



SOUTH-EAST CHESHIRE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

1988 BIRD REPORT

Including BIRDS OF SANDBACH FLASHES

Compiled by C.Lythgoe, assisted by A.A.Robinson.

This report has been compiled from records submitted to me and information from the Sandbach Flashes Log Book. If anybody has details of any significant omissions or errors, please let me know.

The 'Log Book' situated in the box on the oak tree at Elton Hall Flash is there for anybody to record their sightings of birds. It is not just for the regular watchers or rare birds only, so if you have any interesting records please note them in the Log Book for inclusion in future Annual Reports.

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Abbreviations Used

ASQ	Arclid Sand Quarry	ad.	adult
CF	Crabmill Flash	juv.	juvenile
EHF	Elton Hall Flash	imm.	immature
FF	Foden's Flash	m.	male
FFF	Fields Farm Flash	f.	female
GF	Grobby Flash	GC	Golf Course
MGP	Market Garden Pool	SQ	Sand Quarry
MLB	Middlewich Lime Beds	CBC	Common Bird Census
OF	Oaktree Flash	WGBS	Winter Garden Bird Survey
PHF	Pump House Flash		
QC	Quakers Coppice		
RF	Railway Flash		
SF	Sandbach Flashes		
WF	Warmingham Flash		
WLF	Watch Lane Flash		
WP	Winterley Pool		
DP	Doddington Pool		
RP	Rode Pool		

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During 1988 RF, PHF, EHF, WLF and the surrounding land was sold by British Salt to the tenant farmers. It is not anticipated that there will be any major change in the use of the area.

The flashes concerned are still designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest, as are the other flashes within the Sandbach Flashes area.

Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*)

Present in spring, autumn & winter at SF (EHF/PHF/GF/WLF) with max. of 5 on 25 Nov.

No breeding season records - a poor year for SF.

Elsewhere 1 pr. reared 3 young at RP and 1 pr. also reared 3 young at Haslington Hall (the first time for 6 or 7 years).

Also recorded at DP in spring.

Only 1 record at ASQ, the worst ever year.

Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*)

Recorded in every month from SF. Numbers built up from 4 or 5 in winter to 11 in spring. 3 prs. probably bred at FF, CF and WLF.

A good year at other sites with 25 at DP on 10 Mar. and 2 prs. bred successfully there. 4 prs. at RP where at least 2 prs. bred successfully, 1 pr. had a 2 week old juv. on the early date of 16 Apr. At WP 1 pr. bred & fledged 3 young.

An excellent year at ASQ where max. of 14 in Mar., 6 prs. bred and fledged 15 young and there was still 9 birds remaining in Dec.

Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

As usual recorded in low numbers (max. 7 on 26 Feb.) from RF/PHF/WLF during Jan.- Apr. and Aug.- Dec.

Also regular in winter at DP with max. of 18 on 27 Mar.

Occasional records also from ASQ and 3 flying over Hassall Green on 2 Apr.

Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)

Uncommon in winter at SF but regular in summer when a few juvs. also recorded. Max. of 12 on 22 July and 17 Aug.

The RP heronry has grown rapidly and had 17 nests this year. There has been a decrease at the Boden Hall heronry which this year contained no active nests where usually around 5. There was 1 nest at DP, which was successful.

Also regular at ASQ with max. of 7 in June and in the Stowford area with max. of 6 in Feb.

Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*)

The wintering flock varied in numbers and localities but max. was 26 on 9 Jan. at CF/RF. A good breeding season with 2 prs. hatching young, 1 pr. at RF with 6 young and 1 pr. at WF with 7 young.

Elsewhere however, it was a very bad year with no other successful breeding. No birds at DP, none at RP and the pr. at WP was too busy trying to chase off the two accompanying immatures to settle down to breed.

Only 3 records from ASQ, max. of 2 ads. and 1 2nd year on 27 June.

Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*)

1 at WLF with the Canada Goose flock 25 to 28 Jan., 3 to 8

Mar. and 14 Apr.

2 at ASQ on 25 Feb. and 1 there on 5 Apr.

Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*)

1 at SF (CF/RF/WLF) on various dates from 9 Feb. to 11 Mar.

1 at DP on 11 Feb. and 2 Apr.

5 at ASQ from 22 Aug. to 22 Sept. with the goose flock.

Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*)

Present all winter at SF with 122 on 17 Jan. and 140 on 7 Dec. being typical numbers. Although present in summer in low numbers (up to 14) no breeding confirmed.

Common on other waters. At DP 123 on 13 Nov. At WP usually 15 to 45 birds but occasional flocks of up to 190 in late winter.

At ASQ 4 prs. nested with only 2 successful and only 3 young fledged, the poorest breeding year since recording began. However, the autumn flock built up to large numbers with max. of 375 on 19 Sept.

Snow Goose (*Anser caerulescens*)

1 at WP on 1 Oct. with large Canada Goose flock.

1 at PHF on 5 Oct. presumed to be same bird.

Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*)

2 or 3 regularly recorded at DP but 8 on 30 Aug. was exceptional. 1 pr. attempted nesting but nest was destroyed.

Bar-headed Goose (*Anser indicus*)

Occasionally 1 or 2 recorded at DP but 3 on 1 May.

1 at ASQ in the autumn, with the goose flock.

Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*)

Slightly increased numbers at SF at the beginning of the year with a max. of 27 on 1 Mar.

Low numbers (up to 8) present in summer and possibly bred at RF where 2 imms. on 7 Aug. Up to 13 at year end.

Resident at DP where max. of 7 on 11 Feb. but no breeding confirmed this year.

4 imms. at MLB 13 to 22 Aug.

1 pr. settled at ASQ in late Apr. but unfortunately the m. disappeared and the f. was found dead.

Mandarin (*Aix galericulata*)

1 m. (eclipse plumage) + 1 f. at FF on 9 June.

Regular near Haslington with 5 m. 4 f. on 22 Mar. and 1 f. + 3 young and another f. on 5 June. This is the site where a pr. bred for the first time last year and fledged 12.

Also single m. at DP on 1 May, WP 4 Nov. and 3 Dec. to year end and 2 m. at RP on 29 Oct.

1 m. on Alsager Mere in the early year disappeared in summer and returned in autumn.

Wigeon (*Anas penelope*)

Numbers were generally lower this year with max. of 219 on 6

Feb. and 165 on 28 Dec. No summer records.

Usual in winter at DP with max. of 11 on 30 Jan.

Occasional at ASQ with 4 records.

Gadwall (*Anas strepera*)

Only 1 record at SF with a f. at EHF on 10 Jan.

1 pr. briefly at ASQ on 2 Apr.

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

Very low numbers at SF in the early winter with max. of only 120 in Jan. In late winter max. was around 360 in Dec., still slightly low.

Breeds commonly on all waters.

Very common elsewhere with 508 at DP on 30 Aug. being the highest number recorded there.

At ASQ up to 200 in winter but no proved successful breeding.

Teal (*Anas crecca*)

More normal winter numbers at SF this year with 600 on 3 Jan. and 600+ on 27 Dec.

2 prs. summered at EHF/PHF and WLF but no breeding.

Low numbers elsewhere in winter with up to 4 at DP, 12 at RP and 8 at ASQ.

Pintail (*Anas acuta*)

Numbers increased slightly this year with max. of 25 in Jan. and Feb. The year end max. was however only 13 on 18 Dec. An unusual record was a f. which stayed on EHF through the summer.

The only record away from SF was of 1 m. at ASQ on 21 Feb.

Garganey (*Anas querquedula*)

3 records at SF with 1 m. at PHF on 26 May, 1 in eclipse plumage at RF on 10 & 11 Sept. and 1 probable f. at EHF/RF from 5 to 8 Oct.

Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*)

Present all winter at SF in low numbers with max. of 7 on 28 Feb. and usually 4 in late winter but 10 on 7 Aug.

Frequent at RP in winter with up to 6 birds in Jan. and occasional at DP with 2 on 30 Jan.

Pochard (*Aythya ferina*)

Usually present at SF in winter with max. of 26 during Feb. and 22 in Dec.

Higher numbers during winter at DP with 42 on 30 Jan. and 62 on 13 Nov.

Also at RP with 21 on 16 Jan.

Usual numbers at ASQ in winter with up to 14. At this site 1 pr. bred & successfully fledged 1 young.

Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*)

Normal numbers in the early year with 36 on 12 Feb. but much lower numbers in the late year with only 14 on 24 Dec. A few prs. summered and 1 pr. bred with a f. + 11 young at PHF on 8 June.

Also at DP with 61 on 21 Feb. and a few prs. summered but no

breeding; at RP with max. of 25 on 29 Oct. and 1 pr. bred with a f. + 2 large juvs. on 15 Aug.; at ASQ with max. of 21 on 6 Oct. and 2 prs. bred with 8 young hatched but only 2 fledged.

At Haslington Hall 3 territories were credited to the CBC plot by the BTO and 10 juvs. were seen during June.

Eider (*Somateria mollissima*)

An adult f. in eclipse plumage at Wybunbury Sand Pit on 26 Nov. Presumed to be an escape due to the location.

Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*)

For the first time in living memory there were no records from SF this year.

At DP 1 m. 2 f. on 13 Mar.

1 f. at WP on 26 Nov. was an unusual record.

1 imm. at ASQ from 6 to 27 Dec.

Goosander (*Mergus merganser*)

1 m. 2 f. on 3 Jan. and 2 m. on 16 Jan. at DP continues the recent poor sequence of records from here.

A good year at SF with 1 m. on 13 Jan., 1 f. on 28 Sept., 1 f. on 30 Oct. and 1 imm.m. + 5 f. on 6 Nov.

2 m. 5 f. at ASQ on 17 Dec.

Ruddy Duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*)

Low numbers with prs. in spring at WLF, FF, RF, GF, OF but no proof of breeding. Only 1 record in winter with 2 f. at WLF on 3 Dec.

Good numbers at other sites with 23 at DP on 1 May and 21 at RP on 16 Apr. but again no proof of breeding.

The only proved breeding was at ASQ where 1 pr. hatched 5 young but they soon all disappeared.

Hen Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*)

1 f. at EHF on 15 Oct. was only the fourth record for SF.

Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*)

Sightings at SF in all months except May, with records from RF, EHF, WLF, FF.

Also regular sightings from DP, RP, MLB, Wheelock, Alsager, Barthomley, Haslington, Swettenham and ASQ.

A m. and f. were regularly present in a Haslington garden during the early year and from Sept. onwards. Prey taken included house sparrow, blue tit, greenfinch and starling.

Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*)

1 at EHF on 27 Dec. was the first Dec. record for SF.

Again unconfirmed reports of a pr. in the Crewe Hall area during March & April.

Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*)

More sightings than usual from SF and probably bred there this year.

Various scattered records throughout the year. The only confirmed breeding was a site near Haslington where 1 pr. fledged

5 young and a pr. which bred in QC.

Merlin (*Falco columbarius*)

On 24 Jan. a m. was seen near Alsager. A good record for this rare species.

Peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*)

Apparently becoming more common. At SF there was a regular m. and an occasional f. to 26 Feb. and then an imm. on 3 Apr. which was seen to take a black-headed gull. The first autumn record was on 24 July - the first July record. 1 m. regular to the end of the year.

Other records from MLB with 1 m. on 14 Feb. and probably the same bird from Byley on the same day.

1 appeared at DP in the late afternoon of 27 Nov. and spent 5 minutes flying through the gull roost but caught nothing.

Red-legged Partridge (*Alectoris rufa*)

Max. number seen in the usual Doddington colony was 15 on 26 Nov.

Grey Partridge (*Perdix perdix*)

2 at Malkins Bank on 20 Feb. and 2 at Wybunbury Sand Pit on 9 April. 15 - 18 regular in winter near Swettenham. 2 on the Haslington CBC but no records this year from ASQ.

Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*)

Occasional records from FF and WLF areas. Common where reared for breeding e.g. DP, Rode Hall, Crewe Hall.

Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*)

Present during the winter months with records from EHF and FF. Usually singles but 4 on 17 Mar. with 1 at EHF and 3 at FF and 2 at FF on 18 Dec.

Also recorded at Taxmere in winter with 2 on 16 Jan.

Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*)

As usual there were few accurate counts at SF, the max. recorded being 42 on 10 Dec.

Very common on all waters, large and small, throughout the area.

1 of the 4 pairs on the Haslington CBC nested 5 ft. up in a hawthorn bush in the middle of a field!

Coot (*Fulica atra*)

There were no co-ordinated counts for SF but typical numbers were 103 at WLF and 160 at PHF/EHF during Nov. and Dec.

The wintering flock at DP peaked at 206 on 16 Jan. Common on larger waters and several prs. bred at DP, RP, WP & ASQ.

Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*)

1 at WLF on 28 Feb. was the first Feb. record for SF. 1 pr. was present from 10 Mar. to 25 Apr. with single records on 28 May and 26 June. Although breeding behaviour was noted there was no

proof of breeding. The 8 recorded on 6 Apr. was the highest count for SF.

Also 4 at MLB on 4 Aug, and 3 records from ASQ.

Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius*)

First birds of the year seen on 27 Mar. - the same date as last year - and the last on 19 Sept. Spring and autumn passage was fairly light with a max. of only 9 on 29 July.

Bred at PHF/EHF and WLF.

Also bred at MLB with 1 pr. + 3 juvs. in July and at ASQ with 2 successful and 1 unsuccessful prs.

1 unusual record was of a pr. which bred & fledged 2 young at a site adjacent to Crewe Railway station.

Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*)

1 at PHF on 7 Feb. was the earliest record for SF. Otherwise a very poor spring passage. Autumn passage was also fairly poor with a max. of 8 on 16 Sept. The last record was 1 at EHF on 6 Oct.

Also occasional records at MLB from 30 July to 16 Oct. and 1 record of 4 at ASQ on 16 Aug.

Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*)

Good numbers again in the wintering flock at SF with a max. of 140+ on 10 Jan. and a late winter max. of 207 on 23 Dec., which is the highest number recorded there.

A much larger flock roosted at MLB with an early year max. of 414 on 7 Feb. and a late year max. of 700 on 13 Nov.

Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*)

1 at EHF/RF on 17 Sept.

3 records from MLB with 1 on 14 Sept., 2 on 16 Oct. and 1 on 22 Oct. These were the first records for this species here.

Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*)

The early winter roost had an exceptional record of 4000+ on 10 Jan. As usual numbers built up during July to around 1000 and remained at that level to the year end. 2 prs. displaying regularly at PHF in spring.

The winter roost at MLB held a max. of 800 on 7 Feb. and 2000 on 31 Dec. 2 territories on the Haslington CBC.

Knot (*Calidris canutus*)

1 ad. at EHF on 6 Sept. was the only record for SF but there were 3 records from MLB with 1 ad. on 4 Aug., 1 ad. on 29 & 30 Aug. and 1 juv. on 7 Sept.

Sanderling (*Calidris alba*)

At ASQ 5 probables on 30 Apr. and 1 on 2 Aug.

Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*)

A poor year with only 2 records in Sept. and 5 in Oct. each of singles.

Also 1 juv. at MLB on 4 Sept.

Pectoral Sandpiper (*Calidris melanotos*)

An ad. m. was at RF/EHF from 16 to 24 Aug. and another ad. at EHF was first seen on 27 Dec. and stayed into 1989, although very difficult to see amongst the grass.

These are the 6th & 7th records for SF, the last being in Oct. 1985.

Curlew Sandpiper (*Calidris ferrugina*)

An excellent series of records, all from RF and EHF. The first was of 3 birds on 4 Sept. and thereafter present through to 9 Oct. with a max. of 8 on 10 & 11 Sept.

Also 1 at MLB on 9 Oct.

Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*)

Recorded in all months except June. The early winter max. was 6 during Mar. and the late winter max. was 10 in Dec. Autumn passage during late July/ early Aug. with a peak of 15.

Also regular at MLB from 24 July to 29 Oct. with a max. of 15 and occasional at ASQ.

Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*)

Numbers continue to increase with records from all months except May. Up to 20 at the start of the year and 21 in Dec., which was the highest count for that month.

Also at MLB with 1 on 5 Sept., 2 on 7 Sept. and up to 7 on 4 dates in Oct. Singles at ASQ on 7 Aug. & 23 Sept.

Jack Snipe (*Lymnocyptes minimus*)

A secretive bird and difficult to see. There were 5 records in the early winter, up to 6 Apr. and 4 during Nov., all at RF.

Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*)

Recorded throughout except from mid Apr. to mid June. Low numbers in early year, max. 35, but higher numbers at the year end with 140 on 27 Dec.

Up to 20 at MLB increased to 85 on 18 Dec.

Woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*)

Scattered records from SF in Jan/Feb/Mar. and Nov.

Elsewhere 1 bird roding near Crewe G.C. on 16 Apr. and 1 near Crewe Hall woods on 6 Apr.

Also winter records from MLB, Wheelock, Stowford and ASQ.

Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*)

2 spring passage records with 2 on 29 Apr. and 1 on 6 May. 3 records in July with the 11 on 3 July being the highest ever count for SF.

Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*)

All records are of singles from EHF on May, 13 June, 18 July and 21, 25, 31 Aug.

Curlew (*Numenius arquata*)

Recorded in all months except May. Early winter max. of 26 in mid. Mar. and a late winter max. of 56 in Oct. and Dec.

Also recorded from MLB in July, Aug. and Oct.

Only 4 records from ASQ.

1 singing bird near Checkley on 1 May.

Spotted Redshank (*Tringa erythropus*)

2 at EHF on 28 Aug., 1 at EHF on 4 Sept. and 1 at RF on 13 Sept.

Redshank (*Tringa totanus*)

Recorded in every month of the year, although only 1 record in May. Early winter max. of 21 on 23 Jan. and late winter max. of 13 on 23 Dec. In early spring pairs were seen displaying at RF, EHF and WLF.

Some evidence of passage migration at ASQ in late June - early July.

Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*)

No spring records but common in autumn with the first record being 2 at EHF on 3 July. Recorded regularly with 1 or 2 through to Nov. with 1 at RF on 6 and 13 Nov., a very late date.

1 at MLB on 17 Sept. and 3 at ASQ on 7 Sept.

Green Sandpiper (*Tringa ochropus*)

Rare in spring with only 5 records in mid. Apr., but very common in autumn. The first record was of 1 on 16 June and thereafter through to end of Sept. with a max. of 13 on 19 July.

Also occasional records from MLB in autumn.

Wintering records from EHF, MLB and 'open country' records from near Barthomley, Wheelock/Sandbach and Stowford.

Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*)

Spring passage from 17 to 29 Apr. with 1 on 16 May. More common in autumn with records from 2 July to 24 Sept. and a max. of 9 on 22 July.

Records also from MLB from 23 July to 11 Sept.

Singles at DP and WP in May during spring passage.

An exceptional year at ASQ where 1 pr. attempted breeding, there were up to 10 birds in autumn and 1 overwintered.

Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*)

1 at ASQ on 4 May was the first for 7 years.

Mediterranean Gull (*Larus melanocephalus*)

On 3 Aug. 1 was seen briefly at EHF before it flew off to the north. It was re-located later in the gull roost at MLB. The 5th record for SF and the 1st in Aug.

Little Gull (*Larus minutus*)

1 adult in summer plumage at DP on 1 May.

Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*)

Very common with up to 900 around EHF/RF in winter. At EHF birds were seen carrying nesting material on to a bar on the salt-pan on 18 Mar. No proof of breeding locally although juvs. were seen from 21 June.

Max. winter roost numbers elsewhere were 9000 at DP, 4000 at

MLB and 1000 at ASQ.

Common Gull (*Larus canus*)

Up to 70 recorded in winter at EHF/RF.

115 at DP on 27 Nov. was a typical winter count.

Also recorded at MLB and ASQ.

Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*)

Around 200 resident in winter around Maw Green Tip / RF. Some evidence of passage with 315 at EHF/PHF on 12 June. 1 pr. held territory at WLF from mid Feb. to mid Mar.

160 at DP on 27 Nov. was a typical winter count whilst 110 at Astbury SQ was typical for there.

Good numbers at ASQ with up to 1100 in July/Aug.

Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*)

Good numbers at Maw Green Tip with up to 450 in Jan. but numbers reducing rapidly in mid Feb. to around 40. At year-end numbers increased rapidly to 300 by 31 Dec.

Only 5 in the DP roost and 35 at ASQ.

Yellow-legged birds of one of the continental races were seen at Alsager Tip on 2 & 3 Jan., Astbury SQ early Feb., Maw Green Tip 12 & 13 Feb., RF 25 Feb. and MLB on 29 July, 11 Sept. & 10 Oct.

Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucooides*)

1 1st winter on 25/29 Jan. and 1 ad. on 12/13 Feb., both at Maw Green Tip.

At Astbury SQ 1 1st winter on 3 Feb. and 1 2nd winter on 23 Dec.

Glaucous Gull (*Larus hyperboreus*)

1 1st winter bird on 12 Feb. flew from Maw Green Tip to RF.

At Alsager Tip 1 1st winter bird on 2 Jan. and 13 Feb.

Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*)

Uncommon locally so 15 at Maw Green Tip and 32 at Alsager Tip in Jan. were good numbers.

Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*)

Usually a very rare species locally so the following records made this an exceptional year. 1 on 24/25 Jan. at ASQ (the first record for ASQ), 1 on 10 Feb. at PHF, 1 on 6 Mar. at WLF, 1 on 7 Mar. at ASQ, 2 on 8 Mar. at EHF, 1 on 17 Mar. at EHF.

Sandwich Tern (*Sterna sandvicensis*)

1 at DP on 1 May.

Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*)

A poor year at SF with only 4 records of 1 or 2 during July. 1 at MLB on 13 Aug.

A flock of 19 at DP on 30 April was exceptional. Also 9 there on 4 May.

Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*)

Only 2 records from SF with 2 at WLF on 15 Jun. & 1 at WLF on 1 July.

A good series of records from DP with 1 from 27 Apr. to 15 May.

Stock Dove (*Columba oenas*)

Record numbers at SF with 80 at PHF on 3 Jan. An exceptional year at QC where 6 prs. bred in nestboxes, laying 11 clutches totalling 21 eggs and fledged 16.

Woodpigeon (*Columba palumbus*)

Very common but no flocks over 200 recorded.

Collared Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*)

Increasingly common but a roost of 60 at Lawton on 3 Feb. was exceptional.

Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*)

1st of the year at EHF on 17 Apr. Not particularly common locally.

Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*)

The only known breeding pair, at Crewe Hall, Fledged 3 young.

Little Owl (*Athene noctua*)

Commonly recorded in open countryside and villages.

Tawny Owl (*Strix aluco*)

Common in more wooded / parkland areas.

Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*)

1 over EHF on 12 Nov.

Swift (*Apus apus*)

1st of the year were 2 near Crewe on 30 Apr. and the last was 1 at PHF on 4 Sept.

Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*)

Winter records from EHF, WLF, FF, Stowford, DP and ASQ. At Alsager Railway Station 1 flew along the platform on 25 Aug!

The only proved breeding was at RP and R.Dane, Swettenham.

Green Woodpecker (*Picus viridis*)

A good year with probable breeding at Crewe Hall, Swettenham, Wybunbury/Hough, RP and near Doddington.

Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopus major*)

Still by far the commonest woodpecker with records from all areas.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopus minor*)

Uncommon but more records this year, Lawton Hall, Stowford, RP, near Alsager, Haslington CBC, Arclid.

Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*)

Still common on farmland but possibly declining. The largest flock was 70 at PHF on 11 Dec.

Sand Martin (*Riparia riparia*)

1st record was 4 at Wybunbury Sand Pit on 2 Apr. & common thereafter. Again increased numbers this year with approx. 250 prs. at ASQ, 60 at Hough Mill SQ, 18 on R.Dane at Swettenham and good numbers along R.Wheelock.

Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*)

1 early bird at DP on 27 Mar. Next record on 2 Apr. and common after that. On the Haslington CBC pairs increased from 8 to 17 and 6 ads. + 58 pulli were ringed.

In early Sept. a roost built up at Red Lane Flash (opp. WLF) where numbers increased to approx. 3000.

Although outside the SECOS recording area an interesting record was received from Hack Green Maggot Farm near Nantwich where 3 birds stayed on after the main departure in Sept. Two of them disappeared at the end of Oct. but one stayed through to 25 Nov. when it was last seen. It remained indoors the whole time, feeding on the flies in the large main shed.

House Martin (*Delichon urbica*)

1st of the year at EHF on 12 Apr. Widespread breeding bird. Last record from Sandbach Heath on 23 Oct.

Tree Pipit (*Anthus trivialis*)

Only recorded from ASQ in Aug. with 2 on 4th, 3 on 18th and 1 on 21st.

Meadow Pipit (*Anthus pratensis*)

Mainly a spring and autumn passage migrant with max. of 100 at MLB on 25 Sept. Uncommon in winter & summer.

Rock Pipit (*Anthus petrosus*)

1 bird of this species or Water Pipit (*Anthus spinoletta*) at Maw Green Tip on 12 Feb. and also 1 at MLB on 16 Oct.

Definite *A.petrosus* records from MLB with 2 on 21 Oct., 1 on 29 Oct and 1 on 5 Nov.

Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava*)

3 at WLF on 10 Apr. were the first for the year. Bred at ASQ, near EHF, Haslington CBC and Church Lawton.

Last record on 24 Sept.

Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*)

No proved breeding records but 1 at Crewe College on 2 June. Quite common in autumn & winter.

Pied Wagtail (*Motacilla alba*)

The regular large winter roost at ASQ did not form this year but generally very common & widespread all year. One roost near MLB contained up to 240 birds.

White Wagtail (*Motacilla alba alba*)

Generally poor spring passage with singles at EHF from 27 Mar. to 22 Apr., but 14 at DP on 23 Apr. was a good record.

Waxwing (*Bombycilla garrulus*)

A well publicised irruption of Waxwings from the continent brought exceptional numbers to Britain. These were mainly on the east coast and only one was recorded locally, near Wheelock on 11 Dec.

Dipper (*Cinclus cinclus*)

1 pr. reported on the R.Dane near Congleton in early spring.

Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*)

Abundant throughout with numbers on the Haslington CBC up from 15 prs. to 19 prs. probably reflecting the mild 87/88 winter.

Dunnock (*Prunella modularis*)

Very common. Numbers again up on the Haslington CBC from 5 prs. to 10 prs.

Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*)

Very common everywhere. 6 prs. on the Haslington CBC.

Redstart (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*)

1 m. at WLF on 21 Apr. and 1 at RF on 9 Sept.

Whinchat (*Saxicola rubetra*)

A thin scattering of spring & autumn passage records from SF, ASQ and Haslington.

Stonechat (*Saxicola torquata*)

The only record was of a m. near MLB on 6 Nov.

Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*)

Again a thin scattering of spring and autumn passage migrants and generally a poor year.

1st of the year at EHF on 23 Mar.

Ring Ousel (*Turdus torquatus*)

1 m. seen at EHF on 4 Apr. was the first record for SF.

Blackbird (*Turdus merula*)

Abundant throughout. 18 prs. on the Haslington CBC.

Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*)

Average numbers at both ends of the year with 700 at PHF on 23 Jan. and 350 at MLB in Dec.

1st autumn record was at EHF on 11 Oct.

Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*)

Not very common but 2 prs. on the Haslington CBC, when in 1987.

Redwing (*Turdus iliacus*)

As with Fieldfare an average year although numbers less than for Fieldfare. 1st autumn record was 10 Oct.

Mistle Thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*)

Fairly common but widespread and thinly distributed.

Grasshopper Warbler (*Locustella naevia*)

Only one record of a 'reeling' m. between Sandbach & Middlewich on 9 & 10 May.

Sedge Warbler (*Acrocephalus schoenbaenus*)

1st on 21 Apr. at WLF. Around 8 prs. bred at SF.

Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*)

1 at FF on 24 Apr. was the earliest record for SF. 3 prs. bred here and 2 prs. at RP. 1 at WLF on 1 Oct. was the latest record for SF.

Lesser Whitethroat (*Sylvia curruca*)

1st of the year at WLF on 21 Apr. Probably 3 prs. bred at SF and 2, possibly 3, at ASQ.

Generally under-recorded.

Whitethroat (*Sylvia communis*)

1st record on 27 Apr. with 1 at FF and 1 at WLF. Fairly common generally and 3 or 4 prs. at ASQ.

Garden Warbler (*Sylvia borin*)

1st of the year at Crewe Hall on 26 Apr. None at SF but 2 prs. at ASQ, 2 prs. at DP and 2 prs. near RP.

Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*)

An outstanding number of over-wintering birds at each end of the year with 1 m. at Sydney, Crewe from 17 Jan. to 21 Feb. - seen feeding on peanuts; 1 m. in a Wistaston garden from 24 - 30 Jan.; 1 m. in a different Wistaston garden from 28 Feb. to 27 Mar. with a further m. and f. on 6 Mar.; 1 at Elworth on 12 Mar.; 1 m. at Crewe Golf Course on 20 Mar.; then 1 f. at WLF on 1 Oct.; 1 m. at Crewe GC on 30 Oct. and finally 1 m. at Sandbach Heath from 24 to 27 Dec. - seen feeding on grapes.

Current thinking is that the summer & winter populations are different, with our breeding birds going south for the winter and our wintering birds coming from Central Europe and the migration periods overlapping.

Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*)

1st record from Rode Hall on 23 Mar. Last record on 1st Oct. Fairly common.

Willow Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*)

1st record from FF on 2 Apr. and then abundant everywhere.

Goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*)

Widespread in woods, with good numbers in winter. No breeding records.

Firecrest (*Regulus ignicapillus*)

1 m. at Slaughter Hill, Haslington on 21 Mar. is the first record known of for this area.

Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*)

1st record on 6 May, an early date for this species. Various breeding records including an unusual one from Crewe Hall where 2 prs. built nests inside the cabs of two electric milkfloats about 400yards apart. Both vehicles were immobilised and the young fledged.

Pied Flycatcher (*Ficedula hypoleuca*)

1 sighting of a f. seen on the Haslington CBC on 28 Apr.

Long-tailed Tit (*egithalus caudatus*)

Scattered breeding records. Winter flocks of 10+ from ASQ (25), EHF (20), FF (15), Tetton Lane Marsh (16) & Swettenham (10+).

Marsh Tit (*Parus palustris*)

The most uncommon tit. Local records from DP and Swettenham.

Willow Tit (*Parus montanus*)

Slightly more common than the previous species. Breeding records from FF, RP, Swettenham, Alsager and ASQ.

Coal Tit (*Parus ater*)

Fairly common in suitable habitat. Breeding records from ASQ, DP and RP.

Blue Tit (*Parus caeruleus*)

Abundant throughout. 17 prs. on the Haslington CBC, in QC 9 prs. nested in boxes and fledged 88 young and at DP 8 prs. nested in boxes and fledged 77.

Great Tit (*Parus major*)

Very common throughout. 6 prs. on the Haslington CBC. At DP 3 prs. nested in boxes and fledged 20 young - 19 Great Tits and 1 Blue Tit.

Nuthatch (*Sitta europaea*)

Not uncommon in suitable habitat. In QC 1 pr. built a nest in a box but later abandoned it.

Treecreeper (*Certhia familiaris*)

A common resident in suitable habitat.

Great Grey Shrike (*Lanius excubitor*)

1 was seen briefly near RF on 31 Dec. The 8th record for SF.

Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*)

Generally common & widespread. Max. of 10 together at ASQ on

24 Nov.

Magpie (*Pica pica*)

A very common resident everywhere. No records for the usual (but decreasing) winter roost at FF but one at the Dingle, Sandbach held 85 birds on 11 Feb.

Jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*)

A common resident and possibly increasing e.g. 1 pr. nested on the Haslington CBC for the first time and the Doddington flock increased from 40 to 90. Also 70 at PHF on 8 Mar.

Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*)

Very common. Counts at 5 rookeries in the Crewe Hall area gave 208 nests (218 in 1987 and 216 in 1986).

The Arclid Hollow rookery declined to 65 (81 in 1987 and 95 in 1986) but the Lawton Hall rookery held 90 prs.

Crow (*Corvus corone*)

Common throughout the area. Numbers of corvid spp. at Maw Green Tip increased to around 400 in winter.

Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)

Very common but no details received.

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)

Very common around all types of human habitation.

Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*)

Not common locally but breeding season records from RF, PHF (where 2 juvs. on 28 June), Taxmere, Haslington CBC and Church Lawton.

The only winter flock record was of 50+ at PHF on 11 Dec.

Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*)

Breeds commonly throughout the area e.g. 27 prs. on the Haslington CBC (18 prs. in 1987). Some large winter flocks with 240 at Doddington on 26 Nov. and 200+ at Malkins Bank on 10 Dec.

Brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*)

Scarce in the early part of the year with only 3 records - EHF, DP and Swettenham. Even scarcer at the year-end with only one record of 1 at Swettenham on 11 Dec.

Greenfinch (*Carduelis chloris*)

Common resident and breeding bird. 40+ at PHF on 11 Dec.

Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*)

Fairly common resident. Autumn / winter flocks of 40+ at ASQ on 17 Aug., 25 at DP on 30 Aug. and 20+ at RF on 10 Sept.

Siskin (*Carduelis spinus*)

A very poor year for this sp. with only 6 individual records of 1 or 2 in mid-Feb. from 20 observers in the WGBS. Also 2 records from ASQ in Feb. The only year-end records were a flock

of 25-30 at Taxmere on 3 Nov., 2 on 31 Dec. and 2 at MLB on 29 Oct.

Linnet (*Carduelis cannabina*)

Breeds thinly in the area. Autumn flocks of 30 to 50 at MLB and ASQ. Scarce in winter.

Redpoll (*Carduelis flammea*)

Generally scarce in this area but occasional records from SF, MLB, ASQ (where 15+ on 6 Feb.), Swettenham and Crewe.

Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*)

Regular but thinly distributed throughout the area.

Yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*)

Probably declining in numbers in the more intensively farmed areas e.g. Haslington CBC had slowly declined to 5 prs. this year from 14 in 1980.

Reed Bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*)

A common breeding bird with at least 10 prs. at SF and 8 prs. at ASQ. Single birds stayed through the winter in 2 gardens in the WGBS.

Corn Bunting (*Miliaria calandra*)

Generally not common but often in small breeding groups at regular sites e.g. near Alsager 9 prs., near Doddington 3 prs. and also 1 singing m. near Middlewich 31 May.