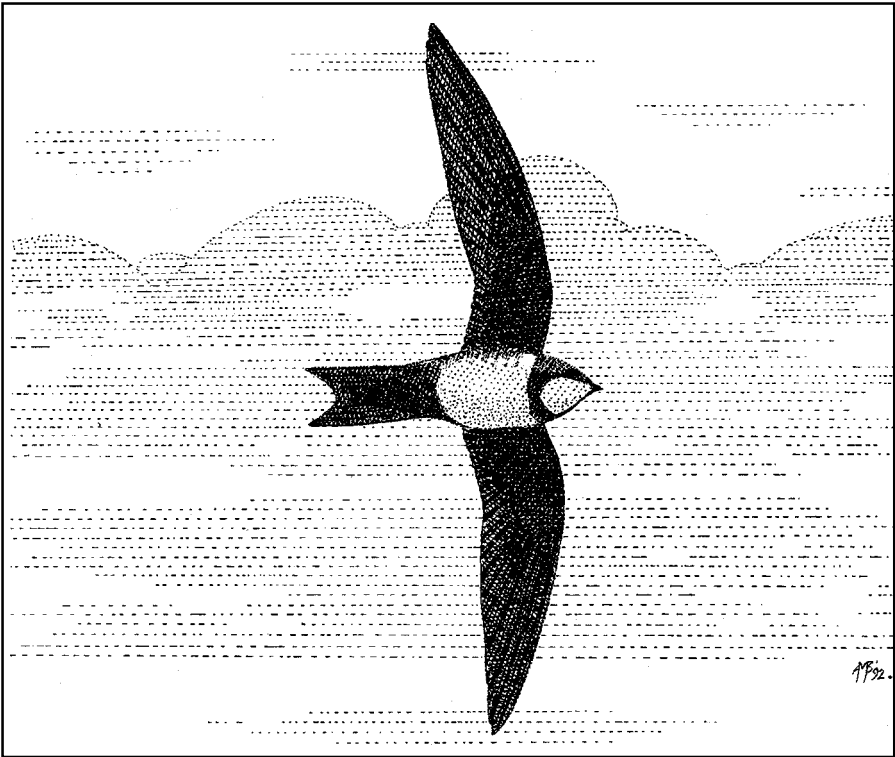


*Cheshire and Wirral
Ornithological Society*

BIRD NEWS

Number 14 Apr 92



AF92.

**Mediterranean Gulls * Recent Reports * Cyprus
Field Sport Conservation * Parkgate Birds * Dark Rumped Petrels
Conservation * Ringers Notebook * One Day Conference
Eastham Woods * Diary**



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Articles, Letters and Comments would be welcomed by the Editor

Front cover - Alpine Swift by Tony Broome

Editorial

A comment from the 'top table' at our recent A.G.M. caused me to think that I may well have overdone the gloom and doom regarding the future of 'Bird News' in my last couple of Editorials. I am offering no apologies however as there has been a very good response to our pleas for new contributors and fresh articles, which I hope is well illustrated in this issue.

The 'Sites to Watch' slot takes on a particular significance although the title is substituted this time by the intriguing 'Spy from Spike Island'. Noting my suggestion for a regular local patch article, Paul Whorton has offered to report his observations each quarter. His first contribution describes his 'bona fides', his objectives and the area he will cover. I was so pleased to note Paul's expressed pleasure in changing from a casual birdwatcher to someone who sees so much more in an area which might not appear to offer great potential to the casual observer. Perhaps his membership of the B.T.O. and his participation in their surveys may be significant.

Mentioning the B.T.O. reminds me that Clive Richards invites our co-operation with B.T.O. projects. He outlines the various options in a subsequent article titled 'Greater liaison between C.A.W.O.S. and the B.T.O.' What could be more worthwhile than this.

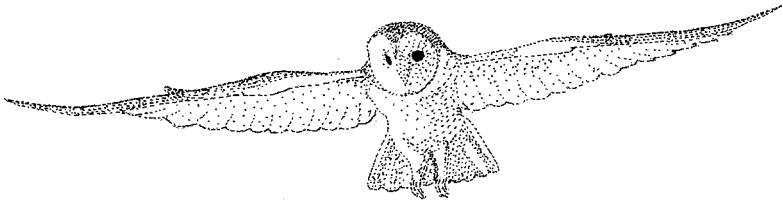
Also of importance in this issue is the first instalment of Ron Harrison's reminiscences. These really are of great interest, bearing in mind Rons' association with the top names in past Cheshire ornithology. In a similar vein a future issue of Bird News will feature another County Recorder's memories. Inspired by Steve Barber's 'Get on your bikes' letter, Dr. John Raines has sent me a fascinating account of his start as a birdwatcher. I must admit that it is a privilege as Editor to receive this type of unexpected letter containing such gems. Dr. Raines has offered more and I am sure you will be as eager as I am to read it. Finally, the aesthetic side of Bird News is heightened by the inclusion of two poems by Peter Walton. All this means we have been able to include four extra pages in this issue. So, well done, but just in case anyone feels I've changed into the supreme optimist I would emphasise that we do need a continuing flow of contributions

To redress the balance a little I have decided to publish a highly critical letter from yet another ex Cheshire Recorder who has adamantly refused to join our society yet who is clearly interested in each copy of Bird News. I will leave you to contrast his message with the general tone of this issue and judge for yourselves the validity of his arguments. Any replies would be printed in future copies.

Finally, on a more serious note, the demise of our regular 'Conservation' article has left a vacuum of information regarding some of the most important issues concerning Cheshire's habitats. Perhaps we will be able to summarise future work by the re-vamped Cheshire Conservation Forum and in addition we would be pleased to print as full and specific a reply as space permits to any particular question you wish to submit.

R Gabb

Species Spotlight



Barn Owl - *Tyto Alba*

The most you normally see of the Barn Owl is a fleeting glimpse in the car's headlights as a "white" owl float across the road. The Barn Owl is the world's most widely distributed owl and in Britain we are in the northern fringe of its range.

Its lifestyle links it very closely to man, its distribution spread with the clearing of the great northern forests, as its preferred habitat is open farmland with plenty of rough grassy areas hosting small mammal populations.

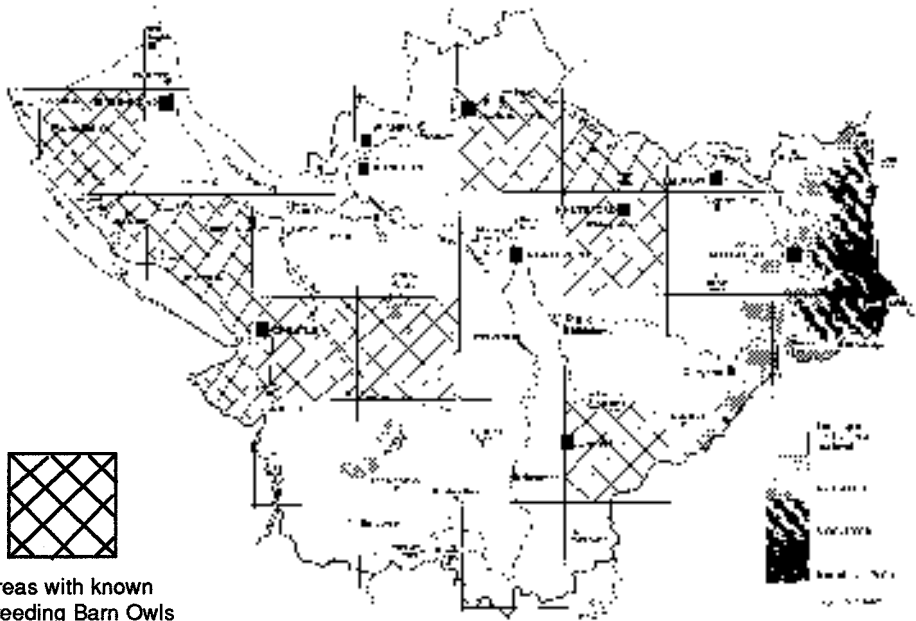
In areas of high rainfall most barn owls nest in man made sites as opposed to tree nesting Barn Owls of low rainfall regions.

The breeding season normally starts at the end of March with the pairing up and courtship flight during which the male will feed the female with small mammals etc. From this "ritual" the timing of egg laying and the clutch size is 'calculated' biologically as this is based on prey resources. The eggs are laid at one or two day intervals and the female starts to incubate soon after the first egg is laid. The clutch size depends upon food availability, the average size is five eggs (in Cheshire the average is three eggs). Each egg hatches after approximately thirty one days. Because of the range of laying days, the hatching of a clutch of five eggs could be spread over ten days. This will lead to a brood of young owlets which differ in size quite considerably. The food requirements of a healthy brood of six will be up to thirty small mammals a day. If food is in short supply 'it has been known for the larger owlets to eat their siblings.

The young Barn Owls leave the nest after nine weeks when they will explore the habitat surrounding the nest site. They will still be fed by their parents while they learn to hunt for themselves. Eventually they will disperse from the nest site area and set up their own territories.

Barn Owl Status in Cheshire

The Barn Owls' present status in the county is approximately fifteen pairs and is quite stable, although this can change very quickly. If there are a series of hard winters and the small mammal population decreases the Barn Owl population would suffer dramatically.



Barn Owl Conservation

The countrywide decline of the Barn Owl has been brought to our attention over the last five years, but how severe was the decline in Cheshire? The population comparison cited in the Hawk and Owl Trust Report (Shaywer) was a 1932 RSPB survey carried out by Blacker. The findings of this survey was 239 pairs in Cheshire giving a ratio of 9:1 per square 100km. When compared with the Hawk and Owl Trust survey which was carried out in 1982-85, a major decline of 86% was indicated. The factors causing the decline are the increase in road and rail traffic, intensification of farming, modern farming methods, use of pesticides and rodenticides and the decline in small mammals caused by the loss of habitat. Many conservation methods are being employed throughout the country, but many are specific to the region which they are employed. in Cheshire a number of breeding and release operators were 're-stocking' and have gained a lot of success. They must be given credit for 40% of the current population. The underlying factor that must be addressed now is the re-establishment of prime foraging habitat. This can be achieved by using set-aside schemes, managing river corridors and parkland, by providing linear corridors of prime habitat which will enable first year birds to disperse and link up therefore giving a healthy gene mix and ultimately a strong healthy population.

Roy Leigh, 19 Queen Street, knutsford, Cheshire, WA1 6 6HZ, Tel: 0565 632417

HELP

I would welcome any reports of sightings, nest-sites, roost sites etc. to aid my long term study of Barn Owls in Cheshire.

Recent Reports

Some of these reports may be unauthenticated and require review by the Society Records Panel or BBRC. Records refer to period from early December to early March.

The **Red-throated Diver** remained on Melchett Mere in Tatton Park until December 15th and a **Black-throated Diver** was on South Cheshire's Marbury Mere from late December into the New Year. I have heard no reports of the scarcer species of grebe. The Rostherne **Cormorant** roost peaked at 225 birds, presumably the 100 on Great Budworth Mere one morning in late December were birds roosting at Rostherne. A **Bittern** was seen at Rostherne on January 21st. **Grey Herons** were back at some heronries by mid-February. The flock of **Berwick's Swans** on Burton Marsh numbered up to 45 birds with 28 still present in early March, seven were on Ince Bank in January. **Bean Geese** are rare visitors to Cheshire and Wirral so a party of 11 over Great Budworth Mere on Christmas Eve was remarkable. Reports of over-flying **Pink-feet** have been markedly fewer than last winter. Up to five **Brent Geese** were regularly reported from the mouth of the Dee and while one at Rostherne on January 29th may be of questionable origin it was nevertheless the first ever recorded there.

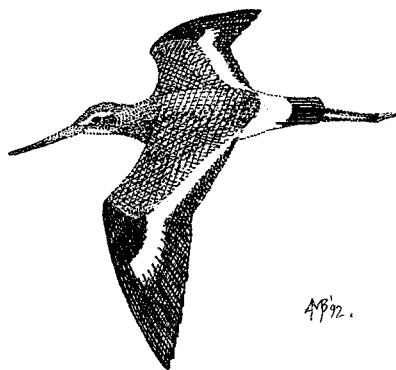
Two **Ruddy Shelduck** were present on the Mersey throughout the period. Over 11,000 **Wigeon** were on the Mersey in January and good numbers were maintained at Rostherne and Catchpenny Pool. The Neumanns Flash **Teal** flock peaked at around 650 birds in January. Frost in January concentrated 66 **Shoveler** at Redesmere. **Pochard** and **Tufted Duck** flocks were much smaller than last winter with respective peaks at Rostherne of 1500 and 170 in February comparing with 3453 and 1828 in 1991, however a good-sized flock of 600 Pochard was at Appleton Resr in February.

Appleton Held a drake **Ring-necked Duck** on January 3rd. Up to 250 **Scaup** were on the Dee at the turn of the year but few were reported from inland sites with a maximum of five at Rostherne in January. A single 'red-headed' **Smew** at Rostherne throughout the period was very difficult to see, two were there on January 26th but otherwise this species was distinctly scarce. Although the Lamaload **Goosander** roost occasionally reached 30 birds the flock appeared here only irregularly, up to 25 were at Bar Mere in January.

Hen Harriers often showed well at the Parkgate high-tides but were distinctly scarce away from the Dee. A **Buzzard** was at Hale in January and one was over Neumanns Flash on March 2nd. There were regular sightings of at least two **Peregrines** at each of the Dee, Mersey and Frodsham Marshes, Fiddlers Ferry and Rostherne with single birds reported from several other sites. **Merlins** were also seen at the same estuarine sites while inland both male and female were seen at Neumanns Flash.

Water Rails were seen regularly at Parkgate high-tides with six on February 20th typical. **Oystercatchers** began returning to inland breeding sites from mid-February and **Ringed Plovers** showed signs of movement about the same time. Both **Golden Plover** and **Lapwing** were affected by the January frosts but 2000 of the former were on Frodsham Marsh in early March and 12000 of the latter on the Mersey Marshes in Mid-January. Numbers of **Ruff** at Sandbach Flashes peaked at around 30 birds while much smaller numbers were at Inner Marsh Farm and Fiddlers Ferry. The mid-January Mersey Wader count revealed a superb count of almost 500 **Black-tailed Godwits**. Small numbers of **Spotted Redshanks** were at inner Marsh Farm throughout the period and one was on Ince Bank in January. **Green Sandpipers** were reported from Fiddlers Ferry and Witton Flashes. A **Common Sandpiper** was found during the Mersey December and January Wader Counts while two were near Runcorn in early February.

A **Pomarine Skua** was reported from New Brighton on December 20th and a **Great Skua** was on the Mersey at Bromborough Docks and off New Brighton on December 23rd and 24th. **Mediterranean Gulls** were seen at sites along the North Wirral coast and one turned up at Neumanns Flash on March 4th. Diligent searching at Neumanns Flash could often reveal a '**Yellow-legged**' Gull or two and there were frequent sightings there of at least four different Iceland and two **Glaucous Gulls**. Glaucous Gulls were also reported from Thurstaston, Fiddlers Ferry, Rostherne Mere and Farmwood Pool and **Iceland Gull** from Fiddlers Ferry. A **Little Auk** was off New Brighton on December 20th.



A **Ring-necked Parakeet** was a surprise sighting at Rostherne on March 5th. Up to six **Short-eared Owls** were on the Dee Marshes in January and February, one on the Mersey and Frodsham Marshes and up to three at Fiddlers Ferry in January, while there were irregular sightings of a single bird at Neumanns Flash in January and March. There were reports of a **Swift** from the Wirral in late February. An **Alpine Swift** over New Brighton on March 6th will, if accepted, be only the second record for Cheshire and Wirral - the first was at Compstall in 'old' Cheshire on 17th August 1970.

A single **Sand Martin** over Tatton Mere on March 10th was the first reported. There were reports of up to three **Water Pipits** at Dee Estuary sites between Parkgate and Burton throughout the period. A **White Wagtail** was at Hilbre on March 7th. There were reports of two **Waxwings** at both Bidston and Heswall in January. Single **Stonechats** were reported from Red Rocks, Parkgate and Lamaload, two were at Fiddlers Ferry. The first returning **Wheaters** were at Hilbre on March 7th. Concentrations of 500 or so **Redwing** and **Fieldfare** reported from Frodsham Marsh, Daresbury and Plumley in January and February. Wintering **Blackcaps** were reported from Eastham, Kingsey and Handforth. Many observers have remarked on the scarcity of **Goldcrests**. One or two **Ravens** were on the Frodsham and Mersey Marshes in January. A flock of over 100 **Tree Sparrows** was at Hale in mid-January and another of up to 60 birds was near Witton Flashes throughout the period. A flock of around 20 **Bramblings** was at Parkgate in January and February but otherwise only odd birds were found among **Chaffinch** flocks at several sites. A flock of around 75 **Twite** was at Neston around the turn of the year, elsewhere eight were on Frodsham Marsh in January and three were at Neumanns Flash in January and February. Two **Hawfinches** were seen at Woolston on March 7th. Up to 18 **Snow Buntings** were at Hilbre in January and February.

Steve Barber

Thanks to 'the Neumanns Log', Keith Massey and Birdline NW.

Notes & Letters

Garden Lists - A Challenge

Seeing Tony Broome's note about garden lists prompted me to tot up mine, past and present, to see how they rate against other CAWOS members.

From 1973-1981 then discontinuously until 1989, I lived at 2 Penrhos Road, Hoylake. Although the garden itself was unremarkable, its strategic position resulted in what I expect is the best garden list in the county (unless of course you know better!) The spare bedroom affords a more or less uninterrupted view of the sea almost as far round as Hilbre. Its greater elevation and infinitely more comfortable surroundings than any other sea-watching position, including the hide of Hilbre, fostered some marathon sessions. I can't imagine any other circumstances in which three figure counts of Leachos Petrel could be combined with music, fresh coffee and a NW gale. Not surprisingly the house list includes almost every conceivable seabird and wader, including Ring-billed Gull and Kentish Plover which obligingly frequented the patch of shore immediately adjacent, and three species of Shearwater.

As if the sea wasn't advantage enough, a decent percentage of the visible passage which moves over Red Rocks also goes over Penrhos Rd. In this category are Hobby, Hen Harrier and 2 Ospreys. There have been numerous near misses; eg. Spoonbill, White Stork, Marsh Harrier and Crossbill, which were seen high over the area from Red Rocks. The list of birds seen from the house currently stands at 163 and I spend every May dreading a phone call from my parents describing something like a Bluethroat or a Hoopoe to push the list further. However, since I don't live there anymore, I can't enter this in the challenge.

Our new house list is a rather more modest 70, but it is rising fast, with Long-tailed Tit and Great Spotted Woodpecker added this month. And there is one bird which didn't appear on the other list; a Green Sandpiper that made a noisy but abortive nocturnal landing attempt on our miniscule garden pond.

If we need an incentive to keep trying, we have to look no further than nearby Forest Rd, where an Arctic Warbler and a Red-breasted Flycatcher were caught on the same September afternoon.

There must be someone out there who can better 70, but what about 163!



KENTISH PLOVER

J E Turner, 12 Dovedale Road, Hoylake

Escapes or Not: Does it really matter?

A few weeks ago, while looking for molluscs, the editor and I discussed a topic which has long interested me. I recently took a degree at college in a misguided attempt to rehabilitate myself with society. During the first term, we students were told repeatedly that man is part of the ecosystem, and that we must take a holistic view of the environment. Almost in the same breath, we were told that no part of the British landscape is natural, it being entirely man-made or man-modified. So if man is part of nature, why are the landscapes in which we live not natural? With the higher education system built on the sand of such inconsistencies, no wonder we're in such a mess.

Then I came across Alan Robert's discussion on "Escapes or Not" (Newsletter 12). While not wishing to pick on Alan, whose opinions are by no means exceptional, I have to say that the same confusion presented itself. Birds are "real" unless they've been held in captivity by man, in which case they and their offspring are "plastic" ("Feral Geese", same issue). For how many generations? I would agree that, "Basically it does not matter whether the bird you saw was an escape or not", but why does it start to matter "when reports are submitted for recording purposes"?

I shunned the company of "birders" years ago now, dismayed that they only saw birds as something to be acquired (listed) to keep up their prestige. Not by me were records "scorned and thrown to the escape file"! Birders have such difficulty in accepting the continuum between wild nature and the mundanity of their own existence, which to my mind is mundane chiefly because they refuse to recognise that continuum.

There are birds such as Ring-necked Parakeets which would not have arrived here without assistance and which rely on humans for feeding. There are birds such as the House Sparrow which rely on use for food and nest sites, but which followed human migrations under their own steam. There are others such as the Pied Wagtail and Swallow, which may well have lived independently of man in the past, but which are now very largely reliant on us for nest sites and, in the case of the wagtail, for winter feeding at sewage works and winter roost sites in towns. Lapwings, Kestrels, Starlings, Jackdaws and many other species would have been all but absent from Cheshire had man not cleared the woodland cover and prevented its return.

But Feral Pigeons are seen as "plastic", even though they compete with Stock Doves and keep the latter at bay from the urban fringe. Mandarins are "plastic" but may well compete with Stock Doves, Jackdaws or even "plastic" Little Owls for nesting holes. "Plastic" Goshawks kill a few crows and other birds in the county. Which of the introduced species does the reader most easily dismiss as "plastic"? And if some are seen as real, why?

Let me change track and consider a species neglected by the plant twitchers: the native Black Poplar (*Populus nigra betulifolia*). When Alan Newton's "Flora of Cheshire" was published in 1971, only three records of this tree were included. By 1991, when a supplement to the flora was produced, a national survey had been held, and some 60 trees reported. The curt explanation for previous omission of such records was that, "Trees obviously planted were not included in the 1971 Flora". Why on earth not ?

Of course by birder's standards the Black Poplar is "plastic". It may be a relic of native woodland of floodplains by rivers, but since these floodplains have been cleared, mown and grazed, the poplars have been unable to reproduce without assistance. So for centuries past they have relied on man for propagation by cuttings. This he did willingly, because the trees were of value to him, part of his life in fact.

Of the 130 trees in Cheshire known to me (there may be as many as 150), several hold nesting Stock Doves, Jackdaws, Kestrels or Little Owls in hollow trunks or branches. "Plastic" owls in "plastic" trees! What matters is not whether a bird or tree has escaped or been planted, but whether a species is playing a significant part in the ecology of the county. Many of the rare birds which wander to Cheshire are of no more significance than the occasional Budgerigar. That was where my path parted from that of the birding world.

There have been various comments in past issues of Bird News referring to Cheshire birdwatchers hiding their light under a bushel, or "county birders who still walk around with chips on their shoulders...harboring past grievances" and so on. But for never having been a "birder", I might presume I was being alluded to! Perhaps this note goes part way towards explaining my reluctance to involve myself again with the birding establishment.

You birders really are more interested in what is not here than what is. Thirteen issues of Bird News have exhausted your interest in Cheshire's birds, so the scope has to be broadened to include "notable sites adjacent to the county.. (or).. the occasional short report on a foreign trip".

Cheshire is dead. Long live the empire where the sun never sets!

J P Guest, Flat 2, 132a Mottram Road, Hyde, SK14 2AZ

For the few of you who may not know, Johnathan has evolved from at least a modicum of twitching in his early days to become a respected past County Recorder, a highly praised Bird Report Editor, a leading contributor to the imminent Breeding Bird Atlas of Cheshire, a co-author of "Were to Watch Bird in Cheshire and Lancashire" (highly recommended), founder of the Lyme NH recording group and presently self-employed Ecological Consultant. As I have so often suggested to him we could do with his constructive advice from within CAWOS rather than criticism from without. I hope the time has come for a reconciliation. Ed.

Mediterranean Shearwater

A Retrospective Addition to the Cheshire and Wirral List

With the recent elevation to full specific status of Mediterranean Shearwater (*Puffinus yelkouan*), the Cheshire and Wirral list has advanced by one. The following account describes the only record of this former subspecies of Manx Shearwater (*Puffinus puffinus*) with a full supporting description. There is however at least one previous record (1).

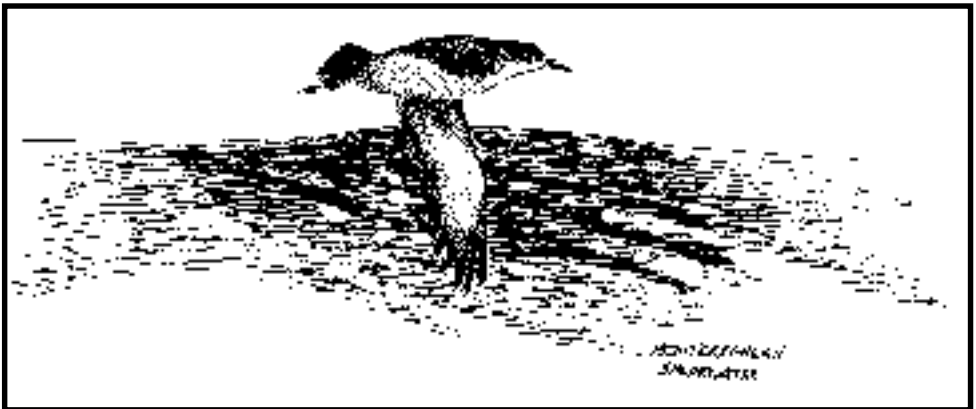
On the morning of Aug 24th 1989, a rather tubby, dirty-coloured Shearwater was noted moving westwards between Hoylake and Red Rocks, with a party of Manx Shearwaters. It appeared slightly larger than its companions, but was shorter in the tail. It used many more fluttery wing beats than the Manxies as it progressed into a force 6 SW wind, appearing more like a big dingy auk than a shearwater.

The upperparts were mid grey-brown, darker on the remiges and retrices. The underparts were more or less as Manx, except that the "black bits" were brown, the under-tail coverts and cheeks were dusky and the underwing was generally less clean.

Has anyone else seen a Balearic Shearwater off Wirral? If so please send the details to the county recorder. Mediterranean Shearwaters are fairly regular visitors to the Irish Sea from July to September, being recorded most frequently off Strumble Head in Dyfed, especially after strong south westerlies. Keep an eye out for them this year.

Jane Turner, 12 Dovedale Road, Hoylake

Reference: 1. J. G. Hall, Cheshire Bird Report (1974) 26.



Aggression by Moorhen when threatened by Grey Squirrel

On 26 May 1990 at Rostherne Mere my attention was drawn to the behaviour of an adult Moorhen.

On sensing the danger from a Grey Squirrel which was stealthily moving down the trunk of a willow at the mere edge, the Moorhen leapt into the air up to a metre from the ground. The bird remained silent and upon landing jumped up again but the confrontation had ended as I stumbled on to the scene to see the Moorhen and it's two tiny young scurry into the cover of a reedbed.

MALCOLM CALVERT

The Terrapins of Thurstaston

No, I could not believe it either, until the first time I went with my family for a Sunday drive up the Wirral peninsular. We had been to Thurstaston Common many times but never before had we turned left off the A540, Telegraph Road, down Station Road to the Wirral Country Park. For those not familiar with this side of Cheshire and Wirral, the A540 leaves Chester at Fountains roundabout, stays to the left of the George and Dragon public house, then continues on to cross Welsh Roads at Two Mills. Stay with the road through the lights at the top of Neston and continue to the large roundabout, noting the Glegg Arms on the right. Follow the second exit off the roundabout through Thurstaston village. Once you leave the houses behind, the road sweeps in a wide left then right bend. Before the road begins to bend left again, there is a cross roads and a small wooden sign pointing left for the Wirral Country Park. Turn here and after a couple of hundred yards, turn right at the "T" junction. The road will now lead you down to the old railway bridge. As you leave your car, you will cross the old Neston to West Kirkby railway track. Since it's closure in the mid 60's, it has been cleaned up and is now the Wirral Way. Up the steps across the platform, you are now met with an open view of gently sloping meadow and a clear view of the Clwydian Range on the far side of the Dee estuary. Walk to the cliff edge here and you may recognise the view. This is were parts of the recent I.T.V. comedy series "Watching" was filmed.

Return to the visitor's centre and browse round the displays that tell of life in the area, not just human but also animal, bird and plant. The hawthorn bushes round the centre are home to at least two families of long tailed tits and I have been lucky enough to find one cobweb and feather nest simply by following one family of "bumbarrels" along the line of shrubs as they search for food. There are always chaffinches and yellowhammers singing, collared doves cooing and, during spring, great spotted woodpeckers drumming on their boundary sounding posts. Walk away from the centre towards the Bar-B-Q area and you will see, on your right, a large clump of shrubs. Hidden within this foliage screen are two small lakes. The right hand lake is given over as a private reserve whilst, for a fee of £5 per day, you can fish the other, to catch small rudd and carp. Apart from catching fish, you could be lucky and catch sight of the bullfinches that live here along with the chiffchaff and willow warblers in summer. Even luckier still, watch along the edge of the reserve lake, from its boardwalk boundary, for a large flat stone with a green neck, for this is the home of the terrapins of Thurstaston. On occasions rarities pass through this part of Wirral with at least two records of bluethroat. There is also a bird hospital and owl sanctuary at the rear of the car park.

All in all, the Wirral Country Park at Thurstaston is well worth a visit.

Ron Plummer

19 November 1991



Shooting - Is it really Conservation?

I feel I must challenge the complacent hypocrisy exhibited by Paul Slater (No. 13Jan92) and other like-minded "conservationists" who manage to reconcile a so-called love of birds with the practice of killing them for pleasure. Whilst I must concede that much of the varied British landscape and its bird-rich habitats owe their very existence to the shooting fraternity, I will not accept that this in any way justifies their barbaric activities - I simply lament the fact that a so-called civilised society cannot conserve landscape and habitat for their own sake and for the benefit of the wildlife they contain.

It is most regrettable that some conservation bodies like the RSPB have been forced to compromise with the shooting lobby in the interests of protecting birds and habitat. Perhaps Mr. Slater expects some similar deferential accommodation from CAWOS. Well I for one resent the ecological and emotional blackmail perpetrated by these self-styled "sportsmen" who offer us the ultimatum of the gun or the bulldozer. When CAWOS goes soft on the shooters I for one will resign.

Don Pawlett

Further road building

In his article "The Changing Face of Birdwatching", Alan Roberts raises the question what are birdwatchers doing to aid conservation. I would like to add a few words as to what we can do to fight off threats to our countryside and our pastime. We can all make politicians and decision makers aware of our views by writing letters to object to damaging schemes and praise for damaging planning applications which have been refused. We also need to look outside the area at threats on our borders, for our area is enhanced by its borderlands.

One damaging scheme which springs to mind is the M57-A562 Link Road which will smash its way across the countryside of Tarbock to the North West of our area. Although not a major bird haunt, the area does support breeding Grey Partridge, Tree Sparrow and Yellow Wagtail. The road will open up the area for development and further encroach upon the village of Hale which is in our area. In fact at a meeting I had with local planning officers some of their arguments for this road were that it would provide a vital link for the extremely ambitious proposal to extend Liverpool Airport by destroying Oglet Bay. Also they seem to envisage a fourth crossing of the River Mersey somewhere in the Speke/Hale area. These were planning officers, whom were extremely ignorant of the issues at stake.

I would like to think that readers of this newsletter will take action against the destruction around us and do something positive to save our natural heritage before it is covered under tarmac and concrete. The newsletter could help by reporting on areas under threat, what is being done to counteract the threat and what the individual can do, as well as reporting on the ongoing proceedings.

Paul Slater

Persistent Sparrowhawks

I am fortunate in that my garden is included in the hunting territory of a pair of Sparrowhawks and I see one, more often the male, not infrequently. Usually the sighting is brief: for instance I have seen one come over the hedge on one side of the garden, arc down to the lawn and pick up a bird without stopping and rise up and over the hedge on the other side, all in the twinkling of an eye. Again, only a couple of weeks ago, one came flying through bushes in the garden next door and passed within 20 feet of me, carrying a Great Tit in its talons. Sometimes one lands on a fence close to the kitchen window and preens itself and on one occasion we were able to watch one for over 10 minutes as it mouthed its prey on the lawn and then tore it to pieces and ate it.

On several occasions a hawk has shown considerable persistence in pursuit of its quarry. A few years ago one attacked some sparrows, but was unsuccessful as they shot into a nearby tangle of climbing roses. The hawk climbed through the roses trying to get at them, but they were far too nimble for it and had the sense not to fly out. A similar incident happened this summer when I noticed a hawk on the fence peering into a Pyracantha bush with a climbing rose growing through it which grow against the fence. It subsequently emerged that a couple of sparrows had taken refuge in the bush. The hawk hopped along the fence and twice attempted to get into the bush, before it gave up.

One day I was crouched, weeding, near to the end of the garden when I heard the rattling alarm call of a Blackbird as it came along the boundary hedge of the next door garden. As I looked up, the Blackbird shot round the corner of the hedge, closely followed by a Sparrowhawk, which knocked a clump of feathers out of the Blackbird's tail as it struck short. Both birds were travelling so fast and so close to me that I actually flung myself to one side, being sure that they were going to hit me in the face. Fortunately in front of me were 2 blackcurrant bushes into one of which the Blackbird shot, turned at right angles, went through the second bush, crossed a 3 feet gap and went through a beech hedge, all in a trice. The hawk did a mid-air stall in front of the blackcurrant bush, turned and hit the hedge a fraction after the Blackbird went into it. After clinging on to the hedge for a second or two and giving a frustrated look into it, the hawk glared at me and then flew away. I am convinced that it knew I was there as soon as I moved, but was not deterred in its pursuit.

The most recent incident of persistence happened last summer, when I was sitting in the garden. As I was talking to a friend I was casually watching some House Sparrows feeding on bread further along the garden. Suddenly a Sparrowhawk appeared low over the top of the hedge and sped towards them. The sparrows reacted amazingly quickly and flew into the nearest cover in a flash. This was a large clump of STI PA GIGANTEA, a densely growing ornamental grass whose flowering stalks grow to 7 or 8 feet. The sparrows went into the fronds at the base of the grass, but this did not put off the hawk which never hesitated, but hit the grass with a noticeable thud. A second later it was out and away clutching one of the unfortunate sparrows.

John Oxenham, Birchwood, 178 Homes Chapel Road, Somerford, Congleton, Cheshire CW12 4QB

Shattered Peace

We overlook a secluded Cheshire lake which attracts a tremendous variety of birdlife - Great Crested Grebe and Little Grebe, Mute Swan, Kingfishers and all variety of waterwoodland birds - Woodpeckers, Longtail Tit, plus Curlew, Lapwing etc.

Spring is here - blossom and daffodils are in flower, all the wildlife are busy courting and house hunting. The air is full of birdsong, but not around Stubbs Flash due to 3 weeks continual bombardment from a gas gun from dawn to nighttime.

This has caused havoc to all the birds. The Great Crested Grebe had just started their courtship display and swans who nested on a smaller lake nearby for the first time last year have been scared off - as have ALL the birds.

Responsibility lies with 6 men from Knutash Private Angling Club who live in towns 15-20 miles away - and only come here once in 4 months, once in 2 months, the others on a Sunday.

Cormorant appeared for the first time in January - five of them. They come to fish to eat to live - probably having been disturbed from their previous habitat, or maybe juveniles.

The anglers jointly pay £600 to the local estate to fish here, and interpret this as meaning they (and not any fish-eating birds) only can fish. Of course they don't eat the fish and certainly don't need to fish - its just "sport".

Odd isn't it that men who have no need for the fish can prevent the wildlife from eating to survive, and even stranger is that this normally peaceful relaxing pastime has caused such a disturbance to the wildlife and the people who live yards away.

After our criticism of their insensitivity the gun will only bang away 3 times a day ad infinitum - there is no closed season.

I have lived here for 20 years - and chose to do so to enjoy the peace and harmony of nature. This interruption to the long-standing calm will soon vanish - nature has adjusted to far worse, and the birds will realise the men from Knottyash are only diddy.

A F Brooks & Family, Yew Tree Farm, Billinge Green, Northwich, Cheshire, CW9 7RZ

Review

The Floating Island: Redesmere and Capesthorne Pools

by J V Oxenham and A L Booth

34 pages A4, illustrated by WV Oxenham. Published by the Macclesfield and Congleton Group of the Cheshire Wildlife Trust.

Redesmere and Capesthorne were both featured in Tunncliffe's "Mersey Chronicle" and Redesmere particularly has long been a favourite haunt of nature lovers. However the publication of this booklet is the first attempt to bring together what is known of the natural history of these sites. The authors have scoured publications on the natural history of Cheshire dating back to the earliest years of this century, reviewed records held by the Cheshire Wildlife Trust, received records and other assistance from many of today's regular observers and had the benefit of the diaries of N Abbott who was active in the area in the 1920's; between them the authors made 82 visits to the area in 1990.

Following a fascinating review ranging from geological details to the romance of Isabel de Vere the authors cover: animal life in the water, plants, mammals, birds, amphibians, butterflies and dragonflies and finally fish and fishing. Each section presents the reader with a summary of the information known to the authors. Not surprisingly the section on birds forms the largest part of the booklet It would appear that while a regular birdwatching visitor would be unlikely to see many rarities, he or she would nevertheless be rewarded by a wide cross-section of avian residents as well as visitors reflecting the changing seasons. The current status of residents and visitors alike is given and often discussed and compared to earlier times where information is available. The appearance of rare birds such as Great Northern Diver, Smew, Osprey and Hoopoe are dated while in the case of Grey Phalarope, Coward's original description of his sighting is quoted in full.

The first aim of the authors is to encourage an interest in and concern for the wildlife and the important wildlife sites within the area of the Macclesfield and Congleton Group of the Cheshire Wildlife Trust. Against a background of ever increasing pressure from boating, angling and the general visitor, the production of this booklet is timely. The booklet is a fine survey of knowledge to date and a sound base for future research in all branches of natural history. In addition it is a "good read" and I recommend it to all CAWOS members.

Steve Barber

Copies are available from 160, Gawsorth Road, Macclesfield, Cheshire SK10 8UO, for £1.50 inc p & p. Please make cheques payable to A Booth.

Alan Booth tells me that he would be pleased to hear of any omissions. SB



Hawfinch

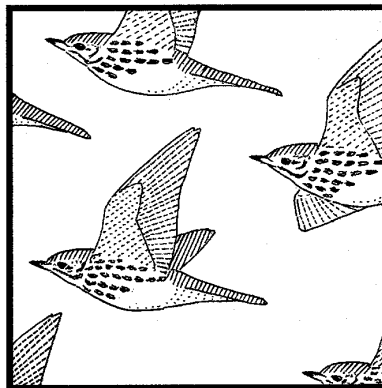
I like to think of a bird that's almost
Never seen; not rare, as an oriole; just
Secretive - a private being which intrigues
By absences. All direct search fatigues
And mystifies, without the slightest glimpse. Yet
It should be obvious: a parrot
In miniature, in English woods - beak
Big enough to overtilt, as well as make seeds crack
I saw one once, by chance, perched totem-still
Close in against a shaded truck; invisible
At first; but then all there, among the ivy leaves.

Peter Walton

The Birth of a Birder or The One That Nearly Got Away

When did you start birdwatching? A question I have often been asked and one that I find difficult to answer. As a lad, brought up on what many eminent politicians these days like to "swank about": the "wrong side of the tracks", there were no hard and fast rules to becoming anything or anybody; it was survival. What were binoculars? - telescopes were for looking at the stars, bird books never heard of. So all I can say is the fact that I was born with curiosity and an enquiring mind - especially about nature. So it was that I found myself playing around brooks and woods, looking into hedgerows and fascinated by my father's racing pigeons, wondering how they managed to find their way home. Like others with the same fascination, I collected birds eggs which were religiously guarded and kept in cotton wool. There was a certain code of ethics: never taking more than one egg and then only when the clutch was incomplete. I would take a lot of trouble pricking the eggs and blowing out the contents - no mean task. I mention this for at a later date I was to find out how the expert oologists went about the task. By the age of 11 having moved to another school which taught Biology, I must have attracted the attention of the biology teacher, who seeing my interest and the corresponding marks on the exam papers took me "under her wing" and offered to take two of us with her and a party of walking friends on a weekend ramble, with the primary intention of using my skills at finding nests. These days when bus loads of children are taken out into the country by their teachers is a far different scenario than being invited by the teacher who was using her own time; consequently I remember it well. We walked through Dunham Park, had our "bagging" at Booth Bank Millington then on down the lanes to Rostherne, along Marsh Lane and across the fields by footpath, crossing the Bollin at Ashley Mill and home. We found a few nests, Robins, Dunnocks, Song Thrushes etc nothing wildly exciting, these were examined with interest by the group, none were robbed and everyone had a pleasant day.

It was about this time I was wandering around Altrincham Sewage Farm, my parents having exchanged our council house for another, which meant my father giving up his one and only hobby that of pigeon racing. On one of my visits, I met an older person by the name of Eric Plant whose father was secretary of the one and only society for many a mile, the Altrincham Natural History Society which held its meetings in the local library. During the conversation he spoke to me of the unusual, to me at any rate, birds that visited the area, and hearing that I had an egg collection invited me to show it at one of their meetings. I well remember how proudly I displayed my case of eggs to all concerned, firmly believing they were all involved in just the same activities as myself. I got to know Eric some 30 years later when everyone's approach to birdwatching and egg collecting has changed considerably, including I might say, my own. I never did ask him if he remembered that meeting so many years before. One thing I do remember was the relatively common nesting of Turtle Doves in an old willow or osier bed that was soon to become the first tip in the area.



As a result of the meeting at ANHS I met an eminent oologist named Silsbury who invited me to his home to see his collection. It is hard to describe the impression that this visit made on me, but as he opened drawer after drawer after drawer of the huge sideboard sized egg compartments, which displayed hundreds of full clutches of birds eggs ranging in size from the smallest Goldcrest eggs to the largest Golden Eagle and even Ostrich eggs not one clutch of each species but in some cases dozens of the same but variable in some way or another. There were eggs of birds I had only heard about, Redshanks, Greenshanks, Snipe, Nightjars, Owls, you name them, he had them. He showed me the special drills, only drilling one hole, and the glass blowpipe for extracting the contents. I was impressed, no I was flabbergasted and when he gave me one or two eggs of Redshank, Oystercatcher, Guillemot etc to bring home, I was like a dog with two tails. The sheer enormity of the occasion was possibly the reason for fading interest in the hobby. One outcome was the purchase from him of Keartons "British Birds and their Eggs", a richly engraved book with coloured plates of eggs and details of where and when to find them, a book which I retained until recent times and was my first bird book. On reflection I often wonder what would have happened had I joined the society, for at that time, within a couple of miles of where I was born, lived one of the worlds, to my mind, greatest ornithologists of his time, the late T A Coward. If I had met him instead of Spilsbury would I have been a convert to respectable ornithology? as it was I became an ardent follower of Isaac Walton and took up angling and other youthful pursuits. After a rupture in my life lasting many years during which I was incapacitated for three years, we had a war and I began a new life altogether with little time for anything but work, I returned to my second love that of angling. It was whilst waiting for the expectant bite in a quiet backwater of the River Dane at Swettenham, that I heard the repetitive song "chick a bee-bee-bee", so insistent that I finally left my piscatorial endeavors to look for the songster. It was a bird I didn't know and I was so intrigued that I bought a bird book. By this time Richardson and Fitter had just published the first real pocket identification guide, if you discount Cowards two volume "Birds of the British Isles", later to be extended to three volumes. Full of excitement I identified the songster as a Marsh Tit, but reading on I found that if I had not heard the song identification would have been much harder. What revelations! I found that it wasn't until recent times that it had been discovered that the willow Tit was recognised as a totally different species and who had been the first to identify it in Cheshire but T A Coward himself and at Rostherne of all places, again "on my doorstep". From that time on the book was never out of my sight and it became impossible to fish and watch birds so I was re-converted, especially as I was given a pair of old German binoculars.

Ron Harrison

This is the first in a series of articles covering the early life of Ron Harrison in his wanderings around the County. We look forward to future episodes.



Jackdaws' Cheerful Banter

It shouldn't come as a surprise
That birds with such disarming cries
Have calculating cold-grey eyes.

Peter Walton

The Local Patch

THE SPY FROM SPIKE ISLAND

As the days lengthen, the willow catkins test the cold air and the daffodils burst through the brown earth, a young man's fancy turns to love... or in our case what will the spring migrant arrival bring!

Ah! I can almost hear your thoughts. "What is this idiot rambling on about? *Spy from Spike ~s-and?* What has that got to do with a serious birdlife magazine?" To answer my own rhetoric, this (hopefully) is an attempt to report on the fortunes of the birdlife and natural history in general in my local area; hence, the Spy from Spike Island. Spike Island is an island in the river Mersey bounded by the river and the St. Helens canal. From original-y having been one of the birthplaces of chemical industry, it ½is now a nature reserve. This feature is virtually in the geographical centre of the patch that I will be covering (which lies within the boundaries of Halton District - i.e. Widnes and Runcorn).

Perhaps as this is an opening shot, a word about your scribe may be appropriate. I am at present thirty years old and reside in the murky depths of North Widnes. My interest in birds extends back over a period of twenty years. For most of the time I have actually lived in Widnes and therefore have an ½abiding interest in the local fauna. Recently I have undergone a 'baptism of fire' as regards access to information on birds and a re-appraisal of the knowledge that I have gained in previous years. This has given me new impetus and a fresh view with which to undertake a deeper study of ornithology.

The issues which cause me concern within my own locality could be said to be those which worry most people on their own areas; degradation of the environment by pollution, development and population pressure. (At present most of these issues are sharply in focus in and around Halton.) I hope to relate these factors to my observations and reports on the status of birdlife within my patch.

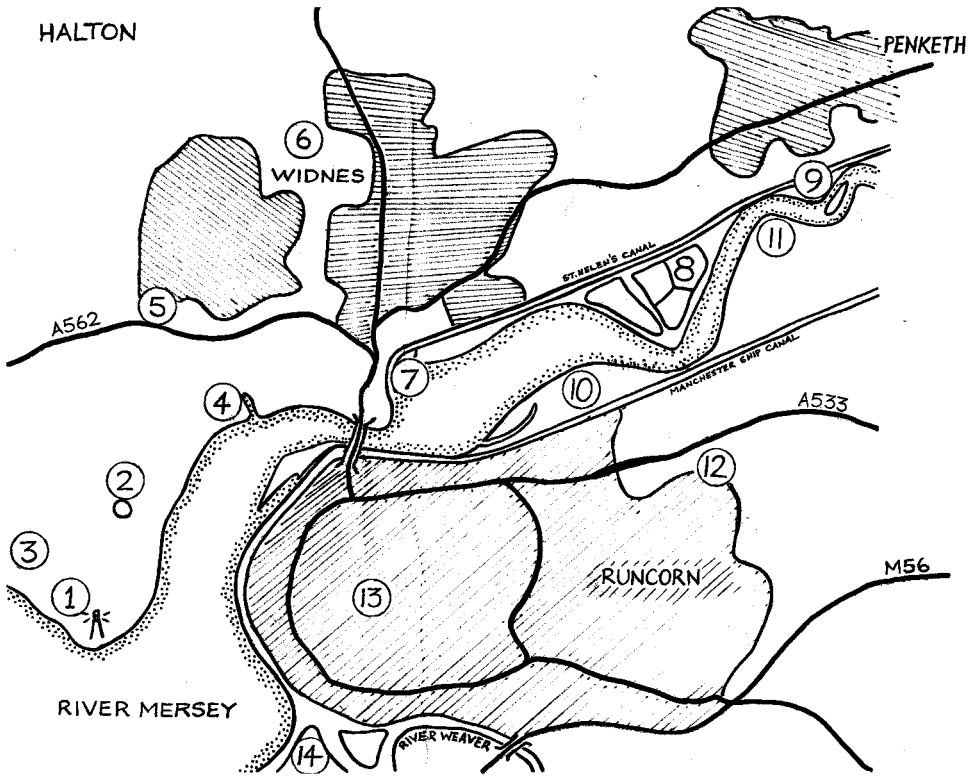
One of the reasons which has prompted me to take on this article is that although Halton is Cheshire's most heavily industrialised area, it has its' saving graces. Some of these graces have been created by the very industry that in many cases now threatens the existence of the habitat which supports our birdlife eg:- Fiddlers Ferry settling lagoons and Frodsham Marsh sludge tanks (the very names are poetry). This paradox makes me doubly appreciate the number and diversity of bird species that occur in our beleaguered environment. November's sight of a Great Northern Diver sailing blithely past 101's fluorocarbon plant springs immediately to mind. I'm sure anyone would be less surprised to see this bird on some storm lashed Scottish loch, but, I value the Frods ham sighting the more for that reason. As seasoned birders, we all know what exciting birding can be had in seemingly unlikely places and we tend to block out any eyesores by concentrating on the bird life. I think it would give pause for thought to agencies or individuals who exert influence over these sites if they were shown the fauna that can exist in so called derelict/marginal/industrial areas. This is a personal view from my own blot on the landscape!

Secondly, I would like to raise the tattered banner in the cause of local parish birdwatching. I'm positive that everyone seeing the map in this article could produce a similar one for their corner of the county. Perhaps this may encourage a few of you to spend more time around the less well known birding spots and to relay the information to CAWOS, thereby providing the county with greater "in-depth" coverage of the birdlife in our area. This would add to the overall body of knowledge and could perhaps fill a few gaps, thus increasing the clarity of the picture regarding the country's birdlife.

So there you have it then, the stall set out, meat (and dare I say it?) two veg. As I trundle around the home ground in my trusty van, I hope to draw some inspiration from our avian friends for my next missive. If you should chance to see me (I'm the hippy looking one in the green woolly hat) stop for a chat. I'm always happy to talk and learn from you, or to help you. Remember none of us knows everything and a word or two could make a day's birding more rewarding, or it could avoid unnecessary disturbance of birds that you may stumble upon unawares, so let's be friendly out there!

Watch this space Beano Fans

Paul Whorton



MAP KEY

1. Hale Head - Somewhat underwatched, good for waders and ducks, Corn Buntings a local speciality.
2. **Hale Decoy** - Numerous unusual sightings here, Stock Doves, woodpeckers ducks swans.
3. Hale Park Plantation - Mature unmanaged wood, Treecreeper, tits, woodpeckers finches.
4. Pickering's **pasture** - Mersey outlook, gulls, waders, ducks, finches and pipits, occasional S.E. Owl and some rarities.
5. Clinton Woods - Rough pasture, woodland, small ponds. Heron, finches, owls, Grey Partridge.
6. Upton Rocks - Once full of farmland species now developed by building, my local bone \approx of contention.
7. Spike **Island** - Ducks, waders, gulls, occasional Merlin.
8. **Cuurdley Marsh/Fiddlers Ferry** - Kingfisher, waders, S.E. Owl, ducks, rarities, gulls and sporadic sightings of Goshawk.
9. Gateworth Tip/Richmond Bank - Gull roost, large numbers of corvids, some rarer gulls.
10. Wigg **Island** - Saltmarsh area, ducks, Snipe, Sand Martin colony.
11. **Moore** - Farmland species, wintering Yellowhammer, rookery, game birds, Little Owl, **Wood cock**.
12. **Big Woods/Norton Priory** - **Some good woodland** species. I have only visited **occasionally**.
13. **Runcorn Hill/Town Park** - Finches, passage birds.
14. **Frodsham Marsh** - Enough said!

Diary

APRIL

- 3 SECOS "AGM & MEMBERS EVENING"
- 5 CRSPB LLANGOLLEN, ring 0244-533029 for details
- 5 HPRSPB CROMFORD CANAL, meet Hazel Grove car park 9.00am
- 5 MCOS TYNMYNYDD & WORLDS END, ring 0928-87219 for details
- 6 HPRSPB "THE FLIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL" by Andre Farrar
- 8 HO "KINGFISHERS" by Mike Taylor
- 10 MCOS "AGM & MEMBERS EVENING"
- 11 ADNHS PECKFORTON, ring 061-860-5104 for details
- 11 KOS ANGLESEY, meet at Sessions House 8.00am
- 12 CADOS SPINNIES & THE ORMES, meet Overleigh Cemetery 9.00am
- 14 MRSPB "OWLS" by Michael Leach
- 15 CRSPB "MEMBERS EVENING"
- 21 MRSPB EVENING WALK AT BONIS HALL, meet Bonis Hall 6.45pm
- 24 KOS "AGM"
- 24 LOG "BACK GARDEN SAFARI" by Bob McCreddin
- 25 HO EYARTH ROCK, CLYWD, meet 8.00am
- 26 LOG NORTH WALES, ring 0606-891274 for details
- 26 MRSPB GREAT ORME, meet Duke Street car park 8.30am
- 26 SECOS PEOVER HALL, ring 0270-872435 for details
- 26 WG ANGLESEY, meet at Guild HQ 7.30am
- 27 CADOS BURTON/GWYSANEY, meet Overleigh Cemetery 6.00pm
- 28 ADNHS "AMPHIBIAN CONSERVATION" by R. Parker

MAY

- 2 MRSPB PLANT SALE at Field Rise, Dumbah Lane, Bollington 2-5pm
- 3 HPRSPB LEIGHTON MOSS by coach, ring 0663-745208 for details
- 3 MCOS DANEBRIDGE, ring 0606-77960 for details
- 8-10 KOS TREGARON & YNYS HIR, ring for details
- 8-10 MRSPB NORTHUMBERLAND WEEKEND, ring 0625-582433 for details
- 9 ADNHS MONSALDALE & MAGPIE MINE, ring 061-928-8063 for details
- 9 CADOS BLACKCOCK LEK & WORLDS END, meet Overleigh Cemetery 5.30am
- 10 CRSPB LAKE VYRNWY by coach, ring 0244-324268 for details
- 10 LOG DANE BRIDGE, ring 0606-891274 for details
- 12 ADNHS "WILDLIFE OF THE PENNINE WAY" by N. Martin
- 12 MRSPB "AGM & MEMBERS SLIDES"
- 13 HO "BIRDS OF A CHESHIRE COUNTRY PARISH" by Rev. Hugh Linn
- 14 MRSPB EVENING WALK, TEGNOSE COUNTRY PARK, meet by dam 7.00pm
- 15 MCOS PECKFORTON, ring 0606-882529 for details
- 17 HO BARDON TOWER, WHARF DALE, meet 8.00am
- 17 WG LAKE VYRNWY, meet at Guild HQ 7.30am
- 19 CADOS LOGGERHEADS, meet Overleigh Cemetery 6.00pm
- 24 HPRSPB COOMBES VALLEY, meet Hazel Grove car park 8.30am
- 24 SECOS ABER & SOUTH STACK, ring 0270-872435 for details
- 29 LOG "AGM & MEMBERS EVENING"
- 30-31 CADOS BRECKS WEEKEND, ring 0928-723871 for details
- 30 HPRSPB DORSET WEEK, ring 061-427-5105 for details

JUNE

4	LOG	EVENING WALK, CALDERSTONE PARK ring 092575-5473
7	CRSPB	LONG MYND, ring 0244-270654 for details
10	HO	"BIRDS OF NEPAL" by Adam Davidson
10	MRSPB	EVENING WALK, GOYT VALLEY, meet at reservoir car park 7.15pm
13	HO	"LATHKILLDALE, DERBYS, meet 8.00am
14	ADNHS	ILAM, ring 061-748-4717 for details
14	CADOS	HAWSWATER & LEIGHTON MOSS, meet Overleigh Cemetery 7.00am
14	LOG	LOGGERHEADS, ring 0606-891274 for details
20	HPRSPB	DOXEY MARSHES & CANNOCK CHASE, meet Hazel Grove 1.00pm
21	MCOS	HAWESWATER & LEIGHTON MOSS, ring 0606-882289 for details
24	CADOS	EVENING BIRD RACE, ring 0244-372313 for details

JULY

4	CADOS	ANGLESEY, meet Overleigh Cemetery 7.00am
4	LOG	LATHKILLDALE, ring 0606-891274 for details
5	CRSPB	ANGLESEY by coach, ring 0244-324268 for details
8	HO	"MEMBERS EVENING"
12	ADNHS	GREAT ORME & ABEROGWEN, ring 061-748-4717 for details
12	HPRSPB	HEALEY DELL & HOLLINGWORTH LAKE, meet Hazel Grove 8.30am
16	CADOS	CHESTER ZOO, ring 0244-381343 for details

SOCIETIES

ADNHS	Altrincham & District Natural History Society, mtgs Hale Methodist Church Hall 7.30pm, Sec. Vincent Pedley 061-748-4717.
CADOS	Chester & District Ornithological Society, mtgs Caldley Valley Community Centre 7.30pm, Prog. Sec. Marion Barlow 09282-3871.
CAWOS	Cheshire & Wirral Ornithological Society, mtgs Knutsford Civic Centre 7.45pm, contact Sheila Blamire 0565-830168.
CCTNG	Cheshire Conservation Trust(North Group), mtgs Altrincham Library 7.45pm, Pub. Off. Ann Mason 061-860-5104.
CRSPB	Chester RSPB Members Group, mtgs St. Marys Centre Chester 7.30pm Prog. Sec. Brenda Legard 0244-682018.
HO	Hale Ornithologists, mtgs St. Peters Assembly Hall 7.45pm, Prog. Sec. Barbara Vercambre 061-980-8362.
HPRSPB	High Peak RSPB Members Group
KOS	Knutsford Ornithological Society, mtgs Knutsford Methodist Church Hall 7.45pm, contact Peter Perkins 0565-632784.
LOG	Lymm Ornithological Group, mtgs Lymm Village Hall 8.00pm, Prog. Sec. Peter Tonge 0606-891274
MCOS	Mid-Cheshire Ornithological Society, mtgs Hartford Village Hall 7.45pm, contact Paul Kenyon, 196 Chester Rd, Hartford.
MRSPB	Macclesfield RSPB Members Group, mtgs Senior Citizens Hall 7.45pm, Prog. Sec. Julia Thornburn 0625-582433.
NCRSPB	North Cheshire RSPB Members Group, mtgs Runcorn Library, Shopping City, Sec. Lynn Fewster 0928-575876
SECOS	South-east Cheshire Ornithological Society, mtgs Sandbach Library 7.30pm, Prog. Sec. John Clowes 0270-872435.
SRSPB	Stockport RSPB Members Group, mtgs contact Mike Armstrong 061-980-3986.
WBC	Wirral Bird Club, mtgs Kingsmead Hall Hoylake 8.00pm, Prog. Sec. Hilda Truesdale 051-632-2705.
WG	Wilmslow Guild, mtgs Wilmslow Guild HQ 7.45pm, Prog. Sec. Miss S. Ricketts 0625-583148.
WRSPB	Wirral RSPB Group, mtgs Williamson Art Gallery Birkenhead 7.30pm Prog. Sec. D. Jowitt 051-625-5534.

GREATER LIAISON BETWEEN THE SOCIETY AND THE BRITISH TRUST FOR ORNITHOLOGY



British Trust for Ornithology

During the coming season the BTO has a number of projects proposed and, as a regional representative of the the Trust for part of Cheshire, I thought that CAWOS members might like to be updated. Certainly more help is required in some parts of the County and I have offered to be the initial contact if any CAWOS members are interested in helping.

First of all there is a 'pilot' census project in which many birdwatchers will be able to contribute with the fieldwork. The aim is to test the best method of collecting data to monitor our bird populations and how changes occur. Essentially this will be by counting as one is walking a transect or by completing point counts. Full details are not available yet, but it is intended that this will be an on-going scheme in following years. Nearly all the paperwork can be done in the field and the areas to be covered are selected 1km, squares. If you feel you can help then please get in touch.

Next there are two species which have been earmarked for attention in 1992; the Corn Bunting and Nightjar. The status of both birds is in decline in our Region due to habitat changes/availability, and so all the more important to research. Obviously Nightjars are not widespread or numerous, but the Corn Bunting does have an interesting distribution locally. If you can help this summer or have information that may be useful then let me know.

In January 1993, (working ahead!) there will be a National Gull Roost Census and the main roosts have been identified. If you could spare some time in early 1993 then you can help. I don't have any details now but I will notify members in a later issue.

I look forward to hearing from CAWOS and BTO members alike if anyone can assist and I will pass on the forms required or put you in contact with the right person as soon as possible.

C M RICHARDS, 13 THE GREEN, HAN DFORTH, 0625-524527

Chaos in Spain

Brilliant, most enjoyable, fantastic, these are all words which spring to mind when I recall memories of my trip to S.W. Spain.

Why "Chaos in Spain". Well the group I travelled with are all members of the Chapel-en-le-Frith ornithological Society. Take the highlighted letters and you have CHAOS.

Anyway back to the holiday. The weather was roasting on arrival and departure; in between we had one or two showers plus one wet day.

As for the birds, well they were great. My favourite day was Friday, 6 May. The two previous days had been fairly cloudy, but when the sun shone on Friday morning the raptors took their opportunity, climbed aboard the thermals over Africa and headed north in their thousands, including Honey Buzzards and Black Kites with Common Buzzards and Griffon Vultures tagging along.

Amongst the many other birds we saw, one of my favourites were the Bee-Eaters gliding low over the ground and higher up, always calling and making a beautiful rippling sound. When the sun shone on their backs and out-stretched wings, the colours just seemed to come alive. Other favourites were Crag Martin, Red-rumped Swallow, Fan-tailed Warbler, Nightingale, Hawfinch and Golden Oriole to name but a few. The Fan-tailed Warbler was very characteristic in flight because it fanned its tail every time it called "zip" hence I got to know it better as "zip zip".

The wild flowers put on a stunning display. We noticed fields carpeted with the purple of Vipers' Bugloss. Having one or two experts in the party to identify them, the flowers provided a good contrast to the birds. The check list of two previous Spanish trips totalled 176 species. Of these I saw 106, of which 48 were "firsts". It was my first birding trip abroad, but with good company and lots of interest, I can assure you it will certainly not be my last.

FOCALPOINT

RUN BY BIRDERS FOR BIRDERS

FOCALPOINT

BINOCULARS AND TELESCOPES

LEITZ	OPTOLYTH	KOWA	BUSHNELL	MANFROTTO
ZEISS	OPTICRON	NIKON	HABICHT	SLIK
BAUSCH+LOMB	ADLERBLICK	SWIFT	MIRADOR	OPTEX

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Our recent move to Higher Whitley, has enabled us to offer our customers even better viewing opportunities. Situated within easy reach of the M56, we have ample free car parking. Visitors to our premises have been able to test out their prospective purchase whilst watching birds using our feeding station. These have included Willow Tit, Treecreeper, Tree Sparrow and Greenfinch, whilst overhead Goshawk, Buzzard and Arctic Tern have been seen on passage. So far nearly 80 species of bird have been seen - is there a better way to try before you buy?

BOOKS

With the increased space our new Unit has, we are able to offer our customers an ever increasing range of Natural History Books, with all the latest from Croom, Helm, T & AD Poyser, Academic Press, Collins, MacMillan and others

OUTDOOR CLOTHING

The following is a selection from our range of outdoor clothing:

Photographers Activity Vest	19.99
Lined Waxed Coats (incl Hood)	39.99
Activity Trousers (plenty of Pockets)	14.95
Adventure Shorts	9.95
Casual Trousers	9.95

FINE ART DEPARTMENT

We also now sell a range of limited edition artwork by Roger Tory Peterson, Lars Jonnson, Robert Bateman, Keith Shackelton and other leading artists. All work is on display at Higher Whitley together with a selection of original artwork by local artists such as Philip Snow, Gordon Trunkfield and David Quinn

FOCALPOINT

UNIT 8, MARBURY HOUSE FARM,
 BENTLEY'S FARM LANE, HIGHER WHITLEY
 Nr. WARRINGTON, CHESHIRE, WA4 4QW
 TEL: 0925 730399 FAX: 0606 892207



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STOP PRESS: CHECKLIST OF BIRDS OF BRITAIN AND IRELAND
Published March 1992. This most authoritative list of British and Irish birds
prepared by the Records Committee of the British Ornithologists Union includes
all 544 species and all sub-species accepted up to the end of 1991.
Available now from WAXWINGS, price £4.95.

Also:- MAJORCA BIRD REPORT for 1991, price £2.50

C.A.W.O.S. UPDATE

At the AGM several questions were asked from the audience about subjects relating to conservation and project matters. Such as situations at Woolston and Witton Flashes. These were answered clearly to the limited audience present but could have been covered perhaps better during the year by means of the newsletter. If you have a question why not write to us and ask it?

NEXT YEARS PROGRAMME

5th October	"Seychelles" Barry Taylor	4th January	"Penguin Promenade" Brian Dyke
2nd November	"The Complete Owl" Michael Leach	1st February	"Birds and Animals of Northern India" Mike McKavett
30th November	"Water Birds" Nick Williams	1 March	AGM & Members Slides