

Knutsford Ornithological Society.



REPORT 1975.

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THE KNUTSFORD ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY BIRD REPORT 1975.

The slight fall in membership was the only aspect of 1975 which was in any way a disappointment to the Society. After the first flush of enthusiasm it was probably a predictable occurrence and one which befalls most organisations of this nature. Nevertheless, for a town the size of Knutsford, 120 is a good number and whilst the Society encounters no difficulty in filling coaches for field trips, and visiting lecturers are assured of a good audience, it means we can offer a friendly and convivial atmosphere so often lacking in Societies with too large a membership.

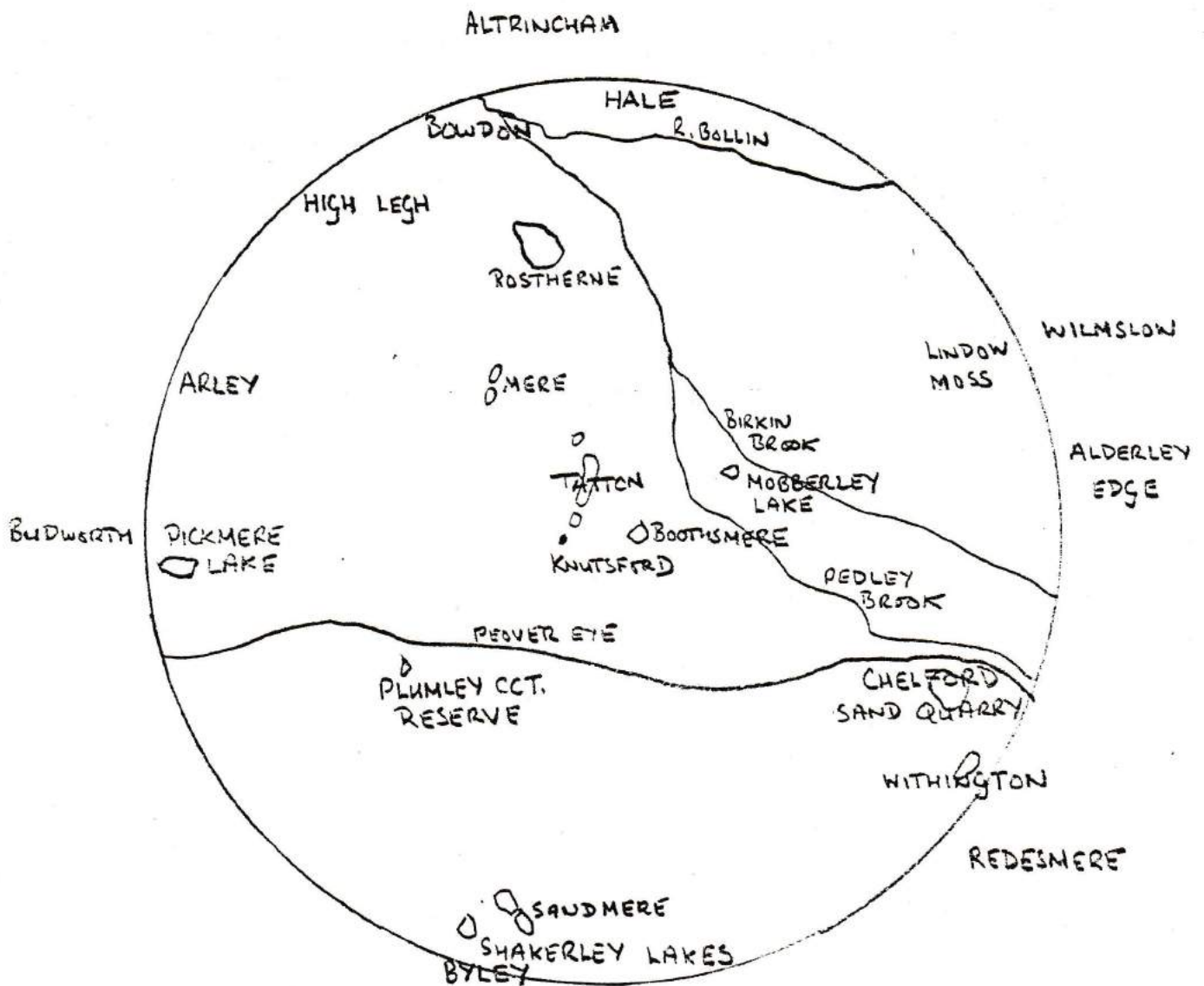
In 1974 such rarities as Osprey, Hoopoe and Spoonbill were seen in the area, but 1975 produced no species quite so exotic. Rostherne had the first Hawfinch for many years together with Black-necked Grebe, Little Tern and Goshawk, whilst at Tatton, a pair of Buzzards almost certainly bred, Ruddy Ducks were seen displaying in the Spring and in December two Firecrests were discovered in the Park. Elsewhere, Whitethroat and Sparrow Hawk continued their recoveries, Great Crested Grebe, Little Owl, Swift and Sand Martins all had a good year and, although not rare birds, it was nice to see Lesser Whitethroat, Dipper and Wood Warbler again breeding within the area.

Mobberley Lake continued as the only location to regularly attract waders with 11 different species in 1975. As it stands the area is an excellent little place for bird watching and it is to be hoped that the various ideas for 'improving' the area remain as such and don't manifest themselves in the form of picnic areas or concrete paths and park benches.

Construction of a housing estate next to Knutsford Moor has begun and it remains to be seen what effect the ensuing disturbance has on the bird life, especially the Autumn Swallow roost and the nesting Grasshopper warblers.

A. C. Usher
Report Editor

THE AREA COVERED BY THIS REPORT



A SYSTEMATIC LIST OF BIRDS OBSERVED WITHIN THE AREA IN 1975.

Nomenclature and Sequence as The Status of Birds in Britain and Ireland published by the British Ornithologist's Union.

Red-throated Diver. (*Gavia stellata*)

The year began well with a Red-throated Diver on 7/1 at Rostherne. It was the first record since March 1963.

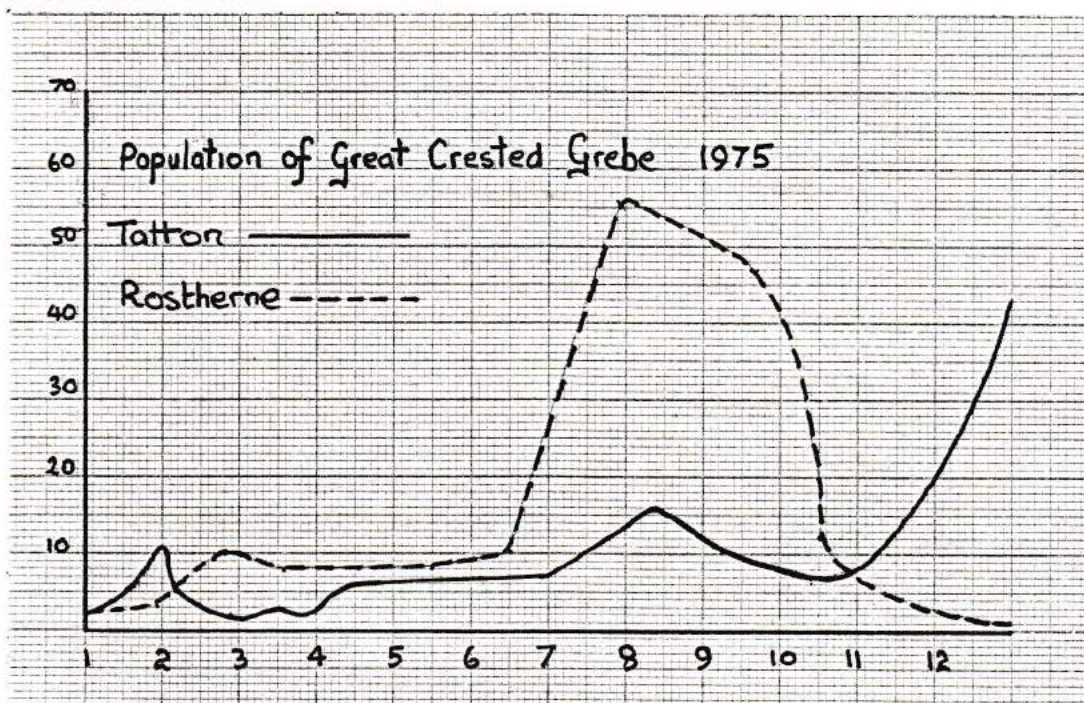
Little Grebe. (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*)

Up to 5 were present at Rostherne during January, August, September and October, 6 were counted on 6/11. No breeding took place. Higher numbers were seen at Tatton especially at the year end with 8 on 21/10, 10 on 6/11 & 15 on 11/11. A pair was seen with 2 young on 13/8. At Tabley a pair successfully reared 2 young. Isolated reports came from Mobberley Lake, Withington, Ceicely Mill and Knutsford Moor.

Black-necked Grebe. (*Podiceps nigricollis*)

One at Rostherne on 17 and 18/8 was presumably the bird seen at Tatton the same week.

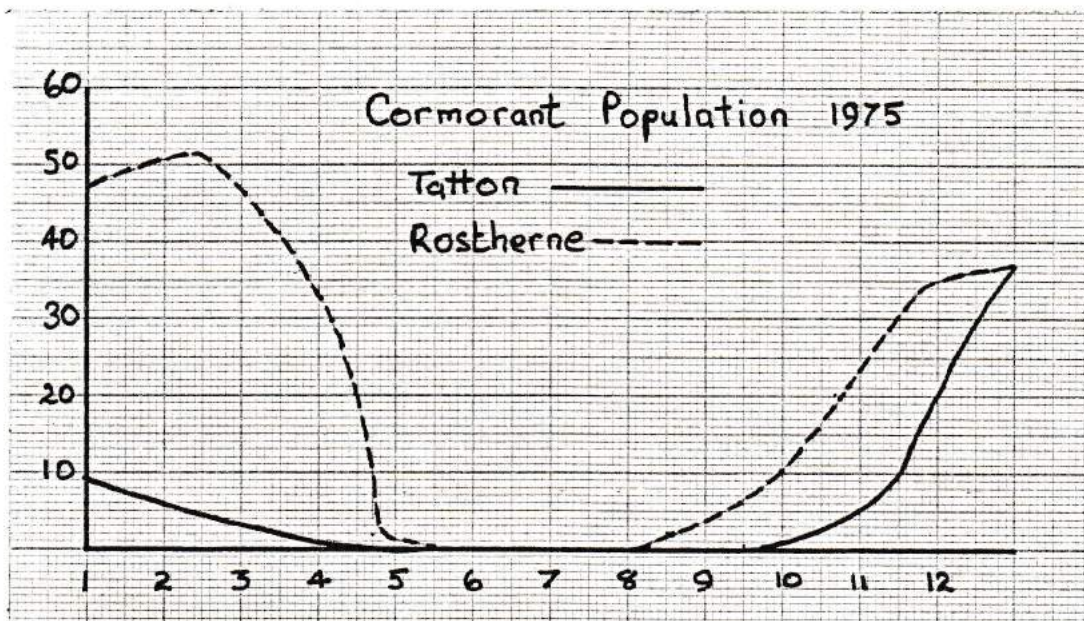
Great Crested Grebe. (*Podiceps cristatus*).



The Great Crested Grebe enjoyed a more successful year than 1974 from the breeding point of view, both at Tatton and Rostherne. At Tatton 3 pairs reared 5 young and at Rostherne 4 pairs successfully raised a total of 9 young. The species also bred at Tabley and Sandmere. The graph shows the distribution at Tatton and Rostherne. Very few were present on either mere at the beginning of the year, the majority are presumed to have been on Marbury Mere. A flock of 57 were at Rostherne on 26/7 but declined to 6 during October. At this point the combined total for the two meres was only 14, and the population at Marbury probably reached its peak. From then on numbers at Rostherne fell away to 1 bird whilst at Tatton a rapid increase to

a maximum of 43 on 30/12 took place, so for some reason many birds preferred Tatton to Marbury during the latter half of the year, a complete contrast to the corresponding period in 1974.

Cormorant. (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)



A record number of 51 Cormorants were present at Rostherne on 15/2. The graph shows the number of birds roosting at Rostherne, together with the number counted during the day at Tatton. As with the Great Crested Grebe, during the latter half of the year many more birds were present at Tatton than in the same period of 1974. At one point in December the whole of the Rostherne roosting population was apparently feeding at Tatton, where the majority favour Melchete Mere rather than the main lake.

Grey Heron. (*Ardea cinerea*)

The number nesting at Tabley this year was not ascertained, but judging from the high counts at Rostherne during the summer, and the frequency of sightings elsewhere it seems hardly likely that less than 1974's c.90 pairs bred.

Mute Swan. (*Cygnus olor*)

Recorded regularly with 7 on 6/11 at Tatton. No breeding records have been received.

Whooper Swan. (*Cygnus cygnus*)

2 adults at Mobberley Lake on 3/11.

Berwick's Swan. (*Cygnus bewickii*)

2 at Tatton on 18/1, 17 adults at Rostherne on 2/11.

Pink-footed Goose. (*Anser fabalis*)

3 appeared at Rostherne on 16/6, they moulted there and were last seen on 2/8. One at Tatton on 8/1 could well have been a genuine wild bird.

Grey lag Goose. (*Anser anser*)

At Rostherne one was recorded on 8/3. 5 arrived in early June and moulted with the Pink-footed and Canada Geese. 17 were present from 7/9 to 10/9. During December there were 7 on the 7th, 15 on the 9th and 30 on the 10th. Tatton had 3 records 1 on 16/3 and 25/3 with 16 on 13/9.

Canada Goose. (*Branta canadensis*)

At Rostherne 5 pairs nested and 6 young were fledged, at Tatton 18 young survived from 6 broods and at Boothmere 4 pairs produced 17 young. The species also nested successfully at Withington, Sandmere, Mobberley Lake and Tabley. Outside the breeding season the usual flocks were to be met with on the larger waters, 504 on 1/2 at Tatton being the largest.

Barnacle Goose. (*Branta Leucopis*)

Two were present throughout the year moving about the area with the Canada Geese flocks.

Bar-headed Goose. (*Anser indicus*)

2 were on Tatton on 25/6 and were recorded again on several occasions at Tabley during July.

Egyptian Goose.

1 was present at Tatton on 29/1 and 1/2, and on 9/2 at Tabley.

Shelduck. (*Tadorna tadorna*)

1-3 were seen regularly at Rostherne during April, there were 2 on 4, 7, 8 May and 9 on 15/11 and 16/11. 2 were on Mobberley Lake on 16/5.

Wigeon. (*Anas penelope*)

Numbers at Rostherne were lower than last year with a maximum of 60 on 9/2 and 25/2 compared with a 100 in 1974. Elsewhere only small groups were seen, the largest aggregation being 26 at Tatton on 10/10.

American Wigeon. (*Anas americana*)

A drake in eclipse plumage was seen at Rostherne on 22/6.

Gadwall. (*Anas strepera*)

There were 7 records of male birds at Rostherne during the first 3 months of the year and from September to the end of the year 5 records from Tatton, with a drake and 3 ducks on 5/12.

Teal. (*Anas crecca*)

1,800 on 1/2 was the highest count for some years at Rostherne, Teal, as with Wigeon and other surface-feeding ducks seem to prefer the seclusion and tranquility of Rostherne whereas Great Crested Grebe and diving ducks such as Goldeneye and Tufted duck prefer Tatton and remain unaffected by the constant passage of visitors round the edge of the mere.

Mallard. (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

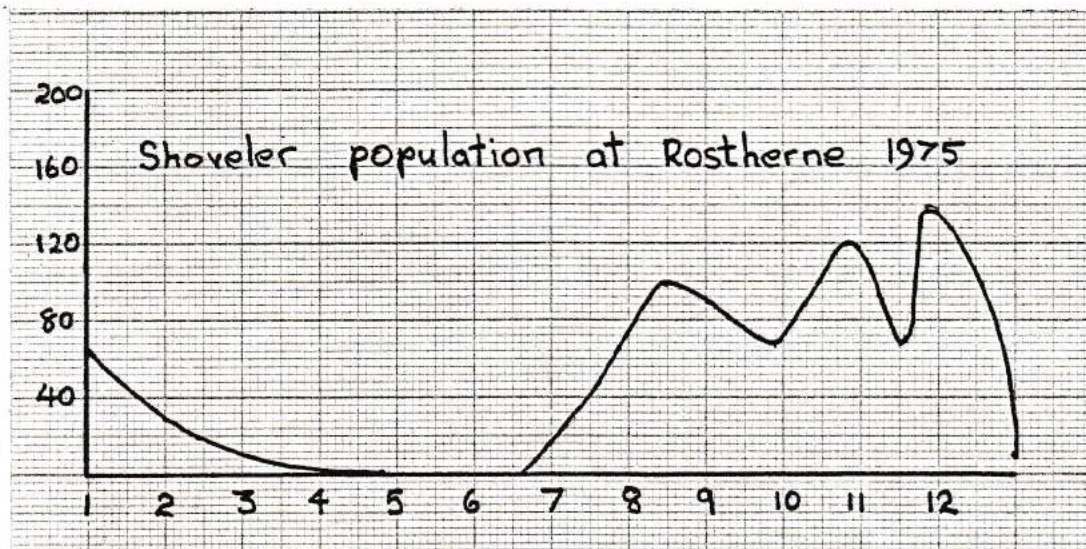
Another mild winter meant low counts again at Rostherne with a maximum of 1,800 on 1/2. 372 were counted on Tatton 3 days earlier and during the summer months numerous pairs bred on both waters. The first brood of ducklings appeared at Rostherne on 14/4.

Pintail. (*Anas acuta*)

In the past 2 years the status of the Pintail at Rostherne has changed dramatically. From being a scarce visitor it has become a resident winter bird in not inconsiderable numbers. 139 were counted on 23/2 and 61 were present on 30/12. Isolated birds were recorded at Tatton and Withington Hall Pool, and at Tatton flocks of 130 birds on 23/2 and 60 on 31/11 were seen in flight low over the mere.

Garganey. (*Anas querquedula*)

A drake in eclipse plumage was seen on 23/8 at Lindow whilst at Rostherne there was 1 on 16/8, 3 on 17/4 and no less than 9 on 23/9.

Shoveler. (*Anas Clypeata*)

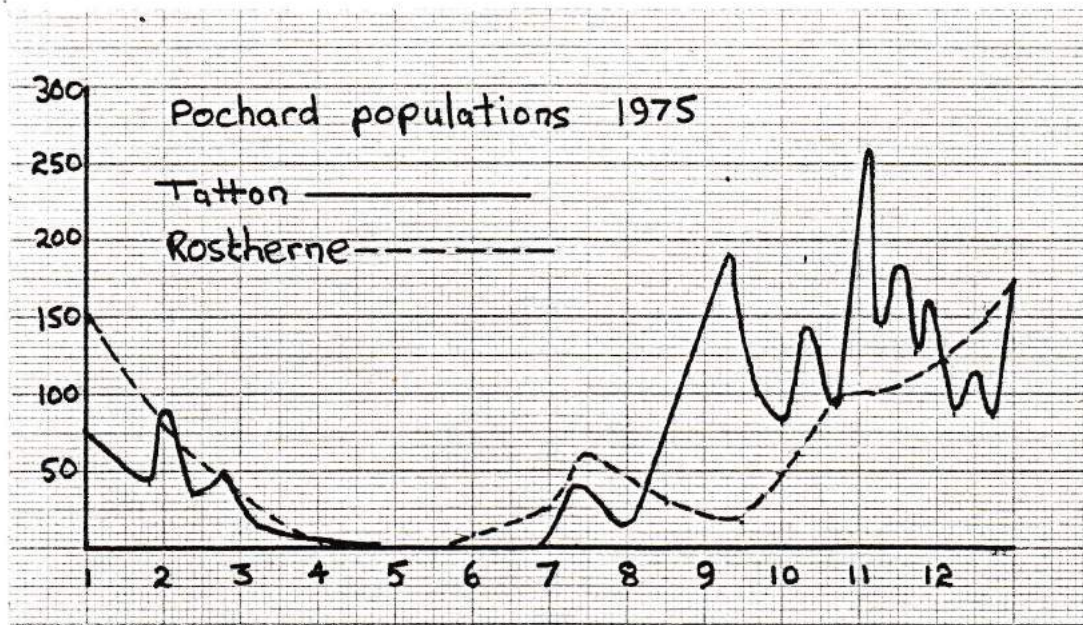
As the graph shows no Spring passage was evident at Rostherne, numbers fell steadily from 60 on 11/1 to 2 on 27/4. Numbers increased rapidly at the end of the breeding season reaching 95 on 16/8 and held well until December when they declined rapidly after reaching a peak of 140 on 22/11. The number on Tatton fluctuated greatly but good counts were obtained in September and October with a maximum of 28 on 10/10.

Red-crested Pochard. (*Netta rufina*)

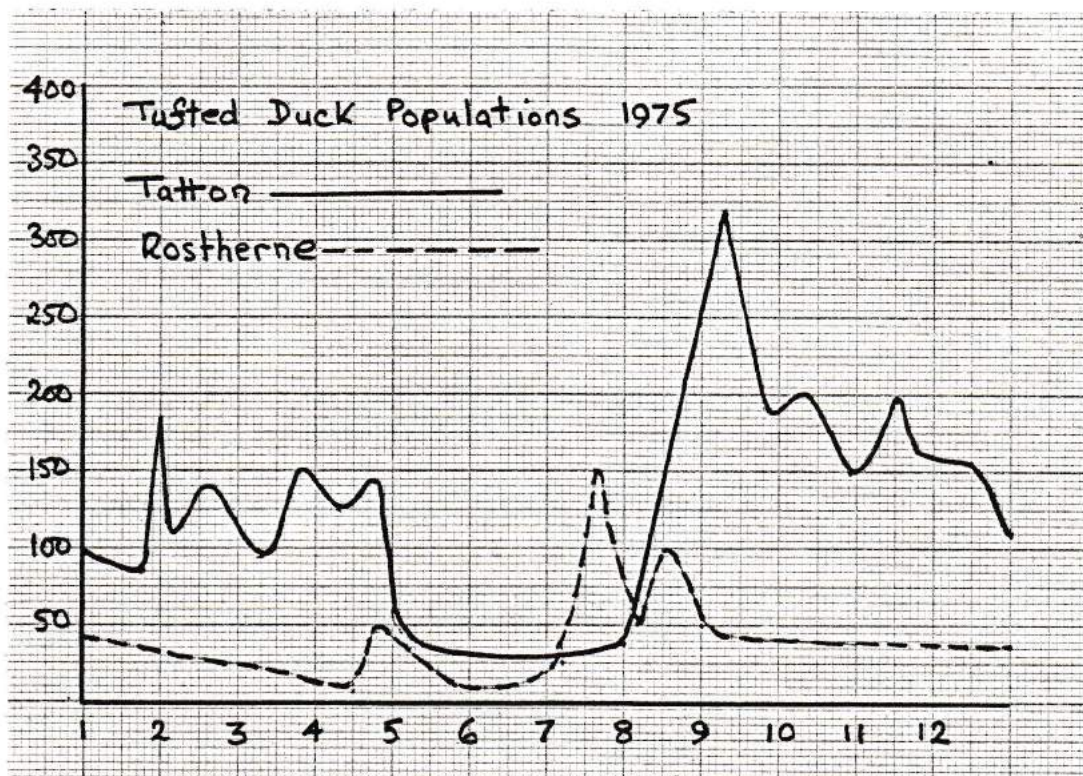
A drake was seen at Rostherne on 15/6.

Pochard. (*Aythya ferina*).

170 at Rostherne on 27/12 was the highest count since October 1972. Despite this the population was higher at Tatton for most of the time with a maximum of 264 on 6/11. The species was also recorded in smaller numbers on Tabley, Boothsmere, Withington and Chelford Sand Quarry where 49 were present on 21/12.



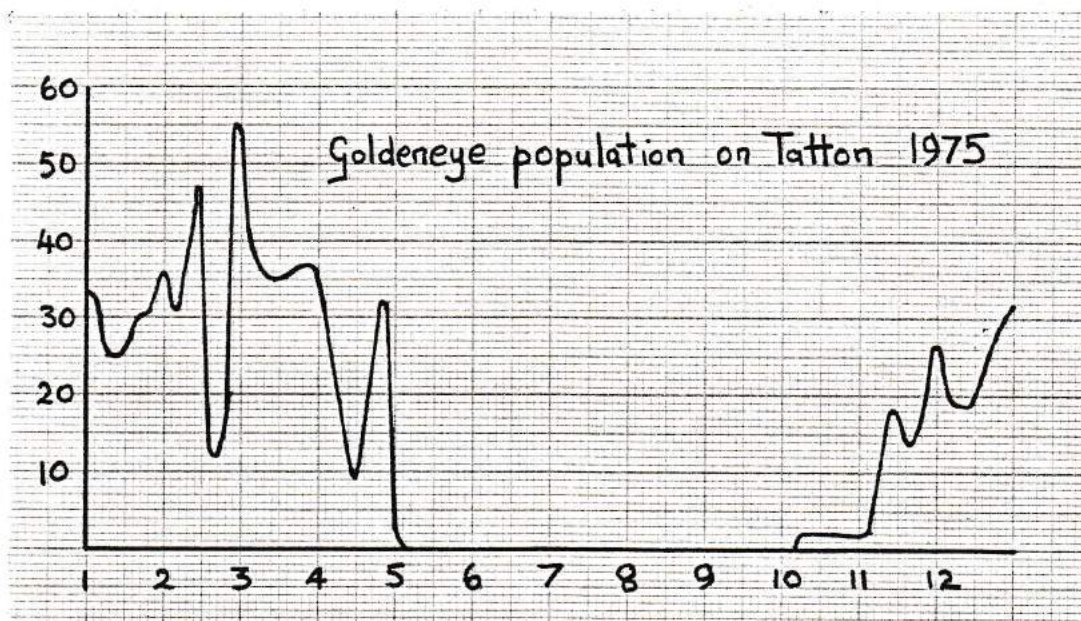
Tufted Duck. (*Aythya fuligula*)



Again no breeding record at Rostherne, and at Tatton only 3 pairs reared young successfully compared with 6 in 1974. As usual the maximum Rostherne count occurred soon after the end of the breeding season with 149 on 19/7, this was lower than last year when there were 281 in early August. As numbers decreased at Rostherne they increased at Tatton where a peak was reached early in September with 315 on 10/9.

Common Scoter. (*Melanitta nigra*)

Male birds were present on 13/4 at Withington and 8/10 at Sandmere.

Goldeneye. (*Bucephala clangula*)

Recorded on Shakerley, Chelford Sand Quarry, Rostherne, Withington, Tabley and Tatton. Up to 19 were counted during the Spring passage at Rostherne, but Tatton again proved to be the most popular water with 8 males and 47 females on 25/2. As last year a single female appeared on Tatton in mid-July whereas the main arrival period did not begin until early October.

Smew. (*Mergus albellus*)

2 females again wintered in the area, the last Spring record being from Tatton on 20/4. The first Autumn record was again from Tatton on 25/10, which was nearly a month earlier than in 1973 or 1974.

Goosander. (*Mergus merganser*)

Up to 24 were counted during the early part of 1974 at Rostherne, but it was an exceptional year and numbers during 1975 returned to a more normal level, 5 birds, 1 male and 4 females, was the maximum, on 31/1. At Tatton 2 males and 4 females were on Melchete Mere on 18/1.

Ruddy Duck. (*Oxyura jamacensis*)

As the breeding range of this species continues to expand it seems inevitable that Tatton, Rostherne and Tabley will soon be colonized. 2 males and 2 females were present during April and May at Tatton and the drakes were seen displaying a number of times but no breeding seems to have taken place. Rostherne had a female on 25/10, the first record since 1972, and during November and December up to 6 were present. 2 drakes were at Tabley on 29/7.

Rosy-Bill. (*Netta peposaca*)

The drake Rosy-Bill remained in residence on Knutsford Moor until well into the Autumn. It was occasionally seen at Tatton and the last record came from Rostherne, on 6/12.

Goshawk. (*Accipiter gentilis*)

Observers at Rostherne had good views of 2 birds which spent 40 minutes on the reserve on 6/2.

Sparrow Hawk. (*Accipiter nisus*)

The Rostherne reserve must be the best place in Cheshire if one wishes to be sure of seeing Sparrow Hawk. An observer spending the morning there is almost sure to be rewarded with good views of the species. During October 3 birds could often be seen in the air together. A pair bred in Mobberley and frequent sightings elsewhere in the area are most encouraging.

Buzzard. (*Butes butes*)

Isolated records came from Toft and Shakerley with regular Spring and Autumn sightings at Rostherne. At Tatton at least one pair bred or attempted to breed and up to 3 birds were seen during November and December.

Kestrel. (*Falco tinnunculus*)Partridge. (*Perdix perdix*)

Widespread reports from all parts of the area especially Mobberley and Rostherne where coveys of 14 were seen on 17/8 and 20/12.

Quail. (*Coturnix coturnix*)

One was seen at Tatton on 4/7.

Pheasant. (*Phasianus colchicus*)Water Rail. (*Rallus aquaticus*)

Seen regularly at Rostherne and at Tatton where higher numbers were recorded during November and December than for some years. There were 5 on 26/11 and 4 on 13/12.

Moorhen. (*Gallinula chloropus*)Coot. (*Fulica atra*)

12 pairs successfully reared young at Rostherne where the maximum number of coot counted was 90 on 20/12. At Tatton 11 pairs reared 23 young and the maximum was 226 on 10/9.

Oystercatcher. (*Haematopus ostralegus*)

At Tatton there was 1 on 8/2 and 4 on 17/4. At Rostherne one was recorded on 25/7 and there were 2 on 18/4 at Mobberley Lake.

Lapwing. (*Vanellus vanellus*)Golden Plover. (*Pluvialis apricaria*)

Large flocks were again in evidence at Ashley where there were 800 on 5/1 and 1300 on 19/1.

Ringed Plover. (*Charadrius hiaticula*)

2 adult birds, 24/7 at Mobberley Lake and a juvenile at Rostherne 3 days later were the only records.

Little Ringed Plover. (*Charadrius dubius*)

3 pairs attempted breeding at 3 separate sites, one pair was successful, the fate of the second pair was not recorded but the third pair deserted due to excessive disturbance.

Curlew. (*Numenius arquata*)

Arrived back at Tatton on 5/2, 9 pairs subsequently nested. Birds also nested at Rostherne and Ashley. During December a regular roost of up to 60 birds built up at Byley.

Spotted Redshank. (*Tringa erythropus*)

1 at Mobberley Lake on 30/4 was an unusual record.

Redshank. (*Tringa totanus*)

3 single records from Rostherne on 6/7, 14/12 and 21/12. At Tatton one was present from 21/12 to 27/12 whilst there was 1 at Mobberley Lake on 20/3 and 2 from 27/3 to 6/4.

Greenshank. (*Tringa nebularia*)

As in 1974 the only Spring records came from Mobberley Lake where there were 2 on 30/4 and 1 on 4/5. At Rostherne there were 6 records during the Autumn passage and 1 was circling Knutsford Moor at dusk on 21/8.

Green Sandpiper. (*Tringa ochropus*)

The favourable conditions existing at the Cheshire Conservation Trust's reserve at Plumley again attracted good numbers of Green Sandpipers from mid-July. 5 were present on 11/8 and this had risen to 8 on 15/8. A late bird was seen at Tatton from 16/11 to 21/11.

Common Sandpiper. (*Actio hypoleucos*)

Recorded frequently during Spring and Autumn, Birds summered at Chelford and Withington and could well have bred at one or both localities. 10, including immatures were present at Chelford on 16/7.

Snipe. (*Gallinago gallinago*)

This species nested within the area in 1974 but no breeding records have been forthcoming for 1975 although they were recorded during the summer months at Tatton and Mobberley. The bird was, as usual, widespread and numerous during the winter with 60 being counted on 6/4 in Mobberley.

Woodcock. (*Scolopax rusticola*)

The earliest 'roding' was observed at Rostherne on 8/3. Records also came from Tatton and a traditional site in Mobberley where up to 3 birds could be seen indulging in this curious crepuscular activity. Further records came from Astle Park, Chelford and along the Birkin Brook at Shaw Heath where 2 were apparently roding on 11/11!

Jack Snipe. (*lymnocryptes minima*)

Records are again confined to one particular area next to Tatton Park's Melchett Mere where the bird can be seen regularly during the winter months. 1 or 2 were usually present but there were 4 on 23/2 and 3 on 4/3. At the other end of the year there were 4 on 17/10 and 3 on 13/11.

Dunlin. (*Calidris alpina*)

Single birds were seen at Mobberley Lake in February, April, July and December with 2 on 24/7 and 5 on 1/5, 18/8 and 29/9. Reports from Rostherne were few and far between although 10 were seen on 19/4. One spent 2 weeks at Tatton during November.

Common Gull. (*Larus canus*)

Less numerous than in 1974, 500 was the maximum recorded at the Rostherne roost compared with 2,000 the previous year.

Herring Gull. (*Larus argentatus*)

6,000 were roosting at Rostherne during December.

Lesser Black-backed Gull. (*Larus fuscus*)

As usual numbers were at their greatest in September when Rostherne had 1,500 roosting.

Great Black-backed Gull. (*Larus marinus*)

Seen regularly but in very small numbers at Rostherne.

Iceland Gull. (*Larus glaucoides*)

Only 1 recorded in 1975, a first winter bird on 11/2 at Rostherne.

Glaucous Gull. (*Larus hyperboreus*)

Again only one record, this concerned an adult bird on 14/2 at Rostherne. The dearth of Arctic gull records during 1975 from Rostherne is probably indicative more of a shortage of observers possessing the patience and determination needed to sort through 20,000 roosting birds rather than an actual decline in numbers.

Black-headed Gull. (*Larus ridibundus*)

The species remained by far the most numerous gull using Rostherne to roost with 4,500 in August rising to 14,000 from October to December.

Little Gull. (*Larus minutes*)

One record, 26/5 at Rostherne.

Kittiwake. (*Rissa tridactyla*)

More pelagic than other gulls and inland records, are rather uncommon, one was seen at Rostherne on 27/4.

Black Tern. (*Chlidonias niger*)

The Spring passage was almost non-existent with only 2 records, 2 birds at Rostherne on 21/5 and 1 at Tatton on 9/6. Numbers during the Autumn were equally disappointing with an immature at Shakerley on 5/8 and 8 at Rostherne on 8/9 followed by singles on 9, 14 and 15/9.

Common Tern. (*Sterna hirundo*)

Sea Terns were also well down in numbers and in fact not a single Common Tern was positively identified although records of 'commic' terns probably included this species.

Arctic Tern. (*Sterna paradisaea*)

1 was seen on 28/4 at Tatton and 3 on 2/6 at Rostherne.

Common/Arctic Tern

No Common or Arctic Terns were recorded during the Autumn at either Tatton or Rostherne. During the Spring passage 'commic' Terns were seen between 11/5 and 21/6 at Rostherne and between 29/4 and 1/6 at Tatton. The maximum at any one time was 5 on 25/5 at Rostherne.

Little Tern. (*Sterna albifrons*)

3 on 29/5 at Rostherne was the first record since July 1970.

Stock Dove. (*Columba oenas*)

A good number nested at Tatton and Rostherne. During the winter there were 30 on 22/3 and 24/3 at Chorley and 47 with a similar number of Wood Pigeons at Mobberley.

Wood Pigeon. (*Columba palumbus*)

The huge flocks seen during the latter end of 1974 and early 1975 especially at Rostherne did not build up again in the Autumn and numbers would seem to have been well down on the corresponding period last year.

Turtle Dove. (*Streptopelia turtur*)

No breeding record for 1975 although birds were recorded during the Summer, 3 separate records came from Rostherne in June, there was a further sighting on 3/7 and 1 was seen on 15/8 at Plumley.

Collard Dove. (*Streptopelia decaocto*)

Now regarded as a pest in many parts of the country, this species cannot yet be described as abundant in our area. It is confined mainly to Knutsford town centre and is rarely seen elsewhere.

Cuckoo. (*Cuculus canorus*)

The first bird was heard calling on 13/4 in Knutsford and the last record was of a juvenile at Rostherne on 25/8. The relative infrequency of reports between these dates would seem to indicate a continuation of the slow decline of the Cuckoo locally.

Barn Owl. (*Tyto alba*)

Seen at Ringway, Chelford, Tabley, Boothsmere, Rostherne and Mobberley. A pair almost certainly nested in the Old Hall at Tatton.

Little Owl. (*Athene noctua*)

1975 proved to be a good year for the Little Owl with records from several new or recolonized areas.

Tawny Owl. (*Strix aluco*)Short-eared Owl. (*Asio flammeus*)

Following last years first ever record at Rostherne one appeared during 1975 on 12/4.

Swift. (*Apus apus*)

Local tradition has it that the first Swifts appear over Knutsford on the first Saturday in May, corresponding with the town's May Day Festival. It proved to be true in 1974 and again in 1975 when the first birds appeared on 3/5. Over 250 birds were seen on a number of occasions over Tatton Mere during May and June. A late bird was recorded at dusk on 2/9 over Knutsford Moor.

Kingfisher. (*Alcedo atthis*)

The Kingfisher enjoyed another successful year with widespread sightings reported. In Mobberley at least 3 pairs raised young and one nest was found on a part of Mobberley Brook which had not been used for breeding for many years.

Green Woodpecker. (*Picus viridis*)

Very active at Rostherne during the Spring although they are not thought to have nested. They almost certainly nested in Tatton and a pair are known to have reared 4 young at Lindow. 1 was seen in Burleyhurst Wood on 30/4 and an immature was seen on 14/7 at Rudheath.

Great-spotted Woodpecker. (*Dendrocopus major*)

Seen frequently all over the area with nesting records from all the usual locations.

Lesser-spotted Woodpecker. (*Dendrocopus minor*)

Recorded regularly but infrequently at Rostherne with no records during the breeding season. This was also the case at Tatton but it is thought probable that the bird bred in one of the areas where public access is prohibited. One on 11/4 was the first record for the Pavement Lane area of Mobberley.

Skylark. (*Alauda arvensis*)

A flock of 110 was seen on 9/12 at Mobberley Lake. 1974's maxima also occurred during early December and it could well be that a regular passage occurs at this time each year.

Sand Martin. (*Ripara ripara*)

4 birds at Tatton on 12/4 were the first of the Spring and this particular species outnumbered other hirundines until well into April when the main arrival of swallows relegated them to second place. Breeding was recorded at the Withington, Saltersley and Sandmere colonies. At the latter the South Manchester Ringing Group ringed 118 birds, giving some idea of the numbers present in 1975.

Swallow. (*Hirundo rustica*)

The first bird appeared on 12/4 at Tatton and the last record was from Rostherne on 29/10. One of the areas most spectacular sights is that of the swallows going to roost on Knutsford Moor during September when numbers are at their greatest. 1975 was a little disappointing in that only once, on 8/9, did the count exceed 2,000. A rather significant report comes from Shakerley when c 2,000 Swallows were roosting in rushes on 1/9 and it could well be that as these areas of rushes at Shakerley grow they will attract more and more of Knutsford Moors roosting population.

House Martin. (*Delichon urbica*)

As with most other summer visitors House Martins seemed to have been delayed in their migration from the South. The first bird was recorded at Rostherne on 19/4 but the cold North winds which blew across Europe up to the middle of April delayed the arrival of the bulk of the population until well into May. Nevertheless, when they finally arrived numbers were not noticeably lower than usual. A late start to breeding meant that second broods were to be seen well into September and a pair were still feeding young on 27/9 in Knutsford town centre.

Yellow Wagtail. (*Motacilla flava*)

8 on 17/4 at Tatton was the first Spring record and from then until well into September the bird was seen regularly. Rostherne had a breeding pair in 1974 but none in 1975.

Grey Wagtail. (*Motacilla cinerea*)

Recorded during the breeding season at Rostherne and also Mobberley. The mud exposed at Tatton during the annual lowering of the water level again attracted good numbers and 6 were seen on 11/11.

Pied Wagtail. (*Motacilla alba yarrellii*)

At the end of September c. 300 were roosting in the 'phragmites' on Knutsford Moor.

White Wagtail. (*Motacilla alba alba*)

One was seen on 25/3 at Tatton. During April there were 2 records from Rostherne, there were 2 at Tatton on the 4th and 3 males were to be seen at Mobberley Lake from the 16th to the 22nd.

Meadow Pipit. (*Anthus pratensis*)

At least 3 pairs were displaying at Saltersley on 29/4 and were feeding young in late June. Outside the breeding season large flocks again built up with 60 at Mobberley Lake on 20/3 and 80 on the Mobberley side of Tatton on 6/4. The Autumn build up started at the beginning of October with 40 on 4/10 on Lindow Common and an equal number at Mobberley Lake 2 days later.

Water Pipit. (*Anthus spinoletta spinoletta*)

1 at Tatton on 12/3.

Waxwing. (*Bombycilla garrulus*)

The 1974 irruption died away during December but a few remained into 1975 and one of these was seen in January on the Chelford Road.

Dipper. (*Cinclus cinclus*)

At no point does the area covered by this report rise to more than 240 feet above sea level. This bird is therefore rarely reported, nevertheless not only were 2 birds seen but they also nested. The nest was along a small stream which is used by a fishing club who, quite by accident it seems, have created conditions ideal for the Dipper.

Wren. (*Troglodytes troglodytes*)Dunnock. (*Prunella modularis*)Robin. (*Erithacus rubecula*)Redstart. (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*)

A superb cock bird in full summer plumage was seen at Rostherne on 27/4.

Whinchat. (*Saxicola rubetra*)

There were 3 separate sightings in May in Shaw Green Willows on the Rostherne reserve, an area where they formally bred.

Wheatear. (*Oenanthe oenanthe*)

The first record came from Saltersley Common, a male on 5/4. This was followed by 5 more Spring records, single males at Mobberley on 7/4, Chelford on 10/4 and Moss Lane Knutsford on 5/5. 2 females were noted at the latter site on 20/5 and a female was seen on Saltersley Common on 29/4.

Blackbird. (*Turdus merula*)Fieldfare. (*Turdus pilaris*)

No very large flocks built up but c 120 birds were counted on a number of occasions especially during the period 23/3 to 29/3. This was when the weather was at its worst with frosty nights and strong North and North-east winds which the birds were sitting out before continuing with their migration to Scandinavia.

Redwing. (*Turdus iliacus*)

As with the fieldfare numbers were at their highest during the cold, windy spell in March when flocks of up to 200 were seen in many parts of the area. A good Redwing roost builds up each Winter in Tatton's Higmere Plantation, where the S.M.R.G., who do a good deal of work on Thrushes, reported up to 130 birds roosting.

Song Thrush. (*Turdus philomelos*)Mistle Thrush. (*Turdus viscivorus*)

Post breeding flocks of 20 on 21/6 and 30 on 21/7 were seen in Tatton Park.

Grasshopper Warbler. (*Locustella naevia*)

A bird was 'reeling' from 7/5 on Knutsford Moor and 2 pairs are thought to have attempted to nest. Unfortunately in their infinite wisdom the council have granted planning permission for a residential estate on the Tatton side of the Knutsford Moor, building is now under way and the birds favourite nesting sites will soon be replaced by £20,000 desirable Georgian Residences' all very nice for well heeled Homo sapiens, but not one feels for *Locustella naevia*.

Sedge Warbler. (*Acrocephalus Schoenobaenus*)

Bred at Plumley and on Knutsford Moor. Although 2 birds were singing at Rostherne during May the species is still not nesting there.

Reed Warbler. (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*)

The years first birds arrived back at Rostherne on 24/4. During the nesting season 70 young were ringed by the S.M.R.G.

Garden Warbler. (*Sylvia Borin*)

Sightings were reported from all the usual locations with breeding records from Plumley and Rostherne where the warden reports good numbers breeding in Mere Covert.

Blackcap. (*Sylvia atricapilla*)

Numerous records from all parts of the area with late male birds on 1/11 at Rostherne and 16/11 at Tatton.

Whitethroat. (*Sylvia communis*)

Nested widely in the area during 1975 and numbers seem to be on the increase again after their decline during the early 70's. It should however be borne in mind that much has been written about this fall in the population and it is perhaps natural to assume that many observers are paying special attention to the species giving a misleading impression of the number present.

Lesser Whitethroat. (*Sylvia curruca*)

A male appeared in Mobberley on 12/5 and on the 14/5 was watched building a trial nest of coarse grasses. It then vanished but returned with a female on 28/5 and the nest was completed using finer grass and small roots with a lining of horse hair. 4 eggs were laid and 3 young were fledged, all three being ringed by the S.M.R.G. The last record was a juvenile on 4/7. Rostherne had 1 record, a bird on 10/8.

Willow Warbler. (*Phylloscopus trochilus*)

During May 10 males were singing along a 400 yard stretch of the Birkin Brook in Mobberley giving some idea of the numbers present during the Summer.

Chiffchaff. (*Phylloscopus collybita*)

More numerous during 1975 than 1974 which was a bad year for the species.

Wood Warbler. (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*)

A bird at Rostherne on 12/7 was the first record for the reserve since 1956. A male was singing at the beginning of June in a birch wood on the edge of Tatton Park.

Goldcrest. (*Regulus regulus*)Firecrest. (*Regulus ignicapillus*)

2 were discovered on 11/11 at the Knutsford end of Dog Wood. Two further records of single birds came from the same location on 10/12 and 30/12.

Spotted Flycatcher. (*Muscicapa striata*)Long-tailed Tit. (*Aegithalos caudatus*)

A completed nest was found on 10/3 in Mobberley, large flocks again built up during the Autumn and Winter especially in Tatton and at Rostherne where a party of 22 were seen on 4/10.

Marsh Tit. (*Parus palustris*)

Family parties were seen in Tatton and Arley Wood, elsewhere records came from Castle Mill, Withington and Shaw Heath.

Willow Tit. (*Parus montanus*)

Seen regularly at Rostherne and at Tatton in Dog Wood and the Higmere Plantation.

Coal Tit. (*Parus ater*)Great Tit (*Parus major*)

At Tatton several birds were heard in early song from mid-January.

Blue Tit. (*Parus caeruleus*)Nuthatch. (*Sitta europaea*)

Seen regularly in all parts of the area.

Tree creeper. (*Certhia familiaris*)

Once again very common and several observers have commented on the high population level.

Corn Bunting. (*Emberiza calandra*)

Small numbers nest in the area and singing males were heard at Lower Withington, Mobberley, the Moss Lane area of Knutsford, Allostock, Rostherne and around the edge of Tatton Park. During November and December c. 30 were roosting on Knutsford Moor.

Yellowhammer. (*Emberiza citrinella*)

Up to 40 were seen feeding with the winter finch flocks in Mobberley and all yellowhammer parties of up to 15 birds were seen a little later in the year.

Reed Bunting. (*Emberiza schoeniclus*)Chaffinch. (*Fringilla coelebs*)Brambling. (*Fringilla Montifringilla*)

Larger flocks were seen in the Autumn than in the Spring. The only sizable groups in the Spring were c.60 in the Green Lane area of Knutsford on 6/4 and 20 on 13/4. 2 on 14/10 at Chelford were the first of the Autumn and flocks of over 100 were noted at Tatton on 21/11 and during November and December around the rubbish tip on Lindow Common.

Greenfinch. (*Carduelis chloris*)Goldfinch. (*Carduelis carduelis*)

The bird is most noticeable in early Autumn when large flocks build up in areas with an abundance of thistle. 50 were seen on 10/9 at Rostherne and up to 20 were present around Mobberley Lake during September and October.

Siskin. (*Carduelis spinus*)

Numbers were lower than in 1974 when up to 60 were counted in Tatton. 30 was the maximum in 1975 on 13/11 with a similar number on 22/12 in Toft Wood.

Redpoll. (*Acanthis flammea*)

During May many pairs were watched displaying at the C.C.T. reserve at Plumley and in the birch woodland around Sandmere. Outside the breeding season Lindow Common would seem to have been the favourite haunt with 60 on 19/12 and 70-80 during October. On 6/12 1 Mealy Redpoll was seen with the flock on Lindow Common.

Twite. (*Acanthis flavirostris*)

Not to be seen very often in the area, a party of 50 on 7/4 in Tatton was an exceptional record.

Linnet. (*Acanthis cannabina*)

As is usual the species was recorded only occasionally in the winter months. Numbers increased in April with 20 on 30/4 in Mobberley. Breeding birds in a traditional area in Mobberley met with less success than usual but nevertheless large flocks built up again in the Autumn with 80 on 1/10 and 60 on 16/10 at Mobberley Lake. 100 were seen on 24/9 at Withington.

Bullfinch. (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*)

Hawfinch. (*Coccothraustes coccothraustes*)

A bird on 29/1 was the first record since 1971 at Rostherne.

House Sparrow. (*Passer domesticus*)

Tree Sparrow. (*Passer montanus*)

There were 40 at Rostherne on 24/8 and at Mobberley Lake a flock of 60 was counted on 9/12.

Starling. (*Sturnus vulgaris*)

40,000 + were roosting at Chelford on 25/10.

Jay. (*Garrulus glandarius*)

Magpie. (*pica pica*)

Numbers continue to increase and gatherings of up to 30 birds were recorded.

Jackdaw. (*Corvus monedula*)

Rook. (*Corvus frugilegus*)

Carrion Crow. (*Corvus corone corone*)

Hooded Crow. (*Corvus corone cornix*)

A bird on 11/10 at Rostherne was the first record for the Reserve since 1948.

A LIST OF FIRST AND LAST RECORDS OF NON-RESIDENT SPECIES

Many of the species recorded annually in the report are non-resident, they can be roughly divided into 3 groups :-

1. Summer Visitors such as swallow or whitethroat that nest here and then migrate south for the winter.
2. Winter Visitors such as Brambling or Smew that winter within the area, and move North to breed during the summer.
3. Passage Migrants that are seen annually in the area whilst moving from Winter to Summer quarters in the Spring and vice-versa in the Autumn. These include such species as Greenshank and Wheatear.

1. Summer Visitors

Species	First Record	Location	Last Record	Location
Little Ringed Plover	4 May	Sandmere	16 July	Mobberley
Common Sandpiper	3 April	Tatton	17 November	Lindow
Turtle Dove	10 June	Rostherne	5 August	Plumley
Cuckoo	13 April	Knutsford	25 August	Rostherne
Swift	3 May	Knutsford	2 September	Knutsford
Sand Martin	12 April	Tatton	6 October	Mobberley
Swallow	12 April	Tatton	29 October	Rostherne
House Martin	19 April	Rostherne	24 October	Mobberley
Yellow Wagtail	17 April	Tatton	28 September	Rostherne
Grasshopper Warbler	7 May	Knutsford	-	-
Sedge Warbler	7 May	Knutsford	17 September	Knutsford
Reed Warbler	24 April	Rostherne	28 September	Rostherne
Garden Warbler	15 May	Plumley	5 August	Shakerley
Blackcap	18 April	Rostherne	16 November	Tatton
Whitethroat	29 April	Lindow	20 September	Tatton
Lesser Whitethroat	12 May	Mobberley	10 August	Rostherne
Willow Warbler	18 April	Rostherne	19 September	Tatton
Chiff Chaff	28 March	Mobberley	26 September	Knutsford
Wood Warbler	4 June	Mobberley	12 July	Rostherne
Spotted Flycatcher	14 May	Rostherne	5 October	Rostherne

2. Winter Visitors

Species	Last Record	Location	First Record	Location
Bewick's Swan	18 January	Tatton	2 November	Rostherne
Wigeon	30 May	Rostherne	6 July	Rostherne
Pintail	19 April	"	28 August	Rostherne
Goldeneye	18 May	"	10 October	Tatton
Smew	20 April	Tatton	25 October	Tatton
Goosander	13 April	Rostherne	29 November	Tatton
Golden Plover	12 April	Tatton	24 July	Mobberley
Jack Snipe	1 April	Tatton	17 October	Tatton
Redshank	6 April;	Mobberley	6 July	Rostherne
Dunlin	1 May	Mobberley	24 July	Mobberley
Fieldfare	25 April	Rostherne	9 October	"
Redwing	12 April	"	9 October	"
Brambling	13 April	Knutsford	14 October	Chelford
Siskin	4 April	Rostherne	18 September	Tatton
Water Rail	12 March	Tatton	18 October	Rostherne

3. Birds Recorded on Passagea) Spring Passage

Species	Date	Locations
Garganey	17/4	Rostherne
Common Scoter	13/4	Withington
Spotted Redshank	30/4	Mobberley
Greenshank	30/4; 4/5	Mobberley
Black Tern	21/5; 9/6	Tatton, Rostherne
Arctic Tern	28/4; 2/6	Tatton, Rostherne
Commic Tern	11/5 to 1/6	Tatton & Rostherne
Little Tern	29/5	Rostherne
White Wagtail	25/3 to 22/4	Tatton, Rostherne, Mobberley
Water Pipit	12/3	Tatton
Redstart	27/4	Rostherne
Whinchat	Mid May	Rostherne
Wheatear	5/4 to 20/5	Saltersley, Chelford, Mobberley, Knutsford
Twite	7/4	Tatton

b) Autumn Passage

Species	Date	Location
Whooper Swan	3/11	Mobberley
Black-necked Grebe	17 & 18/8	Rostherne and Tatton
Garganey	16/8, 23/8, 23/9	Rostherne, Lindow, Rostherne
Common Scoter	8/10	Sandmere
Ringed Plover	24/7, 27/7	Rostherne, Mobberley
Greenshank	27/6 to 21/8	Rostherne & Tatton
Black Tern	5/8, 8/9 to 15/9	Shakerley, Rostherne

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SWALLOW RINGING IN THE KNUTSFORD AREA

During the eight year period 1968-1975 inclusive, and particularly from 1971 onwards, extensive ringing of swallows has been undertaken in the Knutsford and surrounding areas. This work has been carried out by the South Manchester Ringing Group as part of the national ringing scheme of the British Trust for Ornithology.

This has been done almost entirely in two ways. Firstly, individual members of the group have each undertaken to ring virtually all the swallow pulli hatched each season at his own particular adopted set of farms. Secondly, regular mist-netting had been done at Knutsford Moor, where a swallow roost occurs in late summer and early autumn each year. Occasionally swallows are caught elsewhere in very small numbers, for instance at Sand Martin colonies and sewage plants.

Ringing totals 1971-1975 inclusive.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Pulli</u>	<u>Full-grown</u>	<u>Total</u>
1971	945	338	1283
1972	962	937	1899
1973	893	203	1096
1974	612	107	719
1975	1357	639	2006
Total (1968-1975)	5199	2413	7612

The difference in numbers ringed from one year to another is caused by the varying number of personnel available in the group, and also the comparative abundance of swallows year by year. The latter can be assessed fairly accurately by group members who ring at the same series of farms annually, and who are therefore in a position to estimate the number of pairs of birds at each of their farms.

The ringing of swallow pulli is an easy, if time consuming occupation. Nests are fairly easy to find and very few are inaccessible to steps or ladders. Being indoors the weather is irrelevant. Second broods occur with most pairs, the nests being either re-used or new ones built close by. Third broods are occasionally raised and with an average of about five pulli per nest, good numbers can be ringed at each farm. Swallows fledge in approximately twenty one days, the young being ringed at the nest during the period seven to fourteen days after hatching. If they were ringed earlier, the ring could possibly fall over the foot and trap it. If the young were ringed later they might pre-fledge i.e. explode out of the nest due to the ringers close attendance, falling victims to cats, rats etc., even if they survived the fall.

The rings are manufactured from a magnesium alloy of aluminium shaped into a letter C. They are closed round the tarsus of the birds with special pliers and a tight butt joint is affected. These size A rings have an internal diameter of 2.3 mm, a height of 5.5 mm and a thickness of 0.38 mm, each ring weighing 0.047 grammes. That is about one five hundredth of the bird's body weight. Each ring bears the inscription Brit. Museum London SW7, plus a number which consists of two letters followed by five numbers. These rings last the life-time of the bird, are no handicap to it whatsoever, and are readily accepted by the parents.

The technique of catching swallows at roost is to cut a ride in the Phragmites and erect mist nets between vertical poles, projecting the nets several feet above the heads of the reeds. By erecting three nets in a line we can obtain a continuous sheet of nearly invisible net, usually 140 feet long and nine feet high. The elasticity of the material cushions the abrupt stop to the birds flight and the swallows then hang in a pocket of netting created by their own weight. They are a species very easily extracted from the net which is just as well when catches of over a hundred occur. Up to six ringers are involved in extracting the birds which are ringed, aged and, if adults, sexed at the net, each ringer keeping a record of his own work.

At the Knutsford roost there is always a very high percentage of juvenile birds. A small number of Sand Martins, Pied Wagtails and Reed Buntings are also caught, plus the odd Warbler in late summer. It is apparent then, that this study relates to first year swallows, though any recovery of an adult would be welcome. The roost is into full swing by late July and goes on until late August in some years and early October in others. Its size is very variable. It then dwindles to just a few birds and netting them is no longer worthwhile. Approximately two thousand birds are usually estimated on at least one occasion each season, though the roost is said to have been considerably bigger ten years ago.

By catching swallows which are already ringed we can build up a picture of the area from which they are drawn to the roost. These birds are often, though not always, ringed by the group as pulli. The places concerned are Cheadle Hulme, Hazel Grove, Newton, Bollington, Woodford, Mottram St. Andrew, Poynton, Tabley, Adlington, Aston by Budworth and Mobberley. The total lack of birds controlled from South of Knutsford Moor is caused by the complete absence of any ringing in that area. This gap is to be filled this year (1976).

Juvenile swallows ringed at the Knutsford roost have subsequently been reported nesting at the following places : Hazel Grove, Adlington, Prestbury Newton (two birds) and Wilmslow. This information has been supplied by D.R. Mirams and G. Bennett, who each do independent swallow studies in the above places.

A SYSTEMATIC LIST OF RECOVERIES AND CONTROLS

- X = recovered V = controlled (caught and released) f = female Pjf = post-juvenile female
 e = ringed elsewhere (not by the group) r = caught at roost.

movements of over 20 miles:

HS 67816	7- 8-69	juv.	Low Hauxley, Northumberland. (e)
v	1- 9-69		Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Lancashire. (r). 135 m. SSW
HX 67098	14- 6-69	pull.	Cheadle, Cheshire
v	30-12-69		Firgrove (Cape Province), SOUTH AFRICA (r)
JE 93991	1- 8-71	pull.	Pickmere, Cheshire (r)
v	10- 9-71		Cound, Nr.Shrewsbury, Shropshire. 48 m. S
JH 35796	30- 8-71	pull.	Great Warford, Cheshire.
v	2-10-71		Farlington Marsh, Hampshire. (r) 178m. SSE

Museum Paris

1632637	11- 5-72	p.j.F.	Oye-Plage (Pas de Calais), FRANCE (e)
v	30- 8-72		Knutsford, Cheshire. (r)
JH 47305	14- 6-72	pull.	Bryn y Maen, Colwyn Bay, Denbighshire. (e)
v	11- 9-72		Knutsford, Cheshire. (r) 56m. E
JH 46192	24- 6-72	pull.	High Legh, Cheshire.
v	4- 9-72		Radipole, Weymouth, Dorset. (r) 190 m. S
JH 46404	25- 6-72	pull.	Rostherne, Cheshire
v	10- 9-72		Bedworth, Warwickshire. (r) 69m. SE
JH 46476	16- 7-72	pull.	Rostherne, Cheshire.
v	11- 9-72		Blackmoorfoot, Yorkshire. (r) 31m. NE
JH 36048	26- 9-71	juv.	Knutsford, Cheshire. (r)
v	20- 9-72	f.	Burslem, Staffordshire. (r) 20m. SSE
JK 91851	14- 8-72	juv.	Knutsford, Cheshire. (r)
x	19-10-72		Nouadhibou, MAURITANIA
JN 33230	11- 9-72	juv.	Knutsford, Cheshire. (r)
x	9- 7-73		Nr. Sheffield, Yorkshire. 35m. E
JR 07290	7- 7-73	juv.	Knutsford, Cheshire. (r)
v	25- 8-73		Bedworth, Warwickshire. (r) 66m. SE

JS 34029	5- 8-73	pull.	Great Budworth, Cheshire.	
v	8- 9-73		Bedworth, Warwickshire. (r)	69m. SE
JR 07326	1- 7-73	pull.	Tabley, Cheshire.	
x	24-10-73		Cavalla (Firestone), LIBERIA	
JS 34566	11- 8-73	juv.	Knutsford, Cheshire. (r)	
v	27- 4-74		Wilaya de Setif (Constantine), ALGERIA	
JR 07170	28- 6-73	pull.	Mobberley, Cheshire.	
v	1- 5-74		Sidi Bouzid, TUNISIA	
JS 34472	13- 8-73	juv.	Knutsford, Cheshire. (r)	
x	10- 6-74		Hemmam Bou Hadjar (Oran), ALGERIA	
JS 61667	23- 6-74	pull.	High Legh, Cheshire.	
v	21- 8-74		Llangorse Lake, Breconshire. (r)	103m. SSW
KE 14534	10- 7-75	pull.	Mobberley, Cheshire.	
v	11- 8-75		Worsbrough Res. Barnsley, Yorks.	
KC 79963	19- 7-75	pull.	Comberbach, Cheshire.	
v	13- 8-75		Worsbrough Res. Barnsley, Yorks.	
v	18- 8-75		Wintersett Res. Wakefield, Yorks.	
KC 89183	2- 8-75	pull.	Comberbach, Cheshire.	
v	2-10-75		Maple Cross, Rickmansworth, Herts.	
KC 79707	5- 7-75	pull.	Tabley, Cheshire.	
v	16- 9-75		Hindley, Lancs.	

There have also been about 20 recoveries and controls of less than 20 miles movement. These are of course of less interest.

Whilst the results obtained by the South Manchester Ringing Group from its swallow ringing are very significant and exciting, it is its contribution to the BTO scheme which is most important. The group rings a very high proportion of the national total of swallow pullus, often as high as 10-15%.

The foreign recoveries help to confirm migration routes already known, though JK 91851 was the first ever British ringed swallow to be recovered in Mauritania and JR 07326 the first in Liberia. The french bird controlled at Knutsford on 30.8.72. is very interesting and the movement of four birds to Yorkshire in the segment E to NE was quite unexpected. This could indicate a trend of movement within the country, birds preferring to move East before commencing their journey south, to their South African winter quarters. Much more information would be required to prove this point.

Here is the BTO chart for the 133 swallows recovered and controlled during 1973.