

Cambridgeshire Bird Club



E-Bulletin 8 February 2014

(The records in this bulletin are unchecked and may be revised at a later date)

Note: there has been a further revision of the order of presentation (see article below), the falcons now are considered to be correctly placed among the near-passerines (after woodpeckers).



Great Northern Diver by Jamie Wells

HEADLINES

BEAN GOOSE (subspecies 'Taiga' *Anser fabalis fabalis*)*Cambridge Research Park (2 on several dates throughout the month).

LONG TAILED DUCK* Grafham Water (long stay female all month), presumed the same Paxton Pits (22nd).

RED-THROATED DIVER* Grafham Water (16th – rest of the month).

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER* Grafham Water (long stay bird all month and 2 late on 22nd) Paxton Pits (long stay bird present all month), Maxey Pits (2nd -16th), Bainton Pits (16th and 23rd).

GANNET* Gamlingay (3 flyovers on 3rd).

GLOSSY IBIS Fen Drayton Lakes (flyover on 2nd), Nene Washes (3rd – 4th), Huntingdon (15th), Hemingford Abbots area (22nd - end of the month).

GOSHAWK* Hinchingsbrooke CP (flyover on 19th).

ICELAND GULL Tanholt GP (2c.y. on 17th), Peterborough/Oxney Road (15th – 16th), Milton tip area (2nd winter on 18th - rest of the month), Dogsthorpe Tip (27th).

GLAUCOUS GULL Grafham Water (2nd – 9th) Milton Tip and surrounding area (1st winter from all month), Mare Fen (1st winter on 16th), Fen Drayton Lakes (23rd).

For both these gull species some of the records may refer to the same individual, indeed there were sightings of both Iceland and Glaucous reported from the villages close to Milton tip such as Landbeach, Histon and Cottenham (not included here).

WHITETHROAT Ouse Fen (the bird from the end of January was still seen until at least 26th).

Other records

All records below refer to the month at the head of the E-bulletin and where no numbers are given the record relates to single birds.

Where there is an asterisk after the name of the species this indicates that it is necessary to send a description to the County Recorder for the record to be considered.

Wildfowl

Mute Swan counts of 20+ Mare Fen (40 on 2nd), Manea (30 on 9th), Burwell Fen (maximum 24 on 16th), Nene Washes WeBS (190 on 17th), Ouse Washes/Earith to Sutton Gault (43 on 18th), Shropshire's Reservoir (60 on 23rd).



Mute Swan photo by Martin Bell

Bewick's Swan Nene Washes/Eldernell (maximum 200 on 1st), Littleport (2nd), March (400 with Whoopers on 5th), Ely (14th), Prickwillow (17th), Ouse Washes/Earith (18th), Manea (7 on 21st).

Whooper Swan Soham (10 on 1st and 13 on 6th), Nene Washes (1327 into roost on 17th), Ouse Washes (maximum 1000+ on 9th), Burwell Fen (11 on 22nd and 13 on 27th), Great Fen/Woodwalton Fen (10 on 22nd), Ramsey (6 on 28th).

Pink-footed Goose Ouse Fen (2 on 22nd - 26th).

White-fronted Goose Burwell Fen (2 on 1st), Buckden/River Ouse (6 on 3rd), Kingfishers Bridge (2 ?same on 4th and 24th - 25th).

Greylag Goose *counts over 100* Burwell Fen (maximum 320 on 1st), Ouse Fen (232 on 9th), Cam Washes/Upware (maximum 105 on 15th), Somersham GP (237 on 18th), Fowlmere NR (maximum 104 on 20th), Hinchingsbrooke CP (207 on 19th), Wicken Fen (maximum 181 on 16th)

Canada Goose *counts over 100* Cam Washes/Upware (maximum 172 on 5th)

Barnacle Goose Cam Washes/Upware (2nd - 13th).

Brent Goose Cam Washes/Upware (5th - 6th)

Egyptian Goose Fen Drayton Lakes (2 on 2nd), Ouse Washes/Earith (2 on 6th and 18th), Paxton Pits (2 on 8th and 18th), Colne Fen GP (13th), Earith GP (13th), Maxey GP (3 on 16th), Ouse Fen (3 on 16th), Godmanchester GP (17th), Kingfishers Bridge (2 on 25th), Mare Fen (26th).

Shelduck Peterborough/Millennium Bridge (20 on 1st), Paxton Pits (a pair seen regularly all month), Cam Washes (maximum 20 on 16th), Burwell Fen (3 on 7th), Prior's Fen (20 on 13th), Nene Washes WeBS (14 on 17th), Grafham ('several' on 23rd), Ouse Fen (4 on 25th), Fen Drayton Lakes (9 on 27th).

Mandarin Wimpole Park (7th), Castor Hanglands (pair flyovers on 16th).

Wigeon counts 400+ Barleycraft GP (500+ on 1st and 22nd), Huntingdon/Portholme Meadows (1000+ on 1st), Burwell Fen (maximum 1800 on 9th), Cam Washes (maximum 449 on 13th), Nene Washes WeBS (3598 on 17th), Wicken Fen (maximum c2900 on 16th).

Gadwall counts of 50+ Burwell Fen (maximum 60 on 9th), Nene Washes WeBS (129 on 17th), Wicken Fen (maximum 160 on 16th).

Teal counts of 100+ Kingfishers Bridge (maximum 156 on 4th), Burwell Fen (maximum 1600 on 9th), Wicken Fen (maximum 600 on 16th), Nene Washes WeBS (436 on 17th), Somersham GP (152 on 18th), Cam Washes (maximum 154 on 23rd).

Mallard counts of 50 + Ouse Washes/Earith to Sutton Gault (60 on 18th), River Cam/ Bait's Bite to Clayhithe (57 on 16th), Nene Washes WeBS (484 on 17th), Somersham GP (56 on 18th), Cambridge (60 on 22nd), Ouse Fen (55 on 23rd), Wicken Fen (maximum 88 on 25th).

Pintail Paxton Pits (maximum 31 on 3rd), Huntingdon/Portholme Meadow (9+ on 1st), Nene Washes WeBS (302 on 17th), Wicken Fen (maximum 6 on 25th), Cam Washes (maximum 3 on 16th), Burwell Fen (4 on 17th).

Shoveler counts of 40+ Kingfishers Bridge (c150 on 13th), Burwell Fen (maximum 40 on 9th), Wicken Fen/Baker's Fen (maximum c100 on 1st).

Red-crested Pochard Fenstanton GP (16th), Ferry Meadows (2 on 28th).

Pochard counts 100+ Nene Washes WeBS (1067 on 17th), Ouse Washes/Earith (147 on 18th).

Tufted Duck counts 100+ Nene Washes WeBS (1152 on 17th).

Scaup Paxton Pits (a female 3rd – 22nd).

Goldeneye Paxton Pits (maximum c45 on 3rd), Grafham Water (167 on 16th), Nene Washes WeBS (9 on 17th), Fen Drayton Lakes (17 on 21st).

Smew Barleycraft GP (maximum 8 on 13th), Ouse Fen (maximum 4 on 1st and 15th), Paxton Pits (maximum 3 on 14th), Fen Drayton Lakes (a male on 2nd, 13th and 19th), Needingworth Pits (maximum 8 on 13th).

Red-breasted Merganser Soham (6 on 16th).

Goosander Paxton Pits (maximum 12 on 13th), Maxey Pits (maximum 19 on 16th), Grafham Water (16th) Granchester/Byron's Pool (17th).

Ruddy Duck reported from two sites: Fen Drayton Lakes (21st), Kingfisher's Bridge (25th).

Gamebirds

Red-legged Partridge counts 20+ Knapwell/Grange Farm (26 on 10th),

Grey Partridge reported from Burwell Fen (maximum 3 on 7th), Knapwell/Grange Farm (maximum 6 on 10th), Nine Wells (maximum 26 on 10th), Paxton Pits, Soham, Trumpington/Clay Farm (maximum 5).

Cormorant

Cormorant counts of 20+ Wicken Fen (maximum 20 on 16th), Nene Washes WeBS (29 on 17th), Paxton Pits (20 on 21st) and Ferry Meadows CP (maximum 22 on 26th).

Egrets and herons

Bittern reported from Barleycraft GP, Cambridge/Bolton's Pit, Great Fen/Woodwalton Fen/Trundle Mere, Cam Washes, Kingfishers Bridge, Ouse Fen, Waterbeach GP, Wicken Fen.



Bittern photo by Kevin Robson

Little Egret Whittlesford GP (6 on 1st), Paxton Pits (maximum 2), Wicken Fen (maximum 10 on 2nd), Ouse Fen (4 on 5th), Burwell Fen (maximum 2 on 6th), Cambridge/Sheep's Green (6th), Nene Washes (17th), Haddenham/Aldreth Fens (19th), Fen Drayton Lakes (8 on 21st), Cam Washes (maximum 4 on 26th), Mare Fen (2 on 24th), Sawston (2 on 28th).

Grebes

Little Grebe Ouse Washes/Earith (4 on 7th), Cam Washes (maximum 9 on 8th), Ouse Fen (9 on 16th), River Cam Bait's Bite to Clayhithe (12 on 16th), Nene Washes/High Wash (2 on 17th), Somersham GP (5 on 18th), Great Eversden (2 on 18th), Ferry Meadows (2 on 19th), Kingfishers Bridge (12 on 25th).

Great Crested Grebe counts of 5+ Nene Washes WeBS (7 on 17th), Hinchingbrooke CP (10 on 19th), Grafham Water (maximum 21 on 23rd).

Slavonian Grebe* Grafham Water (1st – 2nd).

Kites, harriers, hawks and buzzards

Red Kite Abbots Ripton (2nd and 4th), Peterborough/A1 (2nd), Haddenham/Aldreth Fens (still present on 3rd), Great Fen/Trundle Mere (maximum 4+ on 9th), Hinxton (6th), Chrishall Grange (6th), Burwell Fen (16th), Paxton Pits (16th), Ferry meadows (20th), Grafham Water (21st), Bretton (27th).

Marsh Harrier Great Fen/Woodwalton Fen (maximum 6 on 1st), Ouse Fen (3 on 5th), Wicken Fen (maximum 10+ on 16th), Little Wilbraham Fen (maximum 5 on 16th), Nene Washes WeBS (4 on 17th), Hemingford Abbots (24th), Kingfishers Bridge (2 on 24th).

Hen Harrier Swaffham Bulbeck (a ringtail on 1st), Cam Washes (a ringtail on 2nd) Wicken Fen (maximum 6, 2 males and 4 ringtails on 24th), Ouse Washes/Sutton Gault (ringtail on 27th).

As with the two rarer gull species there are a number of records of both harrier species in the immediate proximity of both the Great Fen and Wicken Fen not included here.

Sparrowhawk *reported from* Abbots Ripton, Burwell Fen, Cambridge (several places), Chatteris, Eaton Socon, Ely, Eversden Wood, Fen Drayton Lakes, Ferry Meadows CP, Fowlmere NR, Great Fen/Trundle Mere, Great Shelford, Hinchingsbrooke CP, Hinxton, Manea, Mare Fen, Ouse Fen, Ouse Washes, Paxton Pits, Thorpe Wood, Wicken Fen and Wimpole.

Buzzard *reported from* Bretton (3), Burwell (5), Ferry Meadows CP (4), Fowlmere, Great Eversden (2), Great Shelford, Hardwick Wood (3), Hemingford Abbots (3), Kimbolton, Knapwell, Little Wilbraham Fen, Longstanton, Monk's Wood Nene Washes/Eldernell, Nene Washes/Low Wash (3), Nene Washes/March Farmers (5), Newton, Ouse Fen, Paxton Pits (maximum 7 on 16th), Sawston (2), Swaffham Bulbeck, Toft (2), Waterbeach GP (4), Whittlesford GP and Wicken Fen.

Rails and crane

Water Rail *reported from* Barford Pocket Park, Cam Washes, Fowlmere NR, Great Fen/Woodwalton Fen, Nene Washes/Eldernell, Ouse Fen, Wicken Fen (maximum 8 on 25th).

Coot *counts of 50+* Burwell Fen (maximum c250 on 4th), Nene Washes/March Farmers (316 on 10th), Cam Washes (maximum 190 on 16th), Ouse Fen (91 on 16th), Nene Washes WeBS (1624 on 17th), Block Fen GP (73 on 18th), Somersham GP (91 on 18th), Berry Fen (50 on 22nd), Wicken Fen (73 on 25th).

Common Crane Great Fen/Woodwalton Fen (maximum 11 on 1st – 2nd), Prior's Fen (5 on 13th), Wicken Fen (at least a pair and maybe two 16th and 19th), Kingfishers Bridge (2 on 17th), Nene Washes/Eldernell (maximum 13 on 17th) and Thorney (2 on 22nd).

Obviously with a wide range and being such distinctive birds there is the possibility of duplication of records so the population of individuals could be over-estimated, however, it seems reasonable to suggest that around 15 – 20 birds were recorded in the county in February.

Waders

Avocet Cam Washes (10 on 23rd and 18 on 26th).

Oystercatcher Nene Washes WeBS (6 on 17th), Ferry Meadows CP (2 on 18th-19th), Hinchingsbrooke CP (2 on 19th), Barleycraft GP (2 on 22nd), Berry Fen (2 on 25th), Cam Washes (maximum 2 on 26th), Kingfishers Bridge (maximum 4 on 25th), Paxton Pits (maximum 5+ on 28th).

Golden Plover *counts over 500* Huntingdon/Portholme Meadows (1500+ on 1st), Burwell Fen (maximum 600+ on 6th), Paxton Pits (500+ on 6th), Little Wilbraham and Teversham Fens (c600 on 13th), Burwell (c700 on 26th).

Lapwing *counts over 500* Fen Drayton Lakes (3000 on 1st), Huntingdon/Portholme Meadow (1200 on 1st), Burwell Fen (maximum 1000 on 4th), Paxton Pits (maximum c3000 on 6th), Whittlesford (c500 on 12th), Stow-cum-Quy (600 over on 16th), Teversham Fen (500 on 16th), Nene Washes WeBS (1162 on 17th) Ouse Fen (8000 on 19th).

Ringed Plover Colne Fen GP (13th), Paxton Pits (16th and 23rd).

Curlew Ouse Fen (19th).

Black tailed Godwit Fen Drayton Lakes (maximum 700 on 1st), Huntingdon/Portholme Meadow (500+ on 1st), Nene Washes/Ring's End (6 on 17th), Paxton Pits (maximum c1500 on 19th), Mare Fen (100 on 22nd), Kingfishers Bridge (26th).

Ruff Ouse Fen (maximum 95 on 2nd), Paxton Pits (maximum 7 on 9th), Needingworth Pits (10 on 13th), Barleycraft GP (maximum 14 on 22nd), Fen Drayton Lakes (25th).

Dunlin Overcote (3rd and 16th), Barleycraft GP (5 on 22nd), Ouse Washes RSPB, Paxton Pits (maximum c50 on 18th), Huntingdon/Portholme Meadow (5+ on 1st), Ouse Fen (maximum 70 on 22nd), Fen Drayton Lakes (25th).

Green Sandpiper 1-4 reported from Cam Washes, Grafham Water, Ouse Fen and Paxton Pits.

Redshank Peterborough (1st), Grafham Water (maximum 37 on 2nd), Histon (15 on 3rd), Ouse Fen (70 on 14th), Cam Washes (maximum 14 on 16th), Barleycraft GP (16th), Paxton Pits (16th), Kingfishers Bridge (26th).

Jack Snipe Orton BP (on 2nd), Sutton (6 on 12th), Paxton Pits (22nd), Maxey Pits (3 on 22nd).

Woodcock *reported from* Eaton Ford, Great Fen/Holme Fen (maximum 2), Cambridge/East Barnwell LNR and in a private city centre garden (9th) and another (22nd), Hardwick Wood, Monk's Wood, Whittlesford GP, Wicken Fen.

Snipe *counts of 20+* Barford Pocket Park (30 on 8th), Sutton (c25 on 12th), Paxton Pits (16th), Wicken Fen (3-4 calling on 19th).

Gulls

Kittwake Grafham Water (9th).

Black-headed Gull *counts of 500+* Eaton Socon (maximum 500 on 14th), Wicken Fen/Baker's Fen (maximum c1650 on 23rd), Milton Tip (3000 on 21st).

Mediterranean Gull Milton Tip (19th – 27th), Grafham Water (a single on 23rd and 3 on 27th).

Common Gull *counts of 100+* Ferry Meadows CP (110 on 20th).

Lesser Black-backed Gull *counts of 100+* Milton Tip (400 on 21st).

Herring Gull *counts of 100+* Nene Washes (3000 on 17th).

Yellow-legged Gull Milton Tip (maximum 6+ on 27th), Grafham Water (maximum 5 on several dates), Mare Fen (3 on 16th), Dogsthorpe Tip (27th).

Caspian Gull Grafham Water (maximum 3 on several dates), Cottenham (8th), Milton Tip/Landbeach etc (maximum 5 on 18th) and Dogsthorpe Tip (27th).

Great Black-backed Gull Nene Washes (500 on 17th) and Milton Tip (160 on 21st).

Doves, owls and kingfisher

Stock Dove *counts of 20+* Ouse Fen (c25 on 15th), Swaffham Bulbeck (30 on 15th), Wicken Fen (c20 on 23rd).

Barn Owl *reported from* Alconbury airfield, Arrington, Barway, Borough Green, Burwell Fen (maximum 3), Cam Washes, Fowlmere NR, Great Fen/Trundle Mere, Haddon, Knapwell, Little Wilbraham Fen, Lolworth, Nene Washes, Norman Cross, Orwell, Ouse Fen, Ouse Washes/Earith, Sawtry, Soham, Swavesey and Wicken Fen.



Barn Owl painting by J.M.W. Turner

Little Owl reported from Burwell Fen, Doddington and Hinxton.

Tawny Owl reported from Gamlingay Heath, Knapwell, Peterborough, Sawston Hall, Stapleford and Wicken Fen.

Short-eared Owl Great Fen/Holme Fen/Trundle Mere (maximum 4 on 4th), Burwell Fen (maximum 5 on 10th), Nene Washes/Eldernell (16th and 27th).

Kingfisher reported from Barleycraft GP, Berry Fen, Burwell Fen, Cambridge (several sites), Fen Drayton Lakes, Ferry Meadows CP, Godmanchester GP, Great Eversden, Great Fen/Woodwalton Fen, Hampton Lakes, Hemingford Abbots, Hinchingsbrooke CP, Hinxton, Maxey GP, Melbourn, Milton CP, Nene Washes, Ouse Fen, Ouse Washes, Paxton Pits, Trumpington/Clay Farm and Waterbeach GP,

Falcons

Kestrel reported from Knapwell (3), Nene Washes WeBS (8 on 17th) and Ouse Fen.

These hardly represent the true picture of this species across the county but perhaps observers might pay particular attention to birds in summer – figures in the recently published Atlas tell of a 44% national decline since 1970 (less in eastern England). Since Kestrels can breed at densities of 10-15 pairs per 10km square halving the population would not show in the Atlas since there will still be birds in each square.

Merlin Fowlmere NR (7th), Great Fen/Holme Fen/Trundle Mere (singles on several dates), Winwick (11th), Great Eversden (15th), Burwell Fen - Wicken Fen (on several dates).

Peregrine Cambridge (1-2 continue to be reported from a variety of sites), Ouse Washes/Earith/RSPB (1st and 5th), Abbotsley (2nd and 3rd), Great Fen/Trundle Mere/Holme Fen (16th – 17th), Nene Washes (17th), Ouse Fen (22nd), Fen Drayton Lakes (22nd-25th), Wicken Fen (23rd).

Parrots

Ring-necked Parakeet* Cambridge/Holbrook Road (26th).

Shrikes and corvids

Great Grey Shrike* Great Fen/Holme Fen (wintering bird from 1st – 27th), Ely (3rd).

Jackdaw/Rook Wicken Fen (roost of 2000-3000 throughout the month).

Rook Wicken Fen/Baker's Fen (c300 on 1st), Abbots Ripton (450 on 4th).

Carrion Crow counts over 20 Great Fen/Holme Fen (28 on 21st) and Knapwell (29 on 10th).

Hooded Crow* Great Fen/Holme Fen (all month).

Raven Grafham Water (2nd), Kimbolton (2nd), Gamlingay (2 on 9th), Bretton (10th), Peterborough/Milton Park (10th), Knapwell (22nd), Paxton Pits (22nd), Stirtloe (22nd), King's Dyke NR (one heard on 23rd).

The increase of this species continues apace. The Cambridgeshire Atlas (2007-11) stated winter records of 1-5 per annum; recently there have been 5-10 records per month from a fairly widespread number of locations. Will this be the first year when Ravens breed in Cambridgeshire for a very long time?

Tits

Marsh Tit reported from Chippenham Fen, Great Fen/Woodwalton Fen, Hardwick Wood, and Monk's Wood. *This appears to be a seriously under-recorded species.*

Bearded Tit reported from Wicken Fen (3 parties heard on 10th).

Warblers

Cetti's Warbler reported from Barford Pocket Park, Fen Drayton Lakes (maximum 3), Great Fen/Woodwalton Fen, Hampton Lakes, Kingfishers Bridge, Ouse Fen, Paxton Pits, Wicken Fen (maximum 5 on 25th).

Chiffchaff Paxton Pits (on several dates), Hinxton (10th), Ouse Washes/Earith (10th), Godmanchester GP (17th), Grafham Water (22nd), Fen Drayton Lakes (2 on 26th) and Fowlmere NR (26th).

Blackcap Cambridge (several sites on 5th 9th and 16th), Barleycraft GP on 16th, Great Shelford (16th) Knapwell (21st).

Nuthatch, starling and thrushes

Nuthatch reported from Paxton Pits, Waresley.

Starling roosts Cottenham (1000 on 2nd), Wicken Fen (500 on 10th).

Fieldfare counts of 100+ Peterborough (500 on 1st), Chrishall Grange (c250 on 6th), Fowlmere NR (200 on 7th), Grafham Water (c100 on 13th), Granta Park (c100 on 14th), Lolworth (240 on 14th), Clayhithe (200 on 16th), Teversham Fen (100 on 16th), Nene Washes/Ring's End (130 on 17th), Thorney Dyke (850 on 19th) and Haddenham/Aldreth Fens 300-400 on 19th).

Song Thrush Knapwell/Grange Farm (22 on 10th).

Redwing Abbots Ripton (162 on 8th), Wimpole Park (80 on 15th), Paxton Pits (71 flyovers on 28th).

Robin Knapwell/Grange Farm (35 on 10th).

Chats

Stonechat Wicken Fen (pair on 2nd), Chrishall Grange (6th), Ouse Washes (2 on 10th and 19th), Nene Washes/Stanground (17th), Earith (18th), Grafham Water (18th), Burwell Fen (1-2 all month).



Stonechat by Neil Bramwell

Sparrows, wagtails and pipits

Tree Sparrow Woodhurst (21 on 16th), Ramsey (23rd), Ouse Washes RSPB (25th).

Grey Wagtail *reported from* Cam Washes, Hinxton, Ouse Fen/Mare Fen (2), Ouse Washes/Earith, Paxton Pits, Peterborough, Sutton Gault, Wicken Fen (flyover).

Pied Wagtail *roost counts* Great Fen/Woodwalton Fen (150-200 on 1st), Granta Park 26 on 11th), Brampton Hut (c100 on 13th).

Water Pipit Ouse Washes/Earith (1-2 all month), Ouse Washes/Sutton Gault (maximum 24 into a roost on 27th- a new county record), Mare Fen/Ouse Fen (8 on 22nd and 6 on 23rd).

Finches and buntings

Brambling Conington airfield (several on 3rd), Ferry Meadows CP (with Chaffinches on 3rd), Wicken Fen (16th), Paxton Pits (maximum 2 on 22nd).

Goldfinch *counts of 50+* Burwell Fen (maximum c300 in three flocks on 10th).

Siskin *reported from* Bretton, Cambridge/Botanic Garden, Chippenham Fen, Fen Drayton Lakes, Ferry Meadows CP, Great Fen/Holme Fen/Woodwalton Fen, Lode, Paxton Pits (maximum c20 on 14th), Grafham Water (2 on 16th).

Linnet *counts of 50+* Knapwell/Grange Farm (105 on 10th), Eversden (c100 on 15th), Ouse Fen (c130 on 15th), Haddenham/Aldreth Fens (80-100 on 19th).

Lesser Redpoll *1-10 reported from* Bretton, Cambridge Lakes GC, Ferry Meadows CP (20 on 19th), Great Fen/Holme Fen/Woodwalton Fen/Trundle Mere (maximum 50 + on 27th), Histon, Paxton Pits, Wicken Fen (maximum 30 on 17th).

Mealy Redpoll Great Fen/Woodwalton Fen/Trundle Mere (maximum 2 on 22nd), Histon (19th).



Bullfinch by Jamie Wells

Yellowhammer *counts of 20+* Knapwell/Grange Farm (85 on 10th), Longstowe (40 on 13th), Hinxton (26 on 20th).

Reed Bunting *counts of 40 +* Granta Park (47 roosting on 11th), Knapwell (67 on 10th).

Corn Bunting *no counts higher than 16 received.*

Exotica/escapes

Ross's Goose Burwell Fen (1st)

Lesser Canada Goose *Branta canadensis parvipes* (a subspecies not currently on the British List). Sutton Gault (1st).

Red-breasted Goose Ouse Washes RSPB (one of unknown origin ? escape, with Greylags on 21st).

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Wicken Fen Group Bird Ringing

There were netting sessions at the Fen on 15 different days in February. The month's ringing total was 182; a further 179 different birds were retrapped, so the overall total for the month was 361. Individual species totals (the first figure new birds, the second retraps) were:

Sparrowhawk	1, 0	Long-tailed Tit	6, 20
Woodpigeon	1, 0	Blue Tit	19, 56
Kingfisher	0, 1	Great Tit	8, 33
GS Woodpecker	0, 3	Tree Creeper	0, 3
Pied Wagtail	4, 0	Jay	1, 0
Wren	2, 4	House Sparrow	1, 1
Duncock	4, 9	Chaffinch	9, 0
Robin	5, 11	Greenfinch	14, 1
Blackbird	6, 7	Goldfinch	33, 4
Song Thrush	2, 0	Lesser Redpoll	41, 2
Redwing	1, 0	Bullfinch	3, 5
Cetti's Warbler	1, 0	Reed Bunting	20, 19

New taxonomic arrangement for 2013

In what seems to be a far too regular happening these days, the arrangement of birds in the systematic list has changed again, and the Cambridgeshire Bird Club is adopting this new order from now on. Please bear with us while everyone gets used to it! The biggest and most surprising change is the placing of the falcons; they are no longer considered to be related to the other diurnal raptors (hawks, buzzards, eagles, harriers, vultures etc.). Instead, it has been discovered that they are most closely related to the parrots, which, in turn, are thought to be the most closely related group to the passerines. I have been trying to adjust to this concept by thinking about the hole-nesting habits of Kestrels, and in particular, casting my mind back to noisy flocks of Lesser Kestrels wheeling around breeding colonies. These can, if you don't think about their diet, be reminiscent of parrots. These relationships have been uncovered at the genetic level, by the study of DNA, which is actually more reliable at telling us how species and genera are related than any outward features like talons and hooked beaks. I think most people would accept that auks are more closely related to gulls than penguins, despite the fact that they look superficially like penguins. It is the ecological niche of swimming out to sea to catch fish which has resulted in the physical similarities of auks and penguins, but they have evolved from different starting points; this is called convergent evolution – different ways of getting to the same end point. Think bats and birds – they have very different but equally effective solutions to the challenge of getting vertebrates airborne. Scientific studies on taxonomic relationships increasingly use genetic material that is evolutionarily neutral. Mutations accumulate in this DNA over time, at a constant rate, described as a

molecular clock. These changes preserve the evolutionary processes and tell us how close or distant two taxa may be. Things which diverged relatively recently will share a lot of the same DNA markers, while those that separated a long time ago will have a lot of differences. Compiling the sequences of more sections of DNA from ever larger numbers of species allows the production of more accurate family trees, showing the most likely ways in which things are related. The problem at the moment is the pace of change, with scientific advances driven largely by technology developed for human genetics plus ever increasing computer power allowing bigger data sets to be processed. This means, for the average birder, that the arrangement seems to have changed every time they get a new book or bird report! Finding the species you want to know about means going to the index rather than the position in the book where you expected to find them. It's difficult to predict how much longer this refinement of taxonomy will continue at the present pace, but I think it is best if we accept the latest findings and follow the consensus. The current list was published on the BOU WeBSite in January 2014 and has been adopted by British Birds, so who are we to argue?

The BOU WeBSite has a full checklist which was published last June, which is not in this most recent order, but the 'simple' list, published in January this year, shows the new order with Falcons towards the end of the non-Passerines. Peter Bircham contacted the BOU about the disruption this frequent rearrangement causes to clubs like ours, and Martin Collinson, Chair of BOURC and convener of the Taxonomic Subcommittee, responded, acknowledging that they could have handled the timing of the publication of these lists better.

Vince Lea

Forthcoming indoor meetings



Friday 14th March, St Johns Hall, Cambridge

Annual General Meeting followed by
The Most Perfect Thing in the Universe by Dougal Russell

Senior Curator, Birds' Eggs and Nests, Bird Group, The Natural History Museum.

"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) *The Life of Birds*. *The Atlantic Monthly* 10(59):368-369. 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. The collection is regularly used by scientific researchers from across the globe studying a diverse range of topics, including species identification, allometry, phylogenetics, environmental change, crypsis, mimicry & brood parasitism. Douglas G. D. Russell is the Senior Curator responsible for the NHM egg and nest collections and this is a rare

opportunity to learn more about the national collection of birds' eggs, its history and the key research that goes on behind the scenes within the national collections at Tring.



Friday 11th April, Cottenham Village College

Thirty Years of Bird Photography by Tim Loseby

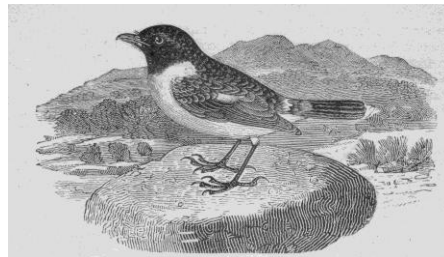
Tim Loseby has been birdwatching for over 50 years. The first 'exotic' place he went to was Minsmere in 1964! He has been a photographer for 30 years, and became a familiar face on the birding scene in the 1980s as a photographer of rarities. He is a founder member of the Oriental Bird Club and has travelled extensively in Indian Subcontinent and Central Asia and Middle East. He is Director of Fair Isle Bird Observatory a place he first visited in 1970. He comes from Yorkshire originally but, following 35 years in Kent, now lives in north Norfolk.

If you would like to receive your bulletin in e-mail format instead of the paper copy please contact cdbcbulletin@cambridgebirdclub.org.uk

Aldreth Windfarm proposal:

Paul Mason has alerted us to a potentially threatening wind farm proposal, in which 4 turbines 130m high are planned for Berry Fen, Aldreth, an area frequented by wintering waders and on a regular commuting route for all three species of swan, as well as host to various breeding raptors. While the club itself is a non-campaigning organisation (if we do not wish to fall foul of our charitable status), we would encourage members to contact Paul for more details and to consider being a part of the very important campaign that he is undertaking.

Paul can be contacted on pmlindenbury@hotmail.com



Next e-bulletin due out by 15th April.

