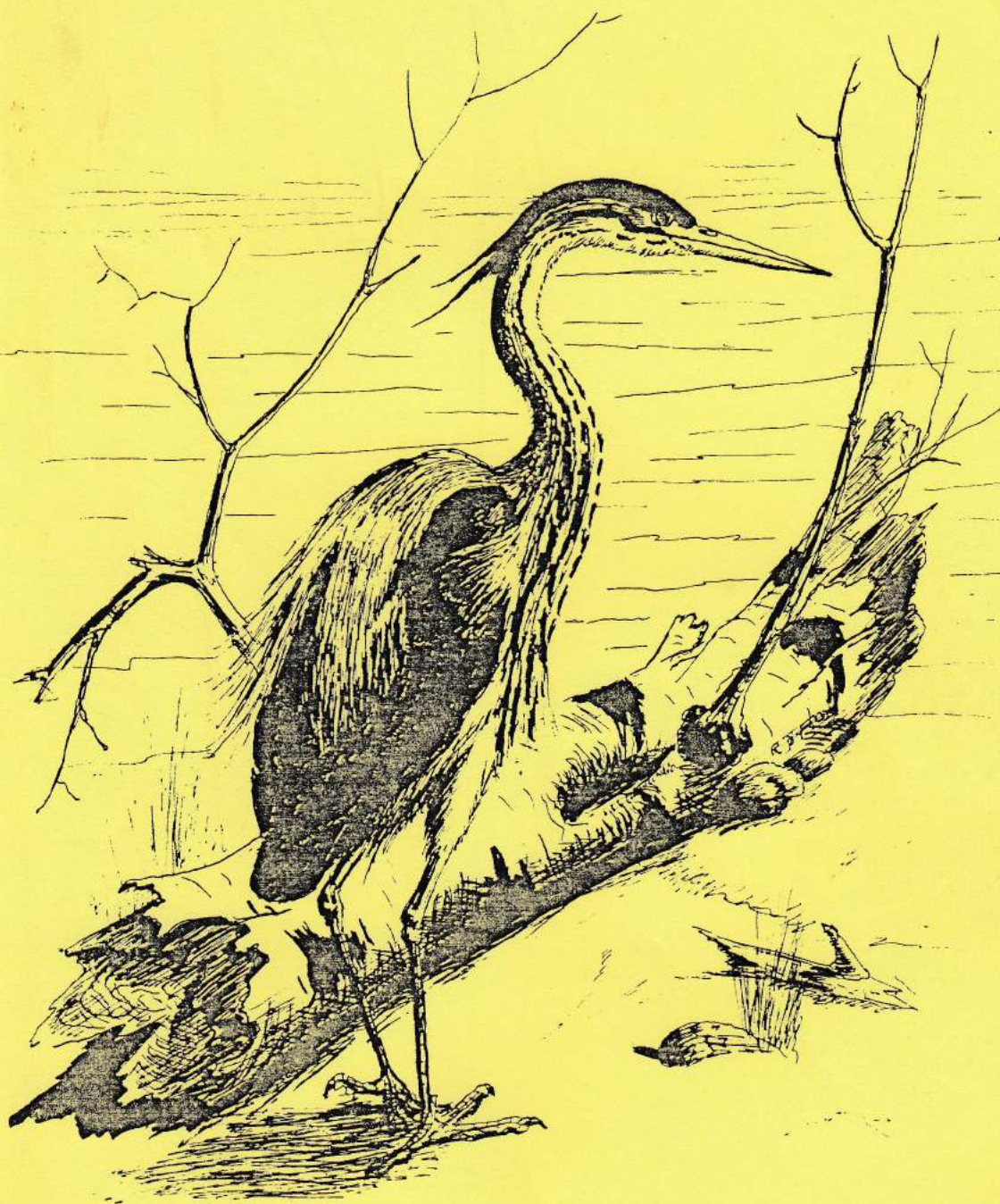


The Knutsford Ornithological Society



Bird Report 1977

THE KNUTSFORD ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY BIRD REPORT 1977.

Rostherne enjoyed a vintage year in 1977, Slavonian Grebe, Bean Goose, Goshawk, Hobby, Marsh Harrier, Bearded Tit, Purple Heron and Little Shearwater were all recorded on the reserve. Tatton had Pied Flycatcher, Black-necked Grebe and Spotted Crake whilst a pair of Ruddy Duck reared seven young on Knutsford Moor, making it the most northerly location in England where the species has so far bred successfully. Mobberley Lake again attracted a fair number of waders including Black-tailed Godwit and Wood Sandpiper and during the spring a Hoopoe spent two days in a garden at Goostrey.

The Society is a member of the Cheshire Ornithological Association, an amalgamation of most of the ornithological and natural history societies in the county. The Association was formed some years ago to promote and protect the interests of birds and birdwatchers throughout Cheshire. In order to fulfil these obligations it was felt that a thorough survey of the distribution of breeding birds in the county was needed and after a series of meetings at the end of 1977 it was decided that the project should begin in the spring of 1978 and run for four years.

The idea is that the project will be run along the lines of the B.T.O. survey of the early 1970's but would be based on 'tetrads' or squares of 2 km x 2 km instead of the original 10 km squares. Our own society has undertaken to cover nearly 50 tetrads, and in an age when most people seem quite content to sit at home during the evening and watch 'The World about us' or 'Wildlife on One', joining the ever increasing ranks of fireside naturalists, it was most encouraging to find so many members offering their services without too much cajoling.

Most society members will be familiar with the magazine 'British Birds', a monthly publication covering all aspects of ornithology. The annual subscription is £8, but members can now receive twelve issues for only £6 using the special forms provided with this report

A. C. Usher
Report Editor

OFFICERS 1977-8

President	W. Mulligan MBOU	Chairman	J. Somerville
Secretary.....	P. B. Perkins	Treasurer	R. Groom
Field Meeting Officer:	Mrs. M. Holt	Lectures Officer:	L. Roome
Report Editor.....	A. C. Usher		
Committee Members ...	Mrs. S. Fielding, Mrs. J. Thornley, L. Mason		

FUTURE EVENTS

Field Meetings

1978

May 5/6/7	Minsmere
June 18	Bempton
July 9	Wildboarclough
Sept 16	Spurn
Oct 6/7/8	Holy Island
Nov 4	Frodsham
Dec 2	Red Rocks

1979

Jan 13	Slimbridge
Feb 10	Morecambe abd Leighton Moss
Mar 11	Open
Apr 9	Llandudno
May 7/8/9	Minsmere

Indoor Meetings

1978

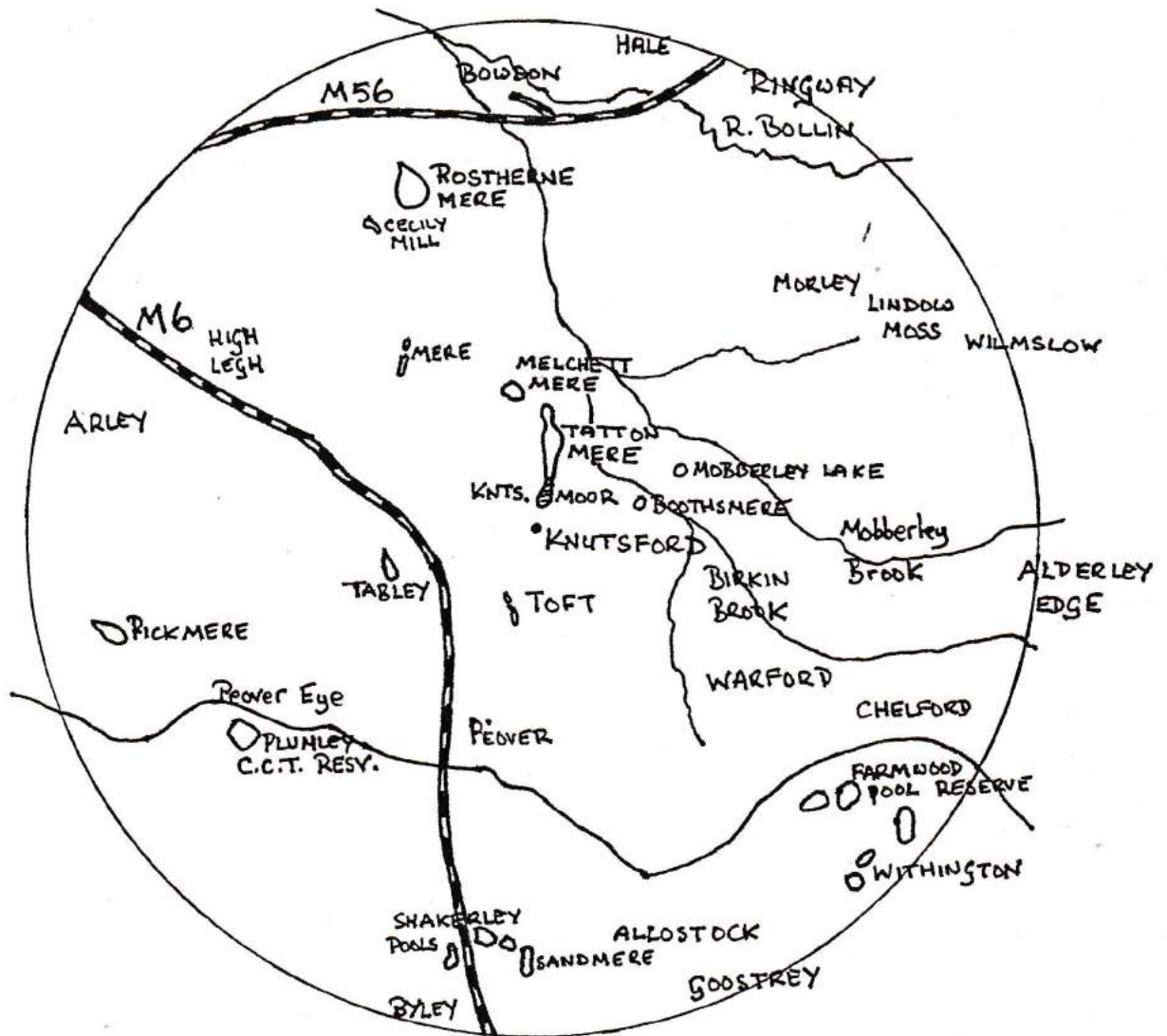
May 19	A.G.M.
June 23	
July 25	
Sept 22	
Oct 27	
Nov 24	Film Night
Dec 15	Christmas Party

1979

Jan 26	
Feb 23	
Mar 23	
Apr 27	A.G.M.

Indoor meetings are held in the Buffet Room, Civic Hall, Knutsford at 7.45 p.m.

THE AREA COVERED by THIS REPORT



A SYSTEMATIC LIST OF BIRDS OBSERVED WITHIN THE AREA IN 1977.

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

Little Grebe. (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*)

Small numbers were recorded throughout the year at all local waters, the maximum being 10 at Tatton on 30/12. During the Summer young were reared at Tabley where 1 juvenile bird was noted on 28/7, Rostherne 2 on 28/7 and Tatton where 2 pairs reared 3 young.

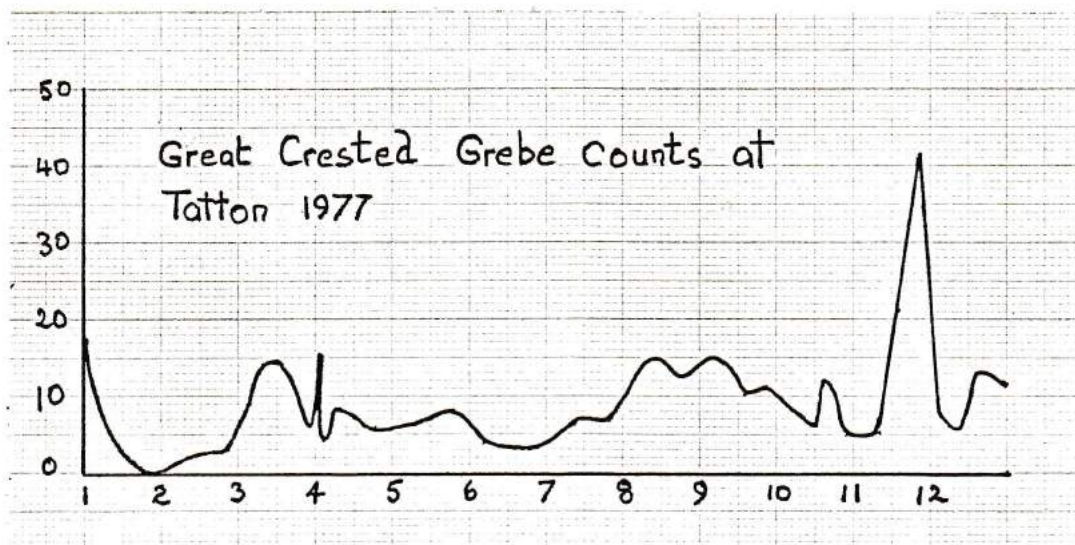
Black-necked Grebe. (*Podiceps nigricollis*)

1 at Tatton in full summer plumage on 23/3. (D. R. Talbot)

Slavonian Grebe. (*Podiceps auritus*)

1 at Rostherne on 24/12. (Many Observers).

Great Crested Grebe. (*Podiceps cristatus*)



The year began with low counts at Tatton and Rostherne, a result of cold weather in December 1976. During the first few days of the year a substantial influx occurred with 15 on 3/1 at Tatton and 17 at Rostherne a day earlier. A further cold spell in January resulted in a rapid reduction in numbers with none at Tatton on 29/1 and only 1 at Rostherne. Counts remained low in February but increased during March when, as the graph shows, there was some evidence of passage at Tatton. Successful breeding records came from Tatton (5 young), Shakerley (3), Sandmere (1), Farmwood Pool (1) and Rostherne (2). During the Autumn and early Winter counts remained somewhat lower than in previous years with a maximum of 41 at Tatton on 27/11.

Monthly Maxima at Tatton and Rostherne.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jne	Jly	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rostherne	15	13	9	6	9	13	13	6	4	9	13	1
Tatton	17	3	14	15	8	4	7	14	14	12	41	13

Manx Shearwater. (*Puffinus puffinus*)

1 found Mere Heath Lane, Knutsford on 7/8 was released next day at West Kirby.

Little Shearwater. (*Puffinus assimilis*)

A bird of the Madeiran race (*P.A. baroli*) arrived at Rostherne on 29/6. Unfortunately records of this nature invariably concern sick birds and this proved to be the case at Rostherne, it was taken from the mere on 1/7 and died the next day.

Cormorant. (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

The Rostherne roost reached a new high of 58 birds on 21/12. Recorded at all other local waters of any size especially Tatton where 24 were counted on 4/12.

Heron. (*Ardea cinerea*)

84 occupied nests were counted at Tabley, many of the trees used for nesting were felled during the Autumn and it remains to be seen what effect this has on numbers in 1978. Elsewhere good numbers of records especially during the period June to October.

Purple Heron. (*Ardea purpurea*)

1 at Rostherne on 11/7 (T. Wall, R. Harrison, G. Wall)

Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*)

Recorded regularly, but in small numbers with the only 2 breeding records coming from Tatton where a single cygnet reached the flying stage and Tabley where 4 young were reared.

Whooper Swan. (*Cygnus cygnus*)

An immature bird was present at Rostherne on 8/12. (R. Fox, T. Wall).

Bewicks Swan. (*Cygnus bewickii*)

Migrating flocks in March, with 24 at Rostherne on 3/3 and 25 flying South-east over Tatton on 20/3. At the other end of the year 8 adults at Rostherne on 21/10 followed by 1 on 29/10, 2 on 27/12 and 5 on 29/12. 4 were seen at Withington on 13/11 whilst at Tatton 4 Juveniles and 3 adults put in a brief appearance on 19/11.

Pink-footed Goose. (*Anser fabalis brachyrhynchus*)

2 records of the same flock over Ringway on 2/1, a figure of 82 from one source and c.50 from the second. 8 feral birds at Rostherne on 14/6. Several sightings in the Autumn beginning with c.300 over Mobberley on 17/11, followed by a single injured bird at Tatton on 3/12 and, in all probability, the same bird at Rostherne later in the day. 6 flying North-west at Rostherne on 29/12 was the years final record.

Bean Goose. (*Anser fabalis fabalis*)

1 seen in flight at Rostherne on 12/2. (J. P. Guest).

White-fronted Goose. (*Anser albifrons*)

25 flew North low over Tatton on 3/1 and later landed at Rostherne, where the flock proved to consist of 15 adults and 10 Juveniles. 2 days later 20 were seen in flight over Rostherne. A bird of the Greenland race (*A. a. flavirostris*) at Tatton on 28/8 was no doubt an escape from a wildfowl collection.

Lesser White-fronted Goose. (*Anser erythropus*)

A bird at Rostherne on 7/1 was probably the individual present in the area from June 1976.

Greylag Goose. (*Anser anser*)

Up to 4 birds were frequently seen with the Canada Geese flocks at various times during the Spring and Autumn. Events at Rostherne followed closely a pattern established since 1975, with up to 4 during the Spring preceding a sudden influx in June with 10 on 6/6 building up to 18 on 10/7. The flock again moulted on the mere and remained until late July when, as in 1975 and 1976, they then moved on.

Snow Goose. (*Anser caerulescens*)

The hybrid bird very closely resembling this species was again noted many times during the year at Tatton, Chelford, Rostherne and Tabley.

Canada Goose. (*Branta canadensis*)

The species enjoyed another successful breeding season with juveniles at Rostherne (21), Tatton (17), Tabley (40), Boothsmere (17), Sandmere (4), Shakerley (5), Farmwood Pool (4), Withington (10) and Mobberley Lake (4). At Tatton a massive flock of 734 was counted on 18/9 whilst at Rostherne 700 were present 4 days later. A bird first recorded at Rostherne in June 1976 was again seen many times during the year at Tatton and Rostherne. Easily picked out by its small size it was considered to be an example of the race *B.C. hutchinsii* which has been recorded in the wild several times in Ireland and Scotland.

Barnacle Goose. (*Branta leucopsis*)

Up to 6 recorded amongst Canada Geese flocks in every month of the year. 3 were paired with Canadas at Tatton during the Spring.

Shelduck. (*Tadorna tadorna*)

At Rostherne there were 4 on 19/2, 2 on 16/4 and 1 on 27/4. A female on 12 and 13/11 was joined by another on 14/11 and 6 flew over the reserve on 18/11. On 27/7 a flock of 18 on moult migration were seen high over Knutsford flying in a north-easterly direction.

Mandarin Duck. (*Aix galericulata*)

A drake was recorded at Tatton on 19/5.

Wigeon. (*Anas penelope*)

Few records except from Rostherne where the species again wintered in good numbers with a maximum of 137 on 12/2. This was rather lower than 1976 when 180 were counted, but still well up on 1975 when 60 was the maximum. It's perhaps of interest that all three annual maxima came in February.

Monthly Maxima at Rostherne

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jne	Jly	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rostherne	95	137	90	8	1	0	3	3	4	9	50	100

Gadwall. (*Anas strepera*)

At Rostherne birds were seen in every month of the year with the exception of May and November. Most records concerned single birds but a male and female were present on a number of occasions in the period January to April and on 23/8 4 were counted. At Tatton a pair were noted on 6/3 with single females on 18/9 and 1/10.

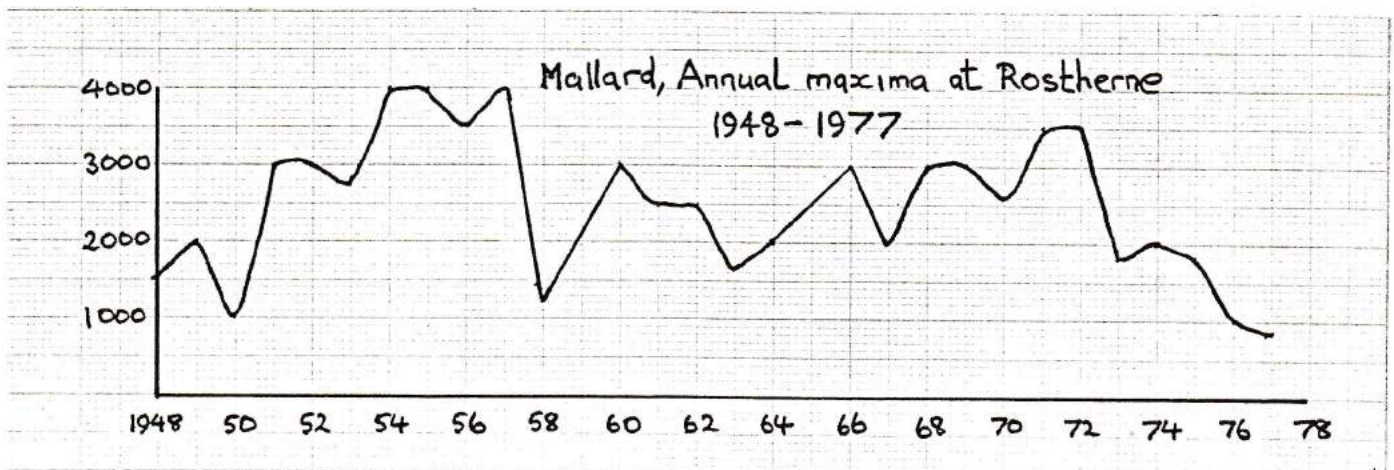
Teal. (*Anas crecca*)

Good numbers were present at Tatton during the cold spell at the beginning of the year with 50 on 3/1 and 55 on 3/2. Counts at Rostherne were very low, 340 on 27/11 was the maximum, comparing badly with 1,500 in 1976 and 1,800 in 1975. Small numbers were also counted at Farmwood Pool, Mobberley Lake, Tabley and Boothsmere.

Monthly Maxima at Tatton and Rostherne.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jne	Jly	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rostherne	263	275	90	25	3	3	4	15	177	240	340	323
Tatton	50	55	4	4	0	1	1	3	2	26	28	8

Mallard. (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

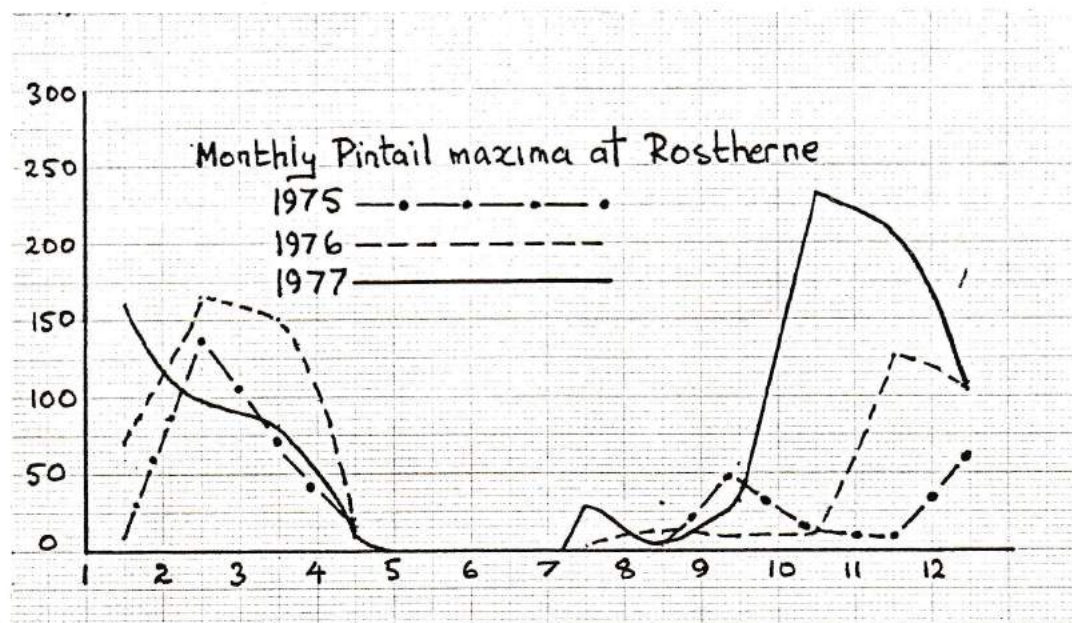


The graph is of annual maxima at Rostherne since 1948 and shows the decline in the wintering population from 4,000 in the 1950's down to only 850 in 1977. Nevertheless the reserve continues to attract larger numbers than any other local water, being approached only by Tatton where 544 were counted on 2/1 and Farmwood Pool with 340 on 16/1. Young were reared throughout the area during the long breeding season of this species, day old chicks were recorded at Tatton as early as 15/4 and as late as 8/8.

Monthly Maxima at Tatton and Rostherne

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jne	Jly	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rostherne	700	397	154	70	155	496	450	650	700	850	750	N/C
Tatton	544	283	146	76	62	109	112	126	333	388	366	356

Pintail. (*Anas acuta*)



No cause for any concern with the Pintail which continues to go from strength to strength at Rostherne. As the graph shows October produced another reserve record when 232 were counted. 5 were seen over Shakerley on 15/10 and Tatton had 3 records 14 on 11/12, 9 on 18/12 and a single male on 30/12.

Monthly Maxima at Rostherne

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jne	Jly	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rostherne	160	97	66	8	0	0	27	1	31	232	207	109

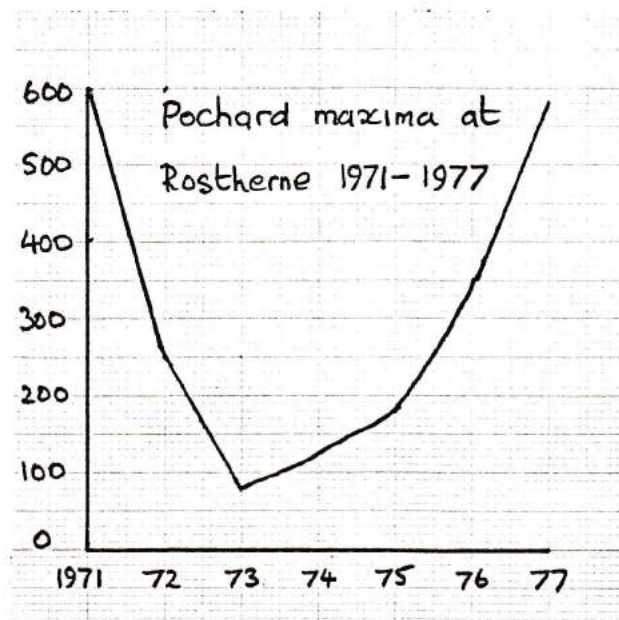
Shoveler. (*Anas clypeata*)

Low counts during the first half of the year but good numbers in the second with 108 at Rostherne on 2/10, 23 at Tatton on 17/8 and up to 15 at Farmwood Pool in December.

Monthly Maxima at Rostherne and Tatton

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jne	Jly	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rostherne	9	5	7	3	6	6	6	50	69	108	59	31
Tatton	9	3	4	2	0	0	0	23	8	14	15	9

Pochard. (*Anas ferina*)



Although numbers at Tatton remained lower than in the previous year, at Rostherne no less than 585 were counted on 16/1. As can be seen from the graph after a decline during the early 1970's numbers wintering on the reserve are rapidly approaching the healthy figure of 600 recorded in 1971.

Monthly Maxima at Tatton and Rostherne.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jne	Jly	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rostherne	589	360	80	12	5	25	51	44	165	99	205	31
Tatton	36	68	21	3	0	5	12	70	89	156	85	71

Tufted Duck. (*Aythya fuligula*)

Fewer breeding records than 1976 with only one pair, each with 6 young, at Tatton and Rostherne, although 3 families were seen at Cecily Mill and a pair reared 7 young at Mere. Large aggregations outside the breeding season especially at Rostherne, 197 on 24/7 and Tatton with 289 on 28/8.

Monthly Maxima at Tatton and Rostherne.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jne	Jly	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Tatton	128	143	143	154	66	87	75	289	257	201	127	73
Rostherne	141	85	27	50	18	30	197	185	41	48	47	52

Scaup. (*Aythya marila*)

An immature male was present at Rostherne from 15/1 to 1/2 when it was joined by a second bird, also an immature male. The two stayed together until 5/2 when one left, the remaining bird being noted almost daily up to 11/5. The Rostherne log also records a female on 30/10.

Goldeneye. (*Bucephala clangula*)

Single figure counts from Tabley, Farmwood Pool, Withington, Boothsmere Dovemere and Shakerley. Up to 14 at Rostherne during February and March but the highest numbers as usual coming from Tatton. 29 were counted on 26/1 and this rose to 39 in March and April as birds prepared to depart for their summer breeding grounds. The first returning birds were recorded from mid-October and by Christmas the Tatton flock numbered 31.

Monthly Maxima at Tatton and Rostherne.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jne	Jly	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rostherne	9	14	14	13	3	0	0	0	0	3	8	12
Tatton	19	32	39	39	10	0	0	0	0	5	21	31

Red-breasted Merganser. (*Mergus serrator*)

A female was seen at Tatton on 12/2. (A.C. Usher, L. Mason).

Goosander. (*Mergus merganser*)

Apart from a drake at Rostherne on 9/12 the only record concerns a "redhead" (female or immature bird) seen on the mere from 10/12 to the end of the year. This bird also spent some time on Tatton Parks Melchett Mere, so accounting for records there on 10, 11 and 18/12.

Smew. (*Mergus albellus*)

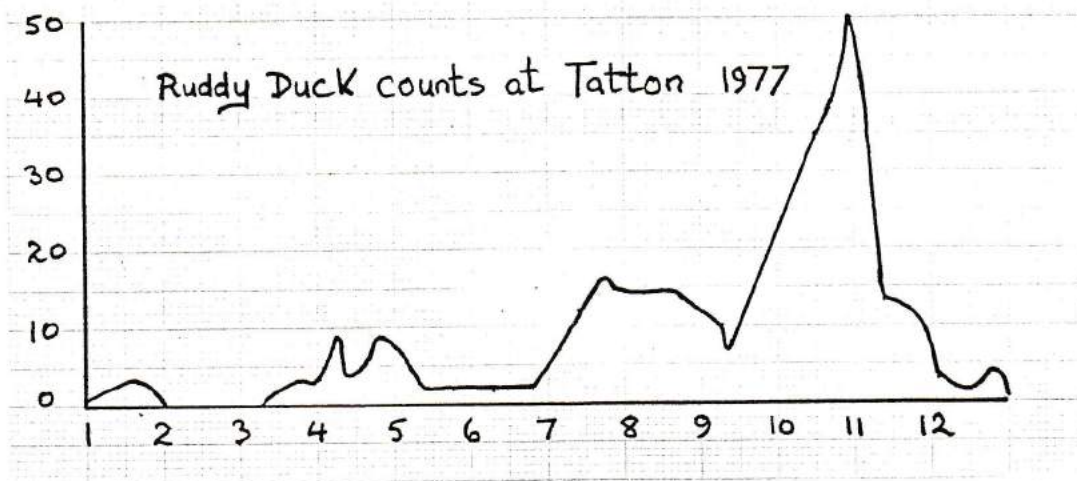
One, and occasionally two females at Tatton from the start of the year through to April when the last record was of 2 females on 19/4. Two birds duly reappeared on 24/11 remaining until the year end. The Tatton birds wandered to Rostherne from time to time and also to nearby Cecily Mill where a female was seen on 28/3.

Ruddy Duck. (*Oxyura jamaicensis*)

A species very much on the increase, good winter counts at Rostherne with 20 on 9/1 and 15 on 3/12. At Tatton a pair reared 7 young, probably the most Northerley location in England where the species has so far bred successfully. During the autumn a quite spectacular influx took place resulting in a count of 50 on 29/10, breaking all sorts of area records and probably also the county record.

Monthly Maxima at Tatton and Rostherne.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jne	Jly	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rostherne	20	7	5	2	3	0	2	1	1	3	6	15
Tatton	4	0	3	9	2	2	16	14	15	50	42	7



Marsh Harrier. (*Circus aeruginosus*)

A male at Rostherne on 4/4 was the first record since 1913. (R. Harrison)

Goshawk. (*Accipiter gentilis*)

2 on 10/12 at Rostherne. (T. Wall).

Sparrowhawk. (*Accipiter nisus*)

The species continues to increase, being recorded frequently throughout the area, especially Allostock (mainly during the Winter), Mobberley, Tatton and Rostherne. In the Spring displaying adults were observed at a number of locations and during the Summer adults were seen carrying prey to several nest sites. The Rostherne population appears to have developed an appetite for the unusual, last year it will be remembered a bird took a Sanderling. This year one was seen to chase and catch a Black Tern, which it carried for a few seconds before releasing it, quite unconcerned by the whole affair the tern then resumed feeding!

Buzzard. (*Buteo buteo*)

At Rostherne single birds were recorded on a number of occasions during the period 2/1 to 18/4 with further records on 8/10 and 19/11. Singles also at Tatton in January, March and May but 2 on 30/1 and 12/3 with 3 displaying on 19/3. Seen also in August, 1 on 9/8, 12/8, 24/8 and 2 on 12/8. It seems unlikely that any birds bred or, especially after last years infamous events, were allowed to breed.

Kestrel. (*Falco tinnuculus*)

No reports of any consequence were received although some observers feel that there has been a slight decrease in numbers over the past few years.

Merlin. (*Falco columbarius*)

A male at Rostherne on 1/5. (A.G. and R.D. Fox).

Hobby. (*Falco subbuteo*)

A male at Rostherne on 23/4 was the areas first record since 1972.
(A.G. and R.D. Fox).

Red-legged Partridge. (*Alectoris rufa*)

A male and female at Mobberley on 4/5 and again on 26/5. A pair bred near the C.C.T. Reserve at Plumley with 3 young on 27/7, but only 2 on 10/8.

Partridge. (*Perdix perdix*)

Frequent records from all parts of the area, the species appears to be decreasing in some parts of the country but seems to be holding its own or even increasing locally.

Pheasant. (*Phasianus colchicus*)

Water Rail. (*Rallus aquaticus*)

Single birds at Rostherne in the last three months of the year. Recorded more frequently on Knutsford Moor, as late as 29/4 and again from 15/10. 3 separate birds were seen on 4/12.

Spotted Crane (*Porzana porzana*)

One flushed from Melchett Mere on 23/1. (P.G. Wolstenholme et.al.)

Moorhen. (*Gallinula chloropus*)

Widespread breeding records from the smallest marl pits right up to the largest meres. 70 were counted at Rostherne on 16/1.

Coot. (*Fulica atra*)

Large counts outside the breeding season; 136 at Tatton on 2/1 and 165 on 8/8; 170 at Rostherne on 1/1; 350 at Tabley on 22/1 and 204 at the Farmwood Pool Reserve on 4/12. These substantial flocks build up at the end of every breeding season and judging from the numbers involved do not consist solely of resident birds. Some immigration obviously takes place, but without ringing evidence their origin can only be a matter for postulation.

Oystercatcher. (*Haematopus ostralegus*)

5 records, all from Rostherne; singles on 19/2, 1/5, 12/5 and 28/7 with 2 on 16/6.

Lapwing. (*Vanellus vanellus*)

Very much in evidence during the early part of the year when large flocks moved South and West following the onset of harsh weather conditions in the north of the country. 2700 were counted at Tatton on 26/2, c.7,500 at Ashley on 12/2 with c.3,000 at Byley on the same day. Many breeding records with young birds at Rostherne from late April and post breeding flocks seen from mid-June.

Golden Plover. (*Pluvialis apricaria*)

Recorded throughout the area, but in greatest numbers at two traditional sites; Ashley and Byley. The Ashley population would appear to roost at night close to Ringway Airport making its way at first light to Ashley (1,760 were counted arriving from the Ringway area at 8.00 a.m. on 8/1). The birds then spend the day resting on fields lying fallow or sown with winter wheat, flying to feed on pasture land in the immediate vicinity or as far away as Mobberley where there were 400 at Stubbs Lane on 2/1 and 600 on 26/11. At the Byley/Allostock roost 1,600 birds were counted on 29/1 and 1,000 on 19/2. These sites really are traditional, A.W. Boyd mentions the Ashley flock in 1933 in his book "The Country Diary of a Cheshireman" and a member of the Society remembers watching the species as long ago as 1928 at the same location. The species remains faithful to the same site at Ashley despite the fact that since those early days the M56 has been driven right through the middle.

Ringed Plover. (*Charadrius hiaticula*)

At Mobberley Lake 1 on 17/4 and 1 on 17/5.

Little Ringed Plover. (*Charadrius dubius*)

Many records from 6/4 through to 10/7. Birds were displaying at 4 different sites although breeding was confirmed at non.

Whimbrel. (*Numenius phaeopus*)

2 records, both of birds in flight, 1 at Rostherne on 3/5 and 1 at Tatton on 21/7.

Curlew. (*Numenius arquata*)

Now nesting quite commonly in the area, especially Tatton and Mobberley, where one of a pair nesting behind Mobberley Lake had its head removed by a dog whilst incubating 4 eggs. Dennis Elphick of the South-east Cheshire Ornithological Society is at present involved in a study of the species in the area and would welcome any inland records for Cheshire. He has located a winter roost in the Northwich area containing up to c.750 birds. These disperse to feed during the day, many to the Knutsford area with up to 170 at Allostock during January increasing to 230-250 in February. Up to 100 birds were seen in the Over Peover area in September and c.250 at Hulme Hall, Allostock on 12/10.

Black-tailed Godwit. (*Limosa limosa*)

A bird in full summer plumage was seen at Mobberley Lake on 10/5.

Redshank. (*Tringa totanus*)

Several records of single birds. At Rostherne on 15/6, 12/7 and 28/8; Tatton on 3/1, 16/1, 6/3, 23/3 and 9/4; Mobberley Lake on 7/4 and 15/12. Singles also on 12/2 at Ashley and Cicely Mill on 8/4.

Greenshank. (*Tringa nebularia*)

Fewer records than average, in fact only two, both from Rostherne 1 on 16/6 and another on 22/8.

Green Sandpiper. (*Tringa ochropus*)

Two winter records, 1 at Allostock on 10/2 and 2 at Rostherne on 27/11. The species was again present at the C.C.T. Reserve at Plumley during the Autumn with 2 on 27/7, 3 on 2/8, 5 on 10/8 and 4 on 5/9.

Wood Sandpiper. (*Tringa glareola*)

1 at Mobberley Lake on 29/4. (A.C. Usher)

Common Sandpiper. (*Actitis hypoleucos*)

Frequent records from mid-April until mid-July. A general influx occurred about 16/4 with one at Rostherne followed by a single bird at Mobberley Lake and 2 at Tatton the next day. Bred at the Farmwood Pool Reserve and also at Withington.

Snipe. (*Gallinago gallinago*)

No breeding records, although a bird was 'drumming' on 24/4 in Mobberley. Good numbers again wintered with c.40 at Byley on 14/2, 70+ at Allostock on 19/12 and c.100 Pavement Lane, Mobberley on 19/1.

Woodcock. (*Scolopax rusticola*)

Birds were seen 'roding' at Plumley, Rostherne, Dog Wood and 2 locations in Mobberley. As usual few records outside the breeding season, but single birds were recorded at Allostock, Tatton and Rostherne. At the last location 4 birds were flushed on 15/12.

Jack Snipe. (*Lymnocyrtus minima*)

Melchett Mere in Tatton Park again provided the only records, with singles on 3/1, 29/1, 12/3, 12/11, 19/11 and 27/11 when 4 were present.

Dunlin. (*Calidris alpina*)

1 or 2 at Mobberley Lake, Rostherne and Farmwood Pool in January, April and November. Evidence of spring passage in April as indicated by records of 2 at Farmwood on 17/4 and at Mobberley Lake 8 on 21/4 and 6 on 24/4.

Gulls, Genus Larus.

From a maximum of 20,000 birds in the early 1970's the Rostherne gull roost has declined considerably to a maximum this year of c.8,000, recorded in mid-January. The reasons for this decline are not clear, but a roost in the Northwich area contained some 10,000 birds in late October, and this could have some bearing on the matter.

Common Gull. (*Larus canus*)

650 at Rostherne on 21/1 compared well with maxima of 500 in 1975 and 1976 although well down on the 1974 maximum of 2,000.

Herring Gull. (*Larus argentatus*)

c.6,000 were counted at the Rostherne roost in 1975 but this year only 1,000, on 15/1.

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

Counts of less than 100 during the first 3 months of the year but signs of spring passage in April with 200 on the 6th. More substantial numbers during the Autumn with a steady rise from 200 on 9/8 to c.1,300 on 1/10.

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

Present in small numbers at the Rostherne roost throughout the Winter. 15 were counted on 4/12 and 12 on 2/1. Also recorded at Tatton; 1 on 16/11 and 2 on 19/11.

Iceland Gull. (*Larus glaucoides*)

Single adults at Rostherne from 1/1 to 18/1 with 2 on 20/2. An immature was seen on 23/1. At the end of the year recorded from 26/12 to 31/12, again a single adult.

Glaucous Gull. (*Larus hyperboreus*)

One record, a first winter bird on 29/3. (T. Wall).

Black-headed Gull. (*Larus ridibundus*)

The species again made up the bulk of the Rostherne roost. 5-6,000 were present on 21/1, this had declined to 3,500 by the end of the month. A similar number were present on 2/3 but by 29/3 only 500 remained. The roost began to form again in July with 50 on the 12th rising to 1,800 on 9/8 and up to the eventual autumn peak of 6,000 on 1/10.

Kittiwake. (*Rissa tridactyla*)

One was found dead at Rostherne on 13/2. Single adults were recorded on the reserve on 1/4, 3/4 and 24/4. A bird was seen circling Knutsford Moor on 26/2.

Black Tern. (*Chlidonias niger*)

A good crop of records, beginning with 4 at Tatton on 15/5 and 1 on the same day at Rostherne. 5 were present at Rostherne on 26/5 and 11 the next day. 4 records at Tatton during the autumn, with single birds on 14/8, 6/9, 30/9 and 2/10. The first autumn record at Rostherne came on 23/8 with 18 subsequent records between then and 5/10, mostly singles but two were seen a number of times between 24/8 and 1/10.

Common Tern. (*Sterna hirundo*)

No autumn sightings but many in the Spring and early summer especially at Rostherne where 9 on 26/5 was the maximum. Tatton had 8 on the same day following singles on 15/5 and 2/5.

Arctic Tern. (*Sterna paradisaea*)

Singles at Rostherne on 10/5, 11/5 and 11/6 with 1 at Tatton on 8/5 but 3 on 18/5.

"Commic Tern". (Genus sterna)

Apart from one at Tatton on 17/4 (probably common judging by the early date) all records from Rostherne, 4 on 14/6, 1 on 15/6, 5 on 17/6. In the autumn 1 on 7/8 and 11/8 with 2 on 3/8, 23/8 and 18/9.

Stock Dove. (Columba oenas)

Widespread but scattered breeding records, probably a species under-recorded. Outside the breeding season flocks of 26 at Tatton on 29/12 and 40 at Toft on 5/1.

Woodpigeon. (Columba palumbus)

Turtle Dove. (Streptopelia turtur)

Sparsely distributed within the area, records in the breeding season from Withington, Mobberley, Knutsford, Plumley and Rostherne.

Collard Dove. (Streptopelia decaocto)

Increasing slowly but still relatively local.

Cuckoo. (Cuculus canorus)

A better than average year for the species with an increase in the number of records. A bird in Mobberley on 26/4 was the first of the year and preceded an influx some days later with sightings in Tatton on 28/4, Moss Lane, Knutsford on 29/4 and Rostherne a day later. 2 were seen at Rostherne on a number of occasions in May whilst Tatton had 3 on the 18th. A young bird at Rostherne was being fostered by a pair of Reed Warblers.

Barn Owl. (Tyto alba)

Becoming rarer each year, 1 at Rostherne on 2/6 was the only record.

Little Owl. (Athene noctua)

Apart from single birds at Rostherne during the winter months, the only records come from Tatton where at least 3 males had established territories on 26/3.

Tawny Owl. (Strix aluco)

Scattered records from all parts of the area. A species predictably under-recorded, as are all the owls, the C.O.A. survey may well give an idea of their true status.

Swift. (Apus apus)

Following birds at Rostherne on 27/4 and Tatton a day later the species became abundant from mid-May. Counts were greatest in June with 300 at Rostherne on the 30th and 400 at Tatton on the 26th.

Kingfisher. (Alcedo atthis)

The long hot summer of 1976 was responsible for a reduction in numbers with few signs of any recovery in 1977. No breeding records were received but increased sightings were reported during the autumn.

Hoopoe. (*Upupa epops*)

One frequented the garden of a farm in Goostrey on 20 and 21/4. (

Green Woodpecker. (*Picus viridis*)

Seen frequently at Tatton and Rostherne throughout the year with juvenile birds at both locations.

Great Spotted Woodpecker. (*Dendrocopos major*)

Common, recorded in all woodland of any size.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker. (*Dendrocopos minor*)

Observed at five separate locations including Rostherne and Tatton where at least two pairs were seen excavating nest holes in April.

S Skylark. (*Alauda arvensis*)

Large numbers were noted passing through the area during October. Good winter flocks with 100 Mobberley Lake on 14/12, 150 Warford on 31/12 and at Ashley 200 on 2/1 falling to 100 on 16/1.

Sand Martin. (*Riparia riparia*)

A bird at Tatton on 12/3 provided the areas earliest ever record. It was joined by 3 more on 18/3 and from then on numbers rose steadily reaching a spring peak of c.160 on 24/4. Non were present at the Sandmere colony on 23/4 but there was considerable activity by 27/4, both there and at the Chelford colony. Heavy return passage in July at Tatton with 200 on 26/7.

Swallow. (*Hirundo rustica*)

Present in the area from 3/4 to 23/10. A pair at Tatton nested in an overflow pipe, below ground level whilst a juvenile hatched at Long Lane Farm, Peover was a pure albino, despite the fact that both parent birds bore normal markings (apparently caused by recessive genetic characteristics or something of an equally esoteric nature). The South Manchester Ringing Group again carried out extensive work on the species, 2 members between them ringed over 1,400 pulli (nestlings) within the Knutsford area including 70 at Hales Pasture, Allstock and no less than 120 at Boothbed Farm Goostrey. The group is now ringing over 20% of the national total of swallow pulli. 22 of these newly ringed birds were subsequently re-trapped at the roost on Knutsford Moor where 1500 were counted on 30/8 and 5/9.

House Martin. (*Delichon urbica*)

Larger than average flocks were apparent in the autumn, especially September. There were 60 at Mobberley on 5/9, 50 Ollerton on 6/9, 200 Over Peover on 13 and 14/9 and 300+ at Tatton on 30/9. 300 were present at Melchett Mere on 8/10, a late date for such a large gathering.

Yellow Wagtail. (*Motacilla flava*)

Adult birds were seen carrying food at a number of sites in Mobberley, Allstock and Chelford. A good spring passage with 53 at Rostherne on 28/4 and 50 on 30/4.

Grey Wagtail. (*Motacilla cinerea*)

A pair reared 4 young at a site in Mobberley. No other breeding records although the species was recorded at Rostherne in every month of the year except July. A party of 5 was seen at Knutsford sewerage farm on 22/1.

Pied Wagtail. (*Motacilla alba*)

The roost on Knutsford Moor contained c.200 birds on 26/9.

White Wagtail. (*Montacilla alba alba*)

Small numbers pass through annually on their way to breeding grounds in Iceland and South Greenland. At Tatton 6 on 26/3 and 2 on 27/3, 1 at Rostherne on 15/5 and 1 Mobberley Lake on 23/4 and 25/4.

Tree Pipit. (*Anthus trivialis*)

The usual handful of records. 2 at Rostherne on 28/5 and 1/5 with 1 on 24/8. 1 Knutsford Moor on 24/4 and further singles on 23/8 and 28/8 'at the same location.

Meadow Pipit. (*Anthus pratensis*)

Bred on Saltersley Moss. Present generally throughout the year with good numbers in late autumn and early winter; 80 Mobberley Lake on 12/10 and 30 on 10/12. A sudden large influx on 17/4 when the wind veered to the South east after a sustained period of northerlies, there were 52 at Withington and 120 at Mobberley Lake followed by 25 at Tabley, which is not a place noted for the species, a few days later.

Great Grey Shrike. (*Lanius excubitor*)

A bird on Lindow Common on 25/10 was the first in the area since 1974. (J. Dawson).

Dipper. (*Cinclus cinclus*)

1 at Rostherne on 22/9. (T. Wall, R. D. & A. Fox).

Wren. (*Troglodytes troglodytes*)

Dunnock. (*Prunella modularis*)

Robin. (*Erithacus rubecula*)

Redstart. (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*)

A male at Rostherne on 30/4 was the only record of the year.

Whinchat. (*Saxicola rubetra*)

3 male birds were seen during the spring; at Rostherne on 1/5 and 2/5 and at Tatton on 16/5. A bird of unspecified sex was recorded at Over Peover on 11/8.

Stonechat. (*Saxicola torquata*)

A male was seen at Tatton Mill on 15/1 and a female was recorded there on 29/1 and 5/2. During the autumn an immature bird frequented the same location, being seen on 15/10 and 29/10.

Wheatear. (*Oenanthe oenanthe*)

Better than average spring passage, the species was seen frequently from 9/3 through to 1/6. Records came from High Legh, Goostrey, Tatton, Mobberley and Rostherne. A male at Sandmere on 15/5 was considered to be an example of the Greenland race. (*O. o. leucorrhoa*).

Blackbird. (*Turdus merula*)

Fieldfare. (*Turdus pilaris*)

Widely fluctuating numbers during the early months of the year as flocks passed south to escape harsh weather in the north of the country. 250 were counted at Mobberley on 24/1 and a flock of c.600 was at Chelford the next day. In March counts reached a peak with 300 at Rostherne on 27/3, 500 at Withington on 13/3 and 500-750 in a field at Byley on 12/3. A flock of c.100 remained at Marthall until 20/4, a late date for such a high number to be seen. A returning bird on 11/8 at Goostrey was very early; generally numbers remained low until early November when flocks of up to 50 were recorded flying south by many observers.

Redwing. (*Turdus iliacus*)

Good numbers present during January and February. A major new roost was discovered at the beginning of the year at New Platt Wood, Allstock. 5,000 - 10,000 thrushes, mostly Redwings, were using the site throughout February.

Mistle Thrush. (*Turdus viscivorus*)

The usual autumnal increase took place with flocks at Rostherne of 7 on 13/8 and 15 on 16/9. Tatton had 30 on 21/8, 12 on 16/10 and 40 on 19/11. This annual increase indicates immigration each year from the Continent but in 'The Status of Birds in Britain and Ireland' it is interesting to note that no foreign-ringed Mistle Thrush has ever been recovered in Britain or Ireland.

Grasshopper Warbler. (*Locustella naevia*)

A pair were present at a site in Mobberley from 4/5 to 18/7 and are presumed to have bred. Elsewhere birds were 'reeling' at Rostherne on 28 and 29/5 and on Lindow Moss on 14/5. No records from the traditional stronghold of the species, Knutsford Moor.

Sedge Warbler. (*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*)

Present from 28/4 with passage at its greatest around 8/5. Bred only on Knutsford Moor despite sightings at Tatton, Mobberley and Rostherne.

Reed Warbler. (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*)

Small numbers nested on Knutsford Moor, the CCT reserve at Plumley and at Tabley. Rostherne remained the species' stronghold and 73 pullus were ringed despite a certain amount of predation, some of it human.

Garden Warbler. (*Sylvia borin*)

An excellent year for the species, birds nested in an area of Mobberley where they were previously unrecorded. Singing males were recorded at Tatton (2), Sandmere (3), Plumley (3) and Rostherne (3).

Blackcap. (*Sylvia atricapilla*)

No change in status apparent, it remains a common summer visitor from mid-April.

Whitethroat. (*Sylvia communis*)

Good numbers of singing males recorded, especially at Rostherne (4), Mobberley (7), Tatton (4) and Plumley CCT reserve (2).

Lesser Whitethroat. (*Sylvia curruca*)

Recorded during the breeding season at Plumley, Shakerley, Rostherne and Mobberley. At least four pairs are thought to have bred in Mobberley, where a bird singing on 27/4 provided the earliest record for many years.

Willow Warbler. (*Phylloscopus trochilus*)

Abundant again throughout the area.

Chiffchaff. (*Phylloscopus collybita*)

One interesting record of an overwintering bird on 23/1 at Tatton.
(G. Williams et al)

These birds are not thought to be of British origin but members of the race *p.c. abietinus* which breeds in Scandinavia and West Russia. More records than usual during the breeding season, but 17 in song at Rostherne on 17/4 must have included some that were newly arrived and presumably many later moved on.

Wood Warbler. (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*)

Single birds in Dog Wood on 30/4 and at Rostherne on 5/5 were forerunners of a large influx in May when up to 4 males were singing in Dog Wood. This is not a traditional nesting area and although there were further records on 22/6 and 13/7 breeding was not suspected. The species breeds every year in a small birch wood in Mobberley and was present again during the breeding season.

Goldcrest. (*Regulus regulus*)

Pied Flycatcher. (*Ficedula hypoleuca*)

A male in Dog Wood from 8/5 to 7/6 remained unmated.

Spotted Flycatcher. (*Muscicapa striata*)

Resident in small numbers from 29/4.

Bearded Tit. (*Panurus biarmicus*)

A male at Rostherne on 29 and 30/11 was the first record for the area.

Long-tailed Tit. (*Aegithalos caudatus*)

Marsh Tit. (*Parus palustris*)

Apart from isolated records at Withington, Astle Park and Chelford, the species was recorded only at Tatton and Rostherne. Birds were seen carrying food to a nest hole at Rostherne on 7/5 and breeding was strongly suspected in Dog Wood where there were many sightings throughout the year.

Willow Tit. (*Parus montanus*)

More widely distributed than the Marsh Tit. Most commonly seen in birch plantations, such as those at Sandmere and Plumley and wherever rotting alder trees provide a suitable nesting habitat, both in areas of woodland such as exist at Tatton and Rostherne and also along streams like the Birkin.

Coal Tit. (*Parus ater*)

Great Tit. (*Parus major*)

Blue Tit. (*Parus caeruleus*)

Nuthatch. (*Sitta europaea*)

Breeding records from all areas of mature timber, including the large gardens surrounding many houses in the more affluent areas of Knutsford.

Treecreeper. (*Certhia familiaris*)

Corn Bunting. (*Emberiza calandra*)

Small flocks during the winter months; 29+ Dirty Lane, Rostherne on 2/1, 21 Mobberley Lake on 11/2 and 18 at the same location on 14/12. Singing males during the summer at Rostherne, Mobberley, Peover, Withington, Allostock, Ollerton and Toft.

Yellowhammer. (*Emberiza citrinella*)

Winter flocks contained fewer birds than average, 15 at Rostherne on 22/2 was the largest. Despite this the number of breeding birds was well up to normal.

Reed Bunting. (*Emberiza schoeniclus*)

A flock of 30 built up during December in Pavement Lane, Mobberley. Each spring a substantial number of migrant birds pass through the area and are most noticeable at Tatton where numbers increase from late March. They appear at the same time as the first of the migrant flocks of meadow pipits and pied wagtails.

Chaffinch. (*Fringilla coelebs*).

Several hundred were roosting at New Platt Wood, Allostock, during January. c.2,000 were watched at Rostherne on 5/2 flying in a southerly direction, probably to the large finch roost at Mere.

Brambling. (*Fringilla montifringilla*)

Small numbers were seen in a large flock of finches at Rostherne on 5/2 (see Chaffinch). 145 were counted flying south-west over Ashley at dusk on 11/4. 100+ were roosting at Allstock in January. Few around at the other end of the year, 12 at Tatton on 19/11 being the largest count.

Greenfinch. (*Carduelis chloris*)

Substantial winter flocks of 100 at Rostherne on 28/3, 100 Allstock in mid-February and c.400 at Tatton on 18/12.

Goldfinch. (*Carduelis carduelis*)

Post-breeding flocks of 30 at Mobberley Lake on 12/9 and 60 at Tatton on 8/10. Whilst many resident birds remain with us during the winter months, a large portion of the population emigrates to the continent returning in late March and April. After low mid-winter counts these returning birds gave counts of 20 at Tatton on 26/3 and 30 on 5/4 with 50 at Goostrey on 17/4.

Siskin. (*Carduelis spinus*)

c.30 at Rostherne on 2/1 and 15 Dog Wood on 8/1. Recorded thereafter only infrequently and in very small numbers. Present again in the autumn and winter from 22/10 with 8 at Rostherne on 23/10 and 25 on 27/10. 20 were seen at Tatton on 5 and 6/11.

Redpoll. (*Acanthis flammea*)

Bred at Sandmere, Plumley and probably Over Peover. Few winter records but 24 were counted at Shakerley on 12/2.

Linnet. (*Acanthis cannabina*)

No winter records except for 6 flying south at Rostherne on 3/1 and 1 on 16/1 at the same location. A few birds were noted in March but the real spring influx began in mid-April when the species was back on Knutsford Heath on 14/4 and Mobberley Lake had 50 on 17/4. Following a successful breeding season the usual autumn flocks built up, especially in Mobberley where 30 were counted on 16/8, 60 on 6/9, 80 on 12/9 and 40 on 31/10. c.100 were counted at Byley on 25/9.

Bullfinch. (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*)

Not a species noted for its gregariousness, so a party of 8 at Sandmere on 8/1 is perhaps worthy of note.

House Sparrow. (*Passer domesticus*)

Tree Sparrow. (*Passer montanus*)

Winter flocks were much smaller than usual with the biggest amounting to c.20 birds, compared with 80-100 normally.

Starling. (*Sturnus vulgaris*)

A huge flock of c.50,000 birds was roosting at Castle Mill on 12/2.

Jay. (*Garrulus glandarius*)

Remains fairly numerous, and widely distributed, a party of 7 were seen at Rostherne on 6/3.

Magpie. (*Pica pica*)

A group of 20 were roosting in Shaw Green Willows, Rostherne on 14/12.

Jackdaw. (*Corvus monedula*)

Rook. (*Corvus frugilegus*)

The long established rookery at Shaw Heath, Knutsford has now been abandoned, whilst the one near the Knutsford entrance to Tatton Park seems to be expanding rapidly.

Carrion Crow. (*Corvus corone*)

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

1. Summer Visitors

Species	First Record	Location	Last Record	Location
Little Ringed Plover	19/4	Mobberley Lake	3/7	Mobberley Lake
Common Sandpiper	16/4	Rostherne	17/7	Dovemere
Turtle Dove	18/5	Plumley	4/9	Chelford
Cuckoo	26/4	Mobberley	31/8	Tatton
Swift	28/4	Knutsford	30/9	Rostherne
Tree Pipit	24/4	Knutsford Moor	28/8	Knutsford Moor
Sand Martin	12/3	Tatton	9/10	Rostherne
House Martin	17/4	Rostherne/Tatton	22/10	Mobberley
Swallow	3/4	Rostherne	23/10	Rostherne/Tatton
Yellow Wagtail	26/3	Tatton	16/9	Rostherne
Grasshopper Warbler	4/5	Mobberley	18/7	Mobberley
Sedge Warbler	28/4	Rostherne	13/8	Rostherne
Reed Warbler	28/4	Rostherne	17/9	Rostherne
Garden Warbler	30/4	Rostherne	4/9	Knutsford Moor
Blackcap	10/4	Tatton	10/9	Rostherne
Whitethroat	30/4	Rostherne	10/9	Rostherne
Lesser Whitethroat	27/4	Mobberley	13/8	Rostherne
Willow Warbler	3/4	Rostherne	29/10	Toft Wood
Chiff Chaff	14/3	Mobberley	30/10	Rostherne
Wood Warbler	30/4	Tatton	13/7	Tatton
Spotted Flycatcher	29/4	Rostherne	6/9	Rostherne
Pied Flycatcher	8/5	Tatton	-	

2. Winter Visitors

Species	Last Record	Location	First Record	Location
Cormorant *	7/5	Rostherne	4/9	Rostherne
Whooper Swan	-	-	8/12	Rostherne
Bewicks Swan	3/3	Rostherne	21/10	Rostherne
Pink-footed Goose	2/1	Ringway	13/11	Withington
Teal *	7/5	Rostherne	23/7	Rostherne
Shelduck	27/4	Rostherne	12/11	Rostherne
Gadwall	17/4	Rostherne	19/6	Rostherne
Pintail	18/4	Rostherne	10/7	Rostherne
Wigeon *	23/5	Rostherne	10/7	Rostherne
Goldeneye	21/5	Rostherne	16/10	Rostherne
Goosander	-	-	9/12	Rostherne
Smew	24/4	Tatton	24/11	Tatton
Water Rail	29/4	Tatton	15/10	Tatton
Golden Plover	22/3	Byley	6/7	Allostock
Dunlin	17/5	Mobberley Lake	17/11	Mobberley Lake
Redshank	9/4	Tatton	15/6	Rostherne
Snipe	24/4	Mobberley	15/10	Tatton
Jack Snipe	12/3	Tatton	12/11	Tatton
Iceland Gull	20/2	Rostherne	26/12	Rostherne
Glaucous Gull	29/3	Rostherne	-	-
Redwing	7/4	Tatton	7/10	Rostherne
Fieldfare	24/4	Rostherne	11/8	Goostrey
Brambling	17/4	Rostherne	15/10	Ashley
Siskin	13/3	Rostherne	22/10	Rostherne

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

3. Species Recorded on Passage

a) Spring

Species	Date	Location
Black-necked Grebe	23/3	Tatton
Red-breasted Merganser	12/2	Tatton
Marsh Harrier	4/4	Rostherne
Merlin	1/5	Rostherne
Ringed Plover	17/4, 17/5	Mobberley Lake
Greenshank	16/6	Rostherne
Wood Sandpiper	29/4	Mobberley Lake
Black-tailed Godwit	10/5	Mobberley Lake
Whimbrel	3/5	Rostherne
Black Tern	15/5 to 27/5	Tatton and Rostherne
Common Tern	2/5 to 20/6	Tatton and Rostherne
Arctic Tern	8/5 to 11/6	Rostherne and Tatton
'Commic' Tern	17/4 to 17/6	Rostherne and Tatton
White Wagtail	26/3 to 15/4	Tatton and Rostherne
Whinchat	1/5 to 16/5	Knutsford and Rostherne
Redstart	30/4	Rostherne
Wheatear	19/3 to 15/5	Widespread

b) Autumn

Species	Date	Location
Shelduck	27/7	Knutsford
Greenshank	22/8	Rostherne
Green Sandpiper	27/7 to 27/11	Plumley and Rostherne
Whimbrel	27/7	Tatton
Black Tern	14/8 to 5/10	Tatton and Rostherne
Common Tern	2/7 and 6/8	Rostherne
'Commic' Tern	3/8 to 18/9	Rostherne
Whinchat	11/8	Peover
Wheatear	17/8, 21/9	Rostherne and Mobberley

WOODPECKERS - BY BOB GROOM

There are 9 species of woodpecker found in Europe, of which three breed in Great Britain (but not Ireland). Also grouped with the woodpeckers but given separate sub-family status is the Wryneck, a hole nesting bird which behaves in some ways like a woodpecker but lacks many of the woodpecker's distinctive features and in appearance has the cryptic colouration of a nightjar or a tree creeper. This fascinating species is confined to Eurasia and has no North American equivalent. It used to breed widely in England but was virtually lost as a breeding species by about 1970. Almost simultaneously the Wryneck began to breed in Scotland (for the first time, at least in recent history) and seems to have established itself there. Unlike our three resident woodpeckers, the Wryneck only spends the summer in Britain, wintering around the Mediterranean and in Africa, where the closely related Red Breasted Wryneck is resident.

The most familiar British Woodpecker is the 9" Great Spotted (or Pied) Woodpecker, which has a continuous distribution from Western Europe to China and Japan and north into Scotland and Scandinavia. Although wary like all the Woodpeckers, the Great Spotted is less elusive than the other 2 British species, if only because it is more numerous (at least 35,000 breeding pairs in Great Britain) and the male attracts attention in the spring with its loud drumming. It is well established in the Knutsford area with breeding strongholds in Tatton Park and most local woods of any size with the right mix of trees. In winter, as Boyd observed, there is some wandering among hedgerow and roadside trees. The adults plumage will be familiar to all, but worth looking out for in summer are juvenile birds with red crowns. Three years ago I had close views of a young Great Spotted reared in Tableymoss Wood which had a rosy pink flush all over its pied plumage. In autumn the juvenile female birds lose their red crowns completely, while the males retain red only on the nape.

The Green Woodpecker is widely but locally distributed in Europe and the Near East (but is not present in the rest of Asia). It can be found in most suitable areas of England and Wales. Since 1950 it has been moving north through Scotland as a breeding bird. I saw a male in Newtonmore in the Spey Valley in May, 1975, presumably this bird was in the advance guard spying out the terrain! The Green Woodpecker is not as numerous in the Knutsford area as in some parts of the country (20,000 breeding pairs in Great Britain) and it is mainly confined as a breeding bird to Tatton Park and similar large wooded areas at Toft, Rostherne and elsewhere. In late summer (when they have spotted plumage) and autumn juvenile birds can be seen widely, presumably searching for territories. In August and October I have seen single Green Woodpeckers on Knutsford Heath.

The Green Woodpecker is closely related to the similar but slightly smaller Grey Headed Woodpecker, which is distributed right across Eurasia and spreading west. It is not found in the United Kingdom. The male Grey Headed Woodpecker has a red forehead, whereas both the male and female Green Woodpecker have red crowns, although it is only the male which has a red centre to its moustachial stripes.

The Lesser Spotted (or Barred) Woodpecker is commoner, than sightings of it would indicate, although it is nowhere numerous (approximately 7,500 breeding pairs in Great Britain). Being only chaffinch size it is inconspicuous high in the branches of a tall tree, particularly during the summer when the trees are cloaked in green. Winter is a good time to see Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers as with care and quietness they can be approached quite closely when located and I have followed a female for half-an-hour or more as it combed even the smallest branches for food. (The much larger Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers tend to stay on the trunk and larger branches). It is distributed right across Eurasia and breeds in most parts of England and Wales, but not in Scotland. Locally several pairs breed in Tatton Park (good places to see them in winter are Dog Wood and Moss Plantation) and in other well wooded places (e.g. Toft Wood and Moss Wood). Only rarely do they venture away from woodland but a pair did visit Knutsford Heath on three successive stormy days in November, 1974. The red-capped male is slightly the more conspicuous of the pair but I tend to see females more often than males. The barred back is the most prominent feature when seen from a distance.

The great Black Woodpecker is found in many parts of Europe where there is extensive forest but has apparently never been reliably reported in Britain, although it is slowly spreading westwards. A crow-sized bird, all black except for a crimson crown, it would be an impressive addition to our avifauna if it ever did arrive.

Three species of spotted (*Dendrocopus*) Woodpeckers do not breed in the British Isles - the declining Middle Spotted Woodpecker, the large (10") White-Backed Woodpecker (male has scarlet crown) and the Syrian Woodpecker, which is spreading steadily westwards having only started to breed in Europe about 1890. All are similar to the Great Spotted Woodpecker (particularly the Syrian) but have distinguishing plumage features and habits.

The other non-British species is the Three-Toed Woodpecker (*Picoides Tridactylus*) which is about the same size as a Great Spotted Woodpecker but very different in appearance. The male has a yellow cap and both sexes have black cheeks. It is found in Scandinavia and Northern Siberia, as well as mountain forest in Central and Eastern Europe and is the only European Woodpecker to have a sibling species in North America.

Any serious birdwatcher is interested in the habits, behaviour, varying plumages etc. of all birds but it is equally true that many birdwatchers have an especial interest in a particular group of birds, be it waders, wildfowl or raptors. If I have a favourite group of birds then it must be the woodpeckers, whose hole-nesting habits and retiring ways make them amongst the most mysterious denizens of parks and woodlands.

RINGING RECORDS OF LOCAL INTEREST 1977

Data Kindly supplied by the South Manchester Ringing Group

Canada Goose

On 3/7 with the aid of members of the Cheshire Schools Sailing and Canoeing Association and 25 other helpers, many from the Knutsford Ornithological Society, the group captured and ringed 39 Canada Geese and 3 Grey Lag Geese that were moulting on the Mere. One recovery has so far been notified - an adult Canada Goose shot near Tabley on 11/10.

Sparrowhawk

3 birds were trapped and ringed at Redwing roosts during the year. A female at Tatton on 15/2 and another on 6/3 at Allostock. A male ringed at Allostock on 6/2 was re-trapped there on 6/3.

Little Ringed Plover

A bird ringed as a pullus (nestling) at Allostock on 29/6/76 was shot on 6/8/77 at Coudekerque (Nord) France.

Snipe

A bird shot at Tatton on 8/10/77 was ringed there, as an adult, on 8/7/73.

Swallow

A bird ringed as a pullus at Tabley on 19/6/76 was controlled (re-trapped and released) on 11/5/77 at Grouville Marsh, Jersey, C.I. One found dead on the nest at Mobberley on 6/6/77 had been ringed as a juvenile on 1/9/75 in Yorkshire. Of four pullus ringed in Mobberley during the year and later recovered two were re-trapped in Yorkshire and the others at Davyhulme and Wellington, Shropshire. Birds ringed as pullus at Rixton, Lancs., Frodsham, Kirby Lonsdale and Wrenbury this year were controlled at the Knutsford roost in September, as was a bird ringed as a juvenile on 11/8/76 at Harlington, Yorkshire. A juvenile re-trapped at Beniel (murcia) Spain on 22/7 had been ringed on 10/6 as a pullus at Allostock. During the autumn 106 birds that had been ringed as pullus during the summer within 20 km of Knutsford were re-trapped at the Knutsford Moor roost.

Swallows ringed by the S.M.R.G. and controlled at Frodsham by the Merseyside R.G.

Date Controlled

Date Age and Place of Ringing

28/8/77

19/6/77 pull. Tabley

31/8/77

7/7/77 pull. Byley

2/9/77

27/6/77 pull. Toft

Birds ringed by S.M.R.G. and subsequently reported nesting

r = roost juv = juvenile pull = pullus m = male f = female

<u>Date Age and Place of Ringing</u>				<u>Date Sex and Place of Control</u>	
7/9/76	juv	Knutsford	(r)	3/6/77	Mobberley
25/8/76	ad.f	"	(r)	10/6/77	Mobberley
31/8/76	juv	"	(r)	27/6/77	f Toft
21/8/76	juv	"	(r)	28/6/77	f Mottram St.Andrew
4/8/76	pull	Tabley		5/7/77	f Wilmslow
21/8/76	juv	Knutsford	(r)	12/7/77	f Mottram St.Andrew
7/8/75	juv	Knutsford	(r)	31/7/77	m " " "
7/9/76	ad.m	Knutsford	(r)	6/8/77	m Adlington
11/8/76	pull	Mobberley		6/8/77	f "
14/8/75	juv	Knutsford	(r)	11/8/77	m Prestbury
26/8/76	juv	"	(r)	17/8/77	f Mottram St.Andrew

Sand Martin

One bird ringed as a juvenile at Lower Withington in 1975 had swapped colonies and was nesting at Allstock in 1977. This has been shown to be a feature of the B.T.O. Sand Martin Survey.

Reed Warbler

A bird ringed on 15/8/76 as a juvenile on Knutsford Moor was controlled at Griend, Waddenzee, Netherlands on 28/6/77, two other juveniles from Knutsford were re-trapped later in the year, one on 1/8/77 at Winchelsea, Sussex and the other on 14/8/77 at Hindley, Lancashire. The most interesting record concerns a bird ringed as a pullus at Rostherne on 26/6/75. It was controlled on 25/6/76 at Saltholme, Teesmouth, Durham and again this year on 6/8 back at Rostherne. A bird ringed on 10/7/74 at Rostherne as a pullus has been re-trapped twice on Knutsford Moor, on 28/7/76 and 16/7/77.

Sedge Warbler

A juvenile ringed on 8/8/76 on Knutsford Moor was captured and caged on 2/4/77 at Al Hoceima, Morocco.

Willow Warbler

A bird first ringed on 17/8/77 on Hilbre Island as a juvenile was controlled three days later at Rostherne.

Reed Bunting

A full grown bird was ringed on Knutsford Moor on 14/9/68, it was controlled on 15/4/71 at Shotton, Flintshire and again on Knutsford Moor on 7/8/77, when at least 10 years old.