

# CAMBRIDGESHIRE BIRD CLUB

*Bulletin* No. 398



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

## RECENT REPORTS MAY AND JUNE 2008

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 Hybrids and Exotica (Vicki Harley). Recent Reports edited by Vicki Harley and Ira Federspiel. If you have valid reasons to dispute comments (e.g. further records) please forward these to the county recorder (contact details on back page).

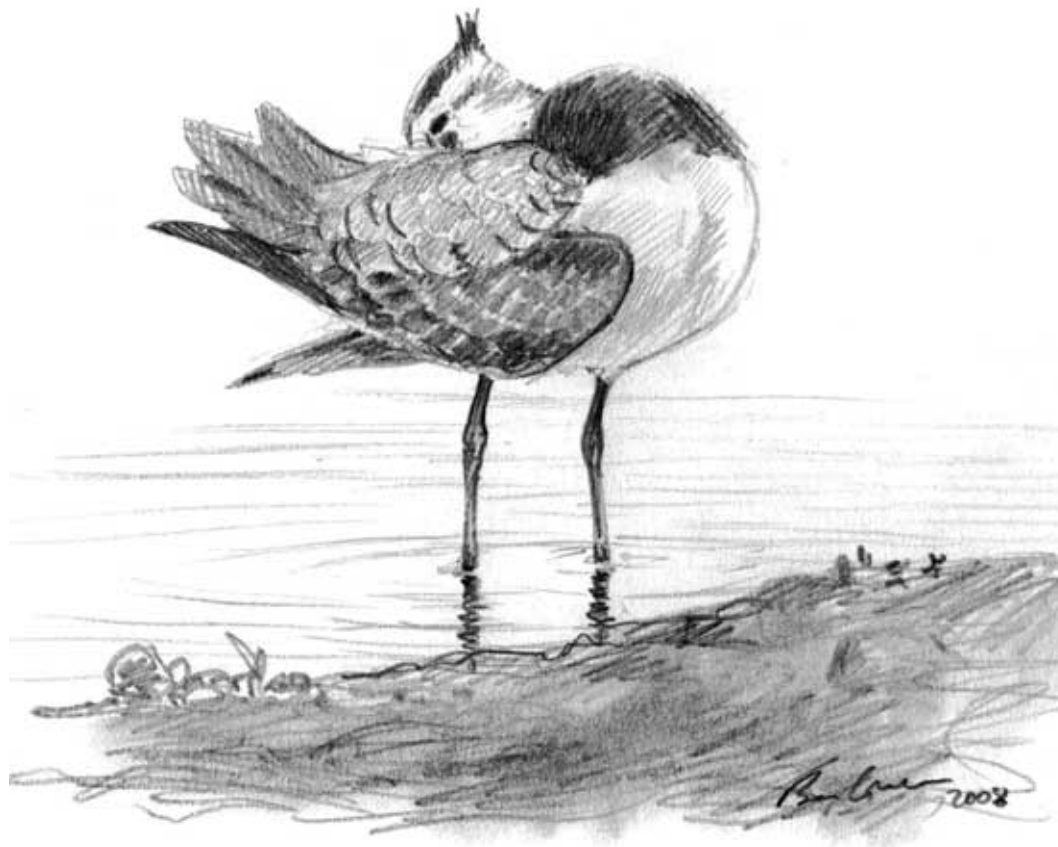
## CBC/BTO CONFERENCE: CAMBRIDGESHIRE WETLANDS WEEKEND

18th/19th October 2008

Information, Inspiration, Enjoyment – all will feature in the Cambridgeshire wetlands conference – see p11 of this bulletin and the booking form for details.

Book now to secure your place.

*Preening Lapwing by Ben Green*



Numbers in brackets indicate May and June maximums.

## WILDFOWL

**Mute Swan** Largest counts were at RSPB Berry Fen (13; 36), Fen Drayton Lakes (58; 95), Grafham Water (155+), Needingworth (21; 11) and Ouse Fen (10; 88). Breeding was noted at 14 sites.

**Whooper Swan** Two birds were noted on the Ouse Washes in May and 1 in June.

**Pink-footed Goose** One bird was at Paxton Pits on May 3rd and flew towards Grafham Water on 4th.

**Greater White-fronted Goose** The bird at Paxton Pits since March remained until May 27th.

**Greylag Goose** Three-figure counts were at Fen Drayton Lakes (487) and double figures at 7 sites. Canada Goose Three-figure counts were at Needingworth (103) and double figures at 8 sites.

**Barnacle Goose** Single figures reported from 7 sites.

**Brent Goose** A single bird was at Paxton Pits on May 27th.

**Egyptian Goose** One to 3 birds were recorded at 5 sites during the period.

**Common Shelduck** Double figures were seen at RSPB Berry Fen (14), the Cam Washes Upware (16), Fen Drayton Lakes (10), Grafham Water (22) and the Ouse Washes (12). Broods were seen in June at Grafham Water and Maxey Pits.

**Mandarin** A drake was at Grafham Water on May 2nd.

**Eurasian Wigeon** One to 4 birds were seen at 8 sites.

**Gadwall** Double figures were seen at RSPB Berry Fen (16), Fen Drayton GP Lakes (28) and Ouse Fen (35). Two broods were noted at Grafham Water.

**Eurasian Teal** The only double-figure counts were 19 at Grafham Water on June 30th and 13 at Paxton Pits on June 9th. Single figures were noted at 6 other sites.

**Green-winged Teal** A drake was at Grafham Water on June 28th.

**Mallard** The largest count was at Fen Drayton Lakes (100) and double figures at 10 other sites.

**Northern Pintail** A drake was at Fen Drayton Lakes in May and a female wandered round Needingworth and Ouse Fen during May and June.

**Garganey** Between 1 and 7 birds were noted from 8 sites during the period.

**Northern Shoveler** Twenty-seven at Ouse Fen was the maximum number recorded. Small numbers were seen at 8 other sites.

**Red-crested Pochard** A single bird was at Paxton Pits throughout the period and 1 at Buckden GP on May 7/8th and Maxey GP on May 25th/26th.

**Common Pochard** Double figures were seen at Fen Drayton Lakes (19), Grafham Water (11) and Ouse Fen (13). Single figures were noted at 4 other sites.

**Tufted Duck** At Fen Drayton Lakes (67; 38), Grafham Water (112) and the Ouse Fen (34; 36). Also noted at 10 other sites.

**Common Scoter** Eleven birds were at Grafham

Water on May 21st and 2 on the 31st. One bird was at Fen Drayton Lakes on June 21st.

**Goldeneye** A male was at Grafham Water until May 5th and another male at Buckden GP on May 8th, (present now for over 12 months). And a third male at Needingworth throughout the period.

**Ruddy Duck** Reported from just 2 sites with 2 drakes at each.

## GAMEBIRDS

**Red-legged Partridge** Seventeen records, some of which refer to paired birds. High counts of 18 at Ouse Washes, 13 at Isleham and 10 at Mepal.

**Grey Partridge** Nineteen records from a wide range of sites with high counts of just 7 at Swaffham Prior and 6 at Wilbraham Common.

**Common Quail** Recorded at the Ouse Washes on May 16th and again June 23rd. Other sites with single records: Nene Washes, Witchford, March Tip, Gamlingay.

**Common Pheasant** Fourteen records, about half of which came from tetrad visits for the atlas. Thirty at Isleham and 25 Ramsey Mereside were the highest counts.

## DIVERS TO HERONS

**Little Grebe** Double figures were noted only at Ouse Fen (17) with broods at the same site and Grafham Water. Single figures were noted at 5 other sites.

**Great Crested Grebe** At Fen Drayton Lakes (24; 28), Needingworth (34; 16) and Roswell Pits (17; 22). Single figures were noted at 12 other sites. Breeding was recorded at 10 sites.

**Black-necked Grebe** A pair bred at a site in the county hatching 2 young, one of which is still present.

**European Storm-petrel** A remarkable record of one present at Grafham Water on June 4th from 4pm until dusk.

**Great Cormorant** Double figures noted at Fen Drayton Lakes (21) and Needingworth (10) and single figures at 9 sites.

**Great Bittern** Heard booming at 3 sites and birds seen on a number of occasions at 2 other sites.

**Black-crowned Night Heron** A bird was flushed by the footpath along the River Great Ouse (whilst the observer was going to see a Cattle Egret – see below) on June 15th. It was then relocated on the Ouse Washes near Earith and was present in the area until at least June 23rd.

**Cattle Egret** A bird was present on the Ouse Washes between Earith and Sutton Gault on June 15th after first being seen on the River Ouse just south of Earith.

**Little Egret** Double figures were seen at RSPB Berry Fen (30), the Nene Washes (15), Ouse Fen (13), and the Ouse Washes (34) and single figures at 8 other sites during the period. There were no

breeding reports, though it is difficult to confirm breeding records of this species.

**Grey Heron** Double figures were present at Fen Drayton Lakes (17) and Needingworth (10) and single figures at 12 other sites. At Wicken Fen the expanding breeding colony is now up to 6 nests and a pair bred at nature reserve of the Perse School for Girls in Cambridge.

**Eurasian Spoonbill** A bird was seen at the Ouse Washes from May 4th to 7th and that or another was at the Nene Washes from June 27th to 30th.

## RAPTORS

**Honey Buzzard** First seen on May 6th, at Ickleton, followed, on the 7th, by 1 seen over the A505 at Fowlmere and 1 (plus a possible second) on the 10th (11th) May at Paxton Pits. Last May record on the 31st at Woodwalton Fen, followed by June records from Fen Drayton (4th) and Paxton Pits again (14th).

**Black Kite** Three records (1 fewer than this time last year): May 4th at Hardwick Wood, May 9th at Melbourn and June 24th at Chatteris.

**Red Kite** The explosion of records continues as birds from the reintroduction schemes in neighbouring counties continue to spread. Seen at 33 sites over the period, with several sites having repeat views suggesting residency and in some cases possible breeding sites. Highest count of 5 birds thermaling over Fenstanton on June 5th.

**Eurasian Marsh Harrier** Seen throughout the period at many sites, not just wetlands but some areas of arable farmland too. Breeding activity, repeat sightings of pairs or displaying birds at about 14 sites.

**Hen Harrier** One late bird from Wicken Fen on May 17th.

**Harrier species** Three ringtails in May, when Montagu's Harrier is perhaps most likely candidate; May 3rd at Nene Washes, 10th at Paxton Pits and 29th at Great Chishill.

**Montagu's Harrier** Four records is a pretty good tally for spring, with 2 on May 4th (Elton and Paxton Pits) on June 6th a 2nd summer male was photographed at Nene Washes, and another male seen on June 29th at King's Dyke.

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk** Plenty of records throughout the county with around 30 sites, but no breeding activity noted. Please do submit breeding records.

**Common Buzzard** Sixty-nine records, several of which refer to small groups of birds possibly on migration but also breeding pairs. High counts of 7+ at Paxton Pits and 7 at Fowlmere both in mid-May.

**Rough-legged Buzzard** One possible seen at Kingfishers Bridge on May 7th.

**Osprey** Continued to be seen through the spring, with 6 sightings in May and one on June 15th at Grafham Water.

**Common Kestrel** A good sprinkling of records, many of which came from atlas tetrad recorders.

Confirmed breeding from 3 nestboxes and other breeding pairs also noted.

**Red-footed Falcon** One well-watched female at Fen Drayton Lakes, reported from May 13th to 29th, while a first-summer female at Ely BF on 18th was also 'twitched' by some observers; single observer records came from birds at Barrington (May 17th), and in June: Cowley Road, Cambridge (3rd), Paxton Pits (6th) and Godmanchester (7th). There was a doubtful record from Paxton Pits on May 20th.

**Eurasian Hobby** Seemingly an excellent spring for this species, with 108 records submitted including several large groups such as 25+ at Wicken Fen on May 11th, 17 at Fen Drayton Lakes on May 24th, 11 at Paxton Pits June 15th, 10 + max count from Ouse Fen (June 28th). Dispersal for breeding occurs in June, with Wicken Fen's highest count that month being just 1! Breeding activity noted at just 1 site.

**Peregrine Falcon** Seen at Ouse Washes on May 3rd and Paxton Pits May 20th. More excitingly, the species is again breeding in the county, for the second year running, but at a sensitive site this time.

## RAILS

**Water Rail** Records only from Mepal (Gault Hole), Ely BF and Ouse Washes where max of 7 reported.

**Spotted Crake** Regularly heard calling at Sutton Gault on the Ouse Washes, from June 13th to 23rd, with a possible max of 4. No reports from the Nene Washes or elsewhere.

**Corn Crake** Three records from the Nene Washes in Jun, presumed to be returning birds from the reintroduction programme. Two on the 29th was the high count.

**Common Moorhen** Small numbers recorded from WeBS counts, atlas tetrad visits and a few other casual sightings. Breeding noted at Mepal, Shingay, Grafham Water, Roswell Pits and Ouse Fen.

**Common Coot** WeBS counts from Fen Drayton Lakes (167; 96), Ouse Fen (3 counts conducted) (134; 94), Berry Fen (9, 55), Needingworth Quarry Lakes (53; 22), Needingworth (36; 41), Landbeach (27; 27). Noted elsewhere, with breeding records from several sites such as Eversden Golf course, with 2 broods of 2.

**Common Crane** Numerous observations from fenland areas, most often relating to 2 individuals flying together, and all in May: Wicken Fen (7th, 19th/3 together, 20th/1 and 29th), Ely, Stretham and Witcham (all on 10th), Alconbury (12th), Fen Drayton Lakes (20th, 29th) and Woodwalton Fen on the 24th.

## WADERS

**Eurasian Oystercatcher** Breeding reported from 6 sites with young produced at 4 of these. Highest count was 8 at Ouse Fen on June 15th.

**Avocet** Breeding confirmed at 2 sites and probable at 1 further site, additionally 1–3 recorded from a further 7 sites, though obviously scarcer than in recent springs.

**Stone Curlew** Singles reported from 2 localities on May 1st and on June 29th.

**Little Plover** Breeding from at a least 6 sites with juveniles produced at 4 of these. Highest counts from Wicken Fen with 10+ on May 16th.

**Ringed Plover** Breeding not well reported – confirmed at Maxey GP. Highest counts from Wicken Fen with 18+ on May 16th and up to 23 at Paxton Pits (may have involved tundra race birds).

**Tundra Ringed Plover** Main site was Paxton Pits from May 1st to June 10th with peak of 30 on May 23rd, also up to 18 at Berry Fen on from May 19th to May 31st and 12 at Maxey GP on May 25th.

**Eurasian Dotterel** Six near Litlington on May 2nd reducing to 2 on 3rd with these (a male and female) remaining to 5th.

**European Golden Plover** A single at Berry Fen on May 19th.

**Grey Plover** Recorded daily from May 3rd to 26th with peaks of 5 at Paxton Pits on 8th and 2–4 at Berry Fen from 14th to 16th, also from Maxey GP, Fen Drayton Lakes, Grafham Water, Ouse Washes and Wicken Fen. In June singles at Paxton Pits on 8th and 16th.

**Northern Lapwing** Breeding pairs as follows: Nene Washes (270), Feldale farm Whittlesey (9), Ouse Washes Pilot Project land (26), Berry Fen (15+; c20 fledged), Buckden GP (1), Chain Corner (1), Mepal (2), Waterbeach Fen (4), Grafham Water (1), Longstanton (1), Needingworth (6), Wicken Fen (5), Kingfishers Bridge (4), Maxey GP (10). Post breeding flocks gathered from early June with up to 95 at Paxton Pits, Ouse Fen (80), Buckden GP (50), Needingworth (47), Fen Drayton Lakes (46).

**Red Knot** In May, 2 at Berry Fen on 9th with 1 to 10th, 2 at Paxton Pits on 15th, Grafham Water on 26th, Paxton Pits on 26–27th and 1 here on June 6th.

**Sanderling** One to 3 from 6 sites from May 1st to 15th then exceptional passage to May 27th with a record count of 27 at Maxey GP on 27th, Paxton Pits 1–11 daily from 16th to 27th, Grafham Water 1–5 from 17th to 27<sup>th</sup>; last birds were 2 at Paxton Pits on June 8th.

**Little Stint** Ouse Washes on May 15th, Paxton Pits on 15th and 2 on 16th and 1 at Paxton Pits on June 13th.

**Temminck's Stint** In May, singles at Fen Drayton Lakes on 5th, Ouse Fen on 8th, Maxey GP on 10–13th, Berry Fen on 13th, Paxton Pits on 13–18th though with 2 on 15th and again on 19th.

**Curlew Sandpiper** Only record was 1 on Nene Washes on May 23rd.

**Dunlin** Poor passage this spring with max site count of 12 at Paxton Pits on May 4th and 20th and 1–8 from a further 6 sites, on some dates the best sites barely held single birds. In June recorded to

23rd with 1–6 at Paxton Pits, 4 at Berry Fen on 19th and Maxey GP on 16th.

**Buff-breasted Sandpiper** A fantastic displaying male at Maxey GP on June 7–8th was well appreciated by the Peterborough birding fraternity. This follows on from a spring male at Wicken Fen in May 2003.

**Ruff** Very scarce with up to 5 at Wicken Fen on May 8–16th and 1 at Maxey GP May 5–7th.

**Common Snipe** Counts of breeding (drumming males): Nene Washes (190), Ouse Washes (Pilot Project; 18), Middle Fen Swavesey (1), Berry Fen and Mare Fen (1).

**Eurasian Woodcock** Up to 3 roding at Wicken Fen, Chippenham Fen and Woodwalton Fen. One was ringed at Wicken Fen on June 1st.

**Black-tailed Godwit** Forty breeding pairs at the Nene Washes had excellent productivity managing to fledge no less than 34 juveniles. Largest groups were 60 at Ouse Washes and 26 at Ouse Fen; most birds were identified as belonging to the *islandica* race though 8 at Berry Fen on May 17th and Grafham Water on June 23rd showed characteristics of the nominate *limosa* race.

**Bar-tailed Godwit** Only 3 May records: Ouse Fen on 11th, Paxton Pits on 15th and 2 at Ouse Washes on 28th.

**Whimbrel** One to 2 recorded from 6 sites between May 2nd and 10th with a larger feeding group of 8 at Woodwalton Fen on the 4th.

**Eurasian Curlew** Singles seen from 4 sites and 2 at Ouse Fen from May 31st into July (as is often the case more than 1 bird can be present in an area though never together as was suspected at Paxton Pits where up to 3 were thought to be frequenting the area).

**Spotted Redshank** Singles at Barton on May 9th, Earith on June 16th and Berry Fen on 17th.

**Common Redshank** Breeding pairs as follows: Nene Washes (165), Ouse Washes (Pilot Project; 25), Ouse Fen (1–4), Kingfishers Bridge (2), Wicken Fen (c.3), Berry Fen and Maxey GP (1+).

**Common Greenshank** Passage from May 2nd to 20th, peaking between 9th and 16th with highest counts from Wicken Fen (10), Nene Washes (8), Ouse Fen (6), Ouse Washes (4), Kingfishers Bridge and Berry Fen (3).

**Green Sandpiper** Singles from 5 sites between May 4th and 28th. In June late 1st-summer northbound migrants or returning birds from 9th at 7 sites with the main site Maxey GP holding up to 4 on 16th–19th rising to 10 on 25th.

**Wood Sandpiper** Passage from May 5th–19th at 5 sites. Highest counts were 8 at Wicken Fen on 6th with 1–3 present to 19th, 4 at Maxey GP on 7th and 1–2 from a further 3 sites. Single in June at Maxey GP on 4th.

**Common Sandpiper** Passage from May 1st to 24th with 1–3 from 9 sites and peak counts from Grafham Water with 7 on 8th. In June singles at 4 sites, with 8 at Grafham Water on 30th.

**Turnstone** The main locality Paxton Pits recorded birds almost daily with peaks of 5 on 16th, 3 on 17–19th, 2 on 21st–22nd and 2–3 on 25th–26th, additionally 5 at Ouse Fen on 21st and 1–2 from a

further 4 sites. In June from Paxton Pits on 6th with 2 present on 7th.

## SKUAS TO TERNS

**Mediterranean Gull** Singles on the Ouse Washes on May 6th, Needingworth on May 11th, Ouse Fen on June 12th and Paxton Pits on June 13th.

**Little Gull** Nine sightings, mostly in May, involved single birds except for 4 at Ferry Meadows on May 7th.

**Black-headed Gull** High counts were 181 at Needingworth on May 18th, with 62 at Berry Fen on the same day; also 53 at Fen Drayton Lakes on June 21st and 55 at Ouse Fen the next day.

**Common Gull** A scattering of reports, mainly in May, with highs of 6 at Westfield Farm Comberton on May 17th and 6 at Ouse Fen on June 22nd.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** Small numbers about, with highs of 18 at Guyhirn on May 5th, 14 at Fen Drayton Lakes on May 17th and 10 at Needingworth on June 22nd. At Grafham Water on June 29th an adult was observed taking two Coot chicks within the space of 3 minutes.

**Herring Gull** Five reports received of 1 or 2 birds.

**Yellow-legged Gull** Twenty-eight reports received, the vast majority from Paxton Pits, where numbers built up gradually until, by the middle of June, they had reached double figures, with a maximum of 13 on June 23rd. There were also 11 at Grafham Water on June 30th.

**Great Black-backed Gull** Eight records included at least 11 at Grafham Water on May 21st and 8 at Paxton on May 27th.

**Common Tern** Forty-two reports from all over the county: in early May numbers were in single figures except for Kingfishers Bridge which had 20 on 7th. There were 70 at Paxton on 15th and 26 at Fen Drayton Lakes two days later, rising to 29 on May 20th. Numbers were a little lower generally in June although Fen Drayton Lakes continued to record high numbers with 39 on June 21st. Also Grafham Water had at least 30 on June 26th.

**Arctic Tern** There were 17 at Fen Drayton Lakes on May 1st and 2 on the Ouse Washes on May 6th.

**Little Tern** Three very early in the morning of May 2nd at Paxton; thereafter singles at Grafham Water (May 10th and June 26th) and Maxey GP on June 8th.

**Whiskered Tern** One, possibly 2, in the county on June 8th, observed at Fen Drayton Lakes and Sutton Gault.

**Black Tern** An excellent spring with 43 different records: the first two weeks of May saw a strong passage with numbers building to 12 at Ferry Meadows CP on 6th, and 10 at Buckden GP, 12 at Fen Drayton Lakes and 10 at Kingfishers Bridge, all on the next day. Grafham Water then recorded 21 on 9th. Thereafter there were reports of the odd single bird until May 21st when 4 were at Fen Drayton Lakes of which at least 3 remained on the following day. The only June record was of two at Paxton Pits on 16th.

## NEAR PASSERINES

**Feral Pigeon** None recorded.

**Stock Pigeon** In 17 records typically 2–8 birds seen; 17 at Ramsay Mere on June 1st.

**Common Wood Pigeon** Three counts of over 50 birds with 173 at Comberton on May 6th.

**Eurasian Collared Dove** Up to 8 birds reported during the reported timed tetrad visits.

**European Turtle Dove** General singles and pairs in the 55 records reported; 5 males calling at Wicken Fen on May 9th.

**Common Cuckoo** One to 3 birds widely reported; highest numbers in both months came from Isleham, with 16 birds on June 15th.

**Barn Owl** Recorded from 31 sites, at several of which more than 1 pair bred.

**Little Owl** Recorded mainly in southern part of county, including 3 records where breeding suspected or evident.

**Tawny Owl** Only 4 records: 3 of singles and 2 birds at the Ouse Washes.

**Long-eared Owl** Recorded at 6 locations, mainly during afternoon and evening.

**Common Swift** Widespread. 200+ at Fen Drayton Lakes on May 1st and over 1000 seen at Grafham Water on May 25th.

**Common Kingfisher** One to 5 birds observed at 16 locations.

**Eurasian Wryneck** One at Paxton Pits on May 7th.

**Green Woodpecker** One to 3 birds recorded from about 40 sites; 6 birds recorded on a 2 km transect at Wilbraham Common.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** One to 3 birds recorded on 26 occasions, widely spread across the county; 6 at Hail Weston in mid-June.

**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** Two records of single birds, both in first half of May in the south west of the county.

## PASSERINES

**Wood Lark** One flew over Little Abingdon at 6am on May 3rd.

**Sky Lark** Counts of breeding territories included 31 at Guyhirn, 26 at Barton, 23 at Comberton and 23 at Ouse Washes. At Wimblington, 3 were seen mobbing a Fox on June 1st.

**Sand Martin** Notable counts included 200+ at Ouse Washes on June 19th, 100 at Block Fen on May 26th, 100 at Ouse Washes on June 22nd and 100 at Ouse Fen on June 29th.

**Barn Swallow** Few counts received, with 50+ at Grafham Water on May 25th the only notable one.

**House Martin** Notable counts included 200+ at Grafham Water on May 25th, 50+ over breeding sites in St Neots on May 24th, and 40+ at Wimblington GP on May 17th.

**Meadow Pipit** No notable counts received. Many territorial birds reported with eight pairs at Cambourne noted on June 19th and four at the pocket park at Eynesbury, St Neots on May 25th.

**Yellow Wagtail** No double figures counts received for this period. Recorded from 16 sites in May and 11 in June.

**Grey Wagtail** Noted at only 2 sites in May and 8 sites in June. First young birds were noted at Toft on May 31st.

**Pied Wagtail** No notable records received.

**Winter Wren** Notable counts of breeding territories included 29 at East Fen, Isleham on May 4th, 11 at Bourn on May 20th and 11 at Mere Farm, Ramsey Mere on June 1st.

**Hedge Accentor** No notable records received.

**European Robin** Counts of breeding territories included 16 between Barton and Comberton on May 2nd, 16 on Wilbraham Common on May 4th and 13 at Bourn on May 20th.

**Common Nightingale** Four singing at Woodwalton Fen was the only notable count. Noted singing at 5 other sites.

**Black Redstart** Two singing males noted from the county during the period.

**Whinchat** Singles at Fowlmere on May 3rd, Paxton Pits on May 4th and at Berry Fen on May 11th.

**Stonechat** One at Wicken Fen on May 6th and one at the Ouse Washes on May 15th.

**Northern Wheatear** Three recorded at Limepit Hill, Fulbourn, on May 1st was the highest count, with singles noted between May 1st and 5th from a further 4 sites. A number of these birds were considered to be of the Greenland subspecies, *leucorrhoea*.

**Ring Ouzel** One at Boxworth on May 4th and another single at Burwell on May 10th.

**Blackbird** Notable counts of breeding territories included 27 at East Fen, Isleham on June 15th, 22 between Barton and Comberton on June 15th and 20 at Bourn on May 20th.

**Fieldfare** One was noted feeding with two juvenile Mistle Thrushes at Fowlmere on May 18th.

**Song Thrush** No notable records received.

**Mistle Thrush** Eight together in a field at Wimblington Common on June 14th was of note.

**Cetti's Warbler** At 12 sites, the range seems still to be expanding, with singing birds at several of these. Up to 7 birds and 4 singing males were observed at Wicken Fen.

**Common Grasshopper Warbler** Reported from 10 sites, with as many as 5 reellers at Little Wilbraham Fen on June 10th.

**Sedge Warbler** From numerous sites, including 15 at Walderssea farm (Guyhirn), and 17 at Sutton Gault (Ouse Washes).

**Eurasian Reed Warbler** From numerous sites, Landbeach GP held 5 singing males on May 16th yet this site had 13 singers on June 22nd. Reed Warblers are renowned for reduced singing once breeding commences, so was there a significant secondary ingress?

**Icterine Warbler** A singing male was found on June 7th at Witchford.

**Lesser Whitethroat** From 25 sites, up to 4 singing birds at Toft.

**Common Whitethroat** Up to 17 birds were seen at Barton, and 20 were noted at Isleham (East Fen) on May 4th.

**Garden Warbler** Seen or heard at 14 sites, with up to 6 singing at Woodwalton Fen on May 7th.

**Blackcap** From several sites, these were more numerous from Isleham (East Fen) – 14 on May 4th – and 10 in the parish of Landbeach.

**Wood Warbler** One was singing in the wood at the north end of the farm, Paxton Pits, on May 3rd, with an unconfirmed sighting on May 5th at the Kingfisher Hide.

**Common Chiffchaff** From 26 sites, with a maximum of 7 at Wilbraham Fen.

**Willow Warbler** From 18 sites, the parish of Landbeach held the most recorded (13 on June 30th).

**Goldcrest** Just 9 sightings, of breeding/singing birds.

**Firecrest** One was noted on Morborne Hill on May 4th.

**Spotted Flycatcher** Reported from 21 sites, compared to 13 sites for this period in 2007.

**Pied Flycatcher** One unconfirmed report from opposite Hayden Hide, Paxton Pits. on May 4th.

**Bearded Tit** Reported from Ely BF where juveniles were seen, and from Wicken Fen.

**Long-tailed Tit** From 10 sites, with 2–15 birds seen within a party.

**Marsh Tit** Records from just Hardwick Wood, with juveniles seen, and Waresley Wood.

**Coal Tit** From 5 sites, of mainly singing birds or pairs with juveniles.

**Blue Tit** From several sites with 22 birds seen within one atlas tetrad on May 2nd.

**Great Tit** A few records submitted from 8 sites, up to 6 probably breeding at one site.

**Wood Nuthatch** Reported from 2 sites with an encouraging count of 12 birds at Monks Wood on May 1st with just a single at Gamlingay Wood.

**Eurasian Treecreeper** Records were received from 4 sites mostly involving single birds, but a breeding pair was noted at The Thicket, St. Ives, and several were ringed at Wicken Fen.

**Eurasian Jay** Reported from 9 sites with the peak count being 5 at Fen End, Over, on May 28th.

**Black-billed Magpie** Reports included breeding birds and young with a maximum of 5 being recorded from both Barton and Huntingdon.

**Eurasian Jackdaw** Records were received from 7 sites with the peak count being 37 at Wilbraham Common on May 4th.

**Rook** Reported from 8 sites with the peak count coming from Boxworth where 91 occupied nests were counted in the village.

**Carrion Crow** Records were received from 9 sites with just 37 birds at the Ouse Washes, Sutton Gault being the peak count.

**Common Starling** Reported from 10 sites with an estimated 1500 pre-roost birds at Holywell Lake, Fen Drayton, on June 13th being the maximum count. A further 1000+ birds were recorded roosting in the lagoons at Grafham Water on June 28th.

**Common Starling** Reported from 10 sites with an estimated 1500 pre-roost birds at Holywell Lake, Fen Drayton, on June 13th being the maximum count. A further 1000+ birds were recorded roosting in the lagoons at Grafham Water on June 28th.

**House Sparrow** Reported from 9 sites with the peak count being just 27 birds at Waldersea Farm, Guyhirn.

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow** Records were received from 3 sites including news of encouraging breeding success. The peak count was 10 pairs at the Ouse Washes on May 31st.

**Chaffinch** The peak count was from Barton/Comberton with 32 birds on May 2nd. A further 22 birds were reported at St. Neot's Meadows on June 9th.

**European Greenfinch** Reports were received from 8 sites with 11 birds at Hail Weston on June 11th being the peak count.

**European Goldfinch** Records were received from 10 sites with the maximum being 25 birds at Braham Farm, Little Thetford, on May 20th.

**Eurasian Siskin** An unusually late recording was made of a single bird in Over on June 14th. Other more recent reports made in neighbouring counties suggest that some birds may remain locally during the summer.

**Common Linnet** Reports were received from 20 sites with 24 birds at Westfield Farm, Comberton on May 6th being the peak count.

**Lesser Redpoll** One report was received of a solitary bird being a house tick at Over on May 3rd.

**Common Crossbill** Reports suggest that quite a few birds were moving through during the period with the peak count being 7 birds at Needingworth on June 15th. A further 6 birds were also reported at Monks Wood, Wandelbury and Eaton Ford, St. Neots.

**Common Bullfinch** The maximum count was just 4 birds at both Comberton and Needingworth.

**Hawfinch** A single bird was reported in a private garden in Benwick on June 14th.

**Yellowhammer** Reported from 16 sites with the maximum being 19 at East Fen, Isleham on May 4th.

**Reed Bunting** Records were received from 17 sites with the peak being 18 at Waldersea Farm, Guyhirn on May 5th. A further 12 birds were also reported from both Lark Rise Farm, Barton and Ouse Fen.

**Corn Bunting** Reports were received from 19 sites with the peak count being 10 birds at White Fen, Benwick on June 1st.

## HYBRIDS

**Canada x Greylag goose** Just one reported from the Cam Washes on May 2nd.

**Garganey x Teal** A female presumed to be of this race was at Berry Fen throughout the period.

**Falcon sp.** A hybrid falcon of uncertain parentage (maybe Peregrine x Lanner/Saker) was seen at Paxton Pits several times in the second half of May.

## EXOTICA

**Black Swan** Most reports were of single birds at various sites (Buckden GP. Cam Washes, Grafham Water, Ouse Fen, Swaffam Prior Fen), with 2 on the Cam at Fen Ditton on June 1st.

**Bar-headed Goose** Most reports were of a single at Paxton Pits (with 2 on June 2nd), plus singles at Grafham Water and Ouse Washes (Chain Corner).

**Red-breasted Goose** One at Ouse Washes (Earith) on June 20th.

**White-cheeked Pintail** One reported from Grafham Water from May 26th to June 6th.

**Saker** A 'huge individual' at Paxton Pits on May 17th.

**Contributors:** Colin Addington, Louise Bacon, Rowena Baxter, Ade Cooper, Robin Cox, Martin Davis, Mike Foley, Richard Hall, Stephen Hartley, Mark Hawkes, Fred Heath, Peter Herkenrath, John Le Gassick, Vince Lea, Tony Mallyon, Owen & Monica Marks, Peter Moule, Rob Partridge, Mark Peck, Michael Price, Tony Roberts, Bob & Ann Scott, Clive Sinclair, Nigel Spowell, Richard Thomas, Chris Thorne, Alan & Brenda Wadsworth, Jamie Wells, Steve Woollard

## A Night Heron to remember

*Graham Easy*

By 1952, only three years into birdwatching, I was part of a keen group of Cambridge High School boys which included Colin Kirtland, John Clark and Howard Ginn who are still active field observers more than half a century later. We relied upon bicycles for transport, my binoculars were 6 × 30, little different from my colleagues, and we carried the *Observers Book of Birds* for reference.

Luckily I live a stone's throw from that national treasure of the time, the Cambridge Sewage Farm and Milton Gravel Pits. Bike rides along the River Cam, Bait's Bite to Clayhithe, were usually rewarding. It was much less disturbed than nowadays with pasture all along and hedges and overgrown areas more in evidence; an excellent place to encounter early spring migrants. On April 19th I was upon such a search early in the morning and left the riverside path to examine an extensive copse of ancient hawthorn and brambles known as the Devil's Bushes. This involved crossing the flood-relief dyke Banker's Ditch, by a rough dam of trunks, branches and planks held in place by posts driven in to the ditch bottom and banks.

On this occasion I was not the first to use the bridge, as I reached the bank top and looked down at the ditch I was shocked to encounter a Little Bittern-like bird, head sunk in to its 'shoulders' with two long stiff plumes projecting from its crest, perched half-way across. We both froze for a couple of minutes enabling me to do a quick sketch as pen and paper were already poised to jot down warbler numbers. Suddenly it flew up on ample wings proving it to be considerably larger than it had appeared when perched. Uttering a few 'quark' calls this Night Heron made off southward mobbed by a couple of Rooks.

This was only the second Cambridgeshire record, and the first for over a century. To the credit of the Report Editor, Tony Vine, the record was accepted; after all at that time he knew nothing of this teenage schoolboy.

*A copy of the field sketch*



*Editor's/Recorder's note.* Currently 16 records of Night Herons have been accepted for Cambridgeshire, up to the last in 2004. Acceptance of this year's Ouse Washes bird, will bring the total to 17.



## Submitting descriptions of county rarities

*Colin Kirtland, on behalf of the Records Committee*

For many years the acceptance of records of county rarities was largely a matter of discussion between the report editor and the recorder. However the increasing number of submissions due to more observers and the relegation of many species from national to county rarity status made this situation quite impractical. Richard Allison was originally responsible for establishing a records committee and the system has subsequently been modified and refined by John Oates and Mark Hawkes. Records are now circulated promptly to members, mostly by computer, and the committee meets regularly to discuss difficult cases, to review their procedures and where necessary to revise the list of species for which descriptions are required.

In the CBC bulletin no.394 Mark gave a comprehensive summary of the need for descriptions and also guidance on the sort of details required, which it was hoped would both encourage inexperienced observers and spur the reluctant into action. However a significant number of records for 2007 are still awaiting descriptions. Production of the annual report cannot be delayed indefinitely; therefore in such cases, to avoid the record being ignored, the committee is willing to accept details from observers other than the finder.

I can only reiterate what Mark has already stated, that descriptions should be as detailed as possible and preferably copied from field notes taken at the time. When judging records, committee members cannot assume or take the unwritten for granted. For example, if a bird flies over and is identified solely on the call, the least we can expect is a transcription of the call!

Some observers may feel that publishing an example of an acceptable description would be of assistance. Rather than giving a fictional account, with the agreement of the observers concerned, we could in future publish an accepted and possibly even a rejected description to indicate the standard required for acceptance.

Finally may we thank those dedicated birders who take the trouble to submit details and encourage others to follow their example.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### INDOOR MEETINGS

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

#### **Friday September 12th Milton Country Park Visitor's Centre**

##### **Bravo Brazil by Stuart Elsom**

Tour Leader, photographer, lifelong Cambs resident and Bird Club member Stuart Elsom takes us on a colourful journey to the toucans, tanagers and trogons of the wonderful Atlantic Rainforest in Brazil.

Check Stuart's website for samples of his photography: [www.stuartelsom.co.uk](http://www.stuartelsom.co.uk)

#### **Friday October 10th Milton Country Park Visitor's Centre**

##### **From soil to satellites – the search for Jerdon's courser in India by Ken Norris**

Jerdon's courser is one of the most elusive and least understood birds in the world. It is known from only a small area of scrub forest in southeast India, and its population is probably less than 150 birds. No nest, egg or young have ever been seen. This talk describes efforts to describe the habitat requirements of Jerdon's courser, to map its habitat and search for

birds in new areas. It also discusses the threats to this species and the difficult problem of resolving conflicts between the needs of poor rural communities and biodiversity conservation.

Professor Norris is Director of the Centre for Agri-environmental Research at the University of Reading. He has wide interests in avian ecology, endangered species ecology and ecological aspects of agri-environmental management.

For more information see: [http://www.rdg.ac.uk/caer/staff\\_ken\\_norris.html](http://www.rdg.ac.uk/caer/staff_ken_norris.html)

### **LIFTS TO CLUB MEETINGS**

Recently, we were approached by a Club member living in Fenstanton who finds it difficult to drive in the dark. She asked whether she could be given a lift to Club meetings. The Club Council is very willing to help. Please let us know if you need a lift to get to outdoor or indoor meetings of the Club and also if you are willing to give other Club members a lift. We could then bring the latter together with those in need of a lift. In the given case: is there anyone driving from Fenstanton to Club meetings? Please contact either Vicki Harley or 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 (see back page for contact details).

### **FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY**

We welcome the following new members – Godfrey Curtis of Trumpington and Alan Leslie of Cambridge

*Bruce Martin*

### **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).

## **CBC/BTO CONFERENCE: CAMBRIDGESHIRE WETLANDS WEEKEND**

**Saturday 18th October 18th: Cottenham Village College**

**Sunday 19th October: wetland sites in Cambridgeshire**

Cambridgeshire holds outstanding wetland habitat, home to conservation success stories and a source of fascination and enjoyment for the county's birdwatchers. This conference will review the status of wetland birds in winter and the conservation projects in the county, investigate the likely effects of climate change and survey the importance of our wetlands for the migration of internationally important species.

On Saturday October 18th, there will be three sessions, each devoted to a particular aspect of the subject. Session one reviews the status of wetland birds and the conservation projects within Cambridgeshire; session two covers past and future aspects of climate change and their likely effects on Cambridgeshire and its bird life; and session three reviews the importance of Cambridge wetlands for the migration of internationally important species. Session one and two will also include talks on the biology of two important wetland birds, Bittern and Lapwing. Our speakers include Andy Musgrave and Mark Rehfisch of the BTO, Simon Wotton and Jen Smart from the RSPB, and Peter Bircham and Roger Beecroft. There will also be an update on the Club's link with Oursi Bird Club in Burkina Faso. During the lunch break there will be a chance to view displays as well as socialise.

Our artist-in-residence will be Ben Green, whose artwork has featured in the Club's bulletins and annual reports. On the day, he will be working on drawings or a painting during the day, giving you the chance to see how the work progress and discuss the skills needed to draw birds. He will also display some completed paintings.

On Sunday October 19th there will be an opportunity to visit to several wetland sites in the county to learn about the habitats and their conservation – and maybe do a little birdwatching as well! At each site a warden will lead a walk and talk about reserve management and the work of the reserve staff and volunteers. Visitors to Kingfishers Bridge will be able to follow up Saturday's talk. At the RSPB Ouse Washes reserve, there will be a chance to see the the Pilot Project, 45 hectares of wetland habitat created in 2001 from arable fields, with the objective of providing alternative habitat for breeding waders, when the Ouse Washes is in unsuitable condition due to prolonged winter and spring flooding, and Carroll's ground, 10 fields that have been converted to wet grassland adjacent to the washes. These areas supported 69 pairs of breeding waders in 2008.

A booking form is attached to this bulletin.

For enquiries contact Vicki Harley (phone and email on back page).

For conference updates check the Club website.

## CLUB CONTACTS

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### **Membership Secretary**

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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 September 7th**

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

**Next Bulletin due out October 2008, covering July–August 2008**

# GOOD BIRDING!