

CAMBRIDGESHIRE BIRD CLUB

Bulletin No. 393



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

RECENT REPORTS JULY AND AUGUST 2007

These are unchecked reports rather than confirmed records; comments are made by Bruce Martin (Wildfowl, Divers to Herons), Vincent Lea (Gamebirds, Raptors, Rails), Jonathan Taylor (Waders), John Harding (Gulls and Terns), Jon Pavey (Pigeons to Woodpeckers), Jono Leadley (Larks to Thrushes), Mike Foley (Warblers to Tits), and David Heath (Wood Nuthatch to Buntings) and Vicki Harley (Hybrids and Exotica). If you have valid reasons to dispute comments (e.g. further records) please forward these to the county recorder (contact details on back page).

The Atlas begins...

Banded Demoiselle by Andrew Mackay©

Work on the BTO Bird Atlas commences in November.

A meeting to introduce the Atlas will be held on October 24th.

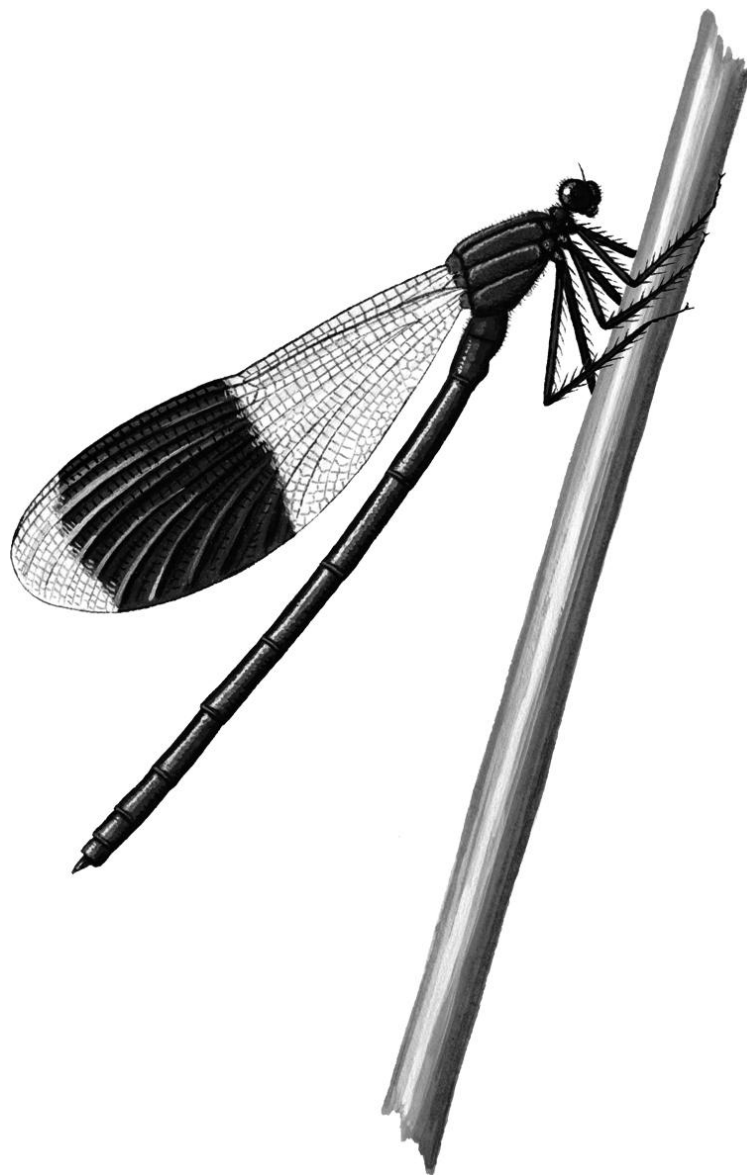
See p 10 for full details.

CBC Announce

If you have asked to be subscribed to the Club's email list for announcements about club events, please contact me. I lost the list of names when my computer failed recently.

Roger Clarke – Memorial Appeal

You still have the chance to donate to the Club's project to commemorate former Club Chairman Roger Clarke – see p12.



Numbers in brackets indicate July and August maximums.

WILDFOWL

Mute Swan At the Cam Washes Upware (33; 45), Fen Drayton GP (127; 132), Grafham Water (147; 171), Needingworth GP (14; 14), Ouse Fen (120; 119) and Paxton Pits (77; 76). Also noted at 9 other sites.

Pink-footed Goose A single bird was seen at Grafham Water occasionally throughout July.

Greylag Goose At Fen Drayton GP (379; 339) and Needingworth GP (192; 11) Ouse Fen (120; 11). Also reported at 6 other sites where notable counts were the Cam Washes Upware (115) and Kingfishers Bridge (125).

Canada Goose At Fen Drayton GP (148; 135) and Needingworth GP (118; 81). Also reported at 7 other sites including a notable count (290) was at Kingfishers Bridge.

Barnacle Goose Singles were present at Fen Drayton GP, Grafham Water and Paxton Pits during the period.

Egyptian Goose Two were present at Long Drove Cottenham on Jul 30th and 2 on the Ouse Washes at Earith on Aug 20th to the month's end.

Ruddy Shelduck Six birds were present at Paxton Pits on Aug 11th. These could possibly have been the same birds seen at Minsmere on the previous day.

Common Shelduck At the Grafham Water lagoons 25 + young were seen on Jul 1st, and at Cam Washes Upware 1 adult and 10 immature birds were seen on Jul 9th. Single counts were noted at 5 other sites.

Mandarin Up to 6 birds were at Bolton's Pit Cambridge during the period and 1 bird at Grafham Water on Jul 29th.

Eurasian Wigeon Single figures were seen at 7 sites and 11 birds at Buckden Pits (on Aug 30th) during the period.

Gadwall At Fen Drayton GP (9; 21). At Grafham Water 104 on Jul 7th which included a brood of 7 young. Four broods were noted at Buckden GP and 64 birds were on the Cam Washes on Aug 30th.

Eurasian Teal Numbers began to increase with c200 on the Ouse Washes by Aug 27th.

Green-winged Teal An eclipse male was present on the lagoons at Grafham Water on Jul 22nd until at least the 25th. As the bird was moulting it is possible that it remained in the area for longer but it spent a lot of time hiding in the reeds.

Mallard At Fen Drayton GP (132; 284), Needingworth GP (61; 103), Ouse Fen (46; 150). Three figure counts were also noted at Fidwell Fen (130), Holt Fen (114) and Kingfishers Bridge (130). Broods were reported from 5 sites.

Garganey Two birds were at the Ouse Washes on Aug 7th and 8th, and single birds at 3 other sites.

Northern Shoveler Double figure were at the Cam Washes Upware (22), Fen Drayton GP (46), Holt Fen (29) and Ouse Fen (19). Single figures were recorded at 4 other sites.

Red-crested Pochard Three birds were at Fen Drayton GP on Aug 27th.

Common Pochard Numbers increased during the period as follows, Barleycroft GP (13; 47), Fen Drayton GP (13; 213) and Ouse Fen (32; 230).

Smaller numbers were noted at 7 other sites.

Tufted Duck As with the previous species numbers began to increase during the period. Barleycroft GP (12; 45), Fen Drayton GP (128; 512), Grafham Water (108; 461), Needingworth GP (116; 112) and Ouse Fen (16; 30). Single figure counts came from 7 other sites. Only reported breeding at 3 sites.

Common Scoter A male was at Grafham Water on Jul 3rd, then 3 males on Aug 11th and another male on Aug 22nd and 24th.

Goldeneye A male was still at Buckden GP until July 1st.

Ruddy Duck Single figures reported from 3 sites.

GAMEBIRDS

Red-legged Partridge Twenty-two broods counted in the Farcet Fen / Blackbush area in July; 19 seen at Comberton included 14 juvs.

Grey Partridge Thirteen territories reported in and around the Farcet fen area in July. Reported from 5 other areas, generally in small numbers.

Common Pheasant Only reported from two localities!

DIVERS TO HERONS

Little Grebe Maximum counts of 10 at Needingworth GP and Kingfishers Bridge and single figures were noted at 10 other sites. Breeding was reported at 7 sites.

Great Crested Grebe At Fen Drayton GP (60; 58) and Needingworth GP (19; 17). Breeding was noted at 8 sites.

Manx Shearwater A bird was at Grafham Water on Jul 11th.

Great Cormorant At Fen Drayton GP (31; 27). Double-figure counts also at the Ouse Washes (22), Kingfishers Bridge (16) and Ouse Fen (15).

Great Bittern Breeding was confirmed for the first time in the county since the late 1930s. It was at Kingfishers Bridge and here is a brief summary from James Cadbury of the unfolding events: "Many flights recorded as a result of concerted effort by Simon Wootton (RSPB) and others. Male continued to boom into July having started in February (a prolonged period). Three females present early July and all assumed to have nested; one nest failed early, two still active at end of month, with young. A fledged young observed early August, and a female feeding young probably away from nest on 17 August." More information is on the RSPB website under 'News'. Single birds were reported at Fen Drayton GP on Jul 14th & 24th, the Ouse Washes on Jul 26th and flying east over the St Ives bridge on Aug 2nd.

Squacco Heron A bird was seen on the Ouse Washes at Earith on Aug 11th and then flew towards Earith GP where over the next 9 days it delighted many birders from around Britain. At times it disappeared into the many hidden areas of

the complex but, for those with patience, gave splendid views especially when in amongst the pink water lilies. It was last seen on Aug 20th. According to the local fishermen it may have been in the area for sometime before being 'discovered' by two fortunate birders.

Little Egret Numbers continue to increase in the county with a record count (?) of c50 along the Great Ouse from Brownhills Staunch to Earith (this included a group of 29 that were photographed). Although reported from 10 sites the vast majority were along the Ouse Valley/Ouse Washes area. Many young birds were seen so it is assumed that they bred successfully again.

Grey Heron At Fen Drayton GP (11; 13) and Needingworth GP (23; 12) and the Ouse Washes(18; 12). Also noted at 10 other sites.

RAPTORS

Honey Buzzard Two sightings: Jul 7th at St Neots and Aug 25th at Witcham.

Red Kite A reduced number of reports compared to recent times but evidence of breeding came from two separate localities. Two seen feeding near the Lincs border at Tydd St. Giles.

Eurasian Marsh Harrier Widely reported singles and small groups, mostly from the wetland and fen areas in the north of the county but also a family group at Fowlmere and a single at Great Chishill.

Hen Harrier Two early reports from Nene Washes (Eldernell), Aug 9th and 31st; perhaps the same bird.

Harrier sp. An intriguing record of a 'thin-winged' bird seen at dusk in Eltisley, Jul 5th.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk Five reports of breeding pairs and other observations of juvenile birds at four sites, regular pair at one site and a bird carrying prey at another suggest widespread breeding throughout the county.

Common Buzzard Widely reported in small numbers, including several juveniles. Highest count was of 6 at Swaffham Prior Aug 3rd.

Osprey Six reports of single birds, all in August. Four came from Grafham Water between 8th and 30th, the other two from Nene Washes on 16th and 31st.

Common Kestrel Nine broods reported, and another juv. away from these pairs. The average brood size of these pairs was only 2, rather lower than the 2006 average of 3.8 reported from the BTO nest record scheme, which has shown a declining trend since the early 1990s when brood size averaged 4. Some of the records were of families recently fledged rather than actual nest counts so the average of 2 may be an underestimate.

Eurasian Hobby Sixty-five records make this the most widely reported raptor again, but many records are from a restricted number of sites, presumably breeding areas. Present in over 25 areas, but breeding confirmed from just 2 sites. One reported hunting Noctule bats at Kingfishers Bridge. No large counts.

Peregrine Falcon Last report from the Peterborough breeding site was a juvenile on Jul 8th. Other records came from Paxton Pits (2 on Jul 22th), and several singleton sightings from Grafham, Farcet Fen and the Ouse Washes/Fen areas in August.

RAILS

Water Rail Reported from Ouse Washes, Kingfishers Bridge, Grafham Water and Fowlmere, with juveniles seen at the latter two sites.

Common Moorhen Reported from 12 areas, mainly breeding records. Highest WeBS count came from Fen Drayton with just 29 on Aug 12th.

Common Coot July and August WeBS counts came from Barleycroft (43; 68); Fen Drayton (248; 353); Needingworth (76; 151); Ouse Fen, phase 1 (80; 110), phase 2 (75; 160); Landbeach (44; 53), all showing a steady increase presumably as juveniles and local movements swell numbers. High numbers also reported from Kingfishers Bridge – max. 245.

Common Crane One probable seen in flight, at 08.25 on Aug 13th; observer in a car on the A603 at Orwell.

WADERS

Eurasian Oystercatcher Present in the county to Aug 8th with highest counts from Fidwell Fen (9; 10), Paxton Pits 8, Ouse Fen 6, Ouse Washes 4 and Fen Drayton 4. A lone straggler over St Neots on Aug 22nd.

Stone Curlew One heard over Little Abington on Aug 12th.

Little Plover Highest counts from Maxey GP, Paxton Pits and Grafham Water – all with 4.

Ringed Plover Highest counts Ouse Washes up to 27 in August, Paxton Pits (21; 7) and 1–4 at or flying over a further 4 sites.

European Golden Plover Early gatherings at Farcet Fen with 36+ in late August and Wicken Fen 35 on Aug 13th.

Grey Plover One at Maxey GP on Aug 22nd.

White-tailed Lapwing Reported flying across the road between Swaffham Prior and Swaffham Bulbeck on July 5th would be a county first and blocker of the century if accepted!

Northern Lapwing Highest counts from Ouse Washes (1500; 1000), Paxton Pits 1291; Smithy Fen 600, Fidwell Fen 500, Ouse Fen 500, Cam Washes 400.

Red Knot Singles at Paxton Pits on July 17th and 29th–31st, Grafham Water on 21st and 3 at Cam Washes on Aug 18–19th.

Sanderling Earliest at Grafham Water on July 13th then on 21st–22nd, 3 on 24th, 3 on Aug 3rd and 1 on 6th, 5 at Paxton Pits on July 22nd and 3 next day and 1 at Maxey GP on July 24th followed on from the good spring passage.

Little Stint 1–5 at Ouse Washes (Earith section) from Aug 6th to 27th.

Curlew Sandpiper Three at Paxton Pits on July 22nd. At Ouse Washes (Sutton Gault area) singles

on July 29th and Aug 6th and 1–3 from 26th to 28th.

Dunlin Highest counts from Paxton Pits of 37 on July 29th, Ouse Washes (6; 33) and 1–4 from a further 6 sites.

Ruff Highest counts from Ouse Washes of 29 on Aug 24th (daily through August) and 1–7 from a further 6 sites.

Common Snipe Good numbers in August with minimum of 120 at Ouse Washes (Sutton Gault), 40 at Fen Drayton, Ouse Fen 36, Fidwell Fen 8, Grafham Water 2, Farcet Fen 3 and Holt Fen 1.

Black-tailed Godwit Highest counts from Ouse Washes of 34 on July 3rd and up to 10 remained on Nene Washes to late July, elsewhere 1–9 from a further 8 sites.

Whimbrel Largest group was 23 flying southwest over Fen Drayton on Aug 27th. Earliest was over Kingfishers Bridge on July 6th, otherwise 1–7 over a further 10 sites.

Eurasian Curlew Largest group was 7 at Ouse Fen on Aug 25th, elsewhere 1–2 over another 6 sites.

Spotted Redshank Three at Paxton Pits on Aug 28th was the largest group. Earliest was at Fidwell Fen on July 25th and singles from a further 3 sites.

Common Redshank Highest counts from Ouse Washes with 40 on July 22nd then as usual scarce in the county from early August with 1–5 from 4 sites.

Common Greenshank Highest counts during August from Ouse Washes 15, Fidwell Fen 8, Holt Fen and Maxey GP 6, Cam Washes and Nene Washes 4 and Paxton Pits 3.

Green Sandpiper Highest counts from Maxey GP of (16; 18), Paxton Pits (9; 3), Wicken Fen (5; 7), Ouse Washes (2; 7), Ouse Fen (2; 7) and 1–3 from a further 9 sites.

Wood Sandpiper Earliest at Ouse Washes on July 4th, 2–3 at Maxey GP from July 22nd to Aug 5th, 3 at Ouse Washes on Aug 27th with singles on several dates and 1 at Cam Washes on Aug 19th.

Common Sandpiper Highest counts from Paxton Pits (6; 4), Grafham Water (9; 6), Fidwell Fen (0; 7), Ouse Washes (4; 3), Maxey GP (2; 4) and Holt Fen (3; 3).

Ruddy Turnstone Earliest from Grafham Water on July 14th where 1–2 recorded on 11 dates and 3 on Aug 16th, Paxton Pits on July 15th and 3 on 30th, Holt Fen on July 20th–21st, Maxey GP on July 22nd and 2 on 24th and one on Aug 22nd and Ouse Washes 2 on Aug 26th with 3 on 27th.

The following wader records were inadvertently omitted from the last bulletin.

Whimbrel Recorded between May 4th and 24th – largest groups were 8 over Paxton Pits on 17th, 5 Trumpington on 13th, 4 at Chain corner on 12th (feeding on arable field) and 1-2 from a further 3 sites.

Eurasian Curlew Recorded over Maxey GP on May 12th, 2 at Paxton Pits on May 22nd, Little Eversden on June 18th and Nene Washes on June 29th.

Spotted Redshank In May from Grafham Water and Ouse Washes on 1st, Nene Washes on 4 dates between 2nd and 11th and at Maxey GP on June 19th.

Common Redshank Breeding pairs at the Nene Washes approx. 170 (large numbers of young present in June), the Ouse Washes Pilot project attracted in a minimum of 7, Wicken Fen 'several pairs' plus 30 in mid-June indicating good productivity, Paxton Pits (up to 4 birds present – scarcer than last year), Buckden GP (4 birds), Long Drove (Cottenham) 1,

Common Greenshank Strong passage in early May with highest counts from Ouse Washes of 38 on 2nd, Nene Washes 14 on 1st and Wicken Fen 8 on 2nd and 1–4 from a further 6 sites up to May 29th. First returning birds were 2 at Ouse Washes on June 22nd and south over Farcet Fen on 24th.

Green Sandpiper Late birds from Ouse Washes: 2 on May 2nd and Paxton Pits on 4th. Return passage commenced on June 11th (Nene Washes) with highest counts from Maxey GP of 10 on June 22nd and 1–5 from a further 6 sites.

Wood Sandpiper In May 1–2 at Nene Washes from May 6th to 11th, singles at Ouse Washes on 2nd, Maxey GP on 5th and Paxton Pits on 20th. In June 1 at Maxey GP on 17th.

Common Sandpiper Recorded from May 5th to 25th with highest counts from Paxton Pits and Grafham Water (4) and Maxey GP 3 – all between 5th and 11th and 1–2 from a further 6 sites.

Ruddy Turnstone Recorded from May 7th to June 3rd. A remarkable count of 24 (county record is 25 from Duxford, Mar, 1978) at Paxton Pits on 14th with 1–7 on 12 dates, Over Fen 4 on 7th, Grafham Water 3 on 18th-19th with 1–2 on 7 dates, Nene Washes on 3 dates with latest on June 3rd and Fen Drayton on 14th.

Wilson's Phalarope A superb female at Grafham Water from May 4th to 9th, present in the lagoons area where it allowed great views and observations of its feeding behaviour – often in the tow of dabbling ducks. It was a great surprise when it turned up next day on the Nene Washes, present to 11th. This represents the county's sixth record.

SKUAS TO TERNS

Great Skua One on Aug 22nd at Grafham Water stayed until the following morning.

Mediterranean Gull Three were at Maxey GP on Aug 11th and two first-winters at Grafham on Aug 23rd; otherwise singles at Paxton (Jul 11th), Holt Fen (Jul 20th), Ouse Washes (Jul 20th), Maxey GP (Jul 29th) and Grafham (Aug 7th).

Little Gull Six sightings of single birds, 4 of which were juveniles, including records from Grafham on Aug 21st, 23rd, and 25th.

Black-headed Gull Highest numbers reported were from Fidwell Fen with a maximum of 1200 on Aug 6th. There were 760 birds at Holt Fen on Aug 12th. Sixty were at Needingworth GP on Jul 15th. Two leucistic birds were reported.

Common Gull The odd single bird reported, except for a count of 31 at Paxton on Jul 30th.

Lesser Black-backed Gull High counts were 44 rising to 120 at Fidwell Fen in the middle of August, and 145 at Westfield Farm, Comberton on Aug 25th. Over 500 birds were counted flying west over Fowlmere at sunset on Aug 26th.

Herring Gull Only reports were of 1–3 on 3 occasions, at Needingworth GP and Ouse Fen.

Yellow-legged Gull The majority of records were from Grafham throughout the period, with a maximum of at least 12 on Aug 3rd. Paxton had a peak July count of 44 on the 5th, and there were 10 on the Ouse Washes on Jul 20th.

Great Black-backed Gull Singles from Devil's Dyke, Grafham (twice) and Paxton, all in July.

Sandwich Tern A single was at Paxton on Aug 5th, there were 2 juveniles at Grafham on Aug 16th and an adult there on Aug 23rd.

Common Tern Fifty-seven separate reports were received from a very wide range of localities. Numbers at Fen Drayton reached a high of 18 on Jul 10th, although none were reported to have bred, as the island was flooded for the second time; numbers here fell away to single figures in August. Other double-figure counts included 120 at Paxton on Jul 23rd, a July peak, 22 at Grafham on Jul 24th, 25 at Maxey GP on Aug 2nd, and over 70 at Grafham on Aug 22nd; numbers at the Ouse Washes in August were between 14 and 26.

Arctic Tern 1–3 birds, mostly juveniles, regularly reported from Grafham in August; otherwise just a juvenile from the Cam Washes.

Little Tern Two were reported on Jul 31st, 1 at Fletton BP and the other at Paxton.

Black Tern Twenty-two reports were received, starting with a report of 8 early in the morning of Jul 21st in heavy rain. Grafham produced 14 further records, including several juveniles. Later in August, however, Fen Drayton took over as the premier site, with 6 reports including 8 on Aug 21st and 8 again on Aug 23rd. Other sites producing records were Paxton, Maxey GP, Holt Fen, and Ferry Meadows CP, all of singles except the last site, which saw 3 on Aug 30th.

White-winged Tern A juvenile was at Maxey GP on Aug 11th.

NEAR PASSERINES

Feral Pigeon None recorded!

Stock Pigeon Eleven counts: 17 pairs breed in the Farcet Fen area. No records from the eastern side of the county.

Wood Pigeon Forty-six at Comberton on Aug 29th; three other records in double figures.

Eurasian Collared Dove Up to 27 recorded at Farcet Fen. Two other records.

European Turtle Dove About 30 records, of 1–5 birds, generally in the fens; 9 birds at Grunty Fen on Jul 2nd.

Common Cuckoo Singles recorded on Jul 4th and Aug 7th.

Barn Owl 1–2 birds recorded from 17 locations. Seven records of breeding pairs.

Little Owl Fifteen records of 1–3 birds, predominantly in the area around Peterborough.

Tawny Owl Observed at 10 locations: generally 1–3 birds. Four territories noted around Kingfishers Bridge.

European Nightjar A 'possible' bird seen near Little Paxton on Jul 25th.

Common Swift An impressive 3000 recorded from Sutton Gault on Jul 4th. Next largest counts were of 65+ at both Farcet village and Melbourn. Two nestlings were still being fed on Aug 23rd in Melbourn.

Common Kingfisher Recorded at about 15 sites. Generally 1–3 birds; 6 recorded at Roswell Pits on Aug 11th.

Green Woodpecker 1–5 birds recorded from nearly 30 sites, well distributed across the county.

Great Spotted Woodpecker 1–2 birds recorded from 12 sites.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker One at Monk's Wood on Aug 28th.

PASSERINES

Skylark Reported from 7 sites in July, with no reports from August. No significant counts, with the highest number being 13 at Westfield Farm, Comberton on July 18th.

Sand Martin Reported from only 3 sites during July and 7 sites during August. Counts of note included 250 at Holt Fen on Aug 18th, 160 at the same site on Aug 23rd and 100 at Ouse Fen on Aug 12th.

Barn Swallow Reported from 3 sites in July and 9 sites in August. Notable counts were 500+ from Fowlmere on Aug 26th, 150 at the same site on Aug 10th and 100 at Priory Park, St Neots on Aug 31st.

House Martin Reported from only 1 site in July and 4 sites in August. 100+ were at Eynesbury, St Neots on July 15th, this being the only notable count.

Tree Pipit Four flew over the dam at Grafham Water on Aug 25th.

Meadow Pipit Reported from 4 sites in July and 2 sites in August; 15 at Monks Hardwick on July 29th was the only count of note.

Yellow Wagtail Reported from 12 sites in July and 15 sites in August. Notable counts included 20 at Earith, Ouse Washes on Aug 19th and at Toft on Aug 30th, 27 at Ouse Fen on Aug 19th, 40+ at Sutton Gault at Sutton Gault, Ouse Washes, on Aug 24th and 55 on the Ouse Washes on Aug 24th.

Grey Wagtail None reported in July, but reported from 8 sites in August. Counts included 4 at Milton on Aug 17th and 5 at Earith, Ouse Washes, on Aug 10th.

Pied Wagtail The only notable counts received were 60 at Stretham on Aug 20th and 93 at Grafham Water on Aug 28th.

Wren Reported from several sites.

Duncock Reported from several sites.

Robin Reported from several sites.

Common Nightingale One recorded at Paxton Pits on July 27th.

Common Redstart One recorded at Witcham on Aug 25th.

Whinchat Two at Fen Drayton on July 29th were the first of the autumn, followed by 1 at Over Fen on Aug 12th, 1 at Wicken Fen on Aug 26th, 2 at Fen Drayton on Aug 29th, with singles the same day at Toft and Eldernell, Nene Washes.

Northern Wheatear Two at Paxton Pits on Jul 27th were still present on the 29th. In August, singles at Earith on 7th, 10th and 22nd, Fen Drayton and Grafham Water on 16th, Fen Drayton on 23rd, Maxey on 27th and Farcet Fen on 30th.

Blackbird Reported from several sites.

Song Thrush Reported from several sites.

Mistle Thrush Notable counts during the period included 12 at Priory Park, St Neots on Aug 13th and 13 at Farcet Fen on Aug 30th.

Cetti's Warbler Just 2 reports, both from Wicken Fen, one in each month.

Common Grasshopper Warbler Noted at Fen Drayton GP, Fleam Dyke, Paxton Pits and Wicken Fen, 1–2 birds at each location.

Sedge Warbler Seven pairs/territories were counted at Farcet Fen (Crowtree) on July 1st, elsewhere 1–3 birds were reported from 3 sites.

Eurasian Reed Warbler Reported from 6 sites, with 9+ pairs / territories at Farcet Fen (Crowtree), 8+ pairs at Farcet Fen (Tebbit's Bridge), and up to 6 birds at Ouse Fen.

Lesser Whitethroat Noted at Farcet Fen (Crowtree), St Neots (Monks Hardwick) and Wicken Fen, all singles, in August

Common Whitethroat Noted at various sites in Farcet Fen and at 10 other locations.

Garden Warbler Reported from 5 sites, still singing at 2 of these.

Blackcap Counts of 1–2 birds from 6 sites, and a record of 20 birds in late July at Milton CP (Cambridge).

Common Chiffchaff Reported from 7 sites, with a maximum of 10 on July 29th at Milton CP (Cambridge).

Willow Warbler From 8 sites, with 1–2+ birds reported (and only 1 on July 29th at Milton CP (Cambridge)).

Goldcrest Reported from just 2 sites, Farcet Fen (Crowtree) and Paxton Pits.

Spotted Flycatcher Reported from 17 sites, with 10 birds being the maximum count (Burghley Park)

Pied Flycatcher An immature/female was seen at Grafham Water on Aug 15th.

Bearded Tit Twenty-five were present at Kingfishers Bridge on Aug 7th, with several family parties present.

Long-tailed Tit Larger parties included 14 at Fleam Dyke and 12 at Abbots Ripton (Halls Farm).

Marsh Tit Littless Wood (Grafham Water) held 4+ on July 7th, whilst individuals were seen at Hardwick Wood and Paxton Pits.

Willow Tit A single report of a 'probable', at Fowlmere RSPB on July 21st. The bird was not seen but was heard calling several times from a tit flock.

Coal Tit Two birds frequented a garden feeder in Melbourn in August.

Blue Tit Reported from 6 locations, with highest counts from Farcet Fen!

Great Tit From 4 sites, with a maximum of 7 at Farcet Fen (Crowtree).

Wood Nuthatch Records were received from 5 sites including 2 adults and 2 juveniles at Hardwick Wood, and also an interesting report of 2 birds from the gardens of Clare College, Cambridge. Several birds were noted at Monks Wood, a further 2 birds from Burghley Park, Stamford with a single at Hinchingsbrooke Park.

Eurasian Treecreeper There was only 1 report during the period of 4 birds at Burghley Park, Stamford, on Aug 18th, obviously a very secretive bird during the breeding period.

Red-backed Shrike One report was received of a female at Stanground Wash on Jul 13th.

Eurasian Jay Reported from 5 sites with the maximum count being 5 birds at Toft on Jul 27th.

Black-billed Magpie Records were received from 7 sites with 16 birds at Priory Park, St. Neots being the peak count. A further 9 birds, including family parties, were reported from Farcet Fen.

Eurasian Jackdaw This bird has been obviously under recorded during the period with just 2 reports submitted. However, 52 birds at Farcet Fen on Aug 30th was the peak count.

Rook Records were received from just 3 sites but there was 1 record that stood out of 550 birds in a field southwest of Girton on Jul 18th. This was supported by a further 96 birds at Farcet Fen on Aug 30th.

Carrion Crow Records were received from 3 sites with the maximum count being just 23 birds at Farcet Fen on Aug 29th.

Common Raven One report was received of a solitary bird over Milton Park, Peterborough on Aug 2nd.

Common Starling Reported from 12 sites with an estimated 600 mainly juvenile birds at Buckden Gravel Pits on Jul 15th being the maximum count. A further 500+ were reported from the Ouse Washes at Earith on Aug 10th.

House Sparrow Records were received from 4 sites with the maximum count being 46+ breeding pairs in Farcet Village on Jul 1st.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow Reported from just 1 site but 12 pairs produced 72+ young at Farcet Fen during the period. This is the same number of young as produced in 2006 but by 5 fewer pairs.

Chaffinch Records were received from 8 sites with 20 birds at St. Neots on Aug 26th being the peak count.

European Greenfinch Records were received from 5 sites with 30+ birds at Farcet Fen on Aug 29th being the maximum.

European Goldfinch The peak count was at Ouse Fen on Aug 12th with 60 birds. This was supported by 43 birds at St. Neots on Aug 5th and 40+ birds at Farcet Fen on Aug 9th.

Common Linnet Reports were received from 11 sites with a flock estimated at 200 birds at Westfield Farm on Aug 29th being the peak count. A further 80 were noted at Fleam Dyke on Aug 25th.

Common Bullfinch Just 5 reports submitted during

the period with 2 birds being the peak counts at both Shepreth and Fleam Dyke.

Yellowhammer Reported from 8 sites with 13 birds at St. Neots on Aug 5th being the maximum count.

Reed Bunting Records were received from 6 sites with the peak being 25 males during the breeding season at Kingfishers Bridge. A further 12+ territories were also reported from Farcet Fen.

Corn Bunting Reports were received from 8 sites with the peak count being 11 birds at Farcet Fen on Aug 27h. A further 9 territories were reported at Kings Delph on Jul 1st.

HYBRIDS

Canada x Greylag Two juveniles at Grafham Water on Jul 14th, and an adult at Kingfishers Bridge on Aug 7th.

EXOTICA

Black Swan Single birds present at several localities: Buckden GP, Fen Drayton GP, Kingfishers Bridge and the Cam Washes.

Bar-headed Goose One at Grafham Water on several dates in July and again in early August.

Rosy-billed Pochard One drake at Grafham Water on Jul 7th.

Eastern Rosella One escapee in gardens in Earith, Jul 1st–2nd.

Rosella sp. One at St. Neots (Eynesbury) on July 28th.

Cockatiel One at Paxton Pits on Jul 24th.

Harris Hawk A single bird at Witcham on Aug 25.

Peacock A male at St Ives (Holt Island) on Jul 1st.

Chinese Grosbeak One at Thriplow on Jul 7th.

Contributors

My apologies to the contributors of this period's records. Due to a computer failure I have lost the list of your names. However all your records and names have already been recorded on the Club's database for the Annual Report. (*Editor*)



Jewel-wings, horse-stingers and devil's darning needles – my life (so far) as a dragonfly-watcher

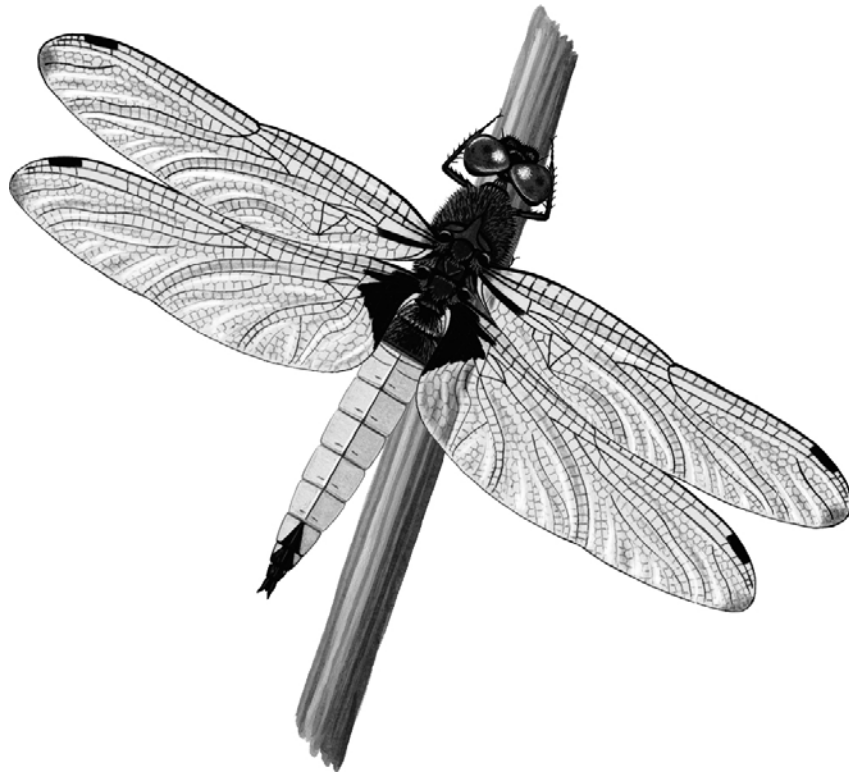
Steve Dudley

An online version of this article, with colour illustrations and photographs, can be found at www.toadsnatcher.com.

Yes, I know, the autumn is hardly the right time to be reading an article on dragonflies, but having just suffered the worst summer for many years, those of us who have already switched our summer 'watching' to insects, are already looking forward to 2008!

Starting out as an RSPB warden, then moving to the BTO and now running the BOU, I've become well known in birding circles, but few outside the dragonfly world know I have been equally driven by these flying jewels as I have by been birds since my late teens.

In the mid-1990s, with my former wife Caroline and birding friend Andy Mackay, I embarked on a dual project of producing two 'ultimate' field guides to dragonflies and butterflies. Birdfair 2007 saw the first of these titles, *Watching British Dragonflies*, hit the street (*Watching British Butterflies* is due out at Birdfair 2008). After over a decade, I'm pleased to say that we feel we have achieved our aim in producing the ultimate single volume (340 pages) to enable the dragonfly-watcher to find, identify and enjoy all of Britain's dragonflies. The book has separate sections covering a quick ID guide, detailed species accounts (two pages per species), 94 of Britain's top dragonfly sites features with detailed site instructions and maps, and a 90-page gazetteer covering hundreds of sites across Britain and Northern Ireland .



My first dragonfly memory is as a small boy fishing the Leeds & Liverpool Canal near my home in Lancashire. I recall clearly my horror at what at the time seemed like a 'giant brown devil' attacking me! It wasn't until 1985, when at 18 I was working for the RSPB at Fairburn Ings in Yorkshire, that I discovered my childhood dragonfly was a Brown Hawker *Aeshna grandis*. Combined, the English and scientific names summed up my giant brown devil – brown and grand!

At Fairburn I was lucky to work with Geoff Welch, whose passion for all wildlife infected me. When he left Fairburn (for Minsmere), he gave me a parting gift in the form of Cyril Hammond's *The Dragonflies of Great Britain and Ireland*. This book changed my life. By today's standards it is a basic guide, but it was enough. I was hooked. One of the first things that struck me was how few species (45 illustrated in this book) there were in Britain.

1986 was my first real summer as a dragonfly-watcher. At Fairburn I cut my teeth on the commoner species and by the end of that summer had also seen species such as Migrant Hawker. This species is now common throughout southern England, but in the mid-1980s it began expanding its range northwards and being discovered at new sites by northern dragonfly hunters.

It took me ten years to see all the British breeding species, during which time I discovered the Highlands of Scotland and to which I have been a regular summer visitor and wildlife holiday tour leader for the last 15 years. The Highlands are equivalent of my 'soul-mate' in insect terms. The contrast between delicate insects in the vast wilderness is startling. I know Glen Affric, Beinn Eighe and Abernethy Forest as well as I know Farcet Fen!

I soon started to add some of the vagrant species, including Britain's first Lesser Emperor Dragonfly, which Richard Thomas found in 1996 at the Science Park on the northern outskirts of Cambridge. This species is now breeding in England. Another recent arrival is Small Red-eyed Damselfly. It was first found in Britain in 1999, in Cambridgeshire in 2005 and in the Peterborough area in 2006 (and I found it half a mile from my house on Farcet Fen this summer!).

Cambridgeshire is blessed not only as a great birding county, but also as a very good dragonfly county. Since 1991, then living in Thetford, Norfolk, I began a love affair with Woodwalton Fen (which remains one of my favourite British dragonfly sites, and I now live only five miles from it). This site holds some of my favourite insects including Scarce Chaser, the immature male of which is my all-

time favourite dragonfly. The Great Raveley Drain, which you have to cross to enter the reserve, is a great place to spend an early-summer's day. Male Scarce Chasers watch for females (to mate with) and other males (which they chase away from the females) from a favoured perch. When you see one, look closely and you will see that they hold their front pair of legs behind their head to allow greater freedom of movement for the head! Nearby Red-eyed Damselflies dance from lily-pad to lily-pad and Hairy Dragonflies hawk the wooded edge of the reserve and occasionally wander over the drain. In July Ruddy Darter takes to the wing and is best looked for along the lush dykes of the reserve itself – you can't miss them and they will regularly perch on handrails alongside Common Darter for comparison!

Houghton Mill is another of my favourite Cambs sites. The River Great Ouse forms a series of backwaters here, and these are stuffed with Scarce Chasers, White-legged Damselflies and Banded Demoiselles – the latter often form swarms of several hundred insects that are a fantastic spectacle. I strongly recommend a picnic here in mid-June to mid-July – you can't fail to have a great time!

Woodwalton Fen, Houghton Mill and the equally spectacular Wicken Fen are all featured in my book.

There are around 22 breeding species of dragonfly and damselfly in Cambs and they occur on almost all but the fastest of flowing waterways. Dragonfly-watching is best done in the morning or late afternoon, or during a 'less' warm day. Avoid the stinking hot summer days when insects are heated up and hyper and approach is very difficult. When cool most will allow very close approach and are great to photograph. You should spend as much time searching surrounding dry habitats as you should watch any water body. The water is merely the 'bedroom' for dragonflies where mating and egg-laying takes place. Most species mature and feed away from water. Favourite places to search are nettle-beds and hedgerows within 25 metres of water. Larger species such as hawkers will often be found well away from water feeding in gardens and along woodland edges and rides.

If you haven't yet spread your wings and discovered dragonflies (and butterflies, moths and all manner of other winged wonders!), do so next summer. It will enhance your overall interest and appreciation of the natural world.

Some dragonfly websites

Cambs Dragonfly Group - <http://camdragshome.blogspot.com/>

British Dragonfly Society - www.dragonflysoc.org.uk

British Nature - www.britishnature.co.uk/DamselfliesDragonflies/Index.html

Digiscoping insects - http://toadsnatcher.blogspot.com/2003_01_01_archive.html

Dragonfly dreams (!) - www.dragonflydream.com/dragonfly.html

You can see sample pages of *Watching British Dragonflies* online at www.wildlifebooks.com.

Watching British Dragonflies by Dudley, Steve, Dudley, Caroline & Mackay, Andrew. 2007.

Subbuteo Natural History Books

Available from Subbuteo Natural History Books | www.wildlifebooks.com

£27.50

Illustrations: Artwork © Andrew Mackay



ROGER CLARKE – MEMORIAL APPEAL

If you have not already contributed to the Club's appeal to commemorate Roger Clarke, one of the country's most distinguished ornithologists and a former Chairman of the Club, please think about doing so now.

Cheques should be made payable to Cambridgeshire Bird Club and sent to The Treasurer, CBC, 2 Millers Lane, Toft, Cambridge CB23 2RX. They can also be given to a Council member at a Club meeting.

MEETING ON THE BIRD ATLAS ON 24TH OCTOBER

The Cambridgeshire Bird Club would like to invite you to take part in the BTO/Cambridgeshire Bird Club/Peterborough Bird Club Bird Atlas 2007–11. We are looking for volunteers to survey tetrads for the wintering and/or breeding bird atlases. The winter Atlas work starts this November. Surveying a tetrad (2 × 2 km square) for a given season just requires two 2-hour timed visits to the tetrad in which you recorded all the birds you see or hear. If you take on a tetrad for the winter one visit should be in Nov/Dec and the other in Jan/Feb. For the breeding season the two visits should be one in April/May and a second in June/July.

We are holding a meeting on the Atlas at the office of the Wildlife Trust in Cambourne (Manor House, Broad Street) on 24th Oct (7:30 for 8:00 start). The meeting will provide background information and information how to do the atlas work. If you are interested to hear more about this major project and/or if you want to get involved, please come along. Please see also <http://www.cambridgebirdclub.org.uk/atlas.htm> or e-mail cambsbirdatlas@btinternet.com for more details.

CBC WORKSHOPS

Local artist Ben Green, has recently led a successful sketching workshop for Club members interested in drawing birds. One member commented, "I went on Ben Green's sketching workshop on Friday 21st Sept and found it enjoyable and useful. There were only three of us (others had to drop out because of clashing commitments), ... so we got plenty of individual attention. We spent all day at Ely, drawing geese etc on the grass in the morning and in the afternoon Ben did an impressive half hour or so demonstration of how we could attempt a watercolour of birds on the water after which we had a go ourselves. I learned plenty from him."

Thank you to Ben for arranging this.

We hope to run further workshops – plans for a digiscoping workshop are in the pipeline. if you have any requests or suggestions, please contact Dick Newell or Vicki Harley.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

INDOOR MEETINGS 2007

For all indoor meetings, doors open at 7.30 pm for an 8 pm start.

Friday November 9th St John's Church Hall, Cambridge Little Egrets in the UK by Andy Musgrove

The Little Egret has shown one of the most spectacular changes in fortune of any British bird, from official rarity in 1990 to a common coastal bird in southern Britain today. The talk will discuss the historical status of the Little Egret, examine its rapid range expansion and look at possible scenarios for the future.

Andy has worked at the BTO for the last ten years and is now head of the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS), as well as being involved in a wide variety of other projects, including advising the government on wild bird and avian influenza. In addition to his professional role, Andy has been a keen amateur birder for 25 years and is also very interested in moths and other wildlife.

Friday December 14th St John's Church Hall, Cambridge
Christmas Social: member's slides, quiz and refreshments

Members are invited to bring 5–10 slides of anything else about birds or natural history that you would like to show to the meeting. A chance to enjoy seasonal refreshments and time to socialise!
For further details and to offer to show slides, please contact Dick Newell or Vicki Harley (see back page for contact details).

INDOOR MEETINGS 2007

Friday January 11th St John's Church Hall, Cambridge
County Update: CBC surveys by Louise Bacon, Lesser-spotted Woodpecker research by Derek Guar/Elisabeth Taylor and the BTO Atlas by Dawn Balmer

This evening will cover recent research in the county and look forward to the Atlas – a major project for the next few years.

Friday February 8th St John's Church Hall, Cambridge
Yet more ways to dress eggs by Andy Gosler

Andy's lecture will be based on his recent Bernard Tucker Memorial Lecture. He has previously visited CBC to talk about Great Tit research in Whytham Woods.

Friday March 7th St John's Church Hall, Cambridge
Annual General Meeting and Learning and Memory in Scrub Jays by Professor Nicky Clayton

Professor Clayton of the Dept of Experimental Psychology, University of Cambridge, will provide an insight in to the fascinating abilities of these birds.

NB. This meeting takes place on the first Friday of the month.

The new programme card giving details of the above meetings and the rest of the programme for 2008 will be sent out with the next bulletin.

RAFFLE PRIZES

Many of the raffle prizes at indoor meetings are donated by Club members. If you would like to donate a prize, please bring it to any indoor meeting or contact Ken Hook (contact details on back page).

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

We welcome the following new members: Andy Cotton of Over, Ira Federspiel of Cambridge, Howard Ginn of Aylesbury, Kevin Hand of Cambridge, Derrick Jackson of Hartford, Huntingdon and Sarah Kelman of Conington

Bruce Martin

FROM THE BULLETIN EDITOR

If you would like to contribute to the bulletin, please contact me. You can send me a complete item or contact me with an initial idea.

Vicki Harley (see back page for phone and email).

CBC E-COMMUNICATION

CBC-ANNOUNCE is an emailing list intended to send announcements and important notices about Club matters to any member who asks to go on the list.

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: Mark Hawkes by November 7th

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

Next Bulletin due out December 2007, covering September–October 2007

GOOD BIRDING!