

Cambridgeshire Bird Club



E-Bulletin 39 September 2016

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



HEADLINES

MANX SHEARWATER* Eaton Socon on the 14th - one picked up in distress taken into care but subsequently died; another at Stetchworth on the 25th was taken to RSPCA at West Winch (see photo).

PECTORAL SANDPIPER* Burwell Fen on the 3rd - 4th, Ouse Washes RSPB on the 19th.

GREAT SKUA Grafham Water 2 flyovers on the 17th, Welney flying high into Cambs on the 21st.

WRYNECK Cambridge (Newmarket Road) on the 11th.

YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER* Soham on the 17th, Dunkirk one caught and ringed on the 30th, Fowlmere NR one on the 30th.

PIED FLYCATCHER Peterborough an immature/female on the 19th, Fowlmere NR on the 24th.

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: the first half of the month was very much a continuation of August, warm sunny, sometimes hot (the 13th/14th were possibly the hottest days in the county in 2016 and the hottest in any September for a century) and with very little rain. At the exact mid-point a change occurred overnight with more seasonal temperatures and a day of, sometimes very intense, rain followed by a mixture of grey days, some sunshine with seasonally average temperatures but very low rainfall so that by the end of the month the pools at Burwell Fen and Baker's Fen had almost dried out.

Wildfowl

Mute Swan Burwell Fen 5 on the 7th.

Greylag Goose Sutton North Fen 1,220 on the 18th, Wicken Fen 147 on the 23rd and 26th.

Canada Goose Trumpington Clay Farm 32 on the 12th.

Barnacle Goose Paxton Pits on the 17th, Sutton North Fen 33 on the 18th.

Egyptian Goose Fen Drayton Lakes 4 on the 7th, Paxton Pits on the 12th, Colne Fen GP 25 on the 18th, Eaton Ford 4 flying over on the 25th.

Shelduck Cam Washes Waterbeach on the 6th, Burwell Fen a juvenile on the 18th.

Wigeon Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) 10 on the 9th, (Mere) 30 on the 26th, Kingfishers Bridge 17 on the 17th, Milton CP 49 on the 18th.

Gadwall Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) 10 on the 9th, (Mere) 25 on the 26th, Milton CP 5 on the 18th, Burwell Fen 2 on the 22nd.

Teal Fowlmere NR 4 on the 1st and 5 on the 6th, Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) 117 on the 10th, 56 on the 23rd, Burwell Fen maximum c120 on the 18th.

Mallard Burwell Fen maximum 51 on the 7th, Trumpington Clay Farm 54 on the 12th, Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) 78 on the 11th, (Mere) 32 on the 26th.

Pintail Paxton Pits on the 7th, 2 on the 28th.

Garganey *reported from:* Burwell Fen (3), Fowlmere NR (2 on the 13th) and Kingfishers Bridge.

Shoveler Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) 20 on the 5th, 22 on the 10th, (Mere) 14 on the 26th, Burwell Fen 12 on the 22nd.

Red-crested Pochard Grafham Water on the 6th.

Pochard Burwell Fen 4 on the 22nd.

Tufted Duck Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) on the 10th, 2 on the 11th, Trumpington Clay Farm 6 on the 12th, Milton CP on the 18th.

Common Scoter Grafham Water on the 18th.

Goldeneye Grafham Water 3 on the 25th.

Gamebirds

Grey Partridge Comberton (Westfield Farm) 3 pairs with one chick on the 11th, Toft 15 (13 young birds) on the 28th.

Cormorants

Cormorant Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) 7 on the 5th, (Mere) 5 on the 26th, Burwell Fen maximum 6 on the 11th, Trumpington Clay Farm 2 on the 12th.

Shag Grafham Water on the 18th.

Egrets and herons

Bittern Wicken Fen on the 1st.

Little Egret *reported from:* Burwell Fen (30), Grafham Water (14), Paxton Pits (5), Wicken Fen (Bakers Fen) (3).

Great White Egret Paxton Pits on the 10th, 14th, Godmanchester GP on the 11th, Nene Washes on the 15th, Fen Drayton Lakes on the 16th - 17th, Ouse Washes on the 20th.

Grey Heron Cambourne 8 flying over on the 6th, Burwell Fen maximum 5 on the 7th and 11th.



Grey Heron at Grafham Water: photo by James Hanlon.

Grebes

Little Grebe *reported from:* Burwell Fen (6), Colne Fen GP (47), Paxton Pits (3), Trumpington Clay Farm (6) and Wicken Fen (5).

Great Crested Grebe *reported from:* Burwell Fen (2), Grafham Water (3), Milton CP (4), Trumpington Clay Farm, Whittlesford GP and Wicken Fen (Mere) (5).

Slavonian Grebe* Grafham Water on the 17th - 25th at least.

Black-necked Grebe Fen Drayton Lakes on the 18th.

Raptors

Red Kite *reported from:* Fowlmere NR, Grafham Water (6), Nene Washes, Paxton Pits (2), St Neots, and Witcham.

Marsh Harrier *reported from:* Burwell Fen (2), Fowlmere NR (3), Grafham Water, Haddenham/Aldreth Fens, Kingfishers Bridge, Paxton Pits, Wicken Fen (2) and Woodwalton Fen (5 into a roost).

Hen Harrier Burwell Fen a pale male flew over on the 10th - the first of the winter - seen also at Wicken Fen the same day and on the 26th.

Buzzard *reported from:* Chippenham Fen (2), Fowlmere NR (5), Fulbourn, Grafham Water (7), Great Shelford (5), Paxton Pits (9), Soham (2), Trumpington (2), Whittlesford and Wicken Fen.

Osprey Little Paxton on 1st, Grafham Water 2+ on the 1st and 3rd, one on the 4th-6th, 3 adults on the 7th, one on the 12th, Paxton Pits on the 2nd and 3rd, Abington Pigotts on the 11th, Fowlmere NR flyover on the 11th.

Rails and crane

Water Rail *reported from:* Burwell Fen (5), Cam Washes Waterbeach, Chippenham Fen (2), Fen Drayton Lakes, Fowlmere NR (5) and Wicken Fen.

Moorhen Burwell Fen 31 on the 7th, 27 on the 11th and 22nd.

Coot Burwell Fen maximum 62 on the 22nd, Wicken Fen (Mere) 48 on the 26th.

Common Crane Eldernell 4 on the 1st, Colne Fen GP 2 on the 18th, Nene North Bank 3 on the 19th.

Waders

Avocet Burwell Fen 3 on the 7th, Cam Washes on the 9th.

Golden Plover Trumpington 35 on the 5th, Kingfishers Bridge on the 6th, Burwell Fen 7 flew over on the 10th, c60 over on the 18th, Kingfishers Bridge 130+ flying over on the 17th, Burwell Fen 30+ on the 17th, Nene Washes 100 on the 25th. Then what appears to be either passage or the arrival of our wintering flocks as follows on the 28th: Warboys c400 flying over, Burwell Fen c300, Trumpington c230, Croydon 80 and Cottenham-Wilburton 50.

Grey Plover Sutton North Fen on the 18th, Nene North Bank on the 19th.

Lapwing Haddenham/Aldreth Fen 2,000 and 200 in separate groups on the 4th, Burwell Fen 43 on the 7th, c110 on the 11th and c350 on the 18th, Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) 160 on the 10th, 420 on the 22nd, Fowlmere NR 67 on the 11th and 95 on the 13th, Thriplow c70 on the 19th, Nene Washes 500 on the 25th.

Little Ringed Plover Cam Washes Waterbeach 4+ on the 1st, Fen Drayton Lakes on the 7th, Sutton North Fen 2 on the 18th - latest record. Burwell Fen - see table.

Ringed Plover Cam Washes Waterbeach 5 on the 1st, 14 on the 3rd, 10+ on the 4th, 29+ on the 6th, 27 on the 10th, Fen Drayton Lakes on the 6th, 2 on the 10th, Fowlmere NR on the 11th, Sutton North Fen 3 on the 18th, Grafham Water 3 on the 18th, 2 on the 25th, Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) 2 on the 23rd.

Black tailed Godwit Cam Washes Waterbeach on the 3rd, Paxton Pits 7 on the 17th, Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) 4 on the 26th, Burwell Fen see table.

Turnstone Grafham Water on the 23rd - 28th.

Ruff Cam Washes Waterbeach 12 on the 1st, one on the 3rd and 6th, Ouse Washes 4 on the 4th, 50+ on the 18th, Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) maximum 29 on the 10th, Grafham Water on the 4th, Paxton Pits on the 5th, 3 on the 13th, one on the 17th, 26th and 28th, Fen Drayton Lakes 5 on the 10th, 3 on the 12th, 4 on the 14th, Kingfishers Bridge 12 on the 17th.

Dunlin Cam Washes Waterbeach 2 on the 1st, 3 on the 3rd, 5 on the 4th, 3 on the 6th, one on the 9th, Grafham Water on the 1st, 5 on the 2nd, one on the 6th and 18th, Fen Drayton Lakes on the 10th, 2 on the 12th, one on the 14th, Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) on the 10th, Paxton Pits 8 on the 17th, one on the 26th, 4 on the 28th, Kingfishers Bridge 2 on the 17th, Colne Fen GP 3 on the 18th.

Little Stint Cam Washes Waterbeach 2 on the 1st, 5+ on the 3rd, 3 on the 4th, one on the 6th and 9th, Burwell Fen 2 on the 1st, Paxton Pits on the 7th, Fen Drayton Lakes on the 9th, Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) on the 10th.

Curlew Sandpiper Fen Drayton Lakes 2 on the 8th - 10th, one on the 12th and 14th, Grafham Water 2 on the 9th.



Curlew Sandpiper at Grafham Water : photo by Brendon Doe

Common Sandpiper reported from: Cam Washes (2), Grafham Water (7), Paxton Pits (4) and Sutton North Fen.

Green Sandpiper reported from: Cam Washes (2), Fen Drayton Lakes (3), Grafham Water, Kingfishers Bridge (5), Ouse Washes (2), Paxton Pits, Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) (3).

Spotted Redshank Burwell Fen a juvenile on the 6th - 10th, Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) on the 10th (presumably the same bird).

Greenshank Paxton Pits on the 3rd - 12th, Cam Washes Waterbeach on the 3rd, Ouse Washes on the 4th, Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) on the 5th, 10th and 2 on the 23rd, Kingfishers Bridge on the 17th, Colne Fen GP on the 18th, Burwell Fen see table.

Redshank Paxton Pits on the 4th, Burwell Fen 3 on the 22nd.

Snipe reported from: Cam Washes (20), Fowlmere NR, Grafham Water (4), Kingfishers Bridge (15+), Paxton Pits (5), Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) (17), Burwell Fen- see table.

Burwell Fen Wader Counts (from Brendan Doe, Andy Hannaford, Martin O'Leary, Dave Palmer, Graeme Reed and the WeBS counters).

Species in descending order: Little Ringed Plover, Ringed Plover, Black-tailed Godwit, Ruff, Dunlin, Common Sandpiper, Green Sandpiper, Greenshank and Snipe.

	1		3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		17	18		22	
LRP	1					1	1										
RPI	8		10	2	30	24	15		5	13	32		30	2			
BtG	12		2	5	2	3	2			1	1					6	
Ru	16		12	10	30	27	27		20	15	36		3	5			
Dun	2			1	6					1							
CS	5		4	4	1	3	3		2	4							
GS	15		12	8	4	7	8		7	8	6			3			
Gsk	8		7	6	2	2	2		2	2	2			1		1	
Snipe	30			8+	30		2			12	3			19		9	

Terns and gulls

Black Tern Grafham Water a juvenile on the 1st-2nd and 2 on the 3rd, one on the 4th, 3 on the 16th and 17th, Fen Drayton Lakes a juvenile on the 2nd, 2 on the 6th, one on the 7th - 12th, Paxton Pits a juvenile on the 12th, 2 on the 13th.

Sandwich Tern Grafham Water on the 10th, Ferry Meadows CP 2 on the 22nd.

Common Tern Grafham Water on the 3rd, 7 on the 5th, Fen Drayton Lakes 6 on the 6th, 17+ on the 7th, 11+ on the 11th, Paxton Pits 9 on the 13th.

Arctic Tern Grafham Water on the 5th, 5 juveniles on the 7th, one on the 15th, Fen Drayton Lakes on the 9th.

Little Gull Grafham Water on the 10th - 13th.

Mediterranean Gull Grafham Water on the 2nd (no age given) and a first-year on the 6th.

Lesser Black-backed Gull Grafham Water 2,300 in the roost on the 2nd, 4,000+ on the 5th and 22nd, Cottenham Long Drove an individual resembling the race *fuscus* known as a 'Baltic Gull' on the 4th. A mixed age group of 400-500 of the race *intermedius* on fields as they were being ploughed in East Cambs at Chippenham on the 5th and Swaffham Bulbeck on the 16th and in South Cambs at Haslingfield 150 on the 22nd.

Herring Gull Grafham Water 150 in the roost on the 22nd.

Yellow-legged Gull *reported from:* Grafham Water (28+), Paxton Pits (c12).

An 'Azorean-type' was seen going into the Grafham Water roost on the 25th.

Caspian Gull Grafham Water 3 juveniles on the 2nd, one on the 4th - 5th, 5 on the 6th, one on the 16th, 6 on the 22nd, a 3 c.y. on the 28th, Cottenham Long Drove a juvenile on the 4th, Paxton Pits a 2 c.y. on the 5th.

Doves, owls swift and kingfisher

Turtle Dove *reported from:* Fowlmere NR (4) and Witcham, *late dates:* 16th (Fowlmere NR).

Barn Owl *reported from:* Burwell Fen, Fowlmere NR (family in the nest box) and Wicken Fen.

Little Owl *reported from:* Swaffham Prior.

Swift *late dates:* Grafham Water 2 on the 3rd, Paxton Pits on the 4th, Fen Drayton Lakes 3 on the 10th, Paxton Pits on the 12th, Ouse Fen on the 18th. Interesting observations by Dick Newell indicate very late fledging, the first of two young left on the 19th and the second, together with the remaining parent on the 22nd, showing that late birds are not necessarily passing migrants.

Kingfisher *reported from:* Burwell Fen (6), Chippenham Fen, Fowlmere NR (several), Haddenham/Aldreth Fens (2), Milton CP (2), Paxton Pits (2) and Wicken Fen.

Falcons and parrots

Kestrel Burwell Fen 6 on the 22nd.

Hobby Burwell Fen on the 1st, 6th, 11th and 18th, 4 on the 22nd, Eldernell on the 1st, Paxton Pits on the 2nd, 2 on the 17th, 3 on the 26th, 2 on the 28th, Ouse Washes 2+ on the 4th, Hare Park on the 5th, Chippenham Fen on the 6th - 7th, Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) on the 12th, Fen Drayton Lakes a juvenile on the 12th, and one on the 15th (unaged), Grafham Water on the 16th, Kingfishers Bridge 2 on the 17th, Woodwalton Fen on the 25th, Nene Washes on the 25th.

Peregrine Fowlmere NR a juvenile on the 10th and an adult on the 15th, Burwell Fen on the 11th and 22nd, Grafham Water on the 22nd, a juvenile on the 25th, Paxton Pits a juvenile (same bird as the previous?) on the 26th, a juvenile female on the 28th.

Ring-necked Parakeet* Litlington on the 27th - the first reported for some time.

Corvids

Carrion Crow Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) 14 on the 11th, Burwell Fen maximum 10 on the 18th.

Raven Grafham Water on the 22nd.

Crests, tits and larks

Firecrest Hare Park one singing on the 15th.

Coal Tit *Richard Broughton has written on Cambirds:* 12th, "At least 38 colour-ringed Coal Tits at large in Monks Wood this week and 43 Marsh Tits. These numbers are very low - on previous years experience there should be about 100 Marsh Tits and 150 Coal Tits in the wood right now".

Marsh Tit

Richard comments: "It is the second worse year for Marsh Tits in 14 years broken only by the deluge year of 2012 (when breeding was dire). The breeding season was poor for tits this year but nowhere near as awful as 2012 so the low numbers probably reflect knock-on effects of low post-fledging survival. (There are) very few berries and seeds on the trees this year and the juvenile

Marsh Tits are quite thin. There's no honeysuckle berries at all, which is a favourite of theirs. Marsh Tits are gradually declining in Monks Wood with average breeding numbers in the past five years down on the first five years of the study (2004-08). This is roughly in line with the national trend."

Reported from: Chippenham Fen and Monks Wood.

Bearded Tit Burwell Fen 4 on the 5th, one on the 6th, 3 on the 7th, Ouse Fen 2 on the 6th, Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) 10 on the 5th.



Bearded Tit at Ouse Fen: photo by Neil Bramwell

Skylark Paxton Pits 42 flying over in small groups on the 28th.

Hirundines, long-tailed tit and warblers

Swallow Ferry Meadows CP c1,000 to roost on the 7th.

House Martin Granta Park c60 on the 24th.

Cetti's Warbler *reported from:* Ferry Meadows CP on 5th, Fowlmere NR (3), Nene Washes, Paxton Pits and Wicken Fen.

Chiffchaff Farcet Fen passage reported 20+ on the 19th, Fowlmere NR 14 on the 24th, Wicken Fen 15 ringed on the 30th.

Willow Warbler *late dates:* Wicken Fen on the 18th.

Blackcap Wicken Fen evidence of passage with 57 ringed at one site on the 12th and 30 the following day on another part of the Fen.

Garden Warbler *late dates:* Wicken Fen on the 6th.

Lesser Whitethroat *late dates:* Fen Drayton Lakes c12 on the 10th, Wicken Fen on the 11th.

Whitethroat *late dates:* Wicken Fen one caught and ringed on the 30th.

Grasshopper Warbler *late dates:* Wicken Fen on the 11th.

Sedge Warbler *late dates:* Burwell Fen on the 23rd, remarkably one caught and ringed on October 3rd.

Reed Warbler Wicken Fen passage reflected by a catch of 64 on the morning of the 12th,

Starling and Spotted Flycatcher

Starling Burwell Fen c250 on the 7th, 52 on the 11th and c70 on the 18th, Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) c270 on the 23rd.

Spotted Flycatcher *reported from:* Cambourne, Cam Washes Waterbeach, Chippenham Fen.

Starts and chats

Black Redstart Cambridge on the 10th, and 17th, Trumpington on the 11th.

Redstart Witcham an adult male on the 1st, Cam Washes on the 6th, Ferry Meadows CP 2 on the 12th - 14th, one on the 15th, Eaton Ford on the 18th, Croydon on the 18th, Nene North Bank on the 19th, Sutton Gault on the 19th, Dunkirk one caught and ringed on the 30th.

Whinchat Paxton Pits 2 on the 2nd, one on the 3rd and the 17th, Fen Drayton Lakes on the 5th, 4 on the 11th, Ouse Fen 3 on the 6th, Chippenham Fen on the 7th, Comberton (Westfield Farm) 3 on the

11th, Ferry Meadows CP on the 16th, Burwell Fen one caught and ringed on the 23rd, Fowlmere NR 2 on the 24th, Nene Washes on the 25th,



Whinchat at Fen Drayton Lakes: photo by Garth Peacock.

Stonechat Wicken Fen a pair on the 23rd, Nene Washes on the 25th.

Wheatear Fowlmere NR on the 1st, Ouse Washes 3 on the 4th, Haddenham/Aldreth Fens on the 4th, Burwell Fen 2 on the 5th, one on the 7th, one on the 17th, Fen Drayton Lakes on the 11th, Cambridge (Chesterton allotments) on the 12th, Paxton Pits on the 17th, Trumpington Meadows NR on the 29th.

Wagtails and pipits

Yellow Wagtail Grafham Water 20 on the 3rd, Burwell Fen c20 on the 6th, Fowlmere NR a roost of 14 on the 6th, and 20+ on the 13th, Paxton Pits 12 on the 7th, c60 flew over on the 12th, 44 over on

the 13th, Nene Washes 100+ on the 15th, Sutton North Fen 27 on the 18th, Nene Washes 60+ on the 25th.

Grey Wagtail *reported from:* Cam Washes Waterbeach, Fen Drayton Lakes (2), Fowlmere NR, Grafham Water and Paxton Pits.

Tree Pipit Grafham Water on the 5th.

Meadow Pipit Colne Fen GP 160 on the 18th, Burwell Fen 50 handled in a ringing session on the 23rd and 31 on the 26th.

Finches and buntings

Siskin Fowlmere NR on the 18th, Ferry Meadows CP 16 on the 23rd.

Linnet Fowlmere NR c40 on the 1st.

Reed Bunting Burwell Fen 132 handled in a ringing session on the 23rd.

Contributors:

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Meetings: see next page.....

Next indoor meetings:

Friday 14th October, Cottenham Village College

Twenty Places to Go Birding Before You Die by Keith Betton

He has bird watched in 98 countries (several times in many places), travelling over 2 million miles and seeing c7500 species of birds. In this talk he takes us to 20 of his favourite locations.

Keith Betton is a media trainer, PR consultant and writer - his first book *Behind the Binoculars* was published in 2015. He is a keen world birder having seen over 7500 species in nearly 100 countries. He has a particular passion for Africa, having been Chairman of the African Bird Club for the last seven years. In the UK he is heavily involved in bird monitoring in Hampshire, where he is County Recorder. He has been a Council Member of both the RSPB and BTO, and is currently Vice President of the latter.

Friday 11th November, St Johns Hall, Cambridge

Identifying Birds for 40 years by Paul Stancliffe

Paul Stancliffe, author of the latest Collins field guides - *Common Birds of Britain and Ireland*, and *Rare birds of Britain and Ireland* - looks at how bird identification has changed during the last forty years.

A lifelong birder, Paul works for the British Trust for Ornithology as their Media Manager. Paul has been fortunate to live in the New Forest, the Isles of Scilly and now Norfolk, amongst a few other birch places. He has served on various bird identification panels and is one of the BTO identification experts.

This will be a return visit for Paul who talked to the Club about wildlife of the Isles of Scilly in 2012.

WICKEN FEN (BIRD RINGING) GROUP

Brief news for September 2016

There were netting sessions at the Fen on 19 different days in September. The month's ringing total was 1195, a further 134 birds were retraps, so the overall 1329 birds were handled, (ringed birds are shown first, followed by retraps, below).

Water Rail	1, 0	Lesser Whitethroat	2, 0
Stock Dove	4, 0	Whitethroat	4, 0

Woodpigeon	1, 0	Garden Warbler	1, 0
Barn Owl	4, 0	Blackcap	212, 2
Kingfisher	4, 0	Chiffchaff	76, 6
Great spot Woodpecker	1, 0	Willow Warbler	4, 0
Sand Martin	10, 0	Tree Creeper	3, 3
Swallow	72, 0	Goldcrest	4, 0
Meadow Pipit	115, 0	Bearded Tit	13, 9
Yellow Wagtail	22, 0	Long-tailed Tit	17, 6
Wren	12, 10	Blue Tit	47, 39
Dunnock	18, 7	Great Tit	28, 18
Robin	6, 9	Jay	1, 0
Whinchat	1, 0	House Sparrow	27, 0
Blackbird	8, 5	Chaffinch	13, 2
Song Thrush	3, 0	Greenfinch	60, 5
Cetti's Warbler	12, 3	Goldfinch	33, 2
Grasshopper Warbler	2, 0	Linnet	3, 0
Sedge Warbler	26, 0	Bullfinch	5, 1
Reed Warbler	134, 4	Reed Bunting	186, 3

Old birds retrapped during the month were:

Blackcap L505746 at 5y 1m,

Chaffinch Y409887 at 3y 5m and

Cetti's Warbler Y855616 at 3y 1m.

Oriental Bird Club

CBC members are welcome to attend the OBC Autumn Meeting, which will be held in the Wilkinson Room, St John the Evangelist, Hills Road, Cambridge on Saturday 29th October 2016.

Doors open at 10.30 and the meeting starts at 11.00. Snacks, cakes and hot and cold drinks will be available all day.

The programme includes talks on the Bengal Florican by Paul Donald, how many bird species there are in Asia by Nigel Collar, birding in China by Per Alstrom and Sulawesi by Mike Edgecombe and the Beijing Cuckoo Project by Chris Hewson.

Sales by Wildsounds and prize draw in aid of the OBC Conservation Fund. Full details at:

<http://orientalbirdclub.org/2016/09/12/2016-autumn-meeting/>

CBC/BTO/RSPB Conference on Rare Breeding Birds, 24th September 2016

Some 75 people - Club members and visitors from the region and beyond - seemed very happy to have given up a fine September weekend day to attend this occasional CBC conference at Cottenham Village College. The day's programme had been devised to present a review of the recording and conservation issues surrounding rare breeding birds in the County and in East Anglia in general.

After an introduction to the conference by CBC Chairman Vince Lea, Mark Holling, Secretary of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, set the stage with an overview of the role and workings of the RBBP. Mark's focus was very much on Cambridgeshire, with its disproportionate share of specialities, thus providing a keynote context for the more specialised species studies which were to come later. Jonathan Taylor followed, with a review of the practical challenges of monitoring and counting breeding ducks, waders and crakes across the vastness of the Nene Washes. Mark Thomas, Senior Investigations Officer at the RSPB, then described the highs and lows of his work tackling wildlife crime and the demands this made on his team for swift communication between conservationists, local volunteers, the police and the media. His case-study of Dutch protection work on Montagu's Harriers would prove a highlight of the day. Finally, for the last in the morning's longer background talks, Steven McAvoy of the BTO demonstrated this year's revised version of BirdTrack, stressing its role in the confidential recording of breeding activity, and the contribution that could and should be made by ordinary birders to the national databases.

After an excellent lunch, an opportunity for useful networking, the afternoon brought a series of shorter presentations. Kevin Hand described the work of the newly established Cambridgeshire Rare Breeding Bird Group, setting the scene for four studies aiming to help conserve and learn more about specific species: Ken Smith on Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers, Norman Sills on Cranes, David Ewbank on Ely's nationally famous Muscovy Ducks, Tim Cowan on the RSPB's Stone Curlew recovery project, and Simon Wotton on Bitterns. To round off the day. Dawn Balmer of the BTO provided a masterful summary of what we had heard, with a heartfelt appeal to birders to get out there to responsibly record the special species we are so lucky to host within the county.

The Club's thanks are due to Vince Lea and Vicki Harley for putting together the programme and for the practical organisation of the day. Raffle prizes were donated by

Dave Gosney, Vine House Farm, Wild about Travel, From the Notebook and by various club members. Proceeds from the raffle will go towards harrier wing-tagging projects.

As usual there were field trips on offer for the following day, the Sunday. Chris Kitchen guided a group at the Nene Washes, and Martin Lester provided a tour of Burwell Fen. Our thanks to Chris and Martin.

Bulletin Editor Chris Brown was particularly taken with two of the talks. Chris writes: "Ken Smith talked about Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers (LSW). The species increased when Dutch Elm disease brought plentiful food and nest sites and peaked around 1980. Declines since then have been rapid and in East Anglia are now very low. The encounter rate reported on BirdTrack is highest in March but even then the peak is 0.2% of all complete lists, compared to 20% for Great Spotted Woodpecker. Ken found in four-year study (2005-9) that breeding success was low, mainly due to chick starvation and nest predation. LSWs have a single brood and though over-winter survival is good the breeding success is about half the rate record in continental Europe.

Ken has issued a national appeal for people to report LSW nests to him; he is then able to monitor breeding using pole mounted cameras. As a result the BTO nest record scheme is now recording about ten nests a year. Newly reported nests are always in dead wood, but no tree species dominates, and often the nests are in odd places, not necessarily woodland. Most recently 2016 breeding success was poor with three nests excavated but no eggs laid.

We can assist Ken by looking for LSWs; even though they are known at only two sites in Cambridgeshire it is possible that they are overlooked. Drumming from the first warm day in February through to April is the best indicator of attempted breeding; drumming happens from dawn until about 9am. Potential sites should be checked out before leaf emergence. All records should be reported to Ken Smith at Ken.smith.lsw@gmail.com. He urged observers not to give up and ended on an optimistic note, in that LSW are known to visit fat feeders and where they are still present, can be offered some assistance.

Tim Cowan (RSPB) explained that Stone Curlews declined in the UK due to changes in farming practices which have reduced the area of bare soil for nesting, as well as the grazing land. Since 1985 an RSPB project has aimed to identify every nest in the UK; working with farmers, fledged chicks are temporarily caught when cultivation such as hoeing take place, and then released. From 1985 until 2012 the population rose from c60 pairs in the East of England to 280, but this was followed by a 20% reduction following the cold spring of 2013, from which the population is yet to recover. The Cambridgeshire population fell from 12 pairs in the 1980s to zero by 1994. Since then single pairs have nested in 1999, 2007, 2008 and 2010-12, rising to two pairs which fledging 4 young in

2015. Nest sites were all on the thin chalky soils in the south of the county with the exception of the 2007 site in the fens.

The key requirement is for areas free of cultivation other than the creation of bare ground; two hectare plots are ideal, and there are now 130 such plots across the East of England. Similarly, plots are being cut in grass heathland where the current crash in the rabbit population has reduced areas of short grass. The RSPB project is winding down but because birds can still choose to nest in crops, the 'temporary rescue' of chicks is continuing."

Rob McEwen was also impressed: "I recently attended the CBC Rare Breeding birds conference and found the day to be an interesting and informative overview of this subject. I was greatly impressed by the range of subjects covered and by how knowledgeable and enthusiastic each of the speakers were for their subjects. Being new to the Cambridgeshire area, I came away from the conference with an increased knowledge of, and a greater appreciation for, the birds and the excellent conservation efforts being undertaken in our local area. I'd like to thank the organisers and speakers for their efforts in making a hugely enjoyable and informative day."

And Bob Jarman too: "Excellent speakers - to get Dawn Balmer and Mark Holling on the same bill was a coup! The use of drones by the Dutch to locate, protect with fox-proof cages and satellite-tag Montagu's Harriers; and the animation showing the birds tracked to their wintering grounds in the Sahel was unforgettable."

Michael Holdsworth

Cambridgeshire Bird Club Summer Garden Bird Survey 2016

As the summer is drawing to a close the garden bird survey is about to end. The survey has run from: 6th March 2016 - 1st October 2016. I look forward to receiving the results in the weeks following the 1st October. Please find the species list for sending in from the computer or for printing off and posting on the Cambridgeshire Bird Club website:

www.cambridgebirdclub.org.uk

Please could you send in the results by the 31st October 2016.

Please send the results to:

gardenbirds@cambridgebirdclub.org.uk

or by post to:

15 School Lane Toft, Cambridge CB23 2RE

Find more details at the Cambridgeshire Bird Club website:

www.cambridgebirdclub.org.uk

If you are unable to access a computer, Bruce Martin has kindly offered to send a paper recording form, so please do get in touch.

The Cambridgeshire Bird Club garden bird surveys have been carried out for two full years. I would like to extend a big thank you to all of you that have taken part in the surveys during that time. A large database has been built up and it records how birds make use of gardens in the county. I plan to write a full summary for the club once all the records are in.

Sadly there have been increasingly fewer people taking part in the surveys and after taking advice I have decided that it would be best to take a break. It has been suggested that it is run on a five year cycle. This would mean restarting the survey in October 2019.

I hope that if you have taken part in these surveys you may like to take part in other surveys that take place in the county. They are advertised on the website or in the club newsletters.

There is a report of the first winter garden bird survey in the Cambridgeshire Bird Report 2014.

The October E-bulletin will be published on November 10th. Any contributions, articles etc to be with me by the 4th please.