



THE OBSERVER

SECOS Newsletter

Promoting and fostering an interest in ornithology by observation, research and record-keeping

February 2025

"Amazing Birds"

Chris Collins

Friday 14th February

via Zoom



Jocotoco Antpitta - Chris Collins

Chris, a freelance ornithologist with 17 years of global experience, has worked on diverse bird and wildlife projects, including over five years aboard expedition ships. In this talk, Chris will explore fascinating topics such as bird migration, insights from modern tracking devices, feather evolution and displays, endemism, and the discovery of new species.

Field Trip

North Wales Coast

Sunday 16th February

The North Wales Coast has some fantastic birding sites, such as Llanfairfechan, The Spinnies and RSPB Conwy. If there is time, we will also have short stops at Llanddulas and Kinmel Dunes.



The Spinnies - Lesbardd

For trip details, refer to the Chairman's Note email, visit the SECOS website or contact the trip leader.

January Highlights (first reports this month)

1st Common Gull, Curlew, Fieldfare, Goosander, Green-winged Teal, Kingfisher, Little Grebe, Pink-footed Goose, Pochard, Raven, Redwing, Siskin, Water Rail, Yellowhammer; 2nd Barnacle Goose, Great White Egret, Redpoll, Snipe, White-fronted Goose; 3rd Chiffchaff, Jack Snipe, Mandarin Duck, Woodcock; 4th Goldeneye, Little Egret; 5th Whooper Swan; 6th Golden Plover; 7th Brambling; 8th Black-tailed Godwit; 9th Tawny Owl, Yellow-legged Gull; 10th Green Sandpiper; 11th Barn Owl; 12th Scaup; 14th Egyptian Goose; 18th Cetti's Warbler; 20th Mediterranean Gull; 23rd Pintail; 28th Red-legged Partridge; 31st Oystercatcher

Sightings EHF/PHF/MGT/RF - Jan

Wildfowl	Count
Shelduck	regular, max 101
Wigeon	regular, max c1080
Gadwall	6, 12 th
Teal	regular, max c340
Green-winged Teal	regular, max 1
Mallard	regular, max c205
Shoveler	regular, max 32
Tufted Duck	regular, max 50
Pintail	regular, max 2
Mandarin Duck	regular, max 1
Goosander	regular, max 4
Greylag Goose	regular, max 525
Canada Goose	regular, max 645
Barnacle Goose	3, 12 th
White-fronted Goose	regular, max 1
G C Grebe	2, 2 nd
Little Grebe	regular, max 3
Coot	regular, max 156
Moorhen	regular, max 15+
Mute Swan	regular, max 6
Whooper Swan	9, 5 th



Green-winged Teal - Dennis Swaby

Raptors & Owls	Count
Sparrowhawk	regular, max 4
Buzzard	regular, max 5
Kestrel	1, 19 th , 20 th , 26 th
Peregrine	1, 4 th , 10 th
Short-eared Owl	1, 10 th

CF = Crabmill Flash

EHF = Elton Hall Flash

FF = Fodens Flash

FFF = Fields Farm Flash

GF = Groby Flash

MGT = Maw Green Tip

OTF = Oak Tree Flash

PHF = Pump House Flash

RF = Railway Flash

WF = Warmingham Flash

WLF = Watch Lane Flash

Blue text indicates place first seen.

Underline indicates high flock count (see Feb 2020 Newsletter, page 8).

Sightings EHF/PHF/MGT/RF - Jan

Waders	Count
Water Rail	2, 19 th
Lapwing	regular, max c550
Golden Plover	5, 8 th
Curlew	regular, max 40
Black-tailed Godwit	regular, max 1
Woodcock	1, 10 th
Common Snipe	regular, max 15

Gulls & Terns	Count
Black-headed Gull	regular, max c2500
Mediterranean Gull	1, 20 th
Lesser Black-b Gull	regular, max 57
Great Black-b Gull	regular, max 4
Herring Gull	regular, max c390
Common Gull	regular, max 6
Yellow-legged Gull	1, 9 th , 10 th , 17 th



White-fronted Goose with Greylag Geese - Dennis Swaby

Herons & Egrets	Count
Grey Heron	regular, max 3
Little Egret	1, 16 th
Great White Egret	regular, max 2



Black-headed Gull - Dennis Swaby



Coot on ice - Dennis Swaby



Mediterranean Gull - Dennis Swaby

Martin Mere WWT - 19th January



19 members travelled to Martin Mere on a cold, dry, overcast day. Despite the chill, spirits were high as we embarked on a promising start to the birding year.

Lapwing Lane

Before arriving at the reserve, we explored the nearby Lapwing Lane, slowly scanning the overhead wires and farm buildings, hoping to spot corn buntings as on previous visits.

Unfortunately, none were seen this time. However, a flock of linnets was feeding in a stubble field, occasionally perching on the wires. A flock of skylarks added to the scene.

On the approach to the reserve, a kestrel was spotted perched on an overhead wire. In the car park, a song thrush darted playfully between the cars, and a small flock of long-tailed tits flitted through the nearby trees, offering a lively welcome.

Visitor Centre

As we passed the pens behind the Visitor Centre, a single redwing stood out against the ground, offering excellent views. The greater flamingos, though always a spectacle, were, of course, excluded from our birding tally!

Discovery Hide

From the comfort of the hide, we were treated to a breathtaking array of birds on The Mere. Highlights included many pink-footed geese, greylags, and magnificent whooper swans. Among the waterfowl, pintails, wigeon, mallards, coots, and shelducks were abundant. Smaller numbers of Canada geese, pochards, tufted ducks, and moorhens were also present.

Waders were well-represented. Black-tailed godwits showed their white wing bars and rump when in flight. Ruffs showed the pale ring at the base of the bill. Gulls included lesser black-backed gull and black-headed gull. A brief appearance of several marsh harriers over the reeds added excitement, while a common buzzard perched on a fence post gave prolonged views. Later in the day, singles of common snipe and stonechat were added to the day's list. The day was crowned by a barn owl sighting around 3 pm - a highlight for those fortunate enough to spot it. Finally, at around 4 pm, a marsh harrier was spotted on the ground, its cream crown visible.

Raines Observatory

The Raines Observatory provided some excellent sightings, with singles of great white egret, little egret, and oystercatcher making an appearance. Outside the hide, activity was lively as chaffinches, goldfinches, house sparrows, and blue tits flitted energetically through the trees and feeders, providing close views.

continued >>

Martin Mere WWT (continued)



Hale Hide

At Hale Hide, another little egret was spotted, along with a good number of teal, their colours vivid even in the muted light.

Kingfisher Hide

Sadly, no kingfishers graced us with their presence during this visit, and the feeders had been removed, leaving only a carrion crow as the sole bird at the hide.

Continuing along the path, we were treated to the sight of a small flock of greenfinch perched at the top of a tree. A little farther on, feeders attracted a delightful variety of birds, including chaffinch, goldfinch, bullfinch, blue tit, great tit, dunnock, magpie, and a male great spotted woodpecker. Less welcome, but undoubtedly entertaining, was the presence of a large rat scavenging below the feeders!

Ron Barker Hide

The hide provided close views of a striking fieldfare. A pheasant also made its way onto the day's list. This hide became a welcome lunch spot for most members, while a few opted for the warmth of the Visitor Centre, where the group later reassembled.

Screen near In Focus Shop

A brief stop at the screen near the In Focus Shop yielded sightings of two great black-backed gulls.

Janet Kear Hide

The feeders attracted two male and two female reed buntings, adding a splash of variety to the day's list. Near the feeders, another large rat scavenged for food.

United Utilities Hide

Unfortunately, the hide was closed for maintenance, leaving this part of the reserve unexplored.

Harrier Hide

From the reedbed walk near the hide, the unmistakable call of a Cetti's warbler was heard. Out on the water, a few gadwall were seen, their understated elegance appreciated.

Return to Discovery Hide

We ended the day back at the Discovery Hide to witness a spectacular scene: hundreds of birds gathering for feeding time. The warden's engaging explanation of the migration of shelducks added an educational element to this remarkable display, rounding off the day beautifully.

Summary

Despite the cold and overcast weather, the trip offered a wealth of sightings and memorable moments. Highlights included the barn owl, marsh harriers, and the sheer scale and diversity of waterfowl at The Mere. The group thoroughly enjoyed this delightful start to the birding year, with both camaraderie and nature's wonders on full display.

Mike Tonks

Trip Count = 60 species

2025 SECOS Field Trips Total = 60 species

Sightings Elsewhere - Jan

EHF/PHF/MGT/RF: Kingfisher, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Jay, Raven, Coal Tit, Skylark, **Cetti's Warbler**, **Chiffchaff**, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Redwing, Fieldfare, Stonechat, Grey Wagtail, Meadow Pipit, **Brambling**, Bullfinch, Greenfinch, Redpoll, Siskin, Yellowhammer, Reed Bunting

FF: **Woodcock**, **Redpoll**, Siskin

FFF: Goosander, **Jack Snipe**, **Kingfisher**, Kestrel, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Redwing, **Fieldfare**, Greenfinch, Redpoll, Siskin, **Yellowhammer**, Reed Bunting

RF: Shoveler, Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Great White Egret

WF: **Mandarin Duck**, Shoveler, Coal Tit, Greenfinch

Alsager: Peregrine

Alsager - Alsager Treatment Works: Grey Wagtail

Alsager - Borrow Pit Meadows: Redpoll, **Siskin**

Astbury - Astbury Mere CP: Shoveler, Gadwall, **Pochard**, **Scaup**, **Goosander**, **Little Grebe**, Great Crested Grebe, Kingfisher, **Raven**, Coal Tit, Redwing, Grey Wagtail, **Siskin**

Brereton Heath - Brereton Heath LNR: Great Crested Grebe, **Redwing**

Checkley: **Red-legged Partridge**, Kestrel, Jay, Fieldfare

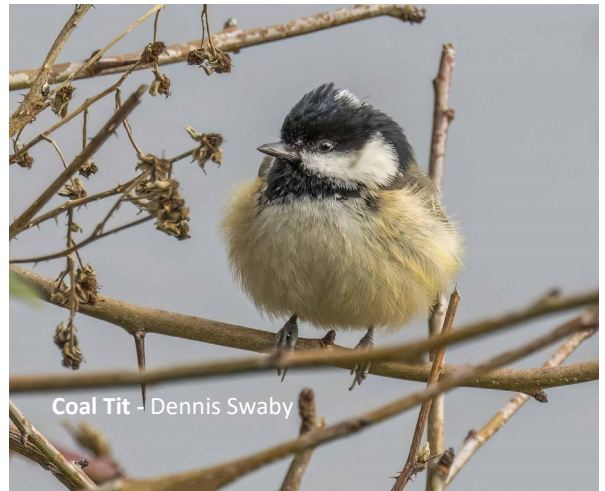
Congleton - Congleton Link Road West: Golden Plover, Redwing, Fieldfare

Congleton - Giantswood Lane: Shoveler, **Little Egret**

Congleton - Lower Heath: Goosander

Congleton - Radnor: Goosander

Congleton - River Dane: Mandarin Duck, Raven, Grey Wagtail



Coal Tit - Dennis Swaby

Congleton - River Dane, Radnor Bridge: Green Sandpiper

Congleton Treatment Works and environs: Goosander, Woodcock, **Green Sandpiper**, Redwing, Grey Wagtail, Bullfinch

Crewe - Basford: **Tawny Owl**, Brambling

Crewe - Groby Road: Barn Owl

Doddington - Doddington Pool: Shoveler, Gadwall, Pochard, **Goldeneye**, Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, **Oystercatcher**, Woodcock, Snipe, Common Gull, Kestrel, Jay, Raven, Redwing, Fieldfare, Stonechat, Greenfinch

Gawsworth - Gawsworth Hall: Goosander, Redwing

Holmes Chapel: **Barn Owl**

Moston Green, W of Sandbach: Yellowhammer

Rode Heath - Rode Pool: **Egyptian Goose**, Goosander, Snipe, Little Egret, Great White Egret, Kingfisher, Jay, Raven, Siskin

This is a small selection of species seen in the SECOS Recording Area.

A full listing is on the website: <https://www.secos.org.uk/sightings/>

Grey Wagtail - Dennis Swaby



Sightings Elsewhere - Jan



Greenfinch - Dennis Swaby



Magpie - Dennis Swaby

Sandbach - Sandbach Wildlife Corridor: **Green-winged Teal, Water Rail, Yellowhammer**

Scholar - Odd Rode: **Little Egret**, Great White Egret

Shavington/Hough: **Pink-footed Goose, Fieldfare**, Linnet

Smethwick Green: **Golden Plover**, Redwing, Fieldfare

Wheelock - Forge Fields: Little Egret, Jay, Raven, Fieldfare, Greenfinch

Winterley & Winterley Pool: Goosander



Reed Bunting - Dennis Swaby

Diary Dates



4th Feb 10.00 am
Tuesday Field Trip

14th Feb 7.30 pm
Indoor Meeting

16th Feb 10.00 am
Sunday Field Trip


Northwich Woodlands
Leader: John Thompson

"Amazing Birds" via Zoom
Speaker: Chris Collins

North Wales Coast
Leader: Mike Tonks

 SECOS Website: <https://www.secos.org.uk>

 SECOS Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/SECOS1964>

 Sandbach Flashes: This medium does not do justice to the images that Dennis Swaby captures at Sandbach Flashes. Some of the images have been uploaded to www.sandbachflashes.co.uk