

CAMBRIDGESHIRE BIRD CLUB

Bulletin No. 395



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

RECENT REPORTS NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER 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), John Harding (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).

AGM

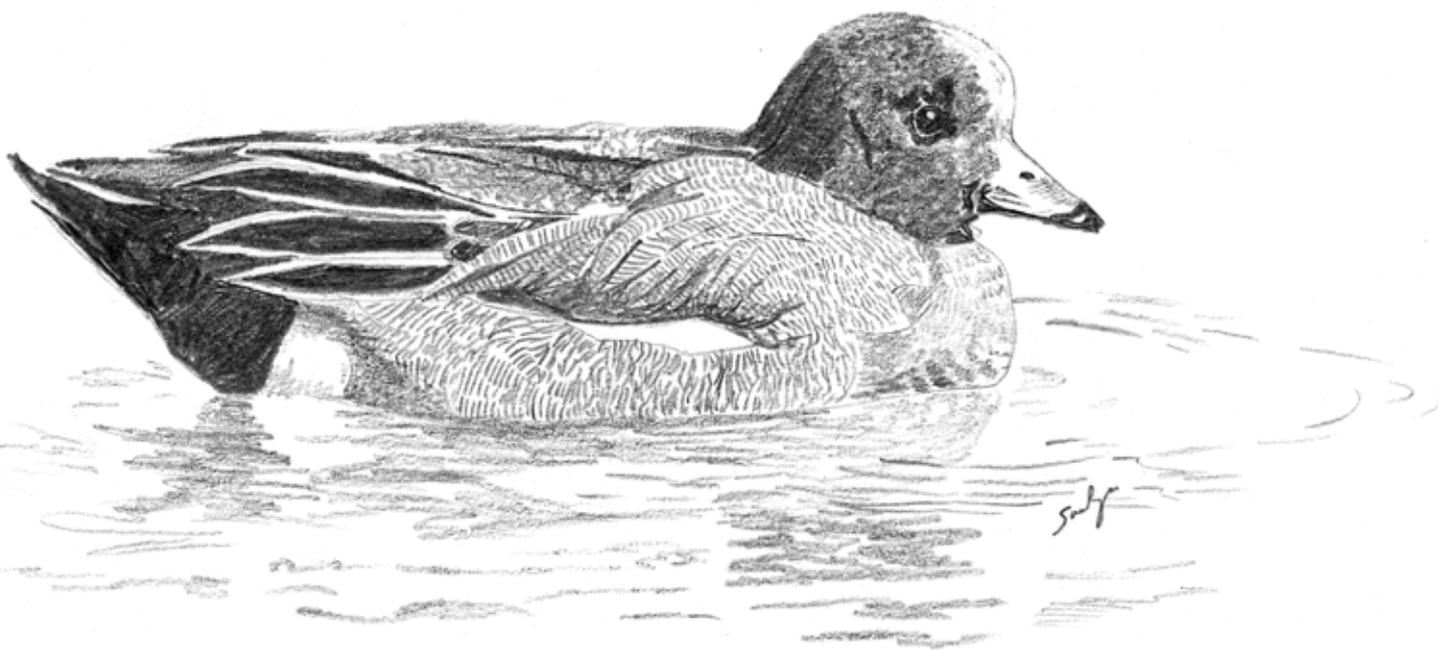
The AGM of the Cambridgeshire Bird Club will be held at St Johns Church Hall on Friday March 7th 2008. Any nominations for Officers or Council Members must be sent to the Club Chairman as soon as possible.

NEW BULLETIN EDITOR REQUIRED

If you would like to help the Club by editing the bulletin, please contact Vicki Harley (see back page for phone and email) to find out what is involved.

PLEASE NOTE THIS MEETING IS ON THE
FIRST FRIDAY OF MARCH.

Drake Wigeon by Sue Rogers



Numbers in brackets indicate November and December maximums.

WILDFOWL

Mute Swan At Fen Drayton Lakes (113; 108), Grafham Water (120; 60), the Ouse Washes (788; 473) and Paxton Pits (132; 123). Also noted at 8 other sites.

Bewick's Swan At the Nene Washes (0; 320) and Ouse Washes (53; 2679). Sites away from the washes – 18 flying north over Kingfishers Bridge on Nov 14th and 10 at Paxton Pits on the same date, 9 over Cambridge on Nov 15th and 2 at Grafham Water the same day. Two birds were at Fen Drayton Lakes on Dec 17th, 4 roosting at Kingfishers Bridge on Dec 24th and 1 was at Wicken Fen on Dec 30th.

Whooper Swan At the Nene Washes (0; 105) and Ouse Washes (2244; 2986). Two birds were at Wicken Fen from Nov 11th to the 15th and 4 birds were at the Cambridge Science Park on Nov 25th.

Pink-footed Goose Ten birds were at Way Head, near Coveney on Nov 13th, 65 at Littleport on Nov 26th, 2 at the Nene Washes on Dec 19th and 3 over Kingfishers Bridge on Dec 22nd.

Greater White-fronted Goose Eleven birds were at Kingfishers Bridge on Dec 22nd and 24th. Five birds were at Croxton Hall on Dec 23rd.

Greylag Goose At Grafham Water (150; 323), the Ouse Washes (814; 439) and Paxton Pits (450; 257). Other three-figure counts were at Buckden GP (288), the Cam Washes (190) and Kingfishers Bridge (346).

Canada Goose At the Ouse Washes (520; 309). Other three-figure counts were at Barleycroft GP (132), the Cam Washes (140), Kingfishers Bridge (510) and Ouse Fen (273).

Barnacle Goose Nine birds were at the Ouse Washes on Nov 26th, 2 at St Neots on Dec 2nd, 4 at Godmanchester GP on Dec 12th, 1 at Grafham Water from Dec 12th to 31st and 3 at Paxton Pits at the end of December of which one bird had been ringed in Bedfordshire.

Brent Goose Possibly the same adult bird was seen on the Ouse Washes on Dec 27th, Brampton Race Course on the 28th and Grafham Water on the 31st, and later seen flying over Paxton Pits.

Egyptian Goose A maximum of 7 birds were recorded at the Ouse Washes in the Earith area during the period. 2 at Holywell on Nov 22nd and 2 at Grafham Water on Dec 26th flew over Paxton Pits on Dec 27th.

Common Shelduck A maximum of 4 birds were again seen at Paxton Pits during the period; 4 birds were at the Ouse Washes Earith on Dec 23rd and smaller numbers at 6 other sites.

Mandarin A male was at Paxton Pits during the period and 2 males stayed briefly on the river at Linton on Dec 15th.

Eurasian Wigeon At Barleycroft GP (256; 292), Fen Drayton GP Lakes (441; 742), Grafham Water (5; 200+), Needingworth GP (466; 952), Ouse Fen (150; 556), the Ouse Washes (9491; 13411), Paxton Pits (320; 765) and Wicken Fen (100; 347). Smaller numbers also noted at 4 other sites.

Gadwall At Fen Drayton Lakes (189; 387), Grafham Water (76; 55), the Ouse Washes (618; 446) and Paxton Pits (121; 143) Double figures were noted at 6 other sites.

Eurasian Teal At Kingfishers Bridge (160; 70), the Ouse Washes (714; 494) and Wicken Fen (9; 230). Double figures were noted at 6 other sites.

Mallard At Fen Drayton Lakes (130; 97), Grafham Water (208; 209), Ouse Fen (86; 108), the Ouse Washes (1213; 1349) and Wicken Fen (114; 217). Other three-figure counts were Conington (152) and the River Cam from Lammas Land to Chesterton (263). Double figures were noted at 6 other sites. A very late brood of 10 duckling was seen at Grafham Water on Nov 29th.

Northern Pintail At the Ouse Washes (151; 172). This was the only site with a three-figure count. Single-figure counts were seen at 7 other sites.

Northern Shoveler At Grafham Water (60; 157), the Ouse Washes (378; 224) and Wicken Fen (161; 92). Double figures were noted at 6 other sites.

Red-crested Pochard Single birds were at Needingworth GP on Nov 11th and Dec 24th and 2 birds at Ferry Meadows CP on Dec 20th and 21st.

Common Pochard At Fen Drayton Lakes (251; 108), the Ouse Washes (338; 624) and Paxton Pits (114; 145). Double figures noted at 3 other sites.

Tufted Duck At Fen Drayton Lakes (473; 300), Grafham Water (1401; 1458), the Ouse Washes (493; 1043) and Paxton Pits (169; 203). Double figures were noted at 6 other sites.

Greater Scaup 1–2 birds at Grafham Water during the period and 1 at Buckden GP on Dec 31st.

Common Scoter Up to 10 different birds were at Grafham Water in November and 1 at Fen Drayton Lakes on Dec 24th.

Goldeneye At Fen Drayton Lakes (53; 55), Grafham Water (41; 131) and Paxton Pits (71; 75). Smaller numbers also noted at 5 other sites.

Smew One at Fen Drayton Lakes on Dec 9th and 6 on the 16th. Singles at Paxton Pits from Nov 11th and 5 on Dec 24th. One at Grafham Water on Nov 19th and Dec 12th. Nine at Needingworth GP on Dec 9th. One at Marsh Lane GP on Dec 13th and 2 each at Ferry Meadows GP on Dec 19th and Somersham GP on Dec 24th.

Red-breasted Merganser A probable at Grafham Water on Nov 1st.

Goosander At Maxey GP 22 on Dec 22nd. Single figures were noted at 10 other sites.

Ruddy Duck Ten birds were at 1 site and 1 or 2 at 2 other sites during the period.

GAMEBIRDS

Red-legged Partridge Several records came from tetrad visits, but highest numbers elsewhere, such as 50 at Westfield Farm, Comberton, 32 Ouse Washes and 26 Hail Weston.

Grey Partridge No tetrad reports yet, and noticeably scarce compared to Red-legs, with 10 at the years end from St Neots being the highest. Others from Paxton Pits, Swaffham Prior Fen and Comberton.

Common Pheasant Majority of records came from tetrad visits, showing the species to be widespread and abundant. The highest count was 47 at Fenstanton. Other reports came from around a dozen localities.

DIVERS TO HERONS

Little Grebe At the Ouse Washes (14; 12) and Paxton Pits (31; 21). The only other double-figure count was 10 at Needingworth in November. Single figures were noted at 7 other sites.

Great Crested Grebe At Fen Drayton Lakes (36; 30), Grafham Water (50; 88) and Paxton Pits (16; 18). Single figures were noted at 5 other sites.

Red-necked Grebe One bird was at Grafham Water on Nov 16th and 2 on Dec 12th.

Slavonian Grebe One bird was at Grafham Water from Nov 21st until Dec 1st.

Black-necked Grebe A single bird was at Fen Drayton Lakes from Dec 24th until the year's end.

Great Cormorant At Fen Drayton Lakes (60; 83), Grafham Water (43; 103), Needingworth GP (22; 11), the Ouse Washes (60; 51) and Wicken Fen (84; 93). Also recorded at 7 other sites. A dusk roost count of 272 at Paxton Pits on Dec 26th ties in nicely with a count of 271+ birds at Grafham Water on Dec 31st where many of the Paxton birds commute to and from.

European Shag A single bird took up residence on the River Nene between The Dog in a Doublet and Peterborough town centre from Nov 16th to Dec 27th.

Great Bittern Two birds were present at Fen Drayton Lakes on Dec 10th and Woodwalton Fen on Dec 23rd and singles at those sites plus Ely BF, Kingfishers Bridge and Wicken Fen during the period. The most unusual sighting was of a bird flying over Elfreda Road Cambridge at 4.20 pm on Dec 10th.

Cattle Egret An adult bird was seen in a pony field to the east of St Neots from Dec 26th to Dec 29th, sometimes flying towards Abbotsley.

Little Egret Single figures (the maximum of 5) were noted at 15 sites during the period.

Great Egret One flew over Wicken Fen towards Upware on Dec 22nd and possibly the same bird was at Paxton Pits from Dec 22nd until 31st.

Grey Heron Double figures were at the Ouse Washes (14) on Nov 12th and at Fen Drayton Lakes (10) on Dec 9th. Single figures were noted at 9 other sites.

Purple Heron The long staying juvenile bird at the Ouse Washes was seen again on Nov 4th.

RAPTORS

Red Kite Regularly seen in the west of the county, with sightings of 5 from Old Weston in both months. A mixture of birds with and without wing tags, presumably from the Rockingham Forest reintroduction scheme; tag details are always useful if they can be seen.

Eurasian Marsh Harrier Generally seen in ones and twos at the main wetland sites with a maximum of 7 at the Ouse Washes on Nov 13.

Hen Harrier Singles reported from 11 sites, some passing through areas in Fenland, others at nature reserves such as Woodwalton and Chippenham Fen, Fowlmere and both Washes. Only Wicken Fen managed higher numbers with 2 in November and up to 5 in December.

Northern Goshawk One report from the Isleham/Soham area on Dec 22nd.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk Many records from throughout the county, with 4 at Paxton Pits and 3 in Elm the highest counts.

Common Buzzard Relatively few records for this species compared to recent trends – is this a downturn or are people losing the novelty of seeing Buzzards in the county? Peaks of 4 from Grafham Water, Nene Washes and Old Weston.

Rough-legged Buzzard One report, coming from the Orwell area, of a bird carrying a rabbit over the A603. Last recorded in 2000; if accepted this would bring the county tally to 72 birds.

Common Kestrel Widespread, with 52 records including high multiples from Nene Washes (9 on Dec 10th) and Ouse Washes (max 7 on Nov 12). Seen on at least 7 tetrad visits for the winter atlas.

Merlin One reported from Newnham, Cambridge twice (independently) on Dec 16th and again on 18th. Other singles came from Foxton, Grafham Water, Nene Washes, Ouse Fen, Ouse Washes, Paxton Pits, Trumpington and Wicken Fen.

Peregrine Falcon More records of this species (36) than of Buzzard (23)! However, all but 2 were of single birds, and several of the records probably relate to repeat sightings of the same individual, showing how reporting biases can skew the picture. Paxton Pits and Nene Washes had 2 each, others came from Grafham Water, Ouse Washes, Cambridge, Old Weston, Haslingfield, Wardy Hill, Fowlmere, Fulbourn, Kingfishers Bridge and Landbeach.

RAILS

Water Rail Site record broken at Kingfishers Bridge, where numbers went from 2 in November to 27 heard on Dec 13th, with 4 elsewhere on site on 22nd, then dropped: 'after a cold spell, only 9 heard at dusk' on 30th. More modest numbers elsewhere, e.g. 8 at Wicken Fen and 5 at Paxton Pits; 1 there seen walking down the public footpath on Nov 17.

Common Moorhen Best recorded through the WeBS counts (see below), but useful records also came from 6 tetrad visits, all of single figure counts, and some casual observations such as 97 along the Cam through Cambridge, 67 at P'boro sewage works, and up to 18 coming to feed at a Cambridge garden! Notable WeBS counts: Ouse Washes (178; 282) (but 424 and 540 on 'interim counts!'), Fen Drayton (34; 38), Grafham Water (32; 14).

Common Coot Only two tetrad records, but much larger numbers from WeBS shows how this species is more dependant on large water bodies than the Moorhen. WeBS counts: Ouse Washes (1000; 2116 – interim counts were 2351 & 2017), Grafham Water (1287; 1628), Fen Drayton (1172; 1123), Paxton Pits (351; 432), Needingworth GP (322;

231) and Barleycroft GP (156; 248). Elsewhere up to 380 at Kingfishers Bridge.

Common Crane Two records of this species, which seems to be on the up without, as yet, the proposed 'reintroductions'. Both birds seen in flight – one from Witchford on Nov 15th, and one near Ely on Dec 15th.

WADERS

Eurasian Oystercatcher Single at Ouse Fen on Nov 25th.

Ringed Plover Single at the Gransdens on Nov 5th.

American Golden Plover A juvenile at Holt Fen on Nov 3rd and probably the same bird next day at Swaffham Prior Fen was the county's second record this autumn.

European Golden Plover Highest counts Fidwell/Holt Fen 4000 from Nov 1st to 3rd, Trumpington 4000 on Dec 5th, Paxton Pits (3468; 1000), Wicken Fen (300; 2000), Ouse Fen (2000; 120), Maxey GP 1500 on Nov 1st, Haddenham 1400 on Oct 7th, Ouse Washes 1102 on Dec 10th, Comberton 1100 on Dec 13th and 700 West Wratting on Dec 31st.

Grey Plover In November at Ouse Washes on 11th, Croydon Hill on 17th and Paxton Pits on 23rd and Nene Washes on Dec 10th.

Northern Lapwing Highest counts from Ouse Washes (5241; 6543), Nene Washes (800; 2250), Paxton Pits (1150; 2000), Ouse Fen/Needingworth GP (300; 1666).

Little Stint Holt Fen on Nov 1st, Paxton Pits 3 Nov 2nd–3rd and one 4th and Over Fen on Dec 17th.

Dunlin Ouse Washes (97; 102), Paxton Pits (33; 14), Holt Fen 28 on Nov 6th, Needingworth GP 75 on Dec 9th, Nene Washes (12; 6).

Ruff Ouse Washes (23; 56), Holt Fen 14 to Nov 6th, Fen Drayton GP 6 on Dec 28th and 1–2 from Nene Washes, Paxton Pits and Needingworth GP.

Jack Snipe Very scarce, twos at Ouse Fen and Paxton Pits and singles from Kingfishers Bridge Ouse Washes and Maxey GP.

Common Snipe At Holt Fen 174 was an impressive count, Ouse Washes (124; 25), Grafham Water (39; 40) a steady wintering group, Ouse Fen (38; 43), Paxton Pits (18; 7), Fen Drayton (2; 8) and 1–5 from several smaller sites.

Eurasian Woodcock Higher numbers present or increased observer effort? Monks Wood up to 10 in December, Kingfishers Bridge 7, Comberton 6 and 1–2 from a further 16 sites.

Black-tailed Godwit Highest counts from Nene Washes where 300 on Dec 10th, Ouse Washes peak of 195 on Dec 19th, 57 over Paxton Pits on Nov 11th, 15 at Fen Drayton on Dec 10th, 12 at Needingworth GP on Nov 11th and 1–7 from a further 3 sites.

Bar-tailed Godwit One at Wicken Fen on Nov 11th.

Eurasian Curlew Only recorded on the Ouse Washes where 11–13 on Dec 10th.

Spotted Redshank Single at Nene Washes on Dec 4th and 14th.

Common Redshank Ouse Washes (100; 52) Overcote 100 on Dec 11th, Nene Washes (40; 3), Paxton Pits (7; 12), Holt Fen (12; 0) and 1–5 from a further 6 sites.

Green Sandpiper Low numbers with highest counts from Paxton Pits (4; 2), Nene Washes (Stanground) 4 on Dec 10th, Ouse Fen (2; 2) and singles from a further 10 sites.

Common Sandpiper Usual wintering bird at Grafham Water from November to at least Dec 15th and one at Wicken Fen on Nov 11th.

Grey Phalarope One on the Ouse Washes on Nov 3rd.

SKUAS TO TERNS

Pomarine Skua Three reported from Grafham in November: an adult pale phase on 10th, one west on 19th and a juvenile on 23rd. Also a juvenile flew SW at Tydd Gote on Nov 18th.

Skua sp. An adult seen briefly at dusk at Grafham on Nov 9th.

Mediterranean Gull At least 4 birds at Grafham on Nov 1st/2nd, involving 2 adults and 2 second-years; single adults again at Grafham on Nov 18th and Dec 30th. One first-winter at Maxey GP on Nov 14th.

Black-headed Gull Largest numbers reported from Fen Drayton where 119 on Nov 11th, 88 on Dec 9th, 100 on Dec 13th and 70 on Dec 19th. One albino at Grafham on Dec 9th and 1 leucistic bird there on Dec 24th.

Common Gull Numbers at Paxton rose from 150 on Nov 8th to 260 on Nov 29th; also 175 reported from Conington on Nov 3rd.

Lesser Black-backed Gull Fifty were at Paxton on Nov 23rd and 115 at Kingfishers Bridge on Dec 21st.

Herring Gull Over 5000 at Grafham at the end of December

Yellow-legged Gull Small numbers are now regularly reported from a range of sites: in this period at Maxey GP, Fen Drayton, Milton Tip, Paxton, Grafham and Holywell. The highest count was at least 5 at Grafham on Dec 30th.

Caspian Gull Singles reported from Grafham (also 2 on Dec 31st), Long Drove and Fen Drayton (also 2 on Dec 18th).

Glaucous Gull One, a first-winter, was at Long Drove on Nov 28th, and another first-winter was at Tanholt GP on Dec 9th.

Great Black-backed Gull Large numbers reported from Kingfishers Bridge: 130 on Nov 23rd building up to 260 on Dec 17th and roosting flock maintaining these high figures till the year's end (two-thirds reported as adults). Over 200 also at Grafham by end of December.

Kittiwake Seven roosting at Grafham on Nov 9th, at least 2 lingering on Nov 10th.

NEAR PASSERINES

Feral Pigeon About 50 birds around Over church in early November; the Wisbech town centre flock had between 75 and 100 birds.

Stock Pigeon At Landbeach 118 birds on Dec 8th; 5 other records of 20 or more birds.

Wood Pigeon About 4000 at Wicken Fen on Nov 11th; 1200 birds at Kingston on Nov 9th–11th and 1100 at Kingfishers Bridge on Nov 17th.

Eurasian Collared Dove Four records of over 25 birds; 109 on the Ouse Washes at Jolly Bankers on Nov 17th.

Barn Owl 1–3 birds recorded from 18 locations.

Little Owl Recorded in 10 locations, mostly single birds but 3 at Great Eversden.

Tawny Owl 1–3 birds well distributed across the county. The A10 claimed another bird.

Long-eared Owl Three records, including a dead bird on an M11 junction.

Short-eared Owl Recorded from 7 sites, mainly in the fens. Generally 1–2 birds; 17 at Nene Washes on Dec 13th.

Common Kingfisher 1–3 birds recorded from 24 sites.

Green Woodpecker Recorded from around 30 sites. Maximum of 7 on the Ouse Washes on two occasions in November.

Great Spotted Woodpecker 1–4+ birds recorded from 30 sites.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker Singles recorded from Priory Park, St Neots and Monks Wood in December.

PASSERINES

Skylark Reported from 13 sites in November and 12 sites in December. The highest counts were 200+ at Old Weston on Nov 17th and 100+ at Abbotsley on Dec 12th.

Barn Swallow Two records received during the period; one at Grafham Water flew west on Nov 4th, whilst one at Cottenham on Nov 21st was the last of the year.

Meadow Pipit Reported from 14 sites in November and 8 sites in December. Highest counts reported were 100 at the Nene Washes on Dec 13th and 14th, and 90 at the Ouse Washes on Nov 26th.

Water Pipit Reported from 5 sites in November and 4 sites in December. A terrific count of 9 was reported from Holt Fen near Stretham on Nov 6th, and up to 3 were at the Ouse Washes on Nov 26th. Two were seen at Kingfishers Bridge on Nov 20th, with 1 there on several dates and at nearby Wicken Fen on Nov 16th. A single was also seen at the Nene Washes on Nov 8th. Numbers at the Ouse Washes rose to 7 on Dec 10th, whilst 6 were present at the Nene Washes on Dec 19th, with 1 remaining at Kingfishers Bridge on Dec 18th and another single at Paxton Pits on Dec 24th.

Grey Wagtail Reported from 17 sites in November and 14 sites in December. Mostly ones and twos reported with one count of 3 at Overcote on Dec 11th.

Pied Wagtail Reported from many sites during the period. The highest counts were of 75+ at Stirtloe SF on Dec 30th, over 20 at Elm on Dec 15th and 20 at Paxton Pits on Nov 23rd.

Waxwing Two were at Fen Drayton GP on Nov 19th and 1 was reported flying over the A10 near

the Little Chef restaurant at Ely on Nov 22nd.

Wren Reported from 7 sites in November and 7 sites in December, with a count of 20 at Aldreth being notable.

Duncock Reported from 6 sites in November and 6 sites in December.

Robin Reported from 7 sites in November and 9 sites in December. Nineteen at Conington on Nov 3rd was a notable count.

Stonechat Reported from 18 sites in November and 14 sites in December. A massive 44 were present on the Nene Washes between Dec 14th and Dec 19th, this site remaining the best wintering area for this species in the county. At the Ouse Washes, 12 was the peak count, on Nov 13th, with 11 there on Dec 19th. No other double-figure counts were received.

Blackbird Reported from 9 sites in November and 14 sites in December. Notable counts received include 59 at Fenstanton on Nov 29th, 55 at Bourn on Dec 24th and 40 at Barton on Dec 11th.

Fieldfare Reported from 25 sites in November and 21 sites in December. The highest counts recorded were 1,200 at Elm on Dec 31st, 638 at the Ouse Washes on Nov 26th, 600 at Wicken Fen on Nov 11th and 501 at Elsworth on Dec 12th. An individual was noted singing at Toft on Nov 28th. A partial albino individual with a 'pure white head and neck, except for a dark mottled throat patch' was seen feeding at Kingfishers Bridge on Dec 30th.

Song Thrush Reported from 9 sites in November and 8 sites in December. No significant counts noted.

Redwing Reported from 12 sites in November and 17 sites in December. The highest counts were over 200 at Elm on Dec 31st, 150+ at the same site on Nov 30th and 140 at Wicken Fen on Nov 11th.

Mistle Thrush Reported from only 7 sites during the period. No notable counts received.

Cetti's Warbler Reported from Ferry Meadows CP, Kingfishers Bridge, Nene Washes, Ouse Washes (Sutton Gault) and Wicken Fen. Mostly 1–2 birds with 4 at Wicken Fen on Nov 11th.

Barred Warbler One turned up at the Ouse Washes RSPB on Dec 12th, and was photographed eating Guelder-Rose berries, its identity being confirmed soon after when a photo was posted on an internet forum. Late-occurring birds are often tame and this bird appeared very confiding.

Blackcap Reported from 15 sites, involving 19+ birds. In addition to using apples as a food source in gardens, some were noted to be feeding on holly berries and apparently nectar-feeding on Mahonia bushes.

Common Chiffchaff Individuals were noted at 7 sites, mostly from mid November.

Goldcrest From 13 sites; up to 6 were reported from Grafham Water and Hardwick Wood, whilst several were trapped and ringed at Wicken Fen in both months.

Bearded Tit One at Ely was associated with a tit flock. At Kingfishers Bridge, 2+ were noted in Nov; 11+ in Dec. Ouse Fen held a pair on Nov 4th and up to 4 were noted there in December. Six+ were

noted at Wicken Fen, in November and December.

Long-tailed Tit From 16 locations, flock sizes ranged up to 25+, Monks Wood holding this reported maximum on Dec 31st. None of the *caudatus* (northern Europe) type was reported.

Marsh Tit Noted at Bourn, Hardwick Wood (maximum 5), Hauxton, Monks Wood (30 on Dec 6th, 80 on 12th), Paxton Pits and Woodwalton Fen.

Coal Tit 1–2 birds at 6 sites, plus a large number at Upton Wood during the period.

Blue Tit Records of >10 birds were received from Bourn, Boxworth / Elsworth, Conington (Cambs), Fenstanton and Westfield Farm (Comberton).

Great Tit From 13 locations, reports of >10 birds were noted at Elsworth, Fenstanton and Over.

Wood Nuthatch Records were received from 5 sites, with a report of 6 birds at Monks Wood on Dec 6th being the peak count. A further 2+ birds were reported from Littless Wood, Grafham on Nov 17th.

Eurasian Treecreeper Reports from 6 sites mainly involved single birds, but 3 were noted at Grafham Water on Nov 17th.

Great Grey Shrike The bird first reported at Wicken Fen on Oct 21st remained at least until the end of the year.

Eurasian Jay Reported from 18 sites with the peak count being 6+ at Elm on Dec 31st.

Black-billed Magpie Recorded from 15 sites during the period with a maximum count being 30 at Paxton Pits on Nov 11th.

Eurasian Jackdaw A report of 210 birds at Grantchester Road on Dec 24th was the peak count.

Rook A flock of 170+ were reported feeding on arable land at Elm on Dec 31st with a further 161 recorded at Fenstanton during the tetrad survey.

Carrion Crow Reported from 15 sites with 120+ birds roosting at Wicken Fen during November being the peak count.

Common Starling A report of 7,500 birds roosting in a reedbed at Kingfishers Bridge on Dec 4th was easily the peak count. However, on Dec 13th numbers here had reduced to just 60 and none by the end of the month.

House Sparrow A maximum count of 55+ birds at Elm on Dec 31st.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow Reported from 8 sites with 10+ birds at the Ouse Washes on Dec 13th being the peak count.

Chaffinch Records were received from 21 sites with a maximum of 156 birds at Hail Weston on Dec 10th. A further 150 birds were recorded at Grange Farm, Abbots Ripton on Dec 12th.

Brambling A little thin on the ground this winter with the peak count being just 15 birds near Addenbrookes Hospital on Dec 30th. Other records included 10 birds at the Ouse Washes, Fowlmere and Abbots Ripton.

European Greenfinch Records were received from 14 sites with 70 birds at Grange Farm, Abbots Ripton being the peak count.

European Goldfinch Recorded from 20 sites during the period with the maximum count being 278 birds from the Ouse Washes on Nov 12th.

Eurasian Siskin Records continued to increase during the period peaking with a report of 100 birds at Woodwalton Fen on Dec 3rd. A further 40 birds were noted at Upton Wood and Orton Brick Pits.

Common Linnet Reports were received from 15 sites with the highest being a flock of 200 birds at Grange Farm, Abbots Ripton on Dec 12th. Other records included 100 birds at both Wilbraham Fen and Fen Drayton.

Twite A solitary bird was reported at Connington Hall during the tetrad survey on Nov 29th.

Lesser Redpoll Recorded from 15 sites mostly involving 1–2 birds, but 22 birds were ringed at Wicken Fen on Nov 19th.

Mealy Redpoll A single bird was ringed at Wicken Fen on Nov 1st.

Common Bullfinch Records came from 17 sites with a peak count of 16 birds at Elm on Dec 15th.

Snow Bunting Single birds were noted at Long Drove, Cottenham and Burwell Fen during November. Further unconfirmed reports came from Swavesey and Stow Longa.

Yellowhammer Reported from 18 sites with the maximum being 71 birds on organic land at Barton on Nov 19th.

Reed Bunting Records included a peak count of 130 birds flushed from chicory strips near Kingfishers Bridge on Dec 28th.

Corn Bunting A report of 90+ birds in a maize field at Paxton Pits on Dec 30th was the peak count. A further 84 birds were recorded at the Ouse Washes (Jolly Bankers) on Nov 17th.

HYBRIDS

Greylag x Swan Geese Three at Croxton Hall on Dec 24th and 27th.

Greylag x Canada Goose 1–3 at Kingfishers Bridge on several dates towards the end of December

Tufted Duck x Pochard An adult drake, which has been present at Fen Drayton GP for several winters, was seen again on Dec 27th.

Scaup x Tufted Duck Drake, presumed to be this cross seen at Grafham Water on Nov 1st and Dec 12th.

Tufted Duck x Pochard Drake, presumed to be this cross, at Grafham Water on several dates.

Lesser Scaup x Tufted Duck A first winter drake, presumed to be this cross, was present at Grafham Water from Dec 9th to the year's end.

Goldfinch x Canary A bird thought to be this hybrid was seen on Nov 26th at Priory Park, St. Neots.

EXOTICA

Black Swan Individual birds on several dates throughout the period at Cambridge, Grafham Water, Paxton Pits, Grafham Water, Marsh Lane GP, Kingfishers Bridge and Ouse Washes.

Bar-headed Goose Singles at Buckden GP on Nov 11th, and at Paxton Pits on several dates, mostly in December.

Red-breasted Goose Singles at Godmanchester GP on Dec 12th, and at Paxton Pits on Dec 28th and 31st.

Snow Goose Two noted at Paxton Pits on Dec 4th.

Rosy-billed Pochard Single drake at St Neots on Dec 4th.

Wood Duck Drake on R Cam near Jesus Lock, Cambridge on Nov 4th, and at the end of December, and a pair at Fen Drayton GP on Dec 12th.

Harris Hawk One at Eldernell, Nene Washes, on Nov 16th.

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



Atlas – a first stock-taking

Tony Fulford, Louise Bacon and Peter Herkenrath for the Research Committee

At the time of writing this note (end of January), more than half of the first winter period of the winter and breeding atlas 2007-11 is over – time to look at the take-up. The atlas is organised by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), but the Cambridgeshire Bird Club would like to take the opportunity to produce a more detailed atlas for the county – in cooperation with the Peterborough Bird Club (PBC), which is covering the PBC recording area, including parts of Huntingdonshire. We have asked birdwatchers to sign up for surveying tetrads (2 × 2 km squares), with two timed tetrad visits (TTVs) of 1 or 2 hours each in the winter period (an early visit in Nov–Dec and a late visit in Jan–Feb) and two visits in the breeding season (April–May and June–July). Currently, of the 550 tetrads in the old Cambs region, 193 (35%) have been allocated for the winter and 189 (34%) for the breeding period. The results can be most easily submitted online via the BTO website (www.birdatlas.net) or via paper forms that can be requested from us. So far, 122 (63%) early-winter TTV data sets have been submitted online, that is almost three-quarters of those allocated to people who have registered online, but this is still only 22% of the total number of tetrads (550) we would like to cover eventually. There will be more data coming in particularly from those submitting paper forms – the forms will be completed and submitted after the end of the first winter period.

Looking at the area covered by TTVs so far, it is clear that the south of old Cambs and in particular the area around Cambridge is relatively well covered, while there are large gaps in the north and east of the old county. We have four seasons to go and the idea is to cover each tetrad only in one season – so we hope that many observers will switch to new tetrads after the first breeding season.

TTVs are not the full story; we also need roving records for all tetrads. Data on roving record submissions is not yet available from the BTO. Roving records are important to achieve a better coverage of all tetrads including those that are surveyed by TTVs. It is particularly important for species that are difficult to find during TTVs, for example owls, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, etc. – although for the Cambridgeshire atlas, we will use the data from the owl survey that the Club has run over previous years. Roving records can be submitted online or on paper forms as well.

We are sure that many birdwatchers share our own enthusiasm for the atlas work. It has been great fun to go out and count birds in a given area. It is perhaps not so much the single rarer bird found during a TTV that have excited us, but the amazing number of, for example, Blackbirds, that we might not have expected.

If you want to participate in the atlas work, please do not start with a late winter count without having done the early winter count first. You can register for atlas work via www.birdatlas.net or by contacting us at cambsbirdatlas@btinternet.com or see our contact details on the backpage; see also www.cambridgebirdclub.org.uk/atlas.htm or contact us for more information or with any question you might have.

Finding 'New Birds' in the county...

Vince Lea

To find a new bird for the county, the best way I've found is to watch from the bedroom window. From this vantage point – overlooking my front yard – I made observations that lead to finding a couple of dozen new birds in 2007. A wander down the back garden turned up a similar number as well, but involved a bit more effort.

Most of these 'new birds' were followed from the moment they were a twinkle in the eye (and song) of the father, through the nest-building stage and the all-important time when they were in the egg, to that wonderful moment when they could be considered as new birds – little nestlings, keenly being fed by their parents.

Making these observations was a wonderful experience in itself, feeling the pride that my 'wild gardening' was paying off for our resident bird population. But they were made all the more valuable by being part of the BTO's long-running Nest Record Scheme. All told I managed to record 12 nests in the garden – two each of Robin, Dunnock, Great Tit and Blackbird, plus single Song Thrush, Blue Tit, Chaffinch and Starling. Furthermore, being a warden for Hardwick Wood where we have 20 or so nestboxes, plenty more Blue and Great Tit nests were also recorded, plus, for the first time a Marsh Tit which raised five chicks to fledging in one of our boxes. The dry, warm April got the season off to an early start, but many of the ground-feeders struggled to get food as the earth baked dry – we lost one brood of Blackbirds and all but one of the Song Thrush broods through starvation. The Tits started breeding later, but the wet May that followed meant the adults had a hard time finding caterpillars, and several almost full-grown broods starved as well. These losses were compensated to some extent by the Great Tit which managed a late brood in the garden in July. All our Robin and Dunnock nests were successful, though it was a bit annoying that the first brood of Robins was reared in our green wheely bin; slightly over-stuffed with hedge clippings, it allowed access for the adults to build in what can only be described as a seriously over-sized nestbox! It took a long time before we could get our bin back! I also followed the fate of a pair of Kestrels that nest in a box in Coton, viewable on my butterfly transect route, where three young fledged.

Our Starling pair provided the most entertainment, nesting underneath the bedroom in the eaves of the bay window. They brought ungainly strands of straw onto the wires outside the window, wobbling about until deciding it was safe to go in and make what they laughingly call a nest. The male would sing regularly from the same point, or up on the telegraph pole, delighting us with his wing-shivering excitement. This was followed by a relatively quiet period as the eggs were being incubated. Once the chicks hatched, though, there was constant activity, with food deliveries and later the noisy chirpings of the growing youngsters. When these were nearly full-grown the mainly invertebrate diet was supplemented with cherries from the gardens over the road – fortunately they didn't raid our own trees, which fruited well!

Nest recording is becoming one of the most satisfying aspects of my birdwatching year, and I would encourage anyone interested in giving it a try to get involved this year, and find their own 'New Birds'. Carl Barimore of the BTO's nest record scheme is based in Cambridge and is hoping to set up an informal group of local recorders who can pass on tips and advice, share in recording efforts on more public sites, and perhaps also link up with ringers who may wish to ring pulli. This would be a great way to get even more out of our recording. Let me know if you are interested in finding out more about it or want to join a local nest recording group – Vince Lea: 01223 263962, vincelea@btinternet.com, 236 Wimpole Road, Barton, Cambridge, CB23 7AE.



CBC Gull workshop: February 3rd 2008

Dick Newell

Five of us met at Butt Lane, Milton for a session studying gulls. An earlier recce found few gulls, but Siskins were much in evidence. Without wasting time, we headed for Long Drove, where there were several hundred gulls laid out in the field opposite the tip, as well as a good number behind the hedge nearer the tip itself. Soon we were picking up Yellow-legged gulls and it was not long before we found examples of first, second and third winters as well as adults. Eventually we switched our attention to the tip side of the road when a juvenile Glaucous Gull put in a very welcome appearance. Having taken a few record shots (see <http://cambsbirdclub.blogspot.com/>), we then decided to try Chestnut Farm where we had requested permission to enter. On the way, a quick scan of a gull flock loafing near Chittering produced two more Yellow-legged Gulls. At Chestnut Farm we got reasonable views of the melée feeding on the tip. There was a probable second winter Caspian Gull there, which didn't stay long enough for a proper grilling. The A10 field, opposite the tip produced another adult Yellow-legged Gull, then for a finish we went back to Long Drove, where the grand finale was a very nice first-winter Yellow-legged Gull on show, bringing our mich total for the day to at least 12.

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.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE BIRD CLUB A MEMBER OF THE CAMBRIDGE CONSERVATION FORUM

The Club has recently become a member of the Cambridge Conservation Forum (CCF). The CCF exists to strengthen links and develop synergies across the diverse community of conservation practitioners and researchers based in and around Cambridge, working at local, national and international levels in order to promote the conservation of wildlife. Member conservation organisations include the BTO, BirdLife International, RSPB, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and the Wildlife Trust, as well as various departments of Cambridge University, and many others. CCF is issuing a monthly e-newsletter, packed with conservation-relevant news, information on conservation-related events in Cambridge or elsewhere, job vacancies in conservation, etc. Members of the Club are invited to attend events that are advertised in the newsletter. If you want to receive the newsletter by e-mail please let Louise Bacon know (see backpage for details). Every first Monday of the month, from 7.30pm, there is the CCF pub night in the Castle pub on Castle Hill, an opportunity to meet and have a chat and a drink with other conservationists from the area. Every year in January, the annual CCF Symposium takes place, with lots of exciting talks and again the chance to meet people who relate to conservation in Cambridgeshire and beyond. Please see the website <http://www.cambridgeconservationforum.org.uk/> for more details.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

INDOOR MEETINGS

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

Friday March 7th St John's Church Hall, Cambridge

AGM followed by Intelligence on the wing: from crafty crows to philosophical parrots by Nicky Clayton

Nicola Clayton is Professor of Comparative Cognition in the Department of Experimental Psychology at the University of Cambridge. She received her undergraduate degree at the University of Oxford and her doctorate at St. Andrews University. In 1995 she moved to the University of California Davis where she gained her first Chair in Animal Behaviour in 2000. She moved back to Cambridge, and in 2005 became one of the youngest professors in the university. Her research has been featured on BBC Radio 4 and in New Scientist magazine.

Her research interests are in the development and evolution of intelligence; for example, whether animals can plan for the future and what they remember about the past. She is also interested in a number of aspects of social and physical intelligence, such as whether animals can differentiate between what they know and what other individuals know. Nicky's work is mainly with members of the crow family (e.g. ravens and jays), and comparisons between the crows and apes including humans. Questions about the evolution of intelligence have focused on the monkeys and apes (primates) because of their close evolutionary relationship to humans. However, there is no reason to assume that intelligence is restricted to the province of primates, or that such abilities have evolved only once. In this talk, Nicky explains that there is good reason to believe that intelligence has evolved several times independently in species facing similar social and physical challenges. She will discuss how we can measure intelligence in animals and then review the evidence that some members of the crow family and parrots possess intellectual abilities that rival those of chimpanzees and other non-human apes.

Friday April 8th Milton Country Park Visitor's Centre

Saving a place for swifts by Edward Meyer

Edward has loved Swifts since his earliest years, when he would watch them on the long summer evenings swirling around the sky over his home. In the late 1990s he noticed that the Swifts nesting in his street in North West London were in decline, and realised that re-roofing of the local Edwardian properties was blocking any possibility of the Swifts returning to their long-established nest sites. Early retirement from the Tate Gallery gave Edward the time to do something for Swifts. He set up the 'London's Swifts' web site (www.londons-swifts.org.uk), which celebrates Swifts, and also shows how they can be saved from decline. Edward's view is that unless we take action now, and on a wide scale, Swifts in the UK are heading for extinction. Within the next 50 years the Swift will become a rare bird unless we create new nest places and, most importantly, protect existing ones.

OUTDOOR MEETING

Warbler workshop at Fowlmere on May 10th

Following from last year's successful warbler workshop at Fowlmere, the Club, in cooperation with the RSPB, would like to offer another such workshop, to be held at Fowlmere RSPB, Saturday May 10th, 7am – meet in the car park. The aim is to learn about warbler identification, with a focus on songs and calls. It is essential to register for the workshop as numbers are limited. If you want to participate, please e-mail or phone Peter Herkenrath (see backpage for contact details).

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 – David Avis of Saffron Walden, Alison Cooper of Little Shelford, John Dingemans of Rushden near Buntingford, Alasdair MacGillivray of Cambridge, Peter Stronach of Cambridge and Nick Warren of Cambridge.

Bruce Martin

FROM THE TREASURER

Thank you, to all our members for your valued support throughout 2007. As the New Year has passed, may I remind you that the annual subscriptions for 2008 fell due on 1st January 2008. If you have not paid your subscription for 2008, 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 this bulletin.

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

CBC BULLETIN BY EMAIL

If you would like to receive your bulletin by email, please contact me. This will save paper and save the Club the costs of distributing the bulletin by post.

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

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

www.cambridgeshirebirdclub.org.uk

Birdline number

Remember that your Cambs bird sightings can be phoned in free of charge to Birdline East Anglia on 0800 083 0803.

Please email records to: Mark Hawkes by March 7th

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

Next Bulletin due out April 2008, covering January–February 2008

GOOD BIRDING!