

CAMBRIDGESHIRE BIRD CLUB

Bulletin No. 458

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

Welcome to the May / June 2018 Edition

As announced last time, the Bulletin editor has stood down. As no-one has formally come forward to produce a bulletin, you will receive this very shortened version of the recent e-bulletins from now on. A fuller summary is produced monthly as an e-Bulletin, and we recommend that if you are able to, you switch to that if you do not receive it already to receive fuller updates of birding over the past weeks.

As county recorder, I do not really have time to produce in-depth bulletins, so what you see here are highlights, headline birds, and a monthly summary statement unashamedly copied from Peter Bircham's e-Bulletin.

If anyone wishes to volunteer to become the new paper Bulletin editor then please contact the club.

After the recent reports we have several important club announcements and activities, including the Bird Club/BTO conference on Migration, Nov 3rd, Cottenham.

RECENT BIRD REPORTS – *Headlines*

May

WHITE STORK* Fen Drayton Lakes on 1st, Eldernell on the 19th and 21st. An escapee, with a barely-visible thin red leg-ring

CATTLE EGRET* Ouse Washes on the 6th and 26th–27th.

PURPLE HERON* Ouse Fen an adult on the 20th.

SPOONBILL Needingworth on the 20th, Fen Drayton Lakes 3 on the 30th.

RED-NECKED GREBE* March Farmers on the 14th.

BLACK-NECKED GREBE March Farmers from 14th–18th.

LITTLE CRAKE* Ouse Fen on the 23rd - heard at night. The third county record.

HONEY BUZZARD* Wicken Fen a flyover on the 14th, New Shardlows Farm on the 25th.

BLACK KITE* Bar Hill GC a flyover on the 11th, Cambridge a flyover on the 20th

BLACK-WINGED STILT Eldernell on the 3rd–4th then 7th–8th, and again on 23rd–26th, Ferry Meadows CP on the 18th. This bird seems to have wandered around having been also seen at Frampton Marsh in Lincolnshire and at Rutland Water. The identity was made by the same missing wing feather in all cases.

June

GANNET Witcham an adult flyover on a misty morning on the 26th. There are two or three records most years, but midsummer is unusual to say the least!

CATTLE EGRET* March Farmers on the 9th, 2 on the 11th.

PURPLE HERON* March Farmers on the 12th.

WHITE STORK* the 'escape' still around, Dog-in-a- doublet on the 2nd.

BLACK KITE* Fen Drayton Lakes on the 19th.

BLACK-WINGED STILT Ouse Washes a female on the 17th–19th.

HOOPOE* Ferry Meadows CP one reported on the 30th.

GREAT REED WARBLER* Fen Drayton Lakes from 15th–28th. Four previous records, the most recent in 2016 at Paxton Pits where a singer stayed for over a month May–June. An annual visitor to Great Britain with around seven records each year.

ROSE-COLOURED STARLING* Hinxton on the 5th, Peterborough 26th–29th. There have been twelve previous county records, the most recent in 2003. These birds were part of a nationwide invasion with 60+ reported in the late May–early June period.

Weather

May a fine start to the month led to a record temperature over the Bank Holiday weekend and dry weather in the first ten days saw water levels fall on wetland sites. A day of heavy rain was followed by warm sunshine for much of the middle of the month until the end when a mixture of occasional days of rain with one or two thundery downpours in certain places were balanced by some warm sunshine. Northerly winds through the month did have a significant impact on migrant arrivals.

June the first ten days were warm and largely sunny with only a rare downpour and after that it was exceptionally dry, warm and usually sunny ending with high temperatures.

The northerly winds of May had an effect, with sub-Saharan summer migrants arriving untypically late with many observers reporting the lack of hirundines and Swifts and at some wetland sites Reed and Sedge Warblers. The main passage migrants, waders and terns, show a similar pattern with passage in two distinct phases. The first during the early days of the month, notably the 6th and 7th; the second phase began on the 21st and continued until the end of the month. June was characteristically a quiet month with outward wader passage ending in the days of late May and return passage only beginning in the very last days of this month. Most other species were engaged in breeding as some of the records show. Despite fears for vulnerable species after the rather vicious winter both Cetti's Warblers and Bearded Tit seem to have survived, with number of the former holding up well but numbers of the latter showing a slight possible decline. However, given the prolonged extremely warm weather and drought it is likely that many species, particularly ground feeders, will be badly hit by the impenetrable soil, especially so early in the summer before soft fruit and harvest spill are available.

Grey Wagtail Survey 2018 - Reminder

You may recall (hopefully, a good few of you do!) that our research programme for 2018 included a survey of Grey Wagtails. The first phase of this comes to a close on 1/9/18. If you have been collecting data could you send your results to research@cambridgebirdclub.org.uk? I would be grateful if I could receive these by 8th October 2018.

The initial results have proved to be very thought provoking, especially with regards to the relationship between *Homo sapiens* and wagtails. More of that anon.

Could you also note that this is just the first, intensive, phase of the survey? We are also interested in the winter distribution of the species. So if you see a Grey Wagtail between 1/9/18 and 31/3/19 could you send in your sightings, thank you.

Many thanks to all those who have taken part so far. But not too many thanks because I'm sure you enjoyed observing this superb little bird. I was watching an absolutely beautiful male collecting food for a second brood when England were playing Sweden in some recent football match. There was a lot of squawking

from the village nearby – Maguire had scored – but hey that can wait for the i-player – I had the best of it. Robert Brown – research officer.

Raptor Survey 22nd or 23rd September 2018

- Over the past couple of years we have carried out a biennial raptor survey. This is giving us a better idea of the changing status of these birds in our county. It's a relatively simple and hopefully enjoyable task.

Pick a promising site. Just about any elevated spot with a reasonable view will do and look out for raptors for a period of one hour. Try to do this in the late morning to the mid afternoon. This is when many raptors are at their most active and most visible, especially those species that soar.

If you see a raptor could you note the

- Species, number and if possible gender
- The location, ideally with a six figure Ordnance grid reference
- The nature of the location – “urban”, “woodland”, “marsh” etc
- What the bird(s) were doing – hunting, on passage etc.
- The time of day and weather conditions.

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

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

And especial thanks to those of you who have contributed in the past.

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

Indoor Meetings Cottenham Village College.

14th Sept: Counting wintering waterbirds – the UK's Wetland Bird Survey by Teresa Frost

Non-breeding waterbirds have been systematically monitored for seventy years. Teresa's talk will cover the history and background of the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) and how it has helped us understand and conserve our internationally important populations of wintering waterbirds.

WeBS is a partnership between the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee in association with the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust. Teresa works with colleagues at BTO and a network of 160 volunteer local organisers to run the scheme. She leads on development and is responsible for annual reporting of results including the WeBS Online Report and the summary report sent out to around 3000 WeBS counters annually.

Prior to joining the BTO in November 2015, Teresa worked in Local Environmental Records Centres for several years after completing her PhD, which was on analysing WeBS data. She sits on the Council of the National Forum for Biological Recording and is enthusiastic about engaging people in recording and monitoring their local wildlife and fostering cross-taxa collaboration between wildlife organisations and groups; and in making better and more extensive use of biodiversity recording and monitoring data for policy, research and conservation at all scales.

12th Oct: Life in a world full of predators : saving the UK's black-tailed godwits by Jen Smart

Breeding waders are in trouble and the beautiful black-tailed godwit is among the most threatened, with fewer than 50 breeding pairs and 90% of these at one nature reserve. I will talk about an ambitious and novel partnership project between RSPB and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, with funding from EU LIFE, which aims to secure the future of godwits as a breeding species in the UK.

Dr Jennifer Smart is a Principal Conservation Scientist at the RSPB Centre for Conservation Science. Much of her career has been focused on the ecology of breeding waders developing conservation solutions to reverse their severe population declines. Increasingly this involves understanding and managing the impacts of predation and finding ways to influence landscape-scale management of wet grasslands.

You can find out more about her and the RSPB Centre for Conservation Science at the following webpages:

<https://ww2.rspb.org.uk/our-work/conservation/centre-for-conservation-science/our-team/jennifer-smart/>

One-day Conference on Migration, Saturday Nov 3rd, Cottenham Village College.

A range of speakers on Britain's place in European bird migration, techniques to study this phenomenon, bird observatories, nocturnal migration, and talks on individual species important to our area such as Swifts and Nightingales, BTO merchandise, workshop on sound recording migrants and excellent food.

Booking from September, cost likely to be same as our last conference. Keep the date freeThe **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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