



THE OBSERVER

SECOS Newsletter

Promoting and fostering the study of ornithology by observation, research and record-keeping

March 2019

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Great Northern Diver

Indoor Meeting

Friday, 8th March

Our speaker is Keith Offord

His talk is called

Land of Geysers and Gyrs

Keith has visited on six previous occasions, most recently on the 11th March 2016 with “Magical Merlins”. Travelling from his base in Selattyn, near Oswestry, tonight he will take us to Iceland as described in his quote below.

“Vast expanses of wild country comprising rugged mountains, volcanoes and lakes make Iceland one of the most scenically interesting countries to visit and during summer it is the breeding ground for a sumptuous array of bird species such as Red-throated and Great Northern Divers in vibrant summer plumage, Red-necked Phalarope, Harlequin Duck, Barrow’s Goldeneye, Whooper Swan, Snow Bunting, Gyr Falcon plus a host of waders and seabirds. All this is set against one of the most impressive backdrops imaginable and this photographic exploration cannot fail to whet the appetite.”

March Sunday Field Trip

We do not have a Sunday Field Trip this month but Colin is leading the First Tuesday Field Trip to Westport Lake on the 12th.

By the time you receive this edition, members will have returned from ‘The Long Weekend’ to Dumfries and Galloway.

A special edition of “The Observer” covering the events, etc. of their time in Scotland is planned.



Say ‘YES’
to SECOS



Sightings – February



Highlights (i.e. first reports this month): - Whooper Swan, Hen Harrier, Tawny Owl, Willow Tit 1st, Woodcock, Mediterranean Gull, Little Owl 2nd, Brambling 3rd, Pink-footed Goose, 5th, Little Owl 11th, Marsh Tit 13th, Yellowhammer 15th, Ring-necked Parakeet 16th

blue text below indicates where first seen



Great (W) Egret. Image by Dennis Swaby

OF: - L Owl

Rookery Bridge/canal: - Skylark, Meadow Pipit & Yellowhammer

WF: - L Owl

WLF: - Pink-footed Goose, L Egret

Is YOUR area included?

Sandbach Flashes: -

EHF/PHF: -

Wildfowl: - 'regulars' incl: - Pintail, Goosander, GC Grebe **also** Pink-footed Goose, Shelduck, Shoveler, Wigeon, Teal, Pochard, Tufted Duck, L Grebe

Egret: - Great (W) & Little Egret (both regular)

Waders: - 'regulars' incl: - Oystercatcher, Curlew, Black-tailed Godwit, Ruff, Snipe, Green Sandpiper & Redshank **also** Water Rail, Golden Plover

Raptors & Owls: - 'regulars' incl: - Kestrel **also** Sparrowhawk & Buzzard

Gulls & Terns: - incl: - Mediterranean & Yellow-legged Gull

Other records: - incl: - Raven, Coal Tit, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Song Thrush, Tree Sparrow, Grey Wagtail, Meadow Pipit & Yellowhammer reported this month.

MGT/RF: - incl: - Gadwall, GW & L Egret, Golden Plover, Woodcock, Snipe, Iceland Gull, Peregrine, Raven, Skylark, Stonechat, Meadow Pipit & Reed Bunting

CF: - Great (W) & L Egret, Oystercatcher

FF: - L Redpoll

FFF: - Pink-footed Goose, Kingfisher, Bullfinch

Green Lane set-aside: - Barn Owl, Merlin, Brambling

GF: - Cetti's Warbler

Sightings Elsewhere: -

Alsager: - Kestrel, Raven, Skylark, Tree Sparrow, Meadow Pipit & Yellowhammer

Borrow Pit Meadow: - Goosander, Bullfinch

Arclid SQ: - Chiffchaff

Bagmere: - Sparrowhawk, [Hen Harrier](#), [Woodcock](#), Snipe, [Tawny Owl](#), [Little Owl](#), Kestrel, Peregrine, Raven, Starling murmuration, Stonechat

Brereton: - Tree Sparrow

Smethwick: - Brambling, Linnet

Brereton Heath LNR: - Linnet

Congleton: -

AWP: - see astburywildlife.blogspot.co.uk

Bathvale: - L Egret, Grey Wagtail, Brambling, Siskin

Bent Farm SQ: - R-I Partridge, Green Woodpecker, Yellowhammer

Dane in Shaw: - Kingfisher, Brambling

Great Moreton Hall: - Great (W) Egret

Timbersbrook: - Barn Owl

Town/Park area: - Goosander, Rook, Dipper, Kingfisher, Grey Wagtail

Crewe: -

David Whitby Way: - Barn Owl, Kestrel

(Continued on page 3)

Key: -	(Regular - 4+ days / month)	AWP = Astbury Water Park	CF = Crabmill Flash
EHF = Elton Hall Flash	FF = Fodens Flash	MGT = Maw Green Tip	PHF = Pump House Flash
RF = Railway Flash	RLP = Red Lane Pool	RLT = Red Lane Tip	WLF = Watch Lane Flash
I am grateful to all who submitted records to the SECOS blog, to Sandbach Flashes Log, or to me by email, text, etc.			





Buzzard, Woodcock, Snipe, Barn & Tawny Owl, Kingfisher, Raven, Coal Tit, Treecreeper & Siskin

Sandbach: -

Elworth: - L Redpoll

Fields Farm: - Barn Owl, Kingfisher, Tree Sparrow, L Redpoll, Siskin

Scholar Green: - Ring-necked Parakeet, Yellowhammer

Shavington: - Blackcap, Goldcrest & mixed finch flock

Swettenham/The Quinta: - Red-legged Partridge, Rook

Timbersbrook: - Barn Owl

Walgherton: - Barn Owl

Wybunbury Moss: - Jay, [Marsh Tit](#), Siskin



(Continued from page 2)

Macon Meadows: - L Egret, Mealy Redpoll (poss)

Derbyshire / Staffordshire border: -

Blackclough: - Raven

Danebower Quarry: - Red Grouse, Raven

Swallow Moss: - Barn Owl

Doddington: - 'regulars' incl: Shelduck, Shoveler, Gadwall, Goldeneye **also** Canada, Barnacle, Greylag & Pink-footed Goose, [Whooper Swan](#), Wigeon, Pintail, Teal, Pochard, Goosander, R-I Partridge, L Grebe, Oystercatcher, Snipe, Common Gull, GS & Gr Woodpecker, Kestrel, Peregrine, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Meadow Pipit & Reed Bunting

Checkley Lane: - Red-legged Partridge, Kestrel, Raven, Skylark, Greenfinch, Linnet, Siskin, Yellowhammer & Reed Bunting

Lawton Hall/Woods: - Rook, Dipper, Siskin

Meremoor Moss: - Green Sandpiper, Kingfisher, Kestrel, Stonechat

Middlewich Canal: - Whooper Swan

Mow Cop: - Stonechat, Brambling, Linnet

Rode Heath: - Tawny Owl, L Egret, [Willow Tit](#)

Rode Pool: - 'regulars' incl: - Canada & Greylag Goose, Mandarin Duck, Shoveler, Teal, Pochard, Tufted Duck, Goosander, GC Grebe, Great W Egret, Cormorant **also** Mute Swan, Gadwall, Wigeon, Heron, L Egret,

Is YOUR area included?

Further afield ...

SJ77 Knutsford / SJ87 Alderley Edge border: -

Lapwing Hall Pool: - Smew

Newchurch Common: - Smew

Northwich Woodlands: -

Marbury CP: - White-fronted Goose, Bittern, Water Rail, LS, GS & Gr Woodpecker

Neumann's and Aston's Flashes: - Water Rail, Barn Owl, Green Woodpecker, Cetti's Warbler

Redesmere: - Pochard, Goldeneye, Smew, Goosander, Red-legged Partridge, Great (W) Egret, Kingfisher

Rudheath Lime beds/Lostock Green: - Golden Plover, Peregrine, Linnet, Yellowhammer

Stapeley: - Red Kite

111 species reported

in your local recording area this month

If your sightings aren't here, please let me know

🌐 - The Web

SECOS Website www.secos.org.uk &

SECOS Blog: to read/record local sightings: - secos.org.uk/sightings

Bird photos: this medium doesn't 'do justice' to the natural history images that Dennis Swaby captures at Sandbach Flashes. He's uploaded some to: - sandbachflashes.co.uk

There are also weekly summaries of local bird sighting on our 'social media' pages: -

Twitter - [@SECOS](https://twitter.com/SECOS)

Facebook - facebook.com/SECOS1964

Field Trip Reports -

some only seen/heard by a fortunate few!

• Feb 5th, Tittesworth Reservoir

15 members attended. 50 species. List includes - Pochard, Goosander, GC Grebe, L Egret, Oystercatcher, Snipe, Common Gull, Kingfisher, GS Woodpecker, Raven, Coal & Willow Tit, Song & Mistle Thrush, Greenfinch, Linnets, L Redpoll, Siskin & Reed Bunting - 9 new 'ticks'



• Feb 10th, North Wales (RSPB Conwy, The Spinnies, Bangor and Llanfairfechan)

20 members; 73 species. List includes - Shoveler, Gadwall, Pochard, Common Scoter, Goldeneye, Goosander, Red-breasted Merganser, Red-necked Grebe, L Egret, Shag, Water Rail, Oystercatcher, Bar-tailed Godwit, Turnstone, Dunlin, Snipe, Greenshank, Common Gull, Common & Black Guillemot, Kingfisher, Rook, Raven, Mistle Thrush, Grey Wagtail, L Redpoll & Siskin - 10 new 'ticks'

Also seen by one or two, but at Llandudno - Rose-coloured Starling (image above by Russ Stonier)

The (unofficial) SECOS Field Trips total for 2019: - 95

Archive:-

Iceland Gull:

"The only record prior to the opening of MGT was a 2nd winter bird which bathed briefly in the river at EHF on 2nd March 1970".

'The Birds of Sandbach Flashes 1935 to 1999'

Species to look for this month:-

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker: "notoriously tricky species to follow through the summer" according to 2015 CAWOS Bird Report; your best chance of seeing this small woodpecker is before the leaves start to open. We have had a number of sightings locally recently, so keep your eyes peeled.

Further Afield:-

Dee Estuary highest tide: - Thurs 21st, Fri 22nd & Sat 23rd Mar - 11:06, 11:50 & 12:32
high water - all 10.0m or more
calculated from Laver's Tide Tables

Raptorwatch - Dee Estuary Sunday 10th Mar (RSPB Parkgate)

Diary Dates



- | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|
| * 1 st Tuesday | 2 th | Pennington Flash |
| Field Trip | | Leader - Mike Tonks |
| * 2 nd Friday | 12 th | AGM and Members' Evening |
| Indoor Meeting | | |
| * Sunday | 14 th | Burton Mere Wetlands RSPB |
| Field Trip | | Leader - Chris Parry |

Newcomers and beginners are particularly welcome on field trips. Please contact the leader at least three days beforehand to confirm arrangements. If the leader does not know you are coming, they cannot let you know of any last-minute changes to the trip. Wherever possible, car sharing is encouraged.

✦ for the details about times & meeting place, visit the SECOS website

Coming soon: - Dawn Chorus (May) and Swift Count (June)

Want to know more or how to take part? See page 6 or ask John Thompson for the details.

If you don't have access to a digital version of this newsletter and want to read the rest of this issue, please ask me for a paper copy. Ed

In the News - recent articles from bird journals, etc.

Spring migration is now earlier in European and North American birds

The greatest advances were found among short-distance migrants that winter in Europe or North America: about 1.5-2 days per decade. Long-distance migrants that winter in the tropics have also advanced the start of their migration, but only by approximately 0.6-1.2 days per decade.

"Based on changes in median migration dates, birds have on average advanced their spring migration by a little over a week since the late 1950s," says Aleksi Lehikoinen from the Finnish Museum of Natural History, University of Helsinki.

Some species show much greater advances. For instance, Whooper Swans now arrive in Finland about two weeks earlier than in the 1980s.

The advances in spring migration dates are not equal across the migration season. Early migrants of a given species have advanced their migration dates more than late migrants within the species' migration season. First migrants have the highest pressure to arrive at their breeding grounds as early as possible, whereas late migrants are typically non-breeders, which have no rush to move north. This asymmetry has led to an overall increase in the duration of migration.

Annual arrival dates of bird species were explained by local temperatures: the earlier the spring, the earlier the timing of migration and the longer the migration season. Geographical differences in climate change also explained regional differences in the advancement of spring migration.

"Birds advanced their migration dates more in Europe than in Canada, because spring temperatures have risen more quickly in Europe," says Andreas Lindén from Yrkeshögskolan Novia, Finland.

The study is based on long-term monitoring data from 21 North European and Canadian bird observatories and included almost 200 study species. The longest time series started in 1959 and the early 1960s and a large part of the data was collected by volunteer birdwatchers. The results were published in the international journal Ecological Indicators.

RBA Feb '19

Cheshire Swan Study Group News Sheet **No 29 February 2019**

Since my last report in October, the swan study group has ringed a total of 81 swans including: - 21 adults, 1 second year, 1 third year and 58 cygnets. These included 3 controls and 7 retraps. We also ringed one juvenile Whooper Swan.

The maximum counts of flocks of Mute swans since my last news sheet are as follows: -

- Acre Dell Pools near Congleton = 76 on 21st October, 73 on 25th November, 83 on 18th December and 86 on 13th January
- Cholmondeley Estates = 6 on 13th October, 2 on 12th October, 10 on 10th December and 8 on 21st January
- Comber Mere near Whitchurch = 83 on 29th October, 61 on 11th November, 51 on 13th December and 9 on 28th January
- Doddington Mere near Nantwich = 51 on 25th October, 56 on 11th November, 54 on 7th December and 58 on 15th January
- Middlewich Canal = 31 on 31st October and 35 on 11th January
- Woolston Eyes near Warrington = 12 on 13th October, 14 on 10th November, 15 on 8th December and 27 on 19th January

The Cheshire Swan Study Group Report for 2018 should be available to view in March on the Web site below.

<http://cheshireswanstudygroup.wordpress.com>

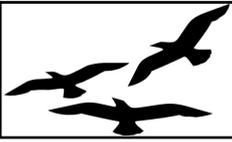
Sightings of all Swans, Geese and Mallard should be sent to:- David Cookson at Cheshireswans@aol.com giving details of place (6 fig map ref), colour/character combination of ring and, if with other birds, total number present in flock. All sightings will receive a printout of the history for the relevant bird(s).

SECOS LIBRARY

We own around 30 books plus a few loose-leaf documents but are no longer able to display them. At a recent committee meeting it was agreed that the details of these should be advertised and made available for any member to borrow. So here goes:-

Details of the books and who holds them are displayed on the notice board at the back of the hall. If anybody is interested but can not get to Friday evening meetings then send me an e-mail and I will send the list to you. If you would like to borrow any of the books please contact the person who holds the book to arrange the loan.

Colin Lythgoe



Bird Talk - readers correspondence

Spring migrants - arrival dates

March heralds the arrival of many of our Spring migrants. Looking through the Sandbach Flashes Bird Reports and, before those, the SECOS Bird Reports they included tables listing the main species showing that year's first date, the earliest date and a 10-year average. I've collated dates from 2006 to 2016 to give the most recent accurate figures for a 'new' 10-year average and I list below the first few expected migrants. These exclude Blackcap and Chiffchaff as it is understood that some birds overwinter and therefore skew arrival dates for the species.

<u>Species</u>	<u>av. arrival date</u>
Little Ringed Plover	19 th Mar
Sand Martin	21 st Mar
Swallow	29 th Mar
Willow Warbler	2 nd Apr
House Martin	6 th Apr

Keep your eye out for their arrival and see how the date compares to the 10-year average.

Next month I'll list the 10-year average for those species arriving after the first week in April.



Hello John,

My friend has sent me this national petition, which I have signed, that I think may be of interest to SECOS members.

Regards

Kate

Every summer, Swifts travel thousands of miles to Britain. Since the Roman era they've found homes in nooks and crannies of British buildings. But the design of new buildings means these homes are rapidly disappearing - and so are the Swifts. In the past 20 years, the number of swifts has halved.

But there's a simple and easy solution. By adding special "Swift bricks" into new build houses, we can make sure Swifts have somewhere to nest.

Germany and Poland have already changed the law to make sure every new house has one of these bird nest bricks - there's no reason we couldn't do the same.

So 38 Degrees member and bird-lover Norman has set up a petition calling on the minister for housing to make sure Swift bricks are in new homes across Britain. But the minister will only listen if he knows the public are behind Norman.

Will you sign the petition today to show him the public want him to do more to help our special summer visitors?

<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/save-our-swifts>

I'm grateful to Ann Rane, a 'Flashes Regular', for the image to the left. It's been a while since I have seen a picture of a bird perched in the post where Bryan erects the SECOS poster publicising the Indoor Meetings. Ed.

The views, comments and opinions expressed in the newsletter by contributors are not necessarily those of the editor, the Society, the Committee or it's members.

In the interests of saving space, formatting and positioning, the Editor reserves the right to edit submissions



"Echoes of the Past"

A nostalgic look through the SECOS archive....

This is the third rarity report from the 1998 SECOS Bird Report, Purple Heron last month and Hen Harrier in January's issue; 1998 was definitely a 'purple patch'. Ed

WHITE STORK AT SANDBACH FLASHES: 17TH MAY 1998

On 17/5/98 I was standing at Elton Hall Flash, along with several other observers, when Frank Melbon spotted a large bird in amongst the several hundred large gulls which could be viewed distantly down the road past Pumphouse Flash. After a brief moment Lee Greenough identified it as a White Stork, which was confirmed as we had good but distant views as it soared and circled around. Its wingbeats were very slow like a large raptor, and when it was first viewed it was quite low, but over the next 13 minutes or so it seemed to gain height and glide off east towards the Wheelock area.

Description:- very large white bird with black flight feathers and trailing edge to wings. Its neck was very long and outstretched at all times. Didn't get bill or leg colour as it was too distant.

On 24/5/98 Lee Greenough and myself were again at Elton Hall Flash when at 10.25am the presumed same bird came over the railway line low. It circled the flash twice, being mobbed continuously by several Lapwings which were present. It then flew over the field to left of the flash and appeared to land. We ran 100 yds. or so up to the gate, from where we could view the field, and the stork was briefly on the deck but was mobbed by 100+ corvids which wouldn't let it settle. It then took off and came directly over our heads at a height of no more than 25 ft. where you could see clearly it had dull red legs but no rings. It then did a couple of circuits of Pumphouse Flash and the ploughed field at the back of it, but it was still being mobbed by several birds. Overall this lasted for about 20 minutes or so and it eventually flew off in the direction it had come from (east), which it had done on the previous occasion on 17/5/98.

MARK STUBBS.

A White Stork, probably the same bird, was seen at Haslington two weeks earlier on 29/4/98 by Reg Crawford. The bird appeared at around 100 ft. above the ground near Clapgate Farm in Waterloo Road. It thermalled above the farm for 10-15 minutes, gaining height up to around 1500 ft. It then flew off west.

This is the 9th record for Cheshire & Wirral. The 8th was one flying over Bulkeley Hill on 11th April 1995 and the 7th was one over Mobberley / Ashley on 10th April 1993.

It is stressed that the inclusion of a site in the Newsletter implies nothing about rights of access to the site, nor anything about the importance as a birdwatching area. The Birdwatchers Code of Conduct and the Country Code must be followed at all times. Entry to land must be made only where right of public access exists or with the landowners permission.

CHESHIRE AND WIRRAL BIRD REPORT 2016

We're delighted to say that the annual *Bird Report* for 2016 is now available – with many people working together to develop the content and get it printed.

The front cover features 8 of the 12 Spoonbills which graced BMW in August and September and delighted many observers.

The Report has 144 pages of text, 7 pages of photos and the colour map of the main birding sites of the county as the centre spread. The photos capture some of the highlights of the year, including stunning shots of Nightjar and Marsh Harrier (taken under licence) and the full Spoonbill cast.

The Report is the one document that brings together individual observer sightings (including Birdtrack), records from major sites and annual counts from the key BTO surveys of WeBS, WBBS and BBS. This all goes to demonstrate that Cheshire and Wirral has a rich avifauna – 232 species were recorded in 2016 of which no less than 28 were BBRC or County Rarities.

As well as the Systematic List, the Report contains articles on:

- A White-crowned Sparrow ringed at Woolston Eyes - the first for Cheshire and Wirral. This was accepted as the first record of the sub-species *gambelii* recorded in Britain.
- Finder's accounts of two rare tern species and an inland Sabine's Gull.
- An account of the influx of Yellow-browed Warblers during the autumn.
- The regular 'Early and late dates for migrants' including an October Cuckoo (the latest ever) and a December Swallow.
- Cheshire and Wirral in the BTO Online Ringing Report, which now selectively focusses on recoveries chosen to illustrate movements and longevity – or both in the case of the Reed Warbler which crossed the Sahara at least 24 times!

For 2016, the Index might be particularly helpful. The Systematic List now follows the International Ornithological Congress (IOC) order – so you if you are looking for Falcons, they sneak in between Woodpeckers and Parakeets.

The *Bird Report* is free to Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society members (ordinary membership costs £12), otherwise it costs £8 + £2 p&p and copies are available from:

David Cogger, 71 Parkgate, Knutsford, Cheshire, WA16 8HF

Tel: 01565 228503 Email: davidcogger@cawos.org

