



NEWSLETTER

THE OBSERVER

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



Pengy's Pond – David Dixon

"Birding at Home and Abroad"

John Gardner
Friday 9th October

The talk features a selection of birds from around the UK, together with a trip abroad to Texel, an island in the northwestern part of the Netherlands.

Field Trip

Pennington Flash

Tuesday 6th October

Pennington Flash is a rewarding wetland reserve near Leigh. Its lake, reedbeds, woodland and grassland attract an impressive variety of birds throughout the year, including wildfowl, waders and woodland species. Well-placed hides, paths and a café make it an enjoyable destination.

Short-eared Owl – John Gardner



Causeway Hide – Karl and Ali

Field Trip

RSPB Leighton Moss

Sunday 25th October

October at RSPB Leighton Moss brings autumn migration, bustling reedbeds and rich wetland birdlife. Look for Bearded Tits, Bitterns, Marsh Harriers and wintering wildfowl, with waders frequenting the coastal pools.

Welcome

We are delighted to welcome new members to SECOS this month.

Gail Bamford, Tim Stone

Goshawk Causes a Stir at Elton Hall Flash

At 2.10 pm on 20 September, a female goshawk was observed at Elton Hall Flash (EHF), flying over the willows bordering the side lane. The bird reappeared at around 4.30 pm, although its presence was initially revealed by the reaction of the other birds. The entire bird population of the flash suddenly erupted into the air, including large numbers of gulls, ducks, coots and Canada geese. The reason for this dramatic disturbance soon became apparent when the goshawk flew over the trees at the viewpoint before heading towards the willows at the back of EHF. Its barred underparts, broad wings and impressive size were particularly noticeable. Goshawk is a county rarity, making this an especially noteworthy sighting. According to records submitted to BTO BirdTrack, the previous records from the Sandbach Flashes were in July 2011 and February 2005.

Highlights Summary

1st Curlew, Dipper, Great White Egret, Kingfisher, Little Egret, Ruff, Yellowhammer; 3rd Spotted Flycatcher, Yellow Wagtail; 5th Marsh Harrier, Redshank; 6th Wheatear; 7th Green Woodpecker, Hobby; 9th Fieldfare, Whitethroat, Willow Warbler; 10th Common Sandpiper, Golden Plover, Green Sandpiper, Ringed Plover; 11th Egyptian Goose, Little Grebe; 13th Cattle Egret, Pink-footed Goose; 14th Mandarin Duck; 17th Red Kite; 20th **Goshawk**; 22nd Oystercatcher; 25th Barnacle Goose, Goosander; 26th Snipe; 27th Common Tern

Sandbach Flashes Sightings - SEP

Elton Hall Flash + Pump House Flash + Railway Flash + Maw Green Tip

Waders	Count
Oystercatcher	3, 22 nd
Golden Plover	1, 10 th
Ringed Plover	4, 10 th
Lapwing	regular, max c120
Curlew	regular, max 15
Snipe	2, 7 th
Common Sandpiper	1, 10 th , 11 th
Green Sandpiper	regular, max 3
Redshank	4, 5 th
Ruff	regular, max 5



Snipe - Dennis Swaby

Sandbach Flashes Sightings - SEP

Elton Hall Flash + Pump House Flash + Railway Flash + Maw Green Tip



Redshank - Dennis Swaby



Ruff - Dennis Swaby

Sandbach Flashes Sightings - SEP

Elton Hall Flash + Pump House Flash + Railway Flash + Maw Green Tip

Wildfowl	Count
Canada Goose	regular, max 100
Greylag Goose	regular, max 70
Mute Swan	6, 1 st
Shelduck	2, 26 th , 28 th
Shoveler	30, 15 th
Gadwall	regular, max 4
Wigeon	regular, max 23
Mallard	regular, max c150
Pintail	1, 14 th
Teal	regular, max c230
Tufted Duck	1, 1 st
Moorhen	regular, max 14
Coot	regular, max 80
Little Grebe	2, 15 th



Marsh Harrier - Dennis Swaby

Hérons & Egrets	Count
Great White Egret	1, 15 th
Cattle Egret	1, 13 th
Grey Heron	regular, max 7



Grey Heron - Dennis Swaby

Gulls & Terns	Count
Common Tern	5, 27 th
Black-headed Gull	regular, max c270
Herring Gull	25, 22 nd
Lesser Black-b Gull	regular, max c180

Raptors & Owls	Count
Sparrowhawk	1, 26 th
Goshawk	1, 20 th
Marsh Harrier	1, 5 th
Buzzard	1, 26 th



Curlew - Dennis Swaby

Trip Report

Middleton Lakes - 20th September



Thirteen members joined our visit to RSPB Middleton Lakes.

Despite the travel challenges – closure of the M42, a football match at Aston Villa's training ground on Bodymoor Heath Road and a local car boot sale – most people arrived more or less on time.

Sunny intervals and mild temperatures provided comfortable walking conditions throughout the day.

On arrival, Karina was greeted by four noisy ring-necked parakeets flying over the trees behind the Welcome Hub. Later, as the group passed the Hub, a great spotted woodpecker was heard and then spotted at the top of a tall tree.

We crossed the lane and joined the elevated boardwalk. The pool beside the reedbed was quiet, and the usual feeding station was absent, presumably because the RSPB was following its advice not to provide seeds and peanuts until the end of October.

Continuing through the woodland, we encountered blue tit, great tit and magpie. From the viewing platform, we spotted a great crested grebe and briefly glimpsed a kingfisher, while a Cetti's warbler called from cover. Further on, we stopped to scan the fields, where a small group of pheasants included several leucistic individuals.

After crossing the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal at Fisher's Mill Bridge, we set up our scopes to scan Fisher's Mill Pool. Tufted duck and coot were the most numerous birds, accompanied by smaller numbers of mute swan, mallard, gadwall, shoveler and lapwing. A great crested grebe was present with a large, stripe-headed juvenile, and a water rail was heard.

As we walked north, we spotted a reed bunting and heard both a green woodpecker and a distant bittern. We then stopped at the brand-new viewing screen overlooking West Scrape and Jubilee Wetlands South. The area was generally quiet, although the channel along the edge of West Scrape held two juvenile mute swans and around twenty coot.

Along the Seasonal Trail towards the footbridge, we paused several times to scan Jubilee Wetlands North. Large numbers of greylag geese, cormorants and black-headed gulls were present, together with a few snipe and a grey heron.

We headed to the Lookout Hide for lunch, overlooking North Pool. A little grebe, juvenile ruff, dunlin and ringed plover were busily feeding in the channels. A little egret dropped in, and a great white egret was spotted further away. A kestrel hovered close to the hide, and a buzzard circled high overhead with two sparrowhawks above it. The size difference was striking: Collins gives the buzzard a length of 48-56 cm and a wingspan of 110-130 cm, compared with 29-41 cm and 58-80 cm respectively for the sparrowhawk.

After lunch, some members explored the fields behind the West Scrape screen and found two Egyptian geese. Others headed south along the path on the eastern side of the reserve. Several viewpoints with benches along this route have previously afforded good views across New Reedbed and Fisher's Mill Reedbed. Unfortunately, the vegetation had grown so extensively that the views were now completely obscured.

It was an enjoyable day in good company, with a varied selection of species and plenty to keep us interested. A drink in the Middleton Hall courtyard rounded off the visit nicely.

Many thanks to Karina for leading the trip.

Trip count: 60 species 2026 SECOS field trips total: 167 species

Sightings Elsewhere - SEP

Buzzard - Dennis Swaby



Sandbach Flashes:

EHF/PHF/MGT/RF: Great Spotted Woodpecker, Raven, Sand Martin, Swallow, House Martin, Cetti's Warbler, Treecreeper, Meadow Pipit

Alsager - Fanny's Croft: Hobby, Skylark, Spotted Flycatcher, Yellow Wagtail, Yellowhammer

Alsager - Treatment Works: Grey Wagtail

Astbury - Astbury Mere CP: Tufted Duck, Great Crested Grebe, Buzzard, Kestrel, Swallow,

Church Lawton - Lawton Gate Treatment Works: Grey Wagtail

Congleton - Lower Heath: Buzzard

Congleton - River Dane: Mandarin Duck, Little Egret, Kingfisher, Dipper, Grey Wagtail

Congleton - Treatment Works: Grey Wagtail

Crewe: Barnacle Goose, Goosander, Sparrowhawk

Doddington - Doddington Pool: Egyptian Goose, Tufted Duck, Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Common Sandpiper, Little Egret, Great White Egret, Grey Heron, Red Kite, Kingfisher, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Raven, Grey Wagtail

Mow Cop: Kestrel, Hobby, Fieldfare, Wheatear

Rode Heath: Hobby

Rode Heath - Rode Pool: Little Egret, Great White Egret, Grey Heron

Sandbach - Fields Farm: Hobby, Swallow, Willow Warbler, Whitethroat, Yellowhammer

Sandbach - Sandbach Wildlife Corridor: Pink-footed Goose, Raven

Scholar Green: Green Woodpecker, Yellowhammer

Shavington/Hough: Swallow, House Martin

Wybunbury - Wrinehill Road: Swallow

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/>

Diary Dates



6th October 10.00 am
Tuesday Field Trip

9th October 7.30 pm
Indoor Meeting

25th October 9.30 am
Sunday Field Trip

Pennington Flash

Leaders: Ian & Lydia Taylor

Birding at Home and Abroad

Speaker: John Gardner

RSPB Leighton Moss

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