



THE OBSERVER

SECOS Newsletter

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

December 2023

Field Trip Sandbach Flashes & Lunch

Tuesday 5th December

Our annual trip to a fantastic local site followed by a festive lunch at The White Lion, Warmingham.



The Salt Pan - [geograph.org.uk - _4247657](https://www.geograph.org.uk/_/4247657)

"Wader Quest"

Rick Simpson

Friday 8th December

Wader Quest was set up in 2012 and was initially intended to be a year-long fundraising event in support of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper. It is now a registered charity, which raises money and awareness to support wader conservation. Rick and his wife Elis are two of the trustees.

The talk shows the beauty and diversity waders around the world. It contains stunning photos and information about the birds and some amusing personal anecdotes. It emphasises the acute crisis facing wader conservation and how we can all help to combat it.



Broad-billed Sandpiper - Rick Simpson

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

Field Trip

RSPB Middleton Lakes

Sunday 10th December



Middleton Lakes - [geograph.org.uk - _4842558](https://www.geograph.org.uk/_/4842558)

Middleton Lakes is a landscape transformed from a gravel pit into a mosaic of wetlands, meadows and woodland in the heart of the River Tame Valley. Several kilometres of trails provide easy access to all parts of the reserve.

November Highlights (first reports this month)

1st Curlew, Dunlin, Goldeneye, Merlin, Water Rail; 2nd Little Egret; 3rd Goosander, Little Grebe, Pintail, Red-legged Partridge, Common Snipe; 4th Fieldfare, Redwing; 5th Cetti's Warbler, Kingfisher, Pink-footed Goose, Pochard, Siskin; 6th Barn Owl; 7th Great White Egret, Jack Snipe; 10th Common Gull, Egyptian Goose; 14th Raven; 16th Brambling; 18th Tawny Owl, Woodcock; 19th Barnacle Goose; 21st Black Swan; 23rd Cattle Egret, Dipper, Lesser Redpoll; 25th Black-tailed Godwit, Marsh Harrier

Sightings EHF/PHF - November

Gulls & Terns	Count
Black-headed Gull	regular, max 198
Lesser Black-b Gull	regular, max 152
Herring Gull	regular, max 85
Common Gull	regular, max 2
Great Black-b Gull	regular, max 2

Hérons & Egrets	Count
Grey Heron	regular, max 7
Little Egret	regular, max 2
Cattle Egret	4, 23 rd , 25 th
Great White Egret	1, 11 th



Mute Swans - Dennis Swaby

Raptors & Owls	Count
Sparrowhawk	1, 26 th
Common Buzzard	2, 5 th , 11 th
Merlin	1, 1 st

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).

Regular means 4+ days per month.

Sightings EHF/PHF - November

Wildfowl	Count
Shelduck	regular, max 72
Wigeon	regular, max c520
Gadwall	4, 19 th
Teal	regular, max c245
Mallard	regular, max c290
Pintail	5, 7 th
Shoveler	regular, max 25
Pochard	regular, max 1
Tufted Duck	regular, max 23
Goldeneye	regular, max 2
Goosander	2, 11 th , 26 th
Pink-footed Goose	regular, max 250
Greylag Goose	regular, max 325
Canada Goose	regular, max 385
Egyptian Goose	1, 11 th
Barnacle Goose	1, 19 th
G C Grebe	regular, max 3
Little Grebe	regular, max 4
Coot	regular, max 216
Moorhen	regular, max 15
Mute Swan	regular, max 6



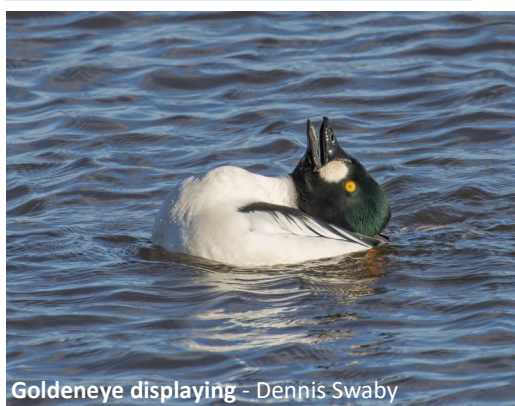
Shoveler - Dennis Swaby

Mute Swan	regular, max 6
Black Swan	1, 21 st

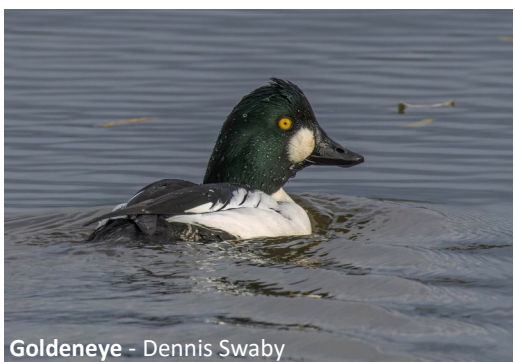


Wigeon - Dennis Swaby

Waders	Count
Water Rail	1, 1 st , 11 th , 26 th
Lapwing	regular, max c370
Dunlin	3, 1 st
Common Snipe	max 3, 26 th
Curlew	regular, max 33
Black-tailed Godwit	1, 25 th



Goldeneye displaying - Dennis Swaby



Goldeneye - Dennis Swaby



Peregrine - Dennis Swaby

Sightings Elsewhere - November

EHF/PHF: Raven, **Redwing**, **Fieldfare**, Bullfinch

FFF: Raven, Redwing, Fieldfare, Brambling, Greenfinch

MGT: **Jack Snipe**, Cetti's Warbler, Stonechat

OTF: **Great White Egret**

RF: **Barnacle Goose**, Great White Egret

WLF: Cetti's Warbler

Alsager - Borrow Pit Meadows: Siskin

Astbury - Astbury Mere CP: **Pochard**, **Little Egret**, **Tawny Owl**, **Kingfisher**, Redwing, Fieldfare, Greenfinch, **Siskin**

Brereton Heath - Brereton Heath CP: Great White Egret, **Lesser Redpoll**, Siskin



Fieldfare - Dennis Swaby

Congleton - Forge & Radnor Woods: **Barn Owl**

Congleton - Mossley: **Woodcock**

Congleton - River Dane: Kingfisher, **Dipper**

Crewe: Pink-footed Goose, Goosander

Doddington - Doddington Pool: Pink-footed Goose, Gadwall, Pintail, Goldeneye, **Goosander**, **Little Grebe**, **Common Gull**, **Marsh Harrier**, Kingfisher, Fieldfare, Stonechat

Doddington - Lemon Pool: **Pintail**

Ettiley Heath - Crabmill Old Farm: Pochard, Great White Egret, Redwing, Fieldfare, Greenfinch



Redwing - Dennis Swaby

Haslington: **Brambling**

Moston: Gadwall, Raven

Rode Heath - Rode Hall: Stonechat

Rode Heath - Rode Pool: **Egyptian Goose**, **Goosander**, Woodcock, **Common Snipe**, **Little Egret**, Kingfisher, **Raven**

Sandbach - Elworth: Pink-footed Goose

Swettenham - The Quinta: Redwing, Fieldfare, Siskin



Goldfinches squabbling - Dennis Swaby



Black Swan - Dennis Swaby

Wheelock - Forge Fields:

Sparrowhawk, Redwing, Fieldfare, Greenfinch

Winterley & Winterley Pool:

Black Swan, Kingfisher, Greenfinch

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/>



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

Pennington Flash - 7th November



After a wet and unpleasant drive up the M6, 19 members arrived at Pennington Flash – at least the rain had abated on arrival. We were greeted by a fly-over of approximately 60 pink-footed geese flying southeast. Unfortunately, we were also greeted with the news that the hides on the east side of the reserve were closed due to flooding. This included the Bunting hide, which is where the feeders are filled regularly and is favoured by the finches and tits, and where water rail is frequently sighted.

We set up scopes by the car park and surveyed the lake, quickly ticking off coot, moorhen, mute swan, Canada goose and mallard. Further out, tufted duck, pochard and cormorant were seen. Even further out, near the far bank, were goosander and female goldeneye. A single oystercatcher flew through, and great and lesser black-backed gulls were seen. Discussion took place about whether we could count two ducks that were pretending to be Muscovy ducks.

We moved on to check out the two hides that were 'closed' and yes, they were flooded. We were able to tick off gadwall, shoveler, great tit, blue tit, wren and nuthatch whilst standing in the water.

We then headed to the Frank R Horrocks hide, which looked out over a spit protruding into the bay – clearly the 'tide' was in! A flock of lapwing had taken up residency at the end of the spit along with several cormorants, shovelers and teal. Out on the water were several little grebes, great crested grebes and goosanders, along with about 20 cormorants cruising across the bay.

On the walk to the Tom Edmondson hide, long-tailed tits, blackbird, magpie and a single redwing were seen. From the hide, we saw mute swan, teal, coot, shoveler and gadwall.

We made the short walk to Ramsdale hide and those that were quickest observed a kingfisher sitting on a post in the middle of the bay. This (or another) kingfisher flitted about the bay several times during our stay. Due to the weather, and that there were no further hides to give us cover, we decided to take lunch in the Ramsdale hide.

As a result of only being able to visit half of the hides it was decided that we should tread new grounds and head over 'The Ruck' – a small hill, presumably made up of coal spoil (with a nearby lane called Slag Lane).


We walked over The Ruck, but birds were few and far apart. We got views of the opposite end of the flash by the sailing club and most of the birds were along the far bank – tufted duck and a few more female goldeneye. Whilst on the walk, goldfinch and a single redpoll were ticked off, along with a fly-through by a sparrowhawk.

We retraced our steps to return to the car park. A quick look from the Tom Edmondson hide finished off the day with views of bullfinch and goldcrest, whilst Colin spent time in the flooded hides and was able to add willow tit and reed bunting.


We had managed to avoid most of the rain by dodging into the hides. We had been warned that there was substantial water about, and wellingtons had been advised – we should probably have had wetsuits as well. A good day was still enjoyed!!

47 bird species were seen/heard during the trip.

Derek Owen

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Wirral - 19th November



Our trip to The Wirral was dominated by frequent bouts of heavy rain.

7 members attended, undeterred by a weather forecast that predicted an 80-90% chance of rain throughout the day.

We met in the car park at Parkgate and set up 'scopes in the rain. Initially, the only bird of note on the salt marsh was a little egret. After a few minutes, a marsh harrier was spotted on the skyline and shortly afterwards another one was seen. Singles of goosander, grey heron and great white egret were found. Eventually, we were rewarded by a distant view of a ringtail **hen harrier** flying low over the marsh, near the Flintshire Bridge. It was tricky to get the 'scopes on it because of the distance and the heavy rain. By this time, we were soaked and the consensus was that we should head to the nearby Burton Mere Wetlands reserve.

The shelter and warmth provided by the Burton Mere visitor centre was very welcome. We settled down to check out the pools, soon adding shoveler, teal, common shelduck, coot, moorhen, black-tailed godwit, lapwing, common redshank and dunlin. A pair of gadwalls were in the channel in front of the visitor centre. Later, we had good views of 2 ruff and a single Canada goose was seen in the field behind the pools. Then, a squadron of 6 whooper swans flew through. A quick peek at the new café took us past the hanging feeders where we saw blue tit and great tit. After lunch the rain eased a little so we decided to return to the itinerary. A juvenile great northern diver had been reported at West Kirby Marine Lake since 4th November so we set off with high hopes.

On arrival at West Kirby, our hopes were soon dashed. The good news was 3 turnstones resting on a small jetty. The bad news was that the Student Windsurfing Association had chosen this day to have their 'away day', and there were dozens of windsurfers whizzing all over the lake at high speed. Unsurprisingly, the diver was not impressed by the disturbance and had gone somewhere quieter. We set up our 'scopes at the edge of the Watersports Centre car park and looked across the sand towards the Hilbre Islands. A flock of common scoters were seen between Hilbre Island and Little Hilbre Island and many feeding shelduck and oystercatchers were spread out across the sand. A solitary resting wader was spotted close to Hilbre Island, which eventually revealed its long curved bill and was identified as a curlew. A discussion started about the id of a flock of black and white ducks on the sea. We settled on tufted ducks although many of us couldn't remember seeing tufted ducks on the sea.

continued >>

Wirral (continued)



A man showed us a photo of a great northern diver that he claimed to have taken a short while ago at the other end of the lake. We drove slowly along South Parade looking for it without success, just a solitary cormorant. Frustratingly, the diver returned to the lake the following day and has been there every day since.

The final stop was the Lifeboat Station at Hoylake. The light was fading now and it was still raining! Thousands of knots were resting on the sand. A few grey plovers and a single great black-backed gull were seen.

We enjoyed the day and proved once again that we're a hardy bunch!

41 species were seen/heard during the day.

Mike Tonks

2023 SECOS Field Trips Total = 167 species

RSPB Sales



The RSPB Macclesfield Local Group sold Christmas cards, calendars and diaries at the November indoor meeting. The total sales for the evening was an excellent £132. Thank you to SECOS members for your generous support.

Ian & Lydia Taylor

Diary Dates



5th Dec 10.00 a.m.

Tuesday Field Trip & Lunch

8th Dec 7.30 p.m.

Indoor Meeting

10th Dec 10.00 a.m.

Sunday Field Trip

Sandbach Flashes

Leader: Jean Harrison

Wader Quest

Speaker: Rick Simpson

Middleton Lakes

Leader: Peter Durnall

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