

**A SUPPLEMENT TO  
THE BIRDS OF  
SANDBACH FLASHES  
FROM 2000 TO 2009**

*Colin Lythgoe*



## INTRODUCTION

After 25 years as the SECOS Recorder I have decided that the time is right for me to stop writing and producing the SECOS Annual Bird Report. However, I will continue as the SECOS Recorder and will accept records of rare, unusual or just good birds to pass on to CAWOS, the County Society. I can also include a summary of bird records in the Annual Newsletter, distributed each August.

To finalise the recording of species at Sandbach Flashes up to 2010, it seemed appropriate to write an appendix to the book produced in 2000 by Andrew Goodwin and myself "The Birds of Sandbach Flashes 1935 to 1999". That is the purpose of this booklet entitled "A Supplement to The Birds of Sandbach Flashes from 2000 to 2009". It covers all records during the decade 2000 to 2009. All of the relevant line drawings kindly provided by Tony Broome for the original book have been included. The "site guide to birdwatching at the flashes" has been updated to reflect the current status of each of the 14 flashes and areas included. The final item is a revised checklist of all species recorded at Sandbach Flashes up to 2009. The original book is out of print but that, together with this supplement, will soon be available to download from the SECOS website at [www.secos.org.uk](http://www.secos.org.uk).

During this decade 187 species have been recorded within the flashes recording area. This includes 12 new species not in the original book. Four of these are only due to species 'splits' and had previously been recorded as sub-species and one is a species elevated from its previous status as an escapee; see page 45 for details. One additional new species is Hooded Crow now split by the BOURC. There are four old records of this species, with the last in 1975, but it has not been recorded this decade. This gives a total of 13 new species from the 1999 total of 225. I have also taken the opportunity to document an old White-winged Black Tern record that has become known. So the grand total for the flashes recording area now stands at 238, including 40 wader species.

Many thanks are due to Andrew Firth and Andrew Goodwin for using their extensive knowledge and experience of Sandbach Flashes to correct and add to the species accounts. Andy Firth has written the Sandbach Flashes records in the Annual Bird Reports since 2007. Grateful thanks also to Peter Roberts, the SECOS web site webmaster, for making the line drawings from the book available for use in this supplement and for converting documents to .pdf files and making them accessible from the SECOS web site. Finally thanks to Dave Condliffe of DC Electrical for a generous financial contribution towards the cost of this booklet.

Colin Lythgoe

SECOS Recorder

## **A SITE GUIDE TO BIRDWATCHING AT THE FLASHES**

This chapter gives a brief summary of the current status of each flash. Full details were given in the original book.

### **Elton Hall Flash**

Despite the unchecked growth of the willow scrub this flash, with the saltpan, continues to be the main site of the area. With the willow scrub now covering around half of the area viewing is restricted and accurate counts are difficult, particularly of the waterfowl. The open water between the willows and the railway line, known as 'the back pool', now gives the best views.

### **Salt Pan**

The lack of a sluice controlling the outflow into the River Wheelock means that the water level, and hence the amount of attractive mud, is at the vagaries of the weather. Despite this it continues to be the top site for waders, is good for dabbling ducks (but is too shallow for diving ducks) and holds a large gull roost in winter.

The provision of a hardstanding area for viewing off the road has vastly improved the safety of watchers and is now a comfortable place to sit and wait for that elusive rarity.

The bird feeders attract a lot of passerine species to the viewing area and are maintained by the generosity of local birdwatchers and HJ Lea Oakes of Wheelock.

### **Fields Farm Flashes**

Although the pools are only of minimal value the railway embankment from here to the canal provides excellent breeding habitat for warblers, finches and buntings.

### **Railway Flash**

This site has not changed much and can still be a good site for ducks and waders. It is also a popular loafing area for the gulls.

### **Oaktree Flash**

An open aspect and visited by a few dabbling and diving ducks.

### **Groby Flash**

The better of the two flashes in this longitudinal subsidence depression. Good for swans, grebes and ducks as well as Reed and Sedge Warblers in the reed beds in summer. Best viewed from the north end of Maw Green Tip.

### **Maw Green Tip**

Continues to be used for tipping, many years after its initial proposed end of use date. This means that it is still growing, particularly upwards! It has developed into an important site for both the transient work areas and the completed areas. The tipping area attracts large numbers of gulls in winter as well as corvids and starlings. The finished areas that have been grassed over are now attractive to pipits and larks in winter, with chats particularly favouring the original course of the Fowle Brook.

### **Watch Lane Flash**

The installation of a sluice on the outflow in the 1990s meant that water levels did not vary and so the muddy margins disappeared. Consequently most of the waders did the same and the site has not maintained its previous importance. It is also the most heavily fished and disturbed site but it is still good for resident grebes and migrating terns.

### **Canal Pools**

Several commercial developments have been started here but quickly abandoned over the years. It is now becoming well populated with vegetation and so is a difficult site to check.

### **Fodens Flash**

Little change here with the open water area being the least important. The wet woodland at the back of the pool and the rough grass/scrub/trees between the pool and the canal hold many more birds.

### **Plex Flash**

No change at this minor site which is difficult to view.

### **Crabmill Flash**

An under-watched site, it is excellent for swans, ducks and grebes, particularly in winter. The small pool at the west end across the canal has grown larger and can be viewed well from a public footpath along the River Wheelock.

### **Warmingham Flash**

The most important site geologically it is of minor ornithological importance due to the heavy disturbance by fishermen. Good numbers of grebes here but little else.

### **Tetton Lane Flash**

Still developing slowly, it is good for Teal and Snipe but is difficult to view.

## SYSTEMATIC LIST

### Status Definitions:

At the beginning of each species account I have defined the current status. In brackets after that is the previous status if it has changed or a confirmation of no change if the previous status still applies. Also in brackets is a statement of a new species where applicable.

For **numbers of birds** the following definitions have been used:-

Vagrant:	Local or national rarity recorded once or twice at the Flashes.
Very rare:	Up to twenty records.
Rare:	Over twenty records but not seen annually.
Scarce:	Less than twenty records annually.
Uncommon:	Small numbers present in appropriate seasons.
Fairly common:	Moderate numbers present in appropriate seasons.
Common:	Good numbers present in appropriate seasons.
Very common:	Large numbers present in appropriate seasons.
Abundant:	High numbers present in appropriate seasons.

And for **breeding status** the following definitions have been used:-

Former breeder:	Bred regularly prior to 2000.
Irregular breeder:	Has bred at least once during 2000 to 2009.
Uncommon:	1 to 5 pairs breeding annually.
Common:	6 to 10 pairs breeding annually.
Very common:	More than 10 pairs breeding annually.

And for **temporal status** the following definitions have been used:-

Resident:	Birds are seen at all seasons.
Summer visitor:	Normally present in summer.
Winter visitor:	Normally present in winter.
Passage migrant:	Moves through the area on migration.
Visitor:	Occurs at any time of the year.

**Abbreviations:** Site abbreviations in the systematic list are as follows:-

EHF: Elton Hall Flash	WLF: Watch Lane Flash
PHF: Pump House Flash	FF: Foden's Flash (The Moat)
FFF: Fields Farm Flashes	PF: Plex Flash (Market Garden Pool)
RF: Railway Flash	CF: Crabmill Flash
OF: Oaktree Flash	WF: Warmingham Flash
GF: Groby Flash	TLF: Tetton Lane Flash
MGT: Maw Green Tip	

In 1999 there was a move to change the common names of birds on the British List to bring them in line with international usage. In anticipation of them becoming widely accepted the proposed names were used. In the following years some new names have been popularly accepted and some have not. For this supplement I have decided to continue with the names used in the book to provide continuity and easy comparison.

**Little Grebe**

*Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Uncommon breeding resident. (no change.)

No perceived change in status with juveniles being seen every year at GF, some years at CF and very rarely at RF.

**Great Crested Grebe**

*Podiceps cristatus*

Fairly common breeding resident. (was: Common breeding resident.)

Numbers appear to be declining. WLF continues to be the main wintering site with between 16 and 26 maximum up to 2007 but smaller numbers in the last three years. The number of breeding pairs has also declined with up to ten pairs at six flashes in 2000 but down to three pairs at WLF, CF and WF by 2009.



**Great Cormorant**

*Phalacrocorax carbo*

Fairly common visitor between August and May. Rare in June and July. (no change.)

PHF continues to be the main site with records from all months, with a few in summer and between 20 and 32 in the winter months.

**Little Egret**

*Egretta garzetta*

Scarce visitor. (was: Very rare visitor. Five records.)

Total number of records in each year

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Records	2	3	4	2	3	4	6	2	8	2

Total number of records in each month

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Birds	0	0	1	1	4	2	4	18	3	2	0	1

In line with the national trend Little Egret has moved from 'very rare visitor' to 'scarce visitor'. The two tables show the occurrence pattern with half the records being in August and all except two being at EHF.

### Great White Egret

*Ardea alba*

Vagrant. (New species).

An adult was first located around 10-00 on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2002 at EHF. It stayed in the area until 6<sup>th</sup> January and although very flighty it was seen by many birders. The bird made a brief return visit on 13<sup>th</sup> February when it flew over from MGT, over PHF and landed on EHF for five minutes.

### Grey Heron

*Ardea cinerea*

Fairly common visitor. Has bred once. (no change.)

Recorded daily feeding at the flashes, with numbers between five and fifteen.

### White Stork

*Ciconia ciconia*

Very rare visitor. (was: Vagrant. Two records of at least one bird.)

One further record with two seen at EHF on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2003 soaring beyond the saltpan. They were watched for five minutes circling and gaining height, then they drifted off east.



### Eurasian Spoonbill

*Platalea leucorodia*

Very rare visitor. (no change.)

A comment in the 2000 book said "With no records since 1982 this is a long overdue species". A prophetic comment since we have had three more records in this decade!

2000 29<sup>th</sup> April 2 adults on EHF for a few minutes.

2002 17<sup>th</sup> May 2 adults on EHF for 90 minutes, flushed by a train.

2008 16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> June a sub-adult on EHF.

### Mute Swan

*Cygnus olor*

Uncommon breeding resident. Common visitor. (no change.)

Between two and four pairs nest in most years using various flashes.

### Tundra (Bewick's) Swan

*Cygnus columbianus*

Rare winter visitor and passage migrant. (no change.)

Only two records, both from 2000, with seven at EHF on 5<sup>th</sup> January and five at EHF on 20<sup>th</sup> December.

### **Whooper Swan**

*Cygnus cygnus*

Rare winter visitor and passage migrant. (no change).

More common than Bewick's Swan but still rare, with no records in three of the years. Three at EHF on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2000 beat the previous earliest record of 21<sup>st</sup> October in 1998. Usually seen in twos or threes but 12 on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2003 at EHF.

### **Pink-footed Goose**

*Anser brachyrhynchus*

Scarce winter visitor. Feral population rare in summer months. (no change).

The usual movement of birds from Lancashire Mosses to Norfolk in early winter and return in January continues. The best year was 2005 when over 2,600 birds were counted flying over from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> January.

### **Greater White-fronted Goose**

*Anser albifrons*

Very rare winter visitor and passage migrant. (no change).

From 25<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> February 2006 three adults and four 1<sup>st</sup> winter birds were at RF/MGT.

On 30<sup>th</sup> October 2008 one adult and one 1<sup>st</sup> winter bird were at EHF and were deemed to be of the Greenland race *A.a. flavirostris*, the first record for the flashes.



### **Greylag Goose**

*Anser anser*

Wild – rare. Feral – uncommon (was Rare visitor and passage migrant.)

Up to 12 regular with the Canada Goose flocks. 20 over EHF on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2002 were probably wild.

### **Canada Goose**

*Branta canadensis*

Common resident. (was: Uncommon breeding resident. Abundant between August and March.)

Numbers vary in the wandering flocks with a high of 800+ in 2009.

### **Barnacle Goose**

*Branta leucopsis*

Scarce visitor. (was: Rare visitor.)

Random records of one or two with the Canada Goose flocks in every year. All are probably feral birds although true vagrancy is a possibility.

### **Egyptian Goose**

*Alopochen aegyptiacus*

Vagrant. (new species.)

All records prior to 2000 were considered to be escapees but following the expansion of the breeding range the following records are considered to be of feral birds.



On 5<sup>th</sup> December 2001 six flew in to EHF and after a few minutes flew off again to the north.

On 16<sup>th</sup> August 2006 three were at PHF and later at WLF.

### **Ruddy Shelduck**

*Tadorna ferruginea*

Rare visitor. (was: Very rare visitor. Five records of six birds.)

Records from five years of one to four birds staying at EHF for up to 20 days i.e. 1<sup>st</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> July 2003. All records are considered to be of feral birds.

### **Common Shelduck**

*Tadorna tadorna*

Fairly common resident. (was: Uncommon breeding resident and common visitor.)

Numbers continued to increase through the decade from a winter maximum of 43 and three broods in 2001 up to a winter maximum of 78 and five broods in 2008.

### **Mandarin Duck**

*Aix galericulata*

Rare visitor and irregular breeder. (was: Rare visitor.)

Recorded in 2000 to 2002 but then nothing until 2008 when a pair bred on MGT pool with three young seen on 7<sup>th</sup> June. This is the first breeding record for the flashes. A pair bred again on MGT pool in 2009, with eight young seen on 13<sup>th</sup> May.

### **Eurasian Wigeon**

*Anas penelope*

Abundant winter visitor, rare in summer. (no change.)

No change in status but an increase in numbers during the decade with a maximum of 920 in 2006.

### **American Wigeon**

*Anas americana*

Vagrant. (was: Vagrant. One record.)

A further record of one with the Eurasian Wigeon flock from 14<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> October 2006.

### **Gadwall**

*Anas strepera*

Scarce winter visitor between August and May. Rare in June and July. (was Scarce winter visitor between August and May. Very rare in June & July.)

Usually one to five recorded randomly in all months of the year, although rarely in summer. Ten on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2002 at EHF and seven on 26<sup>th</sup> December 2009 at PHF.

**Common Teal***Anas crecca*

Abundant winter visitor, uncommon during the summer. (no change.)

No real change in numbers, with maximum in this decade of 814 in 2003, or in temporal status, with a few birds summering but no breeding proved.

**Green-winged Teal***Anas carolinensis*

Very rare winter visitor. (no change, although now a new species.)

This was previously a sub-species of Common Teal but has now been split. Four records up to 1999. Two more records in this decade, both males, with one at EHF from 20<sup>th</sup> October to 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2000 and one at EHF from 27<sup>th</sup> February to 9<sup>th</sup> March 2008.

**Mallard***Anas platyrhynchos*

Very common breeding resident. Abundant July to February. (no change.)

No change in status but numbers are difficult to count accurately at EHF due to the encroaching willow scrub. However, in August 2009 all the birds were flushed out of there and gave a total of 1050, a record count.

**Northern Pintail***Anas acuta*

Uncommon winter visitor, very rare in the summer months. (no change.)

The recent decline noted in the book has continued with late winter 2009 having a maximum of only three birds. One bird, possibly injured, over-summered in 2005

**Garganey***Anas querquedula*

Scarce summer visitor and passage migrant. (was: Rare summer visitor and passage migrant. Has bred once.)

Seen in every year, usually with several records of ones and twos and sometimes staying for long periods. Becoming more common on spring passage. In 2009 a bird was present from 7<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> February, the first winter record.

**Northern Shoveler***Anas clypeata*

Uncommon visitor. (was: Uncommon visitor. Irregular breeder.)

Maximum numbers vary considerably with a high maximum of 59 in 2006 but only 23 in 2008. Numbers peak in September and October and then decline whereas at Doddington numbers peak in November and December with similar maximum counts, so there is possibly some movement between the two sites.

**Red-crested Pochard***Netta rufina*

Very rare visitor. (no change.)

On 17<sup>th</sup> August 2008 a juvenile was seen on EHF, but was not present the next day. The sixth record for the flashes, all included in the Systematic List but probably all should be classified as 'Escaped or Released'.

**Common Pochard***Aythya ferina*

Scarce winter visitor, rare in summer. (was: Uncommon winter visitor, rare in summer.)

Numbers have continued to decline, particularly at EHF and PHF which are now too shallow for diving ducks. Still at CF in small numbers of less than ten and only occasional at EHF.

**Tufted Duck***Aythya fuligula*

Scarce breeding resident, uncommon winter visitor. (was: Uncommon breeding resident, fairly common winter visitor).

The continuing siltation of EHF and PHF has also affected this species and they are now usually found only at CF and RF. Winter numbers have reduced during the decade from around 40 maximum to around 10 maximum. Pairs still breed at CF and RF in most years.

**Lesser Scaup***Aythya affinis*

Vagrant. (New species.)

On 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2004 an adult male was found at RF. Well watched that day it stayed there until 6<sup>th</sup> October when it moved over to EHF and was last seen here on 7<sup>th</sup> October. Subsequent inspection of photographic evidence of plumage details has shown that this was not from the Maw Green Wildfowl collection.

Another adult male was seen on the back pool at EHF on 11<sup>th</sup> November and stayed there until it was last seen at 16-20 on the 12<sup>th</sup>. This bird was considered by observers of both birds to be a separate individual.

The first and second records for the SECOS area. This was submitted to CAWOS at the time as a single record and accepted as such, so it became the third record for Cheshire

**Common Goldeneye***Bucephala clangula*

Scarce winter visitor. Very rare in the summer months. (no change.)

Continues to be a rare bird, particularly at EHF and PHF. Usually only one or two short staying birds at WLF, RF or CF in winter.

**Goosander***Mergus merganser*

Uncommon visitor. (was: Scarce visitor between July and April.)

In 2000 there was just one record of a single bird at each end of the year. Similar numbers until a sudden increase in the winter of 2004/5 when birds were seen regularly, with a maximum of 14. Numbers continued to increase up to a maximum of 28 in December 2006 and have stabilised around that number. Birds start to appear as early as August with numbers peaking in December and January and then decreasing to singles in May or June. EHF and FFF are the favoured sites.

**Ruddy Duck***Oxyura jamaicensis*

Scarce breeding summer visitor. Rare in winter. (was: Uncommon breeding summer visitor. Rare in winter.)

Never a common bird at the flashes with the highest count being seven in 2002. Despite the DEFRA Ruddy Duck cull it is still hanging on and has bred at GF most years in this decade. This cull has cost £4.6 million with 6,200 birds killed - £740 per bird! A few hundred birds now remain in the British population (more than enough to source a population explosion!).

**Red Kite***Milvus milvus*

Very rare visitor. (was: Vagrant. One record.)

Following the success of the national re-introduction programme this species is now much more common. There have been six records this decade, although it is more commonly seen in the SECOS area outside the flashes than actually in the flashes recording area.



- 2005 28<sup>th</sup> May one was watched for 10 minutes over EHF.
- 2008 11<sup>th</sup> June one over WLF.
- 2009 30<sup>th</sup> May one over PHF.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> June one over EHF.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> July one over EHF.

**Eurasian Marsh Harrier***Circus aeruginosus*

Rare passage migrant. (was: Very rare passage migrant. Six records.)

A big increase in records, enough to change its status from very rare to rare. Seen in seven of the ten years, with all the records being of singles and the majority on autumn migration.

Total number of records for each month

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Birds	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	8	2	1	0	0

**Hen Harrier***Circus cyaneus*

Very rare autumn and winter visitor. (no change.)

Only one record in the decade when a male was seen near FF on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2008.

**Northern Goshawk***Accipiter gentilis*

Very rare visitor. (was Vagrant. Two records.)

The problem of separating Goshawks from female Sparrowhawks remains but there were five records in the decade.

- 2001 5<sup>th</sup> March one seen at PHF.
- 2003 28<sup>th</sup> November a female over WLF.
- 2005 8<sup>th</sup> February a male over FF.
- 2007 6<sup>th</sup> August a male over EHF.
- 2009 13<sup>th</sup> September a male over PHF.

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk***Accipiter nisus*

Uncommon breeding resident. (no change.)

No change in numbers or status, probably one or two pairs breed.

**Common Buzzard***Buteo buteo*

Fairly common breeding resident (was: Uncommon visitor and passage migrant).

In line with national trends this species has increased in numbers throughout the decade. Numbers peak in autumn and the maximum count recorded is 12 over EHF on 17<sup>th</sup> August 2005. Several pairs now breed in the flashes recording area.

**Osprey***Pandion haliaetus*

Rare passage migrant. (was: Very rare passage migrant.)

16 records in the decade and only missed in two years. Most common on spring passage with one record in March, nine in April and one in May. On return passage three records in August and two in September. Most records are of flyovers since our small, shallow flashes are not suitable for fishing in.

**Common Kestrel***Falco tinnunculus*

Irregular breeding resident, uncommon visitor. (no change.)

No change in numbers or status. Has bred in a nest box near MGT.

**Merlin***Falco columbarius*

Rare passage migrant and winter visitor. (no change.)

Seen around most of the flashes, it is difficult to assess the numbers accurately since there can be many days between sightings of this elusive bird. There have probably been sightings of 17 birds in the winter period of October to March, two on spring passage in April and May, and five on autumn passage in August and September.

**Eurasian Hobby***Falco subbuteo*

Scarce summer visitor. (was: Rare summer visitor.)

Numbers have continued to increase, with many records of birds visiting the flashes to hunt. Arrivals in spring between 18<sup>th</sup> April and 15<sup>th</sup> May and last sightings for the flashes area between 14<sup>th</sup> September and 8<sup>th</sup> October. There are still no signs of birds breeding in the area.

**Peregrine Falcon***Falco peregrinus*

Uncommon visitor. (no change.)

Still seen regularly throughout the year, using the electricity pylons at RF as a base. Although two birds are usually present there has been no proved breeding attempt, presumably due to the lack of a suitable nest site.

**Red-legged Partridge***Alectoris rufa*

Rare visitor. (was: Very rare visitor.)

Now seen rarely at one site adjacent to CF and just one record away from this site.

**Common Pheasant***Phasianus colchicus*

Uncommon resident. Has bred, current breeding status unclear. (no change.)

Seen in all years at various locations with up to three at any one site. Usually associated with a feeding station, including a tree climbing individual at the EHF feeders.

**Water Rail***Rallus aquaticus*

Uncommon winter visitor, very rare in summer. (no change.)

Records during the winter from most of the flashes during the decade, with the maximum total recorded being seven in 2005. More often heard than seen although one in 2004/5 gave good views from the road bridge at EHF. One summer record with one heard calling at FF in late June 2007.

**Common Moorhen***Gallinula chloropus*

Very common breeding resident. (no change.)

Coordinated counts of all flashes have been made in January in most years and have resulted in a total population varying randomly between 44 and 83, spread between all of the flashes. Most of these birds are resident and stay to breed.

**Common Coot***Fulica atra*

Very common breeding resident and winter visitor. (no change.)

Coordinated counts of all flashes have been made in January in most years and have resulted in a total population varying randomly between 162 and 310, spread between all of the flashes. Many of these birds are winter visitors, as shown by the colour ringed individual seen at EHF on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2008 which had been ringed just 11 days previously at North Duffield Carrs, East Yorkshire.

**Eurasian Oystercatcher***Haematopus ostralegus*

Uncommon visitor between February and August. Irregular breeder. (was: Uncommon visitor between February and August. Rare at other times.)

A very predictable visitor with arrivals in the first half of February each year. At EHF birds are then present through to August with a maximum count of seven. However, the only proved breeding came from CF in 2003 with a pair showing breeding behaviour in June and with three young in July.

**Pied Avocet***Recurvirostra avosetta*

Very rare visitor. (no change.)

Three more records during the decade

2007 On 24<sup>th</sup> June a party of six (2 adults and 4 juvs) visited EHF.

2008 16<sup>th</sup> March two at EHF

3<sup>rd</sup> June two at EHF.

**Little Ringed Plover***Charadrius dubius*

Uncommon summer visitor. Irregular breeder. Fairly common passage migrant. (was: Uncommon breeding summer visitor. Fairly common passage migrant.)

Earliest arrival 5<sup>th</sup> March, latest departure 30<sup>th</sup> September.

From 2000 to 2004 one or two pairs bred at EHF but there has been no successful breeding since then. Birds are usually present all summer but there are strong peaks of migration with maximum daily counts of 19 in spring and 24 in autumn, although these have been much reduced in the last few years.

### **Common Ringed Plover**

*Charadrius hiaticula*

Fairly common passage migrant. (no change.)

Earliest arrival 6<sup>th</sup> March, latest in autumn 8<sup>th</sup> October.

Numbers on spring passage generally with a daily maximum of up to ten but there have been three larger flocks passing through with 33 on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2001, 24 on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2005 and 35 on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2006. Not recorded as often on return passage and with lower numbers, with a daily maximum of up to four. Numbers have reduced during the decade. From 18<sup>th</sup> June 2006 a pair possibly attempted to breed at the back of the saltpan, but abandoned on 2<sup>nd</sup> July.

### **European Golden Plover**

*Pluvialis apricaria*

Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor. (no change.)

Although still classified as uncommon it borders on scarce since numbers have fallen dramatically. In 2000 there was a regular winter flock with a peak count of 110 on 12<sup>th</sup> January. By 2005 the regular winter flock was down to around ten with occasional counts up to 45 and by 2009 the numbers were down to one or two seen occasionally with the Lapwing flock.

### **Grey Plover**

*Pluvialis squatarola*

Rare visitor and passage migrant. (no change.)

No change of its occurrence pattern with four records of single birds that only stayed for a few hours, with the May birds being in summer plumage. Records on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2001; 6<sup>th</sup> April 2005; 7<sup>th</sup> May 2006 and 16<sup>th</sup> April 2009.

### **Northern Lapwing**

*Vanellus vanellus*

Uncommon breeding resident, abundant in late summer and winter. (no change.)

No change in the pattern of occurrence with the winter flock numbers peaking in November and December at between 1,000 and 3,000 birds. Most birds move away by April to breed and then start to return in July and August. A few pairs stay to breed with around three pairs at EHF and one or two pairs at CF.



### **Red Knot**

*Calidris canutus*

Rare passage migrant, very rare in winter. (no change.)

Not recorded in 2003, 2008 and 2009. All records are from EHF and are of single birds that rarely stay for more than two days. There have been four records on spring passage from 16<sup>th</sup> March to 17<sup>th</sup> April and 11 on autumn passage from 2<sup>nd</sup> August to 21<sup>st</sup> November.



**Sanderling***Calidris alba*

Rare passage migrant. (no change.)

Not recorded in 2007 and 2008. All records are from EHF. This species is much more common on spring passage than in autumn. There have been 17 records between 28<sup>th</sup> April and 4<sup>th</sup> June involving one, two or three birds. On return passage there have been single records in August, September and October.

**Little Stint***Calidris minuta*

Very rare spring and rare autumn passage migrant. (no change.)

No records in 2003, 2008 and 2009. All records are from EHF. One spring record of two on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2006. Much more common on autumn passage with 13 records of one or two birds between 23<sup>rd</sup> June and 25<sup>th</sup> Oct. Fortunately most birds stay here for several days. One probable winter record of one on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2006.

**Temminck's Stint***Calidris temminckii*

Rare passage migrant. (no change.)

An adult arrived at EHF late on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2001 and stayed until 12<sup>th</sup> May. The first time since 1985 that one has stayed for longer than a day.

**Pectoral Sandpiper***Calidris melanotos*

Very rare autumn visitor, one winter record. (no change.)

Four records, all in autumn as usual.

2000 27<sup>th</sup> August to 3<sup>rd</sup> September one at EHF.

2003 24<sup>th</sup> September a juv at EHF.

2005 16<sup>th</sup> September to 18<sup>th</sup> September one at EHF.

2007 19<sup>th</sup> September two juvs at EHF.

**Curlew Sandpiper***Calidris ferruginea*

Very rare spring, rare autumn passage migrant. (no change.)

Only one spring record with an adult at EHF on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2002. A disappointing history of autumn passage. From 2000 to 2002 recorded regularly between 22<sup>nd</sup> August and 28<sup>th</sup> October with a maximum count of eight birds. In 2004 there were just two records, one of three juvs and one of five juvs, and in 2005 just two records of single birds. The last was on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2005 and there have been no records since.

**Dunlin***Calidris alpina*

Fairly common passage migrant, uncommon at other times. (no change.)

The regular winter flock numbered 15 in 2000 but reduced steadily so that by 2005 birds were no longer seen daily and after 2006 were not seen at all in winter. Still regular on passage but again the numbers have reduced. Generally less than ten but occasional bigger flocks pass through.

Maximum day count on passage for each year.

2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
19	17	20	10	22	27	40	14	5	4

**Ruff***Philomachus pugnax*

Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor. (no change.)

The wintering flock is still present every year but numbers have reduced from up to 30 in 2002/3 to eight in 2009/10. Only four records of birds on spring passage, but much more common on autumn passage when birds merge into the winter flock. However, numbers on passage have also reduced from a maximum of 24 in 2001/02 to eight in 2009/10.

**Jack Snipe***Lymnocyrtes minimus*

Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor. (no change.)

MGT has developed into the best site for this elusive species that usually needs to be 'walked up' to be seen. RF marsh is also a good site and birds have also been recorded at GF, PHF, EHF, TLF and CP. Although difficult to get an accurate count the total recorded is between five and eight each winter.

**Common Snipe***Gallinago gallinago*

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant. (was: Common visitor between July and April; scarce May and June. Former breeder.)



A very difficult species to count accurately and this can usually only be done when birds are flushed into the open. Highest numbers in winter are found at EHF, RF and TLF with a total count of 100 to 150 at the start of the decade but down to around 50 at the end. Some evidence of passage with for example in 2005 at EHF there were up to 100 in mid August to September but were down to 10 by December.

### **Eurasian Woodcock**

*Scolopax rusticola*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. (no change.)

The damp woodland at FF is the preferred site and birds are resident here through the winter. Always difficult to count unless flushed, the numbers are usually around three but the record count was six on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2002. Also occasional records from GF, MGT and WLF of single birds probably moving through the area.

### **Black-tailed Godwit**

*Limosa limosa*

Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant. Uncommon winter visitor. (was: Uncommon passage migrant.)

A roller coaster decade for this species. Numbers on passage had started to increase in the late 1990s and the maximum in 2000 was 87. In 2002 there was a huge influx with flocks of 214 and then 365 arriving in May and departing quickly, but up to 64 stayed in the summer. In 2004 the maximum count was a staggering 660 on 16<sup>th</sup> May. Numbers varied considerably but were present all summer. Since 2005 numbers have been declining although for the first time birds were present in every month. By 2009 the maximum flock size was down to 70. Sightings of colour ringed birds has shown that our birds are of the Icelandic race *L.l.icelandica* with adult birds moving through on passage and 1<sup>st</sup> summer non-breeding birds staying over the summer.



### **Bar-tailed Godwit**

*Limosa lapponica*

Rare passage migrant and winter visitor. (no change.)

Four records, all of singles at EHF.

2001 4<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> September one stayed for longer than the usual day.

2002 11<sup>th</sup> January one at EHF.

2007 30<sup>th</sup> April one at EHF.

8<sup>th</sup> August one at EHF.

### **Whimbrel**

*Numenius phaeopus*

Scarce passage migrant. (was: Rare passage migrant.)

First records each year have been between 12<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> April. Generally one or two birds, but occasionally three or four, on several dates during the spring. One large count on spring passage when 16 were briefly at EHF on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2007. Less common on return passage but the only blank year was 2009. Generally singles for a day or two except for 14 high over WLF on 16<sup>th</sup> August 2003.

**Eurasian Curlew***Numenius arquata*

Fairly common visitor July to March. Scarce visitor April to June. (was: Fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor. Has bred once.)

A very reliable species with a winter flock of around 60 present until mid-March, when birds then return to their breeding sites. Up to ten birds remain during the summer. Breeding birds start to return from early July and are usually back up to around 60 by August.

**Spotted Redshank***Tringa erythropus*

Rare passage migrant. (no change.)

One record of two birds in summer plumage on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2001. The other nine records are of autumn passage birds with one in July, one in August and seven in September. Usually one, but there are two records of two birds. No records in 2002, 2004, 2007 and 2009.

**Common Redshank***Tringa totanus*

Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant. (was: Uncommon visitor and passage migrant. Former breeder current status unclear.)

At the start of the decade there was a resident winter flock of up to 15 birds at EHF and a light spring and autumn passage with up to three or four birds seen daily. Numbers have decreased steadily over the years and by 2009 the winter flock had a maximum count of six and was no longer resident. Birds were recorded in all months except May but none stayed for lengthy periods.

**Common Greenshank***Tringa nebularia*

Rare spring and scarce autumn passage migrant. (no change.)

Irregular in the number of spring records each year with up to ten in some years but only one in others and absent in 2002 and 2004. Recorded between 14<sup>th</sup> April and 14<sup>th</sup> June. It is annual on autumn passage between 3<sup>rd</sup> July and 5<sup>th</sup> November but is becoming scarcer. In 2000 there were 24 records of one to three birds but in 2008 there was just one record of three on 17<sup>th</sup> August.

**Lesser Yellowlegs***Tringa flavipes*

Vagrant. (no change.)

On the afternoon of 17<sup>th</sup> October 2002 a juvenile was found on EHF and fortunately stayed for the rest of the day so that it was enjoyed by the local 'listers'. This was only the second record for the flashes area. It was gone the next day and probably moved down to a site in the Midlands.

**Green Sandpiper***Tringa ochropus*

Scarce spring and uncommon autumn passage migrant. Scarce in winter. (no change.)

No change in the pattern of occurrence, although numbers are lower. On spring passage usually only one or two records of singles and in some years they are not seen at all. However, in autumn they are usually present daily from the first arrivals in mid to late June through to the last in October. Peak numbers are in July and August and the maximum day count is eight. Singles are occasionally seen in winter at EHF and CF.

**Wood Sandpiper***Tringa glareola*

Rare passage migrant. (no change.)

Only four records in spring, each of one bird although they usually stay for two or three days. On autumn passage recorded in all years except 2006 and 2007. Some years only have one record of a single for one day; others have up to three records of one or two birds staying for a few days. Two records in July, six in August and four in September.

**Common Sandpiper***Actitis hypoleucos*

Uncommon passage migrant. (no change.)

A wader with clearly defined passage periods. Spring passage between 2<sup>nd</sup> April and 31<sup>st</sup> May with maximum day counts varying between three and nine. Autumn passage between 23<sup>rd</sup> June and 20<sup>th</sup> September with maximum day counts varying between four and nine. It was formerly recorded regularly at WLF but this is now no longer suitable for waders following the installation of a sluice.

**Spotted Sandpiper***Actitis macularia*

Vagrant. (no change.)

On 12<sup>th</sup> June 2004 an adult was seen at 06-55 at EHF. It was present all day and seen by a few hundred observers but could not be re-located the next day. This was the second record for the flashes and only the second for Cheshire.

**Ruddy Turnstone***Arenaria interpres*

Rare passage migrant. (no change.)

Only recorded in six years with just one record in each year. Four on spring passage from 14<sup>th</sup> May to 7<sup>th</sup> June, with two singles and two threes. Just two records on autumn passage; four flew over EHF on 5<sup>th</sup> August 2006 and one was at EHF on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2007.

### Red-necked Phalarope

*Phalaropus lobatus*

Very rare visitor. (no change.)



Around 18-00 on 14<sup>th</sup> August 2006 a bird of this species was spotted on EHF and identified as a juv/1<sup>st</sup> winter. It stayed overnight and was last seen at 13-00 on 15<sup>th</sup> August. The fourth record for the flashes.

### Red (Grey) Phalarope

*Phalaropus fulicarius*

Vagrant. (no change.)

On 13<sup>th</sup> October 2001 an adult was found at RF where it fortunately stayed until 16<sup>th</sup> October, giving many observers the chance to watch it. Only the second record for the flashes.

### Mediterranean Gull

*Larus melanocephalus*

Scarce visitor. (was: Very rare visitor. At least 16 records of 14 birds.)

This species has spread through the country during the 1990s and has increased in numbers and occurrence at the flashes, being recorded annually since 1995.

#### Monthly distribution of records from 2000 to 2007

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Birds	10	9	14	2	2	1	14	15	3	2	2	5

#### Total annual records from 2000 to 2009

2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
9	4	5	10	15	8	14	14	13	16

Birds are seen in all age plumages from juvenile to adult and all seasonal plumages. Usually only single birds but occasionally more with for example two adults and two juveniles together in July 2006. Many of the birds recorded in July and August are juveniles, possibly from the Black-headed Gull breeding colony formed at Blakemere Moss in Delamere Forest in 1999 and where Mediterranean Gulls have bred since 2004.



### Franklin's Gull

*Larus pipixcan*

Vagrant. (new species.)

An adult was found in the gull roost at EHF on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2004. Seen at 18-45 it was present until dark at 20-15 and seen by around 50 observers. It was still in the gull roost at dawn the next morning but moved off at 06-30 and was not seen again.

**Little Gull***Larus minutus*

Rare visitor and passage migrant. (no change.)

Not recorded in 2000, 2001 and 2007. Usually only one or two records in a year but sometimes more. 2005 was a good year with five records, including a long-staying bird in 1<sup>st</sup> summer plumage that arrived on 19<sup>th</sup> June and stayed through to 28<sup>th</sup> September, usually at EHF but sometimes visiting WLF. Some evidence of passage, with more records in April and October than other months.

**Black-headed Gull***Larus ridibundus*

Common visitor between April and June, abundant at other times. (no change.)

No change in the pattern of occurrence but numbers have increased. At the start of the year large numbers are present, with the peak numbers being 5,000 in January 2003 and 4,100 in January 2007. They feed at MGT, bathing and preening on PHF and EHF and usually roost on the saltpan. In May and June less than 50 non-breeders remain. The first adults with juvs return in mid-June and numbers then build up to the year end. Peak numbers have been 5,000 in December 2002 and 3,000 in December 2003.

On 19<sup>th</sup> December 2007 a colour ringed bird was noted on EHF which had been ringed as a pullus on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2007 in Denmark.

**Ring-billed Gull***Larus delawarensis*

Very rare passage migrant and winter visitor. (was: Vagrant. One record.)

Only one previous record but a further eight in this decade.

- 2003 23<sup>rd</sup> March. An adult on the saltpan from 15-40 to 16-05.  
24<sup>th</sup> March. Probably the same bird here again from 16-20 to 17-20.  
This bird coincided with a big passage of Common Gulls.
- 2005 21<sup>st</sup> February. An adult in breeding plumage on the saltpan.  
25<sup>th</sup> February. An adult in winter plumage.
- 2007 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> October. An adult in winter plumage.  
19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> December. An adult on PHF.
- 2008 23<sup>rd</sup> February. An adult in winter plumage on PHF.
- 2009 7<sup>th</sup> February. An adult on EHF.  
21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup> February. An adult on PHF.

**Mew (Common) Gull***Larus canus*

Uncommon visitor and passage migrant. (no change.)

The winter gull flock at MGT/RF/PHF/EHF holds between 15 and 30. There is a regular passage every year during March and early April, with maximum day counts varying from 70 up to an impressive 420 on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2008. Very rare in summer. Autumn passage is also very small with few counts above ten; numbers then increase up to 30 in the winter flock again.

## Lesser Black-backed Gull

*Larus fuscus*

Two races have been recorded:

### *L. f. graellsii*

Abundant visitor and passage migrant February to April and August to November. Common in December and January. (no change.)

Numbers vary on a regular annual pattern according to the season. Wintering birds in January and February vary in number from 25 to 120. Numbers then build up on spring passage in March and April with peak counts of 750. A few birds remain over the summer and then numbers build up again on autumn passage from August to November with a peak count of 1,100. Numbers then reduce down to around 300 maximum in December.

On 29<sup>th</sup> July 2000 a colour ringed bird was noted that had been ringed as a pullus at Tarnbrook Reservoir, Forest of Bowland in July 1998.

### *L. f. intermedius*

Very rare passage migrant. (no change.)

In 2002 there were two records of birds showing characteristics of this the Scandinavian race, one on 25<sup>th</sup> July and one on 8<sup>th</sup> December, both on EHF.

## Herring Gull

*Larus argentatus*

Classification of the Herring Gull is in a state of some confusion with proposals to split a number of sub-species and races into separate species.

The official British List, controlled by the BOURC, maintains the Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* as one species with two sub-species (so far as our recording area is concerned):

*Larus argentatus argentatus* in North Europe

*Larus argentatus argenteus* in Britain and West Europe.

However, most other modern lists have accepted changes and include:

Yellow-legged Gull      *Larus michahellis*

Caspian Gull              *Larus cachinans*

as separate species and we have agreed with that.

### *L. a. argenteus*

Abundant from November-March, scarce midsummer, common at other times. (no change.)

Most numerous during the winter months from November to February. Usually 2,000 to 3,000 feeding on MGT each day but up to 4,000 during freezing weather in December 2000. Numbers drop rapidly in spring and just a few stay to summer before they increase in the late autumn to a peak in November again. Although birds feed on MGT and loaf nearby they do not roost here but arrive from the north in mid- morning and depart to the north in late afternoon.



*L. a. argentatus*

Scarce autumn and winter visitor. (was: Rare autumn and winter visitor.)

The last comment on this sub-species in the book was 'Probably far commoner than the few records suggest'. Increased observer knowledge and confidence has proved this to be true, with several records every year. Only one record each in January, February and March but many from August to December. Most counts are of more than one bird and the highest day count is nine.

**Yellow-legged Gull**

*Larus michahellis*

Scarce visitor. (no change, although now a new species.)

At the time of the 1999 book it was described as 'slowly increasing' and it has continued to do so. They have been recorded in all months of the year but are rare in January and December. Peak counts are in July, August and September when birds can be seen on most days. The highest day count is nine on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2008.

**Caspian Gull**

*Larus cachinans*

Rare visitor (new species.)

The first for the flashes was seen at EHF on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2007; a 1<sup>st</sup> summer bird it stayed until at least 3<sup>rd</sup> May. Two more records then this year with an adult and a 3<sup>rd</sup> winter bird in November. In 2008 there were at least 20 reports of at least ten birds with March and April being particularly productive. In 2009 there were 12 documented records with adult, 1<sup>st</sup> winter and 3<sup>rd</sup> winter birds in January to April; 1<sup>st</sup> summer birds in May and June; juveniles in August and adult in October, all from EHF and PHF.

**Iceland Gull**

*Larus glaucooides*

Rare winter and spring visitor. (no change.)

Not recorded in 2003 or 2005 so still classified as rare. The first records of the winter are usually not until December or January and the latest is usually April, although in 2009 a 1<sup>st</sup> winter bird lingered until 25<sup>th</sup> May. In the early years up to three birds in a year but more since 2007 when there were at least eight individuals seen for 51 days between 1<sup>st</sup> January and 19<sup>th</sup> April. In 2008 there were many records of four birds and in 2009 five 1<sup>st</sup> winter birds were seen during the period 5<sup>th</sup> January to 26<sup>th</sup> May with finally a 2<sup>nd</sup> winter bird on 29<sup>th</sup> December. All records are from MGT, RF, PHF and EHF.

**Glaucous Gull***Larus hyperboreus*

Rare winter and spring visitor. (no change.)

As with Iceland Gull it remains classified as rare since there were no records in 2006. First records are from December or January and then seen through to April. Slightly easier than Iceland Gull to determine the actual numbers of birds involved; there were several records of one or two birds in each year, except for 2006 up to 2009. In the early winter of 2009 there were many records of five birds with three 1<sup>st</sup> winter, one of which was seen daily from 26<sup>th</sup> March to 30<sup>th</sup> April, and two 2<sup>nd</sup> winter birds. All records are from MGT, RF, PHF and EHF.

**Great Black-backed Gull***Larus marinus*

Common winter visitor, scarce at other times. (no change.)

The pattern of occurrence is similar to Herring Gull with numbers rising rapidly in November and December, staying in January and dropping rapidly in February. Maximum numbers in winter vary over the years but were always less than 100 except for 2008/9. In that winter up to 250 birds were present during December and January. A few immature birds stay at the flashes outside these months. In the winter months they do not roost at the flashes but fly off to the north-west with the other large gulls.

**Black-legged Kittiwake***Rissa tridactyla*

Very rare visitor and spring passage migrant. (no change.)

Seven records in five of the years. Six of these are of single birds between 3<sup>rd</sup> February and 2<sup>nd</sup> April that were seen briefly on EHF and the saltpan before flying off to the north. This pattern conforms to its classification as a spring passage migrant. The other record of one on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2004 may have been a late migrant.

**Sandwich Tern***Sterna sandvicensis*

Very rare passage migrant. (no change.)

On 21<sup>st</sup> April 2000 three were at EHF for an hour, only the fifth record at the flashes and the first since 1980. The other three records all come from 2003 with six on 25<sup>th</sup> May, one on 14<sup>th</sup> August and three on 9<sup>th</sup> September.

**Common Tern***Sterna hirundo*

Uncommon passage migrant and summer visitor. (no change.)

Spring passage from 18<sup>th</sup> April (one day earlier than the previous earliest) to early June. Usually one, two or three records in spring each year with a maximum count of seven. More common on autumn passage from mid-June to the latest on 18<sup>th</sup> October (five days later than the previous latest). Between five and 12 records each year, frequently of juveniles still with adults. A very

high count on 26<sup>th</sup> August 2009 when a flock of 34 were over EHF. Many records from WLF as well as EHF.

**Arctic Tern**

*Sterna paradisaea*

Rare passage migrant. Very rare midsummer. (no change.)

As usual scarcer on spring passage and just two records, with one at EHF on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2002 and five over EHF on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2004.

An early record on autumn passage from 2007 with one at EHF on 21<sup>st</sup> July. All other records are from August and September with the last being a juvenile at RF on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2002. Most records are of flyovers of single birds but 17 over EHF on 10<sup>th</sup> August 2004 were exceptional.

**Little Tern**

*Sterna albigrons*

Very rare passage migrant. (no change.)

Three records during this decade.

2001 15<sup>th</sup> May one at EHF for five minutes, then PHF for five minutes.

2002 21<sup>st</sup> April one at WLF for 10 minutes.

2004 17<sup>th</sup> April one flew over EHF.

**Black Tern**

*Chlidonias niger*

Rare passage migrant between April and October. (no change.)

Nine records from seven years. Just two on spring passage, in May as usual. Seven records in autumn, usually of singles but 10<sup>th</sup> August 2004 saw an unprecedented movement. 11 passed over WLF in the morning, then 18 through EHF in the early afternoon followed by a further group of 13 at EHF – a total of 42 birds in the day, a record count. Another good count on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2006 with 19 over EHF. A juvenile at EHF on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2001 was the latest date ever.

This next record is included to correct the fact that it was missed from the book.

**[White-winged Black Tern**

*Chlidonias leucopterus*]

Vagrant

One was seen at EHF on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1969. It stayed for two days and was watched by several observers. This was the first record for SECOS. The second was from 1974 and recorded in the book.

**Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)**

*Columba livia*

Former common breeding resident. Recent status unclear. (no change.)

Feral birds with unknown origins are seen regularly.

### **Stock Dove**

*Columba oenas*

Common breeding resident and winter visitor. (no change.)

A regular winter flock in the EHF area with numbers around 20, so 54 in 2000 was exceptional. Still breeds in the flashes area, numbers unknown.

### **Common Wood Pigeon**

*Columba palumbus*

Very common breeding resident, and abundant passage migrant and winter visitor. (no change.)

Breeds throughout the area, numbers not known. Passage birds noted occasionally with for example 1,500 moving over EHF on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2000. Numbers of wintering birds have increased with 1,200 on MGT in 2005 and 1,000 roosting in FF wood in 2006 being noted.



### **Eurasian Collared Dove**

*Streptopelia decaocto*

Very common breeding resident. (no change.)

A common breeding bird, particularly around the farms, although few numbers noted. Usually recorded as a winter flock at EHF with numbers around 30, although 61 in January 2003 and 66 in November 2009 were exceptional.

### **European Turtle Dove**

*Streptopelia turtur*

Rare visitor. (was: Former uncommon breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.)

The only record is of one seen at EHF on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2000, feeding with Collared Doves on the road by the bird feeders.

### **Common Cuckoo**

*Cuculus canorus*

Rare passage migrant. (was: Irregular breeding summer visitor. Uncommon spring and rare autumn passage migrant.)

Cuckoo numbers have suffered a rapid decline nationally and this is reflected locally. There have been only eight records of passage birds, all tabulated below.

2001	1 <sup>st</sup> May	one at EHF and 1 at FF.
2003	15 <sup>th</sup> August	one at EHF.
2005	16 <sup>th</sup> April	one at WLF.
	17 <sup>th</sup> May	one at PHF.
	2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> July	one at MGT.
2007	5 <sup>th</sup> July	one at FF.

### **Barn Owl**

*Tyto alba*

Rare visitor. (was: Very rare visitor. Irregular breeder.)

Has become more common as the local population increases following the provision of nest boxes by the local Barn Owl Group. Breeds regularly at two sites on the flashes boundary and in nest boxes just outside the flashes area. In some years one gives good views as it emerges from its roost site in the chemical works by EHF.

### **Little Owl**

*Athene noctua*

Uncommon breeding resident. (was: Common breeding resident.)

A rapid decline in numbers. In 2001 it was recorded regularly at six of the flashes and MGT. By 2009 there were only three records in the year, two from MGT and one from WLF.



### **Tawny Owl**

*Strix aluco*

Uncommon resident. Irregular breeder. (no change.)

It is difficult to assess this species due to its strictly nocturnal habits. It is recorded regularly in FF wood and probably breeds there as well as another site on the flashes boundary. Also bred near EHF in 2007 when young were frequently seen there.

### **Short-eared Owl**

*Asio flammeus*

Rare passage migrant and winter visitor. (no change.)

Eight records of probably seven birds. All records are of singles, with passage birds flying over and winter birds occasionally seen hunting.

- 2003 29<sup>th</sup> March one over EHF moving north.
- 22<sup>nd</sup> April another over EHF.
- 2004 4<sup>th</sup> October one at MGT
- 31 October one at MGT, possibly the same bird, since on
- 17<sup>th</sup> October one was seen hunting nearby at Coppenhall.
- 2005 12<sup>th</sup> November one along the brook at MGT.
- 2007 20<sup>th</sup> November one over EHF.
- 2008 6<sup>th</sup> January one hunting over RF and MGT.
- 7<sup>th</sup> December one over EHF.

### **Common Swift**

*Apus apus*

Fairly common summer visitor. (was: Very common summer visitor and occasionally abundant passage migrant. Former breeder.)

As usual there is a mass arrival in the last week of April with most gone by the end of August, but a few hanging on into the first week of September.

Although still seen regularly, numbers have decreased significantly and no large counts in the hundreds have been recorded. One bird at EHF on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2007 was the earliest arrival ever, beating the previous record of 20<sup>th</sup> April.

### **Common Kingfisher**

*Alcedo atthis*

Uncommon visitor. Irregular breeder. (no change.)

Records throughout the decade from RF, PHF, EHF, WLF and FF as well as rivers and pools. In 2002 an adult was seen regularly carrying a fish up the River Wheelock so a pair was presumably breeding nearby.



### **Green Woodpecker**

*Picus viridis*

Rare visitor. Irregular breeder. (was: Rare visitor.)

Seen in six of the ten years but generally only one record in a year, except for 2001 and 2009. On 25<sup>th</sup> July 2009 a juvenile was seen in Oakwood Lane and then seen through to 31<sup>st</sup> August and was joined briefly by an adult. In 2001 a pair fledged two young from a nest near FF, the first proved breeding for the flashes area.

### **Great Spotted Woodpecker**

*Dendrocopos major*

Fairly common resident and autumn and winter visitor. Probably breeds annually. (no change.)

Many records throughout the area but particularly from the feeders at EHF and FF. Breeding has been proved at these two flashes in 2007 and 2008 but probably breeds annually here and at other sites.

### **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker**

*Dendrocopos minor*

Scarce visitor. Irregular breeder. (was: Scarce visitor. Has bred once.)

Usually one or two records a year but in 2007 there was a remarkable run of sightings around EHF from 25<sup>th</sup> July with two males and a female giving very close views for over 20 days. In 2002 there were sightings from RF, WLF, EHF and FF where a male was seen excavating a nest hole by the feeders.

### **Common Sky Lark**

*Alauda arvensis*

Uncommon breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. (no change.)

MGT has become the best area with several pairs breeding in summer and a small flock resident through the winter, with the maximum count being 18 in 2002.

Spring passage is very light, but on autumn passage in late September and October up to 60 a day are recorded passing over.

### **Sand Martin**

*Riparia riparia*

Common passage migrant. Irregular breeding summer visitor. (no change.)

Numbers have declined but they are still noted regularly through the summer. In 2009 a small breeding colony, with at least seven active nests, was found in the banks of the River Wheelock near CF. Possibly breeds here regularly since four nests were noted here in 2000.

One late bird on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2003 at EHF became the latest ever, beating the previous latest of 27<sup>th</sup> September.

### **Barn Swallow**

*Hirundo rustica*

Very common to abundant passage migrant. Very common breeding summer visitor. (no change.)

Most commonly recorded as an autumn passage migrant, with flocks of 300 to 500 in September over EHF. Still breeds in the area but is coming under increasing pressure for suitable sites as farm buildings are developed for housing, or sanitised to comply with milking regulations.

Two very late records with a juvenile over EHF on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2001 and an adult over EHF on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2008, although they did not break the latest ever record which is from 30<sup>th</sup> November 1974.



### **Red-rumped Swallow**

*Hirundo daurica*

Vagrant. (new species.)

On 15<sup>th</sup> May 2001 an adult was seen at WLF in a group of 200 hirundines brought down by bad weather. It stayed for 1 hour 30 minutes and then moved off with the other hirundines as the weather improved.

### **House Martin**

*Delichon urbica*

Very common passage migrant. Common breeding summer visitor. (no change.)

No change in status or numbers, with up to 300 seen in most years over EHF in late August and September. Still breeds around many farms.

### **Richard's Pipit**

*Anthus richardi*

Vagrant (new species.)

An adult was found amongst Meadow Pipits on MGT on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2003 at 13-15. It was seen by two other lucky observers before it moved away at 15-00 and was not re-found.

**Tree Pipit***Anthus trivialis*

Very rare passage migrant. (no change.)

Just one very typical record of a bird on autumn passage when one was heard and seen passing over EHF on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2006.

**Meadow Pipit***Anthus pratensis*

Common passage migrant and fairly common winter visitor. (was: Common passage migrant. Uncommon winter visitor. Has bred once.)

The peak count on spring passage was 80 over on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2000. Recorded more regularly on autumn passage in September and October, with 35 an hour over EHF on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2003 and 100 in a day in September 2006 being the highest counts.

MGT is the regular wintering site with usually up to 60 birds present although in 2005/6 over 100 birds were counted.

**Yellow Wagtail***Motacilla flava*

Scarce passage migrant. (was: Uncommon passage migrant and breeding summer visitor.)

Numbers have declined dramatically both nationally and locally. Low numbers of adults and juvs seen at EHF in summer and possibly bred at the start of the decade. By 2009 three on 29<sup>th</sup> August was the largest count and juvs seen were only passage birds.

On 27<sup>th</sup> October 2006 two exceptionally late birds were seen at EHF, easily beating the previous flashes latest of 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1987 and equalling the Cheshire county latest record.

**Grey Wagtail***Motacilla cinerea*

Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor. Rare midsummer. (no change.)

Wandering birds can occasionally be seen at most of the flashes in winter but it is much less common in summer. Breeding has never been proved.

**White (Pied) Wagtail***Motacilla alba*

Common passage migrant and uncommon breeding resident. (no change.)

Two races occur:

*M.a. yarrelli* (Pied Wagtail): still breeds regularly, particularly at EHF with usually one or two pairs seen with young. 56 in March 2001 at EHF is a typical passage record. Winter flocks form at different flashes in different years with 63 at MGT in 2003, 55 at EHF in 2005, 70 at WLF in 2006 and 73 at PHF in 2009 being the maximum recorded.



*M. a. alba* (White Wagtail): the status is changed from rare to scarce passage migrant since it is now recorded annually. Almost all records are of spring passage birds between 27<sup>th</sup> March and 8<sup>th</sup> May but mainly in April, usually singles but occasionally two. Only two September records with ten at EHF on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2000 being exceptional.

### **Bohemian Waxwing**

*Bombycilla garrulus*

Very rare winter visitor. (was: Vagrant. One record.)



In autumn 2004 there was a large influx into the country in October from Scandinavia and by November many had reached south Cheshire. Although flocks of 150+ were seen in Crewe and Congleton there were just two records from the flashes with two at WLF on 20<sup>th</sup> November and one there on 27<sup>th</sup> November.

### **Winter Wren**

*Troglodytes troglodytes*

Very common breeding resident. (no change.)

One of our commonest breeding birds, although we have no counts of breeding pairs

### **Hedge Accentor (Dunnock)**

*Prunella modularis*

Very common breeding resident. (no change.)

One of our commonest resident species with pairs breeding around all the flashes.

### **European Robin**

*Erithacus rubecula*

Very common breeding resident. (no change.)

This is one of our commonest resident passerines, perhaps outnumbered only by Winter Wren and Hedge Accentor.

### **Common Redstart**

*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Rare passage migrant. (no change.)

Still classed as rare because there were no records in 2001. Otherwise seen every year, with a fairly even split between spring and autumn passage. Usually only a single bird for one or two days but in 2002 a male and a juv were present from 7<sup>th</sup> July to 7<sup>th</sup> August in the hedge along the path from PHF to RF, a favoured habitat.

### **Whinchat**

*Saxicola rubetra*

Scarce passage migrant. (was: Rare passage migrant. Former uncommon breeding summer visitor, now irregular.)

The majority of records are from MGT with a few from PHF. There are 13 records on spring passage from 15<sup>th</sup> April to 13<sup>th</sup> May, usually of one or two birds for one day although they sometimes linger for a few days. A male was at MGT from 20<sup>th</sup> April to 9<sup>th</sup> May 2003 and on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2004 there were a male and three females at MGT.

Slightly more common on autumn passage from 6<sup>th</sup> August to 4<sup>th</sup> October, although the maximum count was again four, at MGT on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2003, and they do tend to linger for longer.

### **Common Stonechat**

*Saxicola torquata*

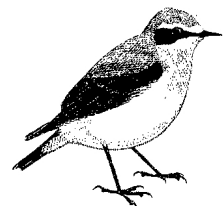
Rare passage migrant and scarce winter visitor. (was: Rare passage migrant and winter visitor.)

Not considered to be recorded on passage every year, but much more common in winter. Recorded annually on MGT and only occasionally at other sites. Seen in varying numbers with only one or two seen occasionally during some winters but in other years birds are resident over the winter. The maximum count is six (three males and three females) on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2004.

### **Northern Wheatear**

*Oenanthe oenanthe*

Uncommon spring and scarce autumn passage migrant. (was: Uncommon spring and rare autumn passage migrant.)



The status has changed from rare to scarce in autumn since it has been recorded in every year, not due to an increase in numbers. Much more common in spring with the first birds seen between 17<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> March at EHF. Then usually recorded on five to 25 other dates with a maximum of four, except for 2004 when there was a heavy passage in April and a remarkable count of 42 on 18<sup>th</sup> April.

*O. o. leucorroha*: in 2001 single birds considered to be of the Greenland race were seen at EHF on 28<sup>th</sup> April, 4<sup>th</sup> May and 27<sup>th</sup> August.

### **Common Blackbird**

*Turdus merula*

Very common breeding resident. October passage migrant and winter visitor. (no change.)

One of the commonest resident birds and can be found breeding around all the flashes.

**Fieldfare***Turdus pilaris*

Common occasionally abundant winter visitor and passage migrant. (no change.)

The first birds usually arrive in the second week of October and numbers build up into November. Winter flock sizes vary from year to year, generally being up to 500, but 2000 were counted round the flashes on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2007.

**Song Thrush***Turdus philomelos*

Common breeding resident and winter visitor. (no change.)

Numbers have increased slightly and it is still a common bird, recorded regularly through the year. It can become very inconspicuous in winter, even though numbers are increased with visitors from Fenno-Scandia, until they start singing again in February.

**Redwing***Turdus iliacus*

Common, occasionally very common, winter visitor and passage migrant. (no change.)

Arrivals usually in the first week of October when birds can be heard calling as they fly overhead in the evenings. Flocks can build up anywhere, depending mainly on the best source of hawthorn berries. Typical recorded flock sizes have been 400 at MGT, 200 at EHF, 300 at WLF and 250 at CF.

**Mistle Thrush***Turdus viscivorus*

Uncommon breeding resident. (no change.)

A difficult species to summarise, there has been no real change in status and numbers, and a few pairs breed around the flashes.

**Common Grasshopper Warbler***Locustella naevia*

Rare spring passage migrant. Formerly an uncommon and irregular breeding summer visitor. (no change.)

Continues to be irregular and elusive! Three records, with the 2000 record being the first since 1982.

2000 end of June: a male reeling for one day only near FF.

2002 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> May: a male reeling near TLF. However, there is a possibility that this bird was present through May and June into July. If so, did it breed?

2009 22<sup>nd</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> April: a male reeling in a hedgerow bordering MGT. At last, a bird that all patch listers could connect with!

**Sedge Warbler***Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Fairly common breeding summer visitor. (was: Common breeding summer visitor. Uncommon passage migrant.)

Arrivals recorded between 15<sup>th</sup> April and 7<sup>th</sup> May.

Numbers have decreased dramatically in the last few years. In 2000 there were around 15 singing males at eight flashes. A full warbler survey of all flashes on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2004 found 25 singing males, including 16 in the MGT/RF area. But by 2007 it was recorded as not common with five at RF being the largest count and by 2009 was infrequently recorded.

**Eurasian Reed Warbler***Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Common breeding summer visitor. Uncommon passage migrant. (no change.)

Arrivals recorded between 18<sup>th</sup> April and 25<sup>th</sup> April

This species is almost exclusively tied to common reed *Phragmites australis* for its nest site and so as the area of reed at any flash varies, so do the Reed Warbler numbers. Overall, numbers have probably increased, helped by the spread of common reed along Fowle Brook at MGT. The full warbler survey of 10<sup>th</sup> May 2004 gave a total of 12 singing males.

**Lesser Whitethroat***Sylvia curruca*

Uncommon breeding summer visitor and passage migrant. (no change.)

Arrivals between 14<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> April, beating the previous earliest of 21<sup>st</sup> April.

Not always the easiest species to record with the best year being 2002 when 15 singing males at eight flashes were recorded.

**Common Whitethroat***Sylvia communis*

Common breeding summer visitor and passage migrant. (was: Very common breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.)

Arrivals between 15<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> April, equalling the previous earliest ever.

Probably the commonest warbler species at the flashes. It breeds throughout the area in suitable habitat and particularly favours the railway embankment from FFF to the canal. In the warbler survey of 10<sup>th</sup> May 2004 26 singing males were recorded.

**Garden Warbler***Sylvia borin*

Uncommon and irregular breeding summer visitor. Uncommon passage migrant. (no change.)

Arrivals between 20<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> April, equalling the earliest ever.

Not common anywhere in the flashes area but favours the canal area by FF and PF. Recorded most years with at least one singing male but the maximum is only three territory holding birds, recorded in 2002 and 2009.

**Blackcap***Sylvia atricapilla*

Common breeding summer visitor and passage migrant. Rare in winter. (was: Common breeding summer visitor and passage migrant. Very rare in winter.)

Arrivals between 21<sup>st</sup> March and 5<sup>th</sup> April.

However, these dates should be treated with caution since it is becoming increasingly difficult to separate new spring arrivals from old winter visitors. Records from temporary residents have proved there is considerable overlap between the two classifications. Although winter visitors are normally associated with gardens where food is provided there have been several records at the flashes. Breeding numbers are considered to be around 15 pairs distributed around the flashes.

**Common Chiffchaff***Phylloscopus collybita*

Common breeding summer visitor and passage migrant. Very rare winter visitor. (was: Common passage migrant. Summers annually. Has bred. Very rare winter visitor.)

Arrivals between 10<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> March.

Has become more common as a breeding bird and during the 10<sup>th</sup> May 2004 warbler survey 20 singing males were recorded. Very noticeable on autumn passage in late September and early October as birds frequently sing as they move through. Records of wintering birds in 2001, 2006 and 2008 from EHF, FFF and WLF.

**Willow Warbler***Phylloscopus trochilus*

Fairly common breeding summer visitor and passage migrant (was: Very common breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.)

Arrivals between 28<sup>th</sup> March and 10<sup>th</sup> April.

Numbers have reduced significantly for a species described as the commonest breeding warbler in 2000 but by the end of the decade there was a maximum count of only three. The 10<sup>th</sup> May 2004 warbler survey gave a total of six singing males. Most common at FFF railway embankment, FF and CP.

**Goldcrest***Regulus regulus*

Fairly common autumn passage migrant and winter visitor. Irregular breeder. (was: Fairly common autumn passage migrant and winter visitor. Summer status unclear.)

Seen regularly in winter and particularly favours FF wood, where up to five can be seen. In 2002 an adult and juvenile were seen in the conifer wood by the canal at PF. This was the first proved breeding for the flashes area. This proved breeding success was repeated at the same site in 2005.

**Firecrest***Regulus ignicapillus*

Very rare winter visitor. (was: Vagrant. Two records.)

On 9<sup>th</sup> November 2000 one was seen briefly at EHF.

**Spotted Flycatcher***Muscicapa striata*

Uncommon passage migrant. Irregular breeding summer visitor. (no change.)



Numbers in the SECOS area appear to have increased but this has not happened at the flashes. Recorded as probably bred at EHF or WLF in the first three years, by 2009 there was only one record of a bird, at EHF from 27<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> August.

**Pied Flycatcher***Ficedula hypoleuca*

Very rare passage migrant. (no change.)

Two more records with a male at WLF on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2001 and one on 17<sup>th</sup> August 2007 that showed well but briefly in hedgerows bordering EHF.

**Bearded Tit***Panurus biamarcus*

Vagrant. (new species.)

A frustrating day on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2002 at WLF when a bird of this species was heard calling at 09-40 from a reed bed by the main car park. Despite constant observation from then until the end of the day the bird was never seen, although it was heard calling several times more.

**Long-tailed Tit***Aegithalos caudatus*

Common breeding resident. (no change.)

This species has continued to increase slightly, with regular winter roving flocks of 30+ but 44 at EHF in 2002 was noteworthy. It has been recorded as breeding at EHF but no doubt several more pairs breed each year.

**Marsh Tit***Parus palustris*

Very rare visitor. (no change.)

The only record is of one in the Red Lane Tip area on 14<sup>th</sup> August 2009, which was not seen subsequently. This is the first flashes record since 1998.

**Willow Tit***Parus montanus*

Scarce breeding resident. (was: Uncommon breeding resident.)

FF has always been the favourite site with suitable habitat and one or two birds were seen in most winters. Responding to increased feeding up to three were regular at FF from 2006 and in 2007 breeding was proved again in the

small wood opposite FF. Present here and probably bred again in 2008, they were only seen in the early part of 2009.

**Coal Tit**

*Parus ater*

Uncommon breeding resident. (was: Uncommon visitor.)

Most common in the FF and PF wooded areas and breeding has been proved here in several years. Now frequently seen in winter on the feeders at EHF.

**Blue Tit**

*Parus caeruleus*

Very common breeding resident. (no change.)

Breeds around all the flashes and takes readily to the nest boxes provided, with in 2000 six pairs using nest boxes that were at FF and up to six pairs using the boxes now around EHF.

**Great Tit**

*Parus major*

Very common breeding resident. (no change.)

Also breeds around all the flashes but not as densely as Blue Tit. Up to four pairs use the nest boxes around EHF.

**European Nuthatch**

*Sitta europaea*

Uncommon breeding resident. (was: Very rare visitor.)

Numbers started to increase during the 1990s and have continued to do so, particularly around FF. Breeding has been proved here each year since 2007.

**Eurasian Treecreeper**

*Certhia familiaris*

Uncommon breeding resident. (no change.)

FF and PF have traditionally been the favoured areas for this species and up to three pairs breed here in most years. Also recorded as breeding at EHF in 2007 and 2008. Wandering birds can be seen anywhere during the winter.

**Red-backed Shrike**

*Lanius collurio*

Vagrant. (new species.)

On 31<sup>st</sup> May 2003 a female was seen on Maw Green Tip. Seen perched on top of one of the new hedges it was watched for several minutes diving down for food and then moving along the hedge but was then lost from view and could not be relocated.

**Eurasian Jay***Garrulus glandarius*

Uncommon breeding resident. (no change.)

Continues to breed annually in the FF and PF wooded areas with probably two or three pairs, although the highest count was six at EHF in April 2002.

**Common Magpie***Pica pica*

Very common breeding resident. (no change.)

Still a very common bird although the counts of 200+ in the winter roost at FF are long gone. Counts in this decade here have varied from 24 to 38. The other regular wintering site is MGT. Breeds in thick hedges and trees around the flashes.

**Eurasian Jackdaw***Corvus monedula*

Very common resident and winter visitor. Breeding status unclear. (no change.)

Numbers have continued to increase and large flocks form in the winter as breeding birds come together. There is a regular corvid roost at FF and a total of 2,000 mixed corvids were recorded here in January 2008. Pairs probably breed in chimneys of some of the cottages in the area.

**Rook***Corvus frugilegus*

Very common breeding resident. (no change.)

The two rookeries in the flashes area have maintained their previous size with the FF wood rookery having between 116 and 147 nests and the GF/OF rookery having around 10 to 15 nests each year. Large feeding flocks congregate at MGT in winter. A mixed corvid roost of 2,000 at FF in January 2008 included many Rooks.

**Carrion Crow***Corvus corone*

Very common breeding resident. (no change.)

Probably the most ignored species in the area! Breeds in large trees around all the flashes and joins the other corvids at MGT in winter.

**Common Raven***Corvus corax*

Uncommon visitor. (was: Very rare visitor. 11 records of 17 birds.)

What a difference a decade makes! The book detailed only 11 records of 17 birds between 1992 and 1999. In 2000 there were two records but by 2009 there were 49 records. Most of these are of flyovers but birds are increasingly



using the area for feeding. This is part of an increase for the species throughout Cheshire.

### **Common Starling**

*Sturnus vulgaris*

Very common breeding resident. Abundant passage migrant and winter visitor. (no change.)

Still breeds commonly around most farm and other rural buildings. A wintering flock is now regular at MGT with at least 1,000 and usually up to 2,000 birds present all winter. Occasionally huge numbers are seen, such as the 20,000 over EHF on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2001.

### **House Sparrow**

*Passer domesticus*

Common breeding resident. (was: Very common breeding resident.)

Initially numbers continued to decrease but in the last few years they have been seen regularly on the feeders at EHF. It is possible that the provision of this constant food source has resulted in a very localised increase, which bucks the trend elsewhere.

### **Eurasian Tree Sparrow**

*Passer montanus*

Common breeding resident. (no change.)

Following the long steady decline of the 1990s this species has now increased in numbers following the provision of a constant food source and a selection of nest boxes. Although exact numbers at the EHF feeders are difficult to count it is felt that around 60 birds use it as a food source. Up to nine pairs use the nest boxes and usually around half of these are double brooded and a quarter of them are triple brooded, going right through to August.

Flocks can be attracted to other food sources and in the winter of 2005/6 a game crop of quinoa plus other food put down by the shooting syndicate near CF supported a flock of at least 200 Tree Sparrows.

### **Common Chaffinch**

*Fringilla coelebs*

Very common breeding resident. Common passage migrant and winter visitor. (no change.)

Probably the commonest finch and breeds throughout the area. Numbers are increased by winter visitors although no very large flocks were recorded. The largest number was 60 at CF in 2005 on the same food source as the Tree Sparrows.

### **Brambling**

*Fringilla montifringilla*

Rare passage migrant and winter visitor. (was: Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor.)

Not recorded in four of the ten years so classified as rare. Most records are of just one or two birds seen briefly. The best year by far was 2005 when the second winter period saw six flying over MGT, one at WLF, one at EHF and three at CF with the Chaffinch/Tree Sparrow flock.

### **European Greenfinch**

*Carduelis chloris*

Common breeding resident. (no change.)

Breeds commonly throughout the area. Flocks form in winter and up to 60 are recorded regularly at WLF. Occasional high counts from CP with 140 in 2000 and EHF with 100 in 2006.

### **European Goldfinch**

*Carduelis carduelis*

Common breeding resident. (no change.)

Numbers of this delightful finch have continued to increase slightly and it breeds throughout the area. Most obvious in late summer/early autumn when large post breeding flocks form and feed on thistle seeds. The favoured area is RF/MGT and 230 were counted here on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2009. A flock of 200 here in September 2005 had reduced to 75 by November.

### **Eurasian Siskin**

*Carduelis spinus*

Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor. (no change.)



Most records are of winter flocks, with the favoured area being FF and PF. Up to 50 are recorded here in most years with occasional records also from EHF, with 50 in 2001, and MGT, with 14 in 2005. Overflying migrants can be heard in March/April and October/November.

### **Common Linnnet**

*Carduelis cannabina*

Uncommon breeding resident. Fairly common winter visitor. (was: Uncommon breeding resident. Fairly common passage migrant.)

Small numbers breed, with the railway embankment at FFF being used regularly as well as in the gorse along Fowle Brook at MGT. The favoured area for winter flocks is MGT, being recorded there every year, with 120 in 2007 being the maximum count. Also recorded from EHF and PHF in lower numbers.

**Redpoll Note.** In 2000 the British Ornithologists Union split the Common Redpoll *Carduelis flammea* so that the sub-species became separate species:-

Lesser Redpoll	<i>Carduelis cabaret</i>
Mealy Redpoll	<i>Carduelis flammea</i>
Arctic Redpoll	<i>Carduelis hornemanni</i>

### **Lesser Redpoll**

*Carduelis cabaret*

**(was : Common Redpoll)**

*Carduelis flammea*

Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor. (was: Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor. Rare in summer. Irregular breeder.)

No longer breeds in the area but is seen regularly in winter with the highest numbers from November to February. The favoured area is around FF where they associate with the Siskin flock feeding on alders and birch. Peak counts in winter are up to 30.

### **Mealy Redpoll**

*Carduelis flammea*

Very rare winter visitor. (no change.)

In 2009 one was identified with the Lesser Redpolls at FF on 16<sup>th</sup> January and again on 17<sup>th</sup> February.

### **Common Crossbill**

*Loxia curvirostra*

Very rare visitor. (no change.)

Five more records in three years, including the first non-flyover record.

2005 22<sup>nd</sup> October six flew over MGT.

2008 2<sup>nd</sup> September one juv in trees, viewable from the canal behind FF.

3<sup>rd</sup> September 12 flew over the canal towpath from the FF direction.

2009 19<sup>th</sup> October two flew over MGT.

30<sup>th</sup> December one flew over FF.

### **Common Bullfinch**

*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Uncommon breeding resident. (no change.)

Most commonly seen in the FF area and one or two pairs are proved breeding here each year. Occasionally recorded from other sites and juvs have been recorded at EHF.

### **Yellowhammer**

*Emberiza citrinella*

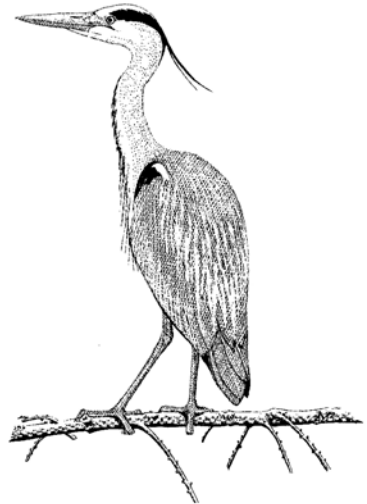
Uncommon breeding resident. (no change.)

The slow decline of this species continues. In 2000 the largest winter flock was 18 but by 2007 the highest count was just two. Some improvement by 2009 when five singing males were heard.

**Common Reed Bunting***Emberiza schoeniclus*

Common breeding resident. (no change.)

The favoured area is MGT and RF where up to seven pairs breed and flocks of around 20 form in winter. However, on 29<sup>th</sup> December 2000 a flock of 54 was seen here, feeding on dock seeds with the ground frozen and 10 cms of snow. Also seen in ones or twos around GF, EHF, WLF and WF.



## Escaped and Released Species

Species reliably recorded at Sandbach Flashes but judged by the author to be escaped or released from captivity. The more interesting ones are listed below:-

### Greater Flamingo

*Phoenicopterus ruber*

One at PHF on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2007.

### Black Swan

*Cygnus atratus*

One at WLF on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2001 and probably the same at EHF on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2001.

### Cape Shelduck

*Tadorna cana*

A female was wandering with a group of Common Shelduck seen at several sites in 2003, including EHF on 1<sup>st</sup> March, 24<sup>th</sup> May and 28<sup>th</sup> May.

### Ringed Teal

*Callonetta leucophrys*

Two birds were at EHF on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2004. A drake was seen here in late March 2008 and one was regular in September 2009.

### Wood Duck

*Aix sponsa*

A pair was together on PHF on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2005. More records during 2006 with two at MGT on 26<sup>th</sup> February, one at PHF on 30<sup>th</sup> August and one at WF on 3<sup>rd</sup> December. Then recorded frequently from MGT and PHF during 2007, 2008 and 2009.

### Harris's Hawk

*Parabuteo unicinctus*

In 2002 a falconer was regularly flying two birds at MGT to scare the gulls off.

[There is a large wildfowl collection nearby in Sydney, Crewe and it is certain that some, if not most, of the birds involved originate from there.]

**NEW SPECIES RECORDED IN THE SUPPLEMENT.  
(During the 10 years of 2000 to 2009)**

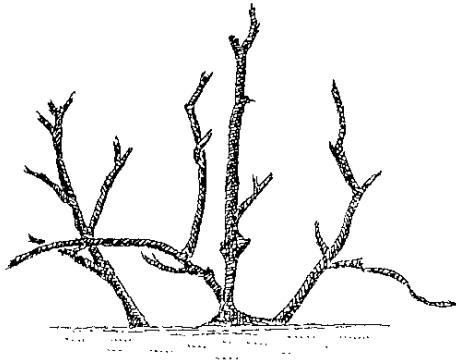
Great White Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>
Egyptian Goose #2	<i>Alopochen aegyptiacus</i>
Green-winged Teal #1	<i>Anas carolinensis</i>
Lesser Scaup	<i>Aythya affinis</i>
Franklin's Gull	<i>Larus pipixcan</i>
Yellow-legged Gull #1	<i>Larus michahellis</i>
Caspian Gull #1	<i>Larus cachinans</i>
Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Hirundo daurica</i>
Richard's Pipit	<i>Anthus richardi</i>
Bearded Tit	<i>Panurus biamarcus</i>
Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>
Mealy Redpoll #1	<i>Carduelis flammea</i>

#1 previously recorded as a sub-species but subsequently split by the BOURC  
#2 previously recorded but only as an escapee.

**NEW SPECIES BUT NOT RECORDED IN THE SUPPLEMENT.**

The following species has been split and accorded full species status by the BOURC since 2000 but has not been recorded at the flashes since then. So it is added to the flashes list but not included in the Supplement.

Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix*

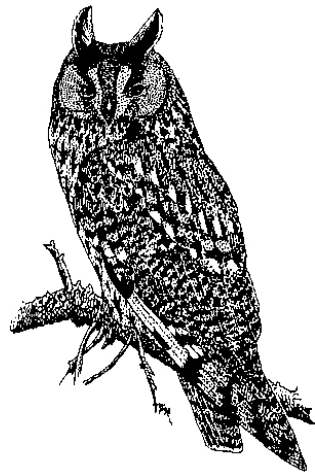


**SPECIES RECORDED IN THE BOOK BUT NOT IN THE SUPPLEMENT.**  
**(During the 65 years from 1935 to 1999)**

Red-throated Diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>
Great Northern Diver	<i>Gavia immer</i>
Red-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>
Horned (Slavonian) Grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>
Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>
Leach's Storm-petrel	<i>Oceanodroma leucorhoa</i>
Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>
Great Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>
Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
Bean Goose	<i>Anser fabalis</i>
Brent Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>
Greater Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>
Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>
Common Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>
Long-tailed Duck	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>
Smew	<i>Mergellus albellus</i>
Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>
European Honey-buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>
Grey Partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>
Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>
Spotted Crake	<i>Porzana porzana</i>
Corn Crake	<i>Crex crex</i>
Common Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>
Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>
White-rumped Sandpiper	<i>Calidris fuscicollis</i>
Stilt Sandpiper	<i>Micropalama himantopus</i>
Upland Sandpiper	<i>Bartramia longicauda</i>
Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>
Wilson's Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus tricolor</i>
White-winged Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>
Long-eared Owl	<i>Asio otus</i>
Alpine Swift	<i>Apus melba</i>
Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>
Eurasian Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>
Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>
Water Pipit	<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>
Common Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>
Ring Ouzel	<i>Turdus torquatus</i>
Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>
Eurasian Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>
Northern Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>
Twite	<i>Carduelis flavirostris</i>

Lapland Bunting  
Snow Bunting  
Little Bunting  
Corn Bunting

*Calcarius lapponicus*  
*Plectrophenax nivalis*  
*Emberiza pusilla*  
*Miliaria calandra*





**CHECKLIST OF THE BIRDS OF SANDBACH FLASHES (2010)**

<b>Species</b>	<b><i>Life</i></b>					
	<b><i>List</i></b>	<b><i>Year</i></b>	<b><i>Year</i></b>	<b><i>Year</i></b>	<b><i>Year</i></b>	<b><i>Year</i></b>
Red-throated Diver						
Great Northern Diver						
Little Grebe						
Great Crested Grebe						
Red-necked Grebe						
Horned (Slavonian) Grebe						
Black-necked Grebe						
Leach's Storm-petrel						
Northern Gannet						
Great Cormorant						
Great Bittern						
Black-crowned Night Heron						
Little Egret						
Great White Egret						
Grey Heron						
Purple Heron						
White Stork						
Eurasian Spoonbill						
Mute Swan						
Tundra (Bewick's) Swan						
Whooper Swan						
Bean Goose						
Pink-footed Goose						
Greater White-fronted Goose						
Greylag Goose						
Canada Goose						

	<b>Life List</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Year</b>
Barnacle Goose						
Egyptian Goose						
Brent Goose						
Ruddy Shelduck						
Common Shelduck						
Mandarin Duck						
Eurasian Wigeon						
American Wigeon						
Gadwall						
Common Teal						
Green-winged Teal						
Mallard						
Northern Pintail						
Garganey						
Northern Shoveler						
Red-crested Pochard						
Common Pochard						
Tufted Duck						
Greater Scaup						
Lesser Scaup						
Common Eider						
Long-tailed Duck						
Common Scoter						
Common Goldeneye						
Smew						
Red-breasted Merganser						
Goosander						

<b>Species</b>	<b>Life List</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Year</b>
Ruddy Duck						
European Honey-buzzard						
Red Kite						
Eurasian Marsh Harrier						
Hen Harrier						
Northern Goshawk						
Eurasian Sparrowhawk						
Common Buzzard						
Osprey						
Common Kestrel						
Merlin						
Eurasian Hobby						
Peregrine Falcon						
Red-legged Partridge						
Grey Partridge						
Common Quail						
Common Pheasant						
Water Rail						
Spotted Crake						
Corn Crake						
Common Moorhen						
Common Coot						
Common Crane						
Eurasian Oystercatcher						
Black-winged Stilt						
Pied Avocet						
Little Ringed Plover						
Common Ringed Plover						

<b><i>Species</i></b>	<b><i>Life List</i></b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Year</b>
Kentish Plover						
European Golden Plover						
Grey Plover						
Northern Lapwing						
Red Knot						
Sanderling						
Little Stint						
Temminck's Stint						
White-rumped Sandpiper						
Pectoral Sandpiper						
Curlew Sandpiper						
Dunlin						
Stilt Sandpiper						
Ruff						
Jack Snipe						
Common Snipe						
Eurasian Woodcock						
Black-tailed Godwit						
Bar-tailed Godwit						
Whimbrel						
Eurasian Curlew						
Upland Sandpiper						
Spotted Redshank						
Common Redshank						
Marsh Sandpiper						
Common Greenshank						

<b><i>Species</i></b>	<b><i>Life List</i></b>	<b><i>Year</i></b>	<b><i>Year</i></b>	<b><i>Year</i></b>	<b><i>Year</i></b>	<b><i>Year</i></b>
Lesser Yellowlegs						
Green Sandpiper						
Wood Sandpiper						
Common Sandpiper						
Spotted Sandpiper						
Ruddy Turnstone						
Wilson's Phalarope						
Red-necked Phalarope						
Red (Grey) Phalarope						
Mediterranean Gull						
Franklin's Gull						
Little Gull						
Black-headed Gull						
Ring-billed Gull						
Mew (Common) Gull						
Lesser Black-backed Gull						
Herring Gull						
Yellow-legged Gull						
Caspian Gull						
Iceland Gull						
Glaucous Gull						
Great Black-backed Gull						
Black-legged Kittiwake						
Sandwich Tern						
Common Tern						
Arctic Tern						
Little Tern						

<b>Species</b>	<b>Life List</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Year</b>
Black Tern						
White-winged Black Tern						
Common Guillemot						
Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)						
Stock Dove						
Common Wood Pigeon						
Eurasian Collared Dove						
European Turtle Dove						
Common Cuckoo						
Barn Owl						
Little Owl						
Tawny Owl						
Long-eared Owl						
Short-eared Owl						
Common Swift						
Alpine Swift						
Common Kingfisher						
Eurasian Hoopoe						
Eurasian Wryneck						
Green Woodpecker						
Great Spotted Woodpecker						
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker						
Common Sky Lark						
Sand Martin						
Barn Swallow						
Red-rumped Swallow						
House Martin						

<b>Species</b>	<b>Life List</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Year</b>
Richard's Pipit						
Tree Pipit						
Meadow Pipit						
Rock Pipit						
Water Pipit						
Yellow Wagtail						
Grey Wagtail						
White (Pied) Wagtail						
Bohemian Waxwing						
Winter Wren						
Hedge Accentor (Dunnock)						
European Robin						
Common Nightingale						
Black Redstart						
Common Redstart						
Whinchat						
Common Stonechat						
Northern Wheatear						
Ring Ouzel						
Common Blackbird						
Fieldfare						
Song Thrush						
Redwing						
Mistle Thrush						
Common Grasshopper Warbler						
Sedge Warbler						
Eurasian Reed Warbler						
Lesser Whitethroat						

<b>Species</b>	<b>Life List</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Year</b>
Common Whitethroat						
Garden Warbler						
Blackcap						
Wood Warbler						
Common Chiffchaff						
Willow Warbler						
Goldcrest						
Firecrest						
Spotted Flycatcher						
Pied Flycatcher						
Bearded Tit						
Long-tailed Tit						
Marsh Tit						
Willow Tit						
Coal Tit						
Blue Tit						
Great Tit						
European Nuthatch						
Eurasian Treecreeper						
Eurasian Golden Oriole						
Red-backed Shrike						
Northern Grey Shrike						
Eurasian Jay						
Common Magpie						
Eurasian Jackdaw						
Rook						
Carrion Crow						
Hooded Crow						



Species	Life List	Year	Year	Year	Year	Year
Common Raven						
Common Starling						
House Sparrow						
Eurasian Tree Sparrow						
Common Chaffinch						
Brambling						
European Greenfinch						
European Goldfinch						
Eurasian Siskin						
Common Linnet						
Twite						
Lesser Redpoll						
Mealy Redpoll						
Common Crossbill						
Common Bullfinch						
Lapland Bunting						
Snow Bunting						
Yellowhammer						
Little Bunting						
Common Reed Bunting						
Corn Bunting						
<b>Total species recorded 238</b>						
<b>Additions and Sub-species</b>						



**SOUTH  
EAST  
CHESHIRE  
ORNITHOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY**

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Indoor meetings held every month from September to April.

Field meetings held throughout the year.

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Take the opportunity to listen to the talk; discuss any problems or observations on birds; with refreshments, prize draw, sale of wild bird food, monthly newsletter.

Field meetings are held at least monthly, visiting Cheshire hot-spots and good birding sites throughout the north of England, the Midlands and North Wales.

**Indoor meetings are held at  
Ettiley Heath Church, Elton Road, Ettiley Heath, Sandbach  
on the second Friday of each month from September to April.**

*New members and visitors are always welcome.*

**For further details contact 01270 582642.**