

# CAMBRIDGESHIRE BIRD CLUB

*Bulletin* No. 388



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

## RECENT REPORTS SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER 2006

These are unchecked reports rather than confirmed records; comments are made by Bruce Martin (Wildfowl, Divers to Herons), Vincent Lea (Gamebirds, Raptors, Rails), Jonathan Taylor (Waders), John Harding (Gulls and Terns), Jon Pavey (pigeons to woodpeckers), Jono Leadley (Larks to Thrushes), Mike Foley (Warblers to Tits), and David Heath (Wood Nuthatch to Buntings) and Vicki Harley (Hybrids and Exotica). 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 Cambridge Bird Club  
members.

### **AGM Notice**

The AGM of The Cambridgeshire Bird Club will be held at St Johns Church Hall on Friday March 9th 2007. Any nominations for Officers or Council Members must be sent to the Club Chairman by Friday February 9th.

*Little Ringed Plover  
Field sketch by Ben Green*



Numbers in brackets indicate September and October maximums.

## **WILDFOWL**

**Mute Swan** At Fen Drayton GP (129; 133), Grafham Water (101; 73), the Ouse Washes (101; 254) and Paxton Pits (68; 109). Double figures were noted at other 5 sites.

**Tundra Swan** Noted at just 2 sites with 2 at Prior's Fen GP on Oct 14th and 4 at Friday Bridge on Oct 28th.

**Whooper Swan** Fifteen were seen on the Ouse Washes on Oct 4th with 85 by the 23rd. On the Nene Washes 13 were noted on Oct 11th. Also noted in small numbers at 5 other sites.

**Pink-footed Goose** Singles were at Kingfishers Bridge on Oct 26th and Wicken Fen on Oct 29th. A flock of 90+ were seen heading east into Norfolk at Four Gates on Oct 29th.

**Greylag Goose** At Grafham Water (132; 32), Kingfishers Bridge (324; 562), Ouse Fen (280; 0), the Ouse Washes (1; 460) and Paxton Pits (611; 793).

**Canada Goose** At Grafham Water (212; 217), Kingfishers Bridge (800; 34), Ouse Fen (90; 0), the Ouse Washes (0; 228) and Paxton Pits (144; 8). Also reported from 2 other sites.

**Barnacle Goose** Up to 3 birds noted at 5 sites.

**Egyptian Goose** Up to 3 birds noted at 4 sites.

**Common Shelduck** Nine birds at Paxton Pits on Sep 16th had dropped to 2 by Oct 2nd. Single figures were noted at 3 other sites up to Oct 8th.

**Mandarin** Pairs were present at Bolton's Pit, Grafham Water and Whittlesford GP. Singles were seen at 2 other sites.

**Eurasian Wigeon** Numbers began to build from about mid September as seen by the following counts. At Fen Drayton GP (681; 859), Kingfishers Bridge (112; 104), the Ouse Washes (1047; 4387) and Paxton Pits (298; 500). Double figures were reported from 6 other sites.

**American Wigeon** At Barleycroft GP the male present during last winter and spring returned on Oct 1st.

**Gadwall** At the Cam Washes (99; 17), Fen Drayton GP (204; 211), Grafham Water (123; 125), Kingfishers Bridge (54; 37), the Ouse Washes (78; 62) and Paxton Pits (87; 145). Also noted at 6 other sites.

**Eurasian Teal** At Grafham Water (329; 267), the Ouse Washes (410; 427), Paxton Pits (300; 334) and Wicken Fen (20; 385). Double figures were recorded at 6 other sites.

**Mallard** At Fen Drayton GP (213; 180), Grafham Water (526; 395), the Ouse Washes (418; 990), Paxton Pits (152; 80) and Woodwalton Fen (210; 39). Other counts were 200 at Ouse Fen and double figures at 7 other sites.

**Northern Pintail** Few birds had arrived in the county during the period with single figures at 7 sites. Eleven at Kingfishers Bridge and the Ouse Washes and 10 at Wicken Fen were the highest counts.

**Garganey** A few birds were still present in the county at Fen Drayton GP (1), Ouse Fen (3), Paxton Pits (4) and Wicken Fen (3). The last record was on Oct 13th at Paxton Pits.

**Northern Shoveler** At the Cam Washes (30; 45), Fen Drayton GP (77; 82), Grafham Water (24; 15), Kingfishers Bridge (18; 30), the Ouse Washes (4; 44), and Paxton Pits (124; 118). Also reported in single figures from 4 other sites.

**Red-crested Pochard** A male was at Paxton Pits during September and 14 were present at the same site on Oct 6th. A 1st winter male was at Grafham throughout the month with a pair present for one day on Oct 8th.

**Common Pochard** The 155 at Ouse Fen on Sep 17th was the only three-figure count. Double figures we noted at 4 sites.

**Ring-necked Duck** The moulting male present at Ouse Fen from Aug 15th remained until Sep 6th.

**Tufted Duck** At Fen Drayton GP (362; 246), Grafham Water (521; 392) and Paxton Pits (332; 180). Double figures were seen at 2 other sites.

**Greater Scaup** An immature male was at Grafham Water from Sep 27th until Oct 24th.

**Common Scoter** A female/immature was present at Fen Drayton GP on Sep 16th and that or another at Ferry Meadows CP on Sep 17th.

**Goldeneye** Paxton Pits first bird of the winter was seen on Oct 21st with 25 noted on the 31st. Ferry Meadows CP was the only other site with 1 also on the 31st.

**Ruddy Duck** Noted at 4 sites.

## **GAMEBIRDS**

**Red-legged Partridge** Autumn is the best time to count coveys of both Partridge species to assess breeding success before the shooting season and predators take their toll. Red-legs were reported from just 9 sites but concerned 170 birds, including 65 at Burwell.

**Grey Partridge** Reported from 10 sites but, in contrast to Red-legs, Greys totalled only 63 birds suggesting lower productivity, fewer birds released or fewer pairs in each area – family groups often getting together to form super-coveys. Largest group was of 15 at Lode.

**Common Quail** Just 1 report, but a remarkable one. At Paxton Pits, on the very late date of Oct 24th, one was flushed at 10 m range and seen well in flight.

**Common Pheasant** Only 5 reports, 2 of which were from Westfield Farm, Comberton. Highest count 32+ at Elm.

## **DIVERS TO HERONS**

**Little Grebe** Apart from the impressive count of 44 birds at Paxton Pits during the period, the only other double figure was 10 at Fen Drayton GP on Aug 8th. Single figures were noted at 9 sites.

**Great Crested Grebe** Counts at Fen Drayton GP were (92; 78), Grafham Water (394; 471) and Paxton Pits (37; 27). Smaller numbers also noted at

6 other sites.

**Red-necked Grebe** The long-staying bird at Fen Drayton GP remained until Sept 24th.

**Black-necked Grebe** Two birds were at Grafham Water on Sep 6th.

**Great Cormorant** Double figures were noted at Fen Drayton GP (53; 51), Grafham Water (67; 43), Kingfishers Bridge (32; 25), the Ouse Washes (21; 20) and Paxton Pits (56; 88). Single figures were reported from 4 other sites.

**Great Bittern** Single birds were seen at Ely BF on Sep 26th and Fen Drayton GP on Oct 14th.

**Little Egret** Numbers decreased from 12 birds at Ouse Fen on Sep 4th to 1 on Oct 1st. Single figures were reported from 10 other sites.

**Grey Heron** At Grafham Water (24; 18) and the Ouse Washes (24; 21). Single figures were reported from 17 other sites.

**Eurasian Spoonbill** One bird was seen on the Ouse Washes in the early morning of Oct 12th.

## RAPTORS

**European Honey-buzzard** Up to 8 records, all in the second half of September. A 'possible' on the 13th at Earith was followed by birds seen at Paxton Pits (15th), Wicken Fen (22nd), Tetworth on 23rd and 24th, Fen Drayton on the 24th, followed by sightings at Grafham and Huntingdon on the 30th. Details of precise times, flight direction and plumage may help to resolve how many sightings relate to the same birds – but at least 3 different phases of juvenile were involved.

**Red Kite** Seven individuals reported across the period, mainly in the northwest of the county but one seen Fowlmere. 'Drive-by sightings' accounted for at least 3 records.

**Eurasian Marsh Harrier** Forty-four records involving birds at 18 localities, some likely to be post-breeding dispersal. Highest site total was of 8 seen at Woodwalton Fen, but 18 records referred to 2 or more birds at a site.

**Hen Harrier** Just 3 records. In September, 1 at Wicken Fen on 23rd plus a possible at Holme Fen on the same day. The Ouse Washes logged a single on Oct 28th.

**Northern Goshawk** Two records; one adult male in Little Shelford, 23rd September, plus a probable male at Monks Wood two days later.

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk** Fifty-seven records over the period, peak count of 4 reported from Paxton Pits. A wide spread of localities, some of which reported Sparrowhawks throughout the period; regularly seen hunting Starlings from the Fowlmere reedbed hide in October.

**Common Buzzard** The raptor with most reports (76) from most sites (44) involving the most birds (perhaps 150 in total!). Highest count was a site (& county?) record of 13 at Grafham Water. Many could be migrant / dispersing birds from outwith the county.

**Osprey** Reports related to perhaps 5 or 6 different birds, a good showing, including 1 lingering at

Grafham/Paxton in September. An unusually late bird on the 28th October seen at Bainton GP.

**Common Kestrel** Widely reported as singles and multiples, including up to 10 birds at Ouse Washes. Surprisingly no records from the Nene Washes.

**Merlin** First of the autumn was on the 27th September between Earith and Haddenham. Further 16 records through October from 10 sites, mainly fenland and a few other wetland sites. Only multiple record was of 2 around Farcet Fen in October.

**Eurasian Hobby** Reported throughout September, with a few in early October plus one possible at the end of that month at Paxton. Many multiple sightings and juveniles noted, with breeding noted around Paxton Pits. Peak count of 7 birds at Woodwalton Fen.

**Peregrine Falcon** Singles seen throughout the period, from a total of 13 sites, while Farcet fen held a male and female during October.

## RAILS

**Water Rail** Reported from 7 sites, most regularly at Fowlmere where the peak count of 5 calling birds was also recorded.

**Common Moorhen** A mere 10 reports of Moorhen concerned groups ranging from 2–65 birds, mostly coming from WeBS counts

**Common Coot** Reported from 11 sites, again mainly thanks to WeBS counts, which revealed that well over 3000 Coot were present in Cambridgeshire in both months. Highest counts came from Fen Drayton (856; 317), Grafham Water (1208; 1458) and Paxton Pits (844; 583).

## WADERS

**Eurasian Oystercatcher** Recorded in September flying over Cambridge on 12th, Little Paxton on 16th and 2 at Ouse Fen on 24th.

**Stone Curlew** One heard flying over Eynesbury at 10pm on Sept 9th and another was reported at Linton (on a farm track) on Sept 22nd.

**Little Plover** Four September records with the latest at Grafham Water on 16th.

**Ringed Plover** Main locality was Paxton Pits with 1–26 daily in September with a peak count of 33 on 3rd. There were 9 at Grafham Water on Sept 17th and 1–3 from a further 3 sites. Latest record was from Paxton Pits on Oct 12th.

**American Golden Plover** The county status of this species was turned on its head with 6 records in October (possibly involving as many as 6 individuals). The first was a juvenile at Farcet Fen on 5th. A moulting adult found next day on the Crowland Washes was seen to fly into Cambs on the 8th. On the 9th a juvenile was discovered at Fen Drayton GP. On the 16th one was briefly seen near March (age unspecified). Not to miss out on the action, a juvenile was at Paxton Pits from 27th to 31st when a further juvenile was present at Maxey GP on 30th–31st.

**European Golden Plover** Highest counts in October from Warboys High Fen 3500 on 28th,

Paxton Pits 2000 on 27th, Littleport 1500 on 26th, Ouse Washes 1300 on 29th, Priory Farm (Wicken) 1100 on 30th, Fen Drayton GP 1000+ on 10th, Kingfishers Bridge 1000+ on 24th, Trumpington 940 on 28th.

**Grey Plover** Single at Paxton Pits GP on Oct 28th.

**Northern Lapwing** Highest counts in September from Ouse Fen 1400 on 17th and Paxton Pits up to 800. In October Ouse Washes with 4960 on 23rd, Warboys High Fen 2500+ on 28th and Paxton Pits 1700 on 23rd.

**Red Knot** Single at Maxey GP on Sept 9th.

**Sanderling** At Grafham Water on September 1st–3rd and 19th.

**Little Stint** In September the main locality Paxton Pits held 1–7 daily with a peak of 11 on 26th. Grafham Water 2–6 from 19th to 25th with further records from Maxey GP, ferry Meadows and Ouse Fen. In October at Paxton Pits 1–3 daily with a peak of 7 on 1st and latest date of 29th and Ouse Fen on 1st.

**Pectoral Sandpiper** An exceptional autumn for this vagrant involving as many as 4 birds. The first at Grafham Water from Sept 9th to 20th, Ouse Fen on Sept 25th, another arrived the same day at Paxton Pits to remain until the morning of 26th and a long stayer at Maxey GP from Sept 28th to Oct 3rd and again on 21st (may have been present in the interim period).

**Curlew Sandpiper** At Grafham Water, 2–3 from Sept 18th to 23rd with one remaining to Oct 3rd.

**Dunlin** Highest counts from Paxton Pits where peaks of 33 in September and 17 in October. Elsewhere up to 7 at Grafham Water to Oct 8th, 6 at Priors Fen on Sept 12th and 3 at Kingfisher Bridge on Sept 24th.

**Buff-breasted Sandpiper** One reported from Wicken Fen on Oct 7th.

**Ruff** Highest count from Ouse washes where 24 on Oct 10th and 10 on Oct 23rd. Wicken Fen 12 on Oct 7th and 7–9 to month's end, Kingfishers Bridge (8; 4), and 1–3 from a further 4 sites.

**Jack Snipe** Up to 4 at Paxton Pits in October, 3 at Kings Dyke NR on Oct 15th and singles at Cam Washes, Nene Washes and Orton BP.

**Common Snipe** Recorded from 7 sites with highest count from Ouse Washes of 43 on Sept 18th, Nene Washes 38, Paxton Pits 28, Ouse Fen 24, and Cam Washes 10.

**Eurasian Woodcock** Only sighting was at Woodwalton Fen on Sept 9th.

**Black-tailed Godwit** In September, 3 at Ouse Washes on 18th, 2 at Paxton Pits on 7th; singles at Grafham Water to Oct 7th and at Priors Fen GP on Oct 14th.

**Whimbrel** Two at Grafham Water on Sept 2nd.

**Eurasian Curlew** All records in September, 2 Ouse Fen on 1st, 2 at Grafham Water on 7th and 1 at Paxton Pits on 9th.

**Spotted Redshank** Two juveniles at Maxey GP from Sept 9th to Oct 1st.

**Common Redshank** Highest counts from Ouse Fen with 21 on Oct 1st and 11 at Ouse Washes on 23rd; 1–2 from a further three sites.

**Common Greenshank** Highest counts in September from Paxton Pits where 1–14 daily with a peak of 16 on 7th, 6 at Grafham Water also on 7th, 4 at Cam Washes on 2nd and 1–2 from a further 6 sites. Latest record from Kingfishers Bridge on Oct 3rd.

**Green Sandpiper** Highest counts: Ouse Fen (10; 1), Paxton Pits (13; 4), Fen Drayton GP (5; 2) and 1–3 from a further 11 sites.

**Wood sandpiper** In September Ouse Fen from 1st to 7th, 2 at Maxey GP on 24th and Paxton Pits 1–2 daily to Oct 7th and a late bird on Oct 27th was joint latest county record.

**Common Sandpiper** In September 1–6 daily at Paxton Pits, up to 4 at Grafham Water and 1–2 from a further 3 sites. In October one at Godmanchester on 2nd at one remained at Paxton Pits to 8th.

**Ruddy Turnstone** Following a good August passage a juvenile at Paxton Pits from Sept 1st to 6th was surprisingly the sole record.

## SKUAS TO TERNS

**Mediterranean Gull** One was at Grafham on Sept 6th, a juv was there on 10th and 11th, and a 1st winter on Sep 27th. In October, the first adult on 23rd and a 2nd winter on 29th. At Ferry Meadows a juv was present from Sept 17th to 21st, with a second bird on 18th. At Farcet Fen there were two birds, a 1st winter and an ad. winter, on Sept 7th, and an adult reported on several dates between Oct 17th and 30th. A 1st winter was at Paxton on Sep 27th.

**Little Gull** Three records: singles at Paxton on Sept 5th, and at Grafham on Sept 26th and Oct 23rd; the first two 1st winter and the last an adult.

**Black-headed Gull** Numbers built up into October, with best figures 250 on winter cereal at Great Eversden on Oct 16th, 862 on the Ouse Washes on Oct 23rd, building to c3,500 two days later.

**Common Gull** There were 40 at Paxton on Sept 7th and 140 there on Oct 6th.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** Max count of 880 were noted in a field north of the reserve at Fowlmere on Sept 10th. There were 28 near Newbury Farm on Oct 8th and 64 at Paxton on Oct 16th.

**Yellow-legged Gull** Numbers continued to decline, the peak count being 6 at Grafham on Sept 11th and again on Oct 7th. There were 4 at Paxton on Sept 3rd, but thereafter this dropped to 1 or 2, which were then reported throughout the period.

**Caspian Gull** A 4th calendar-year bird noted at Grafham between Sept 30 and Oct 8th; then a 1st winter at Grafham on Oct 23rd.

**Great Black-backed Gull** Only reported from Paxton where there were 3 on Oct 2nd.

**Sandwich Tern** Two were at Priory Park on Oct 24th, and one was seen over Castle Street, Cambridge on Oct 11th.

**Common Tern** Only reported in September, with best numbers 4 at Paxton on 7th, 5 at Grafham on 12th, 3 at Fen Drayton on 16th, and at least 11 in heavy rain at Grafham on 22nd; other reports were from the Stretham area.

**Arctic Tern** Single juveniles reported on 7 occasions in September from Grafham and Kingfisher's Bridge.

**Black Tern** A good autumn passage with 23 at Grafham on Sept 12th by far the best number; otherwise between 1 and 3 at Grafham most days in September. Also singles at Ferry Meadow between 17th and 21st.

## NEAR PASSERINES

**Feral Pigeon** Two hundred-twenty recorded on Farcet Fen on 22 October; 75 recorded in Wisbech town centre at the end of October.

**Stock Pigeon** Records from five sites; 80 at Paxton Pits on Oct 29th and 51 at Farcet Fen mid-October.

**Common Wood Pigeon** Highest counts were at Farcet Fen, numbers jumping from under 300 in mid-October to 1,100 on Oct 26th and 1,300 at month end. Two other records of over 200 birds: 600+ at Friday Bridge and 420+ at Elm, both at end of October.

**Eurasian Collared Dove** Maximum of 27 at Chatteris in September; higher numbers recorded during October, with 175 birds counted in 4 flocks at Ramsey St Mary's on 22nd.

**European Turtle Dove** Recorded primarily from fens and washes in first half of September, with up to 5 birds; thereafter generally singles. Last sighting on Oct 8th.

**Barn Owl** Reported from 12 sites. Singles except for 3 records of 2 birds.

**Little Owl** Recorded from 11 sites; predominantly singles but at least 4 birds at Elm and 2/3 birds at 2 other sites.

**Tawny Owl** Records mainly of calling birds across the county; generally 1/2 birds. Five calling birds at Woodwalton Fen in early September.

**Long-eared Owl** Two records of single birds.

**Short-eared Owl** Eight records from 4 sites, all in October. All were single birds except for 3 birds at Wicken Fen on Oct 27th.

**Common Swift** Numbers falling over the first five days of September from 12 down to 1.

**Common Kingfisher** Recorded at 28 sites, including 5 birds at Paxton Pits. Otherwise mainly single birds.

**Eurasian Wryneck** One at Woodwalton Fen on 30th September.

**Green Woodpecker** Records of 1–4 birds from 12 sites.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** Singles recorded from 10 sites plus 2 birds at Wicken Fen and 4 at both Ouse Washes and Elm.

**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** A single recorded at Paxton Pits on 16 September.

## PASSERINES

**Skylark** Reported from 11 sites during the period. The main passage seemed to occur from the end of September and continued throughout October. The largest count was of 63 over Farcet Fen on Oct 18th, with counts of 45 at Westfield Farm, Comberton, on Oct 4th and flying south over Paxton Pits on Oct 26th. Eighteen on the golf course at Toft on 27th Oct may have been grounded migrants.

**Sand Martin** Reported from 5 sites. The largest count was 16 at Farcet Fen on Sept 1st. Three at Paxton Pits on Oct 8th were the last recorded.

**Barn Swallow** Reported from 25 sites. Migrants were noted from several sites during the period, with notable counts of over 50 at Wicken Fen on Sept 23rd, 40 at Barton on Sept 16th, 40 at Paxton Pits on Sept 28th and 38 at Elton on Oct 1st. In addition large mixed flocks of House Martins and Barn Swallows were noted at Tetworth on Sept 27th (200), Grafham Water on Sept 10th (150) and Stretham on Sept 17th (50). Birds were still present at the end of the month.

**House Martin** Reported from 7 sites. The largest counts were 150–200 at Wimpole Estate on Sept 4th, 90 at Elton on Oct 1st and 30 at Paxton Pits on Sept 19th. Last recorded at Paxton Pits on Oct 13th.

**Tree Pipit** A single bird was calling from willows near Gaynes Cove at Grafham Water early morning on Sept 28th.

**Meadow Pipit** Reported from 11 sites during the period. The largest count was 135 at Fowlmere on Sept 27th. Paxton Pits recorded a good autumn passage, with 50 on Sept 25th, 70 on Oct 8th and 60 on Oct 23rd. Elsewhere, 70 were recorded at Wicken Fen on Sept 15th and 35 flew south over Tetworth on Sept 23rd.

**Rock Pipit** Reported from two sites. A single bird was present on the dam at Grafham Water on Oct 14th and two birds flew southwest over Paxton Pits on Oct 28th.

**Yellow Wagtail** Reported from 15 sites. Notable counts include 30 at Wicken Fen on Sept 15th, 25 on a school field at Chatteris on Sept 22nd, 20 in a cow pasture at Earith on Sept 17th and 16 at Paxton Pits on Sept 3rd. A first-winter present at Grafham Water from Oct 20th was considered by some observers to be a Blue-headed Wagtail. The latest bird was this individual, which was still present at the end of the month.

**Grey Wagtail** Reported from 15 sites. Only 2 counts of more than 2 birds were reported; 4 at Paxton Pits on Sept 10th and 3 in a garden at Little Paxton on Oct 17th. Several reports were received from Cambridge, with birds noted in the following areas; Huntingdon Road, Cowley Street, Market Street, Sidney Street, Botanical Gardens, Coldham's Common and the Mill Pond.

**Pied Wagtail** Reported from 5 sites. Notable counts included 118 at Farcet Fen on Oct 5th, with 80 there the following day, rising to 85 on 8th and falling to 46 Oct 27th. Elsewhere, 31 were at

Grafham Water on Sept 10th and 27 were on a playing field at Lode on Oct 6th.

**White Wagtail** A single bird was reported from Paxton Pits on Sept 19th and 20th.

**Common Redstart** A single was seen in an oak wood at Crafts Hill on Sept 10th.

**Whinchat** Reported from 8 sites. All records were of singles, apart from five at Eldernell on Sept 24th and 2 at Fowlmere on Sept 17th. Most records were from the first half of September with October records from Great Gransden on 7th and Serpentine Brick Pit on 13th.

**Stonechat** Reported from 12 sites. The highest count was, predictably, on the Nene Washes, where 12 were at Eldernell on Oct 17th. Multiple counts away from the Nene Washes included 4 at Paxton Pits on Oct 29th, 3 at Castor on Oct 27th, and 2 at Wicken Fen on Oct 13th, Comberton on Oct 14th, Ouse Fen on Oct 15th and Mepal and Stirtloe on Oct 29th.

**Northern Wheatear** After an impressive spring passage, reported from only 10 sites. The largest counts were 3 at Paxton Pits on Sept 22nd, with 2 noted at Priors Fen on Sept 12th and the Ouse Washes on Oct 27th. The last bird was noted flying over Toft on Oct 30th.

**Ring Ouzel** A first-winter was noted at Shepreth L Moor WT on Oct 15th.

**Blackbird** Reported from 4 sites only, with the only notable count being of 12 at Coleridge, Cambridge on Sept 7th.

**Fieldfare** No reports from September, with the first record being a flock of 20 over Ouse Fen on Oct 8th and 75 at the Ouse Washes the next day. The main influx came at the end of October with notable counts including 455 heading south over Tetworth during mid-morning on Oct 26th, with 75 at Elm on Oct 28th and 58 at Farcet Fen on Oct 27th.

**Song Thrush** Reported from 3 sites only. Passage noted in October, with over 10 at Paxton Pits on Oct 12th and again on 28th.

**Redwing** Reported from many sites after the first sighting of a single at Monks Wood on Oct 6th. The largest counts were 580 at Paxton Pits which were heading west southwest on Oct 26th, 235 flying north also on Oct 26th and 72 at Barton the same day.

**Mistle Thrush** Reported from 12 sites. Double-figure counts included 16 at Hardwick Wood on Sept 17th and 12 at Histon on Sept 16th, Toft on Sept 22nd and Coldham on Oct 8th. One bird was singing at Caldecot on Sept 15th.

**Cetti's Warbler** Noted at Wicken Fen during Sept/Oct and Woodwalton Fen (Oct only); 1–2 individuals reported.

**Common Grasshopper Warbler** One at Paxton Pits on Sept 9th and a single at Wicken Fen on Sept 26th.

**Sedge Warbler** Four records in September sightings; the latest on 23rd at Holme Fen.

**Eurasian Reed Warbler** Reported from Farcet Fen, Paxton Pits and Woodwalton Fen; the latest record for Paxton Pits was Oct 15th (c.f. Sept 28th

for 2002/03).

**Lesser Whitethroat** From 5 sites, singles at Monks Wood and Paxton Pits were present on Sept 26th. The Paxton sighting was 6 days later than previous records.

**Common Whitethroat** Reported from 7 sites; none was noted later than Sept 16th.

**Garden Warbler** One was noted on Farcet Fen on Sept 1st; the only other report was of 2 at Paxton Pits on Sept 5th

**Blackcap** Mainly small numbers were noted at 5 sites, with a peak of 5 at Paxton Pits on Sept 12th. Individual were seen into late October.

**Yellow-Browed Warbler** A single report on an individual seen at Fen Drayton along the concrete road between the Pits and St. Ives.

**Common Chiffchaff** After a maximum of 10 at Paxton Pits on Sept 12th, numbers dropped to 1–2 per location, with some males singing into October.

**Willow Warbler** From 6 sites, 3 of which were October records (1st–3rd), on par with 2003 latest dates.

**Goldcrest** Eight sites yielded variously 1–6 birds, the maximum being at Paxton Pits.

**Firecrest** There was just one record – at Milton Park, Peterborough on Oct 31st.

**Spotted Flycatcher** At 8 locations, the latest reported was 1 on Sept 18th at the Ouse Washes (Earith). This not being particularly late when compared to recent years.

**Pied Flycatcher** A female/juvenile was seen at Hardwick Wood on Sept 17th.

**Bearded Tit** Noted at the Ely 'Beet Factory' site (as many as 16–18 on Sept 24th), Kingfisher's Bridge (maximum of 6) and Woodwalton Fen (1).

**Long-tailed Tit** Reports from 10 locations with a maximum of 37 (Woodwalton Fen). A group of 6 at Farcet Fen (Crowtree) was only the fourth record for the area, as noted by the local observer.

**Marsh Tit** Reports of 1–5+ birds from 7 sites: Hardwick Wood, Hayley Wood, Melbourn, Paxton Pits, The Gloucesters (Wimpole), the Belts (Wimpole Estate), and Woodwalton Fen (5+ on Oct 29th).

**Coal Tit** Garden visitors at several sites swelled the numbers seen at regular sites such as Wimpole Estate and Paxton Pits, although as usual numbers were low, mostly singletons (2 birds at 2 sites).

**Blue Tit** From 11 sites, reported maxima included 15 at Baker's Fen (Wicken Fen), 9 at Farcet Fen (Crowtree), and 8 at the Belts (Wimpole).

**Great Tit** Reported from 8 sites, flock numbers were generally low, with a maximum of 8 at the Gloucesters (Wimpole).

**Wood Nuthatch** Reported from 4 sites, with counts of 2 birds at Monks Wood and Hayley Wood with singles at the Wimpole Estate and Grafham Water.

**Eurasian Treecreeper** Records of 1–2 birds from 5 sites, including 2 in a mixed flock at Wicken Fen.

**Eurasian Jay** As would be expected during these months reports have increased significantly with records from 20 sites mostly involving 1–2 birds but 6+ were noted at Elm on Oct 31st.

**Black-billed Magpie** Recorded from 6 sites during the period with a maximum count of 18+ at Elm.

**Eurasian Jackdaw** A report of 70 birds over the Cam Washes on Sep 16th was the highest count with further records from just 2 sites.

**Rook** Records from 3 sites with a maximum count of 135+ feeding on arable land at Elm on Oct 31st.

**Carrion Crow** Reported from 5 sites including a group of 32 birds together on Coldham's Common sports field on Oct 30th.

**Common Raven** Not a common bird in the county, but a single bird was recorded at 3 sites during the period at Abbotsley, Tetworth and Paxton Pits being presumably the same bird.

**Common Starling** A large increase in the number of birds gathering at roosts towards the end of October with a maximum report of 8,000 birds at Ely Beet Factory and also the much debated and photographed 2,853 birds coming to roost at Fowlmere RSPB.

**House Sparrow** A maximum count of 70+ birds at Elm on Oct 31st.

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow** Reported from 6 sites with 40+ birds at Friday Bridge on Oct 21st and at Farcet Fen on Oct 8th. Other records of 1–5 birds at the Ouse Washes, Wicken Fen, Paxton Pits and Fen Drayton GP.

**Chaffinch** Records were received from 4 sites with a maximum of 10 at The Gloucesters, Wimpole on Sep 30th.

**Brambling** Another expected seasonal increase in reports with records from 6 sites including a peak count of 8 at Beechwoods on Oct 4th. Other counts from Grafham Water, Tanholt GP, Kingfisher Bridge, Stretham and Paxton Pits involved 1–2 birds.

**European Greenfinch** Recorded from 5 sites during the period with a maximum count being a massive 640+ birds at Whittlesey Mere on Oct 6th.

**Eurasian Siskin** The first winter reports included a peak count of 6 birds at Paxton Pits on Oct 2nd and 3 birds at Monks Wood on Sep 26th and Oct 12th. A solitary bird was also reported over Stretham on Oct 12th.

**Common Linnet** Reports were received from 11

sites with the highest again being an impressive flock of 220+ birds at Whittlesey Mere on Oct 6th. Other records included 100 at Paxtons Pits on Oct 13th with 90 at both Fen Drayton GP and Histon.

**Twite** Only 1 record of a solitary bird over Farcet Fen on Oct 18th.

**Lesser Redpoll** Recorded from 7 sites mostly involving 1–2 birds, but 4 were reported at Grafham Water and Paxton Pits towards the end of October.

**Common Bullfinch** Records came from 8 sites with a peak count of 6 at Paxton Pits on Oct 7th.

**Yellowhammer** Reported from 5 sites, the maximum was 50 at Paxton Pits on Oct 29th.

**Reed Bunting** Records included 100 birds at Paxton Pits on Oct 29th and 38+ birds from Farcet Fen on Oct 5th.

**Corn Bunting** Reported from 6 sites with 23+ at Woodwalton Fen NNR on Oct 8th, supported by 23 at Fowlmere, 18 at Paxton Pits and 17 at Warboys High Fen.

#### HYBRIDS

**Canada x Barnacle Goose** Three juveniles at Grafham Water from 23rd Sept to 3rd Oct

**Canada x Greylag** Two at Kingfishers Bridge in the last week of October.

#### EXOTICA

**Black Swan** At Paxton Pits, 1–2 throughout the period.

**Ringed Teal** An immature male at Kingfishers Bridge on 5th Oct

**Chiloe Wigeon** Three juveniles at Kingfishers Bridge on 5th Oct

**White Pelican** One seen at Soham Mere on 18th Sept, and later at Burwell Fen where it was mobbed by crows, while circling overhead.

**Purple Swamphen** The long-staying escape recorded on the north side of the river, opposite Ferry Mere, Fen Drayton.

Contributors: Colin Addington, Louise Bacon, Richard Bayldon, James Cadbury, Robin Cox, Steve Dudley, Dr Mike Foley, David Griffiths, Kevin Harris, Mark Hawkes, Peter Herkenrath, Julian Hughes, Vince Lea, Tony Mallyon, Owen & Monica Marks, Bruce & Gwen Martin, Mark Missin, John Oates, Duncan Poyser, Michael Price, Tony Roberts, Ellis Selway, Clive Sinclair, Joe Taylor, Roger Tozer, Alan & Brenda Wadsworth,; Birdline East Anglia, Cambridgeshire Bird Club website.

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.

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## Sketching Birds From Life

*Ben Green*

For a wildlife artist, one of the most important skills to employ is the art of field sketching. It is only by drawing directly from nature that a true picture of the subject can be attained. After a bird has flown away, the memory of its details and attitudes gradually fades until it becomes almost impossible to capture an exact representation of it.

Even if you don't intend to use your sketches to produce a finished painting, there are times when they can be useful – documentation of a rarity that will help its acceptance by the committee for instance, or simply a record of a great day out.

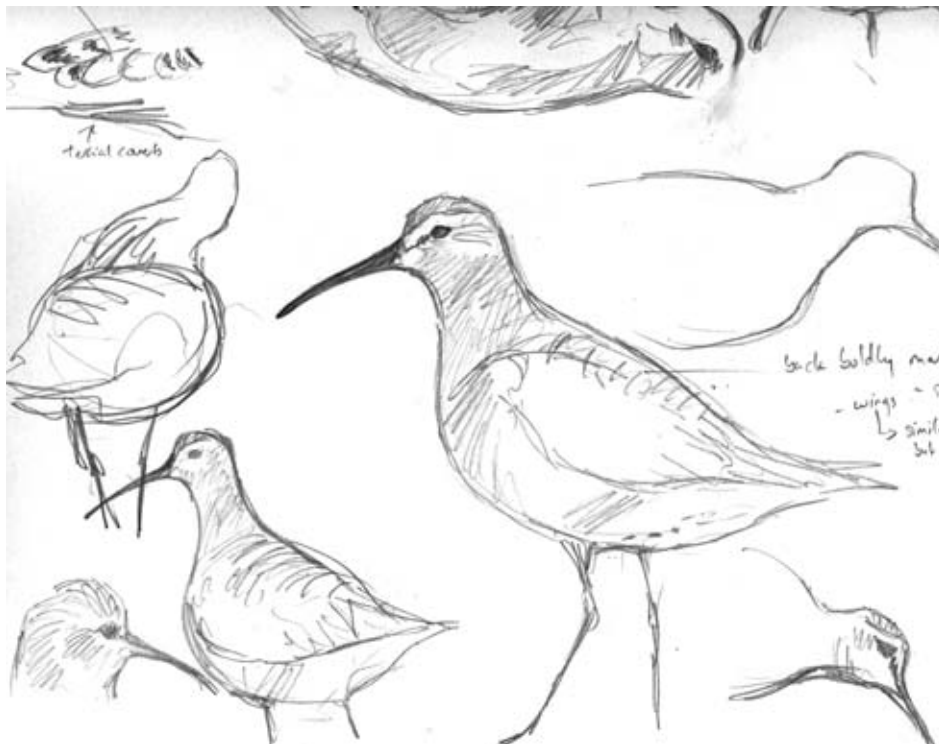
In this article I hope to explain the basics of field sketching and hopefully inspire you to try it for yourselves, but before you start it is vital that you really get to know how a bird is put together. I always do measured drawings of dead birds that come my way, in order to really appreciate the structure of them. The way the wing coverts overlap, the relationship between bill and eye, how the toes are jointed, can all be studied in the hand. Look at photos of birds and you will see certain similarities that are shared no matter what the species – John Busby's book, *Drawing Birds*, outlines these fundamentals superbly. Knowing how a bird's skeleton works helps you to understand what's going on under that mass of feathers, which, in turn will guide your drawing in the right direction.

*Long-billed Dowitcher*





Don't rush into attempting too much too soon. Flying swallows and fast moving warblers are best left alone until you've practised on more sedate subjects. I love it when a wader goes to sleep, as this is when I can capture most of the details of plumage. It is important to work fast even so, as birds have a habit of changing position, or even worse, being flushed by passing birds of prey.



*Curlew Sandpiper*

Look at the shapes created by the bird- the angularity of the back of its head, the slope of its back and the roundness of its chest. Don't try to draw every feather one by one, build up the structure by marking in obvious patterns- the tramlines down the mantle of a little stint, or the crown stripe of a curlew. Always look from one part of the bird to another to see how the shapes fit together- how far beyond the tail does the wing tip extend? Does the eye sit nearer the base of the bill than the rear of the crown? The golden rule is-Look, look again, then draw while you still retain the image in your mind. When the image fades, look again. Position your telescope so that you don't have to move too much when you flit between page and eyepiece.



*A quick Ruff study*

Using a large sketchbook I can move around the page, filling it with snippets of information every time a pleasing shape reveals itself. Start with simple outlines that you can come back to and fill in with a little more detail each time the bird repeats a pose. The more you look, the more detail you will notice. In this way I will build up a series of pages that contain many half-finished studies that combine to give an overall picture. Even a relatively simple sketch can be effective if you pick out the prominent features. The suggestion of a frill around the neck is enough to recognise a ruff in summer plumage. Try to keep your pencil moving smoothly over the paper. Use a reasonably soft one – I prefer a 2b. I use fairly heavyweight cartridge paper that will not suffer too much if I wash on some paint.



The addition of watercolour will enhance any sketch. I make notes on plumage colouration for future reference, but nothing beats mixing the appropriate 'rufous' or 'buff' there and then and applying it to your work. The colours of real life are affected by their surroundings and are difficult to reproduce faithfully later.

Once you have captured the bird itself, try and add background details such as the ripples made by a wading godwit or the reeds that give shelter to a skulking snipe. Not only will this improve the aesthetics of your work, but also give a sense of scale to the bird.

Don't expect everything you draw to be successful, but with practise you should be able to produce sketches that will please yourselves, and others. The important thing of course, is to enjoy yourself, and try not to get too frustrated when your subject flies off half way through a sketch.



## **FORTHCOMING MEETINGS 2007**

Doors open at 7.30pm for an 8.00pm start.

### **January 12th St John's Church Hall, Cambridge The Marbled Murrelet by Fred Cooke**

The Marbled Murrelet is an unusual auk species, which forages at sea but nests in old growth coniferous trees in the British Columbia rain forests. Because these forests are being rapidly exploited for their timber, there is great conservation concern about this species. Unusual research techniques were developed to study the life history of this little known species and led to new approaches to protect the birds.

Fred Cooke has had a life-long interest in birds. After studying at Cambridge University (and being a member of Cambridge Bird Club), he went to the Biology Dept at Queen's University, Ontario, Canada. In 1993 he became Professor of Wildlife Ecology at Simon Fraser University and led research projects on sea-birds, wildfowl, grebes and waders. Fred retired in 2001 and now lives in Norfolk, where he is associated with the University of East Anglia. Fred was President of the American Ornithologists Union from 2002 to 2004. In 2004 was elected a Council member of the RSPB.

### **Friday February 9th – St John's Church Hall, Cambridge Migration and movements of Icelandic Black-tailed Godwits by Jenny Gill**

Since 1993, ornithologists at the University of East Anglia have been studying the movements, habitat use and migration routes of individually colour-ringed Black-tailed Godwits. Hundreds of birdwatchers across Europe report sightings of these birds, helping to reveal fascinating details of the consequences of choosing different breeding and wintering sites, and the strong links between summer and winter locations.

Jenny Gill is a lecturer at the University of East Anglia; her principal research interests are in the conservation and population ecology of migratory birds, and the impacts of climate change on temperate and tropical coastal zones. The Icelandic Black-tailed Godwit study is a major focus of her current research, and further details of this work can be found on: <http://www.uea.ac.uk/~b072834/>

## **FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY**

We welcome the following new members – Gary Davis of Woodhurst Huntingdon, Graham Fairweather of Fen Ditton, Ramon Gomez de la Cuesta of Cambridge and Tom Reed of Old Hurst Huntingdon.

*Bruce Martin*

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

If you would like to receive your bulletin by email or be subscribed to CBC-ANNOUNCE, please contact Vicki Harley. If anyone has asked to receive the bulletin this way but is still getting the print version, please let me know: 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: Mark Hawkes by January 7th**

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

**Next Bulletin due out February 2007, covering Novmebr–December 2006**

# GOOD BIRDING!