

CAMBRIDGESHIRE BIRD CLUB

Bulletin No. 445



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

Welcome to the March / April 2016 Edition

RECENT BIRD REPORTS: *March – April Headlines*

CATTLE EGRET* Apr: Chesterton Fen from 8th – 18th.

WHITE STORK* Apr: Fen Drayton Lakes on 1st and Paxton Pits on 21st, (this latter bird was Polish ringed and had collided with power lines and later been brought to UK for rehabilitation – also seen previously at Welney); 2 flyovers on the same day, Ouse Washes one circling high over Pymoor on 23rd, Milton a flyover on 24th.

SPOONBILL Mar: Ouse Washes on 25th. Apr: Ouse Washes Earith on 9th, Eldernell on 14th, March Farmers on 17th.

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

ARCTIC SKUA* Apr: Paxton Pits – dark phase bird on 29th.

LITTLE TERN Apr: Ferry Meadows CP on 28th.

ICELAND GULL Mar: Witcham Gravel an adult on 2nd, a 2 c.y. on 24th, Grafham Water on 6th and on 10th.

KUMLIEN'S GULL* Mar: Witcham Gravel 2 adults on 2nd.

GLAUCOUS GULL Mar: Grafham Water an adult on 1st.

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

LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER Mar & Apr: reported from four sites, locations not disclosed in the breeding season.

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



*Cattle Egret at Chesterton
photo: Neil Bramwell.*

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.

Weather: March began cold but mainly dry with an area of high pressure and northerly winds clearly delaying migration. Easter saw a change to the Atlantic weather systems and the arrival of the first summer migrants. The end of the month was a little warmer after a fierce storm (Katie) passed over southern England on 27th – 28th. April began with variable weather and a westerly airstream aiding migration. By mid-month the wind had turned to the north and cold winds at the end gave the overall impression of a rather cool month. Interestingly this did not seem to hinder early arrivals with dates largely similar to 2015 despite last year being a warmer spring; indeed some waders arrived earlier and only Swifts and Reed Warblers were notably later, by a week.

Wildfowl

Bewick's Swan **Mar:** Ouse Washes 7 on 19th. **Apr:** Sutton Gault 2 on 7th and 8th.

Whooper Swan **Mar:** Ouse Washes 'several thousand' on 12th and Four Balls Farm 780 on 25th, Coates 278 on 20th. **Apr:** Ouse Washes c80 on 10th, Sutton Gault 16 on 8th, Nene Washes 31 on 8th.

Pink-footed Goose **Mar & Apr:** Kingfishers Bridge single 29th Mar to 25th Apr.

White-fronted Goose **Mar:** Ouse Washes on 19th to 30th. **Apr:** Ouse Washes on 3rd to 11th.

Greylag Goose **Mar:** Fowlmere NR 153 on 2nd, Wicken Fen 58 on 14th, Cam Washes Upware 132 on 14th, Great Fen 130 on 16th. **Apr:** Ouse Fen 160 on 9th, Trumpington Clay Farm 15 on 27th (3 nests), Burwell Fen max 51 (11 pairs) on 30th; broods noted at 3 sites from 20th.

Canada Goose **Mar:** Kingfishers Bridge 67 on 4th, Swaffham Prior Fen 125 on 7th, Toft 31 on 8th, Cam Washes Upware 31 on 14th. **Apr:** Cam Washes Upware 15 on 28th, Burwell Fen max 24 (4 pairs), Trumpington Clay Farm 14 on 12th, Kingfishers Bridge 76 with 27 pairs on 21st.

Barnacle Goose **Mar:** Whittlesford GP on 16th, Lt Shelford 15 on 28th. **Apr:** Whittlesford 4 on 19th.

Brent Goose **Mar:** Cam Washes on 20th.

Egyptian Goose **Mar:** Paxton Pits 2 on 6th, Dog-in-a-Doublet 3 on 4th, Fen Drayton Lakes 3+ on 20th.

Apr: Paxton Pits 2 on 16th, Cam Washes Waterbeach on 22nd, Earith Washes brood of 6 on 27th.

Shelduck **Mar:** Cam Washes Upware 23 on 31st, Grafham Water 5 on 21st, Sutton Gault 6 on 26th, Nene Washes 42 on 28th. **Apr:** Fen Drayton Lakes 2 on 9th, Cam Washes Upware 2 on 5th, Ouse Washes 156 on 11th, Nene Washes Eldernell 35 on 27th, Paxton Pits max 3 on 28th, Burwell Fen max 10 on 13th (5 pairs), Wicken Fen max 4 on 9th (2 pairs), Fowlmere NR a pair on 21st.

Mandarin **Mar:** Trumpington Meadows 11 on 1st, Fowlmere NR a drake on 5th, Linton 5 on 8th, Eye Green NR 2 on 11th. **Apr:** Ouse Fen 2 on 2nd, Trumpington Meadows 4+ on 5th, Wimpole 2 on 20th.

Wigeon **Mar:** Ouse Washes 12469 on 14th, Fen Drayton Lakes 3021 on 15th, Wicken Fen c500 on 17th dropping to 71 on 28th, Burwell Fen 550 on 5th then 16 on 26th, Godmanchester GP 230+ on 5th, Cam Washes Upware 486 on 7th, Nene Washes (Eldernell) 1000 on 22nd. **Apr:** Wicken Fen 43 on 5th, Cam Washes Upware c50 on 5th, Ouse Washes 3246 on 11th, Paxton Pits 3 males on 27th.

Gadwall **Mar:** Ouse Washes 122 on 14th, Cam Washes Upware 14 on 14th, Fen Drayton Lakes 148 on 15th, Wicken Fen 58 on 17th, Burwell Fen 21 on 26th. **Apr:** Wicken Fen max 19 on 9th, Ouse Washes 178 on 11th, Burwell Fen max 35 on 24th (12 pairs), Kingfishers Bridge 40 (15 pairs) on 27th.

Teal **Mar:** Burwell Fen c50 on 4th, Wicken Fen 25 on 3rd rising to 139 on 28th, Ouse Washes 1360 on 14th, Cam Washes Upware 28 on 14th, Fen Drayton Lakes 516 on 15th, Great Fen Trundle Mere 30+ on 20th, Kingfishers Bridge 99 on 22nd, Sutton Gault 260 on 26th. **Apr:** Wicken Fen 63 on 5th, Cam Washes Upware 14 on 5th, Ouse Washes 1363 on 11th, Paxton Pits 16 on 28th.

Mallard **Mar:** Great Fen 77 on 1st, Burwell Fen 52 on 12th, Ouse Washes 650 on 14th, Fen Drayton Lakes 138 on 15th, Peterborough Millennium Bridge 50 on 28th. **Apr:** Burwell Fen max 27 on 24th, Wicken Fen max 35 on 9th, Ouse Washes 494 on 11th, Cam Washes Upware 15 on 28th.

Pintail Mar: Burwell Fen on 4th and 12th, Paxton Pits 5 pairs on 12th, Ouse Washes 130 on 14th, Fen Drayton Lakes 140 on 20th, Sutton Gault 50+ on 25th. **Apr:** Ouse Washes 63 on 11th, March Farmers 112 on 17th, Burwell Fen on 20th and 24th.

Garganey Mar: Nene Washes Eldernell 2 pairs on 23rd – *the first of the year*, then 2 males and a pair on 30th, Kingfishers Bridge 3 on 24 – 25th, Paxton Pits a pair on 26th, Burwell Fen 2 on 30th. **Apr:** Berry Fen on 2nd, Wicken Fen a pair on 5th, thereafter also at Burwell Fen (max 4), Fen Drayton Lakes, Nene Washes, and Ouse Washes (8).

Shoveler Mar: Ouse Washes 85 on 14th, Cam Washes Upware 22 on 14th, Fen Drayton Lakes max 275 on 15th, Wicken and Burwell Fens 85 on 17th, Kingfishers Bridge 42 on 20th, **Apr:** Ouse Washes 561 on 11th, Cam Washes Upware 73 on 11th, Wicken Fen max 32 on 18th.

Red-crested Pochard Mar: Paxton Pits on 12th. **Apr:** Paxton Pits 2 – 3 on several dates max 5.

Pochard Mar: Paxton Pits 84 on 8th, Wicken Fen 20 on 13th, Ouse Washes 1508 on 14th, Fen Drayton Lakes 156 on 15th, Kingfishers Bridge 27 on 30th. **Apr:** Kingfishers Bridge 23 on 2nd, Burwell Fen 2 pairs plus 3 females on 7th, Ouse Washes 73 on 11th, Cam Washes Waterbeach 2 on 22nd.

Tufted Duck Mar: Colne Fen GP 93 on 13th, Ouse Washes 443 on 14th, Fen Drayton Lakes 1141 on 15th, Whittlesford GP 23 on 16th, Wicken Fen 17 on 17th, Burwell Fen 26 on 26th. **Apr:** Paxton Pits 100 on 1st, Burwell Fen max 30 on 2nd, Ouse Washes 505 on 11th, Nene Washes 290 on 17th.

Scaup Mar – Apr: Ouse Washes (same bird as in February?) recorded through to 5th Apr.

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

Apr: Grafham Water on 4th, 2 on 11th, a single on 18th, 4 on 24th.

Goldeneye Mar: Paxton Pits 46 on 7th, Fen Drayton Lakes 73 on 15th and 65 (26m & 39f) on 25th, Grafham Water 30th on 25th, Ouse Washes 4 on 25th. **Apr:** Paxton Pits 22 on 1st, Ouse Washes on 3rd, Fen Drayton Lakes 6 on 13th, Kingfishers Bridge on 21st.

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

Goosander Mar: Burghley Park 5 on 3rd, Grafham Water 17 on 6th. **Apr:** Ouse Fen 2 on 24th.

Gamebirds

Grey Partridge Mar: Comberton 20 on 7th, Cambridge Research Park 2 on 12th, Barton 5 pairs on 30th. **Apr:** Haddenham/Aldreth Fens 4 pairs on 20th, Nine Wells 12 on 19th.

Cormorants, egrets, herons and grebes

Cormorant Mar: Holme Fen 29 on 6th, Ouse Washes 81 on 14th, Whittlesford GP on 16th. **Apr:** Burwell Fen max 13 on 11th, Paxton Pits max 55 on 23rd ‘several active nests’.

Bittern Mar: reported from five sites. **Apr:** reported from six likely breeding sites.

Little Egret Mar: reported from Haddenham, Burwell Fen (12), Godmanchester GP (2), Paxton Pits, Whittlesford GP, Whittlesey (14). **Apr:** similar reports plus Ouse Washes (82), Nene Washes (c100).

Great White Egret Mar: Great Fen/Yaxley area on several dates from 4th, Haddenham/Cottenham area on several dates from 6th, Nene Washes on 12th, King’s Dyke NR on 18th and Eldernell on 23rd, Ouse Washes on 19th, 25th and 26th, Cam Washes on 20th, Paxton Pits on 21st; *so probably 2 different birds in the north of the county and maybe 4 overall*. **Apr:** Ouse Washes singles on several dates and 2 on 11th, Ouse Fen on 3rd, Farcet Fen on 4th, Sutton Gault on 8th.

Grey Heron Mar: Berry Fen 13 on 27th. **Apr:** active nests at Paxton Pits and Wicken Fen.

Little Grebe Mar: Trumpington Clay Farm 4 on 2nd, Bradley Fen 8 on 22nd, Burwell Fen on 17 on 30th, Kingfishers Bridge 8 on 31st. **Apr:** Wicken Fen 6 on 5th, Cam Washes Upware 2 on 28th, Burwell Fen max 16 on 13th, Kings Dyke NR 6 on 20th, Trumpington Clay Farm 3 on 27th.

Great Crested Grebe Mar: Dryside BP 20 on 4th, Burwell Fen 2 all month, Whittlesford GP a pair on 16th, Grafham Water c40 on 25th. **Apr:** Ouse Washes 52 on 11th, Grafham Water 25 on 29th; also at Wicken Fen, Burwell Fen, Trumpington Clay Farm and Whittlesford GP.

Red-necked Grebe* Mar - Apr: Grafham Water on 22nd Mar to 24th Apr with 2 on 24th Mar.

Black-necked Grebe Mar: Ouse Washes on 20th, Grafham Water on 20th – 21st, Fen Drayton Lakes on 25th. **Apr:** one at an undisclosed site in early April.



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

Raptors

Red Kite **Mar:** Regular reports from the Hunts core area, max Stilton/Sawtry 23 on 21st, and more widely from Eldernell, Burwell Fen, Cambridge, Babraham, Foxton and Paxton Pits. **Apr:** also at Cambourne, Grafham Water, Thriplow, Toft, Buckden (6), and Wicken Fen.

Marsh Harrier **Mar:** reported from Woodwalton Fen (c10), Fen Drayton Lakes (4) and Wicken Fen (3). **Apr:** reported from 10 sites with numbers ranging from 1 – 8.

Hen Harrier **Mar:** Great Fen on 4th, Wicken Fen singles on several dates with roost of 3 males and a female on 15th, Cottenham a male on 5th, Elsworth a ringtail on 6th, Bottisham/Wilbraham on 19th.

Apr: Swaffham Prior a flyover on 2nd, Burwell Fen a ringtail on 7th, Wicken Fen 3 ringtails on 9th and 2 on 10th, a male on 11th, Devil's Dyke (Burwell) a male on 16th, *the latest date*.

Buzzard **Mar:** reported from 22 sites with a maximum over north Cambridge (11). **Apr:** also widely reported including from Barton (4), Burwell Fen area (8), Chippenham Fen, Fowlmere, Haddenham, Hemingford Grey (4), Paxton Pits (3+), Six Mile Bottom, Upwood (5+), and Wandlebury.

Osprey **Mar:** Grafham Water on 20th – 21st, *the first of the year*. **Apr:** Farcet Fen flyover on 4th, Maxey GP one possibly two on 5th, Ferry Meadows CP on 10th, Guyhirn a flyover on 11th, Grafham Water on 19th, Paxton Pits a flyover on 22nd, Ely a flyover on 29th.

Rails and crane

Water Rail **Mar:** reported from Cambridge Research Park, Chippenham Fen, Wicken Fen (4), and Woodwalton Fen (11). **Apr:** further reports from Little Wilbraham Fen (5+), Fowlmere NR (2).

Coot **Mar:** Kingfishers Bridge 40 on 4th, Ouse Washes 2105 on 14th, Fen Drayton Lakes 272 on 15th, Burwell Fen 110 on 26th. **Apr:** Ouse Washes 650 on 11th, Colne Fen GP 56 on 9th.

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

Waders

Avocet **Mar:** Grafham Water 3 in the lagoons on 2nd, 6 on 10th, Paxton Pits 2 on 28th, Nene Washes March Farmers on 30th, *good numbers reported back at two other breeding locations*. **Apr:** A similar picture plus Ouse Washes 2 on 3rd, Grafham Water 2 on 21st, Fen Drayton Lakes 4 on 28th.

Oystercatcher **Mar:** reported from Nene Washes (9), Burwell Fen, Godmanchester, Paxton Pits, Colne GP, Fen Drayton Lakes, and Cam Washes (6). **Apr:** Ouse Washes 18 on 11th, Grafham Water 2 on 6th, Paxton Pits max 8 on 11th – 12th, Burwell Fen 5 on 11th, Kingfishers Bridge 4 on 28th.

Golden Plover **Mar:** Eldernell 7000+ on 3rd and 3000 on 12th, Burwell Fen c450 on 8th, Woodwalton Fen 540 over on 29th. **Apr:** Maxey GP 200 on 8th.

Grey Plover **Mar:** Paxton Pits on 18th, *the first of the year*, Kingfishers Bridge on 23rd. **Apr:** Paxton Pits on 3rd, Ouse Washes a flyover on 22nd.

Lapwing **Mar:** Great Fen 700+ on 4th, Roswell Pits 300 on 4th, Ouse Washes 500 on 10th. **Apr:** Ouse Washes 75 on 11th, counts of up to 15 from 17 other sites.

Little Ringed Plover **Mar:** Paxton Pits on 26th, *the first of the year*, Nene Washes March Farmers on 30th. **Apr:** Paxton Pits 1 – 5 on several dates, an undisclosed site a pair in early April, Maxey GP 2 on 11th and 16th, Grafham Water on 15th and 21st, Godmanchester 3 flyovers on 16th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 16th, Nene Washes on 23rd, Trumpington 2 on 24th.

Ringed Plover **Mar:** Paxton Pits on 12th and 28th, Colne GP 2 on 13th, Trumpington Clay Farm 2 on 17th, Nene Washes Eldernell on 23rd. **Apr:** Paxton Pits 2 – 3 on several dates from 16th, Grafham Water on 16th, Whittlesford GP on 26th.

Whimbrel **Apr:** Paxton Pits 6 and Grafham Water 8 on 17th, *the first of the year (earliest in 2015 was April 20th)*, then Paxton Pits one on 18th, 24th and 30th, Ouse Washes a flyover on 21st, Burwell Fen on 23rd and 27th, Cam Washes Upware 3 on 22nd, Nene Washes on 23rd – 24th, Witcham Gravel 2 on 24th, Grafham Water 2 on 28th.

Curlew **Mar:** Fen Drayton Lakes on 4th, Nene Washes on 12th, Paxton Pits 2 on 21st, single on 28th. **Apr:** Burwell Fen on 7th, Paxton Pits on 13th, Berry Fen on 17th, Nene Washes on 24th, Wicken Fen 26th, Dullingham on 28th.

Black tailed Godwit **Mar:** Paxton Pits c4000 on 13th, Fen Drayton Lakes max c3000 on 20th, Nene Washes Eldernell 2700 on 23rd, 2000 on 25th included colour ringed birds traceable to the River Alde in Suffolk (2) and Iceland (3). **Apr:** Nene Washes 2000+ on 2nd, c1100 on 3rd, 200 at March Farmers on 17th, Sutton Gault 520 on 3rd, Ouse Washes c800 on 12th, Fowlmere NR on 4th – *an unusual record as this species is rarely recorded south of Cambridge*.

Bar-tailed Godwit **Mar:** Fen Drayton Lakes on 20th and 22nd – *the first of the year (earliest in 2015 was April 17th)*. **Apr:** Eldernell c25 and Paxton Pits on 11th, Nene Washes 7 on 24th.

Turnstone **Apr:** Ferry Meadows CP on 15th.

Knot **Mar:** Grafham Water on 23rd, Fen Drayton Lakes on 23rd.

Ruff **Mar:** Ouse Washes 53 on 14th, Fen Drayton Lakes 25 on 15th, Cam Washes 2 on 20th, Nene Washes Eldernell 34 on 23rd. **Apr:** Ouse Washes 23 on 3rd, 2 on 23rd, Sutton Gault on 3rd, 6 on 8th, Paxton Pits on 11th – 13th, 2 on 17th, Berry Fen on 17th, Nene Washes 18 on 24th.

Sanderling **Mar:** Kingfishers Bridge on 23rd, *the first of the year*. **Apr:** Paxton Pits on 22nd – 23rd.

Dunlin **Mar:** Paxton Pits on dates from 6th and 5 on 28th, Nene Washes March Farmers max 240 on 10th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 5 on 17th, Wicken Fen 2 on 17th. **Apr:** Ouse Washes 11 on 3rd, Berry Fen 2 on 17th, Nene Washes 3 on 23rd, Paxton Pits max 16+ on 30th.

Common Sandpiper **Mar:** Etton on 25th – *the first of the year (earliest in 2015 was April 16th)*, then Berry Fen on 27th. **Apr:** Trumpington Clay Farm on 12th Paxton Pits 5 on 24th – 28th, Fen Drayton Lakes 2 on 16th, 3 on 23rd, Grafham Water 4 on 18th, one on 28th, Nene Washes 2 on 24th.

Green Sandpiper **Mar:** Aldreth/Haddenham 2 on 6th, Paxton Pits on 12th – 13th and 25th – 28th, Colne GP on 13th, Grafham Water on 30th. **Apr:** Ouse Washes 3 on 3rd, Chesterton Fen 2 on 8th, Maxey GP on 11th, 17th, 19th, Kingfishers Bridge 2 on 12th, Burwell Fen on 12th, Paxton Pits on 13th, 17th, Maxey Cut 2 on 19th, Fen Drayton Lakes 5 on 24th.

Spotted Redshank **Mar:** Fen Drayton Lakes on 20th. **Apr:** Wicken Fen on 3rd, Nene Washes on 7th, 11th and 23rd – 24th.

Greenshank **Apr:** Kingfishers Bridge 5 and Eldernell 3 on 11th – *the first of the year*, Paxton Pits on 12th and 2 on 22nd, Portholme/Godmanchester 3 on 16th, Berry Fen on 17th, Grafham Water 3 on 21st, Nene Washes 4 on 24th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 25th, Wicken Fen on 30th.

Wood Sandpiper **Apr:** Nene Washes on 23rd – *first of the year*, Paxton Pits 23rd, and 25th – 30th.

Redshank **Mar:** Ouse Washes 27 on 14th, Nene Washes March Farmers c25 on 19th, Wicken Fen max 11 on 17th, Cam Washes 14 on 20th, Kingfishers Bridge 8 on 31st. **Apr:** Wicken Fen 5 on 13th, Chesterton Fen on 8th, Ouse Washes 56 on 11th Nene Washes 10 on 12th, Paxton Pits max 8 on 13th.
Jack Snipe **Mar:** Kings Dyke NR (3), Stanground Gullet and Bradley Fen, all on 22nd.

Woodcock **Mar:** *signs of return migration mid-month:* Cambourne on 11th, Great Shelford on 12th, Colne GP 2 on 13th, Wicken Fen on 14th and one roding on 17th, Monks Wood 4 on 15th, Ditton Park Wood 12 on 18th, Holland and Wennington Woods 8 on 19th, Wicken Fen 2 on 26th. **Apr:** Woodwalton Fen 6 on 14th.

Snipe **Mar:** Cam Washes Upware 59 on 4th, Trumpington 25 on 10th, Darlow Farm 34 on 19th, Colne Fen GP 34 on 19th, Milton one feeding alongside the A14 on 14th. **Apr:** reported from Burwell Fen, Cam Washes (5), Ouse Washes, Paxton Pits, Wicken Fen (3 drumming).

Terns and gulls

Black Tern **Apr:** Grafham Water 5+ on 14th – *first of the year (earliest in 2015 was April 23rd).*

Sandwich Tern **Apr:** Burwell Fen on 2nd and Ouse Washes on 3rd – *first of the year, (earliest in 2015 was April 24th),* Fen Drayton Lakes on 13th – 14th, Berry Fen on 17th, Ferry Meadows CP on 20th.

Common Tern **Mar:** Paxton Pits on 28th, *the first of the year.* **Apr:** Ferry Meadows CP on 11th, Maxey GP on 11th, Burwell Fen 2 on 12th and 20th, Paxton Pits 2 on 12th, 26 on 15th, 38 on 21st, 70+ on 27th, Fen Drayton Lakes 6 on 14th, Ferry Meadows CP 65 on 23rd, Grafham Water 21 on 25th.

Arctic Tern **Apr:** Ferry Meadows CP on 11th, Grafham Water on 11th, – *the first of the year*, then 3 on 12th, 9 on 18th, then generally singles reported until Fen Drayton Lakes 15+ on 23rd, Grafham Water 59 on 24th, Cambridge Research Park 11 on 23rd, Longstanton c20 at new lake on 26th.

Kittiwake **Mar:** Cambridge Research Park on 12th.

Black-headed Gull **Mar:** Bradley Fen 600 on 8th, Burwell Fen c570 on 12th, Great Wilbraham c370 on 14th, Trumpington Clay Farm 175 on 17th, Eldernell 850 on 22nd. **Apr:** Kingfishers Bridge 761 on 1st and 306 on 27th, Burwell Fen max c100 on 2nd, Trumpington Clay Farm 104 on 12th.

Little Gull **Mar:** Sutton Gault 8 flew SW on 26th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 28th. **Apr:** Fen Drayton Lakes an adult on 2nd, Sutton Gault 6 on 6th; then on the 11th Eldernell c10, Ferry Meadows CP 2, Grafham Water 13, Maxey GP 5, Ouse Washes 6; on the 12th Burwell Fen 2, Fen Drayton Lakes 6, Grafham Water 6, Ouse Washes 8, Paxton Pits 11; Ouse Washes 2 on 13th, Grafham Water 2 on 14th, Ferry Meadows CP on 15th, Grafham Water 6 on 16th, then a single on 21st and 24th – 25th.

Mediterranean Gull **Mar:** Witcham Gravel an adult on 2nd, 3rd and 8th, then 2 on various dates from 6th, Grafham Water on 6th, Colne GP 2 on 13th, Fen Drayton Lakes a 3 c.y. on 25th. **Apr:** Kingfishers Bridge 2 on 13th, Maxey GP 2 on 14th, Fen Drayton Lakes 2 on 20th Ouse Fen on 24th.

Common Gull **Mar:** Trumpington Clay Farm 4 on 17th, Fen Drayton Lakes 30+ on 20th.

Great Black-backed Gull **Mar:** Nene Washes Eldernell 12 on 22nd. **Apr:** Fowlmere NR an immature on 21st and 22nd and possibly the same at Whittlesford GP on 27th, Kingfishers Bridge 10 on 26th.

Lesser Black-backed Gull **Mar:** Burwell Fen 20 on 5th, Kingfishers Bridge 90 on 25th. **Apr:** Paxton Pits 30 on 19th, Kingfishers Bridge 13 on 22nd.

Herring Gull **Mar:** Nene Washes Eldernell 70 on 22nd, Burwell Fen 3 on 12th. **Apr:** Drysides BP 46 on 20th, Burwell Fen 2 on 2nd and 24th.

Yellow-legged Gull **Mar:** reported from Fen Drayton Lakes (2) and Godmanchester GP (2). **Apr:** Paxton Pits on 22nd and 28th.

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

Doves, owls, kingfisher and woodpeckers

Turtle Dove **Apr:** Cambridge Research Park on 17th – *first of the year (apart from the Aldreth long staying bird),* Murrow on 18th, Fowlmere NR on 21st, Paxton Pits on 22nd, Aldreth on 30th.

Cuckoo **Apr:** Chatteris on 5th, Chesterton Fen on 10th, Wilbraham Common on 14th, then an arrival on 17th with birds noted at Swaffham Bulbeck, Waterbeach, and Burwell Fen/Wicken Fen, and then more widely. *Earliest in 2015 was April 16th.*

Barn Owl Mar: reported from Burwell Fen, Coates, Fowlmere/Newton, Middle Fen, Wicken Fen (3) and Witcham Gravel; road kills on A14 near Connington, near Bar Hill, and near Cambridge. **Apr:** reported from Comberton, Wicken Fen (2); road kills on A14 near Conington, and A10 Milton.

Little Owl Mar: reported from Houghton/Wyton, Little Paxton, Middle Fen and Thorney. **Apr:** an undisclosed location on 20th, Swaffham Prior on 27th.

Tawny Owl Mar: reported from 15 sites, 4 at Woodwalton Fen. **Apr:** Hare Park 2 on 20th, and 8 other sites.

Long-eared Owl Mar & Apr: reported from 2 sites.

Short-eared Owl Mar: reported from Burwell Fen (3), Eldernell (2), Ely, Fen Drayton Lakes (4), Fowlmere/Newton, Foxton, Great Fen (9), Ouse Washes, Wicken Fen, Witcham Gravel and Yaxley. **Apr:** reported from Burwell Fen (3), Fen Drayton Lakes, Maxey GP, Nene Washes (2) and Paxton Pits *with birds still being reported at the end of the month.*

Swift Apr: Ferry Meadows CP and Paxton Pits on 21st, *the first of the year (earliest in 2015 - April 14th)*, then Fen Drayton Lakes 10+ on 22nd, 2 on 28th, Ouse Washes 6 on 22nd, Burwell Fen c20 on 24th, 35 on 30th, Paxton Pits 15+ on 28th.

Kingfisher Mar: reported from 17 sites including Ely CP (3), Toft (2), River Cam Baits Bite-Clayhithe, Colne GP (2), and Haddenham. **Apr:** similar reports including Paxton Pits (2) and Wicken Fen (2).

Falcons, parrots, shrikes and corvids

Merlin Mar: Great Fen on 4th and 10th. **Apr:** Cottenham on 12th, Nene Washes March Farmers on 17th, Wicken Fen on 20th, and Little Wilbraham Fen on 21st – *the last of the winter.*

Hobby Apr: Fen Drayton Lakes 3 on 13th – *first of the year, (earliest in 2015 was April 17th)*, Kings Dyke NR on 14th, Eldernell on 17th, Wicken Fen on 19th and 20th, Nene Washes on 23rd, Burwell Fen on 25th and 27th, Paxton Pits on 27th.

Peregrine Mar: Fen Drayton Lakes on 5th and 16th, Wicken Fen on 7th and 26th, Aldreth on 13th, Ouse Washes on 13th, Cambridge 1 – 2 on several dates, Hemingford Grey on 22nd. **Apr:** reported from 7 sites.

Ring-necked Parakeet* Apr: Ouse Washes on 10th, Witcham a pair on 14th.

Great Grey Shrike* Apr: near Crowland but within Cambs on 6th.

Jackdaw Mar: Burwell Fen c200 on 6th, Burghley Park 150+ on 18th. **Apr:** Paxton Pits 150 on 21th.

Raven Mar: Linton 1 on 17th, Gamlingay 4 flyovers on 20th. **Apr:** 3 pairs with young all on the western county boundary, plus roaming birds as follows: Grafham Water on 17th, Castor Hanglands 2 flyovers on 18th, Paxton Pits 2 flyovers on 23rd and on 29th.

Crests and tits

Goldcrest Apr: Lucy Wood Kirtling 9 on 8th, Witcham 6 singing males on 26th.

Firecrest Mar: Cherry Hinton Pit on 27th. **Apr:** Paxton Pits one photographed on 24th.

Coal Tit Mar: Monks Wood 35 ringed in the month.

Marsh Tit Mar: Toft on 6th, Monks Wood 27 on 15th, Holland and Wennington Woods 29 on 19th, Woodwalton Fen on 20th, Lower Wood 6 on 21st. **Apr:** Ditton Park Wood 4 on 13th.

Bearded Tit Mar: reported from Wicken Fen, Woodwalton Fen. **Apr:** reported from Little Wilbraham Fen (3+), Wicken Fen (3+), Kingfishers Bridge and Ely BF.

Hirundines and warblers

Sand Martin Mar: Fen Drayton Lakes on 15th – *the first of the year*, then on 20th and 2 on 24th, and 100 on 28th; Ferry Meadows CP 20 on 26th and 30th, Grafham Water c40 on 28th, Paxton Pits c30 on 28th. **Apr:** Kings Dyke NR 260 on 11th, Paxton Pits c100 on 15th, Drysides BP 300 on 28th.

Swallow Mar: Grafham Water (2) and Witcham Gravel on 24th – *the first of the year*, Fen Drayton Lakes on 25th, 3 on 27th, Cambridge Research Park on 26th, Ferry Meadows CP on 26th. **Apr:** reported widely from early in the month, Paxton Pits c80 on 15th, Burwell Fen 100+ on 15th.

House Martin Mar: Witcham Gravel on 26th, *the first of the year (earliest in 2015 was April 1st)*, Grafham Water 3 on 28th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 28th. **Apr:** reported from the beginning of the month, then larger counts at Paxton Pits c60 on 15th, Burwell Fen c70 on 24th.

Cetti's Warbler **Mar:** reported from Fen Drayton Lakes (11), Paxton Pits (2) and Wicken Fen (5).
Apr: reported from Fen Drayton Lakes (21) – *a new county record*, Fowlmere NR, Little Wilbraham Fen, Marsh Lane GP (2), Maxey Cut, Milton CP, Ouse Fen (3), Paxton Pits (4), Sutton Gault, Wicken Fen (8) and Cambridge Research Park.

Wood Warbler* **Apr:** Grafham Water on 13th – 19th, Bainton Pits on 25th.

Chiffchaff **Mar:** Great Shelford, Wicken Fen and Cambridge Research Park 2 on 12th *were the first reports of the summer*, then Paxton Pits on 21st, Fen Drayton Lakes 3 on 22nd, and the main arrival from 25th. **Apr:** 9 birds caught in a part of Wicken Fen on April 1st, Ditton Park Wood 23 on 13th.

Willow Warbler **Mar:** Ouse Washes Oxlode on 30th and Ferry Meadows CP on 31st, *the first of the year*. **Apr:** Fen Drayton Lakes 2 on 2nd, Ferry Meadows CP 10 on 9th, thereafter widely reported.

Blackcap **Mar:** Singing birds at Linton from 4th, Haddenham on 20th, Cambridge on 28th, Ferry Meadows CP on 30th. **Apr:** Chippenham Fen up to 5 on 5th part of a general arrival in the first week.

Garden Warbler **Apr:** Paxton Pits 3 on 21st – *first of the year*, Fen Drayton Lakes on 25th.

Lesser Whitethroat **Apr:** Wardy Hill Drove and Roman Road on 11th – *first of the year (earliest in 2015 - April 15th)*, Marsh Lane GP on 13th, Paxton Pits 2 on 13th, Cambridge on 13th, Little Wilbraham Fen 2 on 17th, Wicken Fen on 17th, and Fen Drayton Lakes 6+ on 30th.

Whitethroat **Apr:** Fen Drayton Lakes on 10th – *the first of the year (earliest in 2015 - April 12th)*, Ferry Meadows CP and Kingfishers Bridge on 13th, Paxton Pits on 17th.

Grasshopper Warbler **Apr:** Wicken Fen 4 on 10th – *first of the year (earliest in 2015 - April 11th)*, Woodwalton Fen and Fen Drayton Lakes on 13th, Little Wilbraham Fen on 17th, Ouse Fen on 17th, Wicken Fen one retrapped on 17th had been ringed there in May 2015, Litlington on 19th, thereafter general arrival with reports from at Bainton Pits, Clopton, Cottenham, and Grafham Water.

Sedge Warbler **Apr:** Ouse Fen and Wicken Fen on 2nd – *the first of the year (2015 was April 8th)*, Woodwalton Fen 2 on 4th, Ouse Washes on 5th, Paxton Pits 2 on 10th, and thereafter general arrival.

Reed Warbler **Apr:** Burwell Fen on 11th – *first of the year (2015 was April 8th)*, Woodwalton Fen 6 on 13th, Cambridge Research Park and Paxton Pits on 17th, thereafter widely reported.

Starling and thrushes

Starling **Mar:** roost counts at Fen Drayton Lakes c15000 on 6th, Wicken Fen 6000 – 8000 on 10th.

Ring Ouzel **Apr:** Cambridge on 3rd, Upware on 3rd, Eldernell on 11th, Ouse Washes on 11th, Great Wilbraham Common a male on 14th, and one on 17th, Witcham on 18th – 19th, Moonshine Gap 2 on 26th; *overall a more modest total than the recent peak of 60 in 2015*.

Fieldfare **Mar:** Melbourn 425 on 9th, Foxton/Fowlmere 600 on 19th, several other 100+ counts.
Apr: Foxton 250 on 3rd, Fleam Dyke 11 on 11th, Nene Washes 9 on 23rd, *the latest of the winter*.

Redwing **Mar:** Monks Wood 350+ on 15th, Woodwalton Fen 100+ on 20th, Pidley GC 50+ on 21st, Ferry Meadows c25 on 28th. **Apr:** Great Fen 40 on 1st, Fleam Dyke 8 on 11th.

Mistle Thrush **Mar:** Burghley Park 10 on 3rd.

Nightingale **Apr:** Marsh Lane GP on 11th – *first of the year (earliest in 2015 was April 7th)*, then 3 on 13th, Grafham Water 5 on 13th, Paxton Pits on 13th, 3 on 17th, Castor Hanglands on 18th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 22nd – 23rd, Wicken Fen on 23rd, Little Wilbraham Fen on 24th.

Starts and chats

Black Redstart **Mar:** Cambourne the bird reported in February present until 21st, Yaxley on 29th – 30th. **Apr:** Dullingham on 6th, Linton on 12th, Granta Park a female on 20th, Kings Dyke NR on 20th.

Redstart **Apr:** on 10th singles at Cherry Hinton Chalk pits, Dogsthorpe GP, Fowlmere NR and 2 at Moonshine Gap *were the first of the year*, then RSPB Grange Farm Knapwell on 13th, Eldernell on 17th, Grafham Water on 17th, and later reports from Middle Fen, Fen Drayton Lakes, Wardy Hill, Wicken Fen, Pymoor, Litlington, and Aldreth; *overall reported females outnumbered males 2:1*.

Whinchat **Apr:** Burwell Fen a male on 19th, Ouse Washes on 22nd, 3 on 25th, Paxton Pits 3 on 22nd, 2 on 24th – 27th, one on 28th and 30th, Witcham Gravel 3 on 25th, Wicken Fen on 27th.

Stonechat **Mar:** Eldernell on 3rd, Coates 2 with the Dartford Warbler on 3rd, Wicken Fen on 2nd, 2 on 10th and 3 on 20th, Trumpington Meadows on 7th, Burwell Fen 4 on 10th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 25th. **Apr:** Wicken Fen on 5th, a pair on 20th, single on 25th and 2 males on 27th.

Wheatear **Mar:** Ouse Washes on 24th, *the first of the year*, Etton on 25th, Nene Washes March Farmers on 30th, Toft 2 on 30th. **Apr:** Fen Drayton Lakes on 2nd, Bottisham Lock 2 on 8th, Maxey GP on from 12th with 3 on 19th, Ouse Washes on 12th, North Bank on 13th, Upware on 17th, Burwell Fen 4 on 18th, and thereafter reports from a further 14 sites involving 50+ birds.

Sparrows, wagtails and pipits

Tree Sparrow **Mar:** Great Fen Engine Farm 10 on 20th.



White Wagtail at Paxton Pits: photo by James Hanlon.

Most field guides give illustrations of the variant types of both Yellow and Pied Wagtail. Briefly 'our' wagtails differ slightly from those found on the Continent. The continental Pied is called the White Wagtail and the continental Yellow is called the Blue-headed (for obvious reasons), but hybrids between Yellow and Blue-headed Wagtails have been given the name 'Channel' Wagtail; see <http://www.manchesterbirding.com/flavawagtailsarticle.htm>. All Channel Wagtail should be backed by a description submitted to the recorder on the club description form.

Yellow Wagtail **Apr:** Nene Washes Eldernell and Ouse Washes (3) on 2nd – *the first of the year*, Paxton Pits on 4th, Grafham Water 2 on 6th, thereafter widely reported, Paxton Pits 24 in nearby field on 16th. **'Channel Wagtail'** **Apr:** Ouse Washes on 25th, Grafham Water on 28th, Cottenham a possible on 30th.

Grey Wagtail **Mar:** reported from Fowlmere NR, Grafham Water, Haslingfield SW (2), Paxton Pits and Witcham. **Apr:** Cambridge St Catherine's College mid-month.

Pied Wagtail **Mar:** roost counts Addenbrookes max c100, Whittlesford 250, Woodwalton Fen 100.

White Wagtail **Mar:** Ouse Washes (Sutton Gault) on 16th, Thriplow on 25th. **Apr:** Chesterton Fen on 8th, Colne on 9th, Etton Road Pits 3 on 9th, Haddenham Long Drove on 13th, Grafham Water 3 on 16th, 2 on 28th, Ferry Meadows CP on 18th, Burwell Fen 3 on 18th, 2 on 24th, Paxton Pits on 18th, 2 on 23rd, one on 28th, Nene Washes 2 on 24th, Witcham Gravel on 25th, Cottenham on 30th.

Rock Pipit **Mar:** Ouse Washes on 13th, Paxton Pits on 13th, 20th and 25th. **Apr:** Sutton Gault on 7th.

Water Pipit **Mar:** Ouse Washes c10 on 13th, 5 on 16th, a single at Sutton Gault on 25th and 4 on the washes on the same day, Eldernell a summer plumage bird on 30th. **Apr:** Ouse Washes singles on several dates, then 15 on 2nd, 46 at Sutton Gault on 7th – *a county record*.

Finches and buntings

Brambling **Mar:** Thorney on 11 on 6th, Hare Park 1 – 3 on 7th – 18th, Yelling on 19th. **Apr:** Farcet Fen on 3rd, Hare Park 3 on 10th, RSPB Grange Farm Knapwell on 13th, Ouse Washes on 20th.

Goldfinch **Mar:** Burwell Fen 99 on 5th. **Apr:** Great Fen 120 on 22nd.

Siskin **Mar:** Fowlmere NR 43 on 2nd, Cambridge St. John's Innovation Centre c50 on 10th, Kingfishers Bridge 70 on 13th, Cambridge Research park 20+ on 12th, Holme Fen 20+ on 20th, Houghton Mill c50 on 21st. **Apr:** Hatley 3 on 7th, Ferry Meadows CP throughout the month.

Lesser Redpoll **Mar:** reported from Fen Drayton Lakes (3), Haddenham/Aldreth Fens (8 – 10), Holme Fen (5+), Paxton Pits (6), Ramsey Heights (c50), Somersham (40), Swaffham Prior Fen (42) and Wicken Fen 33 caught during the month. **Apr:** Cottenham c 25 on 2nd, c10 on 24th.

Corn Bunting **Mar:** Little Ouse 32 on 7th, Melbourn 64 on 9th, Great Fen Engine Farm max 130 on 15th. **Apr:** Fleam Dyke 25 on 11th, Foxton 37 on 24th.

Contributors: Colin Addington, Richard Allison, Richard Astle, Malcolm Ausden, David Avis, Louise Bacon, Clive Baker, Geoff Barlow, Paul Barsby, Dave Barton, Marie Barton, Rowena Baxter, Peter Beesley, Guy Belcher, Malcolm Bell, Peter Bircham, Will Bowell, Mark Brandon, Richard Broughton, Chris Brown, Colin Brown, Philip Bubb, Roger Buisson, Mike Burdekin, Will Burdett, Ian Burfield, Malcolm Busby, Howard Butler, Gill Butt, James Cadbury, Saimon Clark, Martin Coates, Ade Cooper, Steve Cooper, Robin Cox, Roger Cresswell, Carole Davis, Martin Davis, Ian Dawson, Tim Dee, Ian Delgado, Ian and Sheila Dickerson, Joy Dingley, Brendan Doe, Steve Dudley Mark Eaton, Ian and Beth Ellis, Mike Everett, Mike Foley, Paul Gallagher, Steve Gann, Andrew Gardener, Don Gardener, Simon Gillings, David Green, David Griffiths, Richard Grimmett, Derek Guar, Trevor Gunton, Lyn Guy, James Hanlon, Andy Hannaford, James Harding-Morris, Kevin Harris, Ron Harrold, Ted Harvey, Mark Hawkes, David Heath, Jon Heath, Jem Holding, Michael Holdsworth, David Hollin, Ken Hook, David Hopkins, John Hoppett, Malcolm Housden, Carl Howard, Neil Howard, Sarah Howlett, Bob Humphrey, Frank James, Sue Jarrett, Andy Jennings, Michael Jennings, Colin Kirtland, Charlie Kitchin, Marcus Kohler, John Le Gassick, David and Sallie Jones, Neil Larner, Vince Lea, Martin Leader, D. C. Lee, Diana Leech, Keith Lievesley, Steve Lonsdale, Rachel Lowry, Duncan Mackay, Robert Mansfield, Owen and Monica Marks, Bruce Martin, Paul Mason, Rob McEwen, Duncan McNiven, Matt Mellor, Andy Merryweather, Howard Neil, Martin O'Leary, Daniel Osborne, Dave Palmer, Richard Palmer, Richard Pargeter, Chris Parker, Gill Parrish, Simon Passey, Richard Patient, Pam Peacock, Rob Pople, Duncan Poyser, Doug Radford, Gary Rawlings, Graeme Reed, Gareth Rees, Tony Roberts, John Roote, Tony Rowe, Bill Simmonds, Clive Sinclair, Bob Smith, Ken Smith, J. R. Spaul, Simon Stirrup, Brian Stone, Jonathan Taylor, Kevin Taylor, Paul Taylor, Mark Thomas, Richard Thomas, Chris Thorne and the Wicken Fen Group, Gary Thornton, Bob Titman, Andrew Tongue, Erica Towner, Calum Urquhart, Tracy Urquhart, Hugh Venables, Luke Wake, John Walsh, George Walthew, Mark Ward, Robin Ward, Iain Webb, Matt Webb, Mike Weedon, Jamie Wells, John Wells, Peter Wells, Chris Went, Steve West, Anthony Weston, Ian Whitaker, Matt Williams, Kevin Wilson, Mat Wilson, David Withrington, Karen Woods, Hugh and Emma Wright and Barbara York and Christoph Zöckler.

Rare breeders. Please remember that we do not publicise information about rare breeding birds which might be starting to return to their regular nesting sites, or birds looking for a nesting site. The Bird Club sightings pages will reflect this now it is the breeding season, and we hope that everybody thinks twice about posts on any social media. A full list of UK rare breeding bird species can be found here: www.rbbp.org.uk. A list of the species which should not be publicised is available from the county recorder. Please inform the county recorder of any rare birds which look like they might be displaying or similar. Birds get disturbed deliberately by the malevolent, but more often they are disturbed inadvertently by the over-enthusiastic.

Cambridgeshire Spotted Flycatcher Project, 2015 and 2016

Last year's results, and the challenges of Spofling

Over a hundred observers provided records of Cambs Spotted Flycatchers in 2015; my thanks to you all. I tried to follow up most recent breeding records, and a number of us systematically searched traditional sites.

38 pairs were **confirmed** breeding, either by nests found, or by very recently fledged and dependent young being recorded nearby where a pair had been present earlier. A further four pairs **probably** bred where they were recorded at the same site on more than one occasion. An

additional eight pairs may **possibly** have bred; this included single birds more than once or pairs just once at suitable or traditional sites. The distribution of pairs was fairly even throughout the county outside of the large towns and cities, with a tendency towards the north and west – Hunts villages along the north-western A14 and A1 corridors scored particularly well.

Flycatchers are now so thinly distributed – only a handful of tetrads had more than a single record – that it will be increasingly difficult for birds to intercept one another. A notable feature of early May records was of birds, presumably returning males, conspicuous or singing at a traditional site for a few days before disappearing. There were perhaps twelve such cases. Equally nests were still being found, and noisy young family parties reported, late into early August. This may suggest that some roving birds do persevere and eventually hook up with a partner. It is possible that such late nests were second broods or repeat attempts, but they could also have been just very late getting started.

Unlike tits, for example, which need to synchronise breeding with an invertebrate food source on a fixed timetable, Flycatchers can successfully raise young all summer long, provided they have a supply of largish prey. In some cases this food supply (butterflies, hoverflies) was provided by just one flowering bush or plant, or by a small stream. Many never ranged further than 50 or so metres from their nest-site. Others fed high in the canopy. Given how unobtrusive and silent the birds can be, it's likely that the species is under-recorded. With a pair on the back of a house or in a large garden you certainly cannot rely on them ever to be audible or visible from the road; though you may just be lucky to get one on some wires or an aerial. Many house-owners don't even know that the birds are there, or if they do, what they are. Even when adults are present, RSPB fieldwork suggests that only one visit in three will necessarily detect them. For my part, I have on several occasions visited nests for ringing without seeing either one of the parent birds or hearing alarm calls. In a number of cases birds were present, but couldn't be pinned down despite considerable effort – only for a fledged family to pop up a few weeks later in precisely the same location.

Nests were predominantly found in two categories of habitat, rural village gardens (not necessarily large ones) with good herbaceous plantings and often with some water, and parkland with good nettle or umbellifer patches; pollarded limes also make popular nest sites. Searches of mature woodland were often fruitless, but by and large woods are rarely visited by birders in summer, so this could just be a recording bias.

The 2016 Survey

The CBC is planning to continue its survey of breeding Spotted Flycatchers into 2016. If you 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? In either case please email us at spofl@cambridgebirdclub.org.uk ; please provide a map reference, preferably to 100m (as TL000000) along with any information you have, including records of single birds. Follow your leads up and keep us informed, or we can arrange to follow up if you don't have time yourself.

Michael Holdsworth secretary@cambridgebirdclub.org.uk

Cambridgeshire Turtle Dove project 2016

The Turtle Dove is one of the UK's fastest declining birds, with Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data indicating a 91% population decline during 1995–2013, and the recent *Bird Atlas* showing a 51% decrease in occupied 10-km squares in Britain between 1968–72 and 2007–11. The species has been on the Red list of *Birds of Conservation Concern* in the UK since the first such assessment in 1996, and was recently classified as globally threatened ('Vulnerable') in the 2015 IUCN Red List.

The local position is also worrying: data from BBS squares within Cambridgeshire show on average 0.1 individuals per square during 2013–14 *cf.* 1.3 during 1995–96). The *Cambridgeshire Bird Atlas* has some breeding evidence reported for 32% of tetrads during 2008–2011 *cf.* at least 48% of

tetrads in Old Cambridgeshire during 1988–1992, and 92% of tetrads in Huntingdonshire during 1979–1983; these data imply that the species has fared similarly poorly locally, with the most recent population estimate for the county suggesting that just 150–300 pairs may persist.

As part of an attempt to carry out an ‘audit’ of the county's remaining breeding Turtle Doves – and assess the feasibility of a more formal/structured survey in 2017 – the Club encourages Members to report all Cambridgeshire records of the species, either directly (see [here](#)) or using [BirdTrack](#) (as also encouraged by [Operation Turtle Dove](#)). To assist with the interpretation of records, any details of [breeding evidence](#) (e.g. ‘purring’ males, pairs in suitable nesting habitat, territorial behaviour observed over a week or more) would be extremely helpful, as would any indication that individuals were probably only passing through (e.g. flying over or not in an area with potentially suitable nesting habitat). Information on precise location, such as a six-figure grid reference (or the 1-km square), would also be much appreciated.

Further guidance on the above, plus full details of the ways to submit records, please go to <http://www.cambridgebirdclub.org.uk/turtledove.html> . If you have any questions about the project, please contact the Club's Research Officer, Rob Pople at research@cambridgebirdclub.org.uk.

CBC Conference on Rare Breeding Birds

Here is a date for your diary. The next Cambridgeshire Bird Club Conference will be held on Sept 24th at Cottenham Village College. The theme this year is Rare Breeding Birds. Many of us are motivated to see rare birds, but when they are breeding they present a dilemma. If we announce it to the world, will the extra attention they receive cause additional stress and disturbance? Will someone try and get too close for that photograph? Worse still, will news get to egg-collectors or other miscreants? But if we don't tell anyone, will we be accused of suppressing information? Should site managers or landowners be told so that the breeding site can be protected? If the progress of the breeding attempt is to be monitored, do we need helpers? Monitoring is of crucial importance if we are to learn anything about the status of our breeding birds.

Our rare breeders are changing - in the last few years we have added Bittern, Little Egret & Crane to the regular list, while Black-winged Stilt and Great White Egrets are making their first steps to possible breeding; at the same time Lesser Spotted Woodpecker has nationally been added to the RBBP list and locally we have lost another RBBP addition, Willow Tit.

This conference will have speakers from the National Rare Breeding Bird Panel, as well as experts who have studied some of these species. We will also hear from the BTO and from site managers with a suite of RBBP species on their reserves, and find out how they manage their reserves and monitor progress. Full details and a booking form will appear in the July Bulletin / E-bulletin but we want to give advance notice so that interested members can put the date in their diaries. If anyone has any studies would like to present (poster or talk) please contact Vicki or Vince.

Blasts from the Past

We may view with despair the indiscriminate shooting of birds that prevails in many countries and even unfortunately here at times, but before a more caring attitude developed in the 20th century, such activities were also considered quite acceptable in Britain. This is well illustrated in the records of the Upware Republic, an informal club established in 1851 by a group of Cambridge undergraduates who met at the Lord Nelson, a riverside inn which became known as the Five Miles from Anywhere and which was destroyed by fire in the 1950s. This could be reached either by river or from a ferry at the end of the Waterbeach Fen road which at least one member of the club recalls using years ago as a short cut to Wicken. Apart from the consumption of large quantities of

ale, the students spent their time boating, fishing, shooting and skating, including skating from Cambridge in the hard winters of 1854 & 5.

The shooting episodes illustrate how any bird edible or not, was considered a suitable sporting target. Thus an entry on 8th March 1852, referring to Twite and Short-eared Owls records: "Fell in with a flock of rare Linnets (*Linaria montium*) and shot about 50; lunched; adjourned to the Fen and killed four Owls (*Strix Brachyitus*)." Even naturalists, who in those days were far more likely to carry a gun than binoculars, joined in the slaughter. They included Frederick du Cane Godman who later travelled extensively collecting specimens, often with his friend Osbert Salvin. They compiled the *Biologia Centrali Americana* and later donated their large collection to the Natural History Museum. From February 1853: "Two members of the Cambridge University Naturalist Society arrived at Upware this day. Shot many Brambling Finches (*Fringilla montium*) and saw a male Hen Harrier at Reach." Another writer, obviously with literary pretensions, records: "Fine day, came down in early dawn - when Aurora was just peeping o'er the renowned fen of Wicken. After a great deal of trouble we killed 9 and a half couple of Snipe (sic) and Water-rails, and a remarkable pied variety of the Stockdove." Snipe seem to have been a favoured target, presumably because they presented a challenge and were obviously abundant: "Fen full of Snipe, and very wet, 4 guns - 14 couple." Another entry from 9th November 1853: "We had an excellent day's sport, we killed 13 couple of Snipe, 6 Wild Duck, 3 Quails, 1 Partridge, 1 Hare, 3 Rabbits and several other little feathered monsters."

Fortunately in these more enlightened times, when we venture into the countryside we are more likely to encounter people armed with nothing more lethal than binoculars or camera and we also have several reserves where wildlife is protected. Even though Snipe are still legal quarry (from August 12th to January 31st), the Twites, Bramblings and Short-eared Owls at least are relatively safe. (Details taken from *Cambridge Revisited* by Arthur B. Gray, first published in 1921.)

Colin Kirtland

Ralph Sargeant

Ralph Sargeant spent his working life as a warden at Wicken Fen. He was a typical fenman with a strong bond with both the countryside. Over time he developed into an extremely competent birdwatcher and in recent years many of the records from Wicken, particularly details of the harrier roost have come from his dedicated watches into the dusk. He was also responsible for the WeBS counts at Wicken. Ralph was what could be described as a character and conversations with him were rarely without interest and amusement. Despite ill health in recent years he continued to drive to the Fen every day. His recent death sees very much the passing of an era.

Peter Bircham

Outdoor Meetings

Nene Washes Friday 27th May at 7.00 pm

This is an excellent site for breeding waders and ducks, and for hearing crakes. If your bulletin has arrived in time and you'd like to join us, please contact Vicki Harley as booking is essential.

Friday 8th July - Ely Beet pits

Kiln Lane Ely CB7 4TT at 7 pm; no need to book. The Ely wildspace birders, including Duncan Poyser, will lead a guided walk around the Ely pits complex, and may, weather permitting, arrange a bird ringing demo. Optional adjournment to The Fountain Inn after the walk for birdy quiz etc.

Friday 12th August - Paxton Pits north

Places limited, please book with Louise Bacon. Meeting place and arrangements will be supplied to those booked on the trip.

The next indoor meeting is Friday 9th September, at Cottenham Village College. The speaker is Brian Eversham, CEO of the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Northamptonshire, on Climate Change and Local Wildlife. Brian will give an entertaining talk with some excellent macrophotography of organisms you know and some you have never seen before.

Get the e-bulletin! Members can sign up at any time for the monthly e-bulletin to be emailed to them; it offers a summary of monthly sightings, photos, news and articles for which there is not room in this print edition. Just email the editors if you would like to receive the e-bulletin.

New Members

We welcome Ken Button of West Mellow, Romsey, Hampshire, Annika Bratt of Cambridge, Ian Dawson of St Neots, Roger Buxton of Barnet, Stephen Mumford of Littleport, and Jonathan Roe of Grafham.

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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).

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.

GOOD BIRDING!