

Birds in Greater Manchester

County Report 2011



Greater Manchester Bird Recording Group



Birds in Greater Manchester 2011

Thirty-sixth Greater Manchester Bird Report

Report Production Team:

Steve Atkins, Ian McKerchar, Bill Myerscough & Steve Suttill

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Report Cover: Dotterels, Brown Wardle Hill, May
main photo: Adrian Dancy, inset: Jon Taverner

Opposite: Wren, Wigan, April: David Cookson

Published by Greater Manchester Bird Recording Group, February 2014

Acknowledgements

This 2011 County Bird Report hopes to build on the improvements and acclaim which were bestowed on the 2010 report which was the first from our new Report Production Team. Once again though, the considerably larger team of individuals who contributed in so many ways remains key to any success of the report and we remain humbled by your support and involvement. The bird records submitted by county birders form the very basis and bulk of the report and a full list of contributors appear at the back of this report. We would also like to welcome Bill Myerscough on to the Report Production Team; his work as proof reader goes considerably above and beyond the call of duty and his infectious enthusiasm will be a welcome addition and serve to ensure the report continues to develop and improve. Special thanks, however, go to the following for their contribution to the production of this 2011 annual county bird report:

Species Text Writers: The work the following ten writers undertook to produce the species accounts within this report cannot be underestimated. Their analysis of many thousands of records forms the very basis of this report.

Rob and Sonia Adderley (Arctic Skua to Arctic Tern).

Steve Atkins (Red Kite to Peregrine; Barn Owl to Short-eared Owl).

Steve Christmas (Mute Swan to Ruddy Duck).

Henry Cook (Oystercatcher to Dotterel; Knot to Grey Phalarope).

Simon Hitchen (Great Northern Diver to Black-necked Grebe).

Ian McKerchar (Feral Pigeon to Cuckoo; Swift to Lesser Spotted Woodpecker; Goldcrest; Skylark to House Martin; Ring Ouzel to Dunnock; Yellow Wagtail to Rock Pipit; Escaped, Introduced, Released and Feral Species).

Tom Morton (Blue Tit to Willow Tit; Long-tailed Tit; Nuthatch to Treecreeper; Starling; House Sparrow to Tree Sparrow).

Bill Myerscough (Cetti's Warbler; Wood Warbler to Reed Warbler; Chaffinch to Corn Bunting).

Mark Rigby (Red Grouse to Pheasant; Water Rail to Coot; Waxwing; Wren; Dipper).

Steve Suttill (Golden Plover to Lapwing; Magpie to Raven).

Report Proof Reader: Bill Myerscough.

Authors and Contributors of Articles: Steve Christmas, Chris Darbyshire, Simon Hitchen, the late Frank Horrocks, Peter Johnson, Andy Makin, Ian McKerchar, Jill Mills, Mike Passant, David Steel & Steve Suttill.

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Photographers: Dennis Atherton, Geoff Butler, Kath Butler, Steve Collins, David Cookson, Adrian Dancy, Ivan Ellison, Pauline Greenhalgh, Ted Keane, Mike Killelea, Ian McKerchar, David Rogers, Peter Smith, Jon Taverner, Simon Warford, Paul Wilson & David Winnard.

Others: Nick Scarle for the production and continued evolution of the map of Birdwatching Sites in Greater Manchester.

Steve Atkins, Ian McKerchar, Bill Myerscough, Steve Suttill (Report Production Team)

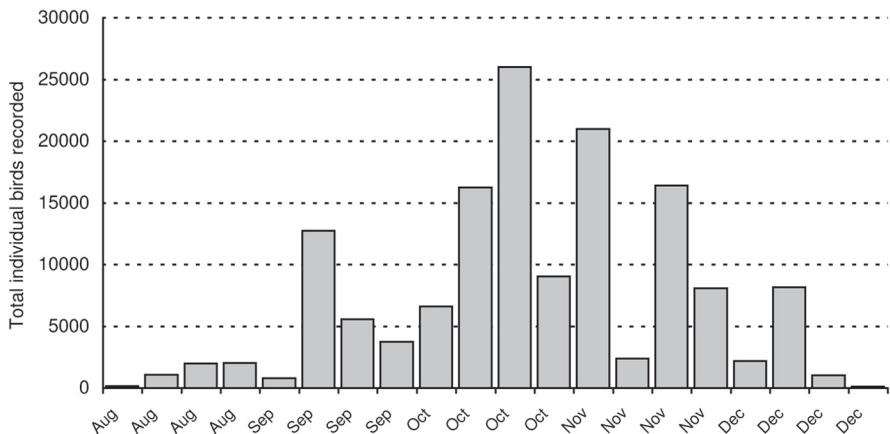
Review of the Year 2011

Ian Mc Kerchar

There are many things that drive birdwatchers to pursue their chosen hobby and whilst the joy of actually watching these beautiful creatures is hopefully paramount to us all, other motivations are as diverse as the birds themselves. Some enjoy the 'chase', the challenge, the chance to find something different, something rare. Whilst many rightly find joy in the simple pleasure of watching even the commonest birds themselves, others are encapsulated by their habits; breeding and migratory being two of the most popular and understandably enthralling. Others simply enjoy the social side of birding and the increasing phenomenon of digital photography, internet blogs and social networking. One thing is for sure though, that despite all the years birdwatching has encompassed, we still continue to learn about the objects of our hobby. And learn we do, for right here in Greater Manchester our more recent years really have pushed back the frontiers of knowledge about our own little land-locked county.

A concerted effort by many observers for the atlas project has considerably furthered our appreciation of the true status of many county bird species but there is still so much more to be done; so much more to learn. With the collection of records for the atlas now over, one can only hope that observers continue with their diligent observations out in the field to monitor these birds, so that a true year on year comparison can be achieved. For many though, their surveying has been so enjoyable, so rewarding, that the thought of being without it is almost incomprehensible!

Visible migration too, whilst not a new phenomenon nationally or even internationally, has been a fairly recent addition to the county birding scene and what an addition it has been! The Horwich Moors alone has become one of the very best (*the* very best?) visible migration areas in North West England, now recording with increasing regularity county species previously considered very scarce and also counts of commoner birds which boggle the mind. To illustrate just how significant these numbers of migrating birds can be at this one site consider the autumn 2011 totals alone of 46624 Woodpigeon, 7042 Swallow, 19863 Starling, 20000 Fieldfare, 837 Wheatear, 21069 Meadow Pipit and 997 Siskin. No one site has changed our idea of what the county is capable of quite like the Horwich Moors and we have still only gouged the surface in reality; there is so much still to learn from this one site alone.



Weekly autumnal bird totals migrating through the Horwich Moors in 2011

Consequently, the meteoric elevation of this site's profile has impacted positively on other sites and birders alike. No more do we think of the county as a migrant desolate zone, that we have to flee to the nearby coast in order to catch a glimpse of an autumnal Redstart, Ring Ouzel or Tree Pipit, for we have rapidly realised that these birds and many like them are passing through our county in decent numbers before our very eyes and probably always have done. It seems that our historic preconceived notion of the county as being poor for migrants had blinkered us somewhat but now those blinkers are off and birders throughout the county enjoy the wondrous spectacle of migration anywhere and everywhere.

Coastline aside, we have a fairly comprehensive and diverse selection of habitats, some excellent birdwatching sites complete with hides, feeding stations and paths galore or near wilderness and solitude if you prefer. Our birdwatching calendar is genuinely exhaustive, with each season offering plenty for all our hearts desire, unless you like seawatching of course! The simple fact is that we really don't do too bad considering our geographical location but it still remains that we can continue to make so much more of what we've got and in the current economic climate, ensuring we do as much as possible to protect the birds and their habitats should be a matter of priority to us all, for without them our hobby really will be rather poor.

A total of 198 species were recorded in the county this year and it has now been three years since the 200 barrier was broken. Highlights were many, really going back to 'whatever floats your boat', but after doing the double in 2010, there were no new additions to the county list this year. Rare and scarce bird highlights were many with two records each for Great Northern Diver, Manx Shearwater, Goshawk, Curlew Sandpiper, Grey Phalarope and Richard's Pipit, all eclipsed by the four records of Slavonian Grebe during the year. Ring-necked Duck, Honey Buzzard, Rough-legged Buzzard, Temminck's Stint, Arctic Skua and Wryneck all managed single records but for many observers, the Brown Wardle Hill Dotterel were well worth the trek to see them and one of them rightly adorns the front cover of this report. If there was to be one true highlight though it would have to be the achievement of the Rumworth Lodge Avocets in successfully raising a brood of three young; the first ever in the county's history. Failing that, few sights can have been more impressive than the 80 Pintail seen flying over Holcombe Moor and Burnt Edge in October, a superb new county record but the astounding run of Hawfinch records at the Horwich Moors in late September, though only to be enjoyed by a solitary observer, was one of the most remarkable occurrences in the county for many a year.

January

The first half of January saw the weather gradually revert to a more 'normal' Atlantic type; milder with some rain at times. However, the cold air was reluctant to loosen its grip with temperatures remaining lower, bringing some frosty nights with snow and ice at times on higher ground. A very mild, wet and windy interlude followed around mid-month with the rest of the month being more settled, with high pressure nearby, but it was often cloudy and cold again at times.

Perhaps the first highlight of the year was all too indicative of the struggle confronting many of our county species as 15 Corn Buntings on Carrington Moss on the 3rd was to be the only double figure flock of the year. The same day saw the final sighting of the much adored male Lapland Bunting overwintering from 2010 at Daisy Hill and a rather unseasonal Little Egret flying over Swinton was a fine addition to one observer's garden list. 25 Grey Partridge at Little Woodden Moss was a particularly large covey and once again, their mention as a particular highlight goes some way to illustrate just how unfortunately scarce such encounters are nowadays. Woodford managed a peak of 200 Linnets on the 6th and one of only three Common Redpoll records during the month was found at Binn Green on the 7th. The redhead Smew at Clifton Country Park remaining from 2010 departed during the month with its final

sighting on the 8th and the county's rather unique (in a North-West England perspective) Great Black-backed Gull roost at Heaton Park Reservoir hits its peak of 840 on the 9th, still falling short of previous year's four figure counts but impressive nevertheless. Another Little Egret was found at Poise Brook, Hazel Grove on the 13th and quickly relocated to nearby Norbury Brook and Torkington Park from the 14th into February, whilst three Yellow-legged Gulls at Heaton Park Reservoir on the 15th was noteworthy and the highest count for the site during the year. Finches continued to provide much interest with a particularly fine roost of 202 Greenfinch at Dimplington on the 16th, 100 Siskin at Chorlton Water Park, a second Common Redpoll for the month at Hale Barns on the 18th, 100 Lesser Redpolls at Pearson's Flash on the 22nd and the third Common Redpoll record, this time at Davenport Green on the 30th.

February

A 'westerly' weather type prevailed for most of the month, bringing plenty of cloud and bands of rain or showers at times. There were some strong winds in the first week but temperatures were generally near or above normal throughout and there were few frosts.

Hale Barns scored again with yet another Common Redpoll on the 5th, the same date as the first Iceland Gull of the year, a juvenile which graced Heaton Park Reservoir. Love them or loathe them, gulls continued to provide much of the monthly highlights and four Yellow-legged Gulls at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 7th was to be the highest count of the year in the county. 200 Linnet at Woodford on the 10th were fairly spectacular and then it was back to gulls with a second winter Iceland Gull found at Castleshaw Reservoirs on the 17th, also seen there again on the 22nd and 23rd. The first Slavonian Grebe of the year, unfortunately just a one day occurrence, was found at Hollingworth Lake on the 21st and then it was back to gulls yet again, with a third winter Iceland Gull at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 24th and a good passage of Mediterranean Gulls at the same site during the month, culminating in four adults being present in the roost on the 25th. More Common Redpolls were discovered in the county around this latter date too, with a single on the Horwich Moors on the 24th and two at Scotmans Flash on the 25th. A female Common Scoter at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 26th was a nice finale to the month.

March

Much of the month saw settled weather, though it was more unsettled during the period 7th to 15th with some strong north-westerly winds and the end of the month saw temperatures just above average. Rainfall amounts were notably low though.

Iceland Gull maintained its presence in the county with a third winter again at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 1st and 2nd, also being seen at Castleshaw Reservoirs on the 5th which nicely highlighted the movements of *larus* species between county roost and refuse sites. 30 Whooper Swans made for a splendid sight over Shell Pool NR on the 3rd whilst the 6th saw a very rare county bird found at Dove Stone RSPB when a small group of lucky observers enjoyed a Rough-legged Buzzard. Mediterranean Gulls continued to pass through Audenshaw Reservoirs, once again peaking at four adults on the 8th and Woodford maintained its attraction for large finch flocks as its gathering of Linnet grew to 300 by the 17th; spectacular indeed! An Avocet at Pennington Flash on 18th was indicative of an apparent increasing trend in records for this species in the county. The same of which might also be said for Slavonian Grebe, which recorded its second record of the year on the same date at Audenshaw Reservoirs, though this individual remained all the way into April and moulted into a very fine breeding plumage along the way. March being the prime spring month for Rock Pipits passing through the county on their way back to their Scandinavian breeding grounds saw no change this year with singles on the 20th, 21st, 25th and 27th, all at the favoured Audenshaw Reservoirs. With summer migrants slowly filtering into the county a Common Sandpiper at Shell Pool NR on the 16th was particularly early, only three days later than the earliest ever recorded in the county. An early Grey Plover graced Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 21st, a Red Kite was over

Mottram on the 22nd and Ruffs were at Pennington Flash on the 23rd and at Astley Moss East Pools on the 29th, the latter female remaining until April 2nd. Audenshaw Reservoirs produced a Twite on the 29th, a very good lowland county record and a garden in Hale paid host to yet another Common Redpoll on the 31st; clearly, there's something irresistible for *flammeas* in those South Manchester gardens!

April

With high pressure over the county for much of the month, there was plenty of fine, warm weather, with a mean temperature 3.7 °C above the 1971-2000 average. It was the warmest April since 1910 and sunniest since 1929 but rainfall was notable by its absence, with a second successive dry month.

Much of the beginning of the month was taken up with celebrating and enjoying the bulk arrival of spring migrants, a true annual highlight itself of which three singing male Redstarts at Middle Bank on the 10th and a superb 3000 Sand Martins at Pennington Flash on the 11th were without equal. It was not until the latter half of the month until the more unusual species were encountered though, with the only real exception to that rule being a striking drake Ring-necked Duck at Pennington Flash from the 11th to the 12th. Spring White Wagtail passage has always been most pronounced at the favoured site of Audenshaw Reservoirs and this year was no exception, with 45 present on the 13th and 35 the next day. A male Pied Flycatcher was an excellent find in the rather urban setting of Longford Park, Stretford on the 14th, as was a very low Red Kite over Rooley Moor on the 16th. A Sanderling at Rumworth Lodge on the 18th remained until May 2nd but one at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 20th managed only a two day stay. Resplendent spring adult Black Terns always draw admiration from birders and there were three records during the month, of which seven together at Pennington Flash on the 22nd was easily the largest flock. Spring Little Gulls are a more predictable occurrence though and six county sites played host to one or more during the month, with a maximum of three splendid breeding plumaged adults at Pennington Flash, again on the 22nd. The 24th was a productive day with a Little Egret found at Pennington Flash, four Sandwich Terns at Audenshaw Reservoirs remaining long enough for fortunate county birders to catch up with them and a male Blue-headed Wagtail was discovered at Rumworth Lodge which remained until May 2nd. Red-breasted Mergansers have obtained the status of being a genuinely very scarce species in the county in recent years and so one at Rumworth Lodge on the 26th was noteworthy, if a little brief in stay and the same date saw the first of the Wood Warblers in the county with one singing at Carr Wood, Bramhall through until May 11th. Three Scaup at Pennington Flash on the 26th were typically one day birds but Common Scoter fared better during the month with four records involving seven individuals. With annual lowland stop-over sites for Golden Plovers moving back north now dwindling, the upland areas produced two substantial counts with 40 at Wharmton Hill, Saddleworth on the 26th and 74 on Ludworth Moor on the 29th. Bar-tailed Godwits remain very scarce county birds and so one at Rumworth Lodge on the 29th, remaining to May 2nd and one at Woodford on the 30th, were a good result. In years gone by, the fairly sizeable annual migration gathering of Whimbrel at certain county sites often used to include the odd Bar-tailed Godwit but such Whimbrel assemblages have dramatically reduced and disappointingly Astley Moss could only muster two Whimbrel all month. On the 29th, Audenshaw Reservoirs was visited very briefly by 27 Arctic Terns which passed through heading north-east but the same could not be said for the drake Garganey at Pearson's Flash on the 30th which remained until May 5th.

May

Dominated by areas of low pressure for much of the month, the weather was often cloudy and windy at times, along with copious rainfall. It was a rather dull month with little sunshine.

The month began well with 30 Whooper Swans over Audenshaw Reservoirs, two wonderful breeding plumaged Curlew Sandpipers on Lightshaw Hall Flash and a fine breeding plumaged

Spotted Redshank at Rumworth Lodge, all on the 1st. The 2nd continued the good birds with a Red Kite over Rumworth Lodge and the discovery of nine Dotterel on Brown Wardle Hill, all of which remained to the 3rd, reducing to five from the 4th to the 6th. Also on the 2nd, a Turnstone was present at Astley Moss East Pools, a female Redstart at Holcombe Moor and the Rumworth Lodge Spotted Redshank remained until late morning until it departed and was re-found at Pennington Flash; moving again on the 3rd, this time to Lightshaw Hall Flash. Again on the 3rd, a Bar-tailed Godwit was at Pennington Flash and a Wood Warbler at Redisher Woods, Holcombe, with the 7th yielding another Red Kite in county airspace, this time over Watergrove Reservoir. The good run of Little Gulls and Black Terns during the month (with seven and eight records respectively) hit their maximums on the 7th with seven Little Gulls at Elton Reservoir and four Black Terns at Audenshaw Reservoirs, though a Little Gull at the Wigan Flashes on the 16th which summered at the site into July was unprecedented. On the 5th Little Terns were at both Audenshaw Reservoirs and Pennington Flash, the 6th saw a Wood Sandpiper at Lightshaw Hall Flash, the 7th a drake Garganey at Rumworth Lodge and possibly the same Grey Plover visiting both Elton Reservoir and Rumworth Lodge and the 8th found a Little Egret at Pearson's Flash and another singing Wood Warbler but this time at Borsdane Wood. The first of the Sanderlings during the month began with a single at Rumworth Lodge on the 8th and then further singles at this site on the 12-13th, 23rd and 26th; Elton Reservoir had a single on the 14th; Watergrove Reservoir a single on the 22nd; and Pennington Flash managed two on the 27th and a single on the 29th. On the 14th, the discovery of a Temminck's Stint at Dover Basin was a popular attraction and almost certainly the same bird was then relocated at Horrocks Flash on the 16th. Also on the 16th, the only other record of a disappointing spring passage for Turnstone was located at Pennington Flash but 500 Swallow at Elton Reservoir and a total of 185 Wheatear in the county on the same date clearly indicated healthy passage for some species. A Sandwich Tern flew over Rumworth Lodge on the 18th and a Knot was found at Pearson's Flash on the same date remaining there into June, whilst three Spoonbills over Horrocks Flash on the 19th was a memorable occasion for the observer. Rumworth Lodge produced 20 Ringed Plover on the 24th, a Red-breasted Merganser over on the 25th and 20 Dunlin on the 26th (the month's highest count for the latter species), whilst another Wood Sandpiper was found at Altrincham ETW on the 25th. May ended nicely with a singing male Black Redstart right in the very heart of Manchester City Centre on the 31st.

June

The month began on a fine, warm note, but the weather gradually became more unsettled, with showers and some longer spells of rain. A short-lived warm spell in the last week gave the highest temperatures of 2011 but overall it was the coolest June since 2001.

June started in fine style with confirmed breeding for Black Redstarts in Manchester City Centre on the 1st, after a female was seen visiting a nest hole with food for its young. On the same date Quail numbers peaked at six in the Chat Moss area and many county birders enjoyed listening to their characteristic song from deep within the fields though some went one better and even managed decent views. Of course the month was quite rightly dominated by the astonishing news that a pair of Avocets successfully bred at Rumworth, with young finally hatched on the 1st; an unpredicted county first. A Sanderling was at Pennington Flash on the 5th and 3000 Swifts at the same site on the 12th was a magnificent spectacle. Two Wood Sandpipers were at Altrincham ETW from the 15th to the 18th, whilst the 19th saw two Little Terns at Elton Reservoir. Horrocks Flash produced the third Wood Sandpiper in the county for the month on the 20th, which remained until the 22nd. Two Redstarts, one at Pennington Flash on the 24th and one at Elton Reservoir on the 26th were perhaps early returning failed breeders but the four Common Scoters at Elton Reservoir and five at Pennington Flash both on the 29th were much more in line with the more usually encountered timings.

July

After a generally fine, warm first few days, the weather became unsettled and with low pressure close by, it was cooler with showers and periods of rain; heavy and prolonged at times. A brief settled interlude towards mid-month was followed by a return to low pressure and cool, unsettled conditions but the last week saw temperatures recover and drier weather, but still with plenty of cloud at times.

With Sandwich Terns usually being associated with the larger waters within the county, the two flying over 'waterless' Pickley Green, Westleigh on the 8th were a testament to the old adage of always keeping one's eyes and ears open! Gatherings of return passage waders began in earnest with 23 Oystercatchers on the 8th and 22 Little Ringed Plovers on the 9th, both at Rumworth Lodge plus another Wood Sandpiper for Altrincham ETW on the 9th. Post-breeding dispersal of Little Egrets saw three records during the month with a juvenile at Broad Ees Dole on the 9th (remaining until August 3rd), one at Altrincham ETW on the 10th and another at Scotman's Flash on the 26th. The expected passage of Common Scoter during the month saw records from four county sites, with three drakes at Pennington Flash and a single at Blackstone Edge Reservoir, both on the 15th; one at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 20th; and another single drake at Elton Reservoir on the 30th. Scaup too, were seemingly caught up in the movement of wildfowl and three at Audenshaw Reservoirs from the 20th to the 27th were followed by a single on the 29th which saw fit to remain at the site until September 8th! The best was saved until almost the last though, as on the 29th, a dark phase Arctic Skua flying north-east over the Pennine Way near to Light Hazzles Reservoir was a real red-letter day for two lucky observers. As the breeding season drew towards its close there were some real successes, though many could be attributed to the sheer hard work of atlas surveyors going the extra mile in recording them, with Teal breeding at two sites; Shoveler, Pochard, Hobby and Pied Flycatcher at one each; and Little Ringed Plover at no fewer than 15. Water Rail territories in the county numbered 23, four pairs of Black-necked Grebes and 13 pairs of Long-eared Owls bred and nest holes at a single Sand Martin colony numbered 592. Though a nest building female Marsh Harrier at one county site was unsuccessful in attracting a mate, one can at least remain hopeful for the future breeding potential of this species in the county.

August

With areas of low pressure over or close to the county for most of the month, the weather was predominantly unsettled and cool. Showers or more persistent rainfall occurred on many days in what was a dull month overall, with cloud cover often suppressing daytime temperatures.

The first day of the month brought a Little Egret to Pennington Flash and the six singing Quail on Chat Moss continued to both delight and frustrate observers in the first few days, depending on whether you just simply enjoyed listening to their marvellous song or agonised on how close they could appear to be without showing themselves! A single Garganey at Pearson's Flash on the 9th may well have remained at the site until September 19th. A juvenile Scaup, an unusual age to be seen in the county, was found at Pennington Flash on the 11th and had moved to Seaforth NR, Lancashire by the next day. Two Black Terns were enjoyed during the month with single adults at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 12th and 21st and the same site also hosted a Turnstone on the 13th. One of the most surprising and potentially important sightings of the month was the superb flock of 20 (minimum) Twite in the Dobcross tetrad on the 22nd but this was severely challenged in the surprising stakes by a stunning Goshawk at Georges Lane, Horwich Moors on the 22nd and perhaps more so by the wonderful Wryneck which graced Georges Lane again from the 24th to the 26th. Not quite in the same league perhaps, autumn Pied Flycatchers are nevertheless particularly noteworthy so a single at Newfields Plantation, Horwich Moors on the 22nd was well received and equally noteworthy were the 106 Wheatears on the Horwich Moors on the same date. Common Scoter passage continued throughout the month, with records coming from seven sites. A female Red-crested Pochard

was on Dover Basin on the 30th and 31st, moving to Pennington Flash on the latter date. An obliging juvenile Curlew Sandpiper at Pennington Flash entertained observers on the 30th and 31st and return passerine migration began in earnest with Redstart records coming by way of six at Elton Reservoir, two at Hollingworth Lake and nine on the Horwich Moors.

September

A changeable 'westerly' weather type prevailed for most of the month with showers or longer spells of rain and there were also some strong winds at times, particularly during the middle two weeks. The last week saw a fine, very warm spell with some exceptionally high temperatures for the time of year and it was the warmest September since 2006. In contrast, rainfall was almost 150% of average.

September is an increasingly exciting month in the county, with return passage really getting into its stride, various large flocks assembling and rare and scarce county birds regularly putting in an appearance along the way. The month opened up with the final sighting of Redstart for the year, at Hollingworth Lake on the 1st, followed swiftly by a Sandwich Tern also there on the 3rd. On the 9th, two Sandwich Terns flew through south at Pennington Flash; Elton Reservoir had their second Grey Plover of the year; a Manx Shearwater was found within the confines of the DW Stadium, Wigan and was successfully returned back to the sea off Formby Point, Lancashire that evening; and a Grey Phalarope was discovered at Pennington Flash, remaining until the 12th. There were three records of Little Gulls during the month and eight of Black Terns, with the latter species peaking via seven heading south through Pennington Flash on the 10th. As the Pennington Flash Grey Phalarope departed on the 12th another was discovered on the same date at Ashworth Moor Reservoir, where it remained until the next day but unfortunately appeared to be in poor health. During bad weather on the 14th a magnificent 1000 Swallows were forced down low over Heaton Park Reservoir, two drake Common Scoters dropped into Scotman's Flash and another Manx Shearwater was discovered, though in a long dead condition on Chelburn Moor. A very late Pied Flycatcher was found at Higher Meadows, Horwich Moors on the 15th and two Knot were found in the month, with singles at Pennington Flash on the 16th and Pearson's Flash on the 19th. A superb Honey Buzzard flew south-west over Smithills Moor on the 23rd and the second Grey Plover of the month was also over the latter site on the 26th. Certainly the most remarkable run of sightings of the month, if not the year, was the three records of Hawfinch seen on the Horwich Moors, with a single on the 18th, ten on the 28th and three on the 29th but if large flocks were your 'thing' then the 1024 Coot at Pennington Flash during the month should suffice instead.

October

The month began with a southerly airstream resulting in some exceptionally high temperatures, reaching 25-28 °C. The rest of the month saw mostly mild westerly or southerly airstreams and these brought showers or longer spells of rain to the county, though the high mean temperatures meant it was the warmest October since 2006.

The astonishing Hawfinch records from September continued into October, this time with a single over Orrell Water Park on the 1st. A female Common Scoter was at Rumworth on the 4th and 11 Rock Pipits were recorded during the month, with a maximum of three at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 7th. The 15th saw the county's fifth Red Kite of the year with one over Hindley but the next two highlights were rarities of a completely different nature though. 80 Pintail heading south-west over Holcombe Moor on the 15th, tracked shortly afterwards over the Horwich Moors, was a remarkable new county record flock but a true eastern rarity was discovered on the 16th when a Richard's Pipit was found at Bispham Hall, unfortunately all too quickly moving on. Following hot on the heels of the year's fifth record of Red Kite, the next involved two together as they were watched over Elton Reservoir on the 18th. A Black Redstart made an appearance on Mast Road, Horwich Moors on the 20th and the same date saw the unprecedented movement of Crossbills through the same moors peak with a remarkable

118 birds counted throughout the day. Another Common Scoter was located, this time at Elton Reservoir on the 22nd with the same day producing a migrating Goshawk at Pennington Flash and the next day 80 Golden Plover were at Audenshaw Reservoirs, which was to be the county's largest flock of the year. The 25th brought a Little Gull to Elton Reservoir and a Spotted Redshank to Pennington Flash, with the 26th seeing a record equalling flock for the year of 20 Dunlin at Audenshaw Reservoirs. As the month drew to a close three Snow Buntings were over Smithills Moor on the 28th and a new county record for Ring-necked Parakeets was set on the 30th when 16 were seen together at Platt Fields.

November

A generally southerly airflow in the first three weeks brought many very mild days and there was plenty of cloud at times but any rainfall was showery and the number of air frosts was among the lowest for November in the last 50 years. During the last week a vigorous westerly air stream brought longer spells of rain and strong winds.

The month's highlights opened with a juvenile Arctic Tern at Pennington Flash on the 1st, the latest ever record; a singing Cetti's Warbler at Hawkley Reedbed on the 3rd; then a year high of 202 Stock Doves on Astley Moss on the 5th; followed by two Snow Buntings over Georges Lane, Horwich Moors on the 6th. The 11th found a Common Scoter at Heaton Park Reservoir and a Slavonian Grebe at Elton Reservoir (both birds remaining until the 12th); a first winter Little Gull at Elton Reservoir; and also a Black Redstart at Blackstone Edge Reservoir, with a second bird returning to a Moss Side garden for its third consecutive winter and remaining until the year end. The county's second Richard's Pipit of the year was discovered on the 12th, thanks to two fortunate observers at Higher Meadows, Horwich Moors and 530 Pink-footed Geese down on stubble fields at Barton Moss on the 15th was a new county record for grounded birds and must have been quite a sight. A Scaup was on High Rid Reservoir on the 16th and another Snow Bunting flew high north-west over Georges Lane, Horwich Moors on the 17th. Pearson's Flash produced a Knot on the 21st and Pennington Flash a Sanderling on the 22nd but the nine White-fronted Geese which flew west over Burnt Edge, Horwich Moors on the 23rd stole the show. A juvenile Great Northern Diver at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 25th did its best to claim bird of the month though, particularly as it remained faithful to the site to the year end.

December

A persistent Atlantic airstream brought changeable, sometimes very stormy weather conditions. There was rainfall on most days, producing a monthly total which was over 75% above average and some hill snow also occurred on higher ground but it was generally mild with few frosts.

Winter Hill played host to a male Snow Bunting from the 3rd which remained all month and whilst unfortunately it spent the majority of its time in bordering Lancashire its excursions into Greater Manchester delighted many county birders all the same. The county's fourth and final Slavonian Grebe of the year was located at Horrocks Flash on the 4th, remaining until the 17th and an adult Great Northern Diver at Castleshaw Reservoirs on the 9th was rightly popular and remained until the year end. The 10th saw an adult Iceland Gull grace Heaton Park Reservoir and another male Snow Bunting feeding on seed placed down to attract the species on Winter Hill. Starlings gathered in their thousands to feed on mossland fields but none could eclipse the 6000 on Cadishead Moss on the 16th. A Bar-tailed Godwit at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 18th was unseasonal and a flock of 200 Skylark on Carrington Moss on the same date was a splendid record. The 19th saw a true county rarity nowadays with a Bewick's Swan at Elton Reservoir for all of 30 minutes. Two Iceland Gulls were found in the latter half of the month, both at Heaton Park Reservoir again, with a second winter on the 19th and another adult on the 24th. Three Snow Buntings were at Standedge on the 26th and the year's highlights were brought to a close with a fine drake Scaup at Pennington Flash on the 29th, present until the year end.

Notes for Contributors

Submission of Records

The County Bird Report relies on the submission of bird records on an annual basis and the Greater Manchester Bird Recording Group (GMBRG) actively encourages observers to record their sightings and to formally submit them to the group. The importance of these records cannot be underestimated. Not only in their use within this report and as its function as the definitive and historic guide of the county's avifauna for years to come but perhaps more importantly, in their use in relation to conservation of birds and their habitats. Sightings posted on the Manchester Birding Forum, those sent only to bird news services and rarities not submitted to and accepted by the appropriate rarities committee are not utilised within this report, and as such can form no part of the county's definitive bird record database and cannot be utilised in conservation issues. Therefore, it is very important that observers submit their records formally to the GMBRG.

Further information explaining why we need your bird sightings in more detail can be found at www.manchesterbirding.com

The GMBRG has adopted MapMate recording software as its preferred method of record submission. Further details, including the purpose and advantages of using the software, can be found at <http://www.manchesterbirding.com/recordingcountybirds.htm>. The GMBRG continues to welcome other forms of record submission though and observers are advised to check the previous webpage link or to contact the County Bird Recorder to discuss their preferred method. A new on-line bird sighting submission method is also available via RODiS which is accessible via www.manchesterbirding.com.

Breeding Birds

The submission of records involving breeding birds is paramount in both extending our appreciation and understanding of the county's avifauna and in protecting them and their habitats both now and in the future. We would ask, wherever possible, that observers adopt the BTO's breeding evidence codes when submitting their records and as such the codes have been reproduced below. Please note that all codes for **Possible**, **Probable** and **Confirmed** Breeding must relate to individuals in **potentially suitable nesting habitat**. The purpose of recording breeding codes is to accurately assess: the number of species breeding at a site; the status of each species (i.e. whether a possible, probable or confirmed breeder); and to estimate the numbers of individual species holding territories. Categories further down the list infer a higher level of breeding evidence. So for example, if you see an adult carrying food (FF) and then observe it flying to a nest in which young are seen, or heard, use the NY code.

Possible breeding

H (species observed in breeding season in suitable nesting **H**abitat)

S (Singing male present, or breeding calls heard, in breeding season, in suitable breeding habitat. Recording the number of actual birds singing [in the comment section] enables the number of territories to be estimated)

Probable breeding

P (Pair observed in suitable nesting habitat in breeding season. Record the number of pairs in the comment section but the actual number of individual birds in the quantity section)

T (permanent Territory presumed through registration of territorial behaviour [song etc] on at least two different days a week or more apart at the same place, or many individuals on one day)

D (courtship and Display [judged to be in or near potential breeding habitat; be cautious with wildfowl])

N (visiting probable Nest site)

A (Agitated behaviour or anxiety calls from adults, suggesting probable presence of nest or young nearby)

B (nest **B**uilding or excavating nest-hole)

Confirmed breeding

DD (Distraction-Display or injury feigning)

UN (Used Nest or eggshells found [occupied or laid within period of survey])

FL (recently **F**ledged young [nidicolous species] or downy young [nidifugous species]. Careful consideration should be given to the likely provenance of any fledged juvenile capable of significant geographical movement. Evidence of dependency on adults [e.g. feeding] is essential. Be cautious, even if the record comes from suitable habitat)

ON (adults entering or leaving nest-site in circumstances indicating **O**ccupied Nest [including high nests or nest holes, the contents of which can not be seen] or adults seen incubating)

FF (adult carrying **F**aecal sac or **F**ood for young)

NE (Nest containing **E**ggs)

NY (Nest with **Y**oung seen or heard)

National and County Rarities

The submission of descriptions for rarities is very important, so that a truly scientific record can be maintained of the county's avifauna.

National rarities are dealt with by the *British Birds* Rarities Committee (BBRC). A full list of species and forms considered by BBRC as well as full details of requirements, procedures and a downloadable reporting form are available on the BBRC website www.bbrc.org

All national rarities should be submitted electronically in the BBRC format and sent to the County Bird Recorder (not direct to BBRC). Any accompanying sketches or photographs should be included as separate jpeg attachments.

County rarities are dealt with by the County Rarities Committee. Full guidelines for finders (or indeed potential finders) of county rarities can be found within the County Rarities Committee's Annual Report (see Contents page within this county report). Further advice, information and the downloadable rarity reporting form can be found at <http://www.manchesterbirding.com/records.htm>.

Introduction to the Systematic List

Species Accounts

The systematic list includes all bird species recorded in an apparently wild state within Greater Manchester in 2011. It follows the status of British birds as determined by the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee in the Official British List categories A, B and C (see below). Following the main section of the systematic list are also included the escapes, ferals and introduced species which are included in the BOU's Categories D and E (see below). The latter are included not only for the completeness of the report but also in order to monitor any population growth, to monitor potentially negative impacts of these species on our native birds and to establish any patterns of occurrence of potential vagrants.

Species names used are the British (English) vernacular names; those in common usage locally.

To minimise potential threats, some records of rare breeding birds within the report are purposefully vague and all records of Ruddy Duck sightings have been withheld once again this year.

Observer's names are given in connection with species submitted to and accepted by BBRC or the Greater Manchester County Rarities Committee.

BOU Official British List Categories

Category A: Species recorded in an apparently natural state at least once since 1 January 1950.

Category B: Species recorded in an apparently natural state at least once between 1 January 1800 and 31 December 1949, but have not been recorded subsequently.

Category C: Species that, although introduced, now derive from the resulting self-sustaining populations.

C1 - Naturalized introduced species – species that have occurred only as a result of introduction, e.g. Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

C2 - Naturalized established species - species with established populations resulting from introduction by Man, but which also occur in an apparently natural state, e.g. Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

C3 - Naturalized re-established species - species with populations successfully re-established by Man in areas of former occurrence, e.g. Red Kite *Milvus milvus*.

C4 - Naturalized feral species - domesticated species with populations established in the wild, e.g. Rock Pigeon (Dove)/Feral Pigeon *Columba livia*.

C5 - Vagrant naturalized species - species from established naturalized populations abroad, e.g. possibly some Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea* occurring in Britain. There are currently no species in category C5.

C6 - Former naturalized species – species formerly placed in C1 whose naturalized populations are either no longer self-sustaining or are considered extinct, e.g. Lady Amherst's Pheasant *Chrysolophus amherstiae*.

Category D: Species that would otherwise appear in Category A except that there is reasonable doubt that they have ever occurred in a natural state. Species placed in Category D only form no part of the British List, and are not included in the species totals.

Category E: Species recorded as introductions, human-assisted transportees or escapees from captivity, and whose breeding populations (if any) are thought not to be self-sustaining. Species in Category E that have bred in the wild in Britain are designated as E*. Category E species form no part of the British List (unless already included within Categories A, B or C).

The current status of species in Greater Manchester

The current county status of each species recorded is given immediately underneath the species name. These are prone to occasional change, as the fortunes and occurrences of county birds change and this report reflects their most current status.

Abundant:	occurs in large numbers in suitable habitats and seasons.
Common:	occurs regularly, or widely distributed in suitable habitat.
Fairly common:	occurs in moderate numbers in suitable habitat.
Uncommon:	occurs in small numbers.
Scarce:	one or two records each year, or restricted to specific habitats.
Rare:	occurs less than annually.
Very rare:	less than 10 records in the past 20 years.
Vagrant:	less than 2 records in the past 20 years
Resident:	species breeds and is present all year.
Winter visitor:	mainly occurs in winter.
Summer visitor:	mainly occurs in summer.
Passage migrant:	mainly a migrant in spring and/or autumn.
Irruptive visitor:	occurs erratically in response to food shortage in home range.
Feral:	a species originating from a domestic source.
Naturalized:	an introduced species now breeding in the wild.

Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC)

The systematic list also includes the National Conservation Concern Status of affected species as published in the *Birds of Conservation Concern 3; 2009*. The BoCC status is shown underneath the current county status and is included in full so observers might obtain a fuller appreciation of the conservation issues facing many of our birds.

Species that meet any of the following criteria are deemed **Red Listed**:

1. **IUCN** Global Conservation Status. Species listed by BirdLife International as being Globally Threatened using IUCN criteria. Further details on those affected species can be found on the BirdLife International website at www.birdlife.org.uk
2. **HD** Historical Decline. A severe decline in the UK between 1800 and 1995, without substantial recent recovery.
3. **BDp** Breeding Population Decline. Severe decline in the UK breeding population size, of more than 50%, over 25 years (BDp1) or the entire period used for assessments since the first BoCC review, starting in 1969 ("longer-term") (BDp2).
4. **WDp** Non-breeding Population Decline. Severe decline in the UK non-breeding population size, of more than 50%, over 25 years (WDp1) or the longer-term (WDp2).

5. **BDr** Breeding Range Decline. Severe decline in the UK range, of more than 50%, as measured by number of 10 km squares occupied by breeding birds, over 25 years (BDr1) or the longer-term (BDr2).

Species that meet any of the following criteria, but none of the red list criteria, are deemed **Amber Listed**:

1. **SPEC** European Conservation status. Categorized as a **SP**ecies of European Conservation Concern (SPEC 1, 2 or 3).

2. **HDrec** Historical Decline – Recovery. Red listed for Historical Decline in a previous review but with substantial recent recovery (more than doubled in the last 25 years).

3. **BDMp** Breeding Population Decline. As for red list criteria BDp1 and BDp2, but with moderate decline (by more than 25% but less than 50%).

4. **WDMp** Non-breeding Population Decline. As for red list criteria WDp1 and WDp2, but with moderate decline (by more than 25% but less than 50%).

5. **BDMr** Breeding Range Decline. As for red list criteria BDr1 and BDr2, but with moderate decline (by more than 25% but less than 50%).

6. **BR** and **WR** Rarity. UK breeding population of less than 300 pairs (BR) or non-breeding population of less than 900 individuals (WR).

7. **BL** and **WL** Localisation. At least 50% of the UK breeding (BL) or non-breeding (WL) population found in 10 or fewer sites.

8. **BI** and **WI** International Importance. At least 20% of the European breeding (BI) or non-breeding (WI) population found in the UK.

All regularly occurring species that do not qualify under any of the red or amber criteria are **Green Listed**. The green list also includes those species listed as recovering from Historical Decline in the last review that have continued to recover and do not qualify under any of the other criteria.

Breeding Bird Survey (BBS)

The Breeding Bird Survey is run by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and is jointly funded by BTO, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) (on behalf of the statutory nature conservation agencies: Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside, the Countryside Council for Wales, Natural England and Scottish Natural Heritage), and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB).

The BBS was launched in 1994, to provide more representative coverage than the main survey running at the time - the Common Bird Census (CBC). The BBS is a line-transect survey based on randomly chosen 1km squares and volunteers make two early morning visits during the April-June survey period, recording all bird species encountered whilst walking two 1km transects across their square. The BBS provides reliable population trends for a large proportion of our breeding species and BBS data for species within this report are represented by two figures separated by a slash i.e. 11/16; the 11 representing total individuals of that species found during the early visit and the 16 the total individuals found during the late visit. A total of 66 squares were surveyed across GM in 2011 so, for example, Blackbird was recorded on at least one visit in 64 of the squares, so it occurred in 97% of squares.

Further information about the BBS and the full 2011 BBS report can be found at <http://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/u16/downloads/reports/bbsreport11.pdf>

UK & GM Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP/GM BAP)

The UK was the first country to produce a national biodiversity action plan. The UK BAP describes the biological resources of the UK and provides detailed plans for conservation of these resources, at national and devolved levels. Action plans for the most threatened species have been set out to aid recovery, and reporting rounds every three- to five-years show how the UK BAP has contributed to the UK's progress towards the significant reduction of biodiversity loss. UK BAP priority bird species are indicated as such underneath their county status within the systematic list. Further information can be found at the JNCC website UK BAP priority bird species <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-5163>

Similarly, the Greater Manchester Biodiversity Partnership has produced GM BAPs for four county species which are indicated with GM BAP below their county status. Further information about the partnership and the action plans for those species involved can be viewed at <http://www.gmbp.org.uk>

Rare Breeding Birds Panel List (RBBP)

The Rare Breeding Birds Panel collects breeding data on the rarer species of birds breeding in the UK (which GMBRG supplies records towards) and its findings are published annually in *British Birds*. Generally speaking these are species with estimated breeding populations of fewer than 1,500 breeding pairs. In particular, its records allow the production of annual national totals of breeding pairs for each species on its list. Species on the Rare Breeding Birds Panel List are denoted by 'RBBP' below its county status.

Abbreviations used within the text

BBRC - British Bird Rarities Committee

BBGM - Breeding Birds in Greater Manchester, the county breeding atlas, published in 1984

BBS - the joint BTO/RSPB/JNCC national Breeding Bird Survey

BOU - British Ornithologists' Union

BTO - British Trust for Ornithology

B/Lake - Boating Lake

CE - Country Estate

CP - Country Park (not necessarily designated under the Country Parks Act)

ETW - Effluent Treatment Works (sewage farm/works)

GM/GMC - Greater Manchester/Greater Manchester County

JNCC - Joint Nature Conservation Committee

LNR - Local Nature Reserve

MSC - Manchester Ship Canal

NR - Nature Reserve

NRS - BTO Nest Record Scheme

NT - National Trust

OCCS - Open Cast Coal Site

PWNR - Peat Works Nature Reserve

Resr(s) - Reservoir(s)
RBBP - Rare Breeding Birds Panel
RSPB - Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
TTV - Timed Tetrad Visit for the BTO national atlas 2007-2011
WBBS - Waterways Breeding Bird Survey
WeBS - BTO/WWT/RSPB/JNCC Wetland Bird Survey
WTW - Water Treatment Works
WWT - Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust
WP - Water Park

Sites

A full list of county sites is given at the end of this report, along with six figure grid references and major bird sites are also indicated on the county map but please note:

Billinge Hill, despite actually being in Lancashire, receives many mentions within this county bird report. The observer of visible migration from the site's watch point is able to clearly prove that the birds seen from there are either flying out of or into Greater Manchester due to the proximity of and his knowledge of the positioning of the county boundary.

Chat Moss is both a collective name for a number of smaller mosses which include Astley Moss, Barton Moss, Cadishead Moss, Irlam Moss, Great and Little Woolden Mosses and Worsley Moss, and is also its own separate site in the centre of the aforementioned mosslands.

Dove Stone is the same site referred to as Dovestone throughout all previous county bird reports. With the area now under the management of the RSPB it is represented in this report as Dove Stone RSPB.

Hollingworth (near Hyde) is a different location to Hollingworth Lake (near Rochdale), which is always designated thus.

Horwich Moors is a collective name for the many moors and associated locations above Horwich/Bolton, comprising the following main sites; Adam Hill, Brownstones Quarry, Burnt Edge Moor, Coal Pit Road, Deans Ditch, Georges Lane, Higher Meadows, Holden's Farm, Mast Road, Montcliffe, Newfields, Smithills Moor, Two Lads Hill, Walker Fold, Wilder's Moor, Wilderswood and Winter Hill.

Lightshaw Meadows is the collective name for the sites of Lightshaw Hall Flash and Dover Basin (also termed the Abram Flashes) and is now under the ownership of Lancashire Wildlife Trust and Red Rose Forest.

WeBS Data

Data were supplied by the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS), a joint scheme of the British Trust for Ornithology, The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and Joint Nature Conservation Committee (the latter on behalf of the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside, the Countryside Council for Wales, Natural England and Scottish Natural Heritage), in association with the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust. Although WeBS data are presented within this report, in some cases the figures may not have been fully checked and validated. Therefore, for any detailed analyses of WeBS data, enquiries should be directed to the WeBS team at the British Trust for Ornithology, The Nunnery, Thetford, IP24 2PU (webs@bto.org)

Systematic List of Birds Recorded in Greater Manchester during 2011

MUTE SWAN *Cygnus olor*

Fairly common resident.

Numbers throughout the county seem to have remained stable overall. The size of the non-breeding flock at Moses Gate CP, Farnworth was reduced compared to 2010, approximately balanced by an increase at Pennington Flash in the second half of the year. Monthly maximum counts for sites at which more than 20 birds were recorded were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Barton/Irlam/MSC	27	18	23	17								
Hope Carr NR	2	22								2	2	2
Moses Gate CP	51	54	54				61		64			
Pennington Flash	3	16	21	3	34	83	100	50	68	65	132	26
Sale WP	14	12	4					4		12	13	20
Three Sisters	38	50	25						10	7	5	5
Wigan Flashes	66	62	49	39	55	50	69	62	52	66	59	73

Nesting attempts were noted at: Abram Flashes; Amberswood; Ancoats; Astley Moss; Blackleach CP; Boarshaw Clough; Bryn Marsh; Buckley, Rochdale; Cheadle Royal; Chorlton Water Park; Clegg Hall Pools, Smithy Bridge; Clifton; Crompton Lodges; Diggles Flash; Dunham Massey; Elton Reservoir; Etherow CP; Heaton Park; Hollingworth Lake; Horrocks Flash; Irlam; Lightshaw WTW; Little Woollen Moss; Low Hall Park; New Springs, Wigan; North Reddish Reservoirs; Outwood Reservoir; Pearson's Flash; Pennington Flash; Platt Fields Park; Queens Park, Heywood; Radcliffe; Rainsford's Flash; Reddish Vale; Rhodes Lodges; Rochdale Canal, Middleton; Roman Lakes, Marple; Sale WP; Scotman's Flash; Turner's Flash; Westwood Flash; Whitley and Worsley, although not all were successful.

Again, the 25+ year old male at Turner's Flash, originally ringed as an adult at Fleetwood in 1989, attempted to breed but was apparently unsuccessful this year. On the BBS, only five squares recorded the species and this represented a significant reduction from 2010 but fell in line with that achieved back in 2009.

BEWICK'S SWAN *Cygnus columbianus*

Rare winter visitor.

BoCC Amber List (SPEC, WL, WI) and UK BAP species.

A single adult was at Elton Reservoir for 30 minutes on Dec 19th before heading off high to the south-west (B. Fielding *et al.*)

WHOOOPER SWAN *Cygnus cygnus*

Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant.

BoCC Amber List species (BR, WL).

The first record for the year was a pair on the River Irwell at Prestolee on Jan 2nd, possibly the same pair being seen at Ringley ETW on Feb 4th. Another, or the same pair, remained at Black

Wood, Irlam Moss from Feb 24th to Apr 4th. A flock of 30 were over Shell Pool NR on Mar 3rd, the highest ever count at this site, and two were at Elton Reservoir on Mar 17th, increasing to six on the 19th. A single was at Chat Moss on Apr 4th and the final record for the first half of the year was a flock of 30 flying over Audenshaw Reservoirs on May 1st.

There was a good series of sightings in the second half of the year, beginning with the first autumn record of a single at Elton Reservoir on Oct 7th followed by a flock of five on Oct 9th and probably the same birds seen flying over Heaton Park Reservoir the same day. Thereafter, small numbers were seen regularly until the end of the year. On Nov 5th probably the same flock of seven were seen flying south east over Georges Lane, Horwich Moors and Astley Green before flying in to Pennington Flash at dusk. Further movements over Horwich Moors were two on Nov 6th, five on Nov 24th and six flew over Besses o' th' Barn, Whitefield on Nov 28th. A further nine flew over Hollingworth Lake on Nov 6th. Three birds remained at Pennington Flash on Nov 6th and four flew off early on the morning of Nov 27th. Eight were at Elton Reservoir on Nov 14th, increasing to nine on the 22nd. The largest flock of the autumn were 10 at Piethorne Reservoir on Dec 6th and four flew east over Matchmoor Lane, Horwich Moors on Dec 12th. The final record of the year was a single at Roman Lakes, Marple on Dec 17th.

BEAN GOOSE *Anser fabalis*

Very rare winter visitor.

BoCC Amber List species (WR).

Amendment to the 2010 record

The two birds at Westlake, Hindley Green on Feb 1st related to the taiga race *A. f. fabalis* and not the tundra race *A. f. rossicus* as reported in the 2010 County Bird Report.

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE *Anser brachyrhynchus*

Common winter and passage visitor, mainly skeins flying over.

BoCC Amber List species (WL, WI).

During the first fortnight of 2011, a total of 867 birds were recorded flying in an easterly direction. For the remainder of the early winter period almost all other records were of birds flying westwards (5,507) or north/south/unspecified (3,179). This overall total was around 5000 less than in 2010, almost certainly due to a significant reduction in the number of records received for this species. The final record of the early period was a single at Blackleach Reservoir on Apr 2nd.

The first autumn record was on Sep 15th when 28 flew south over Pennington Flash. Subsequently, a total of 10,961 birds flew in a westerly direction with 6,547 going in an easterly direction and 8,485 going north/south/unspecified. Again, the overall totals for the late winter period were considerably lower than in 2010.

Grounded birds, usually accompanying flocks of Canada Geese and more often of dubious origins, were recorded as follows: - Heaton Park Boating Lake in January; Hollingworth Lake on Jan 26th; two at Pilsworth Fisheries on Jan 29th; one at Blackleach Reservoir on Feb 12th through to Apr 2nd with other wildfowl; a single at Horrocks Flash on Mar 9th with Greylags, with four also there on Mar 14th and one possibly paired with a Greylag. Singles were at Higher Boarshaw on Mar 26th and at Clegg Hall Pools on Mar 31st. During the second winter period a flock of 530 were feeding on stubble at Barton Moss on Nov 15th which was by far and away the largest ever grounded flock encountered in the county; the previous largest being 245 on Irlam Moss on Dec 31st 2002.

WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser albifrons*

Rare winter visitor.

UK BAP species.

Nine birds flew low west over Burnt Edge, Horwich Moors on Nov 23rd (A. Makin). Though they could not be positively identified to a specific race, the large influx of European White-fronted Geese *Anser albifrons albifrons* into the north-west of England at the time would indicate that they were possibly of this race. This was the first record of this species in the county since 2006.

GREYLAG GOOSE *Anser anser*

Uncommon feral resident and summer visitor.

BoCC Amber List species (WL, WI).

Whilst largely a summer migrant to the region, the first record of the year, at the Wigan Flashes, was of 20 at Horrocks Flash on Feb 3rd increasing to 35 on Feb 26th and then to 36 by Mar 12th. 58 were present at Horrocks Flash on Jul 31st including fledged young, decreasing to 40 on Aug 15th and 21 on Sep 19th. The final record for Wigan Flashes was of two at Pearson's Flash on Sep 23rd. At Etherow CP, totals of eight, 15 and 20 were recorded during the WeBS counts for the first three months of the year, followed by 10 on Jun 22nd. At Pennington Flash, a maximum of 13 was recorded on Jun 30th. Doffcocker Lodge and Heaton Park Boating Lake were the only other regularly reported sites with double figures, with maxima of 48 on Jan 22nd and 25 on Apr 26th respectively, although some of these were probably domestic in origin. 10 flew over Hey Brook on Jun 11th, 12 were at Audenshaw Reservoirs on Nov 9th and 12 were at Woodford Aerodrome fields on Nov 24th. Smaller numbers were also sighted at: Ainsworth; Altrincham ETW; Bramhall Hall Park; Broad Ees Dole; Clegg Hall Pools; Dover Basin; Dimplington; Dunham Massey; Edgeley Reservoirs; Elton Reservoir; Hindley Green; Hollingworth Lake; King George V Pool, Timperley; Lightshaw Flash; Ogden Reservoir, Milnrow; Platt Fields Park; Queens Park, Heywood; Reddish Vale; Roman Lakes, Marple; Rumworth Lodge; Sale WP; Shell Pool NR; Stamford Park Lake, Ashton-under-Lyne; and Worsley Mesnes. One flew north-west early on the morning of Mar 25th at Horwich Moors. Breeding was confirmed at Etherow CP, Heaton Park, Horrocks Flash and Scotman's Flash.

CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis*

Common Resident.

A common resident, occurring almost anywhere there is fresh water. Sites at which monthly maxima of more than 140 were counted and for which regular counts were available were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Castleshaw Resrs	120	1	100	50	50	40	98	1	153	153	50	167
Cheadle Ind. Estate			48	8				160		116		
Crime Lake	41	18	19			8			72	92	22	140
Elton Resr	32	102	32								248	
Etherow CP	150	68	28									
Hollingworth Lake	324	138	143	78	34	158	160	166	220	172	322	240
Moses Gate CP	302	313	94				189					
Pennington Flash		140	79	12	50	414	300	300	356	500	220	110
Royal George Lodge	163	148	17						147	64	200	23
Wigan Flashes	26	136	147	31	25	146	141	102	35	7	8	42
Woodford area	114	75	33	10	14	6		18	33	12	511	281

Sites just missing out on the criteria for the above table but still producing more than one flock of 100 or more strong were Alexandra Park, Oldham (120 in Aug, 120 on Oct); Audenshaw Reservoirs (100 in Jan, 134 in Aug, 100 in Sep); Edgeley Reservoirs (111 in Jan, 106 in Feb); Heaton Park Reservoir (128 in Jan, 104 in Dec); Rhodes Lodges (100 in Jan, 100 in Jul); Sale WP (136 in Jan, 106 in Feb, 114 in Mar, 130 in Sep, 108 in Oct); and Shell Pool NR (132 in Sep, 108 in Oct).

Single counts of over 100 also involved: 172 at Akzo Pond, Littleborough on Oct 23rd; 161 at Billinge Higher End on Sep 19th; 145 at Broadley Fold, Rochdale on Jul 30th; 120 at Chelburn Reservoirs on Aug 9th; 117 at Chorlton Water Park on Feb 1st; 120 at Higher Boarshaw on Dec 14th; 112 at Platt Fields Park in June; 100 at Queens Park, Heywood on Jul 7th; 112 at Salford Quays on Oct 16th; 110 at Springfield Park, Rochdale on Feb 19th; 104 at Stamford Park Lake, Ashton-under-Lyne in March; 151 at Uppermill in February; and 110 at White Ash, Birtle on Dec 28th. At dusk on Aug 31st, 280 flew over Besses o'th' Barn, Bury.

Breeding was confirmed at 46 sites and in 72 atlas tetrads with overlap between the two; tetrads which duplicate sites are not listed: Agecroft; Ainsworth; Akzo Pond, Littleborough; Alexandra Park, Whalley Range; Altrincham ETW; Ashton Canal, Clayton; Ashworth Moor Reservoir; Astley Moss; Barton; Blackleach Reservoir; Black Moss; Blackrod; Borsdane Wood; Bramhall Hall Park; Broadley Pond, Healey Dell; Bruntwood Park; Bryn Marsh; Caldershaw; Castleshaw Reservoirs; Cheadle Bridge; Cheadle Royal; Cheadle ETW; Chorlton WP; Clayton Bridge Lodges; Clifton CP; Clowes Park, Broughton; Crime Lake, Failsworth; Crumpsall; Daisy Nook CP; Dimplington; Dunscair Lodges; Eagley; Edgeley; Elton Reservoir; Etherow CP; Firwood Fold, Bolton; Fog Lane Park, Didsbury; Haigh CP; Halliwell; Hardy Farm; Hareshill; Harrop Dale; Hazel Grove; Heaton Moor; Heaton Park Reservoir; Heaton Park Boating Lake; Heywood; Higher Shore Pool; Hollinwood; Hollingworth Lake; Horrocks Flash; Hunger Hill; Hurst; Ince Moss; King William Pond, Crumpsall; Langtree; Lever Edge; Lightshaw Hall Flash; Lower Kersal; Manchester City Centre; Martland Mill, Gidlow; Middle Hulton; Mirlees Fields, Wood Moor; Montcliffe Quarry, Horwich; Mossley; Orrell WP; Pearson's Flash; Piethorne Valley; Pilkington Delph Quarry; Plantation Farm; Pomona Dock; Queen's Park, Bolton; Queen's Park, Heywood; Rainford's Flash; Red Moss SSSI, Horwich; Rochdale Canal, Littleborough and Summit; Rooley Moor; Rumworth Lodge; Salford Quays; Salford University; Scotman's Flash; Shell Pool NR; Shevington Moor; Smithills; Summerseat; Tottington Lodges; Trafford Park; Turner's Flash; Waste ETW; Westleigh; White Ash, Birtle; Woodford; Worsley.

On the BBS, the 30 squares achieved this year represented a similar result to previous years.

BARNACLE GOOSE *Branta leucopsis*

All records are currently considered to be of feral origin.

BoCC Amber List species (BL).

Mainly recorded during winter and spring, the first was a single at Etherow CP on Jan 6th with one at Roman Lakes, Marple between Jan 18th and 27th with the same or another also there on Apr 9th. This or another bird was at Strines on Jan 19th and Apr 9th. A single was at Audenshaw Reservoirs on Mar 21st with another at Reddish Vale on Apr 3rd, possibly the same bird moving to Hollingworth Lake on Apr 5th. The final spring record was a flock of six flying SE over Audenshaw Reservoirs on May 7th.

During the latter half of the year, singles were at Reddish Vale on Sep 23rd and 30th; Roman Lakes, Marple on Oct 10th and 29th; and Elton Reservoir on Nov 7th.

EGYPTIAN GOOSE *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

Scarce resident.

Numbers at Etherow CP were reduced to a single bird which was recorded, often in the company of the resident pair of Mute Swans, on several dates between January and October. Again, the single bird remained almost continually at Platt Fields Park. In the autumn, a single was reported from Hollingworth Lake on several occasions between Sep 18th and Nov 10th, probably the same bird being seen at Littleborough on Oct 13th. What may also have been the same bird flew east over Besses o'th' Barn on Nov 10th, with one at High Rid Reservoir on Nov 21st.

SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadorna*

Uncommon passage migrant and scarce breeder.

BoCC Amber List species (WL, WI).

Normally an early spring and summer visitor to the county, although there were records in all months. Monthly maximum counts from regular sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Audenshaw Resrs		2	4		4		1	1				
Dover Basin			1	2	2							
Elton Resr		1	2		3				5			
Lightshaw Hall Flash				2	4	2						4
Pennington Flash	5	8	6	4	1	3	7*				1	3
Rumworth Lodge				3	2							
Scotman's Flash					7		3					

* includes five ducklings

In addition, a single was at Dovestone Reservoir on Jan 1st, with one at Heaton Park Reservoir on Jan 22nd and Mar 14th to 20th, possibly the same bird being seen at Hollingworth Lake on Mar 20th. A pair was at Painswick Park, Woodhouse Park on Apr 1st and a single was at Hope Carr NR on Jun 13th. During the autumn, one was at Watergrove Reservoir on Jul 24th and Oct 14th; and one at Hollingworth Lake on Nov 15th.

The only breeding record was of a pair with five young seen at Pennington Flash on Jul 16th.

MANDARIN DUCK *Aix galericulata*

Uncommon naturalised resident, breeding since 1993.

The lack of an extended cold spell this year may have reduced reporting of this unobtrusive duck. Monthly maximum counts for the four major sites in the county were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bredbury		34	7	6	4			6				
Etherow CP	32	36	21	3		21				14		
Goyt Valley area	42					18	6	1	24	24		30
Worthington Lakes	12	8								21		

Additional records were: a single on Jan 2nd at Stalybridge, a male was at Reddish Vale from Jan 16th through to Mar 30th. A flock of seven were at Roman Lakes Marple on Jan 18th, reducing to two by Jan 27th through to Apr 9th. Two were at Littleborough on Jan 30th, three at Watergrove Reservoir Mar 12th and two at Middlewood on Apr 9th. A pair was also at Ladybrook Valley, Cheadle Apr 17th to May 2nd, with a single remaining to Jun 14th. Pairs were also at Denton on Apr 20th and Salford Quays on 21st and 26th. There were no records received from the Haigh area although the population may have relocated to nearby Worthington Lakes.

Breeding was suspected or confirmed at: Etherow CP; Ladybrook; Marple; River Goyt at Offerton; River Goyt at Pear Mill, Bredbury; and Woodford Aerodrome.

WIGEON *Anas penelope*

Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor.

BoCC Amber List species (WL, WI).

Monthly maxima from regularly counted sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Castleshaw Resrs	4								1	17	2	2
Elton Resr	23	13	1						5	26	4	
Heaton Park Resr	4								7	15	16	9
Pennington Flash	4		28					2	7	14	8	16
Rumworth Lodge	1		9		1				2	19	1	
Wigan Flashes	3		3		1			5	7	11	5	6

Additional records were received from: Abram Flashes; Altrincham ETW; Astley Moss East Pools; Audenshaw Reservoirs; Crime Lake, Failsworth; Drinkwater Park; High Rid Reservoir; Hollingworth Lake; Hope Carr NR; Kitcliffe Reservoir; Ringley ETW; River Goyt at Offerton; Roman Lakes; Sale WP/Broad Ees Dole; and Strines. On Feb 26th four were at Ogden Reservoir and probably the same birds were at Watergrove Reservoir. During the autumn, five were at Dover Basin on Aug 30th with six on Oct 5th, and a single at Shell Pool NR Aug 7th to 17th with four there on Oct 2nd. Between three and five were at Clegg Hall Pools from Oct 10th to 15th. Three were at Watergrove Reservoir on Oct 14th, with two on Nov 12th and seven were at Blackleach Reservoir on Oct 16th.

Visible migration observed at Heaton Park Reservoir included seven SE on Sep 16th, one S on Oct 12th, four SE on Oct 19th, three SW on Oct 23rd with 10 E over Besses o'th' Barn on Nov 7th.

There were no definite breeding records although a pair in eclipse plumage was present on Jul 15th at Hollingworth Lake.

GADWALL *Anas strepera*

Uncommon localised resident and passage migrant mostly confined to the western half of the county.

BoCC Amber List species (SPEC, WI).

During the breeding season, broods were observed at: Altrincham ETW, Hope Carr NR, Lightshaw WTW, Pearson's Flash (3 broods), Ringley ETW (5 broods), Sale WP and Wigan Town Centre (SD50X). On the BBS, one square this year replicated the poor result which was also achieved in 2010 and saw a significant decrease from 2009.

Monthly maximum counts of 10 or more at regular sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Abram Flashes		4	13	4	6			60	60	26	4	
Broad E D/Sale WP	5	6	16	13		10	4	6			10	8
Clifton Marina	23	23	3	2	5							
Davyhulme NR			4							12	4	19
Hope Carr NR	25	41	47						18	11	13	9
Lightshaw WTW		17		2	1		15			7	12	
Parson's Meadow									13			4
Pennington Flash	4	15	16	8	5	20		55	116	114	100	58
Ringley ETW		8	8	21	27		9	20	39	6	4	
Shell Pool NR	6	16	2	5	7	1	70	80		7	7	10
Wigan Flashes	45	55	49	17	16	4	11	18	93	107	79	164

The highest count of the year was 164 at Wigan Flashes in December which is below the new threshold for a site of national importance of 250 birds. Additional records of fewer than 10 birds were received from: Astley Moss East Pools; Audenshaw Reservoirs; Banky Meadow; Bickershaw; Blackleach Reservoir; Castleshaw Reservoirs; Chorlton WP; Davyhulme; Diggle Flash; Drinkwater Park; Dunham Massey; Elton Reservoir; Flixton Lagoons; Heaton Park Reservoir; Higher Boarshaw; High Rid Reservoir; Irlam Locks; Little Woolden Moss; Lower Broughton; Low Hall Park; Marple Bridge; Partington; Rhodes Lodges; Roman Lakes, Marple; Rumworth Lodge; Stamford Park, Ashton-under-Lyne; eight at Watergrove Reservoir on Nov 12th was a record count for Rochdale borough; Withins Reservoir; Worsley; Worthington Lakes. The Hey Brook WBBS recorded 17 on May 2nd and 10 on Jun 11th.

TEAL *Anas crecca*

Uncommon resident, common passage migrant and winter visitor, scarce breeder. BoCC Amber List species (WI).

Monthly maxima of 50 or more birds from regularly counted sites were much reduced from previous years and were recorded as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Altrincham ETW	40	90	15	6			5	20		10		
Broad E D/Sale WP		7	15		1		3	1	1	61	42	35
Heaton Park B/Lake	35	4	4						3	5	5	71
Heaton Park Resr	60	29	16	2				3	8	4	35	31
Horrocks Flash	13	18		4	1	1		7	24	38	46	300
Pennington Flash	159	35	30	18		4	2	50	125	170	86	250
Red Moss SSSI	11	3	13	6				11	46	84	23	

Additional counts of groups of more than 20 birds not reaching the criteria for inclusion in the table above came from: - Astley Moss East Pools (24 Sep 4th); Barton Locks (28 Nov 21st); Cadishead Moss (32 Feb 21st); Dover Basin (23 Sep 30th, 26 Oct 5th); Higher Boarshaw (46 Sep 7th and 40 Dec 7th); Hollingworth Lake (37 Oct 23rd, 34 Nov 24th); Hope Carr NR (44 Jan 16th, 31 Feb 13th, 35 Nov 20th); Kingsway Business Park (22 Nov 22nd); Lightshaw Hall Flash (30 Oct 29th); Pearson's Flash (29 Sep 4th, 26 Oct 15th); Ringley ETW (27 Jan 18th, 29

Oct 12th, 37 Nov 12th and 20th); River Irwell at Clifton Marina (24 Mar 3rd); River Mersey/ Manchester Ship Canal junction (23 Jan 24th); Rumworth Lodge (28 Jan 1st, 22 Feb 10th, 25 Nov 28th, 35 Dec 5th); Watergrove Reservoir (28 Oct 14th). Towards the end of the year an excellent 150 were on fields near Woodford Aerodrome on Dec 8th. Visible migration sightings were of eight birds flying south on Sep 3rd and four SW on Oct 28th, over Besses o'th' Barn, Whitefield.

During the breeding season pairs were noted in suitable habitat at Broad Ees Dole, Red Moss SSSI, Pearson's Flash and Shell Pool NR but following on from 2010's first confirmed breeding record for four years, this year's two confirmed broods which were located, at Irlam Moss and Little Black Moss, were an excellent result.

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos*

Abundant resident.

BoCC Amber List species (WDMp1, WDMp2).

Data for regularly counted sites where monthly maxima exceeded 100 were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bramhall Park Lakes	234	111	53	35	21	61	81	146	103	118	124	90
Edgeley Resrs	114	37	21	17								
Etherow CP	187	146	64			20						
Heaton Park B/Lake	97	85	91						98	165	96	
Mersey/Tame WeBS	110		37									
Moses Gate CP	88	73	35				120					
Orrell WP									79		123	76
Pennington Flash	50	150	110	40	23	5		200	342	320	441	275
Rumworth Lodge	6	4	5	8	12		58	22	145	30	7	2
Shell Pool NR	69	54	47	65	65	69	100	90	63	62	46	59
Stamford P/L A-u-L	120	101	46							103	96	101
Three Sisters	122	52	55						70	80	81	92
Westlake, Hindley	102	93	75									
Wigan Flashes	196	86	87	60	52	83	41	102	157	84	93	121

No counts were received from Fog Lane Park this year, which held over 100 birds last year. There were many other counts over 50 strong which came from a number of sites though and their respective peak counts during the year were as follows: - Cheadle Royal Industrial Estate (84 Jan 31st); Doffcocker Lodge (73 Sep 15th); Firs Park Lake, Leigh (50 Oct 16th); Heaton Park Boating Lake (56 Nov 26th); High Rid Reservoir (60 Nov 20th); Horrocks Flash (89 Sep 17th); Jumbles Reservoir (84 Jan 30th); Queens Park, Bolton (160 Aug 28th); Royal George Lodge (52 Dec 18th); Sale WP (55 Sep 18th); Salford Quays (53 Oct 16th); and Worthington Lakes (93 Jan 1st).

Breeding was proved at 39 sites and in 98 atlas tetrads (with significant overlap between the two) throughout the county, across just short of a five month spread from the first fledged young at Fletcher Moss Gardens on Apr 11th to the last at Ringley on Sep 2nd. On the BBS, squares were down to 42 (64%) this year.

PINTAIL *Anas acuta*

Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant.
BoCC Amber List species (SPEC, BR, WL, WI).

Apart from flocks recorded flying over, records of settled birds were confined to singles or pairs. One was at Broad Ees Dole on Feb 8th, followed by a pair at Heaton Park Reservoir on Feb 12th. Pairs were at Altrincham ETW between Feb 21st and 28th and at Pennington Flash on Mar 31st. A single male remained at Stopes Farm Fields from Mar 20th to Apr 9th. During the late period, a female remained at Pennington Flash from Aug 19th through to Dec 19th. A single circled high up over Watergrove Reservoir Oct 1st and one was at Elton Reservoir intermittently between Oct 9th and Nov 21st. A female was at Ringley ETW on Nov 12th.

Visible migration concerned 10 which flew west at Pennington Flash on Sep 16th and nine which flew SW over Billinge Hill on Oct 2nd. Remarkably, the county record was easily smashed by a flock of 80 which flew SW over Holcombe Moor on the morning of Oct 15th and which were then also seen overflying Burnt Edge, Horwich Moors only minutes later, watched heading for the coast. This supports the view that the autumn influx of Pintail into the county consists of birds heading for the Cheshire and Lancashire estuaries where they spend the winter.

GARGANEY *Anas querquedula*

Uncommon summer visitor and passage migrant, very rare breeder.
BoCC Amber List (SPEC, BR) and RBBP species.

The first record of the year was a single at Pennington Flash on Apr 25th and a drake remained at Pearson's Flash from Apr 30th to May 5th. This or another drake was at Rumworth Lodge on May 7th and the final record of the spring period was a single at Horrocks Flash on May 30th. A series of sightings of a single at Pearson's Flash from Aug 9th to Sep 19th presumably related to the same bird, although only one record included information regarding the sex/age, thereby demonstrating the importance of this in establishing numbers present!

SHOVELER *Anas clypeata*

Localised resident, passage migrant and scarce breeder.
BoCC Amber List (SPEC, BR) and RBBP species.

Monthly maximum counts of 10 or more at regularly counted sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Abram Flashes				3	3	2		24	22	18	13	
Altrincham ETW	8	13	16	2	1	2	4					
Broad Ees Dole	4	16	5								6	
Bryn Marsh										2	16	
Horrocks Flash	4	3	10	1	5	1		8	24	22	30	25
Pearson's Flash						1	1	1	17	50	29	46
Pennington Flash	1	30	12	7				20	64	97	100	100

Fewer than 10 birds were sighted at: Alexandra Park, Moss Side; Audenshaw Reservoirs; Blackleach Reservoir; Castleshaw Reservoirs; Chorlton WP; Cleworth (SD70B); Dunham Massey; Elton Reservoir; Flixton Lagoons; Heaton Park Boating Lake; Heaton Park Reservoir; High Rid Reservoir; Lightshaw Water Treatment Works; Ochre Flash; Parson's Meadow; Reddish Vale; Rhodes Lodges; Ringley ETW; Roman Lakes, Marple; Rumworth Lodge; Sale WP; Scotman's Flash; Shell Pool NR; Turner's Flash; Westwood Flash and Withins Reservoir.

Although several pairs were observed in suitable habitat during the breeding season, the only record of confirmed breeding came from the Wigan Flashes on Jul 10th.

RED-CRESTED POCHARD *Netta rufina*

Rare passage migrant and winter visitor; most records relate to escapes.

A single female was at Dover Basin on Aug 30th and 31st, probably the same bird being seen at Pennington Flash later on 31st. A male was at Pennington Flash on Oct 29th and 30th, possibly the same bird moving to Blackleach Reservoir from Nov 14th to 19th.

POCHARD *Aythya ferina*

Abundant winter visitor and uncommon breeder.

BoCC Amber List (SPEC, WDMp1, WDMp2, WI) and RBBP species.

Sites at which monthly maxima of 10 or more were seen as part of regular counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Audenshaw Resrs	7	17	59				12		6	9	15	
Chorlton WP	108	77	56									12
Pennington Flash	15	6	2			2	11	12	24	42	42	35
Rumworth Lodge	11	25	20		1					3	13	14
Wigan Flashes	4	46	37	9	6	4	2	4	4	22	16	30

In addition, 23 were on Lightshaw WTW on Oct 24th and 13 were on Withins Reservoir on Nov 12th. Single figure counts were received from: Blackleach Reservoir; Broad Ees Dole; Bryn Marsh; Castleshaw Reservoir; Clifton Marina; Dover Basin; Elton Reservoir; Hazel Grove Reservoir; Heaton Park Boating Lake, Heaton Park Reservoir; High Rid Reservoir; Hollingworth Lake; Hope Carr NR; Irlam Locks; King George V Pool; Low Hall Park; Moses Gate CP; Ochre Flash; Partington; Reddish Vale; Ringley ETW; Roman Lakes; Sale WP; Salford ETW; Shell Pool NR; Strines; Stamford Park Lake, Ashton-under-Lyne; Turner’s Flash; Westwood Flash and Three Sisters.

The only confirmed breeding was at Wigan Flashes where three newly hatched young were seen at Turner’s Flash on Jun 14th, though birds were also present during the breeding season at Bryn Marsh, Horrocks Flash and Pearson’s Flash.

Correction to 2010 Report: delete “ten Shuttleworth Feb 27th” (included in error)

RING-NECKED DUCK *Aythya collaris*

Rare visitor.

A fine drake was found at Pennington Flash on Apr 11th remaining until the next day and was the first record since 2006 (C. Gregson *et al.*). What was probably the same individual was then located at Woolston Eyes, Cheshire on Apr 20th and it seems also likely that its origins before visiting Pennington Flash came from the drake present at Seaforth NR, Lancashire during March (last seen on the 25th).

TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula*

Abundant winter and passage visitor, uncommon breeder.

BoCC Amber List species (SPEC).

Regularly counted sites with at least one monthly maximum count of 50 or more birds were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Audenshaw Resrs	30	8	12	12	7	4	130	150	100	65	60	80
Chorlton WP	58	49	14	1			1				12	28
Elton Resr	123	33	53					10	14	41	100	90
Heaton Park Resr	417	4	2	4	13		102	129	73	89	45	68
Horrocks Flash	74	19		29	30	31	32	35	135	48	72	59
Moses Gate CP	56	51	55						36			
Pearson's Flash	88			39	12	5	5	2	143	23	143	23
Pennington Flash	66	125	115			39	250	330	250	257	520	430
Scotman's Flash	10	38	57	25		4	74	12	101	117	96	123

Sites meeting the criteria for the above table were halved this year in comparison to 2010 but two excellent single counts not on the above table were of 180 at Salford ETW on Jan 5th and 185 at Withins Reservoir on Nov 12th. Otherwise, maximum site counts of 10 or more were: 19 at Alexandra Park, Oldham on Oct 1st; 21 at Altrincham ETW on Mar 25th; 11 at Astley Moss East Pools on May 2nd; 13 at Amerswood on Apr 27th; 28 at Blackleach Reservoir on Mar 6th; 40 at Boggart Hole Clough Jan 20th; 18 at Broad Ees Dole in Feb; 19 at Brun Clough Reservoir on Aug 17th; 16 at Bryn Marsh on Nov 19th; 10 at Cadishead Moss on Aug 11th; 26 at Castleshaw Reservoirs on Jul 14th; 15 at Clegg Hall Pools, Smithy Bridge on Oct 10th; 40 at Clifton Marina on Feb 13th; 45 at Davyhulme NR on Feb 13th; 42 at Diggle Flash on Jan 16th; 24 at Doffcocker Lodge on Sep 15th; 16 at Dover Basin on Dec 25th; 35 at Dunham Massey on Feb 24th; 20 at Etherow CP on Jan 19th; 11 at Fir Tree Flash, Leigh on Nov 20th; 11 at Harrop Dale on Jun 21st; 30 at Heaton Park Boating Lake on Dec 9th; 13 at High Rid Reservoir on Sep 11th; 36 at Higher Broughton on Jan 2nd; 36 at Hope Carr NR on Jan 16th; 24 at Irlam Locks on Jan 6th; 26 on the River Irwell at Agecroft on Jan 15th; 40 at Lightshaw Water Treatment Works on Oct 24th; 10 at Little Woolden Moss on Jul 11th; 14 at Low Hall Park on Nov 10th; 12 at Mortfield Lodges on Feb 13th; 30 at Partington on Jan 11th; 55 at Platt Fields Park on Jan 23rd; 10 at Queens Park, Heywood on Dec 12th; 27 at Reddish Vale on Jan 27th; 45 at Rhodes Lodges on Feb 13th; 67 at Ringley ETW on Jul 9th; 21 at Rumworth Lodge on Mar 4th and 11th; 11 on the Irwell at Salford University on Feb 3rd; 70 at Shell Pool NR on Dec 31st; 32 at Stamford Park Lake on Dec 18th and at Turner's Flash: 21 on Aug 15th and two counts of 20 on 19th Sep and 21st Nov.

A total of 33 broods were recorded at the following sites: Alexandra Park, in both Oldham and Whalley Range; Brun Clough Reservoir; Castleshaw Reservoir; Clegg Hall Pools; Doffcocker Lodge; Dover Basin; Gidlow; Great Woolden Hall; Hope Carr NR; Horrocks Flash; Little Woolden Moss; Mortfield Lodges, Bolton; Platt Fields Park; Ringley ETW; Rumworth Lodge; Sale WP; Stamford Park Lake, Ashton-under-Lyne; Shell Pool NR; Turner's Flash and near Woodford Aerodrome.

SCAUP *Aythya marila*

Uncommon visitor, mainly winter.

BoCC Red List (WDp2, SPEC, WL) and UK BAP species.

There were fewer records than last year. The only spring record was of three at Pennington Flash on Apr 26th. Three males (two adult and one first summer) were also present at Audenshaw Reservoirs from Jul 20th to 27th, reducing to a single (the immature bird) on Jul 29th which remained until Sep 8th. Otherwise, a juvenile was at Pennington on Aug 11th with the same individual relocating to Seaforth NR, Merseyside the next day; a female was at High Rid Reservoir on Nov 16th and finally a male was at Pennington Flash from Dec 29th to the year's end.

COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra*

Uncommon passage migrant.

BoCC Red List (BDp1, BDp2, BDMr1, BR, WL) and UK BAP species.

As in 2010, the bulk of the records refer to small flocks in the summer months.

The only early winter record was a female at Audenshaw Reservoirs on Feb 26th. Three males flew over the Horwich Moors on Apr 2nd, with a pair present at Heaton Park Reservoir on Apr 7th. The remaining spring records were of a drake present at Pennington Flash on Apr 12th and a drake at Hollingworth Lake on Apr 14th. Four were at Elton Reservoir on Jun 29th, with five simultaneously at Pennington Flash on the same date. A further three drakes were at Pennington on Jul 15th with another on the same day at Blackstone Edge Reservoir and a single at Audenshaw Reservoirs on Jul 20th. Two different drakes were at Elton Reservoir on Jul 30th and Aug 2nd while two females were at Audenshaw Reservoirs and a drake at Hollingworth Lake, both on Aug 1st. The following day three were at Heaton Park Reservoir, with singles at Broad Ees Dole and Watergrove Reservoir. A drake remained at Heaton Park Reservoir until Aug 4th and on Aug 7th singles were at Pennington Flash and Audenshaw Reservoirs, the latter remaining until the next day. Three drakes were at Pennington on Aug 10th. Later in the autumn, two drakes were seen to fly in to Scotman's Flash on Sep 14th but had departed by the next day. A female was at Rumworth Lodge on Oct 4th, with a single at Elton Reservoir on Oct 22nd followed by the final record of the year, a single at Heaton Park Reservoir on Nov 11th and 12th.

Correction to 2010 Report: delete "one was near Shuttleworth on July 21st"

GOLDENEYE *Bucephala clangula*

Fairly common visitor, increasing summer records.

BoCC Amber List species (BR).

Monthly maximum counts of more than 20 birds at regular sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Audenshaw Resrs	50	44	60	30	17	1	5	3	3	11	20	20
Heaton Park Resr	115	75	66	30	3					10	34	38
Pennington Flash	26	22	27	1	1		2	2	2	15	53	57
River Irwell, Salford	24	7	10									11
Wigan Flashes	27	45	57							3	12	17

Eleven were on the Manchester Ship Canal around Irlam Locks on Jan 6th; 17 were at Chorlton WP on Jan 8th; 15 on the River Irwell between Hough Lane and Agecroft bridges on Jan 16th and 25 were at Clifton on Feb 12th. Other records of less than 10 birds were received from: Amberswood; Ashworth Moor Reservoir; Bickershaw; Broad Ees Dole; Chelburn Reservoirs;

Clifton Marina; Doctor Dam Pool, Norden (an unusual location for this species); Elton Reservoir; Gorton Reservoirs; Greenbooth Reservoir; High Rid Reservoir; Hollingworth Lake; Hollins Vale; Jumbles Reservoir; Loonts Lake; Moses Gate CP; Naden Reservoirs; Partington; River Irwell at Peel Park, Salford; River Mersey at various locations downstream from Cheadle Bridge to Banky Meadow and also around Flixton; River Roch at Heywood; Rochdale Canal at Summit; Roman Lakes, Marple; Rumworth Lodge; Sale WP; Salford Quays; Sharston; Strines; Watergrove Reservoir and Withins Reservoir.

A male was present in late June at Elton Reservoir and another bird spent part of the summer at Audenshaw Reservoirs. Three had returned to Audenshaw Reservoirs by Jul 5th. Eleven were on the River Irwell between Agecroft and St. Boniface bridges on Dec 27th.

SMEW *Mergellus albellus*

Irregular, scarce winter visitor.
BoCC Amber List species (WR).

The confiding redhead originally discovered on Dec 23rd 2010 at Clifton Marina, remained until Jan 8th 2011, regularly also to be found on the nearby River Irwell.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER *Mergus serrator*

Scarce winter and passage visitor.

Sightings this year were confined to the spring migration period. A single was at Rumworth Lodge on Apr 26th and the same site saw a female fly in from the SW before circling and leaving to the SE on May 25th.

GOOSANDER *Mergus merganser*

Fairly common winter visitor, increasing summer records and rare breeder.

Monthly maximum counts of 20 or more birds at regular sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Ashworth Moor Resr	23	37	40						6	48		
Audenshaw Resrs	37	32	8	15	6	16	40	40	47	27	25	9
Chorlton WP	22	38	13									16
Elton Resr	10	7	8	6				12	18			32
Heaton Park B/Lake	6	36	14							9	32	23
Heaton Park Resr	52	70	31	64	52		1		16	33	52	26
Hollingworth Lake	21	34	5	4					1		4	32
Pennington Flash	25	13	10		1			1		6	12	16
Piethorne Valley		17	24						15			
Reddish Vale	18	10	3	2	5	1					3	20
Wigan Flashes	26	17	9	1					7		7	10

Other counts received of 10 or more were: 16 on River Mersey, Cheadle Bridge, East Didsbury on Jan 11th; 14 at Stamford Park Lake, Ashton-under-Lyne Jan 16th and 16 here Feb 13th; 14 at Moses Gate CP on Jan 16th and Nov 21st; 12 at King William Reservoir, Blackley also Jan 16th; 12 at Watergrove Reservoir Feb 9th. On Mar 6th Broad Ees Dole reported 23; Castleshaw Reservoirs 17 and Brushes Clough Reservoir 12. Ten were on the River Irwell at Salford University on Jul 11th; 16 at Kirklees Valley on Nov 12th and 11 at Alexandra Park, Whalley Range on Nov 27th.

Other sites at which less than 10 birds were sighted were: Abram Flashes SSSI; Akzo Pond, Littleborough; Amberswood; Cheadle Heath ETW; Chelburn Reservoirs; Church Lane Flood, Woodford; Clegg Hall Pools; Crime Lake, Failsworth; Daisy Hill Lodge, Westhoughton; Dover Basin; Dowry Reservoir; Drinkwater Park; Dutton's Pond, Flixton; Edgeley Reservoirs; Etherow CP; Fir Tree Flash, Leigh; Firs Park Lake, Leigh; Harpurhey Lodges; Higher Boarshaw; Holcombe Brook (SD71X); Hope Carr NR; Huddersfield Canal; Hurst (SD90K); King George V Pool, Altrincham; Kitcliffe Reservoir, Milnrow; Manchester Ship Canal at Cadishead and Flixton; Little Woolden Moss; Luzley (SD90Q); Norden (SD81M); Pilsworth; Pomona Dock; Queens Park, Heywood; Ramsbottom; Red Seas, Crooke; Rhodes Lodges; River Etherow at Compstall; River Goyt at Bredbury, Chadkirk and Offerton; River Irwell at Clifton Marina, Hough Lane to Agecroft bridges, Rock Hall to confluence with River Croal and at Ringley ETW; River Mersey at Millgate Fields, from Northenden to Sale WP, at Sale, Banky Meadow and Flixton; River Tame at Dukinfield, Mossley and Uppermill; River Tonge, Bolton; Rochdale Canal at Failsworth and Summit; Roman Lakes, Marple; Royal George Lodge; Rumworth Lodge; Salford Quays; Sammy's Basin; Shell Pool NR; Slackcote; Stake Hill, Middleton; Starmount Lodges; Stockport Town Centre (SJ89V); Strinesdale Reservoirs; Tottington Lodges; Walmsley's Flash; Walmsley (SD81B); Westlake, Hindley Green; White Ash, Birtle; Whitehead Lodges and Woodbank Park.

Visible migration included two flying over Plantation Farm on Jan 3rd; one over Pickley Green, Westleigh on Jan 6th; five east over the Horwich Moors on Feb 7th; two over Woodford Aerodrome Feb 24th; two over Flixton on Mar 1st; 11 over Gristlehurst Woods on Mar 28th; three over the Douglas Valley on Apr 6th; seven north over Hindley Green on May 10th; two south over the Horwich Moors on Oct 9th and five west over Besses o'th' Barn, Whitefield on Nov 12th.

Although adults were present in the breeding season at a number of locations, the information received on confirmed breeding may relate to just two successful pairs. Ten eggs were laid in a nest box in Bury and all had hatched and left by 29th May. Subsequent sightings of a female on the River Irwell with young may relate to the same brood. She was accompanied by 7 young on the Irwell at Elton Reservoir May 17th, and seen with several young on the river in Radcliffe Town Centre May 22nd. However, a family party of nine birds (presumably eight young) at Burrs CP Jun 21st suggests that at two least pairs bred. Three squares on this year's BBS maintained the species' current status on the survey.

Correction to 2010 report: Breeding did not take place at Diggle Flash and was only confirmed at three sites and in three tetrads with overlap between these.

RUDDY DUCK *Oxyura jamaicensis*

Current county status withheld.

In view of the ongoing cull alleging to preserve the genetic integrity of Spanish populations of White-headed Duck, all records have been withheld from publication.

RED GROUSE *Lagopus lagopus*

Uncommon resident.

BoCC Amber List (BDMp1, BDMp2) and UK BAP species.

Birds were reported from 11 sites and 6 additional tetrads with the majority of sightings from the Horwich Moor and Saddleworth Moor areas. Notable winter counts came from Wilderness, Saddleworth Moor (SE00F tetrad, partly in Derbyshire) with 12 birds reported on Jan 18th and Adam Hill, Horwich Moor with six birds present on Jan 2nd. Reports from Brun Clough, Dovestone Moss, and Rooley Moor (SD81P tetrad, possibly outside the county) refer to just singles but three birds were at Matley on Jan 29th and two at Black Moss on Feb 12th.

Reports from probable breeding sites came from Holme Clough where 12 birds were observed on territory on Apr 16th, Smithills Moor, and Yeoman Hey Reservoir. Red Grouse were recorded in three BBS squares this year compared to two in 2010 (four in 2009) which would suggest that the population is relatively stable. Given the habitat and inaccessibility of the heather moorlands, it's a fair assumption that breeding numbers must be well under-recorded.

Post breeding records came from the Horwich Moors with a maximum of seven birds reported on Sep 9th and various sites on Saddleworth Moor.

RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE *Alectoris rufa*

Uncommon introduction; populations may not be self-sustaining.

Once again the majority of the winter records came from the lowland mossland sites but numbers were down with maximum counts of three birds at Little Woolden Moss and two birds at Irlam Moss on Jan 1st. Two birds were at Carrington Moss on Mar 6th and Woodford Aerodrome on Mar 31st. A single bird was recorded at Irlam Moss on Mar 22nd.

Two adults with seven juvenile birds were seen above Dove Stone RSPB on moorland adjacent to the A635 Greenfield to Holmfirth Road on Jun 23rd. Once again, despite the continuing Atlas work, this was the only confirmed breeding record although birds were recorded in suitable habitat during the breeding season with pairs at Astley Moss, Irlam Moss, Horwich Moors, Partington, Saddleworth Moor, Sunbank Lane, Woodford Aerodrome and Yeoman Hey Reservoir. Courtship or display was also noted in Harrop Dale tetrad SE00E. As in 2009 and 2010 birds were recorded in two BBS squares.

Various post breeding sightings came from the lowland mossland areas with a maximum count of three birds on Irlam Moss on Aug 23rd. Given the low maximum counts it is safe to say that there have been no release or introduction schemes for at least the last three years.

GREY PARTRIDGE *Perdix perdix*

Fairly common but declining resident; augmented by occasional releases in some areas. BoCC Red List (BDp1, BDp2, SPEC) and UK BAP species.

Early records came from 23 sites and four additional tetrads, with double figure records coming from seven of these, including Highfield Moss and Little Woolden Moss which recorded the largest concentrations this year. This compares with six sites registering double figures during the same period in 2010. The seven locations were as follows: - 11 at Daisy Hill on Jan 3rd, 25 at Little Woolden Moss on Jan 5th, 13 at Chat Moss on Jan 10th, 12 at Walkden on Jan 17th, 14 at Dog Hill on Jan 25th, 12 at Haydock Park (SJ59Y tetrad, possibly outside the county) on Feb 8th and 15 at Highfield Moss on Feb 16th. Higher altitude sightings came from Piethorne Valley on Jan 1st when four birds were recorded, six birds on Crompton Moor on Jan 25th and two coveys totalling eight birds were seen on Ludworth Moor on Mar 2nd.

BBS data showed birds present in eight squares in 2009 and only three squares in 2010. This year, birds were recorded in seven squares. 20 records of confirmed breeding were received from seven sites and ten additional tetrads compared to just seven locations in 2010 which represents an exceptional breeding season for recent times. The earliest record came from Carrington Moss on Jun 6th where a bird was reported on a nest. Another nest site was located at Altrincham ETW on Jun 8th. Fledged young were seen at the following locations;- Abram Flashes, Barton Moss, Bryn, Chat Moss, Highfield Moss, Irlam Moss, Leyland Green, Lightoaks Moss Farm, Over Hulton, North Ashton, Piethorne, Tottington, Warburton and Watergrove Reservoir. Pairs were also noted during the breeding season at the moorland sites of Saddleworth and Ashworth Moor, although breeding was not confirmed. BBGM states that "Grey Partridge

is associated mainly with arable and meadowland and pasture, usually below an altitude of about 200 metres. Therefore it is not expected to breed in moorland ...” With recent records of breeding success in moorland areas such as Ashworth Moor, Chelburn, Holcombe, Piethorne, and Watergrove, as well of pairs recorded during the breeding season, it is probable that birds are under recorded in these habitats.

There were numerous reports of 10 birds or more between late August and December. These included peak counts of 27 on Little Woolden Moss; 24 on Irlam Moss; 16 at Ashworth Moor; 15 on Chat Moss; 14 at Barton Locks, Cadishead Wood, Littleborough, and Rumworth Lodge, 12 at Barton Moss and 11 at Daisy Hill.

QUAIL *Coturnix coturnix*

Scarce migrant and summer visitor.

The first report of a singing male came from Irlam Moss on Jun 1st, increasing to four birds on Jun 2nd and this was just the start of what proved to be an exceptional year for this species. A total of 43 reports covering 28 dates came from the traditional mossland sites, however, given the close proximity of these locations, these probably only refer to a maximum count of six birds in the Chat Moss area and a further three birds from Carrington Moss. As is usual for this species, all reports were of males singing from the dense cover of arable fields. However, there were regular sightings of birds commuting between fields on either side of Astley Road just south of Olive Mount Farm on Chat Moss, allowing ‘county listers’ the chance to get reasonable flight views of this normally hard to see species. The last record came from Irlam Moss of six singing male birds on Aug 3rd. Although birds were reported holding territory on Chat Moss and Carrington Moss, breeding was not confirmed. The last confirmed breeding record was in 2004 at Nook Lane, Astley Moss.

PHEASANT *Phasianus colchicus*

Common resident; frequent introductions for shooting.

The peak count of 24 was recorded at Carrington Moss on Dec 18th. Other notable counts were 17 at Holcombe on Apr 4th, 15 at Astley Moss on Feb 21st and Chat Moss on Oct 27th, 12 at Clifton on May 23rd and Cadishead Wood on Nov 3rd, 10 at Pearsons Flash on Dec 15th and eight at Horwich Moor on Sep 9th.

Pheasants were recorded at 80 sites and in 83 tetrads throughout the county with a considerable degree of overlap between the two. The earliest confirmed breeding record came from Bickershaw on May 12th. Other confirmed breeding sites were Ashton-on-Mersey, Astley Moss, Banky Meadow, Barton Moss, Basel Polyolefins (Carrington), Blackstone Edge, Carrington Moss, Daisy Nook, Eagley, Horrocks Hill, Horwich Moors, Langtree, Red Moss SSSI, Shevington Moor, Smithills Hall CP, Smithills Moor, Warburton, Wigan Flashes and Worthington. Pheasants were recorded in 28 (42%) of the county’s BBS squares this year compared to 29 squares in 2010 and 26 in 2009.

In 2009, over 700 birds were released on Ludworth Moor but the only record from this site in 2011 was of a single bird on Apr 4th which would suggest that no further birds have been released since. Another former release site of Brushes recorded a maximum count of seven birds which would suggest that there has been no release at this site either. This was also the case at Dove Stone RSPB where a maximum of four birds were recorded on Sep 22nd including a dark green, melanistic hybrid which had been released with 23 others in October 2009. It is impossible to tell if any release took place on the lowland mosses but the maximum count of 15 at Astley Moss would suggest not.

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER *Gavia immer*

Rare winter visitor.

BoCC Amber List species (WI).

A juvenile was present at Audenshaw Reservoirs from Nov 25th until the year end and was the 9th site record (J. Ireland et al.). An adult also made a long stay at Castleshaw Reservoirs from Dec 9th to the year end (R. Belter et al.) and was the first record for the site and also a welcome addition to the Oldham borough list.

There have now been 26 county records since 1970 (11 since 2000) and these were typical arrival dates, with November being the commonest arrival month, closely followed by December. This species does have a tendency to make long stays in the county with the record being held by the juvenile at Audenshaw Reservoirs in 2006-7 which was present for 146 days.

MANX SHEARWATER *Puffinus puffinus*

Very rare autumn visitor.

BoCC Amber List species (SPEC, BDMr2, BL, BI).

An exhausted bird was found by the ground-staff at the DW Stadium, Wigan on Sep 6th wandering between the seating there (C. Aspey et al.). It was successfully released at Formby Point, where it flew strongly out to sea despite the windy conditions. A second bird was not so lucky, and its fresh corpse was a sad discovery at Chelburn Moor, Littleborough on Sep 14th (D. Wall); this was the first record in the Rochdale borough since 1974 and the skin now resides at The Manchester Museum.

These were the first records in the county since 2000. There have been 25 county records since 1970 and they have all been storm-driven birds within the period Aug 29th to Oct 2nd.

CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Common winter visitor; summering in small numbers.

Monthly maxima at sites where at least one count was in double figures:-

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Castleshaw Resrs	7	7	11	3		1	1	8	5	11	10	7
Davyhulme NR	10	9	8	12	12				13	10	10	3
Elton Resr	12	20	14	2				3				
Etherow CP	13		8									
Heaton Park B/Lake			3								31	
Hollingworth Lake	5	16	10	2	1	1	1	6	6	7	11	26
Pennington Flash	4		42	7		5	9	16	25	32	31	28
Rumworth Lodge	3	5	14	11		1				3		6
Sale WP	8	6	7	4	5	3	3		11	10	6	8
Salford Quays	2	24		6	2				4	8	11	20
Wigan Flashes	6	22	18	3	5	7	10	5	10	17	22	14

At two separate roost sites (locations withheld) counts were made of 28 on Oct 16th, 42 on Nov 13th and 38 on Dec 11th at one and 25 on Jan 18th, 45 on Feb 16th, 36 on Mar 23rd, 46 on Oct 26th and 52 on Dec 1st at the other. There were also isolated double figure counts of 13 at

Roman Lakes, Marple on Nov 11th and 11 at Clegg Hall Pools, Smithy Bridge on Nov 29th. Notable overflying flocks included 17 over Warburton, Carrington Moss on May 7th and 19 south over Besses o'th'Barn, Whitefield on Oct 28th.

BBS data: This species was recorded in 11 BBS squares (17%) which was a small increase from 2010. There was no attempt at breeding within the county, although summering birds appear to be increasing. Nationally BBS data suggested a 5 % decline in the UK population over the period 2010-11.

BITTERN *Botaurus stellaris*

Scarce visitor.

BoCC Red List (HD, SPEC, BR, WR), UK BAP and GM BAP species.

It was a poor year for this species with only nine records received in total.

Autumn/Winter records: All the records came from the Wigan Flashes area. In autumn singles were recorded at both Bryn Marsh and Pearson's Flash on Sep 17th. Singles were then at Bryn Marsh on Nov 7th, Turner's Flash on Nov 19th and again over Bryn Marsh on Dec 17th and 20th, before the final sighting of the year at Hawkley Reedbed on Dec 27th.

Summer records: A booming bird was reported from a site in the west of the county but there was no evidence of breeding.

LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*

Uncommon visitor.

BoCC Amber List species (BL).

This species remains a surprisingly scarce visitor to the county considering the recent population expansion along the north-west coast.

Winter records: One flew over a lucky observer's garden in Dales Brow, Swinton on Jan 3rd and one was then in the area of Norbury Brook and Torkington Park, Hazel Grove from Jan 14th to Feb 6th.

Spring passage: Spring migrants were at Pennington Flash on Apr 24th and Pearson's Flash on May 8th.

Autumn passage: A long-staying juvenile was at Broad Ees Dole, Sale WP from Jul 9th to Aug 3rd. Singles were also at Altrincham ETW Jul 10th, Scotman's Flash Jul 26th and Pennington Flash Aug 1st.

GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*

Fairly common resident.

Breeding: The BTO Heronries census recorded the following counts of occupied nests: Alexandra Park, Moss Side (1 nest); Ashfield Lodge, Didsbury (4); Ashton-under-Lyne ETW (2); Boggart Hall Clough (12); Botany Bay Wood, Worsley (70); Brandlesholme, Bury (3); Brookdale Clough, Clayton Vale (4); Chorlton Ees (17); Croke Wood, Wigan (10); Dunham Massey (7); Gorsey Hill Wood, Littleborough (5); Horrocks Flash (10); Ladybridge, Cheadle Hulme (3); Marple Dale (22); Pearson's Flash (1); Pennington Flash (2); Platt Fields Park (1); Queen's Park, Heywood (15); Saddleworth ETW (7) and Stamford Park Lake, Ashton-under-Lyne (2). There were three new heronries this year and the total number of nests in the county was 198. A pair at Pearson's Flash took the unusual step of nesting on a pylon but it proved to be an inspired choice as they successfully fledged two young. The county's breeding population has remained fairly static over the last five years but there has been a steady decline at the main

Botany Bay Wood heronry since 2005 when 110 nests were estimated here. However the situation as a whole is vastly improved from 1984 when BBGM stated that the species had a 'precarious foothold in Greater Manchester and it is unlikely that more than ten pairs breed'. BBS data: 23 sites (35%) reported this species (36% in 2010). National data suggested a 5% reduction in the UK population from 2010 to 2011 with a 13% decline reported in the NW region.

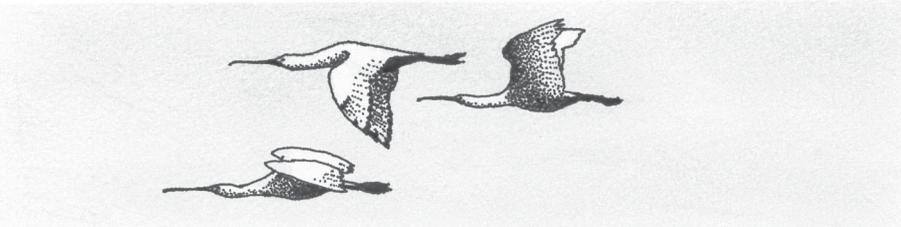
Winter: The highest count away from breeding sites was 12 at Sale Water Park on Dec 26th.

SPOONBILL *Platalea leucorodia*

Rare visitor.

BoCC Amber List species (SPEC, BR).

Three flew west over Horrocks Flash on May 19th, at least one of which was an immature (D. Broome). This was only the tenth county record and the fourth at the Wigan Flashes.



LITTLE GREBE *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Fairly common resident and summer visitor.

BoCC Amber List species (BDMp1, BDMp2).

Counts: Only three sites recorded double figure counts this year (maxima in brackets): Heaton Park Reservoir (21 on Sep 23rd), High Rid Reservoir (15 on Sep 15th) and Pennington Flash (17 on Nov 4th).

Breeding: confirmed at 21 sites: Altrincham ETW; Boggart Hole Clough; Broad Ees Dole, Sale; Brushes Clough Reservoir, Shaw; Bury ETW; Clarence Lido; Doctor Dam, Norden; Elton Reservoir; High Rid Reservoir; Hope Carr NR; Langtree; Lightshaw WTW; Lord's Wood, Hopwood; North Reddish; Pearson's Flash; Radcliffe Ees; Ringley ETW; Rumworth Lodge; Shell Pool NR; Whitley Reservoir and near Woodford Aerodrome. Breeding was also considered probable or possible at a further 14 sites. 21 confirmed breeding sites was five less than in 2010, but the true picture may have been higher as no information was received for several traditional sites such as Pennington Flash and Scotman's Flash. In 1984 BBGM estimated the county breeding population to be 150 pairs, with 11 pairs at Pennington Flash alone, so there has clearly been a considerable decline since then. On a more positive note breeding was confirmed at two sites in the Rochdale borough for the first time since 2007. BBS data: 2 sites (3%) recorded this species - the same as in 2010. Nationally BBS data indicated an 18% decline in the UK population and a 4% decline in the English population from 2010-2011.

Autumn and late winter records: This species is now an uncommon visitor to the north-east of the county, but there was a good scattering of records during the autumn with singles at Clegg Hall Pools, Smithy Bridge on Sep 19th; Castleshaw Reservoirs from Sep 29th to Nov 12th; Foulwater Lodge, Piethorne on Oct 15th; Watergrove Reservoir on Oct 16th; Hareshill, Heywood on Nov 6th; Queen's Park, Heywood from Nov 25th to Dec 12th and White Ash Reservoir, Birtle on Nov 25th-28th.

GREAT-CRESTED GREBE *Podiceps cristatus*

Fairly common resident and summer visitor.

Late summer and autumn counts at Pennington Flash were considerably down compared to 2010. Conversely counts at Elton Reservoir were much higher than in 2010, probably due to increased water levels at this site. Numbers at other sites were broadly similar to other recent years.

Monthly maxima at sites where at least one count was in double figures:-

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Audenshaw Resrs	8	5	11	10	20	21	50	50	40	35	30	17
Elton Resr	3	5	23	15	22			18	60			
Heaton Park Resr	1	6		4	5	4	10		2	2		2
Pennington Flash	4	24	33	25	6	6	30	55	37	55	11	22
Rumworth Lodge		6	11	8	10	6	9	8	5	3	5	4
Wigan Flashes		6	21	20	18	17	21	57	40	18	20	2

Breeding: confirmed at 25 sites: Amberswood; Blackleach Reservoir, Walkden; Crime Lake, Failsworth; Doffcocker Lodge; Elton Reservoir; Heaton Park Boating Lake; Horrocks Flash; Mortfield Lodges, Bolton; Moses Gate CP; Outwood Reservoir; Pearson's Flash; Pennington Flash; Queensmere, Clifton; Rainford's Pool; Reddish Vale, Tame Valley; Rhodes Lodges; Roman Lakes, Marple; Rumworth Lodge; Sale WP; Stamford Park Lake, Ashton-under-Lyne; Trafford Centre, Dimplington; Turner's Flash; Watergrove Reservoir; Westwood Flash and Worthington Lakes. 25 confirmed breeding sites is down from 30 in 2010 but information was not received from several traditional sites. Probable or possible breeding was also reported at a further 17 sites. The county breeding population has certainly expanded since the estimate of 20 pairs in 1982 by BBGM. BBS data: Only 5 BBS squares (8%) recorded this species (4 in 2010). BBS data indicated a 9% decrease in the UK population and a 15% fall in England from 2010-11.

SLAVONIAN GREBE *Podiceps auritus*

Scarce visitor.

BoCC Amber List species (SPEC, BDMp1, BDMp2, BR, WR).

An excellent year for this species with four records being the best annual total since 1996 when there were six. There have now been ten records in the county since 2000.

One was at Hollingworth Lake on Feb 21st (A. Nuttall *et al.*) and was the third record for the site, but only the fifth record for Rochdale and the first in the borough since 1997. An adult was at Audenshaw Reservoirs from Mar 18th to Apr 6th (R. Travis *et al.*) arrived in advanced moult and attained full breeding plumage during its stay. It constituted the eighteenth record for this site but was only the third here in breeding plumage. In autumn, one was at Elton Reservoir from Nov 11th to 12th (B. Fielding *et al.*) and became the third record for the site following sightings in 1993 and 1874. Finally one was at Horrocks Flash from Dec 4th to 17th (R. Thorpe *et al.*) when freezing weather forced its departure.

BLACK-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps nigricollis*

Scarce breeder since 1992; uncommon passage visitor.

BoCC Amber List species (BR, WR).

Spring arrivals: One bird returned to the sole breeding site on the typical date of Mar 19th and numbers had increased to five birds by Apr 9th and seven on May 19th. There were also regular spring sightings at Pennington Flash where two birds were seen regularly from Apr 4th to May 1st (four on Apr 26th) and two were again present on Jun 5th. Heaton Park Reservoir has also become a favoured staging post for this species in recent years, and up to

four birds were present here from April 17th to May 4th. The only other spring sighting was of a single at Sale Water Park from Apr 4th -5th.

Breeding: Three pairs reared four young (broods of three and one) at the county's only breeding site. The last sighting of the year here was a single on Sep 14th.

Post-breeding dispersal: Heaton Park Reservoir was again favoured as a stop-over site in late summer, with up to three birds regularly present between Jul 10th and Sep 23rd. Interestingly it was felt by the local observers that the same individuals were not present throughout this period, but that new birds were arriving as others left. Elsewhere three adults were at Audenshaw Reservoirs from June 23rd to 26th with one remaining until July 2nd, and then an adult was again here from Jul 18th to 25th. Finally one was at Pennington Flash from Sep 9th to 18th.

HONEYBUZZARD *Pernis apivorus*

Very rare passage migrant.

BoCC Amber List (SPEC) and RBBP species.

The 12th individual recorded in the county in modern times flew low, south west, over Smithills Moor on Sep 23rd (A. Makin). This bird was the first sighting since 2005, the most recent record prior to 2011 being of an unseen radio tracked bird which roosted near Outwood Sep 17th 2008. Remarkably, it is the eighth county record to fall in the narrow window of Sep 22nd to 25th, so this four day period would appear to be a good time to look for this species in the future, subject of course to suitable weather conditions!

RED KITE *Milvus milvus*

Uncommon passage migrant.

BoCC Amber List (SPEC) and RBBP species.

Some observers may be unaware that this species remains on the county rarity list, perhaps due to the frequency with which it is seen in neighbouring West Yorkshire, and other areas of the country. It is extremely regrettable that there were seven reported sightings in 2011 (at least those of which we are aware) not supported by a rarities submission. Only six records were accepted out of eight submissions, all singles with one exception. The Mottram area Mar 22nd (R. Bell); low over Rooley Moor Apr 16th, passing within 50 metres of the observer before heading NE out of the county towards Whitworth (S.V. Atkins); a site first at Rumworth Lodge May 2nd (K. Foulkes, P. Rhodes); Watergrove Reservoir May 7th, the second for the site and unusually for this species both were photographed (S. Burke); Hindley Oct 15th (A. Makin) and only the second accepted record of more than one, at Elton Reservoir Oct 18th (S. Johnson, S. Warford) when two circled and then flew SE. The dates are indicative of passage and unlike 2010 none was seen during the summer months June to August.

MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus*

Uncommon passage migrant (increasing).

BoCC Amber List (WR, BL) and RBBP species.

There were no winter records, but the first of the year was a month earlier than 2010, a female at Astley Moss SSSI Mar 28th and then at Astley Moss East Pools Mar 31st. Probably the same bird was also seen on the latter date over Croxden Peat Works NR. All subsequent sightings were of females, or immatures, where sex/age was reported.

Migration peaked in April with singles flying over Pennington Flash 11th; N over Bedford Moss 12th; NNW at Wildersmoor Horwich 16th; and two females (one missing two primaries from right wing) flew in high from the west at Astley Moss East Pools early evening on the 29th. There was just one sighting in May, an unsexed bird at Astley Moss SSSI on the 4th compared to seven reports in 2010.

Nest building was witnessed in June for the first time in the county on 2nd when an adult female was carrying twigs, and again on 4th and 6th. However, whilst she remained in the area until Aug 29th there was no sign of a male. Could this perhaps have been the same bird that summered in 2010? Although the location on the mosslands was away from the traditional reedbed haunts, the expansion of this species' breeding range in the UK has been boosted by the use of agricultural crops for nest sites. Hopefully, this magnificent raptor will be breeding in the county in the near future.

Eight reports in August included a juvenile at Irlam Moss 3rd, migrating through the area and one on Chat Moss 23rd which dived into a wheat crop to escape attack by a Peregrine. Autumn migration over the Horwich Moors consisted of a female at Holden's Farm Aug 23rd; and a female/immature Sep 15th over Montcliffe Quarry which was also seen heading NE over Smithills Moor. Also in September a female flew south over Pennington Flash 16th and the last of the year was at Lowton on the 24th.

HEN HARRIER *Circus cyaneus*

Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor.
BoCC Red List (HD, SPEC) and RBBP species.

The only reported sighting in the first winter period was of two at Lowton on Feb 25th. These would appear to be the first seen in the area for at least 20 years.

During April spring migration was restricted to single ringtails at Smithills Moor on 19th and Ladcastle, near Dobcross on 26th. The latter was the first for Oldham borough since 2006.

October is usually the peak month for this species in the county with more than 60% of the past records from this month coming from moorland sites. October 2011 followed the trend with single ringtails on the Horwich Moors flying SW over Smithills Moor 13th; S over Burnt Edge 14th and possibly the same seen 40 minutes later heading S over Two Lads Hill. October 15th was an exceptional day with a total of three birds seen over Burnt Edge, Horwich Moors (two ringtails and a male) all flying west. These were presumably moving to the coast, possibly the Ribble Estuary, to spend the winter. Increased observer coverage away from the well watched Horwich Moors would undoubtedly result in sightings from new upland areas. This was clearly demonstrated by a visible migration watcher stationed on Holcombe Moor who picked up a ringtail heading SW 30 minutes after sunrise on 15th, seen later at Burnt Edge, Horwich Moors. Could this bird have roosted overnight in the county? The last record from Holcombe Moor was in July 1992. The only mossland record from the autumn/late winter period was a male flushed on Little Woolden Moss Oct 18th. Hen Harrier is rarely encountered on the moors in late winter with only five previous December records, so a splendid male hunting on Smithills Moor Dec 12th was an exciting find for the local patch observer.

Wing tags have identified some of the Hen Harriers seen in recent years, as Scottish birds, but one individual at Dark Lane, Carrington in Oct 2007 was tagged the previous year as a juvenile in the Peak District. So the seemingly inevitable loss of this species as a breeding bird in England, due almost certainly to persecution by game interests, will probably result in a reduction in sightings in future years.

GOSHAWK *Accipiter gentilis*

Scarce visitor. Possibility of escapes.
RBBP species.

This is a notoriously difficult species to nail down when it comes to completing a rarity submission. Two accepted records were the first since 2005, at Georges Lane, Horwich Moors Aug 22nd (A. Makin) and at Pennington Flash Oct 22nd (J. Tymon). Described by RBBP as "an easily overlooked species, a small but unknown proportion of the population

goes unrecorded each year.” However, there is a good chance of locating any pairs when displaying in March/April over their woodland territory.

SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus*

Common resident.

Early & Late Winter periods – Reported from 53 winter atlas tetrads (Jan/Feb only) and 75 sites with significant overlap between the two. The Rochdale Field Naturalists’ Society’s wildlife survey recorded Sparrowhawk in 11 out of 25 gardens (eight in Rochdale and three in Oldham) during the winter, but few garden records were received from elsewhere in the county. Although a 1st winter female was found freshly dead in another Rochdale garden on Jan 26th, its neck broken almost certainly as a result of a collision with a window. In Hale Barns a male and female visited a garden on the same day. The majority of sightings was of one or two birds, but three were at Gillibrands Farm, Daisy Hill Jan 8th and three flew SE during a visible migration watch at Besses o’th’ Barn Nov 12th. A female was harassing a mixed flock of circa 210 winter thrushes and Starlings on farmland to the east of Hall Lee Bank Park Feb 27th.

Breeding – Display was first noted on the relatively early date of Feb 26th, a pair over Kenworthy Woods, Sale, the next being a pair at Drinkwater Park Mar 27th. April was the peak month with birds displaying at Hardy Farm, Chorlton 3rd; Chat Moss (SJ79D tetrad) 10th; Hale Barns (SJ78X) 15th; and Heaton Mersey (SJ89Q) 28th. Display continued into May and June at Whalley Range (SJ89H); Chorlton Water Park (SJ89F); Hurst (SD90K) and Dukinfield (SJ99N). A truly impressive recording effort during the final atlas breeding season established confirmed breeding in 35 tetrads and at five additional sites. The earliest evidence of this was at Haigh Plantations where an occupied nest was located on May 13th, followed by young heard calling from a nest in the Greenfield area on 22nd. Recently fledged juveniles were first seen at Yeoman Hey Reservoir, three on Jun 11th, significantly earlier than most broods. The peak period for fledging was from Jul 13th through to Aug 18th with juveniles encountered in a diverse range of habitats from urban parks in Fallowfield and Whalley Range, mature woodlands, shelter belts and plantations on the moorland fringe. Recorded on 15 BBS squares (23%) compared to 14 in 2010 and 10 in 2009.

The only identified prey was a male Blackbird in a Chadderton garden Mar 6th; a Starling at Elton Reservoir May 8th; and a Collared Dove in a Royton garden Nov 23rd. A melanistic female was at Burnt Edge, Horwich Moors April 2nd, only the second documented sighting of this rare plumage form in the county.

BUZZARD *Buteo buteo*

Common resident.

Despite a 13% drop compared to 2010, more records were received for Buzzard than any other diurnal raptor. The species was reported from all boroughs with the main concentrations in the mosslands, north Bolton, Stockport, Trafford (south of the Mersey) and the Heywood area. Only two sightings were reported from the whole of Tameside and it still remains very scarce in Oldham and north/east Rochdale.

Early & Late Winter periods: During January and February only, Buzzards were observed in 39 atlas tetrads, recording for the winter element of the BTO atlas finishing at the end of February. Also seen at 73 sites in total over the two winter periods, many of which fall within the atlas tetrads. Amazingly, the highest winter counts all fell on the same date of Feb 24th, and all comprising seven birds, at Compstall, soaring at Dunham Massey and flying over Woodford Aerodrome. Five were in the Astley Moss area on the same date. At the end of the year the highest numbers were five south over Georges Lane, Horwich Moors Nov 6th during a visible migration watch, and four at Woodford Aerodrome and nearby fields on Nov 3rd and 24th, as well as on Dec 1st and 22nd.

Breeding: March was the peak month for display with the first pair noted at Redbrow Wood, Compstall Mar 6th and thereafter at Little Woolden Moss 14th; Cadishead Moss and Wood 17th; Baguley 18th; Winstanley Park, Wigan 19th and at Standish 23rd. A copulating pair was observed on Ludworth Moor Mar 26th. After the blip in 2010, the species was well represented on BBS squares, 14 (21%), which is the highest ever occurrence in Greater Manchester and slightly exceeds the NW England 2011 figure of 20%. How long will it be before Buzzard mirrors the national trend and becomes the most widely distributed diurnal raptor in the county? Kestrel and Sparrowhawk were only recorded in 15 squares each in 2011. Breeding was confirmed in an impressive 22 tetrads and at seven additional sites, including a minimum of four pairs on the mosslands. The site/tetrad breakdown by borough was as follows: Wigan (7), Salford (5), Trafford (5), Rochdale (2), Bolton (1) and Manchester (1). In addition two tetrads fell across borough boundaries Bolton/Wigan and Salford/Wigan. The remarkable spread (return) of this raptor has occurred in the short space of just 16 years with the first documented pair in many years breeding in 1996; whilst as recently as 2002 there were just four pairs breeding in the county.

Autumn: 13 were at Croxden Peatworks Aug 18th. Passage during August to October included the highest counts for at least the past 20 years. Smithills Moor was the premier county site for migrating buzzards with all flying south: 21 over between 10.15 and 11.35 hrs on Aug 17th; 15 observed on Sep 15th, but even the exceptional August count was exceeded when 25, including a spiral of eight birds, flew over in the early afternoon Sep 26th. Nearby at Higher Meadows, Horwich Moors 12 on Sep 15th may have included some of the birds flying over Smithills Moor on that date. Southerly movements continued into October, at Pennington Flash, with 22 over in just one hour (11.30 to 12.30 hrs) on the 15th, and 12 seen on 22nd between 13.00 and 13.45 hrs.

Correction to 2010 report: Confirmed in five Atlas tetrads (three on the mosslands, and in Bolton and Manchester boroughs), including two pairs which nested within 700 yards of each other, but **productivity was low** with one and two young respectively. This should have read **productivity was average**.

ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD *Buteo lagopus*

Very rare visitor.



One of the rarest raptors ever seen in the county with only three previous records in modern times, the last being in April 1998 at Strinesdale Reservoirs. A single at Dove Stone RSPB reserve Mar 6th means that Oldham borough has the distinction of claiming all three of the most recent county records going back to October 1980 when a bird was seen at Uppermill.

OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*

Uncommon passage migrant.

BoCC Amber List (SPEC, BR) and RBBP species.

A mere six reports were received compared to 17 in 2010, the lowest since 1998. In April the first was flying over Grosvenor Road, Hyde on 2nd, followed by Dover Basin 10th. Just one record was received in May at Worthington Lakes where one roosted overnight 22nd/23rd and was also seen on 24th. Autumn passage was equally sparse, concentrated in September, with singles flying south at Elton Reservoir on 5th and 15th and the last heading SE low over Smithills Moor on the 18th.

KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*

Common resident and winter visitor.

BoCC Amber List species (SPEC).

Early & Late Winter Periods: During January and February, the final two months of recording for the winter section of Bird Atlas 2007-11, Kestrels were located in 34 tetrads including urban areas such as Castleton (SD81V), Failsworth (SD80V), Fitton Hill (SD90G), New Moston (SD80W), Hollinwood (SD90B), Lower Kersal (SD80A), Higher Broughton (SD80F) and Salford Quays (SJ89D).

Breeding: Reported from 15 BBS squares (23%) which matches the average occurrence across NW England. The highest BBS count was three in the Boothstown West square and on atlas Timed Tetrad Visits three in the Pilsworth South (SD80I) tetrad. A pair was seen mating at a Horwich quarry site Apr 20th. Breeding was confirmed in 34 tetrads during the final atlas breeding season, and also at two additional sites. Whilst this was a significant improvement on the 2010 figure, it was still well below the 46 sites identified in 2009. However, an encouraging total of 25 young fledged at various locations in the Bury area, although the actual number of pairs/ sites is not known to GMBRG. The first occupied nest of the year was located in the Birtle tetrad (SD81G) on May 21st and the first unfledged young were found at Middle Hulton Jun 10th. Also in June: adults were visiting a nest at Cutacre OCCS 11th; three well grown young were found on a church in Monton 11th; two pairs with unfledged young were in the Ramsbottom area 18th; a cliff-face nest at Horwich (SD61Q) contained three well developed chicks 21st; whilst on the same date another quarry site in the Horwich area, just one kilometre away, contained a pair with two downy young. The first fledged young were reported from Highfield Moss Jun 10th and then during the remainder of the month at Eagley (SD71B) 14th; Middle Hulton 19th; Haigh Country Park 26th; Hindley Green 27th; Chat Moss (SJ79D) 28th. A juvenile was soliciting food from an adult female at Bryn Marsh Aug 23rd.

Family parties: Family groups were generally smaller than in 2010 with five observed at Old Hall Farm, Elton Reservoir Jun 26th. In July four at Bottom o'th Moor, Horwich (SD61Q) on 1st, six (a pair with four juveniles) at Cutacre OCCS 10th and four at Daisy Hill 26th. August saw a female with three juveniles at Red Moss SSSI 3rd and on the moors above Watergrove Reservoir, two juveniles were calling noisily whilst pursuing an adult 15th. The latter was chasing a Wheatear in flight and although the intended prey dived down into a clough in a vain attempt to escape, it fell victim to the Kestrels, one of which was then seen plucking the bird on a fence post. The highest count of the year was 21 hunting at various locations across Smithills Moor and Winter Hill Aug 17th, indicative of a successful breeding season in the area, as all were considered to be local birds.

MERLIN *Falco columbarius*

Uncommon winter visitor, passage migrant and scarce breeder.
BoCC Amber List (HD) and RBBP species.

Locations of upland sightings are withheld in the interests of breeding birds.

Early winter sightings: A dedicated local patch worker added Merlin to his New Year's Day list at Woodstock Farm, Chat Moss. Over wintering birds are fairly unusual in upland areas, so a male seen on five dates from Jan 24th to Feb 16th at a site in the North East of the county was notable. A winter atlas record also came from the north on Feb 27th. More typical, another male was reported from Woodford Aerodrome and nearby fields on Jan 27th and in February on the 8th, 17th and 24th; the same site produced a female Mar 10th. Also in March, singles were present at Croxden Peat Works NR on 2nd and 22nd.

Spring migration: Most movement occurred during March with upland reports of singles from five locations in the north and north east of the county, spread across three boroughs. Site A: a male on the 2nd, initially at low level, before disappearing NW over the hill tops; site B: Mar 17th, 19th and Apr 3rd; site C: 24th; sites D and E (close to each other) a female through north 23rd, a male hunting low down and heading north 31st; and a male flying NW Apr 2nd. One at Pennington Flash was flying east at moderate height Mar 28th. Just a single report was received during the breeding season, of a female carrying food at site C Jul 13th. Given the absence of sightings in this well watched area during May and June, it seems unlikely that a pair bred here.

Autumn migration and late winter: A female flying south at Pennington Flash Aug 27th was the first lowland sighting of the autumn. In the hills birds were observed on four dates in August, five days in September and six in October, all in the north and north east. Upland sightings in the same areas continued into November with a female chasing Starlings 13th, and singles on 15th and 17th. Lowland records in September were restricted to a female flying south at Pennington Flash 6th; increasing in October when birds were reported at Elton Reservoir 8th; a female at both Highfield Moss, Lowton and Pennington Flash 15th; Carrington Moss 16th; and a female at Newton Lane, Golborne 17th. November saw a male at Little Woolden Moss 1st and 3rd; and unsexed birds at Carrington Moss 13th and Pennington Flash again on 21st. In December a male flew west at Hall Lane, Aspull 2nd; one at Cadishead Moss 20th was eloquently described by the observer as "scattering the Starlings hither and thither"; and finally at Highfield Moss, Lowton 28th.

HOBBY *Falco subbuteo*

Uncommon summer visitor, rare breeder and passage migrant.
RBBP species.

The number of records received for this species was down by more than 25% compared to 2010.

Spring migration: 2011 bucked the trend of recent years with just two April sightings, at Highfield Moss SSSI 17th and in the BBS Carr Green square on 22nd. During May the highest count of the year was three at Astley Moss SSSI on 3rd with a single also here on 5th and 11th. Elsewhere singles (unless otherwise stated) were at Warburton and Davenport Green 2nd; two on Irlam Moss 9th; Baguley tetrad (SJ88E) 12th; and Elton Reservoir 17th.

Breeding: With effect from 2011 we have adopted the Rare Breeding Birds Panel criteria for categorising Hobby breeding evidence, because this migrant raptor is wide ranging during the breeding season (May to August) records from within a 2km area are considered to relate to a single territory. In addition a minimum of two sightings at least a week apart are required for possible breeding to be inferred. Observations of singles that fell into the possible category came from four areas: Lower Bredbury May 3rd; Bredbury Jul 8th and Aug 5th; Goyt Hall Farm Aug 16th. BBS Carr Green Apr 22nd and Jun 21st. Rumworth Lodge May 2nd, in June flying north on 2nd and chasing a Swallow on 10th. Woodford Aerodrome and local area on May

29th, June 29th, four dates in July and Aug 11th, but these sightings may relate to birds breeding in Cheshire. Probable breeding was registered at one, possibly two sites. A pair was observed in the Sinderland Lane area on May 26th and 30th and in June on 14th with a single seen on 23rd. Elsewhere, another pair, or possibly the same, was visiting an old crow's nest in an oak tree May 30th.

Confirmed breeding was established in the mosslands, and probably occurred at the same site used in 2010, as a juvenile was seen following an adult at a nearby Sand Martin colony Aug 7th. A juvenile was also seen here Sep 4th and two (at least one of which was a juvenile) in an adjacent tetrad on Aug 17th could have been from the same brood. Hobbies were noticeably absent from the east of the county. Isolated sightings on single dates in June, probably relating to roaming birds, were at Altrincham Sewage Works; Brun Clough Reservoir; Cutacre OCCS; Dunham New Park; Flixton Fly Ash Tip; Irlam Locks; Leyland Green SD50K tetrad (possibly outside the county); Pennington Flash; and Shakerley tetrad (SD60W). In July additional sites recording a rare glimpse of this falcon were Audenshaw Reservoirs (seen here every year since 2005); Elton Reservoir; Hulton Park, Atherton; Pots and Pans tetrad (SE00C) and Worsley. First summer birds were seen at Rumworth Lodge May 5th; and Lower Bredbury on several dates between Aug 8th and 16th.

Autumn migration: Reports were received from 18 sites from mid August through to October with the majority falling in the first half of September. Pennington Flash enjoyed an excellent run of records with birds seen Aug 15th and 28th, and Sep 2nd, 5th and 7th. Not to be outdone the Horwich Moors also recorded singles on five dates. Surely no coincidence that these sites are amongst the best covered in the county? Elsewhere, in August reports came from Audenshaw Reservoirs 15th; Blackrod one chasing House Martins on 21st and Besses o'th' Barn 27th. September 1st was an excellent day for Hobby watchers with sightings at four locations, ranging from Smithills Moor in the north, where one was feeding on Craneflies, to Woodford Aerodrome in the south. Other September reports came from Shell Pool NR 11th and 15th; Rumworth Lodge 13th; Elton Reservoir 15th and 18th; Brun Clough Reservoir 16th proving that regular coverage at previously under watched sites can be rewarding; Pearson's Flash 17th and Wigan Flashes 26th. The latest ever recorded in the county, by three days, landed briefly in pine trees at Walker Fold, Horwich Moors on Oct 13th before flying off SW.

PEREGRINE *Falco peregrinus*

Uncommon resident and winter visitor.
RBBP species.

Early winter: As with Hobby, there was a similar reduction in records received for this species, down by 25% compared to 2010. Peregrines tend to stay on territory all year round, as evidenced by a pair at Quarry E (in the west of the county) driving off an intruding male on Jan 5th, demonstrating that quality nesting sites are at a premium and worth defending even in the middle of winter! Interaction observed with other raptors included one stooping at a Sparrowhawk at a moorland site in the north Feb 18th. During this period records came from 11 lowland, five upland and one urban site, Manchester City Centre. The final two months of the winter atlas also saw reports from ten additional tetrads: Barton (SJ79N); Carrington (SJ79K); Hope Carr (SJ69U); Hulme (SJ89I); Irlam (SJ79H); Ringley (SD70S); Rochdale Town Centre (SD81W); Salford Quays (SJ89D) and three upland tetrads; all singles apart from three at a tetrad in the east on Feb 27th. One at Heaton Park Reservoir Mar 14th launched itself from a pylon and attacked a Buzzard which was carrying prey.

Breeding: Very little information was submitted to GMBRG on breeding pairs and their success rate, so we are unable for the first time since 1992 to publish an accurate figure of the number of pairs that bred in the county. We would request that all breeding records for this species are in future submitted to GMBRG so that the county database continues to hold complete

information on this species breeding success. According to BTO data, 12 pulli were ringed in 2011. Given that the total of known juveniles (see below) totals 11, this suggests an additional pair with one young surviving to at least ringing size.

Manchester city centre: Confirmed for the 6th year running. Four juveniles (two male and two females) were in flight with the adults Jun 16th. Sadly, one of the young was found dead in Merseyside on Aug 31st, a road casualty.

Leigh (the 2009/10 site): No information received.

Rochdale Town Hall: four young (believed to be all males) were ringed in late May, one of which was found on the ground Jun 14th and returned to the nest tray after being taken into care. All four had fledged by Jun 23rd.

Stockport (the 2009/10 site): A pair was present during May and June, but no young were seen.

Quarries A (in the north); *B* (in the east) and *D* (in the east): no information received.

Quarry E (in the west): a pair successfully fledged three young, using a Raven's nest from the previous year. The female was seen turning the eggs on Mar 31st, and change-overs between the pair were witnessed on a number of occasions before the female was seen feeding at least two small downy chicks May 10th. The juveniles were seen in flight for the first time with their parents Jun 21st. A pair was observed at a mill (a new site) in the west of the county for three weeks during April.

Autumn and late winter: A dramatic event occurred at Astley Moss East Pools Aug 5th when a juvenile dived at a Greenshank and forced the terrified wader to dive under water to escape. Also in August a Peregrine attacked a Marsh Harrier on Chat Moss 23rd and surprisingly even smaller species attracted the attentions of this raptor with a Pied Wagtail chased by a juvenile at Audenshaw Reservoirs on 1st and a House Martin attracting unwanted attention at Newhey, Rochdale 21st. Reported from 35 sites between August and December with Shell Pool NR recording the species on 21 dates, peaking in September when four were present on 15th and 18th, and three on 11th. During the same period there were numerous sightings on the mosslands with records mainly of singles on 24 dates.

WATER RAIL *Rallus aquaticus*

Uncommon resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.
RBBP species.

Early records came from 10 sites with singles at Gorton and Elton Reservoirs and Wigan Flashes during January. A single bird was seen at Greenfield on Jan 2nd and last seen on Mar 12th. Other single birds were seen at Irlam Locks on Jan 6th, Rumworth Lodge on Jan 10th, Doffcocker Lodge on Jan 15th, Red Moss SSSI on Mar 19th and Flixton on Mar 31st. Two birds were seen at Pickley Green on Mar 15th and Elton Reservoir on Mar 20th.

23 territories were recorded during the breeding season at the Wigan Flashes with six at Bryn Marsh, five at Horrocks Flash, four on Pearson's Flash, four on Turner's Flash, two on Scotman's Flash, one at Hawkey Reedbed and one at Westwood Flash. Away from the Wigan Flashes, territories were held at Flixton; Pickley Green, Westleigh; and Worsley Woods. Confirmed breeding came from two sites with young seen, not surprisingly at Wigan Flashes on Jun 20th and 22nd. An adult bird was seen calling to a downy young bird swimming across open water at Red Moss SSSI on Aug 3rd, the second year in succession that breeding has been confirmed at this location. Agitated behaviour of an adult bird at Abram Flash SSSI would indicate that breeding was also probable at this location but was not confirmed.

Surprisingly, the first record of the year from Pennington Flash came with a single bird reported on Aug 13th. Single birds were regularly reported from this location until Oct 30th

when two birds were reported and again on Nov 4th. Up to five were reported on Dec 3rd. The amount of suitable habitat and the lack of any records from January to early August would suggest that birds are under recorded at this location. Alternatively, the arrival of late summer singletons are the result of post breeding dispersal from nearby breeding grounds with the later records in greater numbers referring to wintering continental birds. Late records came from the Wigan Flashes with eight birds reported on Nov 4th, nine on Nov 21st and 13 on Dec 17th. Four were at Abram Flashes SSSI on Nov 21st and Dec 18th with counts of two in November at Astley Moss East Pools on 5th and at Lightshaw WTW on 21st. Single birds were reported at several locations including Blackleach Reservoir, Walkden on Dec 1st; Elton Reservoir on Dec 4th; Hollingworth Lake and Reddish Vale both on Dec 20th; Shell Pool NR on several dates up to Dec 24th, with two here on Nov 21st. The final record of the year came from a lone bird at Rumworth Lodge on Dec 31st

MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*

Abundant resident.

Maxima at sites where at least one count exceeded 20:-

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Coney Green Floods	31											
Elton Resr	3	8	4			2					35	
Pennington Flash	30	13	13	5	3				29	28	30	29
Sale Water Park	14	8	1						22	24	22	17
Shell Pool NR	21	18	11	10	13	12	23	20	12	10		14
Wigan Flashes	6	10	7	7	7	9	10	17	27	27	35	20

Altrincham ETW and Mesnes Park, Wigan (no WeBS data were available for the late winter period from these two sites) both leave the table this year and are replaced by Elton Reservoir. Only one record was received from Coney Green Floods, Radcliffe but this has been added to the table for consistency. January to March numbers were well down on 2010 totals.

BBS records show a downwards trend with birds present in 28 squares in 2009, 25 in 2010 and only 19 in 2011. Also from BBS and WeBS data, Moorhens have suffered population ‘crashes’ following harsh winters and this, in addition to the spread of American Mink *Neovison vison* could account for the decline. Breeding was confirmed at 43 sites and in 67 additional tetrads. The earliest record was that of a bird on eggs at Chadderton on Mar 4th, seven days earlier than in 2010. The latest record came from Rakewood in September. BBGM states “the only major habitat in Greater Manchester without breeding Moorhens is moorland”. Confirmed breeding records this year at sites such as Brun Clough, Castleshaw Reservoirs, Horwich Moors and Watergrove Reservoir would indicate that moorland sites may have been overlooked in the past or that the species has expanded its distribution. A pair raised a single chick at Brun Clough which is 1200ft above sea level; this is the highest altitude breeding record of this species within Greater Manchester.

Several locations recorded mid to high teen totals in October and then through until the year’s end. This would indicate that birds were able to remain loyal to their breeding grounds and had no problem finding open water throughout the winter months due to the milder conditions.

COOT *Fulica atra*

Abundant resident and winter visitor.

Numbers of Coot in the winter months have reduced in recent years, but 2010’s number were particularly low. This was due in part to the extreme harsh weather forcing birds to move to the

coast to find open water. However, 2011 saw an increase in both early winter and late winter totals with three counts consisting of over 1000 birds, the first year since 1999 that there have been three counts exceeding this threshold.

Maxima at sites where at least one count exceeded 100:-

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Blackleach CP	60	45	18	8	14	7	40	110	125	140	115	100
Clifton Marina	123	57	15									
Crompton Lodges	105	47	31						52			
Elton Resr	117	57	22						213		5	
Pennington Flash	30	80	83	10	20	5		847	1024	1000	660	450
Sale Water Park	149	51	30						35	52	77	70
Wigan Flashes	1000	75	51	124	79	171	180	638	711	738	796	784

Blackleach Country Park and Sale Water Park both enter the above list this year, as well as Clifton Marina, re-entering the list after leaving back in 2010. In the accompanying table, the high number of sites recording 100 or more birds this year equalled the totals achieved in 2002, 2004 and most recently in 2007. Other notable counts came from Irlam Locks (69 birds on Jan 6th), Barton on Irwell (40 birds on Jan 12th), High Rid Reservoir (64birds on Nov 21st) and Roman Lakes (71 birds on Nov 30th).

Breeding was confirmed at 33 sites and in 45 additional tetrads compared to 65 locations in 2010 and 47 in 2009. The first record came from Dunham Massey on Feb 24th where a bird was reported on eggs, with a bird also on eggs at Reddish Vale on Mar 19th. Two family parties with 11 juveniles were present at Elton Reservoir on Apr 10th. Coot was recorded in 10 BBS squares in 2011 which mirrors the 2010 total but is a slight reduction on 2009's total of 12. Recently completed Atlas 2008-2011 surveying shows that Coot were present in 141 tetrads during the breeding season compared to 100 at the time of BBGM.

OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus*

Fairly common passage migrant and summer visitor, uncommon breeder.
BoCC Amber List species (WL, BI, WI).

The first of the year came from Rumworth Lodge with two present on Feb 7th. In the remainder of the month birds (singles unless otherwise stated) returned to many sites around the county including : Hollingworth Lake (8th); Castleshaw Reservoirs (two on the 11th); Pennington Flash (12th); Elton Reservoir (three on the 12th); Heaton Park Reservoir (two on the 12th); Hope Carr NR (two on the 12th); Trub (14th); Shell Pool NR (15th); Church Lane, Woodford (two on the 15th); Cadishead Moss (two on the 17th). During March a total of 24 sites recorded this species and there were high counts at favoured sites as birds with breeding intent gathered; Rumworth Lodge had 14 on the 18th and Pennington Flash had 13 on the 23rd.

Breeding: confirmed at 15 sites, probable at another 12 sites and possible at a further nine sites. A fairly comprehensive set of results achieved due to the final push for the last year of the atlas. There was less evidence of rooftop nest sites being utilised this year though. Confirmed sites included: Astley Moss; Brun Clough Reservoir (3 eggs seen); Carrington Moss; Chat Moss; Dimplington (a brownfield site); Egerton; Etrop Green (carrying worms over to Manchester Airport); Hareshill; Harrop Dale (an occupied nest); Langtree; Lightshaw Hall Flash (occupied nest but later failed); Rumworth Lodge (one chick fledged); Shell Pool NR; Watergrove Reservoir and Woodford (fledged four young). Further sites with probable breeding evidence documented included: Billinge Higher Ends, High Rid Reservoir, Horrocks Flash, Pennington Flash, Pilsworth Reservoir, Shore Top, Starmount Lodges and Whitehead Lodges. BBS data

illustrates a decline on the previous two years with four squares recording this species (6% of the total), down from seven squares in 2010 (10%). The national average is almost double that recorded in the county this year (11.5%); nonetheless this is the lowest national figure recorded since the survey began in 1994.

Post-breeding: Hollingworth Lake had 17 on Jul 2nd reducing to six by the month end, the large numbers due to partial draining of the lake and both Rumworth Lodge (23 on Jul 8th reducing to 11 by the 22nd) and Shell Pool NR (six on Jul 26th) also supported good numbers. During August numbers decreased: Shell Pool NR (two on the 5th), Audenshaw Reservoirs (one on the 9th), Pennington Flash (two on the 13th) and Pearson's Flash (one on the 27th). The last record of the year was at Pennington Flash, with a single bird on Sep 19th.

AVOCET *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Scarce passage migrant.

BoCC Amber List species (BL, WL).

A memorable year for this species in the county began with a single bird at Pennington Flash on Mar 18th (B. Hulme *et al*), which stayed on the spit until the following day. This was the second earliest record for the county, with the earliest being of three birds at Horrocks Flash on Mar 15th, 2008. Then, on Mar 30th, a pair was observed at Rumworth Lodge and stayed at the site on-and-off until Apr 20th (S. Almond *et al*). A stay of more than two days was unprecedented for the county but by late April only one bird remained which finally departed on the 26th. Then on May 2nd the presumed same pair returned to Rumworth Lodge and were seen copulating and in addition digging nest scrapes on one of the islands the same day. For much of May only one adult lingered, quite possibly the other of which was seen over at Pennington Flash on May 22nd (P. Kelly *et al*). Back at Rumworth Lodge, three eggs were seen, all of which had hatched by Jun 2nd representing the first successful breeding for the county. One of the adults finally left on Jul 11th, with the remaining adult and the three fully-grown youngsters being last seen on Jul 19th. This charismatic family was a popular addition to the county's breeding avifauna and proved to be quite an attraction for birders and naturalists; a full account can be found in a separate article within this report.

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius dubius*

Fairly common summer visitor, uncommon breeder.

RBBP species.

Elton Reservoir had the first record for the year on Mar 16th, two days earlier than the first last year. The following week saw migrants passing through a number of sites and birds with breeding intent returning. Passage birds were seen during the spring at: Elton Reservoir with four on Mar 28th rising to five on 29th, Kingsway Business Park had eight on Apr 2nd, Woodford Aerodrome had one on Apr 7th, and Audenshaw Reservoirs had two on 10 dates in Mar-May.

Breeding: confirmed with 14 pairs, probable with a further six pairs and possible with eight further pairs and five singles. The number of confirmed pairs was down on last year's county record of 29. Sites hosting breeding birds consisted of nature reserves, river islands, reservoirs and on some of the few remaining brownfield sites in urban areas. One productive site had two pairs which reared two and three young respectively but elsewhere, most pairs only fledged a single chick. The BBS recorded this species on two squares (3%), up from one square last year. Since 1997 when the first BBS square registered this species, the highest occurrence has been four squares with only one or two most years. Only another seven squares nationally hosted this species (0.3% frequency rate including the two squares in Greater Manchester) signifying the county's importance for this uncommon breeding species in the wider context.

Late summer migrants were seen at Rumworth Lodge where 22 were present on Jul 9th and this represented the highest count of the year and a typical gathering of birds from the wider area, Warland Reservoir with two on Jul 20th, Heaton Park Reservoir had two on Jul 26th, Altrincham ETW had one on Jul 28th rising to two on 31st, Castleshaw Reservoirs hosted one on Aug 30th and Horrocks Flash had a late migrant juvenile on Aug 30th.

Correction to the 2010 report: Breeding: Estimated number of **pairs**: 29 confirmed, 12 probable and 10 possible; the highest number of breeding pairs ever recorded in the county.

RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula*

Fairly common visitor, scarce breeder.
BoCC Amber List species (BDMp1, WI).

A flock of five at Audenshaw Reservoirs on Feb 10th were the first for the year. This site hosted varying numbers throughout the month, with a maximum of seven on 25th and 28th. Smithills Moor had one over on Feb 24th and Kingsway Business Park had two on Feb 27th. During March, Audenshaw Reservoirs again produced the majority of records with 11 bird days and a maximum count of seven on the 5th. Other sites hosting birds were Pennington Flash with singles on the 13th and 22nd and Shell Pool NR had one on the 27th rising to two on the 30th. April saw continued passage, largely through Audenshaw Reservoirs with a max of five on the 5th and returns to breeding sites across the county. 20 at Rumworth Lodge on May 18th was an excellent count, though this rapidly reduced as birds moved through with 16 on the 24th, only eight on the 26th and two by the end of the month.

Breeding: confirmed at five sites and probable at a further seven. The confirmed breeding results achieved this year were significantly reduced from those of 2010 and all took place at brownfield sites in Ancoats (a late record on Jul 20th), Chadderton (one young seen on May 30th), Middlewood Locks, the Newbold tetrad and Trafford Park. It seems possible that more pairs reared young than was actually reported, as proof of breeding success at some regular sites was not obtained this year.

Audenshaw Reservoirs had its first returning migrant on Jul 12th and on another seven dates during the month (maximum of three on the 24th to 25th and 30th). Other late season records were received from: Shell Pool NR (Jul 17th and 20th), Warland Reservoir (Jul 20th), Pennington Flash (Jul 22nd to 23rd), Hollingworth Lake (Jul 25th and two on Sep 17th), Horrocks Flash (four on Aug 15th), with the last record of the year at Audenshaw Reservoirs on Sep 18th.

DOTTEREL *Charadrius morinellus*

Scarce passage migrant.
BoCC Amber List species (BL).

Nine were found at Brown Wardle Hill on May 2nd, with five remaining from the 4th until the 6th (S. Atkins, S. Hitchen *et al*). The 'trip' consisted of six females and three males and spent much time around the south-west slopes of the hill. Coincidentally, this is the same site and same number of birds as last years flock. A full account can found in a separate article within this report.

GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis apricaria*

Fairly common but decreasing winter visitor; uncommon breeder.
BoCC Amber List species (WI).

The WeBS report for 2010/11 showed a profound response to a cold winter with numbers well below average, counts on the Ribble estuary being less than one third of the five year mean. This was reflected in local records, with no three-figure counts received this year. 10 birds were at Woodford Aerodrome on Jan 6th, while the best that Audenshaw Reservoirs

could muster in January was 16 on the 29th. February was very quiet, but numbers started to pick up in March with counts at Golborne Dale Bridge peaking at 35 on the 6th. Also in March, 14 were at Olive Mount Farm, Chat Moss on the 17th, 19 flew over Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 19th and 16 flew south-west over Smithills Moor on the 29th.

Birds had been reported from potential breeding grounds as early as Mar 6th when 10 were at Standedge, but April saw the first appearance of probable breeding codes attached to records as the final season of atlas surveying got under way. These came from Featherbed Moss, Saddleworth Moor, Byron Edge and Blackstone Edge Reservoir. 40 at Wharmton Hill, Saddleworth on Apr 26th probably included passage birds as well as local breeders, and 74 on Ludworth Moor three days later would have been a similar mixture. May saw the breeding codes improve to include signs of agitation and distraction display from the previously mentioned sites and also from the Holme Clough and Cheesden tetrads. In June, nests were found on Dove Stone Moss and Chew Head by local RSPB staff and fledged young were seen on Featherbed Moss by the month end. Golden Plover were recorded in two BBS squares: Holcombe Rifle Range (one on early visit) and Blackstone Edge (two on late visit). Nationally, BBS figures showed a 10% increase but it will take many more good years to arrest the long-term decline.

In September, 15 birds flew south-west over Smithills Moor on the 18th and 19 were noted at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 25th. October saw 10 at Pennington Flash on the 16th and 80 (the county's biggest flock of the year) at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 23rd. December's only counts were 38 roosting on Woodford Aerodrome runway on the 10th and 30 at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 18th. Just three records of rooftop roosting were received: Tom Chandley's Oven Engineers in Denton held 17 on Oct 16th and nine on Oct 30th; Car People on Ashton Moss had a solitary bird on Nov 10th. All of these were with Lapwing flocks.

GREY PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola*

Uncommon passage migrant.
BoCC Amber List species (WL, WI).

Five records were received this year (one more than 2010). Audenshaw Reservoirs' only sighting was a single bird on the morning of Mar 21st, a very early date for this species in our county. The next bird didn't arrive until the morning of May 7th when one at Elton Reservoir was seen to fly off to the west. Another (or maybe the same?) lone bird was at Rumworth Lodge the following day. Elton Reservoir also saw a bird on return passage, one flying over on Sep 9th. The final record was from Smithills Moor on Sep 26th when an adult showing the remnants of breeding plumage flew south-west at 10.05.

LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus*

Common but declining resident and winter visitor.
BoCC Red List (BDp1, SPEC, BDMp2, WI) and UK BAP species.

Monthly maxima at ground roosts where at least one count exceeded 200:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Astley Moss E Pools	320	250	60	4	27	37	19					
Horrocks Flash			9	4		32	100	318	123	15	9	200
Irlam Moss		200	13	19	8	34			5			
Pearson's Flash				3	1	4	53	214	150	2	150	
Pennington Flash	30	150	50	10			5	460	400	300	400	400
Red Moss SSSI	300	41	5	9	6	7						
Woodford	79	48	61	40	47	86	101	18	10	178	292	350

Rumworth Lodge (which had counts in excess of 200 in three winter months in 2010) did not qualify this year, and numbers at Horrocks Flash (where July, August and September counts in 2010 were over 400) were greatly reduced.

Rooftop roosts: reports of this behaviour increased this year, with early-year numbers declining as birds returned to their breeding grounds. In Bolton town centre 70 on Jan 23rd fell to 20 on Feb 7th, whilst at Broadheath Retail Park, Altrincham 110 on Jan 18th fell to 60 on Feb 6th and just 14 on Mar 6th. In addition to these counts, there were January records from: Newton Heath (19 on the 13th), Denton (84 on the 30th) and Rhodes Business Park (20 on the 30th). In February, 65 were at Greengate Industrial Estate, Chadderton on the 9th and 85 frequented Stake Hill, Rochdale on the 11th. 40 occupied warehouse roofs on Ashton Moss on Mar 7th. Roof roosts increased in size and range in the post-breeding period and reports suggest that smaller roosts combine to form larger ones as winter approaches. The year's biggest roost was 240 at Stake Hill on Dec 14th. Around 150 were at Higginshaw, Oldham on Nov 12th and Newton Heath numbers peaked at 120 on the roof of the rail depot on Nov 4th. A mobile flock of over 100 Lapwing frequented a variety of roofs in Bolton town centre from August until the year end, while smaller numbers were reported from Kingsway Retail Park, Tesco in Irlam, Tom Chandley's in Denton and Clipper Logistics in Swinton.

Breeding: Only 39% of our county's BBS squares recorded Lapwings, compared with 45% last year (47% in 2009 and 52% in 2008). Nationally, BBS results show a significant decline of 18% from 2010 to 2011, and the NW breeding population has fallen by 28% since the start of BBS in 1994 - a most discouraging state of affairs. These figures highlight the species' reduction in breeding range, but how are numbers holding up in their strongholds?

The Hey Brook WBBS plot had 23 birds on the first visit and 14 on the second (significantly down on last year's 38 and 31). Numbers were also reduced in BBS squares at Mossley, Ludworth Moor, Heaton Park Reservoir and Trub. The only site to buck the trend was Astley Moss East with counts of 27 and 37 (20 and 22 in 2010). Following widespread records of display from early in the month, the first sitting bird was noted at Elton on Mar 26th. First records of recently-hatched broods came from both Bryn Gates landfill site and Rumworth Lodge on Apr 22nd. Although there were plenty of reports of successful pairs, others on agricultural land suffered from field rolling, slurry-spraying and ploughing at inappropriate times.

KNOT *Calidris canutus*

Scarce passage migrant.

BoCC Amber List species (SPEC, WL, WI).

A single was at Pearson's Flash from May 18th and remained very confiding, at times along the canal towpath, through to Jun 9th. This represents the longest ever staying Knot in the county, with the previous longest staying for 10 days at Audenshaw Reservoirs from Feb 11th to 21st, 2006. One was at Pennington Flash on Sep 16th and was forced to fly off by Lapwings with another at Pearson's Flash on Sep 19th and the final record of the year also at the latter site, with a very late bird on Nov 21st.

SANDERLING *Calidris alba*

Uncommon passage migrant.

Spring passage: A reasonable run of records this period began with a single at Rumworth Lodge on Apr 18th. Further records of singles unless otherwise stated came from: Audenshaw Reservoirs on Apr 20th to 21st, May 8th, May 12th to 13th and May 23rd; Elton Reservoir with a bird still in non-breeding plumage on May 14th; Watergrove Reservoir with a bird in partial

breeding plumage on May 22nd; Rumworth Lodge had one in breeding plumage on May 26th; Pennington Flash had one on Jun 5th.

Autumn passage: A single at Pennington Flash on Nov 22nd was the only sighting during this period.

TEMMINCK’S STINT *Calidris temminckii*

Rare visitor.

BoCC Red List species (BDp1, BDp2, BR).

Singles at Dover Basin on May 13-14th (K. Foulkes, I. Johnson, R. Rhodes, D. Wilson *et al*) and Horrocks Flash on May 16th (D. Broome *et al*) were first site records for both locations and could conceivably relate to the same individual. The two sightings represented a good year for the species in the county, last repeated in 2001.

CURLEW SANDPIPER *Calidris ferruginea*

Rare passage migrant.

Two adults at Lightshaw Hall Flash on May 1st (R. Thorpe *et al*) was the only spring record. During the autumn, a juvenile was at Pennington Flash on Aug 30th (B. Harrison *et al*), remaining on Teal Scrape until 31st.

DUNLIN *Calidris alpina*

Common passage migrant, scarce breeder.

BoCC Red List species (WDp2, SPEC, WDMp1, BL, WL, WI).

Monthly maxima at major sites:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Audenshaw Resrs		2	1	6	10			6	2	1	20	2
Castleshaw Resrs				1	6	1						
Pearson’s Flash					10			1				
Pennington Flash			1		8	2		2				
Rumworth Lodge			2	15	20	5	2	1				

The most frequented sites for this species during the year recorded lower maxima than in 2010 and were also present during fewer months of the year. Bucking the trend, Audenshaw Reservoirs had records from nine months of the year and also managed one of the highest counts of the year.

Other Spring passage records: Further sightings early in the year came from a wide range of sites in low numbers including (singles unless otherwise stated): Shell Pool NR, the first record of the year in the county (Feb 12th, and another later on Apr 17th); Scotman’s Flash, a very tame bird present on the canal towpath (Mar 14th); Georges Lane, Horwich Moors where one flew over (Mar 18th); Elton Reservoir (Mar 21st); Hollingworth Lake (two on Apr 24th); Brun Clough Reservoir (two on May 11th); Horrocks Flash (May 12th); Altrincham ETW (May 12th); Dover Basin (May 14th) and Cutacre OCCS (seven on May 26th). 20 at Rumworth Lodge on May 26th was by far the highest count of the spring though and joint highest for the year.

Breeding: confirmed at two sites and in three additional tetrads one of which is partly in Lancashire, probable at a further one site and possible at one other. The final year of atlas surveying led to a fairly thorough set of breeding records and all but one confirmed breeding site occurred in the far east of the county, the remaining site being in the far north. Distraction display was noted at: Saddleworth Moor, Featherbed Moss with three pairs present and Dovestone RSPB, later seen with fledged young. All evidence of confirmed breeding came during the months of May and June. The BBS found one square with this species (2%), an increase on last year's no show.

Other Autumn passage records: Pennington Flash and Rumworth Lodge had migrants present throughout the summer thereby blurring a defined start to autumn passage, in July additional sites began recording dispersing birds, or passage migrants, including: Hollingworth Lake (two on Jul 2nd), Brun Clough Reservoir (Jul 7th and Sep 8th), Audenshaw Reservoirs (four on Jul 20th, rising to six on Jul 30th and present on six dates in Aug) and Elton Reservoir (Oct 6th). Watergrove Reservoir had an immature on Aug 7th, two on Oct 31st, one flying west on Nov 5th and one on Dec 4th (the latter being the latest county record for the year) but all other late records were at Audenshaw Reservoirs with a flock of 20 on Oct 26th, the joint highest count of the year and a single on Nov 25th.

RUFF *Philomachus pugnax*

Scarce passage migrant.

BoCC Red List species (BDp1, BDp2, SPEC, WL, WI).

Spring passage: one was at Pennington Flash on Mar 23rd and a female was at Astley Moss East Pools from Mar 29th to Apr 2nd.

Autumn passage: return migration featured more strongly than in the early period as is often the case, with records during August and September from: Horrocks Flash with five adults on Aug 27th to 28th; Pennington Flash had two on Sep 2nd, at least one of which was a juvenile, plus one on Sep 16th which was to be the last of the year; Elton Reservoir held two on Sep 4th consisting of a juvenile and a female; and Rumworth Lodge had a single on Sep 8th.

JACK SNIFE *Lymnecryptes minimus*

Uncommon winter visitor.

BoCC Amber List species (SPEC).

Records were few and far between during the early winter period, most coming as a result of winter atlas surveying. Sightings of singles unless otherwise stated came from: Barlow Tip, Chorlton (Jan 25th); Werneth Low Country Park (Feb 2nd); Shuttleworth (Feb 10th and two on Feb 18th); Barton Moss (Mar 3rd); with the final records during this period, as with last year, from Red Moss SSSI (Mar 28th and Apr 17th).

The late winter period saw a larger influx into the county. Records were received from: Croxden Peat Works NR (four on Nov 11th and lower numbers towards the year end); Pickley Green, Westleigh (Nov 11th, with two on Nov 13th); Barton Moss (two on Nov 21st); Audenshaw Reservoirs (Nov 28th, and the last record of the year on Dec 31st); Elton Reservoir (Dec 10th); Ludworth Moor (Dec 18th) and Westwood Flash (Dec 19th). The traditional site of Bickershaw Rucks failed to record any this year, possibly through a combination of reduced coverage and habitat alteration.

SNIPE *Gallinago gallinago*

Fairly common passage/winter visitor, uncommon breeder.

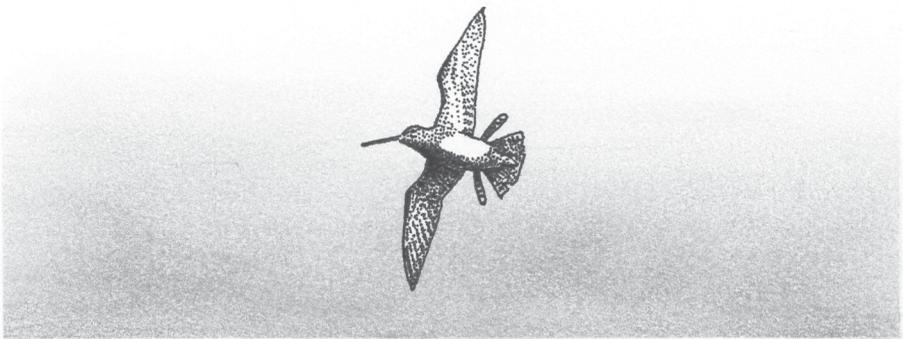
BoCC Amber List species (SPEC).

Monthly maxima at major sites:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Astley Moss E Pools			1	7	2				1		3	52
Croxden Peat Works	1	11	4	3	5	1	2	3	1	14	16	16
Elton Resr			15								5	25
Lightshaw Hall Flash			2		3				8	18		
Pennington Flash			2		3				3	5	26	10
Red Moss SSSI			2	5	3	2	8	8	55	26	10	1
Woodford	38	24							4		7	7

The counts in the above table reveal a noticeable paucity of records for the first two months of the year, at a time of year when significant numbers are expected and this was reflected at many other regular sites. The lack of birds during this period seems likely to be as a result of the severe cold weather forcing birds to move on in search of unfrozen ground. The Woodford area appeared to benefit during this same period however, registering its highest counts of the year and some of the highest in the county for the whole year.

Other early winter period records: Heaton Park Reservoir (10 on Jan 3rd, rising to 13 on Jan 22nd); Barton Moss (nine on Jan 6th, falling to seven by Feb 1st and three on Mar 3rd); Crime Lake, Failsworth (five on Jan 29th); Irlam Moss (12 on Feb 3rd, falling to five by Feb 23rd); Sandy Lane, Haydock Park (six on Feb 8th); Shuttleworth (five on Feb 10th); Adswold Tip (three on Feb 16th); Chadkirk Country Estate (four on Feb 25th); Clegg Hall Marsh, Smithy Bridge (three on Feb 26th, still present on Mar 25th); Birch Industrial Estate (five on Feb 27th); Worsley Dam (four on Mar 6th) and Rumworth Lodge (four to six present on several dates between Mar 11th and Apr 12th). There were a further 25 sites with between one and two birds present. A bird went on to summer at Altrincham ETW but there was no evidence of breeding observed.



Breeding: Probable at seven sites and possible at a further 10 sites. As in 2010 no sites confirmed breeding, but the number of sites with probable breeding fell by nearly three quarters on the previous year. Probable breeding was noted at: Blackstone Edge, Croxden Peat Works NR, Dover Marsh, Harrop Dale, Shaw Moss and Sunbank Wood. Just two BBS squares recorded

this species in 2011 (3%), the same as in 2009 and one of the lowest frequencies since the inception of the survey, reiterating that it was a poor breeding season. By way of comparison though, the BBS had five squares in 2010.

Other late winter period records: The late winter period saw 150% more Snipe recorded than in the early winter period, a strong reflection of the more favourable weather conditions experienced later in the year. They included: Horrocks Flash (five on Oct 2nd and three by Dec 11th); Rumworth Lodge (six on Oct 15th); Little Woolden Moss (three on Oct 1st and again on Oct 18th); Burnt Edge, Horwich Moors (20 flew over on Oct 14th); Bickershaw Rucks (15 on Oct 20th); Pickley Green, Westleigh (a maximum of 10 on Oct 23rd, falling to four by Dec 24th); Barton Moss (six on Oct 26th); Billinge Hill (five flew over heading east on Nov 6th); Hope Carr NR (four on Nov 11th and five on Dec 18th); Shell Pool NR (16 on Nov 21st); Kingsway Business Park (60 on Nov 22nd were flushed off the mudflats and represented the largest count of the year in the county); Makants and Turncroft Farm, Cleworth (six on Nov 26th); Ludworth Moor (27 on Nov 27th) and Moss Farm, Rindle (six on Nov 28th and five on Dec 24th). An additional 28 sites had between one and three birds during this late period.

WOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola*

Fairly common winter visitor and uncommon breeder.
BoCC Amber List species (SPEC).

The early winter time was prolific for sightings of this often elusive wader around the county, continuing over from the influx in late 2010. From a total of 63 records during this period, 83% consisted of single birds. There were 12 records of two or more birds, including: three on Jan 2nd at Burgess Farm, New Manchester; two on Jan 12th at Watergrove Reservoir; two on Jan 13th at Whitesides Plantation and also on Jan 24th and Feb 3rd; two on Feb 8th at Rooley Moor; two on Feb 17th at Blackleach Reservoir, Walkden and again on Mar 1st; two on Feb 24th at Crompton Moor in the bowling green area; five on Feb 25th at Shell Pool NR; three on Mar 6th at Hazel Grove Golf Course and two on Mar 24th at Jubilee. Where recorded, most birds were inadvertently flushed or seen in flight.

Breeding: Roding was witnessed at Gale Brook Plantation with two birds on Jun 17th. A bird at Jubilee on Mar 24th was recorded in suitable habitat but not noted again in the breeding season. As is expected no BBS squares recorded this species.

Late winter period: A bird recorded at Chat Moss on Oct 18th might well have been the first migrant of the period. Also in October singles were at Smithills Moor on the 18th and Croxden Peat Works NR on the 30th. During November a small influx occurred but on a reduced scale compared to the proportions of the previous winter. Records included: one on the 11th at Pennington Flash; one on the 12th at Highfield Moss and again on the 30th; one flushed on the 13th at Mossley; two on the 17th at Little Woolden Moss; regular sightings of a single between the 20th to 27th at Shell Pool NR; one on the 21st at Red Moss SSSI; one on the 26th at Makants and Turncroft Farm, Cleworth and one on the 28th at Moss Side Farm, Rindle. December sightings included: two on the 3rd at Croxden Peat Works NR which were seen within feet of each other; one on the 6th at Newall Green; one on the 8th at Woodford; six on the 10th at Burnt Edge and the same number seen flying out of Walker Fold Woods, both Horwich Moors, on the 14th consisted of birds leaving their day-time roost to feed at dusk; one on the 10th at Elton Reservoir with two on the 17th; one on the 11th at Hardy Farm, Chorlton; one on the 17th at Watergrove Reservoir and finally one on the 24th at Pickley Green, Westleigh.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa*

Uncommon passage migrant.

BoCC Red List (HD, SPEC, BR, WL, WI) and UK BAP species.

Spring passage: commencing in late March at Pennington Flash, there were varying numbers from four on 22nd to a maximum of 12 on the 28th. Four flying south-east on the 26th at Audenshaw Reservoirs was the only other record during this month. Small numbers remained at Pennington Flash throughout the first half of April, with a max of four on the 1st and 14th. 15 arrived on the 15th at Lightshaw Hall Flash representing the only other large flock during the spring. Unlike the same time last year, May was fairly quiet with the largest flock comprising six birds at Altrincham ETW on the 28th. Further records during the month included: one on the 10th at Rumworth Lodge and two on the 29th at the Wigan Flashes. There was no obvious cut-off between spring and autumn passage through the county, with a few birds appearing throughout the summer months, the situation possibly clouded by summering first-summer type birds wandering away from the coast of North-West England. June had records with: one flying west over an Astley garden on the 15th, two on the 20th at Rumworth Lodge, one on the 23rd at Pearson's Flash and one on the 28th to 29th at Pennington Flash.

Autumn passage: In July records increased, starting with three on the 2nd at Altrincham ETW. On the 7th there was a clear arrival at several sites: three at Altrincham ETW; one at Audenshaw Reservoirs; 19 at Pennington Flash; 11 at Rumworth Lodge, including a colour-ringed individual and five at Shaw Moss, Hollingworth Lake in breeding plumage which were scrutinised and found to be of the Icelandic race *L. l. islandica* (as all birds are suspected to be in the county). The following day (Jul 8th) just one remained at Pennington Flash but the Rumworth Lodge flock increased to 12 birds and one was seen from the Hollingworth Lake hide on the 14th. Audenshaw Reservoirs had the largest flock of the year on Jul 29th when 25 birds circled over the site for 15 minutes before flying off eastwards. Of the three records in August, two concerned birds flying over, when seven flew west on 16th at Pennington Flash and five flew south-west on 26th at Audenshaw Reservoirs. Two late birds were at Rumworth Lodge on Oct 7th, one of which appeared to have a broken leg.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa lapponica*

Scarce passage migrant.

BoCC Amber List species (WL, WI).

All records this year were of singles and of the few spring records the first was on Apr 29th at Rumworth Lodge and remained until May 2nd. Woodford had one on Apr 30th and the only other spring sighting was at Pennington Flash on May 3rd. Only one record was registered during the autumn period, of a bird heard calling at Heaton Park Reservoir on Oct 2nd. A late record came from Audenshaw Reservoirs when one was recorded on Dec 18th.

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*

Uncommon passage migrant.

BoCC Red List species (BDp1, BR).

It was a year of two halves for this species in the county, with a healthy spring passage witnessed between April and May, which was followed by a mere two records for the return passage in August and September.

Spring passage (singles unless otherwise stated): Astley Moss (this traditionally popular site had birds on Apr 15th-22nd, two on 24th, one on the 28th, May 5th and two on May 7th); Blackrod, flying north at Little Scotland (Apr 15th); Rumworth Lodge (Apr 16th and four briefly on May 7th); Smithills Moor (five flew north on Apr 16th); Chat Moss (Apr 17th, 19th and 28th); Woodford (six on Apr 30th was the largest flock of the year); Audenshaw Reservoirs

(May 1st, 5th and three on the 6th); Hollingworth Lake (three on May 2nd landed briefly early morning before flying off east); Ludworth Moor (four on May 3rd); Astley Moss East Pools (May 4th and 14th) and Elton Reservoir (May 16th and 28th).

Autumn passage: singles at Georges Lane, Horwich Moors (flew over on Aug 1st) and Croxden Peat Works NR (Sep 10th).

CURLEW *Numenius arquata*

Fairly common passage migrant and summer visitor, uncommon breeder. BoCC Amber List (SPEC, BDMp1, BDMp2, BI, WI) and UK BAP species.

The year got going on Jan 13th with a small influx probably due to cold-weather forcing birds to move around. Singles were at Hollingworth Lake, Pickley Green, Westleigh and Woodford. Late February saw a marked arrival, singles unless otherwise stated were at: Audenshaw Reservoirs (10 on the 22nd); Castleshaw Reservoirs (two on 22nd, one on the 26th); Clegg Hall Pools, Smithy Bridge (eight on the 22nd); Lever Edge (22nd); Elton Reservoir (12 on the 22nd and five flew over Crow Trees Farm on the 24th); Chat Moss, Shell Pool NR, Smithills Moor (flew over NE), three at Woodford Aerodrome (all on the 24th); Higher Boarshaw (25th) and Hawkshaw (two on the 26th). During March several sites recorded birds flying over on active migration and also had relatively large flocks of birds resting before moving on or dispersing locally to breeding sites. Double-figure counts were received from: Woodford (19 on the 3rd); Castleshaw Reservoirs (10 on the 5th) and the largest count of the year at Rooden Reservoir, Piethorne (25 on the 12th which were put up into the air by a passing Peregrine).

Breeding: confirmed at five sites and in three additional tetrads, probable at 16 further sites and in 10 additional tetrads and possible at three further sites and in one additional tetrad. Eight of the probable sites were at various locations on the Horwich Moors and there was almost certainly some duplication between them. Levels of confirmed or probable breeding remained similar to last year, but less sites and atlas survey squares had possible breeding (bubbling song heard on single dates or birds seen in suitable habitat). Confirmed breeding came from: Dovestone RSPB (nest with young found on May 27th); Diggle (on Jun 9th); Woodford Aerodrome (on Jun 9th); Norman Hill Reservoir, Milnrow (one young seen on Jun 14th); Castleshaw Reservoirs (on Jun 18th); Smithills Hall CP (a pair with three well grown young on Jun 19th); Longden End Clough (on Jun 23rd) and Cheesden (on Jul 22nd). Of note, agitated behaviour was reported more frequently later on in the breeding season, strongly suggesting that many more sites successfully raised young than was actually confirmed, particularly as the youngsters would be hard to observe in the long vegetation. BBS data shows this species was recorded on 12 squares (18%), compared with 16 squares (24%) in 2010; a decline on the year before but still just above the national average (16.4%).

Late season records: (singles unless otherwise stated): Audenshaw Reservoirs (Aug 24th, Aug 29th and Oct 19th); Brun Clough Reservoir (Jul 31st and Aug 5th); Castleshaw Reservoirs (three on Aug 20th and one on the 27th); Dunham Massey (three flew NE on Jul 29th); Elton Reservoir (three flew over on Aug 2nd); Georges Lane, Horwich Moors (flew south on Aug 9th and three flew west on 15th); Horwich Moor (flew west on Aug 21st); Pennington Flash (Aug 7th and eight on Sep 5th); Sunfield Estate, Romiley (calling nocturnally on Aug 13th). The last of the year flew SE over Standish Hall Farm on Nov 17th.

COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleucos*

Fairly common passage migrant and summer visitor, scarce breeder, rare in winter. BoCC Amber List (SPEC, BDMp1).

An early bird was at Shell Pool NR on Mar 16th and was only three days outside the earliest ever recorded in the county (on Mar 13th 2003). However, the main arrival began in earnest

during April with 18 sites registering birds during the month. Many appeared at potential breeding sites straight away, with very few loitering at non-breeding lowland staging posts this year. Records included: Heaton Park Reservoir (7th), Hollingworth Lake (two on the 8th), Blackstone Edge Reservoir (9th), Pennington Flash (9th), Rumworth Lodge (11th), Elton Reservoir (two on the 19th), Castleshaw Reservoirs (21st), Dover Basin (21st), Naden (21st), Pomona Docks (21st), Yeoman Hey Reservoir (two on the 22nd) and Audenshaw Reservoirs (three on the 22nd).

Breeding: confirmed at six sites, probable at eight further sites, and possible at two other sites. An increase in confirmed breeding from four sites in 2010 to six sites this year involving a total of eight or more pairs was welcome. The wealth of small reservoirs in our county have the capacity for a healthy number of pairs given the right water levels. Confirmed breeding was noted solely at upland sites: Brun Clough Reservoir; Egerton; Greenfield Reservoir (producing three young); Little Black Moss Reservoir (distraction display); Naden; and Yeoman Hey Reservoir. Recorded on three (5%) BBS squares this year, the same number as in 2010.

Autumn passage: wandering late migrants or failed breeders were noted at a few non-breeding sites during June but it wasn't until July when a noticeable passage picked up: Pennington Flash (four on the 8th); Rumworth Lodge (three on the 9th, rising to six by the 18th); Altrincham ETW (10th); Hollingworth Lake (12th and 24th); Audenshaw Reservoirs (three on the 18th) and Warland Reservoir (20th). Throughout August ones and twos remained at many of the same sites as in the previous month, and in September the only multiple bird sighting came from Hollingworth Lake with two on the 12th. October recorded two birds, with singles at Rumworth Lodge on the 4th and Blackleach Reservoir, Walkden on the 5th.

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus*

Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor.
BoCC Amber List species (BR).

Early Winter period: Lone wintering birds were seen at Hope Carr NR (Jan 3rd & 14th), River Irwell at Clifton CP (Jan 4th) and also on the January WeBS count between Agecroft Bridge and Hough Lane Bridge, Barton Locks (Jan 6th), Manchester Ship Canal at Flixton (Jan 22nd), Cutacre OCCS (Jan 23rd), Partington (Jan 29th), Woodford (Feb 3rd) and Pennington Flash (Feb 11th).

Spring passage: This period almost passed by without note, with just singles observed at Altrincham ETW (Apr 10th, throughout until the 20th) and at Pennington Flash (Apr 15th).

Autumn passage: In comparison with the spring period, autumn migration through the county saw a few favoured sites with the right water levels record larger numbers, however there were no double figure counts this year. Pennington Flash scored the lion's share of records with the first returning on Jun 21st and seen again on the 23rd and the 28th; perhaps a failed breeder heading south early to wintering grounds? There were then multiple birds present from late July until late October with a maximum of nine on Sep 13th. Where recorded, the vast proportion of birds present were juveniles. Altrincham ETW also hosted numerous birds with the first back on Jun 22nd, a maximum of seven on Jul 10th and the final bird on Oct 30th. Other sites included: Shell Pool NR (maximum of two on Jul 14th); Hollingworth Lake (maximum of two on Jul 21st); Horrocks Flash (maximum of three on Jul 30th); Astley Moss East Pools (maximum of four on Aug 1st); Kingsway Business Park (one on Aug 1st); Heaton Park Reservoir (one flew south on Aug 6th and another flew south on Oct 20th); Little Woolden Moss (maximum of two on Aug 11th); Blackleach Reservoir (two on Aug 20th); Rumworth Lodge (maximum of four on Sep 8th); Black Wood, Irlam Moss (one on Sep 10th); and Hope Carr NR (maximum of seven on Oct 16th).

Late Winter Period: two records indicative of wintering were recorded: one at Hope Carr NR on Nov 20th and a single bird, as in same period last year, at Agecroft Bridge, River Irwell on Nov 29th.

SPOTTED REDSHANK *Tringa erythropus*

Scarce passage migrant.
BoCC Amber List species (SPEC, WR).

In May there were three records, all of which almost certainly related to the same individual. A partially breeding plumaged adult at Rumworth Lodge on the 1st remained until the morning of the 2nd, when it flew off strongly south. Soon afterwards, the same individual was heard and then seen, to drop out of the sky in front of Horrocks Hide at Pennington Flash, remaining there for the rest of the day. A bird at Lightshaw Hall Flash, found late in the evening on the 3rd, was also almost certainly the Rumworth/Pennington Flash individual. Pennington Flash had the only autumn bird, with a single fairly late in the year on Oct 25th.

GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia*

Uncommon passage migrant.

Spring passage: there were plenty of records during this migration period and all were condensed into the space of a month (mid-April to mid-May), starting with two birds at Croxden Peat Works NR on Apr 11th. Audenshaw Reservoirs then had one on Apr 20th followed by two on Apr 29th staying for a brief 20 minutes; one at Pearson's Flash stayed from Apr 30th until May 6th; Pennington Flash had one on Apr 30th; one at Lightshaw Hall Flash on May 3rd stayed till the 7th and the adjacent Dover Basin had another on May 5th, which briefly joined the bird at Lightshaw Hall Flash on the 6th; Rumworth Lodge had one on May 4th and again on the 7th. The final record of the spring was at the Wigan Flashes on May 11th.

Autumn passage: Pennington Flash had one on Jul 6th followed by another on Jul 30th; Astley Moss East Pools had one on Aug 1st, which was still present on the 5th; there were two at Castleshaw Reservoirs on Aug 4th; Pearson's Flash had one on Aug 28th and the last of the year flew over Elton Reservoir on Sep 11th

WOOD SANDPIPER *Tringa glareola*

Scarce passage migrant.
BoCC Amber List species (SPEC, BR, WR).

All this year's records concerned birds seen from May through to as late as July. The first record was at Lightshaw Hall Flash on May 6th but Altrincham ETW hosted the majority of records with its first on May 25th. At this latter site two well-watched birds were present from Jun 16th until the 23rd on the very muddy middle pool (of three) which had a rapidly receding water-line but provided fresh mud throughout. On the 23rd, both birds were also seen over at the nearby Shell Pool NR. Elsewhere, the only other record was of one at Horrocks Flash on Jun 20th-22nd.

REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*

Fairly common passage migrant and summer visitor, uncommon breeder and scarce winter visitor.
BoCC Amber List species (SPEC, BDMp1, BDMp2, WI).

The only January record was at Weaste Sewage Works, with five birds present on the 5th. Birds were still in short supply through February with sightings coming from Roman Lakes, Marple with one on 22nd (a local rarity); and Shaw Moss, Hollingworth Lake with two on 22nd, followed by one on 26th. During March there was an increase in records including birds returning to breeding grounds along with passage migrants; singles unless otherwise stated were at: Castleshaw Reservoirs (5th, rising to two by the 25th); Hollingworth Lake (10th and

17th); Clegg Hall Pools, Smithy Bridge (two on the 13th); Pennington Flash (13th, rising to three on the 19th); Audenshaw Reservoirs (15th, rising to five by 22nd); Elton Reservoir (17th); Rumworth Lodge (two on the 18th, rising to three by the 24th); Heaton Park Reservoir (20th); Horrocks Flash (20th); Astley Moss East Pools (22nd); Dover Basin (25th) and Smithills Moor (flew north on the 28th).

Breeding: confirmed at one site, probable at five further sites and possible at another two sites. The single successful breeding site this year was at Rumworth Lodge, with one pair fledging a single youngster. This was the sum total of a poor year in terms of breeding success and represents a significant fall on last year's three confirmed records. Tetrads or sites recording probable breeding included: Harrop Dale with agitated behaviour noted, Lightshaw Hall Flash, the adjacent Dover Basin, Egerton, and Horrocks Flash. For the first year since the BBS survey started no squares registered this species, reflecting the poor breeding season.

Post-breeding and wintering records were logged at: Audenshaw Reservoirs (Jun 30th, Jul 12th and 29th, Aug 12th); Pennington Flash (two on Jul 3rd, one on the 10th, further singles on Aug 19th and Sep 9th); Castleshaw Reservoirs (Jul 10th); Altrincham ETW (Jul 16th); Horrocks Flash (Jul 18th); Hollingworth Lake (Jul 25th); Rooden Reservoir, Piethorne (Aug 3rd) and Heaton Park Reservoir (heard only in misty conditions on Sep 15th). The last record of the year was at Pennington Flash on Oct 14th.

TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres*

Uncommon passage migrant.

BoCC Amber List species (WI).

Just a few records this year of this coastal-loving species: Astley Moss East Pools had one on May 2nd, followed by one at Pennington Flash on May 14th. The only other sighting came from the traditionally favoured site of Audenshaw Reservoirs on Aug 13th, regarding a single bird on return migration. Although artificial, the stone-sided banks of the reservoir appear to replicate their preferred habitat type found on the coast.

GREY PHALAROPE *Phalaropus fulicarius*

Very rare visitor.

There were two records of this county rarity, an excellent year considering there are only 12 previous records. 1957 was the only other occasion that there were two records in a calendar year. Pennington Flash had a juvenile from Sep 9th to 12th (B. Hulme, I. McKerchar *et al*); it seems likely to have been forced inland from the previous week's gale force westerly winds. First found at the western end of the flash, it remained here for most of its stay tucked in against the reedy edge, but was eventually seen from Ramsdale's Hide on the 12th. The second came from Ashworth Moor Reservoir from Sep 12th to 13th (R. Archer *et al*). This bird, possibly also a juvenile, was initially sheltering from fierce winds on rocks below the Owd Betts Country Inn. At times it looked tired and was being severely blown about by the wind when in flight. Remarkably this was the first Grey Phalarope in the Rochdale area since a bird shot in 1899.

ARCTIC SKUA *Stercorarius parasiticus*

Rare visitor.

BoCC Red List (BDp2, WDP1, BDMp1, WI) and UK BAP species.

The year produced just a single record again of this sought after county rarity.

A dark phase bird which flew north-east over the Pennine Way, near Light Hazzles Reservoir Jul 29th, was no doubt a shock for the observers (D. Bebbington, A. Nuttall) at this moorland location.

KITTIWAKE *Rissa tridactyla*

Uncommon passage migrant.

BoCC Amber List species (BDMp1, BL).

Although the actual number of individuals recorded during 2011 was double the number in 2010, it was still far from being a memorable year for this species. However, more unusually this year's records did involve two birds in the winter months.

An adult in the gull roost at Audenshaw Reservoirs on Feb 24th was the first of the year, and although it remained until dusk, it had departed by the next morning. March and April are traditionally the best months to find this species in the county, so two birds, an adult and first summer at Hollingworth Lake on Mar 10th, although not unexpected, did represent the first multiple sighting since 2008. During April, single adults were noted at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 11th, Hollingworth Lake on the 12th, followed by an unaged bird at Shell Pool NR on the 24th, the latter constituting the first site record and finally another adult at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 25th. The final record of the year and the second winter record was of an adult at Audenshaw Reservoirs on Dec 9th.

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Abundant resident and winter visitor, uncommon breeder.

BoCC Amber List species (WDMp1, WI).

Undoubtedly the most obvious and widespread species of gull in the county, being reported outside the breeding season from almost every habitat from town centres to moorland reservoirs.

During the early part of the year four figure counts were made from the major roost sites, with 3900 in the Audenshaw Reservoirs roost on Jan 18th, and 5300 at the same site on Feb 1st. Elsewhere, 2000 were in the Hollingworth Lake roost on Jan 22nd, and 1000 were noted at Heaton Park Reservoir on Mar 16th. The largest count made away from a large body of water during this period was of 600 at Fletcher Moss, Didsbury on Feb 18th.

During the breeding season, the Wigan Flashes remained a principal site with 206 nests counted on Horrocks Flash on May 25th, and 14 nests on Turner's Flash on Jun 14th. On Jun 4th, 124 young were noted on Horrocks Flash, with 152 young at the same site Jun 22nd. Elsewhere, 30 pairs with nests were noted on Astley Moss East Pools on May 30th though all were later decimated by marauding Lesser Black-backed Gulls, and one pair nested on Altrincham ETW (down from four pairs in 2010). Although no breeding data was received, the Shell Pool NR colony held 500 birds on Mar 27th and 780 birds on Apr 24th.

The first juvenile noted away from the breeding areas was of one at Hollingworth Lake on Jun 21st.

The first large count received of the autumn was of 900 on Scotman's Flash on Sep 12th, followed by 3000 at Heaton Park Reservoir on Oct 4th, and 10500 (the largest count of the year) at Pennington Flash on Oct 20th. In November, 3000 were noted at Pennington Flash on the 4th and 5th, then 10000 were in the roost at the same site on the 12th. Also in November, 690 were counted flying east past The Atrium, Besses o'th' Barn, Whitefield on the 10th and 520 were on Church Lane flood, Woodford on the 25th. Lastly, large counts made in December consisted of 4000 on Heaton Park Reservoir on the 10th, 5250 in the Audenshaw Reservoirs roost on the 18th, 520 on Church Lane flood, Woodford on the 22nd, 500 on Crime Lake, Failsworth on the 26th, with 1000 at the same site on the 29th, 500 on playing fields on Littleton Road, Kersal on the 27th and 6000 in the Pennington Flash roost on the 29th.

On Heaton Park Reservoir, a leucistic bird was noted on Jan 1st, whilst an adult bird with pure white primaries was at the same site on Jan 22nd and 30th plus Feb 19th. Another leucistic adult in breeding plumage was at Altrincham ETW on May 30th and was still present on Jul 10th (probably the same individual that was also reported from this site in 2010).

LITTLE GULL *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

Uncommon visitor.

BoCC Amber List species (SPEC).

A non-breeding plumaged adult at Heaton Park Reservoir from Apr 7th to 10th was the first of the year. This was followed later in April by three smart breeding plumaged adults at Pennington Flash on the 22nd, a first summer bird at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 24th, then two adults at both Audenshaw Reservoirs and Elton Reservoir on the 28th and a second summer bird at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 29th. Passage continued into early May with a first summer bird at Pennington Flash on the 1st, six birds (two first summers and four adults) at Rumworth Lodge on the 2nd, an unaged bird at Pennington Flash on the 3rd, seven birds (the highest count of the year) at Elton Reservoir also on the 3rd, an adult at Scotman's Flash on the 5th and a first summer bird at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 7th. The most intriguing record of the year concerns a first summer bird, first reported from the Wigan Flashes on May 16th, which observers considered to be the same individual seen intermittently into July. Further reports of this individual came from Pearson's Flash on May 25th, 26th, 30th and Jun 9th. It was then reported from Worsley Mesnes, Wigan on Jun 29th and again at Worsley Mesnes and Scotman's Flash on Jul 16th. A summering bird is most unusual and it begs the question as to where the bird was, when not reported from the aforementioned sites.

Autumn passage was much lighter, with single juveniles at Audenshaw Reservoirs on Sep 6th and 12th, an adult at Scotman's Flash also on Sep 12th and an adult at Elton Reservoir on Oct 25th. The final record of the year came from Elton Reservoir, with a first winter bird on Nov 11th. An improvement on the records in 2010, but again no double figure counts.

MEDITERRANEAN GULL *Larus melanocephalus*

Uncommon visitor, rare breeder.

BoCC Amber List species (BR).

The first of the year were two birds at Heaton Park Reservoir, an adult and first winter on Jan 22nd and were followed by an adult at Pennington Flash on Jan 29th. February saw a good passage of birds on Audenshaw Reservoirs, with single adults on the 9th, 10th, 14th, 17th, 18th, 19th, then an adult and second winter bird on the 21st, three adults on the 22nd, two adults on the 23rd and 24th, four adults on the 25th, reducing to two adults on the 26th, a single adult on the 27th and then three adults on the 28th. Elsewhere in February, single adults were noted from Fletcher Moss, Didsbury on the 18th, Heaton Park Reservoir (a bird with one leg) on the 19th, Elton Reservoir on the 25th and 26th and Heaton Park Reservoir again on the 26th and 27th. The passage on Audenshaw Reservoirs continued into March, with two adults on the 2nd and 3rd, single adults on the 4th and 6th, four adults on the 8th, and a single adult on the 9th. Heaton Park Reservoir recorded three adults on Mar 13th, a pair on Mar 14th and a single (the one legged bird again) on Mar 16th. Also in March, two adults were at Elton Reservoir on the 13th, a pair were at Pennington Flash on the 18th and 19th, an unaged bird was at Horrocks Flash on the 20th, two adults were at Rumworth Lodge on the 27th and a pair was at Pennington Flash on the 28th. A pair were observed carrying nesting material at a traditional nesting site on Mar 18th, although only a single adult was noted later on Apr 21st and breeding was not confirmed. There were just two further records in April of single unaged birds at Horrocks Flash on the 3rd and north east over Carrington Moss on the 19th.

There were three summer records, all from Rumworth Lodge, with a juvenile on Jul 6th, an adult on Jul 9th and a juvenile again on Aug 6th, no doubt dispersing birds from the breeding site nearby in Lancashire.

September produced three records, with a first winter at Scotman's Flash on the 12th, an adult at Heaton Park Reservoir on the 16th and a first winter at Rumworth Lodge on 18th. The

autumn produced just two further records, with a first winter at Heaton Park Reservoir on Oct 6th and an adult at Audenshaw Reservoirs on Nov 4th. Finally, there were four records in December from three sites, with an adult at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 9th, an adult at Heaton Park Reservoir on the 12th, a second winter at Pennington Flash on the 27th and an adult also at Pennington Flash on 29th. A fairly typical year for this attractive species.

COMMON GULL *Larus canus*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant.

BoCC Amber List species (SPEC, WI).

The major concentration of this species in the county is always the Audenshaw Reservoirs roost and counts during the first winter period were made of 1500 on Jan 18th and 1800 on Feb 1st. Elsewhere, 160 were in the Hollingworth Lake roost on Jan 22nd, 52 were at Chorlton Water Park on Jan 30th and 200 were in the Heaton Park Reservoir roost on Feb 5th. Counts made of birds whilst feeding away from a large body of water included 120 on Bowlee Community Park playing fields on Feb 4th; 100 at Fletcher Moss Gardens, Didsbury on Feb 18th; 40 at Higher Boarshaw, Middleton also on Feb 18th; and 80 at Ludworth Moor on Mar 2nd. Small numbers continued to be reported from several sites during the spring and summer, presumably of non-breeding birds.

Notable counts made during the autumn included 61 at Ludworth Moor on Sep 17th, 100 at Audenshaw Reservoirs on Sep 26th, 50 in the Pennington Flash roost on Oct 20th and 41 at Sale Water Park on Nov 20th. Also, a total of 86 birds were noted moving south on a visible migration watch on the Horwich Moors on Nov 6th. In December 2400 were in the Audenshaw Reservoirs roost on the 18th and 100 were in the Pennington Flash roost on the 29th. In comparison with 2010 counts, there was a slight decrease in the Audenshaw Reservoirs roost counts in January and February but an increase on the December count.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus*

Common passage and winter visitor, uncommon resident.

BoCC Amber List species (BL, BI).

Present throughout the year and probably the most obvious large gull in the county, frequently encountered in urban areas, particularly on playing fields.

During the early part of the year, counts were made in the Audenshaw Reservoirs roost of 134 on Jan 18th, 204 on Feb 1st, 250 on Mar 8th increasing to 500 on Mar 18th. Counts made from Heaton Park Reservoir consisted of 50 on Feb 26th, 800 on Mar 18th, reducing to 200 by Apr 7th and then 280 on Apr 11th. The only four figure count of the year was of an incredible 1014 birds counted in two and a half hours flying south over Billinge Higher End (from the direction of Ribble and Bowland) on Mar 19th. Although it isn't clear whether these birds were moving between feeding sites or flying to roost, the count is still indicative of the increase in numbers during the peak passage period. Further notable counts in April were of 235 at Castleshaw Reservoirs on the 19th, and 300 which flew south over Naden Valley towards Pilsworth on the 21st. In May, counts from Heaton Park Reservoir were made of 160 on the 8th, and 230 on the 10th and 14th. Whilst in June, 270 were counted at Heaton Park Reservoir on the 9th; 160 were on playing fields at Littleton Road, Kersal also on 9th; and 60 were on Astley Moss East and 61 were at Higher Broughton, both on the 17th.

In July, counts of either non-breeding or failed breeding birds continued with 100 at Little Woolden Moss on the 7th; 200 at Heaton Park Reservoir on the 9th; 380 also at Heaton Park Reservoir on the 12th; 80 at Astley Park field, Gin Pit on the 22nd; 63 in the Audenshaw Reservoirs roost on the 26th; and lastly, 300 at Heaton Park Reservoir on the 27th. August saw

an increase in numbers, presumably the first returning birds, starting with 50 at Rooden Reservoir on the 3rd; 500 at Little Woolden Moss on the 14th, with 450 at the same site on the 21st; 457 on Heaton Park Reservoir on the 25th; 100 at Great Woolden Moss on the 26th; 433 at New Moss Road, Cadishead, also on the 26th; and 90 on Pike Fold Golf Course on 27th. Pennington Flash recorded 100 on Aug 28th, with a count of 738 in the roost on the next night. Notable counts in September were made of 57 at Brun Clough Reservoir on the 4th, 50 at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 26th, 933 (the second highest count of the year) at Pennington Flash on the 28th and 51 at Castleshaw Reservoirs on the 29th. In October 73 were at Castleshaw Reservoirs on the 13th with 112 at the same site the next day, 748 were in the Pennington Flash roost on the 20th, and 197 were at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 21st, with 150 at the same site on the 25th.

The last two months of the year produced three counts of 300 birds - at Pennington Flash on Nov 4th, Audenshaw Reservoirs on Nov 20th and Heaton Park Reservoir on Dec 10th. Other lower counts were made of 50 at Castleshaw Reservoirs on Nov 17th, 55 at Pennington Flash on Dec 4th, 110 at Audenshaw Reservoirs on Dec 18th and lastly, 81 at Little Woolden Moss, also on Dec 18th. An adult bird displaying very dark upperparts, indicative of the Scandinavian race *intermedius* was reported from Scotman's Flash on Nov 14th.

HERRING GULL *Larus argentatus*

Common winter visitor and passage migrant.

BoCC Red List (BDp1, WDP1, BDMp1, WI) and UK BAP species.

Although reports of this species were widespread across the county, particularly during the winter periods, the majority of these were of single figure counts. The Heaton Park Reservoir roost remains the principle site, but unfortunately fewer counts were received from this site this year.

The first large count of the year was of 500 birds at Pilsworth Tip on Jan 2nd. Numbers in the Audenshaw Reservoirs roost were typically more erratic. However, two larger counts were made of 200 on Jan 3rd and 112 on Feb 1st. The only counts received from Heaton Park Reservoir during the earlier part of the year were of 36 on Feb 26th, 300 on Feb 27th and 50 on Mar 18th. Elsewhere, 33 flew south over Billinge Higher End in a two and a half hour watch, amongst a large movement of Lesser Black-backed Gulls on Mar 19th.

Another visible migration watch at Besses o'th' Barn, Whitefield on Nov 13th produced 701 birds moving south (presumably birds from Pilsworth Tip). At the end of the year 20 were noted at Pennington Flash on Nov 4th, 24 were at Scotman's Flash on Nov 14th and 50 were in the Audenshaw Reservoirs roost on Nov 20th. December produced 1500 in the Heaton Park Reservoir roost on the 10th with 500 at the same site on the 17th and lastly, 50 at Pennington Flash on the 29th. On the face of it, the counts received this year could indicate a reduction in numbers in the county; however this could just be a reflection of the fact that the counts made this year were more sporadic.

Birds of the Scandinavian race *argentatus* were certainly present in the Heaton Park and Audenshaw Reservoirs roosts but no counts were made. However, other records of *argentatus* race birds, all of adults, involved a single at Lower Bredbury on Jan 30th, two at Scotman's Flash on Oct 4th and four also at Scotman's Flash on Oct 22nd.

YELLOW-LEGGED GULL *Larus michahellis*

Scarce passage and winter visitor.

BoCC Amber List species (BR).

The overwhelming majority of records again came from the major roost sites of Heaton Park and Audenshaw Reservoirs.

In January, two adults were at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 3rd, with three adults at Heaton Park Reservoir on the 15th; these were followed by single adults at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 21st and Heaton Park Reservoir again on the 22nd. February saw four records from Audenshaw Reservoirs with two birds, an adult and 1st winter on the 7th, two adults on the 10th and 20th and lastly a single adult on the 24th. During the spring, an adult was recorded from Castleshaw Reservoirs on Mar 12th and a third summer bird was noted amongst a passage of Lesser Black-backed Gulls at Audenshaw Reservoirs on May 7th.

There were no further records until October, starting with an adult at Heaton Park Reservoir on the 4th, followed by four records from Audenshaw Reservoirs, with single adults on the 19th and 21st, and two adults on the 20th and 25th. Also in October, a bird at Scotman's Flash on the 18th was the only record of the year from the west of the County. November produced single adults at Heaton Park Reservoir on the 11th and Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 12th, 20th and 21st. Finally, in December, birds noted at Audenshaw Reservoirs involved two adults on the 9th and single adults on the 12th and 28th, whilst Heaton Park Reservoir recorded single adults on the 10th, 12th, and 24th, with two adults on the 22nd.

A fairly typical year, although several more birds were reported during the course of the year which were not submitted for inclusion in this report. It is difficult to estimate the number of individuals recorded this year, but certainly some of the records from Audenshaw Reservoirs during the autumn related to the same birds.

A couple of late records (and their appropriate rarity submissions) were received from previous years, with single birds noted at Pennington Flash on Dec 31st 2009 and at Scotman's Flash on Aug 26th 2010.

ICELAND GULL *Larus glaucoides*

Scarce winter visitor.

BoCC Amber List species.

There were no records in January, with the first of the year being a juvenile at Heaton Park Reservoir on Feb 5th. Later in February a second winter bird was found at Castleshaw Reservoirs on the 17th and seen again at the same site on the 22nd and 23rd. On Feb 24th a third winter was found in the roost at Audenshaw Reservoirs, with the same bird being recorded again at Audenshaw Reservoirs on Mar 1st and 2nd, and then at Castleshaw Reservoirs on Mar 5th.

No more reports were received until three records from Heaton Park Reservoir in December, with an adult on the 10th, a second winter on the 19th and an adult again on the 24th. The adult bird on Christmas Eve didn't stay to roost at Heaton Park Reservoir, but flew off south after being present for about 10 minutes bathing and preening mid afternoon.

For the second consecutive year, no Glaucous Gulls were reported.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus*

Uncommon winter visitor.

BoCC Amber List species.

Although reports of this species were widespread during the winter periods, most of these were of single figure counts. Heaton Park Reservoir maintains its status as the main roost site for this species and this was sealed with an excellent count of 840 birds there on Jan 9th. However, further counts from Heaton Park Reservoir during the year were much lower, with 200 on Jan 23rd, 80 on Feb 27th, 40 on Oct 9th, 125 on Dec 10th, 170 on Dec 17th and finally 141 on Dec 22nd. Numbers in the Audenshaw Reservoirs roost were far more unpredictable, with single figure counts on most nights, however, 70 were noted on Jan 3rd and 38 on Jan 18th. Pennington Flash, unusually, produced an impressive run of double figure counts during

the last two months of the year, with 10 on Nov 4th, 53 on Nov 28th, back down to 10 on Dec 10th, increasing to 51 on Dec 12th, 170 on Dec 14th, 45 on Dec 17th, 55 the next day, 163 on Dec 22nd and 100 on Dec 29th. Other double figure counts were of 60 at Pilsworth Tip on Jan 2nd, 21 at the same site on Jan 22nd, 15 at Castleshaw Reservoirs on Nov 17th, reducing to 10 at the same site the next day, lastly a count of 125 at Elton Reservoir on Dec 27th was very impressive for the site. The last of the spring appears to be a single at Heaton Park Reservoir on May 10th, whilst the first returning bird recorded was a single at Castleshaw Reservoirs on Aug 23rd.

Although the highest count of the year of 840 birds in the Heaton Park Reservoir roost is impressive, it is not unprecedented, with the same site recording counts of 841 birds in January 2009 and 1005 birds in January 2008.

LITTLE TERN *Sterna albifrons*

Scarce passage migrant.

BoCC Amber List species (SPEC, BDMr2, BI).

An average year for this species with three records involving four birds. On May 5th, a bird did a brief circuit of Audenshaw Reservoirs before departing, with another bird at Pennington Flash the same day. The only other record consisted of two birds at Elton Reservoir on Jun 19th.

BLACK TERN *Chlidonias niger*

Uncommon passage migrant.

BoCC Amber List species (SPEC).

There was a good spread of spring birds in their smart breeding plumage for county birders to enjoy this year. The first of the year were seven birds at Pennington Flash on Apr 22nd, with three birds present at the same site the next day, Apr 23rd. The following day, Apr 24th, a single was at Audenshaw Reservoirs. After a short gap, birds were then present at one or both of these sites almost daily during the first 10 days of May. During May, two were at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 1st, a single then at Elton Reservoir on the 2nd and 3rd, with four at Audenshaw Reservoirs, another single at Heaton Park Reservoir and three at Pennington Flash, also all on the 3rd. The three birds at Pennington Flash were still present on May 4th, and were followed by two at Rumworth Lodge on May 8th and two at Pennington Flash on May 10th.

No more records then until August when single adults were at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 12th and 21st. Typically, autumn passage then continued in September, with three records from Pennington Flash of a juvenile on the 8th, seven which flew south on the 10th and another juvenile on the 11th. Audenshaw Reservoirs then took over the passage with a juvenile on Sep 12th and 13th; two birds, an adult and juvenile on Sep 16th, with the juvenile remaining to the 18th and two adults on Sep 25th. The final record of the year was a single at Elton Reservoir on Sep 27th.

SANDWICH TERN *Sterna sandvicensis*

Uncommon passage migrant.

BoCC Amber List species (SPEC, BDMr2, BL).

Often a difficult bird to connect with, a total of 10 individuals recorded over five days this year made for an impressive haul for any inland county.

The first record of the year involved four birds at Audenshaw Reservoirs during the morning of Apr 24th. Initially just one bird arrived and actually lingered, undertaking several circuits of all three reservoirs, before eventually being lost to view over no. 2 reservoir. A short time

later a group of three birds arrived and again undertook a tour of the reservoirs before departing. It was with some bemusement that morning for the Audenshaw regulars to witness the antics of one well known veteran county birder, for whom Sandwich Tern had long been an omission on his County List. After an athletic entrance for a man of his senior years, he narrowly missed the first bird, returned to his car, then reappeared and connected with the group of three! How lucky was he? Missing the single, but getting the treble, perhaps he should have bought a lottery ticket on the way home! The next record was of a single bird which flew south-east over Rumworth Lodge on May 18th.

Perhaps the most unexpected and impressive record of the year came from a site with no expanse of water, with two birds south over Pickley Green, Westleigh late afternoon on Jul 8th. A non-breeding plumaged adult at Hollingworth Lake on Sep 3rd was seen to catch a fish and subsequently be harassed by Black-headed Gulls in an attempt to relieve it of its catch. The final record of the year was another multiple sighting, of two birds south at Pennington Flash on Sep 9th.

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*

Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant, scarce breeder.
BoCC Amber List species (BL).

The first arrivals of the year were two birds at Rumworth Lodge on Apr 10th, with three at the same site the next day. Also on Apr 11th, singles were noted at Elton Reservoir and at Pennington Flash.

Spring passage then continued through the latter half of April and well into May, with single figure counts of birds reported from many of the major waters in the county.

During the breeding season, at least 17 pairs nested on Horrocks Flash, a figure slightly down on last year (25 pairs). Once again, productivity was difficult to estimate but at least five pairs were feeding young on Jun 12th. For the second consecutive year a pair nested at Rumworth Lodge, with the first young noted on Jun 16th and three young noted on Jul 9th. No breeding data was received from Doffcocker Lodge this year, although the species was certainly present during the breeding season, with 13 birds noted on Jul 19th.

During the summer months wandering birds were reported from a wide variety of sites, particularly in the west of the county and double figure counts included 14 at Pennington Flash on Jul 7th, with 13 at Rumworth Lodge on Aug 6th, whilst two fresh juveniles at Blackleach Reservoir, Walkden on Jul 29th had probably fledged in the county. A light passage occurred in the early autumn, with the last of the year being seven birds at Heaton Park Reservoir on Sep 14th.

ARCTIC TERN *Sterna paradisaea*

Uncommon passage migrant.
BoCC Amber List species (BDMr2).

The earliest record of the year involved four birds at Pennington Flash on Apr 11th, followed by a single at Audenshaw Reservoirs on Apr 24th. April ended with a flurry of records, with 27 north-east through Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 29th, and two at Hollingworth Lake the same day. The following day, Apr 30th, saw 13 at Audenshaw Reservoirs (including 11 resting on the water), two at Elton Reservoir and eight north-east through Hollingworth Lake. The passage continued into May with eight at Audenshaw Reservoirs, a single at Hollingworth Lake and three at Rumworth Lodge all on the 1st, followed by groups of three at Elton Reservoir and Hollingworth Lake on the 2nd. Further singles were noted from Pennington Flash on May 2nd, Elton Reservoir on May 3rd, Audenshaw Reservoirs, Pennington Flash

and Rumworth Lodge all on May 5th. Also on May 5th, two birds over Cox Green Quarry at Egerton provided a record away from the traditional passage sites. Further singles were then reported from Rumworth Lodge on May 6th, Audenshaw Reservoirs on May 7th, Heaton Park Reservoir on May 14th, Shell Pool NR on May 20th and the last of the spring at Elton Reservoir on May 24th. Mention should be made to a flock of 17 'Commic' Terns which flew high east through Audenshaw Reservoirs on May 16th which the observer thought were probably Arctics. An improved spring passage compared to 2010.

Return passage was a much more subdued affair, starting with a single juvenile at Pennington Flash on Aug 12th. September produced three at Pennington Flash on the 9th and a single at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 16th. More unusual were two late records in October, with one at Elton Reservoir on the 6th and later still, a juvenile at Pennington Flash on the 21st-22nd. However, even the October records were surpassed by an extremely late juvenile at Pennington Flash on Nov 1st; the second latest ever county record after one at Audenshaw Reservoirs on Nov 5th 1989.

FERAL PIGEON *Columba livia*

Abundant resident.

Ever present in town and city centres in the county, three figure counts during the year were as follows: - 116 in the Higher Broughton tetrad SD80F on Jan 2nd; 200 in Failsworth and 100 in fields at Irlam Moss, both on Jan 3rd; 200 in the Rusholme tetrad SJ89S on Feb 19th; 220 in Middleton Town Centre on Feb 11th; 160 at Cheadle Royal Industrial Estate on Aug 22nd; 150 in Piccadilly, Manchester City Centre on Oct 15th; 100 in fields on Carrington Moss on Oct 16th and 200 also there on Oct 30th; 150 in fields on Chat Moss on Oct 22nd; 120 in Alexandra Park, Moss Side on Nov 27th.

Feral Pigeons are notorious for being able to breed throughout the year, seemingly regardless of the weather conditions. This year was no exception, with the first instance recorded of an occupied nest in the Carrington Moss tetrad on Jan 1st and the last of the year at Mills Hill, Middleton, when a well grown young was still in the nest on Dec 10th. Breeding was confirmed at 76 locations this year, mainly from atlas tetrads, the majority of which included multiple pairs, which is no surprise given their gregarious nature. On the BBS their status remained stable at 55% of squares occupied.

STOCK DOVE *Columba oenas*

Fairly common resident.

BoCC Amber List species (BI).

Early winter flocks appeared to be more prolific this year with 130 at Astley Moss on Jan 1st forming part of a total count of 209 from the combined mosses of Astley, Carrington, Chat and Irlam on that first day of the year. Low Hall Park recorded an excellent site count of 26 on Jan 14th and Woodford maintained its county dominance for large flocks with 150 on fields by the Aerodrome on Jan 25th. Thirty sites in total recorded this species during the month of January alone. Scout Road, Horwich Moors recorded 20 on Feb 6th which was an excellent count for the area and other good sized flocks during the remainder of the early period involved 80 by Woodford Aerodrome on Feb 17th, 42 at Barton Moss on Mar 3rd, 100 by Barton Aerodrome on Mar 10th, 21 at Little Woolden Moss on Mar 21st and 66 still by Woodford Aerodrome on Apr 14th.

The first Stock Dove back on territory was as early as Feb 12th at Crompton Moor, followed by the first reported display, observed in the Worsley tetrad SD70K on Mar 6th. The very first confirmed breeding occurred in the Shuttleworth tetrad (SD81D) on May 1st with a further 17

locations or tetrads thereafter, until the last of the year with two almost fledged young at Rindle Farm, Astley Moss on Sep 29th. On the BBS, only seven squares recorded this species (11%), appearing to continue this species declining trend.

In the latter half of the year only two sites recorded double figure counts from the end of July to the end of October, with 18 at Pennington Flash on Jul 7th and 25 at Irlam Moss on Sep 6th the pick of the bunch. Pennington Flash continued to provide superb close-range views of this rather subtly beautiful dove from its Bunting Hide with a maximum of 25 on Nov 4th, whilst Rindle, Astley Moss produced the county's largest flock of the year with 202 there on Nov 5th and Rumworth saw a very respectable 43 there on Nov 21st.

WOODPIGEON *Columba palumbus*

Abundant resident and passage migrant.

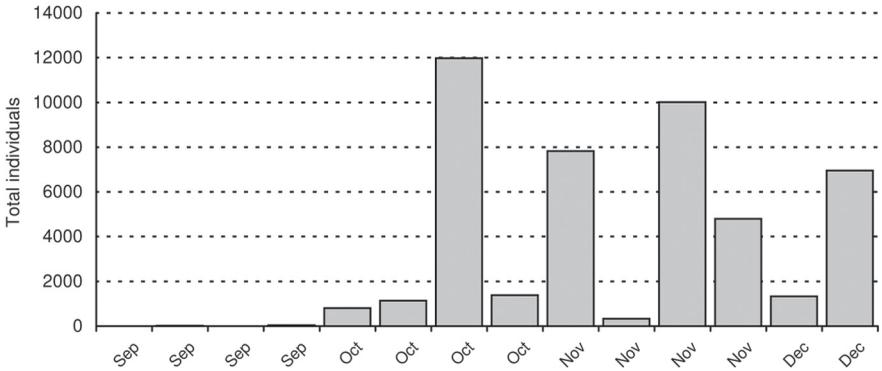
January saw many three figure Woodpigeon counts from sites within the collective 'Chat Moss' area but only five breached 500 strong with Black Wood, Irlam Moss maintaining good numbers throughout the month peaking at 1000 on Jan 27th but Little Woolden Moss harboured the largest flock, with 1250 on the 1st. Outside Chat Moss, Woodford Aerodrome hosted a flock of 400 on the 27th and Shell Pool NR 200 on the 29th. *February* saw a marked reduction in numbers and although nine 3 figure counts were made in the county none exceeded 500 strong, the largest recorded being 350 at Darcy Lever Gravel Pits on the 20th. *March* recorded eleven 3 figure counts during the month but none exceeded 200 strong, nor did they in *April*, when the only three figure counts were of 160 near Ferney Fields Farm, Chadderton on the 1st and 150 on Chat Moss on the 4th.

In the 2010 Greater Manchester County Bird Report, comment was made that it seemed clear that Woodpigeon was being under recorded as a breeding species as whilst 59 locations recorded confirmed breeding during that year, a further 27 recorded nest building and many more noted possible breeding. In 2011, observers in the county made good and thanks to an excellent effort a total of 135 atlas tetrads or other locations recorded confirmed breeding! The first instance was at Queen's Park, Heywood on Mar 28th and the last of the year in the Ashworth Moor Reservoir tetrad (SD81H) on Aug 28th. On the BBS 61 squares (92%) recorded the species, with 11 of those squares recording more than 20 birds on both their early and late visits.

From July to the end of the year there were as to be expected some large feeding assemblages, with the following significant flocks recorded; 300 at Rumworth Lodge on Jul 7th; 800 at Black Wood, Irlam Moss on Aug 3rd; 850 at Little Woolden Moss on Aug 5th; 600 at Little Woolden Moss on Sep 6th; 300 at Shell Pool NR on Oct 9th; 570 at Bedford Moss on Oct 17th; 500 near Woodford Aerodrome on Nov 13th; 400 at Heald Green on Nov 18th; 1800 off Moss Lane, Astley Moss on Dec 12th; 1000 emerging out of the Pennington Flash roost at dawn on Dec 17th; and 1200 near Astley Moss East Pools on Dec 27th.

With visible migration watching becoming a commoner county pursuit, particularly at key locations, avid observers saw the eagerly awaited passage of Woodpigeons over the county in the latter half of the year reach new heights. Beginning in earnest in the first few days of October, their movements through the county lasted all the way until the middle of December, bolstered during that latter month by some significant cold weather movements. Three well watched visible migration sites of the Horwich Moors, the Billinge Hill area (where birds moved overhead into Greater Manchester airspace) and the Whitefield area, reported a total of 71947 Woodpigeons during this period alone, so one can only wonder at just how many actually passed through the entire county airspace. The Horwich Moors maintained its status as the premier site to watch this wonderful spectacle, accounting for 46624 birds and recording four figure counts on 12 dates. Peak daily counts at this site came on Nov 19th with 7775 birds

passing through NNW during the day, including a single flock of 3000, and Dec 14th when 5340 were counted heading north on a broad front during a cold weather movement. The Billinge Hill area accounted for approximately 14000 birds, with three daily totals breaching four figure numbers and its maximum daily total of 7000 occurring on Nov 11th, when 110 flocks moved south on a weather front in just under three hours in the early morning. The Whitefield area amassed a total of 11323 birds and a peak count of 4197 over Besses o'th' Barn on Nov 25th, whilst also recording four figure counts on two occasions and a further four counts which exceeded 500 strong.



Autumn Woodpigeon migration through the Horwich Moors 2011

COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto*
Abundant resident.

This species continues to be well recorded by county observers, with many single figure counts submitted from across the county during the early winter period. The largest recorded flock during the period, which was also to be the largest encountered during the entire year, was of 130 in the Banky Meadow roost on Feb 6th. Those flocks of 20 or more strong were as follows: - 23 at Simister on Jan 19th; 22 at Little Woolden Moss on Jan 20th; 20 in the Hope Carr tetrad SJ69U on Jan 29th; 63 in the Haydock Park East tetrad SJ59Y on Feb 8th; and 24 in the Whitefield tetrad SD80C on Feb 12th.

The first recorded confirmed breeding of the year was at Chadderton on the very early date of Jan 4th, with the first successful breeding record occurring in the Elton Reservoir tetrad (SD70Z) on Mar 26th. From these dates onwards breeding was widespread and 80 locations or atlas tetrads confirmed it, which was clearly more representative of the true status for this species. On the BBS 73% of squares contained the species this year, a slight but still significant drop from 2010 which continued the overall downward trend in recent years. The final breeding of the year was recorded at White Ash, Birtle on the rather late date of Aug 31st. There were no reports of pairs breeding on television satellite dishes this year but there was one rather remarkable choice of nest location when a pair successfully bred on a stand of traffic lights on a pedestrian refuge half way across a busy road intersection in Chadderton! Though their first attempt seemingly failed during January, the nest was re-occupied in late March and by late April the single nestling was believed to have fledged. Clearly traffic light stands afford a good degree of potential breeding success as the pair went on to produce a second brood during early May, with another single young presumed fledged by early June.

The latter half of the year was remarkable by its absence of significant flocks and indeed only four flocks 20 or stronger were encountered to the end of the year! 34 were near Green Common, Westhoughton on Jul 26th but Coal Pit Lane, Bardsley hosted the largest flock, of 100 on Oct 16th, with the other two flocks of 22 at Woodford on Sep 27th and 28 in a roost in conifers at Pennington Flash on Nov 6th.

RING-NECKED PARAKEET *Psittacula krameri*

Uncommon mainly localised resident.

The South Manchester population appears to be continuing to increase in numbers and they rightly remain popular with both birders and the local community. It is important that sightings continue to be reported to the Greater Manchester Bird Recording Group though, so we can continually assess any growth and expansion. Unfortunately, records received this year were relatively low, despite the attention of birders at their favoured haunts and unusually there were certainly few sightings away from these preferred sites. The monthly maxima at these favoured sites through the year were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Alexandra Park	3				1		2					
Fallowfield allotments			8									
Fletcher Moss	1	2	6	7	3	1						6
Fog Lane Park	7	5	9	4								
Platt Fields Park	2		5				9	12		16	2	

The 16 in Platt Fields Park on Oct 30th represents a new county record flock for this species but away from the South Manchester population the only records were of one at Dunham Massey Park on Feb 14th and two at Altrincham ETW on Nov 11th.

Breeding was confirmed this year at Fletcher Moss and Platt Fields Park, with a pair at each site successfully fledging young, plus birds were seen entering nest holes during the breeding season at both Birchfields and Fog Lane Park.

CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*

Uncommon summer visitor; declining.

BoCC Red List (BDp1, BDp2) and UK BAP species.

The ever reliable collective 'Chat Moss' area hosted the first bird of the year with pretty typical timing on Apr 14th thanks to a single bird in the Astley Moss East tetrad (SJ79E). This was swiftly followed by further April sightings of singles at Rindle Wood, Astley Moss on the 14th; Elton Reservoir on the 15th; Astley Road, Chat Moss on the 17th; Scotman's Flash on the 20th; Cadishead Moss on the 22nd; Irlam Moss on the 25th; Lightshaw Hall Flash on the 29th and the only female of the month at Lydgate on the 30th. Only one site managed more than a single bird though, which was unsurprisingly Astley Moss with three on the 24th. During May, a further 20 sites reported Cuckoos, with many recording singing males but only Astley Moss and Dove Stone RSPB could muster more than a single, with two on the 6th and two on the 10th respectively. With three new sites in June and one in July recording the species, it raised the total number of sites graced by Cuckoos in the county during the year to 33.

As a species in serious national breeding decline, the two confirmed breeding records this year were a welcome surprise. Both were in the Wigan area and doubtless others went unnoticed elsewhere but a juvenile at Pearson's Flash on Jun 1st was found in a Willow Warbler's nest, which was an extremely rare host species indeed. The only other confirmed

breeding was in the Wigan Town Centre tetrad SD50X on May 20th. Birds considered to be on territory were well recorded at the following locations: - Astley Moss (SJ69Z), Bamford (in the Jowkin Lane area), Bickershaw Rucks (SD60F), Carrington Moss (SJ79K), Chat Moss (SJ79D), Dog Hill (SD90P) and Etrop Green (SJ88C). Additional to these was a pair in suitable breeding habitat at Dove Stone RSPB on May 10th. On the BBS, this year's apparent increase, however subtle, was borne out with four squares (6%) in comparison to the single square in 2010 and was close to the BBS status of 2009 when five squares were occupied.

July's records were few and far between as expected, with only three recorded. Singles were at Scout Road, Horwich Moors on the 2nd plus Elton Reservoir and Rindle, Astley Moss both on the 31st. August brought two records, both of juvenile birds, as one posed beautifully for an observer at Hope Carr NR on the 4th and another was well watched feeding on moth larvae within the mast cable compounds on the very top of Winter Hill on the 31st.

BARN OWL *Tyto alba*

Uncommon resident.

BoCC Amber List species (SPEC).

Early winter: Very few sightings were reported during January and February with birds seen in five tetrads and at three additional sites, including two locations in the Trafford section of the Mersey Valley. One was seen hunting close to a barn in east Bury Jan 22nd which appears to be a new site. Pellets found in the barn were sent to the Mammal Society for analysis and were said to be larger and heavier than usual. They contained the remains of no less than seven Field Voles, which are the main prey species throughout most of the year; so clearly this owl was experiencing no problems finding food!

Breeding: There was some evidence of range expansion, with a nest containing young found in an east Bury tetrad (the same as the wintering bird) Jun 26th from where no previous breeding reports had been received. Additionally, an adult was seen carrying prey into a barn on the Pennine edge in Rochdale Jun 21st; the first confirmed breeding in an area which has been well watched for at least the past eight years. At another upland site in Rochdale, 12 km from the above, a pair was observed on May 15th. However, due to a significant reduction in the number of records submitted for this species we are only able to report confirmed breeding from ten tetrads. According to information published by the BTO 28 chicks were ringed in the county in 2011, a 75 per cent increase on 2010. The figure compares favourably with 2009, when 30 chicks were ringed at nine sites. Unfortunately, it is not possible to extrapolate the number of breeding pairs from the ringing totals, as only approximately 50 per cent of broods are ringed in an average year.

Autumn/late winter: Singles were seen at a total of five sites in Bolton, Bury, Salford and Wigan.

There were no ringing recoveries or casualties reported throughout the year.

LITTLE OWL *Athene noctua*

Fairly common resident.

Early winter: Singles, unless otherwise stated, were reported from just ten sites as follows: in January at Red Chalis SBI 4th; Whittaker, Littleborough 6th; Hollingworth near Hyde 9th; Crow Trees Farm, Elton Reservoir 14th and again on Feb 18th; the Naden Valley 19th; two at Matley 29th and in February at Woodford Aerodrome 17th; Church Lane, Woodford 19th; Werneth Low 20th; and Elton Reservoir tetrad (SD70Z) 26th. One was on Ludworth Moor Mar 2nd.

Breeding: Little Owl may have been badly affected by the harsh winter of 2010-11, as BBS results in England showed a 29 per cent fall between 2010 and 2011. Although in Greater

Manchester the species is not well monitored by BBS, being recorded on just five (8%) squares compared to six (9%) in 2010. Except for BBS Astley Moss East, these were all upland squares: BBS Brushes, Caldermoor, Holcombe Moor and Holcombe Rifle Range. Very little evidence of confirmed breeding was submitted, the earliest being two pairs with young in the Elton Reservoir area in May, one of which deserted for unknown reasons, the other raising two young. In June occupied nests were found at Middle Hulton and in the Hindley Green tetrad (SD60G), one of a pair was carrying food at Lydgate, Littleborough and a nest with young found in the Shuttleworth tetrad (SD81D) may have been in Rossendale. Fledged juveniles were observed in July at the following locations: both Blackstone Edge and Astley Moss tetrad (SJ69Z) on 14th; Littleborough East (SD91N) 21st; two were accompanied by an adult at both Whittaker near Littleborough and at Withins Reservoir on the same date, 23rd. Elsewhere, pairs were observed in Ainsworth South (SD70U) Mar 26th; in April in Ashworth Moor Reservoir tetrad (SD81H), at Cutacre OCCS (also seen here in July), Ludworth Moor, Walker Fold (SD61R), Barton Moss (SJ79I), and in May at Dunham Park NT. A single was visiting a possible nest site at Darcy Lever in June and a pair was seen in July on Irlam Moss. From mid-March to late August additional sites with singles, indicating possible breeding, were Borsdane Wood; Dark Lane/Sinderland Lane, Carrington Moss; Diggle, near Saddleworth; Fanny Brook Valley, Syke; Gillibrands Farm, Daisy Hill; Higher Shore; Jumbles Reservoir (SD71H); Lightshaw Hall Flash; Meadowcroft Farm, Pilsworth; Moss Brow (SJ78E); Naden (SD91N); Piethorne Valley; Rumworth Lodge; Shore Moor; Syke Farm, Littleborough; White Ash, Birtle; and Woodford Aerodrome.

Autumn/late winter: Records were received from just eight sites; in addition to those mentioned above singles were at Olive Mount Farm, Chat Moss Nov 28th; Hazel Grove Golf Course Dec 1st and Little Woolden Moss Dec 18th.

TAWNY OWL *Strix aluco*

Fairly common resident.

Early Winter: This owl welcomed in the New Year in gardens in Hale Barns (a pair) and Marple, being the first species of the year for one observer. In January and February, when territorial calls and early sunset times should make this species relatively easy to locate, records came from just 12 tetrads and 11 additional sites. During the four winters of recording for Bird Atlas 2007-11 Tawny Owl has only been reported from 56 tetrads (17%) across the whole county, clearly showing the massive under-recording of this species.

Breeding: A female paid several visits to a nest box located in a Littleborough garden on Feb 21st and 27th, but as happened in 2010, appears to have been forced out by Grey Squirrels. P. & N. Johnson's long running survey for the BTO Nest Record Scheme reported 23 pairs in Bury and two in Bolton fledging 46 young (an average of 1.84 young per pair), probably the highest productivity rate since 2007 (figures are not available for 2009) when the recorded average was 2.10 (21 pairs had 44 young). For comparison, 23 pairs raised 30 young in 2010, 22 pairs had 33 young in 2008 and in 2006 19 pairs had 35 young. As in previous years, the combined efforts of the rest of the county failed to match the Bury figures, with breeding confirmed in a mere 21 tetrads and at three additional sites. March saw fledged young first reported on 17th in the Trub, Rochdale tetrad (SD80Z), although young were still in the nest box in the Elton Reservoir area 20th, either this or another brood had fledged by 26th. Two adults were attending two juveniles at Crompton Lodges, Farnworth Apr 15th. However, young were still in the nest in May: at Lower Castleshaw (SD90Z) 2nd; Roe Cross (SJ99Y) 3rd; Swinton (SD70Q) 4th; Astley Moss East (SJ79E) 15th; Park Bridge 21st and the latest known date Jun 7th in Gin Pit tetrad (SD60V). During May recently fledged young were observed at Amberswood (and in June here); Darcy Lever; Hale Barns; Hazel Grove and Tottington. Additional sites and tetrads reporting young in June were Ashton-in-Makerfield (SJ59U);

Carrington Moss; Haigh Plantations (SD50Y); Leyland Green (SD50K); Swallows Wood and Well Green (SJ78Y). The last juveniles of the breeding season were two calling at Mill Lane Horwich Jul 12th and one hunger calling at Watergrove Reservoir the following day.

Autumn/late winter: Birds began calling again in September, to re-establish their territories, with two heard just before dawn in Flixton on 5th. Records were received from 20 sites during this period and the last of the year was a male hooting at Mill Lane, Horwich Dec 27th.

LONG-EARED OWL *Asio otus*

Uncommon resident.

RBBP species.

All locations are withheld in the interests of breeding birds and to protect winter roosts from disturbance.

Early winter: During the second half of January singles were present at three locations in the north of the county, none of which are known to be breeding sites. In the west two separate roosts each containing two birds were found at site W1 on Feb 15th.

Breeding: This owl is an early nester; in February at site E1 (in the east of the county) a male was calling 3rd, followed by a pair calling and wing clapping 8th when a second female was also calling. 2011 was one of the best years ever in the county for recording successful breeding with a minimum of 13 pairs fledging 27+ young at ten sites (five in the east, three in the west and one each in the north and south). This excellent result probably had more to do with targeted recording effort in areas where Long-eared Owl is known to breed, rather than an actual increase in population. Site E2, also in the east, where the preference is for coniferous plantations or small shelter belts, was completely new, but within one km of a well established breeding location, perhaps indicating some local population expansion. As occurred in 2010, fledged young were reported from an area in the east, site E3, from where no breeding records had been received since 1996, indicating either lack of coverage, or the possibility that records are being withheld in the misguided belief that this helps protect the species from disturbance and the theft of eggs/chicks. A mossland tetrad in the south registered successful breeding for the first time, although again Long-eared Owl had been recorded here during the breeding season as far back as 1998. In the west, two pairs were present at two adjacent sites, during the period April to June, but it is not known whether they bred successfully.

Autumn & late winter: Four were present in the north, at one of the early winter sites on Sep 25th and again on Oct 16th, with the roost reducing to two birds during November on 6th, 23rd and 29th, increasing back to three Dec 22nd. Four were roosting at site W1 Dec 12th, whilst in the north one of the early winter roosts contained a single owl Nov 1st and 21st.

SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus*

Uncommon winter visitor; rare breeder.

BoCC Amber List (SPEC) and RBBP species.

Surprisingly there were no records received for the period January to May.

Breeding: Two pairs may have bred in the county, one in the north and one in the east. At the northern location one was seen to catch prey and fly off north Jun 13th, so any nest site was probably outside the county. At the eastern site, one was carrying food Jun 14th and possibly the same bird was seen 19th.

Autumn & late winter: One was at Brun Clough Reservoir, Jul 7th and Aug 1st. There was a large influx of Short-eared Owls into the UK in the autumn of 2011 which probably accounts for the significant increase in sightings, compared to the apparent total absence of the species during

the early winter. One was roosting amongst the heather on Adam Hill, Horwich Moors Sep 1st. Migrants were seen flying over Elton Reservoir Sep 30th and one was mobbed by a Peregrine as it flew over Besses o'th' Barn Oct 26th. There were numerous sightings on the mosslands starting with one at Croxden Peat Works NR Oct 27th. During November one to two were seen on both Little Wolden Moss and Highfield Moss, with singles seen at both locations in December and again at Croxden Peat Works NR Dec 6th. One was at Cutacre OCCS Nov 1st. The Horwich Moors enjoyed the lion's share of the sightings during December with the highest count being five at Burnt Edge. Three were in the same area on 10th and the same number at Newfields Farm, Horwich during the afternoon of the 18th when one knocked a Kestrel off its perch and another was seen carrying prey. Thereafter singles only were seen elsewhere on the Horwich Moors on 27th, 28th and 31st.

SWIFT *Apus apus*

Common summer visitor: declining.

BoCC Amber List species (BDMp1).

The first record of the year would not only have been an extremely early date for this species in the county but may in fact, have been something a whole lot rarer too. A swift species seen for only 15 seconds by an experienced observer at Pickley Green, Westleigh on Apr 2nd appeared medium brown in plumage with slight colour contrast against the apparently paler secondaries. Though the few features seen during the all too brief observation hinted at the possibility of a Pallid Swift *A. pallidus*, the observer rightly conceded it to the 'one that got away file', as frustrating as that must have been.

The earliest arrival therefore was on the rather typical first date of Apr 20th with one over Besses o' th' Barn, Whitefield. Quickly following on the 23rd were two at Pennington Flash and then on the 24th two at both Elton Reservoir and Shell Pool NR. Seven further sites managed to record the species until the end of April, with the highest count coming from Audenshaw Reservoirs with 30 on the 30th. Numbers during May swelled with some substantial arrivals and records were widespread across the county. Audenshaw Reservoirs was clearly *the* place for Swift numbers, recording three counts of 100 (on the 2nd, 5th and 12th), one of 200 (on the 8th), three of 500 (on the 15th, 16th and 22nd), one of 1000 (on the 28th) and the highest monthly count anywhere in the county of 1500 (on the 24th). Other sites recording three figure counts were 100 at Horrocks Flash on the 12th, 110 at Heaton Park Reservoir on the 13th, 400 at Elton Reservoir and 300 at Heaton Park Reservoir both on the 14th and 200 at Elton Reservoir on the 16th. There were some fine large flocks to be found during June too with 500 at Pennington Flash on the 5th, 200 at Hollingworth Lake on the 7th, 200 at Heaton Park Reservoir on the 9th, 300 at Audenshaw Reservoirs and 500 at Pennington Flash both on the 10th (with 500 again at the latter site on the 11th) and the year's highest recorded total, thanks to the fantastic sight of 3000 at Pennington Flash on the 12th.

The county status underneath the header for this species lists it as 'declining' and that very well may still hold true. This year though, breeding looked to have been hugely successful, with 38 locations confirming breeding compared to only 16 in 2010. The tireless efforts of observers actively seeking out breeding occurrences for the final year of the county atlas seems to have been the overriding factor in this meteoric increase in confirmed breeding though and undoubtedly merely reflects the true breeding status of the species as opposed to their under-recorded status of years gone by. Either way, with the atlas survey work now completed, a similarly concerted effort in future summers to record breeding occurrences will be necessary to ensure a balanced view. It does seem though that there was some good news for this species, which seemingly suffers to some extent from a limited choice of nesting sites due to current building design and structure, as the BBS recorded its best results since 2008 with 46 squares (70%) this year.

July saw ten counts over 100 strong coming from Dixon's Wood, Chat Moss; Heaton Park Reservoir; Highfield Moss; Irlam Moss; Little Woolden Moss; Long Lane, Hindley; Olive Mount Farm, Chat Moss; and Rumworth Lodge, with the monthly maximum of 200 occurring at Highfield Moss on the 9th and Rumworth Lodge on the 20th. August saw the usual significant departure of birds heading south but still managed to record three counts over 100 strong, with a fine gathering of 1100 at Black Wood, Irlam Moss on the 3rd; 350 at Shell Pool NR on the 14th; and 160 again at Shell Pool NR on the 21st. September saw only three double figure counts, with 38 at Black Moss, Irlam Moss on the 1st the highest number recorded. Seventeen sites in total recorded one or more birds during the month though, with the final stragglers as follows: - one over Flixton Fly Ash Tip on the 16th, two at Audenshaw Reservoirs and one over Littleborough both on the 17th and the final, fairly late record of the year, of a single over Gillibrands Farm, Daisy Hill on the 21st.

KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis*

Fairly common resident but perhaps declining.
BoCC Amber List species (SPEC).

The large number of locations or tetrads recording this species during the year demonstrated its fairly comprehensive county distribution. For the first four months of the year, all sightings were of singles other than pairs seen at Chorlton Water Park on Feb 16th and 28th, Elton Reservoir on Mar 16th and in the Denton tetrad SJ99H on Apr 3rd. Similarly, in the final three months of the year single sightings were again the norm other than up to three seen together at Pennington Flash from Oct 30th (with two seen on four dates until the end of the year also there), three at Roman Lakes on Nov 12th and two there again on Dec 28th, and two at Chorlton Water Park also on Dec 28th. During December, a bird was seen diving through the slushy semi-frozen canal at Greenfield, Oldham and another at Boarshaw Reservoirs was watched searching for somewhere to fish on the mostly frozen ponds. Hollingworth Lake recorded only two records all year where it appeared the previous two cold winters had hit the population hard. A bird seen flying across Warren Bruce Road, Trafford Park on Mar 23rd was obviously moving between areas, being some way from any water courses.

Breeding was confirmed in six locations, with territories or probable breeding established in a further seven, plus there were several reports of birds in suitable nesting habitat during the breeding season. This result would seem to tentatively indicate the county population being fairly stable once again, against the serious decline across the UK as a whole. However this species, amongst others, is always at the peril of severe cold weather and as such reporting any breeding evidence is very important indeed.

WRYNECK *Jynx torquilla*

Very rare migrant.
BoCC Red List species (HD, BDp1, BDp2, SPEC, BR).

The 18th county record was found at Higher Meadows, Horwich Moors on Aug 24th (K. Haydock, J. Mills *et al*). Despite searching by a number of hopeful birders on the 25th, the bird was not seen again and presumed to have departed during the night. Remarkably, on the 26th the bird was re-found in the same location and showed very well to a few fortunate observers. Despite considerable searching the next day the bird was never seen again though. A full account can be found in a separate article within this report.

September just tips the balance in its favour as the prime month for this species in the county with nine records but is closely followed by seven during October. Outside these two months there have been only two records, one in April and one in August.

GREEN WOODPECKER *Picus viridis*

Uncommon resident.

BoCC Amber List species (SPEC).

Whilst well recorded in the first four months of the year, there were few records away from this species' usual strongholds in the county. The final four months of the year though saw a marked reduction in sightings, resulting in only five records in September, five in October, three in November and none at all in December! Rather typically, when not advertising its presence with its characteristic yaffling call, this species is particularly unobtrusive.

Breeding was confirmed at five sites or tetrads as follows: - Dove Stone RSPB; Dunham Massey (SJ78I); Etherow (SJ99Q); Higher Shore, Littleborough; Pots and Pans (SE00C); and Whittaker Wood, Littleborough. This was a clear reduction from the excellent results obtained in 2010 and was further supported by the BBS which recorded only 5 squares (8%) this year. On a more positive note and given the difficulty in confirming breeding of this species, a further four sites recorded probable breeding and thirteen more sites recorded birds 'singing' or in suitable nesting habitat during the breeding season.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopus major*

Fairly common resident.

A very widespread species in the county, highly evident thanks to its conspicuous plumage and habits. There were many hundreds of reports received during the year, including many from domestic gardens where this opportunistic and very popular bird plunders peanuts and fat ball feeders. One thing woodpeckers are not usually thought of though is as migrants but obviously, to a certain extent, they are. Visible migration watchers on the Horwich Moors saw single birds flying out across the bleak, treeless Smithills Moor on six occasions during the autumn, perhaps likely to be more localised movements, as follows: - high WNW on Sep 22nd; high SW on Sep 27th; high S on Oct 13th, 14th and 15th: and high SE on Oct 21st.

Confirmed breeding results were high again this year with 66 in total, 41 of those being atlas tetrads, and this was further supported by a very healthy number of additional possible and probable breeding locations. Clearly the current county population appears to be very healthy. Results on the BBS supported this too, with 31 squares (47%) this year being the highest ever recorded in the county.

LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopus minor*

Uncommon resident: declining?

BoCC Red List (BDp1, BDp2), UK BAP and RBBP species.

There were no reports of confirmed breeding this year but probable breeding was noted in Bramhall Hall Park on Apr 27th with a bird excavating a nest hole. Other than this, sites with possible breeding birds signified by drumming, were in the Longford Park on Apr 14th; the more usual location of Poise Wood, Offerton on Apr 17th; Woodbank Park, Stockport on Apr 18th; and a bird considered being in suitable breeding habitat in the Chorlton WP tetrad SJ89F on May 17th. There were no reports received from several locations which had previously returned annual records but three tetrads did feature single birds: - at Hazel Grove (SJ98I) on Jan 28th, Partington (SJ79A) on Jan 19th, and Strines (SJ98T) on Feb 20th.

MAGPIE *Pica pica*

Abundant resident.

Notable counts in the first few months came from atlas surveys, with 69 (some of which were building nests) in the Higher Broughton tetrad on Jan 2nd and 46 flying over the Newall Green tetrad the next day. 43 were in one field on Cadishead Moss on Jan 26th. Roosting birds were counted at Darcy Lever (230 on Feb 20th and 295 on Mar 16th), Egerton (180 on Jan 23rd), Kenworthy Woods, Sale (91 on Jan 8th), Banky Meadow (75 on Jan 18th and 70 on Feb 6th) and Pilsforth Fisheries (54 on Jan 29th).

Records came from 91% of our BBS squares (a gradual decline each year since 95% in 2008). Numbers were up on 2010 however, with counts of 20+ from six BBS squares and two WBBS transects. Kenworthy Fields BBS led the way with 31 on the first visit and 17 on the second. Other Magpie-rich squares were Fallowfield (21/21), West Didsbury (15/24), Priory Gardens, Sale (8/20), Hough End (-/26) and Heaton Park Reservoir (21/-). All of these, and Hey Brook WBBS plot (10/20), were surpassed by the Rochdale Canal WBBS, which had 50 on the first visit and 40 on the second. As expected, for such a numerous species which is not shy of human proximity, breeding records were widespread and numerous. There were few records of predation this year. One was reported raiding a Greenfinch nest in Leylandii at Worsley Hall Garden Centre in May, but this corvid is not always at the top of the pecking order – a Magpie nest in a Rochdale garden was attacked by a Carrion Crow in April.

60 were in a stubble field near Heaton Park on Nov 26th. The Platt Fields Park roost held fewer birds this year - 144 birds on Nov 12th, rising to 182 on Christmas Eve. 210, only a slight reduction on last year's count, roosted at Egerton, near Bolton on Dec 22nd.

JAY *Garrulus glandarius*

Common resident.

January's best count was six in a Hale Barns garden the 29th. On Valentine's Day 30 were counted in the Dunham Massey NT, obviously an area with ideal habitat. March's best was at least seven in Drinkwater Park, Prestwich on the 27th.

Jays were noted in 36% of the county's BBS squares (down from 45% in both 2010 and 2009). This tallies with national survey results, which showed a decline in range this year but not significantly affecting the species' gradual expansion. Seven of our squares reported more than two birds: Abram, Bradley Fold, Hartshead Green, Healey, Romiley NE, Romiley SW and Worthington. The five top squares from 2010 showed a decline in numbers this year. Jays can be notoriously secretive in the breeding season though, demonstrated by the vast majority of the 55 confirmed breeding locations only identified once recently fledged juveniles were seen.

Post-breeding reports were fewer this year, probably due to the cessation of atlas surveys. To some extent, this was compensated for by visual migration watches from the Horwich Moors in October. Eight flew south over Burnt Edge on the 1st and 11 were over Georges Lane, also moving in a southerly direction, three days later. Observers at Burnt Edge recorded another eight migrants on the 15th. In addition, October counts came from Pickley Green (eight on the 3rd), Roman Lakes, Marple (eight on the 7th), Etherow CP (seven on the 15th) and Carrington Moss (nine on 30th). In November and December there were no records of more than four.

JACKDAW *Corvus monedula*

Common resident.

The year started with an interesting find for Ian McKerchar. Whilst observing a flock of 630 Jackdaws on Astley Moss on Jan 4th, he noted a bird which clearly portrayed features associated with 'Nordic' Jackdaw *Corvus monedula monedula*. A full account of this record can found in a

separate article within this report. Other notable counts in January came from Compstall ETW where around 1400 flew over, probably heading out of county to roost near Poynton and Pilsworth Fisheries where 822 birds came in to roost. In February, 1100-1200 were recorded in a pre-roost gathering in Chorlton, 500 were counted in the Hurst, Ashton-under-Lyne tetrad on an atlas survey, and 915 were roosting at Darcy Lever, Bolton. The latter roost held 863 Jackdaws on March 16th.

65% of our BBS squares recorded this species (61% in 2010 and 67% in 2009). Those with over 35+ birds on one of the two visits were the regulars - Mossley (36/35) and nearby Grasscroft (24/35) and were joined by Norbury Brook (70/39), Ashton-on-Mersey (3/56) and Sharples (8/41). Numbers at Caldermoor and Holcombe Hill were slightly down this year. Atlas surveys continued to encourage breeding records from a wide variety of sites, and one recorder's proof of confirmed breeding was a bit too close for comfort when he released a recently-fledged juvenile, which had fallen down the chimney and into his living room!

As usual, post-breeding roost counts were dominated by reports from Stockport borough. On October 13th, 2340 flew NE over Hazel Grove after leaving their roost, 900 were counted in a pre-roost gathering at Ludworth Moor on Oct 19th and an estimated 1500 were roosting at Woodford on Nov 17th. The Hazel Grove count increased to 2430 on Dec 12th. Elsewhere, 2000 were noted at Audenshaw Reservoirs on Oct 30th as they left a nearby roost, 500 were regularly noted at Pennington Flash, the Chorlton roost had a maximum of 1500 on Nov 20th and the Heaton Park roost numbered approximately 1000 birds.

ROOK *Corvus frugilegus*

Fairly common resident; declining due to urbanisation.

Once again, the number of records submitted for this species was disappointing. We know that Rooks are decreasing locally and nationally, but far too much of the evidence is becoming anecdotal. Maybe when it becomes a truly scarce species the number of records will increase?

Early year counts of note came from Banky Meadow, where the roost peaked at 80 on Jan 18th, and Pilsworth Fisheries where 100 were seen on Jan 29th. 230 were at Carrington Moss on Feb 3rd and 90 were part of a large corvid flock at Bowlee the next day.

Rookery counts were fewer this year, with many regular sites not reported. Nest numbers (with last year's figures where available) were: Birch 42 (108); Higher Shore 10 (10); Holcombe 6 (24); St. Thomas', Golborne 28 (40) and Tyldesley Cemetery 16 (23). In addition, nesting was recorded from Factory Hill, Horwich (one nest) Greenfield (four), Hawkshaw (12), Smithills, Bolton (five) and with additional atlas records of confirmed breeding from Banky Meadow, Carrington Moss, Dunham Massey, Great Moor, Hodgfold, Shevington Vale, Simpson Clough, Tottington (12) and Wardle. Following a slight increase last year, Rook distribution on BBS squares was back down to the 2009 level of 23%.

Post-breeding, 80 were noted at Ashton Hall Farm, Ashton-on-Mersey on Jul 24th. The only other significant flock of feeding birds was 150 at Shevington Vale on Oct 4th - these were believed to be from the rookery just over the county border at Wroughtington.

October migration watches at Burnt Edge, Horwich, produced counts of 120 on the 15th, 200 on the 24th and 186 on the 25th.

CARRION CROW *Corvus corone*

Abundant resident.

Fewer reports of flocks in excess of 100 birds were received this year. The Banky Meadow roost held 200 on Jan 18th and 210 on Feb 6th. 600 (the year's best count by a long chalk) went

in to roost at Pilsworth Fisheries on Jan 29th and 100 were noted at Carrington Moss on Feb 2nd. 240 were seen at Burnt Edge, Horwich on the last day of March.

As last year, crows were recorded in 96% of our BBS squares. Whilst numbers were much reduced in the Top Lock square, counts in the rest of last year's top five remained impressive. Trub held 44 birds on the early visit and 34 a month later, with Astley Moss East (5/26), Caldermoor (36/22) and Watergrove Reservoir (20/26) joined this year by Sharples, Bolton (43/55).

Most of the large counts seen in autumn and winter came from migration watches in the Horwich Moors area. All were of birds flying S/SE. 300 were over Smithills Moor on Oct 25th, 67 were seen from Matchmoor Lane on Nov 1st and Burnt Edge recorded 70 the following day. On Nov 19th a further 50 were counted over Burnt Edge. 150 were at Shell Pool on Dec 27th.

Oddly, there were no reports of leucism or other colour aberrations this year.

RAVEN *Corvus corax*

Scarce breeder but increasing.

The site in the Horwich Moors area had another good year, again fledging four young despite having on occasion to fend off the attentions of Peregrines and Buzzards entering their territory. As usual the young were ringed. The Flixton site cannot be monitored easily, but nest building was noted in early March, food was being taken to the nest at the beginning of April and recently-fledged young noted on May 22nd. In the Dove Stone area, a nest was reported as occupied on Apr 15th and fledged young were nearby on Jun 1st. Three young fledged from the site in Wigan town centre for a second year. The pair which occupies a quarry site on our county's northern border was again reported as breeding successfully, but whether their offspring were Lancastrians or Mancunians is open to debate.

Ravens roam far and wide outside the breeding season and most other records probably refer to our resident breeding birds. However, autumn records from Smithills Moor seem to show evidence of migration. On Aug 17th six birds were seen flying NW, then a further 13 were noted soaring together in the company of Buzzards before departing in the same direction. The same behaviour, this time involving 11 Ravens, was reported on Sep 26th.

GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus*

Increasing breeder, fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor.

Though early winter birds were both widespread and fairly numerous across the county there were only two counts of four birds together, both in February, at Romiley on the 1st and Shell Pool NR on the 11th. Later in the year there were the usual post breeding flocks and also those swelled by migrants as follows: - 11 at Higher Meadows, Horwich Moors on Aug 26th and 13 also there on Sep 15th; seven at Walker Fold Woods on Sep 15th; six at Crompton Moor on Sep 16th; seven at Chair Wood/Island Dam on Oct 1st; five at Ringley ETW on Oct 9th; six at Watergrove Reservoir on Oct 20th; six at Billinge Higher Ends on Oct 27th; five at Dixon's Wood, Chat Moss on Oct 30th; four at Heaton Park on Nov 26th. In total, 15 locations recorded one or more birds during November, decreasing to only 9 during December.

The first singing bird was heard at Old Hall Drive, Ashton-in-Makerfield on Feb 18th. During March a further four locations recorded birds in song and in April their high-pitched, cyclical song which is often inaudible to many birders (particularly the more elderly amongst us) was much more widespread across the county. The first breeding was confirmed with young in the nest at Haigh Plantations on May 13th. A total of 26 tetrads and four additional sites recorded

confirmed breeding during the year but this apparent increase over previous years was clearly more to do with the marvellous effort of observers surveying for the final year of the atlas, rather than a true increase in breeding. This seemed to be proven with the BBS results which portrayed a fairly gloomy picture, recording a significant change for the worse with only seven squares (11%) this year compared to the 11 and nine squares in 2009 and 2010 respectively. The final breeding record of the year was on Aug 23rd with newly fledged juveniles in Larches between Ochre Flash and Bryn Marsh, Wigan Flashes.

BLUE TIT *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Abundant resident.

Early winter counts: the final Winter Atlas surveys during January and February produced some significant counts. They included the following from tetrads: - Clifton (a staggering 76 on Feb 12th), Hawkshaw (31), Heywood (37), Holcombe Brook (23), Irlam o'th' Heights (22), Nangreaves (48) Offerton Green (23), Pemberton (23), Ramsbottom (34), Romiley (20), Sale East (59), Salford University (42), Shawclough (37), Tottington (22) and Whitefield (59). Other notable numbers from individual sites in this period were of 26 at Ringley ETW on Jan 18th; 40 at Shell Pool NR on Jan 27th; 53 in Philips Park, Prestwich on Feb 12th; 30 in Redisher Woods on Feb 18th; 32 at Shell Pool NR on Feb 25th and 24 at Abney Hall, Cheadle on Mar 5th.

Breeding: BBS records for the year found this species in 58 squares (88%). This compares with 63 squares (94%) in 2010 and 61 squares (92%) in 2009. Its ubiquity in the recording area is manifested by the returns of breeding records during atlas surveys, with 131 tetrads providing confirmed breeding evidence, an additional 34 tetrads indicating either possible or probable breeding and a total of 71 territories at the Wigan Flashes alone. A breeding pair used the void above one observer's porch in Dukinfield Park, whilst at Ludworth Fish Ponds on Apr 3rd a bird attacked the wing mirror of the watcher's car "with some venom!" The highest recorded successful brood was of nine in Stiles Avenue, Marple on May 27th.

Post breeding/late winter: large flocks were noted from a Rochdale garden (with an estimated 20 during November) and the same number from Tyldesley on Dec 14th. At Shell Pool NR there were several flocks of 20+ from Aug 11th onwards, with the highest of 35 on Dec 11th.

GREAT TIT *Parus major*

Abundant resident.

Early winter counts: the greatest numbers were reported from Shell Pool NR with 40 on Jan 27th, 32 on Feb 25th and 25 on Mar 2nd. From the last of the Winter Atlas surveys there were counts of 32 at Ramsbottom, 22 at Whitefield, 20 at Sale East and 19 at Clifton, Holcombe Brook, Shawclough, and Westleigh.

Breeding: a pair nested in a terraced nesting box for House Sparrows at Carrington Moss and raised five young. Another nest site was found in a stone wall along side the brook at Astley Brook. The largest recorded number of fledged young was of seven, again at Stiles Avenue, Marple on May 20th. A late record was of two food begging youngsters at Harwood, Bolton on Jul 11th. This year's BBS produced records from 57 squares (86%). Previously the corresponding figures were of 61 (91%) in 2010 and 61 (92%) in 2009. A total of 124 tetrads confirmed breeding during the year and the Wigan Flashes alone produced 54 territories estimated from CBC type surveys carried out during the period April to June.

Post breeding/late winter: again the best counts were from Shell Pool NR during this period, with 20 on three dates and 40 on Dec 4th. Other flocks of note were 20 at Carrbrook on three dates between Jul 24th and 31st and 23 at Wigan Flashes Dec 20th.

COAL TIT *Periparus ater*

Common resident and winter visitor.

Early winter counts: during the final Winter Atlas counts there were significant numbers from tetrads at Dog Hill (eight), Heywood (seven), Holcombe Brook (six and seven), Redisher Woods (seven), Sale East (six) and Whitefield (seven).

Breeding: confirmed breeding records came from 63 tetrads in the final Breeding Atlas surveys. There were a varied and interesting number of locations noted including golf courses at Romiley, Didsbury and Altrincham; Christies and Alexandra Hospitals; Overdale Crematorium; and alongside the Manchester, Bolton and Bury Canal at Prestolee where at least four young were fledged. Sites included nesting in an "old overflow pipe on the side of a house" in Hindley Green where two young were fledged. A hole in a stone wall was used at Brookdale Clough, Clayton, whilst another pair was successful in a small hole in a stone wall "a few inches off the ground" at Brandlesholme. BBS returns found this species present in only 19 squares (29%). This represents a significant reduction from 24 squares (36%) in 2010 and 25 (38%) in 2009. Seven territories were estimated at the Wigan Flashes during the period April to June.

Post breeding/late winter: the only counts of note during this period were of seven at Chair Wood on Oct 1st; 10 at Burnt Edge, Horwich on Oct 7th; up to six were regular at a garden site in Royton during November; and six were in a Tyldesley garden on Dec 14th. There were many reports of one or two birds at other garden sites.

WILLOW TIT *Poecile montanus*

Uncommon resident, mostly in the south and west of the county.
BoCC Red List (BDp1, BDp2), UK BAP, GM BAP and RBBP species.

A total of 318 records for this species of conservation concern were submitted. This figure is well down on the total of 358 for 2010. As in the latter year the majority again related to areas in the west and south of the county, with sites recording multiple sightings during the year as follows: - Abram (on garden feeders at Warrington Road); Blackleach CP, Walkden; Carrington Moss; 'Chat Moss' (and all its constituents sites); Dover Basin; Elton Reservoir including Daisyfield SBI; Flixton (on garden feeders); Hope Carr NR; Pennington Flash; Pickley Green, Westleigh; Red Moss SSSI; Ringley ETW; Sale WP; Shell Pool NR; Wigan; and Wigan Flashes.

Early winter counts: of the 99 records received for this period those at four sites were away from the more usual areas and came from Elton Reservoir (two birds on four occasions during January), Trub (a single on Feb 12th), Outwood (a single on Feb 20th) and Agecroft (with two birds near the prison on Mar 27th). The remainder of the records were all from sites within the species' stronghold in the county and this period's total also comprised records from 36 Winter Atlas visits. Sightings included four at Shell Pool NR on Jan 13th and Feb 5th; six at Astley Moss on Jan 19th and six at Red Moss, Horwich on Jan 23rd. Birds were noted utilizing the feeding stations at Mersey Valley visitor centre and at Pennington Flash, the latter site where observers can obtain amongst the best views of this species anywhere in the UK.

Breeding: A total of 36 pairs were recorded (13 confirmed, 16 probable and seven possible) which represents a fall of nearly 50% compared to 2010. This is not an actual drop in population though as the 2010 figure was boosted by a tape luring survey carried out by Mark Champion of the Lancashire Wildlife Trust, primarily at sites in Wigan borough. The survey was not repeated in 2011. During the period March to June 2011 Willow Tit was recorded at 35 sites and in 13 additional atlas tetrads. Reported from five (8%) of BBS squares compared with four (6%) in 2010 and three (5%) in 2009, continuing the gradual increase noted last year. The national figures recorded only 33 squares (1%) in 2011 again stressing the county's importance

for this declining species. Early survey work on Wigan Flashes identified 11 potential territories, with birds either holding territories or actively nest building. Confirmed breeding was reported from nine tetrads in the breeding atlas surveys and four additional sites, all to the west or south west of the county. All but two related to parties of fledged young and were at the following locations: - Amberswood, Barton, Boothstown, Borsdane Wood, Chat Moss, Irlam Moss, Little Woolden Moss; Over Hulton, Pemberton, Shell Pool NR, Wigan Flashes (at least three locations), Winstanley and Worthington, During this period birds visited feeding stations in gardens at Abram (on many occasions) and Pickley Green, Westleigh.

Post breeding/late winter: counts of four birds came from Pennington Flash Sep 6th, Shell Pool NR on Sep 18th, Wigan Flashes on Oct 22nd and also Dec 17th, Sale Water Park on Nov 15th, Horrocks Flash on Dec 4th and Pearson's Flash on Dec 17th. Elsewhere, outside the main areas for this species there were just three records all from Elton Reservoir, with singles on Aug 2nd and 20th and two on Nov 6th.

SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis*

Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

BoCC Red List (BDp2, SPEC, BDMp1) and UK BAP species.

There were none of the usual very large Skylark gatherings which can often be found at selected locations during the early winter period with Gillibrands Farm, Westhoughton mustering the largest flock, reaching 100 strong at its peak on Jan 30th. The only other locations with numbers larger than 20 were 35 on Little Woolden Moss on Jan 1st (the largest count there for the period); 25 at Cooper Turning, near Aspull on Jan 3rd; 21 near Woodford Aerodrome on Jan 6th; and 29 at Barton Moss on Feb 1st.

Birds were early to start singing this year with the first reported songster on farmland by Pike Fold Golf Course on Jan 19th and though none were heard again until February, ten further sites resounded to this species' beautifully evocative song during that month. There were some excellent efforts to more comprehensively record the breeding status of this species from observers and the results were enlightening and perhaps a little hopeful for this Red Listed bird. The concerted effort confirmed breeding in 47 tetrads and in three additional sites, with probable and possible breeding (via territories established and singing birds respectively) at many others. Given that most tetrads harboured multiple pairs and that for many locations, double figure singing birds were encountered, it would be interesting to know the true population for this species and perhaps if observers could take the time to note individual numbers of possible/probable/confirmed breeding we might come that much closer to such a realisation.

Feeding flocks and visible migration during the last four months of the year were typically more widespread with the following locations recording figures of more than 30 (all feeding flocks unless otherwise stated): - *September:* 60 at Twelve Yards Road, Chat Moss on the 24th. *October:* 40 at Sandyforth former OCCS on the 1st; 68 flew over Highfield Moss on the 15th; 32 flew south west over Holcombe Moor on the 15th; 235 was a combination of two flocks on Little Woolden Moss on the 20th; 120 flew south over Pennington Flash in only one hour around midday on the 22nd; 120 at Bradley Lane, Standish on the 25th. *November:* 38 flew north west over Georges Lane, Horwich Moors on the 5th; Little Woolden Moss maintained good numbers with a maximum of 128 there on the 10th; 34 flew over Highfield Moss on the 12th; 32 flew south east in one flock over Georges Lane, Horwich Moors on the 30th. *December:* 60 at Shell Pool NR on the 4th; 45 in a roost at Cutacre OCCS on the 12th; 41 at Moss Lane, Astley Moss also on the 12th; 200 at Carrington Moss on the 18th, which were also reported from Shell Pool NR on the 31st; and 138 at Little Woolden Moss on the 22nd.

SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*

Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant.

BoCC Amber List species (SPEC).

The first arrival was at Scotman's Flash with a single on Mar 12th, rapidly followed by four at Elton Reservoir on the 13th, two at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 17th with 15 there on the 18th, and 20 at Pennington Flash also on the 18th. After this latter date a further 11 sites entertained this returning migrant with the peak count during March of 350 at Pennington Flash on the 26th. As expected, the arrival during April was to all points of the county and with some large numbers, the best of which were 2500 at Pennington Flash on the 7th with 3000 also there on the 11th, 500 at Rumworth Lodge on the 13th, 500 at Scotman's Flash on the 14th and 800 at Heaton Park Reservoir on the 26th.

Birds were back at breeding sites typically early and the current largest single colony in the county had 430 all newly dug nest holes by Apr 10th, increasing to 592 by Apr 29th. Unfortunately, due to changes in the availability of suitable nest locations at this site, this latter figure was to be its maximum and there was to be no repeat of the incredible 1320 nest holes found during 2010. Still, nearly 600 isn't bad! Other sites with confirmed breeding (nest holes numbers included in brackets where known) were along water courses at Cutacre OCCS; Cheadle Heath; Douglas Valley (6); Fairfield, Bury; Longden End; Mersey Vale County Park North; Morley's Sand Quarry (280); Pomona Dock; Radcliffe Ees; Reddish Vale; River Mersey at Banky Meadow; River Irk at Blackley; River Irwell at Charlestown (15); River Irwell at Cromwell Bridge (10); River Irwell at Prestolee New Bridge (3); River Irwell at Radcliffe Town Centre; River Roch at Heywood (12); River Roch at Queen's Park Lake, Heywood; Sale Water Park; and Shell Pool NR. The BBS saw a modest increase compared to the previous few years with seven squares (11%). Perhaps surprisingly for early August, on the 5th, two nests were still in use in drainage holes alongside the River Irk at Blackley.

Even whilst breeding was still in progress in our recording area during July, some large gatherings took place over county waters, with 100 at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 1st and again on the 11th, and 300 over Rumworth Lodge on the 20th (where an individual with a white tail was picked out) being the pick of the bunch. During August only Pennington Flash could muster any three figure flocks with a peak count of 200 on the 29th and overall as a county, numbers seemed to be low for the time of year. September witnessed the usual rapid clear out and only Pennington Flash again had any substantial gatherings with 500 there on the 6th easily the largest. Nine other sites bid farewell to this species for another year during the month, with 100 through south at Pennington Flash on the 18th, 11 at Lightshaw WTW on the 19th and one at Pennington Flash on the 23rd, the final records of 2011.

SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant.

BoCC Amber List species (SPEC).

Georges Lane on the Horwich Moors saw the first returning birds this year with two on Mar 25th but further March records were fewer than usual with only the following recorded; - one was at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 27th, with two there on the 29th; also on 29th, single birds were at both Blackleach and Elton Reservoirs, with the final record of the month via two at Rumworth Lodge on the 31st. April of course saw the expected main arrival and 17 double figure counts were obtained during the month but only one of these reached three figures (100 at Heaton Park Reservoir on the 26th). May numbers continued to rise and birds flooded in, resulting in 50 double figure counts and the following three figure counts: - 100 at Rumworth Lodge on the 8th, 150 at Heaton Park Reservoir on the 13th, 100 at Elton Reservoir on the 14th, 160 at Simister on the 14th and a tremendous 500 at Elton Reservoir on the 16th.

The first bird back on territory this year was on Apr 6th at Holden's Farm, Horwich Moor; clearly not wasting any time! With the final push for the atlas, confirmed breeding was very well observed this year, beginning on Apr 28th at Slackcote, Oldham and Mersey Valley Country Park and culminating with 114 tetrads in total plus eight additional sites recording it, which was a tremendous result. The 34 pairs which bred at Broadoak Farm, Sinderland Green was easily the highest single site output though. The BBS seemingly appeared to reflect this good breeding season too with 52 squares (79%) a very modest increase on both 2009 and 2010. The final breeding record of the year were at stables near Blackleach Reservoir where recently fledged young were seen on Aug 29th and recently fledged juveniles at Crompton Moor on Sep 3rd.

During the autumn the bulk of the significant Swallow records were made up from the ever increasing and fairly pioneering (in Greater Manchester at least) visible migration watches. However, feeding flocks over county waters and farmland in particular remained a key feature too and in *August* whilst there were 16 three figure counts during the month the largest flocks came via 300 at Pickley Green on the 19th, with 100 at Rumworth Lodge on the 20th increasing to 300 by the 22nd and again on the 26th. *September* managed 14 feeding flocks 100 or more strong with the spectacle of some really sizeable ones as follows: - 300 at Shell Pool NR on the 4th, 400 at Heaton Park Reservoir on the 6th, and a magnificent 1000 forced down over the water during bad weather also at the latter site on the 14th and 250 again at Shell Pool NR on the 18th. Only Shell Pool could muster any double figure flocks during *October*, with 30 on the 2nd and 50 on the 7th and thereafter records were considerably fewer, with only eight locations noting any Swallows during the remainder of the month. Six flew south over Elton Reservoir on the 19th and a single was at Shell Pool NR on the same date; three flew south over Burnt Edge, Horwich Moors on the 20th; and two were casually feeding as they headed south over Longshaw on the 25th. *November* saw its first record since 2008, with a single bird flying south over Scotman's Flash on the 4th, the final record of the year.

Visible migration watchers have observed the spectacle of this species often literally 'pouring' through county airspace on their way south for the past few years now but their efforts have become more focused as more is understood about this autumnal marvel. During the whole of the autumn 7042 passed through the airspace above the Horwich Moors alone. *August*: - Smithills Moor: oddly, migration during this month took on a slightly more northerly route at this location though this is a short duration phenomenon particular to this site alone and birds obviously move south at some point to get to Africa! 240 moved through N/NE on the 9th, 182 N/NE on the 12th, 114 NE on the 15th, 209 E/NE on the 14th, 122 E on the 17th and 270 E on the 25th. Besses o'th' Barn, Bury: 225 S on the 18th. Holcombe Moor: 211 SE on the 25th. Pennington Flash: 300 S on the 27th. *September*: - Smithills Moor: 270 E on the 1st, 4500 E/SE during the morning of the 15th included two flocks 1000 strong and 735 S on the 18th. Heaton Park Reservoir: 281 S on the 3rd, 150 S on the 11th, 1030 S on the 16th and 116 S on the 24th. Hollingworth Lake: 200 SE on the 15th. Pennington Flash: 1500 S on the 6th, 500 S on the 7th and 1000 S on the 18th. *October*: 414 heading south over Burnt Edge, Horwich Moors on the 1st was the only count of note during the month.

HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbicum*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant: declining?
BoCC Amber List species (SPEC, BDMp1, BDMp2).

Two birds circling over Longshaw, Billinge before heading north on Mar 22nd were the earliest this year but there were also two further March records with a single over Shell Pool NR on the 28th and nine at Cheadle Heath ETW on the 30th. April numbers built up rapidly from the first day in the month but only a single three figure count could be found, with 100 at the evidently favoured site of Heaton Park Reservoir on the 26th.

Though May managed to accumulate 16 double figure counts from 12 sites, once again there was only one which breached three figures with Heaton Park Reservoir serving up 140 on the 13th.

The first birds back on territory were on Apr 22nd at Bryn Gates Landfill and Platt Bridge with the first confirmed breeding taking place in Shaw, Oldham on May 12th. Yet again, concentrated atlas effort produced excellent breeding results and it is clear that somehow, once the atlas recording has ended, this effort must be continued in order for us to fully appreciate the status of this potentially declining species. 78 tetrads confirmed breeding this year, which even excluding additional individual sites, is the highest figure achieved during the survey which ran from 2008 to 2011. There were many colonies with multiple nest numbers but all bar one failed to exceed double figures, with a concerted effort by top 'atlaser' Bill Myerscough finding 20 nests on small side roads off Queens Road, Cheetham Hill. On the BBS 24 squares (36%) this year saw a notable increase on 2010 and a small increase on 2009 too; perhaps there is hope for this species yet? There were four locations with birds still in the nest during September, the latest of which was at Wardle on the 8th.

Return passage began with post-breeding flocks accumulating in the county, the largest of which during *July* were of 300 feeding over cut hay at Crime Lake, Failsworth on the 24th and 200 over Irlam Moss on the 31st. *August* saw only three large gatherings with 100 at Heaton Park Reservoir and 104 over Ringley ETW both on the 7th and 500 south through Pennington Flash on the 27th. *September* saw migration gain momentum and with it large flocks increase, with 13 three figure counts during the month but only three sites recording any consisting of 200 or more: - Heaton Park Reservoir: 205 on the 11th, 800 there during bad weather on the 14th and 300 on the 23rd; Pennington Flash: 500 on the 5th, 400 there on the 6th and 500 through south on the 7th; Shell Pool NR: 200 on the 15th. *October* delivered nine records from five sites during the month (Billinge Hill; Burnt Edge, Horwich Moors; Heaton Park Reservoir; Hollingworth Lake; Longshaw, Billinge) but only one, 17 over Longshaw on the 3rd, broke into double figures. The latest record of the year was over Heaton Park Reservoir, where a single bird flew SW on the 14th.

CETTI'S WARBLER *Cettia cetti*

Rare visitor.



2011 saw a most welcome return to the county report for this species after an absence in 2010. Recent history for this species in Greater Manchester is of our first ever county record only as recently as October 2007. Thereafter a limited number of records in the Wigan Flashes area followed (of possibly the same bird?) in both 2008 and 2009. A bird held territory in the early part of the 2008 breeding season in the Hawkley Reedbed but there was never any real suggestion that it attracted a mate. Almost a full two year gap had elapsed since December 2009 before one was heard singing, again in the Hawkley Reedbed, on Nov 3rd 2011 (K. Kelly, D. Broome *et al*). After that there were a small number of records of a singing bird at this same location and at a few other sites (thought to be the same wandering individual) in the Wigan Flashes through until Dec 22nd.

LONG-TAILED TIT *Aegithalos caudatus*

Common resident.

Early winter counts: the highest numbers reported during Winter Atlas surveys were from Whitefield (37) and Higher Broughton (36). Other significant numbers came from Salford University (28), Haydock Park (22), Dog Hill, Gorton and Pennington Flash (all 20) and Altrincham ETW, Lower Kersal and Ringley (all 18). Other noteworthy numbers during this period came from Ringley ETW with 20 on Jan 18th and 24 there on Feb 6th; and 20 at Pickley Green, Westleigh on Jan 6th and 8th.

Breeding: atlas surveys produced confirmed breeding records from 96 tetrads. Four nests under construction were found along the lane leading to the former Heywood ETW. Nest bushes included gorse at Horrocks Wood, Bolton where it was “right next to the footpath” and at Buckley Wood; with brambles in use at Starmount Lodges and Fitton Hill, Oldham. At Drinkwater Park a pair was involved in a vociferous dispute around their completed nest with a Wren, which was carrying nest material. Was it trying to “hijack” the nest? This years BBS recorded presence in 38 squares (58%), the same as the previous year, but much higher than 2009 (30/45%). The national figure for 2011 was 38%.

Post breeding/late winter: as in previous years there were a good number of large flocks recorded during this period, the highest count was of three flocks totalling 50 birds at Ringley ETW on Dec 17th. Wigan Flashes had a total of 39 on Oct 22nd with 30 at Etherow CP on Oct 15th and 28 at Astley Moss on Sep 26th. There were 26 at Red Moss on Sep 15th and 20 on Oct 15th; 25 at Pennington Flash on Aug 27th with 20 there on Nov 26th; and 25 at Shell Pool NR on Dec 27th and 20 there on Oct 9th and 13th. Other flocks of 20 birds were recorded from Hollingworth Lake on Sep 10th; on three dates from September to November at Pickley Green, Westleigh; Watergrove Reservoir on Oct 20th; and Heaton Park (on Nov 26th and Dec 7th).

WOOD WARBLER *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

Scarce summer visitor and passage migrant.

BoCC Red List (BDp1, SPEC) and UK BAP species.

There were just 16 records on the database for this scarce and elusive summer visitor. All records across Greater Manchester came between Apr 26th and May 24th and most records probably related to just a single bird reported by several observers and which was most often heard in song at Carr Wood, Bramhall and in the atlas tetrad for that particular site (SJ88X Bramhall) between Apr 26th and May 11th. Single birds singing in the adjacent atlas tetrads of SJ88Y Ladybrook on May 21st and SJ98D Bramhall Moor on May 24th might possibly have been the same single bird moving about locally, in a valiant but seemingly unsuccessful attempt to attract a mate? There were only two other records away from this area – one in Redisher Woods, Holcombe on May 4th and one singing in Borsdane Woods, Hindley on

May 8th. Etherow CP, possibly the one site in our recording area which in recent memory might have been regarded as a traditional breeding location, once again provided no records in 2011 and now hasn't done so for four of the last five years. Is this species still present there in the summer months? All records for this site and indeed for any location across Greater Manchester for this much loved but sadly declining migrant warbler will be very gratefully received.

CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita*

Fairly common summer visitor, uncommon winterer.

Early year records: single birds at Lomax Wife's Plantation on Feb 24th; in atlas tetrad SJ99B Reddish Vale on Feb 27th and one singing in a Littleborough garden on Mar 3rd might well have been overwintering birds or may just have been very early migrants? Nevertheless, the main spring influx appeared to commence on Mar 13th with single birds reported from Reddish Vale and Pickley Green and with two at Hope Carr NR, Leigh. Thereafter in March birds were reported from sites spread widely across our recording area, with many birds already in song. 36 sites and nine atlas tetrads recorded Chiffchaff in the second half of March, with the best counts of four singing at Horrocks Flash on 20th; five at Altrincham ETW on 21st; five at Elton Reservoir also on 21st; four at Pennington Flash on 22nd; six at Carrington Moss and Reddish Vale 25th; six in the Wigan Flashes 29th and five at Little Woolden Moss also on 29th. April saw the spread of birds and the increase in numbers continue with seven at Chorlton WP and Pennington Flash on 2nd; Horrocks Flash numbers were up to 10 on 3rd with nine at Pickley Green; 14 at Davenport Green on 7th; atlas tetrads SJ79K Carrington Moss and SD71X Holcombe Brook held nine and eight birds on 3rd and 10th respectively; eight were at Abram Flashes on 14th and seven at Davyhulme NR on 17th. In May, 12 singing birds were in the Mersey Valley on 1st and five at Alkrington Woods on 15th. Subsequently numbers diminished noticeably as birds either moved on or remembered why they had actually come here in the first place, as they settled down to the important business of going about their breeding duties!

Breeding and surveys: between April and June of this year, a concerted effort was made by a dedicated band of Lancashire Wildlife Trust volunteers to map the number of territories held by selected species (including several of the warblers) in the Wigan Flashes area. The total number of territories for each species is included in the appropriate section and for Chiffchaff there were considered to be 33. WBBS plots Douglas Valley and Hey Brook had excellent counts of 9/10 and 4/6 on early and late visits respectively. Nationally on the BBS in 2011 this species was recorded on more squares than was Willow Warbler – 2,141 as against 1,531. This species appears to be doing well regionally too, with the BBS for NW England showing a substantial and statistically significant increase of 182% for the period 1995 – 2010. On our local BBS, an excellent total of 44 plots (67%) reported this species in 2011, well up on the 2010 figures (32 plots/48%), which itself was a good increase on the 2009 figure (24 plots/36%). Squares with the best tallies on early/late visits included: - Amberswood (7/7), Boothstown East (4/5) and Carrington (6/3). The last summer of our local breeding birds atlas saw a fantastic combined observer effort and confirmed breeding was reported from a minimum of 56 GM atlas tetrads, plus a small number of additional sites. These confirmed records were spread over approximately a three and a half month time span, with the first report of an occupied nest in SD71B Eagley on Apr 15th and the last of fledged young in both SD81S Caldershaw and SD50M Pemberton on Jul 28th. It is interesting to note that at the time of our last atlas (BBGM) that Chiffchaff was noted as a confirmed breeding species in just seven tetrads. Estimates back then for our local breeding populations of Chiffchaff was of just 40 pairs and for Willow Warbler of 3,200 pairs. Given the general perception that this species has "done well" in recent years and Willow Warbler perhaps less so, it will be interesting to see if that large disparity in the numbers of breeding pairs will have been closed somewhat by the time we collate the data and produce our latest atlas publication?

Late year records: as the breeding season wound down there was to be just a few remaining noteworthy counts, with 17 in the Dovestones area on Jul 9th, 14 at Pennington Flash on Aug 11th; eight at Reddish Vale on Aug 21st and 12 at Little Woolden Moss on Aug 26th. After that, the number of records and totals generally diminished as September progressed, as birds started their migration and just small single figure numbers lingered into the first two-thirds of October, with the very last bird of the year reported at Hollingworth Lake on Oct 20th.

WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Abundant summer visitor.

BoCC Amber List species (BDMp1, BDMp2).

A single bird heard singing at Elton Reservoir on Mar 25th was the first of the year and arrived just a day earlier than its counterpart in 2010. However, this bird was to be over one week ahead of the next records, when the main influx commenced on Apr 2nd, with birds reported from a wide range of sites and atlas tetrads from across our recording area. Locations reporting this species on that date included: - Abram Flashes SSSI; Chorlton WP; Mossley; Pickley Green; Wilderswood, Horwich; SD81D Shuttleworth; SJ69P Pennington Flash East and SJ88D Newall Green. As migrants arrived in numbers in the last two-thirds of April and into May and males burst into song to advertise their availability to impressionable females, then a number of excellent counts were received, some made up entirely of singing males. Selected records were as follows: - 27 in atlas tetrad SJ79E Astley Moss East on Apr 13th, increasing to 31 on May 9th; 31 at Abram Flashes SSSI on Apr 14th; 28 at Watergrove Reservoir on Apr 16th; 35 at Barlow's Farm, Bickershaw on Apr 20th; 20 in SD71S Hawkshaw on Apr 22nd; 21 at Red Moss SSSI, Horwich on Apr 26th, 23 at Elton Reservoir and environs on Apr 29th and 17 males were still in song in the Wigan Flashes on May 19th.

Breeding and surveys: where suitable habitat exists this species can occur at high density, for example the Wigan Flashes was assessed as having 187 territories in the early part of the breeding season, with Horrocks Flash, Pearson's Flash and Turner's Flash all contributing a minimum of 40 territories each. Willow Warbler was detected on 43 squares (65%) on our local BBS, a figure broadly in line with that of the last two years. Plots recording a double-figure count on either visit included:- Abram; Amberswood; Boothstown East and Shuttleworth, Brushes and Hartshead Green did even better by providing double-figure counts on both the early and on the late visits, as did the Hey Brook WBBS plot. BBS data for the English population shows an increase of 11% for the year 2010 – 2011. However, the longer term trends for this species across the separate English regions are mixed, with all regions to the south of our recording area showing substantial and statistically significant declines. Populations in the northern English regions have generally fared better and the Willow Warbler population for the North-West delivered a healthy 22% increase for the years 1995 – 2010, a gain noted as being more than any other English region during this period. Final year atlas data revealed a truly excellent set of results and this was a just reward for the many local birders who recorded and reported their findings. Breeding was confirmed at a small number of sites and also at a magnificent total of 71 atlas tetrads across large swathes of Greater Manchester. The earliest confirmed records were of adults carrying food at Altrincham ETW on May 14th and of a nest with young at Little Woolden Moss on the following day and the latest of fledged young seen in tetrad SD91F Newhey on Aug 1st.

Despite the increased numbers anticipated in the post-breeding period one might expect that its relative silence at this time of year could reduce the detectability of this species. However, some decent counts were received and these included: - 15 at Highfield Moss on Jul 9th; 22 at George's Lane, Horwich on Jul 15th, increasing to 35 on Aug 5th. In August - 20 were at Hope Carr NR, Leigh on 4th; 20 at Elton Reservoir and environs on 6th; 20 at Cadishead Wood on 11th; 35 at Higher Meadows, Horwich on 26th and the last double-figure count of the year of 15 at Hollingworth Lake on 30th. There were just 19 records for September, 13 of which

came in the first week and the very last sighting of the year was of a single bird at Bickershaw Rucks on 26th.

BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla*

Common summer visitor; uncommon but increasing winterer.

Early winter period: despite acquiring a bit of an unwanted reputation as a “bird table bully” one imagines that single Blackcaps seen between Jan 1st and Mar 6th will have been more than welcome guests in several Greater Manchester gardens on those short and at times gloomy winter days! Gardens in Ashton-on-Mersey; Billinge; Davyhulme; Hale Barns; Haughton Dale; Heaton Chapel ; Heaton Norris; Hindley Green; Littleborough; Romiley; Sale and Walkden (feeding on the rather exotic diet of blackberries in suet!) all reported wintering birds during this period. Additional records, again all of single birds, came from the following winter atlas tetrads:- SD71K Brightmet North; SD81B Walmersley; SJ78Y Well Green; SJ79Y Trafford Park; SJ88I Woodhouse Park; SJ89J Salford University; SJ89L Withington; SJ89V Stockport Centre and SJ89W Heaton Chapel. It seems likely that at least some of these records will also possibly relate to birds observed in gardens?

Counts: it's always difficult to hazard a guess as to the first migrant for this species but a single bird singing at Priory Gardens, Sale on Mar 19th seems a possible candidate. However with just five further records of single birds in the remaining days of March it's certainly a challenge to separate wintering birds from spring migrants. Early April saw a similar pattern to the 2010 records emerging, with a quite noticeable influx in the first week of the month, including many records of more than one bird and multiple songsters at sites now being widely reported. April and the first half of May delivered the highest counts of the year including:- seven at Davenport Green Apr 7th; 11 at Carrington Moss on Apr 9th; 10 in tetrad SJ89B Sale WP also on Apr 9th; 13 at Ivy Green LNR on Apr 11th; 11 in the Abram Flashes area on Apr 14th; 10 at Ringley ETW on Apr 17th, increasing to 20 on May 14th; 10 at Pennington Flash Apr 19th and 12 in the Mersey Valley on May 1st, with 23 there on Jul 3rd. The number of records received for this species tailed off quite steeply after July, with just 18 records logged in August, 15 in September and only 10 for October. Nine birds were at both Ringley ETW and Pennington Flash on 3rd and 7th September respectively. The last bird remaining from the summer contingent was of a female at Red Moss North on Oct 26th. This species diet is thought to switch from predominantly insects in the breeding season to fruit in late summer, autumn and during the winter months. Observers at Pennington Flash on Sep 24th and in Marple on Oct 15th, watched as birds tucked into juicy, sugar rich elderberries, possibly attempting to “pile on the pounds” (well at least a few grams anyway!) before their onward journeys?

Breeding and surveys: 46 squares (70%) were occupied on our local BBS this year, a small increase on the 2010 figure and just shy of the highest ever percentage of 73% achieved in 2005. The top performing squares with counts on early/late visits were: - Amerswood 9/6; Clifton 8/11; Haigh CP 8/6; Hartshead Green 3/7 and Ringway 4/6. The larger transects covered on the WBBS produced important counts at Douglas Valley of 8/5; Hey Brook 8/12 and Rochdale Canal 6/6. Across the whole of the United Kingdom, Blackcap has been one of the more notable BBS success stories in recent years, increasing by 102% for the period 1995 – 2010. It's pleasing to note that North-West England fared slightly better than the national average, with an increase of 139% for the same period. 85 territories were identified at the Wigan Flashes alone. Atlas results added further to the general feelgood factor surrounding this species, with breeding confirmed in an excellent total of 76 tetrads in Greater Manchester. The earliest records were of fledged young seen in tetrads SD60G Hindley Green on May 12th and SD90B Hollinwood on the following day. The last was of a large family gathering, including five young, seen at Shell Pool NR on Aug 7th. Approximately one-third of confirmed breeding records were of sightings of adults carrying food and two-thirds of recently fledged, dependent young.

Late winter period: a male in a Davyhulme garden on Dec 22nd was the only likely candidate as a wintering bird in the latter part of 2011. This single record contrasted quite starkly with the corresponding period in 2010, when many more birds were present.

GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin*

Uncommon summer visitor.

Now is that a Garden Warbler or is it a Blackcap singly richly and loudly, whilst remaining well hidden amongst that area of woodland edge scrub? It's a good job that many Greater Manchester birders can tell the subtle difference between the two, as the 2011 database would be much thinner than the already slight total of 93 records, if lacking those 42 records reporting birds in song. Most database records, as might be expected for this uncommon and unobtrusive warbler were of single birds, with just eight records of two or more birds. Interestingly, the first record of the year was of two in atlas tetrad SJ89B Sale WP on Apr 9th. This sighting was ten days earlier than the corresponding 2010 record and only two days later than the earliest ever Garden Warbler in Greater Manchester, recorded on 7th April 1998. However this year's earliest record was a good week ahead of the next reported bird, when one was singing at Red Moss Flood Pools, Horwich on Apr 17th. Single birds, some in song, were recorded at the following sites/atlas tetrads in the remaining days of April:- Brushes Valley, near Stalybridge; Coal Brow, Horwich; Carrington Moss; Davenport Green; Ludworth Moor; Pickley Green; Ridgmont, Horwich; Romiley Golf Club; Wilderswood, Horwich and SJ69Y Bedford Moss. An additional 13 tetrads and 17 sites (with possibly some overlap) reported this species in May. Three were singing at Pennington Flash on May 1st and two at Lightshaw Flash on May 8th. Another five tetrads and four further sites recorded this species in June. There were just nine records for July, four for August and three for September. Three birds on autumn passage were reported at Withens Reservoir on Aug 25th. September saw single birds reported from Elton Reservoir and Pennington Flash in the first week and the very last bird of the year was at Red Moss SSSI, Horwich on 15th.

Breeding and surveys: this skulking species is notoriously difficult to monitor whilst breeding, so a total of 11 sites/tetrads with probable breeding was an excellent achievement. Most of these probable records were of birds reported as holding territory and five territories were assessed as being held in the Wigan Flashes on May 19th, when five birds were heard in song on a full site count. Confirmed breeding came from an excellent total of three locations – in atlas tetrads SJ88D Newall Green on May 25th; SD70K Worsley on Jun 30th and from Banky Meadow on Aug 17th. Garden Warbler was recorded on just three BBS squares, down from four squares in 2010 and five in 2009. Single birds were at Romiley NE and Top Lock on the early visit and at Brushes on the late visit. WBBS Douglas Valley also detected a single bird on the late visit. On the BBS in England for the period 1995 – 2010 this species has shown a statistically significant decline of 16%. It's interesting to contrast the recent fortunes of the earlier mentioned Blackcap with that of Garden Warbler. Studies have suggested that there is some competition for territories with Blackcaps, which generally arrive a little earlier, although there is no evidence to suggest this determines the relative numbers of each species at a national level. Perhaps more pertinently, recent studies have looked at the large-scale impacts of the growing deer population and its browsing activities on our woodland birds. Garden Warbler is one of the species mentioned as experiencing “especially pronounced negative effects” as a result of deer browsing. Whilst these studies do not suggest that deer is the only factor driving some species declines it does suggest that deer abundance may be affecting some species on far larger scales than previously appreciated. Then again, if these two species are actually sometimes competing for the same territories and deer are a factor, why then has one seemingly prospered whilst the other has not?

LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca*

Uncommon summer visitor.

At the time of our first national breeding birds' atlas (1968 – 1972), the population of the Lesser Whitethroat in Greater Manchester was bordering the north-western edge of its breeding distribution in the United Kingdom. Despite the second atlas (1988 – 1991) showing some expansion northwards nationally and with the publication of BirdAtlas 2007- 2011 imminent and any news it may contain on any gains or losses eagerly anticipated, this is certainly still an uncommon species in our recording area. With around 100 records on the Greater Manchester database this year and birds reported from a total of only 61 sites and atlas tetrads. The first of the spring was a singing male at Newall Green on Apr 7th and thus became our earliest ever spring arrival by three days. Other songsters reported in the second half of April came from sites at:- Audenshaw Reservoirs; Boothstown; Elton Reservoir; Gillibrands Farm, Daisy Hill; Holly Farm, Torkington; Mill Brow, Stockport; Pennington Flash; Reddish Vale and from atlas tetrads SD70B Cleworth; SJ79E Astley Moss East; SJ79R Ashton-on-Mersey; SJ88C Etrop Green and SJ99G Houghton Dale. 24 and then six new sites/tetrads reported the presence of Lesser Whitethroat in May and June respectively. As the breeding season came to a close the number of records received diminished, with just seven in July, five in August and four in September. In this latter month, single birds were at Pickley Green on 7th and 10th, at Bredbury on 16th and the last of the year at Lower Bredbury on 26th.

Breeding and surveys: nationally on the BBS this species has remained largely unchanged for the period 1995 – 2010. Locally it was recorded on five squares this year, exactly the same number as in 2010. Boothstown West logged four on the late visit; Haigh CP - one on the early visit; Lane Head - two on the late visit; Park Bridge – one on the late visit and Ringway registered two on the early and three on the late visit. Hey Brook WBBS also reported single birds on both visits. Atlas results for 2011 showed this species occupying exactly 30 tetrads, two more than the total for the whole of the recording period for BBGM. Probable breeding was reported from 10 of this total of 30 tetrads, plus one additional site. The vast majority, but certainly not all of these probable records came from the south and the west of our recording area. Most of these records were of Lesser Whitethroats considered to be holding territory. Confirmed breeding came from a respectable total of three atlas tetrads: - SD50Y Haigh Plantations; SJ79K Carrington Moss and SJ88C Etrop Green.

WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis*

Common summer visitor.

BoCC Amber List species (BDMp2).

The Whitethroat stands out as possibly the most visible of species from amongst the generally shy and retiring warbler family. The quaint old colloquial name of the “singing skyrocket” is a quite brilliant and apt description of the males noticeable display behaviour, observed after this species arrival in numbers, usually sometime during the second half of April. The first of the year was a singing male in tetrad SD71R Tottington on Apr 9th. Numbers built quickly and during the remaining days of the month noteworthy counts were: - 10 in tetrad SJ79A Partington on 17th; 30 at Carrington Moss also on 17th, with 20 counted there on 29th; 15 in SJ79R Ashton-on-Mersey on 19th; 10 at Adswold Tip on 20th; 14 at Barlow's Farm, Bickershaw on 20th; 10 at Barlow Tip, Chorlton WP on 24th; 12 at Red Moss SSSI, Horwich on 26th and 12 at Elton Reservoir and environs on 29th. Other selected double-figure counts throughout the summer included: - 19 in the Mersey Valley on May 1st; 13 at Shell Pool NR on May 2nd; 11 in SJ78E Moss Brow on May 7th; 15 at Ringley ETW on May 14th; 16 in SJ79F Sinderland Green on May 18th; 10 in SJ79K Carrington Moss on Jun 12th; 10 in SD60W Shakerley on Jun 24th and 11 at Hope Carr NR on Aug 4th. Modest numbers remained into August and were recorded at a total of 24 sites. Just 14 sites reported birds in September, with the last of a single

bird at Heywood on 26th. Mapping of Whitethroat territories in the Wigan Flashes suggested a grand total of 35 territories, with 11 of those at Pearson's Flash.

Breeding and surveys: prior to 1969 this species was amongst, if not actually the commonest, of our English warblers. The alarming fall of 77% in breeding numbers which was gleaned from survey data in the summer of 1969 is well documented and resulted from low survival rates after failure of the rains in their wintering grounds in the Western Sahel. Numbers have effected a degree of slow and variable recovery since then but on the BBS in England for the period 1994 – 2011 it was still recorded on less squares (1,120) than both Blackcap (1,278) and Chiffchaff (1,179). Pleasingly, the BBS report for 2011 suggests that nationally it "was a good year for arid-zone migrants, including....Whitethroat, Sedge Warbler....all of which increased significantly between 2010 and 2011, possibly due to high levels of rainfall in the Sahel region of Africa." Data shows statistically significant increases of 35% for the years 2010 – 2011 and 43% for the longer period 1995 – 2010. So how did our local breeding birds fare in 2011? It was recorded on 31 (47%) of BBS plots but in truth these figures were not greatly different from those achieved in the preceding four years. The best performing squares, with counts on early/late visits were: - Astley Moss East (16/13); Boothstown West (7/13); Carrington (11/3) and Clifton (11/8). WBBS Hey Brook bettered all of the above with counts of 28/16. Greater Manchester's atlas birders did our area proud in 2011, recording a whopping total of 86 tetrads with confirmed breeding this year. For comparison there was a total of just 47 for the whole of the period of BBGM. Mention was made in the 2010 report as to this species extending its range across the north and east of our recording area. Further evidence came this summer with breeding confirmed in seven SD81 tetrads, a 10 square kilometre area comprising parts of west Rochdale & east Bury, where it wasn't even noted as even being present at the time of BBGM! Also SD90, largely Oldham Borough and a small part of Tameside, had three tetrads this year with confirmed breeding, with none achieved at the time of BBGM. Breeding was also confirmed at a handful of additional sites. This species can now turn up almost anywhere with suitable habitat to be found, as evidenced by an adult feeding young by the River Irwell, adjacent to a Manchester City Centre car park on Jun 7th.

GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella naevia*

Uncommon summer visitor.

BoCC Red List (BDp1, BDp2) and UK BAP species.

Counts: the first of the year was at Davenport Green on Apr 7th, equalling last year's record which was the earliest ever recorded. Reeling birds had increased to an incredible seven in this area by 19th. The next birds were single songsters at three locations: - Altrincham ETW, Dover Basin and Elton Reservoir on Apr 10th. In the publication "Birds Britannica" it is mentioned that the song (or "reeling" as it is described for this species) is at a frequency that is "often beyond the capacity of older human ears". Luckily in 2011 we had some younger ears (and some older ones too!) that managed to locate and then report reeling birds and without which we would have much less knowledge as to the sites that this inconspicuous warbler occupies locally. Song was reported between Apr 7th and Jul 31st and approximately half of all singing records were logged in the last two-thirds of April, possibly as birds duly arrived in numbers, advertised their availability before some paired up and remained locally, whilst others inevitably moved on. Other locations where notable counts were reported in April were :- three in SD81H Ashworth Moor Reservoir on 16th; six at Abram Flashes on 18th; nine at Adswold Tip on 20th; six at Cutacre OCCS on 21st; four at Red Moss SSSI, Horwich on 23rd and four at Carrington Moss on 29th. Birds were logged at a total of 58 sites and atlas tetrads (some small overlap) in April. 51 additional locations registered the presence of Grasshopper Warbler between May and August. One heard reeling from a Milnrow garden on Jul 21st was an unusual record and would be a welcome addition to many a Greater Manchester birders garden list! As the breeding season drew to a close, birds left the area quickly and none

were recorded after the end of August. Indeed there were only eight records for that month, all bar a sighting of seven (six adults and one juvenile) at Cutacre OCCS on Aug 4th, were of single birds. Some of the last sightings of the year were of likely migrants on the move seen at some of our moorland sites, with birds at Smithills Moor on Aug 14th, at Makinson Moor on Aug 22nd and the very last of the year at Ludworth Moor on Aug 31st.

Breeding and surveys: nine local BBS squares detected this species this year, matching the all-time high figure achieved in 2010. Singles unless otherwise stated were at Haigh CP; Higher Fold; Ludworth Moor (two); Mossley; Rooley Moor; Sharples and Top Lock (three) on the early visit only. Single birds were at Lostock West on the late visit and at Worthington on both visits. Additionally a single bird was present on the early visit on the Hey Brook WBBS plot. As mentioned earlier does the preponderance of early season records just suggest that these birds are transient migrants? Alternatively could it be that birds are not detected on a later visit as the male, as has been suggested in some literature, stops reeling whilst the incubation duties are shared or the pair feed any young? Possibly questions without a definitive answer! 2011 was a good year for the Grasshopper Warbler on the BBS in England (admittedly from just a small sample size), registering a statistically significant increase of 74%, although for the longer term period 1995 – 2010 it was almost unchanged. This species can have an extended breeding season and a quite fantastic set of results from the last year of our local breeding birds' atlas project saw breeding confirmed at what seems likely to have been an unprecedented total of six locations (four atlas tetrads, plus two additional sites) between May 16th and Aug 19th. Those locations coming up trumps were tetrads:- SD60W Shakerley; SD60X Over Hulton; SD90K Hurst; and SD91E Watergrove. The two successful sites were; the Dovestones area and Pickley Green. Just to add a bit of further information and put some perspective on these results it is interesting to look back to our last local atlas (BBGM) and compare the data. Two of the above tetrads (Hurst and Watergrove) and one of the sites (Dovestones) are in the east of our recording area, where this species was largely absent at the time of BBGM. Additionally, in 2011 alone Grasshopper Warbler occupied exactly 50 atlas tetrads and breeding was confirmed, as previously mentioned in six. BBGM reported only 34 occupied tetrads and just four with confirmed breeding during the years 1979 – 1983. Unfortunately, it seems likely that with atlas surveys now complete that this species will once again become less noticed as a confirmed breeder but it just goes to show what can be found with a bit of skill, effort and patience, when coupled with a good pair of eyes...and ears!

SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* Fairly common summer visitor.

Counts: the earliest records this year all came from the western half of our recording area on Apr 10th, when three were singing at Elton Reservoir and single songsters were at Altrincham ETW and in atlas tetrad SJ79E Astley Moss. The earliest records further east arrived a fraction later in the month, with single singing birds at Kingsway Business Park, Rochdale on 16th; Clegg Hall Marsh, Smithy Bridge on 22nd and at Watergrove Reservoir on 28th. 14 sites, in addition to those already mentioned, reported this species in the last two-thirds of April. The highest counts in that month were as follows:- 12 at Red Moss SSSI, Horwich on 13th; 10 at Barlow's Farm, Bickershaw on 20th; four in the Abram Flashes on 21st; three in tetrad SJ79K Astley Moss East on 28th; four at Carrington Moss on 29th and 12 at Elton Reservoir and environs also on 29th. The month of May saw an additional 20 or so sites registering the presence of this species. The best totals at these new sites this month included:- six in tetrad SD70K Worsley on 5th; three in SJ69E Lightshaw on 8th; six at Ringley ETW on 14th and three at Shell Pool NR on 30th. As the breeding season got into its full swing just a few other noteworthy counts were received: - three at Altrincham ETW on Jun 24th, with four there on Jul 10th; three at Sale WP on Jul 10th and four at Rumworth Lodge on Jul 19th. After a decent number of records were received in July, numbers tailed off sharply in August, with just two

records: - one at Clegg Hall Marsh, Smithy Bridge on 1st; an excellent 12 at Elton Reservoir and environs on 6th, the last Sedge Warblers of the year and on what was to be a rather early latest departure date.

Breeding and surveys: territory mapping in the Wigan Flashes area from April until June assessed 10 Sedge Warbler territories, five of which were in the Hawkley Reedbed. The 2010 county report made reference to this species' population fluctuations linked to rainfall patterns on their wintering grounds. Just to highlight a little further the considerable influence this can have on the numbers of birds returning to our shores to breed can be gained from the following information taken from the publication "Birds in England". It revealed the quite alarming statistic that "survival rates of less than 4% were recorded between the 1983 and 1984 breeding seasons, coinciding with severe African drought. By contrast, survival rates were in excess of 30% during a period of heavy rains between 1974 and 1976." In England on the BBS this species achieved a statistically significant increase of 22% for the period 2010 - 2011. In the earlier section on Whitethroat reference was made to the reason why this was considered to be a good year for species such as it and for Sedge Warbler too. Locally, there wasn't a great deal of change to recent years' figures. Recorded on five squares, with counts on early/late visits as follows: - Amberswood (-/1); Astley Moss East (3/3); Haigh CP (2/-); Lostock West (3/2) and Trub (1/-). The linear waterways surveys of the WBBS revealed counts of: - Douglas Valley (-/2); Hey Brook (18/3) and Rochdale Canal (-/1). Confirmed breeding was noted at a total of 13 locations (eight atlas tetrads and five sites), compared to 12 locations (three tetrads and nine sites) in 2010. Successful tetrads included:- SD50S Newtown; SD50T Gidlow; SD50Y Haigh Plantations; SD60A Abram Flashes; SD60J Hilton House; SD81Q Hopwood; SJ69Z Astley Moss; and SJ79K Carrington Moss. Those additional sites were: - Hawkley Reedbed; Red Moss SSSI, Horwich; Rumworth Lodge; Scotman's Flash and the Sinderland Brook at Woodcote Road.

REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Fairly common summer visitor.

Counts: April 10th proved to be a popular day for migrant warblers in Greater Manchester with Sedge Warbler and now Reed Warbler putting in their first appearances of the year on this date, when two were found at Dover Basin and a single bird was at Jack Lane, Flixton. In the remaining days of April this species was logged at eight additional sites and six atlas tetrads, once again possibly allowing for some small degree of duplication in the records. The most notable counts during this period were of four at Barlow's Farm, Bickershaw on 20th; three in the Abram Flashes on 21st and five at Lightshaw Flash on 30th. One at Chorlton WP on Apr 24th was observed fighting with a House Sparrow! New locations reporting this species in May included: - Astley Moss East Pools; Red Moss SSSI, Horwich; Shell Pool NR (first of the year there on 19th); Sinderland Brook at Woodcote Road (a first record for this area) and atlas tetrads SD60Y Hunger Hill and SD70K Worsley. June saw further reports from locations already revealed as holding birds in April and May but new sites included: - one at Blackleach Reservoir, Walkden on 1st; one was in a small area of *Phragmites* on Buckley Pond, Rochdale on 2nd and 5th and this was an unusual occurrence of this species in the east of our recording area; one was at Altrincham ETW on 24th. There were just ten records from July, the best being of 11 in tetrad SD60B Amberswood on 2nd. August provided even less records (only eight), five of which came from just a single site (Pennington Flash), when the best count there was of three on 5th. Three were also at Hope Carr NR on 4th. There were just two records from September – a single bird at Doffcocker Lodge on 4th and the very last sighting of the year was a good few days later, with a single bird, seen in the rather unusual location of the garden of the kennels on George's Lane, Horwich on 15th.

Breeding and surveys: in this species' stronghold of the Wigan Flashes area, surveys undertaken from April to June registered an excellent total of 413 Reed Warbler territories. More precise

locations within this larger geographical area showed that those sites holding double-figure territory counts were:- 199 at Horrocks Flash; 66 at Bryn Marsh; 65 at Turner's Flash; 48 at Pearson's Flash and 14 in the Hawkley Reedbed. Those holding ten or less territories and "mopping up" the 21 not yet accounted for were: - Ochre Flash (eight); Scotman's Flash (nine) and Westwood Flash (four). It is generally understood that the above mentioned Sedge Warbler is a little less particular in its choice of habitat for nesting sites than the Reed Warbler. However, given both of these species liking for reed swamp (albeit the Sedge Warbler favouring the drier parts of any reedbed) and given the availability of this habitat in the Wigan Flashes then perhaps it is a little surprising to see such a large difference in the numbers of assessed territories there - 10 for Sedge Warbler, as compared to 413 for Reed Warbler. Or perhaps not? It seems likely that in some areas there will be interspecific competition between these two warblers and is it possible that in such optimal habitat that the marginally larger and heavier Reed Warbler is the dominant species? Or are there several other subtle factors involved that result in this huge difference in numbers? Looking back a decade or so and the 2001 county report shows not greatly dissimilar proportions - 12 Sedge Warbler territories, as against 453 Reed Warbler territories - maybe it always was and always will be like this? Questions and more questions! The BBS is not the best indicator for species such as Reed Warbler which have a "clumped" distribution. However, it was logged on two local BBS squares - Amberswood (10/8) and Lostock West (-/1). Hey Brook WBBS detected 8/7 on early/late visits. Breeding was confirmed in eight local atlas tetrads:- SD50X Wigan Centre; SD60B Amberswood; SD60C Hindley; SD60T Rumworth; SJ69E Lightshaw; SJ69J Pennington Flash West; SJ79N Barton and SJ89B Sale WP. Breeding was confirmed at all of the 10 specific sites monitored in the Wigan Flashes. Breeding was not proven at Elton Reservoir and environs this year, despite two singing in The Dip on Apr 24th and birds being logged in the area in both May and June too.

WAXWING *Bombycilla garrulus* Irregular winter visitor.

The influx of 2010 continued into the New Year, with the majority of early records coming from the Stockport area. Birds were present from Jan 1st until the last record from this area on Apr 8th and sightings came from Stockport town centre and nearby Heaton Chapel/Heaton Norris with birds obviously moving between sites in the area. The peak count of 180 at Heaton Moor on Feb 5th was also to be the highest count at any site in the county during the year. Although the total number of birds had reduced significantly, a flock of 100 birds was recorded at Heaton Chapel on Apr 8th. Nearby Woodley Precinct, another of the traditional sites, held a maximum of 57 birds on Jan 2nd. Sightings from the Ashton-under-Lyne/Dukinfield area between Jan 10th and Feb 19th peaked with 90 birds in Bow Street, Dukinfield on Jan 30th. Given their close proximity, these sightings could relate to the same birds that were seen earlier in the month at Woodley Precinct. Records came from the Trafford Park area between Jan 7th and 23rd, with a peak count of 80 birds on the 23rd, before relocating to another area. Cox Green Quarry, Egerton had a maximum count of 35 on Jan 2nd and these birds were present in varying numbers until Feb 10th. Birds were present at Stocks Park, Horwich between Mar 24th and 28th with a high count of 91 birds on 25th. Single birds were seen flying south-east over Smithills Moor, Horwich on Mar 1st and east over Higher Meadows, Horwich on Mar 31st, with 25 birds seen flying over Smithills Moor, Horwich on Apr 1st. Given the easterly direction, these birds had probably started their migration back to their breeding grounds? Flyover birds were also seen at Chorlton Water Park on Jan 10th, with 30 birds flying east and again on Jan 14th with 25 flying east, followed by a further eight. 40 birds were feeding on Manchester Road, Chorlton on Feb 9th.

Other notable flocks recorded were 120 birds at Ashton on Mersey and 100 at Crompton Way, Bolton on Jan 17th with 88 nearby on Wentbridge Road on Jan 23rd, 81 in Whalley Range on

Feb 1st, 115 in Asda's car park, Chadderton on Feb 7th, 100 at Rusholme on Feb 9th, 66 in Timperley on Feb 15th and 75 birds at Billinge Higher End on Feb 19th. 12 birds were present at Salmon Fields, Royton on Jan 3rd and a single bird was found dead on Ashton Road, Oldham on Mar 15th, possibly due to a bus or bus shelter strike. The bird was noted as in excellent condition and was taken to The Manchester Museum. 16 were present at the Co-op in Milnrow on Jan 8th, with 40 seen nearby on the Elizabethan Way on Feb 1st. 44 were feeding on cotoneaster berries in Truro Close, Bury on Jan 22nd and 20 were at Elton on Jan 24th. On Feb 17th, 50 were present at Boggart Hole Clough feeding on tree buds and fly-catching. 18 were also feeding on buds at Pickley Green on Apr 4th. In total, over 230 individuals were still present in the county into April, with the last record on the 18th, when 15 birds were seen in Rochdale Town Centre.

The only late winter record came from the Horwich Moors, with a single bird flying southwest over Burnt Edge on Nov 30th.

NUTHATCH *Sitta europaea*

Fairly common resident in suitable habitat; increasing.

Early winter: the continuing spread was evidenced by records from 50 tetrads in the Winter Atlas surveys for this period. The highest number to be recorded was of eight at Vernon Park Jan 22nd. Six individuals were noted from Smithills Hall Jan 9th; Matley Feb 8th; Borsdane Wood, Hindley Feb 12th and from the River Goyt at Offerton Mar 7th. There were five birds at Offerton Green Jan 2nd; Bradshaw Brook Jan 30th; Haydock Park Feb 8th; Dunham Massey Feb 22nd; Worsley Woods Mar 6th and Abney Hall, Cheadle Mar 12th. These numbers reflect this species apparent liking for parkland.

Breeding: increased colonisation is evident from BBS returns with 17 squares (26%) recording this species. This is despite the downturn the previous year (nine squares/13%) compared with 11 in 2009 (16%). The national figure was 22%. Confirmed breeding was found in 49 tetrads during atlas surveys and included two pairs each at Boggart Hole Clough and Smithills Hall CP. There were early signs of territorial behaviour at Starling, Bury when a pair chased off prospecting tits from an old woodpecker hole on Feb 22nd and with a pair taking in leaves to a nest hole used the previous year at Gingham Brow Mar 27th. Two family parties were seen at Gristlehurst Woods on Jun 9th. Fledged young were seen in the grounds of Christies Hospital on Jun 16th. Finally two birds were seen at Nutter's Restaurant, Wolstenholme, Rochdale on Jul 21st. It is not known whether they were feeding there or just passing by!

Post breeding: four were seen in Haigh Upper Plantations on Aug 23rd but thereafter only 35 scattered records were received up to the end of the year. The highest numbers were eight at Etherow CP on Oct 15th. With the exception of three at Daisy Nook CP on Sep 18th all other reports were of one or two birds, although one at Wigan Flashes on Oct 21st, where this species is rare, was the first for a regular observer there.

TREECREEPER *Certhia familiaris*

Fairly common resident, often overlooked.

A total of 330 records were submitted for this unobtrusive species.

Early winter/early spring: the last Winter Atlas survey in the first two months produced sightings in 39 tetrads, all of one or two birds. The only number above that during this period was of groups of three on Carrington Moss on Jan 1st: at Smithills Hall on Feb 12th and in Borsdane Wood, Hindley on Feb 12th. In March five were seen in Ladybrook Valley, Cheadle on the 12th and four in Horrocks Wood, Bolton on the 19th.

Breeding: of the 118 records from Breeding Atlas surveys, 42 related to confirmed breeding. Breeding was confirmed in 39 tetrads and at two additional sites and these included counts of four at Holcombe Brook Apr 10th; a family party of five at Mill Lane, Horwich May 20th; a nest containing six young at Lilford Park May 28th; four near Woodford Aerodrome Jun 12th and four at Kirklees Jul 17th. BBS counts recorded birds in only five squares (8%). However, this compares favourably with three squares in 2010 (4%) and four in 2009 (6%). The national total was 13.7%.

Post breeding/late winter: all 55 records for the last five months of the year related to one or two birds apart from three at Higher Meadows, Horwich Moors Aug 26th and the same number at Horrocks Flash on Dec 4th. It was reported that this species has become firmly established at the Wigan Flashes as trees have matured. Unseasonal behaviour was noted on Dec 25th at Carrington Moss when “two fighting males” were seen!

WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Abundant resident.

A survey of the Wigan Flashes between April 1st and June 30th discovered 133 birds on territory, including 33 at Horrocks Flash and 25 at Pearson's Flash.

Having previously been recorded in 94% of BBS squares from 2007 to 2010, this year saw a dramatic reduction with only 83% of squares recording this species. This was the lowest percentage since the BBS surveys began in 1994, when it was present in 79% of squares surveyed. However, it should be noted that until 2011, Greater Manchester had consistently tracked above both the national and North-West BBS results. Perhaps the recent prolonged harsh winters have finally taken their toll? Only time will tell. The winter records reflected this year's decline with the only two double figure counts of 11 at Sale East and along the Manchester Ship Canal between Irlam Locks and Boysnope Wharf. In former County Reports, the BBS totals of over 30 (sum of the early/late visits) were included in the 'Wren BBS charts'. In 2010, nine sites accumulated totals of 30 or over but this year it was down to just two. For continuity, this year the qualifying score will be 20. Last year's high flyer Ringway (10/11) dropped from top spot to eleventh and was replaced by the former 'top dog', Priory Gardens (18/16). Clifton (21/10) was the only other site over '30'. Third place went to Higher Fold (12/16), followed by Partington (10/16), Bradley Fold (6/19), Ashton on Mersey (12/12), Romiley NE (12/12), Romiley SW (14/10), Boothstown East (8/15) and West Didsbury (10/12). Heaton Park Reservoir (14) and Hough End (12) only had one visit, so may have made the grade if the second visit had been completed. This year, confirmed breeding records came from 118 locations, mostly atlas tetrads, an increase due largely to the concerted effort of observers for the big push in the final year of the atlas.

STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris*

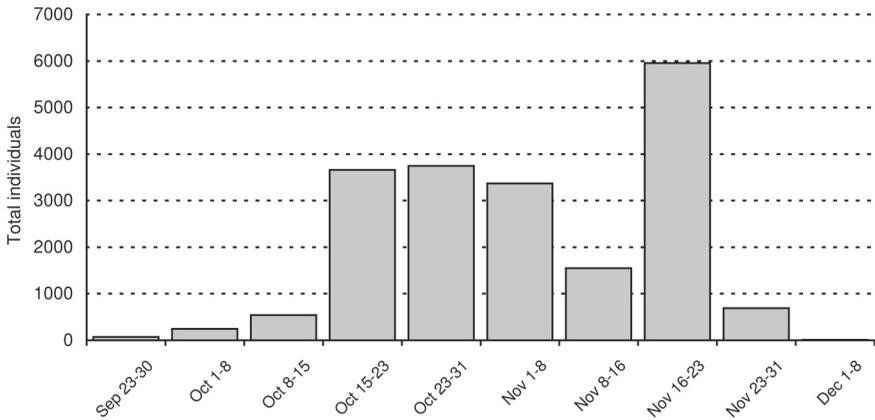
Abundant resident and winter visitor.

BoCC Red List (BDp1, BDp2, SPEC) and UK BAP species.

Early winter counts: the highest counts for this period came from Cadishead Moss with 1000 on Jan 5th, 1500 on Jan 26th and 500 on Feb 21st. At Woodford Aerodrome numbers included 400 on Jan 13th and Feb 17th and 300 on Mar 3rd. Other significant totals were 700 at Pilsworth Floods on Jan 29th; 300 at Rumworth Lodge on Feb 15th; 450 at Higher Boarshaw, Middleton on Feb 25th and 400 at Newall Green on the same date; 300 at Higher Standedge on Feb 28th; 800 at Coney Green Floods on Mar 9th and 500 at Stock Nook Farm on Apr 1st. A leucistic bird was amongst a flock of 60 birds at Lilford Park, Leigh on Jan 27th. Birds were seen on several days in January carrying grass to the eaves of a house in Rochdale, while a mixed flock of this species and thrushes was constantly harassed by a female Sparrowhawk whilst feeding in fields at Hall Lee Bank Park on Feb 27th.

Breeding: a total of 179 tetrads had confirmed breeding records in the atlas surveys and the BBS found birds in 57 squares (86%). The national figure was only 55.3%. Two juveniles in a Royton garden, whilst begging for food when adults were present, could manage to fend for themselves when they were absent! On May 29th an estimated 200 birds were feeding on fields at Adam Hill, Horwich Moors in misty conditions, with around 40% carrying food for youngsters.

Post breeding/late winter: there was an outstanding surge of records for this period, with some very high numbers present. Following breeding, some good sized flocks built up rapidly, with 400 in the Piethorne Valley on Jun 11th, followed by 350 in Cadishead Wood on both Jun 29th and July 15th. A similar number were in New Moss Road, Cadishead on Aug 16th and at Cadishead Moss on Aug 26th. On the latter date 650 were recorded at Prospect Grange Farm, Irlam Moss increasing to 700 there by Sep 8th. Flock sizes remained fairly high in September, with 300 at Elton Reservoir (on the 3rd) and at Chat Moss and also North Ashton (both on the 6th). Numbers continued to increase during October, as migrants joined our resident birds; all were meticulously observed by those visible migration watchers at Burnt Edge, Horwich Moors. Their sightings are summarised in the table below.



Autumn Starling migration over the Horwich Moors 2011

Over the Horwich Moors the highest daily count was 5790 on Nov 19th, which included one flock of 3500 coming in from the north east. Numbers tailed off in December though, with just eight and 22 birds in the first two weeks respectively but the overall total count of birds recorded during the eleven week period late September to early December was 19863. Meanwhile in October and November numbers increased elsewhere too, with 1125 observed on visible migration over Heaton Park Reservoir on Oct 14th and 1444 similarly passing over there one week later. Rindle Road, Astley Moss saw a flock of 700 on Oct 17th increase to over 4000 by Nov 5th. Similarly, a flock of 300 at Cadishead Moss on Oct 25th had swelled to 1500 on Nov 14th, growing to 6000 by Dec 16th but then dropping to 510 on Dec 20th. 300 were at Rumworth Lodge on Oct 24th. Starlings observed migrating over at Besses o’th’ Barn, Whitefield totalled 1548 on Oct 26th and 1384 on Nov 2nd. In the Wigan area there were 2000 at Ashton-in-Makerfield on Nov 10th and 400 at Pemberton the following day. Numbers at Woodford Aerodrome went up from 400 on Nov 10th to 1000 three days later but had dropped to 300 by Dec 8th. On the mosslands, a flock of 400 at Astley Moss on Dec 12th soared ten fold to 4000 by Dec 22nd. At Carrington Moss 500 were present on Dec 18th. Other significant late counts were of 450 at Sandyforth on Nov 14th and 400 at Shell Pool NR on Dec 27th.

DIPPER *Cinclus cinclus*

Fairly common resident in suitable habitat.

Outside the breeding season there were records from 61 sites, with the majority on the Rivers Etherow, Goyt, Irwell, Roch and Tame. Away from these areas birds were seen at Ashworth Moor Reservoir; Dunscair, Bolton; Carr Wood (both Bramall and Rochdale); Micker Brook, Cheadle Hulme; Crompton Moor; Eagley Brook; Hollingworth Lake; Jumbles; Ramsbottom; Royton; Rumworth Lodge; Tottington; Worthington Lakes; and Yeoman Hey Reservoir. Singing birds were recorded as early as Jan 9th when one was on the River Tame at Dukinfield and at the River Irk, Blackley on Jan 16th, Ramsbottom on Jan 22nd and the River Spodden, Healey Dell on Mar 20th .

The first record of nest building came from a traditional nest site on the river Tame at Greenfield on Feb 26th. Other nest building activity was observed at Mossley on the River Tame on Mar 2nd, River Spodden, Healey Dell on Mar 20th, River Mersey at Cheadle Bridge on Mar 27th and 29th, River Roch at Heywood on Apr 1st and Holcombe Brook on Apr 10th. Confirmed breeding was reported from 29 sites, with the majority from the usual haunts in the upland areas to the north and east of the county. These being Bradshaw Brook; Denton; Eagley; Elton; Etherow Country Park; Greenfield; River Roch at Gristlehurst Woods and Heywood; Holcombe Brook; River Goyt at Lower Bredbury; Mill Lane, Horwich; Mossley; Park Bridge; Reddish Vale; Shawclough; Simpson Clough; Slackcote; Swallows Wood; Tottington and Trub Brook. There were three notable breeding records away from these areas. On Apr 9th two adults were seen visiting a nest site with food at Ladybrook Valley, Cheadle. Fledged young were observed on Apr 29th at Haigh Hall, Wigan. Nearby, birds were seen throughout the year at Worthington Lakes and breeding was confirmed again this year with adults carrying food to a nest site.

An exceptional record was of a juvenile bird at Pennington Flash on Aug 25th, which may have been present as early as Aug 21st and was then seen regularly until Sep 9th. A bird was seen displaying at Daisy Nook on Nov 6th and the same or another was singing at the same location on Dec 4th. One also sang at Roman Lakes on Nov 11th.

RING OUZEL *Turdus torquatus*

Uncommon spring and autumn migrant, scarce summer visitor.
BoCC Red List (BDP1) and UK BAP species.

Going back only ten years or so, annual Ring Ouzel records in the county barely ever broke double figures and so the recent status of this highly prized county migrant is somewhat remarkable. Its spring and autumn passage through the county is eagerly anticipated and particularly well observed and perhaps there lies at least some of the key to its recent success. It is very doubtful that their actual numbers have increased, rather our appreciation of their movements and just what the county is capable of producing has changed. Gone are the preconceived notions that they really are that scarce a migrant and county birders practically know where and when they are likely to occur and avidly search them out. The upland fields and moorland edges remain the favoured locations but the lowlands too are increasingly recording the occasional sighting.

Two at Brun Clough Reservoir on Mar 29th began the spring passage through the county but it was not until April when the next two records occurred with singles in the Naden Valley and flying NW over Winter Hill on the 3rd. Lees Hill, another favoured upland location, saw the next with two males on the 6th, whilst the 8th witnessed singles at Burnt Edge and Wildersmoor, both Horwich Moors and a singing male again at Lees Hill. The county's most productive ouzel site, the Horwich Moors, continued its dominance with a male and female at Higher Meadows on the 9th and on the 10th Lees Hill managed two birds and the Naden Valley one. A female travelling with Fieldfares was at Roscow's Tenement Clough, Horwich Moors on the

11th and two females were around Sugar Loaf Hill, Horwich Moors on the 12th. The 14th brought the only lowland record of the year, occurring with a fine male in fields behind Rindle Wood, Astley Moss, which was the same location that entertained a male for eight days in 2010. Remarkably though, as exciting a find as any ouzel is, in particular a lowland bird, on this latter date whilst the lone male ouzel kept to the trees and bushes bordering the fields, the finder also witnessed a flock of six fly in and circle low several times around the fields before continuing on north without ever stopping! One other fortuitous observer also arrived just in time to be shown the birds as they departed in what was the largest lowland flock ever recorded in the county in recent history. The Rindle male remained until the 15th and other than a single bird on Holcombe Moor on the 18th, all other records during April were confined to the Horwich Moors as follows: -a male at Higher Meadows and a female on Smithills Moor, both on the 16th; a female on Two Lads Hill on the 17th; four (a male and three females) in fields at the bottom of Mast Road on the 18th, reduced to three on the 19th and then two on the 20th; a male was on Wildersmoor on the 27th.

In the east of the county a male was on territory on May 12th, whilst at another site relatively nearby confirmed breeding was recorded, with an adult seen carrying food on Jun 10th. A breeding record for this Red Listed species in the county is particularly good news and it remains a distinct possibility that at least one or two pairs may go unnoticed in and around the upland areas. Their harsh 'chacking' calls and characteristic song echoing around the hills and valleys is always likely to be the first evidence of their presence, though appreciating their rather particular breeding habitat requirements might also narrow down suitable locations.

Autumn passage through the Horwich Moors was sufficient to rival many an (admittedly perhaps minor!) East Coast UK watch-point and totalled a magnificent 35 individuals. During September return passage commenced with two female/immatures at Georges Lane on the 15th and continued as follows: - a male at Burnt Edge on the 18th; one flew over Burnt Edge heading east on the 28th; a male was in trees at Newfields Plantation also on the 28th, before flying off south; a female/immature at Higher Meadows on the 29th; three SE through Burnt Edge on the 30th. October continued the excellent run of records with one at Burnt Edge and one chased by Mistle Thrushes at Georges Lane, both on the 1st; six moving south through Burnt Edge and a female/immature at Wilderswood, both on the 2nd; one high south over Georges Lane and a female/immature at Higher Meadows, both on the 3rd; two SE through Burnt Edge on the 4th; five through Burnt Edge on the 15th (four NW and one S) and a single landed briefly in Newfields Plantation on the same date before heading off west; three south through Burnt Edge on the 19th. November recorded three sightings, with one south over Georges Lane on the 5th; a female/immature at Georges Lane again on the 12th; and one on Smithills Moor on the 28th which flew off high east after sheltering underneath a kissing gate. December records are rare in the county and so a female/immature on the 18th was an excellent find despite only being seen three times in as many minutes as it seemingly went to roost in the Adam Hill shelter belt conifers at 3:40pm. The only record received outside the monopoly of the Horwich Moors was of a single bird in the Piethorne Valley on Oct 14th.

BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula*

Abundant resident and winter visitor.

In the first three months of the year, a total of 42 double figure counts were recorded from all points of Greater Manchester but these came mainly as a result of atlas surveying. Counts of 20 or more occurred with 28 at Higher Broughton (SD80F) on Jan 2nd, 20 at Gillbent (SJ88S) on Jan 8th, 20 at Carrbrook (SD90V) on Jan 9th, 33 (including some males already singing) at Whitefield (SD80C) on Feb 12th, 28 at Cadishead Moss on Feb 21st and 30 at Sale (SJ89A) on Feb 28th. Domestic gardens yet again recorded good numbers too but 19 in a Long Lane, Hindley garden on Jan 6th was to be the highest such count.

Confirmed breeding was typically early again this year, in the Mottram tetrad SJ99X on Mar 30th but nest building was observed all the way back into February, with one at Salford University on Feb 14th particularly early. Extra atlas efforts this year saw confirmed breeding results for the county exceed the usual 'tip of the iceberg' with 151 atlas tetrads and other locations easily the highest ever recorded in the county since BBGM and possibly the highest ever in a single year. One can only begin to wonder what the true figure of breeding Blackbirds (as with other species) might be! The BBS remained stable though with 63 squares (96%) being identical to the percentage in 2010 and extremely close to that of 2009. The final breeding record of the year was at Higher Boarshaw, Middleton on Sep 7th, when a hidden juvenile could be heard begging.

It was the onset of October which saw the first notable increases in Blackbird numbers, undoubtedly swelled by influxes of continental birds. 18 were feeding on berries at the southern end of Scotman's Flash on the 4th and 11 were doing likewise at Gingham Brow on the 20th. 17 were at Worsley View Farm, Irlam Moss on the 20th; 20 at Cadishead Moss on the 21st; 11 at Astley Road, Chat Moss on the 25th; and 14 passage birds were at Billinge Higher End on the 27th. Early November witnessed a significant increase in numbers though, with 40 at Pennington Flash on the 6th, 39 at Elton Reservoir on the 7th and 30 at Crooke, Wigan on the 8th bearing testimony to that. It seems likely that migrants from this influx moved through quickly though as for the remainder of the month numbers encountered were rather as to be expected, with 19 at Marsh Green Community Park, Wigan on the 18th; 25 at Irlam Locks on the 21st; 19 at Marsh Green, Wigan on the 23rd; and 25 at Heaton Park on the 26th.

FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris*

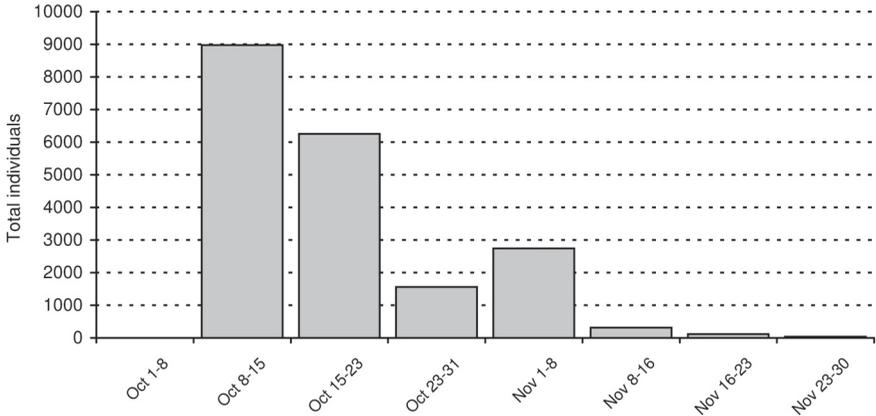
Common winter visitor and passage migrant.
BoCC Red List species (BDp2, BDMp1, BR).

Significant monthly counts for the first four months of the year were as follows: - January: 160 at Sandyforth former OCCS on the 3rd; 150 at Piethorne Valley on the 17th. February: 150 in fields by Woodford Aerodrome on the 3rd, rising to 160 on the 19th; 100 at Crime Lake, Failsworth on the 13th; 206 at Cadishead Moss on the 21st; 100 at Elton Reservoir and 250 at Whitehead Lodges, both on the 22nd; 100 at Coal Pit Road, Smithills Moor on the 24th; 110 at Hall Lee Bank Park on the 27th. March: 114 at Carrington Moss and 100 at Crime Lane, Failsworth, both on the 6th; 104 at Holdens Farm, Horwich Moors on the 31st. April: 68 at Ludworth Moor on the 16th was the highest count of the month and was followed by one on Carrington Moss on the 19th, 20 on Ludworth Moor on the 22nd and 9 also at the latter site on the 25th. May: recorded only a single record this year, with one at Hollingworth Lake on the 2nd, one of the latest ever site records, observed by its most diligent patch watcher, before it departed to the east.

The first record of the autumn was of a single bird over a Royton Garden on Oct 7th. October 13th brought the first major passage of birds moving through with double-figure flock sizes reaching five sites during the day and 110 recorded at Werneth Low, with only the Horwich Moors ridiculing those comparatively miniscule numbers as its eager visible migration watchers recorded a total of 3516 passing through during the day. Though Fieldfare passage over this latter site could not match the astonishing events of autumn 2010, it was nevertheless impressive with some 20,000 birds passing through during the autumn as a whole and the overall picture is illustrated in the accompanying chart.

Significant counts over four figures at this site were recorded during October on the 14th (5460), 15th (2943), 21st (1715) and November on the 7th (1057). Visible migration was witnessed and enjoyed at other sites throughout the county during the autumn as follows: - October: 2526 over Heaton Park Reservoir on the 14th in a generally southerly direction; 340 SW in 14 flocks over Longshaw in two hours mid-morning on the 14th; 449 SW over Lower Bredbury on the 14th; 435 in 13 flocks SW over Billinge Hill in two hours on the morning of

the 15th; 578 W in five flocks through Astley Moss in one hour, early afternoon, on the 17th; 250 over Elton Reservoir on the 21st; 301 SW over Heaton Park Reservoir on the 23rd; 276 S over Heaton Park Reservoir on the 27th; 884 S over Besses o'th' Barn, Whitefield on the 29th. November: 465 SW over Besses o'th' Barn, Whitefield and 200 S over Wigan Town Centre, both on the 2nd; 270 SE in 11 flocks over Longshaw on the morning of the 5th; 232 S over Besses o'th' Barn, Whitefield on the 7th.



Autumn Fieldfares through the Horwich Moors 2011

Outside of visible migration, the usual wintering flocks often demolishing the county's berry laden Hawthorn hedgerows could be found as follows: October: 204 at Ludworth Moor on the 19th; 200 at Abram Flashes SSSI on the 22nd; and 220 at Lightshaw Hall Flash on the 29th. November: flocks of 300 birds were reported from Cutacre OCCS on the 1st; Cow Lane, Hollingworth, Hyde on the 8th; Shell Pool NR on the 13th; and Clegg Hall Pools, Smithy Bridge on the 29th. December: 200 at New Manchester, Ellenbrook on the 14th; 100 at Irlam Moss on the 20th; 150 at Hollingworth Lake on the 22nd; and 160 on the airfield adjacent to Highfield Moss on the 28th.

SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelos*

Common resident and winter visitor.

BoCC Red List species (BDp2) and UK BAP species.

Outside the breeding season there were very few double figure counts but birds were typically highly vocal and their beautiful song could be heard at widespread locations right from the start of the year. Eight were singing in the Mersey Valley on Feb 6th and nine likewise in the Whitefield tetrad (SD80C) on Feb 12th. Ten at Abney Hall, Cheadle on March 12th was particularly noteworthy and immigrants from the Continent were observed during many autumn visible migration watches and joined resident birds, swelling numbers considerably. During October, 10 were at Gillibrands Farm, Daisy Hill on the 2nd and 54 were found around the entire site of Pennington Flash on the 17th.

Confirmed breeding was first recorded at Kersal on Apr 12th and went on to be recorded in a total of 72 atlas tetrads and at 5 additional sites. To emphasise just how many could have bred at any one site though, 29 were recorded on territory in the Wigan Flashes alone but this species remains firmly on the Red List and this year's BBS data supported that status, recording another decline to only 44 squares (67%). The final breeding record of the year was at Knowsley Plantation, Piethorne Valley on Aug 11th.

REDWING *Turdus iliacus*

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant.

BoCC Red List species (BDp2, BR).

Flocks exceeding three figures strong during the first half of the year were relatively few with 100 at Carrington Moss on Jan 1st; 215 at Blossoms Lane, Woodford on Jan 13th; 110 at Fog Lane Park, Burnage on Feb 2nd; 100 at Crime Lane, Failsworth on Feb 13th and again on Mar 6th; and 140 at Whitehead Lodges on Feb 22nd. Though many records were received of single and double figure flocks throughout the first three months of the year, April managed only four records in total, with the last being of a single bird at Chorlton Water Park on the 2nd signifying either a very early departure back to their breeding grounds or perhaps a rather understated later exodus which went unnoticed or unrecorded by observers?

The first returning birds of the autumn were witnessed on Oct 2nd with 13 over Burnt Edge, Horwich Moors; two over High Rid Reservoir; and three over Werneth Low. There then followed rather low-key arrivals during the first two weeks of October, mainly of birds flying over but all that was to change on the 13th when the skies above Burnt Edge, Horwich Moors resounded to their distinctive and evocative calls as the first major arrival of the autumn took place with 2930 passing through SE during the day. The very next day their arrival was equally impressive but much more widespread with the following migrants recorded: - 1681 over Heaton Park Reservoir in a southerly direction; 580 over Higher Meadows, Horwich Moors; 1400 SW over Longshaw in 50 flocks during only two hours early morning; 222 heading SW over Lower Bredbury; 370 SE over Pennington Flash; 903 SE over Roman Lakes, Marple; 200 SE over Skitters Wood in only an hour. Further significant movements during the remainder of the month were as follows: - 269 S/SW over Billinge Hill and 685 NW over Burnt Edge, Horwich Moors, both on the 15th; 250 SE/SW over Billinge Hill, 161 SW over Heaton Park Reservoir and 190 SW over Mossley, all on the 23rd; 168 S over Heaton Park Reservoir on the 27th; 318 S over Besses o'th' Barn, Whitefield on the 29th. November produced only two three figure movements with 150 over Besses o'th' Barn on the 2nd and 307 over Billinge Hill on the 7th.

Flocks of grounded, avidly feeding birds, were also well reported during the latter half of the year as follows: - October: 126 at Shell Pool NR on the 13th; 197 at Pennington Flash on the 17th, reducing to 100 daily from the 20th to the 30th; 400 at Shell Pool NR on the 23rd; 200 at Pickley Green, Westleigh on the 29th. Both November and December could only muster one three-figure flock each, with 250 at Cutacre OCCS on the 1st and 120 at Pickley Green, Westleigh on the 20th, respectively.

MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus*

Common resident.

BoCC Amber List species (BDMp1, BDMp2).

A small number of double figure counts or flocks were recorded in January with 11 in the Hollinwood tetrad (SD90B) on the 9th; 21 at Lilford Park, Leigh on the 27th; 18 at Carrington Moss on the 28th; and 25 at Low Common, Leigh on the 29th. Thereafter no such numbers were reported during the remainder of the first half of the year, which is unsurprising really considering this species' early breeding habit.

The first confirmed breeding record of the year was on Mar 13th in the Ladybrook Valley, Cheadle and a total of 68 tetrads and five additional sites went on to record confirmed breeding during the year with the final record on Jul 23rd in the Hollinwood tetrad (SD90B). Typically, some pairs utilised highly visible nest locations extremely close to busy, human inhabited areas, and non more so than the pair which hatched four eggs from a nest built on the steel framework of the new Women and Children's Centre at the Royal Oldham Hospital. Such was their popularity that they even managed a mention in the Oldham Advertiser! On the BBS, the

39 squares (59%) achieved this year was yet another worrying decline from those of the previous two years.

Double-figure, post-breeding flocks were first encountered on Jun 8th with 14 at Altrincham ETW. The next were not until July though with 11 at Raspberry Lane, Irlam Moss on the 18th; 20 at Bickershaw Rucks on the 25th; and 12 at Lydgate on the 31st. August, as expected, saw the bulk of the larger flocks with 25 at Blackleach Reservoir, Walkden and 30 at Woodstock Farm, Chat Moss, both on the 1st; 16 at Astley Moss on the 4th; 35 at Cutacre OCCS on the 4th; 28 at Astley Road, Chat Moss on the 13th; 30 at Crow Trees Farm, Elton Reservoir on the 19th; 20 at Ludworth Moor on the 21st; and 22 at Shell Pool NR on the 22nd. The final significant flocks of the year were all encountered during September and involved 32 at Astley Road, Chat Moss and 32 at Castleshaw Reservoirs, both on the 3rd; 30 at Shell Pool NR on the 11th and 12th; and 21 at Heaton Park Reservoir on the 24th.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata*

Uncommon and decreasing summer visitor; uncommon passage migrant.
BoCC Red List (BDp1, BDp2) and UK BAP species.

The first returning bird was a little earlier than that of the previous year, with a single at Astley Road, Chat Moss on May 7th. Records for the remainder of May were few and far between though, with only four as follows: - two on Carrington Moss on the 16th; two in Dunham Park NT on the 19th; Brookdale Park, Newton Heath on the 24th; Mirrlees Fields, Woodsmoor on the 26th. Early June saw only three records from additional areas, with birds at Dove Stone RSPB, Slackcote and Worthington.

Considering the typically late arrival of this species to the county, the first breeding pair had obviously wasted no time, with the aforementioned pair at Dunham Park NT on 19th May already occupying a nest! Breeding went on to be confirmed at a further three sites (Carrington Moss, Chat Moss and Slackcote).

The first returning migrant of the autumn was a single bird at Summit, Littleborough on Jul 24th but there were no further records of migrants until August, when the following sites recorded singles unless otherwise stated: - Alkington: 26th, in a domestic garden. Blackleach Reservoir, Walkden: 29th. Elton Reservoir and environs: two on 15th; two on 20th; three on 25th; six on 29th. Hollingworth Lake: two on 23rd; 30th. Horwich Moors: two on 17th; seven on 18th; 19th; six on 20th; four on 22nd; 23rd; three on 24th; two on 25th; two on 26th; 27th. Ludworth Moor: three on 21st. Naden Valley: 23rd. Sale Water Park: 25th. September passage slowed considerably as was to be expected but birds could still be found as follows: - Elton Reservoir and environs: 2 on 3rd; 4th. Horwich Moors: 1st; 4th; a remarkable 16 on 15th. Hollingworth Lake: 1st; 10th; 15th. Mossley: the final record of the year on the 18th.

ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*

Abundant resident.

A widespread and much loved county bird, which can be heard singing its attractive song practically all year round, day or night. Concerted atlas efforts amassed double figure counts in 18 tetrads during the first three months of the year, the highest totals coming via 27 in SD71Y Ramsbottom on Feb 10th, 30 in SD80C Whitefield on Feb 12th, 21 in SD81C Nangreaves and 38 in SJ89A Sale East both on Feb 28th and 24 in SD90X Uppermill on Mar 21st. During the final three months of the year, whilst records were many and widespread (no doubt due in some part to the arrival of many migrants), there were only three counts which breached double-figures with 10 in the Wigan Flashes on Oct 22nd, 11 at Cadishead Wood on Oct 25th and 10 in the Barton Locks area on Nov 21st.

During the breeding season a total of 155 confirmed breeding locations were recorded, 140 of which came from atlas tetrads, which was a terrific result more indicative of the species' true status in the county. The fact that the Wigan Flashes alone recorded 116 territories clearly indicates what density of Robins some sites may be capable of supporting though. The first confirmed breeding record this year was of a nest with eggs in a Rochdale garden during March (no specific date) and was followed with an adult carrying food in the SD90X Uppermill tetrad on 4th Apr, with the final record of the year at Diggle on Aug 24th. On the BBS, the 59 squares this year (89%) represented a minimal decrease from the previous two years with the following sites being the most productive (number in brackets representing early/late visit counts): - Priory Gardens (20/9), Park Bridge (16/11), Higher Folds (15/9), Romiley SW (10/14), Ashton-on-Mersey (9/14), Greenfield (10/13), Ringway (12/9) and Bradley Fold (11/9).

PIED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula hypoleuca*

Scarce and declining summer visitor and scarce passage migrant.
BoCC Amber List species (BDMp1).

Longford Park, Stretford was the rather unusual urban location for the first record of the year on Apr 14th, which was also the earliest returning bird since 2004. Thereafter, records were worryingly sparse with the only previous breeding locations recording 'migrants' being at Swallows Wood with a singing male on Apr 16th and at Etherow CP where a pair were inspecting a nest box on Apr 22nd, which unfortunately came to nothing more.

Slightly more encouragingly though, a pair arrived at a new site in the east of the county on Apr 22nd and were immediately prospecting a nest box, with breeding finally confirmed on May 28th and the final sighting of the adults or juveniles occurring on Jun 21st.

Autumn migrants remain scarce to say the least and the Horwich Moors played host to all but one county record this year, with a single at Royton on Jun 30th followed by the moorland records of a single at Newfields Plantation on Aug 22nd and a female/immature at Higher Meadows on Sep 15th which was the latest county record since one at Rumworth Lodge on Sep 15th 1995.

BLACK REDSTART *Phoenicurus ochrurus*

Scarce migrant and winter visitor, rare breeder.
BoCC Amber List (BDMp1, BDMp2, BR) and GM BAP species.

The city centre of Manchester once again this year resounded to the sound of Black Redstart song, with a pair right at its heart in the King Street area. On Jun 1st a male was heard singing and during the same month breeding was confirmed when both the male and a female were seen entering a building vent hole with food on many occasions. The male was heard at the nearby Town Hall but there were no further reports of feeding or fledged young due to limited observer coverage and the logistics of seeing the birds in this heavily built up area of the city.

Autumn passage was poor by 2010's admittedly very high standards, with only a single record from the Horwich Moors when an immature was seen briefly within the county boundary on Mast Road on Oct 20th, mostly spending its time firmly within Lancashire though. On Nov 11th a female/immature was at Blackstone Edge Reservoir, whilst in Moss Side, Manchester an adult male returned to an urban garden for its third consecutive winter and remained to the end of the year, enjoying hospitality from the house owner with the provision of mealworms but the same could not be said for the resident Robins with regular 'Mexican standoffs' occurring between the two species!

REDSTART *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Uncommon passage migrant and scarce summer visitor and breeder.
BoCC Amber List species (SPEC).

The favoured Lees Hill/Middle Bank area played host to the first bird of the year, a singing male on Apr 6th, which was quickly joined by another on the 8th and culminated in three singing males there on the 10th, with two at Middle Bank and one at Lower Bank, Cow Lane, Hollingworth. There was also the usual smattering of other April sightings from around the county with a male at Bethany Lane, Newhey on 7th; a male near Boaredge Farm, Birtle Moor on the 8th; a singing male at Etherow CP on the 15th and which was still singing there on May 4th; a single at Banky Meadow on the 19th; a singing male on territory at Knoll Wood, Higher Meadows, Horwich Moors on the 26th; and a female was at Welkin Road, Lower Bredbury on the 28th. There was only a single new bird in May though, with a female in suitable breeding habitat on Holcombe Moor on the 2nd.

Disappointingly, there were no records of confirmed breeding this year though it may be that it went unrecorded at least at one site and maybe, just maybe, unnoticed at others? The state of breeding Redstarts in Greater Manchester is therefore rather depressing but referring to their status in BBGM proves little better, with only one confirmed breeding tetrad in that 1984 publication, where it noted their county status as 'precarious'. The presence of a juvenile at the site of the singing male on the Horwich Moors from Jul 15th to 20th promoted hopes of it having been raised on site but this could not be substantiated and the proximity of the county boundary with Lancashire in the wood where the male sang could have made it very difficult to prove it bred in Greater Manchester anyway. For the second year running there were no records from the BBS within the county.

Return passage was good once again with the Horwich Moors maintaining its seemingly now annual lion's share of autumn records. June records, possibly involving failed breeders, began with a very good site record of a single near Woodford Aerodrome on the 24th, quickly followed by one at Elton Reservoir on the 26th in the aptly named 'Redstart Hedge'. The main autumn passage began mid-July however, with a juvenile at Dove Stone RSPB on the 14th and other records during the month involved singles at Altrincham ETW on the 16th; a male in 'Redstart Hedge' at Elton Reservoir on the 23rd which remained the following day too; and one in the Caldershaw tetrad SD81S on the 30th. Typically, August provided the bulk of all the return passage but all the records came from only four sites. Elton Reservoir maintained its attraction for this species, recording six individuals in total as follows: - one at Old Hall Farm on the 9th; one on the 17th; an adult female at Crow Trees Farm on the 19th; one at Coney Green and one at Capsticks, both on the 25th; and another single at Old Hall Farm on the 28th. Hollingworth Lake managed two records during the month, with a female/immature in the 'Big Hedge' on the 21st and another similarly sexed/aged bird on the 30th. On the Horwich Moors, accurately assessing the numbers of birds passing through is often difficult due to birds occasionally moving between the smaller sites in this large recording area, particularly when coupled with the odd days when elusive lingering birds may have gone unnoticed. However, the diligent recording by observers there indicated at least nine birds were involved in total, with their occurrences as follows: - a male at Higher Meadows on the 17th; a male at Newfield Plantation on the 18th was seen again there on the 21st; one at Holden's Farm on the 19th; two on Winter Hill on the 20th; four (three males and one female) at Higher Meadows on the 22nd, with the same location also accounting for a single on the 25th, a pair on the 26th and a single again on the 27th; two males at Holden's Farm on the 22nd probably involved at least one new bird but two on the 25th included a male again and a female, the latter of which was certainly new in. There was to be only a single September record however, occurring at Hollingworth Lake with a female/immature on the 1st which is likely to have been the same individual which was also present the previous day.

WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra*

Uncommon passage migrant and breeder.

BoCC Amber List species (BDMp1).

The first bird of the year was at Pilkington Delph Quarry on Apr 14th but thereafter numbers were comparatively low, with singles at Highfield Moss and Lower Bredbury on the 19th; Ashworth Moor Reservoir on the 21st; Audenshaw Reservoirs, Carrington Moss, Heaton Park Reservoir and Shell Pool NR on the 22nd; Uppermill on the 25th; and Flixton Farm Fields on the 30th. Numbers in May were low too, occurring at only seven sites as follows: - Flixton Farm Fields on the 1st; Adswold Tip, Cheadle and Crow Trees Farm, Elton Reservoir on the 2nd; Clegg Hall Marsh, Smithy Bridge and Dover Basin on the 3rd; Carrington Moss on the 13th; and the final record of the first half of the year, from the Horwich Moors on the 15th.

For yet another year there were no records involving any breeding evidence whatsoever and the demise of this species as a breeder in the county is a significant and disappointing loss.

Observers had to wait until August to see the first migrants making their way through the county, with 30 individuals being recorded from five sites. Irlam Moss and Lightshaw Hall Flash hosted birds on single dates, whilst Elton Reservoir managed two dates. As expected though, the Horwich Moors attracted the bulk of the Whinchats, with 24 individuals recorded from its constituent sites on nine dates. The highest counts too came from the Horwich Moors, with six at Burnt Edge/Holden's Farm on the 19th and 20th and six again on Burnt Edge on the 27th. September saw excellent passage numbers too, recording a total of 25 individuals from seven sites. Blackstone Edge Reservoir, Pennington Flash, Red Moss SSSI and Woodford managed one visit each, with Elton Reservoir and Brun Clough Reservoir receiving two but once again the Horwich Moors lured in the most records with 11 individuals on five dates and a maximum of four together at Holden's Farm on the 1st and 4th. There was a single October record again this year, after one was at Burnt Edge, Horwich Moors on the 1st.

STONECHAT *Saxicola torquatus*

Uncommon winter visitor, passage migrant and breeder.

There were certainly fewer records than usual this year of this endearing little chat, perhaps the result of the recent harsh winters and this was particularly reflected when January produced only a single sighting, involving a pair at Gilligants Farm on the 30th. February saw birds most probably on their way back to upland breeding habitats with records from Carrington Moss, Elton Reservoir, Rumworth Lodge and Slackcote. By March all but one of the five records during the month, a bird at Elton Reservoir on the 5th, came from upland moors and by May, all eleven records were from breeding sites high up in the moors ranging across the very northern edge of the county boundary.

The breeding status of this species appears to be stable at least, with a minimum of seven pairs confirmed breeding for the second year running, with pairs in tetrads at Highfield Moss (SJ69C), Jumbles (SD71H), Naden (SD81N), Summit (SD91P), Swineshaw Moor (SE00A) and Yeoman Hey Reservoir (SE00H) along with two within the Horwich Moors. This was bolstered by records of probable breeding from six additional sites/tetrads with a pair in suitable habitat at Cheesden and also on Winter Hill; agitated pairs on Horrocks Moor, Egerton and Rooley Moor and a territory being held at Watergrove Reservoir. Furthermore, three pairs were located in the Naden tetrad although only one was confirmed as breeding, so obviously, there could well be more breeding pairs out there amongst the county's upland moors. On the BBS, the picture was considerably more concerning though, with only 1 square representing a significant (and declining) change.

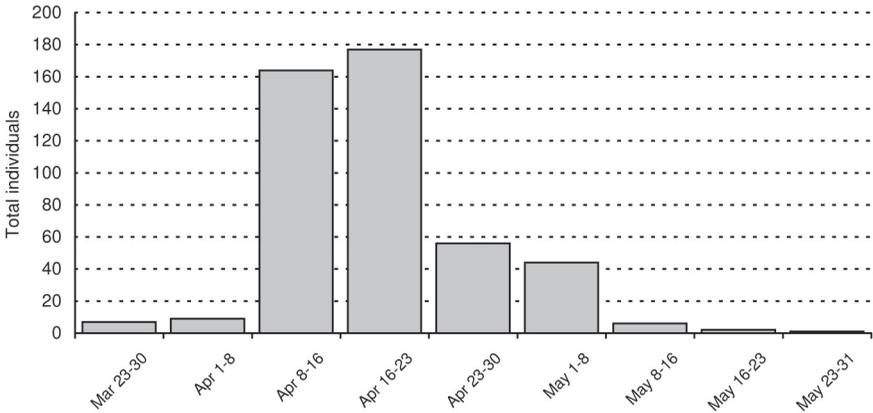
During August only Chelburn Reservoirs, Holcombe Moor and the Naden Valley (the latter certainly involving breeding birds) saw any records away from the Horwich Moors which was

well represented during the month; its maximum of six occurring on the 25th. September brought more widespread numbers as expected and although the Horwich Moors maintained its grip on the majority of them (with a maximum of four during the month) other records came from Blackstone Edge Reservoir; Calderbrook, Littleborough; Chelburn Reservoirs; Cold Greave Clough, Piethorne Valley, with a maximum of six during the month; Ludworth Moor and Rumworth Lodge. October continued in the same vein as the previous month with the Horwich Moors continuing to supply the majority of records but others came from Chair Wood Dam (a male on the 1st); Norman Hill Reservoir, Milnrow (with 2 on the 15th); Carrington Moss (on the 16th); Knowl Moor SBI (on the 20th); Little Woolden Moss (on the 20th); Naden Valley. Typically, the remaining two months of the year saw birds all but disappear with all records on the Horwich Moors as follows: - one at Smithills Moor on Nov 6th, one on Mast Road on Dec 2nd and a male on Adam Hill Moor and a female on Makinson Moor both on Dec 27th. During the latter half of the year it was estimated that 19 migrant Stonechats passed through the Horwich Moors.

WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant.
BoCC Amber List species (SPEC).

Mid-March saw the arrival of the first returning birds, with singles at both Elton and Piethorne Reservoirs on the 13th. There was then a short delay until the next birds, coming via singles at Audenshaw Reservoirs, Smithills Moor and Irlam Moss, all on the 24th and by the end of the month a further nine sites had recorded the species. April bore the heaviest arrivals as usual and the Horwich Moors continued to dominate the county for attracting Wheatears to the upland fields and moors which blanket the area, producing 14 days during the month with double figure counts and impressive peaks of 58 on the 8th, 70 on the 16th and 54 on the 17th.



Spring Wheatears on the Horwich Moors 2011

Other sites recording double figure counts during April were as follows: - 10 at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 7th and 8th; 14 on Holcombe Moor on the 9th; 10 at Brun Clough Reservoir on the 12th; 10 at Longden End Clough on the 14th; 15 at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 15th; an excellent 51 at Brun Clough Reservoir on the 16th, which coincided with the peak spring count on the Horwich Moors on a date when at least 185 were present throughout the county; 11 on Highfield Moss on the 16th and 17th; 16 at Chelburn Reservoirs on the 19th; 24 at Highfield Moss on the 19th; 10 in the Piethorne Valley on the 25th; and 11 near Woodford Aerodrome on the 28th. During May passage settled down considerably and only the Horwich Moors recorded any double figure counts with 11 on the 2nd, 14 on the 5th, with

the total spring migration through the aforementioned site alone standing at 466 individuals by the end of the month.

Breeding this year was either on the increase or perhaps more comprehensively recorded by the diligent efforts of those observers mopping up for the atlas. Either way, 11 tetrads confirmed breeding this year. This excellent number was also reflected on the BBS, with the 12 squares (18%) occupied by this species representing the highest figure since the survey began in 1994.

Autumn migration through the county, and unsurprisingly the Horwich Moors in particular, was busy to say the least but only the aforementioned migration jewel in the county's crown could muster any double figure counts. During August, 23 sites recorded the species with those within the Horwich Moors recording double figure counts on 11 dates, with two particularly impressive counts of 106 on the 22nd and 77 on the 25th. Many sites during September were also fairly comprehensively visited by this species and out of those 20 locations across the county, those within the Horwich Moors managed double figure counts on six dates. Typically, migration slowed dramatically during October but nine sites in the county (six of which came under the Horwich Moors recording area) still recorded at least a single bird, with the monthly peak count of 12 on the Horwich Moors on the 1st and 2nd. November served up three records, two of which came from the Horwich Moors on the 5th, via a single on Mast Road and two on Smithills Moor but Audenshaw Reservoirs recorded the final bird of the year with a single on the 13th, easily the latest ever site record. The final autumn's migration total through the Horwich Moors was remarkably similar to that achieved during 2010 and there was in fact only 18 birds difference, with 2011 managing the slightly higher figure of 837 individuals.

There were three records of birds identified to the Greenland race *O. o. leucorhoa* this year, with a single spring record of two males on Makinson Moor, Horwich Moors on May 9th and two autumn records consisting of two on Little Woollen Moss on Oct 20th and a male on Mast Road, Horwich Moors on Nov 5th.

DUNNOCK *Prunella modularis*

Abundant resident.

BoCC Amber List (BDMp2) and UK BAP species.

For an often overlooked or maybe even ignored species, this year's 990 submitted Dunnock records was a tremendous return, enormously bolstered it must be said by various surveys, the majority of which came from the final push for the atlas. Being a more usually shy and retiring species is unfortunate though, as not only does this mean its true county status is more difficult to assess accurately but in actual fact it really is a 'bit of a looker' when you give it the attention it deserves; with its subtle yet intricate detail and various colours, not to mention its endearing little habits. One can only hope that once the atlas survey is over that observers continue to record this attractive accentor, so we can continue to monitor its status.

Thanks to the county surveys, there were more double figure counts than normal, with the following recorded: - 17 in the Whitefield tetrad (SD80C) on Feb 12th, 10 at Shell Pool NR on Mar 27th, 10 in the Holcombe Brook tetrad (SD71X) on Apr 10th, 10 in the Higher Broughton tetrad (SD80F) on Apr 11th, 16 in the Failsworth tetrad (SD80V) on Apr 13th, 12 on the Sharples BBS Apr 23rd, 17 on the Rochdale Canal WBBS Apr 27th, 14 on the Ashton-on-Mersey BBS May 25th, 14 near Woodford Aerodrome on Sep 15th and 12 at Shell Pool NR on Sep 18th.

As if to emphatically enforce just what a concerted effort by observers in the county can achieve by recording and submitting their sightings, breeding was confirmed in 119 atlas tetrads alone this year! This figure very nearly doubles the very good result achieved in 2010 and is surely a much closer reflection of the true status of this species in the county. Results on the BBS survey remained fairly stable in comparison to previous recent years though, recorded in 55 squares (83%).

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*

Abundant resident.

BoCC Red list (BDp1, BDp2, SPEC) and UK BAP species.

Early winter counts: House Sparrow was widely recorded in tetrads during Winter Atlas surveys, which also produced some excellent counts. Those tetrads in January included 34 in Lower Kersal on the 1st, 39 in Failsworth on the 3rd, 37 in Gillbent on the 8th, 56 in Woodford on the 9th, 40 in Hollinwood on the 17th, 51 in Gorton on the 27th and 38 in the Pilsworth South tetrad on the 29th. February produced two counts of 58 on the 1st, in the Hurst and Woodford tetrads, 39 in Pemberton on the 8th, 46 in Haydock Park on the 8th, 44 in Westleigh on the 19th, 37 in Lever Edge on the 22nd and 63 in Sale East on the 28th. Other large counts during this period were 30 at Simister on Jan 29th; 40 at Worsley View Farm, Irlam Moss on Jan 30th; and 40 in Blossoms Lane, Woodford on Feb 12th. There were also pleasing and regular reports of birds in gardens in Heywood, Littleborough, Middleton, Milnrow, Rochdale and Royton, throughout the period.

Breeding: Atlas surveys found confirmed breeding in 127 tetrads and at 10 additional sites, widely scattered throughout the county. The species also remains very stable in BBS returns, with records from 54 squares (82%) much as in previous years, with 54 (81%) in 2010 and 54 (82%) in 2009. The national figure is 59.2%. The regular habits of this species were also evident when fledglings were noted at an address on the Sunfield estate in Romiley on May 11th, just one day earlier than 2010. On the same date an adult carrying food seen in the Piethorne Valley was described as an “unusual event” for this location, where it is uncommon. Breeding got off to a good start in Dukinfield Park when a bird was seen entering a newly erected box in May and in the second week of that month one observer in Rochdale was awakened early one morning when juvenile birds on the window ledge peered into the bedroom whilst at the same time jumping up and down and stretching their wings!

Post breeding/late winter: as in previous years, large flocks built up around agricultural land in the summer with 100 at Middle Farm, Bredbury on Jul 29th. At Cutacre OCCS 35 were noted on Aug 4th and 45 were at Black Wood, Irlam Moss on Aug 8th, with 95 at Goyt Hall Farm on Aug 16th. The maximum at Cadishead Moss was 73 on Aug 26th. 90 were at Orrell House Farm on Oct 27th. Thereafter the largest numbers were seen in more urban areas including a flock of 50 in allotments at Pemberton on Nov 11th and the same number at Marsh Green, Wigan on Nov 23rd. At Lower Bredbury there were 70 present on Dec 14th.

TREE SPARROW *Passer montanus*

Uncommon resident.

BoCC Red List (BDp1, BDp2, SPEC) and UK BAP species.

There was a total of 346 records of this species of high conservation concern submitted, just one more than in 2010. As mentioned in last years report the stronghold lies in a belt in the western half of the county running between Dunham Massey in the south to Bradley in the extreme north west with isolated pockets in the Birch/Pilsworth/Bowlee area, Ludworth Moor and the vicinity of Woodford Aerodrome, where small numbers were seen throughout the year. The only other sightings outside these areas were at Shaw with one bird on Jan 4th and nine at Gorton on Apr 11th. The bulk of the sightings came from the mossland areas.

Early winter counts: the highest counts during this period were 48 on Astley Moss on Jan 4th, 37 at Black Wood, Irlam Moss Jan 29th and Chat Moss with 42 Jan 10th and 35 Mar 10th.

Breeding: representation on the BBS squares continued to be small with just four (6%) the same as 2009 but slightly above last years figure of three (4%). The national figure is 7.4%. The squares were at Astley Moss East, Carr Green, Carrington and Worthington. Breeding was confirmed in 18 Atlas tetrads and two additional sites as follows: - Bowden, Bowlee (where

nest boxes were used), Dunham Massey, Haigh, Hope Carr, Oldfield Brow, Pennington Flash West, Pilsworth North and South and Worthington. The other eight tetrads were on the mosslands. The two additional confirmed breeding records received were at Billinge Higher End and Rindle Road.

Post breeding/late winter: numbers at Woodford Aerodrome built up from 26 on Jul 2nd to 30 on Sep 4th through to 40 on Oct 30th and 45 on Nov 20th and Dec 10th. Elsewhere there were 32 in the Astley Moss East tetrad on Jun 17th; 40 at Barton Moss on Jul 21st; an excellent 140 at Billinge Higher End on Sep 23rd was the largest flock recorded in the county since January 1986 when 150 were also at Billinge; and 55 at Rindle Road on Nov 6th and 48 also there on Dec 12th. Some visible migration was seen at Pickley Green, Westleigh on Oct 13th when two birds flew SE and also from Burnt Edge, Horwich Moors on Oct 17th with two groups each of six flying south and three again going in the same direction on Oct 23rd.

YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava*

British race *M. f. flavissima* is an uncommon summer visitor, passage migrant and breeder. Continental race *M. f. flava* is a scarce summer visitor and very rare breeder. BoCC Red List (BDp1, BDp2) and UK BAP species.

The favoured spring migrant Yellow Wagtail site of Audenshaw Reservoirs drew in the first returning bird this year, as is often the case, with a fine male on Apr 7th. There was then an eight day wait until the next record, once again at Audenshaw Reservoirs, with two on Apr 15th but thereafter only a further 23 records came from 11 additional sites, with the highest numbers recorded being a rather disappointing five at Altrincham ETW on the 20th and four at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 22nd and 24th. May fared little better in all honesty and only an additional 10 locations recorded birds from those noted in April. Numbers during May increased though and highs at Audenshaw Reservoirs reached six on the 3rd and 10 on the 4th (eight males and two females), with Carrington Moss the only other site to attract more than five birds, with six present on the 11th.

Breeding for this Red Listed species in the county once again looked favourable in comparison to recent years and no less than five tetrads and three additional sites confirmed it, with a minimum of three pairs confirmed in the Barton Moss (SJ79I) tetrad. Yet again, meticulous plotting of territories on the collective 'Chat Moss' by Dave Steel produced an excellent 12 in total (three on Barton Moss, one on Cadishead Moss, one on Chat Moss, two on Irlam Moss and five on Little Woolden Moss), with a minimum of eight confirmed breeding pairs. Additionally, a bird was also seen visiting a possible nest site in Lowton. On the local BBS three squares (5%) was the best result achieved for many years.

Return passage was somewhat subdued with none of the usual larger post-breeding gatherings or roosts reported. Thirteen sites in August recorded at least a single bird, with a maximum count of three observed at Little Woolden Moss on the 5th and 23rd, Altrincham ETW on the 12th (a female and three juveniles) and Cadishead Moss on the 31st. September's rapid clear-out saw only 11 records from seven sites during the month as follows: - four at Elton Reservoir on the 1st, with one on the 2nd; one at Rumworth Lodge on the 3rd; a further single at Elton Reservoir on the 4th, with birds at this site seemingly being attracted to a field containing Highland Cattle; one at Rumworth Lodge on the 8th; two at Audenshaw Reservoir and one south east over Heaton Park Reservoir, both on the 16th; singles at Audenshaw Reservoir and Shaw Moss, both on the 18th, the latter of which avoided being seen by the observer as it flew overhead; and the final records of the year both on the 28th of singles flying south over Burnt Edge, Horwich Moors and south west with Meadow Pipits over Lower Bredbury.

Continental race Blue-headed Wagtail *M. f. flava*

There was one record submitted to, and accepted by, the County Rarities Committee this year, of a male at Rumworth Lodge on Apr 29th, present until May 2nd (S. Warford *et al*). On May 1st it was seen to join a female Yellow Wagtail *M. f. flavissima* but there was no suggestion of the pair breeding.

GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*

Fairly common resident.

BoCC Amber List species (BDMp2).

A rightly popular species, this attractive wagtail was fairly comprehensively recorded in the county, from uplands to lowlands, rural to urban areas, yet despite its apparently rather universal choice of habitat it continues to cause real concern, particularly if this year's BBS results are anything to go by.

Typically there were few larger groups of birds encountered, with only the following standing out amongst the 351 records submitted for the year: - 10 Eccles ETW on Jan 5th; five at Offerton Green ETW on Jan 7th; five in the Ladybrook Valley, Cheadle on Mar 31st; nine at Pennington Flash on Jun 9th and seven together in the Naden Valley on Jul 27th. During December a bird was attracted to seed placed on a domestic shed roof in the Church Street area of Horwich.

Breeding was again well observed thanks mainly to atlas surveyors and 42 tetrads confirmed breeding (as opposed to 27 in 2010), with an additional three sites also confirming it. This overall total of 45 didn't compare so well to 2010's overall total of 58 locations though but making such a comparison is perhaps unwise considering some tetrads contained breeding birds at more than one location within that tetrad. Far more concerning however was the local BBS result, where the eight squares (12%) this year was a 42% reduction from 2010 and 53% compared to 2009. Reasons for this serious reduction are currently speculative at best and may be linked to harsh weather in the three preceding winters but clearly, continued close monitoring and recording of this species by all of us may go some way to identify any reasons for it.

PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba*

British race *M. a. yarrelli* is a common resident.

Continental race *M. a. alba* (White Wagtail) is an uncommon passage migrant.

It was very disappointing this year that practically none of the prominent winter roost sites were recorded, despite often being visited by county birders. Whilst there may be some excuse that those above the Manchester City Centre German markets during the Christmas period were perhaps occasionally viewed through 'beer goggles' and may have been subsequently forgotten about, it is clear that many others throughout the county weren't and yet again, we urge observers of these roosts to submit them whenever possible.

As such, numbers of flocks/counts exceeding 30 during the year were low with only 12 received as follows: - 200 at Eccles ETW on Jan 5th was the highest reported number of the year; 50 at Hope Carr ETW on Jan 22nd; 40 at Altrincham ETW on Feb 21st; 45 roosting in four small ornamental trees in the Pilsworth Asda car park on May 3rd; 42 near Woodford Aerodrome on Aug 4th; a peak count of 40 feeding in fields at Higher Meadows, Horwich Moors on Aug 30th; 30 at Audenshaw Reservoirs on Sep 11th; 61 flying south west over Heaton Park Reservoir on Oct 2nd and another 46 flying over south there on Oct 14th; 31 along the River Goyt, Offerton on Nov 9th; 80 at Compstall ETW on Dec 26th and at least 80 roosting in trees lining Portland Street, Manchester City Centre during December.

61 tetrads and nine sites recorded confirmed breeding, which was very similar to that achieved in recent years. Similarly on the local BBS, 32 squares (49%) portrayed a reasonably stable picture. Once again there were many possible and probable breeding instances and we probably have some way to go in order to comprehensively record the breeding status of this species in the county.

Continental race White Wagtail *M. a. alba*

The first records of the year occurred on Mar 16th with singles at Gillibrand's Farm, Daisy Hill and Pickley Green, Westleigh. For the remainder of March only four sites; Astley Moss East Pools; Audenshaw Reservoirs; Higher Meadows, Horwich Moors and Pennington Flash recorded this continental cousin of our own Pied Wagtail. Only Pennington Flash managed anything other than a single birds thanks to two on the 28th. April, the peak month for this race in the county, saw numbers and their distribution increase, with Altrincham ETW; Audenshaw Reservoirs; Brun Clough Reservoir; Elton Reservoir; Higher Meadows, Horwich Moors; Holcombe Moor and Rumworth Lodge all recording at least one bird. Rumworth Lodge managed five on the 13th but it was the favoured site of Audenshaw Reservoirs which stole the show with birds on 14 dates and an excellent run of records as follows: - 15 on the 7th, 45 on the 13th, 35 on the 14th, 15 on the 15th, 20 on the 16th and 14 on the 18th. May saw only Altrincham ETW, Audenshaw Reservoirs (with birds on five dates during the month and a maximum of two on the 7th) and Rumworth Lodge (with a bird present on seven dates during the month), manage to record this migrant.

There were no autumn records this year.

RICHARD'S PIPIT *Anthus richardi*

Very rare migrant.

For the first time since 1992 Greater Manchester recorded two sightings of this excellent Siberian vagrant, which is always nice for a small inland county situated in North West England. They represented the tenth and eleventh records for the county.

The first, on Oct 16th, flew south west over Bispham Hall heading towards Liverpool (C. Darbyshire) and afforded the observer with good head-height views and an earful of its distinctive call. The second, on Nov 12th, was also only seen and heard in flight, at Higher Meadows, Horwich Moors (K. Haydock, A. Makin) but well enough for the two experienced observers to be left in no doubt as to its identity. Full accounts of both records can found in separate articles within this report.

TREE PIPIT *Anthus trivialis*

Scarce summer visitor and uncommon passage migrant.

BoCC Red List (BDp1, BDp2) and UK BAP species.

There were only two brief spring records this year, of singles north over Longshaw, near Orrell on Apr 22nd and one over Georges Lane, Horwich Moors on May 2nd.

Autumn migration was an improvement but perhaps unsurprisingly couldn't quite match the bumper passage in 2010. The first returning bird was encountered on Aug 12th, flying east over Georges Lane, Horwich Moors and was quickly followed by the next, three singles over Higher Meadows, Horwich Moors on the 14th. Thereafter, for the remainder of August, the following migrants (single birds unless otherwise stated) were recorded: - over Georges Lane, Horwich Moors on the 17th; over Pennington Flash on the 18th; two over Holden's Farm, Horwich Moors on the 19th; two south over Winter Hill, Horwich Moors on the 20th; east over Burnt Edge, Horwich Moors and over Orrell Water Park, both on the 22nd; south

over Billinge Hill and east over Walker Fold Wood, Horwich Moors, both on the 25th; six south over Billinge Hill (one at 8:40am, two at 9:06am, one at 9:11am and two at 9:50am), over Bryan Hey Reservoir, Horwich Moors and at least six over Georges Lane, Horwich Moors, all during the 26th; south over Pennington Flash on the 28th; south east over Brun Clough Reservoir on the 29th; north over Higher Meadows on the 30th. There were three September records, with one low east over Astley Moss East Pools on the 4th; one east over Georges Lane, Horwich Moors on the 10th; and one, the final record of the year, south over Georges Lane, Horwich Moors on the 15th.

MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis*

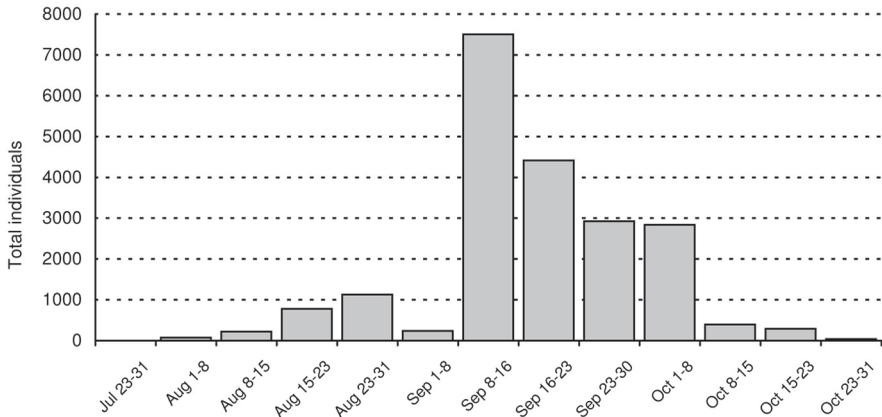
Fairly common resident, summer visitor and passage migrant.
BoCC Amber List species (BDMp1, BDMp2).

There were no significant flocks recorded during the very early winter period but the migration of Meadow Pipits through the county has become a much anticipated annual event for the county’s ardent visible migration watchers and rightly so as observers enjoy the spectacle of this dainty *anthus* often literally pouring overhead, the skies filled with their short piercing calls.

Spring migration, always playing second fiddle to the heavier passage of autumn, consisted of counts above 40 as follows: - *March*: 100 at Crime Lake, Failsworth on the 6th; 110 grounded at Capsticks Marsh, Elton Reservoir on the 20th; 55 at Ludworth Moor on the 26th; 100 at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 28th; 181 N over Smithills Moor also on the 28th was the first major movement of the year at this site; 64 NNW over Smithills Moor on the 29th. *April*: 162 N over Georges Lane, Horwich Moors and 170 N over Holcombe Moor, both on the 2nd; 86 N over Winter Hill on the 3rd; 40 at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 5th and again on the 7th and 8th; 52 N over Georges Lane, Horwich Moors on the 6th; 140 N over Georges Lane, Horwich Moors on the 8th; 87 N over Smithills Moor, Horwich Moors, on the 16th.

Breeding was confirmed in 32 atlas tetrads and one additional site, with the upland moors continuing to hold what would seem to be a thriving population, which may surely be the tip of the iceberg? On the BBS, 18 squares (27%) was a fairly significant reduction from the previous two years though.

Autumn migration proved just what a significant passage route the county is for this species, with total migrants moving through the Horwich Moors alone numbering a fairly staggering 21,069 individuals.



Autumn Meadow Pipits over the Horwich Moors 2011

Though the graph above outlines the overall picture at this latter site, its peak counts came from Smithills Moor as follows: - 274 NW on Aug 18th, 7220 N/NW on Sep 15th, 1910 W/SW on Sep 18th, 1995 SW on Sep 19th, 2059 S/SW on Sep 26th and 1327 S/SE on Oct 4th. Outside this site others too, complete with their hardy observers, noted some excellent passage with the most significant days as follows: - *August*: 75 Ludworth Moor 21st, 150 Holcombe Moor 25th, 50 Castleshaw Reservoirs 29th. *September*: 100 Hollingworth Lake 12th, 58 and 126 S over Heaton Park Reservoir 15th and 16th respectively, 111 S over Billinge Higher Ends 19th, 70 Kingsway Business Park 19th, 674 and 340 SW Heaton Park Reservoir 23rd and 24th respectively, 77 and 238 S Billinge Hill 25th and 26th respectively. *October*: 105 S Billinge Hill 2nd, 394 SW Heaton Park Reservoir 2nd, 52 S Heaton Park Reservoir 7th, 130 Shell Pool NR 9th, 87 S Heaton Park Reservoir 14th, 180 SW Holcombe Moor 15th. *November*: 100 over Highfield Moss 10th.

During the late winter period small numbers were widespread throughout the county, with the lowland mosses containing the highest concentrations. Locations with flocks consisting of 20 or more were - 21 on Little Woollen Moss on Nov 10th; 26 at Astley Road, Chat Moss on Nov 17th increased to 31 by the 22nd; 21 on Bickershaw Rucks on Nov 28th; numbers at Astley Road, Chat Moss continued to grow with an excellent peak of 92 on Dec 9th; 25 were at Kingsway Business Park on Dec 12th; 30 at Crime Lake, Failsworth on Dec 18th and 30 at Birch on Dec 24th.

ROCK PIPIT *Anthus petrosus*

Uncommon passage migrant.

Occurrences were typically focused within the peak migration periods for this species in the county, of late March and the entire month of October. Though it is considered that all records of this species in the county relate to the migratory Scandinavian race *A. p. littoralis*, there were no records of birds in its distinctive breeding plumage this year.

March passage was short and sweet this year, with Audenshaw Reservoirs attracting single birds on the 20th, 21st, 25th and 27th. Migrants during October were recorded from four sites with only one, the Horwich Moors, breaking the monopoly of the usual reservoirs. Three were at Audenshaw Reservoirs on the 7th, with three there again on the 13th, whilst on the latter date the Horwich Moors recorded its first record of this species with one through S/SE. The 14th brought single records to four sites, with Audenshaw Reservoirs, Elton Reservoir, SE through Heaton Park Reservoir and the Horwich Moor's second record heading E with Meadow Pipits at Burnt Edge. Audenshaw still had a single on the 15th, whilst Elton Reservoir now mustered two on the same date. The final records of the year were both at the premier Rock Pipit site of Audenshaw Reservoirs, with singles on the 16th and 21st.

CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs*

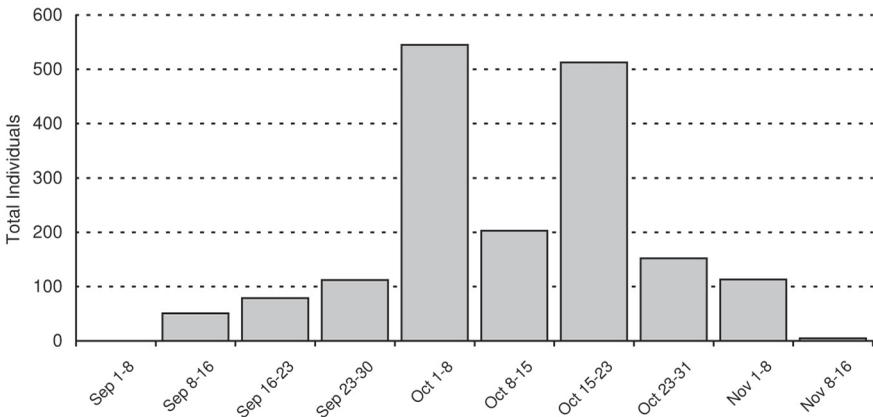
Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

As both a common and widespread bird across our area, Chaffinch sadly tends to be one of those species that birders sometimes overlook when getting round to sending in details of those all important sightings for inclusion on our local records database. Thankfully, the considerable efforts of many birders throughout the final months of our national and local atlas projects this year helped boost the number of records and accounted for 44% of all Chaffinch records received in 2011. 194 tetrads reported the presence of this species during the winter and breeding seasons; a total which when taken in conjunction with their wide distribution is surely a fair indication of its adaptable nature. Most counts however were of small numbers, with once again our mosslands being the favoured sites for the largest ones. However, a few other locations where suitable feeding habitat became available, often stubble fields, also reported some noteworthy flock counts too.

Counts: Astley Moss reported some good sized flocks from the start of the year until the last third of March, with a peak count of 240 on 4th January. There were just a few other noteworthy counts from the early months of the year and they were as follows: - 30 at Orrell WP on Jan 3rd; 47 were feeding on seed in a Hindley Green garden on Jan 11th; 78 at Irlam Moss on Jan 23rd; and 40 at Gillibrands Farm, Daisy Hill on Jan 30th. The first sizeable record after the breeding season was perhaps not surprisingly once again logged at Astley Moss, with 100 there on Sep 24th; this had increased to 260 on Nov 28th. Other selected mosslands area records included:- 120 at Dunham Massey on Nov 27th; 60 at Chat Moss on Nov 28th; 90 in the Rindle area on Dec 12th; 120 at Carrington Moss on Dec 18th and 300 at Prospect Grange Farm, Irlam Moss on Dec 20th. Away from the mosslands other significant records were of 54 at Davenport Green on Nov 3rd; 100 on a stubble field Heaton Park on Nov 26th, with 60 still there on Dec 10th; 50 at Binn Green on Dec 3rd; 70 at the feeding station at Orrell WP on Dec 17th and 60 were feeding in maize stubble fields at Bowlee on Dec 24th.

Breeding and surveys: recorded on 59 (89%) local BBS plots this year, broadly in line with the 2010 figure. Eight of these plots (Abram, Astley Moss East, Carr Green, Carrington, Lane Head, Ringway, Top Lock and Trub) logged at least one double-figure count on either the early or late visits. On the WBBS, Hey Brook and Douglas Valley also reported at least one double-figure count. On the BBS nationally for the year 2010 – 2011 Chaffinch remained largely unchanged but this species has shown a statistically significant increase of 24% in north-west England for the period 1995 – 2010. The earlier mentioned endeavours of atlas birders helped produce a quite phenomenal total of 90 atlas tetrads and four additional sites with confirmed breeding this year, substantially up on previous years efforts but with the 2011 tally probably representing a more accurate reflection of this species real level of breeding activity in Greater Manchester? The earliest record was of an occupied nest at Elton Reservoir on Apr 19th and the last of fledged young seen at Jubilee and Littleborough East on Jul 31st.

Movements: those hardy and dedicated Horwich Moors visible migration watchers once again put in some long hours in the field to record birds on autumn passage. The accompanying chart highlights movement between mid-September and early November but with the peak weekly totals logged in the first three weeks of October. Five three-figure counts were registered during this period, with a peak daily count of 195 flying north on the 2nd. An observer at Heaton Park Reservoir also reported his peak count in mid-October, when 131 moved south on 14th. Other counts included 20 flying over Billinge Higher End on Sep 16th and 40 heading south-west over Holcombe Moor on Oct 15th.



Autumn Chaffinch migration through the Horwich Moors 2011

BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla*

Uncommon winter visitor.

For a species that has sometimes been recorded in flocks of millions in continental Europe we are lucky in some years if we even manage to record the occasional three-figure flock count in Greater Manchester! We certainly didn't manage one this year unfortunately, with just eight double-figure flock counts in the early winter period. A further six double-figure counts came from the second winter period but all however were daily grand totals of birds recorded flying over on visible migration. There was a total of just over 140 records on our database in 2011. Although these records were received from across our recording area; as far west as Orrell WP, as far east as Binn Green, in the south in tetrads SJ78T Hale and SJ88D Newall Green and in the north-east at Hollingworth Lake, the vast majority were of just single figure numbers. This species general affinity and association with the Chaffinch was also reflected in its fondness for our mosslands sites too, with over 35% of all records coming from these areas. When coupled with the fact that a further 23% of all records were of birds on the move (mostly over the Horwich Moors) it doesn't leave a great deal left over to report on from across the rest of our recording area!

First winter period: approximately three-quarters of all records were logged during this time and selected records were as follows. Chat Moss held modest numbers in January, where Bramblings often associated with larger flocks of Chaffinches, with a peak count there of 35 on 10th; atlas birders reported counts of 15 in tetrad SD70G Walkden and 21 in SD80C Whitefield on Jan 22nd and Feb 12th respectively; 10 were at Orrell WP on Feb 19th and 21 were at Astley Moss on Mar 21st. Small numbers turned up in gardens in Chorltonville, Hindley, Milnrow and Mossley between January and April. Interestingly, two separate mosslands sites reported birds in either song or sub-song in the first week of April. The last record from the early part of the year was of six in Springfield Copse, Strines and a single bird in Whittaker Wood, Littleborough, both on Apr 17th.

Second winter period: two flying south over the Horwich Moors on Oct 4th were the first birds of the autumn. In the latter part of the year there were just a mere handful of sightings of birds seen down on the ground. However, only one of these records referred to more than just a single bird.

Movements: those stiff-necked, sky-gazers on the Horwich Moors skilfully picked out small numbers of Bramblings amongst the other species on the move during the autumn months. The peak for visible migration passage appeared to be the last week of October and movement appeared to have ceased by mid-November. Tallies of 26 and 38 flying south on 25th and 29th October respectively were the highest daily totals during this period.

GREENFINCH *Carduelis chloris*

Common resident.

Since the first reports of the microscopic parasitic disease trichomonosis appeared in the summer of 2005 data suggests that sadly the United Kingdom populations of Greenfinch and to a lesser extent Chaffinch have declined as a consequence. So does the 2011 data throw any light on what effect this disease might have had on our local populations? Not really, as it is somewhat contradictory, with fewer large (50+) flock counts reported this year than in the preceding years but with the best ever number of confirmed breeding records in 2011. There were just eight counts of 50 or more birds this year (*cf.* 10 in 2010; 17 in 2009). It must also be noted that five of this years' total of eight were daily autumn aggregates of birds moving through Greater Manchester airspace (*cf.* just one in 2010).

Counts: by far and away the largest count was of 205 in tetrad SJ79T Dimplington on Jan 16th. 43 fed in a Hindley Green garden on Jan 11th; 30 were at Davenport Green on Feb 9th; 35 at Barton Moss, Eccles on Jul 5th and counts of 40 were logged at Pennington Flash on three

dates in August and September. Birds showed up in numbers at Davenport Green again, with 50 there on Nov 12th and finally 50 were at Woodford Aerodrome on Nov 24th. These few large counts were in stark contrast to many other sightings with approximately 80% of all of the records submitted for this year being for five birds or less.

Breeding and surveys: as mentioned earlier there was a marked increase (69%) in the number of confirmed breeding records in 2011, to a total of approximately 81 tetrads and two additional sites, up from 49 in 2010. Most, if not all of this increase was a result of one intensive and organised final push in the last summer of our local breeding birds' atlas project. Records covered quite an extended period, with the first fledged young seen in tetrad SD81L Simpson Clough on May 9th and the last in tetrad SD80M Rhodes on Sep 7th. On the BBS the number of plots recording this species locally fell slightly from 57 in 2010 to 55 in 2011. Three plots (Boothstown East, Fallowfield and Lane Head) recorded a double-figure count on just one visit and two (Norbury Brook and Trub) managed double-figure counts on both the early and late visits. Despite earlier mention of finch trichomonosis and any ensuing likely mortality, the BBS for north-west England shows a 7% increase for the years 1995 – 2010, suggesting our local populations are holding up somewhat better than those nationally, which have shown a statistically significant decrease of 9% for the same period. On the WBBS, Rochdale Canal had a count of 12 on the late visit.

Movements: the numbers counted by visible migration watchers at one site this year, the Horwich Moors, appeared to be well up on the 2010 total. At the peak time for movement, this site logged a total of 283 flying south on five dates between Oct 15th and Oct 22nd, with a maximum daily count of 86 on 17th. Also in October at Heaton Park Reservoir, 20 and 79 flew over north-west on 2nd and 20th respectively. 72 heading south over Besses o' th' Barn on Nov 2nd was the last major movement of the autumn.

GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis* Common resident.

This species has seen a quite meteoric rise in recent decades and with numbers possibly still on the increase it seems set to keep its place amongst the commonest of our songbirds. It's perhaps not too surprising then that this species was reported from across the length and breadth of our recording area, with a multitude of records of double-figure counts throughout the year. However, 2011 once again showed a similar pattern of sightings to those noted in earlier county reports, with a sizeable majority of the largest flock counts (all those counts of 50 or more birds detailed below) coming in the second half of the year.

Early year counts: gardens in Hindley Green and Billinge reported 51 and 80 on Jan 1st and Jan 25th respectively; 56 were counted in tetrad SD50M Pemberton on Feb 8th; 50 were at Broughton on Mar 2nd and 80 visited Scotman's Flash on Mar 12th. Once again, niger seed was reported as a major attraction for Goldfinch in gardens this year. Outside of gardens, other food sources reported as being utilised at different times of the year included: - alder, hawkbit, larch, thistles and some also foraged in stubble fields.

Breeding and surveys: in terms of the number of confirmed breeding records this year, if both Chaffinch and Greenfinch fell gallantly but tantalisingly short of becoming centurions, then Goldfinch upstaged them both by bursting through the three-figure barrier to record an astonishing 125 tetrads and eight additional sites with confirmed breeding. This is well up on the totals for 2010, 2009 and 2008 which were 73, 57 and 40 respectively. For Goldfinch the breeding season was even more extended than that of Greenfinch, with the first confirmed record received of an occupied nest in tetrad SJ89D Salford Quays on Apr 13th and the last of adults with dependent young seen at Higher Boarshaw on Sep 10th. On the BBS locally, Goldfinch maintained its high presence, recorded on 85% of all plots. Only as recently as 2002 this figure stood at 72%, which even at that time represented its highest ever level on this

survey. 13 plots (nine in 2010, seven in 2009) recorded at least one double-figure count, suggesting further evidence of its continuing success. Additionally, all three of our WBBS plots (Douglas Valley, Hey Brook and Rochdale Canal) also had at least one double-figure count.

Late year counts: the earliest substantial post-breeding flock was of 50 at Cutacre OCCS on Jul 10th, which had increased fivefold by Aug 4th, when 250 birds were observed feeding on thistle seeds. A flock of 80 at Reddish Vale on Jul 26th had almost doubled in size to 150 on Aug 13th. Also in August – 110 were seen at Davenport Green on 3rd, 55 at Goyt Hall Farm on 16th and 60 at Woodford Aerodrome on 18th. September brought counts of 110 at Astley Moss East Pools on 4th, 50 at Castleshaw Reservoirs on 10th, 50 near Carrbrook on 18th and 50 at Miles Platting on 23rd. In October, the Horwich Moors area reported counts of 50 at Wilderswood on 2nd, with 60 and 100 also there on 5th and 7th respectively; 60 were in Walker Fold Woods on 7th. November produced three counts – 50 at Kirkless, Wigan on 22nd, 50 at Turner's Flash on 25th and 55 at Cheadle Bridge on 29th. December saw no slowing down in the reporting of these large flock counts, with 65 at Millgate Fields on 6th; 53 at River Irwell (old course) on 8th; 56 in a Hindley Green garden on 19th and finally 90 visited Lilford Park, Leigh on 20th.

Movements: once again the Horwich Moors produced some excellent totals of birds on the move, the majority but not all from the first half of October. 60 flew south on 2nd, a peak count of 143 south-west on 4th and 81 south/south-west on 14th. 74 were logged flying west/north-west on Nov 7th. Heaton Park Reservoir's peak counts were also from early October, with 71 and 49 moving south on 9th and 14th respectively. 92 flew south over Besses o' th' Barn on Nov 11th.

SISKIN *Carduelis spinus*

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant; rare breeder.

2011 was a slightly better year than the preceding two years for catching up with some reasonable sized flocks of Siskin in Greater Manchester. This year there were 38 counts of 20 or more birds, 28 in the early part of the year and 10 in the latter (*cf.* 19 – split 5/14 in 2010). Some of the sites reporting the larger flocks were the same as those mentioned in earlier years' reports, possibly reflecting the availability of a reliable source of food for this species at these regular haunts.

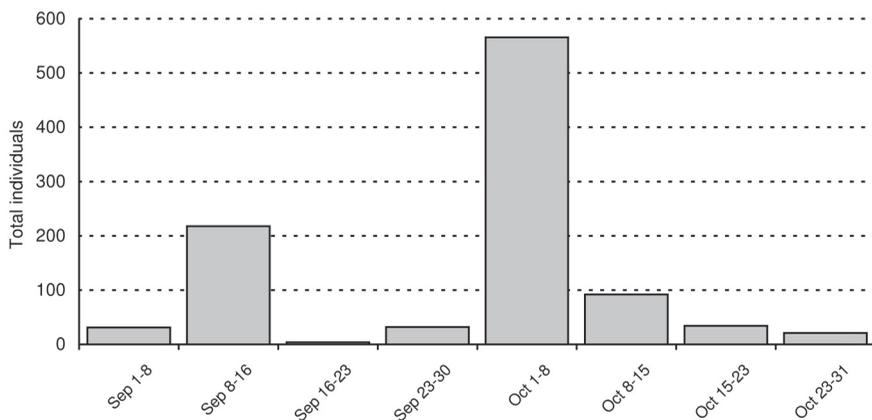
Early counts: 50 by the River Tame in Dukinfield on New Year's Day had increased to 70 there on Jan 9th. 40 were alongside the Huddersfield Canal at Stalybridge on Jan 2nd. Chorlton WP and environs is a regular wintering spot and this year produced seven 20+ sized flock counts between January and March, with maxima of 100+ in January, 85 in February and 20 in March. Nearby Sale WP recorded 30 on Jan 9th and 20 on Feb 6th – possibly the same birds as those seen at Chorlton WP? Further west - Marsh Green, Wigan held 40 on Jan 12th; the Wigan Flashes 60 on Jan 13th and 35 at Carrington Moss and 25 at Pickley Green were both sightings from Feb 11th. The Oldham area reported 30 in Chadderton on Jan 13th; 20 at Daisy Nook CP on Jan 22nd, increasing to 30 on Feb 26th and 30 were at Fitton Hill on Feb 3rd. Hollingworth Lake had a count of 41 on Jan 27th and 30 were still around on Feb 1st. 28 at Roman Lakes, Marple on Feb 5th had increased to 35 by the 21st of the same month. Little Woolden Moss reported 28 on Feb 17th and 20 visited Pike Fold Golf Course, Unsworth on Feb 26th.

Breeding and surveys: excluding migrants flying over the Horwich Moors there were totals of just 4 records on the database in April, none whatsoever for May and 11 and 12 for June and July respectively. This pattern of sightings appears to be broadly in-line with those noted from earlier years and this might possibly suggest that just very small numbers remain in our county throughout the breeding season? The final summer of our local breeding birds' atlas project did

however bring some worthwhile reward and positive results, with birds reported in suitable habitat in tetrad SD60B Amberswood on Jun 14th and breeding was later confirmed with sightings of fledged young in tetrads SD70L Linneyshaw and SD71C Egerton, both remarkably reported on the same date of Jun 29th. Two local BBS plots - Holcombe Moor and Caldermoor reported one and three birds respectively, both counts coming only on the late visits.

Late counts: there was a small number of widely distributed sightings:- 50 at Astley Moss SSSI on Aug 31st; 20 in the Piethorne Valley on Sep 28th; 20 at Pickley Green on Oct 13th; 30 at Woodford Aerodrome on Oct 27th; 25 at Fairhurst Lane reclamation site, Standish on Nov 7th; 30 at Roman Lakes, Marple on Nov 11th, which was bettered by a December count there of 50 on 4th; 30 at Chorlton WP on Dec 11th and finally 30 were in the Red Moss area of Horwich on Dec 26th.

Movements: spring migration on the Horwich Moors produced a total of 101 birds heading north, the bulk of which passed through during March and the first week of April, with just a single bird in early May. Although this figure was rather dwarfed by a total of 997 birds logged during autumn migration, the overwhelming majority this time heading in a south-easterly direction. The accompanying weekly totals chart effectively reveals the pattern and timing of movements there this autumn. A bit of “flesh on the bones” of this graph shows the first evidence of movement came on Sep 2nd, when 30 flew south east over Wallsuches. 216 were counted on Sep 15th, many heading south-east but some sizeable flocks of 88 and 50 were feeding down in the local woodlands on this and also on the following day. These migrants are thought to have completely “cleared-out” by 19th and a second somewhat larger wave was observed later, peaking in the first week of October, with the highest daily totals of 184 flying south on 2nd and 166 south-east on 4th. Smaller numbers were still on the move by mid-October. Heaton Park Reservoir reported 26 south-east on Sep 16th; 21 south on Oct 12th and 20 advanced over Besses o’ th’ Barn on Oct 26th.



Autumn Siskin migration over the Horwich Moors 2011

LINNET *Carduelis cannabina*

Common resident and partial migrant.

BoCC Red List (BDp2, SPEC, BDMp2) and UK BAP species.

2011 was in some respects like a re-run of 2010, with many of the largest flock counts originating from the same two main areas noted in last year's report – Chat Moss and its constituent mosslands and Woodford Aerodrome and environs. It is a worry though for the future of birds currently using the latter site, with proposals for development already on the table for this

large and now defunct industrial site. This species has gained red-listed status because of its substantial decline over the last few decades and can ill afford to lose one of its main current wintering sites in our county. The number of large counts was down from those reported in 2010 – 22 flocks of 50 or more birds and a further 13 flocks of 100 or more in 2011 (*cf.* 2010 with just 31 and 15). However, this might in part be just a reflection of the lower overall level of large counts being received from these two favoured areas?

Early year counts: the aforementioned Woodford Aerodrome had peak monthly counts of 200 on both Jan 6th and Feb 10th, 300 on Mar 17th and still held a flock of 150 on Apr 14th. Selected peak monthly mosslands counts were of 79 at Little Woolden Moss on Jan 12th; 83 at Prospect Grange Farm, Irlam Moss on Feb 21st; and 130 at Raspberry Lane, Irlam Moss on Mar 10th. Other noteworthy counts away from these two areas included:- 110 at Kitt Green, Wigan on Jan 12th, with 160 there on Feb 8th; 50+ at Gillibrands Farm, Daisy Hill on two dates in late January and 80 were observed roosting in gorse at Shell Pool NR on Mar 11th.

Breeding and surveys: despite the very best concerted efforts of many atlas birders throughout this breeding season there was not to be a substantial rise in the number of confirmed breeding records for Linnet, when compared to the 2010 total. This was rather disappointing, particularly given the healthy increases noted for several of the other finch species detailed in this current county report. Indeed a total of 28 tetrads and two additional sites represented a slight fall on the 2010 total. The first confirmed breeding record came from atlas tetrad SJ79D Chat Moss on Apr 17th and the last on Aug 8th when a flock of seven recently fledged juveniles and six adults were seen at Old Hall Farm, Elton Reservoir Oct 1st. On the BBS 26 (39%) local plots recorded Linnet this year, a marginal but still most welcome increase on the 2010 statistics. Only five plots had one double-figure count of birds on either the early or late visits. These were: - Ludworth Moor (12/6), Mellor Moor (-/12), Trub (11/3), Watergrove Reservoir (11/2) and Worthington (11/-). Sadly the BBS statistics for this species nationally continues to paint a depressing picture with decreases (some statistically significant) across the United Kingdom as a whole and in all eight of the English regions for the period 1995 - 2010.

Late year counts: the first significant post-breeding flock was of 140 at Holden's Farm, Smithills Moor on Aug 19th, increasing slightly to 160 three days later. 110 at Black Wood, Irlam Moss were feeding on oil seed rape stubble on Aug 29th. Ludworth Moor reported 68 on Aug 31st and Woodford Aerodrome 60 on Sep 15th, which was to be the only sizeable record for this site during this time, when for comparison there were 10 for the corresponding period in 2010. Over 100 birds were at Dover Marsh on Sep 23rd; these too were also feeding in a newly harvested rape seed field. 60 were at Shell Pool NR on Oct 23rd; 70 at Black Wood, Irlam Moss on Oct 26th; 50 fed in a stubble field at the northern end of Heaton Park on Dec 10th and 72 were at Little Woolden Moss on Dec 12th, increasing to 85 by 22nd of the same month.

Movements: 16 flew south-west over Aspull on Sep 23rd. Heaton Park Reservoir logged totals of 37 south-west on Sep 24th, 10 south on Oct 7th, 27 north on Oct 9th and 49 south on Oct 14th. 21 flew west/south-west over Billinge Higher End on Oct 27th. A total of 142 birds migrated over the Horwich Moors during the autumn counting period.

TWITE *Carduelis flavirostris*

Scarce resident; passage migrant and winter visitor.
BoCC Red List (HD2, BDp1), UK BAP and GM BAP species.

With red-listed status and both national and local biodiversity action plans in place the Twite now has the highest conservation priority possible. However in 2011 government spending reviews impacted on funding to Natural England, one of the joint partners in our local Twite Recovery Project. Whilst some of the shortfall in funding this year was made up by the other joint partner, the RSPB, the project unfortunately saw some aspects of research and monitoring

scaled back. One of these was the checking of known breeding colonies and inevitably little information was received via this route on our breeding birds in 2011. For Twite in the South Pennines generally, the project saw great efforts this year to try and get farmers whose land is within 2.5 kms of a known colony into agri-environment schemes, assuming any shortage of funds didn't inhibit this from happening too? Other initiatives included raising awareness of the highly damaging impact moorland fires have on breeding colonies and indeed as an example our own Chelburn Moor population suffered seriously damaged nesting habitat for three years in a row prior to this year. With little breeding information received this year, other than birds seen in suitable habitat, records were understandably a little thin on the ground.

Light Hazzles and environs: - there were 12 records in total, all in the first half of the year. Two were at Light Hazzles Reservoir on Mar 25th and five were there on Apr 20th. Two flew east over Cowberry Hill, Blackstone Edge on Apr 9th. Chelburn Moor reported two and three on Apr 14th and Apr 19th respectively. On Apr 21st, single birds were at Byron Edge and Warland Reservoir – the latter bird sporting a pink ring on its left leg. Two were at Blackstone Edge Fold on Apr 23rd, with one also there on Jun 11th. Also on this latter date three were at Cowberry Hill, Blackstone Edge, with another seen nearby at Cow Head Quarry. Finally three calling birds flew over Cowberry Hill, Blackstone Edge on Jun 16th.

Other sightings: a single bird at Audenshaw Reservoirs on Mar 29th was an excellent lowland record. Oldham borough reported two sightings this year, with two birds at Brun Clough Reservoir on Jun 18th and a quite exceptional local count of at least 20 but possibly as many as 40 Twite in a single flock in atlas tetrad SD90Y Dobcross on Aug 22nd.

Movements: migration watching on the Horwich Moors delivered six records of birds flying over. Spring saw one moving north-west over Smithills Moor on Mar 18th and one heading north over Georges Lane, Horwich on Mar 23rd. Autumn sightings consisted of seven flying west over Smithills Moor on Sep 19th and Georges Lane, Horwich logged single birds on the move on Oct 14th and on both 5th and 6th of November.

LESSER REDPOLL *Carduelis cabaret*

Uncommon resident and winter visitor.

BoCC Red List (BDp1, BDp2) and UK BAP species.

This delicate and rather retiring finch produced roughly the same number of sightings this year as in 2010 – around the 350 mark. Whilst these records were received from across Greater Manchester, wherever suitable feeding or breeding habitat was available, just short of three-quarters of all records were of five birds or less, re-enforcing the general impression of it being one of our more elusive finches to try and catch up with throughout our recording area. A request is made to all local bird watchers to report wherever possible all sightings of this red-listed bird, whilst not forgetting about our other red and amber-listed species too! The number of 20+ flock counts totalled 16 this year, slightly down on the 2008 figure of 18 but more significantly down on the totals of 23 and 21 reported in 2010 and 2009 respectively.

Early year counts: by some considerable margin the largest flock of the year was of 100 birds at Pearson's Flash on Jan 22nd. The observer interestingly noted that "several individuals in the flock displayed characteristics of Common (Mealy) Redpoll but none bore a full suite of features to confirm identification as this species". The areas around Red Moss, Horwich have regularly reported the presence of this species in recent county reports and in 2011 records were received from ten months, with the highest count in the early part of the year of 30 on the SSSI on Jan 23rd. Atlas surveyors reported 20 in tetrad SJ88D Newall Green on both Jan 31st and Feb 6th and 30 were at Highfield CP on Feb 12th. Other sightings included - 27 at Davenport Green on Jan 11th, 22 at Shell Pool NR on Feb 10th and 40 at Chat Moss on Apr 1st.

Breeding and surveys: the BBS statistics for England most encouragingly showed a 31% increase for the year 2010 - 2011 but sadly revealed a 10% decline for the longer period between 1995 - 2010. For perspective however, it should be noted that across the UK this species presence was recorded on only 6% of all the 3,222 plots surveyed this year, whilst the three commonest finches (Chaffinch, Greenfinch and Goldfinch) were present on between 92% and 63% of squares for the same area. Locally on the BBS there was another slight but nonetheless disappointing drop to just 4 (6%) plots recording this species, down on the 2010 figure, which itself was down on the 2009 figure. Astley Moss East (1/2), Brushes (2/0), Lostock West (3/7) and Ludworth Moor (3/2) were the four lucky squares recording birds on either early or late visits. Probable breeding was reported from seven sites (including six within the Wigan Flashes) and three atlas tetrads, and possible breeding from a further nine tetrads and six sites. Happily, breeding was actually confirmed in five locations, which were as follows: - an occupied nest in tetrad SJ69E Lightshaw on May 7th; adults carrying food at Red Moss SSSI, Horwich on Jun 24th; adults were observed feeding fledged young at three separate locations - in Whitesides Plantation, Crompton Moor on Jun 12th; at Lady Lees, Middle Naden (two begging young) on Jul 27th and at Hollingworth Lake (also two begging young) on Aug 21st. One observer also thought it likely that this species had bred on Ludworth Moor.

Late year counts: 25 were feeding in silver birches at Brown Stones Quarry, Smithills on Sep 10th; 30 visited Bickershaw Rucks on Sep 15th; Shell Pool NR reported further flocks there of 25 and 20 on Oct 16th and Nov 14th respectively; the Factory Hill area, Horwich had 20 feeding on alders on Oct 21st; December saw 20 at Ince Moss landfill, Wigan on 6th, 40 at Turner's Flash on 22nd and a good sized flock of 30 were again in the Red Moss area of Horwich on 26th. In both winter periods, small but not insignificant numbers visited garden feeders; a habit which is possibly becoming more common of late? One in an Upper Harwood garden on Jun 17th fed on niger seed. In Marple, 12 were regularly present in December, with a maximum of 15 on 30th, which included a returning male which had been ringed in the same garden in January of this year. A Romiley garden had a maximum of 12 on Dec 31st. A Rochdale garden held up to four in the first three months of the year. This seems an appropriate time to give due recognition to the 21 individuals or pairs of members of the Rochdale Field Naturalists' Society, who took their time to record and report on all of the birds (including finches) visiting their gardens this year. To them and indeed to all garden bird recorders a very big "thank you".

Movements: 143 flew over the Horwich Moors in spring (most in a northerly direction), with the last week of March and to a lesser extent the first week of April being the two main weeks for passage. A total of 275 flew over in autumn (this time perhaps not surprisingly, most heading southwards). Double-figure totals were reported on ten days in the first three weeks of October, with some selected highest counts of 30 and 25 travelling south on 3rd and south east on 4th respectively; 36 flew west-north-west on 13th and 24 again moved south on 21st.

COMMON REDPOLL *Carduelis flammea*

Scarce winter visitor.

Seven accepted records in 2011 was the best total for "Mealies" since 10 in 2008. All but one of the records were of single birds and all came in the first three months of the year. One was at Binn Green on Jan 7th (M. Rigby). Single birds were in a Hale Barns garden on Jan 18th and Feb 5th (H. Cook), who also found one at nearby Davenport Green on Jan 31st. A male was on the Horwich Moors on Feb 24th (A. Makin). Also in late February, two visited Scotman's Flash on 25th (D. Broome). The final record was of one at Hale on Mar 31st (V. Evans).

COMMON CROSSBILL *Loxia curvirostra*

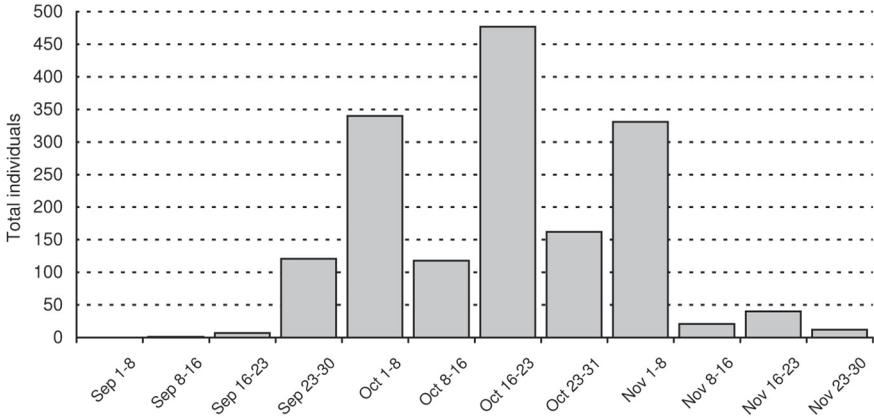
Uncommon passage migrant, with occasional winter influxes; possible rare breeder.

160 records were received for Crossbill this year - an exceptionally high total. There were no records before Mar 8th and all but six of the records came from the last seven months of the year. Once again, as in 2010, a range of sites across the Horwich Moors provided the most sightings, with approximately 75% of all records originating from there. A very high percentage of these records were of birds recorded in flight and are summarised separately in the paragraph on movements. It's fair to say that the series of sightings of flocks of Crossbills both flying over the Horwich Moors and down feeding in the local moorland plantations there generated a fair bit of healthy debate at that time. Questions were posed as to whether the same birds were possibly being counted over and over again, as they moved between their feeding areas or alternatively were movements purely of birds on passage? Or does it seem likely that there was some element of truth in both of these interpretations for all of the sightings involved? As with many other bird related conundrums the questions remained largely unanswered...at least for the time being! A handful of other sites/areas also recorded this species in 2011, with some excellent numbers reported from these other locations.

Counts/flocks: a single bird was at Binn Green on Mar 15th, with six there on May 7th. Seven (three males and four females) on Crompton Moor on Jun 4th preceded a sighting of five juveniles there on Jul 31st – a very nice reward for a dedicated local patch birder. Three females visited Watergrove Reservoir on Jun 4th. Ernocroft Wood at Etherow CP produced a good series of records in late June, starting on 17th with a flock of six of mixed ages and sexes; 13 were then reported on 18th, 15 on 19th, 10 on 22nd and six on 24th, which was to be the last sighting in this brief but productive flurry of Crossbill activity at this location. Activity in the Binn Green/Dove Stone area flared up again in July, with an excellent count of 38 there on 9th; the observer noting interestingly that this flock consisted of 80% juveniles and contained no adult males. 25 were still present on Jul 13th and 20 the following day. At Higher Meadows, Horwich 24 fed on larch cones on Sep 27th, one of several substantial flocks of birds down feeding in the plantations on the Bolton Moors towards the end of the year. Additional selected flocks included:- counts of 18 and 14 feeding on larch on Makinson Moor and Wilderswood, both on Oct 2nd; 15 were present in Walker Fold Woods on Oct 9th, with 45 there on Oct 20th observed feeding on spruce cones. Flocks of 50 and 21 in Walker Fold Woods and Higher Meadows, Horwich on Oct 29th and Nov 2nd respectively were once again feeding on conifer cones but this time the two fortunate observers were also treated to the lovely sight of watching birds drop down to quench their thirst in nearby streams. The final record of birds down in this area was of 30, once again in larches, at Wilderswood on Nov 7th. Towards the end of the year reports were once again received from the Dove Stone/Binn Green area with 23 present on Oct 23rd and two birds on Dec 3rd.

Movements: there were four records of small numbers flying over the Horwich Moors sites in March and April. Movements re-commenced in this area but on a much grander scale on Jul 11th and thereafter many records were received of birds on the move through until Dec 20th. The accompanying chart highlights the main weekly peaks of activity throughout October and the first week of November. During this enormous (possibly unprecedented?) period of movement, ten days recorded tallies of 50 or more birds flying over, with the highest daily total count of 118 logged on Oct 20th. At around the same time of the year a good series of sightings were reported from the Lonshaw, Billinge and Billinge Hill areas. All records of birds on the move from there came between Sep 25th and Nov 15th. 10 east/south-east on Sep 25th, 14 south-west on Oct 13th and 15 south-west on Oct 20th were the only double-figure tallies amongst the total of 15 records received from this area at this time. Elsewhere other isolated counts were of one moving over Highfield Moss, Lowton on Oct 8th and 14 flying low in strong southerly winds and heading west over the Wigan Flashes on Nov 2nd. A count of one flying over Shevington on Sep 26th was improved upon just two days later when 12

flew south over the same site. A single bird flying west over Davenport Green on Nov 3rd was a first record for Crossbill for that observer at that site.



Crossbill movements through the Horwich Moors 2011

BULLFINCH *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Fairly common resident.

BoCC Amber List (BDMp1, BDMp2) and UK BAP species.

Approximately 54% of all records received this year were as a direct result of birders diligently noting down those atlas tetrads in which our Bullfinches were present in the winter months and also throughout the breeding season. Many thanks to all those involved but please remember that the above statistic just emphasises how vital it is for us all to continue to submit our records for this and other species too, now that our atlas projects have sadly finished. There were 47 records with counts of six or more birds, by and large spread fairly evenly across our recording area and throughout most months of the year, with just a short gap in the records of these larger gatherings at the very height of the breeding season.

Early counts: a few selected records showed that birds turned up in a wide variety of locations and habitats. The relatively urban/suburban atlas tetrads of SD80A Lower Kersal, SD80F Higher Broughton, SJ88D Newall Green and SJ89D Bramhall Moor reported birds in January and February. In contrast, flocks in the first three months of the year at Carrington Moss; Chorlton WP; Davyhulme NR; Flixton; Hazel Grove Golf Course; Kenworthy Woods, Sale; Reddish Vale CP and Shell Pool NR perhaps more readily bring to mind more typical Bullfinch habitat. Several observers once again reported good counts of this species at Pennington Flash throughout the year. The Bunting Hide there has always been a reliable spot for viewing this species at close quarters – perhaps it's about time it was renamed the Finch Hide! The best count in the early part of the year, for this site as a whole, was of 15 on Apr 2nd.

Breeding and surveys: the fantastic efforts of atlas surveyors contributed enormously to a bumper total of 44 widely distributed tetrads and seven additional sites reporting confirmed breeding for this species in 2011. This was a whopping 59% increase on the 2010 total and sadly is a figure the likes of which we may never see again! The breeding season started early, with two singing males at Burrs CP on Jan 22nd and one at Higher Shore on the following day. The first report of nest building came from Milnrow in March. The first fledged young were seen in tetrad SD60G Hindley Green on May 12th and the last almost four months later in tetrad SD70J Tonge Fold on Sep 4th. The good news continued with 22 BBS (33%) squares in

Greater Manchester recording Bullfinches in 2011 compared to the 2010 figure of 19 (28%) squares, which itself was a nice improvement on the 2009 figure of 14 (21%) squares. One slight downside was that 17 of these 22 squares only recorded the presence of this rather shy species on just one of the visits and quite often then it was only of a single bird. The best performing plot was Clifton with 2/4 birds recorded on early/late visits. The slightly larger areas surveyed on the WBBS ensured that our three local plots - Douglas Valley, Hey Brook and Rochdale Canal - all saw at least one count of three birds.

Late counts: eight at Cutacre OCCS on Jul 10th was the first noteworthy post-breeding flock. Many of those sites already mentioned in the earlier part of the year reported the presence of small flocks again, through until the end of the year. In addition there were records from:- Abram Flashes; Adam Hill, Horwich (21 wintering birds feeding on the moors there on Dec 2nd was to be the highest count in Greater Manchester this year) ; tetrad SD90V Carrbrook; Etherow CP; Hardy Farm, Chorlton; Higher Meadows, Horwich; Mossley; Walkden and the Wigan Flashes. Late year counts at Pennington Flash produced totals of 12 there on Nov 26th and 13 on Dec 28th.

Movements: one observer recorded 131 moving over the Horwich Moors in the last quarter of the year, with the peak times for movement being the last three weeks of October, the first week of November and also the third week of December. 18 (mostly in ones and twos) heading west/south-west over Burnt Edge, Horwich on Oct 13th was the highest daily total.

HAWFINCH *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Rare visitor; has bred.

BoCC Red List (BDp1) and UK BAP species.

2011 was to be a quite outstanding year, with four accepted records for this rare and enigmatic finch. This century it has only graced us with its presence and featured in our county bird reports for the years 2000, 2006 and most recently in 2009. Autumn visible migration watching on the Horwich Moors showed that quite unexpected rewards can sometimes come right out of the blue...when any thick mist eventually lifts! An observer at Dean Ditch, Smithills Moor had the thrilling experience of watching a single calling bird flying west on Sep 18th and this was then followed and bettered on Sep 28th by what must have been a really astonishing sight of a flock of 10 heading southwards over the very same site! On the following day, Sep 29th, three birds were observed briefly in tree tops at Georges Lane, Horwich before being seen to fly off towards Wallsuches. All three of these sightings were courtesy of and credited to A. Makin - some justifiable and tangible reward for all the many hours, often in difficult weather conditions, that he put in this year counting birds on migration, at these sometimes bleak moorland sites. Another observer, again watching birds on passage, was also treated to the special sight of one in flight, when it flew over Orrell WP on Oct 1st (P.Alker).

SNOWBUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

BoCC Amber List species (BR).

Findings of these birds, sometimes affectionately referred to as "snowflakes" are always a special treat in Greater Manchester and are guaranteed to attract the attentions of many other local bird watchers. This year all but one of the sightings came from the Horwich Moors area and it seems possible that they may well comprise repeat viewings of a very small number of birds. Three birds, one male and two females/immatures, were on Smithills Moor on Oct 28th. Two birds, a male and a female, flew separately over Georges Lane, Horwich on Nov 6th, with one also observed flying high north-west on Nov 17th. A male was found on Winter Hill, Horwich on Dec 3rd and for much of that month it kept some of those keen year, life and

county listers very firmly on their toes as it spent its time bordering the county boundary between Greater Manchester and Lancashire, only spending some of its time on the “right” side of the boundary! A male also seen in this area on the following day, was thought by the observer to have been a different bird. A male seen by several observers in the same locale on Dec 10th, was feeding on seed kindly put down by birders to try and help it survive the wintry conditions prevailing at that time. The last received record from there this year was of two flying over on Dec 18th. The only other sighting away from this location was from the far north-east of our recording area, with three at Standedge on Dec 26th, yet another site very close to the county boundary but this time the one between our county and Yorkshire.

LAPLAND BUNTING *Calcarius lapponicus*

Rare winter visitor and passage migrant.

BoCC Amber List species (WR).

There was to be just a single record this year, with the adult male that had been found at Daisy Hill, Westhoughton in the last few days of December 2010 lingering in the same area for the first three days of January 2011 (P. Rhodes *et al*).

YELLOWHAMMER *Emberiza citrinella*

Fairly common resident.

BoCC Red List (BDp1, BDp2) and UK BAP species.

2011 saw a significant number of records for Yellowhammer being generated by field studies undertaken throughout the final few months of our latest four year national and local atlas projects. Our last published atlas “Breeding Birds in Greater Manchester” from the period 1979 – 1983 stated for Yellowhammer that “our map shows that a serious contraction in distribution has occurred in the last 30 - 50 years”. A thorough review of the locations of sightings for this year sadly suggests that this contraction looks as if it has continued since the time of our last atlas, with many of the areas further east in our recording area appearing to have either now lost their local populations or for them to have become reduced in size and extent. Once again, a perhaps unhealthy high proportion of records came from our mosslands areas and thus a request is hereby made for observers to submit all records for Yellowhammers from locations outside of their known favoured haunts.

Early year counts: early January saw counts in the Astley Moss area of 70 and 80 on 1st and 4th respectively. Gillibrands Farm, Daisy Hill also reported some large flocks in January – selected counts there included: - 60 on 1st, 50 on 6th and 40 on 26th, with 32 still present on Mar 4th. Elsewhere, 30 were at Carrington Moss on Jan 3rd; 15 at Pickley Green on Jan 4th; 25 at Worsley View Farm, Irlam Moss on Jan 26th, with 21 there on Mar 9th. 15 at Carrington Moss on Mar 14th and 15 at Borsdane Wood, Hindley on Mar 16th were the last substantial counts in the early part of the year. In our most recent county reports, small residual populations have been reported from around the Bredbury area and from the Outwood/Ringley Valley area. Pleasingly, records were received from the former location for the first nine months of the year and breeding was confirmed there too, but sadly for the latter location, no records were received at all in 2011.

Breeding and surveys: atlas bird watchers helped contribute most significantly towards a quite excellent total of 15 tetrads and three additional sites with confirmed breeding this year. The breeding season “kicked off” with singing birds at Pickley Green in early March; males then sang through until late August. March and April saw many reports of pairs or birds holding territory in their traditional breeding locations. The first confirmed breeding record was of an occupied nest in tetrad SD51K Shevington Moor on May 16th and the last of a nest with eggs, perhaps surprisingly on as late a date as Jul 30th. There was a slight but welcome increase in

the number of local BBS squares detecting Yellowhammer this year. There was an increase from nine plots (13%) to 10 plots (15%). Worthington was by far and away the top performing square with 14/10 birds recorded on early/late visits and notably the only plot to record a double-figure count. 35 territories were assessed on Chat Moss this year, a figure broadly in-line with the totals from the last three years (D. Steel).

Late year counts: post-breeding flocks disappointingly appeared to be lower in size than those reported in the early part of the year and once again their locations showed a westerly bias. 25 were at Borsdane Wood, Hindley on Jul 10th; 18 at Cadishead Moss on Aug 11th; 20 at Gillibrands Farm, Daisy Hill on Oct 2nd; 30 at Bradley Lane, Standish on Oct 25th; 23 at Carrington Moss on Oct 30th and 20 at Little Woolden Moss on Dec 18th.

REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Fairly common resident and partial migrant.

BoCC Amber List (BDMp2) and UK BAP species.

The Reed Bunting with possibly greater flexibility than the Yellowhammer with regard to its feeding and breeding habitat requirements is more widely dispersed across our county. However once again, many of the double-figure counts from this year originated from a few favoured sites, especially from those being carefully watched over by some of our dedicated local patch recorders! A number of these sites (some as expected from our mosslands) will be familiar and repeat names to many, having been frequently mentioned in several of our more recent county bird reports. Notwithstanding this, records for this species came from a much greater range of sites from across our recording area than say Yellowhammer but often in small numbers, especially and perhaps not surprisingly during the breeding season.

Counts: Little Woolden Moss saw several counts in the first two months of the year, with a maximum of 41 there on Jan 12th. Other early January records were of 10 at Cooper Turning on 3rd; and 15 at Astley Road, Chat Moss on 13th. Late January saw reports of 15 at Worsley View Farm, Irlam Moss on 26th and 25 at Gillibrands Farm, Daisy Hill on 30th. February brought further mosslands records, when 10 were at Chat Moss on 24th and 16 at Irlam Moss on 24th. 17 were at Carrington Moss on Mar 14th and 12 in the Astley Moss area on Mar 21st and several of the sites previously mentioned thereafter reported further double-figure counts throughout this month and during April too. Flock sizes then diminished as the breeding season commenced, with 12 at Irlam Moss on Aug 6th the first post-breeding count of any note. This site also saw several other double-figure counts through until November. 12 feeding in a stubble field at the northern end of Heaton Park on Dec 10th were noteworthy and 15 were at Little Woolden Moss on Dec 18th. One site in particular - the Red Moss area of Horwich - produced an excellent series of counts, mostly but not all coming outside of the breeding season, with 20 on Mar 19th being the best count in the early part of the year. Up to 7 singing males were reported at this site and breeding was confirmed there too. Post-breeding flock counts at this site were both more numerous and larger, with 60 on Sep 15th being the best, although 34, 39 and 30 on Oct 15th, Oct 26th and Nov 12th respectively were all worthy of recognition. Acknowledgment is also due to the many bird watchers at other locations across Greater Manchester, who sent in records from across the year from sites that quite often just failed to reach the double-figure numbers mentioned above. These well-watched sites included:- Altrincham ETW; Audenshaw Reservoirs; Barlow Tip/Chorlton WP; Bickershaw Rucks; Castleshaw Reservoirs; Crime Lake, Failsworth; Cutacre OCCS; Doffcocker Lodge; Dover Basin; Elton Reservoir and environs; Hollingworth Lake; Lightshaw Meadows; Pennington Flash; Pickley Green; Rumworth Lodge; Sale WP and Woodford Aerodrome. At least their best efforts haven't gone unnoticed and unmentioned! Credit too for those keen on counting birds in their gardens and who took their time to report this species visiting gardens in small numbers at Egerton, Flixton, Littleborough, Milnrow, Oldham and Rochdale.

Breeding and surveys: Reed Bunting was detected on only 16 (24%) local BBS plots this year – a drop from 30% in 2010 to 24% this year, which itself was slightly down on the 2009 figure. For England as a whole the BBS saw a decline of 8% for the year 2010 – 2011 and this will dent somewhat the marked positive recovery of 28% reported for the period 1995 – 2010. Our best producing squares, with counts on early/late visits were: Amberswood (5/4), Caldermoor (2/5), Trub (3/4) and Worthington (5/2). More positive news however on the breeding front was of yet another cracking total of 37 atlas tetrads and one additional site that reported confirmed breeding in 2011, a slight increase on the 2010 figure. Records were logged between May 9th (a nest with eggs) on Irlam Moss and Aug 17th (fledged young) in tetrad SD60A Abram Flashes. A total of 31 territories were reported as being held in the Wigan Flashes. All three local WBBS plots reported the presence of this species this year and although Douglas Valley found only a single bird on the late visit, the Hey Brook site recorded excellent totals of 10 birds on both the early and late visits.

Movements: a total of 113 birds were reported on autumn passage over the Horwich Moors, with the middle two weeks of October noted as the peak time for movement. The highest daily counts were of 32 flying south-east on Oct 13th and 13 heading south on Oct 15th. 12 flew south-west over Heaton Park Reservoir on Oct 14th.

CORN BUNTING *Emberiza calandra*

Uncommon resident.

BoCC Red List (HD2, BDp1, BDp2, SPEC) and UK BAP species.

The Corn Buntings strong association with arable farmland has probably always afforded it limited opportunities in our urbanised county and perhaps even more so when also taking into account the relative predominance of pastoral farming in our uplands and in the east of our recording area. Nationally this species has been “under pressure” for several decades now and surveys have suggested that the population dropped alarmingly by over 90% in the thirty year period between the early 1970s and the start of this century. For 2011 our local records show that we still have small residual populations in the south and west of our recording area, being part of broader based populations covering some parts of Lancashire, Merseyside and north Cheshire...but for how much longer? Biological diversity is important but equally so is biological abundance and we must all hope that our local populations don't diminish to levels from which they cannot recover. The 2011 records however made for continued gloomy reading, containing just 45 records in total; with just one double-figure count therein and with the remaining 46 records all being of four birds or less with most records being of singles. Once again a request is made for observers to submit details of all of their sightings for this hard-pressed species.

Early year counts: a single male that had been discovered in the Daisy Hill area in late December 2010 remained there through until Jan 12th. 15 on Carrington Moss on Jan 3rd turned out to be the only double-figure count received this year. Other mosslands records included three in tetrad SJ79K Carrington Moss on Jan 6th; four at Astley Road, Chat Moss on Feb 17th; four at Little Woolden Moss on Feb 21st.

Breeding and surveys: breeding was considered possible at Hall Lane, Aspull and in tetrad SJ79C Irlam Moss, with birds in suitable habitat on May 6th and Jul 26th respectively. Singing males were reported from six sites and one atlas tetrad, with possibly some overlap between them, as indeed there may well be for some other records for this species too. One songster was present at Highfield Moss, Lowton on seven dates between Apr 17th and Jul 20th, indicating an established territory there. Other probable breeding activity was reported from atlas tetrads SJ78P Oldfield Brow and SJ79K Carrington Moss. The only confirmed breeding this year came from atlas tetrad SJ79I Barton Moss on Jun 11th. David Steel's long-standing and invaluable annual survey of several species of breeding bird on Chat Moss and some of its

constituent mosslands estimated there to be just five Corn Bunting territories there this year. This total is down on the figures for 2010, 2009 and 2008, which were nine, 12 and 13 territories respectively. Further evidence of this species local decline is apparent, when this most recent figure is compared to an average count of 19 territories for the ten year period from 2000 to 2009. Although never a common bird on our local BBS surveys, it's sad to report that for the fourth year in succession this species went undetected on any local plots.

Late year counts: this species is one of our later breeders and may still lay eggs as late as early August (BTO Nest Record Scheme), so it's possible that three sightings from Little Woolden Moss in that month, with a maximum count of three there on 5th, might possibly be birds still going about their breeding duties? The only record after August also came from this same site, when two birds were there on Nov 10th

Escapes, Introduced, Released & Feral Species

Records of escaped, introduced, released and feral species were relatively few this year, especially as known birds remained in the county but went seemingly unrecorded. We would therefore urge observers to submit all sightings of such species, which remain important to enable us to continue to monitor their status.

BLACK SWAN *Cygnus atratus*

One was in the Langtree tetrad SD51Q on May 16th.

BAR-HEADED GOOSE *Anser indicus*

At least one bird was seen at Pennington Flash on six dates between Jan 27th and Apr 6th. Castleshaw Reservoirs played host to a single of this attractive goose on Jun 11th.

EMBDEN GOOSE *Anser sp.*

A single was at Platt Fields Park from Jan 2nd to at least Jun 16th and two were at Audenshaw Reservoirs on Jan 9th. Heaton Park Boating Lake maintained the largest numbers as usual with 31 on Jan 11th and Sep 3rd, whilst Red Moss SSSI had two from Apr 17th-22nd and a single on May 6th. Five were at Reddish Vale on Apr 18th.

SNOW GOOSE *Anser caerulescens*

A white morph adult flew low south over Audenshaw Reservoirs on Apr 10th.

RUDDY SHELDUCK *Tadorna ferruginea*

A pair was at Pennington Flash on Jul 2nd.

MUSCOVY DUCK *Cairina moschata*

All records were of single birds unless otherwise stated. Barton on Irwell from Jan 12th to Apr 16th; BBS Ringway Jun 14th; Dumplington on May 22nd; Etherow CP two on Nov 10th;

Heaton Park Boating Lake had four on Jan 11th, Oct 3rd and Dec 9th; Pennington Flash on Nov 26th, Dec 2nd and 28th (though this male was present but seemingly unrecorded throughout the year?); Platt Fields Park on Jan 2nd and 9th, Mar 30th, Apr 23rd and Jun 16th; on the Manchester, Bolton and Bury Canal at Radcliffe Town Centre on Mar 20th; Reddish Vale, recorded in every month of the year from Jan 6th to Dec 31st; Summit, on the Rochdale Canal, Apr 23rd; Worthington Lakes on Mar 6th.

CHILOE WIGEON *Anas sibilatrix*

One was at Queen's Park, Heywood from Jan 13th to Mar 28th. Probably the same bird was seen nearby on the River Roch at Crimble on May 24th.

RINGED TEAL *Callonetta leucophrys*

Pairs of this attractive little duck were at Gorton on Jan 4th and Fletcher Moss Gardens on Feb 19th, with a single at Cheadle Bridge on Jun 20th and at Edgeley Reservoirs Aug 7th.

HELMETED GUINEAFOWL *Numida meleagris*

One was at Mossley on Jul 31st, having escaped from a local farm. Another appeared to be sitting on a nest beneath a hedge at Lodge Farm, Horwich May 8th.

WHITE STORK *Ciconia ciconia*

A single bird, presumed to belong to one of the practically annual spring wandering escapees, was over Elton Reservoir on Apr 17th.

SACRED IBIS *Threskiornis aethiopicus*

A wandering individual visited Woodford on Apr 27th and Altrincham ETW on Apr 29th.

FLAMINGO sp. *Phoenicopterus sp.*

A Flamingo, thought probably to be a Lesser Flamingo *Phoenicopterus minor*, was on the grass alongside one of the runways at Manchester International Airport on the evening on Jul 3rd. The next day it remained present and was considered to be a danger to aircraft such was its proximity to the runway, eventually forcing a complete closure for five hours! Despite the airport staff's best attempts the bird avoided capture and eventually flew off around midday.

RED-TAILED HAWK *Buteo jamaicensis*

One was flying over Chadderton Cemetery on Apr 1st.

HARRIS HAWK *Parabuteo unicinctus*

One was found dead at Pearson's Flash Jan 2nd, its jesses had become entangled with a barbed wire fence. Four escaped from a shed in Bredbury on Aug 4th. It seems possible therefore that a single bird seen in the roughly same area on Aug 19th might well have been one of these four escapees?

EAGLE OWL *Bubo bubo*

A single was reported in Bury on Oct 21st.

COCKATIEL *Nymphicus hollandicus*

A Grey Cockatiel was on telecoms masts at Oldham Edge on Jul 25th, with another, probably the same species, heard calling nearby.

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Manx Shearwater, DW Stadium, Wigan, September (Kath Butler)

Early and Late Dates for Migrants in 2011

(Excluding presumed wintering/summering individuals)

SUMMER VISITORS	Earliest arrival in 2011	Earliest arrival ever	Latest departure in 2011	Latest departure ever
Garganey	25th Apr	6th Mar 94	19th Sep	2nd Nov 93
Osprey	20th Mar	15th Mar 07	9th Sep	12th Oct 01
Little Ringed Plover	16th Mar	17th Feb 99	30th Aug	2nd Oct 86
Whimbrel	15th Apr	13th Feb 95	10th Sep	7th Nov 07
Common Sandpiper	16th Mar	13th Mar 03	5th Oct	28th Nov 92
Common Tern	10th Apr	24th Mar 08	14th Sep	5th Nov 89
Cuckoo	14th Apr	20th Mar 77	31st Aug	27th Sep 81
Swift	20th Apr	13th Apr 96	21st Sep	15th Nov 04
Sand Martin	12th Mar	7th Mar 94/03	23rd Sep	17th Nov 86
Swallow	25th Mar	2nd Mar 97	4th Nov	26th Nov 97
House Martin	22nd Mar	16th Mar 93/97	14th Oct	20th Nov 85
Willow Warbler	25th Mar	10th Mar 93/94	26th Sep	25th Nov 84
Garden Warbler	9th Apr	7th Apr 98	15th Sep	20th Nov 82
Lesser Whitethroat	7th Apr	7th Apr 11	26th Sep	30th Sep 96
Whitethroat	9th Apr	28th Mar 98	30th Sep	9th Oct 78
Grasshopper Warbler	7th Apr	7th Apr 10	Aug 31st	23rd Nov 81
Sedge Warbler	10th Apr	7th Apr 10	Aug 6th	28th Oct 82
Reed Warbler	10th Apr	4th Apr 03	Sep 15th	10th Oct 80/94
Ring Ouzel	8th Apr	8th Mar 86	13th Nov	26th Nov 05
Whinchat	14th Apr	31st Mar 85	1st Oct	30th Oct 93/05
Wheatear	13th Mar	4th Mar 03	11th Nov	16th Dec 00
Yellow Wagtail	7th Apr	29th March 03	28th Sep	23rd October 84
Tree Pipit	22nd Apr	31st Mar 98	15th Sep	5th Nov 96
WINTER VISITORS	Earliest arrival in 2011	Earliest arrival ever	Latest departure in 2011	Latest departure ever
Fieldfare	1st Oct	16th Aug 08	2nd May	31st May 82/08
Redwing	1st Oct	1st Sep 89	2nd Apr	15th May 99
Brambling	4th Oct	28th Sep 07	17th Apr	7th May 78

Report on Bird Ringing in Greater Manchester for 2011

Steve Christmas

Numbers of birds ringed nationally increased again from the record year in 2010 and this was also reflected in Greater Manchester. Totals of most finches and all the common tits were increased, possibly indicating greater use of artificial foods during winter following a good breeding season.

Some excellent Sedge Warbler controls indicated the southward autumnal movement of birds soon after ringing, including an adult bird particularly far to the east in Belgium. Two Reed Warblers and a Blackcap were recaptured further south and east later in the autumn. However, the Swallow ringed at Spurn (East Yorkshire) in August was apparently taking its time to move south, being recaptured at Orrell three weeks later. The adult controlled at Orrell had been ringed three years earlier in Sussex as a juvenile and must have made the journey to and from Africa six times! The Swallow controlled during the breeding season in the Scottish Borders illustrates the origin of some of the birds passing through the county in autumn. A good series of Sand Martin controls included birds moving through France as well as the first Portuguese-ringed bird to be recaptured in the UK, which was nesting at Shakerley the following season.

2010/11 was a Waxwing invasion winter and a bird ringed in the autumn in Aberdeen sadly met its end by hitting a window in Stretford in March. A Starling from Garstang found dead over 16 years later would have almost broken the UK longevity record except for the fact that it was long dead when reported. Also close to the UK longevity record was a Swinton-ringed Long-tailed Tit which survived into its 8th year. Coal Tits are only rarely recorded moving great distances so one ringed in mid-winter and moving north into Lancashire by early spring was a surprise.

A fascinating set of Lesser Redpoll controls included two ringed at Dobcross in June and caught at the same site near Malvern (Hereford and Worcester) the following autumn. Another ringed in October at Orrell had moved to Kent 15 days later. Although the Twite ringing project run by the RSPB in the Pennines did not carry on in 2011, a good series of sightings were received of nestlings from 2009 and 2010 subsequently wintering on the East Coast. A long distance Reed Bunting control from Wiltshire had already moved over 200km north by late March.

A nestling Common Tern from the Doffcocker colony was controlled in Spain in the autumn. A Lesser Black-backed Gull from a Ribble colony was sighted at the same location before being resighted at Pearsons Flash in a later summer. There were several other useful sightings of colour ringed birds, including two well-travelled Cormorants originating from inland colonies further south. Black-headed Gulls continued to provide a series of long distance sightings, mainly of birds ringed in Eastern Europe, but also including two ringed in British colonies and resighted in their first winter. A Coot originally caught at Southport (Lancashire) during a cold spell was sighted in Bramhall in the spring before moving south to Slimbridge (Gloucestershire) by the autumn.

The only Peregrine ringed this year in the City Centre sadly came to grief at Birkenhead in August. A nestling Buzzard from Marple had also moved in the same general direction. A Barn Owl had crossed the Pennines and was found dead in Leigh following a spell of cold weather. Another casualty was a Scottish Pied Wagtail found in Stockport later in the autumn.

The Blackbird originally ringed at Spurn (East Yorkshire) in October may well have been of Scandinavian origin, as presumably was the Brambling recaptured at Orrell later in the winter.

Two interesting Goldfinch recoveries were received: one ringed in Buckinghamshire in winter was found dead the following autumn in Bury, while another had moved from the Isle of Man to Orrell in only 16 days. Even more rapid was the Siskin which had relocated to the Scottish Highlands in five days in March.

Thanks to all ringers who have contributed data: Leigh Ringing Group, South Manchester Ringing Group and North West Swan Study Group. Further details of ringing totals and recoveries affecting the county and the rest of the UK can be found on the BTO web site: <http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/ringing/publications/online-ringing-reports>

Ongoing colour ringing schemes within Greater Manchester and contact details are as follows:

Mute Swan	weshalton@btinternet.com
Coot	kanebrides@gmail.com
Black-headed Gull	kanebrides@gmail.com
Dipper	tony.wilkinson@tantronics.co.uk
Starling	kanebrides@gmail.com
Tree Sparrow	se.christmas@ntlworld.com

For all other species, colour ring sightings can be reported via: <http://www.cr-birding.be/>

Birds with metal rings only can be reported at: <http://blx1.bto.org/euring/main/>

Greater Manchester Ringing Totals

Species	2010	2011	Species	2010	2011
Mute Swan	71	78	Barn Owl	18	4
Canada Goose	107	98	Tawny Owl	4	11
Mallard	2	1	Long-eared Owl	3	5
Mandarin Duck	-	1	Swift	6	1
Tufted Duck	2	-	Kingfisher	4	1
Grey Heron	7	3	Gt. Spot. Woodpecker	15	16
Sparrowhawk	7	13	Sand Martin	69	65
Buzzard	-	5	Swallow	759	685
Kestrel	4	33	House Martin	177	280
Merlin	-	4	Meadow Pipit	92	11
Hobby	-	3	Grey Wagtail	26	13
Peregrine	12	1	Pied Wagtail	23	4
Water Rail	-	1	Waxwing	36	7
Coot	177	31	Dipper	65	78
Lapwing	12	9	Wren	48	57
Woodcock	1	-	Dunnock	76	116
Black-headed Gull	6	5	Robin	101	142
Common Tern	26	15	Blackbird	141	158
Stock Dove	3	3	Fieldfare	-	3
Woodpigeon	13	24	Song Thrush	22	21
Collared Dove	5	10	Redwing	2	12

Species	2010	2011	Species	2010	2011
Mistle Thrush	2	-	Jackdaw	2	1
Grasshopper Warbler	5	8	Raven	4	-
Sedge Warbler	109	68	Starling	68	77
Reed Warbler	262	289	House Sparrow	15	6
Blackcap	32	99	Tree Sparrow	6	13
Garden Warbler	-	4	Chaffinch	337	514
Lesser Whitethroat	-	1	Brambling	17	74
Whitethroat	35	30	Greenfinch	116	331
Chiffchaff	35	124	Goldfinch	334	546
Willow Warbler	64	74	Siskin	10	88
Goldcrest	28	100	Linnet	4	43
Long-tailed Tit	154	216	Twite	77	-
Blue Tit	707	851	Common Redpoll	-	1
Great Tit	427	555	Lesser Redpoll	82	241
Coal Tit	80	123	Comm/Lesser Redpoll 3		1
Willow Tit	14	31	Bullfinch	131	139
Nuthatch	25	28	Yellowhammer	22	34
Treecreeper	5	28	Reed Bunting	157	106
Jay	9	6			
Magpie	9	4	Total	5,529	6,903

Selected ringing recoveries affecting Greater Manchester

Ringing terminology:

Pullus (Pulli): young bird(s) ringed in the nest or close to the nest and only able to fly weakly.

Control (Controlled): previously ringed birds which have been re-trapped and had their rings read in the hand.

Mute Swan

W27169	Adult	10.02.11	Stratford-on-Avon, Warwicks
	Ring read	22.05.11	Horrocks Flash, Wigan, 161km NNW

Teal

ET04809	2nd year ♂	19.02.02	Pennington Flash
	Shot	30.10.03	Appleton Thorn, Warrington, 17km S

Cormorant

G1781	Nestling	26.04.09	Abberton Reservoir
Orange CIF	Ring read	23.05.10	Tittesworth Res, Staffs, 241km NW
	Ring read	16.07.10	Farnham GP, N Yorks, 292km NNW
	Ring read	16.11.11	Roman Lakes, Marple, 263km NW

5247524	Nestling	11.05.11	Rutland Water
	Ring read	24.07.11	Horrocks Flash, Wigan, 159km NW
	Ring read	02.08.11	Foxcote Res, Bucks, 75km SSW

Grey Heron

1293461	Nestling	26.04.03	Botany Bay Wood, Worsley
	Dead	25.08.10	Ormskirk, Lancs, 34km WNW

Buzzard

GC49800	Nestling	16.06.09	Marple, Stockport
	Dead	11.04.11	Fiddler's Ferry, Cheshire, 40km W

Peregrine

GR21354	Nestling	18.05.11	Manchester
	Dead (car)	31.08.11	Birkenhead, 55km WSW

Coot

GR05415	Adult	11.01.10	Marine Lake, Southport
	Rings read	15.10.11	High Rid Reservoir, Bolton, 34km E
GR25063	1st year	30.11.10	Marine Lake, Southport
	Rings read	28.03.11	New House Pond, Bramhall, 65km ESE
	Rings read	07.10.11	Slimbridge, Gloucs, 217km S
GR24381	1st year	17.10.10	Stanley Park, Blackpool
	Rings read	27.02.11	Doffcocker, Bolton, 44km E
GR03989	Adult	06.01.10	Farnworth
	Rings read	27.01.11	Martin Mere, Burscough, Lancs, 33km W
GR25060	Adult	30.11.10	Marine Lake, Southport
	Rings read	05.05.11	Pennington Flash, 35km E

Black-headed Gull

3612697	Adult	31.03.04	Ruusbroecstraat, Leeuwarden, NETHERLANDS
	Ring read	29.11.10	Farnworth, 543km W
56439	Nestling	15.06.08	Jekabpils, LATVIA
	Ring read	11.11.10	Farnworth, 1829km W
3670357	Nestling	13.06.09	Schelpeneiland, Vogelplas Starrevaart, NETHERLANDS
	Ring read	17.02.10	Farnworth, 487km WNW

FN77859	Adult	02.05.10	Swinoujscie Port, Zachodniopomorskie, POLAND
	Ring read	28.09.10	Pennington Flash, 1107km W
EW74366	Nestling	12.06.10	Attenborough Nature Reserve, Notts
	Ring read	21.09.10	Ashton-in-Makerfield, 115km NNW
6H7415	Adult	19.03.11	Svanemollebugten, Copenhagen, DENMARK
	Ring read	15.08.11	Farnworth, 993km WSW
6H8050	Nestling	05.06.10	Hirsholm, Frederikshavn, DENMARK
	Ring read	16.02.11	Pennington Flash, 941km WSW
EY02115	Nestling	08.06.11	Killington Reservoir, Cumbria
	Ring read	24.11.11	Hindley, 90km S

Lesser Black-backed Gull

GH98582	1st year	12.09.00	near Bury
	Rings read	08.10.02	Hempstead, Gloucester, 193km S
	Rings read	10.12.05	Churchbridge, Cannock, Staffs, 104km S
	Rings read	31.01.11	Priorslee, Telford, Shrops, 101km S
GA32963	Nestling	24.07.07	Banks Marsh, Ribble
	Rings read	11.09.08	Marisma del Odiel, Huelva, SPAIN, 1855km S
	Rings read	20.07.10	Stoke Orchard, Gloucs
	Rings read	24.07.11	Pearsons Flash, Wigan, 28km SE

Common Tern

SR90817	Nestling	24.06.10	Doffcocker, Bolton
	Controlled	11.09.10	Marismas Del Odiel, Huelva, SPAIN, 1845km SSW

Barn Owl

GF36616	Nestling	16.06.09	Broomhill, Barnsley, S Yorks
	Dead	24.01.11	Leigh, 77km W

Sand Martin

L190689	Adult ♂	15.06.10	Shakerley, Atherton
	Controlled	24.08.10	Etang de la Horre, Lentilles, Aube, FRANCE, 749km S
L451555	1st year	18.07.10	Roundhouse Quarry Farm, Wilts
	Controlled	19.06.11	Shakerley, Atherton, 211km NNW

6478040	1st year	12.08.10	Massereau, Frossay, Loire-Atlantique, FRANCE
	Controlled	07.08.11	Worsley, 698km
A310342	1st year	21.08.10	Lagoa de Santo Andre, Setubal, PORTUGAL
	Controlled ♀	19.06.11	Shakerley, Atherton, 1782km NNE
Swallow			
X129569	1st year	28.08.08	Pett Level, Sussex
	Controlled ♂	09.09.11	Longshaw, Orrell, 371km NW
L624697	1st year	12.09.10	Worsley
	Controlled	29.07.11	Langhill, Dumfries & Galloway, 190km NNW
Y040663	1st year	20.08.11	Spurn Point, Yorks
	Controlled	10.09.11	Longshaw, Orrell, 187km W
Coal Tit			
L853069	2nd year	23.01.11	Dales Brow, Swinton
	Controlled	15.03.11	Moor Piece, Lancashire, 44km N
Willow Tit			
X925693	Juvenile	27.06.11	Bryn Marsh, Wigan
	Controlled	24.07.11	Longshaw, nr Orrell, 6km W
Long-tailed Tit			
ALL918	Full grown	28.02.04	Dales Brow, Swinton
	Dead	13.05.11	Dales Brow, Swinton, 7+ years
ATY569	Full grown	04.09.10	Bryn Marsh, Wigan
	Controlled	11.10.10	Meols, Wirral, 38km WSW
	Controlled	21.03.11	Meols, Wirral
	Controlled	10.04.11	Meols, Wirral
Sedge Warbler			
X849731	1st year	21.07.10	Walcot, nr Wellington, Shrops
	Controlled ♂	04.06.11	Scotman's Flash, Wigan, 91km N
Y259091	1st year	26.06.11	Worsley
	Controlled	25.07.11	West Bexington, Dorset, 316km S
X925823	Adult ♀	15.07.11	Bryn Marsh, Wigan Flashes
	Controlled	10.08.11	Heesert, West Vlaanderen, BELGIUM, 512km SE

X925843	1st year	21.07.11	Scotman's Flash, Wigan
	Controlled	31.07.11	Hengistbury Head, Bournemouth, Dorset, 317km S
Reed Warbler			
X924076	1st year	22.08.11	Scotman's Flash, Wigan
	Controlled	17.09.11	Pitsea Marsh, Essex, 306km SE
X925965	1st year	06.08.11	Scotman's Flash, Wigan
	Controlled	15.08.11	Tour Aux Moutons, Donges, FRANCE, 690km S
Blackcap			
V070668	1st year ♀	22.07.11	Longshaw, nr Orrell
	Controlled	09.09.11	Sandwich Bay, Kent, 374km SE
Willow Warbler			
DJN249	1st year	12.08.10	Martinstown, nr Dorchester, Dorset
	Dead	10.04.11	Marple, 300km N
Waxwing			
NW50268	1st year ♂	28.11.10	Rosemount, Aberdeen
	Dead (glass)	04.03.11	Stretford, 414km S
Starling			
RR28596	2nd year ♂	02.03.95	nr Forton, Garstang, Lancs
	Long dead	21.09.11	Walkden, 57km SE; 16+ years
Blackbird			
LA10928	1st year ♀	14.10.09	Gibraltar Point, Lincs
	Dead (cat)	07.03.11	Gower Hey Wood, Hyde, 164km WNW
Pied/WhiteWagtail			
Y127834	1st year	30.08.11	East Kilbride, Glasgow
	Dead	07.10.11	Heald Green, Stockport, 297km SSE
Chaffinch			
L624819	1st year ♀	28.09.10	Shakerley, Atherton
	Controlled	12.02.11	Hightown, Merseyside, 38km W
Brambling			
L654427	1st year ♀	09.10.10	Kilnsea Clays, Humberside
	Controlled	29.01.11	Longshaw, nr Orrell, 189km W

Greenfinch

TR30802	1st year ♂	11.08.11	Thornton, Merseyside
	Controlled	30.10.11	Longshaw, nr Orrell, 21km E

Goldfinch

L277430	1st year ♀	04.12.10	Thornton, Merseyside
	Controlled	18.09.11	Orrell Reservoirs, Orrell, 21km E
L606324	1st year	26.12.10	Iver Heath, Bucks
	Dead	09.09.11	Bury, 258km NNW
L642473	2nd year ♂	27.02.11	Walkden
	Controlled	28.04.11	New Laithe Farm, Newton, Lancs, 47km N
Y376300	1st year	12.10.11	Point of Ayre, Isle of Man
	Controlled	28.10.11	Longshaw, nr Orrell, 146km SE; 16 days

Siskin

X658827	2nd year ♀	03.03.11	Stalybridge
	Controlled	25.04.11	Derwent Valley, Derbys, 23km ESE
X657399	2nd year ♀	21.03.11	near Manchester Airport
	Controlled	26.03.11	Lohead Croft, Raemoir, Grampian, 414km N; 5 days

Twite

T938535	Adult ♂	21.03.09	Light Hazzles Reservoir
	Rings read	27.09.09	Britannia Quarries, Lancs, 9km W
	Rings read	22.08.10	Worsthorne Moor, Lancs, 13km NNW
	Rings read	14.02.11	Leverton, Lincs, 165km ESE
X647957	Nestling	10.06.10	Chelburn Moor
	Rings read	12.01.11	Titchwell, Norfolk, 196km ESE
X647993	Nestling	28.06.10	Chelburn Moor
	Rings read	28.10.10	Titchwell, Norfolk, 196km ESE
	Rings read	26.02.11	Titchwell
X647995	Nestling	28.06.10	Chelburn Moor
	Rings read	04.10.10	Britannia Quarries, Lancs, 8km W
	Rings read	02.04.11	Frampton Marsh, Lincs, 163km ESE

X648202	Nestling	30.06.10	Blackstone Edge Pasture
	Rings read	22.08.10	Worsthorne Moor, Lancs, 16km NNW
	Rings read	18.03.11	Frampton Marsh, Lincs, 160km ESE

Lesser Redpoll

T559515	Adult ♂	22.10.05	Turf Lea near Strines
	Controlled	26.12.09	Light Oaks, Staffs, 36km S
	Controlled	21.02.10	Light Oaks
	Controlled	02.01.11	Light Oaks
V855576	Adult ♂	24.05.09	Eshton Tarn, North Yorks
	Dead	04.01.11	Jericho, Bury, 46km S
L853025	1st year	22.01.11	Walkden
	Controlled	01.04.11	Higher Thrushgill, Lancs, 60km N
L950463	2nd year ♂	02.06.11	Dobcross, Uppermill
	Controlled	09.11.11	Castlemorton Common, Hereford & Worcs, 168km S
L950479	2nd year ♂	23.06.11	Dobcross, Uppermill
	Controlled	20.11.11	Castlemorton Common, Hereford & Worcs, 168km S
X926117	Full grown ♀	13.10.11	Longshaw, nr Orrell
	Controlled	28.10.11	Orlestone Forest, Kent, 364km SE; 15 days

Reed Bunting

L141944	1st year ♂	26.09.10	Moss House Farm, Out Rawcliffe, Lancs
	Controlled	02.03.11	Shakerley, Atherton, 47km SSE
L042429	1st year ♀	19.11.10	Corsham Lake, Wilts
	Controlled	23.03.11	Shakerley, Atherton, 233km N

Greater Manchester County Rarities Committee Annual Report 2011

Ian McKerchar

Current Rarities Committee Members:

Rob Adderley, Pete Hines, Andy Isherwood, Ian McKerchar (Chairman), John Rayner

Gulls sub-committee members: Rob Adderley, Ian McKerchar, Roy Travis

Firstly I would like to take this opportunity to thank Adam Davison, who left the committee during 2011 after serving on it for over five years. Adam relocated to the sunnier and more bird-filled climate of Devon and, on behalf of the County Rarities Committee and the Greater Manchester Bird Recording Group, I would like to say a sincere thank you for his time and effort whilst on the committee; we wish him all the very best. Adam's departure of course left a vacancy and this was duly filled by long-time potential candidate, John Rayner. Many will know John as one of the county's longest serving county birders and more than occasional national twitcher whose wealth of experience in both the UK and abroad was an attribute which the committee felt would benefit us greatly. So, I would also like to take this opportunity to publicly welcome John aboard.

SUBMISSIONS IN 2011

A total of 91 county rarities were claimed via one means or another through the year and this left the rarities committee busy dealing with the 71 submissions gratefully received and assessed. Of those received 16 were gulls which were assessed by the gulls sub-committee. This left 20 claimed county rarities not submitted though and as always this is a great shame, as in the end it is the county's avifauna which suffers. One can only speculate at the reasons for not submitting these claims; perhaps those observers have a preformed opinion of the committee's assessment process, that they decided in hindsight that their claims were probably not sufficient to warrant submission, that they realised they had simply made a mistake or perhaps that they merely forgot to submit it at all! As always though, I remain available to discuss any matters relating to county rarities, whether that is general record submission, our assessment process or indeed individual submissions not yet submitted, those in circulation or those for which a decision has been given.

COMMON (MEALY) REDPOLL

At the 2012 annual County Rarities Committee meeting its members discussed, amongst other items, the regularly thorny issue of Common Redpolls. Whilst quite clearly, Common Redpolls occur practically annually in the county in usually very small numbers, their identification still causes many problems for observers and concern for those assessing submissions. Identification problems are quite understandable though, not least due to the poor understanding for many observers in the full plumage variation of redpolls (particularly seasonally), given that our genuine experience of them, that obtained by close, prolonged observation of good numbers of the species and during a range of seasons, being generally poor. Indeed, in our county alone, variation and apparent anomalous features often portrayed by individual Lesser Redpolls continues to surprise even experienced ringers when they are in the hand. As such, the committee unanimously decided to only accept future submissions of 'classic' individuals for which a full suite of pro-Common Redpoll features could be evidenced. This level of assessment is absolutely necessary to maintain an accurate record of the status of this species in the county and also to record identification features, both of which may be relevant to its future appreciation.

PHOTOGRAPHIC SUBMISSIONS

The Rarities Committee, rather begrudgingly, appreciates that for many birders the digital camera has replaced the notebook in recording rare or scarce birds they may come across and that because of this we now increasingly assess submissions containing images only (plus at the very least, the vital information completed on the front of a rarity report form). Whilst we appreciate this perhaps looks set to increase, we would like to point out that our standard for acceptance remains the same for photos or written descriptions. They say 'a picture paints a thousand words' but often, images can be inconclusive, misleading and, as is seemingly increasingly worrying, manipulated for the purposes of concoction. With this in mind we urge observers to familiarise themselves with our guidelines for the submission of digital images (see below) and to appreciate that, in some instances, no matter how 'good' a submission may appear in an image, for its assessment to be equitable and maintain our rigorous standards for acceptance, the lack of a full suite of features or indeed a single particularly important feature may cause a submission to be found not proven.

ADDITIONS TO THE COUNTY RARITIES LIST

Obviously there has been a marked change in the national status of Glossy Ibis in the last 10 years, and particularly since 2007 when the first annual influx of over 20 birds occurred, with a similar influx being repeated in every year since 2009. It is now known from the rings carried by some birds that they originated in Spain and this is likely to be the case for the majority. The breeding population in Spain has become established since 1996 and has increased significantly since 2006 (Santoro *et al* 2010) expanding into southern France and a review by BBRC considered that the increase will be sustained. With a national occurrence of more than 100 records in five years, with 20 or more in at least four of those years indicating that the species is on course to comfortably exceed BBRC's traditional criterion for removing a species from their rarities list. Therefore, given the ease of identification and the relatively low rate of non-acceptance, Glossy Ibis was dropped from the BBRC list and as of January 1st 2013 all records should now be sent to the County Bird Recorder. There remains only a single record of this species in the county, at Pennington Flash in December, 2008.

GUIDELINES FOR THE SUBMISSION OF RECORDS

These are available on the Manchester Birding website at www.manchesterbirding.com. If you do not have access to the internet, please contact me and I will be happy to send a copy to you.

The County Rarities Committee urges all serious observers, however experienced, to complete rarity forms so that a truly scientific record can be maintained of the county's avifauna. Observers finding a national or county rarity should take a description in writing and if possible obtain a photograph and find another competent observer to confirm the identification. When submitting a rarity description, observers should include as much possible detail, taken from field notes (which should ideally be included in the submission), bearing in mind that the County Rarities Committee can only assess the submission from the information provided by the observer. Line drawings are always useful and greatly appreciated by the committee, no matter how poor the artist perceives them, and can often provide great clarity to the overall submission.

Submissions to the committee including digital images continue to increase and whilst we would encourage the use of photographs, especially as an addition to a submission, observers should still continue to obtain high quality field notes; even if the submission meets the criteria for assessment by photo only, as field notes may be invaluable in the event of a query. Digital photographs of any quality should be provided to the committee as an email attachment (not included within the text of an email or other document) but these should be original copies, without any computer enhancement or touch-ups and of as large a file size as possible.

Conventional film photographs should be included; preferably of at least 6" x 4" size and home printed digital photographs are acceptable provided the print quality is of a sufficiently high standard. A series of images should be provided where ever possible and particularly in single-observer sightings and in instances where a single image fails to display all the necessary identification features, the latter being all too often the case. I would welcome observers requiring advice with any of the above processes to contact me to discuss the matter.

Depending on the circumstances, of which the welfare of the bird is paramount at all times, with serious consideration given to access and possible habitat damage, the sighting may be reported to one of the commercial bird information services. Observers in any doubt should immediately contact me for advice.

All national rarities should be submitted initially to me and NOT directly to BBRC, which enables me to make a copy of the submission and to iron out any queries before it is then forwarded to this very busy committee. This route for submissions is also that preferred and requested by BBRC.

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF NOT PROVEN RECORDS

This list contains all records assessed by the Greater Manchester County Rarities Committee (GMCRC) during 2011 which were found not proven. Wherever possible, the reason for a record being found not proven has been given within the systematic list but the GMCRC Chairman is always available to further discuss individual submissions with their respective observers if necessary. The term 'description incomplete' used within the list generally signifies important missing features within submissions without which identification cannot be proven beyond all reasonable doubt; in many cases this was due to the brevity of the sighting or the circumstances the observer(s) found themselves in, for which the GMCRC has complete sympathy for.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus* Aspull Apr 17th (description incomplete; seen at long distance and in silhouette only, the observer could only be confident of kite sp. and a further sighting of the same bird by another observer was not received); Holden's Farm Horwich Moors Aug 20th (no description supplied within the submission). **Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis* Shaw Apr 4th, adult female (description incomplete); Carrington Moss Oct 16th, juvenile female (description incomplete). **Dotterel** *Charadrius morinellus* Two Lads Hill, Horwich Moors Aug 18th, juvenile (description incomplete, brief flight view only at fairly long range). **Yellow-legged Gull** *Larus michahellis* Pennington Flash Jan 23rd, adult (the bird appeared to be a Herring Gull *Larus argentatus argenteus* from photos submitted); Elton Reservoir Sep 27th, adult (incomplete description, some features submitted were deemed inconsistent with Yellow-legged Gull); Irwell Valley Way, Salford Oct 1st, adult (photos only supplied for assessment; their quality was insufficient to fully establish the species involved); Briscoe Lane, Newton Heath Oct 15th, adult (incomplete description, bird observed without optics). **Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur* Norbury Farm (2) May 24th (description incomplete, birds observed without optics). **Nightjar** *Caprimulgus europaeus* Walshaw, Bury Jul 31st (description incomplete, bird observed without optics). **Marsh Tit** *Poecile palustris* Pennington Flash Aug 22nd (description incomplete); Droylsden (3) Dec 31st (description incomplete, birds observed without optics). **Common Redpoll** *Carduelis flammea* Jericho Jan 4th (found dead; photos of the bird's corpse appeared to exclude Common Redpoll); Horwich Moors Feb 24th, female (description incomplete). **Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* Burnt Edge, Horwich Moors Oct 21st (description incomplete).

County Rarities List

Descriptions are required to be submitted to the County Rarities Committee for the following (non-BBRC) species:

Bewick's Swan	Red Kite
White-fronted Goose	Montagu's Harrier
Bean Goose	Goshawk
Brent Goose	Rough-legged Buzzard
American Wigeon	Red-footed Falcon
Green-winged Teal	Spotted Crake
Ring-necked Duck	Corncrake
Ferruginous Duck	Crane
Long-tailed Duck	Kentish Plover
Eider	Dotterel
Velvet Scoter	American Golden Plover
Smew	Little Stint
Black Grouse	Temminck's Stint
Quail (non-calling birds)	White-rumped Sandpiper
All diver species	Pectoral Sandpiper
Fulmar	Curlew Sandpiper
All shearwater species	Purple Sandpiper
Wilson's Petrel	Buff-breasted Sandpiper
Storm Petrel	Red-necked Phalarope
Leach's Petrel	Grey Phalarope
Gannet	All skua species
Shag	Sabine's Gull
Night Heron	Ring-billed Gull
Cattle Egret	Yellow-legged Gull
Great White Egret	Caspian Gull
Purple Heron	Roseate Tern
White Stork	White-winged Black Tern
Glossy Ibis	All auks
Spoonbill	Turtle Dove
Red-necked Grebe	Nightjar
Slavonian Grebe	Bee-eater
Honey Buzzard	Hoopoe
Black Kite	Wryneck

Golden Oriole	Rose-coloured Starling
All Shrike species	Nightingale
Chough	Bluethroat
Hooded Crow	Siberian Stonechat
Marsh Tit	Red-breasted Flycatcher
Bearded Tit	Richard's Pipit
Woodlark	Tawny Pipit
Shore Lark	Red-throated Pipit
Cetti's Warbler	Water Pipit
Barred Warbler	Serin
Aquatic Warbler	Parrot Crossbill
Marsh Warbler	Twite (except in certain upland areas)
Dartford Warbler	Common Redpoll (except in influx years as indicated by the Chairman)
Subalpine Warbler	Common Rosefinch
Icterine Warbler	Hawfinch
Melodious Warbler	Lapland Bunting
Greenish Warbler	Cirl Bunting
Yellow-browed Warbler	Ortolan Bunting
Pallas's Warbler	Rustic Bunting
Radde's Warbler	Little Bunting
Dusky Warbler	

SUBSPECIES

Iceland Gull (Kumlien's Gull *L.g. kumlieni*)

Yellow Wagtail (all races other than *flavissima*) and any purported hybrid individuals.

Chiffchaff - all races except *collybita*

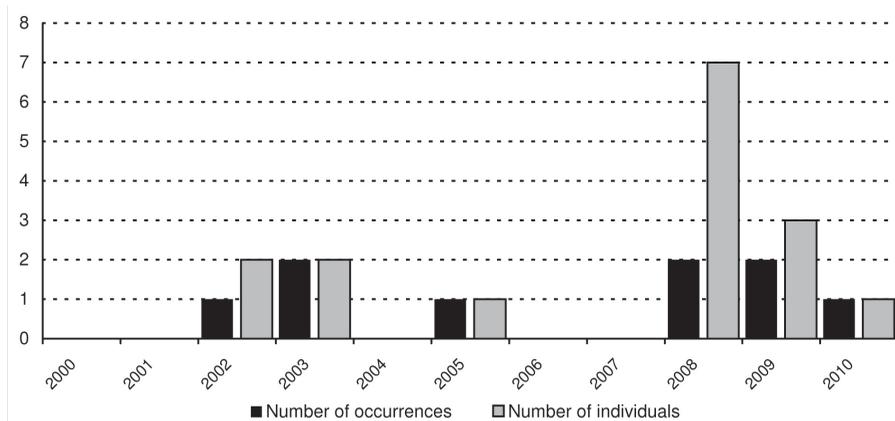
Other records of **birds in unusual habitat, exceptionally early or late migrants etc.** may, at the discretion of the County Rarities Committee, require a description, and in any case, records of rarer species will only be accepted with an observer's name attached. In influx years, the requirement for a description may be suspended at short notice by the Committee.

Any species not on either of the above lists should be assumed to be a national rarity; please contact the County Bird Recorder for a form (01942 701758) or fill one in online at www.manchesterbirding.com

Greater Manchester's First Breeding Avocets

Ian Mc Kerchar

Avocet was first recorded in Greater Manchester in 1983 and since then the species has remained rare and highly sought after in the county. It has however built a rather remarkable status within Lancashire, with their first ever breeding occurrence in 2001 being the prelude to the 62 pairs which bred (or attempted to breed) in 2010. Nowadays it is not impossible to count almost 100 Avocets during a single day at Marshside RSPB alone! This surge in records has also been reflected in neighbouring Cheshire too, where the species now breeds annually after their first successful breeding record in 2002. Back in Greater Manchester though, this increase in Avocets at our nearest coastline seems to have barely impacted upon their appearances in our land-locked county and with the exception of the two flocks totalling seven individuals in 2008, their less than annual occurrences usually consists of lone singles or the occasional pair.



So it was that 2011's first record of Avocet in Greater Manchester began with a pair at Rumworth Lodge on March 30th, a site which has twice before hosted a pair together (in 2004 and 2009) and they were rightly popular with county birders for the short time they remained there. The next occurrence was only four days later though, again with a pair at the same location and remarkably, the wait for the next record, once again at Rumworth, was just under a month later on May 2nd with a pair yet again. At this point, there seemed no suggestion of anything other than perhaps three pairs of Avocets having been found at the same location, though brief mating of this pair on the latter date was intriguing and local birders on scene joked "they'll be breeding next". On May 5th a pair was back at Rumworth and the female was observed picking at small twigs on the ground and tossing them in the air when the male approached and also attempting to make a nest scrape. An attempt at breeding now seemed a genuine possibility.

On the morning of May 7th both birds reappeared at Rumworth again, with the female still crouching when the male approached and attending to her nest scrape. The male was also observed chasing off the local Oystercatchers with his bill held low to the ground and by the afternoon it appeared that the female was actually sitting on a nest! Their location in between these sightings was unknown but it was now appearing increasingly likely that this one pair was involved with all the sightings over the past five weeks, perhaps as they made their minds

up as to whether the site was to their liking or not! A small band of dedicated county birders set about very closely watching the pair and by May 9th, the female appeared to be turning eggs in their nest of a small scrape surrounded by a few twigs. With water levels fairly close to the nest, discussions took place with United Utilities who admirably agreed to lower the water level in the lodge should it threaten the nest. At this point too, all the national and local bird information services were contacted and asked to withhold any information passed to them about the presence of this pair, as due to the potential ease of access to the nest site and of disturbance from humans, the decision was made to keep the news of this remarkable occurrence as low key as possible.

Practically daily vigils took place by the small band of observers, who not only spent considerable time studying the habits of the pair but also protecting them from regular disturbance by unaware members of the public visiting the site walking dogs, fishing and even picnicking! By May 13th, three eggs were confirmed in the nest and both parents aggressively defended their nest site, often flying off the eggs to chase away intruders. By the same token, the female was often harassed by the local Common Terns, occasionally forcing her to leave the nest. On May 22nd though, the male disappeared and was not seen at Rumworth again until May 27th. With a lone Avocet seen at Pennington Flash on the former date considered perhaps to be the Rumworth male, quite why he left the female to incubate the eggs alone for five days when he had previously shared the workload with regularity, is anyone's guess but even if it didn't worry the female it certainly worried her human guardians at the time.



In the late afternoon of June 1st, the first chick hatched and bird's observers celebrated the event perhaps more than the birds themselves! Early the next morning the second chick had hatched and by early afternoon the third and final chick had joined its siblings around the waters edge. The parents now increased their relentless and highly aggressive attacks on anything which came anywhere near their young, including seeing off Canada Geese, Tufted Duck, Sparrowhawk, Oystercatchers, Redshank, Black-headed Gulls, Pied Wagtail and occasional large fish which swam into the shallows but not however the local Coot, who merely stood their ground and couldn't be budged. On one occasion the male even tried to chase a Hobby which flew low through their airspace, though inevitably, his ambitious attempt never worried the falcon in the slightest.

By June 13th the young had grown rapidly and were now roughly one and a half times the size of nearby Ringed Plovers and were fairly independent with it; wandering considerable distances from the security of their parents whilst regularly testing their young wings. An impending fishing match due to take place around the shore of the Lodge on the 14th, combined with the apparent robustness of the young, initiated a public news release of their presence and with it a sigh of relief from their avid observers of the past weeks. The young continued to grow at

a considerable pace, with many birders now enjoying their antics and on the morning of July 19th an adult and the three young were seen flying low north-east over a very nearby local observer's house but by 3pm the same day they were back along the waters edge at the Lodge. This was to be the very last sighting of the family but we were now safe in the knowledge that Greater Manchester's very first Avocet breeding attempt had been successful to the tune of three fully fledged young.



Acknowledgements

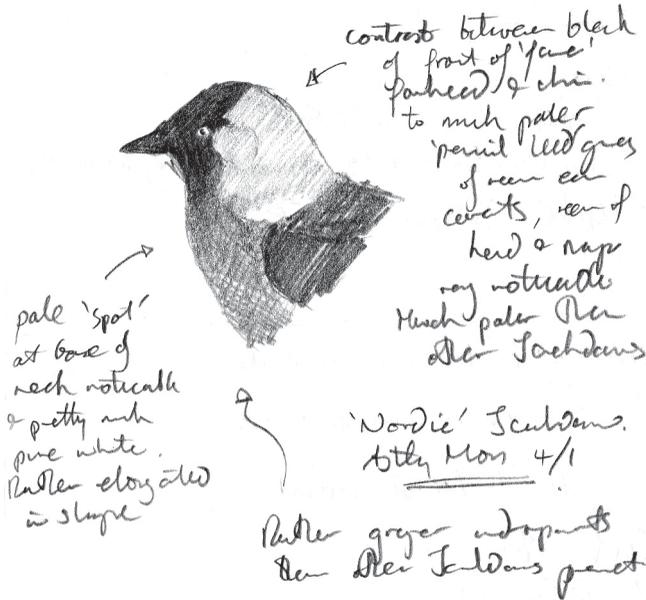
At least some of the success of this pair of Avocets should be attributed to the dedication of the small band of observers whose near daily vigils at least kept human disturbance at bay; they know who they are and our (and I'm sure the Avocets') thanks go to them all. My thanks are also to Andy Makin and Phil Rhodes for permitting access to their records of sightings surrounding this pair which forms the basis of this article and to Simon Warford and Bill Myerscough for commenting on an earlier draft.

Nordic Jackdaw on Astley Moss

Ian McKerchar

In the weeks preceding January 4th 2011, large numbers of Jackdaws had been visiting fields around Rindle Road, Astley Moss. As a species not often present in large numbers and with good easy viewing available, I had taken the opportunity to study them on an almost daily basis during my visits to the area. Whilst 'scoping a large flock of some 630 Jackdaws (covering two large fields) I noted a single bird which was immediately interesting and clearly portrayed features associated with 'Nordic' Jackdaw *Corvus monedula monedula*. I observed the bird for approximately three minutes before the flock noisily took to the air and moved fields as they often did and I was left in no doubt as to this bird displaying clear features of Nordic Jackdaw. Those key, obvious features were as follows: -

- The most immediately arresting feature was the bird's extremely pale, whitish 'collar' on the lower neck. It was consistently conspicuous and was carefully observed to ensure it was not an effect of light or angle, which it clearly was not. The collar was not complete but extended around the side of the neck for what looked like an inch or so. It was narrow in width but even and appeared unaltered by the bird's movements.
- The contrast between the black of the front of the bird's face, forehead and chin against the much paler looking 'pencil lead' grey of the rear ear coverts, head and nape was very prominent and more so than on any of the nearby 'British' Jackdaws *Corvus monedula spermologus*.
- The underparts were also clearly greyer in colour than any of the other Jackdaws present, creating noticeable contrast between them and the jet black looking wings.



Immediately after my observation I rang Tom McKinney at Birdnet Information to ask if there had been any other sightings of Nordic Jackdaws in the UK at that time as I hadn't heard of any. Tom informed me that there had only been a single report in Ireland at that time. In the days and weeks after my observation though, there certainly seemed to be an influx of this Scandinavian race of Jackdaw into the UK, with many individuals being reported including at least a couple Cheshire.

The Astley Moss bird was not subsequently seen despite further checking of the flocks, though given the numbers of Jackdaw involved and their flighty nature, picking it (or indeed another) out was always going to rely on a good amount of luck!

Dotterel on Brown Wardle Hill

Simon Hitchen

On May 2nd 2011 I had a rare child-free afternoon. I had noticed some reports of Dotterel elsewhere in the country over the last few days and therefore texted Steve Atkins to say that I was thinking of checking Brown Wardle Hill, as a trip of nine birds had spent several days there last year. Steve said that he was also free and so we decided to go up together. It's a bit of a slog up to Brown Wardle Hill and I decided to leave my 'scope in the car (a decision that I was to regret later!) and although it was a beautiful sunny day there was a strong and cold easterly wind. We therefore decided to search the more sheltered southern slopes first (avoiding the western slopes as these are in Lancashire!). We were just discussing our plan of attack as we climbed the southern slope when we flushed a small group of waders from just in front of us. I remember thinking Golden Plover as they flew up but the call was not right - a chattering 'prrrp' call that I failed to recognize - but as I got my binoculars onto the area a little further up

where they had landed I could see the unmistakable sight of a female Dotterel. At the same time I heard Steve shout out 'Dotterel' and we excitedly shook hands - after years of the hard slog and disappointment that is Rochdale birding I don't think either of us had really expected to go out to look for Dotterel and actually find some!

The birds were spending a lot of time crouched down in the low vegetation to shelter from the stiff wind and this made counting, let alone sexing, the birds tricky. We eventually established that some bright individuals were clearly well marked breeding-plumaged females, whereas the duller were assumed to be males, though some were slightly intermediate in plumage. Although we considered there to be six females and three males, the situation may have been complicated by some birds not being in full summer plumage (or possibly being duller in first summer plumage?) and therefore it was difficult to be sure about this. The birds were similar in size and shape to Golden Plover although a little sleeker and daintier and less pot-bellied. The plumage was unmistakable and when feeding they had the typical stop/start approach of plovers but when not feeding sat crouching low down out of the wind; being fairly tame they allowed close views. With the males more obviously duller than the females, they reminded me slightly of giant Whinchats on steroids with their striking supercilia and more peachy-buff breasts.

More worrying than counting and sexing the birds though was trying to establish the exact grid reference of the sighting as the area is right on the county boundary and we initially feared we may have been in Rossendale, Lancashire. So it was with great relief that Steve's GPS finally confirmed we were in Rochdale and therefore within Greater Manchester. We sent a text to Ian McKerchar and local birders and then I faced up to the fact that I was going to have to walk all the way back to the car park at Watergrove Reservoir to fetch my telescope as I wanted to get some digiscoped photos. When I finally returned Dave Ousey had joined Steve and we spent the next hour enjoying some fantastic views.

Wryneck on the Horwich Moors

Jill Mills

A Day I'll Always Remember...

The dry sunny morning of the 24th August, 2011 found me and my friend Ken Haydock walking along Georges Lane, Horwich in search of migrant passerines. On reaching High Meadows, which has been part of our birding patch for many years, I was hoping to see migrant Common Redstart, a favourite of mine. Ken had seen four of them in the hedgerow bushes just north of the sheep field two days previously, so I was full of optimism that I might be lucky. On scanning the line of dense Hawthorns, Hollies and Oaks, we soon located two obliging Spotted Flycatchers, flycatching. A good start and very nice to see! Other birds were two Willow Warblers and the usual residents but no Redstarts.

After a while, Ken suggested that I walk on a few yards further to view an isolated Hawthorn tree where all four Redstarts had flown to a couple of days previously, whilst he stayed scanning the hedgerow. By now it was 9.25 am and as I approached the Hawthorn tree I could see two immature Willow Warblers flitting around the topmost branches and sparring as Willow Warblers have a tendency to do. On closer inspection however they appeared to be mobbing something in the branches. I watched them through binoculars "bombing" this part of the tree. Taking a couple of paces to my right, I scanned again and saw what appeared to be a thickening of a branch. Was it gathered vegetation, a clod of soil, or something infinitely more interesting? With a sudden rush of excitement and adrenalin I realised what I had seen. Surely not a Wryneck? I couldn't be so lucky ... but yes it was, one of my favourites which I had previously seen at Spurn and on the Isles of Scilly.

The bird lay lengthways along a sloping branch and blended in beautifully against the bark of the tree. Its plumage was a fantastic mottled mixture of browns and greys, streaked and barred which provided excellent camouflage. I quickly turned and beckoned urgently to Ken who was by now walking towards me about ten yards away, thinking I'd spotted our target species for the day, a Common Redstart. Immediately looking back to the branch, I saw that the Wryneck had endured enough harassment and suddenly took flight, crossed the lane just ahead of me and climbed at about a 30 degree angle over the edge of the moor.

Luckily Ken had seen the bird as it flew and was stunned and delighted too. I was still shell shocked! How superb to find one of my favourite birds on our home patch. We chatted excitedly about the bird and decided to try and relocate it by searching the surrounding moorland. Shortly, we were joined by two more county birders but sadly four hours later we had nothing to report and decided to call it a day. However, I shall always remember the pleasure of finding such a brilliant bird on our patch.

Two days later on 26th August the Wryneck was relocated in the dell at High Meadows where photographs were taken by Ian Mc Kerchar and as far as I'm aware that was the last sighting of the Wryneck in the Horwich Moors area.

Richard's Pipit near Bispham Hall, Longshaw

Chris Darbyshire

The day of October 16th 2011 began with a phone message from Colin Davies of the St. Helens Wildlife Recording Group, who had been present early morning just to the south of Billinge Hill and recorded a possible Richard's Pipit from call, flying west. The conditions at that time were heavy mist and short distance visibility. Colin had been on Hilbre Island the previous day and seen the known Richard's Pipit there, so the call was fresh in his mind. I could only get up to the Hill by about 09.30, and the mist hadn't cleared at all, so a fruitless hour was spent waiting for the mist to disperse.

With nothing of note in that area up to 10.20, and little in the way of over-flying migrants, I decided to walk north to a group of small woodlands west of Bispham Hall. One patch of woodland there is coniferous and was on my mind with regards to the many Crossbills which had been passing over the last three weeks or so. No Crossbills were found but 14 Golden Plover flew west at 10.31, a silent *Phylloscopus* warbler flew past me into an adjacent copse soon after and a few Fieldfares were disturbed here and there. Nothing much else for the next 20 minutes or so, except a few small groups of Meadow Pipits coming and going and even fewer Skylarks drifting about, so I walked a bit further north along the path to where I could see Up Holland and Dalton at the other end of the Ashhurst-Billinge ridge and look down onto a large meadow adjacent to Bispham Hall. Still nothing really migrating overhead.

Then at 11.06 I noticed a bird in bounding flight approaching from over the north-west sector of Bispham Hall. It wasn't until it was almost over the path I was stood on that I realized it was a pipit, but clearly far bigger than the local Meadow Pipits. It wasn't very high up, presumably as it hadn't gained any height passing over the woodland of Bispham Hall and passed perhaps less than 20 metres from and slightly south of me. As it approached the path it called just once and then continued on a straight course to the south-west, with the cathedrals of Liverpool permanently in the background, until out of sight. The following description accommodates all the features available to me in such a fly-over situation;

A large pipit, clearly a pipit and not a lark, sleek rather than bulky. Much bigger than the Meadow Pipits seen only a few moments before, with a longer tail and I can't help mentioning the resemblance to Grey Wagtail which struck me at the time with regards its flight silhouette; shorter in the tail maybe than Grey Wagtail, but still similar. Olive light brown upperparts and creamy underparts, but little detail available with regards any streaking. White edgings to the

tail clearly seen, especially towards the tail end and it was quivered slightly at each undulation, which may have been the reason why the white was more noticeable there. A pale mark was noticed on the upper face, but I was unable to obtain any definition with regards a supercilium in the short time it was in view. Bill prominent, but no detail obtained. Call note loud and strident, which I noted down as "preerp". It actually reminded me of the call of a cockatiel, though shorter, rather than a sparrow. Flight shallowly undulating, less deep than (say) Great Spotted Woodpecker and casual, rather than hurried like Meadow Pipit. As I watched it away, there was no jinking from side to side, its course remaining quite straight.

Richard's Pipit on the Horwich Moors

Andy Makin

My regular early morning visible migration (VisMig) watch on the Horwich Moors was interrupted by thick mist on the morning of November 12th 2011, a most frustrating regular occurrence here during late autumn. Therefore, I decided to check nearby High Rid Reservoir which was mist free, in the hope that as and when it cleared I would only be a five minute drive away from my usual watch point. At around 10am the mist began to clear and so I headed for my favoured VisMig spot along Georges Lane, just above Higher Meadows and on arrival there it was apparent that this was the only such spot on the moors which was mist free at that time.

Starting at 10:15am, migration for the first half an hour was slow and so around 10:40am I was pleased to see Ken Haydock mooching along the road and who continued to relieve my boredom by showing me a nearby roosting Tawny Owl. Walking back to the watch point there was a small movement of Skylarks overhead and with lifted spirits we decided to give it another half an hour or so. We hadn't been waiting long when we spotted a party of seven Skylark calling and moving south-east at 11am. As we watched them moving past we both became aware of a harsh sparrow-like call "chreep chreep", loud and obviously close overhead but nothing was visible. We were both stumped and pondered whether it could be a House Sparrow but that seemed unlikely as I had never seen one over the moors on migration and the call also seemed harsher than a sparrow anyway. At that point it all clicked and I shouted out "it's a Richard's Pipit"! What was probably only seconds seemed like minutes as I scanned towards the direction of the kennels on Georges Lane some 200 metres to the north-west, just as I got onto a small wagtail like passerine dropping out of sight. It was so unfortunately brief that Ken had little chance of catching even a glimpse of the bird though. I hadn't seen the bird for long enough and Ken hadn't seen it at all; he also couldn't remember the call of Richard's Pipit but knew our bird was something out of the ordinary. It seemed to have dropped down anyway so we marched off towards the kennels. We walked up the side of the moor overlooking the back lawn area; an ideal spot for a Richard's Pipit, but sadly there was nothing but Meadow Pipits and a Ring Ouzel which on any other day would have been much more appreciated. We decided to split up, with me walking back along Georges Lane towards the pike checking the pasture land, whilst Ken decided to walk up to cover Wildersmoor.

Back on Georges Lane, in front of the kennels, I scanned the flooded marshy field, ideal for Richard's Pipit again but there was still no sign. At this point, whilst attempting to alert other observers to the possibility of their being a Richard's Pipit up here and faffing about with my 'phone, I heard the distinct "chreep chreep" and was surprised to see the bird in question flying past below me across the marshy field. There was now no doubt it was a Richard's Pipit as I could easily make out its large pipit structure, overall greyish colouration with longish, pale-sided and almost wagtail like tail and undulating flight. I couldn't make out any other features but the call nailed it. It was then I made a bit of a mistake though and as it flew towards the pike I took my eye off it with the intention of alerting Ken who was now a little further down Georges Lane and in the process lost sight of it. Ken and I continued to search for the bird thereafter but with no luck and the bird was not subsequently seen again.

Siberian Chiffchaff in Greater Manchester

Ian McKerchar

There can be few geographical regions which produce such genuinely pulse-quickenning vagrants to our country's shores as Siberia and its mere mention conjures wondrous images of mile upon mile of desolate taiga, uninhabited by humans. Such is the size of this mystical region that Siberia accounts for almost 10% of the Earth's land surface alone! Unsurprisingly however, vagrants emanating from this land are rare to Greater Manchester to say the least, but they are certainly not unheard of. Both Black-faced Bunting and Dusky Thrush fall into the true Siberian vagrant category and both have graced our county, coincidentally at sites less than two miles apart. Another tiny Siberian waif which has made the remarkable journey to our county is Siberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita tristis*.

Siberian Chiffchaff is currently regarded as the easternmost race of Chiffchaff (though is treated as a species in its own right by some authorities) and is an annual, usually late autumn/early winter, scarce migrant to the UK. Its true status though has been beleaguered with many misunderstandings and only more recent thorough research of the status and identification of all the current races of Chiffchaff (with an emphasis on *tristis*) have enabled this to be clarified somewhat. My following appraisal of the taxonomic status of Chiffchaffs is purposefully rudimentary though, as not only is the subject complicated but it still has some way to go before it is completely understood. In less recent years, many paler plumaged Chiffchaffs often found in the UK in autumn and winter which did not match that expected of our own British breeding race of Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita collybita* nor that of our then understanding of *tristis*, were assigned to the Scandinavian race of Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita abietinus* which breeds from Scandinavia eastwards to the Ural Mountains in west-central Russia. Recent DNA analysis from such plumaged birds in Holland appears to prove even this may now be incorrect though and that they too are in fact *tristis* (and that *abietinus* may be inseparable from *collybita*)! From around the Ural Mountains eastwards once again, towards the Yenisey River in Western Siberia, occurs what is currently considered to be a form of Siberian Chiffchaff known as *fulvescens*. This form is similar in appearance (and vocalisations) to *tristis* but may apparently display slightly more olive and yellow within the plumage. From the Yenisey River eastwards through Central and Eastern Siberia Chiffchaffs become generally more 'brown and buff', completely lacking green and yellow but for the edges of the remiges and rectrices; 'true' Siberian Chiffchaffs.

There are only currently two County Rarities Committee accepted occurrences of Siberian Chiffchaff in Greater Manchester; at Pennington Flash on October 8th, 1998 and Chorlton Water Park on December 12th, 2000. Both these records importantly transcribed the distinctive call of Siberian Chiffchaff and also compared well to the plumage and bare part colouration expected of the race. Previous to these records though, between 1982 and 1989 there was a remarkable run of Siberian Chiffchaffs reported in the county.

The following records (all singles unless otherwise stated) occurred during the aforementioned eight year period: -

1982: Cheadle Hulme 13th November; 2 Scotman's Flash 30th December-25th February 1983

1983: 3 Chorlton Meadows 21st November-mid December; Altrincham ETW 17th December

1984: Chorlton mid-November

1985: Stretford ETW early-March

1987: Stockport 15th-22nd March (noted as '*tristis abietinus*'?)

1989: Scotman's Flash 26th February

As all the records pre-date 1992 (and therefore precede the inauguration of the County Rarities Committee) there are no written descriptions for any of them and so a retrospective analysis and review could not be undertaken. It is curious to ponder though, why so many records abound during this period yet none had ever been reported prior to 1982 and only three have been reported post 1989?

The 2006 Watergrove Reservoir Chiffchaff

An intriguing record came from Watergrove Reservoir on November 9th, 2006. A Chiffchaff was found by Steve Atkins amongst a small, young plantation along the western side of the reservoir and was a vocal individual, frequently heard calling. Steve could not immediately place the call though as it was plainly very different from that of the Chiffchaffs he usually encountered. Shortly afterwards I received a telephone call from Steve asking for some assistance with the bird's possible identification and after he had (successfully) attempted to imitate the call of the bird to me I was sufficiently confident that it sounded very much like a Siberian Chiffchaff; confident enough to make haste for Watergrove Reservoir! Unfortunately, I never actually did see it, as it (frustratingly) remained always out of view for me although I heard it call many times and having heard many *tristis* previously it clearly matched that of Siberian Chiffchaff to the ear (a plaintive, clearly uninflected whistled "peep" or "peet"). However, a couple of features of Steve's field description evidently noted slight hues of olive green within the upperparts (other than the remiges and rectrices) which, back then, it was believed true *tristis* would not be expected to show. Therefore it could rightly not be positively assigned to *tristis* at that time but those findings of various more recent studies seem to indicate a likelihood of this bird actually being a *tristis*, especially given that the call (and indeed song) of *tristis* is considered definitive for identification purposes. So it seems that, from our current knowledge, this Watergrove Reservoir bird could well have been a Siberian Chiffchaff after all and once the muddy Chiffchaff waters become clearer, a full review of this record is perhaps in order!

The 2006 Pennington Flash Chiffchaff

During early 2011, whilst perusing the photographic galleries of county birder and photographer Paul Wilson, I happened upon an image labelled as a Chiffchaff which had been taken at Pennington Flash on April 17th, 2006. The image stopped me in my tracks and immediately I recognised that it bore obvious characteristics of the race *tristis*; Siberian Chiffchaff. After confirming with Paul where and when the image had been taken I circulated it around the County Rarities Committee for their combined opinion. Whilst patently portraying plumage characteristics of Siberian Chiffchaff and in fact, there being seemingly little from the image alone to warrant against its identification as such, the committee rightly unanimously decided that without details regarding the bird's vocalisations (and considering the potentially misleading impact lighting and/or photographic effects may have on assessing from a couple of images alone) its identification could not be proven beyond all reasonable doubt and instead that it should be recorded as 'showing characteristics of *tristis*'. Owing to the fact that Paul's image is really rather good though (see the photographs at the centre of this report) it is worth examining it further as it clearly matches what we would expect, from our current knowledge, a classic Siberian Chiffchaff to portray.

Initially, the overall 'brown and buff' appearance of the Pennington Flash bird, lacking any hues of green and yellow but for the edges of the remiges and rectrices, is striking and quite unlike what we would normally expect to see on an early spring *collybita* Chiffchaff. Examining it closer though, it is a remarkably delicately and richly plumaged little bird and each intricate detail supports its pro-*tristis* characteristics. The upperparts are clearly brownish, with a rather distinct greyish hue across the nape and rear crown in this instance and the entire underparts

are very pale creamy-buff, lacking any visible yellow hues. The supercilium is very prominent (particularly from just in front of the eye rearwards), perhaps slightly longer than *collybita* and is again very pale creamy-buff, lacking any yellow hues, whilst the ear coverts are a rather attractive warm buff with an evident rusty tinge. The pale off-white eyering is only prominent below the eye; there is a darker eyestripe particularly behind the eye and a suggestion of a slightly darker 'shadow' immediately above the supercilium. The only green and yellow hues on the entire bird are along the edges of the remiges and rectrices, with some yellow at the bend of the wing which is to be expected (and is actually from the underwing coverts). The darker alula is very prominent against the colour of the rest of the bird and there is certainly a vague hint of a paler wingbar across the edges of the greater coverts. The bare parts of the bird are very dark blackish, particularly the legs.

With such apparently classic Siberian Chiffchaff plumage characteristics it is a shame that the way the record came about and unavoidably had to be assessed detracts from its acceptability, but considering the full intricacies in the identification of the Chiffchaff complex, it is perhaps right that a single image alone should not warrant a full 'proven beyond all reasonable doubt' verdict. Whatever its true racial identity though, nothing detracts from just what an attractive little *Phylloscopus* warbler it is, nor that it has probably travelled some considerable distance to get here.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Paul Wilson for providing copies of the Pennington Flash Chiffchaff photographs, the Greater Manchester Rarities Committee for comments during the circulation of the Pennington Flash bird, Steve Atkins for discussion over the Watergrove Reservoir bird and Bill Myerscough for proof reading the article for me.

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A Small Cog in a Big Wheel

Dave Steel

Yes, dear conscience, I am aware that I 'have' to input quite a few records on the Greater Manchester bird recording spreadsheet covering my latest jaunts onto the Moss this December and I am well aware that I have not input any for the six visits I have made so far this month. Thus it will take me an 'age' but surely you must see dear tormentor that I 'only' want to look at my holiday snaps after my recent week in the sun, for today has been the shortest and not particularly the nicest of days weather-wise, especially when only yesterday I was basking in wall to wall 26°C sunshine...!

Then again a quick re-wind tells me that only this morning I spent four hours on what is my favourite piece of the world and surely the birds it supported need to be recorded for posterity. For without this recording they will go the way of my youthful wanderings on the Mosses, albeit on the Worsley/Astley side of this vital sweep of greenbelt that separates Manchester from Warrington, when my memory says the area 'brimmed' with farmland birds but alas my scant notebooks of the time cannot PROVE this abundance of birds.

PROVE being the operative and most significant word in the above paragraph. For now is the time (as the folk singer Buffy-St-Marie refrained '*it's here and it's now you must help us dear man - now that the Buffalo's gone*'), when planning laws are about to change perhaps in the favour of those who see all open spaces as simply somewhere to build upon. Without evidence to PROVE that we share these buffer zones between urban sprawls with a spread of flora and fauna, which will be destroyed if we cannot PROVE that they exist and have a right to exist, then when the plans are put forward how can we defend them?

We could say yes, but of what good are my records of the birds noted on the Moss, or wherever else we enjoy our birdwatching, when we are faced with the powerful and persuasive arguments that will be put forward by developers to chase off our beleaguered birdlife, with their grandiose schemes for the total urbanisation of the UK?

We being the operative and significant word in the preceding paragraph, so let's pause and reflect on WE. If WE ALL input our sightings onto a format that can be sent to OUR COUNTY RECORDER (and he has a few formats he is happy to encourage us all to use; I prefer the Excel spreadsheet method as I input a lot of records for my 'patch' on a yearly basis) who will then happily collate ALL of OUR records onto ONE database (now there's dedication to records).

This database of all OUR records can then be used to say '*excuse me*' Mr. Developer/planner etc., but WE feel this planned DESTRUCTION of habitat would seriously affect ALL of these birds that WE have evidenced with OUR RECORDS. Perhaps who knows, someone will listen to US and take heed of that which we as birdwatchers hold most dear - the birdlife that enthral us with their sheer tenacity for survival. A survival that in the end can all too easily be swept away for the want of a few hours a year of diligent RECORDING by ALL of us who surely know that a case can only be proven if good evidence is at hand!

Which brings me to my title for this not very subtle call to arms to all of you fellow birdwatchers, who may feel to be a mere cog in the wheel of this modern world. A world where all seems to be crushed under the juggernaut of progress through perpetual 'development' and which sweeps habitat aside and along with it our tenacious birds. But take a look around you for a minute. Surely Pennington Flash came into being due to records kept by Frank Horrocks and his contemporaries who knew and loved and kept and submitted records that surely helped to turn this brownfield site into a haven for wildlife. Thus proving the worth that each of our contributions will be much appreciated by our County Recorder when he is next asked "why shouldn't we bulldoze that worthless piece of habitat?" To which he will reply in confident tones, WE the birdwatching community would like to differ as to the real worth of that area and we have the RECORDS to prove it!

Here 'endeth' my sermon - for I have so many records still to input!

Dave Steel has been the county's most prolific submitter of bird records for many years, noting and sending in well over 7000 sightings annually for his beloved local patch of the 'Chat Moss' area. Submitting currently well over double the amount of records of any other county birder, his intricate mapping and cataloguing of species on his patch forms the very backbone of our defence against any planning applications impacting on this vulnerable and extremely important area and are testament to what a single industrious and passionate birder can achieve.

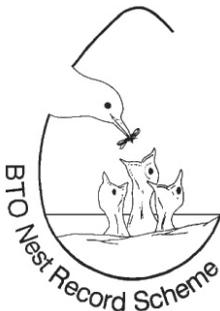
Birds, Boxes and Me

Peter Johnson

Whatever hobby you may have usually starts with an interest, can become a passion and, as many birders know, turns into an obsession, which is what has happened to me and my love of conservation. From 1992 I started putting up a variety of nest boxes in large quantities to the point where I had close on 300 boxes to monitor. In that period I have had 21 different species breeding in them and on ledges I have provided. Species include 300+ pairs of Tawny Owl, 60+ pairs of Little Owl, 60+ pairs of Kestrel, Pied Flycatcher, Redstart, numerous Nuthatch, Willow Tit, three pairs of Goosander and numerous pairs of Great and Blue Tit, fledging around 13,000 young in total. In 1998 I monitored 104 occupied Blue Tit boxes and my wife Norma who fills in the nest record cards sent them to the BTO. Only the Nags Head RSPB reserve sent in more cards than us that year for this species.

Several years ago I put a Tawny Owl box up in a private garden on Holcombe Hill. After speaking to the owner one day he informed me that his gardener had seen a 'turkey' fly out of the box. I thought could that 'turkey' have been a female Goosander, as I had monitored a box not half a mile away with Judith Smith in 1998 that a Goosander had bred successfully in. The 'turkey' which turned out to be a Goosander of course, which later successfully fledged 10 young. Over the years I have been plagued by grey squirrels, numerous wasp nests, and have had wood mice occupying the boxes, and quite often had boxes predated by weasels. Interestingly in our own garden Tree Bees used one of our nest boxes one year. I gather they have only been in Britain for around 10 years and are the only bee to use a nest box. As the years have rolled by I have had more than one occasion upon which to question my sanity, such as the times when I would be walking across open fields or moorland with a double ladder on my shoulder to check a Kestrel box on a remote tree only to run into walkers/runners/ramblers who gave sidelong glances and muttered 'there's no windows to clean out here mate'. Rather than reveal what I was actually doing, I would carry on regardless - I'm sure there must be some people who think I have escaped from the local asylum. I have recently attempted to attract different species and have put up a tray on the side of a very tall building in the hopes of getting Peregrines/Ravens breeding. I have also placed several baskets in suitable habitat in the hope of attracting Long-eared Owl or Sparrowhawk and am going to put some Swift boxes up under the eaves of my house.

The years spent carrying out this work have been incredibly rewarding and to be able to play a very small part in helping these birds breed is very gratifying. It's such a privilege to have been able to handle the likes of juvenile Tawny Owls, Little Owls, Kestrels and others. The thrill it has given me has never faded.



The BTO Nest Record Scheme (NRS) gathers vital information on the breeding success of Britain's birds by asking volunteers to find and follow the progress of individual birds' nests.

The data collected are used to produce trends in breeding performance, which help us to identify species that may be declining because of problems at the nesting stage. NRS data also allow us to measure the impacts of pressures such as climate change on bird productivity.

Anyone can be a nest recorder. Some people watch a single nest box in their back garden while others spend hundreds of hours finding and monitoring nests in the wider countryside.

For more information on research using NRS data, see:

<http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/nrs>

BirdAtlas - the beginning of the end

Steve Suttill

August 2011 saw the end of four years of recording for the BirdAtlas 2007-2011 project, as observers submitted their final breeding season data. However, this was just the beginning of the end for those with the task of producing the actual atlas, which maps the distribution of birds across the whole of Great Britain and Ireland in both winter and the breeding season. Validation of the records (which had started much earlier) had to be completed and records submitted directly to the atlas database were augmented by data from ringers, nest recorders, other bird surveys and local bird recording groups. Checking each and every record was a mammoth task just because of the sheer volume involved. Mercifully there were few disputes over identification of species (thanks to the county rarities committee for their help with this) but a good number of incorrect grid references and wrongly applied breeding codes were unearthed. Eventually provisional maps for each species were produced and these made some errors glaringly obvious. BirdAtlas was published on time at the end of 2013 - I hope you have a copy on your newly-reinforced bookshelves. What, however, has become of the update to *Breeding Birds in Greater Manchester* - our new local atlas?

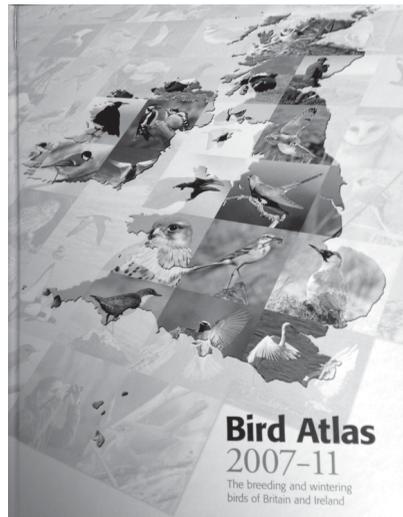
Most importantly, all the atlas records for Greater Manchester have been entered into the county database and are already being used for conservation purposes. The production of an atlas in book form will take a little longer, however. Information will be presented in 25 times more detail than in the national publication. Whilst we can already produce maps for each species, changes in distribution need to be analysed, population estimates calculated and readable accounts written before page layout can commence. More detailed scrutiny of some records, particularly those from the county boundaries, will also be necessary. Nearly everyone in the atlas team has a full-time job and all are also involved with the production of this county report on an annual basis. Rest assured that we are committed to producing a publication that will be a worthy successor to the county's first atlas.

Finally, may I take this opportunity to thank all the hundreds of people who contributed to BirdAtlas by submitting their records. Everyone involved seems to have enjoyed taking part in what has been a monumental achievement, but particular mention must be made of the contributions of several individuals.

Bill Myerscough's missionary zeal for the project made sure that virtually no corner of the county was left unexplored and that surveying efforts were properly targeted. Steve Atkins assisted with record validation and his constant analysis of the records provided Bill's "ammunition" ensuring that we never became complacent. Finally, Ian McKerchar's website manchesterbirding.com provided an invaluable means of communication for the first bird atlas of the computer age.

BirdAtlas 2007-11 is a partnership between the British Trust for Ornithology, BirdWatch Ireland and the Scottish Ornithologists Club

<http://www.bto.org/shop/bird-atlas>



Richard George Wakely (1928 - 2012)

Susan Kennerly (née Wakely) & Steve Suttill

Richard Wakely was born on October 17th, 1928 in West Drayton, Middlesex. At school during the Second World War, his fascination with the outdoor world was evident in his extensive collection of birds' eggs (an activity he neglected to mention at his RSPB job interview!) and in the hours he and his friends would spend cycling and exploring in the local countryside. This love of nature never left him. On finishing school, Richard continued his education at Writtle Agricultural College, after which he worked at Church Farm on the chalk downs of Sussex and also at a commercial nursery.

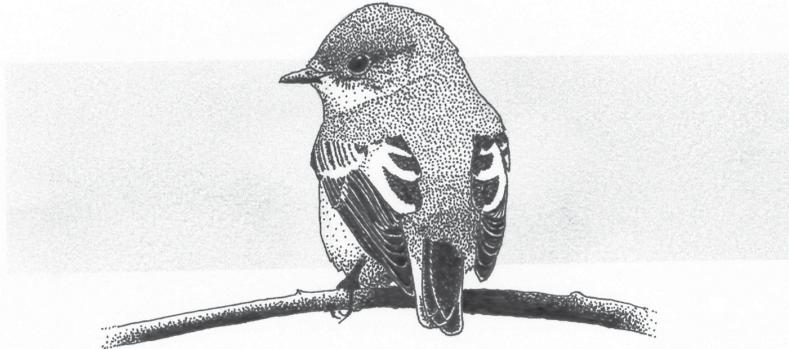
Richard then worked for 12 summers as naturalist at Camp Mohawk on the Fonthill Abbey estate in Wiltshire, a summer camp for the children of American servicemen in Europe. This was a perfect opportunity for him to be paid to spend his summers outdoors and share his knowledge of the natural world. One year Richard worked alongside a long-haired youth who went on to achieve fame as lead singer of the Rolling Stones. More importantly, Richard met Carol Johnson of the North Atlantic Girl Scouts. Following their marriage, they spent two summers in northern Minnesota and drove from coast-to-coast across the USA.

In summer 1973, the family moved to Teesside where Richard joined the RSPB, initially to work at the Teesmouth Field Centre. 1977 brought the family to Dukinfield when Richard became teacher/warden at the Eastwood RSPB reserve in Stalybridge.

The educational aspects of Richard's work resulted in him giving talks and lectures in venues as diverse as Brunel University, the Free Trade Hall and HMP Strangeways with sometimes differing audience reaction. Whilst explaining to the Strangeways audience that there was a nesting Kestrel visible through the window, one prisoner was far more excited to use his binoculars to get a view of 'H Wing'.

In 1989, Carol's untimely death left Richard solely responsible for raising two teenage children and he took early retirement from the RSPB. He remained very active at Eastwood in the capacity of 'Honorary Warden' where he coordinated the 'Tuesday Group' and the weekend 'Voluntary Wardens'. In his later years, Richard spent more time writing poetry and working in his garden, raising bluebells, foxgloves and cowslips from seed, and gaining great enjoyment from being in this environment.

Richard will be remembered by all who knew him for many things, not least his extraordinary knowledge and enthusiasm for the natural world, something he was able to share with some 50,000 young people during the course of his life.

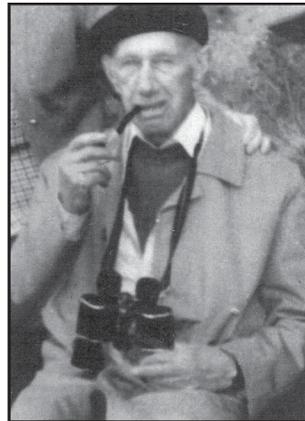


Pied Flycatcher

(Ian Mc Kerchar)

Frank Horrocks

~ a tribute



Frank R. Horrocks - a man ahead of his time

Michael L. Passant

On 5th May 2009, as part of a foursome team including also my friends Chorley, Rayner, and Rigby, during our "May Mayhem" attempt at a big day list, I returned to Pennington Flash after an absence of 36 years. The place had changed almost beyond recognition. I stared with incredulity at all the trees, the hides, an adjacent golf course which had materialised, and above all, the absence of the slag heaps which had formerly dominated an untamed scrubby grassland. As I struggled to get my bearings, the only firm reference point was the boating club complex on the south side of the Flash, close to where I used to park my car in the early 1970's. My companions and I strolled off towards the first hide, which I saw was named after Frank Horrocks, and inside of course I saw the plaque, in pride of place, dedicated to his memory. I suddenly felt old; I'd only been 31 or 32 when I'd last been here, and 28 years old when I had first met Frank. As for him, he'd still been alive until relatively recently; - until 2003 as I read on the plaque, and had lived to within sight of his 91st birthday. Over the following weeks back in Co. Durham, my thoughts kept turning to Frank Horrocks; I could picture his face and recall his voice so easily, for he had been one of my two most influential birding mentors of the early 1970's. In those days, as a novice birdwatcher with not even a field guide but armed with my first binoculars, (a pair of Boots "Ascot" 10x50's purchased for £23), I was commuting daily between Bury (where I lived) and Warrington (where I worked). It was only on a whim early one evening in 1969 or 1970 that I first called in to explore Pennington Flash on my way home from work.

As I was walking slowly scanning the waters of the Flash and its rather grim surroundings, along the dirt track ahead I perceived a quite elderly unremarkable man approaching, wearing a macintosh and a beret but also, significantly, with binoculars. We exchanged pleasantries, and I told him that this was my first visit, and pretty soon he was showing me round what was obviously his local patch. It would have been obvious to him within minutes that I was not particularly knowledgeable or experienced, and although he seemed quite pleased to meet another person birdwatching, I'm sure I gained rather more from the encounter than he did. Whilst it is easy for a comparative novice to be impressed, I must say that he did indeed impress me. He knew the area like the back of his hand and obviously was expertly familiar with everything there was to see, and was pointing out and identifying birds with practiced ease. Before we parted it had already become "Mike and Frank," and I was looking forward to subsequent visits. Opportunities for me to go birding however were limited. I had a young family, (a wife, a baby boy and a four year old boy), a responsible job, a mortgage, and little free time. Although I lived close to Elton Reservoir, I was seldom able to spend much time round there, other than at odd weekends. Sometimes when I called in at Pennington I wandered round alone, though as often as not I bumped into Frank who almost like a genie materialised as if from a magic lamp, always with a kind word and enquiring as to what I had been seeing. Our only conversation centred upon birds; it was as if our friendship was formally defined (as in master and pupil) and I could only speculate as to his line of work, though assumed it most likely that he had worked as a miner or such, but never asked. We certainly looked an ill

matched pair, with me invariably in a suit and tie, (though latterly, when I was free to plan a visit beforehand, I did exchange shoes for wellingtons).

A milestone event was when he pointed out my very first Short-eared Owl some 300 yards away over what would now be the golf course, but in those days was an expanse of more suitable rough grassland habitat. I expressed both delight and amazement at his skill and blurred out the question, "How can you see its ears so far away?" Frank didn't respond, but I'd like to think he might have smiled to himself and shared that gaffe later, perhaps with his friends over a pint in a pub sometime. What I did learn primarily from him was the importance of observing bird behaviour and learning bird calls, and set about from then on trying to trace unknown calls back to the source. My four years of chance encounters with Frank, which numbered at most barely a dozen, confined to spring and summer, all sped by (as the years do), and I moved house into N.Wales and sadly was never to see Frank again, though I often thought about going over to see him, but never did.

More recently, I enquired on the Manchester Birding website as to whether there existed any photographs of him; but apparently nobody knew of any. My next step was to contact Eddie King of the Leigh Ornithological Society (L.O.S.), who kindly referred me to the chairman, David Shallcross. He in turn put me in touch with Jack and Doris Critchley, firm friends of Frank who were particularly close to him in his later years. In October 2011, to my great delight, I received from Jack Critchley a package containing first hand accounts by Frank of his boyhood adventures, some of the highlights among his discoveries, as well as his views on conservation and the wider interest in birds and birding which had become established during his later years. From his writings, it was apparent that he was from his earliest years very much a solitary pioneer and champion of birds and wildlife against old entrenched attitudes and mindless acts of cruelty. These were evidently perpetrated by otherwise reasonable ordinary working men who, mainly due to ignorance and thoughtlessness, regarded the shooting of birds as an acceptable leisure activity. It was also a great pleasure to see several photographs of Frank after the passing of almost 40 years; especially the one of him wearing his beret and raincoat; - looking about 60 years of age, and exactly as I recall him at our first meeting. Also enclosed was the March 2003 issue of the L.O.S. newsletter which marked Frank's death on 26th January 2003. Within this were moving and most eloquent tributes from friends who had certainly known Frank rather better, and for far longer periods of time than I did. I refer here particularly to contributions from Jack and Doris Critchley, Gordon Follows, Judith Smith, Ken Spencer, John Tymon, and David Wilson. After reading and copying this material, I forwarded everything to Ian Mc Kerchar to afford him the opportunity at some stage convenient to him (and mindful of his own heavy workload) to make the material more widely available should he consider it appropriate. Jack Critchley also sent to me a publication of the Wigan Heritage Service magazine "PastForward" issue no.59 (Dec-Mar 2012) which featured a two page article on Frank Horrocks by Yvonne Eckersley. A footnote at the end advised of the Frank Horrocks Archive D/DX/162 at Wigan Archive Services at Leigh Town Hall.

I understand from Jack Critchley that 15th February 2012 marked the 100th anniversary of Frank's birth, and with Ian's kind permission and support, I suggested that this was as appropriate a time as any to celebrate his life and contribution, and to bring to Greater Manchester's increasingly wide birding fraternity some fuller insight and awareness of him. Reading and learning so much more about Frank Horrocks over the last few years, I discovered additional dimensions to the man, such as his talent as a poet, and his love and appreciation of classical music, linked possibly to his boyhood experience as a chorister. Despite having left school at 14 years of age (as did many of his generation), his writings are concise and to the point, full of logical insights, and come across with a precise eloquence which holds the reader's interest.

So, you may ask; - what was special about the man himself? What I believe set him apart was his early commitment, while still a youngster, to be his own man, to stand alone if necessary

against the opinions and pressures of his day. That takes a certain amount of character (not to mention courage) in a young boy. He shunned the boring popular pursuit of football (as he saw it), and fervently sought understanding of the wildlife he was discovering all around him. His birding skills were honed over years of dedicated field work and observation, fuelled by enthusiasm and single mindedness of purpose. Frustratingly, he had nobody at all to share it with, and this was the situation in which he pursued his interest for many years, to the extent that he virtually considered himself to be the only birdwatcher in his part of the world. In short, he was decades ahead of his time. He fell in love with nature and it sustained him all through his active life, and from the tone of the many tributes at the time of his death, it was obvious that above all, he was a true friend and good companion to many, and simply put, a gentleman. I believe that his closeness to, and love of nature over his long life endowed him with a certain fundamental wisdom and the ability to see the world in true perspective. He seems to have realised quite independently and at an early age, the truth as expounded some time earlier by the great pioneering naturalist Alfred Russell Wallace, that birds and all the animals of the natural world do not exist solely at the behest of humans or for their convenience or amusement, but have their own agendas and purposes without any need to justify their existence to us, and as such fellow creatures, they are fully deserving of our respect.

On 15th February 2012 therefore, on what would have been his 100th birthday I raised a glass to Frank Ridyard Horrocks, and quietly said a long overdue "thank you; - I was indeed fortunate to have briefly known you."

The following compositions are Frank Horrocks' own, written by him over thirty years ago and were kindly provided by Jack and Doris Critchley:

Early Days

Frank R. Horrocks

When a small boy, the living room window behind Uncle Tom's sweet shop in Firs Lane had a fascination for me. Viewed from outside were two sweet bottles behind the window. In one swam several Carp, while a four-inch Rudd or Dace seemingly forever tried to escape from the other bottle by swimming up and down with its nose to the glass. Then came an added attraction in the window- three small birds eggs, not the same shape and with variations in the brown colouring. The eggs were from Westleigh Lodge Farm, where Uncle Tom went for milk for ice-cream making. He was also a coal-miner, later becoming a town councillor with a term of office as Mayor during the war years. In contrast to the three sparrow eggs there appeared a larger egg, blue and spotted black; a small blue egg; and yet another, olive brown, rather dumpy, but pointed and bigger than any of the others- a partridge egg. My frequent visits to the window met with amused approval from Uncle Tom. I was enchanted by the delicate beauty of the eggs.

Just up the road in Heath Lane lived Aunt Ann, a maiden Aunt. Here too there were quite a few attractions, one being a raised concrete slab in her pantry, usually adorned with an array of singing-lilies, plate meat, apple and custard pies. The whole front of the house was ivy-covered with several nesting sparrows. In the back yard stood a huge rain tub in which I had a number of Sticklebacks, but above all a short walk and I was in the fields. In those same fields I marvelled at my first hovering Kestrels and drumming Snipe and found my first Reed Bunting's nest- four eggs beneath a canopy of dead reed grass. About this thrilling experience I had to tell someone, so hotfoot to Aunt Ann's, but despite by boyish excitement, she was in no mood to listen, Uncle David, who lived next-door-but-one, kept several ferrets in a large wire-netting cage. His fox-terrier, Nell, had managed to reach one of Aunt Ann's custard pies and had emptied the contents thereof, leaving the pastry.

Meanwhile, with pre-knowledge, I was first customer at the school jumble sale, where, for one penny, I acquired a case of stuffed birds which I have to this day. At about this time a Great Northern Diver was shot at Fir Tree Flash, the bird being killed by the men who chased it in a boat. There was no letter of protest in the "Journal" from local people, despite the paper reporting the event, but a gentleman from London wrote a scathing letter of condemnation at the killing of a rare bird that came to Leigh. Books on bird identification were few and far between, if any, cigarette cards being one source of information, a well-known tobacco firm issuing a series of fifty "Life in the Tree-Tops", depicting, to me then, such fabulous birds as Buzzard, Sparrowhawk, Jay and Nuthatch, to mention a few.

In winter I often met two or three shooting miners who would kill anything bigger than a sparrow. Fieldfares, regular victims, they dubbed Russian Blue-backs, the Common Snipe being known to them as the Hodge Snipe. They presented me with a Short-eared Owl shot by them a few days previously, but it had been dead too long to have it stuffed, much to my regret. They also invited me to collect an unidentified thrush, another of their victims. I am still convinced it was a White's Thrush. I kept the bird as long as possible, but had no-one to report or show it to, the late T A Coward being the only naturalist I had heard of. Reluctantly and regrettably I buried it in the garden. These same men shot a Barn Owl, prompting me to write a letter of protest which was published in the "Journal". Strangely enough, my next encounter with them resulted not in the hostility I had expected, but in a veiled form of admiration for daring to step out of the line and challenge them. They were tough, ruthless men, misguided, but likeable in some ways.

Due to the strictness of the trespassing laws (resulting in my one and only court appearance when in my early teens) the railway lines and embankments between the flashes were a veritable sanctuary for nesting birds, while on the water in winter impressive rafts of wildfowl could be seen, but unfortunately not identifiable without binoculars. At the eastern end of the flash, when the water stretched to Pennington Bridge, were a number of shallow pools, frequented in spring, but more so in autumn, by small flocks of waders- Ringed Plover and Dunlin being recognized then. Intrigued by them, I wondered where they came from and whither bound, as with the terns over the water. I have no doubt that had the flash been so well-watched then as it is now more species would have been added to the local list. By way of illustration, a mounted specimen of a Spotted Crake, shot at the local flash by a Lowton man, was on display at the old Pennington Hall Museum.

Looking Back

Frank. R. Horrocks

To me, the eruption of birdwatchers in the last decade has been as phenomenal as the spread across Europe to this country of the Collared Dove. Before the Second World War, the term "birdwatcher", as far as I know, was unknown, while in my youth the only interest in birds, locally at any rate, was in cage birds, Skylarks and Linnets included, and stuffed birds on ornamental display in glass cases. To show an interest in wild birds in a completely wild state was apparently something new and incomprehensible to the general public. I thought it was incomprehensible why this should be. Indeed, very little was known about wild birds and, for the most part, these were mis-named.

In my far-off school days the Reed Bunting was the Writing-Master, the Dunnock the Blue Dunnock, names no doubt derived from the markings on the eggs of the former and the egg colour of the latter. In a school classroom was a framed coloured painting of a pair of Pied Wagtails- "Peggy Dishwashers" according to the artist. In those same schooldays I found the local fields and wildlife irresistible. Here I was delighted to make acquaintance of Stickleback and Water Vole in the brook, Snipe in the marshy patches, with Mallard and Coot on open

water amongst fascinating experiences. So delighted that I had to tell someone, but nobody wanted to know. Church-going and music dominated family life, accepted by me with reluctant compliance. My voiced enthusiasm for wildlife was met with indifference. Instilled, or rather knocked, into me was an appreciation of music. Later it would enrich my life considerably. However, these were happy days and I had every intention of keeping it that way in the future. Not much else mattered, only to share. But who with? It was to prove a long wait, lasting many years via a tortuous route.

After leaving school at the age of fourteen, I was expected to conform to the routine of others, but I wasn't bored enough. To be unalterably different wasn't easy. Every effort was made on my part to find a like-minded companion, but to no avail. I associated with rat-catchers, bird-catchers (whose name for the Redpoll was Jitty or Tilly), pigeon-fanciers and shooting miners. Their name for the Fieldfare was Russian Blueback. A pair of Carrion Crows in flight was solemnly referred to as a pair of pit-clogs. Baffled by a Cormorant, they shot it and dubbed it a Mongoose. These men, older than myself, were in a rough fashion to me and somewhat amused, especially at the small pair of opera glasses I used. I don't remember seeing binoculars in the mid-thirties, certainly not in the field. My aid to bird identification was "Birds", in the "Observer" series. Conservation and nature trails I never heard mentioned. About this time, I borrowed from the Library the late F. A. Lowe's book "Days with Rarer Birds". In it were photographs taken in Holland of Black-tailed Godwit and Black Tern, birds I never expected to see. Posters with a picture of the Barn Owl and information regarding its protection appeared outside police stations. I found this very encouraging.

The long quest to find a kindred spirit at long last materialised in the person of T. Edmondson, some ten years my junior. This came to light not in the field but sitting next to each other on a motor coach choir trip. Although often in each other's company, we never suspected a mutual interest. Soon followed a Naturalists' Association of four, with Tom Edmondson as Hon. Sec., T. Durkin as Hon. Treas., W. Cartledge member, and myself as Hon. Organiser. Weekly meetings were held at my former address, the log book still being in my possession. An entry from it reads: "Details of a dinner on 23rd December, 1938."- The menu is to be a 2d pie each, two 1½d sweet cakes each, ¼ of tongue or such like. At a cost of 2/-. After correspondence, Mr. Lowe of Bolton was invited to the Flash, where he was shown many nests. He was particularly intrigued with a pair of Stonechats nesting on the embankment by Pennington railway station. Association bird records appeared in E. Hardy's book "Birds of the Liverpool Area", published, I think, during the War. At the outbreak of war the Association was dissolved, T. Durkin and myself being conscripted to the Army. Still remembered with affection and respect, Tom lost his life in Italy. A bitter blow. During a few war-time months spent on the mainland of Orkney Isles, I was given the opportunity to observe such exciting birds as Hen Harrier, Red-throated Diver and Black Guillemot, to mention a few.

On my return to civilian life, I was equipped with binoculars exchanged for a few cigarettes in Germany. Inferior when compared to modern binocs, they had to suffice for a time. They were immediately put to use, as was the "Handbook", bought second-hand for £5.00. On completion of the daily task, the nightly round would begin, daylight permitting. This involved push-bike visits to Astley and Pennington Flashes. Other habitats visited, time allowed or made, were Borsdane Wood, Tyldesley Sewage Works, Lilford Wood, Lightshaw Hall Flash, the Wigan Flashes and the mosses, mostly during weekends. Local work without precedent. Occasionally being sniped at by the "enemy", I was told I didn't know what I was missing by not attending football matches. The answer was obvious.

Being a member of the Lancashire and Cheshire Fauna Society, bird records for the area, initially jotted down on Swan Vestas matchboxes in pencil, were submitted to C. Oakes, Lancashire Bird Recorder for the Society, and over a number of years to his successor, K. G. Spencer. There was correspondence with the late A. W. Boyd and the late F. A. Lowe. I was reminded of "Days with Rarer Birds" when, on my second visit to Astley Flash, a small flock

of Black-tailed Godwits in breeding plumage came tumbling and calling out of the sky to alight in front of me. An unforgettable sight. Black Terns appeared at Pennington Flash in the following month, May 1946.

In the 1950's I was happy to share, with others who appeared on the scene, the local birdlife. Twitchers were an unknown species. The complete obliteration of Astley Flash with colliery waste was a calamity. It was a great place for migrating wading birds; Common Sandpiper, Snipe and Oystercatcher nested there; and, to my knowledge, a pair of Dunlins attempted nesting. Two or three Smew wintered there. Meanwhile, Pennington Flash was being filled in, at the Plank Lane end by the N.C.B. and the south side and Pennington end by general refuse. In some respects, the flash is not the place it was for birds. Still a large area of water, it became part of a country park. Now wardened, the waterfowl, ducks in particular, have benefited greatly from protection. It was until 1966 that Pennington Flash was consistently watched by myself only. I was then joined by others whose enthusiasm culminated in the present Leigh Ornithological Society. A schoolboy dream come true? I think so. Looking back? Perhaps a glance.

Nightjars

Frank. R. Horrocks

It was as a result of my frequent push-bike visits in the late 1940s to that all-year-round place of bird interest, Astley Flash, that I became acquainted with the local mosses. In near proximity to the flash, an area of flooded pasture-land caused by mining subsidence, the mossland was in direct contrast and worthy of investigation for its birdlife.

After reconnoitring the fringes north of the Liverpool-Manchester railway line, I was struck by the similarity of terrain to that of Risley Moss, where I first heard my first Nightjar in 1936, prior to the building of the Royal Ordnance Factory. My first attempt at locating Nightjars took place at dusk, near to the old mineral line from Astley Green colliery to the main line. This was aborted by swarms of unseen biting insects. A smoke-screen of furiously-puffed tobacco smoke was no deterrent. In a state of panic, the bike was mounted with ill-tempered haste and pedalled pell-mell to a more salubrious environment.

Convinced it was a typical Nightjar habitat, a daylight search, during which many small yellow moths were disturbed with no shortage of clegs resulted in the flushing of a male Nightjar, the white on the wings and tail catching the eye as it flew low over patches of heather and peat-cuttings uttering its "goo-ick" call. Nightjars are still extant at this site, but for how long?

Meanwhile, several tentative but further probes had been made from the eastern end of Bedford Moss, the bike being left in Rindle Wood. Despite having learned that little human activity escaped the notice of the moss-dwellers, to my surprise I was never challenged. Emboldened, I was delighted to find that I had, for the most part, this moss to myself and regularly roamed at will, noting such mossland nesting birds as Tree Pipit, Turtle Dove, Willow Tit, Curlew and Whinchat. In addition, three male Nightjars were found, one near the railway line, another at the western edge of Bedford Moss, and the other at the opposite end near Rindle Wood, this being the most accessible, the one which was followed up from song, through spectacular wing-clapping and display flight to nesting.

It was only after a casual, but methodical, search that I came across the sitting female. At the foot of a stunted birch, on a small patch of bare peat criss-crossed with charred sticks and small pieces of bark, she sat perfectly still, relying on her marvellous camouflage to escape detection. Almost at my feet, she nearly succeeded, the full breeding cycle of this pair of Nightjars later being successful.

Another Nightjar habitat, between the flash and the moss, was unwittingly created by man. A huge hummocky coal slag-heap dumped from the bowels of the earth had over the years become overgrown with various forms of vegetation, including bracken, with scattered birch trees and willow-scrub. The small yellow moths were also much in evidence. In a grassy hollow was an old railway sleeper on which, invariably, on sunny days a male Nightjar could be observed basking. This bird's presumed mate deserted her beautifully marked eggs, laid on bare slag, after being scared by a local man's dog as she was sitting. It would be most lamentable if this particular slag-heap was landscaped. It would then become a mound of featureless grass.

Redwings

Frank R. Horrocks

At night each year when winter's near
Redwings call in voice so small
Overhead they fly heedless of below
City or farmstead tho' a glow

Bare winter ore to northern shore wing
Once more in pine to sing
(with russet underwing)
And summer brings

Contributors

The Greater Manchester Bird Recording Group and the Annual Bird Report Production Team would like to sincerely thank all those individual observers, societies and organisations who contributed to this 2011 report by submitting their sightings either directly to the GMBRG or via one of the many active bird surveys within the county. Whilst it is hoped that the list is as complete as possible there will inevitably be some omissions for which we apologise in advance.

Data for inclusion in this report was also received from Audenshaw Ornithology Group, BTO Birdtrack and Atlas, Leigh Ornithological Society, Rochdale Field Naturalists' Society, Shell Pool Reserve Conservation Group, Stockport Birdwatching Society and WeBS.

The BirdAtlas project has resulted in a big increase in the number of records and observers. As a result, this list may contain a few names of those who have submitted records from just outside the county boundaries.

Adderley R & S	Bostock S	Christmas S	Farrell C
Alker P	Bowker D	Clifford D	Farrow DS
Allen S	Bradley SA	Coatsworth T	Fielding B
Allen-Pearson S	Bradney R	Colley M	Fleming P
Almond S	Bratton JH	Connelly J & V	Fletcher C
Archer R	Breaks M	Cook H	Foex B
Ashcroft C	Bridge T	Cooper A	Foulkes K
Ashcroft R	Broadbent R	Cooper MC	Foulkes R
Ashton R	Brooks D	Cooper R	Fox D
Ashworth G	Broome D	Cope T	Francis D & P
Atkins SV	Brown C	Corser J & R	Friel D
	Burgum J	Costa S	Fry J
Bailey R	Burke S	Council RP	
Baillie C	Burkmar R	Cowley K	Gartside K
Ball A	Butterworth J	Cremins P	Gaskell D
Bamforth A & N	Butterworth K	Cross A	Ghilks S
Barker C		Cubbon M	Gibson J
Barlow P	Cameron N	Culkin M & P	Gifford DL
Baron P	Campbell I		Gill G
Barrett N	Canovan JJ	Darby T	Golborn P
Barrow M	Canovan S	Darbyshire C	Graham A
Bateson C	Carpenter B	Davidson J	Grounds N
Beaney VR	Carr S	Davison P	
B Beardmore J	Carroll P	Deed B	Hadfield R
Bennett D	Carter J	Doherty J	Haigh P
Berry P	Carter JE	Douglas S	Halsey S
Bingham T	Carter P	Dyke B	Hammond P
Bird B	Caveney J		Hargreaves G
Bishop T	Chambers A	Eades R	Harper C
Bissitt AJ	Champion M	Easton JR	Harrison W
Bissitt D	Chapman AJ	Eccles J	Haydock K
Blackhall B	Chatterton V	Elsey S	Hayes R
Blumsom W	Chippendale S	Evans M	Haynes W
Bolton S	Chorley M	Evans D	Headon J
Boote I	Christian J		Heaton P

Heintzen C	Livesey P	Peters IR	Taylor J
Hewitt R	Lumb D	Pinder JM	Theakston R
Higson C	Lyons J	Pinnington S	Thew R
Hill R		Plant S	Thompson D
Hilton N	Maddock P & R	Posen S	Thompson PR
Hind SH	Makin A	Potts C	Thorpe R
Hines P	Makinson I	Praciak L	Tollitt B
Hitchen S	Mariani A	Prosser A	Tonge G
Holland D	Marston C		Tweedale B
Holt A	Martin AW	Ramsden CG	Tymon J
Honer C	Martin DS	Rawlins M	
Horwood GM	Martin SJ	Rayner JW	Vaughan M
Howard M	Massey S	Ready R	
Hulme B	Mayall V	Renshaw K	Waddington B
Hunt A	Maynard D	Rhodes P	Waddington P
Hunt G	McCabe K	Rigby M	Walker C
Hunter JSA	McGeorge I	Rimmer A	Wallace D
Hurst P	McGowan J	Risley P	Warford A
Hyde P	McGrady L	Roberts J	Warford S
	McKerchar IM	Rowley A	Weir D
Irons D	McRoyall S	Royle F	Welford JT
Isherwood N	Meadowcroft D	Rudd P	West N
Ives R	Meadows J	Rush SA	Whittaker I
	Miller L	Rushton M	Wilcox B
Jackson P	Mills J		Wilcox D
Jeffrey JHG	Moffatt I	Sanderson D	Wilcox T
Jepson-Brown C	Moor J	Schofield A & P	Wilkinson C
Johnson AA & C	Morris P	Shallcross D	Wilkinson J
Johnson D	Morton T	Shaw BT	Willcock B
Johnson I	Mossman A	Sherrington D	Williams R
Johnson P & N	Myers DA	Shilton K	Willis R
Johnson S	Myerscough W	Sidebotham D	Wilson PK
Jones A	Mynett Y	Simms OJ	Wilson R
Jones B		Simpson S	Winn A
Jones PJH	Neil T	Smith AJ	Winter K
Jowett T	Newing R	Smith P	Wood JP
	Newman G	Southworth N	Wood N
Kehoe M	Nuttall A	Stanyer MP	Woodhead N
Kelly P		Steel D	Worthington J
Kenworthy R	O'Hara D	Stevens P	Wren P
Kenyon P	O'Mahony T	Straffon J	Wright D& D
King E	Ormerod J	Street C	Wright N
King TS	Ousey D	Sutcliffe DJ	Wright OE
Kirk P	Owen BJ	Suttill SM	Wynn J
Knight J	Owen C	Sutton P	
Koczwara D	Owen M	Sweeney S	Yalden DW
		Swift R	Young AJ
Laidlaw C	Parry C	Sykes D	Young SC
Lewis M	Parry T		
Liddle R	Paterson A	Tattersall S	
Little C	Peers M	Taverner J	
Little A	Pepler GRM	Taylor R & S	

Directory of Birding in Greater Manchester

The county of Greater Manchester consists of 10 metropolitan boroughs: Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan. Below is a list of contacts, clubs and other information which you may find useful. There is much more detail and information for all aspects of birding in the county on the regularly updated website www.manchesterbirding.com

County Bird Recorder

Ian McKerchar, 42 Green Ave, Astley M29 7EH

Tel: 01942 701758 Mob: 07958 687481 Email: ianmckerchar1@gmail.com

Assistant County Bird Recorder and BTO Assistant Regional Rep.

Steve Atkins, 33 King's Grove, Wardle, Rochdale OL12 9HR

Tel: 01706 645097 Email: steveatkins@tiscali.co.uk

BTO Regional Representatives

Manchester - Stephen Suttill, 94 Manchester Rd, Mossley, OL5 9AY Tel: 01457 836360

Email: suttill.parkinson@virgin.net (home) info@marctheprinters.co.uk (work)

Cheshire N & E - Mark Eddowes, 59 Westfield Drive, Knutsford WA16 0BH.

Tel: 01565 621683 Email: mark@eddowesaviationsafety.com (the 10km squares SJ78, SJ88 and SJ98 are in this region although large parts of them are in Greater Manchester)

Regional Organiser for the Breeding Bird Survey, Manchester Region: Antony Wainwright,

25 West Grove, Daisy Hill, Westhoughton, Bolton BL5 2HU. Tel: 07894 243432

Email: awainwright40@gmail.com

Wetland Bird Survey Organiser: Jamie Dunning,

Flat 2, 42 Palatine Road, Withington M20 3JI Email: jamiedunning8@gmail.com

Clubs

Greater Manchester Bird Recording Group

Contact: Ian McKerchar, 42 Green Ave, Astley, M29 7EH

Tel: 01942 701758 Mob: 07958 687481 Email: ianmckerchar1@gmail.com

Leigh Ornithological Society

Contact: Raymond Meredith, 24 Samuel Street, Hindsford, Atherton M46 9AY

Tel: 01942 793555 Email: raymond.meredith@ntlworld.com

Stockport Birdwatching Society

Contact: Dave Evans, 36 Tatton Rd South, Stockport, SK4 4LU

Tel: 0161 432 9513 Email: windhover@ntl.com

RSPB Members' Groups - Group Leaders or contacts:

Bolton: Barrie Shore (Secretary) Tel: 01254 772089 Email: B.Shore@sky.com

High Peak: Richard Stephenson (Group Leader) Tel: 07966198472

Email: richard.stephenson@manchester.ac.uk

Stockport: Jean Crouch (Group Leader) Tel. 01625 873147

Wigan: Neil Martin Tel: 01695 624860 or 01695 633419 Mobile: 07950 137165

Site Recording Groups or Local Contacts:

Audenshaw Ornithology Group (Audenshaw and Gorton Reservoirs)

Contact: Roy Travis, 188 Smallshaw Lane, Ashton-under-Lyne, OL6 8RA

Tel: 0161 330 2607 Email: roy.travis188@btinternet.com

Elton Bird Recording Group (Elton and Withins Reservoirs plus environs)

Contact: Peter Baron, 17 Elton Brook Close, Bury BL8 2SN

Tel: 0161 761 6531 Email: peter.baron2@btinternet.com

Shell Pool Reserve (permit required: £20 p.a.)

Mrs Chris Neild, 70 Ardenfield Drive, Peel Hall, Manchester M22 5DD

Tel: 0161 436 7551 Email: chrisneild@surfbirder.net

For local contacts for other sites, please contact the County Recorder

Contact Details for Permit Only Sites

A restricted number of permits are issued for Audenshaw Reservoirs and Heaton Park Reservoir by United Utilities. There is a waiting list at both sites. These are free of charge and are issued for one year (applicants must be members of the RSPB, BTO, WWT or similar organisation). For either site, apply to Edward Lawrance, Longendale Office, Woodhead Rd., Tintwistle, Glossop SK13 1HS Tel: 01457 851080 Email Edward.lawrance@uuplc.co.uk.

For access to Ringley ETW, apply to Ian Harper, Anderton Yard, Rivington Water Treatment Works, Horwich, BL6 7RN Tel: 01204 664305.

Applications for permits for Shell Pool Reserve should be made to Mrs Chris Neild, 70 Ardenfield Drive, Peel Hall, Manchester M22 5DD Tel: 0161 436 7551. Email: chrisneild@surfbirder.net

Applications for a key to access Cotterill Clough should be made to Cheshire Wildlife Trust, Bickley Hall Farm, Bickley, Malpas, Cheshire, SY14 8EF.

Greater Manchester Police Wildlife Liaison contact:

GM Police no longer has any Police Wildlife Liaison Officers so please direct all enquires or information relating to wildlife crime to them via their 101 non-emergency number or the 999 emergency number.

National Wildlife Crime Unit: Andy McWilliam. Tel: 07884116585 Email: ukwildlifecrime@nwc.u.pnn.police.uk (in the event of information relating to suspects involved in wildlife crime, details should be passed onto Andy McWilliam of the National Wildlife Crime Unit as well as GM Police and the RSPB).

Site Conservation and Records for Flora and other Wildlife

The Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) works across the 10 districts of GM and identifies, surveys and selects County Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs) of which there are over 500. Information on individual SBIs may be obtained from GMEU and a copy of the SBI selection guidelines can be downloaded from <http://www.tameside.gov.uk/ecologyunit>. In addition GMEU assesses and comments on the potential ecological impacts of development proposals on behalf of the district planning departments, and provides advice on safeguarding wildlife on development sites.

GMEU is also home to the Greater Manchester Local Records Centre (GMLRC) which was established in 2008 and forms part of a national network of LRCs. GMLRC's primary roles are to promote wildlife recording across GM and to maintain a database of species and habitat records which are of vital importance to GMEU's work. In order to protect wildlife we need to know where and when species occur. By building up a detailed picture of the current distributions of Greater Manchester's wildlife, we will also be able to monitor future changes, especially in response to climate change.

GMLRC's website <http://www.gmwildlife.org.uk/> provides information on wildlife recording in Greater Manchester. Over the next few years the website will build into a valuable information resource on the sites and wildlife of GM. Records of flora and fauna (excluding birds) can now be submitted to the LRC via the website using the on-line recording system GMLRC RODIS. Data are uploaded to the National Biodiversity Network Gateway where they are made available to the Environment Agency, Natural England and other organisations, for conservation and research purposes. To ensure their protection, data on sensitive species can only be accessed by the general public at 10km resolution and records of some species e.g. Ruddy Duck are not supplied to the NBN. The species records (datasets) for Greater Manchester can be viewed at <http://data.nbn.org.uk/> by clicking on Browse Dataset Providers and selecting Greater Manchester Ecology Unit from the list.

Close co-operation with the GM Bird Recording Group (GMBRG) means that any bird records submitted to GMBRG are made available to GMEU for the selection of Sites of Biological Importance, conservation of our county's birds and to assess the impacts of planning applications.

Contact details: Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU), Tameside MBC, Wellington Rd, Ashton-under-Lyne OL6 6DL Email: gmeu@tameside.gov.uk Tel: 0161 342 2250



Wryneck, Georges Lane, Horwich, August (Ian McKerchar)

Major Sites Mentioned in the Text with 6 Figure OS Grid Reference

* Access strictly by permit only: see address in Directory section;

No public access; £ Parking charge; (h) Hide

Abney Hall	SJ860890	Broadley Fold	SD876165
Abram Flashes SSSI	SD608077	Brookdale Clough	SJ892998
Adswood Tip	SJ887877	Brookheys Covert	SJ742903
Akzo Pond	SD935155	Brook Wood	SJ768917
Alexandra Park Moss Side	SJ835950	Brushes Valley	SJ995992
Alkrington Woods	SD863050	Bryan Hey Resr	SD369412
Altrincham ETW	SJ753907	Bryn Marsh	SD585026
Amerswood Lake	SD607037	Burnt Edge	SD660126
Apethorn	SJ945935	Cadishead Moss	SJ699937
Ashworth Moor Resr	SD830155	Carrington Moss	SJ747915
Astley Green	SJ703997	Castleshaw Resrs	SD995099
Astley Moss East Peat Pools #	SJ715985	Chadkirk	SJ940895
Astley Moss SSSI *	SJ697977	Chadwick Lane	SD870101
Astley Tip #	SJ710995	Cheadle Heath ETW	SJ867897
Atherton Woods #	SD671017	Chelburn Resrs	SD951193
Audenshaw Resrs *(h)	SJ915965	Chew Valley	SE025025
Banky Meadow	SJ766933	Chorlton Ees	SJ805932
Barlow Tip	SJ815921	Chorlton WP	SJ820915
Barlow's Farm	SD628025	Church Lane Woodford	SJ883828
Barrow Bridge	SD690116	Clegg Hall Pools #	SD920141
Barton Moss	SJ735975	Clifton Marina	SD773044
Bedford Moss	SJ687974	Compstall Resrs	SJ967907
Bickershaw Rucks	SD630005	Cotterill Clough *	SJ804839
Billinge Higher End	SD522028	Cox Green Quarry	SD715147
Binn Green £	SE019045	Crime Lake	SD917013
Birchfields Park	SJ860950	Crompton Lodges	SD742067
Bishop Park	SD965085	Crooke	SD555073
Blackleach Resr	SD738040	Croxden Peatworks NR	SJ715970
Black Moss Covert	SJ745888	Cutacre	SD942405
Blackstone Edge Resr	SD972181	Dainewell Wood	SJ756910
Boodle Wood	SD732003	Daisy Hill ETW	SD653036
Borsdane Wood	SD625060	Daisy Nook CP	SD920006
Botany Bay Wood #	SJ730985	Davenport Green	SJ800860
Bramhall Park Lakes	SJ890865	Davyhulme NR	SJ744960
Broad Ees Dole (h)	SJ800933	Deans Ditch	SD670145

Diggle Flash	SD632016	Holden's Plantation	SD662130
Ding Quarry	SD850187	Hollingworth Lake £ (h)	SD937150
Dixon's Wood	SJ716965	Hope Carr NR	SJ663986
Doffcocker Lodge	SD685103	Hopwood Hall	SD875083
Dover Basin	SD612001	Horrocks Flash	SD592025
Dovestones £	SE020033	Horrocks Hill	SD697130
Drinkwater Park	SD804024	Hough End	SJ835930
Dunham Massey £	SJ740870	Hulton Park #	SD680050
Dunscar Lodges	SD711136	Hyde Bank	SJ947903
Dutton's Pond	SJ739941	Ince Moss Landfill	SD585036
Ealees Valley	SD944162	Irlam Moss	SJ710960
Edgeley Resrs	SJ887891	Jack Lane NR	SJ733940
Elton Resr	SD790095	Jackson's Boat	SJ811927
Ernocroft	SJ983910	Jumbles Resr (h)	SD734143
Etherow CP£(h)	SJ972908	Kenworthy Woods	SJ821914
Factory Hill	SD649121	Kickety Brook	SJ790920
Firs Park Lake	SD645005	Kingsway Bus. Park	SD915120
Fir Tree Flash	SD640010	Kirklees Valley	SD790120
Flixton Fly Ash Tip	SJ738938	Kitcliffe Resr	SD960125
Flixton Lagoons	SJ733936	Knott Hill	SD960015
Gatley Carrs	SJ842889	Knott Lanes	SD924015
Gidlow Rucks	SD569084	Knowl Hill	SD841167
Gingham Brow	SD651116	Ladybrook Valley	SJ903858
Glover's Pool	SD603014	Ladyshore	SD763066
Godley Resr	SJ965953	Light Hazzles Resr	SD963197
Gorton Resrs	SJ900963	Lightshaw Hall Flash	SJ617997
Goyt Hall Farm	SJ923901	Lilford Park	SD670011
Great Woolden Moss	SJ695945	Linneyshaw Moss	SD744038
Greenbooth Resr	SD855154	Little Ees	SJ779930
Gristlehurst Woods	SD847117	Little Woolden Moss	SJ695955
Haigh Plantations £	SD590075	Littlemoss	SD915000
Hawkley Reedbed	SD581032	Longworth Lane	SD706140
Healey Dell	SD877158	Loots Lake	SJ838894
Heaton Park Resr * (h)	SD826050	Low Hall Park	SD611032
High Moor, Delph	SD972067	Lowton Heath	SJ613964
High Rid Resr	SD666101	Ludworth Moor	SJ997097
Higher Meadows	SD647129	Medlock Valley	SD922010
Highfield Moss SSSI	SJ612954	Middlewood	SJ952847
Hobson's Moor	SJ991973	Montcliffe	SD652123
Holcombe Moor	SD770179	Morley's SQ	SJ686991
Holden Clough A-u-L	SD934014	Moses Gate CP (h)	SD747065
Holden's Farm	SD666130	Moss Lane, Astley	SJ695985

Naden Resrs	SD853170	Shell Pool NR * (h)	SJ747922
Newfields Farm	SD671123	Shore Top Resr	SD767062
Nob End	SD747067	Simpson Clough	SD855125
Norman Hill Resr	SD968131	Sinderland	SJ749903
Ochre Flash	SD581032	Skitters Wood	SJ572991
Ogden Resr	SD953123	Slackcote	SD970092
Offerton	SJ920885	Smithills Moor	SD670137
Orrell WP	SD533037	Southern Cemetery	SJ830925
Otterspool	SJ936895	Springfield Park	SD875123
Outwood	SD775060	Spring Mill Resr	SD875171
Park Bridge	SD943025	Staley Brushes	SJ995995
Parson's Meadow	SD573046	Stamford Pk Lake Alt.	SJ774875
Pavilion Wood	SD940155	Stamford Pk Lake A-u-L	SJ956993
Pearson's Flash	SD583038	Starmount Lodges	SD756088
Pennington Flash £ (h)	SJ640990	Stretford Ees	SJ785935
Philips Park, Prestwich	SD800040	Strinesdale Resrs	SD955063
Pickley Green	SD655020	Swineshaw Resrs	SD995005
Piethorne Resr	SD965127	Tandle Hill CP	SD903086
Pilsworth Fisheries	SD830085	Three Sisters (h)	SD582010
Platt Fields Park	SJ851944	Trub	SD890095
Poise Brook	SJ925895	Turner's Flash	SD588031
Pomona Docks	SJ820965	Urmston Meadows	SJ762939
Prestolee Road/Pond	SD766060	Vicars Hall Lane	SD710003
Priory Gardens	SJ797935	Viridor Wood	SD594007
Queens Pk Heywood	SD858116	Walker Fold Woods	SD675125
Radcliffe Ees	SD795074	Wallsuches, Horwich	SD653117
Rainford's Tip	SD587027	Walmsley's Flash	SD565064
Red Moss SSSI	SD635100	Walves Resr	SD747150
Red Seas, Crooke	SD556071	Warland Resr	SD960205
Reddish Vale	SJ905935	Watergrove Resr (h)	SD910180
Redisher Woods	SD776155	Werneth Low	SJ958925
Rhodes Lodges	SD857053	Westlake	SD636037
Rindle Wood	SJ702976	Wildersmoor	SD647125
Ringley ETW *	SD785040	Windy Bank Wood	SJ681972
Riversvale	SD935016	Winter Hill	SD662145
Roman Lakes	SJ969880	Withins Resr	SD785087
Rooley Moor	SD864172	Woodbank Park	SJ914905
Rumworth Lodge	SD678078	Woodford Aerodrome #	SJ893818
Sale WP	SJ800930	Worsley Moss	SJ730980
Salford Quays	SJ807970	Worthington Lakes	SD582107
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Fieldfare, Wigan, January (David Cookson)



Female Red-crested Pochard, Pennington Flash, August (Jon Taverner)



Ring-necked Duck, Pennington Flash, April (Ted Keane)



Scaup, Pennington Flash, December (Jon Taverner)



Goosanders, River Irwell, May (Mike Killelea)



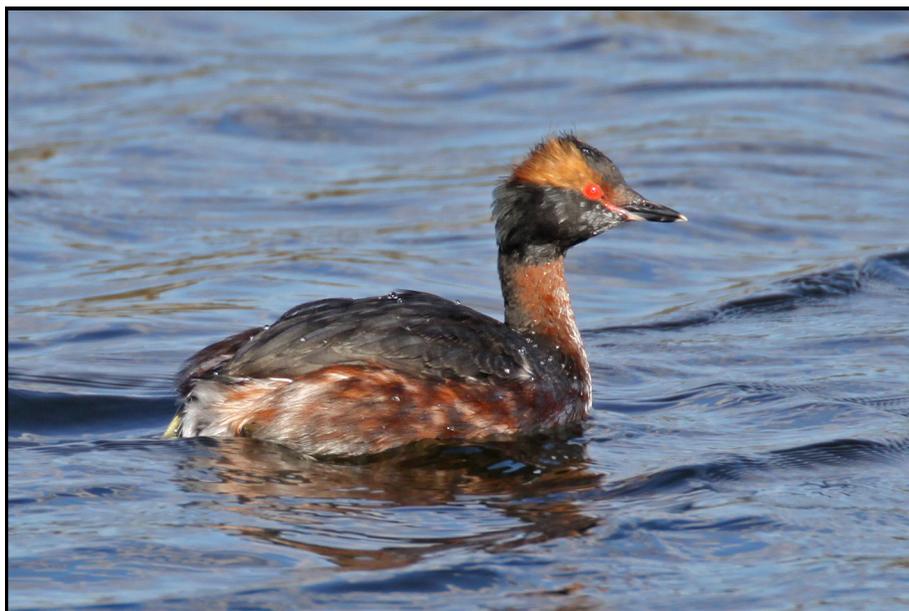
Black-necked Grebes, Pennington Flash, May (Pauline Greenhalgh)



Black-necked Grebe, Sale Water Park, April (David Winnard)



Juvenile Peregrine, Rochdale, June (Dennis Atherton)



Slavonian Grebe, Audenshaw Reservoirs, March (Ivan Ellison)



Avocet, Rumworth Lodge, July (Ioan Ellison)



Young Avocets, Rumworth Lodge, July (Paul Wilson)



Spotted Redshank, Pennington Flash, May (Jon Taverner)



Grey Phalarope, Ashworth Moor Reservoir, September (Steve Collins)



Juvenile Cuckoo, Pearson's Flash, July (Peter Smith)



*Chiffchaff showing characteristics of Siberian race *tristis*,
Pennington Flash, April 2006 (Paul Wilson)*



Starling, Bolton, April (Geoff Butler)



Redstart, Holdens Farm, August (David Rogers)

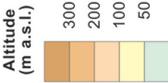
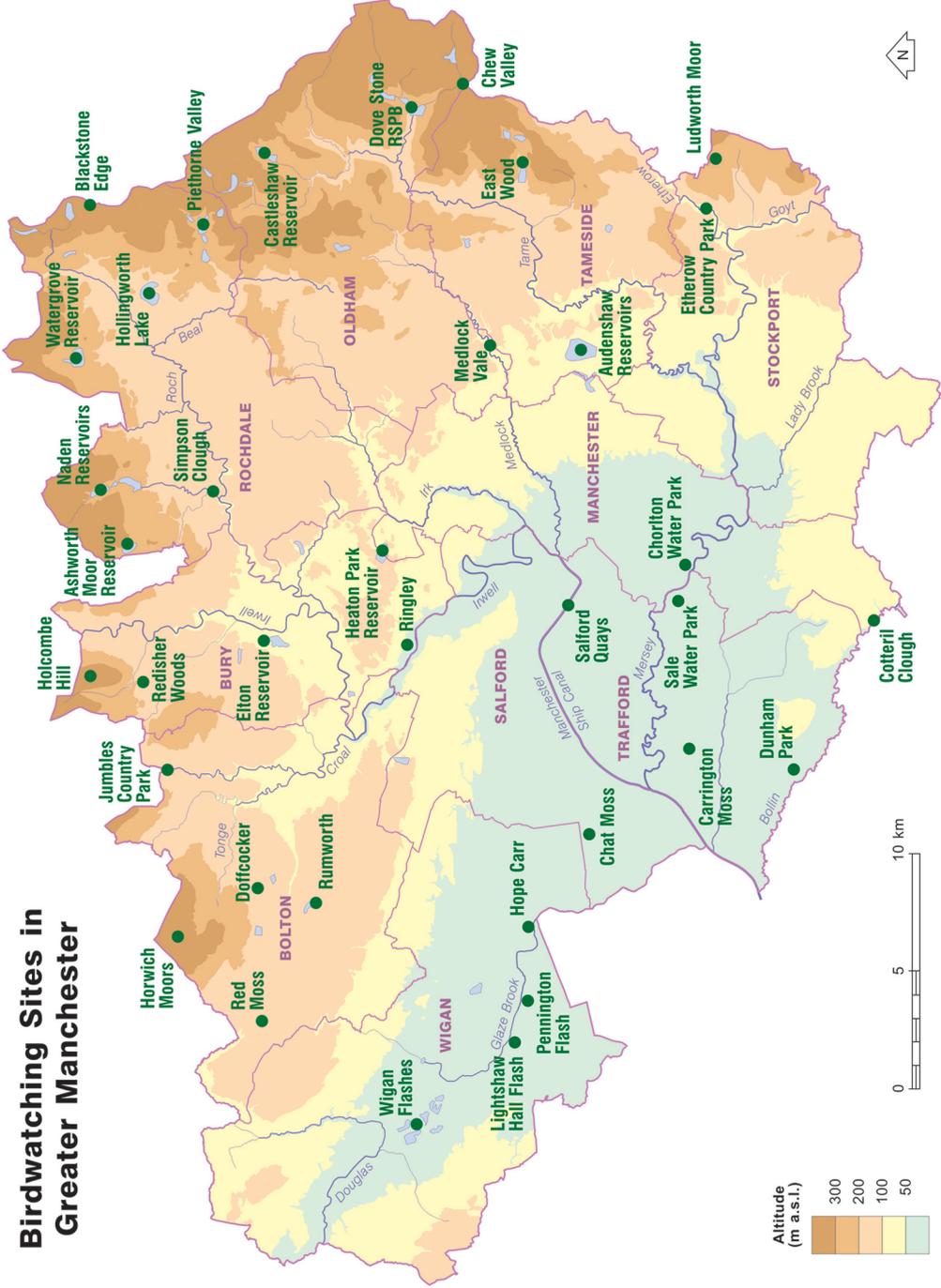


Tree Sparrow, Rindle, June (Dennis Atherton)



Brambling, Binn Green, January (David Rogers)

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