

CAMBRIDGESHIRE BIRD CLUB

Bulletin No. 417



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

Welcome to the July / August 2011 Edition

For July and August, the systematic listing of birds has been written by Steve Cooper. Our star bird for this period was a first year male Common Rosefinch (*Carpodacus erythrinus*). As the name suggests, the adult has red coloration of various parts of the plumage. In contrast our bird was rather drab and brown – but nevertheless spectacular as it is the first recorded sighting of the species for Cambridgeshire. Equally amazing was David Hatton's ability instantly to recognize that he had heard an unfamiliar and potentially rare bird, from the moving car which he was driving, and through his side window which he had wound down only seconds before because his passengers needed air! David's personalised account of his experience can be found in the Articles Section. A salutary lesson from this is always to carry some form of sound recording device whenever birding.

Bird diseases are something we should try to avoid in our garden birds, and Mike Toms of the BTO recently delivered a talk on garden birds to the Bird Club, which included aspects of disease control. Further details of one disease, Trichomonosis, are presented for those who were not able to attend the talk.

There are many activities and events that are taking place before Christmas and we try to include them all, but for those that are not detailed, links to web sites have been provided, to obtain further information.

As the nights draw in and days become colder, thoughts go towards filling the garden feeders more often. CBC members can obtain bird food at a discount from Rectory Farm near Milton - see page 11 for details.

From the Editor

Whinchat
by Rob Law



RECENT BIRD REPORTS JULY / August 2011

These are unchecked reports rather than confirmed records, sourced from sightings received by our County Recorder or reported on the "What's About?" page on the CBC website.

Moulting flocks of **Mute Swans** reached 187 at Fen Drayton Lakes during July and 217 at Grafham Water during August. Post breeding flocks of **Greylag Geese** peaked at 261 at Ouse Fen in July. Up to five **Egyptian Geese** remained at Fen Drayton Lakes throughout, and 20 were reported at Earith GPs on Aug 8th. The female **Ruddy Shelduck** at Grafham Water was noted up to August 17th, and another female or the same bird was seen at Ferry Meadows CP on Aug 1st. Single **Mandarin Ducks** were noted at former breeding sites at Bolton's Pit Cambridge to mid-August and Grafham Water on August 22nd. Reports of other wildfowl were somewhat lacking but a count of 638 **Mallards** and 856 **Tufted Ducks** at Grafham Water on August 14th were high site counts.

A drake **Ferruginous Duck** was found at Paxton Pits on July 23rd remaining to the 29th. The over-summering drake **Goldeneye** was still at Brampton GP into August and a single was also noted at Fen Drayton Lakes on July 11th. **Ruddy Ducks** continued to evade the bullet at two sites.

It has been a good year nationally for **Quail** but with singing birds being noted at eight sites in July, this species has perhaps been slightly under-recorded within Cambs?

A juvenile **Gannet** was noted flying along the A14 at St Ives on August 30th and must have been a shock for the driver. Another inland seabird was a juvenile **Shag** noted at Ely BF on July 11th.

Double figure counts of **Little Egrets** came from Grafham Water (14) and Ouse Fen (10) with records from a total of nine sites. Numbers in general were somewhat down during the period compared to recent years. A **Purple Heron** was noted over Maxey GP on July 30th. A **White Stork** drifted over the River Cam at Upware on August 14th. The August WeBS count at Grafham Water revealed 230 **Great-crested Grebes** with a juvenile **Black-necked Grebe** there on Aug 15th–23rd.

The successful story of the **Red Kite** continues with confirmation of a breeding pair close to Cambridge, and at least one young fledged. **Marsh Harriers** also continue to do

well; up to seven could be seen at Kingfishers Bridge. The identification of **Hen / Pallid / Montagu's Harriers** should never be taken lightly, so the identities of a juvenile harrier at Chatteris on August 25th and a 'ringtail' at Haddon on August 29th remain unconfirmed. An unseasonal male **Hen Harrier** was noted at Little Downham on July 21st.

A **Goshawk** was reported over Eltisley on August 22nd. During August, records of **Ospreys** came from Nene Washes (14th), Grafham (14th and 21st), Ferry Meadows CP (24th) & Paxton Pits (28th).

Several confirmed breeding records of **Kestrel** were received. The first **Merlin** of the autumn flew over Grafham Water on August 14th. Unfortunately having fallen from the nest a young **Peregrine** from one of the counties' breeding pairs had to be treated at the Raptor Centre at Woodhurst. At a new site, a pair of **Peregrines** successfully raised one young, and within just a few yards of their nest were a pair of breeding Kestrels, Stock Doves and Jackdaws, all apparently unperturbed!

Common Crane continues to be a resident of the county, but three birds photographed over Fowlmere NR on July 23rd were also noted at Wicken Fen and Over on the same day. From July 26th, 2–3 birds frequented the Ouse Washes into August.

The maximum count of **Avocets** was made at Isleham on Aug 10th – 11 birds including seven juveniles. Scarcer passage waders noted during the period included a **Grey Plover** at Fen Drayton Lakes on July 31st; **Knot** at Grafham Water on August 18th; four **Little Stints** at Beeby's pit on August 27th (the first in the county this year); a **Temminck's Stint** at Grafham Water on August 24th; and a flock of 18 **Bar-tailed Godwits** at Kingfishers Bridge on July 9th. The only reports of **Spotted Redshank** were a single at Fen Drayton Lakes on July 29th and four at Grafham Water on August 17th. **Whimbrels** were also scarce, but a notable number of **Curlews** built up to 24 on the Nene Washes by the end of August. A classic wader for the period is the **Green Sandpiper**; this was reflected by the 48 records received, with peak counts of 15 at Kingfishers Bridge

and 14 at Grafham Water. One to two **Wood Sandpipers** were noted at Buckden, Isleham, Kingfishers Bridge and Maxey GP during August. An extraordinary flock of 42 **Common Sandpipers** flew around Fen Drayton Lakes on July 12th – post-breeding flocks of this size and nature have been well documented in this species.

The gull roost at Grafham Water attracted several **Mediterranean Gulls** including the now expected juvenile birds. Elsewhere the only record was of an adult at Dogsthorpe Tip on July 12th. A juvenile **Little Gull** was at Grafham Water on Aug 18th with two there the next day. The large **Black-headed Gull** colony at Kingfishers Bridge fledged at least 220 young and returning **Common Gulls** were noted from July 23rd. In the south of the county 268 **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** pre-roosted on Duxford Airfield at the end of July, and at Long Drove Cottenham 700 were noted on July 23rd. The regular late summer build-up of **Yellow-legged Gulls** at Paxton Pits reached 39 on July on 25th, but this was well down on recent years. A second calendar year **Caspian Gull** was at Grafham Water on July 9th, followed by an adult at Dogsthorpe Tip on July 22nd and a juvenile that was photographed there on August 17th. Sadly a juvenile **Kittiwake** was found dead at Grafham Water on July 25th. The post breeding build-up of **Common Terns** at Grafham Water peaked at 67 on Aug 23rd, and an early-arriving juvenile **Arctic Tern** was noted there on Aug 27th. The latter half of August saw a good passage of **Black Terns** at several sites, with a peak of 27 at Grafham Water on August 25th. A superb juvenile **White-winged Tern** frequented Grafham Water from August 11th, remaining until Aug 22nd and attracting many admirers during its protracted stay. Records of **Turtle Doves** came from just 14 sites, and alarmingly the only records of **Cuckoos** received for the period were a juvenile at Fowlmere NR on July 1st and a single at Fen Drayton Lakes on August 31st.

There were few records of owl species received but breeding of **Long-eared Owls** was confirmed at a less regular site – this species must be under-recorded within the county. A **Short-eared Owl** was noted in the Tubney Fen / Wicken Fen area during July

and August, and one also in the south-east of the county on July 16th.

Many **Swifts** had departed from the county by the end of July with records of small flocks up to the end of August. Following a trend, there were very few records of **Kingfishers**. Records of **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** were received from Brampton, Bedford Purlieus and Harston. No reports of breeding **Ravens** were received but three over Fen Drayton Lakes on July 11th was unusual.

Hopefully the numbers of **Goldcrest** records will increase as they become more vocal, as only two records were received. Several pairs of **Bearded Tits** were confirmed breeding at Wicken Fen; elsewhere reports came from Fen Drayton Lakes and Kingfishers Bridge.

Reports of breeding **Sand Martins** were few and far between, but at Kingfishers Bridge 37 active nest holes were noted from a peat cliff face. At Fen Drayton Lakes, a large build-up of this species was estimated to be 500+ on August 16th with hundreds still present on the 29th. **House Martins** too were noted in good numbers with an impressive 250+ on wires at Stow cum Quy on August 5th, and hundreds reported at Ferry Meadows CP and Fen Drayton Lakes towards the end of August.

Warblers are always quieter during July / August, busily feeding young, hence few records were received. Of interest, though, was an [unconfirmed] report of a singing **Marsh Warbler** at Clayhithe on July 3rd. At Westfield Farm Comberton, 24 **Common Whitethroats** were noted on July 20th, hopefully reflecting a good breeding season for this species. The **Wood Warbler** is a tricky bird to catch up with in Cambs so singles noted at Ferry Meadows on Aug 1st and 19th were noteworthy; the latter bird was even photographed. A flock of 250+ **Starlings** at Eynesbury reflects a good local population and the largest flock of **Mistle Thrushes** received was 25 birds at Waterbeach Fen in August.

Spotted Flycatchers were confirmed breeding at six sites in addition to around six sites reported in the previous period, but remain worryingly scarce. Always a rare breeding bird in the county, **Black Redstarts** fledged two young at a site away from traditional areas. A flurry of **Common Redstarts** was noted from August 14th at Buckden (two sites), Ferry Meadows, Folksworth, Monk's Wood and Warboys.

Noted from August 10th at Maxey GP, there was a good passage of **Whinchats** with records from a further 10 sites. The first returning **Wheatears** passed through the county on August 3rd at Histon, and at Barton on the 4th; a peak count of 6 was noted on the Nene Washes on the 30th. In August, reports of another very scarce county bird, the **Pied Flycatcher**, came from King's Ripton on the 21st, Hauxton on the 24th, and Murrow on the 26th–27th, all being noted in private gardens. A count of 34 **House Sparrows** came from Ramsey Mereside; it would be good to have a better picture of numbers of this species within Cambs, with more records being required. For instance, does it seem that the species has changed its preference away from busy urbanised centres and concentrates its efforts in rural villages, often situated within farmsteads on the periphery? Alas no records at all were received for **Tree Sparrow!**

A quick check of arable fields in July found at least 21 pairs of **Yellow wagtails** nesting in Melbourn and adjacent parishes. August saw 100+ flocks at the Cam Washes and Caldecote / Washingley. The first **Tree Pipits** of the autumn were heard flying over Ferry Meadows on August 14th and Stuntney on the 21st. No really large counts of finches were reported, but of note were 50 **Goldfinches** at Brownhill Staunch and 40+ **Linnets** at Grafham Water and Comberton. An early movement of **Siskins** was noted over Paxton Pits on July 3rd.

There was a good movement of **Crossbills** during July, with double figure flocks noted over Cambridge (14, 12) on the 22nd and 28th, and at Swaffham Prior 10 on the 24th.

Records also came from 10 other sites - presumably all records refer to Common? It is not often that little brown jobs attract much attention, but a singing first-summer **Common Rosefinch** at Melbourn on July 10th - 26th at least caused quite a stir. An outstanding record, not only because it was a county first, but also due to the diligence of the finder on hearing the far carrying song through his open car window! 12 pairs of **Corn Buntings** were noted on territory at Burwell.

Exotica records involved sightings of the regular **Bar-headed Goose** at Paxton Pits NR and **Ross's Goose** at Cams Washes / Kingfishers Bridge.

Contributors: Colin Addington, John Austin, Louise Bacon, Rowena Baxter, Peter Bircham, Malcolm Busby, James Cadbury, Pete Cornish, Michael Crosby, Ade Cooper, Steve Cooper, Robin Cox, Ian Dawson, Mark Eaton, Eugene Flanz, Mike Foley, Paul French, John Harding, Keith Harris, Mark Harrison, Andy Harrold, Mark Hawkes, David Heath, Peter Herkenrath, David Hollin, Derek Holman, Jonathan Hook, David Hopkins, Andrew Knights, Colin Kirtland, John Le Gassick, Colin Kirkland, Vince Lea, Jim Lawrence, John Lindsell, Dan Lupton, Tony Mallyon, Owen & Monica Marks, Andy Massey, Matthew Mellor, Dave Millard, Mark Missin, David Nation, Dave Palmer, Alan Paterson, Gavin Paterson, Garth Peacock, Robert Pople, Michael Price, Doug Radford, Mike Redshaw, RSPB, Tony Roberts, Stephen Roughley, Nigel Russell, Clive Sinclair, Nigel Sprowell, Jeff Stanning, Brian Stone, Andrew Taylor, Chris Thorne, Alan Wadsworth, Mark Ward, P M Warrington, John Wells, Chris Went and Mick Whitehouse, Terry Wood, Christoph Zockler. Also, records were taken from the CBC website and Cambirds, with thanks to Tony Roberts.

And thanks to all other contributors to the CBC database.

The finding and identification of a singing Common Rosefinch, Melbourn, Cambridgeshire, July 2011

David H. Hatton

The morning of Sunday 10th July 2011 was pleasantly dry, warm and settled, and, at this usually quiet time of year, I resolved to spend it with my family. After breakfast, we discussed whether to visit Wimpole Hall or RSPB Fowlmere reserve for a walk, and decided upon the latter, which boasted a delightful range of birds over the spring and early summer. Mindful of my desire to watch the British grand prix live over lunchtime, I marshalled the family out promptly, and it wasn't long before we were enjoying views of the numerous insects along the Fowlmere boardwalk trail. All seemed quiet bird-wise, and so we kept to plan and returned to the car park at 12.15. 'I'll get back

just in time for the pit-lane walk', I mused as I fired up the car to get back to Royston. How wrong I was!

Exiting the reserve, we joined the single-track road that wriggles its way back to the former A10 but immediately we found ourselves behind a cyclist. Slowly negotiating the first sharp bend, I heard my father-in-law at my side fiddling with his electric window switch. The car was hot from its time in the morning sun, and, realizing that the child locks were all on, I released the central lock and lowered the two front windows to quickly release the heat. What I next experienced won't repeat many times in the future... Through the open window on my side and over the slight engine noise, I distinctly heard a short, unfamiliar, song phrase: '*pee-tee-vuu*'. 'How odd' I thought, 'that's a bit like Crested Lark [a major rarity]!' By then, and still following the cyclist, we were passing a huge field on my right, much beloved of larks, making my daydreaming seem very faintly plausible and sufficient to keep my attention as we proceeded along the 200 metre straight towards the next dog-leg bend. Then, there it was again; this time, somewhat closer to the source, I could tell it was a sweet song, slightly more complex than I had first thought, but defying immediate naming. I quickly went through in my mind the common species that it really *ought* to be given the location – no, not a Skylark, not a Yellowhammer, or a Reed Bunting, nor a Yellow Wagtail. 'Come on David' I thought, 'you *must* know it!'

'Sorry I must stop, I'll just be a minute', I announced to my four slightly perplexed occupants. I parked up as safely as I could just beyond the final bend, taking advantage of a wide farm exit. Now for the first time I realized that the source of the song was almost above my head and I caught a glimpse of a finch-sized bird in the evergreen canopy at the roadside near the golf course. Conscious that I might flush it if I wandered onto the road to try to get a view, I then made a very tactical decision. Instinct told me that a recording of the distinctive song could very well nail it, whereas perhaps flushed views might lead to my returning home empty-handed. So I dived into the boot and grabbed my Remebird II digital recorder. This fantastic little device attaches to my binoculars and is designed to record both voice notes and bird songs and calls through its inbuilt twin microphones. I powered it up, but where were the usual LED indicators? It was out of juice! I scrambled around for a spare AAA battery and was relieved to find one in my camera bag. With the Remebird now on, it was with much relief that I then recorded the two last song phrases the bird gave, before all went quiet. Two minutes passed, still no sign, and I had a car full with occupants cooking in the sun. With the pressure off, I thought harder about the identification. Rosefinch came to mind, but doesn't that sing 'pleased to meet you' I thought – this song seemed slightly longer, with an extra note, so surely it couldn't be that very unlikely species here in Cambridgeshire! Other thoughts came to mind too – could it be a cage bird, an escape (or a Great Tit of course!)... So I resolved to get back home and pursue the identification from there.

Ten minutes later, we were back, and, even better, the F1 GP was yet to start. I've frequently been impressed by my friend Simon Stirrup's knowledge of songs, so I called his home, only to be surprised when I was auto-forwarded to his wife's mobile – they were on the Suffolk coast, and Simon was busy photographing hairstreaks! Leaving a quick, 'speak later' excuse, I quickly dialled up Daniel Duff, another friend with a very enquiring interest in vocalizations. Expecting him to be in his usual home area of Germany, I was surprised to find that he was actually in London with his wife Cathy, attending a flower show! I explained my reason for calling and played the short recording of two phrases down the phone line to Dan. 'Sounds like Rosefinch!' Dan enthused, 'maybe not quite right.....you'd better compare with the xeno-canto library'. 'Actually I've got a library on my Remebird, it might well be on that!', I explained and elected to try that and call back. Within a minute, my Remebird was playing back to me a bona fide Rosefinch song – and wow didn't it sound similar in tone and structure to my Melbourn bird! Delighted, I phoned back Dan, and we discussed how indeed they were remarkably alike, the Melbourn bird sounding a tad less 'pure', but given in the same measured way with generous gaps of 8 or so seconds between renditions. Thanking Dan, I decided that a return to the site was obviously in order and phoned fellow Royston birders Tim J. Wilson, who also opted for Rosefinch when played the precious recording, and John and Jenny Chainey. Abandoning the live coverage of the GP (painful!), I met up with Tim and drove

us both over to Melbourn. Again with the windows wound down, I was relieved to hear the now-familiar song as I drove up to my intended parking spot. I turned the car around, allowing Tim to scan into the tree tops, and within seconds he had picked up the bird, rather dowdy looking but clearly a Common Rosefinch nonetheless! Tim and I had both seen dozens of this species on many trips to the northern isles over the past 20 years, and I'd heard a few singing males on mainland Europe.



From the car, I took a quick couple of record shots with my SLR camera in case it disappeared, which it promptly did as one of the locals fired up a lawn-mower right alongside us and drowned out all other sounds. I watched it fly out towards the golf course, and a few minutes later it resumed singing, albeit distantly. We parked up off the road, then followed the public footpath onto the edge of the golf course

First-summer male Common Rosefinch, Melbourn, Cambridgeshire, 10 July 2011 (David H. Hatton; digiscoped: Kowa TSN823, Panasonic LX5)

and were soon joined by John and Jenny. There, we obtained a succession of views at a range of 25–150 metres, allowing me to get some reasonable digiscoped photos, and to phone out the good news to an incredulous Doug Radford, the Fowlmere RSPB warden.

Doug was over with us in a few minutes, and we then discussed how to release the news, bearing in mind the complexities of local relations, the restricted access to the edge of the golf course and the non-existent parking along the roadside. The obvious answer was to make enquiries with the golf course owners – so we made our way to the clubhouse, and, although the manager was away, he kindly phoned back within half an hour and gave permission for use of the club's car park. Thereafter, Doug returned to his office and released the news to BirdGuides, ensuring that all the news services got a consistent set of directions with the appropriate advice about keeping off the greens. In subsequent endeavours with Dan Duff, I made a sonogram of one of my original recordings (Fig. 1).

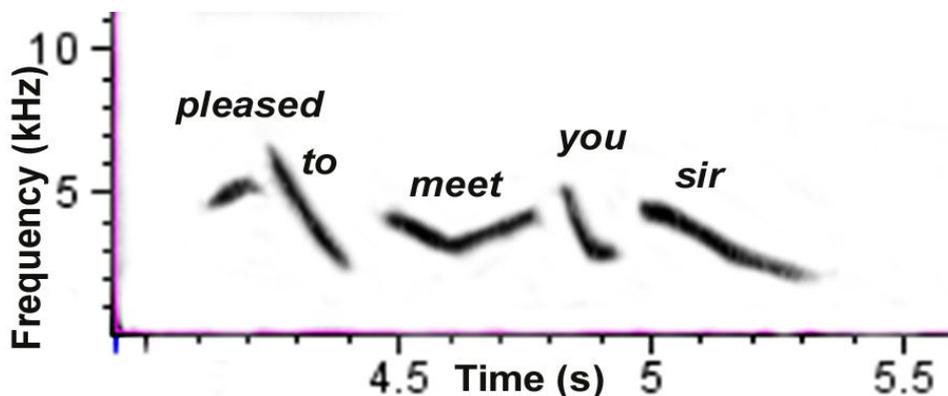


Fig. 1. Sonogram created (courtesy D.G.D.) by processing with Raven Lite software the original recording made of the Common Rosefinch in Melbourn (recorded by D.H.H. on a Remibird II device, 10 July 2011),

then re-rendering the output '.png' file in photoshop to readjust the recording to convenient axes and remove background noise and adding the suggested mnemonic (manipulations by D.H.H.).

This shows the elegant simplicity of the song and indicates that it is better rendered as 'pleased to meet you *sir*'. On reflection, this was a truly exciting local day out, and it shows the value of not ignoring unfamiliar sounds – but following them up and recording them!

The bird, a first for the county, performed reliably in the vicinity of Foxfield Farm until 26th July, and the good behaviour by birders meant that the reputation of twitchers was upheld in a somewhat tricky location.

Acknowledgements:

The Cambridgeshire Bird Club and I extend grateful thanks to all local residents, and especially to Douglas and Lauren Gray Stephens of Foxfield House for their marvellous tolerance and hospitality to the birders; also to Richard and Veronica Taylor at Foxfield Bungalow; and to the manager and staff of Kingsway Golf Centre for much assistance. Doug Radford, Manager of RSPB Fowlmere was pivotal in liaising with the residents, farmers and the Golf Centre, and who assisted birders greatly in order to see this rare bird. I also thank Daniel G. Duff, Tim J. Wilson, Simon A. Stirrup, John and Jenny Chainey. Finally, I acknowledge my family, Diane, Harry, Tristan and grandad John, for all their patience that day. For information on the excellent Remebird recorder, see www.remebird.com.

Trichomonosis in finches

edited by Mike Foley

This disease has been in bird news recently, and has even been mentioned in the national press and was part of a talk by the BTO to our Club on 14th Oct. It is becoming an issue whenever bird-care in gardens is discussed. But what is it?

It first became noteworthy as a disease in British finch populations in 2005, and was shown to be present in southern Fennoscandia in 2008, and in northern Germany by 2009. This article describes the disease and ways to reduce its spread to healthy birds in garden situations, and also shows the evidence supporting the idea that migratory Chaffinches that overwinter in England and Wales are the source of the outbreaks on the continent.

Trichomonosis is the name given to a disease caused by the protozoan parasite *Trichomonas gallinae*. It has been recorded in a number of garden bird species and is also known as 'canker' when seen in pigeons and doves, and as 'frounce' when seen in birds of prey. It has been known as a disease of cage birds for some time.

The disease came to prominence in summer 2005, when it was first noted in British finches, and it is widely acknowledged to be the causal factor in the rapid decline of the British Greenfinch population that was first noted in late summer 2006. Epidemics of the disease also occurred in 2007, with smaller scale mortality-events noted in subsequent years. By 2007, breeding populations of greenfinches and chaffinches in the geographic region of highest disease incidence had decreased by 35% and 21% respectively, representing mortality in excess of half a million birds (Robinson *et al.* 2010). Greenfinches and Chaffinches are the species that have been most frequently affected, but the disease has also been documented in other garden bird species, including House Sparrow, Dunnock, Great Tit and Siskin.

Trichomonosis typically causes swelling at the back of the throat and in the gullet. Affected birds show signs of general illness (lethargy, fluffed-up plumage) and may have difficulty in swallowing or laboured breathing. Some individuals may have wet plumage around the bill and drool saliva or regurgitate food that they cannot swallow. In some cases, swelling of the neck may be evident. The disease may progress over several days or even weeks.



The trichomonad parasite is vulnerable to desiccation and cannot survive for long periods outside the host. Transmission is most likely to be through contaminated food or water, e.g. where a bird with difficulty swallowing regurgitates food that is then eaten by another individual. *Trichomonas gallinae* is a parasite of birds and does not pose a health risk to humans or their mammalian pets.

BTO researchers working alongside others involved in the Garden Bird Health initiative, used Garden BirdWatch and other data to establish the impact of this disease on Greenfinch and Chaffinch populations. The results of this work revealed a substantial population decline in those areas where disease incidence was greatest.

What you can do in your garden: Follow sensible hygiene precautions as a routine measure when feeding garden birds and handling bird feeders and tables. Clean and disinfect feeders and feeding sites regularly. Suitable disinfectants that can be used include a weak solution of domestic bleach (5% sodium hypochlorite) or other specially-designed commercial products. Always rinse feeders thoroughly and **air-dry before re-use**.

Rotate positions of feeders in the garden to prevent the build-up of contamination in any one area of ground below the feeders. Empty and air-dry any bird baths on a daily basis. You may wish to consider stopping feeding if you have an outbreak of the disease at your feeding station, in an attempt to force the birds to feed elsewhere at a lower density (although in reality they may end up visiting another feeding station and possibly one where no hygiene measures are in place). A leaflet is available, courtesy of the Garden Bird Health initiative, at:

http://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/u23/downloads/pdfs/disease_trichomonosis_factsheet_2011.pdf

Reference. Robinson, R.A., Lawson, B., Toms, M.P., Peck, K.M., Kirkwood, J.K., Chantrey, J., Clatworthy, I.R., Evans, A.D., Hughes, L.A., Hutchinson, O.C., John, S.K., Pennycott, T.W., Perkins, M.W., Rowley, P.S., Simpson, V.R., Tyler, K.M. & Cunningham, A.A. (2010). Emerging Infectious Disease Leads to Rapid Population Declines of Common British Birds. PLoS One 5 (8) e12215 <http://www.plosone.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pone.0012215>

Acknowledgments: To the BTO (<http://www.bto.org/>), for giving permission for information to be extracted from their web pages, and also to the Garden Bird Health initiative (<http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/gbw/gardens-wildlife/garden-birds/disease/gbhi>)

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Peter Herkenrath

At the end of July, the five years of work for the winter and breeding atlas finally came to an end. I would like to thank the many members of the Club who spent many hours in the field counting birds, and achieving excellent coverage of the county. While the BTO is busy analysing the data at the national level, our Club begins to do the same for our Cambridgeshire atlas. If you want to be involved with its writing up and production, please get in touch with Louise Bacon or myself.

I attended two days of the British Birdwatching Fair in August at Rutland Water. It was good to catch up with other birders and members of the Club. I also met with the Chairman of the Peterborough Bird Club and we agreed on closer collaboration between our two clubs. Amongst the talks I heard was one about the search for the Slender-billed Curlew, organised over past years by the RSPB in many Mediterranean and Eastern European countries, where this species once was a regular migrant or winter visitor. While many data were collected on important sites for birds, there were

only two or three possible sightings of the Slender-billed Curlew. Perhaps it still exists but it might well now be extinct.

Besides many ongoing initiatives to save species from extinction, renewed efforts are now directed to save the Spoon-billed Sandpiper from this terrible fate. The population of this wader that breeds in eastern Siberia and winters in south-east Asia has plummeted to only a few hundred individuals threatened by large-scale coastal reclamation in staging and wintering areas and hunting in the latter. After the AGM in March, we had an update on the situation of the species presented by our member Christoph Zöckler. Since then, efforts for captive-breeding have begun. You can find further information throughout the birdwatching and bird conservation media.

It is this time of year when I tend to stare out of the window, scanning the sky and bushes in the garden for migrants. In early September, a beautiful Lesser Whitethroat – one of my favourite birds – showed well in the garden and while writing this (mid September), House Martins and Swallows are migrating outside. Over the past days I have still enjoyed late Common Swifts flying over. Who knows what this autumn holds in hand? At our September indoor meeting, the 'Urban Birder' David Lindo shared with us his enthusiasm for birding in an urban environment. I can only echo this – an urban garden or park or the sky over a city or town can turn up many exciting birds, in particular during migration season.

The Club is currently facing several changes. One is that after 12 years of service as Cambridgeshire Bird Report Editor John Clark is stepping down. The Club is very grateful for his outstanding contribution to this key publication, for his hard work and his commitment to the Club. At the same time, we welcome Ali Cooper as Production Editor for the Bird Report. We do, however, look for a replacement for John as overall editor and in due course also for a new Bulletin Editor. If you wish to get involved or would like to talk about a potential engagement, please contact me (see contact details on the last page).

The Cambridgeshire Bird Club Bob Scott Prize for Ornithological Research in Cambridgeshire

With the death of Bob Scott in 2009, the Club lost its former Chairman, and the British conservation scene a passionate advocate who had helped establish nature conservation in this country. The CBC Council is convinced that an award for ornithological research in Bob Scott's memory would fit in well with Bob's aims and ideals.

The Bob Scott Prize for Ornithological Research in Cambridgeshire will be awarded for ornithological field research on wild birds in Cambridgeshire. Work directly or indirectly supporting bird or wider nature conservation, as well as work undertaken by young people, would be especially welcome but is not a condition for receiving the prize. The prize is open to non-professionals. The Club would particularly welcome submissions by school, college and university students (undergraduates). PhD research would not be eligible. It is intended to publish the results of the research in the annual Cambridgeshire Bird Report.

The aim is to award the prize annually at the Annual General Meeting in March. The winner will receive a reward of £150 and a certificate. Submissions should be sent to the Chairman of the Club by 15 January each year (see contact details on the last page). The selection of the winner will be undertaken by a jury consisting of the Chairman of the Cambridgeshire Bird Club, another Club member appointed by the Club's Council, a representative of the Department of Zoology, Cambridge University, a representative of the Department of Life Sciences, Anglia Ruskin University, and Ann Scott. More details are available on the Club's website and from the Chairman.

I wish you happy birding this autumn.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Vicki Harley

Friday 11th November, St Johns Church Hall, Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 8RN

Doors open 7.30 p.m. for 8 p.m.

Are Deer to Blame for Woodland Bird Declines? by Stuart Newson

Stuart Newson has worked as a research ecologist at the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) for almost ten years, where his main role has been to analyse data from large national surveys and demographic data on wild bird and mammal populations.

Friday 9th December, St Johns Hall, Cambridge

Doors open 7.30 p.m. for 8 p.m.

Christmas Social

Come and enjoy mince pies and mulled wine in good company while listening to inspiring short talks by Club members. Please contact Vicki Harley or Peter Herkenrath in advance of the event if you would like to give a short presentation.

LOOKING AHEAD: CBC INDOOR MEETINGS 2012

The 2012 programme will cover a wide range of subjects from near and far. Topics include House Sparrows, Jackdaw behaviour, birds of Lundy Island, and wind-farms and birds. Peter Holden, known to many of you as organiser of the YOC, will speak on 'Birds: Their Hidden Lives'. We begin the New Year with Ruth and Alan Davies talking on their worldwide birding adventure in 'The Biggest Twitch'.

Details of all meetings will appear on the 2012 programme card, to be distributed with the next Bulletin.

ORIENTAL BIRD CLUB WINTER MEETING

Saturday 29th October, St John's Church Hall, Hills Road, Cambridge

The Oriental Bird Club (OBC) invites Cambridgeshire Bird Club members to attend its winter meeting. The day's programme (10.30am – 5.00pm; AGM 12.00-12.45) includes several talks including 'Collapse of large frugivore populations on Luzon'; 'A video-odyssey around Sulawesi & Halmahera'; 'The 2011 Spoon-billed Sandpiper project'; 'Thirty years of photography in the Orient'. Snacks, cakes and hot drinks will be available all day, and there will be sales by Wildsounds and others. See: <http://www.orientalbirdclub.org/news/index.html>

RSPB CAMBRIDGE LOCAL GROUP – FIELD TRIPS / INDOOR MEETINGS

Indoor meetings - all at St John's Church Hall, Hills Road, Cambridge (7.15pm for a 7.30pm start)

- Wednesday October 19th: A Visit to the Camargue, by Jonathan Forgeham
- Wednesday November 16th: Plantlife's Conservation Work on Wildflowers, Fungi and other Plants in the UK, by Tim Pankhurst
- Wednesday December 14th: Christmas Social

Field trips

- Saturday November 19th: Elmley Marsh. Leave Cambridge 8am, to meet in car park 10.15am

To book and discuss transport to the event, call Andrew Camps, 01638 741018.

For more details and bookings, please see <http://www.rspb.org.uk/groups/cambridge/events/> or call Andrew Camps, 01638 741018.

Voices for Nature

Stamford, 18th & 19th November 2011

Voices for Nature is a one-and-a-half day event organised by **New Networks for Nature**, a recently founded alliance whose goals are to challenge the low political priority placed upon wildlife and landscape in this country and to celebrate the central roles played by nature in our cultural life.

This is the third in a series of events, which bring together a broad alliance of individuals who in their personal and professional lives draw creative inspiration from the birds, wildlife and landscapes of this country. The group includes writers, scientists, visual artists, musicians, conservationists and academics who meet:

- to emphasise the sheer diversity of responses to the natural world and ways of placing value on it, beyond the narrowly econometric
- to challenge the low priority placed nationally and politically on these key cultural assets
- to make productive links with other individuals and organizations with similar purposes.

New Networks for Nature is a wholly voluntary organization.

Enquiries about the event: info@newnetworksfornature.org.uk

WILD BIRD FOOD

Members of the Cambridgeshire Bird Club can buy wild bird food at a 10% discount from Rectory Farm, Landbeach, CB24 6DA (on the A10 1.5 km N of the A14). Just show your most recent Bulletin or Annual Report as proof of membership. Just one more benefit of joining CBC.

‘NATURE IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE’

Volume 53 of *Nature in Cambridgeshire*, has been published recently. Among the usual wide-ranging coverage, there are articles on breeding Marsh Harriers, Swifts, butterflies and the flora of Devil's Dyke, fungi and lichens. Further details of this and earlier issues are available at <http://www.natureincambridgeshire.org.uk>. Copies of Issue 53 (2011) and many others are available from Vicki Harley (contact details on back page).

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

We welcome the following new members – Robert Brown of Elton Peterborough, Ian Harvey of Cambridge and Richard Kenzie of Fowlmere.

Bruce Martin

FROM THE TREASURER

Thank you to all our members for your valued support throughout the year. Annual subscriptions for 2012 fall due on 1 January 2012. If you do not have a current standing order in place, please ensure that you send a cheque to me in time. If you wish to start paying by standing order, please let me know and I will send you a form (by post or e-mail).

Subscriptions for 2012 remain unchanged at:	Full	£14
	Senior/Concessionary	£10
	Student	£6

Kevin Harris

THE CBC BULLETIN AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS – BY EMAIL

The Bulletin can be sent to you in an email as an electronic version (PDF) instead of the paper format which is traditionally posted. To date, a significant minority of members receive it by email, and I would hope there will be a continuing trend towards more information sent by email than by paper. Postage cost reductions to the Club are one point but there are other benefits. Increasingly, colour can be added to photographs of the emailed version, and links to pertinent web pages or to other bird-based web sites can be selected at a click of the computer mouse. Bulletins in the future could contain more information than they do now if the format is sent by email, by way of direct links to other web pages which will appear on your screen.

I should emphasize that no-one will find less than they did before if they wish to continue to receive the Bulletin in paper form. Links to external web pages can be achieved by typing in the web links yourself.

There are also times I would like to send out an email which could be in-between Bulletins, or a reminder of a talk or event, and I would like to extend this service to everyone who has an email address. You can STILL have the Bulletin in paper form even if you give your email address to the Club for these other informative and possibly urgent communications.

If you want, you can add your email address onto a sheet at any CBC meeting, or send it to me, the Bulletin Editor (see the link on the last page).



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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.cambridgebirdclub.org.uk

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

Please email records to: Mike Foley by November 7th 2011

Please send records by post to: Mike Foley by November 5th 2011

Next Bulletin due out early December 2011, covering September / October 2011

GOOD BIRDING!