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# SOUTH EAST CHESHIRE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

## 2005 BIRD REPORT

**Including Birds of Sandbach Flashes**



Grey Phalarope  
Adult winter

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## CONTENTS

Page	Title
3	Editorial
4	Contributors/Abbreviations/Status Definitions
5	Map of SECOS Recording Area
6	Birding Sites
8	Systematic List
29	Coordinated Count at All Flashes on 9 <sup>th</sup> January
30	Grey Phalarope at Doddington Pool on 4 <sup>th</sup> & 5 <sup>th</sup> November
31	Grey Phalarope at Doddington Pool on 11 <sup>th</sup> & 12 <sup>th</sup> November
32	Pallas's Warbler – an Identification Problem
32	Pallas's Warbler near Congleton on 1 <sup>st</sup> February
33	Cheshire and Wirral Bird Atlas
34	SECOS Winter Garden Bird Survey
36	Early and Late Dates for Summer Visitors



## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the 2005 report for the SECOS area. The main body of the report is the **Systematic List**, which gives details of all birds seen and recorded in the SECOS area during 2005. If you can contribute similar records for 2006 then please send them to me. Even records of common birds help to make the summaries for those species.

The usual articles include the SECOS area map and gazetteer, which I hope is of value to those new to the area or who are not familiar with the birding hot spots. The other regular article is the list of **Early and Late Dates** for migrants. I have also included a summary of the **Coordinated Count of all Flashes** in January to illustrate the distribution of the different species around the 14 flashes in the area.

The British Ornithologists Union has made a number of changes to the official British List this year. These include splitting Canada Goose into Greater Canada Goose (our species) and Lesser Canada (Cackling) Goose; finally splitting Yellow-legged Gull from Herring Gull (although Caspian Gull remains a sub-species of Herring Gull for the moment); and changing the scientific name and list order for some species in the swallow family and tit family. These changes have been adopted for this report.

Overall it has been a good year for records, although a few birds were present for only one or two days so could be difficult to connect with. The grand total of species seen in the area was 163 including 26 wader species, compared with 161 and 23 in 2004.

Noteworthy records include the Black-necked Grebe at Doddington on the same time and place as last year, which was the second record for the area. Pink-footed Geese flying over in late Jan/early Feb are normal but this year over 5,900 were recorded. One of the best sightings was the female Goosander with 11 young on the River Dane near Swettenham. 11 raptor species were recorded, with increasing numbers of Red Kite sightings and Hobby proved breeding at the usual two sites – but there must be more. In the wader group there was a very creditable total of 26 species recorded; 25 at Sandbach Flashes included a Pectoral Sandpiper plus a few species not recorded annually. Black-tailed Godwits are now present here all year and peaked at 500 in summer. The 26<sup>th</sup> species was Grey Phalarope at Doddington. The two records on consecutive weekends were only the second and third records for the area. 10 gull species included Ring-billed Gull and the newly split Yellow-legged Gull but not Iceland Gull this year. The Waxwing invasion of late 2004 continued and numbers built up to 180 in Crewe and 140 in Congleton before dispersing as their food supplies ran out. The only new species for the area was the Pallas's Warbler that stayed at Crossley north of Congleton for a month. Finally worth a mention is the Marsh Tit that was first seen on the feeders at Rode Pool on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2002 and has been recorded on most weeks since.

Fieldwork for the **CAWOS Atlas** has been completed for the second breeding season and almost so for the winter birds. Coverage has been good and thanks are due to everybody who has been involved. However, don't forget that it is a three year survey so keep up the effort! There are still tetrads waiting to be allocated for the last year's work. The **SECOS Winter Garden Bird Survey** goes from strength to strength with 49 members contributing data. It provides an interesting and useful activity for the members as well as an invaluable source of records for this bird report. Thanks to all members who are involved and particularly to Trevor Clowes for organising the survey so ably.

Thanks to **H J Lea Oakes** at Wheelock Mill for helping with free food; and particularly this year to **CAWOS**, the County bird club, for a generous grant towards the cost of food at the Tree Sparrow feeding station at Elton Hall Flash. Also to **Newbrook Engineering**, Quakers Coppice Crewe for help with nest box protection.

Many thanks to all contributors, without whose records there would not be a report. Special thanks to Joan and Keith Tilbrook for their help in typing, collating and checking this report.  
Colin Lythgoe; SECOS Recorder

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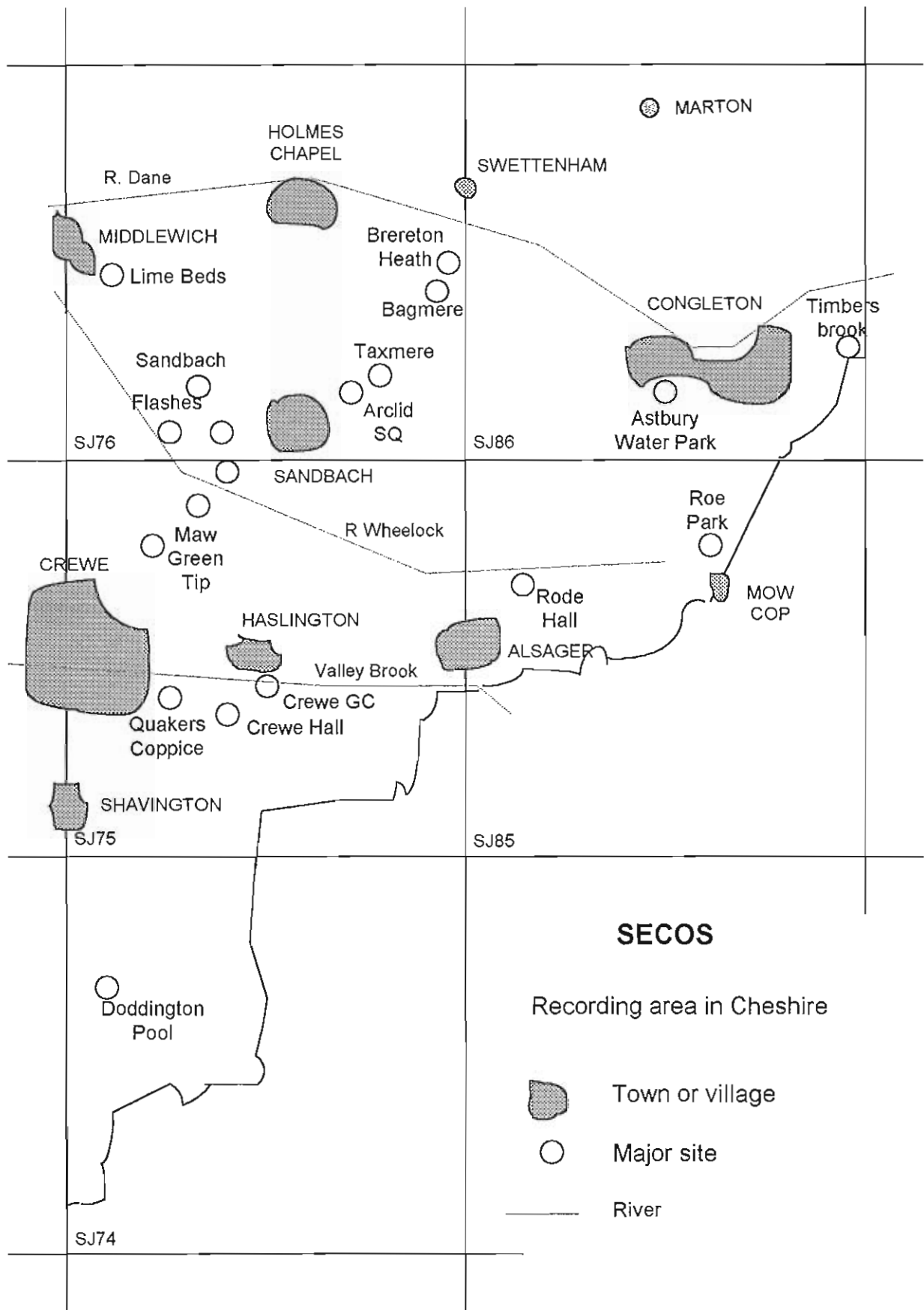
## Abbreviations Used

CF	Crabmill Flash	ad	adult
CP	Canal Pools	m	male
EHF	Elton Hall Flash	f	female
FF	Foden's Flash	imm	immature
FFF	Fields Farm Flash	juv	juvenile
GF	Grobby Flash	c	approximately
OF	Oak Tree Flash	max	maximum
PF	Plex Flash	BBRC	British Birds Rarities Committee
PHF	Pump House Flash	BP	Business Park
RF	Railway Flash	CP	Country Park
RL	Red Lane Flash	SQ	Sand Quarry
SF	Sandbach Flashes		
TLF	Tetton Lane Flash		
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

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

Extensive area of water formed by the quarry workings.

### **Astbury Mere SJ849624**<sup>4</sup>

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

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

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

### **Bent Farm Sand Quarry SJ830621**<sup>3</sup>

A large working sand quarry owned by WBB Minerals.

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

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

### **Cheshire's Close SJ868588**<sup>4</sup>

The old stone quarry 2 kms. north of Mow Cop.

### **Crewe Business Park SJ720550**<sup>4</sup>

Primarily a Business Park but managed very sympathetically for wildlife. Adjacent to Quakers Coppice.

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

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

### **Crewe Hall SJ735544**<sup>1</sup>

A very extensive area of mixed woodland and farmland.

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

Includes two large lakes, woodland, the Hall and grounds.

### **Eaton Hall SQ SJ864654**<sup>3</sup>

A working sand quarry.

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

Large area of mixed woodland including a lake.

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

The raised settling beds owned by British Salt.

### **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.

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

A wood of six hectares on the south side of Crewe owned by Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council.

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

A 1300 metre-long lake with islands and extensive reed beds, surrounded by woods. The SECOS bird hide overlooks one end of the pool.

### **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.

#### **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.

#### **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.

#### **The Moat SJ730613 (previously known as Foden's Flash)**

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

#### **Warmingham Flash SJ719619**

Heavily disturbed by fishermen.

#### **Watch Lane Flash SJ727606**

Heavily disturbed by fishermen but with two small reed beds.

### **Stowford SJ745530<sup>3</sup>**

An area of wet meadows between the A500 and the railway line.

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

Farmland and mixed woodland by the River Dane.

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

Area of woodland and a pool just north of Arclid Sand Quarry.

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

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

### **Westlow Mere, Congleton SJ855644<sup>3</sup>**

Previously known as Hulme Walfield Sand Quarry, now a Trout Fishery.

**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 2005

### Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*)

*Fairly common resident.*

Records in the first winter period from EHF (1), GF (2), Doddington Pool (13) and Rode Pool (4).

Successful breeding season records from the stronghold of Doddington Pool where probably six pairs were present but only one juv was seen. Also from RF where a pair with two juvs in June, Bent Farm SQ where a pair with two small juvs on 21<sup>st</sup> Aug and Chorlton where a pair with two juvs on 26<sup>th</sup> July.

The usual post-breeding gathering at Doddington Pool peaked at 41 in Aug.

Records in the second winter period of one or two from EHF, RF, Astbury Mere with a max of 13 at Doddington Pool.

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

*Common resident.*

Flocks in the first winter period were at SF (24), Doddington Pool (23), Arclid SQ (8) and Rode Pool (7).

Breeding proved at RF (a pair with two juvs), WLF (a pair with two juvs), Brereton Heath CP (a pair with young), and Winterley Pool (two pairs with three juvs).

A very poor year at Doddington Pool where up to 17 birds were present but very little breeding activity and no juvs seen. Also at Rode Pool where four pairs were present but no juvs were seen.

The post-breeding flock at Arclid SQ peaked at 10 but no flock formed at Doddington with just the regular number of around 17 (only 19 in 2004 but a more usual 65 in 2003).

In the second winter period 23 at WLF and 17 at Doddington Pool with smaller numbers at five other sites.

### Black-necked Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*)

*Very rare visitor.*

One was at Doddington Pool from 12<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> Aug, the third record for the SECOS area. The second was a juv at the same site in 2004 when present on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> July and 25<sup>th</sup> Aug to 16<sup>th</sup> Sept.

### Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

*Fairly common winter visitor. Rare in summer.*

In the first winter period numbers at the two main sites were PHF (22) and Doddington Pool (17).

In the second winter period there were only 8 at PHF but 31 at Doddington Pool although numbers reduced when the roost trees were felled and scaring techniques used.

Small numbers at, or flying over, several sites.

### Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*)

*Rare visitor.*

There were four records of singles through the summer, all at Sandbach Flashes; at EHF on 8<sup>th</sup> June, EHF on 27<sup>th</sup> July, EHF on 10<sup>th</sup> Aug and FF on 27<sup>th</sup> Aug.

### Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)

*Common resident.*

At the Rode Pool heronry there were 38 nests in use with many juvs seen. 39 nests in 2004, 40 in 2003 and 40 in 2002.

There were as usual many widespread records throughout the year of one or two in various lakes, ponds, rivers or fields.

### Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*)

*Fairly common resident.*

Monthly max at the two main sites were:-

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Winterley Pool	47	42	33	18	19	27	20	18	18	25	31	42
Doddington	43	9	5	7	48	70	71	75	38	17	14	11

The total of different birds seen at Winterley Pool during the year was only 73, a big reduction from its heyday in the late 90s when, for example, 391 were seen during 1998.

Successful breeding recorded at RF (one juv), Astbury Mere (five juvs), Bent Farm SQ (five juvs) and Doddington (eight juvs) and other nesting attempts at Rode Pool, Trent & Mersey canal Wheelock, and Winterley Pool (two pairs).

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

*Rare winter visitor.*

Seven adults and two imms at Arclid SQ on 30<sup>th</sup> Jan, one adult at Doddington Pool on 18<sup>th</sup> Feb and five at Swettenham Heath in early Feb.

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

*Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant or feral.*

Huge numbers of birds in the usual Jan/Feb movement from Lincolnshire/Norfolk to the Lancashire Mosses.

22<sup>nd</sup> Jan 120 over MGT, 90 over FFF.

23<sup>rd</sup> Jan 10 skeins over EHF between 13.00 and 14.25, total 1,330.

25<sup>th</sup> Jan 4 skeins over CF and EHF, total 830; large flock over Arclid Hollow; 100 over Crewe; 3 skeins over Middlewich, total 280; 190 over Rode Pool; 200 over Sandbach; 120 over Weston; 300 over Wistaston. Grand total 2,020+

26<sup>th</sup> Jan 230 over EHF.

29<sup>th</sup> Jan 350 over Congleton.

1<sup>st</sup> Feb 420 over Congleton, 50 over Arclid SQ.

6<sup>th</sup> Feb 240 over Crossley.

There was probably some double counting on the 25<sup>th</sup> but in total 5,900+ geese were recorded flying north west in a two-week period.

Few records in the second winter period with just 125 over EHF on 5<sup>th</sup> Oct, 52 over MGT on 19<sup>th</sup> Nov, 60 over Congleton on 20<sup>th</sup> Dec and 88 over CF on 24<sup>th</sup> Dec.

Single birds resident with various Canada Goose flocks.

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

*Rare winter visitor or feral.*

At Rode Pool a pair was present from early April, nested there, hatched three young and fledged one.

Six seen frequently at Doddington Pool and up to three with Canada Goose flocks at various sites in the area.

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

*Common resident.*

Max numbers in the first winter period were: Sandbach Flashes (490), Doddington Pool (151), Rode Pool (65).

Bred at many sites, those with multiple broods being Doddington Pool (87 adults with 61 juvs), Rode Pool (67 adults with 26 juvs), SF (4 pairs recorded).

The main site for post breeding flocks is Arclid SQ where there was a max of 425 on 23<sup>rd</sup> Aug.

Similar winter numbers in the second winter period with EHF (350), Doddington Pool (190), Rode Pool (170).

#### **Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*)**

*Rare visitor or feral.*

Records of singles with the Canada Goose flock from EHF, RF, FFF, Arclid SQ, Queens Park Crewe and Doddington at various times throughout the year.

#### **Ruddy Shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*).**

*Very rare visitor, usually presumed escapes.*

Two were at Bent Farm SQ on 17<sup>th</sup> Dec, where one was recorded in March/April 2004. Three at EHF on 7<sup>th</sup> Jul and one at EHF on 31<sup>st</sup> July.

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

*Uncommon resident and winter visitor.*

Peak count at EHF was in Feb as usual with 55 on 5<sup>th</sup> Feb (52 in 2004).

Two pairs bred at the flashes with a pair + eight juvs at EHF and a pair + 10 juvs at FFF. Also bred at Blakenhall where a pair with two juvs on a small pond. A pair present at Eaton Hall SQ but no breeding proved. (A pair with eight juvs in 2004).

At Arclid SQ a pair present in the breeding season but nothing proved. This pair evicted a visiting pair of a male Common Shelduck and a female probable Paradise Shelduck.

As usual birds disappeared to moult in autumn but by Dec had built up to 30 at EHF.

**Mandarin Duck (*Aix galericulata*)**

*Scarce visitor.*

More records than usual with a male along the Valley Brook Crewe from 17<sup>th</sup> Feb to 16<sup>th</sup> May and with a female present from 9<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> March. A male on the River Dane Somerford on 7<sup>th</sup> June.

Up to two males and one female in Queens Park Crewe in the autumn. Up to four recorded from EHF on various dates from 9<sup>th</sup> Aug to 26<sup>th</sup> Oct.

A male was with the Mallard at Arclid SQ from 30<sup>th</sup> Oct to 23<sup>rd</sup> Nov.

**Wigeon (*Anas penelope*)**

*Uncommon winter visitor.*

The table gives the monthly max at EHF/PHF. This is the main site but big numbers are also regular at CF. A co-ordinated count of all flashes on 9<sup>th</sup> Jan gave a total of 751. 700 in Dec probably represent the total flock.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
EHF/PHF	340	450	406	87	3	1	1	4	79	120	241	700

Also recorded in winter from Doddington Pool with 130 in Jan and 98 in Dec, Arclid SQ (7), Rode Pool (3) and Lawton Hall (2).

**Gadwall (*Anas strepera*)**

*Uncommon winter visitor.*

All records from EHF with one or two in March. Then up to six present on various dates from mid-July to mid-Oct and a single on 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Dec.

**Teal (*Anas crecca*)**

*Common winter visitor. Scarce in summer.*

The main site is EHF/PHF and the monthly max for this site are given in the table. Also regular at CF (75), RF(33), TL (22) and a co-ordinated count on 9<sup>th</sup> Jan gave a grand total of 613.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
EHF/PHF	464	406	293	119	4	33	14	304	432	330	392	350

Counts of 10+ in winter from other sites were Rode Pool (60), Doddington Pool (30), Eaton Hall SQ (21) and Arclid SQ (18).

**Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)**

*Common resident. Abundant in winter.*

Max monthly counts at the main sites in the area were:-

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
EHF/PHF	177	73	33	17	170	130	210	500	350	402	311	217
Arclid SQ	290	125	46	25	70	122	169	198	184	225	214	280
Doddington	289	170	72	102	138	208	260	146	119	167	232	237

Breeds commonly on most waters in the area.

Other sites with winter counts of 100+ were Astbury Mere (196) and Rode Pool (110).

**Pintail (*Anas acuta*)**

*Uncommon winter visitor.*

Good numbers at EHF in the first winter period with a max of 37 in Feb. Present regularly through to 10<sup>th</sup> April. One bird, a female possibly injured and unable to fly, stayed right through the summer. The first returning birds in the second winter period arrived on 1<sup>st</sup> Aug. Numbers were generally lower with a max of 14 in Dec.

Also seen at Arclid SQ with singles on 16<sup>th</sup> Jan and 2<sup>nd</sup> April.

**Garganey (*Anas querquedula*)**

*Scarce summer visitor.*

Spring birds at EHF with a male from 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> April and 5<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> May. Also a cracking good male at Rode Pool from 8<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> April.

One autumn record of a female/juv at EHF on 19<sup>th</sup> Aug.

**Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*)**

*Uncommon winter visitor, scarce in summer.*

Records in all months from EHF with at least two birds staying over summer.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
EHF	35	25	19	10	3	8	5	40	55	26	22	12
(2004)	16	15	9	8	5	1	5	11	22	25	12	20

An increase in numbers everywhere with max from other sites being Rode Pool (28), Doddington Pool (22) and Arclid SQ (4).

**Pochard (*Aythya ferina*)**

*Fairly common winter visitor.*

A significant slump in numbers at all sites as shown by the following comparison where the first number is the 2005 max count and the second number is the 2004 max count.

Doddington Pool (29-53), Astbury Mere (47-50), Winterley Pool (13-26), Rode Pool (16-22), EHF (9-21) and Arclid SQ (3-6).

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

*Fairly common winter visitor. Uncommon in summer.*

Lower numbers at the flashes with winter max of 21 at WLF and 20 at CF, the usual sites. The recorded monthly max at other sites were:-

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Astbury Mere	64	nc	9	18	nc	nc	nc	nc	62	nc	86	nc
Doddington	45	96	107	101	47	41	25	65	36	48	60	85
Winterley Pool	14	6	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	15	20

The most widespread duck after Mallard with records in the breeding season from Bent Farm SQ (pair with eight juvs), Doddington Pool (five pairs with broods of seven, six, six, five and three), Wychwood Park Weston (female with six juvs), Eaton Hall SQ (14 adults), Arclid SQ (three adults).

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

*Rare visitor.*

A male at Arclid SQ on 11<sup>th</sup> Jan was only the fourth record for this site since 1980.

A male was also at Doddington Pool on 7<sup>th</sup> Oct, only the third record for this site and the first since 8<sup>th</sup> Nov 1997.

**Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*)**

*Uncommon winter visitor.*

In the first winter period regular at Doddington Pool with a max of 14 and the last record being two on 8<sup>th</sup> April. Also two at Lawton Hall Pool and one at Rode Pool.

In the second winter period again regular at Doddington Pool with the first record on 18<sup>th</sup> Nov and a max of 11 in Dec. Also two at Astbury Mere in Nov.

Finally a female at CF on 31<sup>st</sup> Dec caused some panic amongst the flashes year listers as they rushed to tick the only record there this year.

**Goosander (*Mergus merganser*)**

*Uncommon winter visitor.*

The highlight of the year must be the female with 11 juvs seen on the River Dane near Swettenham in June.

Plenty of records in the first winter period with up to 16 at Rode Pool, the main site this year and last recorded on 15<sup>th</sup> March, recorded on 22 dates from 2<sup>nd</sup> Jan to 27<sup>th</sup> April at EHF with a max of 14 but usually one or two. Also at Arclid SQ, Bent Farm SQ and Lawton Hall Pool.

In the second winter period up to eight regular at Rode Pool from 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov, nine records from EHF and six at Lawton Hall Pool in Nov.

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

*Uncommon resident.*

Records from eight sites during the year and four broods noted.

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

*Very rare visitor.*

On 18<sup>th</sup> Aug an adult flew over Plant Lane and Fodens Flash towards Elworth at 11.30. Only the fourth record for the SECOS area.

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

*Very rare visitor.*

One was watched for 10 minutes over EHF on 28<sup>th</sup> May. One was seen on consecutive days, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Aug, hunting over fields either side of the A34 between Marton and Eaton Hall. One was reported on 19<sup>th</sup> Aug flying low just outside Crewe on the Sandbach road.

*One seen perched in a tree near Holmes Chapel for 15 minutes on 24 Aug.*

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

*Rare passage migrant.*

Two records this year, with a male flying over EHF saltpan on 29<sup>th</sup> April and a female flying north-east over Middlewich at 10.00 on 20<sup>th</sup> May. The latter bird had a blue tag on the left wing.

**Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*)**

*Very rare visitor.*

Good views obtained of a male as it flew over Fodens Flash on 8<sup>th</sup> Feb.

One by Mow Cop on 9<sup>th</sup> June – in the air with Buzzards.

**Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*)**

*Common resident.*

Common throughout the area with many records. The only proved breeding was near Arclid SQ and in Wistaston. Recorded prey items included Collared Dove, Great Spotted Woodpecker and Greenfinch.

In winter recorded in 26 out of 43 gardens in the SECOS Winter Garden Bird Survey.

**Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*)**

*Common resident.*

Now the commonest raptor and can expect to be seen during a few hours' birdwatching anywhere. Most counts of 10+ birds were in the early spring with 17 over Wheelock Heath on 21<sup>st</sup> Feb, 12 over Rode Pool on 15<sup>th</sup> Feb, 11 over Haslington on 20<sup>th</sup> March, 11 over Arclid SQ on 2<sup>nd</sup> April and 10 over Holmes Chapel on 14<sup>th</sup> March.

The only breeding reference was of a young bird in Marton on 14<sup>th</sup> July.

12 soaring over EHF on 17<sup>th</sup> Aug.

**Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*)**

*Rare migrant.*

Four records during the year, all on spring passage when most records occur:-

22<sup>nd</sup> March one drifted over Church Lawton heading north-east.

28<sup>th</sup> March one passed over the observer's house in Sandbach.

1<sup>st</sup> April one flew over Doddington Pool at 16.50 heading north.

22<sup>nd</sup> May one flew over EHF at 14.05 heading north.

**Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*)**

*Common resident.*

Common throughout the area but not so many records as for Sparrowhawk. Not recorded from gardens in the SECOS area in winter, compared with 17 out of 43 for Sparrowhawk, reflecting the different hunting techniques of the two species. The only proved breeding was on MGT where on 14<sup>th</sup> June adults were seen taking food to young in a pole mounted nest box on the tip.

**Merlin (*Falco columbarius*)**

*Rare winter visitor.*

All records from the flashes with three records of one at EHF from 19<sup>th</sup> Sept to 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct. Then reports of a female at EHF on 4<sup>th</sup> Dec, FF on 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec and CF on 31<sup>st</sup> Dec may relate to the same bird.

### **Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*)**

*Uncommon summer visitor.*

First arrivals at the beginning of May, with singles over Sandbach on 1<sup>st</sup> May and ones over EHF and Arclid SQ on 2<sup>nd</sup> May.

Breeding proved at the usual two sites with three juvs seen at Doddington and two juvs seen at Oakhanger. Clusters of records or breeding behaviour noted near Arclid, Marton and Warmingham.

The last record was of an adult with one juv at Doddington on 23<sup>rd</sup> Sept.

One over Congleton Edge on 18<sup>th</sup> Aug was carrying and plucking a Swallow mobbed by 15 other Swallows.

### **Peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*)**

*Scarce resident and winter visitor.*

As usual birds were resident in the RF area through the year but no breeding attempt noted. Occasional records of single birds, mainly in autumn and winter, from Tidnock, Arclid SQ, Chorlton, Crewe, Doddington and Haslington. From 24<sup>th</sup> Dec to the year-end one roosted each evening on a large lighting column in the railway yard at Basford.

Prey items included Lapwing, Stock Dove, Moorhen and Feral Pigeon.

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

*Rare except where locally released.*

Records from eight sites probably all relate to birds released by shooting syndicates. Highest numbers were 22 at Doddington on 14<sup>th</sup> Oct and 16 at Marton on 14<sup>th</sup> Sept.

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

*Scarce resident.*

The increase noted in 2004 was maintained this year, probably still driven by the CAWOS Breeding Bird Atlas fieldwork but giving a truer picture for the area.

At Blakenhall two separate pairs noted in the breeding season and a creditable 25 in Dec.

Two separate pairs at Chorlton, one pair near Haslington and one pair near Swettenham all recorded during atlas fieldwork.

### **Quail (*Coturnix coturnix*)**

*Rare migrant or summer visitor.*

On 12<sup>th</sup> June one was heard calling repeatedly from a barley field at Smethwick Hall Farm, Brereton. Despite much effort it was not heard subsequently. The last record I can find before this is of one at Wybunbury SQ on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1999.

### **Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*)**

*Scarce resident except where locally released.*

Usually concentrations of thousands where released for shooting e.g. Crewe Hall and Doddington. Quite widespread in low numbers outside these concentrations.

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

*Scarce winter visitor.*

In the first winter period the obliging individual from 2004 continued to give excellent views around the watch point and feeders at EHF. Also one at Doddington New Pool on 29<sup>th</sup> March.

In the second winter period from 29<sup>th</sup> Aug there were records of two from EHF and singles from GF, FF, RF, WLF and PHF. Also at Little Taxmere on 12<sup>th</sup> Nov, Doddington New Pool in Dec and one at Rode Pool on 27<sup>th</sup> Dec.

### **Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*)**

*Common resident.*

The co-ordinated count of all flashes on 9<sup>th</sup> Jan gave a total of 66 spread over nine of the flashes. There were 53 at ten flashes in 2004 and 64 at eight flashes in 2003.

This shows its widespread distribution with small numbers on most waters, large and small. The only other sites with counts of 10+ were Winterley Pool 21, Gawsworth 16, Rode Pool 15 and Doddington 10.

### **Coot (*Fulica atra*)**

*Common resident and variable winter visitor.*

The co-ordinated count of all flashes on 9<sup>th</sup> Jan gave a total of 220 spread over 12 flashes with the highest counts being WF (54), WLF (44) and CF (41), the usual best sites.

Monthly max for other sites excluding Sandbach Flashes, where only EHF and PHF are counted monthly, were:-

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Astbury Mere	97	nc	23	15	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	134	nc
Doddington	316	218	141	88	103	257	557	685	593	372	302	306
Winterley Pool	26	21	nc	nc	11	36	nc	nc	nc	nc	32	35

#### Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*)

*Scarce winter visitor and uncommon summer visitor.*

My comment last year that 'arrivals seem to be getting a few days earlier each year' still applies since the first arrival was on 27<sup>th</sup> Jan at EHF (6<sup>th</sup> Feb in 2004). February arrivals then at Bent Farm SQ, Doddington Pool and Arclid SQ. Birds were then present at the flashes on most days through to the last on 30<sup>th</sup> July but no breeding attempt was noted there.

Breeding did take place at Arclid SQ where one pair bred but failed due to predation and another pair bred and fledged one juv at the new quarry. Pairs also bred at Bent Farm SQ where a nest with four eggs on 10<sup>th</sup> May, Doddington Pool where one juv fledged, Marton where a pair nested in May but later deserted and Oakhanger where a pair were seen displaying several times.

Records of wandering birds from 11 sites with the last being one at Wychwood Park Weston on 18<sup>th</sup> Oct.

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

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

The first bird was one at Arclid SQ on 19<sup>th</sup> March, followed by four at EHF on 20<sup>th</sup> March. Spring passage at EHF in March and April with a max of 10.

Although present daily at EHF there was no record of any breeding attempt or juvs seen. The only breeding record was of a pair on a nest or brooding young near Arclid SQ, although birds were seen in the breeding season at Eaton Hall SQ, Arclid New SQ, Bent Farm SQ. A very poor year.

Return passage at EHF peaked in early July with a max of 16 and the last record was of one there on 4<sup>th</sup> Sept.

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

*Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.*

Two exceptionally early birds at EHF on 17<sup>th</sup> Feb. A single at the end of March, three on 16<sup>th</sup> April and then regular passage (although two weeks later than normal) from 30<sup>th</sup> April to 13<sup>th</sup> June. Generally less than 10 but 24 were present on 15<sup>th</sup> May.

Return passage at EHF from 10<sup>th</sup> Aug to 12<sup>th</sup> Sept with a max on any day of four. Also recorded at Doddington Pool with one there on 5<sup>th</sup> Aug.

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

*Uncommon winter visitor.*

Regular at EHF in the first winter period up to 17<sup>th</sup> Feb and a max count of 45. Also eight were seen in a Lapwing flock at Stowford on 15<sup>th</sup> Feb.

One bird in summer plumage appeared at EHF on 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> July.

More records but less birds in the second winter period with generally one or two occasionally seen in the Lapwing flock from 9<sup>th</sup> Sept to the year end.

#### Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*)

*Rare visitor and passage migrant.*

A typical record of this less than annual visitor with a single present at EHF for part of one day on 6<sup>th</sup> April.

#### Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*)

*Common resident and abundant winter visitor.*

Monthly max at EHF were:-

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
EHF	1490	1700	17	14	16	147	300	592	730	776	651	3000

Other large flocks recorded in the first winter period were Brownlow (500+), Doddington (550) and Arclid SQ (500).

Breeding records from Arclid SQ where probably three pairs, Marton probably four pairs, Doddington four adults and one juv, and EHF but only one small juv seen.

In the second winter period away from EHF flocks of 550 at Arclid SQ, 200 at Doddington and 135 at Eaton SQ.

**Knot (*Calidris canutus*)**

*Rare visitor.*

Two records of singles at EHF both staying longer than the usual one day. One from 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> Sept and one from 28<sup>th</sup> Sept to 1<sup>st</sup> Oct. Then a more usual brief visit of one on 19<sup>th</sup> Oct at EHF.

**Sanderling (*Calidris alba*)**

*Scarce passage migrant.*

Just two records this year with one at EHF on 18<sup>th</sup> May and one at Eaton Hall SQ on 11<sup>th</sup> June.

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

*Scarce passage migrant.*

Five records on return passage, all at EHF, with one in summer plumage on 16<sup>th</sup> Aug, one adult with one juv on 21<sup>st</sup> Aug, one on 28<sup>th</sup> Aug and one on 26<sup>th</sup> Sept.

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

*Rare autumn visitor.*

One arrived at EHF at 15.00 on 16<sup>th</sup> Sept, was present all day on 17<sup>th</sup> Sept and was seen to leave at 08.00 on 18<sup>th</sup> Sept.

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

*Scarce passage migrant.*

Only two birds seen with a single at EHF from 5<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> Sept and a single at EHF on 25<sup>th</sup> Sept.

**Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*)**

*Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant.*

In the first winter period from Jan to March a max of 4.

Spring passage from April to early June generally had a low max of eight, except for 27 passing through on 30<sup>th</sup> April. At Arclid SQ five records of one or two between 8<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> May.

Return passage from late July through to early Oct when recorded daily with a max of 11.

Also one in summer plumage at Eaton Hall SQ on 24<sup>th</sup> July.

Finally settling down to the winter flock with a max of five.

**Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*)**

*Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant.*

The resident wintering flock at EHF was present from the start of the year through to 23<sup>rd</sup> March with a max of 14.

No birds on spring passage. Two singles in summer plumage in June.

Return passage from 30<sup>th</sup> June (max of 15) merged into the resident wintering flock (max of 12).

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
EHF	15	14	14	0	0	2	8	8	15	12	12	11

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

*Scarce winter visitor.*

All records were from the first winter period, with none at the end of the year.

Between 1<sup>st</sup> Jan and 24<sup>th</sup> April records were from MGT (1), RF (2), TLF (3) and Arclid SQ (1).

**Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*)**

*Uncommon winter visitor and migrant.*

Most records from Sandbach Flashes where a co-ordinated count of all flashes on 9<sup>th</sup> Jan gave a total of 116, including 61 at RF and 34 at TLF. Last record on 27<sup>th</sup> April.

First autumn record on 1<sup>st</sup> July. Two or three then but strong evidence of passage through the area from mid-Aug to late Sept when up to 100 seen regularly. Numbers then dropped to less than 10 to the year end.

40+ at Arclid SQ on 20<sup>th</sup> Oct was the highest ever count there.



**Woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*)***Scarce winter visitor.*

A few records of this under-recorded crepuscular species. Three at FF in early Jan, and one near Astbury Mere, one at Cockswood Wood and one at Arclid SQ in Jan.

Then in Dec one in Black Wood, Marton, and one flushed from a wood near Alsager where up to four regularly winter.

At least six seen in the woods at Rode Pool.

**Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*)***Scarce migrant and rare winter visitor.*

Now present all year at EHF but numbers increased rapidly from late March, through April and May to a peak in early June as the flock of non-breeding 1<sup>st</sup> summer birds built up. Rapidly decreasing from early July to residual numbers of up to 10.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
EHF	7	12	54	186	310	500	31	18	13	12	4	8

**Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*)***Scarce passage migrant.*

A sprinkling of records on spring passage with four at EHF on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> April, three on 7<sup>th</sup> May, one on 18<sup>th</sup> May and one at Doddington Pool on 20<sup>th</sup> May.

On return passage one or two seen on 11 days between 27<sup>th</sup> July and 12<sup>th</sup> Aug at EHF.

**Curlew (*Numenius arquata*)***Scarce resident and fairly common winter visitor.*

A max of up to 54 in the usual evening roost at EHF in the first winter period. Numbers reduced rapidly from mid-March as birds returned to their breeding sites and only up to three were present during April, May and June.

No proved breeding this year but pairs were noted displaying through the breeding season near Haslington and Stowford, two previous successful sites, and also near RF/Clay Lane.

Numbers at EHF built up from early July as finished breeders returned, increased to a peak of 90 in Sept and then down to the regular 60 in Oct.

**Spotted Redshank (*Tringa erythropus*)***Rare passage migrant.*

Four records, all from EHF in Sept with three juvs on 11<sup>th</sup>, two adults on 12<sup>th</sup>, one on 18<sup>th</sup> and one on 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Redshank (*Tringa totanus*)***Uncommon visitor and migrant.*

In the first winter period the resident flock at EHF had a high max count of 19, reducing to one by mid-April.

Spring passage and return passage does not occur now, with only one or two occasionally from mid-April to mid-Oct.

Then numbers built up to a low max of 10 in Dec.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
EHF	18	19	15	8	1	2	1	1	1	5	6	10

Singles also recorded at Arclid SQ on 19<sup>th</sup> March and 6<sup>th</sup> Oct, Doddington Pool 15<sup>th</sup> July and Eaton Hall SQ 11<sup>th</sup> June.

**Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*)***Uncommon passage migrant.*

On spring passage up to six at EHF on 13<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> May. Singles on four scattered dates in July, then one stayed at EHF from 16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Aug. Finally one at EHF on 19<sup>th</sup> Sept.

**Green Sandpiper (*Tringa ochropus*)***Scarce winter visitor. Uncommon passage migrant.*

Records in the first winter period from Bent Farm SQ (3), Tidnock (1), Middlewich Lime Beds (1) and Stowford (1).

Very light spring passage as usual with just a single on three days in April.

Heavy autumn passage as usual which extended from 25<sup>th</sup> June through to 16<sup>th</sup> Oct when recorded on most days at EHF with a max of five.

In the second winter period one or two present at Doddington Pool from 12<sup>th</sup> Aug through to 18<sup>th</sup> Nov. Also two along the drainage ditches at Stowford, a regular wintering site, and one at Marton in Aug.

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

*Scarce passage migrant.*

All records from EHF with a single there from 31<sup>st</sup> May to 2<sup>nd</sup> June.

On return passage one or two present from 31<sup>st</sup> July to 12<sup>th</sup> Aug.

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

*Uncommon passage migrant.*

Spring passage extended from 9<sup>th</sup> April to 13<sup>th</sup> May with up to three at EHF, four at Arclid SQ and three at Astbury Mere.

Interesting records from Eaton Hall SQ with a calling bird on 8<sup>th</sup> May and 11<sup>th</sup> June, right in the breeding season.

Return passage from 24<sup>th</sup> June through to 17<sup>th</sup> Sept with up to four at EHF, two at Arclid SQ, one at Bent Farm SQ, three at Doddington Pool and one at Rode Pool.

**Grey Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*)**

*Very rare winter visitor.*

In the afternoon of 4<sup>th</sup> Nov at Doddington Pool an adult in winter plumage was seen sheltering under the rhododendron bank. The bird was also present on 5<sup>th</sup> Nov but could not be found on the 6<sup>th</sup>.

Amazingly on 11<sup>th</sup> Nov at Doddington Pool another bird was seen, this time in 1<sup>st</sup> winter plumage so a different bird. This bird was also present on 12<sup>th</sup> Nov.

(See separate article for more details).

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

*Scarce visitor.*

Last year's big increase in records was maintained in 2005 with records of singles from EHF in the following months:-

Jan 17<sup>th</sup>, Feb 14<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>; March 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>; Aug 19<sup>th</sup>; Nov 25<sup>th</sup>; Dec 8<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> – a 1<sup>st</sup> winter bird.

**Little Gull (*Larus minutus*)**

*Rare visitor and passage migrant.*

A good series of records from EHF. One on 20<sup>th</sup> March and another on 23<sup>rd</sup> April. Then on 19<sup>th</sup> June a 1<sup>st</sup> Summer bird appeared and proved to be a real long-stayer. Occasionally moving to WLF it was seen most days until 28<sup>th</sup> Sept. During that period an additional 2<sup>nd</sup> summer bird was present on 21<sup>st</sup> June and a juv on 5<sup>th</sup> Sept.

Also three at Astbury Mere on 20<sup>th</sup> March.

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

*Abundant autumn and winter visitor.*

In the first winter period the max counts recorded in roosts were at Astbury Mere (1500), EHF (935) and Arclid SQ (365). There were few actual counts at MGT/RF during the year. Numbers of all gull species continue to be suppressed by regular shooting on the tip by Waste Recycling Group.

Around 700 at EHF in July and a high of 2000 at MGT in Dec. In Nov a good count of the regular gull roost at Doddington Pool gave a total of 12,000.

**Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*)**

*Very rare winter visitor.*

On 21<sup>st</sup> Feb an adult in breeding plumage was seen on EHF saltpan.

This was the third record for the flashes, the previous two being an adult on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> March 2003 and a 2<sup>nd</sup> winter bird briefly near RF on 5<sup>th</sup> Feb 1995.

Amazingly on 25<sup>th</sup> Feb a different bird, an adult in winter plumage, was on EHF saltpan and so became the fourth record.

**Common Gull (*Larus canus*)**

*Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant.*

The usual pattern of records from the flashes with few in winter (max seven), strong passage through March (max 70), none in summer, very low numbers on autumn passage (max five) and low numbers in the second winter period (max 20).

Numbers in the Doddington Pool roost followed a similar pattern but no actual numbers recorded, except for around 200 in March.

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

*Fairly common winter visitor. Uncommon summer visitor.*

Few counts from MGT this year, due to shooting there. At EHF low numbers (50) to start the year built up to around 300 in March on passage. Lower numbers in summer but another increase in July and Aug to around 300, down to 30 in Sept and Oct and increased to 600+ in Nov.

The Doddington Pool gull roost held 400 in Nov.

**Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*)**

*Fairly common winter visitor. Uncommon summer visitor.*

Difficult to document with the records available since there are few counts from MGT and the large gull species do not roost in the area.

Records of 200 at EHF in Jan then 469 at EHF and 1500 on MGT in Dec.

Birds showing characteristics of the nominate Scandinavian race *L.a. argentatus* were noted on 11<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Nov plus 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Dec.

One of the *argentatus* on 14<sup>th</sup> Dec had yellow legs, as do some of the eastern Baltic population.

**Yellow-legged Gull (*Larus michahellis*)**

*Scarce visitor.*

As usual most records are in July, Aug and Sept with a few in winter but not Jan or Dec.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of days recorded	0	2	0	0	1	3	10	5	2	1	2	0
Max day count	0	1	0	0	1	2	4	4	3	1	2	0

**Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucooides*)**

*Scarce winter visitor.*

No records this year.

**Glaucous Gull (*Larus hyperboreus*)**

*Scarce winter visitor.*

Records from two periods 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> Jan and 11<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> Feb. Although recorded from MGT, EHF and PHF, all records were of a 1st winter bird so maybe only one bird involved, or possibly two.

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

*Uncommon winter visitor.*

Recorded in most months at EHF with highest numbers in Jan (27) Feb (26) and Nov (12). Outside these winter months usually up to three sub-adults.

**Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*)**

*Uncommon passage migrant.*

On spring passage singles at EHF or WF on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> April, 13<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> May, 4<sup>th</sup> June. Also one at Astbury Mere on 14<sup>th</sup> May.

Also recorded on six dates on return passage at EHF from 1<sup>st</sup> June to 14<sup>th</sup> Aug but with higher numbers, e.g. six on 29<sup>th</sup> July and five on 14<sup>th</sup> Aug.

Singles also recorded over Haslington on 18<sup>th</sup> June and at Doddington Pool on 15<sup>th</sup> July and 26<sup>th</sup> Aug. Also one at Astbury Mere on 14<sup>th</sup> May.

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

*Scarce passage migrant.*

Just one record of two birds at EHF on 14<sup>th</sup> Aug.

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

*Rare passage migrant.*

Again just one record of this species with nine at Doddington Pool on 23<sup>rd</sup> Aug.

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

*Common resident.*

Common in most town centres. It was noted at Arclid SQ that there were many fewer records and smaller counts since barn conversions had been completed at farms around the quarry.

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

*Uncommon resident.*

Quite widespread but frequently not picked up in flocks of Woodpigeon. Flocks of 10+ were recorded at Doddington Park (27), Arclid SQ (20) and EHF (14). No proved breeding but many records in the breeding season.

**Woodpigeon (*Columba palumbus*)**

*Common resident.*

Very widespread with records from virtually all tetrads in the CAWOS Breeding Bird Atlas. The largest recorded flocks in winter were MGT (1200), Doddington Park (600) EHF (500) Arclid SQ (250) Rode Pool (140) and Alsager (130).

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

*Common resident.*

Common and widespread with many records in the breeding season although few proved breeding. High counts in winter were seen at Blakenhall (60), Tidnock (41), FFF (36), EHF (27), Marton (12) and Wheelock Heath (10).

**Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*)**

*Uncommon summer visitor and migrant.*

The first bird was heard near WLF on 16<sup>th</sup> April. A disappointing year with records from only six sites despite the extra atlas fieldwork, and a last record on 17<sup>th</sup> July.

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

*Scarce resident.*

Fewer records this year but the increase in numbers is being maintained. At least two pairs bred in the Coppenhall Moss area. One of the pair at Doddington was found dead by the tower on 18<sup>th</sup> July.

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

*Common resident.*

Remains the commonest owl, with its favoured habitat of open farmland, and recorded at around 25 sites, with multiple pairs in some areas, as shown by the record on 27<sup>th</sup> Aug with seven different birds calling around Marton.

Young seen at four sites and nesting behaviour noted at another four.

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

*Common resident.*

A very impressive total of records for this nocturnal species. Records from 32 sites, including 15 only during the CAWOS Atlas fieldwork, and proved breeding from five sites.

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

*Rare passage migrant and winter visitor.*

On 12<sup>th</sup> Nov one was seen by the bridge over the brook at MGT at 11.00.

**Swift (*Apus apus*)**

*Fairly common summer visitor.*

A very reliable summer visitor for dates, with the first this year on 26<sup>th</sup> April over Crewe (25<sup>th</sup> April for the last three years) then two over EHF on 27<sup>th</sup>.

400 over Doddington Pool in bad weather on 20<sup>th</sup> May. No major counts at breeding sites but 20 over St. Peter's Church Hall Elworth, our monthly meeting venue, on 24<sup>th</sup> July, probably included a few juvs.

15 screaming over a Haslington site on 23<sup>rd</sup> June, similar to 2004 but none seen over Wheelock Heath where the colony was down to two birds in 2004.

Departure started in Aug where 500 seen heading south over Weston on 2<sup>nd</sup> Aug but continued into early Sept as usual with Sept records from Gawsworth (1<sup>st</sup>), Alsager (4<sup>th</sup>), Crewe (4<sup>th</sup> and EHF (6<sup>th</sup>). (4<sup>th</sup> Sept in 2004 and 5<sup>th</sup> Sept in 2003).

**Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*)**

*Uncommon resident.*

Even with the additional fieldwork carried out for the CAWOS Breeding Bird Atlas birds were only recorded from a total of 19 sites (23 in 2004, 14 in 2003). The only proved breeding came from Rode Pool and at Swettenham where the lucky observer saw two juvs on the River Dane perched on a branch 10 yards away and practising fishing.

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

*Uncommon resident.*

Fewer records than last year, the first of the atlas fieldwork, but still recorded from 12 sites (20 in 2004 and 9 in 2003). Most records in the breeding season but proved no breeding.

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

*Common resident.*

By far the commonest woodpecker with records from many sites across the area. Breeding was proved at eight sites.

In the SECOS Winter Garden Bird Survey recorded in 9 out of 43 gardens.

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

*Uncommon resident.*

A very poor year for records with none seen during fieldwork for the CAWOS Breeding Bird Atlas and only seen in a total of six sites.

### **Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*)**

*Fairly common.*

The only flocks of 10+ recorded in the first winter period were 26 at Arclid SQ on 24<sup>th</sup> Feb and 17 on MGT on 16<sup>th</sup> Feb.

Recorded from many sites in the breeding season but no proved breeding.

The usual autumn passage was later than usual, being through all of Oct to mid-Nov instead of mid-Sept to end of Oct. Regular passage of birds over EHF and MGT with a daily max of 60.

No flocks in the second winter period.

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

*Fairly common summer visitor.*

First birds of the year were seen at Arclid SQ and Astbury Mere on 20<sup>th</sup> March, followed by three at EHF on 24<sup>th</sup> March.

Breeding colonies at Bent Farm SQ (three sites and around 200 nest holes), Eaton Hall SQ (unable to count the nest holes), Wybunbury old SQ (virtually abandoned now, just a few nest holes) and Arclid new SQ (50 nest holes for the first brood but much reduced for the second brood).

The last record was of one at EHF on 12<sup>th</sup> Sept.

### **Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*)**

*Common summer visitor.*

As in 2004 the first bird was seen on 28<sup>th</sup> March – at Mow Cop this year – followed by one at Astbury Mere on 30<sup>th</sup> March.

Several breeding records from farm buildings plus one from Sandbach Heath where a pair fledged two broods from an outhouse.

A large pre-roost gathering at Marton with 600 over the village on 2<sup>nd</sup> Sept. Also 100+ over Arclid SQ and 100+ over EHF in early Sept.

Fewer Oct records this year, being seen at EHF, RF and the last over Sandbach on 14<sup>th</sup> Oct.

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

*Common summer visitor.*

First records from three sites on 8<sup>th</sup> April with three at Doddington Pool, two at EHF and one at Astbury Mere.

Breeds commonly on buildings throughout the area but counts only from Brookside Hall Arclid Hollow where around 20 pairs nested. 40 over Marton on 9<sup>th</sup> Sept, 200+ over The Cloud on 13<sup>th</sup> Sept and 30 over Astbury Mere on 19<sup>th</sup> Sept.

Several Oct records with the last being two over Sandbach on 7<sup>th</sup> Oct and finally two over Haslington on 11<sup>th</sup> Oct.

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

*Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant. Scarce resident.*

Several flocks in the first winter period included 98 at Sproston, 55 at FFF, 48 at Marton, 30+ at Arclid SQ and 30 at MGT.

Records of two singing males at each of the two regular breeding sites at Cheshire's Close and Roe Park.

Some autumn passage in Oct and flocks in the second winter period of 100+ at MGT, 40 at Weston, 38 at Arclid SQ and 35 at Haslington.

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

*Uncommon passage migrant and summer visitor.*

Late arrivals this year, the first being at Basford, Crewe on 18<sup>th</sup> April, then one over Radnor Park Congleton on 19<sup>th</sup> April.

Also fewer records from breeding sites, just 10 sites and juvs seen only at EHF.

The last record was three at EHF on 4<sup>th</sup> Sept.

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

*Fairly common resident and winter visitor.*

Now common and widespread on streams, rivers and pools. Recorded from 36 sites throughout the year plus three sites in the SECOS Winter Garden Bird Survey. Records in the breeding season from 15 sites with juvs seen at Crewe, Middlewich, Scholar Green and Stowford. The best year ever at Arclid SQ where one pair had three broods and a second pair had one brood

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

*Fairly common resident.*

Flocks in the first winter period at Sproston (126), Rode Pool (90), EHF (55) and Wheelock Sewage Works (45).

Proved breeding recorded at EHF, Doddington Park, Stowford, Wychwood Park Weston and Arclid SQ.

The largest recorded roost in the second winter period was the long-standing one at the Crewe Arms/railway station/post office site, although the max of 200 was well down on the 2004 max of 300.

Single birds of the Continental race *M.a. alba* were recorded on spring passage on six days at EHF from 27<sup>th</sup> April to 9<sup>th</sup> May, at Doddington Pool on 1<sup>st</sup> April and Marton on 10<sup>th</sup> April.

**Waxwing (*Bombycilla garrulus*)**

*Rare winter visitor.*

2004 ended with numbers building up following the large invasion in Nov and Dec. This continued until there was a max of 140+ near Congleton Library and 180 on Asda car park in Crewe town centre. As the food supply there ran out the birds dispersed to various sites in Crewe town. Also recorded during Jan and Feb in Elworth (1), Haslington (1), Middlewich (50), Scholar Green (2), Swettenham (8), Wistaston (11) and the last record was of five in Wistaston on 17<sup>th</sup> March.

The Congleton flock followed a similar pattern, building up to a max of 140+ on 20<sup>th</sup> Jan, then dispersing to various sites with the last record on 9<sup>th</sup> March.

On 28<sup>th</sup> Nov one was heard and seen in flight over Moston Green.

**Dipper (*Cinclus cinclus*)**

*Scarce resident.*

Recorded at the regular site on the River Dane at Havannah, Congleton in the breeding season but no further details. Also an adult seen several times and finally also one juv on the River Wheelock near Hassall Green. Birds first recorded here in summer of 2004 but breeding not proved then.

**Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*)**

*Abundant resident.*

Recorded in all 46 of the reporting gardens in the SECOS Winter Garden Bird Survey with a max of two. Also all atlas tetrads.

**Dunnoek (*Prunella modularis*)**

*Common resident.*

Recorded in 45 of the 46 reporting gardens in the SECOS Winter Garden Bird Survey and all but one of the atlas tetrads.

**Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*)**

*Abundant resident.*

Recorded in all 46 of the reporting gardens in the SECOS Winter Garden Bird Survey with a max of four. Also in all atlas tetrads.

**Redstart (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*)**

*Scarce migrant and rare summer visitor.*

Three records, all during the autumn this year, with one at PHF on 25<sup>th</sup> July, one at PHF on 15<sup>th</sup> Aug and one at Arclid SQ on 29<sup>th</sup> Aug.

**Whinchat (*Saxicola rubetra*)**

*Scarce migrant.*

A poor year with records on just three dates with one juv at MGT on 6<sup>th</sup> Aug, one adult at PHF on 6<sup>th</sup> Sept, and three adults at MGT on 11<sup>th</sup> Sept.

**Stonechat (*Saxicola torquata*)**

*Scarce winter visitor.*

One definite winter record of a male at Chorlton on 16<sup>th</sup> Jan. Possible passage migrants or wandering winter visitors were a pair near Marton on 14<sup>th</sup> March and a pair at RF with a single at CP on 19<sup>th</sup> March.

In the second winter period a pair were recorded frequently at MGT from 16<sup>th</sup> Oct to 22<sup>nd</sup> Dec. Also recorded from five other sites between 19<sup>th</sup> Aug and 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec, Alsager (1), Doddington (1), Haslington (1), Mow Cop (2) and Stowford (1).

**Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*)**

*Uncommon passage migrant.*

A return to more normal numbers after last year's exceptional spring passage. The first records were on 20<sup>th</sup> March, with one on MGT and one near Brownlow, followed by two at Tidnock on 21<sup>st</sup> March. Then recorded on nine dates at the flashes up to 5<sup>th</sup> May with a max of four at MGT and four at EHF. Also on spring passage at Cheshire's Close with one on 11<sup>th</sup> April, Marton with two on 16<sup>th</sup> and two on 26<sup>th</sup> April and Arclid SQ with two on 10<sup>th</sup> May.

Records only from MGT on return passage with records on seven days from 14<sup>th</sup> Aug to 15<sup>th</sup> Oct with a max of seven.

**Blackbird (*Turdus merula*)**

*Abundant resident and winter visitor.*

Recorded in all 46 of the reporting gardens in the SECOS Winter Garden Bird Survey with a max count of 11. Also in all atlas tetrads.

**Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*)**

*Common winter visitor.*

In the first winter period flocks of 100+ were noted at Hough (500), CF (450), Doddington (150), EHF (120), Hulme Walfield (100+), Astbury (100+) and Stowford (100).

The first returning birds in the second winter period were noted on the rather late date of 16<sup>th</sup> Oct (usually at least one week earlier) with four at MGT. The only 100+ flocks were 250 at Smethwick Green and 100+ at EHF.

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

*Fairly common resident.*

Recorded in 34 out of 46 reporting gardens in the SECOS Winter Garden Bird Survey with a max of three. At least five singing males holding territory at Arclid SQ.

**Redwing (*Turdus iliacus*)**

*Common winter visitor.*

In the first winter period flocks of 100+ were noted at CF (250), Marton (200), Haslington (130), Congleton (130), Hulme Walfield (150) and Astbury (160).

The first records in the second winter period were 50 over EHF on 15<sup>th</sup> Oct and 130 at MGT on 16<sup>th</sup> Oct. As with Fieldfare this species was at least one week later than usual in its arrival date.

Winter flocks of 250 at MGT and 140 at Rode Pool.

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

*Fairly common resident.*

Breeds commonly throughout the area but generally under-recorded. Post-breeding flocks in Aug of 35 at Marton, 26 at Somerford Booth and 12 at Doddington.

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

*Rare summer visitor.*

Two records of 'reeling' males this year with one at Bagmere on 29<sup>th</sup> April not heard again, so possibly a passage migrant since warblers do sing on passage. Also one at Chorlton on the much later date of 20<sup>th</sup> June, when generally right in the breeding cycle.

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

*Uncommon summer visitor.*

First record was on 24<sup>th</sup> April with one at WF and two at RF. Then records from OF, GF, EHF and RL by the end of the month.

Usually 20+ singing males at Sandbach Flashes, particularly RF/MGT area, but no actual warbler counts this year. Records also from another nine sites involving 14 singing males.

Last record was on the exceptionally early date of 14<sup>th</sup> July.

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

*Uncommon summer visitor.*

First record was of one at RL on 19<sup>th</sup> April, then one at WLF on 21<sup>st</sup> April. No warbler survey done at Sandbach Flashes this year so no counts made for here.

Singing males also recorded at Crewe Business Park with one on 15<sup>th</sup> June, Bent Farm SQ one on 19<sup>th</sup> June and Rode Pool where up to three present all summer.

Last record was of two at EHF on the early date of 19<sup>th</sup> Aug.

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

*Uncommon summer visitor.*

First records on 23<sup>rd</sup> April with two near PHF and one at Astbury Mere, followed by others at RF, FFF and EHF before the end of the month. Recorded in 11 out of 41 tetrads in the CAWOS Breeding Bird Atlas and nine other sites.

The last record was of one at EHF on 16<sup>th</sup> Sept.

**Whitethroat (*Sylvia communis*)**

*Common summer visitor.*

First records on 21<sup>st</sup> April with one at FF and one at Arclid SQ.

A very common breeding species with, for example, 11 singing males along the railway embankment at FFF, probably eight pairs at Arclid SQ and recorded in 30 out of 41 tetrads in the CAWOS Breeding Bird Atlas. The last record was one at Alsager on 2<sup>nd</sup> Sept.

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

*Fairly common summer visitor.*

First records on 26<sup>th</sup> April with one at Crewe Business Park and one at Wychwood Park Weston. A scarce bird at the flashes with only one singing male recorded from the FF area. More numerous but not particularly common elsewhere, being recorded in 13 out of 41 tetrads in the CAWOS Breeding Bird Atlas. Only two pairs at Arclid SQ where traditionally four to seven pairs.

The last record was of one at EHF on 3<sup>rd</sup> Aug.

**Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*)**

*Common summer visitor. Scarce winter visitor.*

Records in the first winter period from eight gardens in the SECOS Winter Garden Bird Survey plus three other sites including two males found in Crewe town centre whilst looking for Waxwings.

Widespread arrival as usual, starting from 1<sup>st</sup> April with one at FF and one at Doddington.

Recorded in 33 out of 41 tetrads in the CAWOS Breeding Bird Atlas and probably nine pairs at Arclid SQ. A clear break between summer and winter records with the last summer record being one at Arclid SQ on 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct, although this is the latest ever summer record.

Records in the second winter period from Alsager, Arclid SQ, Haslington (two sites) and Sandbach.

**Pallas's Warbler (*Phylloscopus proregulus*)**

*Vagrant.*

A bird of this species was first seen at sunset on 29<sup>th</sup> Jan. Identified on 30<sup>th</sup> Jan, it was confirmed on 31<sup>st</sup> Jan and made public.

Very many observers made the trip to Crossley north of Congleton (500 metres inside the SECOS boundary!) to check the railway embankment and were usually rewarded with very close views of this confiding bird. Last reported on 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb.

(See separate report for more details).

**Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*)**

*Common summer visitor, very rare winter visitor.*

Mass arrivals as usual with the first being at FF on 19<sup>th</sup> March, one at Scholar Green and two at Astbury Mere on 20<sup>th</sup> and then flooded in before the end of the month with, for example, nine singing males at Arclid SQ by 28<sup>th</sup> March.



The commonest warbler and recorded in 38 out of 41 tetrads in the CAWOS Breeding Bird Atlas with many other records as well, including probably 11 pairs at Arclid SQ.

Last summer records from Marton on 5<sup>th</sup> Oct and EHF on 11<sup>th</sup> Oct.

More winter records than usual with one at Crewe GC on 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov and one at Arclid SQ in Oct, Nov and Dec. Also one at EHF and two at FF seen regularly in Nov and Dec.

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

*Common summer visitor.*

An early arrival at Arclid SQ with one there on 28<sup>th</sup> March followed on 2<sup>nd</sup> April by one at EHF and 3<sup>rd</sup> April with one at Lawton Heath End, and then thinly widespread.

Recorded in 24 out of 41 tetrads in the CAWOS Breeding Bird Atlas and six pairs at Arclid SQ.

Last record was one at EHF on 4<sup>th</sup> Sept.

**Goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*)**

*Uncommon resident and winter visitor.*

Increasingly common in winter and records from 26 sites. Also increasingly common as a breeding bird with breeding proved from four sites PF (pair + juvs in the conifer wood by the canal), Quakers Coppice (a nest in a yew tree), Swettenham (four juvs just left the nest, like tiny balls of fluff) and Wybunbury (two juvs seen).

**Firecrest (*Regulus ignicapillus*)**

*Very rare winter visitor.*

One was reported as being seen on 6<sup>th</sup> Feb at the Pallas's Warbler site at Crossley, near Congleton.

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

*Uncommon summer visitor.*

Fortunes continue to improve for this species with records from 19 sites and breeding proved from four, Barthomley, Cheshire's Close, Twemlow Green and Haslington where a pair nested on top of a House Sparrow terrace box in my garden and fledged four.

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

*Common resident.*

High numbers continue with many flocks of around 10 birds seen throughout the area in winter with flocks of 10+ at FF (30+), Tidnock Wood (20), Haslington (18 in the observer's garden), Arclid SQ (17), Doddington (14), Arclid Hollow (13) and Rode Pool (10+). Recorded in 37 out of 43 gardens in the SECOS Winter Garden Bird Survey.

Obviously breeds successfully but juvs only recorded at EHF and Quakers Coppice.

**Blue Tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*)**

*Common resident.*

Nest boxes were used at the following sites:-

Site	Pairs	Eggs laid	Juvs hatched	Juvs fledged
Quakers Coppice	12	103	84	26
Rode Pool	4	39	35	12

Back to disaster after the recovery of 2004! At Quakers Coppice a productivity rate of only 2.2 young per pair compared to a more normal 7.4 young per pair in 2004 but a disastrous 2.5 young per pair in 2003.

As usual this is the most frequently recorded bird in the SECOS Winter Garden Bird Survey.

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

*Common resident.*

Nest boxes were used at the following sites:-

Site	Pairs	Eggs laid	Juvs hatched	Juvs fledged
Quakers Coppice	5	32	23	5
Rode Pool	5	24	23	15

As with Blue Tit it was back to disaster at Quakers Coppice where five pairs only managed to fledge five young, a productivity rate of 1.0 young per pair compared to the more usual 4.4 young per pair in 2004.

Recorded in 40 out of 43 reporting gardens in the SECOS Winter Garden Bird Survey with a max of 25 in a Middlewich garden.

**Coal Tit** (*Periparus ater*)

*Fairly common resident.*

Recorded from 38 out of 43 gardens in the SECOS Winter Garden Bird Survey and many records in the breeding season but juvs only seen at PF in the conifer wood by the canal.

**Willow Tit** (*Poecile montanus*)

*Scarce resident.*

Recorded during the breeding season at Congleton, Doddington Park (two pairs), Sandbach and Arclid SQ with winter records from a further four sites.

**Marsh Tit** (*Poecile palustris*)

*Rare visitor.*

Amazingly the bird first recorded on the feeders at Rode Pool on 17<sup>th</sup> Sept 2002 has been present there ever since. Recorded in most weeks, summer and winter, it has never been seen with another Marsh Tit and so presumably has never bred.

**Nuthatch** (*Sitta europaea*)

*Common resident.*

Quite widespread with records from 20 tetrads in the CAWOS Breeding Bird Atlas. Breeding proved at Arclid SQ for the first time. At Quakers Coppice a pair laid four eggs in a nest box but the juvs died although two other pairs bred in natural sites.

Recorded in 11 out of 43 gardens in the SECOS Winter Garden Bird Survey with a max of four in a Shavington garden.

**Treecreeper** (*Certhia familiaris*)

*Common resident.*

Quite common and widespread but this inconspicuous little brown job is always under-recorded. Proved breeding at Quakers Coppice where a pair were watched feeding young behind loose bark on a sweet chestnut and at Doddington Pool where a pair nested behind a plank in the bird hide for the fourth consecutive year and fledged at least two, possibly four, young.

**Jay** (*Garrulus glandarius*)

*Uncommon resident.*

Understandable for Treecreeper, but not so for the brightly coloured and conspicuous Jay, but this is also under-recorded with records from only 12 sites.

In the autumn acorn-burying season they were so numerous it was not possible to drive round the country lanes without seeing a Jay with an acorn in its bill!

Breeding proved at Taxmere where adults seen with young.

**Magpie** (*Pica pica*)

*Common resident.*

A very obvious and common breeding bird. The only recorded winter flocks were 48 in Jan going to roost in the ancient hedge in Crewe Business Park and 24 in Dec at PHF.

**Jackdaw** (*Corvus monedula*)

*Common resident and winter visitor.*

A common breeder, particularly round old buildings, with for example 25 pairs in Doddington Hall and a further 20 pairs in the old tower there.

A pair in the wood at Rode Pool provided some entertainment as they had a battle with two squirrels for over two weeks for possession of a nesting hole in an oak tree – eventually the squirrels won!

Large counts recorded were 330 east over Tidnock Wood on 10<sup>th</sup> July, presumably to Danes Moss roost, 240 over the woods at Rode Pool in Oct and 190 over PHF in Dec.

**Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*)**

*Common resident.*

The total nests at regularly counted rookeries were:-

Site	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001
Crewe/Alsager (9 sites)	500	511	537	528	566
Foden's Flash	131	121	126	117	n.c.
Arclid	80	77	81	93	82

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

*Common resident.*

Easily held on to its title of 'the most ignored species in the area'! Apart from the Breeding Bird Atlas, just four records were received.

**Raven (*Corvus corax*)**

*Scarce visitor and resident.*

The big increases of the past few years were maintained with similar records this year to last year.

The only proved successful breeding was at Rode Hall estate where a pair fledged at least one but probably two juvs. The pair that first nested in our area, at Timbersbrook, probably bred again but I have no records. The pair at Doddington was noted during the breeding season but no breeding proved.

Flyovers on 16 days at the flashes with a max of five together over MGT on 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct and flyover records from eight other sites with a max of six at North Rode on 25<sup>th</sup> Aug.

**Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)**

*Common resident and abundant winter visitor.*

Still recorded in most tetrads in the CAWOS Breeding Bird Atlas. Winter roosts recorded from Winterley (1000 to 2000 in leylandii), Haslington (500 in a holly hedge) and Crewe (350 in a leylandii hedge).

The largest feeding flock was 750 in fields by Arclid SQ in Feb.

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

*Common resident.*

Recorded in 42 out of 43 gardens in the SECOS Winter Garden Bird Survey with a max of 38 at Blakelow. Largest other counts were from a Haslington garden where eight pairs bred in eight nest boxes and up to 50 present in winter.

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

*Fairly common resident.*

Numbers continue to increase with records from 23 sites (17 in 2004 and 15 in 2003). Breeding season records from most of these and breeding proved at five of them.

Max number counted at the flashes feeding station was around 20 at any one time but probably many more in total since they are difficult to count there.

In the second winter period around 35 in the usual site at MGT but eclipsed by a huge flock of around 200 in a hedge near Crabmill Flash. They were attracted by a food supply of an adjacent game cover crop of quinea plus extra food put down by the shooting syndicate.

**Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*)**

*Common resident and winter visitor.*

Common throughout the area with flocks in the winter of 120 at Doddington, 100 at Cranage and at least 60 at CF on the same food source as the Tree Sparrows.

Recorded in 41 out of 43 gardens in the SECOS Winter Garden Bird Survey with a max of 21 at Swettenham. Widespread breeder, recorded in most tetrads.

**Brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*)**

*Scarce winter visitor.*

Only three records in the first winter period with two at Alsager, one at Haslington and at FFF.

Records from eight sites in the second winter period with Crewe Business Park (1), Doddington Pool (1), Doddington Park (1), Haslington (1), Marton (3), MGT (6 over), WLF (1 over), EHF (1) and CF (3 with the Chaffinch/Tree Sparrow flock).

**Greenfinch** (*Carduelis chloris*)

*Common resident.*

A very common finch, recorded in 39 out of 43 gardens in the SECOS Winter Garden Bird Survey with a max of 30 in a Middlewich garden.

Winter flocks at Alsager (200), Crewe Business Park (160 going in to roost in laurel bushes), Crewe (150 going to roost also in laurels), WLF (54).

**Goldfinch** (*Carduelis carduelis*)

*Fairly common resident.*

Maintaining its increased numbers there were many flocks of 10 to 30 birds recorded. One huge flock of around 200 birds on MGT in Sept reduced to around 75 by Nov. Also 40 at Alsager.

Recorded in 28 out of 43 gardens in the SECOS Winter Garden Bird Survey with a max of 34 in a Crewe garden.

**Siskin** (*Carduelis spinus*)

*Uncommon winter visitor and scarce resident.*

A very poor first winter period with only three records of singles plus records from five gardens out of 43 in the SECOS Winter Garden Bird Survey with a max of two in Feb.

Many more records in the second winter period with records from 14 sites including Arclid SQ (60), Crewe (30), Crewe GC (30), Blakenhall (16), FF (16), Haslington (14) and MGT (14).

**Linnet** (*Carduelis cannabina*)

*Fairly common resident.*

Records from 17 sites this year compared to 20 in 2004 and 24 in 2003. However there were some large winter flocks at regular sites. In the first winter period a large flock of 420 at Doddington in Feb, 100 at Hough and 40 at Crewe Business Park.

In the second winter period there was a huge flock of 590 at Doddington feeding on oil seed rape stubble and perching on wires. These reduced to 120 by Nov. Also 115 at MGT in Sept and Oct, 60 at Smethwick Green in Dec, 40 at Alsager in July and 200 at Congleton in Aug.

**Lesser Redpoll** (*Carduelis cabaret*)

*Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor.*

Records from only five sites in the first winter period including seven at Arclid SQ and just one or two at other sites.

A minor improvement in the second winter period with records from seven sites including 22 at Arclid SQ, and 15 along Macon Meadows, Crewe.

**Crossbill** (*Loxia curvirostra*)

*Very rare visitor.*

Birds heard calling on The Cloud on 21<sup>st</sup> June, then a single flying over Sandbach Park on 14<sup>th</sup> July.

Six together over MGT on 22<sup>nd</sup> Oct.

**Bullfinch** (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*)

*Uncommon resident.*

A wide spread of records throughout the year from many sites. Generally four or less in the group but eight at FF in Jan was exceptional.

Recorded in 11 out of 43 reporting gardens in the SECOS Winter Garden Bird Survey with a max of eight in a Middlewich garden.

**Yellowhammer** (*Emberiza citrinella*)

*Uncommon resident.*

Once again an increase in records with pairs in the breeding season reported from 29 sites compared to 24 in 2004 and 18 in 2003.

Winter flocks reported of 25+ at Arclid SQ, 22 at Sproston and 21 at Haslington.

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

*Uncommon resident.*

Counts in the first winter period of 20 at Doddington, 15+ at Arclid SQ and 15 at MGT/RF.

No record of singing males at Sandbach Flashes this year but 11 at Arclid SQ was similar to the highest number of recent years. Also one or two singing males at around 17 other sites.

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

*Scarce resident.*

One, and occasionally two, singing males at Marton from April to June. Also one here in Dec. One singing male in May near Hough, very close to last year's sightings in this area. One on 30<sup>th</sup> July at Alsager.

### **Category E Species – Introductions or Escapes**

**Wood Duck** (*Aix sponsa*)

A male was present on the Trent & Mersey Canal near Hassall Green at least throughout Nov.

A pair were together on PHF on 6<sup>th</sup> Dec. Free-flying birds, they possibly came for a day out from a nearby wild fowl collection.

**Paradise Shelduck** (*Tadorna can*)

A female of probably this species was at Arclid SQ on 26<sup>th</sup> April and was paired with a male Common Shelduck.

**White-cheeked Pintail** (*Anas bahamensis*)

One seen at Doddington Pool several times during Feb, on 17<sup>th</sup> March and 31<sup>st</sup> Dec, was probably a female.

**COORDINATED COUNT AT ALL SANDBACH FLASHES ON 9<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2005**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Flashes	15	16	Total
Little Grebe						1									1 (0)			1
G't Crested Grebe	1	1	1		1		12					3	5		24 (21)	3	2	29
Cormorant					4							19			23 (10)	1	3	27
Grey Heron			1	1			1					4	2	1	10 (4)		4	14
Mute Swan		2										2	3		7 (21)	36		43
Pink-footed Goose												1			1 (0)			1
Greylag Goose				1											1 (0)			1
Canada Goose	103			18	25		3					341			490 (323)	55	14	559
Shelduck			2		7	21									30 (16)			30
Wigeon	18	59			126	204						344			751 (453)			751
Mallard	18	2	8	2	2	124	2		4	14	1	30	1		206 (415)	86	236	528
Teal	2	7	33		32	422						75		22	613 (292)		13	626
Pintail						23						2			25 (4)			25
Shoveler				3		18									22 (4)			22
Pochard						7									7 (2)	11		18
Tufted Duck												17			19 (22)	19		38
Ruddy Duck					2							1			1 (0)			1
Water Rail	1														1 (0)			1
Moorhen	7	4	4	3	5	11	13					6	13		66 (53)	21	0	87
Coot	7	16	6	6	15	26	44	2	2		1	41	54		220 (191)	33	7	260
Lapwing						648									648 (526)			648
Jack Snipe														3	3 (0)			3
Snipe	14			61		4								34	116 (14)		2	118
Woodcock															0 (0)		1	1
Curlew					7	46	11								64 (52)			52
Ruff					6	7									13 (11)			13
Redshank						9									9 (5)			9
Black-headed Gull						75	54								841 (857)	94	300	1235
Common Gull				2											2 (4)			2
Lesser B'backed Gull				46		2									48 (67)			48
Herring Gull				145		5									150 (83)			150
Great B'backed Gull				16		2									18 (0)			18

Flashes numbers in brackets are from Jan 2004 during very cold but not freezing weather.

**SOUTH EAST CHESHIRE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

Total of all birds excluding gulls: sites 1-14 = 3369 (2440 in 2004) & sites 1-16 = 3906 (3629)  
 On the count date the weather was average for January, cold but not freezing.

- 1 Groby Flash
- 2 Oaktree Flash
- 3 Railway Flash
- 4 Fields Farm Flash
- 5 Pump House Flash
- 6 Elton Hall Flash
- 7 Watch Lane Flash
- 8 Red Lane Pool
- 9 Canal Pool
- 10 Fodens Flash
- 11 Plex Flash
- 12 Crabmill Flash
- 13 Warringham Flash
- 14 Tetton Lane Flash
- 15 Winterley Pool
- 16 Arclid Sand Quarry

## GREY PHALAROPE AT DODDINGTON POOL ON 4<sup>TH</sup> & 5<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2005

On Friday 4 November 2005 David Meakin and I were doing our weekly check of the birds at Doddington Pool. Having checked Lemon Pool we moved over to the main pool and decided to split up to check different sections of the water. After only two minutes, as I approached the hide, Dave rang to say that he was looking at a phalarope just 15 metres off the bank. Breaking into a sweat I broke the world record for the 300 yard hobble (still on sticks following a hip replacement operation!) but no worry, the bird was still there.

It proved to be very confiding, ignoring us as it moved up and down the water and down to 5 metres distance. It was disturbed once by a pair of arguing Great Crested Grebes that surfaced under the bird, causing it to fly off across the water towards the gathering gull roost. There it was gently mobbed by one gull, flew a few yards, landed and was mobbed again. This was repeated several times until the bird flew back to its original quiet area. Later on it had a further inter-action with the gulls. The phalarope was feeding with the usual action of rapid pecking at the surface of the water, moving its head from side to side as it moved about, when a gull swam up to within inches of it but did not threaten it. This was followed by another gull, then another and ultimately there were up to 10 gulls swimming very close to the phalarope, following its every move. Finally the bird flew a few yards and the gulls lost interest, having left me with the impression that they were more curious than threatening.

We watched the bird from 14-55 to around 17-00, and took the following description:

An obvious phalarope, the relatively large black bill was clearly seen even without binoculars and so it was identified as a Grey Phalarope, and after checking the plumage, as an adult in winter plumage.

Mainly a grey and white bird with a complex black and white head pattern with the boundaries not clearly defined. A white head with a large oval black patch around, behind and below the eye. A white streak above this patch separated it from the black feathering starting at the sides of the crown, meeting at the nape and going narrowly down the centre of the hind neck and just reaching the back.

The mantle was a plain mid-grey, scapulars and coverts the same mid-grey but with pale grey/white fringes. Underparts were plain white.

In flight the prominent white wing bar was clearly seen and a hint of a dark central rump patch noted.

The bill was relatively large and appeared all black, the eye was black and the legs were not seen. The bird was not heard to call.

The bird was present all day Saturday and was seen by numerous observers but could not be relocated on the Sunday and was not seen again.

Colin Lythgoe and David Meakin

## GREY PHALAROPE AT DODDINGTON POOL ON 11<sup>TH</sup> & 12<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2005

On 11<sup>th</sup> November I was driving to Doddington to meet David Meakin to do our regular count of the birds there. Whilst driving I was wondering what we could possibly see to match the Grey Phalarope that we had there last week. Various possibilities passed through my mind but none matched what I actually found when I arrived, to see Dave scoping another Grey Phalarope!

A quick inspection revealed that the bird was in 1<sup>st</sup> winter plumage and so different than last week's bird – two Grey Phalaropes in two weeks!

It's behaviour was very similar to last week's bird, favouring the sheltered water under the lee of the rhododendrons on the wooded bank. The bird was watched from 13-15 to 16-00 during which it spent all of its time feeding, continuously moving its head from side to side, picking insects from the surface of the water.

By an amazing stroke of fortune it favoured the patch of open water in front of the hide, giving us incredible close views down to 3 metres as it moved around. The following description was taken:

An obvious phalarope, the relatively heavy black bill showed it to be a Grey Phalarope. It had a black and white head pattern with a black eye patch round and behind the eye, although not as extensive or as black as last week's adult. The centre of the crown was white, rest of the crown black, extending down the nape and the rear neck on to the back.

There were several juvenile plumage black feathers on the back, roughly forming two lines. The scapulars had moulted into adult plumage of grey with pale grey fringes. The coverts showed as a black band under the scapulars on the folded wing, formed by the retained juvenile black/brown feathers, fringed buff. There was a faint orange patch on the throat, only noticeable with a front view and from close up.

A white wing bar was prominent in flight. No call was heard.

Saturday is shooting day at Doddington so I visited at 15-45 to obtain long distance views from the safety of the car park. The phalarope was still present feeding as yesterday, continuously moving from side to side picking insects off the surface of the water under the shelter of the rhododendron covered bank. After a few minutes the shoot started up in the adjacent woods and around 1000 water birds and gulls took off, but the phalarope was not disturbed. Amazingly the shoot got closer to the bird, but with springer spaniels searching the undergrowth and guns firing within 30 metres it continued to feed! Most descriptions of Grey Phalarope contain the comment 'usually very tame' but this was ridiculous!

Breeding on the remote Arctic Ocean coasts of Iceland and Svalbard and wintering at sea off the coast of West Africa it is quite possible that this bird, and last week's bird, had not been close to human beings before. The recent very strong south westerly winds had presumably blown the bird inland.

Colin Lythgoe and David Meakin



## PALLAS'S WARBLER – AN IDENTIFICATION PROBLEM

Around sunset on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> January whilst walking the Macclesfield Canal near Bosley I heard a strange call coming from a tall hedgerow. Still calling the bird moved along the hedge and finally I caught a glimpse. A 'crest surely? Flicking its wings – must be a Firecrest. Then no more views. Overnight, having checked my books, I had discounted Firecrest. On Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> January I returned, about an hour earlier than the previous day. Quite soon I saw it along a high hedgerow along the railway embankment. Binoculars up – it's got eye stripes ... and wing bars. It IS a Firecrest. Then as it flew away a pale yellow rump contrasting with the olive-green mantle became obvious. Do Firecrests have those? (I've not seen the species for a quarter of a century!). Back with the books in the evening I began to realise that it must have been a Pallas's Warbler. So what to do? Phone Steve Barber – he'll know. Steve and Gill visited the following afternoon and confirmed my identification. The rest, as they say, is history.

Richard M. Blindell; extracts from an article in Bird News 66 April 2005.

### PALLAS'S WARBLER NEAR CONGLETON ON 1<sup>ST</sup> FEBRUARY 2005

I received a phone call late the night before to tell me of a Pallas's Warbler near Congleton (at SJ896654), reported on the pager network. I went to the site, along a railway embankment, next morning, arriving at 09-15. Nobody else was on site so I walked slowly along the field edge checking the embankment and hedge.

At 09-30 I saw the bird about 30 metres away in the hedge and working its way towards me. It passed by within 10 metres and continued searching the hedge as it went away from me. I stayed until 10-00 and had several more good views of the bird. The hedgerow trees were very thin and spindly and gave excellent views. Subsequent views were not quite as good as it moved amongst more mature trees and thicker vegetation.

The bird was constantly moving, hopping and fluttering through the hedgerow, flitting about looking for insects, along the hedge into the trees back into the hedge etc. It also made a few swift short darts out flycatching.

The following notes were taken: -

It was a very small, constantly active warbler. The upper parts were generally olive green and underparts white.

The head pattern was very distinctive with broad yellowish supercilia, extending from the forehead back almost on to the nape, and a broad pale yellowish central crown stripe over the crown and on to the nape.

The bird showed two white wing bars; that formed by the white tips of the greater coverts was broader and longer than that formed by the white tips of the median coverts that was thinner and shorter.

When the bird occasionally hovered briefly in front of a branch looking for insects the yellow rump was obvious.

The bill was small, thin and black. The leg colour was not noted.

The bird was not heard to call.

Colin Lythgoe

## CHESHIRE AND WIRRAL BIRD ATLAS

This exciting Bird Atlas project is being coordinated by the county bird club, the Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society. There are over three hundred volunteers involved in surveying all areas of Cheshire and Wirral during 2004 to 2007. The aim is to find all of the species of bird that are breeding, or spending the winter, in each tetrad (2x2 km square). This will allow a fascinating comparison of the changes in our birdlife since the first breeding bird atlas of Cheshire and Wirral, based on fieldwork undertaken in 1978-84. It will also enable the first atlas of winter birds in Cheshire and Wirral to be published. The data will also be used by conservation bodies, in reporting on the progress of Biodiversity Action Plans, and so on.

We are currently halfway through the overall fieldwork period, having completed two of the three years for breeding records and being partway through the second winter period. In total within the county there are around 650 tetrads to be covered of which around 500 have been done for breeding records and around 400 for winter records. So far as SECOS is concerned we have 65 tetrads to survey and of these 57 have been covered for both breeding and winter records, by a fairly even split of SECOS members and non-members. However, I get the feeling that there is not so much enthusiasm for the winter fieldwork! Please do not be put off, winter recording is much easier – no early morning starts, no behaviour to be coded, just stroll around your tetrad and record what you see! Although we still have a few tetrads to cover I have a few volunteers to cover them. However, there is a problem in the south west of the county where, due to the sparsity of the human population, there are still a lot of tetrads to be covered. If you feel that you have covered yours well enough and fancy a change of scenery, please consider doing a tetrad in that area.

There will always be the possibility of varying quality in the results due to observer competence and experience. This is something the organizers are aware of and will be keeping a check on. All you can do is put the hours in and do your best! If I can help in any way then please give me a ring.

- In the previous atlas the average for each tetrad was that 61% of records had two-letter codes and that should be the target in this Atlas. So far in the SECOS area the best figure is 85% and the lowest is around 15%.
- If you have limited time available for fieldwork please concentrate your efforts later in the season. Remember that fieldwork can continue after June – and is essential for some late-breeding species – but be extra careful at this time with recently fledged young.
- To be included as RF juveniles must be still dependent on their parents i.e. being fed; older young may have travelled in from a different tetrad – or county!
- It is also acceptable to get records from residents with local knowledge who can give you reliable information.
- Another source of records not being fully used at the moment is the Supplementary Record Form. If you get a good record outside your tetrad – particularly any two-letter code of the more difficult to record species – please put the details on a Supplementary Record Form and send it to me with your own tetrad records.

Some woodland species are much more widespread than last winter and could provide good opportunities for you to record them, if you have not already done so. The crop of beech mast has been particularly poor, so those species that favour beech seed have moved out of woodland in search of suitable food. Bramblings are the obvious example: the species was reported from only 19 tetrads in 2004/5, and only in small numbers, but Bramblings are now to be found quite widely in a range of habitats.

Siskins were scarce last winter, and many of those that were in the county stayed in the tops of the trees, then headed off early to their Scottish and Continental breeding grounds. This year there are indications that they are now exhausting their preferred coniferous seeds, and are coming into gardens and other sources of food. Lesser Redpolls are also being widely reported.

In terms of habitat it is vitally important to seek out any stubble fields, particularly in the 'desert' of improved grassland of modern dairy farming. An even better source of food for granivorous birds is game cover; it is very attractive, particularly to finches and buntings. Other habitats that are important to look at are farmyards, where there are usually good numbers of sparrows – both House and Tree, and finches and Starlings. Finally don't forget field ponds.

Some interesting facts are emerging from the increased coverage. It is pleasing to see that some species are more common than was previously thought, including Tree Sparrow, Yellow Wagtail and particularly Yellowhammer. However, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker proved more elusive than ever this year with no records at all during the summer. Finally the most satisfying record was probably the Dipper which in 2004 was seen several times on the upper reaches of the River Wheelock near Day Green and was seen again this year, ultimately with a juvenile and so proving successful breeding in this unexpected site.

Colin Lythgoe; SECOS Recorder

## SECOS WINTER GARDEN BIRD SURVEY

The latest survey attracted the highest level of support ever, with forty-four participating. This year saw five new members join and one drop out due to being located overseas. One thousand and fifty-seven bird/week records were produced by the recording team during the twenty-six week period of the survey from October 2004 to the end of March 2005.

In the twenty years since 1985 eighty-four members have taken part at various times. Seventy-four different species of birds have been recorded in gardens over that period.

Once more thanks are extended to the following recorders who provided the data for the survey (in survey membership number order in columns). People listed with names in *italics* provide records but are not SECOS members.

Hilary Clowes	Paul and Margaret Harvey	Avril Watkins
Bryan Perkins	Lorna Pickstock	Alan Robson
John and Wendy Smith	Ann Pym	Bill Bellamy
Janet Grice	George & Barbara Fisher	Ron and Doreen Jones
David and Elaine Meakin	Bill and Betty Brookes	Geoff Yarwood
Glyn Jones	Barbara Hubbard	<i>Derek Leigh</i>
Christine Howarth	Janet and Peter Roberts	<i>Tony Coomer</i>
Stan Wildig	Derek Owen	Paula Birchall
Marie Turner	Alan and Linda Battersby	Cynthia Cadman
Christopher Price	Charles Hull	<i>Howard Nixon</i>
Alan and Joan Soper	Andrew & Doreen Bailey	<i>Brian Sankey</i>
Joan Tilbrook	Gordon Fleet	<i>John &amp; Wendy Fuller</i>
John Thompson	Paddy Bennion	<i>Carole Barclay</i>
Colin Lythgoe	John Goulding	Sylvia Jarvis
Megan McKelvey	John P. Barker	

The ten most common garden birds remain substantially the same as in the last survey. The greenfinch regained a position in the top ten with the chaffinch being ejected. The remaining nine positions were occupied by the same species, again with the usual minor changes to the relative positions as shown below.

Our current most common ten bird species are :-

- 1) Blue Tit [2], 2) Robin [3], 3) Blackbird [1], 4) House Sparrow [6],
- 5) Collared Dove [4], 6) Dunnock [7], 7) Great Tit [5], 8) Wood Pigeon [10],
- 9) Starling [8], 10) Greenfinch [11].

The number in square brackets following the name shows the corresponding position last year.

Siskin records were dramatically reduced in this survey, with only ten records from six gardens with the highest single count of two birds. In the 2003/04 survey there were one hundred and four records from twenty gardens with a highest count of fifteen, which in itself had also been noted as a significant drop from previous years. The statistics extracted from the twenty years of garden bird surveys for house sparrows and starlings continue to show a trend of decreasing headcounts. The number of long-tailed tit visits showed a recovery following last year's decline. Sparrowhawks were recorded as visitors to half of the gardens surveyed, where they were observed taking a variety of small birds and mice as prey. Three gardens were fortunate to host tawny owls.

Trevor Clowes

## EARLY AND LATE DATES FOR SUMMER VISITORS

*The table has been arranged in date order for the '10 year average' arrival dates so that you know what order to expect the visitors in.*

	ARRIVALS			DEPARTURES		
	Date in	10 Year	Earliest	Date in	10 Year	Latest
Species	2005	average	ever	2005	average	ever
Chiffchaff	19-Mar	12-Mar	8-Mar-89	11-Oct	11-Oct	28-Oct-04
Little Ringed Plover	19-Mar	17-Mar	5-Mar-00	04-Sep	2-Sep	16-Oct-85
Sand Martin	20-Mar	20-Mar	12-Mar-89	12-Sep	22-Sep	24-Nov-72
Swallow	28-Mar	26-Mar	19-Mar-00	14-Oct	22-Oct	30-Nov-74
Blackcap	01-Apr	1-Apr	18-Mar-97	02-Oct	17-Sep	2-Oct-05
Willow Warbler	28-Mar	2-Apr	28-Mar-03&05	04-Sep	8-Sep	1-Oct-04
House Martin	08-Apr	4-Apr	25-Mar-95	11-Oct	17-Oct	5-Nov-77
Yellow Wagtail	18-Apr	12-Apr	29-Mar-81	04-Sep	17-Sep	2-Oct-87&04
Lesser Whitethroat	23-Apr	18-Apr	21-Mar-00	16-Sep	13-Sep	1-Oct-98
Reed Warbler	19-Apr	19-Apr	12-Apr-97	nr	18-Sep	4-Oct-98
Sedge Warbler	24-Apr	20-Apr	16-Apr-80	nr	1-Sep	1-Oct-78
Whitethroat	21-Apr	21-Apr	15-Apr-93	02-Sep	5-Sep	21-Sep-93
Cuckoo	16-Apr	21-Apr	5-Apr-82	nr	17-Aug	1-Oct-86
Swift	26-Apr	24-Apr	16-Apr-96	06-Sep	10-Sep	3-Nov-78
Garden Warbler	26-Apr	26-Apr	20-Apr-96	nr	19-Aug	20-Sep-04
Hobby	01-May	5-May	27-Mar-94	23-Sep	25-Sep	8-Oct-00
Grasshopper Warbler	29-Apr	10-May	25-Apr-93	nr	none	30/8/??

I have selected 17 species in total, these being summer visitors that 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 usually 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 that move here from the continent, whilst our summering birds migrate south. Therefore these two species do fit my criteria for inclusion.

Little change this year with the earliest ever date for Willow Warbler of 28<sup>th</sup> March being equalled and the latest date for Blackcap being extended by one day to 2<sup>nd</sup> October. There did seem to be a clearer gap between summer and winter visitors for Blackcap and Chiffchaff this year. Grasshopper Warbler just hangs on with only two records this year.

Two 10-year average dates have moved with Blackcap going from 2<sup>nd</sup> April to 1<sup>st</sup> April and Sedge Warbler from 21<sup>st</sup> April to 20<sup>th</sup> April and so these two species have moved up the table. Arrivals to mid April were later than average due to poor weather. All three hirundine species seemed to depart around 10 days earlier than the 10 year average. There were few usable late dates for warbler species – gone early or not noticed?