

CAMBRIDGESHIRE BIRD CLUB Bulletin No. 453



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

Welcome to the July / August 2017 Edition

RECENT BIRD REPORTS – *Headlines*

CATTLE EGRET* Aug: Kingfishers Bridge one flew along the Cam at dusk on the 10th.

PURPLE HERON* Aug: Ouse Fen a juvenile on the 10th – 11th.

BLACK STORK* July: Woodwalton Fen on the 25th going south, (one seen in Lincolnshire earlier).

RED-NECKED GREBE July: Bradley Fen 12th – 17th.

HONEY BUZZARD* Aug: Cambridge a flyover on the 27th.

STONE CURLEW Aug: Stetchworth on the 21st.

BLACK-WINGED STILT July: Ouse Washes, the pair with young were reported regularly and the young fledged during the month to become the first successful breeders in the County.

RED-NECKED PHALAROPE* July: One at a private site on the 25th – 29th briefly visited the Ouse Washes on 28th.

WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN* Aug: Grafham Water an adult on the 25th.

WRYNECK Aug: Fen Drayton Lakes on the 29th, Ouse Washes on the 30th.

WOODLARK July: Eldernell on the 2nd, Devil's Dyke on 5th.



Black-winged Stilt juveniles at an undisclosed site: *photo by Tony Martin*

A brief history of Black-winged Stilts in Cambridgeshire prior to 2017

1945 first reported at the Cambridge Sewage Farm in May during a 'minor invasion'.

1983 after a gap of thirty-eight years 4 were seen on the Nene Washes in April 1983; they left for a while but a pair returned and nested. However, the eggs were taken and the presumed pair were seen finally on the Ouse Washes on June 17th, the first failed breeding attempt.

1998 one on the Cam Washes in early May.

2005 one on the Ouse Washes in late April, later seen on the Norfolk section.

2009 a female at Maxey GP in late April, previously seen in Suffolk.

2012 a male at Paxton Pits May 3rd to 8th and on the 24th, Ouse Fen a pair on May 8th followed by a (the Paxton Pits) male from 9th to 23rd; also seen at Barleycraft GP on 22nd.

2014 a complicated picture! A pair at Paxton Pits in mid-May, another pair at Fen Drayton Lakes, then Ouse Fen and then Earith Washes on the same date. These latter birds were accompanied by a colour-ringed escape and all 3 were seen at Burwell Fen the following day. This second pair returned to Fen Drayton Lakes and nested. They laid one egg which was predated, after which they moved to Berry Fen (joined by the escape) until late May, and may then have gone to Suffolk. The escape remained in the County at various sites until mid-November.

2015 Burwell Fen 2 in mid-May nested, laid 2 eggs but then assumed predated or trampled by livestock. Also 2 on the Nene Washes in mid-April and 2 on Burwell Fen in mid-June.

A typical pattern for a colonising species - failed attempts over a series of years until successful. This has been a record breaking year in the UK, with 13 chicks fledged from nests in Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Kent. The species was removed from the national rarity list from early 2017.

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: July began with dry, warm and occasionally hot weather. Mid-month brought a hint of what was to come, and in the final week the jet stream changed its path allowing an Atlantic airstream to dominate with wet and cooler conditions. August continued the pattern of 'traditional' English summer of sunshine and showers or longer spells of rain. Maximum temperatures were largely around the 20° mark and with occasional warmer days.

Wildfowl

Mute Swan July: Sutton North Fen 33 on 23rd. **Aug:** Isleham 23 on 3rd, Burwell Fen max 17 on 14th.

Whooper Swan July: Ouse Washes on several dates, presumably an over-summering injured bird.

Greylag Goose July: Colne Fen GP 548 on 23rd, Sutton North Fen 198 on 23rd. **Aug:** Burwell Fen maximum c400 on 14th, Kingfishers Bridge 392 on 20th, Fowlmere NR 190 on 25th.

Canada Goose July: Sutton North Fen 33 on 23rd, Kingfishers Bridge 103 on 29th. **Aug:** Trumpington Clay Farm 48 (some 2/3 grown), Kingfishers Bridge 229 on 12th and (with Cam Washes) 519 on 24th.

Barnacle Goose July: Grafham Water on the 17th, 2 on 30th, Sutton North Fen 28 on 23rd. **Aug:** Grafham Water on 16th, Sutton North Fen 29 on 20th, Granta Park 10 on 21st, Paxton Pits on 28th.

Egyptian Goose July: Fen Drayton Lakes 12 on the 2nd and 23 on 9th, Sutton North Fen 6 on 23rd. **Aug:** Maxey GP 9 on 4th, Colne Fen GP 11 on 20th, and Paxton Pits 2 (bred).

Shelduck July: Wicken Fen on the 1st, Littleport May Farm 2 juveniles from 3rd – 10th, Maxey GP 5 from 16th, Burwell Fen 15 on 29th. **Aug:** Burwell Fen maximum 9 on 4th.

Mandarin July: Linton 9 on the 3rd (bred), Wicken Fen a female on 7th. **Aug:** Fowlmere NR an eclipse male on 5th.

Wigeon July: Ouse Washes 6 on 9 – 10th. **Aug:** Kingfishers Bridge 5 on 13th.

Gadwall July: Ouse Fen 34 on 2nd, Kingfishers Bridge 33 on 3rd. **Aug:** Isleham Washes 35 on 4th, Burwell Fen maximum 130+ on 11th, Kingfishers Bridge 37 on 31st.

Teal July: Ouse Washes 23 on the 1st. **Aug:** Burwell Fen 24+ on 11th, Fowlmere NR 8 on 22nd, Grafham Water 79 on 27th, Littleport May Farm 9 on 28th.

Mallard July: Burwell Fen 48 on the 12th, Wicken Fen 98 (many 2/3 grown young) on 14th, Whittlesford GP 27 on 19th, Colne Fen GP 159 on 23rd, Kingfishers Bridge 153 on 24th. **Aug:** Burwell Fen max 300 on 14th, Sutton North Fen 315 on 20th, Littleport May Farm up to 500 all month.

Garganey July: reported from Ouse Washes (8 with 3 broods) and Paxton Pits. **Aug:** reported from Burwell Fen (14), Fen Drayton Lakes, Isleham Washes (adult with 8 young) and Ouse Washes (7).

Shoveler July: Ouse Washes 10+ on 8th, Burwell Fen 11 on 29th. **Aug:** Fowlmere NR 2 on 13th, a single on 16th, Littleport May Farm a female from 11th – 21st.

Red Crested Pochard Jul: Maxey GP 2 on 16th, a single on 23rd and staying to 12th Aug.

Pochard July: Fen Drayton Lakes max 41 on 9th. **Aug:** Bradley Fen 20 on 16th, Maxey GP 66 on 30th.

Tufted Duck July: reported from Grafham Water (600+), Colne Fen GP (124), Trumpington Clay Farm (12 adults with broods). **Aug:** Drysides BP 70 on 10th, Grafham Water 545 on 19th.

Scaup Aug: Coveney Byall Fen on the 2nd.

Goldeneye July: Fen Drayton Lakes on 20th and 30th. **Aug:** Grafham Water from 7th to 25th.

Gamebirds

Grey Partridge July: reported from Littleport May Farm 30+ all month (bred). **Aug:** also at Burwell Fen, Fowlmere NR maximum 11, Wicken Fen, and Gt Wilbraham Common (6).

Quail July: calling birds at Chippenham Fen on the 5th, Wicken Fen on 11th, Cottenham on 13th, Cheveley/Stetchworth on 13th, Sutton North Fen 2 on 23rd and Burwell Fen on 24th. **Aug:** Great Stukeley on 6th, Burwell Fen/Tubney Fen 1 – 2 birds calling from 14th and a family (adult with c6 young) on 16th, Yaxley on 14th.

Egrets, herons and grebes

Bittern July: Kings Dyke on the 5th and 21st, Burwell Fen and Wicken Fen area one, sometimes two, seen in flight on several dates, Cambridge Research Park on 30th.

Little Egret July: reported from Burwell Fen (20 – 30 most of the month, maximum 37 on 16th), Cam Washes, and Wicken Fen (11). **Aug:** at Burwell Fen (maximum 41 on 28th), Fen Drayton Lakes (10), Fowlmere NR, Grafham Water (12), Littleport May Farm (4), and Paxton Pits (6).

Great White Egret July: Ouse Washes on the 14th, Paxton Pits on 24th – 25th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 25th – 26th. **Aug:** Fen Drayton Lakes on 9th – 10th, Kingfishers Bridge on 10th, Ouse Fen on 10th – 11th, Paxton Pits on 11th, 12th and 21st.

Little Grebe July: reported from Littleport May Farm 15+ all month, Colne Fen GP 31 on 20th, Wicken Fen (8 adults with young), Bradley Fen 12 on 31st. **Aug:** also at Burwell Fen (14).

Great Crested Grebe July: Grafham Water 15 on 8th, Colne Fen GP 17 on 23rd, Drysides BP 18 on 26th. **Aug:** Drysides BP max 23 on 16th, Colne Fen GP 31 on 20th.

Black-necked Grebe July: Grafham Water on 24th.

Raptors

Red Kite July: near Sawtry 30+ at the usual site on the 1st, Fowlmere NR 1 – 2 regularly and 4 on 29th, Cambridge Airfield on 20th, Maxey GP 21 on 25th, Paxton Pits on 25th, Littleport May Farm 2 – 3 all month. **Aug:** Grafham Water 9 on 27th, Castor 5 on 21st, and Wicken Fen on 27th.

Marsh Harrier July: reported from Lt Wilbraham Fen, Burwell Fen (2), Chippenham Fen (3), Great Fen area, Littleport May Farm, Ouse Washes (3), and Wicken Fen (3). **Aug:** also at Fowlmere NR, Grafham Water, and Haddenham/Aldreth Fens.

Hen Harrier Aug: Haddenham/Aldreth Fen a ringtail on 11th, *the first of the winter season*.

Montagu's Harrier July: Six Mile Bottom, a possible ringtail on 4th.

Sparrowhawk July: reported from Cambridge Airfield (2), Great Shelford (adult and juvenile on separate days), and Willingham. **Aug:** at Burwell Fen, Cambridge, Chippenham Fen (2), Fowlmere NR (2), Great Shelford (2), Littleport May Farm (6), Kingfishers Bridge and Paxton Pits.

Buzzard July: widely reported as usual e.g. Cambridge Airfield (3), Chippenham Fen, Great Shelford and Thriplow. **Aug:** Cambridge (11), Fowlmere NR (6), Grafham Water (10), Littleport May Farm (10+), Pampisford (3), Haddenham/Aldreth Fens (2), Six Mile Bottom, and Kingfishers Bridge.
Osprey July: Grafham Water on 26th. **Aug:** Grafham Water from 25th – 28th, 2 on the 27th, Ouse Washes on 30th.

Rails and crane

Water Rail July: reported from Littleport May Farm (6+) and Wicken Fen (with 2 young). **Aug:** also at Eldernell, Grafham Water, Woodwalton Fen (3), and Kingfishers Bridge (3).

Coot July: Wicken Fen 68 plus young on 14th. **Aug:** Kingfishers Bridge 270 on 10th, Colne Fen GP 285 on 23rd, Sutton North Fen 168 on 23rd, Burwell Fen maximum 53 on 28th.

Common Crane July: Ouse Washes 2 on the 3rd. **Aug:** Ouse Washes 3 on the ground and then 13 over on 11th, 15 adults on 13th, 19 over on 31st, Eldernell 6 on 13th, 2 on 22nd.

Waders

Avocet July: Ouse Washes adults with young on the 1st, then 12 on 9th. **Aug:** Ouse Washes 3 on 6th, Littleport May Farm 4 on 11th.

Oystercatcher July: reported from Burwell Fen, Littleport May Farm (2 adults and 3 juveniles) and Byall Fen (10). **Aug:** Littleport May Farm 5th – 11th, Kingfishers Bridge 3 on 3rd.

Golden Plover Aug: the first returning on 13th at Burwell Fen (15) and Ouse Washes (40), Trumpington c30 near the A10/M11 roundabout on 15th, Sutton North Fen c45 on 20th.

Lapwing July: Fowlmere NR maximum 110, Burwell Fen max 530 on 25th, Kingfishers Bridge max 616 on 13th, Ouse Washes 168 on 27th. **Aug:** Fowlmere NR 100 on 12th, Nene Washes 900 on 20th, Burwell Fen max 650 on 28th, Kingfishers Bridge 720 on 31st.

Little Ringed Plover July: reported from Fen Drayton Lakes, Fowlmere NR, Maxey GP (3), Ouse Washes and Wicken Fen (4). **Aug:** Burwell Fen max 11 on 13th, Grafham Water 6 on 20th.

Ringed Plover July: Ouse Washes 4 on the 9th, Fen Drayton Lakes 4 on 23rd. **Aug:** Burwell Fen max 45 on 23rd, Sutton North Fen 45 on 20th.

Whimbrel July: Burwell Fen flyovers on the 22nd, 25th and 31st, Kingfishers Bridge on 22nd, Cherry Hinton 4 over on 25th, Grafham Water 2 on 26th. **Aug:** Burwell Fen 2 on 19th, Reach 8 over on 19th.

Curlew July: Stanground Wash on the 2nd, Paxton Pits on 3rd, flyovers at Hemingford Grey on 12th, Stapleford on 16th, Ouse Washes on 16th, and Grafham Water on 30th. **Aug:** Ouse Fen on 15th.

Black tailed Godwit July: Fowlmere NR on the 1st, Wicken Fen 22 on 2nd, Kingfishers Bridge 26 on 9th, Ouse Washes 40 on 10th and 29 on 30th. **Aug:** Ouse Washes 7 juveniles of the 'Icelandic' race on 7th, Isleham Washes 40 on 10th, Wicken Fen 10 on 13th, Grafham Water on 18th, Littleport May Farm 5 on 21st. *Please remember to report colour ringed Godwits – see Bulletin No 452.*

Turnstone July: Grafham Water on the 29th, 8 on 30th, Fen Drayton Lakes on 30th. **Aug:** Grafham Water 3 on 1st and a juvenile on 25th, Paxton Pits on 21st.

Knot Aug: Burwell Fen on the 18th.

Ruff July: Ouse Washes 3 on the 1st rising to 47 on 24th, Burwell Fen 2 – 10 from 14th, Kingfishers Bridge 3 on 22nd, Paxton Pits on 22nd, Littleport May Farm max 9 on 31st. **Aug:** Burwell Fen max 17 on 21st, Littleport May Farm max 9 on 18th, Kingfishers Bridge 33 on 24th.

Dunlin July: Grafham Water 2 on 3rd, 3 on 20th, Ouse Washes 4 on 16th, 2 on 30th, Burwell Fen 2 on 25th, 5 on 26th. **Aug:** Grafham Water 8 on 1st, Fen Drayton Lakes on 1st, Burwell Fen variable numbers maximum 19 on 11th, Littleport May Farm on 11th, Paxton Pits on 21st and 28th.

Little Stint July: Burwell Fen on the 26th – 28th.

Common Sandpiper July: Kingfishers Bridge 2 on the 2nd, Paxton Pits on 3rd, Grafham Water 3 on 4th and 4 on 20th, Burwell Fen 1 – 3 from 22nd, Sutton North Fen 7 on 23rd, Colne Fen GP 8 on 23rd.

Aug: Paxton Pits 3+ on 12th, 4 on 28th, Grafham Water 7 on 18th, 4 on 20th, Colne Fen GP 2 on 20th, Sutton North Fen 6 on 20th, Burwell Fen max 7 on 21st, Fowlmere NR on 25th – 26th.

Green Sandpiper July: reported from Burwell Fen (max 25), Fen Drayton Lakes, Kingfishers Bridge (6), Littleport May Farm (7), Maxey GP, Ouse Washes (3), and Paxton Pits (2). **Aug:** also at Colne Fen GP (9), Coveney Byall Fen (2), Fowlmere NR, Godmanchester GP (2), and Grafham Water (9).

Spotted Redshank Jul: Ouse Washes on the 22nd. **Aug:** Burwell Fen a flyover on 4th, one on 30th, Grafham Water on 27th, Isleham Washes on 28th – 29th.

Greenshank July: Burwell Fen 2 on the 12th, then 1 – 2 until 27 on 22nd and 25 on 23rd, Ouse Washes 5 on 16th, and Kingfishers Bridge 24 on 22nd. **Aug:** Burwell Fen max 9 on 10th, Ouse Washes 3 juveniles on 6th – 7th, Paxton Pits max 5 on 21st, Fowlmere NR on 13th, Nene Washes on 20th, Colne Fen GP 3 on 20th, Byall Fen on 21st, Littleport May Farm 2 on 21st, and Grafham Water 7 on 26th.

Wood Sandpiper July: Kingfishers Bridge on the 2nd, Paxton Pits on 3rd, Ouse Washes on 30th, Maxey GP on 29th – 31st. **Aug:** Kingfishers Bridge 2 on 8th, Burwell Fen singles 13th – 23rd.

Redshank July & Aug: reported from Burwell Fen (5), Fen Drayton Lakes (5), Littleport May Farm (9), Paxton Pits (4), and Ouse Washes (8).

Woodcock July & Aug: Littleport May Farm 4 reported.

Snipe July & Aug: reported from Burwell Fen (max 13), Littleport May Farm (30+), Ouse Washes (5), Fowlmere NR (3), Kingfishers Bridge (9), Paxton Pits, and Tubney Fen.



Black Tern at Grafham Water: *photo by Mathew Mellor.*

Terns and gulls

Black Tern July: Burwell Fen a moulting adult on the 19th, Grafham Water on 25th. **Aug:** Grafham Water 2 juveniles on 19th – 22nd and a single until 26th, Ferry Meadows CP a juvenile on 30th.

Sandwich Tern Aug: Eaton Ford a flyover on the 11th, Paxton Pits 4 on 29th.

Common Tern July: reported from Burwell Fen (32), Paxton Pits (25), Fowlmere NR (2), Great Shelford (5), Littleport May Farm (8). **Aug:** also at Grafham Water (21), Trumpington Clay Farm (3) and Kingfishers Bridge (15).

Black-headed Gull July: Grafham Water 312 on 5th, Great Shelford 350+ on 17th mostly Black-headed but also 15% Lesser Black-backed and 2% Herring Gulls and 5 Common Terns, presumed to be feeding on flying ants, a phenomenon noted with fewer numbers on the same day at Fen Drayton Lakes and Block Fen. **Aug:** Maxey GP 1000 on 12th, Grafham Water 200 on 28th.

Mediterranean Gull Aug: Burwell Fen a juvenile on the 2nd, Grafham Water a juvenile on 25th.

Common Gull July: Grafham Water 4 on 5th. **Aug:** Kingfishers Bridge 10 on 13th.

Lesser Black-backed Gull **July:** Godmanchester GP 182 on 21st, near Fowlmere NR 218 on 23rd, 100 heading south on 29th. **Aug:** Littleport May Farm max 134 on 31st, Burwell Fen 400+ on 11th, Fowlmere NR 50 flying south on 12th, 150+ on 13th then up to 1000 in surrounding fields on 27th.
Herring Gull **July:** Stanground Wash 7 on 20th, Littleport May Farm 2 – 3 all month. **Aug:** Littleport May Farm 68 on 7th rising to 112 on 31st, Cam Washes 10 on 19th.
Yellow-legged Gull **July:** reported from near Fowlmere NR 2 in a recently harvested field, Grafham Water (12), Maxey GP and Paxton Pits. **Aug:** also at Burwell Fen (3) and Grafham Water (15+).
Caspian Gull **July:** Paxton Pits a first-summer on the 1st. **Aug:** Fowlmere a juvenile on 25th.
Great Black-backed Gull **Aug:** Grafham Water 5 on the 25th, Littleport May Farm 2 on 27th.

Doves, cuckoo, owls, kingfisher and nightjar

Stock Dove **July:** Littleport May Farm 50+ all month, several broods. **Aug:** Colne Fen GP 21 on 20th.
Collared Dove **July:** Littleport May Farm 30+ throughout. **Aug:** Stanground Wash 42 on 2nd.
Turtle Dove **July:** reported from Cambridge Research Park (2), Fowlmere NR (3 plus juveniles), Fen Drayton Lakes, Kings Ripton (a juvenile), Middle Fen (2), Paxton Pits and Wicken Fen. **Aug:** reports from Croydon (3), Fowlmere NR (3), and Haddenham/Aldreth Fens (3).
Cuckoo **July:** Ouse Washes 2 on the 1st, 3+ on 2nd, a juvenile on 27th, 2 on 29th, Littleport May Farm on 5th, Burwell Fen a juvenile on several dates from 22nd, 2 juveniles on 27th, Wicken Fen a juvenile on 29th. **Aug:** Burwell Fen on 7th, Buckden GP on 13th – *the last reported*.
Barn Owl **July:** reported from Burwell Fen, Fowlmere NR, Littleport May Farm 3 pairs bred, Ouse Washes (2) and Wicken Fen. **Aug:** also at Waterbeach Fen and Stanground Gullet.
Little Owl **July:** reported from Cambridge Airfield, Granta Park and Littleport May Farm (4). **Aug:** also at Fen Drayton Lakes, Maxey and Isleham.
Tawny Owl **July:** reported from Littleport May Farm (2), Thorpe Wood, and Ouse Washes (a dead juvenile). **Aug:** also at Hare Park (2), Swavesey (2) and Bassenhally Pit.
Long-eared Owl **July:** juveniles heard at Grafham Water on 25th. **Aug:** juveniles at Swavesey on 8th.
Short-eared Owl **July:** Littleport May Farm 2 all month. **Aug:** Chippenham Fen on 31st.
Swift **July:** Harston 35+ on the 1st, Great Shelford c30 on 1st feeding on flying ants, Fowlmere NR 150+ on 16th, Farcet 66 on 22nd. **Aug:** Coveney Byall Fen 100 on 3rd; *general departure seems to have been around mid-month with late dates* Cambridge, Fen Drayton village, Hemingford Grey, Landbeach (still feeding young) all 28th, Godmanchester GP on 30th, St Ives 5 on 31st.
Kingfisher **July:** reported from Fowlmere NR (2), Littleport May Farm (a pair raised three broods) and 14 other sites. **Aug:** also at Barway, Houghton Mill, Bradley Fen and Kings Dyke NR.
Nightjar **July:** Cambourne on 7th. NB see page 9; dates for GPS tagged bird 'Marcel' in the county were June 25th and 27th; there was also a report from Ouse Washes (Welches Dam) on 4th June.

Falcons

Kestrel **July:** Littleport May Farm 12+ all month, Hinxton 7 on the 14th. **Aug:** Fen Drayton Lakes a leucistic individual on 12th, Witchford 6 on 13th.
Merlin **Aug:** Wicken Fen on the 25th, *the first of the winter season*.
Hobby **July:** reported from Burwell Fen (2), Cambridge Airfield, Fowlmere NR, Great Fen (5), Littleport May Farm (2 – 4), and Waterbeach. **Aug:** also at Chippenham Fen, Fen Drayton Lakes, Colne Fen GP (2 juveniles), Eldernell, Grafham Water, Ouse Washes (5), and Paxton Pits (4).
Peregrine **July:** Littleport May Farm a female from 3rd – 16th, Cambridge Airfield on 20th. **Aug:** reported from Burwell Fen (juvenile), Cambridge, Monks Wood (2 young birds) and Maxey GP.

Corvids

Jackdaw **July:** Sawston c350 feeding in a pasture field on the 21st, Littleport May Farm 300+ all month, Mepal 220 on 8th.
Jackdaw/Rook **July:** Chippenham Fen c1000 (mostly Jackdaws) on the 5th. **Aug:** Chippenham Fen 3000 minimum emerging from the roost at dawn on 11th, Ely c380 feeding in a stubble field on 3rd (mostly Jackdaws in both cases).

Rook July: Fowlmere NR 300+ nearby (with a few Carrion Crows) on the 19th, Sawston/Stapleford c300 on 20th, Littleport May Farm 500+ all month.

Raven July: Bedford Purlieus on 7th. **Aug:** Etton GP 2 on 13th, Paxton Pits 3 on 29th.

Tits, larks, hirundines and warblers

Marsh Tit July: territories recorded at Monks Wood (15), Wennington Wood (13), Holland Wood (6); also at Ten Wood. **Aug:** reports from Hardwick Wood (3), Chippenham Fen, and Castor Hanglands (2).

Bearded Tit Aug: reported from Ouse Fen, Kingfishers Bridge (2), Wicken Fen (a family on 29th).

Skylark July & Aug: Littleport May Farm 100+ throughout.

Sand Martin July: Tanholt GP 100 on 7th, Maxey GP 600 on 23rd, Burwell Fen 120 on 23rd, Cam Washes c30 on 30th. **Aug:** Buckden GP 900 on 13th, Paxton Pits 100+ on 21st.

House Martin July: Linton 58 (bred). **Aug:** Fowlmere NR 60+ on 19th, Fen Drayton village 40+ on 22nd, Granta Park 60 on 21st.

Swallow July: Cam Washes c50 on the 30th, Littleport May Farm 40+ all month.

Cetti's Warbler July: reported from Fowlmere NR, Littleport May Farm and Wicken Fen. **Aug:** also at Paxton Pits, Dryside BP, Buckden GP and Bradley Fen.

Willow Warbler Aug: Ouse Washes 'passing through in good numbers' on the 7th.

Lesser Whitethroat July: Kingston one singing on 31st.

Grasshopper Warbler July: reported from Middle Fen, Paxton Pits, and St Neots. **Aug:** also at Wicken Fen, Bradley Fen and Buckden GP.

Reed Warbler July: Kingfishers Bridge 375 on 13th. **Aug:** Burwell Fen 14 on 21st.

Nuthatch, starling, thrushes and spotted flycatcher

Nuthatch July: Ten Wood on the 19th, New Shardlow's Farm on 28th, and at 6 other sites. **Aug:** at 3 further sites including Monks Wood 5 on 28th.

Treecreeper July & Aug: reports from 16 sites, singles or 2s.

Starling July: Diddington 2000 on 10th, Sutton North Fen 400 on 23rd. **Aug:** Burwell Fen c250 on 14th, Whittlesey Low Wash 150 on 15th, Fowlmere NR a roost of c60 on 16th.

Mistle Thrush July: Toft 6 on 18th. **Aug:** Cam Washes 10 on 19th, Lordsbridge 8 on 21st.

Spotted Flycatcher July: reported from 10 sites including Fowlmere NR (bred), Histon, Hauxton, Wicken Fen (2) and Woodhurst. **Aug:** reports from 21 sites including Croydon (bred), Fen Drayton Lakes, Godmanchester GP, Haddenham (bred), Quy Fen (3), Waterbeach (bred) and Wicken Fen (8).

Starts and chats

Redstart Aug: Linton on the 6th, Eldernell a male on 20th, Cam Washes a male on 20th, Fowlmere NR on 20th and 27th, Kings Dyke NR on 25th.

Black Redstart July: Hamerton on the 15th, Little Downham on 25th.

Whinchat July: Wicken Fen a male on the 17th. **Aug:** Ouse Washes on 8th, Grafham Water on 18th, 20th, 25th, and 2 on 27th, Nene Washes on 20th, Fen Drayton Lakes 2 on 28th.

Stonechat July: Wicken Fen 4 on 2nd (bred). **Aug:** Bassenhally 2 on 27th, Littleport May Farm on 28th.

Wheatear July: Early migrants at Sutton North Fen a juvenile on the 23rd, and Magog Down on 26th. **Aug:** Littleport May Farm 2 on 11th, 3 on 21st, Nene Washes and Grafham Water on 20th, Paxton Pits on 21st, Wicken Fen on 22nd, Ellington on 25th, Magog Down on 25th, Fen Drayton Lakes 2 on 28th.

Sparrows, wagtails and pipits

Tree Sparrow July: Sutton North Fen 15 on the 23rd, Ouse Washes on 29th, Redmere Farm (bred). **Aug:** Redmere Farm 120+ all month.

Yellow Wagtail **July:** Ouse Washes 20+ on the 23rd, Littleport May Farm maximum 74 on 31st. **Aug:** Grafham Water 24 on 23rd and 30+ on 30th, Fowlmere NR c50 on 19th, Nene Washes 200+ on 20th, Ouse Washes 65 on 26th.

Grey Wagtail **July:** reported from Fowlmere NR, Hauxton (3), Littleport May Farm, and the Ouse Washes. **Aug:** also at Grafham Water, Maxey Cut (5) and Waterbeach.

Pied Wagtail **July:** Ouse Washes 10+ on the 23rd, Littleport May Farm maximum 67 on 31st. **Aug:** Hinxtan 37 on 24th.

Finches and buntings

Greenfinch **July:** Kings Dyke NR 60 on the 28th. **Aug:** Littleport May Farm 50+ all month.

Goldfinch **July:** Farcet 58 on the 29th. **Aug:** Kingfishers Bridge 150+ on 24th, Eldernell 100 on 26th.

Siskin **July:** Aldreth on the 2nd.

Linnet **July:** Linton 60 on the 30th. **Aug:** Maxey GP 300 roosting on 13th.

Crossbill **July:** Woodhurst a flyover on the 13th, Orwell a flyover on 25th.

Corn Bunting **July:** Nine Wells 8 on the 5th, Icknield Way 9 on 17th. **Aug:** Haddenham/Aldreth Fen 8 on 11th, Littleport May Farm 50+ all month.

Reed Bunting **July & Aug:** Littleport May Farm 100+ throughout.

Exotica

Bar-headed Goose **July:** Sutton North Fen 2 on the 23rd. **Aug:** Sutton North Fen 2 on 20th.

Zebra Finch **July:** Brampton on the 9th.

Contributors: Colin Addington, Richard Allison, Malcolm Ausden, David Avis, Louise Bacon, Ian Barton, Peter Beckenham, Guy Belcher, Peter Bircham, Richard Broughton, Chris Brown, Roger Buisson, Mike Burdekin, Ian Burfield, Howard Butler, James Cadbury, Josh Carter, Ade Cooper, Steve Cooper, Gillian Cox, Robin Cox, Roger Cresswell, Martin Davis, Ian Dawson, Ian Dickerson, Joy Dingley, Brendan Doe, Mark Eaton, David Ellis, Ian Ellis, Mike Everett, Mike Foley, Martin Fowlie, Andrew Gardener, Don Gardener, Simon Gillings, David Green, Richard Gregory, Ian Gordon, Chris Hainsworth, James Hanlon, Andy Hannaford, Ron Harrold, Mark Hawkes, David Heath, Fred Heath, Jon Heath, Peter Herkenrath, Mark Hill, Michael Holdsworth, David Hopkins, Sarah Howlett, Bob Humphrey, Sue Jarrett, Richard Johnson, David Jones, Richard and Alix Jones, Richard Johnson, Colin Kirtland, Charlie Kitchin, Mike and Ann Knowles, Marcus Kohler, Nick Langley, Nick Loughton, Stella Loughton, Vincent Lea, Martin Leader, David Lee, John Le Gassick, Peter Leonard, Hugh Lewis-Wright, Rita Lingard, Ade Long, Tony Lowe, Owen and Monica Marks, Bruce Martin, Tony Martin, Paul Mason, Rob McEwen, Duncan McNiven, Matthew Mellor, Andy Merryweather, Steve Mumford, Martin O'Leary, Richard Palmer, Neil Parkin, Rob Partridge, Richard Patient, Mark Peck, Rob Pople, Doug Radford, John Raven, Petru Rednic, Graeme Reed, Gareth Rees, Chris Rider, Duncan Ritchie, Tony Roberts, Kathleen Rosewarne, Ann Scott, Rosemary Setchfield, Norman Sills, Clive Sinclair, Bob Smith, Jim Stevenson, Simon Stirrup, Jonathan Taylor, Michael Taylor, Richard Thomas, Chris Thorne and the Wicken Fen Group, Hugh Venables, Luke Wake, George Walthew, Mark Ward, Robin Ward, Mat Webb, Jamie Wells, Anthony Weston, Kevin Wilson, David Withrington and Christoph Zöckler.

Keeping up the list: at the end of July (according to the E-bulletin records) the county species total for 2017 was 200; new species that month were Black Stork, Red-necked Phalarope and Woodlark. At the end of August the total was 201 with the addition of White-winged Black Tern.

From the Editor

There is a flavour of debate, even controversy, in the articles on the following pages. The route of a GPS tagged Nightjar wandering over Cambridgeshire raises the question whether birds not seen by the human eye can be added to the records. You might think that there is no debate about this one, but recent discussion on the google group Cambirds about the evidence of night time sound recordings of migrating Ortolan Buntings and other species, pushes the boundary further; this is one that our Records committee will no doubt be looking at.

Meanwhile, in celebration of 50 issues of the E-bulletin, editor Peter Bircham reflects on changes in our local bird populations. But this is a controversial topic, and club chairman Vine Lea has a different viewpoint.

Further contributions on any of these issues would be welcomed by the editors.

Chris Brown

A peripatetic Nightjar – research from the University of York.



For those who have not already seen this, here is the track of a GPS tagged Nightjar in mid-summer as it seemingly searched for a mate. A lesson to be learned is that it is not impossible to see a migrant in the ‘wrong’ place in the middle of the breeding season. In June, this bird (‘Marcel’) seems to have wandered through our area unreported and spent a day resting at Waterbeach; there were reports 10 days before and 10 days after so did Marcel do three circuits, before being tagged and after the tag was removed? Read more at <https://www.york.ac.uk/news-and-events/news/2017/research/marcel-the-nightjar-on-the-hunt-for-love/>

Ruminations on bird populations over time

In the period of the Ice Age (ten thousand years ago and before) did warblers fly to Britain from Africa? When Britain was covered with ‘wildwood’ little over three or four thousand years ago, what was the status of the Skylark, or the Yellowhammer or the Whinchat, Wheatear and so on? There is considerable emphasis today on the losers in the avifaunal stakes of Great Britain, blame lying in loss of habitat mainly centred upon the changes in farmland - or simply in ‘the countryside’. The BTO Common Bird Census and its successor the Breeding Bird Survey can seem to be a methodology for showing a declining birdscape. Somehow this grasps our attention as we see the birds of our childhood and youth declining or disappearing from the countryside, and no longer present in the places where we formerly found them. Turtle Doves are perhaps the best example. Over the millennia since the emergence from the Ice Age man has deliberately altered the landscape and habitat of Britain to suit his needs always using the current state of the art technology, be it the simple flint axe or today’s hedge flail on a tractor, or from slash and burn to the behemoth of the modern bulldozer. Thus wildwood was reduced to create farmland and pieces of all kinds of habitats were levelled to build factories and towns in a seemingly never-ending process. For the birds it was a case of simply adapt or die. As a result of our creations the wildwood species such as Hawfinch and Goshawk, found themselves more and more marginalised. There is a Darwinian aspect to this situation. For many species fast adaptation has been required to survive and even to thrive, those that have failed in this respect are the species now featuring on

the lists of red and amber concern. If for instance Turtle Doves overwintered (and why don't they?) they would almost certainly be better placed to boost their flagging population, much as Marsh Harriers have gradually changed from being migratory to being partially resident, a change that has taken place in only a few generations and helped the population to grow and spread rapidly. This is fast adaptation indeed - change or die.

Perhaps I have a perverse view of events, but all I can see is a balancing out of the pluses and minuses. For example, who would have thought of the arrival of Little and Great White Egret even ten years ago, or the breeding of Black-winged Stilts. And for my generation breeding Marsh Harriers, Common Buzzards, Red Kites, Common Cranes, Cetti's Warbler and Bearded Tits in Cambridgeshire seemed fanciful thirty years ago, to say nothing of Avocets, Hobbies, and Peregrines.

For us in Cambridgeshire the re-wilding projects at Wicken and the Great Fen have delivered snippets so far, but promise to change things dramatically in future. Burwell Fen is a start but there is more to come; add to that Ouse Fen and Fen Drayton Lakes and we are looking at a much better future for wetland birds. And take a glance into your garden and see the thriving populations of former woodland species, tits and thrushes plus finches from the countryside, all given a new habitat and food sources by our actions. Remember, most of the population surveys do not cover suburban gardens and do not reflect these changes. A wise man once pointed out to me that how you look at the population of a species depends entirely on where you start.

In short I think the emphasis on declines is overblown and disproportionate. The changes in agricultural practices are in fact a continuation of the process that began millennia ago, in which we took the natural habitat and changed it to suit ourselves, something we continue to do today with continuing consequences for birdlife; however, we are doing our best to ameliorate the effects. All is far from lost, quite the contrary in fact. I believe that overall birdlife in Britain is healthy, and a measure of this is the contrast between the number of breeding species 'lost' in the last forty years against the number of species gained. This month we learned that Night Herons have bred in Somerset, Cattle Egrets in Cheshire, Dorset and Somerset, Great White Egrets in Norfolk and Somerset and Spoonbills in Yorkshire – you see what I mean!

Peter Bircham

And a different perspective... Really, no problem?

Peter Bircham's 'thought piece' on the changes to our county birds is provocative, perhaps deliberately so – and it is certainly important to debate these topics. One of the aims of the Cambridgeshire Bird Club is the 'conservation of birds in Cambridgeshire' but if there is no problem then perhaps we can relax and just enjoy the changes, if indeed the gains match the losses... But really? Does the evidence back that up?

Of course, if by some miracle humans had failed to discover Britain until now, it would be a very different place with a completely different birdlife. But the current thinking on how the 'forested' landscape would have looked is not one of continuous tree canopy, but of a more open savannah-like scene where large herbivores and natural events created and maintained openings. I have recently visited an attempt at 'rewilding' in Sussex (Knepp) where herds of cattle and deer keep areas open and scrubby, ideal for what we think of as farmland birds such as Yellowhammers; wild pigs disturb the ground, creating conditions for 'arable weeds' that sustain an increasing population of Turtle Doves - absent from the site until the owners stopped arable farming and let it go wild. And a friend who visited in the spring found nesting Skylarks in scrubby patches which we would not imagine them using in the arable landscape. So I think our 'farmland' birds would have been present, maybe in different numbers, even if we had not started farming.

So to counteract Peter's optimistic list of gains, what have we lost? Abundance of many species has gone down considerably, as charted by the farmland and woodland bird index, while efforts to create new wetlands and to improve water quality have indeed caused a stabilisation in the overall numbers of wetland birds; as these are the sort of places birders tend to go we may well notice these and think things are OK. The sampling of the largest part of our county by the BBS shows

what is going on in the majority of the landscape and it is not good. We have lost breeding wetland birds as well as gained others - if we were to go back 1000 years there would probably have been Storks, Ospreys and White-tailed Eagles but in recent recorded times Red-necked Grebe and Ruff have stopped breeding entirely, Pintail more or less, and Redshank and Snipe from the general countryside away from highly managed protected sites. But species of the general countryside show many more losses - Honey Buzzard (probably), Montagu's Harrier, Corncrake, Golden Oriole, Red-backed Shrike, Wryneck, Willow Tit, Tree Pipit, Wood Warbler, Redstart, Pied Flycatcher, Whinchat, Wheatear, Hawfinch, Lesser Redpoll and Cirl Bunting are all former breeders from not too distant times. These are countered by gains of Collared Dove, Grey Wagtail and a few introduced species like Canada Goose and Mandarin!

Over to the members to contribute, I feel. *Vince Lea*

Requests for records and information

Cambridge Natural History Society (CNHS) Tawny Owl Survey.

The (CNHS) project to look at the wildlife and Natural History of Cambridge City and its immediate environs kicked off at the beginning of the year. The study area is an 8x8km square centred on the junction of Mill Road and Covent Garden. It is approximately bounded by the A14 to the north, the M11 to the west, and includes Cherry Hinton and part of Teversham, and Trumpington to the south. Its wintering Blackcap survey continues – interim results are on the nathistcam.org.uk web site in the July blog. Please send further records to my email below, and thank you to all who have contributed so far.

Our latest survey is of Tawny Owls. It is about now that young Tawny Owls have dispersed and are trying to establish territories. If you know of breeding sites in the study area, single birds or any Tawny record please let me know the date, location, and behaviour. I'd be grateful if you would send me records to: bobjarman99@btinternet.com. All records will also go to the County Recorder. Thank you. *Bob Jarman*

Cambridge University Estate

University of Cambridge Environment team are interested in the biodiversity of the University estate. CBC members are invited to contribute their knowledge of the wildlife of the area. Suggestions for improvement are also welcomed. Space does not allow the reproduction of maps here, but those who are interested should contact the editor. Suffice to say that the rural estate covers Madingley Hall and the farmland around it, and farmland to the south of High Cross; the urban estate includes the High Cross site. Land owned by the colleges is not included. Information can be sent to ben.walton@admin.cam.ac.uk

Reminder – if you took part in the Club Raptor Survey, please remember to send your results by 1st October if possible to research@cambridgebirdclub.org.uk

Indoor club meetings

Friday 13th October, Cottenham Village College, 7.30 for 8.00pm

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 station 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.

Friday 10th November, St Johns Hall, Cambridge, 7.30 for 8.00pm

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.

Friday 8th December, St Johns Hall, Cambridge, 7.30 for 8.00pm

Christmas Social

Come and enjoy mince pies and mulled wine in good company while listening to inspiring short talks by club members.

Please contact [Vicki Harley](#) if you would like to give a short presentation.

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!