

CAMBRIDGESHIRE BIRD CLUB Bulletin No. 451



Opinions expressed in this bulletin are not necessarily those of the Club.

Welcome to the March / April 2017 Edition

RECENT BIRD REPORTS – *Headlines*

RING-NECKED DUCK* **Mar-Apr:** At Paxton Pits the long-staying female present from the 1st March until at least 18th April.

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER* **Mar:** Grafham Water one of the long-stay birds remained until at least the 22nd.

CATTLE EGRET* **Mar:** Duxford on the 16th. **Apr:** Ouse Fen Wash on 16th, then 2 on 24th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 17th, Ouse Washes on 26th, one near Deeping Lakes on 30th was just in the county.

PURPLE HERON* **Apr:** Ouse Washes on the 23rd.

WHITE STORK* **Apr:** Warboys on the 4th.

GLOSSY IBIS* **Mar-Apr:** Ely probably present throughout until Apr 5th, then Littleport May Farm on Apr 7th.

SPOONBILL* **Apr:** Ouse Washes on the 21st.

STONE CURLEW **Apr:** at an undisclosed site on the 30th.

BLACK-WINGED STILT* **Apr:** Woodwalton Fen 2 on the 23rd, Ouse Washes a pair briefly on 24th, March Farmers 5 on 29th.

DOTTEREL **Apr:** Coveney Byall Fen a pair on the 27th, Wendy on 30th.

ICELAND GULL **Mar:** Dogsthorpe Tip on the 17th – 19th. **Apr:** Dogsthorpe Tip on 21st – *quite a late date, the latest ever being May 7th at Flag Fen in 2009.*

GLAUCOUS GULL **Mar:** Cambridge Research Park long-stay 2 c.y. bird was reported up to the end of the month, Grafham Water an adult on 18th. **Apr:** Cottenham area the 2 c.y. bird was reported on the 2nd but not thereafter.

RED-RUMPED SWALLOW* **Apr:** Ferry Meadows CP on the 17th – 18th.

OTHER REPORTS

Records in this bulletin are unchecked and may be revised at a later date. Asterisks indicate species for which it is necessary to send a description to the County Recorder for records to be accepted. The term 'reported from' gives an indication of distribution. Some species give maxima when a number of counts have been received. Where no numbers are given the record relates to a single bird. Occasionally the abbreviations M and F and 'max' are used.

Weather: March was mild and showery with an early arrival of Chiffchaffs. Towards the month's end the wind turned to the east forcing temperatures down; Cambridgeshire was among the colder counties and that may have inhibited the arrival of early migrants. By contrast the first week of April was warm and dry with 25°C in Cambridge on the 9th, the warmest place in the country. There followed a return to more normal April temperatures with some colder days and winds variable; generally colder in the final week. With no real rainfall this was one of the driest Aprils on record.

Rare Breeding birds: in order to give some protection to the rare breeding birds in the county some records are withheld. Please remember to report rare breeding birds to the Recorder who will advise you about the suitability of making the information public (e.g. on Cambirds).

Editor's note: with a large number of records submitted this spring, some hard editing has been required, so my apologies go to those who do not see their records here – other earlier or later birds, or higher counts have edged them out. CB

Wildfowl

Bewick's Swan Mar: Nene Washes 70 on 23rd. Apr: Ouse Washes on 10th.

Whooper Swan Mar: Littleport 950 on 1st, Ferry Meadows CP 7 on 23rd, Ouse Washes 'several hundred' on 25th, 64 on 27th. Apr: Nene Washes 5 on 29th, Witcham Gravel 2 on 28th.

White-fronted Goose Apr: Ouse Washes an immature on the 24th – 30th.

Greylag Goose Mar: Kingfishers Bridge 314 on 2nd, Trumpington Clay Farm 45 on 9th, Fowlmere (near the reserve) 185 on 9th, Burwell Fen 80 on 9th. Apr: Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) 43 on 8th and 8 pairs on 29th, Kingfishers Bridge 50 – 60 on 12th and 6 broods on 29th, Fowlmere NR 62 on 20th.

Canada Goose Mar: Kingfishers Bridge 133 on 2nd. Apr: Burwell Fen maximum 33 on 2nd, Kingfishers Bridge 179 on 10th.

Barnacle Goose Mar: Colne Fen GP 2 on the 5th, Granta Park 13 on 7th, Ouse Washes 16 on 8th, Trumpington Clay Farm 2 on 9th. Apr: Burwell Fen on 2nd and 15th, Whittlesford GP 2 pairs on 20th.

Egyptian Goose Mar: reports of pairs at Paxton Pits on 18th and 31st, Grafham Water on 12th, Marsh Lane GP on 13th, Milton CP on 20th, Ouse Washes on 27th, Kingfishers Bridge on 28th, May Farm Littleport all month. Apr: Burghley Park 8 on 6th, Burwell Fen 3 on 21st, Berry Fen 5 on 24th, and pairs at Paxton Pits, Littleport May Farm, Kingfishers Bridge, and Fen Drayton Lakes.

Shelduck Mar: Burwell Fen maximum 37 on 25th, Paxton Pits 2 on 16th, Wicken Fen max 6 on 11th, Ouse Washes 31 on 13th. Apr: Kingfishers Bridge 8 on 2nd, Ouse Washes 83 on 10th, Burwell Fen 22 on 15th, Isleham Wash a pair on 8th, Paxton Pits on 17th and 24th, Witcham Gravel on 28th.

Mandarin Mar: Eye Green 2 on the 9th, Ferry Meadows on 20th, Fowlmere NR on 20th, Wimpole Hall 10 on 27th. Apr: Pairs at Longstowe and Pymoor, singles at 3 other sites.

Wigeon Mar: Ouse Washes 10112 on 13th, Cam Washes c190 on 12th, Wicken Fen max 780 on 16th.

Apr: Ouse Washes 3378 on 10th, Nene Washes 100+ on 8th, all reports from other sites were of <10.

Gadwall Mar: Burghley Park 37 on the 2nd, Burwell Fen 14 on 9th, Wicken Fen maximum 20 on 4th, Ouse Washes 517 on 13th, Cam Washes 42 on 26th. Apr: Ouse Washes 233 on 10th, Burwell Fen max 46 on 14th, Kingfishers Bridge max 51 on 21st.

Teal Mar: Ouse Washes 1526 on 13th, Burwell Fen max 98 on 16th, Wicken Fen max 220 on 16th, May Farm Littleport 60+ all month. Apr: Burwell Fen 140 on 5th, Nene Washes 50+ on 8th, Fowlmere NR 5 on 9th, Ouse Washes 1181 on 10th, Kingfishers Bridge max 36 on 14th.

Pintail Mar: Burwell Fen 6 on 13th, Paxton Pits 1 – 2 drakes up to 20th, Ouse Washes 471 on 13th, Cam Washes 2 on 15th, Witcham Gravel 160 on 26th. Apr: Ouse Washes 144 on 10th.

Garganey Mar: Ouse Washes 5 on the 11th and Grafham Water 3 males and a female on 11th – *the first reports of the year*; thereafter Ouse Washes 1 – 4 on several dates, Burwell Fen 1 – 3 from 13th, Nene Washes 2 – 3 from 13th, Fowlmere NR on 25th (*unusual in South Cambs*), Paxton Pits 5 on 26th, Cam Washes on 29th, Kingfishers Bridge 6 on 31st. Apr: reported from Burwell Fen (3), Kingfishers Bridge (5), Nene Washes (5), Ouse Washes (13), Sutton Gault, Tubney Fen and Wicken Fen.

Shoveler Mar: Ouse Washes 568 on 13th, Wicken Fen max 157 on 16th, Burwell Fen maximum 238 on 25th. Apr: Ouse Washes 1084 on 10th, Nene Washes 104 on 23rd.

Red-crested Pochard Mar: Paxton Pits 3 – 5 from the 6th – 23rd. Apr: Paxton Pits a pair on 8th and 9th, 2 drakes on 10th and one on 24th, Maxey GP a pair on 10th – 19th, 4 on 13th.

Pochard Mar: Paxton Pits 130+ on 6th, Sutton Gault c45 on 8th, Ouse Washes 826 on 13th. Apr: Kingfishers Bridge maximum 27 on 6th, Burwell Fen 5 (2 males and 3 females) on 15th.

Tufted Duck **Mar:** Bradley Fen 68 on the 1st, Sutton Gault c45 on 8th, Milton CP 10 on 12th, Ouse Washes 1530 on 13th, Burwell Fen max 18 on 16th. **Apr:** Colne Fen GP 192 on 2nd, Kingfishers Bridge max 32 on 8th, Ouse Washes 450 on 10th, Trumpington Clay Farm 22 on 20th.

Scaup **Mar:** Paxton Pits up to 10 from 16th – 29th and 3 still on 31st, Ouse Washes (Chain Corner) 9 on 4th – 11th then (Four Balls Farm) 4 on 15th and 13 on 26th, Fen Drayton Lakes a F on 7th, Grafham Water a F on 27th. **Apr:** Ouse Washes 15 on 1st dropping to 2 by 17th, Coveney Byall Fen a pair on 20th, Paxton Pits on 22nd.

Common Scoter **Apr:** Grafham Water 3 on the 5th, a male on 19th, one on 30th.

Goldeneye **Mar:** Fen Drayton Lakes 30+ on the 6th, 10 on 15th and 3 still on 31st, Grafham Water 83 on 12th then down to 17 on 31st. **Apr:** Paxton Pits 28 on 1st, 2 females on 17th and one on 22nd, Grafham Water on 19th, Fen Drayton Lakes 3 on 4th, 19 on 7th, one on 29th and 30th.

Smew **Mar:** Ouse Washes 4 on 5th and 3 on 11th, Earith Old West River on 18th, Bainton GP on 19th.

Red-breasted Merganser **Mar:** Grafham Water a male on the 11th.

Goosander **Mar:** Grafham Water 6 on the 7th, a female on 21st – 22nd, 3 on 31st, Paxton Pits on 10th, Cam Washes a redhead on 15th.

Gamebirds

Grey Partridge **Mar:** Nine Wells max 20 on the 2nd, Fowlmere NR a pair on 2nd, Littleport May Farm 20+ all month. **Apr:** Barton 35 on 7th, Tick Fen Chatteris 'several' on 23rd, Cam Washes 2 on 23rd, Ouse Washes on 24th, and Fowlmere 12 on 25th.

Egrets and herons

Bittern **Mar:** reported from 4 sites. **Apr:** reported from 10 sites.

Little Egret **Mar:** reported from Burwell Fen (6), Cam Washes (6), Fowlmere NR (2), Littleport May Farm (6), Nene Washes (50), Ouse Washes (53), Paxton Pits (2), and Wicken Fen (4). **Apr:** similar reports plus Maxey GP (18), Kingfishers Bridge (3), Ouse Fen Wash (3), and Trumpington Clay Farm.

Great White Egret **Mar:** Fen Drayton Lakes on the 6th, Ouse Washes on 8th, 2 on 26th, Ferry Meadows CP on 13th and 26th, Nene Washes on 13th and 23rd, Mepal 2 on 23rd. **Apr:** Ouse Washes 2 on 24th, Ferry Meadows CP on 30th.

Grey Heron **Mar:** Ouse Washes 26 on 13th. **Apr:** Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) 8 on the 8th.

Grebes

Little Grebe **Mar:** reported from Burwell Fen (16), Cambridge West Cambridge Site (4), Cam Washes Upware (2), Kingfishers Bridge (12), and Fowlmere NR (2). **Apr:** also at Littleport May Farm (15), Trumpington Clay Farm (6), Colne Fen GP (13), and Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) (5).

Great Crested Grebe **Mar:** Grafham Water 97 on 12th, Ferry Meadows CP 42 on 23rd, Drysides GP 15 on 29th. **Apr:** also at Kingfishers Bridge (2 pairs), Roswell Pits and Whittlesford GP.

Red-necked Grebe* **Mar-Apr:** the Grafham Water long-stay bird reported on 24th Mar was in full summer plumage and remained until 5th Apr; Bradley Fen on 24th Apr.

Black-necked Grebe **Apr:** Fen Drayton Lakes a winter plumage bird from 30th Mar to 20 Apr, a summer plumaged bird at one other location.

Raptors

Red Kite **Mar:** reported from Norman Cross (20 – 30), Paxton Pits, Fowlmere NR, Great Chishill (10) and Cambridge Addenbrookes (5). **Apr:** reported from Coton/Granchester roundabout, Grafham Water (3), Hemingford Grey (2), Littleport May Farm (3), and Wicken Fen (2).

Marsh Harrier **Mar:** reported from Burwell Fen (2), Lt Wilbraham Fen (5), Kingfishers Bridge (3), Littleport May Farm (6), Nene Washes (3), Ouse Washes (2), Paxton Pits, Woodwalton Fen (4 males and 2 females into roost) and Wicken Fen (4). **Apr:** at most of these sites, maximum Wicken Fen (8).

Hen Harrier **Mar:** Wicken Fen a male on the 3rd and 6th, Woodwalton Fen a male on 4th, Haddenham on 5th, Sutton Gault a male on 8th and 29th, Burwell Fen a male on 21st and 25th, Swavesey a male on 24th, Cam Washes a male on 29th. **Apr:** Burwell Fen on 2nd, Fowlmere NR a female on 9th, a 2 c.y. male on 17th, Wicken Fen a male on 13th, Etton a ringtail on 24th.

Readers will be aware of recent reports of the unexplained losses of satellite-tagged Hen Harriers in northern Britain, and the continued persecution of this beautiful bird. So it is worth noting that this winter the population in Cambridgeshire has been below the levels of recent years. We have only one piece of evidence for the origin of our wintering birds (a wing-tagged bird from northern England), so this may be coincidental, but it is interesting that this winter there have been fewer reports of immature (ringtail) birds and the reports all winter have mainly been of mature males. PB

Sparrowhawk **Mar:** reported from Burwell Fen, May Farm Littleport (4), and Gt Eversden. **Apr:** also at Chippenham Fen, Cottenham, Fowlmere NR (2), Kingfishers Bridge, and Cambridge (2).



Sparrowhawk at Willingham: photo Colin Brown

Buzzard **Mar:** as always, widely reported e.g. Brinkley (3), Burwell Fen (2), Cambridge (Brookland's Avenue), Fowlmere NR (6), Kingfishers Bridge (11), Littleport May Farm (6), Newmarket Racecourse (Cams), Paxton Pits (12), Sutton Gault (5). **Apr:** again widespread the higher counts at Duxford area (23), Foxton (14), and Granta Park (7) and Tick Fen Chatteris (6).

Osprey **Mar:** St Neots a flyover on the 27th – *the first of the summer*. **Apr:** Farcet Fen on 3rd, Grafham Water on several dates from 4th, Elton a flyover on 13th, Ouse Washes a flyover on 30th.

Rails and crane

Water Rail **Mar:** reported from Paxton Pits, Lt Wilbraham Fen (3), Wicken Fen (4), Drysides BP (2) and Woodwalton Fen. **Apr:** also at Fowlmere NR (2) and Kings Dyke NR (2).

Coot **Mar:** highest counts Ouse Washes 1730 on 13th, Burwell Fen maximum 245 on the 16th. **Apr:** Ouse Washes 738 on 10th, Burwell Fen 119 on 15th, Wicken Fen (Baker's Fen) 6 nests on 29th.

Common Crane **Mar:** reported from 2 – 3 sites in groups of up to 17, many sightings of birds flying over. **Apr:** a group on 7 non-breeding birds roaming the county were reported from Wicken Fen on the 19th, Wimblington on 28th, March Farmers on 30th, and Ferry Meadows CP on 30th.

Waders

Avocet **Mar:** Grafham Water 3 on the 11th, Wicken Fen 4 on 11th, Isleham Wash 45 on 16th, Paxton Pits 4 on 25th, Cam Washes 16 on 25th. **Apr:** Isleham Wash 33 on 9th, Fen Drayton Lakes 2 on 15th, Paxton Pits on 16th – 18th, Coveney Byall Fen 2 on 20th, Ouse Washes 12 on 23rd.

Oystercatcher **Mar:** widely reported e.g. Paxton Pits max 7 on the 27th, Burwell Fen 4 on 6th, Sutton Gault 8 on 8th, Marsh Lane GP 3 on 13th, Cam Washes 4 on 15th, Littleport May Farm (4). **Apr:** reports from Grafham Water (3), Kingfishers Bridge (4), Isleham Wash (a pair), Nene Washes (8), Ouse Fen Wash (2), Paxton Pits (5) and Ouse Washes (max 18).

Golden Plover **Mar:** Ouse Washes Sutton Gault to Earith 1500 on the 4th, Nene Washes 3000 on 5th, Lt Wilbraham Fen 250 on 10th. **Apr:** Etton 150 on 12th.

Grey Plover **Mar:** Nene Washes March Farmers on 8th – *the first of the year*, Paxton Pits March Farmers and Ferry Meadows CP all on 25th, Ouse Washes on 26th. **Apr:** Paxton Pits on 9th, Grafham Water on 14th – 16th, Ferry Meadows CP 5 on 30th, Nene Washes 7 on 30th, Ouse Washes 12 on 30th.

Lapwing **Mar:** Cam Washes 400 on 1st, Colne Fen GP 600 on 4th. **Apr:** reported from Ouse Washes (81) and Kingfishers Bridge (32), but others few suggest breeding.

Little Ringed Plover **Mar:** Fen Drayton Lakes and Cam Washes on 18th – *the first of the year*, Maxey GP on 23rd, Cam Washes 2 on 29th – 31st, Godmanchester NR on 31st. **Apr:** reported from Coveney Byall Fen (8), Kingfishers Bridge (4), Maxey GP (2), Ouse Fen Wash (2) and Paxton Pits (3).

Ringed Plover **Mar:** Colne Fen GP on the 4th, Cam Washes 2 on 18th, Earith 5 on 18th. **Apr:** reported from Berry Fen (17), Ouse Washes (12) and Paxton Pits (4).

Whimbrel **Apr:** Fen Drayton Lakes on 18th – *the first of the year*, then Moonshine Gap on 20th, Grafham Water 3 on 21st, Paxton Pits 3 on 21st, Coveney Byall Fen 5 on 21st, Kingfishers Bridge 6 on 22nd, Nene Washes 5 on 23rd, Ouse Fen on 24th, Ouse Washes on 28th.

Curlew **Mar:** Ouse Washes Sutton Gault on the 4th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 6th, Nene Washes 3 on 23rd, Ouse Washes 2 on 25th. **Apr:** Wicken Fen on 1st, Etton on 17th, March Farmers on 30th.

Black tailed Godwit **Mar:** Nene Washes 1700 on 15th, Ouse Washes 1665 on 25th. **Apr:** Ouse Washes c1500 on 21st, then 100 on 24th and c300 on 26th when many had departed; elsewhere Fen Drayton Lakes 80 on 22nd, Berry Fen 170 on 24th, small numbers at 4 other sites.



Black-tailed Godwits at Ouse Washes: photo by Jon Heath

Bar-tailed Godwit **Mar:** Fen Drayton Lakes on the 30th – *the first of the year*. **Apr:** Paxton Pits 3 on 18th and 10 on 29th, Grafham Water 2 on 20th, one on 30th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 22nd, Kingfishers Bridge on 22nd, Ouse Washes on 24th, 28th and 30th, Nene Washes 5 – 6 on 30th, Etton 4 on 30th.

Turnstone **Apr:** Grafham Water on the 25th – *the first record of the year*, then on 30th, Barleycraft GP 2 on 30th, Ouse Washes on 30th.

Knot **Apr:** Nene Washes a flyover on the 30th – *the first of the year*.

Ruff **Mar:** Ouse Washes from the 4th maximum 34 on 26th, Nene Washes 20+ on 6th and 60+ on 13th, Paxton Pits 5 on 27th. **Apr:** Burwell 8 on 21st and 13 on 24th, Kingfishers Bridge 4 on 10th, 3 on 12th, Ouse Fen Wash 2 on 17th, Ouse Washes max 110 on 23rd, and Coveney Byall Fen 26 on 28th.

Curlew Sandpiper **Apr:** Ouse Washes on 29th.

Sanderling **Apr:** Paxton Pits on the 25th – *the first of the year*, Barleycraft GP on 30th, Grafham Water 2 on 29th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 30th.

Dunlin **Mar:** Ouse Washes max 100 on 4th, Nene Washes 125+ on 13th. **Apr:** Etton 3 on 3rd, Grafham Water 2 on 14th, Paxton Pits max 4 on 25th and 28th, Ouse Washes 12 on 30th, Coveney Byall Fen 8 on 28th, Berry Fen 9 on 30th, Wicken Fen 3 on 30th; singles elsewhere.

Common Sandpiper **Apr:** Fen Drayton Lakes on 14th – *the earliest record this year*, Tanholt GP on 15th, Paxton Pits on 17th, Ouse Fen on 24th, Fen Drayton Lakes 4 on 24th, Coveney Byall Fen on 28th, Ely on 29th, Grafham Water on 29th, Clayhithe on 30th.

Green Sandpiper **Mar:** reported from Cam Washes (2), Colne Fen GP (2), Ouse Washes (2) and Paxton Pits. **Apr:** reported from Burwell Fen (4), Coveney Byall Fen, Fowlmere NR (2), Kingfishers Bridge (4), and Littleport May Farm (2) and Colne Fen GP (3).

Spotted Redshank **Apr:** Ouse Washes on the 16th – *the first this year*, then 3 on 23rd, Kingfishers Bridge on 23rd, Berry Fen on 28th, Coveney Byall Fen on 28th, Cambridge a flyover on 29th.

Greenshank **Apr:** Paxton Pits on the 16th – *the first of the spring*, then 17th and 2 on 30th, Burwell Fen 5 on 29th, Berry Fen on 21st and 24th, Cam Washes 4 on 23rd, Ouse Washes max 12 on 28th, Wicken Fen 3 on 24th, Coveney Byall Fen on 28th, March Farmers 3 on 29th, Grafham Water on 29th.

Wood Sandpiper **Apr:** Berry Fen, Fen Drayton Lakes, Ouse Washes (5) all on the 30th – *the first of the year*.

Redshank **Mar:** reported from Ouse Washes (95), Paxton Pits (30), Burwell Fen (6 pairs), Cam Washes (6+), Isleham Wash (10), Grafham Water (4), Littleport May Farm (6) and Wicken Fen (5).

Apr: also at Fowlmere NR (unusual at this site), Kingfishers Bridge (7), and Ouse Fen Wash (6).

Jack Snipe **Mar:** Fowlmere NR on 1st and 5th, Paxton Pits on 3rd, Colne Fen GP 4 on 5th. **Apr:** Bradley Fen on 18th.

Woodcock **Mar:** Monks Wood 8 on the 2nd, Cambridge on 9th, Ditton Park Wood on 31st. **Apr:** Littleport May Farm 4 all month, roding males at Woodwalton and Chippenham Fens.

Snipe **Mar:** reported from Burwell Fen (16), Cam Washes (14), Fowlmere NR (18), Grafham Water (15), Littleport May Farm (50 – 60 all month), Trumpington Clay Farm (11) and Wicken Fen (26).

Apr: also at Etton (20), Roswell Pits (13), and Colne Fen GP (10).

Terns and gulls

Black Tern **Apr:** Ouse Washes on 2nd – *the first of the spring*, Paxton Pits on 18th then 2 on 23rd, 41 on 30th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 24th, 30 on 30th, Grafham Water on 25th and 2 on 30th.

Sandwich Tern **Apr:** a passage on the 9th e.g. Grafham Water (3), Cambridge Research Park and Paxton Pits (3); Bretton on 18th.

Common Tern **Mar:** Fen Drayton Lakes on the 28th – *the first of the summer*, Grafham Water 3 on 31st, Paxton Pits on 31st. **Apr:** reported from Burwell Fen (2), Cam Washes (5), Clayhithe (3), Ferry Meadows CP (max 43), Grafham Water (19), Fen Drayton Lakes (30), Kingfishers Bridge (3), Littleport May Farm (7), Milton CP, Paxton Pits (2) and Roswell Pits (1+).

Arctic Tern **Apr:** Grafham Water on 11th – *the first of the summer*, Fen Drayton Lakes on 15th, 11+ on 17th and 22+ on 24th, Ouse Washes a flyover on 21st, Grafham Water 80 in three different groups on 24th, 87+ on 27th, one on 29th, Ferry Meadows on 24th, 9 on 27th, one on 28th, Ely Roswell Pits on 25th, Paxton Pits 14 on 25th, 5 on 28th – 29th and one on 30th, Meadow Lane GP 2 on 26th.

Kittiwake Apr: Grafham Water on the 14th – 15th.

Black-headed Gull Mar: Bradley Fen 600 on 1st, Grafham Water 4000 on the 7th, Burghley Park max 300 on 9th, Wicken Fen 1000 on 4th, Fen Drayton Lakes 1000 on 6th, Paxton Pits 200 on 28th.

Apr: Boxworth 200 on 9th, Ouse Washes 600 on 23rd, Littleport May Farm 200+ all month.

Little Gull Mar: March Farmers 3 on the 11th, Ouse Washes 4 on 27th, Paxton Pits 6 on 28th, Fen Drayton Lakes 2 on 28th and 6 on 31st, Grafham Water 7 on 27th. **Apr:** Fen Drayton Lakes a first summer bird on 4th – 7th, Ouse Washes Four Balls Farm on 5th, Paxton Pits on 18th, Etton 2 on 19th.

Mediterranean Gull Mar: Grafham Water on the 7th, Ouse Washes 2 on 7th and 8th, Cam Washes 2 on 18th, Hemingford Grey 2 adults flying over on 30th. **Apr:** Kingfishers Bridge 2 on 9th, Ferry Meadows CP on 30th, a pair at an undisclosed site on 30th.

Common Gull Mar: Grafham Water 2000 on the 7th, Burwell Fen 102 on 9th. **Apr:** Fen Drayton Lakes 220 on 6th, small numbers at Littleport May Farm, Etton and the Ouse Washes.

Lesser Black-backed Gull Mar: main roosts at Fen Drayton Lakes 370 on 6th, Ouse Washes 270 on 270 on 6th. **Apr:** Godmanchester GP 122 on 17th, Kingfishers Bridge 4 on 1st, Fowlmere NR 3 on 15th, Ouse Fen Wash 2 (of the *intermedius* race) on 12th, Trumpington Clay Farm 2 (*intermedius*) on 20th.

Herring Gull Mar: Bradley Fen 250 on 1st, Fen Drayton Lakes 130 on 6th, Ferry Meadows CP 140 on 10th. **Apr:** numbers right down e.g. Kings Dyke NR 10 on 5th, Littleport May Farm 12+ all month.

Yellow-legged Gull Mar: reported from Dogsthorpe Tip and Grafham Water (2). **Apr:** reported from Kingfishers Bridge, Ouse Washes and Paxton Pits (2).

Caspian Gull Mar: reported from Dogsthorpe Tip, Grafham Water and Fen Drayton Lakes (3).

Great Black-backed Gull Mar: Burwell Fen on the 1st, Fen Drayton Lakes 6 on 6th, Littleport May Farm on 20th, Ouse Washes 7 on 26th. **Apr:** Paxton Pits 4 on 14th, Kingfishers Bridge 3 on 29th.

Doves, owls and kingfisher

Stock Dove Mar: Colne Fen GP 59 on the 4th, Littleport May Farm 30+ all month. **Apr:** Kingfishers Bridge on 1st, Foxton 30 on 15th, Witchford 19 on 20th.

Turtle Dove Apr: Barleycraft GP on 20th – *the first of the summer*, Fowlmere NR and Roswell Pits on 23rd, Croydon on 24th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 29th, Berry Fen on 30th.

Cuckoo Apr: Paxton Pits on the 14th – *the first of the summer*, then Gt Wilbraham Common and Diddington on 15th, thereafter widespread e.g. Burwell Fen (2), Fen Drayton Lakes (4), Littleport May Farm (3), March Farmers, Ouse Fen and Wicken Fen.

Barn Owl Mar: reported from Cottenham, Fowlmere NR, Littleport May Farm (6), Nene Washes, Wilburton and Wicken Fen (5). **Apr:** also at Burwell Fen (3), Chatteris, Littlington and Ely.

A fledgling ringed at Landbeach on August 5th was found dead on Holy Island, Northumberland on January 16th. While it is well known that young Barn Owls disperse in order to find unoccupied territory during the winter this is an unusual movement, not just north but also off-shore. PB

Little Owl Mar: reported from Cambridge (West Cambridge Site), Gt Eversden (2), Fen Drayton Lakes and Littleport May Farm (4). **Apr:** reported from Wicken Fen (2) and Kingfishers Bridge (2).

Tawny Owl Mar: reported from 11 sites including Newnham Cambridge (2) and Purls Bridge (2). **Apr:** reported from 5 other sites including Woodwalton Fen (2).

At Wicken Fen a local resident (human) witnessed an extraordinary 'parliament' of Tawny Owls one evening in mid-March. An estimated 15 individuals gathered near St Edmund's Fen with a considerable racket and flying to and fro, such that a neighbour hearing the noise assumed it was a cat fight. BWP reports examples of 'caterwauling' mostly in autumn and early winter, but does not describe this behaviour which was almost certainly part of some territorial dispute. The observer reported that he had seen this once before many years ago in Cumbria. PB

Long-eared Owl Apr: Fen Drayton Lakes on the 25th, Woodwalton Fen 2 on 30th, Kings Dyke NR 2 on 10th.

Short-eared Owl **Mar:** reported from Burwell Fen (2), Cambridge (Lovell Road a flyover), Fen Drayton Lakes (2), Littleport May Farm (2), Eldernell (4), Tubney Fen and Wicken Fen (4). **Apr:** reported from Cam, Nene and Ouse Washes, Fowlmere NR, Wicken Fen and the Great Fen.

Swift **Apr:** Paxton Pits on the 21st – *the first of the year and a little later than average*, then Ferry Meadows CP 2 on 22nd, Paxton Pits 3 on 22nd and 24th and 4+ on 25th, Ouse Fen 4 on 24th, March Farmers 4 on 29th, Fen Drayton Lakes 2 on 30th.

Kingfisher **Mar:** reported from Cambridge (2 sites), Fen Drayton Lakes, Fowlmere NR, Grafham Water (2), Kingfishers Bridge (2), Littleport May Farm (4), and Ouse Washes (2). **Apr:** at most of these sites plus Milton CP, Roswell Pits, Paxton Pits (3), Willingham, Hinxton, and Stanground.

Falcons and parrots

Kestrel **Mar-Apr:** Littleport May Farm 8+, Ouse Washes 7 – 9 throughout.

Merlin **Mar:** Gt Abington a M on the 5th, Burwell Fen a M on 13th, Wicken Fen a F on 13th, Little Staughton on 14th, Haddenham a F on 17th, Fowlmere NR a F on 19th. **Apr:** Aldreth Fen 2 on 8th.

Hobby **Apr:** Grafham Water on 13th – *the first of the summer*, Etton on 16th, Wicken Fen on 21st then Ouse Washes on 24th, 3 on 28th, Glinton on 24th, Littleport May Farm on 25th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 28th – 29th, March Farmers 4 on 29th, Paxton Pits 5 on 30th, Ferry Meadows CP on 30th.

Peregrine **Mar:** reported from Cambridge, Paxton Pits, Colne Fen GP, Sutton North Fen, Eldernell, Fen Drayton, Wicken Fen, Nene Washes, Cam Washes, Fowlmere NR (2), Stetchworth and Burwell Fen. **Apr:** also at Grafham Water, Littleport May Farm (2), and Ouse Washes (2); *on the Ouse Washes one was seen to take an Icelandic Black-tailed Godwit on the 28th.*

Ring-necked Parakeet* **Apr:** Ouse Washes on the 1st.

Shrikes and corvids

Great Grey Shrike* **Mar:** the Wicken Fen long-stay bird from the 4th – 27th, Paxton/Little Staughton from 14th – 19th (also seen in Bedfordshire). **Apr:** Burwell Fen on 3rd – *as reported in the area for several months; see also the comment in Bulletin No. 450 regarding two individuals.*

Jackdaw **Mar:** roost counts at Fowlmere 700, Paxton Pits 750, and Fen Drayton Lakes 300.

Rook **Mar:** rookery counts from c56 sites, the largest at Melbourn (179 nests) but a slight drop here compared to last year.

Raven **Mar:** Grafham Water 2 on the 11th, Marsh Lane GP a flyover on 13th, Fowlmere NR 1 – 2 on several dates, Barton a flyover on 24th. **Apr:** reported from Castor Mill, Fen Drayton Lakes (2), Fowlmere (2), Hemingford Grey (4), Landbeach and Woodhurst.

Crests, tits and larks

Firecrest **Mar:** Mepal on the 23rd. **Apr:** Cambridge on 28th.

Blue Tit **Apr:** *Of two ringing recoveries in February from Wicken Fen, one was ringed at Thetford in Sept 2016 and a second had been ringed at Upper Langley in Essex in Aug 2015. Blue Tits are generally sedentary so these movements of 31km and 38km respectively are unusual.*

Marsh Tit **Mar:** reported from 13 sites. **Apr:** 15 territories at Monks Wood

Bearded Tit **Mar:** Wicken Fen 8 on the 9th; also at Burwell Fen, Fen Drayton Lakes and Kings Dyke NR. **Apr:** reported from Burwell Fen, Ouse Fen and Wicken Fen and Kingfishers Bridge.

Skylark **Mar-Apr:** May Farm Littleport 40+, Nine Wells max 33, Trumpington Clay Farm 30+.

Hirundines, long-tailed tit and warblers

Sand Martin **Mar:** Ferry Meadows CP on the 14th (*the first record of the year*), 6 on 17th, Grafham Water 3 on 16th, Paxton Pits 4 on 16th, Marsh Lane GP 5+ on 17th, Paxton Pits 3 on 18th, Fen Drayton Lakes 50 on 17th, then widely reported at water bodies. **Apr:** largest counts at Fen Drayton Lakes 100+ on 3rd, Kingfishers Bridge 250+ on 10th, Mepal 120 on 20th, and Drysides BP 150 on 25th.

Swallow **Mar:** Paxton Pits on the 21st – *the first of the summer*, Fowlmere NR on 25th, Papworth Everard on 28th, Sutton Gault on 29th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 29th, Grafham Water on 31st. **Apr:** reported ever more widely in the first ten days, largest count Ferry Meadows CP 110 on 27th.

House Martin **Mar:** Fowlmere NR 2 on the 17th – *the first record of the year*. **Apr:** Fen Drayton Lakes 50 on 3rd, Paxton Pits 2 on 8th, Wicken Fen on 9th, Ferry Meadows CP on 12th, thereafter reported more widely including Cam Washes 30+ on 23rd, Kingfishers Bridge 35 on 27th.

Cetti's Warbler **Mar:** reported from Fowlmere NR (3), Grafham Water, Kingfishers Bridge (2+), May Farm Littleport (3), Nene Washes (4), Wicken Fen (12) and Woodwalton Fen. **Apr:** similar reports plus Burwell Fen (2), Fen Drayton Lakes (9), Milton CP, Roswell Pits (3) and Sutton Gault.

Chiffchaff **Mar:** over-wintering birds complicated the picture but a clear arrival over the weekend 11th - 12th, e.g. Brampton Wood 12 on 11th, Coldhams Common 7 on 12th, Marsh Lane GP 7 on 13th; *by the 17th at least 2 colour-ringed birds that bred on site last year had returned to Wicken Fen*. **Apr:** Fowlmere NR 15+ on 1st, Milton CP 10 singing on 4th, Grafham Water 17 on 8th.

Willow Warbler **Mar:** Fen Drayton Lakes, Ferry Meadows CP, Godmanchester NR, and Paxton Pits (5) all on the 31st – *the first of the summer*. **Apr:** Wicken Fen on 1st, Fen Drayton Lakes 8 on 8th.

Blackcap **Mar:** Hemingford Grey a male singing on the 13th and Melbourn a male on 16th were probably wintering individuals; then arrival suggested by Grafham Water and Wimpole Park birds singing on 24th, Paxton Pits 4 on 28th. **Apr:** Fowlmere NR 6 singing on 1st, Milton CP 11 singing on 4th.

Garden Warbler **Apr:** Burwell Fen on 3rd – *the first of the summer, another early date, the record being March 28th at Morborne in 1999*, Waterbeach on 6th, Ferry Meadows CP on 12th, Paxton Pits on 18th and 8 by 30th, Fen Drayton Lakes 6+ on 30th.

Lesser Whitethroat **Apr:** Marsh Lane GP on 6th – *the first of the summer*, then Mepal 3 on 9th, Ferry Meadows CP on 10th, Witchford 2 on 11th, and thereafter widely reported.

Whitethroat **Apr:** Kingfishers Bridge on 4th – *the first of the summer*, Ouse Fen on 5th, Ferry Meadows CP on 6th, and general arrival thereafter; Croydon 7 on 23rd.

Grasshopper Warbler **Apr:** Wicken Fen on 3rd – *the first of the summer*, thereafter reported from Burwell Fen, Cam Washes, Castor Hanglands, Clopton, Fen Drayton Lakes, Fowlmere NR, Kingfishers Bridge, Ouse Fen, Paxton Pits, Woodwalton Fen (4), and Wicken Fen (3).

Sedge Warbler **Mar:** Fen Drayton Lakes and Wicken Fen (one was caught and ringed) on the 31st – *the first of the year and only 6 days behind the all-time record which is March 25th 2002 at Paxton Pits*. **Apr:** March Farmers on 1st, Ely Beet Factory on 2nd and Cambridge Research Park on 3rd, Wicken Fen and Clayhithe on 6th, indicating the steady return; Fowlmere NR 10 on 12th.

Reed Warbler **Apr:** Fowlmere NR and Wicken Fen on 4th – *the first of the summer*, Grafham Water on 5th, Littleport May Farm 6 on 15th.

Waxwing, nuthatch, starling and thrushes

Waxwing **Mar:** the birds reported since January continued to be seen around Cambridge, including Botanic Gardens 12 on 1st, Trumpington 12 on 2nd – 11th, 12 back at the Milton Road site from 16th, and 7+ on Fitzwilliam Road on 30th; also at Duxford on 2nd, Stukeley Meadows c10 on 16th, 11 on 17th – 19th. **Apr:** Cambridge (Bulstrode Gardens) 8 flushed by a Sparrowhawk on 4th, Lovell Road 7 over on 7th, Chesterton 6 over on 8th – *the latest record*.

Nuthatch **Mar:** reports from Plunder Wood (2) Buff Wood (3) and Ditton Park Wood (5). **Apr:** Burghley Park (3), Ten Wood (2) and Milton CP.

Treecreeper **Mar:** Buff Wood 4 on 25th, Littleport May Farm 8 all month.

Starling **Mar:** counts of 100+ at Wicken Fen, Burwell Fen, Littleport May Farm, Lt Wilbraham Fen and Witchford. **Apr:** Foxton c100 on 20th, Trumpington Clay Farm c80 on 20th.

Ring Ouzel **Apr:** Ferry Meadows CP on 7th, Morbourne on 8th and 16th, Hope Farm Knapwell 2 on 11th, Coveney Byall Fen on 11th – 13th, Wicken Fen on 15th, Lt Wilbraham Fen 2 on 17th, Folksworth on 19th – 21st, Great Fen on 20th, Ferry Meadows CP on 21st – 22nd, Woodwalton Fen on 24th.

Fieldfare **Mar:** Shepreth 200 on 1st, Burghley Park 200+ on 19th, Foxton 250+ on 28th, Littleport May Farm 1000+ on 26th. **Apr:** Fowlmere NR 9 flew over on 1st, Littleport May Farm 8 on 6th, Woodwalton Fen 2 on 23rd, Fen Drayton Lakes on 2 on 29th.

Redwing **Mar:** widely reported on return passage mid-month – Paxton Pits 51 on 10th, Buff Wood on 11th, Fowlmere NR 30 over on 14th, Woodhurst c200 over on 15th, Wicken Fen a steady passage on 15th, Great Shelford c30 over on 31st. **Apr:** Fowlmere NR on 4th – *the latest reported*.

Nightingale Apr: Castor Hanglands on 12th, Paxton Pits on 12th, Marsh Lane GP 3 on 12th – *the first reports of the summer*, then Wicken Fen 2 on 13th and subsequently Castor Hanglands 2 on 17th, 6 on 23rd, Roswell Pits on 30th.

Starts and chats

Black Redstart Mar: Cambridge on the 7th, Linton on 25th. **Apr:** Hardwick a female on 8th, Kings Dyke NR on 25th and 28th.

Redstart Apr: Knapwell Grange Farm a male on 13th – *the first of the year*, Castor Hanglands on 15th, 2 on 16th, one on 17th, Clopton a female on 16th, Paxton Pits on 22nd.

Whinchat Apr: Coveney Byall Fen on 28th – *the first of the year*, Grafham Water a male on 29th – 30th, Linton on 29th.

Stonechat Mar: Wicken Fen on the 1st, 2 males and a female on 4th, Burwell Fen 5 on 1st, 2 on 15th, Tubney Fen 5 on 1st, Stirtloe 2 on 4th, Trumpington Meadows a pair on 4th, Colne Fen GP on 5th. **Apr:** Wicken Fen a pair on 23rd, Littleport May Farm 5 – 6 all month.

Wheatear Mar: Litlington a male on the 23rd – *the first of the year*, Cam Washes on 31st. **Apr:** Paxton Pits on 9th, Kingfishers Bridge a male on 10th, Maxey GP 3 on 11th, Cam Washes on 11th; then almost daily reports the maxima being Bedford Purlieus 11 on 15th, Littleport May Farm 8 – 12 from 15th, Ouse Washes 12 on 17th, Haddenham/Aldreth Fen 11 on 23rd and Paxton Pits 10 on 28th – 29th.



Wheatear at Ouse Fen: photo by Thomas Reed

Accentors, sparrows, wagtails and pipits

Dunnock Mar: Hinxton 58 in a mixed finch flock, *an unusually large number at a site where there is supplementary feeding*.

House Sparrow Mar-Apr: 30+ at Cottenham, Foxton, Wicken Fen, Wansford, and Stanground.

Tree Sparrow Mar-Apr: Redmere Farm c85 throughout, Ouse Washes 6 – 8 throughout.

Yellow Wagtail Mar: Sutton Gault on the 29th – *the first of the summer*, Grafham Water on 30th.

Apr: Farcet Fen on 3rd, Littlington on 4th, then reported from Cam Washes, Grafham Water (12+), Haddenham Long Drove, Tick Fen Chatteris (25), Littleport May Farm (9) and Ouse Washes (18).

Grey Wagtail Mar: reported from 12 sites including River Cam and Washes (3 pairs) and Wimpole Park. **Apr:** reported from a further 7 sites.

Pied Wagtail **Mar:** Little Downham SW 20 on the 2nd, Cambridge Addenbrookes a roost of 150 on 4th, Cambridge Retail Park 85 on 9th, Littleport May Farm 100+ all month. **Apr:** Whittlesford roost 75 on 4th, Fowlmere NR a roost of 12 on 9th.

White Wagtail **Mar:** Burwell Fen on 25th, Eldernell on 25th, Ferry Meadows CP on 25th, Fowlmere NR on 30th. **Apr:** Paxton Pits on 1st, 12th, 16th, 3 on 17th, Littleport May Farm 4+ from 8th, Fen Drayton Lakes 2 on 17th, one on 28th, Grafham Water 3+ on 20th, one on 24th, Duxford on 28th.

Tree Pipit **Apr:** Castor Hanglands on the 16th – *the first of the year*, Paxton Pits on 25th.

Meadow Pipit **Mar:** Nene Washes 50+ on the 13th, Littleport May Farm 100+ all month. **Apr:** Trumpington Clay Farm 30 on 17th, Cambridge West Site 36 on 13th.

Rock Pipit **Mar:** Grafham Water on the 24th.

Water Pipit **Mar:** Ouse Washes Sutton Gault to Earith 5 on the 4th, 2 on 18th, Ouse Washes 9 on 5th. **Apr:** Ouse Washes on 1st.

Finches and buntings

Brambling **Mar:** Fowlmere NR 1 – 2 into roost with chaffinches early in the month, Melbourn on 16th, Burghley Park 8 on 23rd, Littleport May Farm 3 on 26th.

Chaffinch **Mar:** Fowlmere NR a roost of 35+ on the 1st. **Apr:** Barton 24 on 6th.

Greenfinch **Mar-Apr:** Littleport May Farm 50+ throughout.

Linnet **Mar:** Fowlmere NR a roost of 20 on the 2nd, Hinxton 60 on 4th, Wicken Fen a roost of 30 on 8th, Gt Eversden 50 on 12th. **Apr:** Littleport May Farm 50+ all month.

Lesser Redpoll **Mar:** Woodwalton Fen c80 with Goldfinch flock on 17th.

Mealy Redpoll **Mar:** Woodwalton Fen 2 in the above flock on 17th.

Goldfinch **Mar:** Shepreth 62 on 1st, Woodwalton Fen a c120 on the 17th. **Apr:** Littleport May Farm 80+ all month.

Siskin **Mar:** Fowlmere NR on 1st, 2 on 14th, 6 on 19th, Grafham Water a flyover on 12th, Wicken Fen one ringed on 16th, c12 on 17th.

Corn Bunting **Mar:** Witchford 40 on 2nd, Foxton c10 on 20th, Littleport May Farm 50+ all month.

Apr: Haddenham Long Drove 6 – 8 on 13th, Trumpington Clay Farm c6 on 2nd, Chrishall Grange 20 feeding on 20th.

Yellowhammer **Mar:** Hinxton 150 on the 4th, Barton 56 on 15th. **Apr:** Barton 113 on 6th, Comberton 16 on 7th, Shepreth L-Moor 10+ on 10th.

Reed Bunting **Mar:** Hinxton mixed flock of 100 on the 4th, Wicken Fen 28 on 16th, Farcet 22 on 31st, Littleport May Farm 100+ all month.

Exotica

Black Swan **Mar:** Ouse Washes (Four Balls Farm) 2 on 26th. **Apr:** Ouse Washes on the 5th.

Wood Duck **Mar-Apr:** a pair at Longstowe.

Reeve's Pheasant **Mar:** one at Barway on 20th.

Harris Hawk **Mar-April:** one still in the Barton area.

Hybrids

Tufted Duck/Pochard **Mar:** Ouse Washes (Four Balls Farm) on the 26th.

Glaucous Gull x Herring Gull **Apr:** Cottenham Long Drove a 2 c.y. on the 2nd.

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Keeping up the list: at the end of April (according to the E-bulletin records) the county species total was 186. New species in March were Garganey, Red-breasted Merganser, Black-necked Grebe, Osprey, Little Ringed Plover, Grey Plover, Curlew, Common Tern, Little Gull, Sand Martin, House Martin, Swallow, Sedge Warbler, Wheatear, Yellow Wagtail, and Rock Pipit. In April they were Purple Heron, Stone Curlew, Black-winged Stilt, Dotterel, Whimbrel, Turnstone, Knot, Sanderling, Common Sandpiper, Spotted Redshank, Greenshank, Wood Sandpiper, Arctic Tern, Black Tern, Sandwich Tern, Turtle Dove, Cuckoo, Swift, Hobby, Ring-necked Parakeet, Garden Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat, Whitethroat, Grasshopper Warbler, Ring Ouzel, Nightingale, Redstart and Whinchat.

A Reminder of Club research projects this year - you can help

Sand Martin Survey

The study will be in two parts. First, I would like to get an accurate and comprehensive record of nesting colonies. Secondly, I believe it would be valuable if we could get a more general idea of where the birds are and what they are doing. Sand Martins are insectivores but arrive early and leave late so certain habitats must be vital to their well-being.

User-friendly forms to assist in the survey work will be available from the club's web site, or by request from Robert Brown or Louise Bacon by email to research@cambridgebirdclub.org.uk.

Finally and importantly, care is needed particularly when surveying Sand Martins. Obvious hazards are deep water bodies and steep unstable slopes. The laws relating to trespass and access also apply.

Robert Brown

Cambridgeshire Spotted Flycatchers

The CBC is continuing the Spotted Flycatcher Project this summer. In 2016 we found many more pairs than we had in 2015, mainly because we put in more effort and hours. A hundred or so observers sent in records. A high proportion of these turned out not to be Club members but ordinary householders (often still BTO and RSPB members) responding to publicity in parish magazines and on websites. If you just see even a single Spotted Flycatcher **after 1 June this year**, it will be worth following up. Do you know of a pair nesting near you this year, or of a traditional site which may be being used again? Email me at spofl@cambridgebirdclub.org.uk with any information you have, including records of single birds; and please provide a map reference, preferably to 100m (as TL000000). Follow your leads up and keep us informed or we can arrange to follow up if you don't have time yourself.

Michael Holdsworth

Wiffwaff singers

Tony Fulford is continuing his investigations into why some Willow Warblers sing like Chiffchaffs. Last year, with help from local birders, he found eight such singers. This allowed some preliminary playback experiments to discover how Willow Warblers (ordinary and wiffwaffs) and Chiffchaffs react to one another's songs. In order to follow up these studies this year he is again asking people to listen out for and report (to tonyfulford@gmail.com) any wiffwaffs they might come across in Cambridgeshire this spring. Listen for "chiffchaff" songs sung rather too fast (4 notes per second rather than 3) or with odd stray notes in them, or for Willow Warblers adding odd scratchy bits to the end of their usual liquid song; such bird often sooner or later reveal themselves

to be mixed singers. They are commoner than you may think. See also, Tony's short paper in *British Birds* May 2017, Vol 110, pp296-301.

Tracking Lesser Black-backed Gulls

I'm not really a Larophile – it's not that I dislike gulls, but rather that the subtle plumage variations of the various phases don't seem to stick in my memory. So it was a something of a relief that April's indoor meeting focussed not on these details but on recent research into the movements and behaviours of Lesser Black-backed Gulls *Larus fuscus*. The speaker, Viola Ross-Smith, has been researching this species with colleagues at the BTO; they have studied the species' daily and seasonal movement through a project partly aimed at assessing the potential impact of offshore wind farms on gull mortality.

The study was set against a background of press inspired anti-gull hysteria and the continuation of licenced control of Lesser Black-backs and Herring Gulls despite a recent collapse in the size of their breeding colonies. Numbers are declining at most SPA colonies; the species is amber listed and 2/3 of the biogeographical population of the race *L. graellsii* is in the UK.

The Orford Ness colony peaked at 20000 pairs in the 1990s but is now very small; the reasons are unclear but could include fox predation or low breeding success. Similarly, the Walney Island (Cumbria) colony has fallen from 20000 to 5000 pairs; here the absence of a fox problem suggests one of food supply. Skokholm's colony has fallen by 66% to 1500; there are no foxes but Greater Black-backed Gulls do predate at that site.

Meanwhile windfarms pose two types of threat to gulls and seabirds generally – threats of collision and of displacement to other feeding areas. As direct observation of bird behaviour within wind farm arrays is very difficult, GPS tags were used to record the position and flight height of gulls. It was found that gulls do fly through wind farms weaving between the turbines, and that at night they tend to fly below blade height, but not all birds showed these behaviours and 31% of monitored birds were still at risk. There was some evidence that over time birds learn to avoid the whole wind farm, but this of course may require additional effort to reach feeding areas.

Tagging also revealed sharp variations in feeding behaviour. At chick feeding stage, fish are needed for satisfactory growth of the young birds. In one Orford Ness pair, the male switched at this time from his normal foraging pattern in and around Lowestoft, to fishing far out into the North Sea. The female however, continued her usual pattern of following the A14 to the Milton Landfill site to feed. (This left me wondering whether gulls are habituated on landfill feeding, despite its lower nutritional yield, and whether the decline in food value of refuse is a factor as more domestic food waste is in-vessel composted). Meanwhile studies of Herring and Greater Black-backed Gulls in Texel (Netherlands) showed the importance to these species of discarded fish from incoming fishing boats; as this practice is now being curtailed, again one is left wondering about the complex interactions between human behaviour and gull populations.

Tagging also showed the very different wintering behaviours of individuals, both the routes taken for birds that move to the Moroccan coast to winter, and the still considerable inter-UK movement of those birds that winter here.

These studies have been published and these short note gives only a taste of the full results; for more information see <https://www.bto.org/science/migration/tracking-studies/tracking-lesser-black-backed-gulls>

Chris Brown

Cambridge Natural History Society 98th Conversazione

An Exhibition with free entry on **Friday 16th June 1 – 6 pm and Saturday 17th June 10am – 5pm**
Department of Zoology, University of Cambridge, Downing Street, Cambridge CB2 3EJ

New Members

We welcome Mark Collins of Comberton and Aubrey Worboys of Guilden Morden.

Field Meetings

Friday June 9th at 6pm. Your chance to visit MAY FARM LITTLEPORT courtesy of Steve Mumford, Biodiversity Officer. **Please book** with Louise Bacon for this evening visit which will be a walk to admire the site, followed by a talk with hot drink afterwards.

Friday July 14th Great Fen project. Meet at 6.30pm at the 'Last of the Meres trail' parking on the B660. A walk to see some of the areas coming into the Great Fen project, returning arable land to wetland habitats.

Friday August 11th Cavenham Heath. Time t.b.c, but **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 in August.

Please book the June and August events with Louise Bacon, cbcrecorder@gmail.com

The Cambridgeshire Bird Club exists to promote the conservation of birds and their habitats in the county, identify areas of conservation value, and advance the education of the public in the study of birds.

www.cambridgebirdclub.org.uk

The editors would welcome contributions to the E-Bulletin and print edition, on topics such as identification problems, behaviour, summaries of club talks, and book reviews. Contact us at cbcbulletin@cambridgebirdclub.org.uk, and use this address to let us know if you would like to receive your bulletin in e-mail format rather than paper.

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Bird Records, sightings and news

If you have seen a scarce or local bird, please submit the news to the '[What's about](#)' page on the Club website via [Pete and Paul](#) who maintain an up-to-date selection of recent highlights. You can also report interesting sightings on the [Cambirds](#) email group (not run by the Club, but we access the records).

Full lists of your records should continue to be submitted monthly, either via BirdTrack by the end of the month in question, or to **Louise Bacon** the County Recorder, preferably using the [spreadsheet](#) available on the Records section of the website, **by the 5th of the following month**. There is no need to duplicate records across both channels.

GOOD BIRDING!