



# THE OBSERVER

## SECOS Newsletter

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

## June 2026

### Short Weekend Trip

East Yorkshire Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> - Monday 15<sup>th</sup> June

Gannets - John M Wheatley



We'll explore the wetlands of Fairburn Ings, where Bittern, Bearded Tit and Spoonbill are all possible, and the spectacular Bempton Cliffs, with Puffin, Razorbill and Gannet all expected. Wykeham Forest gives us the chance of displaying Goshawks and perhaps even Honey Buzzard if we're lucky, while North Cave Wetlands should provide a rich mix of wetland birds.

### Summer Walk

Swettenham Valley Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> June

Swettenham Valley is one of Cheshire's lesser-known wildlife treasures, with a rich mix of ancient woodland, flower-filled meadows, ponds, scrub and wet flushes creating excellent habitat for a wide variety of birds, butterflies and wildflowers. This attractive summer walk offers peaceful countryside, beautiful scenery and plenty of wildlife interest.



Swettenham Lavender Garden - Stephen Craven

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

## May Highlights (first reports this month)

2<sup>nd</sup> Common Tern, Hobby; 3<sup>rd</sup> Dunlin, Goosander, Great White Egret, House Martin, Lesser Whitethroat, Little Ringed Plover, Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Sanderling, Swift; 4<sup>th</sup> Common Sandpiper, Dipper, Egyptian Goose, Kingfisher, Reed Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Snipe, Water Rail, Whitethroat; 5<sup>th</sup> Common Gull, Little Grebe, Yellow Wagtail, Yellowhammer; 6<sup>th</sup> Black Swan, Raven; 7<sup>th</sup> Willow Warbler; 8<sup>th</sup> Red Kite; 10<sup>th</sup> Garden Warbler, Spotted Flycatcher; 13<sup>th</sup> Mandarin Duck, Wheatear; 15<sup>th</sup> Garganey, Little Egret; 18<sup>th</sup> Sand Martin; 19<sup>th</sup> Cuckoo, Ruddy Shelduck; 21<sup>st</sup> Osprey; 26<sup>th</sup> Yellow-legged Gull

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

Wildfowl	Count
Shelduck	regular, max 22
Wigeon	max 2, 5 <sup>th</sup>
Gadwall	regular, max 15
Teal	regular, max 7
Mallard	regular, max c150
Shoveler	present, 26 <sup>th</sup> , 30 <sup>th</sup>
Tufted Duck	present, 30 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Garganey</b>	regular, max 2
<b>Goosander</b>	1, 3 <sup>rd</sup>
Greylag Goose	regular, max 4
Canada Goose	regular, max 50+
G C Grebe	max 1, 15 <sup>th</sup> , 16 <sup>th</sup> , 30 <sup>th</sup>
Coot	regular, max 31
Moorhen	regular, max 5
Mute Swan	regular, max 3
<b>Black Swan</b>	1, 6 <sup>th</sup>



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.

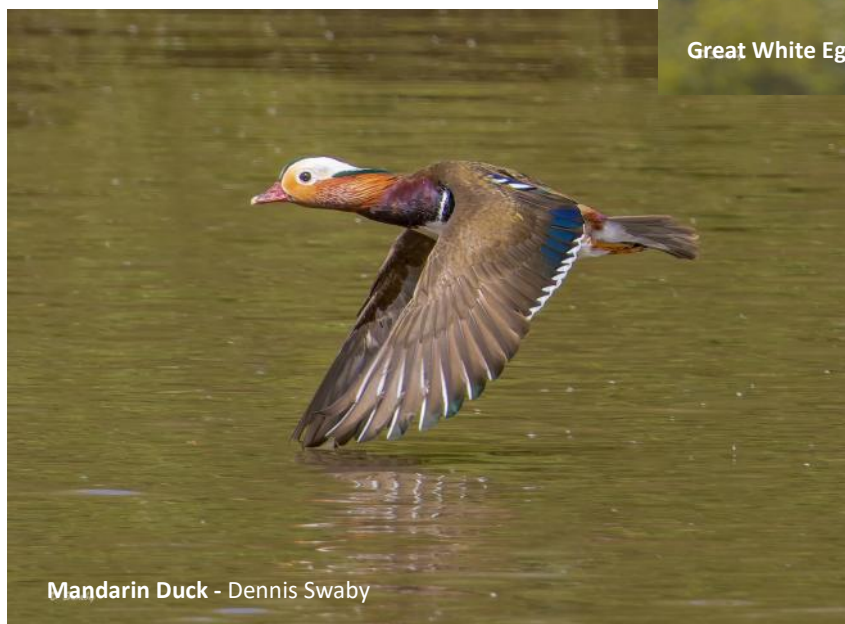
Underline indicates high flock count (see Feb 2020 Newsletter, page 8).

# Sightings EHF/PHF/MGT/RF - May

Waders	Count
Water Rail	1, 4 <sup>th</sup>
Oystercatcher	regular, max 4
Lapwing	5
Little Ringed Plover	2
Ringed Plover	max 17, 3 <sup>rd</sup>
Snipe	1, 4 <sup>th</sup>
Dunlin	1, 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup> , 21 <sup>st</sup>
Common Sandpiper	1, 4 <sup>th</sup>
Sanderling	1, 3 <sup>rd</sup>



Great White Egret - Dennis Swaby



Mandarin Duck - Dennis Swaby

Gulls & Terns	Count
Black-headed Gull	regular, max 5+
Lesser Black-b Gull	regular, max c150
Herring Gull	regular, max 36
Common Gull	1, 5 <sup>th</sup>
Common Tern	regular, max 2
Yellow-legged Gull	1, 26 <sup>th</sup> , 28 <sup>th</sup>

Hérons & Egrets	Count
Grey Heron	regular, max 2
Little Egret	1, 15 <sup>th</sup>
Great White Egret	1, 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup>

Raptors & Owls	Count
Buzzard	1, 24 <sup>th</sup> , 28 <sup>th</sup>
Hobby	1, 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup>



Sparrowhawk - Dennis Swaby

## Goyt Valley - 12<sup>th</sup> May



18 members travelled to Goyt Valley. The weather ranged from light drizzle to downpours in the morning, but brightened up for Derbyshire Bridge and Danebower.

Bird species seen/heard: Canada Goose, mallard, red grouse, pheasant, cuckoo, woodpigeon, lapwing, curlew, common sandpiper, grey heron, **short-eared owl**, kestrel, raven, blue tit, great tit, swallow, willow warbler, chiffchaff, blackcap, wren, treecreeper, song thrush, blackbird, robin, pied flycatcher, redstart, stonechat, wheatear, dipper, grey wagtail, pied wagtail, meadow pipit, chaffinch, goldfinch, reed bunting

**Trip Count = 35 species**

Thanks to Chris Parry for an enjoyable walk despite the rain.

## Wybunbury Moss NNR - 20<sup>th</sup> May



13 members enjoyed an informative and enjoyable walk at Wybunbury Moss, guided by Jenni Tibbetts from Natural England. Jenni proved to be an excellent guide, sharing her extensive knowledge of the site's history, geology, chemistry, wildlife, conservation work, and the ongoing challenges involved in preserving and enhancing this precious habitat.

Bird species seen/heard: Canada goose, mallard, pheasant, woodpigeon, great spotted woodpecker, magpie, jackdaw, carrion crow, blue tit, chiffchaff, wren, song thrush, robin

**Trip Count = 13 species**

£65 was collected from SECOS members and given to Wybunbury Moss NNR. The money will be spent on conservation at Wybunbury Moss. Thank you for your support.

## Leighton & Foulshaw Mosses - 24<sup>th</sup> May



Seven members travelled to Leighton Moss on a warm (18°C) sunny day.

Starting at the Visitor Centre, we walked along the Garden Trail to Lilian's Hide, hearing chaffinch, chiffchaff, blackbird, wren and robin on the way. From the hide, a range of common waterbirds was present, including Canada goose, mute swan, mallard, tufted duck, coot, black-headed gull, lesser black-backed gull and cormorant. Nearby, Cetti's, reed and willow warblers were all heard singing.

Later, two little gulls provided an excellent spectacle. Their light, buoyant, tern-like flight, frequent changes of direction and aerial hawking of insects were distinctive. We also watched them repeatedly dip down to snatch food from the water surface.

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## Leighton & Foulshaw Mosses (continued)

Along the Family Trail, we stopped at the Tim Jackson Hide. On the approach, numerous broad-bodied chasers were flying amongst and perching on the reeds. Their broad, flattened yellow abdomens and brown thoraxes identified them as females. A pair of oystercatchers sat atop the sand martin nesting structure (although no sand martins were present), while gadwall, moorhen and grey heron were added to the day list.



Further along the trail, at Grisedale Hide, a female marsh harrier quartered the reedbed. Its pale buff head glowed in the sunlight, standing out clearly against the darker body. Swallows pursued insects low over the water, while a few swifts hunted higher overhead. A sparrowhawk made a brief appearance as it flew through.

On the return journey to the Visitor Centre, a reed bunting sang from a bush behind the grit trays. In the wet woodland alongside the track, a tree creeper was encountered, while a great tit was repeatedly observed entering a nest box.

After lunch, we set off along the Lower Trail towards Causeway Hide, pausing to watch several singing reed buntings. From the hide, we observed a great crested grebe collecting nesting material and added pochard to the day list.

At around 3.40 pm, we made the short five-minute drive to the Saltmarsh Car Park off New Road. From the Allen Hide, 18 avocets were busily feeding in the shallow water, sweeping their long, thin, upturned bills rhythmically from side to side. Two oystercatchers loafed nearby, while a great white egret dropped in on the far side of the pool.



At the Eric Morecambe Hide, two spoonbills stood sleeping in shallow water approximately 100 metres away. Occasionally, one awoke to preen, revealing its enormous spoon-shaped bill.

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# Leighton & Foulshaw Mosses (continued)

We then drove approximately 20 minutes to Foulshaw Moss.

Two osprey nests are present on the moss. Nest One is occupied by an established breeding pair, while Nest Two is home to a younger pair that have been strengthening their bond since 2025.

From the boardwalk, we pointed our scopes towards Nest One and could just make out the head of a sitting osprey, although heat haze made viewing difficult. Soon afterwards, a second bird arrived at the nest and remained for several minutes.

Continuing to an elevated viewing platform, we turned our attention towards Nest Two. In this direction, the light was more favourable and we obtained clearer views of the sitting bird.

A small bird then landed on top of a dead pine trunk, effectively a ten-metre-high post. Given the habitat and size, it was initially identified as a stonechat. However, another observer suggested pied flycatcher.

The bird repeatedly returned to the same perch after making short aerial sallies for insects. Overall, it appeared brown, with a noticeably darker head and some pale streaking on the back.

The habitat seemed ideal for stonechat, but pied flycatchers can also occur in mossland during migration where there is suitable shelter and an abundance of flying insects. The feeding behaviour was perhaps more suggestive of pied flycatcher than stonechat, although neither identification could be confirmed with confidence.

So was it a stonechat or a pied flycatcher? The truth is that I don't know. My suspicion is pied flycatcher, which would have been a welcome addition to my year list. What the observation did remind us, however, is that migrating birds are not always found in their typical breeding habitats.

Finally, we completed the boardwalk circuit back to the car park before walking a short distance to another viewing area, where we enjoyed our clearest views yet of the osprey on Nest Two.

The Foulshaw Moss Ospreys Webcams can be found at:

<https://www.cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk/osprey-webcam>

This was a brilliant trip. Although we were slightly disappointed not to see or hear bearded tit or bittern, compensation came in the form of views of little gull, spoonbill and osprey. Combined with warm sunshine, dragonflies and a wealth of reedbed wildlife, it made for a memorable day out. Many thanks to Jean Harrison for organising and leading an enjoyable and successful day.

*Mike Tonks*

## Sightings Elsewhere - May



**EHF/PHF/MGT/RF:** Swift, Cormorant, Buzzard, Kingfisher, **Sedge Warbler**, **Reed Warbler**, Lesser Whitethroat, Goldcrest, Stonechat

**FFF:** Great White Egret, Kestrel, Hobby, Peregrine, **House Martin**, **Lesser Whitethroat**, Yellow Wagtail, Grey Wagtail

**WLF:** Common Tern

**Alsager - Borrow Pit Meadows:** Reed Warbler, Reed Bunting

**Astbury:** Hobby

**Astbury - Astbury Mere CP:** Shoveler, Tufted Duck, Great Crested Grebe

**Brereton Heath - Brereton Heath LNR:**

Yellowhammer

**Brereton Heath - The Moss:** Skylark, Lesser Whitethroat, Whitethroat, **Yellow Wagtail**, **Yellowhammer**

**Checkley:** Red Kite

**Church Lawton - Lawton Hall:** Yellowhammer

**Congleton:** **Swift**

**Congleton - Dane-in-Shaw:** Kingfisher

**Congleton - Little Moreton Hall:** Tufted Duck, House Martin

**Congleton - Mill Green:** Goosander, **Kingfisher**, **Dipper**

**Congleton - Mossley:** **Garden Warbler**, Whitethroat

**Congleton - River Dane:** Goosander, Swift, Little Ringed Plover, Kingfisher, Dipper, Grey Wagtail

**Crewe - Quaker's Coppice:** **Spotted Flycatcher**

**Doddington - Doddington Pool:** Gadwall, Tufted Duck, **Little Grebe**, Great Crested Grebe, Oystercatcher, Lapwing, Common Tern, Raven, **Sand Martin**, House Martin, Reed Warbler, Garden Warbler

**Doddington - Glovers Moss & Ridleys Pool:** Tufted Duck, Oystercatcher, **Willow Warbler**

**Ettiley Heath, W of Sandbach:** Red Kite

**Fourlanes End, SE of Sandbach:** **Hobby**

**Gawsworth - Gawsworth Hall:** Tufted Duck, Kestrel, House Martin

**Goostrey to Holmes Chapel:** Raven

**Gorsty Service Res. and environs, SE of Crewe:** Little Ringed Plover

**Haslington:** Red Kite

**Hassall Green, SE of Sandbach:** Lapwing

**Mow Cop:** Red Kite, **Wheatear**

**Rode Heath:** **Egyptian Goose**, **Ruddy Shelduck**



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 - May



Reed Warbler - Dennis Swaby

**Rode Heath - Rode Pool:** Egyptian Goose, **Ruddy Shelduck**, Tufted Duck, Great Crested Grebe

**Sandbach - Elworth - Barlow Wood:** Whitethroat, Yellowhammer

**Sandbach - Sandbach Wildlife Corridor:** **Red Kite**

**Sandbach Heath:** Oystercatcher, Kestrel, Sand Martin, House Martin, Yellow Wagtail, Yellowhammer

**Scholar Green:** **Red Kite**

**Walgherton - Lea Forge:** **Whitethroat**, Spotted Flycatcher

**Wheelock:** **Cuckoo**, **Osprey**

**Wheelock - Forge Fields:** **Mandarin Duck**, Sparrowhawk, House Martin

**Wybunbury - Cobbs Lane:** Tufted Duck, Oystercatcher, Lapwing, House Martin, Sedge Warbler, Whitethroat

**Wybunbury - Wrinehill Road:** Lapwing, **Raven**

## Diary Dates



**8<sup>th</sup> Jun 7.00 pm**

Committee Meeting

**14-15<sup>th</sup> Jun**

Short Weekend Trip

**24<sup>th</sup> Jun 10.00 am**

Summer Walk

**East Yorkshire**


Leader: Mike Tonks

**Swettenham Valley**

Leaders: Ian & Lydia Taylor

 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/>