



THE OBSERVER SECOS Newsletter

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

January 2026

Field Trip

Tittesworth Reservoir - Tuesday 6th January



Tittesworth Reservoir - Paul Ashwin

Dammed in 1858 to harness the flow of the River Churnet, Tittesworth Reservoir was later enlarged in 1963 to become Staffordshire's second-largest waterbody. The site boasts two well-positioned bird hides and a network of thoughtfully maintained trails skirting the water's edge, offering excellent opportunities to enjoy both resident and passage birdlife.

Curlews in the Landscape

Andrew Brockbank

Friday 9th January

Andrew explores the curlew's decline and the challenges facing ground-nesting birds. He examines how farming changes, net-zero policies, grouse moors and recreation affect their future, highlighting practical actions for curlew recovery and the wider implications for nature's recovery across farmland, moorland and shoreline habitats.



Curlew - Andrew Brockbank

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

Welcome!

We are delighted to welcome the following new member to SECOS this month:

Myles Tomlinson

Field Trip

Slimbridge WWT

Sunday 25th January

(by coach)



Slimbridge Visitor Centre - Mike Dodman

January is an excellent month to visit Slimbridge. Bird numbers are typically at their highest, with as many as 30,000 wintering ducks, geese, swans and waders present.

December Highlights (first reports this month)

1st Curlew, Fieldfare, Little Grebe, Raven, Redwing, Ruff; 2nd Bar-headed Goose (assumed feral/escapee), Black-tailed Godwit, Cetti's Warbler, Common Gull, Egyptian Goose, Goosander, Green-winged Teal (subspecies of Teal), Little Egret, Pochard, Snipe; 5th Goldeneye; 8th Caspian Gull, Common Crossbill, Redpoll, Siskin; 10th Great White Egret, Green Sandpiper, Kingfisher, Mandarin Duck, Pink-footed Goose; 11th Red Kite; 13th Chiffchaff, Tree Sparrow, Woodcock; 19th Blackcap; 21st Jack Snipe, Pintail; 22nd Water Rail; 27th Redshank; 29th Tawny Owl; 30th Merlin

Sightings EHF/PHF/MGT/RF - Dec

Gulls & Terns	Count
Black-headed Gull	regular, max c150
Lesser Black-b Gull	regular, max 5
Herring Gull	regular, max 38
Common Gull	1, 2 nd , 10 th
Caspian Gull	1, 8 th , 23 rd



Black-tailed Godwit –Dennis Swaby

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 - Dec

Wildfowl	Count
Shelduck	regular, max 5
Wigeon	regular, max 300+
Gadwall	max 4, 1 st
Teal	regular, max 44
Green-winged Teal	1, 2 nd , 22 nd
Mallard	regular, max 60+
Pochard	1, 21 st , 22 nd
Shoveler	regular, max 4+
Tufted Duck	regular, max 16
Pintail	1, 21 st
Goosander	1, 2 nd
Greylag Goose	max 37, 10 th
Canada Goose	regular, max 340+
Pink-footed Goose	max c90, 30 th
Egyptian Goose	1, 2 nd , 6 th , 7 th
G C Grebe	1, 2 nd
Little Grebe	1, 1 st , 2 nd , 5 th
Coot	regular, max 80+
Moorhen	regular, max 5+
Mute Swan	regular, max 2



Curlew & Ruff- Dennis Swaby



Egyptian Goose- Dennis Swaby

Raptors & Owls	Count
Buzzard	max 2, 30 th
Peregrine	max 2, 30 th
Sparrowhawk	1, 30 th
Kestrel	1, 30 th

Herons & Egrets	Count
Grey Heron	regular, max 2
Little Egret	max 11, 21 st
Great White Egret	regular, max 5

Waders	Count
Water Rail	2, 30 th
Lapwing	regular, max 260+
Ruff	regular, max 1
Curlew	regular, max 20
Black-tailed Godwit	max 6, 30 th
Redshank	1, 27 th
Green Sandpiper	regular, max 1
Snipe	max 3, 30 th
Woodcock	1, 22 nd

Sandbach Flashes - 2nd December



18 members attended the Sandbach Flashes on a dry, sunny morning.

The water levels were high and the side lane was inaccessible.

46 bird species were recorded: Canada goose, greylag goose, Egyptian goose, shelduck, wigeon, mallard, teal, green-winged teal, pochard, tufted duck, woodpigeon, collared dove, moorhen, coot, little grebe, lapwing, curlew, black-tailed godwit, snipe, black-headed gull, common gull, lesser black-backed gull, cormorant, little egret, grey heron, buzzard, great spotted woodpecker, magpie, jackdaw, carrion crow, coal tit, blue tit, great tit, Cetti's warbler, long-tailed tit, wren, redwing, blackbird, robin, house sparrow, dunnock, grey wagtail, pied wagtail, chaffinch, greenfinch, goldfinch

Middleton Lakes - 14th December



Attendees and weather

Seven members visited RSPB Middleton Lakes under light cloud in the morning, with sunny intervals developing later. Temperatures were around 10°C, making for comfortable walking conditions.

Start of the walk

From the car park we crossed the lane and joined the elevated boardwalk. Although the pool by the reedbed was quiet, the feeders were busy, attracting numerous blue tits and great tits, along with single chaffinch, goldfinch and greenfinch.

Through the woodland

As we continued through the woodland we encountered coal tit, wren, jackdaw and magpie, while a green woodpecker was heard calling nearby. From the viewing platform, mallard and mute swan were seen on the water, and a partially concealed grey heron was located at the edge of the water. Further along the path, a redwing perched obligingly at the top of a tree.

Fisher's Mill Pool

After crossing the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal at Fisher's Mill Bridge, we set up scopes to scan Fisher's Mill Pool. Tufted duck were the most numerous species, accompanied by several coots. Great crested grebe, goldeneye (both male and female), pochard, shoveler and Canada goose were also present. A little egret flew across the pool and continued overhead.

continued over >>

Middleton Lakes (continued)



Viewing screen

Walking north, we stopped at the viewing screen overlooking West Scrape and Jubilee Wetlands South. Jubilee Wetlands South was quiet, but West Scrape held three little grebes and a small number of gadwall.

Towards the Lookout Hide

Continuing towards the Lookout Hide, we paused several times to scan Jubilee Wetlands North. Greylag goose, Egyptian goose, wigeon, teal, great white egret, cormorant, black-headed gull and lesser black-backed gull were all noted. A female stonechat showed well, perching on fence posts and reeds, and near the hide we watched a small party of long-tailed tits moving through the bushes.

The Lookout Hide

We stopped for lunch at the Lookout Hide overlooking North Pool. Water levels were high and bird numbers low, but a great white egret (possibly the same individual seen earlier) and a moorhen were present. Some members also had a brief view of a single goosander before it moved out of sight.

Towards the footbridge

Heading south, we paused to hear, and briefly see, a Cetti's warbler. A welcome rest at the benches overlooking East Scrape revealed large numbers of Canada goose, greylag goose and cormorant, along with a few pochard.

Dosthill Nature Reserve

After crossing the footbridge over the River Tame into Dosthill Nature Reserve, we walked north to a viewing screen. Here we enjoyed a lively scene, with hundreds of black-headed gulls, good numbers of wigeon and mallard, a few teal, tufted duck, gadwall and coot, plus single shoveler and great crested grebe.

Cliff Lakes and return

We retraced our steps for a brief visit to the north shore of Cliff Lakes, which was fairly quiet, holding only tufted duck, coot and lesser black-backed gull. On the return walk, a buzzard was spotted, our only raptor of the day. Back at the car park, several species were added to the day's list at the RSPB Welcome Hub.

Recent heavy rainfall meant water levels were high throughout the reserve, which explained the absence of waders. Nevertheless, it was an enjoyable day out in good company, with a varied selection of species and plenty to keep us interested.

Trip Count = 43 species

2025 SECOS Field Trips Total = 168

Sightings Elsewhere - Dec



Long-tailed Tits - Dennis Swaby

Sandbach Flashes:

EHF/PHF/MGT/RF: Jay, Skylark, **Cetti's Warbler**, Song Thrush, **Redwing**, Blackbird, **Fieldfare**, Stonechat, **Tree Sparrow**, Bullfinch, Greenfinch, **FF:** Pink-footed Goose, **Woodcock**, **Tawny Owl**
WLF: Canada Goose, Pink-footed Goose, **Water Rail**, Cetti's Warbler

Alsager - Alsager Treatment Works: Woodpigeon, Grey Heron, Carrion Crow, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Blackbird, Robin, Dunnock, Pied Wagtail

Arclid: Stonechat

Astbury - Astbury Mere CP: Mute Swan, Shoveler, Mallard, **Pochard**, Tufted Duck, Woodpigeon, Moorhen, Coot, Great Crested Grebe, Black-headed Gull, Cormorant, **Red Kite**, Magpie, Jackdaw, Carrion Crow, Blue Tit, **Chiffchaff**, Treecreeper, Blackbird, Robin

Brereton Heath - Bagmere: Starling

Brereton Heath - Brereton Heath LNR: Mute Swan, Mallard, Tufted Duck, Pheasant, Stock Dove, Woodpigeon, Collared Dove, Moorhen, Coot, Great Crested Grebe, Black-headed Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Cormorant, Buzzard, Magpie, Jackdaw, Rook, Carrion Crow, **Raven**, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Starling, Blackbird, **Fieldfare**, Robin, House Sparrow, Chaffinch, Goldfinch

Church Lawton - Lawton Pool & Woods: Tufted Duck, Goosander

Congleton - Buglawton: **Tawny Owl**

Congleton - River Dane: Goosander

Crewe - Coppenhall Moss: Starling

Doddington - Doddington Park: **Redpoll**, **Common Crossbill**, **Siskin**

Doddington - Doddington Pool: **Bar-headed Goose** (assumed feral/escapee), Teal, Pochard, Tufted Duck, **Goldeneye**, Goosander, Little Grebe, Snipe, Black-headed Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Grey Heron, **Merlin**, Raven, Nuthatch, Blackbird, Fieldfare

Gawsworth - Gawsworth Hall: Tufted Duck, **Goosander**, Kestrel, Mistle Thrush, Blackbird

Moston Green, W of Sandbach: Snipe, Skylark, Nuthatch, Meadow Pipit, Siskin

Rode Heath: Little Egret

Rode Heath - Rode Pool: Egyptian Goose, **Mandarin Duck**, Shoveler, Teal, Tufted Duck, Goosander, Great Crested Grebe, Black-headed Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Cormorant, Little Egret, **Great White Egret**, Grey Heron, **Kingfisher**



House Sparrow - Dennis Swaby

This is a small selection of species seen in the SECOS Recording Area.

A full listing is on the website:

<https://www.secoss.org.uk/sightings/>

Sightings Elsewhere - Dec

Sandbach - Elworth: Pink-footed Goose, Raven

Sandbach - Malkins Bank: Jack Snipe

Sandbach - Moston: Collared Dove, Black-headed Gull, Herring Gull, Buzzard, Raven, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Chiffchaff, Wren, Treecreeper, Starling, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Redwing, Blackbird, Fieldfare, Robin, House Sparrow



Redwing
- Dennis Swaby



Treecreeper - Dennis Swaby

Diary Dates



6th Jan 10.00 am

Tuesday Field Trip

9th Jan 7.30 pm

Indoor Meeting

12th Jan 7.30 pm

Committee Meeting

25th Jan 7.30 am Crewe

Tittesworth Reservoir

Leader: Chris Pary

"Curlews in the Landscape"

Speaker: Andrew Brockbank

7.45 am Sandbach

Sunday Field Trip

Slimbridge WWT

Leader: Ian Taylor



SECOS Website: <https://www.secoss.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/>