

CAMBRIDGESHIRE BIRD CLUB

Bulletin No. 379



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

RECENT REPORTS MARCH AND APRIL 2005

These are unchecked reports rather than confirmed records, and comments are made by Bruce Martin (Grebes to Wildfowl), Mark Hawkes (Raptors to Coot), Jonathan Taylor (Waders), Steve Cooper (Skuas to Near Passerines and Hybrids and Exotica), Stuart Elsom (Larks to Thrushes), Mike Foley (Warblers to Tits) and Vicki Harley (Wood Nuthatch to Buntings). If you have valid reasons to dispute comments (e.g. further records) please forward these to the county recorder (address on back page).

MARCH & APRIL

This bulletin reports the occurrence of 164 species (excluding hybrids and exotics). Waxwings were seen at 37 localities, part of a countrywide invasion. Three American species pleased wildfowl-watchers, while numbers of wintering wildfowl and waders dwindled. Species on passage included over 100 Wheatear, and scattered records of Arctic Tern, Black Redstart, Ring Ouzel, Tree, Water and Rock Pipits.

Stone-curlew by Graham Easy



Numbers in brackets indicate March and April maximums.

WILDFOWL

Mute Swan Counts were received from 16 sites; the most notable were Fen Drayton GP (35, 61), the Ouse Washes (305, 313), Over Fen (205, 247) and Paxton Pits (55, 22). Birds were also seen nesting in a few places.

Tundra Swan At the Nene Washes the 130 on Mar 1st had dropped to 18 by 14th and the Ouse Washes WeBS count produced 10 on Mar 13th and none in April.

Whooper Swan At the Nene Washes 35 on Mar 3rd were down to 6 on 22nd. And the Ouse Washes 469 on the WeBS count in March had dropped to one bird on the April count. On Mar 16th at Elm near Wisbech 4 groups totalling 60+ birds were seen heading northwest.

Bean Geese The last bird on the Ouse Washes was seen on Mar 1st.

Pink-footed Goose Up to 3 birds at 4 sites were seen during the period, some undoubtedly feral.

Greater White-fronted Goose One at the Nene Washes on Mar 6th.

Greylag Goose At Fen Drayton GP (82, 46) plus a brood of 3 very small young on Apr 11th, Grafham Water (43, 11), Kingfishers Bridge (80, 23), Needingworth GP (141, 86), the Ouse Washes (17, 57), Over Fen (40, 9) and Paxton Pits (311, 2). Also reported from 8 other sites.

Canada Goose Double figure counts were noted at 11 sites and single figures at 7.

Barnacle Goose Feral birds were noted in single figures at 6 sites and 14 at Paxton Pits on Mar 9th.

Egyptian Goose Two birds were at Over Fen GP on Apr 13th and one on the Ouse Washes at Earith on the 17th, later seen at Earith GP on the 30th.

Common Shelduck At Grafham Water (22, 40), the Nene Washes 48 in March and the Ouse Washes (222, 165). Single figures at 10 other sites.

Mandarin Pairs noted at Granchester, Madingley Hall and the Ouse Washes and singles at Lark Rise Farm Barton and on the River Cam at Chesterton.

Eurasian Wigeon At Fen Drayton GP (1533, 2), Grafham Water (120, 7), Kingfishers Bridge (150, 23), Needingworth GP (319, 170), the Nene Washes (3305, ?), the Ouse Washes (14,131, 4275), Over Fen (500, 12) and Paxton Pits (1460, 4). Other three-figure counts were 350 at the Cam Washes Upware on Mar 13th.

American Wigeon A male apparently paired with a Eurasian Wigeon was present at Chain Corner near Sutton on the Ouse Washes from Apr 20th to 27th. Amazingly this was the third North American duck species recorded in the county during the period.

Gadwall Counts at Fen Drayton GP were (36, 18), Grafham Water (42, 43), Needingworth GP (32, 7), the Nene Washes (41, ?), the Ouse Washes (1531, 873) and Paxton Pits (117, ?). Double figures noted at Bury Fen (43) and single figures at 5 other sites.

Eurasian Teal Counts at Fen Drayton GP were (22, 22), Grafham Water (150, 72), Kingfishers Bridge (65, 32), Needingworth GP (23, 12), the Nene Washes (302, ?), the Ouse Washes (3783, 2750), Over Fen (80, 8) and Paxton Pits (27, 4). Other counts were 61 at Bury Fen and smaller numbers from 5 other sites.

Green-winged Teal A male first seen on the Nene Washes on Mar 25th moved to the River Nene where it remained until at least Apr 30th.

Mallard Counts at Fen Drayton GP (46, 55), Grafham Water (100, 80), Kingfishers Bridge (86, 51), Milton CP (30, 15), Needingworth GP (24, 54), the Nene Washes (177, ?), the Ouse Washes (1662, 1361) and Over Fen (80, 16). Also recorded at 14 other sites.

Northern Pintail At the Ouse Washes (1707, 509). Double figures were noted at Wicken Fen, 31 on Mar 3rd and Bury Fen, 29 on Mar 15th and single figures at 4 other sites.

Garganey Seen mainly at the Nene and Ouse Washes with 2 at the Nene from Mar 24th and 2 at the Ouse from Mar 29th increasing to 5 by Apr 11th. Singles were also seen at Over Fen on Apr 7th and Paxton Pits on Apr 22nd.

Northern Shoveler At Fen Drayton GP (76, 8), Grafham Water (155, 22), Kingfishers Bridge (54, 24), the Nene Washes (177, ?), the Ouse Washes (2131,1900) and Paxton Pits (41, 70). Thirty were at Bury Fen on Mar 1st and 14 at the Cam Washes Upware on Apr 13th.

Red-crested Pochard Two males were at Paxton Pits on Mar 1st then 1 until the end of April. One bird was at Marsh Lane GP on Apr 1st.

Common Pochard Counts were: Fen Drayton GP (136, 1), Grafham Water (22, 2), Needingworth GP (38, 0), Ouse Washes (295, 15) and Paxton Pits (233, 1). Most birds had left the county by Apr 19th apart from a few at Kingfishers Bridge where as in recent years it is hoped they will stay and breed.

Ring-necked Duck A male found on the lagoons at Grafham Water on Apr 5th was undoubtedly the best of the American trio mentioned earlier for many of the local birders who had been hoping to add it to their county list for some time. It remained faithful to the site until at least the end of April. Although for a period during its stay it didn't look in very good health but it recovered and it was also seen to display to Tufted Ducks.

Ferruginous Duck A female was present for one day only at Kingfishers Bridge on Apr 30th.

Tufted Duck Counts at Fen Drayton GP were (343, 383), Grafham Water (144, 61), Needingworth GP (154, 177), Ouse Washes (944, 867) and Paxton Pits (492, 6). Double figures noted at 7 other sites.

Greater Scaup Two birds were at the Ouse Washes on Mar 14th.

Black Scoter A very interesting movement of this species through the county produced records on five different dates, almost certainly of different birds on each occasion. A pair was present at Paxton Pits on Mar 20th. Followed by 2 females at

Grafham Water on Mar 27th and 28th. This site then hosted a pair on Apr 13th that were replaced by 3 females on Apr 15th. On the same date 2 pairs were at Paxton Pits.

Goldeneye Counts at Fen Drayton GP were (142, 25), Graham Water (92, 4) the Ouse Washes (12, 2) and Paxton Pits (98, 32). Also reported from 4 other sites.

Smew Paxton Pits numbers peaked at 14 (4 males) early in March dropping to 10 by the 11th with the last bird seen on the 14th. Thirteen birds were at Needingworth GP on Mar 6th with 7 on the 11th.

Goosander At Grafham Water 4 birds on Mar 2nd was the maximum count with the last 2 birds seen on Mar 18th. The Paxton Pits maximum was 12 on Mar 3rd and the last 2 birds were seen on Apr 1st.

Ruddy Duck At Fen Drayton GP the maximum count of 10 on Mar 25th had dropped to 1 bird by the end of April, and at Grafham Water the maximum of 29 on Mar 5th was down to 1 bird by Apr 17th. Up to 3 birds recorded at 4 other sites.

GAMEBIRDS

Red-legged Partridge Recorded from 15 sites, with numbers ranging from 1 to 14 birds.

Grey Partridge Recorded from 19 sites, with numbers ranging from 1 to 7 birds.

Common Quail One singing at Over Fen on Apr 16th. This represent a new earliest date for the county (c.f. 23rd April 1985).

Pheasant Recorded from 14 sites, with numbers ranging from 1 to 45 birds.

DIVERS TO HERONS

Little Grebe Birds were noted at 15 sites most of which will be breeding sites. The largest count being at Paxton Pits with 23 in March.

Great Crested Grebe A drop from 821 in January to 176 April at Grafham Water (472, 176) reflects the general dispersal to breeding grounds. Though at the Ouse Washes where numbers rose (26, 48) indicated that there was still a lot of water on the washes. Other counts came from 12 other sites, the highest number being at Fen Drayton GP (38, 46).

Black-necked Grebe The bird at Orton BP on the last 2 days in February remained until Mar 12th. Then displaying pairs that temporarily raised hopes that they might breed in the county again were seen at Fen Drayton GP on Mar 24th and 25th with 1 bird remaining until the 26th and at Paxton Pits on Apr 16th with 1 bird again remaining until 26th.

Great Cormorant At Paxton Pits 180 active nests were noted in April with a sample count of 36 nests producing an average of 2.47 young per nest. The other breeding colony in the county at the Ouse Washes had 68 nests. The Paxton Pits dusk roost count in March produced 428 birds. Birds were also noted at 12 other sites.

Great Bittern Booming birds were heard at 5 sites. Surely it can't be long before breeding is proved to occur once again in the county.?

Little Egret Reported from 8 sites, with the highest

count of 11 on the Ouse Washes at the end of March.

Great Egret A bird found in full breeding plumage at the Ouse Washes late on Apr 1st unfortunately only remained in the area for a short time and was not relocated the next day.

Grey Heron Reported from 24 sites with double figures at the Ouse Washes (59:35). Twenty-five active nests counted at Goosetree Farm in April.

White Stork Singles were reported from Southery on Mar 27th and Godmanchester on Apr 25th.

RAPTORS

Red Kite Singles recorded during March at Norman Cross on 5th, Gamlingay and Sawtry on 6th, Peterborough on 15th, St. Neots on 16th, Wandlebury on 17th, Paxton Pits on 20th, Elton Furze on 21st, East Hatley and Grafham Water on 26th. In April singles seen at Brampton and Stilton Fen on 2nd, 2 over Elton and a single over Ouse Washes on 3rd, Castor Hanglands on 5th, Woodwalton Fen on 9th, 2 high over Buckden GP/Paxton Pits on 10th, with singles at Paxton Pits on 22nd and 24th. Also, a pair was seen in potential breeding habitat during March and April.

Marsh Harrier Recorded from 20 sites. A survey has revealed at least 30 pairs are present within the county. During March migrants were noted at Paxton Pits on 20th, Fowlmere on 24th, Fen Drayton GP on 26th and in April at Paxton Pits on 8th, Grafham Water on 19th, Waresley Park on 26th, Fowlmere on 29th, Farcet Fen on 30th. The peak count was 8 on Nene Washes during April.

Hen Harrier Peak counts from the regular sites as follows: Wicken Fen (4, 4), Nene Washes (1, 0), Ouse Washes (0, 1). Singles at Swaffham Prior Fen on Mar 7th, 17th, 25th, and Lode on Mar 17th.

Sparrowhawk Recorded from 29 sites, with numbers ranging from 1 to 3.

Common Buzzard From 1 to 5 birds at 44 sites, and 8 at 1 site in the north of the county.

Osprey One over Farcet Fen on Apr 3rd, 1 over Paxton Pits on 16th Apr, with possibly the same bird 3 hours later on Godmanchester GP.

Kestrel From 1 to 3 birds reported from 30 sites, , apart from 19 along Nene Washes on Mar 14th.

Merlin At the regular sites recorded as follows: Ouse Washes (1, 0), Nene Washes (2, 0) and at Farcet Fen (3, 1). Also singles at Orton BP on Mar 5th, Cam Washes (Upware) on Mar 13th, Alconbury on Mar 16th, Paxton Pits on Mar 23rd, Wicken Fen on Mar 29th, St. Neots on Mar 30th, Lode on Apr 11th and Paxton Pits on Apr 29th.

Hobby Singles at Woodwalton Fen on Apr 19th, Paxton Pits on 22nd (with 3 by the 24th), Soham and Trumpington on Apr 22nd, Fen Drayton and Huntingdon on Apr 24th, Whittlesford on Apr 29th, 2 at Farcet Fen, 2 at Ouse Washes, and 1 at Ferry Meadows all on Apr 30th.

Peregrine Recorded at the regular sites as follows: Ouse Washes (3, 1), Nene Washes (2, 1). Other sightings included Woodwalton Fen on Mar 13th,

Monks Wood on Mar 14th, Farcet Fen on Mar 18th, Cam Washes (Upware) on Apr 3rd, Farcet Fen on Apr 10th, with 2 on Apr 11th.

RAILS

Water Rail Reported from 11 sites, with peak counts including 12 at Wicken Fen in March, 7 at Nene Washes in March, and 6 at Ely BF in April. Otherwise 1-3 birds.

Spotted Crane One was heard at Wicken Fen for 2 weeks during the middle of April.

Moorhen Reported from 21 sites, with peak counts as follows: Ouse Washes (88, 82), Nene Washes (42, 0), Fen Drayton (16, 24) and Grafham Water (21, 9).

Coot Reported from 16 sites, with peak counts as follows: Ouse Washes (2795, 3320), Paxton Pits (635, 13), Nene Washes (419, -), Fen Drayton GP (300, 166), Needingworth (119, 80) and Grafham Water (119, 104).

WADERS

Eurasian Oystercatcher Reported from 10 sites: highest counts Ouse Washes 12, Paxton Pits 9, Nene Washes 7.

Black-winged stilt One flying north along the Ouse Washes at Welches Dam on Apr 30th was later located near Welney.

Avocet First recorded at Kingfishers Bridge on Mar 10th (peak of 9), 5 at Ouse Washes on Apr 23rd, 1–3 at intermittently Nene Washes, Long Drove (Cottenham) on Mar 26th, Wicken Fen on Apr 17th, 2 at Cam Washes on Mar 19th and Apr 17th and Grafham Water on Apr 19th.

Little Plover First date Mar 22nd (Kingfishers Bridge); records from 13 sites, Highest counts from Nene Washes 8, Grafham Water 5, Paxton Pits 4.

Ringed Plover Main locality Paxton Pits with peaks of (29, 14), elsewhere 3 at Orton BP on Apr 1st and 1–2 from a further 5 sites

Eurasian Dotterel Three records all from Apr 30th as follows: 6 at Warboys High Fen, 6 at Ouse Washes (Chain Corner) and a single near Pondersbridge (Black Bush Drove).

European Golden Plover Highest counts in March – Nene Washes 2000, Trumpington and Ouse Washes 1500, Serpentine BP 1100, Comberton 900. In April a scattering of small groups – last at Swaffham Prior Fen (210) on 17th.

Grey Plover Nene Washes, singles on Mar 25th and 29th.

Northern Lapwing A few small wintering flocks remained to 10th Mar, then mainly breeding population present. At Nene Washes a fall to around 240 pairs (*c.f.* 280 in 2004) (though apparently more on surrounding arable) and Kingfishers Bridge 5 pairs (*c.f.* 15 in 2004).

Red Knot Singles at Grafham Water on Mar 10–11th and Apr 8th, Nene Washes on Mar 25th and 2 at Paxton Pits on Apr 24th.

Dunlin Highest counts from Berry Fen 206 on Mar 2nd, Ouse Washes 98 and Nene Washes 54 on

Mar 14th, Paxton Pits present throughout – with peaks of 16 on March 20th and 22 on Apr 30th. Otherwise very low numbers through April.

Ruff The Ouse Washes (the country's main locality) held up to 207 in March and 63 to April 11th. Also up to 26 at Berry Fen Mar 2nd to 15th and 1–3 at Paxton Pits, Nene Washes, Kingfishers Bridge, Needingworth and Over GP and Wicken Fen.

Jack Snipe Up to 5 at Mepal Airfield to Apr 17th, singles at Priors Fen GP, Ouse Washes, Paxton Pits and Nene Washes (last date Apr 26th.)

Common Snipe Highest counts from Ouse Washes (287, 94), Over Fen (21, 29), Paxton Pits (20, 5), Cam Washes (30, 0) plus 1–15 birds from most gravel pits/wetland sites. Breeding (drumming) – Nene Washes 196, Wicken Fen 9, Kingfishers Bridge 4.

Woodcock Roding birds at Wicken Fen more closely monitored revealing up to 19 territories. No other birds reported as yet.

Black-tailed Godwit Highest counts Ouse Washes (2528, 719), Nene Washes (500, 200), Barleycraft GP (0, 350), Over Fen (50, 220), Wicken Fen (70, 135), Paxton Pits (1, 77), 80 west over Grafham Water and Marsh Lane GP on Apr 4th.

Bar-tailed Godwit In April, 22 at Nene Washes on 23rd, 6 at Chain corner on 19th, 2 at Wicken Fen on 24th and singles at Paxton Pits on 16th, 24th and 25th.

Whimbrel In April, 3 at Ouse Washes on 3rd, 5 south over Paxton Pits on 21st plus singles on 23rd and 24th, Wicken Fen on 24th and Nene Washes 5 'feeding' on 26th.

Eurasian Curlew In March, 3 at Wicken Fen on 10th possibly same 3 at Ouse Washes on 14th, 2 at Swaffham Prior Fen on 7th and singles at Nene Washes, Paxton Pits, Orton BP. Singles in April at Fen Drayton GP on 10th and Farcet Fen on 13th.

Spotted Redshank Singles at Nene Washes Apr 9th–14th and Ouse Washes on Apr 20th.

Common Redshank Highest counts from Ouse Washes (402, 215), Nene Washes (85, 180), Paxton Pits (26, 16).

Common Greenshank In April, Barleycraft GP on 9th, Nene Washes on 17th with 2 on 26th, Ouse Washes on 21st and 23rd, Paxton Pits on 24th and 30th.

Green Sandpiper Highest counts were 5 at Maxey GP, 3 at Godmanchester GP (latest on 16th), Paxton Pits and Wicken Fen and 1–2 from a further 6 sites.

Common Sandpiper First at Paxton Pits on Apr 3rd (6 dates in April) other singles in April at Fen Drayton GP, Nene and Ouse Washes and Ferry Meadows CP

Ruddy Turnstone Single at Paxton Pits on Apr 30th.

SKUAS TO TERNS

Mediterranean Gull The only March record was of 2 on the Nene Washes on 12th. In April, single

adults were noted at Paxton Pits, Over Fen and Nene Washes all on single dates.

Little Gull Spring passage began on 1st April with at Paxton Pits. A peak count of 16 came from Ferry Meadows on 16th when 11 were also noted flying east over Fen Drayton. A single at Whittlesford GP on 26th was a good record for the locality.

Black-headed Gull Milton Tip attracted 1800+ during March. At Paxton Pits 6 eggs of this species were found in grass having been predated by corvids.

Common Gull The only indication of a spring passage was 70 at Milton Tip on March 5th and 50 at Wandlebury on April 14th; once again it was invisible to most observers.

Lesser Black backed Gull Counts of 500 at Grafham Water and 200 on the Nene Washes reported during March were the only notable counts received and therefore representing only a token number of this species which pours through Cambs during this period.

Herring Gull Virtually unrecorded, do people reporting the next species not also see this one? On the Nene Washes 200 noted on March 4th.

Western Yellow-legged Gull Reported from 9 sites with up to 4 noted at Grafham Water and Paxton Pits during the period. An adult displayed to a Lesser Black back at Godmanchester GP on April 23rd – were they the hybrid pairing that has bred in Bedfordshire in recent years?

Caspian Gull Long Drove Cottenham is proving to be one of the best sites in country for this bird with regular reports throughout March peaking at an incredible 6 on the 26th (3 × 2cy, 2 × 3cy, 1 × ad.) Elsewhere singles noted at Dogsthorpe Star Pit, Grafham Water, Milton Tip and Wicken Fen.

Iceland Gull Reports from Fletton BP, Grafham Water, Long Drove Cottenham and the Nene Washes. A rather late 2cy bird was at Flag Fen / Fletton BP on April 10–11th.

Glaucous Gull Single 2cy birds reported at Grafham Water on Mar 4th and Dogsthorpe Star Pit on Mar 9th, 16th and 18th.

Greater Black-backed Gull A gang of up to 23 mostly 2cy birds at Kingfishers Bridge during April.

Black-legged Kittiwake In March, 5 adults were at Grafham Water on 8th with 2 roosting there on 2nd and singles noted on the 9th and 14th. April saw 7 adults again at Grafham on the 8th and singles at Paxton Pits on 10th and 24th.

Sandwich Tern An early bird was at Grafham Water on Apr 4th followed by birds at Ferry Meadows CP on 6th and on the Ouse at Ely on 24th.

Common Tern First noted on Mar 28th when 8 were at St Ives, low numbers then noted to Apr 19th. Peak numbers noted late April with counts of 45 at Paxton Pits on 22nd and 80 at Ferry Meadows on 25th.

Arctic Tern Reported from Apr 13th (Ferry Meadows CP) with a light passage (1–4 birds) during Apr 22nd–26th noted from Block Fen, Ferry

Meadows CP, Godmanchester GP, Mepal and Paxton Pits. Typically a heavy squall briefly forced down 11 birds at Kingfishers Bridge on 27th that eventually flew of eastwards.

Little Tern Guaranteed to brighten up any day in Cambs this county scarcity was noted at Dryside BP on Apr 13th with 2 at Paxton Pits on Apr 22nd.

Black Tern In late April 1–2 noted at Ferry Meadows CP, Kingfishers Bridge and Paxton Pits between 23rd and 30th.

PASSERINES

Feral Pigeon Largest counts again from Wisbech Town Centre (110+) and Elizabeth Bridge Cambridge (95).

Stock Pigeon Only 15 records from 9 sites, largest flocks reported were 43 at Ramsey Mere and 40 at Barleycraft GP both in April.

Wood Pigeon Up to 644 noted at Monks Hardwick during the period. Ten noted feeding on blossom and buds in a Newnham garden must have been popular!

Collared Dove Largest count received was of 15+ at Elm.

Turtle Dove The earliest arrival was at Paxton Pits on Apr 17th. Elsewhere recorded received from only 8 sites to the months end including 3 at Farcet Fen and Fowlmere NR.

Cuckoo Earliest bird noted at Paxton Pits on Apr 13th also reported from 12 sites to the month's end.

Barn Owl Thirty-one records received from 26 including 2 at Grafham Water on Mar 1st.

Little Owl Nineteen records from 19 sites: still under-recorded.

Tawny Owl A survey of Wicken Fen revealed 12 territories.

Long-eared Owl Reported from 7 sites.

Short-eared Owl. Good numbers still present in the county during the period with 33 records from 23 widespread sites, some late April birds raise the hope that this species will breed in Cambs this year.

Common Swift First noted at Barnack Hills and Woodwalton Fen on Apr 16th. Generally an early en-masse arrival this year around Apr 24–27th. Forty+ were noted at Paxton Pits on 28th.

Kingfisher Of 37 records received only 1 from Paxton pits referred to breeding birds with 3 occupied nests noted there.

Green Woodpecker To say this species is still increasing may be an understatement as 73 records were received and to underline its vastly improved status, up to 12 were noted around Wandlebury and 8 at Fen Drayton during April!

Greater Spotted Woodpecker Not quite matching the previous species but still 47 records received including 5 drumming at Elm.

Lesser-Spotted Woodpecker Twenty-three records from 11 sites – 'yes' 11 sites! Still being regularly noted at Fen Drayton GP, Monk's wood and Woodwalton Fen.

Woodlark One individual recorded on private land at Kennett on Mar 13th.

Skylark Reported from 15 sites with a maximum of 31 at Lark Rise Farm, Barton on Mar 26th.

Sand Martin Reported from 18 sites. The earliest record was from Kingfisher's Bridge on Mar 16th. The maximum number recorded during the period was 260 at Fen Drayton on Apr 7th.

Barn Swallow First returning birds seen at Burwell Fen on Mar 1st. Numbers increased throughout the period with birds recorded from at least 20 sites. The maximum record was 40+ at Fen Drayton on Apr 7th, no doubt part of the same movement as the Sand Martins (above) on the same day.

House Martin With the first of the spring noted on Mar 25th at Orton Brimbles, only ones and twos were reported compared to more usual numbers. Maximum recorded was 20+ at Paxton Pits on Apr 23rd

Tree Pipit Two in April, 1 at Castor Hanglands on 1st, and 1 at Farcet Fen on 10th.

Meadow Pipit Records were received from 17 sites with the highest count coming from Grafham Water with 100 present on Mar 20th.

Rock Pipit As many as 11 were recorded with the vast majority in March as would be expected. Records in March were as follows: Orton BP on 8th, Grafham Water 2 on 9th with a single next day, Paxton Pits 3 on 20th – one of which was bearing a silver BTO ring and Maxey on 21st. Finally a possible bird of the Scandinavian race *littoralis* was recorded in April at Paxton Pits on 10th.

Water Pipit Singles were noted at Kingfishers Bridge and Nene Washes during March with as many as 6 noted at Ouse Washes throughout March and into early April.



Male Yellow Wagtail, Nene Washes, April 16th 2005, by Mike Weedon

Yellow Wagtail The first returning bird was noted at Paxton Pits on Mar 27th, 4 days earlier than the previous earliest record. Singles were noted throughout April at 12 sites with a maximum of 18

at Long Drove, Haddenham on Apr 16th. A male of the blue-headed subspecies *flava* was noted at Grafham Water on Apr 11th.

Grey Wagtail Reports were received from 16 sites with the majority of records concerning 1–2 birds. The maximum was 8 at Godmanchester Sewage Works on Mar 1st.

Pied Wagtail Counts received from 10 sites with a maximum of 130 at Kingfisher's Bridge on Mar 16th.

Bohemian Waxwing The invasion continued with reports received from as many as 37 sites during the period. Of course with such a nomadic species it is impossible to avoid some duplication of records given the birds' mobility, however the records can be summarised as follows: Orton Wistow 45, Kings Hedges/ Arbury area up to 32, Ferry Meadows 30, Cambridge (Newmarket Road) 26, Kingfishers Bridge 26, Stretham 25, Sawston 25, Cambridge (Brooklands Avenue) 24, Orton Malborne 23, Peterborough (Ledbury Road) 20, Orton Wistow 19, Peterborough (Gresley Way) 17, Peterborough (Thorpe Park Road) 13, Paxton Pits 12, Over 12, RAF Wyton 10, Alconbury 8–9, Ely 8, Alconbury Weston 3, Bar Hill 1–3 with singles recorded at Bar Hill, Barton, Cambridge (Whitehall Road), Eaton Socon and Eynesbury.

Nightingale First noted at Marsh Lane GP on Apr 4th. Records followed from another 10 sites. The maximum as expected was at Paxton Pits with up to 15 singing males by the end of the month.

Black Redstart Three were seen; the first was an immature bird at Grafham Water from 19th to 23rd, the second was at Wyton Airfield on Mar 29th, the final record was at Cambourne on Apr 12th.

Common Redstart Singles were noted from early April in Shepreth, Denton, Paxton Pits, Milton Country Park, Nene Washes and Toft

Whinchat First arrival noted on Apr 27th at Coates with 7 records following shortly afterwards from Ouse Washes, Paxton Pits, Aldreth and Fowlmere which recorded 4 on 30th.

Stonechat Records of 1–2 birds were noted from at least 10 sites. The maximum in the period was 6 birds present at Nene Washes.

Northern Wheatear In the largest movement for several years, perhaps as many as 100 were noted as they moved through the county. First noted at Cambourne on Mar 16th with additional records from the following sites: In March, singles were noted at Abington, Cambourne, Farcet Fen, Ouse Washes, Over Fen and Paxton Pits. In April numbers increased, and birds were noted at: Haddenham 11, Paxton Pits 10, Farcet Fen 7, Swaffham Prior Fen 6, Sutton Meadlands 4, Over Fen 4 Records of 1–3 birds came from . Long Drove (Haddenham), Warboys High Fen, Fowlmere, Aldreth, Nene Washes, Blackbush Drove, Cambourne, Ferry Meadows, Flag Fen, Gamlingay, Ouse Washes, Over Fen, Swaffham Prior Fen and Wicken Fen. Many records in the

second half of April referred to birds of the Greenland race *leucorhoa*.

Ring Ouzel A small influx was noted in April. First noted at Wicken Fen on Apr 3rd with further records in April as follows: 2 at Peterborough Services from 16th to 19th, 1 at Fowlmere on 19th, singles at Chippenham Fen and Little Wilbraham on 20th, 2 at ferry Meadows on 24th and 30th and finally a single was noted at Lode on 30th.

Blackbird Records were received from 13 sites with maximum of 17 at Coveney on Apr 8th

Fieldfare Records received from 17 sites with average numbers recorded. The maximum count was 150 and was noted at Comberton and Upton on Mar 1st and from Impington Lake on Mar 7th.

Song Thrush Records were received from 12 sites with 1–3 individuals being the norm at most sites. The maximum was 28 at Wicken on Mar 10th.

Redwing Recorded from at least 13 sites with lower than average counts. The maximum noted during the period was from Priory Park, St. Neots with 70 on Mar 14th. A male in full cascading song was noted at Monks Wood on Mar 13th

Mistle Thrush Reports were received from 8 sites with 12 being the norm. 6 were noted at Midsummer Common, Cambridge on Mar 15th.

Cetti's Warbler One to two singing males gracing Fen Drayton GP from Mar 22nd, were heard most often at Elney Lake. One male and a female were present at Wicken Fen on Mar 26th; then only single birds up to Apr 16th. Singles was present at Manea on Mar 10th, and at 2 other fenland sites in April.

Common Grasshopper Warbler Reported from 9 sites, mostly 1–2 birds were found but 3 were reeling at Woodwalton Fen on Apr 19th.

Sedge Warbler At 15 sites, from Apr 1st (Ouse Washes) and at some other sites a day or two later. Highest count was 11 at Fen Drayton on Apr 22nd.

Eurasian Reed Warbler Recorded at 9 sites, the earliest was at Grafham Water and Paxton Pits on Apr 16th, equalling the 2003 earliest record, and in advance of the mean county date by 3 days.

Lesser Whitethroat Records of 1–4 at 12 sites, from Apr 12th (Grange Farm Witcham). Four were at Paxton Pits on Apr 24th (first for year), and 3 were calling at Elm by the month's end.

Common Whitethroat From 16 sites, records overall suggest a later than average appearance this year, the earliest being at Over Fen GP on Apr 10th, which is also the county mean date. Nine were present at Fen Drayton GP on Apr 22nd.

Blackcap Several birds were seen during March as is usual. By mid-April numbers were rising, with 15 and 25 at Wandlebury CP on Apr 14th and Apr 21st respectively, and 14 at Fen Drayton on Apr 11th.

Garden Warbler Reported from Witcham, Elm, Fen Drayton GP, Marsh Lane GP, Paxton Pits, Swavesey, and Wandlebury CP. At Elm 4+ males were singing at month's end; the other records were of single birds.

Wood Warbler Found at 3 sites from Apr 26th to 30th – in each case singles were singing at Witcham, Paxton Pits and Fowlmere NR.

Common Chiffchaff The highest count was 20 at Fen Drayton GP on Mar 24th. The Siberian form continued to be reported from Godmanchester GP/tip, on Mar 2nd and Mar 9th.

Willow Warbler Some of the earlier records came from Fen Drayton GP, Monks Wood and Paxton Pits (Mar 14th). However, the earliest record by far was from Whittlesey – Mar 7th.

Goldcrest Reported from 12 sites, records were scattered throughout March and April, with a maximum of 6 at Wandlebury CP on Apr 28th.

Firecrest A female was present at Paxton Pits on Mar 19th, and a report of 1 again on Mar 20th was presumably the same bird.

Pied Flycatcher One was recorded at Ferry Meadows CP on Apr 24th.

Bearded Tit Two at the Nene Washes on Mar 14th.

Long-tailed Tit From 19 (often garden) sites, the highest count of 10 at Wandlebury CP on Apr 14th.

Marsh Tit Reported from 5 sites in March and April respectively (and 8 in total), Woodwalton Fen held up to 10 in March, but none were reported there in April. A similar pattern emerges for Monks Wood (up to 15), but in contrast at The Gloucesters (Wimpole) 1 was present in March and 6 in early April. Hardwick Wood held 2 pairs on April 19th.

Coal Tit At 10 sites, the last reported sighting was Apr 16th; 1–3 birds were noted at each site.

Blue Tit Thirty birds were noted at Impington Lakes on Mar 7th, 16 at The Gloucesters (Wimpole) on Apr 9th, and 12 at Lark Rise Farm (Barton) on Apr 5th. At least 2 pairs had commenced nesting by Mar 31st at Newnham (Cambridge).

Great Tit From 20 sites, 30 birds were noted at Impington Lakes on Mar 7th and 14 were present at The Gloucesters (Wimpole) on Mar 11th.

Wood Nuthatch Singles recorded from 4 sites.

Eurasian Treecreeper Recorded from just 8 sites, counts of 1–4 from all sites, except Monks Wood where 15 were recorded on Mar 3rd.

Eurasian Jay Records from 20 sites, most counts of 1–2, but maximum of 9 at Wandlebury CP.

Black-billed Magpie Reported from 12 sites, with highest counts of 15 from Elm, Nene Washes and Paxton Pits.

Eurasian Jackdaw Records received from 8 sites, with highest count of 42 at Over, plus 1 record of Nordic Jackdaw from Lode.

Rook Records from 19 sites received, including 118 occupied nests at Paxton Pits and 94 nests either side of A-505 at Imperial War Museum.

Carrion Crow Recorded from 15 sites. The highest count was 100 from Westfield Farm (Comberton).

Common Starling Records received from only 10 sites; highest counts of 60, foraging in field at Bar Hill, and 90+ at Elm.

House Sparrow Records received from 7 sites, maximum of 70+ at Elm.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow Recorded from 11 sites;

highest counts of 45 at Witcham, and 40 at Block Fen.

Chaffinch Records received from 10 sites, with maximum of 25+ at Elm on Mar 31s.

Brambling Records from 9 sites, mostly of 1–2 birds, also 3 at Streatham and 5 at Paxton Pits.

European Greenfinch Noted from 15 sites. Highest counts were 85 on March 4th at Streatham and 30 at Barleycraft GP on April 9th.

European Goldfinch Records received from 19 sites. Maximum count of 28 at Streatham.

Eurasian Siskin Two at Woodwalton Fen on March 3rd and 26th.

Common Linnet Recorded from about 20 sites. Peak counts of 110+ at Weybridge GP on April 11th and 80 at Over fen on 10 Apr. Also flocks of 45 or more at Elm, Fen Drayton, Paxton Pits.

Lesser Redpoll Records of 1–6 from 5 sites and 12+ at Meadowgate Lane, Wisbech on March 5th.

Common Bullfinch Counts of 1–4 birds reported from 15 sites. plus 9 at Milton CP being the highest number.

Hawfinch A single birds seen at Ferry Meadows CP on Mar 18th.

Yellowhammer Reported from 22 sites. The highest count by far was 150 at Witcham.

Reed Bunting Records from 18 sites with a count of 57 from the Ouse Washes being the maximum.

Corn Bunting Records received from 18 sites, mostly of fewer than 10 birds, but 39 were counted at Cambourne on March 19th and 150 at Westmoor Farm (Chatteris) on March 10th.

HYBRIDS and EXOTICA

Greylag x Canada Goose Up to 3 noted at Paxton Pits during the period.

Common Pochard x Ferruginous Duck A female noted at Buckden GP/Paxton Pits on Mar 3rd–20th.

Common Pochard x Tufted Duck A redhead type drake noted at Buckden GP on Mar 20–26th.

Black Swan Still present at the usual sites Cambridge, Ely, Ouse Washes and Paxton Pits.

Bar-headed Goose A single still in the Kingfishers Bridge/ Wicken Fen area during March.

Wood Duck In Cambridge, a pair in the Jesus Green area of Cambridge on Mar 28th–Apr 2nd.

The drake was still present to the month's end with the same or another drake noted near the Botanical Gardens on Apr 22nd.

Argentine Bluebill A drake still present at Grafham Water to Mar 2nd at least.

Purple Swamp-Hen Still present on the R. Ouse in the Fen Drayton / Swavesey area, has it really been 7 years since it escaped!

Cockatiel A single noted at Long Drove Cottenham on Mar 7th.

Contributors: Colin Addington, Jake Allsop, Ann Asher, Paul Atkinson, Louise Bacon, Geoff Barlow, Ian Barton, Rowena Baxter, Guy Belcher, Peter Bircham, James Cadbury, Ade Cooper, Robin Cox, Ian Delgado, Dr Mike Foley, David Griffiths, John Harding, Kevin Harris, Brian & Sheila Harrup, Mark Hawkes, David Heath, Peter Herkenrath, Ken and Maggie Hook, David Hopkins, Julian Hughes, Bob Humphrey, Bill and Ann Jordan, Colin Kirtland, Charlie Kitchin, John Le Gassick, Vince Lea, Jono Leadley, Stuart & Rita Lingard, Nigel Lister, Tony Mallyon, Owen & Monica Marks, Bruce & Gwen Martin, Mark Missin, Clare Neville, Dick Newell, John Oates, Rob Palmer, Rob Partridge, Mark Peck, Mark Pettit, Doug Radford, Dr Gareth Rees, Nick Richardson, Tony Roberts, Kathleen Rosewarne, Bob & Ann Scott, Clive Sinclair, Richard Thomas, Chris Thorne, Roger Tozer, Ruth Tubbs, Alan & Brenda Wadsworth, Mark Ward, P. M. Warrington.

Apologies to anyone whose name has been omitted. Any records received after the deadline date may not appear in the Bulletin though the observers may be acknowledged. They will be entered on the Clubs database for the Annual Report.

BAP species: Last but not least – Stone-curlew

Vince Lea¹ and Catherine Weightman²

¹CBC member. ²Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Action Plan Co-ordinator

In the final article on Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species we describe the plans for Stone-curlew in Cambridgeshire.

The Stone-curlew used to be a regular breeding bird of the chalk hills of South-East Cambridgeshire until agricultural changes eradicated suitable habitat, leading to the retreat of this species as a breeding bird to large areas of less intensive agriculture, with the nearby stronghold in the Breckland being of national and local significance. It is Red-listed as a priority species in the review of birds of conservation concern due to the long-term decline, and is a national BAP species as well as being in Cambridgeshire's BAP. It is still an occasional migrant in Cambridgeshire; there over 70 pairs in 1964, but has not been recorded as breeding since 1999..

The BAP for this species is linked to plans for grassland and arable farmland improvement, in particular extending and enhancing semi-natural species-rich grassland on the chalklands through farm subsidies. A particular priority at the moment is to record all occurrences of the species, in order to monitor changes in its status and to allow active protection measures to be made should any Stone Curlews appear at a site. The long-term goal is to restore this as a breeding species in the county. Stone-curlew will utilise sparsely cropped arable land and short turf grassland as breeding habitat. Spring-sown arable crops are suitable for nesting but then require protection from further agricultural operations, so a strategy of encouraging grassland for breeding is considered more appropriate in the long-term. For such a rare species, site confidentiality and protection are significant concerns to avoid unnecessary disturbance either from over-keen birdwatchers or other less well meaning elements. Any Bird Club members with information on Stone Curlews at sites in the county should submit their records to the county recorder and all sensitive site information will be kept confidential. Such records are of great value in the effective monitoring of the species and are vital to ensuring effective conservation measures are in place.

The main lead partner for the Stone-curlew BAP is the RSPB, who are monitoring and researching the species. English Nature and Defra also have major responsibilities within the plan, with enforcement of legislation and encouragement of farmers through subsidy schemes. There is also an element of encouraging the public to visit the well-known and well-protected site at Weeting Heath, where people can experience this unique and exciting bird in a controlled way.

The principle reason for the decline of the Stone-curlew is identified as a loss of both quantity and quality of large areas of semi-natural grassland, while remaining patches are often under grazed from a Stone-curlew perspective, due to the loss of rabbit populations and the decline of extensive livestock farming in East Anglia. Consequently, there are major current actions being taken to conserve Stone Curlews in their Breck strongholds involving site safeguarding and habitat management, particularly on the large heath areas in military hands and the big National nature reserves. It is hoped that as the populations there grow, surplus birds will move into suitable habitat being created in Cambridgeshire. Set-aside and spring cropping on arable land also helps and the RSPB has encouraged several South Cambs landowners to adopt these strategies. The RSPB have also surveyed the extent of suitable prey in the area. Working through FWAG, NFU and Defra, advice and species promotion is being disseminated to farmers in suitable areas for colonisation.

Introducing Birder's Eye View. This is a new feature in the Bulletin and gives members a chance to write about any birding or environmental subject that they feel strongly about. If you would like to contribute, please contact the bulletin editor, Vicki Harley. Thank you very much to Steve Dudley for writing the first Birder's Eye View.

Birder's Eye View: Too much wind and not enough substance

by Steve Dudley

I've been invited to 'expand' on comments I made on Cambirds when local birders were discussing the massive topic of renewable energy and its contribution to combating global climate change. Wow! How much time have we got?!

In April, Rowena Langston (RSPB) and myself organised the British Ornithologists' Union (BOU) annual conference entitled 'Wind, Fire and Water: Renewable Energy and Birds'. Why did we focus on renewables? Why did we not open the conference to all alternative energy generation? Global

climate changes is a huge subject, and when you only have a weekend to debate a topic, its easier to remain focused and deal with bite-sized chunks! The BOU had already held a conference on a climate change related issue in 2002, and its effect on coastal environs and their birds. So this time around we again kept it to a single issue within the wider climate change debate.

This article is a personal view, as a birder, conservationist and energy consumer and does not represent the views of my employer, the BOU or the Cambridgeshire Birc Club.

Renewable energy is the term used to describe energy that is generated from resources such as wind, water (tidal and wave action), biomass material (the processing of material grown specifically for energy generation or the processing of waste material from some crop production). The majority of proposed renewable energy generation will come from harnessing wind using the installation of wind turbines (wind farms), with the rest coming from smaller-scale energy generation technology such as water energy generation (increased hydro development (freshwater) and the offshore development of wave and tide technology) and bioenergy (the growing and cropping of crops such as oilseed crops for the production of liquid fuels for transport needs, or utilising wood (including coppice material) and straw for the generation of electricity and heat/or heat). Wind power is the only technology sufficiently progressed to make any real contribution to the UK's overall energy generation by the government target date of 2010 with bioenergy likely to be the second largest contributor (for more information on wind energy see the recent article on 'birds and wind farms' in *British Birds* (98: 194-204) and for a review of the recent BOU conference see the forthcoming article in *British Birds* (July issue))

Can an island nation with a wealth of wind and water (both inland and coastal) not harness nature in order to have a sustainable energy generation? The debate rages as to exactly what impact renewable energy generation can make to combat global climate change. Some say renewable energy is the future whilst others argue that the technology isn't efficient and cannot meet our needs. If we look at our current energy consumption, it can be broken down as transport (33%), heat (36%) and electricity consumption (31%). Our declining stocks of fossil fuel is responsible for nearly all transport and heat use (although a small percentage of heat is generated by electricity), so renewable energy generation can only contribute to about 40% (all electricity plus some heat) of the UK's total energy consumption. By 2010 (the government's target date) the aim is to have 10% of our total energy needs generated by renewable energy sources (= wind 7%, biomass 2%, landfill 1%, water (inc hydro) 0%). This compares to gas 41%, coal 26%, nuclear 19%, oil 1% and others 3%.

The UK's renewable energy programme is unlikely to generate enough energy to make an impact globally, at least not when countries such as the US (the highest energy consuming nation on the planet) and others continue to contribute virtually nothing to the battle against climate change. So what will?

Costs aside, the only viable option in terms of efficient energy generation appears to be nuclear (projected to be 19% of UK energy generation by 2010). Nuclear however brings with it a mass of politically fuelled debates, even more than renewable energy generation! The cost of nuclear power is astronomical even compared to the billions which will be invested in renewable energy. Although the actual energy production is 'green' the waste from nuclear energy definitely isn't. It is the safe disposal of nuclear waste which has seen the gradual run down of the British nuclear industry. Nuclear represents a long-term and significant contribution to combating climate change, but brings with it the huge long-term problem of safe waste disposal which may just end up being just as big a problem for the planet in the future as climate change is today. Another major political issue with nuclear is the proliferation of nuclear technology which has the potential of being used by some nations for the development of nuclear armaments. In a climate of non-proliferation of such technologies, and the western world's fear of terrorist attack, this is possibly the biggest political problem to overcome for any administration attempting to establish a nuclear energy generation programme.

But aren't we missing the point? Climate change is not caused by energy production but energy consumption. Typical of a western, capitalist, economy, we address problems by tackling the visible

effects and not the cause of the problem. The problem is quite simple – we consume too much energy that produces too many emissions, which in turn contribute to global climate change. Greener and cleaner energy generation of whatever source will never combat climate change alone. At present we consume virtually all the energy we generate. Globally, the world holds very little in reserve, and locally it is practically non-existent.

And what of the huge number of new homes that are being built up and down the land? How energy efficient are they? Do they have solar power? Rain misers? They might be more energy efficient than an equivalent sized older home, but on average, each newly built home is only 50% as energy efficient as it could be (based solely on consumption and not on the energy it actually takes to build them – think of all that concrete!).

No, we are largely responsible for climate change. Not the energy generators. Not the politicians. Not America (although they are the biggest contributors to emissions responsible for the acceleration of climate change). The way we live our lives, and the energy we consume through our homes (central heating, lighting, cooking, electric goods, etc), our lifestyles (nearly everything we purchase requires energy to create it or package it), the disposal of our waste, and significantly, the way we move around – planes, trains and automobiles! Like it or not, even the greenest of us using energy saving light bulbs, recycling all we can and using solar power as part of our home's energy supply, still consume vast amounts of energy elsewhere in our western lifestyle. It is estimated that we could halve our domestic energy consumption simply by being more energy efficient! But we choose not to.

It is also our western lifestyle that creates the NIMBY – not in my back yard – syndrome. It seems many people are willing to undertake some improvements in energy efficiency to their home and some to their lifestyles – taking public transport, commuting by pushbike, holidaying at home or at European destination without the need of a plane. But when it comes to the positioning of wind farms, well, say no more. Not near me please.

Well not me. I live on the open arable fen, and when asked if I would oppose wind farms being built in the fens, my response was immediate – bring them on! The fens are one of the windiest areas of lowland Britain, and whilst I remain unconvinced by the exact contribution renewable energy sources will deliver to our nation's energy needs, I am still in favour of wind farms being built in wind-rich areas such as the fens.

Sod the view! If we leave it to the NIMBY's we won't have a view in the long-term anyway, as the planet slowly chokes and dies (but not in our lifetime eh). No, rack 'em up! I see wind farms as not only a way of generating renewable energy, but also a means of conservation. Imagine replacing the current arable fen with a partly restored natural fenland landscaped looked over and guarded by wind turbines with limited human access because of the health and safety implications of an active wind farm area. Avoid the migration routes and major wintering wildfowl areas of the Ouse and Nene riverways, but replacing sugar beet, carrots and onions with reeds, meres and grassland really does appeal. Yes, wind turbines kill birds, agriculture has been a major cause of bird declines around the globe, and most of the arable fen doesn't have many birds left thanks to agricultural intensification and with it the continued poisoning of wildlife that would otherwise flourish in these areas. Habitat restoration would surely increase bird populations to such levels that the loss caused by strikes with rotating wind turbine blades would still give us a significant net increase in bird populations. Not to mention the wider wildlife benefit, because lets face it, few plants, mammals and insects will ever be threatened by blades rotating relatively high above the ground. Studies already show that even along major coastal migration routes where wind farms have been positioned, birds are capable of taking evasive action and migrating around a farm. Migration during bad weather through these farms will certainly lead to increased mortality, but whilst the fens does have migration corridors (Ouse and Nene), large scale migration simply does not happen across the major land-mass of the arable fen, so the effect on migrating birds would be minimal, and the benefit to resident birds and wildlife populations is huge (as I suspect it would be for many migrant bird species too).

In order to think globally we need to act locally. Charity begins at home. Well, conservation of the planet does as well. As consumers we need to act now. We need to change our energy-gorging lifestyles (fewer twitches!) and object to the NIMBY revolution that is sweeping the land. If you'll excuse me, I'm just going to cycle round my local patch and protest at the lack of wind farms viewable from my house. And at least I can see one wind turbine (the start of the great fen wind farm?) from my garden – can you?

Climate change is a natural planetary event. The earth experiences cooling and warming on a cyclic basis over many millennia. The industrialisation of our planet, in particular the last 100 years, is now accelerating this natural process. Whether we can, or should, do anything about this is up to us as individuals. Can we be bothered? And does it matter? It's really up to you.

CBC Field Trip to Lakenheath Fen RSPB reserve: June 10th 2005

Lakenheath Fen RSPB reserve is a habitat creation project on the Norfolk/Suffolk border adjacent to the River Little Ouse. Most of this reserve is not open to the public, so we had arranged a guided visit with the Warden Norman Sills and his assistant Sophie Leadsom. The weather was clear, calm and sunny.

The turn out for this evening walk was 51 (we think). After an introduction to the project from Norman, we split into 2 groups and set off along the public trail for the first part of our walk, past the mature poplar plantations, which are the summer home of several bird species, including garden warbler, cuckoo and kingfisher, which use the up-turned roots of trees as a surrogate bank for burrowing. However, the most prized birds here are the Golden Orioles, which bred in this area even when the Poplars were a commercial project. Two were heard singing by at least part of the group in this area.

Beyond the poplars is the first of the major wetlands which are surrounded by banks; here the first highlight for some of us was the Fen Ragwort, a very rare plant which has been grown from one of the few wild populations left (which is not far away) and introduced here. As we walked along the edge of this reedbed with open water, the distinctive pinging of Bearded Tit was heard, and two birds were seen at very close range for several minutes, backed by the constant song of *Acrocephalus* warblers and swifts wheeling over the water behind. The Beardies were so unusually close that it was easy to look for them in the vegetation on the far side of the channel when their call was heard, but they were actually only a few metres from us in the near edge of the reeds!

Cuckoo put in a good showing early on, with one flying past and perching for good views to be had. As the evening progressed and we walked down the trails beyond the public areas, Hobbies and Marsh harriers became the biggest attractions, with several of each species being seen hunting over the various sections of the wetlands.

Whilst getting good views of Sedge Warblers on yet another small block of reedbed, a Barn Owl distracted us, carrying prey off past us to presumably feed its chicks somewhere. We had now reached the furthest point of our walk, about half-way down the 3-mile long reserve, and we all congregated on a high point – all the raised banks were created through the landscaping out of the pools and reedbeds – to watch the evening birds. Marsh harriers were seen again, a Turtle Dove passed by, and several groups of duck came through to roost in the reeds. Sophie gave us a brief talk about the plants that have been found on the site. Only two species have been planted- common reed and the Fen ragwort, but well over 60 species of plants grow on the reserve. Most of these are wetland plants, and are thought to have persisted as dormant seed in the arable for between 60 & 100 years, from the wet meadows that pre-dated the conversion to arable in the twentieth century. One of the plants which has appeared is Common Meadow Rue, which whilst not an uncommon wetland plant, happens to be the food plant of a nationally rare moth, the Marsh Carpet. This moth was found in an area just up-river until about 1980, but no one has seen it in the Lakenheath area since. After discovering the food plant on the reserve about 4 years ago, the RSPB searched for the

larvae of this moth and discovered that they now have a healthy population – presumably it survived unseen in its nearby site and has now taken advantage of the expanded suitable habitat.

Just as we were leaving to walk back through the reserve, one of the Barn owls came towards us, carrying prey, as it had a couple of times already. As it rose over the heads of the group, a Kestrel appeared from nearby scrub and rose up to the Owl, engaged talons and after a mid-air tussle, stole the vole from the Barn Owl. Presumably, the kestrel chicks in the area are also doing well, in part at the expense of the Barn Owl – prey does appear to be plentiful though.

Our return took us along the final part of the public trail, as the light started to fade, with several groups of ducks and lapwings coming into roost. And then the Grasshopper warbler started reeling, just to add one more species to an enjoyable evening in Suffolk.

We would like to thank Norman and Sophie for their time, and attendees – Club members, guests and non-members alike- contributed a donation of £71.82 to the RSPB. The Club gained one new member at the start of the evening, and non-members were asked to consider becoming members.

FORTHCOMING SUMMER FIELD MEETINGS 2005

July 8th Paxton Pits Reserve: Meet in the reserve car park at 7p.m. for a guided walk with one of the reserve rangers. Access from A1 at Little Paxton, two miles north of St Neots, grid reference TL197629.

Paxton Pits' variety of habitat – wetland, scrub and woodland – provides a home for 70 breeding species. To date, 229 species have been recorded, the 'star' birds in summer being Nightingales and breeding Cormorants. An evening walk in July should be rewarded with good views of hunting Hobby, and many birds will be feeding young, including Common Terns and just possibly Nightingale. July is also a good time of year for dragonflies and flowers.

For further information see the reserve website: www.paxton-pits.org.uk

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO ATTEND THIS MEETING, PLEASE BOOK A PLACE: Call Vicki Harley 01954 250340

August 12th RSPB Fowlmere Reserve Barbecue

Arrive any time during afternoon/evening for birding. Escorted walk at 6.30 pm.

Barbecue cooking in the picnic area from 7.30pm. – bring your own food to cook. Salad, baps, sauces, soft drinks available – donation towards costs welcome. We also hope to arrange moth-trapping later in the evening. Toilets are available.

CONTACT RITA LINGARD (01480 214904) OR VICKI HARLEY (01954 250340) BY 7TH AUGUST IF YOU INTEND TO COME – THIS WILL HELP US WITH THE CATERING.

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

We welcome the following new members, Sonja Baxter of Cottenham, Gillian Cox of St. Ives, Martin Feaviour of Steeple Morden, David Fitzsimons of Milton, Andrew Knights of Soham, Bill Simmonds of Hemingford Grey and David White of Linton.

Bruce Martin

CBC E-Communication: bulletin by email and CBC-Announce

More members are receiving their bulletin by email, thus saving paper, postage, and speeding up delivery time. CBC-ANNOUNCE is an emailing list intended to send announcements and important notices about Club matters to any member who asks to go on the list.

If you would like to receive your bulletin by email or be subscribed to CBC-ANNOUNCE, please contact Vicki Harley, email vicki.harley@care4free.net

CLUB CONTACTS

Chairman

Dick Newell

Old Beach Farm
Landbeach, Cambridge, CB4 8ED
Tel: 01223 869400
Email: dick.newell@zen.co.uk

Secretary

Mark Hawkes

15 Linclare Place, St Neot's, Cambs, PE19 7AH
Tel: 01480 403046
Email: markhawkes@yahoo.co.uk

Membership Secretary

Bruce Martin

178 Nuns Way, Cambridge CB4 2NS
Tel: 01223 700656
Email: bruce.s.martin@ntlworld.com

Treasurer

Rita Lingard

14 Spens Avenue, Cambridge CB3 9LS
Tel: 01223 356476
Email: rita.lingard@ntlworld.com

County Recorder (Old Cambs)

John Oates

7 Passage Close, Lode, Cambs CB5 9EH
Tel: 01223 812546
Email: joates9151@aol.com

County Recorder (Hunts)

John Clark

7 Westbrook, Hilton, Huntingdon, Cambs PE18 9NW
Tel: 01480 830472
(No email)

Indoor Meetings Secretary & Bulletin Editor

Vicki Harley

30 Margett Street, Cottenham, Cambs CB4 8QY
Tel: 01954 250340
Email: vicki.harley@care4free.net

Research Officer

Dr Bill Jordan

31 East Hatley, Hatley St George, Sandy, Beds SG19 3JA
Tel: 01767 651737
Email: bill@31hatley.fsnet.co.uk

Website

Simon Stirrup

33 Brenda Gautrey Way, Cottenham, Cambs CB4 8XW
Tel: 01954 250207
Email: simon.stirrup@virgin.net

Other Council Members

Louise Bacon

236 Wimpole Road, Barton, Cambs, CB3 7AE
Tel: 01223 263962
E-mail: louise.bacon2@btinternet.com

Stuart Elsom

117 Andrew Road, Eynesbury, St Neots, Cambs PE19 2PP
Tel: 01480 471910
Email: stuart.elsom@tringa.co.uk

Peter Herkenrath

50 Sherbourne Close, Cambridge CB4 1RT
Tel: 01223 420736
Email: peter@herkenrath.fsnet.co.uk

Jono Leadley

4 Manor Farm Court, Perry, Cambs, PE28 0DT
Email: jonoleadley@gmail.com

John Le Gassick

17 Acacaia Avenue, St Ives, Cambs, PE27 6TN
Tel: 01480 391991
Email: jclegassick@ntlworld.com

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.cambridgeshirebirdclub.org.uk

Birdline number

Remember that your Cambs bird sightings can be phoned in free of charge to Birdline East Anglia on 0800 083 0803.

Please send records to: John Oates by July 7th
Next Bulletin due out August 2005, covering May and June 2005

GOOD BIRDING!