

SANDBACH FLASHES 2013 BIRD REPORT



Long-eared Owl

Editorial
(Andy Firth)

Another excellent year's birding at the flashes with 156 species being recorded, not quite up to arguably what is the best ever flashes year of 2012 when 161 species were seen and two new species were added to the patch list but still a fantastic return. Highlights were plentiful and although most of the goodies were either briefly seen or stayed but only distant views were had highlights included Gannet, Hoopoe and Stilt Sandpiper with supporting cast of Brent Goose, Glossy Ibis, Temminck's Stint and Long-eared Owl amongst others.

One observer saw all five species of regular British owls within the flashes area which may be unprecedented as a feat. I have included in the report an updated article I produced originally in 2009 for CAWOS on the status of waders at the flashes prompted by seeing the Stilt Sandpiper and the Temminck's Stint found this year at Elton Hall Flash by DN. In preparing this year's report I enjoyed reading some of the finder's accounts from the earlier SECOS reports and have included a couple to bring back memories from the turn of the century. The early and late dates are included for all the regular migrants.

The images in the report were kindly supplied by Dennis Swaby excepting the Long-eared Owl (Bob Brown) and Stilt Sandpiper (Ian Grant) so thanks to all three for allowing me to use them to brighten up the report. As always thanks to everybody who supplies sightings via the Elton Hall Flash log book as this is the sole source of information for the report so if it's not in the book it's not in the report. If there are any omissions that were in the log book but not in the report that is my mistake. Any articles for inclusion in future reports would be most welcome.

EARLY AND LATE DATES FOR SUMMER VISITORS

The table has been arranged in date order for the '10 year average' arrival dates for the SECOS recording area as I don't have specific Sandbach Flashes information. Note that the latest ever SECOS record for Lesser Whitethroat has been updated below as I was informed of a record on 8th Oct within the SECOS recording area.

Species	ARRIVALS		DEPARTURES	
	Date in 2013	Earliest Ever SECOS	Date in 2013	Latest Ever SECOS
Little Ringed Plover	29-Mar	05-Mar-00	29-Jul	16-Oct-85
Sand Martin	07-Apr	11-Mar-08	21-Sep	24-Nov-72
Swallow	10-Apr	10-Feb-07	09-Oct	30-Nov-74
Willow Warbler	13-Apr	21-Mar-09	22-Aug	27-Sep-08
House Martin	10-Apr	25-Mar-95	26-Sep	05-Nov-77
Yellow Wagtail	11-Apr	29-Mar-81	20-Aug	27-Oct-06
Lesser Whitethroat	21-Apr	21-Mar-00	09-Sep	08-Oct-13
Reed Warbler	22-Apr	10-Apr-11	10-Sep	04-Oct-98
Common Whitethroat	20-Apr	11-Apr-09	08-Sep	22-Sep-11
Sedge Warbler	22-Apr	10-Apr-11	01-Aug	01-Oct-78/11
Swift	24-Apr	05-Apr-82	31-Aug	03-Nov-78
Cuckoo	NR	16-Apr-96	NR	01-Oct-86
Garden Warbler	29-Apr	16-Apr-09	23-Aug	09-Sep-83
Hobby	28-Apr	27-Mar-94	15-Sep	08-Oct-00
Grasshopper Warbler	21-Apr	15-Apr-09	NR	25-Sep-10

WADERS AT SANDBACH FLASHES

Sandbach Flashes is one of the better known and watched sites in inland Cheshire with the site being visited each and every day throughout the year by one or more of the dedicated locals and also some visitors from further away within Cheshire, and occasional birders from Staffordshire. To many of the local birders the waders, which are unpredictable in occurrence and challenging to identify (with the distance they are often viewed by the observers) being the highlight of any visit.

An incredible FORTY species of wader has been recorded at the Flashes which has less than five regular or even one off breeding species. For an inland site away from any major river this is very impressive. The number of species varies each year from approximately eighteen in a poor year to twenty five or so in a good year. The months that make or break a year are undoubtedly May but especially August and September.

If one is really lucky a flock of waders may touchdown in May and contain Dunlin, Ringed Plover and Sanderling or even a Turnstone but this is very unusual and the fare is usually much more mundane. This may seem fairly insignificant to a patch birder watching the coast of the Wirral but is the highlight of any spring day inland. August and September are the months for wader passage with scruffy looking adults of a dozen or so species followed by their immaculately marked offspring.

In the current era it is Elton Hall Flash (SJ727597) incorporating the 'salt pan' which is by far the most productive site for wading birds but previously Watch Lane Flash (SJ727606) was equally as rewarding until the water levels started being maintained at an artificially high level by the anglers for their sport. Now Watch Lane Flash produces little more than the odd Common Sandpiper and Oystercatcher. When water levels are low in spring and autumn the edges of the two Railway Flashes (SJ718585) and Pump House Flash (SJ723595) become exposed and these can still attract the odd species and the railway flashes being quite difficult to observe are somewhat under watched and may still produce more than is actually recorded.

Elton Hall Flash has changed markedly even in the fifteen years or so that I have been watching the flashes area and the main area (the salt pan) is flooded frequently in all seasons by the river which passes adjacent to the site, this is putting layer after layer of silt onto the salt pan but so far this seems to not be affecting the attractiveness of the site for the birds. There has also been a rapid colonisation of willow scrub.

Breeding Species

A pitiful list for such a productive site for passage birds with Lapwing (less than ten pairs) the only regular breeder and these tend to suffer from the farmers plough or the ever present corvids, gulls and foxes notwithstanding the unpredictable water levels. Little Ringed Plovers have bred but not in recent years although most years are seen displaying and copulating, once again the unpredictable water levels are probably to blame for this behaviour not leading to successful breeding. A pair of Ringed Plovers also tried and failed recently. Oystercatchers may breed somewhere in the Sandbach Flashes area but this is as yet not proven. It is very unlikely that the situation for breeding waders will improve in the foreseeable future with no management of the site.

Spring Passage

Small parties of Dunlin and Ringed Plover are annually recorded in April and/or May. From early March Oystercatchers are ever present. Redshank and Common Sandpiper are also seen every spring. Greenshanks are recorded nearly every spring but Sanderling is more unpredictable with records annual for ten or so years and then none for three or so consecutive years. Recent years have seen an increase in Avocet sightings in line with the increasing North West population and if a Grey Plover or Bar Tailed Godwit is to appear May is the best bet. The majority of Whimbrel records are in May and Turnstone if it is to occur will be most likely seen in this month. Little Ringed Plovers arrive each March and are present throughout the spring period. The diminutive Temminck's Stint has been recorded on at least 15 occasions in May but sadly only twice in the last decade. The Black Tailed Godwit has seen the most amazing change with numbers increasing and non breeding birds of the Icelandic race present in most months although this recent upsurge appears to be decreasing. Evidence of the birds having fledged in Iceland having been proven with several colour ringed birds seen from that population.

Autumn Passage

Without doubt for me personally August and September are the best months and most of the locals visit Elton Hall Flash as much as time and family commitments allow. There cannot be many better sights for an inland birder (or any birder come to that) than a flock of pristine juvenile Curlew Sandpipers and/or Little Stints probing around the water's edge of their local patch. Unfortunately in the last four or five years this has not occurred but hope springs eternal. Wood Sandpipers grace the flashes most years and often stay for some time. September is statistically the best for Knot although this species can turn up in almost any month outside midsummer. In the last decade Pectoral Sandpiper did become quite regular with records approximately every other year this now seems to have tailed off. From late July through to September Green Sandpipers are always present and numbers could be quite significant regionally as between six and twelve birds are present between late July and late September, presumably these are birds passing through so the numbers could be quite large. Ruffs appear every August with moulting adults followed by smart juveniles. The Ruff in particular can stay for long periods and individuals can be watched turning from peachy juveniles to the typical pale looking adults throughout autumn and into winter. The male birds always outnumber the females.

Winter Visitors

A flock of a thousand plus Lapwing is present in winter with usually between eight and twelve Ruff for company though this number seems to be reducing each year and three or four is now the expected return. Golden Plover are becoming rare but are still present intermittently in winter. Common Snipe are present sometimes in large numbers although there are probably many more present than are actually recorded and Jack Snipe and Woodcock can be found with some effort. The winter Curlew flock usually numbers around sixty and ranges widely between all the flashes. Little Stint, Knot and Grey Plover have been recorded in the winter months but it is unusual and one would be very lucky to come across anything other than the species mentioned earlier.

Rarities

The list is impressive with all three Phalaropes having been recorded and on one day in 1962 both Red Necked and Wilson's were present on the same day. In 1993 a party of three Black Winged Stilts dropped into Pump House Flash. A White Rumped Sandpiper in 1980 and Stilt Sandpiper in 1984 were the only flashes records of each species until this year with the second Stilt Sandpiper. Of all the species which have visited the flashes for me the ones I would have most like to have seen were the 1983 Upland Sandpiper and the 1990 Marsh Sandpiper. Two records of both Lesser Yellowlegs and Spotted Sandpiper with one of each in the last decade have kept the more recent patch watchers happy. The Spotted Sandpiper's and Upland Sandpiper are the only Cheshire and Wirral records and the Wilson's Phalarope was the first for the county.

The Future

It is most unlikely that the habitat will improve to allow more species to breed and the constant flooding of Elton Hall Flash may reduce its attractiveness to passage birds but as yet this has not materialised and most species from short billed Little Ringed Plover to long billed species such as Black Tailed Godwit can be observed actively feeding when present. With the continued observer coverage hopefully very little will be missed. Of the species yet to occur how about a Pratincole, one of the Lesser Golden Plovers, Broad Billed, Bairds or Terek Sandpiper or even a Long Billed Dowitcher. Who knows but hopefully whatever it is I'll be there when it drops in.

Species List

Eurasian Oystercatcher, Black Winged Stilt, Pied Avocet, Little Ringed Plover, Common Ringed Plover, Kentish Plover, European Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Northern Lapwing, Red Knot, Sanderling, Little Stint, Temminck's Stint, White Rumped Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper, Dunlin, Stilt Sandpiper, Ruff, Jack Snipe, Common Snipe, Eurasian Woodcock, Black-Tailed Godwit, Bar-Tailed Godwit, Whimbrel, Eurasian Curlew, Upland Sandpiper, Spotted Redshank, Common Redshank, Marsh Sandpiper, Common Greenshank, Lesser Yellowlegs, Green Sandpiper, Wood Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, Spotted Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone, Wilson's Phalarope, Red-Necked Phalarope, Red (Grey) Phalarope.

A BLAST FROM THE PAST 1999

Avocets at Sandbach Flashes 1st May 1999 by Ian Mumford

After a very ordinary couple of hours at Foden's Flash and Watch Lane Flash, I moved round to Elton Hall Flash. The only birds of note were two Common Sandpipers and a summer plumaged Dunlin. I then walked down the road to Pump House Flash and after a brief scan over the water all I noticed was a Cormorant. I carried on down the road to view the very right hand corner of PHF. The first thing I put my binoculars on to my amazement were two Avocets'. It was now about 10:30 am. They appeared quite settled on the mud and after a short period they started displaying and copulating.

I had seen no other birder's today due to a North Wales' twitch by the locals, so I only managed to contact Dave Norbury who arrived post-haste. By about 11:45 am the news was on Birdnet which then brought a steady flow of birders. These birds stayed until the 6th May. The last Avocet's at Sandbach Flashes were in May 1974, which I was lucky enough to see as well.

Footnote: - The above article demonstrates the changing fortune of this species with Avocet rapidly approaching annual status at the flashes; this record caused some speed limits to be broken by observers coming back from North Wales.

Night Heron at Sandbach Flashes 2nd June 1999 by Ian Mumford

A trip to Elton Hall Flash this evening seemed worthwhile after the earlier heavy rain. Along with Dave Norbury we had found a few waders including Ringed and Little Ringed Plover and six Black Tailed Godwits. At about 7:10 pm two Black Headed Gulls were calling loudly towards the railway line, and it was apparent they were mobbing a much larger Heron-like bird. As they came nearer we could see this bird was pale grey on the upperparts and buffish on the underparts. More features became clear as the bird circled, a dark grey crown and trailing yellow cream legs and a stout black bill. Also noted was some spotting on the wing coverts. I realised immediately that the bird was a Night Heron. The Night Heron flew on very stiff wings and was very agile. After some fifteen laps of Elton Hall Flash the bird landed in the willow scrub with the gulls still in pursuit. With the lack of a black crown I aged this bird as a 1st summer.

After the bird landed it could not be relocated so I went to the phone and alerted as many people as possible. Arriving back at Elton Hall Flash Dave had found the Night Heron near the top of the willows. A few people saw the bird before it moved into deeper cover. After around thirty minutes with the number of birders increasing, the Night Heron flew out into the open on the edge of the river. Everyone who made the trip had good views of the bird until at 9:30 pm it flew back further towards the railway line and was not re-located in the now fading light.

Footnote: - The bird was not seen the next morning and remains the only Sandbach Flashes record. The fact that the finder had to "go to the phone" to release the news shows how much times have changed. There is also no truth in the suggestion that it was the finder's last visit to the flashes.

SYSTEMATIC LIST 2013

Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*)

Fairly common resident.

Regular throughout and attempted to breed on RF however no cygnets were reported.

Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*)

Rare winter visitor.

A good year for this increasingly seen visitor, one was over WLF on 21st Mar, one was on WLF on 14th Oct with a party of eight (three adults and five immatures) on EHF on 4th Nov.



Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*)

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant or feral.

Infrequent in the first winter period with the first late winter period skein being recorded over EHF on 28th Sep.

Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*)

Rare visitor or feral.

Not a species to get too excited about but did breed for the first time within the flashes area, with four goslings accompanying a pair on 30th May on WF.

Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*)

Common resident.

Wintering numbers up to 800 and unfortunately a very successful breeding season with broods on all flashes.

Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*)

Rare visitor or feral.

Odd birds as usual regular with the Canada Geese.

Brent Goose (*Branta bernicla*)

Very rare winter visitor.

On 15th Jan one of the dark bellied form was on EHF it stayed until at least 20th Jan but was not easily pinned down and wandered with the Canada Geese flock.

Common Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*)

Uncommon resident and winter visitor.

Just two or three broods recorded this year and several of these young fell to a rather hungry Grey Heron. Wintering numbers between 60 and 70.

Mandarin Duck (*Aix galericulata*)

Scarce visitor.

A difficult species to catch up with this year with just a smattering of individual sightings mainly from EHF.

Eurasian Wigeon (*Anas penelope*)

Common winter visitor.

On 26th Jan 1070 were counted in as near to a co-ordinated count that is possible, the count area covering CF, WLF, EHF and PHF.

Gadwall (*Anas strepera*)

Uncommon winter visitor.

Regular throughout with a pair displaying on 15th May on RF, no breeding evident.



Common Teal (*Anas crecca*)

Common winter visitor. Scarce in summer.

Slightly fewer this year in both winter periods. Counts between 350 and 400 the maximum recorded, but very difficult to assess accurately with the high water levels



Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

Common resident. Abundant in winter.

The first young were noted on EHF on 30th Mar. Numbers up to approximately 600 in Sep on EHF.

Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*)

Uncommon winter visitor.

Wintering numbers continuing to decrease with six the largest count and often only two or three present on EHF.

Garganey (*Anas querquedula*)

Scarce summer visitor.

After last year's successful breeding a very disappointing year with a drake on RF on 16th Apr and a female also on RF on 1st May.

Northern Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*)

Uncommon winter visitor, scarce in summer.

Numbers small in the early winter period with counts in the low twenties. On 3rd Oct 65 were counted on EHF.

Common Pochard (*Aythya ferina*)

Fairly common winter visitor.

Singles and the odd pair seen infrequently on EHF, PHF and CF.

Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*)

Fairly common winter visitor. Scarce breeder.

The only breeding records were from CF and RF. Numbers up to 30 on CF on 30th Mar.

Greater Scaup (*Aythya marila*)

Very rare visitor.

On 15th Oct a drake was on CF and stayed until the following day.

Common Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*)

Uncommon winter visitor.

In the early winter period two females and three drakes, records from EHF, PHF, CF and WLF.

Goosander (*Mergus merganser*)

Regular winter visitor.

A definite levelling off in numbers but still regular this year at EHF and also increasingly on FF.

Red-legged Partridge (*Alectoris rufa*)

Rare except where locally released.

Just occasional records from the CF area. Releases for shooting seem to have stopped.

Grey Partridge (*Perdix perdix*)

Very rare visitor, has bred

On 24th Apr one was seen briefly near to Dragons Lane, this was the first record since 7th May 1998 meaning many of the recent patch watchers are still to see this species.

Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*)

Scarce resident except where locally released.

Commonly seen especially around FF. Bred with two recently fledged juveniles by WLF on 29th Aug.

Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*)

Fairly common resident.

Breeding from CF and RF. An impressive five were on EHF on 27th Feb.

Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*)

Common resident.

Regularly recorded and bred throughout with a successful pair on EHF noteworthy.

Northern Gannet (*Morus bassanus*)

Very rare visitor

The second flashes record was of a juvenile seen over EHF in the early afternoon of 14th Oct. This was during a stormy period of weather and other birds were seen inland. The only other flashes bird was recorded on 6th July 1970.

Great Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

Fairly common winter visitor. Rare in summer.

Recorded regularly throughout (maximum 23), less so in the summer months.

Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*)

Scarce visitor.

After four were recorded in 2012 this year's records as follows, one on 16th Mar EHF, one 2nd July EHF, two 28th July EHF, two 22nd Nov EHF, one 14th Dec EHF, one 15th Dec WLF, one 22nd Dec EHF.

Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)

Common resident.

Regularly recorded throughout particularly from EHF.



White Stork (*Ciconia ciconia*)

Very rare visitor

On 27th Apr one flew over MGT, it was proven not to be from the Maw Green collection.

Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*)

Very rare visitor.

The second for the flashes was one which flew over EHF on 25th Nov; this followed the first for the flashes in 2012 and was located by the same individual who found last year's bird.

Red Kite (*Milvus milvus*)

Scarce visitor.

The first record was of two birds over MGT on 7th Apr, one was over EHF on 10th June with it or another the following day. On 10th Aug another from EHF with another single on 17th Aug. The final one was over EHF on 22nd Aug,

Eurasian Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*)

Common resident.

Regular throughout with breeding recorded. On 8th Oct at EHF a female was seen to strike and kill a Northern Lapwing but was unable to carry it off after dropping it into the water.

Common Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*)

Common resident.

By far the commonest raptor, as with last year soaring birds into double figures regularly recorded.

Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*)

Scarce migrant.

From feast in 2012 to famine this year with a single record unusually from FF on the very early date of 13th Mar.

Common Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*)

Common resident.

Seen regularly throughout the recording area and the third most recorded raptor behind Common Buzzard and Eurasian Sparrowhawk. Breeding though suspected not confirmed this year.

Merlin (*Falco columbarius*)

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

Three records this year with birds as follows WLF 28th Jan, CF 28th Apr, and EHF 27th Oct. An increase on the single in 2012.

Eurasian Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*)

Uncommon summer visitor.

The first record was from CF on 28th Apr then recorded throughout but not regularly until the last on 15th Sep. Again no evidence of breeding in the recording area.

Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*)

Scarce resident and winter visitor.

Seen regularly particularly around EHF/PHF and MGT.

Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*)

Scarce winter visitor.

Once again recorded from the RF area with birds seen or heard in every month but also recorded from EHF, PHF and FF. No proven breeding but strongly suspected.

Common Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*)

Common resident.

No change in status, breeding records from all the main flashes.

Common Coot (*Fulica atra*)

Common resident and variable winter visitor.

The largest count from a combination of CF, WLF, EHF and PHF was 167 on 26th Jan. Breeding from most of the flashes noted.

Eurasian Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*)

Scarce winter visitor and uncommon summer visitor.

First recorded in mid Feb and then regular throughout although no breeding attempt suspected.

Pied Avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*)

Scarce visitor.

On 18th May three were located on EHF by birders searching for the Temminck's Stint; two were on EHF on 10th June.

Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius*)

Scarce summer visitor. Uncommon spring/autumn migrant.

The ever changing water levels at EHF mean again no breeding attempt. On EHF 20 were counted on 16th Apr. On 13th Aug the first passage juveniles were noted at EHF.



Common Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*)

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

Recorded from EHF but no double figure counts received.

European Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*)

Uncommon winter visitor.

Another poor year with 17 over PHF on 17th Feb and 27 over MGT on 7th Sep being the only double figure counts.

Northern Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*)

Common resident and abundant winter visitor.

Approx 1300 birds from EHF regular in both winter periods could have bred by CF with six pairs seen displaying in Apr but no juveniles subsequently seen.

Sanderling (*Calidris alba*)

Scarce passage migrant.

Just a single record with an adult on PHF on 27th May.

Temminck's Stint (*Calidris temminckii*)

Rare passage migrant

On the morning of 18th May one was on EHF but didn't stay for long and was only seen by four or five locals. This is the first record since 2001.

Curlew Sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*)

Scarce passage migrant.

Between 29th Sep and 4th Oct a juvenile was present commuting between EHF and PHF.



Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*)

Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant.

High water levels meant reduced numbers however 15 were on EHF on 15th May.



Stilt Sandpiper (*Micropalama himantopus*)

Very rare visitor

On 2nd Sep an adult in very advanced moult saw sense and left Marbury, arriving at EHF it stayed until 7th Sep although never giving good views the bird was heavily twitched throughout its stay. This was the second flashes record after the notorious limping bird seen in the summer of 1984.



Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*)

Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant.

Wintering numbers seemingly in terminal decline with four the maximum count, the first returning adult on 21st July, juvenile passage followed but no notable counts.

Jack Snipe (*Lymnocyrtus minimus*)

Scarce winter visitor.

A typical range of records with birds flushed from the RF area totalling eight.

Common Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*)

Uncommon winter visitor and migrant.

On 12th Jan 87 were counted on Tetton Lane marsh. Regular sightings from EHF, PHF and RF.

Eurasian Woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*)

Scarce winter visitor.

Regularly seen from the canal footpath adjacent to FF in the early winter period. On 8th Apr one was seen on the footpath from WLF to Crabmill Lane a particularly late record.

Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*)

Common non breeding resident.

Once again regularly recorded but the flocks of many hundreds appear to be a distant memory with EHF hosting 121 On 20th July being the best count.

Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*)

Scarce passage migrant.

As usual a tricky species to catch up with for the regulars with one on 28th Jul by PHF the only record. A very poor return.

Eurasian Curlew (*Numenius arquata*)

Scarce resident and fairly common winter visitor.

Numbers once again peaked at around 60 throughout the winter periods mainly recorded from EHF.

Spotted Redshank (*Tringa erythropus*)

Rare passage migrant

Just a single in 2013 with one EHF on 28th Aug the only record.

Common Redshank (*Tringa totanus*)

Uncommon visitor and migrant.

A maximum of seven in the early winter period the highest count.

Common Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*)

Uncommon passage migrant.

An excellent return passage with birds present throughout Aug, four on 10th Aug the largest count, this being from EHF.

Green Sandpiper (*Tringa ochropus*)

Scarce winter visitor. Uncommon passage migrant.

Once again common on return passage with birds ever present in July, Aug and Sep maximum 11.



Wood Sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*)

Scarce passage migrant.

As in 2012 this species just managed to sneak onto the year list with an adult on PHF on 26th Apr the only sighting. Spring sightings are most unusual so this was most welcome.

Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*)

Fairly common passage migrant.

The first were three on EHF on 15th Apr, 11 were also on EHF on 18th Apr, and this is an exceptional count for the flashes, frequently reported until the last on 16th Aug.

Mediterranean Gull (*Larus melanocephalus*)

Scarce visitor.

Two adults were on EHF on 12th Jan and then fifteen sightings throughout 2013 mainly from EHF.

Little Gull (*Larus minutus*)

Rare visitor.

One was over EHF on 6th Apr, on 18th May a 1st sum arrived on EHF and what was presumably the same bird was seen intermittently through to 17th Jun.

Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*)

Abundant autumn and winter visitor.

After breeding for the first time in 2012, no follow up this year. Wintering birds up to 2000 and the first returning juvenile on 21st Jun.

Common Gull (*Larus canus*)

Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant.

Once again no large counts recorded this year in either passage periods.

Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*)

Fairly common winter visitor. Uncommon summer visitor.

No change with up to 800 recorded at RF/MGT, intermedius birds occasional on EHF. Fresh juveniles seen on PHF presumably birds from the burgeoning colony in nearby Crewe.

Yellow-legged Gull (*Larus michahellis*)

Regular passage migrant.

Regular from EHF and PHF, largest count being nine on PHF 30th July.

Caspian Gull (*Larus cachinnans*)

Scarce visitor.

Records in 2013, an adult EHF on 17th Jan, adult 16th Feb PHF, adult 18th Mar PHF, 1st sum 15th May PHF, adult and 2nd w 21st Dec PHF.

Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*)

Fairly common winter visitor. Uncommon summer visitor.

Approx 1200 were recorded at MGT/RF on 12st Jan, reports of argentatus birds regular in both winter periods

Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucooides*)

Scarce winter visitor.

An adult was on PHF on 12th Jan, on 15th Feb a 1st w on PHF, another 1st w on MGT then PHF on 9th Apr

Glaucous Gull (*Larus hyperboreus*)

Scarce winter visitor.

A 1st or 2nd w on PHF 17th Jan, a 1st w between 9th and 27th Feb ranged between MGT, RF, PHF and EHF.

Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*)

Uncommon winter visitor.

On 7th Jan 125 were on PHF with 137 also on PHF on 22nd Dec, the first passage juvenile was seen on PHF on 21st July.

Black-legged Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*)

Scarce passage migrant.

On PHF an adult was found on 9th Mar and was seen again the following day on EHF. The date is typical for this species.

Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*)

Scarce passage migrant.

Just one record with a juvenile at EHF on 10th Sep.

Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*)

Uncommon passage migrant.

No breeding this year and fewer records than usual after the first on 12th May.

Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)

Scarce passage migrant.

RF hosted an adult on 18th Apr.

Feral Pigeon (*Columba livia*)

Common resident.

Regular around EHF throughout.

Stock Dove (*Columba oenas*)

Uncommon resident.

Under recorded but 85 were around EHF on 21st Mar.

Common Woodpigeon (*Columba palumbus*)

Common resident.

Common throughout.

Eurasian Collared Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*)

Common resident.

Common throughout breeding confirmed.

Long-eared Owl (*Asio otus*)

Very rare visitor

Bird of the year for many, certainly in looks, was one seen roosting in bushes by GF marsh on 27th Apr, becoming more visible but not disturbed it stayed all day but there were no subsequent sightings.



Short-eared Owl (*Asia flammeus*)

Scarce passage migrant, winter visitor.

Just one record with a bird in flight around MGT on 17th Apr.

Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*)

Scarce resident.

Only two or three sightings reported in the log book and no reason to believe any more were seen.

Little Owl (*Athene noctua*)

Rare resident.

Again very difficult to find in the recording area with one by Railway Farm on 15th Feb, another sighting from the same area on 11th Nov.

Tawny Owl (*Strix aluco*)

Common resident.

Calling birds heard and seen at FF but the star individual was one which roosted, sometimes in the open from 30th Apr for a week or so adjacent to EHF.

Common Swift (*Apus apus*)

Fairly common summer visitor.

The first record came from EHF on 24th Apr, then regular until the last on 31st Aug.

Common Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*)

Uncommon resident.

Records from EHF, PHF, RF, CF and WLF.

Eurasian Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*)

Very rare visitor.

On the morning of 6th May just after 08:00 am a bird flew over the observers standing adjacent to Hancock's field and continued over the railway towards FFF. There was no subsequent sign of the bird. This is the third flashes record after one in May 1971 and another in October 1985.

Green Woodpecker (*Picus viridis*)

Uncommon resident.

As always with this species difficult to pin down for the regulars with just one record of a very vocal but elusive bird between mid February and late March, seen and heard around WLF, CF and PHF.

Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*)

Common resident.

Commonly recorded throughout and regular on the EHF feeders.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopus minor*)

Uncommon resident.

After last year's single this year produced two with the first seen in trees bordering the footpath from Plant Lane to Crabmill Lane on 19th Feb and another from the same footpath on 12th July.

Common Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*)

Fairly common.

Regular from MGT with breeding proven with a recently fledged juvenile seen on 10th Aug.

Sand Martin (*Riparia riparia*)

Fairly common summer visitor.

Commonly seen after the first on the late date of 7th Apr, no evidence of breeding again this year.

Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*)

Common summer visitor.

The first was on 10th Apr and then common throughout. Breeding confirmed.

House Martin (*Delichon urbica*)

Common summer visitor.

The first on 10th Apr then regular throughout with the last on 26th Sep.

Tree Pipit (*Anthus trivialis*)

Very rare passage migrant.

One found on 16th Apr was still present the following day in the MGT area. Another flew over MGT on 25th Apr. On 25th Aug another was seen perched and in flight also adjacent to MGT.

Meadow Pipit (*Anthus pratensis*)

Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant.

A poor year for passage birds but regular in both migration periods, occasional birds in song flight around MGT but these didn't stay to breed. 75 were at MGT on 3rd Nov.

Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava*)

Uncommon passage migrant and summer visitor.

An excellent spring passage culminating in a count of 12 by RF on 22nd Apr, not as common on return passage but still regular around EHF.

Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*)

Fairly common resident and winter visitor.

Seen occasionally but never common particularly around EHF and PHF.

Pied Wagtail (*Motacilla alba yarrellii*)

Fairly common resident.

Commonly recorded throughout the year, "White Wagtails" in Mar, Apr and May. Maximum count 52 MGT on 16th Nov.

Winter Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*)

Abundant resident.

Regular throughout. Breeding confirmed.

Dunnock (*Prunella modularis*)

Common resident.

Regular throughout. Breeding confirmed.

European Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*)

Abundant resident.

Regular throughout. Breeding confirmed.

Common Redstart (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*)

Scarce migrant.

The first was a female in hedgerows by the track leading from WLF to Crabmill Lane on 19th Apr, next was a male in the hedgerows around MGT on 25th Apr. On return passage a juvenile in hedgerows bordering the Crabmill Lane to Plant Lane footpath on 15th July.

Whinchat (*Saxicola rubetra*)

Scarce migrant.

An excellent year for this species with the first a male on MGT on 20th Apr, another the following day at EHF, on 28th Apr there were three on MGT with these individuals or others until 1st May. On 7th Sep an adult and two juveniles were on MGT

Northern Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*)

Uncommon passage migrant.

Not surprisingly after the coldest spring for years the first was recorded on the late date of 15th Apr, only single figure counts with a maximum of nine by CF on 22nd Apr and then a very poor return passage with just eight individuals.

Common Blackbird (*Turdus merula*)

Abundant resident and winter visitor.

Common throughout the area. Breeding confirmed.

Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*)

Common winter visitor.

An under recorded species but regular counts of fifty or so in both winter periods.

Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*)

Fairly common resident.

Regular throughout though not commonly recorded.

Redwing (*Turdus iliacus*)

Common winter visitor.

Flocks of one hundred plus noted in both winter periods,

Mistle Thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*)

Fairly common resident.

Breeding recorded with juveniles by WLF in early May.

Common Grasshopper Warbler (*Locustella naevia*)

Scarce summer visitor.

Very difficult to catch up with this year with just two birds recorded' the first was in scrub adjacent to MGT on 21st Apr, the second by TLF on 24th/25th Apr.

Sedge Warbler (*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*)

Uncommon summer visitor.

Regular around MGT/RF/EHF/WLF, recently fledged juveniles being fed around EHF on 20th June confirming breeding.

Eurasian Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*)

Uncommon summer visitor.

Breeding was confirmed from MGT/RF once again. On 24th May nine were singing in the reed beds surrounding WLF.

Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*)

Common summer visitor. Scarce winter visitor.

Regular throughout the recording area with breeding proven.

Garden Warbler (*Sylvia borin*)

Fairly common summer visitor.

Once again very difficult to find but a bird around EHF on 29th Apr ensured it got onto everybody's year list.

Lesser Whitethroat (*Sylvia curruca*)

Uncommon summer visitor.

On 6th June an adult was feeding young by PHF once again confirming breeding. Another pair also with juveniles by Watch Lane track on 10th June.

Common Whitethroat (*Sylvia communis*)

Common summer visitor.

Regular throughout after the first on 20th Apr.

Common Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*)

Common summer visitor, very rare winter visitor.

Regular throughout though under recorded at least fifteen singing birds on territory though probably more present.



Willow Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*)

Common summer visitor.

Again under recorded but little change suspected, breeding proven with two recently fledged juveniles on 8th June by PHF.

Goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*)

Fairly common resident and winter visitor.

Under recorded with odd singles from the well watched areas.

Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*)

Uncommon summer visitor.

As with 2012 just two recorded with one in hedgerows bordering MGT on 25th Aug and the second in the hedgerow bordering PHF on 5th Sep.

Long-tailed Tit (*Aegithalos caudatus*)

Common resident.

Common throughout. Breeding from FF.



Willow Tit (*Parus montanus*)

Uncommon visitor, has bred

Just a single with one briefly by Watch Lane farm on 14th Mar.

Blue Tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*)

Common resident.

Common throughout. Breeding confirmed.

Great Tit (*Parus major*)

Common resident.

Common throughout. Breeding confirmed.

Coal Tit (*Parus ater*)

Fairly common resident.

Regular throughout.

European Nuthatch (*Sitta europaea*)

Common resident.

Regular around FF but just occasional singles elsewhere

Eurasian Treecreeper (*Certhia familiaris*)

Common resident.

Common again in all suitable habitats. Breeding confirmed.

Eurasian Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*)

Uncommon resident.

Regular singles reported from the FF area but few records from elsewhere.

Common Magpie (*Pica pica*)

Common resident.

Common throughout, breeding proven.

Eurasian Jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*)

Common resident and winter visitor.

Very commonly recorded particularly from MGT with flocks of several hundred not uncommon this year.

Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*)

Common resident.

The rookery still in FF and also commonly seen on MGT.

Carrion Crow (*Corvus corone*)

Common resident.

Common throughout the area once again. Breeding confirmed.

Common Raven (*Corvus corax*)

Scarce visitor and resident.

Hardly causes a stir now with six together over EHF on 22nd Oct however being noteworthy.

Common Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)

Common resident and abundant winter visitor.

A best estimate of the flock around MGT in late Nov was c 2,000, but perhaps many more.

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)

Common resident.

Seen around EHF but only in small numbers. Uncommon elsewhere and barely recorded.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*)

Fairly common resident.

Breeding confirmed again but no notable counts.

Common Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*)

Common resident and winter visitor.

Common throughout again. Breeding confirmed.

Brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*)

Scarce winter visitor.

One on 15th Jan around EHF stayed until 13th Apr, others were over MGT on 7th Apr, EHF on 31st Oct

European Greenfinch (*Carduelis chloris*)

Common resident.

Regular particularly around WLF, on 6th Oct a massive 83 were feeding on small rose hips adjacent to MGT.

European Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*)

Fairly common resident.

Common throughout with 77 on MGT on 6th Oct. Breeding confirmed.

Eurasian Siskin (*Carduelis spinus*)

Uncommon winter visitor and scarce resident.

Regular around FF particularly in the first winter period, odd flyovers elsewhere.

Common Linnet (*Carduelis cannabina*)

Fairly common resident.

Maximum count reported was 66 on MGT 27th Oct. Bred around MGT.

Lesser Redpoll (*Carduelis cabaret*)

Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor.

Regularly recorded from FF, otherwise flyovers particularly from MGT.

Mealy Redpoll (*Carduelis flammea*)

Very rare winter visitor

On 26th Feb one was seen in trees by the track from WLF to Crabmill Lane it could not be relocated subsequently amongst the Lesser Redpolls and Siskin's present.

Common Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*)

Very rare visitor.

A very good year with birds over calling on the following dates, one WLF 4th Jan, one FF 5th Apr, seven MGT 7th Apr, two WLF 29th May, four WLF 20th July, two WLF 1st Aug, one WLF 9th Aug, four FF 28th Dec.

Common Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*)

Uncommon resident.

Recorded regularly again throughout the area.

Yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*)

Uncommon resident.

Up to three singing birds along the railway line but just the odd flyover from MGT otherwise.

Common Reed Bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*)

Uncommon resident.

Common around MGT/RF. Breeding confirmed.