

# CAMBRIDGESHIRE BIRD CLUB

*Bulletin* No. 389



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

## RECENT REPORTS NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER 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).

### AGM Notice

The AGM of the Cambridgeshire Bird Club will be held at St Johns Church Hall on Friday March 9th 2007.

The AGM agenda and proposed new club constitution will be distributed with this bulletin. Please take a look at them before the AGM. The constitution has been modified to make it appropriate for the club in the 21st century.

*Lapwing  
by Sue Rogers*



Numbers in brackets indicate September and October maximums.

## **WILDFOWL**

**Mute Swan** At Fen Drayton GP (134; 141), the Nene Washes (78; 108), Ouse Fen (10; 150), the Ouse Washes (405; 276) and Paxton Pits (171; 91). Smaller figures were noted at other 10 sites.

**Tundra Swan** At the Nene Washes (20; 400) and the Ouse Washes (263; 1647). Away from the feeding areas around the Washes wandering birds were at Paxton Pits, 2 on Nov 12th, Kingfishers Bridge, 1 on Nov 26th and 1 on Dec 23rd.

**Whooper Swan** At the Nene Washes (49; 187) and the Ouse Washes (995; 568). As with the above species, away from the feeding areas around the Washes birds were seen at Kingfishers Bridge, 14 flying NW on Nov 3rd and birds heard flying over Streatham in thick fog on Dec 19th.

**Bean Goose** Ten dark geese thought to be this species were seen at Wardy Hill on Dec 20th before flying off east.

**Pink-footed Goose** A flock of 85+ birds were seen at Foul Anchor on Cambs/Norfolk border flying in from the Lincs direction on Nov 11th. Ten flew over Paxton Pits on Nov 12th and c80 flew over Huntingdon Road, Cambridge, heading west at 9am on Dec 20th. Two birds flew over Grafham Water on Dec 26th and a single bird was at Kingfishers Bridge on and off during the period.

**Greater White-fronted Goose** Seven birds were on the Ouse Washes in the Pymore area from Nov 2nd until Dec 18th and 2 birds were at Maxey GP on Dec 31st.

**Greylag Goose** At Grafham Water (298; 211), Kingfishers Bridge (565; 311), the Nene Washes (0; 150), the Ouse Washes (267; 156) and Paxton Pits (669; 421).

**Canada Goose** At Grafham Water (212; 217), Kingfishers Bridge (455; 336), Ouse Fen (90; 0), the Ouse Washes (570; 124) and Paxton Pits (8; 101). 100 at Ouse Fen on Dec 24th was the only other three-figure count.

**Barnacle Goose** Single figures were noted at 3 sites. A roving flock of up to 79 birds seen Dec 28–30th at Needingworth GP, St Neots and Paxton Pits caused some excitement but they proved to be visitors from the known feral flock in Bedfordshire.

**Brent Goose** A bird seen at Fen Drayton GP on Dec 16th was then seen on the Ouse Washes between Dec 17th and 27th. Two birds were at Orton BP on Dec 26th.

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

**Common Shelduck** Single figures were noted at 8 sites during the period.

**Mandarin** A pair was seen at Grafham Water on Nov 7th and Dec 28th.

**Eurasian Wigeon** At Fen Drayton GP (642; 1050), Kingfishers Bridge (510; 1000), the Nene Washes (1854; 2994), the Ouse Washes (19056; 12178) and Paxton Pits (658; 1002). Double figures were reported from 6 other sites.

**American Wigeon** At Barleycroft GP the male continued to be seen to the year's end.

**Gadwall** At Block Fen GP (142; 229), Fen Drayton GP (553; 512) a record count for this site, Landbeach GP (133; 113), the Ouse Washes (180; 20) and Paxton Pits (170; 172). Also noted at 6 other sites.

**Eurasian Teal** At Grafham Water (341; 414), Kingfishers Bridge (132; 100), the Nene Washes (500; 672), Ouse Fen (140; 140), the Ouse Washes (2910; 405), Paxton Pits (300; 334) and Wicken Fen (20; 385). Double figures at 2 other sites.

**Mallard** At Grafham Water (269; 246), the Nene Washes (274; 308), Ouse Fen (150; 140), the Ouse Washes (2219; 1298) and Paxton Pits (397; 148). Double figures were noted at 10 other sites.

**Northern Pintail** At the Nene Washes (260; 155) and the Ouse Washes (1275; 603). The only other notable count was at Fen Drayton GP with 181 on Dec 16th.

**Northern Shoveler** At Fen Drayton GP (37; 54), Grafham Water (56; 86), Kingfishers Bridge (36; 33), the Nene Washes (80; 145), Ouse Fen (26; 39), the Ouse Washes (510; 56) and Paxton Pits (68; 29).

**Red-crested Pochard** Three birds were at Fen Drayton GP on Dec 1st and 2 at Paxton Pits on Nov 5th. Single birds were seen Grafham Water, Kingfishers Bridge and Orton BP during the period.

**Common Pochard** At Fen Drayton GP (92; 111), Grafham Water (36; 48), Ouse Fen (160; 85), the Ouse Washes (496; 890) and Paxton Pits (145; 121). Reported in small numbers from 6 other sites.

**Tufted Duck** At Fen Drayton GP (417; 454), Grafham Water (203; 179), the Ouse Washes (215; 557) and Paxton Pits (431; 436). Double figures were seen at 7 other sites.

**Greater Scaup** Singles were seen at Kingfishers Bridge on Nov 3rd to the 6th, at Grafham Water on Nov 9th and at the Ouse Washes on Nov 20th and 21st. A bird seen at Shropshire's Reservoir on Nov 22nd may have been the bird seen earlier at KFB.

**Common Scoter** A male was present at Ferry Meadows CP on Dec 23rd.

**Goldeneye** At Fen Drayton GP (52; 90), Grafham Water (25; 32), Paxton Pits (79; 60). The 18 birds at Buckden GP on Dec 3rd were the only other double-figure count.

**Smew** The first birds of the season were 2 redheads at Needingworth GP on Nov 20th. At Fen Drayton GP numbers built from 1 on Dec 10th to 7 (2 males) by Dec 24th. At Paxton Pits, their first bird was on Nov 29th with 3 present by Dec 6th. The only other sightings were at Marsh Lane GP with 1 bird on Dec 10th and 2 on Dec 17th.

**Goosander** Singles were noted at 6 sites from Nov 13th. In December numbers built up with a maximum of 6 at Paxton Pits, 4 at Maxey GP, 3 at Grafham Water and Milton CP. The most surprising sighting was the bird at the Ouse Washes, which is almost certainly the bird seen earlier in the year with a broken wing. Obviously this isn't preventing it from catching its food, but being unable to fly where has it been in the meantime?

**Ruddy Duck** Noted at 5 sites.

## GAMEBIRDS

**Red-legged Partridge** Reported from 11 sites, including some double-figure coveys close to Cambridge. Largest gatherings were in fenland with 81 at Farcet Fen on Boxing Day surely crying out for pear trees!

**Grey Partridge** Reported from 12 sites, in slightly smaller numbers than Red-legged with largest numbers again coming from Farcet Fen on Boxing Day – 46 birds in 3 coveys. Lekking behaviour involving 3 pairs was noted at the Ouse Washes.

**Common Pheasant** Only reported from 9 sites, mostly in single figures. Farcet Fen, Boxing Day count of 39, was the highest reported.

## DIVERS TO HERONS

**Great Northern Diver** One day appearances of a single bird(s) were at the Ouse Washes on Dec 3rd and Grafham Water on Dec 8th.

**Little Grebe** Double figures noted during WeBS counts were Fen Drayton GP (16; 11), Mepal GP (16; 14) and Paxton Pits (17; 16). Single figures were noted at 9 sites.

**Great Crested Grebe** Counts at Block Fen GP (11; 13), Fen Drayton GP were (57; 64), Grafham Water (404; 310) and Paxton Pits (17; 19). Single figures were noted at 12 other sites.

**Red-necked Grebe** The long staying bird at Fen Drayton GP remained until the year's end.

**Leach's Storm-petrel** Large movements of this species during storm conditions around the UK coast resulted in some birds being displaced inland. Three birds were found at Grafham Water on the morning of Dec 7th, 2 of which sadly died and the other flew off to the northwest. Another freshly dead bird was found at Comberton on Dec 8th.

**Great Cormorant** Counts at Fen Drayton GP (109; 75), Grafham Water (106; 179) and the Ouse Washes (66; 38). Dusk roost counts at Paxton Pits were (137; 278). Single figures were reported from 11 sites.

**European Shag** A juvenile bird was seen in the Nene Washes area from Nov 5th to the 26th. A ring on the bird's leg identified it as having been ringed as chick on the Isle of May, Fife on Jul 11th 2006. There have been previous records of birds ringed at this site turning up in the county.

**Great Bittern** Single birds were seen at Kingfishers Bridge in November, Ely BF and Woodwalton Fen in late December, and a sharp-eyed observer in a train at Waterbeach Station saw one fly by on Dec 28th.

**Little Egret** Single figures were scattered around the county with a maximum of 4 at Borough Fen on Dec 15th, 3 at Waterbeach Fen on Dec 17th and 18th, 2 at Fen Drayton GP and Paxton Pits and singles at 6 other sites.

**Grey Heron** Double figures were at the Nene Washes (21) and the Ouse Washes (12) and single figures were reported from 16 other sites.

## RAPTORS

**Red Kite** Three records, all to the north and west of the county; 1 drive-by around Sawtry/Yaxley Nov

4th; in December a probable at Paxton Pits on the 3rd and 1 at Grafham Water on the 11th.

**Eurasian Marsh Harrier** A total of 25 records throughout the period, coming from 9 separate sites. Most regular at the Ouse and Nene Washes, and Kingfishers Bridge. Mainly seen as singletons, but 6 at the Ouse Washes on Nov 6th was notable.

**Hen Harrier** Eleven records of singletons, plus a record of 2 birds at Burghley Park (Nov 27th). Most reports from the same sites as Marsh Harrier, but ringtails were seen at Barley on Nov 19th and at Grafham Water on Dec 9th. At Wicken Fen, one male on Dec 9th, but no reports concerning the winter roost. Has this ceased to be or is no-one watching it?

**Northern Goshawk** One report came from Conington Fen in mid-November

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk** The most widely reported raptor over the period, with 57 reports from 26 areas. Eight reports refer to 3 or more birds at a site, 2 of which were at Fowlmere's starling roost. Other prey items reported include Wood Pigeon and an attempt at a rat on a garden bird table.

**Common Buzzard** Sixty birds reported through the period from widespread locations, though less evident than during Sep–Oct. Peak counts were seen at Paxton Pits, with 6–8 on Nov 2nd and 6 on Dec 6th, while Nene Washes and Grafham Water managed 5s in Nov.

**Osprey** A remarkable record from Ely on Nov 28th was the latest ever for Cambs.

**Common Kestrel** Thirty-five records came from the period, with double-figure counts coming from the Ouse and Nene Washes, max. 25 at Nene Washes Dec 18th.

**Merlin** Nineteen sites hosted this species, mainly in fenland. With 34 records, this might appear to rival the Kestrel for top falcon, but all sightings were singletons except for 2 at Farcet Fen on Dec 26th.

**Eurasian Hobby** One on the incredibly late date of Dec 7th at Priory Park, St. Neots, almost a month later than the previous latest ever (last year).

**Peregrine Falcon** Thirty reports, including 2 at the Nene Washes in Nov with 3 there Dec 31st a fine end to the year, and an estimated 3–4 separate birds around Farcet Fen. Sites away from fenland and the Ouse valley pits included Peterborough City Centre Nov 2nd, and Hatley St George, where one seen feeding on a Wood Pigeon kill on Dec 17th. Seen killing and eating Northern Lapwing and hunting at a Gull roost.

## RAILS

**Water Rail** Reported from 12 localities, most regularly Kingfishers Bridge where maxima of 6 in November and 12 in December were the county highs for the period. Only 1 reported from Fowlmere, and some other traditional sites had no reports at all (Wicken, Chippenham & Woodwalton Fens for example).

**Common Moorhen** November maxima at Grafham Water (52), Fen Drayton (47) and the Ouse Washes (36); counts increased in December with

Ouse Washes reporting 180, Nene Washes 61 and Farcet Fen 49.

**Common Coot** Reported from 18 sites, well over 5000 Coot were present in Cambridgeshire in both months. Highest counts came from Fen Drayton (1361; 1460), Grafham Water (1372; 1418), Paxton Pits (762; 899) and the Ouse Washes (541; 681).

## WADERS

**Eurasian Oystercatcher** Single records in December from Grafham Water, Fen Drayton GP, Maxey GP and Farcet Fen.

**Eurasian Dotterel** One at Rings End from Nov 10th to 11th and probably the same individual at Pymoor on Nov 20th – this continues the recent run of wintering records.

**American Golden Plover** Following the record number of sightings in October a juvenile was found by a keen-eyed observer at Pymoor on Nov 18th.

**European Golden Plover** Very good counts for the period – highest counts from Ouse Fen (7000; 2500), Ouse Washes/Pymoor (5000; 200), Fen Drayton GP (4000; 190), Paxton Pits (2300; 3500), Trumpington (3000; 0), Stretham (1900; 0), Duxford (0; 1500), Kingfishers Bridge (0; 1500), Nene Washes (1200; 300), Toft (400; 1000), Upton (0; 1000).

**Grey Plover** Two at Maxey GP on Dec 23rd.

**Northern Lapwing** Generally low numbers – highest counts Ouse Washes (9737; 1143), Holt Fen (2450; 0), Nene Washes (1650; 885), Kingfishers Bridge (0; 1200). Paxton Pits (1000; 650).

**Red Knot** An unusual grounding (caused by fog) from Dec 23rd as follows; Maxey GP 26 on 23rd, Ferry Meadows 4 on 23rd, Nene Washes 2–5 from 23rd to 27th, Barleycroft GP on 23rd and 29th and outside of this event a single Nene Washes on 7th.

**Sanderling** One at Maxey GP on Dec 23rd.

**Dunlin** Highest counts from Ouse Washes (42; 33), Paxton Pits (25; 33) Elsewhere Nene Washes (8; 20), up to 17 at Ouse Fen/Over Fen, Barleycroft GP 12 and Fen Drayton 7.

**Ruff** Highest count from Ouse washes (33; 30), Fen Drayton GP (36; 4), Paxton Pits (7; 14), Nene Washes (13; 5) and 1–5 from a further four sites.

**Jack Snipe** Two at Ouse Fen on Nov 3rd, Paxton pits 1–2 in November and 1 on Dec 12th and singles at Dogsthorpe Star Pit and Kingfishers Bridge.

**Common Snipe** Very low numbers from most localities particularly the traditional washland sites. Recorded from 13 sites with highest counts from Ouse Fen (92; 16), Ouse Washes (13; 16), Grafham Water lagoons (25; 14), Paxton Pits 28, Ouse Fen 24, and Cam Washes 10.

**Eurasian Woodcock** Scarce for the period, main site being Kingfishers Bridge where 4 flushed during a shoot (indeed, 2 of these were shot) on Dec 9th. Elsewhere up to 2 at Paxton Pits and singles from a further 7 sites.

**Black-tailed Godwit** Numbers were building nicely at Ouse Washes reaching 1461 by Nov 20th, deep flooding eventually pushed these off, some

relocating to the Nene Washes where up to 900 present to Dec 18th only to be seen off by a freeze-up. Elsewhere 22 at Fen Drayton GP on Dec 10th, 11 at Paxton Pits on Nov 28th and 1–4 through December.

**Bar-tailed Godwit** In December 3 at Maxey GP on 23rd and 1 at Nene Washes on 24th–25th were part of the fog disoriented movement that affected several wader species.

**Eurasian Curlew** Main sighting was of 28 at Foul Anchor on Dec 10th, otherwise 1–2 from a further 9 sites.

**Common Redshank** Highest counts from Nene Washes (119; 80), Ouse Washes (46; 44), River Nene (near Foul Anchor) 35+ on Dec 10th, Grafham Water (8; 12), Paxton Pits (7; 6) and 1–5 from a further 5 sites.

**Green Sandpiper** Highest counts from Paxton Pits (3; 2), Whittlesey Mere 2 on Nov 19th and singles from a further 9 sites.

**Common Sandpiper** Three birds as follows: Grafham Water November to Dec 28th, Wisbech/Foul Anchor to Dec 10th at least and at Gorefield on Nov 9th.

**Ruddy Turnstone** One at Nene Washes on Dec 24th–25th.

**Grey Phalarope** One at Ouse Washes on Dec 4th was in 1st winter plumage. Most county records are between September and December.

## SKUAS TO TERNS

**Arctic Skua** Two intermediate juveniles over Grafham on Dec 2nd.

**Mediterranean Gull** An adult reported regularly at Grafham throughout the period, joined by a second bird on Nov 16th, 20th and 21st; then at least 3 birds on Dec 3rd and 5th. Elsewhere, singles at Blackbush on Nov 10th, Chatteris on Nov 10th and 11th, Ouse Washes on Nov 19th, Block Fen on Nov 22nd, and Shropshires Res. on Nov 30th and Dec 2nd. Towards the end of December 1st seen regularly at Farcet Fen, 2 at Fen Drayton on Dec 23rd and 29th, 1 at Landbeach on Dec 22nd and 1 at Paxton on Dec 27th.

**Laughing Gull** One adult seen in the gull roost at Grafham by at least 12 observers (see account on p9).

**Little Gull** After a single reported at Grafham on Nov 3rd, 9 were there on Dec 8th. On the same day 1 was reported on the Ouse Washes, and there was also 1 at Shropshires Res. on Dec 12th.

**Black-headed Gull** Large counts included about 600 in ploughed fields at Fen Ditton on Nov 18th, over 9000 at Grafham on Nov 23rd, 655 at Shropshires Res on Nov 28th, increasing to 1120 there 2 days later and 1670 there on Dec 12th. A melanistic bird was first noted at Grafham on Nov 25th, increasing to 2 at Nov 29th and reported again on Dec 2nd.

**Common Gull** Highest numbers were at Paxton, where 290 on Nov 3rd and 330 on Dec 9th. A bird showing the characteristics of the North American race (Mew Gull) was at Grafham on Dec 2nd.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** Shropshires Res hosted the only large numbers, with a peak count of 789 on Nov 30th.

**Herring Gull** Much smaller numbers than the previous gull species, the only high count being 70 at Paxton on Nov 30th. A colour-ringed adult at Milton on Nov 18 was ringed as a pullus at Orford Ness.

**Yellow-legged Gull** A total of 31 records from 9 different sites shows how regularly birds of this species are now seen in the county. High counts were 5 at Cottenham (Long Drove) on Nov 18th, 7+ at Grafham in early December, and at least 8 at Milton on Dec 8th.

**Caspian Gull** Seen at 5 sites during the period, with 4 at Milton on Dec 6th, including 1 with a green Polish ring, and 5 at Cottenham (Long Drove) on Dec 23th; otherwise ones or twos.

**Glaucous Gull** A single at Newmarket near the Suffolk border on Dec 7th.

**Great Black-backed Gull** A count of 112 at Paxton on Dec 24th; otherwise numbers in the high twenties at Shropshires Res. at the end of November and beginning of December.

**Black-legged Kittiwake** One adult noted at Grafham between Dec 3rd and 7th.

## NEAR PASSERINES

**Feral Pigeon** More than 120 recorded in Wisbech in both November and December; 45 observed off Huntingdon Road, Cambridge on Nov 15th.

**Stock Pigeon** Four records of 120 or more birds, the highest count being 156 at Thorney Dyke Road on Dec 18th.

**Common Wood Pigeon** On Dec 26th 850 were observed at lower Farcet Fen. Eight other counts of more than 240 birds, at Barton, Comberton, Elm, Hatley St George and Kingfisher Bridge.

**Eurasian Collared Dove** On Dec 26th 113 were at Lower Farcet Fen, 3 other records of more than 30 birds.

**Rose-ringed Parakeet** One at Stretham on Dec 13th.

**Barn Owl** Reported from 22 sites. Generally singles except for up to 6 birds on the Nene Washes and 4 on the Ouse Washes.

**Little Owl** Recorded from 8 sites; singles except for at least 2 birds at Elm and 4 at Farcet Fen.

**Tawny Owl** Single birds recorded from 7 sites.

**Long-eared Owl** Single birds recorded at 2 sites in the south of the county, both in mid-November.

**Short-eared Owl** Up to 13 birds in and around the Nene Washes, records of single birds from Waterbeach Fen, Ouse Washes and the Offords.

**Common Kingfisher** Twenty-four records from 20 sites, of which 18 records were of singles. Highest recorded was 4 birds at Paxton Pits on Nov 5th.

**Hoopoe** One recorded from a garden in Foxton on Nov 15th.

**Green Woodpecker** Twenty-six records from 18 sites. Mostly single birds; 4–9 birds recorded from the Ouse Washes.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** 1–5 birds recorded from 17 sites.

**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** 1–2 birds recorded from Cambridge, Orton Brick Pits and Paxton Pits.

## PASSERINES

**Skylark** Reported from 11 sites during the period. Notable flocks included 80 at Littleport on Dec 20th, 76 at Farcet Fen on Nov 19th, 73 at Westfield Farm, Comberton, on Nov 18th and 40 at Swaffham Prior Fen on Nov 2nd and Paxton Pits on Nov 21st.

**Meadow Pipit** Reported from 13 sites. The largest count was of 96 at the Ouse Washes on Nov 6th, with 90 there the following month on the 20th. The only other notable count was 60 at Toft on Nov 7th.

**Rock Pipit** One seen on the Nene Washes on Nov 1st was the only record during the period.

**Water Pipit** Reported from 2 sites during the period. One was present on several dates at the Nene Washes, with 2 reported on Dec 18th.

Another individual was observed at Kingfishers Bridge on Dec 28th.

**Grey Wagtail** Reported from 12 sites. Additionally reports from several areas of Cambridge may relate to the same individuals. Three at Paxton Pits on Dec 9th was the highest count received, with 2 seen there on various dates. Two birds were also reported from Milton CP and Midsummer Common (Cambridge). Many reports were received from urban areas, with birds being seen on house roofs in Comberton, in a business park at Ely and on a building site in Trumpington.

**Pied Wagtail** Reports received from 12 sites. A huge count of 494 was received from Blackbush (two flocks of 437 and 57) on Nov 10th. Other notable counts include 130+ at March on Dec 9th, 110 at Farcet Fen on Dec 15th, 36 at Holt Fen on Nov 26th and 23 on the Ouse Washes on Dec 4th.

**White Wagtail** Two were reported among the large Pied Wagtail flock at Blackbush on Nov 10th.

**Bohemian Waxwing** Two reports received. One was in a private garden at Milton on Dec 3rd and 2 were seen at Outwell on Dec 14th.

**Winter Wren** Reported from many sites. Notable counts include 19 in the reedbed at Kingfishers Bridge on Dec 23rd, 14 at Kingfishers Bridge on Dec 19th and 10 at Hatley St George on Dec 10th and 16th.

**Hedge Accentor** Reported from only 7 sites.

**European Robin** Reported from only 11 sites. Notable counts included 14 at Hatley St George on Dec 10th with 11 there on Dec 16th.

**Stonechat** Reported from 18 sites. By far the highest numbers were recorded on the Nene Washes, with a peak of 38 on Dec 18th. Other notable counts away from the Nene include 8 on the Ouse Washes on Nov 6th and Dec 20th, 5 at Ouse Fen on Nov 3rd, 4 at Paxton Pits on Dec 4th and Littleport on Dec 20th.

**Blackbird** Records received from only 11 sites. The largest count recorded was 30 at Paxton Pits on Dec 20th, followed by 26 at Hatley St George on Dec 16th.

**Fieldfare** Reported from 20 sites. A large influx occurred on Nov 1st, with counts of 3250 on the Nene Washes, with 2300 nearby at Thorney Dyke

Road and 505 at Stretham and 450 at Kingfishers Bridge. The following day, 600 were seen at Paxton Pits, with 300 there on Nov 3rd. In December, lower numbers were evident, with 401 at Hatley St George on the 9th and 180 at Elm on the 31st.

**Song Thrush** Reported from 12 sites. The highest count was of 12 at Hatley St George on Dec 10th, with 9 there on the 16th. Several unseasonal records of singing birds were received including birds at Cambridge and Hatley Park.

**Redwing** Reported from 18 sites. The largest count was 135 flying southwest at Stretham on Nov 2nd. The only other three-figure count was of 104 at Little Wilbraham Fen on Dec 10th.

**Mistle Thrush** Records received from only 9 sites. No notable counts received. Singing birds reported from Farcet Fen, Grafham Water, Hatley St George and Stretham. Remarkably, a pair was seen nest building at Farcet Fen on Dec 26th!

**Cetti's Warbler** One was seen at Ouse Fen on Nov 3rd, and Kingfishers Bridge has its first site record, 2 birds on Dec 19th, with singles seen into late December.

**Blackcap** Reported from 8 sites, with a ratio of males to females of about 4:1 where the sexes were mentioned.

**Common Chiffchaff** At 7 sites, with 1–4 individuals noted (maximum at Paxton Pits in December).

**Goldcrest** Thirteen sites yielded up to 13 birds (max. at Eversden Wood, Nov). Paxton Pits observers considered they were very scarce there this winter.

**Bearded Tit** 6+ birds were present at Kingfishers Bridge during the latter half of December.

**Long-tailed Tit** Double-figure counts were made at 13 locations with a maximum of 45 at Eversden Wood in November.

**Marsh Tit** From 11 sites – Beechwoods LNR (south of Cambridge), Eversden Wood, Fordham Wood, Hardwick Wood, Hatley St George (3 woods), Paxton Pits, The Gloucesters (Wimpole, 6 birds the maximum), The Belts (Wimpole) and Toft.

**Coal Tit** Reported from 10 sites mostly 1 but up to 5 birds, with Lovell Road, Cambridge attaining the maximum. Two males in the Cambridge Botanic Garden were in full song on Dec 17th.

**Blue Tit** From wide ranging locations with greater numbers reported than last year. Numbers at Hatley St George hit 40 on Dec 10th.

**Great Tit** Observers of Blue Tits tend to report this species too, so the reported range is similar for the two species. Hatley St George/East Hatley had the maximum count (23).

**Wood Nuthatch** Reported from 3 sites, with counts of 2 birds at Eversden Wood and The Gloucesters Wimpole and 1 bird at Grafham Water.

**Eurasian Treecreeper** Recorded from 7 sites mostly involving 1–2 birds but 4 were reported at Eversden Wood and Hatley St. George supported by 3 at Hardwick Woods.

**Eurasian Jay** Well-reported with max. count of 6+ at Elm on Nov 30th and 3 from Toft on Nov 7th and Westfield Farm Comberton on Nov 29th.

**Black-billed Magpie** Recorded from 12 sites during the period with a maximum count of 34 at

the Ouse Washes on Nov 20th.

**Eurasian Jackdaw** Records were received from 7 sites with 730 circling over Farcet Fen being the peak count. Of note a Nordic Jackdaw was reported from Milton Tip on Nov 24th.

**Rook** Records from 5 sites with a maximum count of 900 flying to roost over Trumpington on Dec 3rd. Other reports included 337 at Hatley St George on Dec 10th and 250 over Stapleford on Nov 27th.

**Carrion Crow** Reported from 6 sites including a flock of 63 birds at Westfield Farm, Comberton on Dec 27th.

**Common Starling** A conservative estimate of 6000+ birds roosting at Fowlmere RSPB on Nov 12th was the peak count supported by 1300 at Kingfishers Bridge on Nov 28th.

**House Sparrow** Reported from 5 sites with a maximum count of 65+ birds at Elm on Nov 30th and 55+ at Farcet Fen on Dec 22nd.

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow** Reported from 8 sites with 26 birds at Block Fen on Dec 18th and 16 birds at Farcet Fen on Dec 31st.

**Chaffinch** Well-reported with 90 at the Cambridge Botanical Gardens and 80 at Barton on Dec 31st being the highlights.

**Brambling** Another increase in reports with records from 10 sites including a peak count of 55 at the Roman Road, Worsted on Dec 6th and 50 at the Beechwoods Reserve on Nov 26th.

**European Greenfinch** Recorded from 6 sites with a maximum count being 197 at the Ouse Washes on Nov 20th.

**Eurasian Siskin** Still a bit thin on the ground with a peak count of 20 birds at Ferry Meadows CP on Dec 23rd. Other reports from Hatley St George, Kingfishers Bridge and Stapleford involved just single birds.

**Common Linnet** Reports were received from 11 sites with the highest being a flock of 50 birds at Ouse Fen on Nov 5th.

**Twite** Reported from 2 sites with an impressive 10 birds recorded Maxey GP's on Nov 12th and 2 at Paxton Pits on the same day.

**Lesser Redpoll** Recorded from 3 sites mostly involving 1–3 birds but 12 were reported at Paxton Pits on Dec 13th.

**Mealy Redpoll** A single report of 2 birds at the Countryside College, Wisbech on Nov 21st.

**Common Bullfinch** Records came from 11 sites with a peak count of 10 at Milton CP on Nov 4th.

**Lapland Longspur** A probable sighting at the Ouse Washes, Pymoor Railway Bridge on Dec 9th.

**Yellowhammer** Reported from 13 sites, again the maximum was 50+ at Paxton Pits on Nov 12th.

**Reed Bunting** Records included 37 birds at Farcet Fen on Dec 26th and 36 birds from Kingfishers Bridge on Oct 5th.

**Corn Bunting** Reported from 11 sites with 51 at Pymoor Oct 8th being the peak count. Other records included 28 at Hod Fen, Holme, 21 at Farcet Fen and 15 at Hatley St George.

## HYBRIDS

**Canada x Greylag** Two at Kingfishers Bridge between Nov 21st and Dec 6th.

**Glaucous x Herring Gull** A 2nd-winter presumed hybrid was at Grafham Water on Dec 27th

#### **EXOTICA**

**Black Swan** At Paxton Pits, 2 on various dates and 2 at Ely riverside on Dec 17th.

**Wood Duck** Two at Midsummer Common, Cambridge on Nov 5th.

**Muscovy Duck** Riverside Ely, 73 on Nov 19th.

**Purple Swamphen** The long-staying escape recorded at Brownhill Staunch on Nov 5th.

**Laughing Dove** One in Ely on Nov 11th.

Contributors: Colin Addington, Louise Bacon, Ian Barton, Rowena Baxter, Prof DM Broom, Robin Cox, Steve Dudley, Mike Everett, Dr Mike Foley, David Griffiths, Kevin Harris, Mark Hawkes, Peter Herkenrath, Julian Hughes, Phil Jackson, Vince Lea, Jono Leadley, Owen & Monica Marks, Mark Missin, Darren Oakley-Martin, John Oates, Richard Palmer, Robert Pople, Duncan Poyser, Dr Gareth Rees, Tony Roberts, Kathleen Rosewarne, Clive Sinclair, Howard Slatter, J Swalwell, Alan & Brenda Wadsworth, David White, 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.

## **Submitting records using the CBC spreadsheet**

*Mark Hawkes, Cambs County Recorder.*  
(adapted from an original piece by John Oates).

For sometime now, I have been submitting my records via email, and using the CBC spreadsheet. I used to send them to the county recorder as a list (compiled in a letter format), but, after John Oates convinced me to try using the CBC spreadsheet, I have never looked back. It is the most efficient and easy way to submit records. Now, having taken over from John as County Recorder, I hope I can encourage others to also give it a go.

Many CBC members already submit their records by e-mail using the CBC spreadsheet, but there are some who do not. This may be because of a basic unfamiliarity with spreadsheets. I hope I can encourage a few more members to send in their records by providing an overview of the CBC database and by giving a few hints and tips. Regular contributors may also find this useful, and I urge everyone to read the following.

With so many spreadsheets being sent from many observers, it takes many hours to compile, sort and tidy the main database. To help keep this process efficient (and avoid mistakes creeping into the database), it is helpful if observers can try to follow the (fictitious) example given below. It is also helpful if observers don't alter the settings of the sheet.

**Code and Species:** Each species has been given a code, which allows records to be sorted in a particular order. A commonly encountered problem is what to do when a particular species is seen more than once. The best way around this is to insert blank rows below the species and use 'Copy' and 'Paste' tools to add the Code and Species (see Black Tern above). It is best to avoid typing the Code and Species because this can lead to errors, which are very difficult to pick up. It is particularly important to stick to the standard species names. Annual report and bulletin section writers can sort the records correctly using these names. For example, Common Shelduck and Shelduck will not be sorted together using the species name, even if the Codes are correct. The use of filters allows quick access to a particular species and saves scrolling down large numbers of rows. If several sightings of a species are made at the same site, during the same month, then add extra records in the comments box (see Eurasian Hobby above), this helps to minimise the size of the spreadsheet (which can exceed 36,000 records per year!).

**Date:** The date is best entered as dd-mm-yy. This allows dates to be easily changed into the required format (which will occur automatically on the new spreadsheet). Dates entered in other ways (e.g. 7th Jan 2006) require editing, which is time consuming and can lead to errors. The dates for birds seen throughout a particular month, can be added as the last date in the month, with a specific qualifier in the comments section (see Tawny Owl above). The same principle applies to records that cover a prolonged period of time (e.g. breeding records, see Common Coot above).

**Location:** Please use the standardised site names as much as possible. A useful list of sites can be found in the Annual Report gazetteer, or on the CBC website, under the 'What's About?' page. If

records relate to a particular part of a larger location, please include the sub-site in brackets afterwards (see Bewick's Swan and Tawny Owl above). Often it is required that the database be sorted by site names, and if a standard format is not followed, this makes additional work for those involved. For example if listed 'Long Drove', this would place all the Long Doves together, yet those at Cottenham and Haddenham are clearly different sites – please list as 'Cottenham (Long Drove)'.

**Numbers:** This is self-explanatory, and often the most notable count for a month will suffice, with other numbers noted in Comments box.

**Observer:** This is fairly straightforward – a list of observer initials can be found in the latest Cambs Bird Report. Multiple observers should be listed in the same column (see Black-necked Grebe above).

Any additional information can be added in the comments section. Unusual behaviour, breeding details or plumage aberrations are good examples of this. It is also a good place to highlight high counts or notable site records (see Canada Goose and Black-headed Gull above). The report section writers will occasionally use these comments.

Column H is used to distinguish between Hunts (h) and Old Cambs (c). This allows Hunts records to be sorted easily for use by the Hunts Flora and Fauna Society. The map on the back cover of the Annual Report is an excellent reference. Column I is used to distinguish Peterborough Bird Club area records (PBC). The area covered can be viewed at [http://pbc.codehog.co.uk/area\\_map.htm](http://pbc.codehog.co.uk/area_map.htm).

This is just a quick guide to using the spreadsheet, so please contact me if you have any questions. For an idea of what kind of records to submit, please refer to the 'Guidelines for the submission of records' in the CBC Annual Report. However, if you are not sure, please submit the records (especially any breeding data for any species, as this is an area where we would like to receive more records).

As of January 2007, a new, slightly modified spreadsheet will be available, please email me for a copy at [marklhawkes@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:marklhawkes@yahoo.co.uk)

Code	Species	Date	Location	No.	Comments	Observer
8	Black-necked Grebe	1-Apr-06	Grafham Water	2	found by CDA	CDA, MLH
33	Bewick's Swan	4-Dec-06	Ouse Washes (Mepal)	210	in field	MLH
40	Canada Goose	27-Sep-06	Grafham Water	212	large count for this site	MLH
76	Ruddy Duck	4-Dec-06	Ouse Washes (Pymoor)	1	drake	MLH
89	Osprey	31-Aug-06	Grafham Water	1	adult, present until 6/9	MLH et al
93	Eurasian Hobby	5-May-06	Paxton Pits	3	Also singles on 10/5 and 20/5	MLH
107	Common Coot	31-May-06	Grafham Water	*	10 breeding pairs	MLH
159	Common Greenshank	7-Sep-06	Grafham Water	7	peak in month, otherwise 1-5	JDL, MLH
177	Black-headed Gull	12-Feb-06	Grafham Water	1	albino - seen again on 16/2, 22/2	MLH et al
199	Black Tern	5-May-06	Grafham Water	12		MLH
199	Black Tern	5-May-06	Paxton Pits	5		MLH
199	Black Tern	2-Jun-06	Godmanchester GP	2		MLH
216	Tawny Owl	31-Mar-06	St. Neots (Flawn Way)	*	heard regularly during the month	MLH



## **Bulletin bird: Laughing Gull at Grafham Water.**

*Jono Leadley*

From mid-summer onwards, a large number of gulls roost at Grafham Water. Due to the reservoir's large size, the roost moves around, presumably in response to the wind direction. Often this makes the roost very difficult to watch. However, from time to time, watching the gull roost can be very rewarding.

On 19th November 2006, I wandered down to the harbour near Mander Car Park, which offers a good vantage point for watching the gulls if they are gathering at the western end of the reservoir. To start, I attempted to take some photos of a Yellow-legged Gull, which was loafing close to the shore. I then turned my attention to the gulls which were gathering further out.

After a few minutes I noticed a small gull in the nearest flock, with an all black bill and a black 'bandit mask'. I momentarily thought of a first winter Mediterranean Gull, but then the bird turned round revealing, to my utter surprise, dark grey upper-parts and long black primaries! I immediately telephoned Mark Hawkes and said that he should come to Grafham as quickly as possible as I had found a small dark gull that I thought was a Laughing Gull, although I said that I hadn't totally ruled out Franklin's Gull. In a state of shock, I tried to calmly think through the identification features of this pair of similar species.

The long drooping black bill, lack of large white primary mirrors, lack of distinct white eye crescents and long wings fitted Laughing Gull, so I telephoned Mark again, confirming the identification and that it was still present. I attempted to get a photo, but due to the poor light and the fact that my hands were shaking from excitement, I was unable to take a decent photo. I was also quite concerned that should the bird fly while I was trying to photograph it, I might have difficulty relocating it among the thousands of gulls present in the roost.

For the vast majority of the time, the bird loafed on the water, slowly drifting east. It occasionally did a bit of preening of the upperparts and was seen to stand and flap at least once. It did not interact with the other gulls at all and appeared to be in good condition and healthy.

Then, after the longest 10 minutes of my life, Grafham Water regular, Colin Addington, arrived, followed by other birders. I was incredibly relieved to get others on to this fantastic bird and share the sighting with many of my birding friends. In all, about a dozen people managed to see the bird before it was lost in the gathering gloom of dusk. Despite intensive searching for many days hereafter, the bird was not relocated. What was presumably the same individual was found in Hertfordshire at Amwell Gravel Pits a week later (26th), where it roosted overnight before flying off early the next morning. If accepted, this will be the first record for Cambridgeshire.



### **NEWS FROM THE RSPB IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

At the end of January the RSPB confirmed today that it has bought Fen Drayton Lakes from London-based property company O & H Properties Ltd to develop a major new nature reserve. More than £2 million of funding from Communities and Local Government and the East of England Development Agency is contributing towards the purchase and set-up costs of the new nature reserve. The guided busway being built by Cambridgeshire County Council will provide a new access route to the heart of the reserve, with a request stop at the nature reserve. The landscape and wildlife will be enhanced through a programme of habitat management including removal of willows to open up views, scrub management, creation of reedbeds, and digging new ditches and pools. Initial work at Fen Drayton Lakes RSPB nature reserve will include signposts, footpaths, car parking and interpretation panels as well as spreading the word about the reserve in surrounding communities. The new reserve will be

part of a very large wetland complex of adjacent nature reserves along the River Great Ouse, including Needingworth Quarry, and the Ouse Washes. With the addition of Fen Drayton Lakes, this area of protected wetland is already 23 miles long and over 2,300 hectares in size, with the prospect of being even bigger as the RSPB and other organisations are working together to add more land in future.

*Graham Elliott (RSPB Fens Area Manager)*

**\*\*\***

## **Roger Clarke 1952–2007**

Roger Clarke who was one of the most distinguished ornithologists among the many who have been members of the Club, passed away on the 28th January. He had been ill for a year but continued working on his numerous ornithological projects right up to the end.

Roger was an accountant by profession, as was his father, but he really only pursued this career in single-handed private practice so that he could have the maximum time for ornithology. Accountancy was just a means to enable him to support his family and pursue his real passion which was birds and particularly raptors. It was his work on raptor feeding ecology which was the subject of his Ph.D which he received from the University of Liverpool in 1999. Even his accountancy practice was put to the benefit of birds because he gave his time and professional expertise freely to bird charities and organisations such as the British Ornithologists' Union, the Hawk and Owl Trust and the Society of Wildlife Artists. For many years he was auditor to our Club of which he was also Chairman from 1995 to 2000, including our 75th anniversary celebrations.

He was a self-effacing, shy man whose quiet demeanour concealed a very sharp, meticulous and critical scientific mind which led to his ground-breaking work on raptor feeding ecology, particularly Hen Harriers which were his favourite birds. His scientific fastidiousness did not extend to the domestic arena for which he had no propensity except to clutter it with pellets. But his wife, Janis, was lovingly tolerant of Roger's obsession with raptors and their feeding habits.

Roger was also a musician and an avid collector of wildlife art especially pictures of raptors. His private collection of Donald Watson paintings was recently exhibited at the Mall galleries in London as part of a Society of Wildlife Artists' Exhibition. Eric Ennion used to live in Burwell, the next village to Roger and, not surprisingly, his paintings also were among his favourites in his collection.

It is tragic that the ornithological world should have been robbed of one of its stars at the premature age of 54 when he still had so much to offer. It is also tragic and ironical that he, a committed and life-long non-smoker, should have succumbed to a disease usually confined to smokers. Roger will be missed, not only by the Club and the birding community of Cambridgeshire, but also by the whole world of ornithology and raptor conservation stretching from Norfolk to India. We particularly extend our condolences to his widow, Janis and his children, Mostyn and Bethan.

Roger was recently awarded the Union Medal of the British Ornithologists' Union and the citation, which is a much fuller appreciation of Roger's life than I can give here, can be read on the BOU website at [www.bou.org.uk](http://www.bou.org.uk)

*Robin Cox (CBC President)*

## FORTHCOMING MEETINGS 2007

Doors open at 7.30pm for an 8.00pm start.

### Friday March 9th St John's Church Hall, Cambridge

#### AGM followed by 100 Years of British Birds and British Birding by Bob Scott

This talk It will trace 100 years of British Birding through the 'eyes' of British Birds magazine, maybe with some of Not BB thrown in for good measure! It will look at how birdwatching has changed (even the word has changed to birding!) as illustrated from Vol.1 to Vol. 100 in 2007. Often serious, sometimes amusing, and occasionally with glaring errors(!), this presentation charts the history of the journal, the birds and the people over the century.

Bob Scott is a former chairman of Cambridgeshire Bird Club. He is currently a trustee and director of British Birds and is very active in wide range of BTO field studies. He enjoys travel and is a member of the Seychelles Bird Record Committee.

### Friday April 13th Milton Country Park Visitor's Centre

#### Birds of Australia by David Fisher

This talk will introduce us to Australia's colourful and diverse birdlife. It will cover the main habitats and the birds to be found in each, as well as a few mammals.

David Fisher is a former Managing Director of Sunbird who has led more than 130 tours to 28 countries on six continents. He has spent a total of more than three years in the field in South America and more than two years each in Australia and Africa. He is a member of the East African Rarities Committee, Chairman of the Seychelles Records Committee, and is a council member of the Neotropical Bird Club.

## FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

We welcome the following new members – Carl Barimore of Cambridge, Darren Oakley-Martin of Hatley St George, Duncan Ritchie of Kings Ripton Huntingdon and Peter Watson of Ely.

*Bruce Martin*

## FROM THE EDITOR

We offer our condolences to the families and friends of Cambridgeshire Bird Club members Paul Atkinson and Sheila Harrup who passed away in December 2006. Paul Atkinson helped produce to the Annual Reports in the early 1990s. Sheila Harrup was the wife of Brian Harrup, a former secretary of the Club.

## FROM THE TREASURER

Subscriptions are due on 1st January 2007, **please pay promptly.**

Many of you pay by Bankers Standing Order and your bank should pay your subscription on the first working day in January 2007. If you pay by cash or cheque, please see me at an indoor meeting or post your subscription to me at 2 Millers Road, Toft, Cambridge, CB23 2RX.

Subscriptions :- Full membership	£14.	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 262659 or email ksharris2@aol.com. Last year we were able to reclaim over £900 – and remember it does not cost you anything – all the money the Club gains comes from the Inland Revenue.r

***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.***

*Kevin Harris (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](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 March 7th**

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

**Next Bulletin due out April 2007, covering January–February 2007**

# GOOD BIRDING!