



# THE OBSERVER

## SECOS Newsletter

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

## April 2026

### Field Trip

### Woolston Eyes NR Tuesday 14<sup>nd</sup> April



Main Woolston Eyes hide - Galatas

Woolston Eyes Nature Reserve is a designated SSSI and a rich wildlife haven located around 4 km east of Warrington town centre. Bounded by the River Mersey to the north and the Manchester Ship Canal to the south, the reserve occupies four former dredging lagoons created during the maintenance of the Ship Canal. Today these areas form around 400 hectares of freshwater pools, reedbeds, willow scrub and rough

grassland, providing excellent habitat for birds and other wildlife. To date, an impressive 248 bird species have been recorded at the reserve.

## Annual General Meeting & Members' Evening

### Friday 10<sup>th</sup> April

Peter Durnall will present a film titled "[The World's Most Beautiful Duck](#)"

Ian Taylor will showcase his photos of "[Birds and Scenes of Sri Lanka](#)".

And there will be the ever-popular [Bird Trivia Quiz](#) to challenge you!

There will be a raffle, and refreshments will be served.

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 members to SECOS this month:

Paul Weedall, Jean Weedall

# Long Weekend Trip Dorset - Fri 24<sup>th</sup> - Mon 27<sup>th</sup> April



We're heading to Dorset in April for our long weekend trip, staying at The Heights Hotel on the Isle of Portland. Dorset is a superb birding destination, offering a rich variety of habitats. During the trip we plan to visit several excellent reserves, including Arne, Radipole Lake, Lodmoor and Chesil Beach. We'll also do some sea-watching at Portland Bill and stop at Ham Wall on the way home. With spring migration well under way, there should be plenty of potential for interesting sightings throughout the trip. A full report will follow in a future newsletter.

### March Highlights (first reports this month)

1<sup>st</sup> Cetti's Warbler, Fieldfare, Goldeneye, Green Sandpiper, Kingfisher, Little Grebe, Oystercatcher, Pink-footed Goose, **Shore Lark**, Siskin, White-fronted Goose; 2<sup>nd</sup> Tawny Owl; 3<sup>rd</sup> Mediterranean Gull; 4<sup>th</sup> Goosander; 5<sup>th</sup> Great White Egret, Jack Snipe, Little Egret, Little Ringed Plover, Pochard, Snipe, Water Rail; 6<sup>th</sup> Raven, Sand Martin; 7<sup>th</sup> Dunlin, Redshank; 8<sup>th</sup> Pintail; 9<sup>th</sup> Blackcap, Black-tailed Godwit, Redwing; 10<sup>th</sup> Caspian Gull, Common Gull; 12<sup>th</sup> Red Kite; 17<sup>th</sup> Dipper; 18<sup>th</sup> Redpoll; 19<sup>th</sup> Yellow-legged Gull; 20<sup>th</sup> Common Crossbill, Little Owl; 22<sup>nd</sup> Egyptian Goose, **Stone-curlew** (flyover), Yellowhammer; 23<sup>rd</sup> Iceland Gull; 24<sup>th</sup> Mandarin Duck; 25<sup>th</sup> Swallow; 26<sup>th</sup> Ruddy Shelduck; 27<sup>th</sup> Kittiwake; 29<sup>th</sup> House Martin

Sightings  
EHF/PHF/MGT/RF  
Mar

Raptors & Owls	Count
Sparrowhawk	1, 10 <sup>th</sup> , 15 <sup>th</sup>
Buzzard	regular, max 2
<b>Red Kite</b>	1, 12 <sup>th</sup>
Kestrel	1, 21 <sup>st</sup>
Peregrine	1, 9 <sup>th</sup> , 11 <sup>th</sup> , 24 <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 - Mar

Gulls & Terns	Count
Black-headed Gull	regular, max c1000
Lesser Black-b Gull	regular, max 65
Great Black-b Gull	1, 10 <sup>th</sup> , 14 <sup>th</sup>
Herring Gull	regular, max 17
<b>Mediterranean Gull</b>	regular, max 2
<b>Common Gull</b>	regular, max 13
<b>Caspian Gull</b>	1, 10 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Yellow-legged Gull</b>	1, 19 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Iceland Gull</b>	1, 23 <sup>rd</sup>



Iceland Gull - Dennis Swaby



Green Sandpiper - Dennis Swaby

Herons & Egrets	Count
<b>Little Egret</b>	regular, max 6
<b>Great White Egret</b>	regular, max 3



Black-tailed Godwit - Dennis Swaby

Waders	Count
<b>Water Rail</b>	1, 5 <sup>th</sup> , 22 <sup>nd</sup>
Oystercatcher	regular, max 7
Lapwing	regular, max 5
<b>Little Ringed Plover</b>	regular, max 4
<b>Redshank</b>	1, 7 <sup>th</sup> , 17 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Dunlin</b>	1, 7 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Black-tailed Godwit</b>	regular, max 3
<b>Snipe</b>	regular, max 9
<b>Jack Snipe</b>	1, 5 <sup>th</sup>
Green Sandpiper	regular, max 4

# Sightings EHF/PHF/MGT/RF - Mar

Wildfowl	Count
Shelduck	regular, max 38
Wigeon	regular, max 350+
Gadwall	1, 9 <sup>th</sup> , 16 <sup>th</sup> , 19 <sup>th</sup>
Teal	regular, max 35+
Mallard	regular, max 30+
<b>Pintail</b>	4, 8 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Pochard</b>	max 6, 5 <sup>th</sup>
Shoveler	regular, max 16
Tufted Duck	regular, max 12
Goosander	2, 14 <sup>th</sup> , 15 <sup>th</sup>
Greylag Goose	regular, max 2
Canada Goose	regular, max 40+
<b>Pink-footed Goose</b>	1, 1 <sup>st</sup> , 20 <sup>th</sup>
<b>White-fronted Goose</b>	regular, max 75
G C Grebe	2, 19 <sup>th</sup>
Coot	regular, max 15+
Moorhen	regular, max 4
Mute Swan	regular, max 4



Goosander - Dennis Swaby



Great Crested Grebes - Dennis Swaby

## Moore Nature Reserve - 3<sup>rd</sup> March



Ten members travelled to Moore NR on a glorious spring day.

Bird species seen/heard: Canada goose, shoveler, gadwall, wigeon, mallard, teal, tufted duck, pheasant, stock dove, woodpigeon, moorhen, coot, little grebe, great crested grebe, lapwing, black-headed gull, herring gull, lesser black-backed gull, cormorant, grey heron, sparrowhawk, buzzard, kingfisher, **lesser spotted woodpecker**, great spotted woodpecker, jay, magpie, carrion crow, raven, coal tit, blue tit, great tit, long-tailed tit, chiffchaff, goldcrest, wren, nuthatch, treecreeper, song thrush, mistle thrush, redwing, blackbird, robin, dunnoek, chaffinch, bullfinch, greenfinch, redpoll, siskin

**Trip Count = 49 species**

## Old Moor RSPB - 22<sup>nd</sup> March



Fourteen members arrived in the car park at RSPB Old Moor on a beautiful spring morning. After making themselves ready, everybody set off for the reserve entrance through the shop, noting that the café closed at 2 pm.

Following the Green Lane Loop, we could see and hear greenfinch, chiffchaff, robin and goldfinch, soon arriving at The Lookout Hide, the first of nine hides on the site. Looking across the Mere, we could see Canada geese, woodpigeons, black-headed gulls, wigeon, tufted duck, gadwall and shoveler. Closer inspection identified a pair of goldeneye diving to feed, and a family group of five whooper swans.

Taking the clockwise route around the trail, we stopped in the Field Pools West Hide where we watched a robin, wren and a male reed bunting flitting among the vegetation. Across the water little egret was added to the day list as we continued along the path. Some members could hear what appeared to be a sedge warbler with others suggesting martins and swifts. On closer inspection on the other side of the hedge all was revealed – the noise was a lure for swifts and house/sand martins to nest in the tower block of purpose-built accommodation. Interestingly, the Merlin app didn't suggest any of these species when asked!

Walking along the loop, Cetti's warblers were in song, and some saw this elusive warbler as it moved through the bushes. A brief stop in Field Pools East Hide didn't add anything new so we moved onto Wath Ings Hide, the furthest point from the visitor centre. This large hide gave views over the Ings and the Wader Scrape area, and we watched marsh harriers in flight performing their acrobatics. As they twisted low over the water, you could clearly distinguish the male from the female bird by their markings, all made easier by the good light. A number of lapwings and cormorants were resting on the mudflats in the Wath Ings with great crested grebes performing their courtship of synchronised head bobbing as well as collecting and adding weed to their nest site.

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## Old Moor RSPB (continued)



Moving on to our final hide before lunch, the Wader Scrape, we found two peregrines resting on their own pylons over the reed beds. We spotted stock doves on the top of a kestrel nest box, and teal were seen close to the hide. Redshanks were calling and flying across the water followed by a group of oystercatchers. Moving back to the visitor centre some went back their cars and others visited the reserve café for lunch.

A WhatsApp report of bearded tits (reedlings) from the Reedbed Path immediately caught our attention and after lunch we set off along this seasonal track. Some stopped off in the Bittern Hide while others headed for the Reedbed Hide. Just before the hide a pair of bearded tits were found about 5 to 10 metres from the path working their way along the reedbed. Being somewhat elusive, it took some time before everybody saw both the male and female bird – absolutely fantastic, the bird of the day for some!

Moving onto the Reedbed Hide, we sat waiting to see a bittern fly but had to be satisfied with some of the group hearing the bittern booming. Water rails regularly squealed, little grebes laughed and great crested grebes displayed, but sadly no bittern flight, so we set off back to the Bird Garden Hide, stopping for another look at the bearded tits en route.

Our final hide for the day was in the Bird Garden, where feeders attracted lots of long-tailed, great & blue tits, reed buntings, dunnocks, chaffinch and greenfinches. Sadly, no tree sparrows were seen, an abundant bird on previous visits, perhaps a sign of the times for this species. In total, we logged fifty-one species from a great day's birdwatching with great company.

Bird species seen/heard: greylag goose, Canada goose, mute swan, whooper swan, shoveler, gadwall, wigeon, mallard, teal, tufted duck, pochard, goldeneye, pheasant, stock dove, woodpigeon, water rail, moorhen, coot, oystercatcher, lapwing, redshank, black-headed gull, lesser black-backed gull, herring gull, little grebe, great crested grebe, cormorant, little egret, grey heron, marsh harrier, buzzard, peregrine, sparrowhawk, magpie, jackdaw, carrion crow, blue tit, great tit, bearded tit, long-tailed tit, chiffchaff, Cetti's warbler, wren, song thrush, blackbird, robin, dunnock, pied wagtail, chaffinch, greenfinch, goldfinch, siskin, reed bunting.

*Ian & Lydia Taylor*

Many thanks to Ian & Lydia Taylor for leading an enjoyable trip.

**Trip Count = 47 species**

**2026 SECOS Field Trips Total = 107**

## Sightings Elsewhere - Mar



Sand Martin - Dennis Swaby

**EHF/PHF/MGT/RF:** Raven, Skylark, **Sand Martin**, **Swallow**, Cetti's Warbler, Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Stonechat, Greenfinch, Linnet, **Redpoll**, Common Crossbill, Siskin, Reed Bunting

**FFF:** Goosander, Jack Snipe, Sparrowhawk, Swallow, **House Martin**, **Redwing**, Fieldfare, Greenfinch, **Redpoll**, Siskin, Reed Bunting

**TLF:** Pink-footed Goose, **White-fronted Goose**, Shoveler, Teal, Lapwing, Snipe, Peregrine, Skylark, Meadow Pipit

**WF:** **Tawny Owl**, Cetti's Warbler

**WLF:** Little Egret, **Kingfisher**, Sand Martin, Swallow, **Cetti's Warbler**, **Siskin**, Reed Bunting

**Alsager - Borrow Pit Meadows:** Goosander, Siskin  
**Arclid:** **Red Kite**, Sand Martin

**Astbury:** Red Kite

**Astbury - Astbury Mere CP:** **Kittiwake**, Red Kite, Sand Martin, Swallow, House Martin, Blackcap, Bullfinch

**Brereton:** **Little Owl**

**Bridgemere:** Red Kite

**Church Lawton - Lawton Gate Treatment Works:** Grey Wagtail

**Congleton - Congleton Link Road West:** Redwing, Fieldfare

**Congleton - Giantswood Lane:** **Egyptian Goose**, Oystercatcher

**Congleton - Mossley:** Jack Snipe, Sparrowhawk

**Congleton - Newsbank:** Pink-footed Goose, Little Ringed Plover

**Congleton - River Dane:** Goosander, Red Kite, Kingfisher, Blackcap, **Dipper**, Grey Wagtail

**Crewe - Meremoor Moss:** Cetti's Warbler

**Crewe - Wychwood Park, Weston:** Cetti's Warbler, Blackcap

**Doddington - Doddington Park:** Red Kite

**Doddington - Doddington Pool:** Shoveler, Gadwall, Tufted Duck, **Goldeneye**, **Little Grebe**, Great Crested Grebe, **Oystercatcher**, Lapwing, **Raven**, **Fieldfare**

**Gawsworth - Gawsworth Hall:** Tufted Duck, Goosander



Swallow - Dennis Swaby

**Hassall Green, SE of Sandbach:** Goosander, **Red Kite**, Greenfinch

**Moston Green, W of Sandbach:** **Green Sandpiper**

**Mow Cop:** **Shore Lark (present from 16 January to 31 March)**, Stonechat, Bullfinch, 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/>

## Sightings Elsewhere - Mar

Rode Heath: **Ruddy Shelduck**, Swallow  
Rode Heath - Rode Pool: Egyptian Goose,  
**Mandarin Duck**, Shoveler, Goosander, Little  
Egret

Sandbach - Bradwall Green: **Common Crossbill**

Sandbach - Elworth: Greenfinch, Siskin

Sandbach - Malkins Bank: Grey Wagtail, Siskin

Sandbach - Sandbach Wildlife Corridor:

**Stone-curlew (flyover)**, Kingfisher

Scholar Green: **Yellowhammer**

Shavington/Hough: Siskin

Walgherton - Lea Forge: Fieldfare



Wren - Dennis Swaby

Wheelock - Forge Fields: Goosander, Tawny Owl,  
**Blackcap**, Greenfinch, Siskin

Winterley & Winterley Pool, SE of Sandbach:  
**Goosander**

## Diary Dates



**10<sup>th</sup> Apr 7.30 pm**

AGM & Members' Evening

**14<sup>th</sup> Apr 10.00 am**

Tuesday field trip

**24<sup>th</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup> Apr**

Long Weekend Trip

**Woolston Eyes NR**

Leaders: Ian & Lydia Taylor

**Dorset**

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/>