



**SOUTH-EAST CHESHIRE
ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

1993 BIRD REPORT

including Birds of Sandbach Flashes

SECOS Recorder
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This is the annual report of birds in the SECOS area, including the birds of Sandbach Flashes. It is as full a report as possible from the records submitted and considers all species in the area in 1993. However, there are few records for the Dane Valley/Congleton area, and consequently this area is under-represented.

This year I have attempted to give a one-line definition of the status of species. As well as its seasonal status I have tried to give an indication of abundance throughout the SECOS area, using the following terms :- vagrant, rare, scarce, uncommon, common, abundant. There are no rigid numeric limits for each term, I have merely used them to give an indication of relative abundance.

For those readers of this report who are not familiar with the whole of the SECOS area, I have included a map and brief notes on the major sites.

I would like to thank Joan and Keith Tilbrook for their assistance in typing and collating this report.

Colin Lythgoe.

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Abbreviations Used

EHF	Elton Hall Flash	ad	adult
FF	Foden's Flash	juv	juvenile
GF	Groby Flash	m	male
MGP	Market Garden Pool	f	female
PHF	Pump House Flash	c	approximately
RF	Railway Flash		
WLF	Watch Lane Flash		
SF	Sandbach Flashes		

BIRDING SITES

I have listed below some of the more major sites for birding in the SECOS area, including a brief summary of the site and a grid reference of its approximate centre.

Doddington Pool SJ714464

Includes the large lake, woodland, the Hall and neglected grounds.

Quaker's Coppice SJ724546

A wood of six hectares on the south side of Crewe. Owned by Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council and operated as a Local Nature Reserve.

Crewe Hall SJ735544

A very extensive area of mixed woodland and farmland.

Crewe Golf Course SJ744546

Situated at Haslington. It also includes the Valley Brook and surrounding woods.

Rode Pool SJ815575

A 1300 metre-long lake with islands and extensive reed beds, surrounded by woods.

Lawton Woods SJ825559

Large area of woodland including a lake.

Roe Park SJ858583

Large area of mixed woodland on the side of Mow Cop, like Welsh hill valley habitat.

Sandbach Flashes

An all-embracing term used to describe the various flashes in the area to the west and south of Sandbach, and north of Crewe. These started forming in the 1930's after land subsidence following brine extraction. All flashes are now privately owned and there is no public access. However, most are watchable from public roads and tracks. Most of the flashes' area is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). There are currently around fourteen flashes, but the most important are:-

Elton Hall Flash SJ727596

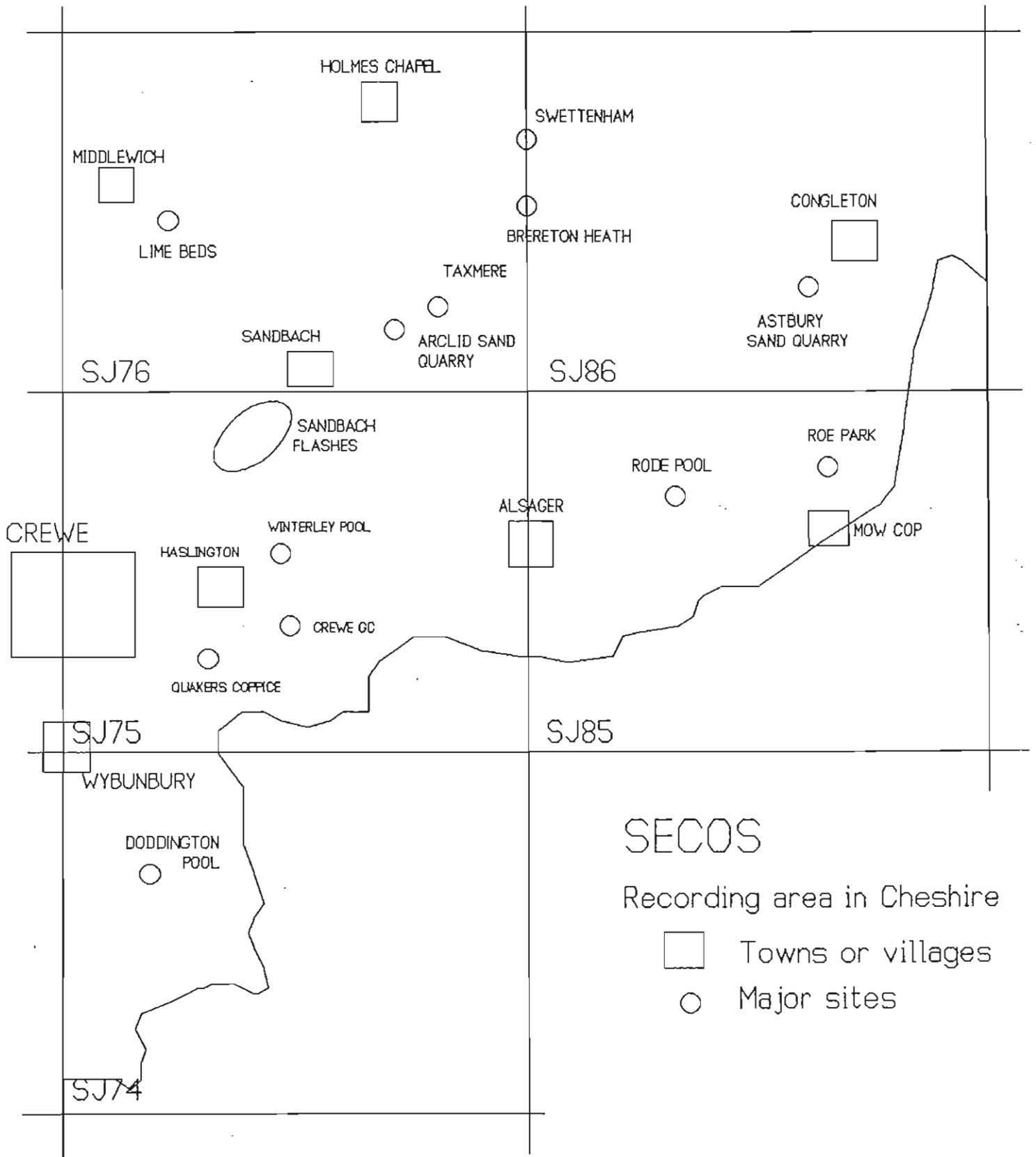
In two parts, with the River Wheelock flowing through the well-vegetated part, and very little vegetation on the salt pan.

Pump House Flash SJ723595

The site of the old brine pumping mechanism. Now silting up rapidly.

Railway Flash SJ718585

Currently is two separate flashes with a marshy area between.



SECOS

Recording area in Cheshire

- Towns or villages
- Major sites

Maw Green Tip SJ717577

Not strictly in the flashes' area but inextricably linked for gulls and corvids. Just north of Crewe. This is being greatly expanded and now butts right up to Railway Flash.

Watch Lane Flash SJ727606

Heavily disturbed by fishermen but with two small reed beds.

Foden's Flash SJ730613

Includes a large bed of bulrushes and the wood around the flash.

Warmingham Flash SJ719619

Heavily disturbed by fishermen at weekends.

Middlewich Lime Beds SJ711653

The raised settling beds owned by British Salt.

Arclid Sand Quarry SJ778623

Extensive area of water formed by the quarry workings.

Taxmere SJ780625

Area of farmland just North of Arclid Sand Quarry.

Bagmere SJ796643

An overgrown old mere still with some water and reed beds.

Brereton Heath SJ798651

A Cheshire County Council Country Park comprising a water-filled quarry and surrounding mixed woodland.

Swettenham SJ801675

A small mixed woodland with Swettenham Brook flowing through it. A Cheshire Wildlife Trust Local Nature Reserve.

Astbury Sand Quarry SJ849624

Extensive area of water formed by the quarry workings.

When out in the countryside, either general birdwatching or carrying out specific fieldwork, then observe the birdwatcher's code of conduct:-

1. The welfare of birds must come first.
2. Habitat must be protected.
3. Keep disturbance to birds and their habitat to a minimum.
4. When you find a rare bird think carefully about who you should tell.
5. Do not harass rare migrants.
6. Abide by the bird protection laws at all times.
7. Respect the rights of landowners.
8. Respect the rights of other people in the countryside.
9. Make your records available to the local bird recorder.

Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*)

Uncommon resident.

Resident at SF where maximum of 5. 2 pairs bred here with one pair on GF, and 2 ads and 2 juvs on PHF in July and Aug. 3 pairs bred at Doddington Pool where 25 ads and juvs were seen in Aug.

Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*)

Common resident.

A good year for breeding success. At SF pairs bred at GF, FF, WF (2 pairs, broods of 2,3,2), WLF (1 pair with 1 juv), CF and RF. At Doddington Pool at least 4 pairs bred with broods of 4,2,2,1 seen, and up to 22 birds in autumn. Also bred at Rode Pool with 4 pairs and broods of 2,2,1, Winterley Pool where 1 pair with 4 juvs. and Arclid SQ where 4 pairs and 5 juvs fledged. This was the first breeding success at Arclid since 1989, possibly helped by the eradication of 10 mink in 1992.

Fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*)

Vagrant.

At Doddington Pool a single bird was present on the water at 08.00 on 26 April. After 15 minutes it took off and flew off southwards. This is the first record for the area.

Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

Common winter visitor. Rare in summer. Increasing in numbers.

Still increasing in numbers as a winter visitor. Most common at PHF where maximum of 21, and RF where maximum of 13. At WLF due to reputedly up to 40 birds depleting the fish stocks, Elworth Anglers were granted a licence by MAFF to shoot cormorants, under strictly controlled conditions. Maximum numbers recorded at other sites were Doddington Pool 39, Rode Pool 5, and there were several records of birds flying over.

Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)

Common resident.

Recorded in all months from SF where 9 at WLF in Aug. was the maximum. Regular in many sites throughout the area. Breeds at Rode Pool where 25 nests (26 in 1992 and 29 in 1991).

Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*)

Uncommon resident. Scarce breeder,

Pairs bred at GF (4 juvs), FFF (1 juv), Winterley Pool (6 juvs). Recorded in low numbers from various flashes as well as Doddington Pool.

As usual the main non-breeding flock was at Winterley Pool, where numbers were around 30-35 all year until late Dec, when they shot up to 69, a record for the area.

Bewick Swan (*Cygnus columbianus*)

Rare winter visitor.

3 were at PHF on 3 Jan.

Whooper Swan (Cygnus cygnus)

Rare winter visitor.

1 was at EHF on 11 Nov.

Bewick/Whooper Swan

Rare winter visitor.

8 seen briefly in flight over EHF on 19 Nov could not be specifically identified.

Bean Goose (Anser fabalis)

Vagrant.

1 was at EHF from 15 to 19 Dec. with 2 Whitefronted geese and 2 Pinkfooted geese. By their behaviour these were probably wild birds. Only the second record for SF with the previous one on 12 to 28 Dec 1983.

Pinkfooted Goose (Anser Brachyrhynchus)

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

Most records of birds flying over EHF with 1 on 30 Sept, 1 on 4 Oct, 55 on 14 Nov. 1 bird stayed at EHF from 15 to 18 Dec where it was joined by a second bird until 19 Dec.

Whitefronted Goose (Anser albifrons)

Rare winter visitor. Some feral birds.

2 at EHF from 15 to 19 Dec with 1 Bean Goose and 2 Pinkfooted Geese.

Greylag Goose (Anser anser)

Rare winter visitor. Some feral birds.

1 at EHF on 19 Nov, 1 or 2 at Doddington Pool on several occasions. All with Canada Goose flock and assumed to be escapes.

Canada Goose (Branta canadensis)

Common resident.

Up to 167 in early winter, and 470 in late winter at SF where at least 2 pairs bred. Common on most waters with maximum of 322 at Doddington Pool, 220 at Winterley Pool, 40 at Rode Pool and bred at all sites.

Barnacle Goose (Branta leucopsis)

Rare winter visitor. Some feral birds.

1 with Canada Goose flock at RF 30 April, PHF 16 May and WLF 2 Sept.

Bar-headed Goose (Anser indicus)

Feral birds.

1 at Doddington Pool was regularly with the Canada Goose flock. It proved to be a f when it mated with a Canada Goose, and laid 5 eggs. Fortunately these were taken by a fox.

Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*)

Scarce resident and winter visitor.

Recorded in all months from PHF/EHF. Early winter maximum of 24 in Feb, and late winter maximum of 20 in Dec. 1 pair bred with 7 juvs. At Doddington Pool lower numbers than usual although 2 pairs bred with broods of 3 and 7. These juvs all disappeared very quickly.

Wigeon (*Anas penelope*)

Uncommon winter visitor.

The usual large wintering flock at PHF/EHF. Early winter maximum of 275 in Jan. In late winter the first birds returned on 18 Sept and numbers peaked at 349 in Dec. Up to 17 at Doddington Pool during the winter.

Gadwall (*Anas strepera*)

Scarce winter visitor.

Up to 4 at SF in Jan and Feb with occasional singles Aug to Nov. At Doddington Pool a pair were present on 6 to 21 Jan, 29 March and 18 Nov, with a f on 20 Nov.

Teal (*Anas crecca*)

Common winter visitor. Scarce in summer.

Numbers at SF peaked around 550 in Jan and 860 in Dec, with up to 17 during the summer. At Doddington Pool 2 or 3 recorded occasionally in winter.

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

Common resident and breeder. Abundant in winter.

Maximum 131 in early winter and 424 in late winter at SF. Maximum 290 early and late winter at Doddington Pool. Resident and breeds commonly on most waters.

Pintail (*Anas acuta*)

Scarce winter visitor.

Only recorded from SF where even here it is now only a scarce winter visitor. Maximum 29 in Feb and 30 in Dec.

Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*)

Scarce winter visitor.

Recorded in all months from SF but very low numbers with no more than 5 except for Jan when up to 12. Up to 40 regular at Doddington Pool in winter.

Pochard (*Aythya ferina*)

Uncommon winter visitor.

Now scarce at SF although 23 at WLF in Feb, but only 1 or 2 in late winter. Good numbers at Doddington Pool with 87 in Jan and 75 in Nov being maximum counts.

Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*)

Uncommon winter visitor. Scarce in summer.

Present in low numbers all year at SF with maximum of only 12, although 1 pair bred at EHF with 6 juvs. An exceptional year at Doddington Pool with maximum of 109 in March and 6 pairs bred with broods of 9,7,7,6,4,4!

Scaup (*Aythya marila*)

Rare winter visitor.

A f was at Doddington Pool on 8 Jan.

Eider (*Somateria mollissima*)

Vagrant.

1 imm was at WLF on 1 Nov. This is the first record for SF and was part of an influx of eiders inland.

Common Scoter (*Melanitta nigra*)

Rare visitor.

A good series of records with a f at PHF on 30 Dec and from Doddington Pool a f on 1 July, 2 m on 29 July, 2 m 1 f on 20 Oct.

Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*)

Uncommon winter visitor.

Singles, either m or f, during Jan at PHF or RF were the only records for SF. Regular at Doddington Pool during winter with maximum of 9 in March and 7 in Dec.

Red-breasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator*)

Rare winter visitor.

A f was present at Doddington Pool from 6 to 26 Dec.

Goosander (*Mergus merganser*)

Scarce winter visitor.

A good series of records from SF where at EHF 1 m on 1 to 3 Jan, 1 f on 4 April, 1 f on 29 Aug, with 1 f at FF on 31 Oct.

Ruddy Duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*)

Uncommon resident.

The m with the injured wing which was present throughout 1992, was present until 23 May when it disappeared. Otherwise a poor year with only up to 3 in the summer, although 1 pair bred at MGP with 5 juvs. Elsewhere recorded from Doddington Pool with up to 11 m displaying, Rode Pool 2 m displaying.

Hen Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*)

Vagrant.

1 passed briefly over EHF on 11 Nov. Only the ⁵4th record for SF.

Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*)

Common resident.

Widespread and now the commonest raptor. Definitely bred at PHF and WLF. Probably bred at Quaker's Coppice, Stowford, Doddington Pool.

Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*)

Rare resident and autumn/winter migrant.

1 at EHF on 1 and 3 Jan. Then in Aug a super series of records of birds over, on 28 Aug 4 flew over EHF going east to west, followed later by 5 over west to east. Also 2 over on 29 Aug and 1 over on 30 Aug. 1 at RF on 14 Nov.

Also recorded from Doddington Pool with singles on 3 May, and 14 and 15 Dec, Crewe Hall 1 bird resident, Stowford 1 regular in summer, and 3 over on 10 Oct; Coppenhall, Crewe, 1 over on 17 Aug. These records reflect the increase in numbers of this species throughout Cheshire.

Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*)

Rare passage migrant.

1 over PHF on 23 May and 1 over EHF on 3 Oct. 1 was at Doddington Pool on 26 and 27 May.

Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*)

Common resident.

Widespread but generally not as common as Sparrowhawk. Definitely bred near EHF.

Merlin (*Falco columbarius*)

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

1 m at PHF on 10 March, 1 m at PHF on 3 Oct, and a separate f at WLF on 3 Oct; 1 m at WLF on 22 Oct. Also recorded from Doddington Pool where 1 f on 11 Oct, Dane Valley where 1 m from 10 Oct to 20 Oct, and 22 Nov.

Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*)

Rare passage migrant and summer visitor.

1 at WLF on 14 Aug, and singles at EHF on 30 Aug and 4 Sept. Singles also from Arclid Sand Quarry on 16 May and Mow Cop on 14 Aug.

Peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*)

Scarce autumn migrant and winter visitor.

Latest early winter record from RF/EHF was 8 March. Singles in July and Aug may have been wandering birds. Resident at RF from 19 Sept with 2 regular during Nov. Also fairly regular at Doddington Pool with singles on 17 Feb, 2 Aug, 17 Aug, 17 Sept and 1 Oct.

Red-legged Partridge (*Alectoris rufa*)

Rare except where locally released.

1 at WLF on 3 May. Various records from around Doddington where released for shooting, 2 on 23 March, 1 on 26 March, 1 on 2 April, and 12 on 11 Dec.

Partridge (*Perdix perdix*)

Scarce resident.

1 near WLF on 24 April. 1 at Checkley Wood on 16 May, 1 at Bagmere on 4 June.

This species continues to decline.

Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*)

Scarce resident except where locally released.

Common in areas where reared for shooting, e.g. Doddington and Crewe Hall, where over 2000 chicks put out. Scarce elsewhere.

Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*)

Scarce winter visitor.

1 or 2 at PHF or FF in March and April and 1 at WLF on 14 Nov. More common than this but difficult to record.

Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*)

Common resident.

In low numbers on most waters with higher numbers at SF where 55 in Jan and 67 in Dec.

Coot (*Fulica atra*)

Common resident and variable winter visitor.

During winter months up to 85 at PHF, 60 at WLF, 45 at GF. At Doddington Pool up to 240 in Jan and 290 in July. Winterley Pool 45.

Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*)

Rare summer visitor and rare winter visitor. Not resident.

At SF either 1 or 2 on various dates from 7 March to 19 July, and then 1 at EHF from 12 to 17 Dec.

Although there have been several breeding attempts in the area in the past, the first proved breeding occurred at Doddington Pool where 1 pair laid 4 eggs. Unfortunately after 3 weeks incubating the eggs were taken by a fox. Highest count was 5 at Doddington Pool in April. Breeding behaviour was noted at Arclid Sand Quarry where up to 3 birds were recorded from mid-April to early July.

Blackwinged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*)

Vagrant.

The undoubted birds of the year. First record for SF, and the breeding attempt at Frodsham was only the fifth in Britain this century. The 3 birds involved were first reported from Anglesey on 10 April, moved around North Wales and Cheshire - including PHF on 25 April for an hour in the morning - and finally settled to breed at Frodsham. Unfortunately the pair slowly deserted and 3 eggs were taken by magpies and 1 by a coot!

Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius*)

Scarce summer visitor. Uncommon autumn migrant.

The first bird at SF was 1 at EHF on 13 March, an early date, with the last on 3 Sept. Maximum in May was 9 and maximum in July was 15. 1 pair bred at EHF, where 2 juvs seen. Also bred at Arclid Sand Quarry with 2 pairs. One had 4 juvs and the other failed. Breeding also from Middlewich Lime Beds where 1 pair bred.

Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*)

Uncommon passage migrant.

Spring passage at PHF/EHF from 7 March to 26 May with up to 10 in mid-May. Less numbers on autumn passage with up to 3 from 26 June to 22 Aug.

Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*)

Uncommon winter visitor.

The early winter flock at EHF peaked at 338 on 20 Feb. Only up to 24 in late winter, with the first bird on 14 Sept. Also recorded in winter from Doddington Pool where 4 birds landed on the ice on 27 Dec.

Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*)

Rare winter visitor. Scarce passage migrant.

Only one record from SF with 1 at EHF on 16 Dec. One also from Doddington Pool where 1 flew over on 5 Oct.

Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*)

Common resident and winter visitor.

Up to 2000 in the early winter flock at EHF and 1500 in the late winter flock. Breeds throughout the area, but density and success rate not known for sure. 3 nests near Arclid were lost when the field was rolled.

Knot (*Calidris canutus*)

Scarce passage migrant.

1 juv was around EHF and PHF from 15 Aug to 21 Aug.

Sanderling (*Calidris alba*)

Scarce passage migrant.

1 was at Arclid Sand Quarry on 14 May, and possibly the same bird at EHF the following day.

Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*)

Scarce spring migrant. Uncommon autumn migrant.

An excellent series of records at EHF with 1 juv on 10 Aug, 2 or 3 from 28 to 31 Aug, 7 records in mid-Sept with 6 on 15 Sept, then 1 on 6 Oct and 7 Oct. Also 1 at Doddington Pool on 28 Sept.

Curlew Sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*)

Rare spring migrant. Scarce autumn migrant.

2 juvs at EHF on 1 Aug was the only record.

Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*)

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

Present at SF in all months except June. Up to 11 during the early winter period, maximum 7 in May on spring passage, 7 in July on autumn passage, but only 1 or 2 in late winter.

Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*)

Scarce winter visitor.

The regular wintering flock at PHF/EHF was present in typical numbers. 35 in Jan and present until 9 April. The first record in the autumn/late winter period was on 28 July and the maximum was 30 in Nov and Dec.

Jack Snipe (*Lymnocyptes minimus*)

Scarce winter visitor and migrant.

1 at WLF on 5 Jan, 1 at RF on 30 March, and 2 at RF on 17 Oct. Also recorded from the boggy area on Mow Cop where 2 on 16 March and 1 on 5 Dec.

Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*)

Uncommon winter visitor and migrant.

Generally under-recorded, but typical recorded numbers were 25 at EHF, 10 at PHF, 12 at RF, 16 at WLF during the winter months. Also 6 at Stowford in Nov.

Woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*)

Rare/scarce? resident. Scarce winter visitor.

Winter records from FF where 2 on 1 Jan, 1 on 31 Jan, and 1 on 12 Dec. Also 1 at Doddington Pool on 15 Oct, 1 in winter at Wistaston, and 2 shot in Crewe Hall Woods in Nov. Does this species still breed locally?

Blacktailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*)

Scarce migrant.

2 at EHF on 15 Aug, 16 Aug, 30 Aug.

Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*)

Scarce passage migrant.

6 records of singles at SF: Maw Green Tip on 24 April, EHF 4 May, PHF 19 May, EHF 12 July, EHF 16 July, EHF 3 Aug. One over-flew Arclid Sand Quarry on 11 May.

Curlew (*Numenius arquata*)

Rare resident. Uncommon winter visitor.

Recorded in every month at EHF but less than 10 from April to Aug. In the winter roost a maximum of 146 in Feb, and 73 in Nov. Regular at Stowford where 2 pairs seen displaying and probably bred.

Spotted Redshank (*Tringa erythropus*)

Scarce passage migrant.

1 bird at PHF/EHF from 25 July to 30 July.

Redshank (*Tringa totanus*)

Rare summer visitor. Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

Recorded in every month at SF but only 1 or 2 from April to Sept. Maximum in early winter was 10 at EHF in Jan and 8 at WLF in Feb. In late winter, maximum 6 at PHF/EHF. 3 singles at Arclid Sand Quarry on 21 June, 7 Aug, 18 Sept.

Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*)

Scarce passage migrant.

Spring passage at SF with singles at EHF/RF/WLF from 8 May to 13 May, 9 June and 24 June. Autumn passage with singles on 8 Aug, 10 Aug and 31 Aug.

Green Sandpiper (*Tringa ochropus*)

Rare winter visitor. Scarce spring migrant. Uncommon autumn migrant.

The usual heavy and extended autumn passage at SF started on 7 June, with the last bird on 3 Oct. Maximum numbers from mid-July to mid-Aug with 15 on 26 July. Single wintering birds at SF during Jan to April, Stowford Jan and Nov, and Arclid Sand Quarry March and Dec.

Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*)

Rare summer visitor. Scarce passage migrant.

Fairly low numbers at SF on passage. Maximum 3 in May and also maximum of 3 in July. 1 late bird at EHF from 10 Sept to 17 Sept. Also recorded on passage at Doddington Pool where a maximum of 9 on 21 April. At Arclid Sand Quarry one pair bred, but the young were seen being taken by a fox.

Wood Sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*)

Scarce passage migrant.

1 at EHF on 4 July and 1 on 15 Sept.

Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*)

Abundant autumn and winter visitor.

Much movement between Maw Green Tip and SF. Up to 3000 around the Tip in mid-winter. Most birds use EHF saltpan to roost. Up to 14,000 in the Doddington Pool winter roost.

Common Gull (*Larus canus*)

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

Up to 40 amongst the gull flock at SF and 110 in the roost at Doddington Pool.

Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*)

Common winter visitor. Uncommon summering non-breeder.

Up to 1100 around Maw Green Tip and SF in autumn. Most birds roost to the north-west of the area. At Doddington Pool up to 2700 in the winter roost. There were 3 very dark birds, probably *fuscus* race, at PHF on 15 Sept.

Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*)

Uncommon winter visitor and summering non-breeder.

Up to 700 around Maw Green Tip and SF in autumn. Again most birds flight off to the north-west to roost. At Doddington Pool there are very few in the gull roost.

Yellow-legged Gull (*Larus (argentatus) cachinnans/michahellis*)

Rare autumn and winter visitor.

1 at PHF on 23 Sept. Singles at Doddington Pool on 20 Oct. and 20 Nov.

Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucoides*)

Rare winter visitor.

More records than usual from Maw Green Tip/RF. Ad on 1 Jan and 3 Jan, 2nd winter on 5 Jan, Ad on 18 Jan, 1st winter 8 and 28 Feb, Ad from 25 March to 10 April and 1st winter from 30 March to 10 April.

Glaucous Gull (*Larus hyperboreus*)

Rare winter visitor.

1st winter birds at Maw Green Tip/RF on 18, 19 and 29 Jan.

Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*)

Scarce winter visitor and autumn migrant.

Up to 23 in the gull flock at Maw Green Tip/RF and 13 in the gull roost at Doddington Pool.

Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*)

Scarce passage migrant and summer visitor.

1 at WLF on 17 and 18 May, 1 at PHF on 11 June, then in July 2 at EHF on 17, 3 at WLF on 18 and 1 at WLF on 20. Singles at Doddington Pool on 24 April, 10 May and 29 July. At Arclid Sand Quarry there were 3 on 21 June, 1 on 27 June and 1 on 7 July.

Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)

Scarce passage migrant.

1 at EHF on 11 April. 3 at Doddington Pool on 14 June.

Little Tern (*Sterna albifrons*)

Rare summer visitor.

The only record was of 1 at Arclid Sand Quarry on 20 June, the first record for here.

Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*)

Scarce passage migrant.

Singles at Doddington Pool on 10 May and 27 May.

Feral Pigeon (*Columba livia*)

Common resident.

Fairly common resident in most town centres. At least two flocks of c.200 in Crewe.

Stock Dove (*Columba oenas*)

Uncommon resident.

The only proved breeding was in Quaker's Coppice where 8 pairs used nest boxes, laid 30 clutches from March to Sept, with a total of 61 eggs from which 38 hatched and 27 young fledged. In winter a flock of 80 around Doddington.

Woodpigeon (*Columba palumbus*)

Common resident,

The only winter flocks recorded were 500 near Alsager in Dec, 260 at PHF in Feb and 100 at Doddington in March.

Collared Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*)

Common resident.

The only record received was from Wistaston where 10 pairs regular all year and bred.

Cuckoo (Cuculus canorus)

Uncommon summer visitor and migrant.

1st record was of 1 at FF. Breeding season records from FF, WLF. (where seen watching reed warblers in the phragmites bed), Wistaston, Doddington, Bagmere and Haslington.

Barn Owl (Tyto alba)

Rare visitor.

1992 - one was found dead near Weston in the same place as one in 1991.

Little Owl (Athene noctua)

Common resident.

Bred at Doddington and also recorded from PHF, WLF, Haslington (5 pairs in Spring), near Alsager, Mow Cop, Crewe Golf Course.

Tawny Owl (Strix aluco)

Common resident.

Bred at FF, Bagmere (where 2 juvs on 4 June), Crewe Golf Course (where 2 juvs on 9 July) and Quaker's Coppice, where a pair laid 2 eggs in a nest box in Jan but deserted in early Feb.

Short-eared Owl (Asio flammeus)

Rare winter visitor.

1 near EHF by railway embankment on 27 and 28 Dec.

Swift (Apus apus)

Uncommon summer visitor.

The first record was from WLF where 1 on 22 April followed by 1 at Doddington on 23 April. The last record was from WLF on 28 Aug. Highest counts were from Doddington Pool on 16 May with c.340.

Alpine Swift (Apus melba)

Vagrant.

One seen on 9 Oct at EHF with starlings and black-headed gulls from 12-15 to 12-25, feeding on aerial insects. If accepted by BBRC this will be the first record for the area. *This record has been accepted by BBRC*

Kingfisher (Alcedo atthis)

Uncommon resident.

Birds were recorded from Rode Pool, Lawton Pool, Wistaston, Holmes Chapel, Doddington Pool and most probably attempted breeding. The only proved breeding from near Arclid Sand Quarry and River Wheelock near EHF.

Green Woodpecker (Picus viridis)

Uncommon resident.

Records from FF, Brereton Heath, Arclid Sand Quarry, Holmes Chapel, Doddington with a probable breeding pair at Mow Cop.

Great Spotted Woodpecker (Dendrocopas major)

Common resident.

By far the commonest woodpecker. Recorded from most flashes at SF and most wooded areas.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopas minor*)

Uncommon resident.

Various records from WLF, Sandbach (where 2 by the Library on 24/4!), Stowford, Holmes Chapel (where 1 feeding on peanuts on 26/4), Crewe Golf Course, Arclid Sand Quarry, Doddington.

Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*)

Common? resident and autumn passage migrant.

Still breeds in the area but density unknown - is it declining? The only winter flock record was of 23 near Arclid on 31 Jan. Autumn migration in Sept and Oct noted at SF and Doddington, where 60 over on 1 Oct.

Sand Martin (*Riparia riparia*)

Uncommon summer visitor.

2 early birds appeared at Doddington Pool on 18 March and the last record was of 2 at RF on 14 Sept. The only proved breeding site was Holmes Chapel, Hermitage Bridge, with 2 pairs.

Swallow (*hirundo rustica*)

Abundant summer visitor.

First record was on 27 March with 1 at EHF and last was on 25 Oct with 2 over PHF. Breeds commonly on most rural buildings. Near Arclid Hospital there was an autumn roost of several thousand birds from mid-Aug to 24 Sept.

House Martin (*Delichon urbica*)

Common summer visitor.

First record was on 16 April with 8 at WLF, and the last record was on 12 Oct with 6 over Sandbach. Still breeds commonly, although one observer noted that numbers were noticeably down.

Richard's Pipit (*Anthus novaeseelandiae*)

Vagrant.

1 found by the old quarry at Mow Cop on 14 March stayed until 3 April. This is the first record for the area.

Tree Pipit (*Anthus trivialis*)

Rare summer visitor.

2 at Mow Cop on 14 Aug.

Meadow Pipit (*Anthus pratensis*)

Uncommon resident and autumn passage migrant.

In winter up to 40 around Maw Green Tip, also up to 40 around Mow Cop, with lower numbers at Doddington and Haslington. Breeding density not known but one pair bred at Middlewich Lime Beds. In autumn 71 over EHF on 21 Sept and 95 over on 23 Sept.

Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava*)

Scarce resident and uncommon passage migrant.

A maximum of only 3 on spring passage at SF from 14 April to 17 May and 4 in autumn from 27 July to 19 Sept. No breeding records.

Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*)

Rare summer visitor. Scarce winter visitor.

Bred at Doddington Pool, where juvs seen on 22 July, and probably bred at Holmes Chapel Hermitage Bridge. The usual winter roost at Arclid Sand Quarry held abnormally high numbers where at least 29 birds present on 6 Nov. 24 birds were caught and ringed.

Pied Wagtail (*Motacilla alba yarellii*)

Common resident.

The only records were of autumn or winter flocks, e.g. 70 at Wheelock Sewage Farm on 31 Dec, 32 at PHF on 26 Aug.

White Wagtail (*Motacilla alba alba*)

Scarce passage migrant.

2 birds were at EHF on 16 Oct.

Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*)

Abundant resident.

Dunnoek (*Prunella modularis*)

Abundant resident.

Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*)

Abundant resident.

Nightingale (*Luscinia megarynchos*)

Vagrant.

1 m was at Arclid from 24 April to 29 May, when it was singing occasionally during the day, and even more beautifully at night. No proof of breeding success.

Black Redstart (*Phoenicurus ochruros*)

Rare winter visitor.

An elusive m was found at Rookery Bridge near EHF on 26 Dec and seen briefly again on 27 Dec.

Redstart (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*)

Rare summer visitor.

Probable breeding at Roe Park where 1 m singing in May, and Crewe Hall where 4 juvs, but no ads, on 16 July. Also 1 f at Bradwall on 16 July and 1 at Mow Cop on 29 Aug.

Whinchat (*Saxicola rubetra*)

Rare summer visitor. Scarce passage migrant.

1 m at RF on 23 April, 1 ad at PHF on 21 and 22 Aug. 1 m at Mow Cop on 14 Aug.

Stonechat (*Saxicola torquata*)

Scarce winter visitor.

1 f at Maw Green Tip on 9 Dec. 1 m at Mow Cop on 15 March, and 20 March, 1 f at Arclid Sand Quarry on 3 Nov.

Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*)

Scarce spring migrant. Rare autumn migrant.

Generally low numbers, up to 3 maximum (except for 10 April when 8 at Maw Green Tip) at SF from 24 March to 19 May. 1 or 2 at Mow Cop from 16 to 24 March. Only 2 autumn records, 1 at Stowford on 22 Aug and 1 at PHF on 17 Sept.

Ring Ousel (*Turdus torquatus*)

Rare passage migrant.

A good series of records from Mow Cop where 1 m on 6 April, 5 on 12 April and 2 on 18 April. The only autumn record was 1 on 13 Oct in a Holmes Chapel garden!

Blackbird (*Turdus merula*)

Abundant resident and winter visitor.

Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*)

Common winter visitor.

First winter record was of 2 at EHF on 10 Oct. Maximum flock size recorded was 200 also at EHF.

Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*)

Uncommon resident.

Has been declining in numbers for several years, but one recorder reported more numbers than usual.

Redwing (*Turdus iliacus*)

Common winter visitor.

First winter record was of 10 at EHF on 4 Oct. Maximum flock size was 150, also at EHF.

Mistle Thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*)

Uncommon resident.

Few records received, but a stable population, widespread. 10 at WF on 8 Sept.

Grasshopper Warbler (*Locustella naevia*)

Scarce summer visitor.

2 "Reeling" males heard at Bagmere on 2 and 4 June. 1 at Arclid Sand Quarry on 25 April, where a pair and a brood of newly fledged young were found on 17 July.

Sedge Warbler (*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*)

Uncommon summer visitor.

First record was on 8 May with males singing at WLF and FFF where subsequently bred. Also bred at Lawton SF.

Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*)

Uncommon summer visitor.

A survey on 23 May at SF gave a total of 14 pairs with GF6, OF 1, RF 2, FFF 1, WLF 4. Also 4 singing m at Rode Pool on 2 June.

Lesser Whitethroat (*Sylvia curruca*)

Uncommon summer visitor.

Present from 30 April to 7 Sept. Probably c.5 pairs bred at SF and 2 pairs at Arclid Sand Quarry.

Whitethroat (*Sylvia communis*)

Common summer visitor.

Present from 15 April to 21 Sept. Probably c.5 pairs at SF and 5 pairs at Arclid Sand Quarry.

Garden Warbler (*Sylvia borin*)

Common summer visitor.

Recorded from Arclid Sand Quarry (where c.8 pairs bred), Crewe Golf Course c.4 pairs), FF, Wistaston.

Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*)

Common summer visitor. Scarce winter visitor.

First record on 15 April with a m at FF. Recorded from several sites, but the only quantitative data from Arclid Sand Quarry, where 2 proven and 1 probable breeding pairs. A f recorded on several dates in late winter from Wistaston.

Wood Warbler (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*)

Scarce summer visitor.

Secondhand reports of singing males near Timbersbrook picnic area around end of April/early May. More fieldwork is needed to confirm status and numbers.

Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*)

Common summer visitor.

The usual March records makes this the earliest warbler to arrive. 1 at RF on 14 March, 1 at Arclid Sand Quarry on 20 March and several more before end of March.

Willow Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*)

Common summer visitor.

First record on 31 March with 1 at FF. Typical number (10 pairs) reported from Arclid Sand Quarry, although other recorders reported a noticeable drop in numbers.

Goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*)

Uncommon winter visitor.

Recorded in low numbers (up to 5) from FF, WLF, EHF, Doddington, Crewe Golf Course, Rode Pool, Quaker's Coppice.

Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*)

Scarce summer visitor.

Numbers are definitely declining with previously regular breeding sites at Alsager and Arclid Sand Quarry not used this year. 1 pair near Alsager was the only breeding record.

Longtailed Tit (*Aegithalos candatus*)

Common resident.

The population is quite high at the moment, probably due to a run of fairly mild winters. Bred at FF, WLF, Quaker's Coppice, Doddington, Wistaston, Alsager.

Winter flocks of 30 at Doddington, 25 at WLF, 18 EHF.

Willow Tit (*Parus montanus*)

Scarce resident.

1 pair resident and bred at FF. Records also from Wheelock where 4 on 6 Feb, Dane in Shaw 3 on 18 July, Alsager where only 1 seen.

Coal Tit (*Parus ater*)

Uncommon resident.

Few records received, but regular at Crewe Golf Course, Doddington, Quaker's Coppice.

Blue Tit (*Parus caeruleus*)

Abundant resident.

At Quaker's Coppice 8 pairs used nest boxes, laid 89 eggs and fledged 81 young.

Great Tit (*Parus major*)

Common resident.

At Quaker's Coppice 3 pairs used nest boxes, laid 26 eggs and fledged 16 young.

Nuthatch (*Sitta europaea*)

Common resident.

7 recorded from Rode Pool area on 18 April. At Quaker's Coppice 1 pair used a nest box, laid 7 eggs and fledged 7 young.

Treecreeper (*Certhia familiaris*)

Common resident.

Few records received.

Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*)

Uncommon resident.

Recorded from FF, Bagmere, Rode Pool, Crewe Golf Course, and Wistaston where 1 pair had 3 juvs.

Magpie (*Pica pica*)

Common resident.

Although widespread, the only flock of double figures was of 15 at Wheelock Sewage Farm on 31 Dec.

Jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*)

Common resident.

At least 100 regular in the corvids at Maw Green Tip. A large corvid roost in Crewe Hall Woods held numbers in the "low hundreds".

Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*)

Common resident.

The rookery at Arclid Hollow held 58 nests (where a low 47 in 1992). Nine rookeries in the Crewe/Alsager area held 456 nests this year (419 in 1992 and 346 in 1991). The new rookery at FF has increased rapidly to 35 nests this year. A large corvid roost in Crewe Hall Woods held numbers in the "high hundreds".

Carrion Crow (*Corvus corone*)

Common resident.

Up to 50 feeding on Maw Green Tip in winter.

Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)

Abundant resident and winter visitor.

Up to 1500 at Maw Green Tip in Dec.

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)

Abundant resident.

Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*)

Uncommon resident.

Breeding records from FF, Maw Green Tip, Brereton, Arclid Sand Quarry. Winter flocks of 35 at Haslington, 15 at FFF, 15 at Maw Green Tip, 10 near Alsager.

Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*)

Abundant resident and winter visitor.

Winter flocks of 200 south of Alsager, 150 near Haslington, 150 at Arclid, 70 at Doddington.

Brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*)

Scarce winter visitor.

A large roost built up in bushes at Doddington with 200 in Feb, 300 in March, down to 90 by 9 April. These were probably the same birds which fed regularly in a stubble field at Chorlton near Hough. Also 10 at Lawton Woods, 12 at Bradwall, 2 at Arclid, 2 at Mow Cop, 2 over EHF, 1 at Wheelock. In late winter only singles in chaffinch flocks at Haslington and south of Alsager.

Greenfinch (*Carduelis chloris*)

Common resident.

Winter flocks of 100 at Doddington, 50 at EHF, 50 at Arclid, 20 near Haslington.

Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*)

Common resident.

Winter flocks of 40 at Doddington, 47 at FF, 50 at Maw Green Tip, 50 at EHF.

Siskin (*Carduelis spinus*)

Uncommon winter visitor.

Winter flocks of 70 at Crewe Golf Course, 50 over EHF in March, 30 at Arclid Sand Quarry, but 50 on 27 Nov. Also recorded feeding on peanuts in gardens at Holmes Chapel and Haslington.

Linnet (*Carduelis cannabina*)

Common resident.

Proved breeding from FFF where a pair with 6 juvs. Winter flocks of 150 at Chorlton, near Hough; 150 on stubble fields at Doddington, 50 at Maw Green Tip.

Twite (*Carduelis flavirostris*)

Rare migrant.

1 at Mow Cop on 14 March.

Redpoll (*Carduelis flammea*)

Rare resident. Uncommon winter visitor.

No summer records. In early winter, a flock at Crewe Golf Course built up to 60 maximum in March. Also 23 at Wynbunbury Moss in Feb, and 57 at Mow Cop in Oct. Up to 4 at WLF and FF in winter.

Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*)

Uncommon resident.

2 pairs at FFF, 1 pair at Crewe Golf Course, and 1 pair at Wistaston, were the only records of these beautiful birds reported.

Yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*)

Uncommon resident.

During this year's BTO Farmland Bunting Survey, there were 12 tetrads surveyed in the south of the county. There were 36 birds recorded during the Survey, varying from 11 in the best tetrad (Barthomley) to none at all in 5 tetrads. Other records include 7 m singing near Haslington in June, 8 m at SF in May, and 2 m at Arclid. There were no records of winter flocks.

Reed Bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*)

Uncommon resident.

During the BTO Survey, in the 12 tetrads there were only 20 birds recorded in total and of these 11 were in one area at Baddiley Mere (outside the SECOS area). 7 tetrads had none at all. Poor numbers also at Arclid where only 3 or 4 pairs compared to 5 or 6 in 1992, and 7-9 throughout the 1980s. However, at SF there were 10 pairs (average numbers) and one reporter at Alsager thought numbers had increased.

Corn Bunting (*Miliaria calandra*)

Uncommon resident.

During the BTO Survey, there were no records at all in 12 tetrads surveyed. However, there has been an increase in records this year, only partly explained by increased observer awareness due to the Survey. Possibly the farmland "set aside" policy is helping this species. All records of singing males are recorded.

Regular sites - south of Alsager 4, Doddington 4, Basford 2. Irregular or unknown sites - east of Alsager 4, near Haslington 3, Wybunbury 1, Bridgemere 1, Shavington 2, Brereton 2.

Small winter flocks of 13 at Arclid and 12 at Doddington.