

Cambridgeshire Bird Club



E-Bulletin 49 July 2017

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



Red-necked Phalarope at an undisclosed site: photo by Tony Martin

HEADLINES

BLACK STORK* Woodwalton Fen on the 25th, going south, probably the bird seen in Lincolnshire earlier.

BLACK-NECKED GREBE Grafham Water on the 24th.

RED-NECKED PHALAROPE* Ouse Washes on the 28th, having been seen at a private site on the 26th and 27th.

BLACK-WINGED STILT Ouse Washes the pair with young were reported regularly and the young fledged during the month to become the first successful breeding in the County.



Black-winged Stilt juveniles at an undisclosed site: photo by Tony Martin

A brief history of Black-winged Stilts in Cambridgeshire prior to 2017

First reported at the Cambridge Sewage Farm in May 1945 during a 'minor invasion'.

After a gap of thirty-eight years 4 were seen on the Nene Washes in April 1983, they left for a while but a pair returned and nested, however, the eggs were taken and the presumed pair were seen finally on the Ouse Washes on June 17th - the first failed breeding attempt.

1998 one on the Cam Washes in early May.

2005 one on the Ouse Washes in late April - later seen on the Norfolk section.

2009 a female at Maxey GP in late April - previously seen in Suffolk.

2012 a male at Paxton Pits May 3rd to 8th and on the 24th, Ouse Fen a pair on May 8th followed by a (the Paxton Pits) male from 9th to 23rd - also seen at Barleycraft GP on 22nd.

2014 a complicated picture! A pair at Paxton Pits in mid-May, another pair at Fen Drayton Lakes, then Ouse Fen then Earith Washes on the same date. These latter birds were accompanied by a colour-ringed escape and all 3 were seen at Burwell Fen the following day. This second pair returned to Fen Drayton Lakes nested laid one egg which was predated after which they moved to Berry Fen (joined by the escape) until late May. The escape remained in the County at various sites until mid-November.

2015 Burwell Fen 2 in mid-May nested, laid 2 eggs but then deserted - assumed predation. Also 2 on the Nene Washes in mid-April and 2 on Burwell Fen in mid-June.

This is a very typical pattern of a colonising species, failed attempts over a series of years until successful. What will next year bring?

Stop Press: According to 'British Birds' a pair bred in Norfolk this year and at Cliffe Pools Kent.

WOODLARK Eldernell on the 2nd.

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 much as June ended with dry, warm, occasionally hot (and very hot) weather. Mid-month, in a hint of what was to come, there were a few slightly wetter days and then in the final week the jet stream changed its path allowing a westerly Atlantic airstream to dominate and with it wet and cooler conditions prevailed, including a day or two of northerly winds.

Wildfowl

Mute Swan Burwell Fen 8 on the 12th, Wicken Fen 4 + 2 cygnets on the 14th, Trumpington Clay Farm 5 adults on 18th.

Whooper Swan Ouse Washes on several dates - presumably an over-summering injured bird.

Greylag Goose Wicken Fen 27 on the 1st, Burwell Fen 70 on the 12th, Trumpington Clay Farm 46 (some 2/3 grown young) on the 14th, Fowlmere NR 31 on 18th, Sutton North Fen 198 on the 23rd, Littleport May Farm up to 30 all month.

Canada Goose Trumpington Clay Farm 22 on the 18th, Sutton North Fen 33 on the 23rd.

Barnacle Goose Grafham Water on the 17th, 2 on the 30th, Sutton North Fen 28 on the 23rd.

Egyptian Goose Fen Drayton Lakes 12 on the 2nd, Trumpington Clay Farm 1+ on the 18th, Sutton North Fen 6 on the 23rd, Littleport May Farm 2 all month.

Shelduck Wicken Fen on the 1st, Littleport May Farm 2 juveniles from the 3rd - 10th, Burwell Fen 7 on the 12th.

Mandarin Wicken Fen a juvenile on the 7th.



Mandarin with Mallards and a Little Egret at Wicken Fen: photo Roger Cresswell.

Wigeon Ouse Washes 3 on the 1st, one on the 29th.

Gadwall Wicken Fen 7 on the 1st, 2 on the 14th, Burwell Fen 14 on the 12th, Littleport May Farm a male in eclipse on 30th - 31st.

Teal Ouse Washes 20 on the 1st, Fowlmere NR 1-2 from the middle of the month.

Mallard Burwell Fen 48 on the 12th, Wicken Fen 98 (many 2/3 grown young) on the 14th, Trumpington Clay Farm 12 (mostly 2/3 grown young) on the 18th, Whittlesford GP 27 on the 19th, Littleport May Farm up to 300 all month.

Garganey *reported from:* Burwell Fen (7), Ouse Washes (8 - bred with 3 broods) and Paxton Pits.

Shoveler Wicken Fen 7 on the 14th, Littleport May Farm 2 from the 4th - 7th.

Pochard Fen Drayton Lakes 8 on the 2nd.

Tufted Duck *reported from:* Grafham Water (600+), Littleport May Farm 10+ all month, Trumpington Clay Farm (12 adults with broods of 6,6,10 and 5 on the 18th), Whittlesford GP (8), and Wicken Fen (2).

Goldeneye Fen Drayton Lakes on 20th and 30th, Grafham Water on the 22nd and 30th.

Gamebirds

Red-legged Partridge Littleport May Farm 50+ all month - several broods seen.

Grey Partridge *reported from:* Fowlmere NR, Littleport May Farm 30+ all month broods of 11,9,9,7 and 5.



Grey Partridge at Fowlmere: photo by Phil Smith

Quail calling birds at: Chippenham Fen on the 5th, Wicken Fen on the 11th, Cottenham on the 13th, Cheveley-Stetchworth on the 13th, Sutton North Fen 2 on the 23rd, Burwell Fen on the 24th.

Pheasant Littleport May Farm 100+ all month - bred.

Cormorants

Cormorant *reported from:* Burwell Fen (6), Fowlmere NR (6 flyovers on the 22nd), Grafham Water, Littleport May Farm (4), Trumpington Clay Farm and Wicken Fen.

Egrets and herons

Bittern Burwell Fen one seen in flight on the 12th, Wicken Fen one, sometimes two, seen in flight on several dates, Cambridge Research Park on the 30th.

Little Egret *reported from:* Burwell Fen (20-30 most of the month maximum 37 on the 16th), Cam Washes, Fen Drayton Lakes (3), Littleport May Farm (2), Paxton Pits (5) and Wicken Fen (11).

Great White Egret Ouse Washes on the 14th, Paxton Pits on the 24th - 25th, Fen Drayton Lakes on the 25th - 26th.

Grebes

Little Grebe *reported from:* Littleport May Farm 15+ all month - bred, Trumpington Clay Farm (3 + one young), Wicken Fen (8 adults with at least 8 small young).

Great Crested Grebe *reported from:* Littleport May Farm 4 plus 4 young, Wicken Fen 2 pairs each with 2 young.

Raptors

Red Kite near Sawtry 30+ at the usual site on the 1st, Fowlmere NR 1-2 regularly seen 4 on the 29th, Cambridge Airfield on the 20th, Paxton Pits on the 25th, Littleport May Farm 2-3 all month.

Marsh Harrier *reported from:* Burwell Fen (2), Cambridge Airfield, Chippenham Fen (3), Great Fen (bred), Littleport May Farm (6 plus 4 young), Ouse Washes (3), Wicken Fen (3).

Sparrowhawk *reported from:* Cambridge Airfield (2), Great Shelford (adult and juvenile on separate days), Littleport May Farm (4) and Willingham.

Buzzard *reported from:* Cambridge Airfield (3), Chippenham Fen, Great Shelford, Littleport May Farm (6+), Pampisford, Sawston by-pass, Stapleford and Thriplow.

Rails and crane

Water Rail *reported from:* Littleport May Farm (6+) and Wicken Fen (plus 2 young).

Moorhen Littleport May Farm 50+ all month.

Coot Burwell Fen 30 on the 12th, Wicken Fen 68 plus young on the 14th, Trumpington Clay Farm 10 plus 3 young on the 18th, Littleport May Farm 10+ all month.

Common Crane Ouse Washes 2 on the 3rd.

Waders

Avocet Ouse Washes adults with young on the 1st, near the Ouse Washes 10+ on the 20th, 7 on the 27th, 2 on the 29th, 10 on the 30th, Littleport May Farm 2 on the 31st.

Oystercatcher *reported from:* Burwell Fen, Littleport May Farm (2 adults and 3 juveniles).

Lapwing Kingfishers Bridge 200+ on the 2nd, Fowlmere NR 15-30 regularly seen around the Mere maximum 110, Burwell Fen c370 on the 12th, c530 on the 25th, 200 on the 28th, Ouse Washes 168 on the 27th, 150+ on the 30th, Littleport May Farm 40+ all month.

Little Ringed Plover *reported from:* Burwell Fen (5), Fen Drayton Lakes, Fowlmere NR, Grafham Water, Maxey GP (3), Ouse Washes and Wicken Fen (4).

Ringed Plover Fen Drayton Lakes 4 on the 23rd, one on the 30th.

Whimbrel Burwell Fen a flyover on the 22nd, the 25th, and 31st, Kingfishers Bridge on the 22nd, Cherry Hinton 4 flew over on the 25th.

Curlew Paxton Pits on the 3rd, Hemingford Grey a flyover on the 12th, Stapleford one flying west on the 16th, Ouse Washes one flying south on the 16th, Grafham Water a flyover on the 30th.

Black tailed Godwit records of two different races: *limosa* the race that breeds in England and *islandica* which, as the name suggests breeds in Iceland. Some of these latter race birds are now returning through the County. Fowlmere NR on the 1st, Wicken Fen 22 on the 2nd, Ouse Washes 4 on the 16th, (juveniles colour-ringed presumed locally bred in nearby Norfolk), 4 on the 27th, 14 on the 29th, 29 on the 30th, Burwell Fen 4 on the 17th, 3 on the 23rd and 27th, 8 on the 28th, 3 on the 30th, Fen Drayton Lakes on the 30th, Littleport May Farm 6 on the 31st.

Colour ringed Black-tailed Godwits

If you see a colour ringed Black-tailed Godwit please send the details (date, time, location and colour combination) to www.projectgodwit.org.uk where more information can also be found. All birds ringed under this project have two colour rings above the knee on each leg; the lower right colour is lime green with a black letter 'E'. If you provide an email address the project will send you information about the bird you have seen.

Turnstone Grafham Water on the 29th, 8 on the 30th, Fen Drayton Lakes on the 30th.

Ruff Ouse Washes 3 males on the 1st, then 35 on the 16th and around 30 thereafter, Burwell Fen 3 on the 14th, then 2 - 10 for the rest of the month, Wicken Fen on the 21st, Kingfishers Bridge 3 on the 22nd, Paxton Pits on the 22nd, Littleport May Farm 6 on the 28th and 9 on the 31st.

Dunlin Grafham Water on the 16th, 3 on the 20th, Ouse Washes 4 on the 16th, one on the 27th, 2 on the 30th, Burwell Fen 2 on the 25th, 5 on the 26th, 3 on the 27th, 5 on the 28th, 3 on the 29th,

Little Stint Burwell Fen on the 26th - 28th,

Common Sandpiper Kingfishers Bridge 2 on the 2nd, Wicken Fen on the 2nd, Paxton Pits on the 3rd, Grafham Water 1-2 from the 16th maximum 4 on the 20th, Wicken Fen 2 on the 21st, Burwell Fen 1-3 from the 22nd, Sutton North Fen 7 on the 23rd, Ouse Washes on the 23rd, Fen Drayton Lakes 2 on the 23rd, one on the 25th and 30th,

Green Sandpiper *reported from:* Burwell Fen (15), Fen Drayton Lakes, Kingfishers Bridge (6), Littleport May Farm (7), Maxey GP, Ouse Washes (3), Paxton Pits (2) and Wicken Fen.



Green Sandpiper at Wicken Fen: photo by Roger Cresswell.

Greenshank Burwell Fen 2 on the 12th, then 1-2 for the rest of the month, exceptionally 27 on the 22nd and 25 on the 23rd, Ouse Washes 5 on the 16th, one on the 23rd and 29th, 3 on the 30th, Kingfishers Bridge 24 on the 22nd, one at a private site on the 27th, Littleport May Farm 2 on the 31st.

Wood Sandpiper Kingfishers Bridge on the 2nd, Paxton Pits on the 3rd, Ouse Washes on the 30th, Maxey GP on the 30th.

Redshank *reported from:* Burwell Fen (5), Fen Drayton Lakes (5), Littleport May Farm (9), Paxton Pits (4), Ouse Washes (2),

Woodcock Littleport May Farm 4 all month.

Snipe *reported from:* Burwell Fen (6+), Littleport May Farm (30+), Ouse Washes (5),

Summary of wader passage

Ringed Plover, Whimbrel, Ruff, Dunlin, Common Sandpiper, Green Sandpiper, Greenshank and Wood Sandpiper (mainly from Burwell Fen but also Ouse Washes, Paxton Pits, Fen Drayton Lakes and Grafham Water) note: dates not included indicate no count..

	1	2	3	12	14	16	17	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
RPI												4								
Whim											2			4						1
Ru	3				3	35	3	6		1	11	32		8		35	11	12	34	9
Dun						5			3					2		4		3	2	
CS		3	1			1			4	2	1	11		4	3	3	1	2	3	2
GS				14		13	7	7			18	4	10	18	13	6	4	5	5	12
Gsk				2	1	7		2			51	24	2	4	2	4		2	4	2
WS		1	1																	2

Terns and gulls

Black Tern Burwell Fen a moulting adult on the 19th.

Common Tern *reported from:* Burwell Fen (26), Cam Washes, Fowlmere NR (2), Grafham Water (4), Great Shelford (5 - see Black-headed Gull), Littleport May Farm (8).

Black-headed Gull Great Shelford 350+ mostly Black-headed but also 15% Lesser Black-backed and 2% Herring Gulls and 5 Common Terns spiralling and presumed to be feeding on an emergence of flying ants on the 17th, a phenomenon noted the same day (with fewer numbers) at Fen Drayton Lakes and Block Fen, nr Fowlmere NR 64 in a recently harvested field on the 23rd, Littleport May Farm 20+ all month - bred.

Common Gull nr Fowlmere NR 64 in a recently harvested field on the 23rd, Littleport May Farm 4-5 all month.

Lesser Black-backed Gull Great Shelford (see above), nr Fowlmere NR 218 in a recently harvested field on the 23rd, 100 flew over heading south on the 29th, Littleport May Farm 22 on the 27th.

Herring Gull Great Shelford (see above), Littleport May Farm 2-3 all month.

Yellow-legged Gull *reported from:* nr Fowlmere NR 2 in a recently harvested field, Grafham Water (12) and Paxton Pits.

Caspian Gull Paxton Pits a first-summer on the 1st.

Doves, cuckoo, owls kingfisher and woodpeckers

Stock Dove Littleport May Farm 50+ all month several broods seen.

Woodpigeon Littleport May Farm 200+ all month.

Collared Dove Littleport May Farm 30+ all month.

Turtle Dove *reported from:* Cambridge Research Park (2), Fowlmere NR (3 plus juveniles), Fen Drayton Lakes, Kings Ripton (a juvenile), Middle Fen (2), Paxton Pits and Wicken Fen.

Cuckoo Ouse Washes 2 on the 1st, 3+ on the 2nd, a juvenile on the 27th, 2 on the 29th, Littleport May Farm one calling on the 5th, Burwell Fen a juvenile on several dates from the 22nd, 2 juveniles on the 27th, Wicken Fen a juvenile on the 29th.



Juvenile Cuckoo at Wicken Fen: photo by Roger Cresswell

Barn Owl *reported from:* Burwell Fen, Fowlmere NR, Littleport May Farm 3 pairs bred, Ouse Washes (2) and Wicken Fen.

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

Tawny Owl *reported from:* Littleport May Farm (2) and Ouse Washes (a dead juvenile).

Short-eared Owl Littleport May Farm 2 all month.

Swift Harston 35+ over a cereal field on the 1st, Great Shelford c30 on the 1st feeding on flying ants, Fowlmere NR 150+ on the 16th, Littleport May Farm up to 60 hunting over the marsh all month.

Kingfisher *reported from:* Fowlmere NR (2), Littleport May Farm (a pair raised three broods 4 more adults seen) and Wicken Fen.

Falcons

Kestrel Littleport May Farm 12+ all month.

Hobby *reported from:* Burwell Fen (2), Cambridge Airfield, Fowlmere NR, Great Fen, Littleport May Farm (2-4), Ouse Washes (3), Paxton Pits, Waterbeach and Wicken Fen (2).

Peregrine Littleport May Farm a female from 3rd - 16th, Cambridge Airfield on the 20th.

Corvids

Jackdaw Sawston c350 feeding in a pasture field on the 21st, Littleport May Farm 300+ all month.

Jackdaw/Rook Chippenham Fen c1,000 (mostly Jackdaws) emerging at dawn from roost on the 5th.

Rook Fowlmere near the NR 300+ (a few Carrion Crows) in a recently harvested field on the 19th, Sawston-Stapleford c300 in a recently ploughed field on the 20th, Littleport May Farm 500+ all month.

Carrion Crow Littleport May Farm 300+ all month.

Tits and larks

Marsh Tit *reported from:* Ten Wood (2).

Bearded Tit *reported from:* Wicken Fen.

Skylark Littleport May Farm 100+ all month.

Hirundines, and warblers

Sand Martin Cam Washes c30 on the 30th, Littleport May Farm up to 40 feeding over the marsh all month.

Swallow Cam Washes c50 on the 30th, Littleport May Farm 40+ feeding over the marsh all month.

Cetti's Warbler *reported from:* Fowlmere NR, Littleport May Farm and Wicken Fen.

Grasshopper Warbler *reported from:* Middle Fen, Paxton Pits, St. Neots and Wicken Fen.

Nuthatch, Starling and Spotted Flycatcher

Nuthatch Ten Wood on the 19th, New Shardlow's Farm on the 28th.

Starling Littleport May Farm 50+ all month.

Spotted Flycatcher *reported from:* Fowlmere NR (bred), Wicken Fen (2) and Woodhurst.

Starts and chats

Black Redstart Little Downham on the 25th.

Whinchat Wicken Fen a male on the 19th.

Stonechat Wicken Fen 2+ on the 14th.

Wheatear Sutton North Fen a juvenile on the 23rd.



Juvenile Wheatear at Sutton North Fen: photo by Steve Cooper

Sparrows, wagtails and pipits

Tree Sparrow Sutton North Fen 15 on the 23rd, Ouse Washes on the 29th, Redmere Farm 120+ - bred.

Yellow Wagtail Ouse Washes 20+ on the 23rd, Littleport May Farm maximum 74 on the 31st.

Grey Wagtail *reported from:* Fowlmere NR, Hauxton (2), Littleport May Farm, and the Ouse Washes.

Pied Wagtail Ouse Washes 10+ on the 23rd, Littleport May Farm maximum 67 on the 31st.

Meadow Pipit Littleport May Farm 30+ all month.

Finches and buntings

Greenfinch Littleport May Farm 50+ all month.

Goldfinch Littleport May Farm 80+ all month.

Siskin Aldreth on the 2nd.

Linnet Littleport May Farm 50+ all month.

Crossbill Woodhurst a flyover on the 13th, Orwell a flyover on the 25th.

Corn Bunting Littleport May Farm 50+ all month.

Reed Bunting Littleport May Farm 100+ all month.

Keeping up the list: at the end of July (according to the E-bulletin records) the county species total for 2017 is now exactly at the magic 200. New species this month: Black Stork, Red-necked Phalarope and Woodlark.

Exotica

Bar-headed Goose Sutton North Fen 2 on the 23rd.

Zebra Finch Brampton on the 9th.



Zebra Finch : photo by Jim Stevenson

Contributors:

Colin Addington, Malcolm Ausden, Louise Bacon, Peter Bircham, Ian Burfield, Ade Cooper, Steve Cooper, Martin Davis, Ian Dawson, Brendan Doe, David Ellis, Mike Everett, Mike Foley, Martin Fowlie, Richard Gregory, James Hanlon, Andy Hannaford, Ron Harrold, Mark Hawkes, David Heath, Jon Heath, Mark Hill, Michael Holdsworth, David Jones, Richard and Alix Jones, Richard Johnson, Charlie Kitchin, Mike and Ann Knowles, Nick Laughton, Stella Laughton, Tony Lowe, Owen and Monica Marks, Tony Martin, Steve Mumford, Martin O'Leary, Richard Palmer, Neil Parkin, Rob Partridge, Richard Patient, Mark Peck, Doug Radford, John Raven, Petru Rednic, Graeme Reed,

Chris Rider, Jim Stevenson, Simon Stirrup, Jonathan Taylor, Richard Thomas, Chris Thorne and the Wicken Fen Group, Hugh Venables, Luke Wake, Mark Ward, Jamie Wells and Kevin Wilson.

Raptor Survey 16th September 2017 11a.m. - 12 noon

Raptors are some of our most exciting yet controversial birds. It's a dull birdwatcher that does not thrill to the sight and sound of a Red Kite. At the same time we are frequently told that there are "too many" Buzzards/Kites/Sparrowhawks - delete to suit the prejudice of the moment.

In Cambridgeshire we are blessed with a good range of raptors. It was not ever thus. Scroll back fifty years and it was a red letter day to see a Sparrowhawk let alone a Kite or a Buzzard.

The status of most Raptor species continues to change. At present we do not have breeding Ospreys but it's only a few miles from Rutland Water to Ferry Meadows so maybe in a few years ...?

A few years ago the club did a raptor count - we did 2 spring ones and an autumn one. It has been a while, and we thought we would repeat this survey

What to do - Pick a watchpoint and log all the raptors seen during the hour preferably 11am - 12 noon. Then send us your results. Your spot can be anywhere, but a raised viewpoint might be an advantage?

Our chosen date of September 16th 2017 should be when resident species are dispersing, and it is still within migrant raptor season, so the opportunity for Osprey or rarer species is also there.

Send us your location, and time spent on watch (the suggested hour is ideal but not strict). Log your sightings with species, count, gender if known, and activity. From a watch the birds may be close, distant, hunting, etc. so notes on direction, activity etc. are additionally useful.

Don't be concerned if you cannot answer all the points above. Each observation adds to the snapshot. Send your results to research@cambridgebirdclub.org.uk, preferably by Oct 1st.

Hopefully, we will be able to repeat this survey in the years to come thereby producing trend data of even value than a one off.

Robert Brown (Research Officer) and Louise Bacon (County Recorder)

Forthcoming Field meeting (book with Louise Bacon)

Friday August 11th, time T.B.C. - 4 places left!

Cavenham Heath. Booking essential. Site Manager for Natural England, Mike Taylor, will lead a walk around the heath, hopefully with a chance to see the post- breeding Stone Curlew aggregation which often occurs at that time of year.

Next indoor meetings:

Friday 8th September, Cottenham Village College

Research on the Pied Flycatcher by Malcolm Burgess

Malcom Burgess works in the Conservation Science department of the RSPB, currently with a focus on understanding declines in some of our woodland birds. His work on Pied Flycatcher (and also Wood Warbler, Hawfinch and Willow Tit) is giving us a greater understanding of the problems on the breeding sites, and how management strategies might help stem the decline.

Friday 13th October, Cottenham Village College



Giving Wildlife the Edge on Fenland drains by Cliff Carson

After managing the RSPB and The Wildlife Trust Ouse Washes Reserves from 1975 for 30 years, Cliff Carson moved to join the Middle Level Commissioners in 2005. In his role as Environmental Officer for this large Fenland drainage authority, he works to enhance the rivers and drains of the Middle Level system for biodiversity.

His particular interest is in adapting or creating man-made structures to provide sites for wildlife. Over the last decade otters have benefited from a network of 80 holts constructed in the otherwise bare banks of fenland drains. Kingfishers have been provided with secure nest sites behind holes drilled for them through steel piles and brick headwalls at 90 pumping station and bridge sites. Water voles and pollinating insects benefit from soft engineering coir roll revetments, pre-established with native riparian plants. Over 90 barn owl boxes and 100 bat boxes installed in Drainage Board Districts now offer breeding sites to both species.

As a close second to practical conservation projects, Cliff enjoys photographing wildlife and communicating the importance of its conservation

Friday 10th November, St Johns Hall, Cambridge

Cuckoos: an African perspective by Claire Spottiswoode

Claire joined the Department of Zoology, University of Cambridge, in 2002 as a PhD student (supervised by Professor Nick Davies), coming from the University of Cape Town in her home country of South Africa. She has stayed on ever since supported by a series of research fellowships from Sidney Sussex College, The Royal Society, and currently the BBSRC, and is a Senior Research Fellow at Magdalene College. From mid-2016 she has been splitting her time between the Department of Zoology and the [FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology](#) in Cape Town.

Bird Records, sightings and news

If you have seen a scarce or local bird, please submit the news to the '[What's about](#)' page on the Club website via [Pete and Paul](#) who maintain an up-to-date selection of recent highlights. You can also report interesting sightings on the [Cambirds](#) email group (not run by the Club, but we access the records).

Full lists of your records should continue to be submitted monthly, either via BirdTrack by the end of the month in question, or to **Louise Bacon** the County Recorder, preferably using the [spreadsheet](#) available on the Records section of the website, **by the 5th of the following month**. There is no need to duplicate records across both channels.

Bulletin Editor's Note on the recent reports

The Recent Reports section draws on the information collected by Peter Bircham for the e-bulletin, as well as data via the County Recorder from the BTO Birdtrack system. Usually woodland birds are very little reported, and the two month period May-June is no exception. We do indeed live in the least wooded county in England, but have there really been only 7 sightings of Nuthatch and 6 of Treecreeper in those 8 weeks? And are most of the ancient woods in the west of the county completely devoid of reportable birds including woodpeckers and warblers? With so few reports, any that I do including seem merely anecdotal.

So whereas the reports section captures all the visitor highlights, and pretty accurately migration movements and high counts of wintering birds, it is not telling us much about some of our residents. The same goes for species such as Yellowhammer, Song and Mistle Thrush all of which are Red listed.

I know from experience that recording woodland birds is tricky; ears can be more useful than eyes, birds like nuthatches are quite mobile, and none of the woodland specialists stand around in easily counted flocks; 'counts' are often estimates. I wonder if patch reports in a more narrative form

would be a better way of exchanging information on woodland birds, in these pages. So if there are any woodland watchers out there who can offer short items to rectify the imbalance, please get in touch.

Chris Brown

Cambridge Natural History Society (CNHS): Tawny Owl Survey.

The (CNHS) project to look at the wildlife and Natural History of Cambridge City and its immediate environs kicked off at the beginning of the year. Our study area is an 8x8km square centred on the junction of Mill Road and Covent Garden. Our study area is approximately bounded by the A14 to the north, the M11 to the west and includes Cherry Hinton and part of Teversham to the east and Trumpington to the south.

Our project has three main components, species surveys, a survey of gardens and ongoing recording by local experts. The wintering Blackcap survey continues - interim results are on the nathistcam.org.uk web site in the July blog. Thank you do to all who contributed. I'd like to continue this winter. Please send records to my email below.

Our latest surveys include a Tawny Owl survey of our study area. It's about now that young Tawny Owls have disbursed and are trying to establish territories. If you know of breeding sites in our study area, single birds or any Tawny record please let me know: date, location, behaviour.

I'd be grateful if you would send me records to: bobjarman99@btinternet.com. All records (and Blackcap records) will also go to Louise our County Recorder.

Thank you
Bob Jarman

WICKEN FEN (BIRD RINGING) GROUP

Brief news for July 2017

There were netting sessions at the Fen on 10 different days in July, additionally some owls were ringed in the boxes. The month's ringing total was 447.

Common Tern	1	Sedge Warbler	28
Barn Owl	4	Reed Warbler	92
Kingfisher	1	Treecreeper	2

Great spot Woodpecker	3	Wren	36
Blue Tit	27	Blackbird	6
Great Tit	17	Song Thrush	4
Bearded Tit	6	Spotted Flycatcher	1
Cetti's Warbler	9	Robin	20
Long-tailed Tit	13	Dunnock	13
Chiffchaff	89	House Sparrow	1
Willow Warbler	13	Chaffinch	1
Blackcap	32	Linnet	4
Garden Warbler	3	Bullfinch	12
Lesser Whitethroat	3	Reed Bunting	5
Grasshopper Warbler	1		

Old birds retrapped during the month were:

Chaffinch L504062 at 6y 8m, Blackbird XB92849 at 6y 6m,

Reed Warbler L505240 at 6y 1m and Bullfinch Y409137 at 4y 8m.

Discussion point:

Double broods or replacement clutches - views from a thread on Cambirds

(Apologies if you are a subscriber to Cambirds and have read this already but it is a nice piece of ornithological discussion about 'common' birds).

Dick Newell July 8th

I have Great Tits with chicks breeding in my Barn (alongside Barn Owls, Jackdaws and Stock Doves + Blackbird earlier).

It seemed pretty late to me, but reading BWP, I had not realised they can have 2nd or even 3rd broods.

Richard Broughton

Great Tit second broods are an interesting thing. Back in the day it was thought that British great tits are single brooded, whereas on the continent double broods are common. This was thought to be climatic, with longer seasons in the south. It's so ingrained that to this day most major nestbox studies (e.g. Wytham) only check first broods, and don't have a protocol for checking for seconds in July. This is very typical for smaller box studies too (like Monks Wood). But with climate change it was predicted that we'd see an increase in second broods. Worth mentioning that true double/second broods are when the first brood has fledged successfully and become independent and then the adults have another go. That takes at least two months from nest-building to family

dispersal. Not to be confused with a replacement brood, [which is] when the first nest fails and then the adults repeat. This is very common in Britain. Telling apart second broods from replacements isn't easy, you need ringed birds and detailed monitoring to know whether they've had a successful first attempt. This year I've also been seeing lots of late broods - heard some new fledglings today. But it's very hard to tell if they're true second broods, as we had a very early spring when lots of tits started laying, but then got hammered by poor weather in April/May, with a lot of chick mortality. So, many of these birds failed quite late (chick stage) and have probably had repeated attempts, which aren't true second broods, just late replacements. No way of knowing, really, without ringing and a lot of legwork.

Never heard of Great Tits having a true third brood.

pjw42

I guess it's also just possible that birds that had not been able to obtain a nest site early in the season get one after the first brood of other adults has gone. Proving that, though, would require pretty intensive trapping or watching of the adults. I have suspected it once when the second clutch was so soon after the fledging of the first that the original adults ought surely still have been with their young (but I can't prove it, of course!).

Michael Holdsworth

It's certainly a colossal amount of legwork ever to systematically re-check for second broods. For that reason, I've no idea what the proportion is with my flycatchers. The situation is of course confused further by some very late arrivals/starts; obvious delay in some cases in finding a mate; and repeats due to predation/gales/gutter-flooding. However, this year we have again had an identifiable female back on eggs 7-10 days after the first lot fledged. I've read that the male can take them off to teach them the tricks of the trade for the fortnight that [it] takes, before returning for nest-provisioning duties. But there again, we've again had this year cases of single mothers provisioning without any help from the male; and again some strong suggestions of bigamy/polygamy by naughty males....

Richard_Broughton

Interesting about the polygamy/polyandry. As the Marsh Tits have dwindled this has become more common in Monks Wood, as there's more odd/widowed birds that don't find a mate due to the declining number of recruits and birds in the landscape. I've had many years with excess males, but recently excess females too as things really go down the pan.

Marsh Tits never have a repeat if the nest is lost after the first half of incubation, and apparently Willow Tits rarely repeat at all (though there's limited info). That means they're more vulnerable to the effects of losses than are Great Tits, as they're more likely to have a total loss for the year. I heard three begging fledged broods of Great Tits on one farm this morning (9th July).

Ann Beeby

Chiffchaffs are regarded as double-brooded. At Wicken Fen this year we have found only 3 pairs of the 12 pairs being closely watched to have a true second brood. This is possible since one or both of the adults of these pairs are colour-ringed. (There is a probable 4th, but the adults aren't marked). Other late nests that might appear to be second broods are actually repeats following failure at chick-stage due to predation, weather, etc. Early arrival in March led us to think it might be a good year for second broods, but no more than usual.

Ed: Great Tit males seem to continue to sing long after what might be considered 'normal' breeding season, or at least I've heard a few locally. Often heard well into the middle of June when most of the young should be flying - is this significant?

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Inclusions for the next E-bulletin to reach me by September 4th please.