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# **SOUTH-EAST CHESHIRE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

## **2000 BIRD REPORT**

**Including Birds of Sandbach Flashes**

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## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the SECOS Annual Bird Report for 2000 and, depending on your point of view, this one really is the last of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

As well as the Systematic List there are the usual articles giving details of Birdwatching Sites in the SECOS area, and the list of Early and Late Dates, updated for 2000. This year's site guide covers Timbersbrook and The Cloud, and has been written jointly by Alan and Linda Battersby, and Andrew and Angela Goodwin. Charles Hull has contributed an important article reporting on the first four years of the BTO's major ongoing survey, the Breeding Bird Survey, in South Cheshire. There is also a report on a Common Bird Census carried out in Crewe Business Park, ready to assess the impact of the Crewe Green Link Road.

2000 has been a steady rather than spectacular year with no new species recorded, but a lot of good records. The Sandbach Flashes' New Species Sweep is still waiting to be won! Overall a total of 161 species were recorded in the area, including 25 wader species.

There were three separate records of Little Egret, reflecting how increasingly common this species is becoming. Two Spoonbills in April were the first since 1982, and a Green-winged Teal in October was the first since its split from Common Teal.

A good year for raptors with 11 species recorded, including only the 2<sup>nd</sup> Honey Buzzard, the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Red Kite, the 7<sup>th</sup> Marsh Harrier, 4 separate Ospreys and the Peregrines would surely breed at Railway Flash if they had somewhere to lay eggs on! The most important event of the year was probably the pair of Ravens at Timbersbrook. Watched displaying and nest building in early spring, no juveniles were seen at the nest but four birds were seen here in July. This is the first breeding record in our area.

The breach in the north bank of the River Wheelock at Elton Hall Flash was finally repaired in February, after a year of flooding on the saltpan. The silt deposited by the river will surely lead to additional growth of vegetation, reducing the size of the saltpan. However, the temporarily increased water levels showed what could be achieved if the outlet from the saltpan was controlled by a variable sluice.

As part of the White-headed Duck protection programme shooting contractors employed by the Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions have been active at several sites in the SECOS area, and an unknown number of Ruddy Ducks have been killed. If you have specific details of any such activities I should be pleased to hear from you.

During the course of the year SECOS members have been involved in a number of surveys, particularly ongoing BTO surveys. Additionally over 20 members are now regularly recording garden birds for the SECOS Garden Bird Survey. We also continue to monitor the nest boxes at Quakers Coppice and Rode Pool.

Finally, many thanks to all contributors, without whose records there would not be a bird report. Special thanks to Joan and Keith Tilbrook for their help in typing, collating and checking this report, and to John Thompson for his assistance.

Colin Lythgoe  
Recorder.

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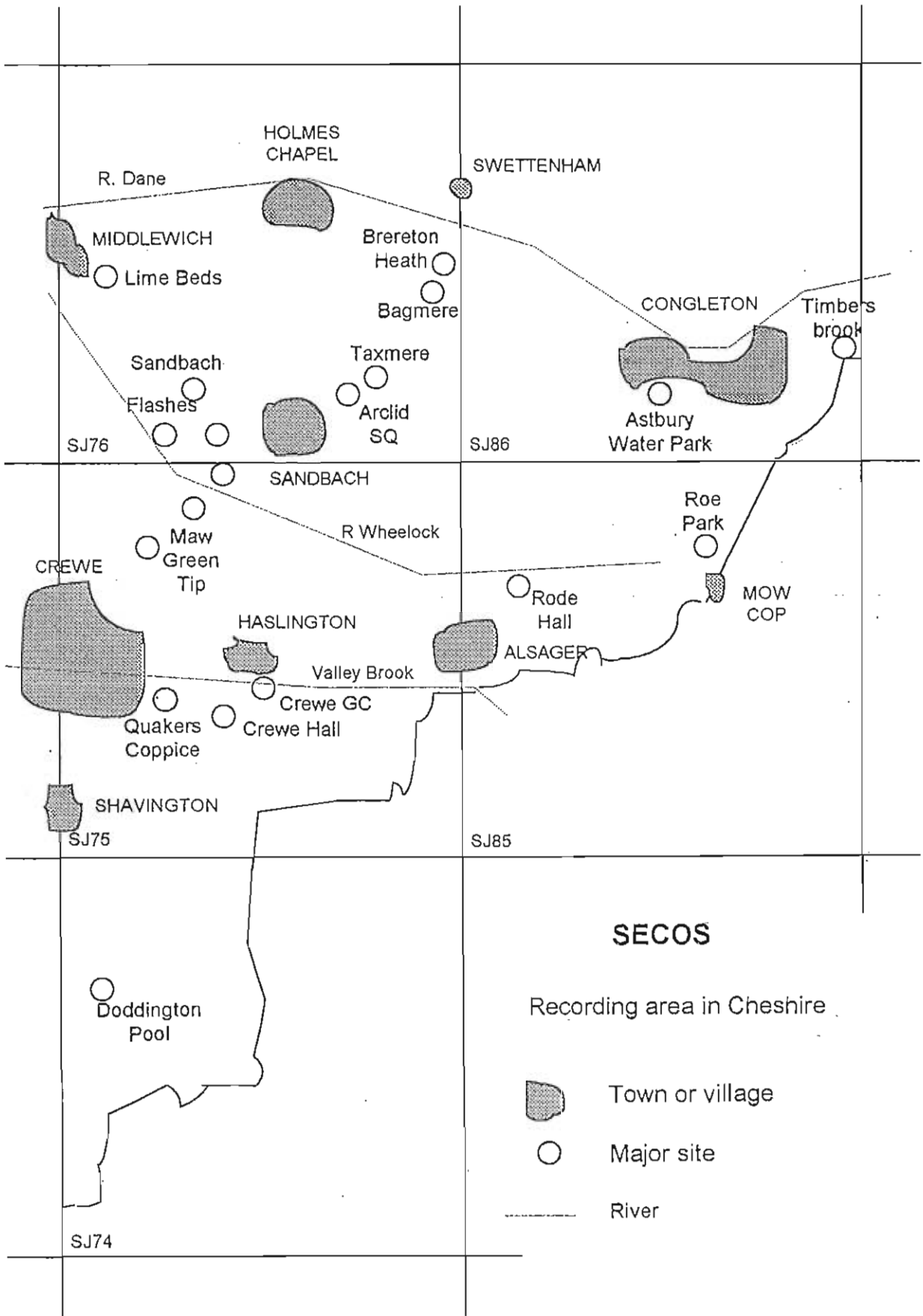
## Abbreviations Used

CF	Crabmill Flash	juv	juvenile
CP	Canal Pools	1stW	1 <sup>st</sup> Winter
EHF	Elton Hall Flash	2ndW	2 <sup>nd</sup> Winter
FF	Foden's Flash	3rdW	3 <sup>rd</sup> Winter
FFF	Fields Farm Flash	imm	immature
GF	Groby Flash	ad	adult
OF	Oak Tree Flash	m	male
PF	Plex Flash	f	female
PHF	Pump House Flash	c	approximately
RF	Railway Flash	max	maximum
SF	Sandbach Flashes	SQ	Sand Quarry
TLF	Tetton Lane Flash	WP	Water Park
WF	Warmingham Flash		
WLF	Watch Lane Flash		

## Status Definitions

The status of species within the area is given in a one-line entry after the species heading. These have been defined as follows:-

Abundant	Occurs in large numbers in suitable habitats and seasons.
Common	Occurs regularly or widely distributed in suitable habitats.
Fairly common	Occurs in moderate numbers in suitable habitats.
Uncommon	Occurs in small numbers.
Scarce	One or two records in each year, or restricted to specific habitats.
Rare	Occurs less than annually.
Very rare	Less than 10 records in the last 20 years.
Vagrant	Less than 2 records in the last 20 years.



## 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.

The level of access is denoted by the figure shown, in accordance with the following definitions:-

- <sup>1</sup> No public access
- <sup>2</sup> Access to SECOS members only
- <sup>3</sup> Some access or viewing from footpaths and roads
- <sup>4</sup> Public access

### **Doddington Pool SJ714464 <sup>2</sup>**

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

### **Quakers Coppice SJ724546 <sup>4</sup>**

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 <sup>1</sup>**

A very extensive area of mixed woodland and farmland.

### **Crewe Golf Course SJ744546 <sup>3</sup>**

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

### **Rode Pool SJ815575 <sup>2</sup>**

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

### **Lawton Woods SJ825559 <sup>3</sup>**

Large area of woodland including a lake.

### **Mow Cop from SJ856573 to SJ873593 <sup>3</sup>**

A sandstone ridge of moorland habitat giving extensive views over the Cheshire Plain and which forms the Cheshire/Staffordshire border.

### **Roe Park SJ858583 <sup>3</sup>**

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

### **Sandbach Flashes <sup>3</sup>**

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 1930s 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 saltpan.

#### **Pump House Flash SJ723595**

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

#### **Railway Flash SJ718585**

Currently two separate flashes with a marshy area between.

**Maw Green Tip SJ717577**

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

**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 and behind the flash.

**Warmingham Flash SJ719619**

Heavily disturbed by fishermen.

**Middlewich Lime Beds SJ711653 <sup>1</sup>**

The raised settling beds owned by British Salt.

**Arclid Sand Quarry SJ778623 <sup>3</sup>**

Extensive area of water formed by the quarry workings.

**Taxmere SJ780625 <sup>1</sup>**

Area of farmland just north of Arclid Sand Quarry.

**Bagmere SJ796643 <sup>3</sup>**

An overgrown mere still with some water and reed beds and a designated SSSI.

**Brereton Heath SJ798651 <sup>4</sup>**

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

**Swettenham SJ801675 <sup>3</sup>**

Farmland and mixed woodland by the River Dane.

**Astbury Water Park SJ849624 <sup>4</sup>**

Extensive area of water formed by the quarry workings, now used for water sports and angling.

**Timbersbrook/The Cloud SJ896627 to SJ900635 <sup>3</sup>**

A small (but important in a SECOS context) area of upland moorland and conifer forest.

**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.

## SYSTEMATIC LIST

### Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*)

*Fairly common resident.*

Up to 5 spread around SF in the first winter period, but Doddington continues to be the main site for this species with up to 14 in March.

However, breeding success was poor here with 5 pairs breeding but few juvs seen. Also bred at the usual site of GF (2 juvs), EHF (2 juvs) and RF (1 juv).

31 at Doddington in Sept. Also at Rode Pool (2 in both winter periods), Congleton Park and Astbury Water Park, and a single record from Arclid SQ.

### Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*)

*Common resident.*

Flocks in the first winter period were at WLF (16), Arclid SQ (11), Astbury WP (17), and Doddington (18).

Breeding attempts were recorded at 9 sites but for reasons unknown success was generally poor at most sites. An early brood of 3 at PF on 26<sup>th</sup> April. A pair at FFF had 2 broods but no juvs were seen at EHF, GF and WF. Also at Doddington (5 pairs but few juvs), Arclid SQ (5 pairs with 3 broods of only 1, 2, 1), Rode Pool (4 pairs with 9 juvs in total), and Winterley Pool (2 pairs with 1 juv).

Numbers in the second winter period were similar to those in the first.

### Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

*Common winter visitor. Rare in summer.*

A max of 28 at SF in Jan (PHF 14, CF 12, RF 2) and 9 at Doddington in Feb. Becoming more regular with a few imm through the summer at both of these sites.

In the second winter period up to 21 at PHF and 13 at Doddington. Also at Astbury WP (5), Rode Pool (2), Stowford (2), and Arclid SQ (3).

### Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*)

*Very rare visitor.*

Three records this year of this increasingly common species. 1 ad on 18<sup>th</sup> June dropped in at RF, then flew to EHF and finally flew off north over WLF.

An ad was seen at Arclid SQ on 21<sup>st</sup> Aug when it flew off at 19.50, heading west with the black headed gulls going to roost (at Sandbach Flashes?).

Another ad on 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct at EHF flew up with gulls from behind the embankment on the saltpan at 18.12. It returned there but could not be relocated next morning.

The 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> records for the SECOS area.

### Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)

*Common resident*

Generally recorded daily at SF throughout the year with up to 17 in total at all flashes. Also recorded regularly on many other waters showing its widespread distribution when feeding.

The only heronry in the SECOS area is at Rode Pool where there was a total of 37 nests in use. A big increase with only 26 in 1999 and 28 in 1998.

### Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*)

*Very rare visitor.*

At EHF on 29<sup>th</sup> April, 2 ads flew in at around 19.00 and landed on the saltpan, but left after a few minutes due to constant harassment by the gulls. They flew off north and arrived at Leighton Moss later in the evening.

Only the 5<sup>th</sup> record for the flashes, and the first since 1982 when 3 ads on 16<sup>th</sup> May at RF and an imm on 6<sup>th</sup> Nov at EHF, were the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> records.



### **Mute Swan** (*Cygnus olor*)

*Fairly common resident.*

Monthly max at the two main sites in the SECOS area were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Winterley Pool	103	69	70	62	62	45	39	49	60	79	96	120
Doddington	35	3	3	3	56	66	71	55	29	18	22	45

Although the highest number recorded on any day at Winterley Pool was 120 there were 254 individual swans identified there during the year.

Breeding pairs were recorded at GF, EHF, WLF, CF, Alsager (The Mere), Astbury WP, Crewe (Queen's Park), Doddington, Lawton Woods, Stowford, Wheelock (canal) and Winterley Pool.

### **Bewick's Swan** (*Cygnus columbianus*)

*Rare winter visitor.*

One record from each end of the year. 7 at EHF on 5<sup>th</sup> Jan were present all day and were seen to fly off at 08.10 on 6<sup>th</sup> Jan.

5 at EHF on 20<sup>th</sup> Dec were first seen at 15.15 and were seen to fly off at 09.30 on 21<sup>st</sup> Dec.

### **Whooper Swan** (*Cygnus cygnus*)

*Rare winter visitor.*

3 were seen briefly at EHF on 15<sup>th</sup> Oct. This is the earliest ever autumn record – the previous was 21<sup>st</sup> Oct (in 1998).

7 birds, probably of this species, flew over Arclid SQ on 8<sup>th</sup> Nov, heading east.

### **Pink-footed Goose** (*Anser brachyrhynchus*)

*Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant or feral.*

Few mid-winter over flying records this year with only 271 over EHF on 25<sup>th</sup> Jan and 82 over Crewe on 7<sup>th</sup> Dec. 8 birds were at RF/ Maw Green Tip/GF on 5<sup>th</sup> Jan and from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> Feb, and coincidentally – or the same birds – 9 were at Doddington from 18<sup>th</sup> Feb to 17<sup>th</sup> Mar.

Other singles with Canada Geese were presumed to be feral birds.

### **Greylag Goose** (*Anser anser*)

*Rare winter visitor or feral.*

Occasional records of up to 7 birds from SF, Arclid SQ, Doddington and Rode Pool were presumed to be escapes but 30 at CF on 25<sup>th</sup> Dec and 36 at PHF on 26<sup>th</sup> Dec were wild/feral birds.

### **Canada Goose** (*Branta canadensis*)

*Common resident.*

Max numbers in the first winter period were SF (649), Arclid SQ (66), Doddington (120), Rode Pool (57), and Winterley Pool (56).

Bred at several sites with, for example, 34 juvs at Doddington, 26 at Rode Pool, 22 at Arclid SQ, 6+ at SF, and 6 at Haslington Hall.

Some large numbers gathered in the post-breeding flocks in autumn with 570 at SF, 350 at Winterley Pool, 236 at Doddington, 85 at Rode Pool and, as usual for this species, Arclid SQ being the main site with a max of 829 in late August.

### **Brent Goose** (*Branta bernicla*)

*Very rare winter visitor or feral.*

On 6<sup>th</sup> June a very tame-looking bird was swimming round Winterley Pool with the Canada Goose flock.

### **Shelduck** (*Tadorna tadorna*)

*Uncommon resident and winter visitor.*

In the first winter period regular at SF with up to 42 at PHF and EHF and occasional at Doddington with up to 8. Also 2 at Swettenham in April.

The only breeding records were from SF where two broods (of 8 and 5) at EHF, although a pair occasionally visited Arclid SQ.

In the second winter period up to 32 at PHF and EHF but no records from anywhere else.

### Mandarin (*Aix galericulata*)

*Scarce visitor.*

1 m was at PHF on 22<sup>nd</sup> Mar and a f/imm at EHF from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> Aug.

1 m was on Queen's Park, Crewe, lake in June with a f here in Oct. Also 1 m at Doddington on 30<sup>th</sup> Dec.

### Wigeon (*Anas penelope*)

*Uncommon winter visitor.*

A co-ordinated count of all flashes on 16<sup>th</sup> Jan gave a total of 513 (RF 45, PHF 106, EHF 270, CF 92). At Doddington generally less than 5 but 58 on 22<sup>nd</sup> March.

For the second year in succession a few birds stayed on and summered at EHF.

Numbers at SF started to build up slowly from 28<sup>th</sup> Aug (29<sup>th</sup> Aug in 1999 and 26<sup>th</sup> Aug in 1998 – very consistent) and eventually peaked at 572 in Nov. Also at Doddington (5), Astbury WP (17), and Arclid SQ (4).

### Gadwall (*Anas strepera*)

*Uncommon winter visitor.*

A strange series of records at SF with 2 at GF from 8<sup>th</sup> Jan to 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb. Then 2 at EHF in early June and 4 at EHF in late June.

Finally regular in winter starting with 4 at RF on 13<sup>th</sup> Sept and ending with a SF record count of 8 on 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec.

Also at Rode Pool (pair in March) and Doddington (1 in April).

### Teal (*Anas crecca*)

*Common winter visitor. Scarce in summer.*

An increase in numbers all year at SF. The co-ordinated count on 16<sup>th</sup> Jan gave a total of 352 (269 in 1999) and there were up to 465 in March.

Summered in small numbers but no evidence of breeding. In the second winter period a max of 670 at EHF/PHF in Nov (370 in 1999).

Also in winter at Doddington (14), Rode Pool (8), Arclid SQ (28) and Astbury WP where 6 brought in by freezing weather on 31<sup>st</sup> Dec was the first record for there.

### Green-winged Teal (*Anas carolinensis*)

*Very rare winter visitor.*

At EHF on 20<sup>th</sup> Oct an ad still in partial eclipse plumage was first noted with other Teal on the saltpan. It was present continuously to 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov.

### Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

*Common resident. Abundant in winter.*

Max numbers in the first quarter were SF (293 spread over 10 flashes), Arclid SQ (200), Doddington (235), Rode Pool (40), and Queen's Park Crewe (113).

Breeds commonly on most waters and post breeding/autumn flocks recorded were SF (413), Arclid SQ (376), and Rode Pool (54). At Doddington the autumn max was 236 until 30<sup>th</sup> Dec when 377 were recorded during freezing weather on a small patch of open water.

### Pintail (*Anas acuta*)

*Uncommon winter visitor.*

A max of 25 at EHF where present through to the late date of 27<sup>th</sup> April (they usually move away before April).

The first bird in autumn was 1 at EHF on 1<sup>st</sup> Sept then present continuously to the year end with a max of 23.

Rare away from SF with 2 at Doddington on 25<sup>th</sup> Feb and 4 at Arclid SQ on 28<sup>th</sup> Dec.

**Garganey** (*Anas querquedula*)

*Scarce summer visitor.*

1 m at RF on 21<sup>st</sup> March. 1 m at EHF on 25<sup>th</sup> May. A single at EHF on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> Aug and 1 also at EHF from 30<sup>th</sup> Sept to 8<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**Shoveler** (*Anas clypeata*)

*Uncommon winter visitor.*

Recorded in all months at SF with 2 or 3 summering but not breeding. Up to 20 in the first winter period and a high max of 33 in the second winter period.

Occasional records from Doddington (10), Astbury WP (4), and Arclid SQ (3).

**Pochard** (*Aythya ferina*)

*Fairly common winter visitor.*

Becoming increasingly irregular at SF and except for a high count of 30 at CF in mid Jan, numbers continue to decrease here. In the first winter period also at Doddington (46), Astbury WP (28), Winterley Pool (17), all numbers lower than last year.

Numbers in the second winter period were generally higher (except for SF with a max of only 6!) with Doddington (73), Astbury WP (27) and 43 at Winterley Pool, a record count for there.

**Tufted Duck** (*Aythya fuligula*)

*Fairly common winter visitor. Uncommon in summer.*

In the first winter period max numbers of SF (41), Astbury WP (46), Winterley Pool (10), Rode Pool (12) and Doddington (147) which continues to be the main site for this species. 12 pairs were recorded as breeding in 1999 but there were only 4 this year with 3 at Doddington (broods of 9, 3 and 1 seen) and 1 at EHF (4 juvs).

Max numbers in the second winter period were SF (20), Astbury WP (54), Winterley Pool (33), Rode Pool (7) and Doddington (137).

**Common Scoter** (*Melanitta nigra*)

*Very rare visitor and passage migrant.*

1 m was seen diving at Astbury WP late in the afternoon on 11<sup>th</sup> March but could not be found the next day. However another m was recorded here on 1<sup>st</sup> April.

**Goldeneye** (*Bucephala clangula*)

*Uncommon winter visitor.*

In the first winter period present continuously at Doddington with a max of 13. Also 3 at Astbury WP and a single f at RF during Jan.

Second winter period records from the same sites with Doddington (18) and Astbury WP (5) plus a long staying twosome at EHF/PHF from 26<sup>th</sup> Oct to 10<sup>th</sup> Dec.

**Goosander** (*Mergus merganser*)

*Uncommon winter visitor.*

A very poor year at SF with only 2 sightings (11 in 1999) 1 f circled PHF on 29<sup>th</sup> April and 1 f at EHF on 21<sup>st</sup> Dec.

Up to 12 at Rode Pool in Jan and Feb and 2 on the R. Dane at Swettenham in March.

In the second winter period only 1 at Rode Pool in Dec, 1 on the R. Dane at Swettenham on 24<sup>th</sup> Sept and 2 in Congleton Park on 27<sup>th</sup> Dec.

**Ruddy Duck** (*Oxyura jamaicensis*)

*Uncommon resident.*

All site details have been withheld as a protest against the Ruddy Duck killing programme.

In summary there was a max of 27 birds in the first winter period and 14 in the second winter period, and at least 2 pairs bred successfully.

**Honey Buzzard** (*Pernis apivorus*)

*Vagrant.*

On 25<sup>th</sup> Sept a pale phase bird was seen flying over Middlewich Lime Beds during a large influx of this species into the country.

This is only the second record for the SECOS area.

**Red Kite** (*Milvus milvus*)

*Very rare visitor.*

Two records of this increasingly common species with 1 flying over a field by the Plough Inn, Alsager, on 1<sup>st</sup> June and 1 flying west between Shavington and Wybunbury on 21<sup>st</sup> October being mobbed by corvids.

These are the third and fourth records for the SECOS area.

**Marsh Harrier** (*Circus aeruginosus*)

*Very rare passage migrant.*

An imm flew over WLF on 22<sup>nd</sup> Oct at 09.40 and was seen to fly over PHF at 09.42 heading south-west.

This is the 7<sup>th</sup> record for the flashes and the first in October.

**Goshawk** (*Accipiter gentilis*)

*Rare visitor.*

1 was recorded at PHF on 5<sup>th</sup> March and 1 at Timbersbrook on 2<sup>nd</sup> April.

**Sparrowhawk** (*Accipiter nisus*)

*Common resident.*

Common throughout the area and noted from 27 sites plus various flashes at SF although breeding was only proved at 1 site.

Prey items recorded were Stock Dove, Woodpigeon, Collared Dove, Feral Pigeon, Blackbird, Starling and Blue Tit.

Birds were recorded at 6 out of 15 feeding stations in the SECOS garden bird feeding survey.

**Buzzard** (*Buteo buteo*)

*Uncommon resident.*

An abundance of records which can probably be summarised as around 26 breeding pairs throughout the area, with juvs recorded at just 2 sites.

**Osprey** (*Pandion haliaetus*)

*Rare migrant.*

The best year ever for this rare passage migrant with four records, although as usual all are of birds flying over.

In spring 1 on 9<sup>th</sup> April going north over the M6, 1 over EHF and WLF on 13<sup>th</sup> May.

Then on autumn migration 1 over PHF on 29<sup>th</sup> Sept and 1 over Bathvale Congleton on 29<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**Kestrel** (*Falco tinnunculus*)

*Common resident.*

Common throughout the area and recorded from around 26 sites but with breeding at only one with 3 juvs seen near Crewe Railway Station.

**Merlin** (*Falco columbarius*)

*Scarce migrant and winter visitor.*

Only one record this year with a m seen briefly at RF on 24<sup>th</sup> March.

**Hobby** (*Falco subbuteo*)

*Uncommon summer visitor.*

The first record was of 1 over Arclid SQ on 19<sup>th</sup> April. Various records from 6 widespread sites suggesting probably no breeding site within the SECOS area this year.

The last record was of 1 over EHF on 8<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**Peregrine** (*Falco peregrinus*)

*Scarce autumn migrant and winter visitor.*

A pair seem to be present all year now at RF, perching on the electric pylon and hunting here and at EHF/PHF – if only they had a platform to nest on! Other birds visit the flashes area in winter.

There was an intriguing set of 3 records from the Checkley/Blakenhall/Weston area, where they have also previously been recorded.

Prey items included Stock Dove and Feral Pigeon.

**Red-legged Partridge** (*Alectoris rufa*)

*Rare except where locally released.*

Regular in the usual sites of Blakenhall, Checkley, Doddington and Weston, where released for shooting. Max of 44 at Bank Farm, Checkley.

**Grey Partridge** (*Perdix perdix*)

*Scarce resident.*

Up to 14 at Bank Farm, Checkley, where released for shooting. The only other records were 1 at Stowford on 19<sup>th</sup> March and 2 at Roe Park on 15<sup>th</sup> April.

**Pheasant** (*Phasianus colchicus*)

*Scarce resident except where locally released.*

Very common where released for shooting but rare elsewhere.

**Water Rail** (*Rallus aquaticus*)

*Scarce winter visitor.*

In the first winter period singles at WLF, FF, GF, EHF and PHF. Records from the second winter period were EHF (2), WLF (2) and CP (1).

The only other record was an unusual one from Haslington. A bird of this species was seen lying dazed at the side of Waterloo Road. It was approached to within a few feet when it got up and staggered through a hedge where it could not be followed!

**Moorhen** (*Gallinula chloropus*)

*Common resident.*

The co-ordinated count at SF on 16<sup>th</sup> Jan gave a total of 69 spread over 11 of the flashes (94 in 1999). Very widespread with small numbers on most waters including small ponds.

**Coot** (*Fulica atra*)

*Common resident and variable winter visitor.*

The co-ordinated count at SF on 16<sup>th</sup> Jan gave a total of 310 spread over 10 of the flashes.

Max counts at other sites in the first/second winter periods were Doddington (254/449), Astbury WP (10/60), Arclid SQ (28/17), and Winterley Pool (22/46). Pairs breed on most larger lakes and ponds.

**Oystercatcher** (*Haematopus ostralegus*)

*Scarce winter visitor and scarce summer visitor.*

Arrivals as usual from mid-Feb with 1 at EHF on 19<sup>th</sup>, 1 at Arclid SQ also on 19<sup>th</sup> and 1 at Doddington on 25<sup>th</sup>. Present at all three sites through to June but no evidence of breeding anywhere.

The last bird was 1 at EHF on 28<sup>th</sup> July.

**Little Ringed Plover** (*Charadrius dubius*)

*Scarce summer visitor. Uncommon spring/autumn migrant.*

1 at EHF on 5<sup>th</sup> March was the earliest ever arrival beating the previous earliest of 6<sup>th</sup> March 1977. As well as early, numbers were also high with a daily max of up to 11 on spring passage.

Breeding was disappointing, however, with probably only 1 pair breeding at EHF and 1 pair at Arclid SQ new quarry. 1 bird was seen at Middlewich Lime Beds on 29<sup>th</sup> April.

Return passage was high with a daily max of 19 through July. The last bird was seen at EHF on the early date of 26<sup>th</sup> Aug.

**Ringed Plover** (*Charadrius hiaticula*)

*Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.*

A good year with 3 at EHF on 13<sup>th</sup> Feb, occasional records through March and April but continuous throughout May with a max of 18. 2 at Arclid SQ on 15<sup>th</sup> May.

Return passage started with 1 on 30<sup>th</sup> June and then regular through Aug to 20<sup>th</sup> Sept with a max of 6 in late Aug.

**Golden Plover** (*Pluvialis apricaria*)

*Uncommon winter visitor.*

As usual there were more in Jan than any other month with 110 on 12<sup>th</sup> Jan but they quickly disappeared, and the last was 1 on 1<sup>st</sup> March. 1 at Middlewich Lime Beds on 29<sup>th</sup> April was in full summer plumage.

Many more records in the second half of the year starting with 1 at EHF on 18<sup>th</sup> July, then fairly regular to the year end with a max of 51 in Dec. At Arclid SQ there were 24 on 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov and 6 on 18<sup>th</sup> Dec.

**Lapwing** (*Vanellus vanellus*)

*Common resident and abundant winter visitor.*

Max counts in the first winter period were EHF (800), Arclid SQ (500), Doddington (350).

Breeding pairs were recorded at EHF (2), PHF (?), RF (?), Doddington (5), Haslington (6), Mow Cop (2), Oakhanger (4), Roe Park (1), Stowford (5) and Arclid SQ (3).

More large flocks recorded in the second winter period with EHF (710), Arclid SQ (800), Astbury (250) and Doddington (170).

**Knot** (*Calidris canutus*)

*Rare visitor.*

Only two records this year, both singles at EHF, one on 11<sup>th</sup> April and one on 28<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**Sanderling** (*Calidris alba*)

*Scarce passage migrant.*

All records from EHF, mainly on spring passage as usual, with singles on 29<sup>th</sup> April, 7<sup>th</sup> May and 19<sup>th</sup> May and 2 on the unusual date of 16<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**Little Stint** (*Calidris minuta*)

*Scarce passage migrant.*

Another poor year for this species with a single at EHF from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> June and 1 at EHF on 25<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**Pectoral Sandpiper** (*Calidris melanotos*)

*Very rare visitor.*

An ad at EHF on 27<sup>th</sup> Aug was first seen at 11.45 at the back of the saltpan. Birds of this species tend to stay for several days and this one did the same, with the last sighting being on 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept.

The 10<sup>th</sup> record for the flashes.

**Curlew Sandpiper** (*Calidris ferruginea*)

*Scarce passage migrant.*

At EHF no records in spring as usual but an extended series of autumn passage records starting with 8 on 28<sup>th</sup> Aug. Then 1 or 2 in the first half of Sept and 1 from 21<sup>st</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**Dunlin** (*Calidris alpina*)

*Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant.*

At EHF the usual low numbers of 1 to 3 in the first winter period. Spring passage started from mid-March through to early June with generally less than 5 birds, but occasional peaks up to a max of 19.

Return passage from late June through to Sept with usually 1 to 4 birds present, but a max of 8.

Low numbers in the second winter period except for 15 on 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov.

**Ruff** (*Philomachus pugnax*)

*Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant.*

Resident in Jan, Feb and March with a max of 20. Spring passage was probably 1 on 10<sup>th</sup> April. Return passage started on 3<sup>rd</sup> July with birds still in summer plumage. Recorded daily then through to the end of the year with return passage (max 17) merging into wintering birds (max 11).

A very typical pattern of occurrence for this species. Also 2 were seen at Arclid SQ on 29<sup>th</sup> Aug.

**Jack Snipe** (*Lymnocyptes minimus*)

*Scarce winter visitor.*

In the first winter period records from CP (2), PHF (1), Maw Green Tip (2) and Mow Cop (1).

In the second half of the year 1 at Maw Green Tip on 26<sup>th</sup> Dec but probably resident all winter here, and 1 at Crewe Golf Course in mid-Dec.

**Snipe** (*Gallinago gallinago*)

*Uncommon winter visitor and migrant.*

Records in the first winter period from EHF (52), OF (25), RF (30). No records in May or June.

Recorded continuously at SF from 1<sup>st</sup> July to the end of the year with a max at EHF of 57, but no doubt seriously under-counted as usual.

Also recorded occasionally at Arclid SQ, Checkley, Doddington, Haslington and Middlewich Lime Beds with up to 10 birds.

**Woodcock** (*Scolopax rusticola*)

*Rare resident. Scarce winter visitor.*

1 regular at FF in Jan and Feb. 1 at GF and 1 at Stowford both in mid-Dec. Up to 5 seen in Rode Pool woods during the winter.

Again no breeding season records. Does this rare species still breed in our area?

**Black-tailed Godwit** (*Limosa limosa*)

*Scarce migrant.*

A funny year with spring passage consisting of 1 on 1<sup>st</sup> March, then on 13<sup>th</sup> May a flock of 150 flew over, followed shortly by a flock of 100. Next was a flock of 87 that stayed for 3 days from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> May and finally 1 on 28<sup>th</sup> May. At Arclid SQ 17 flew over on 14<sup>th</sup> May.

Return passage was from 1<sup>st</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> July (max 20) and then 1 from 7<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> Sept.

Overall recorded on only 19 days (69 in 1999 and 61 in 1998).

On 4<sup>th</sup> July one bird was seen to be colour-ringed. It was an Icelandic breeding bird, ringed on the Wash 7/97 and subsequently seen at Cley 10/97, Snettisham 4/98, Welney 4/99 and Rutland Water 9/99.

**Whimbrel** (*Numenius phaeopus*)

*Scarce passage migrant.*

Spring passage was 3 on 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> April and singles on 8<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> May.

2 singles on return passage on 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> July and 8<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> Aug.

**Curlew** (*Numenius arquata*)

*Uncommon resident and fairly common winter visitor.*

A max of around 50 in the usual evening roost at EHF in the first quarter except for 73 on 3<sup>rd</sup> Feb.

Only occasional records at EHF in April, May and June as birds disperse to their breeding sites. Summer records from Stowford and Mow Cop, two traditional breeding sites, and Bathvale Congleton, Roe Park, Weston and Arclid SQ.

Birds began to return to EHF from early July and numbers soon settled to around 60 to the year end.

**Spotted Redshank** (*Tringa erythropus*)

*Rare passage migrant.*

Only one record of a single at PHF on 28<sup>th</sup> Sept.

**Redshank** (*Tringa totanus*)

*Uncommon visitor and migrant.*

Recorded in every month but with a different status.

Resident in winter with a max of 15 to the end of March. Spring passage in April with up to 4 recorded. Occasional singles in May and June. A light return passage in July (max 3), then occasional singles again in Aug and Sept. Finally becoming resident again from early Oct to the year end with a max of 8. All records from EHF.

**Greenshank** (*Tringa nebularia*)

*Uncommon passage migrant.*

The usual pattern of records with 1 or 2 at EHF/PHF on 10 days between 4<sup>th</sup> May and 14<sup>th</sup> June on spring passage.

Return passage was from 4<sup>th</sup> July to 26<sup>th</sup> Sept with records on 24 days of 1 to 3 birds and 4 on 20<sup>th</sup> Sept.

Also at Arclid SQ with 1 on 3<sup>rd</sup> July.

**Green Sandpiper** (*Tringa ochropus*)

*Scarce winter visitor. Uncommon passage migrant.*

Spring passage consisted of only 1 bird on 1 day, 23<sup>rd</sup> April at EHF.

Then as usual a long extended return passage when recorded continuously at EHF/PHF/RF from 20<sup>th</sup> June to 7<sup>th</sup> Sept with a max of 6 on any day. Finally 1 at EHF on 30<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1 was on return passage at Arclid SQ on 14<sup>th</sup> July.

Wintering birds were recorded from Sandbach in Jan and Stowford in both winter periods with 3 in Oct.

**Wood Sandpiper** (*Tringa glareola*)

*Scarce passage migrant.*

1 at EHF on 20<sup>th</sup> June (spring or autumn migrant?). 1 from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> Aug, 2 at EHF on 24<sup>th</sup> Sept and 1 at PHF from 26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> Sept.

**Common Sandpiper** (*Actitis hypoleucos*)

*Uncommon passage migrant.*

Spring passage at EHF/PHF/RF/WLF from 15<sup>th</sup> April to 21<sup>st</sup> May with a max of 5. Also on passage at Arclid SQ (5), Doddington (3) and Crewe Business Park (1).

Return passage at EHF from 3<sup>rd</sup> July to 20<sup>th</sup> Sept with a max of 5. Also on passage at Arclid SQ (4) and Doddington (3).

At Arclid SQ 1 pair probably bred but no juvs were seen.

**Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres*

*Rare passage migrant.*

One record of 3 at EHF on 21<sup>st</sup> May.

**Mediterranean Gull** (*Larus melanocephalus*)

*Scarce visitor.*

At least 3 separate birds at SF. 1 ad and 1 2<sup>nd</sup>S birds together at EHF from 5<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> July.

Then probably the same 2 birds at EHF + 1 ad at WLF on 2<sup>nd</sup> Aug. Finally 6 other records of 1 bird during Aug (3), Sept (1) and Oct (2).

At Arclid SQ 1 ad was regular in the gull roost during late Jan.

**Black-headed Gull** (*Larus ridibundus*)

*Abundant autumn and winter visitor.*

In winter up to 3000 regularly feeding on Maw Green Tip, loafing in that area and bathing/preening at PHF and EHF.



The winter roost at Doddington held lower than usual numbers with the max count being 8000 in Dec and the roost at Astbury WP held a max of 2000 birds.

Up to 400 at Arclid SQ and 300 at Winterley Pool in winter but they do not roost there.

### Common Gull (*Larus canus*)

*Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant.*

Regular in low numbers (up to 50) in winter at Maw Green Tip and EHF. A noticeable passage northwards in March to mid-April with a max of 110 over RF on 26<sup>th</sup> March. This passage also noted with increased records at Arclid SQ and Astbury WP.

The winter gull roost at Doddington held a max of 400.

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

*Fairly common winter visitor. Uncommon summer visitor.*

Recorded in all months at Maw Green Tip/RF/EHF.

Wintering numbers of up to 400 there. Then a spring passage in March and April with a max of 2500. A few imms stay in the summer. Autumn passage in Aug/Sept/Oct with a max of 1000 and then reducing to around 200 in winter.

Very low numbers at Doddington in the winter roost with a max of only 400 (2,200 in 1999).

On 29<sup>th</sup> July a 2<sup>nd</sup>S bird was seen with a coloured leg ring. It had been ringed at Tarnbrook Reservoir, Forest of Bowland in July 1998.

### Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*)

*Fairly common winter visitor. Uncommon summer visitor.*

Up to 2500 at Maw Green Tip in Jan and Feb. As usual numbers then drop rapidly to a max of around 100. An upsurge in numbers then in Nov and Dec with a max of 3000, and 4000 during freezing weather on 30<sup>th</sup> Dec.

Always rare in the gull roost at Doddington and a max of only 2 was recorded.

Birds showing characteristics of the Scandinavian race *L.a. argentatus* were recorded on 27<sup>th</sup> March, 23<sup>rd</sup> Sept and 21<sup>st</sup> Oct.

Birds of the race *Yellow-legged Gull L.a. michahellis* were recorded frequently. Singles on 1 day in Jan, April, May and June. Then recorded almost daily from 5<sup>th</sup> July to 22<sup>nd</sup> Oct with a max of 5 on any one day.

### Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucooides*) ———

*Scarce winter visitor.*

Only 2 birds this year with a 1stW bird at Maw Green Tip throughout Jan to 3<sup>rd</sup> Feb and a 3rdW bird also being seen on 3<sup>rd</sup> Feb.

### Glaucous Gull (*Larus hyperboreus*)

*Scarce winter visitor.*

A very poor year with only 2 records of 1 bird, an ad at Maw Green Tip on 15<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> Jan.

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

*Uncommon winter visitor.*

Recorded in all months from Maw Green Tip/RF/EHF with as usual peak numbers in Jan (max 62) and Nov/Dec (max 200), and less than 10 in other months.

Also at Arclid SQ with 2 records in Jan and 2 in Dec of 1, 2 or 3 birds.

### Sandwich Tern (*Sterna sandvicensis*)

*Very rare passage migrant.*

On 21<sup>st</sup> April 3 were present at EHF from 12.15 to 13.15 when they flew off south-west.

This is the 5<sup>th</sup> record for the flashes and the first since 1980 when 1 was over FF on 7<sup>th</sup> May and 2 were at WLF on 21<sup>st</sup> Sept.

### Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*)

*Uncommon passage migrant.*

Two records on spring passage with 1 at WLF on 29<sup>th</sup> April and 2 at Doddington on 9<sup>th</sup> May.

As usual more on autumn passage. Recorded on 11 days from 19<sup>th</sup> July to 26<sup>th</sup> Sept at EHF/WLF, with a max of 3. Also 1 at Doddington on 26<sup>th</sup> June and 1 at Arclid SQ on 18<sup>th</sup> July.

**Arctic Tern** (*Sterna paradisaea*)

*Rare passage migrant.*

A 1<sup>st</sup>W bird was at WLF from 26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> Aug.

**Black Tern** (*Chlidonias niger*)

*Rare passage migrant.*

1 on spring passage at Doddington on 19<sup>th</sup> May.

1 at EHF on 20<sup>th</sup> Sept for only 10 minutes and 1 at Doddington on 27<sup>th</sup> Sept.

**Feral Pigeon** (*Columba livia*)

*Common resident.*

Regular flocks in most town centres with, for example, 200 in Crewe town centre and 100 along Nantwich Road. Also up to 65 at Arclid SQ.

**Stock Dove** (*Columba oenas*)

*Uncommon resident.*

At Quakers Coppice 11 pairs laid 23 clutches in nest boxes with 46 eggs laid, 28 hatched and 15 fledged. Also bred at Taxmere.

Winter records from PHF 54, WLF 14 and five other sites with under 10.

**Woodpigeon** (*Columba palumbus*)

*Common resident.*

Flocks in winter of WLF (600), Arclid SQ (150), Checkley (520), Blakenhall (400) and Rode Pool (150).

In the second winter period a roost of around 2000 birds was noted in Crewe Hall woods.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> Oct a flock of 1500 was noted moving over EHF.

**Collared Dove** (*Streptopelia decaocto*)

*Common resident.*

Common and widespread but grossly under-recorded. The only large flocks recorded were 46 sitting on wires at the back of H.J. Lea's grain mill at Wheelock in Oct and 42 at Arclid SQ, also in Oct.

**Turtle Dove** (*Streptopelia turtur*)

*Rare summer visitor.*

1 was seen at EHF on 3<sup>rd</sup> May, feeding with Collared Doves on the road by the bird feeders.

**Cuckoo** (*Cuculus canorus*)

*Uncommon summer visitor and migrant.*

The first records were of 1 at Winterley Pool on 18<sup>th</sup> April, followed by 1 at Stowford and 1 at Smallwood, both on 23<sup>rd</sup> April.

Records of singing birds from 8 other sites but only 2 had a continuous series of records, suggesting breeding in the area.

This species continues to decline locally and nationally.

**Barn Owl** (*Tyto alba*)

*Scarce resident.*

As last year only one proved breeding pair when the Blakenhall pair fledged 3 juvs. However, other records, including some breeding season records, from EHF, Barthomley, Coppenhall Crewe, Doddington, Marshfield Bank Crewe, Middlewich, Rode, Stowford and Weston.

**Little Owl** (*Athene noctua*)

*Common resident.*

Common in open farmland but only recorded from 8 sites where 22 in 1999. However, the abundance of this species is shown by a record from Haslington when on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep at 16.00, one bird started calling, and within a few minutes another 5 separate birds in the area were also calling.

**Tawny Owl** (*Strix aluco*)

*Common resident.*

Common in more wooded areas. Records this year from 9 sites and probably bred at all of those.

On 21<sup>st</sup> July 1 was found dead in the farmyard at EHF.

**Short-eared Owl** (*Asio flammeus*)

*Rare passage migrant and winter visitor.*

An interesting record of 1 on 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept seen flying over the observer's garden in Crewe Road, Sandbach.

**Swift** (*Apus apus*)

*Fairly common summer visitor.*

First birds were 2 at Alsager on 19<sup>th</sup> April, followed by 1 at WLF on 23<sup>rd</sup> April.

Lower than usual numbers in breeding colonies, in particular only 100 at West Street, Crewe. There were 700 feeding at Doddington on 26<sup>th</sup> May after heavy rain.

Most birds have departed by the end of Aug but 1 late bird was seen over EHF on 24<sup>th</sup> Sept.

**Kingfisher** (*Alcedo atthis*)

*Uncommon resident.*

Recorded from 16 sites this year with proved breeding at Arclid SQ and River Wheelock, near EHF.

**Green Woodpecker** (*Picus viridis*)

*Uncommon resident.*

Recorded from 16 sites (14 in 1999 and 1998). Although many records are from winter they probably all represent breeding pairs. 1 juv was seen near WLF on 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** (*Dendrocopos major*)

*Common resident.*

By far the commonest woodpecker, with records from many sites. Regular at the feeding station at EHF and also seen on peanut feeders in gardens at Swettenham, Timbersbrook and Haslington, where a f was seen feeding a juv in June.

**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** (*Dendrocopos minor*)

*Uncommon resident.*

A poor year for this uncommon and elusive species with only five records. 1 each from Barthomley, Lawton Woods, Quakers Coppice, Crewe Golf Course and Wistaston Crewe, where 1 was seen in the observer's garden.

**Skylark** (*Alauda arvensis*)

*Fairly common.*

Slightly more records than 1999 and 31 singing males recorded from 16 sites. Autumn passage was noted from late Sept to early Oct at EHF, Arclid SQ and Doddington. The only winter flocks were 20 at Maw Green Tip, 14 at Haslington and 14 at Checkley.

**Sand Martin** (*Riparia riparia*)

*Fairly common summer visitor.*

The first birds were seen on 14<sup>th</sup> March with 3 at Doddington and 3 at WLF.

Breeding colonies at Arclid SQ where 1 in the old quarry failed due to landscaping work, and 1 in the new quarry failed due to bank slippage.

Much reduced numbers at Wybunbury SQ with only around 70 holes where 250 in 1999.  
4 nests along the River Wheelock near to CF.  
300 were over the water at Doddington on 15th July. The last birds were 4 over Alsager on 21<sup>st</sup> Sept.

**Swallow** (*Hirundo rustica*)

*Common summer visitor.*

The first bird was 1 at FF on 19<sup>th</sup> March, but not seen again until 1<sup>st</sup> April when regular after that.

Breeds commonly throughout the area.

The only autumn roost was at Arclid SQ with up to 500 in mid-Sept. Much evidence of southerly migration at the end of Sept with 300 over Doddington on 22<sup>nd</sup>, 500 over EHF on 25<sup>th</sup> and 'several hundreds' over Rode Pool, also on 25<sup>th</sup>.

The last birds were 3 over WLF on 15<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**House Martin** (*Delichon urbica*)

*Common summer visitor.*

First record was 1 at Arclid SQ on 7<sup>th</sup> April and regular thereafter. Breeds commonly throughout the area.

As for Swallow, southerly movements were noted at the end of Sept with 400 over Doddington on 27<sup>th</sup> and 250 over EHF on 28<sup>th</sup>.

The last bird was 1 over Alsager on 25<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**Meadow Pipit** (*Anthus pratensis*)

*Uncommon resident and passage migrant.*

Winter flocks of Maw Green Tip (25), Arclid SQ (28), Checkley (23), Basford (22) in Jan and Feb. Spring passage noted with 45 at Wybunbury and 45 at Mow Cop in late March and 80 over EHF on 2<sup>nd</sup> April.

Probably bred at Mow Cop, and possibly at Middlewich Lime Beds. Autumn passage noted in late Sept and early Oct, and then 40 at Maw Green Tip in winter.

**Yellow Wagtail** (*Motacilla flava*)

*Uncommon passage migrant and summer visitor.*

The first record was of 1 at EHF and 1 at WLF on 9<sup>th</sup> April. Breeding season records from only 7 sites, but most of these had proved breeding.

The last record was of 1 at EHF on 21<sup>st</sup> Sept.

**Grey Wagtail** (*Motacilla cinerea*)

*Scarce summer visitor and scarce winter visitor.*

Definitely on the increase in this area with winter records from around 25 widespread sites, although breeding was only proved at Doddington.

At Arclid SQ up to 3 birds were seen in Nov but the large roost of the past few winters was not established.

**Pied Wagtail** (*Motacilla alba yarrellii*)

*Fairly common resident.*

Very few records of this under-recorded species. Only two proved breeding sites with 2 or possibly 3 pairs at Arclid SQ, and 1 pair with juvs at EHF.

In Dec up to 40 were feeding on the open filter beds at Wheelock Sewage Works. A few records of winter roosts this year with 200 in the Rolls Royce factory, Crewe, 200 in bushes along Mill St. Congleton, 50 on Rail House, Crewe, and 60 at Arclid SQ flying south-west (to the M6 services?) at dusk.

The continental White Wagtail (*M.a. alba*) was recorded with 1 at EHF on 16<sup>th</sup> April, and 10 at EHF on 30<sup>th</sup> Sept.

**Waxwing** (*Bombycilla garrulus*)

*Very rare winter visitor.*

On 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb a flock of 10 was seen moving around a housing estate on the north side of Sandbach. Seen for 10 minutes at 09.30, they could not be relocated at 10.30.

**Dipper** (*Cinclus cinclus*)

*Scarce resident.*

Records from Bathvale Congleton but in winter only, whereas they bred last year. No records from the usual site of River Dane, Havannah, Congleton (Dippers present but no observers?).

An unusual record of 1 seen at Doddington on 28<sup>th</sup> Sept.

**Wren** (*Troglodytes troglodytes*)

*Abundant resident.*

15 territories were recorded in a common bird census at Crewe Business Park.

**Dunnoek** (*Prunella modularis*)

*Abundant resident.*

17 territories were recorded in a common bird census at Crewe Business Park. A max of 10 was recorded in a winter survey of Bank Farm, Checkley.

**Robin** (*Erithacus rubecula*)

*Abundant resident.*

19 territories were recorded in a common bird census at Crewe Business Park. A max of 10 was recorded in a winter survey of Bank Farm, Checkley.

**Redstart** (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*)

*Scarce migrant and summer visitor.*

The only records were of 1 juv at EHF on 25<sup>th</sup> June and 9<sup>th</sup> July.

**Whinchat** (*Saxicola rubetra*)

*Scarce migrant and summer visitor.*

1 m at EHF from 24<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> April and 1 f there on 5<sup>th</sup> May.

**Stonechat** (*Saxicola torquata*)

*Rare winter visitor.*

In spring 1 f at EHF on 15<sup>th</sup> March and 1 at FF on 3<sup>rd</sup> April. In autumn 1 at Middlewich Lime Beds on 1<sup>st</sup> Oct, 1 at Stowford on 15<sup>th</sup> Oct and 1 f at Mow Cop on 31<sup>st</sup> Oct.

**Wheatear** (*Oenanthe oenanthe*)

*Uncommon passage migrant.*

A better year, with the first being 3 at Haslington on 12<sup>th</sup> March. At SF the first was 1 at EHF on 24<sup>th</sup> March. Then recorded on 13 days to the end of April with a max of 4. Also singles in Crewe, Alsager and Mow Cop.

In autumn 2 singles in Aug and 1 in Oct at SF, 2 singles at Arclid SQ, 2 at Haslington 19<sup>th</sup> Sep and 2 at Middlewich Lime Beds on 1<sup>st</sup> Oct, the latest date.

**Blackbird** (*Turdus merula*)

*Abundant resident and winter visitor.*

21 territories were recorded in a common bird census at Crewe Business Park. A max of 27 were recorded in a winter survey at Bank Farm, Checkley. The large increase in numbers noted at several sites in early Oct were probably winter visitors.

**Fieldfare** (*Turdus pilaris*)

*Common winter visitor.*

In the first winter period flocks of around EHF (400), Arclid SQ (500), Blakenhall (200), Doddington (300) and Stowford (200).

The first birds in the second winter period were at Doddington on 11<sup>th</sup> Oct. Numbers were generally much lower this winter.

**Song Thrush** (*Turdus philomelos*)

*Fairly common resident.*

4 territories were recorded in a common bird census at Crewe Business Park. Again another welcome increase in records with, for example, the following breeding pairs: Alsager South (4), Crewe Golf Course (5) and Arclid SQ (5 definite + 3 possible).

**Redwing** (*Turdus iliacus*)

*Common winter visitor.*

Generally much lower numbers than for Fieldfare with a max flock size of only 50 in Jan.

The first birds in autumn were on 8<sup>th</sup> Oct with 30 over Crewe town centre and 2 over WLF.

Max flock size in Dec of only 40 except for 200 at WLF on 3<sup>rd</sup> Dec.

**Mistle Thrush** (*Turdus viscivorus*)

*Fairly common resident.*

Breeds throughout the area, usually early but a pair with 2 juvs in Alsager on 15<sup>th</sup> March was exceptionally early.

Autumn flocks of 10+ were recorded from Rode Pool (45), Crewe (16), Haslington (14), and Checkley (10).

**Grasshopper Warbler** (*Locustella naevia*)

*Scarce summer visitor.*

Border Fisheries, near Betley, is 200 yards inside the SECOS area. A m was 'reeling' here from 20.25 to 21.30 on 5<sup>th</sup> July but not heard again after.

This brief record is better than none – which we had last year! The usual site of Bagmere was blank for the second successive year,

**Sedge Warbler** (*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*)

*Uncommon summer visitor.*

First record was of 1 at EHF on 22<sup>nd</sup> April then at other flashes within a few days. Breeding season records from GF, PHF, EHF, RL, CP, WLF, Doddington and Rode Pool.

**Reed Warbler** (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*)

*Uncommon summer visitor.*

The first record was of 1 at WLF on 20<sup>th</sup> April. Breeding season singing male records from WLF (8), RL (1), GF (2), EHF (1) and Rode Pool (6). A singing male at Taxmere on 22<sup>nd</sup> May was only the third record here in 20 years.

**Lesser Whitethroat** (*Sylvia curruca*)

*Uncommon summer visitor.*

First recorded on 22<sup>nd</sup> April with 1 at PHF, then 1 at FF and 1 at WLF on 23<sup>rd</sup> April. Then recorded at EHF, CF, Arclid SQ, Alsager, Blakenhall, Haslington and Weston.

**Whitethroat** (*Sylvia communis*)

*Common summer visitor.*

A mass arrival with 1 at EHF on 23<sup>rd</sup> April and then on 24<sup>th</sup> 5 at FFF, 4 at FF, 2 at WLF and 1 at Arclid SQ.

A common breeding species with, for example, 6-10 pairs at Arclid SQ, 6 at Weston and 4 at Alsager South.

**Garden Warbler** (*Sylvia borin*)

*Fairly common summer visitor.*

First record was of 1 in the Valley Park, Crewe, on 27<sup>th</sup> April with the main arrival in the first week in May. Not particularly common, with records from only 9 sites, and at Arclid SQ none proved but 4 possible pairs.

**Blackcap** (*Sylvia atricapilla*)

*Common summer visitor. Scarce winter visitor.*

The first record was of an early bird at CF on 21<sup>st</sup> March. Breeds commonly throughout the area with, for example, 8-10 singing males at Arclid SQ, 5 territories recorded in a common bird census at Crewe Business Park.

Wintering records of 1 m in Crewe on 8<sup>th</sup> Jan, 1 m in the observer's garden on 29<sup>th</sup> Dec, and 2 in a different observer's garden on 30<sup>th</sup> Dec, both in Crewe.

**Chiffchaff** (*Phylloscopus collybita*)

*Common summer visitor, very rare winter visitor.*

As usual our earliest, and easiest to hear and identify, summer visitor. First at Congleton on 12<sup>th</sup> March, 1 at Crewe Business Park on 14<sup>th</sup> March, then a mass arrival from 16<sup>th</sup> with 2 at Crewe GC, 1 at EHF and 1 at FF on that date, and many other sites after that.

Breeds commonly throughout the area with, for example, 9 territories at Arclid SQ.

1 winter record with 1 at Astbury Water Park on 17<sup>th</sup> Dec.

**Willow Warbler** (*Phylloscopus trochilus*)

*Common summer visitor.*

First record was 1 at Queens Park, Crewe, on 6<sup>th</sup> April, and birds were widespread by mid-April.

This is our commonest warbler with, for example, 14 pairs at Arclid SQ.

**Goldcrest** (*Regulus regulus*)

*Uncommon winter visitor.*

Winter records from 15 sites (as last year) with generally 1s or 2s but 7 at EHF in Nov.

More summer records than usual with breeding proved at Queens Park, Crewe (pair + 3 juvs in July) and probable at Crewe Golf Course, Haslington, Rode Pool, and The Cloud where males still singing in May and June.

**Firecrest** (*Regulus ignicapillus*)

*Vagrant.*

1 was seen briefly at EHF on 9<sup>th</sup> Nov.

**Spotted Flycatcher** (*Muscicapa striata*)

*Uncommon summer visitor.*

Another welcome increase in records with proved breeding at Arclid Hollow, Arclid SQ, St. Michael's churchyard Crewe, Crewe Cemetery, Crewe Golf Course, Elworth, Hough, Shavington, Wybunbury and probable at WLF, Queens Park Crewe and Doddington.

**Pied Flycatcher** (*Ficedula hypoleuca*)

*Very rare passage migrant.*

1 pair bred at Timbersbrook with fledged young seen in July. A pair bred here in 1998 but not in 1999.

**Long-tailed Tit** (*Aegithalos caudatus*)

*Common resident.*

Continues to be common and widespread. There seem to be many flocks of low numbers (10-15) but few of 20 or more. The largest flock was of 25 at Crewe Business Park, where 3 territories were recorded in a common bird census in summer.

**Willow Tit** (*Parus montanus*)

*Uncommon resident.*

Winter records only, with 1 or 2 at FF, Salt Line Alsager, Bathvale Congleton, Dingle Woods Sandbach and Salt Line Wheelock.

**Coal Tit** (*Parus ater*)

*Fairly common resident.*

Recorded in winter from 12 sites and in summer from 6 sites where probably bred (and many more).

**Blue Tit** (*Parus caeruleus*)

*Abundant visitor.*

Site	Pairs	Eggs laid	Hatched	Juvs fledged
Elton Hall Flash	5	?	?	17*
Foden's Flash	6	?	?	42
Quakers Coppice	11	134	124	104
Rode Pool	3	?	?	22

\*only two boxes were checked at Elton Hall Flash.

At Quakers Coppice the mean 1st egg date was 19/4 (earliest 12/4 latest 28/4)

At Crewe Business Park 15 territories were recorded in a common bird census.

**Great Tit** (*Parus major*)

*Common resident.*

Site	Pairs	Eggs laid	Hatched	Juvs fledged
Elton Hall Flash	4	?	?	27
Foden's Flash	1	?	?	yes
Quakers Coppice	2	13	13	13
Rode Pool	1	7	7	7

At Crewe Business Park 6 territories were recorded in a common bird census.

**Nuthatch** (*Sitta europaea*)

*Common resident.*

Under-recorded with records from 12 sites and breeding proved or probable at 4 of those. At Quakers Coppice 1 pair used a nest box with 8 eggs laid and 8 juvs fledged.

**Treecreeper** (*Certhia familiaris*)

*Common resident.*

Again under-recorded with records from 10 sites and breeding only proved at Doddington where a pair built a nest inside the bird hide, behind a plank of wood leaning against the wall!

**Jay** (*Garrulus glandarius*)

*Uncommon resident.*

A drop in records, where only recorded from 9 sites and proved breeding at Arclid SQ.

**Magpie** (*Pica pica*)

*Common resident.*

Breeds commonly. The only record of 10+ was of 17 at CF on 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb. At Crewe Business Park 6 territories were recorded in a common bird census.

**Jackdaw** (*Corvus monedula*)

*Common resident and winter visitor.*

A common breeder with, for example, 30 pairs around Doddington Hall, and 30 pairs in the roof space of two disused farm buildings at Oakhanger.

In winter up to 3000 in the roost at Crewe Hall woods, with 2000 Rooks.



**Rook** (*Corvus frugilegus*)

*Common resident.*

The total of nests at regularly counted sites were :-

Site	2000	1999	1998	1997
Crewe/Alsager (9 sites)	539	524	469	420
Fodens Flash	116	119	93	101
Arclid	69	53	59	68

In winter up to 2000 in the roost at Crewe Hall woods.

**Carrion Crow** (*Corvus corone*)

*Common resident.*

An almost totally ignored species with records received from only 4 sites!

**Raven** (*Corvus corax*)

*Rare visitor.*

A species slowly expanding its range throughout Cheshire, and has now been proved breeding in the SECOS area, with a pair breeding on a ridge at Rainow Hill, near Timbersbrook. No juvs were seen at the nest but 4 Ravens were recorded here in July.

An increase also in the number of flyovers with records of 1 or 2 from EHF, PHF, Bathvale Congleton, Crewe Hall, Doddington, Rode Pool and Stowford.

**Starling** (*Sturnus vulgaris*)

*Common resident and abundant winter visitor.*

The only winter roosts recorded were 400 in Badger Avenue, Crewe, 300 in a garden at Wistaston, Crewe, and 200 at Congleton. Recorded in 37 out of 50 weeks in a Haslington garden.

Up to 2000 were regular feeding at Maw Green Tip during the winter.

**House Sparrow** (*Passer domesticus*)

*Common resident.*

Some regular autumn/winter flocks were recorded from Alsager (32), Crewe (42), Haslington (52) and Winterley Pool (80). This species is decreasing and numbers need to be monitored carefully.

**Tree Sparrow** (*Passer montanus*)

*Fairly common resident.*

Recorded at 9 sites in winter. Breeding records from EHF (1 pair used a nest box and fledged 5 juvs), Timbersbrook (pair + 4 juvs) plus Blakenhall, Brereton, Haslington and Stowford.

Autumn flocks of RF (47), EHF (25) and Bank Farm Checkley (44).

**Chaffinch** (*Fringilla coelebs*)

*Common resident and winter visitor.*

Breeds commonly throughout the area. Winter flocks recorded at Alsager South (30), Haslington (54) and Winterley Pool (60).

**Brambling** (*Fringilla montifringilla*)

*Scarce winter visitor.*

A poor year with records in the first winter period from Astbury WP, The Cloud and Timbersbrook (up to 20).

In the second winter period from EHF, Haslington and Sandbach Park.

**Greenfinch** (*Carduelis chloris*)

*Common resident.*

In some areas now more common than Chaffinch.

In winter flocks of 140 at CP, 100 roosting in laurels near Quakers Coppice, 85 at Haslington and 32 at Alsager South.

7 territories were recorded at Crewe Business Park in a common bird census.

**Goldfinch** (*Carduelis carduelis*)

*Fairly common resident.*

Post-breeding flocks in autumn of EHF (50), Alsager South (24), Astbury WP (30), Haslington (40), Stowford (30), Wheelock (25), plus many smaller ones. Feeding regularly on niger seed in a Haslington garden with a max of 27 recorded.

**Siskin** (*Carduelis spinus*)

*Uncommon winter visitor.*

Recorded from 10 sites in the first winter period and 9 in the second winter period (as last year), but as usual only generally coming into gardens in Feb and March. Flocks of FF (44), Taxmere (115), Crewe Golf Course (60) and Stowford (40).

On The Cloud several birds were singing in March and April and possibly bred here, although 85 on 8<sup>th</sup> April could be on passage.

Flocks in Nov and Dec of Alsager South (50), Bathvale Congleton (30), Crewe Golf Course (35), Haslington (35) and Rode Pool (50).

**Linnet** (*Carduelis cannabina*)

*Fairly common resident.*

Lower numbers in the first winter period with max flock sizes of EHF (26), Arclid (65) and Doddington (24).

Nest building and juvs noted at Astbury WP, and along the railway embankment at FFF.

Larger flock sizes in the second winter period with PHF (62), Maw Green Tip (40), Arclid SQ (75), Alsager South (80), Checkley (54) and Mow Cop (50).

**Redpoll** (*Carduelis flammea*)

*Uncommon resident and winter visitor.*

Recorded at 7 sites in the first winter period (max 11 at FF) and 9 sites in the second winter period (max 10 at Alsager South). Sadly no breeding season records.

**Crossbill** (*Loxia curvirostra*)

*Very rare visitor.*

Much activity was noted in the conifer woods on The Cloud in March and April. There were possibly 2 pairs breeding here but, despite many hours of watching, breeding could not be proved.

**Bullfinch** (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*)

*Uncommon resident.*

Recorded from 20 sites across the area (16 in 1999 and 22 in 1998) all of which are probably breeding records for this sedentary species. Usually less than 5 but a good record of 9 at Doddington in Nov.

3 territories were recorded at Crewe Business Park in a common bird census.

**Yellowhammer** (*Emberiza citrinella*)

*Uncommon resident.*

Three flocks of 10+ this year with 23 near Weston on 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb, 20 at Alsager South and 18 at RF on 7<sup>th</sup> April.

Winter records from 13 sites and breeding season records from 11 sites.

**Reed Bunting** (*Emberiza schoeniclus*)

*Uncommon resident.*

Winter flocks of 12 at Maw Green Tip in Jan, 10 at Checkley in Dec and an incredible 54 at Maw Green Tip on 29<sup>th</sup> Dec, feeding on dock seeds with the ground frozen and 10 cms. of snow. Breeding pairs at Arclid SQ (6 pairs) Maw Green Tip (4), RF (5), GF (3) and 7 other sites.

**Corn Bunting** (*Miliaria calandra*)

*Uncommon resident.*

Another disastrous reduction in numbers with a max of only 4 birds at 3 sites (10 birds at 6 sites in 1999).

## Butterflies

Although not required for an ornithological society, a number of butterfly records have been entered in the log book at Sandbach Flashes. They only relate to Elton Hall Flash area and are not necessarily a complete record. I do not intend to keep records of these species but have recorded these here as a matter of interest:-

Clouded Yellow  
Large White  
Orange Tip  
Green-veined White  
Small Tortoiseshell  
Painted Lady  
Comma  
Red Admiral  
Peacock  
Speckled Wood  
Grayling

## Other Species

Terrapin – one was noted on the saltpan in June and Aug.

Mink – one was seen at PHF on 18<sup>th</sup> Nov.

**BRITISH TRUST FOR ORNITHOLOGY**  
**BREEDING BIRD SURVEY IN SOUTH CHESHIRE - 1997 to 2000**

**AIMS & SURVEY DESIGN OF THE BBS**

The Breeding Bird Survey is the BTO's major continuing survey to monitor the population changes of common birds. The main aims of the BBS are:-

- To provide information on a year-to-year and longer term basis of changes in population levels for a wide range of breeding birds across a variety of habitats throughout the UK. Knowing to what extent bird populations are increasing or decreasing is fundamental to bird conservation. Monitoring birds has the added advantage that they act as valuable indicators of the health of the countryside.
- To promote a greater understanding of the population biology of birds and in particular to focus on factors responsible for declines.
- To promote bird conservation through the involvement of large numbers of volunteers in vital survey work in the UK.

The principle features of the survey design of the BBS are:-

- Bird counts are made in 1 km. squares of the National Grid that are selected randomly by the BTO across the UK.
- An initial site visit is made to set up two 1 km. line transects and to record habitat details. The ideal survey route is made up of two parallel lines, each 1 km. in length, running North/South or East/West through the square, although for practical reasons routes deviate somewhat from the ideal.
- Two early morning visits are made to count birds of all species seen or heard with early counts taking place between end March and early May (the first half of the breeding season) and late counts between mid May and late June (the second half of the breeding season); with each visit taking about an hour and a half. Every bird is recorded together with the distance from the transect line in one of three distances (within 25m, between 25m and 100m and greater than 100m) or as in flight.

The South Cheshire Region stretches from the River Dee in the south-west to Bosley Cloud in the east and extends from the South Cheshire boundary northwards to Twemlow Green. The squares fall predominantly within the area covered by the Nantwich Natural History Society and the South East Cheshire Ornithological Society. It consists of the following eight 10km. squares:-

10km. Square	Approximate Location	10km. Square	Approximate Location
SJ44	Malpas	SJ65	Nantwich
SJ54	Norbury	SJ75	East of Crewe
SJ55	Spurstow	SJ76	Holmes Chapel
SJ64	Audlem	SJ86	Congleton

The number of 1km. BBS squares surveyed in South Cheshire over the last 4 years are :-

1997	1998	1999	2000
11	13	17	15

The members of SECOS who are participating in this survey are:-

Colin Lythgoe      Charles Hull      John Smith      John Thompson      Geoff Yarwood

Many thanks to the above for their efforts in this survey which is much appreciated and if any member of SECOS would like to take part in this important ongoing survey, which is not onerous and also enables one to become very familiar with a particular plot over the years, please contact me.

**RESULTS OF SURVEYS CARRIED OUT FROM 1997 TO 2000**

**1. TOTAL SPECIES RECORDED**

The total number of species recorded during the surveys in 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000 and the total in the four year period are as follows:-

1997	1998	1999	2000	1997-2000
74	72	79	81	90

**2. HIGH INDIVIDUAL & HIGH AVERAGE COUNTS FOR EACH SPECIES**

**Column A.** The highest number recorded in any 1km square, subject to a minimum count of 5 in two or more of the four years. This indicates just how many birds of one species can at times be found in a single square. The number of species falling in this category was 37.

**Column B.** The average number of birds per 1km. square for each of the above 37 species. This is the total number of birds of a species seen in a year divided by the number of 1km. squares surveyed.

Species in **Bold Type** are "red listed" in Birds of Conservation Concern (i.e. birds that have declined by at least 50% during the last 25 years).

Species in *Italics* are "amber listed" in Birds of Conservation Concern (i.e. birds that have declined by 25-49% during the last 25 years).

SPECIES	1997		1998		1999		2000	
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
Grey Heron	5	<1	13	1.3	8	<1	8	1.4
Canada Goose	17	4.5	10	2.5	16	2.3	8	2.1
Mallard	7	2.3	49	7.6	34	6.3	21	6.4
Pheasant	16	2.5	13	2.7	23	2.3	14	2.6
Moorhen	4	1.1	5	1.8	6	1.9	5	1.9
<i>Lapwing</i>	6	1.4	4	1.2	10	2.1	17	3.6
<i>Lesser Black-backed Gull</i>	5	<1	5	<1	56	3.5	27	2.9
Feral Pigeon	25	3.7	11	4.0	28	2.8	29	3.6
<i>Stock Dove</i>	5	1.3	10	2.9	5	<1	6	<1
Woodpigeon	48	21.7	80	28.8	52	21.3	44	25.6
Collared Dove	22	5.2	42	6.8	33	5.2	26	6.9
Swift	10	1.5	5	<1	10	1.8	13	1.1
Skylark	8	2.6	6	1.5	7	1.9	12	2.3
<i>Swallow</i>	24	9.8	40	10.5	32	10.7	20	9.6
House Martin	27	3.4	39	4.2	46	10.0	13	4.1
Pied Wagtail	4	<1	14	1.5	5	1.1	5	1.3
Wren	12	6.9	14	7.0	30	10.4	28	13.6

<i>Dunnock</i>	9	4.4	8	3.1	10	3.6	12	5.2
Robin	15	5.5	13	6.5	21	8.0	20	8.5
<i>Blackbird</i>	39	12.6	59	14.9	48	16.9	47	17.7
Song Thrush	8	2.3	6	1.8	5	1.6	8	2.3
Mistle Thrush	3	1.1	5	1.4	7	1.6	5	1.4
Chiffchaff	4	1.3	5	1.7	5	1.0	6	1.2
Willow Warbler	6	1.1	14	2.0	6	1.8	9	1.9
Blue Tit	48	12.7	26	9.9	26	10.6	24	11.5
Great Tit	12	5.7	23	6.5	18	7.9	18	8.3
Magpie	11	4.4	15	6.3	14	6.4	16	6.1
Jackdaw	35	10.6	23	5.9	44	11.5	32	10.4
Rook	80	23.2	80	18.0	105	25.0	83	17.9
Carrion Crow	32	16.6	33	16.5	41	18.0	42	20.1
<i>Starling</i>	110	36.8	85	30.5	164	37.8	68	34.4
House Sparrow	69	15.9	54	18.5	88	17.4	69	19.0
Chaffinch	32	15.4	27	14.5	38	16.4	30	17.9
Greenfinch	23	7.7	12	4.3	16	3.9	13	4.2
<i>Goldfinch</i>	4	1.8	8	2.0	21	2.4	11	2.3
Linnet	6	1.4	4	<1	6	<1	8	1.6
Yellowhammer	5	1.7	8	2.2	5	1.8	9	2.4

### 3. SPECIES RECORDED IN 75% TO 100% OF THE 1KM. SQUARES

Species are listed, per year, in order of the number of surveyed 1km. squares in which they were recorded (with the "%" indicating the % of the squares surveyed that contained the species):-

1997		1998		1999		2000	
<i>Species</i>	%	<i>Species</i>	%	<i>Species</i>	%	<i>Species</i>	%
Woodpigeon	100	Woodpigeon	100	Woodpigeon	100	Woodpigeon	100
<i>Swallow</i>	100	<i>Swallow</i>	100	Robin	100	<i>Swallow</i>	100
Blackbird	100	Wren	100	Blackbird	100	Wren	100
Great Tit	100	Robin	100	Blue Tit	100	Robin	100
Magpie	100	Blackbird	100	Carrion Crow	100	Blackbird	100
Carrion Crow	100	Blue Tit	100	Chaffinch	100	Blue Tit	100
<i>Starling</i>	100	Great Tit	100	<i>Swallow</i>	94	Great Tit	100
Chaffinch	100	Carrion Crow	100	Wren	94	Carrion Crow	100
Skylark	91	<i>Starling</i>	100	<i>Dunnock</i>	94	<i>Starling</i>	100
Wren	91	House Sparrow	100	Great Tit	94	Chaffinch	100
<i>Dunnock</i>	91	Chaffinch	100	<i>Starling</i>	94	Mallard	93
Blue Tit	91	<i>Dunnock</i>	92	Magpie	88	<i>Dunnock</i>	93
Greenfinch	91	Magpie	92	House Sparrow	88	Magpie	93
Yellowhammer	91	Mallard	85	Greenfinch	82	Song Thrush	86
Mallard	82	Jackdaw	85	Mallard	76	House Sparrow	86
Robin	82	Greenfinch	77			Pheasant	79
Song Thrush	82					Collared Dove	79
Rook	82					Long tailed Tit	79
House Sparrow	82					Jackdaw	79
						Greenfinch	79
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>

#### 4. SPECIES RECORDED IN 50% TO 75% OF THE 1KM. SQUARES

Species are listed, per year, in order of the number of surveyed 1km. squares in which they were recorded (with the "%" indicating the % of the squares surveyed that contained the species):-

1997.		1998		1999		2000	
<i>Species</i>	%	<i>Species</i>	%	<i>Species</i>	%	<i>Species</i>	%
<i>Goldfinch</i>	73	Pheasant	69	Collared Dove	71	Moorhen	71
Pheasant	64	Moorhen	69	House Martin	65	<b>Skylark</b>	71
Moorhen	64	<i>Stock Dove</i>	69	<b>Song Thrush</b>	65	<i>Goldfinch</i>	71
<i>Lapwing</i>	64	Collared Dove	69	Jackdaw	65	Yellowhammer	71
Chiffchaff	64	<b>Skylark</b>	69	Yellowhammer	65	Whitethroat	64
Canada Goose	55	<b>Song Thrush</b>	69	Moorhen	59	Chiffchaff	64
Cuckoo	55	Chiffchaff	69	Mistle Thrush	59	Rook	64
Pied Wagtail	55	Yellowhammer	69	Blackcap	59	Canada Goose	57
Jackdaw	55	Feral Pigeon	62	Chiffchaff	59	<i>Lapwing</i>	57
		<i>Goldfinch</i>	62	Willow	59	House Martin	57
				Warbler			
		Mistle Thrush	54	<b>Skylark</b>	53	Mistle Thrush	57
		Willow	54	Rook	53	Blackcap	57
		Warbler					
		Rook	54				
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>

#### 5. SPECIES RECORDED IN 25% TO 50% OF THE 1KM. SQUARES

Species are listed, per year, in order of the number of surveyed 1km. squares in which they were recorded (with the "%" indicating the % of the squares surveyed that contained the species):-

1997		1998		1999		2000	
<i>Species</i>	%	<i>Species</i>	%	<i>Species</i>	%	<i>Species</i>	%
Collared Dove	45	<i>Lapwing</i>	46	Pheasant	47	Grey Heron	43
Mistle Thrush	45	House Martin	46	<i>Lapwing</i>	47	Pied Wagtail	43
Blackcap	45	Long tailed Tit	46	Cuckoo	47	Willow Warbler	43
<b>Linnet</b>	45	Grey Heron	38	Pied Wagtail	41	<b>Linnet</b>	43
Mute Swan	36	Canada Goose	38	Jay	41	Feral Pigeon	36
Black-h Gull	36	Pied Wagtail	38	<i>Goldfinch</i>	41	<i>Stock Dove</i>	36
Herring Gull	36	Whitethroat	38	Grey Heron	35	Cuckoo	36
Feral Pigeon	36	Jay	38	Canada Goose	35	G.S.Woodpecker	31
<i>Stock Dove</i>	36	<b>Tree Sparrow</b>	38	Swift	35	Jay	31
Swift	36	Coot	31	<b>Linnet</b>	35	<b>Bullfinch</b>	31
House Martin	36	G.S.Woodpecker	31	Whitethroat	29	<b>Tree Sparrow</b>	29
Whitethroat	36	Blackcap	31	Long tailed Tit	29		
Willow Warbler	36	<b>Linnet</b>	31	<b>Tree Sparrow</b>	29		
Jay	36						
Grey Heron	27						
Little Owl	27						
Treecreeper	27						
<b>Tree Sparrow</b>	27						
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>		<b>11</b>

## 6. MAMMALS

As part of the survey any mammals that were seen or evidence found of their presence (i.e. fresh molehills) were recorded and a summary of the results are as follows:-

Recorded in >75% of the squares	Recorded in 50 to 75% of the squares	Recorded in 25 to 50% of the squares	Recorded in <25% of the squares
Rabbit Grey Squirrel	Brown Hare Fox Mole	Badger Feral Cat	Water Vole Mink

### DISCUSSION OF SURVEY RESULTS

It is difficult to draw any firm conclusions from this data as it only represents a very small sample of squares surveyed over a relatively short period of time. However in spite of this limitation I am going to try to draw some conclusions from this survey work but I would ask you to treat the results of these attempts with some caution. Thus *my interpretation* of these surveys are as follows:-

#### 1. STATUS OF "RED-LISTED" BIRDS

The status of "Red-listed" birds within the UK and in the South Cheshire area are as follows:-

Bird	UK Status from 1994 to 1999	South Cheshire Status from 1997 to 2000
Grey Partridge	Decreased by 43%	Few species recorded during the surveys - scarce breeding bird.
Skylark	Decreased by 16%	Shows a steady increase over the last 3 years of 53% contrary to the national trend.
Song Thrush	Increased by 6%	Population appears to be stable with no significant change over the years.
Spotted Flycatcher	No Significant Change	Few species recorded during the surveys - scarce breeding bird.
Tree Sparrow	No significant Change	Population appears to be stable with no significant change over the years.
Linnet	Decreased by 14%	Population appears to be stable with a small increase over the last three years of 14% contrary to the national trend.
Bullfinch	Decreased by 28%	Few species recorded during the surveys - scarce breeding bird with slight increase in 2000.
Reed Bunting	No significant Change	Recorded in 1s & 2s in 1997 & 1998 and in 7s & 8s in 1999 & 2000 - sample not big enough to be significant.
Corn Bunting	Decreased by 26%	Occasional records in 1 or 2 squares in 1997 & 1998 - but no records in 1999 & 2000. Scarce breeding bird.

#### 2. THE STATUS OF "ORANGE-LISTED" BIRDS

The status of "Orange-listed" birds within the UK and in the South Cheshire area are :-



Bird	UK Status from 1994 to 1999	South Cheshire Status from 1997 to 2000
Kestrel	Decreased by 30%	Few species recorded during the surveys - scarce breeding bird.
Lapwing	Decreased by 20%	Population has increased significantly over the last 3 years by a factor of 3 contrary to the national trend.
Stock Dove	No significant Change	Population has declined somewhat over the period but only a few birds recorded.
Swallow	Increased by 10%	Population is stable with birds being recorded in all squares surveyed.
Dunnock	Increased by 7%	Population shows a steady increase over the last 3 years of 67% with birds being recorded in 91 to 94% of all squares surveyed.
Blackbird	Increased by 12%	Population shows a steady increase over the 4 year period of 40% with birds being recorded in all squares surveyed.
Starling	Decreased by 6%	Population is stable with birds being recorded in all squares surveyed.
Goldfinch	No Significant Change	Population shows a small increase in 2000 compared to 1998 & 1999.

### 3. OTHER SPECIES SHOWING SIGNIFICANT CHANGE

Other species whose numbers have changed significantly in South Cheshire over the period 1997 to 2000 are as follows:-

Bird	South Cheshire Status from 1997 to 2000
Mallard	Since 1997 has shown a threefold increase.
House Martin	Highest counts increased from 27 in 1997 to 46 in 1999 but fell back to only 13 in 2000.
Wren	Shows a steady increase year on year with the 2000 figures double those of 1997. This is probably the result of the recent spate of mild winters.
Robin	Has increased since 1997 by a total of 55%.
Blue Tit	Over the last three years shows a steady increase of 16%.
Great Tit	Has increased since 1997 by a total of 46%.
Magpie	Highest counts increased from 11 in 1997 to 16 in 2000 but average birds per square remain fairly constant.
Carrion Crow	Numbers have increased steadily over the four years by 21%.
House Sparrow	The year 2000 showed the highest average number of birds per square of the 4 years.
Chaffinch	Steady increase over the last four years of 16%
Greenfinch	Highest count decreased from 23 in 1997 to 13 in 2000.

### FINAL PLEA

I trust that the above indicates the importance of this BTO survey nationally and also that over time it will also become a useful tool for estimating the changes to the South Cheshire bird populations. We have in our area a number of squares that we have, to date, not been able to cover because of lack of fieldworkers and thus if anyone would like to participate in this survey for 2001 and subsequent years please contact me. As I mentioned earlier this survey is straightforward, takes up only a little time and is an excellent way to become familiar with a "local patch" within South Cheshire.

Charles Hull; BTO Regional Representative South Cheshire; Tel:- 01270-628194

## BIRDING ON 'THE CLOUD'

The Cloud is one of the most picturesque areas in the SECOS recording region. The three-mile circular walk outlined below can be enjoyed at any time of the year, although the period from the end of February to early June may be the best for birds. Try to pick a calm sunny morning; an early start is recommended as this is a popular walk.

This birding site is best accessed from Congleton. Leave Congleton on the A54 Buxton Road. After one and a half miles, having gone over the canal, turn right into Middle Lane which is also signposted to Timbersbrook and the picnic site. After three-quarters of a mile turn right at a T-junction on to Weathercock Lane. After half a mile turn left into a well-signposted car park and picnic site just before entering the hamlet of Timbersbrook.

Walk from the car park into a grassy open picnic site. This is a good area for common woodland birds and in spring the songs of Chiffchaff and Blackcap fill the air. At the far end climb the steps on to Tunstall Road. Walk right and, after 80 yards, turn left by a telephone and post box. To your left is the 'Silver Springs Mill' pool. From late April until early June listen for singing Pied Flycatcher. A pair has bred nearby in recent years. On the left is a private road and, a short distance beyond, a footpath leads off to the left and follows the clough. Walking a short way up this ill-defined footpath increases your chances of further woodland species and also Kingfisher. SECOS rarities recorded along here include Wood Warbler and Redstart.

Return back to the road, pass through a gap in the wall and descend down to the mill pool. This is a good area for Grey Wagtail, especially near the weir; keep listening for singing Pied Flycatcher and Wood Warbler in the spring.

Walk up Tunstall Road and, after 400 yards, turn right into Gosberryhole Lane. A footpath sign reads 'Mow Cop Trail' and 'The Cloud'. There is a good viewpoint 300 yards up this lane: stand by the wooden fence near the standing stones. Ravens have bred nearby and betray their presence with loud deep 'pruuk-pruuk' calls.

Green Woodpecker is also seen occasionally in the general area. Carry on up the lane passing 'Folly Cottage' on the right. A short distance beyond bear left steeply uphill, passing a National Trust sign. This is a rocky path and care is needed. Keep left after 100 yards at a junction of paths; after another 400 yards go through a gateway and turn sharp left.

This rather narrow trail skirts the escarpment edge and the Cloud plantation and offers fine views over the Cheshire plain. Watch out for Ravens and Buzzards. After a mile the trail climbs up a heather and bilberry moor and reaches a trig. point. This makes an excellent picnic site and also a good vantage point for birding. The views over towards the Roaches and the main Pennine range are splendid. In spring and early summer Meadow Pipits will be in song flight and this is a favourite site for Kestrels. We are reliably told that Black Grouse used to lek in this area but were shot out.

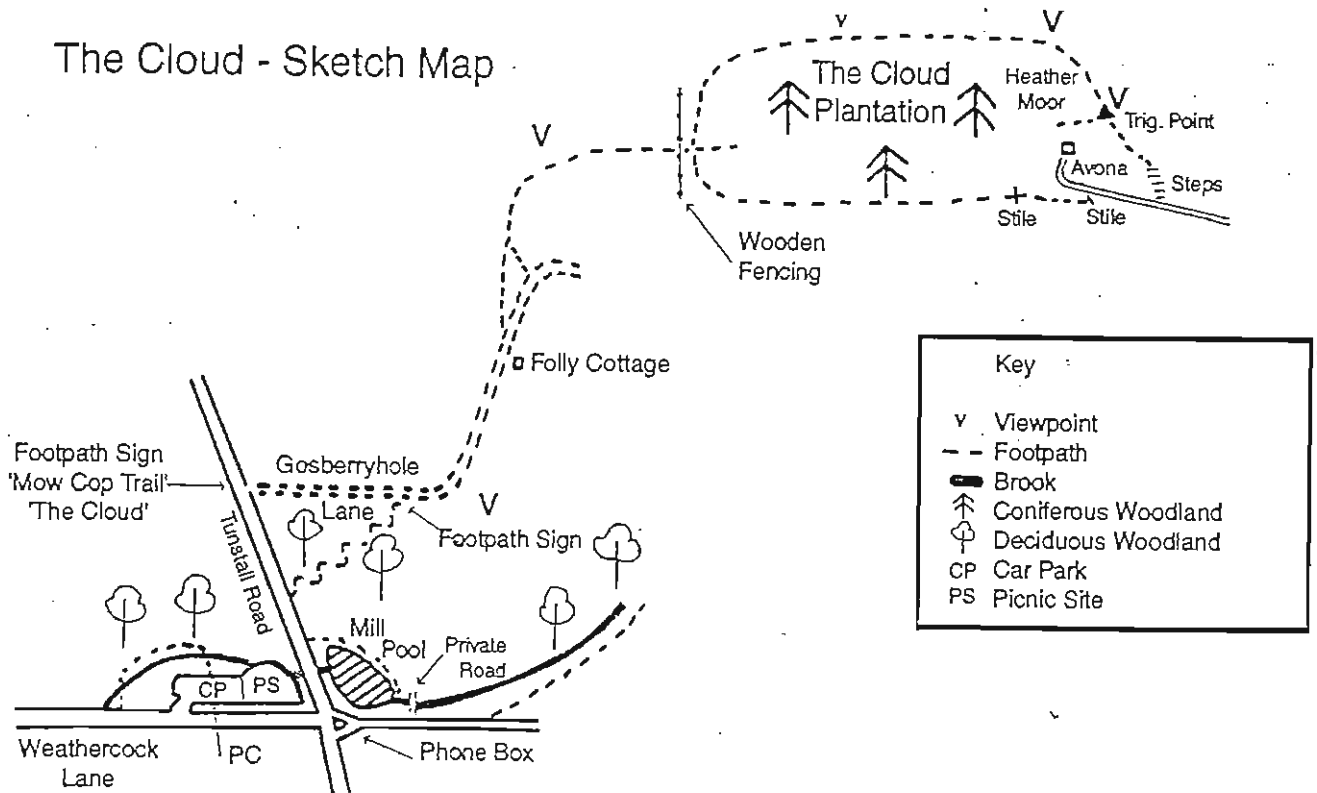
Ignore the well-defined trail leading off to the right. Descend on the path following the escarpment edge passing 'Avona' cottage and descend down concrete steps. At the bottom turn right on a lane and, after 100 yards, climb over a stile and bear right along the field edge. This footpath soon re-enters the Cloud plantation. From February to April, listen for singing siskins which may breed here. Crossbills have been seen here on a handful of occasions and have bred. Listen out for their calls.

Follow the path back to Gosberryhole Lane and, just past the lookout where we stopped on the ascent to look for Ravens, turn left at a footpath sign. This path descends steeply down steps; Wood Warbler has been recorded rarely here in May.

Back at the car park, another area well worth investigating before leaving is the footpath leading off from the car park (see sketch map). This descends down into a patch of riverine woodland often full of birds and carpeted with wild flowers in the spring.

Alan and Linda Battersby; Andrew and Angela Goodwin.

### The Cloud - Sketch Map



## A PATCHWATCHER'S REWARD

29<sup>th</sup> October 10.00

Bathvale Congleton

10.30am

Weather : Cold, cloudy, strong south wind.

Working my local patch of Bathvale on a cold, windy day in October 2000 will be remembered for a lifetime.

Hoping to see a Dipper I started to walk up the valley by the side of a small stream that makes its way into the River Dane, usually a pair can be seen 'mostly in the winter months' but not on this day. My disappointment was soon gone as I watched a Kingfisher dive into the water and return to an overhanging branch just above water level. Watching for a while I then decided to make a detour away from the stream so as not to disturb him, but he saw me and flew up the valley, calling as he went.

A little farther on I came across an unexpected surprise, a bird which I had not seen on this patch for nearly five years, the last time being 25.2.96, flying from the ground and disappearing over a small rise in the field was a Green Woodpecker. I started to work my way into a better seeing position, but two dog walkers came past causing the bird to take cover in a tree, where it was joined by a Great Spotted Woodpecker.

Walking on over the wooden bridge that crosses the stream I again sighted the Kingfisher along with a Grey Wagtail. What more colourful birds to light up a cold, grey October day could one wish for?

Then it was up a small incline that took me to the canal, and it was here, hidden from my view by a group of trees, I heard a lot of activity by crows, there was something on the patch they did not want and were intent on seeing it off. It was then that I saw what was causing their anger, being mobbed by three crows and keeping low for protection from the strong wind was an Osprey. It kept coming straight towards me, I could not believe I was seeing such a magnificent bird on my patch, right over he flew, at no more than 30ft. above my head, you could see his pale body, the wing pattern white with dark wing patches, and clearly showing on a white head was the dark eye band. The head was moving from side to side as if surveying the ground beneath as he flew south up the valley.

I took my hat off and shouted 'good luck, mate' as he made the long journey to the wintering grounds in Africa, he not knowing just how much he had made a patch worker feel so privileged and happy to share a brief moment with him that day.

Walking on along the canal towpath, a Buzzard sat on a fence post, flying to a tree when seeing me; a Kestrel hovered overhead and Redwing were filling themselves with hawthorn berries.

And so back to home with memories that will be called up over and over again, making an unforgettable day and a very, very happy patchwatcher.

Russ Stonier.

*A memorable day indeed, and one that shows what can be seen when you watch your local patch regularly. It can be very rewarding to walk an area regularly and you soon come to regard the birds as 'your' birds. If you do watch a local patch don't forget to record what you see and let me have your records to include in the annual bird report.. All Bathvale records and most of the Astbury records are from Russ.*

*Colin Lythgoe.*

## CREWE BUSINESS PARK, COMMON BIRD CENSUS 2000

A census of breeding birds was carried out during 2000. A total of six visits were made, all birds recorded and results analysed in accordance with the rules for the Common Bird Census of the British Trust for Ornithology.

The results are listed below:

SPECIES	No.
Mute swan	1
Canada goose	1
Mallard	4
Moorhen	6
Common sandpiper	4
Stock dove	1
Woodpigeon	21
Collared dove	4
Feral pigeon	1
Kingfisher	4
Great spotted woodpecker	4
Swallow	1
Pied wagtail	1
Wren	15
Dunnock	17
Robin	19
Blackbird	21

Song thrush	4
Mistle thrush	1
Whitethroat	4
Blackcap	5
Chiffchaff	1
Willow warbler	2
Long-tailed tit	3
Blue tit	16
Great tit	6
Treecreeper	1
Magpie	6
Jackdaw	2
Crow	4
Starling	1
Chaffinch	2
Greenfinch	7
Goldfinch	3
Bullfinch	3

### Notes:

1. No. is the number of occupied territories
2. 4 signifies recorded but not enough to give a territory.
3. Most territories along the brook include habitat on both sides.
4. Mute Swan: present until early May but did not breed.
5. Canada Goose: recorded three times but did not breed.
6. Wren: surprisingly only in hedgerows or streamside.
7. Dunnock: as Wren but also in car park and pond bushes.
8. Robin: as Dunnock.
9. Magpie: although six territories were recorded there was an average maximum of 16 birds each visit.
10. Chaffinch: in the old orchard area.
11. Greenfinch: 5 territories were clustered around the main pond.

## EARLY AND LATE DATES FOR SUMMER VISITORS

*The table has been arranged in date order for the '10 Year Average' arrival dates.*

Species	ARRIVALS			DEPARTURES		
	Date in	10 Year	Earliest	Date in	10 Year	Latest
	2000	Average	ever	2000	average	ever
	1990/99			1990/99		
Chiffchaff	14-Mar	13-Mar	8-Mar-89	03-Oct	9-Oct	15-Oct-87
Little Ringed Plover	05-Mar	20-Mar	5-Mar-00	26-Aug	4-Sep	16-Oct-85
Sand Martin	14-Mar	22-Mar	12-Mar-89	21-Sep	18-Sep	24-Nov-72
Swallow	19-Mar	27-Mar	19-Mar-00	15-Oct	19-Oct	30-Nov-74
Willow Warbler	06-Apr	2-Apr	29-Mar-81	27-Aug	12-Sep	26-Sep-98
Blackcap	21-Mar	7-Apr	18-Mar-97	30-Sep	12-Sep	30-Sep-00
House Martin	07-Apr	7-Apr	25-Mar-95	25-Oct	13-Oct	5-Nov-77
Yellow Wagtail	09-Apr	13-Apr	29-Mar-81	21-Sep	15-Sep	2-Oct-87
Reed Warbler	20-Apr	17-Apr	12-Apr-97	09-Sep	18-Sep	4-Oct-98
Whitethroat	23-Apr	19-Apr	15-Apr-93	30-Aug	11-Sep	21-Sep-93
Cuckoo	18-Apr	20-Apr	5-Apr-82	nr	22-Aug	1-Oct-86
Sedge Warbler	22-Apr	23-Apr	16-Apr-80	30-Aug	29-Aug	1-Oct-78
Swift	19-Apr	25-Apr	16-Apr-96	24-Sep	7-Sep	3-Nov-78
Lesser Whitethroat	22-Apr	28-Apr	21-Apr-88	22-Sep	9-Sep	1-Oct-98
Garden Warbler	27-Apr	28-Apr	20-Apr-96	17-Aug	3-Aug	9-Sep-83
Hobby	19-Apr	3-May	27-Mar-94	08-Oct	20-Sep	8-Oct-00
Grasshopper Warbler	nr	7-May	25-Apr-93	nr	nr	30/8/??

I have selected 17 species in total, these being summer visitors which usually nest in the SECOS area. I have deliberately not chosen the spring and autumn passage migrants, since these times quite often overlap, and it is not possible to separate the end of spring passage from the start of autumn passage. Also some passage migrants are only seen on one passage but not both.

It should be noted that there is some uncertainty over the dates for Blackcap and Chiffchaff. Both of these species over-winter regularly and have been recorded in every month of the year. It is currently accepted that the wintering population is made up of birds who move here from the continent, whilst our summering birds migrate south. Therefore these two species do fit my criteria for inclusion. However, it does mean that there is the possibility of confusing a late staying winter visitor for an early arriving summer visitor! I have used my judgement to give only those records that I think relate to summer visitors.

In 2000 three dates have been extended. A Hobby on 8 Oct. extended the previous late date of 7/10/92 by one day. A Little Ringed Plover on 5 March again extended the previous record by one day, although that record had lasted since 1977. A Blackcap on 30 Sept. caused some problems, but since it had also been recorded a few days previously I judged it to be a late summer visitor. All these three records were from EHF, reflecting the effort and many hours put in by the regular observers there.