



# THE OBSERVER

## SECOS Newsletter

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

## November 2024

### Field Trip

#### Pennington Flash

Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> November

Pennington Flash is a 70-hectare lake created at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by coal mining subsidence, mainly from Bickershaw Colliery. Over 230 bird species have been recorded on the site including osprey, kingfisher, marsh harrier and spoonbill.



Pennington Flash - Ron Saunders

### "Seabirds"

#### Anthony Brandreth

Friday 8<sup>th</sup> November

This talk is about seabirds and their struggle for survival. Anthony says "Seabirds are our most enigmatic species. Little encountered and recorded, these creatures inhabit a harsh and unforgiving environment."



Great Shearwater - Anthony Brandreth

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

# Sightings EHF/PHF/MGT/RF - Oct

## Field Trip

### Willington Wetlands Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> November

Willington Wetlands DWT is former gravel pit in the Trent Valley. The reserve is particularly important for its wetland habitats, from open water to reed beds, while the shingle and grass islands provide a refuge for birds and are ideal for breeding waders.



Willington Wetlands - M J Richardson

#### October Highlights (first reports this month)

1<sup>st</sup> Barnacle Goose, Great White Egret, Hobby, Pink-footed Goose, Pochard, Raven, Snipe, Lesser Whitethroat; 2<sup>nd</sup> Cetti's Warbler, Common Scoter, Curlew, Egyptian Goose, Kingfisher, Little Grebe, Mandarin Duck, Pintail, Siskin, Water Rail, White Wagtail (alba), Woodcock; 3<sup>rd</sup> Golden Plover, Marsh Harrier, Sandwich Tern; 4<sup>th</sup> Yellow Wagtail; 5<sup>th</sup> Merlin, Red Kite, Redwing, Yellowhammer; 6<sup>th</sup> Barn Owl; 7<sup>th</sup> Garganey; 8<sup>th</sup> Caspian Gull; 9<sup>th</sup> Yellow-browed Warbler; 11<sup>th</sup> Common Gull, Lesser Redpoll, Tawny Owl; 13<sup>th</sup> Fieldfare, Goosander; 14<sup>th</sup> Whooper Swan, Yellow-legged Gull; 15<sup>th</sup> Little Egret; 16<sup>th</sup> Green Sandpiper; 17<sup>th</sup> Jack Snipe; 22<sup>nd</sup> Dipper; 30<sup>th</sup> Brambling, Common Redpoll; 31<sup>st</sup> Hawfinch

# Sightings EHF/PHF/MGT/RF - Oct



Black-headed Gulls - Dennis Swaby

Gulls & Terns	Count
Black-headed Gull	regular, max c300
Lesser Black-b Gull	regular, max 59
Herring Gull	regular, max 13
<b>Common Gull</b>	regular, max 2
<b>Caspian Gull</b>	1, 8 <sup>th</sup> , 21 <sup>st</sup> , 28 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Yellow-legged Gull</b>	1, 14 <sup>th</sup> , 22 <sup>nd</sup>
Great black-b Gull	regular, max 4

CF = Crabmill Flash

EHF = Elton Hall Flash

FF = Fodens Flash

FFF = Fields Farm Flash

GF = Groby Flash

MGT = Maw Green Tip

OTF = Oak Tree Flash

PHF = Pump House Flash

RF = Railway Flash

WF = Warmingham Flash

WLF = Watch Lane Flash

**Blue text** indicates place first seen.

Underline indicates high flock count (see Feb 2020 Newsletter, page 8).

# Sightings EHF/PHF/MGT/RF - Oct

Wildfowl	Count
Shelduck	regular, max 2
Wigeon	regular, max c450
Gadwall	regular, max 25
Teal	regular, max c290
Mallard	regular, max c150
<b>Pochard</b>	regular, max 3
Shoveler	regular, max 52
<b>Pintail</b>	regular, max 3
Tufted Duck	regular, max 6
<b>Garganey</b>	regular, max 1
<b>Mandarin Duck</b>	1, 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 16 <sup>th</sup> , 20 <sup>th</sup>
Goosander	1, 18 <sup>th</sup> , 20 <sup>th</sup> , 27 <sup>th</sup>
Greylag Goose	regular, max c200
Canada Goose	regular, max c300
<b>Barnacle Goose</b>	2, 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>Pink-footed Goose</b>	c950, 4 <sup>th</sup>
G C Grebe	regular, max 2
<b>Little Grebe</b>	regular, max 7
Coot	regular, max c170
Moorhen	regular, max 13
Mute Swan	regular, max 5
<b>Whooper Swan</b>	7, 27 <sup>th</sup>



Mandarin Duck - Dennis Swaby



Golden Plover - Dennis Swaby

Gadwall - Dennis Swaby



Waders	Count
<b>Water Rail</b>	regular, max 2
Lapwing	regular, max c160
<b>Golden Plover</b>	1, 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup> , 30 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Curlew</b>	regular, max 26
<b>Common Snipe</b>	regular, max 14
<b>Jack Snipe</b>	1, 17 <sup>th</sup> , 28 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Woodcock</b>	1, 2 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>Green Sandpiper</b>	regular, max 2

# Sightings EHF/PHF/MGT/RF - Oct

Raptors & Owls	Count
Sparrowhawk	3, 18 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Marsh Harrier</b>	regular, max 1
<b>Red Kite</b>	1, 5 <sup>th</sup>
Buzzard	regular, max 5
Kestrel	regular, max 4
Hobby	1, 2 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>Merlin</b>	1, 5 <sup>th</sup> , 22 <sup>nd</sup>
Peregrine	1, 18 <sup>th</sup> , 25 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Barn Owl</b>	1, 6 <sup>th</sup> , 13 <sup>th</sup> , 14 <sup>th</sup>



Marsh Harrier - Dennis Swaby



Sparrowhawk - Dennis Swaby

Hérons & Egrets	Count
Grey Heron	regular, max 3
<b>Little Egret</b>	regular, max 4
<b>Great White Egret</b>	regular, max 2



Little Egret - Dennis Swaby

## Sightings Elsewhere - Oct

**EHF/PHF/MGT/RF:** Kingfisher, **Raven**, Skylark, Swallow, House Martin, **Cetti's Warbler**, **Yellow-browed Warbler**, Lesser Whitethroat, **Redwing**, Fieldfare, Stonechat, **White Wagtail (alba)**, **Brambling**, **Common Redpoll**, **Lesser Redpoll**, **Siskin**, **Yellowhammer**




**FFF:** **Tawny Owl**, Kingfisher, Swallow, Cetti's Warbler, Blackcap, Redwing

**WLF:** Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Cetti's Warbler

**Astbury - Astbury Mere CP:** Pink-footed Goose, Pochard, **Common Scoter**, **Yellow Wagtail**

**Bosley - Bosley Locks:** **Kingfisher**, Swallow, House Martin      **Brereton Green:** **Hawfinch**

**Church Lawton - Lawton Gate Treatment Works:** House Martin

-  **SECOS Website:** [www.secos.org.uk](http://www.secos.org.uk)
-  **SECOS Blog** (to read/record local sightings): [www.secos.org.uk/sightings](http://www.secos.org.uk/sightings)
-  **Sandbach Flashes:** This medium does not do justice to the images that Dennis Swaby captures at Sandbach Flashes. Some of the images have been uploaded to [www.sandbachflashes.co.uk](http://www.sandbachflashes.co.uk)

## Sightings Elsewhere - Oct

**Congleton - Buglawton:** Raven

**Congleton - Mossley:** Barn Owl, Redwing, **Fieldfare**

**Congleton - River Dane:** Pink-footed Goose, **Goosander**, Kingfisher, Redwing, **Dipper**, Grey Wagtail

**Crewe:** Yellow-browed Warbler

**Doddington - Doddington Pool:** Barnacle Goose, Pink-footed Goose, Pochard, Little Grebe, **Common Snipe**, **Sandwich Tern**, Great White Egret, **Kingfisher**, **Hobby**, Raven, House Martin

**Rode Heath - Rode Pool:** **Egyptian Goose**, **Mandarin Duck**, Water Rail, Common Snipe, Kingfisher

**Sandbach - Elworth:** Pink-footed Goose, Raven

**Sandbach - Sandbach Wildlife Corridor:** Redwing



Raven - Dennis Swaby

**Scholar Green:** Whooper Swan, Kingfisher, Redwing, Stonechat, Siskin, Yellowhammer

**Shavington/Hough:** Little Grebe, Common Snipe, Little Egret, Raven, Redwing

**Wheelock - Forge Fields:** Common Gull

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

A full listing is on the website:



Pied Wagtail - Dennis Swaby

## Belvide Reservoir - 2<sup>nd</sup> October



### Arrival at Belvide Reservoir

Heavy rain and localised flooding over the few days before our visit to Belvide Reservoir, courtesy of West Midland Bird Club, reduced the number of SECOS members from fifteen to ten who braved the elements. The roads on the way into the Belvide car park showed evidence of flooding with lots of mud and gravel on the road surface. Just one 50-yard section was a water splash, so we all arrived safely.

### Woodland Bird Feeding Station

Once everybody had changed into their boots, we set off for the woodland bird feeding station. The usual great, blue and coal tits were feeding on the well-stocked peanut and seed feeders, with the occasional chaffinch or goldfinch dashing in for a quick raid. A single nuthatch was seen by some, but it didn't return before it was time to move on to the reservoir.

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# Belvide Reservoir (continued)



## Reservoir Hides and Early Sightings

The steady rain meant we were all pleased that Belvide has six hides, although we only visited five, deciding not to walk to the Hawkshutts Hide at the west end of the reservoir as we could scan the area it covered from the West Hide. We started at Scott Hide where we searched for the reported male lesser scaup and a female (greater) scaup without success. There were plenty of coot, tufted duck, mute swans, great crested grebes and grey heron in sight but no scaup or garganey as previously reported.

## Additional Species at Andrew Chappell Hide

Moving onto the Andrew Chappell Hide added teal, shoveler, mallard, common pochard and gadwall to the day's list, with a distant **black-necked grebe** across the reservoir. From both hides, hirundines (swallows, house and sand martins) were flashing across above the water feeding up in preparation for migration. Several great white egrets were flying around the end of the reservoir.

## Observations at Gazebo Hide

The rain eased a little as we walked to Gazebo Hide, the hirundines still flying across in front of the hide with several moorhens taking advantage of the seed dropped from the feeding station as tits, a robin and goldfinch dashed in and out of cover to feed. A large skein of greylag goose came into land on the north shore together with a few Canada geese. A **Tundra bean goose** was reported in the area over the weekend and diligent searching of the flock found it, a life bird for some of the group and certainly the bird of the day for the author. Black-headed gulls flew up and down the reservoir and others plus herring gull and lesser black-backed gull were identified from telescope views of the north shore.

## Final Sightings at West Hide

We passed Gazebo Bay on our way to the West Hide and close views of possibly a second black-necked grebe in winter plumage was seen. The walk up to the West Hide didn't add anything new to the list but the absence of lapwing from the site was noted.

We waited out a rain shower and then made our way back to the Scott Hide where we left a member who didn't want to walk so far. He showed us where the male **lesser scaup** was last seen and, after much detailed discussion about ladders up the Dam wall, we all managed to see this North American vagrant, again a life bird for some but only he saw the (greater) scaup and the Group missed this one.

## Return to the Car Park

On our walk back through the wood, a great spotted woodpecker was seen on the peanut feeder. It remained motionless while we watched and provoked discussion as to whether it was real! We walked back to the car park for a cup of coffee before leaving, which finished a highly successful day's birdwatching with forty-one species seen in total, plus the resident bar-headed goose.

*Ian & Lydia Taylor*

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# Belvide Reservoir (continued)



**Species seen/heard:** Canada Goose, Greylag Goose, Bar-headed Goose, **Tundra Bean Goose**, Mallard, Tufted Duck, Gadwall, Teal, Shoveler, Wigeon, (Greater) Scaup, **Lesser Scaup**, Pochard, Coot, Moorhen, Great Crested Grebe, **Black-necked Grebe**, Mute Swan, Cormorant, Grey Heron, Great White Egret, Little Egret, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Black-headed Gull, Buzzard, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Pheasant, Swallow, House Martin, Sand Martin, Carrion Crow, Magpie, Jay, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Nuthatch, Robin, Chaffinch,

**THANK  
YOU**

A £5 per permit fee was collected from non-WMBC members and £40 has been sent to WMBC.

Thank you for your support.

## Wirral - 20<sup>th</sup> October



On a damp overcast morning, fifteen members met in the Wirral Way Rope Walk car park at Parkgate. Two new members joined us for the trip around the Wirral to visit four sites on this high-tide weekend. Two members arrived early and spotted a **hen harrier** and a **spoonbill** from the Old Baths car park.

### **Parkgate (Old Quay & The Parade)**

We set off towards the Old Quay along the Wirral Way and, as we reached the edge of the salt marsh, we could see little and great egret flying around and then disappearing into the reeds. Several marsh harriers were seen quartering the marsh looking for breakfast as the tide was starting to push in. As we walked along the path into the open, it started to rain quite heavily and we watched greylag geese and black-tailed godwits fly overhead.

After some consultation, the leader decided it was not sensible to walk on and we retraced our steps and this time turned to walk along The Parade. The weather started to clear just as we passed the first seats, where some sat to scan across the reeds. Several water rails were heard squealing together with Cetti's warblers as closer views of little and great egrets were seen. We continued to examine the marsh harriers that flew around hoping to find a hen harrier but without success. The head and neck of a solitary **common crane** were seen as it moved through the reeds, disappearing and reappearing from view. As we moved along the Parade at Parkgate, we added a pair of stonechats, a hovering male kestrel, mute swans, lapwing, mallards and teal to the list. At our final stop opposite the pools in the marsh, we found a couple of little grebes, and several common redshanks roosting as it reached high tide. At this point, we decided to walk back to our cars and move on to our next destination at West Kirby.

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# Wirral - 20<sup>th</sup> October (continued)



## West Kirby

We met in West Kirby, Dee Lane car park and walked down to the seafront only to be sandblasted by the wind we had been promised by the weather forecast. We watched the herring and black-headed gulls fight the elements, and along the front we could make out a large flock of roosting oystercatchers. We decided to move on to our next destination at Hoylake Kings Gap, where we made use of the wall to protect us from the wind. This was a great vantage point giving closer views of the oystercatchers plus excellent views of sanderling running like clockwork toys along the shore together with dunlin, grey plover in winter plumage, knot and a few turnstones. Flying around were flocks of lapwing, black-tailed godwit and starling, but no raptors were visible to cause these birds to take flight.

## Leasowe Lighthouse

At this point, some members made for home while others moved on to our final destination at Leasowe Lighthouse, Moreton. It was still very windy but dry as we looked out to see about 100 herring gulls on the sand bank together with lesser black-backed gulls. More sanderlings ran along the sea wall and the final list addition for the day, a small flock of ringed plover, were seen further along the sea wall.

Thanks go to Tom for leading a very productive day out birdwatching on the Wirral.

*Ian and Lydia Taylor*

**Species recorded:** greylag goose, Canada goose, pink-footed goose, mute swan, mallard, shelduck, teal, little grebe, water rail (heard), moorhen, **common crane**, **spoonbill**, grey heron, oystercatcher, grey plover, ringed plover, lapwing, black-tailed godwit, common snipe, common redshank, turnstone, knot, sanderling, dunlin, black-headed gull, herring gull, great black-backed gull, lesser black-backed gull, cormorant, little egret, great egret, **hen harrier**, marsh harrier, buzzard, kestrel, magpie, carrion crow, woodpigeon, collared dove, feral pigeon, raven, skylark, Cetti's warbler (heard), blackbird, robin, wren, starling, meadow pipit, stonechat, pied wagtail, goldfinch.

**Trip Count = 49 species**

**2024 SECOS Field Trips Total = 167 species**

## Diary Dates



**5<sup>th</sup> Nov 10.00 a.m.**

Tuesday Field Trip

**Pennington Flash**

Leader: Mike Tonks

**8<sup>th</sup> Nov 7.30 p.m.**

Indoor Meeting

**Seabirds - struggle for survival**


Anthony Brandreth

**17<sup>th</sup> Nov 9.00 a.m.**


Sunday Field Trip

**Willington Wetlands**

Leaders: Ian & Lydia Taylor

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