



## Cambridgeshire Bird Club

E-Bulletin 48 June 2017

(apologies, I have got out of order with the numbering - this one is correct)



Blackbird brood at Willingham: photo by Colin Brown

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

### HEADLINES

**HONEY BUZZARD\*** one found dead at an undisclosed site on, or around, the 11<sup>th</sup>.

**BLACK-WINGED STILT** Ouse Washes a pair nested and the chicks left the nest, encouragingly they were still alive and growing at the end of the month. This is the first successful breeding in the county in a sequence of attempts going back to 1983; most have failed at the egg stage due to predation.

**TEMMINCK'S STINT** Ouse Washes on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

**ARCTIC SKUA\*** Thorney Toll one on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

**NIGHTJAR\*** Ouse Washes on June 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**RED-FOOTED FALCON\*** Fowlmere NR a female on 20<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup>.

**SAVI'S WARBLER\*** Wicken Fen the bird from the 30<sup>th</sup> of May was heard on the 1<sup>st</sup>.

### 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:** beginning with a typical early summer mixture of light showers and sunshine the middle of the month suddenly became unusually hot with temperatures in the 30s for five consecutive days, Cambridgeshire being among the hottest spots. A gradual breakdown at the end of the third week led to some very heavy downpours and in some places a month's rain fell in a single day followed by a more typical pattern of sunshine, cloud and showers.

### Wildfowl

**Mute Swan** Whittlesford GP 3 on the 8<sup>th</sup>, Littleport May Farm 5-6 all month maximum 22 on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, Burwell Fen 10 on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Greylag Goose** Littleport May Farm 17 on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, Whittlesford GP 40 + 8 young on the 8<sup>th</sup>, Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) 16 on the 14<sup>th</sup>, Trumpington Clay Farm maximum 35 on the 28<sup>th</sup>, but a crèche of 15 young on the 6<sup>th</sup> plus a small brood of 4 on the 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Canada Goose** Burwell Fen maximum 10 - bred, Trumpington Clay Farm maximum 24 +3 young on 28<sup>th</sup>, Wicken Fen bred.

**Barnacle Goose** Whittlesford GP 5 on the island on the 8<sup>th</sup>, Grafham Water 2 on the 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Egyptian Goose** Paxton Pits 5 on the 24<sup>th</sup>, 2 on the 29<sup>th</sup>, Trumpington Clay Farm 3 on the 28<sup>th</sup>, Littleport May Farm 2 all month.

**Shelduck** Burwell Fen 2 on the 21<sup>st</sup> - bred (brood of 7), Littleport May Farm 2 on the 3<sup>rd</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Mandarin Grafham Water** a drake on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Wigeon** Paxton Pits a drake on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, Littleport May Farm 2 on the 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**Gadwall** Burwell Fen - bred (brood of 2), Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) 2 on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Teal** Burwell Fen on the 21<sup>st</sup>, Littleport May Farm 8+ all month

**Mallard** Fowlmere NR - bred (at least 4 broods), Wicken Fen 77 on the 14<sup>th</sup> - bred (2 broods of 8), Burwell Fen 34 on the 21<sup>st</sup>, Littleport May Farm 450+ all month.

**Garganey** *reported from:* Burwell Fen, Ouse Washes, Wicken Fen (4).

**Shoveler** Littleport May Farm 2 on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, Paxton Pits a drake on the 4<sup>th</sup>, Burwell Fen - bred (brood of 5), Wicken Fen 13 on the 14<sup>th</sup> - bred (brood of 10).

**Pochard** Paxton Pits 5 drakes on the 4<sup>th</sup>, Littleport May Farm a female all month.

**Tufted Duck** *reported from:* Burwell Fen (2), Fowlmere NR (2), Littleport May Farm (10+), Paxton Pits - bred (brood of 6), Trumpington Clay Farm (15), Whittlesford GP and Wicken Fen.

**Common Scoter** Grafham Water a female on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

### **Gamebirds**

**Red-legged Partridge** Littleport May Farm 50-60 all month.

**Grey Partridge** Littleport May Farm 20+ all month.

**Quail** Swaffham Prior one calling on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, Orwell one calling on the 17<sup>th</sup>, Heydon 2 on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Pheasant** Littleport May Farm 50-60 all month.

### **Cormorants**

**Cormorant** *reported from:* Burwell Fen (2), Fowlmere NR, Hauxton (flyover), Littleport (2), and Whittlesford GP (2).

## ***Egrets and herons***

**Bittern** *reported from:* Burwell Fen and Wicken Fen.

**Little Egret** *reported from:* Burwell Fen (34), Fowlmere NR (3), Littleport May Farm (2), Paxton Pits (6), Trumpington Clay Farm, Whittlesford GP and Wicken Fen (20+ on many dates).

**Great White Egret** Ouse Washes on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Grey Heron** Burwell Fen 4 on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

## ***Grebes***

**Little Grebe** *reported from:* Burwell Fen, Fowlmere NR, Littleport May Farm (15), Trumpington Clay Farm (3), and Wicken Fen (3 - bred).

**Great Crested Grebe** *reported from:* Littleport May Farm (4).

## ***Raptors***

**Red Kite** Fowlmere NR 2 flying over on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and a single on the 10<sup>th</sup>, Paxton Pits on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, Over on the 4<sup>th</sup>, Wicken Fen on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, Cambridge on the 10<sup>th</sup>, Cam Washes on the 10<sup>th</sup>, Chippenham Fen 2 flew over on the 13<sup>th</sup>, Fowlmere NR daily with 2 on the 15<sup>th</sup>, Witcham on the 23<sup>rd</sup>; Waterbeach, Little Downham, Little Thetford and Landbeach, on the 25<sup>th</sup>, Over on the 26<sup>th</sup> and reported to be seen daily, Little Downham on the 27<sup>th</sup>, Littleport May Farm 1-3 seen regularly.



Red Kites at an undisclosed site photo: Gary Thornton

**Marsh Harrier** *reported from:* Burwell Fen, Chippenham Fen, Fowlmere NR, Littleport May Farm (6) and Wicken Fen.

**Buzzard** *reported from:* Burwell Fen, Chippenham Fen (2), Fowlmere NR (3), Littleport May Farm (6), Little Shelford, Newton, Pampisford, Swaffham Bulbeck and Wicken Fen (2).

**Osprey** Grafham Water on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

### ***Rails and crane***

**Water Rail** *reported from:* Fowlmere NR (bred), Littleport May Farm (6+) and Wicken Fen.

**Moorhen** Fowlmere NR - bred 3 broods on the 28<sup>th</sup>, Littleport May Farm 40+ all month.

**Coot** Wicken Fen 31 on the 14<sup>th</sup> (3 nests), Burwell Fen 111 on the 21<sup>st</sup> - bred (6 young), Littleport May Farm 20+ all month.

**Common Crane** Ouse Washes 2 on the 24<sup>th</sup>, Burwell Fen 2 on the 25<sup>th</sup> and one on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

### ***Waders***

**Avocet** Ouse Washes several pairs bred, Littleport May Farm 4 on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2 on the 5<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> (nest predated), Wicken Fen 2 on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Oystercatcher** *reported from:* Cottenham Long Drove, Grafham Water, Littleport May Farm (4), and Paxton Pits.

**Grey Plover** March Farmers on the 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Lapwing** *reported from:* Burwell Fen c200 on the 21<sup>st</sup>, Fowlmere NR (2 + chicks then 55 later in the month), Littleport May Farm (10+), Trumpington Clay Farm (2) and Wicken Fen (34 on the 14<sup>th</sup>).

**Little Ringed Plover** Fowlmere NR from 22<sup>nd</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup>, Paxton Pits on the 24<sup>th</sup>, (adult + juvenile), Burwell Fen on the 30<sup>th</sup>, Grafham Water on the 29<sup>th</sup>, Ouse Washes 7 on the 30<sup>th</sup>, Littleport May Farm 2 all month.

**Ringed Plover** Littleport May Farm 2 all month.

**Curlew** Fowlmere NR on the 15<sup>th</sup> - an unusual record in the south of the County; then a sequence of records of birds flying over: singles at Hemingford Grey and the Devil's Dyke on the 26<sup>th</sup>, Chesterton Cambridge on the 28<sup>th</sup> and Eaton Ford on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Black tailed Godwit** some evidence of return passage with some birds of the *islandica* race: Burwell Fen on the 25<sup>th</sup>, Mepal 17 flying over on the 27<sup>th</sup>, Maxey GP 28 on the 29<sup>th</sup>, Ouse Washes 2 on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Ruff** Wicken Fen on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Sanderling** Paxton Pits on 3<sup>rd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Sandpiper** Littleport May Farm on the 11<sup>th</sup>, Grafham Water on 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Green Sandpiper** *reported from:* Burwell Fen (7 on the 30<sup>th</sup>), Fen Drayton Lakes, Fowlmere NR, Littleport May Farm, Paxton Pits, Wicken Fen.

**Redshank** *reported from:* Burwell Fen (2), Littleport May Farm (2), Paxton Pits (4 - 2 young), Wicken Fen (5).

**Woodcock** *reported from:* Chippenham Fen (2), Littleport May Farm (4) and Wicken Fen (one roding).

**Snipe** *reported from:* Cottenham Long Drove, Littleport May Farm (10+), Wicken Fen (3 drummers).

### ***Terns and gulls***

**Common Tern** *reported from:* Burwell Fen, Fowlmere NR (3), Littleport May Farm (6 - nest predated) and Trumpington Clay Farm (2).

**Black-headed Gull** *reported from:* Burwell Fen (14), Trumpington Clay Farm (14), Littleport May Farm 50+ all month.

**Common Gull** Littleport May Farm 5-6 all month.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** Fowlmere NR 5 flew over on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6 on the 7<sup>th</sup>, Littleport May Farm 2 on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, Chippenham Fen 5 flew over on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Herring Gull** Littleport May Farm 3-4 all month.

**Yellow-legged Gull** Paxton Pits 2 on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 3 on the 24<sup>th</sup>, Cottenham Long Drove on the 29<sup>th</sup>, Grafham Water 5 on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

***Doves, cuckoo, owls kingfisher and woodpeckers***

**Stock Dove** Littleport May Farm 30+ all month.

**Woodpigeon** Littleport May Farm 200+ all month.

**Collared Dove** Littleport May Farm 50-60 all month.

**Turtle Dove** *reported from:* Fleam Dyke, Fowlmere NR (4), Godmanchester, Haddenham (2-3), Heydon, Needingworth Lakes, Ouse Washes, Paxton Pits and St Ives.

**Cuckoo** *reported from:* Burwell Fen, Clayhithe, Fen Drayton Lake ('hepatic' on the 29<sup>th</sup>), Duxford Grange, Littleport May Farm (3), Ouse Washes (3+), Paxton Pits (2), Wicken Fen (3+ including an 'hepatic').

**Barn Owl** *reported from:* Burwell Fen, Fowlmere NR, Littleport May Farm (6), Ouse Washes (2) and Wicken Fen.

**Little Owl** *reported from:* West Cambridge - bred and Littleport May Farm (2).



Little Owl at West Cambridge: photo by Neil Bramwell.

Tawny Owl *reported from:* Littleport May Farm (2), Wicken Fen and Wimpole - bred.

Short-eared Owl Littleport May Farm 2 all month

Swift *large counts:* Fowlmere NR 20 on the 10<sup>th</sup>.

Kingfisher *reported from:* Fowlmere NR (2), Littleport May Farm (6), Ouse Washes and Paxton Pits (2).

### ***Falcons and parrots***

Hobby *reported from:* Chippenham Fen, Ditton Park Wood, Fowlmere NR, Littleport May Farm (4+), Paxton Pits (5+) and Wicken Fen (3).

Peregrine Littleport May Farm on the 4<sup>th</sup>, Wicken Fen a flyover on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

### ***Corvids***

Magpie Littleport May Farm 20+ all month.

Jackdaw/Rook Chippenham Fen a roost of c500 emerged at dawn on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

Jackdaw Littleport May Farm 200+ all month.

Rook Littleport May Farm 200+ all month.

Carrion Crow Littleport May Farm 200+ all month.

### ***Crests, tits and larks***

Bearded Tit *reported from:* Wicken Fen and Ouse Fen.

Skylark Littleport May Farm 40+ all month.

### ***Hirundines and warblers***

Swallow Littleport May Farm 20+ all month.

Cetti's Warbler *reported from:* Littleport May Farm (4), Paxton Pits (3), St Neots (several), and Wicken Fen (20).

Grasshopper Warbler *reported from:* Littleport May Farm (4), St Neots and Wicken Fen (4).

### ***Nuthatch, Starling and Spotted Flycatcher***



**Nuthatch** Witchford on the 11<sup>th</sup> - unusual in fenland.

**Starling** Burwell Fen c115 on the 21<sup>st</sup>, Fowlmere NR a roost of 100 on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, Littleport May Farm 60 all month.

**Spotted Flycatcher** *reported from:* Fowlmere NR.

### ***Spotted Flycatcher project update by Michael Holdsworth***

As I write this (1 July) the earliest pairs to arrive are already feeding noisy week-old fledglings in the canopy, while late-arrivals, or birds which took a while to find a mate, are just starting to lay up. We've so far identified about 50 pairs, and found 33 nests. We've also already been able to confirm five successfully fledged broods where we hadn't found the nest; the remaining pairs are *probables* and *possibles*. As usual, 100% of these pairs are in 'garden' habitats, which include churchyards, farms and parkland. Flycatchers seem now to have entirely withdrawn from the wider countryside; we have recorded no pairs on agricultural land or in woodland. This may be an artefact of recording, since these habitats are largely ignored by birders in favour of wetlands; but there are still many traditional sites in woodland, often well-watched BCNWT reserves, with no birds again this year. The received wisdom is that garden breeders are three times more productive than countryside pairs, which continue to suffer from habitat degradation, massively depleted invert biomass and heavy predation. As usual, the success-rate of our garden birds has been very encouraging. We've had more nests lost to the weather (floods in gutters, creepers blown down) than to predation, which is almost invariably by Jays. Of about five losses so far only a couple have looked like characteristic corvid predation - undamaged nest, contents missing (mammals tend to wreck the nest). And, of course, these are resilient birds which will almost invariably start a replacement nest within a few days.

It is early days for results of the geolocator project. However, we have re-sighted nine out of nineteen tagged project birds; and six out of nineteen untagged survival controls. We've caught and ringed twelve new adults at our sites, replacing last year's birds that probably didn't survive to return. Catching the tagged birds to retrieve their devices is proving something of a fieldwork challenge: we have just three in the bag so far.

**Nightingale** *reported from:* Paxton Pits (2).

### ***Starts and chats***

**Stonechat** Littleport May Farm 2-3 all month.

### ***Sparrows, wagtails and pipits***

**Tree Sparrow** Redmere Farm at least 100 all month - breeding.

**Grey Wagtail** *reported from:* Fowlmere NR (2).

**Pied Wagtail** Littleport May Farm 100 all month.

**Meadow Pipit** Wicken Fen 5 on the 14<sup>th</sup>, Littleport May Farm 100+ all month.

### ***Finches and buntings***

**Greenfinch** Littleport May Farm 50+ all month.



Greenfinch at Fowlmere: photo by Bob Steed

**Goldfinch** Littleport May Farm 80+ all month.

**Linnet** Littleport May Farm 50+ all month.

**Crossbill** Cambridge a flyover on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Corn Bunting** Littleport May Farm 50+ all month.

**Reed Bunting** Littleport May Farm 100+ all month.

***Keeping up the list:*** at the end of June (according to the E-bulletin records) the county species total for 2017 is now 197. New species this month: Arctic Skua, Nightjar and Crossbill. Added from May: Spotted Flycatcher.

***Contributors:***

Colin Addington, Richard Allison, Louise Bacon, Richard Bashford, Peter Bircham, Mike Burdekin, Ade Cooper, Steve Cooper, Martin Davis, Tim Dee, Brendan Doe, Mike Everett, Rose Ferraby, Richard Gregory, Andy Hannaford, Mark Hawkes, David Heath, Jon Heath, Colin Helliwell, Michael Holdsworth, Pete Holt, Richard Jackson, Johan de Jager, Charlie Kitchin, Mike and Ann Knowles, Nick Laughton, Stella Laughton, Vince Lea, Tony Lowe, Owen and Monica Marks, Paul Mason, Steve May, Steve Mumford, Martin O'Leary, Richard Palmer, Neil Parkin, Rob Partridge, Richard Patient, Mark Peck, Doug Radford, Gary Rawlings, Petru Rednic, Claire Spottiswoode, Simon Stirrup, Jonathan Taylor, Richard Thomas, Chris Thorne and the Wicken Fen Group, Hugh Venables, Mark Ward, Jamie Wells, Kevin Wilson and Christoph Zöckler.

***Forthcoming Field meetings (book with Louise Bacon)***

**NOTE** Friday July 14th, 6:30pm Great Fen Project \*\*\* unfortunately this trip has had to be cancelled due to over-running works on the site.

**Friday August 11th, time T.B.C.**

Cavenham Heath. Booking essential. Site Manager for Natural England, Mike Taylor, will lead a walk around the heath, hopefully with a chance to see the post- breeding Stone Curlew aggregation which often occurs at that time of year.

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***Next indoor meetings:***

**Friday 8th September, Cottenham Village College**

**Research on the Pied Flycatcher by Malcolm Burgess**

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**Friday 13th October, Cottenham Village College**



## **Giving Wildlife the Edge on Fenland drains by Cliff Carson**

After managing the RSPB and The Wildlife Trust Ouse Washes Reserves from 1975 for 30 years, Cliff Carson moved to join the Middle Level Commissioners in 2005. In his role as Environmental Officer for this large Fenland drainage authority, he works to enhance the rivers and drains of the Middle Level system for biodiversity.

His particular interest is in adapting or creating man-made structures to provide sites for wildlife. Over the last decade otters have benefited from a network of 80 holts constructed in the otherwise bare banks of fenland drains. Kingfishers have been provided with secure nest sites behind holes drilled for them through steel piles and brick headwalls at 90 pumping stations and bridge sites. Water voles and pollinating insects benefit from soft engineering coir roll revetments, pre-established with native riparian plants. Over 90 barn owl boxes and 100 bat boxes installed in Drainage Board Districts now offer breeding sites to both species.

As a close second to practical conservation projects, Cliff enjoys photographing wildlife and communicating the importance of its conservation

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## **Friday 10th November, St Johns Hall, Cambridge**

### **Cuckoos: an African perspective by Claire Spottiswoode**

Claire joined the Department of Zoology, University of Cambridge, in 2002 as a PhD student (supervised by Professor Nick Davies), coming from the University of Cape Town in her home country of South Africa. She has stayed on ever since supported by a series of research fellowships from Sidney Sussex College, The Royal Society, and currently the BBSRC, and is a Senior Research Fellow at Magdalene College. From mid-2016 she has been splitting her time between the Department of Zoology and the [FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology](#) in Cape Town.

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## **WICKEN FEN (BIRD RINGING) GROUP**

Brief news for June 2017

There were netting sessions at the Fen on 13 different days in June; additionally a few more pulli were ringed, mainly from the Group's nestboxes. The month's ringing total was 199.

Barn Owl	3	Whitethroat	1
Kingfisher	1	Willow Warbler	2
Green Woodpecker	1	Chiffchaff	40
Great spot Woodpecker	1	Garden Warbler	2
Jackdaw	3	Blackcap	13
Wren	13	Blue Tit	10
Dunnock	12	Great Tit	9
Robin	19	Long-tailed Tit	1
Blackbird	5	Treecreeper	3
Cetti's Warbler	8	Linnet	2
Grasshopper Warbler	1	Chaffinch	1
Sedge Warbler	8	Bullfinch	3
Reed Warbler	33	Reed Bunting	2
Lesser Whitethroat	2		

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### ***Book review: 'Wildlife on your doorstep by Mark Ward.'***

*For his 'Skills' section for his Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award, Josh Carter has chosen to improve his birdwatching skills. As a self-taught teenager he came to us with an already impressive set of birdwatching skills, so it has been challenging to find ways to build on this, with an introduction to bird survey techniques, enhancing his recording standards, nest recording and ringing. He has also been given a new publication to review. Mark Ward may be a familiar name to many members, being on our Rarities Committee and, of course, editor of the RSPB's Nature's Home magazine. His new book is available from NHBS at <http://www.nhbs.com/title/209747/wildlife-on-your-doorstep>*

*Josh writes.....*

I have thoroughly enjoyed reading this book. It is concise, beautifully laid out and genuinely inspiring to me.

One of the main strong points, I thought, was the photography. Almost every page in the book has at least one photograph- and they are all of very high quality. I admire that the author has not only the vast knowledge of the world of wildlife but also the ability to take or obtain such great photos.

The book is very informative and teaches a lot of information quickly, but the vocabulary is relatively simple and the pages clearly laid out, so this is a book that anyone can keep up with.

I also like the 'Diary entries' which inform the reader of his experiences and particular triumphs in the author's wildlife-watching career. There are also lists of tips to help you find certain species of bird, which saves a lot of ruffling through ID books to find the right habitat and best time of year to see, for example, all 5 species of owl. It's brilliant!

The book has expanded my wildlife knowledge from just birds to moths, butterflies, dragonflies, fungi, trees and so much more, including more about birds.

I felt that the author was talking to me as an audience, which is a change from an ID book. For example, rather than saying "Arctic Terns sometimes travel inland in spring" it would say "The Arctic Tern's northbound migration will bring it through *your* patch in spring" and it feels more like the author is trying to help you than simply a page of information.

Before I read this book I generally blamed my garden for the general lack of wildlife. However, I now know that there is always something you can do to improve the wildlife in your garden: increase variety on feeders, plant more under-storey, put up bird boxes...

he thing that ultimately makes birdwatching in your garden more fun than visiting a nature reserve is that you feel part of conservation. If you travel to a National Nature Reserve 40 miles away, you might see plenty of new birds to add to your list, but you're not really benefitting the birds unless you donate to the reserve. But as it rightly says in the book, your garden is like a nature reserve of which you are the warden- and you feel like you're making an effort for the future of wildlife.

Josh Carter.

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Any contributions for the July issue to reach me please by August 4<sup>th</sup>. PB.