

Cambridgeshire Bird Club



E-Bulletin 22 May 2015

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



Red-rumped Swallow at Ferry Meadows CP: photo by John Saunders

HEADLINES

GREEN-WINGED TEAL Ouse Washes on 7th.

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER Paxton Pits long stay bird until 15th then at Grafham Water from 19th+ until 26th the latest date for the county, (the previous latest record was May 22nd in 2006).

SPOTTED CRAKE Ouse Washes 4-5 on 4th.

CORNCRAKE one calling from a possible breeding site on 7th.

HONEY BUZZARD Cambridge/Huntingdon Road on 31st.

TEMMINCK'S STINT Cam Washes 2 'possibles' on 13th and 2 definites on 31st.

ARCTIC SKUA Grafham Water 2 adults on 6th.

POMARINE SKUA Grafham Water an adult dark-phase bird on 6th.

WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN Paxton Pits on 26th.

GOLDEN ORIOLE reported at Paxton Pits (unconfirmed report from RBA) and one from a South Cambridgeshire wood on 21st.

RED-RUMPED SWALLOW Ferry Meadows CP on 10th - 12th.

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 before the record will be accepted.

Weather

If there is such a thing as typical May weather this was not it! The month was windy and quite wet and often quite cold. Some wholly unseasonal squalls in the first half of the month were unexpected but brought in some skuas, though not any other storm-driven birds. Interspersed with these wet and windy days have been days of warm sunshine although never in much of a continuum. Best summarised as changeable and cooler and windier than average.

Wildfowl

Mute Swan Burwell Fen 22 on 6th, Trumpington/Clay Farm 5 on 19th.

Whooper Swan March Farmers/Nene Washes an injured bird on 8th.

Greylag Goose Trumpington/Clay Farm maximum 40+ 4 and 3 goslings, Burwell Fen 12 on 6th.

Canada Goose Trumpington/Clay Farm maximum 24 +3 goslings, Burwell Fen 6 on 6th.

Egyptian Goose Fen Drayton Lakes a pair with young on several dates, Trumpington/Clay farm a pair on site and flying around the area until 15th, Paxton Pits on 16th, 2 on 25th and 5 on 27th.

Shelduck Wicken Fen 6 on 4th and 15 on 18th, Burwell Fen 11 on 6th, Paxton Pits a pair on 16th and 2 pairs on 17th, Cam Washes 4 on 28th.

Mandarin Paxton Pits a pair on 25th.

Wigeon Paxton Pits a drake still on 30th.

Gadwall Cam Washes 16 on 1st, Burwell Fen 16+ on 6th, Wicken Fen 4 on 13th, Cam Washes 4 on 28th.

Mallard Burwell Fen 21 on 6th, Cam Washes 45 on 28th.

Pintail Paxton Pits a drake on 15th.

Garganey *reported from:* Berry Fen, Fen Drayton Lakes, Little Downham, Ouse Washes, Tubney Fen and Wicken Fen.

Shoveler Burwell Fen 17 on 6th, Cam Washes 15 on 28th, Paxton Pits 3 on 30th.

Pochard Paxton Pits a female on 30th.

Tufted Duck Trumpington/Clay Farm maximum 24, Burwell Fen 30+ on 6th.

Red-breasted Merganser Grafham Water 8 (briefly) on 22nd.

Gamebirds

Grey Partridge Cam Washes 3 on 13th.

Quail Nene Washes one calling on 15th.

Cormorants

Cormorant Burwell Fen 2 on 6th.

Egrets and herons

Bittern *reported from:* Chippenham Fen (flyover), Wicken Fen.

Little Egret *reported from:* Burwell Fen, Cam Washes (4), Chippenham Fen, Fen Drayton Lakes, Paxton Pits (3) and Wicken Fen (13).

Great White Egret Ouse Washes on 4th – 5th.

Grey Heron Cam Washes 5 on 28th.

Grebes

Little Grebe *reported from:* Burwell Fen 3 on 6th, Fowlmere NR, Trumpington/Clay Farm (2).

Great Crested Grebe *reported from:* St Ives, Trumpington/Clay Farm (2), Wicken Fen (2).

Raptors

Red Kite *reported from:* Dry Drayton, Girton, Manea, Oakington, Paxton Pits (3), St. Ives, Westley Bottom and Wyton.

Marsh Harrier a number of reports of -23 birds from mostly fenland sites.

Buzzard *reported from:* Bottisham Lock (5), Burwell Fen, Chippenham Fen, Fen Drayton Lakes, Fowlmere NR, Great Stukeley, Little Wilbraham Fen (3), Paxton Pits (6), Shepreth and Wicken Fen (2).

Osprey Grafham Water on 1st, Ferry Meadows CP an immature female, ringed as a juvenile at Rutland Water in 2013 was present all month and presumed the same at Alconbury flyover on 29th and Cambridge/Cherry Hinton flyover on 29th.

Rails and crane

Water Rail *reported from:* Burwell Fen (2),

Coot Burwell Fen 32 on 6th.

Common Crane records from five fenland sites relate to 4 breeding and at least 2 prospecting pairs and non-breeders.

Waders

Avocet Cam Washes 12 on 1st, then 1-4 from 8th to 15th, Fen Drayton Lakes 2 on 7th – 12th, Wicken Fen 2 on 23rd, Paxton Pits 2 on 26th.

Oystercatcher Cam Washes 1-4 all month, Fen Drayton Lakes 2 on several dates and 2 young seen on 25th, Paxton Pits 6 on 16th, Wicken Fen 2 on 18th.

Grey Plover March Farmers on 8th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 9th.

Golden Plover March Farmers 3 on 8th, Duxford and Devil's Dyke, Newmarket on 12th – latest date.

Lapwing Trumpington/Clay Farm 2 pairs plus chicks on several dates, Paxton Pits 8 on 16th.

Little Ringed Plover Cam Washes 7 on 1st and 2 on 13th, Paxton Pits 1-4 all month, Grafham Water on 6th, Ouse Washes on 7th, Fen Drayton Lakes on several dates.

Ringed Plover Trumpington/Clay Farm 1-3 all month, Berry Fen on 9th, Wicken Fen 11 on 12th and 2 on 13th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 12th, Cam Washes 2 on 13th, Grafham Water on 13th, Paxton Pits 2-3 on 16th - 18th then 7 (tundra subspecies) on 25th – 28th, Ouse Washes on 20th.

Whimbrel Paxton Pits on 3rd – 5th, Grafham Water on 6th, March Farmers/Nene Washes on 8th.

Black tailed Godwit Cam Washes 5 on 1st, Wicken Fen on 1st, Fen Drayton Lakes on 8th.

Bar-tailed Godwit Paxton Pits on 3rd – 5th.



Bar-tailed Godwit at Paxton Pits: photo by Jamie Wells

Turnstone Paxton Pits on 8th, the same or another on 13th then 3 on 14th and a single on 18th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 9th.

Ruff Cam Washes 4 on 1st, March Farmers 2 on 8th, Paxton Pits on 16th – 17th.

Sanderling Grafham Water 8 on 13th, a single on 14th and 4 on 30th, Paxton Pits on 14th and another on 18th then 3 on 28th.

Dunlin *reported from:* Berry Fen (4), Cam Washes (2), Fen Drayton Lakes (3), Grafham Water, March Farmers (3), Ouse Washes (9) and Paxton Pits (12).

Common Sandpiper Paxton Pits 1-2 on 4th – 15th, Grafham Water on 6th and 2 on 14th, Fen Drayton Lakes 2 on 12th.

Green Sandpiper Trumpington/Clay Farm on 1st, Wicken Fen 2 on 18th.

Spotted Redshank Ouse Washes 2 on 9th.

Greenshank Cam Washes 5 on 1st and 2 on 13th, Paxton Pits 2 on 3rd - 6th and a single on 16th, Grafham Water 2 on 6th, Berry Fen on 9th, Paxton Pits on 26th.

Wood Sandpiper Fen Drayton Lakes on 1st, Berry Fen 2 on 9th, Cam Washes 2 on 13th.

Redshank *reported from:* Cam Washes (17), Paxton Pits (3) and Wicken Fen (4).

Woodcock Wicken Fen maximum 3+ roding on 13th.

Snipe *reported from:* Cam Washes and Paxton Pits.

Terns and gulls

Little Tern Paxton Pits on 5th, Hampton on 15th.

Black Tern Paxton Pits on 12th - 13th then 4 on 15th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 31st.

Common Tern Paxton Pits c80 on 4th and 120+ on 5th, Trumpington/Clay Farm maximum 6 + one nest.

Arctic Tern Grafham Water on 3rd and 6th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 12th.

Black-headed Gull Trumpington/Clay Farm c6 nests maximum 24. Burwell Fen 120+ c30 nests.

Little Gull Paxton Pits – Grafham Water 1-2 all month, Fen Drayton Lakes on 7th – 16th.

Mediterranean Gull Chatteris an adult on 2nd, Paxton Pits on 4th, Trumpington/Clay Farm a 2cy on several dates.

Lesser Black-backed Gull Trumpington/Clay Farm 1-3 up to 15th, Burwell Fen 12 on 6th.

Yellow-legged Gull Berry Fen 2 on 9th, Paxton Pits on 25th – 27th.

Doves, cuckoo, owls and kingfisher

Turtle Dove *reported from:* Brampton, Cambridge Research Park, Castor Hanglands, Colne on 2nd, Cottenham on 2nd, Fowlmere NR (3), Mepal (5), Paxton Pits, Reach (2), Roswell Pits/Ely, Six Mile Bottom (2), Sutton Gault and Wicken Fen.

Cuckoo reported from: Cam Washes, Croydon, Fen Drayton Lakes (2+), Histon, Houghton Meadows, Little Wilbraham Fen, Paxton Pits, Ramsey Heights (2), Wicken Fen (3), Woodwalton Fen (4) and Wyton.



Cuckoo at Fowlmere NR: photo by Doug Radford.

Barn Owl reported from: Barton, Cam Washes, Fen Drayton Lakes, Sawston by-pass and Wicken Fen (2).

Little Owl reported from: Barway, Fen Drayton Lakes and New Shardelows Farm

Short-eared Owl Nene Washes on 4th - last record of the winter so far.

Kingfisher reported from: Paxton Pits and Wicken Fen (4 different birds caught on 10th),

Falcons and parrots

Hobby reported from: Berry Fen, Bottisham Lock, Cambridge Research Park, Cam Washes, Fen Drayton Lakes, Fowlmere NR, Grafham Water, Little Wilbraham Fen (2), Ouse Fen (8), Paxton Pits (10), Six Mile Bottom, Sutton Gault, St. Ives, Wicken Fen (c12) and Woodwalton Fen (3).

Peregrine *reported from:* Cambridge, Wicken Fen and Wyton.

Ring-necked Parakeet Peterborough/Central Park on 20th.

Tits

Marsh Tit *reported from:* Paxton Pits (2),

Bearded Tit *reported from:* Wicken Fen.



House Martin - subject of a BTO survey this year. Photo by Colin Brown

Warblers

Cetti's Warbler *reported from:* Cambridge/Coldham's Common, Cambridge Research Park, Little Wilbraham Fen, Paxton Pits, Ramsey Heights, Wicken Fen (14), Woodwalton Fen (10+),

Garden Warbler Fen Drayton Lakes 12 on 2nd,

Grasshopper Warbler *reported from:* Chippenham Fen(2), Great Fen, Wicken Fen (3+) and Woodwalton Fen (3).

Starling and thrushes

Starling Trumpington/Clay Farm flock of c 120 adults and young on 29th.



Blackbird at Willingham: photo by Colin Brown.

Fieldfare Cottenham on 2nd – possibly the latest date this year (so far).

Mistle Thrush *reported from:* Chippenham Fen, Fowlmere NR, Holme Fen, Ramsey Heights and Shepreth.

Spotted Flycatcher *reported from:* Wicken Fen on 5th, Cambridge Research Park on 8th, Fowlmere NR, Granta Park 2 on 13th, Chippenham Fen 2 on 17th and Westley Bottom on 17th.

Nightingale *reported from:* Cambridge Research Park, Castor Hanglands (19 singing), Fen Drayton Lakes (3), Old Sulehay, Paxton Pits, Wicken Fen (2) and Woodwalton Fen.

Starts and chats

Redstart Ouse Fen a male on 7th.

Whinchat Bottisham Lock on 1st, Ouse Fen 2 females on 2nd, Paxton Pits a female on 7th, Burwell Fen 2 females on 7th.

Stonechat Wicken Fen a family on 15th.

Wheatear Six Mile Bottom a female on 1st, Backbush 7 on 3rd, Paxton Pits 2 on 4th, Burwell Fen 4 on 5th, Ferry Meadows CP on 5th, Paxton Pits on 5th, Trumpington Meadows 2 on 7th, Burwell Fen on 9th, Haddenham/Aldreth 2 on 10th, Paxton Pits on 29th.

Sparrows and wagtails

Tree Sparrow Holme Fen on 2nd.

Grey Wagtail *reported from*: Bottisham Lock and Paxton Pits (2).

Finches and buntings

Crossbill Wicken Fen a flyover on 26th.

Corn Bunting Trumpington Meadows 11 on 7th.

Exotica

Snow Goose still in the Wicken Fen area.

Contributors:

Colin Addington, Richard Allison, Dave Anderson, Denise Anderson, Louise Bacon, Dave Barr, Rowena Baxter, Peter Bircham, Richard Broughton, Chris Brown, Mike Burdekin, Will Burdett, Ian Burfield, Howard Butler, Saimon Clark, Martin Davis, Nikki Dibb, Joy Dingley, Mark Eaton, Paul Gallagher, Ben Green, Richard Grimmett, Andy Hannaford, Vicki Harley, Mark Hawkes, David Heath, Jon Heath, Paul Hobson, Michael Holdsworth, Pete Holt, David Hopkins, Sarah Howlett, Johan de Jager, Andy Jennings, Tref Jones, Colin Kirtland, Charlie Kitchin, Colin Lee, John Lindsell, Bob Mansfield, Owen and Monica Marks, Paul Mason, Martin O'Leary, Dave Palmer, Richard Palmer, Rob Partridge, Richard Patient, John Pilgrim, Doug Radford, Graeme Reed, Gareth Rees, Chris Rider, Duncan Ritchie, John Saunders, Isaac Swift, Jonathan Taylor, Richard Thomas, Chris Thorne and the Wicken Fen Group, Calum Urquhart, David Walsh, John Walsh, Hugh Venables, Alan Wadsworth, Mark Ward, Iain Webb, Matt Webb, Mike Weedon, David Wege, Jamie Wells, Kevin Wilson, David Withrington, Hugh Wright and Barbara York.

Summary: after a flood of reports in April a greatly reduced number in May, thus the E-bulletin is shorter than usual. Very few counts of wildfowl – please do record wildfowl and look for signs of breeding. Also there is not very much on the more unusual passerines. Has the odd weather played a part? Several rare breeding bird records are being submitted in confidence to the County Recorder and not mentioned on our news services, as befits the status of these vulnerable species. Thanks to everyone for their restraint.

Cambridgeshire Spotted Flycatcher Project 2015

If you see even a single Spotted Flycatcher after mid June, it will be worth following up.

Do you know of a pair nesting near you this year, or a traditional site which may be being used again? If you haven't seen one of these delightful birds for years, now is your chance.

The CBC is running a survey of breeding Spotted Flycatchers in 2015. This is the perfect activity for bored birders during those long summer evenings between the end of May and the start of the autumn passage in late July. You can find full details on the website.

<http://www.cambridgebirdclub.org.uk/spofl.html>

We want to hear from anyone who sees flycatchers after mid-June, or knows of a current or recent site. Please email

spofl@cambridgebirdclub.org.uk

with any information you have, including records of single birds; and please provide a map reference. Follow your leads up and keep us informed or we can arrange to follow up if you don't have time yourself. In addition we've identified a hundred or so regular or recent sites which we need to get checked. There's a list of these here.

<http://www.cambridgebirdclub.org.uk/spoflsites.html>

Let us know if you want to check any of these for us.

Spotted Flycatchers are a challenge

Spotted Flycatchers are extremely unobtrusive when breeding, ranging only within the close vicinity (often <100 metres) of the nest; and are inaudible to many. They arrive very late and are present in habitats rarely sought out by birders largely preoccupied with wetland sites from July onwards.

The species is certainly under-recorded. With a pair on the back of a house you certainly cannot rely on them ever to be audible or visible from the road on wires or aerials. Most house-owners don't even know that the birds are there.

Even when adults are present, RSPB fieldwork suggests that only one visit in three will necessarily detect them. For my part, I have on several occasions visited nests for ringing without seeing either one of the parent birds or hearing alarm calls.

One way of helping will be to cold-search some of the areas listed – or even to check out any churchyard or piece of parkland or mature gardens. It will, however, be important to stress that a single visit will never absolutely confirm absence. If you want to check out an area, please email

spofl@cambridgebirdclub.org.uk

and we can give you some additional pointers. If you've checked your local churchyard **several times over a few weeks** and still seen no birds, then that would be useful information too.

Background and status

The abundance change map For Spotted Flycatcher in the BTO's *Bird Atlas* is amongst the most consistently negative maps of any species. Widespread tetrad losses amounted to a 50% decline during 1995-2010, part of an 88% decline since 1970. For the Cambridgeshire *Atlas* Spotted Flycatchers were recorded in 22% of tetrads, down from 26% in the previous Old Cambridgeshire and 70% in the Huntingdonshire *Atlases*. Breeding was confirmed during the Atlas period in 85 tetrads, as probable in 29 and as possible in 76. The causes of this decline are uncertain, but have been linked to reduced survival of first-year birds related to conditions on migration and the wintering grounds; to high rates of nest predation, particularly in 'natural' woodland and farmland habitats; and, of course, to the general reduction in the availability of invertebrate food which we all notice on the summer windscreens of our cars.

The population estimate we came up with for the *Cambs Atlas* – 100 to 200 pairs – was something of a wild guesstimate.

Objectives

– The principal objective will be to record as many nests as possible within the County; to map these to a 100m grid reference; and to record the outcome.

Side-objectives would be:

- To create a database of nest-sites in a form which could be re-surveyed site by site at some future date.
- To record data for the BTO Nest Record Scheme for the national demography database. Even a single visit is of value. The NRS receives fewer than 100 records for Spotted Flycatcher each year.
- To assess whether nest success is indeed higher in gardens and churchyards than in farmland and woodland.
- To assess the incidence of second broods (supposedly 20%).
- As appropriate, to ring nestlings (and possibly adults) for the BTO Ringing Scheme.

A similarly informal study in Bedfordshire (Richard Bashford, 2002) located 94 pairs, including five sites with two pairs and four sites with three. In addition, single birds with no confirmed breeding were found at 28 sites. This was in the context of only 10-15 Bedfordshire pairs being recorded in previous non-survey years.

John Clarke's entertaining little book *'The Spotted What!?'* describes a charming exercise in citizen science in the Cotswolds, where he marshalled senior village volunteers to study 137 pairs (182 nests) during 2001-04, mainly by door-stepping and cold-searching churchyards.



Photo Simon Stirrup.

CBC Research Officer

Many thanks to Rob Pople for offering to take on this role. If anyone would like to join the Research Committee (we used to have one) please contact the Chair (Vince Lea).

Outdoor Meetings

Friday 12th June, Greys Farm, Therfield, near Royston, 7.30pm.

Edward Darling is a passionate and practical farmer-cum-conservationist, and will show us the many measures he has put in place on his farm to improve bird numbers, particularly of red-listed species such as Grey Partridge, Lapwing, Yellow Wagtail and Corn Bunting. Booking is not essential but helps ensure we don't start the tour without you; contact Vince Lea. To find Greys, take the A505 to the Western end of the Royston bypass, and then take the Therfield and Royston turn off the dual carriageway at the roundabout. This road turns left, and then very soon on the right there is a turn to Therfield - you will see a carpark for the heath ahead of you, but continue up the hill - Greys is near the rise of the hill on the left, on a marked turning in the trees (TL337395).

Friday 10th July, Ouse Fen, 6:30pm

Meet at the public car park at Earith Bridge on A1123 by the New Bedford River, just west of the junction with the B1050 from Willingham, TL393748. A guided walk with the warden Barry O'Dowd; limited to about 12 people so please contact Vince or Louise to book.

Friday 14th August, 7:00pm - To be arranged, but likely to be to Woodwalton Fen. Please contact Louise for further details and to book.

WICKEN FEN (BIRD RINGING) GROUP

Brief news for May 2015

There were netting sessions at the Fen on 11 different days in May. Nestling birds were ringed without the use of the nets, in open nests or in the large and small nestboxes. The month's ringing total was 245, a further 143 birds were retrapped, so the overall total of birds handled in the month was 388. The first figure below is the ringing total, the second is the retraps. Individual species totals were:

Kestrel	1, 0	Garden Warbler	3, 2
Hobby	1, 0	Blackcap	28, 11
Cuckoo	1, 0	Chiffchaff	34, 8
Barn Owl	1, 0	Willow Warbler	4, 1
Kingfisher	2, 2	Bearded Tit	2, 0
Swallow	1, 0	Long-tailed Tit	0, 6
Wren	11, 10	Blue Tit	32, 20
Dunnock	3, 7	Great Tit	10, 16
Robin	8, 4	Tree Creeper	0, 5
Blackbird	6, 13	Jay	0, 1
Song Thrush	7, 2	Jackdaw	17, 0

Cetti's Warbler	5, 6	Chaffinch	3, 4
Grasshopper Warbler	6, 0	Greenfinch	1, 2
Sedge Warbler	15, 4	Goldfinch	2, 1
Reed Warbler	28, 10	Bullfinch	4, 5
Lesser Whitethroat	2, 0	Reed Bunting	5, 3
Whitethroat	2, 0		

Old birds retrapped during the month were:

Blackbird XB92634 at 6 years 1 month,
 Great Tit TH47238 at 6 years 0 months,
 Garden Warbler X875672 at 5 years 0 months,
 Blue Tit X876576 and Cetti's Warbler L093219 both at 4 years 10 months,
 Dunnock L094679 at 4 years 2 months and
 Blackcap L093706 at 4 years 1 month.

The Neotropical Bird Club will be holding a summer meeting in Cambridge on Saturday 25 July and members of the CBC are welcome to attend. The meeting will be held at St John's Church Hall in Hills Road, a venue familiar to club members. Entrance is free, doors open at 10:30 for coffee & cakes and the meeting starts at 11:00. The talks will include Trish Allison on 'The state of birds in the Neotropics', Richard Thomas on ' Birding the Colombian Andes: how I learned to love tapaculos', Chris Sharpe on ' Three Decades of Birding in Venezuela', Tom Stuart on 'Recent NBC Conservation Awards' and Raymond Jeffers on 'Northeast Brazil: land of endemics and more! A sandwich lunch will be available, and the meeting will close around 5.0.

End of E-bulletin – next is due on July 10th.