

CAMBRIDGESHIRE BIRD CLUB

Bulletin No. 424



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

Welcome to the September / October 2012 Edition

Season's greetings and, as I put the bulletin together, it really does feel like winter has come. A weekend where the frost persisted two days, with freezing nights and day time temperatures barely into single figures. If – as some predict – this continues, it will surely affect our birds. We are already experiencing a big influx of Waxwings – reports of which will feature in the next bulletin. There are also flocks of winter thrushes; local to myself there have been 2 separate flocks of around 1,000 (mainly Fieldfares) as well as a few Waxwings, one of which became a garden tick for me. Elsewhere, it seems the berry crop is patchy, with large areas having little to offer. Maybe the cold spring reduced insect activity to such a low level that pollination was hampered. We may see the local berry stocks quickly stripped. A completely different set of difficulties faced one species that I have been trying to help locally, the Kingfisher. For a couple of years now, I have been working to improve conditions on the Bourn Brook, but 2012 saw many flooding episodes, with bankside nest holes submerged several times during the breeding season, and difficult fishing in the deep, turbulent, cloudy water. A third freezing winter in a row will set them back again, if many of their favoured spots go under ice. At this time of year, data from many summer surveys are being compiled and collated, and so far nothing I have seen gives much cause for hope; butterfly numbers down a third, nesting success rates showing below average performance (worst ever for Chaffinch for example) and so on. 2012 has had many birding highlights, not least the autumn fall which Colin Kirtland has written about at the end of this bulletin. For bird populations, however, it will be the sort of year we do not want to see again in a hurry. Let's hope 2013 brings better fortunes.

From the Bulletin Editor



Whooper Swans by Graham Easy

RECENT BIRD REPORTS September / October 2012

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.

September and October are a time of flux, with our final few summer migrants leaving, winterers just starting to appear and the lure of potential passage birds providing extra incentive to get out birding when the weather is right. Despite a quiet start, this period became increasingly interesting with periods of high pressure over the North Sea, and strong northerlies followed by light easterlies and poor visibility causing the thousands of birds leaving Scandinavia in search of better feeding to find East Anglia to their liking. Was the Ouse Washes the site of the month in September, though? Was its range of wetland birds record-breaking for the county for both numbers and quality?

Wildfowl numbers are only starting to build for the winter; peak WeBS counts are still low on the main sites. **Mute Swan** WeBS counts of over 100 at Paxton, Fen Drayton and Ouse Fen were still dwarfed by the interim count of 578 on the Ouse Washes. Our wintering swans started to appear; only one record of **Bewick's Swan** (3 at Grafham Water on 29th Oct) but several good counts of **Whooper**, with over 100 seen on a couple of occasions by the end of October. The Ouse Washes dawn count on 30th Oct revealed 524, and an interesting observation of groups migrating south over Foul Anchor three days earlier had groups of 34, 19, 1, 19, 12 & 10 over from the NW. The same observer had counts of **Pink footed Goose** moving through; 240, 34, 15, 1, 33, 50, 25 & 12. Other flocks of this seemingly increasing bird were recorded in the last week of October, and there were records of birds migrating over urban areas at night or in fog. Only a single record of 2 **White-fronted Geese** was received, from the Ouse Washes on 29th Oct. The numbers of feral **Greylag Geese** in the county continue their inexorable rise, with peak counts from many of our main water bodies; examples included 625 at Paxton Pits, 380 at Kingfishers Bridge and 368 at Colne GP. A similar trend can be seen for **Canada Goose**, slightly different sites having the peak counts; 604 at the Ouse Washes, 220+ at Needingworth, 224 at Kingfishers Bridge and 213 at Earith GP. Feral **Barnacle Goose** singletons were logged from 7 sites, whilst **Dark-bellied Brent Geese** put in a brief appearance at Witcham, with 2 on 24th October, and 32 flew SW the following day. **Egyptian Geese** have a stronghold along the Ouse valley pits and pools, with up to 27 birds seen on a variety of occasions from Paxton to Earith. Additionally, 31 were on the Ouse Washes; the Earith flock and a pair with 7 part-grown young on the old Bedford river.

Shelduck are never a common bird in autumn, so a scatter of ones and twos at 7 sites across the county would be expected at this time of year. **Mandarin Ducks** are always elusive, so

multiple observations of birds in Little Shelford show that they are seen when observers happen to spend a lot of time around suitable stretches of water – they seem to prefer quiet, wooded small rivers rather than large, open gravel pits, although a bird was also recorded at Fen Drayton (but what hasn't been?). Apart from an end of October count of 9938 at the Ouse Washes, most **Wigeon** flocks were very small, building up a little by the end of October at other sites, too, with Colne Fen GP, Needingworth and Fen Drayton all having over 400 birds on WeBS counts in October. **Gadwall** counts in Sep and Oct were similar to each other at many sites, and only Fen Drayton and the Ouse Washes had large numbers, over 300. **Teal** were widely recorded in low numbers, with large gatherings again at only a couple of sites, including Maxey GP, Wicken (Bakers Fen), and unsurprisingly, the Ouse Washes with a peak count of over 2000 in mid Sept. We are developing a pattern here, as **Mallard** were again widespread in low numbers, with aggregations of over 100 at many of the larger complexes of pools. **Pintail**, possibly the most attractive dabbling duck, is far less common, only seen in low numbers at a few sites, with 17 at the Ouse Washes being the highlight on 29th Oct. **Garganey** seemed to be relatively abundant this year. The record count from late August of 72 birds was not matched, but 2 were seen at Grafham and at least 43 on the Ouse Washes; additionally birds were seen at Ferry Meadows, Fen Drayton, Berry Fen and Needingworth Lakes. What has caused the particularly high counts this year? **Shoveler** counts take us back to the pattern seen for Teal and Mallard, and the highlights were 324 at Fen Drayton and 21 at the Ouse Washes.

Red Crested Pochard appear settled in low numbers at a couple of sites, as has been the pattern for some time. **Common Pochard** are centred on the Ouse valley, with peak counts (100) at Ouse Fen and Fen Drayton but only a handful at other sites. **Tufted Duck** is possibly

our most widespread duck, and a late brood of four chicks about a week old was observed at Colne Fen GP. Peak counts of 643 at Fen Drayton and 423 at Godmanchester Pits were eclipsed by 1177 at Grafham Water. A **Common Scoter** at Fen Drayton on 27th-28th September was well-watched and hence well-reported, and the other deep-water ducks were also seen at a few locations; **Goldeneye** in 5 places, mostly in numbers you can count on one hand, but with an impressive 52 at Grafham. A male **Goosander** flew over Ferry Meadows on 27th Oct, and the day after a redhead was at Paxton Pits. **Ruddy Duck** persist at two locations.

We received only 17 records of game birds, combining all three species, and the highlight was three records of **Grey Partridge** family coveys, pairs with 8 or 9 young seems to be the reported norm.

Gannets are a classic bird blown in on a northerly wind, and as the phenomenon of watching for them and other seabirds from strategic places becomes more widely adopted we must surely begin to get a more accurate picture of how many sea birds move over the county in these storm conditions. A reflection of this were 3 seen at Foul Anchor on 27th Oct, and the same day one over Holme Fen. A week before, on 21st, a juvenile was observed 40 feet above the car by a lucky birder on the A14 near Milton, and an unseasonably early one on 19th Sep flew over Over. **Cormorants** were widely reported from a variety of wetland sites, mostly in numbers less than 20, but there were large counts at a few of the obvious gravel pits and other large sites.

Bittern was only reported from 3 locations, just one or possibly two birds. Winter roosting birds will soon be more on the agenda of the mid-winter birder, so the number of sightings is likely to go up as winter encroaches. A **Night Heron** was reported from a small private pool in Cambridge, seen at dusk (3rd Sep) and not relocated. **Little Egrets** are found in increasing numbers, continuing to be widespread in low numbers across the county, but with some record site counts attained this autumn. Grafham has a site record count of 32, 50+ at Berry Fen was also good, but everything was overshadowed by the counts from the Ouse Washes. Regular high counts resulted in a concerted effort to count the washes thoroughly, and the final number recorded on 1st Sep was 233. Its larger relative, the **Great Egret**, was to be seen by many people at the Ouse Washes from 11th Sep to 18th Oct,

and 2 were present on 16th and 18th Oct. Our resident **Grey Heron** was reported across the county in small numbers, with only Fen Drayton, Grafham and the Ouse Washes getting into double figure counts. Scarcer herons continue to grace our county and the juvenile **Purple Heron** from August was still at the Ouse Washes on 1st September. Additionally, a juvenile was seen at Kingfisher Bridge on 14th – was this the same bird which had suddenly decided to disperse, or a second one? **Glossy Ibis** is also becoming a more familiar sight – the Ouse Washes in particular seemed more like a Mediterranean wetland at times with the number of heron species more associated with mainland Europe – and an immature bird spent all of September and part of October there, as did a **Spoonbill**, which was joined by 2 others on 21st Sep before they were seen heading off south on 22nd. Spoonbills were also seen at Berry Fen and Ouse Fen (15th Sep), and Grafham Water (16th Sep). A report of a Glossy Ibis in Cambridge from one of the bird reporting services remains unsubstantiated.

The resident grebes were reported from a variety of sites, and broods of **Little Grebe** part-grown young were noted at Kingfisher Bridge (14th Sep) and Ouse Washes (22nd Sep) and **Great Crested** from Roswell Pit (15th Sep). Two **Red-necked grebes** were reported, on consecutive days; Brampton (19th Oct) and then Grafham Water.

Three reports of **Honey Buzzard** in the second half of September, from Peterborough and St Ives, will need descriptions to be accepted as records. **Red Kites** were reported from approx. 20 locations, with a peak count of 6 at Woodwalton Fen on 13th Oct, and a similar widespread occurrence of **Marsh Harrier** reflects the increasing good fortunes of our raptors. By the end of October, 8 locations had recorded **Hen Harrier** in 1s or 2s; most seemed to appear from 21st onwards. **Sparrowhawks** seemed to keep a low profile – recorded across the county, mostly we seem to notice them when alerted by mobbing species such as gulls, or when they hunt within the urban environment. A peak count of 5 from Ouse Fen is notable for one of our more solitary raptors. Counts of 5 for **Buzzard**, however, are not out of the ordinary, and as we explored in more depth last time in the raptor watch reports, there can be many observations of this number in the county. Four lucky observers connected with migrating **Ospreys**, between 1st and 13th Sep. Obviously,

far less luck is needed to see **Kestrels**, and there seem to still be healthy numbers of records submitted for this species, including comments that more are being seen at some sites this year than recently. The early date of 5th Sep for the first **Merlin** record is nowhere near as early as the record of July 1997, and by the end of October 11 locations had this high-speed hunter. Its summer counterpart, the **Hobby**, was still being seen in significant numbers through September, and a few late birds hung around until October, with the last ones noted from Paxton Pits (8th), Fen Drayton Lakes (13th) and Buckden (14th), no doubt taking advantage of late dragonflies and other feeding opportunities before migrating. **Peregrines** were recorded from a stunning 27 locations across the county. One notable sighting was from Foul Anchor, on the day (27th Oct) that many parties of swans and geese were observed moving through – was this an opportunistic local hunter following flocks of birds of all kinds on the move in the weather, or was it also an arrival from Scandinavia?

Water Rails were reported from 13 locations, mostly heard, although an observation of adult with one well-grown young at Ouse Fen (29th Sep) provides evidence of breeding even this late in the year. Fowlmere reserve seems to be the top spot, with far more records than any other site, and a peak count of 5 on 30th October. A late brood of 3 **Moorhen** chicks from Kingfisher Bridge on 12th Sep seems in line with several late breeding reports of water birds – presumably having one more attempt in the improved autumn weather after the appalling summer rains. A similar thought seems to have occurred to **Coot**, as one was recorded on eggs at the Cam Washes on Sep 1st. Some large WeBS count of Coot show numbers building up at our major sites, with 1054 at Fen Drayton, 923 at Grafham Water, 553 at Paxton Pits (all October WeBS), and 844 on the Ouse Washes (29th Oct). The over-sized member of the family, the **Common Crane**, continues to do well in the north of the county, with the Nene Washes flock peaking at 17 (25th Oct), as well as 2 birds on the Ouse Washes (7th Sep, 22nd & 24th Oct) and 8 over Ramsey (23rd Oct).

Oystercatcher are rarely recorded inland in autumn/early winter, so only 2 records of singletons at Grafham Water come as no surprise. A similar number of **Avocet** records again conforms to what we'd expect – one was of a colour-ringed juvenile; no details have yet been supplied of its original site. **Little Plover**

numbers increased over a 3-day period (14-17 Sep) on the Ouse Washes, peaking at 4. The place to be for **Ringed Plover** appears to be the Ouse Washes, with the peak count of 69 on 29th Sep, but good numbers continued through into October with 55 on the 6th. **Golden Plovers** started to build up into flocks, with several flocks of over 500 from mid Oct, peaks of 800 (Kneesworth 18th), 1000 (Haddenham 26th), and 1500 (Upware 20th). Apart from 14 observed flying over the Ouse Washes on 27th Sep, only singletons of **Grey Plover** passed through the county at the end of Sep/early Oct, at 3-4 sites. The build up of **Lapwing** mirrored the Golden Plover picture, with flocks of over 800 by late Oct at Ouse Fen and the Ouse Washes. **Knot** are also found at a few sites in late Sep/early Oct, but rarely more than singles, although 6 were flying south over Paxton Pits (23rd Sep) and 4 at Witcham (27th Oct). A single **Sanderling** at Grafham Water on 27th Sep completes the scarce coastal peeps collection. The Ouse Washes carried on its county dominance for interesting wetland birds through Sept and Oct with up to 6 **Little Stints**, a **White-rumped Sandpiper**, 2 **Pectoral Sandpipers** and up to 5 **Curlew sandpipers** amongst the **Dunlin** (up to 65, including 2 birds of race *alpina* on 29th Sep). Trying to draw attention from this, Wicken Fen also had a Pectoral Sandpiper 7-13th Sep. Ruff also flocked to the excellent feeding conditions on the washes, with a peak of 110 (29th Sep), and a few smaller groups elsewhere. **Jack Snipe** trickled into the county in October, being seen at Kings Dyke, Kingfisher Bridge and Ouse Fen. Its common relative was seen at 24 sites, mostly in 1s and 2s, but some interesting counts have been supplied; Wicken Fen seems unsure how many snipe it had, with counts for Wicken of 60 and Wicken (Bakers Fen) of 85 on the 7th Sep. The Ouse Washes had 120+ on 1st Sep, and Witcham GP 39 (21st Oct). Only 2 **Woodcocks** were reported, at Fowlmere and Kings Dyke, both on 28th Oct. Apart from a group through Paxton Pits (6 on 21st Sep) and 1 at Wicken Fen, **Black-tailed Godwits** appear restricted to the Ouse washes: peak count 32 on 10th Sep, and birds assigned to the nominate (UK breeding) race *limosa*, numbered 25 and 31 on 22nd & 29th Sep respectively. Single **Bar-tailed Godwits** were at the Ouse Washes on 6th and 10th Sep, replaced by **Whimbrel** on 13th; also one at Wicken that day. At least one also passed through Paxton Pits on 2nd Sep.

Curlews were recorded in their usual low numbers at 6 locations, but just to carry on the wader-fest, up to 21 were at the Ouse Washes (22nd Sep). **Green** and **Common Sandpipers** prefer other parts of the Ouse – peak counts of 18 and 12, respectively, at Ouse Fen and several double figure counts of the former at Berry Fen amongst a scatter across the county at 20 sites. **Spotted Redshank** appeared far more selective in location than their far less Common relative; the former was only recorded from the Ouse Washes (up to 11 on a range of dates), but 6 places managed to tempt in **Common Redshanks** although none reported more than 3. Much more widespread was the **Greenshank**, at 9 locations; mostly low numbers, but yet again the Ouse Washes had the peak count with over 30 on 5th Sep. A few **Wood Sandpipers** passed through the county, calling in at Ouse Fen and the Ouse Washes. Similarly, single **Turnstones** passed through the Ouse Washes on several dates in Sep, and one NW over Paxton Pits (5th Sep).

27th October was a key date for bird movements as we have seen, and the day spent at Foul Anchor not only had Gannets, wildfowl and raptors, but also other expected seabirds, including 2 of both **Pomarine** and **Great Skuas**. That day there were also two of the latter at Grafham. A much larger count had occurred 6 weeks earlier, with 22 observed on 14 Sep at Foul Anchor, and 5 unidentified smaller skuas south over the Ouse Washes on 22nd Sep. **Mediterranean Gull** also put in an appearance on 27th Oct with 2 through Foul Anchor, the latest of 6 records at the usual sort of places. **Little Gull** were also seen at Foul Anchor (27th Oct) and three days later at the Ouse Washes. **Black-headed Gulls** were seen at 17 sites, from farmland to large wetland complexes, with counts at some of the latter building to approx 1000 at Paxton Pits (2nd Oct). **Common Gulls** appear nothing of the sort, with only 3 records – two low counts from WeBS sites and 100 roosting at CEGB Res in Peterborough. Not many **Lesser Black-backs** were around either, with the only significant counts coming from Fowlmere during the Raptor watch and Bedfordshire BigMig days. **Herring Gull**, in contrast, was at 17 sites, with biggest gatherings at Tanholt Pits and Bradley Fen, both in the wider Peterborough area. **Yellow-legged Gull** put in appearances at 7 places, whilst Paxton was the only place to host **Caspian Gull**. **Great Black-backed Gulls** obviously like the company of

Herring, as their favourite sites match well. 27th Oct was the key date for **Kittiwake**, with 17 at Foul Anchor and others at Ouse Fen, Ouse Washes (Earith), Witcham GP. Three days later one was on the dam at Grafham. A late **Sandwich Tern** passed through Woodwalton Fen on 13th Oct, but all the **Common Terns** had gone by the end of September, and the only **Arctic Tern** was on the 22nd Sep (Ouse Washes). Single **Black Terns** passed through Guyhirn/Rings End on 27th Sep and lingered at Paxton Pits 24th Sep to 6th Oct.

Rock Pigeon, more familiar to most of us as the Feral Pigeon, top-scores from farmland, with 200 in a mixed pigeon flock in Haslingfield, but the next-biggest groups were recorded in Cambridge (70) and Wimpole Hall (85). **Stock Dove** must be under-recorded, as the only counts were obtained from Comberton and Haslingfield, of 12 and 30 respectively. **Wood Pigeon** was recorded in a dozen places in groups of more than 100, with big counts at Little Shelford (1000), Soham (400) and Fowlmere on the BigMig (407). **Turtle Doves** lingered into Sep at 7 sites, in small numbers, as did **Cuckoos**, being seen at Farcet Fen (11th Sep) and Ouse Washes (17th Sep). **Barn Owl** chicks were ringed at 3 locations out of the 9 recorded sites. **Little Owls** were only observed at 4 sites, and **Tawnies** from 13, at a time of year when they can be quite vocal establishing territories. **Short-eared Owls** made a re-appearance from mid Oct at 8 locations, including spots where they put on an excellent show last winter. The last **Swifts** were around Cambridge and a few southern villages in the first week of September, and a late one was reported from Paxton on 29th Sep. **Kingfishers** were seen at an encouraging 22 sites, including a peak of 6 at the Ouse Washes, where they tended to be seen over the river channels from the hides. Whilst we received the usual scatter of **Green** and **Great-spotted Woodpecker** records, less anticipated were two **Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers**; one seen on multiple occasions from a private garden south of Cambridge, and the other from Grafham Water. **Jays** arrived in the UK during October, and Cambridgeshire's records must reflect this, with several observers reporting groups moving through or from places not usually known for Jays, e.g. 13th Oct, Woodwalton Fen; "groups of 5, 3, 2, 1 & 1 SW to Monks Wood in an hour. None returned in next hour. Others remained on fen". Sizeable flocks of **Jackdaws** were

observed heading to roost west of Peterborough, with up to 850 on 18th Oct from Ferry Meadows and 575 at Orton Brimbles, 29th Sep. As is usual, they often mix with **Rook** in winter roosts, and the latter Jackdaw count was in addition to 200+ Rooks. Three lucky observers connected with **Raven**, an increasingly regular sight but still worthy of being a description bird, so don't forget to send yours in.

Goldcrests were recorded from across the county, with double figure counts from Fowlmere and Woodwalton Fen, and Wicken Fen had one of the two **Firecrests** reported – the other possibly a returning bird to a previous garden wintering site. Only a handful of titmice records were received of any species, and usually only small numbers, but a count of 20 **Blue Tit** from Holt Island (St Ives) is surely noteworthy (30th Sep)? **Bearded Tits** are becoming an established bird in the county now, seen at 11 sites, in double figures at Kingfisher Bridge, Maxey GP and Ouse Fen (21 on 13th Oct).

We do not often think of **Sky Lark** as migrants, but the counts of 104 moving consistently heading SW over Fowlmere on the Big Mig (14th Oct) and over Woodwalton Fen (13th Oct) well illustrates that they are, and two fortunate observers had **Wood Lark** also on the move on different dates, over Bourn (31st Oct) and Ouse Fen (25th Oct). Hirundines were still around, many migrating through, and some very impressive counts were made, including a large number of **Swallows** and **House Martins** “grounded” in east winds and rain at Ferry Meadows (23rd Sep), with over 800 Swallow and 100 martins. Other large flocks were observed in late September at Grafham Water, Ouse Washes, and Kingfisher Bridge, the latter having 1000 **Sand Martins** on 27th Sep. Some of our birds were still busy breeding, with House Martin broods in Dry Drayton 3rd and Cottenham 29th Sep.

Cetti's Warblers were recorded from a dozen sites, with up to 6 being recorded at Fen Drayton (20th Oct). It's always difficult to know whether **Chiffchaff** observations at this time are summer or winter birds, but nonetheless, counts of 23 and 25 are impressive (Ferry Meadows 22nd Sep, Milton CP 9th Sep). Far fewer records of *Sylvia* warblers were received, but the 3 **Lesser Whitethroats** together in a Cambridge hedgerow were quite likely migrants (3rd Sep), and this species was seen at another dozen sites through September. **Whitethroats** lingered on as well, with up to 3 at the Ouse Washes. Whilst only a

single **Sedge Warbler** was recorded, singing at Chippenham Fen (2nd Sep), **Reed Warblers** hung around reedbeds across the county into October.

As I write, it looks like it will be another good year for **Bohemian Waxwings**, but only one made it into this recording period, at the Ouse Washes RSPB on 30th Oct. **Common Starlings** joined in the late October influx, with several very large counts reported, even from locations not known for their Starling dusk displays, and 2,000 seen migrating over Grafham (28th Oct). Top marks have to go to Needingworth, though, with over 12,000 counted on 25th Oct.

Ring Ouzels were amongst the many autumn migrants to visit the county; observers at six sites connected with this splendid thrush, nearly always seen as singletons; the 6 at Foul Anchor on 27th Oct was an excellent count. Five **Fieldfares** at Ferry Meadows (1st Oct) were forerunners of what has so far proven to be a year of large influx, with large flocks regularly reported by the last few days of October, several sites reporting over 500 birds moving through or on the ground. **Song Thrush**, whether migrants or residents, were far scarcer with only five records (3 ascribed to Continental Song Thrush), although one on the dam at Grafham Water was clearly a migrant. **Redwings** arrived *en masse* with Fieldfares, and whilst never as common, a few flocks of over 200 were found. **Spotted Flycatchers** can breed late, with a family party observed at Caldecote in mid Sep, and a definite migrant in a garden in Girton at the end of the month. **Robins** rarely feature in these accounts, but a likely fall of 9 at Grafham on 29th Sep is worth noting – others may have noticed increased numbers around this time, too. A single **Black Redstart** (24th Oct) at Grunty Fen followed on the heels of several passage **Common Redstarts**, mostly from Ferry Meadows, but also from Crown Lakes, Wimpole, Fowlmere NR and Milton, all in September bar the latter one (1st Oct). Ten **Whinchats** and half a dozen **Stonechats** also passed through the county in 1's and 2's, neither quite matching the numbers and sites for **Wheatear** during the same time; with up to 3 at Ouse Washes reserve on 8th Sep and 1 or 2 at 14 other sites.

Migrating pipits are usual thought of as **Tree Pipit** rather than Meadow, but whereas only one of the former was observed (1st Sep, Ouse Washes) several observers had **Meadow Pipit** migrating, notably over Eaton Ford at roughly 20

birds per hour SW on several occasions. A flock of 120 was counted on the Ouse Washes banks (22nd Sep). By October **Rock Pipits** had appeared at several well-watched sites, including Grafham, Paxton and the Ouse Washes, with up to 4 seen on multiple occasions. **Scandinavian Rock Pipits** seem to pass solely through Paxton Pits but **Water Pipit** is a much scarcer bird, with only one seen, at Eldernell 24th Oct. **Yellow Wagtails** were still widely seen in September, and some large groups were notable on the Ouse Washes; over 100 on 2nd Sep between Fortreys Hall and Stevens Hide was the top score. **Grey Wagtails** never flock, but were noted from 22 locations across the county, a much broader spread of records than for **Pied Wagtail**. The latter's continental sibling, **White Wagtail**, was observed from four sites on passage.

Migration has been the undoubted theme of this edition, and finches have also been on the move, with groups of **Chaffinch** moving west at Paxton Pits (20th Sep) and Haddenham on 14th Oct. **Brambling** from 21 locations highlights further the movement of birds at this time of year, mostly in small groups or singletons, but one to watch for all winter. Only four records of **Greenfinch** may reflect the increasing scarcity of this species, and only one significant count was made, of 25 at Waterbeach Fen. Large flocks (100+) of **Goldfinch** were seen, however, at Wicken and Burwell Fens and Colne Fen GP. **Siskins** were seen at over 25 locations, and several of these held flocks of 20 or more birds,

including Southey Wood, Monks Wood, Paxton Pits, Ferry Meadows, Fowlmere and the Great Fen area between Holme and Woodwalton Fens. Few large flocks of **Linnet** have built up yet, but 170 at Fowlmere (Manor Farm) and 150 at the Ouse Washes is a start of the winter flock season. A single **Twite** record of two birds from the Ouse Washes will need a description for final acceptance. Like Siskin, sizeable **Redpoll** flocks can be a welcome feature of the autumn and winter, and a classic spot is the birch woods of Holme Fen, reflected by the flock of 50+ there on 21st Oct; however, Grafham had more than twice this number on 19th Oct. **Crossbill** is another unpredictable species, with a handful of sightings; Southey Wood is a noteworthy spot with a flock of 20 feeding in the extensive conifers there on 28th Oct. Not to be outdone, a single **Hawfinch** record came from Morborne Hill on 13th Oct to complete the elusive woodland bird collection for the autumn. Our 3 buntings are very much birds of farmland, a less-visited habitat at the time of year when migrants can occupy much of our time and some of our wetlands have been at their prime. A flock of 60 **Yellowhammers** at Barton on 26th Oct is surely a sign of winter flocks to come, and similar numbers of **Reed Bunting** from Colne Fen GP and Paxton reflect the slightly different habitat preferences of this species. A count of 54 **Corn Buntings** at Morborne Hill completes this summary, by the same lucky observer of the Hawfinch mentioned previously.

The Recent Reports were compiled and written by Louise Bacon, assisted by Doug Radford.

Contributors: Colin Addington, David Avis, Louise Bacon, Rowena Baxter, Guy Belcher, Chris Brown, R. Burton, James Cadbury, Joy Cadbury, Lucy Cadbury, David Collins, Ade Cooper, Ali Cooper, Steve Cooper, Andy Cotton, Tim Dee, Ian Dickerson, Steve Dudley, Ian Ellis, Mark Evans, Mike Everett, Mike Foley, Richard Fowling, Don Gardener, Andrew Green, David Griffiths, Dennis Hall, James Hanlon, Vicki Harley, Kevin Harris, Dave Hatton, Wendy Hatton, Mark Hawkes, David Heath, Jonathan Heath, Peter Herkenrath, Michael Holdsworth, David Hollin, David

Hopkins, John Hoppett, Bob Jarman, S. Jarrett, Richard Jones, Colin Kirtland, Charlie Kitchin, John Le Gassick, Vincent Lea, Jono Leadley, Tony Mallyon, Monica Marks, Owen Marks, Bruce Martin, Chris Martin, Gwen Martin, Paul Mason, Duncan McNiven, Matthew Mellor, David Milne, M. J. O'Leary, Dave Palmer, Richard Palmer, John Parslow, Rob Partridge, Gavin Paterson, Richard Patient, Garth Peacock, Mark Peck, Duncan Poyser, Doug Radford, Duncan Ritchie, Tony Roberts, Bill Simmonds, Clive Sinclair, Alan Skull, Bob Smith, Nigel Spowell, Simon Stirrup, Brian Stone, Jonathan Taylor, Richard Thomas, Gary Thornton, Hugh Venables, Mark Ward, John Wells, Barbara York.

From the County Recorder

You will all be familiar with the Club's Excel spreadsheet which lists all the birds that have been recorded in the county. This can be downloaded from the website and it is used by many birders to list their own sightings and to list records to be sent into the Bird Club for inclusion in the county database. Some important changes will take place at the beginning of 2013, and I feel that an

explanation is needed. First, the order of some of the species in the spreadsheet will change from 2013 onwards. Foremost our wish is to bring the species order in line with that of the British List which is managed by the British Ornithological Union Records Committee. And many other organisations such as the BTO now follow the BOU order so there is a sound reason to change. At the practical level, you will have noticed that our Bulletin and our annual Report have followed the BOU order for some time now, and it makes sense to have the database set up in the same order – which will help bulletin and section writers check through the records more easily and efficiently.

There will be a period when both the new and current lists will be available, but I am sure that there will be no need for confusion at the changeover. The current (old) list will still be used for records from the year up to 31st Dec 2012 and the list can be used at any time to enter 2012 records. The changed (new) list should be used for NEW sightings from 1st Jan 2013 and onwards. So for a while the Club's website will have two spreadsheets for downloading: one for 'for records up the end of 2012' and the other 'for NEW records from 1st Jan 2013'. If someone does mistake one list for another, Howard Slatter, Dick Newell, Louise Bacon and myself can oversee the database to check for cross-over, and I would like to thank the three of them for their input. Code numbers will still be ascribed to species and subspecies but the numbers will not relate to the current ones. What I implore therefore is not to mix up the contents of the two lists in any one report, and to ensure that code numbers do not cross over from one list to another.

The second and major change to the species list is a change to the naming of several birds, again to conform with the BOU and others. So now we will no longer have the 'European Robin' – it will be simply the 'Robin'. And the 'Common Blackbird' will become the 'Blackbird'. There will be many more examples of this type of change, but there should be no confusion arising. We are for example not changing 'Red Kite' to 'Kite' as we have two Kite species. But 'Common Buzzard' will become 'Buzzard' which is its colloquial name but it will not be confused with 'Honey-buzzard' as the latter should never be shortened to 'Buzzard' in the UK. And our garden friend the 'Dunnock' will, thankfully, no longer be listed as the 'Hedge Accentor'!

From the Chairman

I am writing these lines in the middle of November, on a chilly late autumn evening after a brilliant day of sunshine. Autumn migration has calmed down but I still hear migrating Redwings calling at night. I have started my Winter Thrushes Survey for the BTO, having chosen a site in Girton close to where I live. My first walk was not the most exciting one but at least I recorded Blackbird, Song Thrush, Fieldfare and Mistle Thrush. Our Club has had a very good relationship with the BTO, supporting the nation-wide surveys including, of course, the Atlas. In the last Bulletin I reported from our joint CBC/BTO/RSPB Raptor Conference and I e-mailed Andy Clements, the BTO Director after the Conference, expressing my satisfaction about the good collaboration with the BTO. Andy wrote back saying "Thanks for taking the time to let me know that our collaboration delivered a successful conference. Feedback from the BTO staff there was also very positive. It is great to be able to rely on support from Cambridgeshire Bird Club in BTO survey and monitoring work. We look forward to a continuing strong collaboration with you." If you have not yet taken up a square for the Winter Thrushes Survey, you can select a square near where you live. In addition, the BTO seeks volunteers for randomly selected squares and several are still available in north Huntingdonshire / Peterborough. Please see the BTO website <http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/winter-thrushes>. Like all survey work it serves not only science but also our enjoyment of getting out and watching birds. Besides our regular monthly meetings, we had a successful joint meeting with the Cambridgeshire Mammal Group when Richard Thomas (known to many members as a keen birder at Ouse Fen) explained to us some significant aspects of the work of the Cambridge-based organisation TRAFFIC in combating illegal trade in wildlife. Many birdwatchers have an interest in mammals as well and the Cambridgeshire Mammal Group is currently preparing a new atlas of the mammals of the

county. There is still time to submit sightings for the atlas to the group; for details please see their website (www.cambsmammalgroup.co.uk) or get in touch with me.

Cambridge is of course a hub for conservation-related groups and the Club is a member of the Cambridge Conservation Forum (CCF). I would like to draw members' attention to the Annual CCF Symposium, which will be held on Thursday 10 January at the Judge Business School in Cambridge. Please check the CCF website for the programme and a booking form (www.cambridgeconservationforum.org.uk). Another Cambridge link is the one to work on the conservation of one of the rarest waders on Earth, the Spoon-billed Sandpiper. Several organisations based near Cambridge are involved with this, including BirdLife International, BTO, RSPB and Wildfowl & Wetland Trust (WWT). In collaboration with the Wildlife Trust, we recently organised the showing of a WWT film about the attempt to secure a captive-bred population of Spoon-billed Sandpipers. Our member Christoph Zöckler has been involved with conservation work for the species for many years, and at the meeting told us about a newly-discovered and hugely important staging site in China, which – like so many other sites along the migration route of the species – is threatened by development.

Let me finish with **two requests**: Firstly, please consider making a submission for the **Bob Scott Prize for Ornithological Research in Cambridgeshire** as highlighted in the last Bulletin. If you know of anyone, who might be eligible, or who could be asked to undertake relevant research, please make them aware of the Bob Scott Prize. More information is available on our website (<http://www.cambridgebirdclub.org.uk/prize.html>) or from me. Submissions for the award in 2013 should be sent to me by 15 January 2013. Secondly, our **Treasurer** will step down at the 2013 AGM and we are looking for a successor. Please get in touch with me if you think you could help the Club with that significant position or if you know of anyone who might be.

I wish all our members a happy Christmas and a great new birdwatching year.

Peter Herkenrath

From the Research Committee

Atlas Update

In the last bulletin, you all received your atlas pre-order form and I have been very pleased with the response – many of you have been keen to take up the offer of a cost-price purchase. We know what sort of things will be mentioned for each species, and the maps are drawn. We have a team of people who have taken a group of species to write, but we have two significant groups of species as yet unadopted. If anyone feels they would like to write species accounts to the prescribed template for either Raptors or Waders I would love to hear from you. Remember as well that you can still send me your atlas pre-publication order during December if you haven't taken advantage of the offer already, or have mislaid your form. Publication is planned to be in March 2013.

Louise Bacon

From the Treasurer

Thank you, to all our members for your valued support throughout the year. Annual subscriptions for 2013 fall due on 1 January 2013. If you do not have a current standing order in place, please ensure that you send a cheque to me as soon as possible. If you wish to start paying by standing order, please let me know and I will send you a form (by post or e-mail).

Subscriptions for 2013 remain unchanged at:	Full	£14
	Senior/Concessionary	£10
	Student	£6

Kevin Harris

Christmas Quiz

The young Perry Green, a gentleman of multifarious talents and interests, whose encyclopaedic knowledge knows no bounds, has this year provided a quiz with a musical theme. Some birds are mentioned more than once. As an incentive to participate, for anyone with a full set of correct answers he will sing at their Karaoke party and entertain with his renowned Elvis impersonations.

1. Which two species can be heard in Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony ?
2. Manfred Mann sang about a Pretty
3. Which bird sang in Berkeley Square?
4. Which birds will be over the white cliffs of Dover?
5. The Ascending.
6. Sweet Suffolk, a madrigal.
7. Rockin', a 1958 song.
8. Which other birds are mentioned in question 7?
9. The dying one was made famous by Anna Pavlova.
10. If I were a, a song by Ronnie Ronalde.
11. In the music hall song My old man said follow the van, which bird was mentioned?
12. Poisoningin the Park.
13. El Pasa, a song by Simon and Garfunkel.
14. The of Tuonela, a work by Sibelius.
15. What is the occupation of Papageno in The Magic Flute?
16. Who couldn't afford to fly to Missouri?
17. The Thieving....., an opera.
18. When call and evening is nigh.
19. River , an opera.
20. Edith Piaf.
21. They sang : Take it Easy and Hotel California.
22. A hit by Fleetwood Mac.
23. The old hooty owl hooty hoos to the
24. A ballet by Stravinsky.
25. They came back to Capistrano in the 1957 song.
26. According to the play, later made into a film, they can't sing.
27. Jenny Lind was known as the Swedish
28. Sheryl, a country singer.
29. They came from Bay City.
30. A composer of church music, born in 1543.
31. O for the wings, for the wings of a
32. A little white, sung by Danny Kaye.
33. Their first record was: Flag Day.
34. What birds might be found in an English country garden?
35. A piano piece by Grieg.
36. Bye bye.....
37. Hold a in the air.
38. On hearing the first in spring.
39. Who was swallowed by the wolf?
40. An easy one for Christmas: who was in a pear tree?

Forthcoming Events

Friday 14th December – Christmas Social at St John's Church Hall, Hills Road, Cambridge

Friday 11th January at St John's Church Hall, Hills Road, Cambridge

Nature Conservation: where have we come from, where are we, and where are we going? By **Mark Avery**

Mark Avery will present his own very personal view of nature conservation. Mark describes himself as an ex-Cambridge undergraduate, ex-RSPB Conservation Director, current birdwatcher, environmental commentator and writer. He is the author of a popular blog, and his recent book Fighting for Birds - 25 years in nature conservation, has had excellent reviews

Friday 8th February 8th at St John's Church Hall, Hills Road, Cambridge

Paradise in Peril: the UK Overseas Territories, their wildlife and conservation by **Mike Pienkowski**
The UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs) and Crown Dependencies (CDs) are part of the UK's sovereign territory, and their citizens are British citizens – but they receive few UK resources. Most of the globally important biodiversity for which the UK is responsible under international agreements

and conventions occurs in UKOTs, which collectively support at least 23 endemic bird species, 23 of reptiles and amphibians, 200 of plants and 500 of invertebrates. Many of these species (and their associated ecosystems) are classified as threatened, and some are in imminent danger of extinction. The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum advances conservation and sustainable environmental management more broadly across the UKOTs.

Dr Mike Pienkowski is Honorary Executive Director, UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum and has managed its programme and various projects over 17 years, and has taken particular interest in the Turks & Caicos Islands and St Helena. He previously worked at Durham University, the Nature Conservancy Council (where, amongst other initiatives, he established and managed the successful programme to re-introduce red kites to England and Scotland).

Monday 28th January at Cottenham Village College

Birds and People: pushing the boundaries by Martin Garner & Tormod Amundsen

In this double presentation Martin Garner will include groundbreaking stories of bird identification, the places and the people. Tormod Amundsen's contribution will feature Arctic Norway: the making of a nature destination.

Martin Garner has made his name with his important publications on bird ID. His popular book *Frontiers in Birding* has sold out. Additionally, he has been a member of BBRC since 2006, an ID consultant to *Birding World*, and was formally an ID consultant for BWPI. Martin is an Evangelist for the Church Army. He will be accompanied by a Norwegian architect and birder Tormod Amundsen (of Biotope). Tormod lives on Vardo Island, Varanger, Arctic Norway and together with Martin, organised the 'Arctic Gullfest'.

GULL IDENTIFICATION MASTERCLASS WITH MARTIN GARNER – check the Club's website or contact Vicki Harley for information on this event.

RSPB CAMBRIDGE LOCAL GROUP

Indoor meetings at St John's, Hills Road, 7.30pm:

Wednesday, 12 December: Christmas Social, with a short talk by Kevin Hand on Saving Asia's Vultures from Extinction (booking: 01954 202354, e-mail: mel_brensmith@hotmail.co.uk)

Wednesday 16 January: The Norfolk Crane Story, by Chris Durdin

WILD BIRD FOOD

Members 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.

Tailpiece

I enjoyed a wonderful couple of days birdwatching on the Norfolk coast in late October, when the combination of north-easterly winds and fog resulted in a large fall of migrants. Blackbirds, Fieldfares and Robins were everywhere, with smaller numbers of Redwings, Goldcrests and Bramblings thronging the bushes and hedgerows. There were also several Ring Ouzels and Black Redstarts to add to the excitement. Inevitably there were a few rarities, with an extremely obliging Red-flanked Bluetail being the highlight as it fed unconcernedly just a few yards from the assembled admirers. Ending the day at Brancaster with the sighting of an Arctic Warbler, I remarked that it was the first I had seen in Britain since one on Fair Isle in 1961. The young lady standing next to me exclaimed in amazement, or maybe it was awe and reverence: "My mother wasn't even born then!" At such times one does begin to feel a little ancient!

Colin Kirtland

NEW MEMBERS.

We welcome the following new members – David Freeman of Great Shelford, Martin O’Leary of Burwell, Mike Reed of Welwyn Garden City, Norman Sills of Hockwold and Geoff Harries of Whaddon.

Club Contacts

Chairman**Peter Herkenrath**

19b Pepys Way, Girton, Cambridge, CB3 0PA

Tel: 01223 276553

Email: chairman@cambridgebirdclub.org.uk**Secretary****Michael Holdsworth**

4(a) Cavendish Avenue, Cambridge, CB1 7US

Tel: 01223 476643

Email: m.holdsworth@ntlworld.com**Treasurer****Kevin Harris**

37 Vicarage Meadow, Stow-cum-Quy, CB25 9AL

Tel: 01223 813085

Email: treasurer@cambridgebirdclub.org.uk**County Recorder****Mike Foley**

141 Shelford Road, Trumpington, CB2 9ND

Tel: 07954 585953

Email: recorder@cambridgebirdclub.org.uk**Meetings Secretary****Vicki Harley**

30 Margett Street, Cottenham, CB24 8QY

Tel: 01954 250340

Email: vicki.harley@care4free.net**Bulletin Editor****Vince Lea**

236 Wimpole Road, Barton, CB23 7AE

Tel: 01223 263962

Email: vincelea@btinternet.com**Annual Report Editor****John Harding**

3 Cotton's Field, Dry Drayton, CB23 8DG

Tel: 01954 780777

Email: johnharding44@googlemail.com**Research Officer****Louise Bacon**

236 Wimpole Road, Barton, CB23 7AE

Tel: 01223 263962

Email: louise.bacon2@btinternet.com**Membership Secretary****Bruce Martin**

178 Nuns Way, Cambridge, CB4 2NS

Tel: 01223 700656

Email: bruce.s.martin@btinternet.com**Website****Chris Quy**

35 Spring Close

Burwell, Cambridge, CB25 0HF

Tel: 01638 743204

Email: webmaster@cambridgebirdclub.org.uk**Ringing Secretary****Michael Holdsworth**

4(a) Cavendish Avenue, Cambridge, CB1 7US

Tel: 01223 476643

Email: m.holdsworth@ntlworld.com**Annual report****John Harding**

3 Cotton's Field, Dry Drayton, CB23 8DG

Tel: 01954 780777

Email: johnharding44@googlemail.com

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 Jan 7th 2013, or send records by post to Mike Foley by Jan 5th. Next Bulletin due out late early February 2013, covering November / December 2012.

GOOD BIRDING!