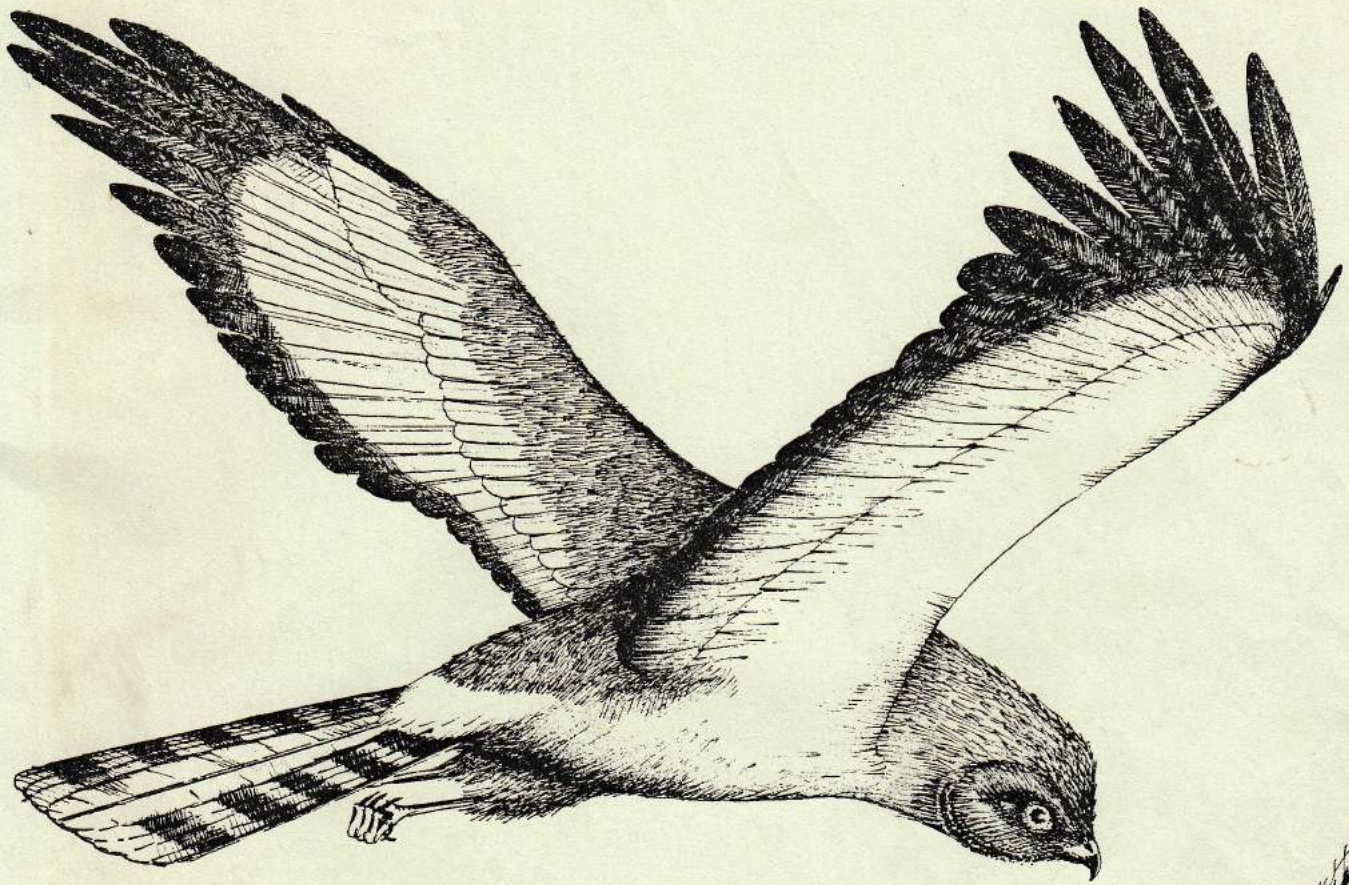


The Knutsford Ornithological Society



P.A.C.

BIRD REPORT 1978

THE KNUTSFORD ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY BIRD REPORT 1978

Despite its small size and distance from the coast the area covered by this report can be relied upon to turn up many interesting and unusual species every year. The majority of records, of course, come from either Tatton or Rostherne, the two most well-watched locations in the area. 1978 was no exception, Rostherne had Goshawk and the almost annual Osprey whilst at Tatton there were records of Spotted Crake for the second successive year plus Curlew Sandpiper and Sandwich Tern, two very unusual records for the park.

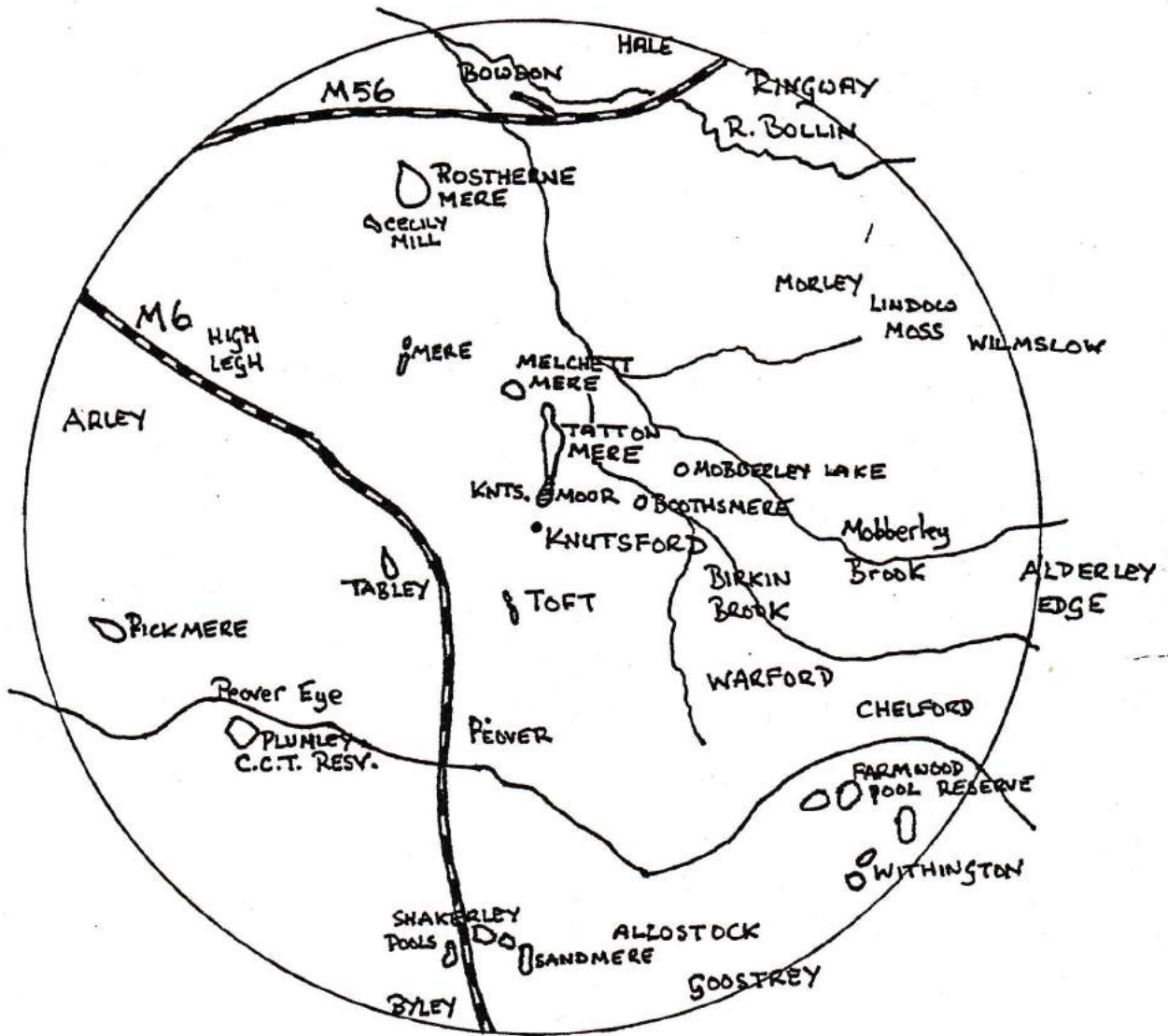
Elsewhere Knutsford Moor had a Hen Harrier; a Hoopoe spent two days in a garden in Mobberley during the spring and, also in Mobberley, one of the area's more experienced observers was surprised to see a Pratincole in flight in mid-June.

On a more mundane and perhaps more important level the breeding survey began well, all 46 tetrads being covered in the first full year of the project. 1978 was a good year for Cuckoos with many more sightings than usual and two fledglings were found, both in Dunnock's nests. Lesser whitethroats almost outnumbered common whitethroats and a pair of Barn Owls successfully reared young at a site in Mobberley.

M. Greenhalgh

REPORT EDITOR

THE AREA COVERED BY THIS REPORT



A SYSTEMATIC LIST OF BIRDS OBSERVED WITHIN THE AREA IN 1978

Nomenclature and Sequence as The Status of Birds in Britain and Ireland published by the British Ornithologists Union (1972).

Little Grebe. (Tachybaptus ruficollis)

Only small numbers recorded at Rostherne, the maximum being 3 on the 28/4. No breeding records received for Tabley or Rostherne but 2 pairs in Tatton reared 5 young.

Black-necked Grebe. (Podiceps nigricollis)

1 appeared at Rostherne on 2/1 and remained for 2 days (Many observers).

Great Crested Grebe. (Podiceps cristatus)

Monthly Maxima at Tatton and Rostherne

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rostherne	3	6	7	7	13	-	15	6	10	6	1	1
Tatton	18	22	10	8	3	3	11	9	10	5	24	37

Breeding Records

Farmwood Pool 1 Pair reared 1 young
 Rostherne No record of successful breeding
 Tabley No record of successful breeding
 Tatton 2 Pairs were recorded with 5 young on 26/7.
 On 11/7 2 young were seen riding on the back of an adult and being fed with tiny fish and aquatic insects. (A.C. Usher)

Cormorant. (Phalacrocorax carbo)

The Rostherne roost of 60 birds on 4/1 beat the previous highest count of 58 recorded on 21/12 1977. The maximum at Tatton was 24 on 3/12.

Heron. (Ardea cinerea)

The tree felling carried out at Tabley during the Autumn of 1977 does not seem to have effected the number of nests occupied, with 98 occupied nests counted on 2/5.

Mute Swan. (Cygnus Olor)

1 ringed adult, ring number 147, was seen throughout the year, throughout the area. It was ringed as a cygnet at Clifton Compville near Tamworth Staffs on 28/7/74 and has since been seen at Burslem on 14/10/77, Tamworth on 13/11/77. It spent most of 1978 at Rostherne and Tatton. Breeding records were received for Tatton where a single cygnet was reared to reach sub-adult stage by the end of the year and Tabley where 1 pair reared 5 young.

Whooper Swan. (Cygnus cygnus)

7 were present at Tatton on 29/11. (A.C. Usher)

Bewicks Swan. (Cygnus bewickii)

A flock of approximately 50 were seen over Knutsford flying east to their Russian breeding grounds on 8/3 (D.A. Pike) 5 birds were present at Rostherne on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th January.

Pink-footed Goose. (Anser fabalis brachyrhynchus)

A flock of 37 were seen over Tatton on 1/1 followed on 16/1 by a flock of 100 approximately over Mobberley. At Rostherne 20 were present on 15/1, later in the year 2 were recorded on 12/11 and 1 on 17/12. Tatton also saw a bird on 17/12.

White-fronted Goose. (Anser albifrons)

Single birds were recorded at Rostherne on 22/9, 3/11, 4/11, 8/12. 2 were seen on 19/12.

Greylag Goose. (Anser anser)

1978 began with a large flock of c 220 seen flying west over Mobberley on 26/2 (L. Mason). The now familiar sequence of events continued at Rostherne with single birds arriving in Spring followed by the main party in June, moulting, and then leaving at the end of July. The maximum number being 26 birds. Single birds were seen at Tabley on 5/7, Tatton on 10/9 and Mobberley on 29/8.

Snow Goose. (Anser caerulescens)

The "Hybrid Blue" was again recorded in the area but mainly at Tatton as in previous years.

Canada Goose. (Branta canadensis)

Location	Highest Total	Juveniles Reared
Rostherne	400	9
Tatton Park	900 ¹	36
Mobberley Lake	213 ²	-
Tabley Mere	-	51
Boothsmere	35	12
Toft Hall	50	
Mobb. Brickyard Pools	-	7
Double Wood	-	2
Total Juvs.		117

¹ New record number on 10/9
² New record number on 21/8

An interesting sighting came from Mobberley Lake where 20 birds arrived on 24/8 from the South East and began to drink very heavily, indicating perhaps that they had just completed a long journey (A.C. Usher). As in previous years a pair bred

at Mobberley Lake on the small Island but the 5 juveniles were taken on the night of 21/5.

Barnacle Goose. (Branta leucopsis)

At least 1 bird was present throughout the year moving between Tatton and Rostherne with the Canadas. 6 birds were present at Tatton on 10/9.

Shelduck. (Tadorna tadorna)

At Rostherne single birds were seen on 12/4, 14/6, 13/8, 15/8, 3/9 and 26/11. Small groups of 9 and 7 were seen on 4/2 and 4/5 respectively. Others records came from Tatton where 1 bird was present on 26/3 and 3 birds visited Tatton for 20 minutes flying from the South East and leaving in a North Easterly direction. Single birds were seen at Mobberley Lake on 26/3 and 28/12.

Mandarin Duck. (Aix galericulata)

A drake was present at Tatton 10/9.

Wigeon. (Anas penelope)

Monthly Maximas

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rostherne	84	65	32	3	-	-	2	1	10	9	12	58
Tatton	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	11	2	-	12

Disappointing results from Rostherne where the maximum count of 84 in January was well down on the 1977 maximum of 137.

Gadwall. (Anas strepera)

A lower number of sightings than in previous years with 2 birds present at Rostherne on 1/1 and 17/12. At Tatton a drake was seen on 3/9 and on the 17/12 2 drakes and a female were recorded.

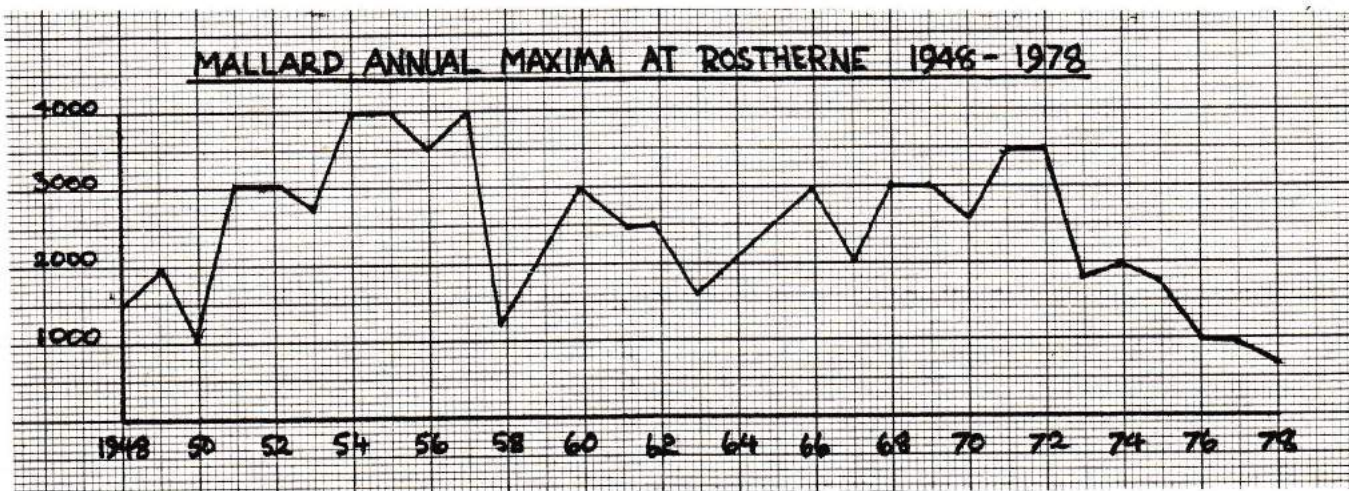
Teal. (Anas crecca)

Monthly Maxima at Rostherne and Tatton

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rostherne	366	100	34	5	1	-	2	1	464	512	400	610
Tatton	12	21	1	-	-	-	-	2	4	21	40	60

Encouraging results from Rostherne especially towards the end of the year, where the counts from September onwards were more or less double the numbers recorded over the same period in 1977 but still down on the 1976 maximum of 1,500. 5 birds were seen at Plumley on 6/8 and 14 were seen at Mobberley Lake on 29/3.

Mallard. (Anas platyrhynchos)



As the graph shows, the decline continues in the wintering population at Rostherne with the 1978 maximum count of 700 being the lowest total for at least 30 years. The Mallard population appears to be remaining stable at Tatton with good numbers recorded throughout the year. Plenty of evidence received to suggest that 1978 was a good year for the number of young reared especially at Tatton, where sightings of juveniles were recorded throughout the season.

Monthly Maxima at Rostherne and Tatton

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rostherne	418	450	120	100	115	-	350	400	700	512	700	600
Tatton	371	219	96	58	136	92	128	278	212	270	576	548

Pintail. (Anas acuta)

Disappointing results from Rostherne for 1978 compared with 1977 as the comparison below shows. 7 records from Tatton, 1 on 8/1, 1 female on 29/7, 1 on 23/9, 1 immature male on 3/10, 2 on 15/10, 1 on 12/11 and 6 on 7/12.

Monthly Maxima at Rostherne for 1977 and 1978

Rostherne	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
1977	160	97	66	8	-	-	27	1	31	232	207	109
1978	83	61	32	3	-	-	1	-	13	53	120	22

Shoveler. (Anas clypeata)

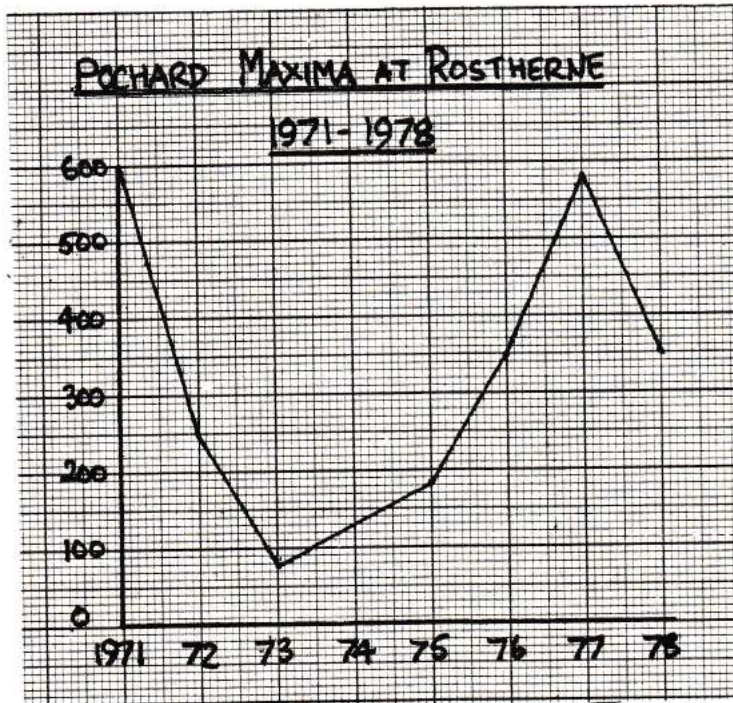
A good year for Shoveler at both Rostherne and Tatton, especially in the 2nd half with counts of 211 in September at Rostherne and 89 (Record) at Tatton also in September. 30 - 35 birds were

resident at Mere between September and November.

Monthly Maxima at Rostherne and Tatton

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rostherne	14	25	22	11	1	-	2	12	211	54	150	73
Tatton	1	-	-	2	-	4	4	78	89	68	17	18

Pochard. (Anas ferina)



As the graph shows the highest count at Rostherne for 1978 was 346, a 41% decrease from the 1977 high of 589. The figures for Tatton closely resemble 1977.

Monthly Maxima at Rostherne and Tatton

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rostherne	346	280	155	8	-	-	30	30	16	26	84	208
Tatton	62	55	41	3	1	8	27	86	177	81	135	65

Tufted Duck. (Aythya fuligula)

Good breeding records received for Tatton where 7 families totalling 26 young were seen on 11/7. Tatton remains the stronghold for this species throughout the year, the maximum number recorded being 326 in August.

Monthly Maxima at Rostherne and Tatton

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rostherne	50	50	-	25	12	-	110	102	41	7	36	23
Tatton	93	110	170	160	90	73	144	326	305	254	206	170

Scaup. (*Aythya marila*)

1 immature bird was reported at Rostherne on 5/2 being attacked by a male Pochard ! Another immature was recorded on 18/2 followed later in the year by a female on 2/11 and a male on 14/9.

Common Scoter. (*Melanitta Nigra*)

All records for this species come from Rostherne, 2 on 1/4, 3 on 6/7, 1 on 3/9, 2 on 23/11.

Goldeneye. (*Bucephala clangula*)

Tatton enjoyed another good year with the February, March and April numbers being well above 1977's corresponding counts. 1 female bird was recorded on Tatton on 29/7. Perhaps with these hard winters and short summers that we are experiencing at the moment, a pair might breed in Cheshire for the first time since the early 1930's, if the present weather trends continue.

Monthly Maxima for Rostherne and Tatton

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rostherne	4	27	8	7	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	6
Tatton	30	49	46	47	10	-	1	2	3	12	30	30

Red-breasted Merganser. (*Mergus serrator*)

A male and 2 females were seen at Rostherne on 6/5. (Rostherne Log).

Goosander. (*Mergus merganser*).

At Rostherne single birds were seen on 12/2, 13/8, 15/10 followed by 2 birds on 17/12. At Tatton a single female was recorded throughout early December and then joined by another female on 17/12 before leaving for Rostherne.

Smew. (*Mergus albellus*)

A single female spent January, February and up to the middle of March at Rostherne and Tatton before being joined by another female on 12/3. A female returned on 29/10 to Tatton and remained in the area until the year end.

Ruddy Duck. (*Oxyura jamaicensis*)

No breeding records from Rostherne but 2 families reared 11 young on Knutsford Moor. The highest count at Tatton of 33 in September was well down on 1977's highest count of 50.

Monthly Maxima at Rostherne and Tatton

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rostherne	1	4	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	1	3
Tatton	10	9	5	4	-	-	21	24	33	16	7	7

Osprey. (Pandion Haliaeetus)

A single bird was recorded at Rostherne on 1/5. (J.P. & L. Dawson).

Hen Harrier. (Circus Cyaneus)

A male was present at Knutsford Moor between 6.30 p.m and 7.30 p.m on 25/3. (Mrs. M. Turner).

Goshawk. (Accipiter gentilis)

A bird was seen at Rostherne on 2/4, 9/4 and 16/4. Later in the year a bird visited Rostherne on 13/11. (A.D. Burnett)

Sparrowhawk. (Accipiter nisus)

At Rostherne during 1978, 127 sightings were recorded in the log, of the 127 sightings 2 are particularly interesting. The first was on 22/1 when 3 females and 2 males were seen displaying together over the mere. (P. Ellis & J.P. Dawson). The second happened on 19/2 when a sparrowhawk took a redwing only for the prey to be taken by a carrion crow which in turn lost it to another carrion crow. Tatton also had a good number of sightings and reasonable evidence has been received to suggest that breeding took place successfully at 2 locations within the Park.

Buzzard. (Buteo buteo)

A disappointing year, for only 7 records have been received. At Rostherne single birds were seen on 1/9, 12/9, and 3/10 while at Tatton single birds were seen on 5/1, 7/1 and 23/5. 1 bird was seen in Tatton in July by one of our more inexperienced observers who has yet to learn the value of accurate field notes.

Kestrel. (Falco tinnuculus)

Merlin. Falco columbarius)

4 records for 1978, which must amount to an exceptional year for this species in our area. The sightings were: 1 on 15/1, and 1 on 29/1 at Rostherne, followed very much later in the year by 1 seen on 4/12 on Pavement Lane, Mobberley and again a few days later.

Red-legged Partridge. (Alectoris rufa)

A pair were seen in Mobberley on 11/5 and 1 was heard calling at the same location on 13/6.

Partridge. (Perdix perdix)

Locally common, perhaps the first tetrad results will show a true picture for this species.

Pheasant. (Phasianus colchicus)

Water Rail. (Rallus aquaticus)

Recorded at Rostherne in February, October, November and December. Knutsford Moor provided the usual amount of sightings with 1 heard calling at the end of June ! (J.P. Guest).

Spotted Crake. (Porzana porzana)

1 seen on Knutsford Moor on 21/9. (J.P. Guest)

Moorhen. (Gallinula chloropus)

Coot. (Fulica atra)

As in previous years large numbers built up outside the breeding season at both Rostherne and Tatton.

Maximum numbers recorded at Rostherne and Tatton outside the breeding season

	Jan	Feb	Mar	-	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rostherne	120	128	N/C		50	40	N/C	N/C	N/C	76
Tatton	73	30	74		200	308	400	310	208	149

Oystercatcher. (Haematopus ostralegus)

Rostherne saw 2 birds on 3/5, a single bird on 19/6 and again on 19/6. 2 birds visited Tatton on 16/4.

Lapwing. (Vanellus vanellus)

Flocks counted at the early part of the year were smaller than in recent years. The largest flock being 1,500 on 1/1 at Ashley.

Golden Plover. (Pluvialis apricaria)

As with the Lapwing the flocks of Golden Plover at the beginning were well down on previous years figures. 519 were recorded at Ashley on 1/1 and a flock of 600 were seen at Stubbs Lane, Mobberley on 4/1. A search of this bird's usual haunts on 11/2 revealed no birds present.

Ringed Plover. (Charadrius hiaticula)

2 at Mobberley Lake on 13/5 and 3 on 17/5.

Little Ringed Plover. (Charadrius dubius)

The only records of this species come from Mobberley Lake, where a pair bred successfully. This pair's attempts at breeding were fraught with disaster and it is only because of Tony Usher's dedicated vigilance that the pair bred successfully. Full marks to Tony and a lesson to all fireside birdwatchers in active conservation. Below is a day by day account of the events at Mobberley Lake, taken from Tony's notes:

- 3/4 2 birds arrive
- 12/4 Down to 1 bird
- 17/4 Still only 1 bird
- 22/4 2nd bird returns

- 24/4 Down to 1 bird again
25/4 2nd bird returns again
27/4 The pair seen displaying
29/4 Still displaying
30/4 A 3rd bird arrives
3/5 Down to 1 pair again and seen making a scrape
20/5 Scrape nest complete with 3 eggs
6/6 Nest destroyed by cattle
26/6 The birds have bred again, new nest found with 4 eggs
2/7 After continuous heavy rain the 4 eggs are found floating in the nest. Eggs placed by Tony in a plant pot with dry soil - Bird returns and begins to incubate the eggs. Later the same day the new 'artificial' nest is flooded too, so tony moves the nest 2!
3/7 Nest flooded again and the eggs are floating. The eggs moved to a new scrape 12" away birds seen to return to the new nest to incubate the 4 eggs.
8/7 The birds are seen to change over on incubation.
12/7 3 adults seen but the resident pair are incubating 3 eggs (1 egg vanished)
16/7 Young heard in eggs
17/7 1 juvenile seen in nest
18/7 2 juveniles seen together with 1 egg in nest
23/7 3 juveniles in nest all ringed by Stuart Burnet of the South Manchester Ringing Group

So with the assistance from one willing birdwatcher the parent birds succeeded in raising 3 new additions to their species. Sightings of little ringed plovers at Mobberley Lake continued into September, the last being of a ringed juvenile on 6/9.

Whimbrel. (Numenius phaeopus)

Only 1 record of a bird seen in flight over Rostherne on 31/7.

Curlew. (Numenius arquata)

The curlew remains a common bird in the Knutsford area with many records of breeding received for many locations.

Spotted Redshank. (Tringa erythropus)

1 seen flying over Melchett Mere in Tatton on 8/9 (J.P. Guest)

Redshank. (Tringa Totanus)

Only 1 record from Rostherne of 1 bird heard calling on 2/10 and only 2 records from Tatton, 1 on 27/3 and 1 on 16/4. At Mobberley Lake early spring migration was witnessed when single birds were seen on 8/3 and 9/3. A flock of 6 birds stayed for a short while on 26/3. This was before 1 single bird arrived on 6/4 and stayed until 4/5 unfortunately not attracting a mate.

Greenshank. (Tringa Nebularia)

Just 2 records for 1978. 1 bird flying over Mobberley on 30/5, 1 over Rostherne on 8/7.

Green Sandpiper. (Tringa ochropus)

Only 1 spring record of a single bird at Mobberley Lake on 15/3. Autumn migration was witnessed with a single bird on 7/8, again

at Mobberley Lake, followed by sightings at Tatton on 22/8 and 5/9 with 1 sighting at Rostherne on 2/9.

Common Sandpiper. (Actitis hypoleucos)

Frequent records from suitable localities during the spring migration but evidence of Autumn migration only coming from Rostherne where birds were seen on 6 occasions in July and August.

Snipe. (Gallinago gallinago)

A flock of 15 were seen in Mobberley on 19/2 during a spell of cold weather, that being the largest flock seen, well down on usual winter counts. Breeding took place in Tatton as a nest was found containing 4 eggs on 16/5.

Woodcock. (Scolopax rusticola)

Plenty of records from Tatton, Rostherne and Mobberley.

Jack Snipe. (Lymnocyptes minima)

As in the past, Melchett Mere in Tatton Park provided the only sightings for 1978, 2 on 15/1, and single birds seen on 12/2, 20/2, 5/3, 12/4, 7/11 and 10/11.

Dunlin. (Calidris alpina)

Location	Winter	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter
Mobberley Lake	1 on 3/1 1 on 29/1	1 on 29/4	1 on 8/7 *	1 on 20/8, 22/8, 24/8, 25/8, 3/9.	-
Rostherne	1 on 3/1	-	-	-	-
Tatton	-	-	-	4 on 22/8 1 on 12/9	1 on 20/12

* in full summer plumage

Curlew Sandpiper. (Alidris Ferruginea)

1 flew high over Tatton with a Dunlin on 12/9 (J.P. Guest)

Ruff. (Philomachos pugnax)

1 at Mobberley Lake on 7/8 (A.C. Usher)

Pratincole. (Glareola pratincola)

1 seen in Mobberley on 15/6 (A.J. Bond)

Great Skua. (Stercorarius Skua)

The following notes were extracted from the Rostherne log for 31/8. "Great Skua first noted at 1545 swimming on mere. Superficially resembling immature large gull but much darker, warmer brown upper breasts and underparts. Mobbed on water by black headed gulls. Took to wing showing clear white patches at base of

primaries. Mobbed by lapwings and 4 gulls as it flew over water then resettled, bill grey with black tip. Still present at 1615 when it flew around looking very big on wing." (J.P. Guest).

Gulls. (Genus Larus)

The Rostherne maximum gull roost was 9,200 on 3/11 compared with 8,000 in 1977, still very much lower than the roosts of 20,000 birds in the early 1970's.

Common Gull. (Larus Canus)

The roost at Rostherne seems to be returning to the number recorded in 1974 with 1978 showing an increase over 1977.

Year	Maxima
1974	2000
1975	500
1976	500
1977	650
1978	900

Herring Gull. (Larus argentatus)

1,400 were counted at Rostherne on 12/1 compared with a maximum of 1,000 for 1977, still well short of previous years.

Lesser Black-backed Gull. (Larus fuscus)

Spring passage was noticed on 21/5 when small numbers were seen flying North West over Moberley throughout the day. At Rostherne 300 birds were seen on 21/5 to confirm that spring passage movements were taking place. The largest number seen at Rostherne during the autumn was 592 on 29/10.

Great Black-backed Gull. (Larus marinus)

At Rostherne 24 were seen on 2/1 and 7 on 15/10. An adult with an immature bird was seen on 17/2 in Tatton.

Iceland Gull. (Larus glaucooides)

2 records only from Rostherne, 1 on 1/1 and an immature on 14/1.

Black-headed Gull. (Larus ridibundus)

Numbers at Rostherne were well down on previous years with the maximum being only 1,500 on 8/12. A bird was seen with its brown summer hood at Rostherne on 18/1 !

Little Gull. (Larus minutus)

2 birds, 1 an adult and the other a first summer bird, were seen at Rostherne on 3/5 with 11 common terns. (T. Wall)

Kittiwake. (Rissa tridactyla)

A party of 6 birds were seen with the gull roost at Rostherne on 2/2. 4 were also seen at Rostherne on 4/6.

Black Tern. (Chlidonias niger)

Location	Spring	Autumn
Tatton	2 - 25/4, 2 - 26/4, 2 - 27/4 1 - 3/5, 1 - 19/5	-
Rostherne	2 - 27/4, 1 - 28/4	1 - 6/9, 1 - 11/9

As we can see from the above table not much evidence of autumn passage received, with Rostherne holding only 2 records as against 19 records for the autumn of 1977.

Common Tern. (Sterna hirundo)

1978 followed the same pattern as 1977 with sightings at Tatton and Rostherne in the spring but no autumn sightings. The earliest record being 1 sighted at Tatton on 26/4 and the last record being 2 at Rostherne on 3/6.

Arctic Tern. (Sterna paradisaea)

Only 3 records, 1 at Rostherne on 24/5 and singles at Tatton on 27/4 and 14/5.

"Commic Tern". (Genus sterna)

All records come from Rostherne where 26 were seen on 6/5 and 13 were recorded on 2/7. The other records were, 4 on 7/5, 2 on 19/5, 19/5, 1 on 26/6, 1 on 9/7, 1 on 30/7.

Sandwich Tern. (Sterna sandvicensis)

1 seen at Tatton on 5/9. (J.P. Guest).

The following is taken from T. Hedley-Bell's "The Birds of Cheshire" published in 1962.

'On inland waters it is much rarer than the other sea terns. In 40 years Boyd had seen it only four times, twice in April, once in May and once in September. No other observers appear to have found the species at an inland locality.'

Stock Dove. (Columba oenas)

Woodpigeon. (Columba palumbus)

Turtle Dove. (Streptopelia turtur)

Only 2 records, 2 at Rostherne on 3/7 and 1 flying South over Knutsford Moor on 16/9.

Collared Dove. (Streptopelia decaocto)

Cuckoo. (Cuculus canorus)

The earliest record was when single birds were recorded at different localities on 17/4. Many records received including juvenile cuckoos being found in 2 dunnocks nests. The last record was of a bird seen on 19/7 at Sudlow's Fruit Farm.

Barn Owl. (Tyto alba)

A pair bred successfully in Mobberley, with 1 fledged young seen in July. Perhaps the decline of this species within our area has stopped and we may be able to look forward to more such breeding records in the future.

Little Owl. (Athene noctua)

Many records received, especially from Tatton but unfortunately no nesting sites were discovered.

Tawny Owl. (Strix aluco)

Recorded throughout the year at Rostherne, including 1 record of an adult bird feeding an immature bird on 24/5. 3 records from Tatton, birds were heard calling on 6/4 and 12/4 and 1 bird that had been shot was found on 16/5. Also recorded in Mobberley and Peover.

Swift. (Apus apus)

An influx of birds took place on 26/4, with birds being seen at Rostherne and Tatton. 300 were present at Tatton on 4/6. Normally, only occasional single stragglers are seen in late September but in 1978 a small flock of 19 was present at Tatton on 17/9 and 60 were seen on 26/9 at Soss Moss. The last record was of a single bird seen at Rostherne on 15/10, an exceptionally late record. (R.D. Fox).

Kingfisher. (Alcedo atthis)

The year began well when a nest was found at Melchett Mere in Tatton on 21/5. But the pair of birds abandoned the site. Other pairs were also recorded on Peover Eye and Birkin Brook. Also recorded at Rostherne throughout the year including 1 bird that was mist netted and ringed on 9/9.

Hoopoe. (Upupa epops)

A hoopoe was seen in a garden on Lady Lane, Mobberley on 6/5. (T. Hedley-Bell).

Green Woodpecker. (Picus viridis)

Great Spotted Woodpecker. (Dendrocopos major)

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker. (Dendrocopos minor)

Skylark. (Alauda arvensis)

The usual large flocks were to be seen during the autumn passage and the winter months at Warford and Ashley.

Sand Martin. (Riparia riparia)

The first bird arrived at Tatton on 27/3. The numbers at Tatton built up steadily until 17 were present on 3/4 but the number had dwindled down to 2 on 9/4 because of cold northerly winds causing the birds to temporarily return South to shelter from the cold spell in Cheshire. The last record was of a bird seen at Tatton on 17/9.

Swallow. (Hirundo rustica)

Present in the area from 3/4 to 29/10.

House Martin. (Delichon urbica)

The large autumn gatherings recorded in 1977, were again in evidence in the autumn of 1978 with 120 seen at Mobberley Lake on 21/9, 60 seen at the same location 2 days later and 100 seen at Tatton on 27/9. A bird was seen feeding young on 11/10 at Ilford's Works in Mobberley.

Yellow Wagtail. (Motacilla flava)

Large numbers were seen in the spring passage, with records of up to 27 seen in Tatton throughout April, and 20 seen on 3/5 also in Tatton. A pair of birds were recorded having bred in Tetrad Number SJ 78S. (A. Caldwell).

Grey Wagtail. (Motacilla cinerea)

As in previous years, this bird was to be seen at Rostherne throughout the year. A pair with a juvenile were seen at Astle Pool on 27/5.

Pied Wagtail. (Motacilla alba)

White Wagtail. (Motacilla alba alba)

Small numbers were seen passing through Tatton from late March to early May.

Tree Pipit. (Anthus trivialis)

Only 1 record of a single bird seen on 7/9 at Rostherne. (T. Wall).

Meadow Pipit. (Anthus pratensis)

20 birds were seen at Mobberley Lake on 12/4 including 6 larger Meadow pipits with grey backs, white underparts, bright orange legs and white head pattern possibly continental birds on their way to their Icelandic breeding grounds. (A.C. Usher).

Wren. (Troglodytes troglodytes)

Dunnock. (Prunella modularis)

Robin. (Erithacus rubecula)

Redstart. (Phoenicurus phoenicurus)

A male was seen at Rostherne on 7/5.

Whinchat. (Saxicola rubetra)

Single birds were seen at Rostherne on 28/4, 4/5, 5/5 and 6/5. At Tatton singles were recorded on 1/5 and 5/9.

Stonechat. (Saxicola torquata)

A male was seen in the Connifer Plantation by Dog Wood in Tatton on 30/3. (C. Goodie).

Wheatear. (Oenanthe oenanthe)

Plenty of records received of birds seen during spring passage from 3/4 through to 1/5. Single birds were seen at Rostherne on 7/8 and at Tatton on 9/8.

Blackbird. (Turdus merula)

Fieldfare. (Turdus pilaris)

Last winter record = 16/4 (in Mobberley - L. Mason)
First winter record = 18/10 (in Mobberley - A.C. Usher)

Redwing. (Turdus iliacus)

The large roost discovered at New Platt Wood, Allostock in the early part of last year was not recorded in 1978. A single bird was seen in Tatton on 1/5. (C. Goodie)

Mistle Thrush. (Turdus viscivorus)

Grasshopper Warbler. (Locustella naevia)

Only 3 records received, singles at Rostherne on 4/6 and 15/6 plus 1 seen on Knutsford Moor on 15/9.

Sedge Warbler. (Acrocephalus schoenobaenus)

Evidence received suggests successful breeding took place on Knutsford Moor and the Plumley Reserve. Also recorded at Rostherne and Tatton.

Reed Warbler. (Acrocephalus scirpaceus)

Present in the area from 25/4 until 30/9. Breeding took place at the usual sites.

Garden Warbler. (Sylvia borin)

Another successful year for this species with pairs breeding at Ashley, Astle Pool, Colshaw Hall, Mobberley, Plumley, Tabley and Tatton.

Blackcap. (Sylvia atricapilla)

Whitethroat. (Sylvia communis)

Singing males were seen at Colshaw Hall (2), Ashley (2), Plumley Reserve (1). Fledged young were seen at Mobberley on 1/8.

Lesser Whitethroat. (Sylvia curruca)

Recorded at all the usual haunts. A bird was mist netted at Rostherne on 16/7.

Willow Warbler. (Phylloscopus trochilus)

Chiffchaff. (Phylloscopus collybita)

Wood Warbler. (Phylloscopus sibilatrix)

All records came in the spring passage singles seen at Rostherne on 5/5 and 16/5. A male was seen at Hanging Bank in Tatton on 16/5 and a male was heard singing in Spring Wood on 21/5.

Goldcrest. (Regulus regulus)

Spotted Flycatcher. (Muscicapa striata)

Resident in small numbers.

Long-tailed Tit. ((Aegithalos caudatus)

Marsh Tit. (Parus palustris)

Willow Tit. (Parus montanus)

Coal Tit. (Parus ater)

Great Tit. (Parus major)

Blue Tit. (Parus caeruleus)

Nuthatch. (Sitta europaea)

Treecreeper. (Certhia familiaris)

Corn Bunting. (Emberiza calandra)

A flock of 40 were seen at Margaret Barclay's School in Mobberley on 29/1. (L. A. Mason). Singing males were seen at various sites during the breeding season.

Yellowhammer. (Emberiza citrinella)

Large winter flocks were seen in Mobberley, with 40 present at Margaret Barclay's School from 23/1 until the 29th. 25 were seen at Pavement Lane on 15/2. A nest was discovered in Mobberley on 12/3 ! Good numbers of singing males were recorded at various sites during the summer.

Reed Bunting. (Emberiza schoeniclus)

Numbers built up during the spring passage as in previous years. A pair seen at the Bathing Area in Tatton on 25/3, the first indication of the forthcoming spring passage.

Chaffinch. (Fringilla coelebs)

200 were seen at Mereheath Lane on 25/3 and a flock of 300 were seen at Ashley on 26/12.

Brambling. (Fringilla montifringilla)

The last record was on 3/5 and the first record was on 12/10. The last record on 3/5 was a singing male seen in Tatton !

Greenfinch. (Carduelis chloris)

A large flock was to be found in Tatton near the Old Hall early in the year. The numbers varied from 200 to 500 ..)

Goldfinch. (Carduelis carduelis)

Siskin. (Carduelis spinus)

The majority of the sightings were made at Rostherne including a flock of 50 on 29/10.

Redpoll. (Acanthis flammea)

A singing male was seen in Tatton on 23/4. Breeding took place at Plumley and Sandmere. A pair of mealy redpoll were seen on Pavement Lane on 15/2 during the cold spell. The mealy is a sub species from Northern Europe and is a rare and irregular winter visitor.

Linnet. (Acanthis cannabina)

Single birds were seen regularly during the winter months at Tatton and Rostherne. After the breeding season flocks built up with 70 seen at Cecily Mill, Rostherne on 12/10 and 80 seen at Nether Peover on 5/9.

Bullfinch. (Pyrrhula pyrrhula)

House Sparrow. (Passer domesticus)

Tree Sparrow. (Passer montanus)

Starling. (Sturnus vulgaris)

Jay. (Garrulus glandarius)

Magpie. (Pica pica)

A magpie was seen to rob a blackbird's nest at Rostherne on 26/4. A party of 13 were seen at Peover on 6/6.

Jackdaw. (Corvus monedula)

Rook. (Corvus frugilegus)

A new rookery has been established at Arden House in Ashley.

CONTRIBUTORS

A.J. Bond, S.A. Burnet, M. Crosby, A. Davison, J. Dawson, P. Ellis, A. Fox, R.D. Fox, R. Groom, C. Goodie, M. Greenhalgh, T. Hedley-Bell, R. Harrison, L. Mason, Rostherne Observatory Log, A. C. Usher.

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SPECIES RECORDED ON PASSAGE

SPRING

Species	Date	Location
Bittern	4/3	Tatton Park
Common Scoter	1/4	Rostherne
Goshawk	2/4	Rostherne
Hen Harrier	25/3	Knutsford Moor
Osprey	1/5	Rostherne
Oystercatcher	3/5	Rostherne
Green Sandpiper	15/3	Mobberley
Greenshank	30/5	Mobberley
Pratincole	15/6	Mobberley
Black Tern	26/4 - 3/5	Tatton Park
Common Tern	26/4 - 3/6	Tatton/Rostherne
"Commic" Tern	6/5 - 26/6	Tatton/Rostherne
Arctic Tern	27/4 - 24/5	Tatton/Rostherne
Hoopoe	6/5	Mobberley
Wheatear	3/4 - 1/5	Tatton/Rostherne
Stonechat	30/3	Tatton Park
Whinchat	28/4 - 6/5	Rostherne

SPECIES RECORDED ON PASSAGE

AUTUMN

Species	Date	Location
Garganey	13/8	Rostherne
Scaup	14/9	Rostherne
Common Scoter	3/9	Rostherne
Spotted Crake	21/9	Knutsford Moor
Whimbrel	31/7	Rostherne
Spotted Redshank	8/9	Tatton Park
Curlew Sandpiper	12/9	Rostherne
Ruff	7/8	Mobberley
Great Skua	31/8	Rostherne
Black Tern	6/9	Rostherne
"Common" Tern	2/7 - 30/7	Rostherne
Sandwich Tern	5/9	Tatton Park
Wheatear	9/8 - 25/8	Tatton Park
Whinchat	13/8 - 5/9	Tatton Park
Redstart	2/9	Budworth
Tree Pipit	7/9	Rostherne

WINTER VISITORS

Species	Last Record	Location	First Record	Location
Cormorant *	14/5	Rostherne	5/9	Tatton Park
Whooper Swan	-	-	29/11	Tatton Park
Bewicks Swan	8/3	Knutsford	6/12	Rostherne
Pink Footed Goose	16/1	Mobberley	12/10	Tatton Park
Teal *	20/4	Rostherne	5/9	Rostherne
Shelduck	-	-	23/9	Tatton Park
Gadwall	-	-	3/9	Tatton Park
Pintail	11/4	Rostherne	5/9	Rostherne
Wigeon *	11/4	Rostherne	3/9	Tatton Park
Goldeneye	1/5	Tatton Park	22/8	Tatton Park
Goosander	12/2	Rostherne	13/8	Rostherne
Smew	23/4	Tatton Park	29/10	Tatton Park
Water Rail	29/3	Tatton Park	10/10	Rostherne
Golden Plover	25/2	Tatton Park	22/8	Tatton Park
Dunlin	29/4	Mobberley Lake	20/8	Mobberley Lake
Redshank	9/7	Mobberley Lake	2/10	Rostherne
Snipe	23/5	Tatton Park	8/9	Tatton Park
Jack Snipe	1/5	Tatton Park	7/11	Tatton Park
Iceland Gull	14/1	Rostherne	-	-
Glaucous Gull	-	-	-	-
Redwing	1/5	Tatton Park	2/10	Rostherne
Fieldfare	2/4	Tatton Park	18/10	Mobberley
Brambling	3/5	Tatton Park	12/10	Tatton Park
Siskin	24/5	Rostherne	23/9	Tatton Park

Dates of those species marked with an asterisk are only approximate as a few birds tend to summer in the area.

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

SUMMER VISITORS

Species	First Record	Location	Last Record	Location
Little Ringed Plover	3/4	Mobberley Lake	6/9	Mobberley Lake
Common Sandpiper	25/4	Mobberley Lake	9/8	Rostherne
Turtle Dove	3/7	Rostherne	16/9	Knutsford Moor
Cuckoo	17/4	Moss Lane	19/7	Sudlow Fruit Farm
Swift	26/4	Tatton Park	15/10	Knutsford
Tree Pipit	-	-	7/9	Rostherne
Sand Martin	27/3	Tatton Park	17/9	Tatton Park
House Martin	23/4	Ashley	28/10	Queensway
Swallow	3/4	Tatton Park	29/10	Rostherne
Yellow Wagtail	16/4	Rostherne	12/9	Tatton Park
Grasshopper Warbler	4/6	Rostherne	15/9	Knutsford Moor
Sedge Warbler	29/4	Knutsford Moor	5/9	Knutsford Moor
Reed Warbler	25/4	Knutsford Moor	30/9	Knutsford Moor
Garden Warbler	5/5	Rostherne	5/9	Knutsford Moor
Blackcap	22/4	Tatton Park	16/9	Rostherne
Whitethroat	5/5	Rostherne	3/9	Rostherne
Lesser Whitethroat	4/5	Mobberley	16/7	Mobberley
Willow Warbler	16/4	Tatton Park	8/10	Rostherne
Chiff Chaff	10/3	Rostherne	3/10	Ashley
Wood Warbler	5/5	Rostherne	-	-
Spotted Flycatcher	27/5	Peover Hall	21/9	Knutsford Moor
Pied Flycatcher	-	-	-	-

THE BIRDS OF KNUTSFORD

by BOB GROOM

With the influx of warblers, flycatchers, hirundines, chats etc. in the spring months one tends to think that there are many more birds about in the summer than there are in winter. Certainly birdwatching opportunities are better from April to September than in the dark months of the year and most birds are much more noticeable in their bright, breeding season plumage. However, it is a fact that not only are there about the same number of bird species to be seen in the winter as in summer but in terms of absolute numbers of individual birds there may not be a great deal of difference between the two halves of the year, except the hardest winters when there is a mass exodus of wintering birds south and west.

Within the boundaries of Knutsford, from Windmill Wood on the south side to Tatton Mere in the north, the fields around Green Lane and Blackhill Lane in the west to Booth's Mere, Springwood and the Birkin Brook on the east side, some 65 species can be seen virtually the whole year round, although the same individuals do not necessarily compose the population in both winter and summer. Those species which we term 'resident' can actually include many individual migrants. Great numbers of starlings leave Scandinavia and the Continent in the autumn to winter in the British Isles, while some of our breeding starlings depart for points south. There are, of course, sedentary populations of birds like the Robin, Dunnock and Yellowhammer who may not leave the area during winter. Linnets which are 'resident' British birds, do, however depart from Knutsford and other inland breeding areas during the winter and in common with many other finches and buntings find slightly milder conditions and better feeding near the coast. A further 19 regular summer visitors (most breeding) and 16 regular winter visitors bring the total number of species that one can normally expect to see through the year to about 100. Quite a respectable total for a small semi-urban inland area in the north-west of England. Rarities, occasional visitors, vagrants and passage migrants bring the potential total up to about 140, but not all of these are seen every year, although some may be present briefly and escape detection. (Within the wider area covered by the Knutsford Ornithological Society's Bird Report, between 150 and 160 species have been reported in most years. A number of these are, of course, relative or extreme rarities).

The table below summarises the bird species to be seen in Knutsford family - by - family.

Group	Resident	Seasonal Visitors		Rarities Occasional Visitors and Passage Migrants
		Summer	Winter	
Grebes	2			3
Shearwaters				1
Cormorants	1+			
Hérons	1			
Bitterns				1
Swans	1			2
Geese	1			7
Ducks	3		8	5
Harriers				1
Hawks	1			
Buzzards				1
Falcons				1
Partridges	1			
Pheasants	1			
Crakes & Rails	2			
Coots	1			
Waders	2	1	2	3
Skuas				1
Gulls	4+		1	1
Terns				4
Doves & Pigeons	3			1
Cuckoos		1		
Owls	2			
Swifts		1		
Kingfishers	1			
Woodpeckers	3			
Larks	1			
Hirundines		3		
Wagtails	1	1	1	(1*)
Pipits	1			1
Waxwings				1
Wrens	1			
Accentors	1			
Chats	1	2		1
Thrushes	3		2	
Warblers		8		1
Kinglets	1			1
Flycatchers		1		1
Tits	6			
Nuthatches	1			
Creepers	1			
Buntings	3			
Finches	5	1	2	
Sparrows	2			
Starlings	1			
Corvids	5			(1*)
TOTALS	<u>65</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>16</u>	(*) sub-species <u>36</u>

+ Non-breeding but present in most months. More numerous in winter.

NOTE : The list of rarities is not meant to be exhaustive and has only been derived from records covering the past five years, mostly contained in the annual K.O.S. Bird Reports. From the point of view of local birdwatching, these species are the icing on the cake, rather than the cake itself. Those noted in Tatton Park north of Tatton Mere itself - including Melchett Mere records - have had to be excluded from the table as not in Knutsford. Birds do not, of course, observe human-drawn boundaries or categories of behaviour and there is inevitably some artificial standardisation involved in categorising species in a table such as the one above. The Cormorant, which does not breed in the area, can still be seen in almost every month of the year, although it is most numerous in winter. Since it cannot be counted in both the summer and winter visitor categories it has been included as a 'resident', although it is certainly not a resident in the same sense as a Blackbird or Song Thrush.

It is difficult to guess at which species could have been seen regularly in Knutsford earlier in the century but have now disappeared from the area. Certainly the Corncrake bred on agricultural land in the town up to at least the 1920's. Now it is not even a vagrant to the area. The Barn Owl was very much commoner in former times than it is today and Turtle Doves may well have bred in Knutsford before they began to desert East Cheshire in the 1940's. It seems unlikely that the Wryneck, once relatively common over much of England but now virtually extinct as a breeding bird, and the Red-Backed Shrike, widely distributed up to the 1950's but now reduced to remnant populations in the New Forest, East Anglia and the South-East, have bred anywhere near Knutsford in the present century. Even in 1900, Cheshire was on the edge of their breeding range and today they are extremely rare passage migrants in the county. No doubt the Bittern once bred locally but this must have been well before the end of the last century as Boyd ('A Country Parish', Collins 1951) reports that it last bred on Whitley Reed as long ago as about 1850, before the moss was drained. Nearby development seems to have affected the status of the Grasshopper Warbler, until recent years a regular summer visitor and breeding bird in the Knutsford Moor reedbed.

On the credit side, Knutsford has gained a number of breeding and visiting species since the Second World War. Amongst them Collared Dove, Ruddy Duck and Curlew as breeding birds, Cormorant, Greater and Lesser Black-Backed Gulls as regular visitors.

The Nuthatch today a common enough breeding bird in Tatton Park and Windmill (Toft) Wood, is on the edge of its range in Cheshire. It has apparently spread North during the present century, reaching North Cheshire in numbers in the 1930's and '40's and may well leave the area again if the cooling trend of recent years (presumably the reason for many Northern species beginning to breed in Scotland in the present decade)

continues until the end of the century, as many climatologists predict it will.

The status of some birds, such as the Woodcock and the Secretive Water Rail, is unclear and there is still much to be learnt about the comings and goings of even the more familiar species. Why should the Corn Bunting be resident in one area of agricultural land and yet in another apparently similar area it is not to be found? There is certainly plenty of scope for members of the Knutsford Ornithological Society to add to the stock of knowledge about the birds of Knutsford so that one day a much more detailed and comprehensive version of the survey I have attempted here can be written.