

CAMBRIDGESHIRE BIRD CLUB Bulletin No. 455



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

Welcome to the November / December 2017 Edition

RECENT BIRD REPORTS – *Headlines*

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER* Nov: Grafham Water from the 9th to the end of the month. Dec: Grafham Water the November bird still present, with 2 on the 19th.

ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD* Nov: Holme Fen on the 12th.

GOSHAWK* Nov: Great Fen (Rhymes Reedbed) on the 17th.

GLAUCOUS GULL Dec: Cottenham Long Drove an adult on the 29th.

ICELAND GULL Dec: Cottenham Long Drove a 1 c.y. on the 29th then two in the area on 31st.

GREAT GREY SHRIKE* Nov: Brampton on the 14th.

SHORELARK* Nov: Burwell Fen 5th – 8th; *eight previous records, the last in 2004.*

Other records

Records in this bulletin are unchecked and may be revised at a later date. Asterisks indicate species for which it is necessary to send a description to the County Recorder for records to be accepted. The term 'reported from' and 'also at' give an indication of distribution. Some species give maxima when a number of counts have been received. Where no numbers are given the record relates to a single bird.

Weather: As is often the case, November began with one or two frosts. Up to the middle of the month conditions varied between mild and cold as the wind veered between west and north but the month ended with a cold spell and further frosts. December continued the alternating mild / cold pattern but by the 8th a much colder spell began, with snowfall on the 10th. Christmas was mild followed by a second snowfall and frosts, and then the return of mild conditions at the end to the month. Overall December was colder and wetter than in recent years and the number of 'headline' species was down, but conditions on mainland Europe may have played a part too.

Wildfowl

Mute Swan Nov: Ouse Washes 240 on the 20th. Dec: Kingfishers Bridge 52 on 17th.

Bewick's Swan Nov: Ouse Washes 40 on the 8th, Littleport May Farm 27 on 28th. Dec: Littleport May Farm 16 on 15th, Eldernell 6 on 17th. *Noticeably fewer reports so far this winter; WWT Welney reported only 147 on the Ouse Washes Cambs + Norfolk.*

Whooper Swan Nov: Ferry Meadows CP 4 on the 5th, Nene Washes 418 on 8th, Burwell Fen 33 into roost on 13th, Ouse Washes 600+ on 5th and 2822 on 20th, Littleport May Farm 424 on 28th. Dec: Littleport May Farm 381 on 1st, Kingfishers Bridge 69 on 3rd, Ouse Washes 3516 on 11th.

Pink-footed Goose Nov: Ouse Washes 4 on the 2nd, one on 29th, Littleport May Farm 28 flying over on 9th, Yaxley 250+ over on 24th. Dec: Ouse Washes on 2nd.

Greylag Goose Nov: Cambridge Research Park c180 on the 9th, Wimpole Park 240 on 11th, Kingfishers Bridge max 860 on 2nd, Wicken Fen 240 on 17th, Sutton N Fen 1020 on 26th. **Dec:** Kingfishers Bridge c350 on 6th, Cambridge Research Park 260 on 29th.

Canada Goose Nov: Trumpington Clay Farm 66 on the 14th, Ouse Washes 912 on 20th. **Dec:** Stanground Wash 62 on 20th, Kingfishers Bridge 170 on 31st.

Egyptian Goose Nov: Ferry Meadows CP on the 2nd, Maxey GP 3 on 3rd, Kingfishers Bridge 9 on 16th, Paxton Pits 11 on 23rd, Colne Fen GP 11 on 26th. **Dec:** Grafham Water 2 on 13th, Kingfishers Bridge max 11 on 23rd, Fen Drayton Lakes 2 on 30th, Barleycraft GP 14 on 31st.

Shelduck Nov: Nene Washes on the 8th, Ouse Washes on 18th, Burwell Fen 2 on 22nd, Fowlmere NR on 24th (*unusual south of Cambridge*), Littleport May Farm 2 on 24th. **Dec:** Grafham Water on 15th and 2 on 17th, Burwell Fen 2 on 24th.

Mandarin Nov: Wimpole Park max 14 on the 5th, Haslingfield STW 10 on 6th, Eye Green a drake on 9th, Fen Drayton Lakes a female on 18th, Littleport May Farm a drake on 28th – 30th. **Dec:** Wimpole Park on several dates max 17 (12 males) on 1st, Eye Green on 26th.

Wigeon Nov: Ouse Washes 2100 on the 12th and 5549 on 20th, Wicken Fen 571 on 18th, Colne Fen GP 482 on 26th. **Dec:** Littleport May Farm max 381 on 1st, Wicken Fen 574 on 4th, Ouse Washes 10549 on 11th, Cam Washes Upware c250 on 6th, Godmanchester NR 136 on 7th, Maxey GP 157 on 11th, Burwell Fen c300 on 18th and 200+ on 24th, Fen Drayton Lakes 1000+ on 30th.

Gadwall Nov: Kingfishers Bridge max 55 on the 16th, Stretham Marina 118 on 18th, Wicken Fen 50+ on 29th. **Dec:** Godmanchester NR 74 on 7th, Kingfishers Bridge max 72 on 8th, Holme Fen 77 on 9th, Maxey GP 62 on 11th, Milton CP 112 on 12th, Paxton Pits 120 on 12th, Fen Drayton Lakes 123 on 17th.

Teal Nov: Ouse Washes 1210 on the 20th, Wicken Fen max 178 on 29th, Burwell Fen max 216 on 22nd. **Dec:** Ouse Washes 1519 on 11th, Kingfishers Bridge max 163 on 28th, Cambridge Research Park 215 on 31st, Woodwalton Fen 221 on 31st.

Mallard Nov: Haddenham Hinton Farm Reservoir 150 on the 16th, Ouse Washes 766 on 20th, Sutton N Fen 335 on 26th, Littleport May Farm up to 500 all month. **Dec:** Ouse Washes 974 on 11th, Kingfishers Bridge max 172 on 28th, Holme Fen 175 on 9th, Littleport May Farm max 681 on 18th.

Pintail Nov: Wicken Fen 3 on the 3rd, Ferry Meadows CP 2 on 6th, Ouse Washes 50 on 20th. **Dec:** Ouse Washes 93 on 11th, Nene Washes 220+ on 31st.

Garganey Nov: Ouse Washes a female on the 18th – *a very late date but not quite the latest ever, which was December 4th 2014.*

Shoveler Nov: Ouse Washes 200+ on the 12th, Burwell Fen max c70 on 17th, Wicken Fen maximum 47 on 29th. **Dec:** Eldernell 80 on 4th, Wicken Fen 34 on 4th, Kingfishers Bridge max 23 on 8th, Ouse Washes 151 on 11th, Maxey GP 46 on 11th, Burwell Fen 60 on 23rd.

Red-crested Pochard Nov: Kingfishers Bridge 2 on the 5th, Paxton Pits on 12th. **Dec:** Paxton Pits on 23rd.

Pochard Nov: Wicken Fen 25 on the 17th. **Dec:** Cambridge Research Park 53 on 31st, Maxey GP 18 on 11th, Littleport May Farm max 27 on 15th, Colne Fen GP 58 on 17th, Fen Drayton Lakes 30+ on 22nd and 30th, Burwell Fen 17 on 23rd, Ouse Washes 480 on 28th.

Tufted Duck Nov: Cambridge Research Park 20 on the 9th, Wimpole Park 21 on 19th, Littleport May Farm max 27 on 30th. **Dec:** Godmanchester NR 217 on 7th, Holme Fen 43 on 9th, Colne Fen GP 101 on 17th, Fen Drayton Lakes 50+ on 22nd, Littleport May Farm max 53 on 13th.

At Grafham Water a Tufted Duck with a nasal saddle had been originally marked at Saint-Phillippe de Grand Lieu in France on November 26th 2015, and seen one more time at Landes Genusson on March 27th 2016.

Scaup Nov: Grafham Water on the 26th.

Common Scoter Dec: Grafham Water 3 female/immatures on the 5th – 6th, 6 on 18th and 2 on 20th and 26th.

Goldeneye Nov: Ferry Meadows on the 3rd and 5 on 21st, Cambridge Research Park on 9th, Stapleford 2 on 14th, Ouse Washes 2 drakes on 28th, Grafham Water 149 on 26th, Fen Drayton Lakes 25+ on 26th. **Dec:** Fen Drayton Lakes 40 on 24th and 28 on 30th, Godmanchester NR on 7th.

Smew **Nov:** Fen Drayton Lakes a 'redhead' on the 19th – *the first of the winter*. **Dec:** Kingfishers Bridge on 3rd, Fen Drayton Lakes on 7th and 2 redheads on 26th – 31st, Barleycraft GP 5 on 31st.

Goosander **Nov:** Ferry Meadows CP a male and a female on many dates, Grafham Water a female on 6th and 17th, 2 on 26th. **Dec:** Grafham Water 4 on 5th and 8 on 13th, Eldernell on 6th, Maxey GP 2 on 11th, Wimpole Park a redhead on 15th, Fowlmere NR 2 redheads on 19th – *this species is unusual south of Cambridge*.



Goosander at Grafham Water: photo by Phil Smith

Gamebirds

Red-legged Partridge **Nov:** Little Wilbraham Fen 55 on the 18th, Littleport May Farm 50+ all month. **Dec:** Holme Fen c30 on 2nd.

Grey Partridge **Nov:** Nine Wells max 73 on the 2nd, Croydon 12 on 25th, Fowlmere NR 12 on 26th. **Dec:** Burwell 15 on 3rd, Littleport May Farm max 63 on 15th, Nine Wells 18 on 28th.

Cormorants, egrets, herons and grebes

Cormorant **Nov:** reported from Grafham Water (121), Ferry Meadows CP (45), Burwell Fen (6), and Littleport May Farm (8). **Dec:** also at Milton CP (27), Wicken Fen (30), Cambridge Research Park (13), Fowlmere NR (4), Holme Fen (5) and Kingfishers Bridge (22).

Shag **Dec:** Ferry Meadows CP on the 10th – 11th.

Bittern **Nov:** reports from Fen Drayton Lakes (3) and Fowlmere NR. **Dec:** also at Woodwalton Fen.

Simon Wotton of the RSPB reports that booming Bitterns increased slightly in 2017, mainly in Somerset as numbers in East Anglia have fallen slightly; Cambridgeshire recorded 15.

Little Egret **Nov:** reported from Burwell Fen (6), Cottenham, Ferry Meadows CP, Fowlmere NR, Holme Fen (2), Kingfishers Bridge, Littleport May Farm (6), Wicken Fen (7) and Fen Drayton Lakes (11). **Dec:** at the above sites plus Cambridge (Long Road 4), Hauxton and Godmanchester NR.

Great White Egret Nov: Cambourne 2 on the 16th, Godmanchester NR on 17th, Cottenham on 18th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 18th and 25th. **Dec:** Cottenham on 2nd and 3rd, Fen Drayton Lakes 2 on 2nd and 10th, Wicken Fen on 3rd, Cambridge Research Park on 10th, Maxey GP on 11th, Paxton Pits on 22nd.

Grey Heron Nov: reported from Ouse Washes (9), Grafham Water (9), Burwell Fen (5), and Littleport May Farm (8).

Little Grebe Nov: reported from Fowlmere NR (2), Haddenham Hinton Farm Reservoir, Kingfishers Bridge (3), Littleport May Farm (15+), Trumpington Clay Farm (8), Holme Fen (12), Colne Fen GP (21) and Woodwalton Fen. **Dec:** also at Earith, Woodwalton Fen (10) and Trumpington (7).

Great Crested Grebe Nov: reported from Roswell Pits (5), Paxton Pits (5), and Kingfishers Bridge (9); Grafham Water WeBS count 259 on 26th. **Dec:** also at Cambridge Research Park.

Raptors

Red Kite Nov: reported from Fowlmere NR, Ouse Washes, Holme Fen (8), Littleport May Farm (2 – 3), Belsize Wood (24) and Sawtry (15). **Dec:** Stilton c60 on 11th.

Marsh Harrier Nov: reported from Haddenham/Aldreth Fens, Littleport May Farm (8), Kingfishers Bridge (4) and Ouse Washes (3). **Dec:** further reports from Burwell Fen, Cambridge Research Park (4+), Fen Drayton Lakes, Nene Washes (Eldernell 8), Wicken Fen (6) and Woodwalton Fen (6).

Hen Harrier Nov: Wicken Fen on the 12th and Aldreth a ringtail on 14th *were the first of the winter*, Littleport May Farm a female on 28th, Wicken Fen a male on 29th. **Dec:** Littleport May Farm a female from 1st – 13th, Swaffham Prior a ringtail on 6th, Nene Washes (Eldernell) a female on 7th, Wicken Fen 3 – 4 on several dates from 9th, maximum 5 on 4th with at least 3 males.

Buzzard Nov: reported from Babraham, Great Fen Project, Haddenham (2), Kingfishers Bridge, Littleport May Farm (10+), and Wicken Fen (2). **Dec:** also at Barton, Burwell Fen (2), Foxton (6), Godmanchester NR, Grafham Water, Ouse Washes (6), Willingham (2) and Woodwalton Fen.

Rails and crane

Water Rail Nov: reported from Cambridge Research Park, Fowlmere NR (8) and Wicken Fen (2).

Dec: also at Fen Drayton Lakes (2), Godmanchester NR (2), Kingfishers Bridge (2), King's Dyke NR, Littleport May Farm 20 all month (an influx reported), Maxey GP and Wimpole Park.

Moorhen Nov: Haddenham Hinton Farm Reservoir 23 on the 16th, Littleport May Farm 100+ all month. **Dec:** Wimpole Park 20 on 18th, Stanground Wash 32 on 19th, Trumpington (Clay Farm) 20 on 17th.

Coot Nov: Kingfishers Bridge max 234 on 22nd, Grafham Water WeBS count 579 on 26th. **Dec:** Kingfishers Bridge max 171 on 14th, Fen Drayton Lakes 860 on 17th, Fletton Lake 300 on 31st.

Common Crane Nov: Nene Washes 3 on the 1st, Ouse Washes a maximum of 26 adults and 6 juveniles were reported on several days from the 2nd. **Dec:** Nene Washes (Eldernell) 3 – 7 reported on several dates, maximum 28 (possibly up to 31) on the 16th, Wicken Fen on 28th.

Comment from Norman Sills: Sunday 19 Nov was a national crane count day. We had 31 near Manea and the Nene held 7, so a Fens total of 38, I assume a Cambridgeshire record number. As it happened, Charlie Kitchin saw all 38 on Monday 20th so certainly a Nene record total – in modern times.

Waders

Grey Plover Nov: Ouse Washes on the 18th.

Golden Plover Nov: Littleport May Farm 274 on the 2nd, Burwell Fen 600 on 5th, Stapleford c500 on 14th, Trumpington (fields) 1600 on 25th, RAF Molesworth 250+ on 18th. **Dec:** Stapleford 500+ on 3rd, Littleport May Farm max 407 on 13th, Nene Washes 4000 on 31st, Foxton c500 on 31st.

Ringed Plover Nov: Kingfishers Bridge on the 12th.

Lapwing Nov: Haddenham/Aldreth Fens 400+ on the 9th, Ouse Washes c500 on 14th, Kingfishers Bridge max 518 on 16th, Burwell Fen 800 on 5th, Littleport May Farm 554 on 24th. **Dec:** Ouse Washes 3000 on 3rd, Nene Washes (Eldernell) 2000+ on 5th, Burwell Fen c500 on 21st.

Curlew Dec: Ouse Washes on the 11th and 28th.

Black-tailed Godwit Nov: Ouse Washes 260 on the 25th, Wicken Fen on 17th, Kingfishers Bridge on 22nd, Isleham on 25th. **Dec:** Kingfishers Bridge 9 on 14th.

Bar-tailed Godwit Nov: Grafham Water on the 21st.

Ruff Nov: Burwell Fen 12 on the 5th, Littleport May Farm 3 on 5th, Nene Washes on 8th, Cam Washes 24 on 11th, Ouse Washes 22 on 12th, Kingfishers Bridge max 33 on 16th. **Dec:** Ouse Washes 36 on 3rd, Burwell Fen 9 on 21st, Fen Drayton Lakes 4 on 30th, Nene Washes (Eldernell) 48 on 31st.

Sanderling Nov: Grafham Water on the 7th.

Dunlin Nov: Cambridge (Lovell Rd) one overnight 2nd/3rd, Burwell Fen 23 on 9th falling to 4 on 24th, Nene Washes on 8th, Ouse Washes max 35 on 28th, Wicken Fen 10 on 25th. **Dec:** Ouse Washes 9 on 11th, Burwell Fen 4 on 18th.

Little Stint Nov: Burwell Fen 2 on the 6th, Kingfishers Bridge on 12th, Ouse Washes on 18th – 20th. **Dec:** Burwell Fen 2 on 4th.

Common Sandpiper Nov: Wisbech St. Mary on the 5th. **Dec:** Paxton Pits on 8th.

Green Sandpiper Nov: reported from Cottenham Lode (3), Fen Drayton Lakes, Ferry Meadows CP, Grafham Water and Kingfishers Bridge. **Dec:** also at Burwell Fen, Bottisham Lock, Cam Washes, Cottenham Long Drove and Great Fen (New Decoy Farm 2).

Redshank Nov: reported from Burwell Fen (5), Grafham Water (7), Littleport May Farm (2), Nene Washes (5), Ouse Washes (10), Paxton Pits (5) and Wicken Fen. **Dec:** also at Grafham Water, Littleport May Farm (2), and Nene Washes (15).

Jack Snipe Nov: Great Fen Project (Rhymes Reedbed) on the 17th – the *first record of the winter*, Littleport May Farm 2 on 24th. **Dec:** Kings Dyke NR 2 on 2nd, Ouse Washes on 11th, Littleport May Farm on 28th.

Woodcock Nov: *the usual arrival of Continental migrants* – Cambridge (Sheep's Green) on the 1st, Ferry Meadows CP on 5th and 2 on 9th, Rampton on 10th, Drysides BP 2 on 23rd, Wicken Fen 7 on 25th, Littleport May Farm 10+ all month. **Dec:** Brampton Wood on 2nd, Fowlmere NR on 2nd, Ditton Park Wood on 14th, Paxton Pits on 23rd, Croydon on 23rd.

Snipe Nov: reported from Cambridge Research Park, Great Fen Project (Old Decoy Farm 34), Littleport May Farm (100+), Ouse Washes (42), Trumpington (Clay Farm) 15 and Wicken Fen (10). **Dec:** also at Kingfishers Bridge (29), Colne Fen GP (15), Fowlmere NR (8), and Paxton Pits (7).

Gulls

Kittiwake Nov: Ouse Washes on the 12th.

Black-headed Gull Nov: Haddenham Hinton Farm Reservoir 150 on the 16th, Wicken Fen a roost of c500 on 17th, Kingfishers Bridge max 350 on 23rd, Littleport May Farm 300 all month. **Dec:** Wicken Fen c930 on 4th, Bradley Fen 500 on 14th, Fowlmere NR 300+ flying over on 23rd.

Mediterranean Gull Nov: Ferry Meadows CP a 2nd winter on the 9th – 14th (*this bird was ringed on a Baltic island off southern Sweden in June 2016*), Cambourne on 18th. **Dec:** Grafham Water a first-winter on 18th.

Common Gull Nov: Ferry Meadows CP on the 5th (*a ringed bird last reported in September 2015 at Bergen Norway*), Haddenham/Aldreth Fens 150+ on 9th, Haddenham Hinton Farm Reservoir 50 on 16th. **Dec:** maxima Fowlmere NR (20 on 25th) and Littleport May Farm (29).

Lesser Black-backed Gull Nov: Foxton SW 200 on the 4th, Wicken Fen 30 on 18th, Fowlmere NR 80 on 24th, Littleport May Farm 226 on 24th. **Dec:** Littleport May Farm max 187 on 13th.

Herring Gull Nov: Ferry Meadows CP 50 on the 5th, Littleport May Farm 174 on 24th, Bradley Fen 44 on 23rd, Cambridge Research Park 200+ on 29th. **Dec:** Fowlmere NR 4 on 2nd, Bradley Fen 300 on 4th, Littleport May Farm max 92 on 13th, Colne Fen GP 54 on 17th.

Yellow-legged Gull Nov: reported from Cambridge Research Park (2) and Stapleford (3). **Dec:** reported from Cottenham Long Drove and Foxton SW.

Caspian Gull Nov: reported from Cambridge Research Park (2), Kingfishers Bridge, Milton (3) and Paxton Pits. **Dec:** reported from Fen Drayton Lakes, Littleport May Farm and Dogsthorpe Tip.

Great Black-backed Gull **Nov:** Ferry Meadows CP 4 on the 5th, Littleport May Farm 3 on 24th. **Dec:** Ferry Meadows CP 7 on 10th, Great Fen on 16th, Cambridge Research Park 110 on 28th, Kingfishers Bridge 107 on 31st.

Doves, owls and kingfisher

Stock Dove **Nov:** Ferry Meadows CP 17 on the 2nd, Great Fen Project 40 on 17th, Littleport May Farm 50+ all month. **Dec:** Great Fen Project 62 on 9th, Nene Washes (Eldernell) 95 on 17th.

Woodpigeon **Nov:** Ferry Meadows CP (Vis Mig) 1522 on the 5th, Witcham 1500 on 7th. **Dec:** Littleport May Farm c1000 all month.

Collared Dove **Nov:** Burwell Priory Farm c50 on the 17th, Littleport May Farm 100+ all month.

Barn Owl **Nov:** reported from 11 sites including Fowlmere NR (2), Kingfishers Bridge (2), Great Fen, Ouse Washes and Wicken Fen (2). **Dec:** also at Burwell Fen, Littleport May Farm (8+) and Nene Washes (Eldernell 3).

Little Owl **Nov:** reported from 9 sites including Littleport May Farm (4) and Witcham (2). **Dec:** also at Wicken Fen (2) and West Cambridge Lake.

Tawny Owl **Nov:** reported from 8 sites, all singles except Littleport May Farm (2). **Dec:** reported from 5 further sites including Bluntisham and Orton Longueville.

Long-eared Owl **Dec:** Kings Dyke NR 2 roosting on 2nd, 5 on 31st.

Short-eared Owl **Nov:** Wicken Fen 2 on the 13th, Nene Washes 4 on 24th, Grafham Water on 23rd, Littleport May Farm 2 all month. **Dec:** reported from Burwell Fen, Great Fen Project, and Nene Washes (Eldernell max 6).

Kingfisher **Nov:** widely reported (32 sites) including 6 within Cambridge, Burwell Fen, Cambridge Research Park, Cottenham, Great Fen Project, Holme Fen and Wicken Fen (2). **Dec:** similarly widespread including Ferry Meadows CP (3) and Littleport May Farm (6).

Falcons and parrots

Kestrel **Nov:** Holme Fen 6 on the 12th, Littleport May Farm 20+ all month.

Merlin **Nov:** reported from 12 locations including Haddenham Drovers on 5th, Fowlmere NR on the 8th, Wicken Fen on 13th, Great Staughton on 14th, Kingfishers Bridge on 16th, Great Fen Project on 19th and Reach/Swaffham Prior a male on 30th. **Dec:** Fen Drayton Lakes on 2nd, Stapleford on 3rd, Cambridge Research Park on 9th, Fowlmere/Duxford on 11th, Littleport May Farm a female on 12th, Paxton Pits on 23rd, Cam Washes Upware a female on 24th, Kingfishers Bridge on 24th.

Peregrine **Nov:** reported from Kings Dyke NR 2 on the 2nd, Wisbech St. Mary on 5th, Littleport May Farm a male on 7th and a female on 24th, Ouse Washes on 12th and 18th, Holme Fen on 15th, Earith-Haddenham on 17th, Burwell Fen a male on 17th, Great Fen on 17th, Kingfishers Bridge on 22nd, Ferry Meadows CP on 23rd, Cottenham on 26th. **Dec:** reported from 12 sites including Fen Drayton Lakes, Fowlmere NR, Kingfishers Bridge, Nene Washes, Wimpole Park and Woodwalton Fen.

Ring-necked Parakeet* **Nov:** Ouse Washes on the 2nd and 4th, Sawston various dates up to 30th.

Corvids

Magpie **Nov & Dec:** Littleport May Farm 30+ throughout.

Jay **Nov:** Lt Wilbraham Fen 5 on the 16th. **Dec:** Woodwalton Fen 5 on 8th.

Jackdaw **Nov:** Cambridge (Lovell Road) 428 roosting on the 3rd, Littleport May Farm 300+ all month.

Jackdaw/Rook **Nov:** Sawston c350 going to roost on Dernford Fen on the 21st, Wicken Fen a roost of 'many hundreds' all month, c800 on 3rd Dec.

Rook **Nov:** Littleport May Farm 500+ all month. **Dec:** Swaffham Bulbeck c100 in a recently sown field on the 6th, Cam Washes Upware c150 on 6th.

Carrion Crow **Nov:** Great Fen Project 33 on the 17th, Littleport May Farm 300+ all month. **Dec:** Fowlmere NR roost of 50 on 5th.

Raven **Nov:** Fowlmere NR on the 1st, Linton 2 on 3rd, Dry Drayton 2 on 5th, Wimpole 2 on 11th and one on 17th, Littleport May Farm one on 28th, Chippenham Fen on 29th. **Dec:** Litlington 5 on 14th,

Littleport May Farm on 14th, Wimpole Park 3 on 15th and 4 on 24th, Barton 4 on 18th, Fowlmere NR on 25th, Croydon 3 on 26th and Castor Hanglands on 30th.

Crests, tits and larks

Firecrest Nov: Histon on the 1st, Dry Drayton on 25th. **Dec:** Fowlmere on 12th.

Marsh Tit Nov: reported from Aversley Wood (8), Chippenham Fen (4), Tetworth Hall Estate (3) and Southey Wood (6). **Dec:** also at Grafham Water, Paxton Pits, Wimpole Park (2), Ditton Park Wood (6) and Woodwalton Fen (13).

Bearded Tit Nov: reported from Nene Washes (2+), Kingfishers Bridge (4), Ouse Washes and Wicken Fen (5). **Dec:** reported from Ouse Fen and Burwell Fen (4).

Skylark Nov: Castle Camps c50 on 5th, Littleport May Farm 100+ throughout. **Dec:** counts of 100+ at Barton, Caldecote and Littleport May Farm.

Hirundines and warblers

Swallow Nov: Wicken Fen 2 on the 5th – *the latest date reported this year.*

Cetti's Warbler Nov: reported from Cambridge Research Park, Fen Drayton Lakes, Fowlmere NR (2), Littleport May Farm (6), Paxton Pits, Wicken Fen (12) and Woodwalton Fen. **Dec:** reported from 7 sites.

Yellow-browed Warbler Nov: Yaxley in a garden on 1st.

Chiffchaff Nov: Cambridge Research Park on the 9th, Wicken Fen on 3rd, 2 on 19th and one on 24th, then 2 on 28th (different birds caught and ringed), Fowlmere NR on 11th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 19th.

Dec: Godmanchester NR on the 7th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 22nd, Littleport May Farm 5 – 6 all month.

Siberian Chiffchaff Nov: Fen Drayton Lakes on the 28th.

Blackcap Nov: Woodhurst on the 1st, Wicken Fen on 10th and 19th, Wimpole Park 5 on 20th, Littleport May Farm 2 – 4 all month. **Dec:** Wicken Fen on 3rd, Cambridge (E Chesterton) on 17th.

Reed Warbler Nov: Fowlmere NR on the 1st and again on 26th – *a very late date; the latest date ever is Dec 12th on the Ouse Washes.*

Starling and thrushes

Nuthatch Nov: reported from Chippenham Fen, Littleport May Farm and Wimpole Park (5). **Dec:** reported from Cambridge Science Park, Ditton Park Wood (2) and Kingfishers Bridge.

Starling Nov: Ferry Meadows (Vis Mig) 1546 on the 1st, 1110 on 5th, 963 on 9th and c1000 on 17th, Wicken Fen roost c4000 on 5th and c8000 on 11th, Great Fen Project 497 on 19th, Fowlmere NR 250 on 24th, Haddenham/Aldreth Fens 2000 on 25th, Littleport May Farm up to 3000 all month. **Dec:** Ouse Fen c400 on 22nd, Foxton c500 on 31st, Littleport May Farm c3000 throughout.

Blackbird Nov: Cambridge (Lovell Rd) 75 overnight 2nd/3rd, Witcham 30 on 7th, Ferry Meadows CP 20 on 9th (Vis Mig), Witchford 47 on 19th, Fowlmere NR 25 on 26th, Littleport May Farm 50+ all month. **Dec:** Stanground Wash 34 on 26th, Littleport May Farm 50+ all month.

Fieldfare Nov: Ferry Meadows CP 267 on 7th (Vis Mig), Stretham 535 on 7th (Vis Mig), Witcham-Mepal 200 on 5th, Cambridge (Lovell Rd) 190 on 7th, Burwell Fen 285 on 10th, Haddenham 500 – 600 on 26th. **Dec:** Littleport May Farm max 300, Kingfishers Bridge 261 on 28th, Coates c500 on 27th.

Song Thrush Nov: Cambridge (Lovell Rd) 35 overnight 2nd/3rd, Littleport May Farm 20+ all month.

Redwing Nov: Cambridge (Lovell Rd) 276 overnight 2nd/3rd, 160 on 7th, Ferry Meadows CP Vis Mig 455 on 7th and 211 on 9th, Witcham 400 on 7th. **Dec:** Fowlmere NR 110 on 2nd, Littleport May Farm 50+ all month.

Starts and chats

Black Redstart Nov: Wimpole Park on the 12th, Ferry Meadows CP on 21st. **Dec:** Northstowe on 9th, Papworth Everard on 9th, St Ives on 10th.

Stonechat Nov: reported from Burwell Fen (2), Earith/Haddenham, Ferry Meadows CP (pair), Grafham Water, Great Fen (various sites, total 17), Paxton Pits (female) and Wicken Fen. **Dec:**

further reports from Bottisham Lock, Fen Drayton Lakes, Cam Washes (3), Kingfishers Bridge (4), Holme Fen (2), Trumpington Clay Farm (pair) and Littleport May Farm (2).

Wheatear Nov: Littleport May Farm 3 on the 9th and one on 15th.

Sparrows, wagtails and pipits

House Sparrow Dec: Eaton Ford 35 on the 23rd, Littleport May Farm 50+ all month.

Tree Sparrow Nov: Woodhurst on the 1st, Ouse Washes 2 on 5th and 18th, Littleport May Farm 18+ all month and Redmere Farm 120+ all month. **Dec:** Ouse Washes Welches Dam 10+ on 26th.

Grey Wagtail Nov: reported from 20 sites including Cambridge Research Park, Fowlmere NR, Landbeach, Littleport May Farm (4). **Dec:** similar reports with 5 additional sites.

Pied Wagtail Nov: Foxton SW c100 on the 4th, Haddenham/Aldreth Fens 50+ on 9th, Littleport May Farm 50+ all month; roosts at Addenbrooke's Hospital c100, A505 Sawston roundabout 200 and Cambridge Research Park 60+ on 29th.

Meadow Pipit Nov: Great Fen Old Decoy Farm 53 on the 17th, Littleport May Farm 100+ all month.

Rock Pipit Nov: Grafham Water on the 22nd.

Water Pipit Nov: Burwell Fen on the 5th – 9th, Ouse Washes 2 on 18th. **Dec:** Burwell Fen on 17th, Kingfishers Bridge on 17th and 3 on 24th, Stretham 2 near the marina on 24th – 31st.

Finches and buntings

Chaffinch Nov: Castle Camps 200 on 5th, Witchford 103 on 7th, Ferry Meadows CP (Vis Mig) 43 on 2nd, 72 on 5th and 61 on 9th. **Dec:** Ouse Washes 25 on 28th, Littleport May Farm 100+ all month.

Brambling Nov: as with Hawfinch the invasion led to a plethora of records some Vis Mig, some site records. Reports almost daily from 1st – 7th, maxima Ferry Meadows CP 7 on 5th, Landbeach 4 on 3rd; then a wave from 16th to 27th, max Barton Lark Rise Farm 12 on 27th and Colne Fen GP 12 on 26th.

Dec: Ouse Washes on 3rd and 3 on 28th, Littleport May Farm 2 on 3rd, 27 on 14th, 32 on 18th and 36 on 30th, Wimpole Park on 21st and 2 on 24th, Croydon on 26th.

Greenfinch Nov: Dernford Fen 45 on 4th, Littleport May Farm 50+ all month. **Dec:** Wimpole Park 20 on 19th.

Goldfinch Nov: Grafham Water 120 on the 2nd, Kingfishers Bridge 92 on 9th, Rhymes Reedbed 54 on 17th, Haddenham/Aldreth Fens 60 – 70 on 25th, Great Fen 78 on 19th, Littleport May Farm 50+ all month. **Dec:** Fowlmere NR max 50+ on 2nd, Great Fen Project 112 on 16th.

Siskin Nov: reported from Southey Wood (13), Wicken Fen (2) and Woodwalton Fen, plus several Vis Mig records. **Dec:** also at Chippenham Fen (c30), Woodwalton Fen (40) and Fowlmere NR (10).

Linnet Nov: Great Fen Project 888 on 19th, Manea 120+ on 28th, Littleport May Farm 200+ all month. **Dec:** Great Fen 2060 on 16th, Colne Fen GP 120 on 17th, Nene Washes 200+ on 31st and Littleport May Farm 400+ all month.

Lesser Redpoll Nov: reported from Great Fen (6) and Witcham (10). **Dec:** also at Ouse Washes (3), Paxton Pits, Woodwalton Fen (30), Cambridge Lovell Rd (10+) and Wicken Fen (3).

Arctic Redpoll Dec: Woodwalton Fen on 9th.

Hawfinch Nov: the invasion continued with reports of Vis Mig in the first half of the month then site records. Maxima Wimpole Park 14 on 1st, Stretham 9 on 7th, and then Wimpole Park 14 on 29th (*the highest count ever recorded in the county*), and smaller groups at Eaton Ford, Cambridge (Chesterton), Helpston, and Woodwalton Fen. **Dec:** after the invasion, Wimpole Park 2 – 6 on several dates maximum 8 – 10 on the 2nd, Alwalton 2 on 11th, Rampton a flyover on 23rd.

Yellowhammer Nov: Comberton 49 on 11th, Croydon 32+ on 25th. **Dec:** Barton 48 on 19th.

Corn Bunting Nov: Hinxton 12 on the 1st, Haddenham/Aldreth Fens 10 on 9th, Littleport May Farm 50+ all month. **Dec:** Northey Fen GP 21 on 4th, Littleport May Farm 81 on 18th, Nene Washes c50 on 26th and Fowlmere NR c20 on 21st.

Reed Bunting Nov: Fowlmere NR a roost of 300 on the 8th and 24th, Great Fen 48 on 19th, Littleport May Farm 200+ all month. **Dec:** Great Fen 76 on 16th.

Exotica

Black Swan Nov: Fen Drayton Lakes on the 9th and 18th. **Dec:** Fen Drayton Lakes on 10th.

Bar-headed Goose Nov: Wicken Fen 2 on the 11th and 18th.

Chinese Goose Nov: Cambridge Research Park on the 9th.

Ruddy Shelduck Nov: Maxey GP on the 3rd.

Keeping up the list: at the end of November (according to the E-bulletin records) the county species total for 2017 was 213. New species in October: American Golden Plover, Bee Eater, Yellow-browed Warbler and Hawfinch, and in November: Goshawk and Shore Lark. With no new additions in December, 213 remains the final total. Of course some of these records may be rejected by the Rarities Committee and there may be some others not yet reported. What will happen in 2018?

Contributors: Colin Addington, Richard Allison, Malcolm Anderson, Ben Atkinson, Malcolm Ausden, Louise Bacon, Geoff Barlow, Ian Barton, Rowena Baxter, Peter Beckenham, Guy Belcher, Paul Bennett, Peter Bircham, Chris Bowden, Chris Brown, Roger Buisson, Ian Burfield, Howard Butler, James Cadbury, Josh Carter, Ade Cooper, Steve Cooper, Paul Craske, Nick Croft, Mike Crosby, Carlos Davies, Ken Davies, Carole Davis, Martin Davies, Ian Dawson, Tim Dee, Ian and Sheila Dickerson, Nina Dimitrova, Brendan Doe, Ian Ellis, Mike Everett, Paul Gallagher, Don Gardener, Simon Gillings, Richard Gregory, James Hanlon, Andy Hannaford, Ron Harrold, Mark Hawkes, David Heath, Jon Heath, James Hitchcock, Michael Holdsworth, Dave Hollin, Ken Hook, David Hopkins, Neil Howard, Sarah Howlett, Charlie Kitchin, Sue Jarrett, Jo Jones, Colin Kirtland, Charlie Kitchin, Marcus Kohler, Stella and Nick Laughton, Vince Lea, Martin Leader, Christina Leadlay, David Lee, Keith Lievesey, Rita Lingard, Peter Loudon, Owen Marks, Bruce Martin, Tony Martin, Paul Mason, Duncan McNiven, Matt Mellor, Andy Merryweather, Steve Mumford, Dick Newell, Martin O'Leary, Dave Palmer, Richard Palmer, Rob Partridge, Richard Patient, Paul Pateman, Mark Peck, Rob Pople, Doug Radford, Tim Rea, Petris Rednic, Mike Redshaw, Graeme Reed, Gareth Rees, Chris Rider, Tony Roberts, Kathleen Rosewarne, Stuart Short, Norman Sills, Bill Simmonds, Clive Sinclair, Henry Stanier, Simon Stirrup, Jonathan Taylor, Michael Taylor, Richard Thomas, Chris Thorne and the Wicken Fen Group, Bob Titman, Hugh Venables, Luke Wake, George Walthew, Mark Ward, Tony Warne, Iain Webb, Matt Webb, Mike Weedon, Jamie Wells, John Wells, Julian Wheel, Kevin Wilson, David Withrington, Ken Wolstencroft, Mike Wood, Hugh Wright and Barbara York.

Bird Populations over time – both Editors' last words (for the time being)

Peter Bircham's article in the August e-bulletin (No. 453 of the print edition) provoked counter arguments from Vince Lea and Bob Jarman. Martin O'Leary and John Hall (December e-bulletin) wrote to exemplify some losses and gains from their own garden observations.

In the November e-bulletin, editor Peter Bircham sought to bring the discussion to a close, and I agree that we should pause it for a while; but not necessarily finally - it is too important for that. Before doing so, here are Peter's closing thoughts, followed by my own. *Ed.*

"Using the data from the BTO Population Trends which are based on a variety of monitoring programmes including the Breeding Bird Survey, I have drawn up three lists under the headings: Declining, Stable and Increasing since 1980.

Declining (50% or greater *): Common Sandpiper*, Corn Bunting*, Cuckoo*, Cirl Bunting*, Dipper, Golden Plover, Greenfinch* Grey Partridge*, House Martin*, House Sparrow*, Kestrel*, Lapwing*, Lesser Redpoll*, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker*, Lesser Whitethroat, Linnet*, Little Grebe*, Marsh Tit*, Meadow Pipit, Mistle Thrush*, Nightingale* Redshank, Skylark*, Snipe*, Song Thrush Spotted Flycatcher*, Starling*, Swift*, Tawny Owl, Tree Sparrow*, Turtle Dove*, Willow Tit*, Willow Warbler*, Woodcock*, Yellow Wagtail* and Yellowhammer* - a total of 35 species.

Stable: Blackbird, Bullfinch (now back to 1980 levels), Coal Tit, Crossbill, Common Tern, Cormorant (stable since 95), Dunnock, Garden Warbler, Goldcrest, Grasshopper Warbler, Great-crested Grebe, Grey Heron, Grey Wagtail, Hobby, Jay, Kingfisher, Marsh Harrier, Peregrine Falcon, Pied Wagtail, Red-legged Partridge, Reed Bunting, Sand Martin, Sedge Warbler, Swallow, Shelduck, Treecreeper, and Whitethroat - a total of 27 species.

Increasing (50% or greater *): Barn Owl (since 95), Blackcap*, Blue Tit*, Buzzard*, Canada Goose*, Carrion Crow*, Cetti's Warbler*, Chaffinch, Chiffchaff*, Collared Dove*, Coot, Gadwall*, Goldfinch*, Goosander*, Great-spotted Woodpecker*, Great Tit*, Green Woodpecker*, Greylag Goose*, Jackdaw*, Little Egret*, Long-tailed Tit*, Magpie*, Mallard*, Mandarin*, Nuthatch*, Oystercatcher*, Pheasant*, Red Kite*, Reed Warbler*, Robin*, Sparrowhawk, Stock Dove, Tufted Duck, Wood Pigeon*, and Wren - a total of 35 species.

To summarise, there are 35 species in decline (29 by 50% or more), 27 species with stable populations, and 35 increasing (28 by 50% or more), which means that well over half of our breeding birds are in a stable or increasing state. Since only just over a third of our breeding birds are in trouble my position remains that there is over-emphasis in the rather general view that birds in Britain are in decline; the facts do not support that when you take the figures for these 'common' species.

There may be an explanation of the general sense of gloom and doom that lies in our emotional response to these facts. Some increases are not pleasing to many people. The rise in populations of predators (corvids and birds of prey) may be unwelcome to the garden bird watcher. Instinctively we are unsympathetic to black birds and sympathetic to colourful species. Little birds appeal more than big birds. We don't like species that compete with us. Then there are the 'foreign' birds such as some wildfowl that have 'gone wild' and multiplied. And, of course for many of us nostalgia plays a part – 'I used to see many more birds....etc.'

That's my final contribution; doubtless many readers will want to stick to their views and at no time have I been trying to deny the sad and sometimes dramatic declines in the species in list one. I just suggest a little balance to the argument.

Peter Bircham

Peter's argument is that the gains and losses in our breeding bird population currently balance, and therefore that "the emphasis on declines is overblown and disproportionate". Vince Lea put forward the alternative view, arguing that the abundance of farmland and woodland birds has declined markedly.

To settle this in my own mind, I turned to two recent reports. The BTO Breeding Bird Survey report for 2016 does show (similar to Peter's case) that 36 species show a long term increase and 32 a long term decline – an approximate balance. But of 21 species in the Birds of Conservation Concern Red List, 19 show a long term decline and only 2 a long term increase. Conversely 23 of the 29 Green listed species show a long term increase. It seems that the situation is worsening for the birds most at threat whilst species with healthy populations are becoming more numerous.

The BTO, RSPB and other organisations have also recently issued 'The State of UK's Birds 2017'. The Wild Bird Indicators in this report trace the change in abundance of our common and widespread native species. The indicator for farmland birds is now at less than half of the 1970 level, though the rate of decline has slowed more recently. The woodland bird indicator is 23% lower than 1970; 19% of woodland species show a strong decline and 9% a strong increase. The Wetland species indicator is 8% lower than its 1975 start point and the Seabird indicator is 22% below its 1986 baseline. So the overall picture is of the declining abundance of breeding birds in each of these habitats. The headlines do of course hide complex variations; for example, 8 seabird species are declining while 8 species are increasing, most of these being the more generalist feeders. But the overall abundance of seabirds is still down.

The same report contends that changes in the abundance and distribution of species (predominantly a northward movement) are consistent with a changing climate. This is providing both opportunities for colonization and pressure on rarer species at the edge of their range; they might face local extinction.

So it appears that there is merit in both arguments, and it is quite possible of course for the diversity of breeding species to remain constant whilst the abundance of some species declines.

How we react to this is a subjective matter - is the glass half full or half empty? For me it seems dangerous to be too relaxed about the state UK bird populations. Yes, it is nice to enjoy some new

regulars from southern Europe, but are they increasing in range and total number or simultaneously losing suitable habitat on the southern edges of their range? And where do the birds of higher altitudes and latitudes go if conditions become unfavourable for them?

Finally, if you are not convinced that there is a problem, then consider the news that researchers from Radboud University in the Netherlands studied 63 nature reserves in Germany¹ and found that the biomass of flying insects has declined by 76% since 1989; all the sites studied were protected and managed nature reserves though surrounded by farmland, suggesting a link to pesticide use. The UK has a similar land-use pattern, and considering the dependence of many bird species on insects either year-round or for rearing young, this study should warn us against complacency.

Chris Brown

Next indoor meetings

February 9th at St Johns Hall, Cambridge, 7.30 for 8.00pm

Birds and birdwatching in Bangladesh by Rob Sheldon

Rob Sheldon has worked in nature conservation for almost 20 years, including 12 years with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). Since 2013, he has been the Chairman of the Ornithological Society of the Middle East, The Caucasus and Central Asia (OSME). Most recently he has worked for the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) as the Director of the King Khalid Wildlife Research Centre (KKWRC) in Saudi Arabia. He now works freelance as a consultant through RDS Conservation.

Bangladesh is not a regular destination for tour companies with most focusing on India and Nepal. However, the country has many fascinating birding locations and hosts some high profile species on many birdwatchers' 'must see' list. Sonadia Island is one of the most important wintering sites for the Critically Endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper and a range of other shorebird species. And the renowned Sunderbans hosts a good population of the elusive Masked Finfoot. This talk will highlight some of the key birdwatching sites across Bangladesh, as well as discuss some of the ongoing conservation work for threatened bird species.

9th March: St Johns Hall, Cambridge, 7.30 for 7.45pm start

Annual General Meeting

The AGM Agenda and the Minutes of the 2017 meeting accompany this bulletin; the accounts for 2017 are on the club website. The AGM will be followed by:

Birds in the ancient world: winged words by Jeremy Mynott

Birds pervaded the ancient world. They impressed their physical presence on the daily experience and imaginations of ordinary people in town and country alike, and figure prominently in their literature and art. They also provided a fertile source of symbols and stories in their myths and folklore and were central to the ancient rituals of augury and divination. Jeremy Mynott's new book, *Birds in the Ancient World: winged words*, brings together all this rich and fascinating material in translation for the modern reader, using birds as a prism through which to explore both the similarities and the often surprising differences between ancient conceptions of the natural world and our own.

Jeremy is the author of *Birdscapes: Birds in Our Imagination and Experience* (2009), a book exploring the variety of human responses to birds, described by reviewers as 'the finest book ever written about why we watch birds' (Guardian) and 'a wonderful rumination on birds and birders through space and time for anyone interested in our relationship with nature' (THES). More recently, he published *Knowing your Place*, an account of the wildlife in a tiny Suffolk coastal hamlet. He has broadcast on radio and television, is a regular reviewer for the TLS and wildlife magazines, a founder member of 'New Networks for Nature', and is the former Chief Executive of Cambridge University Press.

¹ <https://www.ecowatch.com/flying-insects-germany-2498472920.html>

New Members

We welcome Phil Smith of Eaton Socon, Derek Turnidge of Abington, Vicki Fowler of Cambridge, and Matt Walton.

Research

Full details of the Club's research projects for 2018 will be in the next bulletins but meanwhile please note that there will be a further Raptor Watch on Sat 24th March.

Bulletin Delivery

Bruce Martin is retiring from his role organising the delivery of the bulletin. The role consists of collecting each edition (6 per year) from the printer in Histon, batching copies and taking them to local deliverers, and posting the remainder. If you are able to take on this vital role please contact the Chairman.

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.

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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!