



# THE OBSERVER

## SECOS Newsletter

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

## March 2025



Kingfisher - Nick Martin

### "A Celebration of British Birds"

Nick Martin

Friday 14<sup>th</sup> March

To quote Nick:

*"We love birds and in this talk we will find out more about our relationship with them and how many species have adapted to live alongside us and our activities. We'll look at the rare birds, the common species and the new kids on the block. We'll enjoy the best of the dawn chorus, seabirds, birds of prey and much more."*

## Field Trip

### Burton Mere Wetlands

### Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> March

Located on the Dee Estuary, Burton Mere Wetlands spans the border between Wales and Cheshire. The reserve features a diverse landscape of reedbeds, marshland, scrapes, lagoons, ponds, narrow woodland strips, and mixed farmland. In spring, it comes alive with the sights and sounds of breeding birds.



Burton Mere Wetlands - Eirian Evans

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

## February Highlights (first reports this month)

1<sup>st</sup> Black-tailed Godwit, Common Gull, Curlew, Fieldfare, Golden Plover, Goosander, Green Sandpiper, Green-winged Teal, Kingfisher, Little Grebe, Mandarin Duck, Merlin, Raven, Red Kite, Redwing; 2<sup>nd</sup> Great Egret, Siskin, Snipe, White Wagtail (alba); 3<sup>rd</sup> Goldeneye, Grey Partridge, Oystercatcher, Red-legged Partridge, Redpoll; 5<sup>th</sup> Yellowhammer; 6<sup>th</sup> Barnacle Goose, Chiffchaff, Pink-footed Goose, Pochard, Tawny Owl; 7<sup>th</sup> Cetti's Warbler, Little Egret; 9<sup>th</sup> Woodcock; 13<sup>th</sup> Caspian Gull, Common Sandpiper, Water Rail; 18<sup>th</sup> Egyptian Goose; 19<sup>th</sup> Barn Owl; 20<sup>th</sup> Pintail; 22<sup>nd</sup> Avocet; 25<sup>th</sup> Black-necked Grebe

## Sightings EHF/PHF/MGT/RF - Feb

Wildfowl	Count
Shelduck	regular, max 95
Wigeon	regular, max c820
Gadwall	max 7, 9 <sup>th</sup>
Teal	regular, max c270
<b>Green-winged Teal</b>	regular, max 1
Mallard	regular, max 130
Pochard	1, 13 <sup>th</sup> , 28 <sup>th</sup>
Shoveler	regular, max 26
Tufted Duck	regular, max 32
<b>Pintail</b>	max 2, 20 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Mandarin Duck</b>	regular, max 1
Goosander	regular, max 12
Greylag Goose	regular, max 15
Canada Goose	regular, max c350
<b>Barnacle Goose</b>	regular, max 2
Pink-footed Goose	c300, 7 <sup>th</sup>
G Crested Grebe	regular, max 1
<b>Little Grebe</b>	regular, max 2
Coot	regular, max 115
Moorhen	regular, max 13
Mute Swan	regular, max 12



Mandarin Duck - Dennis Swaby



Green-winged Teal - Dennis Swaby

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

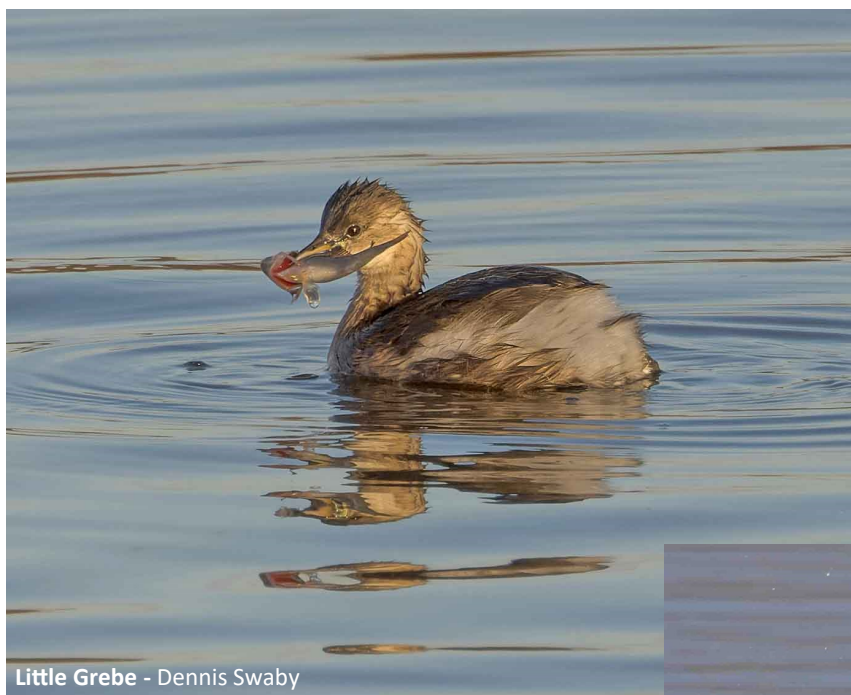
**Blue text** indicates place first seen. Underline indicates high flock count (see Feb 2020 Newsletter, page 8).

# Sightings EHF/PHF/MGT/RF - Feb

Waders	Count
Oystercatcher	regular, max 4
Avocet	1, 22 <sup>nd</sup>
Curlew	regular, max 15
Lapwing	regular, max c750
Black-tailed Godwit	regular, max 4
Woodcock	1, 9 <sup>th</sup>
Common Snipe	regular, max 21
Common Sandpiper	1, 13 <sup>th</sup>
Green Sandpiper	regular, max 2



Oystercatchers - Dennis Swaby

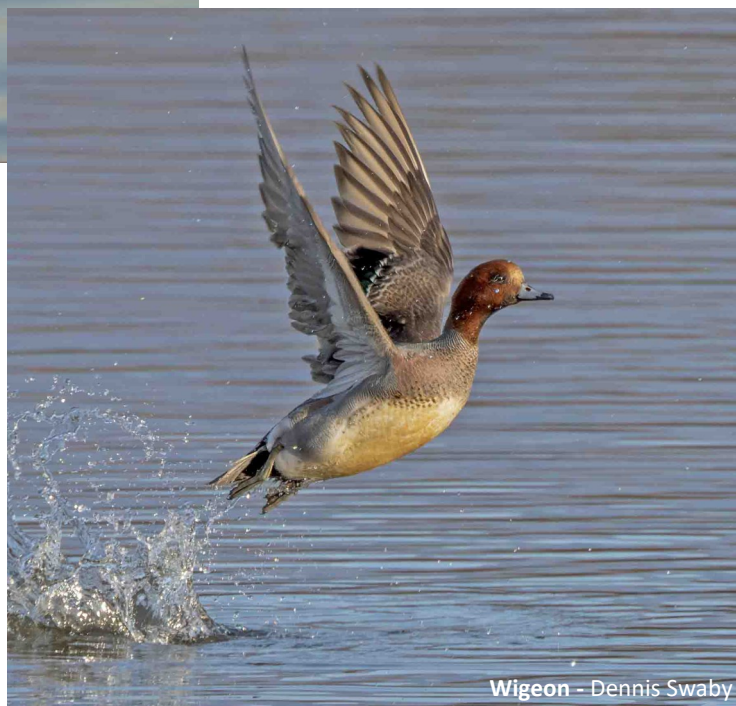


Little Grebe - Dennis Swaby

Gulls & Terns	Count
Black-headed Gull	regular, max c200
Lesser Black-b Gull	regular, max 35
Great Black-b Gull	max 2, 14 <sup>th</sup>
Herring Gull	regular, max c100
Caspian Gull	1, 13 <sup>th</sup>
Common Gull	regular, max 3

Herons & Egrets	Count
Grey Heron	regular, max 8
Little Egret	regular, max 1
Great Egret	regular, max 3

Raptors & Owls	Count
Sparrowhawk	1, 1 <sup>st</sup> , 6 <sup>th</sup> , 13 <sup>th</sup>
Buzzard	regular, max 2
Kestrel	regular, max 1



Wigeon - Dennis Swaby

# Northwich Woodlands - 4<sup>th</sup> February



Fifteen members enjoyed a rain-free morning at Marbury CP, followed by a heavy shower around 1 pm. In the afternoon, we travelled the short distance to Neumann's and Ashton's Flashes. A big thank you to John for leading.

Species seen/heard were: Canada Goose, Greylag Goose, Mute Swan, Shelduck, Shoveler, Gadwall, Mallard, Tufted Duck, Goldeneye, Goosander, Moorhen, Coot, Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, **Water Rail (close views of two birds)**, Oystercatcher, Lapwing, Curlew, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Cormorant, Grey Heron, Kingfisher, Jay, Magpie, Carrion Crow, Woodpigeon, Coal Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Cetti's Warbler, Goldcrest, Nuthatch, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Robin, Stonechat, Dunnock, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, **Hawfinch (seen by a lucky few!)**, Reed Bunting. Also, a probable Greylag Goose / Domesticated Goose hybrid.

**Trip Count = 44 species**

# North Wales Coast - 16<sup>th</sup> February



Nineteen members set off for the North Wales coast on a cold, drizzly day with a moderate breeze. Despite the weather, we enjoyed some excellent birding across a variety of habitats.

## **Llanfairfechan**

We parked in the newly resurfaced car park—clearly, they knew we were coming! On the rocky shore, a few oystercatchers were feeding while herring gulls loafed nearby. A single redshank was spotted, and seven turnstones were seen foraging along the water's edge. When they took flight, their numbers revealed a group of around twenty. Further out, an **eider (seen by one member)** was on the water, and a common buzzard was seen overhead. A skein of pink-footed geese passed through.

On the inland pool, a single red-breasted merganser was dozing, its distinctive pink-like head feathers making it easy to identify. A little grebe dived among the black-headed gulls and mute swans at the pool's edge. We followed the River Llanfairfechan in search of dipper and grey wagtail but, unfortunately, had no luck this time.

continued >>

# North Wales Coast (continued)



## NWWT The Spinnies

As we arrived, a curlew flew in from the sea and a small flock of wigeon flew over the water. The species list quickly grew with sightings of goldeneye, teal, and a **red-throated diver (seen by one member)**. A group of six or seven common scoters floated offshore, and as they took flight, we spotted one with white wing markings, confirming the presence of a **velvet scoter (seen by two members)**.

In the fields behind the car park, we found two little egrets, a few curlews, lesser black-backed gulls, mistle thrushes, and meadow pipits. From the hide along the lane, a **water rail (seen by two members)** was spotted.

At the main hide, the feeders attracted a flurry of activity with mallards, moorhens, blue tits, great tits, a coal tit, dunnocks, chaffinches, robins, goldfinches, and two female siskins. A grey heron stood motionless at the far end of the pool. A Cetti's warbler was heard calling. With the high tide covering the estuary, sightings were limited to a little grebe, shelduck, and a lone female goosander.

## RSPB Conwy

On the way to Conwy, a red kite was spotted soaring near the A55. Upon arrival, we took a well-earned lunch break – some opted for the Lookout Hide, while others enjoyed the warmth and comfort of the café.

From the café, we observed Canada geese, mallards, gadwall, teal, moorhens, coots, and little grebes. The feeding station provided great views of long-tailed tits and greenfinches. Continuing through the reserve, we visited the Tal-y-fan and Cuddfan Carneddau hides, where we added tufted duck, shoveler, pochard, and lapwing to our list. A single common snipe showed well, and a Cetti's warbler was heard again. Other highlights included bullfinch and meadow pipit.

## Llanddulas

At first glance, Llanddulas seemed quiet, but a scan with the scopes revealed an incredible spectacle – hundreds of common scoters spread across the sea, a fitting finale to our trip. Despite the chilly, damp conditions, we recorded an impressive variety of species, with several stand-out moments, including the velvet scoter, eider, red-throated diver, and water rail. A great day's birding in excellent company – here's to the next adventure!

*Mike Tonks*

**Trip Count = 56 species**

**2025 SECOS Field Trips Total = 83 species**

## Sightings Elsewhere - Feb



Stock Doves - Dennis Swaby

**EHF/PHF/MGT/RF:** Stock Dove, Woodpigeon, Collared Dove, Cormorant, Kingfisher, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Jay, Rook, Carrion Crow, Skylark, **Cetti's Warbler**, **Chiffchaff**, Goldcrest, Wren, Treecreeper, Song Thrush, **Redwing**, **Fieldfare**, Stonechat, Grey Wagtail, **White Wagtail (alba)**, Bullfinch, Greenfinch, Redpoll, **Siskin**, Reed Bunting

**CF:** Pink-footed Goose

**FF:** Goosander, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Coal Tit, Goldcrest, Treecreeper

**FFF:** Goosander, Stock Dove, Kingfisher, Mistle Thrush, Redwing, Fieldfare, Bullfinch, Greenfinch, Siskin, **Yellowhammer**, Reed Bunting

**WLF:** **Water Rail**, Little Egret, Kingfisher, Cetti's Warbler

**Alsager - Borrow Pit Meadows:** Goosander, Cormorant, Bullfinch, Redpoll

**Arclid Area SQs:** Shoveler, Teal, Tufted Duck, Oystercatcher

**Astbury - Astbury Mere CP:** **Pochard**, Tufted Duck, Goosander, Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, **Black-necked Grebe**, Mistle Thrush, Redwing, Grey Wagtail, Siskin

**Brereton Green:** Red Kite

**Brereton Heath - Brereton Heath LNR:** Great Spotted Woodpecker, Coal Tit, Goldcrest, Wren, Nuthatch, Redwing, Fieldfare, Bullfinch

**Checkley:** **Grey Partridge**, **Red-legged Partridge**, Redwing, Fieldfare, Robin, Reed Bunting

**Congleton - Congleton Link Road West:** **Golden Plover**, Little Egret, **Red Kite**

**Congleton - Giantswood Lane:** Tufted Duck, Oystercatcher, Little Egret

**Congleton - Newsbank, Acre Dell Pools:** Green Sandpiper

**Congleton - River Dane:** **Mandarin Duck**, **Goosander**, Red Kite, **Kingfisher**, **Raven**

**Doddington - Doddington Pool:** Pink-footed Goose, Shoveler, Gadwall, Pochard, Tufted Duck, **Goldeneye**, Red-legged Partridge, Stock Dove, Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, **Oystercatcher**, Lapwing, Common Gull, Merlin, Peregrine, Jay, Mistle Thrush, Redwing, Fieldfare, Stonechat, Meadow Pipit, Greenfinch, Reed Bunting



Wren - Dennis Swaby

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/>

## Sightings Elsewhere - Feb



Reed Bunting - Dennis Swaby

**Rode Heath - Rode Pool:** **Egyptian Goose**, Mandarin Duck, Shoveler, Gadwall, Goosander, Water Rail, Snipe, Little Egret, Great White Egret, Barn Owl, Kingfisher, Siskin

**Scholar Green:** Yellowhammer

**Shavington/Hough:** Buzzard, Kestrel, Fieldfare

**Smallwood:** Sparrowhawk, Raven, Redwing

**Walgherton - Lea Forge:** Grey Heron, **Merlin**, Rook

**Wheelock - Forge Fields:** Mandarin Duck, Sparrowhawk, **Tawny Owl**, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Raven, Greenfinch

**Winterley Pool, SW of Sandbach:** Barnacle Goose

**Eaton, N of Congleton:** Buzzard, Reed Bunting

**Fanny's Croft:** **Barn Owl**

**Gawsworth - Gawsworth Hall:** Goosander

**Haslington:** **Pink-footed Goose**

**Moston Green:** Coal Tit, **Redpoll**, Siskin

**Rode Heath:** Sparrowhawk

**Rode Heath - A533:** Oystercatcher

**Rode Heath - Rode Hall:** Raven



Robin - Dennis Swaby

## Diary Dates



**4<sup>th</sup> Mar 10.00 am**  
Tuesday Field Trip

**14<sup>th</sup> Mar 7.30 pm**  
Indoor Meeting

**16<sup>th</sup> Mar 09.30 am**  
Sunday Field Trip

**Doxey Marshes**

Leader: Tom Graham

**"A Celebration of British Birds"**

Speaker: Nick Martin

**Burton Mere Wetlands**

Leader: Anthea Gater



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 <https://sandbachflashes.co.uk/>