

# BIRD NEWS

Number 70

April 2006



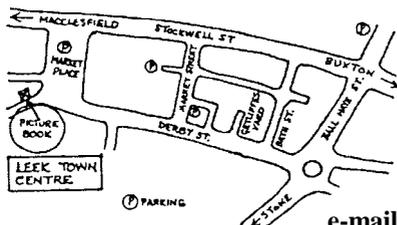
White-winged Black Tern • Awards for All Grant  
House Martin Survey Results 2005  
Golden Plover - A Change in Breeding Pattern?

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*Bird News welcomes articles, letters and comments relevant to birdwatching in Cheshire & Wirral. Please either e-mail or post (on disc) your contributions to the Editor at the address shown above.*

*The views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Society, the Council of the Society, or the Editor.*

Front cover: Pied Flycatcher by Ray Scally

Other illustrations: Tom Lowe, Bill Morton, Ron Plummer and Dave Quinn

# Guest Editorial

I did think that writing this Editorial was going to be simple, but when I began to think about it, it was nothing like. It is my last as County Recorder. Hugh Pulsford is the new recorder for Cheshire and Wirral, as from April 7<sup>th</sup> 2006. I've been in the position so long that it seems strange to be talking about someone else in the role.

In 1987 the Cheshire Ornithological Association, (which had recorded so expertly from about 1967, the same year that Mediterranean Gull and Caspian Tern occurred in the county for the first time) reformed as CAWOS. The County Recorder's job was up for grabs and I rather rashly put my hand up at a meeting in October of that year. With no other volunteers, I was hastily elected before I changed my mind.

It was to be an interesting and rewarding role. I saw it, and do still see it, as an ambassador for the Society, one that guided the county's birders towards higher standards of recording but one that also recognised the bewilderment of the general public who were enthusiastic (and brave enough) to report some bird or other. They usually got my name from the RSPB, they usually misidentified the bird, but they always went away happy knowing that someone had taken the time to listen to their story. It didn't matter whether their Lesser Grey Shrikes which hung to their nut feeders were really Long-tailed Tits, all that mattered was that CAWOS was shown to be a society that didn't dismiss out of hand.

I have tried to do the same with submitted records. That doesn't mean to say that I'd accept anything if the description wasn't up to much, rather the opposite. I know the other rarity team members have thought me too regimented at times, but my views were twofold. If a person couldn't write an adequate description, then could they identify the species in the first place? And secondly, if I felt that I couldn't accept a record, I would always be prepared to support my decision with a discussion, saying why I had come to it. If I couldn't do that, how could I adjudicate on it? No system is foolproof however and getting it right every time isn't possible, but in general, the decisions were balanced. They were usually supported by the County Rarities Team, including Steve Barber and Jane Turner, two long-standing members, but not always. The debates could get quite heated at times, but their views were always appreciated, as have been those of later members. Almost democratic at times...

I also took a keen interest in the new Society's *Bird Report*. I supported the view that there should be lots of illustrations (and eventually colour photographs) to appeal to the up-and-coming birding fraternity, including the 'dreaded' twitchers, of which I was a part at that time. I think that a lot of people saw the role of County Recorder as being incongruous with that of a twitcher, but my two main interests within birding were migration and identification, and to me, they went together. Each to their own as they say, but even to this day I feel the combination was and maybe still is, frowned upon in some circles.

It's also been rewarding to see CAWOS grow from a fledgling society into what it is now with a good membership base, a highly regarded *Bird Report* and a very readable newsletter (which incidentally used to be compiled and the type stuck onto sheets by hand!). The County Recorder may be the public face of a society like CAWOS but the real hard work is done by the support team, which I am grateful to say, has always been very professional and understanding of my faults, particularly my memory. Most of the Council members were part of the old COA, but relative newcomers such as our ex-Chairman, Sheila Blamire, more than made up for lost time and played a huge part in transforming the Society into what it is today. Without them all there would be no CAWOS and very likely, no viable County Recorder position. I have felt for some time now that my work and family commitments have competed for time with that of County Recorder and I always marvel at the enthusiasm and energy that 'real' County Recorders have; Judith Smith (Greater Manchester) is an excellent example. Her website is something that CAWOS needs to emulate.

My other interest associated with birds was of course the weather. I've always been intrigued with it and hardly ever miss the BBC summary at the end of the news. I only wish the first few seconds would be given to a brief overview of the eastern seaboard of the United States, for it is there that a lot of our weather originates. I even emailed the weather centre but only got a polite

reply. I suppose my frequent trips to the Isles of Scilly, like those of Hugh, fuelled the thirst for a better understanding of how our weather affects which birds we get. You can walk around the islands one day and be surrounded by eastern or southern European migrants, only to be watching American warblers and waders the next day. I always thought that the most interesting part of my 'Review of the Year' in the *Bird Report* was the bit on the weather each month and how it influenced the birds that turned up in the county.

My interest in listing has gradually waned over the years, from the heavy days of long distance twitching (Isles of Scilly or Shetland there and back in the same day), day listing around Cheshire *without pagers*, to day listing at Frodsham Marsh. I gradually became happier with finding my own birds and enjoyed watching the seasons through the marsh, engaging in idle chat with friends like Bill Morton over a coffee and a sandwich on the 'Bend' and spending more time abroad, particularly China. I found an inner peace that didn't need a list. I suppose it's something of an age thing.

The above is only a snapshot of my view of my time as County Recorder. There are lots more memories, probably best left to another day. I have enjoyed my time in the role, but after nearly nineteen years, feel that the change is for the best. I wish Hugh a successful period as County Recorder and know that the support team will be there for him as they always have been for me.

**Tony Broome**

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**Note: the copy date for the next issue is 3<sup>rd</sup> June - 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 Sheila Blamire know as soon as possible.

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# County Rarities

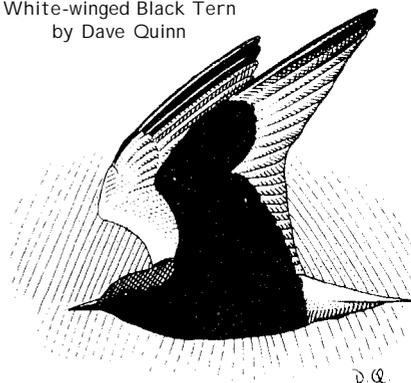
## WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN *Chlidonias leucopterus*

White-winged Black Tern is quite a rarity in the county. There have only been 15 records, the last being in 2003 when an adult was seen off Hoylake and Hilbre. It is interesting to note that there are a lot more published records in the Cheshire *Bird Reports* going back to 1976, including sightings of up to six birds on the River Mersey, which were clearly misidentified Black Terns.

Summer-plumaged birds are relatively straightforward to identify and their bold black and white plumage is striking. The silvery grey wings flash white in bright light and if you are fortunate enough to encounter flocks over flooded paddies and marshy fields when you are abroad, they always have a 'wow' factor. The upperwing lesser coverts (leading edge to the wing) are gleaming white, whilst the black underwing coverts are diagnostic and are not shown by any Black Terns, even the American race *surinamensis*. They are an eastern tern, and their distribution stretches from eastern Europe to China, being a regular but rare migrant to Britain during periods of suitable weather.

Birds out of summer plumage are more difficult. They are the smallest of the three marsh terns and closest to Black Tern, although not massively dissimilar from Whiskered Tern if the observer is unfamiliar with the group. Whiskered Terns always remind me more of *sterna* terns, particularly Common. They are the largest of the three, having broader wings and longer legs than the two

White-winged Black Tern  
by Dave Quinn



'black' terns, but a short tail like the latter two. All three species lunge-dive, their flight lacking the fluidity and grace of Commons and Arctics. Whiskered are very rare in this country and there have only been two records in Cheshire, the first at Woolston Eyes in June 1983 and the 'flock' at Woolston Eyes and Neumann's Flash in May 2005.

Perhaps even more shorter-winged and tailed than Black Terns, White-winged Blacks also have a more delicate bill, shorter than the head length and a more rounded head. It is subtly different from Black Tern which tends to have a longer bill and flatter fore-crown and a more forked tail. Black Terns also have slightly shorter legs. Transitional winter adults have a plumage that reflects that of the striking summer plumage. There are traces of black on the underwing coverts, white on the upperwing coverts and the rump and tail are white. They also lack the dark patches at the sides of the breast, shown by Black Tern and the dark streaked crown and black ear covert patches are usually separated by a white supercilium.

The lack of dark patches at the sides of the breast is also a diagnostic feature of juvenile White-winged Blacks, but they also show a lot more white on the sides of the head at the rear and the centre of the black crown extends further down towards the nape. The mantle, back, scapulars and tertials are noticeably darker than those of a juvenile Black and form a 'saddle' which contrasts markedly with a pale grey central area on the wings, unlike the more uniform appearance of juvenile Black. Both species show a dark carpal bar (the upper lesser coverts) and white leading edge, but it is far more obvious in White-winged Black Tern. The rump is also white of course and the pale grey tail usually has a white outer web to the outer tail feathers. It is a beautiful tern.

One last word of warning however. In certain lights Black Terns can look very contrasty and the full range of features should be confirmed before claiming the rarer species.

**Tony Broome**

## COUNTY RARITIES TEAM - UPDATE

The County Rarities Team has continued to look at ways of improving its services to Cheshire and Wirral birders (and those from outside the county) who submit records of county rarities requiring descriptions.

1) The team will look at ways to improve the speed of record assessment, adopting a phased approach to reviewing records on an ongoing basis, rather than waiting for a complete set of all the previous year's records to be collated before assessment. Although this will require more accurate database management and organisation, the team believes that more rapid assessment, and hence feedback to observers, is achievable. It is hoped that observers will use the electronic version of the Rarity Form available on the website (in Word format) to facilitate this process, although paper records remain fully acceptable.

2) Individuals who submit records will get feedback on the acceptance of their records, and for records which are considered "not proven" feedback will be provided on the reasons for the team's decision. In addition, the team is looking at options to use the CAWOS website and *Bird News* to more regularly publish accepted records of county and national rarities throughout the year.

3) The team has reviewed the current species list requiring descriptions, and apart from the addition of 17 ex-BBRC rarities, as described in the last addition of *Bird News*, has decided to make no further changes. Research continues on acceptance criteria for several species, including external liaison with other County Rarity Committees and Recorders.

**Hugh Pulsford, County Recorder**

### Recent BBRC decisions:

<b>Accepted:</b>	Great White Egret	Great Budworth area	7 Jan to 23 Mar 2002
	Great White Egret	Fiddler's Ferry	2 on 17 Jul 2003
	Great White Egret	Fiddler's Ferry	3 Aug 2003
	Bonaparte's Gull	Inner Marsh Farm	adult on 20 May 2004
	Whiskered Tern	Woolston Eyes	4 on 19 May 2005
	Whiskered Tern	Ashton's Flash	same 4 on 19 to 20 May 2005
	Black Kite	Moore NR / Arpley Tip	20 May 2005
<b>Not accepted:</b>	Great White Egret	Fiddler's Ferry	13 Sep 2003

# Recent Reports

*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 winter period from December to February.*

## SITE REPORTS

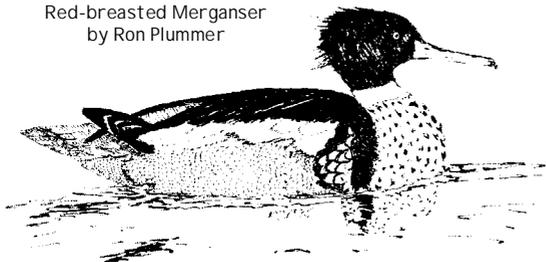
### Chester area

22 Mandarins were on the River Dee at Farndon on 31<sup>st</sup> Dec, with a pair of Goosander here on 11<sup>th</sup>. A Hen Harrier was at the Gowy Meadows on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Jan with nine Buzzards on 1<sup>st</sup> and a female Merlin at Kelsall on 1<sup>st</sup> Feb. A Mediterranean Gull was on the Dee at Chester on 15<sup>th</sup> Dec and a Ring-billed Gull at the Gowy Meadows on 18<sup>th</sup> Dec. 15 Bramblings were at Farndon on 22<sup>nd</sup> Jan, 200 Siskins were at Farndon on 31<sup>st</sup> Dec along with c80 Lesser and at least two Mealy Redpolls, a Mealy Redpoll was also noted on 14<sup>th</sup> Jan.

### Crewe & Nantwich area

A Little Egret visited several sites during Feb. Wildfowl of note included seven White-fronted Geese in the Sandbach area on 25<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> Feb and 920 Wigeon in the Sandbach area on 23<sup>rd</sup> Jan, also 14 Goldeneye were on Deer Park Mere on 11<sup>th</sup> Jan, 14 Goosander were at Baddiley Mere on 14<sup>th</sup> Jan with 12 at Rode Pool during Jan and 10 at Sandbach on 1<sup>st</sup> Jan. A Red-breasted Merganser was at Hurleston on 7<sup>th</sup> Jan. An Oystercatcher was at Hurleston on 6<sup>th</sup> Feb and

Red-breasted Merganser  
by Ron Plummer



Sandbach on 17<sup>th</sup>, with a Little Stint here on 27<sup>th</sup>. Elsewhere, 50 Snipe were at Norbury on 7<sup>th</sup> Dec, eight Woodcock at Hurleston on 19<sup>th</sup> Jan and Green Sandpiper was recorded at several sites. Mediterranean Gull was reported from Hurleston and Sandbach, a Glaucous Gull was at Hurleston on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Jan, Iceland Gull at Sandbach on 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> Feb and a possible Kumlein's Gull at Elton Hall Flash on 26<sup>th</sup> Feb which is now considered an aberrant Herring Gull.

Four Waxwings were at Nantwich on 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec, Cetti's Warbler at Audlem on 1<sup>st</sup> Jan and a Firecrest at Deer Park Mere on 7<sup>th</sup> Jan. Good numbers of Tree Sparrows were noted: 300 at Combermere Farm on 8<sup>th</sup> Jan was the largest count, whilst 220 fed on quinoa at Crabmill Flash during Jan. Six Ravens were at Combermere on 26<sup>th</sup> Dec, three Crossbills at Deer Park Mere on 21<sup>st</sup> Jan, 35 Yellowhammers on set-aside near Alsager on 24<sup>th</sup> Jan and 40 Reed Buntings at Combermere Farm on 8<sup>th</sup> Jan.

### Ellesmere Port & Neston area

20+ Little Egrets were at Neston on 2<sup>nd</sup> Jan. A female/immature Marsh Harrier was noted over Neston on 15<sup>th</sup> Feb with two Hen Harriers at Neston reed bed on 2<sup>nd</sup> Jan and 27<sup>th</sup> Feb. Two Water Pipits were at Neston Old Quay on 9<sup>th</sup> Dec with single birds on 20<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> Feb. Three Marsh Tits were at Stanney Woods on 27<sup>th</sup> Jan.

### Halton area

Four Cranes were seen in flight between Widnes and Speke on 28<sup>th</sup> Jan. A Short-eared Owl at Hale on 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec was a rare sight for this winter period here. A Rock Pipit was at Hale on 25<sup>th</sup> Feb. A Chiffchaff at Pickering's Pasture on 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec showed the characteristics of the Siberian race, elsewhere a Firecrest was at Wigg Island during Jan, along with c100 Siskins.

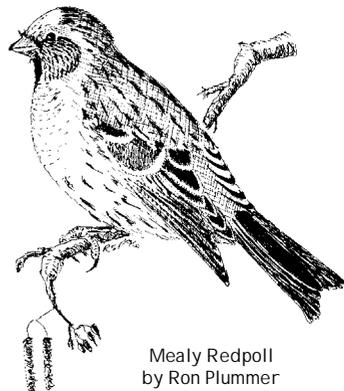
### Macclesfield area

Rostherne had 364 Cormorants on 10<sup>th</sup> Dec which was the third highest count for this species at this site; a Bittern was noted on several dates during Jan being last seen on 9<sup>th</sup> Feb. Wildfowl

included an Egyptian Goose at Poynton Pool between 21<sup>st</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Feb. Rostherne held 176 Wigeon and 786 Teal during Jan, both being the second highest counts for that month. Five Mandarin were on Tatton Mere on 20<sup>th</sup> Jan along with a redhead Smew on several dates into mid-Feb, whilst a drake visited Bosley, Ridgegate and Tegg's Nose reservoirs during early Feb. 10 Goosander were noted over Rostherne on 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb, whilst five were at Poynton Pool on 17<sup>th</sup> Jan, with others reported on the River Dane (2), Bottoms Reservoir (3), Ridgegate Reservoir (2) and Higher Disley (2). A Red Kite was over Macclesfield Golf Club on 21<sup>st</sup> Feb. An Oystercatcher was at Rostherne on 3<sup>rd</sup> Jan (second January record) with another at Poynton Pool on 21<sup>st</sup> Feb. A Redshank was an unusual visitor to Poynton Pool on 24<sup>th</sup> Feb whilst a Common Sandpiper at Rostherne on 4<sup>th</sup> Dec was the first ever December record. A Dipper on the River Dane at Congleton on 22<sup>nd</sup> Dec was a good find, otherwise c300 Pied Wagtails were noted at the roost in Macclesfield on 11<sup>th</sup> Dec, and at least 10 Brambling noted in the Knutsford area on 10<sup>th</sup> Feb.

### Vale Royal area

Two Bitterns were at Marbury CP on 31<sup>st</sup> Dec, with one over Pick Mere on 29<sup>th</sup> Jan. A first winter Whooper Swan was an unusual visitor to Marbury CP from 22<sup>nd</sup> Jan to 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb, reappearing at Marston on 9<sup>th</sup> Feb. A drake Goosander was at Haydn Pool on 13<sup>th</sup> Feb. A Hen Harrier at Marston on 25<sup>th</sup> Feb was the only raptor of note. Oystercatchers returned to Marbury CP on 28<sup>th</sup> Jan, whilst three Ringed Plover were at Neumann's Flash on 19<sup>th</sup> Feb. Barn Owls were reported from Moulton and Neumann's Flash, with a Long-eared Owl at the latter site on 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> Jan. At least 50 Siskins were at Marbury CP on 13<sup>th</sup> Feb, 80 Lesser Redpolls at Ashton's Flash on 27<sup>th</sup> Feb with a Mealy Redpoll at Neumann's Flash on 18<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> Feb. 13 Crossbills were at Delamere on 22<sup>nd</sup> Dec and a Hawfinch was at Marbury CP on 31<sup>st</sup> Dec. Good counts of 100+ Tree Sparrows and 100+ Yellowhammers came from Marston on 19<sup>th</sup> Dec.



Mealy Redpoll  
by Ron Plummer

### Warrington area

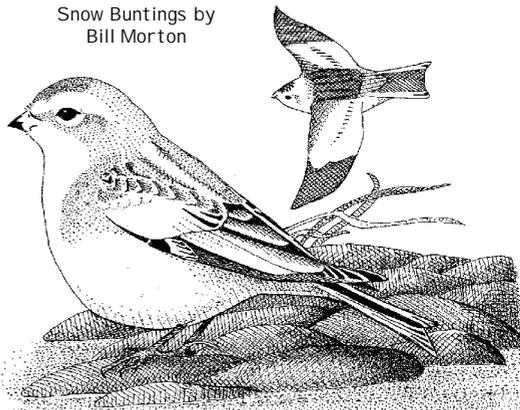
A Black-necked Grebe was at Houghton Green Pool on 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Dec with possibly the same bird at Moore NR on several dates from 1<sup>st</sup> Jan. A Slavonian Grebe was reported from Houghton Green Pool on 13<sup>th</sup> Feb. Up to three Bitterns were at Moore NR, and a Little Egret was at Fiddler's Ferry on 29<sup>th</sup> Jan and 4<sup>th</sup> Feb. A drake Goosander visited Woolston during Dec. A Goshawk was a regular visitor to Woolston with another at Moore NR on 25<sup>th</sup> Feb, a pair of Merlin were at Fiddler's Ferry during Jan. The first returning Oystercatcher was at Fiddler's Ferry on 29<sup>th</sup> Jan, this site also had up to 14 Jack Snipe during Dec along with Black-tailed Godwit. A Common Sandpiper was noted on the Mersey at Gatewarth on 25<sup>th</sup> Jan. One or two Mediterranean Gulls were noted at Gatewarth and Moore NR, and single Iceland Gulls were at Fiddler's Ferry on 7<sup>th</sup> Dec, Gatewarth on 27<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> Jan, Moore NR on 4<sup>th</sup> Feb. A Kumlein's Gull was reported at Arpley Tip on 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Feb. 120 Stock Doves roosted at Fiddler's Ferry during Jan, a Barn Owl was here on 26<sup>th</sup> Jan with a Short-eared Owl at Moore on 19<sup>th</sup> Jan. Wintering Blackcaps were noted at Risley Moss and Woolston, where up to four Chiffchaffs were noted. 100 Siskins were at Fiddler's Ferry during Jan, with two Twite here on 17<sup>th</sup> Dec and two Mealy Redpolls at Moore NR on 16<sup>th</sup> Feb with another at Fiddler's Ferry.

### Wirral area

Three Red-throated Divers were off Hilbre on 17<sup>th</sup> Feb with one on West Kirby Marine Lake between 20<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Dec, a single Great Northern Diver was off Hilbre on 28<sup>th</sup> Jan. A Slavonian Grebe was at New Brighton on 8<sup>th</sup> Dec and two Shags were seen on West Kirby ML on 18<sup>th</sup>. 100 Bewick's Swans were on Burton marsh on 11<sup>th</sup> Jan and 30 Whooper Swans were at Shotwick on 19<sup>th</sup> Feb, with up to 10 in the Burton area on several dates. The Brent Goose flock at Hilbre peaked at 100 on 29<sup>th</sup> Jan. The Green-winged Teal was at Inner Marsh Farm to at least 13<sup>th</sup> Feb, three Mandarins were at Raby Mere on 20<sup>th</sup> Jan with four Eiders at Leasowe on 8<sup>th</sup> Feb and Smew at Inner Marsh Farm on 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb. Raptors included a first winter male Marsh Harrier at Inner

Marsh Farm on 12<sup>th</sup> Feb, up to four Hen Harriers at Parkgate, and a female Goshawk at West Kirby on 10<sup>th</sup> Feb. A Rough-legged Buzzard was reported from Burton Marsh on 2<sup>nd</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Feb and an exceptionally early Osprey was reported north over Seacombe on 9<sup>th</sup> Feb. Four Cranes paid a brief visit to Shotwick on 28<sup>th</sup> Jan. Waders included 730 Grey Plover at West Kirby on 1<sup>st</sup> Dec, 22,400 Knot at Leasowe on 3<sup>rd</sup> Feb, 21,000 Dunlin at Hoylake on 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec, 16 Purple Sandpipers at Wallasey on 30<sup>th</sup> Dec, an over-wintering Whimbrel at Inner Marsh Farm on 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb and 120 Turnstones at West Kirby ML on 14<sup>th</sup> Feb. Mediterranean Gulls were at Inner Marsh Farm on 25<sup>th</sup> Jan and Wallasey on 5<sup>th</sup> Feb with a second-winter Ring-billed Gull at Leasowe on 14<sup>th</sup> Jan. Seven Short-eared Owls were at Heswall on 18<sup>th</sup> Feb, two Richard's Pipits were still at West Kirby up to 12<sup>th</sup> Dec with one remaining until 12<sup>th</sup> Feb, four Rock Pipits were at Hilbre on 11<sup>th</sup> Dec. A Mistle Thrush was noted on eggs at Frankby on 20<sup>th</sup> Dec, five Blackcaps were at Heswall on 28<sup>th</sup> Dec, with a Chiffchaff singing at Thurstaston on 25<sup>th</sup> Feb. 17 Bramblings were at Gilroy Nature Park on 12<sup>th</sup> Feb, five Twite at West Kirby on 26<sup>th</sup> Jan, 10 Crossbills at Frankby Cemetery on 12<sup>th</sup> Dec, at least two Lapland Buntings at Burton marsh on 20<sup>th</sup> Jan, and five Snow Buntings at West Kirby on 14<sup>th</sup> Dec.

Snow Buntings by  
Bill Morton



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## SAND MARTINS

(*Riparia riparia*)

Forgetting that the martins nested there,  
We wander up a local valley – past the weir,  
The busy road bridge, and the cattle fields  
Where slick spring pasture already yields  
Aside to comb a parting for the path.  
The river never repeats itself  
Yet is the constancy beside us  
As we tire and find a pausing place  
Before the turn for home.

It's here,

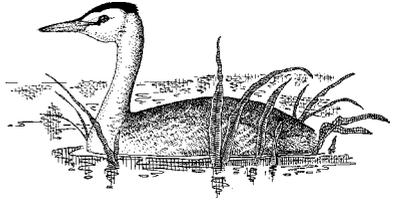
Above the low-browed river cliffs just more  
Than our head-height, we see the wheeling birds,  
Hear gravel voices and Saharan words  
From these survivors of vast journeying.  
I count to thirty burrows, with burrowing  
Still going on where birds have made first dints  
In sand and stones. They swerve away – sky-prints  
Of swift-winged butterflies – then back  
To their own cuts of cliff, with the one-track  
Minds of returning brave riparians.

**Peter Walton**

# 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, 102 Crewe Road, Nantwich, Cheshire, CW5 6JD**

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".

## **HOUSE MARTIN SURVEY**

**Please take part in this year's survey and send  
your records direct to Brian Martin**

**(i.e. in addition to any Atlas or annual records submitted)  
by the end of October 2006 if possible.**

**Any information is welcome, e.g. numbers, recorded dates,  
breeding success (or not!), anecdotes, etc.**

**Encourage your friends and neighbours as well!**

**Brian Martin, 45 Albert Road, Grappenhall, Warrington, WA4 2PF  
Tel: 01925 264251 E-mail: brianmartin1940@hotmail.com**

# Projects and Surveys

## HOUSE MARTIN SURVEY 2005

A total of 21 people returned completed survey forms (about average for recent years), with data submitted for a total of 66 sites and 275 occupied nests. Interestingly, a few observers surveyed all the houses either in the street in which they lived or one nearby, and a surprisingly large number of nests were found.

### Arrival and Departure

The first House Martins were reported on 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> April, but the main arrival appears to have been between 26<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> April. As in previous years, however, birds arrived late at some sites (late May/early June) and left early in late July/early August after raising only one brood. Perhaps these were birds that had tried to breed elsewhere and failed.

Most birds departed, as usual, in September, but one was at a Barnton site on 8<sup>th</sup> October and young were still being fed in a nest at Whitley Reed on 9<sup>th</sup> October.

### Major Sites

Unfortunately, I was unable once again to gain access to Styal Prison, while Pete Hall's changed circumstances meant that the population at Toft Hall was not surveyed in 2005. There was a major fall in numbers at Holcroft Hall, Culcheth, where Angela Love reported only three occupied nests (26 in 2004) and the reasons for this are unclear. The largest single population reported was the 28 nests at Hordern Farm, Macclesfield (20 nests in 2004), 25 nests at Park Moss Farm, Arley and 18 breeding pairs found by J.D. Atkinson at the Horseshoe Inn, Newbold by Astbury.

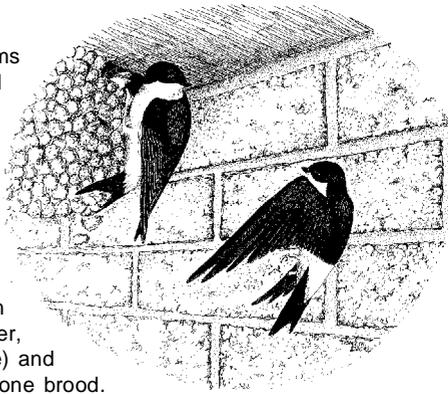
After a gap of several years I surveyed the whole of the parish of Antrobus, where at 27 sites I found a total of 94 occupied nests. This represents a significant decline from the 141-144 pairs in 2000, 121 in 2001 and 118-121 in 2002, when I last carried out fieldwork there. Most of the previously visited sites were occupied, but with reduced numbers, and in a few cases half the 2002 levels.

As mentioned earlier, several observers spent time covering particular streets, and by careful examination of both the front and rear of properties found a surprisingly large number of nests. Douglas Buchanan, for example, found 24 on 19 properties in Beamish Close, Appleton, Warrington, Steve Turner 14 on nine houses in Blackcroft Avenue, Barnton, and Andrew Duncalf 20 on an unknown number of houses in Monarch Drive, Northwich. This suggests that perhaps many breeding pairs are overlooked, particularly at the rear of buildings.

### Breeding Success

2005 seems to have been one of mixed fortunes for House Martins, with some observers, like Angela Love at Holcroft Hall, reporting a disastrous breeding season. So did David Hinkes at Rainow, where three nests were repaired but not occupied. Endless disputes with House Sparrows were thought responsible for this, as was the case with Beryl Colley-Davies' population at Norley, where House Sparrows have caused problems for her House Martins for several years now. Clearly, House Sparrows are a problem at a number of sites, occupying nests before the martins return.

M.F. Griffiths provided considerable information on the nests on his house at Brereton Green, Sandbach, where his birds did not return until 5<sup>th</sup> June and only showed interest in breeding towards the end of that month. Two of the four nests were not occupied until August so only single broods were raised, as was the case in the other two nests. An interesting return was received from Jack Canovan for the B.A.E. Systems site at Woodford. On the factory buildings



there four nests were successful, but from the number of unoccupied nests (19) many more must have bred in the past. A.Johnson's colony at Helsby had an excellent breeding season in 2004 (eight pairs), but following the installation of the dreaded uPVC soffits in autumn 2004, only one nest was built and occupied and just one brood was raised before the birds departed on 12<sup>th</sup> August. In contrast, other observers reported successful breeding seasons. At Winsford Harry Andrews had two breeding pairs which double brooded and the 20 pairs in Andrew Duncalf's street in Northwich also all double brooded. The 14 pairs which bred on Hillcrest Farm, Goostrey were reported by the owners, Naomi and Eric Adams, to have had very successful first broods but few second. In 2004 P.Matthews found an interesting population on a farm, Vale Royal, high above Macclesfield. At the time it was empty, but undergoing extensive building work. Fears that this site would be lost have not been realised, for the new occupants appear, so far, to be sympathetic and the population increased from 10 to 13 pairs.

## Artificial Nests

Only one observer, Steve Turner, reported an artificial box being used. Those on Sheila Blamire's house were again unoccupied, and no information was received from Revd Hugh Linn on the success or otherwise of his boxes.

## Conclusion

2005 seems to have been a year of mixed fortunes for House Martins, with some gains and some losses. The population in my long-term study area of Antrobus has steadily declined since I began fieldwork there in 2000, and others report similar losses over the years. On the other hand there are sites where birds continue to thrive and numbers either change little or increase. The reasons for these differences are not clear. We know next to nothing about where our House Martins winter and therefore what threats they may be experiencing. Certainly, in the spring of 2005 many migrants faced bad weather in southern Europe, which may account for losses of some populations and late arrivals.

There was little mention this year of House Martins being discouraged from nesting although this does continue to occur, as I found at one important colony in Antrobus. The change to uPVC soffits and gutters does pose a long-term threat as Graham Palmer found at Macclesfield, where the two occupied nests in his street were on the remaining houses with wooden eaves!

**Brian Martin, 45 Albert Road, Grappenhall, Warrington, WA4 2PF. Tel: 01925 264251  
E-mail: brianmartin1940@hotmail.com**

Contributors: N.&E.Adams (Goostrey), H.Andrews (Winsford), J.D.Atkinson (Macclesfield), P.Brighton (Croft), D.Buchanan (Warrington), J.Canovan (Cheadle Hulme), B.Colley-Davies (Norley), A.Duncalf (Northwich), R.Fletcher (Warburton), M.F.Griffiths (Brereton Green, Sandbach), M.Hood (Mobberley), D.Hinkes (Rainow), A.Johnson (Helsby), A.Love (Culcheth), B.Martin (Antrobus), P.Matthews (Macclesfield), G.Palmer (Macclesfield), A.Pym (Swettenham), H.Sarjeant (Parkgate), S.J.Turner (Barnton). Information was also submitted for an interesting and productive site just into Shropshire.

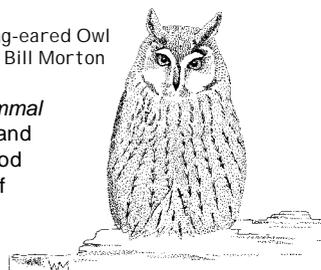
**NB** This report is based on information supplied directly to Brian Martin, and does not include House Martin records sent in as part of the Atlas survey, or via the 'usual' records submission route, due to the delay in either receiving and/or processing these records in time for this report to be analysed and written. Any suggestions to extend or improve this survey would be appreciated. Ed.

## OWL PELLETS WANTED

Currently, work is being undertaken on the development of a *Mammal Atlas* for the Cheshire region. For small mammals (mice, voles and shrews) it is very difficult to obtain sufficient data to give a good reflection of their distribution, as it takes an enormous amount of mammal trapping survey work and would not be complete within the next 10 years. As a consequence, other methods of sourcing small mammal records have had to be explored.

One of these methods is to use owl pellets (from Barn, Tawny and other owls) to identify prey items from the owl's hunting territory. As a consequence we are asking anyone who has access to owl pellets to send them, along with the following data: owl species (if known), date pellets

Long-eared Owl  
by Bill Morton



found, place pellets found (with grid ref if possible), and the recorder's name and contact details, to:

**Mr Tony Parker, Liverpool Museum, Zoology Section, William Brown Street, Liverpool, Merseyside, L3 8EN Tel: 0151 478 4363 E-mail: Tony.Parker@liverpoolmuseums.org.uk**

Pellets, if being posted, should preferably be placed in a plastic bag and sealed and then put into a padded envelope. A plastic bag is just as useful if handing the pellets in at the reception counter at the Museum. Please note - the data (see above) should always accompany the pellets and should preferably be inside the bag with the pellets.

## COLOUR-RINGED TWITE – CAN YOU HELP?

Following recent reports of colour-ringed Twite on BirdGuides, this is a plea to all birders to report all colour-ringed birds you see, even if it is one you have seen in the past, or you think someone else is sure to report it - chances are, no-one will!

All colour-ringed Twite have two or three colour rings, with two on the left leg and a metal ring on the right. In some cases, birds may also have a colour ring above or below the metal ring on the right leg. 12 different colours have been used, and five types of split-colour rings (two colours on one ring). Note: colours may be subtly different under different light conditions. Re-sightings of left leg colour combinations are the most important.

Sightings of these birds have uncovered some great movements, such as a breeding female seen in Snowdon, ringed as a juvenile in the south Pennines, establishing the first connection between these two populations. Observations of winter site-fidelity are also extremely useful, hence the need to report birds even if they've been seen before at the same site. For all colour-ringed birds, it's important to note the colour and position of the rings (including the metal ring), which legs they are on, and the colour of any lettering (on larger rings).

For further information on colour-ringed Twite, contact **Andre Raine (mobile: 07817 767997, home: 01284 704625) or Dave Sowter (mobile: 07957 265797, home: 01772 749220).**

To report any colour-ringed birds in the UK, just go to [www.ring.ac](http://www.ring.ac) and follow the links to our online reporting form (you can also report metal ring numbers). Your report, which will be very gratefully received, will be sent to the ringer or species co-ordinator and if the bird can be traced and identified you'll be sent its history.

For queries or more information on any colour-ringed birds in the UK contact **Kate Risely, at the BTO.**

## URBAN MAMMAL SURVEY

Mammals are one of the most elusive and difficult groups of animals to record. Often all we find are the tracks and signs (such as feeding remains and latrines) to give any clue that they are around. Since much of the UK's countryside is being developed, the mammals are losing their habitats, and are coming closer to towns and cities. Foxes are often seen roaming the streets of our towns, sometimes in broad daylight, and then there is the grey squirrel, happily at home in many people's gardens! This gives us an opportunity to find out how well our mammals are doing, in some cases without even leaving the comfort of our own homes.

The Urban Mammal Survey is part of a project, working in partnership with the county mammal groups and rECOrd (the Local Biological Records Office), to record the mammals of Cheshire, with a view to producing a mammal atlas of Cheshire in 2007. We are particularly keen to find out the numbers and spread of some of our best known mammals - grey squirrel, hedgehog, red fox, badger, mole (or molehills) and rabbit. According to our current database there are large areas of both rural and urban environments in Cheshire and Greater Manchester that have no rabbits and no grey squirrels! You may think they are everywhere, or you may never have noticed them at all, but until we begin to count them we cannot really be sure.

**Information required:** Name, address (including postcode) and telephone number; state which species you have seen and where you saw them (please give OS grid ref if you know it, or a postcode); date spotted and how many you saw.

Please post or e-mail your mammal sightings to:

**Tony Parker, 41 The Park, Penketh, Warrington, WA5 2SG. [tony.parker01@btinternet.com](mailto:tony.parker01@btinternet.com)**

## MONITORING THE DISTRIBUTION OF POLECATS

2006 is the final year of a three-year national survey to determine the present distribution of polecat, which is rapidly recolonising adjacent parts of England from its last stronghold in Wales. The survey is organized by Dr Johnny Birks of the Vincent Wildlife Trust at Ledbury, and a current 10km squares distribution map can be seen in their *January 2006 Newsletter* on the Trust's website ([www.vwt.org.uk](http://www.vwt.org.uk)), which shows that polecat has now been recorded over much of Cheshire. Over 90% of reports are of roadkills, and I myself have found three corpses within the last two years, one near Youlgreave in Derbyshire in March 2004, one in December 2005 on the A34 near the King's Arms garage in Wilmslow, and one on the A536 at Gawsworth on 1 February 2006. When I reported the latter, Johnny Birks told me that he also had another record from nearby North Rode Wood in April 2005. Records for Cheshire are also kept by rECOrd at Chester Zoo ([manager@rECOrd-LRC.co.uk](mailto:manager@rECOrd-LRC.co.uk)), who have told me that there is a good breeding population out on Frodsham Marsh, where a few have been trapped, and there have been multiple roadkills on the M56 which runs alongside the site.

As birders are always about in the countryside, they are in a good position to contribute further records to add to our knowledge of the present distribution of this elusive animal. Any sightings of either live animals or roadkills should be reported to:

**Johnny Birks, The Vincent Wildlife Trust, 3&4 Bronsil Courtyard, Eastnor, Ledbury, Herefordshire, HR8 1EP. Tel: 01531 636441 E-mail: [johnnybirks@vwt.org.uk](mailto:johnnybirks@vwt.org.uk)** and preferably supported either by sending the corpse (!) or by good photographs (details on the vwt website), but even records unsupported by such evidence are useful.

The main confusion 'species' is feral ferret, but in ferrets:

- (1) dark fur on the face does not reach right down to the nose
- (2) pale cheek patches and forehead often very extensive and do not contrast much with the dark 'bandit' mask
- (3) pale throat patch longer than 5cm
- (4) one or more pale paws
- (5) some scattered white guard hairs over the body, particularly towards the tail.

If any animal shows any of these five characteristics, it is a sign of ferret parentage, and the animal is either a ferret or a hybrid. To be most use, therefore, any photographs should try to show these features. However, even records of feral ferrets or hybrids are useful to the survey, and should be reported, as above.

**David Atkinson**

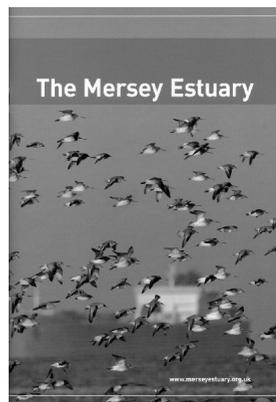
### THE MERSEY ESTUARY – 2nd EDITION

This little book is now available! It is again lavishly illustrated with new photographs, an informative map, recent data about bird numbers and updated information throughout on its 36 pages. Dealing with aspects of the estuary's history, its importance for birds and other wildlife, its potential for recreation and its future, it guides the reader through the various areas: the upper and inner estuary, the narrows, the nature reserves and other sites of interest.

The MCEG is most grateful to CAWOS (one of its member organisations) who have co-sponsored this book. CAWOS was represented by David Cogger at the book launch held on 15 March, at Pickering's Pasture.

Further details about the Mersey estuary and the MCEG can be found on [www.merseyestuary.org.uk](http://www.merseyestuary.org.uk)

Books can be ordered from **MCEG c/o 15 Carlow Close, Hale nr Liverpool, L24 5RS** (£3.00 + 50p p&p, cheques payable to 'Mersey Estuary Conservation Group').



# Cheshire and Wirral Atlas

## Winter Records

Thanks to all those who have submitted their records for the 2005-06 winter season. By the end of March we had received nearly 250 sets of records, which is a great help in enabling us to get the material quickly into the database for analysis. If you have not already submitted your records please do so as soon as possible.

Paper records should be sent to your Area Coordinator. Electronic records should be sent to your Area Coordinator and, for security purposes, to [atlassubmissions@cawos.org](mailto:atlassubmissions@cawos.org).

## 2006 Breeding Season

By the time you read this, the third and final breeding season will be well under way and we expect that by its end every tetrad in Cheshire and Wirral will have been covered in at least one year. If for any reason you are unable to complete your fieldwork please contact your Area Coordinator, David Cogger or Steve Barber **as soon as possible** so that alternative arrangements can be made.

## Supplementary records

While fieldworkers are concentrating on their 'main' tetrad – i.e. the one(s) which have been allocated to them, do not forget, as you travel about the county, the value of 'supplementary' records. These are records of species that you might see outside your main tetrad. They can be valuable; even the most experienced observers can miss species and it can be quite difficult to prove that some common species (e.g. Dunnock, Woodpigeon) have actually bred.

All records are welcome: **if you are a fieldworker** you can download a supplementary form, or request one from David Cogger, and fill in the details. You do not need a separate form for each tetrad in which you find birds.

**If you have not taken part in the Atlas project** before now is your chance to do so. Keep a note of anything you see. We need to know:

- obviously the species
- what it was doing which enabled you to prove breeding (e.g. carrying food to the nest or removing the faecal sac away from it, feeding or guarding recently fledged young, being aware of an occupied nest in use, etc)
- the type of habitat in which you saw the bird (e.g. broadleaved woodland, suburban garden, farmland with hedge above 2m, small pond, stream, etc)
- where it was. A grid reference or a postcode should enable us to locate it – the name of the nearest town, village or prominent feature also helps.

At the end of the breeding season either email your returns to [atlassubmissions@cawos.org](mailto:atlassubmissions@cawos.org) or send them to David Cogger at 113 Nantwich Road, Middlewich, CW10 9HD.

## Sponsorship

If you are interested in sponsoring a species (cost £25 per species) there are still 28 left for sponsorship. Sponsors will have their names printed at the foot of the species' description and of course will have the satisfaction of supporting the work of the Atlas.

Fulmar, Little Egret, Bewick's Swan, Greylag and Barnacle Geese, Gadwall, Common Scoter, Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, Coot, Ringed Plover, Grey Plover, Knot, Little Stint, Bar-tailed Godwit, Spotted Redshank, Greenshank, Green Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, Little, Common, Herring, Iceland and Great Black-backed Gull, Kittiwake, Common Tern, Razorbill, Rook.

In some cases two or three people have joined together to sponsor a species. It would be sensible to phone or e-mail me for up-to-date availability. Cheques should be made payable to CAWOS and will be acknowledged. *The Lancashire and North Merseyside Breeding Atlas* was able to obtain sponsorship for every species – surely Cheshire and Wirral can do as well.

**David Cogger, 113 Nantwich Road, Middlewich, Cheshire, CW10 9HD**  
**Tel: 01606 832517 E-mail: [memsec@cawos.org](mailto:memsec@cawos.org)**

# Notes & Letters

*Bird News* is always keen to hear from CAWOS members. Please send us any notes of unusual avian behaviour or amusing anecdotes that you think your fellow birders will be interested in. Also, we are always interested in your views on any of our articles or on the newsletter itself. Ed.

## LESSER REDPOLL FEEDING ON NIGER SEED IN A CHESHIRE GARDEN

On 18<sup>th</sup> February 2006 I mist-netted a single male Lesser Redpoll *Carduelis cabaret* and assumed that this was a bird associating with a small flock of European Siskin *Carduelis spinus* which have been attracted to my feeders this winter. The Siskins have been regular visitors in small numbers, feeding on both the niger and sunflower seeds, but this was the first Redpoll that I have ever seen or heard in the garden after over three years of fairly consistent feeding and catching here.

On 26<sup>th</sup> February, I was lucky enough to catch seven Redpolls at once and two further birds, later in the day.

Naturally, I have since been watching out for them to monitor their habits. The seed preferred is niger and I have seen four birds together, so far, on one feeder. They appear to approach the feeder in a less direct way than European Goldfinches *Carduelis carduelis* or Siskins, often landing on the ground first. There are both adult and first year birds and the flock congregates in the tops of mature trees in neighbouring gardens.

**Clive Richards, South Manchester Ringing Group, 88 Manchester Road, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 2JY**

## GARDEN UPDATE

Referring to Bob Groom's article on dominance ('King of the Garden') in *Bird News No. 69*, January 2006, the following happened on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2005 in my garden. A Coal Tit was feeding on a peanut bar, when it was chased off by a Starling. The Starling was chased off by a Great Spotted Woodpecker. The Great Spotted Woodpecker was chased off by a Magpie. A squirrel chased off the Magpie. The squirrel decided to eat the sunflower hearts instead!

Over the past few weeks I have been entertained by a Dunnock. A pair comes to a bird table not far from the kitchen window. The male (presumably) sees his reflection in the window and flies across, stands on the sill and proceeds to peck at the glass. He frantically flicks his wings, or sometimes just one wing and occasionally bursts into song, as he flies up and down the pane of glass pecking at his reflection in a manic way. Once the female finishes eating he accompanies her back to the nearest tree.

**Hazel J Raw**

Congratulations to Hazel for being amongst the winners in the *Birdwatching* Gardman prize draw last February. Ed.

## FRODSHAM ON A WINTER'S DAY

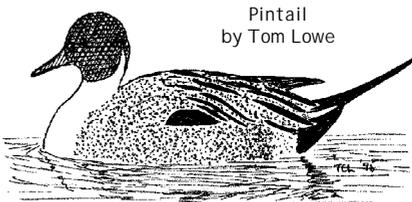
On 3 January 2006 after the Christmas break, which I spent in Connecticut, USA, I was keen to visit one of my favourite patches – Frodsham. This coincided with my wife's eagerness to see me out of the house to enable her free time to spend on her own. "Take advantage of the situation", I said to myself, which I did post-haste. So I made a flask of coffee and sandwiches and within twenty minutes I was driving over the M56 motorway on the bridge towards the Frodsham tanks and Weaver Bend. I always start my day list once over the bridge and made my way to the log, stopping and listening out for the commoner species that can be seen along the track towards the log. A **Grey Wagtail** flew over calling. I stopped at the log to determine recent sightings but there was little information (as usual of late.....!) apart from a note left behind by a birder who, after making a recent visit, remarked how much Frodsham had changed implying that he found it most disappointing compared with his visits some years previously. I particularly noted that he didn't record any sightings in the log.

The weather was calm and very misty with visibility down to a couple of hundred yards so I wasn't particularly optimistic about the day. However, I was somewhat encouraged by the forecast of it clearing by mid-morning.

I slowly drove to the Weaver Bend parking area and was gratified by sightings of a few passerines, which I noted in my day book. I parked and, after changing to 'wellies' walked the muddy track to the Weaver Bend noting **Long-tailed Tit**, **Song Thrush** and a female **Bullfinch**. It was still very misty as I approached the Weaver when I saw a narrow boat navigating upstream from the confluence with the Ship Canal. This was not a good start...!!, but birds started to settle once it disappeared into the mist and I continued writing down all records. Amongst other birds the Bend revealed **8 Common Snipe**, **1 Jack Snipe**, **Teal**, **Mallard**, **10 Goldeneye**, **6 Little Grebe**, **3 Skylark**, **2 Reed Bunting**, **c25 Stock Dove** with a flock of **c130 Linnets** in the hedgerows beyond the fields south of the Weaver embankment. On my previous visit I had seen a **Kingfisher** seeking food along the embankment dyke. No such luck today!

I spent some one-and-a half hours on the Bend and then retraced my walk back to the car to scope the marsh to No 5 tank. It was here that I witnessed the January spectacle of thousands of **Lapwing** and **Golden Plover** densely interspersed with **Dunlin**, **Curlew**, the odd **Ruff** and **1 Black-tailed Godwit**. I failed to find **Little Stint** which was a minor disappointment. After walking south alongside No 5 for some distance I turned back and walked to Marsh Farm. Not a lot here apart from the usual common species on Frodsham score and the River Mersey including the **2 Stonechats** which have been here all winter.

Collecting my car en route I stopped at the stables where I located the only **4 Redwing** of the day with other passerines. I walked the track between No 6 & 5 tanks and saw even more **Lapwing**, **Golden Plover** and **Dunlin** on No 5 with ever increasing numbers of the latter settling on No 6 on a rising tide. A **Willow Tit** was calling and eventually revealed itself from the shrubs on the embankment to No 6 when I was joined by another birder for the afternoon. In all we saw **c4800 Dunlin**, **c4000 Golden Plover**, **30 Ringed Plover**, **c3000 Lapwing**, **c40 Tufted Duck**, **20 Mallard**, **126 Wigeon**, **34 Pintail**, **29 Pochard**, **1 Ruddy Duck** and **c400 Teal** with a sprinkling of **Shelduck** and **Cormorant**. In amongst the large flock of **Dunlin** arrived **28 Grey Plover** and **Redshank** numbers increased to c60 on the far side of No 6. Birds of prey were plentiful with **4 Kestrel**, **3 Common Buzzard**, **1 Peregrine** on No 6, together with a **Sparrowhawk** hunting low and a **Merlin** perched on a post watching the shorebirds on No 5, deciding where to go next. When it did there was a spectacle of thousands of birds flying high in a huge mass hoping for survival. A single **Raven** remained watchful from its fence post.



Pintail  
by Tom Lowe

We then took our time in arriving at the top NW corner of No 6 when we saw a sizeable flock of **Goldfinch**, **Linnets** and **Greenfinch** totalling c120 in number. Amongst them were **4 Reed Bunting** in No 4 Tank with a further **2 Stonechat** behind us in No 6. Suddenly they were joined by **4 Redpoll sp** which flew immediately into a shrub directly in front of us. They didn't stay long but sufficient for us to take a deep breath as one was much whiter and bigger than the other three. Its white rump 'shouted' at us as did the overall frosty appearance and white wing bars. We ventured to track it down even further and our diligence paid off when it was relocated with the other **Redpoll** at the top of a large shrub. I scoped all birds to make direct comparisons and concluded that there were **3 Lesser Redpoll** (much browner overall with buff wing bars) and a **Mealy Redpoll** being larger and plumper, distinctively whiter overall, with two white wing bars particularly obvious on the greater wing coverts. The distinct white rump was considerable in size with very neat and faint striations from the base of the pale buff uppertail coverts to the striated upper back on a frosty white/greyish/light buff 'base coat'. The flanks were broadly striated rather than with thin single striations. Unfortunately we didn't see the undertail coverts. The distinctive red forehead was accentuated by the much whiter appearance of the bird's head as was the nice reddish pink upper breast.

As the day drew to a close with fading light I decided to make my way back towards home. At this moment I had noted 68 species for the day which I thought was a pretty good effort. In order to achieve 70 (and why not.....??) I decided to include **Collared Dove** and **House Sparrow** which I saw on the way back over the motorway bridge in the mobile home park and cottage gardens. They seldom venture over the motorway.

Some say that Frodsham has lost its appeal, there aren't the rarities anymore; the new dredgings placed in the settlement tanks give the impression of loss of habitat; it's hard going, particularly in the winter. I don't think so, especially after this visit and my day list will certainly be presented as a supplementary winter record for the forthcoming CAWOS Cheshire and Wirral Bird Atlas.

The sightings for the day are as follows:

Little Grebe	6	Lesser Black-backed Gull	125
Cormorant	4	Black-headed Gull	50
Grey Heron	4	Stock Dove	25
Canada Goose	30	Woodpigeon	120
Shelduck	5	Collared Dove	2
Teal	400	Skylark	3
Mallard	20	Pied Wagtail	2
Wigeon	126	Grey Wagtail	1
Pintail	34	Meadow Pipit	12
Pochard	29	Wren	3
Tufted Duck	40	Dunnock	2
Goldeneye	10	Blackbird	10
Ruddy Duck	1	Redwing	4
Sparrowhawk	2	Song Thrush	3
Buzzard	3	Robin	5
Kestrel	4	Stonechat	5
Merlin	1	Long-tailed Tit	6
Peregrine	1	Willow Tit	1
Pheasant	10	Great Tit	2
Moorhen	2	Blue Tit	6
Coot	70	Magpie	3
Lapwing	3000	Jackdaw	1
Golden Plover	4000	Rook	3
Grey Plover	28	Carrion Crow	20
Ringed Plover	30	Raven	1
Jack Snipe	1	Starling	60
Common Snipe	8	House Sparrow	4
Black-tailed Godwit	1	Chaffinch	30
Curlew	200	Greenfinch	35
Redshank	60	Mealy (Common) Redpoll	1
Dunlin	4800	Lesser Redpoll	3
Ruff	1	Goldfinch	120
Common Gull	50	Linnet	150
Great Black-backed Gull	10	Bullfinch (female)	1
Herring Gull	30	Reed Bunting	6

Every time I 'bird' Frodsham, there is a surprise of some kind. The omissions from this day include Fieldfare, Mistle Thrush and Goldcrest plus one or two others. It doesn't have to be a rarity. Next time I visit, there might be a Short-eared Owl or Hen Harrier, or an early/wintering Chiffchaff; a rarity would be nice but does it matter after today's spectacle!

**Peter Twist**

## **A NOTE FROM THE PAST**

*This e-mail was recently sent to [info@cauos.org](mailto:info@cauos.org) and we thought it may be of interest to members:*

I don't know if the following will be of any historic interest, as you will have no way of confirming them, but... in case they are of interest.

I used to live at Margaret's Lane (though we used to call it Rake Lane, off Heath Lane), Little Sutton, Cheshire, CH66 4PG (I think that is the right postcode) and I found a dead Wryneck once on the way to school (early 70s?). It seemed in perfect condition, and I guessed it might have flown into the power cables overhead during the night. I identified it on returning home from a bird book. I can't remember what I did with the body though!

In the very hot summer of 1975 or 1976 we had a Nightjar too; the calls from it seemed near to one of the two isolated oak trees in the hay field in front of our house. Underneath this particular tree was always very weedy, particularly with docks I recall. The song was very distinctive and unmistakable.

At about the same time we also had what we thought were one, possibly two Nightingales. I can only recall hearing them the one year, but my older brother thinks they visited for several years in the late 70s. I cannot now remember if the song was definitely a Nightingale's, but at the time it seemed very loud, clear and melodious. We certainly had very overgrown hawthorn hedges in the fields and lane around us then, some backing on to ditches with extra bramble cover. There were also one or two pits surrounded by scrub, and very small scrubby/woody corners. The people who have moved in since seem to have tidied everything up - hedges replaced by ranch style fencing.

**Tom Sanders**

## **GOLDEN PLOVER – A CHANGE IN BREEDING PATTERN?**

In *CAWOS Bird News* No.55 (July 2002), I suggested that Golden Plovers *Pluvialis apricaria* were returning to their breeding grounds in the east Cheshire hills earlier than they had done in the (recorded) past. Steve Barber, in *Bird News* No.56 (October 2002), and Irene Blagden in *Bird News* No.58 (April 2003), subsequently added interesting information to that given in my article. The passage of further time has shown that, whatever the position prior to 2002, the pattern of early return is now well established.

On 13<sup>th</sup> February 2003, a raw, cold day with hoar frost at Shining Tor, there was a pair on Clough Moor, below the Cat & Fiddle, and a single bird in Danebower.

Danebower Hollow produced two pairs on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2004.

In thick mist, on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2005 there were at least 18 birds standing or lying in Danebower. When I returned, after walking to Shining Tor, they had gone, but a flock of about 30 burst out of the mist, flying north to south, and disappeared back into it. Not long afterwards, a similar, and probably the same, flock was on Tagsclough Hill and a flock of 38, flying quite high from east to west, flew over Birchenough and Tagsclough Hills.

A search of Danebower, the area from Cat & Fiddle to Shining Tor, Birchenough and Tagsclough Hills on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2006 failed to produce a single plover, but a flock of nine flew over Cut-thorn, Birchenough and Tagsclough Hills on 10<sup>th</sup> February.

Thus, it now seems safe to say that some of Cheshire's breeding population of Golden Plovers are first on their nesting grounds on, or about, 9<sup>th</sup> February, even when weather conditions are harsh.

It will be interesting to see whether this pattern is the same in a few years' time. I understand that research by the RSPB and Manchester and Newcastle Universities has shown that plover chicks now hatch on average nine days earlier than they did in the mid-1980s, and that by 2010, if climate change continues to provide even warmer springs, the plovers may be nesting three weeks earlier than they do now. This is not the good thing it might at first appear, because the main food of plover chicks, crane fly, is not emerging much earlier, thus threatening early chicks with starvation.

Incidentally, what is to be made of small January flocks in the Cheshire hills mentioned in my original article and one of 13 plovers high over Shutlingsloe in January 2003? A few possibilities suggest themselves: (a) they are moving between feeding grounds (b) they are moving to nesting grounds in neighbouring counties, such as the January birds in Derbyshire mentioned by Irene (c) they are moving to the 'traditional staging posts' again mentioned by Irene or (d) they are prospecting potential, or the previous year's, breeding grounds before their actual return. The last may not be too fanciful, because some of the plovers do have a look around before settling down. For example, the flock on 10<sup>th</sup> February this year, referred to above, appeared from over Cut-thorn, flew to the edge of Tagsclough Hill, circled and returned the way it had come and, before disappearing beyond Cut-thorn, two birds broke away and flew off to the south.

**J. V. Oxenham, Birchwood, 178 Holmes Chapel Road, Somerford, Cheshire, CW12 4QB**

## ROSTHERNE MERE

The following article appeared in *The Knutsford Guardian* January 11 2006:

### Birdwatchers use technology in quest to find strangest sights

Birdwatchers are becoming a rare breed at Rostherne Mere because new technology now tells them when to visit. Voluntary warden John Dawson said many twitchers stayed away unless their mobile phones buzzed when something interesting was there. "We used to get a lot of people but now they have pagers and a bird line they don't come to an area on the off chance," he said. Years ago hundreds of birdwatchers applied for permits to use the hide near the church in Rostherne. Organisers had to limit the number of people with passes each year to 1,000 because so many wanted to use the hut. Now fewer than 400 birdwatchers apply for permits to visit the mere. In the past many enthusiasts arrived early and stayed all day because they did not know what rare species might arrive.

Rostherne Mere is a protected national nature reserve where scientists carry out freshwater research. Experts believe its fish population still originates from fish that lived in the mere when it was formed during the Ice Age about two million years ago.

Each year during winter hundreds of wildfowl flock to the site which is the deepest - 100ft - and largest mere in Cheshire. The water is home to rare algae and birds including Pochard, Teal, Pintail, Shoveler, Ruddy Duck, Gadwall and Goosander, Sparrowhawk, Kestrel, Reed Bunting, Willow Warbler, Whitethroat and three woodpecker species also visit the site. Mr Dawson, a birdwatcher who has visited Rostherne for 40 years, said most residents who lived nearby did not realize the mere was such an important wildlife site. "Rostherne Mere is pretty unique and I don't think people do know that," he said. About eight wardens guard against poachers, trap mink, monitor the wildlife populations and provide educational visits at Rostherne Mere.

Permits to use the hide cost £7 a year, £10 for a family and £2 for pensioners or children under 16. To apply for a pass write to D.A. Clarke, 1 Hart Avenue, Sale, Cheshire or call 0161 973 7122.

### Nature runs its course - fewer Mallards now visit Rostherne Mere.

John Dawson went on to say that a Europe-wide decline in the Mallard population had reduced the number of winter arrivals by more than 3,500 in 40 years. "It's just one of those things that's happening naturally," he said. More than 4,000 once arrived at Rostherne during cold weather. Now about 400 only journey to the mere during the migration season. Mr Dawson believes the Mallards are also finding new smaller alternative water habitats. However, last week he said attempts to improve the water quality at Rostherne could attract more ducks. Years ago changes at a nearby sewage works began to reduce the nitrogen pollution in the mere.

**NB** The Rostherne Observatory (referred to as the birdwatchers hide in the above article) is managed by CAWOS and permits can also be obtained at the same time as renewing your CAWOS membership. Ed.

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- If YOU see anything of interest in your local paper, or even in the national press or magazines,
- about Cheshire and birdwatching please bring it to our attention. Either scan in the article
- or letter and e-mail it to me or cut it out and put it in the post. Please make sure the source
- and date is clear. Contact details are on the inside front cover of *Bird News*. Ed.

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## CONSERVATION AREA REPRESENTATIVES

There are currently 2 vacancies for conservation area representatives for both the **Macclesfield** and **Vale Royal** areas. Broadly speaking, the aim is to keep an eye on what is going on in their area and to be the point of contact for any CAWOS members who have specific concerns, issues, or information, and to either deal with it themselves or pass it on to the appropriate person/authority.

**If you are able to help please contact David Cogger, Secretary.**

# 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 e-mail preferably). They may be able to help or should know someone who can! The relevant contact information is listed at the end.

## HALTON AREA

**Upper Mersey Estuary Nature Reserve:** As a consequence of government funding now allocated to the second Mersey crossing, Halton Borough Council is putting together a proposal for the 'Upper Mersey Estuary Nature Reserve'. This is being put forward with regard to managing habitat within the Upper Mersey Estuary with the intention of creating a new nature reserve for the area which already acts as a major wildlife corridor. There are six main objectives:

1. Bring areas of salt marsh into single ownership to streamline management, either by agreements with landowners or purchase of land.
2. Introduce management through grazing to reverse the decline in quality of the salt marsh.
3. Habitat creation such as creation of scrapes, dredging and controlling water flow.
4. Increase interpretation by use of viewing areas, interpretation boards and webcam technology.
5. Enhancement of neighbouring designated sites such as Fiddler's Ferry lagoons, Moss Side, Wigg Island and Gatewarth is required to maintain value of the area as a wildlife corridor.
6. Provide new uses for land previously seen as derelict or contaminated which are located within the boundary of the proposed reserve.

**Tony Parker, Halton Area Representative**

## WIRRAL AREA

**Cockling:** The long-awaited cockling *Regulation Order for the Dee Estuary* has been issued for public consultation. This should result in a small scale local cockling fishery of benefit to both local cocklers and the birds.

**Microlights:** There has been considerable disturbance of birds caused by low flying microlights along the north Wirral coast and inside the Dee estuary. The Wirral Ranger Service have been actively trying to get to grips with this problem including drawing up a licence agreement which will include a requirement to fly no lower than 1000ft over the north Wirral and Dee estuary SSSIs.

**Osprey nesting sites:** A rather bizarre request was made by the Highland foundation for Wildlife to the Wirral Biodiversity Group for help in finding a suitable nesting site for Ospreys in Wirral. I have suggested that Wirral is not the best area to try and attract Ospreys to, although areas elsewhere in Cheshire might be suitable.

**Richard Smith, Wirral Area Representative**

## LOCAL AUTHORITY AREA REPRESENTATIVES

<b>Chester</b>	Neil Friswell, 8 Oaklands Crescent, Tattenhall, Cheshire, CH3 9QT. Tel: 01829 770463. E-mail: neil.friswell@btinternet.com
<b>Congleton</b>	Richard Blindell, 5 Bath Vale, Congleton, Cheshire, CW12 2HF. Tel: 01260 275084. E-mail: richardblindell@hotmail.com
<b>Crewe &amp; Nantwich</b>	Colin Lythgoe, 11 Waterloo Road, Haslington, Crewe, CW1 5TF. Tel: 01270 582642. E-mail: colinlythgoe@haslington9.freeserve.co.uk
<b>Halton</b>	Tony Parker, 41 The Park, Penketh, Warrington, WA5 2SG. Tel: 01925 726986. E-mail: tonyparker@cauos.org
<b>Macclesfield</b>	<b>Vacant - please let David Cogger know if you are willing to take on this role</b>
<b>Vale Royal</b>	<b>Vacant - please let David Cogger know if you are willing to take on this role</b>
<b>Warrington</b>	Brian Martin, 45 Albert Road, Grappenhall, Warrington, WA4 2PF. Tel: 01925 264251. E-mail: brianmartin1940@hotmail.com
<b>Wirral</b>	Richard Smith, March Wall, King's Drive North, Caldy, Wirral, CH48 1LL. Tel: 0151 625 2320. E-mail: richard@deestuary.co.uk

# Membership News

**Welcome to the following new members:** W Gilmour-White, M. Bannon, Chris Herbert, Dan Crowley and Mark Greenhough.

## **At a Council meeting on 12th January:**

- All those responsible for the compilation and production of the 2004 *Bird Report* were congratulated on their achievement; the Report had been well received.
- a grant was made of £100 to SECOS to help their Tree Sparrow feeding project.

**David Cogger, 113 Nantwich Road, Middlewich, Cheshire, CW10 9HD**  
**Tel: 01606 832517 E-mail: memsec@cawos.org**

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## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 7<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2006**

### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2005**

This is the second occasion on which I have served as Chairman, having held the role previously for one year in 1999, so it gives me a further opportunity to review the way in which the Society has progressed. The intervening years were led admirably by my predecessor, Sheila Blamire (a difficult act to follow!) and the changes are clear to see. I have tried in this report to cover just some of the areas of the Society's work in the past year.

#### **Activities**

The programme of indoor meetings again gave us the opportunity to hear presentations from a number of high quality speakers whose subjects this year ranged from John Lawton Roberts' talk on 'The Raven' through to 'The Art of Misidentification' by Tim Melling, which had the audience laughing incredulously at the way in which a bird like an Oystercatcher could be identified as a Black Stork! We were also taken to the USSR and Namibia, and shown how Michael Leach developed his career as a wildlife photographer. David Norman also gave us an interesting insight into his first impressions of the results from the initial survey returns for the Atlas. We are fortunate to have a Programme Secretary with the contacts and imagination to assemble such a varied series of speakers and topics. I have been pleased that we have also had additional help volunteered in the last year in the running of the meetings.

Liaison with other groups/organisations and promotion of the Society are two further areas where we both aim to foster relations and to give a higher profile to the Society. We were represented at the rECOrd conference and at a meeting of the Cheshire Barn Owl Groups, and a stand was manned at the Woolston Eyes Open Day.

#### **Breeding and Wintering Atlas**

With the Atlas survey work proceeding apace, the Atlas Steering Group is busily undertaking a range of activities that will lead eventually to our ultimate goal – the publication of the Atlas. We have chosen to report the detail of their activities in the Secretary's Report, but I should record here our appreciation for the efforts that they are putting in to bring this project to fruition.

#### **Conservation**

We have kept awareness of, and in a number of cases contributed input to, matters of conservation concern within or affecting the county. These have included a planning application for extension to Chelford Sand Quarries, the DEFRA Cormorant cull, the Second Mersey Crossing, the Dee Estuary Dredging and the application for a Wind Farm at Aston Grange. Our conservation representatives keep an eye on what is happening in their area, and always welcome information on any potential developments.

## **Publications**

The appointment of a new Systematic List Editor (Richard Smith) was one of a number of changes made to the organisation of the team charged with the daunting task of producing the high quality *Bird Report* to which we have all become accustomed. Major problems with the loss of compilers from the previous year resulted in the work having to be taken on by less people, and the team will be looking to expand again in the coming year – please note! However, the end result fully matched, if not exceeded, all our expectations, and the whole team is to be congratulated on producing a report which is recognised nationally as being among the best in the country – something for which they, and the Society as a whole, can feel justly proud.

I am sure that you, like me, look forward to receiving our quarterly Newsletter. It is always a good read, with plenty of variety in the articles and other items covered within its pages. Again we should all be grateful to the small team who give so much of their time to ensure that this publication is produced.

## **Records**

The records database continues to grow, boosted in the last year by the additional records being created by Atlas survey work. It is an increasingly valuable source of data, not only as input to the *Bird Report*, but also to provide data for conservation purposes. Council has been considering a number of areas affecting the records we hold, including the revision of protocols for the release of records to third parties, the use of records from the BTO's BirdTrack recording scheme, and the impact of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. Thanks are due both to those who submit their records and also to those members, led by the Database Manager, who undertake the task of validating and importing new records into the database. The assessment of rarity records is another important part of ensuring that the records of scarcer species are properly verified, and the Rarities Team undertakes this role. We are indebted to them for the diligence with which they carry out this task.

## **Finally.....**

I would like to thank the many people who give their time to the Society – I have mentioned a number above, but I can't include everyone in this report, so I apologise to anyone I might have missed. There are, however, three people whom I must mention here. The first is our hard-working Secretary, David Cogger, who contributes so much to the Society, in this and a number of other roles; the second is our Treasurer, Clive Richards, who ensures that we are financially sound, and the third is our retiring County Recorder, Tony Broome. Tony has been an Executive Member of Council and County Recorder since the formation of the Society in October 1988 and has been significantly involved in the major changes which have taken place in the way that recording is carried out within the county during that time. He has also, through his illustrations, brought to life our Newsletters and Bird Reports. He deserves a well-earned rest, and he leaves the role with sincere thanks from the Society for all the work that he has contributed over the years.

**Brian Dyke, Chairman**

## **SECRETARY'S REPORT**

As was only to be expected, work for the Breeding and Wintering Atlas has dominated the past year. We are now more than halfway towards the task of completing the fieldwork with the end of the second winter season, and I would like to thank all of you who have sent in your returns so quickly – we already have over 300 in. Many tetrads have been revisited and others looked at for the first time, and we are confident that all tetrads will be covered by the end of the breeding season and that this pattern will be repeated in winter 2006-07.

Whereas the previous Atlas took seven years to complete, it is gratifying that over 90% of tetrads have been covered in the first two years; all the more so as we have added winter fieldwork and the recording of habitat codes to the demands made upon fieldworkers. They are to be congratulated for having risen magnificently to the occasion – we estimate that about 60,000 person hours will have been devoted to fieldwork alone by the time surveying is at an end.

The number of fieldworkers has remained constant at just under the 300 mark, and most seem to be enjoying the experience. The Atlas Steering Group, consisting of David Norman, Bob Harris,

Steve Barber, Peter Twist and myself is now well established and a Publications Working Party will soon meet to look at all aspects of publication and seek quotes for the work; we hope to publish in autumn 2008. Peter Twist as Business Manager is in the process of persuading firms and other organisations to sponsor the project, and an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund is in its initial stages. Individuals and affiliated societies between them have sponsored over 150 species and raised £3000, important in showing the Heritage Lottery Fund that we are matching any funding they might give.

Apart from the Atlas, the normal series of indoor meetings for 2006-07 is under construction, with speakers including Terry Pickford, Allan and Susan Parker, Tom Lawson, John Lawton-Roberts and Paul Hobson. An application has been made to 'Awards for All' for a grant to purchase equipment which will enable us more effectively to get out and talk to groups who might be interested in our work.

2005 saw membership reach a record high of 376; 28 new members joined in that year, slightly down on the previous year but including 14 Atlas fieldworkers. More importantly, only 3 of the 34 new members in 2004 did not renew, showing, hopefully, that they are happy with the work of the Society. Some recently joined members have begun to take an active part in the Society but I will once again repeat my usual warning that too much of the work of the Society is done by too few people and more help is urgently needed.

However, 2005 has been a good year in which the Society has moved forward; long may it continue to do so.

**David Cogger, Secretary**

## **TREASURER'S REPORT**

### **Report on the 2005 Accounts**

The draft 'Income and Expenditure' and the draft 'Balance Sheet' are presented tonight; I hope everything is clear. As in previous years, I would like to point out that the figures are 'subject to audit'. The audit will follow, all being well, shortly.

The year has produced a reasonably significant profit of £2,086 largely due to better *Bird Report* income less costs, more inbound donations than outgoing, and greater bank interest.

Total income of £9,981 on ordinary business and Atlas fund income of £1,750 have been achieved, the latter going to the project, of course.

The virtues of Gift Aid are once more apparent with a superb addition to funds of £772, this time down for once, presumably due to lack of members signing the Gift Aid form. This is a very useful, free sum which contributes to profits entirely.

Once again the management of the Observatory at Rostherne has had a neutral effect on these accounts with permit money in, cancelling permit money paid out.

**Clive Richards, Treasurer**

## **AWARDS FOR ALL**

Confirmation has been received that the Society has been awarded a grant for £3,483 under the National Lottery's 'Awards for All' scheme. This will be used to purchase a laptop, software, projector and PA system to enable the Society to visit other groups and/or hold meetings to explain the work of the Society and, of course, the ongoing Atlas project. Up to now, the Society has relied on borrowing equipment - not a satisfactory situation.



# Diary

## MAY

- 6 ADNHS Consall Nature Park, Staffordshire, contact Anne Mason 0161 980 8645
- 6 NNHS Spring Bird Log in the Society's recording area, ring for details
- 6-13 HPRSPB Dorset Spring Holiday, ring for details
- 7 SRSPB Titchwell RSPB Reserve by coach, ring for details
- 7 MRSPB Woolston Eyes, depart Duke Street car park at 8:00am
- 8 SRSPB Pennington Flash, meet in car park by the Golf Club, St Helens Rd, Leigh at 7:15pm
- 9 ADNHS 'THE MORAL DILEMMAS OF A TREE CONTRACTOR' by Chris Frankland
- 9 MRSPB AGM, followed by MEMBERS' SLIDES
- 10 HO 'OMAN – THE CONTINENTAL CONNECTION' by John Wyatt
- 10 NCRSPB Wigg Island, Runcorn, contact Tony Parker 01925 726986
- 11-14KOS North Norfolk weekend, ring for details
- 14 WGBG Anglesey by coach, contact Alan Bradshaw 01625 527169
- 14 MRSPB Anglesey by coach, depart Wilmslow Guild at 7:30am (with WGBG)
- 14 SECOS Forest of Dean, ring for details
- 15 HPRSPB 'THE WILDLIFE OF MADAGASCAR' by Geoff Trinder
- 16 MRSPB Alderley Edge Woods, meet at NT Car Park, nr the Wizard Restaurant at 6:30pm
- 16 MCOS Loggerheads CP & Cilcain, contact Harold Fielding 01606 882529
- 17 NCRSPB Cilcain, contact Les Goulding 01925 265578
- 18 NNHS Smith's Millennium Wildlife Refuge, ring for details
- 19-20MRSPB Pembrokeshire Weekend, contact Ian Taylor 01260 275248
- 20-21CADOS East Anglia weekend, contact Dave Goff 01244 345043
- 21 MCOS Whixall & Fenns Mosses, contact Mike Whiteside 01829 771628
- 21 HO Moore NR by coach, ring for details
- 21 HPRSPB Lake Vyrnwy, meet at the Memorial Car Park, Marple at 8:00am
- 21 NCRSPB Forest of Bowland, contact Cliff Gibson 01925 817874
- 26 KOS Goyt Valley evening trip, meet at the Sessions House, Knutsford at 6:30pm
- 31 MRSPB Tittesworth Resr, meet at Tittesworth Resr Visitor Centre at 6:30pm

## JUNE

- 7 MRSPB Ringway walk, meet at the dead end off Lady Lane, nr Mobberley at 6:30pm
- 8-12 NCRSPB Orkney Weekend, contact Dave Hughes 01925 726242
- 10 KOS Leighton Moss, meet at the Sessions House, Knutsford at 8:30am
- 11 SECOS Walney Island, ring for details
- 11 HPRSPB Padley Gorge, meet at the Memorial Car Park, Marple at 8:15am
- 14 HO 'PATAGONIA & THE ANTARCTIC' by Dr John Raines
- 15 MRSPB Ladderedge Country Park, Leek, meet at the Visitor Centre Car Park at 6:30pm
- 15-18MCOS Northumberland & Farne Islands, contact Les Goulding 01925 265578
- 16 NNHS Bates Wood, a Staffordshire Wildlife Trust Reserve, ring for details
- 17 ADNHS The Sefton coast, Lancs, contact Mike Pettipher 0161 865 0118
- 18 CRSPB Bempton Cliffs RSPB reserve by coach, contact John Dawson 01244 675929
- 21 NCRSPB Gowy Meadows, contact Tony Parker 01925 726986
- 23 KOS Manchester Airport evening walk, meet at the Sessions House, Knutsford at 6:30pm
- 25 CADOS Anglesey, contact Alan Harley 01925 269430

## JULY

- 1 ADNHS Five Dales walk round Miller's Dale, Derbys, contact George Allen 0161 973 8088
- 2 HPRSPB Cannock Chase, meet at the Memorial Car Park, Marple at 7:00pm
- 5 NCRSPB Marbury Country Park, contact Les Goulding 01925 265578
- 6 NCRSPB BBQ and walk at Queen Charlotte's Wood, contact John Drake 01928 561133

- 12 HO MEMBERS' EVENING (tickets to be obtained in advance)
- 12 NCRSPB Ainsdale, contact Paul Grimmett 01925 268770
- 16 KOS Forest of Bowland, meet at the Sessions House, Knutsford at 8:30am
- 16 SRSPB Middlewood Way Open Day, ring for details
- 20 NNHS Whixall Moss, near Whitchurch, Shropshire, ring for details
- 28 KOS Frodsham Marsh evening walk, meet at the Sessions House, Knutsford at 6:30pm

## AUGUST

- 12 Birdwatch, Banks Rd car park, Lower Heswall, meet 11:15am (HW 14:15, 9.6m)
- 17 NNHS Combermere, ring for details
- 19 CADOS East coast, contact Don Pawlett 01244 677477
- 20 NCRSPB Formby, contact John Drake 01928 561133

## AFFILIATED SOCIETIES

- ADNHS Altrincham & Dist. Natural History Soc, mtgs Hale Methodist Church Hall 7.30pm, contact Sec. Anne Mason 0161 980 8645
- CADOS Chester & Dist. Ornithological Soc, mtgs Caldy Valley Community Centre 7.30pm, contact Prog. Sec. Nick French 01978 856522
- CAWOS Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Soc, mtgs Knutsford Civic Centre 7.45pm, contact Sheila Blamire 01565 830168
- CRSPB Chester RSPB Group, mtgs St Mary's Centre, Chester 7.30pm, contact Prog. Sec. John and Tracy Langley 01244 678781
- HO Hale Ornithologists, mtgs St Peter's Assembly Rooms 7.45pm, contact Prog. Sec. Barbara Vercambre 0161 980 8362
- HPRSPB High Peak RSPB Members' Group contact Peter Griffiths 0161 427 5325
- KOS Knutsford Ornithological Soc, mtgs Jubilee Hall, Stanley Road 8.00pm, contact Tony Usher 01565 873508
- LOG Lymm Ornithological Group, mtgs Lymm Village Hall 8.00pm, contact Prog. Sec. Hilary Unsworth 01925 860155
- MCOS Mid-Cheshire Ornithological Soc, mtgs Hartford Village Hall 7.45pm, contact Paul Kenyon 01606 77960
- MRSPB Macclesfield RSPB Members' Group, mtgs Senior Citizens' Hall 7.45pm, contact Ray Evans 01625 432635
- NCRSPB North Cheshire RSPB Members' Group, mtgs St Matthew's CoE Primary Sch, Stretton 7.45pm, contact Olive Giles 01928 733405
- NNHS Nantwich Natural History Soc, mtgs The Gables at 7.30pm, contact Sec. Mike Holmes 01270 611577, mike@uimprove.com
- SECOS South-East Cheshire Ornithological Soc, mtgs St Peter's Church Hall, Elworth 7.30pm, contact Sec. Colin Lythgoe 01270 582642
- SRSPB Stockport RSPB Members' Group, mtgs Stockport College of Technology, Lect Theatre B 7.30pm, contact Peter Hugo 0161 485 4024
- WGBG Wilmslow Guild Birdwatching Group, mtgs Wilmslow Guild HQ 7.45pm, contact Indoor Prog. Sec. Judith Rees 0161 980 5034

Will **affiliated societies**, who wish to advertise meetings of relevance to CAWOS, please send their programme to:- **Sheila Blamire, Woodruff Cottage, Clamhunger Lane, Mere, Cheshire, WA16 6QG** or, *preferably please*, by e-mail: [sheilablamire@cawos.org](mailto:sheilablamire@cawos.org)

**For further information on Outdoor Events within the county see  
the Birdwatcher's Diary at: [www.deeestuary.co.uk](http://www.deeestuary.co.uk)**

# CAWOS Indoor Meetings

**6th October 2006 'WILDLIFE OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC' by Terry Pickford**  
Terry shares his love of the Czech Republic with us tonight, prompted by many conservation visits over the last 30 years, plus leading groups to this, as yet, unspoilt part of Eastern Europe.

**3rd November 2006 'BIRDING LA MANCHA by Allan & Susan Parker  
& EXTREMADURA'**

This talk looks at the bird rich areas of Central Spain, just a 2.5 hour flight from the UK. As well as the fantastic birdlife and superb scenery, much of the flora and fauna will be covered as well.

**1st December 2006 'IN PURSUIT OF PENGUINS' by Tom Lawson**

We're very pleased to welcome back Tom, who will focus tonight on the amazing birdlife, (especially penguins!) and the incredible scenery of the 'Subantarctic Islands of New Zealand' - a truly wild place.



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The next indoor meeting is on Friday 6th October 2006 at Knutsford:  
'WILDLIFE OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC' by TERRY PICKFORD  
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