

CAMBRIDGESHIRE BIRD CLUB

Bulletin No. 386



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

RECENT REPORTS MAY AND JUNE 2006

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).

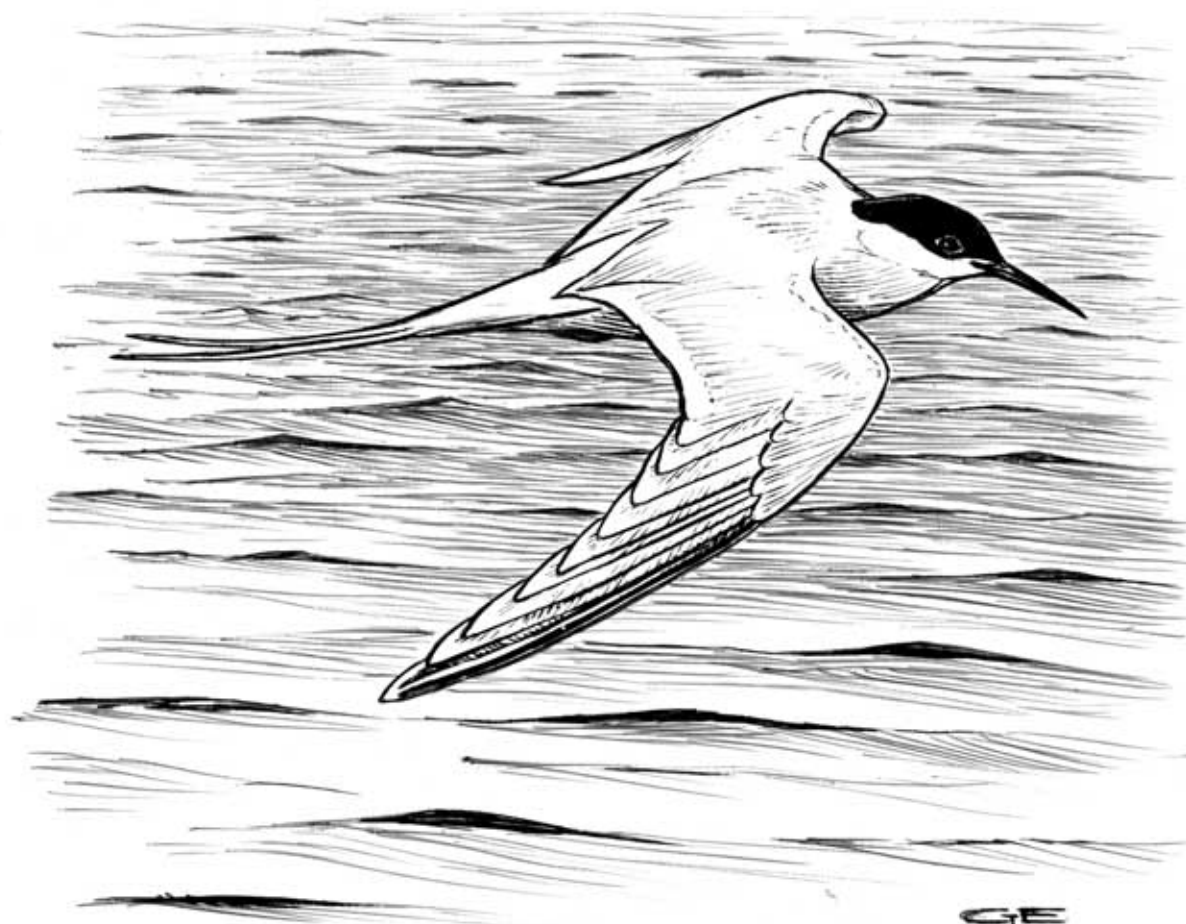
Cambridgeshire Bird Club vacancies

If you are interested in helping the Club please see p10.

Wild Bird Food – 10% discount

Members of the Cambridgeshire Bird Club can buy wild bird food at a 10% discount from Rectory Farm, Landbeach (on the A10 just over 1km N of the A14). Just show your most recent Bulletin or Annual Report as proof of membership. Just one more benefit of joining CBC!

Roseate Tern by Graham Easy



Numbers in brackets indicate May and June maximums.

WILDFOWL

Mute Swan Broods were noted at 6 sites and moulting flocks at 7 sites. The highest counts were at Fen Drayton GP (139), Grafham Water (110), Ouse Fen (86) and Paxton Pits (71).

Whooper Swan A single bird was at the Ouse Washes during the period.

Pink-footed Goose One bird was at Kingfishers Bridge with Greylag Geese on May 1st.

Greylag Goose At Fen Drayton GP (12; 205). Paxton Pits was the only other site with three-figure counts with 528 birds that included 158 young.

Canada Goose Double figures noted at 7 sites.

Barnacle Goose Up to 10 birds was at Paxton Pits during the period.

Egyptian Goose Up to 3 birds noted at 5 sites in May.

Ruddy Shelduck A female put in a brief appearance at Ouse Fen on Jun 5th.

Common Shelduck Two broods were seen at both the Cam Washes and Ouse Fen, and birds were reported from 7 other sites.

Mandarin Two birds were at Grafham Water on May 5th and 3 at Dillington, (southwest of Grafham Water), on May 6th. The birds at the latter site were perched in a tree near an owl box, (perhaps using it?).

Eurasian Wigeon Single figures recorded at 8 sites during the period with a few birds summering at some of the sites. Returning autumn birds (6) were at Paxton Bits on Jun 29th.

Gadwall Recorded at 6 sites in June. The most notable counts being at Paxton Pits 102, Cam Washes 58 and the Nene Washes 41. A brood of 8 were seen at Ouse Fen on Jun 15th.

Eurasian Teal Four sites held summering birds, but there were no reports of breeding.

Mallard At Fen Drayton GP (128;64). Breeding was noted at a number of sites.

Garganey Up to 9 birds were at Ouse Fen in early May, (5 males were seen chasing 1 female), and up to 7 birds were present most of June. Also reported from 5 other sites with numbers from 1 to 4.

Northern Shoveler Noted at 6 sites with a maximum of 11 at Grafham Water and Ouse Fen. Broods were seen at the Nene Washes and Ouse Fen.

Red-crested Pochard Two males were present at Godmanchester GP on Jun 4th and at Ouse Fen on Jun 18th. A male and female were at the latter site on Jun 26th and a single bird at Whittleford GP on Jun 4th.

Common Pochard One or two were at 6 sites for most of the period with 14 at Paxton Pits and up to 50 at Ouse Fen by the end of June. A brood of 5 were in a ditch at the Ouse Washes on Jun 9th.

Tufted Duck Counts of (19; 17) at Fen Drayton GP were the highest counts apart from 50 at Ouse Fen

on Jun 25th. Broods were reported from Ouse Fen (2) and the Ouse Washes (1).

Common Scoter One-day flocks appeared at Grafham Water with 25 on May 17th and 9 on May 27th.

Goldeneye Three immature males were at Paxton Pits on May 7th with 2 still on the 11th. A male was at Ouse Fen on May 20th.

Ruddy Duck Noted at 6 sites.

GAMEBIRDS

Red-legged Partridge Reported from 9 sites, numbers ranging from 1–29 birds.

Grey Partridge Recorded at 15 sites, numbers ranging from 1–8 birds, and as is usual, the majority of records came from Fenland areas.

Common Quail Calling males recorded at Nene Washes (March Farmers) on May 27th, Cherry Hinton on Jun 11th and 15th, Reach on Jun 25th, and 2 at Farcet Fen from Jun 30th into July.

Common Pheasant Reported from just 5 sites, with numbers ranging from 1–15 birds.

DIVERS TO HERONS

Great Northern Diver The long-staying immature bird at Grafham Water was last seen on May 22nd.

Little Grebe Single figures reported from 4 sites.

Great Crested Grebe Breeding was reported at 6 sites. Counts at Fen Drayton GP were (29; 21). The only other double figure counts were 52 at Paxton Pits in June and 14 at Ouse Fen, also in June.

Red-necked Grebe The bird at Fen Drayton GP moved to Ouse Fen in late May where it remained to the period end.

Black-necked Grebe A bird was present at Grafham Water on May 1st.

Northern Gannet An adult was present at Grafham Water on Jun 21st.

Great Cormorant There were still 25 occupied nests at Paxton Pits on Jun 11th. Small numbers were noted at 6 other sites.

Great Bittern Reported from 3 sites, one of which was Ouse Fen where a bird was seen on 3 days in May. Hopefully prospecting for the future at this new reserve!

Little Egret Reported from 11 sites with double figures at 3, Ouse Fen 12, Ouse Washes 12 and Wicken Fen 28.

Grey Heron Noted at 18 sites.

Eurasian Spoonbill Four birds that had been at Welland Bank Pits (in Lincs), briefly entered the county when they flew along the Cambs side of the River Welland. An immature/sub adult bird seen at Wicken Fen on May 21st moved to Kingfishers Bridge on 22nd. An adult was at the Ouse Washes on Jun 7th and an immature bird was at Wicken Fen on Jun 21st/22nd.

RAPTORS

European Honey Buzzard After the early spring records, further individuals were seen at Fowlmere on May 6th, Farcet Fen on May 12th, Hemingford

Grey on May 17th, Fen Drayton GP on May 18th, Serpentine BP on May 25th and finally Chesterton on Jun 16th.

Black Kite A possible at Alwalton on Jun 11th.

Red Kite A good period for this species, with 37 reports from 28 sites, all involving singles, apart from 2 at Ferry Meadows from Jun 6th to 7th and Sawtry on Jun 6th. Also, 1 at Abbotsley on May 13th had a red-tag on its right wing, indicating a Scottish origin.

White-tailed Eagle An adult, probably of this species, was seen flying west over Hauxton on Jun 21st. Frustratingly, there were no further sightings.

Eurasian Marsh Harrier Recorded at 19 sites. The majority were seen around, or near, breeding sites, but migrants noted at Fen Drayton GP and Serpentine BP.

Hen Harrier A single ringtail at High Fen (Warboys/Chatteris) on May 13th.

Montagu's Harrier Singles, thought to be this species, were seen at Gamlingay on May 5th and a ringtail at Wimpole on Jun 12th.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk Recorded at 28 sites, with all counts involving 1–3 birds.

Common Buzzard Recorded at 26 sites, with all counts involving 1–4 birds.

Osprey Singles at Paxton Pits on May 2nd & 13th (with probables on 3rd and 4th), Fen Drayton GP and Woodston on May 4th, Ferry Meadows from May 18th to 21st and Jun 10th, Cam Washes (Upware) on May 25th, Little Paxton on May 30th, Cambridge on Jun 6th and Eynesbury on Jun 11th.

Common Kestrel Recorded at 29 sites, with all counts of 1–4 birds.

Red-footed Falcon A first-summer male at Nene Washes from May 6th to 11th, and a female briefly at Fen Drayton GP on May 18th.

Eurasian Hobby Recorded at 33 sites. Peak counts included 16 at Paxton Pits on May 28th (with up to 10 also being seen over Little Paxton), 8+ at Fen Drayton GP on May 19th, 8 at Nene Washes on May 14th and Wicken Fen on May 12th, and 6 at Ouse Fen on Jun 30th. Otherwise 1–5 at other sites.

Peregrine Two at Farcet Fen on May 3rd, with singles on 12th and 16th, Stretham on May 1st, Blackbush on May 8th, Ouse Fen on May 13th, Paxton Pits on May 15th and 23rd and Cambridge on May 20th.

RAILS

Water Rail Recorded at 5 sites, numbers ranging from 1–4 birds.

Spotted Crake At least 1 calling male at Ouse Washes on May 28th and up to 2 on Nene Washes from Jun 2nd to 14th.

Corncrake Up to 4 singing males were recorded along the Nene Washes during the period.

Common Moorhen Reported from 7 sites, numbers ranging from 1–13 birds.

Common Coot Reported at 7 sites, numbers ranging from 1–250 birds.

WADERS

Eurasian Oystercatcher Breeding at 7 sites with young fledged from at least 3 of these.

Pied Avocet Far scarcer than recent years with birds recorded from only 5 sites with a maximum of 5 at Ouse Fen on June 17th. No successful breeding reported as yet.

Pratincole sp. One flew across the A428 between Caxton Gibbet and Cambourne on June 9th. Frustratingly the observer could not confirm its identity though it is thought likely to of been a Collared. (One was at Wicken Fen on May 23rd 2005).

Little Plover Recorded from 13 sites during the period, peak counts from Paxton Pits of 14 on May 3rd and Maxey GP with 6 on June 28th. Breeding recorded at 4 sites with young seen at 2.

Ringed Plover Breeding noted from only 2 sites, though present at a further 3 suitable sites. Passage of Tundra Ringed Plover peaked at Paxton Pits on May 24th when 60 present (a site record count) and Ouse Fen with 23 on 17th. In June up to 12 at Paxton Pits

European Golden Plover In May singles at Farcet fen on 3rd, Over fen on 6th and 31st.

Grey Plover All May records, mainly from Paxton Pits where 1–4 daily from 4th to 11th and 2 on 31st. Elsewhere Ouse Fen 2 on 5th, 4 on 7th, 2 on 9th, Ouse Washes 4 on 7th and Nene Washes on 5th.

Northern Lapwing Young were reported from Kings Dyke NR, Fordham, Weybridge GP, Cam Washes (Upware), Over Fen GP and Nene Washes. Post-breeding flocks from June 3rd at Paxton Pits reaching 330 by month's end, Needingworth GP 170, Wicken Fen 90, Cam Washes 88 and Isleham 48.

Sanderling In May recorded almost daily from Paxton Pits with peaks of 5 on 11th and 20th and 2–3 from 23rd to 30th. Elsewhere 3 at Barleycraft GP on 7th, Ouse Fen/Over Fen singles on many dates, Grafham Water on 9th, Nene Washes on 14th and Kingfishers Bridge on 19th–20th. In June 8 at Paxton Pits on 5th with 3 to 5th and one on 6th and Over Fen on 9th.

Little Stint At Paxton Pits 2 on May 22nd rising to 3 on 23rd (where one briefly observed singing/diplaying) and one on June 9th.

Temminck's Stint Over/Ouse Fen one from 5th to 10th when a second bird appeared for the day, Paxton Pits on May 12th to 14th and two at Over Fen on June 14th.

Curlew Sandpiper Five at Over Fen on May 2nd, 2 on 3rd and 1 on 12th.

Dunlin Highest counts from Paxton Pits (92; 27), Ouse Fen (43; 4), Nene Washes (11; 0), Barleycraft GP 17, Kingfisher Bridge (9; 0). Last recorded on Jun 10th at Paxton Pits.

Broad-Billed Sandpiper One at Ouse Fen on May 19th was the bird of the spring for most Cambs birdwatchers.

Ruff Very scarce in May with 1–2 at Nene Washes from 5th to 14th, Kingfishers Bridge on 9th, Ouse

Fen on 23rd and 4 males on 31st. Also at Ouse Washes on 13th at least.

Common Snipe Away from main breeding sites singles at Grafham Water on May 6th and Ouse Fen on several dates in June. Fair numbers of flying young seen at Nene Washes in June.

Eurasian Woodcock Roding birds at Wicken Fen (5) and Holme Fen (3).

Black-tailed Godwit Breeding birds at Nene Washes suffered poor breeding success with only 4 fledging from 48 pairs. Passage birds in May, presumably all *islandica* race, at Cam Washes 24 on 1st, Nene Washes 12 (May), Kingfishers Bridge 10 on 1st, Paxton Pits 7 on 11th. In June, 3 at Paxton Pits on 25th, single limosa race on 27th, 12 at Ouse Fen on 28th and 3 on 30th.

Bar-tailed Godwit Main passage from May 1st to 11th. At Paxton Pits daily during this period peaking at 11 on 1st and 4 on 8th. Nene Washes 7, Godmanchester GP 4, Kingfishers Bridge 3, singles at Barleycraft GP, Ouse Washes and Ouse Fen and a late bird at Nene Washes on 22nd.

Whimbrel Passage noted from May 1st to 25th peaking 1st–7th with counts of 7 and 17 at Paxton Pits, Ouse Washes 8, Nene Washes 3, Eltisley 3.

Eurasian Curlew Three at Nene Washes on May 1st and June 30th with singles on several dates, elsewhere from Ouse Fen 2 on June 22nd, Abbottsley, Paxton Pits and Ouse Fen

Spotted Redshank Brief passage from May 1st to 9th with 2 at Wicken Fen on 4th, 1 on 5th and further singles at Cam Washes (Upware), Nene Washes, Ouse Fen, Paxton Pits.

Common Redshank At Nene Washes still good numbers of calling adults in June. Ouse Fen up to 18 in June (no fledged birds seen), Wicken Fen 4 in May, Cam Washes 4 in May, singles elsewhere.

Common Greenshank Passage from May 2nd to 15th with highest counts from Nene Washes (20), Ouse Washes (7), Ouse Fen (6), Paxton Pits and Wicken Fen (4), Over Fen GP 3. In June, possibly on return passage on 6th and 8th and from 28th at Over Fen and Paxton Pits.

Green Sandpiper At Over Fen on May 8th.

Returning birds from June 4th first at Godmanchester GP, highest counts from Maxey GP 8 on 28th and Wicken Fen 7 on 30th.

Wood sandpiper Singles in May at Ferry meadows on 3rd and Ouse Fen on 4th and 13th.

Common Sandpiper Recorded at 9 sites from May 1st to 23rd, highest counts 4 at Grafham Water on 3rd and 3 at Paxton Pits on 2nd. First returning birds from June 24th at Paxton Pits.

Ruddy Turnstone Main passage from May 1st to 16th with up to 6 at Ouse Fen, 1–3 at Paxton Pits, 1–2 at Grafham Water, single at Fen Drayton GP; in addition 5 at Beebys Pit on 24th. In June, 1–2 at Paxton Pits from 3rd to 13th.

SKUAS TO TERNS

Arctic Skua A rare spring record of 1 flying east at Grafham Water on May 2nd.

Mediterranean Gull The 3cy bird continued to frequent the Farcet Fen/Blackbush area to June 5th at least. The only other record was a single at Paxton pits on May 5th.

Little Gull Another poor period for this species with 1–3 at Kingfishers Bridge, Over Fen, Paxton Pits and Wicken Fen from May 10th to June 4th.

Black-headed Gull Godmanchester GP held 30 pairs in May. At Paxton Pits no breeding data received, but 84 2cy birds were noted on June 4th.

Common Gull At Ouse Fen and Paxton Pits, 1–2 birds during the period also an adult noted over Peterborough town centre on May 20th was noteworthy.

Lesser Black backed Gull Breeding noted at 3 sites and a regular gathering of up to 300 birds noted at Ouse Fen during June.

Herring Gull Two large young noted at 1 site by the end of June. Breeding was suspected at another site in the north of the county.

Yellow-legged Gull Late May/June saw the usual influx of birds into the county especially at Paxton pits where up to 25 birds could be found.

Greater Black-backed Gull Another scarce gull during the period, 1–5 regular at Ouse Fen and Paxton Pits but as with other larids no counts received from any of the county landfill sites.

Kittiwake A single adult was at Paxton Pits on May 21st.

Sandwich Tern Two birds briefly at Ouse Fen on May 7th.

Roseate Tern On June 3rd, a single bird frequented the Tern/Gull colony at Paxton Pits until 6.30 pm, when it promptly headed off high to the south, an outstanding record of an extremely rare inland bird! (see p8).

Common Tern Reported from 18 sites with large numbers present at Paxton Pits (110; 133), no breeding data was received from any site!

Arctic Tern The strong passage noted at the end of April carried on into early May, notable the 1st with birds present at Barleycraft GP (3), Ely (2) and Paxton Pits (15). A first-summer bird was reported from Paxton Pits on May 28th.

Little Tern Two birds were noted at Paxton Pits on May 11th and a single was at Ferry Meadows on June 7th.

Black Tern Records received from 8 sites up to May 16th with a high of 17 at Paxton Pits on the 12th. In June noted at Paxton Pits 6 on the 4th and 1 on the 10th, Grafham Water 7 on the 6th with singles at Fen Drayton on the 9th and Orton BP on 10th–11th.

NEAR PASSERINES

Feral Pigeon Birds noted at Cambridge (Elizabeth Way) (55), Lower Farcet Fen (86) and Wisbech (120+).

Stock Pigeon Eight pairs were noted to be breeding in Priory Park St Neots.

Wood Pigeon A large flock at Blackbush swelled to 1120 by May 8th and 17 pairs were noted to be breeding in priory Park St Neots.

Collared Dove Twenty-three were noted feeding in a garden at Farcet Fen on May 5th.

Turtle dove Records received from 40 widespread sites, but the density of pairs continues to be low.

Common Cuckoo Reported from 26 sites including 5 at Isleham and Wicken Fen.

Barn Owl Thirty-one records received from 24 sites, many confirming breeding.

Little Owl Twenty-seven records received from 22 sites many not confirming breeding.

Tawny Owl Only reported from 12 sites.

Long-eared Owl In the north of the county, 1 observer noted possibly up to 7 pairs.

Short-eared Owl. Intriguing records of singles at Paxton Pits on May 1st–3rd and Alconbury Airfield on May 24th.

Common Swift Sixty-two records received, many reporting breeding or possible breeding numbers; with so much good information perhaps it would be good if we all added our local birds to this data? Unfavourable feeding conditions concentrated feeding birds over water at the end of May, examples being 300+ at Grafham Water/ Paxton Pits and 200+ at Kingfishers Bridge.

Kingfisher Only 16 records received!

Hoopoe The second bird of the spring was noted in a garden at Saxon Street on May 12th.

Eurasian Wryneck Another garden bird this time at Dry Drayton on May 5th.

Green Woodpecker Reported from 18 sites including breeding at 3 sites around the village of Over.

Greater Spotted Woodpecker Seventeen records from 17 sites also including breeding at 3 sites around the village of Over.

Lesser-Spotted Woodpecker Reported from The Gloucesters and Paxton Pits; also in a Landbeach garden where it was the first record for over a decade.

PASSERINES

Skylark Reported from 17 sites with maximum of 48 at Monks Hardwick and 44 at Cherry Hinton during June.

Sand Martin Reported from 18 sites. Maximum was 290 occupied nest holes at Paxton Pits on May 13th.

Barn Swallow Recorded from 20+ sites. Maximum count was 20 at Ouse Washes on May 2nd.

House Martin Recorded from 13 sites with a maximum of 92 at Paxton Pits on May 2nd.

Meadow Pipit Records were received from 17 sites with records concerning displaying/breeding pairs

Yellow Wagtail Noted throughout April and May at 16 sites with a maximum of 24 at Over Fen on May 5th. A male of the blue-headed subspecies *flava* was noted at Ouse Washes on May 2nd.

Grey Wagtail Reports were received from 11 sites; the majority of records concerned breeding pairs.

Pied Wagtail Counts received from 10 sites with a maximum of 10 at Grafham Water on May 3rd.

Nightingale Records were received from 12 sites. The maximum as would be expected was at Paxton Pits with up to 27 singing males by mid June.

Black Redstart The only record during the period concerned a singing male (location withheld).

Common Redstart Two females were noted during the period. The first was at Two Barns Farm and the second the same day at Blackbush.

Whinchat Three records received, all in May.

Individuals were recorded at Serpentine on 2nd and at Nene Washes and Ouse Fen on 4th.

Stonechat Singles noted from Wicken Fen during May and June. These are the only reports of this species in the period.

Northern Wheatear Following on from the large movement in April, many more birds were noted as they headed north. Noted from Blackbush Drove, Cambourne, Fen Drayton, Ferry Meadows, Grafham Water, March Farmers, Ouse Fen and Westfield Farm (Comberton)

Blackbird Records were received from 13 sites with maximum of 30 territories identified at Priory Park (St.Neots) during June.

Song Thrush Records were received from 12 sites with 1–3 individuals being the norm at most sites. At least 12 breeding territories were confirmed from Priory Park) St.Neots.

Mistle Thrush Reports were received from 8 sites with 1–2 being the norm; 11 were noted at Blackbush on Jun 5th.

Cetti's Warbler Reported from 3 sites, with maximum of 6–7 birds at Wicken Fen on May 16th. A report of 1 at Paxton Pits in May may have involved mistaken identity.

Common Grasshopper Warbler Noted at Castor Hanglands (maximum 10), Ely, Grafham Water, Paxton Pits and Wicken Fen (5+).

Sedge Warbler At 13 sites, Fen Drayton GP held 21 singing males in May, whilst 9 birds were noted at East Fen (Isleham).

Eurasian Reed Warbler Reported from 14 sites, including 66 singing males at Fen Drayton GP – double last year's May count, 20 at Ramsey Mere, 17 at East Fen (Isleham) and 12 at Landbeach GP.

Lesser Whitethroat The peak count at Paxton Pits was 8 on May 7th. Also reported from a further 23 sites, numbers ranging from 1–4.

Common Whitethroat Wide-ranging numbers, from many sites. Of the higher counts, Fen Drayton GP supported 23 singing males (May 14th), 12+ were noted at Landbeach, and 20+ pairs were established around Over and Over Fen (Ouse Fen).

Garden Warbler From 8 sites, the highest count was 14 singing males at Fen Drayton GP – more than last year.

Blackcap Noted at 19 sites, East Fen (Isleham) was just pipped at the post by Fen Drayton GP for the maximum day count.

Common Chiffchaff Reported from 15 sites, counts ranged from 1–4.

Willow Warbler Twenty singing males at Fen Drayton GP on May 14th was double the 2005 count in the same period. The next highest count

reported was 11+ males at Landbeach.

Goldcrest Low numbers reported from Landbeach, Lode, Paxton Pits and The Gloucesters (Wimpole).

Firecrest One was first noted in a Landbeach garden on May 13th. A second sighting, perhaps the same bird, was made on June 2nd. On both occasions the bird was a singing male. One was noted at the Gloucesters (Wimpole) on May 1st.

Spotted Flycatcher From 27 sites, breeding was noted at many of these, with a maximum of 2 breeding pairs found at RAF Brampton (one fewer than last year).

Bearded Tit Reported from a single site (Ely BF); 1–5 birds were recorded there on various dates.

Long-tailed Tit From 7 sites, a party of 32 at Needingworth was highest count made.

Marsh Tit Reported from Buff Wood, Paxton Pits, The Gloucesters (Wimpole), and Waresley and Gransden Woods, and only in May.

Coal Tit From 5 sites, with breeding pairs confirmed at 2 of these.

Blue Tit Notable numbers included 27 breeding pairs at Priory Park (St Neots).

Great Tit Reports were received from 8 sites, with Priory Park (St Neots) supporting 25 breeding pairs.

Wood Nuthatch Single birds were recorded from Waresley and Gransden Woods on May 24th, Hayley Wood on May 28th and Priory Park (St Neots) on June 15th and 27th.

Eurasian Treecreeper Records were received from just 5 sites. A count of 5 at the Gloucesters on May 7th and 2 pairs at Paxton Pits on May 14th are notable.

Eurasian Golden Oriole A male was seen flying north over Paxton Pits by 3 lucky birders on June 3rd. A second record from the conservation area at Paxton Pits on June 14th is unconfirmed. A bird was heard singing on the Suffolk side of the river at Isleham Water meadow on June 7th

Woodchat Shrike A report of a bird at Crown Lakes CP (Farcet) on June 7th would be an excellent county record if confirmed.

Eurasian Jay Records came from 9 sites, with 5 at Paxton Pits on May 2nd, and 4+ at both Elm and Wisbech during May being the high counts.

Black-billed Magpie Records of 10 at Blackbush on May 8th and 10+ at Elm during May were the highest counts.

Eurasian Jackdaw Records received from just 5 sites, with 15+ at Elm in May the highest count.

Rook Records received from only 5 sites. A count of 94 at Park House Farm, Farcet Fen on May 12th and 40+ at Elm in May were the high counts, but a poor showing compared to recent years for the same period.

Carrion Crow A record of 115 in trees at Wicken Fen on May 16th was notable.

Common Raven Two birds were reported from Paxton Pits on May 7th, with another there (flying south to Hayling then east) on June 17th. A report of a 'possible' at Great Chishill on June 13th rounds

off an intriguing set of records.

Common Starling A pre-roost gathering of 800 at the science park in Cambridge during June is the only report of more than 50.

House Sparrow Maximum counts of 45+ at Elm in May, 46 at Crowtree, Farcet Fen on May 5th and 32 at Farcet on May 5th are noteworthy.

Tree Sparrow Recorded only from Elm (with a single bird in May) and Crowtree, Farcet Fen where the maximum count was 21 on May 5th (and where 13 young fledged).

Chaffinch A count of 22 at The Gloucesters (Wimpole) on May 3rd was the highest count.

European Greenfinch The maximum count was of 25+ at Elm throughout May.

European Goldfinch The maximum count was just 10+ birds at Elm throughout May.

Eurasian Siskin A single bird at Paxton Pits on May 7th was a good record – late but not unprecedented.

Common Linnet A record of 44 at Over Fen GP on June 4th and 16 at Westfield Farm (Comberton) on May 3rd were the only ones in double figures.

Common Crossbill Twelve were seen at Woodston (Peterborough) on May 19th.

Common Bullfinch Reported from 12 sites, with a maximum count of 5+ birds at Elm in May.

Yellowhammer Recorded at over 20 sites. Highest counts were of 13 birds at Monks Hardwick on June 25th, and 10–12 at Lark Rise Farm (Barton) during June.

Reed Bunting Recorded at 15 sites; 20 birds at Fen Drayton GP on June 10th, and 10 at Lark Rise Farm (Barton) on June 14th were the highest counts.

Corn Bunting Records were received from 20+ sites. Maximum counts were from Blackbush Drove with 16–17 on May and 31 birds (23 singing males) on June 5th.

HYBRIDS

Canada x Greylag Up to 4 noted at Paxton Pits.

Gadwall x Mallard A male was noted at Ouse Washes on Mar 4th.

Tufted duck x Pochard Noted at Grafham Water on Mar 7–12th and Paxton Pits 12–24th.

EXOTICA

Black Swan 1–3 noted at Paxton Pits throughout and confirmed breeding in Cambridge.

Lesser Canada Goose Again noted at Kingfishers Bridge to May 11th at least.

Wood Duck A drake on the R. Cam Cambridge was still present into May.

Argentine Bluebill An example of local wildfowl movements came from a drake bird noted at Ouse Fen on May 9th–14th, then Kingfishers Bridge on May 16th and finally Ely BF on May 25th.

Contributors: Colin Addington, Paul Atkinson, Louise Bacon, Rowena Baxter, Robin Cox, Ian Delgado, Steve Dudley, Dr Mike Foley, John Harding, Kevin Harris, Jack Harrison, Mark Hawkes, Fred Heath, Peter Herkenrath, Julian Hughes, Bob Humphrey, Marcus Kohler, John Le Gassick, Vince Lea, Tony Mallyon, Owen & Monica Marks, Bruce & Gwen Martin, Mark Missin, Dick Newell, John Oates, Rob Palmer, Rob Partridge, Nick Richardson, Tony Roberts, Bob & Ann Scott, Bill Simmonds, Clive Sinclair, Joe Taylor, Richard Thomas, Roger Tozer, P. M. Warrington, Lionel Webb, David White, Christoph Zöckler; Birdline East Anglia, Cambridgeshire Bird Club website.

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.

From the Bulletin Editor: a note explaining the names to be used for the Needingworth/Ouse Fen/Over Fen area will appear in the next bulletin. I apologise for any confusion between the different names at present.

Bulletin bird 1: Broad-billed Sandpiper at Over Fen

Richard Thomas

There can be few more exciting moments in birding than finding a rarity on your local patch, when all those birdless hours of hard work are finally rewarded.

Friday 19th May 2006 dawned cool and overcast. As usual, I headed to Over Fen for a quick look before work. Wader passage this spring had already been excellent at Over, with records of Temminck's Stint and Curlew Sandpiper, and the previous evening I had seen five Turnstones and a Sanderling. Despite this, I wasn't hopeful; although there had been overnight rain, the wind was blustery and from the south-west – hardly the conditions for continental drift migrants.

At 07.20 I drew up alongside the first main pool and raised my telescope. In view was a small, dark-backed wader facing away from me, with gleaming white underparts...not a Dunlin, so what was it? A summer-plumaged Sanderling? The bird turned, I saw its head and my heart missed a beat; there was no mistaking the split double supercilium of a Broad-billed Sandpiper. I hit the phone – first my wife, Sarah, who seemed too sleepy to take the news in, next John Oates, who was pumping iron in the gym but later told me my voicemail sounded several octaves above normal. And so the list went on: Bruce Martin (whose first reaction was to have a cup of tea), Mark Hawkes, Jim Lawrence – whoever's name I could find whilst simultaneously trying to phone, digiscope and keep an eye on the bird.

As I waited for birders to arrive, the magnitude of the find suddenly struck me; there was probably more chance of a Finnish Monster Rock band winning Eurovision than a Broad-billed at Over! The bird had walked out of view behind a grass clump and I admit I started to panic. I had ruled everything else out, hadn't I? That head pattern couldn't have been a Jack Snipe could it? The bird walked into view again: dark bill and legs, pale mantle stripes against dark brown, not rufescent upperparts. There was no doubt – it was a Broad-billed, and not just any old Broad-billed; this one was in cracking summer plumage!

Chris Martin arrived first. I got him onto the bird then moved my car away from the anticipated traffic chaos. Others began to arrive – Peter Moule by bicycle, Richard Allison, Bruce and Gwen (after tea of course). Broad-billed Sandpiper was soon finding its way onto more and more Cambridgeshire lists, and more and more pints were accumulating in my 'beers owed' fund (many of them from folk still to clear their October 2004 Shore Lark debt, I might add).

The news was put out on national pagers and during the course of the day more than 100 people must have visited the Fen. Fortunately, the Broad-billed Sandpiper was almost always on view, and later it joined up with a flock of around 20 Dunlins. It was viewable from a public right of way and as requested, people parked and behaved sensibly. A few days later I saw the Hanson site manager who had been rather bemused by the whole incident, but had no complaints whatsoever about the number of visitors on site. (I'm not sure how he'll react when I find a White-tailed Plover though!).

Broad-billed Sandpiper is generally a scarce and uncommon species that breeds from northern Scandinavia patchily across to eastern Siberia, with birds wintering in East Africa, coastal South and

South-East Asia as far south as Australia. It is very distinctive in summer plumage, being smaller than a Dunlin and generally dark brown above and white below with a prominent 'split' supercilium (actually formed by a pale lateral crown stripe joining the supercilium in front of the eye), pale mantle lines, rather short legs and a relatively long bill with a characteristic drooped-tip. Autumn birds are far less distinctive, being generally pale grey and are easily overlooked for a small Dunlin.

Broad-billed Sandpiper is a national rarity in the UK. Almost annual in occurrence, it averages 4–5 records a year, most in mid-late May and again in early autumn. There are very few inland records and only one accepted record from Cambridgeshire: a bird at Nene Park, Peterborough, on 17th May and again on 20th May 1986. The Over Fen bird was the first to be twitchable in the County, although sadly for only one day; several observers left the site disappointed next morning.

Bulletin bird 2: Roseate Tern at Paxton Pits

Mark Hawkes

Saturday June 3rd 2006 dawned a beautiful sunny day. Around 11.30am, I was just leaving home when I received a phone call from John Clark. He was passing on news from John Parslow, who had just found a Roseate Tern at Paxton Pits. Within 10 minutes I arrived on-site, and joined Martin Davis in a search of the terns and gulls on the islands. I soon located the bird standing on its own, and then both MD and myself started to phone the news to local birders. The bird, a stunning adult, performed superbly, usually just loafing on the shoreline with other terns. It also showed well in flight. It was present until at least 6.30pm, by which time it had become more active and had moved to another pit. It also became rather vocal during the early evening, and was last seen to fly off south.

Description:

Size and shape: Similar in most respects to the Common Terns present alongside, although it was slightly smaller and notably longer tailed, with the streamers extending well beyond the closed primaries. It also appeared to have a slightly decurved bill, and the legs were slightly longer than those of a Common Tern. In flight, the wings were shorter than Common Tern, and perhaps slightly narrower, which gave it a compact appearance in flight, with quicker wing beats.

Plumage: Notably cleaner white looking than a Common Tern in all respects. When perched, the underparts were bright white, and the upperparts a pale whitish-grey, making the Common Terns look somewhat dull grey in comparison. This gave the impression of a tiny Sandwich Tern. The closed primary pattern was notable too. The outer 2–3 primaries (lowest on closed wing) were notably dark grey on their outer webs, whilst the inner primaries were clean white – this was also evident in flight, where it showed a slight dark wedge on the upperside of the outer wing. The underwing was very clean white, with no obvious dark trailing edge to the primaries unlike Arctic or Common Terns. The head was black-hooded like a Common Tern, although the lower edge of the cap was probably straighter. It didn't show the pink flush often seen on this species in the breeding season.

Bare Parts: The bill was long and slender, with a hint of being decurved. It was black throughout, except for a small amount of dark red at the base. The legs were a very bright orange colour, unlike the darker red colour of most of the Common Terns. Eye not noted.

Calls: Heard overhead by several observers, and noted to be very distinctive, having a quality somewhere between Common and Sandwich Tern. A disyllabic "chivick" or "chevick", with the emphasis on the first part.

Unfortunately, this bird was found on one of the private and working areas of the Paxton Pits complex, and permission could only be obtained for a small number of local birders to witness this beautiful bird. Despite searching, there was no sign the following morning.

PREVIOUS COUNTY RECORDS:

- Stibbington 9th July 1963
- Grafham Water 6th-8th July 1976
- Grafham Water 26th July 1977
- Ouse Washes 11th May 1981
- North Bank 23rd Aug 1984

No-doubts have been raised about any of the previous county records, but none have ever been documented with a description. Roseate Tern remains a very rare straggler to any inland site, and with a much declined world population, is likely to remain so. This bird, which was photographed, becomes the first documented county record.

Changed Times

Mike Everett

After 26 years of spring sky-watching, in May this year I finally added Honey Buzzard to my house-and-garden list and brought the tally up to 140 species. New birds on the scoreboard have become very rare nowadays, although 2005 was a good year, with the addition of a long-anticipated Red Kite and a wonderful May flypast by three dozen noisy Arctic Terns.

I began the list in 1980 when we moved to a 1950s bungalow right on the southern edge of Hemingford Grey. There were Tree Sparrows in the garden then, Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers came regularly and the local Yellow Wags sometimes visited the lawn. Corn Buntings sang from the wires bordering the nearby arable. Marsh Lane pits are not far away and the Little Ringed Plovers, which still bred there in those days, occasionally wandered our way in song-flight.

Apart from an old apple tree, almost the sole survivor of the orchard that was once here, the garden itself was unexceptional. I soon planted a Silver Birch sapling, then a couple of Rowans (all now big, mature trees), and, in due course, assorted shrubs. Over the years my little patch has attracted or been home to many of the species you would expect in the more modern reaches of a Cambridgeshire village, although the breeding list is very thin at just four species. Migrant visitors have included both Reed and Sedge Warblers, and Redstart twice.

Immediately behind the garden lay a small meadow, cut for hay in the early years, bordered on two sides by a fine old hedgerow with a few Oaks. In winter, it was possible to see the fields beyond, with their Grey and Red-legged Partridges, Lapwings and Golden Plovers. A bramble patch in the meadow grew and grew: Sedge Warblers nested in it and, for two wonderful summers, Grasshopper Warblers. The whole area was great for migrants in season, including Tree Pipit, Ring Ouzel, Whinchat and Redstart.

Working on my garage roof one winter's day, I found that, with the leaves gone from the trees, I could just see the extreme south-west corner of the southernmost pit at Marsh Lane. A climb up into the old apple tree gave a slightly better view, although lugging the 'scope up with me was not easy! For a bit of fun, I deliberately climbed up to get three local rarities on the list – Great Northern and Black-throated Divers and Velvet Scoter – cheating, you might say, but who cares? Looking over the list as it stands now, I find that the only other wetland bird added like this is Little Grebe: all the rest have flown over at some time or other.

Sitting as we do under the Grafham gull roost route, and more importantly close to various pit complexes on what I think of as the Ouse Valley Flyway, I have done well for "fly-over" birds down the years. Virtually all the local wildfowl have appeared at one time or another, including occasional Egyptian Geese, the family of five Whitefronts which spent a few winter weeks locally some years ago and even a drake Garganey passing with a group of Mallard. Whimbrel and Greenshank have often flown over, but the best waders have been a Spotted Redshank and a little party of Knot. The real goodies have been Bittern, Little Egret (twice), Montagu's Harrier, Osprey (twice), a party of Sandwich Terns among the Grafham-bound gulls and Crossbills (twice).

There have been surprises – and amusing incidents. With none anywhere locally, how did a Nuthatch find its way onto the list? And how many people have heard a night-flying Quail, calling continuously as it passed over? One of my three Woodcock records involved a bird which flew past the front garden and went straight into my neighbour's open garage, where I picked it up, unhurt, from his workbench – what a super bird in the hand! Then there was the first Osprey, one Easter Sunday. As it suddenly came into view, chased by the local Carrion Crows, I put down the hot cross bun I was eating and grabbed my bins – as I watched the Osprey, my mother's dog ate the bun.

It's a great story so far – but it doesn't end there. Two things have happened which have greatly altered things. First, there is that general decline in so many species we all know about. Our Tree Sparrows and Corn Buntings are long gone, as are the local Lesser Spots. Nowadays Yellow Wags are only very occasional autumn passers-by. Lesser Redpolls no longer feed in my birch, or drink at my little pond. For reasons I cannot fathom, the Tawny Owls at our end of the village have vanished too.

What is worse is that, after a long, hard fight by all of us here, developers succeeded in destroying the meadow and most of the old hedgerow as they built a load of new houses to the south of our once-quiet road. Gone are the Turtle Doves that crooned on the summer evenings, and all the hedgerow warblers – and I no longer have that great open view to the south. My general “sky view” is greatly reduced too. I really miss the cock Pheasants that used to feed under the bird-table.

It's not all doom and gloom, of course. Sparrowhawks are commonplace now, and it's a bad day if I don't see at least one from the house. Hobby sightings have increased over the years, and it's wonderful to see Buzzards so frequently. Green Woodpeckers are far more common here than they once were – and appear regularly on the lawn.

I don't mind that other newcomer here, the Magpie, and over the last year or so have enjoyed the sudden appearance of a few Jackdaws. At night, when the wind is right and the A14 traffic noise is not too bad, I can hear the nearest Marsh Lane Nightingale, which gives me a great deal of pleasure.

I continue to enjoy this “home birding”, which is really about much more than just keeping a list. Even so, I wonder what the next new bird will be? It's high time a Marsh Harrier turned up – or perhaps, now that they winter regularly just down the road, a Smew or two will fly over.



NEW BTO REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Cambridgeshire has a new BTO Regional Representative, Tony Fulford (email: Tony.Fulford@lshtm.ac.uk) . For the time being I will remain the link between the CBC and the BTO until Tony has settled into the post. I would like to thank all of the members who made my six years as RR so enjoyable and also for all the help they gave me.

John Le Gassick

CAMBRIDGESHIRE BIRD CLUB VACANCIES

County Recorder

As John Oates will be leaving the county in a few months time, we are looking for a new County Recorder. The ideal person for this post will be a competent birder, and be computer literate, have data management skills and be well organised. If you are interested in this post and would like to know more please contact the club Chairman Dick Newell (contact details on back page) who will be happy to discuss the post with you and supply more details.

Recent report writers

New contributors are to write-up some parts of the Recent Reports section of the bulletin. Contributors receive the spreadsheet containing records for a two-month period and extract the relevant records for their section. Writers are needed for Skuas to Terns, near passerines (Pigeons to Woodpecker) and Wood Nuthatch to Buntings.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE BIRD CLUB

Indoor meetings

Our recent membership survey (as reported on briefly in the last bulletin) showed that identification is the most popular subject for talks. Don Taylor's talk at our October meeting should provide plenty of useful information for those who wish to improve their wader identification. At the time of writing I am looking for a speaker on raptor ID for the 2007 programme. When the subject is appropriate, I will ask other speakers to include tips on identification in their talks.

Workshops

Following last winter's series of successful workshops on gulls, we hope to arrange workshops on digiscoping/digital photography and wader identification. Anyone who might be interested in attending workshop on either or both of these workshops should contact me. Once we know how many people are interested we will arrange some events; these will be announced in the bulletin and/or club website or by contacting you directly, whichever is most appropriate.

Vicki Harley (contact details on back page)

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS 2006

Doors open at 7.30pm for an 8.00pm start.

Friday September 8th Milton Country Park Visitor's Centre

Black Grouse – Bubbling on the Moor by Julian Hughes

Since first seeing a Black Grouse lek in north Wales as a teenager, Julian Hughes has been fascinated by these amazing birds. Now head of the RSPB's species conservation team, he will tell us about the research and recovery work for Black Grouse underway in the uplands, especially in Wales, where numbers are now increasing after decades of decline.

Friday October 13th Milton Country Park Visitor's Centre

The Fascinating Challenge of Wader Identification by Don Taylor

This illustrated talk will be based on the recently published *Waders of Europe, Asia and North America*, written by the speaker and illustrated by Stephen Message. The importance of ageing and moult in identifying waders will be explained and topics such as plumage variations and behaviour will be covered. Don Taylor is the President of the Kent Ornithological Society. He has developed a keen interest in seeing all the waders of the world. He has travelled extensively with Tony Prater and David Rosair, with this ambition in mind, and was with them when David Rosair completed his list by seeing a Bukidnon Woodcock roding in Mindanao

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

We welcome the following new members, Aaron Grainger of Cherry Hinton, Simon Hill of Linton, David Norman of Ely, Sue Rogers of Swavesey and Kevin Webb of Fordham.

Bruce Martin

Cambridgeshire Bird Club photographic competition

The Bird Club holds a monthly photographic competition. Please visit the Club's website to view a selection of excellent photographs taken by county birders and to learn how to vote for the winning photograph each month.

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. If anyone has asked to receive the bulletin this way but is still getting the print version, please let me know: 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 September 7th

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

Next Bulletin due out October 2006, covering July–August 2006

GOOD BIRDING!