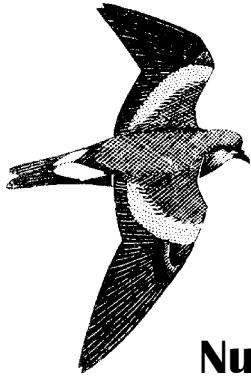


Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society

Reg. Charity No. 702484 www.cawos.org



BIRD NEWS

Number 126

July 2024



County Rarity: Subalpine Warbler
£300,000 to develop new wetland in Hoylake
Local Nature Recovery Strategies
The Spring Migration

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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: Yellow Wagtail by Ray Scally

Other illustrations by Phil Jones and Ray Scally

Note: the copy date for the next issue is 19th October 2024

Guest Editorial

Outside looking in... I've been asked if I'd be interested in doing an Editorial and at first was hesitant. It's been a long time since I've done one and I've spent most of my time in Yorkshire on the coast just north of Spurn, so apart from the rarities adjudication for Cheshire and Wirral, I've been slightly out of touch. Or so I thought. I suddenly realised that as I'd been following several accounts on Twitter (I refuse to call it X) and local Whatsapp groups within the local birding fraternity and that I was actually pretty well up-to-date on what's been happening.

Living on the east coast has given me a different perspective about patch birding. I did intend to bird around Spurn and have done a bit of that, but I found that my garden became my preferred local patch. At just over an acre and situated 200m from the North Sea, it's been a fabulous place to be and there's been a lot of exciting days with not only good birds, but some rare moths and other insects. I've enjoyed it tremendously but have decided to move on and will miss it. So what to do next? I'm thinking about that.

Local patch birding has always been close to my heart. Sure, I had my twitching back in the day, but the novelty wore off eventually and my work took over anyway. I've been following one lady on Twitter whose enthusiasm for her local patch has been captivating. Debbie Knight is well known in south Cheshire for getting up incredibly early and her long walks, sometimes twice a day, have turned up some good birds around Marbury Mere near Whitchurch. As a relative beginner her posts exude excitement and her many requests for help with the identification of her bird photographs, taken on her trusted Sony DSC-HX400v bridge-camera which goes everywhere with her, have been met with enthusiasm from her followers. From her initial 'What's this bird of prey?' most days, Debbie's now confidently identifying Hobbies and Peregrines without a problem. I can see that the hours she puts in and her 'slightly obsessive personality' (her words), are paying off both in her identification skills and the birds that she regularly turns up. The day an Osprey went through was a milestone, a bird that she'd dreamt of finding and well deserved. Even better were two Common Cranes on a flooded field one morning, a species many birders still haven't seen in Cheshire and Wirral. Perhaps more interesting are the pair of Ravens that have got used to her and allow her to approach closely and even brought their two young. Mind you, I think the cubes of fat she offered them did help. Her photographs of the Ravens and the notes on their behaviour have been great to read about. Debbie's recent five days off-patch in Scotland and the east coast of Yorkshire have been tweeted about with her usual infectious excitement. Birding, as she's commented, has improved her mental health enormously... and like me, she's always happiest quietly walking alone watching wildlife. Her posts are a great read and she's now at the top of the slippery slope which is moth-ing, having ordered her first trap. Watch this space.

One of the reasons why @MarburyBirds has made its mark on me is that Debbie hasn't been afraid to ask when she's struggled with identification and the response from Twitter birders has been commendable. I see so many negative comments on social media and at times, at east coast birding sites, directed at people new to birding and struggling with identifying even the commonest of birds. All I'd say is that we all had to start somewhere!

Which brings me on to the potential future threat to learning how to identify birds through trial and error. The rise of AI - Artificial Intelligence. I'm not an enthusiast when it comes to taking the easy way to identify wildlife. It's my age no doubt. I was brought up with books. Real paper and real illustrations that you could pour over and text that you could read and re-read until the information sunk in and then the satisfaction I got from applying it in the field and identifying a bird correctly. There are numerous AI apps about, Obs identify, Merlin Bird ID, etc. They work by using algorithms that are meant to continually learn as corrections are made... and they do need correcting. Their success rate at identifying a bird, insect, plant or animal varies between apps. Some are as low as 19% initially and the best around 60-70%. They can point you in the right direction or totally mislead you. I either case, that's not my point, which is that unless you take the time and make the effort to learn by your own mistakes, you're unlikely to ever succeed in not relying on a computer to tell you what you've just seen. Even more alarming/interesting/puzzling is the recent emergence of AI optics that purportedly identify a bird whilst you're watching it. To me that is

crossing a line. Where's the skill in that? Or is it a good thing for novices... will it help a new generation to become aware of the world of birds that is around them. That and my next subject will make the work of rarities committees interesting no doubt. The latest *British Birds* July 2024 has an article entitled 'AI-generated images and their impact on birding'. It's a fascinating read. AI altered birds or background or even birds generated from scratch and the photos used are very convincing indeed. As AI improves further, it will probably be impossible to tell what is fake and what is genuine. My answer would be to request a full set of field notes and a description relating to the bird and photographs without would be binned unless multi-observer of cause. The future will certainly be uncertain.

A final mention to some other content in *Bird News*. Richard Smith has written a couple of nice articles on memorable spring migrations on Wirral and the increase of Ospreys passing through the area in spring. The migrations I'll come back to. To get 25 Ospreys in one spring is superb, but in 2023. That is how many were counted. You'd never have dreamt it would possible only a few years ago. Re-introductions and locally breeding birds in England have no doubt helped. There's news of a new wetland reserve at Hoylake to be created which is excellent and a fine piece of work by all those involved in the initial planning and support. Not so positive is the news that badgers have once again decimated breeding birds at RSPB Burton Marsh, defying current attempts to keep them out. They're superb climbers and fences seem to be no barrier. What will the wardens do next I wonder?

Going back to Richard's article on past spring migrations. They've changed and are nowhere near as good as they used to be for variety and numbers of birds. Spurn has been recording birds since early last century and it's become very obvious over recent migration times that common birds simply aren't arriving as they used to in spring and autumn. Observers at other places up and down the east coast have reported the same. Whereas falls of birds numbering hundreds or even thousands were regular, they're a thing of the past it would seem. Species such as Wheatears, Willow Warblers, Whinchats, Yellow Wagtails, etc, can often be counted on one hand, two if it's a good day. Suitable days when the weather would seem to be perfect for migrants have produced very little, frustrating those of us that remember how similar days used to be certain to produce fields full of common migrants. The reasons? Plentiful I would guess but best left for another time....

Tony Broome

CAWOS News

There have been two Council meetings since the last *Bird News* - the AGM on 1st March and an ordinary Council meeting on 17th April. Both meetings were organised on a 'face-to-face' basis at the Mere and Tabley Community Club. This will now be our preferred venue for face-to face meetings and the facilities there are excellent. It was also pleasing that the AGM was relatively well attended with 25 members and one guest. We obviously would like to see a much greater attendance but at least there were more people than the previous two years and, interestingly, more than at most of our Zoom meetings.

The changes to Council which were ratified at the AGM were Tony Parker taking over as Chairman with outgoing Chairman, Phil Hampson, remaining on Council in the capacity of Vice-Chair. The only other change to Council was Neil Coyne replacing Emma Jenks as an ordinary member. We are grateful to Neil for stepping forward and look forward to his input over the coming weeks and months. All of this means that, like last year, there is a vacancy for a non-executive member so, if anyone is interested, please contact me.

One of the main topics discussed at the April Council meeting was the membership survey questionnaire which we hope to distribute to all members very shortly. The questionnaire will be brief and focussed on the issues which we believe are important and conducive to better

engagement with the society. I would ask that you please make every effort to complete and return the questionnaire as soon as you are able.

It is pleasing to report that sales of the 2022 *Bird Report* are going well with RSPB Burton Mere Wetlands, selling all their initial allocation in just a few weeks. We are now at the stage where the data for the 2023 report is being finalised prior to distribution to the compilers.

David Hiley, Secretary

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Membership is currently standing at 279 - slightly below the total of this time last year. New members: welcome to Greg Hughes, and Karen Stead, many thanks for joining CAWOS.

Membership Survey

CAWOS Committee (Council) are seeking your views. Please look out for the forthcoming survey which will be distributed by email (from 'memsec' /csbailey) or, if we hold no email address for you, a copy will be sent in the post. We are hoping to hear from everyone - your views are important to us.

Carolyn Bailey, Membership Secretary



LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGIES

Over the last few months a number of local naturalists and CAWOS members have been involved in creating Local Nature Recovery Strategies for our region. The Environment Act captures the requirements for Local Nature Recovery Strategies in the 25 Year Plan where one of the aims of the Act includes the delivery of the Nature Recovery Network for England through LNRS.

These Strategies are an ambitious and strategic tool for nature recovery established by England's Environment Act. Natural England views them as a new and exciting tool to identify ambitious nature recovery opportunities at a landscape scale. These outputs are backed by national and local evidence that helps partners and stakeholders to identify prioritised outcomes; and potential measures for creating or improving habitat to achieve those outcomes.

LNRS will be a key mechanism for mapping and planning local delivery of the Nature Recovery Network and support the delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) through local plans. The Environment Act, in addition to establishing LNRS, makes delivering BNG a mandatory part of nature recovery.

- A key principle of LNRS is that the process must be **locally led, evidence based and co-produced**. They bring together communities and decision makers across the public, private and voluntary sector to prioritise action for biodiversity.
- A Responsible Authority leads on LNRS, however stakeholders, partners and local communities will feed into the strategy to create a shared plan for nature recovery.
- LNRS must be **collaboratively produced**, with forthcoming regulations under the Environment Act providing a key mechanism for setting minimum standards for how Responsible Authorities must work with local partners.
- LNRS should consider opportunities to achieve wider **nature-based solutions**. The potential opportunities identified in these strategies can include actions to address other environmental objectives that are also positive for biodiversity, for example river flood management and climate change mitigation through tree planting and peatland restoration.
- Another ambition of LNRS is to try and align efforts, for example to help direct the **location of Green Infrastructure through Local Plans**. They should guide and inform other spatial plans within the area, for example Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and National Park Management Plans.
- LNRS should be seen as a useful and practical tool by landowners and managers, developers, local authorities and communities. They can direct investments such as BNG or Carbon Credits and help partners to deliver their nature recovery objectives effectively. Defra and NE are currently exploring how LNRS can be aligned with funding sources such as new **Environmental Land Management schemes** and BNG to further incentivise their delivery.

The Environment Act confirms that LNRS must contain two components which are a Biodiversity Statement of Priorities and a Local Habitats Map.

The **Biodiversity Statement of Priorities** must include:

- An **overall description of the area** drawing on existing policies, strategies and planning documents.
- A **description of the ecological sub-areas** based on key habitats and species associated with the area.
- Opportunities for **linking, increasing or improving** the condition of each key habitat.
- A description for which the creation or improvement of habitats **could help provide a nature-based solution** such as climate and flood mitigation.
- The **agreed outcomes** that each LNRS will achieve; as well as **the potential measures and mechanisms** to deliver the desired outcomes - for example **ditch-blocking to re-wet degraded peat**.

The second output is the **Local Habitat Map** - this map supports local action by mapping important existing habitats and further informing linking, increasing or improving the condition of key habitats. This map is the foundation of the LNRS and will be used for identifying areas to expand, improve and create better networks based on the Lawton principles. The map is created based on local evidence and involves all partners and stakeholders. It maps:

- The **most valuable existing habitats (and species)** for nature.
- This is overlaid with **specific proposals for creating or improving habitat** for nature and **achieving wider environmental goals**.
- It also must identify proposed locations for delivering both **the prioritised and other desired outcomes and measures**.

As far as CAWOS is concerned we will provide input for two local strategies covering Cheshire West and Chester, Cheshire East and Warrington and that for the Liverpool City Region which includes Halton and the Wirral.

The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) is a blueprint to help wildlife thrive, improve our ecological network, and target investment in nature. Partners across the area are working together to develop this strategy and we are extremely keen to gain input from the wider conservation and naturalist community. Part of the LNRS process is creating a 'Species Shortlist', which will be used to target species that are a priority for conservation action within our area.

CAWOS and other local societies NGOs and specialists will be working together on this Species Shortlist based around these four criteria for inclusion:

- Species and/or species assemblages which are indicators of priority habitat.
- Locally Significant Species which are unique to Cheshire, or where Cheshire hosts nationally important populations.
- Potential Species which could move into the area with provision of good quality habitat.
- Flagship Species which can be used to engage and enthuse the wider public. Charismatic species and those with interesting stories behind them.

A number of workshops have been arranged, these give a chance to contribute ideas using these criteria as a framework, details can be obtained by contacting Iona Cowell at RECORD; iona@record-lrc.co.uk.

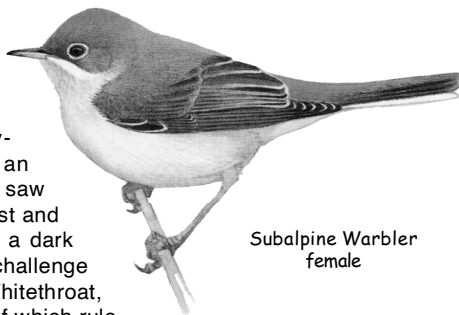
LNRSs will be reviewed and published every 3-10 years (on a roughly 5-yearly cycle). As part of this review, responsible authorities will take stock of what nature recovery action has been taken in their area. Further advice will be provided to them on how they should approach doing this nearer the time.

Note: the copy date for the next issue is 19th October 2024

County Rarities

SUBALPINE WARBLER *Sylvia cantillans/iberiae/subalpina*

I've been lucky enough to blunder into three of Cheshire's 'Subalpine' Warblers, two females and a male. With both females I had a brief period of confusion as to why what appeared to be a Lesser Whitethroat on my first impression of jizz, but it was so non-descript and sandy-coloured when it showed properly. The male was an altogether different experience as the first thing I saw was a bird with brownish-red throat and upper breast and a white moustachial stripe, peering at me out of a dark gap in a gorse bush. Females can be quite an ID challenge - but they are even more delicate than Lesser Whitethroat, they have a buffish eye ring and pale legs, both of which rule out the former species. A male of the Subalpine complex, seen well, should be quite easy to identify, though some western males with weak moustachial stripes could be mistaken for the longer-tailed Dartford Warbler on a brief view.



Subalpine Warbler
female

Since the complex was split into three species in 2013, identification became a lot more complicated, and all three are now BBRC species. If you are lucky enough to find a male, take careful note of the tone of the underparts (pinkish/orange/brownish red) and the extent. Also the tone of the upperparts (Western birds tend to be browner, Eastern birds more blue-grey). The extent of white in the outer three tail feathers is also helpful, with more white in the tail of Eastern birds. If you can get a recording of any calls, which can also help with identification and can be diagnostic if the birds gives the characteristic wren-like call of Moltoni's Warbler. In theory the tail pattern also helps with the identification of females, but a couple of recent DNA tests on captured birds shows things are not quite as clear cut as might have been hoped.

Not being able to narrow your bird down within the complex is quite a good problem to have!

Jane Turner

SUBALPINE WARBLER: CHESHIRE AND WIRRAL STATUS

'Subalpine Warbler' has appeared in *Cheshire (and Wirral) Bird Reports* in just seven years, all the records are in spring as early as April 19th and as late as May 15th.

At the time of the first Cheshire and Wirral record the annual British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) *Report on rare birds in Great Britain* published records under the name 'Subalpine Warbler'. The first County and our only inland record is of a male singing from a hedge along Burleyhurst Lane, Morley, near Wilmslow on 15th May 1982. This was followed by a male trapped and ringed at Hilbre on 22nd April 1988 and a female at Lingham Lane, Moreton/Meols on 9th May 1992. All three records were accepted by BBRC.

From 2006 BBRC no longer considered all records of Subalpine Warbler, asking only for details of particular races and leaving birds of unattributed races to County record committees. Coincidentally the next County record is of a bird found in a ringing trap at Hilbre on 30th April 2006. Of all seven County records this is the only bird known to linger, remaining as it did until May 11th. This was an elusive bird to the extent that it was not seen on two of the days during its stay. It made good use of its time on the island as an accidental re-trap on May 6th found a much improved fat-score compared with the day it was first trapped (Williams P). The record was accepted by the County Rarity Panel.

Red Rocks hosted the next two records, a male on 13th May 2016 and a female on 10th May 2017, both records being accepted by the County Rarity Panel.

By the time of the most recent County sighting and following significant taxonomic and policy changes BBRC were again requesting all records of birds of the 'Subalpine Warbler species complex'. Members of this complex appeared under four species headings in the BBRC *Report on rare birds in Great Britain* for 2021 which included the bird photographed near Burton Point on April 19th that year in the Western Subalpine/Moltoni's Warbler group (*S. c. iberiae/inomata/S. subalpina*).

Steve Barber

Williams P, 'Subalpine Warbler on Hilbre', p 121-122, C&WBR 2006.

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 January to April 2024.

SITE REPORTS

Chester area

Green-winged Teal was at Mollington on Mar 3rd, Spoonbill at Chester on Jan 12th, 15 Waxwings at the Crook of Dee on Feb 19th and a Marsh Tit at Aldford on Feb 10th.

Congleton area

Common Scoter was at Astbury Mere on Mar 20th and 26th, White Stork at Somerford on Apr 6th.

Crewe and Nantwich area

Brent Goose was at Railway Flash Mar 31st and Apr 1st and two Garganeys at Elton Hall Flash on Mar 21st. 25 Swifts were at Doddington on Apr 27th. An Avocet was at Elton Hall Flash on Mar 3rd, two Little Ringed Plovers at Sandbach on Mar 18th, Whimbrel at Pump House Flash on Apr 17th and a Curlew Sandpiper at this site on 30th and Wood Sandpiper at Elton Hall Flash on Apr 29th and 30th. Little Gull was at Elton Hall Flash on Mar 8th and 9th, Sandwich Tern on Apr 5th, Little Tern at Hurleston Reservoir on Apr 22nd, Common Terns at Elton Hall Flash on Apr 5th and 28th and 11 Arctic Terns at Hurleston on Apr 22nd. Three Cattle Egrets were at Elton Hall Flash on Jan 11th.

An Osprey was over Marbury Big Mere on Mar 24th and another at Crewe on Mar 31st, single Red Kites over Batherton, Doddington, Elton Hall Flash and Hurleston and two Short-eared Owls at Maw Green Tip on Jan 13th. Three Waxwings were at Shavington on Feb 20th, Sand Martin at Elton Hall Flash on Mar 22nd, two Ring Ouzels at Bickerton Hill on Apr 12th, Redstart at Doddington on Mar 26th and c80 Lesser Redpolls at Bickerton Hill on Feb 24th.

Ellesmere Port and Neston area

Wildfowl included: 7000 Pink-footed Geese at Burton Marsh on Feb 11th, two White-fronted Geese at BMW on the same day, a Bewick's Swan at Burton Marsh on Feb 1st with 21 Whooper Swans on Feb 10th. Single American Wigeons were at BMW on Jan 22nd to 24th, Denhall and Little Neston on Feb 15th, two Garganeys at BMW on Apr 2nd and 26th, a Green-winged Teal at Parkgate from Mar 13th to 17th and Scaup at BMW on several dates from late Mar to late Apr. Four Common Cranes were over BMW on Apr 19th and were later seen over various Wirral locations.

The first Avocet was at BMW on Feb 11th with 134 on Mar 22nd and five Grey Plovers on Apr 8th and 9th, 16 Whimbrels at Shotwick on Apr 24th, c3000 Black-tailed Godwits at BMW on Apr 8th and 9th and three Turnstones on the same dates with c250 Knots on 9th. Little Gull was at BMW on Apr 29th, possible Arctic Skua reported from BMW on Jan 23rd. Three White Storks were over BMW on Apr 30th, Spoonbill at Parkgate on Apr 25th to 27th, two Bitterns BMW on Feb 6th and 13 Cattle Egrets at Ince on Jan 5th and Mar 11th. Single Osprey was at BMW on Mar 22nd with a Red Kite on



Gren-winged Teal by Phil Jones

several dates and two Hobbies at Burton Marsh on Apr 30th. Four Waxwings were at Neston on Mar 21st, Bearded Tit at BMW on Apr 2nd with Firecrest on Mar 17th, Redstart at Burton Marsh on Apr 7th with Tree Pipit on 11th, two Water Pipits at Neston on Jan 7th and 32 Twites at BMW on Feb 4th.

Halton area

2650 Pink-footed Geese were at Hale on Mar 19th with Common Scoter there on Mar 16th and 24th. Avocet was at Carr Lane Pools on Mar 7th with Little Ringed Plover on 16th, seven Whimbrels at Hale on Apr 20th and a Little Stint at Pickering's Pasture on Jan 13th. A Kittiwake was noted at Hale on Mar 21st and again at Pickering's Pasture on Apr 15th, two Little Gulls at Pickering's Pasture on Apr 7th, Glaucous Gull at Widnes on Feb 20th and 23rd, three Iceland Gulls at Hale on Jan 12th and Kumlein's Gull at Widnes for most of Jan. Common Tern was at Pickering's Pasture on Apr 15th.



Bearded Tit by Ray Scally

Spoonbill was at Hale on Feb 29th and 15 Cattle Egrets at Hale on Mar 21st and Apr 14th. Osprey was at Hale on Mar 29th and 31st, Red Kite on Mar 9th and seven Short-eared Owls at Hale on Mar 2nd. Ring Ouzel was at Carr Lane Pools on Mar 21st, Redstart at Hale on Apr 17th, three Channel Wagtails at Hale on Apr 20th, Tree Pipit at Carr Lane Pools on Apr 12th and two Water Pipits there on Mar 10th.

Macclesfield area

Eight Whooper Swans were at Acre Nook on Feb 26th, three Egyptian Geese at Peover on Jan 26th and 98 Mandarins at Radnor Mere on Jan 19th. Slavonian Grebe was at Mere Farm SQ on Jan 13th and 24th and two Black-necked Grebes at Lapwing Hall SQ on Mar 23rd. Bar-tailed Godwit was at Mere Farm SQ on Apr 25th and 27th. Sandwich Tern was at Acre Nook SQ on Apr 16th with five Arctic Terns on Apr 28th. White Stork was observed over Chelford and Lapwing Hall SQ on Mar 29th. Red Kite was at Redesmere on Mar 14th, Bosley on Mar 22nd and Danebower on Mar 29th. Three Ring Ouzels were at Danebower on Mar 22nd, Spotted Flycatcher at Lapwing Hall SQ on Apr 24th and two Pied Flycatchers at Tegg's Nose on Apr 26th.

Vale Royal area

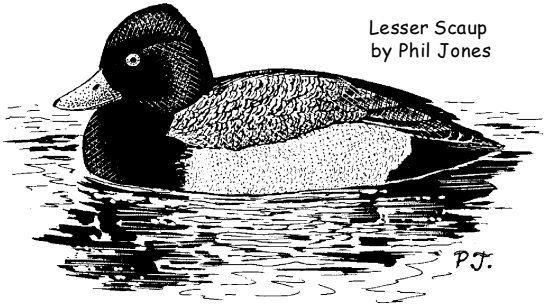
30 Whooper Swans were at Marbury CP on Feb 16th, Garganey at Ashton's Flash on Apr 27th, 235 Wigeons at Neumann's Flash on Jan 1st, Scaup at Marbury CP on Jan 11th with Common Scoter from Feb 14th to 18th and Mar 16th, Smew at Newchurch Common from Jan 7th to 27th and Feb 5th to 10th and 28 Goosanders at Marbury CP on Jan 17th. The first Swift was at Ashton's Flash on Apr 21st, Cuckoo at Winsford and Wincham brook on Apr 1st. Two Common Cranes were at Frodsham Marsh on Apr 23th, three Black-necked Grebes were at Frodsham Marsh on Apr 4th.

60 Avocets were at Frodsham Marsh on Mar 12th, two Whimbrels on Apr 22nd, 16 Woodcocks at Neumann's Flash on Jan 1st and 13 Jack Snipes at Middlewich on Feb 24th. Kittiwake was noted at Marbury CP on Apr 10th and 12th, four Little Gulls on Mar 8th, Common Tern on Apr 24th and Arctic Tern on Apr 8th and 16th and Black Tern at Frodsham Marsh on Apr 8th. Two Bitterns were at Marbury CP on Jan 6th, 21 Cattle Egrets at Frodsham Marsh on Apr 26th. Up to three Marsh Harriers in the Ashton's Flash area on several dates, single Red Kites over Comberbach, Frodsham Marsh, Marbury CP, Moulton and Neumann's Flash with an early Hobby at Frodsham Marsh on Mar 18th.

Seven Waxwings were at Helsby on Jan 4th, c1200 Sand Martins at Marbury CP on Apr 10th, Red-rumped Swallow at Knutsford on Apr 17th and the first House Martin was at Marbury CP on Mar 27th. A Wood Warbler was at Delamere on Apr 30th, Redstart at Marbury CP on Apr 12th, Lostock Green on 20th and Delamere on 27th. Two Channel Wagtails were at Marbury CP on Apr 14th, two Water Pipits at Frodsham Marsh on Mar 16th with Black-throated Thrush reported from Wilmslow on Jan 9th.

Warrington area

24 Whooper Swans were on the Mersey at Fiddler's Ferry on Feb 26th, two Garganeys at Woolston Eyes from Mar 27th to 29th, two Ferruginous Ducks there on Apr 3rd and 6th, Scaups on Feb 10th and Mar 18th with a Lesser Scaup on various dates from Feb 18th to Apr 6th with one at Rixton on Feb 14th and Common Scoter at Woolston Eyes on Apr 4th, Long-tailed Duck at Moore NR up to Jan 10th and Ruddy Duck at Woolston Eyes on several dates.



Lesser Scaup
by Phil Jones

The first Swift was at Woolston Eyes on Apr 16th and Cuckoo at Moore NR on Apr 1st. Slavonian Grebe was at Woolston Eyes on Apr 18th with the first Black-necked Grebe on Feb 19th.

Avocet was at Lymm on Apr 22nd and early Little Ringed Plover on Feb 25th, seven Woodcocks at Risley Moss on Jan 6th, three Whimbrels at Moore on Apr 18th and Silver Lane Pools on 27th and a Wood Sandpiper was at Moore on Apr 26th. Little Gull was at Woolston Eyes on Mar 31st, Iceland Gull on Mar 27th, Sandwich Tern on Mar 20th, Common Tern at Lymm on Apr 22nd, five Arctic Terns at Woolston Eyes on Apr 16th. Little Bittern was at Woolston Eyes on Apr 19th. Hen Harrier was at Norton Marsh on Feb 20th. A Marsh Tit was at Moore NR on Mar 12th, Redstart at Silver Lane Pools on Apr 18th with two Corn Buntings on 5th.

Wirral area

450 Brent Goose were at Hilbre on Jan 7th, 6000 Pink-footed Geese at Hilbre on Apr 20th and five Whooper Swans at Hoylake on Feb 26th. A Green-winged Teal was at Heswall from Mar 9th to 12th, five Eiders at Hilbre on Mar 23rd, Velvet Scoter at Hoylake on Jan 7th, c10,000 Common Scoters off north Wirral on Feb 28th, four Long-tailed Ducks off Hoylake on Mar 3rd and Smew at West Kirby Marine Lake on Jan 17th and 18th and 43 Red-breasted Mergansers at Heswall on Mar 10th. The first Swift was at Leasowe on Apr 22nd, two Cuckoos at Hoylake on Apr 20th. Over 500 Great Crested Grebes were off the north Wirral shore on Feb 28th, Slavonian Grebe at Hilbre on Jan 12th to 13th and West Kirby Marine Lake on 14th.

Waders of note included: 140 Grey Plovers at Heswall on Apr 16th, 157 Whimbrels at Heswall on Apr 26th, 520 Bar-tailed Godwits at Hoylake on Feb 9th, 15 Purple Sandpipers at Hilbre on Feb 10th and eight Woodcocks at Moreton on Jan 5th. 120 Kittiwakes were at New Brighton on Apr 15th, Sabine's Gull off Wallasey on Apr 15th, 86 Little Gulls at Leasowe on Mar 5th, Glaucous Gull at Meols on Jan 26th, Iceland Gull at Hoylake on Mar 26th and Apr 14th. 100 Sandwich Terns were off Hilbre on Apr 6th, Little Tern at Heswall on Apr 7th and Black Tern at Meols on Apr 29th. 50+ Guillemots were on at Leasowe on Mar 1st, 15+ Red-throated Divers at Hoylake on Apr 4th, Great Northern Diver at Hilbre on Mar 1st, Leach's Petrel at New Brighton at Mar 24th, Manx Shearwater at Leasowe on Mar 23rd, 72 Gannets off Hilbre on the same date and three Shags at Birkenhead on Mar 10th.

Osprey was at Hilbre on Mar 21st and Caldoy on Apr 30th, Hen Harrier at Hoylake on Apr 7th, Red Kite at Thurstaston on Feb 14th and Gyr Falcon at Meols on Mar 4th. Three Waxwings were at Hoylake on Jan 1st and Saughall Massie on 3rd, 150 Skylarks at Heswall on Mar 10th, Woodlark at Leasowe on Apr 6th, three Sand Martins and three House Martins at Leasowe on Mar 16th. Four Ring Ouzels were at Hoylake on Apr 6th, Black Redstart at New Brighton on Mar 21st, three Redstarts at Leasowe on Apr 9th with at least six Whinchast on Apr 30th, Channel Wagtail at Leasowe on Apr 28th, four Tree Pipits at Hoylake on Apr 30th with Common Redpoll on Apr 27th and Snow Bunting on Feb 10th.

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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.

Species Spotlight

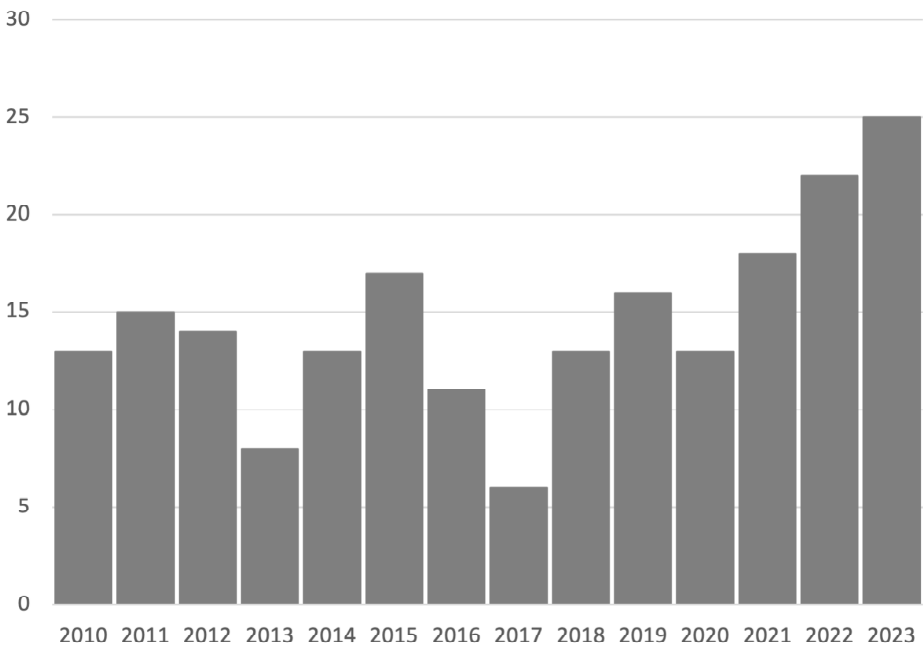
OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*

I start with a quote from the Leasowe Lighthouse Birders Blog (April 2018):

“A fantastic weekend of migration started late Friday afternoon when a male Osprey flew east over two observers along Park Lane. Like buses a second Osprey was found on the tide line on Friday 14th. This second bird (a female) then flew directly towards observers standing on the sea defence where it landed and devoured a large Flounder; much to the delight of the regulars and a very fortunate visiting RSPB group. After 30 minutes on show the bird eventually flew off and was picked up over Seaforth. Ospreys are becoming more regular on Wirral these days but it's always a thrill to see them on patch.”

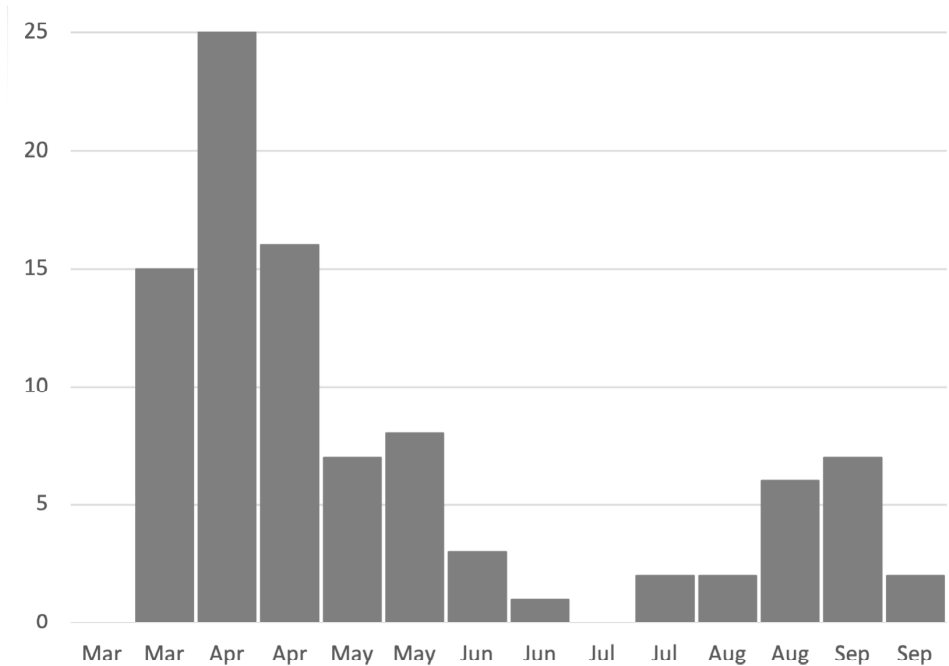
I came across the above piece whilst looking for good photos of Ospreys in the Lighthouse Birders Blog and liked it so much I had to reproduce it in this article. We always love to see Ospreys and 2023 was a record year for them here on the Dee Estuary and North Wirral as shown in the bar chart below.

**Ospreys on the Dee Estuary
Total of Annual Records 2010 to 2023**



Between 2010 and 2020 numbers flying over here on passage had plateaued out at an average of about 13 a year, but there has been a strong increase in the past three years with a record 25 in 2023. This increase has no doubt been fueled by the increase in breeding pairs, particularly in England and Wales where total confirmed breeding went up from 11 pairs in 2010 to a remarkable 36 pairs in 2023. Reintroduction/translocation schemes, such as at Rutland Water and Poole Harbour, have not only helped this increase in breeding but also must have contributed to the general increase in the number of sightings with young birds wandering across the country looking for potential mates and prospecting for nest sites.

Osprey Records for Dee Estuary Half Monthly Totals 2019 to 2023



The above bar chart I find intriguing. We always see more Ospreys in spring than on the return passage, but this is strange as with nearly all other species it's the other way round with birds flying through quickly in the spring, in a hurry to reach their breeding sites, whilst the return journey is not only far more leisurely there are also more birds with juveniles as well as the adults present.

We think there are two reasons for more Ospreys in spring - the first is that in spring they take a long journey up from Africa with many flying over the Bay of Biscay followed by a flight across the English Channel and then inland over England and Wales, so by the time they reach the Liverpool Bay area they are more than ready to pause and catch some fish to feed on, and we often do see them catch and eat fish here as per the bird in April 2018. The second reason is that young unpaired Ospreys will be looking for mates and prospecting for nests and these latter will account for nearly all the birds we see in May and June. The breeding season for paired adults is well underway by late April, over the past three years both adults have arrived at Llyn Brenig by mid-April. On the return journey, after breeding, the Ospreys will be well fed, and are not looking for mates or nest sites, so just fly through without pausing.

It is feasible that one day Ospreys will nest here, there appears to be plenty of good size fish for them in the sea and it would be easy enough to build a nesting platform for them at a safe site. Nesting Ospreys are certainly getting nearer with the closest site to the Dee Estuary just over an hour's drive away at Llyn Brenig in Denbighshire. Sarah Callon, North Wales Wildlife Trust's BOP Project Officer, tells me they are always looking for volunteers at Llyn Brenig so if you want to spend some time with the Ospreys email: sarah.callon@northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk.

Richard Smith (article first published in the February 2024 Newsletter on the Dee Estuary Birding Website <http://www.deeestuary.co.uk>)

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 January 2024 to end of May 2024

2024 has been remarkable for the Hilbre Bird Observatory for many reasons. Not least amongst them the aurora borealis that was seen from the island by a couple of fortunate members on 10 May 2024 and the island was visited by five different Ospreys during the spring as well. As well as this there were a good number of birds caught for ringling and the results of that ringling illustrated aspect of the migration process that we would hope to find.

A very large female Blackbird was caught on the island in February. This was almost certainly a Scandinavian or Northern European bird which fits in with the Wirral's known attraction for this class of Blackbird.

There were 30 Lesser Redpolls caught on the island this spring. Two of them were already ringling. One was from West Sussex, originally ringling in 2023 and the other was from Warwickshire ringling in 2024 a month or so before it was caught on Hilbre. This was typical of the relatively leisurely passage north made by these birds during spring.

Of particular interest to the observatory was a colour-ringed Wheatear seen on Hilbre the day after it had been ringling by the Bird Observatory on the Calf of Man. It was a female, Greenland-race bird indicated by its wing length, which had probably been blown off course by south-easterly winds, found itself on the Calf of Man and was reorienting itself for its onward journey, probably initially to Iceland where it might stay or continue to Greenland or even Canada. The bird in question weighed 26 grams but another, different female Greenland-race bird was caught on Hilbre a bit later in the month. Its wing length was the same as the Calf of Man bird but it weighed 46 grams. Clearly, it was ready for the next step of its migration with enough fat/fuel to get to Iceland.

Every bird arriving on the island is not a migrant but nevertheless it was good to catch a Goldfinch ringling by a member of the Obs with a ringling site on the front at Hoylake.

The USA and Canada have a bird monitoring system for migrants called Motus. The system works by placing a tag on a bird that broadcasts a signal and having lots of receiving stations across the country to receive and record these signals. Great results related to migration have been achieved using this system and people in the UK and Europe are starting to implement it. Hilbre Bird Observatory has decided to take part in this scheme and anybody visiting the island may notice the aerials for the Hilbre system in the paddock next to the Telegraph Station Lookout. The Motus tags to go on birds are rather expensive consequently it will probably be a relatively slow uptake for the system. Nevertheless, the Bird Observatory is now ready to support the implementation of this new approach to monitoring bird migration across western Europe.

John Elliott, on behalf of the Hilbre Bird Observatory

RINGING AT WOOLSTON - WINTER 2023/2024

This note covers the winter period from October 2023 through March 2024 ('this winter').

In the period under review 982 new birds of 36 species were ringling at Woolston which compares with 1,467 new birds of 42 species in the 2022/2023 winter period ('last winter'). Persistent adverse weather conditions resulted in just 51 ringling sessions across the reserve compared to

94 in the previous winter. Whilst this is a crude comparison, a 46% reduction in the number of sessions resulted in a 33% reduction in captures so, despite the apparent loss of birds, it was a fairly normal winter with the usual winners and losers.

For much of the winter water levels were not conducive to the operation of the fixed duck trap with the result that just 12 Teal were ringed compared with 146 last winter. For the same reason, the species normally caught in Potter Traps, Moorhen, Coot and Water Rail, did not figure in this winter's captures.

Winter ringing is a combination of resident birds and migrants from further north in the UK or continental Europe. Totals for most resident birds show a reduction broadly in line with the reduction in effort. However, Blue Tits and Great Tits were caught in similar numbers to last winter and appear to have had a good breeding season which is in line with the results from our nest boxes in 2023. The same cannot be said for the resident thrushes with Blackbirds ringed down from 24 to seven and Song Thrushes from 13 to four, reductions which go beyond the simple reduction in effort. Chiffchaffs and Blackcaps lingered late into the autumn with 38 of the former and 13 of the latter ringed, but only two Chiffchaffs ringed in January can confidently be described as overwintering birds.

Turning to migrants, Goldcrests must have arrived in good numbers because 210 were ringed, almost as many as the 217 last winter. Redwings were evident but not in the same numbers as last winter and 40 were ringed compared with 87. For the second winter running Bramblings were conspicuous by their absence and none were ringed. Chaffinches, some of which also arrive from Scandinavia, were probably present in similar numbers to last winter with 70 ringed compared with 125, broadly in line with the reduction in effort. However, it is worth remembering that in the winter of 2021/2022 a total of 197 were ringed and the longer term trend for Chaffinches appears to be negative. After a slight uptick last winter, the inexorable decline in Greenfinches resumed and just 65 were ringed compared with 149. Ringing a Greenfinch is becoming a notable event at Woolston. In many years, Reed Buntings are attracted to the sacrificial crop on No.3 Bed but that did not happen to any great degree this winter and only 24 were ringed compared with 95. The bright spot amongst the finches was Lesser Redpoll. It is true that they are irruptive at Woolston but, even accepting this, in view of the reduced effort the 125 ringed compared with 88 last winter indicates that they arrived in exceptional numbers.

As I write in late May it is too early to have any clear view of the breeding season except to say that the Blue Tits and Great Tits appear to again have done reasonably well in the nest boxes. A total of 127 chicks have been ringed on No.3 Bed compared with 141 in 2023. This reduction is a result of a fall in the number of pairs of Blue Tits in the boxes. A pair of Great Tits that fledged just a single chick are trying again and at the last check there were six warm eggs in the box. Second broods are unusual and are always the result of a very small number of chicks in the first attempt. Of course, the real acid test is how many chicks successfully fledge but the early signs are promising with good brood sizes. Of 21 nesting attempts 20 made it to the chick stage. Of these ten have so far been checked for fledging with a one hundred percent success rate.

In contrast to last winter, nothing unusual turned up in the nets.

Michael Miles, on behalf of the Woolston Ringing Team

COLOUR RING REPORT

This report is a summary of the records obtained by the Dee Estuary Colour-ring Birding Group from February to June 2024.

Knots

The sub-species of Knot (*Calidris canutus islandica*) which breeds in Greenland and northern Canada had a very good breeding season in 2023, and consequently thousands of young birds have been in the Liverpool Bay area. We know little about what these birds do in their second year after the adults leave to breed, so the local ringing groups have made a point of catching and ringing a sample of these and by early May 2024 over 600 had been fitted with flags. They are already showing some surprising movements with one on a beach at Teeside just five days after it was recorded at Seaforth, another one was on the Ythan Estuary, NE Scotland, just three days

after also being seen at Seaforth and four more turned up in early June in the German Waddensea in a flock which consisted of many adults - perhaps failed breeders? In mid-June a flock of 4,000 2CY Knots fed on Leasowe shore for three days and we were able to record 90 flagged birds, including many which had been seen at Seaforth during the previous few days, a site of increasing importance as a safe roosting area for our Knots.

Oystercatchers

In March two Icelandic ringed Oystercatchers were found in a flock roosting on Hilbre. One had been ringed in May 2017 in east Iceland and the other in the south in 2022. Both had been incubating adults when caught and both have been recorded breeding back in the same areas in subsequent years. In early May another ringed Oystercatcher was found on Hilbre, this one had been ringed as a chick in 2021 in Bergen, Norway, in the grounds of the local IKEA store! We have seen this one before, it was on Heswall shore in June 2023.

Bar-tailed Godwits

Although still numerous at Formby and Crosby the numbers of Bar-tailed Godwits along north Wirral are generally much lower than they were 10 years ago, so it was good to have a flock of 520 at high tide at Hoylake in early February. Scanning through this flock revealed four colour-ringed birds - two were ringed in 2018 at Formby, and have been regularly recorded along that coast since, including one which has also been seen twice at Thurstaston. The other two were ringed in southern Norway when they were returning south after breeding, one in 2020 and the other in 2021. The first one has been recorded on the French Atlantic Coast and also at Dawlish Warren in Devon, so spends the winter to the south of us. The other has been regularly recorded around the Liverpool Bay coast including Ainsdale, Formby, Seaforth and Thurstaston.

Redshank

The Dee Estuary is the most important site in the country for this species but we don't see many that are colour-ringed so it was good to spot one at Burton Mere Wetlands in April with an interesting history. It was ringed at Frieston Marsh in September 2021 then recorded at Port Seton, near Edinburgh, on the south coast of the Firth of Forth on October 11th 2023, before moving south to Saltfleet Haven, Lincs, where it was spotted just four days later. The record at Burton Mere Wetlands is the first away from the east coast of the UK.

Coot

Coots aren't a species we would normally associate with flying long distances but ringing tells us that they do just this with birds flying to and from the continent, as well as within the UK. One colour-ringed at Martin Mere, Lancs, in December 2023 was recorded at Burton Mere Wetlands in early June, the first for this species in our database.

If you want to be part of the Dee Estuary Colour-ring Birding Group all you have to do is submit a colour-ring sighting either to myself or copy me in on any submission you may make elsewhere so I can include it in our database. Email: richard@deeestuary.co.uk.

Note there is a monthly colour-ring update on the Dee Estuary Birding Website: www.deeestuary.co.uk.

Richard Smith

MID-CHESHIRE BARN OWL GROUP

As reported in the previous issue, the weather at the start of 2024 was not good, particularly for Barn Owls, alternating between very wet, warmer than usual, strong winds and gales etc. It didn't get much better as time drew on and now looks like resulting in a less than average year for our owls.

Breeding is generally later than experienced over the last few years - about 2-3 weeks later - most probably caused by the weather conditions earlier in the year, but their regular food sources of voles and shrew numbers were also down. The latter again being a function of weather and/or their own periodic (4/5 year) breeding cycle. Consequently, we are finding that breeding activity is down, with a number of regular breeding sites now empty this year, or with clutch sizes down and surviving chicks also down in numbers.

It would appear that this year could be one of those whereby all the 'bad' issues for Barn Owls have conspired to come together to affect our birds. Hard to accept, but that's Mother Nature, and is something we have to accept and live with.

As for the rest of the year – fingers crossed that things get better weatherwise and food-wise, but as with nature, that's pretty much out of our control.

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

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

John Mycock, Chairman Tel: 07970 235437 Email: cheshirebarnowls@gmail.com

CHESHIRE SWAN STUDY GROUP

Since my last report in February, the RSPCA at Stapeley Grange, Nantwich has informed me that they are now accepting wildfowl.

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

- Acre Dell Pools, nr Congleton 19 on 5th Apr and 32 on 12th May.
- Bottom Flash, Winsford: 52 on 25th Feb, 38 on 10th Mar, 57 on 7th Apr and 50 on 12th May.
- Comber Mere, nr Whitchurch: 5 on 11th Feb, 5 on 10th Mar, 2 on 7th Apr and 2 on 12th May.
- Doddington Mere, nr Nantwich: 2 on 12th Feb, 2 on 26th Mar, 8 on 29th Apr and 76 on 27th May.
- Neumann's Flash, Northwich: 4 on 11th Feb, 6 on 10th Mar and 5 on 7th Apr.
- Sankey Valley CP, Warrington: 11 on 11th Feb, 10 on 10th Mar, 10 on 7th Apr and 9 on 12th May.
- Woolston NR, Warrington: 47 on 11th Feb, 28 on 10th Mar and 49 on 7th Apr.

Movements

CBT4 ringed as a male cygnet on 23-12-23 at the Nantwich Boating Lake was seen on 24-3-24 at Southport Marine Lake = 72kms.

CBT5 ringed as a second-year male on 25-1-14 at the Nantwich Boating lake was also seen on 24-3-24 at Southport Marine Lake = 72kms.

CPF3 was ringed as a male cygnet on 16-11-19 at Boden Hall pool near Alsager.

Seen on 6-1-22 at Rufford CP, Nottingham = 84kms.

Seen on 4-11-22 at Centre Parks CP, Sherwood = 85kms.

Seen on 27-2-24 at Vicars Water CP, Mansfield, Notts = 87kms.

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

David Cookson, on behalf of Cheshire Swan Study Group
<https://cheshireswanstudygroup.wordpress.com>

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*.

Sites to Watch

RSPB DEE ESTUARY RESERVE

First published on the RSPB Dee Estuary Blog on 13th May 2024 - see <https://community.rspb.org.uk/placestovisit/deeestuary/b/deeestuary-blog/posts/blue-monday>



BLUE MONDAY

Monday morning in Burton Mere Wetlands' office always means reflecting on the prior week, and weekend in particular. However, as enjoyable as the first true taste of summer has been, the weather was far from the most significant feature of the past weekend.

It is impossible to ignore the fact that the classic spring scene of the main scrape and its surrounds diminished over the past few days. After suspicions that there was some mammalian activity inside the electric predator exclusion fence, our fears were confirmed on Friday night as one of our warden team observed a badger crossing the water on the scrape and causing havoc on the islands. The result of this come Saturday morning, was the almost complete abandonment of the affectionately-known 'gull island' along with a notably reduced number of Avocets in the wider area - and most that remained, feeding in pairs across the scrape having had their nests or young chicks predated.

Obviously, this has come as a huge shock and disappointment to the team who put every ounce of effort into managing Burton Mere Wetlands, knowing that the breeding waders are the primary objective of our conservation delivery, and a thriving Black-headed Gull colony a not insignificant further goal. Not just the warden team are affected, though they are closest to the matter given they actively manage the vegetation and water levels and maintain the fencing throughout the year. The wider reserve team is equally pained, having invested so much energy into inspiring the public about the work we have done to benefit these iconic birds over the past couple of decades, and spent weeks this winter explaining to visitors about the new fence as it was painstakingly installed.

For the third consecutive year, Burton Mere Wetlands' waders have suffered considerable impact from the plucky and persistent badgers. We entered this spring with high hopes that the new electric fence would help steer the reserve back to its best for breeding waders, with peaks of over 200 pairs achieved a few years ago.

The renewed wooden posts and otherwise improved fence design was intended to eliminate badgers (and foxes), yet this weekend's events show that despite this investment, the 'honeypot' effect created inside the fence is attractive enough for badgers to have already outsmarted it. Despite the constant efforts of the warden team testing the electric current and monitoring for signs of digging or interference, the badgers have found a way through - or more accurately, over.

Badgers are incredibly muscular and resourceful, and clearly even the new exclusion fence in its current form is no match for the persistence of a large local population with the reward of a rich meal. Close inspection of the fence since the weekend suggests that the badger - whether more than one individual is too soon to know - being successfully prevented from breaching through or under the fence, found a means of climbing over, perhaps braving an electric shock in the process. Whilst clearly devastated, the team at least understand the motive behind the badgers' behaviour. Purely a survival instinct, their insistence on breaching the fence is indicative of the dearth of food available from the surrounding land; such is the general decline of wildlife in our countryside due to various pressures on the landscape.

Additionally, mammals are not the only challenge. As in previous years, a range of avian threats - Buzzard, Carrion Crow, and quite bizarrely Coot - have taken their toll on the nests. This compounds the difficulty of managing for a high density of vulnerable waders, due to the inevitable attraction to predators.

We know you will all share our disappointment, but also trust our commitment to finding a solution. Whilst the realisation of another poor breeding year is still raw, the wardens are already actioning plans to salvage the season for the remaining Avocet and Lapwing chicks, and for the Redshank who so far seem less affected thanks to their preference to nest in areas of denser rush with a greater ability to hide. Additional electric wire to deter climbing and extended mesh around access gates - classic weak spots - will be added as short-term remedial measures in the next week or so, before a thorough review in the autumn with some potentially substantial improvements to be made.

In times like this, your support is more valuable than ever; enabling us to overcome setbacks, and giving us the belief to persevere. We're all in this together.

Dan Trotman, Visitor Experience Manager, RSPB Dee Estuary Reserve

WIRRAL COUNCIL AWARDED OVER £300K TO DEVELOP NEW WETLAND IN HOYLAKE

First published in the Wirral Globe and the Birkenhead News on 23rd March 2024

WIRRAL Council has been awarded more than £300,000 to develop a wetland nature reserve. £314,000 of flood management funding has been given to the local authority to work with Cheshire Wildlife Trust to turn over 60 hectares of land into a number of different habitats to improve biodiversity in and around Hoylake. The funding will go towards developing a wetland on farmland that regularly floods called the Hoylake Carrs, sometimes known as Langfields, that sits next to the Hoylake Municipal Golf Course.

The plans will see areas of the land turned into new ponds, grassland and marsh, new woodland, and other habitats. The public will still be able to access the area with new boardwalks, with the hope it will bring more people to the area. The project is in its early stages with final funding to be confirmed as Wirral Council prepares to engage with the public about its plans. However, shortly after the funding was announced, the plans were leaked on social media.

According to a briefing to councillors, water will be kept back by a small 'lip' around the edge of the land which will hold water back with shallow ponds and ditches created which "aims to create an ideal habitat for wintering waders and wildfowl." This will support wildlife in the Dee Estuary which is an internationally important habitat for migrating birds.

Following the leak, Cllr Liz Grey, who chairs the authority's environment committee, confirmed the local authority was working with the Cheshire Wildlife Trust on the plans who has extensive experience on similar projects.

She said the proposal for a wetland had first been floated by members of a campaign group against luxury golf resort plans on the same land years ago and the council had been independently working on a wetland proposal since.

Cllr Grey said there was evidence people's health and well-being improves with access to green space and the outdoors, adding: "The whole point of this is at the moment we have got access to 8% of England. The rest is private property. That 8% is massively overused and some people do not have access to it so it's really important we improve access to green spaces. That was the whole point of my supporting this is that people could go and get their wellies on."

Cllr Grey said the proposal would have other benefits such as education opportunities too as well as help offset any loss of habitat from developments taking place on brownfield sites elsewhere in Wirral. The council plans to build at least 17,000 homes before 2040.

She also said turning the fields into a nature reserve would prevent an area of green belt from ever being developed, adding: "It's absolutely wonderful but important for the local community as it protects the land for the community for years to come."

The local economy could also see a benefit. Places like a wetland in Martin Mere in Lancashire see up to 200,000 visitors a year bringing £6m into the local economy. Cllr Grey said: "It's obviously going to be a tourist attraction and part of our visitor economy and bring more people to the West Kirby and Hoylake area. They will visit local restaurants and businesses and maybe even stay over and boost the local economy."

Concerns had been raised that the proposal might cause flooding but Cllr Grey said that by holding water back instead of draining it quickly, the River Birket would be less likely to flood downstream in places like Leasowe and Moreton.

Cllr Grey said the authority that manages flooding was also in support of the proposal, adding: "There is no way this will make flooding worse but actually will make flooding a lot better. We have built on flood plains across Wirral and those houses will be massively protected if the water can be contained."

Following the initial investment, the briefing said that once any initial plans are finalised, the Cheshire Wildlife Trust would develop a plan to fund remaining works and manage the site over 30 years. The council currently receives rent from a farming tenant who has been notified.

ROSTHERNE MERE NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE

Newsletter January-March 2024

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2024. Spring is my favourite season at Rostherne as a sense of renewal is characterised by increasing bird song, the emergence of spring flowers and early insects scouting for nectar and nest sites.

Wintering wildfowl included counts: 11 Goldeneye, 32 Mandarin, 18 Pochard, 26 Shoveler, 86 Mallard, 232 Teal and 310 Wigeon. A male Pintail was spotted by Steve Collins in Feb, a rare sight at Rostherne these days. Eight Whooper Swans visited in Mar and a pair of Egyptian Geese was often seen in Dolls Meadow. There were around 200 Pink-footed Geese flying over in Jan. Up to 12 Goosanders joined the evening roost. There were 25 Great Crested Grebes with several pairs displaying. Three Little Grebes were also recorded. A Little Egret was seen in Dolls Meadow in Jan and Mar. Cormorants started nest building during the middle of Jan and there were 78 nests by Mar. Several Water Rails squealed from the reed beds throughout the quarter. There were around 110 Lapwing over Gale Bog and an amazing 11 Woodcock flew into roost during Jan, witnessed by Mike Duckham viewing from Marsh Lane. Eight Snipe were flushed from Dolls Meadow. Four Oystercatchers visited in Mar. Interestingly, a Redshank was seen feeding underneath the Bittern Hide on several dates. The BTO Winter Gull Survey was undertaken during Jan. This national survey has been scheduled approximately every 10 years at Rostherne since 1953! There were 1200 Black-head Gulls, 185 Common Gulls, 305 Lesser Black-backed Gulls and 120 Herring Gulls counted in the roost. A Caspian Gull and Yellow-legged Gull were also recorded.

Five Buzzards were seen on several dates. Sparrowhawk and Kestrel were frequently recorded. A Marsh Harrier circled the Reserve in Jan and a Peregrine was over Harpers Bank Wood in Feb. A Barn Owl roosted in the Mere Meadow box. A Little Owl was heard calling near Marsh Lane and a Tawny Owl was heard during the day on several dates.

A special record for Sheelagh Halsey was the arrival of a female Lesser Spotted Woodpecker on the Split Limes in Mar. Another delight was the six Grey Partridges seen in Mere Meadow by Ian McCulloch. Bullfinches, Lesser Redpoll and Reed Buntings visited the bird tables in front of the Observatory and hides. Cetti's Warbler was recorded on most days with four in Mar. Malcolm Calvert retrapped a male bird in Mere Covert which was ringed as a juvenile in Aug 2023.

Up to 260 Fieldfares, 60 Redwings and 100 Starlings were seen feeding in Martin's Field behind Egerton Hall, just off the Reserve. Furthermore, it was a pleasant surprise to see up to 10,000 Starlings returning to roost in the reed beds near Shaw Green in Mar. Mar saw the arrival of the first Sand Martins and Chiffchaffs. Linnets and Skylarks were occasionally seen in the fields surrounding the Reserve.

The last few months have been very wet and Dolls Meadow resembled a lake for the majority of Jan but hopefully we will see some dry and sunny weather during the spring.

Newsletter April-June 2024

Welcome to the second newsletter of 2024. Firstly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Rupert Randall, the Natural England Reserve Manager, for all his dedicated work over the last 15

years! You will be greatly missed Rupe on both a professional and personal level! I wish you all the best in your well-earned retirement. Furthermore, a very big welcome to the new Reserve Manager, Steve Ormerod and the Senior Officer for National Nature Reserves, Chris Evans.

While wildfowl counts are usually low during this quarter, the breeding residents were busy. Several broods of Canada Geese, Mallards and Coots were noted with five Mandarin ducklings seen in early May. However, only one Great Crested Grebe chick has been recorded so far this year. Rarities included a Cattle Egret in Apr, the first ever record for the Reserve, Little Egrets, a Black-necked Grebe and a Common Scoter. The Cormorant colony continues to expand with an amazing 193 nests recorded in May which set a new Reserve record!

Waders included Oystercatcher and Common Sandpiper while Lapwings bred in several of the fields surrounding the Reserve. A Kittiwake in adult winter plumage visited in Apr, the first since 2016. Both Arctic and Common Terns dropped in while the commonest gull was Lesser Black-backed Gull which peaked at 160. Two pairs of Buzzards bred and Sparrowhawk, Kestrel, Red Kite, Peregrine and Hobby were all recorded during the quarter. It was a good breeding season for Great Spotted Woodpecker with several nests recorded while a Green Woodpecker was seen in Apr. An elusive Cuckoo was heard calling in Gale Bog on several dates in Jun.

Sand Martins were seen almost daily in Apr peaking at around 1000 feeding over the Mere. They were up to 40 House Martins during May but Swallow numbers were modest with around 10 the highest count. Nest building around Briddonweir Farm was noted during May. Swifts peaked at about 30 birds. Ring-necked Parakeets were recorded on two occasions in Harpers Bank Wood. Skylarks bred in the fields surrounding the Reserve while a Grey Wagtail family was seen along Rostherne Brook on several dates. Kingfishers were recorded in widespread locations along the Mere margins.

Cetti's Warbler continues to thrive on the Reserve; it was recorded in six different locations in Apr. Malcolm Calvert and John Adshead discovered a Cetti's nest with several eggs, a very rare find; unfortunately, it was not successful and was probably predated. Recent captures of ringed Cetti's have shown an interesting link between Rostherne, Pickmere and Woolston Eyes. A total of 63 adult Reed Warblers had been caught by mid-June with an encouraging number of returning birds. Willow Warbler, Sedge Warbler and Whitethroat were all recorded in the quarter with up to 12 singing Chiffchaff and 10 Blackcaps heard on walks around the Mere. A Lesser Whitethroat was singing in a territory near Hunter's Moon, just off the Reserve, for several weeks.

A Spotted Flycatcher was first seen in Wood Bongs on 18th May. A pair built a nest high up in a tree and fingers crossed that they breed successfully. Two Bramblings was seen in Wood Bongs and two Linnets in Bobby Field during Apr. A pair of prospecting Ravens was recorded on several dates.

Bill Bellamy

WANTED: NEW COUNCIL MEMBER

**There is a vacancy for a Non-Executive
(Ordinary) Member of Council**

For further information, please contact:

David Hiley Email: secretary@cawos.org Tel: 07484 83665

THE SOCIETY NEEDS YOU!!!

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 split 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. Also, we are always interested in your views on any of our articles or on the newsletter itself. Ed.

EXCEPTIONAL NUMBERS!

This is the 2nd part of my article where exceptional numbers of birds (in a national context) have been present on the Dee Estuary and the Wirral coast.

Terns (Sandwich, Arctic and Common)

The 1960s and early 1970s saw some remarkable reports of huge numbers of terns. The first report below, in 1965, was from Hilbre and is the only one which mentions Sandwich Terns when about 9,000 were counted on September 5th - despite there being a lot less pairs breeding around the Irish Sea at that time than there are now. The other reports don't distinguish between Arctic and Common Terns but I suspect that the majority were probably Arctic Terns coming down from Scotland, Scandinavia and, perhaps, even north-west Russia - and at that time the River Mersey, and the channel going up towards Formby, was probably being used as a staging post for them. We still do get thousands of Arctic Terns in Liverpool Bay but these days they mostly pass through Morecambe Bay on their way north in spring to breed, with only small numbers recorded on their return.

Hilbre Bird Report 1965: On August 21st, 26th and September 5th literally thousands of mixed terns were off the island, certainly in such numbers that had not previously been recorded by the Observatory. The observers found it impossible to specifically identify and count each species so the estimates of numbers refer mainly to the Common, Arctic, Little and Sandwich Terns. The estimates were as follows: August 21st and 26th - c5,000 and at least 1,000 respectively, Sandwich and 'Commic' Terns predominated with a few Little. September 5th - c10,000. Heavy movement to the north-east during the two hours 05.30 - 7.30. Majority Sandwich, then Little, with only a few 'Commic'.

Cheshire Bird Report 1969: Vast numbers of 'Commic' terns were present in the mouth of the Mersey in late August and early September, whilst these were largely on the Lancashire side of the river, big numbers overflowed to the Cheshire side. From the Isle of Man boat on September 1st it was seen that dense clouds of terns stretched all the way from the docks to the Formby Light, a distance of several miles. This congregation must have numbered tens of thousands and at the same time there were at least 1000 off Seacombe on the Cheshire side. At this period numbers passing Hilbre were reported at 500 per day, 2000 on August 16th.

Cheshire Bird Report 1970: 5-6000 milling around feeding over the outflows from Birkenhead Docks..... the rate was 198 per minute (passing the bow of a ship) and the movement was watched in progress for an hour.

Cheshire Bird Report 1972: At Hilbre up to 600/day were passing in the Mersey there was a count of 4200/hour over a period of three hours passing Seacombe in the second week of September.

Cheshire Bird Report 1973: beginning of September on a rising tide when 12,000 were counted moving up river, in the space of an hour, at New Ferry.

Redwings

There was a massive Redwing migration through our area on October 19th 2022. It was estimated that at least 20,000 flew over Thurston that day and they were recorded in their thousands along the north Wirral coast, over Hilbre and down the estuary, as well as all over inland Wirral. But by far the biggest count, and the biggest single site count of Redwings ever made in the UK,

was at Crosby Marine Park where an experienced migration watcher counted an amazing 122,600 all heading south - i.e. straight towards the north Wirral coast!

This big movement started in southern Norway and Sweden on the evening of the 18th, the weather radar showed them flying up in one huge mass before starting to fly out into the North Sea. Huge numbers headed due south and ended up flying along the west coast of Holland on 19th. Others flew south-west and thousands were heard crossing the County Durham coast at Jarrow overnight. By the morning the large majority were recorded heading south over Lancashire, the eastern half of Yorkshire and into Merseyside and Cheshire.

An article 'A Massive Redwing Migration' was published in my *December 2022 Newsletter* and shows maps of exactly where the birds were and the routes they took.

I end with a quote from an observer who was at Thurstaston in the afternoon of 19th "I have just walked through Dawpool NR, every berry tree was alive with them. They were like locusts. Then a Sparrowhawk spooked them all, what a spectacular sight."

Richard Smith (article first published in the January 2024 Newsletter on the Dee Estuary Birding website <http://www.deeestuary.co.uk>)

THE SPRING MIGRATION

The Spring Migration starts around early March and can still be underway in early June, but it no doubt peaks in the second half of April and into early May. It can be an exciting and magical time - waking up on a spring morning to find Wheatears in every field and Willow Warblers in every bush. It's about far more than just those two species, of course, and it's exciting because we see species rarely recorded here at other times of the year. No spring is the same and we will remember days when the beach is covered in White Wagtails, or four or five Ring Ouzels in one field, or hearing dozens of Whimbrels calling on the shore, or a mega rarity turns up, or..... So I thought I'd recount some of these magical days from the past few years.

Willow Warblers and Wheatears - May 2nd 2012

I quote from the Hilbre Bird Observatory Blog for May 2nd 2012 "Today saw almost certainly the largest ever fall of migrants recorded at Hilbre since the Bird Observatory was established in 1957". It had been a miserable April, and the last week had included gales and torrential rain, but April 30th saw a vast improvement and by May 2nd there was a warm south-easterly airflow and the birds reacted accordingly. Observatory members on their way to the island at first light knew something amazing was happening when they counted 72 Wheatears around the West Kirby Marine Lake Car Park! When they reached Hilbre birds were everywhere and it was like that all day. Next I quote Matt Thomas (Hilbre Ranger) from his 'From the Muddy Banks of the Dee' Blog: "Looking around it was as if a Wheatear bomb had gone off. All along the west side of the island were Wheatears. Some loafing on the grass, others scromping grubs from the sandy cliffs. If you got one in the viewfinder of the camera there was almost always another in the same frame. There must have been around 200 of them during the course of the day but their numbers were dwarfed by the amount of Willow Warblers that fell from the skies. Final total was 800. You looked at every bush, fence post and there was a Willow Warbler there. I walked out of the garden of the Bird Obs and nearly trod on one. I have never seen anything like it before." Other Hilbre highlights that day were six Common Redstarts, 3,000 Swallows and 250 House Martins.

Common Redstarts

Fabulous birds to see with their red breast and tail, in the sun they really stand out like red jewels. Most pass through here in the last three weeks of April with a few stragglers in May. We rarely see any at other times of the year here on the coast although they do breed inland in small numbers in both Cheshire and Clwyd.

Two years stand out - 2014 and 2015. April 2014 started well with singles recorded at various locations between 8th and 20th and then on 21st six were at Leasowe Lighthouse with birds also at Hoylake and Hilbre. There was a total of 42 records that year, the highest in recent years.

The total in 2015 was not quite as high, with 37, but one day stands out - 17th April. It had been a good week with three at Red Rocks on 15th and four males at Leasowe Lighthouse on 16th.

17th started well with two stunning males along Park Lane (near the Lighthouse) at 8am. During a visit in the afternoon it quickly became apparent there had been a second arrival of birds with an additional eight Common Redstarts logged, making an incredible 10 for the day and 19 for that week.

Ring Ouzels

The Ring Ouzel migration can be quite prolonged with the few we see in March thought to be British breeding birds whereas the higher numbers we get in April mostly breed in Scandinavia. Most come down to feed for a few hours before moving on but occasionally we will get one that stays for several days. I remember a lovely male bird in Heswall NT in 2007 which stayed for a week, one day it was joined by another male plus a female. That same April a female Ring Ouzel was in a field just below Stapledon Woods for five days, a five minute walk from my house - fantastic!

But it was 2019 which stands out with the highest numbers this century. Things started quite slowly with just one record in March that year. Three, at Leasowe Lighthouse on 8th, was a good start to April but it wasn't until 15th that we started seeing them every day. 18th was outstanding. We had a flock of seven in one field at Leasowe Lighthouse with at least 10 in the area. That same day there were also Ring Ouzels at Red Rocks (three), Hilbre, Burton and Caldy making for a total of at least 16. The total number of records for spring 2019 was 43, the next highest this century was 37 in 2014 with the average being 20.

Yellow Wagtails

Stunning looking birds. Although we've had good numbers of Yellow Wagtails since, especially in 2019 as described below, I've never seen a flock of them as there was in early May 2011 and I quote from the Dee Estuary June 2011 Newsletter:

"They were like bright yellow leaves blown by a swirling wind. Sorry to go all poetical on you but that's what I thought whilst watching a flock of 25 Yellow Wagtails in the horse paddocks by Leasowe Lighthouse on 5th. Earlier in the day over 40 had been reported here and by the evening numbers had built up to 58 - these must be the highest numbers here for well over 20 years where anything over 10 is usually considered exceptional. What intrigued me was the way the large flock were behaving, very restless, constantly on the move and swirling around in flight in contrast to the behaviour of most Yellow Wagtails here which usually just stay on the ground busy feeding. It was nice to see so many females in the flock, looking as beautiful as the males but much more of a pale primrose colour as opposed to the males' bright buttercup yellow."

As mentioned above, April 2019 was an excellent month for Yellow Wagtails and I can do no better than to quote from my Newsletter again (May 2019):

"It's been a great year for Yellow Wagtails with a max count of at least 40 at Leasowe Lighthouse on 22nd. Hilbre rarely gets more than ones and twos as most fly over, so it was fantastic to have 23 on the island on 21st and 31 two days later. Channel Wagtails (Yellow/Blue-headed Wagtail intergrade - *M f flava x favissima*) are unusual here, and we rarely get more than the odd one, so to get seven records was great. Two turned up at Burton Mere Wetlands on 14th and later in the month we had a few at Leasowe Lighthouse. But the sumptuous icing on the cake was the arrival of a Spanish Wagtail (*Motacilla flava iberiae*) found by Stan Davidson in Kerr's Field at Leasowe on 26th, despite gales and rain on 27th it was still present on 28th and briefly the next day."

Whimbrels

I love to go down to the estuary between West Kirby and Heswall in late April and early May to hear the Whimbrels with their seven whistle call. At that time of year many of the other waders have already left us so you really notice the Whimbrels which are passing through here on their way between West Africa and Iceland. On an incoming tide they often perch on the rocks on the stretch between Caldy steps and the causeway at Dee Sailing Club, giving very good views and an opportunity for photos.

As the tide comes in further the Whimbrels make their way to Heswall shore, and here a large roost gathers. We've had record numbers here over the past few years with peak counts as follows:

142	May 6th 2020	173	May 1st 2021
211	May 5th 2022	184	May 2nd 2023

Rarities

The spring migration is a great time for spotting rarities and I finish this article with a selection from 2007 to 2023.

Red-breasted Flycatcher, Hilbre, 2007; Whiskered Tern, Inner Marsh Farm, 2008; Red-rumped Swallow, Leasowe Lighthouse, 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011; Stone Curlew, Leasowe Lighthouse, 2009; Bluethroat, Leasowe Lighthouse, 2010 and 2022; Nightingale, Hilbre, 2010; Citrine Wagtail, Red Rocks, 2014; nine Surf Scoters, Hoylake, 2015; three Dotterels, Meols, 2015; Nightjar, Hilbre, 2016; Shorelark, Hilbre, 2017; Gull-billed Tern, Burton Mere Wetlands, 2018 and 2023; Spanish Wagtail, Leasowe Lighthouse, 2019; Collared Pratincole, Leasowe Lighthouse, 2021; Bonaparte's Gull, Burton Mere Wetlands, 2021; Black-winged Stilt and Savi's Warbler, Burton Mere Wetlands, 2023.

Richard Smith (article first published in the April 2024 Newsletter on the Dee Estuary Birding Website <http://www.deeestuary.co.uk>)

CAWOS Programme

The 2024-2025 programme will be done by a mixture of indoor meetings (in person), or by Zoom, as detailed below. Indoor meetings will be held in the Mere and Tabley Community Club, Warrington Road, Knutsford, WA16 0PU, starting at 7.45pm. Any guests will be welcome. If by Zoom, instructions will be sent via email to members, so please make sure we have your up-to-date email address.

4th OCTOBER 2024 (Zoom)

'NOCTURNAL MIGRATION: THINGS THAT GO TSEEP IN THE NIGHT' by Simon Gillings

Every spring and autumn, millions of birds migrate over us whilst we sleep. Recent years have seen considerable interest in using audio recorders to capture the flight calls of these migrants, either to boost garden lists or as part of more structured monitoring. Simon will introduce nocturnal migration, discuss how recordings can be taken and illustrate some of what I have learned about this topic. Expect to have your eyes, ears and minds opened to what could be skimming over your rooftop whilst you slumber.

1st NOVEMBER 2024 (in person)

'ARDNAMURCHAN: ALMOST AN ISLAND' by Mike Roberts

This talk focuses a wide variety of birds and wildlife of this western most part of the mainland. It includes White-tailed Eagles, Black-throated Divers as well as many coastal species including birds seen on the relatively easily accessible islands of Staffa and The Treshnish Isles. A variety of cetaceans species are included as well as Basking Sharks. Of course Otters and Pine Martins are included as well as the elusive Scottish Wildcat.

6th DECEMBER 2024 (Zoom)

'CANARY ISLANDS' by Mark Woodhead

Situated in the Atlantic Ocean off the west coast of Africa and just north of the Tropic of Cancer, the Canary Islands have a unique location, isolation, vegetation and climate. This has led to a continuously evolving bird diversity ranging from Berthelot's Pipits to Blue Chaffinches. I hope to show you most of the island endemics in this presentation. If you haven't already visited, I hope that my talk will persuade you to add this destination to your ornithological bucket list.

3rd JANUARY 2025 (Zoom)

'PRAIRIES TO POLES' by Colin Bradshaw

Colin Bradshaw is an English physician, ornithologist, and musician who was chairman of the British Birds Rarities Committee from 1997 to 2008. The 'Prairies to Poles' is a new talk and has lots of photos of American Warblers, shorebirds, wildfowl and sparrows as well as other wildlife.

7th FEBRUARY 2025 (in person)

'CURLEWS IN THE LANDSCAPE' by Andrew Brockbank

Andrew Brockbank hails from the Western Lake District from where he gained his love of nature and the desire to work in the field of countryside management and conservation. Curlews nested in hay fields close to home; with their evocative call a prominent part of the spring soundscape. Were we slow to notice the decline of the Curlew population as changes in agricultural systems brought dramatic changes to the countryside? And should we be surprised to find the Curlew at the centre of some contentious current issues in conservation? From the transition in upland agricultural to the push for net-zero, or the controversy over grouse moors to the impacts of recreation, the Curlew's future hangs in the balance! Andrew's illustrated talk will highlight a range of actions for Curlew recovery and touch on the prospects for other shoreline, moorland, and farmland birds amongst the complex challenges we face in working for nature's recovery.

7th MARCH 2025 (in person)

AGM followed by 'SUMMER WINGS - SAVING SWIFTS, SWALLOWS AND MARTINS' by Louise Bentley

Swifts, Swallows and martins have lived alongside us for centuries, as our close companions, but how well do we know these summer visitors? Discover more about these magical migrants, as slowly they reveal their secrets to us. Find out why it's not all bad news and how conservation measures can make a difference to our Swifts & hirundines. An upbeat, highly informative, illustrated and interactive presentation by Louise Bentley of Bolton and Bury Swifts. Our project supports Swift and martin conservation locally, encouraging boxes, bowls and bricks in new developments. I am also an RSPCA accredited rehabilitator for Swifts and hirundines.

Conservation News

A round-up of news from the CAWOS conservation representatives. If you have any issues or concerns then do contact your local representative (by email or letter preferably). There several vacancies - **please get in touch if you could help!**

CONSERVATION TEAM

Conservation Officer Vacant

Chester Vacant

Congleton Vacant

Crewe and Nantwich Vacant

Halton Tony Parker, 41 The Park, Penketh, Warrington, WA5 2SG.
Tel: 01925 726986 Email: tonymarker@cawos.org

Macclesfield Vacant

Vale Royal Roy Leigh, 8 Hall Drive, Marston, Northwich, Cheshire, CW9 6DT
Tel: 01606 892032 Email: roysleigh@aol.com

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

Wirral Richard Smith, March Wall, King's Drive North, Caldley, Wirral, CH48 1LL.
Tel: 0151 625 2320 Email: richard@deestuaries.co.uk

Note: the copy date for the next issue is 19th October 2024



SEPTEMBER 2024

- 8 KOS Leighton Moss RSPB, ring for details
- 13 SECOS 'THE RIVER' by Paul Hobson
- 27 KOS 'ST. KILDA: THE LONELY ISLES' by Steve Halliwell

OCTOBER 2024

- 4 **CAWOS 'NOCTURNAL MIGRATION: THINGS THAT GO TSEEP IN THE NIGHT'**
by Simon Gillings (Zoom)
- 5 KOS Llanfairfechan followed by Conwy RSPB, ring for details
- 11 SECOS 'BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY AROUND THE UK' by David Winnard
- 25 KOS 'CURLEWS IN THE LANDSCAPE' by Andrew Brockbank

NOVEMBER 2024

- 1 **CAWOS 'ARDNAMURCHAN: ALMOST AN ISLAND' by Mike Roberts (in person)**
- 2 KOS Burton Mere Wetlands RSPB, ring for details
- 8 SECOS 'SEA BIRDS - THE STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL IN A HARSH ENVIRONMENT'
by Anthony Brandreth
- 22 KOS 'THE BIRDS OF EXTREMADURA' by Mike Roberts

DECEMBER 2024

- 1 KOS Marshside RSPB and Martin Mere WWT, ring for details
- 6 **CAWOS 'CANARY ISLANDS' by Mark Woodhead (Zoom)**
- 13 KOS Christmas Party
- 13 SECOS 'BIRDING ON THE DOORSTEP' by Chris Galvin

JANUARY 2025

- 3 **CAWOS 'PRAIRIES TO POLES' by Colin Bradshaw (Zoom)**
- 10 SECOS 'SKYDANCERS' by Keith Offord
- 11 KOS Northwich Woodlands / Neumann's Flash /Marbury CP, ring for details
- 24 KOS 'WHERE EAGLES FLY - WHAT SATELLITE TRACKING HAS SHOWN US'
by Dr Alan Fielding

FEBRUARY 2025

- 7 **CAWOS 'CURLEWS IN THE LANDSCAPE' by Andrew Brockbank (in person)**
- 9 KOS Tatton Mere, ring for details
- 14 SECOS 'AMAZING BIRDS' by Chris Collins (by Zoom)
- 28 KOS 'WILD ISLANDS: THE NATURE OF THE FALKLANDS' by Mark Sissons

MARCH 2025

- 7 **CAWOS AGM followed by 'SUMMER WINGS - SAVING SWIFTS SWALLOWS AND MARTINS' by Louise Bentley (in person)**
- 14 SECOS 'A CELEBRATION OF BRITISH BIRDS' by Nick Martin
- 15 KOS Leighton Moss RSPB, ring for details
- 28 KOS 'VIBRANT SRI LANKA: BLUE MAGPIES, BLUE WHALES AND BLUE SKIES'
by Ashley Grove

APRIL 2025

- 12 KOS Woolston Eyes, ring for details
- 25 KOS AGM and MEMBERS' IMAGES

AFFILIATED SOCIETIES

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

CAWOS Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society www.cawos.org
Meetings: Mere and Tabley Community Club, Warrington Road, Knutsford at 7:45pm, or by Zoom, as detailed in the programme, contact Sec. David Hiley 07484 836652

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

HPRSPB High Peak RSPB Members' Group <https://ww2.rspb.org.uk/groups/highpeak/>
Meetings: Senior Citizens' Hall, Marple at 7:30pm, contact David Knass 07879 646856

KOS Knutsford Ornithological Society www.10x50.com Meetings: Jubilee Hall, Stanley Road, Knutsford at 8pm, contact Sec. Karina Stanley 07532 833083

MRSBPB Macclesfield RSPB Members' Group www.rspb.org.uk/groups/macclesfield
Meetings: Macclesfield Community Centre, Macclesfield at 7:45pm, contact Ray Evans 01625 432635

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

SECOS South-East Cheshire Ornithological Society www.secos.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 Stuart Mollison 07505 254306

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@cawos.org

*****POSITION VACANT*****

BIRD REPORT CO-EDITOR

You may be aware that Ted Lock is stepping down from his role of Bird Report Co-editor after the Bird Report 2023.

We therefore invite anyone who has an interest in working with Ted on the 2023 report with a view to taking over on the 2024 report to contact David Hiley at

secretary@cawos.org

More information, including Job Description, can be supplied.

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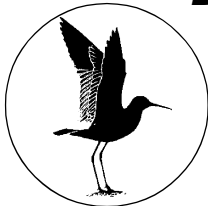
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**'NOCTURNAL MIGRATION: THINGS THAT GO TSEEP
IN THE NIGHT' by Simon Gillings**

ZOOM MEETING on 4th OCTOBER 2024

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