

CAMBRIDGESHIRE BIRD CLUB

Bulletin No. 382



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

RECENT REPORTS SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER 2005

These are unchecked reports rather than confirmed records, and comments are made by Bruce Martin (Wildfowl, Divers to Herons), Mark Hawkes (Gamebirds, Raptors, Rails), Jonathan Taylor (Waders), Steve Cooper (Skuas to Near Passerines and Hybrids and Exotica), Stuart Elsom (Larks to Thrushes), Mike Foley (Warblers to Tits) and Colin Kirtland (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).

Season's Greetings

Happy Christmas and a good birding
New Year to all Cambridgeshire Bird
Club members.

Great Fen Project Field Trip
January 15th 2006 – booking essential
See p11.

Subscriptions due now!

**Please read the Treasurer's message on
p11..**

Common Buzzard by Graham Easy



Numbers in brackets indicate September and October maximums.

WILDFOWL

Mute Swan At Fen Drayton GP (120, 128), the Ouse Washes (238, 317) and Paxton Pits (138, 117). Also reported from 10 other sites.

Tundra Swan Up to 10 birds were at Prior's Fen GP from Oct 17th to 22nd.

Whooper Swan A single bird was at Paxton Pits on Sept 17th and 6 at the Ouse Washes on Sept 27th. In October birds were seen at Friday Bridge (1), Paxton Pits, (2 over), Prior's Fen (5) and Elm (3).

Bean Goose A single bird of unknown origin was at Wicken Fen on Aug 4th.

Pink-footed Goose On Oct 2nd, 90 birds flew north to the west of the Ouse Washes at Mepal and c120 flew southeast at Wisbech. Twenty-nine were at Grafham Water on Oct 29th and a single bird was at Paxton Pits from Oct 9th to the 13th.

Greater White-fronted Goose A single bird was present at Sutton North Fen on Oct 9th.

Greylag Goose At Kingfishers Bridge (188, 308), Paxton Pits (511, 530), and Wicken Fen (190, 140). Other three-figure counts were at Fen Drayton GP (211), the Ouse Washes (326) and Sutton North Fen (658).

Canada Goose Three-figure counts were noted at Kingfishers Bridge (210), the Ouse Fen (128), Ouse Washes (280), Sutton North Fen (421) and Wicken Fen (130). Double figures were noted at 5 other sites.

Barnacle Goose Up to 5 feral birds were noted at 5 sites.

Egyptian Goose 1–2 birds were present at Kingfishers Bridge mid-September and 1 on Oct 2nd. Two birds were at Sutton North Fen also on Oct 2nd and 2 at Block Fen on Oct 13th.

Common Shelduck Two birds were at Grafham Water on Sept 18th and 5 at the Ouse Washes on 19th. At Eau Fen there was 3 birds on Sept 20th and 4 on Oct 10th.

Mandarin A single bird was at Grafham Water on Sept 18th and 1 at Paxton Pits on Oct 9th.

Eurasian Wigeon Numbers increased during the period with counts at Fen Drayton GP (262, 1012), at Needingworth GP (32, 328), the Ouse Washes (105, 2106) and Paxton Pits (327, 509). Also reported from 9 other sites.

Gadwall Three-figure counts were made at Fen Drayton GP (189), Paxton Pits (125) and Wicken Fen (135) during the period. Double figures were noted at 6 other sites.

Eurasian Teal At Fen Drayton GP (160, 99), Grafham Water (470, 467), Needingworth GP (114, 124), the Ouse Washes (320, 334), Paxton Pits (29, 118) and Wicken Fen (153, 221).

Mallard Three-figure counts were noted at 6 sites.

Northern Pintail Double figures were seen at Fen Drayton GP with 16 on Sept 17th and Block Fen with 20 on Oct 22nd and single figures at 4 other sites.

Garganey Two birds were still present at Wicken Fen on Oct 13th and 1 at Paxton Pits on Oct 22nd.

Northern Shoveler Three-figure counts were made at Grafham Water (195), Paxton Pits (207) and Wicken Fen (179) and double figures at 6 other sites during the period.

Red-crested Pochard The family party continued to be seen at Paxton Pits until at least Oct 9th with a male still present at the month's end. Singles birds were seen at Needingworth GP during both months and at Grafham Water on Oct 27th.

Common Pochard At Fen Drayton GP (39, 79), Needingworth GP (39, 63) and Paxton Pits (74, 50). Grafham Water with 17, Prior's Fen GP with 60 and Ouse Fen with 40 were the only other sites with double figures.

Tufted Duck Counts at Fen Drayton GP were (375, 379), Grafham Water (650, 669), Needingworth GP (128, 184) and Paxton Pits (380, 598). Smaller numbers were also noted at 8 other sites.

Greater Scaup The 6 birds that were present at Prior's Fen GP from Oct 22nd were joined by another on the 29th.

Common Scoter A small movement through the county occurred during the period with a female/immature at Grafham Water on Sept 12th, followed by a pair on Oct 4th, 2 males on the 7th with 1 male remaining until the 23rd. At Paxton Pits 2 females were present on Sept 20th and 1 on Oct 6th.

Goldeneye Only singles birds were seen at 4 sites during September, but numbers had increased by the end of October with 30 at Paxton Pits and 34 at Grafham Water.

Ruddy Duck Noted at 4 sites.

GAMEBIRDS

Red-legged Partridge Reported from just 7 sites, numbers ranging from 1 to 21 birds.

Grey Partridge 1–24 birds recorded at 8 sites.

Common Pheasant Reported from 5 sites, with numbers ranging from 1 to 25.

DIVERS TO HERONS

Little Grebe Good numbers were recorded during the period with maximums of 41 at Paxton Pits, 25 at Needingworth GP and 24 at Fen Drayton GP. Other double figures were 16 at Ouse Fen and 12 at Grafham Water. Single figures at 7 other sites.

Great Crested Grebe Two very small young were at Godmanchester GP on Oct 6th and 1 was still there on Oct 23rd. Counts at Fen Drayton GP were (88, 53), Grafham Water (322, 148), Needingworth GP (13, 18), Paxton Pits (47, 21) and Roswell Pits (18, 15). The only other double figure count was 18 at Marsh Lane GP. Single figures noted at 6 other sites.

Red-necked Grebe One bird at Grafham Water on Sept 22nd and another at Paxton Pits on Oct 31st.

Slavonian Grebe Singles were at Paxton Pits on Oct 9th and Grafham Water on Oct 23rd.

Black-necked Grebe The bird present at Fen Drayton GP late in August remained to at least Sept 4th. After that it is difficult to say exactly how many birds were involved. At Paxton Pits an adult first seen on Sept 5th was joined by a juvenile on the 9th and they remained until the adult departed on the 20th. The juvenile stayed until Oct 22nd. Two birds were at Grafham Water on Sept 21st; and singles were seen at Needingworth GP on Oct 16th and Fen Drayton GP on Oct 19th. The only certainty was that at least 3 birds were involved!

Leach's Storm-petrel One lucky observer found this bird early on the morning of Oct 3rd but the bird wasn't so lucky. A Peregrine attempted to catch it but only managed to knock it on to the water before a Great Black-backed Gull pounced on it. It was only seen for a period of 45 minutes. Also unlucky was the observer who ran from his car only to see the GBBG flying off with the petrel in its bill. I wonder if he will count it on his Cambs list!

Northern Gannet A juvenile bird was at Kingfishers Bridge on Oct 15th and 16th and a different juvenile was at Grafham Water on Oct 17th and 18th.

Great Cormorant At Fen Drayton GP (46, 58), Grafham Water (196, 125), Needingworth GP (15, 7), Kingfishers Bridge (16, 18), the Ouse Washes (27, 26) and Wicken Fen (13, 13). A dusk roost count at Paxton Pits produced 145 birds on Oct 30th. Also a count at the same site of a flock of 81 roosting and feeding on the Pumhouse Pit was considered unusual and the suggestion made was that they might have been lost in the fog. Another flock, this time 87 was seen swimming and feeding together at Godmanchester GP on Oct 6th.

Great Bittern Singles birds were occasionally seen flying during the day at Fen Drayton GP and regularly seen going to roost, but the 4 birds that went to roost on Oct 30th must be a record for the site if not the county, (in modern times at least). Another bird was at Eldernell on Oct 24th.

Cattle Egret The adult first seen in the Hinchingbrooke/Brampton area on Jul 28th remained until Sept 9th.

Little Egret Single figures reported from 9 sites, with the highest count of 14 at Grafham Water on Sept 9th.

Grey Heron At Fen Drayton GP (9, 12), Grafham Water (23, 18) and the Ouse Washes (29, 20). Single figures were recorded at 15 other sites.

White Stork A bird was present in the Gunthorpe/Newborough Fen area of Peterborough from Sept 1st until Oct 7th.

RAPTORS

Red Kite Singles seen at Yaxley on Sept 3rd, Holme on Oct 14th, Ely and Ouse Washes on Oct 20th (maybe relating to the same bird?)

Eurasian Marsh Harrier Recorded at 26 sites, with peak counts including 8 at both Wicken Fen and Ouse Washes and 6 on Nene Washes all during September. Away from breeding/post-breeding areas, presumed migrants were seen at Barleycraft GP, Eau Fen, Elm, Farcet Fen, Fen Drayton GP, Fowlmere, Godmanchester GP, Haddenham Fen,

Kneesworth, Monks Wood, Over Fen GP, Paxton Pits and Tick Fen.

Hen Harrier Recorded at Wicken Fen from Sept 30th, with 1–2 regularly through Oct. Also singles at Swaffham Prior Fen on Oct 21st and Nene Washes on Oct 24th.

Goshawk Singles in October over Farcet Fen on 3rd, Paxton Pits on 18th and Somersham on 22nd.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk Recorded at 26 sites. Peak counts included 5 at Paxton Pits in Oct and 4+ at Grafham Water in September, otherwise numbers ranged from 1–3 birds.

Common Buzzard Recorded at 38 sites. The peak count (which equalled the previous county record) was of 10 birds seen on Oct 2nd, they were viewable from both Paxton Pits and Grafham Water. Many other records of presumed migrants, including 8 over Godmanchester GP on Sept 24th. Otherwise numbers ranged from 1–6 birds.

Osprey Single at Barleycraft GP on Sept 7th – a poor showing by recent standards.

Common Kestrel Recorded at 22 sites. Peak counts included Ouse Washes (17, 20) and 7 at Wicken Fen on Sept 18th. Otherwise numbers ranged from 1–5 birds.

Merlin Singles recorded as follows in September; Paxton Pits on 11th, Fowlmere on 28th. In October at 2 at Swaffham Prior Fen on 28th, with singles at Wicken Fen on 2nd and 5th, Farcet Fen on 3rd and 26th, Swaffham Prior Fen and Whittlesey Mere on 25th, Grafham Water and Lode on 29th, Paxton Pits on 30th and Car Dyke on 31st.

Eurasian Hobby Still widespread being recorded from 28 sites. Peak numbers were seen at Fen Drayton GP (4, 3) and 3 at Monks Hardwick on Sept 4th. Otherwise 1–2 birds involved.

Peregrine In September, singles recorded at Grafham Water on 3rd, Barleycraft GP on 4th, Paxton Pits on 9th, and in October at Grafham Water on 3rd (when it killed a Leach's Petrel!) and 14th, Paxton Pits on 5th and 28th, Wicken Fen on 9th and 20th, Sutton Gault on 11th, Fen Drayton GP on 16th, Ramsey Mereside on 25th and Priors Fen on 29th

RAILS

Water Rail Reported from 13 sites involving 1–3 birds, apart from 7 at Kingfishers Bridge on Oct 9th.

Spotted Crake A late individual was seen at Holme Fen on Oct 25th.

Common Moorhen Reported from 14 sites. Peak counts from Fen Drayton GP (26, 57), Grafham Water (50, 44), Ouse Washes (34, 23). Other counts from ranging from 1–27 birds.

Common Coot Reported from 13 sites. Peak numbers included Paxton Pits (1045, 970), Grafham Water (864, 803), Fen Drayton GP (820, 810), Barleycraft GP (587, 514), Kingfishers Bridge (206, 236) and smaller numbers at other sites, ranging from 1–85 birds. The partial albino wintering bird returned to Godmanchester GP in early September for another winter.

WADERS

Little Plover Single present at Paxton Pits throughout September

Ringed Plover Main locality Grafham Water with peaks of 18 on Sept 4th and up to 4 in October and Paxton Pits 7 on Sept 16th

Tundra Ringed Plover 1–3 at Paxton Pits on Sept 18–25th and 1 on Oct 14th.

European Golden Plover Smaller groups around until October influx with highest counts as follows: Smithey Fen (Cottenham) 4350 on 27th, Over Fen GP 3900 on 30th, Swaffham Prior Fen 1500 on 22nd, Haddenham, Block Fen and Kingfishers Bridge 1000 and up to 500 from a further 9 sites/areas.

Northern Lapwing Highest counts at Over Fen GP (500, 2060), Priors Fen GP (1200, 2000), Eau Fen (1360, 130), Barleycraft GP (378, 1297). Groups of 100–700 at a further 14 locations. A leucistic bird noted at Eau Fen.

Red Knot Eau Fen on Sept 5th, Grafham Water on Sept 9th and Paxton Pits on Oct 6th.

Little Stint Juveniles in September at Paxton Pits off and on 11–26th, Fen Drayton on 24th, Grafham Water 29th, in October at Kingfishers Bridge on 1st, Eau Fen 10–11th and Fen Drayton GP on 30th,

Temminck's Stint A single at Priors Fen GP on Sept 5th.

White-rumped Sandpiper A juvenile showed well at Grafham Water from Oct 7th to 22nd.

Pectoral Sandpiper A juvenile briefly at Godmanchester GP on Sept 9th.

Curlew Sandpiper In September, at Grafham Water 2nd–4th, 2 at Ouse Washes on 5th and Paxton Pits GP on 18th.

Dunlin Main locality was Grafham Water with peaks of 32 on Sept 29th and 29 on Oct 2nd. 1–8 from a further 7 sites.

Ruff Main locality was Eau Fen with peaks of 54 on Sept 20th and 38 on Oct 10th, elsewhere up to 10 at Paxton Pits, 6 at Grafham Water and 1–4 at Fen Drayton GP.

Jack Snipe In October, two's at Kings Dyke NR and Over Fen GP and singles at Farcet Fen, Fowlmere and Fen Drayton GP.

Common Snipe Highest counts from Ouse Washes of 173 on Oct 17th and Over Fen GP (27, 145), recorded from most wetland sites. An unseasonal bird displaying at Chippenham Fen on Sept 6th.

Eurasian Woodcock Singles reported from Wicken Fen during October.

Black-tailed Godwit Up to 6 at Kingfishers Bridge in October, otherwise 1–2 from a further 4 sites.

Whimbrel Singles at Kingfishers Bridge on Sept 13th and 15th.

Eurasian Curlew 1–4 at or over Paxton Pits on several dates, 4 at Over Fen GP on Sept 18th, 3 over Grafham Water on Sept 9th, singles at Nene Washes, Ouse Washes and Barleycraft.

Spotted Redshank Single juveniles at Eau Fen Sept 3rd–10th and Priors Fen GP on Sept 5th.

Common Redshank As usual a scarce bird during this period. One at Paxton Pits Sept 1st–9th. In

October Barleycraft GP up to 9, Grafham Water 1–5, Godmanchester GP 4, Paxton Pits 1–2.

Common Greenshank 1–4 at Eau Fen (Sept only), Priors Fen GP (to Oct 30th) and Grafham Water (to Oct 2nd) also a single at Sanger Centre Scrapes (Ickleton) on Sept 6th.

Green Sandpiper Highest counts as follows: Eau Fen (7, 3), Over Fen GP (6, 3), Paxton Pits (5, 3), Wicken Fen (5, 2) and 1–3 from a further 12 sites.

Wood Sandpiper Singles at Priors Fen on Sept 2nd and Grafham Water on Oct 4th.

Common Sandpiper In September, peaks of 17 at Eau Fen on 6th, Grafham Water 10 on 18th, Paxton Pits and Barleycraft GP both 5, Godmanchester GP 4 and 1–3 from a further 3 sites. In October, 1–2 from 3 sites including possible returning wintering individuals at both Paxton Pits and Grafham Water.

Ruddy Turnstone Paxton Pits, 4 on Sept 3rd and 2 at Grafham Water on Sept 9th.

Phalarope sp. At Grafham Water, 1 on Sept 21st was thought to be a red-necked, the date would be typical for that species in the county.

SKUAS TO TERNS

Arctic Skua A juvenile at Paxton Pits on Sept 11th was the only skua of the autumn.

Mediterranean Gull Only reported from Paxton Pits in September on 6th, 8th 14th and 25th.

Little Gull A poor year for this species continued with a poor autumn passage, only recorded at Grafham Water with 2 on Sept 16th and Paxton Pits on Oct 18th.

Black-headed Gull Up to 1000+ birds were regularly noted on the arable around Melbourn and adjacent parishes during the period.

Common Gull Poorly recorded during the period.

Lesser Black backed Gull In October up to 1300+ roosted at Barleycraft GP and 600+ were regular on the arable around Melbourn and adjacent parishes.

Herring Gull Up to 60 birds roosted at Barleycraft GP during October including many '*argentatus*'.

Yellow-legged Gull Regularly noted at Grafham Water throughout including an adult found dead there on Oct 7th. Heavy gull passage during October resulted in up to 13 birds roosting at Barleycraft GP and up to 5 birds on the arable in the Foxton area.

Caspian Gull During October 6 individuals were recorded at Barleycraft GP.

Greater Black-backed Gull The largest count received was of 30+ roosting at Barleycraft GP during October.

Common Tern A juvenile was still at Grafham Water to Oct 28th at least.

Arctic Tern In September, noted at Grafham Water on 10th, Milton CP 14th–24th and Prior's Fen on 27th and 30th.

Black Tern At Grafham Water numbers peaked at 20 on Sept 9th with 12 the next day, 11 also noted there on the Sept 1st.

PASSERINES

Feral Pigeon During the period up to 200+ noted in Wisbech Town Centre and a total of 100+ birds

from 3 sites in Cambridge.

Stock Pigeon Three nest boxes at Warner's Drove Somersham were all still occupied in September and contained 2 eggs, 2 young and 2 young respectively.

Wood Pigeon Largest flock of 905 at Barton.

Collared Dove At Elm, 210 remained into early September but decreased as the stubble was ploughed. Elsewhere large flocks noted at Milton (180), Swaffham Prior (89) and Wicken Fen (150+).

Turtle Dove During September a large flock of 34 noted at Haddenham Fen on 1st, also 13 at Eau Fen on 5th and 10 at Swaffham Prior Fen on 4th. No records received for after the 23rd!

Cuckoo A juvenile at Farcet Fen on Sept 5th was the only record received.

Barn Owl Twenty records received from 15 sites.

Little Owl Fourteen records received from 12 sites.

Tawny Owl Twenty-four records from 18 sites.

Short-eared Owl. A single noted at Paxton Pits on Sept 23rd. In October, 1–2 regular from the 20th also noted at Conington, Fen Drayton, Lode, Paxton Pits and Priors Fen.

European Nightjar At Wicken Fen a single bird was attracted by a tape recording on Sept 8th!

Common Swift Latest bird reported from Cambridge on Sept 28th.

Kingfisher Reported from 28 sites.

Eurasian Wryneck A single showed well at Grafham Water on Sept 2nd and another in a garden at Oakington on Sept 18th.

Green Woodpecker Thirty records from 20 sites.

Greater Spotted Woodpecker Twenty-two records received from 15 sites.

Lesser-Spotted Woodpecker Reported from Little Thetford, Monk's Wood, and Wimpole Park during the period.

Skylark Reported from 11 sites with a maximum of 60 at Lark Rise Farm, Barton on Oct 31st.

Sand Martin Reported from 7 sites with numbers dropping towards the end of September. The maximum count was 44 at Paxton Pits on Sept 16th.

Barn Swallow Noted from at least 16 sites with many reports of large migrant flocks. Several flocks of 100–200 were noted but the maximum count was 300 at Paxton Pits on Sept 11th. Many late individuals were noted this autumn with singles at St.Ives, Farcet and Maxey at the month's end.

House Martin Recorded from at least 13 sites with some large flocks heading south in late September. Maximum counts received were from Paxton Pits with 600 on Sept 11th. The latest was noted at Wisbech with 20 on Oct 11th.

Tree Pipit The only record in the period concerned a single at Grafham Water on Oct 4th.

Meadow Pipit Records were received from 12 sites with the highest count coming from Ouse Washes with 92 present on Sept 19th.

Rock Pipit As many as 7 noted. 1–2 were seen at Grafham Water during October. Singles were also noted at Dog-in-a Doublet, Eau Fen, Ferry Meadows, Godmanchester GP, Paxton Pits and

Prior's Fen.

Water Pipit One recorded at Holt Fen on Oct 31st

Yellow Wagtail Noted from at least 10 sites. The maximum recorded was 50 at Grafham Water on Sept 4th with the latest at Paxton Pits on Oct 9th.

Grey Wagtail Reports were received from 11 sites with the majority of records concerning 1–2 birds. The maximum was 3 at Lode on Oct 10th.

Pied Wagtail The only records of note received were counts of 75 at Stretham on Sept 8th and Granta Park, Abington on Sept 13th.

Black Redstart Only 2 were recorded; the first was at Farcet on Oct 23rd with another at Upware on Oct 29–30th.

Whinchat Singles noted at 8 sites throughout September and October. Records came from Eau Fen, Fen Drayton, Ferry Meadows, Great Eversden, Nene Washes (2), Over Fen, Paxton Pits and Wicken Fen (2).

Stonechat 1–2 birds noted from at least 10 sites with records from Eau Fen, Fen Drayton, Grafham Water, Kingfisher's Bridge, Linton, Paxton Pits, Nene Washes, Over Fen, Prior's Fen, Swaffham Prior Fen and a maximum of 4 at Wicken Fen.

Northern Wheatear Recorded at 14+ sites in September with the last noted on Oct 29th at Prior's Fen. Records were received as follows: Conington, Eau Fen, Eynesbury, Farcet Fen, Fen Drayton, Grafham Water, Great Eversden (2), Haddenham (4), Ouse Washes (2) Paxton Pits (3), Priors Fen, Serpentine Lake, Tick Fen and Wicken Fen.

Ring Ouzel A single at Fen Drayton on Oct 17th was the only record during the period.

Blackbird Records were received from 7 sites with maximum of 120 at Elm on Oct 31st.

Fieldfare First noted on Sept 27th with 30 at Comberton. Records were received from 15 sites across the county. The maximum count was from Holme Fen with 1300 on Oct 26th.

Song Thrush Records were received from 5 sites with 1–3 individuals being the norm at most sites. The maximum was 8 at Elm on Sept 30th.

Redwing The first returning birds noted on Oct 2nd with a single at Whittlesford. The maximum noted during the period was from Wicken Fen with 500 on Oct 27th

Mistle Thrush Reports were received from 10 sites with 1–2 being the norm. Several large groups were noted including 33 at Stonebridge on Oct 14th.

Cetti's Warbler Reported from 3 sites: Fen Drayton (recorded throughout), Paxton Pits (1 possible, Oct 27th), and Wicken Fen (throughout, ringing records at the end of the period showed that 1 female and 4 juveniles had been ringed).

Sedge Warbler Singles were noted at reservoirs near Haslingfield (Sept 3rd), Grafham Water (Sept 21st–23rd), Ouse Washes (Oct 17th) and Paxton Pits (Sept 17th).

Eurasian Reed Warbler Singles on Sept 24th at Paxton Pits and Sept 30th at Wicken Fen were the last reported sightings.

Lesser Whitethroat The latest records were from Sept 10th–21st, not particularly later than in 2003.

Common Whitethroat A peak late count at Paxton Pits was 10+ on Sept 10th, with final sightings of 2 on Sept 25th; also 1 at Eau Fen (Ely) on Sept 10th.

Garden Warbler These lingered at Milton CP (Cambridge) until Sept 24th (1) and Paxton Pits, Oct 2nd (1).

Blackcap Reported from 7 sites. 3 were ringed at Wicken Fen on Oct 22nd.

Yellow-browed Warbler One reported from a private garden Oct 12th Werrington, but this was not viewable from any public area.

Common Chiffchaff From 18 sites, with a maximum of 20 at Paxton pits on Sept 9th.

Willow Warbler The last records were Sept 28th at Paxton Pits, and Oct 22nd at Wicken Fen.

Spotted Flycatcher A family party of 5 was noted at Chippenham Fen on Sept 6th; 3 including a juvenile were found at Landbeach on Sept 3rd, and the latest seen was at Priory Park (St Neots) on Sept 10th (1).

Pied Flycatcher A Pied Flycatcher was noted in a private garden in Trumpington, Cambridge

Long-tailed Tit Reported from 8 sites, with larger numbers from Holme Fen (45), Wicken Fen (33), Sutton Gault (28) and the old St Ives railway line (23).

Marsh Tit Noted at Hardwick Wood (2, Oct 8th and Oct 22nd), Monks Wood (Oct 14th, 50), Paxton Pits (1-2) and Wood Walton Fen (2 on Oct 10th).

Coal Tit No more than 2 birds were seen at any sighting; 2 October records at Wicken Fen were thought to be 'unusual'.

Blue Tit Ringing records at Wicken Fen showed 49 were trapped in Sept and 73 in Oct.

Great Tit From 7 sites, the numbers ringed at Wicken Fen were very similar to those of Blue Tit (42, 72).

Wood Nuthatch One record only, from Burghley House on Sept 4th.

Eurasian Treecreeper Reported from only 5 sites. Two were ringed at Wicken in October and unusually one was heard singing there on Oct 23rd.

Great Grey Shrike One at Thorney Dyke on Oct 8th, at a time when several were arriving on the east coast.

Eurasian Jay Autumn is the season when Jays leave the shelter of the woodland and become much more conspicuous as they roam the countryside. Reported from 26 sites, many of them in open fenland, and several records of migrating birds. British Jays are mostly sedentary; virtually all ringing recoveries are within 30 miles of the ringing site. Despite the species' apparent reluctance to undertake sea crossings, irruptions from continental Europe do occur, particularly if the acorn crop fails. Highest counts were 9 at Borough Fen Decoy on Oct 6th, 8 flying northwest over the A505 towards Melbourn on Oct 3rd, 7 at Elm in September and 6 at Fen Drayton on Sept 17th.

Black-billed Magpie Only flocks noted were 15 at Elm in September and October and 9 at Wicken on Sept 18th.

Eurasian Jackdaw A flock of 200 at Wicken on Oct 16th was the only large gathering reported.

Rook The highest number noted was 85 at Elm in October

Carriion Crow A roosting flock of 70 at Wicken on Oct 29th was the highest count; no other flocks over 20 were reported. Some interesting behaviour was witnessed at Paxton Pits on Oct 16th when one was seen swinging upside down on telegraph wires, close to another perched bird. It did not flap to right itself but just hung there before swinging back upright. This was repeated at least three times.

Common Starling Widespread records of the usual autumn flocks, but not in particularly large numbers. Highest counts were of 1300 roosting at Bolton's Pit, Cambridge on Oct 14th, 1000 feeding at Barton on Sept 30th, 700 roosting at Fen Drayton on Oct 9th, 500 roosting and harried by a Sparrowhawk at Fowlmere on Oct 16th, 400 at Elm on Oct 22nd and 300 at Prior's Fen on Sept 24th.

House Sparrow A flock of 95 at Elm was the largest reported. Although many are attracted to regular feeding sites, most observers continue to note a decrease, as in a St. Ives garden where only 10 were counted compared to 44 last year.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow Records from only 6 sites, all in fenland: 10 at Block Fen on Oct 22nd was the highest number. Two were seen in a Lode garden, feeding on sunflower hearts.

Brambling First reports of the autumn were of singles at Stretham on Oct 4th and Grafham on 5th. These were followed by widespread sightings, particularly from 14th onwards; all were of 1-4 birds apart from 15 at Woodhurst on 23rd.

Chaffinch Counts of 30 at Fen Drayton on Sept 15th and Barton on Oct 31st were the highest. Early morning migration was reported over St. Neots with 20 moving south on Oct 26th and 7 on 30th.

European Greenfinch A flock of 250 at Milton on Sept 8th was seen feeding on a sunflower crop. There were also flocks of 250 at Gorefield on Sept 13th and 150 at Elm on Oct 15th, while a Comberton garden attracted up to 20 birds.

Southerly movements over St. Neots involved 40 birds on Oct 26th and 9 on 30th. At Wicken 156 were ringed in September and 203 in October.

European Goldfinch Many reports of feeding flocks, mostly attracted to thistles and teasels. There were 150 at Swaffham Prior Fen on Oct 18th, 120 at Grafham on Sept 15th, 95 at Eau Fen, Ely on Sept 10th, 55 at the Nene Washes on Oct 7th and numerous smaller flocks. Not all garden sightings involved birds feasting on niger seed as 5 at Toft on Oct 22nd were feeding on dandelion seeds growing on the lawn. Passage was noted at St. Neots where 20 flew south on Oct 26th.

Siskin The first of the season was 1 at Sutton Gault on Sept 9th, followed by 1 at Paxton Pits and 3 at Kingfisher's Bridge on 17th and 24th at Fen Drayton on 18th. The influx continued throughout late September and October, with reports from 18 sites. The largest flock recorded was 25 at Ferry Meadows on Oct 6th.

Linnet Recorded in good numbers with counts of 100 at Paxton Pits on Sept 18th, 97 at Over Fen on

Oct 2nd, 86 at Barton on Sept 7th, 80 at Cambourne on Oct 6th, 70 at the Nene Washes on Oct 7th, 60 at Grafham on Oct 8th, at Elm throughout October and 51 at St. Neots on Sept 4th. Smaller flocks of 8–44 birds reported from a further 6 sites.

Common Crossbill Birds which arrived in the late summer irruption seem to have moved on as the only record was of 2 at Monk's Wood on Oct 14th.

Twite Two at Grafham on Oct 7th and 1 there on 22nd. Singles at Witcham on Oct 16th and Prior's Fen on 17th. Four county records in an autumn is exceptional.

Lesser Redpoll Only September reports were of 2 at Fen Drayton on 18th and 3 at Cambridge on 19th. However, October records from 11 sites were evidence of an influx. Highest counts were 35 at Grafham and 15 at Prior's Fen, both on 22nd.

Common Bullfinch Like most common passerines, this species is doubtless under-reported, as records were received from only 12 sites. However numbers do seem to be declining as the largest flock was only 8 at Paxton Pits on Oct 16th. At Elm 7 birds were seen feeding regularly on honeysuckle berries.

Hawfinch A welcome report of 1 at Ridley Hall, Cambridge on Oct 19th.

Yellowhammer No large concentrations reported: the highest counts were at Paxton Pits with 30 on Sept 26th and 35 on Oct 20th. Otherwise 23 at St. Neots on Sept 4th, 18 at Barton on Oct 31st and 15

at Haddenham on Oct 9th were the only records of double figures.

Lapland Longspur One at the Nene Washes on Sept 24th was heard calling as it flew overhead.

Reed Bunting Reports from only 6 sites hardly reflect the true status of this species. The only double figure count was of 12 at Kingfisher's Bridge on Oct 7th.

Corn Bunting Four records: 30 at Cambourne on Oct 6th, 15 at Fowlmere on Sept 28th, 6 at Car Dyke on Oct 2nd and 1 at St. Neots on Oct 30th.

HYBRIDS

Barnacle x Canada Goose Two noted at Paxton Pits on Oct 7th.

Canada x Greylag 1–2 noted at Kingfishers Bridge during October.

Tufted Duck x Scaup A single drake thought to be this parentage at Kingfishers Bridge on Oct 17th.

EXOTICA

Black Swan Still present at Jesus Lock Cambridge.

Snow Goose A white phase bird was still present in the Wicken area to Sept 20th at least.

Muscovy Duck At Ely 74 birds including 4 ducklings noted on Oct 17th.

White-cheeked Pintail Two noted Eau Fen / Kingfishers Bridge on Sept 10th–15th.

Wood Duck A drake at Paxton Pits on Oct 4th–9th.

Purple Swamp-hen Still present on the R. Ouse having wandered down to Fen Drayton GP during October.

Colin Addington, Louise Bacon, Rowena Baxter, Peter Bircham, Philip Bubb, James Cadbury, John Clark, Julia Clayson, Robin Cox, Ian Delgado, Ian Ellis, Dr Mike Foley, David Green, Kevin Harris, Mark Hawkes, Peter Herkenrath, Pete Holt, Julian Hughes, Michael Jennings, John Le Gassick, Vince Lea, Jono Leadley, Stuart & Rita Lingard, Tony Mallyon, Owen & Monica Marks, Bruce & Gwen Martin, Mark Missin, John Oates, Rob Palmer, Richard Patient, Mark Peck, Mark Piercey, Michael Price, Dr Gareth Rees, Nick Richardson, Tony Roberts, Paul Rule, Bob & Ann Scott, Clive Sinclair, Chris Thorne.

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.

Bulletin bird 1: Leach's Petrel at Grafham Water

Jono Leadley

Monday morning, 3 October 2005. Back to work after a fantastic holiday, watching wildlife in South Africa. My Dad had told me the previous day that he thought he had seen a Ring-necked Duck on the settlement lagoons at Grafham Water. He presumed it was the bird I had taken him to see back in the spring. When I told him that the bird had not been seen since May, he was quite surprised, as he was sure of his identification. I thought I would get up early and go for a quick walk round, just to check, before heading to work.

It occurred to me that the Ring-necked Duck could have turned up while I was away, unbeknown to my father and I. I rang Mark Hawkes, but he was unaware of the bird having returned. Sadly, not a single diving duck was present on the lagoons, so I decided to check out the reservoir, as birds often sit on the water close to the south shore, if they are flushed from the lagoons by dog walkers. Indeed there were a couple of flocks of Tufted Ducks offshore, so I set my 'scope up and started to analyse them. Just as I was beginning to scrutinise the second flock, a dark bird flew past with two Black-headed Gulls in hot pursuit. I immediately recognised the bird as a Leach's Petrel! But surely not, I had only just got back from holiday – there must be some mistake! The gulls stopped chasing the petrel, and it landed on the water about 250 metres away. I knew what I was looking at but could not

quite believe it. Suddenly, it took off again and started gliding around on angled wings, low over the surface of the reservoir. Due to the dull conditions I did not notice the grey carpal bar, but did notice the white rump, which appeared to be restricted to the sides of the rump, due to black feathers down the centre. The bird's large size, lack of white underwing bar and distinctive flight pattern immediately ruled out (British) Storm Petrel and the rump pattern excluded Madeiran Petrel, two species I am familiar with.

I got straight back on my mobile phone to Mark and said 'I am really not joking, but...' and then my battery went dead. From where I was standing it was a good ten-minute walk back to the car, which would mean leaving the bird. What if it disappeared before I got back to the reservoir – would anybody believe me? This was a tough decision, but I had no choice. I ran, faster than I have done for a long time!

Fortuitously, I had a phone charger in my car and was able to ring Mark immediately. While the grapevine kicked into action, I drove to Mander Car Park where I quickly relocated the Leach's. The next 20 minutes seemed to take forever, before Mark and then Colin Addington and Stuart Elsom arrived. The bird was frequently sitting on the reservoir but often took flight when mobbed by gulls. At about 8.55am, a big immature Peregrine came charging in and attempted to catch the petrel. After several close passes, the falcon appeared to give up on the agile black seabird, leaving the local gulls to continue harassing it. But, a minute later the Peregrine came in low and hard and struck the petrel, which cart-wheeled into the water with a splash. Immediately, a Great Black-backed Gull flew in and started pecking at the bird, which appeared to be almost dead. Shortly, the gull picked up the petrel and half-swallowing it, took off and proceeded to fly around the reservoir with the poor bird's wings hanging out of it's bill. A few other birders began arriving, but they were unfortunately too late. A sad end to a great bird, and the first at Grafham Water since 1983.

Bulletin bird 2: White-rumped Sandpiper at Grafham Water

Jono Leadley

Following the Leach's Petrel on the 3rd October, Grafham Water had continued to have a good week, with Tree and Rock Pipits and Common Scoter having been found. On Friday afternoon (7th), Mark Hawkes found two Twite on the shore near Marlow Car Park and I thought I would head over for a look after work, as these would be a Grafham Water tick for me. I met Debbie McKenzie who was busy looking for the birds at Marlow. She had not seen them unfortunately, and despite a co-ordinated effort could not re-find them, although a Rock Pipit was a little compensation.

Thinking that the Twite could be feeding on the drawdown zone, we wandered west from Marlow Car Park. We noted four Ringed Plovers on the point, plus several fishermen, knee-deep in the water. Shortly, I heard the plovers calling and they flew past us. I also heard an unfamiliar wader, which sounded a bit like a Little Stint – but also like a sunbird! A small 'peep' then came into view and headed across the reservoir with the plovers. As it turned, I said to Debbie that I could have sworn it had a white rump, but as it headed off into the distance, there was nothing I could do about it.

Five minutes later, I heard the plovers calling again – they were coming back! Would the small wader be with them – we held our breath. They pitched in with the small flock of Dunlin on the shore about 10 metres away. I picked up a small wader that was crouching on the water's edge. Frustratingly, it had landed behind a rock and I could only see its head. I immediately got quite excited, as the bill and head looked spot-on for White-rumped Sandpiper. While trying to show Debbie the bird, which was not easy due to it being mostly obscured, it walked out, proving it was no 'funny Dunlin'. It was a White-rumped! Wow! A familiar sensation of panic and incredulity set in – it was only four days since the Leach's Petrel. I got some very shaky photos and noted the key features, including, of course, the twinkling white rump. I then got on the phone to Mark Hawkes, who had just arrived at Marlow Car Park with Duncan Poyser. Minutes later, the four of us were having fantastic, close views of the bird, as it fed along the stony shore. Although occasionally flushed by fishermen, the bird was fairly relaxed and was still present at dusk. I never did see the Twite!

On Saturday the bird evaded detection but was undoubtedly still present, as it was re-found by David Hollin in the same location on Sunday morning. It was last seen on 22 October. This is the first record for Grafham Water and the third for Cambridgeshire, the previous records being of birds at Wisbech Sewage Farm on 31 October 1964 and on the Ouse Washes from 6 to 10 September 2000.

The status of Common Buzzard in Cambridgeshire.

Mark Hawkes.

The Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* has once again become a regular sight for birders around Cambridgeshire; however, the status of this species has had changing fortunes over the years within the county.

In the Huntingdonshire & Peterborough districts during the period 1825–35, the Common Buzzard was described as ‘being as common a breeder as Red Kite’ (where one count in c.1824 of this latter species included 27 together). Common Buzzards were always a much more widespread breeder in the larger woods of the north and west of the county, than in the old county of Cambridgeshire, where they were described as a ‘very rare straggler’. The exact breeding status in this area remains unclear, as some breeding records may have referred to the ‘Moor Buzzard’, another name for Marsh Harrier. However, with the passing of the Game Laws in 1840, this species was decimated (a fate also shared with Red Kite) due to trapping, poisoned bait and shotgun use, and by 1845 it was described as ‘only occasionally seen’.

This status of occasional sightings was maintained until 1947–60, when a small number became resident in the southwest of the county, and successful breeding was once again proven in 1959. Elsewhere, small numbers were occasionally seen during the winter periods. However, from the late 1950s the use of organochlorine insecticides caused widespread mortality in many species of raptors (including Common Buzzard and Sparrowhawk) and breeding failure due to DDT (*dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane*) at the egg stage. With this the breeding population crashed again, with between 1961 and 1998, just one confirmed breeding record in 1976. It also seems likely that during that 1950s, the heavy use of myxomatosis to control rabbit numbers (a popular prey of Common Buzzards) also had a detrimental effect on the Common Buzzard population. From the 1960s onwards, Common Buzzards were usually only seen singly, and most of the records fell in the August to November periods, with smaller numbers during the winter and spring periods. This suggested that most sightings referred to migrants passing through the county or over-wintering birds. One of the largest groups included five passing northeast through the county in March 1965. From 1969 to 1989, in the old county of Cambridgeshire, the average was just 2–3 records per annum, although in 1981 an exceptional seven were recorded. In the Huntingdonshire and Peterborough areas from 1964, the average was 1–5 records per year, but sightings slowly increased to give records of eight in 1975 and 1987, 10+ in 1991, 16–20 in 1989 and an unprecedented 35–45 in 1995.

Since the mid-90s, Common Buzzards have been recorded in increasing numbers, and from an increasing number of sites. Finally, in 1999, a pair successfully bred in the southeast of the county, and others were noted summering in the west of the county. Since then, the breeding population has continued to grow, as have the number of general sightings. See below table for a summary of records for 1991–2004:

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Records (approx)	14	13	16	17	40	63	45	54	86	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Breeding pairs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	4–10	7–12	3–12	4–17
Peak Counts	2	2	5	4	5	4	4	4	5	10	5	8	10	8

Table: From 2000 onwards, calculating approximate numbers of records within the county became impossible due to the number of widespread records, and almost daily sightings from some areas.

In Cambridgeshire the number of breeding pairs is probably still on the increase, although the variation of numbers from year to year is a reflection of how hard it can be to confirm successful breeding of this species. In 1994, birds that bred in Essex were seen within the county, and in 1996, there were also two reports of juvenile birds with adults, which may have been reared within the county. The sudden increase in records in 1995–96 may, in part, be due to some releasing of birds within East Anglia (e.g. 12 at Sheringham, Norfolk in 1995), and in some years between 1991–2004 known escaped birds were seen (complete with jesses). Also of note, in 2003, a female Common Buzzard paired with an escaped Red-tailed Hawk *B. jamaicensis* and reared two young.

The origins of the increasing numbers of Common Buzzards in Cambridgeshire are probably related to three main factors, including a spreading of the population from its stronghold in the west country, an autumn influx from northern areas of Britain (and also probably birds of continental origin) and the slowly increasing breeding population. Proof of genuine movement by this species, from strongholds to the west of Cambridgeshire, was provided by one which was found dead at Chettisham on March 23rd 1994, which was ringed as a nestling in Gwent (Wales). Also noteworthy is that the two peak counts of 10 birds in 2000 and 2003 both came during the autumn period, and many of these peak counts involve birds actively moving in a southerly direction through the county. Counts of 4–8 birds are now commonplace.

Below is a copy of the table from Cambridgeshire Bird Report 2002 – this illustrates very well the present annual status of Common Buzzard in Cambridgeshire:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Records	5	12	28	25	21	9	11	20	50	33	13	10
Individuals	6	19	38	30	30	11	13	38	92	57	21	11

Typically nowadays in Cambridgeshire, small numbers are present during the first winter period, and between March and May these numbers increase due to returning birds from other wintering areas and passage migrants. Small numbers are present during the summer months, and again from August to October the numbers are increased by locally reared birds and passage migrants (peaking in September). Small numbers again remain to winter during the second winter period.

The majority of Common Buzzard records still come from the more wooded northern, western and southeastern areas of the county, with fewer records from the more arable fenland areas; however, it is not uncommon to see a soaring Common Buzzard just about anywhere around the county nowadays, and small soaring groups have become a welcome sight in many areas. This growing population trend has been noted in most counties bordering Cambridgeshire, and it seems likely that over time they will return to occupy most of the suitable habitats throughout Cambridgeshire, and this has probably been helped by the recovery of rabbit numbers after the decline in the 1950s, the banning of DDT from 1984, and much lower numbers being persecuted.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS 2006

Friday January 13th St John's Church Hall, Cambridge A Bird Photographer's Year in Finland by Jari Peltomäki

Jari Peltomäki will show some stunning bird images and tell us about what happens in Finnish nature (and especially in birdlife) at different times of the year. Jari is Director of Finnature Ltd, a company specialized in wildlife watching and wildlife photography. He was International Wildbird Photographer of the year 2004 and gained several 'semis' and 'finals' in BBC's Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition during last couple of years. He was a member of Finnish Rarities Committee years 1994-2001 and has written numerous articles in Finnish and international journals, mostly on various aspects of bird identification. Look at Jari's website, www.birdphoto.fi, for a taste of his photography.

Friday February 10th St John's Church Hall, Cambridge
Africa from the Victoria Falls to the Skeleton Coast by Phil Palmer

Phil Palmer's talk will introduce us to the exciting birdlife to be found in the forests and lakes of Uganda and the contrasting habitats of Namibia's desert and coastal wetlands. Phil is well travelled and regularly gives lectures based on his trips. In 2004 he helped the Russian Arctic Academy to survey the Chukotka Peninsula. He is author of *First for Britain and Ireland* and a council member of the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust.

FIELD TRIP 2006

The Great Fen Project
January 15th 2006, 1000–1200

Guided field trip to the Great Fen Project, Woodwalton, with Chris Gerrard and Alan Bowley. The project aims to restore 3000 hectares of fenland habitat which will connect Woodwalton Fen and Holme Fen National Nature Reserves and have great benefits for wildlife and people. As numbers are limited to 30 places, booking is essential for this meeting. For further information and to book, please contact Jono Leadley: phone 01954 713551 (work), email jonoleadley@gmail.com
Also see the project's website: www.greatfen.org.uk

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

We welcome the following new members, Sue Jarrett of Willingham, Peter Moule of Over and Carol Schaessens of Cambridge.

Bruce Martin

A MESSAGE TO ALL MEMBERS FROM THE TREASURER

Subscriptions are due on 1st January 2006, ***please pay promptly – it saves the club the cost of sending reminders.***

Many of you pay by Bankers Standing Order and your bank should pay your subscription on the first working day in January 2005. If you pay by cash or cheque, please see me at an indoor meeting or post your subscription to me at 14 Spens Avenue, Cambridge CB3 9LS.

Subscriptions :	Full membership	£14.00
	Senior/concessionary	£10.00
	Student	£ 6.00

If you are a tax payer and have not yet completed a 'Gift Aid Form' to enable the club to reclaim 28p in the £ from the Inland Revenue on your subscription, please contact me either on 01223 356476 or email rita.lingard@ntlworld.com

If you no longer pay tax and have signed either on old covenant or a more recent gift aid form please let me know as the Club will no longer be entitled to reclaim tax on your subscription.

The tax we reclaim from the Inland Revenue is very important to the finances of the Club, ***last year we were able to reclaim over £900*** but there are still some of you who pay tax that have 'just not yet got round to completing the form'. Please contact me to check and if I do not hold a 'Gift Aid Form' for you I will be very pleased to send one to you by post or email. Remember it does not cost you anything – all the money the Club gains comes from the Inland Revenue.

Rita Lingard (Hon. Treasurer)

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The Cambridgeshire Bird Club exists to promote the conservation of birds and their habitats in the county, identify areas of conservation value and advance the education of the public in the study of birds.

www.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 email records to: John Oates by January 7th

Please send records by post to: Louise Bacon by January 7th

Next Bulletin due out February 2006, covering November–December 2005

GOOD BIRDING!