

Cambridgeshire Bird Club



E-Bulletin 33 March 2016

(The records in this bulletin are unchecked and may be revised at a later date)



Red-necked Grebe at Grafham Water : photo by Jonathan Taylor

HEADLINES

SPOONBILL Ouse Washes on 25th.

ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD* Thorney the bird from February was present until 7th at least, presumed the same at Eldernell on 17th.

ICELAND GULL

Witcham Gravel an adult on 2nd, a 2 c.y. on 24th.

Grafham Water on 6th and on 10th.

'Kumlien's' Gull Witcham Gravel 2 adults on 2nd.

GLAUCOUS GULL

Grafham Water an adult on 1st.

Witcham Gravel a 2 c.y. bird on several dates.

LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER Fowlmere NR on 19th.

DARTFORD WARBLER* Coates the bird from February was present until 6th at least.

Other records

All records below refer to the month at the head of the E-bulletin and where no numbers are given the record relates to single birds.

Where there is an asterisk after the name of the species this indicates that it is necessary to send a description to the County Recorder before the record will be accepted.

Weather: The first week was cold but still and mainly dry and the following week an area of high pressure settled over the country bringing some warm days with sunshine and some cold with cloud and a predominantly northerly wind which clearly delayed inward (and outward?) migration. At the Easter weekend a change in the wind direction to the west brought Atlantic weather systems and the arrival of the first summer migrants. The end of the month was a little warmer after a fierce storm (Katie) passed over southern England on 27th-28th. Overall a drier month.

Wildfowl

Bewick's Swan Ouse Washes 7 on 19th.

Whooper Swan Swaffham Prior Fen 17 on 7th, Ouse Washes 'several thousand' on 12th, c110 on 19th, Sutton Gault 120 on 25th.

White-fronted Goose Ouse Washes on 19th, 25th.

Greylag Goose Fowlmere NR 153 on 2nd, Wicken Fen 20+ on 12th, 58 on 14th, Burwell Fen 53 on 12th and 26th, Swaffham Prior Fen 12 on 7th, Cam Washes Upware 132 on 14th, Whittlesford GP 15 on 16th.

Canada Goose Trumpington Clay Farm 7 on 2nd, Fowlmere NR 7 on 2nd, Swaffham Prior Fen 125 on 7th, Burwell Fen 12 on 12th, Cam Washes Upware 31 on 14th.

Barnacle Goose Whittlesford GP on 16th.

Brent Goose Cam Washes on 20th.

Egyptian Goose Paxton Pits 2 on 6th.

Shelduck Burwell Fen 3 on 4th, 5 (2 pairs) on 26th, Wicken Fen on 8th and 10th and a pair on 21st and 28th, Paxton Pits on 6th, Cam Washes Upware 2 on 7th and 14th, Grafham Water 5 on 21st, Sutton Gault 6 on 26th.

Mandarin Fowlmere NR a drake on 5th, Eye Green NR 2 on 11th.



Mandarin drake at Fowlmere NR photo: Gary Thornton.

Wigeon Wicken Fen 228 on 3rd, c500 on 17th, 228 on 21st and 71 on 28th, Burwell Fen c300 on 4th, c310 on 12th, 16 on 26th, Godmanchester GP 230+ on 5th, Cam Washes Upware 486 on 7th, 370+ on 14th, Sutton Gault c600 on 26th.

Gadwall Cam Washes Upware 14 on 14th, Wicken Fen 58 on 17th and 16 on 28th, Burwell Fen 21 on 26th Sutton Gault 26 on 26th.

Teal Burwell Fen c50 on 4th, 37 on 12th, 18 on 26th, Wicken Fen 25 on 3rd, 40 on 10th, c80 on 17th, 124 on 21st and 139 on 28th, Cam Washes Upware 17 on 7th, 28 on 14th, Great Fen Trundle Mere 30+ on 20th, Sutton Gault 260 on 26th.

Mallard Burwell Fen 52 on 12th, Cam Washes Upware 21 on 14th, Wicken Fen 22 on 17th and 30 on 28th.

Pintail Burwell Fen on 4th and 12th, Paxton Pits 5 pairs on 12th, 3 birds on 18th, 5 on 21st, Fen Drayton Lakes 'lots' on 17th, Sutton Gault 50+ on 25th, 10 on 26th.

Garganey Nene Washes Eldernell 2 pairs on 23rd - the first of the year, then 2 males and a pair on 30th, Paxton Pits a pair on 26th, Burwell Fen 2 on 30th.

Shoveler Wicken Fen 20 on 3rd, 31 on 8th, 43 on 17th and 28 on 28th, Burwell Fen 7 on 4th, 12 on 12th and 11 on 26th, Cam Washes Upware 12 on 7th, 22 on 14th, Great Fen Trundle Mere 10 on 20th, Sutton Gault 70 on 26th.

Red-crested Pochard Paxton Pits on 12th.

Pochard Burwell Fen on 4th, Paxton Pits 84 on 8th, Wicken Fen 20 on 13th, Fen Drayton Lakes 32 on 25th.

Tufted Duck Wicken Fen 11 on 3rd, 17 on 17th, Cam Washes Upware 9 on 7th, Burwell Fen 23 on 12th and 26 on 26th, Whittlesford GP 23 on 16th.

Scaup Ouse Washes presumably the same bird as was seen in February up until at least 25th.

Common Scoter Paxton Pits 10 on 20th, Grafham Water a pair on 20th and a single on 21st.

Goldeneye Paxton Pits 46 on 7th, Ouse Washes 4 on 25th, Fen Drayton Lakes 65 (26m & 39f) on 25th.

Smew Fen Drayton Lakes on 5th, 3 on 25th, Colne GP 4 on 13th, Paxton Pits a drake on 21st.

Goosander Grafham Water 17 on 6th.

Gamebirds

Grey Partridge Cambridge Research Park 2 on 12th,

Cormorants

Cormorant Wicken Fen 3 on 3rd, 10 on 10th, Cam Washes Upware 2 immatures on 7th, Whittlesford GP on 16th, Burwell Fen 11 on 26th.

Egrets and herons

Bittern *reported from:* Wicken Fen.

Little Egret *reported from:* Aldreth/Haddenham, Burwell Fen (12), Godmanchester GP (2), Paxton Pits, Sutton Gault (2), Whittlesford GP, Wicken Fen (10).

Great White Egret Great Fen/Farcet Fen/Yaxley on several dates from 4th, Aldreth/Haddenham/Rampton/Cottenham on several dates from 6th, Nene Washes on 12th, King's Dyke NR on 18th, Ouse Washes on 19th, 25th and 26th, Cam Washes on 20th, Paxton Pits on 21st, Bassenhally/Eldernell on 23rd, (probably 2 different birds in the north of the county and maybe 4 overall).



Great White Egret and Little Egret at Aldreth : photo by Simon Stirrup.

Grey Heron Wicken Fen 6 in bushes on Mere island on 17th.

Grebes

Little Grebe Trumpington Clay Farm 4 on 2nd, Burwell Fen on 4th, 2 on 26th, Wicken Fen on 10th, 21st and 28th.

Great Crested Grebe Burwell Fen 2 all month, Whittlesford GP a pair on 16th, Trundle Mere on 20th.

Red-necked Grebe* Grafham Water on 22nd - 24th, then 2 on 24th, and a single until the end of the month.

Black-necked Grebe Ouse Washes on 20th, Grafham Water on 20th - 21st, Fen Drayton Lakes on 25th.

Raptors

Red Kite Willingham on 2nd, Eldernell on 3rd, Foxton on 5th, Paxton Pits 2 on 6th, 3 on 21st, Stilton/Sawtry 2 on 8th, 23 on 21st, Monks Wood 2 on 15th, Burwell Fen on 17th, Holland and Wennington Woods Abbots Ripton on 19th, Great Fen New Decoy 2 on 20th, Babraham on 21st, Ouse Washes on 25th, Nene Washes on 25th, Wicken Fen on 25th, Cambridge on 28th.

Marsh Harrier *reported from:* Burwell Fen (2), Eldernell, Fen Drayton Lakes (4) and Wicken Fen (3).

Hen Harrier Burwell Fen singles on several dates, Great Fen on 4th, Wicken Fen singles on several dates roost maximum 3 males and a female on 15th, Cottenham a male on 5th, Elsworth a ringtail on 6th, Swaffham Prior Fen a male on 14th, Bottisham-Wilbraham on 19th.

Buzzard Babraham (2), Brinkley, Chippenham Fen (3), Coton, Eldernell (3), Fen Drayton Lakes (4), Fordham, Girton, Grafham Water (7), Great Fen New Decoy (2), Great Shelford, Great Wilbraham (3), Hemingford Grey, Paxton Pits (2), Six Mile Bottom (2), Stapleford, Swaffham Bulbeck, Swaffham Prior (3), Tubney Fen, Whittlesford, Willingham (2) and Wicken Fen (2).

Osprey Grafham Water on 20th - 21st, first of the year.

Rails and crane

Water Rail *reported from:* Cambridge Research Park, Chippenham Fen and Wicken Fen (4).

Coot Trumpington Clay Farm 15 on 2nd, Wicken Fen 22 on 3rd, 26 on 17th, 14 on 28th, Cam Washes Upware 17 on 7th, 33 on 14th Burwell Fen 85 on 12th and 110 on 26th.

Common Crane Recorded at 6 sites involving perhaps 18 birds. Locations withheld during the breeding season. Please continue to submit records directly to the County Recorder.

Waders

Avocet Grafham Water 3 in the lagoons on 2nd, 6 on 10th, 4 on 30th, Paxton Pits 2 on 28th, Nene Washes March Farmers on 30th, good numbers reported back at two other breeding locations.

Oystercatcher Burwell Fen on 4th, a pair on 12th and 26th, Godmanchester GP 3 on 5th, Paxton Pits 2-4 on several dates from 6th- maximum 6 on 18th, Colne GP 4 on 13th, Wicken Fen 2 on 13th, Fen Drayton Lakes 4 on 15th.

Golden Plover Eldernell 7,000+ on 3rd, Burwell Fen c450 on 8th, c110 on 12th, Nene Washes March Farmers 450 on 30th.

Grey Plover Paxton Pits on 18th - first of the year.

Lapwing Cam Washes Upware 31 on 7th, Burwell Fen c50 on 12th.

Little Ringed Plover Paxton Pits on 26th - first of the year, Nene Washes March Farmers on 30th.

Ringed Plover Paxton Pits on 12th and 28th, Colne GP 2 on 13th, Trumpington Clay Farm 2 on 17th, Nene Washes Eldernell on 23rd.

Curlew Fen Drayton Lakes on 4th, Nene Washes on 12th, Paxton Pits 2 on 21st, single on 28th.

Black tailed Godwit Nene Washes (Low Wash) 400 on 10th, Paxton Pits c4,000 over on 13th and 1,000 on the site later the same day, 4 on 25th, c100 on 28th, Holywell c2,500 on 13th, Fen Drayton Lakes 500+ on 16th and 17th, c3,000 on 20th, c2,000 on 22nd, 89 on 24th, 92 on 25th, Cam Washes on 20th, Nene Washes Eldernell 2,700 'icelandic' on 23rd, 2,000 on 25th included colour ringed birds traceable to the river Alde in Suffolk (2) and Iceland (3), 2,100 on 30th, Sutton Gault 200 on 26th.

Bar-tailed Godwit Fen Drayton Lakes on 22nd.

Knot Grafham Water on 23rd.

Ruff Fen Drayton Lakes 4 on 17th, Cam Washes 2 on 20th, Nene Washes Eldernell 34 on 23rd.

Dunlin Paxton Pits singles on 6th and 13th, then 2-3 on 21st and 5 on 28th, Nene Washes March Farmers 240 on 10th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 15th, 5 on 17th, Wicken Fen 2 on 17th.

Green Sandpiper Aldreth/Haddenham 2 on 6th, Paxton Pits on 12th - 13th, 25th, 28th, Colne GP on 13th, Grafham Water on 30th.

Spotted Redshank Fen Drayton Lakes on 20th.

Redshank Paxton Pits 1-7 on several dates, Burwell Fen on 11th, Wicken Fen on 12th, 11 on 17th, 6 on 21st, Cam Washes Upware 2 on 14th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 15th, Cam Washes 9 on 20th.

Woodcock signs of return migration mid month: Cambourne on 11th, Great Shelford one disturbed from the edge of the field at the bottom of the editor's garden on 12th, Colne GP 2 on 13th, Wicken Fen on 14th and one roding on 17th, Monks Wood 4 on 15th, Holland and Wennington Woods Abbots Ripton 8 on 19th, Wicken Fen 2 on 26th.

Snipe Paxton Pits on 6th, 8 on 7th, 2 on 13th, Cam Washes Upware 11 on 7th, Burwell Fen on 11th, Wicken Fen on several dates maximum 4, Milton alongside the A14 on 14th.

Terns and gulls

Common Tern Paxton Pits on 28th - first of the year.

Kittiwake Cambridge Research Park on 12th.

Black-headed Gull Wicken Fen 220 on 10th, 153 on 21st, Burwell Fen c570 on 12th and 130 on 26th, Great Wilbraham c370 on a recently planted field on 14th, Trumpington Clay Farm 175 on 17th.

Little Gull Sutton Gault 8 flew SW on 26th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 28th.

Mediterranean Gull Witcham Gravel an adult on 2nd, 3rd and 8th, then 2 on several dates from 6th, Grafham Water on 6th, Colne GP 2 on 13th, Fen Drayton Lakes a 3 c.y. on 25th.

Common Gull Trumpington Clay Farm 4 on 17th.

Lesser Black-backed Gull Burwell Fen 7 on 12th.

Herring Gull Burwell Fen 3 on 12th.

Yellow-legged Gull *reported from:* Fen Drayton Lakes (2) and Godmanchester GP (2).

Caspian Gull *reported from:* Fen Drayton Lakes, Godmanchester GP and Grafham Water (3).

Owls kingfisher and woodpeckers

Barn Owl *reported from:* Burwell Fen, Coates, Fowlmere-Newton, Middle Fen, Wicken Fen (3) and Witcham Gravel.

Road kills: A14 near Connington and A14 near Bar Hill, A 14 near Cambridge.

Little Owl *reported from:* Houghton-Wyton, Little Paxton, Middle Fen and Thorney.

Tawny Owl *reported from:* Wicken Fen.

Short-eared Owl *reported from:* Burwell Fen (3), Eldernell (2), Ely, Fen Drayton Lakes (4), Fowlmere-Newton, Foxton, Great Fen (9), Ouse Washes, Wicken Fen, Witcham Gravel and Yaxley.

Kingfisher *reported from:* Burwell Fen, Colne GP (2), Haddenham, Paxton Pits and Wicken Fen (3).

Falcons and parrots

Merlin Great Fen on 4th.

Peregrine Fen Drayton Lakes on 5th and 16th, Wicken Fen on 7th and 26th, Aldreth on 13th, Ouse Washes on 13th, Cambridge 1-2 on several dates, Hemingford Grey on 22nd.

Corvids

Jackdaw Burwell Fen 41 on 26th.

Rook Swaffham Prior Fen c150 on a recently cut maize strip. Rookery counts: IWM Duxford 27 nests.

Carrion Crow Burwell Fen 52 on 26th.

Raven Gamlingay 4 flyovers on 20th.

Tits

Coal Tit Monks Wood 35 ringed in the month.

Marsh Tit Monks Wood 27 on 15th, Holland and Wennington Woods 29 on 19th, Woodwalton Fen on 20th, Paxton Pits on 21st.

Bearded Tit *reported from:* Wicken Fen.

Hirundines and warblers

Sand Martin Fen Drayton Lakes on 15th - the first of the year then one on 20th and 2 on 24th, c100 on 28th, Grafham Water on 24th, then c40 on 28th, Witcham Gravel on 26th, Paxton Pits c30 on 28th, Ferry Meadows CP 20 on 26th and 30th, so general arrival around the 28th - 30th.

Swallow Fen Drayton Lakes on 25th - the first of the year, 3 on 27th, Cambridge Research Park on 26th, Witcham Gravel on 26th, Ferry Meadows CP on 26th, Grafham Water on 28th.

House Martin Witcham Gravel on 26th - first of the year, Grafham Water 3 on 28th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 28th.



Long tailed Tit in Cambridge : photo by Jonathan Heath.

Cetti's Warbler *reported from:* Fen Drayton Lakes (11), Paxton Pits (2) and Wicken Fen (5).

Chiffchaff *early dates:* Great Shelford one passed silently through the editor's garden on 12th, on the same day one at Wicken Fen and 2 at Cambridge Research Park - possibly the first arrivals of the summer, one caught and ringed at Wicken Fen on 13th, Paxton Pits on 21st, Grafham Water on 21st, Fen Drayton Lakes 3 on 22nd, main arrival on 25th and thereafter.

Willow Warbler Ferry Meadows CP one singing on 31st - first of the year.

Blackcap Haddenham a male on 20th, Cambridge a male singing on 28th, Ferry Meadows CP one singing on 30th.

Starling and thrushes

Starling *roost counts:* Fen Drayton Lakes c15,000 on 6th, Wicken Fen 6,000-8,000 on 10th.

Fieldfare Wicken Fen 30 on 10th, 55 on 17th, Woodwalton Fen 100+ on 20th, Pidley GC 150+ on 21st, Haddenham/Aldreth Fens 100 on 30th.

Redwing Burwell Fen c20 on 4th, Monks Wood 350+ on 15th, Woodwalton Fen 100+ on 20th, Pidley GC 50+ on 21st, Ferry Meadows c25 on 28th.

Starts and chats

Black Redstart Cambourne the bird first reported in February still present until 21st, Yaxley on 29th - 30th.

Stonechat Eldernell on 3rd, Coates 2 with the Dartford Warbler on 3rd, Wicken Fen on 2nd, 2 on 10th and 3 on 20th, Trumpington Meadows on 7th, Burwell Fen 4 on 10th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 25th.

Wheatear Ouse Washes on 24th - the first of the year, Nene Washes March Farmers on 30th.

Sparrows, wagtails and pipits

Tree Sparrow Great Fen Engine Farm 10 on 20th.

Grey Wagtail *reported from:* Fowlmere NR, Grafham Water, Haslingfield SW (2), Paxton Pits and Witcham.

Pied Wagtail Ouse Washes (Sutton Gault) 'White Wagtail' on 16th.

Rock Pipit Ouse Washes on 13th, Paxton Pits on 13th, 20th, 25th.

Water Pipit Ouse Washes c10 on 13th, 5 on 16th, a single at Sutton Gault on 25th and 4 on the washes on the same day, Eldernell a summer plumage bird on 30th.

Finches and buntings

Chaffinch Swaffham Prior Fen c60 on 7th.

Brambling Thorney on 4th, Hare Park 1-3 with Chaffinches on 7th - 18th, Yelling on 19th.

Goldfinch Swaffham Prior Fen 37 on 7th.

Siskin Fowlmere NR 43 on 2nd, Cambridge St. John's Innovation Centre c50 on 10th, Paxton Pits 5 on 12th, 3 on 21st, Cambridge Research park 20+ on 12th, Holme Fen 20+ on 20th, Houghton Mill 30+ on 21st, Chippenham Fen 5-6 on 22nd.

Lesser Redpoll *reported from:* Fen Drayton Lakes (3), Haddenham/Aldreth Fens (8-10), Holme Fen (5+), Paxton Pits (6), Ramsey Heights (5) and Wicken Fen 33 caught during the month.

Corn Bunting Great Fen Engine Farm 20 on 20th.



Brambling male at Yelling: photo by Ian Whitaker

Exotica

Black Swan Nene Washes on 25th, Ferry Meadows CP on 30th - might have been the same bird?

Contributors:

Colin Addington, Richard Allison, Louise Bacon, Paul Barsby, Peter Beesley, Peter Bircham, Will Bowell, Richard Broughton, Colin Brown, Martin Coates, Steve Cooper, Martin Davis, Ian Dawson, Tim Dee, Ian Dickerson, Brendan Doe, Steve Dudley, Ian and Beth Ellis, Mike Everett, Steve Gann, Don Gardener, , David Griffiths, James Hanlon, Andy Hannaford, Ted Harvey, Mark Hawkes, David Heath, Jon Heath, Michael Holdsworth, David Hopkins, Sarah Howlett, Colin Kirtland, Charlie Kitchin, Neil Larner, Rachel Lowry, Paul Mason, Duncan McNiven, Matt Mellor, Howard Neil, Martin O'Leary, Daniel Osborne, Dave Palmer, Chris Parker, Gill Parrish, Duncan Poyser, Doug Radford, Gary Rawlings, Ken Smith, Simon Stirrup, Jonathan Taylor, Mark Thomas, Richard Thomas, Chris Thorne and the Wicken Fen Group, Gary Thornton, Andrew Tongue, Calum Urquhart, Tracy Urquhart, Hugh Venables, Luke Wake, Mark Ward, Robin Ward, Matt Webb, Mike Weedon, Jamie Wells, Ian Whitaker, Matt Williams, Kevin Wilson, Mat Wilson, David Withrington, Karen Woods, Hugh and Emma Wright and Barbara York.

Rare breeders

Please remember that we do not publicise information about rare breeding birds which might be starting to return to their regular nesting sites, or birds looking for a nesting site. The Bird club

sightings pages will reflect this now its breeding season, and we hope that you all THINK TWICE at least about what you might be about to post on any social media.

A full list of UK rare breeding bird species can be found here: www.rbbp.org.uk

You should inform the county recorder know of any rare birds which look like they might be displaying or similar.

Birds get disturbed deliberately by the malevolent, but more often, they disturbed inadvertently by the over-enthusiastic.

WICKEN FEN (BIRD RINGING) GROUP

Brief news for March 2016

There were netting sessions at the Fen on 12 different days in March. The month's ringing total was 141; a further 159 different birds were retrapped, so the overall total for the month was 300. Individual species totals (the first figure new birds, the second retraps) were:

Green Woodpecker	1, 0	Great Tit	9, 24
Great spot Woodpecker	0, 1	Chiffchaff	5, 0
Wren	0, 3	Treecreeper	2, 1
Dunnock	1, 12	House Sparrow	0, 1
Robin	5, 6	Greenfinch	23, 10
Blackbird	3, 3	Chaffinch	10, 3
Song Thrush	0, 1	Goldfinch	24, 2
Redwing	3, 1	Lesser Redpoll	28, 5
Goldcrest	2, 1	Bullfinch	5, 1
Long-tailed Tit	1, 17	Reed Bunting	6, 11
Blue Tit	13, 56		

Old birds retrapped during the month were:

Chaffinch X078560 at 6 years 8 months,

Cetti's Warbler L093219 and Robin X876549 both at 5 years 9 months (but the latter, sadly, dead),

Blue Tit X876576 at 5 years 8 months,

Great Tit L505752 and Blackbird LB03670 both at 4 years 7 months,

Long-tailed Tit DDA398 at 4 years 5 months.

Next indoor meeting:



Friday 13th May, Cottenham Village College

A Very Fine Swan Indeed: Art, science and the unfeathered bird by Katrina Von Grouw

The book, *The Unfeathered Bird*, originally intended as a manual for bird artists, has been 25 years in the making. Only much later did it blossom into something far more ambitious. A world away from textbooks and diagrams, this is a work equally intended for scientists and artists, indeed anyone with an appreciation of birds or an interest in their adaptations and behavior. It includes illustrations of 200 species, all made from actual specimens, many in lifelike positions. Virtually all the complete skeletons were prepared and reconstructed at home from specimens donated from zoos, wildlife hospitals and conservation charities. Join Katrina as she explains her aims and inspirations, shares her insights about birds beneath their feathers, and relates how her home was turned upside down as more and more specimens joined the queue.

Katrina van Grouw is a graduate of the Royal College of Art. Her formal education was in Printmaking and Natural History Illustration, but she's also a dedicated ornithologist, a former Natural History Museum curator, a qualified bird ringer, and an experienced preparator of natural history specimens.

Research News

Cambridgeshire Turtle Dove project 2016

The Turtle Dove is one of the UK's fastest declining birds, with Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data suggesting a 91% population decline during 1995-2013, and the recent *Bird Atlas* showing a 51% decrease in occupied 10-km squares in Britain between 1968-72 and 2007-11. The species has been

on the Red list of *Birds of Conservation Concern* in the UK since the first such assessment in 1996, and was recently classified as globally threatened ('Vulnerable') in the 2015 IUCN Red List.

Data from BBS squares within Cambridgeshire (on average 0.1 individuals per square during 2013/14 *cf.* 1.3 during 1995/96) and from the *Cambridgeshire Bird Atlas* (some breeding evidence reported for 32% of tetrads during 2008-2011 *cf.* at least 48% of tetrads in Old Cambridgeshire during 1988-1992 and 92% of tetrads in Huntingdonshire during 1979-1983) imply that the species has fared similarly poorly locally, with the most recent population estimate for the County suggesting that just 150-300 pairs may persist.

As part of an attempt to carry out an 'audit' of the County's remaining breeding Turtle Doves - and assess the feasibility of a more formal/structured survey in 2017 - the Club would like to encourage Members to report all Cambridgeshire records of the species, either directly (see [here](#)) or using BirdTrack (as also proposed by [Operation Turtle Dove](#)). To assist with the interpretation of records, any details of [breeding evidence](#) (e.g. 'purring' males, pairs in suitable nesting habitat, territorial behaviour observed over a week or more) would be extremely helpful, as would any indication that individuals were probably only passing through (e.g. flying over or not in an area with potentially suitable nesting habitat).

Further guidance on the above, plus full details of the ways to submit records, will be made available on the [Research pages](#) of the Club's website within the next week or so (the earliest records in the County have tended to be during the second or third weeks of April, but most individuals won't arrive until late-April or May), but in the meantime if you have any questions about the survey, please contact the Club's Research Officer, Rob Pople (research@cambridgebirdclub.org.uk).

Book Review: *Orison for a Curlew* by Horatio Clare

This is a nicely produced small book (less than a hundred pages) on the subject of the Slender-billed Curlew; at least that is the implication in the title. The author describes how he followed a trail around Eastern Europe meeting people who claimed to have seen the bird and visiting places where it had been seen. The narrative contains plenty of sociological observations particularly on the state of countries such as Greece, Bulgaria and Romania and of course Clare never saw the bird in question, nor did he venture to Morocco, or Siberia or any of the other countries where possible sightings were mentioned: Iran, Iraq, Syria etc. All of which left me feeling short changed. I'm afraid to me it read rather like a report on a gap-year project. It would have been greatly enhanced by some photographs of the sites, or even line drawings. At £12 I am not sure I would recommend buying it, maybe borrow it.

Cambridge Bird Club Reports 1927 --

Thanks to Dick Newell, Chris Quy and Mike Foley a full set of the Club's Annual Reports will soon be available on the website. As a taster: each of the first two issues 1927 and 1928 contained information on the Adam's Road Bird Sanctuary.

In Report 1 (1927)

CAMBRIDGE TOWN

The town of Cambridge is extraordinarily full of bird life; this is because of the Backs, the various Fellows' Gardens, and the large number of houses with suitable gardens.

Between Adams Road and Grange Road there is a bit of waste ground, about two acres in extent, which was made into a skating rink some years ago. There is also a marshy part in the middle which may be flooded, and all the rest of the area is covered with dense undergrowth comprised of yew, Scotch fir, lilac, privet, willow and hawthorn. There is a very high thick hedge round it. The Club has been fortunate in securing this as a Sanctuary. Next year nesting-boxes will be put up, and as many building sites as possible provided. A list is kept of every bird that is seen there, when and where it nests, how many young it rears, etc. Young and parent birds will be ringed, and in the winter we hope to put up a bird trap, to find out how many of the birds winter there, etc. Although this Sanctuary is within a stone's throw of two rows of houses, the following birds nested there this year:

Greenfinch- At least five pairs. Goldfinch- One pair, on the island. Bullfinch- At least four pairs.
Chaffinch- At least three pairs. Long-tailed Tit- Two pairs. Goldcrest- One pair.
Red-backed Shrike- Two pairs. Chiff chaff- At least two pairs. Willow-Warbler- At least two pairs.
Reed-Warbler- At least four pairs. Whitethroat- Two pairs. Lesser Whitethroat- One pair.
Song-Thrush- About six pairs. Blackbird- About six pairs. Nightingale- Two pairs.
Robin- One pair at least. Hedge-Sparrow- One pair at least. Wren- About two pairs.
Wood-Pigeon- About three pairs. Turtle-Dove- About three pairs. Moorhen- Two pairs.

As well as these the following have been seen in the Skating Rink : Rook and Jackdaw, feeding; Starling, small flock feeding; Hawfinch ; Linnet, in May; House-Sparrow, plentiful of course; Yellow Bunting, pair in April; Reed-Bunting, about fifty in a flock, November 13th (J.H.) ; Pied Wagtail, in winter; Tree Creeper, of ten ; Great, Blue, Coal, and Marsh Tits; Spotted Flycatcher in July ; Sedge-Warbler, a pair appeared in May, but did not stay; Garden-Warbler, one seen several times in May ; Fieldfare, flocks settled on the taller willows; Redwing, roosts in the hawthorns; Mistle-

Thrush, often seen ; Green and Greater Spotted Woodpeckers seen feeding here; Cuckoo, of ten here in May ; Mallard, three; Teal, one; Snipe, fifteen on February 8th; Pheasant, a cock.

In Report 2 (1928)

CAMBRIDGE TOWN SANCTUARY

In last year's Report it was mentioned that the Ornithological Club had acquired the old Skating Rink off Adams Road as a sanctuary. The year was a great disappointment; the "Town" got to hear that it was being kept as a sanctuary, and people broke in in large bodies ; most of the nests were torn down and the position became quite hopeless. It was decided that the Club had not the money to retain a place, where there is liable to be such a great expenditure. Incidentally many members of the Club thought that this sanctuary did not justify itself, owing to the fact that all the birds in it are found in the gardens and "Backs" of Cambridge. As a result the Committee decided that the Club should no longer be responsible for the sanctuary. A Sanctuary Club has now been formed to maintain it ; this Club is separate from the Ornithological Club.

As a result of the enormous destruction of nests by trespassers it was impossible to carry out in full, details of the batching of eggs and young of the birds that nest in the sanctuary. The results, such as they are, are given below. Miss J. J. Hopkins very kindly kept records of the nests during the Easter vacation. No attempt is made to give a complete list of the birds that occupy the sanctuary, since there was a fairly complete one last year. Apart from the notes on the nests, there are only notes on the more unusual birds.

Hawfinch- A pair were seen in the sanctuary fairly regularly, but did not nest.

Goldfinch- No nest was found this year, but a pair were to be seen there frequently, especially on the island, where they nested last year.

Lesser Redpoll- Frequently visit the pine trees.

Bullfinch- Several pairs nest, and they are quite abundant in winter.

Reed Warbler- The reeds were too short early in the year for nests. R.V.P. found one nest at the top of a tall privet bush, and another in a hawthorn, both about 12 feet from the ground ; both had eggs on May 29th.

Long-eared Owl- F.J.C. saw one on April 29th.

Sparrow Hawk - One paid a short visit during the first week in March. It was first seen on 2nd, and then every day until the 7th.

Common Snipe-A small party was seen in March, as was the case last year.

The Adam's Road Bird Sanctuary today.

The Adams Road Bird and Wildlife Reserve is managed by the Sanctuary Club. The reserve occupies 4 acres and was let to the University in 1894 by St John's College with permission for use as a skating rink. Excavation was carried out leaving an island and trees were planted on the periphery. This fell into disuse in World War I and 1928 it was sub-let to the Cambridge Ornithological Club with condition that it should be kept as a nature reserve. Vandalism was a problem and shortly afterwards local residents formed the Sanctuary Club and took on the responsibility for the maintenance of the reserve.

In 1935 Mr G.N.Ogilvy took responsibility for the rent for 20 years in memory of his son, Ian, who had been a keen member of the Sanctuary Club. Mr Ogilvy also gave six wooden seats to the reserve, still in use, which carry named plaques to his son. It was in this reserve that the Rev. Edward A. Armstrong carried out his research for his book "The Wren".

From 31 members in 1932 the club grew and now stands at around 160.

By 2004 the accumulation of silt had allowed the reeds to encroach upon 90% of the lake and dredging became necessary, as previously in the 1950's. A recent development is the excavation a new pond, Rob's Pond, by the Greenbelt Mid-week Working Party, which, as intended, has now been colonised by the crested newts from the derelict swimming pool in a neighbouring garden in Adams Road.

In 2007 generous donations by members enabled the old gates to be replaced.

The annual subscription to the Sanctuary Club is £10 and is due on 1st January. The Annual General meeting is held early in the spring and the committee confers when necessary to plan maintenance with the help of Wildlife experts. The work is carried out partly by voluntary help of members and partly with professional help. Members bringing children to the Sanctuary should be aware of such hazards as swampy ground and poisonous plants and take full responsibility for them. The steps to the main hide demand special care. Please ensure that children are aware of the need for quiet in the reserve. Dogs are not admitted.

Work parties are held on the first Saturday of the month from October to January between 9am and 1 pm to carry out basic maintenance in accordance with the management plan drawn up with the advice of conservation experts. Help is always welcome for the whole or part of the morning. We have some tools but member may prefer to bring their own. Gardening gloves are strongly recommended.

There are notebooks in both hides to record sightings of birds and also of plants, insects and other wild life seen. Entrance to the reserve is in Adams Road next to no 18. The inner gate is kept locked and members are supplied with the number of the combination lock.

CCI/BTO Cuckoo Day

A day exploring the Cuckoo, its ecology and cultural relevance.

Thursday, April 21, 2016 -09:30 to 16:45

Event host / presenter: John Fanshawe, CCI/Mike Toms, BTO

Booking contact details:

Ticket bookings for this event are being handled through [Brown Paper Tickets](#). Places are limited so book early to avoid disappointment.

Venue Website: <http://www.cambridgeconservation.org/cuckoo-day>

Additional information

The Cuckoo is viewed by many as the herald of spring, announcing the changing seasons with its familiar call. The species features prominently in literature, in folk song and, additionally, has proved a popular subject for scientific study.

On 21 April 2016 the Cambridge Conservation Initiative and British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) are hosting an event brings together many of those working on Cuckoos from across a suite of disciplines, providing a wonderful opportunity to discover more about this fascinating bird from the experts.

Those speaking/performing at the event include: Michael McCarthy (journalist and author of *Say Goodbye to the Cuckoo*), Dr Chris Hewson (studying Cuckoo migration), Malcolm Green (storyteller), Toby Smith (photojournalist), Sara Zonneveld (studying upland Cuckoos), Dr Claire Spottiswoode (studying African Cuckoos) and Geoff Sample (sound recordist).

The event is being hosted at the David Attenborough Building on Pembroke Street, Cambridge, CB2 3QZ and carries a small charge of £22 (plus booking fee) to cover the costs of refreshments and speaker expenses. We hope that this will be a day full of discussion, inspired by engaging presentations, and we would be delighted if you could join us.

Farmland Bird Surveyors Needed

Improve your bird ID skills, learn about farmland bird ecology and farming and help RSPB with high priority work!

Where: Cambridgeshire Fen Farmland

When: April to June, 4 early morning surveys during the breeding season

We need you! In recent decades populations of many bird species associated with farmland habitats have experienced worrying declines. The RSPB is working with partner organisations and the farming community to try to halt this decline.

The support from volunteer surveyors in recent years has led to a targeted approach centred on 27 areas within the UK based on farmland bird records collated over recent years. Within the Fens focus area we aim to monitor populations of the 10 most declining farmland birds. This will involve providing high quality bird surveys to farmers within the focus areas and will enable the advice our advisors subsequently deliver to be measured.

This project allies the enthusiasm of RSPB volunteers with the willingness of farmers who are interested in doing more for the birds and nature on their farms.

Requirements: Essential:

- 1) Able to identify all common bird species and especially farmland birds by sight and sound and attend a training day in March.
- 2) Able to walk several kilometres over rough ground.
- 3) Able to read large-scale maps.
- 4) Able to deal directly with farmers in a polite and friendly manner.
- 5) Commit to make an initial visit to your farm and subsequently carry out 4 early morning surveys between mid April and June.
- 6) Able to organise own travel to and from farm.
- 7) Ability to keep data confidential.

Desirable:

Knowledge and experience of territory mapping using standard symbols, previous bird survey experience would be an advantage although training on survey methodology will be given.

We will reimburse you for out of pocket travel expenses and provide you with training and ongoing support in your role.

Who to contact:

Katy Froud

Tel: 01603 697592

E-mail: katy.froud@rspb.org.uk



The RSPB is the country's largest nature conservation charity, inspiring everyone to give nature a home.