

Cambridgeshire Bird Club

E-Bulletin 62 August 2018



Turtle Dove at Cambridge Research Park : photo by Jonathan Heath.

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

HEADLINES

BLACK-NECKED GREBE Paxton Pits on the 9th.

SPOONBILL Cottenham Long Drove a flyover on the 28th.

SABINE'S GULL Grafham Water an adult found dead on Aug 20th. There have been sixteen records up to 2016 latest in 2014.

PIED FLYCATCHER Hinxton on the 6th.

ORTOLAN BUNTING Cambridge on 28th and 29th nocturnal migration recorded - see News and Comment.

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 week saw a continuation of the hot weather until an Atlantic front finally arrived and normal summer weather followed together with some thundery downpours and a mixture of sunny warm days and some cloudy with rain.

Summary: wader passage continued, Lapwing and Lesser Black-backed Gull arrived in numbers, and there was a new temporary 'wetland' site at Barway where the farmer has flooded a field to rid it of nematode worms. By the end of the month both Wigeon and Pintail were reported as wildfowl numbers built up and Golden Plover arrived heralding a change of the seasons.

Wildfowl

Mute Swan Kingfishers Bridge 8 on the 9th, Fen Drayton Lakes 281 on the 12th (WeBS count), Hobson's Park 7 on the 23rd, Earith c35 on the river Ouse on the 31st.

Whooper Swan Nene Washes on the 25th.

Greylag Goose (*counts 40 plus*) Fen Drayton Lakes 148 on the 12th, Kingfishers Bridge between 252 and 383 on all counts, Wicken Fen 240 on the 16th and 160 on the 30th, Hobson's Park 51 on the 23rd.

Canada Goose (*counts 20 plus*) Fen Drayton Lakes 50 on the 12th, Kingfishers Bridge between 88 and 201 on all counts, Fowlmere NR 191 on the 18th, Wicken Fen 220 on the 20th.

Barnacle Goose Grafham Water one on several dates, Sutton North Fen 31 on the 20th.

Egyptian Goose Fen Drayton Lakes 17 on the 12th, Kingfishers Bridge 3 on the 24th and 7 on the 26th.

Shelduck Stapleford Dernford Farm Reservoir a juvenile on the 6th, Barway 3 on the 6th.

Mandarin Grafham Water on the 2nd, 2 on the 4th, one on the 9th, 3 on the 20th, 2 on the 26th.

Wigeon Barway on the 8th, Fen Drayton Lakes 11 on the 12th, Paxton Pits on the 29th, 4 on the 31st, Ferry Meadows CP 9 on the 31st.

Gadwall Kingfishers Bridge 43 - 55 early in the month then 79 on the 24th and 63 on the 26th, Fen Drayton Lakes 422 on the 12th, Barway 40 on the 12th, Wicken Fen 8 on the 30th.

Teal Barway 11 on the 6th, 91 on the 12th, Kingfishers Bridge 12 - 25 all month, Fen Drayton Lakes 22 on the 12th, Wicken Fen 19 on the 11th, 13 on the 16th, 17 on the 20th, Fowlmere NR 6 on the 18th, 24th and 31st.

Mallard Fen Drayton Lakes 240 on the 12th, Grafham Water 954 on the 12th, Kingfishers Bridge maximum 130 - 250 all month maximum 543 on the 24th, on the 16th, Fowlmere NR 102 on the 18th, Wicken Fen 130+ on the 30th.

Pintail Sutton North Fen on the 20th - first returning bird, Grafham Water on the 28th and 29th, Cambridge Research Park on the 29th, Wicken Fen a pair on the 30th, Paxton Pits 3 on the 31st.

Garganey Fen Drayton Lakes on the 1st, 2 on the 11th, one on the 21st, 28th -29th, a juvenile on the 31st, Kingfishers Bridge on the 2nd, 2 on the 24th, 4 on the 26th, Barway 3 on the 12th, 4 on the 15th, one on the 27th, Grafham Water a female/immature on the 14th, 3 on the 17th - 21st, one on the 25th, 29th, Wicken Fen on the 20th and 26th.

Shoveler Kingfishers Bridge 2-18 all month until a maximum of 58 on the 26th, Burwell Fen 4 on the 16th, Wicken Fen 18 on the 16th, 34 on the 30th.



Shoveler at Grafham Water : photo by Phil Smith.

Red-crested Pochard Grafham Water a female/immature on the 14th, Paxton Pits 105 on the 12th, Fen Drayton Lakes on the 21st.

Pochard Fen Drayton Lakes 64 on the 12th, Grafham Water 4 on the 12th, Paxton Pits 2 on the 12th, Wicken Fen on the 16th, Kingfishers Bridge 4-8 all month.

Tufted Duck (*counts 20+*) Grafham Water 459 on the 4th, Fen Drayton Lakes 570 on the 12th, Hobson's Park 22 on the 23rd.

Scaup Grafham Water a male with many characteristics of this species but which may have been a hybrid on the 3rd.

Goldeneye Grafham Water 3 on the 12th, one on the 25th and 31st.

Goosander Fen Drayton Lakes 9 on the 13th, Stapleford Dernford Farm Reservoir 4 on the 16th and 9 on the 18th - these were the product of the first ever breeding in the County by this species.

Gamebirds

Grey Partridge Longstanton Lagoon 2 adults and 7 young on the 2nd, Tanholt GP on the 16th, Grafham Water a pair with a single juvenile on the 25th.

Cormorants

Cormorant Kingfishers Bridge 4-8 all month maximum 19 on the 26th, Barway 7 on the 6th, Fen Drayton Lakes 46 on the 12th, Burwell Fen 7 on the 8th, 2 on the 16th, Paxton Pits on the 16th, Wicken Fen 5 on the 16th, Hobson's Park 2 on the 23rd, Whittlesford GP on the 23rd.

Egrets and herons

Bittern *reported from:* Cam Washes, Fen Drayton Lakes and Wicken Fen.

Little Egret Longstanton Lagoon 6 on the 2nd, 5 on the 4th, Paxton Pits 3 - 8 all month, Barway 27 on the 6th, 11 on the 8th and 12th, Ferry Meadows CP on the 9th, Kingfishers Bridge 4 - 9 all month maximum 26 on the 9th, Fen Drayton Lakes 4 on the 12th, Grafham Water 12 on the 12th, 4 on the 14th, Wicken Fen 3 on the 15th - 16th, Whittlesford GP on the 23rd, Fowlmere NR on the 24th and 31st, Great Shelford a flyover on the 31st.

Great White Egret Woodwalton Fen on the 15th, Paxton Pits on the 10th - 16th, 2 on the 17th - 25th, one on the 31st, Ferry Meadows CP a flyover on the 21st, Kingfishers Bridge on the 24th - 27th.

Grey Heron Kingfishers Bridge 10 on the 2nd, Fen Drayton Lakes 9 on the 12th.

Grebes

Little Grebe *reported from:* Ferry Meadows CP, Fowlmere NR, Hobson's Park (5), Kingfishers Bridge (16), Paxton Pits (3), Fen Drayton Lakes (5) and Wicken Fen (8).

Great Crested Grebe *reported from:* Barway, Fen Drayton Lakes (124), Hobson's Park (2), Kingfishers Bridge (10), Paxton Pits (14) and Wicken Fen.

Raptors

Red Kite *reported from:* Hauxton (2), Fowlmere (5) and Paxton Pits.

Marsh Harrier *reported from:* Cambourne (a flyover), Cambridge Research Park (juvenile), Chippenham Fen, Fowlmere NR, Kingfishers Bridge, Nene Washes (2), Paxton Pits and Wicken Fen (2).

Hen Harrier Wicken Fen a ringtail thought to be of this species on the 15th.

Buzzard *reported from:* Chippenham Fen, Haslingfield, Kingfishers Bridge (2), Longstanton, Paxton Pits (6) and Wicken Fen.

Osprey Grafham Water on the 6th, 30th, 2 on the 31st, Houghton Mill/Hemingfords on the 22nd, Sutton Gault on the 27th, Marholm on the 28th.

Rails and crane

Water Rail *reported from:* Burwell Fen, Fowlmere NR and Wicken Fen (a juvenile),

Moorhen Fen Drayton Lakes 29 on the 12th, Kingfishers Bridge maximum 14 on the 24th.

Coot Kingfishers Bridge 145-230 all month, Fen Drayton Lakes 1,390 on the 12th, Burwell Fen 38 on the 8th and 24 on the 16th, Wicken Fen 24 on the 16th, Hobson's Park 26 on the 23rd.

Common Crane Nene Washes 19 on the 14th - see News and Comment, Cambridge 4 near the Coton footpath on the 28th - must be the most unlikely sight of the year so far.

Waders

For selected species a table has been prepared from accumulated counts.

Avocet Grafham Water 3 on the 2nd.

Oystercatcher reported from: Grafham Water (5) and Kingfishers Bridge (3).

Golden Plover Kingfishers Bridge 36 on the 16th - earliest returning birds reported to date, Cottenham Long Drove 24 on the 20th, Fowlmere NR 5 on the 22nd, 33 flying over on the 29th, Kingfishers Bridge 98 on the 26th.

Lapwing Kingfishers Bridge 37 - 328 all month maximum 544 on the 2nd, Paxton Pits c200 on the 4th, 40 on the 12th, Fowlmere NR 230 on the 5th, 80 on the 6th, Fen Drayton Lakes 91 on the 12th, 350 on the 21st, Grafham Water 63 on the 12th, 100+ on the 31st.

Little Ringed Plover Stapleford Dernford Farm Reservoir 2 on the 5th, Kingfishers Bridge on the 9th, 24th and 26th, Grafham Water 2 on the 17th and 30th, Longstanton Drainage Lagoon a juvenile on the 20th.

Ringed Plover Wicken Fen on the 2nd and 15th, Grafham Water 4 on the 7th, 6 on the 8th, 10 on the 9th, 9 on the 11th, 2 on the 12th, 5 on the 25th, 3 on the 26th, 2 on the 27th, Longstanton Drainage Lagoon on the 20th, Fen Drayton Lakes on the 28th.

Whimbrel Little Shelford 43 flying over on the 20th.

Curlew Grafham Water on the 22nd, 30th, Ferry Meadows CP 3 flying over on the 30th, Fen Drayton Lakes on the 31st, Fowlmere NR a flyover on the 31st.

Black tailed Godwit Grafham Water 2 - 9 all month, Wicken Fen 6 on the 2nd, one on the 5th, 3 on the 15th, 6 flew over on the 25th then 3 on the 26th and 27th, Stapleford Dernford Farm Reservoir 2 flying over on the 2nd, 2 on the 6th, Barway 20 on the 8th, 37 on the 12th, 10 on the 15th, 6 on the 27th, Paxton Pits 3 on the 9th, Kingfishers Bridge 3-4 on the 2nd - 16th, 2 on the 24th, 9 on the 26th, 4 on the 27th.

Accumulated totals

1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th	10 th	11 th	12 th	13 th	14 th	15 th	16 th	17 th	18 th	19 th	20 th	21 st
2	11	1		1	2	2	20	7			38		1	13	2	2				2
22 nd	23 rd	24 th	25 th	26 th	27 th	28 th	29 th	30 th	31 st											
		11	14	19	22	2	7	3	6											

Turnstone Grafham Water on the 6th, 4 on the 8th, one on the 9th, Fen Drayton Lakes 4 on the 29th, Paxton Pits on the 31st.

Knot Grafham Water a juvenile on 25th - 31st.

Ruff Wicken Fen 4 on the 2nd, 7 on the 5th, 2 on the 7th, Barway 8 on the 8th, 11 on the 12th, 12 on the 15th, 6 on the 27th, Grafham Water on the 9th and 12th, 29th, 2 on the 31st, Kingfishers Bridge 7-10 on the 2nd - 27th.

Sanderling Grafham Water on the 7th, 4 on the 8th, 2 on the 9th, and one on the 11th and 27th.



Sanderling (summer plumage) at Grafham Water : photo by James Hanlon.

Dunlin Grafham Water 1-9 on several dates maximum 25 on the 11th, Paxton Pits 3 on the 4th, Fowlmere NR on the 9th, 2 on the 12th, Wicken Fen on the 11th and 2 on the 15th, Stapleford Dernford Farm Reservoir on the 16th.

Common Sandpiper Fen Drayton Lakes on the 1st, 2 on the 11th, one on the 12th, 21st, 28th, Grafham Water 2 - 11 all month, Longstanton Lagoon 2 on the 2nd, one on the 4th and 27th, Stapleford Dernford Farm Reservoir 2 - 5 from the 2nd to 24th, Paxton Pits 5 on the 4th, 3 on the 9th, one on the 31st, Wicken Fen on the 5th and 14th, Barway 4 on the 8th, Ferry Meadows CP on the 8th and 28th - 29th, Kingfishers Bridge 2 - 3 all month, Maxey GP on the 12th, Colne Fen on the 21st, Fowlmere NR on the 21st - 27th.

1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th	10 th	11 th	12 th	13 th	14 th	15 th	16 th	17 th	18 th	19 th	20 th	21 st
12	14	7	9	5	6	6	5	7		13	8		1		4	2				2
22 nd	23 rd	24 th	25 th	26 th	27 th	28 th	29 th	30 th	31 st											
1	1	5	10	4	4	8	7		1											

Green Sandpiper Fen Drayton Lakes 1- 3 all month, Fowlmere NR on the 1st, 2 on the 12th, 5 on the 21st, one on the 22nd, Grafham Water 4 - 14 all month, Longstanton Lagoon 3 on the 2nd, 2 on the 4th, one on the 20th and 27th, Stapleford Dernford Farm Reservoir on the 1st, Wicken Fen 1 -7 all month, Barway 2 on the 8th, 3 on the 15th, one on the 27th, Kingfishers Bridge 4 - 5 all month maximum 10 on the 26th, Maxey GP 5 on the 12th, Paxton Pits on the 16th, 3 on the 22nd, one on the 24th and 2 on the 25th, Cottenham Long Drove on the 18th, 20th, Ferry Meadows CP on the 20th, Colne Fen 5 on the 21st, Maxey GP 4 on the 23rd, White Fen on the 25th.

1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th	10 th	11 th	12 th	13 th	14 th	15 th	16 th	17 th	18 th	19 th	20 th	21 st
11	13	5	2	5		5	2	6		14	23		14	3	5	13	2		5	10
22 nd	23 rd	24 th	25 th	26 th	27 th	28 th	29 th	30 th	31 st											
4	4	7	18	11	4	6	5	2	4											

Greenshank Paxton Pits a juvenile on the 5th, one on the 31st, Stapleford Dernford Farm Reservoir 3 on the 5th, 5 on the 6th, one on the 24th, Grafham Water 1 - 5 all month, Fowlmere 3 on the 7th, Barway 2 on the 8th, 4 on the 12th, one on the 27th, Ferry Meadows CP on the 9th and 29th, Wicken Fen a flyover on the 19th, Longstanton Lagoon on the 25th, Kingfishers Bridge 4 on the 24th - 27th.

1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th	10 th	11 th	12 th	13 th	14 th	15 th	16 th	17 th	18 th	19 th	20 th	21 st
				4	5	4	2	2		4	7		1	6	2	5		1	5	5
22 nd	23 rd	24 th	25 th	26 th	27 th	28 th	29 th	30 th	31 st											
		5	10	4	9	4	6	2	4											

Wood Sandpiper Wicken Fen on the 2nd - 7th, Fen Drayton Lakes on the 21st.

Redshank *reported from:* Barway (6), Grafham Water, Kingfishers Bridge, Longstanton Lagoon (2), and Stapleford Dernford Farm Reservoir.

Snipe *reported from:* Barway (11), Maxey GP (10), Fen Drayton Lakes, Ferry Meadows CP, Fowlmere NR (5), Kingfishers Bridge (10), Paxton Pits (5), Stapleford Dernford Farm Reservoir (2), and Wicken Fen (5).

Terns and gulls

Black Tern Grafham Water a juvenile on the 21st, 12 on the 29th, 4 on the 31st.

Common Tern Burwell Fen, Barway (2), Cam Washes, Maxey GP, Fen Drayton Lakes (34), Ferry Meadows CP (40), Grafham Water (50), Kingfishers Bridge (5) and Paxton Pits (10).

Arctic Tern Grafham Water 2 juveniles on the 9th, one on the 16th and 17th.

Black-headed Gull Kingfishers Bridge 114 on the 2nd, 95 on the 26th, Fen Drayton Lakes 82 on the 12th, Longstanton Lagoon c100 on the 25th.

Mediterranean Gull Colne Fen a juvenile on the 21st, Longstanton Lagoon a juvenile on the 25th and 27th.

Common Gull Kingfishers Bridge 3 on the 26th.

Lesser Black-backed Gull (*counts 40+*) Stapleford Dernford Farm Reservoir 300 on the 2nd, Heydon 280 on the 12th, Fowlmere NR 40 on the 17th, 200 in the field opposite the NR on the 18th, 350+ on the 27th, Cottenham Long Drove 300 on the 18th, Burwell 350+ in a ploughed field on the 30th, Great Shelford 60+ in a ploughed field on the 30th, Little Shelford 40+ on the 31st.

Herring Gull Burwell Fen 2 on the 16th, Fowlmere one among Lesser black-backs on the 27th.

Yellow-legged Gull *reported from:* Cottenham Long Drove (12), Grafham Water (10), Haddenham (4), Heydon (3), Longstanton Lagoon (3), Paxton Pits, Stapleford Dernford Farm Reservoir and Sutton North Fen.

Caspian Gull Grafham Water on the 4th, a 3 c.y. on the 9th, a juvenile from the 29th.

Great Black-backed Gull *reported from:* Grafham Water.

Doves, cuckoo, owls and Kingfisher

Wood Pigeon Burwell fen c120 on the 21st.

Turtle Dove *reported from:* Cambridge Research Park, Cottenham Lode (2), Fen Drayton Lakes, Fowlmere village, Maxey GP, and Overcote.

Barn Owl *reported from:* Burwell Fen and Wicken Fen.

Little Owl *reported from:* Lode.

Tawny Owl *reported from:* Wicken Fen.

Long-eared Owl Grafham Water on the 16th.

Short-eared Owl Knapwell Grange Farm on the 23rd.

Swift Burwell 80 on the 7th, Barway 20 on the 8th, one on the 27th, Grafham Water 2 on the 11th, 2 on the 26th, Stapleford Dernford reservoir 18+ on the 16th, 5 on the 24th, Fowlmere NR on the 17th, Kingfishers Bridge 15 on the 26th, Ferry Meadows CP 5 on the 31st.

Kingfisher *reported from:* Ferry Meadows CP (2), Grafham Water (bred), Kingfishers Bridge, Lode Mill, Paxton Pits (2) and Wicken Fen.

Falcons and parrots

Hobby Stapleford Dernford Farm Reservoir on the 5th and 16th, Fowlmere NR on the 6th, 18th, Barway on the 12th and 15th, Burwell Fen on the 8th, Fen Drayton Lakes on the 12th, Maxey GP on the 12th, Wicken Fen on the 15th and 26th, Chippenham Fen on the 21st, Cottenham Long Drove on the 20th, Ferry Meadows CP on the 25th, Cam Washes on the 26th, Kingfishers Bridge on the 24th, 26th and 27th, Fen Drayton Lakes on the 28th.

Peregrine Paxton Pits an immature male on the 4th, Grafham Water on the 15th, Longstanton Lagoon on the 25th, Cambridge 2 birds on the 28th - feathers from under the site revealed prey items of Common Tern and Black-tailed Godwit.

Corvids

Carrion Crow Burwell Fen 18 on the 21st.

Raven Paxton Pits 2 on the 4th, Fowlmere NR 2 on the 12th, Heydon up to 8 in a pig field on the 12th - doubling the previous County record of 4, Grafham Water 4 on the 16th, Hare Park a flyover on the 28th.

Corvid species Heydon 'hundreds' in the pig field where the Ravens were seen on the 12th.

Hirundines, long-tailed tit and warblers

Sand Martin Paxton Pits 20 on the 12th, Barway 200 on the 12th, 450+ on the 27th, Kingfishers Bridge 80 on the 24th and 31 on the 26th.

Swallow Paxton Pits 20 on the 12th, Wicken Fen roost of 200+ on the 20th, Kingfishers Bridge 36 on the 24th.

House Martin Paxton Pits 70 on the 12th, Fowlmere NR 50+ on the 18th, Kingfishers Bridge 50 on the 24th and 114 on the 26th.

Cetti's Warbler *reported from:* Wicken Fen.

Warbler spp

At Grafham Water on the 11th 'lots' of warblers were reported to be in the bushes and on the same day at Wicken Fen at least 10-15 *phylloscopus* warblers feeding in a tall willow tree. Suggesting that a passage movement was in full swing.



Willow Warbler at Heydon : photo by Steve Cooper

Grasshopper Warbler *reported from:* Chippenham Fen, Grafham Water and Wicken Fen.

Nuthatch, starling and thrushes

Nuthatch *reported from:* Wicken Fen.

Starling Fowlmere NR a roost of c200 on the 24th.

Mistle Thrush Ferry Meadows CP a group of 18 on the 20th.

Spotted Flycatcher Hinxton a pair bred, Ferry Meadows CP on the 8th and 25th, Fowlmere NR on the 12th, 3 on the 18th, Wicken Fen 2 ringed on the 19th, Grafham Water on the 25th.

Starts and chats

Redstart Milton a female/juvenile on the 25th, Fowlmere a female on the 27th.

Whinchat Nene Washes on the 25th, Kingfishers Bridge 2 on the 26th, Wicken Fen on the 30th.

Stonechat Nene Washes a juvenile on the 25th, Wicken Fen a pair on the 26th, Kingfishers Bridge on the 26th.

Wheatear Grafham Water on the 14th and 31st, Fen Drayton Lakes on the 25th.

Wagtails and pipits

Yellow Wagtail (*counts 10 plus*) Grafham Water 10+ on the 14th, 20 on the 25th, 30 on the 31st, Nene Washes 10 on the 25th, Wicken Fen 27 caught and ringed at a roost on the 20th, and 22 on the 26th, Sutton Gault 60+ on the 21st, Cam Washes 15+ on the 26th, Kingfishers Bridge 22 on the 26th, Fen Drayton Lakes 32 on the 29th.

Grey Wagtail *reported from:* Ferry Meadows CP and Fowlmere NR.

Tree Pipit Fowlmere NR a flyover on the 18th, Cam Washes a flyover on the 26th, also recorded on noc mig (see below).

Finches and buntings

Goldfinch Kingfishers Bridge 45 on the 2nd, 49 on the 24th and 65 on the 26th.

Corn Bunting Fowlmere NR 30 on the 29th.

Exotica

Ross's Goose Wicken Fen on the 20th - presumed the same bird as previously reported. See among the hybrids - maybe this bird was a parent of the hybrid at Kingfishers Bridge, since it is always consorting with the Greylags.

Hybrids

Tufted Duck x Red-crested Pochard Grafham Water on the 4th.

Greylag x Canada Goose Kingfishers Bridge on the 9th.

Greylag x Snow/Ross's Goose Kingfishers Bridge on the 16th.

Contributors:

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Next indoor meetings:

Cottenham Village College

14th Sept: *Counting wintering waterbirds - the UK’s Wetland Bird Survey* by Teresa Frost



Non-breeding waterbirds have been systematically monitored for seventy years. Teresa’s talk will cover the history and background of the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) and how it has helped us understand and conserve our internationally important populations of wintering waterbirds.

WeBS is a partnership between the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee in association with the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust. Teresa works with colleagues at BTO and a network of 160 volunteer local organisers to run the scheme. She leads on development and is responsible for annual reporting of results including the WeBS Online Report and the summary report sent out to around 3000 WeBS counters annually.

Prior to joining the BTO in November 2015, Teresa worked in Local Environmental Records Centres for several years after completing her PhD, which was on analysing WeBS data. She sits on the Council of the National Forum for Biological Recording and is enthusiastic about engaging people in recording and monitoring their local wildlife and fostering cross-taxa collaboration between wildlife organisations and groups; and in making better and more extensive use of biodiversity recording and monitoring data for policy, research and conservation at all scales.

12th Oct: *Life in a world full of predators : saving the UK's black-tailed godwits* by Jen Smart

Breeding waders are in trouble and the beautiful black-tailed godwit is among the most threatened, with fewer than 50 breeding pairs and 90% of these at one nature reserve. I will talk about an ambitious and novel partnership project between RSPB and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, with funding from EU LIFE, which aims to secure the future of godwits as a breeding species in the UK.

Dr Jennifer Smart is a Principal Conservation Scientist at the RSPB Centre for Conservation Science. Much of her career has been focused on the ecology of breeding waders developing conservation solutions to reverse their severe population declines. Increasingly this involves understanding and managing the impacts of predation and finding ways to influence landscape-scale management of wet grasslands.

You can find out more about her and the RSPB Centre for Conservation Science at the following webpages:

<https://ww2.rspb.org.uk/our-work/conservation/centre-for-conservation-science>

<https://ww2.rspb.org.uk/our-work/conservation/centre-for-conservation-science/our-team/jennifer-smart/>

St Johns Church Hall, Cambridge

9th Nov: *Green birding, the RSPB and the adventures of a biking birder* by Gary Prescott

Gary Prescott, The Biking Birder, will be talking about Green Birding, the growing way in which birders are being more environmentally friendly when birding. You will meet the characters from around the World who participate in Green Birding and find out why they do what they do. Gary will also be talking about his Biking Birder adventures, telling stories from his three years on the road as he cycled around the UK visiting every RSPB and Wildfowl & Wetland Trust nature reserve - twice! The first person ever to do this, Gary also has some Green Birding records to discuss, as well as tales from his latest Biking Birder adventure in Peru last year.

ONE DAY CONFERENCE

Saturday November 3rd at Cottenham Village College, the theme is Migration

A whole day learning about migration, how we observe it visually and by sound recording, the role of bird observatories, and case studies revealing the migration routes of birds which use

Cambridgeshire as either a summer or a winter base, and how new technology has helped reveal this knowledge.

£25 for the day, book via Vicki Harley (vicki.harley@care4free.net). Booking form will be emailed

Research Projects

Raptor Survey 22nd or 23rd September 2018

Over the past couple of years we have carried out a biennial raptor survey. This is giving us a better idea of the changing status of these birds in our county. It's a relatively simple and hopefully enjoyable task.

Pick a promising site. Just about anywhere will do and look out for raptors for a period of one hour. Try to do this in the late morning to the mid afternoon. This is when many raptors are at their most active and most visible, especially those species that soar.

If you see a Raptor could you note the

- Species, number and if possible gender
- The location, ideally with a six figure Ordnance grid reference
- The nature of the location - "urban", "woodland", "marsh" etc
- What the bird(s) were doing - hunting, on passage etc.
- The time of day and weather conditions.

Don't be concerned if you cannot answer all the points above. Each observation adds to the snapshot. Send your results to research@cambridgebirdclub.org.uk

Hopefully, we will be able to repeat this survey in the years to come thereby producing trend data of even value than a one-off.

And especial thanks to those of you who have contributed in the past.

Robert Brown (Research Officer) and Louise Bacon (County Recorder).

BTO Tawny Owl Point Survey

As part of its "[Project Owl](#)", the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) will be running two complementary Tawny Owl surveys over the coming months, the first of which - the [Tawny Owl Point Survey](#) (or "TOPS") - starts in August. Full details of TOPS are available from the survey web page above, but essentially volunteers are required to make two relatively short (20- or 30-minute)

early-evening survey visits between the 15th of August and 15th of October to listen for Tawny Owl hooting/calling activity from a safely accessible point within 300 metres of the centre of a survey “tetrad” (i.e. 2×2-km square).

As TOPS is a sample (rather than complete) survey - mirroring the methodology used for previous surveys in 1989 and 2005 - only one in nine 10-km squares has been selected for sampling across the country. Within Cambridgeshire these 10-km squares are TL18 (including, e.g., Sawtry, Stilton, Holme and the Giddings), TL45 (i.e. central Cambridge and Coton south to Harston and Stapleford), TL48 (including, e.g., Mepal, Manea and Pymoor) and TF41 (e.g. northern Wisbech, Gorefield, Tydd St Giles, etc.). Those of you living or working elsewhere may find a 10-km square falling (mainly) outside the County's boundaries to be more convenient, so please do also check the [interactive map](#) on the survey web pages.

If you would like to get involved in TOPS, please either request a tetrad using the interactive map online, or contact Derek Langslow - the Regional Representative for the BTO's “[Huntingdon & Peterborough](#)” region (regarding TL18) - or me (for TL45, TL48 and TF41) if you have any queries. Please note that to request a tetrad using the public online map you will need a BTO user ID (click “Create BTO account” when prompted, if you don't already have one) and to register for TOPS (click “Login and signup” when prompted, if you haven't registered already). Only existing BTO volunteers who have already registered for TOPS (e.g. from their “My BTO” page) should select the “Request square” option.

Alternatively, the complementary Tawny Owl Calling Survey - which will start at the end of September, and can be carried out from your garden (or other local green space), wherever in the County you are - will also be launched soon (further details to follow in next month's e-Bulletin).

Rob Pople, Regional Rep. for the BTO's “[Cambridgeshire](#)” region (robgpople@hotmail.com)

News and Comment

Vanishing roosts

For the past few years there have been corvid roosts, Rooks and Jackdaws, numbering thousands of birds, at both Chippenham and Wicken Fens. Yet this year none at either site. In an excellent book *Ravens in Winter* the American ornithologist Bernd Heinrich studied the roost sites of Ravens in a New England wood in winter. The book was about much more but Heinrich was certain that roosting allowed birds to ‘exchange information’ about good food sources in much the same way that Honey Bees have been shown to. So, the question remains, where have they gone, these Rooks and Jackdaws? In previous years they have been conspicuously feeding in fields close by, but not this year. Indeed, has the hot weather and the consequent rock-hard land reduced the population significantly?

News of the Cranes by David White (from RSPB)

We are very fortunate to have an increasing population of Cranes nesting in the Fens. Although, for reasons that will become apparent, it has taken a long time to get to this point, here is a summary of how they have done on our reserves in the Fens this year:

I will start at the Nene Washes. This year, four pairs attempted to nest - the highest number of pairs that have ever tried to raise a family on this site. Two of these pairs raised families successfully, each fledging two chicks.

Lots of adult birds are now also gathering at the site. They are forming a post-breeding roost. At the moment there are about 27 adult birds gathering.

Meanwhile, at Lakenheath Fen, one pair nested on the reserve. Everything seemed to be going well until the reserve team started seeing the chicks. It became apparent that one of the chicks was considerably larger than the other one which was a concern.

As the weeks went on, the family were occasionally seen by the reserve team and by members of the public passing the reserve on the train (which ironically, is often the best way to see them here at certain times of the year).

In early July, the larger chick took its first flight and was seen flying around with its parents. Although this was great news, we became concerned about the fate of the smaller chick, as while the three were flying around, it was obviously on its own somewhere on the reserve. However, nobody saw the smaller chick for quite some time so we started fearing the worst.

When August came round, we were very intrigued to see what was going to happen. Traditionally, our Cranes tend to leave the reserve in August and go and join the other Cranes in the Fens at places like Nene Washes. However, the family of three stuck around and by the time mid-August came around, we were starting to wonder why they were still here!

On Sunday, regular reserve visitor John Walsh saw a family of four cranes from the train, which was intriguing. Against all the odds, was the smaller chick still alive after all.

Nene Washes power lines

The power lines that crossed RSPB Nene Washes have now been buried in order to try to prevent swans and other large species of birds from colliding with them during the winter months.

Noc Mig reports

From Simon Gillings

Standardised Nocturnal Flight Call Monitoring Cambridge, August 2018



28 nights



220 hours



569 calls



88 birds

<http://trekteilen.nl/site/totals/2080/2018>

Species	Nights	Calls	Individuals
Little Grebe	1	1	1
Grey Heron	5	31	6
Mallard	1	3	1
Moorhen	2	5	2
Coot	1	9	2
Oystercatcher	4	13	6
Little Ringed Plover	1	7	1
Ringed Plover	1	1	1
Golden Plover	2	3	2
Lapwing	1	1	1
Dunlin	3	4	3
Snipe	1	4	1
Whimbrel	9	98	17
Redshank	2	14	4
Green Sandpiper	1	1	1
Common Sandpiper	5	35	11
Black-headed Gull	1	1	1
Common Gull	2	21	2
Common Tern	2	250	3
Barn Owl	1	1	1
Skylark	2	5	2
Tree Pipit	2	4	2
Robin	4	5	5

From Jonathan Heath

Night beginning	Nocturnal Migrants	Night beginning	Nocturnal Migrants
Aug 1st	Dunlin, Common Tern	Aug 16th	Little Ringed Plover
Aug 2nd	Whimbrel	Aug 17th	-
Aug 3rd	Whimbrel (x2), Dunlin, Oystercatcher, Teal	Aug 18th	Oystercatcher
Aug 4th	-	Aug 19th	Little Ringed Plover, Whimbrel (x2), Dunlin, Oystercatcher
Aug 5th	-	Aug 20th	Ringed Plover, Green Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper (x2)
Aug 6th	Common Sandpiper	Aug 21st	Oystercatcher (x2), Common Sandpiper
Aug 7th	Godwit sp., Oystercatcher, Common Sandpiper	Aug 22nd	Whimbrel (x4), Ringed Plover
Aug 8th	Green Sandpiper	Aug 23rd	Tree Pipit
Aug 9th	Dunlin, Green Sandpiper	Aug 24th	Sandwich Tern
Aug 10th	-	Aug 25th	-
Aug 11th	n/a	Aug 26th	-
Aug 12th	Whimbrel, Oystercatcher	Aug 27th	Whimbrel, Ringed Plover
Aug 13th	Ringed Plover	Aug 28th	ORTOLAN BUNTING, Whimbrel
Aug 14th	Whimbrel (x3), Common Sandpiper	Aug 29th	ORTOLAN BUNTING, Godwit sp., Lapwing, Barn Owl
Aug 15th	-	Aug 30th	Tree Pipit

Giving godwits a headstart by Hannah Ward (RSPB/WWT)

The Cambridgeshire fens are home to almost the entire UK breeding black-tailed godwit population. Project Godwit is a five-year project aiming to boost the population through a range of measures, including rearing and releasing birds using a technique known as headstarting. We released 26 black-tailed godwits in 2017 and we were delighted to have headstarted birds returning to the fens in April this year. Nine released birds returned to the fens in 2018, and as we know that most godwits don't return to breed until they are two years old, we hope that there are more to come in 2019.

Early season flooding this year at the Nene Washes caused us problems when a number of our birds were forced to nest in nearby farmland. Luckily, we were able to work with the landowner to monitor the nests and collect the eggs for headstarting. The ground conditions had left a number of eggs coated in mud and we feared that some might not survive. But, despite our concerns, we were able to release another 38 godwit chicks into the wild in June this year at WWT Welney and the RSPB Nene Washes. Since their release, we've had numerous sightings of birds around the washes, with some birds venturing further afield to north Norfolk, Hampshire and Suffolk. All of the birds marked from our project have a lime colour ring with the letter E stamped on it. Sightings can be reported to us via our website here <http://www.projectgodwit.org.uk/get-involved/report-a-sighting> Thank you to all of the ring readers out there who have been helping us keep an eye out for these special birds!

As well as releasing birds, we're also taking measures to improve breeding success in the wild. We're happy to report that 18 wild chicks fledged this year from our project sites, which we're pleased with given the rocky start to the season caused by the flooding at the Nene Washes. And we're already seeing our headstarted birds contributing to the population, with the fens godwit population creeping up to 39 pairs (from 38 pairs in 2017). Encouragingly, we recorded birds breeding at the RSPB Ouse Washes for the first time since 2012, upping the number of sites supporting breeding godwits in the fens from two to three.

Project Godwit is a partnership between RSPB and WWT with major funding from the EU LIFE Nature Programme, the HSBC 150th Anniversary fund, Natural England, the Heritage Lottery Fund, through the Back from the Brink Programme and Leica UK. The project aims to secure the future of black-tailed godwits in the Fens. You can find out more at www.projectgodwit.org.uk or follow us on twitter @projectgodwit.



Figure 1: Our first fledged juvenile from a headstarted bird - a year ahead of schedule - Jonathan Taylor

Figure 2: Earith - headstarted in 2017 and returned to breed in 2018 at RSPB Ouse Washes - Jonathan Taylor



Figure 3: Black-tailed godwit chicks inside the rearing facility at WWT Welney - Georgette Taylor WWT

Wicken Fen Group

Ringing results for August from 9 sessions: ringed birds first column, retraps second.

Mallard	1	
Sparrowhawk	2	
Green Woodpecker	1	
Great Spotted Woodpecker	1	
Sand Martin	2	
Swallow	60	
Yellow Wagtail	49	
Wren	21	6
Dunnock	4	6
Robin	10	3
Blackbird	3	1
Song Thrush	4	
Cetti's Warbler	20	5
Grasshopper Warbler	1	
Sedge Warbler	20	
Reed Warbler	122	6

Lesser Whitethroat	2	
Whitethroat	11	
Garden Warbler	3	
Blackcap	40	2
Chiffchaff	24	3
Willow Warbler	8	
Spotted Flycatcher	2	
Bearded Tit		1
Long-tailed Tit	6	2
Blue Tit	13	10
Great Tit	4	8
Treecreeper		1
Chaffinch	1	
Goldfinch	1	
Bullfinch	6	1
Reed Bunting	4	1
	446	56

Next issue (September) will be on October 10th, any records, contributions to reach me by the 4th please.

