

CAMBRIDGESHIRE BIRD CLUB Bulletin No. 440



Opinions expressed in this bulletin are not necessarily those of the Club.

Welcome to the May / June 2015 Edition

RECENT BIRD REPORTS

May – June Weather. If there is such a thing as typical May weather this was not it! The month was windy and quite wet and often quite cold. Some wholly unseasonal squalls in the first half of the month brought in a few skuas, though no other storm-driven birds. Interspersed with these wet and windy days were days of warm sunshine although never establishing a continuum; best summarised as changeable and cooler and windier than average. June was a classic mixture of sunshine and showers, cooler and warmer days and windy from time to time, not exactly ‘flaming June’ until the very end of the month.

May – June Headlines

GREEN-WINGED TEAL* May: Ouse Washes on 7th.

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER* May: Paxton Pits long stay bird until 15th then at Grafham Water from 19th until 26th, *the latest date for the county; the previous latest record was May 22nd in 2006.*

SPOTTED CRAKE May: Ouse Washes 4 – 5 on 4th.

CORNCRAKE May: one calling from a possible breeding site on 7th.

HONEY BUZZARD* May: Cambridge/Huntingdon Road on 31st. Jun: Wicken Fen a flyover on 3rd, Ouse Washes a flyover on 11th.

TEMMINCK’S STINT May: Cam Washes 2 ‘possibles’ on 13th and 2 definites on 31st. Jun: Cam Washes 2 on 1st.

RED-NECKED PHALAROPE* Jun: Ouse Washes briefly on 11th.

ARCTIC SKUA* May: Grafham Water 2 adults on 6th.

POMARINE SKUA* May: Grafham Water an adult dark-phase bird on 6th.

WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN* May: Paxton Pits on 26th.

RED-FOOTED FALCON* Jun: Fowlmere probably a 2nd c.y. female on 5th.

GOLDEN ORIOLE* May: reported at Paxton Pits (unconfirmed report from RBA), and one at a south Cambridgeshire wood on 21st.

RED-BACKED SHRIKE* Jun: Sutton Gault on 15th.

RED-RUMPED SWALLOW* May: Ferry Meadows CP on 10th – 12th.

Other records

The records in this bulletin are unchecked and may be revised at a later date. An asterisk after the name of the species indicates that it is necessary to send a description to the County Recorder before the record will be accepted. Some species are ‘reported from’ to give an indication of distribution. Some entries (particularly wildfowl) have maxima given when a number of counts have been received. Where no numbers are given the record relates to single birds.

Wildfowl

Mute Swan **May:** Burwell Fen 22 on 6th, Trumpington/Clay Farm 5 on 19th, Ouse Fen 150+ on 25th.
Jun: Burwell Fen 6 on 16th, Colne Fen 53 on 18th.

Whooper Swan **May:** March Farmers/Nene Washes an injured bird on 8th. **Jun:** Reach Lode a presumed escape on 20th.

Greylag Goose **May:** Trumpington/Clay Farm maximum 40+ and 7 goslings, Burwell Fen 74 on 17th.
Jun: Barleycraft GP 233 on 28th, Kingfishers Bridge 26 pairs and 112 young on 30th.

Canada Goose **May:** Trumpington/Clay Farm maximum 24 + 3 goslings, Burwell Fen 6 on 6th. **Jun:** Kingfishers Bridge 25 pairs with 33 young on 30th, Trumpington/Clay Farm 9 and some juveniles on 19th, Ely River Ouse 30+ on 11th.

Egyptian Goose **May:** Fen Drayton Lakes 2 pairs with 4 young on 17th, Trumpington/Clay Farm a pair in the area until 15th, Paxton Pits on 16th, 2 on 25th and 5 on 27th. **Jun:** Fen Drayton Lakes maximum 14 (adults and young) on 3rd, Paxton Pits on 12th, 2 on 15th and 3 on 27th, Trumpington/Clay Farm on 14th.

Shelduck **May:** Wicken Fen 15 on 18th, Burwell Fen 25 on 2nd, Tubney Fen 50 on 10th, Paxton Pits a pair on 16th and 2 pairs on 17th, Cam Washes 4 on 28th. **Jun:** Fidwell Fen 2 on 1st and on 30th when with young, Paxton Pits 9 (a family) on 14th, Burwell Fen 33 including 27 young on 27th.

Mandarin **May:** Paxton Pits a pair on 25th.

Wigeon **May:** Berry Fen 4 on 17th, Paxton Pits a drake on 30th. **Jun:** Barleycraft GP 10 on 6th, Paxton Pits a drake still present on 27th and 2 on 30th, Wicken Fen on 2nd and 14th.

Gadwall **May:** Berry Fen 100 on 2nd, Burwell Fen 70 on 2nd, Kingfishers Bridge 52 on 7th and 7 broods on 17th. **Jun:** Chittering c40 on 19th, breeding evidence at Fidwell Fen and Cam Washes, Isleham Washes 4 on 3rd, Burwell Fen 8 on 16th.

Teal **Jun:** Grafham Water a pair with young on 1st and Kingfishers Bridge a female with 2 young on 21st (*proven breeding records of this species remain rare in the county*); Paxton Pits a drake on 12th and 27th, Burwell Fen 24 (mostly males) on 27th.

Mallard **May:** Holme Fen 74 on 14th, Burwell Fen 76 on 30th, Cam Washes 45 on 28th. **Jun:** Burwell Fen 42 on 16th, Woodwalton Fen 70 on 27th.

Pintail **May:** Paxton Pits a drake on 15th. **Jun:** Paxton Pits 4 including a drake on 23rd.

Garganey **May:** reported from Berry Fen, Fen Drayton Lakes, Little Downham, Ouse Washes, Tubney Fen and Wicken Fen. **Jun:** Paxton Pits a female on 27th, Ouse Washes 4 on 11th.

Shoveler **May:** Burwell Fen 17 on 6th, Cam Washes 15 on 28th, Paxton Pits 3 on 30th. **Jun:** Fidwell Fen on 1st and 30th, Paxton Pits a pair on 12th, Burwell Fen 32 on 14th.

Red-crested Pochard **Jun:** Paxton Pits a female on 3rd, St Neots a female on 7th, Paxton Pits a male on 15th then 2 – 3 (a female and 2 males) for the rest of the month.

Pochard **May:** Kingfishers Bridge 11 on 7th, Paxton Pits a female on 30th. **Jun:** Fidwell Fen 2 on 1st and 20+ on 30th, Fen Drayton Lakes maximum 13 on 3rd, Barleycraft GP 15 on 6th, Paxton Pits 7 on 27th, breeding recorded at 4 sites.

Tufted Duck **May:** Trumpington/Clay Farm maximum 24, Paxton Pits 40 on 5th, Burwell Fen 30+ on 6th, Kingfishers Bridge 40 on 19th. **Jun:** Fidwell Fen 34 on 15th, Fowlmere NR 3 on 7th, Burwell Fen 5 on 16th, Trumpington/Clay Farm 13 on 19th, Kingfishers Bridge 36 young on 26th.

Red-breasted Merganser **May:** Grafham Water 8 briefly on 22nd.

Gamebirds

Grey Partridge **May:** Cam Washes 3 on 13th. **Jun:** Foxton 4 pairs on 3rd, Knapwell 3 pairs on 20th, Babraham 2 + 6 young on 24th, Fowlmere 3 pairs on 25th, Fidwell Fen an adult with young on 30th.

Quail **May:** Nene Washes one calling on 15th. **Jun:** Six Mile Bottom one calling on 11th, Burwell Lode one calling on 22nd, Orwell maximum of 3 from 28th, Melbourn one calling on 30th.

Cormorant, egrets, herons and grebes

Cormorant **May:** Paxton Pits 48 on 7th. **Jun:** Paxton Pits 66 on 25th, Kingfishers Bridge 7 on 5th, Burwell Fen 7 on 16th.

Bittern **May:** reported from Chippenham Fen (flyover), Wicken Fen. **Jun:** reported from Wicken Fen (2), Kings Dyke NR, Kingfishers Bridge, Nene Washes and Woodwalton Fen.

Little Egret **May:** reported from Burwell Fen (21), Cam Washes (4), Chippenham Fen, Berry Fen (16), Paxton Pits (3) and Wicken Fen (13). **Jun:** reported from Burwell Fen (23), Cam Washes (6), Fen Drayton Lakes (2), Grafham Water, Paxton Pits (8), Soham and Wicken Fen (15).

Great White Egret **May:** Gt Paxton 2 on 2nd, Ouse Washes on 4th – 5th. **Jun:** Knapwell a flyover on 3rd.

Grey Heron **May:** Cam Washes 5 on 28th, Burwell Fen 10 on 17th.

Little Grebe **May:** reported from Burwell Fen 12 on 17th, Fowlmere NR, Trumpington/Clay Farm (2). **Jun:** Wicken Fen a pair with young on 7th, Trumpington/Clay Farm an adult feeding young on 14th, Burwell Fen 15 + 4 broods on 27th.

Great Crested Grebe **May:** reported from Drysides BP (18), St Ives, Trumpington/Clay Farm (2), Wicken Fen (2). **Jun:** Wicken Fen on 2nd, Fidwell Fen on 13th, Burwell Fen 7 on 16th, Drysides BP 14 on 30th.

Raptors

Red Kite **May:** reported from Dry Drayton, Girton, Manea, Oakington, Ferry Meadows (4), Paxton Pits (3), St. Ives, Westley Bottom and Wyton. **Jun:** reported from Wicken Fen, Paxton Pits, Abbots Ripton, Harston, Waterbeach, St Ives, central Cambridge, and Sawston.

Marsh Harrier **May:** a number of reports of 2 – 4 birds mostly from fenland sites. **Jun:** reported from 11 sites, maximum Ely BF 6 on 20th.

Buzzard **May:** reported from Bottisham Lock (5), Burwell Fen, Chippenham Fen, Fen Drayton Lakes, Ferry Meadows (6+), Fowlmere NR, Great Stukeley, Little Wilbraham Fen (3), Paxton Pits (6), Shepreth and Wicken Fen (2). **Jun:** widely reported including Abbots Ripton (4), Woodditton / Dullingham (4) and Duxford / Ickleton (6).

Osprey **May:** Grafham Water on 1st, Ferry Meadows CP an immature female ringed as a juvenile at Rutland Water in 2013 was present all month, Alconbury on 29th, and Cambridge/Cherry Hinton on 29th. **Jun:** Ferry Meadows CP on several dates.

Rails and crane

Water Rail **May:** reported from 6 sites. **Jun:** reported from 3 sites including Nene Washes / Eldernell 3 on 3rd.

Coot **May:** Burwell Fen 160 on 24th. **Jun:** Burwell Fen 183 on 3rd, Ouse Fen 135 on 3rd, and Block Fen GP 110 on 26th.

Common Crane **May:** records from five fenland sites relate to 4 breeding and at least 2 prospecting pairs and non-breeders. **Jun:** two fenland records including a sighting over Ely.

Waders

Avocet **May & June:** Recorded at a number of wetland sites including adult groups up to 18 in number, but reports suggest a poor breeding season at most sites.

Oystercatcher **May:** Cam Washes 1 – 4 all month, Fen Drayton Lakes 2 on several dates and 2 young seen on 25th, Paxton Pits 6 on 16th, Wicken Fen 2 on 18th. **Jun:** reported from Burwell Fen (3), Fen Drayton Lakes (3), Grafham Water (2), Isleham Washes (2), Paxton Pits (3) and Wicken Fen.

Grey Plover **May:** March Farmers on 8th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 9th.

Golden Plover **May:** March Farmers 3 on 8th, Duxford and Devil's Dyke Newmarket on 12th, the latest date.

Lapwing **May:** Trumpington/Clay Farm 2 pairs plus chicks on several dates, Fulbourn Fen 19 + 3 chicks on 22nd, Paxton Pits 8 on 16th. **Jun:** reported from Cam Washes (15), Fen Drayton Lakes (15), Trumpington/Clay Farm (4); post-breeding flocks at Paxton Pits 50 on 9th, then 80 on 14th and 137 on 17th, Burwell Fen 343 on 27th and Isleham Washes 350 on 27th.

Little Ringed Plover **May:** Cam Washes 7 on 1st and 2 on 13th, Paxton Pits 1 – 4 all month, Grafham Water on 6th, Ouse Washes on 7th, Fen Drayton Lakes on several dates. **Jun:** reported from Fen Drayton Lakes and Paxton Pits, Kingfishers Bridge and Berry Fen.

Ringed Plover **May:** Trumpington/Clay Farm 1 – 3 all month, Berry Fen on 9th, Wicken Fen 11 on 12th and 2 on 13th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 12th, Cam Washes 2 on 13th and 17 (tundra subspecies) on 19th, Grafham Water on 13th, Paxton Pits 2 – 3 on 16th to 18th then 7 (tundra subspecies) on 25th – 28th, Ouse Washes on 20th. **Jun:** reported from Cam Washes, Grafham Water, Paxton Pits (2), Trumpington/Clay Farm and Block Fen GP.

Whimbrel **May:** Paxton Pits on 3rd – 5th, Grafham Water on 6th, March Farmers/Nene Washes on 8th.

Black-tailed Godwit **May:** Cam Washes 5 on 1st, Wicken Fen on 1st, Fen Drayton Lakes on 8th. **Jun:** Burwell Fen 13 on 27th.

Bar-tailed Godwit **May:** Paxton Pits on 3rd – 5th. **Jun:** Paxton Pits 2 on 26th – 27th.

Turnstone **May:** Paxton Pits on 8th and 13th then 3 on 14th and a single on 18th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 9th.

Ruff **May:** Cam Washes 4 on 1st, March Farmers 2 on 8th, Paxton Pits on 16th – 17th.

Sanderling **May:** Grafham Water 8 on 13th, a single on 14th and 4 on 30th, Paxton Pits on 14th and another on 18th then 3 on 28th. **Jun:** Grafham Water 3 on 1st, Paxton Pits 3 (the same?) on 2nd, Fen Drayton Lakes on 2nd – 3rd.

Dunlin **May:** reported from Berry Fen (4), Cam Washes (2), Fen Drayton Lakes (3), Grafham Water, March Farmers (3), Ouse Washes (9) and Paxton Pits (12). **Jun:** reported from Paxton Pits (2).

Common Sandpiper **May:** Paxton Pits 1 – 2 on 4th to 15th, Grafham Water on 6th and 2 on 14th, Fen Drayton Lakes 2 on 12th. **Jun:** Fidwell Fen on 30th, Bradley Fen on 30th.

Green Sandpiper **May:** Trumpington/Clay Farm on 1st, Wicken Fen 2 on 18th. **Jun:** reported from Burwell Fen, Fowlmere NR (2), Grafham Water, Paxton Pits, and maximum at Bradley Fen 6 on 30th.



Green Sandpiper at Fowlmere NR. *Photo by Garth Peacock.*

Spotted Redshank **May:** Ouse Washes 2 on 9th. **Jun:** Burwell Fen 12 on 19th, Nene Washes on 22nd.
Greenshank **May:** Cam Washes 5 on 1st and 2 on 13th, Paxton Pits 2 on 3rd – 6th and a single on 16th, Grafham Water 2 on 6th, Berry Fen on 9th, Paxton Pits on 26th. **Jun:** Ouse Washes on 26th.
Wood Sandpiper **May:** Fen Drayton Lakes on 1st, Berry Fen 2 on 9th, Cam Washes 2 on 13th. **Jun:** Burwell Fen on 21st.
Redshank **May:** reported from Cam Washes (17), Nene Washes (22), Paxton Pits (3) and Wicken Fen (4). **Jun:** reported from Burwell Fen (6), Fen Drayton Lakes (5) and Paxton Pits (7), Kingfishers Bridge (6), Ouse Washes (10), and Berry Fen 29 on 13th.
Woodcock **May:** Wicken Fen 3+ roding on 13th, Woodwalton Fen single roding on 10th. **Jun:** Wicken Fen up to 3 roding during the month.
Snipe **May:** reported from Kingfishers Bridge (4 drumming), Wicken Fen (3), Nene Washes (6), Cam Washes and Paxton Pits. **Jun:** Ouse Washes 6 on 1st, Paxton Pits 2 on 23rd.

Terns and gulls

Little Tern **May:** Paxton Pits on 5th, Hampton on 15th.
Black Tern **May:** Kingfishers Bridge on 3rd, Paxton Pits on 12th – 13th then 4 on 15th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 31st. **Jun:** Fen Drayton Lakes on 1st, Paxton Pits 5 on 15th.
Common Tern **May:** Paxton Pits 20 on 2nd c80 on 4th and 120+ on 5th, Trumpington/Clay Farm maximum 6 + one nest. **Jun:** breeding records from Burwell Fen 3 + 3 juveniles, Kingfishers Bridge and Kings Dyke NR.
Arctic Tern **May:** Grafham Water on 3rd and 6th, Drysides BP on 11th, Fen Drayton Lakes and Ferry Meadows on 12th.
Black-headed Gull **May:** Trumpington/Clay Farm maximum 24 and c6 nests. Burwell Fen 120+ and c30 nests, Kingfishers Bridge c60 nests. **Jun:** Burwell Fen 108 on 16th, Barleycraft GP 1000 on 20th.
Little Gull **May:** Paxton Pits & Grafham Water 1 – 2 all month, Fen Drayton Lakes on 7th – 16th, Prickwillow 2 on 12th.
Mediterranean Gull **May:** Chatteris an adult on 2nd, Paxton Pits on 4th, Trumpington/Clay Farm a 2nd c.y. on several dates. **Jun:** Grafham Water a 2nd c.y. on 4th, Barleycraft GP on 20th.
Lesser Black-backed Gull **May:** Huntingdon Business Park 50 on 1st (roof nesting), Cottenham 60 on 26th. **Jun:** Paxton Pits 21 chicks on 17th; *the success of this species at this site is deemed to be responsible for the breeding failure of waders and also the loss of the Egyptian Goose family.* Counts of over 40 at Chittering 72 on 15th, Dryside BP 46 on 1st, Bradley Fen 46 on 1st.
Yellow-legged Gull **May:** Kingfishers Bridge 8 on 21st (all 2nd c.y.), Berry Fen 2 on 9th, Paxton Pits on 25th – 27th. **Jun:** Paxton Pits 2 – 5 all month from 3rd, Grafham Water a 3rd c.y. on 5th then 2 on 16th.

Doves, cuckoo, owls, kingfisher, woodpeckers

Turtle Dove **May:** reported from Brampton, Cambridge Research Park, Castor Hanglands, Colne, Cottenham, Fowlmere NR (4), Little Wilbraham fen (4), Maxey GP (5), Mepal (5), Paxton Pits, Reach (2), Roswell Pits/Ely, Six Mile Bottom (2), Sutton Gault and Wicken Fen. **Jun:** reported from Cambridge Research Park, Castor Hanglands, Comberton, Diddington, Fen Drayton Lakes, Fleam Dyke, Fowlmere NR (6), Great Abington, Paxton Pits and Wicken Fen.
Cuckoo **May:** reported from Cam Washes, Croydon, Fen Drayton Lakes (2+), Histon, Houghton Meadows, Little Wilbraham Fen, Paxton Pits, Ramsey Heights (2), Wicken Fen (3), Woodwalton Fen (5) and Wyton. **Jun:** reported from Burwell Fen, Fen Drayton Lakes (2), Isleham Washes, Little Wilbraham Fen, Paxton Pits (2), Reach Lode (3), Wicken Fen (3) and Woodwalton Fen (3+).
Barn Owl **May:** reported from 14 sites including Sutton Gault (3) and Wicken Fen (5). **Jun:** fewer reports but clustered between Barton / Melbourn and Kingfishers Bridge / Burwell Fen.
Little Owl **May:** reported from Barway, Barton (2), Hinxtton (2), Fen Drayton Lakes and New Shardelows Farm. **Jun:** reported from 9 sites including Gt Stukeley and Saxon Street.
Short-eared Owl **May:** Nene Washes on 4th, the last record of the winter. **Jun:** Swaffham Prior on 3rd – *an unusual summer record.*

Kingfisher **May:** reported from Paxton Pits and Wicken Fen (4 different birds caught on 10th), and 9 other sites. **Jun:** reported from a similar range of sites with several reports of birds feeding young.
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker **May:** Reported from two sites.

Falcons, parrots and corvids

Hobby **May:** reported from Berry Fen, Bottisham Lock, Cambridge Research Park, Cam Washes, Fen Drayton Lakes, Fowlmere NR, Grafham Water, Little Wilbraham Fen (2), Ouse Fen (8), Paxton Pits (10), Six Mile Bottom, Sutton Gault, St. Ives, Wicken Fen (maximum 18), Burwell Fen (22) and Woodwalton Fen (3). **Jun:** fewer reports but including from Boxworth, Burwell Fen, Cambridge/Harvey Goodwin Ave, Paxton Pits.

Peregrine **May:** reported from Cambridge, Ely, Wicken Fen and Wyton. **Jun:** Fen Drayton on 7th, Huntingdon on 10th, Kingfishers Bridge on 10th, Dry Drayton on 12th, and Wicken Fen on 22nd.

Ring-necked Parakeet **May:** Peterborough Central Park on 20th, Ouse Washes 5 on 27th.

Jackdaw **Jun:** Paxton Pits 650 on 25th.

Carrion Crow **Jun:** Parker's Piece Cambridge up to 50 on several days in mid-month.

Tits, martins and warblers

Marsh Tit **May:** reported from Paxton Pits (2), Kirtling (3), and 6 other sites.

Bearded Tit **May & Jun:** reported from Wicken Fen and Teversham / Lt Wilbraham Fens.

Sand Martin **May:** reports from 9 sites, maximum Kingfishers Bridge c70 on 7th. **Jun:** breeding at two gravel pit sites, max count Sutton North Fen GP 80+.

House Martin **May:** largest recorded movement Ferry Meadows CP c300 on 5th.

Cetti's Warbler **May:** reported from Cambridge/Coldham's Common, Cambridge Research Park, Little Wilbraham Fen, Paxton Pits, Ramsey Heights, Wicken Fen (14), Woodwalton Fen (10+). **Jun:** reported from Cambridge Research Park, Grafham Water (2), Paxton Pits (2), Wicken Fen and Woodwalton Fen.

Willow Warbler **May:** Paxton Pits 8+ on 10th, Ditton Park Wood 8 on 21st, and counts of 4+ at 8 other sites.

Garden Warbler **May:** Fen Drayton Lakes 12 on 2nd, Woodwalton Fen 10+ on 2nd, Paxton Pits 10 on 10th. **Jun:** Ditton Park Wood 8 on 5th.

Lesser Whitethroat **May:** Fen Drayton Lakes 8+ on 3rd, 1 – 4 at 14 other sites.

Whitethroat **May & Jun:** both months produced 4 sites with counts of 10 – 16 birds, and many other reports mostly from the south and east of the county.

Grasshopper Warbler **May:** reported from 12 sites including Chippenham Fen (2), Wicken Fen (5+) and Woodwalton Fen (3). **Jun:** reported from Castor Hanglands and Bradley Fen.

Starling, thrushes and flycatchers

Starling **May:** Trumpington/Clay Farm flock of c 120 adults and young on 29th. **Jun:** Block Fen GP 600 on 28th, Nene Washes 2000 on 29th.

Fieldfare **May:** Cottenham on 2nd and Soham 2 on 8th, the latest dates this year.

Mistle Thrush **May:** reported from Chippenham Fen, Fowlmere NR, Holme Fen, Ramsey Heights and Shepreth.

Spotted Flycatcher **May:** reported from Wicken Fen on 5th, Cambridge Research Park on 8th, Fowlmere NR, Granta Park 2 on 13th, Chippenham Fen 2 on 17th and Westley Bottom on 17th. **Jun:** reported from Foxton, Fulbourn Fen, Lode, Monks Wood, Waterbeach and Wennington Wood.

Nightingale **May:** reported from Cambridge Research Park, Castor Hanglands (19 singing), Fen Drayton Lakes (3), Old Sulehay, Paxton Pits (11), Wicken Fen (2) and Woodwalton Fen. **Jun:** reported from Castor Hanglands (5), Fen Drayton Lakes, Paxton Pits and Wicken Fen.

Pied Flycatcher **Jun:** Cam Washes (Upware) on 25th.

Starts and chats

Redstart **May:** Ouse Fen a male on 7th.

Whinchat **May:** Bottisham Lock on 1st, Ouse Fen 2 females on 2nd, Paxton Pits a female on 7th, Burwell Fen 2 females on 7th.

Stonechat **May:** Wicken Fen a family on 15th. **Jun:** Ouse Washes 4 on 3rd.

Wheatear **May:** Six Mile Bottom a female on 1st, Blackbush 7 on 3rd, Paxton Pits 2 on 4th, Burwell Fen 4 on 5th, Ferry Meadows CP on 5th, Paxton Pits on 5th, Trumpington Meadows 2 on 7th, Burwell Fen on 9th, Haddenham/Aldreth 2 on 10th, Paxton Pits on 29th. 'Greenland race' *leucorhoa*: Heydon a female on 12th.

Sparrows and wagtails

Tree Sparrow **May:** Holme Fen on 2nd and 10th.

Yellow Wagtail **May:** Brampton Racecourse 20 on 2nd, Ouse Washes 6 on 10th, Cam Washes 6 on 14th. **Jun:** reported from 9 sites including 6 with breeding evidence.

Grey Wagtail **May:** reported from Bottisham Lock and Paxton Pits (2). **Jun:** Pairs at 5 further sites.

Finches and buntings

Linnet **May:** Hinxton c50 on 11th.

Siskin **Jun:** Paxton Pits on 27th.

Crossbill **May:** Wicken Fen a flyover on 26th. **Jun:** Peterborough 2 flyovers on 22nd.

Corn Bunting **May:** Trumpington Meadows 11 on 7th, Haddenham / Aldreth Fen 5+ on 10th, Hildersham 6 on 13th, Holme Fen 6 on 14th. **Jun:** Nine Wells 5 on 8th, Six Mile Bottom 3+ on 11th, Benwick 3 on 12th.

Exotica

Snow Goose **May:** still in the Wicken Fen area.

Black Swan **Jun:** Paxton Pits on several dates.

Contributors: Colin Addington, Richard Allison, Jake Allsop, Dave Anderson, Denise Anderson, David Avis, Louise Bacon, Dave Barr, Dan Barrell, Rowena Baxter, Guy Belcher, Peter Bircham, Andy Bradley, Richard Broughton, Chris Brown, Mike Burdekin, Will Burdett, Ian Burfield, Malcolm Busby, Howard Butler, James Cadbury, Saimon Clark, Steve Cooper, Robin Cox, Ben Craig, Martin Davis, Nikki Dibb, Joy Dingley, Mark Eaton, David Elliott, Mike Everett, Paul Gallagher, Andrew Green, Ben Green, Richard Grimmett, Derek Gruar, Kevin Hand, Andy Hannaford, John Harding, Vicki Harley, Mark Hawkes, David Heath, Jon Heath, Paul Hobson, Michael Holdsworth, Pete Holt, David Hopkins, Sarah Howlett, Johan de Jager, Bob Jarman, Sue Jarrett, Andy Jennings, Tref Jones, Colin Kirtland, Charlie Kitchin, Andrew Knights, Mike and Ann Knowles, Colin Lee, John Le Gassick, Vincent Lea, Martin Leader, Christina Leadlay, John Lindsell, Steve Lowe, Bob Mansfield, Owen and Monica Marks, Bruce Martin, Paul Mason, Andy Merryweather, Martin O'Leary, James Page, Dave Palmer, Richard Palmer, Rob Partridge, Richard Patient, Garth Peacock, Rob Pople, John Pilgrim, Doug Radford, Graeme Reed, Gareth Rees, Chris Rider, Duncan Ritchie, Tony Roberts, John Saunders, Rick Saunders, Clive Sinclair, Bob Smith, Claire Spottiswood, Brian Stone, Isaac Swift, Jonathan Taylor, Richard Thomas, Chris Thorne and the Wicken Fen Group, Francis Tusa, Calum Urquhart, David Walsh, John Walsh, Hugh Venables, Alan Wadsworth, Mark Ward, Iain Webb, Mat Webb, Mike Weedon, David Wege, Jamie Wells, John Wells, Peter Wells, Kevin Wilson, Mathew Wilson, David Withrington, Hugh Wright, Bartlow Wyllie and Barbara York.

CBC Winter Garden Bird Survey 2014-15

The full results of the Cambridgeshire winter garden bird survey 2014-15 are now in. A total of 59 gardens were surveyed by observers across the county. May I take this opportunity to say a really big thank you to all who took part. From the first analysis of the results the following can be highlighted:

A total of 57 species were recorded across all the gardens. 37 species was the greatest number observed in a single garden. Infrequently recorded species included Red Legged Partridge, Barn Owl, Skylark, and Marsh Tit.

The Blue Tit was the most frequently observed bird species, being present in all gardens. The Blackbird was the second most frequently recorded bird.

Of the expected winter visitors to gardens, Fieldfare and Redwing were recorded but they tended

not to stay around for long periods of time. Brambling, Lesser Redpoll and Siskin occurred in only a small number of gardens this winter. Chiffchaff and Blackcap, historically considered to be summer visitors, were both present during the winter period.

The list of species on the survey form was based upon a similar survey that has been running in Bedfordshire for a number of years. A comparison of that list with the Cambridgeshire observations reveals that only Nuthatch was not recorded in the Cambridgeshire survey. Eleven species not on the original Bedfordshire list were observed to be using gardens in Cambridgeshire.

Almost all observers put out food regularly for the birds. Of those who did not put out food regularly, two did so for at least part of the time. A few observers put out specific types of food such as nyjer hoping to attract Goldfinches, with success varying from one observer to another. There was a concern raised about Trichomonosis; one observer noted the problem and recorded that feeding was stopped and precautions taken.

There are many more facts and figures from this survey to be published and I hope to submit a final report for the Annual Bird Report. All the records received will go to the county recorder. It is hoped that this first winter's survey will be a baseline for comparison with future winter garden bird surveys.



Blackbird at Willingham: photo by Colin Brown.

If you are taking part in the summer garden bird survey I am looking forward to hearing from you. Please send in your results by the 31st October to gardenbirds@cambridgebirdclub.org.uk. If you are having problems sending the forms to me please do not hesitate to get in touch. Please see the Cambridgeshire Bird Club website for details. I hope in due course to have details on the website for the CBC Winter Garden Bird Survey 2015-16.

There may be those who would like to participate in this survey but do not have access to a computer. If you are one of those people and would like a form, please let Bruce Martin know and he will send you a survey form and instructions how to take part when he sends your next bulletin. Bruce's contacts are: - 01223 700656 or 07977 381625 or 178, Nuns Way, Cambridge, CB4 2NS.

In the meantime get ready to log down all the species you see in your garden (numbers aren't necessary) on a weekly basis starting on Sunday October 4th. Rebecca Buisson

Dunkirk Avocets

This article arose from observing two ringed Avocets at the Cam Washes in April, which I later tracked down as birds from Tony Martin's Dunkirk site. Tony is keen that observers continue to send him sightings of Dunkirk ringed birds, and photos are also welcome. Tony is at boto@live.co.uk. The article is an extract from the 2015 Dunkirk Avocets newsletter. (Ed).

The Dunkirk colony of avocets (*Avoceta curvirostra*) is some 6km NNW of the city of Ely. The scrape which it occupies was created in 2007. The site was previously agricultural farmland with no standing water. Avocets nested in this first year and have done so each year subsequently. Most chicks to have fledged from the colony have been marked with individually identifiable red plastic rings (2 white characters reading upwards, legs identical). Many observers have been kind enough to report sightings of these birds over the past 7 years.

Since May 2011 I have received 113 reports of 29 Dunkirk birds away from the colony and seen 21 birds at the colony itself. Most of the non-Dunkirk sightings have been from within the UK, at 34 sites in 13 counties. The majority of sightings are from East Anglia, within 100km of the natal colony, but an increasing number of sites on the South coast have been receiving Dunkirk avocets – in Devon, Dorset, Hampshire and Sussex. The most northerly sightings have been from northern England – Washington, Tyne and Wear at and sites in Lancashire and North Lincolnshire.

Overseas reports have come from coastal sites in the Netherlands, Belgium, and France. There has been no repeat of the Feb 2008 sighting of a juvenile in southern Spain. Initially, these continental sightings were all outside the breeding season, but more recently Dunkirk birds have been seen in France in April, May and June, and D1 was in the Netherlands in April 2013, looking likely to breed there.

A rewarding aspect of this study has been reports of Dunkirk-reared avocets breeding in colonies being watched over by people who then kindly send me their records and often their photographs. Some Dunkirk birds have clearly become regular breeders elsewhere. Female A5 looked at RSPB Marshside and nearby WWT Martinmere in Lancashire in 2009/10, wintered at Topsham in Devon, looked at Titchfield Haven, Hants in 2012 and 2013, and then in 2014 finally raised chicks at a new site in W. Sussex. At no time was this bird seen back at Dunkirk. Meanwhile Female D2 bred at Cley in 2013 and 2014 and other Dunkirk birds are known to have bred at Cattawade, Essex, Snettisham, Norfolk and Orford Ness, Suffolk. Observations in April and May at other sites may also indicate nesting, but proof is lacking.

One of the most interesting exchanges of a bird between two sites occurred very recently. Male H7 was seen at the RSPB reserve at Frampton Marshes on the Wash on 26 March 2015, and then was photographed at Alkborough Flats on the Humber next day, a distance of just over 100km in a straight line. At this time of year avocets are moving around a lot prior to breeding, and apparently H7 and his mate had not yet quite decided where to settle. This bird was familiar with Alkborough, having been there after the breeding season in 2010 and 2012. He was not seen at all between July 2012 and March 2015, begging the question of where he had been in the intervening period. Yearling avocets can certainly breed, but not all do. Many yearlings do not breed and may not appear in front of a hide for some time; the longest period in which a bird remained undetected was more than 4½ years.

Movements within the early part of the breeding season are common, as would be expected from the fluctuations in numbers on a daily basis in March and April at most sites. For example,

Mark Hawkes saw A1 at Grafham Water on 8 April 2012, and commented that it was paired and nest building, yet the bird then turned up at Dunkirk 13 days later, and was seen on and off throughout May and June (though it didn't breed at Dunkirk).

Breeding success

The considerable variation in annual breeding success seen in the first years of the colony has continued. Only one avocet fledged from Dunkirk in 2011, and none did so in 2012. The reason for the complete reproductive failure that year was a new one – the invasive plant *Crassula helmsii* choked the water along all margins, thereby preventing chicks feeding. They simply starved, with growth rates less than half normal. The following season, 2013, was a mixture of good and extremely bad for the scrape. A large nesting colony of black-headed gulls materialised, and ironically the avocets bred much more successfully than normal. However, botulism struck in late June for the first time at this site, probably introduced by the gulls, and during July-Sept many wild birds died as a consequence, including some of the later-hatched avocet chicks. Nevertheless, most of the larger avocet chicks did fledge successfully, and 11 were ringed.

The 2014 breeding season was poor, with just 5 fledged avocets. For some unknown reason the hatching rate was low – most pairs walked away from the nest with just one or two chicks – and again botulism killed the later broods. It remains to be seen if botulism poisoning is now an annual hazard for avocets and other birds in late summer and autumn at this site.

The future

The Dunkirk colony is on private land managed for wild birds, with controllable water levels and a predator-proof fence surrounding it. The scrape itself is therefore secure, and in principle the colony should persist if the various damaging environmental problems encountered in recent years (invasive plants and botulism especially) can be kept under control. Colour-ringing of avocet chicks will continue, as will similar studies of both black-headed gulls and Mediterranean gulls at the same site. Please do continue to send me your sightings of Dunkirk-ringed avocets and spread the word that searching avocet flocks for colour-rings is productive and interesting. As ever, I will respond to sighting reports promptly, with a complete sighting history for that bird, and try to keep observers informed of subsequent sightings too.

Tony Martin

Request for information on Starlings

We are trying to relocate c.40 colour-ringed juvenile starlings from Grange Farm, Knapwell (a.k.a. RSPB Hope Farm). As in previous years they have instantly dispersed away from the breeding colony and disappeared. We think that their parents escort them to favoured feeding areas, which we would like to know more about. It is likely that some will have gone down to the Ouse floodplain – there is already a sizeable flock building up at Fen Drayton. Others seem to gather around areas of mown grass (e.g. Cambourne Village Green) and oilseed rape fields. Most of the time, the flocks are too distant or mobile, but occasionally it is possible to get close to them and check large numbers of juveniles for rings in a short time. If birders could take advantage of such opportunities it would greatly increase our chances of locating the post-breeding gatherings used by our birds.

The birds are ringed on both legs: a standard BTO metal ring on one leg and a dark blue colour-ring on the other. The colour-rings have a white three-letter (or number) inscription, starting with "A". There are other studies using similar rings, including projects around Biggleswade/Sandy in Bedfordshire and Lincolnshire. Starlings are proving very mobile and we have already exchanged birds between study areas. It's quite easy to confirm that starlings are not colour-ringed – you only need to see one leg and confirm it's got no rings. A photo of the colour rings is available if anyone needs to get an idea what they look like.

We would be very grateful to receive reports of colour-ringed starlings in Cambridgeshire, particularly if they are ours. We are trying to establish which habitats are important for juveniles up until their full post-juvenile moult (around September). It would also be useful to us to receive data on the numbers of juveniles checked for rings at sites in Cambs but confirmed un-ringed – an estimate of the total number of juveniles present and the habitat they were using would be the other supporting information we would need. As an example: *Fen Drayton, Ferry Mere/Lagoon, 30 May, 200 juveniles, 59 confirmed un-ringed, feeding on lightly cattle-grazed floodplain pastures.*

Please email reports to me at david.buckingham@rspb.org.uk.

Dave Buckingham

Forthcoming events

Field Meeting - Friday 14th August, Woodwalton Fen at 7:00pm.

Meet at the parking along Great Raveley Drain at the end of Chapel Road, Ramsey Heights. Please contact Louise Bacon for further details.

Indoor meetings:

Friday 11th September, Cottenham Village College, 7.30 for 8.00pm

Ornithology to Ethno-ornithology – a life journey by Andy Gosler

Why are we ornithologists? Because we are fascinated by birds, yes, but why are humans so captivated by the ecology, evolution and behaviour of another vertebrate group that a UK Government Chief Scientist should complain that a disproportionate amount was spent on bird research to the detriment of other taxa? Whatever the answer to this, the fact that humans everywhere are enthralled by birds should point the way to how we might engage, re-engage or differently-engage people in all countries with nature, and so focus resources most effectively for its conservation. Ethno-ornithology is the study of human relationships and associations with birds, be they benign or harmful for the birds themselves. This talk expands on these issues and describes how the speaker's own lifelong engagement with birds led him into this subject area.

Dr Andrew Gosler is University Research Lecturer in Ornithology and Conservation at Oxford University, where he holds a joint position between the Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology and the Institute of Human Sciences. His research interests span bird ecology and evolution, through ethno-ornithology to conservation. He is a former Editor of *Ibis*, a recipient of medals from the BTO and BOU and is the originator and Director of EWA: the Ethno-ornithology World Archive.

Friday 9th October, Cottenham Village College, 7.30 for 8.00pm

'The Lady of the Reeds' – the rediscovery of pioneering bird photographer Emma Turner by James Parry

James is a writer and editor of books on art, history and wildlife and is researching the life and work of Emma Turner, the pioneering bird photographer. Turner developed her craft in the Norfolk Broads, where in 1911 she helped rediscover the bittern as a British breeding bird and took the earliest known images of species such as water rail and bearded tit at the nest. She became one of Britain's leading women ornithologists and was a vice-president of the Cambridge Bird Club. After decades of obscurity following her death in 1940, the recent discovery of some of her diaries and an archive containing original Turner images and correspondence has shed new light on her remarkable achievements.

Courses

The University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education (ICE), are offering two part-time Biological Science courses: an Undergraduate Certificate in Evolutionary Biology Oct 2015 – June 2016, and an Undergraduate Advanced Diploma in Ecological Monitoring and Conservation

Nov 2015 – May 2017. The closing date is 7 September 2015. For further information, fees and online application go to: www.ice.cam.ac.uk/courses/certificates-and-diplomas

New members

We welcome Sophie Thom (Cambridge), Steven Swain (Shepreth), Robert Welham (Ely), and Robin Upton (Herringswell).

CBC Research Officer

Many thanks to Rob Pople for offering to take on this role. If anyone would like to join the Research Committee (we used to have one) please contact the Chair (Vince Lea).

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The Cambridgeshire Bird Club exists to promote the conservation of birds and their habitats in the county, identify areas of conservation value, and advance the education of the public in the study of birds. www.cambridgebirdclub.org.uk

The editors would welcome contributions to the E-Bulletin and print edition, on topics such as identification problems, behaviour, summaries of club talks, and book reviews. Contact us at cbcbulletin@cambridgebirdclub.org.uk, and use this address to let us know if you would like to receive your bulletin in e-mail format rather than paper.

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). Any major rarities can be phoned in to Birdline East Anglia on 07941 333970.

Full lists of your records should continue to be submitted monthly 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.**

GOOD BIRDING!