

**Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society**

Reg. Charity No. 702484 [www.cawos.org](http://www.cawos.org)



# **BIRD NEWS**

**Number 118 November 2021**



**County Rarity: Woodlark**

**Species Spotlight: Shelduck**

**Dee Estuary Celebrates Funding Award**

**Hockenhull Platts CWT Reserve 1972-2021**

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

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**Front cover: Long-billed Dowitcher by Ray Scally**

**Other illustrations by Tony Broome and Phil Jones**

**Note: the copy date for the next issue is 19<sup>th</sup> February 2022**

# Guest Editorial

In the March 2021 issue of *Bird News* the Guest Editor commented on the major changes that have occurred within CAWOS: several senior members who have spent many years in the society, supporting and enabling it to function, have stepped down. We wish them well in the future and thank them for their dedicated support over past decades.

This leads to the question where are their replacements? CAWOS Council consists of five Officers (Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer, Secretary and County Recorder) and up to six Ordinary members. For the last three years CAWOS Council has placed adverts in *Bird News* seeking replacements on Council for both Officers and Ordinary members, only one person has come forward. As a result, several Officers are fulfilling multiple roles, and others have wanted to retire but felt unable to as there was no-one to replace them. Currently we have no Vice-Chair. This situation cannot be sustained if the society is to fulfil its role. Council meets five times a year, one being face to face and the others via Zoom with the meetings lasting for 2 hours. So members from any part of the county can contribute.

In addition to Council we do need other people, who may or may not become Ordinary Council members, to fill a variety of roles. These include Membership Secretary, Programme Secretary and someone to take responsibility for the bird records, extracting and validating the data, and preparing it for the compilers who write the systematic list for the annual *Bird Report*. Production of the *Bird Report* also requires one or more people to oversee the whole process, collate the different contributions and get it ready for printing. None of these individual roles is particularly onerous, but at present a very small team are covering all of them and this is unsustainable.

Several hard-working members put in their time willingly to produce reports on Barn Owl, Mute Swan and Heron surveys, and to prepare annual reports from Hilbre Island, Rostherne Mere NNR, Marbury CP, Woolston Eyes, Sandbach Flashes and Merseyside and South Manchester Ringing Groups. All their efforts are greatly appreciated. As the county bird society CAWOS *could* be playing a major role in organising and running surveys on species that are under threat from global warming, and on the breeding and wintering birds in Cheshire and the Wirral. To do this we need help and input from our members.

So what is the future of our Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society? Uncertain is my view unless more of the 300+ members are prepared to get involved. Your Council, which is the prime mover, is woefully under-staffed and cannot continue with three or four members running the whole show. Is it that helping run the society does not appeal to members? Or is it that members do not know what needs to be done? There are many keen birders in the county who are not CAWOS members, but are active in other groups. Should we reach out to them to get involved? Any thoughts and offers of help would be most welcome. Now more than at any time this century do we need help to monitor the decline or increase in bird species in the county. **The future of the Society is in your hands.** My email address and that of our Chairman Phil Hampson are on the inside front cover of *Bird News*, please contact one of us if you can offer to help or need more information.

Having no doubt depressed you with the above, the remainder of the *Bird News* is more exciting with articles including: on the funding awarded to Cheshire Wildlife Trust through the National Lottery Heritage Fund for a cross-border conservation project focussed on the Dee estuary; an inspired suggestion for rewilding an area in Hoylelake by Richard Smith; summer ringing at Hilbre Island Observatory (this 3-month period as eventful as any other period in the island's development!); and the second phase of the Rostherne Mere NNR Wetland Enhancement Project.

**Ted Lock, CAWOS Secretary**

**Note: the copy date for the next issue is 19<sup>th</sup> February 2022 - please be prompt**

We cannot guarantee that material received after this date will be published in that issue. If you are aware that your material may be delayed, please let the Editor know as soon as possible.

# County Rarities

## WOODLARK *Lullula arborea*

You're just enjoying an idle day out not seeing much at Mere Farm quarry, when a small brown bird flits across your line of sight and settles on the open ground. First impression is of a small thrush without a tail, but the patterned upperparts don't fit, it flies again, this time settling low in one of the scrubby birches. Through the binoculars, face on, it is an obvious 'lark'. But what is it doing here and why does it appear so well marked? It looks like a Skylark, but it gives the impression of being short and plump and almost tail-less. It's in a tree and you can see a prominent supercilium giving it a well-marked head pattern of a dark eye, plain brownish ear coverts bordered by a dark line. The remaining upperparts are equally neatly patterned, with dark-tipped coverts on warm-brown secondaries and primaries, with a noticeable dark and light patch on the closed wing. In contrast it has a white belly and streaked upper breast. It clearly isn't a Skylark and it's far too well marked for a Short-toed Lark. Realisation dawns as the bird flies back down to the ground to feed, the wing pattern of white-edged black wrist patches, short white-tipped tail and lack of any white on the trailing edge of the wing confirms your suspicion that this is a Woodlark.



Woodlarks are usually rare away from known breeding or wintering sites, but they do seem to turn up at odd locations, as the several Cheshire and Wirral records have shown. Other points to look out for are the call, a fluty "too-lleeet" note, usually given during the distinctive undulating flight akin to that of a woodpecker. I also think Woodlarks appear to feed like Shore Larks, head down and horizontal pose. There really isn't any confusion species, even well-marked juvenile Skylarks, which can also appear short-tailed, never show the strong supercilium and wing patch combination of Woodlark. Despite some evidence that the UK population has expanded up into suitable habitats in the Midlands, it remains a rare bird in Cheshire and Wirral. There is some evidence that we do get birds of Continental origin, pushed across the North Sea by the severe weather.

Hugh Pulsford

## WOODLARK: CHESHIRE AND WIRRAL STATUS

The Cheshire and Wirral status of Woodlark in the 19th century was described by Coward & Oldham in *Birds of Cheshire* (1900) as "scarce resident" and they wrote "only a few instances of its occurrences are known, although possibly it has been overlooked". These occurrences amounted to eight reports. The earliest of these refers to a water-colour drawing of a Woodlark marked 'Burton 1839' in the possession of one Captain Congreve. This is presumably the bird referred to by Hardy in *The Birds of the Liverpool Area* (1941) as being in "Capt. Congreve's collection...from Burton" but giving the year 1899. From *The Birds of Wirral* (Brockholes, 1874) Coward took the author's own reports that he saw "a rather wild unsettled bird" at Claughton near Birkenhead in April 1859 and in May 1861 that "I saw a pair of birds, but failed to find the nest" at Burton. Apparently based on these two reports Hardy (1941) wrote "Brockholes found it nesting in the Wirral". In 1873 *Nature* published notes from J D Sainter, which included a reference to Woodlarks having "bred about Gawsorth" 25 years ago, but although becoming "completely extinguished" due to the actions of bird-catchers and/or shooters Sainter noted "they have returned lately". An observer reported an undated nest at Alderley, while in 1882 song was heard on several evenings at Manley. Also undated are reports of song at Woodley (no longer in Cheshire) and Poynton from a person who kept Woodlarks as cage-birds and so, according to Coward & Oldham, "is well acquainted with their song".

In *The Fauna of Cheshire* (1910) Coward adds to the previously detailed records a statement that Woodlarks were caught in Petty Pool Park c1840, while from the notebooks of Lord de Tabley,

mainly written between 1864 and 1868, two localities for Woodlark - Tabley and Lower Peover - are given, but de Tabley had written "now very rare". Coward begins the 1910 species account with "No known specimen of a Cheshire Wood Lark exists, much of the evidence of its occurrence in the county is unsatisfactory". He amends its status to "Possibly at one time a scarce resident or migrant; now extinct". Despite this, Holloway (1996) in *The Historical Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland 1875-1900* maps Woodlark as 'Occasional' in Cheshire and Wirral.



In his *The Birds of Cheshire* (1962) Bell has only a bird singing at Spital in 1934 until the late 1950s, from when a relative flurry of records coincides with an intensification of recording, particularly at Hilbre. Single birds were noted on spring or autumn passage at Hilbre on 25th Mar 1956, 8th-9th May 1960 and 3rd or 8th Apr 1961; at Red Rocks on 13th Oct 1961, Neston Fields on 29th Sep 1968, Hilbre on 16th May 1976 and Red Rocks dunes and golf course on 7th Oct 1979.

Not reported in the 1980s, a bird at Vicar's Cross on 3rd and 4th Jan 1997 became the first modern day sighting off Wirral and the first in winter. Hilbre was back in business with a fly-over on 27th Apr 1998 and one flew SE at Hale Shore on 3rd Oct 1998. Singles flew over a Nantwich garden on 8th Aug 2004 and Hilbre on 17th Apr 2005, while one on Lindow Moss from 4th to 7th Jun 2006 was the first heard singing in the county since 1934! In 2008 one was at Arpley Landfill on 9th Feb, one flew over Hilbre on 8th May and three among a mixed lark flock at Appleton Thorn on 23rd and 24th Dec appear to be the first multiple sighting since the 19th century!! That record was followed by two birds watched by many observers among Skylarks near Brereton Heath Country Park from 7th to 20th Nov 2010. Most recently one flew over the River Mersey at Hale on 31st Oct 2015.

Perhaps the current status can best be described as rare passage migrant, very rare in winter, with one summer record.

Steve Barber

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# Notes and Letters

## MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

This section is a chance for members to contribute, whether a few lines, or a long article, which might be spilt over several issues. Some ideas might be amusing (or otherwise!) anecdotes, unusual avian behaviour, special memories, ringing and/or survey stories, and looking back over the years—even back to childhood! The list is almost endless—it's up to members. If you think it's worth writing, other members will think it's worth reading! Also, we are always interested in your views on any of our articles or on the newsletter itself. Ed.

## HELPING SWIFTS IN CHESTER

Before everybody's lives were turned upside-down by the covid-19 pandemic in early 2020, RSPB Chester Group were making plans for a third year of Swift box installation around Chester. Unfortunately we lost a whole year and just had to let the Swifts get on with their business until lockdown and movement restrictions eased. For anyone who didn't see my previous news item on this topic see *Bird News* March 2019. I should add that we started the free Swift box scheme after survey work in 2016 and 2017 had raised awareness of the sharp drop in the number of breeding Swifts. The scheme is funded by grants from The Naturesave Trust and Cheshire West and Chester (CWAC).

So it felt good in April this year to start planning box installations again. After checking with RSPB's Regional Office that our activity complied with policy on public activities, one of the first

things we had to do was to find a new box fitter, as we had lost contact with the previous incumbent. Through contacts of our committee members, we found Ralph Firbanks, a joiner who had decided to retire when the pandemic took hold but has turned out to be an enthusiastic replacement. When the box scheme was mothballed in spring 2020, a dozen or so people in Chester and Ellesmere Port were still on our waiting list. It was heartening to discover that most of these were still interested, so in late April and May, Ralph and I visited eight houses in Upton, Newton and Ellesmere Port to install some boxes. A further three boxes went up in July to complete the season's work.

In fact, the first boxes to go up this spring in Chester were not fixed by Ralph. My Swift scheme partner John Dearnley learned in 2019 that the owners of The Bluecoat on Northgate Street were planning some roof repairs, so persuaded them to add some Swift boxes while the scaffolding was up. Although the roof work finished last year, we met the caretaker on site in April to agree on suitable places for boxes, and he put up three the day after our visit.

We haven't done any organised monitoring of nest sites in Chester for a few years now so we rely on casual observations from group members based in Chester and any other reports we receive through email, social media, etc. So it was very encouraging to get the news in early summer that a box we had installed in Park Drive, Hoole in 2019 had nesting Swifts in it. We suspect that other boxes we have put up (the total count now exceeds 80) have attracted Swifts, but this is the first time that the homeowner has confirmed breeding. He was so pleased that he installed two more boxes straightaway. Another piece of good news we received is that CWAC will be installing 20 Swift bricks (even better than boxes as they don't degrade) on the multi-storey car park in the new Northgate development. We are trying to persuade the council to add a call-playing system to make sure the Swifts find the new 'hotel' quickly.

We have been advising people that they can also help Swifts to find new nest sites by encouraging local House Sparrows to take up residence in their new box, perhaps by using more seed feeders. Swifts seem to be aware of sparrow breeding activity around houses, which is not surprising given that the two species often nest close to each other on buildings and will compete for the best sites. If box owners only get House Sparrows to nest, they are still helping a red-listed species after all.

Finishing on a personal note, the nest site in my house in Duckington was used again this year, as it has been each year since we moved in over 20 years ago. As far as we know, the young birds fledged ok in late July. This summer we finally got round to having two boxes put up on the same wall as the nest, so we hope to increase our breeding productivity next year. We had some good screaming parties this summer too, particularly after immature birds arrived in mid-June. Swift fans call these birds 'bangers' because they fly up to likely nest sites, including Swift boxes, and gently hit them with their wings to see if they are occupied. They seem to remember these vacant sites when they return the next season. Roll on 2022.....

If you live in or around Chester and would be interested in having a Swift box installed email us at [RSPBchester@googlegroups.com](mailto:RSPBchester@googlegroups.com)



**Roger Nutter**

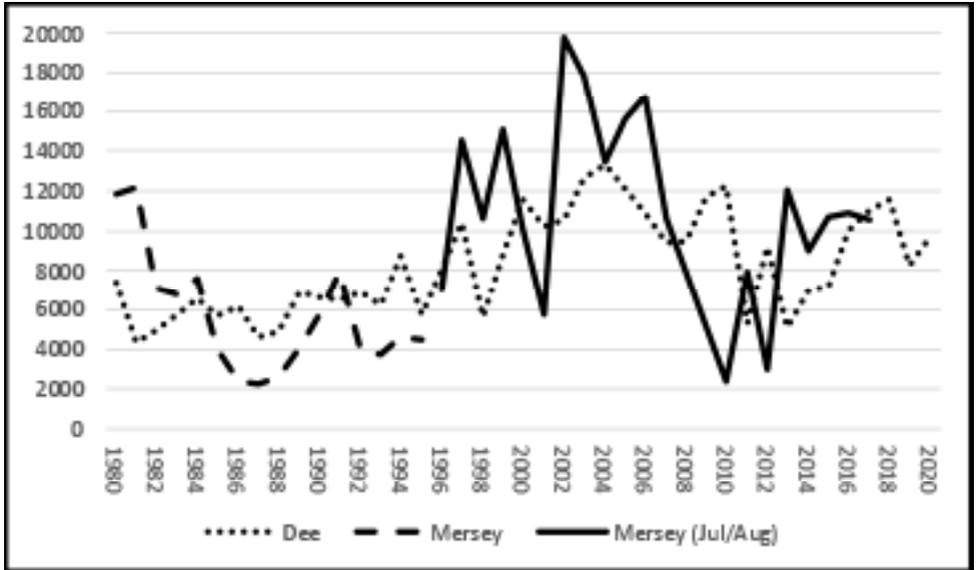
**Note:** If YOU see anything of interest in your local paper, on the Internet, or even in the national press, relevant to Cheshire and Wirral, please bring it to the Editor's attention. Either scan in the article and email it, or cut it out and put it in the post. Please make sure the source and date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

# Species Spotlight

## SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadorna*

This article was first published in the October 2021 On-line Newsletter of Dee Estuary Birding ([www.deeestuary.co.uk](http://www.deeestuary.co.uk)).

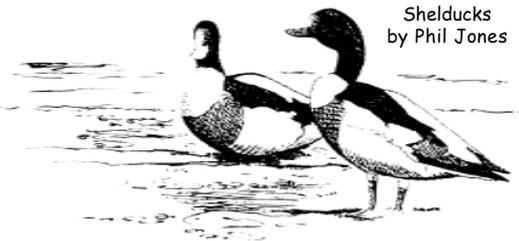
The large and colourful Shelduck is always a joy to see; being commonplace on the estuary we rather take them for granted but they really are exotic-looking birds. We are lucky as the Dee estuary and adjacent Mersey estuary are the most important sites in the country for them.

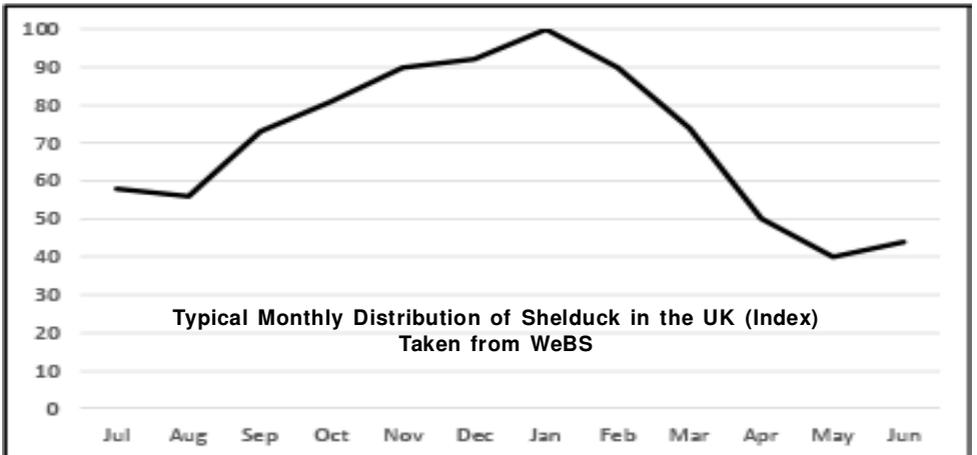
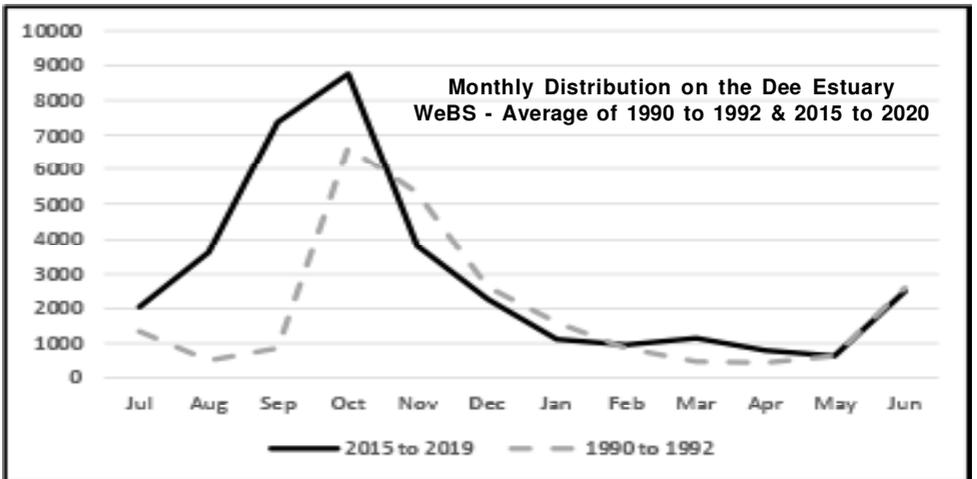
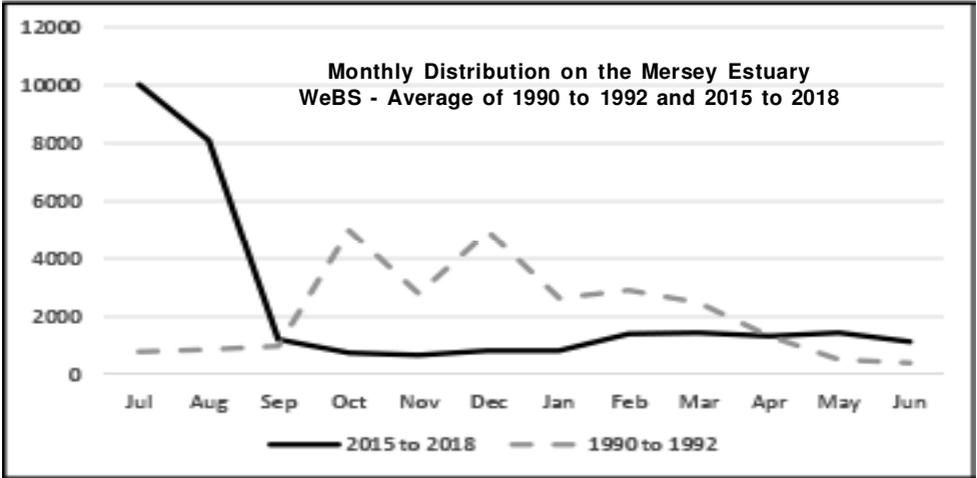


### Shelduck on the Dee and Mersey Estuaries - Max WeBS Counts 1980 to 2020

Note that on the Mersey Estuary since 1996 all max counts have been in July or August

The graph above shows max annual counts (Wetland Bird Survey) from the Dee and Mersey estuaries from 1980 to 2020. In the late 1970s and early 1980s the Mersey estuary had more Shelduck than the Dee, at that time numbers peaked on the Mersey during the winter months. But around 1996 there was a dramatic change in their behaviour when large numbers started to use the Mersey estuary as a post-breeding moulting site during July and August, reaching a remarkable 19,810 in August 2002. Shelduck, of course, are famous for their long-distance flight to the Waddensea (mostly to the Helgoland Bight, NW Germany - a straight line distance of just over 470 miles from the Dee estuary) where they moult in July and August. Probably well over half of the UK adult population undergo this flight but a significant number stay to moult in this country mainly in the Humber, the Wash, Firth of Forth and the Mersey - and it is the Mersey which is now by far the most important moulting site in the UK. Numbers moulting on the Mersey do fluctuate quite widely from year to year and are currently at just over 10,000 (there have been some missed and/or partial counts since 2017 so have not been included in the graph - but overall numbers do appear to have dropped in the past three years).





These three graphs tell an interesting story. I've compared the monthly average in the early 1990s, i.e. pre-1996 and when numbers nationally were high, to the current monthly distribution. There has been a dramatic change on the Mersey and the graph shows the peak numbers which now occur in July and August, compared with autumn and winter peaks in the early 1990s. Wintering numbers there are now only around the 1000 mark, perhaps the moulting flock are depleting the food sources which then don't recover until the next summer. On the Dee estuary the change in distribution is more subtle. The peak on the Dee estuary has always occurred in autumn so our mudflats must have plenty of food for birds returning from their moult, whether that's on the Waddensea or the Mersey. However, before 1996 the peak always occurred either in October or November whilst since 1996 the peak has been either in September or October. Obviously, the reason for the earlier arrival is that most birds are now flying the very short distance from the Mersey to the Dee after they've finished their moult, rather than several hundred miles from Germany. Note also, the much higher numbers that we now have in August on the Dee estuary which suggests that a few thousand Shelduck moult here as well as on the Mersey, something which has been suspected for quite a while.

After the October peak birds disperse away from the Dee very quickly and by January counts are down to 1000. The monthly distribution for the UK as a whole is quite different with a peak in mid-winter, usually in January, and this is presumably when all the birds which moulted on the Waddensea have returned to the UK. The movements of Shelduck are complex and by no means fully understood. The Ribble estuary, just to the north of us, typically has a peak of around 4000 but since 2005 this peak has occurred on nine different months - only excluding April, May and August. I have no idea what to make of that! Ros Green (BTO), who has just started a PhD on Shelduck migration (and see Refs 3 and 4), said "I've got a feeling they do many more interesting things than most people realise".

One way to track these movements is by colour-ringing and a lot of Shelduck have been colour-ringed in recent years, and on the Dee estuary we have 102 records of 35 colour-ringed Shelduck over the past three years. Prior to that has been a total of four recoveries of metal-ringed birds (which demonstrates just how useful colour-ringing is).

## Notes

1. Over 400 Shelduck have been colour-ringed since 2017 at Martin Mere and we saw our first one on the Dee estuary in March 2019. Most of these Martin Mere ringed birds are sighted on the Dee from late August through to early November, after which many spend the winter back at Martin Mere where they get plenty of free food put out for the wild swans and captive birds. Typical numbers through the winter at Martin Mere are around 500. About 30 pairs stay to breed there but most have dispersed elsewhere by the end of March, and it is April when we have seen one or two ringed birds back here on the Dee Estuary presumably breeding locally.

2. They have been colour-ringing Shelduck in the Lower Derwent Valley NNR for over 10 years but we didn't see our first one on the Dee estuary until November 2019. As well as the six birds seen on the Dee estuary they have also had several other records of their birds in the north-west of England, so that's an interesting westwards movement. Like the Martin Mere birds we see these ones in autumn and spring. There is a sizeable breeding population in the Derwent Valley of at least 60 pairs.

3. A bird ringed at Lower Derwent Valley in February 2018 was spotted at Thurstaston in November 2019, before finding its way to Zuidhoek, just south of Rotterdam, in February 2021. As far as I can ascertain this is the first ringed Shelduck seen on the Dee estuary which has also been recorded abroad. February is also an interesting date for it to be in The Netherlands - has it been there since moulting on the Waddensea in August, or is it a bird that winters in the UK and breeds on the continent? These are the sort of questions that we hope colour-ringing will eventually answer.

## References

1. *Cheshire and Wirral Bird Reports* 1980 to 2019, CAWOS.
2. Neil Friswell & Colin E. Wells, *Dee Estuary and North Wirral Foreshore WeBS Annual Reports* 2009/2010 to 2019/2020.
3. Ros Green, A migration mystery, *BTO News* Spring 2021.

4. Ros Green et al., Review of the migratory movements of Shelduck to inform understanding of potential interactions with the offshore wind farms in the southern North Sea, *BTO Research Report 718*, 2019.

Thanks to Kane Brides (Martin Mere) and Craig Ralston (Lower Derwent Valley) for providing the Shelduck colour-ringing records.

This article 'Contains Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) data from Waterbirds in the UK 2019/20 © copyright and database right 2021. WeBS is a partnership jointly funded by the BTO, RSPB and JNCC, in association with WWT, with fieldwork conducted by volunteers.'

**Richard Smith**

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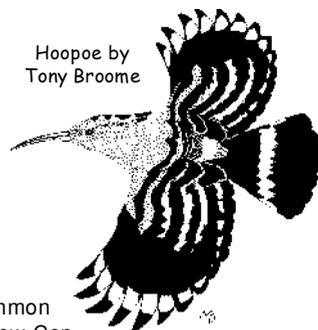
# County Round-Up

*Some of the records may be unauthenticated and therefore will require review by the Society's Rarities Panel or the BBRC. This report covers the period from May to August 2021.*

## SITE REPORTS

### Chester area

A Quail was at Chester on May 18<sup>th</sup> with another at Holt on Jun 23<sup>rd</sup>. Three Cattle Egrets were at Puddington on May 5<sup>th</sup> and Red Kites were noted over Crewe-by-Farndon on Jun 9<sup>th</sup>, Tattenhall on Jun 17<sup>th</sup>, Tilston on Jun 16<sup>th</sup> and Tiverton on Jul 24<sup>th</sup>. A Hoopoe was at Mollington on May 10<sup>th</sup>, a Wood Warbler at Puddington on May 5<sup>th</sup> and two Spotted Flycatchers at Farndon on May 19<sup>th</sup>.



### Congleton area

Five Common Scoters were at Astbury Mere on Jul 15<sup>th</sup>, Common Tern on Jun 20<sup>th</sup> and Osprey on Aug 9<sup>th</sup>. Red Kites were over Mow Cop on Jun 12<sup>th</sup> and Scholar Green on May 28<sup>th</sup>. Two Spotted Flycatchers were at Congleton on Jun 30<sup>th</sup>.

### Crewe area

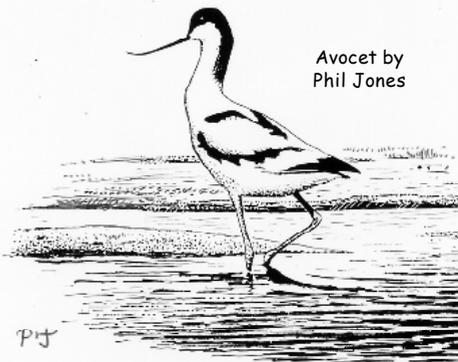
A Quail was at Sandbach on Jun 27<sup>th</sup>. Three Cuckoos were at Bickerton Hill on May 3<sup>rd</sup> and Jun 30<sup>th</sup> and a Turtle Dove was at Burleydam on Jul 27<sup>th</sup>. Two Turnstones were at Elton Hall Flash on May 4<sup>th</sup> with nine Green Sandpipers on Jul 21<sup>st</sup> and Wood Sandpiper on Aug 4<sup>th</sup> and Greenshank on Aug 14<sup>th</sup>. Two Common Terns were observed at Sandbach Flashes on various dates with a single Arctic Tern on EHF on May 4<sup>th</sup>. A Glossy Ibis was at EHF on May 26<sup>th</sup>. Red Kites were over Crewe on Jun 23<sup>rd</sup>, Fodens Flash on Jul 27<sup>th</sup> and Shavington on Jun 30<sup>th</sup>. A single Marsh Tit was at Bickerton Hill on May 27<sup>th</sup> and two Spotted Flycatchers were at Quaker's Coppice on Jun 27<sup>th</sup>.

### Ellesmere Port area

Two Quails were at Parkgate on Aug 7<sup>th</sup>. Wildfowl at BMW included: 10 Egyptian Geese on Aug 31<sup>st</sup> and two Garganeys on Jul 3<sup>rd</sup>. A Common Crane was at BMW on May 16<sup>th</sup>. Waders included: two Curlew Sandpipers at BMW on Jun 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> with Pectoral Sandpiper Aug 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>, Long-billed Dowitcher from Jul 25<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> with Wood Sandpiper on various dates with a max of 12 Spotted Redshanks on May 2<sup>nd</sup> whilst 25 Greenshanks were at Parkgate on Aug 1<sup>st</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>. A Bonaparte's Gull was at BMW on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, two Little Gulls on May 18<sup>th</sup> and two Sandwich Terns on Jun 6<sup>th</sup>. A Glossy Ibis was at BMW on May 23<sup>rd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup>, Bittern bred at BMW for the first time, four Cattle Egrets were at Burton Marsh on May 2<sup>nd</sup> with seven Great White Egrets on Aug 16<sup>th</sup>. An Osprey was at Ince on May 14<sup>th</sup>, two Red Kites were at BMW on Jun 3<sup>rd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> and Burton on May 27<sup>th</sup> and three Hobbies were here on Aug 29<sup>th</sup>. A Wood Warbler was at BMW on May 28<sup>th</sup> with Ring Ouzel at Parkgate on May 1<sup>st</sup>.

## Halton area

Up to five Ruddy Shelducks were on the Mersey in the Widnes area on various dates and two Common Scoters were at Hale on May 4<sup>th</sup>. 14 Avocets were in the Hale area on Jul 12<sup>th</sup>, 20+ Whimbrels were here on May 4<sup>th</sup>, two Turnstones on May 8<sup>th</sup>, a Curlew Sandpiper on May 3<sup>rd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> and nine Sanderlings on May 8<sup>th</sup> with a Little Stint on May 7<sup>th</sup> and a Wood Sandpiper on May 15<sup>th</sup> and Jun 5<sup>th</sup>. A single Little Gull was at Hale on Jun 10<sup>th</sup>, an Iceland Gull on the Mersey at Runcorn on May 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> with Caspian Gull on Jul 10<sup>th</sup>. A Common Tern was at Pickering's Pasture on May 14<sup>th</sup> with another at Wigg Island on Jun 12<sup>th</sup>. A Glossy Ibis was at Hale on Jun 6<sup>th</sup>, with up to four Spoonbills in the area during May and 27 Little Egrets at Wigg Island on Aug 7<sup>th</sup>. An Osprey was at Hale on Aug 8<sup>th</sup> and a Red Kite at Dutton on Jun 17<sup>th</sup>. Two Channel Wagtails were at Hale on Jul 23<sup>rd</sup>.



Avocet by  
Phil Jones

## Macclesfield area

A Quail was at Arclid SQ on Jun 27<sup>th</sup>. Water birds included: a Whooper Swan at Catchpenny Pool on May 27<sup>th</sup> and later Redes Mere on several dates in Jun, seven Egyptian Geese were at Tatton on Jul 18<sup>th</sup>, 34 Common Scoters at Lapwing Lane Pool on Jun 24<sup>th</sup> with six Black-necked Grebes at this site on Jul 25<sup>th</sup> and Slavonian Grebe at Acre Nook SQ on May 1<sup>st</sup>. Two Avocets were at Mere Farm SQ on Jul 10<sup>th</sup> and three Common Terns were at Tatton on Jul 10<sup>th</sup>. Ospreys were noted at Acre Nook SQ on Aug 29<sup>th</sup>, Lamaload Reservoir on May 28<sup>th</sup>, Redes Mere on May 19<sup>th</sup> and Rode Heath on Jul 18<sup>th</sup>, Red Kites were at Macclesfield Forest on Jun 16<sup>th</sup> and Chelford on Aug 20<sup>th</sup>. A Rose-coloured Starling was at Sutton Reservoir on Jun 13<sup>th</sup> and a single Pied Flycatcher was at Wildboardclough on May 16<sup>th</sup>.

## Vale Royal area

A single Quail was at Winsford on Aug 9<sup>th</sup>. Two Egyptian Geese were at Neumann's Flash on Jul 5<sup>th</sup>, with three Garganeys on May 10<sup>th</sup>, a male Ring-necked Duck was at Newchurch Common on May 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> and 16 Common Scoters were at Marbury CP on Jun 24<sup>th</sup>. A Black-necked Grebe was at Marbury CP on Jul 15<sup>th</sup> and Aug 23<sup>rd</sup>. Waders of note included: a late Golden Plover at Frodsham Marsh on May 31<sup>st</sup>, an American Golden Plover was here on Aug 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, 21 Whimbrels were at Rudheath on May 8<sup>th</sup>, six Bar-tailed Godwits at Frodsham Marsh on May 7<sup>th</sup> with c3000 Black-tailed Godwits on Aug 12<sup>th</sup>. A Turnstone was noted at Frodsham Marsh on Aug 7<sup>th</sup> with three Knots on Jul 31<sup>st</sup>, six Little Stints on May 6<sup>th</sup> and a Long-billed Dowitcher from Aug 3<sup>rd</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup>, two Wood Sandpipers on Jul 24<sup>th</sup> and Spotted Redshanks on several dates.

A Kittiwake was at Neumann's Flash on Aug 16<sup>th</sup>, single Little Gulls were at Frodsham Marsh on various dates during May and Aug, four Common Terns at Marbury CP on Jul 7<sup>th</sup>, a White-winged Black Tern at Ashton's Flash on Jul 21<sup>st</sup> and a Black Tern at Marbury CP on Aug 23<sup>rd</sup>. Three Spoonbills were at Frodsham Marsh on May 15<sup>th</sup>. An Osprey was at Frodsham Marsh for several weeks during Jul-Aug with others at Marbury CP on May 19<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, Middlewich on Jun 11<sup>th</sup> and Ashton's Flash on Aug 27<sup>th</sup>. A Red Kite was at Frodsham Marsh on May 25<sup>th</sup>, 31<sup>st</sup> and Jul 24<sup>th</sup>. Two Hobbies were at Comberbach on Aug 2<sup>nd</sup>. A Tree Pipit was at Marbury CP on Aug 12<sup>th</sup>.

## Warrington area

An Avocet appeared at Woolston Eyes on May 17<sup>th</sup> with Whimbrel on May 4<sup>th</sup>, nine Green Sandpipers on Aug 14<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>, a Wood Sandpiper on May 13<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and Aug 3<sup>rd</sup> and Greenshank on several dates. Three Sandwich Terns were at Norton Marsh on Jun 4<sup>th</sup>, nine Common Terns at Woolston Eyes on Jul 31<sup>st</sup> with an Arctic Tern on May 4<sup>th</sup>. An Osprey was at Gatewarth on Aug 28<sup>th</sup>, Marsh Harrier bred at Woolston Eyes for the first time, elsewhere a Red Kite was over Penketh on Jul 27<sup>th</sup>. Three Hobbies were at Risley Moss on Jun 9<sup>th</sup>. A Hoopoe was at Burtonwood on Jun 10<sup>th</sup> and two Tree Pipits were at Woolston Eyes on Aug 23<sup>rd</sup>.

## Wirral area

Two Quails were at Leasowe on Jul 3<sup>rd</sup>. A Brent Goose was at Hilbre on Jun 7<sup>th</sup> and the first returning bird was at New Brighton on Aug 7<sup>th</sup>. Waders included: a Collared Pratincole at Leasowe on May 14<sup>th</sup>, an American Golden Plover at Hoylake from Aug 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, a record 173 Whimbrels at Heswall on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 5730 Black-tailed Godwits at Caldy on Aug 26<sup>th</sup>, two Little Stints at Hoylake on Aug 24<sup>th</sup>, 240 Sanderlings there on Aug 21<sup>st</sup> and a Wood Sandpiper at Leasowe and Moreton, both on May 24<sup>th</sup>. Two Little Gulls were off Hilbre on May 29<sup>th</sup>, nine Mediterranean Gulls at Heswall on Jul 25<sup>th</sup>, with a possible Iceland Gull at Hoylake on May 23<sup>rd</sup>. 830 Sandwich Terns were at Hilbre on Jul 31<sup>st</sup>, two Little Terns at Hoylake on May 8<sup>th</sup> with 192 Common Terns on Aug 21<sup>st</sup>, four Arctic Terns at Wallasey on May 4<sup>th</sup>, Roseate Tern at Hoylake on Jul 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, whilst a possible Caspian Tern was at Hoylake on Jun 26<sup>th</sup> with Black Tern on Aug 24<sup>th</sup>. Two Arctic Skuas were off Hilbre on Aug 8<sup>th</sup>, Hoylake on 13<sup>th</sup> and Meols on 15<sup>th</sup>, 28 Guillemots off Hilbre on May 25<sup>th</sup> with Razorbill on Jul 6<sup>th</sup>.

75+ Manx Shearwaters were off Hilbre on May 25<sup>th</sup>, a Sooty Shearwater on Aug 28<sup>th</sup> and 72 Gannets on Jul 4<sup>th</sup>. A Spoonbill was at Hilbre on May 10<sup>th</sup>. 106 Little Egrets were at Heswall on Aug 14<sup>th</sup>. Ospreys were over Raby on May 18<sup>th</sup>, Leasowe on May 23<sup>rd</sup> and Heswall on Aug 12<sup>th</sup>, a Goshawk at West Kirby on Jun 7<sup>th</sup> and two Red Kites at Heswall on Jun 9<sup>th</sup>. A Hoopoe was at Hoylake on May 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> with another at Hilbre on Jul 21<sup>st</sup>, a Red-backed Shrike at Leasowe on Jun 1<sup>st</sup>, Wood Warbler at Leasowe on May 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> and Melodious Warbler at Hilbre on Jul 20<sup>th</sup>. Ring Ouzel was at Leasowe on May 1<sup>st</sup> and a late Redwing at Hilbre on Jul 1<sup>st</sup>. At least 20 Whinchats were at Leasowe on May 9<sup>th</sup> and four Rock Pipits at Hilbre on May 27<sup>th</sup>.

**Tony Parker, 41 The Park, Penketh, Warrington, Cheshire, WA5 2SG**  
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**Thanks/acknowledgments to:** Dee Estuary Website, SECOS, WECG, Dermot Smith (Mersey WeBS), NNHS, Frodsham Marsh Birdlog, *Birdwatching* Magazine, Manchester Bird Forum, whatsapp groups (Cheshire, Marbury and Sandbach), Rob Cockbain, Bill Bellamy and everyone else who passed records on.



Little Gulls by Phil Jones

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# SITUATIONS VACANT

## ***“THE SOCIETY NEEDS YOU”***

### **NON-EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS**

**For further information, please contact:**

**Ted Lock Email: [secretary@cawos.org](mailto:secretary@cawos.org) Tel: 01625 540466**

# Sites to Watch

## BURTON MERE WETLANDS AND DEE MARSHES



It's been a good autumn for scarce and rare waders at Burton Mere Wetlands: a Long-billed Dowitcher delighted visitors from 25<sup>th</sup> July until 30<sup>th</sup>, closely followed by a Pectoral Sandpiper on 6<sup>th</sup> August that was last seen on 8<sup>th</sup>. Star bird, however, was a Wilson's Phalarope that arrived on 21<sup>st</sup> September, the first for BMW and the first for Cheshire for over 30 years. Well over 900 birders

came to see the bird, resulting in our busiest day ever on 22<sup>nd</sup> with nearly 400 visitors on that one day! Before leaving the Dee, the phalarope relocated to the Boathouse Flashes at Parkgate for its last day on 24<sup>th</sup>.

Our Bittern pair managed to fledge at least one, although young were never seen together, so it was almost impossible to come up with a correct figure of the number of fledged birds. Wintering birds are already building up to impressive numbers, with at least 8,500 Pink-footed Geese roosting on mudflats off Burton and Parkgate Marshes each night. Pintails are in good numbers too, with 500 counted together on Bridge Pool in late September.

A grey, sub-adult male Hen Harrier is being seen regularly on the marsh and may well be one of last year's over-winterers. One of these was colour-ringed and we managed to track it down as a bird that was fledged at Texel in The Netherlands. We had an update from the Dutch ringer again this year to say that this male was back at Texel and was provisioning for two nesting females. But unfortunately, the colour ring had fallen off during the breeding season, meaning that we wouldn't be able to confirm if he returned to the Dee again this winter.

All the work to refresh and renew the ditches on the wet grassland at BMW was undertaken as planned late summer, with a few new ditches installed too. All with a bespoke piece of kit known as a soil spreader, which creates the very shallow ditches that provide perfect feeding habitat for wader chicks. The new scrape was also created adjacent to the Border Hide that should help to bring birds closer to the new hide.

The next development that is planned for BMW is the installation of a café, which, all going well, will be installed in the early part of 2022. Conscious of not wanting to increase visitor numbers dramatically, this new café will only be of use to members and paying visitors who will continue to access the reserve through the visitor centre as today.

**Graham Jones, Site Manager at RSPB Dee Estuary Reserve**

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## HOCKENHULL PLATTS CWT RESERVE 1972-2021

When I look back after almost 50 years of recording at this special wetland site, I am very conscious of the changes to bird sightings and populations. This wetland site, part of the Grosvenor Estate, was created primarily on the fields of a former dairy farm, with a newly-planted stand of poplar trees, planted to eventually be a source of matchsticks, at the edge. The ancient highway from Chester to London across a causeway and three medieval packhorse bridges over the River Gowy ran through the reserve. In the early years Cuckoos were almost ever present and bred on the site together with Curlew, Common and Jack Snipe, Skylark and Yellow Wagtail. Wheatear, Whinchat and Stonechat were regular visitors, and breeding birds included good numbers of Willow, Sedge, Garden and Grasshopper Warblers as well as Common and Lesser Whitethroat. Willow Warblers largely disappeared from the site by 1997, their territories being taken over by Chiffchaff and Blackcap, and now excitingly in the early 2020s, by Cettis and Reed Warblers. Reed Buntings have always been common at Hockenhull with up to 10 pairs recorded in the 1987 BTO Census. The hedgerows were always full of Tree Sparrows, Greenfinches, Bullfinches, Linnets and Yellowhammers, and the wet meadow was a regular haunt of Tawny and

Barn Owls, with Little Owls found in the boundary oaks between the reserve and Christleton. The surrounding meadows also hosted hundreds of Lapwing with good numbers of Golden Plover in the autumn. How things have changed!

The most significant change was that of farming practices, from dairy to arable with the coming of the Common Agricultural Policy, and the building of a reservoir to service those new farm crops. Much later the digging of a huge lake on the Tarvin side of the reserve alongside the Gowy has completely changed the nature of the site. Although several attempts have been made to graze the reserve by horses, cattle and sheep, the vegetation has continued to grow and even the big 'drier' meadow is now head high with reeds, rushes and grasses in summer months. Gone are the stands of Common Spotted, Early Purple and Northern Marsh Orchids and even many of the smaller flowering plants such as Ragged Robin, Lady Smock and Burr Reed have been taken over by this enormous growth. Water levels have fluctuated but the last five years of excessive rainfall has seen water under all three bridges many times, and the whole reserve under water for weeks on end. There has been a great increase in the number of species of damsel and dragonflies, with a similar increase in butterfly species until 2019. Otters now regularly breed on the site, and the new lake has attracted a wide variety of wildfowl. Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Wigeon, Teal, Pintail, Shoveler, Tufted Duck, Mandarin and the occasional Goldeneye are present, and we have even had Bewick and Whooper Swans joining a small local Mute population. Birds of prey, relatively rare in the 1970s, are now common with daily sightings of Buzzard, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, with occasional sightings of Hobby, Red Kite, Marsh Harrier and Peregrine Falcon. One of the most rewarding experiences of late has been the return of good numbers of Lapwing, often seen in their hundreds, roosting on the island and displaying over the lake and surrounding fields. They have been accompanied by up to four pairs of Oystercatchers, and lots of geese. Greylag and Canada Geese are regular visitors, but the most exciting change has been the daily visits by up to 3,000 Pink-footed Geese, which fly over in V-shaped skeins, with skein after skein following with excited calling from group to group. Grey Heron, Little Egret, Cormorant and a variety of gulls are almost ever present on the Gowy or near the lake.

The reserve has always had lots of breeding pairs of Blue, Great and Long-tailed Tits and the poplars are home to several pairs of Great Spotted Woodpeckers, Treecreepers and Goldcrests. Spotted Flycatchers, once a common sight, are sadly now quite rare, but numbers of thrushes are increasing, with Song and Mistle Thrush breeding on the reserve, and good numbers of wintering Fieldfare and Redwing seen. Kingfisher and Mandarin Duck have made attempts to breed in the plantation, but stoats, and grey squirrels probably deter these. A Kingfisher did build a nest in the bank of the Gowy, and successfully bred young in 2016, despite the nest collapsing, but sightings in the last two years have been rare.

Thanks to Joe O'Hanlon, John Ball, David Hiley and the late Vincent Tonge for their sightings on the reserve.

**David Cummings**

**Please note** that the Hockenhull Platts Nature Reserve is managed by the Cheshire Wildlife Trust and parts of it are not open to the public. However, good views of the meadows, River Gowy and the more distant lake are available from the public right-of-way which runs through it. For more information visit <https://www.cheshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/nature-reserves/hockenhull-platts>.

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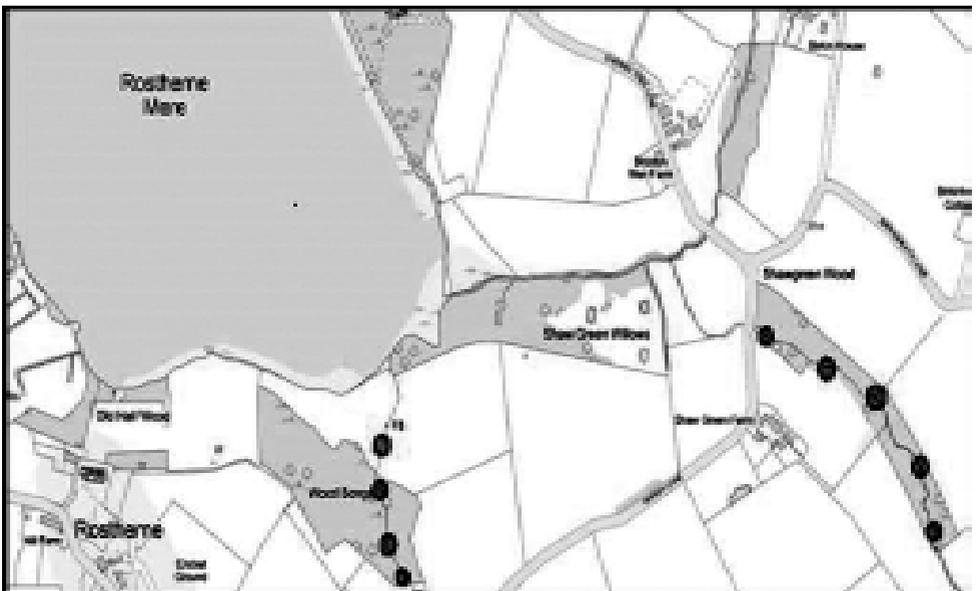
## **SECOND PHASE OF THE ROSTHERNE MERE NNR WETLAND ENHANCEMENT PROJECT**

During September 2021 work started on the creation of a series of ponds, scrapes, bunds and leaky dams in the southern section of the NNR near Shaw Green Willows and Marsh Lane.

The maps below show the location of the new bunds and ponds. The focus of the second phase was Old Meadow to the east of Shaw Green Willows where a number of new ponds and scrapes have been dug with retaining earth banks. Several existing ponds in the adjacent Mere Meadow have also been desilted. Work was ongoing during the time of writing but Mallard, Teal, Grey Heron and Snipe have already dropped in to take a look at the new habitat.



In addition, a series of leaky dams have been constructed within several watercourses flowing into the Mere and Blackburn's Brook to slow flow and increase silt deposition before water enters the Mere. During high and intense rainfall events, such as occurred during January 2021, water flows back up Blackburn's Brook towards the Mere which is against the usual direction of flow. This phenomenon brings potential pollutants and litter into the Mere from the River Bollin catchment. The Mere then fills from both Rostherne Brook and Blackburn's Brook and acts as a sink for nutrients. Extensive littering of the shoreline also often occurs as the Mere fills.



The first phase of the project included the creation of 23 pools and scrapes in Dolls Meadow, the construction of leaky dams in Rostherne Brook and new ponds in Mere Field (as reported in the July *Bird News*). The Wetland Enhancement Project will greatly help strip nutrients out of the watercourses by slowing down flows which will ultimately improve water quality in Mere. Furthermore, both flora and fauna will be greatly enhanced by the increase in new habitats created by the project.

**Bill Bellamy**

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## **TATTON PARK**

I have been asked to do a regular feature for *Bird News* from Tatton Park, something I am more than willing to do and hopefully members will find it of interest.

There have been quite a few successes over the breeding season. The heronry at Higmere seems stable with thirteen pairs breeding this year. Some lucky birders got to witness Kingfishers fledging from a nest. It was also a pleasant sight to see three Barn Owl chicks in one of the many nest boxes that I have put up in the park. We did a release scheme here many years ago releasing chicks from Muncaster Castle in the estate. They have been regular ever since and the rough grassland in many parts of the estate provides good vole habitat. Little Owls are now far less common. A Goosander with nine chicks on one of the streams was also an unusual sighting at Tatton.

Black-necked Grebe and a Little Egret were all notable for Tatton and a regular sighting of a Hobby on the dead tree at the back of Melchett Mere proved of interest to visitors.

A Wheatear on the Mill Pool track was a sign of things starting to move through again in mid-September. As we move into the winter period, wildfowl numbers and variety will increase on the meres. A Goldeneye has already been seen here in early September. The rushes around the edges of the meres are good places to look for Stonechats. The beech trees along Beech Avenue and Rostherne Drive are good places to look for Bramblings.

By November the deer rut will be coming to an end, some of it has been filmed for a wildlife documentary out next year that we have been assisting with. The rangers will feed the deer daily with carrots right through the winter period to ensure that they maintain condition ready for spring.

**Darren Morris, Tatton Park Ranger**

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# **Ringling News**

Ringling plays an important part in developing our knowledge of birds. In this feature we invite ringling groups, or individual ringling, active in Cheshire and Wirral to contribute their own accounts of their activities. In general, the idea is that these should provide a means of updating local birders on the groups' work - both by way of information about birds ringling or recovered, and news of other events (or incidents). Future contributions will be welcomed.

## **HILBRE BIRD OBSERVATORY (HIBO)**

### **Ringling July to September 2021**

The summer on Hilbre was viewed in the past as an unimportant time on the island, a time for bird observatory members to attend to other things. This year was different and members attended as frequently as they did in the spring migration period. Thank goodness they did, that 3-month period was as eventful as any other period in the island's development.

It was stated in the last Hilbre report for CAWOS that Linnets had done well, breeding productivity was high. It turned out that this was the best Linnet breeding season since records began, a great result for this red-listed species holding its own on Hilbre. Other breeding birds did well too

with Blackbirds producing several broods and the Rock Pipits were shown to be resident, ringing recoveries of adults demonstrated this, and they were productive with many young establishing themselves round the islands.

On 1<sup>st</sup> July a juvenile Cuckoo was caught and ringed, this was the first since 2013. What a start to the summer! Juvenile Whitethroat, Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Song Thrush and Grasshopper Warbler were all caught and ringed. The first Willow Warbler after the spring migration was caught on 16<sup>th</sup> July; was this post-juvenile dispersal or migration? A Great-spotted Woodpecker, a juvenile, was caught and ringed. This was the third for the island, the first arriving in 2015. Then it was 20<sup>th</sup> July.

On 20<sup>th</sup> a Melodious Warbler was caught and ringed. This was the first since 1994 and the third for the island overall. A day later a Hoopoe turned up, paid a brief visit to the island but to members' and visitors' frustration it remained on the west of the island and avoided all the trapping areas.

Along with all this excitement 14<sup>th</sup> July brought a remarkable event. A Redwing was caught and ringed. The bird was an adult and was undertaking a full moult. Redwings do not generally spend the summer in the UK and their full moult usually takes place after a breeding attempt. What had that bird been up to and where had it been when it was up to whatever it was up to?!

August found the activity on the island unabated, not quite the excitement of July but nevertheless a southern migrant hawk dragonfly was a first for the island. The Hilbre record was a confirmation that this dragonfly is expanding its range northwards. A juvenile Redstart and Stonechat were both ringed at the beginning of August and nominate race Wheatears were also caught and ringed. The Wheatears represented long-distance migrants as did the Whitethroats and Willow Warblers that were also ringed in August. These long-distance migrants will have bred in the UK unlike most of the Wheatears that were ringed in September. These were birds of the Greenland race which usually breed in Iceland, Greenland or Canada. Hilbre has more years where no Greenland race Wheatears are caught in autumn than years where that race of birds are caught.

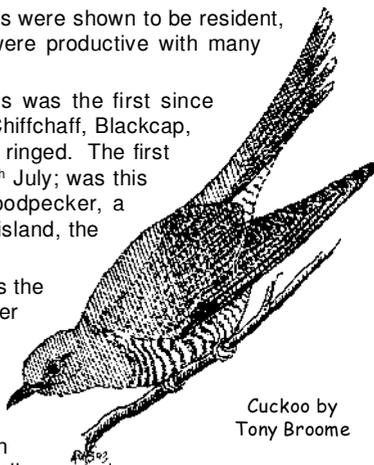
Hilbre was part of Franz Bairlein's Wheatear network as was David Hussell from the Long Point Bird observatory. Both Franz and David attached geolocators to Wheatears; Franz had 3 geolocators recovered from Wheatears breeding in Alaska and David had 1 geocator recovered from a bird he had ringed in Iqaluit in Canada. Geolocators are reasonably good at identifying longitude but not very good at identifying latitude, especially at the time of the equinox when Canadian Wheatears migrate across the Atlantic. David explained that his geocator recovery showed that his Wheatear had crossed the Atlantic in 4 days but he did not feel that his data could reliably identify where in Europe the Wheatear landed.

Following on from David Hussell's data, it seems likely that his Canadian Wheatears that are on their way to their wintering grounds in West Africa are affected by weather conditions over the Atlantic, in particular hurricanes in and around the Caribbean and their northern aftermath. In years where there are no hurricanes at this time of year the Wheatears from Canada/Greenland/Iceland make landfall in Europe somewhere south of the UK and do not turn up on Hilbre. In years where there is hurricane activity at the right/wrong time, as in 2021, Wheatears are pushed further north than they would like and land in the UK, hence their arrival at Hilbre.

There is probably no simple explanation of why the summer of 2021 produced so many interesting and unexpected ringing records on Hilbre. The increased effort by members during the period probably accounted for some of the records, but there may have been a better than average breeding season in the UK that meant more birds were moving about either on migration or on post-juvenile dispersal. Improvements in the UK breeding season may be a result of global warming. The unexpected number of Greenland race Wheatears ringed was probably just a result of the weather over the Atlantic, but this weather effect could not have been responsible for the increased number of other long-distance migrants or relatively sedentary birds around the island.

It will be interesting to see what next summer brings.

**John Elliott, on behalf of Hilbre Bird Observatory**



Cuckoo by  
Tony Broome

## CHESHIRE SWAN STUDY GROUP

*As from the end of this year I shall be retiring as leader of the Cheshire Swan Study Group. Ringing will continue as usual and all sightings are welcome.*

Since my last report in June, the Swan Study Group has ringed a total of 47 swans including 30 cygnets, 1 second-year and 16 adults. These included 2 controls and 6 retraps.

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

- Acre Dell Pools, nr Congleton: 38 on 20<sup>th</sup> Jun, 47 on 15<sup>th</sup> Jul, 31 on 15<sup>th</sup> Aug and 36 on 15<sup>th</sup> Sep.
- Bottom Flash, Winsford: 63 on 8<sup>th</sup> Jun, 40 on 22<sup>nd</sup> Jul, 38 on 16<sup>th</sup> Aug and 61 on 12<sup>th</sup> Sep.
- Burleydam pool, nr Whitchurch: 12 on 13<sup>th</sup> Jun, 18 on 11<sup>th</sup> Jul, 14 on 29<sup>th</sup> Aug and 12 on 19<sup>th</sup> Sep.
- Comber Mere, nr Whitchurch: 25 on 13<sup>th</sup> Jun and 9 on 25<sup>th</sup> Jul.
- Doddington Mere, nr Nantwich: 60 on 21<sup>st</sup> Jun, 61 on 15<sup>th</sup> Jul, 60 on 4<sup>th</sup> Aug and 41 on 8<sup>th</sup> Sep.
- Spike Island, Widnes: 105 on 7<sup>th</sup> Jun, 69 on 31<sup>st</sup> Jul, 118 on 8<sup>th</sup> Aug and 74 on 12<sup>th</sup> Sep.

**Breeding Season:** A good season with more pairs being sighted.

**Movements:** Greylag Goose 61C green-ringed on 14-9-20 as a gosling at Marbury CP, Northwich seen on 12-7-21 at Strathclyde CP, North Lanarkshire = 295 kms.

The *Cheshire Swan Study Group Report* for 2021 will be available to view early 2022 on the website (under Reports): <http://cheshireswanstudygroup.wordpress.com>

**Sightings** of all swans, geese and Mallard should be sent to David Cookson at [cheshireswans@gmail.com](mailto:cheshireswans@gmail.com) giving details of place (6-fig map ref), colour/character combination of ring and, if with other birds, total number present in flock. All sightings will receive a printout of the history for the relevant bird(s).

**David Cookson, Group Leader, 70 Rope Lane, Rope, Crewe, CW2 6RD**  
**Tel: 01270 567526. Email: [cheshireswans@gmail.com](mailto:cheshireswans@gmail.com)**

## MID-CHESHIRE BARN OWL GROUP

The summer months have been relatively kind for the Barn Owls. Yes, there have been periods of 'extreme' weather, hot and wet, but we've been through these periods before, and the Barn Owls continue to survive. The important thing is food, and food seems to have been relatively abundant this year, with plenty of voles, shrews and the likes.

Our problem has been mainly related to the fallout from the coronavirus lockdowns, with box checking, for Barn Owl breeding activity, continuing to be restricted, but not quite as much as last year. Our box checking seems to imply recorded results which are, on first review, slightly down on both 2019 and 2020. This, like 2020, is most probably due to the fact that we haven't been able to check as many boxes, in both 2020 and 2021, as we did in 2019. Consequently, overall, 2021 looks like being a reasonable year for Barn Owls in Cheshire.

If there's any concern, it relates to the next couple of years. The Barn Owl's food is mainly voles and shrews. These have a breeding cycle which usually results in a very low breeding year every 4 to 5 years. We are due such a year soon, and this will result in a low Barn Owl breeding year. We wait with bated breath.

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

To repeat our usual concerns and plea - if you have seen any Barn Owls recently, please could you let us know, either direct or by our sighting report on the website [www.cheshirebarnowls.co.uk](http://www.cheshirebarnowls.co.uk); as you will appreciate it is important that we know where the birds are regularly seen.

**John Mycock, Chairman Tel: 07970 235437 Email: [cheshirebarnowls@gmail.com](mailto:cheshirebarnowls@gmail.com)**



# Conservation News

A round-up of news from the CAWOS conservation representatives, who aim to keep an eye on what is going on in their area. If you have any issues or concerns then do contact your local representative (by letter or email preferably). They may be able to help or should know someone who can! The relevant contact information is listed at the end.

## CONSERVATION NEWS FROM STEVE TURNER

I hope you have all had a good summer if you can call it a summer, what strange weather we have had. Firstly I must tug on your heart strings, Chester, Congleton and Macclesfield areas are still short of a Conservation Rep. This post is not rocket science I know we all have little free time, this small job does not take up much of that precious free time it is a case of being a contact point for members who have a problem on their patch that they need a hand with, it also entails looking at your local paper to see if any developments are in the pipeline and if your own local paper is like ours at Northwich that will not take very long at all. All developments need an environmental survey carried out before planning permission is granted, the rep's job is to give the society the heads-up before the bulldozers and diggers move in. We have a good network of knowledge in our society and if these plans are brought to our attention someone can attend any planning meeting to put our views forward, before people move into the houses being built, as we all know if there is a piece of land empty some person will try and build on it. The post of conservation rep does not take up much time but is very important to be able to strike whilst the iron is hot. If any of you out there can spare a small amount of time please let me know. We have a good team but we need to build on it. Here endeth the sermon. All I ask is give it some thought please.

Here at Weaverham we have had a mixed year, Starlings and House Sparrows have done well with plenty of juveniles about and Greenfinches and Goldfinches all coming to my feeding station with lots of young in tow. This year the amount of seed taken has not let up, normally I get a bit of a break in the frequency of time between fill-ups, this year I have been filling up every day. Swifts in our part of Weaverham have been down to one pair instead of the usual 5-6, but they managed to fledge three young. House Martins did not appear till the middle of June and then only two pairs, they managed five young which they were training and they left us last week [mid-September].

Whilst you are out and about please keep your eyes peeled the DARK ONES are still out there they have not gone away. If you see something that does not feel right it probably isn't. Please obtain all the details you can BUT DO NOT PUT YOURSELVES at risk, use your optics, we all have them I hope, and note down any descriptions and car numbers in your field note books, again we all carry one or is it just me?

I hope you all have a good autumn and winter and get that lifer we all seem to just miss.

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

## CONSERVATION REPRESENTATIVES

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

## OUR DEE ESTUARY CELEBRATES FUNDING AWARD

Cheshire Wildlife Trust is delighted to announce they have been awarded funding through the National Lottery Heritage Fund to deliver a major cross-border partnership conservation project focusing on the Dee Estuary. The project aims to inspire coastal communities on the Wirral and in Flintshire and Denbighshire about the wildlife of the Dee Estuary.



Cheshire Wildlife Trust is leading the project on behalf of the Tidal Dee Catchment Partnership, which brings together a range of local organisations with an interest in the estuary.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund has awarded £540,100 towards the £900,000 project that will benefit the estuary over the next three years.

The project has big ambitions and will be delivering projects across a broad range of themes: such as improving water quality, protecting wading birds on the estuary, raising awareness of the wildlife significance of the estuary, citizen science recording and practical conservation work.

One of the first activities to get going is the winter wading bird training sessions for volunteers and recreational users on the estuary. The project is looking for people knowledgeable about waders on the estuary to help deliver these training sessions. If you would like to help please contact:

**Sarah Bennett, Development Manager, Cheshire Wildlife Trust**  
email: [sbennett@cheshirewt.org.uk](mailto:sbennett@cheshirewt.org.uk)

**NB** More information can be found on [www.cheshirewildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.cheshirewildlifetrust.org.uk) under 'News'.

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## REWILDING HOYLAKE LANGFIELDS (A FANTASY?)

*This article was first published in the April 2021 On-line Newsletter of Dee Estuary Birding ([www.deeestuary.co.uk](http://www.deeestuary.co.uk))*

**Rewilding with species restoration is a solution to three crises facing humanity: climate change, biodiversity loss and wellbeing.**

**Amy-Jane Beer (Ref 1).**

Those who live locally will have probably realised by now that the Hoylake Golf Resort, first proposed in 2004, is now dead in the water. It may not have been officially cancelled by Wirral Council but the political will has evaporated and the money has most certainly dried up. As the proposal included building houses on Green Belt land it never had much public support and I always felt that it was just one councillor's vanity project and he has now retired. So what do we do with these 295 acres?

To me it seems an ideal opportunity for a rewilding project on land which the Council told us, when justifying the Golf Resort, is low grade and unproductive. But what exactly is rewilding and why is it necessary? Several books have been written answering those very questions and I can't recommend too highly the ones mentioned in the References/Further Reading section below (*Refs. 2, 3 and 4*). In this short article I'll try and give a brief summary.

In this country we pride ourselves on our great conservation societies and organisations, such as the RSPB, Wildlife Trusts, BTO etc, which have large memberships, many active volunteers and enthusiastic and knowledgeable employees; they are the envy of the world. It is ironic, therefore, that our countryside is one of the most impoverished and degraded in the world with our wildlife often clinging on in depleted remnants of barely suitable habitats. It's as though somebody in power sat down at the end of World War II and drew up a plan on the most efficient way to destroy our wildlife, and has been carrying that out ever since with great success as there have undoubtedly been catastrophic declines of both insects and birds over that period. Having depressed you all with that here is the good news, there is light at the end of the tunnel with rewilding becoming more and more part of mainstream thinking and with many notable success stories (*see Ref 5*).

Rewilding is about restoring and repairing the land and has resulted in changing the way we think about how nature works, and what happened in the past. Take plant succession for example - we've always been told that if you leave an area of shallow fresh water to its own devices it will silt up, first turning into reedbeds before scrub invades followed by trees and it will eventually end up as closed canopy woodland. We've also been taught that the pre-historic Wild Wood in the British Isles consisted of closed canopy woodland from coast to coast, and I quote "8,000 years ago, Britain had so many trees that a squirrel could go from *John O'Groats* to *Land's End* without touching the ground". But we now know that is all just baloney. Many recent studies and direct observation of rewilded areas have proved without doubt that it just didn't happen like that - there would have been a whole mosaic of habitats including extensive grasslands and wetlands. Benedict MacDonald (author of *Rebirding*) reckons around 20% of the land would have been underwater in one form or another. So how can the theory of plant succession be so wrong? Because it takes no account of the huge impact made by animals. To quote Dutch ecologist Frans Vera "Animals are drivers of habitat creation, the impetus behind biodiversity. Without them you have impoverished, static, monotonous habitats with declining species. It's the reason so many of our efforts at conservation are failing".

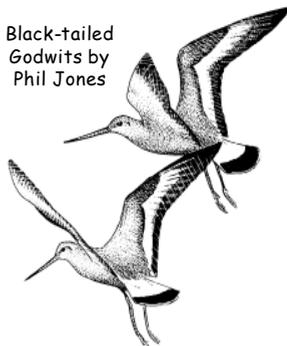
You will hear the phrase 'Keystone Species' again and again with rewilding and these mainly fall into the category of herbivorous animals such as cattle, horses, deer and beavers, and add to that the omnivorous pig. Deer and beavers are, of course wild animals, and in the 'wild wood' there would also have been Aurochs and bison (wild cattle), Tarpan (wild horses) and wild boars, but where wild animals such as these aren't available then hardy old domestic breeds such as Longhorn cattle, Exmoor ponies and Tamworth pigs are a good substitute. It is these animals that in their different ways - grazing, browsing, digging and dam building - create habitat diversity and with it abundant wildlife with birds, insects, wild flowers and the rest (*Ref 6*). Rewilding is often associated with reintroducing species but it's more about providing conditions in order that nature can be left to create the right habitats so that species can make a comeback, either naturally or through reintroduction schemes.

What I had in mind for the Hoylake Langfields would be to make them into a Nature Reserve, so by definition that means rewilding them but exactly how that would be achieved I would leave to the experts. At 295 acres these fields may be a bit small for a full-on rewilding project, which are normally associated with areas of land consisting of several thousand acres (for example the Knepp estate is 3,500 acres), but it is certainly large enough to make a fabulous nature reserve being slightly larger than both RSPB Burton Mere Wetlands and the wild area of WWT Martin Mere. These low-lying fields with a high water table, often flooding in winter, would be turned into wetlands with reedbeds, wader scrapes, deeper lagoons for ducks and geese, damp fields and islands for breeding waders and there would still be plenty of room for woodland, scrub and wild flower meadows.

With the Dee Estuary just to the west and north Wirral Shore and Liverpool Bay just to the north the reserve would be in an ideal place, many birds already fly over these fields every day as they travel between the two areas, as well as passage migrants flying down the coastline. With the proximity of the West Kirby and Hoylake high tide roosts the reserve would itself become a major roost site and refuge for waders, which are often disturbed by the many dogs and walkers on the beaches. Such a wetland reserve would also attract exciting birds such as Short-eared Owls, Hen Harriers, Marsh Harriers and Bitterns.

Currently permanent shallow fresh water is in very short supply in North Wirral but to get an idea of the potential of this site I give two examples of what happens when shallow fresh water is available. The first is the 'Gilroy Scrape'. This was a permanent flood caused by a blocked drain which was in a small paddock of just five acres on the southern edge of Hoylake Langfields next to Gilroy housing estate. Unfortunately it was drained in 2016, but up until then it regularly held around 5% of the entire Icelandic race of Black-tailed Godwits as they moulted here in late summer and autumn, which meant it was one of the most important sites for this sub-species in Europe with numbers typically reaching two to four thousand (*Ref 7*). It also attracted up to a hundred Redshanks and Common Snipes plus regular visits of Common, Green and Wood Sandpiper

Black-tailed Godwits by Phil Jones



on passage, as well as a good selection of wildfowl including Garganey, Shelduck and Shoveler. The other site is also just another small paddock of around five acres. This was basically an area of wasteland on the edge of Moreton which last year (2020) was dug out to create a flash to attract birds, and within weeks it was doing just that. In the summer there were huge numbers of hirundines feeding overhead and this last winter (2020/21) there were up to 62 Shoveler, three Water Rail, over 20 Common Snipe, 35 Mallard, three Tufted Duck, several Teal and a Greenshank. As the saying goes - provide the habitat and the birds will come!

Although creating some fantastic habitat for wildlife, particularly birds, would be a primary aim of any reserve I envisage education to be just as important. Situated next to Hoylake and West Kirby there are several schools within an easy walk of the Hoylake Langfields, with many more schools just a short drive away in the rest of Wirral and, indeed, the whole of Merseyside. This would be an ideal opportunity to provide world class wildlife educational and research facilities something along the lines of WWT Martin Mere which has over 10,000 schoolchildren visiting each year (Ref 8). It would also be a boost for the tourist economy and visitors would be able to come by train, as well as car, with Hoylake Station immediately adjacent to the proposed reserve.

All this, of course, is currently just a fantasy and I'm not aware of any serious plans for the Hoylake Langfields although I'm not the first to propose some kind of Wetland Centre (see Ref 9). But with rewilding becoming more and more in the public eye and Wirral Council having 295 acres of land they don't know what to do with, you never know what might happen.

### Further Reading/References

1. Amy-Jane Beer, Lost and Found, *Waterlife* (WWT Magazine) 214, November 2020/February 2021.
2. Isabella Tree, *Wilding*, Picador, 2018 (about the remarkable wilding experiment which has been taking place on the Knepp Estate, West Sussex).
3. Benedict MacDonald, *Rebirding - Restoring Britain's Wildlife*, Pelagic Publishing, 2019.
4. Derek Gow, *Bringing Back the Beaver*, Chelsea Green, 2020.
5. Rewilding Britain Website - "Think Big. Act Wild."  
<https://www.rewildingbritain.org.uk/>
6. K. H. Hodder et al., Large herbivores in the wildwood and modern naturalistic grazing systems, *English Nature (Report 648)*, 2005.
7. Richard Smith, The Godwits of Gilroy, September 2015 *Dee Estuary Newsletter*, <http://www.deeestuary.co.uk/news0915.htm>.
8. Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust - The Learning Zone, <https://learningzone.wwt.org.uk/>
9. Proposals for a Hoylake Eco-Golf Resort, Wildfowl and Wetland Centre; a leaflet published by Hoylake Village Life in 2011 and revised in 2017: [http://hoylakevision.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Eco-resort\\_Layout\\_1\\_2017\\_UPDATE\\_LOWRES.pdf](http://hoylakevision.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Eco-resort_Layout_1_2017_UPDATE_LOWRES.pdf)

**Richard Smith**

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## FIDDLERS FERRY POWER STATION

Fiddlers Ferry power station is expected to make way for 1,750 new homes, it has been reported. The Widnes plant closed in March 2020 as part of the Government's plans to phase out coal by 2025. The scheme was initially earmarked for 'employment use' in Warrington Borough Council's draft Local Plan in 2019. However, a revised version now sets out a goal to transform the site into a 'new sustainable residential community'. It also hopes to create a 'major ecological and recreational resource' with multiple uses, with warehouses and low carbon energy production also planned. Green belt east of the power station would be removed to allow for the construction of 860 of the homes, while another large expanse of green belt containing lagoons previously used for cooling the plant and storing ash would also be released to accommodate 900 properties. The remaining lagoons and land will be 'enhanced to provide an ecological and major new recreational resource'. The Local Plan said more than half of the wider 324-hectare extended site being eyed for redevelopment under the Fiddlers Ferry proposals would be 'devoted to parkland and recreational space'. WBC said the homes would be supported by a new primary school, health facility and shops.

**Tony Parker**

# CAWOS News

I hope you have all had a good summer's birding, which seems some time ago as autumn is now upon us with darker nights as the clocks go back this coming weekend. I had reason to go out last evening around 6pm and was pleased to hear Tawny Owls actively calling to one another, starting to think about their breeding season which is not that far away now.

Bynow you may have read my Guest Editorial in this issue of *Bird News*, highlighting how CAWOS is desperately short of people to help run the society at the level of the main committee (Council). At least six issues of *Bird News* (ie 2+ years!) have had advertisements seeking help from members, with only one person coming forward. Many hands make light work we are told and this is what we need. The help will not be too onerous and people can do as little or as much as they wish. For example, do you have accounting or secretarial skills? Could you chair our five evening meetings a year (lasting about 2 hours each), four by Zoom and one face to face? **The Society cannot continue if we do not soon get replacements for some key positions on the committee.**

**Current membership** stands at 308 with one new member since the last issue of *Bird News*, Joe O'Hanlon from Chester.

**CAWOS Council** has only met once, in September, since my last update: financial matters were, as always, high on the agenda and the Treasurer circulated, ahead of time, spreadsheets of income and expenditure. Subscription income in 2021 was down by £131 at £4,699, reflecting a small decline in membership, which is partially off-set by slightly higher Gift Aid. The number of the *Bird Reports* sold is more difficult to ascertain as many outlets were closed due to Covid-19. We need to understand this situation better. General overheads are lower than budgeted for due to the absence of room charges and the removal of cover insurance for our equipment. *Bird News* and the *Bird Report* production costs were within budget, but postal charges for the *Bird Report* were £206 higher than budget. Overall, the Society finances are in good shape.

The **indoor meeting programme** for the rest of 2021 is in place and details are in this issue of *Bird News*.

**The website** has been revamped with a new front page, and is now more interesting and easier for people to search. One suggestion was that we might consider having a regular update on birds seen in the county. In theory we could, but we would need somebody to take it on.

**The 2020 Bird Report** is under way, thanks to Phil Hampson who took over the collation of bird records not submitted into BirdTrack, the retrieval of all the records from BirdTrack, and sending the data out to the 13 compilers. Andy Livermore has been a great help in rewriting the guidelines for compilers and analysing some of the data and putting it in a format to make life easier for the compilers. Mark Woodhead has collected a large number of photographs of birds in the county ready for selection for the report. Decisions need to be made on possible dates for typesetting, but will have to wait until we have all the sections for the Systematic List.

Hugh Pulsford, the County Recorder, could not attend our recent meeting, but said no rarities were reported in the county since the last report. He has set up a **Scarce and Rare County Bird WhatsApp group**, so that members of the Rarities Committee can follow up quickly on any sightings. On the Monitoring or Surveying front we have had no requests from the BTO and we are unable to run any within the county due to lack of resources to organise and plan them.

Rostherne NNR has the Boyd Memorial Observatory and CAWOS has a contract with Natural England to look after the place and provide annual bird records for the reserve. A sub-committee of CAWOS, with several dedicated members, does this. HS2 is scheduled to run along the north side of the reserve which will cause upheaval and disturbance. In addition, we have just learned that a service station and hotel is planned for the M56 at junction 7 and this is an added **conservation concern** which needs our attention. Another current conservation issue is the expected start of building at Mere Farm Quarry as it is developed into a water park. There is no news from the Habitat and Conservation Management Group at Frodsham Marsh, but they only meet twice a year now. What is the current situation at Rudheath Lime Beds? Have the two beds

been removed and is the mitigation that was agreed happening in the rebuilding? We need to follow up on this. We have members on the Dee Estuary Conservation Group and the Mersey Estuary Conservation Group. We have no new reports but a meeting is scheduled this month for the DECG.

Hopefully this gives members an idea of the type of issues we face with our depleted committee.

**Ted Lock, CAWOS Secretary**

## **MEMBERSHIP NEWS**

2022 Subscription renewals are included with this copy of November *Bird News*.

**Please check that your Standing Order is set up for the correct amount. Thank you.**

If you still pay by cheque it is easy to set up a Standing Order or pay by Bank Transfer using the details on the renewal form.

**Phil Hampson, Membership Secretary**

## **BIRD REPORT 2020**

We are making good progress with the report. The data and associated documentation has now been sent to the compilers for them to start the process of updating the systematic list. This is no small task and we estimate it will take in the region of 2 months, and then we have to do the editing and typesetting. Throughout we have been selecting the photographs for this copy and have reduced the number from an initial 600 to approximately 140, from these we will use in the region of 80 in the final copy. At this stage I have to thank everyone who has submitted records by whatever channel, sent in photographs, helped and supported in any way. Producing the *Bird Report* is a long and complicated process which falls on the shoulders of a few people and it is testament to their dedication that we are now at this stage. Hopefully, it will fall on members' doorsteps early in the New Year.

**Phil Hampson**

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# **CAWOS Programme**

**The 2021-2022 programme will be done by Zoom and intructions will be sent via email to the membership, so please make sure we have your up-to-date email address. Any other updates to this programme will be on [www.cawos.org](http://www.cawos.org) and again via emails to the membership.**

## **3rd DECEMBER 2021**

**'THE COMMON CRANE IN THE UK: NOT YET COMMON - BUT GETTING THERE?' by Alison Morgan**

After an absence of around 400 years Common Cranes (*Grus grus*) made a natural return to the UK with successful fledging from a pair in Norfolk in the early 1980s. In 2010 a reintroduction project was started in the South West, and 93 hand-reared cranes were released into the wild over a 5-year period. The presentation will focus on the fortunes of the reintroduced birds. It will cover how they are tracked and monitored; their survival and their habits; their breeding success to date; apparent limiting factors and effort made to improve productivity. Alison has been involved with the reintroduction project since the beginning both as a member of the monitoring team and as the ringer responsible for the capture and ringing of the second-generation birds.

## **7th JANUARY 2022**

### **'SEABIRDS AND MARINE CONSERVATION' by Jonathan Green**

Jonathan Green is from the Seabird Ecology Group at Liverpool University. Seabirds are the world's most threatened group of birds, facing challenges to their populations both on land and at sea. While many of these threats remain, a number of initiatives are, however, now underway to try and arrest population declines, with several success stories. In his talk he will report on how these challenges are being addressed and some of their own work in this area from the Caribbean and from closer to home. In doing so he will demonstrate how the role that seabirds play in marine ecosystems can be put to work to promote and enhance marine observation more broadly.

## **4th FEBRUARY 2022**

### **'WILDLIFE OF A WORKING FOREST' by Mike Read**

Mike regards the superb New Forest as his 'local patch' and lives on the edge of this unique location which is studded with ancient and ornamental broad-leaved woodlands, mires, ponds and streams, timber plantations and glorious heathlands. Ancient rights, local traditions and constantly changing work practices add greatly to this, Britain's smallest National Park. However, it is an area under great pressure with perhaps 15 million day-visits annually. Despite this pressure, the New Forest still contains an extraordinary range of wildlife species with many rarities and some are even unique in British terms.

## **4th MARCH 2022**

### **AGM followed by a new approach of having three x 20-minute talks:**

#### **'LITTLE TERNS AT GRONANT (NORTH WALES)' by David Norman**

Little Tern is among Britain's rarest seabirds, and declining. Most colonies are in eastern England but the only one in Wales, at Gronant (managed by Denbighshire County Council) is now one of the largest, holding about one-tenth of the UK population. Since 1983 I have held Schedule 1 licences to study the Gronant colony, mostly by ringing the chicks, and trapping the breeding adults in recent years. With careful approach the breeding birds are not as sensitive to disturbance as most people claim, and this talk will summarise lots of findings of conservation importance, including the age structure of the colony, with record longevity figures; the strength of the pair-bond from year to year; movement of young birds, particularly within the Irish Sea meta-population; and the high proportion of non-breeding adults.

#### **'NON-BREEDING MOVEMENT, BEHAVIOUR AND ENERGETICS OF COMMON GUILLEMOTS AND RAZORBILLS' by Lila Buckingham**

Seabird populations have declined by 70% in the last 60 years and they experience their highest levels of mortality during the non-breeding season, when they encounter a wide range of marine threats. For example, we are developing our seas to provide renewable energy, but this can cause disturbance and loss of suitable foraging habitat to species such as Common Guillemots and Razorbills. In order to understand population vulnerability of guillemots and Razorbills to such threats, we tracked individuals from multiple colonies around the UK. In this talk, I will present our findings on their movements, behaviour and energetic spend throughout the non-breeding season and highlight when and where they are likely to be most vulnerable to marine threats.

#### **'THE SEARCH FOR THE OAP (OLD AGED PUFFIN)' by David Steventon**

David first visited the Shiant Islands in 1970 to carry out the seabird counts for Operation Seafarer. Little did he know then that fifty years later he would still be seabird counting and ringing there and reconnecting with some elderly seabirds. The story of these old birds features in a BBC Coast programme (series 9, episode 4).



This section of Bird News has been temporarily suspended because the majority of indoor events have been cancelled due to Covid-19 OR some of the affiliated societies are holding zoom meetings with speakers (eg CAWOS) OR a mixture (eg MRSPB). If you need any clarification please check with each society on their website or ring the contact number below.

## AFFILIATED SOCIETIES

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

**CAWOS** Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society [www.cawos.org](http://www.cawos.org)  
Meetings St Vincent's RC Church Hall, Knutsford 7:45pm, contact Sec. Ted Lock 01625 540468

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

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

**KOS** Knutsford Ornithological Society [www.10x50.com](http://www.10x50.com)  
Meetings Jubilee Hall, Stanley Road, Knutsford 8pm, contact Sec. Karina Stanley 07532 833083

**MCOS** Mid-Cheshire Ornithological Society [www.midcheshireos.co.uk](http://www.midcheshireos.co.uk)  
Meetings Cuddington & Sandiway Village Hall 7:45pm, contact Andrew Aldridge 01477 534873

**MRSPB** Macclesfield RSPB Members' Group [www.rspb.org.uk/groups/macclesfield](http://www.rspb.org.uk/groups/macclesfield)  
Meetings Macclesfield Community Centre, Macclesfield 7:45pm, contact Ray Evans 01625 432635

**NCRSPB** North Cheshire RSPB Members' Group [www.rspb.org.uk/groups/north\\_cheshire](http://www.rspb.org.uk/groups/north_cheshire)  
Meetings Appleton Parish Hall, Appleton at 7:45pm, contact Sec. Dot Seed 07917 567395

**NNHS** Nantwich Natural History Society  
Occasional meetings throughout the year, contact Sec. Roger Crow, 01270 618416

**SECOS** South-East Cheshire Ornithological Society [www.sec.os.org.uk](http://www.sec.os.org.uk)  
Meetings Ettiley Heath Church Community Centre at 7:30pm, contact Mike Tonks 07484 306147

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

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

**If you know anyone who might want to advertise  
in future Bird News please let me know.**

**Sheila Blamire at [sheilablamire@kawos.org](mailto:sheilablamire@kawos.org) Tel: 01565 830168**

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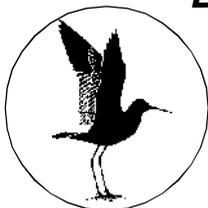
**BIRD REPORT PROJECT MANAGER**

**NON-EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS**

For further information, please contact:

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## \*\*\* CAWOS SPEAKER MEETING BY ZOOM \*\*\*

'THE COMMON CRANE IN THE UK' by Alison Morgan

3<sup>rd</sup> DECEMBER 2021 Contact: Phil Hampson

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