

Latest news, views, gossip etc.

Latest News - 2015

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Updated 31st December 2015.

31/12/2015..... Annual Christmas walk

2015 has been an excellent year for the KOS with a committee working hard behind the scenes, an expanding membership and sufficient funds to see us through another 12 months of activities - well done team!

As a group we've enjoyed some great field trips including those two long weekends away, Barmouth in May and Teesside in October plus the "usual" outings to places closer to home. This time last year the little lady and I were enjoying summer time in New Zealand and indeed most members seem to have travelled abroad this year on one or more occasions adding a few "ticks" to their life lists! Despite having sat in New Zealand's only bird hide watching Wrybills and a flock of Eastern Bar-tailed Godwits that winter every year in NZ, having flown [11,000 Kilometers non-stop from Alaska](#) my most abiding memories are, as usual, of local birds seen in and around Cheshire - that June evening in the Pennines amongst "roding" Woodcock and displaying [Nightjars](#) will remain with me for ever - I know others are of a similar persuasion.



Despite the best efforts of [storm Frank](#) the annual Christmas walk around the

Neumann's/Budworth area went ahead as planned yesterday (30th). We braved gale force winds powering in from the Irish Sea but were safely ensconced in one of the hides enjoying elevenses when the rain arrived - a real downpour lasting about ten minutes before it passed over taking the wind with it. The weather in December has been amazing this year with winds sweeping up from the south giving the UK a mean temperature of 8.1°C, no less than 4.2°C above the long term average, apparently today (31st) the temperature

at the north pole will be above freezing instead of the normal -25°C! Perhaps these conditions combined with the wind and rain of the previous 12 hours had something to do with the appearance of a juvenile dark phase Arctic Skua that we spotted from the west hide at Neumann's Flash! The bird was in flight heading east to west, it was in view for only a few seconds before vanishing behind trees surrounding the flash but long enough for three of us to get onto it. The latest Cheshire atlas states that winter records are rare but not unknown *winter records are rare. The two birds seen during this Atlas period (both in winter 2006/ 07) were the first for six years: one was seen off Hilbre (SJ18Z) and another on 4 January 2007 flew in the mouth of the Mersey off Egremont shore.....* Previous winter inland records have come from Moore and Rostherne. I note from the internet that Pomarine and Great Skuas were also seen yesterday in other locations.



Pallid Swift - Oman - Barrie Amitt

Baz is off on his travels again, this time to Oman and I've recently received this email from him.....

Spring migration seems a long way off but migration already happening elsewhere. On Monday a.m had a group of 40 of these pass through - Pallid Swifts: - fed in the area for 20 mins and then disappeared north. In the afternoon, managed a picture as a group fed over the local park. These

birds normally move through to Gulf states in January so a good bird for the trip list. Visible migration- fantastic! Other causes for celebration - the Tour Down Under (Bike race - Team Sky and all that..) begins the 2016 racing season on the 17th Jan.... as MUFC seem to be playing rather dull football these days might be worth a look - you don't have to shave your legs to watch.....

15/12/2015..... Christmas Party & Martin Mere/Marshside



A busy weekend for KOS members with the annual Christmas party on Friday evening followed on Sunday with the trip to Martin Mere and Marshside. The party was an unqualified success and our bean counter treasurer Frank Dearden reports that we made a profit of no less than £275; comfortably above the previous peak of £193 reached in 2010 and more than two and a half times last year's result of £107.07!! The attendance this year was 27, despite the absence of one or two "regulars" and this was the highest in recent KOS history. As usual it was a group effort with everyone helping in one way or another but perhaps special thanks should go to Jude for preparing the coronation chicken and delivering it to Derek and Jean's during the afternoon - despite not being able to attend herself, to Susan Middleton for the delicious apple crumble and of course our secretary Derek Pike for bringing the whole thing together on the night and for his unique style of auctioneering that ensured he squeezed every last penny from his victims!

A small but select group headed north on Sunday (13th) on our December field trip to the Southport area where we enjoyed fine weather for most of the morning but by noon the forecast rain had arrived and it subsequently continued for most of the afternoon, although by then we'd reached Martin Mere and were able to indulge in a little hide-hopping!

We began at [RSPB Marshside](#) where we met up with some local birders from Southport who kindly pointed us in the direction of a distant Merlin and two Marsh Harriers that were quartering the marsh against a backdrop of Blackpool Tower and the Lake District Hills. The area on the opposite side of the road held an enormous number of birds Teal, Shoveler, Mallard, Pintail, and Wigeon plus thousands of Black-tailed Godwits all in a constant state of flux due to the unwanted attentions of marauding Great Black-backed Gulls and a Peregrine Falcon that had no trouble downing an unfortunate wader which was devoured on the ground in front of the Sandgrounders hide. I think this is a better spot than Parkgate for wildfowl watching as the numbers seem to be greater and you're able to get much closer views from the hides provided by the RSPB.



None members are now charged £11 for entry into Martin Mere (£8 concessions) and there has been some discussion about whether or not it's still really value for money. Certainly in the recent past the pens seemed sparsely populated and poorly organised with funds being spent on the large restaurant and the new Discovery hide, a replacement for the long Swan Link hide that will be removed after next year's breeding season. On Sunday we confined ourselves to the Discovery, Ron Barker and Raines hides (and the restaurant of course!); the car park was full and the reserve

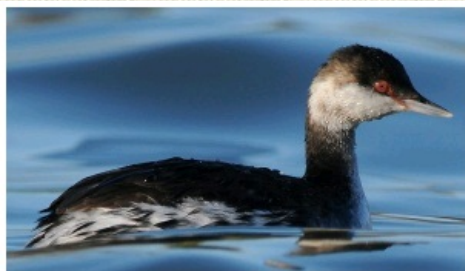
was packed with family parties which was nice to see, perhaps this is now their visitor target. An un-ringed Ross's Goose has been included on the day list although it's origin is unknown, unlike the 1,300 Whooper Swans currently wintering at Martin Mere whose lives have been closely monitored for many years! Conditions had deteriorated by the time we reached the Ron Barker hide and it had become quite misty; hundreds of Wigeon were grazing on the grass close to the hide but few Pinkfeet were present although the information board gave a figure of 10,000, no doubt they were away feeding during the daylight hours and indeed large flocks began to appear as the light faded. Feeding time was at 3pm and a good crowd had assembled in the Discovery hide in anticipation (and an even bigger gathering of Whoopers outside!) the reserve warden distributed the corn and at the same time giving a running commentary via a wireless link to speakers in the hide - it was quite effective and a feature I'd not seen before. There's a video I took [here](#).

Marsh Harrier, Buzzard, Kestrel, Merlin, Peregrine, Teal, Shoveler, Mallard, Tufted Duck, Pintail, Wigeon, Pochard, Mute Swan, Whooper Swan, Moorhen, Coot, Canada Goose, Pink-footed Goose, Greylag Goose, Pied Wagtail, Jackdaw, Rook, Carrion Crow, Black-tailed Godwit, Ruff, Redshank, Dunnock, Robin, Blackbird, Goldcrest, Greenfinch, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, House Sparrow, Tree Sparrow, Starling, Lapwing, Wood Pigeon, Curlew, Oystercatcher, Golden Plover, Little Egret, Black Headed Gull, Herring Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Shelduck, Cormorant, Heron, Pheasant, Gadwall, Meadow Pipit, Wren,

Magpie, Ross's Goose, Chaffinch. [57 species].... no Redwings or Fieldfares!

03/12/2015..... Latest news from Rostherne & Woolston

A Slavonian Grebe was located at Rostherne yesterday (2nd.) by John Dawson, unfortunately it had moved on when Bob Groom paid a visit today (3rd) but, by way of compensation, Bob had a fine male Goosander on the mere and a Hen Harrier over the village cricket pitch! Recent sightings in the Rostherne log included Raven, Bittern, Water Rail and a regular Peregrine.



We had hoped to catch up with the recently seen Harrier at Woolston when we drove across to Warrington yesterday (2nd) and perhaps the Firecrest that had also been recorded. Unfortunately we saw neither but we did manage to rack up a respectable score of 45 of the commoner species during a period of two and a half hours.

One of the first birds we saw as we made our way across the bridge was a Kingfisher, speeding through towards the weir, apparently it's been giving excellent views from the Morgan hide, perching on the conveniently placed branch at a distance just right for the photographers! There were good numbers of Redwings about but, surprisingly, no Fieldfares appeared all morning, but we did have a few Siskins passing over as we made our way to the Morgan hide. Highlight of the morning was the large number of finches feeding on the sunflower seeds in the large feeders to the right of the hide; Greenfinches, Goldfinches, Chaffinches, some fine Bullfinches in immaculate plumage and 14 Bramblings, also in tip-top condition - great views through Derek's 'scope! Continuing around the reserve a Redpoll flew overhead (Bob had a number from the Morgan hide and earlier I believe up to 12 had been feeding on the [mugwort](#) growing by the waters edge) and we finally heard a Willow Tit; if they ever vanish from Woolston the species will be in real trouble - it's their stronghold. Closer to home Roger Barnes has a Willow Tit coming to his feeders overlooking Knutsford Moor - there's plenty of rotting Birch trees in Higmere Plantation and Dog Wood so you never know!

Some dates for your diary for 2016 provided by Sheila - "There are some very high tides in the days around the 11th March, 8th April, 7th May, 19th September, 19th October and 15th November all over 10m." No doubt we'll be making our way over to the Wirral Peninsula around those dates.



14/11/2015..... KOS trip to Pennington Flash

Rather a subdued start to our KOS trip to Pennington Flash with the depressing news from Paris dominating the early morning news bulletins. Luckily the deluge predicted by the met office held off and it wasn't until the afternoon that we experienced any sustained precipitation; I sometimes think the weathermen deliberately err on the side of caution having been criticised so often in the past. Either that or they all have shares invested in

Noah's Ark Construction Ltd!

Bob Groom and David Cogger decided to remain in the area around the information centre and hides whilst the rest of us did the full circuit of the flash (5.7km according to the app on my fancy new iphone) they added a number of species that we missed for one reason or another.

A female Common Scoter had been seen the previous day but it appeared to have moved on before our arrival; we recorded Teal, Mallard, Tufted Duck, Gadwall, Shoveler, Pochard and caught a fleeting glimpse of a Goosander through the undergrowth as it flew along the side of the flash. There were large numbers of wintering Coot and Moorhen present plus many Great Crested Grebes and Dabchicks, at one point seven of the latter were counted feeding together in a tight group close inshore.

There was plenty of activity in front of the hide where the feeders are positioned with close views of species such as Bullfinch, Kingfisher and Willow Tit, Bob and David also had Brambling and Water Rail from here and elsewhere Grey Wagtail and Goosanders with 2♂ and 1♀.

Blackbird, Robin, Dunnock, Goldcrest, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Brambling, Carrion Crow, Jackdaw, Wren, Reed Bunting, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Willow Tit, Bullfinch, Moorhen, Coot, Kingfisher, Goosander, Teal, Mallard, Tufted Duck, Gadwall, Shoveler, Pochard, Heron, Black-headed Gull, Herring Gull, Common Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Woodpigeon, Cormorant, Canada Goose, Great Crested Grebe, Little Grebe, Redwing, Fieldfare, Water Rail, Grey Wagtail, Pied Wagtail, Nuthatch, Mistle Thrush, Kestrel, Buzzard, Jay, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Lapwing, Mute Swan, Magpie, [51 species]



Apart from Frank's new blue Barbour wellies the trip will be remembered as the one where we were introduced to [Scottish Tablet](#) by Anne and David from Warrington. This was homemade by Anne using sugar, butter and condensed milk and was absolutely delicious but, having seen the recipe, I suspect that if available commercially it would have to carry a government health warning - three pieces of that a day would give you the life expectancy of a Mayfly!

9/11/2015..... Wintering Blackcap & Stonechat in Tatton

As usual we began our Wednesday (4/11) walk around Tatton Park on Knutsford Moor, this is always the

most rewarding part of any birding trip to the park; during fieldwork for the first Cheshire Atlas, between 1979 and 1984, no less than 80 breeding species were recorded in the [tetrad](#) containing the Moor, the south end of Tatton Mere and Dog Wood, that was the 5th most productive of the 670 tetrads covered in the publication. Away from this area the law of diminishing returns kicks in and the rest of the park is less profitable - but of course should be covered when attempting one of [birdwatching's most difficult challenges!](#)

There were good numbers of Tits and Finches to be seen on the way down to the Moor, a flock of Fieldfares passed overhead and a nice male Blackcap was a good record - we'd had one the previous Wednesday at Woolston and they are becoming more and more numerous nowadays in the winter months. The back pool on the Moor held Little and Great Crested Grebes, Mallard, Shoveler and Gadwall, a Kingfisher was in view for a split second and a Water Rail for only a little longer as it flew between two areas of reed. I remember back in the 1980's standing in that same spot with [Jonathan Guest](#) discussing the expanding range of Cetti's Warbler and Jonathan confidently predicting that within 30 years they'd be breeding on the Moor; they've since nested in Cheshire and been recorded at Woolston and Rostherne, it surely won't be long



before that explosive song is heard on the Moor!

On then into the park proper where we added a few new species on the main mere, including four female/ immature Goldeneye, further on Bob's Stonechat put in an appearance in the reeds at the north end of the mere, it may remain in the area for the rest of the winter. We enjoyed elevenses in the Allen hide (*there's a leak in the roof Darren!*) where we counted eight Wigeon and 30 Pochard but little else of note before heading back to the cars via the east bank of the main mere and Dog Wood [50 species].

The first Bramblings of the winter have arrived in our area, Geoff and Sheila had one on the 7th in their garden at Mere but were pipped to the post by Len Mason who recorded a fine male also in his garden, this time in Mobberley.

I mentioned the first Cheshire atlas, published in 1992, this is a terrific book and should form part of any Cheshire birder's library, I always thought this would become a collectors piece and quite valuable but apparently not as I see [plenty of copies are available](#) from as little as £7.50!

Don't forget our KOS November Field Trip takes place this coming Saturday (14th) when we'll be visiting [Pennington Flash](#). 9am at the Sessions House or about 9:45am at the flash. The postcode is WN7 3PA

2/11/2015..... Slaughter in the Park

Bob Groom and Jacquie Ledward have been on their travels again over the past couple of weeks with visits to Rostherne Mere (24th) and the Wirral Peninsula for the high tide on the 29th. At Rostherne they were lucky enough to see a ring-tailed Hen Harrier, seven Egyptian Geese and 10 Mandarin Ducks, whilst over on the Wirral an email from Bob suggests they did very well indeed.....

Despite the lack of wind and much to our surprise the tide came well up and as usual at such events there was a huge amount of bird activity. Highlights included 2 Short-eared Owls, seen very close several times, and a Peregrine, plus Kestrel and Sparrowhawk, but the only Hen harrier sighting was very distant. Also 3 Great White Egrets along with dozens of Little Egrets. Big numbers of some species, including maybe a thousand Black-Tailed Godwits. Scores of Skylarks. Carrion Crows picked up many small mammals from the marsh. There was plenty of sunshine and it even got quite warm. Afterwards we called briefly at Burton Mere and Jacquie saw her first Curlew Sandpiper. We didn't have time to look for the Jack Snipe but it was still a very successful trip.....

Great White Egrets continue to establish themselves in Cheshire and Sheila tells me there are now thought to be up to eight in the county. Winter Thrushes continue to pour into the country, on my morning strolls around Mobberley Fieldfares as well as Redwings have become very prominent. A Kingfisher can often be seen from the bridge over Mobberley Brook at the junction of the main road and Mill Lane.

A Stonechat has returned to the area around Tatton's Melchette Mere; up to two have been seen in previous years when there was a suggestion that they may have been [Siberian Stonechats](#) *Saxicola maurus* - I think we'll leave that to the experts!



I've received uncorroborated reports that access to Tatton was restricted recently whilst six Ruddy Ducks were killed using high-powered rifles as part of the ongoing [cull](#) - I wonder where they get the locations from? I don't know anyone who mention the species in their reports either in print or on the web.

Having saved the purity of the White-headed Duck it's been suggested that the powers that be will now do the same for our Scottish Wildcat (*Felis silvestris*) by ridding the country of the introduced domestic cat (*Felis catus*), a species directly responsible for the demise of millions of song birds every year. [\[NB\]](#)

21/10/2015..... KOS Long Weekend in Teesside

14 KOS members enjoyed an interesting long weekend in Teesside, you can find a full report by [clicking here](#).

On the 15th October Geoff and Sheila Blamire had 50 Fieldfares and a few Redwings in their garden in Mere

whilst on the same day Alan Booth reporting from his local patch had a single Goldeneye, 60 Gadwall, 25 Shoveler, 10 Pochard and a Wigeon on Tatton Mere - there were no less than 45 Wigeon on the 11th, that must be some sort of record!

Also on his local patch Bob Groom has had some interesting sightings that he has summarised in an email - Cemetery area - c.150 Redwings and Fieldfares, around 100 Starlings, similar no. of finches (3 species), Mistle Thrushes, a Song Thrush, Nuthatch, 3 Pied Wagtails, 2 Grey Wagtails, mixed tits, and a frustratingly brief view of 2 more mystery birds (dark, with red tails). A Kestrel was also in attendance. About 240 Lapwings & several Buzzards from Moss lane. Really good..

Don't forget it's our October indoor meeting this Friday (23rd) when Jimmi Hill will be talking about birds of prey in the Forest of Dean.

14/10/2015..... The invasion begins

It appears that the last of our Swallows have set off for Africa; Bob Groom had four along Green Lane (Knutsford) on the 9th and I noted just a single bird at Green Bank Farm in Mobberley the same morning.



Also heading south are Bob's Hobbies, his last record was on September 27th when he watched a food pass between an adult and one of the youngsters - we wish them a safe journey and let's hope they return to Cheshire next Spring.

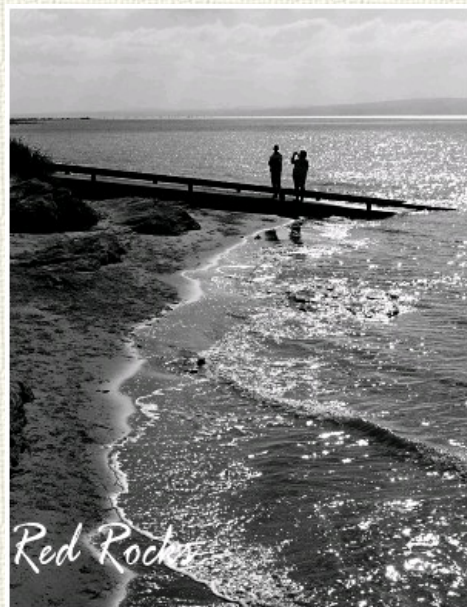
More signs of the changing seasons on Tuesday afternoon when Bob had 10 Fieldfares flying over Green Lane, perhaps the first of many this Winter with such cold conditions on the continent, I believe they've had snow and ice already in Russia and Poland. I suspect we'll see plenty this coming weekend as we head up to Teesside on the east coast on a KOS long weekend, this is new territory for most of us and Derek and Sheila have put in a lot of time and energy sorting out accommodation and an itinerary for members. Although I've only been involved a little on the periphery I still

have 65 emails in my Teesside mail directory - goodness knows how many they've sent or received!

04/10/2015..... TWT - The Wirral peninsula for the high tide.

It appears that the current spell of fine weather will be coming to an end early next week, but it's been good while it lasted, with clear blue skies and temperatures in the high teens during the day, falling to single figures overnight. Our local Swallows in Mobberley have found it to their liking and yesterday (2nd) there were still four birds on the electric cables next to Green Bank Farm, whilst further along Hobcroft Lane House Martins are also hanging on, their time with us now overlapping with that of the early winter migrants as Meadow Pipits and Skylarks were passing through all morning.

On Wednesday (30th) we travelled over to the Wirral Peninsula for the high tide, starting at Burton Mere before moving along to Red Rocks via the newly refurbished chippy at Parkgate where we found the fish and chips were as good as ever and there are now two



dining rooms where you can enjoy your meal away from the weather should the occasion arise. Red Rocks was a bit of a disappointment from an ornithological point of view, the tide was obviously a big one with the sea reaching right up to the rocks but with such balmy conditions there

were few birds in evidence - a couple of Ringed Plovers sat out the tide in front of us, a small flock of Curlews flew up the estuary and Cormorants and gulls roosted on the semi-submerged rocks just out

to sea.

Earlier in the day though we'd had more luck at Burton Mere where Pintail and the first Pink-footed Geese have returned and 3,500 Teal had been counted prior to our arrival. From the reception building we saw a Marsh Harrier, a selection of commoner waders such as Lapwing and Snipe plus good numbers of Wildfowl including the Pintail, Shoveler (I believe there are now 230 - a record for the reserve) and a few of the early pinkfeet flying over. No sign though of the Pectoral Sandpiper or Little Stints that had been seen from there the previous day.

Walking over to the Inner Marsh hide we had a Kingfisher perched on a fence by the fishing pools plus the usual selection of passerines frequenting the feeding stations whilst, from the hide itself, a whole heap of wildfowl but little else, disappointingly we'd missed a singing Cetti's Warbler by just a few minutes. Bob had chosen to remain in the reception building when we went over to the far side of the reserve and predictably he'd had more luck than us (is it luck or skill?) and we were able to add Pectoral Sandpiper and a late Yellow Wagtail to the day list which finally totalled 58 species.

Bob's Hobbies have finally begun their journey south there was no sign of them today or last night (3rd) when I was at the location but by way of compensation I was lucky enough to see (and hear) a straggling "V" shaped flock of Pink-footed Geese pass high overhead - 70 birds heading from east to west - autumn is upon us!

22/09/2015.....KOS trip to Leighton Moss and news from Tatton

Bob Groom and Alan Booth have seen the Black Tern over the main mere in Tatton (it was still there this afternoon (22nd). Bob has cornered the Hobby market this year, as well as his family party, since the last update has seen birds at Rostherne, Tatton and over Tabley hill!!

I've done a separate report for the Leighton Moss trip you can find it here -

http://www.10x50.com/leighton_2015.html

Don't forget on Friday we have our first indoor get together of the season in the Jubilee Hall 7:45 for 8pm kick-off.

Derek tells me we can still perhaps squeeze in another couple of people on the trip to the north-east over the weekend of 15th - 18th October although this may have changed since I last talked to him.

11/09/2015..... A quiet day in Northwich : Ringers return to Knutsford Moor.

We enjoyed a leisurely stroll around Northwich Woodlands on Wednesday (9th), beginning as usual at the Witton Mill car park, walking to the hide overlooking Haydn's Pool, then up to Budworth Mere before returning via Neumann's flash.

Plenty of mud at Haydn's but little in the way of birds although we did have single Kestrels and Sparrowhawks, in fact the only excitement came when I had to announce that unfortunately I'd left the sausage rolls in the car and those that were expecting them would have to wait until later - you just can't get the staff nowadays!

We had more luck on the way to the mere with Great Spotted and Green Woodpeckers plus lots of passerines in the tangle of vegetation along the path including Chiffchaff, Goldcrest, Bullfinch and a number of Blackcaps fattening up on the elder berries.



Just the usual stuff on Budworth mere - plenty of eclipse wildfowl, a few family parties of Great Crested Grebes and a huge mixed flock of Canada and Greylag Geese, now back in flight after their moult. Bob had chosen a shorter route via Dairy house meadows and had been lucky enough to see a Spotted Flycatcher en route to the hide at Neumann's where we all met up again. There were some waders on Neumann's, a large flock of Lapwings were the most obvious but those with 'scopes also found 2 Redshanks, 16 Snipe, 3 Ruff and a Curlew. A routine sort of morning but the weather was good - as was the company! (53 species)

Alan Booth kindly sent me a list of species he's recorded recently on Knutsford Moor including 5 Gadwall, 6 Shoveller, 2 Wigeon, 2 Pochard,

6 Dabchicks, Kingfisher, Grey Wagtail and a Green Woodpecker - thanks Alan!

On the subject of the Moor, as I mentioned recently, the South Manchester Ringing Group have resumed ringing there and Hugh Pulsford has sent me an article about their activities and a resume of results so far - [you can read it here](#).

03/09/2015..... A wet day on the Wirral

Our Swifts appear to have left for Africa, Bob Groom recorded one over Knutsford town centre on the 30th August - that may well be the last one, September Swifts are few and far between. They'll soon be followed by the Swallows, on my morning walk around Mobberley I've noticed much chattering amongst the local birds perching on the phone and electricity cables along Church Lane and next to Green Bank Farm.



There were plenty of hirundines about on Wednesday (2nd) viewed from the reception centre at the RSPB Burton Mere reserve, just Swallows and House Martins - the Sand Martins seem to have moved on already. The weather could have been kinder, it rained on and off for most of the morning with the occasional break that allowed us to do some quick hide hopping!

There was a smart looking juvenile Yellow Wagtail together with a flock of Pied on the island in front of the Marsh Covert hide and a Green Sandpiper provided us with good views on the opposite side. There were no Little Egrets around but I'm reliably informed that up to 400 are roosting on the reserve together with three Great White Egrets!

Another break in the weather allowed us time to move to the Inner Marsh hide where we enjoyed our butties and 'scoped the assembled wildfowl. There are apparently two Garganey on the reserve, we didn't manage to find them - but it wasn't easy with the seemingly incessant rain combined with the fact that the birds are in eclipse plumage at this time of the year. We caught a quick glimpse of a Kingfisher as it powered across the mere and three nice Greenshanks showed nicely in front of the hide, Bob and Len had remained in the Marsh Covert hide

and had good, close views of the Kingfisher from there.

We arrived back at the reception centre after another soaking to the news that we'd missed a hobby by a few minutes and the hot drinks machine was still out of action; still we did have reasonable views of a Spotted Redshank on one of the islands in front of the centre to round off a soggy but enjoyable morning with a final total of 53 species.

Hugh Pulsford tells me that the South Manchester Ringing Group have resumed their activities on Knutsford Moor so, hopefully, this will provide some interesting data in the weeks to come, in the past ringing at this location has produced loads of good records.

27/08/2015..... A good day at Woolston Eyes.

A friend in Norfolk reported "100's" of Swifts passing along the east coast yesterday morning (26th), we also had a few as we drove over to Warrington for a morning's birding at Woolston Eyes, not quite as many but nevertheless an encouraging start to proceedings.



Things began quietly as we looked up the length of number 3 bed from the first platform hide; it was noticeable that the water level was a lot lower now than in the Spring and early Summer, this has been done deliberately to attract more waders to the reserve.

Few species were in song as we made our way along the paths leading to the Morgan hide, only Wrens and a few notes from a Chiffchaff but we did see Common Whitethroat, Goldcrest, Blackcap and overhead another Swift, Swallows, House Martins and a family party of four Sparrowhawks.

There was plenty of activity in front of the hide as we enjoyed our elevenses - about 20 Black-tailed Godwits are still present on the reserve and eventually some made their way in our direction and gave excellent views as they fed in the shallows a few yards away. Good numbers of Lapwings loafed on the mud - 300 according to the [website](#). Two Ruff (a male and a female (ruff and reeve)) could be seen in the distance whilst much closer a Green Sandpiper and a juvenile Little Ringed Plover arrived close to the hide, being joined eventually from the cover of the reeds by a splendid Water Rail - at one stage all three were visible at the same time in our binoculars. We had hoped to see one of the three Great White Egrets that have set up shop at Woolston and eventually one did appear for a few seconds as it flew between the reed beds on the far side of the

reserve; not the best of views but long enough to successfully identify it. The birds are apparently quite mobile and we'll no doubt get better views in the future; in fact after most of us had left to walk to the other hides Bob reported that a bird did appear from the reeds and remained in view for some time. [53 species]

Did anyone loose a watch yesterday? Brian Martin found one near his car as he left the reserve.

19/08/2015..... Bob's been very busy!

August is probably the quietest time of the year for birders, nevertheless KOS members have still been out and about, non more so than Bob Groom who has kindly kept us up-to-date with news of his latest adventures in a series of emails the first of which is reproduced here (I've removed the location for obvious reasons).....

*Took advantage of today's weather opportunity and headed for *****. On approach heard calling and then spotted a Hobby on bare branch at top of tree part way down the edge of the wood. It seemed to be eating something small (insect?). Suddenly there was more calling and a second bird (female?) appeared and both Hobbies put on quite a display for about 5 minutes as they sped round against the blue sky together, interacting, then one bird (the male?) veered off and I followed its direct flight into the far distance (off hunting?). The other bird presumably returned to the wood as I didn't see it again. Some time later, this time from the path inside the wood, I saw a Hobby back on the lookout tree for a short time. Then all went quiet. If there are young in the nest they should be fledging soon. Other highlights - 2 lovely Song Thrushes, each with a snail in their beak and using a big stone as an anvil. Walking back, 80 Curlews in flight high against blue sky, some calling. Other raptors in evidence - Kestrel, Buzzards (including juveniles calling almost constantly) and 2 Sparrowhawks.*

Geoff and Sheila headed over to Northwich where they had a Greenshank and 7 Green Sandpipers on haydn's Pool with a Ruff, 48 Curlews and 400 Lapwings on Neumann's flash (Bob later had 80 Curlews, a Little Egret and 4 Swifts at the same location). Closer to home Derek and Jean counted at least 20 House Sparrows - some still feeding recently fledged youngsters in their garden in Lilac Avenue. They enjoyed a Summer walk around Runway 2 following the usual route and found it very quiet but did see a juvenile Grey Wagtail on the Bollin where it passes under the runway - we had 2 adults here earlier in the year.



Bob also had Grey Wagtails on one of his recent outings to Tabley



(private land).....*Forgot my secateurs (again) and the brambles I slashed back last month were growing back across the paths. So it was back to being Slash, doing air-guitar with my trusty walking stick. Exhausting work.. Some rewards, however, Kingfisher seen twice and Grey Wagtail (x2) preening/moulting on the same fallen tree in the water. The pair of Mute Swans have raised their 3 cygnets to almost adult size and seem to be tolerating (just) 2 other adults on the mere. Pair of Little Grebes with a juvenile.*

Having survived a 60th birthday party the previous evening, held at a well known establishment on the outskirts of Knutsford where the clientele seemed to have a very high tattoo to teeth ratio, on Sunday morning (16th) I took a quiet walk through Dog Wood and alongside Tatton's main mere as far as the old bathing area where a Black Tern had been seen a few days earlier. No luck though, there wasn't much around, although the Canada Geese are back in flight after their moult and Robins could be heard with their wistful autumn song reminding us that Christmas is just around the corner!

10/08/2015..... Some recent local sightings

As we move into August, the first of our summer visitors are already beginning the long journey back to their wintering grounds. Swift numbers have begun to dwindle and migrating waders are beginning to appear at suitable locations throughout the area. I've not been able to do much birding lately but some members and friends have been out and about and their records are summarised below.

The visibility problem at Haydn's Pool seems to have been sorted with recent sightings of Ruff, Dunlin, Common and Green Sandpipers whilst over at Neumann's Flash 2 Greenshanks and a Ruff were present over the weekend. Bob, Jacquie and Meg have been out a couple of times, recording a male Hen Harrier, Hobby and two Ravens along the Weaver Way at Dutton and further along on Frodsham Marshes had male and female Marsh Harriers together with a large flock of Dunlin on number 6 tank plus Chiffchaffs, Blackcaps, Common Whitethroats and Garden Warblers in the undergrowth close to where the old log book was kept. Derek and Jean were surprised to see a family party of Garden Warblers actually in their garden - they could well have come from Sudlow Lane where a bird has been in song for most of the Summer.



Bob couldn't resist the temptation of the Sabine's Gull over on Pennington Flash and was rewarded with good views of what's an unusual species so far inland. It's still there apparently but a bit more "flighty" after being attacked by one of the flashes giant Pike!!

Closer to home Darren Morris reports that the Egyptian Geese have bred and were showing off their four youngsters on the ice pond right in front to the

mansion in Tatton Park.

Finally Alan Booth has been seeing a family party of four Ravens over his home in Middle Walk and tells me the last of the resident Swifts have now departed for warmer climes. Alan recently had a Green Woodpecker and a Hobby from the observatory overlooking Rostherne Mere.

If you have any records that might be of interest please let me know (tony@10X50.com) and they'll be preserved forever in cyberspace - or until I stop paying the ISP!!

27/07/2015..... The final Friday evening walk

Just eight of us plus Meg and Patch (the most well-behaved members of the group!) for the final Friday evening walk of the KOS season around the eastern end of the [Northwich Woodlands](#).



We parked at the lay-by along Warrington Road before heading off around Neumann's flash; as you'd expect at this time of the year things were a little quiet, although there was some song with a couple of Song Thrushes, Blackcaps, a Reed Warbler and Chiffchaffs heard. A Great Crested Grebe was feeding two small youngsters in the centre of the flash, we counted 30 Lapwings and a small flock of Curlews flew in from the west before settling in on exposed mud over on the far side. As we made our way from Neumann's towards Haydyn Pool a Kingfisher was feeding just below Butterfinch bridge, perched on a long stem of overhanging *phragmites*, it didn't linger long and quickly vanished in a flash of cobalt blue over the reed bed. Haydyn pool was a little disappointing as the view from the main hide was restricted

somewhat by vegetation and we were unable to hook up with the two Sandpipers that Jacquie had seen there earlier in the day, although from the hide on the far side a Water Rail flew from cover before quickly seeking sanctuary in the undergrowth. The vegetation in front of the hides is due to be removed shortly having been left, for obvious reasons, during the breeding season. The Curlews from Neumann's flew overhead to roost on Ashton's Flash as we made our way back to the cars in the gathering gloom after a very pleasant, easy paced evening.

That just about rounds off the KOS "year" running as it does between September and July annually - considerably longer than most groups who pack in after their agms' in the Spring! Over the past 10 months members have been able to enjoy the seven indoor lectures and a full programme of field trips including the

[Norfolk Weekend](#) last October and a most successful visit to [Wales](#) in the Spring - not bad for ten quid a year!!

19/07/2015KOS July Field Trip to Burton Wetlands RSPB Reserve

Kos trips sometimes tend to fragment a little over the course of a days birding but yesterday (18th) we began as two groups with some travelling directly to the reserve whilst the remainder chose to visit the [2015 National Exhibition of Wildlife Artists](#) which is being held (until 2nd August) at the Gordale Garden Centre, just up the road from Burton village. We live in an age where, thanks to digital cameras and Photoshop, everyone can be an artist of sorts but to see what those with the appropriate skills can produce with just a selection of brushes and paints is quite remarkable. Unfortunately this expertise comes at a price so that big inviting space over our fireplace will remain blank for the foreseeable future!



We resisted the opportunity to enjoy a nice



breakfast at the garden centre and joined the rest of the party at the reserve, making do with a cup of RSPB tea and a sausage roll. We managed 51 species during the course of the day and, apart from a single Common Tern seen by Bob and David, both early and slightly later parties recorded the same species.

There was quite a bit of activity in front of the information centre with Ruff(4), Common Sandpiper, Little Ringed Plover(6) and Avocet(1) present plus a whole heap of Black-tailed Godwits looking handsome in full summer plumage. Reed Warblers were still in full song as we made our way at the regulation KOS pace down to the Marsh Covert hide, with frequent stops as John re-introduced us to the various plant species who's names we had forgotten over the past 12 months! We counted no less than 68 Little Egrets from the hide - Nature's litmus paper - something's happening, rapidly, to the climate. Just think Len and I drove to the Ribble Marshes in my old mini van in 1973 just to tick one of those off on our lists! We had lunch in the Inner Marsh hide watching more Ruff and Godwits plus Dunlin(6), Common Redshank(2) and six Spotted Redshanks looking quite tatty moulting into Winter plumage.

A lovely days birding in warm sunny weather - this is an excellent nature reserve!

9/7/2015.....Sunshine and showers at Woolston

One of the advantages of having a reserve like Woolston Eyes with it's six hides so close to Knutsford is that, given a day like Tuesday with numerous very heavy showers, it's still possible to spend the morning out birding and remain dry! Despite the rain we managed to accrue a healthy count of 55 species; the three Grebe species present on the reserve all had young, most of these now seen to be independent of their parents so you'd have to check on the [Woolston Eyes website](#) to see how successful or otherwise they've been this year.



Whilst we were in the Tower hide a Little Egret flew in, initially it was out of sight but after a short time it appeared from the reeds and gave some great views as it moved slowly around the pool in front of us feeding. It was a bird of the year as Geoff pointed out it's greenish yellow legs (black in adults) and a pale lower mandible, this species is not too common at Woolston and was the first record of the year - excellent!

It's not too late for song and six species of warbler were heard although only the Reed Warblers were still going full time. The feeders outside the Morgan hide were attracting Chaffinch, Bullfinch, family parties of Greenfinch and our little friend the Willow Tit; at one point they scattered rather quickly as a male Sparrowhawk shot ~~passed~~ ^{oops!} past the hide and perched on top of the feeder rail - it was a bedraggled looking specimen, wet through and probably moulting - our thanks to David Spencer for allowing us to use his images from Tuesday.

Some recent records from our area that I've been sent recently include - Siskins - Geoff and Sheila have two males and a female visiting their garden on a regular basis, always leaving in the same direction and, as in previous years, Sheila thinks they may be nesting locally. Stan Allen from Altrincham saw a Red Kite over the Dog Inn (Lower Peover) on the first of the month, I'm told that this is only the third record so far this year in the County. Bob Groom had a Hobby when visiting



Rostherne Mere recently where he tells me a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker is a regular visitor. Derek and Jean were in Lower Peover at the weekend and counted 40 House Martin's nests at Rose Bank Cottage, also the

Oystercatchers have successfully bred in the big field opposite the entrance to Lilac Avenue where skylarks can be heard singing every day - only half a mile from Knutsford town centre!

29/06/2015KOS evening walk - Mobberley

The weather didn't look too promising about an hour before we were to meet up in Mill Lane for the second of our Summer evening walks as heavy rain moved in from the west. Luckily it didn't last long, although it meant that those without overtrousers did get a bit wet as we made our way through waist high grass meadows and crops (keeping to the paths of course). Despite the absence of one or two regulars 14 of us started the walk, including Simon and Lyn, two new members, on their first outing with our little club.

The route first took us south, through fields of wheat, barley and acres of potatoes (destined eventually for Walkers Crisps) as far as Fox Harbour, an area that we'd found so disappointing recently on one of the Wednesday walks. Fortunately things turned out "better than likely" as my grandad used to say, we came across encouraging numbers of singing passerines including Blackbird, Song Thrush, Reed Bunting, Common Whitethroat, Chaffinch, Linnets, Yellowhammer (plenty of those) and even a couple of Skylarks. It was along this first leg of the walk that Sheila spotted what was inevitably to be the bird of the evening - a Hobby, perched on the bare top branches of an ash tree just a couple of fields away from where we stood. Geoff soon had the 'scope set up allowing most of the party to get a quick look before the bird, rather inconveniently, chose to glide down to a nearby oak and out of sight. As the location is quite close to Mobberley SQ and it's large dragonfly population I think we'll be paying this area close attention in the coming weeks.



After all this excitement things calmed down a little and we headed west, crossing over Pedley Brook and on towards Springwood farm. A Curlew called briefly as we stood on the Pedley bridge and we were able to get a quick view as it flew overhead towards Tatton park, this apart there was little else of note although it was nice to see an encouraging number of Swallows and House Martins at the farm. We finally arrived back at the cars after a walk of about two and a half hours having recorded 39 species, it's probably only around three miles but it's not the easiest three miles in the village!

Following on from our Hobby and Darren's last week in Tatton, Bob had a pair that are almost certainly breeding at a traditional site south of Knutsford.

It appears that this year's Tour de France won't be going over the Col de Galibier after all [due to a landslide](#) I just wonder if it was anything to do with Barrie and the amount of sweat and testosterone he deposited on his way up recently!!

22/06/2015 Shetland report and news of the Lad!

Susan and Jacquie have kindly provided me with an account of their adventures on the Shetlands I've put it on a separate page <http://www.10x50.com/shetland.html> thanks ladies!

Also on his travels - Barrie Armit - Lost in France with his bike. I received an Email this afternoon :-

Camping at place called Valloire in Alps. Tent pitched by river in narrow valley looks out onto stands of conifers, bare mountainside and more conifers on skyline,,, about 500 metres up. River lined with dense shrubbery, birch. River shallow and noisy! Nice mix of birds: raptors - short-toed eagle, buzzard, honey-buzzard, kestrel, Sparrowhawk - never know quite what's going to appear over the conifers and sail overhead. Camp birds are black redstarts, hybrid Italian x house sparrow, various tits as mentioned, pair of bullfinches, GS woodpeckers and grey wags. Bonelli's Warbler common in forests but though certain of at least a couple of continental treecreepers, not found a short-toed I'm happy with. Other species of interest: quail, snowfinch, alpine chough, red-backed shrike, booted eagle,

Have a google of [Col de Galibier](#) for pics of the area.... rode up it last Friday (and because I'd had my pasta for breakfast, rode down the other side and back up for good measure).

Managed the 15th fastest ascent in last 30 days or 367th all time fastest out of 4455 (recorded) attempts. Stunning alpine scenery seen through blur of perspiration. Officially knackered after riding 2 cols today - the scale is amazing. In the first 25 miles, I rode up 2123 metres of elevation gain,,, Cat and Fiddle is 7 miles and about 400 metres ... tomorrow is birds and butterflies..

Off for some vin rouge now and birding from the tent.....Take it easy - Baz

Nearer to home I had a reeling Grasshopper Warbler last night along Pavement Lane in Mobberley and Bob recorded 2 Grey Partridges feeding in recently sown field off Green Lane, along with 7 Lapwings and an Oystercatcher

21/06/2015 TWT - Breeding success at Woolston

A cacophony of noise from the resident Black-headed Gulls greeted us on Wednesday (17th) at Woolston Eyes as the birds guarded their newly fledged offsprings; raptors or inquisitive ducks all received the same rough treatment if they strayed too close!

Some of the Black-necked Grebes also have young, the Woolston Eyes website shows that currently there are 5 young and 13 adults present on the reserve we counted around 8 adults and 2 well grown juvenile birds. Other species now with youngsters in tow included Moorhen, Coot, Greylag Geese, Mallard and a family party of Shelducks with 5 young. There has been a recent influx of Mute Swans and Gadwall - over 200 were counted last week by some of the more regular visitors. Some warblers were still in song, we heard Chiffchaff, Common Whitethroat, Reed and a very vocal Sedge Warbler on the path to the Morgan hide, but we've yet to hear the Cetti's Warbler that other have reported from various parts of the reserve. A single Black-tailed Godwit was feeding alongside the Morgan hide, giving really good views but it was quite a surprise when no less than 54 flew in from the west and settled out of view over the far side of the reed beds.



We saw and heard a Willow Tit close to the Frank Linley hide with a second as we made our way back through the wildflower meadows. Bob also had one as he returned by another route and also reported a Peregrine seen from the Morgan hide after we had left, apparently the Black-headed Gulls didn't tackle this chap and chose merely to remain silent as it passed over!

News from the reserve yesterday (20th) - 2 Avocets, 3 Ringed and 2 Little Ringed Plovers - they would have been nice!

Also, from Darren Morris, a Hobby in Tatton yesterday, no further details - they're few and far between this year in Cheshire.

Don't forget that we have our Mobberley evening walk this Friday (26th). meeting up at 6:45pm in Mill Lane, Mobberley

15/06/2015 KOS on Tour!

The midweek weather forecasts on the BBC prior to our scheduled KOS visit to the Manifold Valley consistently warned of thunder storms of biblical proportions on Saturday (13th) so, with discretion being the better part of valour, it was decided to postpone the trip to the Pennines and go instead for the easier option of a stroll around Northwich's Neumann's Flash / Haydyn's Pool area. Needless to say, apart from a light shower early in the morning, the day remained dry with some sunshine around lunchtime!



We ended up with 53 species which is quite a respectable total - nothing out of the ordinary, but with most species still in song we were able to pin-point the majority and enjoy good views of birds like Reed Warbler, Blackcap and Common Whitethroat. The Reed Warblers gave especially good views as they fed their fledged youngsters in front of one of the hides and we were delighted to hear so many Song Thrushes as we made our way towards Haydyn's Pool. Haydyn's was a bit of a disappointment in that the Sand Martins don't seem to be using the Sand Martin bank that was constructed for them and the small shingle island, complete with webcams, hosted only Mallards and a lonely looking Oystercatcher. Whilst we're on the subject of Oystercatchers Derek and Jean have a pair on the field opposite their house again this year and report that the birds are sitting tight, so hatching should be imminent.

Jacque and Sue are back from their trip up to the Shetland Islands and seem to have had a really enjoyable holiday, recording 86 species including things like Red-necked Phalarope, Whimbrel and Great Northern Diver. The girls are going to write up an account of their adventures for this website, hopefully with some pictures and video - Sue's video of Bonxies flying alongside their boat and feeding on

biscuits from outstretched hands is quite spectacular!

Also currently on tour, this time in Romania, Geoff and Sheila seem to be enjoying themselves judging by the text I received last night

What a day on the photo boat! Red-necked Grebes with 3 chicks. Great Crested Grebes on nest + others with small chicks on their back. Black-necked Grebes again with small chicks on back. Common, Black and Whiskered Terns. Finally a Night Heron v close. Started at 5am. Brief stop 12 noon to 2pm. Then out til 9pm. Now about to have dinner at 9.30!!!.....

Burning the candle at both ends again !!!

06/06/2015Some recent sightings and [Bob's trip to Bulgaria](#)

Just to keep things up to date, some recent sightings by KOS members - on 31st May Derek and Jean had a Yellow Wagtail along Sudlow Lane just past the keeper's cottage and tonight (6th) Derek received a report of a Red Kite over Knutsford. Tony Ellis heard a Cuckoo today (6th) whilst running in Delamere Forest and on the 1st Bob Groom watched a Common Tern fishing on Knutsford Moor before flying off in an easterly

direction (Chelford Sand Quarries??) Bob has recently returned from a trip to Bulgaria and has kindly sent me an account of his adventures which can be found [here](#)

4/06/2105 TWT..... a night to remember

Despite the poor weather last Friday's KOS evening trip to the Goyt Valley went very well due mainly to the "roding" Woodcocks and the spectacular finale to the evening they provided. Not everyone was able to travel to the Pennines that evening, so we decided that yesterday (3rd), instead of the usual Wednesday morning walk, we'd venture out in the evening to the Goyt again and hopefully the Woodcocks would oblige a second time.



As usual we started at the second car park and made our way up the new path to where we'd listened to the singing Wood Warbler on our previous visit. It was quite strange really in that most of the species we'd seen last time were not showing but the two species we missed (Cuckoo and Tree Pipit) were both present. The Cuckoo was heard only but the Pipits were singing and Bob found a pair that were obviously at their nest site on the slope down to the road, under the overhanging oaks in the leaf litter.

It was now heading towards 9:00pm and time for the Woodcocks. This time we decided not to view from the bridge close

to the car park but, following a tip from a fellow birder, we drove to a new location away from the Goyt where he'd seen not only Woodcock but also **Nightjars!!** We arrived at the recommended spot about 9:15pm and immediately were rewarded with excellent view of roding Woodcock, more than we'd seen previously and the birds were toing and froing all the time we were there.

Now it may be something to do with a sheltered upbringing or a reluctance to venture further south than Stoke bird watching

but the last time I saw a Nightjar was in 1973 (see the photo opposite) when Len Mason, Tony Bond and I visited a nest site on Risley Moss. I was therefore delighted to renew acquaintances at about 9:25pm, in the gathering gloom, as a bird began "churring", it was some distance away and difficult to hear, but soon became louder and more strident when a second bird put in a very brief appearance a few yards from where we stood before heading away as it became aware of us. So we'd heard and briefly seen a Nightjar and were quite satisfied with that as we made our way back to the cars but there was more to come because as we headed towards a clump of mature pines a bird was heard again, this time a lot closer and Jude picked it out perched along a thin branch, silhouetted against the last bit of light with the planet Venus in the background - what a marvelous sight!

We thought that was it but further drama followed quickly as a second Nightjar flew in and appeared to chase off the first with a confusion of squeaky calls and wing clapping - phew, too much excitement for us old chaps!!

29/05/2015 TWT..Fox Harbour - Mobberley

No one seems to know the origin of the name Fox Harbour for that area of Mobberley running from Spring Wood in an easterly direction for about a mile, following the course of Pedley Brook as far as Great Warford. The terrain close to the brook is not suitable for farming as it slopes steeply downwards and is populated with gorse, blackthorn and damp beds of *juncus* reed. Either side of the brook the fields are used for dairy cattle, grass for silage or the production of cereal crops such as barley, wheat and oats. [Marl pits](#) are commonly found in these fields and provide a valuable habitat for fish, frogs and newts, as well as water birds such as moorhens, coots and herons.

We've been wandering Fox Harbour for more than 60 years now and the decline in the birdlife has been quite dramatic. Last night I was looking at my notebooks from the early 1970's



Dunnock + juv Cuckoo Fox Harbour 1973

Curlew, Grey Partridge, Corn Bunting, Snipe, Moorhen and Cuckoos were all breeding, there were so many Skylarks, Lapwings, Yellowhammers, Song Thrushes and Linnets that they barely merited a mention. Compare this with the situation on Wednesday (27th) when we spent two and a half hours crisscrossing the area - one Yellowhammer, one Skylark, one Reed Bunting, two Lapwings and two pairs of Linnets in a grand total of only 36 species seen during the morning.

Still, if there is a positive side to the story, Common Whitethroat, Tree Sparrow, Goldfinch, Collared Dove and of course Buzzard are a

lot more common now than in the 1970's, so it seems that it's our farmland birds that have suffered the most over the intervening years. All this is nothing new of course and there are many reasons and theories as there are experts to explain to us just why it's happening - but happening it is, before our very eyes - so

make the most of those Cheshire Skylarks, Yellowhammers and Linnets while you can, they'll not be with us much longer!

24/05/2015 KOS evening walk - Goyt Valley

The weather for the past week has left a lot to be desired with lower than average temperatures and plenty of cloud and rain. Despite this, and being made of sterner stuff, we *have* been out and about, anxious not to waste any opportunities at what is the best time of the year for birding.

Wednesday was probably the worst day of the week but we went ahead anyway with the planned walk alongside the new runway 2 at Manchester Airport. Some species seemed unperturbed by the conditions and the more common warblers - Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Common Whitethroat plus Willow and Garden Warblers were all in song. This is a good year for Common Whitethroats - they were everywhere but it doesn't seem the same for Lesser Whitethroats, we heard only one and that was for just a few seconds and we heard no Grasshopper Warblers despite this being traditionally a good location for the species. As has been the case for the past few years a pair of Grey Wagtails appeared to be nesting alongside the River Bollin as it passes under the runway and where we had our sausage rolls, sheltering from the elements!



Last night (22nd) we were on the road again this time to the Goyt Valley on the first of our three Summer KOS evening walks. The weather was overcast and dry as we left Knutsford but deteriorated as we climbed into low cloud on the road out of Rainow. Fortunately the valley is considerably lower than the surrounding hills and when we arrived at the car park visibility was quite reasonable. A new path now leads from the car park up to the track that runs parallel to, but above, the road running along the valley. Half way up and we were delighted to hear the [wonderful song](#) of a Wood Warbler coming from the canopy above us; we caught glimpses of it in



the gloom but hearing the song alone was quite sufficient!

Along the top path a Redstart was singing and gave good views as Geoff got the 'scope on it, further on a Spotted Flycatcher showed well for a few seconds, vanishing before the rest of the party could get on to it, but by way of compensation a Pied Flycatcher arrived at the same spot a minute later. We walked the road as far as the next car park, where the woodland ends and the view opens out; a Curlew was calling as well as a Red Grouse but it obviously wasn't the weather for Cuckoos or Tree Pipits both of which were present earlier in the week.

We walked back past the cars towards the concrete bridge where much grunting and squeaking announced the arrival of the "roding" Woodcocks (this came from the birds of course and not the birders - although we were quite excited!). We had the best views we've ever had at this spot of up to three individuals as they quartered the area above our heads and away over the woodland. If you've never witnessed this spectacle (and I know some members haven't) - this is the place!

We'd already had a good night despite the weather but as we drove out of the Goyt towards Derbyshire Bridge a Short-eared Owl flew over the car as a final bonus!

19/05/2015 Elizabeth

Olwen, Jean, Derek and I spent a pleasant morning yesterday after driving down to Nantwich to visit Elizabeth Perkins. Elizabeth will be 90 later this year and is still in good health although the problem with her vision is not going away but it seems to have stabilised and isn't getting any worse. She is able to walk into town to the shops and is looking forward to three holidays later in the year, she sends her kind regards to all KOS members.



For those that don't know Elizabeth she and her late husband Peter were founder members of the Society back in 1974, in fact they helped organise the WAE classes in the two years before then that eventually lead to the formation of the KOS. I always remember early in 1974 during the [three day week](#) when most evening classes were suspended we continued to meet at their home in Sharston Crescent!

Peter was our Secretary for many years before Roy Bircumshaw took the reins and he and Elizabeth moved to Nantwich to be nearer to their two daughters.

Alan Booth reports that on the 14th on Knutsford Moor he saw a pair of Greylag Geese with four goslings and heard single Reed and Sedge Warblers, additionally two male Gadwalls were seen competing for the attentions of a lady Gadwall!

On Sunday morning (17th) I met Alan on the Moor; we couldn't hear any Reed or Sedge Warblers but they're probably still there as there are some areas where it's not easy to get close enough to the reed bed. Further up towards the railway bridge two warbler species were in song - a male Common Whitethroat and, in the big elder shrub halfway up to the bridge, a Garden Warbler. I'd heard this bird previously before the Barmouth weekend.

13/5/2015 *Barmouth trip : Spotted Flycatchers*

The long weekend in Wales was a great success - [full report here](#).

We left Bob in charge over the weekend and he did quite well - Lesser Whitethroat at Woolston (9/5), 15 Buzzards in the air at the same time, singing Redstart and two Spotted Flycatchers at Rostherne.

In Mobberley Nick Davies reports a Spotted Flycatcher at the usual location! (11/5)

Well done chaps.

5/5/2015 *Lesser Whitethroat*

Both Sheila Blamire and Bob Groom report seeing Cormorants feeding on small ponds recently when out and about, Bob on his Tabley Hill patch and Sheila (plus Geoff of course) whilst doing a 1K square as part of the BTO [Breeding Bird Survey](#) to the north of Peover Heath. With over 200 breeding pairs at Rostherne it's perhaps not surprising that there's a lot of competition for the best fishing spots! Bob also had Raven, 5 Tree Sparrows and seven Skylarks on the same visit. Skylarks were much in evidence on Sunday (3rd) when I took an early evening walk along the paths that run by the side of runway 2 at Manchester airport, they find the acres of grassland either side of the runways much to their liking, but I don't know how many succeed in breeding there as the grass is mown regularly for easy access in the event of an emergency. This location, around [crash gates 8 and 9](#), is a favourite



spot for Lesser Whitethroats - [the bird watcher's bird](#) - and eventually I did locate one singing fitfully from the top branches of an oak tree where it was feeding. I think the current spell cold weather means survival comes first with finding a mate and breeding on the back burner for the time being.

Up at Wray in Cumbria Susan Rowley heard her first Cuckoo of the year last week, this is a species that has decreased in numbers dramatically over the past few years in our area and I didn't hear one in Cheshire during the whole of 2014. Perhaps we'll hear a few later in the week when the KOS visit Wales again for our May long weekend based in Barmouth, I don't think we're in for a heat wave but the forecast is for mixed weather and we'll settle for that!

On our last visit to the same area in May 2012 we recorded just 100 species over four days, so I think this should be our target this year!

Itinerary :-

Thursday - [RSPB Lake Vyrnwy](#)

Friday - [RSPB Ynys Hir](#)

Saturday - [Dyfi Ospreys](#) and part of the [Mawddach Trail from Penmaenpool](#)

Sunday Home via [RSPB Conwy](#)

2/5/2015 *Wheatears & Osprey*

Tatton's two terns remained in the park until at least Monday (27th) when I was able to get a close look at them in good light from Dog Wood as they frequented the wooden posts of the deer fence towards the southern end of the main mere. As I approached one bird was calling loudly and eventually the second flew in from the direction of Knutsford Moor carrying a small fish which was presented to the first (presumably female) bird; this was repeated a number of times. They were Common Terns and from their behaviour weren't proposing to migrate any further north but would be nesting locally; I don't think there's anywhere in the park suitable, perhaps they'll head over to the Northwich Flashes where a pair nested last summer. The nest boxes I saw last week in Dog Wood had been put up by Darren Morris, one of the park rangers, he has erected 22 of various designs plus four Barn Owl boxes, some in the wood but most in the private deer enclosure.



Nick and Jane Davies continue to explore the area near to their home in Mobberley, on Tuesday (28th) they reported Tree Sparrows and Linnets on Pavement Lane, Yellowhammers on the path beyond Springwood Farm, a Whitethroat by the fishing pond and five migrating Wheatears on a field next to Gleavehouse Farm, these birds have hung around in the past but Bob Groom and I both failed to find any so they've presumably continued north. Bob had more luck though yesterday (1st) when he had an Osprey overflying Rostherne Mere, it circled round the reserve a few times before moving away in a westerly

direction.

On Wednesday we had hoped to do our first "airport walk" of the season but because of a poor weather forecast chose instead to visit Woolston Eyes. More Summer visitors have been arriving and we noted Whitethroats, Blackcaps and just a single Willow Warbler whilst in the reed beds Reed Warblers were present in good numbers with just one Sedge Warbler singing near to the Frank Linley hide. 14 Black-necked Grebes have been counted so far on the reserve, we saw a few of these from the Morgan hide as well as two Little Ringed Plovers and, on one of the islands in front of the hide, a pair of Lapwings are nesting and as of Wednesday had produced the first of what will be four eggs.

Much excitement today (2nd) over at Woolston where a female [Bufflehead](#) has put in an appearance! The question now of course is it an escapee or a genuine vagrant from North America? Well I've noted in the past with similar occurrences that if people already have one on their list(s), then it's an escapee but if they've yet to tick one off it's "obviously wild"!!

Late news today from Darren - a Black Kite has escaped today from Knutsford's Gauntlet Birds of Prey Centre!

25/4/2015 *Terns in Tatton - AGM*

Alan Booth was also visiting the Northwich Woodland area on Wednesday morning, although he was there a little earlier than us. He saw three different Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers, including a bird drumming and calling above the viewing screen that overlooks the Coward reed bed at 8:00am.



On Wednesday afternoon (23rd) Bill Mccaig reported two "commic" Terns in Tatton, resting on one of the blue buoys in the centre of the main mere. They were still there today when I paid a quick visit during the afternoon, fluttering over the water, picking emerging insects from the surface. It's unusual for these birds to remain so long, normally they arrive mid-afternoon and then continue with their journey north towards dusk. Also in the park lots of hirundines of all three species, I always struggle to estimate numbers even using the tried and tested method of counting the legs and dividing by two! Two Swifts were scything through the air amongst

the hirundines, they're very early this year normally we don't see them until [Knutsford May Day](#). On my way back through Dog Wood I noticed some nice new nest boxes positioned high up on the tree trunks away from prying eyes and inquisitive fingers - how many are there Darren and are some for Flycatchers? No sign of the garganey on Knutsford Moor but I did hear the first Reed Warbler from deep in the reed bed.

The KOS AGM took place on Friday (24th) it seemed to go on forever this year and lasted a full 12 minutes! Tony Ellis has resigned as Lectures Officer and this position was the only one that remained vacant as the meeting ended. We were therefore delighted to hear today from Secretary Derek Pike that Jacquie Ledward and Susan Middleton had volunteered to share the job between them and will join Sue Heath, another volunteer, on the committee - thanks ladies and welcome!

After the formalities of the AGM, as has become the custom, Sheila and Geoff Blamire entertained us with an account of one of their adventures abroad, this time their 2008 Spring trip to Arctic Norway; mostly still images shot by Sheila (one of which came 4th in the [2009 British Birds Photographer of the Year Competition](#)) but some video shot by Geoff including [Ieking Great Snipe](#) - all this for two bottles of wine - can't be bad!

If anyone has already lost the booking form for the October trip to Teeside you can [download a copy from here](#)- don't forget Derek wants your money by May 1st.!



23/4/1025 *TWT - Influx of Warblers*

Our [Timperley Early](#) is prolific this year, so much so that the little lady is giving away copious amounts to her bowling friends! The warm settled weather seems to have helped and it's done the same for some of our migrant species; yesterday (22nd) we took a stroll around Neumann's Flash and were pleased to hear so many singing warblers - Chiffchaffs, Willow Warblers, Common Whitethroats and Blackcaps have all returned in force and were making the most of a beautiful morning. Some of their close cousins were back too, we had two Sedge Warblers and six or seven Reed Warblers although, disappointingly, the Grasshopper Warbler that had been present yesterday hadn't hung around, still I think we'll have them at Woolston on our next visit to the Warrington reserve. No sign either of the two Black-winged Stilts that had been seen on Ashton's Flash over the weekend - they have previously nested on Neumann's. Hirundines were in short supply, we saw only a couple of Swallows and Sand Martins although the latter were exploring the holes in the artificial sand bank at Haydn's Pool which is most encouraging. A pair of Oystercatchers seemed to have set up shop on the small island at Haydn's but there was no sign of the previously reported pair of Little Ringed Plovers - the two islands are ideal sites for these waders now that the excess vegetation has been removed. We saw Great Spotted and Green Woodpeckers and on our return route to the cars, in the small copse near Butterfinch Bridge, Bob had a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker drumming 40 species.



19/4/2015 *KOS in North Wales*

A 100 species over the two days? They said it couldn't be done - and of course they were correct (on this occasion) but we had a great time trying and ended up with a very respectable count of 85 over the course of our visit.



We began on Friday morning at Llanfairfechan; it was a beautiful calm day giving our sea watchers pretty much ideal conditions, unfortunately there wasn't much out there to see although they did record 3+ Red-throated Divers, Common Scoters and Great Crested Grebe together with a Sandwich Tern picked out earlier by new member Phil Hampson - welcome Phil! We did the walk to Morfa Madryn along the promenade and Sheila, our official scorer, was kept very busy - Jude Halman was on top form and pointed out 2 distant Peregrines and in quick succession our first Wheatear of the trip - I take it all back Jude!! On the reserve Chiffchaffs, Blackcaps and Willow Warblers were in full song in the undergrowth whilst on the



pools we had Ringed Plover, Redshank, Dunlin, two Goosanders and a Red-breasted Merganser - also there an early Orange-tipped Butterfly.

From Llanfairfechan we travelled the short distance to [RSPB Conwy](#); the tide was out



but there was plenty to see and hear in the reed beds and tangled undergrowth along the various paths winding around the reserve. An early Reed Warbler was heard, but not seen next to the first hide, whilst further round the walk a fine male Whitethroat perched nicely for the 'scopes. Also of note a single White Wagtail and, as the afternoon wore on, some visible migration in the form of flocks of hirundines passing through Swallows, Sand Martins and a single House Martin.

We spent the night at the excellent Premier Inn in Llandudno Junction (no complaints from anyone - that must be a first!!). After the evening meal as a bit of a bonus I persuaded one or two of the party to spend a few minutes outside and we were able to watch the [ISS](#) as it passed silently overhead, ploughing on through the night at 17,000 mph (yes that's faster than JS - even in his aeroplane!)



Another fine day on the Saturday as we met up with the workers (Sue and Jacquie) for our walk around the Orme, starting at the top of the Marine Drive just past the [Rest and be Thankful cafe](#). The expected seabirds not yet on the list like Gannet and Kittiwake were quickly added followed by Chough and Guillemot. On the limestone pavement there were good numbers of Meadow Pipits and Stonechats, whilst in the fields alongside the path those with the patience were well rewarded with excellent views of a male and female Ring Ouzel plus a fine male Redstart and (after due consideration) a Black Redstart

that gave only a fleeting view. The Auks present on the cliffs under the lighthouse as viewed from the Marine Drive seemed to be down in number and Sheila could only identify one Razorbill for our list. Back at the Conwy reserve not a lot had changed since the previous day although we did have good views of a Whimbrel and a pair of Long-tailed Tits were busy building their nest in a hawthorn bush - they represented species number 85!

Back home Roger was out early as usual this morning and had Scaup, Brent Goose and a pair of Garganey on Tatton main mere; unfortunately neither Bob or me could find these birds later in the day although Bob did have the first Swift of the year - very early, nice one Robert!

Don't forget the AGM this Friday (24th) it doesn't take long (9mins.) last year! Following this Sheila and Geoff with their presentation entitled "Arctic Spring".

16/4/2015 *Mobberley Barn Owl*

For those that haven't yet seen the [Mobberley Barn Owls](#) - here they are - Thanks Geoff.

16/4/2015 *first Common Sandpiper*

Our early morning Tatton correspondent Roger Barnes tells me the female Scaup was still on Tatton mere early today, he also had an Oystercatcher and two days ago on the 14th the first Common Sandpiper of the year was flushed from the west side of the main mere, flying across to the far bank. These Sandpipers pass through Tatton every year but are prone to disturbance and are recorded only by early risers! The previous day (13th) Bob Groom had 200 hirundines including several Swallows and the first House Martins of the season over the mere. Over in Mobberley Len Mason was delighted to hear a Willow Warbler singing as he surveyed the veg. patch, unfortunately it had moved on before I arrived but we did see a splendid Brimstone butterfly - again another first for the year. In



Northwich Jacquie Ledward came across two Peregrine Falcons whilst walking along the River Weaver, they were very active and could well be thinking of nesting in that particular location, as I recall a pair nested at the ICI plant at nearby Lostock Gralam but I don't know if they're still there.

This weekend our KOS field trip takes us to North Wales; the original plan was to do the usual walk across the limestone pavement on the Great Orme on Saturday before moving on to RSPB Conwy, however 12 members are travelling to the principality on Friday and staying overnight at Llandudno Junction before meeting other members (those who still have to work for a living!) on the Orme on Saturday morning. The Friday folk will be meeting at Llanfairfechan, walking along the promenade and on to the Morfa Madryn reserve. We should have some excellent birds, the bird forums are buzzing with news of newly arrived migrants and rarities in the areas we'll be visiting - perhaps we should set ourselves a target of 100 species for the two days!

12/4/2015 *Some excellent records over the past few days*

The weather has turned colder again over the past few days and the Spring migration has not yet got into top gear - nevertheless a slow trickle of interesting migrants are arriving in our area.



Redstart Mobberley SQ
Nick Davies
11-4-15

Nick and Jayne Davies took an evening stroll around Mobberley Sand Quarry (SQ) on Saturday evening (11th) and came across a fine male Redstart, Nick was able to fire off a couple of shots one of which is reproduced on the left - OK Nick, as you say, it's only a record shot but It's probably the first picture of this species ever taken in Mobberley and a first for Mobberley SQ! Further on, along Gleave House Lane, they had a pair of Mandarins that flew off in the direction of Fox Harbour - a location where they've nested previously.



This morning (12th) around 8:00am, a couple of miles away in Tatton, Roger Barnes watched a female Scaup on the main mere. whilst at about the same time Alan Booth was lucky enough to flush a pair of Garganey on Knutsford Moor they were on the back pool and flew off up the back arm of the pool and out of sight. Alan also reports four singing Willow Warblers on the Moor / Dog Lodge plus 200 sand Martins and five Swallows over the main mere. I didn't do much birding today but in Stretford Mistle and Song Thrushes were heard and a Kestrel appears to be nesting in the Alex Ferguson stand at the Theatre of Dreams, where today the Red tide well and truly [eclipsed the Blue Moon!](#)

8/4/2015 *Quite a day!*

The day began well at 8am with a phone call from Roger Barnes, who was already in Tatton, and was able to confirm that yesterday's two Black-necked grebes were still present on the main mere and giving excellent views on a crystal clear morning.



Our Wednesday group travelled to Woolston Eyes where one of the first birds recorded was a singing Blackcap, our first of the year. A few minutes later a Swallow flew across the reserve heading steadily in a north-westerly direction, again another new species. Six Black-necked grebes have arrived back on the reserve and we saw four of these involved in some early season skirmishes, they apparently don't begin nest building until the new growth of phragmites reed is about 18" tall. Good numbers of Chiffchaffs were in song and we were lucky to have pretty good views of a single Willow Tit on the feeders in front of

the Morgan hide. Brian Martin had heard a Cetti's Warbler singing at the other side of number 3 bed but we couldn't hear it from where we were located although, by way of compensation, we had a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker calling loudly as we reached the car park.

This evening at around 7pm I joined Geoff, Sheila and Jane on Pavement Lane in Mobberley, the two Barn Owls are nesting in an Oak tree viewable from the road. As the light faded one of the pair returned from hunting with a sizeable item of prey and vanished into the nest hole. Prior to this we'd seen a Little Owl in a tree to the left of the Barn Owl tree, whilst in the tree to the right, where the Owl box is located, a male Mandarin was perched - perhaps they'll use the nest box. As we waited for some action from the Owls a wader passed overhead, only around 100' up flying in a northerly direction - it was a Whimbrel and my bird of the day!



7/04/2105 *First Swallows*

A high pressure weather system established itself over the British Isles during the Easter weekend and fed in some warm south-westerly winds, bringing into our area the first Swallows of the Summer. Bob Groom had a possible 12 birds on a short visit to Green Lane (knutsford), his local patch on the 4th., but they were very high and he hasn't recorded them as a valid record. Yesterday (6th) Phil Rowley had a single Swallow in Lower Peover and later "several" on telephone lines in Ashley. During his short visit to Green Lane Bob also recorded 4 Tree Sparrows, 2 Chiffchaffs, 2 Buzzards, 15+ Stock Doves, m Linnet, 2 Stock Doves and a Sparrowhawk - as he said, not bad for just an hour.



Photo Nick Davies

Nick and Jane Davies have enjoyed excellent views of at least one and possibly two Barn Owls from Pavement Lane. The optimum time appears to be between 19:00 and sunset.

This morning, whilst waiting to provide a blood sample at Cranford Lodge, I struck up an interesting

conversation with a lady and her husband who turned out to be keen hill-walkers. She claimed not to know much about birds but was obviously being very modest and it was plain that she knew her moorland birds very well indeed. This Spring they had already seen 3 pairs of Ring Ouzels on their travels but didn't reveal the locations, so this increasingly rare migrant is about but it may require some climbing - that counts me out!

30/03/2015*Little Gull at Tatton*

Incessant rain yesterday morning (29th) followed by heavy showers backed by gale force winds in the afternoon as I walked through Tatton in search of my first Sand Martins of the year. Luckily the weather had prevented the birds from moving on and I counted about 40 - so avoiding the ignominy of having to wait until April for my first sighting of the season!

Bob Groom estimated at least 250 birds mid-morning today over the



main mere, also there a Little Gull, perhaps blown inland by the continuing westerlies and an excellent record for Tatton. I went in around 3pm in the hope of seeing it but unfortunately it hadn't stayed around and had gone on it's way. Last Friday's indoor meeting was very well attended despite the absence of one or two regulars, Charlie Owens' presentation on the south Lancashire mosslands was very well received, he has an in-depth knowledge of the numerous locations, their history and flora and fauna. A good circular walk based on [Bents garden centre](#) was recommended and we'll be doing that one later in the Spring on one of



our Wednesday tours.

After the meeting Nick and Jane Davies mentioned that they'd seen a pair of Grey Wagtails at the bottom end of Pavement Lane (Mobberley) just before Springwood farm, they've nested there in the past and I've seen a bird carrying food a little further downstream near the Birkin Centre. The fields either side of the narrow road down to this location can be productive and are a favourite stopping off location for migrating Wheatears at this time of year. There's also a pair of Barn Owls in the area that are currently giving good views at dusk over those fields and across to Mobberley SQ.

25/03/2015 *TWT... Tatton*

A pleasant morning stroll around Tatton today - from Dog Lodge, across Knutsford Moor, along the west side of the main mere as far as the [Allen Hide](#) before returning via Dog Wood. A pair of Great Crested Grebes were busy building a nest on the far side of the Moor Pool where a pair of Gadwall seemed to be quite settled, I don't recall them ever breeding on the moor or in Tatton itself. At least one Heron's nest looked to be occupied in Higmere Plantation, despite recent disturbance during forestry activities, Nuthatches were calling from the plantation and a single Chiffchaff was singing - there was also a bird on the Moor near the pumping station.

Despite a dozen Sand Martins being counted over the mere yesterday we saw none this morning, but perhaps we were too busy talking as Bob Groom, who was viewing proceedings from the other side of the mere had a small party of 8 birds high over our heads!

The pair of Goosanders were still on view from the hide but there was little else of note as we enjoyed our [Goostreys](#) sausage rolls before heading for Dog Wood. At least 2 Great Spotted Woodpeckers were drumming and in the distance the yaffle of a Green Woodpecker came from the direction of Mobberley. Forestry work in the wood seems to have ended, perhaps for the breeding season but there must be some jobs remaining - there's an awful lot of valuable timber still lying around. Some rhododendrons have escaped the axe and it will be interesting to see if they still attract Blackcaps when they return in the next few days.



23/03/2015 *KOS March field trip to Woolston Eyes (Sun 22 March 2015)*

A party of 14 for Sunday's KOS trip to [Woolston Eyes](#) including Anne and Dave our friends from Warrington - nice to see you again folks, don't leave it so long next time!



A long-staying female Marsh Harrier was one of the first birds on our list, giving good views as it hunted low over the reed bed before drifting away over the M6. No Black-necked Grebes were present although they have been seen this year already and an email from Sheila confirms there was one today as well as adult Mediterranean Gull. Chiffchaffs were in good voice but they were the only Summer migrants we recorded as we missed out on Sand Martins yet again. They are around in good numbers though, Jacquie saw 6 in the afternoon at Haydyn's Pool and was told by the rangers that on Sunday morning there had been 2 early Swallows over





Pussy Willow

Budworth Mere. Talking of rangers, Darren Morris over at Tatton counted 29 Goldeneye in the Park on Sunday morning where the pair of Goosanders remain on Melchette mere.

Making our way further round the reserve a small group of Redwings were seen in the silver birch trees as we approached the Morgan hide where we enjoyed our elevenses and excellent views of a Willow Tit under one of the feeders - this species is becoming rarer and rarer, even here, one of it's strongholds.



Kestrel - Nick Davies

It was a pretty good day for raptors, as well as the Harrier we saw a number of Buzzards, a single Sparrowhawk and, as we made our way, out a pair of Kestrels were displaying over the reserve. One landed quite close by and we had good views through the 'scopes and allowed Nick to take the image shown above. We ended up with a total of 48 species during the morning and could no doubt have added more had there not been a football match kicking off at 1:30pm that just had to be watched, and what a [satisfactory outcome](#), apparently Pele was a guest of honour and as such was introduced to the crowd at half-time - spending more time on the pitch than the Liverpool captain!!

Don't forget it's time to renew your permit for Woolston Eyes and also this Friday (27th) Charlie Owen will be giving his talk about the South Lancashire Mosslands at our March indoor meeting - I've heard this one before, it's very good and I'm looking forward to seeing it again.

21/03/2015 *Tatton Updates*

The [Knutsford Guardian reports](#) that [the Bewilderwood project](#) has been "put on hold", I'm guessing that means abandoned!

On the face of it that's good news, but as the Park needs to be self-financing some time in the near future there may have to be savings and I was once told that in order to reduce costs the Dog Wood entrance would be permanently closed.

Earlier today Darren Morris had a male and female Goosander on Melchette Mere - thanks Darren that must have been a great sight! This afternoon I took a stroll down Pavement Lane (Mobberley) as far as the impressive new gates that are intended to keep the riffraff well away from [Wes Brown's](#) new pad. No sign of any passing Wheatears on the usual fields but I did see a beautiful cock Yellowhammer sitting on top of the bare hawthorn hedge looking quite resplendent.

The female Osprey has returned to the Dyfi Reserve near Barmouth - we'll be paying a visit of course on our trip in May. Until then the [streaming video](#) from the nest will have to suffice but I must say the HD pictures are always very impressive.



18/03/2015 *First Chiffchaffs of the year*

We set off this morning in an optimistic mood to [Northwich Woodlands](#) fully expecting to come across our first Sand Martins of the year, probably over the broad expanse of [Budworth Mere](#) as "hundreds" had been reported from there over the weekend. Unfortunately if there were hundreds, which I doubt, they'd moved on and there wasn't a one to be seen!



Chiffchaff

We'd begun the day as usual at the Witton Mill car park, taking in Haydyn's Pool before moving on to the Mere and returning via "Big Wood" and Neumann's Flash. The volunteers have done a good job on the two islands in the middle of Haydyn's and removed most of the rank vegetation making them much more attractive for waders and I'm sure Little Ringed Plovers will be arriving there in the near future. Other waders at the pool were 6 Snipe, a single Lapwing and a pair of Oystercatchers that look as though they are close to setting up shop on the larger of the two islands.

Although we missed the Sand Martins we did have some Summer migrants in the form of three singing Chiffchaffs, one at Haydyn's, one near the viewing screen overlooking Budworth Mere and the third just as we left the car park along Witton Brook.

Great Crested Grebes were displaying on the mere and on the far side a few Curlews were feeding just behind the sand spit which was populated by Black-headed Gulls and a surprisingly large number of Common Gulls, presumably stopping off on their way north.

We met up with more birders than usual, the majority wandering around aimlessly in search of the pair of Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers that had been reported earlier in the week, this is probably the best way to encourage the birds to move on and find somewhere else to nest!

16/03/2015..... *Tatton's first Sand Martin*

Darren Morris one of the Tatton Rangers kindly sent me a text today with news of the first Sand Martin over the main mere this afternoon - 2 days later than average. Later in the evening though I was informed that a number of Martins were seen over Melchette Mere on Saturday (14th) during one of the periodic Pike fishing matches.

15/03/2015.....No Summer migrants yet - but!

Despite regular visits to Tatton over the past few days by KOS members no Summer migrants have yet been seen or heard in the park, although both Sand Martins and Chiffchaffs have been recorded in and around Cheshire during the week. I was lucky this morning though as I walked through Dog Wood on my way back to the car after an unproductive visit to the main mere when I became aware of a sound with which we've become familiar with over the years on visits to Martin Mere - Whooper Swans! A flock of around 40 birds calling loudly passed directly overhead, in a "V" formation, hundreds of feet above flying in a north-westerly direction. I presume these are Icelandic breeders that have wintered on the eastern side of the country and are now preparing for their journey back home over the Atlantic.



There was more excitement on Wednesday (11th), this time in Bucklow Avenue (Mobberley) where Len Mason, having a late Breakfast (*I know - that's not unusual!*) noticed a very rare visitor flitting around his veg. patch in the back garden. It was a Black Redstart a species we last saw some years ago on a KOS trip to Red Rocks Marsh on the Wirral peninsula and a real rarity in the county. I suspect it may require a description before it's accepted as a bona fide record, so Len will have to get his quill and ink out!

08/03/2015 The first Sand Martins return

As predicted the warmer weather brought in the first of this year's Sand Martins. Many records appeared during the day on the [Birdguides](#) website including sightings from Wigan Flashes and Frodsham. I visited Tatton in heavy rain during the morning but had no luck, neither did Bob Groom who went in during the afternoon. The park is still on Winter opening and closing times, which means it's closed all day Monday so we'll probably have to wait until later on in the week for the first record in our area.

Tatton and it's Great Crested Grebes were featured tonight on Countryfile with [David Norman](#) giving a creditable performance in front of the camera, although I was disappointed that [Darren Morris](#) wasn't chosen for the part following on from his star role on North West Tonight in 2010!

04/03/2015 Too cold yet for Summer visitors

Derek and Jean, currently in Portugal, have so far recorded 80 species within 8Km of their holiday home "without trying". Amongst these were species such as Swallow, Sand Martin and House Martin some of which could well have been heading north towards the UK. With this at the back of our minds we made our way over to [Woolston Eyes](#) in an optimistic mood, hoping to perhaps come across one of these early birds ourselves. Unfortunately it wasn't to be - we had 38 species during the morning but nothing out of the ordinary. Some species such as Dunnock, Wren, Blue Tit and Great Tit were in song and Black-headed Gulls had arrived back in good numbers in preparation for the coming breeding season. The first of this year's Black-necked Grebes should return within the next few days, last year the arrival date was the 8th of March. The 8th of March is also the earliest ever date at Tatton for the first Sand Martin of the Spring and with much warmer weather forecast to arrive over the weekend it might be worth popping into the park on Sunday and doing



a scan of the main mere. On average the first bird has been recorded on the 14th, although over the past few years I think other locations have been earlier and on one occasion one was claimed on 28th February over Rostherne mere!

Two websites that will give an idea of what's arriving and where during the Spring are [Birdguides](#) and the [Manchester Birding](#) site.

23/02/2015 [Bob's trip to Oman](#)

One of our more well-travelled members - Bob Groom, has recently returned from [a birding trip to Oman](#). He circulated an Email with an account of his adventures and has kindly agreed to allow me to publish it on the website - I think it merits a bigger audience!

21/02/2015..... High tide at Parkgate

I've see more spaces at the Ethihad than were available yesterday (20th) along the sea wall at Parkgate as birders arrived in large numbers ahead of the incoming Spring tide, which at 10.3 meters plus the backing of a light wind from the south-west, was expected to flood the marsh and reach the quay side forcing any birds and mammals hidden in the reeds (or [cord-grass](#) apparently) out into the open.



We weren't disappointed this time as the sea forced it's way in. We had a total of 50 species and, looking at the list, within this were some nice records - Merlin, Hen Harrier, Peregrine, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk and Short-eared Owl. Nevertheless just single examples of the first five species and only 2 Owls was less than we'd hoped for and less than we'd seen in previous years at this location.





Passerines also seemed to be down in number, there were very good counts of Skylark, but these apart species like Greenfinch, Chaffinch and Linnets were few and far between and it was an hour before we saw the first Meadow Pipit!



Hérons are now outnumbered by Little Egrets, a species that seems to be going from strength to strength in this part of the world, we also had a Great White Egret flying upriver - I think four individuals are present in the area and could become even more common in the coming years. These members of the Heron family were taking full advantage of the prevailing conditions as the small mammal residents were forced out of cover by the incoming tide and swam for their lives towards the shore. Common and Water Shrew, Bank Vole, Harvest Mouse and even a large Rat were all seen, most made the safety of dry land! Water Rails are normally around and seem to be the favourite prey of the Grey Herons but we saw only one and this one was in flight making for the sanctuary of a local garden. Species of the day was probably Jack Snipe, they're always reluctant to take flight and a couple did hang on until their cover vanished under the advancing water and they were forced into the air giving really good views.

Finally I can report that the fish and chips at the [Parkgate chippy](#) were as good as ever!

09/02/2015 *Pinkfeet - report from Derek Pike*



100+ Pink-footed Geese seen over Knutsford at 2:00pm this afternoon, flying in a north-westerly direction. That would put them on course for Martin Mere - perhaps we should expect to see more in the coming weeks as they prepare to return to their Summer homes in Iceland or Greenland

07/02/2015 *KOS Feb. field trip to Tatton Park*

14 members plus Meg the dog enjoyed a leisurely Saturday morning stroll around the park starting on the eastern side of Knutsford



Moor, then through Dog Wood before making our way alongside the main mere as far as the Allen hide. We're currently sitting under a large anti-cyclone and consequently the weather was quite benign with no wind and a temperature of 5°C so any sounds carried for considerable distances. Great Spotted Woodpeckers were very active with 4 or 5 individuals drumming and a Green Woodpecker was heard calling briefly from the direction of the golf course. Despite being referred to as "bandit country", and written off by some employees of the park, a considerable amount of work is going on in Dog Wood with the removal of rhododendrons and unwanted sycamore trees opening up the undergrowth to the sunlight and creating a habitat that may be more attractive to species such as Wood Warblers and Pied and Spotted Flycatchers, who have all nested in the past. As we passed through Blue Tits and Great Tits were in song as well as Coal Tits singing from the conifers near the outdoor centre, whilst in the distance both Song and Mistle Thrushes were heard.

The main mere was mostly covered with a thin layer of ice but there was some open water along the western edge and here we noted

Little Grebe, Tufted Duck and Pochard along with 22 Goldeneye - mostly females but a few displaying males were a reminder that Spring is just around the corner.

After a mid-morning break in the Allen hide, overlooking Melchette mere, we headed across to Beech Walk, putting up a flock of around 20 Meadow Pipits as we moved alongside the reed bed. The small Larch plantation en route was proving attractive to a small flock of birds, mostly Goldfinches but some of the party noted one or two Siskins amongst them.

The trees along Beech Walk were apparently planted in 1739 and are now reaching the end of their lifetime, but instead of hacking off the dead branches or chopping them down completely the powers that be have made the surprising decision to let nature take its course and leave them to die naturally, so providing a home for a multitude of plant and insect species in the years to come. A stout fence has been built to keep people out together



with information notices that explain their decision, nevertheless some visitors are choosing to ignore advice and continue to walk the old paths under the trees - an interesting legal battle will no doubt ensue when someone gets clobbered by a falling limb!



We returned to Dog Lodge via Knutsford Moor and were delighted when David Bayne was the first to spot a Kingfisher, perched on a branch overlooking the River Lily, just as it empties in to the Moor reed bed. This is an excellent little spot and often a patient observer will be rewarded with good views of Water Rails and Snipe emerging from the *phragmites* to feed in the open.

In all we had 40 species, not too bad considering things like Reed Bunting, Redwing and Fieldfare were absent from the list!

03/02/2015... The Allen Hide and annual Wildfowl Watch in Tatton

Many years ago the KOS approached the then director of Tatton Park (Commander P.A.C. Neate, RN Rtd.) with a plan to construct a hide in Higmere Plantation overlooking the south end of the main mere and Knutsford Moor. Despite the fact that we offered to do the whole job for nothing, mainly due to the good offices of J.E. Pike and Sons, builders of Knutsford, the director didn't see it generating any additional revenue and refused permission.



Fast forward 30 years and we find that the park now has a dedicated bird watching hide; a splendid construction overlooking Melchette mere and equal to any RSPB hide I've ever been in. The amazing thing is that it was designed and built for free by a Tatton "regular" who offered his services (and money) on hearing that it was a long standing ambition among the park's rangers to have such a facility but the powers that be were reluctant to release any funds. (although it's now listed as one of the many attractions on [Tatton's website](#)). The benefactor wished to remain anonymous but it did help that he owned a portable building company based in a nearby town!

Construction was completed about four years ago and since then the rangers and the KOS have held a joint "Winter Wildfowl Watch" every January allowing the public to talk to "the experts" and have a look through some decent optical equipment. Last year was a bit of a disaster as it rained all morning and we had only three visitors, two people and one smelly waterlogged pooch! The weather was much kinder for this year's event, held on Sunday the 25th, with unbroken sunshine for the two hours we were open for business and we played host to almost 50 visitors. There wasn't much on offer in the way of birds but we did manage 31 species including a Stonechat which was found by one of the visitors and which gave good views in front of the hide. Some visitors were local and all were given a copy of the latest [KOS programme](#) before leaving so, you never know, they may decide to come along to one of our Friday meetings.



Two local groups, Hale Ornithologists and the [Manchester Ornithological Society](#) have disbanded in recent times and the average age of KOS members is increasing year on year, so we were all encouraged by the number of youngsters who popped in during the morning. The future lies with them, but how do you prise kids away from their computer screens, out of cyberspace and into the real world ?

No, I don't know either - perhaps Google and Wikipedia have all the facts and information we'll ever need and there's no need to venture out into the rain and snow in search of further knowledge and LBJ's

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