

# CAMBRIDGESHIRE BIRD CLUB

*Bulletin* No. 383



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

## RECENT REPORTS NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER 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 Woodpeckers and Hybrids and Exotica), Stuart Elsom (Larks to Thrushes), Mike Foley (Warblers to Tits) and David Wege (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).

### AGM 2006

The 2006 Annual General Meeting will be held at St Johns Church Hall, Hills Road, Cambridge at 8.00 p.m. on Friday March 10th (see p 11).

### 2005 Bird Records

Please submit any outstanding records to the County Recorders (including descriptions) by May 7th.



*Little Egrets by Graham Easy*

Numbers in brackets indicate November and December maximums.

## **WILDFOWL**

**Mute Swan** At Fen Drayton GP (146; 127), Grafham Water (67; 17) the Ouse Washes (352; 340) and Paxton Pits (109; 131). Also reported from 6 other sites.

**Tundra Swan** Away from areas close to the Nene Ouse Washes birds were noted at Ferry Meadows CP (1), Fowlmere (13), Grafham Water (4), Kingfishers Bridge (25 flying over), Paxton Pits (2), Streatham (10 flying NNE), Trumpington (1 flying NE) and Wicken Fen (16). The maximum number on the Ouse Washes dawn roost count was 3061.

**Whooper Swan** Maximums at the Nene and Ouse Washes were 44 and 1784 respectively. Away from the Washes birds seen at Elm (38), Fen Drayton GP (17 over), Holt Fen (4) and Wicken Fen (1).

**Tundra Bean Goose** Three birds flew into Kingfishers Bridge on Dec 25th.

**Pink-footed Goose** Fifteen were at the Ouse Washes on Nov 3rd, 2 at the Nene Washes on Dec 8th and 1 at Shropshire's Reservoir on Dec 31st.

**Greater White-fronted Goose** Singles present at the Ouse Washes on Dec 14–17th, Fen Drayton GP on Dec 20th and Paxton Pits on Dec 31st.

**Greylag Goose** At Grafham Water (109; 182), Kingfishers Bridge (92; 800+), the Ouse Washes (377; 156) and Paxton Pits (476; 408). The only other three-figure count was 170 at Wicken Fen.

**Canada Goose** At Kingfishers Bridge (660; 511) and the Ouse Washes (332; 278). Other three-figure counts were noted at Portholme Meadow (100+), Ouse Fen (176) and Wicken Fen (250).

**Barnacle Goose** Up to 4 birds were at Paxton Pits in November and 3 in December. Singles were seen at other 5 sites.

**Brent Goose** A juvenile was at Ouse Fen from Nov 20th to 28th.

**Egyptian Goose** Two birds were seen at Earith GP on Nov 9th, 2 at Needingworth GP and the Ouse Washes on Nov 13th and 6 at Wicken Fen on the same day. Up to 8 birds were present in December.

**Common Shelduck** Single figures were seen at 6 sites, Holt Fen (2), Grafham Water (7), Kingfishers Bridge (1), the Nene Washes (3), the Ouse Washes (2) and Paxton Pits (6).

**Mandarin** Four birds were at Grafham Water during the period and 2 at Paxton Pits on Dec 11th.

**Eurasian Wigeon** At Fen Drayton GP (516; 728), Kingfishers Bridge (108; 390), Needingworth GP (794; 675), Ouse Fen (580; 580), the Ouse Washes (11,049; 37,395), Paxton Pits (736; 1103) and Wicken Fen (320; 470). Treble figures were also noted at the Cam Washes (180), Holt Fen (230) and Shropshire's Reservoir (242). Also reported from 5 other sites.

**American Wigeon** A fine male bird found at the Barleycroft pit at the Needingworth complex attracted a lot of interest during its stay from November 21st until December 10th.

**Gadwall** At Fen Drayton GP (236; 295), Grafham Water (89; 77), Landbeach GP (31; 96), Needingworth GP (95; 146), the Ouse Washes (80; 62), Paxton Pits (170; 315) and Wicken Fen (50; 54). Also noted at 8 other sites.

**Eurasian Teal** At Fen Drayton GP (95; 45), Grafham Water (214; 360), Needingworth GP (69; 28), the Ouse Washes (896; 3,948), Paxton Pits (90; 213) and Wicken Fen (250; 310). Other three-figure counts were noted at Ouse Fen (100) and Woodwalton Fen (120+). Noted at 9 other sites.

**Mallard** A maximum of 1,130 on the Ouse Washes in December. Three-figure counts at 6 other sites.

**Northern Pintail** The Ouse Washes counts were (191; 1,485). Twenty-seven at the Nene Washes, 19 at Grafham Water, single figures at 6 other sites.

**Garganey** A very late female was present at Grafham Water on Nov 16th.

**Northern Shoveler** At Grafham Water (154; 273), the Ouse Washes (276; 384), Paxton Pits (137; 5) and Wicken Fen (143; 31). Double figures were noted at 5 other sites.

**Red-crested Pochard** A male at Paxton Pits remained to at least Dec 23rd and 2 females were also present on Nov 18th. Two females were at Ferry Meadows CP on Dec 15th and 1 bird at Fen Drayton GP on Dec 18th.

**Common Pochard** At Fen Drayton GP (45; 112), Grafham Water with (48; 72), Needingworth GP (34; 95) and Paxton Pits (258; 246). Double-figures were also noted at Mepal Pits/Block Fen (18), Milton CP (11), Ouse Fen (60), Ouse Washes (57), Shropshire's Reservoir (16) and St Ives GP (41).

**Tufted Duck** Counts at Fen Drayton GP were (402; 499), Grafham Water (900; 1337), Needingworth GP (181; 128), Ouse Washes (60; 116) and Paxton Pits (768; 532). Other three-figure counts were Mepal Pits/Block Fen (265) and St Ives GP (111). The December Grafham Water count was the highest since 1979 and the sixth highest ever.

**Greater Scaup** At Prior's Fen GP the 7 birds became 8 on Nov 2nd and stayed until Nov 12th when 4 disappeared and the remaining 4 left on Nov 14th. An adult female was at Grafham Water from Dec 19th to the year's end.

**Long-tailed Duck** An adult male was at Grafham Water from Nov 29th until Dec 8th.

**Common Scoter** Three birds at Ferry Meadows CP on Nov 14th increased to 8 the next day, but all were gone the following day. This was mirrored at Grafham Water: the 2 birds seen on Nov 15th increased to 48 by the 17th but had all disappeared bar one by the 18th. This was another good count for the site, second to the highest of 64 in 1988.

**Goldeneye** At Fen Drayton GP (19; 131), Grafham Water (47; 69) and Paxton Pits (96; 108). Smaller numbers were also noted at 10 other sites.

**Smew** The first birds of the winter were 4 redheads at Fen Drayton GP on Nov 3rd. These only stayed for the day and the next at this site was 5 on Dec 5th. Between then and the year-end the maximum count was 16 on Dec 18th. Paxton Pits had its first bird on Nov 19th and reached its maximum of 7 on

Dec 28th. One or two birds were also seen at Ferry Meadows CP, Grafham Water, Kingfishers Bridge and Needingworth GP.

**Goosander** At Grafham Water 1 bird on Nov 6th had increased to 11 by the year end. Twelve on Dec 31st was the maximum for Paxton Pits. Single figures were also seen at 7 other sites.

**Ruddy Duck** Noted at 3 sites.

## GAMEBIRDS

**Red-legged Partridge** Recorded at 8 sites, numbers ranging from 1–35 birds.

**Grey Partridge** Recorded at 17 sites, numbers ranging from 1–30 birds.

**Common Pheasant** Recorded at 7 sites, numbers ranging from 1–19 birds.

## DIVERS TO HERONS

**Little Grebe** At Fen Drayton GP (17; 11), Needingworth GP (23; 3), the Ouse Washes (27; 57) and Paxton Pits (21; 12). Other double figures were 10 each at Mepal GP and Shropshire's Reservoir. Single figures at 6 other sites.

**Great Crested Grebe** Counts at Fen Drayton GP were (70; 91), Grafham Water (114; 470) and Paxton Pits (26; 26). Other double figures were 30+ at Hinchbrook CP and 11 at Needingworth GP. Single figures were noted at 6 other sites.

**Red-necked Grebe** One bird was present at Grafham Water on Nov 11th and 14th and another at Fen Drayton GP from Dec 7th to the year end.

**Black-necked Grebe** A single was at Needingworth GP from Nov 8th until the end of the month, possibly the same bird that had been present in mid October.

**Great Cormorant** At Fen Drayton GP (48; 73), Grafham Water (44; 147) and the Ouse Washes (19; 41). Double figures were noted at Hinchbrook CP (20+) and Kingfishers Bridge (10). Dusk roost counts at Fen Drayton GP produced 100 birds, the Nene Washes (21) and the maximum count at Paxton Pits was 527.

**European Shag** One was at the Dog in a Doublet on Nov 25th and 2 at Chatteris on Dec 12th.

**Great Bittern** A single bird took up residence at Paxton Pits from Nov 8th until the year's end. Birds continued to be seen in the daytime at Fen Drayton GP by lucky observers when they were feeding in reed fringes or sitting on an island. The roosting area began to attract more and more people as the news spread, but it wasn't always easy to see the birds coming in. At times they would fly over your head, but mostly would only be seen by the sharpest eyes in the gloom as they appeared from behind the trees and dropped quickly in to the reeds. Occasionally one would land in an osier before dropping down giving an opportunity for a longer view. The site record was broken again when 5 birds were seen on Dec 28th.

**Little Egret** Single birds were noted at 8 sites.

**Grey Heron** At Fen Drayton GP (11; 16), Grafham Water (123; 13) and the Ouse Washes (15; 8).

Double figures were also noted at Paxton pits with 15 on Dec 13th. Single figures at 11 other sites..

## RAPTORS

**Red Kite** Just a single sighting of one at Sawtry on Nov 5th.

**Eurasian Marsh Harrier** Recorded at 8 sites, with a peak of 5 on Nene Washes during November and December. Others were recorded at Over Fen GP during late November, Prior's Fen on Nov 10th, Paxton Pits on Nov 30th, Fowlmere on Dec 15th and occasionally from Kingfishers Bridge, Ouse Washes and Wicken Fen.

**Hen Harrier** Peak counts from Wicken Fen (1; 5), Ouse Washes (1; 5), Woodwalton Fen (2; -) and Nene Washes (1; -). Others were seen at Grafham Water on Nov 6th, Orton BP on Nov 21st, Haddenham on Nov 25th, Cam Washes (Upware) on Dec 7th and Sixteen Foot Drain on Dec 25th.

**Goshawk** One reported at Offords on Nov 4th.

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk** Recorded at 25 sites, with all counts involving 1–4 birds.

**Common Buzzard** Recorded at 24 sites. All counts of 1–3 birds.

**Common Kestrel** Recorded at 29 sites, peak counts included Nene Washes (19; 12), otherwise 1–7 birds.

**Merlin** Apart from 2 on Ouse Washes during November and Over Fen GP on Nov 19th, all other sightings involved singles during November at Paxton Pits on 1st & 5th, Holt Fen on Nov 6th, Fen Drayton GP on 7th. Fowlmere on 12th, Manea on 13th, Bluntisham on 16th, Nene Washes on 21st, Grafham Water on 24th & 25th, Wicken Fen on 27th and during December at Fowlmere on 4th, Wicken Fen on 7th, Nene Washes on 8th and 27th, Over Fen GP on 10th, Cambourne on 16th, Car Dyke on 17th, Paxton Pits on 27th and both Buckden GP and Fen Drayton GP on 31st.

**Eurasian Hobby** A very late record from Grafham Water on Nov 9th – if accepted, this will become latest county record by 7 days.

**Peregrine** Two were seen during November and December on Ouse Washes, otherwise singles were seen during November at Nene Washes on 1st & 27th, Royston on 1st, Foul Anchor on 5th, Holt Fen on 5th, 12th & 14th, Farcet Fen on 10th, Grafham Water on 11th & 12th, Paxton Pits on 12th & 28th, Wicken Fen on 20th, Cam Washes (Upware) on 21st. During December at Kingfishers Bridge on 1st, Wicken Fen on 5th, Paxton Pits on 8th & 13th, Over Fen GP on 11th, Nene Washes on 16th & 27th, Cambridge on 22nd and Twentypence on 25th.

## RAILS

**Water Rail** Recorded at 11 sites, numbers ranging from 1–6 birds, although impressive counts included 10 at Fen Drayton GP in December and a massive 22 at Kingfishers Bridge during November – a new county record (c.f. 20+ at Woodwalton Fen in Dec 1979).

**Common Moorhen** Recorded at 19 sites. Peak counts included Ouse Washes (83; 47), Grafham Water (29; 45), Fen Drayton GP (44; 37), Paxton Pits (15; 29). Otherwise 1–26 birds.

**Common Coot** Recorded at 14 sites. Peak counts included Fen Drayton GP (1362; 1301), Paxton Pits (1028; 1272), Grafham Water (732; 1234), Barleycraft GP (535; -), Ouse Washes (51; 309). Otherwise 1–204 birds. Partial-albino still at Godmanchester GP..

## WADERS

**Ringed Plover** Holt Fen Nov 1st and 11th to 13th, Grafham Water 2 on Nov 1st.

**Eurasian Dotterel** Single at Over Fen Nov 27th to 28th and at Fen Drayton GP on Dec 4th and Fenstanton on 10th was thought probably to be an adult and returning bird

**European Golden Plover** Highest counts from Holt Fen (5000; 4000), Ouse Fen 5000 on Nov 28th, Fenstanton 4000 on Dec 13th, Soham 2000 on Dec 19th, Barleycraft (743; 2000), Westfield Farm (Comberton) 1800 on Nov 16th, Trumpington 1500 Nov/Dec max, Ouse Washes (950; 800), other peak counts Ferry Meadows CP and Orton BP 700, Little Eversden 500, Nene Washes 400, Paxton Pits GP 400.

**Northern Lapwing** Main locality was Ouse Washes with 9554 in November and 7211 in December, other peak counts at Over Fen 2000, Nene Washes 1900, Holt Fen 1600, Paxton Pits GP 900.

**Red Knot** Singles at Grafham Water on Nov 7th and Dec 15th to 27th and Paxton Pits on Dec 31st.

**Dunlin** Main locality was Ouse Washes where only 10 in November rising to peak of 136 on Dec 21st. Elsewhere up to 17 at Paxton Pits, 16 at Grafham Water, 12 at Nene Washes, 10 at Holt Fen and 7 at Barleycraft GP.

**Ruff** Main locality was Ouse Washes with peaks of 127 on Nov 7th and 315 Dec 17th –21st. Elsewhere at Holt Fen peak of 19 on Nov 2nd and 1–3 from a further 4 sites.

**Jack Snipe** All records as follows: Hampton Lakes 5 on Nov 7th, Cambourne 5 on Nov 27th, Orton BP 4 (Nov), Mepal Airfield (1; 3), Paxton Pits (1; 2), Prior's Fen GP 2 on Nov 7th, Over Fen 2 on Dec 4th and singles from Kings Dyke NR, Nene Washes, Ouse Washes and Wicken Fen.

**Common Snipe** Peak numbers during November 1st to 20th with Holt Fen 180, Over Fen GP 134, Nene Washes 110, Ouse Washes 99, Chippenham Fen 24, Mepal Airfield 20. In December 40 at Mepal Airfield on 17th and 25 at Paxton Pits and 1–8 from a further 10 sites.

**Eurasian Woodcock** Recorded throughout the period from 20 sites, mostly singles, highest counts from Ouse Washes with 4 on Nov 23rd, Fen Drayton and Paxton Pits 1–3 regular, Kingfishers Bridge 3 on Nov 9th.

**Black-tailed Godwit** Numbers at Ouse Washes built from 60 on Nov 7th to 325 on 12th to a peak of 1154 on Dec 19th. Nene Washes 33 from Dec 1st to 2nd. Up to 8 at Holt Fen Nov 2nd to 4th and

singles from Barleycraft GP, Grafham Water and Wicken Fen.

**Bar-tailed Godwit** Single flying south over Grafham Water on Dec 3rd.

**Eurasian Curlew** Two at Ouse Washes on Nov 7th and single at Nene Washes on Nov 16th.

**Common Redshank** Highest counts from Nene Washes (90; 90), Ouse Washes (26; 100), Holt Fen (30; 0), Wisbech (R.Nene) 30 on Nov 19th, Grafham Water (7; 16), Barleycraft GP 11 on Nov 13th, 1–7 from a further 6 sites.

**Common Greenshank** Single at Nene Washes on Nov 15th.

**Green Sandpiper** Highest count came from Paxton Pits with 3 on Nov 29th. 1–2 at a further 14 sites

**Common Sandpiper** A single at Paxton Pits Nov 13th and 17th and Dec 4th.

## SKUAS TO TERNS

**Mediterranean Gull** In November singles recorded at Hampton Lakes on 7th, Holt Fen on 8th and Fen Drayton GP on 27th. December saw up to 3 roosting at Grafham Water, also noted roosting at Fen Drayton GP.

**Laughing Gull** None reported! In November over 60+ birds were recorded in Britain and Ireland so we won't get a better chance to add this species to the Cambs list.

**Little Gull** A single adult noted at Grafham Water on Nov 5th.

**Black-headed Gull** Roosting birds totalled 12,000+ at Grafham Water and 1500+ at Fen Drayton GP during November with 500 at Cherry Hinton Pits on Dec 29th. An almost pure albino bird noted at Grafham Water from November matched a bird seen in previous years.

**Common Gull** In November 4000+ noted roosting at Grafham Water and 250+ at Fen Drayton GP. Good feeding conditions on the Ouse Washes attracted 620 birds on Dec 20th and at Paxton Pits day roosting birds peak at 215 in December.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** In November up to 800+ roosted at Grafham Water and 400 at Fen Drayton GP.

**Herring Gull** Milton Tip attracted up to 460 birds during the period, these accounted for the similar numbers noted roosting at Fen Drayton GP.

**Yellow-legged Gull** Peak counts of 4+ noted during the period at Barleycraft GP (4), Fen Drayton GP (13), Grafham Water (9), Holt Fen (6) and Landbeach (6), 1–3 noted at 6 other sites.

**Caspian Gull** Following a single at Milton Tip on Nov 30th 1–3 birds were recorded at Buckden GP, Fen Drayton GP, Grafham Water, Landbeach, Milton Tip and Ouse Washes during December.

**Greater Black-backed Gull** Low numbers this winter with 200 roosting at Grafham Water and 120 at Kingfishers Bridge the largest counts received.

**Black-legged Kittiwake** A single adult was at Grafham Water on Nov 4th.

**Common Tern** A winter plumaged adult at Grafham Water present up to Nov 8th was found dead there on 9th.

## PASSERINES

**Feral Pigeon** Numbers in Wisbech Town Centre increase to 320+ during November and a total of 260+ birds noted from sites around Cambridge.

**Stock Pigeon** Large flocks noted at two Fenland sites, Prior's Fen 141 in November and Coveney 145 in December, also 75 at Paxton Pits on Dec 13th. Small numbers regular at bird tables in Fowlmere, Cambridge and Stapleford.

**Wood Pigeon** Over 1800 noted from two sites at Melbourn in December. Largely a sedentary species, but 303 over Fanshawe Rd Cambridge in one hour early am suggest some movement, albeit locally perhaps?

**Collared Dove** Peak counts of 40+ noted at Brook Rd Cambridge (40 roosting), Kingfishers Bridge (45), Manea (73) and Paxton Pits (42).

**Barn Owl** Forty-four records received from 17 sites including up to 4 at Wicken Fen.

**Little Owl** Seventeen records received from 14 sites.

**Tawny Owl** Only 12 records from 9 sites.

**Long-eared Owl** Reported from 2 sites.

**Short-eared Owl.** Twenty-nine records received from 11 sites including up to 6 at Wicken Fen.

**Kingfisher** Reported from 24 widespread sites including up to 4 at Paxton Pits.

**Green Woodpecker** Another very widespread species with up to 9 reported from Barleycraft GP and 7 at both Fen Drayton GP and Ouse Washes.

**Greater Spotted Woodpecker** At Wicken Fen 8 different birds handled during November.

**Lesser-Spotted Woodpecker** Records were from Caxton Hall, Godmanchester and Monks Wood.

**Skylark** Reported from 18 sites with a maximum of 100 at Manor Farm (Fowlmere) on Nov 12th and Stirtloe on Nov 29th.

**Barn Swallow** Three or four late birds noted during the period. The first was noted at Fowlmere on Nov 6th with another at Prior's Fen, Peterborough the next day, the third and latest individual was noted at Caldecote on Dec 16th.

**House Martin** Two singles noted during the period. The first was at Elton on Nov 4th with several noted the following day at Little Paxton village

**Meadow Pipit** Records were received from 11 sites with the highest count coming from Ouse Washes with 83 present on Dec 19th.

**Rock Pipit** Only 1 recorded in the period, a single at Grafham Water on Nov 28th.

**Water Pipit** As many as 16 were recorded during the period as follows. Ouse Washes 3, Kingfishers Bridge 2, Nene Washes 2, 1-2 at Paxton Pits with singles noted at Ferry Meadows and Holt Fen.

**Grey Wagtail** Reports were received from 24 sites with the majority of records concerning 1-2 birds. The maximum was 3 at Paxton on Nov 2nd.

**Pied Wagtail** Counts received from 8 sites with a maximum of 200 pre-roost in St. Neots on Nov 14th.

**Bohemian Waxwing** After last winters' influx, numbers were back to normal this year with records as follows. Willingham 3 on Nov 19th, Kingfishers

Bridge 2 on Nov 22nd, Ouse Washes 1 on Nov 26th and Dec 9th, Woodston Ponds 2 on Dec 6th, Over, 1 on Dec 24th and finally 4 at Ferry Meadows on Dec 28th.

**Black Redstart** One seen at Fowlmere on Nov 15-16th. This mirrors the last record at this site in 2001 when a single was noted on Nov 9th.

**Stonechat** One or two birds were noted from at least 20 sites. The maximum throughout the period was a superb 18-20 at Nene Washes.

**Northern Wheatear** One record during the period, a late migrant was noted at Knapwell on Nov 4th.

**Ring Ouzel** Two singles, at opposite ends of the County. The first was at Knapwell on Nov 1st with another seen next day at Nene Washes

**Blackbird** Records from 7 sites with maximum of 27 at Monks Hardwick, St. Neots on Dec 11th

**Fieldfare** Records received from 17 sites with good numbers recorded. The maximum count was from Wisbech with 750 on Nov 16th. Many sites recorded at least 300 birds throughout the period.

**Song Thrush** Records were received from 5 sites with 1-3 individuals at most sites. The maximum was 13 at Kingfishers Bridge on Nov 20th.

**Redwing** Recorded from at least 13 sites with lower than average counts. Most sites recorded between 20 and 50. Maximum during the period was from with 150 at Wicken Fen on Nov 25th.

**Mistle Thrush** Reports of 1-2 from 10 sites. Maximum was 23 at Stow-cum-Quy.

**Wood Nuthatch** Records of 1 or 2 birds came from Croxton Hall, Grafham Water (Savages Wood), Madingley Wood and Ferry Meadows CP.

**Eurasian Treecreeper** Records of 1-3 birds received from 7 sites as follows: Paxton Pits, Croxton Hall, Eversden Wood, Woodwalton Fen, Cobb's Wood (Wimpole), Toft and Fowlmere NR.

**Great Grey Shrike** The often obliging bird was present at Wicken Fen from Nov 7th until at least Dec 4th. It returned to the site on Dec 28th until at least the end of the year. Other records were of a bird seen in flight over Impington on Dec 1st, and one at Soham Mere on Dec 18th.

**Eurasian Jay** Recorded from 15 sites, with maximum counts of 6 at Paxton Pits on Dec 13th, 6 at Cobb's Wood (Wimpole) on Dec 28th and 5+ at Elm throughout December.

**Black-billed Magpie** Reported from 10 sites. Maximum counts of 70+ at roost in Cambridge (Brooks Road) on Dec 24th, 45 at Ouse Washes on Nov 7th, and 30 at roost in Trumpington during December are all noteworthy.

**Eurasian Jackdaw** Records received from just 6 sites, with 350 flying over Kingfishers Bridge on Dec 21st and a roost of 75 in Cambridge during late December being the only notable counts.

**Rook** Records received from 5 sites, with no counts of more than 80 birds.

**Carrion Crow** Recorded from 8 sites. The highest counts came from Nene Washes (Eldernell) with 111 birds on Nov 11th and 85 birds on Dec 16th.

**Common Starling** Highest count received was of 4,183 at Ouse Washes on Nov 7th. Up to 2,000

birds at Manor Farm (Fowlmere) on Nov 1st, and then 2,000 at roost in Fowlmere on Dec 2nd were also notable counts.

**House Sparrow** Maximum counts from Elm with 75+ in November and 90+ in December. A count of 43 at Way Head on Dec 20th is also notable.

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow** Recorded from 5 sites. Up to 91 were recorded from Grange Farm (Witcham) during mid-November, with up to 29 recorded from Ouse Washes throughout the period. However, 140 at Block Fen on Dec 21st is an excellent record.

**Chaffinch** Records received from 10+ sites. High counts were of 100+ at Stirtloe on Nov 29th and 73–94 at Ouse Washes throughout the period.

**Brambling** Records, mostly of 1–5 birds, came from 10 sites. Numbers at Fowlmere rose from 3 on Dec 16th, to a reserve record high of 88 on Dec 29th.

**Greenfinch** Noted from 9 sites. Maximum counts were of 70 at Whittlesford/Duxford on Dec 8th, 52 at Ouse Washes on Nov 7th, and 40 at Elm throughout the period; 202 individuals were ringed at Wicken Fen during December.

**Goldfinch** Noted from 15 sites. Highest counts were of 189–230 at Wicken Fen throughout the period, 131–224 at Ouse Washes throughout and 75 at Burwell (Little Fen) on Nov 10th.

**Eurasian Siskin** Recorded from 30 sites. Maximum counts were of c.60 at Chippenham Fen throughout the period, 50 at Woodwalton Fen Dec 24th and 26th, 30–40 at Paxton Pits throughout, and 30 at Fen Drayton GP on Dec 29th.

**Common Linnet** Records were received from 8 sites. Peak counts were of 70 at Fen Drayton GP on Nov 26th, 50+ at Elm throughout November and 50 at Over Fen GP on Dec 10th.

**Lesser Redpoll** Records from 24 sites, mostly involving 1–5 birds. Numbers built to 20 at Kingfishers Bridge on Dec 22nd, with other high counts being 20 at Fulbourn NR on Dec 3rd, 14 at Nene Washes on Nov 3rd, 12 at Chippenham Fen on Dec 28th and 11 at Lode on Dec 31st.

**Mealy Redpoll** Recorded from Paxton Pits where 6 birds were present on Nov 28th. Also recorded from Woodwalton Fen with 3 on Dec 24th and 1 on Dec 26th, and from Fen Drayton GP, where a bird was seen on Dec 18th.

**Common Crossbill** Recorded from Monks Wood, where 2 pairs were present from Dec 14th to Dec

20th, and Grafham Water a bird flew over on Nov 28th.

**Common Bullfinch** Reported from over 15 sites, with 45 at Paxton Pits on Dec 13th representing an exceptional count.

**Hawfinch** An excellent run for this species saw 1–2 birds recorded at Ferry Meadows CP on a number of dates between Nov 21st and Dec 31st. Singles were also recorded at Abbots Ripton on Nov 20th, Brampton Wood on Dec 7th, Paxton Pits on Dec 13th and 20th, and Maxey GP on Dec 28th.

**Yellowhammer** Recorded from 12 sites, with 120 at Grange Farm (Witcham) on Dec 27th, 40–61 at Paxton Pits throughout the period, and 40+ at Stirtloe on Nov 29th being noteworthy.

**Reed Bunting** Recorded from 16 sites. High counts included 27 at Wicken Fen on Nov 30th and c.60 at Witcham – Coveney on Dec 29th.

**Corn Bunting** Recorded received from 11 sites. A high count of 200 at Manor Farm (Fowlmere) on Nov 12th is exceptional. Other high counts include 50 at Stirtloe in mid-December, 37 at Landbeach on Dec 15th, 35 at Ouse Washes on Dec 21st, 33 at Tetworth on Dec 18th and 30 at Cambourne on Dec 1st.

#### HYBRIDS

**Barnacle x Canada Goose** One noted at Paxton Pits on Nov 7th.

**Canada x Greylag** Up to 3 at both Kingfishers Bridge and Paxton Pits during the period.

**Gadwall x Mallard** A drake bird was photographed on the Ouse Washes on Nov 20th.

**Tufted duck x Pochard** 'Lesser Scaup' types noted at Milton CP Grafham Water, Kingfishers Bridge and St Ives. A 'Redhead' type was noted at Mepal Pits on Dec 3rd.

#### EXOTICA

**Black Swan** Two still present on the River Cam Jesus lock – Grantchester.

**Bar-headed Goose** Singles noted at Prior's Fen GP and Ouse Washes in November.

**Fulvous Whistling Duck** A single on the Ouse Washes on Nov 13th.

**Harris Hawk** A single near the Railway Bridge on the Ouse Washes on Nov 12th.

**Contributors:** Colin Addington, Louise Bacon, Ian Barton, Roger Beecroft, James Cadbury, Ade Cooper, Robin Cox, Ian Delgado, Pat Doody, Dr Mike Foley, Andrew Green, David Griffiths, John Harding, Kevin Harris, Brian & Sheila Harrup, Mark Hawkes, Peter Herkenrath, Pete Holt, David Hopkins, Julian Hughes, Michael Jennings, Vince Lea, Jono Leadley, Tony Mallyon, Owen & Monica Marks, Bruce & Gwen Martin, Mark Missin, John Oates, Richard Palmer, Rob Palmer, Richard Patient, Jon Pavey, Doug Radford, Dr Gareth Rees, Nick Richardson, Tony Roberts, Kathleen Rosewarne, Paul Rule, Bob & Ann Scott, Clive Sinclair, Howard Slatter, Richard Thomas, Chris Thorne, Roger Tozer, Alan & Brenda Wadsworth, P. M. Warrington, David White

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.

# The changing status of Little Egret in Cambridgeshire.

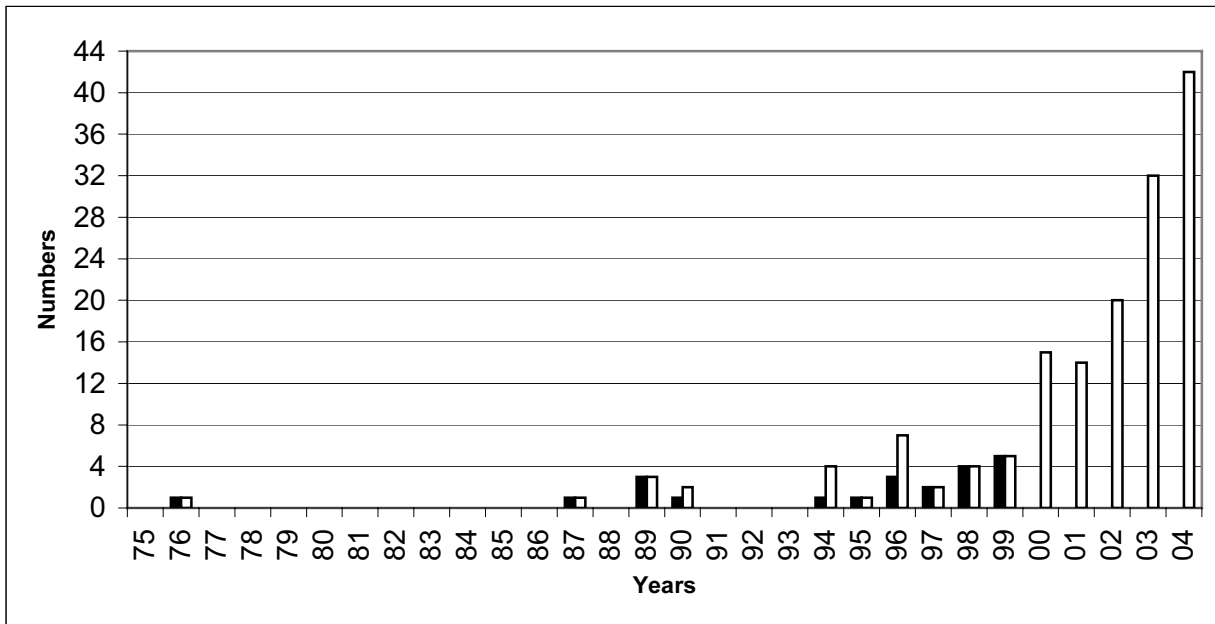
Mark Hawkes.

The diminutive and charismatic Little Egret has become a widespread, and popular sight in many parts of Cambridgeshire. This is a new phenomenon and until quite recently this species was still considered scarce throughout Britain. The first official British record is somewhat clouded (see Palmer 2000 for further information), but only 23 were recorded prior to the formation of the British Birds Records Committee in 1958. Due to a northward range expansion in Europe, this total had reached 740 individuals by 1971, and a massive 15,034 by the end of 1990 (Rogers 1997). Although now a very familiar sight around coastal Britain, they remain somewhat scarcer inland.

The first Cambridgeshire record was around 1850, when two were shot near Whittlesey Mere (Clark 1996). It was then a further 114 years until the next record, when one was observed at Paxton Pits on May 14th 1964. This was followed by records from Cambridge on May 18th 1976 and on Nene Washes on August 4th 1987.

Figure 1. Distribution of Little Egrets in Cambridgeshire 1975–2004.

The solid bars represent number of records. Open bars represent number of sites visited.



As can be seen by the above figure, records of this species remained very rare until the late 80's/early 90's. This was followed by a slow increase in records between 1994-99. During this time some individuals would wander between several sites (e.g. in 1994, one bird visited four sites over two days). However, in 2000 a massive increase in records was noted, rendering it impossible to determine the exact number of records/individuals and this increase has continued since, with at least 42 sites recording Little Egrets in 2004.

The first confirmed British breeding record was in Dorset during 1996, when a single pair raised three young. This was followed by 12 pairs (raising 24 young) in Co. Cork in 1997. By 2002 between 146-162 pairs were confirmed/suspected breeding at 22 locations (Ogilvie *et al* 2004). The first confirmed Cambridgeshire breeding record came in 2004, when around 12 pairs raised 18 young on the Ouse Washes (Ward 2005). Birds had been present during the summer (and winter) at this potential breeding site for several years prior to this – a feature also noted in newly established colonies in western France (Voisin *et al*, 2005). The presence of this small colony resulted in a count of 25 birds on June 20th, which in itself was a new county record.

Initially, during the late 80's to mid 90's, most records fell in the 'summer' period, with a notable peak in May. As the number of records continues to increase, birds are now resident, and are recorded in all months of the year.

Figure 2. Analysis of 2004 Little Egret records (using CBC database):

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Approx. number of sites visited	8	14	3	1	7	5	14	13	7	4	4	5
Approx. number of individuals in county	6	10	4	5	10	26	34	25	9	7	5	5
Largest count	3	2	2	5	3	25	22	18	3	3	2	2

The above figure shows that small numbers wintered in the county during 2004. These numbers decreased by late winter as birds moved to breeding areas, and by April birds were only noted at a breeding site, where numbers built-up during May. The large count of individuals during June was due to the breeding group on the Ouse Washes. During July and August post-breeding dispersal began (note the increase in the number of sites being visited), and from September until December small numbers remained at a few sites in the county.

During 2004, Grafham Water recorded Little Egrets on 5 single dates (2 in February and singles in March, May, July and August). However, during the summer/autumn of 2005, a different pattern was noted. The first bird arrived in early July, with up to four by the end of the month (equalling the sites peak count of four in July 2003). From mid-late August seven birds were regularly seen, and by September 9th a peak of 14 birds were present, this included some juveniles. Numbers then fell away rapidly, with just six on the 16th, four on 19th and 1-2 birds from September 20th throughout October and November. The peak count was the highest ever in the county away from a breeding site. A similar pattern was noted at near-by Paxton Pits (peaking at 6 birds), and this post-breeding build-up was also noted at Rutland Water, Leics (M. Berriman, personal communication) and Chew Valley Lake, Somerset (K. Vinicombe, personal communication) – where, at both sites, the peak count was nine birds. Interestingly, Greater London’s largest count was a roost of 34 birds at Broadwater GP’s on December 31st 2004, suggesting a strong wintering population (A. Self, personal communication).

The expanding British population, with its exponential growth, and the establishment of a breeding site within the county, should ensure this little heron remains an increasingly familiar site for county birders, and hopefully other breeding sites will become established in the future.

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## **RSPB Spotted Flycatcher survey in Bedfordshire/Cambridgeshire: 2005**

*Danaë Stevens & Michael MacDonald*

In 2005 the birds returned relatively late to the study area (stretching from St Neots to Willington, Stotfold and Eltisley), with many not appearing until late May or even early June. It is possible that poor weather along their spring migration routes was responsible. This late arrival may be the reason that very few pairs apparently attempted to raise second broods after first broods had fledged. The latest birds observed were on September 8th, when several juveniles were still flying around the churchyard of St Peter's in Tempsford. However, in other places the birds had left well before this.

Over the summer, more than 40 pairs of Spotted Flycatchers were located in the study area, although nests were not found for all of these. In some cases researchers returned late in the season to places where birds were known to be, but had been unable to find a nest, only to see fledged young flying around. Despite extensive searching, practically no birds were found in farmland, and only a handful in woodland. Gardens, churchyards and parks, seem to be the stronghold for this species in this area. This contrasts with the results from the other study area for this research project, in South Devon, where birds are still quite common in farmland and woodland.

Forty nests were monitored. Three of these were late nests in the same cup as had been used earlier in the season, and a handful of others were second nests in close proximity to early attempts. The most popular nest locations were ivy roots against tree trunks, and climbing vegetation against house walls. The birds seemed quite happy with human activity around the nest, and two were positioned directly above front doors. Thirty of the nests were successful, i.e. they fledged at least one chick. In total, 102 chicks fledged from the 40 nests. This works out as 2.55 chicks per nest, or just over 3 chicks per pair over the whole breeding season, taking into account that some pairs have more than one nest. This represents a relatively high breeding success rate for a small song-bird, and suggests that Spotted Flycatchers had a fairly good breeding year in this area. We hope to continue this nest monitoring work in the area in 2006 to see if this level of breeding success is maintained. We also plan to use nest cameras to record feeding activity at the nest and to identify causes of nest failure in more detail.

Fifteen adult birds and 81 chicks were colour ringed over the summer. This not only helps us to follow the movement of birds during the breeding season, but also helps us to follow the nesting success and survival of individual birds in future years. The movements of individual birds are not precisely known; it is presumed that adults come back to the same locations, because there are often nests in the same place year after year. This colour-ringing program will help to establish whether this is true. Young birds may come back to the same area, but this is far less certain. Many will not survive their first migration, but it is possible that some could return anywhere within the study area next spring.

We would like to thank all those who allowed access to their property during 2005 and to all those who contributed information on the locations of Spotted Flycatchers and who helped us with our survey work to locate breeding pairs. Without this help and cooperation, this important piece of research would not be possible.

**\*\*\***

## **Cambridgeshire Breeding Owls Survey 2004–6: Update for 2005 Season**

We had a rather poor return rate this year compared to last year, although some new parts of the county were covered. Responses have shown more Barn Owls than we thought we knew about, but information on our commonest two owls, the Little and Tawny, is still very patchy. Space in this issue precludes me from including maps here, but a full report will appear in the 2005 annual report. I can summarise as follows:

Species	Sites 2005 (definite, possible)	Total 2004 (definite, possible)
Barn Owl	16, 22	60, 52
Tawny Owl	13, 27	40, 61
Little Owl	210, 30	49, 77
Long-Eared Owl	8, 9	17, 7

This data show how reduced the numbers of records received were this year. So, if you have been participating in this survey but haven't returned your data to me, please do so. Otherwise, please send in your records to the county recorder and we may be able to incorporate them into our data.

The Barn Owl numbers are a big under-estimate, as we do not include here data from the Barn Owl box project which is an ongoing scheme in the fenland parts of the county. A summary of their data from 2004 is included in the systematic list part of the annual report 2004.

We would like to thank everyone who has participated in this survey so far, spending invaluable hours in the field at dusk to obtain this data.

This year, 2006, we would like as many volunteers as possible to help complete this project. It doesn't matter if you only want to cover a small area; all coverage helps us build a picture of the distribution of these species.

PLEASE, PLEASE GET IN TOUCH WITH ME IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO HELP IN THE FORTHCOMING SEASON WITH THIS SURVEY.

From feedback I have received, I have decided that we will hold a session actually out in the field to discuss surveying for Owls. This will be fairly short, and be held one afternoon in late February or early March.

*Louise Bacon, for the Research Committee*

## **Swifts in Cambridge**

In 2002 a survey of screaming swifts was carried out by the Cambridge City Greenways project and CBC members were involved. In 2006, the two organisations are joining forces to do a repeat survey of swifts during late May and June.  
More information in the next bulletin.

## **Kingfishers Bridge Volunteers.**

Roger Beecroft who manages the 150-acre Kingfishers Bridge wetland nature reserve near Wicken is seeking help at the regular Tuesday working parties. Work is normally from 8.30 until mid afternoon, though those who can only work for a shorter period are also welcome. There is usually an opportunity either during the lunch break or after work for the day has finished to have a walk round parts of the reserve that are not open.

For further information please contact either Bruce Martin (01223 700656) or Roger Beecroft (07767 758178).

**\*\*\***

## **FORTHCOMING MEETINGS 2006**

Doors open at 7.30pm for an 8.00pm start.

### **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 and illustrated with superb photos. 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.

### **Friday March 10th St John's Church Hall, Cambridge**

#### **A.G.M. followed by Dick Newell's Seabird Odyssey**

Since his first sea-watch at Dungeness in 1957, and his first pelagic trip on an Irish Trawler in 1965, Dick has had an obsession with seabirds. Now, many pelagic trips later from Antarctica, Svalbard, South Africa, Senegal, Portugal, Oman, Australia, New Zealand and California, Dick will show pictures of some of his favourite seabirds and will take you on one of his more recent trips.

### **Friday April 7th Milton Country Park Visitor's Centre**

#### **Heathland Birds: Conservation on the Hoof by Rowena Langston**

Rowena Langston is a senior research biologist at the RSPB; she has wide interests including heathland birds, birds and wind energy, shorebird migration and bird population changes. She will talk to us about the special birds of heathland and their conservation.

(Please note this meeting is on the first Friday of April, not the second Friday which will be Good Friday).

## **FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY**

We welcome the following new members, Carlos Davies of Cambridge, James Hanlon of Great Shelford, Elizabeth Scott of Cambridge and Iain Webb of Cambridge.

*Bruce Martin*

## **A MESSAGE TO ALL MEMBERS FROM THE TREASURER**

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

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

## **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](mailto:vicki.harley@care4free.net)

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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](http://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 March 7th**

**Please send records by post to: Louise Bacon by March 7th**

**Next Bulletin due out April 2006, covering January–February 2006**

# GOOD BIRDING!