

Seabirds Count 2019; Report for South Cheshire

Weston Road Industrial Estate, Crewe. This is a site of over 200 acres.

History

Breeding gulls were first recorded on this site in 2012, although considering the size of the colony in that year it must have been started earlier. Gulls were recorded in a few years prior to 2012 but breeding was not noted. The following is an edited version of the report from the SECOS 2012 Annual Bird Report.

“This summer both Lesser Black-backed and Herring Gulls bred successfully on factory roofs on Weston Road Industrial Estate in Crewe. The first Lesser Black-backed Gull nest was seen on 6th May with a Herring Gull nest noted shortly after and the site was watched closely. On 6th June the first Lesser Black-backed Gull chicks were seen at just a few days old, with Herring Gull chicks seen a few days later.

Although the colony was hard to survey there were ultimately seven broods of Lesser Black-backed Gull and two broods of Herring Gull actually seen, with around 14 juveniles noted. It was not possible to get a clear view of all of the several roofs involved but on a visit in early June four nests were visible with 12 adults in view. There was some human disturbance on the roofs and immediately around 70 adults were visible in the air, indicating a possible presence of up to 20 nests. The first fledged birds were seen in flight on 14th July.

Most of the gull's food came from Maw Green Landfill site, although birds were often seen taking advantage of take away scraps on nearby Nantwich Road in the early morning. On 22nd July a just fledged juvenile Lesser Black-backed Gull was seen feeding on a part eaten burger on the pavement outside MacDonalds at 05-30. Bathing and drinking water was obtained not only from the flashes near Maw Green but also from Queens Park lake and Crewe Business Park ponds. The gull chicks were seen drinking rain water collected in the guttering on the factory roof itself.

The defence of the colony was fierce with both Grey Heron and Common Buzzard mobbed when flying overhead, giving a true indication of the number of birds involved which was well over 150 by the end of June.

Since year 2000 in Cheshire gulls have started nesting more regularly, usually on or near the coast. For Herring Gull the few previous breeding records have all been on or around the Wirral coast, so this is the first recorded proved successful inland breeding in Cheshire. However, it is highly likely that gulls also bred in 2011 since a high number of gulls were noted here during the year but only as casual records and no nests were seen. Also the number of nests this year is between nine and possibly up to 20 which seems too high a number for the first year a breeding colony is established.

The reasons for establishing a successful breeding colony support those postulated by Norman (2008); a safe predator free nest site (building roofs),

abundance of food (Maw Green Landfill and discarded take away food along Nantwich Road), a variety of bathing and preening sites (Sandbach Flashes and various ponds), combined with a source of adult summering gulls at Maw Green. This site will continue to be watched, it has a lot of potential to expand.”

In the early years the site was restricted to a large building currently occupied by Swansway with a few moving over on to the adjacent B&Q building. During the early summer of 2015 the roof of the main site was cleared of all previous nests and later was re-roofed. This roof has never been used again, whether due to special material used or special protection measures I do not know. The effect of this was to disperse breeding pairs to other buildings and by late July fluffy juvs were sticking their heads above roof parapets all over the site!

Numbers have continued to increase slowly each year since then and this report gives the current numbers.

Lesser Black-backed Gull in 2019

A total of 76 breeding adults with 31 juvs seen in 23 broods used 14 buildings
Also c. 70 non-breeding sub-adults just loafing about

Herring Gull in 2019

A total of 18 breeding adults with 12 juvs seen in 8 broods used 6 buildings
Also c. 20 non-breeding sub-adults just loafing about

Details of individual buildings used at this site are appended.

Bombardier Railway Works, West Street, Crewe

This site comprises two buildings in a small area which is all that remains of the original railway works that once covered most of Crewe.

History

Breeding gulls were first recorded on this site in 2014, although considering the size of the colony in that year it must have been started earlier. In that year for both species a total of 55 adults and 17 nests were recorded. In the summer of 2015 both buildings were re-roofed over a prolonged period making the site unusable that year. The following year a large housing development was completed adjacent to the site, causing much more disturbance. Because of the housing development touching the breeding site it is now very difficult to even see the building roofs from a distance (via Morrisons Supermarket car park!)

All gulls in 2019

No gulls have been seen over this site for two years and it must be considered as ceased.

Alsager

History

The site is an industrial site which was Caradon Bathrooms, between Twyfords and the railway line. Now demolished and planned for a Sainsbury supermarket but on hold. Access is very poor and the possible breeding site is not visible. On 26/04/2015 c20 total LBB and HG were visible but Twyford's staff report "hundreds, present all year".

It has not been possible to obtain access to this site for a detailed survey and further development has taken place since 2015.

All gulls in 2019

Occasionally one or two Lesser Black-backed Gulls have been recorded over the site but despite extensive searching of the area no breeding site has been found. The site has been taken over by Geberit and the staff report that no gulls are present on their site.

So there is no proof that a colony was ever established on this site.

Watch Lane Flash, Sandbach

History

The flashes in the Sandbach area were formed in the early 1920s by subsidence due to the extraction of salt by brine pumping. Watch Lane Flash was first recorded with open water in 1925 and there is still a saline spring in the north east corner. Additionally water flows in to Watch Lane Flash from Red Lane Flash, a very small body of water fed by natural brine springs only 30 metres from the east end of Watch Lane Flash. These two are believed to be the only saline flashes in the area and one of only two such inland saline marsh sites in the country.

In the 1980s the local angling society installed a sluice on the outflow stream to control the water level.

Common terns were first recorded as breeding here in 2011, with a nest built on the structure of the sluice. A pair has bred in most years since then.

Common Terns in 2019

One pair has bred again using the sluice structure for a nest site and at least one juvenile has been seen.

Colin Lythgoe

August 2019

Seabirds Count Survey 2019

Summary of various visits

All numbers given are of birds actually seen. Since I am viewing from street level there are a number of roofs that are impossible to get a view on so these figures must be an absolute minimum. Colin Lythgoe

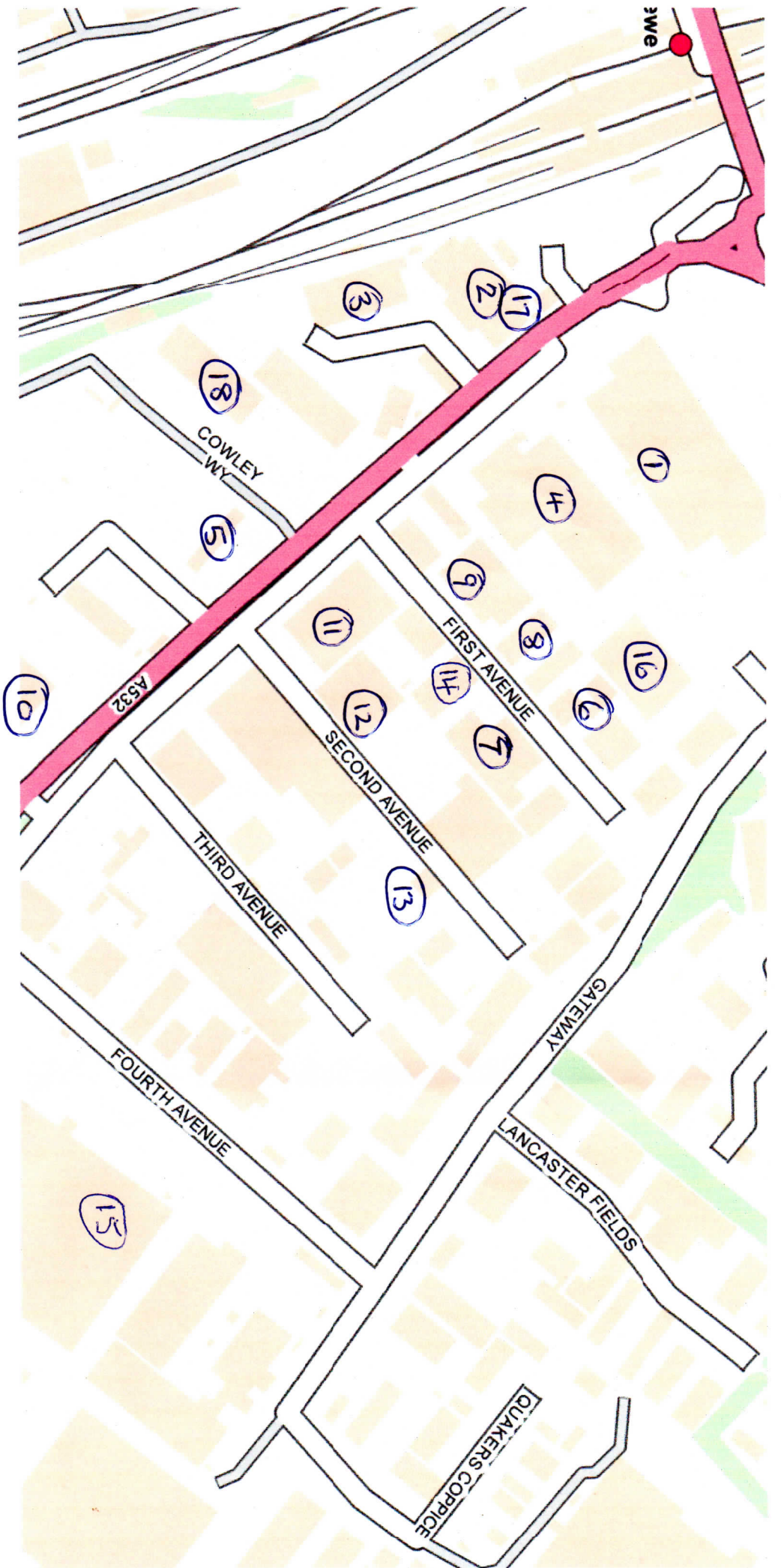
site name	map number	field notes
B&Q north side	1	LBB ads 23 juvs 10 broods 5; HG ads 3 juvs 2 broods 1
B&Q south side	1	LBB ads 26 juvs 11 broods 6; HG ads 7 juvs 5 broods 3
Storage King	2	LBB ads 4 juvs 1 broods 1; HG ads 4 juvs 1 broods 1
Royal Mail (MECX)	3	LBB ads 1 juvs 2 broods 1; HG ads 1 juvs 2 broods 1
Swansway	4	LBB ads 4 juvs 0 broods 0
Scope House	5	LBB ads 2 juvs 1 broods 1; HG ads 2 juvs 1 broods 1
Eardleys	6	LBB ads 4 juvs 5 broods 2
Wrights WH1	7	LBB ads 50 juvs 0; HG ads 10 juvs 0. Used as a loafing site
Jaymar Packaging	8	not used
Electric Centre	9	LBB ads 1 juvs 2 broods 1
AO (Omega Building)	10	not used
Nissan	11	LBB ads 3 juvs 2 broods 1
Osan	12	HG ads 1 juvs 1 broods 1
Cooper Buckley (view from 2 nd Avenue)	13	LBB ads 2 juvs 2 broods 1
B&E Engineering	14	LBB ads 2 juvs 2 broods 1
AO (Alpha Building)	15	Another loafing site with at least 32 adults in total seen
Swansway Repairs	16	LBB ads 2 juvs 1 broods 1
CSL	17	LBB ads 1 juvs 1 broods 1
CES	18	LBB ads 1 juvs 1 broods 1

Summary totals

LBB ads 76 (+c. 70 loafers) juvs 31 broods 23 using 14 buildings

HG ads 18 (+c. 20 loafers) juvs 12 broods 8 using 6 buildings

A grand total of around 240 birds.



Western Road Industrial Estate, Gense.

Site Plan
July 2019