

SANDBACH FLASHES

2016 BIRD REPORT



Whiskered Tern

Editorial (Andy Firth)

The year 2016 gave us 150 species compared with the following from the last few years:-

144 in 2015

142 in 2014

156 in 2013

161 in 2012

Two new species were added to the area list with two very "twitchable" Whiskered Terns and a less co-operative Sabine's Gull. A singing and showy at times Wood Warbler was also a highlight for many. Quite intense coverage of Maw Green Tip and the surrounding area gave the observer some quality rewards with Rock Pipit, Black Redstart and Corn Bunting amongst many other excellent sightings. I have reverted to using the British (English) vernacular name for species as for most local patch workers a Goosander will never be a Common Merganser and a Diver won't be a Loon (not that we see many). I have also taken away the status for individual species as these are subjective and change quite quickly.

The worst wader year in my memory in terms of species was disappointing but was certainly offset by the highlights in the paragraph above.

It is essential for anybody that wishes their finds and or sightings of scarce/rare birds in a Cheshire or national context to appear in the CAWOS report and be considered for national acceptance that the rarity form and/or images are submitted to the county recorder. Particularly descriptions and images of Caspian Gull's would be invaluable in this respect. I will continue to document what is recorded in the log book but unless submitted to the relevant authorities in a county and national context rarities not submitted will be lost.

I have placed at the back of this year's report what is considered the current list of birds of the flashes and hopefully if and when the "Birds of Sandbach Flashes" book is brought up to date this will form the basis of any discussions regarding the legitimacy or not of any named species. Thanks to all who submitted their personal lists which are also included.

Thanks to H J Lea Oaks for once again providing food for the EHF feeders this is welcomed by the local Tree Sparrow population and many other species. Thanks also to the individual birders who also stock the feeders with special thanks to the individual who has set up the one down the side lane; this has been alive with Tree Sparrows. Final thanks to all for entering their sightings in the log book to allow the bird life of the Sandbach Flashes area to continue being documented, very few sites will have records as thorough as our local patch. Note that the flashes are even coming into the 21st century with a website; please visit at www.sandbachflashes.co.uk, well done to those involved in this project.

If anybody would be prepared to make some Tree Sparrow nest boxes these would be gratefully received as our current stock is decaying quickly. I am happy to place them in the relevant areas when made. Once again I have had a couple of hearsay records I have not included because of lack of dates and/or location so please place any records of interest in the log book if at all possible, a second Redstart anyone.

Compilation of this report is becoming more time consuming around work/home because of the amount of welcome information in the log book so any assistance going forward would be much appreciated.

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 prior to the Sandbach Flashes report standing alone and not including other SECOS records as I don't have specific Sandbach Flashes information.

	<i>ARRIVALS</i>		<i>DEPARTURES</i>	
Species	Date in 2016	Earliest Ever SECOS	Date in 2016	Latest Ever SECOS
Little Ringed Plover	30-Mar	05-Mar-00	12-Aug	16-Oct-85
Sand Martin	24-Mar	11-Mar-08	01-Oct	24-Nov-72
Swallow	24-Apr	10-Feb-07	10-Oct	30-Nov-74
Willow Warbler	03-Apr	21-Mar-09	20-Sep	27-Sep-08
House Martin	24-Apr	25-Mar-95	29-Sep	05-Nov-77
Yellow Wagtail	06-Apr	29-Mar-81	06-Sep	27-Oct-06
Lesser Whitethroat	17-Apr	21-Mar-00	02-Sep	08-Oct-13
Reed Warbler	16-Apr	10-Apr-11	20-Sep	04-Oct-98
Common Whitethroat	17-Apr	11-Apr-09	01-Sep	22-Sep-11
Sedge Warbler	16-Apr	10-Apr-11	06-Oct	06-Oct-16
Swift	22-Apr	05-Apr-82	13-Aug	03-Nov-78
Cuckoo	N/R	16-Apr-96	N/R	01-Oct-86
Garden Warbler	03-May	16-Apr-09	09-Aug	09-Sep-83
Hobby	22-Apr	27-Mar-94	28-Sep	08-Oct-00
Grasshopper Warbler	23-Apr	15-Apr-09	NR	25-Sep-10

Note that 2016 gave us the latest ever Sedge Warbler record.

Next new bird for the flashes sweepstake

The next for the flashes once again was correctly predicted in 2016 with Tim Halliday suggesting Whiskered Tern.

Name	Species
Andy Firth	Woodlark
Bryan Perkins	Dipper
Colin Lythgoe	Bluethroat
John Wakefield	Caspian Tern
Russ Stonier	Rose Coloured Starling
Chloe Jones	Black Throated Diver
Paul Hill	Storm Petrel
Dave Norbury	Bonaparte's Gull
Ian Barber	Blue Winged Teal
Dave Meakin	Ring Necked Duck
Mark Stubbs	Cetti's Warbler 2015
Noel Stubbs	Long Billed Dowitcher
Peter Swallow	Little Auk
Tim Halliday	Whiskered Tern 2016
Janet Jones	Common Rosefinch
Joyce Griffith	Ross's Gull
Allan Perkins	American Golden Plover
Ian Marshall	Dotterel
Alan Battersby	Collared Pratincole
Linda Battersby	Ferruginous Duck
Alan Booth	Rough Legged Buzzard
Peter Lunt	Shag
Angela Goodwin	Cattle Egret
Robert Brown	Little Bittern

Whiskered Terns at Elton Hall Flash, 7th May, by Janet Jones.

On 7th May I arrived at Elton Hall Flash at the same time as Andy Goodwin. We both thought conditions of sunny but cool strong easterlies would be ideal for spring migrants or at least a tern or two.

We went to the viewpoint. At 08:15 two darkish terns (along with a Common Tern) appeared from the south over the salt pan looking smaller and shorter tailed also much darker and greyer with black caps. Telescope views showed deep red bills, shorter than the accompanying Common Terns bill, grey throats with darker bellies and ventral areas and white under-tails. The black caps reached to the nape and the legs and feet were red.

We now knew we were on to a good tick, so much so that when Andy jumped up from his chair to find his phone, he fell backwards, missed the chair and found he had forgotten to bring his phone anyway. So it was left to me to put the news out as we agreed there were two Whiskered Terns over Elton Hall Flash. I had seen the two terns we were now watching the previous day at Long Eaton gravel pits. Andy Firth was next on the scene and then many other birders started to arrive and the Whiskered Terns showed all day until at least 20:30.

The Whiskered Terns gave good photographic opportunities all day. The salt pan soon warms up with abundant insects hatching so maybe that is why the birds stayed all day.

This is the first record for the flashes and the sixth record for Cheshire.



Sabines Gull at Elton Hall Flash, 12th July, by Andy Goodwin.

At 11:50 on Tuesday 12th July I picked up an old friend Pete Houston in Haslington and we drove to WLF to try for the Cetti's Warbler. It was Pete's last chance to see it before he returned to Australia on Thursday. With no sight or sound of it by 13:30 and no Dragonflies either we decided to try our luck at EHF. We had been lucky a few days earlier with a summer plumaged Mediterranean Gull which was a new flashes bird for Pete as he emigrated before this species became regular at the flashes.

On arrival at EHF I installed myself in my favourite seat with my tripod and scope between my legs ready for action. John and Tom who had done a sterling job manning the watchpoint before my arrival now left. Plenty of large gulls were passing heading down on to the salt pan so I decided to check any small gulls in the hope of relocating the Mediterranean Gull which Pete drooled over. Smaller gulls are not that regular at the flashes in early July and when I did see one heading over the hawthorns at about 60 yards range it looked small, bright and well patterned with fast wing beats and buoyant flight. Lifting my binoculars I was confronted with an adult Sabines Gull. Its outer primaries were black, the black extending through the primary coverts to the carpal joint. Each primary had a large white terminal spot. The inner primaries and secondaries were pure white and in the sunny conditions was very eye catching. The coverts and mantle were a clean soft dove grey with the curving edge of the greater coverts enhancing the boundary with the white secondaries. The under-wing was also striking with the white primary tips showing and a translucent white patch on the inner primaries. I noticed the bird shake in flight and dangle blackish legs, I cursed to myself as I knew it must have been bathing on PHF. I shouted to Pete and then luckily found it in my scope quickly. I had been fixated by its wing pattern and I hadn't seen much else on the bird.

I could only see its rear as it bounced along towards the dead tree with its fast wing beats, long broad wings, each beat of wings making it rise and fall like a Tern. The legs of my plastic seat started to buckle again, the Whiskered tern episode had weakened them, undeterred I carried on bravely. The tail and rump were white, the tail was notched and the outer tail feathers looked pointed. It banked over the dead tree and was clearly smaller and daintier than the Black-headed Gulls it had now joined. It had long broad wings and a short tail. It approached number four spit and I could see a scruffy head with brownish grey mottling on its face, ear coverts and sides of the upper neck. Its bill was black with a yellow tip glistening in the sunshine. It climbed higher following two Black-headed Gulls towards WLF. Pete had found it in his binoculars; I stepped aside so he could use my telescope while I got my camera off my belt. It was though too late as it had gone behind the viewpoint trees.

We dashed around to WLF but we drew a blank, we then returned to EHF/PHF on the off chance the bird had returned. As we both had prior arrangements we left at 18:30, I dropped Pete off in Haslington and stopped at Winterley Pool to clear my head and to scribble down some notes. I decided I needed to check literature and some images on line. I wanted to try and age our bird and I was also aware of the first summer pitfalls surrounding Kittiwakes. First summer was eliminated by bill and lack of black in tail and I decided on second summer because of its early moulted hood. I returned to EHF at 05:20 hours the following morning and did a frantic search but to no avail. I decided to check RF and MGT but at 10:20 hours I received several texts saying "Andy your Sabines Gull is at Carr Vale".

I decided to do some research into how a Sabine's Gull could end up at Sandbach Flashes. The HBW volume three states its breeding habitat as Arctic tundra breeding at wetlands with mosses and sedges often in brackish water. On line I found its breeding areas described as meadows and salt marsh flats also shallow pools and ponds with high densities of invertebrates and small fish. It is unusual in that recent summer records of Sabine's Gull have been at similar sites such as Pennington, Carr Vale and Sandbach. Did it investigate the flashes because our salt/brine attracted it? Autumn storm driven birds usually turn up along the coast or on our larger reservoirs, how did it find the flashes? Did it follow the river system or the canal as we suspect the Whiskered Terns did. "Some Canadian breeding birds migrate overland reaching the Rocky Mountains to the Great Lakes usually solitary" (HBW volume 3). I have been on fast ferries and watched Sabine's Gulls in spring overtake us such was the urge to reach their breeding grounds. They are very fast, capable, pelagic gulls.

I think this was a sub-adult bird doing a trial run, learning its migration route and how to find suitable breeding habitat ready for its first breeding attempt next year. Luckily my name was on this one but if it has happened once it may well happen again. I will be checking all small gulls at EHF next July.

Systematic list 2016

Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*)

On 9th May 45 were on EHF/PHF, several pairs bred with the first cygnets seen on EHF on 16th May.

Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*)

An adult was on EHF on 19th October then on 21st October five (two adults and three juveniles) were also located on EHF.



Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*)

Unusually not recorded in the first winter period, the first late winter period birds were two over MGT on 30th September, five skeins then over MGT in October with several more in November/December. On 15th November 42 alighted briefly on EHF. One was with Canada's in early December.

Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*)

In the first winter period 17 were on EHF on 16th Jan, breeding proven with three goslings on WF on 7th July. Up to 60 flew in to EHF on 20th September.

Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*)

A grotesque 1077 were on EHF/PHF on 16th January, the first juveniles were seen on 14th May.

Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*)

The usual odd birds with the Canada Geese, four flew over MGT on 5th May.

Egyptian Goose (*Alopochen oegyptiaca*)

Two records in 2016, one over MGT on 3rd March with another around EHF from 20th December for several days.

Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*)

Thirty-one were on EHF on 16th January, the first of several broods were on EHF on 24th May.

Mandarin Duck (*Aix galericulata*)

Odd singles or pairs were recorded throughout from EHF with the first on 20th January. Two nesting boxes have been erected these however have not been used this year.



Wigeon (*Anas penelope*)

The maximum first winter period count was 630 between EHF/PHF on 24th January. 720 were on EHF on 23rd October. Odd birds summered. 671 were on EHF on 27th November.

Gadwall (*Anas strepera*)

The maximum first winter period count was just nine on EHF on 22nd April. Bred on EHF and on RF with the first juveniles seen on 6th June EHF and RF 22nd June.



Teal (*Anas crecca*)

The maximum first winter period count was 190 on 24th January. On 23rd October 180 were on EHF/PHF.

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

No significant early winter period counts, the first ducklings were on EHF on 11th April. A minimum of 630 were counted on EHF on 2nd August

Pintail (*Anas acuta*)

In the first winter period 10 were on EHF on 27th January, a maximum of six in the second winter period.

Garganey (*Anas querquedula*)

Single drakes were on PHF on 12th May, EHF on 1st June and 27th July. A female type was on RF from 30th August to 2nd September.

Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*)

The maximum first winter count was 29 on EHF on 20th February. On 20th November 51 were on EHF.

Pochard (*Aythya ferina*)

The largest count of a poor year was five on RF on 12th November.

Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*)

On 18th March 47 were counted between EHF and PHF. Breeding from RF with 13 juveniles present on 15th June (two broods), also bred on WF. A third brood was on RF on 31st July.

Scaup (*Aythya marila*)

A 2nd calendar year drake was on RF between 16th February and 3rd March. A first calendar year drake was also on RF on 1st November.

Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*)

A drake was on EHF between 1st and 5th January.

Goosander (*Mergus merganser*)

The maximum count in the first winter period was 11 on EHF on 27th February; nine were on EHF on 14th August.

Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*)

Regular particularly around FF and CF.

Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

Twenty-five were on EHF on 16th January. In the late winter period over twenty were regular on and around EHF.

Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*)

Odd individuals throughout, after a slow start five were seen at EHF on 14th August.

Great White Egret (*Ardea alba*)

When one flew over the observers heads by PHF on 29th July it was assumed by many that could be that for the year however on 17th August one appeared on Hancock's Flood and could be viewed with a Grey Heron and Little Egret, probably an unprecedented flashes observation. This bird then stayed until 5th November. On 8th October one flew high over MGT and may not have been the resident bird. On 9th December one was on EHF and stayed until at least 20th December, this was joined by a second bird around RF in late December, what an incredible change in status for this species that at the turn of the century was a flashes vagrant.



Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)

Regular throughout the area once again, one individual became a specialist in intimidating the long staying Great White Egret.

Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*)

Bred on GF, RF and either EHF or PHF, up to six individuals present at times on EHF.



Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*)

The maximum first winter period count was 13 on WLF on 26th January. Breeding records from EHF, RF, WF and WLF. On 13th November 14 were on WLF.

Red Kite (*Milvus milvus*)

Still struggling to establish commonly locally with the only records singles over MGT on 13th May, EHF on 20th May and from EHF on 2nd June.

Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*)

An adult male was over PHF on 3rd June another was over RF on 16th June and was aged as a 2nd calendar year. A third bird, a "cream crown" was seen over EHF on 15th September.

Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*)

Commonly recorded but no breeding proven.



Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*)

A pair attempted to nest in the willows by EHF but apparently were unsuccessful, 13 were together over EHF on 15th August.

Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*)

The first was seen over WLF on 2nd May, another was over EHF on 19th August, the third and final one was over WLF on 10th October.

Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*)

On 5th January four were seen and/or heard combining both GF and RF. Singing/calling birds from GF throughout June strongly suggests breeding at that location.



Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*)

Common on the WEBS counts around EHF with breeding from all the well watched flashes.

Coot (*Fulica atra*)

Breeding from all the well watched flashes, counts over 100 from RF, EHF and WLF.

Avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*)

In what was arguably the worst flashes wader year in recent memory two records from EHF/PHF On 18th March and 21st May made this species the only rare or scarce wading bird to make the report excepting Jack Snipe.



Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*)

The first was on EHF on 3rd March, six were on EHF on 12th June, no breeding recorded.

Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*)

Another difficult year for this species with less than ten sightings following the first which was seen from EHF on 24th March.

Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*)

Maximum counts of 1100 in the first winter period from EHF, smaller numbers in the second winter period with 700 noted on EHF on 27th November.

Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius*)

Very disappointing spring passage with no notable counts, no breeding again but the first returning juveniles were on PHF on 19th July.

Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*)

The first was on EHF on 2nd May, four were on Hancock's flood on 12th May.

Curlew (*Numenius arquata*)

Numbers in both of the winter periods were between 40 and 55 mainly around EHF/PHF. Of particular interest was a ringed bird present between at least 15th September to the year-end which was ringed as an adult male on 22nd March 2015 at Dolydd Hafren on the River Severn between Welshpool and Newtown.

Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*)

The largest count was 25 on EHF on 28th May.



Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*)

The first winter period produced a maximum of six from EHF, a summer plumaged male was on EHF on 13th May and a party of seven flew over EHF on 26th May but did not land, another male was on EHF on 25th June, up to three in the second winter period.

Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*)

The first of a relatively disappointing year was one on EHF on 23rd February. Four including a juvenile were on EHF on 31st July; a flock of 20 flew around EHF on 21st August. Five were over EHF on 11th November.

Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*)

The first was on EHF on 11th April, eight were present on EHF on 25th July.

Green Sandpiper (*Tringa ochropus*)

The first record was from EHF on 22nd April, two were on EHF on 11th June. On return passage up to eight or nine regular.

Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*)

The first of the year was on EHF on 5th May, six together on EHF on 17th August was particularly noteworthy.

Redshank (*Tringa totanus*)

The maximum count from EHF in the first winter period was five, in the second winter period numbers about the same with five recorded on several occasions.

Jack Snipe (*Lymnocyptes minimus*)

None were recorded in the first winter period. Several individuals were flushed from MGT in the second winter period.

Woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*)

Six were flushed from scrub/woodland around FF on 10th January.

Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*)

No count larger than 20 in the first winter period. In the second winter period no substantial counts submitted.

Whiskered Tern (*Chlidonias hybrida*)

At approximately 08:15 on 7th May two adults flew into view from the watch-point at EHF they stayed until at least 20:30 that day and became the first flashes record. (See the separate article).

Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*)

Two were seen over WLF on 11th May

Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*)

The first was over EHF on 3rd May, breeding confirmed from WLF. Six were present over WLF on 20th July

Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)

An adult commuted between WLF and EHF on 20th July

Sabines Gull (*Xema sabini*)

The first for the flashes if accepted flew through EHF on 12th July at approximately 16:00. Aged as an adult this could well have been the bird seen at Carr Vale NR the same morning which flew off at 09:30 from that site returning to the same location in Derbyshire the following day (see separate article). Amazingly what was thought by the observer to be the same bird (having seen the Carr Vale bird) was seen at EHF on 5th September, it could however not be relocated despite extensive searching. If accepted this will be the second record for the flashes.

Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*)

An excellent year with an adult on 18th March and another on 23 and 24th March, records from RF/EHF and PHF.

Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*)

Recorded throughout with "several hundred" reported from EHF in January and November, no evidence of breeding.

Little Gull (*Larus minutus*)

Just a single was recorded this year with a 1st calendar year bird on RF on 6th and 7th October.

Mediterranean Gull (*Larus melanocephalus*)

The first of around twenty recorded was on EHF on 24th January.

Common Gull (*Larus canus*)

No counts of note with low double figure counts from EHF on spring and autumn passage.

Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*)

An estimated 1000 were counted on and around MGT on 20th January

Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*)

An estimated 4000 were counted on and around MGT on 20th January.

Yellow-legged Gull (*Larus michahellis*)

Regularly recorded from RF, PHF and EHF, six on 12th September being the largest count.

Caspian Gull (*Larus cachinnans*)

The following were reported, all require written submissions and/or photographs to be acceptable in a county or national context. Adult 13th January, 2nd calendar year 24th January to 5th March, 2nd calendar year 8th March, adult 19th March, adult 26th April, 4th calendar year 12th June, adult 6th November.

Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucoides*)

Probably seven individuals in the first winter period were recorded from EHF/PHF/RF or MGT. Two adults, one 2nd calendar year, two 3rd calendar years and two 4th calendar years. The second winter period produced an adult from EHF on 29th December.



Glaucous Gull (*Larus hyperboreus*)

Two in the first winter period were a 2nd calendar year on EHF/PHF/MGT between 5th and 27th March and an adult at the same locations between 8th and 27th March. The adult was a ringed bird, it was trapped and ringed on 21st March 2015 at Pitsea Landfill Site in Essex by the North Thames Gull Group and was aged as a fifth calendar year or older. The bird was initially thought to be a large adult male Iceland Gull even in the hand but fitted in the range of a small female Glaucous Gull, the bird was then recorded at the following locations before being seen at the flashes:-

- Wellingborough recycling centre 21st March 2015
- Stanwick gravel pits 23th March 2015
- Stanwick gravel pits 24th March 2015

On 16th November a 1st calendar year was on RF, this bird was probably the earliest ever second winter period record and stayed until the year end. A 3rd calendar year on 23rd December and then an adult the following day both on MGT ensured 2016 was an excellent year for "white wingers".

Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*)

The maximum count this year came on 1st January with 185 the combined total from PHF and EHF. On 20th November 121 were on EHF.

Feral Pigeon (*Columba livia*)

Common throughout.

Stock Dove (*Columba oenas*)

On 27th April 110 were in fields adjacent to EHF. Breeding proven.

Woodpigeon (*Columba palumbus*)

Common throughout, breeding proven, 373 were over MGT on 19th October.

Collared Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*)

Regular throughout, 34 were in and around the farm buildings down the side lane at EHF on 12th November.

Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*)

The first of 2016 was on MGT on 23rd February. At least two pairs bred. Two or three were seen hunting around Groby Road early morning on 2nd August.

Little Owl (*Athene noctua*)

The only record of this species was one seen distantly from the RF area; despite much searching it could not be relocated.

Tawny Owl (*Strix aluco*)

Odd singles from EHF, FF and RF areas.

Long-eared Owl (*Asio otus*)

The winter roost in the early winter period reached a maximum of four. Two was the biggest second winter period count.

Short-eared Owl (*Asia flammeus*)

The first was reported from CF on 23rd May, then one on MGT on 30th August. Another was on MGT on 21st October.

Swift (*Apus apus*)

Regularly recorded from all flashes, no evidence of breeding.

Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*)

Recorded from all flashes, no evidence of breeding.

Green Woodpecker (*Picus viridis*)

One was seen on MGT on 22nd March, another two were heard calling only around CF in May and again in August.

Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*)

Common throughout, bred in FF but presumably elsewhere as well.

Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*)

Once again breeding not proven but sightings from all of the flashes.

Merlin (*Falco columbarius*)

On 31st August a female was over MGT, this was the observers first August Merlin in 46 years watching the flashes. A male was over MGT on 13th October.

Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*)

After the first was seen on 22nd April this species was recorded infrequently with around twenty sightings in the log book. This is quite surprising as a pair bred just outside the flashes recording area.

Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*)

Regular from the EHF, PHF and RF areas.

Magpie (*Pica pica*)

Common throughout. Breeding proven.

Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*)

Regular from the FF/WLF areas but also EHF particularly throughout the months of September and October.

Jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*)

On 18th January 240 were counted around MGT. This figure had increased with 450 counted on 2nd December. Breeding proven.

Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*)

Common throughout, no count of the FF rookery was made this year to the best of my knowledge.

Carriion Crow (*Corvus corone*)

Common throughout. Breeding proven.

Raven (*Corvus corax*)

Six were over MGT on 5th April, regular throughout the year.

Goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*)

Regular in the first winter period from FF but also recorded from EHF and the MGT area.

Blue Tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*)

Common throughout. Breeding proven.

Great Tit (*Parus major*)

Common throughout. Breeding proven.

Coal Tit (*Periparus ater*)

Regular anywhere with conifers but not exclusively. Breeding strongly suspected.

Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*)

Singing birds in May and June from CF, MGT and TLF. The largest visible migration count was 36 over MGT on 4th October.

Sand Martin (*Riparia riparia*)

50 were counted over EHF on 6th April. The last were over MGT on 1st October an exceptionally late date. No breeding reported.

Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*)

Regular throughout after the first on 24th April, no breeding pairs reported.

House Martin (*Delichon urbica*)

Regular throughout after the first on 24th April, no breeding pairs reported.

Cetti's Warbler (*Cettia cetti*)

On 24th January what was presumably the bird from 2015 was by PHF it was recorded on and off until what was probably the same bird? was relocated near Red Lane Tip on 11th April then recorded from Red Lane Tip and EHF/PHF but never simultaneously so there is still uncertainty about how many were present, possibly just the one.



Long-tailed Tit (*Aegithalos caudatus*)

Common throughout, breeding proven.

Wood Warbler (*Phylloscopus Sibilatrix*)

After last year's bird a much more obliging individual sang and showed on and off for several days in trees near Red Lane Tip between 30th April and 2nd May. A great sight and sound.

Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*)

One overwintered around EHF in the first winter period otherwise the normal range of records from all areas. Breeding proven.

Willow Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*)

Recorded in small numbers from most of the recording area, breeding proven.

Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*)

Once again with Chiffchaff the most regularly recorded warbler, breeding proven.

Garden Warbler (*Sylvia borin*)

Another average year with only six records after the first by GF on 3rd May.

Lesser Whitethroat (*Sylvia curruca*)

The largest day count was five on 14th May, breeding proven.

Whitethroat (*Sylvia communis*)

A very poor year for this species with eight on 14th May being the biggest day count. Breeding proven.

Grasshopper Warbler (*Locustella naevia*)

One in the Red Lane Tip area on 23rd April, another was reported singing on private land in May near RF.

Sedge Warbler (*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*)

On 14th May a co-ordinated count of the RF and WLF area recorded 16 singing birds

Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*)

On 14th May a co-ordinated count of the RF and WLF area recorded 17 singing birds

Nuthatch (*Sitta europaea*)

Regular in the early winter period from the stronghold around FF but also frequently noted at EHF.

Treecreeper (*Certhia familiaris*)

Commonly recorded in all suitable habitat, breeding proven.



Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*)

Common throughout, breeding proven.

Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)

2000 were on MGT on 3rd March. Breeding proven.

Blackbird (*Turdus merula*)

Common throughout, breeding proven.

Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*)

In the first winter period the largest single count was 260 over MGT on 31st March. On autumn visible migration 148 over MGT on 22nd October.

Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*)

Recorded infrequently mainly from around EHF.

Redwing (*Turdus iliacus*)

Counts of between 75 and 120 in the first winter period. On 8th October 358 flew over MGT.

Mistle Thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*)

Bred at Red Lane Tip. Unusually odd individuals were over MGT in autumn visible migration watches.

Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*)

One was behind the railway on 5th May, a welcome spring record; the second was in the hedgerow surrounding GF on 14th August.

Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*)

Common throughout. Breeding proven.

Black Redstart (*Phoenicurus ochruros*)

The third for the flashes was found on MGT while the observer was searching for Dragonflies. The female was present for 20 minutes but could not be relocated.

Redstart (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*)

One was in the hedgerows bordering GF on 21st July. There was another "word of mouth" report but nothing could be found in the log book reference that sighting.

Whinchat (*Saxicola rubetra*)

The first was a juvenile on MGT on 1st August; three were on MGT on 26th August. The latest ever for the flashes was one on MGT from 14th to 22nd October.

Stonechat (*Saxicola torquata*)

The first winter period produced two both on MGT, unusually two birds were viewable around EHF in early August. Odd singles or pairs then from MGT on and off throughout.

Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*)

The first was on 28th March on MGT, around 25 then recorded on spring passage. The first bird suspected to be of the Greenland race was on MGT on 25th April. The first returning bird was a juvenile on MGT on 1st August; five were on MGT on 21st August.

Dunnock (*Prunella modularis*)

Common throughout. Breeding proven.

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)

Regular with increasing frequency around EHF, no breeding records but presumably did breed in the area with juveniles on the EHF feeders.

Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*)

On 26th August a superb 80 were counted on MGT. Became more regular throughout the late winter period especially around the new feeding station down the side lane at EHF.

Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava*)

A handful of spring records. Two by RF on 12th August were presumably returning birds as no evidence of breeding in the area.

Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*)

Regular around EHF especially in the winter months.

Pied Wagtail (*Motacilla alba yarrellii*)

The first "white wagtail" was on EHF on 17th March. Breeding proven, the best autumn visible migration watch was 36 over MGT on 4th October.

Tree Pipit (*Anthus trivialis*)

Just a single recorded with one on MGT on 15th August.

Meadow Pipit (*Anthus pratensis*)

On spring passage the maximum count was 43 over MGT on 31st March. On 30th September 774 were counted on a mornings visible migration watch over MGT.

Rock Pipit (*Anthus petrosus*)

The first record since 1999 was a bird seen on MGT on 24th October.

Brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*)

An excellent year, five in the first winter period, flyovers from MGT on 21st March, 31st March and 3rd April. One Red Lane Tip on 16th April and one well observed by EHF between 7th and 16th April. On autumn visible migration watches five recorded from MGT in October with one also in October over EHF. Another was at the EHF feeders on several dates in November.

Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*)

Breeding proven, frequent on the October visible migration watches in small numbers.

Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*)

Up to eight around FF in the first winter period, presumably bred in that area. One high over MGT on a visible migration watch in October.

Greenfinch (*Carduelis chloris*)

No notable counts recorded but no evidence received of a change in status.

Linnet (*Carduelis cannabina*)

On 18th January 35 were on MGT. Upwards of 100 were regular on MGT throughout October/November with 46 being the largest autumn visible migration count from MGT on 4th October.

Lesser Redpoll (*Carduelis cabaret*)

FF held a flock of 40 on 16th January. Nine on 6th October flew over MGT.

Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*)

The first was over MGT on 20th June. Two were also over MGT on 7th October.

Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*)

Common throughout, 120 were present around GF on 16th October. Breeding proven.

Siskin (*Carduelis spinus*)

On 1st February 67 were in alders by FF. Poor numbers from the autumn visible migration watches with 16 on 19th October being the largest count.

Yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*)

The usual scattering of records from behind the railway line and from MGT, singing birds in the breeding season but no proof of breeding.

Reed Bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*)

Bred in the RF/MGT area, upwards of twenty counted on several occasions throughout October from MGT.

Corn Bunting (*Milaria Calandra*)

One of many just rewards for the observer involved was one over MGT on 20th March.

All images courtesy of Dennis Swaby

The flashes list

Below is the currently understood systematic list of the flashes. The status of some of these is subjective for example Red-crested Pochard, Ruddy Shelduck, Ruddy Duck, Red-legged Partridge, White Stork, Egyptian Goose, and Barnacle Goose amongst others. Corncrake and Bearded Tit are "heard only" records and the sole Arctic Skua record has no date. I have included the personal lists of the local birders who know and are prepared to share them, feel free to submit yours for future reports. No pretending you don't keep a list I've seen the crowds when a rarity turns up. Any mistakes in any of the personal lists below let me know and I will amend accordingly.

	Species	A Goodwin	D Norbury	I Mumford	A Firth	I Barber	R Jones	D Robinson	J Jones	M Stubbs
1.	Mute Swan	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
2.	Bewick's swan	Y	Y	Y	Y				Y	Y
3.	Whooper Swan	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
4.	Bean Goose	Y	Y	Y						
5.	Pink-footed Goose	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
6.	White-fronted Goose	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
7.	Greylag Goose	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
8.	Greater Canada Goose	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
9.	Barnacle Goose	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
10.	Brent Goose	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
11.	Egyptian Goose	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
12.	Ruddy Shelduck	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
13.	Shelduck	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
14.	Mandarin Duck	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
15.	Wigeon	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
16.	American Wigeon	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
17.	Gadwall	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
18.	Teal	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
19.	Green-winged Teal	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
20.	Mallard	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
21.	Pintail	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
22.	Garganey	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
23.	Shoveler	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
24.	Red-crested Pochard	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
25.	Pochard	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
26.	Tufted Duck	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
27.	Scaup	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
28.	Lesser Scaup	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
29.	Eider									
30.	Long-tailed Duck			Y						
31.	Common Scoter	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
32.	Goldeneye	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
33.	Smew	Y	Y	Y						

220.	Grey Wagtail	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
221.	Pied Wagtail	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
222.	Richard's Pipit	Y				Y				
223.	Tree Pipit	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y
224.	Meadow Pipit	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
225.	Rock Pipit	Y								
226.	Water Pipit	Y								Y
227.	Brambling	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
228.	Chaffinch	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
229.	Hawfinch	Y							Y	Y
230.	Bullfinch	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
231.	Greenfinch	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
232.	Linnet	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
233.	Twite	Y		Y						
234.	Lesser Redpoll	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
235.	Common Redpoll	Y		Y		Y	Y		Y	Y
236.	Crossbill	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y
237.	Goldfinch	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
238.	Siskin	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
239.	Snow Bunting	Y								Y
240.	Lapland Bunting	Y	Y							
241.	Yellowhammer	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
242.	Little Bunting	Y		Y						
243.	Reed Bunting	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
244.	Corn Bunting	Y	Y	Y					Y	
	SPECIES SEEN	222	210	204	188	185	185	180	199	197
		A Goodwin	D Norbury	I Mumford	A Firth	I Barber	R Jones	D Robinson	J Jones	M Stubbs