

# CAMBRIDGESHIRE BIRD CLUB

*Bulletin* No. 402



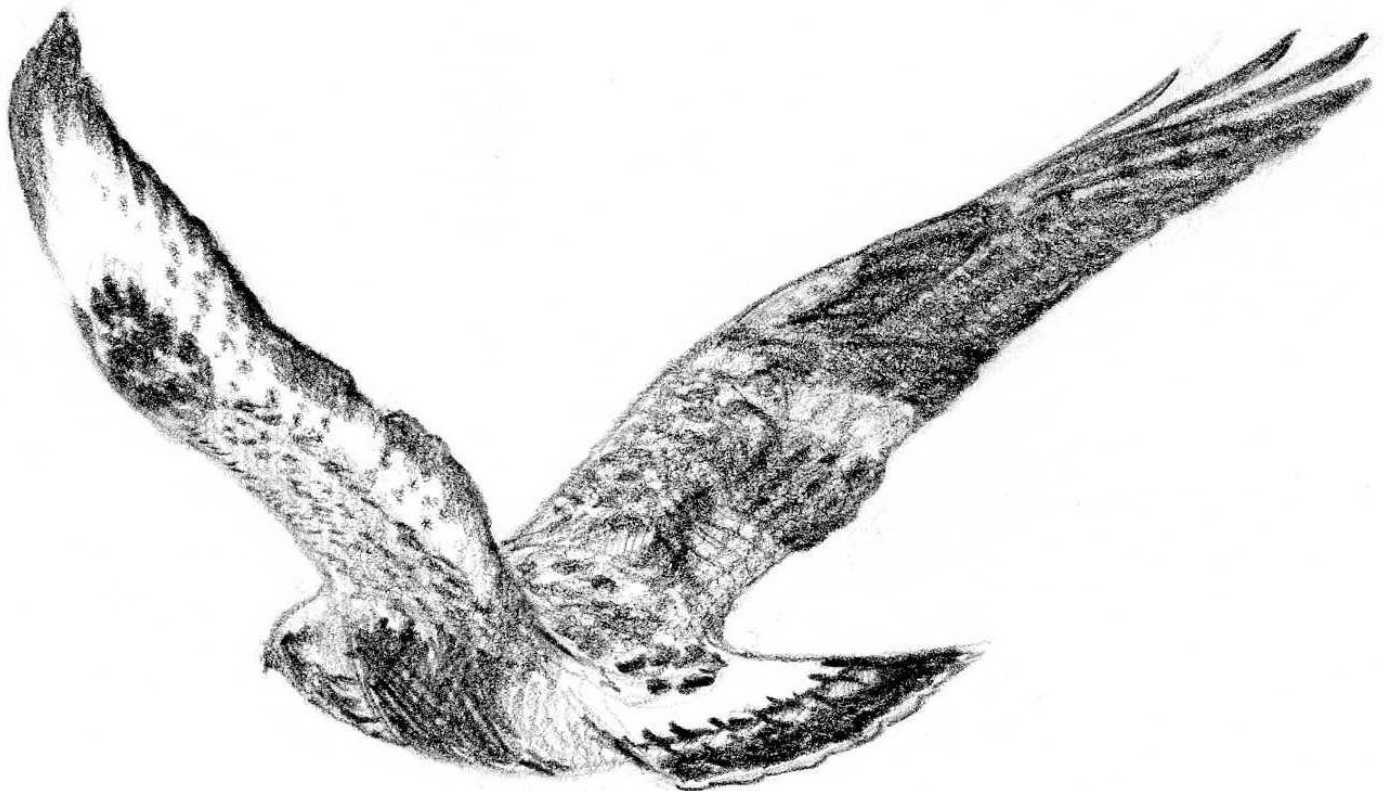
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*Opinions expressed in this bulletin are not necessarily those of the Club.*

## **RECENT REPORTS JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 2009**

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), Mike Foley (Larks to Tits) and David Heath (Wood Nuthatch to Buntings) and Vicki Harley (Hybrids and Exotica). If you have valid reasons to dispute comments (e.g. further records) please forward these to the county recorder (contact details on back page).

*Rough-legged Buzzard at Coveney by Ben Green*



Numbers in brackets indicate January and February maximums.

## WILDFOWL

**Mute Swan** At Grafham Water (127; 45), the Nene Washes (35; 207), Ouse Fen (156; 126) and the Ouse Washes (810; 431). Double-figure counts were made at 8 other sites.

**Tundra Swan** At the Nene Washes (151; 109) and the Ouse Washes (3458; 644). Birds away from the Washes were seen at Fen Drayton Lakes with 4 on Jan 2nd, Ouse Fen 8 on Jan 4th, Grafham Water 2, Kingfishers Bridge 2 and Paxton Pits 6 all on Jan 6th.

**Whooper Swan** At the Nene Washes (170; 462) and the Ouse Washes (5979; 3242). Ten birds flew over Kingfishers Bridge on Jan 2nd and 21 birds were at Woodwalton Fen from Jan 31st to Feb 4th. Single figures were seen at 4 other sites.

**Bean Goose** The 3 birds in the Cam Washes area in December remained until Jan 28th. Five birds were on the Nene Washes from Jan 17th to 29th and 7 birds were at the Ouse Washes on Feb 4th and 5th. Nineteen birds flew north along the Ouse Washes on Feb 27th.

**Pink-footed Goose** Twenty birds were at Paxton Pits on Jan 6th, 2 at Fen Drayton Lakes on Jan 22nd and singles at Cambourne, the Ouse Washes and Wimpole Park.

**Great White-fronted Goose** A maximum of 46 were on the Ouse Washes and 17 on the Nene Washes during the period. Three birds were at Fen Drayton Lakes on Feb 8th.

**Greylag Goose** At Fen Drayton Lakes (118; 72), Grafham Water (195; 56), Kingfishers Bridge (200; 125), Ouse Fen (196; 350), the Ouse Washes (319; 491), Paxton Pits (586; 203), Wicken Fen (353; 319) and Wimpole Park (103).

**Canada Goose** Three-figure counts were at the Ouse Washes (779; 213) and Wicken Fen (171; 28) and double figures at 9 other sites.

**Barnacle Goose** Ten birds were at Paxton Pits on Jan 18th, with 8 in early February and 2 at the months end. Nine birds were at Hinxton on Jan 24th and singles at 4 other sites.

**Brent Goose** Three birds were at Paxton Pits from Jan 1st until 11th. Around 70 birds flew east over Grafham Water on Jan 31st and 1 flew over Paxton Pits on Feb 8th.

**Egyptian Goose** Up to 6 birds were at the Earith Washes in January and 7 in February. Singles were at Perry on Jan 1st and the Nene Washes on Jan 24th.

**Common Shelduck** At Grafham Water 25 birds were seen on Feb 22nd, at the Nene Washes 67 on Feb 23rd and Berry Fen 16 on Feb 28th. Single figures were seen at 11 other sites.

**Mandarin** Male was at Grafham Water on Jan 10th.

**Eurasian Wigeon** At Berry Fen RSPB (24; 295), Fen Drayton Lakes (886; 2228), Four Gotes (236; 104), Needingworth GP (476; 1852), the Nene Washes (5330; 9106), Ouse Fen (2100; 1100), the Ouse Washes (18,417; 16,851) and Wicken Fen (850; 700). Double-figure counts at 4 other sites.

**Gadwall** At Berry Fen RSPB (102; 83), Fen Drayton Lakes (302; 202), Grafham Water (383; 168), Milton CP (177; 140), Needingworth GP (129; 186), the Nene Washes (0; 128), Ouse Fen (110; 58), the Ouse Washes (993; 317), Paxton Pits (251; 280) and Wicken Fen (114; 122). Double figures were counted at 5 other sites.

**Eurasian Teal** At Fen Drayton Lakes (106; 144), Grafham Water (150; 99), Kingfishers Bridge (115; 288), the Nene Washes (952; 1733), Ouse Fen (80; 251), the Ouse Washes (3642; 844), Paxton Pits (348; 165) and Wicken Fen (380; 202). Double figures were counted at 5 other sites.

**Green-winged Teal** A male was present at Maxey GP on Feb 19th and 20th and that or a different bird was on the Nene Washes on the 25th.

**Mallard** At Fen Drayton Lakes (184; 76), Four Gotes (161; 206), Grafham Water (228; 153), Kingfishers Bridge (92; 174), the Nene Washes (360; 403), Ouse Fen (135; 100), the Ouse Washes (2054; 1070) and Wicken Fen (280; 71). Double figures were counted at 7 other sites.

**Northern Pintail** At Fen Drayton Lakes (1; 213), the Nene Washes (211; 1951) and the Ouse Washes (1450; 327). Smaller numbers also noted at 7 other sites.

**Garganey** A male was at Mare Fen on Feb 21st and a female with it on Feb 25th. A male was seen at Fen Drayton Lakes on Feb 27th.

**Northern Shoveler** At Fen Drayton Lakes (36; 150), Grafham Water (57; 121), Kingfishers Bridge (89; 152), the Ouse Washes (722; 183) and Wicken Fen (30; 105). Double figures seen at 5 other sites.

**Red-crested Pochard** Birds were seen during the period at 3 sites, Fen Drayton Lakes (9), Grafham Water (13) and Paxton Pits (3). It could be that these counts included birds moving between the sites.

**Common Pochard** At Buckden GP (132), Fen Drayton Lakes (96; 316), the Nene Washes (26; 330), the Ouse Washes (1316; 992) and Paxton Pits (210; 150). Double figures were present at 4 other sites.

**Tufted Duck** At Fen Drayton Lakes (419; 469), Grafham Water (1399; 377), Needingworth GP (107; 79), the Nene Washes (5; 247), the Ouse Washes (1345; 2409) and Paxton Pits (401; 614). Double figures were counted at 3 other sites.

**Great Scaup** Single birds were at Cambourne, Ferry Meadows CP, Grafham Water and the Ouse Washes during the period. The dates suggest that 4 different birds were involved

**Goldeneye** At Buckden GP (51; 39), Fen Drayton Lakes (78; 59), Grafham Water (65; 47), Orton GP (12; 24), the Ouse Washes (15; 12) and Paxton Pits (103; 103). Single figures were seen at 3 other sites.

**Smew** The highest count was 15 at Needingworth GP on Feb 7th. Then 8 each at Fen Drayton Lakes and Paxton Pits. Also seen at Landbeach GP (1), Mare Fen (2), Ouse Fen (4) and River Lane GP (2).

**Red-breasted Merganser** The 3 birds at Fen Drayton Lakes from 2008 remained until Jan 2nd, and then until the end of the period a single bird spent its time between the lakes and the river with

forays to Mare and Berry Fen at the end of February.

**Goosander** Up to 11 birds were at Grafham Water during the period and 3 each at Fen Drayton Lakes and Paxton Pits. Two birds were at Buckden GP on Jan 25th.

**Ruddy Duck** Reported from 3 sites.

## GAMEBIRDS

**Red-legged Partridge** Reports from just 7 locations, with 20 around Melbourn the highest count.

**Grey Partridge** Reported from 8 locations. Melbourn had birds at 3 different farms.

**Common Pheasant** Three albino birds at Grafham were thought to be recent releases. Otherwise 40+ at Melbourn was the highest count.

## DIVERS TO HERONS

**Little Grebe** Double figures were noted at Fen Drayton Lakes (12), Grafham Water (11), the Ouse Washes (16) and Paxton Pits (13). Single figures were counted at 12 other sites.

**Great Crested Grebe** Double-figures counts were at Earith GP (10), Fen Drayton Lakes (48), Grafham Water (97), Orton BP (18), the Ouse Washes (36) and Paxton Pits (17). Single figures were counted at 10 other sites.

**Red-necked Grebe** The September bird at Grafham Water was present until Jan 29th.

**Slavonian Grebe** A bird was at Grafham Water on Jan 19th.

**Black-necked Grebe** Single birds were seen at St Ives GP on Jan 10th, Grafham Water and the Ouse Washes on Jan 19th. Then Grafham Water again on Feb 13–20th and the Ouse Washes again on Feb 23rd–26th.

**Great Cormorant** At Grafham Water 195 were counted on Feb 14th and 119 at the Ouse Washes on Feb 23rd. Double figures were counted at 4 other sites.

**Great Bittern** Three birds were present at Fen Drayton Lakes and 2 at Kingfishers Bridge during the period. Two birds were also seen at Wimpole on Jan 5th and Ely BF on Jan 22nd and Feb 15th.

Singles were seen at Barrington, Ferry Meadows GP, Fowlmere RSPB, Paxton Pits and Wicken Fen.

**Little Egret** Thirty birds roosted near Stevens Hide on the Ouse Washes on Jan 19th. Between 1 and 5 were reported from 20 sites.

**Great Egret** Is this species following in the footsteps of its smaller cousin the Little Egret? From the number of reports and sightings, it could well be. A bird was seen at Fen Drayton Lakes on Jan 8th.

This was then followed by a bird at the Ouse Washes at last winter's roost site on Jan 17th, no doubt the returning bird from last winter. This was joined by a second bird later in the month. Whilst these 2 birds continued to frequent the Ouse Washes area a bird was seen at Prickwillow, then in the Ely area from Feb 13th. On Feb 23rd two birds were found to be roosting at Roswell Pits Ely, whilst there were still 2 on the Ouse Washes. Though the distance between the 2 sites isn't great they were thought to be different birds. Then on Feb 24th when

the 2 birds roosted (one at 5 pm and the other at 6 pm) at Ely, 2 birds were seen to fly SW over Kingfishers Bridge at 5.10 pm. So it seems there were certainly 4 birds in the County but could there be 6?

**Grey Heron** Double figures were present at Berry Fen RSPB (10), Fen Drayton Lakes (15), Grafham Water (15), the Nene Washes (11), the Ouse Washes (22) and Paxton Pits (12). Single figures were at 13 other sites.

**White Stork** One was noted at Brampton on Feb 14th.

## RAPTORS

**Red Kite** Regular sightings of 1–3 individuals from several locations across the county, including one at Coton during the RSPB garden birdwatch. Two were seen on the club's atlas birdrace day.

**Eurasian Marsh Harrier** Kingfishers Bridge held 6 in both months, with clear signs of preparations for the breeding season by late February. Wicken and Woodwalton both had 5 birds in January.

**Hen Harrier** A series of reports from Fenland, particularly Wicken and Woodwalton, the former having 4, possibly 5, to roost. Away from the fens, sightings came from Fowlmere and Comberton.

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk** Seen at 30 different localities, with only a couple of sites holding more than 2 individuals.

**Common Buzzard** Back to being the most widely reported raptor again, with a stunning 96 records submitted. Ten localities held 5 or more birds, with 14 at Paxton Pits on Feb 14th

**Rough-legged Buzzard** The wintering bird seen at Coveney on 20 days between Jan 1 and Feb 1, then one 7 miles away at Kingfishers Bridge on Feb 7th, and finally back at Coveney again on Feb 26th.

**Common Kestrel** The usual distribution of sightings with no large numbers; 6 at the Nene Washes in Feb being the peak. One 'hassling' a Short-eared Owl for its vole at Wicken and a pair displaying at the end of February were the only behaviours noted.

**Merlin** Singles from Burwell, Cam Washes, Cambourne, Caxton, Melbourn, Nene Washes, Ouse Fen, Paxton Pits, Ramsey St Mary's, Shaddywell Pit, Wicken and Woodwalton Fen.

**Peregrine Falcon** Four reports from Cambridge, although none from the church where 1 spent the early part of the winter. Others seen across the county, particularly the bigger wetlands such as 3 at the Nene Washes, 2 each for the Ouse Washes, Paxton Pits and Woodwalton Fen.

## RAILS

**Water Rail** Reported from 16 locations, with Kingfisher Bridge having the highest count of 12. Odd records came from Fenstanton in a garden and Hemingford Grey where one was almost caught by a fox.

**Common Moorhen** Larger WeBS counts were at the Ouse Washes (156; 145), Fen Drayton (22; 19) and Ouse Fen (5; 41). Birds were noted in gardens feeding on millet and apple.

**Common Coot** Some large WeBS counts: the Ouse Washes (2836; 2288), Fen Drayton (1413; 232), Grafham Water (1148; 471) and the Nene Washes (15; 547).

**Common Crane** Two Cranes spent most of January at the Nene Washes, while 2 were at Woodwalton Fen late Feb – were they the same pair?

## WADERS

**Eurasian Oystercatcher** First arrivals from Feb 16th at Paxton Pits and at 8 sites by month's end. Peak counts from the Nene Washes of 9 on Feb 23rd and up to 6 at Paxton Pits.

**Ringed Plover** First arrivals at Paxton Pits and Maxey GP on Feb 15th, highest counts were 4 at Paxton on 22nd and 3 at Needingworth GP on 22nd.

**European Golden Plover** Highest counts from Haddenham Fen of 4000 on Jan 18th, the Nene Washes 1737 on Jan 19th. The early February freeze-up saw most birds leave the county, with numbers much reduced the largest group of 2000 at Ouse Fen on Feb 22nd and only 600 at the Nene Washes on 23rd and 1000 at West Wickham on 26th.

**Northern Lapwing** Also affected by the cold weather. Highest counts from the Nene Washes (6353; 2187), the Ouse Washes (4096; 1722), Wicken Fen 2500 on Jan 26th, Haddenham Fen 1500 on Jan 18th.

**Sanderling** Two at Fen Drayton GP on Jan 5th is a scarce winter record.

**Dunlin** Highest counts from the Ouse Washes (33; 97), Ouse Fen 42 on Jan 4th. Only a handful of birds in mid-Feb, then 50 at Brownhill Stauch on 22nd and 90 on the Ouse Washes at Earith on 25th.

**Ruff** Highest counts from the Ouse Washes (62; 30), Ouse Fen up to 60 in Feb, the Nene Washes (2; 35), Fen Drayton GP 30 on Feb 25th and 1–2 from a further 4 sites.

**Jack Snipe** Five at the Ouse Washes (Sutton Gault) from Jan 3rd to 5th, 2 at Wicken Fen on Jan 8th and singles from a further 5 sites.

**Common Snipe** Highest counts from Paxton Pits (42; 52+), the Ouse Washes (36; 23), Needingworth GP (6; 30+), Ouse Fen (18; 28), Wicken Fen (12; 15), 19 near Kneesworth were flushed from flooded arable field on Feb 22nd. During the heavy snow small groups were observed flying through towns and passing office windows.

**Eurasian Woodcock** Highest counts were 4 at Paxton Pits on Jan 4th, 4 at Wicken Fen on Feb 26th and 3 at Ickleton on Jan 7th and 1–2 from a further 18 sites.

**Black-tailed Godwit** Highest counts from the Nene Washes 2000 on Jan 24th and 607 on Jan 24th, Fen Drayton GP (5; 1800), the Ouse Washes (690; 922), Needingworth GP 356 on Feb 22nd, Paxton Pits, Grafham Water and Buckden GP 80+ on Feb 22nd probably all relating to same flock searching for feeding grounds in the Ouse valley.

**Bar-tailed Godwit** Seven flew south at Brownhill Stauch on Feb 8th.

**Eurasian Curlew** An extraordinary flock of 200 on flooded fields near St Ives on Feb 21st eclipsed the

previous county record of 95 from Over Fen in July 1984. More normal records were 7 at the Ouse Washes on Jan 17th and 4 on Feb 4th, 4 at Cam Washes on Feb 19th, 2 at Fen Drayton GP on Jan 7th and singles from a further 3 sites.

**Common Redshank** Highest counts from the Ouse Washes (137; 150), the Nene Washes (61; 23), Needingworth GP 72 on Feb 22nd, Kingfishers Bridge (3; 23), Ouse Fen (4; 17), Berry Fen 29 on Feb 22nd and 1–9 from a further 9 sites.

**Green Sandpiper** Highest counts from the Nene Washes 5 on Jan 14th, Cam Washes (1; 3), Waterbeach Fen 4 on Feb 3rd–4th and 1–2 from a further 9 sites.

**Common Sandpiper** A wintering bird was noted along the Nene at Four Gotes on Feb 7th.

**Ruddy Turnstone** Reports from the Ouse Washes on Jan 21st and Feb 23rd and 25th and the Nene Washes on Feb 1st.

## SKUAS TO TERNS

**Mediterranean Gull** Single bird(s) reported from Ferry Meadows throughout January, with two at Grafham on 25th. One February record from the Ouse Washes.

**Black-headed Gull** Highest count approx. 2500 at Wicken on Jan 20th; other high counts were 572 at Fen Drayton on Feb 21st, 356 at Foxton on Feb 15th, and at least 350 at Kneesworth on Feb 26th.

**Common Gull** Eighty-two at Melbourn on Jan 18th, 84 at Foxton on Feb 15th, and at least 170 at Kneesworth on Feb 26th were the highest counts.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** Few records for this period: 7 were at Fen Drayton on Jan 18th, on which day there were also 8 at Newton and 2 at Ouse Fen; otherwise the odd single reported.

**Herring Gull** There were at least 300 at Buckden on Jan 2nd and 249 at Newton on Jan 18th.

**Yellow-legged Gull** Small numbers reported throughout the period, mainly from Paxton and Long Drove Cottenham. Highest count was 9 at Grafham on Jan 11th.

**Caspian Gull** Single birds were reported from Long Drove Cottenham, throughout the period, involving at least 3 different birds, and there were also singles at Landbeach, Milton, Grafham and Paxton.

**Iceland Gull** Singles were reported from Milton Tip, Long Drove Cottenham, Grafham, Shropshire's Reservoir and Fen Drayton GP although several different birds were thought to be involved.

**Glaucous Gull** A similar story to Iceland Gull with singles reported from Long Drove, Shropshire's Reservoir, Chittering, Grafham, Dogsthorpe Tip and Over in January and the Ouse Washes at the end of February.

**Great Black-backed Gull** Buckden hosted up to 150 in early January and there were between 50 and 100 at Kingfishers Bridge throughout the period.

**Kittiwake** One was at Grafham on Jan 23rd.

## NEAR PASSERINES

**Rock Pigeon** About 40 birds at Over in both months, and 75+ at Wisbech.

**Stock Pigeon** Two hundred recorded during the January WeBS survey for the Nene Washes, with 110 on the Ouse Washes the same day (Jan 19th). 120 were recorded at Ouse Fen earlier in January.

**Wood Pigeon** Ten flocks of over 1000 birds, recorded fairly evenly through the 2 months. The largest record was of 2500 birds at Melbourn feeding on oil seed crops.

**Eurasian Collared Dove** A high count of 140 birds at Melbourn on Jan 18th; Elm the second best locality had a mere 25+ birds in January.

**Rose-ringed Parakeet** Two birds at Bar Hill on Feb 9th.

**Barn Owl** At Kingfishers Bridge up to 4 present Jan 21st, 4 also Woodwalton Fen during February. Recorded at 40 locations in all, widely distributed across the county.

**Little Owl** Records of 1–2 birds at 10 sites.

**Tawny Owl** Recorded from 19 locations, generally 1–2 birds, often calling. Five birds in Melbourn in February and 4 between Grantchester and Cambridge on New Year's Day.

**Long-eared Owl** Four records including at least 7 birds roosting at 1 site.

**Short-eared Owl** Between 1 and 3 birds recorded from 5 sites; only 3 of the 19 records were in February.

**Common Kingfisher** Recorded at 19 sites, mainly 1–2 birds; 6 recorded Paxton Pits on Feb 22nd.

**Green Woodpecker** Between 1 and 5 birds recorded from 22 sites.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** Between 1 and 4 birds recorded from 22 sites. Drumming reported on Jan 2nd.

**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** One or 2 birds observed at 5, possibly 6 sites, widely distributed outside the Fens.

## PASSERINES

**Woodlark** One was reported near Bythorn on Jan 19th, and another pinpointed near Kennett on Feb 28th.

**Skylark** Several large flocks were noted, e.g. 500+ in a large oilseed rape field at Witcham (with c.800 in the Witcham area on Feb 9th). And in cereal stubble fields: 350+ at Stirtloe, 150+ at Grafham Water, c.400 at Bythorn, 100+ at Buckden GP, and 70 at Larkrise Farm (Barton). Also reported from other numerous sites.

**Meadow Pipit** Reports of 15+ birds include one at Larkrise Farm (Barton) in cereal stubble; at Four Gotes along the river bank; Fowlmere Fen; Kennett (40+); Kingfishers Bridge; Nene Washes; Ouse Washes; Paxton Pits and Wicken Fen (70+ on Feb 14th).

**Water Pipit** Noted at 6 sites, with a maximum of 6 birds on the Ouse Washes on Feb 4th.

**Grey Wagtail** Several observers noted 1–2 birds at various sites, but as many as 10 were seen together on the filter beds at Godmanchester Sewage Works on Feb 7th.

**Pied Wagtail** The larger counts consisted of 70+ at Godmanchester Sewage Works, Newmarket Road Tesco car park, Foxton, Grantchester Meadows, Melbourn Parish and 3 other sites.

**Bohemian Waxwing** Around 14 observers reported their findings including 2 at Barton on Feb 5th, 1–3 at Cambourne from Feb 1st to 20th; and at 5 other sites.

**Winter Wren** A few reports but nothing as exceptional as over 40 individuals crowding in to an old House Martin's nest to roost (as reported on Radio 4, outside our county).

**Hedge Accentor** Reported from 7 sites, with a maximum of 12 in the Melbourn Parish.

**European Robin** Twenty-nine birds were noted in the Parish of Melbourn on New Year's Day. It was also noted at 6 other sites.

**Black Redstart** A female was reported from Little Thetford on Feb 13th.

**Stonechat** A typical scattering of records with a maximum of 11 at the Nene Washes on Jan 19th.

**Common Blackbird** Reported from many sites, with 12+ at one garden feeding on apples in the garden over the period; and 21 on a single front lawn at Witcham on Feb 6th.

**Fieldfare** A flock of 1800+ was noted at Elm in early February, but then the warmer spell dispersed them. Several flocks of over 1000 birds were seen at various sites (and not only the fens), and 1–2 intrusions into private gardens where they had not been encountered before.

**Song Thrush** Low numbers at 6 sites, but 10+ in the parish of Elm and 18 in Melbourn.

**Redwing** The larger flocks consisted of 120–300 birds, with a flock of 30 moving into Cambridge City to feed on Cotoneaster during the cold weather.

**Mistle Thrush** Reported from 17 sites, with a maximum of only 4 birds – rather surprising as large flocks have been in the past.

**Cetti's Warbler** Recorded at Fen Drayton Lakes, Kingfishers Bridge, Ouse Washes, Wicken Fen and Woodwalton Fen.

**Blackcap** More females than males were noted. If Blackcaps continue the trend to remain overwinter, will males eventually be more regular, to allow earlier territorial possession, as is thought to be the case for European Robins?

**Common Chiffchaff** Noted at 8 sites, with 6 at Godmanchester Sewage Works on Feb 7th.

**Goldcrest** Reported from 18 sites, with mostly 1–2 at each site, other than at Melbourn where 18+ were active on Jan 1st.

**Firecrest** Two present at Paxton Pits from Jan 22nd to 28th, with singing noted on some days and seen from Feb 23rd at the south end of Cloudy Pit.

**Bearded Tit** At RSPB Fowlmere, 1 or more were seen in January. Up to only 3 birds were at Kingfishers Bridge (perhaps due to high water levels) and as many as 30 individuals were at Wicken Fen during the period.

**Long-tailed Tit** Noted at 13 sites with a few daily visitors to garden feeders at some sites, and a maximum of 42 at Wicken Fen in January.

**Marsh Tit** From 8 woodlands areas (including Basefield Wood which is rarely mentioned) and also from Barrington, with a maxima of 6 at Wimpole and Woodwalton Fen both in early February.

**Coal Tit** From a smattering of sites, with up to 3 birds noted.

**Blue Tit** Noted at 11 sites, with a maximum of 23 at Toft on Feb 1st.

**Great Tit** Noted at 8 sites, with a maximum of 25 at Fordham Wood Toft on Feb 7th.

**Wood Nuthatch** Reports were received from 10 sites with the peak count being 3 from Bedford Purlieus and Hardwick Wood. A single bird was also reported from Clare College, Cambridge.

**Eurasian Treecreeper** Present at 7 sites mostly involving 1–2 birds but 5 were recorded at Bedford Purlieus on Jan 16th.

**Eurasian Jay** A peak count of 3 pairs at Kingfishers Bridge on Feb 28th. Reported from 11 further sites.

**Black-billed Magpie** Twenty-six birds roosting in an orchard at Elm was the peak count supported by 24 birds from Melbourn on New Years Day.

**Eurasian Jackdaw** One thousand or more birds leaving roost sites at dawn from Paxton Pits on Jan 1st was the peak count. An estimated mixed flock of 4000 Jackdaw and Rook roosted at Fen Drayton Lakes on Jan 14th.

**Rook** Records were received from 7 sites with a pre-roost flock of 400+ birds at Melbourn on Jan 8th being the peak count.

**Carrion Crow** Reported from 6 sites with an estimated 100+ birds at Melbourn on Jan 8th being the maximum count.

**Common Raven** A rare bird in the County so a single bird at Hatley St George on Feb 16th was notable.

**Common Starling** Reported from 10 sites with 2500 building up to roost in the centre of Wisbech on Feb 28th being the peak count. An estimated flock of 700 birds were also noted at Long Drove Cottenham.

**House Sparrow** Records were received from 8 sites with 85+ birds at Melbourn being the maximum count.

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow** An increasing number of records including reports of 30 birds in a garden at Woodhurst and 22 birds on a front lawn at Witcham.

**Chaffinch** Reported from 15 sites with the maximum count being around 250 birds at Kingfishers Bridge on Jan 22nd.

**Brambling** Very thin on the ground this year with records from just 5 sites noting 1–2 birds. The peak of 2 birds came from the Ouse Washes, Wimpole Park and a garden in Melbourn.

**European Greenfinch** Reports were received from only 6 sites with a pre-roost gathering of around 30 birds at Wimpole Park being the peak count.

**European Goldfinch** An interim count of 165 birds at the Ouse Washes on Jan 5th was easily the peak count. A further 100 birds were noted roosting at Kingfishers Bridge on Jan 11th.

**Eurasian Siskin** A flock of 80 birds at Woodwalton Fen on Feb 4th was the peak count. A further 45 birds were also reported from Fordham Wood.

**Common Linnet** Records were received from 12 sites with 100 birds at the Nene Washes being the peak count. A further 80 birds were noted at Ouse Fen and Fen Drayton Lakes.

**Lesser Redpoll** Recorded at 7 sites with

Woodwalton Fen holding around 100 birds on Feb 14th. Forty-five birds were reported at Bedford Purlieus on Jan 16th.

**Mealy Redpoll** All records came from Woodwalton Fen where a flock of 14+ birds, including 4 pink males were noted on Feb 2nd.

**Common Bullfinch** Reported from 24 sites with 20 birds at Hauxton on January 9th being the peak count. A further 12 birds were noted at Buckden Gravel Pits.

**Hawfinch** An encouraging number of records were received from 3 sites during the period. Two birds were noted at Wigham Green and Southorpe at the beginning of January whilst a single female bird was seen at Wimpole Park.

**Yellowhammer** Reported from 25 sites with the maximum count being approximately 200 birds at Stirtloe on Jan 14th.

**Reed Bunting** A large increase in reports during the period with records from 21 sites. The peak count was an impressive 202 birds in game cover at Summerhouse Farm, Melbourn on Feb 15th.

**Corn Bunting** Reported from 13 sites with 130+ birds at Stirtloe on Feb 8th being the peak count. Other records of note included flocks of 80+ birds at Melbourn and 40+ at Ramsey Heights.

## HYBRIDS

**Canada x Greylag** Singles at Cambourne and Kingfishers Bridge.

**Tufted x Pochard** Single drakes seen on Grafham Water on Jan 10 and Meadow Lane GP on Feb 7.

**Scaup x Tufted Duck** A drake at Grafham Water on Feb 7 was presumed to be of this parentage.

**Gadwall x Mallard** A drake of this less frequently reported hybrid was noted at Paxton Pits on Jan 24.

## EXOTICA

**Black Swan** Most reports were of single birds from a variety of locations, with 3 on flooded ground at Willingham on Feb 19th.

**Bar-headed Goose** Several reports of single birds, mostly from Paxton Pits throughout the period. Also reported from Berry Fen and Ouse Fen.

**Ross's Goose** Single bird reported from several sites in the vicinity of Wicken Fen, sometimes associating with Greylags.

**Harris Hawk** One seen at Folksworth and Woodwalton Fen towards the end of the period was trailing jesses.

**Muscovy Duck** Maximum count on River Great Ouse at Ely of 18.

**Contributors:** Colin Addington, Jake Allsop, Louise Bacon, Rowena Baxter, James Cadbury, Ade Cooper, Steve Cooper, Josephine Cosgrove, Robin Cox, Martin Davis, Mike Foley, David Griffiths, Gordon Harland, Dean Harlow, Stephen Hartley, Kevin Harris, Mark Hawkes, Fred Heath, Peter Herkenrath, Jonathan Hook, David Hopkins, Bob Humphrey, Colin Kirtland, John Le Gassick, Vince Lea, John Lindsell, Tony Mallyon, Owen and Monica Marks, Bruce and Gwen Martin, Mark Missin, Robert Pople, Duncan Ritchie, Tony Roberts, Rodney Self, Clive Sinclair, Nigel Spowell, Chris Thorne, P. M. Warrington, Jamie Wells

## **The Coveney Rough-legged Buzzard**

*David Hopkins*

On Sunday 7th December 2008 I had a good yomp around the fens around Witcham to see if the cold weather had brought in any winter raptors. A fairly barren walk was drawing to a close, but as I trudged along Market Way, Witcham, half a mile from home, a buzzard glided over my head heading north. I set up my 'scope and thought the wings were quite short (pinched-in in gliding flight), but a thick black terminal tail-band and snow-white upper-tail got my pulse racing.

Of course, then the bird disappeared over the hill, so I ran across a rape field to view the fen below. Rather out of breath, it took a few moments to pick the bird up, quite distant over the fen towards Coveney. At that range, the plumage looked quite black-and white, dark upper-wings splashed with white dappling on the wings and upper-body, a broad white leading edge, pale nape and head streaked dark brown, with white fore-crown, white upper-chest and broad, nearly black lower chest and belly, white vent and under-tail coverts. The under-wings were revealed in effortless, powerful hovering on long, broad elastic wings; very white, with distinctive large blackish carpal patches. This was definitely a Rough-legged Buzzard!

I alerted a couple of local birders, but of course it then managed to disappear without trace, and at 3pm I got a lift home.

Late morning the next day, I got out to look for the bird, and after half an hour I got a phone call from Owen Marks to say he had the Rough-leg perched in a conifer near to where I initially saw it. The news was put out, and over the next couple of months many birders visited the area. Never an easy bird to spot, those with time to spare could eventually expect good views.

A while later, from images taken, it was deemed to be a second-winter male. In different light conditions it varied from looking warm brown and cream, to greyish brown and white, but the pale frosting and looser plumage gave it a typical Rough-leg appearance. The characteristic feathered tarsi were visible both on the perched bird and on photos I took, giving the legs a thick, dusky look compared to the thin yellow 'knitting needles' that Common Buzzards have.

It was seen until early February and then again from February 26th to March 19th, enabling me to study in detail a species that had previously afforded me brief or distant views. The gliding action of the Rough-leg was distinctive, and active flight on long, broad wings with slower wing-beats was more reminiscent of Honey Buzzard than Common. The way it used the contours of the land was a joy to watch, often perching shrike-like on whippy hedges, or skimming the ground when moving longer distances. Hunting techniques included prolonged viewing from a single exposed perch, followed by a swoop or pounce, to hovering and dropping onto prey spotted. It was often accompanied by Common Buzzards, Magpies and Carrion Crows (the latter often betraying its presence), and sometimes was bullied off prey it had caught. Even in very cold weather, it was a lot more active than the Common Buzzards (who seemed content in looking out for food from tree perches for lengthy spells).

Initially it favoured long grass and margins, but in March chopped game-cover belts were preferred. Voles, and later rats formed its staple diet, although sympathetic local farmers put out game in the coldest weather. It ranged over 12 square kilometres, occasionally being reported slightly further a-field. Perhaps of note, the Rough-leg was frequenting the area in which I saw a 'probable' Rough-legged Buzzard on two occasions in late March/early April 2008, and so may represent a returning bird.

## **A Farewell to Grafham**

*Jono Leadley*

I write with the sad news that my patch and I have decided to split up. I have had a fantastic eight years with Grafham Water, during which time, like all relationships there have been ups and downs. However, it is the good memories I will always treasure.

I remember with fondness my first visit back in 2001 when Mark Hawkes showed me round. A fine drake Garganey in the lagoons hinted at what the site had to offer. For the first couple of years my

relationship with Grafham Water was long-distance and I was only able to visit at weekends and the occasional weekday evening. This did provide some excitement, including my only sighting of Velvet Scoter, in April 2001; a Great Skua, found whilst in the company of Mark, in September the same year; and a fine Great White Egret in September 2002.

In 2004, I decided to take my relationship with Grafham to the next level and move to Perry, so we could spend more time together. The shores of the mighty reservoir were now only a minute's walk away, and I could even see a tantalising glimmer of water from my upstairs window. Over the years, this led to a respectable house-list, including Osprey, Red Kite, Pink-footed Goose and Yellow-legged Gull, though not matching previous Perry-resident, Richard Porter's Leach's Petrel and Caspian Tern!

The following year, 2005, I 'upped the ante' and tried to spend a little bit of time every day around the 'res', particularly during migration periods. This led to the discovery of a cracking male Ring-necked Duck in the lagoons on a lovely, sunny April morning. This bird stayed for a few weeks and was admired by many. Later in the year, patching firmly lodged itself in to my birding psyche when a Leach's Petrel glided past whilst looking through the Tufted Duck flock off the lagoons. This was Monday October 3rd and the petrel was a fine birthday present; but the best was yet to come. The following Friday I was unsuccessfully looking for a Twite which had been seen earlier that day on the jetty at Marlow Car Park, when a small group of waders flew past. When the one with an unfamiliar call pitched on to the shore a few minutes later, I realised I was looking at Grafham's first and Cambridgeshire's third White-rumped Sandpiper. Again, the bird stayed for a couple of weeks allowing great views for many visiting birders.

Grafham Water made me wait for several months before my next really good find, though plenty of scarce stuff, such as divers, grebes and white-winged gulls kept things ticking over nicely. November 26th 2006 found me 'doing the gull roost', one of the main Grafham birding activities during the winter months. This day proved to be a real red letter day, when a small gull with a dark, drooping bill and bandit mask turned to reveal itself as Cambridgeshire's first ever Laughing Gull. Despite my panic that the bird would lose itself in the gloom among the tens of thousands of commoner gulls, it obligingly showed itself off to about a dozen visiting birders before dark.

2007 proved to be another exciting year at Grafham Water. The highlight was undoubtedly the stunning female Wilson's Phalarope found by Colin Addington in the lagoons in May, a bird I had probably overlooked ten minutes previously when birding at the exact spot! A month later, lightning struck for the second time, when I literally bumped into another Grafham Water Laughing Gull, this time a cracking second-summer feeding along the shore of the dam with a couple of Black-headed Gulls. This enabled many more local birders to catch up with this mega county bird.

What would turn out to be my last full year was fairly quiet one compared to the previous three, though some good patch-ticks, such as Spoonbill, Crane and Firecrest were added to my growing Grafham Water list, along with some reasonable patch-finds, like Honey Buzzard, Manx Shearwater, Fulmar and Arctic and Great Skuas. Sadly, I realised too late that my patch had been flirting with outsiders, when bird of the year, a Black Stork only showed itself to a passing out-of-county birder.

Besides the rarities, Grafham Water has provided some excellent birding and other wildlife interest over the years. Taking part in monthly WeBS counts, breeding bird surveys and practical conservation work has really helped foster a sense of pride in the site and a real knowledge of the habitats and wildlife present. The Wildlife Trust manages the nature reserve at the west end of the reservoir and Matt Hamilton, who has recently moved on within the Trust, deserves congratulations for some fantastic improvements he has made on site.

When the birding slowed, there was always plenty of other wildlife to enliven the days. Foxes, Badgers and Stoats were regularly seen whilst my undoubted insect highlight of my stay in Perry was a smart Silver-washed Fritillary that graced my buddleia for a few days in 2007. Bats had always been conspicuous and with a bit of expert help we proved the occurrence of Leisler's Bats at Grafham, along with more common species such as Noctule, and Common and Soprano Pipistrelles. During the spring and summer, plants got some attention too, with Sulphur Clover, Early Purple Orchids, Adder's Tongue and Golden Dock all finding their way into my notebook.



It is very difficult to choose from all this excellent birding a favourite memory. Sometimes, it is the circumstances that adds to the occasion; hearing my first (and only) Grafham Water Quail in April 2006, while locking the car park gate at Marlow; being awestruck by a movement of hundreds of Arctic Terns shortly after the birth of my daughter in April 2008; marvelling as 20 summer-plumaged Little Gulls dropped out of a clear, blue sky in May 2005 and the nerve-wracking twitches back from the office to see Storm Petrel, Long-tailed Duck and Gannet, are only a handful of tales from the pages of my notebook, all of which are remembered fondly.

However, I think the thing that will stay with me longest about my brief stint of birding at Grafham Water, was the friendship shown by the small group of Grafham regulars who shared the thrills and spills with me, notably Colin Addington, Mark Hawkes and David Hollin. Their openness and generosity about their sightings, together with going the extra yard to help each other get on to the good birds was really humbling and I was thrilled to be a part of that for a few exciting years. Thanks for sharing it with me lads!

I shall miss you Grafham Water.

## **A Winter to Remember**

*Colin Kirtland*

So it snowed! Your children welcomed the opportunity to stay off school and you stayed at home to make a snowman, salving your conscience by thinking that this was a return to one of the true winters of old. But was it? Well, hardly. Thirty years ago the winter of 1978/9 was remarkable both for the weather and for a succession of interesting birds, with unprecedented numbers of Hen Harriers, Rough-legged Buzzards, Short-eared Owls and the rarer grebes, plus more than usual sea duck.

A Rough-legged Buzzard and two Hen Harriers on the Norfolk coast on November 16th, while not unusual, were a foretaste of things to come. A Great Grey Shrike at Fen Drayton on 20th was the first of several that winter but a House Martin and Yellow Wagtail there on the same date were unexpectedly late. On 23rd I saw a drake Ring-necked Duck at Paxton and on 26th, in frosty conditions and with a strong north-west wind, a Hen Harrier and Great Grey Shrike in the Breck. A Merlin at Wicken on 27th was followed by six Scaup at Milton on 28th and as it grew even colder, a Water Pipit on the filter beds at the Cambridge Sewage Farm. A Black Redstart on the mud in front of the hide at Grafham on December 7th was a real bonus. On 10th a Hen Harrier at Wicken in the morning was followed by seven roosting on the Ouse Washes in the evening with five Short-eared Owls for good measure. I had, for me, a rare trip away from East Anglia when I was offered a lift to Sussex on 14th to see a Greater Sand Plover, the first for Britain. Back on familiar territory there were two Hen Harriers in the Breck on 17th and six Short-eared Owls at Bottisham Locks on 21st. On New Year's Eve, with a biting north-east wind and snow showers, Lapwings were moving steadily south-west all morning at about 1000 per hour, obviously in search of warmer climes. On a broad front, probably tens of thousands were leaving ahead of the big freeze.

January started well with five Hen Harriers seen at close range from the tower hide at Wicken as they circled for some time before dropping in to roost. At a largely frozen Fen Drayton on 3rd there was a female Smew and 14 Goosander. At Paxton the next day most of the duck including 11 Goosander were on the river as the pits were all frozen. Grafham remained open and, wrapped up well against the east wind, I managed to see a further 19 Goosander and a drake Smew. At a bitterly cold Snettisham on 6th there was another Smew on the pits. The sea was freezing on the coast of the Wash, with floating ice along the shore. An adult Glaucous Gull and Mediterranean Gull were at Heacham while on the return journey we saw two Hen Harriers at Wolferton and six at Roydon plus the usual Hooded Crow before regaining the welcome warmth of the car for the drive home. Wicken was becoming even more exciting as Hen Harriers increased at every visit: on 8th I watched seven circling and calling together and a Great Grey Shrike added to the interest. Despite a slight thaw, I noticed as I passed that the Cam and Old West rivers were still frozen. I found another Great Grey Shrike in the Breck on 11th, uncharacteristically perching low on the sheltered side of a bush, trying to hide from the unrelenting north-west gale. Golden Pheasant and Hawfinch were additions to my

year's list before I finished the day at Tuddenham Heath where five Hen Harriers were seen dropping into the bracken, seeking shelter for the night.

The Suffolk coast was, as usual, well worth a visit: on 13th there were eight Smew and a Hen Harrier at Benacre. Late afternoon saw us standing on the heath at Blythburgh Lodge, overlooking the Westwood Marshes at Walberswick, a wonderful vantage point from which to view raptors arriving for the evening. Inevitably there were more Hen Harriers, a male and at least seven ringtails, while a Merlin and a Great Grey Shrike were seen perched on bushes in the reed-bed. Best of all was a superb Goshawk which flew in above the forest on the far side of the marsh and was mobbed by two of the harriers. It perched obligingly on top of a tree, looking very pale against the dark pines. It was last seen mobbing a Buzzard – then still a scarce visitor and my only one of the winter!

A Bittern at Fen Drayton on 19th was a nice surprise, as was a Long-eared Owl perched prominently in a willow at Earith pits and a flock of six Twite at Mepal pits. In the freezing conditions a Chiffchaff at Ely Beet Factory. on 22nd was even more surprising but three Goosander and a Hen Harrier were almost to be expected as by then at least ten Hen Harriers were roosting at Wicken. On the bright, cold afternoon of 27th, Tom Talbot and I headed for the Breck through four inches of snow, but with a shovel in the boot as a precaution! We were amply rewarded with a fine Rough-legged Buzzard and an immature Goshawk at Elveden. Later at Tuddenham, as the light faded the temperature plummeted. My breath was freezing on my beard as winter tightened its grip. Hunched against the cold, we trudged through the snow, like figures in a stark winter landscape by Breughel. The sight of six Hen Harriers going to roost warmed our spirits if not our bodies as the temperature dropped steadily to a bone-chilling minus 20 degrees. That night Grafham Water froze over!

The wilder stretches of the Ouse north of Littleport have always been worth visiting during cold weather and the next day a drake Velvet Scoter and a Scaup were welcome finds. As winter progressed the frosts continued and more birds arrived from the frozen continent. February was to prove even more productive. A Smew at Lackford on 4th was followed by two Hen Harriers at Elveden and three more at Lakenheath, plus a Rough-legged Buzzard, Merlin and Great Grey Shrike. A frozen Paxton on 8th held nine Goosander and three Smew on one small open pool while at Grafham, which still had ice at the western end, numbers of most birds had dropped dramatically after the freeze. There were only three Great Crested Grebes, 18 Tufted Duck and a Pochard, most having escaped to the coast or the open rivers. However 93 hardy Goldeneye had already returned and a Slavonian Grebe and drake Velvet Scoter were new. On 11th there were three Rough-legged Buzzards in the Breck and an unexpected Great Northern Diver flying over heathland heading north-west.

By now, Redwings and Fieldfares were regular visitors to the garden, having long since stripped the hedgerows of their berries. Two inches of snow on 16th enticed me out (I needed little enticement) in search of new arrivals, and what a day it was! It started well at Fen Drayton where I found two Red-necked Grebes, a drake Velvet Scoter, two Red-breasted Mergansers and a Kittiwake which headed south, and who could blame it? A brief stop at Offord Marina produced three splendid drake Mergansers as I continued hopefully to Grafham. With plenty of ice still present, I scanned the water from the dam and southern shore. A Red-throated Diver alone made the trip worthwhile but a Fulmar, three Red-necked Grebes, 22 Goosander, a Merganser and an adult Little Gull were the icing on the cake. The recent north-east gales and blizzard conditions had certainly produced the goods! Encouraged by this, the next afternoon I visited Marsh Lane and saw another Red-necked Grebe and Velvet Scoter. Ending the day at Meadow Lane, I was delighted to see a Bittern and Long-eared Owl. Next day the flooded but mostly frozen Ouse Washes was the destination. Between Earith and Mepal we found a Red-throated Diver, two Red-necked Grebes and seven Brent and from Mepal to beyond Welney, two more Red-necked and a Slavonian Grebe, two drake Smew, 20 White-fronted Geese, a male Hen Harrier and 11 Short-eared Owls. This unprecedented arrival of the rarer grebes kept me searching. On 20th I saw a Red-necked at Waterbeach pits and another at Landbeach. Every pit had its share! On 22nd there was a Slavonian and three Smew at Buckden plus a pair of Mergansers and 39 Goosander at Grafham. Next day I was out yet again. This was addictive! Fortunately my working hours were fairly flexible and my late, long-suffering wife seldom complained. Many have been divorced for far less! At Paxton I found a yet another Slavonian Grebe, a drake Common Scoter and a Long-eared Owl.

Having exhausted most of the local waters, a few of us decided to try our luck further afield. The picturesque Eye Brook Reservoir was frozen apart from two small pools but among the tightly-packed wildfowl we saw seven Goosander, two Smew and 28 Bewick's Swans. Next stop was Rutland Water: surely such a large expanse would have plenty of open water – it didn't! There in the middle of the ice was just one small, open pool. At least this made it easy to count the birds, which included two Red-necked Grebes, 88 Goldeneye and six Goosander. We ended the day at some of the large gravel pits in south Lincs. Tallington was the best with Red-necked and Slavonian Grebes and 60 Goosander.

*Winter scene by Ben Green*



By March 1st most of the ice had melted. There was a Merganser on the Cam at Upware and ten Hen Harriers and the Great Grey Shrike still at Wicken. On 4th a morning visit to the Ouse Washes produced another Red-necked Grebe and a Kittiwake. In the Breck on 8th I was rewarded with a Red-necked Grebe, two Rough-legged Buzzards, six Hen Harriers and a Merlin. On 11th it was time for another day at the coast. Starting early, we stopped to look at the Relief Channel and River Ouse beyond Denver and were pleased to find two Red-necked and one Slavonian Grebe and four Mergansers. A Rough-legged Buzzard at Wolferton was followed by another at Snettisham, where the grebe saga continued with five Red-necked and two Slavonian plus a Hooded Crow. There were 20 Long-tailed Ducks at Holme and five species of geese at Holkham, but not a Pink-foot all day! At Salthouse we saw a Hen Harrier and 31 Shorelarks before ending the day at Cley, huddled on the East Bank as we watched eight Hen Harriers flying around over the reeds, with one diving at a passing Bittern. On another trip to Suffolk on 14th we saw two Hen Harriers at Minsmere, a Great Grey Shrike at Westleton, two Red-necked Grebes at Benacre and five Bean Geese at Southwold. The Walberswick roost attracted six Hen Harriers and a Merlin and the Great Grey Shrike was still present. Many of the winter visitors seemed reluctant to leave – hardly surprising as we were still having snow showers on 22nd when we saw three Rough-legged Buzzards together on one Breckland heath with six Hen Harriers and a shrike. Among all this gathering it seemed a little incongruous to see the first four Wheatears of the year! A Red-throated Diver on the Old West at Earith on 23rd still provided a wintry touch but spring, although very late, was inexorably on its way. My first Chiffchaff at Paxton on 29th was about three weeks late as was a Sand Martin at Buckden, hawking for insects above two Slavonian Grebes. My totals for that remarkable season (avoiding duplication) were 25 Red-necked and 10 Slavonian Grebes, 169 Goosander, 22 Smew, 14 Red-breasted Mergansers (inland only), 63 Hen Harriers, 7 Rough-legged Buzzards, 45 Short-eared Owls and at least 5 Great Grey Shrikes. Now that's what you call a winter!!

## Looking Ahead

*Duncan Poyser*

April and May are my most exciting birding months of the year. I clear the workload so I can get out and make the most of the lengthening days. By the beginning of April the first wave of returning migrants such as Sand Martins and Swallows, Little Ringed Plover, Sedge Warbler and Garganey will have brightened the blustery spring days. A continued look skywards could produce a migrating

Osprey or a roving Red Kite. By mid April attention turns to the woods and hedgerows where migrant Redstart, Pied Flycatcher, Firecrest and Wood Warbler become increasingly feasible finds and a focused hunt for Ring Ouzel is likely to reap rewards. A brisk North westerly wind with showers can produce excellent numbers of Arctic Terns which often depart as quickly as they appeared.

With migration in full swing and breeding birds setting up territory early May is buzzing with possibilities. Wetlands can provide a stop over spot for Black Terns, Little Gull, Turnstone, Sanderling, Bar-tailed Godwit, Knot or Temminck's Stint during easterly air flows. This is also a good time to look for Dotterel on the Fens, although recently trips have been scarce. BTO Atlas work will be very productive at this time especially an early morning visits when birds seem to be at their most vocal and active. Rarities will be found and Semi-palmated, Buff-breasted and Broad-billed Sandpiper, Wilson's Phalarope, Icterine Warbler and Collared Pratincole have been recent stars. What's will this springs highlights be?



## **FORTHCOMING CBC EVENTS 2009**

### **INDOOR MEETINGS**

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

#### **Friday May 8th, Milton Country Park Visitors' Centre What Future for our Uplands by Christine Reid**

#### **A Day Trip to the Farne Islands by Andy Cotton**

The two talks at this meeting will cover habitats that do not feature in Cambridgeshire's landscape.

Christine Reid has worked in forestry and agriculture policy with English Nature / Natural England for over 10 years. She currently manages Natural England's Upland Futures project. The talk will cover why the uplands are important for both nature and people, some of the challenges and opportunities they currently face, and explain Natural England's developing vision for these areas. The presentation will include a short film 'The Uplands Matter to Me', and opportunity for discussion.

Andy Cotton started his career in conservation as Assistant, then Chief, Warden for the National Trust on the Farne Islands, Northumberland, in 1989 and 1990. He was responsible for visiting arrangements on Staple Island, bird and wildlife surveys and estate and habitat management. Andy is now the Senior Site Manager of the RSPB's Ouse Valley nature reserves, in Cambridgeshire.

### **OUTDOOR MEETINGS**

#### **Warbler workshop at Fowlmere RSPB – Saturday May 9th**

This event aims to help interested birdwatchers to learn how to identify our various warblers, by sight and sound. This event is especially suitable for beginners, but more advanced birdwatchers who simply want to enjoy the morning chorus and share their knowledge are very welcome. Members and non-members of the Club or the RSPB are welcome. There is no charge. Meet on Saturday May 9th at 6.30 am in the car park at the Fowlmere reserve (for directions see [www.rspb.org.uk/reserves/guide/f/fowlmere/index.asp](http://www.rspb.org.uk/reserves/guide/f/fowlmere/index.asp)). The workshop will take place regardless of the weather and will last approximately four hours.

**Booking is essential** – contact Peter Herkenrath to book a place (contact details on back page).

## **RSPB Ouse Washes – Friday May 15th**

Meet at 7 pm in the reserve car park for a guided walk to see breeding waders on the Pilot project/Carroll's ground habitat restoration site.

**Booking is essential** – contact Dick Newell to book a place (contact details on back page) and for full details.

## **Kingfishers Bridge – Friday June 12th**

Meet at 7 pm for a guided natural history walk. Breeding birds at Kingfishers Bridge include Marsh Harrier, Barn Owl, Oystercatcher, Redshank, Lapwing and Barn Owl. Among a plant list of over 350 species, Water Germander and Venus's Looking Glass are of special interest.

**Booking is essential** – contact Vicki Harley to book a place (contact details on back page) and for full details.

## **Cavenham Heath – Friday 10th July**

An evening walk looking for Stone Curlew, Nightjar and general natural history, 7pm until late. Full details will appear in the next bulletin.

For further information contact Vicki Harley (contact details on back page).

### **FROM THE RECORDS COMMITTEE**

The Cambridgeshire Bird Club Records Committee (CBCRC) has been reconstituted under my Chairmanship and we shall be publishing notes of interest in the Bulletin. We have reviewed the list of species requiring descriptions and, as a result of this review, we have made the following changes:

#### **Description no longer required**

*Common Crane*  
*Temminck's Stint*  
*Iceland Gull*  
*Glaucous Gull*  
*Wryneck*

#### **Description required**

*Slavonian Grebe*  
*Cattle Egret*

These changes take effect from January 1st 2009.

*Robin Cox*

### **FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY**

We welcome the following new members – Chris Brown of Cambridge, Alan Coles of Hilton, Roger and Diana Leech of Barrington, Colin and Kathy Platt of Milton, Marie Stevenson of Ely, Mel Quy of Burwell, Mark Welch of Ely and Bahar Yilmazel of Cambridge.

*Bruce Martin*

### **FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

The club owes an enormous debt of gratitude to Vicki Harley for editing our Bulletin for the last six years. She has continued and improved the high quality of this publication which is one of our main methods of communication with our members. Relentlessly, six times a year, our Bulletin editor has produced a quality publication, on time and with excellent content. Thank you, Vicki. The task now falls to Duncan Poyser. He inherits considerable momentum and we wish him luck.

### **Bob Scott 1938–2009**

As we are going to press, it is with great sadness that we announce the death of Bob Scott, Vice President and past Chairman of the Club. After a short illness, Bob died on 26th March. Our hearts go out to Ann and all who were close to him.

*Dick Newell*

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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 May 7th**

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

**Next Bulletin due out July 2009, covering March–April 2009**

# GOOD BIRDING!