

Latest news, views, gossip etc.

Latest News - 2016

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Updated 31st December 2016.

31/12/2016..... *Waxwings back!*



Thirteen KOS members enjoyed our annual post Christmas walk around the Northwich Woodlands area - Haydn's Pool, Budworth Mere, Neumann's Flash etc. on a cold but dry winter's day (30th). Although the temperature was above freezing at around 4 ° C the recent frosts had frozen the ground nicely so the going was firm and not as boggy as in the past. Haydn's Pool was completely frozen over so we were surprised to see a single Snipe lurking in the reeds whilst further out a Buzzard perched close to the owl box and, in the distance, a Peregrine surveyed it's kingdom from atop one of the old ICI buildings.

The facilities at the Marbury Park visitor centre have been improved but unfortunately the butty van wasn't in attendance so we had our elevenses at the viewing screen overlooking the Coward reed bed and Budworth Mere where Blue, Great and Coal Tits together with Nuthatches were using the feeding station and Water Rails were calling from the reeds below us. On the mere itself a good selection of water birds - Wigeon, Shoveler, Mallard, Moorhen, Coot, Gadwall, greylags and Canada Geese - star of the show was a very confiding Goosander swimming a few yards out from where we were stood; it was a "redhead" but areas of paler white areas on it's flanks suggested a young male bird.

Neumann's Flash was almost completely iced over except for a small area of open water which was being kept temporarily clear by the presence of a concentrated mixed flock of wildfowl - Teal, Wigeon, Mallard and Shoveler plus Black-headed, Common and Herring Gulls.

At this stage we had planned to drive down to Northwich town centre and the Lidl car park where Waxwings had been seen the previous day but, just in time, Sheila phoned to tell us that she and Geoff were at the Tesco store and were watching a flock there, in the same Rowan tree they'd been using a couple of years ago, we saw seven birds but Sheila reports that they counted 21 later in the afternoon. There weren't many berries on the tree this winter and even fewer on the other tree next to it so the birds will be moving on quite quickly - hopefully to Mobberley where two Cotoneasters on Town Lane, which kept a flock of up to 25 birds in food for three weeks previously, are absolutely laden with fruit!

More Winter visitors have been recorded locally, Geoff and Sheila have been visited by three male Brambling and Jayne and Nick Davies counted between 20 and 25 along Beech Walk in Tatton Park on the 29th.

Species seen during the KOS Christmas walk 2016. Goldfinch, Wigeon, Shoveler, Mallard, Moorhen, Coot, Wren, Magpie, Cormorant, Blackbird, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Carrion Crow, Song Thrush, Redpoll, Mute Swan, Wood Pigeon, Jay, Buzzard, Stock Dove, Snipe, Peregrine, great Spotted Woodpecker, Nuthatch, Bullfinch, Pochard, Water rail, Great Crested Grebe, Tufted Duck, Heron, Black-headed Gull, Canada Goose, Dunnock, Teal, Common Gull, Chaffinch, Herring Gull, Lapwing, Greylag Goose, Gadwall, Goosander, Curlew, Goldcrest, Starling, Redwing, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Fieldfare, Waxwing. [✓ 51]

So there we go, another year of fun and games with the KOS! Plenty of highlights for me - the Nightjars at the end of May up in the Pennines, 10,000 Barnacle geese in the air at Caerlaverock in Novemebr and hearing my first Cheshire Cetti's singing in the reed bed from Butterfinch Bridge below Haydn's Pool. Feel free to share your favourites, there must be many amongst such a well travelled group of birders! I'm sure there'll be more this year especially with the trip to Speyside in

June - I can't wait!

A Happy and Healthy new year to all KOS members and anyone else who passes this way as they drift through cyberspace.

21/12/2016..... *Christmas Party 2016 and Martin Mere*

A busy weekend for KOS members with the annual Christmas party on Friday evening (16th) followed on Sunday with our outing to Marshside and Martin Mere.

The party was a great success and our Treasurer Frank Dearden reports a healthy profit of £ 188.20, the third highest in the society's history, 26 people attended, just one short of last year and included six who hadn't attended in previous years; it was one of these who pointed out that there aren't many places in the world where you can see a man auctioning a plate of meat pies whilst simultaneously chewing a cold sausage! Thanks are due to everyone who attended and those who provided the excellent selection of food especially Jude for the coronation chicken and Sue and Jacquie who prepared the delicious apple crumble that vanished so quickly. Sheila Blamire won the quiz with a 46 points out of a possible 50, I thought I'd made this years questions/id's/anagrams a little more difficult than previously, but no puzzle fooled everyone in the room, even the picture of a Masked Wagtail was correctly identified by the well-travelled Bob Groom (just wait for next years anagrams!) As usual our hard working Secretary Derek Pike was MC for



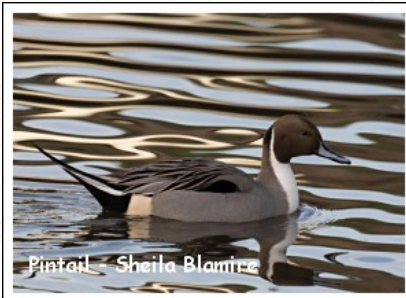
the evening, managing to keep a semblance order and squeeze a final few bob out of us during the auction - in his report, whilst considering suggestions for possible changes to the evening, Frank quite rightly points out that "people would want to retain Derek's auctioneer banter at the evening's close even if it raised not a penny!"

Sunday (18th) found us heading north on the M6 again, first up to the RSPB's Marshside reserve and later in the morning across to Martin Mere.



At 7 ° C it wasn't particularly cold but a steady breeze from the Irish sea made it a morning to make for the various hides rather than stand out in the open for long periods.

As we've come to expect the stretch of water in front of Nel's hide was the most productive with a good selection of wildfowl - Shelduck, Wigeon, Pintail, Teal, Shoveler and Tufted Ducks were all present in large numbers plus Black-tailed Godwits, Redshanks, Curlews and Golden Plover. They all remained quite settled for long periods, despite the presence of a few Great Black-backed Gulls, only taking to the air en masse when a big female Sparrowhawk passed low over the area.



The car park at Martin Mere was filling rapidly when we arrived shortly after midday, the various special

Christmas attractions were obviously working and it was nice to see so many young families enjoying the reserve and the seasonal facilities laid on to attract them. Rather unfortunately one of these was the "sail to Santa's Island" adventure where kids could be paddled out to meet Santa and receive a gift etc. this was set up on the "Swan Lake" in front of the large observation windows where normally visitors could eat their sandwiches whilst watching an interesting selection of wildfowl from all across the planet, these birds appear to have been temporarily re-located. The restaurant was doing a roaring trade and the Hon. Treasurer and I wondered how much money was generated by this and the shop. Looking at the [latest accounts](#) it appears (to my non-expert eye) that the catering operations take £ 2.8M and the retail operations £ 1.3M per annum - big business!



The path down to the Ron Barker hide provided some new species for the day list including Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Chaffinch, Coal, Blue and Great Tits plus the anticipated Tree Sparrows whilst from the hide we added Kingfisher and an unexpected Green-winged Teal.

We ended the day in the Discovery hide for the 3pm feed, [quite a scrum!](#) and an encouraging number of families had deserted Santa Claus and his elves to enjoy the spectacle.

Closer to home in Tatton Park Alan Booth tells me that on the 18th December 3 pairs of Mandarin Ducks were present on the main mere and, on the same date, he heard a Great Spotted Woodpecker drumming in Dog Wood. After the disruption caused during the forestry work last year it's to be hoped that things will have settled down and the wood attracts the woodpeckers back plus, perhaps, some Summer migrant species such as Redstart and the Flycatchers.

Today (21st) it's the Winter Solstice - at 10:44 GMT apparently - so we can begin to look forward to the longer evenings and even the return of the first Sand Martin in around 10 weeks time! Before then though remember on Friday 30th we have our Christmas walk around the Northwich Woodlands meeting up at the Millers Bridge car park at 09:45 for a 10:00am start.

Species seen at Marshside / Martin Mere on 18th December 2016.

Skylark, Little Egret, Shelduck, Pied Wagtail, 🟡, Robin, Woodpigeon, Canada Goose, Mallard, Magpie, Great Black-backed Gull, Meadow Pipit, Lapwing, Pink-footed Goose, Starling, Wigeon, Buzzard, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Golden Plover, Wren, Pochard, Pintail, Tufted Duck, Teal, Black-tailed Godwit, Shoveler, Greylag Goose, Black-headed Gull, Redshank, Curlew, Sparrowhawk, Grey Wagtail, Moorhen, Coot, Goldfinch, Linnet, Grey Heron, Dunnock, Blackbird, Collared Dove, House Sparrow, Whooper Swan, Cormorant, Mistle Thrush, Chaffinch, Coal Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Tree Sparrow, Jackdaw, Greenfinch, Green-winged teal, Pheasant, Ruff, Song Thrush, Kingfisher. [✓ 53] + 🟡

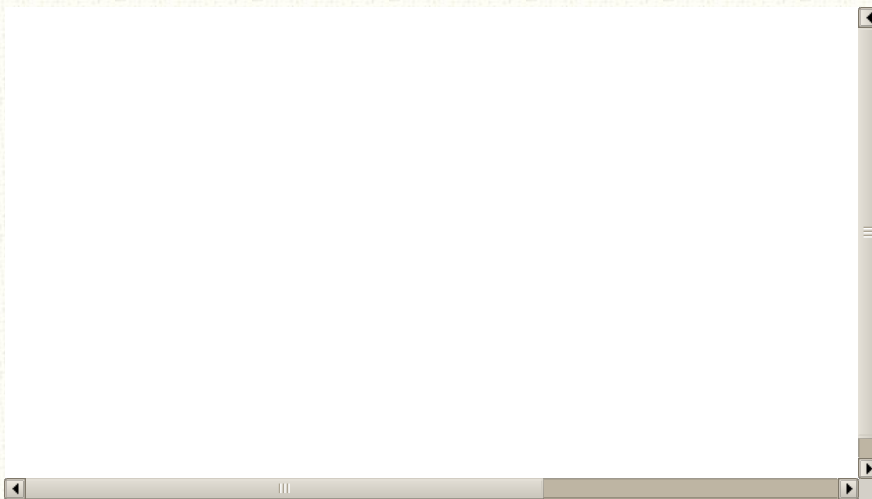


13/12/2016..... *First records for Tabley and Tatton*

As the relentless spread northwards of the various members of the family *Ardeidae* continues inland records are becoming more and more common but, apart from Rostherne which has had both Little and Great White Egrets this year, they've been few and far between around the Knutsford area.

on Sunday (4th) whilst doing his regular [WeBs count](#) Bob Groom saw what was very probably the first record of Great White in Tabley Park (a bird previously well described by Ernie Hart the resident gamekeeper) *Lovely and bright but even the light wind was frigid. Leaves now covering the mud but also the many tree roots, real trip hazards. Finally I have seen Ernie's 'big white heron' but, frustratingly, it was only a very quick view as it flew over the mere. While there were no grey herons around for comparison, it was clearly that size. I didn't see a yellow bill but it was gone so quickly and I didn't see it again. (There was some shooting going on a short distance away and a fishing boat out.) It's tempting to say it was definitely a great white egret but there is still the outside possibility of it being an albino grey heron, though such a bird would be rarer than a GWE! Difficult... 43 Mute Swans on the mere and the regular 2 Shelducks. also 30+ Shovelers and 110 Mallards but very few other ducks. Usual female Grey Wagtail, this time in a marshy area alongside the wood.*

On Thursday (8th) I had an email from Carl Butterworth who, earlier in the day, had videoed a Little Egret flying over Tatton Mere before landing in the reeds in front of the Higmere plantation (you can watch it below) we believe this is a first for the park - well done Carl and many thanks!



The cold spell of weather seems to have passed and, with south-westerly winds blowing up from the Azores, temperatures have risen dramatically reaching 13 ° C on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday last week. This may have prompted a Song Thrush into song this morning along Slade Lane in Mobberley although it's arctic cousins, the Redwings, weren't tempted and a flock of 59 Pinkfeet flying south reminded us that there's plenty of cold weather to come!

On Sunday it's our December field trip to Marshside and Martin Mere, leaving the Tatton Street car park at 9:00am; but before then on this coming Friday (16th) it's the KOS Christmas party - one of Knutsford's most eagerly awaited social events of the year it generates much needed funds - our speakers have been excellent this year but they don't come cheap!

04/12/2016.....*Some good records from Tatton*

November 2016 was considerably colder than the same month in 2015. My weather station shows that the average temperature (one minute intervals) was 8.4 °C in November 2015 and only 3.4 °C this year, with 14 air frosts compared to 3 last year. Some smaller stretches of water have frozen over but the bigger meres are still clear of ice. Rostherne Mere was relatively quiet when I spent a couple of hours there on Monday afternoon (28th) with no apparent increase in wildfowl numbers. This build-up happens in really cold weather as, due to its depth, it's the last of the Cheshire meres to freeze over . Around 30 Wigeon flocked together near the sandspit, whilst further out four "redhead" Goosanders landed briefly before flying away out of site in the direction of the Whitley hide.



On Tuesday (29th) Derek and Jean saw a female Stonechat close to Tatton Park's Melchett Mere, this bird had been seen the day before by Darren Morris and on the 24th by Alan Booth; Darren also saw another, in the deer enclosure, also on the 24th. Derek and Jean report "100s" of Canada Geese on Melchett plus a Kingfisher, whilst on the main mere they noted two male Common Scoters - an excellent record for the park. On Wednesday we travelled over to Woolston Eyes for a gentle morning birding, below the bridge at the entrance the water was mostly frozen over but a few Shovelers fed close to the shore where the ice hadn't reached. Little to see from the first elevated hide but some clear water with a selection of wildfowl could be seen in the distance so we made our way to the Morgan hide from where we'd get better views and enjoy an early sausage roll. On the walk round we passed a work party led by an enthusiastic young man on secondment from the RSPB, they were removing some of the taller trees

that had been used by Magpies and Buzzards for nesting and were hoping this would encourage the Willow Tits to use the area they were clearing. I remember when we were wardening at Loch Garten big conifer trees were cut down to a height of about 5 or 6 feet leaving these remaining stumps to gently rot providing nest sites for the Crested Tits which excavate nesting cavities in rotten wood, as do Willow Tits.

The feeders at the Morgan hide were very busy mainly with large numbers of Greenfinches plus Goldfinches, Blue, Great and Willow Tits and a *phylloscopus* warbler, presumably a Chiffchaff. The wintering Bramblings, so noticeable last Winter, have yet to re-appear.

Moorhens and Coots seemed quite at home on the ice in front of the hide whilst further away where some clear water remained a selection of wildfowl were concentrated into a small area - Mallards, Shoveler and lots of Teal including a difficult to find Green-winged Teal - an escaped bird if you have one on your various lists, an obvious wild bird if you haven't!

Species seen at Woolston Eyes - 30th December 2016 Robin, Blackbird, Moorhen, Long-tailed Tit, Goldcrest, Magpie, Dunnock, Shoveller, Carrion Crow, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Greenfinch, Willow Tit, Green-winged Teal, Woodpigeon, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Black-headed Gull, Chiffchaff, Tufted Duck, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Reed Bunting, buzzard, Herring Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Grey Wagtail, mallard, Teal, Green-winged Teal, Sparrowhawk, Pied Wagtail, Song Thrush, Kestrel, Cormorant, Grey Heron. [✓ 35]

22/11/2016..... KOS trip to Dumfries and Galloway

Rather a long piece so I've put it on a separate page - [click here](#)

While we were away there were some very big tides and Bob and Jacquie drove down to Parkgate to see if they could pick up any of the specialities - here's his email

We did go, and on arrival had to sit in the car for half-an-hour as it pelted down outside, but at least we did see a male Hen Harrier during that time. At least it brightened up later but it was pretty chilly. With the very strong wind behind it, the tide came right up to the wall and stayed in for a long time but no Water Rails or Crakes seen. However there were huge numbers of birds at high tide and we had prolonged views of at least 3 Short-Eared Owls and I saw a Bittern in flight. Also a distant Peregrine and Jacquie had a probable Merlin. I counted 60+ Little Egrets in one gathering. We finished the day at BMW. The Cattle Egrets were still there and a Kestrel, but no Marsh Harriers. Tremendous number of Pink-Footed Geese came in to feed and roost and we also saw a female Stonechat.

09/11/2016..... More Winter Visitors

Our weather continues to arrive from the east and it's much colder than this time last year, on Tuesday morning (8th) at 6am [my weather station](#) recorded -3.2 °C. Last Wednesday (2nd) at 7:30am a high flying flock of c.150 Pinkfeet passed over Moberley heading east, there are few more exciting sounds for we birders - wild, evocative and timeless - perhaps they were anticipating the cold snap to come. Later in the morning we drove over to Warrington and the Woolston Eyes



reserve; we had hoped to see the immature Hen Harrier that had been seen earlier in the week quartering the reed beds, this bird has been fitted with a [satellite tracker](#) enabling realtime monitoring of it's position. This data won't be made public immediately in case it's used by members of the shooting fraternity to establish it's location, a pity - but a sign of the times. In contrast you can follow the [movements of Spoon-billed Sandpipers in Myanmar](#) using the same technology!

We didn't catch up with the Harrier, but managed a total of 40 species during the morning, nothing unexpected but good views of things like Sparrowhawk and a nice Grey Wagtail in front of the Morgan hide where Bob had two Goosanders just before we left.

The Lesser Spotted Woodpecker has been seen and/or heard a couple of times at Rostherne, it was watched just below the observatory and identified as a male bird. No sign of it yesterday afternoon (8th) but there was plenty of activity, mainly thrushes - Redwings and Mistle Thrushes especially, no large numbers of Fieldfares yet but I did find a solitary Song Thrush amongst the Redwings. Also on the Reserve five Mandarins including two fine looking males at the outlet of Rostherne Brook, 23 Shovelers feeding in front of the boathouse and just before leaving a Little Egret flew down the length of the mere before heading off towards Tatton Park.

Species seen at Woolston Eyes - Wednesday 2nd November 2016.

Wren, Goldcrest, Moorhen, Coot, Mallard, Gadwall, Teal, Wigeon, Goldfinch, Long-tailed Tit, Little Grebe, Blue Tit, Black-headed Gull, Kingfisher, Magpie, Goldfinch, Jay, Sparrowhawk, Grey Wagtail, Cormorant, Shoveler, Blackbird, Redwing, Dunnock, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Heron, Reed Bunting, Snipe, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Buzzard, Great Tit, Chaffinch, Black-tailed Godwit, Robin, Greenfinch, Canada Goose, Carrion Crow, Goosander, Shelduck. [✓ 40]

31/10/2016..... Cattle Egrets

We enjoyed a pleasant morning last Wednesday (26th) at [Burton Mere](#), quite misty at first with the power plants across the Dee estuary belching out clouds of steam, looking very photogenic in shades of grey and white; eventually though the sun burnt off the murk and the temperature rose to 17 °C leaving perfect conditions for a spot of birding.



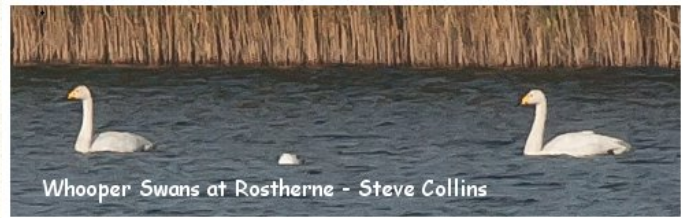
Following in the footsteps of those other southern European species - Little Egret, Great White Egret and Spoonbill - Cattle Egrets seem to be expanding their range and five birds recently arrived on the Reserve. We had hoped to see these and we weren't to be disappointed as they were on view from the reception building, clearly at home following the cattle through the reed beds and at one stage one of the birds perched on the back of one of the cows - just like you see in the books!

We managed an excellent total of 60 species during the morning - large flocks of Pinkfeet were on the move with several groups of 100+ birds arriving from the estuary, on the wader scrape in front of the Inner Marsh hide Sheila managed to pick out 5 Dunlin and 2 Ruff amongst the numerous



Redshanks. Back at the reception building three Marsh Harriers looked great as they floated over the water meadows as we enjoyed a cup of RSPB coffee before heading for home (incidentally an enterprising chap has set up a Butty Van in the car park (with the agreement of the RSPB) so visitors can enjoy a freshly made bacon bap rather than the crisps and biscuits normally on offer)

Locally KOS members



Steve Collins and Phil Dell had two Whooper Swans at Rostherne on the 26th and also the Lesser Spotted Woodpecker on the same day with another sighting by Phil in front of the observatory on the 27th.

Another encouraging turnout on Friday evening when 30 members and visitors enjoyed an excellent talk by [Paul Hobson](#) who recounted his journeys through Namibia, South Africa, Rwanda and Kenya; this wasn't just a "bird on a stick" lecture but an entertaining travel log covering subjects such as the Rwandan War and how to stay clear of the [Lords Army!](#) On the subject of exotic locations I learn that some members will be heading for the sun over the next few days including trips to Peru, California and even Hawaii - Aloha!

Species recorded at Burton Mere Wetlands - 26th October 2016

Rook, Nuthatch, Redshank, Shoveler, Black-headed Gull, Cattle Egret, Mallard, Moorhen, Coot, Marsh Harrier, Teal, Skylark, Lapwing, Shelduck, Wigeon, Snipe, Pintail, Starling, Black-tailed Godwit, Pied Wagtail, Canada Goose, Greylag Goose, Pink-footed Goose, Carrion Crow, Heron, Mute Swan, Jackdaw, Long-tailed Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Dunnock, Robin, Magpie, Goldfinch, Wren, Chaffinch, Goldcrest, Tufted Duck, Gadwall, Little Grebe, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Blackbird, Water Rail, Redwing, Jay, Dunlin, Bullfinch, Ruff, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Reed Bunting, Redpoll, Linnet, Great White Egret, Sparrowhawk, Stock Dove, Greenfinch, Mistle Thrush, Buzzard, Chiffchaff. [✓ 60]

23/10/2016..... Whooper Swans drop in at Tatton

The easterly winds have returned after a short interval of westerlies last week and they've brought with them more Winter visitors. In Moberley on Thursday (20th) there was another noticeable increase in the number of Redwings, Blackbirds and



Mistle Thrushes plus the first flock of Fieldfares, a group of about 20, flying south over Hobcroft Lane. Dave Higginson from Greenbank Farm along the lane tells me they've been struck by an outbreak of bovine tuberculosis and so far he's lost 25 milking cows and 10 in-calf heifers, they are the only dairy farm left in the immediate area and don't "buy-in" any animals. He suspects it's been spread by Badgers. Geoff and Sheila Blamire report their first garden Redwing arrived on the 16th, followed by a very early Brambling just two days later.

On Thursday afternoon (20th) Derek and Jean were walking in Tatton Park when they were surprised to come across a small flock of 12 Whooper Swans, 8 adults and 4 juveniles on Melchett Mere, a great record! Interestingly a flock of 12 spent a few hours on Rostherne Mere on October 28th last year, there's a good picture of them in the 2015 Rostherne Report taken by Steve Collins. The report is an excellent publication, well written with some great pictures by Steve and plenty of graphs and

charts that reveal some interesting population trends using data that can go back over one hundred years! The report is free for members. I spent a couple of hours there on Friday afternoon (22nd), a nice male Goosander was going to be the highlight until, as I was making my way out, a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker called loudly from the top of a Lime tree in the churchyard before flying directly overhead into a Willow tree on the edge of the cricket pitch, I wasn't able to re-locate it.

Bob and Jacquie have been across to the Wirral again and seem to have enjoyed some success *It was a seven bird-of-prey day today at the Parkgate High Tide event. We missed Merlin (one was seen very briefly) but had good views of fem. Marsh Harrier, Short-eared Owl, Peregrine (3 birds circling together), Buzzard, Kestrel and Sparrowhawk! 30 Pink-Feet flew over and there were all the usual waders (including lots of Curlews), Little Egrets etc..Early on at Leasowe we had showers but for the rest of the day the sun shone. We called in at Burton but missed cattle egret again. More views of Marsh Harrier etc.....* I believe there are now 5 Cattle Egrets at Burton Wetlands.



On Saturday Martin Hughes-Games tweeted that he'd been sacked by the BBC "The BBC commissioner Tom McDonald has decided my services no longer required on Springwatch etc. Sad, but it's been brilliant. Thank you." There followed a rush of angry tweets from his followers prompting a statement from the Corporation which explained that he hadn't been dropped from Springwatch and insisted talks were continuing over what a spokesperson described as his "evolving" role. Whatever the outcome I think the BBC could do worse than giving the job to Tatton Ranger and KOS member Darren Morris, who again appeared on BBC TV during the week when they visited Tatton for a piece about rutting deer, he seems to be their go-to man on this sort of subject! During the last series from Tatton it was broadcast live to millions of viewers, so he's bombproof; he'd also fit in well with Chris Packham who's also a well known lover of '80's rock bands - judging from his Facebook page Darren's a big fan of [New Model Army](#), so he's well qualified for the job although in this age of diversity targets who knows what criteria lurk in the BBC's tick boxes.

Don't forget, we have a meeting this Friday (28th) when [Paul Hobson](#) will be talking to us about "African Delights"

17/10/2016..... KOS field trip to Connah's Quay

The Deeside Naturalists' Society was formed in 1973 and a year later they approached the C.E.G.B. (now UNIPER) at Connah's Quay Power Station to ask if a hide could be located on their land overlooking the River Dee. Permission was granted and since then the reserve has evolved into a really well organised facility with five hides and an excellent Field Studies Centre. Security is taken very seriously and our KOS field trip on Saturday (15th) began at a locked barrier where we were greeted by Phil Hotchkiss the Chairman of the DNS who escorted us down to the Field Studies Centre where we met up with other members and were given an introduction to the Society, it's work and the Reserve.

Kingfisher. Connah's Quay
Simon Smith



The first bird on the day's list proved to be a Kingfisher, perched on a branch overhanging a pool outside the Centre, we saw it a number of times during the course of the day. As the high tide was at 11:15am Phil suggested that it would be best if we drove down to the West hide first and then visit the other hides later in the day, this we did and enjoyed great views from this impressive two storey tower that afforded uninterrupted views over the ash pool, the wetland meadows and right across the Dee estuary towards Burton and Parkgate, these two locations were initially hidden from view as it was still very misty, although the rain that greeted our arrival ceased shortly after the Hon. Secretary had donned his waterproof over-

trousers - we must remember that trick Derek!

The Kingfisher had followed us up to this end of the reserve and again showed well on the ash pool along with Coot, Moorhen, Shoveler and a nice Grey Wagtail; Reed Buntings, Meadow Pipits and Linnets were much in evidence as they commuted between the shrubbery surrounding the pool and a barbed wire fence on which the Kingfisher eventually alighted, just below the hide.

Two Great Crested Grebes and a few Cormorants fed out on the river whilst much further away Parkgate was now in view as the mist lifted and over the reedbeds we saw an unidentified Harrier and a probable Great White Egret, Little Egrets were plentiful but it was only recently that the first Great White was recorded actually on the Reserve. As high tide was reached the sun came out and in the distance flocks of Black-tailed Godwits put on a wonderful display, flashing grey and dazzling white as they twisted and wheeled over the estuary, there was no apparent reason for this behaviour as the tide was now beginning to recede, but perhaps the Peregrine perched high up on one of the pylons was making them a bit skittish!

On our last visit to Connah's Quay one of the highlights was the flock of Twite feeding in the car park, unfortunately this time we were a few weeks too early, apparently the birds were still feeding on aphids and wouldn't return until they'd exhausted this food source. There's an excellent article on the species [here](#). As the tide went out we made our way back to the Centre and enjoyed lunch in warmth and comfort (the Reserve is jointly managed by E.ON. and the DNS, apparently E.ON. pay the electric bills and as Phil is an electrician all the radiators work!.) Part two of the visit saw us spending some time exploring the three hides closest to the Centre, we added a few new species including Little Grebe, Goldcrest and 13 Greenshanks but by now the tide was receding quickly and there was little activity on this particular stretch of the Reserve. Our thanks go to Phil and his colleagues for their friendly welcome and allowing us access to this wonderful stretch of the Welsh coast.



Curlew. Connah's Quay
Simon Smith

The story of the Siberian Accentor on the Shetlands proved to be popular and things took an amusing twist last weekend. Apparently a group of twitchers chartered an aircraft to fly them up to Lerwick on the Monday (10th) at a cost rumoured to be £ 800 per person, what they didn't know was that there'd been an [unprecedented influx](#) and by Thursday two more had appeared, at Hendon in County Durham and Easington Yorkshire!! [Have look at what the newspapers made of it](#) no wonder people think birders are a bit weird - hundreds of old blokes who must surely all be fully paid-up members of [the DMC!](#) [NB](#)

Species seen at the Connah's Quay Reserve - October 2016

Kingfisher, Wren, Little Egret, Pied Wagtail, Goldfinch, Magpie, Curlew Carrion Crow, Herring Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Greater Black-backed Gull, Kestrel, Redshank, Wigeon, Coot Shoveler, Moorhen, Cormorant, Mallard, Dunlin, Black-tailed Godwit, Great Crested Grebe, Reed Bunting, Meadow Pipit, Linnets, grey Wagtail, Heron, Wood Pigeon, Buzzard Staring, Snipe, Peregrine, Skylark, Mute Swan, Dunnock, Pheasant, Greenshank, Blue Tit, Goldcrest, Little Grebe, {Harrier sp.} [✓ 42]

13/10/2016..... *The first Goldeneye of the season*

The recent run of easterly wind, much appreciated by residents of Mere, has produced some [remarkable records](#) from favoured hot spots, especially the Shetland Islands where species such as Black-faced Bunting, White's Thrush, Siberian Thrush and Brown Shrike have appeared, cumulating this week with Britain's first [Siberian Accentor!](#) Yellow-browed Warblers are widespread, even here in the west of the country, and three have been ringed in the past week at Woolston Eyes, other records have come from all over the north-west. Closer to home, in Mobberley, there's been a noticeable increase in Blackbirds over the past few days and this morning (13th) three small separate groups of Mistle Thrushes, only totalling 10 birds, passed overhead flying in a south-westerly direction. Yesterday (12th) we enjoyed a gentle stroll around Tatton Park (6km according to my [new phone app](#)) starting on Knutsford Moor (the Moor), as usual this was the most productive part of the morning; there was no sign of Cetti's Warbler, but we remain cautiously optimistic for next Spring, plenty of



Yellow-browed Warbler

small birds were feeding in the tangle of undergrowth and shrubbery - Great Tits, Blue Tits and Coal Tits, at one stage I thought I heard a Willow Tit call briefly but time and the rest of the troops were moving on so that will have to wait until more time is available. The back Moor pool was quite busy with Coot, Moorhen, Mallard, Tufted Duck, Great Crested Grebe and Gadwall all on show, we also had a quick glimpse of a Kingfisher and a Water Rail was calling discordantly from the *phragmites*.

Tatton main mere also had good numbers of wildfowl and we were able to add Shoveler, Pochard and a newly returned female Goldeneye to the list; we didn't do a count but earlier in the week Alan Booth had 110 Tufted Ducks, 20 Pochard and 10 Shoveler. Elevenses we taken in the Allen hide, Melchett Mere and the feeders were very quiet, just a group of 6 Egyptian Geese loafing on the waters edge giving us time to put the world to rights: the Hon. Treasurer and the Hon. Chairman enjoyed an in depth discussion about the latest offering from the RSC at Stratford-on-Avon (I did google it but it appears that the [RSC Website](#) as been hacked!) whilst the rest of us were more concerned with the continuing [problems of the England football team](#).

Sheila has lent me a copy of "The Heron" the magazine of the RSPB Macclesfield Local Group, they enjoyed a visit to Speyside earlier this year staying at the Grant Arms in Grantown-on-Spey, this is where we'll be based on our trip next June and the report makes [interesting reading](#); they had 112 species during the time they were there so I think we should make this our target for this much anticipated return to the highlands. Late news from Woolston - the Morgan hide has now re-opened and don't forget this Saturday's trip to [Connah's Quay](#) - 09:00 at Lilac Avenue.

Tatton : 12th October 2016.

Robin, Mistle Thrush, Wood Pigeon, Canada Goose, Carrion Crow, Nuthatch, Coal Tit, Blue Tit, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Blackbird, Wren, Coot, Moorhen, Mallard, Gadwall, Tufted Duck, Great Crested Grebe, Kingfisher, Water Rail, Black-headed Gull, Mute Swan, Heron Cormorant, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Shoveler, Pochard Jay, m Goldeneye, Pied Wagtail, Meadow Pipit, Goldfinch, Buzzard, Egyptian Goose, Grey Wagtail, Magpie, Great Tit.

06/10/2016.....*The first returning Redwings*

A friend of mine is a keen amateur astronomer, a pastime that, in his case, entails sitting out in the garden after sunset observing the night sky. Like many of us he's now past his sell-by-date but his hearing is still very good and he phoned me on Sunday(2nd) to report detecting the [thin calls of migrating Redwings passing overhead](#), these were the first of the Autumn and I heard a steady stream as I ventured outside shortly after he'd contacted me. Over in Crosby Barrie Armit had two Redwings on Sunday, followed by a count of 253 the following day, he also had 11,421 Pink-footed Geese leaving their overnight roost as a red dawn broke over the Liverpool Bay area. A few Redwings flew west over the fields of Mobberley this morning (6th) plus many Meadow Pipits and a steady trickle of Skylarks - Autumn is definitely here.



Across the other side of the Mersey Estuary from Crosby at Hoylake and again on the 2nd, Bob Groom and Jacquie Ledward recorded 240 Curlews at high tide as well as 1,000 plus Oystercatchers, 3 Grey Plovers, Bar & Black-Tailed Godwits and the usual small waders plus Common Scoter, 3 Sandwich Terns and a Peregrine falcon. The weather by then was atrocious with

heavy rain so they made their way to Burton Mere RSPB Reserve and it's sheltered hides where they enjoyed super 'scope view of a Curlew Sandpiper, but missed out on the Cattle Egret that has been around on the reserve for some time.

On Wednesday (5th) we paid a long overdue visit to Northwich hoping to hook up with the Spotted Crake that had been on Neumann's Flash for the past week or so. We didn't see it but there was a surprisingly good selection of waterfowl including 15 Little Grebes, Mallard, Gadwall, Tufted Duck, Pintail, Shoveler, Wigeon and even a female Scaup. Waders were well represented too, we had Snipe, Lapwing, Ruff, Dunlin, Golden Plover and a nice flock of Curlew.

Members who were disappointed about missing the Crake might want to make their way over to Rostherne where another semi-rarity - a second winter Yellow-legged Gull can be seen in amongst the gull roost in late afternoon - now don't all rush at once!

Buzzard, Goldfinch, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Robin, Jay, Herring Gull, Magpie, Cormorant, Meadow Pipit, Pintail, Wigeon, Scaup, Mute Swan, Heron, Shoveler, Snipe, Lapwing, Little Grebe, Curlew, Gadwall, Kestrel, Ruff, Tufted Duck, Jackdaw, Wren, Long-tailed Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Blackbird Pied Wagtail, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Golden Plover, Sparrowhawk, Moorhen, Coot, Dunnock, Dunlin, Pheasant, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Carrion Crow, Mallard, Raven.

29/09/2016..... *Cetti's Warbler on the Moor!!*

[Last year](#) I wrote about the spread of Cetti's Warblers and how, for many years, we'd been anticipating their breeding on Knutsford Moor. Well I think we're almost there! Yesterday (28th) KOS member and County Recorder Hugh Pulsford caught a female Cetti's on the Moor during ringing operations, interestingly it was already ringed so this should provide some valuable information when Hugh receives details of where and when this initial ringing took place. Hugh also mentioned ringing no less than 40 Grey Wagtails during September and when he returns from a birding expedition to the South West at the end of October he'll provide us with an account of ringing activities on Knutsford Moor this year.



Last Friday (23rd) Bob Groom was in Tatton Park and was pleased to come across a passing Wheatear perching on thistle stalks in the open area near the Millennium



Cetti's Warbler September 2016 on Knutsford Moor - Hugh Pulsford

Wood plus a large flock of 55 Meadow Pipits at the same spot. Over the mere 3 Swallows and 4 House Martins, I had a single Swallow over Mobberley yesterday afternoon heading steadily south, we'll not see many more but the Martins may be around for a few more weeks - even into November.

A good gate on Friday (23rd) as a crowd of 32 dicked through the turnstiles at the Jubilee Hall for our first indoor meeting of the season; the Hon. Treasurer left with a smile on his face having taken £ 154 in entrance fees and memberships,

including contributions from 3 new Members - welcome to Bernard McLenaghan, David Eyes and (at last) all the way from the [Britannia Stadium](#) Darren Morris!

Our speaker for the evening was Keith Offord who gave a presentation entitled "Raptorphilia", proper ornithology - everything you needed to know about raptors, delivered in a very professional way by a man who knows his subject and can present it in an effective and engaging manner. He will be returning to Knutsford shortly at the [next CAWOS meeting](#).

20/09/2016..... *Hobbies and Hilbre*

The current spell of unseasonably warm weather seems to be coming to an end with weather systems queuing up in the Atlantic ready to remind us that we're just a couple of days away from the autumnal equinox. Last Tuesday (13th) was the hottest day of the year with 34.4°C recorded in Gravesend, up here though it was a much more manageable 24°C and the day ended with heavy rain and a [spectacular lightning show](#). The following day (14th) I joined Bob Groom at the local Hobby site and for two hours we enjoyed memorable views of the two juvenile birds as they fed on a ready supply of flying insects, building up their reserves before migrating south for the first time (probably within the next ten days). The "record shot" was taken by Steve Collins on Saturday (17th), Steve also provided me with the image of Rostherne's Great White Egret that was first seen last Wednesday (14th), as far as I know it's still there and spends most of its time in the reed bed in front of Mere Covert, across the far side of the reserve from



Juvenile Hobby Sept. 2016 Steve Collins

the obs.

It was another fine day on Sunday for our trip across the sands of Dee to Hilbre Island, unfortunately circumstances dictated that most of the regulars were unable to make the journey so it was a party of only four stalwarts that followed the tide out to the island, not the smallest ever turnout (I remember three of us once enjoying a trip to the Point of Air some years ago) but nevertheless quite disappointing. Assuming a [normal distribution](#) one day no one will appear (I'll let Mark or Geoff calculate the odds!).

The [Burbo Bank](#) wind farm wasn't producing much electricity due to the very calm conditions



The Hon. Treasurer on Hilbre with his Collins Guide opened at "W" for waders

which of course affected the birds that we'd see during the four or five hours to be spent on the island. A steady stream of Swallows passed through during the day but only one Skua was recorded and we saw just two Sandwich Terns when normally there would have been plenty around, together with their Arctic, Little and Common cousins.

Waders were also well down in number - although Bob Groom, who hadn't walked across to Hilbre but had driven to Hoylelake for the high tide, had much better luck and reports "Close views of Curlew Sand, Sanderling, Bar-tailed Godwits, an enormous number of Dunlin, Ringed Plover etc.". Apart from the Curlew Sandpipers we had all those species but not in the numbers we'd become accustomed to over the years, at one stage a small flock of waders with Dunlin, Ringed Plover, Turnstone and a Sanderling settled on the rocks close to us giving excellent views, as did a passing Wheatear - just a couple of yards away - binocs not needed!

On the sea, and as the tide came in, the 'scopes revealed 100's of Common Scoters many miles away flying amongst the new area of wind turbines in Liverpool Bay, it's not yet known what effect the turbines have on the wintering Scoters and their bivalve prey, although some people seem to have been given lots of money to run computer simulations. Closer in a few Great Crested Grebes and Cormorants were feeding and a winter plumage Guillemot floated slowly past the island and around to the Middle Eye where Oystercatchers, Curlews, Dunlin and a few Bar-tailed Godwits were sitting out the tide.

On our way out to the island Phil Woollen, one of the ringers, passed us in his Land Rover and kindly offered to take us the rest of the way; we declined, but accepted the offer of a lift back after the high tide - it was quite an adventure. Phil had to return to West Kirby as soon as possible and followed "route number

3"; route 1 was apparently bumpy, route 2 very bumpy and as we found number 3 passed through the receding water right over the "bumpiest" bits - so we arrived back on dry land shaken but not stirred in double quick time ready for an ice cream as we sat on the promenade watching less fortunate birders struggling back around the Little Eye!

Chiffchaffs are singing again (more birds than ever this year) after their post breeding moult and are always a reminder that it's time for our first indoor meeting of the new season. This year we welcome Keith Offord with his talk entitled "Raptorphilia"; Keith is well-known on the lecture circuit and our skillful Lectures Officers have negotiated a very reasonable price with a top notch speaker, so see you on Friday (23rd), same time, same place.



Great White Egret Rostherne 2016 Steve Collins

Hilbre Island, September 2016

Magpie, Wood Pigeon, House Sparrow, Black-headed Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Common Scoter, Great Crested Grebe, Sandwich Tern, Wren, Oystercatcher, Dunlin, Ringed Plover, Redshank, Herring Gull, Cormorant, Curlew, Meadow Pipit, Heron, Turnstone, Robin, Linnets, Guillemot, Pied Wagtail, Wheatear, Sanderling, Bar-tailed Godwit, Little Egret, Swallow. [30]

Summer made a very welcome and timely re-appearance this week with temperatures up into the mid-twenties, just in time for the Tour of Britain cycle race as it passed through Knutsford and Mobberley on Tuesday (6th) and for our mid-week trip over to Burton Wetlands Centre the following day.

The race took part solely in Cheshire, passing through Tatton at about 1pm before heading through Ashley and Mobberley and then away into the Pennines before returning to finish in the park. The event attracted large crowds into the village and the route included [Smith Lane and Town Lane](#), part of the Mobberley 5K so residents were well used to seeing athletes passing through!



The reception Building at Burton was in Etihad mode, sparsely populated with plenty of empty seats, the 'scopes gave good views from there of a Green Sandpiper and three Greenshanks plus just two Snipe that took flight as two Marsh Harriers passed low over the pools.

Moving on to the Pool Screen we enjoyed great views of the 12 Spoonbills now resident on the reserve, currently they outnumber the Little Egrets that appear to have moved elsewhere, although they may well disperse during the day and return to roost at night.

In contrast to the reception building the Inner Marsh hide was chock-a-block, the recent excellent work done to attract waders by removing overgrown waterside vegetation and excavating muddy scrapes seems to have been successful with Ruff, Little Stint, Dunlin and eight Curlew Sandpipers on offer. Dave Butterworth eventually managed to get his 'scope set up and we had good views of all these species; unfortunately it's becoming more and more difficult to find a seat in these hides due to the activities of the new generation of photographers who seem to be reluctant to allow others a view as they spend hours dangling their equipment out of the viewing slots, waiting for Cartier-Bresson's [decisive moment](#). Whatever happened to

the Rolleicord and FP3?

Curmudgeon noun [ker-muhj-uh n] a bad-tempered, difficult, cantankerous person. I had to look that one up although the Hon. Treasurer. suggested I could have just used a mirror!

Natural England have done a good job at Rostherne removing the fallen tree blocking the path to the obs. and I was able to spend a pleasant couple of hours there on Thursday (8th). I met Steve Collins there and later Alan Booth arrived, we had Green Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper and a Little Egret, all on the sand spit where Rostherne Brook empties into the mere.

Species seen at Burton Mere. 7th September 2016

Canada Goose, Greylag Goose, Moorhen, Lapwing, Mallard, Sparrowhawk, Black-tailed Godwit, Heron, Shoveler, Teal, Greenshank, Coot, Snipe, Marsh harrier, Gadwall, Pied Wagtail, Green Sandpiper, Jackdaw, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Carrion Crow, Robin, Tufted Duck, Wood Pigeon, Kingfisher, Little Grebe, Long-tailed Tit, Chiffchaff, Wren, Goldfinch, Magpie, Spoonbill, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Buzzard, House Martin, Swallow, Ruff, Little Stint, Mute Swan, Avocet, Rook, Dunnock, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Dunlin, Stock Dove, Curlew Sandpiper [47]

05/09/2016.....*Interesting news from Wales*

Sheila Blamire's excellent picture of the Little Tern taken at Gronant Point during our short visit there in July has yielded some interesting information. As you can perhaps make out the bird has a colour ring on it's left leg, not very distinct on this reduced image but on the original Sheila could read quite clearly the letters XAC.



She has received the following information from David Norman who is studying the species at Gronant.....
"XAC was originally ringed as a chick at Gronant on 5 July 2009 then trapped on the nest on 25 June 2015 as a breeding male. This is a decent age but Little Terns are quite long-lived with the British record-holder still alive at almost 22 years old (<https://app.bto.org/ring/countyrec/results2015/longevity.htm>) and I have had dead ringed birds in the Gronant colony at 8, 9, 11 and 19 years of age. I started colour-ringing last year as part of the EU LIFE+ project (<http://www.rspb.org.uk/whatwedo/projects/details.aspx?id=362308>), a 5-year, multi(11)-partner project to try to understand more about the species and to try to increase its UK population. We have also started trapping adults on the nest at the late stage of their incubation using walk-in traps, but just did two in 2015 and two in 2016. For decent visibility the colour-rings have to be taller than the metal rings so they are suitable only for adults and the larger chicks: I colour-ringed 20 chicks and two adults in 2015, and 34 chicks and two adults in 2016. One of the main points of it is to look for colour-rings

in future years, for recording site-fidelity or colony interchange, and age of first breeding which is still not well known (probably 3 but possibly 2 in some individuals). XAC had actually been seen in June this year by one of the site wardens but it was very encouraging that you were able to see it and take such a clear photograph....."

It looks like I've incurred the wrath of the spirits at Rostherne with my comments about Slow Birding and the Dull Men's Club as, after Bob Groom's rare Flycatcher on the reserve, the Observatory has been cut off from the rest of the world by a huge branch that has detached itself from the main trunk and fallen over



the approach path completely blocking it and crushing the railings running alongside. I hadn't heard anything about this when I travelled over to Rostherne last Tuesday (30th) so I had no idea when it had happened and did a quick check to ensure no one had been using the path as it came crashing down! I was joined by a chap from Natural England (the warden was on holiday and this was his boss) he said his men could tackle most things but this, at first glance, was too big a job for them. I've not heard anything since so I don't know when the obs. will re-open.

Our Swifts have moved on and they will be followed shortly by the last of the Swallows, probably by the third week of the month although many can still be seen at dusk flying in to roost in the maize fields either side of Moss Lane; Bob Groom had "many hundreds" there last Tuesday (30th) where they were attracting the attention of two Hobbies.

Last night (4th) Bob heard a Greenshank calling as it passed over Queensway - this reminded me of Boyd's words from this month in 1938 *I heard a Greenshank just before midnight flying and calling over the house. "Sailing comfortably through the windy stars" like [Richard Middleton's ghost ship](#).....* Boyd's book *The Country Diary of a Cheshire Man* is essential reading for Cheshire birdwatchers and [still available for a few quid!](#)

27/08/2016..... *Species number 219 at Rostherne!*

I was planning to recommend Rostherne Mere as an ideal venue for members of "[The Dull Men's Club](#)" but that idea has been put on hold with the exciting news that on Friday morning (26th) Bob Groom discovered what will be the 219th

species on the all-time Rostherne Mere bird list (if it is accepted) . Bob was watching a mixed flock of Warblers and Tits feeding in the undergrowth in front of the observatory close to the waters edge, when his attention was drawn to a small bird markedly different from any of it's companions and he immediately identified it as a Red-breasted Flycatcher. In his notes in the logbook Bob mentions the birds small size, it's noticeable eye ring and especially the bright white area at the base of the tail. This is not a difficult species to identify, we've seen them on Lindisfame on a number of occasions and Bob has also seen them on the continent and even in Morocco so I don't think there will be any problem getting this fine record accepted by the Cheshire rarities committee.

Bob returned in the evening and I joined him there to see if we could re-locate the bird; we were unsuccessful but we enjoyed a few quiet hours birding ending with a spectacular sunset (*below*)



Wednesday (24th) found us once again at the Woolston Eyes Reserve; things were a bit quiet - relatively speaking of course, some of the species we see on a regular basis there would cause palpitations at Rostherne! A Goosander had been seen from the

bridge earlier in the day but there was no sign of it when we arrived, although a Kingfisher there gave good prolonged views just below us as we crossed over onto number 3 bed.

Black-tailed Godwit and Lapwing numbers are increasing nicely, amongst a large group of the latter Derek located a Greenshank that seemed quite settled and showed well when all the waders took flight as a passing Sparrowhawk spooked them.

I know some people who read this section of the website live abroad so they may be interested to know that the Tour of Britain cycle race passes through our area on Tuesday 6th September and will be shown live on satellite TV all around the world [click here](#). The race passes through Knutsford twice during the day ending in Tatton Park; you'll even be able to watch as the riders pass through Mobberley - along Smith Lane and Town Lane - right past the end of our avenue!!



Species seen at Woolston 24th August 2016

Robin, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Cormorant, Black-headed Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Swallow, House Martin, Canada Goose, Kingfisher, Mute Swan, Woodpigeon, Mallard, Coot, Heron, Tufted Duck, Gadwall, Stock Dove, Moorhen, Black-tailed Godwit, Water Rail, Lapwing, Green Sandpiper, Buzzard, Greenshank, Little Grebe, Garden Warbler, Greenfinch, Shoveler, Carrion Crow, Sparrowhawk, Bullfinch, Blackbird, Willow Tit, Jay, Goldfinch. [✓ 36]

22/08/2016..... *Success for the Hobbies, return of the Goldfinches.*

In their book "The Birds of Cheshire" from 1900 [Coward](#) and Oldham tell us *in Cheshire the Goldfinch as a resident is rapidly becoming rarer, and has been exterminated in most districts. The reclamation of waste has curtailed its haunts and persistent persecution by bird-catchers has been instrumental in further reducing its numbers. Immigrants are occasionally seen in Winter in districts where the bird is extinct as a breeding species.....*



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How things have changed, it's now probably the most numerous of the finches to be found in the county. This week they've returned to our garden in force - adults and juveniles, emptying the feeder at a great rate of knots! We don't use nyger seeds, they are quite happy with sunflower hearts as are the other species that visit us, currently Blue and Great Tits, Greenfinches, House Sparrows, Nuthatches and the Coal Tits all taking the food directly whilst Blackbirds, Chaffinches and Dunnocks Hoover up the surplus dropping to the floor.

Bob Groom's Hobbies are progressing nicely, last Tuesday (16th) the nest contained two well-grown young, so it won't be long before they fledge, perhaps they'll be seen at the Swallow roost along Green Lane where Bob had two Hobbies last Sunday(14th).

Great Crested Grebes have bred successfully in Tatton, on Sunday (21st) Derek noted a pair with five young on Melchett and later a second pair with two tiny chicks at the Dog Wood end of the main mere. Darren Morris tells me that the log book in the Allen hide has had to be removed due to the usual

unsavory entries but a smaller replacement has been placed out of sight on the ledge above the logbook table.

Ken and Shirley Davies have returned home after their Scandinavian adventure, but not for long, Ken tells me on Saturday they'll be taking the ferry to Dunkirk before moving onward to Bavaria and perhaps Italy!

Ken has sent me a brief resume of their route in Scandinavia and a list of the species seen.

At last chance to send you the list of birds, in roughly the order we found them as we travelled from home to Harwich, to the Hook of Holland, through Holland, Germany, Denmark. Ferry to Bergen, up the west coast of Norway, right up to the North Cape and back via Finland. Down the east coast of Sweden, over to the island of Gotland, back to mainland Sweden, onto the island of Oland, down to southern Sweden, ferry to Germany and back via Northern Holland and home 6,405 miles not counting the many ferries we went on.

Species list Scandinavia 2016 - Ken and Shirley Davies

Red Kite, Carrion Crow, Rook, Jackdaw, Woodpigeon, Collared Dove, Kestrel, Pheasant, Buzzard, Blackbird, Starling, Pied Wagtail, Magpie, Swallow, House Martin, Chaffinch, Redstart, Swift, House Sparrow, Greenfinch, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Egyptian Goose, Mute Swan, Coot, Tufted Duck, Common Tern, Black-headed Gull, Cormorant, Great Crested Grebe, Grey Heron, Great White Egret, Mallard, Shelduck, Greylag Goose, Spotted Redshank, Bluethroat, Reed Bunting, Reed Warbler, Willow Warbler, Cuckoo, Song Thrush, Chiffchaff, Long-tailed Tit, Jay, Blackcap, Lesser Whitethroat, White Stork, Yellowhammer, Lapwing, Oystercatcher, Treecreeper, White Wagtail, Redwing, Sparrowhawk, Marsh Harrier, Redshank, Skylark, Goldfinch, Sand Martin, Yellow Wagtail, Meadow Pipit, Linnet, Hooded Crow, Tree Pipit, Moorhen, Barnacle Goose, Avocet, Shoveler, Black-tailed Godwit, Curlew, Common Sandpiper, Common Gull, Little Tern, Golden Plover, Ringed Plover, Herring Gull, Teal, Lesser black-backed Gull, Brent Goose, Greenshank, Wigeon, Spoonbill, Red-necked Grebe, Siskin, Arctic Tern, Eider Duck, Raven, Wheatear, Bullfinch, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Snow Bunting, White-tailed Eagle, Ruff, Great Black-backed Gull, Spotted Flycatcher, Brambling, Rock Pipit, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Willow Tit, Canada Goose, Black Woodpecker, Osprey, Tree Sparrow, Green Woodpecker, Three-toed Woodpecker, Kittiwake, Pink-footed Goose, Pied Flycatcher, Goosander, Crane, Whooper Swan, Garganey, Arctic Skua, Slavonian Grebe, Velvet Scoter, Puffin, Razorbill, Guillemot, Gannet, Shag, Pintail, Whinchat, Red-backed Shrike, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Grey Plover, Crested Tit, Rosefinch, Grey Wagtail, Stock Dove, Green Sandpiper, Turnstone, Grey Phalarope, Dunlin, Short-eared Owl, Whimbrel, Hen Harrier, Bar-tailed Godwit, Black Redstart, Dunnock, Tawny Owl, Little Grebe, Wren.

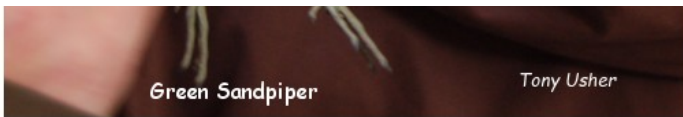
I think that totals 152 with a lot more we could not fully identify either looking at or by song.

12/08/2016..... *A mid-week trip to Woolston Eyes and some slowbirding*

It's always a bit strange, given the time of the year, to hear so much bird song coming from the reedbeds at Woolston Eyes, but it was there on Wednesday (10th)- Reed and Sedge Warblers, Common and Lesser Whitethroats and even Cetti's Warbler could all be heard in short snatches as we climbed up the steps to the first elevated hide. There's a simple explanation though - it's a looped recording being played (quite loudly) by members of the [Merseyside Ringing Group](#) to



lure birds down to the area where their mist nets have been set up deep in the reeds. As well as the normal passerines that can be expected in August, over the past few days they have caught and ringed five Green Sandpipers, in addition to the normal metal BTO ring these individuals have had ~~green~~ orange rings fitted to their right legs and it's interesting to note that, of the seven Green Sandpipers seen from the Morgan hide on Wednesday, none were colour ringed, giving an indication of the number passing through the area on their way to warmer climes. The water level on number 3 bed has been lowered to attract waders and it appears to be working, as well as the Green Sandpipers the bed held eight Snipe, two Dunlin, three Common Sandpipers, 13 Black-tailed Godwits, 65 Lapwings and I believe that the first Greenshank of the



season was seen yesterday (11th). All three species of hirundines were moving through, a single Sand Martin, a handful of Swallows together with large numbers of House Martins skimmed low over the water, whilst higher up just one Swift heading rapidly

south, perhaps the last one we'll see before April next year.

Most of the Black-necked Grebes have left the reserve, just three well-grown young birds remained and I presume they'll be on their way before too long; the feeders, brimful with sunflower seeds, were attracting very large numbers of Greenfinches, they must have done well this Spring, lets hope they steer clear of the Trichomonosis that has been responsible for a rapid decline in numbers over the past few years.

In complete contrast to the busy comings and goings at Woolston, on returning from Rostherne two weeks ago I dug out my copy of "The Birds of Rostherne Mere" [1976] by Ron Harrison and David Rogers. It reminded me what a special place it was for us at that time before the WWI and mobile phones. So, just for old times sake, I paid a visit later the next week and quite enjoyed it!

It took some time to get into "Rostherne Mode", things are so far away compared with Woolston etc. but there was plenty of time (I spent 2 hours there) and was the only visitor during that period.

There was a Green Sandpiper where Rostherne Brook enters the mere and a small passage of Swifts at around 11:30am. I filled in the "tick list" and was surprised to see that a Greenfinch on the feeder was a rare record - only 4 records in 2014 according to the excellent annual report.

["Slow Birding"](#) I can recommend it!

If anyone hasn't a copy of the book you're welcome to borrow it.

Species seen at Woolston Eyes 10th. August 2016

Woodpigeon, Robin, Cormorant, Mute Swan, Mallard, Tufted Duck, Coot, Wren, Gadwall, Bullfinch, Blackbird, House Martin, Common Whitethroat, Moorhen, Black-headed Gull, Magpie, Lapwing, Swift, Heron, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Reed Warbler, Green Sandpiper, Carrion Crow, Snipe, Dunlin, Black-tailed Godwit, Sand Martin, Common Sandpiper, Teal, Little Grebe, Blue Tit, Pied Wagtail, Black-necked Grebe, Greenfinch, Dunnock, Great Tit, Willow Tit, Jay, Sparrowhawk, Shoveler, Great Crested Grebe, Swallow, Buzzard, Stock Dove, Canada Goose, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Long-tailed Tit, Chaffinch, Greylag Goose. [✓ 51]

01/08/2016..... A great evening at Rostherne



An encouraging turnout of 22 members and friends on Friday (29th July) for our third and final evening trip of the season, this time to the Rostherne Mere Reserve where we met up with Phil Dell and Steve Collins, two recent recruits to the KOS and honorary reserve wardens, who were to give us a conducted tour - a rare and very welcome privilege.



We split into two groups, I went with Phil who led those with wellies on a complete circuit of the mere whilst Steve guided the remainder on a shorter route taking in the observatory plus the Whitley hide and surrounding reed beds.

We walked down the steep slope to the waters edge following in the footsteps of generations of Cheshire bird watchers - Coward, Boyd, Hedley Bell, Samuels and our own Bill Mulligan their ageing black and white portraits still adorn the walls of the observatory. A reminder to us current birders of our own mortality!

We always knew that this was never going to be the best time of the year to visit Rostherne for birds, and indeed this was the case. Nesting is now complete so there was very little in the way of song and the wildfowl were in eclipse plumage, the Canada Geese and Greylags are currently completely flightless whilst their flight feathers are replaced. There was though some colour and activity, an Oystercatcher dropped in along the lakeside and a Kingfisher powered along low over the mere; a bright flash of opal blue.

Phil had warned us it would be a bit muddy in places and it certainly was in Harpers Bank Wood, this is where the Cormorants nest and this year

there were no less than 160 pairs - have you any fishing friends? Best not tell them about this!

The woodland of Mere Covert was quiet, except for a singing Stock Dove and short bursts from a Chiffchaff and a Reed Warbler as we made our way around the reed beds at the eastern end of the mere before meeting up with Steve's group back in the observatory. Despite covering less ground they'd had quite an exciting time with sightings of a Raven, a Hobby hunting dragonflies and, best of all, a Cuckoo! The BTO is doing a lot of work with Cuckoos, they're fitting tiny satellite transmitters to the birds which allow their movements to be followed over a period of years [\[click here\]](#) amongst many other things it's been shown that most adult Cuckoos have left Britain by the end of June and begun their migration back to Africa leaving their offsprings to fend for themselves before following them weeks later. So Friday's bird was probably a juvenile bird and three quickly taken "grab shots" by Steve seem to confirm this; perhaps it was brought up by a pair of Rostherne's numerous Reed Warblers. 42 species was not a bad total given the time of year and our thanks go to Phil and

Steve for their time and effort which made for such an enjoyable evening.

On his way home Steve stopped off in Pavement Lane and reports seeing two of the Barn Owls and as a bonus the pair of Little Owls that are also resident in the area, often heard but rarely seen. In Tatton Park, whilst walking Patch, Tony Ellis came across a singing Grasshopper Warbler in the plantation just to the west of the Old Hall, probably the only record for the park this year.

Species List - Rostherne Mere July 29th 2016. Goldfinch, Mistle Thrush, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Wood Pigeon, Great Crested Grebe, Tufted Duck, Kingfisher, Mandarin, Grey Heron, Pheasant, Greylag Goose, Canada Goose, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Cormorant, Oystercatcher, Mute Swan, Blackbird, Coot, Chiffchaff, Swallow, Long-tailed Tit, Stock Dove, Carrion Crow, Jay, Starling, Reed Warbler, Chaffinch, Cuckoo, Hobby, Raven, Nuthatch, Buzzard, Sparrowhawk, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Jackdaw, Black-headed Gull, Pochard, Mallard, Magpie, Robin.[42]

28/07/2016..... *More Flycatchers & a trip to Burton Wetlands*

Following the welcome news that Spotted Flycatchers had bred in Tatton Park Alan Booth contacted me with another sighting, this time two birds seen on Gleavehouse Lane in Mobberley. I saw them there a few days ago, I'm assuming they've nested somewhere in the vicinity. Further down the lane where it joins Pavement Lane I met up with KOS members Bob Groom and Sue and Jim Middleton who were watching for the Barn Owls, eventually and just as the last bit of daylight was lost we saw no less than four birds in the vicinity of the nest box.



Yesterday (27th) we paid a visit to the RSPB's Burton Wetlands Reserve on the Wirral via the [Gordale Garden Centre](#) where the [National Exhibition of Wildlife Art](#) was again being held. There were some beautiful items there but inevitably stuff like that comes at a price, nevertheless last year 45% of the exhibits found a new home and I believe one of our number will be returning over the weekend with their chequebook! I made do with a coffee in the restaurant and I must say it was excellent.

A pair of Spotted Crakes have bred at Burton and the reception building was much more crowded than usual as people waited patiently for the appearance of one of the adults or the single youngster that seems to have survived. In due course there was a rush to the 'scopes as a small dark coloured bird appeared in amongst the vegetation across the far side of the lake and was considered by those that know about these things to be a juvenile Spotted Crake. I did manage a few seconds on Sheila's

'scope but had only poor views as it slipped into the reeds, earlier in the morning a juvenile Water Rail had also been seen at the same spot - so you pay your money and take your choice!

Other birds were more obliging though and both Common and Green Sandpipers fed in front of the building giving an opportunity to compare these two easily confused species - until they take to the air of course! A little further out a substantial flock of Black-tailed Godwits is building up nicely and amongst them we noted Snipe, Dunlin and a number of Ruff; Bob Groom and David Cogger had arrived before us and prior to our arrival had seen four Spoonbills - they seem to be increasing steadily, there were seven at Burton in June and we may see successful breeding in Cheshire before too long. If Spoonbills do breed they'll be following in the footsteps of those other recent colonisers, the Little Egrets that are going from strength to strength. From the viewing screen on the way to the Inner marsh hide there was a flock of 34, brilliant white plumage contrasting nicely with a moulting Spotted Redshank that roosted peacefully amongst them. Not much from the Inner Marsh Hide where we had lunch, but en route Geoff and Sheila had taken a detour up to the viewing point overlooking the estuary and ticked off Great White Egret - species #49.

Don't forget tomorrow evening (Friday 29th) Phil Dell and Steve Collins will be giving us a tour of the Rostherne Reserve, meeting in the Natural England car park opposite Egerton Hall at 6.30pm. We'll be splitting into two groups - group one will confine their activities to the Whitley hide and the Observatory: anyone ~~daft~~ fit enough will join group two for a complete circuit, Phil recommends wellies and plenty of insect repellent for this group!

Carrion Crow, Black-headed Gull, Black-tailed Godwit, Teal, Gadwall, Green Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, Coot, Mallard, Little Grebe,, Moorhen, Woodpigeon, Goldfinch, Greylag Goose, Canada Goose, Avocet, Barnacle Goose, Ruff, Magpie, Pied Wagtail, Buzzard, Stock Dove, Reed Warbler, Reed Bunting, Spoonbill, Blue Tit, Garden Warbler, Blackbird, Swallow, Water Rail, Spotted Crake, Willowchaff, Wren, Long-tailed Tit, House Martin, great Spotted Woodpecker, Marsh Harrier, Spotted Redshank, Little Egret, Great White Egret, Lapwing, Oystercatcher, Wigeon, Song Thrush, Snipe, Starling, Common tern, Jay, Dunnock.[49]

19/07/2015..... *Spotted Flycatchers nest in Tatton*

Friday's evening walk around the Rostherne Mere Reserve has been postponed and re-scheduled for the following Friday (29th) as the original date clashes with the RHS Flower Show in Tatton, the event always causes traffic chaos in the local area and beyond.



Mike Duckham, originally from Timperley and now living in Llandudno, visited the park on Monday and found two families of Spotted Flycatchers one behind the Rostherne Lodge and a second in the copse of Sweet Chestnuts on the left along the walk to the house. Bob Groom counted a flock of 110+ Swifts over Tabley Hill on Saturday (16th), in our part of Mobberley I think we've only one pair this year but they seem to have been successful, the family are very active in the evening - two adults and three young judging by their behaviour. The same noisy scene just down the road in Shaw Heath but on a larger scale, at the weekend I counted at least 50 birds overhead,



© Richard Steel 2009

many family parties, screaming youngsters in pursuit of their parents creating most of the noise.

On Sunday (17th) Bob was birding in Mobberley and had extended views of two Hobbies that eventually made off in the direction of Spring Wood, they've nested there in the past but this is the first record of birds in that area this Summer. I spent a couple of hours there last night with no luck although I had good views of a Barn Owl hunting over a newly mown meadow, presumably one of the birds from Pavement Lane.

I received my copy of the 2015 Woolston Eyes Conservation Group Annual Report this week, it's an excellent publication and it's well worth paying just that little extra on top of the annual subscription to receive a copy of your own. The report covers Dragonflies, Butterflies and each bird species recorded but surprisingly not the flowers to be found (there is a list on the website from 1996) [a job for you there JS!].

Some may not agree with the inclusion of Ruddy Duck in the species list, apparently the birds that successfully reared young in 2015 were the last breeding pair in the country - unless you know differently of course!

I've updated the "places" page of the Gallery section of the website [\[click here Frank\]](#). If members have any photos of their favourite spots I will gladly add them. I hope to do the same for the local bird pictures, I'll include some of the current images taken in the 70's, they are of historic interest as I know they were originally printed on [Ilford colour paper](#). There are millions of bird pictures on the internet of course but I hope to include just those taken by KOS members (amongst whom we have two Countryfile calendar winners) so I'm expecting a deluge of images before too long!

10/07/2016..... *Black-necked Grebes do well at Woolston*

A good start to our mid-week amble around Woolston Eyes with a Kingfisher seen from the bridge leading to the reserve, peering down into the water we could see plenty of tiny fish so the birds won't be going short of food. This is traditionally the quietest time of the year nevertheless Chiffchaffs, Song Thrushes, Blackcaps, Common Whitethroats and single Reed



© Richard Steel 2013

Warblers and Reed Bunting were all still in song. Tufted Ducks are late nesters and from the raised viewing platform a family party consisting of the female and seven tiny young were feeding in the nearest stretch of water just below the platform. It'll be a miracle if they all survive such has been the amount of predation this year, Lesser Black-backed Gulls and Buzzards have been the main culprits, Brian Martin the reserve recorder told us that a brood of nine Shelducks was wiped out in just a few days. One of a number of solutions to this problem being considered involves the use of [non-lethal] lasers; apparently they have been tested on the Gulls!

A second brood of seven Tufted Ducks could be seen from the Morgan hide as well as all three species of Grebe with young, of course at Woolston special attention is paid to the [Black-necked Grebes](#) as the reserve is a nationally

important breeding site for this species, they seem to have done well this year and Brian told us that nine pairs have produced young.

On Tuesday evening (5th) Bob Groom and Jacquie Ledward had good views of the Barn Owls that are nesting in Mobberley along Pavement Lane, Bob also told me that the Hobbies have returned to their (undisclosed) nest site a few miles from Knutsford, on Wednesday evening, during a brief visit, he saw both the male and female birds, these are the only pair I'm aware of in our area at the moment but I'm sure there must be others, if so they'll become more conspicuous as the season progresses.

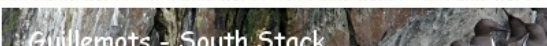
Ken and Shirley Davies continue making us all jealous as they continue with their epic tour of Scandinavia! Ken's latest email informs me that they are currently on Oland Island, just off the east coast of Sweden and now seem to be heading south. I'm sure we'll see some photos eventually (hint Ken!)

Wren, Chiffchaff, Magpie, Song Thrush, Wood Pigeon, Blue Tit, Chaffinch, Kingfisher, Mute Swan, Coot, Tufted Duck, Blackcap, Common Whitethroat, Long-tailed Tit, Bullfinch, Blackbird, Cormorant, Goldfinch, Reed Bunting, Gadwall, Teal, Pochard, Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Carrion Crow, Reed Warbler, Shoveller, Greenfinch, Moorhen, Great Tit, Greylag Goose, Canada Goose, Black-necked Grebe, Swift, Swallow, House Martin, Buzzard, Pheasant, Black-headed Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull. [✓41]

05/07/2016..... *KOS overnight trip to Anglesey*



We normally visit Wales a couple of times each year. Of late it's been only as far as Llandudno and the RSPB reserve at Conwy and it's some years since we ventured as far as the top end of Anglesey, due mainly to the amount of driving involved; at least five hours in total - too much in one day!. We therefore decided to spread this year's visit over two days with an



Guillemots - South Stack



Simon Smith

overnight stay at the [Gwesty Carreg Bran Hotel](#) in Llanfairpwll, located at the south end of the island, a place we'd used in previous years.

The journey from Knutsford to [South Stack](#) took just about two hours, passing through some very heavy rain close to the Conwy Reserve, but thereafter we were lucky with the weather and enjoyed mainly dry conditions for the rest of the trip.

Arriving at South Stack the first thing we noticed was the wind, it's an exposed spot and down below us the sea looked quite rough but it was possible to shelter in the lee of Ellin's tower and set up the 'scopes for a little sea watching. There were plenty of Gannets close to shore and in the mid-distance, alternating between black and white as they twisted in the wind low over the breakers - Manx Shearwaters, a species we don't see on every visit to the Stack but great to see them

on this occasion. As expected the cliff faces were crowded with Guillemots and Razorbills; a constant procession of birds coming and going with food for their young, apparently six pairs of Puffins have bred this year and those members of the party with the required amount of energy added them to the trip list after descending the steps as far as the bridge across to the lighthouse. Choughs have bred successfully again and they were enjoying the blustery conditions that continued all morning; Rock Piptits too were unaffected by the wind and were seen rising from the shelter of the cliffs in display flight two or three times but diving for cover when one of the resident Peregrine Falcons powered overhead - great views.

We had lunch at South Stack, either butties and flask or in the excellent RSPB cafe before driving the short distance to Holyhead harbour, parking on the quayside at the end of Turkey Shore Road. Here we added a few new ticks to the list, in particular the Black Guillemots that frequent the harbour, birds were seen in flight and also feeding. Summer or Winter this seems to be the place for this relatively rare species.



Peregrine - South Stack
Sheila Blamire

From Holyhead we took a 30 minute drive along the coast to [Cemlyn Bay](#), owned by the National Trust and leased by North Wales Wildlife Trust (NWWT) since 1971. Here we enjoyed some really good birding; depending on where you look for information there are up to 60 pairs of Arctic Terns, the same number of Common Terns and up to 2,500 pairs of Sandwich Terns nesting on the reserve! Making it the third biggest colony of Sandwich Terns in the UK.

All three species were busy feeding their young and there was a bustle of activity as the parent birds flew in carrying sand eels (*Ammodytes tobianus*) one at a time, passing them over and immediately off they went again for more!

As a bonus Sheila located a handsome looking Mediterranean Gull in amongst the thousands of terns and we were all able to get good views of this still rare, but rapidly increasing species through the 'scopes.



Sandwich Tern - Cemlyn Bay
Simon Smith

The following morning (3rd July) after an excellent breakfast at the hotel we resumed the trip with a pleasant drive along the bottom end of the island to [Penmon Point](#), a peaceful and picturesque spot with views across to Puffin Island and, in the far distance, Llandudno and the Great Orme. The weather was great, temperature in the high

teens, a few fluffy white clouds and a clear blue sky - ideal conditions to just sit and relax (we're good at that in the KOS!)

Telescopes revealed clouds of auks flying around the island, too far away for specific identification but closer to us we did see Eiders and Black Guillemots passing along the coast as well as more Sandwich Terns moving north carrying food. Eventually we moved off and did a walk through the dunes, overgrown with vegetation and home to Willow Warblers, Chiffchaffs, Blackcaps, Bullfinches, lots of Linnets and a family party of Common Whitethroats. The little [Pilot House Cafe](#) on the point proved irresistible for a late morning coffee for just about everyone in the party and of course a further period of just sitting down and chilling out was called for before we headed off to our final destination - Gronant Dunes and the [Little Tern colony](#).

It doesn't look far on the map but it took well over an hour to reach Gronant - it's on the A548 just past Prestatyn, next to the Presthaven caravan park, from where a path of about 600m leads to the observation platform. We added Sedge Warbler, Moorhen and Skylark to the list on the way to the platform from where we could see the terns feeding their young, most of which were hiding away from predators in the marram grass adjoining the nesting area. This year things have gone very well and the volunteers on duty told us that 172 pairs have produced 375 eggs and a total of 199 chicks have hatched; I believe 133 of these have now been ringed by David Norman. One of the wardens guided us along the beach to a safe spot where we could get a closer look at the birds, still from a distance but viewing was possible from there just using binoculars rather than the 'scopes. This has been a real success story and congratulations are due to all concerned - a great way to end our little expedition into Wales!

Our thanks are due to Frank Dearden for organising the accommodation. On the surface a straightforward job but I know there were problems with cancellations and also with the fact that hotel had changed hands in between us booking and our arrival but we had the right man for the job - thanks Frank!

We're fortunate at the moment in having a number of competent photographers in the KOS. Two of these Sheila Blamire and Simon Smith have sent me a selection of their images taken over the weekend for inclusion on the website. Those I didn't use have been put into an album which can be viewed by [clicking here](#) (those with no attribution are mine)



Sheila Blamire

Swallow, Linnet, Chough, Jackdaw, Gannet, Herring Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Manx Shearwater, Kittiwake, Meadow Pipit, Rock Pipit, Dunnock, Swift, Razorbill, Guillemot, Fulmar, Cormorant, Raven, Peregrine, Puffin, Pied Wagtail, Greenfinch, Oystercatcher, Magpie, great Tit, Black Guillemot, Black-headed Gull, Stonechat, Grey Heron, Sandwich Tern, Sparrowhawk, Wren, Collared Dove, Blackbird, Buzzard, Pheasant, Mute Swan, Little Egret, Kestrel, Woodpigeon, House Martin, Shelduck, Arctic Tern, Mediterranean Gull, Canada Goose, greylag Goose, Curlew, Red-breasted Merganser, Common tern, Chiffchaff, carrion Crow, Chaffinch, Song Thrush, Nuthatch, Goldfinch, Mallard, Reed Bunting, Eider, House Sparrow, Common Whitethroat, Willow Warbler, Blackcap, Bullfinch, Jay, Blue Tit, Robin, Sedge Warbler, Moorhen, Skylark, Little Tern, Ringed Plover, Starling.[✓73]

24/06/2016..... *A memorable evening in Mobberley*

About an hour before kickoff tonight (24th) it didn't look too promising for our evening walk around the fields of Mobberley as we endured yet another downpour, something we've had to get used to over the past few weeks as the month



Yellow Wagtail, Mobberley
Steve Collins

threatens to be the wettest June on record. Fortunately by the time we met up on Mill Lane the rain had passed over and the walk was completed in pretty benign conditions. From Mill Lane we headed south along footpaths through fields of oats, barley, maize and potatoes (to be used for Walker's crisps - helping to keep Britain fat!) as far as Pedley Brook where we then swung west, across the stream to Springwood Farm and eventually, via [Gleave House Farm](#), back to the cars.

The route, of just over three miles, was a bit rough and boggy in places but everyone finished in one piece, including Sue's grandson, 7 year old Jayden, complete with his own binoculars and bags of enthusiasm; let's hope he joins us again, we could do with some young blood!

There seemed to be good numbers of Swallows feeding over the first of the big fields, this year housing acres of barley, and Geoff Blamire (minus 'scope on this occasion) picked out a superb male Yellow Wagtail perched on top of the ripening crop. (see picture taken tonight). There were two birds, both collecting insects, sometimes eating them and at other times dropping out of sight; perhaps feeding fledged young?

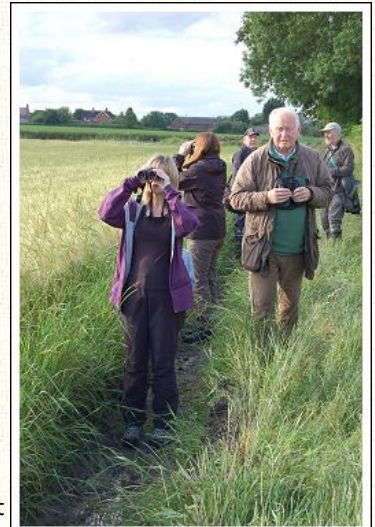
Making our way across a maize field (on the designated path of course) we were serenaded by two Skylarks that appear to be nesting amongst the crop, they should be safe there as it won't be harvested until much later in the year.

Moving into the area we've always known as Fox Harbour (and shown as such on 19th century maps) there were still some species in song including Blackbird, Reed Bunting, Chaffinch, Chiffchaff, Yellowhammer, Common Whitethroat and an encouraging number of Song Thrushes but unfortunately the Sand Martin colony was deserted once again.

No sign of Spotted Flycatchers at Springwood Farm this year, in fact the ivy the pair used previously had died off for some reason, but there were plenty of Swallows nesting in the outbuildings and a male Grey Wagtail posed nicely for us on the wires leading up to the farm.

On Tuesday (21st) I'd done a recce of the route and been lucky enough to come across a Barn Owl hunting over the fields in between Springwood Farm and Pavement Lane Farm, it was carrying prey to a nest box and I was pretty confident we'd be able to see it tonight, but it hadn't read the script and failed to appear! We did though note a singing Linnet just along the lane from where we were waiting for the afore mentioned owl.

The light was beginning to fade now but there was enough to see a single Swift passing over in a southerly direction and just before it set the sun appeared briefly from under the clouds providing a spectacular end to another pleasant evening out in the company of a very agreeable group of friends.



Chaffinch, Blackbird, Collared Dove, House Sparrow, Swallow, Magpie, Jackdaw, Carrion Crow, Pheasant, Song Thrush, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Yellowhammer, Yellow Wagtail, Pied Wagtail, Dunnock, Tree Sparrow, Skylark, Kestrel, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Mallard, Robin, Coot, Chiffchaff, Wren Whitethroat, Starling, Goldfinch, Jay, Reed Bunting, Buzzard, Grey Wagtail, House Martin, Mistle Thrush, Linnet, Swift - [✓32]

14/06/16.....*KOS Field Trip to Leighton Moss RSPB*

We were lucky with the weather on Sunday (12th) for our KOS field trip to [Leighton Moss RSPB Reserve](#), the weather people were predicting heavy showers but in the event we saw no rain until we were leaving for home in late afternoon.



The new "[sky tower](#)" was our first port of call, it affords great views across the whole reserve and would be an ideal place to watch the Marsh Harriers and Bitterns should they put in an appearance, unfortunately both species were conspicuous by their absence! An immature Harrier was seen in the afternoon from the public hide but apparently Bitterns haven't nested now for



Marsh Tit - Leighton Moss
Sheila Blamire

three years and efforts are underway to persuade them to remain on the reserve and breed after wintering in the area. There wasn't much to see on what water remains but a nice flock of 116 summer plumaged Black-tailed Godwits flew in accompanied by a Ruff, also in magnificent breeding attire - it posed quite nicely and everyone had good views through Sheila's 'scope. Both Reed and Sedge Warblers were in song, hidden from view, amongst the towering reeds alongside the paths as we made our way down to the Tim Jackson and Grisedale hides but, probably due to the low water levels, there

was little to see from the hides apart from a Little Egret that was feeding in front of the Jackson hide. Perhaps it was our recent visit to the similar habitat to be found at the Ham Wall reserve in Somersset, an area that was teeming with birds, that made this part of Leighton Moss seem to be very much the poor relation.

Lunch was taken on one of the wooden tables at the rear of the visitor centre, close to the bird feeders which were attracting a number of species including a family of Marsh Tits that posed well for the photographers in the party. Derek

couldn't be with us unfortunately, but as it was so close to his birthday and he would normally treat us to an ice cream he phoned to say that I should help to perpetuate this welcome tradition and treat the troops in the appropriate manner and he would be reimburse me in due course. So we were able to toast the Hon. Sec. with a tub of ice cream rather than something a little stronger, although I think a nice drop of red would have been cheaper than the RSPB ice cream!!

The route to the public hide has been improved by the construction of a very impressive wooden walkway through the reed bed, this eliminates the need to walk along the busy road before turning right onto the causeway. As well as the previously mentioned Marsh Harrier, from the public hide we recorded Kingfisher and Water Rail; good numbers of Swifts and a handful of hirundines fed overhead and as we made our way back to the cars a lone Willow Warbler was heard in full song close to the new walkway.

Our final destination were the hides overlooking Morecambe Bay; a Peregrine falcon passed over as we made our way over the fields - probably one of the [Warton Crag birds](#). No Avocets have nested this year due to [problems with a sluice gate](#) but there were a few about to add to the day list. We were also able to add species such as Redshank, Curlew, Skylark and Shelduck plus four Spoonbills that performed well in front of the Eric Morecambe hide, our final tick of the day was a Cetti's Warbler, singing loudly just to one side of us bringing the list to 62 species - quite respectable.



Spoonbill - Richard Steel

Chiffchaff, Chaffinch, Goldcrest, Nuthatch, Dunnock, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Collared Dove, Coal Tit, Wren, Goldfinch, Magpie, Reed Bunting, Oystercatcher, Mallard, Black-tailed Godwit, Ruff, Lapwing, Sedge Warbler, Little Egret, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Wood Pigeon, Swift, Black-headed Gull, Coot, Great Crested Grebe, Gadwall, teal, Greylag Goose, Swallow, Blue Tit, Bullfinch, Song Thrush, Robin, Reed Warbler, Mute Swan, Moorhen, Grey Heron, Buzzard, Great Tit, Greenfinch, Blackbird, March Tit, Marsh harrier, Kingfisher, carrion Crow, Water Rail, pied Wagtail, Jay, House Martin, Canada Goose, Great Black-backed Gull, Willow Warbler, Peregrine Falcon, Avocet, Spoonbill, Starling, Shelduck, Redshank, Skylark, curlew, Cetti's Warbler.

10/06/2016..... Visits to Burton Mere and Woolston

Ken and Shirley Davies seem to be enjoying their Scandinavian adventure and continue to head slowly north along the east coast of Sweden. By last Sunday (5th) they'd reached the town of Soraker and report seeing Velvet Scoters (4pairs), Black Woodpecker, Three-toed Woodpecker and both Red-throated and Black-throated Divers during the day.

Meanwhile back here in the UK KOS members have been out and about, making the most of the current spell of good weather. Susan Middleton, Jacquie Ledward and Bob Groom enjoyed a very productive visit to the RSPB Burton Mere Wetlands Reserve on Saturday (4th) and Bob kindly sent me an email summerising their day's birding.

Jacquie, Sue and I visited Burton Mere today and had wonderful views of no less than seven Spoonbills, also a female Marsh Harrier was almost constantly in view, despite being mobbed by all and sundry. We heard and saw Cetti's Warbler and had great views of several Sedge and Reed Warblers. Redshanks and Snipe were displaying repeatedly. At one point I counted well over 200 Black-Tailed Godwits from the Marsh Covert Hide and there were at least another 50 or 60 near the observatory and IMF hide. Spotted Flycatchers were visible from the car park. There were an incredible 70+ Avocet chicks (let's hope most survive) plus many adults Despite not seeing some 'obvious' species (like Sparrowhawk, Kingfisher and Great Spotted Woodpecker) we managed a respectable total of 60 species between us. A very good day indeed..... BOB



Geoff and Sheila Blamire followed in their footsteps on Tuesday (7th.), they found that, unfortunately, the flycatcher's nest had been destroyed by a squirrel but saw most of the other species mentioned by Bob. Talking to Colin Wells, the reserve warden, Sheila found that the staff have put up an anti-predator fence around the area containing the pools nearest the information centre and more than 130 pairs of waders are breeding; Lapwings, Avocets, Redshank and Snipe plus Shovelers (rare in Cheshire). They are planning to put up a similar fence around the original IMF pool next year, as well as a big new hide overlooking this area; this will be accessible to all visitors to the Reserve.

Derek Pike reports that eight Lapwings were on the big field at the north end of Lilac Avenue, two of these appeared to be incubating eggs. We met here on Wednesday morning on our way to Woolston Eyes, it was

great to hear a Skylark in full song over the field, just a short walk from Knutsford town centre!

Things have become quieter at Woolston as the breeding season progresses: on the water Canada Geese, Coots, Moorhens, Mallards, Mute Swans, Black-headed Gulls, Gadwall, Great Crested Grebes and Black-necked Grebes all had young, Brian Martin the Woolston Eyes recorder told us that there were now three families of Black-necked grebes on the reserve.

On Tuesday (7th) just before 9:00pm I watched a Barn Owl hunting over the rough pasture next to Pavement Lane Farm in Moberley, apparently they are using one of the nest boxes at the rear of the small field where the highland cattle are kept.

Don't forget this Sunday 12th June we have our KOS field trip to Leighton Moss, leaving the Tatton Street car park at 08:30am

Species seen at Woolston Eyes on 8th June - Song Thrush, Greenfinch, Heron, Common Whitethroat, Blackbird, Wren, Blue Tit, Jay, Coot, Greylag Goose, Blackcap, Chaffinch, Chiffchaff, Wood Pigeon, Black-headed Gull, Reed Bunting, Gadwall, Teal, Mute Swan, Tufted Duck, Pochard, Mallard, Little Grebe, Shelduck, Goldfinch, Great Crested Grebe, Shelduck, Goldfinch, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Cormorant, Bullfinch, Reed Warbler, Buzzard, Shoveler, Canada Goose, Little Egret, Magpie, Black-necked grebe, Sedge Warbler, Blackbird, House Martin, Swift, Swallow, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Lapwing, Kestrel, Pheasant, Oystercatcher, Little Ringed Plover [49]

01/06/2016..... *A morning in Derbyshire*

Barrie Armit's adventures in Canada are now at an end and he should now be on his way home with 200+ species under his belt; I'm hoping that he'll do a trip report for this website in due course.

On Monday (30th May) both Bob Groom and Geoff and Sheila Blamire paid separate visits to the area around Haydyn's Pool in Northwich and came up with similar lists. The pair of Garganey are still showing from time to time on the pool near the larger island whilst on the smaller island the Oystercatchers have enjoyed some success, Geoff and Sheila saw at least one youngster in company with one of the adults that appeared to be still incubating the remaining eggs. Blackcaps, Chiffchaffs, Common Whitethroats plus Reed, Sedge and Garden Warblers were all in song and Geoff and Sheila heard the Cetti's Warbler from the vegetation near Carden's bridge.

On Wednesday (1st June) we found ourselves once again heading for the hills, this time to the [village of Bonsall](#), hidden away in the Pennines, just a short distance from the town of Matlock and, before the arrival of ex-KOS members Alison Lea and Mark Eddowes, famous only as the venue for the annual [World Championship Hen Racing competition](#) at the Barley Mow pub in the centre of the village!



Alison and Mark's house lies just up the road from the pub; a beautiful new building constructed using traditional materials at the bottom of a steep slope with a large terraced garden that will keep them busy for a long time! Alison kindly provided refreshments before we set off along a route prepared by Mark that took us through an area known as Horsedale, out of the village, up a wooded valley that eventually opened out into steep-sided meadows containing Buttercups, the increasingly rare Meadow Saxifrage and lots of other flowers that needed the expertise of John Somerville to help with their identification!

Blue Tits, Great Tits and House Sparrows were busy feeding young, Mark had counted 7

Blue Tit eggs in one nest box and five chicks successfully fledged. The weather was overcast and it was quite cool and windy as the path climbed higher. Plenty of Swallows and House Martins were seen but surprisingly no Swifts, they do seem to be in short supply this year. Common Whitethroats, Willow Warblers, Chiffchaffs, Blackcaps and Garden Warblers were all still singing and eventually the rattle of a Lesser Whitethroat was heard in the distance. We walked for about an hour before eventually returning along the same route, pausing to watch a fine male Redstart which gave good views as we passed through its territory in an old stone building close to the path.

We ended our visit at the splendid little [Fountain Tea Rooms](#) in the centre of the village before driving back into Cheshire after a very enjoyable morning's birdwatching. Many thanks Alison and Mark - with your permission we'll pay a return visit to this very civilised part of the world in the near future.



Blackbird, Magpie, Jackdaw, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Goldfinch, Collared Dove, House Sparrow, Mistle Thrush, Song Thrush, Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Swallow, Wood Pigeon, Great-spotted Woodpecker, Pied Wagtail, Wren, Blackcap, Carrion Crow, Garden Warbler, Bullfinch, House Martin, Dunnock, Common Whitethroat, Lesser Whitethroat, Chaffinch, Pheasant, Robin, Redstart, Goldcrest, Kestrel, Buzzard. [33]

29/05/2016..... *Evening trip to the Pennines*

Friday evening (27th) found us on the first of our KOS evening walks, on this occasion up into the Pennines, starting in the Goyt Valley before moving on to another location later. We'd visited the valley a couple of weeks previously (12th) on a mid-week walk but that was in the morning, this time it wasn't until 7:30pm that we set off (no less than 22 members - most encouraging!).

Predictably things were much quieter this time but it was a very pleasant evening with blue skies and no rain or wind, Curlews could be heard in the distance and much closer to us at least two Cuckoos were calling; a couple of times we had views of them flying - a pity we were in Derbyshire and not just over the border, I've still not seen or heard one in Cheshire this year.

Willow Warblers, Chiffchaffs, Song Thrushes and Wrens were all singing despite the late hour but Tree Pipits, Redstarts and Pied Flycatchers weren't heard although later in the walk some of the party watched a pair of Redstarts busily feeding young in a roadside Oak tree. Along the river Grey Wagtails were again present and on the shore of the Errwood reservoir a pair of Little Ringed Plovers were seen, there wasn't much activity but there's a chance they could be nesting there, it's an ideal location.



Time was marching on and the light was fading so, on our return to the cars, we drove out of the valley to another location hoping, optimistically, that we would hook up again with the Nightjars we'd seen 12 months ago. Our optimism paid off and after some time waiting silently in the appropriate spot (yes silently - not a word normally associated with the KOS!) a very soft "churring" was audible in the distance. Slowly it became louder and eventually one or perhaps two individuals were seen; better views than last year, at one time a bird perched in a dead tree further up the slope from where we were stood, silhouetted against the last light of the day, and staying long enough for the 'scopes to be focussed on it. As our old friend Gordon Yates

would have said - "it just doesn't get any better"!

No recent news from Barrie, now in the high Arctic of Canada but Ken and Shirley Davies have probably now reached a similar latitude in Norway where their trip list now exceeds 100.

Closer to home Derek and Jean has excellent views of up to five individual green Woodpeckers on a route taking them along Beech Walk in Tatton Park, their local stronghold.

Bob Groom and Jacquie Ledward visited a site in our area where Hobbies bred last Summer and were delighted to find that the birds have returned and were watched displaying over the trees that held their nest last year.

species seen on our evening walk 27 May 2016. Pheasant, Swift, Meadow Pipit, Red Grouse, Sparrowhawk, Willow Warbler, Mallard, Buzzard, Song Thrush, Cuckoo, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Chaffinch, Canada Goose, Cormorant, Wood Pigeon, Pied Wagtail, Little Ringed Plover, Curlew, Wren, Chiffchaff, Mistle Thrush, Great Tit, Blackbird, Goldcrest, Grey Wagtail, Redstart, Common Sandpiper, Woodcock, Robin, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Nightjar, Kestrel. - 32

24/05/2016..... *The trip to Somerset*

The KOS trip to Somerset went very well I've put the report on a separate page, [to read it please click here!](#)

On Sunday (22nd) our Tatton correspondent, Alan Booth had a Spotted Flycatcher and a Male Redstart at the far end of Tatton Mere Covert. Interesting records, I've not heard of any Spotted Flycatchers in the park for some time and the last Redstart record was in the 1980's when a pair nested at the Outdoor Centre, close to where the Sunday bird was seen!

Barrie Armitt's trip to the colonies continues and I can think of no better way to relay the news of his latest adventures than by reproducing his emails below!

14/05/2016 Leisurely day today..woke at 0500 to heavy rain and tent shaking in northerly wind...decided lie-in was in order...lay there trying to work out bird calls snug in the Rab 600. Cold day -10 ° C and f5 northerly made canopy searching tough..birds have sought sheltered areas so narrows the search down. Only 2 warblers on BBRC/Western Palearctic still to find : Wilson's Warbler and Louisiana Water thrush..latter unlikely as an early migrant and few in numbers here....no one else has recorded one so chances are slim. Seen 156 species so far and have until 1st June. Just missed Pelican because scanning a marsh and it was circling behind me. Some good birds though: 120 American Golden Plover, 5 Willets, 4 Least Sand., Semi-Palmated Plovers, Canvasback, Redhead, American Wigeon, Lesser Yellow leg, Green-winged Teal...all of which sound familiar to Cheshire birders as most are on the British list- one or two have even appeared within CAWOS area?. Will be in Pelee area until 24th then it's north to the boreal zone and the dreaded swarms of black flies...I have been warned many times but why the locals are getting so excited about a few flies escapes me- lack of blighty backbone if you ask me; will keep you updated.

16/05/2016 Seen 32 of the 36 adding Wilson's, Worm-eating and Mourning this morning. Connecticut is a late migrant and the last of them all to go through....no sign or reports of yesterday's bird. On day 14 of 30 so should add a couple more warblers....trip list is 168 and 2 places to visit on way back to camp...getting tougher to add new birds. Yesterday was hail and snow fell. ..Added Prairie Warbler and Pileated Woodpecker at Rondeau Park...few birds singing and didn't blame them. Sun today ? The Wilson's was penultimate North American warbler I had targeted and particularly satisfying as the one on Uist last autumn was co-found by non other than Roy Dennis ..purveyor of fine wellingtons to the gullible. Coffee break done. Enjoy Somerset

23/05/2016 Day 20 and it's hot. Warnings- always uttered with a knowing grin- about the swarms of flies awaiting me in Algonquin, have sent me out shopping for a 'bug' hat ...checked out the full suit version but not available in a continental cut...sartorial elegance wins out over loss of blood? Added Marbled Godwit to trip list this morning: trip now stands at 193. Remarkable how few warblers remain; they really do pass through in large numbers in a short time frame- 10 day period and then it's a trickle or nothing. However much remains and some birds are looking fantastic. Had 1300 Grey Plover yesterday that got up with 70 Bonaparte's Gulls and headed north...The former for the arctic tundra, the latter for the trees they nest in further north....gulls in trees: bizarre. Still trying to add wood warbler 33 of 36 to the list... have heard Connecticut Warbler singing 3 times but still no views. The Louisiana Water thrush was given a (p)(provisional) after I saw, heard and photographed a bird - wasn't sure and asked a few of the local birders to offer an opinion...con census was Northern. Hope the KOS trip went well and look forward to reading about it in due course.

14/05/2016..... *Lovely morning in the Goyt Valley.*

Summer seems to have arrived all of a sudden, the maximum temperature reached on both the 29th and 30th April was a chilly 8 °C but by last Sunday (8th) we were sweltering at 25.1 °C. The warmer weather may have encouraged the return of our Reed and Sedge warblers to Knutsford Moor at last, Alan Booth had his first of the year last Wednesday (4th) with 3 Reed and 2 Sedge in song. Also on the



Redstart - Steve Collins

4th. Stan Allen re-visited a Raven's nest he and his wife had discovered three weeks previously in Tatton Park, it seems to have been successful and contained three well-grown young.

On Wednesday (11th) we paid our first visit of the season to the Goyt Valley, despite a less than encouraging weather forecast, apart from some light precipitation on the road up to Pym Chair, we enjoyed a dry day, although there was little in the way of song until mid-morning when the sun finally appeared.

We parked up in the normal Errwood car park and set off up the steep slope at the rear before joining the path that runs along the side of the hill parallel with the road below.

Last year it was here that we'd watched and listened to a singing

Wood Warbler, unfortunately it wasn't around this time but a Spotted Flycatcher was present at the same location; this was the first of two sightings of this particular species, a pair were very active in the woodland (I think this is called Stake Side on the map) at the south end of our gentle morning's amble.

Tree Pipits started singing as the morning progressed, there appear to be quite a few singing males in the valley this Spring. We had our elevenses in the woodland by the side of the River Goyt where a pair of Grey Wagtails have set up shop and it was here that we came across our first pair of Pied Flycatchers, they were investigating one of the many nest boxes conveniently provided throughout the valley.

Walking back along the road newly arrived Common Sandpipers were very vocal sorting out their territories down below us where the river empties into the Errwood reservoir whilst in the roadside oaks we had remarkably close views of Redstarts and Pied Flycatchers, again examining potential nest sites. It was here Steve obtained these two excellent images! The final total was a modest 37 but we recorded 4 of the 5 specialities that were predicted, missing out on only the Wood Warbler: quality rather than quantity with memorable views of many species which is always something the troops appreciate!



Pied Flycatcher - Steve Collins

Rook, Goldfinch, Jackdaw, Meadow Pipit, Skylark, Chaffinch, Wren, Willow Warbler, Great Tit, Wood Pigeon, Swallow, Canada Goose, Song Thrush, Kestrel, Mallard, Curlew, Mistle Thrush, Pheasant, Common Sandpiper, Redstart, Greylag Goose, Spotted Flycatcher, Red Grouse, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Robin, Jay, Coal Tit, Goldcrest, Long-tailed Tit, Grey Wagtail, Blackbird, pied Flycatcher, Treecreeper, Blue Tit, Heron, Pied Wagtail, Tree Pipit. [37]

This is a busy time of the year for both birds and birders and I'm currently receiving emails and texts from KOS members scattered far and wide, so it's not always possible to distill all this information down into a short summary. So you're getting here a mixture of news and sightings!

Bob Groom has been on his travels again with another visit to Bulgaria, Bob appears to have found it rather disappointing due to bad weather, nevertheless he did manage over 100 species and if you [click here you can read his report](#).

Geoff and Sheila Blamire have a trail camera set up in their back garden and Geoff has uploaded a remarkable video to YouTube showing an unfortunate rabbit falling prey to a Tawny Owl - [click here](#).

Jacquie Ledward had 4 Black and 2 Arctic Terns at Budworth Mere on the morning of the 12th May, by the evening this had increased to 13 of the former. Black Terns have been recorded all across the area including Woolston Eyes where they've also had an unusual inland Turnstone and the Osprey that we saw last week seems to have become a permanent fixture. Tatton ranger Darren Morris reports a Black-necked Grebe on the main mere and a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker in the gardens of the Hall, both yesterday (13th)

News from abroad - Ken and Shirley Davies are in Denmark at the start of their Scandinavian adventure whilst even further away in Canada Barrie (The Lad) Armit now has 27 out of his target of 35 North American Warblers during his trip to Point Pelee, the southern-most mainland location in Canada -

Hi there Tony

Discovered some wifi! Big storm last night ... spectacular lightning show visible through tent...bit worried as I'm camped in a wood. Put the ear plugs in and slept like a baby... Saw the Prothonotary you mentioned..seen 27 of my target list of 35... Worm-eating just been reported so off shortly. Wed was the best day so far..regulars say the best fall-out since 1971. Excellent day. Good to see birds familiar to us in UK. .did a 2 hour session watching lake Erie this morning...Great Northern Divers , Mergansers ,Sand Martin and Common Tern mixing it with tiny dots of Ruby throated Hummingbirds coming in after 60 mile crossing.. Orioles, Kingbirds, Vireos et al landing tired after flight from the US. Fantastic to pick up tiny dots coming closer over the water and head for the trees at the tip.... High flying warblers mostly impossible for me to identify but there are some great local birders to help me out. Anyway,, Worm-eating Warbler awaits (fingers crossed)...hope the Goyt trip went well. Take it easy Baz

04/05/2016..... *It's all happening!*

There was much excitement on Saturday (30th. April) over at Woolston Eyes when the ringers caught a real rarity in their



mist nets. It was a White-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*), a North American species, common over there but previously recorded only six times in the British Isles! After processing the bird was released close to the Morgan hide where it was seen on and off for a few hours before moving on. Nevertheless, despite entry to the reserve normally being open to permit holders only, it was decided to give everyone a chance to see it should it return and a small charge was made for access to the reserve the following day; I believe £ 300 was taken, unfortunately the bird failed to re-appear.

We travelled over to Woolston this morning (4th) and enjoyed some great weather at long last with the mercury peaking at 17 ° C. in mid-



afternoon. Surprisingly we didn't see or hear a single Willow Warbler although Chiffchaffs and Blackcaps were present in good numbers and the first Common Whitethroats were very active, enjoying the perfect weather. We spent some time waiting for a Garden Warbler to show itself; just to confirm it's identity as it's apparently quite uncommon on the reserve, eventually it showed very well, in full song at the top of a small oak tree. In the meantime Sheila and Frank had made their way to the raised viewing platform and were delighted to see an Osprey

hovering over the far end of the reserve, it remained in view for only a short time before drifting off in a westerly direction. Before reaching the main hide (The Morgan) we heard our first Grasshopper Warbler of the season [reeling](#) in the distance, it wasn't very distinct but later on, our way out of the reserve, it was somewhat louder, although it remained unseen in deep cover. We enjoyed our elevenses in the Morgan hide, remembering to spare a thought for Barrie Armitt, who's now jetted off to Canada and had informed us that at that particular moment he would be enjoying his first morning's birding at [Point Pelee!](#)

Reed and Sedge Warblers were singing close to the hide, on the water Black-necked, Great Crested and Little Grebes were all present and a trickle of hirundines passed through plus one or two Common Swifts high over the reserve. 52 species in all, not a bad total, the final entry was a Cetti's Warbler heard briefly in song close to the footbridge.



Temperatures over the previous weekend had remained well below average with highs only in single figures. Migrating hirundines in considerable numbers spent their time wasting precious energy fluttering low over the local meres in search of newly emerging insects; at Rostherne Bob Groom counted 400 House Martins on the 1st of the month, whilst the following day at Marbury he had c 1000 hirundines, this time mostly Swallows. He also saw a single Black Tern over the mere whilst over at Tatton I had two Common Terns and Steve Collins reports that the long-staying Sandwich Tern can still be seen at the Acre Nook sand quarry in Chelford; an unusual inland record.

A little closer to home I watched a male and a female Wheatear in the new horse paddocks on the road up to Gleavehouse Farm, it's getting a little late now for "our" birds; could these be ["Greenland" Wheatears](#) on their way much further north to Iceland, Greenland or even Canada? I think we'll leave that to the experts!

species seen at Woolston Eyes - 4/5/2016 Buzzard, Wren, Greenfinch, Common Whitethroat, Great Crested Grebe, Chaffinch, Chiffchaff, Robin, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Bullfinch, Heron, Jay, Blackcap, Shelduck, Magpie, Kingfisher, Carrion Crow, Mistle Thrush, Mallard, Black-headed Gull, Reed Bunting, Cormorant, Osprey, Pochard, Tufted Duck, Gadwall, Canada Goose, Moorhen, Lapwing, Garden Warbler, Long-tailed Tit, Sand Martin, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Grasshopper Warbler, Black-necked Grebe, Reed Warbler, Sparrow Hawk, Dunnock, Mute Swan, Greylag Goose, Blackbird, Little Grebe, Swift, Wood Pigeon, Willow Tit, Sedge Warbler, Stock Dove, Greenfinch, Pheasant, Cetti's Warbler [52]

28/04/2016.....Roy Bircumshaw

Roy Bircumshaw died a few days ago after struggling with ill health for a considerable time. Whilst not a founder member



of the society he'd been around for many years and gladly volunteered to become Secretary of the KOS when Peter Perkins, who was first to hold the post, moved out of the area. He'd led an interesting life and possessed a huge vocabulary which he put to good use when thanking speakers to the Society's Friday evening meetings in his own unique, ebullient manner! We're fortunate at the moment having so many members who are prepared to spend much time and energy running the Society, especially the extended field trips, but this wasn't always the case and Roy often had to struggle on his own. We extend our sympathies to Roy's son Carl and his family, they've lost a father and grandfather and we've lost a good friend.

Roy's funeral will take place on Thursday 5th May at St. Cross Church at 1pm, followed by cremation at Altrincham Crematorium.

The present period of cold weather is dragging on far too long for the well-being of our wildlife; I managed a walk around the lanes of Moberley this morning before the conditions deteriorated

during the afternoon, the temperature as I write is rapidly approaching freezing again and hailstones are piled up against the back door after the latest downpour. Two pairs of Lapwings and a pair of Skylarks are nesting in fields adjacent to Smith Lane, they're on eggs and I fear for them if conditions don't improve quickly.

Wednesday was a similar sort of day but luckily we managed to complete our first circuit of runway 2 at the airport in relatively benign conditions, in fact it was quite warm in the sun - after all we are almost in May! This is a good location for Lesser Whitethroat and indeed we came across a singing male on the opposite side of the runway and it stayed around long enough for 'scopes to be set up and we all enjoyed close up views of the little chap. Also seen during the morning a single Common Whitethroat plus good numbers of Chiffchaffs and Willow Warblers, we watched one of the latter feeding in a willow sapling that was bedecked with catkins - it was finding plenty of food. Birds like this are more likely to survive the cold weather, unlike the hirundines and Swifts that rely mainly on flying insects for sustenance.

Alan Booth had a Common Tern this morning (28th) in Tatton and our man on the inside, Darren Morris, reports a Whinchat earlier in the week in one of the private areas of the park.



Blackcap, Swallow, Reed Bunting, Skylark, Kestrel, Buzzard, Common Whitethroat, Wren, Wood pigeon, Jay, Blackbird, Moorhen, Robin, Canada Goose, Chiffchaff, Goldfinch, Goldcrest, Linnets, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Blue Tit, Carrion Crow, Magpie, Pheasant, Bullfinch, Willow Warbler, Chaffinch, Lapwing, Nuthatch, Mistle Thrush, Song Thrush, Lesser Whitethroat, Great Tit, Long-tailed Tit. [33]

25/04/2016..... *Three new arrivals*

After a week of very pleasant Spring weather with temperatures in the mid to upper teens things have taken a downturn over the weekend and a large anticyclone in mid-Atlantic has come into play bringing us what could be a long period of cold conditions straight down from the arctic.



Lesser Whitethroat

Steve Collins

In Tatton Park yesterday morning (24th) it felt more like the end of February than the last week of April with a maximum temperature of only 7 ° C. this, and heavy showers, combining to give early migrants a challenge they could do without; let's hope it doesn't last too long.

New KOS member Steve Collins was out and about on Friday (22nd) exploring the area of Mobberley to the east of Springwood Farm and recorded Linnets, Yellowhammer and a singing Lesser Whitethroat at the fishing pit where the path meets the track that runs from Gleavehouse Farm to the Dun Cow pub, close to Ollerton crossroads. This seems to be an attractive location to the species - we've had them there for the past few Summers.

Alan Booth braved the weather early yesterday morning (24th) and was rewarded with the first Common Sandpiper of the season in Tatton, also there at least two Goldeneye remain on the main mere. I followed the same route later in the day hoping for Reed and / or Sedge Warblers on the Moor; no sign of either unfortunately but I still managed 36 species on the

route from the Moor to the bathing area and back. Prominent amongst these were healthy numbers of Chiffchaffs and Blackcaps with a lone Swift amongst the hirundines low over the main mere - my first of the year.

The Society's AGM on Friday went very smoothly, lasting only 12 minutes this year, not a record but not too onerous giving plenty of time for Sheila (and Geoff) Blamire to entertain us with their latest presentation "three months birding in Europe" - including mid-Winter trips to the continent in search of Vultures, Eagles and Wolves which could involve up to 12 hours in an un-heated hide with only a tin bucket for company!!

The main points to arise from the AGM were that the committee was seen to be a little top heavy and it was decided to reduce the number of members by two. Our excess of income over expenditure was £ 310, a much improved picture following three consecutive years of losses, most satisfactory!

For insurance purposes Frank Dearden has produced a risk assessment document covering both the indoor and outdoor activities that we enjoy as members of the Society. You may have noticed on our [new programme](#) that each field trip now has a designated leader; another insurance requirement but something that's easily done and shouldn't be too difficult to implement.

21/04/2016..... *More summer migrants*

On Wednesday (20th) KOS member Ken Davies heard a Cuckoo whilst playing golf at Delamere Golf Club, it was his first of the year having gone all 2015 without hearing one in Cheshire; this was the case for most of us Ken!

At the same time as Ken had the Cuckoo we were enjoying the beautiful weather in Northwich, we did a 5K circuit in an anti-clockwise direction around Ashton's / Neumann's flashes, over to Haydn's pool before returning to the cars via Carden bridge.

Amongst the first bird we heard on setting off from the Witton Mill bridge car park was our first Sedge Warbler of the year, it was a very active individual flying from the top of one willow to another, pausing on each for a few seconds allowing good views through the 'scopes. A short distance further on a second new one in the form of a Common Whitethroat, well hidden but an unmistakable song of course.

It's an excellent year for warblers and as we headed towards the first hide someone remarked that we were walking through a tunnel of song - with Chiffchaffs, Willow Warblers, Whitethroats, Robins, Goldfinches, Dunnocks, Blackbirds and Song Thrushes all playing their part in providing us with a very pleasant experience.

The water level on Neumann's is currently very high, a pair of Great Crested Grebes were displaying but the only island is completely submerged, it was here that we noted a single Swallow - the only hirundine of the morning.



© Richard Steel 2013

A pair of Garganey seem to be finding Haydn's pool to their liking, they've been there for more than a week now and have been seen copulating on a number of occasions. They showed well for us on the smaller of the two islands although there wasn't much action and they spent their time side by side dozing in the warm morning sun! On the bigger island an Oystercatcher was incubating eggs, a Green Woodpecker was seen under the Kestrel box on the opposite side of the pool and new species number three, a Reed Warbler, was singing to the left hand side of the viewing screen.

Walking along the path towards Carden bridge early butterflies were making the most of the conditions with Peacock, Orange-tip and a surprising number of Brimstones all in flight. Passing across the bridge and making our way up the path on the opposite side one and perhaps two Cetti's Warblers sang from the tangle of waterside vegetation rounding off a very rewarding mornings birding.

Don't forget tomorrow night (Friday 22nd) it's our AGM. It never lasts more than 15 minutes and no one will be press ganged into joining the committee, all the current members are willing to serve another year, of course if you feel you'd like to help out in any capacity speak up, new blood is always welcome! After this short event our Hon. Chairman Sheila

will be entertaining us with a presentation entitled "Three Months Birding in Europe" - sounds good Sheila!

Willow Warbler, Goldfinch, Carrion Crow, Magpie, Lapwing, Wren, Blackbird, Great Tit, Robin, Long-tailed Tit, Jackdaw, Sedge Warbler, Chiffchaff, Mallard, Tufted Duck, Greylag Goose, Common Whitethroat, Blue Tit, Coot, Little Grebe, Gadwall, Buzzard, Song Thrush, Wood Pigeon, Blackcap, Cormorant, Jay, Moorhen, House Sparrow, Collared Dove, Great Crested Grebe, Mute Swan, Shoveler, Swallow, Chaffinch, Mistle Thrush, Goldcrest, Dunnock, Shelduck, Garganey, Oystercatcher, Stock Dove, Green Woodpecker, Reed Warbler, Black-headed Gull, Pheasant, Heron, Cetti's Warbler, Great Spotted Woodpecker [49]

14/04/2016..... *A morning at Woolston and a surprise on the road to Middlewich.*

More Summer migrants are arriving by the day, on Tuesday (12th) Darren Morris had two Common Terns in Tatton Park over the main mere, perhaps they're the same two that spent some time with us last Summer when they were watched fishing on Knutsford Moor before flying off to the east carrying their catch, which made us think they were perhaps nesting locally. Also on the 12th two Common and one Arctic Tern were seen at Woolston Eyes, as well as a Ring Ouzel near the No4 bed sandpit pond and the first Common Sandpiper of the year. There was no sign of any of these birds yesterday when we visited the reserve, nevertheless there were plenty of others about on what seemed to be the first really spring-like day of the year with blue skies and a maximum temperature of 15 ° C recorded during the afternoon.

From the footbridge leading to the hides we noticed a pair of Shelducks below us on the banking where they're probably going to nest in one of the many rabbit holes at that location. A little further on our first Blackcap of the season was singing from the undergrowth, followed a short time later by a Willow Warbler; the first of many we heard during the



morning, it seems it as though it will be a good year for them and also Chiffchaffs - over 100 of the latter were recently counted on the reserve! As we stood on the raised viewing platform a Cetti's Warbler exploded into song just a few yards to one side of us, there are a few at Woolston but that's the first time we've actually heard one our regular mid-week visits.

There are currently seven Black-necked Grebes on the reserve, some were on view from the Morgan hide, but there was no evidence of nesting activity - it's perhaps just a bit too early. Also showing well were a pair of Mediterranean Gulls that looked like a pair rather than individual birds, they remained in close contact with each other throughout the time we were there. A female Marsh Harrier floated over the reedbeds at one stage causing a bit of a panic amongst the other birds, including the flock of 20+ Bramblings that are still frequenting the feeders along side the main hide.

This morning (14th) the little lady and I were driving towards Middlewich from the direction of Byley, just before we got to the bridge that crosses the Dane on the outskirts of Middlewich I noticed a large bird hovering over the river. Initially I assumed it was a Buzzard but as we got closer I could see it had well defined black and white markings rather than the usual wishy-washy appearance of most Common Buzzards. Luckily, just before the bridge, there's a lay-by used by the local fishermen and so I swung into there at speed managing to stop just before a large oak tree at the end and quickly exited the vehicle ignoring the torrent of abuse, not normally heard outside the Stretford End, from the passenger seat. I didn't have my binocs in the car but we were close enough to confirm my suspicions that it was an Osprey! It flew to one of those very tall electricity pylons where it remained for a few seconds before being mobbed by the local corvids and headed off north, in the general direction of Northwich and Knutsford.

Birds seen at Woolston Eyes - Chiffchaff, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Blackcap, Mallard, Robin, Magpie, Bullfinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Wood Pigeon, Heron, Starling, Willow Warbler, Song Thrush, Chaffinch, Coot, Rook, Wren, Black-headed Gull, Shelduck, Black-necked Grebe, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Cormorant, Jay, Tufted Duck, Teal, Gadwall, Canada Goose, Pochard, Greylag Goose, Great Crested Grebe, Reed Bunting, Pheasant, Sand Martin, Swallow, Cetti's Warbler, Carrion, Crow, Lapwing, Buzzard, Mediterranean Gull, Mute Swan, Little Grebe, Moorhen, Brambling, Dunnock, Marsh harrier, Willow Tit, Blackbird, Stock Dove. [50]

11/04/2016..... *A challenging morning on the Great Orme!*

Knutsford apparently enjoyed some very pleasant weather on Saturday (9th) with hazy sunshine and just the odd shower in the late afternoon. We were 70 miles away to the west enjoying the April KOS field trip to north Wales, walking the Great Orme above Llandudno during the morning and visiting the RSPB reserve at Conwy in the afternoon - the weather in Wales proved to be a little more changeable.

Following a pleasant ascent in the cars up the marine drive we parked in the usual place, first left after the "Rest-and-be-Thankful" cafe and up to the parking area at the top. The weather wasn't too bad to begin with, although ominous clouds were approaching over Conwy Bay, and we had excellent views of Stonechats, Wheatears and displaying Meadow Pipits as we made our way carefully over the Orme's famous [limestone pavement](#). Thereafter though things started to go downhill as the weather we'd seen over the bay reached us on the Orme; rain at first quickly changing to sleet, then to snow and finally hailstones before reverting to light rain driven into our faces on a strong westerly wind. These conditions continued as we descended the zig-zag path down to the marine drive and again as we struggled up to the lighthouse, past the cafe and back up to the cars (looking on Google Earth the ascent from where we joined the marine drive to the car park was 364feet - isn't that the height of St. Paul's Cathedral?). So we were cold and wet, some wetter than others,



my coat was soaked right through and I can confirm that [Nikwax](#) just doesn't work - at least not on my coat! Viewing was all but impossible as everyone's optics misted up although we did manage to add Guillemot and Fulmar to the day list, hopefully last Saturday was an exception and hasn't put too many members off the idea of the Great Orme walk permanently, it's a magical location.

Things were better down at the Conwy reserve and after a warm drink in the cafe we set off with renewed vigour around the perimeter paths. It was high tide, and it was a big one, there were plenty of waders roosting on the pools, mainly Black-tailed Godwits, Redshanks and Curlews; the Curlews looked to be in superb condition and gave great views through the 'scopes. Hirundines were passing through in large groups and the heavy rain earlier may have forced migrating warblers to seek shelter as the bushes were full of Chiffchaffs and Willow Warblers, a White Wagtail showed well on the short turf on one of the islands close to the second hide and near the information centre, underneath one of the feeders, a flock of House Sparrows - remember them?!

Meadow Pipit, Pied Wagtail, Wheatear, Stonechat, Linnet, herring Gull, Carrion Crow, Wood Pigeon, Goldfinch, Wren, Greenfinch, Cormorant, Great Black-backed Gull, Oystercatcher, Great Crested Grebe, Jackdaw, Fulmar, Chiffchaff, Blackbird, Guillemot, Robin, Starling, House Sparrow, Coot, Canada Goose, Swallow, Sand Martin, House Martin, Gadwall, Shelduck, Teal, Magpie, Mute Swan, Goldeneye, Tufted Duck, Redshank, Black-tailed Godwit, Curlew, Herring Gull, Dunnock, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Bullfinch, Willow Warbler, White Wagtail, Heron, Red-breasted Merganser, Little Egret, Moorhen, Mallard, Wigeon, Song Thrush, Greylag Goose, Shoveler. [54]

08/04/2106..... *Migrants flood in*

Chiffchaffs seem to be everywhere at the moment, yesterday on my daily walk around Mobberley I counted 10 singing males plus one in our back garden, Derek heard one on Knutsford Heath and on Sunday (3rd) there were five between



Knutsford Moor and the bathing area in Tatton. Also in the park, on the main mere, another Black-necked Grebe was present and I was pleased to see a Kingfisher flying up from the direction of the moor, they will be nesting now so it's worth taking a careful look at the banking, both on the mere and also Melchett, where they've nested in the past. I counted about 20 Goldeneye from the bathing area plus around 50 Sand Martins and a handful of Swallows a figure dwarfed by the 600+ seen yesterday (5th) over Budworth Mere by Bob and Jacquie! They also had a Peregrine and a singing Blackcap, I believe there are quite a few there already as well as the first Willow Warblers of the year.

Back in Mobberley I was out down Pavement Lane on Monday evening looking for Wheatears in the horse paddocks (one along Mereheath Lane last Thursday (31st March)), I had no luck with them but, as I was talking to two bird watchers from Plumley,

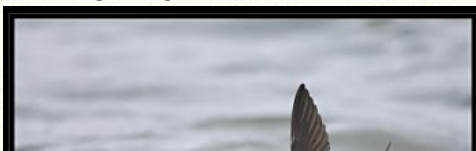
a Barn Owl appeared, quartering the field to the south of Pavement Lane before moving over to the field next to Pavement Lane Farm where we'd watched a pair last year. It stayed in view for some time and at one point flew within a few yards from where I'd stationed myself, just north of the farm next to the new gate. Unfortunately last night (5th) it failed to put in appearance at a similar time but the resident pair of Little Owls showed well with lots of calling plus copulation - a sight I'd never seen previously!

The picture below was kindly sent to me by Gwyndaf Roberts, a friend from the Knutsford Photographic Society, it was taken at Neumann's Flash on the 16th March and shows the pre-roost gathering or "murmuration" of Starlings that quite a few of our members were lucky enough to witness at the time. Gwyn seems to have arrived at a good estimate of the number present - "*by scrutiny of the images and using a grid method to calculate numbers I came up with 320,000*" - thanks Gwyn that's probably more accurate than our usual method of counting the legs and dividing by two - yes I know some of you have heard that one before, but not everyone has!



31/03/2016.....*More hirundines in Tatton*

Cool but dry conditions on Wednesday (30th) for a gentle stroll around Tatton Park. We actually covered 7.5K or about 4½ miles, beginning as usual on Knutsford Moor, then alongside the main mere before walking past the old hall to a position overlooking the Deer Park, followed by elevenes in the Allen hide and finally back to Dog Lodge via Dog Wood.



The single Chiffchaff on the moor from last week had been joined by others and we heard four singing birds before entering the park at the main gate. On the moor pool a pair of Great Crested Grebes were displaying and showing every intention of constructing a nest on the east side of the water; they



should be ok there as it's very boggy and probably safe from human interference.

The heronry in the Higmere plantation still has two occupied nests, if all is well they should now be well into incubation, although they appear to have begun nesting a little later than usual this year. Further up the main mere we came upon the hirundines, mostly Sand Martins with around 50 present, although it was difficult to count them as we were experiencing visible migration with birds arriving from the south and others towering up before leaving to the north. Our sharp-eyed Chairman picked out the first House

Martin of the season in amongst the Sand Martins and most of us managed to get on to it without too much trouble. Three Pintails are still in Tatton, a male and two females, they were swimming a few yards from the bank of the main mere and seemed unperturbed by human activity which makes you think that they're not true wild birds. Still, they are in good plumage, the male bird in particular was looking very handsome and they were a welcome addition to our day list.

We chose to walk up beyond the old hall because it's been there, on the open grassland, that Wheatears have been seen in previous years and this is the optimum time of the year for seeing them on their way north; but not this Wednesday unfortunately!

We ate our sausage rolls in the comfort of the Allen hide and as usual put the world to rights (no one ever seems to listen to us though!), the feeders had been emptied before the start of the breeding season so there was little in the way of avian activity but we were delighted to see the first Swallow of the year flying low over Melchett mere, it remained with us for a few minutes before heading north.

A Mistle Thrush was putting on a virtuoso performance in the small wood behind the hide as we left to make our way back, one of four heard in song - we had only one Song Thrush during the whole morning.

Canada Goose, Goldfinch, Jackdaw, Carrion Crow, Magpie, Blue Tit, Wood Pigeon, Dunnock, Nuthatch, Mistle Thrush, Chiffchaff, Wren, Robin, Blackbird, Coal Tit, Moorhen, Long-tailed Tit, Mute Swan, Mallard, Tufted Duck, Great Crested Grebe, House Sparrow, Great Tit, Song Thrush, Collared Dove, Goldcrest, Jay, Coot, Reed Bunting, Cormorant, Buzzard, Goldeneye, Black-headed Gull, Sand Martin, House Martin, Swallow, Pintail, Green Woodpecker, Meadow Pipit, Sparrowhawk, Raven, Pied Wagtail, Grey Heron, Stock Dove. [43]

26/03/2016..... A trickle of migrants

The large high pressure system that has dominated our weather for the past two weeks has weakened during the last 24 hours allowing an area of low pressure to move in from the west, bringing with it southerly gale force winds. So it should now become a little warmer and encourage more migrants to move north from the Iberian peninsula where they've probably been waiting for more favourable conditions.



Our mid-week walk took us around the Northwich Woodlands (Haydn's Pool, Neumann's Flash, Budworth Mere etc.) and we managed to accrue a reasonable total of 58 different species, but only two of those were spring migrants. A single Sand Martin was flying over Budworth Mere and, out on the sand spit across the mere from where we were viewing, Hugh Pulsford picked out a Little Ringed Plover - demonstrating the advantage that a decent telescope brings, but at £ 2799 for the latest Leica I think I'll be quite content to ensure I go birding with companions who have deeper pockets than me!!

A trip into Tatton, taking in Knutsford Moor, Dog Wood and up to the bathing area on Thursday (24th) produced just two Sand Martins but the following day (25th) as well as three Sand Martins a Chiffchaff was in song on the Moor and I was delighted to come across two Black-necked Grebes, showing nicely in the middle of the main mere. No doubt they are en route to Woolston but with a bit of luck they may hang about for a few days - they have in the

past. Yesterday's [Birdguides](#) sightings included 11 instances of this species so they seem to be on the move.

Also in the park there's a couple of very [vocal Green Woodpeckers](#), Dabchicks, Pochard, Shoveler, loads of Great Crested Grebes and up to 12 Goldeneye.

Further afield the first Osprey has returned to the Dyfi reserve, although not one of last year's successful pair. It's well worth a look at the webcam ([click here](#))- full HD and HiFi sound but perhaps best to avoid the associated chat room with it's bunny huggers and teleclappers! [\[NB\]](#)

20/03/2016..... The search for first Sand Martin

The main hide at Woolston Eyes (the Morgan hide) is as good as you'll find anywhere, being purpose built on the edge of number 3 bed, giving great views looking east over what is the main area of interest for visiting bird watchers. It's only drawback, as we found on Wednesday (16th) when we went in search of the year's first Sand Martin, is the very fact that it faces east and consequently when there's an easterly wind blowing in through the open windows it makes for uncomfortable viewing, especially when you're looking for a tiny bird only 5" long weighing in at 14g (about half of one ounce)!!

We did our best but it was to no avail, although birds had been already been recorded in the midlands they didn't yet seem to have ventured up as far as Cheshire.



The well-stocked feeders outside the hide were attracting some birds, but fewer than on our last visit; the Greenfinches seem to have dispersed but there were still a few Chaffinches and some well-marked Bramblings on view.

The first Black-necked Grebe returned to the reserve this week but there was no sign of that either.

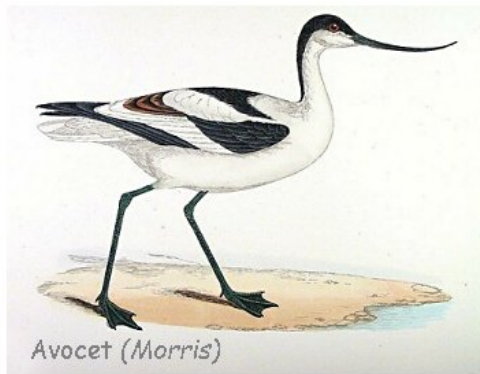
A few miles to the east in Tatton Park, ranger Darren Morris was determined to uphold the park's reputation for early migrants and was able to spend a few minutes during the day scanning the main mere for hirundines. Unlike last year though, when he was rewarded on the 16th, this time he was unlucky and inevitably two days later (18th) when he was away on a course the first Sand Martin appeared, low over the mere at 2:30 in the afternoon! I make that Rangers 0 - KOS 1 Darren!

Next on the Tatton list is Chiffchaff and I'm sure that in the next few days they'll be singing in Dog Wood and joined, not long after, by Blackcaps.

Herons are nesting again in Higmere plantation albeit in smaller numbers than in recent years. Tatton regular Roger Barnes reports two or possibly three occupied nests this spring.

14/03/2016..... *A few nice surprises at Burton Mere*

Conditions are ideal at the moment for early migration with a large high pressure system sitting firmly over the British Isles, so yesterday (13th), on our KOS March field trip to RSPB Burton Mere we were cautiously optimistic that the first Sand Martin of the year would put in a much anticipated appearance. Unfortunately it wasn't to be but there are already some in the country and I'm sure we'll have our first before the end of this week. By way of compensation though we did have two Chiffchaffs, the first - seen only by the Inner Marsh Hide and the second, in full song, in-between the reception building and the marsh covert hide. Was this a "true" migrant or one of the increasing number of birds that now over-winter with us?



Avocet (Morris)

There's been a build-up of Avocets on the reserve and up to 25 have been counted, we recorded 16, so it's looking encouraging for the coming breeding season. Incidentally if you'd like to learn more about Avocets in northern England then [CLICK HERE](#) this chap puts an amazing amount of effort into monitoring the population at Leighton Moss.

There was plenty of activity on the pools in front of the reception building where, as well as the Avocets, we had Kingfisher, Stonechat and a Spotted Redshank that was the subject of some discussion until it flew a few yards

and we able to able to positively ID it.

As we were making our way towards the inner marsh hide we were delighted to hear the song of a Cetti's Warbler from the reeds just in front of the first viewing screen and, on this occasion, we were able to watch it from a distance of only a few yards as it made it's way through the *phragmites* before flying off low across the water to a new location. A second bird was heard near the marsh covert hide, with a third in amongst a tangle of vegetation where the boardwalk ended. Colin Wells, the Reserve warden, told me that they had up to five males singing last year, with one pair probably attempting to nest.

Meadow Pipit, Raven, Herring Gull, Black-headed Gull, Blackbird, Chaffinch, Linnets, Greenfinch, Canada Goose, Greylag Goose, Barnacle Goose, Black Swan, Mute Swan, Mallard, Teal, Shoveler, Gadwall, Goldeneye, Redshank, Spotted Redshank, Black-tailed Godwit, Little Egret, Grey Heron, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Cetti's Warbler, Skylark, Carrion Crow, Rook, Jackdaw, Buzzard, Kestrel, Robin, Nuthatch, Tufted Duck, Moorhen, Coot, Lapwing, Wren, Avocet, Pied Wagtail, Oystercatcher, Shelduck, Kingfisher, Cormorant, Stonechat, Reed Bunting, Pintail, Dunnock, Brambling, magpie, Jay, Wood Pigeon, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Tawny Owl, Peregrine, Bullfinch, Stock Dove, Chiffchaff [60]

11/03/2016..... *Fish and Chips and a Short-eared Owl*

A reasonable count of 47 species yesterday (10th) on a mid-week trip across to Parkgate for the big spring tide (10.2m).



Unfortunately conditions were quite benign with no wind to push the water up as far as the sea wall and as a consequence the birds weren't forced into the air and seemed content to sit out the tide in relative safety.

We based ourselves at the [Parkgate Old Baths](#) and from there spent some time walking along the sea wall with the estuary on one side and the golf course on the other. From here we had our first raptors of the day with distant views of Marsh and Hen Harriers, a few Skylarks were in full song over the marsh and in the paddock behind the car park a small flock of Redwings in beautiful plumage were showing well in the slightly overcast but bright conditions.

A Peregrine falcon spent some time overhead as we walked up as far as the chippie, whilst on the way back we enjoyed watching a "ringtail" Hen Harrier before getting really good views of the first Short-eared Owl of the day as it slowly quartered the marsh close to the roadside

Our Middle East correspondent Barrie (the lad) Armit is off on his travels again and in response to my email about yesterday's proposed trip to the Wirral sent the following reply

Weather forecast looks promising as well - dry, cloudy, slight chance of a shower, some west in the wind... should have a good outing... the chippie is always good of course!

I'll be up near the Lebanese border by Thursday hoping for the last of a couple of wintering wheatear spp before turning south for the 450k wander to Eilat and raptor migration... 848 Steppe Buzzard, 649 Pallid Swift, 686 Steppe Eagle et al through the Low Mountain counting station today.... clear skies, sunshine... but, sadly, no fish and chips to compare with the Parkgate chippie.... lots of falafel though.....



The Lad

Have a good one
Baz



Black-headed Gull, Blackbird, Robin, Carrion Crow, Magpie, Moorhen, Wood Pigeon, Coot, Teal, Mallard, Chaffinch, Coal Tit, Cormorant, Wigeon, Dunnock, Little Egret, Grey Heron, Canada Goose, Rook, Sparrowhawk, Buzzard, Goldfinch, Redshank, Magpie, Wood Pigeon, Skylark, Jackdaw, Wren, Long-tailed Tit, Raven, Great White Egret, Wigeon, Peregrine, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Marsh Harrier, Hen Harrier, Short-eared Owl, Jay, Chaffinch, Reed Bunting, Redwing, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Starling, Shelduck, Pink-footed Goose, Oystercatcher, Curlew. [47]

. 01/03/2016..... *Signs of Spring*

When does the spring begin? For many people it's around the time of the spring equinox (20th March) when the days become longer than the nights, but for the Met. Office and for statistical convenience it's today - March 1st.....*The meteorological seasons consists of splitting the seasons into four periods made up of three months each. These seasons are split to coincide with our Gregorian calendar making it easier for meteorological observing and forecasting to compare seasonal and monthly statistics. By the meteorological calendar, spring starts on 1 March.....* Of course neither are correct because as we all know Spring begins in these parts when the first Sand Martin is seen over Tatton Mere, normally around the 14th of this month!



So we have a couple of weeks to go yet but our resident species can't hang about for that long and I was delighted to see (and hear) four Lapwings displaying over the big field opposite Smith Lane Farm in Moberley yesterday morning - [one of nature's most evocative sounds](#), whilst a couple of hundred yards further on a Skylark was in full song, just a dot in a clear blue sky. Let's hope these birds and any that arrive later are successful; they have every chance as the fields, lying either side of the Manchester to Chester railway line, are farmed in accordance with one of the governments agricultural environment schemes (AESs) in which farmers sign up to receive payments for environmentally beneficial actions that are outside their normal farming practices.

As well as potential nesting species the area has been attracting some winter visitors; Len Mason had 25 Linnets recently and I've seen a flock of Yellowhammers there - yes a flock! Well just 6 birds actually, but it's a good sign as the species is only just hanging on locally as a breeding species.

Birds with a long journey ahead of them before too long are still with us - the usual increase in Siskins is underway and they can be seen in good numbers, often in quite substantial groups feeding in waterside Alders and flocks of Redwings and Fieldfares seem to vary in size from day to day as they start to move north in anticipation of the warmer weather. Bob Groom had a Red Kite over Green Lane in Knutsford, perhaps the bird seen recently in Tatton, Derek Pike reports that there are now two Pintails on Melchett Mere in Tatton park and two Bitterns have been seen recently; one in the [Coward reedbed](#) at Budworth Mere with a second seen by Phil Dell at Rostherne.

22/02/2016..... *KOS Tatton Field Trip*

Stan Allen from Altrincham, a regular visitor to the park for the past 40 years, reports that he saw his first ever Red Kite in Tatton on the 14th February. There certainly haven't been many records recently, although some years ago a juvenile bird that had been ringed as a nestling in Wales spent part of the winter there, albeit mostly over the deer park, not an area generally accessible to the public. It can't be long before they decide that Cheshire's to their liking - after all they've now become a common sight in many other parts of the country.

Our KOS February field trip to Tatton took place last Sunday (21st), I had to miss it unfortunately but Frank Dearden has once more provided an account of proceedings



A party of eleven members and one dog set off in mild, overcast conditions for a circuit of Tatton Park.

Prior to assembling for the walk in Dog Lodge lay-by, Derek Pike started the day well with a flock of c.50 Lapwings over fields to the north of Northwich Road.

Our route took us along the east side of a very soggy Knutsford Moor and through Dog Lodge Wood to Tatton Mere. The wildfowl selection on the Mere included both male and female Goldeneye whilst above the trees to the east we had the welcome site of a hovering Kestrel.

The Allen Hide, overlooking Melchett Mere, provided a welcome mid-walk break and here we caught up with Bob Groom who was having a less energetic foray into the Park. He reported a Green Woodpecker on his way in, a bird we were to catch up with later ourselves when Phil Rowley spotted one flying across Beech Walk.

A probable group of thrushes seen on open ground to the north of the Allen Hide caused us to set off for a closer look. A large flock was revealed with Redwings and Starlings dominating along with a smaller representation of Fieldfares.

Our return walk took us around Melchett and down the western side of Tatton Mere to the Knutsford entrance of the Park where a flyby from a Sparrowhawk brought our outing to an appropriate conclusion.

Species seen - 37

Wood Pigeon, Canada Goose, Magpie, Black-headed Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Jackdaw, Dunnock, Wren, Robin, Blue Tit, Cormorant, Goldfinch, Carrion Crow, Nuthatch, Great Tit, Song Thrush, Buzzard, Tufted Duck, Mallard, Shoveler, Coot, Goldeneye, Pochard, Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Mute Swan, Moorhen, Shelduck, Kestrel, Mistle Thrush, Green Woodpecker, Fieldfare, Redwing, Starling, Jay, Blackbird, Sparrowhawk.

12/02/2016..... *The best laid schemes of mice and men*

The idea was simple enough; on Wednesday (10th) we'd spend the morning at the RSPB Burton Wetlands Centre and, as the 10 meter high tide pushed up the Dee estuary, the displaced birds would seek refuge on the reserve giving us some really good views as they waited for the waters of the Dee to recede as the tide ebbed. Did it and did they? Well no, not exactly, the tide certainly came in but unfortunately the birds hadn't read the script and failed to put in an appearance. In fact the pools in front of the Inner Marsh hide remained very sparsely populated - it was a bit like the Etihad on a bad day!



Black-tailed Godwits - C.F. Tunnicliffe

Still we didn't do too badly and ended up with a respectable total of 43 species for the morning. There was plenty going on in front of the reception building with good numbers of wildfowl, 12 Grey Herons and just a single Little Egret plus a flock of 100 plus Black-tailed Godwits that were very active, at one stage the

whole flock were feeding on the grassland next to the perimeter path which must have been very soft after weeks of winter rain.

A small flock of Siskins showed well in the alders overhanging the path and a group of 15 Linnets gave good views through the 'scopes whilst perched in an oak tree close to the railway bridge leading to Burton Point. We walked up to the point from the Inner Marsh hide, but again there was little to see and it was perishing so we made our way back to the sanctuary of the reception building where I felt obliged to treat everyone to a warm drink as it was my birthday!

Black-headed Gull, Blackbird, Robin, Carrion Crow, Great Tit, Magpie, Moorhen, Wood Pigeon, Blue Tit, Coot, Teal, Mallard, Chaffinch, Tufted Duck, Shoveler, Coal Tit, Black-tailed Godwit, Cormorant, Wigeon, Nuthatch, Dunnock, Kingfisher, Little Egret, Grey Heron, Canada Goose, Greylag Goose, Rook, Sparrowhawk, Buzzard, Linnet, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Snipe, Redshank, Magpie, Wood Pigeon, Skylark, Curlew, Jackdaw, Siskin, Wren, Long-tailed Tit, Raven. [43]

Signs of the coming Spring in Mobberley now with Blue, Great and Coal Tits, three Song Thrushes, a Mistle Thrush, Nuthatch, numerous Dunnocks and Goldcrests all in song plus today the first Chaffinch spluttering into life. Our earliest Sand Martin was recorded some years ago on the 8th March so we've not long to go until the "official" start of Spring!

3/2/2016..... *A rainy day in Northwich*

Unfortunately I was unable to travel to Northwich today due to being struck down by man 'flu, nevertheless a small but robust group assembled and, braving the weather, headed off in the direction of Haydn's Pool - here's how they got on

It was a very depleted team that assembled at Witton Mill Bridge car park - Dave Butterworth, Bill Killey, Derek and Myself. A small group but well balanced; two good talkers and a couple of good listeners.



Probably the best sighting of the day was recorded just a few paces from the car park when three Bullfinches(1m 2f) alighted on a bush alongside the path. They showed well for two minutes before flying across the open land to the west.

We took the usual route towards Haydn's Pool, stopping just below it to monitor the reedbed. There, Derek identified two clear bursts of song from a Cetti's Warbler. Conditions were very poor at this point, some 15-20 minutes of heavy rain, and no sightings were achieved. At Haydn's Pool itself the water level was very high and two Coot was the only birdlife evident on it.

Under a clearing sky we departed from our usual route to make a full circuit of Neumann's Flash. The water level here was again very high and the variety of birdlife much reduced from normal; the best sighting from the first (western) hide being a mixed flock of 40 Shoveler and Teal.

From the eastern hide the dominating sight was a flock of Black-headed Gulls resting on the water. A total of 370 were counted with a dozen showing well in breeding plumage at this early point in the year.

The total of different species seen in the morning was a lowly 22. *Frank Dearden*

Black-headed Gull, Blackbird, Robin, Bullfinch, Carrion Crow, Great Tit, Magpie, Song Thrush, Moorhen, Wood Pigeon, Blue Tit, Water Rail, Coot, Teal, Mallard, Cetti's Warbler, Chaffinch, Tufted Duck, Shoveler, Mute Swan, Gadwall, Coal Tit.

Thanks Frank just as our old English teacher liked it - clear and concise!

31/1/2016..... *Big Garden Birdwatch on Knutsford Moor and a trip to Woolston*



Friends of the Moor - Big Garden Birdwatch 2016



We've enjoyed better weather in the past for our annual get together with our chums from "The Friends of Knutsford Moor" as they participated in the RSPB's "[Big Garden Birdwatch](#)", it was only about 6°C with a steady drizzle for most of the time, nevertheless there was a good turnout and we came across some nice birds including Kingfisher and Treecreeper, these haven't been recorded before, in a grand total of 35 species - 7 more than last year. Fieldfares and Redwings were absent from this year's list but the Moor pool was proving to be attractive to more species than we've seen previously, including Pochard and Shoveler.

Number of birds seen at the same time - 35 species.

Blackbird(5), Black-headed Gull(70), Blue Tit (2), Canada Goose(2), Carrion Crow(2), Chaffinch(2), Coal Tit(1), Collared Dove(1), Coot(3), Cormorant(1), Dabchick(1), Dunnock(1), Goldfinch(1), Great Crested Grebe(2), Great Spotted Woodpecker(1), Great Tit(5), House Sparrow(7), Jackdaw(7), Kingfisher(1), Long-tailed Tit(4), Magpie(4), Mallard(25), Moorhen(3), Nuthatch(1), Pochard(5), Robin(2), Shoveler(8), Siskin(4), Song Thrush(1), Starling(1), Mute Swan(2), Treecreeper(1), Tufted Duck(3), Wood Pigeon(6), Wren(2)

Thursday (28th) found us again at Warrinton's excellent Woolston Eyes Reserve, there was no sign of the Marsh Tit that's been seen recently from the Morgan hide, although as usual a Willow Tit was on the feeders to the left of the hide whilst on the other side masses of Greenfinches were feeding on the sunflower seeds. They're messy eaters and un-eaten bits of sunflower hearts are scattered onto the ground below where Chaffinches and Bramblings were taking full advantage of this Manna from Heaven!

From the raised viewing platform we could see that a wide "ride" had been cut through the reedbed - [I've found this link to reedbed management](#) (you have to click it Frank!) - so therein, no doubt, an explanation for this action can be found! Perhaps the secondment, from the RSPB, of a young man to help with management of the reserve for a 12 month period has something to do with it. The machine used to cut the reeds is called a Truxor, [a video of it in action on the reserve has been posted on YouTube](#). Go on admit it you'd love a go on that!

Blue Tit, Great Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Carrion Crow, Shoveler, Mallard, Little Grebe, Jay, Willow Tit, Dunnock, Greenfinch, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Brambling, Sparrowhawk, Teal, Lapwing, Grey Heron, Blackbird, Gadwall, Buzzard, Robin, Jackdaw, Canada Goose, Bullfinch, Coot, Moorhen, Wren, Magpie, Black-headed Gull, Mute Swan, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Wood Pigeon, Cormorant, Redwing, Reed Bunting, Pheasant, Tufted Duck (38 species)

20/1/2016..... *An enjoyable morning in Tatton*



The winter birdwatching event in the park, in and around the Allen hide, on Sunday (17th) went off very well with around

40 visitors tempted into the hide over the two hours the event went on for. The weather was kind to us, there was no rain, although it was quite cool and the temperature never rose above 3°C all morning.



The park was quite busy and we had no trouble persuading a steady stream of people that their "visitor experience" would be enhanced by popping in for a few minutes to view the birds through the 'scopes and chat to the KOS members lurking within! We were lucky in that there was a fine male Pintail on view throughout, together with a Cormorant conveniently posed on a post over the mere plus a herd of deer on the far bank - we must have been doing something right as one gentleman placed a £10 note in the collection box outside the hide!! (all proceeds are spent on food for the bird feeders).

It was suggested by some visitors that we should provide hot drinks as an added incentive, they were only joking of course, but perhaps it not such a bad idea for next year - an orange box set up outside the hide with one of those small gas stoves heating a kettle of hot water, a couple of cartons of milk, some coffee granules and tea bags and away you go - all donations gratefully received!

As it was, this time we could only offer a drop of Scotch kindly provided by Roger Barnes, in rather a nice hip flask, who insisted he didn't want it back until it had been emptied, we did our best Roger (as did some of the punters) but there's still a bit left over which I'll dispose of in an appropriate manner! Eight KOS members turned out to help on the day so, to avoid overcrowding in the hide when things became busy, some chose to head off around the park to do a bit of birding and were able to add a few more species such as Green Woodpecker, little Grebe, Raven and Goldeneye to the mornings list which finally crept up to 37 species, not very impressive of course, but the morning was about more than that.

Blackbird, Robin, Dunnock, Goldcrest, Chaffinch, Carrion Crow, Jackdaw, wren, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Moorhen, Coot, Mallard, Tufted Duck, Pochard, Grey Heron, Black-headed Gull, Woodpigeon, Cormorant, Great Crested Grebe, Little Grebe, Redwing, Nuthatch, Mistle Thrush, Buzzard, Jay, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Mute Swan, Magpie, Coal Tit, Raven, Green Woodpecker, Kestrel, Pintail, Fieldfare, Goldeneye.

This coming Friday (22nd) we welcome Jeff Clarke back to the Jubilee Hall with a presentation entitled 'Antipodes - Edge of the Abyss'. There's a possibility that we may be seeing a few new faces as I believe the Lymm Ornithological Group has unfortunately folded due to "the changing demographics of modern society". They used to meet on the same Friday as us and if any members do turn up I'm sure they'll be given a warm KOS welcome!

11/1/2016..... *An excellent start to the New Year*

Our first trip of the year, to the [Northwich Woodlands Reserve](#) (Neumann's / Budworth etc.), went very well indeed although it got off to a less than auspicious start as when we arrived we found the barrier to the car park still locked! This prompted a rapid change in plans and much confusion as plans B and C had to be aborted for various reasons leaving



members scattered to the four winds all over Northwich!! Fortunately the problems were resolved when a young lady appeared with the keys and, a few phone calls later, by the time we got as far as Butterfinch Bridge the party was back together again (17 members + 3 pooches). It was when we were stood on the bridge that an [explosion of sound from deep in the reedbed](#) announced the presence of a Cetti's Warbler causing the Hon. Sec. to spin through 90° whilst simultaneously leaping two feet into the air like a coiled spring - and why not because for most of us this was the first time we'd heard one in Cheshire!! We moved from the bridge a short distance along the path below Haydyn's Pool where the bird put on a virtuoso performance for us ; let's hope he finds a mate later in the Spring. This was always going to be the highlight of the day, perhaps even of the year, but there was a day list to be populated so, after ticking off a skulking Water Rail, we set off in the direction of Budworth Mere via Haydn's Pool. Elevenses were taken in the shelter near to the Ranger's cabins taking advantage of the splendid little butty bar that opens there every weekend serving freshly made food and drinks including [barn cakes](#) from Goostrey's in Mobberley and bacon from [Waugh Brow Farm](#) - also in Mobberley!

Moving on to the viewing screen the feeding station was attracting the usual mixed crowd of Tits and Nuthatches whilst a Kingfisher was seen a number of times during the time we were there, 23 Curlews were counted over the far side of the mere but very few Grey Herons seem to have returned to what used to be the biggest heronry in England. Bob had decided not to walk as far as the mere and spent the time at Neumann's flash where he was able to add Siskin, Long-tailed Tit, Raven, Green Woodpecker, and a pair of displaying Peregrine Falcons to the list, which finally totalled 55 species, very respectable for this time of the year.

Blackbird, Robin, Dunnock, Goldcrest, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Carrion Crow, Jackdaw, wren, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Bullfinch, Moorhen, Coot, Kingfisher, Teal, Mallard, Tufted Duck, Gadwall, Shoveler, Pochard, Grey Heron, Black-headed Gull, Herring Gull, Common Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Woodpigeon, Cormorant, Canada Goose, Greylag Goose, Great Crested Grebe, Little Grebe, Redwing, Water Rail, Grey Wagtail, Nuthatch, Mistle Thrush, Buzzard, Jay, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Lapwing, Mute Swan, Magpie, Coal Tit, Cetti's warbler, Raven, Peregrine, Stock Dove, Greenfinch, Curlew, Treecreeper, Wigeon, Shelduck, Green Woodpecker.

It appears that the weather is about to become a little colder with the BBC starting to panic as the mercury sinks down towards zero and the Daily Express promising an "Arctic Blast" from the north!! Perhaps the birds already know this with an increase in winter thrushes noted by Bob Groom along Green Lane in Knutsford yesterday (10th) - 150 Redwings plus "good numbers" of Fieldfares, whilst in Mobberley on the same day I passed a "field full" of the same two species along Hobcroft Lane - too many to count but I guesstimate around 500. Last Tuesday as I was driving towards Northwich a huge flock of

Pinkfeet passed overhead, flying south-east, again impossible to count but they stretched from Lilac Avenue right across the Tabley Park area.

Weather permitting this coming Sunday (17th) we'll be teaming up again with the Tatton rangers for a [Winter Birdwatch](#). It takes place between 11am and 1pm in and around the Allen Hide overlooking Melchett Mere, so if you're at a loose end on the day, come along and join in the fun, KOS members normally outnumber any visitors we manage to attract!!

03/1/2016..... *Sad News*

A sad start to the new year with news, from her daughter Susan, that Elizabeth Perkins has died, she was 90 years of age. 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. 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. Apparently Elizabeth had just returned from holiday to her flat when she suffered a stroke and passed away later that day (31st December). Her funeral will be held on Monday 18th January at St Mary's Church Nantwich at 11.00am.



In his Nature Notes column in the Times Derwent May states that "Song Thrushes are singing everywhere", well he obviously doesn't live in Mobberley, I've not heard one yet despite being out and about most mornings, if there any still left in the area I would expect to hear them soon. No sign either of Mistle Thrushes, although Bob Groom had a singing bird in Tatton Park where Alan Booth reports that a pair of Stonechats can still be seen in the Melchett Mere area.

Our January field trip to the Neumann's/Budworth area of the Northwich Woodlands reserve takes place this coming Saturday (9th), meeting at the Sessions House at 9:00am or 9:15 at the usual Witton Bridge car park. Perhaps we'll be able to locate the Cetti's Warbler (a new bird for the reserve) that's been recently discovered.

A little further away ex KOS member Malcolm Greenhaulgh now living on Majorca sent me a nice list of species he saw on New Years day.

Snipe, Common Sandpiper, Marsh Harrier, Peregrine Falcon, Serin, Cetti's Warbler, Balearic Warbler, Fan-tailed Warbler, Moustached Warbler, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Crag Martin, Black Redstart, Common Redstart, Stonechat, Whinchat, Little Egret, Cattle Egret, No hangover. - *I believe all but the last one Monty!*

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