

SANDBACH FLASHES 2012 BIRD REPORT



Glossy Ibis

Editorial (Andy Firth)

The year 2012 was presumably the best ever for Sandbach Flashes, two firsts for the area in Glossy Ibis (M Wright) and Hawfinch (A Goodwin) stole the show and the finders article for the Ibis is included in the report. However the supporting cast was also worthy of star billing, I for one will never forget the Wryneck found by AG on the 5th May, amusingly while some of the regulars were chasing a Pied Flycatcher at Flamborough, luckily it stayed and showed for two days so no handkerchiefs were necessary for the Pied Fly "twitchers". Other highlights included the all-day Little Tern and Kittiwake which are both notorious short stayers. Watch Lane Flash had a welcome return to form with Great Northern Diver and Red-breasted Merganser both being seen. The long staying Common Scoter on Pump House Flash was also much appreciated. A Bittern seen in late December was only the second flashes record and is included at the very end of the systematic list as the report author had naively compiled the final report while off work at Christmas assuming nothing new would be found. Other highlights are too many to mention but all 161 species seen in 2012 are covered in the report.

While compiling this year's report it became clearer with every species I covered that without two individual observers (D Norbury and A Goodwin) the rest of our burgeoning year lists would have been reduced quite drastically. I have compiled a list of AG and DN's 2012 finds in a short 'resume' and this is included. Mark Stubbs writes as to why the 3rd June was such a special day for him and it nicely sums up what having a local patch is all about.

On a rather more disappointing note it does appear that the water levels throughout the area are going to be constantly higher than ideal and the return wader passage this year was without doubt the worse in my memory.

If there are any omissions from the report feel free to let me know but some are inevitable as compilation can be a rather arduous task. Once again thanks to everybody who maintains the feeders around Elton Hall Flash and who enter their sightings into the log book. Finally thanks to Bob Brown and Dennis Swaby for allowing me to use their superb images within the pages and on the cover of the report.

Glossy Ibis 7th January 2012
(Malcolm Wright)

On the afternoon of Saturday 7th January at 14:45 I made one of my regular visits to the flashes. On this occasion I decided to check out Pump House Flash first. The light was good with mid-afternoon sunshine just beginning to fade.

The usual large numbers of gulls were present on the main body of water and after scanning through these I continued to cover the rest of the flooded fields in the surrounding area. There feeding on the edge of the flooded field was what was obviously an Ibis. Having not been a birder for too long and not being sure which species of Ibis I had found I went along to the view point at EHF where I knew Brian Perkins and Dave Robinson were. I relayed to them what I had seen.

The three of us walked back to Pump House Flash to confirm my initial observation and after a short while we identified the bird as a definite Glossy Ibis, a first for the flashes and a lifer for me. This was probably the same bird which had been seen briefly in flight late one afternoon a few days earlier over the railway line.

We lost sight of the bird amongst all the other birds in the air but were sure it had flown off towards Maw Green tip.

The bird subsequently showed the following day and then made regular visits to the flashes and surrounding fields for the next week or so and then seemingly disappeared until about ten days later when I found it again while checking out the fields on the opposite side of the road to Elton Hall Flash. It remained in the fields for the subsequent few days allowing some good photographic opportunities.

I just wish I had selected this species in the "next for the flashes" sweep.

My best day at the flashes (Mark Stubbs)

I started watching Sandbach Flashes in 1992 and have witnessed many great sightings, personal finds and experiences. On June 3rd 2012 I had what I consider to be my best ever day's birding at the flashes. This was not because I saw anything particularly rare but how the events came together and the species involved which made it so special. On the day in the MGT/RF area I saw Short-eared Owl, Grasshopper Warbler, Garganey, Hobby and Red Kite. The following are the reasons that this day and these birds were so special.

Short-eared Owl:-

Not only was this sighting on an unusual date but it was only my second for the flashes. Surprisingly this bird stayed whereas one would think it would have been on breeding territory at this time of the year.

Grasshopper Warbler:-

This may not be an unusual species for many local patches in Cheshire but it has only recently colonised the flashes area again. It has in fact never been a regular species even in the past; however since 2009 it has become annual around the MGT/RF area presumably as the habitat matures it becomes more to the species liking.

Garganey:-

This species is seen most years at the flashes. The spring of 2012 produced a pair which stayed to breed. The resulting breeding confirmed in mid-summer made the sighting on this day all the more special.

Hobby:-

Anyone who knows me will be aware that this species is one of my favourites and I have studied its behaviour for many years. On the 3rd June I witnessed a pair displaying and in my opinion inspecting a potential nest site. The events of this day came to nothing so far as I know but could the birds have settled to breed elsewhere in the flashes area something which has never been proven but is surely inevitable.

Red Kite:-

Finally the icing on the cake so far as the 3rd June is concerned. This was a bird that I have always wanted to see at the flashes and although distant I had two prolonged sightings.

To summarise:-

Why was 3rd June such a special day for me? The Short-eared Owl was a bird I didn't expect to see at this time of year. The Grasshopper Warbler showed extremely well which isn't always a characteristic of this species. The Garganey pair subsequently bred, only the second ever flashes record of breeding. The behaviour I noted from the pair of Hobbies was something I haven't witnessed before. The Red Kite was my first ever at the flashes and is a bird which is always a privilege to see. What a day!



Garganey

2012 What a year (Andy Firth)

As I mentioned in the editorial, when going through the records for the year 2012 it became clearer than ever that the two flashes veterans found a disproportionate amount (around 80%) of the rare and scarce birds recorded in 2012. Below is a summary of AG's finds with apologies if I have missed any or credited any wrongly.

Greater Scaup

Red-breasted Merganser (first flashes record for 23 years)

Great Northern Diver (first flashes record for 17 years)

Eurasian Spoonbill

Eurasian Wryneck (first flashes record for 15 years)

Hawfinch (first flashes record)

Add to the above the first breeding record of Garganey for 37 years, Arctic Tern, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Tree Pipit, Bohemian Waxwing, Common Redstart and Common Crossbill and all in all not a bad years local patching.

At EHF/PHF, DN managed the following, again with apologies if I have missed any or credited any wrongly.

Egyptian Goose

Green-winged Teal

Common Scoter (first flashes record for 18 years)

Little Tern (first flashes record for 8 years)

Add to this Osprey (at least four), Curlew Sandpiper, Bar-tailed Godwit, Little Gull, Caspian Gull(s), Glaucous Gull, Black Tern and many more.

Hopefully the year 2013 will see the good birds split a little more equally between the locals but don't hold your breath.

EARLY AND LATE DATES FOR SUMMER VISITORS

The table has been arranged in date order for the '10 year average' arrival dates for the SECOS recording area as I don't have specific Sandbach Flashes information.

Species	<i>ARRIVALS</i>		<i>DEPARTURES</i>	
	Date in 2012	Earliest Ever SECOS	Date in 2012	Latest Ever SECOS
Little Ringed Plover	18-Mar	05-Mar-00	29-Jul	16-Oct-85
Sand Martin	21-Mar	11-Mar-08	25-Sep	24-Nov-72
Swallow	28-Mar	10-Feb-07	27-Oct	30-Nov-74
Willow Warbler	08-Apr	21-Mar-09	19-Aug	27-Sep-08
House Martin	30-Mar	25-Mar-95	05-Oct	05-Nov-77
Yellow Wagtail	01-Apr	29-Mar-81	18-Sep	27-Oct-06
Lesser Whitethroat	18-Apr	21-Mar-00	29-Sep	01-Oct-98
Reed Warbler	15-Apr	10-Apr-11	22-Sep	04-Oct-98
Common Whitethroat	28-Apr	11-Apr-09	15-Sep	22-Sep-11
Sedge Warbler	18-Apr	10-Apr-11	01-Aug	01-Oct-78/11
Swift	27-Apr	05-Apr-82	22-Aug	03-Nov-78
Cuckoo	13-May	16-Apr-96	NR	01-Oct-86
Garden Warbler	02-May	16-Apr-09	19-Aug	09-Sep-83
Hobby	30-Apr	27-Mar-94	25-Sep	08-Oct-00
Grasshopper Warbler	20-Apr	15-Apr-09	NR	25-Sep-10

SYSTEMATIC LIST 2012

Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*)

Fairly common resident.

Regular throughout with 30 on EHF/PHF on 2nd Mar.

Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*)

Rare winter visitor.

Two were present on EHF on 12th Feb though they soon flew off towards RF. Three were seen over Green Lane on 1st Mar. A herd of over 20 flew south east over EHF on 16th Nov.

Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*)

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant or feral.

One was regular throughout the early winter period with the Canada Geese, skeins of 55 and 130 over MGT on 13th Jan, 15 over EHF on 29th Jan and 250 over EHF on 8th Feb. In the second winter period 115 over MGT on 22nd Sep, 140 over EHF on 7th Oct, 280 over EHF on 10th Oct, 150 over MGT 10th Oct. Upwards of 400 flew over EHF in several skeins on 11th Dec.

Greater White-Fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*)

Very rare winter visitor.

An adult of the European race remained from 2011 and was present from at least 1st to 9th Jan it was seen throughout the area.

Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*)

Rare visitor or feral.

Regularly seen throughout at EHF, PHF and RF with up to ten individuals.

Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*)

Common resident.

Breeding records from RF, CF, EHF and WLF. Up to 800 regular in winter.

Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*)

Rare visitor or feral.

Odd birds regular with the Canada Geese.

Egyptian Goose (*alopochen aegyptiacus*)

Rare visitor.

One was by PHF on 15th Apr.

Common Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*)

Uncommon resident and winter visitor.

On 2nd Feb 70 were counted on EHF. Three broods fledged from EHF.

Mandarin Duck (*Aix galericulata*)

Scarce visitor.

No recorded breeding this year as in 2011 but still regular particularly around MGT and RF.

Eurasian Wigeon (*Anas penelope*)

Common winter visitor.

On 22nd Feb approximately 700 were counted on EHF this turned out to be the largest count in the first winter period. Upwards of 900 were counted on EHF/PHF on 11th Dec.

Gadwall (*Anas strepera*)

Uncommon winter visitor.

An excellent year with double figure counts from RF and EHF

Common Teal (*Anas crecca*)

Common winter visitor. Scarce in summer.

No change in status this year in both winter periods. Counts of 600 plus the maximum recorded.

Green-winged Teal (*Anas carolinensis*)

Rare visitor.

A drake was found on EHF on 19th Jan and although very elusive stayed for a further two days.

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

Common resident. Abundant in winter.

The first young were noted on FFF and CF on 11th Apr

Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*)

Uncommon winter visitor.

As last year wintering numbers decreasing with just nine in the first winter period the largest total.

Garganey (*Anas querquedula*)

Scarce summer visitor.

A pair which arrived on RF on 24th April stayed to breed, the first such proven event since 1975 and produced at least six young, the juveniles were first seen on 10th Jun and then sightings of three juveniles in late Jul and early Aug on Hancock's flood presumably related to this breeding pairs offspring. Another drake was also on RF on 2nd May.

Northern Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*)

Uncommon winter visitor, scarce in summer.

Numbers small in the early winter period with counts in the low twenties. On 14th Sep an impressive 71 were on EHF/PHF, this being one of the largest ever counts from the recording area.

Common Pochard (*Aythya ferina*)

Fairly common winter visitor.

As in 2011 infrequently seen on EHF/PHF in both winter periods.

Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*)

Fairly common winter visitor. Scarce breeder.

On CF 22 were counted on 16th Feb, bred at RF, CF and unusually EHF.

Greater Scaup (*Aythya marila*)

Very rare visitor.

On 24th Oct two 1st w were seen briefly on WLF, these located later that day to CF and stayed until 4th Nov being also seen on EHF but missing on some intervening days.

Common Scoter (*Melanitta nigra*)

Very rare visitor and passage migrant.

A drake found on PHF on 13th Jul was the first at the flashes since 1994 and also the first to stay for more than one day; it departed overnight on 17th Jul. This species was a new flashes bird for many.

Common Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*)

Uncommon winter visitor.

A female was on RF between 9th and 12th Jan. A pair was on EHF on 1st Nov with presumably the same female of the pair still present into Dec. Three immature/females were on CF on 28th Nov.

Red-breasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator*)

Very rare visitor.

On 6th Nov a pair was present on WLF between 07:45 and 09:50, the first flashes record since Oct 1989 and the finders first ever in 42 years of watching the flashes.

Goosander (*Mergus merganser*)

Regular winter visitor.

The rapid increase in numbers appears to have levelled off but still regular at EHF in greatly reduced numbers.

Red-legged Partridge (*Alectoris rufa*)

Rare except where locally released.

Just one record in the first winter period with two seen near EHF on 17th Jan, this turned out to be the only sighting.

Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*)

Scarce resident except where locally released.

Commonly seen especially around FF.

Great Northern Diver (*Gavia immer*)

Very rare visitor.

On 19th Nov a 1stw spent twenty minutes on WLF around midday before flying off north. This was the second flashes record after one also on WLF in Mar 1995. On 27th Nov another flew over PHF, this could have been the earlier bird but if so where had it been for the intervening eight days.

Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*)

Fairly common resident.

Breeding from CF, RF and possibly PHF.

Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*)

Common resident.

A much better year with birds regular on EHF, RF, WF, WLF and CF. Breeding confirmed with at least five successful broods.

Great Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

Fairly common winter visitor. Rare in summer.

Recorded regularly throughout less so in the summer months. An impressive 30 were on PHF on 4th Feb with 24 over EHF on 7th Oct.

Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*)

Scarce visitor.

The first of the year was on EHF on 16th Apr, others also on EHF/PHF on 22nd Apr, 2nd May and 25th Aug.

Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)

Common resident.

Regularly recorded throughout particularly from EHF.

Eurasian Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*)

Very rare visitor

An adult spent two hours on RF on the afternoon of 1st May

Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*)

Vagrant.

The first for the flashes was found on PHF on 7th Jan and was then recorded regularly until the last sighting on 3rd Feb, surprisingly of the twenty-five or so entries in the "next bird for the flashes sweepstake" nobody had selected this species. (see separate article).

Red Kite (*Milvus milvus*)

Scarce visitor.

The first record of this slowly increasing visitor was one over PHF on the afternoon of 27th Mar; one flew over EHF on 22nd May, one over EHF and MGT on 27th May, one over EHF and MGT on 3rd Jun.

Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*)

Scarce visitor.

A better year for this species, an immature male over EHF on 7th Jul, an immaculately plumaged "cream crown" on 16th Aug behind PHF could well have been a juvenile. Another "cream crown" was over PHF on 31st Aug.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*)

Common resident.

Regular throughout with breeding recorded.

Common Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*)

Common resident.

By far the commonest raptor, soaring birds into double figures regular.

Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*)

Scarce migrant.

The first of an excellent spring passage was one over EHF and then WLF on 16th Apr, one caught a fish at EHF on 6th May, on 8th May one flew over PHF, one was seen from PHF on 4th Jun. On return passage one was over EHF on 13th Aug with others also over EHF on 6th Sep and 8th Sep. A fantastic year.

Common Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*)

Common resident.

Seen regularly throughout the recording area but the only confirmed breeding this year from Watch Lane.

Merlin (*Falco columbarius*)

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

One flew over EHF on 30th Jan

Eurasian Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*)

Uncommon summer visitor.

The first record was from EHF on 30th Apr then seen intermittently with two juveniles over EHF on 26th Jul particularly noteworthy although breeding in the recording area was not proven.

Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*)

Scarce resident and winter visitor.

Seen regularly particularly around EHF/PHF and MGT.

Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*)

Scarce winter visitor.

Regular from the RF area with birds recorded in every month but also recorded from EHF, PHF and FF.

Common Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*)

Common resident.

No change in status, breeding records from all the main flashes.

Common Coot (*Fulica atra*)

Common resident and variable winter visitor.

On 11th Feb 124 were counted on EHF/PHF, a colour ringed bird seen at PHF on 14th Mar was trapped and ringed at Southport 70 km away from the flashes on 20th Dec 2011 showing that even birds considered mainly sedentary make movements between sites.

Eurasian Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*)

Scarce winter visitor and uncommon summer visitor.

Typically the first on 24th Feb then up to eight throughout with attempted breeding at EHF being unsuccessful.

Pied Avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*)

Rare visitor.

Two were on EHF on 19th Apr; another also on EHF on 13th May was followed by another two also on EHF on 3rd Jun.

Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius*)

Scarce summer visitor. Uncommon spring/autumn migrant.

High water levels ensured a very disappointing return of records with only a couple of double figure counts noted.

Common Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*)

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

The largest count was ten at EHF on 26th May.

European Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*)

Uncommon winter visitor.

A better early winter period with counts of 15 on 2nd Jan, 12 on 12th Jan notable and then frequent though never common at EHF. On 15th Nov approximately 100 were at EHF, otherwise odd one's and two's.

Northern Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*)

Common resident and abundant winter visitor.

An impressive count of approximately 2000 was present at EHF on 15th Feb, no breeding confirmed from the recording area and the post breeding flock was already up to 400 strong by the beginning of August.

Sanderling (*Calidris alba*)

Scarce passage migrant.

Most unusual were two recorded at EHF on 13th Feb and aged as 1st w. More typical was a partial summer plumaged adult at EHF on 2nd Jun.

Curlew Sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*)

Scarce passage migrant.

The first spring record since 9th May 1998 was one at EHF briefly on the morning of 1st Jun.

Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*)

Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant.

As with the other commoner waders a poor passage in spring and almost absent on return passage.

Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*)

Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant.

A maximum of seven wintered in the first winter period; the first returning juvenile was on EHF on 1st Sep.

Jack Snipe (*Lymnocyptes minimus*)

Scarce winter visitor.

One was flushed from besides GF on 21st Mar with others flushed from MGT on 18th Apr and 21st Apr.

Common Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*)

Uncommon winter visitor and migrant.

No reason to believe any significant change in status although with the higher water levels throughout the area difficult to ascertain exact numbers this year.

Eurasian Woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*)

Scarce winter visitor.

Regularly seen from the canal footpath adjacent to FF, up to six regular throughout Jan and on one occasion eleven birds seen.

Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*)

Common non breeding resident.

Still regular but not in the numbers previously seen. The first returning juveniles were on EHF on 1st Sep.

Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*)

Rare passage migrant and winter visitor.

One commuted around EHF and PHF between 26th and 28th Apr.

Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*)

Scarce passage migrant.

The first of the year were five over RF on 1st May, infrequently seen after with single birds on 2nd May and 10th May. On return passage singles seen at EHF/PHF on 11th Jul and 12th Jul with two birds present on 17th and 18th Jul with the increasing Curlew flock alongside PHF.

Eurasian Curlew (*Numenius arquata*)

Scarce resident and fairly common winter visitor.

Numbers once again peaked at around 60 throughout the winter periods mainly recorded from EHF.

Common Redshank (*Tringa totanus*)

Uncommon visitor and migrant.

A maximum of eight in the early winter period the highest count.

Common Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*)

Uncommon passage migrant.

A very poor year with only five recorded all from EHF.

Green Sandpiper (*Tringa ochropus*)

Scarce winter visitor. Uncommon passage migrant.

A very good spring passage with records from Mar, Apr and May.

Numbers up to ten on return passage and the flashes remains a really important stop off point for migrating birds.

Wood Sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*)

Scarce passage migrant.

This species just managed to sneak onto the year list with one on Hancock's flood from 27th to 29th Jul.

Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*)

Fairly common passage migrant.

The first was at EHF on 2nd Apr and then infrequently reported throughout but no late summer records.

Mediterranean Gull (*Larus melanocephalus*)

Scarce visitor.

The first was on EHF on 19th Feb and then in smaller numbers than recent years in the early period with several recorded. On 13th Aug a juv and 1st s were seen on EHF. Overall a poor year,

Little Gull (*Larus minutus*)

Rare visitor.

Two were seen briefly over EHF on 17th Mar.

Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*)

Abundant autumn and winter visitor.

No change in 2012 with numbers peaking at approximately 2000 at EHF as in 2011. Breeding at WLF a first flashes record with a juvenile seen on 2nd Jul.

Common Gull (*Larus canus*)

Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant.

No large counts recorded this year in either passage periods.

Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*)

Fairly common winter visitor. Uncommon summer visitor.

No change with up to 800 recorded at RF/MGT, intermedium birds occasional on EHF

Yellow-legged Gull (*Larus michahellis*)

Regular passage migrant.

Regular from EHF and PHF once again with 13 adults and 3 juveniles on 30th Aug particularly noteworthy.

Caspian Gull (*Larus cachinnans*)

Scarce visitor.

The first was a 1st w at EHF on 11th Jan then an adult on 29th Jan with this or another on and off throughout Feb including sightings on MGT and RF. A near adult was on PHF on 3rd Apr with a 1st w on 18th Apr, a 3rd s at EHF on 7th Aug and a 1st w on 2nd Sep. Finally a 1st w on 12th Dec.

Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*)

Fairly common winter visitor. Uncommon summer visitor.

Over 1000 were recorded at MGT on 21st Jan, reports of argentatus birds particularly in Jan and Nov with 41 by PHF on 10th Nov.

Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucooides*)

Scarce winter visitor.

A marvellous early winter period (sightings until 20th Apr) with so many reports impossible to be sure of numbers of individuals. After studying the log book and personal sightings probably four 1st w, one 2nd w and three adults responsible but this may well be an underestimate. On 15th Dec an adult was on PHF.

Glaucous Gull (*Larus hyperboreus*)

Scarce winter visitor.

An immature on PHF on 23rd Dec stayed and was most welcome as this species does tend to be recorded in the period after the New Year so many thought the chance of one in 2012 had gone.

Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*)

Uncommon winter visitor.

On 11th Feb 54 were on EHF this was the biggest count in the first winter period, on 2nd Dec 132 were on PHF/EHF and this was the largest count in the second winter period.

Black-legged Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*)

Scarce passage migrant.

On PHF an adult was found on 18th Mar and stayed all day commuting between PHF and EHF.

Little Tern (*Sterna albifrons*)

Very rare passage migrant.

The first since 17th Apr 2004 was found on EHF early on the afternoon of 26th Apr and stayed until at least 17:00, as most records have been of flyovers this was a flashes lifer for many observers.

Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*)

Scarce passage migrant.

Just one record with a juvenile first at PHF and then WLF on 30th Aug.

Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*)

Uncommon passage migrant.

The first were two at EHF on 30th Apr, breeding once again at WLF with three juveniles on 23rd Jun.

Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)

Scarce passage migrant.

A 1st w was over WLF on 10th Jul with four Common Terns, adults flying through were reported from EHF on 16th and 27th Aug.

Feral Pigeon (*Columba livia*)

Common resident.

Regular around EHF throughout.

Stock Dove (*Columba oenas*)

Uncommon resident.

The fields bordering EHF held well over 100 in early April, bred in the Barn Owl boxes again and commonly seen throughout the year.

Common Woodpigeon (*Columba palumbus*)

Common resident.

Common throughout.

Eurasian Collared Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*)

Common resident.

Again common throughout the year from all areas.

Common Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*)

Scarce passage migrant.

The first was heard behind EHF on 13th May, the first sighting was over EHF on 18th May, another was around MGT from 26th to 28th May and another also around MGT on 10th Jun.

Short-eared Owl (*Asia flammeus*)

Scarce passage migrant, winter visitor.

One was seen by birders watching the Glossy Ibis by RF on 8th Jan; another spent a week or so by MGT from 27th May and was seen from PHF on 4th June. On 7th Nov one was over MGT with presumably the same bird also seen on MGT on 11th Nov.

Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*)

Scarce resident.

A bird roosted in the early winter period in a nest box and was seen throughout January, singles were also recorded from EHF, PHF and MGT.

Little Owl (*Athene noctua*)

Rare resident.

The decline continues unabated with just one by railway farm from 3rd May for several days and one on Tetton Lane on 30th May.

Tawny Owl (*Strix aluco*)

Common resident.

Calling birds heard and seen at FF.

Common Swift (*Apus apus*)

Fairly common summer visitor.

The first records came from EHF on 27th Apr, after this a massive 200 or so were over EHF on 14th May.

Common Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*)

Uncommon resident.

Regular from EHF, RF.

Eurasian Wryneck (*Jynx torquilla*)

Vagrant.

On 5th May a major birding injustice was rectified when one was found on the footpath by MGT, the finder having missed the previous birds recorded in 1996 and 1997. The bird stayed for two days and entered many flashes lists.

Green Woodpecker (*Picus viridis*)

Uncommon resident.

One was in the MGT area on 22nd Apr with another also around MGT on 21st May. On 14th Aug one was near WLF with another on 30th Aug. WLF also produced another sighting on 6th Sep.

Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*)

Common resident.

Commonly recorded throughout and regular on the EHF feeders. Breeding confirmed with a pair at EHF showing particularly well.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos minor*)

Uncommon resident.

Just a single record with one briefly in hedgerows bordering Crabmill Lane on 31st Aug.

Common Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*)

Fairly common.

MGT again the only reliable area with singing birds regular in Apr, May. Breeding suspected.

Sand Martin (*Riparia riparia*)

Fairly common summer visitor.

Commonly seen after the first on 21st Mar, no evidence of breeding again this year.

Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*)

Common summer visitor.

The first was on 28th Mar and then common throughout. Breeding confirmed.

House Martin (*Delichon urbica*)

Common summer visitor.

The first on 30th Apr then regular throughout. Breeding confirmed.

Tree Pipit (*Anthus trivialis*)

Very rare passage migrant.

Just one record of a bird over Watch Lane Farm on 23rd Aug.

Meadow Pipit (*Anthus pratensis*)

Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant.

Another poor spring with only small numbers on passage, mainly from MGT. Concentrated visible migration watches from the MGT area on return passage produced 418 flying over on 29th Sep.

Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava*)

Uncommon passage migrant and summer visitor.

The first was over RF on 1st Apr which is only three days after the earliest ever record. Reported fairly regularly afterwards from EHF in particular.

Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*)

Fairly common resident and winter visitor.

Infrequently seen and heard throughout the area.

Pied Wagtail (*Motacilla alba yarrellii*)

Fairly common resident.

Commonly recorded throughout the year. Several "White Wagtails" in Mar, Apr and May. On 29th Sep fifty "alba" wagtails were recorded over MGT.

Bohemian Waxwing (*Bombycilla garrulus*)

Rare visitor.

On 23rd Nov two were over Watch Lane farm, up to eight were then present on the driving range car park from 21st Dec and stayed for several days. On the same day one was over MGT.

Winter Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*)

Abundant resident.

Regular throughout. Breeding confirmed.

Dunnock (*Prunella modularis*)

Common resident.

Regular throughout. Breeding confirmed.

European Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*)

Abundant resident.

Regular throughout. Breeding confirmed.

Common Redstart (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*)

Scarce migrant.

Four recorded this year. The first was a very fresh juvenile in hedgerows bordering Crabmill Lane on 23rd Jul, a female was at RF on 29th Jul with a male at EHF on 14th Aug. A male at RF on 27th Aug was the final one.

Whinchat (*Saxicola rubetra*)

Scarce migrant.

All records from MGT with three on 2nd May, one 12th May, one 28th Aug and the final one on 13th Oct.

Common Stonechat (*Saxicola torquata*)

Scarce winter visitor.

The first was on MGT on 8th Mar with another by GF on 21st Mar. On 3rd Nov a male was on MGT and stayed for several days.

Northern Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*)

Uncommon passage migrant.

The first passage birds were on MGT on 18th Mar, 14 on 28th Apr was the biggest spring count, again on MGT.

Common Blackbird (*Turdus merula*)

Abundant resident and winter visitor.

Common throughout the area. Breeding confirmed.

Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*)

Common winter visitor.

On 14th Oct a week after the first Redwing sightings on 7th Oct, numbers rapidly increased with many flocks recorded stripping the berries particularly from the MGT area.

Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*)

Fairly common resident.

Regular throughout. Breeding Confirmed.

Redwing (*Turdus iliacus*)

Common winter visitor.

After the first returning birds on 7th Oct flocks of well over 100 were recorded throughout the flashes area.

Mistle Thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*)

Fairly common resident.

Breeding recorded.

Common Grasshopper Warbler (*Locustella naevia*)

Scarce summer visitor.

Presumably just one or two birds responsible for this year's sightings with a bird adjacent to RF/MGT first seen on 20th Apr being reported regularly throughout spring, it or a female was seen carrying food on 26th May in the same area. A male reeling again in the same area on 16th Jul was presumably the same bird.

Sedge Warbler (*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*)

Uncommon summer visitor.

Breeding was confirmed from MGT/RF but undoubtedly bred elsewhere with singing birds regular.

Eurasian Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*)

Uncommon summer visitor.

Breeding was confirmed from MGT/RF.

Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*)

Common summer visitor. Scarce winter visitor.

The first was heard from EHF on 23rd Mar, a count of singing birds on 6th May produced 11 birds on territory.

Garden Warbler (*Sylvia borin*)

Fairly common summer visitor.

A difficult species to catch up with once again and no territory holding birds' present and total records in single figures after the first on 2nd May. Odd birds around EHF/PHF in early Aug.

Lesser Whitethroat (*Sylvia curruca*)

Uncommon summer visitor.

An average year after the first on 18th Apr.

Common Whitethroat (*Sylvia communis*)

Common summer visitor.

Regular throughout and breeding proven after the first on 28th Apr.

Common Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*)

Common summer visitor, very rare winter visitor.

The first singing bird was seen on 15th Mar. Breeding confirmed.

Willow Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*)

Common summer visitor.

Seemingly still in decline with fewer singing birds, the first from EHF on 8th Apr.

Goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*)

Fairly common resident and winter visitor.

Recorded infrequently from most of the area.

Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*)

Uncommon summer visitor.

The tenuous hold continues with just two records, from Green Lane on 5th Aug and PHF on 20th Aug.

Long-tailed Tit (*Aegithalos caudatus*)

Common resident.

Common throughout. Breeding confirmed.

Blue Tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*)

Common resident.

Common throughout. Breeding confirmed.

Great Tit (*Parus major*)

Common resident.

Common throughout. Breeding confirmed.

Coal Tit (*Periparus ater*)

Fairly common resident.

Regularly recorded and now often on the feeders at EHF.

European Nuthatch (*Sitta europaea*)

Common resident.

Regular around FF but still scarcely recorded elsewhere.

Eurasian Treecreeper (*Certhia familiaris*)

Common resident.

Common in all suitable habitats. Breeding confirmed.

Eurasian Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*)

Uncommon resident.

The major influx into the country never really reached the flashes although several movements of between six and nine birds were recorded in August and September.

Common Magpie (*Pica pica*)

Common resident.

Common throughout, breeding proven.

Eurasian Jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*)

Common resident and winter visitor.

Very commonly recorded particularly from MGT.

Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*)

Common resident.

The rookery still thriving in FF and also commonly seen on MGT.

Carrion Crow (*Corvus corone*)

Common resident.

Common throughout the area once again. Breeding confirmed.

Common Raven (*Corvus corax*)

Scarce visitor and resident.

Another excellent year with birds recorded in every month, who would have believed that a decade ago.

Common Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)

Common resident and abundant winter visitor.

Common in both winter periods particularly on and around MGT.

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)

Common resident.

Seen around EHF but only in small numbers.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*)

Fairly common resident.

Again numbers slightly down, breeding confirmed.

Common Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*)

Common resident and winter visitor.

Common throughout again. Breeding confirmed.

Brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*)

Scarce winter visitor.

One was seen on Crabmill Lane on 3rd Feb, another from the same area on 28th Mar. On 22nd Oct a male spent the day on the feeders at EHF. On 6th Nov two flew over WLF, one was by CF on 7th Nov. Two more by GF on 7th Nov. One over CF on the 15th Nov. In Dec one plus occasionally by EHF.

European Greenfinch (*Carduelis chloris*)

Common resident.

Regular particularly around WLF. Breeding confirmed.

European Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*)

Fairly common resident.

Common throughout. Breeding confirmed.

Eurasian Siskin (*Carduelis spinus*)

Uncommon winter visitor and scarce resident.

The biggest count was 30 at FF on 22nd Jan.

Common Linnet (*Carduelis cannabina*)

Fairly common resident.

A massive 207 were counted in the field by EHF on the evening of the 4th Apr, a regular flock of around 70 on MGT throughout Nov and Dec.

Lesser Redpoll (*Carduelis cabaret*)

Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor.

A flock of 30 around FF on 23rd Jan the largest count, regular over MGT on visible migration watch but only six the largest count on 15th Oct.

Common Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*)

Very rare visitor.

Several records of flyovers, heard only at FF on 29th Jan, one over FF on 1st Mar, one over FF on 28th Jul

Common Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*)

Uncommon resident.

Seemingly increasing and seen throughout the area. Breeding confirmed.

Hawfinch (*Coccothraustes coccothraustes*)

Vagrant.

The first ever record for Sandbach flashes was one that flew over MGT when the observer was doing one of the regular visible migration watches on 29th Sep. Incredibly another was seen feeding on hawthorn berries in the hedgerow bordering GF on 25th Oct. These birds ensured the "first for the flashes" sweepstake was won.

Yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*)

Uncommon resident.

Up to eight seen behind the railway line on several occasions throughout January.

Common Reed Bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*)

Uncommon resident.

Common around MGT/RF. Breeding confirmed.

Great Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*)

Very rare visitor

On the 28th Dec one was reported on the bird information services with no specific location given, the bird was seen the following morning at FF and is the first flashes record since 1977 and only the second ever.

Category E Species - Introductions or Escapes

Black-bellied Whistling Duck (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*)

Three were on WLF on 15th Jul.

Fulvous Whistling Duck (*Dendrocygna bicolor*)

One was on EHF on 11th Jun.

Sacred Ibis (*Threskiornis aethiopicus*)

One flew into RF on 28th Apr and fed for 15 minutes before heading off high.

2012 in pictures by Dennis Swaby and Bob Brown



Kittiwake PHF March



Common Scoter PHF July



Marsh Harrier EHF July



Wryneck MGT May



Short-eared Owl MGT May



Grasshopper Warbler MGT May



Bar-tailed Godwit PHF/EHF April



Wood Sandpiper PHF/EHF July



Common Tern PHF August



Iceland Gull PHF March