

CAMBRIDGESHIRE BIRD CLUB

Bulletin No. 384



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

RECENT REPORTS JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 2005

These are unchecked reports rather than confirmed records, and comments are made by Bruce Martin (Wildfowl, Divers to Herons), Mark Hawkes (Gamebirds, Raptors, Rails), Jonathan Taylor (Waders), Steve Cooper (Skuas to Woodpeckers and Hybrids and Exotica), Stuart Elsom (Larks to Thrushes), Mike Foley (Warblers to Tits) and David Wege (Wood Nuthatch to Buntings). If you have valid reasons to dispute comments (e.g. further records) please forward these to the county recorder (address on back page).

Bird Surveys

This bulletin gives details of surveys covering Swifts, owls and Black-tailed Godwits, as well as more comprehensive surveys of breeding birds on farmland. If you are interested in any of these please check the details on page 9.

Summer Field Trip

For details of an evening visit to the RSPB Nene Washes, please look at page 11.

Northern Shoveler and Pintail by Ben Green



Numbers in brackets indicate January and February maximums.

WILDFOWL

Mute Swan At Fen Drayton GP (86; 42), Ouse Fen (20; 160), the Ouse Washes (338; 229), Paxton Pits (139; 120) and Wicken Fen (38; 29). Also reported from 13 other sites.

Tundra Swan At the Nene Washes (800; 1600) and Ouse Washes (3114; 1453).

Whooper Swan At the Nene Washes (40; 200) and Ouse Washes (3356; 1780). Away from the Washes birds were seen at Fen Drayton GP (2), Grafham Water (4), Ouse Fen (11), Shippea Hill (12) and Wicken Fen (1).

Tundra Bean Goose Two birds were on the Nene Washes on Jan 28th and 9 on the Ouse Washes on Feb 23rd.

Pink-footed Goose Single birds were at Kingfishers Bridge during January and Swaffham Prior Fen on Feb 4th and 5th and 2 birds at Needingworth GP on Feb 11th. Two birds were also seen on the Ouse Washes on the same date – were they the same birds?.

Greater White-fronted Goose A number of birds spent time in Cambridgeshire during a period when flocks were reported roaming the country. Twenty-one flew west over Coldhams Common in Cambridge at 9.30am on Feb 4th and 34 flew over Fen Drayton GP at 2.15pm the same day. A flock of 33 was seen on the Ouse Washes, also on Feb 4th. Were they all part of the same movement?

Between 8 and 13 birds were present at Paxton Pits on a number of dates from Feb 10th to the 28th. Then 22 birds were seen on the Ouse Washes from Feb 13th and 38 were there on Feb 27th and 28th. A flock of up to 36 took up residence from Feb 13th to the 26th at the unlikely site of Hatley Park, west of Cambridge, where they spent their timing feeding in a meadow and roosting on a lake. And finally, 32 birds were feeding in winter wheat with a flock of 134 Greylag Geese and winter swans south of Mepal on Feb 27th, the same day the observer saw the birds on the Ouse Washes. Just how many birds were present in the County, I wouldn't like to guess!

Greylag Goose At Kingfishers Bridge (540; 150), the Ouse Washes (49; 273), Needingworth GP (200; 184), and Paxton Pits (60; 126). Other three-figure count were at Ferry Meadows CP (157) and Mepal (134).

Canada Goose Three-figure counts were noted at Kingfishers Bridge (510), the Ouse Washes (434) and Roswell Pits (104). Also reported from 10 other sites.

Barnacle Goose Reported from 6 sites with the maximum of 4 at Paxton Pits in February.

Brent Goose Single birds were seen at the Ouse Washes on Jan 3rd and Grafham Water on Jan 30th.

Egyptian Goose Two birds were seen on the Ouse Washes in January and 4 at Paxton Pits on Jan 15th.

Common Shelduck Not surprisingly the Ouse Washes had the largest count with 77 on Feb 13th. The only other double-figure was 15 at Grafham Water on Feb 12th. Single figures were reported from 8 other sites.

Mandarin Six birds were at Grafham Water and 2 at Paxton Pits during the period.

Eurasian Wigeon At Fen Drayton GP (1608; 1287), Kingfishers Bridge (700; 580), Needingworth GP (1311; 751), Ouse Fen (290; 160), the Ouse Washes (34,162; 38,398), Paxton Pits (1864; 1339), Shropshire's Reservoir (542; 164) and Wicken Fen (880; 483). Three-figure counts were also noted at the Buckden GP (300), Cam Washes (400) and Grafham Water (126).

American Wigeon The male bird that was on the Barleycroft pit at the Needingworth complex moved to the Ouse Washes for a while in January before returning to Barleycroft where it remained (apart from occasional excursions to the river Ouse and the Needingworth pits) until the period end.

Gadwall At Fen Drayton GP (378; 268), Grafham Water (44; 109), Landbeach GP (75; 137), Needingworth GP (93; 54), the Ouse Washes (665; 1694) and Paxton Pits (300; 142). Double figures were also noted at 7 other sites.

Eurasian Teal At Grafham Water (469; 458), Ouse Fen (120; 30), the Ouse Washes (7181; 6533), Paxton Pits (250; 55) and Wicken Fen (503; 374). Other three-figure counts were noted at the Cam Washes Upware (100), Ferry Meadows CP (110), Kingfishers Bridge (115) and Ouse Fen (120). Double figures were noted at 6 other sites.

Green-winged Teal A male was present at Ferry Meadows on Jan 14th.

Mallard At Grafham Water (491; 290), the Ouse Washes (1373; 1786) and Wicken Fen (351; 171). Three-figure counts were noted at 3 other sites.

Northern Pintail The Ouse Washes counts were (1789; 2990). The next highest counts were 15 at Fen Drayton GP on Jan 31st and 15 at the Cam Washes on Feb 18th.

Garganey A male was present at Woodwalton Fen on Feb 12th.

Northern Shoveler At Grafham Water (210; 302), the Ouse Washes (853; 833) and Wicken Fen (103; 100). Double figures were noted at 5 other sites.

Red-crested Pochard Three birds were at Bainton GP on Jan 5th. Two males were present at Grafham Water from Jan 12th until Feb 13th. A county record of 18 birds was at Needingworth GP on Jan 17th with 5 birds still present on Feb 10th. Two birds were at Paxton Pits on Jan 23rd to the 27th, then 4 birds on Feb 18th.

Common Pochard At Fen Drayton GP (109; 157), Grafham Water with (78; 110), Needingworth GP (50; 65), the Ouse Washes (267; 225) and Paxton

Pits (215; 110). Double-figures were also noted at 8 other sites.

Tufted Duck Counts at Fen Drayton GP were (424; 679), Grafham Water (951; 207), Kingfishers Bridge (45; 115), Needingworth GP (155; 223), the Ouse Washes (420; 571) and Paxton Pits (655; 578).

Double figures were noted at 5 other sites.

Greater Scaup The adult female at Grafham Water from 2005 remained until Jan 24th. A male was present at the Ouse Washes from Jan 16th to the 28th. A male was at Bedlam Bridge on Jan 31st and a female at Paxton Pits on Feb 1st. Two birds, (a male & female) were at Ferry Meadows on Feb 4th.

Lesser Scaup A 1st winter male was at the Ouse Washes from Jan 28th until the end of the period.

Common Scoter A male was seen at Grafham Water on Feb 6th.

Goldeneye At Fen Drayton GP (131; 146), Grafham Water (53; 72) and Paxton Pits (124; 120). Smaller numbers were also noted at 10 other sites.

Smew This is a difficult species to monitor as there is a regular movement between sites, particularly those in the Ouse Valley that are fairly close to each other consisting of Marsh Lane, Fen Drayton and Needingworth GP's. Whereas in the past, Fen Drayton had been the favoured site, more recently the other two have been preferred, particularly Needingworth which has held greater numbers for longer periods. Maximum counts of 15 were at Needingworth GP on Feb 5th, 13 at Paxton Pits on Feb 1st and 13 at Marsh Lane GP on Jan 1st. Single figures from 1 to 8 were seen at 5 other sites.

Red-breasted Merganser A female was present at Grafham Water on Feb 9th.

Goosander Reported from 14 sites with the highest count of 20 at Maxey GP on Jan 5th. Counts of 12 were noted at Grafham Water on Feb 13th and at Paxton Pits on Jan 29th. Single figures from 1 to 4 were noted at the remaining sites.

Ruddy Duck Noted at 6 sites.

GAMEBIRDS

Red-legged Partridge Recorded at 14 sites, numbers ranging from 1–22 birds.

Grey Partridge Recorded at 23 sites, numbers ranging from 1–11 birds.

Common Pheasant Recorded at 17 sites, numbers ranging from 1–38 birds. At Grafham Water two melanistic females were present with a number of normal plumage birds, and a white bird was seen on Ouse Washes (Four Balls Farm).

DIVERS TO HERONS

Red-throated Diver The juvenile bird first seen in November, (unfortunately omitted by me in the last bulletin), was present throughout the period.

Great Northern Diver A juvenile first seen at Paxton Pits in November then relocated to Grafham Water at the end of December, (omitted in the last bulletin as above), was present throughout the period.

Little Grebe Double figures were seen at Fen Drayton GP (11), Grafham Water (10) and Mepal GP (16). Single figures were recorded at 12 other sites.

Great Crested Grebe Counts at Fen Drayton GP were (40; 22), Grafham Water (538; 159) and Paxton Pits (31; 22). Other double figures were Block Fen GP (19), Mepal GP (12), the Ouse Washes (14) and Shropshire's Res. (10). Single figures were noted at 10 other sites.

Red-necked Grebe A bird was present at Grafham Water on Jan 8th and Feb 18th and the bird that was present at Fen Drayton GP from Dec 7th remained until the period end.

Black-necked Grebe A probable was seen at Grafham Water on Feb 26th.

Northern Fulmar A bird was present at Grafham Water on Jan 29th and 30th.

Great Cormorant At Fen Drayton GP (59; 28), Grafham Water (250; 531), Kingfishers Bridge (13; 16), the Ouse Washes (42; 158) and Wicken Fen (17; 40). The maximum dusk roost count at Paxton Pits was 554, the highest since February 1997. At the same site there was 80 occupied nests by mid February. Birds were also noted at 11 other sites.

Great Bittern Five birds were seen again going to roost in early January at Fen Drayton GP with 4 still present by the end of the month, but down to 1 by the end of February. Single birds were seen during the period at Ely BF, Kingfishers Bridge, Paxton Pits (2 on Jan 29th), St Ives GP and Wicken Fen.

Little Egret It is difficult to estimate the total number of birds residing in the county as they range from the south of Cambridge to the north of Peterborough. Some are very mobile whilst others find a site to their liking and stay. Birds were reported from 15 sites mainly as singles, but the Ouse Washes and Wicken Fen recorded 5 birds on a couple of dates.

Grey Heron At Fen Drayton GP (14; 11), Grafham Water (11; 3) and the Ouse Washes (15; 17). (The figure for Grafham in the last bulletin should have read 12 NOT 123 as written!). Single figures were recorded at 15 other sites.

RAPTORS

Red Kite Records of two birds together came from Norman Cross on Feb 6th, Elton on 19th and Conington Fen (Hunts) on 27th, otherwise singles seen at Elton on Jan 18th, Paxton Pits on Feb 5th, Stilton on Feb 11th, Monks Wood on Feb 20th, Doddington on Feb 21st and Woodwalton Fen on Feb 27th.

Eurasian Marsh Harrier Recorded at 8 sites, with peaks of 4 at both Kingfishers Bridge and Ely BF. Otherwise 1–3 at the more regular wintering sites

Hen Harrier Peak counts from Wicken Fen (6; 5), Ouse Washes (4; 3), Woodwalton Fen (0; 1) and Nene Washes (1; 1). Others were seen at Ely BF and St. Neots on Jan 1st, Orton BP from Jan 13th to Feb 6th, Lode on Jan 15th and 24th, Swaffham Prior Fen on Feb 5th and Burwell Fen on Feb 10th.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk Recorded at 36 sites, with all counts involving 1–3 birds, apart from 7 along Ouse Washes on Jan 16th.

Common Buzzard Recorded at a massive 43 sites. Most counts of 1–3 birds, but also 8 at Wimpole Park, 7 at Paxton Pits and 6 at Swaddywell Pit (Helpston). This species has been so successful in its westwards colonisation, that birds are reported on almost everyday of the year. It would be helpful if only notable records are reported to the CBC from now on. These include large counts, ALL breeding information and evidence of migration. Records of single birds from regular areas are now so common that this information is not required.

Common Kestrel Recorded at 30 sites, with all counts of 1–7 birds.

Merlin Records of 2 birds included sightings at Fen Drayton GP on Jan 8th (with 1 on 30th), Farcet Fen on Jan 12th (with 1 on 23rd), Over Fen GP on Jan 22nd, Ouse Washes on Feb 4th and Lode on Feb 15th. Otherwise singles in January at Marsh Lane GP 1st, Nene Washes on 2nd and 22nd, Maxey GP on 3rd, Grafham Water on 4th and 11th, Kingfishers Bridge on 4th, between Eltisley and Waresley on 9th, Ely, Wicken Fen and Ouse Washes on 13th, Barleycraft GP and Block Fen on 17th, Paradise NR on 19th, Ferry Meadows and Stanground Wash on 22nd, Wicken Fen on 22nd and 25th, Great Eversden on 24th, Manea on 30th and Woodwalton Fen on 31st. Fewer reports in February, with birds at Ferry Meadows on 3rd, Swaffham Prior Fen on 5th and Nene Washes on 13th.

Peregrine Regular sites held peak counts as follows; Ouse Washes (2; 2), Nene Washes (1; 2), otherwise 2 at Orton BP on Jan 25th were notable. Singles were seen during January at Paxton Pits on 5th, Peterborough on 9th, Kingfisher Bridge on 10th, Lode on 11th, Farcet Fen on 12th, Grafham Water on 15th, Barleycraft GP on 17th, Eltisley on 23rd, Wicken Fen on 24th, 28th & 30th, Fowlmere on 27th and in February at Wicken Fen on 5th and 24th, Grafham Water and Paxton Pits on 12th and Kingfishers Bridge on 16th and 28th.

RAILS

Water Rail Recorded at 17 sites, numbers ranging from 1–8 birds, but also counts of 10+ at Fowlmere in January and Kingfishers Bridge in February.

Common Moorhen Reported from 20 sites. Peak counts included Ouse Washes (68; 109), Grafham Water (22; 31), Fen Drayton GP (34; 27), Over Fen GP (29; 26). Otherwise 1–25 birds.

Common Coot Reported from 18 sites. Peak counts included Ouse Washes (826; 2336), Paxton Pits (1283; 739), Fen Drayton GP (1217; 588), Grafham Water (785; 749), Barleycraft GP (492; 211). Otherwise 1–200 birds.

WADERS

Eurasian Oystercatcher Early records at Whittlesford on Jan 7th and Paxton Pits on 22nd,

singles at several sites in February with up to 4 at Paxton Pits

Ringed Plover First recorded at Paxton Pits on Jan 20th, where 3–11 in February and 2 at Grafham Water Feb 10th to 12th.

European Golden Plover Highest counts from Ouse Washes (6497; 5393), Wicken Fen (0; 5250), Barleycraft GP (4000; 5000), Serpentine Lake (4400; 300), Nene Washes (30; 4500), Swaffham Prior Fen (2000; 4500), Histon 3000 on Jan 12th, Westfield Farm (Comberton) (1500; 430), Paxton Pits (977; 1384 – a site record), several other flocks of 100–1000 in the Cambridge A14 corridor. One at Swaffham Prior Fen exhibited bright orange legs!

Grey Plover Two at Ferry Meadows on Jan 19th and singles Ouse Washes on Jan 16th and Feb 13th.

Northern Lapwing Main locality was Ouse Washes with peaks of 16,714 on Jan 16th and 15,994 on Feb 13th elsewhere up to 6000 at Nene Washes, 3000 at Over Fen, 2100 at Barleycraft GP, 1800 at Swaffham Prior Fen, 1600 at Kingfishers Bridge, 1500 at Paxton Pits.

Red Knot Single at Grafham Water from 2005 throughout January rising to 2 on 29th and 3 from Feb 3rd to 6th. At Paxton Pits on Jan 1st and 27th with 2 on Feb 2nd and Nene Washes on Jan 28th.

Sanderling Three at Grafham Water on Jan 26th with 2 remaining on 28th was a rare winter record.

Dunlin Highest counts from Ouse Washes with peaks of 103 on Jan 16th and 104 on Feb 13th, Needingworth GP (91; 41), Grafham Water (20, 17), Paxton Pits (12; 17).

Ruff As usual Ouse Washes was main locality with up to 62 in January rising sharply to 270 in early February, 1–6 from 4 other sites.

Jack Snipe Cambourne 4+ on Feb 11th and 3 at Serpentine BP on Feb 28th were the only multiple counts, elsewhere singles from a further 5 sites.

Common Snipe Fluctuating counts from most sites highest as follows: Over Fen GP (90, 38), Ouse Washes (73; 49), Wicken Fen (28; 14), Fen Drayton GP (30; 20), Ferry Meadows (0; 25) and 1–15 from a further 12 sites.

Eurasian Woodcock Highest counts 6 at Gt Eversden, 5 at Monks Wood and Woodwalton Fen, 3 at Madingley Wood, Wicken Fen and 1–2 from a further 15 sites.

Black-tailed Godwit At Fen Drayton GP 400 on Jan 11th was a slight anomaly as Ouse Washes numbers did not build until February when a peak of 1150 on 4th. Also 60 at Barleycraft on Feb 9th

Eurasian Curlew Main record concerned 42 feeding on arable at Foul Anchor on Feb 19th (the highest count this century) otherwise 1–3 at Ouse Washes and singles at a further 4 sites.

Spotted Redshank A single at Ouse Washes intermittently from Jan 3rd to Feb 24th.

Common Redshank Highest counts from Nene Washes (70; 120), Needingworth GP (70; 32), Ouse Washes (30; 32), Grafham Water (18; 12), Paxton Pits (7; 10) and 1–9 from a further eight sites.

Green Sandpiper Scarce during the period with 1–2 from 12 sites.

Common Sandpiper A remarkable record of 6 at Over Fen GP on Jan 15th will require verification if this record is to stand.

Ruddy Turnstone Singles at Ouse Washes on Jan 21st, Grafham Water Jan 27th to Feb 2nd and Barleycraft GP on Feb 5th.

SKUAS TO TERNS

Mediterranean Gull Roosting birds regularly noted at both Grafham Water and Ouse Washes, also noted at Ferry Meadows CP and Dogsthorpe Tip during the period.

Little Gull Two noted on the Ouse Washes on Jan 2nd were noteworthy.

Black-headed Gull Roosting birds totalled 20,000+ in January at Ouse Washes RSPB. There were no records for the Grafham roost, but a small roost of up to 1800+ formed at St Ives GP. Feeding flocks of up to 820 were noted at Milton Tip and worms attracted 400+ to Coldhams Common.

Common Gull Roosting birds totalled 5,000+ in January at Ouse Washes RSPB elsewhere 300 were noted at St Ives GP and up to 260 at Paxton Pits.

Lesser Black backed Gull As early as Jan 8th over 1000+ were roosting at Ouse Washes RSPB.

Herring Gull 1000+ were noted at Landbeach on Jan 7th. A German wing-tagged bird (5D) was recorded at Milton on Jan 16th having previously been noted in Belgium, Holland and Scotland.

Yellow-legged Gull A strong showing for the time of year with 3–6 birds noted regularly at Grafham Water, Landbeach and Ouse Washes being eclipsed by the 13 reported from Paxton Pits on Jan 23rd.

Caspian Gull In the Milton / Landbeach area regular watching resulted in over 10+ individuals being recorded during the period surely this is the British hot spot for this gull? Also recorded at Dogsthorpe Tip, Grafham Water, Ouse Washes and Paxton Pits.

Iceland Gull At Milton Tip 2cy birds were noted on Jan 22nd and Feb 24–28th the latter bird also being noted at Bottisham Fen and Long Drove Cottenham.

Glaucous Gull None recorded!

Greater Black-backed Gull Still low in numbers this period with 74 at Paxton Pits the largest count received.

NEAR PASSERINES

Feral Pigeon Up to 180+ noted in Wisbech and 61 in St Neots Town Centres.

Stock Pigeon Largest count received was 140 at Upware on Jan 8th.

Wood Pigeon Flocks of 500+ noted at Elm

(1250+), Kingfishers Bridge (750+), Over Fen (500+), Upware (1500+) and Westfield Farm (570).

Collared Dove A very large flock of 238 noted at Purls Bridge on Jan 8th.

Barn Owl A bumper 68 records received from 32 sites! Up to 6 were noted on Ouse Washes and 5 at Wicken Fen.

Little Owl 18 records received from 15 sites.

Tawny Owl Only 28 records from 22 sites.

Long-eared Owl Reported from 6 sites.

Short-eared Owl. Thirty-five records received from 8 sites including up to 4 at Orton BP and Wicken Fen.

Kingfisher Reported from 41 widespread sites including up to 3 at Paxton Pits.

Green Woodpecker Reported from 41 sites.

Greater Spotted Woodpecker Fifty-four records received – more than the previous species for a change with up to 8 at Paxton Pits and 8 handled at Wicken Fen during February; heard drumming at 2 sites in January

Lesser-Spotted Woodpecker Noted from the following sites Bedford Purlieu, Hills Road Cambridge, Cobb's Wood, Grafham Water, Monks Wood, Paxton Pits, Priory Park St Neots and Woodwalton Fen.

PASSERINES

Skylark Reported from 15 sites with a maximum of 32 at Monks Hardwick on Jan 29th.

Meadow Pipit Records were received from 7 sites with the highest count coming from Ouse Washes with 137 present on Jan 16th.

Water Pipit Singles were noted from Kingfishers Bridge, Paxton Pits and Nene Washes with singles also noted at Ouse Washes throughout January and February. The maximum count was 3 at Ouse Washes on Jan 30th although singles were noted on many dates throughout January and February.

Yellow Wagtail One was seen on the incredibly early date of Feb 23rd and remained until 25th. An exceptionally early migrant, or an overlooked wintering bird?

Grey Wagtail Reports were received from 16 sites with the majority of records concerning 1–2 birds. The maximum was 3 at Ely on Feb 8th.

Pied Wagtail Counts received from 10 sites with a maximum of 150 at Ely on Jan 11th.

Bohemian Waxwing Following last years influx, this year returned to more usual numbers. Singles were noted at Over, Paxton Pits, Ouse Washes and Cambridge, where 2 were seen in early January

Black Redstart A single female was seen at Fowlmere on Jan 14th and 30th.

Whinchat One was reported at Barleycraft on the early date of Feb 17th

Stonechat 1–2 birds were noted from at least 20 sites with records from Barleycraft, Burwell Fen, Cam Washes Upware, Ellington, Elm, Ely, Farcet Fen, Fen Drayton, Kingfishers Bridge, Nene Washes, Over Fen, Pymoor Bridge, Wendy, White Fen and Wicken Fen. The maximum in the period

was 14 present at Nene Washes and 17 at Ouse Washes.

Blackbird Records were received from 7 sites with maximum of 28 present at Upware on Jan 8th. Remarkably, a juvenile was recorded in Cambridge on Feb 28th!

Fieldfare Records received from 17 sites with good numbers recorded, many flocks of 200+ birds were noted. The maximum count was from Wisbech with 750 on Jan 31st.

Song Thrush Records were received from 12 sites with 1–3 individuals being the norm at most sites. The maximum was 10 at Wicken fen on Jan 27th.

Redwing Recorded from at least 13 sites with lower than average counts. Most sites recorded between 20 and 50. The maximum noted during the period was from St. Neots with 110 on Jan 13th.

Mistle Thrush Reports were received from 8 sites with 1–2 being the norm. Six were noted at Kingfisher's Bridge on Jan 27th.

Cetti's Warbler Singleton birds were reported from Block Fen and Ouse Washes (2 sites) during both months. Wicken Fen produced a maximum of 4+ on Feb 8th.

Blackcap Present at 9 localities involving at least 13 individuals; most records were of garden visitors.

Common Chiffchaff Sewage treatment works lived up to their reputation for attracting overwintering birds, with 5 at Needingworth on Feb 22nd.

However there were no reported birds at other sewage works. Elsewhere, it was reported from 9 sites, with 3 at Milton CP (Cambridge) in mid Feb.

Goldcrest Reported from numerous sites, with a maximum of 10 at Wicken Fen, 7 at Grafham Water and a peak of 6 at Paxton Pits all in early Jan; elsewhere 1–4 birds.

Bearded Tit Just one report – but of 5+ individuals – from Wicken Fen (Jan 14th).

Long-tailed Tit From 18 sites, the higher counts (all in January) were as follows: c 45 at Paxton Pits; 25 at The Gloucesters (Wimpole), 24 at Bakers Fen (Wicken Fen), and 20+ at Gamlingay Wood.

Marsh Tit Reports of 119+ individuals in total were received from 16 sites. Monks Wood surpassed all other sites with c 70 on Feb 22nd. Ten were present at Woodwalton Fen, 6 at The Gloucesters (Wimpole), 6 at Gamlingay Wood and 6 at Hardwick Wood.

Coal Tit Reports of 1–4 birds included some regular visitors to gardens during both months. The Gloucesters (Wimpole) held 4 on Feb 10th.

Blue Tit The determined bunch of observers who report this common species noted birds at 13 sites, including c 120 at Paxton Pits, 50+ at Bar Hill (north west of Cambridge), 51 at Hardwick Wood, and 28 at The Gloucesters (Wimpole).

Great Tit From 12 sites, the maximum reported was 30 at Hardwick Wood, followed by 24 at The Gloucesters (Wimpole), 12 at Hayley Wood and 10 at Landbeach GP. An open-ended fence pipe proved to be an irresistible roosting place for one bird at Fen Drayton GP.

Wood Nuthatch Recorded from 6 sites. Records of 4 birds at Croxton Hall on Jan 1st and 4 at Monks Wood on Feb 17th are noteworthy.

Eurasian Treecreeper Records received from 12 sites. Most records were of 1–5 birds, although 6 birds were at Hardwick Wood on Jan 19th, Gransden Wood on Feb 19th and Woodwalton Fen on Feb 5th.

Great Grey Shrike The bird present at Wicken Fen at the end of 2005 was recorded on a number of days between Jan 4th and 9th, and then again from Jan 22nd until Feb 17th. Whilst not on view at Wicken in mid-Jan, presumably this same bird was seen at Kingfishers Bridge on Jan 21st. A bird was also noted at Peterborough District Hospital on Jan 11th.

Eurasian Jay Records from 16 sites refer to counts of 1–4 birds apart from a flock of 8 at Paxton Pits on Feb 12th.

Black-billed Magpie Reported from less than 10 sites. A count of 20 at Ouse Washes (Fortrey's Hall) on Feb 10th was the highest for the period.

Eurasian Jackdaw Reported from less than 10 sites. Maximum counts were of just 200 at Toft on Jan 10th and 100+ at Granta Park (Abington) on Jan 4th. Eastern race birds were recorded from Landbeach (1 on Jan 4th, and 3 on Feb 2nd) and Milton Tip (Cambridge) with 1 on Feb 28th.

Rook Highest counts were of roosts of 1200 at Fen Drayton GP on Jan 31st, and 1100 at Hardwick Wood on Jan 26th.

Carrion Crow The highest count reported was of up to 18 birds at Monks Hardwick throughout the period.

Common Starling Highest counts were of roosting flocks at Cambridge Science Park, with 500 birds on Jan 21st, and Fen Drayton GP, with 350 over Holywell Pit on Jan 17th.

House Sparrow Counts at Elm of 130+ in Jan and 80+ in Feb were by far the highest for the period.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow Recorded from 9 sites. Maximum counts included an impressive 150 at Witcham on Feb 3rd, 100 at Block Fen on Jan 17th, 60 at Swaddywell Pit (Helpston) on Jan 28th and 48–50 at Ouse Washes throughout.

Chaffinch Highest counts were of 80 at Ouse Washes on Feb 16th, 45 at Aldreth Fen on Jan 27th, and 42 at Witcham on Feb 3rd, none of which are particularly notable.

Brambling Counts of 1–10 birds came from 16 sites (with the Ouse Washes accounting for most records of 5–10 birds throughout the period). Small numbers (1–5 birds) were noted at Fowlmere NR throughout January, but an unprecedented flock of 250 birds was counted coming to roost on Feb 15th.

European Greenfinch Maximum counts were 130 at Paxton Pits on Jan 6th, 100 at Landbeach on Jan 26th, 55 at Stretham on Feb 19th and 50 at Lode on Jan 11th.

European Goldfinch Counts of over 50 birds came from Swaffham Prior Fen with 130 on Jan 2nd, Wicken Fen with 100+ throughout the period, Ouse

Washes with 66 on Feb 13th, and Paxton Pits with 65 on Jan 4th.

Eurasian Siskin Recorded from 40 sites, with many flocks of 1–30 birds. Maximum counts were of 100 at Woodwalton Fen on Feb 5th (a flock of 40–60 was present from late Jan until the end of Feb), 60 at Paxton Pits on Jan 8th, and 40 at Fordham Woods on Jan 1st.

Common Linnet Noteworthy records were of 160 at Swaffham Prior Fen in Jan 9th, 150 at Paxton Pits on Jan 20th, 69 at Lode on Jan 18th (dropping to 55 in mid Feb) and 56 at Needingworth GP on Feb 16th.

Lesser Redpoll Records were received from 13 sites. The flock of birds at Woodwalton Fen increased from c.25 at the end of Jan to 40 on Feb 5th. A flock of 23 at Nene Washes on Jan 27th is also noteworthy.

Mealy Redpoll Recorded from 4 sites, with 1–5 birds at Woodwalton Fen from Jan 29th to Feb 5th, and singles at Nene Washes and Ouse Washes at the end of Jan. A single bird graced a garden bird feeder in St Ives on Jan 3rd and 8th.

Arctic Redpoll A good winter for redpolls was capped by two records of Arctic Redpoll, with one at Nene Washes on Jan 27th, and one at Woodwalton Fen the next day.

Common Crossbill Reported from Southey Wood, where up to 17 were recorded from Jan 5th to 15th, and Monks Wood, where up to 8 were present from Jan 10th to the end of Feb.

Common Bullfinch Reported from at least 35 sites. 25+ at Paxton Pits on Jan 1st, and 20 at Milton CP (Cambridge) on Jan 29th were noteworthy.

Hawfinch An excellent series of records came from Ferry Meadows CP with 1–3 birds present (on and off) throughout the period. A bird was present at Monks Wood throughout the period, with 3 there on Feb 17th. Other records were of singles at Maxey GP (Jan 3rd), Grafham Water (Jan 9th), Werrington (Jan 12th) and Sawston (Jan 15th).

Contributors: Colin Addington, Louise Bacon, Ian Barton, Rowena Baxter, Roger Beecroft, Philip Bubb, Alan Bullwinkle, Bob Bunten, Robin Cox, Ian Delgado, Dr Mike Foley, Richard Fowling, Robin Franklin, Andrew Green, David Griffiths, Kevin Harris, Brian & Sheila Harrup, Mark Hawkes, Fred Heath, Peter Herkenrath, Ken Hook, Julian Hughes, Bob Humphrey, Colin Kirtland, John Le Gassick, Vince Lea, Tony Mallyon, Owen & Monica Marks, Bruce & Gwen Martin, Will Miles, Mark Missin, Dick Newell, John Oates, Rob Palmer, Pam & Evan Peacock, Michael Price, Mike Redshaw, Dr Gareth Rees, Nick Richardson, Tony Roberts, Kathleen Rosewarne, Bob & Ann Scott, Ellis Selway, Clive Sinclair, Chris Thorne, Iain Webb

Apologies to anyone whose name has been omitted. Any records received after the deadline date may not appear in the Bulletin though the observers may be acknowledged. They will be entered on the Clubs database for the Annual Report.

Snow Bunting A bird at Over on Jan 8th was an excellent record.

Yellowhammer Recorded at 20 sites. High counts were of 145 at Witcham on Feb 3rd, 70 at Swaffham Prior Fen on Jan 5th, 41 at Lark Rise Farm (Barton) on Feb 17th, and 40 at Toft on Feb 24th.

Reed Bunting Recorded at 17 sites. High counts were of 120 at Farcet Fen on Jan 23rd, c.80 at Fowlmere NR on Jan 21st, 63 at Block Fen on Jan 11th, and 54 at Monks Hardwick on Feb 26th.

Corn Bunting Records were received from 15 sites. 120 at Swaffham Prior Fen on Jan 5th, 104 at Witcham on Feb 3rd, and 80 at Black Horse Drove on Jan 8th were all noteworthy.

HYBRIDS

Canada x Greylag Singles noted at Hatley St George and Kingfishers Bridge.

Eurasian x American Wigeon

A drake was reported from Kingfishers Bridge on Jan 2nd.

Tufted duck x Pochard 'Lesser Scaup' types noted at Grafham Water on Jan 9th.

Herring x Lesser Black Backed Gull Singles noted at Landbeach on Feb 6th and Milton on Feb 27th.

Herring x Glaucous Gull

A 2cy was photographed at Milton on Jan 30th.

Tree Sparrow x House Sparrow A single was noted at Grafham Water on Feb 11th.

EXOTICA

Black Swan Up to 4 noted on Nene Washes and 2 at Ely and Ouse Washes.

Bar-headed Goose Singles noted at Barleycraft GP and Kingfishers Bridge.

Muscovy Duck Up to 59 noted at Ely.

Budgerigar Noted at Earith and Landbeach (blue type).

Recent habitat management at Fowlmere

Doug Radford (RSPB Warden)

If you have been to Fowlmere Nature reserve recently, you cannot fail to have noticed that we have cut or burnt more than a hectare of reedbed and fen this winter, and I thought I should offer an explanation to anyone who is wondering why.

The reedbed and fen habitats occupy one-third of the total area of the reserve and are the main reason for its notification as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Some parts of the reedbed have been improving in response to our water management, but other parts have been showing evidence of drying out. Rushes have been replacing reeds, which is not good for birds such as Reed and Sedge Warbler and Water Rail, or for the specialised reedbed invertebrates.

Regular cutting and removal of the dead material is a tried and tested method of slowing the process of succession, but raking and burning the cuttings is time consuming and labour intensive, so we have been able to cut only small areas each year until now. This winter Tim Bennett (formerly of Wicken Fen) brought a specialist reed cutter and harvester that gathers the cuttings into bundles, which made clearing up much quicker and easier, and so we were able to cut a much larger area. We have also burnt a drier section where the accumulation of dead material was suppressing growth in what used to be our most reliable Grasshopper Warbler territory. We expect both of these techniques to stimulate the growth of reeds and other fen species, with a subsequent increase in numbers of breeding birds. The new reeds will also produce many more seeds because the stem-boring wainscot moth larvae in the old reeds have been removed, making the area much more suitable for wintering Bearded Tits (as has happened in the past).

The RSPB at Over, Needingworth and Fen Drayton

Graham Elliott, RSPB Fens Area Manager

The RSPB has had a presence in the lower Ouse Valley for many years with its land holdings on the Ouse Washes being internationally important for breeding and wintering birds. Recently, however, opportunities have arisen to expand our influence further upstream to Needingworth and Fen Drayton.

At Over and Needingworth the RSPB is working together with Hanson to develop a 700ha wetland which will include 460ha of reedbed. The first phase was planted with reeds in 2004 and the second phase has just been landscaped ready for planting in summer 2006. The reed is growing well but it will take it several years to develop into reedbeds suitable for Bitterns or Bearded Tits.

As part of our partnership with Hanson we are also taking on land on the north side of the river, some such as the old Barleycroft workings we already own, some such as the settling lagoons and processing areas we will not acquire until Hanson leave the site in 20–30 years time. We intend to add to the land north of the river mainly to develop additional breeding areas for wetland species that are increasingly being affected by summer floods on the Ouse Washes. We are confident that we will be able to acquire some of the land between the old Barleycroft workings and the skating fields at Earith and hope to announce the acquisition shortly. We hope to manage the site as floodplain grassland especially for breeding waders such as Lapwing, Snipe and Redshank.

You may also have heard that the RSPB is hoping to acquire Fen Drayton Lakes. Recent public announcements from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister have stated that £1.12m has been set aside for the RSPB to acquire and set up a new reserve here. So far so good, but we still have to reach agreement with the current owners. Negotiations are continuing which will hopefully end in success sometime over the next month or so.

Please contact me you have any further questions: graham.elliott@rspb.org.uk, office: 01480 819214

Farm surveys

Under the revised Environmental Stewardship Scheme farmers are now to be rewarded for better environmental management of their land. The scheme has four objectives (1) to conserve wildlife (2) to protect historic features (3) to maintain landscape character and (4) to improve water quality and reduce soil erosion. The scheme has three elements: Entry Level Stewardship (ELS), Organic Entry Level Stewardship (OELS) and Higher Level Stewardship (HLS).

In order to qualify for the available grants under any of these schemes farmers may need to survey their land for its wildlife including the presence of breeding birds which are probably the main indicator of an improving environment. Through FWAG (the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group) the Cambridgeshire Bird Club has been asked if we could provide volunteers to undertake surveys on local farms if requested. The Club has offered to seek volunteers who may be interested in undertaking such surveys, which I can say from personal experience are both interesting and rewarding. There would, however, be no financial reward but the farmer would be invited to make a suitable donation to the Club.

Would anyone who is interested in volunteering please let me have their names (Tel 01763 208636: Email: Robin@rafcox.go-plus.net). I will, then, keep a list and put the nearest volunteers in touch with any farmers who request our help.

Swifts in Cambridge

This year we are teaming up with Cambridge City Greenways project to expand on their 2002 survey of screaming & breeding swifts in Cambridge. We are asking people to survey on a regular basis from a single fixed spot. This will take about 15 minutes of your time once a week for 5 weeks.

If you would like to take part and help us find the bits of the city most favoured by Swifts please get in touch with Louise Bacon.

Breeding owl survey – final year

This is the final year of our three year survey of the whole county for breeding owls. There are still places not covered, so if you would be interested in helping please get in touch with Louise Bacon.

Operation Godwit – Colour-ringed Black-tailed Godwits

As part of an international study into the migration patterns and population dynamics of Black-tailed Godwits, more than a thousand birds have been individually colour-ringed throughout the species range. It would be much appreciated if you could pass on sightings of marked godwits. Many of the birds have been seen several times and observers will receive details of previous movements. Please record the COLOUR and POSITION of all colour rings along with DATE, TIME, LOCATION and NUMBER of godwits present, and send to: Jenny Gill (University of East Anglia): j.gill@uea.ac.uk Further details on: <http://www.uea.ac.uk/~b072834/>

Cambridgeshire Biological Records Centre

The Bird Club are now sharing bird data with this county-wide organisation to help provide information on bird populations in several ways. They provide information to inform the planning process, hopefully highlighting significant bird sightings. They also provide information to other Nature Conservation Organisations on reserves, sites of interest, etc, and to organisations such as FWAG for better informed farming/stewardship decisions, and to researchers for specific projects. Sensitive and confidential records are not used by the Records Centre, and personal observer details are never disclosed.

Leave it to the birds!

The Cambridgeshire Bird Club was granted charitable status on 10 March 1989 to advance the education of the public in the study of birds.

An important activity of the Club is to collect and publish information concerning the avifauna of the administrative County of Cambridgeshire. Club records are regularly called on to provide reliable statistics to be used when assessing and considering the impact of local environmental and agricultural issues. This clearly places a responsibility on its members to ensure that the existing records are safeguarded for future use and that the annual recording of all avifauna information is maintained.



The Cambridgeshire Bird Club is a Registered Charity and as such any legacy will be received free of Inheritance Tax. The wording below is suitable for including in your Will but I strongly recommend that you take professional advice in writing your Will. You can leave a specific sum as your Legacy or you could leave a percentage of your residuary estate. Your residuary estate is the sum which is left after settling all specific bequests and expenses. I give a suggested wording for each type of Legacy.

The following wording can be used as a clause in your will for leaving a legacy to the Cambridgeshire Bird Club.

“I give the sum of £..... (.....amount in words) to the Cambridgeshire Bird Club (Registered Charity No 284045) for its general charitable purposes, for which the receipt of the Treasurer is to be a sufficient discharge.”

OR

“I give% of the residue of my estate to the Cambridgeshire Bird Club (Registered Charity No 284045) for its general charitable purposes, for which the receipt of the Treasurer is to be a sufficient discharge.”

If you require any further information about ‘Leaving a Legacy’ to the Cambridgeshire Bird Club please contact me.

Mrs Rita Lingard (recently retired Club Treasurer), 14 Spens Avenue, Cambridge CB3 9LS
Email – rita.lingard@ntlworld.com

Savings + Tax + Gift Aid

The majority of Club members now pay their annual subscription under a Gift Aid Declaration (or under old Covenants); this enables the Club to reclaim tax from HM Customs & Revenue and in 2005 this amounted to £944.76 representing almost 15% of our total income. However, there are still a number of you who are reluctant to help the Club in this way. For your information when signing a Gift Aid Declaration you must ensure the following:

- You must pay an amount of income or capital gains tax at least equal to the tax that the Cambridgeshire Bird Club reclaims on your gift in the tax year (Currently this is £2.82p on a £10 subscription and £3.95p on a £14 Subscription).
- If in the future you no longer pay tax on your income and/or capital gains equal to the tax that the Cambridgeshire Bird Club reclaims, you can cancel your declaration.
- If you pay tax at the higher rate you can claim further tax relief (*for your own benefit*) in your Inland Revenue Self-Assessment Form.

Some members believe that they do not pay tax which can be reclaimed by the Club even though they receive interest from investments or bank deposit accounts upon which interest is paid to them after deduction of tax. Clearly, in this case, many members could allow the Club to reclaim tax paid.

For a Senior member the interest received after the deduction of tax should be equal to or greater than £15 each year.

However, if you have previously paid your subscriptions under a Gift Aid Declaration (or old Covenant) and you now no longer pay sufficient tax to cover the amount to be reclaimed by the Club then you must inform the Treasurer who will cancel your Declaration. There will be no communication between the Club and H M Customs & Revenue it is only for Club records.

If you need any further help or advice please ask me or the new Treasurer.

Rita Lingard (recently retired Club Treasurer)

Email: rita.lingard@ntlworld.com

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS 2006

Doors open at 7.30pm for an 8.00pm start.

Friday May 12th Milton Country Park Visitor's Centre

The Dodo by Errol Fuller

The talk will summarize what is actually known about the Dodo (surprisingly little!) and how the facts have been established. There are three sources of information: skeletal material, written accounts contemporary with the Dodo's existence and pictures painted by men who actually saw them. These have all given rise to endless confusion over what the bird actually looked like, how it lived, when it became extinct etc. etc. and the value of each piece of evidence will be considered. The talk will also feature an overview of the Dodo's rise to its current status as an icon of extinction.

Errol Fuller is a writer of books on the curiosities of natural history (The Great Auk; Dodo, from Extinction to Icon; Extinct Birds; The Lost Birds of Paradise; Lost Worlds) and a painter of sporting subjects: boxing, cricket, racing, snooker. He was brought up in south London but now lives in Kent.

SUMMER FIELD TRIP 2006

Friday June 9th RSPB Nene Washes Reserve

Meet at 7 p.m., in the reserve car park for a guided walk with a reserve warden.

The reserve is 8 miles east of Peterborough, and north east of Whittlesey. There is a car park at the end of Eldernell Lane, off the A605 east of Coates. There is currently no signposting to the reserve. This should be an excellent time to see waders including Black-tailed Godwits which will all have hatched by then, and for those wanting to stay on to the dark, a chance of Spotted and Corn Crakes. The Washes in the dark is a fantastic experience! For more information on the reserve look at the RSPB website.

Please book by contacting Louise Bacon who can also give further information (contact details on back page).

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

We welcome the following new members: - Steve Bramham-Jones of Haddenham, Ian & Shelia Dickerson of Haddenham, Mike Everett of Hemingford Grey, Adrian Hoyes of Cottenham, Andy Merryweather of Great Abington, Jeffrey Reed of Downham Market, Mr. GR Seamons of Oundle, Joe Taylor of Cambridge, Peter Vandome of Cambridge and David Woolven of Buckden.

Bruce Martin

CBC E-Communication: bulletin by email and CBC-Announce

If you would like to receive your bulletin by email or be subscribed to CBC-ANNOUNCE, please contact Vicki Harley, email vicki.harley@care4free.net

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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.cambridgeshirebirdclub.org.uk

Birdline number

Remember that your Cambs bird sightings can be phoned in free of charge to Birdline East Anglia on 0800 083 0803.

Please email records to: John Oates by May 7th

Please send records by post to: Louise Bacon by May 7th

Next Bulletin due out June 2006, covering March–April 2006

GOOD BIRDING!