



THE OBSERVER

SECOS Newsletter

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

May 2024

Field Trip

Goyt Valley Tuesday 7th May

Goyt Valley is located a few miles to the northwest of Buxton. The valley has two big drinking-water reservoirs called Fernilee and Errwood. They are both fed by the River Goyt and provide drinking water for Stockport and its surrounding areas. The Valley is rich in wildlife and May is an ideal time to visit when the spring migrants have returned.



Errwood Reservoir - Colin Park - Geograph Britain and Ireland



Meadow at Fanny's Croft - geograph.org.uk

Evening Walk

Fanny's Croft, Alsager Wednesday 15th May

This pleasant countryside walk is around the farmland to the south of Alsager, and includes a small wooded area known as The Sprink. Meet at 7.00 p.m.

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



Centenary Pool - Christine Johnstone

Field Trip Burton Mere Wetlands Sunday 19th May

Situated in the Dee Estuary, Burton Mere Wetlands straddles the border between northeast Wales and Cheshire. It has a mosaic of reedbeds, marshland, scrapes, lagoons and ponds, narrow strips of woodland and mixed farmland. In spring, the reserve is alive with the sights and sounds of breeding birds.

A Tribute to Patrick Whalley

We were saddened to hear the news that one of our Society's founding members, Patrick Whalley, had passed away aged 85.

In his early years, Patrick was a keen and skilful birder and, as well as recording local birds, he was licensed by the BTO as a bird ringer. He was instrumental in getting the Sandbach Flashes designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest in 1963.

In 1964, Patrick and Alan Goodin, a good friend and local birder, decided to form a local bird club based at Sandbach and so SECOS was founded. Patrick served on the committee as Recorder from 1964 to 1979, and produced the first "Checklist of the Birds of Sandbach Flashes".

During the 1960s, Patrick and others erected a bird hide at Doddington Pool, at the request of the headmistress of Goudhurst College girls' school (which occupied Doddington Hall). The headmistress was keen for the girls to widen their interests.

Patrick was an accomplished artist. He designed the first SECOS logo of a little ringed plover and some of his designs were used by the RSPB on their Christmas cards.

In 2000, Patrick was appointed an Honorary Life Member in recognition of his work for SECOS. Patrick laid firm foundations for the Society, which is still thriving 60 years later.

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 - April

April Highlights (first reports this month)

1st Blackcap, **Brent Goose**, Great White Egret, Green Sandpiper, Hobby, Little Ringed Plover, Mediterranean Gull, Oystercatcher, Ring-necked Parakeet, Short-eared Owl, Snipe; 2nd Dipper, Goldeneye, Goosander, Kingfisher, Little Grebe, Mandarin Duck, Tawny Owl; 3rd Cetti's Warbler, Lesser Redpoll, Siskin, Swallow, Willow Warbler; 5th Black-tailed Godwit, Common Sandpiper, Common Tern, Pochard, Raven, **Sandwich Tern**, Water Rail; 6th Sand Martin, **White Stork**; 7th Barnacle Goose, Fieldfare, House Martin; 8th Grey Partridge, Wheatear; 9th Redstart; 10th Redshank; 11th Green Woodpecker, Little Egret; 12th Brambling, Grasshopper Warbler, Red Kite, Red-legged Partridge, **Ring Ouzel**; 13th Curlew, Yellow Wagtail, Yellowhammer; 14th Dunlin, Whitethroat; 16th Lesser Whitethroat, Whinchat, White Wagtail (alba); 17th Common Gull, Pied Flycatcher, **Whimbrel**; 18th Sedge Warbler; 20th Egyptian Goose, Reed Warbler; 27th Ringed Plover, Swift; 28th Cattle Egret, Garden Warbler; 29th **Wood Sandpiper**; 30th **Curlew Sandpiper *** Only the 2nd spring Curlew Sandpiper in the last 25 years**

Wildfowl	Count
Shelduck	regular, max 46+
Wigeon	regular, max 22
Gadwall	regular, max 12
Teal	regular, max 27
Mallard	regular, max 70+
Pochard	regular, max 4
Shoveler	regular, max 12
Tufted Duck	regular, max 15
Goldeneye	1, 8 th , 9 th
Mandarin Duck	1, 11 th
Goosander	regular, max 4
Greylag Goose	regular, max 7
Canada Goose	regular, max 46
Brent Goose	1, 1 st
G C Grebe	regular, max 4
Little Grebe	2, 7 th , 14 th , 17 th
Coot	regular, max 24
Moorhen	regular, max 4
Mute Swan	regular, max 5



Sandwich - Dennis Swaby

Gulls & Terns	Count
Black-headed Gull	regular, max 52
Mediterranean Gull	3, 1 st
Lesser Black-b Gull	regular, max 100+
Herring Gull	regular, max 15+
Common Gull	1, 17 th
Common Tern	1, 5 th , 28 th
Sandwich Tern	1, 5 th



Great White Egret - Dennis Swaby



Yellow Wagtail - Dennis Swaby

Raptors & Owls	Count
Sparrowhawk	regular, max 2
Common Buzzard	regular, max 8
Kestrel	regular, max 2
Hobby	1, 1 st , 28 th
Short-eared Owl	regular, max 2

Sightings EHF/PHF/MGT/RF - April



Grey Heron (3 gulps and it's gone !!) - Dennis Swaby

Waders	Count
Water Rail	regular, max 1
Oystercatcher	regular, max 3
Lapwing	regular, max 11
Ringed Plover	1, 27 th
Little Ringed Plover	regular, max 5
Dunlin	1, 14 th
Redshank	regular, max 10
Common Snipe	2, 1 st , 7 th
Curlew	1, 13 th , 21 st
Whimbrel	1, 17 th , 22 nd
Black-tailed Godwit	regular, max 46
Common Sandpiper	regular, max 4
Green Sandpiper	1, 1 st , 11 th
Wood Sandpiper	1, 29 th , 30 th
Curlew Sandpiper	1, 30 th



Curlew Sandpiper - Dennis Swaby



Common Sandpiper - Dennis Swaby



Siskin - Dennis Swaby

Herons & Egrets	Count
Grey Heron	regular, max 5
Little Egret	1, 20 th , 29 th , 30 th
Cattle Egret	1, 28 th
Great White Egret	regular, max 1

Sightings Elsewhere - April



Whinchat - Dennis Swaby

EHF/PHF/MGT/RF: Raven, Sand Martin, Swallow, House Martin, Swift, Cetti's Warbler, Willow Warbler, Blackcap, Whitethroat, Lesser Whitethroat, Grasshopper Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Whinchat, Wheatear, Yellow Wagtail, White Wagtail (alba)

FF: Tawny Owl, Blackcap

FFF: Oystercatcher, Common Sandpiper, Swallow, House Martin, Sedge Warbler, Blackcap, Redstart, Lesser Redpoll, Siskin

WLF: Kingfisher, Cetti's Warbler, Reed Warbler

Alsager - Mosshouse: Peregrine, Grasshopper Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat, Wheatear, Yellow Wagtail, Yellowhammer

Astbury - Astbury Mere CP: Ring-necked Parakeet

Brereton Heath - Brereton Heath CP: Garden Warbler, Fieldfare

Checkley: Red Kite

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/>

Congleton - Bullsmoor: Grey Partridge

Congleton - Giantswood Lane: Mandarin Duck, Oystercatcher, Little Ringed Plover

Congleton - Mossley: Tawny Owl

Congleton - Newsbank: Barnacle Goose, Green Sandpiper

Congleton - River Dane: Goosander, White Stork, Kingfisher, Dipper

Congleton - Tommys Brook: Goosander, Kingfisher, Dipper

Cranage: Wheatear

Crewe - Wychwood Park, Weston: Willow Warbler, Whitethroat

Doddington - Doddington Park: Red Kite

Doddington - Doddington Pool: Mandarin Duck, Goldeneye, Red-legged Partridge, Swift, Little Grebe, Oystercatcher, Common Sandpiper, Green Sandpiper, Wheatear, Yellow Wagtail, White Wagtail (alba)

Haslington: Hobby

Middlewich - Lime Beds: Lesser Whitethroat, Whitethroat

Mow Cop: Red Kite, Ring Ouzel, Wheatear

Rode Heath: Little Egret, Swallow, Yellowhammer

Rode Heath - Rode Hall: Egyptian Goose

Rode Heath - Rode Pool: Mandarin Duck, Goosander, Oystercatcher, Green Woodpecker

Sandbach - Elworth: Hobby

Shavington: Blackcap

Swettenham Hall: Mandarin Duck, House Martin

Walgherton - Lea Forge: Green Woodpecker, Whitethroat

Wheelock - Forge Fields: Hobby, Pied Flycatcher, Brambling



Wheatear - Dennis Swaby

SECOS Website: www.secos.org.uk

SECOS Blog (to read/record local sightings): www.secos.org.uk/sightings

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

Woolston Eyes - 2nd April



15 members travelled the short distance to Woolston Eyes NR. The weather was fine and dry. In the morning, we visited each of the hides on No. 3 Bed. In the afternoon, we followed the track through No 4 bed.

43 bird species were recorded including gadwall, pochard, little grebe, **black-necked grebe**, sparrowhawk, **marsh harrier**, blackcap and **brambling**.

In the days leading up to the trip and afterwards, two garganey, two ferruginous ducks and a ruddy duck were reported on the reserve. Unfortunately, we didn't see any of them!

£36 was collected from non Woolston Eyes members and sent to Woolston Eyes Conservancy Group. Thank you for your support.

Mike Tonks

Lake Vyrnwy RSPB - 21st April

19 people travelled to RSPB Lake Vyrnwy. The weather was dry with sunny intervals throughout the day.



On the approach to the reserve, a goshawk was spotted.

In the morning, most people chose to follow the 3-mile Wildlife Trail (Blue Trail) in a clockwise direction. A few people opted to take the 2-mile Wildlife Way (Yellow Trail) and explore the area below the dam wall. The trails were mostly undulating coarse-gravelled forestry tracks. There was one steep ascent on the Wildlife Trail, which everyone managed. If we visit in future, it may be better to avoid the steep ascent by walking the trail in an anti-clockwise direction.

On the Wildlife Trail, we recorded tits (**marsh** (heard), **willow**, great, blue and coal), thrushes (song, mistle, blackbird), warblers (**wood warbler**, chiffchaff, willow warbler, blackcap), raptors (buzzard, red kite), nuthatch, **redstart**, **pie flycatcher**, **common crossbill**, **brambling**, siskin, skylark, dunnock and raven. Willow warblers vastly outnumbered chiffchaffs. We watched a probable **tree pipit** perched at the top of a tree. After a while, it climbed into the air and then parachuted to the top of a nearby tree. A few minutes later, it repeated this behaviour to confirm its identity.

At the Coed y Capel Hide and around the visitor centre, siskin, marsh/willow tit and collared dove were seen. A small flock of house martins flew through.

Around the dam, crows (carrion crow, jackdaw, magpie), swallow, treecreeper and chaffinch were recorded.

>> continued

Lake Vyrnwy RSPB (continued)

After lunch, we drove about 5 miles to Rhiwargor car park at the top of the lake and walked the 2-mile Waterfall Trail (Green Trail). Part of the trail was closed for forestry work, making it an 'out and back' walk rather than a circular walk. The trail was mostly an undulating stone footpath with no steep parts. Several chiffchaffs were heard. A flock of small brown birds, believed to be meadow pipit, landed and were soon hidden in the grass. A distant **cuckoo** was spotted perched quietly in a small tree at the top of the waterfall. A redstart was seen on the way back to the car park.

Some people continued to the Centenary Hide where roadside parking was limited. The hide was accessed via a 350-metre track through woodland. Mandarin duck and Canada goose were in the pool. A **peregrine** was spotted perched on a distant rock face. The woodland around the hide was very productive with treecreeper, goldcrest, whitethroat, chiffchaff, willow warbler, chaffinch, redstart, pied flycatcher, blue tit and great tit. A great spotted woodpecker was heard drumming and a raven flew over.

Some people continued a further 800 metres along the road to the Lakeside Hide where great crested grebe, mallard and kestrel were added to the day's list.

A few people opted to travel to Llangynog. They were rewarded for climbing more hills with stonechat, redstart, peregrine, goldfinch and jackdaw.

A most enjoyable day with the target birds of the western oak woodlands – pied flycatcher, redstart, wood warbler, crossbill and goshawk – all recorded, and the cuckoo a bonus. A total of 50 species were seen/heard.

Mike Tonks

2024 SECOS Field Trips Total = 132

Diary Dates



7th May 10.00 a.m.

Tuesday Field Trip

Goyt Valley

Leader: Chris Parry

15th May 7.00 p.m.

Evening Walk

Fanny's Croft, Alsager

Leader: Jean Harrison

19th May 10.00 a.m.

Sunday Field Trip

Burton Mere Wetlands RSPB

Leader: Ian Taylor

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