



Cambridgeshire Bird Club

E-Bulletin 43 February 2017



Fieldfare at Fowlmere NR: photo by Gary Thornton

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

HEADLINES

RING-NECKED DUCK* Paxton Pits: the female continued to be reported until the end of the month.

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER* Grafham Water: the three immatures remained until at least the 4th, 2 on the 12th, then a single until the end of the month.

GLOSSY IBIS* Ely: presumed to be the same bird reported in the area in December when it was last reported on the 12th; seen in February from the 14th until the 19th.

ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD*: Wryde Croft Thorney: the bird recorded in January was still present until at least the 24th.

GLAUCOUS GULL Cambridge Research Park/Long Drove Cottenham: an adult and a 2 c.y. from the 1st until at least the 9th, a 2 c.y. still present until the end of the month.

ICELAND GULL Grafham Water: on the 21st.

LAPLAND BUNTING* Earith: one flying north on the 26th.

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 month began with a rare few days of mild weather before, at the beginning of the second week, the Continental high returned bringing an easterly wind and temperatures close to zero with some flurries of weak snow. Mid-month the westerly wind brought a return to milder, spring-like weather culminating in Storm Doris on the 23rd when the county was battered by severe winds, after which the days were windy, with some rain but still mild.

Wildfowl

Mute Swan Ouse Fen: 160+ on the 4th. May Farm Littleport: 10-20 all month.

Bewick's Swan Burwell Fen: 2 on the 4th and 5th, Ouse Washes 54 on the 19th, Nene Washes (Ring's End): 85 on the 20th, May Farm Littleport: maximum 69 on the 5th.

Whooper Swan Ouse Fen: on the 4th, Wicken Fen: 31 on the 4th, 40 on the 7th, 7 on the 24th, Burwell Fen: 18 on the 5th, one on the 12th, 13th and 2 on the 24th, Nene Washes (Ring's End): 175 on the 20th, May Farm Littleport: maximum 194 on the 23rd.

Bean Goose* birds of the race 'Tundra': Cambridge Research Park: 2 briefly on the 1st, Nene Washes: 3 on the 13th, Farcet Fen: 3 on the 25th.

White-fronted Goose Ouse Washes: c30 on the 1st, one on the 19th, Burwell Fen: c15 on the 4th, 12 on the 5th, 37 on the 6th, 31 on the 12th, 18 on the 20th and the 24th, Needingworth Lakes: 41 on the 4th, 46 on the 6th, Paxton Pits: 20 on the 4th - 5th, 14 on the 19th, Manea: 28 by the fishing pit on the 8th (likely to be the same birds as reported from the Ouse Washes), Cam Washes Upware: 37+ on the 17th.

Greylag Goose Burwell Fen: 172 on the 13th and 74 on the 24th, Fowlmere NR: 80 on the 14th, Wicken Fen: maximum 43 on the 16th, Trumpington Clay Farm: 52 on the 27th, Cam Washes Upware: 238 on the 28th.

Canada Goose Trumpington Clay Farm: 54 on the 10th, Cam Washes Upware: 67 on the 16th, 42 on the 28th.

Barnacle Goose Ouse Washes: 10 on the 1st, Paxton Pits: on the 11th.

Brent Goose Grafham Water: on the 15th, Earith: on the 26th.

Egyptian Goose Burwell Fen: on the 6th, Burwell (Priory Farm): 4 on the 16th, Paxton Pits: on the 17th, 2 on the 26th, May Farm Littleport: 2 all month.

Shelduck Burwell Fen: 9 on the 6th, 3 on the 16th, 8 on the 24th, Wicken Fen: on the 7th and 18th, Paxton Pits: from the 11th, Nene Washes: 21 on the 13th, Cam Washes Upware: 6 on the 16th - 17th, 2 on the 28th.

Mandarin Wimpole Hall: 3 on the 7th, 8 on the 9th.

Wigeon Milton CP: 29 on the 12th, Nene Washes: 12,929 on the 13th, Burwell Fen: maximum 720 on the 16th, Cam Washes Upware: c260 on the 16th, c450 on the 28th, Wicken Fen: maximum 580 on the 16th.

Gadwall Burwell Fen: maximum 142 on the 8th, Milton CP: 67 on the 12th, Nene Washes: 228 on the 13th, Cam Washes Upware 23 on the 28th.

Teal Fowlmere NR: 26 on the 2nd, Nene Washes: 2,726 on the 13th, Burwell Fen: maximum 720 on the 16th, Cam Washes Upware: 34+ on the 16th, Wicken Fen: maximum 268 on the 3rd, May Farm Littleport: 60+ all month.

Mallard Burwell Fen: maximum 92 on the 16th, Cam Washes Upware: 33 on the 16th, Wicken Fen: maximum 220 on the 16th, May Farm Littleport: 300+ all month.

Pintail Paxton Pits: 2-4 on several dates from the 4th, Fowlmere NR: 3 on the 8th, Nene Washes: 109 on the 13th, Wicken Fen: 2 on the 16th, Witcham Gravel: 3 males on the 24th.

Shoveler Milton CP: 2 on the 12th, Nene Washes: 226 on the 13th, Burwell Fen: maximum 192 on the 16th, Wicken Fen: maximum 270 on the 16th, Cam Washes Upware: 28 on the 28th.

Red-crested Pochard Ouse Washes (Earith-Sutton): 2 - a male and a female - on the 18th.

Pochard Trumpington Clay Farm: 4 on the 10th, Milton CP: 3 on the 12th.

Tufted Duck Paxton Pits: 136 on the 12th, Milton CP: 49 on the 12th, Burwell Fen: maximum 43 on the 16th, Wicken Fen 68 on the 16th, Whittlesford GP: 20+ on the 27th.

Scaup Ouse Washes (Earith-Sutton): 9 on the 18th - 25th, 7 on the 26th, Grafham Water: 4 on the 19th - 22nd, Witcham Gravel: 2 on the 24th.

Common Scoter Grafham Water: a long-stay bird, a female, still present until the 12th.

Goldeneye Paxton Pits: c90 on the 4th, Milton CP: a drake on the 8th, Grafham Water: 146 on the 12th.

Smew Needingworth Lakes: on the 6th, 3 'redheads' on the 19th, Fen Drayton Lakes: a male and 2 'redheads' on the 12th, one on the 17th, Colne Fen GP: 2 'redheads' on the 12th, Grafham Water: a 'redhead' on the 17th, Earith: a 'redhead' on the river.

Goosander Grafham Water: 2 on the 4th, 8 on the 12th, 11 on the 21st, Paxton Pits: 2 on the 7th, a drake on the 9th, 3 on the 19th, 2 on the 20th - 21st.



Goosander at Paxton Pits: photo by Phil Smith

Gamebirds

Red-legged Partridge May Farm Littleport: 50-60 all month.

Grey Partridge May Farm Littleport: 5 on the 5th and 7 on the 21st, Wicken Fen: 3 on the 16th, Burwell Fen: 3 on the 24th, Lark Rise Farm: 5 on the 24th.

Pheasant May Farm Littleport: 50-60 all month.

Cormorants

Cormorant Burwell Fen: maximum 6 on the 16th, Wicken Fen: maximum 6 on the 5th, May Farm Littleport: up to 4 all month.

Egrets and herons

Bittern *reported from:* Fen Drayton Lakes and Paxton Pits.

Little Egret *reported from:* Burwell Fen (2), Fen Drayton Lakes, May Farm Littleport (6), Paxton Pits, Peterborough and Wicken Fen (2).

Great White Egret Fen Drayton Lakes: from the 13th until the 17th, Ouse Washes (Chain Corner): on the 18th, 2 on the 21st, single on 24th, then 2 on the 26th and one flying north on the 27th.

Grebes

Little Grebe *reported from:* Burwell Fen, Cam Washes Upware (2), May Farm Littleport (15), Milton CP, Trumpington Clay Farm (2) and Wicken Fen.

Great Crested Grebe Grafham Water: 324 on the 4th, Burwell Fen: on the 13th, Wicken Fen: on the 16th, May Farm Littleport: 2 all month.

Red-necked Grebe* Grafham Water: the long-stay bird still present until the end of the month.

Raptors

Red Kite Grafham Water: 5 on the 4th, Paxton Pits: 8 on the 4th, one on the 5th, 2 on the 10th, one on the 17th and 26th, Fowlmere NR: on the 14th, May Farm Littleport: 2 on the 14th, Fen Drayton Lakes: on the 17th, Great Chishill: 24 heading over the county boundary to Herts on the 21st, Heydon: on the 24th.

Marsh Harrier Fen Drayton Lakes: on the 4th, Paxton Pits: on the 4th, Burwell Fen/Wicken Fen: roost count maximum 8 on the 4th and 1-2 reported on many dates, Cam Washes: 1-2 on the 16th - 18th, May Farm Littleport: up to 6 all month.

Hen Harrier Wicken Fen: 2 on the 4th, Cam Washes Upware: a male on the 17th.

Sparrowhawk Cambridge (Milton Road): 2 attracted by the Waxwings, Chippenham Fen: one seen to take a Great Spotted Woodpecker from a feeder on the 7th, Wicken Fen: 2 males chasing on the 16th, May Farm Littleport: up to 4 all month.

Buzzard *reported from:* Burwell Fen (2), Chippenham Fen (2), Great Shelford, Great Chishill (11+), Haddenham/Aldreth Fens (5), May Farm Littleport (6), Newton-Fowlmere (road casualty), Paxton Pits (2), Sutton Gault (2), Swaffham Prior Fen, Thriplow, and Wicken Fen (3).



Common Buzzard in Fowlmere village: photo by Gary Thornton

Rails and crane

Water Rail *reported from:* May Farm Littleport (6+), Paxton Pits and Wicken Fen (3).

Moorhen Burwell Fen: 14 on the 16th, May Farm Littleport: 60+ all month.

Coot Burwell Fen: maximum 347 on the 16th, Cam Washes Upware: 23 on the 16th, Wicken Fen: 116 on the 16th.

Common Crane Burwell Fen: 3 on the 6th, Cam Washes: 8 on the 18th, Wicken Fen: 3 on the 4th and 6th, 8 on the 19th - multiple sightings of the same individuals, Nene Washes: 24 on the 13th.

Waders

Avocet Isleham Washes: 4 on the 21st.

Oystercatcher Paxton Pits: 1-4 from the 5th, Burwell Fen: on the 13th, Cam Washes Upware: on the 16th - 18th, Ouse Washes (Earith-Sutton): on the 18th, 2 on the 24th and 25th.

Golden Plover Fowlmere NR: 40 flew over on the 2nd, Paxton Pits: 3 flew over on the 5th, Sutton Gault: 'several thousand' on the 7th, Nene Washes: 6,500 on the 13th, Haddenham/Aldreth Fens: 250 on the 14th, Burwell Fen: 12 flew over on the 14th, May Farm Littleport: 74 on the 14th and 52 on the 21st, Wicken Fen: 46 flying over on the 16th, Cam Washes Upware: 12 flying over on the 16th, Ouse Washes: 650 on the 19th, Trumpington: 80 the 24th, Ouse Washes Earith-Sutton: 700 on the 24th, Sutton Gault: 1,600 on the 25th.

Lapwing Nene Washes: 11,375 on the 13th, Haddenham/Aldreth Fens: 2,750 on the 14th, Paxton Pits 100-200 from the 13th, Burwell Fen 850 on the 16th, Wicken Fen: c750 on the 16th, Sutton Gault: 900 on the 25th, Cam Washes Upware/Waterbeach: c450 on the 28th.

Ringed Plover Ouse Washes (Earith-Sutton): 3 on the 18th (first of the year), one on the 24th.

Black tailed Godwit Paxton Pits: 13 on the 4th, 21 on the 9th, Wicken Fen: singles on the 7th and 28th, Nene Washes: 780 on the 13th, Ouse Washes (Earith-Sutton): 500 on the 18th, 1,170 on the 24th.

Ruff Nene Washes: 73 on the 13th, Ouse Washes (Earith-Sutton): 12 on the 18th.

Dunlin Nene Washes: 103 on the 13th, Ouse Washes (Earith-Sutton): 60 on the 18th, 65 on the 24th.

Green Sandpiper *reported from:* Burwell Fen, Cam Washes Upware, Colne Fen GP, Grafham Water, May Farm Littleport, Paxton Pits and Wicken Fen.

Redshank Paxton Pits: 1-2 from the 5th, Ouse Washes (Earith-Sutton): 26 on the 18th, Cam Washes Upware: 2 on the 17th, 5 on the 18th.

Jack Snipe Paxton Pits: on the 10th, Ferry Meadows CP: on the 21st.

Woodcock Fowlmere NR: on the 2nd, Ferry Meadows CP: 3 on the 10th, 4 on the 21st, May Farm Littleport: 2 on the 14th, Wicken Fen: on the 26th.

Snipe *reported from*: Burwell Fen (10), Cam Washes Upware (3), Fowlmere NR (2), May Farm Littleport: 50-60 all month, Paxton Pits (2) and Wicken Fen (6).

Gulls

Black-headed Gull Haddenham/Aldreth Fens: 2,000 following the plough on the 14th, Burwell Fen: 65 on the 16th, Wicken Fen: 58 on the 16th and 1,360 on the 18th, May Farm Littleport: 200+ all month.

Mediterranean Gull Cottenham: an adult at the roost on the 14th, Wicken Fen: on the 17th, Grafham Water: on the 21st, Ferry Meadows CP: on the 23rd, Yaxley: an adult on the 25th.

Common Gull Trumpington Clay Farm: 1-2 all month, May Farm Littleport: 10+ all month.

Lesser Black-backed Gull Wicken Fen: 20 on the 18th, May Farm Littleport: 5-6 all month.

Herring Gull Burwell Fen: on the 13th, May Farm Littleport: 12+ all month.

Yellow-legged Gull *reported from*: Cambridge Research Park (2), Cottenham (4), Ferry Meadows CP, Grafham Water and Paxton Pits.

Caspian Gull *reported from*: Cottenham (Long Drove) (6+), Grafham Water (2) and Paxton Pits.

Doves, owls and kingfisher

Stock Dove May Farm Littleport: 30+ all month.

Woodpigeon Offord D'Arcy: 1,300 on the 12th.

Collared Dove May Farm Littleport: 50-60 all month.

Barn Owl *reported from*: Burwell Fen (3), Cam Washes Upware, Fowlmere NR, Grafham Water, May Farm Littleport (6), Paxton Pits, Sutton Gault (3) and Wicken Fen (3).

Little Owl *reported from*: May Farm Littleport (4).

Tawny Owl *reported from:* Abbots Ripton, Hare Park Six Mile Bottom and May Farm Littleport (2).

Short-eared Owl *reported from:* Burwell Fen/WickenFen (6), Fen Drayton Lakes, May Farm Littleport (2), Paxton Pits and Sutton Gault.

Kingfisher *reported from:* Fowlmere NR, Haddenham/Aldreth Fens, May Farm Littleport (4-6), Milton CP, Paxton Pits, Sutton Gault and Wicken Fen.

Falcons

Kestrel Burwell Fen: 5 on the 6th, Haddenham/Aldreth Fens: 6 on the 14th, May Farm Littleport: 8+ all month.

Merlin Somersham: a female on the 10th, Paxton Pits: a female on the 16th.

Peregrine Burwell Fen: on the 4th and 24th, Ferry Meadows CP: on the 16th and 21st, Cam Washes Upware: on the 17th and 24th, Wicken Fen: 2 on the 17th, Ouse Washes (Earith-Sutton): 2 on the 18th, Cambridge: on the 20th, May Farm Littleport: 1-2 all month.

Shrikes and corvids

Great Grey Shrike* Wicken Fen: the individual from the previous months continued to be reported until the end of the month; there is some evidence that two birds were present, based on timings and locations of sightings. Comparison of photographs submitted to the Club's gallery seem to back this up. Melbourn: one from 6th - 9th.

Magpie May Farm Littleport: 20+ all month.

Jackdaw Wicken Fen: c100 on the 18th, May Farm Littleport: 200+ all month.

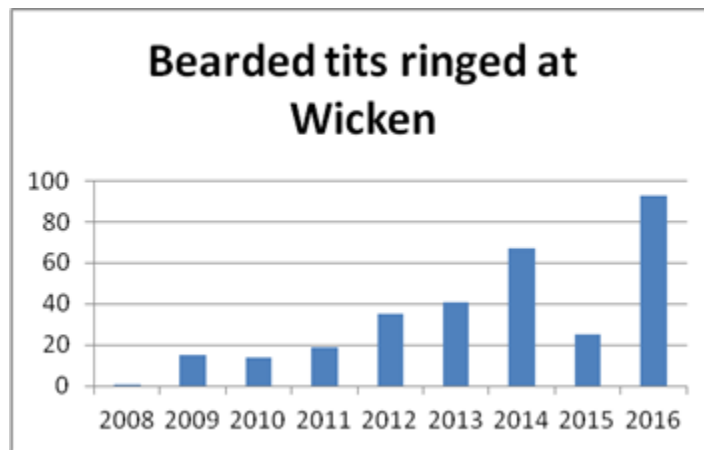
Rook May Farm Littleport: 200+ all month.

Carrion Crow Wicken Fen: 16 on the 16th, May Farm Littleport: 200+ all month.

Tits and larks

Marsh Tit *reported from:* Chippenham Fen and Paxton Pits.

Bearded Tit *a paper in the latest issue of Bird Study by Malzer and Hansell relating to a study in the Scottish lowlands highlights the importance of unmanaged reedbed for nesting Bearded Tits. For several years now the reedbed at Wicken Fen has been uncut and this may explain the suggested population growth shown by the number of birds ringed year on year.*



(Figure courtesy of Jo Jones)

Wicken Fen: 2 birds ringed as juveniles on June 25th 2016 turned up at Holme Bird Observatory (Norfolk) on October 29th.

Skylark May Farm Littleport: 40+ all month.

Warblers

Cetti's Warbler *reported from:* Fen Drayton Lakes (3), Fowlmere NR (3), May Farm Littleport (2-3), Paxton Pits (3) and Wicken Fen (7).

Chiffchaff Ely SW: 5+ on the 15th, 2 on the 26th plus 4 birds grey and white which may (or may not) have been of the nominate race, Ouse Washes Earith-Sutton: on the 24th, May Farm Littleport: 2-3 all month.

Siberian Chiffchaff* Ely SW: on the 15th - 16th and 26th.

Blackcap Waterbeach: a female on the 21st, Burwell: on the 22nd.

Waxwing, Nuthatch, Starling and thrushes

Waxwing Cambridge Milton Road /Science Park area: 12 -15 from the 1st until at least the 25th, Yaxley: 2 in a private garden on the 12th.

Nuthatch *reported from:* Chippenham Fen.

Starling Isleham: a roost of 10,000 to 15,000 on the 6th, Wicken Fen: c120 on the 16th, Wimblington: a roost of 4,000-5,000 on the 26th.

Fieldfare Haddenham/Aldreth Fens: 500-600 on the 14th, Wicken Fen: a roost of c50 on the 19th, Burwell Fen: 8 on the 24th, Sutton Gault: 50 on the 25th.

Redwing surprisingly no records of more than one or two other than May Farm Littleport: 10+ all month.

Starts and chats

Black Redstart Cambridge: on the roof of St. Botolph's Church on the 27th.

Stonechat Burwell Fen: up to 5, mostly 1-3 on several dates from the 4th, Wicken Fen: 1-3 on several dates from the 4th, Ouse Fen: a pair on the 4th, Sutton Gault: 2 on the 7th and 25th, Trumpington Clay Farm: on the 10th, Paxton Pits: a pair on the 14th and 18th, 4 on the 19th, Ouse Washes (Earith-Sutton): 2 on the 18th, May Farm Littleport: 5-6 all month.

Sparrows, wagtails and pipits

Tree Sparrow Foxton: up to 14 on a garden feeder on the 8th, Ouse Washes Welches Dam: 83 on the 8th, Redmere Farm: up to 85 during the month.

Grey Wagtail *reported from:* Cambridge (St, Catharine's College), Haddenham/Aldreth Fens, May Farm Littleport and Paxton Pits.

Pied Wagtail Whittlesford: 200-300 in a roost on the 12th, Haddenham/Aldreth Fens: 28 on the 14th, May Farm Littleport: 100+ all month.

Meadow Pipit May Farm Littleport: 100+ all month.



Meadow Pipit at Landbeach: photo by James Hanlon

Water Pipit Wicken Fen: on the 4th, Sutton Gault: 20+ on the 7th, 5 on the 18th, 28 on the 19th, 26 on the 25th.

Finches and buntings

Brambling Roman Road (Copley - A11): c10 with Chaffinches on the 6th, Ouse Washes Welches Dam: on the 8th, Cambridge (Windsor Road): in a garden on the 13th, Lark Rise Farm: one with other finches on feeders on the 20th, Hare Park Six Mile Bottom: 3 with Chaffinches on the 27th.

Greenfinch May Farm Littleport: 50+ all month.

Goldfinch Wicken Fen: 50 on the 18th, May Farm Littleport: 80+ all month.

Siskin Paxton Pits: 12+ on the 4th, 17+ on the 11th, Chippenham Fen: 12+ on the 7th, Fowlmere NR: on the 14th, Wicken Fen: one caught and ringed on the 17th.

Linnet Paxton Pits: c520 on the 4th.

Lesser Redpoll *reported from:* Woodwalton Fen and Wicken Fen.

Mealy Redpoll Woodwalton Fen: 2 on the 17th.

Yellowhammer Paxton Pits: c50 on the 4th, Cam Washes Upware: 20+ on the 17th.

Corn Bunting May Farm Littleport: 50+ all month.

Reed Bunting Cam Washes Upware: 50+ on the 17th, May Farm Littleport: 100+ all month.

Exotica

Ross's Goose Wicken Fen: the familiar individual still in the area associating with Greylags.

Chinese Goose Ouse Fen: on the 4th,

Glaucous/Herring Gull hybrid Cambridge Research Park: a possible on the 1st.

American Wigeon/Eurasian Wigeon hybrid Chain Corner: a male seen on several dates from the 21st.

Keeping up the list: at the end of February (according to the E-bulletin records) the county species total is now 141. New species this month: Glossy Ibis, Avocet, Ringed Plover, Black Redstart.

As it is now March, some of our early starting rare breeding birds are now back on their territories, and others are arriving. Care and common sense should be used when reporting sightings of ANY species listed by the Rare breeding bird panel (rbbp.org.uk for details) and they will cease to be posted on our news services and in bulletins except in a generalised way. Early species such as Stone Curlew, Lesser-spotted woodpecker, Peregrine and crane are heading to territories NOW, so think before you type.

Please contact Louise Bacon, your county recorder, for advice and further information on cbcrecorder@gmail.com.

Contributors:

Colin Addington, Chris Akhurst, Jill Aldred, Richard Allison, Louise Bacon, Geoff Barlow, Peter Bircham, Richard Bradbury, Andrew Bryce, Michael Cadney, Ade Cooper, Steve Cooper, Martin Davis, Ian Dawson, Ian and Sheila Dickerson, Brendan Doe, Steve Dudley, Steve Dutton, David Ellis, Andy Frost, James Hanlon, Andy Hannaford, Mark Hawkes, David Heath, Jon Heath, Michael Holdsworth, David Hopkins, John Hoppett, Mark Jackson, Richard Johnson, Charlie Kitchin, Marcus Kohler, Mike and Anne Knowles, Neil Lerner, Nick Laughton, Stella Laughton, Vince Lea, Diana Leech, Owen and Monica Marks, Bruce Martin, Paul Mason, Duncan McNiven, Matt Mellor, Steve Mumford, Daniel Osborne, Richard Palmer, Richard Patient, Mark Peck, Chris Percival, Duncan Poyser, Doug Radford, John Raven, Gary Rawlings, Chris Rider, David Saunders, Norman Sills, Simon Stirrup, Jonathan Taylor, Iain Thomas, Richard Thomas, Chris Thorne and the Wicken Fen Group, Keith Tinworth, Ken Venus, Luke Wake, Mark Ward, Iain Webb, Matt Webb, Mike Weedon, Jamie Wells, Anthony Weston, Kevin Wilson, David Withrington, Patrick Woods and Bartow Wylie.

Next indoor meetings:

Tomorrow.....Friday 10th March, St Johns Hall, Cambridge start at 7.45

**Annual General Meeting followed by
Pineapple Peril for Palearctic migrants & African forest species by Ann Scott**

The story of an African reserve set up in memory of Bob Scott to help overcome some of the problems facing trans-Saharan migrant birds.

Bob Scott worked for the RSPB for many years and, after his retirement, was chairman of Cambridgeshire Bird Club from 1999 to 2004.

For more information go to:

www.whyTSbirds.org

Friday 7th April, Cottenham Village College



Feathered Fiends? Reasons to love your neighbourhood gulls by Viola Ross-Smith

Viola Ross-Smith is Science Communications Manager at BTO, responsible for spreading the good word about the BTO's research through print publications, social media and as many other channels as possible. Before taking on this role in 2015, Viola worked on gulls for 10 years, starting during her PhD and continuing in her previous job at the BTO, as an ecologist. She is still involved in seabird tracking and research, and sits on the Executive Committee of the Seabird Group.

Friday 12th May, Cottenham Village College<

Reclaiming South Georgia by Tony Martin

Two centuries ago, rats and mice were inadvertently introduced to the UK overseas territory of South Georgia by sealers and then whalers. Over time, these unwelcome guests ate their way through most of the island's wildlife, reducing the bird population by more than 90%. They threatened the extinction of an endemic bird and fundamentally changing the entire ecosystem of this globally important sub-Antarctic wildlife refuge. Tony Martin led a 6-year project to eradicate these invaders on behalf of the South Georgia Heritage Trust, using 3 helicopters, 300 tonnes of bait, £8m and a team of 40 people. This talk will explore what was involved in carrying out the world's largest rodent eradication project on a remote, glacier-encrusted island, the very encouraging results so far, and what lies ahead before South Georgia can finally be declared rodent free.

Tony Martin is Professor of Animal Conservation at the University of Dundee, and currently under secondment to the South Georgia Heritage Trust as Director of the South Georgia Habitat Restoration Project. He was previously a researcher at the Sea Mammal Research Unit and then the British Antarctic Survey in Cambridge for 30 years, working on cetaceans and other aquatic vertebrates, especially in polar regions and the Amazon. At home in Cambridgeshire, Tony's garden has grown alarmingly, now hosting breeding avocets, harriers, kingfishers and sand martins.

Club research - you can help with.....

Sand Martin Survey

The Cambridgeshire Bird Atlas notes that a survey of Sand Martins (*Riparia riparia*) is overdue. I recently volunteered to become the club's research officer and would like to instigate such a study in 2017.

Sand Martins are the smallest of the hirundines to be seen in Cambridgeshire. The flight is often described as "weak" or "fluttering" but even so they migrate thousands of miles and are one of our first summer visitors. The earliest ever arrival date comes from the Nene Washes, the 27th February 1994, and the latest ever departure is from the Ouse Washes, the 17th November 1968.

Sand Martins nest throughout most of Europe. They can cope with a wide range of climatic conditions, from the north of Norway to the hotter parts of Spain. They winter in Africa with British birds travelling through France and Spain to the Sahel.

The 2015 Cambridgeshire Bird Report notes that Sand Martins are on the "green list" but that they have suffered declines in the past. 184 pairs nested in 2015 at 7 sites. Peak counts recorded 175 individuals on the Cam Washes in spring and 500 at Burwell in late summer. The highest ever count was an estimated 2 million birds at a roost on the Ouse Washes in August 1968, unlikely to be surpassed in modern times.

Birdlife (Birds in Europe 2004) give the status of the species as "depleted" with moderate declines in the late 20th century; they say the situation has stabilised but with very confused local variations. There appear, for instance, to have been recent gains in Ireland but falls in the UK.

A survey in Cambridgeshire should throw some light on the picture locally. It may also help us influence planning decisions and assess the value of purpose built nesting structures. The surveyors will be club members making specific notes of their observations during their normal bird watching. I do not envisage surveyors having to "sign up" for specific routes at specific intervals, but we can suggest sites to visit for participants if needed. I'm sure there are sufficient of us to produce interesting and valid results as part of our normal activities.

The study will be in two parts. First, I would like to get an accurate and comprehensive record of nesting colonies. Secondly, I believe it would be valuable if we could get a more general idea of where the birds are and what they are doing. Sand Martins are insectivores but arrive early and leave late so certain habitats must be vital to their well-being.

I will prepare user-friendly forms to assist us in the survey work which will be available from the club's web site, in the next edition of the e-bulletin or by request from Robert Browne or Louise Bacon by email to research@cambridgebirdclub.org.uk.

Finally and importantly, care is needed particularly when surveying Sand Martins. Obvious hazards are deep water bodies and steep unstable slopes. The laws relating to trespass and access also apply.

Robert Brown

Cambridgeshire Spotted Flycatchers

Michael Holdsworth

The CBC is planning to continue the Spotted Flycatcher Project into 2017.

2016 was the second year of this survey and we found many more pairs than we had in 2015, mainly because we put in more effort and hours. A hundred or so observers sent in records. A high proportion of these turned out not to be Club members but ordinary householders (often still BTO and RSPB members) responding to publicity in parish magazines and on websites. Genuine citizen science!

Most pairs were finally pinned down by dogged fieldwork from a handful of flycatcher *aficionados*, cold-searching traditional sites, peering suspiciously into people's gardens and lurking in churchyards. Most popular were gardens (not necessarily large ones) with good herbaceous plantings and often with some water (free-range dogs seemed to help too, deterring cats, squirrels and corvids); and parkland or churchyards with good nettle or umbellifer patches, often under pollarded limes or with animals. None was in our cities, and none was in or directly adjacent to arable farmed land. Pairs were generally unobtrusive and often entirely silent. Many never ranged further than 50 or so metres from their nest-site; others only fed high in the canopy. Quite a nesting challenge!

We confirmed 58 pairs as definitely breeding, at 49 sites (there were some mini-'colonies'). We found 36 actual nests, and most of the other confirmed records were based on reports of adults with very recently fledged noisy dependent young either close by where birds had been present earlier through the season, or at traditional sites from previous years but where we couldn't find the actual nest this year.

There were a further nine probable/almost certain pairs - one or two birds present on several occasions in good habitat or again at traditional sites. Some of these may have failed, or been predated, or may just have been single unrequited birds. And we had a further 19 possible pairs at new or non-traditional sites; but again, many may just have been single unpaired birds.

This makes a maximum total of 86 pairs, which I suspect (wild guess) represents 20 to 60% of the likely Cambridgeshire total. This is nicely in line with the *2007-11 Cambridgeshire Bird Atlas* 'guesstimate' of 100 to 200 pairs in the County.

Flycatchers continue to be in deep decline.

<http://blx1.bto.org/birdtrends/species.jsp?&s=spofl>

This year I had the opportunity of working with the BTO's Chris Hewson and Lee Barber on a

geocator project, divided between Cambridgeshire and Devon.

SpotFly problems are as likely to be during the nine months they are out of the UK as they are here. There are only half-a-dozen ring-recoveries ever south of the Sahara, so we don't really know where they go or what threats they might be facing. Cutting-edge geolocators for birds of this size now weigh about 0.3 gms -that's a tiny fraction of a flycatcher's body weight, or a grain of rice. But this constraint means that there can be no antenna, solar-recharging or remote satellite sensing (as you can with Cuckoos and Nightjars). The geolocators need to be retrieved at some stage to be read. All they do is record light change and time, so that by recording dawn, dusk and time you have a rough idea of where the bird is every day.

Keen eyesight, virtuoso manoeuvrability and near-zero braking distances made the birds tricky to mist-net, but they turned out to be suckers for perch-traps! We fell just one short of our funded quota of twenty tagged birds (plus another twenty 'controls' for comparisons of survival) and all we have to do now is recapture them this summer to retrieve the devices and download the data. Some 66 nestlings were ringed, mainly by the BTO's Lee Barber. Some pairs were leading interesting lives: one menage-a-trois saw a single male bird with two females and nests on the go on opposite sides of the same house. And there were two cases of males apparently abandoning single mums as soon as nest-provisioning duties were required. This sort of bad behaviour is only revealed when you start individually marking the birds.

If you just see even a single Spotted Flycatcher after 1 June this year, it will be worth following up. Do you know of a pair nesting near you this year, or of a traditional site which may be being used again?

Email me at spofl@cambridgebirdclub.org.uk with any information you have, including records of single birds; and please provide a map reference, preferably to 100m (as TL000000). Follow your leads up and keep us informed or we can arrange to follow up if you don't have time yourself.

secretary@cambridgebirdclub.org.uk



WICKEN FEN (BIRD RINGING) GROUP

Brief news for February 2017

There were netting sessions at the Fen on only 8 different days in February. The month's ringing total was 66, but a further 185 different birds were retrapped, so the overall total for the month was 251. Individual species totals (the first figure new birds, the second retraps) were:

Green Woodpecker	1, 1	Song Thrush	1, 0
GS Woodpecker	0, 1	Redwing	1, 0
Goldcrest	1, 4	Robin	2, 10
Blue Tit	7, 64	Dunnock	4, 6
Great Tit	9, 38	House Sparrow	1, 2
Bearded Tit	3, 1	Chaffinch	7, 4
Cetti's Warbler	1, 2	Goldfinch	6, 0
Long-tailed Tit	2, 28	Siskin	1, 0
Tree Creeper	1, 4	Bullfinch	1, 1
Wren	6, 9	Reed Bunting	5, 5
Blackbird	6, 5		

Old birds retrapped during the month were:

Great Tit at 7y 9m, Long-tailed Tit at 6y 11m, Blue Tit at 6y 7m, Robin at 4y 9m, Reed Bunting at 4y 0m, Cetti's Warbler at 3y 6m and Chaffinch at 3y 5m.

External Events and announcements

From Kate Fleet the Events Manager at Heffers bookshop.

On 28th March Heffers are hosting a talk by two members of the Rutland Ospreys Project. This link has more information: <https://rutlandospreys.eventbrite.co.uk>

Tony Fulford is continuing his investigations into why some Willow Warblers sing like Chiffchaffs. Last year, with help from local birders, he found eight such singers. This allowed some preliminary playback experiments to discover how Willow Warblers (ordinary and wiffwaffs) and Chiffchaffs react to one another's songs. In order to follow up these studies this year he is again asking people to listen out for and report (to tonyfulford@gmail.com) any wiffwaffs they might come across in Cambridgeshire this spring. Listen for "chiffchaff" songs sung rather too fast (4 notes per second rather than 3) or with odd stray notes in them, or for Willow Warblers adding odd scratchy bits to the end of their usual liquid song; such birds often sooner or later reveal themselves to be mixed singers. They are commoner than you may think.

Bird Surveyors needed by the RSPB

Cambridgeshire

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

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. With the help of volunteers carrying out surveys on farms we are able to provide surveys to farmers and enable our advisers to deliver more targeted advice on helping give nature a home through wildlife friendly farming practices.

We are looking for individuals who are:

Able to identify all common bird species and especially farmland birds by sight and sound.

Able to walk either a route of several kilometres over rough farmland or along public access routes in a 1km² allocated tetrad.

Able to read large-scale maps.

Experience of bird surveying is desirable but training will be provided on survey methodology. We will reimburse you for out of pocket travel expenses and provide you with training and ongoing support in your role.

Training days are to be held on 18 March 2017 at RSPB Ouse Washes Nature Reserve.

Farmland Bird Surveys

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

Turtle Dove Surveys

When: May to July, 2 early morning surveys during the breeding season

For more information please look on the volunteering page on our website: www.rspb.org.uk

or contact: Katy Froud Tel. 01603 697592 or Email: katy.froud@rspb.org.uk

Answers to the Quiz in the October e-bulletin?

Hi y'all,

Apologies for belatedly providing the answers to the quiz in the October e-bulletin but events at home across the pond have eclipsed all other matters. I'm certain that you brainy guys, with your scholarly erudition befitting a great University City, managed to answer most if not all of the questions, especially as I know that many of you have visited the USA and take a keen interest in our birds. You sure are all welcome to drop into the old homestead and share a bottle or two of vintage Bourbon if you ever pitch up here in Kalamzoo.

A. Harv. Eatonburger

1. Which bird is the national emblem of the USA ? Bald Eagle.
2. Which bird is the emblem of a Missouri baseball team? Cardinal.
3. Which bird is the emblem of an Ontario baseball team? Blue Jay.
4. Which bird is also known as the Oldsquaw? Long-tailed Duck.
5. Which two states do not have wild birds as their state bird? Rhode Island and Delaware both have chickens as their state bird!
6. Which bird is literally immaculate in juvenile and winter plumage? Spotted Sandpiper - the specific name is macularia, meaning spotted, from the Latin macula. Immaculate literally means unspotted, which the species is in winter and juvenile plumage.
7. Which bird has a scientific name meaning grey marsh runner? Short-billed Dowitcher (Limnodromus griseus).
8. Which bird has a scientific name meaning wandering worm-eater? Tennessee Warbler (Vermivora peregrina).
9. Which bird has a scientific name meaning bi-coloured quick mover? Tree Swallow (Tachycineta bicolor).

10. How many American species have become extinct since 1900? Four: Labrador Duck, Passenger Pigeon, Eskimo Curlew and Ivory-billed Woodpecker.



Red Kite at Grafham Water: photo by Ian Dawson

Next bulletin (March) due on the 10th April, any articles, contributions to reach me by the 4th please. Ed.