

# CAMBRIDGESHIRE BIRD CLUB

*Bulletin* No. 394



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

## RECENT REPORTS SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER 2007

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), Colin Kirtland (Gulls and Terns), Jon Pavey (Pigeons to Woodpeckers), Jono Leadley (Larks to Thrushes), Mike Foley (Warblers to Tits), 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 (contact details on back page).

**A Happy Christmas and a good birding New Year to you all**

*Golden Plover and Grey Plover by Graham  
Easy*



Numbers in brackets indicate September and October maximums.

## **WILDFOWL**

**Mute Swan** At Fen Drayton GP (144:126), Grafham Water (182:103), Ouse Fen (75:64) the Ouse Washes (111:566) and Paxton Pits (80:132). Also noted at 10 other sites.

**Bewick's Swan** Two at Paxton Pits on Oct 24<sup>th</sup> and 2 at the Ouse Washes on Oct 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Whooper Swan** Thirty were counted on the Ouse Washes on Oct 22<sup>nd</sup> and single figures were at 4 other sites.

**Pink-footed Goose** Apart from feral birds at 2 sites a flock of 20 flew over Hatley Park on the evening of Sept 25<sup>th</sup> and 163 were at the Nene Washes on Sept 27<sup>th</sup>.

**Greylag Goose** Three-figure counts were made at Grafham Water (172), Kingfishers Bridge (600), Needingworth GP (404), the Ouse Washes (313) and Paxton Pits (216). Also reported at 6 other sites.

**Canada Goose** Three-figure counts were made at the Ouse Washes (236), Paxton Pits (259) and Wicken Fen (138). Also reported at 6 other sites.

**Barnacle Goose** Eleven birds were at Needingworth GP on Sept 15<sup>th</sup>, 8 at Paxton Pits on Oct 18<sup>th</sup> and singles at Grafham Water and the Ouse Washes.

**Egyptian Goose** A maximum of 8 birds were recorded in the Earith GP/ Ouse Washes Earith area during the period. 7 were at Wicken Fen on Oct 13<sup>th</sup> and 5 at Fidwell Fen on the same date, (same flock)? And a single bird at Paxton Pits on two dates.

**Common Shelduck** A maximum of 4 birds were seen at Paxton Pits and smaller numbers at 4 other sites.

**Mandarin** Six birds were displaying at Bolton's Pit Cambridge on Sept 11<sup>th</sup> and singles were at Paxton Pits on Sept 3<sup>rd</sup> and over Little Paxton village on Oct 1st.

**Eurasian Wigeon** At Barleycroft GP (16:340), Fen Drayton GP (279:626), Grafham Water (5:200+), Needingworth GP (9:309), Ouse Fen (4:280), the Ouse Washes (3:6152), Paxton Pits (42:420) and Wicken Fen (2:177). Smaller numbers also noted at 6 other sites.

**Gadwall** At Fen Drayton GP (151:198), Grafham Water (76:55), the Ouse Washes (0:683) and Paxton Pits (33:106) Also reported at 9 other sites.

**Eurasian Teal** At Grafham Water (137:148), Ouse Fen (180:156), the Ouse Washes (188:2090), Paxton Pits (114:110) and Wicken Fen (404:84). Smaller numbers also noted at 5 other sites.

**Mallard** At Barleycroft GP (120:108), Fen Drayton GP (152:181), Grafham Water (371:1316), Kingfishers Bridge (277:83), Needingworth GP (163:131), Ouse Fen (120:196), the Ouse Washes (0:2158), Paxton Pits (243:110) and Wicken Fen (115:180). Smaller numbers also noted at 6 other sites.

**Northern Pintail** Wintering birds first noted from September 11<sup>th</sup> with a single bird at Buckden GP. By the period end the Ouse Washes with 39 birds,

Ouse Fen with 16 and Paxton Pits with 15 had the highest counts. Single figure counts were seen at 4 other sites.

**Garganey** The last recorded birds were 1 at the Ouse Washes on Sept 8<sup>th</sup>, 2 at Paxton Pits on Sept 9<sup>th</sup> and 1 at the Cam Washes on Sept 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Northern Shoveler** At Fen Drayton GP (100:82), Kingfishers Bridge (100:104) and the Ouse Washes (0:646) and Wicken Fen (9:97). Smaller numbers also noted at 11 other sites.

**Red-crested Pochard** Two birds were at Grafham Water on Sept 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> and 6 at Fen Drayton GP on Oct 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Common Pochard** At Fen Drayton GP (45:60), Needingworth GP (70:39) and Ouse Fen (150:34), the Ouse Washes (1:179) and Paxton Pits (34:63). Also recorded at 5 other sites of which Ely BF with 88 on Sept 29<sup>th</sup> is worth a mention.

**Tufted Duck** At Fen Drayton GP (360:245), Grafham Water (555:692), Needingworth GP (47:46), Ouse Fen (16:30), the Ouse Washes (69:448) and Paxton Pits (274:188). Also recorded at 6 other sites.

**Greater Scaup** At Grafham Water there was an interesting movement of this species with a male on Oct 22<sup>nd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup>, 2 males on the 26<sup>th</sup>, a female on 27<sup>th</sup> and 2 females on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Scoter** Three males were at Grafham Water on Oct 8<sup>th</sup>.

**Goldeneye** The summering male was still at Buckden GP in September and 2 birds were at the Ouse Washes on Sept 28<sup>th</sup>. Single figure records were from 4 sites in early October and by the latter part of the month they was 25 at Grafham Water, 11 at Paxton Pits and 10 at Buckden GP.

**Ruddy Duck** Single figures reported from 4 sites.

## **GAMEBIRDS**

**Red-legged Partridge** A few reports of double-figure site counts.

**Grey Partridge** Highest counts of 18 (Haddenham Fen) and Foxton (13), otherwise a few small counts.

**Common Pheasant** Only reported from 4 sites.

## **DIVERS TO HERONS**

**Little Grebe** An impressive count of 57 was made at Paxton Pits in September and 54 in October. Other double-figure counts were 29 at Needingworth GP and 24 at the Ouse Washes. Single figures were noted at 6 other sites.

**Great Crested Grebe** Grafham Water was as usual the place to go for wintering GCGs with a maximum count of 119. The best double-figure counts were Fen Drayton GP 52, Paxton Pits 42 and the Ouse Washes 40. Also recorded at 9 other sites.

**Red-necked Grebe** One at Orton BP on Oct 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Black-necked Grebe** One at Grafham Water on Sept 12<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Northern Fulmar** An unexpected garden tick when from an Elton bedroom window 1 was seen to head along the River Nene on Sept 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Northern Gannet** One was seen at the Nene Washes on Sept 27<sup>th</sup>, 2 juveniles at Maxey GP on

Sept 28<sup>th</sup> and 1 flew over Croydon on Oct 14<sup>th</sup> during a migration watch.

**Great Cormorant** At Fen Drayton GP (28:70), Grafham Water (34:44) and the Ouse Washes (48:109). Also recorded at 9 other sites.

**Great Bittern** Two were present at Kingfishers Bridge on Sept 11<sup>th</sup> and singles were seen at Ely BF, Fen Drayton GP, the Ouse Washes and Woodwalton Fen during the period.

**Little Egret** The maximum count on the Ouse Washes was 28. Twenty-three at Paxton Pits on Sept 4<sup>th</sup> was a record for the site. Single figures were noted at 8 other sites.

**Great Egret** One flew north over Fidwell Fen on Oct 27<sup>th</sup>.

**Grey Heron** At Fen Drayton GP (12:10) and the Ouse Washes (26:115). Also noted at 10 other sites.

**Purple Heron** Two long staying juvenile birds took up residence at the Nene and Ouse Washes during the period, the Nene bird from Sept 19<sup>th</sup> to Oct 6<sup>th</sup> and the Ouse bird from Sept 23<sup>rd</sup> to Oct 14<sup>th</sup>. There was also a record from the Ouse Washes of a bird on Sept 10<sup>th</sup>. Was this the Ouse or Nene bird or neither?

## RAPTORS

**European Honey-buzzard** Along with lots of Common Buzzards in our autumn skies, there were several 'possible' Honey's, including a remarkable report of 8 at Hemingford Grey. Confident sightings came from Barton (1, Sep 2nd), Ouse Fen (2, 15th) and Trumpington (2, Oct 4th).

**Red Kite** Regularly reported from the Grafham Water area, with up to 2 in both months, while a single was also seen at Fowlmere on Sep 5th.

**Eurasian Marsh Harrier** Regularly reported from all the main wetland areas of the county, highest numbers coming from the Nene Washes with 13 on Sep 16th. Successfully bred at Fowlmere RSPB reserve with 2 juvs.

**Hen Harrier** Singles reported in Sep from Ouse Washes (2nd) and Nene Washes (26th) with a further 4 singles in Oct from Nene Washes, Paxton Pits, Fowlmere and Holt Fen.

**Harrier sp.** A 'grey' harrier seen at distance from Sutton Gault on Sep 2nd, same day as a confirmed Hen Harrier also at the Ouse Washes.

**Montagu's Harrier** Remarkably, a ringtail was seen at Fowlmere on Sep 1st and a male at the same site on the 2nd.

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk** Reported from 29 localities throughout the county, including many gardens. Prey / attempted prey included Starling, House Sparrow and Collared Dove.

**Common Buzzard** Widely reported throughout the period, with some being apparent migrants drifting high, while other reports involved noisy family groups and apparent resident birds in suitable habitat. Witcham, Grafham Water and Paxton Pits all got into double figures in September, Paxton having a max of 13. Stanground, with 10 birds on the 8th, had the peak October count.

**Rough-legged Buzzard** A possible seen at Upton Wood on Oct 15th.

**Osprey** A single seen regularly at the Nene Washes (Eldernell) from Sep 12th to Oct 1st, plus 3 sightings of a single at Grafham and one over Addenbrookes Hospital, all in September.

**Common Kestrel** 1–3 birds from many localities, including 2 juveniles at Paxton Pits, but the only higher counts came from Nene Washes with a max of 12 on Sep 26th.

**Merlin** Singles seen on and off at 5 localities from Sep 8th to end Oct.

**Eurasian Hobby** 30 sites had Hobby reports, mostly 1–2 birds and almost all in September. Peak of 5 at Paxton Pits was highest count, last bird seen here on Sep 22nd. Only 2 in October compared with last year when there were 8+.

**Peregrine Falcon** Regularly reported from Grafham and Paxton throughout the period, with several different birds involved. Other sightings came from both washes, Wicken Fen, Brampton GP, Fulbourn and Shepreth.

## RAILS

**Water Rail** Reported from 8 wetlands, including 6 at Fowlmere on Sep 18th and 3 at Grafham Water Oct 13th.

**Corn Crake** One flushed and seen in flight at Old Weston on Sep 25th was a lucky encounter for one observer.

**Common Moorhen** Mainly recorded through the WeBS counts with highest numbers from the Ouse Washes (-, 208), Grafham Water (37, 14), Paxton Pits (32, 31) and Fen Drayton (29, 41).

**Common Coot** WeBS counters logged several thousand from our large wetlands, with Grafham Water (908, 1287), Ouse Washes (-, 1191), Fen Drayton (430, 1065), Paxton Pits (342, 379) and Needingworth (244, 344) sharing the majority.

## WADERS

**Eurasian Oystercatcher** Single at Ouse Fen on Oct 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Little Plover** 1–3 at Ouse Washes (Sutton Gault) from Sept 1<sup>st</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup>, Paxton Pits on 24<sup>th</sup> and Grafham Water on 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Ringed Plover** 1–21 at Fidwell Fen from Sept 29<sup>th</sup> to Oct 23<sup>rd</sup>, peak of 19 at Paxton Pits on Sept 8<sup>th</sup>, 3–13 at Ouse Washes (Earith) from Sept 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup>, 1–15 at Maxey/Etton GP Sept 6<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup>, 1–6 and peak of 13 on Sept 5<sup>th</sup> at Grafham Water.

**American Golden Plover** A juvenile at Maxey/Etton Pits on Oct 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**European Golden Plover** Small groups in September, good arrival through October. Highest counts Fidwell Fen (450:2500), Wicken Fen 2000 on Oct 24<sup>th</sup>, Paxton Pits (24:1800), Ouse Fen (250:1250), Haddenham 1400 on Oct 7<sup>th</sup>,

**Grey Plover** In September, Paxton Pits on 1st and 2 on 29<sup>th</sup>, Barleycraft GP on 29<sup>th</sup>, Ouse Fen 2 on 29<sup>th</sup>, In October, Barleycraft GP 2 on 2<sup>nd</sup>, Grafham Water on 3<sup>rd</sup>, Needingworth GP 3 on 3<sup>rd</sup>, Ouse Washes on 8<sup>th</sup>, Manea on 10<sup>th</sup> (with Golden Plover

flock), Ouse Fen and Over Fen on 20<sup>th</sup> and Paxton Pits on 24<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>.

**Northern Lapwing** Highest counts from Paxton Pits (600:1700), Fidwell Fen (1320:1500), Ouse Washes (100, 1294), Needingworth GP 1170 on Sept 15<sup>th</sup>, Nene Washes 1000 on Sept 29<sup>th</sup>, Wicken Fen 1000 on Oct 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Red Knot** Singles at Paxton Pits on Sept 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup>, Grafham Water on Aug 14<sup>th</sup> and 5 at Fidwell Fen on Oct 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Sanderling** Two at Grafham Water on Sept 3<sup>rd</sup> and 1 from 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Little Stint** An excellent autumn, recorded from Sept 12<sup>th</sup> with peaks counts from Fidwell Fen (6:16):Grafham Water (7:7), Barleycraft GP (3:6), Needingworth GP (2:5), Paxton Pits (3:3), Maxey GP (1:2), Ouse Fen (1:2), Kingfishers Bridge and Over Fen (0:2).

**Temminck's Stint** Single at Barleycraft GP on Sept 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Pectoral Sandpiper** Two juveniles at Ouse Washes (Earith to Sutton Gault) from Sept 1<sup>st</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Curlew Sandpiper** Good passage at Fidwell Fen mainly between Sept 6<sup>th</sup> and Oct 12<sup>th</sup> with peak counts of (6:10), Kingfishers Bridge several on Oct 9<sup>th</sup>, Ouse Washes and Paxton Pits 2 in early September and one at Maxey GP on Sept 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Purple Sandpiper** One at Barleycraft GP on Sept 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Dunlin** Highest counts from Paxton Pits (11:10), Fidwell Fen (10:24), Ouse Washes (16:0), Grafham Water (9:0), Maxey/Etton GP (7:9), Needingworth GP (6:5).

**Ruff** Highest counts from Fidwell Fen (10:19), Ouse Washes (15:6) and 1–4 from a further four sites.

**Jack Snipe** In October 1–2 at Nene Washes, Fowlmere, Paxton Pits, Kings Dyke and Mepal.

**Common Snipe** Highest count from Ouse Washes (110:124 min), Fidwell Fen (24:10), Nene Washes (30:40 min), Kingfishers Bridge (0:60), Paxton Pits (15:23), Grafham Water (1:19)

**Eurasian Woodcock** Singles appeared at 4 sites from Oct 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Black-tailed Godwit** Up to 8 at both Ouse Washes and Fidwell Fen and 1–4 from a further 4 sites.

**Icelandic Black-tailed Godwit** One at Paxton Pits on Sept 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Bar-tailed Godwit** Fidwell Fen from Sept 18<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> and Needingworth GP Sept 30<sup>th</sup> and Oct 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**Whimbrel** Four over Hardwick Wood on Sept 1<sup>st</sup> and 1 over Sutton Gault on Sept 7<sup>th</sup>

**Eurasian Curlew** Four over Grafham Water on Sept 1<sup>st</sup>, 3 over Elm on Sept 5<sup>th</sup>, Earith GP on Sept 29<sup>th</sup> and Ouse Washes on Oct 8<sup>th</sup>.

**Spotted Redshank** Ouse Washes from Sept 5<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup>, Paxton Pits from 1<sup>st</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>, Nene Washes on Oct 15<sup>th</sup> and Maxey GP on Oct 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Redshank** 1–2 at 4 sites in September, 30 at Ouse Washes from Oct 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1–6 at Paxton Pits and 1–2 from a further 6 sites.

**Common Greenshank** Main locality was Ouse washes with max count of 24 on Sept 1<sup>st</sup> reducing daily to 1–2 after 11<sup>th</sup> except for 6 on Oct 8<sup>th</sup>, 9 at

Paxton Pits on 3<sup>rd</sup> with last on Sept 24<sup>th</sup> and 1–2 from a further 7 sites.

**Green Sandpiper** Highest numbers in September, peak counts: Maxey GP (12:2), Paxton Pits (8:5), Wicken Fen (5:5), Fidwell/Holt Fen (7:3), Ouse Washes (5:0) and 1–3 from a further 6 sites.

**Wood Sandpiper** In September 1–2 at Ouse Washes from 1<sup>st</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> and 1 at Grafham Water on 29<sup>th</sup>.

## SKUAS TO TERNS

**Arctic Skua** All reports were from September: at Grafham Water, southwest on 1st; at Paxton Pits with 3 seen high to the west on 26<sup>th</sup> and Nene Washes where 1 was seen on 26<sup>th</sup> and 4 probables were flying southwest on 29<sup>th</sup>

**Great Skua** Northerly gales in late September resulted in records of singles at Fowlmere on 27<sup>th</sup>, Fen Drayton, Grafham Water and Fidwell Fen on 28<sup>th</sup>; the latter was observed feeding on a gull. It remained until 30<sup>th</sup> but was picked up dead at nearby Kingfishers Bridge on October 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**Mediterranean Gull** All records were of single birds: at Grafham Water Sept 1st, Oct 13<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>; at Ouse Fen on Sept 9<sup>th</sup>; Maxey GP on Sept 12<sup>th</sup>; at Girton on Oct 24<sup>th</sup>; Fidwell Fen on Oct 27<sup>th</sup>; Paxton Pits on Oct 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Laughing Gull** A 2nd CY bird was watched in the gull roost at Fidwell Fen on Oct 26<sup>th</sup>. The third county record following previous sightings at Grafham

**Little Gull** A good series of records in September included 1 at Grafham Water on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, 2 on 10<sup>th</sup>, 1 on 17<sup>th</sup> and another on 30<sup>th</sup>; singles at Paxton Pits on 4<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>; at Fidwell Fen 8 adults and 2 juveniles on 28<sup>th</sup>, and a juvenile at Holt Fen on 30<sup>th</sup>. In October, singles at Holt Fen on 1<sup>st</sup>, at Fidwell Fen on 2<sup>nd</sup> and Brampton GP on 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**Black-headed Gull** The only notable count was of 1100 roosting at Fidwell Fen on 30<sup>th</sup> Sept. A leucistic bird was reported from Grafham Water on Sept 17<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>, and an albino on Oct 27<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Gull** Very few reported, with 80 at Paxton Pits on Oct 3<sup>rd</sup> being the only count above 20.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** At Paxton Pits, 2000 were seen flying west to roost on Sept 7<sup>th</sup>, and at Fidwell Fen, 990 were roosting on Sept 30<sup>th</sup>. No roost counts were received from Grafham Water.

**Herring Gull** Surprisingly not a single record received – have they all transformed in to Yellow-legged Gulls?

**Yellow-legged Gull** The now annually reported autumn influx included 7 at Grafham Water on Sept 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 2 there on Oct 6<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>. At Paxton Pits there were 29 on Sept 7<sup>th</sup> (70% were 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> CY birds) and 10 on Oct 14<sup>th</sup>. Regular sightings were made at Fidwell Fen from late September: 7 on Sept 24<sup>th</sup>, 14 on 25<sup>th</sup>, 3 on Oct 20<sup>th</sup>, 15 on 23<sup>rd</sup>, 19 on 26<sup>th</sup> and 2 on 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Caspian Gull** Singles at Fowlmere on Sept 12<sup>th</sup>, Paxton Pits on Oct 7<sup>th</sup> and Fidwell Fen on Oct 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Great Black-backed Gull** Only 4 records were received: 10 at Paxton Pits on Sept 5<sup>th</sup>, 3 at

Comberton on Oct 5th, 1 at Ouse Fen on Oct 14th and 10 at Fidwell Fen on Oct 29th

**Sandwich Tern** A single at Grafham Water on Sept 19th, and 2 there on 28th

**Common Tern** The only flocks reported were 11 at Earith on Sept 1<sup>st</sup> and 4 juveniles there on Oct 3<sup>rd</sup>; 5 at Sutton Gault on Sept 7<sup>th</sup>, 4 at Grafham on Sept 26<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>. Otherwise, 1s and 2s were reported from Ferry Meadows, Etton Pit, Nene Washes, Paxton Pits, Fen Drayton GP, Holt Fen and Fidwell Fen.

**Arctic Tern** The increasing number of records in probably due as much to increasing observer familiarity with the species as more frequent occurrence. There were several reports from Grafham Water with 1 on Sept 3<sup>rd</sup>, 13 on Sept 26<sup>th</sup>, 10 of which stayed only briefly before continuing their migration, 2 on 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>, followed by singles on Oct 6<sup>th</sup>. At Shropshire's Reservoir, there was 1 on Sept 29/30<sup>th</sup>, 4 on Oct 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>. Three at nearby Fidwell Fen on Sept 29<sup>th</sup>, and 2 at Holt Fen on Oct 4<sup>th</sup>, could have been the same birds.

Elsewhere 1s and 2s between Sept 24<sup>th</sup> and Oct 8<sup>th</sup> at Ferry Meadows, Fen Drayton, Maxey GP, Milton CP, Nene Washes and Needingworth GP

**Black Tern** Two at Grafham Water on Sept 1st, 3rd and 7th, 5 at Holt Fen and Shropshires Reservoir on 23rd, and one at Brampton GP on Oct 5<sup>th</sup>.

## NEAR PASSERINES

**Feral Pigeon** At least 120 birds present in Wisbech town centre on Sept 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Stock Pigeon** Only 4 reported counts, the highest being 34 birds at Monks Hardwick, St Neots on Oct 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Wood Pigeon** Two hundred and four at Monks Hardwick, St Neots on Oct 14<sup>th</sup> and 315 at Elm on Sept 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Eurasian Collared Dove** Over 30 birds at Elm on Sept 30<sup>th</sup>.

**European Turtle Dove** Nine records of single birds across the county during September and 1, at Stretham, on Oct 6<sup>th</sup>. Four birds at RSPB Ouse Washes on Sept 8<sup>th</sup>.

**Rose-ringed Parakeet** A single at Duxford on Oct 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Cuckoo** A very late bird at Holt Fen on Oct 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Barn Owl** 1–3 birds recorded from 12 locations, including 1 dead bird on the A10 (possibly two dead birds).

**Little Owl** 1–2 birds recorded from 11 sites widely spread across the county.

**Tawny Owl** 1–3 birds observed at 22 locations, mostly calling. One bird found in middle of road staring into car headlights before flying off.

**Short-eared Owl** Earliest record is of 2 birds at Nene Washes on Sept 17<sup>th</sup>; singles recorded there on two subsequent occasions. Two birds at Woodwalton Fen on Oct 28<sup>th</sup>.

**European Nightjar** A single at Wicken Fen on Sept 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Swift** 1–3 birds recorded from various sites across the county in the first week of September; 1 bird seen at Paxton Pits on Sept 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Common Kingfisher** Recorded at about 26 sites. Generally 1–4 birds; 8 recorded at Ouse Washes on Oct 8th.

**Green Woodpecker** Recorded from over 20 sites. Five birds in a grass field near Bar Hill on Oct 10<sup>th</sup>; otherwise generally 1–2 birds.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** 1–3 birds recorded from 17 sites.

**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** Two at Paxton Pits on Oct 21<sup>st</sup>.

## PASSERINES

**Wood Lark** One seen at Croydon Hill on Oct 30th.

**Skylark** Reported from 3 sites in September: 19 at Ouse Fen on 23rd, 15 at Toft on 27th and 20 flew north at Paxton Pits on 29th. In October, reported from 13 sites, with the highest counts being 70 over Little Paxton (in one flock) on 12th, 70 near Ashley on 30th, 56 in fields to the west of Stretham on 12th, 51 near Brinkley at Cricks Farm on 30th and 39 at Monks Hardwick, St Neots on 14th.

**Sand Martin** Still widespread in the county in the first half of September. Towards the end of the month, fewer reports received, with the highest count being of 500 from Fen Drayton GP on 24th. Reported from 2 sites in October, with 20 at Paxton Pits on the 2nd followed by a single at Wicken Fen the next day being the last record.

**Barn Swallow** Reported from many sites in September, with the highest counts being 600 at Paxton Pits heading south-southeast in 2½ hours on 23rd and 600 at the Nene Washes on 29th. The only other notable count in September was 300 roosting at Paxton Pits on 7th. In October, recorded from several sites, with 200 moving over Girton on 2nd and 30 heading northeast at Comberton the next day. Two at the Ouse Washes on the 9th was the latest record.

**House Martin** Reported from many sites in September, with the highest counts reported being 300 at Paxton Pits on 25th, 250 at Milton CP, Cambridge, on 23rd and 200 at Eaton Ford, St Neots on 1st. The highest count in October, was 80 at Paxton Pits on 1st, with the last record being of a single at Paxton Pits on 27th.

**Richard's Pipit** A single was at Maxey GP from Oct 22nd until the 25th.

**Tree Pipit** One flew west at Paxton Pits on Sept 1st.

**Meadow Pipit** Reported from 8 sites in September and 7 sites in October. The highest counts recorded were 60 at Cambourne on Sept 27th and over 70 at Grafham Water on Oct 13th.

**Rock Pipit** Reported from 4 sites during the period. Up to 3 were present at Grafham Water between Oct 1st and 8th. Two were present at Holt Fen on Oct 23rd, with 3 there on 26th, and 2 still there on 29th. At Paxton Pits two, possibly 3 birds were present between Sept 29th and Oct 10<sup>th</sup>; it was considered that all birds were of the Scandinavian subspecies, *littoralis*.

**Water Pipit** One was reported from Holt Fen between Oct 22nd and 29th.

**Yellow Wagtail** Reported from many sites during September, with the highest count being 200 at Earith on 8th. In October, 1 reported from the Ouse Washes on 1st was the last of the year.

**Grey Wagtail** 1–3 reported from 18 sites in September and 17 sites in October.

**Pied Wagtail** Reported from 5 sites in September and 9 sites in October. The highest count in September was 140 at Ely BF on 4th and in October, 200 were at Fen Drayton GP on 14th.

**White Wagtail** Reported from 3 sites in the period; 1 at Earith on Sept 8th, 1 at Wicken Fen on Sept 30th and 1 at Holt Fen on Oct 7th.

**Wren** Reported from 4 sites during the period.

**Dunnock** Reported from 4 sites during the period.

**Robin** Reported from 4 sites during the period, with 10 singing at Landbeach GP on Oct 5th.

**Common Redstart** One at Witcham on Sept 1st.

**Whinchat** Reported from 6 sites in September and 2 sites in October. Two on the Ouse Washes on Sept 1st were followed by 2 at Ouse Fen the next day, with 1 at Paxton Pits the same day. Six were present at the Nene Washes on the 3rd with 3 present the next day and singles on 12th and 26th. One was at Fidwell Fen on 15th and another single was at Grafham Water on 22nd. In October, singles were reported from Holt Fen on 3rd with another the next day at Eynesbury Pocket Park, St Neots on 4th.

**Stonechat** 1–3 reported from 7 sites in September, and 1–6 from 15 sites in October.

**Northern Wheatear** 1–2 reported from 12 sites in September, with most appearing in 2 distinct periods, 1 at the beginning of the month and 1 at the end. Reported from 4 sites in October, with 3 at Toft on the 19th being the last record.

**Ring Ouzel** Two records, both in September; 1 at Eldernell, Nene Washes on 18th and 1 at Paxton Pits on 30th.

**Blackbird** Reported from several sites with the only notable count reported being 25 at Grafham Water on Oct 14th.

**Fieldfare** The first of the autumn were 15 recorded at Gamlingay on Sept 21st, followed by a single at Eldernell, Nene Washes on 27th, 6 on the Ouse Washes on 29th and 11 at Milton CP, Cambridge on 30th. In October, much more widespread and reported from many sites. The highest counts were 1700 at Wicken Fen on 20th, 500 at Wicken Fen on 24th and 327 at the Ouse Washes on 21st.

**Song Thrush** Reported from 2 sites in the period.

**Redwing** One over Barton Road, Cambridge on Sept 11th was the first of the autumn. The highest counts in September were 50 flying southwest over Hardwick on 27th and 48 over Milton CP, Cambridge on 30th. In October, reported from many sites, with the highest count being 250 at Paxton Pits on 27th.

**Mistle Thrush** Reported from 6 sites during the period, with 15 at Priory Park, St Neots on Sept 3rd the only notable count.

**Cetti's Warbler** Wicken Fen ringing activities showed 5 different birds present in September and

by the end of October, 24 different birds for the year so far. Also found at Buckden GP (second ever record), Fen Drayton GPs and Woodwalton Fen.

**Common Grasshopper Warbler** Sightings of single birds on Sept 15th and Sept 20th at Wicken Fen and Paxton Pits respectively would seem to be the last records for the summer.

**Sedge Warbler** At 3 sites, with September sightings at Ouse Washes (Earith), Paxton Pits, Wicken Fen, the last report for the county being from the latter on Sept 23rd.

**Eurasian Reed Warbler** From 5 sites, (4;1), the latest being reported from Kingfishers Bridge. The last one noted at Paxton Pits was on Sept 22nd.

**Lesser Whitethroat** From 3 sites, the latest being Sept 15<sup>th</sup> at Paxton Pits and also Wicken Fen, rather earlier than some years.

**Common Whitethroat** The latest report this year was Sept 22<sup>nd</sup>, at Paxton Pits, but there is still time for the record (Nov 22nd 2002, Cottenham) to be broken.

**Garden Warbler** Reports were made from only Paxton Pits and Fen Drayton GPs, Sept 23rd at the latter.

**Blackcap** Reported from 8 sites, the largest day-numbers were 15 from Milton CP (Cambridge) and 35 at Paxton Pits in September, but the latest was from Milton CP (Cambridge), on Oct 20th.

**Yellow-browed Warbler** There were 2 reports, from Holbrook Road, Cambridge (Oct 7th) and from the Boongate Caterpillar Office, Vicarage Far Road, Peterborough, Oct 3rd.

**Common Chiffchaff** All 22 records from 21 locations were of *collybita*. Interestingly, the latest was on Oct 19th.

**Willow Warbler** This seemed to depart Paxton Pits rather early (Sept 9<sup>th</sup>) and was last noted on Sept 27th at Wicken Fen.

**Goldcrest** The usual small numbers reported from gardens but also from Wicken Fen and Paxton Pits.

**Firecrest** A female was reported from a private area of Monks Wood on Sept 15th, and 1 was noted with the tit flock at Ouse Washes (Welches Dam) on Oct 14th.

**Spotted Flycatcher** From 6 sites, all singletons, no families.

**Bearded Tit** Noted at 5 sites, including Kingfishers Bridge and Wicken Fen.

**Long-tailed Tit** These dainty birds recorded only from 8 sites.

**Marsh Tit** Noted at Gamlingay, Hardwick Wood (5 birds), Hayley Wood, Paxton Pits and Upton Woods (10 birds).

**Coal Tit** From 4 sites; 2 were ringed at Wicken Fen, where the species is unusual at this time of year.

**Blue Tit** From just 4 sites, 1–8 birds

**Great Tit** Reported in small numbers from 4 sites.

**Wood Nuthatch** Records were received from 3 sites, with a report of 3 birds at Wimpole Park on Oct 20th being the peak count.

**Eurasian Treecreeper** Although only 3 reports were received, the peak count of 7 birds from Wimpole Park was notable.

**Great Grey Shrike** A single bird was recorded at Wicken Fen on Oct 21st and remained at least until the end of the month.

**Eurasian Jay** As would be expected during September and October reports increased significantly with records from 16 sites mostly involving 1–2 birds but 7 were noted at Tetworth on Oct 7th.

**Black-billed Magpie** Recorded from 5 sites during the period with a maximum count of 18+ at Elm.

**Eurasian Jackdaw** A report of 25+ birds at Elm on Sept 30th was the peak count.

**Rook** Only 1 record received being 170+ birds feeding on arable land at Elm.

**Carrion Crow** Reported from 6 sites with 16 birds at Westfield Farm, Comberton being the peak count.

**Common Raven** A rare bird in the county, but this is the second year running one has been recorded during this period, with a single bird being noted at Parsons Drove on Sept 11th and again at Grafham Water on Sept 15th.

**Common Starling** Numbers of birds gathering at roosts towards the end of October was beginning to increase with a maximum record of 2,500+ birds at Fowlmere RSPB on Oct 29th.

**House Sparrow** A maximum count of 65+ birds at Elm on Sept 30th.

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow** Reported from 3 sites with 5 birds at Gamlingay on Sept 21st being the peak count.

**Chaffinch** Records were received from 6 sites with a maximum of 40 at St. Neots on Oct 14th.

**Brambling** Another expected seasonal increase in reports with records received from 10 sites including a peak count of 5 at Gamlingay on Oct 24th.

**European Greenfinch** Records were received from 3 sites with 20+ at Elm being the peak count.

**European Goldfinch** Recorded from 15 sites during the period with the maximum count being a massive 1,200+ birds at Burwell Fen on Oct 24th.

**Eurasian Siskin** The first winter reports indicate that it is going to be a better year for this most welcome visitor. Records were received from 15 sites including a report of 60 birds at Ouse Fen on Sept 2nd with a further 40 at Upton Wood on Oct 15th.

**Common Linnet** Reports were received from 9 sites with the highest being an impressive flock of 200+ birds at Westfield Farm, Comberton on Sept 7th. Other records included 150 at Toft on Oct 12th with a further 100 at Ouse Fen on Sept 23rd.

**Twite** Another rare county bird but a solitary one was noted at Wicham on Oct 19th.

**Lesser Redpoll** Recorded from 11 sites mostly

involving 1–2 birds but 6 were reported at Fen Drayton GPs on Oct 7th.

**Mealy Redpoll** A single bird was ringed at Wicken Fen on Oct 24th.

**Common Crossbill** A report of 4 birds over Milton CP on Oct 13th was the only record.

**Common Bullfinch** Records came from 10 sites with a peak count of 20 at Milton CP on Sept 6th.

**Snow Bunting** Another good report was received of single bird over the Nene Washes on Oct 25th.

**Yellowhammer** Reported from 9 sites with the maximum being 45 at Westfield Farm, Comberton on Oct 30th.

**Red Bunting** Records included 20 birds at Paxton Pits on Sept 30th and 18 birds from Westfield Farm, Comberton on Oct 18th.

**Corn Bunting** Reported from just 2 sites but 32 birds at Grafham Water on Sept 27th was an exceptional count for this site.

## HYBRIDS

**Greylag x Canada Goose** Two birds of this combination at Kingfishers Bridge on Sept 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Pochard x Tufted Duck** Drakes of this combination were seen at Grafham Water on Oct 27<sup>th</sup> and Paxton Pits on Oct 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Scaup x Tufted Duck** A female, presumed to represent this hybrid, was seen at Grafham Water on Oct 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>.

## EXOTICA

**Black Swan** Singles were seen at Milton CP (Cambridge) in both months and at Fen Drayton GP on Oct 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Demoiselle Crane** An escaped bird was seen on Sept 8<sup>th</sup> at the water meadows, Isleham. A distant crane seen from Prickwillow Fen flying along the River Lark on Sept 22<sup>nd</sup> may have been the same bird.

**Bar-headed Goose** One at Paxton Pits for the first 3 weeks of September and on several dates in October.

**Harris Hawk** One at the Nene Washes on Sept 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Contributors:** Colin Addington, Louise Bacon, Rowena Baxter, James Cadbury, Robin Cox, Carlos Davies, Nick & Jan Davies, David Griffiths, Stephen Hartley, Kevin Harris, Mark Hawkes, Fred Heath, Gary Heath, Peter Herkenrath, Julian Hughes, Bob Humphrey, Tony Mallyon, Owen & Monica Marks, Bruce & Gwen Martin, Mark Missin, Robert Pople, Duncan Poyser, Michael Price, Tony Roberts, Bob & Ann Scott, Nigel Spowell, Chris Thorne, Alan & Brenda Wadsworth, P. M. Warrington, David White



## Recording birds in Cambridgeshire

Records of birds in Cambridgeshire, common and rare, breeding, wintering or on passage, are the staple of the Club's Annual Report, as well as the recent reports section of this bulletin. The Club asks that records of rarities in the county be supported by descriptions, as *Mark Hawkes* explains, and *Louise Bacon* reminds us that, while the BTO's Atlas project provides a new way to contribute your records, the Club's collection of data on Cambridgeshire's birds continues as before – and depends on your involvement.

### Descriptions: the why, what for and how?

*Mark Hawkes*

The Cambridgeshire Bird Club Records Committee (CBCRC) is tasked with monitoring records of rare species that have been recorded within the county. A list of these local rarities can be found on the Cambridgeshire Bird Club website, or see *Camb's Bird Report* 79:153–155. Those species of national rarity status are passed to the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) to assess.

Many birders may not be aware why records of rare species require a description, and sadly some are reluctant to provide written descriptions for their sightings. Hopefully this article will help to clarify a few matters and encourage more people to provide documentation of anything rare they find within the county. Thankfully the majority of rare birds are reported and documented by the finders, adding to the variety and value of the county's avifauna.

Every year the Cambridgeshire Bird Club produces an annual report, which documents the status of all bird species recorded within the county. A small number of these species, however, occur so infrequently that records merit written or photographic support. Descriptions are assessed by the CBCRC to see if the sightings are of an acceptable level to appear within the annual report. This system allows a benchmark to be established, whereby all published records are considered to be reliable and proven. This system also allows for a consistency of record documentation, which in turn gives a fair overview of the status of these particular species. It also means that, in time, future generations will have valuable and substantiated data at their disposal. The days of publishing records of rare birds on an observer's 'say-so' are long past. However, it must be remembered that this is not a reflection on whether observers are considered reliable or not, but more a means of setting a level playing field that all records can be judged against. It would be irresponsible to take every claim at face value, yet unfair to not require descriptions from certain observers.

Rare bird records generally fall into one of three categories: 1) Those reported, but never submitted; 2) Those submitted and found to be reliable, and 3) Those submitted but for which the evidence wasn't conclusive. It is unfair to term these latter records as 'rejected'. In most cases the committee do not believe an error has been made regarding the identification of a certain species, but that the evidence presented was not sufficient enough for a conclusive decision to be made, and therefore feel it unsafe to publish the record in the relevant annual report. Unfortunately, for those rare species that are claimed, but never submitted to the committee, these records will probably never form part of the county's records, and over time, this important (and often interesting) data is slowly lost.

This regular recording and assessment of rare species means that patterns can be observed, and if it appears that a species status has changed locally, a decision can be made to remove that species from the list of those considered to rare. A recent example of this is Caspian Gull, which, due to heightened interest in gull-watching locally, combined with good written and photographic evidence, has shown this sub-species can be found fairly frequently in the county. Without a benchmark to compare the numerous claims per year, it would have been almost impossible to establish a true status. The committee can also keep track of which species are becoming scarcer, and then decide whether to elevate those species to a description level. A good example of this would be Willow Tit – which is now one of the rarest species in Cambridgeshire.

Records of rare birds should be submitted to the county recorder. These can be submitted on a form provided by the club, or downloaded from the website. The submission should firstly include the following information. Observers name(s) and contact details, species name, location, time and duration of observation, an indication of viewing conditions (distance from bird, weather conditions etc), optical aids used, the number of individuals (if more than one), the age and sex of the bird (if determined), information about any photos taken and quite importantly, any previous experience of both the species involved, and any closely related species. All this information is important for giving the committee a background to the sighting, as well as providing accurate details about the sighting. This should then be followed by an honest and as detailed description as possible, made as soon after the sighting as possible, with reference to any notes taken at the time, and preferably before any referral to a field guide. Some observers take many months to submit their records, and this may bring into question the validity of their recollections of the bird (especially if no notes or photos were taken at the time).

Unfortunately, many descriptions submitted to the committee are of the '*I have seen many before, and this was another*' ilk. This leaves the committee in a hard position. Details provided often don't suggest a mistake has been made, and it is easy to give the observer the benefit of the doubt, but the descriptions themselves often contain little descriptive evidence. Observers should try to describe as much as possible about the size and structure of the bird, its behaviour, jizz, call and all the plumage features noted, making particular effort to explain how other (similar) species were eliminated. It can be easier to describe the features of a bird by breaking the description down into several parts. This can include the head, upperparts, underparts, tail and bare parts (bill, legs and eyes), and if accompanied by a simple sketch (don't get too hung-up about the quality), this can provide an even clearer picture of the bird involved. Other points that should be clarified include how similar species (including escapes); aberrant common species and hybrids have all been eliminated.

It is a sad fact, but many of the descriptions submitted to the committee probably do involve the species claimed, but the lack of details often means that the record cannot be safely considered proven. The CBCRC would ideally like to see presentation of more thorough descriptions, which should help to increase the percentage of records that make it in to the annual report, and improve our knowledge of the avifauna of our county.

With exciting advances in photography and 'digi-scoping', more rare species are being photographed (or videoed). The CBCRC is always grateful to receive copies of these for record assessment, ideally accompanied by the details listed above, and a short description, and these can be sent as email copies or printed hard copies.

Two species deserve a special mention. Honey-buzzards and Goshawks are both reported frequently in the county, yet few of these reports are ever submitted to the CBCRC. Both of these species are notorious for simply flying over and never being seen again, and this, combined with the fact that both *can* actually be hard species to identify, means the few descriptions received are often brief and poorly detailed. It would also seem some observers are reluctant to submit these species for several reasons. Both are species that, without caution, can be confused with their more common relatives, and often the individuals involved have been seen distantly or briefly. Furthermore, although both can be characteristic in the field, it can be hard to portray those subtle features in writing. Many observers have seen these species in large numbers abroad, and frankly become blasé about writing a description for a species they believe to be easy to identify. However, these species are genuinely rare in Cambridgeshire, and really should merit a little more respect – it is unfortunate to think that the true status of Goshawk is far from clear locally. Another species for which the submission rate is low is Montagu's Harrier, but this may be due to the difficulty of identifying a briefly seen bird on passage.

Thankfully, many of the descriptions submitted to the CBCRC are of a very good standard, and this helps make the record assessment process much more efficient. So the next time you are fortunate enough to find something rare in the county, please take a little extra time to honour that record with a good description.

## **Club records, BTO atlas, bird track and roving records: why our bulletins may get short of bird sightings.**

*Louise Bacon  
Research Officer, CBC*

As many of you will be aware, the BTO have launched their new atlas project, which is going very well. We have around 25% of tetrads (2 x 2km squares) assigned for coverage, and we have only been running this for a couple of months.

The main point of this note is a more pertinent one to club records. The on-line tetrad visit recording system run by the BTO is the route which many people have chosen to submit their tetrad data, which is very good for the scheme. The second element of the BTO atlas project, the component they have called 'Roving records', is to encourage people to submit ALL of their bird sightings via this route, to enable species lists for 10km squares and tetrads to be compiled as part of the atlas project. The BTO BBS and WEBS data will also feed in to the atlas project. However, the Club will get records submitted on line to BTO for our area ONLY ONCE OR TWICE A YEAR!

So, if you are involved in the atlas survey work, we ask that if possible, and you feel that you can find the time, that you continue to submit your records to the club in the usual way. We realise that not everyone will be able to find the time to use both methods to submit their records, but it is worth thinking about continuing to send in your records to us – I hope that you all like to see accurate summaries of the birds from recent months in our regular bulletin, and if we all went down the bird-track route, what would we have to publish?

Also, bear in mind that we do not yet know when we will receive BTO data, and or how this will fit with our annual report records compilation, either, so if YOU want YOUR sightings to appear in the county archives promptly, then our spreadsheet (or paper records system) is the way to go.

Despite doing tetrads (as well as trying to keep the county atlas project going) I will continue to send in my records to the club as a priority 6 times a year, so please consider joining me in this.



## **Cambridgeshire Bird Club partners with bird club in western Africa**

*Peter Herkenrath*

Many of our birds in Cambridgeshire migrate south in autumn to spend the winter in Africa, building a natural link for birds and birdwatchers between Europe and Africa. It is for that simple reason that a group of members of the Cambridgeshire Bird Club came up with the idea of partnering with an equivalent organisation in Africa, somewhere where our birds go. Burkina Faso is a sub-Saharan country, which indeed harbours many European birds, and even a number of birds ringed in Cambridgeshire have been recovered in the country which is surrounded by Mali in the north and west, Niger in the east, and Benin, Togo, Ghana and Ivory Coast in the south. One of us had previously been working with the BirdLife International partner organisation in Burkina Faso, *Fondation des Amis de la Nature* (Foundation of the Friends of Nature, NATURAMA). With the help of the BirdLife Secretariat, contact was made with NATURAMA and they recommended that we should contact the Oursi Bird Club.

Lake Oursi is one of only ten Important Bird Areas (IBA) in Burkina Faso, located in the very dry north close to the borders with Niger and Mali. Annual rainfall in this part of the country averages less than 400mm and the dry season typically lasts for 8–10 months. The IBA, part of the *Réserve Partielle du Sahel* north of the town of Gorom-Gorom, is made up of a series of lakes interspersed with sand dunes, grassland and stands of trees. The area is very important for wetland birds. A waterfowl count

in January 2003, for example, found 34 wetland species, including 2132 Garganey (with an estimated 7000 birds present), 1857 White-faced Tree-Ducks, 1019 Knob-billed Geese, 671 Ruff, 640 Spur-winged Geese, 447 Moorhen, 427 Black-winged Stilt, 370 Grey Herons, 252 African Jacanas, 227 Glossy Ibis, 219 Wood Sandpipers and 84 individuals of the logo bird of our Club, the Black-tailed Godwit. More than 100 species of waterbirds have been recorded at the site.

The area is, however, highly threatened. One reason is the intensive land-use: over-exploitation of the natural resources through intensive livestock farming and deforestation. Other problems stem from poaching and the drying-out of the ponds and lakes, which, with climate change, is likely to happen more often in the near future. For many years, a local Site Support Group, the Oursi Bird Club, with support from NATURAMA, has been addressing the threats (Site Support Groups are local groups looking after IBAs, a concept that has become highly successful within the BirdLife partnership around the world). NATURAMA and the Oursi Bird Club have increasingly focused their attention to help people managing their environment. This is most important considering that Burkina Faso is one of the poorest countries on Earth, with rural people depending heavily on natural resources. Besides bird monitoring, environmental awareness has been raised and activities to conserve the local ecosystems have been developed. Recently, Swedbio, an international development programme of the Swedish government, through the BirdLife network, has enabled a project at three sites in Burkina Faso that supports local communities in securing their livelihoods through sustainable natural resource use. Oursi is one of those sites. The project promotes agroforestry which secures habitats from the loss of soil from erosion and desertification as well as preventing the siltation of water bodies. In 2006, for example, a total of 1.2 km of hedges was planted at the ponds. Measures like this help the local people and the wetland-dependent birds – as well as woodland and savannah birds – at the same time.

The Oursi lakes are extremely remote. Measuring on a map, Oursi lies less than 200 miles from the capital of Burkina Faso, Ouagadougou, and less than 250 miles from Timbuktu in Mali. But getting there is a different thing. The roads are partly sand tracks and at times they might not be usable at all as happened recently when severe floods hit the southern fringe of the Sahara. In August this year, a NATURAMA/BirdLife delegation got stuck at Oursi for two days because of flooding. The delegation also faced the collapse of their huts during a torrential downpour – there is no ‘western standard’ accommodation at Oursi.

So what could a partnership with a group operating in such a remote location bring to our Club? We hope to regularly exchange information with the Oursi Bird Club and let our members know when birds from Europe arrive, how typical ‘Cambridgeshire birds’ such as the Black-tailed Godwit are doing at Oursi in winter, what other species occur there, etc. We aim in turn to send our Bulletin, including summaries of the highlights in French, to the Oursi group. Learning about the specific challenges for bird conservation in the context of a harsh climate and widespread poverty might motivate us here in Cambridgeshire to find ways of supporting our friends at Oursi. Actually, a good start has been made in early November, when a delegation of the BirdLife Secretariat handed over to the Oursi Bird Club a digital camera, which a member of our Club had very kindly donated. The camera will help our friends at Oursi with documenting the changes in the environment and the impacts that the habitat restoration work will have on the ecosystems.

We aim for regularly reporting to our members about Oursi at indoor meetings, via the Bulletin and on our website. If anyone wants more information, please contact me – see the Club contacts on the back page of this Bulletin. We are extremely grateful for the help we have received from the BirdLife International Secretariat and NATURAMA in developing the partnership with Oursi and for the kind donation of the digital camera by a Club member.



## ROGER CLARKE – MEMORIAL APPEAL

The Club was privileged to have Roger Clarke as one of its members and especially as Chairman. He was one of the country's most distinguished ornithologists as was been reflected in the many tributes and obituaries which were published after his death. It is felt that his memory and his association with the Club should be commemorated in some permanent way and, since Wicken Fen was one of his favourite places where much of his work on Hen Harriers was done, it is proposed that an inscribed seat there would be an appropriate memorial.

If you have not already contributed to this project in memory of Roger, please take the chance to do so now, as the appeal will be closing shortly. Donations should be sent to Kevin Harris, the Club's Treasurer, at 2 Millers Lane, Toft, Cambridge CB23 2RX.

Cheques should be made payable to Cambridgeshire Bird Club. They can also be given to a Council member at a Club meeting.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS 2008

### DIGISCOPING WORKSHOP

After the success of previous workshops for members on gull and warbler identification, and sketching, we hope to run further workshops. Plans for a digiscoping workshop are in the pipeline. If you would like to take part in this, please contact Dick Newell or Vicki Harley.

### INDOOR MEETINGS 2008

For all indoor meetings, doors open at 7.30 pm for an 8 pm start.

#### **Friday January 11th St John's Church Hall, Cambridge County Update**

##### ***The BTO Atlas by Dawn Balmer***

Dawn is the Atlas Coordinator for Bird Atlas 2007–11. She has worked for the BTO for over 15 years on a range of projects covering surveys and bird ringing. She is on the Editorial Board of British Birds and regularly contributes to British Wildlife and Sandgrouse (OSME journal).

##### ***Cambridgeshire Bird Club surveys by Louise Bacon***

Louise, the Club's Research officer, will present results of the Club's Swift and Owl surveys.

##### ***Lesser Spotted Woodpecker by Derek Gruar***

Derek, a Senior Research Assistant with the RSPB, will talk about research which is helping to provide an insight in to the decline of this species.

#### **Friday February 8th St John's Church Hall, Cambridge Yet more ways to dress eggs by Andy Gosler**

The pigmented eggshells of birds have been the subject of much debate by ornithologists for over 150 years. Explanations of the pigmentation patterns include camouflage (e.g. waders), eggshell-mimicry (e.g. cuckoos). However the most common pattern seen in birds (e.g. very many passerines worldwide), of a small white egg speckled with reddish-brown spots cannot be explained in this way. Studies of Great Tit *Parus major* eggs in Wytham Woods have show that such pigmentation is pigmentation is intimately related to eggshell structure, calcium availability, and water loss in incubation. In other words, while we were distracted by the patterns, we failed to appreciate that the pigments on these eggs were shell compounds related to eggshell strength and function.

Andy Gosler has worked at the Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology (EGI) for 26 years. In 1998 he received the Tucker Medal of the BTO for his contribution to the scientific work of the Trust. He has written many scientific papers and is currently working with an Australian colleague on a book on Ethno-ornithology: the ornithological knowledge of indigenous peoples.

## **RAFFLE PRIZES**

Many of the raffle prizes at indoor meetings are donated by Club members. If you would like to donate a prize, please bring it to any indoor meeting or contact Ken Hook (contact details on back page).

## **FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY**

We welcome the following new members: We welcome the following new members – David Griffiths of Cambridge and Dennis Hall of Swavesey.

*Bruce Martin*

## **POST CODE CHANGES**

Would any members whose postcode have changed please inform Bruce Martin (Tel. )so that he can update their address label.

## **FROM THE TREASURER**

Thank you, to all our members for your valued support throughout 2007. With the New Year approaching, may I remind you that the annual subscriptions for 2008 fall due on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2008. If you do not currently pay by standing order, please ensure that you send your cheque to me as soon as possible. If you wish to start paying by standing order, please let me know and I will send you a form (by post or e-mail).

If you normally pay by standing order and have changed your bank account during the year, please ensure that the payment instructions have been passed to your new bank.

Subscriptions for 2008 remain unchanged at:

Full	£14
Senior/Concessionary	£10
Student	£6

If you are a UK tax payer and have not yet completed a 'Gift Aid Form' please contact me for a form. Gift Aid enables the club to reclaim 28p in the Pound from the Inland Revenue on your subscription at no cost to you. On the other hand 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*

## **FROM THE BULLETIN EDITOR**

If you would like to contribute to the bulletin, please contact me. You can send me a complete item or contact me with an initial idea. I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the bulletin this year.

*Vicki Harley* (see back page for phone and email).

## **CBC E-COMMUNICATION**

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 me. If you have previously asked to be sent messages via CBC-ANNOUNCE, please contact me as due to computer failure I lost the list of subscribers.

*Vicki Harley* (see back page for phone and email).

## CLUB CONTACTS

### **Chairman**

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#### **Kevin Harris**

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### **County Recorder (Old Cambs)**

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### **County Recorder (Hunts)**

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### **Indoor Meetings Secretary & Bulletin Editor**

#### **Vicki Harley**

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### **Other Council Members**

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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 2008, covering November–December 2007**

# GOOD BIRDING!