

CAMBRIDGESHIRE BIRD CLUB

Bulletin No. 431



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

Welcome to the November / December 2013 Edition

From the County Recorder

Firstly, thank you to everyone who has sent records to the club during 2013 – they are greatly appreciated. I would also like to thank Tony Roberts for his hard work collating records from Cambirds posts and from our “What’s About” pages, and to thank Howard Slatter for continuing in his data manager role, making the recorder’s job a lot easier.

Now on to the reminder – those of you who have not sent in your records, now is the time to do so. A full list of the types of record we require is on the club’s website, but the sorts of records of importance are: scarcer or more unusual species, official rarities (remember, you will need to complete our description form for these, and a list is on the website), and for commoner species peak counts, unusual counts or unusual places, early or late dates for seasonal birds, etc. If you use Birdtrack, we do not need your records separately, as we interact with Birdtrack records.

The very best way to supply your bird records is to do it every month, getting things to me by 5th of the following month. But you can wait until the end of the year if you wish; these records will not feature in bulletins but will still contribute to our annual report. Remember that if you think a bird at a particular site is vulnerable to disturbance, it is important still to tell the recorder where it is, but mention the confidential bit – this means that if we get other records from the same site, they can also be withheld. This is most important in the breeding season, but can also be true at other times of year.

Louise Bacon

Editor’s note

I hope you are also reading and enjoying the e-Bulletin which has been available monthly on the club’s website. The recent reports in the e-Bulletin are more detailed and better illustrated than is possible here, and increasingly the printed edition will be a digest of the monthly e-Bulletins.

From now on the e-Bulletin will be emailed direct to paid up members who have given us their email address; the print bulletin can be sent to you in this way too. There is no need to resubmit if you already receive the Bulletins by email, but if you are not receiving them or want to make a change, please contact us at cbcbulletin@cambridgebirdclub.org.uk.

Chris Brown

RECENT BIRD REPORTS November / December 2013

Where no numbers are given, the record relates to a single bird. An asterisk after the name indicates a national or local rarity that requires a description to be sent to the County Recorder.

November Headlines

LONG-TAILED DUCK* Grafham Water (3rd to end of the month), then also throughout December.

There have been 39 previous records in Cambridgeshire.

GREAT WHITE EGRET* Ferry Meadows (4th).

GLOSSY IBIS* Wicken Fen (2 on 2nd), Ouse Washes (10th – 11th), Cam Washes (1 possibly 2 on 16th).

NORTHERN HARRIER* Ouse Washes RSPB (2nd – 12th).

GREY PHALAROPE* Ouse Washes RSPB (2nd – 4th).

GLAUCOUS GULL Milton tip (23rd).

HOODED CROW* Woodwalton Fen (21st – 23rd).

SERIN* Knapwell (heard flying over on 18th).

HAWFINCH Gamlingay (2 flyovers on 17th).

December Headlines

VELVET SCOTER* Grafham Water (a juvenile from 3rd – 22nd), Paxton Pits (presumed same bird as at Grafham, 14th). There have been 45 previous records in Cambridgeshire.

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER* Grafham Water (26th – 31st), Paxton Pits (a juvenile 28th – 31st). There have been 68 previous records in Cambridgeshire.

SHAG Fen Drayton Lakes (a sub-adult 26th – 31st), Paxton Pits (30th).

ICELAND GULL Witcham (following the plough 2nd and 3rd), Ferry Meadows CP (2nd and 6th), Ouse Washes (4th), Grafham Water (a first-winter 8th – 17th), Tanholt GP (2 juveniles on 24th, single on 28th).

GLAUCOUS GULL Bradley Fen (a first-winter on 1st), King's Dyke NR (1st), Fen Drayton Lakes (a first-winter on 7th, 14th, 21st and 22nd), Ferry Meadows CP (7th), Grafham Water (an immature on 8th – 30th), Milton tip (first calendar year on 23rd – 28th and 2 juveniles on 30th and 31st).

LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER Brampton Wood (28th).

Wildfowl

Mute Swan **Nov:** Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 408 on 25th). **Dec:** counts over 50 Ouse Washes RSPB (301 on 16th), Ouse Fen (126 on 22nd), Farcet Fen (58 on 31st).

Bewick's Swan **Nov:** Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum roost count 51 on 25th). **Dec:** Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 112 on 9th), Nene Washes (40 on 10th), Kingfisher's Bridge (2 on 15th), Grafham Water (2 on 22nd), Paxton Pits (2 on 25th), Littleport (6+ on 28th).

Whooper Swan **Nov:** Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum roost count 3175 on 25th), Wicken Fen (4 on 15th, 6 on 25th), Nene Washes (max 500 on 23rd). **Dec:** March – Binnimoor Fen (160 on 1st), Nene Washes (maximum 300 on 1st), Kingfishers Bridge (6 roosted on 3rd and 26th), Sutton North Fen (max 86 on 7th), Ouse Washes RSPB (max 2913 on 9th), Lt Downham Westmoor Common (450 on 15th), Ely BF (10 on 22nd and 24th), Littleport (350+ on 28th). *The Ouse Washes count was a record for November in the county; the number of Whooper Swans on the Ouse Washes has increased dramatically in recent years.*

Pink-footed Goose **Nov:** Ferry Meadows CP (36 flyovers on 30th).

Greylag Goose counts over 100 **Nov:** Ely Roswell Pits (210 on 30th), Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 600 on 11th). **Dec:** Colne Fen GP (maximum 493 on 1st), Sutton North Fen (max 630 on 1st), Barleycraft GP (max 459 on 15th), and at 12 other sites. *This gives a county-wide total of 2000 to 4000 depending on movement of flocks. The December counts have at least doubled over the last twenty years.*

Canada Goose counts over 100 **Nov:** Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 435 on 11th). **Dec:** Cam Washes Upware (105 on 2nd), Godmanchester GP (maximum 105 on 10th), Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 384 on 16th), Kingfishers Bridge (144 on 26th).

Barnacle Goose **Nov:** Ouse Washes RSPB (11th). **Dec:** Cambridge University (West Cambridge Site, 10 on 6th), Sutton North Fen (17 on 7th), Hinxton (11 on 17th and 19th), Granta Science Park (11 on 20th) Wicken Fen (5 on 22nd). *The Cambridge/Hinxton/Granta Park birds may be the same wandering group.*

Brent Goose **Nov:** Fen Drayton Lakes (10 on 15th).

Egyptian Goose **Nov:** Fen Drayton Lakes (15+ on 17th), Ouse Fen (2 on 17th), Ouse Washes RSPB (5 on 11th), Paxton Pits (2 on 30th). **Dec:** At 11 sites along the Ouse valley (maximum 8 at Ouse Fen on 15th), and also at Eltisely (8th), Waterbeach Fen (1 on 8th), and Kingfishers Bridge (2 on 23rd and 27th).

Shelduck **Nov:** Ouse Washes RSPB, Paxton Pits (a drake on 30th). **Dec:** Barleycraft (1st), Grafham Water (single on 6th and 2 on 15th), Paxton Pits (2 on 14th single on 15th and 2 and 22nd), Ouse Washes (16th), Kingfishers Bridge (4 on 30th), and Godmanchester GP (27th).

Mandarin **Nov:** Paxton Pits (2 females on 16th). **Dec:** Wimpole Park (4 on 8th), Hinchinbrooke CP (13th), Hauxton (4 on 28th).

Wigeon counts over 500 **Nov:** Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 18471 on 25th), Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen and Mere, maximum c2660 on 20th). **Dec:** Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 28964 on 16th), Barleycraft GP (747 on 15th), Wicken Fen – Baker's Fen (c1320 on 26th), Fen Drayton Lakes (max 2500 on 30th).

Gadwall counts over 100 **Nov:** Ouse Washes RSPB (max 115 on 11th), Wicken Fen (max 120 on 12th).

Dec: Ferry Meadows CP (125 on 1st), Fenstanton GP (188 on 9th), Ouse Fen (maximum 187 on 15th), Wicken Fen (maximum 170 on 16th).

Teal counts over 100 **Nov:** Wicken Fen Baker's Fen and Mere (maximum 337 on 19th), Ouse Washes RSPB (2045 on 11th). **Dec:** Colne Fen (378 on 1st), Wicken Fen (maximum 600+ on 4th), Berry Fen (320 on 15th), Grafham Water (maximum 379 on 15th), Ouse Fen (233 on 15th), Ouse Washes (maximum 4044 on 16th), Kingfishers Bridge (maximum 162 on 18th), and Fen Drayton Lakes (430+ on 30th).

Mallard counts over 100 **Nov:** Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 1640 on 11th), Wicken Fen (maximum 448 on 12th). **Dec:** Holme Fen (175 on 8th), Sutton North Fen (maximum 118 on 14th), Grafham Water (maximum 300 on 15th), Ouse Fen (131 on 15th), Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 1423 on 16th), Wicken Fen (max 213 on 16th), River Cam Cambridge - Owlstone to Chesterton (214 on 28th, 35% females).

Pintail **Nov:** Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 81 on 11th), Wicken Fen (maximum 6 on 4th). **Dec:** Nene Washes (maximum 200 on 8th), Ouse Washes RSPB (482 on 16th), Fen Drayton Lakes (max 29 on 30th), 1 – 10 at Berry Fen, Colne Fen GP, Kingfishers Bridge, Ouse Fen, Paxton Pits and Wicken Fen.

Shoveler **Nov:** Wicken Fen Baker's Fen and Mere (c50 on 19th), Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 129 on 25th). **Dec:** counts over 100 Ouse Fen (152 on 4th), Grafham Water (maximum 109 on 15th), Ouse Washes RSPB (221 on 16th), Fen Drayton Lakes (maximum 125 on 22nd).

Red-crested Pochard **Nov:** Fen Drayton Lakes (a pair 9th – 11th and a single on 30th), Ouse Washes RSPB (11th), Milton CP (a female on 12th – 13th). **Dec:** Milton CP (female on 1st), Paxton Pits (1st – 28th one or two drakes and an occasional female), Fen Drayton Lakes (drake on 3rd).

Pochard **Nov:** Wicken Fen (2 on 12th), Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 780 on 25th). **Dec:** counts over 100 Fen Drayton Lakes (174 on 14th), Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 266 on 16th), Waterbeach Fen (118 on 20th), Cambridge Research Park aka Waterbeach GP (maximum 129 on 22nd).

Tufted Duck **Nov:** Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 593 on 11th). **Dec:** counts over 100 Godmanchester GP (maximum 211 on 2nd), Earith GP (109 on 14th), Barleycraft GP (119 on 15th), Grafham Water (1534 on 15th), Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 168 on 16th).

Scaup **Nov:** Grafham Water (adult female from 3rd – 12th). **Dec:** Grafham Water (1st – 14th), Paxton Pits (single on 7th, 2 on 14th, a single on 15th, and 3 on 30th).

Common Scoter **Nov:** Grafham Water (4 on 2nd, singles on 3rd, 11th, 12th, 26th and 30th). **Dec:** Grafham Water (single 6th – 8th and 2 on 31st), and Waterbeach Fen (7th).

Goldeneye **Nov:** Grafham Water (max 43 on 26th), Paxton Pits (20+ on 17th), Ouse Washes RSPB (a single on 11th, and 2 on 25th). **Dec:** Grafham Water (max 192 on 15th), and 1 – 5 reported from six other sites.

Smew Nov: Fen Drayton Lakes (3 redheads on 30th), Paxton Pits (a redhead on 30th). **Dec:** Paxton Pits, Barleycraft GP, Fen Drayton Lakes, and Needingworth GPs had counts ranging from 1 to 7 for most of the month, singles at Grafham Water (8th and 31st).

Goosander Nov: Ouse Washes RSPB (3rd), Wicken Fen (a female on 15th and 2 males on 25th), Grafham Water (7 on 25th, a single on 26th and 3 on 30th), singles at two other sites. **Dec:** Grafham Water (1 – 15 from 1st to 22nd), Maxey Pit (15 with 2 nearby, on 18th), Paxton Pits (a drake on 25th and 2 on 30th), singles at three sites.

Ruddy Duck Nov: 1 – 3 birds recorded at three locations during the period.

Gamebirds

Grey Partridge Nov: Wicken Fen (5 on 1st), Comberton Westfield Farm (18 on 13th). **Dec:** counts over 20 Nine Wells (maximum 26+ on 6th), Trumpington Clay Farm (maximum 21 on 8th); also reported from Burwell Fen, Colne Fen GP, Comberton and Eversden.

Divers, shearwaters, gannet and cormorants

Red-throated Diver* Dec: Fowlmere NR (1st). *Probably the first county record south of Cambridge city.*

Cormorant Nov: Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 23 on 11th), Wicken Fen (maximum 40 on 15th). **Dec:** counts over 30 Barleycraft (80+ in a roost on 1st), Godmanchester GP (maximum 92 on 10th), Grafham Water (38 on 15th), Wicken Fen (maximum 45 on 17th), 20+ at five other sites.

Egrets and herons

Bittern Nov: reported from Woodwalton Fen (Gordon's Mere), Ouse Fen (2 on 30th), Wicken Fen.

Dec: Ouse Fen (2 on 15th), Kingfishers Bridge (8th and 30th), Woodwalton Fen (26th), and Grafham Water (31st).

Little Egret Nov: reported from Fen Drayton Lakes (maximum 20+ into roost on 16th), and six other sites. **Dec:** counts over 10 Grafham Water (maximum 15 on 1st), Godmanchester GP (maximum 12 on 10th), Ouse Fen (maximum 12 on 15th), smaller numbers at nine other sites.

Grey Heron Nov: Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 26 on 11th). **Dec:** counts over 10 Ouse Fen (12 on 15th), Ouse Washes RSPB (15 on 16th).

Grebes

Little Grebe Nov: reported from Milton CP (4 on 12th), Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 10 on 11th). **Dec:** Bradley Fen (maximum 7 on 1st and on 15th), Colne Fen (maximum 19 on 1st).

Great Crested Grebe Nov: reported from Milton CP, Ouse Washes RSPB (3 on 25th). **Dec:** counts over 10 Bradley Fen (maximum 12 on 6th and 8th), Fen Drayton Lakes (maximum 14 on 6th), Godmanchester (maximum 56 on 10th), Hinchinbrooke CP (13 on 13th), Grafham Water (maximum 383 on 15th).

Slavonian Grebe* Dec: Grafham Water (4th).

Black-necked Grebe Nov: Grafham Water (2 on 3rd and singles on 10th, 11th and 25th). **Dec:** Grafham Water (1st – 4th).

Raptors

Red Kite Nov: Woodwalton Fen (13th), Nene Washes (3 on 23rd), Grafham Water (2 on 26th). **Dec:** reported from 13 sites in the north and west of the county including Tanholt GP (3+ on 29th), with only two records in the south (Madingley and Wandlebury).

Marsh Harrier Nov: Nene Washes Eldernell (maximum 6+ on 2nd), Burwell Fen (2 females on 3rd, male on 16th), Ouse Fen, Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 14 on 11th), Woodwalton Fen (maximum 5+ on 13th), Wicken Fen (maximum 3 on 17th), Little Wilbraham Fen (20th), Ely BF (30th).

Dec: at all the above sites (maximum Ouse Washes 11), plus Kingfishers Bridge (maximum 4). *This suggests a minimum winter population of 30 + birds in the county; in the year 2000 this species was described in the CBR as 'rare in winter' with not a single record.*

Hen Harrier Nov: Great Fen (wing-tagged male on 7th – 13th), Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 5+ on 6th), Wicken Fen (maximum 4) and singles at Tubney Fen, Ouse Fen, and Farcet Fen. **Dec:** Molesworth (7th), Cam Washes (ringtail on 8th), Bradley Fen (15th), Great Fen Trundle Mere (untagged male on 4th),

Waterbeach Fen (8th), Wicken Fen (maximum 2 males and 2 females on 15th), Earith (2 on 24th). An 'orange' bird on the Nene Washes (1st – 17th) was considered to be a possible 'Northern' Harrier.

Sparrowhawk Nov: at Barton, Burwell Fen, Comberton, Paxton Pits, Woodwalton Fen, Wicken Fen.

Buzzard Nov: Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 7 on 11th) and reported from 8 other sites including Wentworth (an exceptionally white bird). **Dec:** reported from 26 sites across the county.

Kestrel Nov: Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 8 on 25th), Swaffham Prior Fen/Tubney Fen (4 on 2nd).

Merlin Nov: Ouse Washes RSPB (immature male on 4th), Woodwalton Fen (13th). **Dec:** Wicken Fen (2nd), Buckden (5th), Fowlmere (a female on 9th), Holme Fen (maximum 2 on 22nd), Needingworth (24th), Ouse Fen (30th).

Peregrine Nov: Barton Lark Rise Farm (2 on 2nd), Cambridge (1 – 2 throughout the month seen on King's College Chapel, Catholic Church, Addenbrooke's Hospital and St Giles Church), Little Wilbraham Fen (2 on 20th), and 9 other sites. **Dec:** Cambridge (1 – 2 reported at various times and in various parts of the city), Peterborough Power Station (all month), Tubney Fen (one interested in the Starling roost on 18th), and pairs or singles at 7 other sites.

Rails

Water Rail Nov: reported from Burwell Fen, Little Wilbraham Fen (2 on 20th), Nene Washes Eldernell (5+ on 10th), Ouse Fen, Ouse Washes RSPB, Wicken Fen (maximum 5 on 15th) and Woodwalton Fen (4 on 13th). **Dec:** reported from 17 separate sites including Wicken Fen (maximum 5 on 17th, and a female caught and ringed same day).

Moorhen Dec: counts over 20 Godmanchester GP (28 on 2nd), Nene Washes (31 on 9th), River Cam Bait's Bite to Clayhithe (58 on 15th) and Owlstone to Chesterton (33 on 28th).

Coot Nov: Milton CP (130 on 12th), Ouse Washes RSPB (800 on 25th). **Dec:** Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 1097 on 16th), Grafham Water (609 on 15th), and 7 other sites with counts of 100 – 300.

Common Crane Nov: Nene Washes Eldernell (4 – 7 all month, maximum 18 on 25th). **Dec:** Eldernell/Guyhirn (maximum 13 on 1st), Wicken Fen (2, maybe 3 seen and heard regularly from early December).

Waders

Oystercatcher Nov: Ouse Washes RSPB (70 on 25th).

Golden Plover counts over 500 Nov: Ouse Fen (1200 on 17th), Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 600 on 4th), Swaffham Prior Fen/Tubney Fen (850 on 2nd). **Dec:** Wicken Fen (2000 on 1st), Barleycraft GP (c500 on 1st), Ouse Fen (maximum 600 on 5th), Haddenham/Aldreth Fens (c3500 on 9th), Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 8133 on 16th), Trumpington Clay Farm (500 on 15th).

Lapwing Nov: Ouse Fen (maximum 2000 on 17th) Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 6439 on 25th). **Dec:** 500+ at Kingfishers Bridge (600 on 3rd), Berry Fen (maximum c600 on 5th), Haddenham/Aldreth Fens (c1500 on 9th), Barleycraft GP (3640 on 15th), Little Fen (2150 on 15th), Paxton Pits (600 on 15th), Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 29020 on 16th), Wicken Fen (742 on 16th), Ouse Fen (maximum 2250 on 22nd).

Curlew Nov: Paxton Pits (16th). **Dec:** Ouse Washes Welches Dam (17th).

Black-tailed Godwit Nov: Fen Drayton Lakes (212 on 12th), Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 184 on 25th). **Dec:** Paxton Pits (10 on 28th), Wicken Fen (125 on 29th), Overcote (322 on 29th), Fen Drayton Lakes (250 on 30th), Ouse Washes Earith (c100 on 31st).

Ruff Nov: Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 112 on 11th). **Dec:** Little Fen (15th), Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 75 on 16th), Berry Fen (22nd – 27th), Earith (3 on 24th), Overcote (78 on 29th), Paxton Pits (40 flyovers on 28th), Fen Drayton Lakes (55 on 30th).

Dunlin Nov: Paxton Pits (10th and 30th), Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 8 on 11th). **Dec:** Ouse Fen (11 on 15th), Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 58 on 15th), Berry Fen (maximum 20 on 19th), Earith (11 on 24th), Barleycraft GP (28th), Fen Drayton Lakes (20 on 30th). *For the above three species these records suggest some evidence of a late December influx, perhaps due to flooding elsewhere, or maybe passage.*

Green Sandpiper Nov: reported from Paxton Pits (maximum 2 on 10th) and 6 other sites. **Dec:** 1-3 reported from Burwell Fen and 10 other sites.

Redshank Nov: Grafham Water, Ouse Fen (3 on 17th), Paxton Pits (maximum 5 on 10th) and Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 13 on 25th). **Dec:** Grafham Water (13 on 15th), Ouse Washes (52 on 16th), Earith (24th), Cam Washes Upware (8 on 26th), Overcote (39 on 29th) and 1 – 4 at six other sites.

Jack Snipe Nov: Witchford (14th). **Dec:** Ouse Washes RSPB, King's Dyke NR (maximum 2 on 1st), Paxton Pits (19th), Bradley Fen (22nd).

Woodcock Nov: Comberton (13th), Wicken Fen (13th, 14th), Witchford (14th), Haddenham (14th), Holme (15th), Woodwalton Fen (2 on 24th), Paxton Pits (30th). *A typical autumn arrival of this species; although often a little earlier, there is always a group of records around a few close dates in November.* **Dec:** 1 – 3 reported from 10 sites including Castor Hanglands (exceptionally 7 on 1st and 4 on 8th).

Snipe Nov: Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 19 on 11th). **Dec:** counts over 20 Berry Fen (31 on 12th), Ouse Washes Earith (c40 on 31st).

Skuas, auks, terns and gulls

Arctic Skua* Dec: Wicken Fen (4th after a storm).

Arctic Tern Nov: Grafham Water (2nd and 10th).

Black-headed Gull Dec: counts over 500 Bradley Fen (600 on 1st), Swaffham Bulbeck (minimum 1500 in two recently ploughed fields on 13th), Melbourn (750 on 15th), Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 738 on 16th), Tanholt GP (1000 on 21st), Fen Drayton Lakes (c3300 on 22nd), Milton tip (800+ on 27th).

Mediterranean Gull Nov: Grafham Water (an adult on 3rd), Paxton Pits (2nd). **Dec:** Grafham Water (an adult on 15th and 30th), Fen Drayton Lakes (a 1st winter bird on 30th and 31st).

Common Gull Dec: Fen Drayton Lakes (145 roosting on 22nd).

Lesser Black-backed Gull Dec: counts 50 and over Melbourn (81 on 15th), Trumpington Clay Farm (70 on 15th), Milton tip (maximum 350 on 30th), Ouse Fen (66 on 29th).

Herring Gull Dec: counts over 40 Bradley Fen (maximum 300 on 8th), Wicken Fen (47 on 16th), Tanholt GP (50 on 21st), Milton tip (700+ on 27th).

Yellow-legged Gull Nov: Grafham Water (4 on 3rd, single on 12th), Fen Drayton Lakes (16th). **Dec:** Milton Tip (and 11 on 24th), and 1 – 4 at nine other sites.

Caspian Gull Nov: Grafham Water (an adult on 3rd and 10th), Paxton Pits (2nd, 10th) and Fen Drayton Lakes (3+ on 15th). **Dec:** 1 – 2 reported from Dogsthorpe tip, Fen Drayton Lakes, Grafham Water, Impington Lake, Kingfishers Bridge, Milton Tip, Paxton Pits, and Tanholt GP (3 on 24th).

Great Black-backed Gull Dec: Bradley Fen (140 on 15th), Kingfishers Bridge (540 on 18th), Milton tip (maximum over 440 on 31st).

Doves, cuckoo, owls kingfisher and woodpeckers

Stock Dove Dec: counts of 20 plus, Earith GP (20 on 14th), Fen Drayton Lakes (149 roosting with Cormorants on 22nd), Harlton (25 on 29th).

Woodpigeon Dec: Wicken Fen (2000-3000 out of roost on 17th).

Collared Dove Dec: Melbourn (116 on 15th).

Ring-necked Parakeet* Nov: Cambridge (16th), Cherry Hinton (23rd), and St Ives (flyover 27th). **Dec:** Cambridge Hartingdon Grove (2nd and 12th).

Barn Owl Nov: reported from 5 sites including Ouse Washes (2 on 26th), Comberton (a very late brood in a nest box with a fluffy youngster seen on 27th). **Dec:** reported from 12 sites across the county.

Little Owl Nov: Nene Washes Eldernell. **Dec:** Fen Drayton Lakes, Haddon, Wicken Fen Baker's Fen.

Tawny Owl Nov: Woodwalton Fen (maximum 3 on 10th). **Dec:** reported from Castor Hanglands (3 on 8th), Great Fen, Over (2), Rampton, Toft and Wicken Fen (more than one on 10th).

Short-eared Owl Nov: Ouse Washes RSPB (4th), Burwell Fen (2 on 7th), Nene Washes Eldernell (10th and 2 on 23rd), Ouse Fen (10th and 30th), Great Fen (11th) and Paxton Pits (24th). **Dec:** reported from Burwell Fen, Great Fen Trundle Mere (maximum 7 on 28th with 4 more nearby), Kingfishers Bridge and Wicken Fen (29th).

Kingfisher Nov: reported from Burwell Fen, Kingston old railway NR, Ouse Fen, Paxton Pits (2 on 10th) and Wicken Fen. **Dec:** at 25 sites including Cambridge (several places), and Great Fen sites.

Great Spotted Woodpecker **Nov:** Paxton Pits (a bird heard drumming on 30th).

Shrikes and corvids

Great Grey Shrike* **Nov:** Great Fen Holme (from 1st and a second bird from the 10th; these two birds were separated by a couple of miles), Ouse Washes Pymore (2nd – 3rd). **Dec:** Great Fen Holme Fen (two birds still present from 1st and at least one until 26th).

Magpie **Dec:** St Neots Pocket Park (54 in a roost on 8th), Trumpington Clay Farm (25 on 21st).

Jackdaw **Dec:** counts over 500 Croydon (1600 on 14th), Huntingdon (c1000 on 31st).

'Nordic' Jackdaw **Dec:** Fen Drayton Lakes (22nd).

Jackdaw/Rook **Dec:** Wicken Fen (roost all month, with dawn dispersal 3000-5000 on 17th), Waterbeach barracks (mixed flock of 1000+ on 24th).

Rook **Dec:** largest counts Croydon (840 on 14th), Harlton (1400 on 29th), Huntingdon (3000 on 31st).

Carrion Crow **Nov:** Barton Countryside Restoration (37 on 7th), Ouse Washes RSPB (75 on 25th). **Dec:** counts over 50 Ouse Washes (50 on 16th), Fen Drayton Lakes (75 on 22nd), Holme Fen (240 on 24th), Wicken Fen (maximum c300 on 15th).

Raven* **Nov:** Ferry Meadows CP (2 flyovers on 12th and 25th), Orton Waterville (2 flyovers on 19th).

Dec: Castor Hanglands (one heard on 1st and 3 on 8th), Brownhill Stauch (a pair on 14th and 15th).

Crests, tits and larks

Coal Tit **Nov:** Chippenham Fen (42 ringed this year giving a sense of a large population there).

The new national Atlas 2007-11 shows this species to be expanding on the outer fringes of its distribution, and also interestingly in Eastern England including into fenland.

Marsh Tit **Nov:** reported from Chippenham Fen, Great Fen. **Dec:** reported from Grafham Water (5 on 1st), and Holme Fen.

Bearded Tit reported from **Nov:** Woodwalton Fen (3 on 13th), Ouse Fen, Wicken Fen (maximum 5 on 16th). **Dec:** Godmanchester GP, Kingfishers Bridge, King's Dyke NR, Ouse Fen and Wicken Fen.

Hirundines, long-tailed tit and warblers

Swallow **Nov:** Ouse Washes (2 on 6th – latest record this year).

Sand Martin Wicken Fen (a bird caught on September 9th had been ringed just 2 days previously at Stockton on Tees and thus travelled 275km in that time).

Cetti's Warbler **Nov:** reported from Nene Washes Eldernell, Ouse Fen and Wicken Fen (maximum 5 on 16th and 17th). **Dec:** reported from 10 sites, maximum again at Wicken Fen (4 on 16th).

Long-tailed Tit Wicken Fen (a bird retrapped in December was just over 6.5 years old.)

Chiffchaff **Nov:** Fen Drayton Lakes (15th), Wicken Fen (15th and 17th), Cam Washes (18th), Paxton Pits (2 on 30th). **Dec:** at 7 sites including Paxton Pits (maximum 3 on 7th) and Fen Drayton Lakes (3 on 14th, 2 on 19th), and a bird of the sub-species *tristis* also called **Siberian Chiffchaff*** on 30th and 31st).

Blackcap **Nov:** Wicken Fen (a single caught and ringed on 17th). **Dec:** Yelling (9th), Cambridge East Chesterton (female on 23rd), Melbourn (male on 25th).

Waxwing, nuthatch, treecreeper, wren, starling and thrushes

Waxwing **Nov:** Fowlmere (heard on 29th).

Nuthatch **Nov:** reported from Chippenham Fen and from Hare Park Six Mile Bottom (first to be seen in fifteen years). **Dec:** reported from Fulbourn Fen and Littless Wood. *There is more discussion of this species in the December e-Bulletin; all sightings are welcomed.*

Starling **Dec:** counts over 1000 Tubney Fen (maximum pre-roost gathering of c 5000), Ouse Fen (10000 on 16th but not since), Godmanchester GP (2500 on 27th).

Blackbird **Dec:** Castor Hanglands (85 on 28th), Wicken Fen (possible influx with 28 birds ringed in Dec).

Fieldfare **Nov:** Swaffham Prior Fen/Tubney Fen (c100 on 2nd), Ouse Washes RSPB (343 on 11th). **Dec:** counts over 100 Little Wilbraham Fen (120 on 11th), Wicken Fen (150 on 16th), Farcet Fen (112 on 25th), Great Abington (c100 on 26th). *Observers have noted the lack of the normal flocks of Fieldfares and Redwings; numbers seem to be quite low and they may have moved west more promptly than usual.*

Redwing **Dec:** counts over 50 Godmanchester (70 on 10th), Hinxton (61 on 17th).

Starts and chats

Stonechat Nov: Burwell Fen (male on 7th, 2 or 3 on 10th, single on 16th), Great Fen (8th), Ouse Fen (10th – 15th), Ouse Washes (2 on 26th). **Dec:** Nene Washes (1st), and 1-2 all month at Burwell Fen, Great Fen, Ouse Washes (maximum 3 on 16th), and Wicken Fen.

Sparrows, wagtails and pipits

House Sparrow Dec: Melbourn (90 on 15th).

Tree Sparrow Nov: Orton BP (15 on 17th). **Dec:** Orton BP (3 on 1st, 7 on 14th and 9 on 28th), Farcet Fen (maximum 19 on 3rd), Melbourn (2 on 15th), Wicken Fen (8th and 10th).

Grey Wagtail Dec: reported from 11 wetland and river side sites and Bar Hill.

Pied Wagtail Nov: Cambridge Addenbrooke's Hospital (roost of c650 on 5th and 12th), Ouse Washes RSPB (31 on 11th). **Dec:** Whittlesford/Sawston (roost of 300 – 500 on 26th at BP garage/McDonalds).

Rock Pipit Nov: Paxton Pits (9th).

Water Pipit Nov: Ouse Washes (2 on 12th, single maybe 2 on 26th). **Dec:** Ouse Washes (7th).

Finches and buntings

Chaffinch Dec: counts over 50 Farcet Fen (51 on 28th), Orton BP (63 on 28th).

Brambling Nov: reported from Six Mile Bottom (6 on 2nd). **Dec:** Holme Fen (10th), Overhall Grove (c20 on 20th), Paxton Pits (23rd).

Greenfinch Dec: Bottisham (a bird found dying had been ringed at Wicken 8 years previously).

Goldfinch Nov: flocks of 50+ Wicken Fen (c200 on 1st), Swaffham Prior Fen/Tubney Fen (60 on 2nd).

Dec: counts over 75 Nene Washes (75 on 8th), Burwell Fen (100+ on 17th), Bradley Fen (80 on 22nd), Holme Fen (84 on 28th).

Siskin Nov: reported from Chippenham Fen (including a single bird ringed on 23rd), Paxton Pits (6 on 30th), Woodwalton Fen (6 on 13th). **Dec:** Chippenham Fen (10 on 5th), Nine Wells (6+ on 6th), Paxton Pits (2 on 8th), Grafham Water (28 on 15th), Fen Drayton Lakes (3 on 14th), Milton CP (3+ on 25th).

Linnet Nov: Swaffham Prior Fen/Tubney Fen (flock of 70 on 2nd).

Lesser Redpoll Nov: reported from Chippenham Fen, Paxton Pits, Upware, Wicken Fen, Woodwalton Fen. **Dec:** Ferry Meadows (30 all month), Paxton Pits (c30 on 7th), Holme Fen (40+ on 10th and 24th).

Mealy Redpoll Nov: Upware (2 possible among a small flock on 16th). **Dec:** Ferry Meadows CP (1 – 2 with Lesser Redpolls 11th – 19th).

Crossbill Nov: Great Shelford (flyover on 18th). **Dec:** Fen Drayton Lakes (14th).

Yellowhammer Dec: counts over 50 Melbourn (90 on 15th), Burwell (c50 on 26th).

Corn Bunting Dec: Holme Fen (c100 on 22nd), Paxton Pits (15 on 1st).

Contributors: Colin Addington, David Avis, Louise Bacon, Rowena Baxter, Guy Belcher, Chris Brown, Roger Buisson, Malcolm Busby, Howard Butler, James Cadbury, Tim Caldicott, Ade Cooper, Steve Cooper, Andy Cotton, Pauline Cozens, Carole Davis, Martin Davis, Tim Dee, Brendan Doe, Steve Dudley, Judith Dunkling, Mark Eaton, Mike Everett, Mike Foley, Don Gardener, Simon Gillings, David Green, Paul Gallagher, Dennis Hall, James Hanlon, Ron Harold, Jeff Harrison, Mark Hawkes, David Heath, Jonathan Heath, Simon Henderson, Michael Holdsworth, David Hollin, David Hopkins, C. Hothersall, Sue Jarrett, Josh Jones, Richard Johnson, Colin Kirtland, Charlie Kitchin, Vincent Lea, John Lindsell, Tony Mallyon, Bob Mansfield, Monica Marks, Owen Marks, Bruce Martin, Paul Mason, Donal McCarthy, Duncan McNiven, Matthew Mellor, Andy Merryweather, M. J. O'Leary, Daniel Osborne, Dave Palmer, Richard Palmer, John Parslow, Gavin Paterson, Richard Patient, Pam Peacock, Robert Pluck, Rob Pople, Doug Radford, Duncan Ritchie, Tony Roberts, RSPB Reserves, John Saunders, Ralph Sergeant, Chris Shurlock, Clive Sinclair, Howard Slatter, Bob Smith, Claire Spottiswoode, Brian Stone, Kevin Taylor, Richard Thomas, Andrew Tongue, Chris Thorne and the Wicken Fen Group, Hugh Venables, Mark Ward, Matt Webb, Jamie Wells, John Wells, Chris Went, Gwyn and Audrey Williams, Kevan Wolstencroft, Barbara York. *Recent reports were compiled by Peter Bircham and edited for this bulletin by Chris Brown. As usual, apologies if your name has been missed from the list.*

CBC Photo of the Year 2013 entries are now presented on the Club's website. Please visit and follow the instructions there to cast your votes. Voting closes on Feb 23rd.

<http://cambridgebirdclub.org.uk/POTY2013.html>

The Great Fen

It is a busy and productive time at the Great Fen, where work continues to create a Living Landscape of wetland habitats over 3,700 hectares, connecting and protecting Woodwalton Fen and Holme Fen National Nature Reserves. Working together, the project partners (Environment Agency, Huntingdonshire District Council, Middle Level Commissioners, Natural England, and the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire) now own 55.5% of the project area. By December 2013 1519 hectares (41%) will be managed for nature conservation. In 2008 the Great Fen was awarded a record breaking grant of £7.2 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the purchase and restoration of the Holmewood Estate in the north of the project area. Matched funding was raised from donors, grant giving trusts, and Wildlife Trust members and supporters. The HLF funded project has been a fantastic success. Land has been restored, wildlife is returning and people have much greater physical and intellectual access to the existing nature reserves, to restored land, and to the wealth of recorded heritage which has been collated by staff and volunteers.

This year additional HLF funding has created the opportunity to restore a further 182 hectares at Engine Farm. This is land of the highest priority for restoration, as it connects with other restored areas. It will also enable the Great Fen to create new footpaths and cycle routes, and to offer public engagement and volunteering opportunities including exploring the history and pre-history of the site of Whittlesey Mere. A major fundraising campaign has been launched to secure the necessary matched funding for the HLF grant - see www.greatfen.org.uk/appeal

The Great Fen is for people as well as for wildlife, and the Education and Community team based at the Wildlife Trust's Countryside Centre at Ramsey Heights continues to offer programmes for schools, families, community groups and volunteers. A local group of volunteers goes from strength to strength, as do the Volunteer Rangers who provide the "public face" of the Great Fen and assist visitors at weekends. The Great Fen's first Information Point at New Decoy Farm on the B660 (including a bird hide and way marked trail) is now open, and a recent architectural competition has produced a winning design for a visitor centre which it is hoped to build in the next 5-7 years.

Kate Carver - Great Fen Project Manager

Great Fen Birds

Although the Great Fen was first conceived many years ago, and the first land purchased in 2002, much of the land restoration is still in its early stages. Some areas have been allowed to re-colonise naturally, while others have been seeded with native grasses, following the last crop harvest. Meanwhile, the two National Nature Reserves form the cornerstones of the project.

Woodwalton Fen is well known for its matrix of reedbed, scrub, willow carr and wet woodland. Regular species include Water Rail, Reed Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Marsh Tit, Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Garden Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat, Cetti's Warbler and Cuckoo. Grasshopper Warblers and Nightingales add to the summer chorus, and Woodcock and Long-eared Owls are present, although the former in better numbers at Holme Fen. Bearded Tits are winter visitors, although not recorded breeding, and this year the first booming Bittern for quite some time was heard. Winter sees the arrival of Redwings and Fieldfares, flocks of Siskins and Redpolls, with Arctic Redpolls recorded in recent years. Hen Harriers (once common) are now rather scarce winter visitors, but Marsh Harriers are resident all year.

The bird populations of Holme Fen have fluctuated greatly over the years as the site has changed from open fen and heath to scrub, and then to woodland. Once common, Nightingales, for example, are no longer heard, although this may change as the shrub layer recovers following the control of Muntjac deer numbers. The meres often reveal surprises, and Goosander, Smew and Ruddy Duck have all been sighted in recent years, while Goldeneye are more regular. Tits, Wrens, Robins and Great-spotted Woodpeckers remain plentiful, and Firecrests and Spotted Flycatchers made a welcome return this

year after a period of absence. Hobbies are a regular summer fixture, hawking dragonflies over both Woodwalton and Holme Fens, and Red Kites are frequently seen, having first nested in Holme Fen four years ago; Common Buzzards breed in a number of locations.

With the on-going land restoration beyond the National Nature Reserves, bird records are far from mediocre. One of the winter highlights is the roost of Short-eared Owls, numbering 10-15 birds in most years. Barn Owls are a daily pleasure for many staff and visitors, and Little Owls and Tawny Owls are also present. With Merlin and Peregrine Falcon offering occasional winter sightings, and Goshawk a one-time record, on a good day it would be possible to see many of the UK's owl and raptor species.

It is intended that much of the Great Fen develops naturally, without specific habitat or species prescriptions, but one exception is the provision of breeding and wintering habitat for waders. Lapwing breed and there are promising signs for Snipe; the numbers of each species swell in winter along with flocks of Golden Plover. Other wader species recorded on new and established scrapes include Black and Bar-tailed Godwit, Redshank, Greenshank, Common and Green Sandpiper, Whimbrel, Greenshank, Avocet and Dunlin. A particularly productive area in this respect is the newly formed habitat at Rymes Reedbed, viewable from a tower hide, Trundle Mere Lookout, which is accessed through Holme Fen. New Decoy is also expected to be a haven for waders, as new water management infrastructure comes online; a series of scrapes are viewable from the Ballard Hide, a straw bale construction accessible via a circular walk from the New Decoy car park on the B660. New Decoy also holds good numbers of wintering finches, with Bramblings often accompanying Chaffinches and Siskins on the feeding station at the Ballard Hide, and Redpolls make good use of the weed seed rich margins of the fields, grazed by Highland cattle.

Another key part of the habitat mosaic will be the creation of seasonally flooded grassland and open water for wildfowl; we expect to boost the numbers of Wigeon, Gadwall, Shoveler, Teal, Goldeneye, and Shelduck, as well as those of the less frequent Pintail and Garganey. Land-forming works are currently underway, although good winter viewing of these species can already be had from the west bank of Woodwalton Fen, overlooking Middle Farm. Corn Buntings are present in good numbers year round but especially in winter, and Yellow Wagtails benefit from the abundance of flies associated with cattle, which are a key conservation management presence on the Great Fen.

One of the highlights on the restoration land has been Common Cranes, first recorded some 5 years ago on Woodwalton Fen; a magnificent sight in the fields or circling high overhead, they remain just occasional visitors. Amongst other species highlights are Stonechat and Whinchat, Wheatear and the occasional Ring Ouzel passing through, Little Egret, Grey Partridge, Quail and Turtle Dove. Surprise species have included Gannet and Sandwich Tern, and with a supporting cast of fen and woodland birds a day on the Great Fen can be very productive, and should become even more so in future.

Dr Paul Tinsley-Marshall - Great Fen Monitoring Officer



Christmas Quiz Answers

Professor Shaw Tierdowell hopes that you enjoyed the quiz and that you managed at least a few answers. Anyone who scored over twenty did well, over thirty - exceptionally well, and forty correct answers gives you the privilege of setting the next quiz!

1. Nightingale: from Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale".
2. Swifts: from Kenneth Grahame's "Ducks' Ditty."
3. Robin Redbreast: from William Blake's "Auguries of Innocence."
4. Swallow: from Shakespeare's "The Winter's Tale."
5. Skylark: from Shelley's "Ode to a Skylark."

6. Thrush: from Robert Browning's "Home Thoughts from Abroad."
7. Pelican: by D.L.Merritt.
8. Kite: from "The Winter's Tale." This refers to the species' habit of decorating its nest and shows that the kite was a common bird at the time.
9. Raven: from Shakespeare's "Macbeth." (The Prof confesses to a mistake here; it should be "under the battlements.")
10. Chaffinch: from "Home Thoughts from Abroad."
11. Dove: from Genesis ch.8 v.9. The dove was the second bird that Noah sent out from the ark to see if the flood had abated.
12. Cuckoo: from Wordsworth's "To the Cuckoo."
13. Sparrow: from Shakespeare's "Hamlet."
14. Wren: from "Auguries of Innocence."
15. Eagle: from Keats' "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer."
16. Coot and hern (an old name for heron): from Tennyson's "The Brook."
17. Jackdaw: from "The Jackdaw of Rheims" by Thomas Ingoldsby, (the nom de plume of R.H.Barham.)
18. Crow: from the nursery rhyme "Tweedledum and Tweedledee." Although these are characters from Lewis Carroll's "Through the Looking Glass", the rhyme is anonymous.
19. Ringed Plover: from "Ringed Plover by a Water's Edge" by Norman McCaig. A very apt description of the bird's behaviour.
20. Swan: from "What is Pink?" by Christina Rossetti.
21. Falcon and owl: from Macbeth. This was noted as something unnatural, which of course it is, as a falcon is more likely to attack an owl to steal its prey. Shakespeare had a good knowledge of bird behaviour.
22. Heron: from "Poem in October" by Dylan Thomas.
23. Snipe: a wonderfully dismissive description from "A Question of Upbringing " by Anthony Powell.
24. Starlings: from "The Barn" by Edward Thomas. A brilliant description, surely enabling one to guess the answer even if the source was unknown.
25. Peewees: these are of course peewits or lapwings; from Robert Louis Stevenson's "To S.R.Crockett."
26. Blackbird: from "Adlestrop" by Edward Thomas.
27. Rooks: another description that should enable one to guess the answer, this is from "The Birds" by Sir John Squire.
28. Nightingales: from the poem of the same name by Robert Bridges.
29. Vulture: from the poem by Hilaire Belloc, although the description could be said to fit the setter of this quiz!
30. Cormorant: from "Paradise Lost" by John Milton. An interesting reference; we may think that tree-perching cormorants are a recent development but it was obviously well known centuries ago.
31. Gull: from "Under Milk Wood" by Dylan Thomas.
32. Owls, hen, larks and wren: from Edward Lear's "Nonsenses." Lear was arguably a better artist than poet, known for his landscapes and an 1832 monograph on parrots.
33. Shags: another good description from "The Birds."
34. Hawk: from "Hamlet." It is usually accepted that handsaw was an error which occurred when one of the folios was copied from the original and that the word should be harnser, an old name for heron; thus the comparison is of one bird with another.
35. Linnets: from "Lake Isle of Innisfree" by W.B.Yeats.

Forthcoming meetings

Friday 14th February, St John's Community Hall, Hills Rd, Cambridge Doors 7.30 pm for 8 pm start
Swans and Swan-upping by Chris Perrins

Chris Perrins was Director of the Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology in Oxford until his retirement. His main areas of interest have been the long-term study of tit populations in Wytham Woods, seabirds on the Pembrokeshire Islands of Skokholm and Skomer, and Mute Swans. His studies of the latter have centred on the Thames and its tributaries and the birds in the breeding colony at Abbotsbury, Dorset; his team were also deeply involved in the problems of lead-poisoning and the

banning of lead fishing weights. He co-authored a book on the Mute Swan (Croom Helm, 1986) and is The Queen's Swan Warden. His talk will include recent studies of the Thames population.

Friday 14th March, St Johns Community Hall, Hills Rd, Cambridge Doors 7.30 pm for 8 pm start **Annual General Meeting**. AGM agenda and minutes of 2013 meeting are attached. Together with the Treasurer's Statement and Accounts these will also be on the club website. Anyone wanting the latter papers posted to them before the meeting should contact Bruce Martin. AGM followed by **The Most Beautiful Thing in the Universe by Douglas Russell**

"I think that, if required, on pain of death, to name instantly the most perfect thing in the universe, I should risk my fate on a bird's egg" Higginson, T. W. (1862)

Containing over 200,000 sets and representing over 52% of world bird species, the avian egg collection at the Natural History Museum (NHM) is one the most important global research resources of its kind and is regularly used by scientific researchers from across the globe studying a diverse range of topics. Douglas G. D. Russell is the Senior Curator of the NHM egg and nest collections; this is a rare opportunity to hear about their history and the key research themes they support.

Sat 29th March, East of England Ringers' Conference, at Duxford Cambridge CB22 4XQ. For ringers and nest recorders; details at <http://www.bto.org/news-events/events/2014-03>.

New Members - We welcome the following new members – Jeremy & Jill Aldred of Trumpington, Deborah Lauterpacht of Meldreth, David Morris of Coton, Roger Swain of Dry Drayton and Matthew York of Isleham.

Club Contacts

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Bird Records, sightings and news

If you have seen a scarce or local bird, please submit the news to the '[What's about](#)' page on the Club website via [Pete and Paul](#) who maintain an up-to-date selection of recent highlights. You can also report interesting sightings on the [Cambirds](#) email group (not run by the Club, but we access the records). Any major rarities can be phoned in to Birdline East Anglia on 07941 333970.

Full lists of your records should continue to be submitted monthly to **Louise Bacon** the County Recorder, preferably using the [spreadsheet](#) available on the Records section of the website, **by the 5th of the following month.**

GOOD BIRDING!