

# CAMBRIDGESHIRE BIRD CLUB Bulletin No. 448



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

## Welcome to the September / October 2016 Edition

### RECENT BIRD REPORTS – *Headlines*

**AMERICAN WIGEON\*** Oct: May Farm Littleport from 6<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup>.

**MANX SHEARWATER\*** Sept: Eaton Socon on the 14<sup>th</sup>, one picked up in distress was taken into care but subsequently died; another at Stetchworth on the 25<sup>th</sup> was taken to RSPCA at West Winch.

**CATTLE EGRET\*** Oct: Nene Washes 4 on the 7<sup>th</sup>, one on the 10<sup>th</sup>, one at the Dog-in-a Doublet on the 11<sup>th</sup>, Whittlesey on the 12<sup>th</sup>, Nene Washes (Low Wash) on the 14<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup>.

**PECTORAL SANDPIPER\*** Sept: Burwell Fen on the 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup>, Ouse Washes RSPB on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Oct: Maxey GP on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

**LESSER YELLOWLEGS\*** Oct: at an undisclosed location on the 21<sup>st</sup>. *If accepted this will be the eighth record for the county; the last one was in 2008.*

**GREAT SKUA** Sept: Grafham Water 2 flyovers on the 17<sup>th</sup>, Welney flying high into Cambs on 21<sup>st</sup>. Oct: Ouse Washes a low flyover on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, Orton on the 10<sup>th</sup>.

**YELLOW-LEGGED GULL** Sept: an 'Azorean-type' at the Grafham Water roost on 25<sup>th</sup>.

**WRYNECK** Sept: Cambridge (Newmarket Road) on the 11<sup>th</sup>. Oct: Linton on the 1<sup>st</sup>.

**YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER\*** Sept: Soham on the 17<sup>th</sup>, Dunkirk one ringed on 30<sup>th</sup>, Fowlmere NR one on 30<sup>th</sup>. Oct: *a remarkable 9 – 10 sightings following the September birds, considering there are only 17 previous accepted records for the county:* Fowlmere NR single still present on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, Mepal on 2<sup>nd</sup>, Ely on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, Dunkirk on 5<sup>th</sup>, Peterborough (Fitzwilliam Bridge) on 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, Paxton Pits on 8<sup>th</sup>, Chesterton Cambridge on 11<sup>th</sup>, Peterborough (Wharf Rd railway crossing) on 14<sup>th</sup>, Yaxley Lode on 15<sup>th</sup>, and possibly the same bird 1.5 km away at Holme Fen on 16<sup>th</sup>.

**DIPPER\*** Oct: One at Bassingbourn throughout the month, and a report from Little Shelford on 6<sup>th</sup>.

**PIED FLYCATCHER** Sept: Peterborough an immature/female on the 19<sup>th</sup>, Fowlmere NR on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

**ISABELLINE WHEATEAR\*** Oct: Coveney Byall Fen on the 29<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup>; *a first for the county and according to the wise men the first inland record for Britain, so probably the bird of the year!*

**TWITE\*** Oct: Coveney Byall Fen on the 10<sup>th</sup>.

### 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: The first half of September was sunny and often hot; the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> were possibly the hottest days in the county in 2016, and the hottest in any September for a century. Mid-month saw a change to more seasonal temperatures firstly with intense rain, but then mostly cloudy and dry. October saw a slow change with some cooler periods but little rainfall. With high pressure over

Scandinavia, the predominant wind direction was easterly or north-easterly leading to the abrupt departure of summer migrants and an influx of winter visitors and passage migrants. Dry conditions until the end of the month undoubtedly had a negative effect on wader and wildfowl records.

### Wildfowl

**Bewick's Swan Oct:** Coveney 3 flying over on the 21<sup>st</sup>, *the first of the winter*.

**Whooper Swan Oct:** Ouse Washes 23 on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, Nene Washes 6 on 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, Pymoor 26 on 9<sup>th</sup>, Haddenham/Aldreth Fens on 12<sup>th</sup>, Fen Drayton Lakes 4 on 19<sup>th</sup>, Ferry Meadows CP 6 on 20<sup>th</sup>, Marsh Lane GP 5 over on 21<sup>st</sup>, Eldernell on 29<sup>th</sup>, May Farm Littleport 75 on 29<sup>th</sup> (30% juveniles).

**Pink-footed Goose Oct:** May Farm Littleport 70 flying south on the 7<sup>th</sup>.

**White-fronted Goose Oct:** Paxton Pits 8+ over on the 8<sup>th</sup>, Ouse Washes RSPB 3+ on 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Greylag Goose Sept:** Sutton North Fen 1220 on the 18<sup>th</sup>, Wicken Fen 147 on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Barnacle Goose Sept:** Paxton Pits on the 17<sup>th</sup>, Sutton North Fen 33 on 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Egyptian Goose Sept:** Isleham Wash 9 on 4<sup>th</sup>, Colne Fen GP 25 on 18<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Fen Drayton Lakes 18 on 6<sup>th</sup>, Trumpington Clay Farm 2 on 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>, May Farm Littleport 2 on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Shelduck Sept:** Cam Washes Waterbeach on 6<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** May Farm Littleport 2 juveniles all month.

**Mandarin Oct:** Peterborough (Crown Lakes) 11 in a family group on the 4<sup>th</sup>.

**Wigeon Sept:** Ouse Washes 200+ on 18<sup>th</sup>, Milton CP 49 on 18<sup>th</sup>, Fen Drayton Lakes c1100 on 24<sup>th</sup>.

**Oct:** Fen Drayton Lakes 1200 on 6<sup>th</sup>, Ouse Washes 300 on 15<sup>th</sup>, Colne Fen GP 324 on 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Gadwall Sept:** Kingfishers Bridge 67 on 4<sup>th</sup>, Grafham Water 81 on 25<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Fen Drayton Lakes 102 on 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Teal Sept:** Isleham Wash 117 on 4<sup>th</sup>, Burwell Fen c120 on 18<sup>th</sup>, Grafham Water 207 on 25<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Ouse Washes 700 on 2<sup>nd</sup>, Wicken/Burwell Fens c150 on 9<sup>th</sup>, May Farm Littleport c40 all month.

**Pintail Sept:** Kingfishers Bridge 6 on 22<sup>nd</sup>, Paxton Pits 2 on 28<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Kingfishers Bridge 6 on 5<sup>th</sup>, Paxton Pits 2 on several dates after 16<sup>th</sup>, Fen Drayton Lakes 2 on 13<sup>th</sup>, Sutton (North side) 2 on 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Garganey Sept:** reported from Burwell Fen (3), Fowlmere NR (2 on 13<sup>th</sup>) and Kingfishers Bridge. **Oct:** Fen Drayton Lakes on the 6<sup>th</sup>, Grafham Water on the 9<sup>th</sup>, *the latest date*.

**Shoveler Sept:** Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) 22 on 10<sup>th</sup>, Grafham Water 50 on 25<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Fen Drayton Lakes 78 on 6<sup>th</sup>, Barleycraft GP 76+ on 19<sup>th</sup>, Wicken/Burwell Fens 10 on 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Red-crested Pochard Sept:** Grafham Water on the 6<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Fen Drayton Lakes on 13<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**Pochard Sept:** Bradley Fen 35 on 30<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Tanholt GP 10 on 11<sup>th</sup>, Whittlesford GP 8 on 27<sup>th</sup>.

**Scaup Sept:** Cherry Hinton Pits on 18<sup>th</sup>, Grafham Water on 18<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** May Farm Littleport a female 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>, Paxton Pits 3 females on 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Scoter Sept:** Grafham Water on 18<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Ferry Meadows CP 3 on 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Goldeneye Sept:** Grafham Water 3 on 25<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Fen Drayton Lakes 2 on 15<sup>th</sup>, Grafham Water 10 on 16<sup>th</sup>, Paxton Pits a male on 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**Goosander Oct:** Fowlmere NR a redhead on the 18<sup>th</sup>, Ely on 20<sup>th</sup>.

### Gamebirds

**Grey Partridge Sept:** Comberton (Westfield Farm) 3 pairs with one chick on the 11<sup>th</sup>, Nine Wells 53 on 27<sup>th</sup>, Toft 15 (13 young birds) on 28<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** May Farm Littleport coveys of 2 to 11, Coploe Hill 40 on 9<sup>th</sup>, Melbourn 29 on 26<sup>th</sup>, Fowlmere 5 on 31<sup>st</sup>.

### Cormorants, egrets and herons

**Cormorant Sept:** Grafham Water 193 on 25<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Fen Drayton Lakes max 185 on 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**Shag Sept:** Grafham Water on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Bittern Sept:** reported from Wicken Fen, Bradley Fen and Whittlesey. **Oct:** also at Fowlmere NR, Fen Drayton Lakes and Woodwalton.

**Little Egret Sept:** maximum Burwell Fen (40 on 1<sup>st</sup>). **Oct:** max Fen Drayton Lakes (35 on 22<sup>nd</sup>).

**Great White Egret Sept:** Paxton Pits on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, Godmanchester GP on 11<sup>th</sup>, Nene Washes on 15<sup>th</sup>, Fen Drayton Lakes on 16<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup>, Ouse Washes on 20<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Fen Drayton Lakes on 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, Paxton Pits on several dates all month.

## Grebes

**Little Grebe** **Sept:** reported from Colne Fen GP (47), Trumpington Clay Farm (6). **Oct:** Colne Fen GP (40), May Farm Littleport (15+), Trumpington Clay Farm (10) and Wicken Fen (adult with 3 young).

**Great Crested Grebe** **Sept:** reported from Colne Fen GP (39), and Ferry Meadows CP (c50). **Oct:** May Farm Littleport 2 and a juvenile all month, Grafham Water 274 on 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Red-necked Grebe\*** **Sept:** Grafham Water on 22<sup>nd</sup>. **Oct:** Witcham Gravel on 4<sup>th</sup>.

**Slavonian Grebe\*** **Sept:** Grafham Water on 17<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Fen Drayton Lakes on 28<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Black-necked Grebe** **Sept:** Fen Drayton Lakes on 18<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup>.

## Raptors

**Red Kite** **Sept:** reported from Fowlmere NR, Grafham Water (6), Nene Washes, Paxton Pits (2), St Neots, and Witcham. **Oct:** Paxton Pits on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 3 on 19<sup>th</sup>, Gt Chishill 7 on 15<sup>th</sup>, Fowlmere NR singles on several dates, Yaxley 7 on 16<sup>th</sup>, May Farm Littleport several sightings of 1 – 3 all month.

**Marsh Harrier** **Sept:** reported from Fowlmere NR (3), Grafham Water, Haddenham/Aldreth Fens, Wicken Fen (2) and Woodwalton Fen (5). **Oct:** also at Paxton Pits on 3<sup>rd</sup>, Fen Drayton Lakes 2 on 13<sup>th</sup>, Yaxley 4 on 16<sup>th</sup>, Burwell Fen 5 on 24<sup>th</sup>, May Farm Littleport max 5, Nene Washes (Eldernell) 7.

**Hen Harrier** **Sept:** Burwell Fen a pale male flew over on the 10<sup>th</sup>, *the first of the winter*; seen also at Wicken Fen on 10<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Cam Washes a male on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, Wicken Fen a male on 24<sup>th</sup>, Fowlmere NR a ringtail on 25<sup>th</sup>, Ouse Washes a male on 27<sup>th</sup>, Eldernell on 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Sparrowhawk** **Oct:** reported from Chippenham Fen (2), May Farm Littleport (4) and Paxton Pits (3).

**Buzzard** **Sept:** reported from Chippenham Fen (2), Fowlmere NR (5), Grafham Water (7), Great Shelford (5), Paxton Pits (9), Soham (2) and Trumpington (2). **Oct:** Burwell Fen (3), Sawston (2), Haddenham/Aldreth Fens (5), May Farm Littleport (4), Wicken Fen (2), Heydon (10) and Yaxley (6).

**Osprey** **Sept:** Grafham Water 2+ on 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, one on 6<sup>th</sup>, 3 on 7<sup>th</sup>, one on 12<sup>th</sup>, Paxton Pits on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, Abington Pigotts on 11<sup>th</sup>, Fowlmere NR on 11<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Eldernell on the 29<sup>th</sup>, *the latest date*.

## Rails and crane

**Water Rail** **Sept:** reported from Burwell Fen (5), Cam Washes Waterbeach, Chippenham Fen (2), Fen Drayton Lakes, and Wicken Fen. **Oct:** also at May Farm Littleport (6) and Fowlmere NR (10).

**Common Crane** **Sept:** Eldernell 4 on the 1<sup>st</sup>, Colne Fen GP 2 on 18<sup>th</sup>, Nene North Bank 3 on 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Oct:** Ouse Washes 8 on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 20 in flight on 24<sup>th</sup> (*this equals the county record for the largest number recorded, previously in 2014 on the Nene Washes*), Pymoor 3 on 9<sup>th</sup> (2 adults and one juvenile), Haddenham/Aldreth Fens 3 on the 12<sup>th</sup>.

## Waders

**Avocet** **Sept:** Burwell Fen 3 on the 7<sup>th</sup>, Cam Washes on 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Golden Plover** **Sept:** Trumpington 35 on the 5<sup>th</sup>, Burwell Fen c60 on 18<sup>th</sup>, Kingfishers Bridge 130+ on 17<sup>th</sup>, Nene Washes 100 on 25<sup>th</sup>; then on 28<sup>th</sup> Warboys c400 over, Trumpington c230, and Burwell Fen c300. **Oct:** Burwell Fen 520 on 9<sup>th</sup>, Pymoor 720 on 9<sup>th</sup>, Wicken Fen 520 on 9<sup>th</sup>, Wardy Hill c650 on 14<sup>th</sup>, Trumpington A10/M11 junction 400 on 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, Burwell Fen 1000 on 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Grey Plover** **Sept:** Sutton North Fen on the 18<sup>th</sup>, Nene North Bank on 19<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Ouse Washes on 2<sup>nd</sup>, Farcet Fen a flyover on 15<sup>th</sup>, Paxton Pits 3 flying over on 16<sup>th</sup>, one over on 24<sup>th</sup>.

**Lapwing** **Sept:** Haddenham/Aldreth Fen 2200 on the 4<sup>th</sup>, Fowlmere NR 95 on 13<sup>th</sup>, Burwell Fen c350 on 18<sup>th</sup>, Thriplow c70 on 19<sup>th</sup>, Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) 420 on 22<sup>nd</sup>, Kingfishers Bridge 1033 on 20<sup>th</sup>, Nene Washes 500 on 25<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Paxton Pits 74 on 3<sup>rd</sup>, Haddenham/Aldreth Fens 1500+ on 12<sup>th</sup>, Coveney (Byall Fen) 170 on 19<sup>th</sup>, Burwell Fen 330 on 24<sup>th</sup>.

**Little Ringed Plover** **Sept:** Cam Washes Waterbeach 4+ on the 1<sup>st</sup>, Fen Drayton Lakes on 7<sup>th</sup>, Sutton North Fen 2 on 18<sup>th</sup>, *the latest record*.

**Ringed Plover** **Sept:** Cam Washes Waterbeach 29+ on the 6<sup>th</sup>, Fen Drayton Lakes 2 on 10<sup>th</sup>, Sutton North Fen 3 on 18<sup>th</sup>, Grafham Water 3 on 18<sup>th</sup>, Burwell Fen max 32 on 11<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Burwell Fen 14 on 1<sup>st</sup>, Paxton Pits 2 on 1<sup>st</sup>, one on 22<sup>nd</sup>, Ouse Washes 8 on 2<sup>nd</sup>, Wicken Fen 4 on 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**Curlew** **Sept:** Whittlesey on 6<sup>th</sup>, Cambridge (Chesterton) on 18<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Paxton Pits on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**Black-tailed Godwit** **Sept:** Cam Washes Waterbeach on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, Paxton Pits 7 on 17<sup>th</sup>, Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) 4 on 26<sup>th</sup>, Burwell Fen 12 on 1<sup>st</sup>, then 6 on 22<sup>nd</sup>. **Oct:** Ouse Washes 4 on 2<sup>nd</sup>, Wicken Fen 2 on 9<sup>th</sup> and 8 on 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Turnstone** **Sept:** Grafham Water on the 23<sup>rd</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Paxton Pits on 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Ruff** **Sept:** Cam Washes Waterbeach 12 on the 1<sup>st</sup>, Ouse Washes 50+ on 18<sup>th</sup>, Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) max 29 on 10<sup>th</sup>, Paxton Pits 3 on 13<sup>th</sup>, Fen Drayton Lakes max 5 on 10<sup>th</sup>, Kingfishers Bridge 12 on 17<sup>th</sup>, Burwell Fen, max 36 on 11<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Paxton Pits on 1<sup>st</sup>, 2 on 3<sup>rd</sup>, 3 on 8<sup>th</sup>, Ouse Washes RSPB 24 on 2<sup>nd</sup>, Wicken Fen 4 on 3<sup>rd</sup>, May Farm Littleport 2 on 7<sup>th</sup>, Pymoor 70 on 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Dunlin** **Sept:** Cam Washes Waterbeach 5 on the 4<sup>th</sup>, Grafham Water 5 on 2<sup>nd</sup>, Burwell Fen 6 on 5<sup>th</sup>, Fen Drayton Lakes 2 on 12<sup>th</sup>, Paxton Pits 8 on 17<sup>th</sup>, Colne Fen GP 3 on 18<sup>th</sup>, Kingfishers Bridge 6 on 20<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Paxton Pits 1 – 3 all month, Ouse Washes 3 on 10<sup>th</sup>, Fen Drayton Lakes on 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**Little Stint** **Sept:** Cam Washes Waterbeach 2 on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 5+ on 3<sup>rd</sup>, 3 on 4<sup>th</sup>, one on 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, Burwell Fen 3 on 4<sup>th</sup>, Paxton Pits on 7<sup>th</sup>, Fen Drayton Lakes on 9<sup>th</sup>, Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) on 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Curlew Sandpiper** **Sept:** Fen Drayton Lakes 2 on 8<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup>, one on 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, Grafham Water 2 on 9<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Wicken Fen on 5<sup>th</sup>, Ouse Washes on 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Sandpiper** **Sept:** reported from Cam Washes (2), Grafham Water (7), Paxton Pits (4), Burwell Fen (max 5) and Sutton North Fen. **Oct:** Paxton Pits on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, Ferry Meadows CP on 7<sup>th</sup>, *the latest date*.

**Green Sandpiper** **Sept:** reported from Burwell Fen (max 15), Cam Washes (2), Fen Drayton Lakes (3), Grafham Water, Kingfishers Bridge (5), and Ouse Washes (2). **Oct:** at Colne Fen GP (7), Grafham Water (3), May Farm Littleport (4), Ouse Washes (Chain Corner and Pymoor), and Paxton Pits (2).

**Spotted Redshank** **Sept:** Burwell Fen a juvenile on the 6<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup>, and Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) on 10<sup>th</sup> (presumably the same bird).

**Greenshank** **Sept:** Paxton Pits on the 3<sup>rd</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>, Cam Washes Waterbeach on 3<sup>rd</sup>, Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) 2 on 23<sup>rd</sup>, Kingfishers Bridge on 17<sup>th</sup>, Colne Fen GP on 18<sup>th</sup>, Burwell Fen max 8 on 1<sup>st</sup> dropping to one on 22<sup>nd</sup>. **Oct:** Coveney Byall Fen on 19<sup>th</sup>, *the latest date this year*.

**Redshank** **Sept:** Grafham Water 5 on 2<sup>nd</sup>, Paxton Pits on 4<sup>th</sup>, Burwell Fen 3 on 22<sup>nd</sup>. **Oct:** May Farm Littleport 2 on 6<sup>th</sup>, Peterborough (Millennium Br) on 6<sup>th</sup>, Wicken/Burwell Fens 3 on 20<sup>th</sup>, Cam Washes 2 on 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Jack Snipe** **Sept:** May Farm Littleport on 28<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Fowlmere NR 1 – 2 on 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>, Wicken Fen on 24<sup>th</sup>, Kings Dyke NR on 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Woodcock** **Oct:** May Farm Littleport 6 – 8 all month, Chippenham Fen at dawn on the 5<sup>th</sup>, Milton (in a garden) on 9<sup>th</sup>, Farcet Fen on 20<sup>th</sup>. *See the November issue of [British Birds](#) in which Christoph Zöckler writes about the loss of this species as a breeding bird at Wicken Fen.*

**Snipe** **Sept:** reported from Cam Washes (20), Grafham Water (4), Kingfishers Bridge (15+), Paxton Pits (5), Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) (17), Burwell Fen (40). **Oct:** Burwell Fen (2), Chippenham Fen (2), Fowlmere NR (2), May Farm Littleport c100 during the month, and Paxton Pits (7+).

### Terns and gulls

**Black Tern** **Sept:** Grafham Water a juvenile on 1<sup>st</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> and 2 on 3<sup>rd</sup>, 3 on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, Fen Drayton Lakes a juvenile on 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2 on 6<sup>th</sup>, one on 7<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>, Paxton Pits a juvenile on 12<sup>th</sup>, and 2 on 13<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Roswell Pits on 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**Sandwich Tern** **Sept:** Grafham Water on the 10<sup>th</sup>, Ferry Meadows CP 2 on 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**Common Tern** **Sept:** Grafham Water 7 on the 5<sup>th</sup>, Fen Drayton Lakes 17+ on 7<sup>th</sup>, 11+ on 11<sup>th</sup>, Paxton Pits 9 on 13<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Paxton Pits on 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Arctic Tern** **Sept:** Grafham Water on 5<sup>th</sup>, 5 juveniles on 7<sup>th</sup>, one on 16<sup>th</sup>, Fen Drayton Lakes on 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Black-headed Gull** **Sept:** Bradley Fen 250 on 5<sup>th</sup>, May Farm Littleport 200 on 20<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Coploe Hill 250 on 9<sup>th</sup>, Granta Park c250 on 31<sup>st</sup>.

**Little Gull** **Sept:** Grafham Water on the 10<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Mediterranean Gull** **Sept:** Grafham Water on the 2<sup>nd</sup> (no age given) and a first-year on 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Gull** **Sept:** May Farm Littleport 8 on 20<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Trumpington Clay Farm 5 on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** **Sept:** Grafham Water 2300 roosting on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4000+ on 5<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, Foxton 660 on 19<sup>th</sup>; Haslingfield 150 on 22<sup>nd</sup>, Cottenham Long Drove one resembling the race *fuscus* ('Baltic Gull') on 4<sup>th</sup>, mixed age group of 400 – 500 of the race *intermedius* at Chippenham on 5<sup>th</sup>.

**Oct:** Haddenham/Aldreth Fens 150+ on 12<sup>th</sup>, Fowlmere/Newton c250 on 31<sup>st</sup>.

**Herring Gull** **Sept:** Cottenham (Long Drove) 40 on 8<sup>th</sup>, Grafham Water 150 into roost on 22<sup>nd</sup>. **Oct:** Drysides BP 46 on 31<sup>st</sup>.

**Yellow-legged Gull** **Sept:** reported from Grafham Water (28+), Paxton Pits (c12) and Foxton (7).

**Oct:** Fowlmere NR, Duxford and Paxton Pits (3).

**Caspian Gull** **Sept:** Grafham Water 3 juveniles on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, one on 4<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup>, 5 on 6<sup>th</sup>, 6 on 22<sup>nd</sup>, a 3 c.y. on 28<sup>th</sup>, Cottenham Long Drove a juvenile on 4<sup>th</sup>, Paxton Pits a 2 c.y. on 5<sup>th</sup>.

**Great Black-backed Gull** **Sept:** Cottenham (Long Drove) 20 on 8<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** singles at May Farm Littleport, Swaffham Bulbeck, Bradley Fen, Comberton and Haddenham/Aldreth Fens.

#### Doves, owls swift and kingfisher

**Stock Dove** **Sept:** Colne Fen GP 24 on 18<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Paxton Pits a roost of 80 on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Turtle Dove** **Sept:** reported from Witcham, Duxford and Fowlmere NR (16<sup>th</sup>).

**Barn Owl** **Sept:** reported from Burwell Fen, Fowlmere NR (a family in the nest box) and Wicken Fen. **Oct:** also at May Farm Littleport, and Barton 11 in two broods.

**Little Owl** **Sept:** reported from Swaffham Prior and 7 other sites. **Oct:** May Farm Littleport max 4.

**Tawny Owl** **Oct:** 7 reports including Bretton (2) and May Farm Littleport 2 calling on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Short-eared Owl** **Sept:** May Farm Littleport on 30<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Burwell Fen on the 9<sup>th</sup>, 2 on 23<sup>rd</sup>, 4 on 26<sup>th</sup>, 5 on 28<sup>th</sup>, Grange Farm Knapwell on 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Swift** **Sept:** Grafham Water 2 on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, Cambridge on 4<sup>th</sup>, Paxton Pits on 4<sup>th</sup>, Fen Drayton Lakes 3 on 10<sup>th</sup>, Paxton Pits on 12<sup>th</sup>, Ouse Fen on 19<sup>th</sup>, Fen Drayton Lakes 2 on 27<sup>th</sup>. *Dick Newell reports very late fledging (19<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>), suggesting that late birds are not necessarily passing migrants.*

**Kingfisher** **Sept:** reported from Burwell Fen (6), Roswell Pits (5), Chippenham Fen, Fowlmere NR (several), Haddenham/Aldreth Fens (2), Milton CP (2), and Paxton Pits (2). **Oct:** Fen Drayton Lakes, May Farm Littleport (4), Wardy Hill Coveney and Wicken Fen / Burwell Lode (7).

#### Falcons and parrots

**Kestrel** **Oct:** May Farm Littleport maximum 6, Burwell Fen maximum 7 on 24<sup>th</sup>.

**Merlin** **Oct:** Fowlmere NR a female on the 8<sup>th</sup>, another or the same on 16<sup>th</sup>, Paxton Pits on 22<sup>nd</sup>, Cam Washes on 25<sup>th</sup>, Wicken Fen a female/immature on 27<sup>th</sup>.

**Hobby** **Sept:** 32 reports from 18 sites maximum Wicken and Burwell Fens 4 on 22<sup>nd</sup>. **Oct:** Burwell Fen 2 on 2<sup>nd</sup>, May Farm Littleport up to 7<sup>th</sup>, Wicken Fen 2 on 9<sup>th</sup>, *the latest date.*

**Peregrine** **Sept:** Fowlmere NR on the 10<sup>th</sup> and an adult on 15<sup>th</sup>, Burwell Fen on 11<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, Peterborough (Millennium Br) 3 on 11<sup>th</sup>, Grafham Water on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, Paxton Pits a juvenile on 26<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** May Farm Littleport a female on 5<sup>th</sup>, Wicken Fen on 17<sup>th</sup>, Eldernell 2 on 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Ring-necked Parakeet\*** **Sept:** Litlington on the 27<sup>th</sup>, *the first reported for some time.*

#### Shrikes and corvids

**Great Grey Shrike\*** **Oct:** Burwell/Wicken Fen on 24<sup>th</sup>.

**Jackdaw** **Sept:** Roswell Pits 200 on 14<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** May Farm Littleport c100 all month, Great Shelford 50+ in a thermal on 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**Carion Crow** **Oct:** Burwell Fen 20 on the 1<sup>st</sup>, May Farm Littleport c100 all month, Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) 37 on 21<sup>st</sup> and 34 on 22<sup>nd</sup> harrying a Buzzard, Haddenham / Aldreth Fens 150 on 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**Raven** **Sept:** Grafham Water on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, Barton 2 on 25<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Fen Drayton Lakes a flyover on 3<sup>rd</sup>, Fowlmere 2 low over the village on 4<sup>th</sup>, May Farm Littleport on 5<sup>th</sup>, Ferry Meadows CP a flyover on 6<sup>th</sup>, Orton Wistow over on 9<sup>th</sup>, Peterborough (Milton Park) 4 on 10<sup>th</sup>, Trumpington over on 15<sup>th</sup>.

#### Crests, tits and larks

**Goldcrest** **Oct:** a bird ringed at Burnham Deepdale in Norfolk on the 6<sup>th</sup> was retrapped at Wicken Fen on the 9<sup>th</sup>, obviously a migrant travelling 80km in 3 days heading SSW.

**Firecrest** **Sept:** Hare Park one singing on the 15<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Wicken Fen one trapped on 12<sup>th</sup>.

**Coal Tit** **Sept:** *Richard Broughton wrote on Cambirds on 12<sup>th</sup>, "At least 38 colour-ringed Coal Tits at large in Monks Wood this week and 43 Marsh Tits. These numbers are very low – on previous years' experience there should be about 100 Marsh Tits and 150 Coal Tits in the wood right now".*

**Marsh Tit** **Sept:** Reported from Chippenham Fen, Langley Wood and Monks Wood. *Richard Broughton comments: "It is the second worse year for Marsh Tits in 14 years broken only by the deluge year of 2012 (when breeding was dire). The breeding season was poor for tits this year but nowhere near as awful as 2012 so the low numbers probably reflect knock-on effects of low post-fledging survival. (There are) very few berries and seeds on the trees this year and the juvenile Marsh Tits are quite thin. There's no honeysuckle berries at all, which is a favourite of theirs. Marsh Tits are gradually declining in Monks Wood with average breeding numbers in the past five years down on the first five years of the study (2004-08). This is roughly in line with the national trend."*

**Oct:** reported from Paxton Pits and Ten Wood.

**Bearded Tit** **Sept:** Burwell Fen max 4 on the 5<sup>th</sup>, Ouse Fen 2 on 6<sup>th</sup>, Wicken Fen (Bakers Fen) 14 on 30<sup>th</sup>, Teversham Fen 4 on 30<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** also reported from Cam Washes (2), Fen Drayton Lakes (6), Fowlmere NR and Wicken Fen (30), Kingfishers Bridge (15), Yaxley and Roswell Pits.

**Skylark** **Sept:** Paxton Pits 42 flying over in small groups on the 28<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Fowlmere 20 on 9<sup>th</sup>, Comberton 29 on 11<sup>th</sup>, Yaxley 45+ on 16<sup>th</sup>, May Farm Littleport c20 during the month.

#### Hirundines, long-tailed tit and warblers

**Sand Martin** **Oct:** Burwell Fen 5 on 1<sup>st</sup>, Byall Fen on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Swallow** **Sept:** Ferry Meadows CP c1000 to roost on the 7<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Ouse Washes (Sutton Gault) 25 on the 9<sup>th</sup>, Wicken Fen 5 on the 9<sup>th</sup>, one on 17<sup>th</sup>, May Farm Littleport c50 up to the 13<sup>th</sup>, Yaxley on 16<sup>th</sup>, Ouse Washes RSPB 24 on 17<sup>th</sup>, Fowlmere NR 2 on 26<sup>th</sup>, *the latest date*.

**House Martin** **Sept:** Wimpole 250 on 4<sup>th</sup>, Fowlmere NR c50 on 30<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Burwell Fen c250 on 1<sup>st</sup>, May Farm Littleport c10 up 7<sup>th</sup>, Ouse Washes (Sutton Gault) 3 on 9<sup>th</sup>, Waterbeach 6 on 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Cetti's Warbler** **Sept:** reported from Ferry Meadows CP on 5<sup>th</sup>, Fowlmere NR (3), Drysides BP (5), Paxton Pits and Wicken Fen. **Oct:** also at Eldernell (3) and Fen Drayton Lakes (5).

**Chiffchaff** **Sept:** Farcet Fen passage of 20+ on the 19<sup>th</sup>, Fowlmere NR 14 on 24<sup>th</sup>, Wicken Fen 15 ringed on 30<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Wicken Fen on 9<sup>th</sup>, Peterborough (Fitzwilliam Bridge) 15 on 9<sup>th</sup>, Yaxley on 15<sup>th</sup>, Cam Washes on 25<sup>th</sup>, May Farm Littleport 2 on 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Willow Warbler** **Sept:** Wicken Fen and Great Fen on the 18<sup>th</sup>, Ferry Meadows CP on 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Blackcap** **Sept:** Wicken Fen evidence of passage with 57 ringed on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 30 on 13<sup>th</sup> on another part of the Fen. **Oct:** Paxton Pits on 8<sup>th</sup>, Fowlmere NR on 9<sup>th</sup>, May Farm Littleport a female on 10<sup>th</sup>, Wicken Fen on 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Garden Warbler** **Sept:** Wicken Fen and Grafham Water on the 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Lesser Whitethroat** **Sept:** Fen Drayton Lakes c12 on the 10<sup>th</sup>, Wicken Fen on 11<sup>th</sup>, Colne Fen GP 2 on 18<sup>th</sup>, Ferry Meadows CP on 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**Whitethroat** **Sept:** Wicken Fen one caught and ringed on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Grasshopper Warbler** **Sept:** Wicken Fen on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Sedge Warbler** **Sept:** **Sept:** Burwell Fen on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. **Oct:** Wicken Fen on 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**Reed Warbler** **Sept:** Wicken Fen passage reflected by a catch of 64 on the morning of the 12<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Fowlmere NR on 4<sup>th</sup>.

#### Waxwing, starling, thrushes and spotted flycatcher

**Waxwing** **Oct:** March (briefly, in a garden) on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Nuthatch** **Oct:** Ten Wood 5 on 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Starling** **Sept:** Burwell Fen c250 on the 7<sup>th</sup>, Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) c270 on 23<sup>rd</sup>. **Oct:** counts of over 1000 at Fen Drayton Lakes, Mepal Fen, Haddenham/Aldreth Fens, Nene Washes, Ouse Washes (4000+ on 29<sup>th</sup>) and May Farm Littleport.

**Ring Ouzel** **Oct:** Fowlmere a first-year female in the paddock close to the reserve on the 9<sup>th</sup>, Mepal a male on 9<sup>th</sup>, Little Paxton one on 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Fieldfare Oct:** general movement reported on 9th (e.g. Fowlmere NR 16), Wardy Hill Coveney 120 on 14<sup>th</sup>, Wicken Fen c350 on 22<sup>nd</sup> and c1000 by 28<sup>th</sup>, Burwell Fen c600 on 24<sup>th</sup>.

**Redwing Oct:** the first arrivals were reported widely across the county on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, e.g. Ferry Meadows CP 250 on 6<sup>th</sup>, 50 at Fowlmere NR on 7<sup>th</sup>, Paxton Pits 102 on 8<sup>th</sup>, Wicken Fen 350+ on 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Mistle Thrush Sept:** Hinxton 18 on 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Spotted Flycatcher Sept:** reported from Cambourne, Chippenham Fen, Ferry Meadows CP (28<sup>th</sup>).

#### Starts and chats

**Black Redstart Sept:** Cambridge on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, Trumpington on 11<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Farcet Fen on 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Redstart Sept:** Witcham an adult male on the 1<sup>st</sup>, Cam Washes on 6<sup>th</sup>, Ferry Meadows CP 2 on 12<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup>, one on 15<sup>th</sup>, Eaton Ford on 18<sup>th</sup>, Croydon on 18<sup>th</sup>, Nene North Bank on 19<sup>th</sup>, Sutton Gault on 19<sup>th</sup>, Dunkirk one caught and ringed on 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Whinchat Sept:** Paxton Pits 2 on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, Fen Drayton Lakes 4 on 11<sup>th</sup>, Ouse Fen 3 on 6<sup>th</sup>, Chippenham Fen on 7<sup>th</sup>, Comberton (Westfield Farm) 3 on 11<sup>th</sup>, Ferry Meadows CP on 16<sup>th</sup>, Burwell Fen one ringed on 23<sup>rd</sup>, Fowlmere NR 2 on 24<sup>th</sup>, Nene Washes on 25<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Fen Drayton Lakes on the 1<sup>st</sup>, Wicken Fen on the 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup>, Nine Wells on 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Stonechat Sept:** Wicken Fen a pair on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, Nene Washes on 25<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Chippenham Fen a pair on 5<sup>th</sup>, Fen Drayton Lakes 2 on 13<sup>th</sup>, Wicken Fen on several dates, Paxton Pits 3 on 14<sup>th</sup> and one after 22<sup>nd</sup>, Croydon 5 on 16<sup>th</sup>, Magog Down on 16<sup>th</sup>, Stretham 4 on 20<sup>th</sup>, Cam Washes on 25<sup>th</sup>, May Farm Littleport 2 on several dates, Nene Washes (Eldernell) 2 on 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Wheatear Sept:** Ouse Washes 3 on 4<sup>th</sup>, Haddenham/Aldreth Fens on 4<sup>th</sup>, Burwell Fen 2 on 5<sup>th</sup>, one on 17<sup>th</sup>, Fen Drayton Lakes on 11<sup>th</sup>, Cambridge (Chesterton) on 12<sup>th</sup>, Paxton Pits on 17<sup>th</sup>, Trumpington Meadows NR on 29<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** May Farm Littleport 2 on 13<sup>th</sup>, Cam Washes on 16<sup>th</sup>.

#### Wagtails and pipits

**Yellow Wagtail Sept:** Grafham Water 35 on the 7<sup>th</sup>, Burwell Fen c20 on 6<sup>th</sup>, Fowlmere NR a roost of 14 on 6<sup>th</sup> and 20+ on 13<sup>th</sup>, Paxton Pits 12 on 7<sup>th</sup>, c60 over on 12<sup>th</sup>, 44 over on 13<sup>th</sup>, Nene Washes 100+ on 15<sup>th</sup>, Sutton North Fen 27 on 18<sup>th</sup>, Nene Washes 60+ on 25<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Paxton Pits on 3<sup>rd</sup>, Pymoor on 9<sup>th</sup>, Fowlmere NR on 12<sup>th</sup>, and Yaxley on 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Grey Wagtail Sept:** reported from Cam Washes Waterbeach, Fen Drayton Lakes (2), Fowlmere NR, Ferry Meadows CP, Grafham Water and Paxton Pits. **Oct:** also at May Farm Littleport (max 3), Wardy Hill Coveney, and Roswell Pits.

**Pied Wagtail Oct:** May Farm Littleport c30, Hinxton 22 on 5<sup>th</sup>, Block Fen GP 250 on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Tree Pipit Sept:** Grafham Water on the 5<sup>th</sup>, Ferry Meadows CP on 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Meadow Pipit Sept:** Colne Fen GP 160 on the 18<sup>th</sup>, Burwell Fen 50 handled in a ringing session on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 31 on 26<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** May Farm Littleport c100 all month, Burwell/Wicken Fen 140 ringed during the month were mainly, if not all, passage birds as shown by ringing recoveries.

**Rock Pipit Oct:** Paxton Pits 2 on the 1<sup>st</sup>, one on 7<sup>th</sup>, 2+ on 8<sup>th</sup>, one on 22<sup>nd</sup>, Ouse Washes 2 on 2<sup>nd</sup>, Ferry Meadows CP on 7<sup>th</sup>, Chain Corner on 9<sup>th</sup>, Grafham Water 2 on 14<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup>, one on 16<sup>th</sup>.

#### Finches and buntings

**Brambling Oct:** Fulbourn on the 5<sup>th</sup>, Fowlmere NR 3 on 12<sup>th</sup>, 2 on 30<sup>th</sup>, Farcet Fen on 17<sup>th</sup>, Little Shelford on 19<sup>th</sup>, St Ives on 20<sup>th</sup>, Hare Park Six Mile Bottom 2 on 23<sup>rd</sup>, Paxton Pits 2 on 22<sup>nd</sup>, Ferry Meadows CP on 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Goldfinch Sept:** Swaffham Prior Fen c150 on 25<sup>th</sup>. **Oct:** Mepal Fen 320 on 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Siskin Sept:** Fowlmere NR on the 18<sup>th</sup>, Ferry Meadows CP 16 on 23<sup>rd</sup>. **Oct:** Histon on 2<sup>nd</sup>, Fen Drayton Lakes 2+ on 8<sup>th</sup>, Fowlmere NR up to 10, Mepal 4 on 15<sup>th</sup>, Ferry Meadows CP 12 on 31<sup>st</sup>.

**Linnet Sept:** Fowlmere NR c40 on the 1<sup>st</sup>. **Oct:** Fen Drayton Lakes c200 on 6<sup>th</sup>, Comberton 80 on 11<sup>th</sup>, Haddenham/Aldreth Fens 150 on 12<sup>th</sup>, May Farm Littleport c60 on 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**Lesser Redpoll Oct:** 1 – 2 at Fowlmere NR, Paxton Pits, Peterborough, and Kings Dyke NR.

**Yellowhammer Sept:** Shepreth-L-Moor c20 on 23<sup>rd</sup>. **Oct:** Farcet Fen 19 on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Corn Bunting Oct:** Fowlmere NR up to 50 on several dates, Duxford Grange 31 on 24<sup>th</sup>.

**Reed Bunting Sept:** Burwell Fen 132 handled in a ringing session on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. **Oct:** Burwell Fen movement indicated by catches of 77 on 1<sup>st</sup>, 48 on 12<sup>th</sup> and 81 on 15<sup>th</sup> almost entirely new birds each time, and an overall total of 343 birds ringed in October, Fowlmere NR c650 into roost on 26<sup>th</sup>.

#### Exotica

**Harris Hawk Sept:** Barton on 14<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>.

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Editor's Note: because of the very welcome amount of material available I have had to edit both the Recent Report section and the articles in this edition fairly heavily. A longer version of the conference report appeared in the October e-bulletin and an illustrated expansion of Mike Burdekin's article may appear in the next e-bulletin.

### **Rare Breeding Birds Conference - reports**

Some 75 people, Club members and visitors from the region and beyond attended this occasional CBC conference at Cottenham Village College. The day's programme set out to review the recording and conservation issues surrounding rare breeding birds in the County and in East Anglia.

Mark Holling, Secretary of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, set the stage with an overview of the role and workings of the RBBP. Mark's focus was very much on Cambridgeshire, with its disproportionate share of specialities, thus providing context for the species studies which were to come later. Jonathan Taylor followed, with a review of the practical challenges of monitoring and counting breeding ducks, waders and crakes across the vastness of the Nene and Ouse Washes. Mark Thomas, Senior Investigations Officer at the RSPB, then described the highs and lows of his work tackling wildlife crime and the demands this made on his team, for swift communication between conservationists, local volunteers, the police and the media. His case-study of Dutch protection work on Montagu's Harriers would prove a highlight of the day. Finally, for the last in the morning's longer background talks, Steven McAvooy of the BTO demonstrated this year's revised version of BirdTrack, stressing its role in the confidential recording of breeding activity, and the contribution that could and should be made by ordinary birders to the national databases.

The afternoon brought a series of shorter presentations. Kevin Hand described the work of the newly established Cambridgeshire Rare Breeding Bird Group, setting the scene for five species studies: Ken Smith on Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers, Norman Sills on Cranes, David Ewbank on Ely's nationally famous Muscovy Ducks, Tim Cowan on the RSPB's Stone Curlew recovery project, and Simon Wotton on Bitterns. To round off the day, Dawn Balmer of the BTO provided a masterful summary and a heartfelt appeal to birders to get out there to responsibly record the special species we are so lucky to host within the county.



The Club's thanks are due to Vince Lea and Vicki Harley for putting together the programme and for the practical organisation of the day. Raffle prizes were donated by Dave Gosney, Vine House Farm, Wild about Travel, From the Notebook and by various club members.

As usual there were field trips on the following Sunday; Charlie Kitchin guided a group at the Nene Washes, and Martin Lester provided a tour of Burwell Fen. Our thanks go to Charlie and Martin.

Chris Brown summarises one of the species talks. "Ken Smith talked about Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers (LSW). The species increased when Dutch Elm disease brought plentiful food and nest sites and peaked around 1980. Declines since then have been rapid and in East Anglia numbers are now very low. The encounter rate reported on BirdTrack is highest in March but even then the peak is 0.2% of all complete lists, compared to 20% for Great Spotted Woodpecker. Ken found in a four year study (2005-9) that breeding success was low, mainly due to chick starvation and nest predation. LSWs have a single brood and though over-winter survival is good the breeding success is about half the rate record in continental Europe.

Ken has issued a national appeal for people to report LSW nests to him; he is then able to monitor breeding using pole mounted cameras. As a result the BTO nest record scheme is now recording about ten nests a year. Newly reported nests are always in dead wood, but no tree species dominates, and often the nests are in odd places, not necessarily woodland. Most recently 2016 breeding success was poor with three nests excavated but no eggs laid.

We can assist Ken by looking for LSWs; even though they are known at only two sites in Cambridgeshire it is possible that they are overlooked. Drumming from the first warm day in February through to April is the best indicator of attempted breeding; drumming happens from dawn until about 9am. Potential sites should be checked out before leaf emergence. All records should be reported to Ken Smith at [Ken.smith.lsw@gmail.com](mailto:Ken.smith.lsw@gmail.com). He urged observers not to give up and ended on an optimistic note, in that LSW are known to visit fat feeders and where they are still present, can be offered some assistance".

Rob McEwen was impressed: "I found the day to be an interesting and informative overview of this subject. Being new to the Cambridgeshire area, I came away from the conference with an increased knowledge of, and a greater appreciation for, the birds and the excellent conservation efforts being undertaken in our local area." And Bob Jarman too: "Excellent speakers – to get Dawn Balmer and Mark Holling on the same bill was a coup! The use of drones to locate, protect with fox-proof cages and satellite-tag Montagu's Harriers; and the animations showing the birds tracked to their wintering grounds in the Sahel were unforgettable."

*Michael Holdsworth*

### **Rare Breeding Birds Conference - feedback**

The dust has settled and the organisers have breathed a sigh of relief as another successful Cambridgeshire Bird Club Conference has passed. We hope those who attended enjoyed the day, and the field trips if they made it to one of those as well; certainly comments received to date have all been positive, and we hope that the recording of rare breeders will be enhanced in future as a consequence. As well as raising awareness of the topic and providing fascinating insights into some of these species, the event also raised some money for conservation: £163 was raised by the raffle which will go towards Hen Harrier satellite tagging work by the RSPB. There was also a budget surplus from the event, some of which will be donated towards this work (a further £100) and £150 will be donated to the BTO for their BirdTrack Research Appeal - Stephen McAvoy gave a presentation highlighting why BirdTrack is a valuable recording tool for all birds, with special features for maintaining the confidentiality required for rare breeding birds. Funds are needed to analyse declining species data from BirdTrack to help inform conservation strategies.

One thing which had been intended, but due to a photocopying error failed to happen on the day, was to get feedback from Club members on what sort of conference you want next. We would

particularly like to hear from those who have not yet attended a conference - what would tempt you, if anything?

The first questions are relevant to those who attended the conference, but all are invited to comment on this and send your thoughts to me on vincelea@btinternet.com

How did you first hear about the conference, and when?

How do you rate the event (1= poor, 10 = excellent) for:

Value for money?

Food and refreshments?

Suitability of venue?

Organisation?

Content?

What are the most useful things you have learnt from the conference?

Do you think you will change any of your birdwatching habits next year as a result of the conference?

Would you like to join the Cambridge Rare Breeding Bird group to be kept informed of recording/monitoring or site protection opportunities and activities during 2017?

We usually arrange a themed conference every 2 years. Please give us your opinions on future conferences: What time of year would be preferred? (Some suggest that autumn is too busy a time for birding!) Previous topics have included Farmland Birds, Woodland Birds and Wetland Birds. What topics or themes would you like to hear about?

*Vince Lea*

## **The impact of increasing flood events on breeding waders on the Ouse Washes.**

The Ouse Washes is an extensive area of wet grassland in Norfolk and Cambridgeshire and is one of the country's largest flood storage reservoirs. It is internationally important for wintering wildfowl and is one of the most important lowland sites in England for breeding waders including snipe, redshank, lapwing and black tailed godwit (just); as such is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest, a Special Protection Area (SPA) and a Ramsar Convention Site.

Historically, the number of breeding pairs of waders on the washes was significantly higher than it is today. Since the mid-1970s, the frequency and magnitude of late spring and summer flooding has increased, deteriorating the quality of the site for ground nesting birds and making vegetation management by grazing and mowing far more difficult.

The Ouse Washes generally floods as a result of heavy or persistent rainfall within the catchment area falling on surfaces which are unable to absorb and retain it, or on land that is efficiently drained, thereby allowing it to enter the river network very quickly. Larger volumes of water entering the network more quickly reduce the time in which full capacity is reached, and to relieve this pressure water is diverted into the Ouse Washes via the sluice gates at Earith. This is very simplistic explanation of why and how the washes flood but in reality there are other more complex factors involved.

**Flooding Impacts.** Years with high numbers of flood days (around 100) also have the lowest total of wader pairs. But timing is the critical factor; a flood in late July would not have the same impact on breeding waders as does a flood in early May. For example on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2007, a flood of 0.67 meters above the summer retention level affected 75 pairs of Lapwings, 90 pairs of Redshank, 55 of Snipe, and 2 Avocet pairs, a total of 220 pairs.

**Addressing these impacts.** Through a series of partnerships involving the Environment Agency, RSPB, Natural England and the Wildlife Trusts, new wet grassland habitats have been created outside of the Ouse Washes. The creation of the Pilot Project began in 2002, covering 44ha, followed by an additional 31ha called Carroll's Ground in 2006. This is managed by the RSPB and now supports over 150 pairs of breeding waders. The creation of Lady Fen began in 2007, covering 300ha and now supports over 170 pairs of breeding waders, including 3 pairs of black tailed godwit; this is managed by the Wildfowl & Wetland Trust at Welney. In 2014 work began on a new habitat

creation project at Byall Fen Coveney; a further 188ha of wet grassland to be created in 2 phases. Phase 1 has been completed this year and phase 2 will hopefully begin within the next couple of years.

These 'lifeboat' sites, as they are often termed, have shown that with the right management and the ability to control the water regime they can support increasing numbers of breeding waders. In 2016 the total number of waders breeding on newly created wet grassland outside of the Ouse Washes, an area covering 196ha, was over 320 pairs. Comparing this to the whole Ouse Washes (an area covering 2400ha) where only 350 pairs were present, illustrates the success of these sites in creating safe nesting areas for displaced birds. *Mike Burdekin, Warden, RSPB Ouse Washes*

### **Raptor conservation and monitoring in Albania.**

Kevin Hand, a club member, is involved with the relevant country-based NGOs in monitoring and conserving vultures and other birds of prey in Albania, a very under-visited and poor European country. Some of those at the conference may have seen the basic information sheet which he present on the day, but we now have an update from him. Various partner organisations are keen to help, and use expertise from the work in Asia on halting the declines of vultures there, to take this project further. A student project is also hopefully going to look at all of the known data from the country, without which it is impossible to know the best locations to focus work. Club member Bob Jarman has also donated a telescope to the project to aid their monitoring work. Offers of support or financial assistance on this project are welcome, and please contact Kevin Hand for further information: E-mail [kevinhand@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:kevinhand@tiscali.co.uk)

### **Publication offer – "Birds of the Nene Washes" by Jonathan Taylor**

Due for publication late 2016, 100 pages, including photos and illustrations, retail £10 plus £2 p&p.

This new publication introduces the Nene Washes, the habitats, management and their vital importance for birds in winter and summer, not just for Cambridgeshire but for the UK. It also provides species accounts for all birds which have been recorded at the Washes. This is your chance to purchase at a reduced price for club members, of £8 plus £2 p&p (or pick up from bird club meetings from January). Send your cheque (payable to Jonathan Taylor) and name/address to: Jonathan Taylor, 28 Elm Crescent, Glinton, Peterborough, PE6 7LE. Please state if you wish to collect from Cambridge.

### **Subscription reminder**

Club subscriptions fall due on 1st January 2017. Rates for 2017 are: Full £17; Senior/Concessionary £12; Student £8.

### **CBC Summer Garden Bird Survey**

This survey has run from 6<sup>th</sup> March 2016 to 1<sup>st</sup> October 2016. I look forward to receiving any outstanding results, emailed to [gardenbirds@cambridgebirdclub.org.uk](mailto:gardenbirds@cambridgebirdclub.org.uk) or posted to 15 School Lane Toft, Cambridge CB23 2RE.

The CBC garden bird surveys have been carried out for two full years. I would like to extend a big thank you to all of you that have taken part in the surveys during that time. A large database has been built up which records how birds make use of gardens in the county. I plan to write a full summary for the club once all the records are in.

Sadly there have been increasingly fewer people taking part in the surveys and after taking advice I have decided that it would be best to take a break. It has been suggested that it could run on a five year cycle, and this would mean restarting the survey in October 2019. *Rebecca Buisson*

## Next Indoor Meetings

**Friday 9th December, St Johns Hall, Cambridge 7.30 for 8pm**

### **Christmas Social**

Come and enjoy mince pies and mulled wine in good company while listening to inspiring short talks by club members. Please contact Vicki Harley if you would like to give a short presentation.

**Friday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2017, St Johns Hall, Cambridge 7.30 for 8pm**

**The Red List and State of the World's Birds** by Ian Burfield and Tris Allinson

### **New Members**

We welcome David Farrant of Little Abington and Stewart Short of Molesworth

**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](http://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](mailto: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.

#### **Club Contacts**

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**Website: Chris Quy** [webmaster@cambridgebirdclub.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@cambridgebirdclub.org.uk)

**Other Council Members: Mike Foley**

### **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 5<sup>th</sup> of the following month**. There is no need to duplicate records across both channels.

# ***GOOD BIRDING!***