

Middlewich Wildlife Report 2021



Figure 1: (Paul Bebbington)

Compiled by Paul Bebbington

INTRODUCTION

It has been a good year with 121 **Bird** species recorded and 3 escapees.

Butterfly species total was 17 and **Dragonflies** 11.

We had 12 **Mammals** and 3 **Bats**. Hundreds of **Moths**, **Bees**, **Hoverflies** and other **Insects**, **Frogs**, **Toads** and a few scarce **Wild Flowers**.

BIRDS

MUTE SWAN

Common breeding resident with broods on Shropshire Union Canal and Trent & Mersey Canal. Over 40 recorded on T&M Canal in January. Numbers decreased through the year. In November numbers started to increase but only 26 by the end of the year (maybe due to bird flu?).

WHOOPER SWAN

One adult male (Lockie) was present all January and most of February. No sign on 27 February (reported at Sandbach Flashes). Returned on 7 March and 8 March then moved to Marbury. Came back on 12 March until 15 March which was the last date sighted.



Figure 2: (Ian Barber)

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE

Several skeins were recorded in January with 150 over Cledford Lane on 1 January; 8 January - 60 over Ressay; 17 January - 20 over Swanny; 23 January - 28 over Whitemore Road; 7 on field next to Ressay on 24 January; 16 over Swanny on 1 February; then not reported again until 3 November with 70 over SU Canal; 100 plus over Hubert Drive on 4 November, 8 and 10 over Mill Lane 12 and 21 December.

WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE

Only one reported on 26 and 27 January in field next to Ressay 1st year bird. Then moved to Marbury.

CANADA GOOSE

Resident breeder and reported every month. Most breeding reported from Swanny: 22 goslings on 27 June nesting along SU Canal. Highest counts: 180 Ressay on 7 January; 200 plus field next to Ressay on 27 January; 110 Swanny on 12 September; 85 Croxton Lane on 25 September. A record count of 290 in field next to Ressay on 23 October plus 3 Canada x Greylag hybrids.

GREYLAG GOOSE

Most records are in early and late months. Highest numbers were in January with 36 at field next to Ressay on 24 and 25 January; 20 over Swanny on 3 January; 5 back of Limebeds on 16 February; 17 over Swanny on 25 September; 15 over Croxton Lane on 3 October; 50 plus over Swanny on 2 November; 40 over Swanny on 14 November. Last record 22 over Swanny on 20 November. No reports of breeding.

SHELDUCK

Not a common duck in Middlewich. First report 2 flyover at Swanny on 31 January; 4 flyover SU Canal on 23 February; 1 Swanny on 5 March. Pair flooded field Bridge 23l SU Canal on 15 March. Pair on Dane flood (which has now been drained) on 16 and 17 March. Pair on flooded field Warmingham Lane on 19 March; 3 over Swanny on 27 March, 13 April and 1 May; 1 over SU Canal Bridge 23 on 30 December.

MANDARIN

Good duck for Middlewich reported most months and breeding confirmed. Pair on Wheelock on 1 January; pair on Ressay on 4 and 6 January; 4 on Ressay on 31 January; 5 on Dane on 5 March; 11 on Dane on 21 March; 1 female in tree over Dane on 26 April (probable breeding site); pair on towpath at Swanny on 28 April; pair with 9 young on Dane on 22 May; 28 (in 3 broods of 7, 7 and 9) on Dane on 29 May; Pair with 6 young on Dane on 8 June; 3 over Swanny on 25 October; pair on Ressay on 27 December.

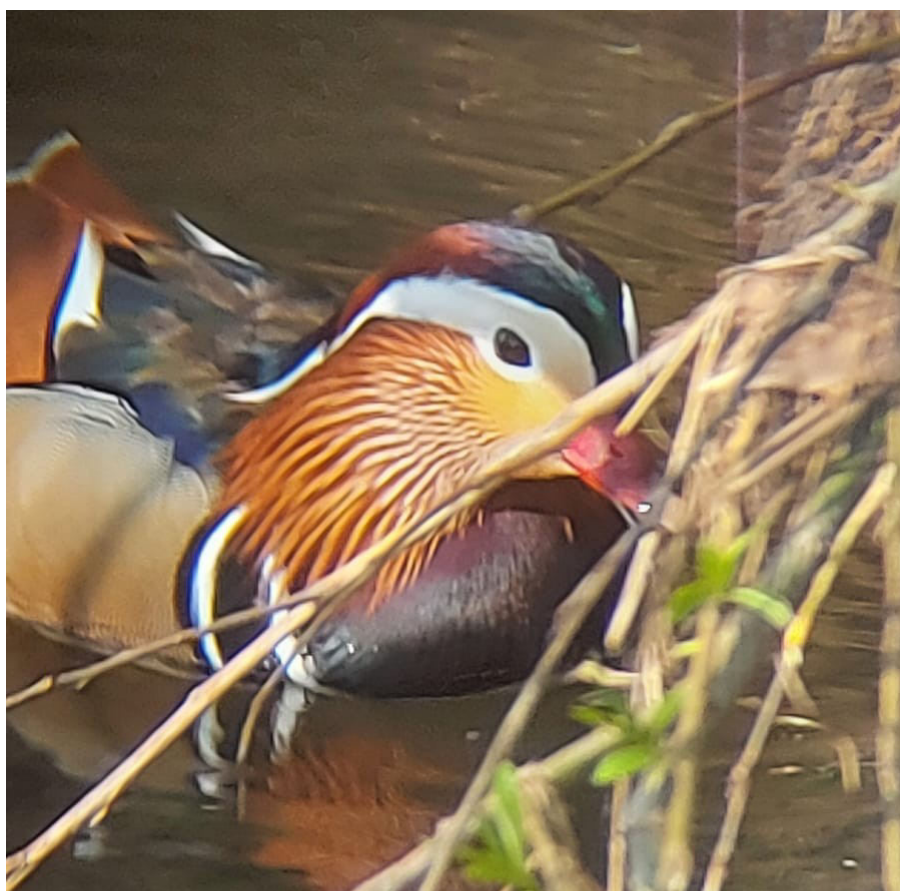


Figure 3: (Martyn Lewis)

WIGEON

Scarce in Middlewich (with hundreds at Sandbach Flashes); 1 at Ressay on 7 and 8 February; 16 circled above King Street on 16 February; 6 came off pit at field next to Ressay on 17 February; 1 female on field next to Ressay 25 February; 10 off Tetton Lane flood on 11 March.

TEAL

Good counts mainly coming from Ressay and Croxton Lane. 50 plus came off pit on Croxton Lane on 1 January; 132 on Ressay on 7 January; 140 on pit in field next to Ressay on 24 January; 65 on frozen Ressay on 11 February; 15 on pit top of Pochin Way on 5 March; 40 plus on pit on field next to Ressay on 23 October; 3 on Swanny on 31 October; 70 plus on pit on Croxton Lane on 11 December.

MALLARD

Common resident breeder recorded every month. 50 plus on Ressay all January and February; pair with 7 ducklings on Dane Flood on 5 April; female with 10 ducklings on Churchyard on 17 April; pair and 12 ducklings on 21 April; pair and 17 ducklings on 22 April on SU Canal. Lots of broods about mid-May; 31 on SU Canal on 19 September; 56 on SU Canal on 26 December; 50 plus on Ressay on 27 December.

PINTAIL

Only one record: pair flew along SU Canal on 7 April.

SHOVELER

Uncommon duck for Middlewich: 1 drake with Wigeon flock above Dane Flood on 16 February; 1 drake came off pit next to Ressay on 27 February; pair low over King Street on 23 December.

GADWALL

Not many records. There was a pair on Dane Flood on 11 and 12 March; pair on pit past Swanny on 15, 17, 26 and 28 April; 2 male and 1 female on pit past Swanny on 3 May.

TUFTED DUCK

Most reports coming from Ressay. January has been the best month with a maximum of 23 on 22 January. Then numbers slowly decreased with 1 May being the last sighting before Summer with 5, then not reported until 13 October with 5 again and numbers started to increase again with 16 reported on 22 December. Only one other report from Swannay with 3 on 18 March.

GOOSANDER

Breeding resident. A common duck for Middlewich which has been reported every month; 36 at Ressay being a maximum count. Other sites being River Dane, River Wheelock, T&M Canal and SU Canal. Female with 11 young on Dane (Bullocks Meads) on 6 April; female in tree above Dane - possible nest site - on 17 April; 1 going into hole in tree by Swannay on 16 May; female with 17 young on Dane (Bullocks Meadows) on 22 May. Numbers decreased mid-Summer then in October numbers built up again, mainly at Ressay. By 11 December numbers reached 24 at Ressay.



Figure 4: (Ian Bailey)

RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE

Fairly common around and reported most months but no reports in July and August, 4 in field by breach on 25 January; pairs were recorded at Swanny, Mill Lane and Limebeds; 3 reported at Mill Lane on 4 April (with 2 mating); last report pair Mill Lane on 30 December.

PHEASANT

Not a lot of reports especially with a lot of fields and farmland around. Reported from Croxton Lane, Mill Lane, field past Swanny and back of Salt Cellar, mainly pairs. 1 was reported from Hubert Drive on 15 March, No reports of breeding.

GREY HERON

Common reported every month. 4 in field next to Ressay on 31 January; 3 on Swanny on 27 February; up to 9 around Middlewich on 27 March; 5 on Ressay on 13 October; 3 on Limebeds on 15 October.

LITTLE EGRET

Only one report this year at Swanny on 4/5 December.

CORMORANT

Reported most months: 4 present at Ressay on 16 January; 3 at Ressay (2 coming into breeding plumage) on 31 January; 1 on T&M Canal on 14 March; 1 back of British Salt on 11 October; 2 over Limebeds on 15 October; 5 at Ressay on 23 and 30 October.



Figure 5: (Paul Bebbington)

LITTLE GREBE

All reports coming from Swanny and only single birds. Most reports in January, February and December. One report on 25 August.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE

Most sightings were on Swanny but with 2 on SU Canal by Norman's Wood on 1 January. Pairs at Swanny in February, March, April and May. Pair doing the courtship dance at Swanny on 12 March and making nest on 6 April. Pair again displaying at Swanny on 16 May. 4 at Swanny on 16 March. No breeding confirmed.

RED KITE

Only 3 sightings: 1 over Hubert Drive on 1 June; 1 over Croxton Trail on 10 June and 1 over Westbury Close on 4 October.

SPARROWHAWK

This common resident was reported throughout the year. Most records relating to 1 or 2 individuals. 2 females at back of Limebeds on 1 January; 1 over Whitemore Road on 19 January; 1 chasing Meadow Pipits on field next to Ressay on 27 January; 1 at top of Stoney Pavement on 16 February; 1 male chasing Reed Buntings at Swanny on 25 February; pair at Mill Lane on 28 March; 1 in battle with Kestrel at Limebeds on 30 August; 2 at Swanny on 12 September; a pair displaying past Swanny on 30 September; 1 at back of Salt Cellar on 14 November.

BUZZARD

Well over 70 birds reported every month: 10 reported over Middlewich on 1 January; 3 near Swanny on 29 January; 2 over Norman's Wood on 8 February; 3 over Ressay on 27 February; 4 over Limebeds on 7 March; 5 over Dane Valley Way on 22 April; 1 adult and 2 young SU Canal past Norman's Wood on 30 July; 12 over Swanny on 12 September; 6 kettling over Limebeds on 19 September.

OSPREY

Only one reported over Cledford on 11 June.

KESTREL

Encouraging to receive records for every month: 1 over Cledford Lane on 16 January; a pair at back of Salt Cellar on 29 January; 1 over Swanny on 17 February; 1 in battle with Sparrowhawk at Limebeds on 30 August; 2 at Limebeds on 3 October; 1 at Dane Valley Way on 18 October.



Figure 6: (Paul Bebbington)

HOBBY

Summer visitor but only 4 records this year: 1 over Swanny on 4 May and 14 June; 1 over Wavertree Drive on 9 July; 1 over Westbury Close on 19 July.

MERLIN

Only one record of this raptor: male in top of tree early morning at Coalpit Lane on 21 March.



Figure 7: (Martyn Lewis)

PEREGRINE

Records most months: 1 over Croxton Lane on 1 January; pair circled over Hubert Drive on 3 February; female over field by Ressay on 19 February; 1 on pylon at back of British Salt with prey on 28 February; 1 over Swanny on 8 March; 1 with prey over Hubert Drive on 10 April; 1 at back of Salt Cellar on 20 April; 1 on pylon again at back of British Salt on 11 October; 1 flushed Lapwings at back of Salt Cellar on 7 November; 1 over Westbury Close on 29 December.



Figure 8: (Paul Bebbington)

WATER RAIL

All records came from Swanny throughout the year and possible breeding: 3 seen and 4 heard on 1 January; 1 calling on 23 February; 2 seen on 26 February; 3 seen on 3 March; 1 calling on 6 April; 1 calling most days during May/June; 1 squealing on 29 August; 1 seen on 7 September; 2 seen on 12 September; 2 calling on 8 October; 2 seen on 23 October; 1 showing well at back of wide on 2 and 7 November; 3 seen on 28 November; 2 seen on 17 December.

MOORHEN

Common breeding resident recorded throughout the year. 7 along SU Canal on 19 January; 6 on Dane flood on 27 February; 1 on nest on Dane flood on 5 April. On 13 April the Dane flood had been drained by farmer no sign of nests, saplings had been planted. Pair with 3 young pit on pit next to T&M Canal on 9 May; pair with 1 young on Ressay on 29 May; 2 young on SU Canal on 27 September; pair with 3 young on Mill Lane on 16 December.

COOT

Not a very common bird in Middlewich. Only recorded on Dane Flood: 5 on 25 February; 11 on 11 March; 3 nests on 23 March; still on nests on 5 April but the flood had been drained and it had dried out and no nests by 13 April.

OYSTERCATCHER

Only two reports in February: 2 over SU Canal on 23 February; 1 on Ressay on 28 February. Increased sighting in March: pair next to Ressay on 4 March; 1 on flooded Dane field on 7 March; 1 on Swanny on 14 March; 3 over SU Canal on 26 March; 3 over Swanny, 2 mating briefly, on 27 March; 3 over Swanny on 3 April; pair next to Ressay on 5 April; 2 over Swanny on 9 May; 3 over Croxton Lane on 15 May; 3 over Swanny on 19 June was the last report.

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER

Only a few reports: the first one on flood in field next to Salt Cellar on 5 and 6 April. 1 calling over Limebeds on 13 April; pair on Limebeds on 13 June; 1 at Limebeds on 11 July.



Figure 9: (Paul Bebbington)

GOLDEN PLOVER

Most reports came in January and February. The first on 3 January with Lapwing flock over Swanny, 23 were at back of Salt Cellar on 24 January; 57 off Dane Valley Way on 12 February was the first count. 6 at back of Salt Cellar on 14 February. The only other report was 1 over Swanny on 12 September.

LAPWING

Reported every month with a flock of 150 plus over Swanny on 3 January; 144 at back of Salt Cellar on 24 January and 121 on 25 January; 42 over Swanny on 29 January; 75 at Yatehouse Lane on 16 February; 200 in field off Holmes Chapel Road on 16 February; 3 sitting on nests in field off Croxton Lane on 27 April; with 2 young off King Street on 28 May; with 3 young off Croxton Lane on 31 May; with 6 young off Croxton Lane on 1 June; with 7 large young off Croxton Lane on 6 June; 33 over Swanny on 12 September; 9 on Coalpit/Clive Green Lane on 19 September; 40 plus at back of Salt Cellar on 9 October; 83 at back of Salt Cellar on 7 November; 79 off Croxton Lane on 22 December; 127 in 3 flocks over Swanny on 26 December.

JACK SNIPE

Great to find some in Middlewich for what is normally an uncommon species in Middlewich: 2 at back of Limebeds on 17 and 18 January and 11 at back of Limebeds on 24 March.

SNIPE

Recorded most months but none in May, June, July and August. 46 flushed off Croxton Lane on 1 January was the highest count; 21 back of Limebeds on 9 January; 13 back of Limebeds on 18 January; 4 on field next to Ressay on 24 January; 8 over Swanny on 11 February. On 12 February 1 on waste land near the Sewage Works and 1 top of Dane Valley Way. 1 over Hubert Drive on 12 February; 3 at back of Limebeds on 12 March; 1 at Swanny on 26 April; 6 off Croxton Lane on 5 September; 4 over Swanny on 9 October. A few were heard at the back of Limebeds on 17 December; 10 off Croxton Lane on 22 December and 26 flushed from pit off Cledford Lane on 22 December.

WOODCOCK

Over 20 records and these were typically from the beginning and ending of the year: 1 at Cledford Lane on 1 January; 8 were at back of Salt Cellar on 6 January and a record 10 at back of Salt Cellar on 9 January; 7 at the back of Salt Cellar on 1 February; 1 over Swanny on 6 February; 8 were at the Limebeds on 10 February; 1 was flushed at back of Salt Cellar on 14 February; 6 at Limebeds on 22 February; 3 flushed back of Salt Cellar on 16 March and 2 at back of Salt Cellar on 19 November.

CURLEW

Not very common around Middlewich when there are good numbers at Rudheath. 1 over Swanny on 3 and 17 April; 3 over Swanny on 1 May; 1 over Hubert Drive on 17 July; 1 over Swanny on 8 August.

WHIMBREL

Only one report this being 2 in the ploughed field off Mill Lane on 1 May.

COMMON SANDPIPER

Not many reports this year: 1 at Ressay on 12 April; 1 at Dane by aqueduct on 3 May; 1 at back of Swanny on 6 July and 1 at Ressay on 6 September.

GREEN SANDPIPER

A good number for this over-Wintering wader: 1 was at back of Limebeds on 1 January; 1 at back of Salt Cellar on 9 January; a pair at back of Limebeds on 23 January and 17 March. 1 calling over Hubert Drive on 3 August was the first returning bird. 3 and probably 4 at back of Limebeds on 25 August; 2 at back of Limebeds on 11 September; 1 on farm track from Bridge 23 SU Canal on 25 October and 3 November; 3 were at back of Limebeds and 1 at Croxton Lane on 14 November; 3 at Yatehouse Lane on 11 December; 4 at back of Salt Cellar on 23 December and 2 back of Salt Cellar on 27 December.

BLACK-HEADED GULL

Our commonest gull with good numbers all year: 200 plus in field at Norman's Wood on 8 February; 200 plus on flood by Dane on 16 February; 60 on Ressay on 27 February; 50 on Ressay on 29 August; 500 plus in field across Dane by Swanny on 3 September.

MEDITERRANEAN GULL

Not well recorded and all records in April: 2 by Bridge 25 SU Canal on 2 and 3 April; 1 over Whitemore Close on 16 April.



Figure 10: (Paul Bebbington)

COMMON GULL

Recorded in most months: 6 in flooded farm field after Norman's Wood on 8 February; 40 plus in field past Swanny on 27 February; 6 on Sutton Lane playing field on 2 March; 12 on field at back of Swanny on 9 March; a few were reported from Clive Green Lane / Coalpit Lane on 9 October; 1 at Swanny on 22 December.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL

Good numbers reported around and a good chance of them breeding on factory roofs: 12 were on Dane Flood on 16 February; a pair on pit at back of Ressay on 8 April; 26 in total at Ressay and field on 1 May; 100 plus in ploughed field across Dane past Swanny on 3 September; small flocks at Coalpit Lane / Clive Green Lane on 25 September and 9 October.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL

Not well reported by all year round sightings: 1 over Pochin Way on 17 January; 5 over Cledford Lane on 23 January; 1 at Coalpit Lane / Clive Green Lane on 25 September; 1 at Sewage Works on 26 December.

HERRING GULL

Recorded most months but not in large numbers: fields along SU Canal and Dane Flood had a few but not double figures. Back of Salt Cellar and Limebeds had a couple of sightings. Back of Salt Cellar good numbers of gulls going to roost but mixed.

COMMON TERN

Only 2 records: 2 feeding over Swanny on 20 June and 1 over Hubert Drive on 18 July.

ROCK DOVE / FERAL PIGEON

Reported every day all over Town Centre in flocks by Church and nesting under Town Bridge.

STOCK DOVE

This small attractive dove can easily be overlooked but good numbers reported throughout the year: 19 on field by breach on 11 January; a few at Swanny on 16 January; 10 over Swanny on 27 February; 8 over Dane Flood on 7 March; 30 plus in field off Croxton Lane on 22 May; 12 at Swanny on 12 September; 72 was the best record on Croxton Lane on 19 September; 18 off King Street on 9 October; 8 at back of Ressay on 30 October; 5 at Mill Lane on 12 December.

WOOD PIGEON

Very common all over Middlewich in gardens and farmland. Good numbers recorded all year: 75 reported on 18 April in field before Swanny; hundreds flying over Middlewich throughout the year; thousands over Swanny on 2 November.

COLLARED DOVE

All year round resident recorded in gardens and breeding reported in gardens and farmland.

CUCKOO

The Cuckoo's call is one of the most welcome sounds of Spring and this year 1 was calling on 9 May off King Street. Only a few more reports: 1 seen calling at Swanny on 7 June; 1 distant calling at Swanny on 8 June; 1 calling near Morrisons on 20 June.

BARN OWL

Resident and local breeding. One came out of box in field next to Ressay on 27 January. Owl pellets were found under box by Bridge 23 SU Canal on 2 March; 1 flyover Croxton lane at 6.15am on 27 March.; 1 over Croxton Lane at 9pm on 19 April; 1 between Swanny and Croxton Lane at 9.15pm on 26 April; noise coming from box near Bridge 23 SU Canal on 28 April - maybe young birds inside.

TAWNY OWL

Tawny owls were regularly heard calling around Middlewich. No confirmed breeding but very good chance they have bred. 1 was calling at back of Salt Cellar on 22 January and 1 February; 1 over Limebeds on 9 February; 1 over Limebeds on 9 February; 1 calling back of Wavertree Drive on 2 March; 1 calling on 9 March and 2 calling on 13 September by Swanny; 1 at Westbury Close on 28 June and 1 calling on 9 July; 1 calling at Norman's Wood on 13 September; 1 over top of Cledford Lane on 15 November.

SWIFT

Swifts are one of the last Summer migrants to arrive and this year the first was seen on 7 May when 2 were sighted over Westbury Close; 3 over Swanny on 8 May. A few were reported over Hubert Drive on 9 May; 21 over Hubert Drive on 8 June; 2 over Westbury Close on 11 August was the last recording.

KINGFISHER

There were almost weekly sightings of Kingfisher mainly from Swanny and SU Canal. There are suitable river banks on the Dane and Wheelock for nest sites: 1 was very showy along the SU Canal every month; a pair at Swanny on 28 February and 3 at Swanny on 9 March; 1 by Dane Flood on 13 April; 2 at Swanny and 1 caught a small roach on 30 August; 1 at Swanny and 1 on canal pit on 30 September; 2 on SU Canal on 6 October; a pair by Ressay and a pair at Swanny on 17 October; 3 at Swanny on 14 November and 22 December; 2 on SU Canal on 30 December.

GREEN WOODPECKER

Only 3 sightings this year: 1 calling along Dane on 27 February and 21 March; 1 calling along Dane near T&M Canal on 9 April.

LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER

A scarce bird for Middlewich but we had a few reports: 1 was along Dane by Croxton Trail on 4 April; 1 calling and drumming along Dane past Swanny on 18 April; 1 drumming and seen on Dane past Swanny on 26 April; 1 calling past Swanny on Dane on 30 August.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER

By far our commonest Woodpecker reported all year: 3 along Croxton Trail and Swanny on 2 January; 1 at Norman's Wood on 24 January; bred in Norman's Wood last year; 1 drumming at Wimboldsley Wood on 25 January; 1 in woods by Dane flood on 25 February; 2 drumming at Norman's Wood on 3 March; 1 on Manor Estate on 14 June; 1 at Wavertree Drive on 27 July; 1 at Dane Valley Way on 18 October; 1 along Stoney Pavement on 25 October; 1 along SU Canal on 30 December.

MAGPIE

A common species all over Middlewich and reported every day, breeding locally: 12 were reported at Limebeds on 15 November.

JAY

Small numbers are resident and reported throughout the year. Mainly in Autumn when they collect acorns (however this year has been bad for acorns); 1 was reported in Norman's Wood in January and February; 2 at Rumps Lock on 28 February; 1 at Limebeds on 22 April; 2 past Swanny on 12 September; 3 past Swanny on 25 September; 2 at Limebeds on 15 October; 3 at Stoney Pavement on 25 October; 1 at Mill Lane on 10 December.

JACKDAW

A common breeding bird with more nesting in chimney pots around ; over 1000 going to roost at back of Salt Cellar on 3 February and over 500 going to roost at back of Salt Cellar on 19 November; a few hundred along SU Canal by breach on 28 November,

ROOK

Common but mainly on fields outside town: 50 in field next to Ressay on 24 January; 2 nests reported from Norman's Wood on 15 March; over 100 in field next to Ressay on 29 August; 4 over Hubert Drive on 14 November; over 100 by breach on 28 November.

CARRION CROW

A common resident breeding species. Recorded most days in gardens and farmland.

RAVEN

Once an uncommon species around Middlewich but now regular sightings. 5 over Middlewich on 1 January; 7 over Swanny on 3 January. Other sightings at Limebeds, Cledford Lane, Nantwich Road, Pochin Way and Croxton Lane. A pair bred on a pylon off Cledford Lane. At least 3 young were still in the nest on 28 April but on 7 May a young Raven was found hanging by its foot from the nest and on 12 May was dead as it was unable to free itself. Sightings continued every month and 1 was honking on the pylon where the nest was in December. Maybe will breed again.

BLUE TIT

Common resident and breeding in most gardens. Big flocks were recorded around Ressay and Swanny with mixed tits August / September.

GREAT TIT

Again a common resident and breeder and recorded every month and breeds in garden nest boxes.

COAL TIT

In Autumn and Winter periods Coal Tits are frequent sights in gardens around town. Spring and Summer, however, they are much scarcer. Recorded in gardens in January, February, March, October, November and December.

SKYLARK

It is pleasing that Skylarks are a breeding species around Middlewich and recorded every month, counts of 40 and 50 off Croxton Lane early January; 1 singing over Swanny on 14 March; 2 at back of Salt Cellar on 25 April; sighting over Limebeds and Swanny in October. Counts of 30 plus at Croxton Lane and back of Salt Cellar in December.

SAND MARTIN

The first Spring arrivals were flocks of 17 and 6 over Swanny on 31 March; 11 at Swanny on 5 April; 2 at Bullock's Meadows on 9 April; 20 plus over Swanny at dusk and roosting in reedbed on 26 April.

SWALLOW

The first record was on 2 April along the SU Canal; 12 over Swanny on 5 April; a pair mating briefly at Swanny on 17 April. Large flocks with House Martins at Swanny on 8 May. 100 and 200 flocks at Swanny in September; 20 plus over SU Canal on 27 September. Last recording was 2 over Limebeds on 15 October.

HOUSE MARTIN

Recorded first on 12 April with 2 along SU Canal. Also records from Swanny and Whitemore Road, where there are nest sites. Late September was the last sighting along SU Canal with 9 over.

CETTI'S WARBLER

Another successful breeding resident warbler but only recorded at Swanny and along T&M Canal past Swanny. First was recorded on 1 January and maybe up to 5 at Swanny on 9 January; 4 calling on 22 January; 1 in full song on 16 February; pairs together and signs of breeding on 16 May; 1 seen carrying food to nest on 6 June; 1 catching and eating large green caterpillar on 20 June; 3 recorded on 9 October; 1 being 1st Winter bird; then twos and threes were recorded all months until December.

LONG-TAILED TITS

A resident and widespread bird around Middlewich mainly in pairs in February and March then later on in the year flocks with 30 plus . A pair collecting cobwebs for nest on Westbury Close on 12 March; a pair building nest by Sutton Lane Bridge on 22 April; 30 plus at Swanny on 13 October; 10 plus at Norman's Wood and Ressay in December.

CHIFFCHAFF

A common breeding Summer migrant with over-Wintering birds: 3 by Swanny on 26 February; 1 at Ressay on 27 February and 11 March; 5 at Swanny and along Dane on 21 March would be migrants. 4 singing on Stoney Pavement on 3 March; good numbers of 28 at Swanny and 20 at Limebeds on 2 April; 10 along Stoney Pavement on 8 April; 4 young being fed near Swanny on 6 April; adult and juvenile at Limebeds on 11 July; 5 at Ressay on 29 August; 6 at Dane Valley Way and 10 plus at Swanny on 30 August; 12 at Swanny on 3 October; 1 at Swanny on 13 October was the last record.

WILLOW WARBLER

The first record for this Summer migrant was 1 at Limebeds on 2 April; 1 at Westbury Close on 3 April and 1 at Hubert Drive on 4 April; 3 at Westbury Close on 7 April. It is a local breeder but no confirmed records.

SEDGE WARBLER

A relatively common breeding Summer migrant with all records coming from Swanny: 2 recorded on 17 April; 8 on 25 April and double figures on 1 May. Birds recorded through to late August.

REED WARBLER

A common breeding Summer migrant - again only recorded at Swanny: first bird on 17 April; 9 recorded at on 25 April and double figures on 1 May; 14 birds were there on 8 August. The latest date sighted was on 25 September.

GRASSHOPPER WARBLER

A scarce Summer migrant and more than likely a breeder: 1 reeling and showed briefly at Swanny on 25 April; 1 reeling but not seen on 26 April and again reeling and seen on 1 May, 11 May and 29 May. One reeling past Swanny Bridge 176 on 6 and 7 June; 1 reeling at back of Swanny on 13 June.

BLACKCAP

A common breeding Summer migrant and a few over-Wintering birds around: 1 male at Westbury Close on 1 January; 1 male at Hubert Drive on 15 January; a pair at Westbury Close on 13 February and 21 February; a female in a garden at Waterside Way on 1 March. A male singing and female at Westbury Close on 16 and 17 March; 1 singing at Stoney Pavement on 31 March; 2 male and 1 female at Hubert Drive on 31 March; 5 at Swanny on 2 April; a pair and young along SU Canal on 18 July; 6 at Swanny and Limebeds on 25 August; 10 plus at Swanny on 30 August. A pair at Limebeds on 15 September; 1 female at Westbury Close on 13 October and 9 November; 2 near tip at Swanny on 20 November; a male at Hubert Drive on 21 and 26 December.



Figure 11: (Martyn Lewis)

GARDEN WARBLER

An uncommon and secretive migrant. One was reported between Swanny and Bramble Cuttings on 30 April; 1 from Whitemore Close on 29 May and an adult and juvenile at Limebeds on 11 July.

LESSER WHITETHROAT

A scarce breeding Summer migrant with most records coming from Swanny and Limebeds: 1 heard at Swanny on 25 April; 1 on Canal Pit on 9 May and 23 May; 1 at Limebeds on 12, 22 and 29 May; 1 singing at Limebeds on 13 June; 1 off Croxton Lane on 20 June; 2 adults and juvenile at Limebeds on 14 August; a pair at Limebeds on 11 September was the last record.

WHITETHROAT

A common breeding Summer migrant with reports coming across Middlewich: the first record was on 10 April by Bridge 176 on T&M Canal; on 22 April reports from Sewage Works, Salt Cellar and Cledford Lane; 3 at back of Salt Cellar and 2 off Croxton Lane on 25 April; 4 at Limebeds on 12 May; 9 at back of Salt Cellar on 16 May; young at Limebeds on 27 June; adult and juvenile at Limebeds on 11 July; 1 with tit flock at Dane Valley Way on 30 August; 1 at Swanny on 12 September was the last record.

GOLDCREST

A common species present throughout the year but seldom seen in numbers. Singles reported from Swanny, Ressay, Limebeds and Cledford Lane in January and February ; 5 at Swanny on 19 February and 4 on 27 February; a pair in Norman's Wood on 1 March; 2 in Hubert Drive on 20 August; 4 at Swanny on 4 November; 1 in Mystery Wood on 10 December.

WREN

A common resident across Middlewich breeding in gardens around, reported all year with ones and twos.

NUTHATCH

A regular breeding species around Middlewich with reports coming from Norman's Wood, Swanny, 2 from Dane Flood; Hubert Drive, Westbury Close and Ressay recorded every month.

TREE CREEPER

A resident species regularly reported all year, the majority of sightings were singles, however, 2 at Swanny on 26 February; 2 at Dane Flood on 28 March; other reports from Norman's Wood, Croxton Trail, Hubert Drive and Stoney Pavement.

STARLING

The year started with a murmuration over Swanny on 6 January when approximately 5000 dropped into the reeds and again on 12 January; 5000 plus in field after Norman's Wood on 17 January. Small flocks in gardens around Middlewich throughout the year. Hundreds going to roost at Swanny on 28 December

BLACKBIRD

A very common resident species recorded every month, nesting in gardens and parks. A pair feeding young at Westbury Close on 1 May and building nest on 1 May; again feeding young in nest on 22 May.

FIELDFARE

A common and widespread Winter migrant. High counts of over 300 off King Street on 8 January; 120 at Swanny on 9 January; 100 plus in fields off SU Canal and Cledford Lane on 7 and 8 February; 200 plus along SU Canal on 13 March. Last of the Winter was 9 at Coalpit Lane on 9 April. Dozens around Middlewich again on 7 November with hundreds at back of Salt Cellar on 27 December.

REDWING

A common Winter migrant: 200 plus along SU Canal on 11 January; a large flock over Gatehouse Lane on 7 February; 200 plus in fields off Cledford Lane on 9 February; 100 plus along Dane Valley Way on 12 February; 6 over SU Canal on 23 March was the last for the Winter. First report for the Autumn was 1 over Hubert Drive on 7 October.

Numbers built up through October and November. Counts of hundreds from Limebeds, Mill Lane, back of Salt Cellar and Swanny by December.

SONG THRUSH

A common resident species recorded all year, breeding in gardens: 3 in Westbury Close garden on 21 February; reports from along both canals and gardens throughout the year.

MISTLE THRUSH

Relatively uncommon but recorded early and late parts of the year. One singing along SU Canal on 11 January; 3 were at Ressay on 17 January; pairs at Whitemore Road and SU Canal on 19 and 23 February; 4 at Dane Flood on 27 February; 1 off Croxton Lane on 3 October; 2 at SU Canal on 30 December.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER

Individuals were recorded: 1 at Ressay on 29 August; 1 at Swanny on 12 September.



Figure 12: (Paul Bebbington)

ROBIN

One of those species which are so common they tend to be under-reported but are a resident breeder. Young in Westbury Close garden on 20 April and birds reported eating out of hand along SU Canal.

REDSTART

Only one report of a juvenile catching flies at Hubert Drive on 5 August.

WHINCHAT

A Spring and Autumn passage visitor with only one report from Croxton Lane on 5 September.



Figure 13: (Martyn Lewis)

STONECHAT

Recorded in early and late months of the year with about 30 sightings at 5 locations. First sightings were a pair on Cledford Lane by Bridge on 15 January and stopped until 21 February. One male was reported on top of Limebeds on 18 February (maybe the one from Cledford Lane). A male was along the SU Canal by Railway Bridge on 23 February; a pair at back of Limebeds on 11 March; a male at back of Swanny on 16 March; a pair were at back of Swanny from 8 October to 17 October; a pair were at the of Salt Cellar on 9 November and the last record was a male at back of Salt Cellar on 14 November.



Figure 14: (Paul Bebbington)



Figure 15: (Paul Bebbington)

DUNNOCK

A common widespread resident across all Middlewich with sightings every day and very common in gardens but out of the top ten birds in RSPB Garden Birdwatch.

YELLOW WAGTAIL

A declining migrant wagtail breeds in small numbers on farmland. First record was one over Croxton Lane on 25 April; 2 males and 2 females were at the back of the Salt Cellar on 5 May; 2 off Croxton Lane on 9 May; a female was on wires along Croxton Lane on 22 May; 2 males off King Street on 28 May; a pair in potato field off Croxton Lane on 13 June; 4 on Croxton Lane on 20 June with last sightings being a pair over Swanny on 12 August.



Figure 16: (Paul Bebbington)

GREY WAGTAIL

Our smartest Wagtail can be seen throughout the year. Breeds in small numbers and recorded every month. A pair were always present around the River Croco / 3 Locks and The Gym on Brooks Lane. Also reports from Swanny, Ressay, Sewage Works, Sandersons Brook, Stoney Pavement; SU Canal, Kings Locks, Mill Lane and Hubert Drive.

PIED WAGTAIL

This is the commonest of our Wagtails present all year round: 23 were at the Sewage Works on 5 January and 30 on 26 January. A flock was over Swanny catching flies on 28 April; 12 at back of Salt Cellar on 5 May; 11 at junction between Coalpit Lane and Clive Green Lane on 25 September; 20 off King Street on 7 November; 6 at Sewage Works on 26 December.

MEADOW PIPIT

Widespread over Middlewich recorded all months except May / June / July and August which suggests it goes off to breed. Small flocks reported at Swanny in January; a flock of 12 along SU Canal on 25 January; over 30 at Cledford Lane on 9 February; a flock of 15 at back of Limebeds and Sandersons Brook on 14 and 15 March. 6 over Hubert Drive on 27 March; 50 plus flock on Cledford Land; a large flock of 132 over Swanny on 12 September was the highest count. 30 plus at Limebeds in 9 October; single at Sewage Works on 9 November; 6 in field opposite Salt Cellar on 28 November.

TREE PIPIT

Only one record of this declining migratory Pipit came on 12 September over Swanny.

HOUSE SPARROW

Reports that House Sparrows are declining in recent years but are still top of the Garden Birdwatch, recorded every day. Breeding in Swift boxes on Westbury Close; 35 in garden on Whitepark Close in July.

TREE SPARROW

This species is definitely declining in Cheshire with only 2 records both coming from Mill Lane with 2 birds on 11 and 12 December.

CHAFFINCH

Chaffinches are a common resident breeder: 40 plus flocks over King Street and Gatehouse Lane in January and February. Flocks disappear in Summer as breeding starts then at the end of the year the flocks build up again: 20 with Meadow Pipits on King Street on 7 November; 50 plus in field by breach on 28 November.

BRAMBLING

Bramblings are a Winter visitor with only one record of a female coming to garden on Westbury Close on 10 December. A couple more possible sightings of birds in gardens on Whitepark Close and Hankelow Close.

GREENFINCH

Despite a recent national decline in numbers, thought to be linked with the spread of trichomonosis which prevents them from feeding properly, we have had good numbers: 5 at Whitemore Road on 14 January; 31 at Westbury Close on 30 January; 13 at Whitemore Road on 21 February; 40 plus off King Street on 23 March; young birds recorded at Swanny on 20 June; 15 at Ressay on 20 November.

GOLDFINCH

Goldfinches are resident breeders in gardens and farmland around. Good flocks form in Winter months and feed in gardens: 37 at Whitemore Road on 14 January; 20 by 3 Locks along T&M Canal on 24 January; 56 at Limebeds on 2 February; 50 plus along Gatehouse Lane on 7 February; 100 plus feeding on thistle heads at top of Limebeds on 25 August; 100 plus at Swanny on 12 September; 100 plus at Limebeds on 15 September being chased by a Sparrowhawk; 27 at Westbury Close on 10 December

SISKIN

This small colourful Finch is a Winter visitor usually in small numbers visiting garden feeders. One calling over Dane Flood on 27 February; a pair in garden at Westbury Close on 22 March; a pair in garden on Hubert Drive on 31 March; 3 over Swanny on 9 April; 12 circled over Hubert Drive on 1 October; 6 at Limebeds on 15 November; 20 feeding in alders at Swanny on 20 November; 10 plus along Pochin Way on 26 December,

LINNET

Linnets are residents which breed in small numbers around Middlewich. Flocks of 12 plus birds were at Cledford Lane, Gatehouse Lane and Sandersons Brook in January and February. 20 plus at back of Limebeds on 2 April; birds seen collecting nesting material at Limebeds on 13 April and 22 May. Newly fledged birds at Limebeds on 27 June; 4 reported past Norman's Wood on 11 September; 40 plus in field opposite Salt Cellar on 28 November.

LESSER REDPOLL

Redpolls are a passage migrant and Winter visitor in small numbers: 6 reported along Pochin Way on 8 January; 1 at back of Limebeds on 9 January; 1 in garden on Whitemore Road on 20 January and 3 from garden in Hubert Drive on 2 February; 3 along SU Canal on 26 March; 2 near Swanny on 25 April; 1 over Swanny on 16 May was the last Winter record.

BULLFINCH

The most colourful of our native Finches and a regular breeder around Middlewich. Singles and pairs were reported from Limebeds, Swanny and Cledford Lane in January and February; 5 reported at Swanny on 27 February and 6 at Limebeds on 28 February; 3 at Swanny on 8 August.

REED BUNTING

A fairly common resident breeder with most reports coming from Swanny. 9 were on pit off Croxton Lane; 2 at Swanny on 6 January; single at back of Limebeds on 17 and 24 January; 5 singing at Swanny on 23 February; 12 at Swanny on 26 February; 2 near small pit across the Dane past Swanny on 27 February; 12 again at Swanny on 2 March; 6 at Swanny on 25 September and 14 November; 2 along Mill Lane on 16 December.



Figure 17: (Ian Barber)

ESCAPED BIRDS

- 2 Cape Shelduck were at Swanny on 13 July.
- 1 Black Swan along SU Canal from 23 to 27 February.
- 5 Guinea Fowl at Tetton Lane on 7 May.

BUTTERFLIES

17 species of **Butterfly** were recorded but one that was not was Large Skipper. I suspect they are around but overlooked. The first butterfly to be recorded was Small Tortoiseshell on 21 February and the last was the Small White on 19 November.

SMALL SKIPPER

A few records of this species at back of the Limebeds had double figures and a single was recorded in Hubert Drive. All records came in July



Figure 18: (Martyn Lewis)

BRIMSTONE

Only 2 records this year, one in March at the back of B&M. The other being at Whitemore Road in late August.

LARGE WHITE

Singles recorded in July, August and September.

SMALL WHITE

The first sighting was along the SU Canal on 19 April then every month. The last sighting was at the Limebeds on 19 November.

GREEN-VEINED WHITE

Limebeds and Swanny were the most recorded areas from mid-May through to mid-August.

ORANGE TIP

This early butterfly was reported in large numbers along the SU Canal in April. Also Limebeds early May. The last record was on T&M Canal by Swanny on 8 June.

COMMON BLUE

Only 2 records both in August: 1 at Limebeds and 1 at Pochin Way. It is probably under-recorded.

HOLLY BLUE

Most reports coming from gardens: The first on 31 March and the last on 24 August.

RED ADMIRAL

The first sighting was on 8 June mainly in ones and twos. Large numbers along SU Canal in early October. The last report was on 9 November at the back of Salt Cellar.



Figure 19: (Paul Bebbington)

PAINTED LADY

A few sightings of this Lady: 8 June the first and 15 August the last.



Figure 20: (Martyn Lewis)

COMMA

2 on top of Limebeds on 27 February was the first record. More reports from gardens and along canals until 6 October.

SMALL TORTOISESHELL

Reports from gardens, canals and Limebeds from 21 February through to 12 August.

PEACOCK

This common and attractive butterfly appeared in late March to mid-August.

SPECKLED WOOD

Most reports coming from Limebeds starting mid-April through to mid-October. Also reported from gardens and along canals.

GATEKEEPER

The flight season is usually limited to July and August. All records coming from Limebeds with double figures in mid-July.



Figure 21: (Paul Bebbington)

MEADOW BROWN

Although the first record was not until 11 July, it is highly likely that butterflies were present before that date. All reports coming from Limebeds in July and August double figure numbers.

RINGLET

All records coming in July with again double figures from Limebeds. A couple of reports were from gardens.



Figure 22: (Martyn Lewis)

MOTHS

Hundreds of **Moths** were recorded – too many to name them all but a few worth a mention:

- Early Thorn
- Pine Beauty
- Diamond Back Moth
- Elephant Hawkmoth



Figure 23: Elephant Hawkmoth Caterpillar (Martyn Lewis)

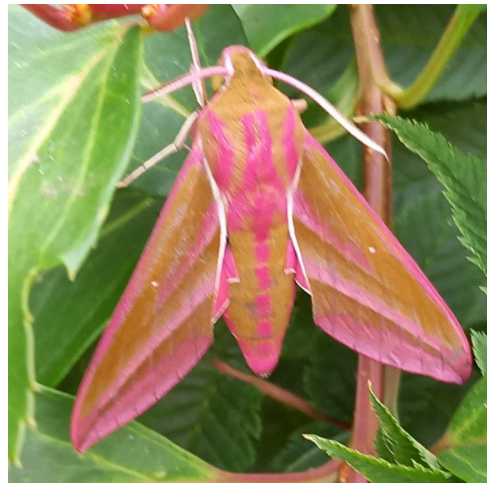


Figure 24: Elephant Hawkmoth (Paul Bebbington)

- Lime Hawkmoth



Figure 25: Lime Hawkmoth (Paul Bebbington)

- Scalloped Hazel
- Waved Umber
- Buff Ermine



Figure 26: Buff Ermine (Ian Barber)

- Pebble Hook-tip
- Ruby Tiger
- Pale Prominent
- Mother Shipton
- Cinnabar Moth
- Scorched Wing



Figure 27: Scorched Wing (Paul Bebbington)

- Currant Clearwing



Figure 28: Currant Clearwing (Martyn Lewis)

- Poplar Hawkmoth
- Swallowtail
- Peach Blossom



Figure 29: Peach Blossom (Paul Bebbington)

- Lesser Swallow Prominent
- Beautiful Hook-tip
- Ghost Moth
- Mint Moth
- Small Phoenix
- Canary Shouldered Thorn



Figure 30: Canary Shouldered Thorn (Paul Bebbington)

- Clouded Border
- Goldspot
- Chinese Character
- Magpie
- Centre-barred Swallow



Figure 31: Mullein Moth Caterpillar (Ian Barber)

DRAGONFLIES

We had 11 species of **Dragonfly** around Middlewich. The most abundant and the first to appear was the Banded Demoiselles and the Hairy Dragonfly was a great find.

BANDED DEMOISELLE

This large metallic blue/green damselfly seen along the canals from late May to late August, hundreds reported mid-June.

AZURE DAMSELFLY

Only two reports: one coming from pond in Hubert Drive new freshly emerged Azure Damselfly and one by Swanny.

COMMON BLUE DAMSELFLY

A widely distributed species which breeds in still- and slow-flowing waters – garden ponds and canals are ideal. Reported from 1 June.



Figure 32: (Martyn Lewis)

RED-EYED DAMSELFLY

The males have blood-red eyes and are found on floating vegetation: only reported from SU Canal.

BLUE-TAILED DAMSELFLY

A very common species found in a wide range of habitats reported from the end of May until mid-June.

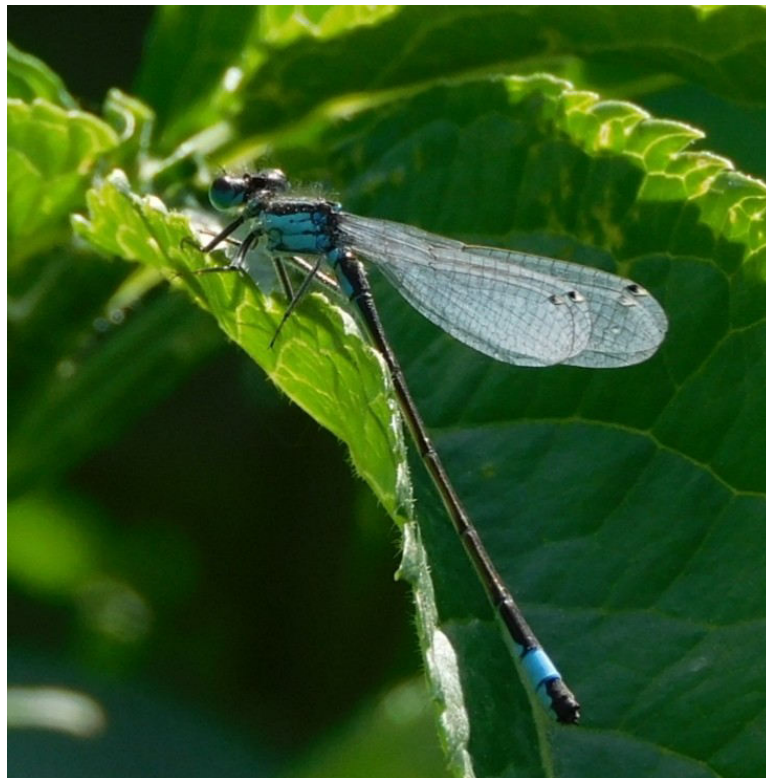


Figure 33: (Ian Barber)

SOUTHERN HAWKER

A large and colourful solitary dragonfly which is associated with shaded shallow ponds. Reports coming from gardens and SU and T&M Canals. Our latest dragonfly to be reported on 31 October at Swanny.

BROWN HAWKER

This easily identified large brown dragonfly with amber wings was recorded in a few gardens and along Pochin Way.

MIGRANT HAWKER

Only a couple of reports of this medium-sized dragonfly which appears from late Summer.



*Figure 34: Male Migrant Hawker
(Martyn Lewis)*

HAIRY DRAGONFLY

This was a good species to find for the first time in Middlewich on the canal past Swanny on 7 June and until 19 June.

BLACK-TAILED SKIMMER

Only one report of this yet another medium-sized dragonfly. It flies low over the water's surface and often rests on bare ground. Reported at Swanny on 12 August.

COMMON DARTER

Widespread and common reported from early August. Sites included both Canals and Limebeds.

BEES AND HOVERFLIES

Our first **Bumblebee** was on 3 February. Other species recorded:

- Honeybee
- Buff-Tailed Bumblebee
- White-Tailed Bumblebee
- Hairy-Footed Flowerbee
- Tawny Mining Bee
- Red-Tailed Bumblebee
- Early Mining Bee
- Red Mason Bee
- Common Carder Bee
- Gooden's Nomad Bee
- Patchwork Leafcutter Bee
- Vestal Cuckoo Bee
- Slender Mining Bee
- Brassy Mining Bee
- Ivy Bee

Hoverflies:

- Scaeva Pyrastris
- Great Pied Hoverfly
- Hornet Hoverfly



Figure 35: Hornet Hoverfly (Martyn Lewis)

- Helophilus Pendulus
- Xanthogramma Pedissequum

OTHER INSECTS

One outstanding record of Roesel's Bush Cricket at Limebeds on 12 August was only the second record for Cheshire, recorded on 30 August and 5 September also.



Figure 36: Martyn Lewis

List of others including:

- Water Boatman
- Green Shieldbug
- Crab Spider
- Harlequin Ladybird

- 14-Spot Ladybird



Figure 37: 14-Spot Ladybird (Ian Barber)

- Dark-Edged Beefly
- Caddisfly
- Slender Groundhopper
- Cockchafer
- Scorpionfly
- Black and Red Froghopper
- Large Narcissusfly
- Water Cricket
- Flesh Fly
- Lesser Stag Beetle
- Gasteruption Jaculator (Parasitic Wasp)
- Welsh Chafer
- Swollen Thighed Beetle
- Field Grasshopper
- Water Scorpion
- Orange Ladybird

MAMMALS

We recorded 15 species of **Mammals** in the year:

- Rabbit
- Grey Squirrel
- Hedgehog
- Fox
- Badger
- Brown Hare
- Mole
- Field Vole
- Wood Mouse
- House Mouse
- Brown Rat
- Mink



Figure 38: (Paul Bebbington)

3 species of **Bat** including:

- Common Pipistrelle
- Soprano Pipistrelle
- Noctule

The only reptile recorded was **Common Frog**.

An **American Signal Crayfish** was found dead on the towpath near Swanny which confirms their presence.

WILD FLOWERS

A few **wild flowers** to be recorded:

- Jack Go To Bed at Noon
- Devil's Paintbrush
- Spotted Orchid



Figure 39: Jack Go To Bed At Noon (Martyn Lewis)

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