

CAMBRIDGESHIRE BIRD CLUB

Bulletin No. 397



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

RECENT REPORTS MARCH AND APRIL 2008

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

CBC/BTO CONFERENCE: CAMBRIDGESHIRE WETLANDS WEEKEND

October 18th/19th 2008

Information, Inspiration, Enjoyment – all will feature in the Cambridgeshire wetlands conference – see p13 for a preliminary announcement and look out for the booking form with the next issue of the bulletin.

LIFTS TO CLUB MEETINGS

Please read the notice about transport to Cambridgeshire Bird Club meetings on page 12.

Siskins by Graham Easy



Numbers in brackets indicate March and April maximums.

WILDFOWL

Mute Swan At Fen Drayton Lakes (42; 31), Grafham Water (31; 31), Needingworth GP (25; 27), the Nene Washes (65; 40), Ouse Fen (80; 81) and the Ouse Washes (577; 205). Other counts were 68 at Kingfishers Bridge on Mar 4th and 106 at Paxton Pits on Mar 8th.

Bewick's Swan The only reports were of 1 bird at the Nene Washes on Mar 9th and 31st, and 20 at the Ouse Washes on Mar 9th.

Whooper Swan At the Nene Washes, 325 on Mar 9th and 1 on Apr 23rd, and at the Ouse Washes, 1041 on Mar 18th and 29 on Apr 8th.

Pink-footed Goose One bird was at Graham Water on Mar 9th, and the 4 birds at Ouse Fen from February remained until Apr 6th.

Greater White-fronted Goose One bird was at Paxton Pits from Mar 9th to Apr 29th.

Greylag Goose Three-figure counts were at Brampton Racecourse (150+), the Cambridge Washes (189), Grafham Water (132), Kingfishers Bridge (131) and Paxton Pits (175). Double figures were noted at 7 other sites.

Canada Goose At Kingfishers Bridge (184; 117). Double figures were noted at 11 other sites.

Barnacle Goose Single figures reported from 5 sites.

Brent Goose A single bird was seen on the Ouse Washes near Mepal on Mar 13th. It was then seen at Ouse Fen on 19th, Mare Fen on 21st and Needingworth GP on 26th.

Egyptian Goose Up to 4 birds were recorded in both the Cam and Ouse valleys during the period. Singles were seen at the Nene Washes on Mar 28th and Grafham Water on Apr 23rd and 2 birds at Paxton Pits on Mar 24th.

Ruddy Shelduck At Maxey GP 3 birds were present on Mar 9th. At Wicken Fen on Apr 8th a female was seen on top of a telegraph pole near the ringing hut at 6.30am. It was probably stirring from its overnight roost (slow leg stretching). It emerged later that it nested/mated with a male in a nearby wildfowl collection, but left after another couple of weeks. A female was present at Ouse Fen on Apr 10th.

Common Shelduck At the Cam Washes Upware (21; 9), Grafham Water (27; 21), the Nene Washes (52; 28) and the Ouse Washes (10; 61). Also noted at 8 other sites.

Mandarin Much to the surprise of a local birder a male visited the pond in his garden at Arrington on Mar 12th. Up to 3 birds were at Grafham Water in April.

Eurasian Wigeon At the Cam Washes Upware (350; 48), Fen Drayton GP Lakes (571; 114), Grafham Water (114; 7), Kingfishers Bridge (426; 4), Needingworth GP (1273; 41), the Nene Washes (7077; 200), Ouse Fen (615; 156), the Ouse Washes (9425; 1385), Paxton Pits (838; 1047) and Wicken Fen (300; 11). Also noted at 4 other sites.

Gadwall At Grafham Water (212; 81), the Nene Washes (195; 110) and the Ouse Washes (518; 299). Paxton Pits with 279 was the only other site with three figures. Double figures were noted at 9 other sites.

Eurasian Teal At Fen Drayton GP Lakes (73; 157), Grafham Water (169; 38), Kingfishers Bridge (101; 22), the Nene Washes (1420; 100) and the Ouse Washes (446; 1257). Also noted at 11 other sites.

Mallard At Fen Drayton Lakes (85; 108), Grafham Water (227; 104), the Nene Washes (788; 150) and the Ouse Washes (1298; 784). Also noted at 16 other sites.

Northern Pintail At the Nene Washes (376; 6) and the Ouse Washes (1180; 83). Single figures were seen at 6 other sites.

Garganey Six birds were seen on the Ouse Washes on Apr 22nd, 5 on the Cam Washes Upware on Apr 9th and 1–3 at 6 other sites during the period.

Northern Shoveler At Fen Drayton Lakes (11; 79), Grafham Water (78; 67), Kingfishers Bridge (89; 12), the Nene Washes (293; 42), Ouse Fen (14; 14), the Ouse Washes (846; 413), Paxton Pits (98; 6) and Wicken Fen (100; 40). Also noted at 5 other sites.

Red-crested Pochard A maximum of 5 were at Paxton Pits during the period, 2 at Fen Drayton Lakes in March and 2 at Needingworth GP on Mar 30th.

Common Pochard Counts of 181 at Paxton Pits on Mar 8th and 281 on the Ouse Washes on Mar 17th were the only three-figure counts. Double Figures were noted at 6 other sites.

Tufted Duck At Fen Drayton Lakes (322; 258), Grafham Water (189; 117) and the Ouse Washes (1470; 845). At Buckden GP 113 on Apr 15th and Paxton Pits 588 on Mar 9th were the only other three-figure count. Double figures were noted at 10 other sites.

Greater Scaup A bird was seen on the Ouse Washes on Mar 17th, Apr 9th and 19th.

Common Scoter Four birds were at Ferry Meadows CP on Mar 26th and 4 at Grafham Water on the same day. Then on Mar 27th there were 9 birds at Grafham Water, which were thought to be different to the earlier birds.

Goldeneye At Buckden GP (67; 3), Fen Drayton Lakes (71; 34), Grafham Water (70; 14) and Paxton Pits (116; 55). Also noted at 4 other sites.

Smew Two birds were at Buckden GP on Mar 23rd and 6 at Needingworth GP on Mar 9th. At Paxton Pits birds were present throughout the period with a maximum of 7 on Mar 9th with the last bird seen on Apr 6th.

Red-breasted Merganser A pair were at Grafham Water on Mar 26th. A male was at Fen Drayton Lakes on Mar 27th and 1 at Grafham Water on Apr 6th.

Goosander Three birds were at Ferry Meadows CP on Mar 26th, 4 at Grafham Water on Mar 9th and 21st, and 5 at Paxton Pits on Mar 9th. Singles were seen at the Cam Washes Upware, Fen Drayton Lakes and RSPB Fowlmere.

Ruddy Duck Reported from just three sites with a single bird at one site and two at the others.

GAMEBIRDS

Red-legged Partridge Only 10 records submitted during the period, with 10 pairs at Blackbush Drove the highest count.

Grey Partridge Small numbers from 14 scattered localities, with 10 birds at St Neots the highest count.

Common Pheasant Only 8 reports reflect the unpopularity of recording this species, rather than its true distribution!

DIVERS TO HERONS

Little Grebe Double figures were noted at the Ouse Washes (10), Kingfishers Bridge (21, with an estimated 11–12 pairs) and Paxton Pits (28). Single figures were noted at 14 other sites.

Great Crested Grebe At Fen Drayton Lakes (20; 27), Grafham Water (46; 42) and the Ouse Washes (48; 28). Double figures were also noted at Buckden GP (13), Needingworth GP (19) and Paxton Pits (24). Single figures were noted at 13 other sites.

Red-necked Grebe The long staying bird at Buckden GP was last reported on Apr 17th.

Black-necked Grebe One bird was at Orton BP on Mar 9th.

Great Cormorant At Fen Drayton Lakes (27; 27), Grafham Water (27; 24), the Ouse Washes (294; 27), and Wicken Fen (15; 26). Double figures also noted at Barleycroft GP (77), Brownhills Staunch (25), Kingfishers Bridge (31) and the Nene Washes (35). At Paxton Pits there were approx. 80 occupied nests.

European Shag One was at Kingfishers Bridge on Mar 8th.

Great Bittern Heard booming at 3 sites, and another bird seen on a number of occasions at another site.

Cattle Egret A bird was present at Grange Farm Old Weston from Mar 6th until Mar 30th. One was seen near junction 10 of the M11 near Sawston on Apr 1st.

Little Egret The Ouse Washes with approx. 30 birds on Apr 22nd was the only site with double figures. Single figures were noted at 14 other sites during the period.

Great Egret The long-staying bird that took up residence on the Ouse Washes in late December was last seen on Mar 17th. A possible flew over the Mere at Wicken Fen on Mar 30th.

Grey Heron At the Ouse Washes (52; 61). Double figures were also present at Berry Fen (RSPB) (13), Fen Drayton Lakes (12) and the Nene Washes (21). Breeding was noted at the Cam Washes Upware, Kingfishers Bridge, Paxton Pits and Wicken Fen.

Eurasian Spoonbill A bird was seen at Eldernell on the Nene Washes on Apr 11th.

RAPTORS

European Honey-buzzard A single report of one on 13th Apr at Kings Dyke.

Black Kite A single record of one heading west near Huntingdon, seen at the junction of the A14/A1M on 29th Apr.

Red Kite Looking at the distribution of records, now present thinly throughout the county with the exception of open fenland. Of the 47 records received (double the number in the equivalent period last year), several suggest birds present in territories, and some indicate definite breeding attempts. Four at Paxton Pits on Mar 24th (the peak count).

Eurasian Marsh Harrier Regularly reported from the larger wetland sites, such as Woodwalton Fen, Ouse Washes and the like, with high counts at Wicken Fen (8 in April) and Kingfishers Bridge. Breeding behaviour and pairs also noted at less expected sites.

Hen Harrier Still 5 at Wicken Fen on 9th Mar, down to 1 by the end of April, with others reported from 5 further sites, including 2 at the Nene Washes.

Northern Goshawk Three records, all between 27th Mar and 8th Apr, from a range of localities.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk Reported from 29 localities, in ones and twos, with some breeding activity noted such as pairs and males in display flights. For the atlas, please keep a watch out for birds carrying prey to nest sites to try and confirm breeding!

Common Buzzard Some impressive counts, particularly round Grafham and Paxton with 6–9 regularly seen at both sites. Also widely distributed throughout the county, with 52 localities.

Osprey Eight or 9 between 26th Mar and 30th Apr, including one successfully fishing at Bassenhally.

Common Kestrel With only 34 reports, and much smaller groups, Kestrel now looks heavily outnumbered by Buzzard, but of course could be underreported. One eating worms on the tarmac at Grafham (after heavy rain) was an interesting behaviour note.

Merlin Scattered reports throughout March, with 3 at the Nene Washes the peak, but only 4 reports in Apr, last on 17th at the Nene Washes. One with fresh kill in Chesterton on Apr 6th.

Eurasian Hobby One very early record (though not the earliest ever) on Apr 3rd at Abbots Ripton, then a long gap until a flurry of 26 records from Apr 21 to the month's end. Peak counts of 4 from Paxton Pits (25th) and Wicken (26th).

Peregrine Falcon Reported from 10 localities throughout the period, with 2 seen twice at Nene Washes plus Paxton Pits and Wicken Fen also getting more than one sighting.

RAILS

Water Rail Ten locations held Water Rails this spring, with just 3 the peak count at Kingfishers Bridge.

Corn Crane One logged at the Nene Washes on Apr 23rd represents encouraging news for the reintroduction programme there.

Common Moorhen The vast majority of records came from WeBs counters, with the Ouse Washes getting the lion's share, with 403 in Mar, down to 76 by April. Other counts included Grafham Water (39; 25) and Fen Drayton (36; 36).

Common Coot As with Moorhen, most counts came from WeBS with Ouse Washes again leading the way (2786; 1345). Grafham Water (290; 140), Fen Drayton (237; 143), and Paxton Pits (184 in Mar) were also-rans. A pair nested on a new pool created during the construction of the new A428 at Cambourne.

Common Crane An explosion of spring records including some tantalising prospects with pair(s) in wetland areas of the north of the county. Very promising news for the large-scale habitat restoration projects underway in the fens.

WADERS

Eurasian Oystercatcher Recorded from 16 sites. At least 6 pairs reported as breeding. Peak counts of 13 birds on the Nene Washes Mar 9th.

Pied Avocet Recorded from many suitable sites during the spring dispersal, as birds look for prospective breeding sites. Over 20 potential pairs reported although recent history has seen low breeding success as cold, wet spells can drastically effect chick mortality. Highest count was of 32 at a site in the east of the county.

Stone Curlew Three birds present in late April and a pair nesting at the same undisclosed site. The species shows signs that it may be clawing itself back as a Cambridgeshire breeding bird.

Little Plover A maximum of 9 birds at Maxey GPs on Apr 1st and smaller numbers at 10 more sites, breeding behaviour noted at several of these.

Ringed Plover A slow and protracted passage of birds throughout the period, Paxton recording birds most regularly and holding the peak of 15 birds on both Mar 15th and the last day of April. Smaller, darker birds of the *tundra* race were noted in low numbers from both Paxton and the Nene Washes in the latter half of April.

Dotterel A single bird at Blackbush Drove on Apr 24–25th in the company of Golden Plover was a good find as this species seems to have abandoned traditional fenland trip sites.

Golden Plover In March 3 sites retained wintering flocks of 1000+ birds including an impressive 5650 on the Nene Washes, Mar 9th. At Lark Rise Farm, Barton, 1200 on Mar 27th had reduced to 18 a fortnight later reflecting the spring time northern exodus of the species with only 8 records received for April.

Grey Plover Recorded regularly at Paxton, Maxey and the Nene Washes. Two birds were recorded at each of these sites on one date and on Apr 19th 3 were present on the Ouse Washes complex.

Lapwing Most records received were of breeding birds or birds on territory. On the Nene Washes, 730 birds were still present on Mar 9th. The same

area held an impressive 270 breeding pairs later in the season.

Knot Three birds present on Mar 3rd at Grafham were followed in April by single birds present at Maxey, Nene and Ouse Washes.

Sanderling Singles of this regular passage wader at Grafham and Paxton on several dates from Mar 26th. Two birds at Fen Drayton on Apr 19th were the peak.

Little Stint A single bird at Fen Drayton in mid-April was the only record.

Dunlin Only single figure counts from sites during March, apart from 64 on the Nene Washes on 9th. Paxton was the most regularly reported from site during April with several double figure counts peaking at 42 on 27th.

Ruff Highest count during the period was of 80 between Swavesey and Over on 26th March with 70 at the Ouse Washes (Earith) on Apr 9th. Apart from these records were mainly of small groups at a variety of washland and gravel pit sites.

Jack Snipe Three recorded at Cambourne on Mar 24th and singles recorded on single dates at Maxey GP and Paxton Pits.

Snipe Recorded at 16 sites with notable counts of 27 at Fen Drayton on Mar 9th and 37 at Grafham on Mar 19th. Drumming birds were noted from several sites with an expected peak on the Washes, the Nene recording 170 drummers.

Woodcock Wicken Fen recorded the peak number of this elusive species with 7 on Apr 11th with 5 additional sites with birds present. No roding was reported.

Black-tailed Godwit A prominent and much enjoyed feature of the period is the large gatherings of russet godwits heading to their breeding grounds in Iceland. The washland systems of the Nene and Ouse are the favoured haunts as the winter floods recede and the peak of 4000 birds was on the Nene Washes on Mar 22nd. Away from the washes single figure counts from Grafham, Buckton, Paxton and Wicken Fen.

Bar-tailed Godwit Two were present on the Nene Washes from Apr 8th to 22nd joined by an impressive flock of 70 on 20th when 4 were also present at Maxey GP. Singles were also recorded at Fen Drayton and Paxton, both on the 27th April.

Whimbrel A vocal passage migrant often picked up on it 'seven whistle' call alone, birds were recorded from or over 9 sites. Notable were 8 at Paxton on the 26th followed by 8 at Fen Drayton the next day. Twelve over Grafham on 20th April reflected a day of considerable wader passage in the county.

Curlew Eight sites provided records, predominantly single, fly-over birds. The exception was a flock of 6 at Fen Drayton on Apr 27th.

Spotted Redshank A single frequented the Nene Washes from Apr 8th to 29th, and another was recorded at Bakers Fen, Wicken on Apr 23rd.

Redshank Highest counts were on the Nene (223; 20) and Ouse Washes(163; 181) with double-figure counts from many other wetland sites.

Greenshank Recorded at 8 sites in pairs or singly, peak count of 4 on several dates from the Ouse Washes.

Lesser Yellowlegs The rarest wader of the spring, an individual found at Berry Fen on Apr 19th was subsequently relocated near Earith on 20th/21st and probably again at Sutton Gault on 23rd. This was the 7th county record.

Green Sandpiper Widespread records from many sites with the highest counts of 7 in both March and April at Maxey GP.

Wood Sandpiper Singles at Maxey GP and Fen Drayton in the last week of April.

Common Sandpiper A single in early March at Grafham was perhaps a wintering bird with no further records until April. Singles and pairs recorded at 6 sites including a maximum of 3 at Paxton.

Ruddy Turnstone A single bird at Fen Drayton on Apr 20th.

SKUAS TO TERNS

Mediterranean Gull Two birds were at Kingfishers Bridge on Apr 6th and again on 10th; elsewhere singles at Paxton and twice at Nene Washes.

Little Gull A good spring for this species, with 24 records involving possibly 50 birds. Highest counts were 7 at Fen Drayton on Apr 20th and 8 at Over on the same day. Fen Drayton and Paxton saw by far the bulk of the records.

Black-headed Gull Records of note were well over 1000 at Cottenham Long Drove on Mar 29th, with 750 at Kingfishers Bridge on the same day. Counts over 400 also at Kingfishers Bridge on Mar 11th, Apr 10th and Apr 29th.

Common Gull High counts were 245 at Paxton on Mar 9th, 120 at Winwick on Mar 30th and 166 at Paxton on Apr 21st.

Lesser Black-backed Gull Numbers at Cottenham Long Drove rose to just under 1500 on Mar 22nd and fell away to about 550 on Apr 12th. There was a melanistic bird there on Mar 20th.

Herring Gull A single report of 3 at Fen Drayton on Mar 9th.

Yellow-legged Gull If reports are anything to go by this species is more common in the county than the preceding one! Recorded on 31 occasions from 7 different sites, the majority from Paxton, but several from Long Drove. Highest count was 6 at Paxton on Mar 22nd. One there was paired with a Lesser Black-backed Gull.

Caspian Gull There was a bird at Paxton on Mar 15th and another there on Apr 20th.

Iceland Gull Birds were at Grafham on Mar 12–14th, Long Drove on Apr 5th, again at Grafham Apr 10–11th, on the Nene Washes on Apr 11th, at Paxton on Apr 21st and at Grafham 2 days later. All records involved single birds.

Kumlein's Gull A bird was reported at Long Drove on Apr 5th; there was a further report from Grafham on 8th.

Great Black-backed Gull There were 17 at Kingfishers Bridge on Apr 10th.

Kittiwake A good showing this spring with 11 reports from 6 sites. Most were at Grafham with a

high of 6 on Mar 24th. Only one was reported as a first-winter bird.

Sandwich Tern One was reported at Ferry Meadows on Apr 22nd and that one, or another bird, was there 2 days later.

Common Tern A good passage reported in April with some high counts. The first report was on Apr 4th. Numbers were still in single figures until Apr 21st, but on 22nd there were 15 at Fen Drayton and 27 on the Nene Washes. Next day there were 10 at Paxton. The day after, that figure had risen to 20 and on Apr 27th it was 35. On the same day 20 were reported from Fen Drayton. On Apr 30th 16 were at Buckden GP.

Arctic Tern Extraordinary figures on 2 days at the end of April. Already there had been 18 at Grafham on 18th, but on Apr 27th well over 300 were reported: 200 at Ferry Meadows, at least 57 at Grafham, and 81 at Paxton. There were still 40 birds at Ferry Meadows the next day, but then from 25th onwards numbers quickly fell away again.

Black Tern What was to prove a major passage over the country in early May had started in the county before the end of April. One bird was at Fen Drayton on 22nd and 2 on 26th. On 29th there were 3 at Paxton and 1 at Grafham, and on 30th 1 at Buckden GP.

NEAR PASSERINES

Feral Pigeon Recorded in Cambridge (30).

Stock Pigeon Recorded across county; 5 records in double figures with a maximum of 44 at Ouse Fen on Apr 13th.

Common Wood Pigeon At Huntingdon on Mar 3rd (150). Four other records of more than 50 birds.

Eurasian Collared Dove Singles and pairs recorded, apart from 12 birds at Barton on Apr 11th.

European Turtle Dove First recorded on Apr 19th, at Fen Drayton Lakes; 7 other records.

Rose-ringed Parakeet Singles at Whittlesford on Mar 27th and Grafham Water on Apr 30th.

Common Cuckoo Recorded from Apr 13th onwards (25). Predominantly singles; 3 birds recorded at both Paxton Pits and Wicken Fen.

Barn Owl Recorded from 26 sites. Generally singles; 3–4 birds at Long Drove, Cottenham, during March.

Little Owl Observed at 10 sites. All singles except for 2 birds at Comberton and Over.

Tawny Owl Recorded at 8 sites; only 2 records for April. One bird observed at a Barn Owl nestbox in broad daylight!

Long-eared Owl Two records during April.

Short-eared Owl One to three birds recorded throughout period, with majority of records from either Wicken Fen or Nene Washes.

Common Swift First record on Apr 19th at Grafham Water, with numbers rising to 100 at Fen Drayton on Apr 27th and 200+ at Grafham water on Apr 29th.

Common Kingfisher One to four birds recorded widely across the southern part of the county from 15 sites.

Eurasian Wryneck One visited a garden south of Warboys over 3 days in mid-April.

Green Woodpecker Recorded at 29 sites; maximum of 8 birds on the Ouse Washes on Mar 17th.

Great Spotted Woodpecker Generally 1–3 birds recorded at 18 sites; 8 birds at Monks Wood on Mar 31st.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker Records from 6 sites, all of single birds.

PASSERINES

Skylark Reported from 5 sites in March and 12 sites in April. Notable counts included 70 at Stirtloe on Mar 4th, 32 at Barton on Mar 27th and 32 at Benwick on Apr 26th.

Sand Martin Following a single at Paxton Pits on Mar 7th, reported from a further 9 sites in March and 13 sites in April. Notable counts included 65 at Paxton Pits on Mar 22nd and 400 at Buckden GP on Apr 6th.

Barn Swallow The first record was from Peterborough, where one was over Thorpe Meadows on Mar 17th. Seen at a further 7 sites in March with 3 the highest count at a number of sites. In April, seen at many sites throughout the county with notable counts of 40+ at Brampton GP on 7th and 30+ at Fen Drayton Lakes on 17th.

House Martin First noted at Wicken Fen, where two were seen on Mar 29th. On 31st, observed at 3 more sites. In April noted from 11 sites, with the only notable count being of 46 at Paxton Pits on 28th.

Meadow Pipit Reported from 6 sites in March and 11 sites in April. Notable counts included 60 at Paxton Pits on Mar 24th, 42 at Ouse Washes on Mar 17th and 40+ at Grafham Water on Mar 13th.

Rock Pipit Singles reported at Maxey GP on Mar 15th and Apr 5th, Ferry Meadows CP on Mar 26th and Grafham Water from Mar 31st until Apr 8th. All birds were considered to be of the migratory *littoralis* subspecies.

Water Pipit Reported from 3 sites in March: two at the Nene Washes on Mar 9th and 28th with 3 there on 30th. Three were at Ouse Washes on Mar 17th and a single was at Kingfishers Bridge on Mar 25th. Reported from 2 sites in April; up to 4 seen at the Nene Washes, with the last report of single on 20th and a single was seen at Maxey GP on Apr 5th. A bird that flew over Paxton Pits on Apr 9th calling was either this or the former species.

Yellow Wagtail Reported from at least 20 sites during April, following the first, a single at Cottenham Long Drove on 5th. The only notable count received was of 48 at Nene Washes on the 19th.

Grey Wagtail Reported from 10 sites in March and 9 sites in April. All reports of singles or pairs, except for 4 at Ouse Fen on Apr 10th and 3 at Grafham Water on Mar 27th.

Pied Wagtail Reported from only 4 sites in March and 12 sites in April. Notable counts included 130+

at Great Abington Science Park on Mar 18th and 40+ at Grafham Water on Apr 8th.

White Wagtail Reports of singles from 4 sites in March. Reported from 8 sites in April. Most reports on singles except for 4+ at Paxton Pits on 20th, 3 at the Nene Washes on 7th and 9th and 2 at Grafham Water on 10th and 17th.

Winter Wren Reported from 5 sites in March and 8 sites in April. A notable count of 17 at Monks Wood on Mar 31st.

Duncock Reported from 4 sites in March and 7 sites in April.

Robin Reported from 5 sites in March and 8 sites in April. A notable count of 26 at Monks Wood on Mar 31st.

Common Nightingale Following the first report of one at Paxton Pits on Apr 8th, reported from a further 9 sites by the end of the month. Numbers at Paxton Pits increased to 20 by 27th, with 12 at Marsh Lane GP the highest count at that site ever. At least 7 were singing at Grafham Water by the month end.

Black Redstart A male and female were seen in Cambourne on Apr 4th with a female at Fenstanton on Apr 15th and a male in Peterborough on Apr 26th.

Common Redstart Reported from 9 sites in April: A female at Fowlmere NR on 10th was followed by a female at Noon Folly Farm, Bar Hill on 13th, a male at Kings Dyke NR the same day, a male at Ferry Meadows CP from 16th to 18th, a single at Paxton Pits on 17th, 3 on the Nene Washes on 19th, a male at Shepreth L-Moor WT from 19th to 21st, a male at Woodwalton Fen on 25th and a female at Milton CP on 26th.

Whinchat A very poor showing, with a male at Paxton Pits on Apr 23rd and a single on the Nene Washes on Apr 29th being the only records.

Stonechat One to 4 reported from 10 sites in March.

Northern Wheatear Reported from 10 sites in March and 17 sites in April. Most reports of 1 to 4 birds, but higher counts included 5 birds at Paxton Pits on Mar 24th and Grafham Water on Mar 26th.

Ring Ouzel Two singles in March, at Mepal on 26th and Shaddywell on 30th, were overshadowed by reports from 9 sites in April. A female at Coveney/Witchford on Apr 6th was followed by a male at Folksworth from 15th, with 2 there on 18th, 3 on 20th, 4 on 22nd and a single male still there on 24th. Elsewhere, 2 flew north over Grafham Water on 17th, single males were at Ouse Washes and Roswell Pits the same day, with another 2 singles the next day at Dullingham and Witcham, followed by a single at Marholm on 22nd before the last record, a single at Wicken Fen on 27th.

Blackbird Reported from 3 sites in March and 8 sites in April.

Fieldfare Reported from 19 sites in March and 21 sites in April. Notable flocks include 500 at Haddenham on Mar 2nd, 400 at Fowlmere on Mar 16th, 350 at Cottenham Long Drove on Apr 5th, 340 at Paxton Pits on Mar 24th and 300 at Over on Mar 19th.

Song Thrush Reported from 4 sites in March and 8 sites in April. No flocks reported.

Redwing Reported from 16 sites in March. The largest flocks recorded were 250 at Conington on Mar 27th and 97 at Monks Hardwick on Mar 2nd.

Mistle Thrush Reported from 3 sites in March and 6 sites in April.

Cetti's Warbler Reported from Wicken Fen throughout the period (with 12 present on Apr 1st) and also from 8 other sites, 7 of these holding birds in April.

Common Grasshopper Warbler First noted a little later than usual (Apr 13th at Brampton Tip) and then from 6 other sites.

Sedge Warbler Noted one day earlier than in 2006, at Fen Drayton Lakes (Apr 2nd). The maximum day count was 32 singers at Kingfishers Bridge on Apr 28th, with Marsh Lane and Buckden GP having 11 birds towards the end of April.

Eurasian Reed Warbler According to the CBR (2006) the earliest ever record is Apr 7th in 2001, so a report at Buckden GP on Apr 4th is noteworthy. At other sites, numbers reported were generally 1–5, with a maximum of 19 at Kingfishers Bridge on Apr 28th.

Lesser Whitethroat The first sighting was on Apr 12th at Nene Washes, and it was also seen at 18 other sites over the rest of the month.

Common Whitethroat Reported generally somewhat later than in 2006, from 22 sites.

Garden Warbler First reported from Apr 21st, with a build up to 10 at Paxton Pits on Apr 26th.

Blackcap Only 3 March reports; from Little Paxton, Milton CP (Cambridge) and Newnham (Cambridge). Twelve were noted at Marsh Lane GP (Apr 26th).

Wood Warbler At 2 sites, Bainton GP on Apr 17th and Grafham Water on Apr 23rd.

Common Chiffchaff Noted at 15 sites in March, and from 19 additional sites in April. One bird at Cherry Hinton Pits (Apr 17th) had an unusual song.

Willow Warbler Some earlier birds in March were noted at Buckden GP, Grafham Water and at Paxton Pits. Ten or more birds were reported from Buckden GP, Devil's Dyke and Paxton Pits.

Goldcrest Reported from 8 sites, with up to 3 territories noted at Girton College.

Firecrest Records, from 6 sites, refer to sightings of single birds or single singing males in March, with an additional later bird singing at Paxton Pits on Apr 26th.

Bearded Tit Reported from a single site, with 3+ pairs present and young seen being fed on Apr 15th.

Long-tailed Tit Reported from 9 locations, with 8 pairs noted at Monks Wood. A very pale-headed bird was noted at Grafham Water on Mar 8th.

Marsh Tit Reported from Archers Wood (Copingford), Combers Wood, Hardwick Wood, Hayley Wood, Monks Wood, Paxton Pits and Wimpole NT. Monks Wood held 38 birds on Mar 14th, and 37 were counted on Apr 7th.

Coal Tit Few sightings from the north of the county, with a maximum of 9 in Monks Wood on Mar 31st.

Blue Tit From 10 sites, with 67 counted at Monks

Wood in March.

Great Tit From 11 sites, with 26 at Monks Wood in March, and 11 at Lark Rise Farm (Barton) on Mar 27th.

Wood Nuthatch Records were received from 7 sites being mainly single birds but 7 were noted at Monks Wood on Apr 7th.

Eurasian Treecreeper Recorded from 5 sites mostly involved 1–2 birds, but 12 were reported at Monks Wood on Mar 31st with a further 7 reported at Woodwalton Fen on Mar 14th.

Great Grey Shrike The single bird at Wicken Fen remained until the end of March when another was recorded at Farcet Fen in early April.

Woodchat Shrike Unconfirmed report was received of a possible bird between Westwick and Cottenham on April 17th.

Eurasian Jay Reported from 15 sites during the period with a maximum count of 4 at Lark Rise Farm, Barton and Buckden GP.

Black-billed Magpie Recorded from 7 sites during the period with the peak count being 12+ at Grafham Water on Mar 9th.

Eurasian Jackdaw Records were received from 5 sites with 100+ at Cottenham Long Drove on Apr 12th being the maximum count. A Nordic Jackdaw was recorded at Sutton Gault on Apr 11th.

Rook Good numbers of nesting birds were recorded during the period with the peak count being 105+ nests at Denny Abbey.

Carrion Crow Reported from 6 sites with 38 birds at Westfield Farm, Comberton being the peak count.

Common Starling Again records were received from just 6 sites but this included 5000 birds coming to roost at Buckden GP on Mar 3rd and 4000 noted at the Nene Washes on Mar 9th.

House Sparrow Just 2 reports with 6 birds at Barton being the peak.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow Records were received from 4 sites including 4 birds in a Foxtan garden on Mar 16th. The peak count, however, was 12 birds at Grunty Fen on Mar 25th.

Chaffinch Reported from 12 sites with the peak count being 135 birds at Stirtloe on Mar 4th.

Brambling Records were received from an impressive 24 sites including many to garden feeders. However, the majority of these reports were of 1–2 birds. The exception to this was 121 birds coming to roost at Folwmere NR on Mar 11th.

European Greenfinch Recorded at 5 sites including 20 at Top Lodge Farm on Apr 17th and 14 in Cambourne on Apr 23rd.

European Goldfinch Reported from 6 sites with the peak being 50 birds recorded at the Ouse Washes during the WeBS count on Mar 17th.

Eurasian Siskin Records were received from 14 sites with the maximum count being 50 birds at Bevill's Wood on Mar 17th.

Common Linnet Reported from 19 sites with 150 birds at Wicken Fen on Mar 14th being the peak count. A further 91 birds were noted on a freshly sown field at Swaffham Prior Fen on Apr 12th.

Lesser Redpoll Reported from 10 sites with a flock

of 20 birds at Pickmore Wood on Apr 25th being the peak count.

Common Bullfinch Recorded from 9 sites with the peak count being 5 birds at Landbeach.

Hawfinch A report of a single bird was received from Upton Wood on Apr 8th.

Lapland Longspur There was a good record of 2 birds discovered in a field in Stirtloe on Mar 1st of which at least 1 remained until Mar 4th. How many more of these birds go through undetected?

Yellowhammer Reported from 17 sites with the maximum being 40 at Stirtloe on Mar 4th. Another 25 birds were noted in a Foxton garden on Mar 16th.

Reed Bunting Records were received from 20 sites with the peak being 60 again from Stirtloe on Mar 4th. A further 50 birds were also noted at Ouse Fen and Wicken Fen NR.

Corn Bunting A large increase in reports during the period with records from 15 sites. The peak count was an impressive 202 birds at Swaffham Prior Fen on Apr 12th. Other reports included 100 at Wicken Fen NR and 85 at Reach.

HYBRIDS

Canada x Greylag goose Up to 4 birds of this combination were seen at several sites in the county (Brampton Race Course, Godmanchester GP, Kingfishers Bridge). One bird at Kingfishers Bridge in birds had distinctive plumage and had previously been seen at Ouse Washes on Nov 26th 2007.

Yellow x Blue-headed Wagtail A male presumed to be of this race was at Grafham Water on Apr 17th.

EXOTICA

Black Swan One at Buckden GP on Apr 30th.

Argentine Bluebill A single bird at Ely BF on Apr 23rd was thought to be of this species.

Bahama Pintail One seen at Grafham Water on Apr 24th.

Falcon sp. A large, pale Gyr-type bird at Paxton Pits on Mar 24th.

Contributors: Colin Addington, Louise Bacon, James Cadbury, Robin Cox, Dr Mike Foley, Nick Faiers, Richard Hall, Stephen Hartley, Kevin Harris, Mark Hawkes, Gary Heath, Peter Herkenrath, Colin Kirtland, Vince Lea, Tony Mallyon, Bruce & Gwen Martin, Tony Roberts, Bob & Ann Scott, Clive Sinclair, Nigel Sprowell, Chris Thorne, Alan & Brenda Wadsworth, P. M. Warrington, Jamie Wells

Bullfinch by Sue Rogers



Siskins in suburbia 2008

John Le Gassick

Eurasian Siskin *Carduelis spinus* has been a rare but welcome visitor to the garden of 17 Acacia Avenue in the late winter/early spring. Normally there are one or two annual records such as: one Siskin 17th March 1984, male and female 25th and 26th February 1986 and 2nd April 2006 again a male and a female. This year the number of birds visiting the feeders has been much greater than in any of the years that I have lived here.

I moved into Acacia Avenue in January 1979 and have always recorded the birds in the garden. Since its inception in 1995 I have been a member of the BTO Garden Birdwatch www.bto.org/gbw and from that date have kept weekly records.

Every January I suspend a red peanut bag in the garden in the, probably mistaken, belief that this will attract these attractive finches. This year only once was a bird seen on the nut bag, they mostly fed on the two suspended nyger seed feeders and to a slightly lesser extent on the sunflower hearts dispenser. The majority of the records were early in the morning.

I am also aware the fact that I have been in full retirement since 2001 and having an interest in digi-scoping the birds in the garden means that I spend a lot more time watching the feeders than in the earlier years. Nevertheless I feel that here in the heart of suburbia, it has been a good year for Siskin!

Table showing visits to the garden feeders (date & numbers)

12/2	22/2	24/2	25/2	26/2	28/2	29/2	04/3	05/3	06/3	08/3	09/3	10/3	11/3	12/3	13/3	16/3	20/3
2	1	2	3	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	4	3	2	3	2	2	2

Male Siskin on sunflower hearts and a female on the peanut bag

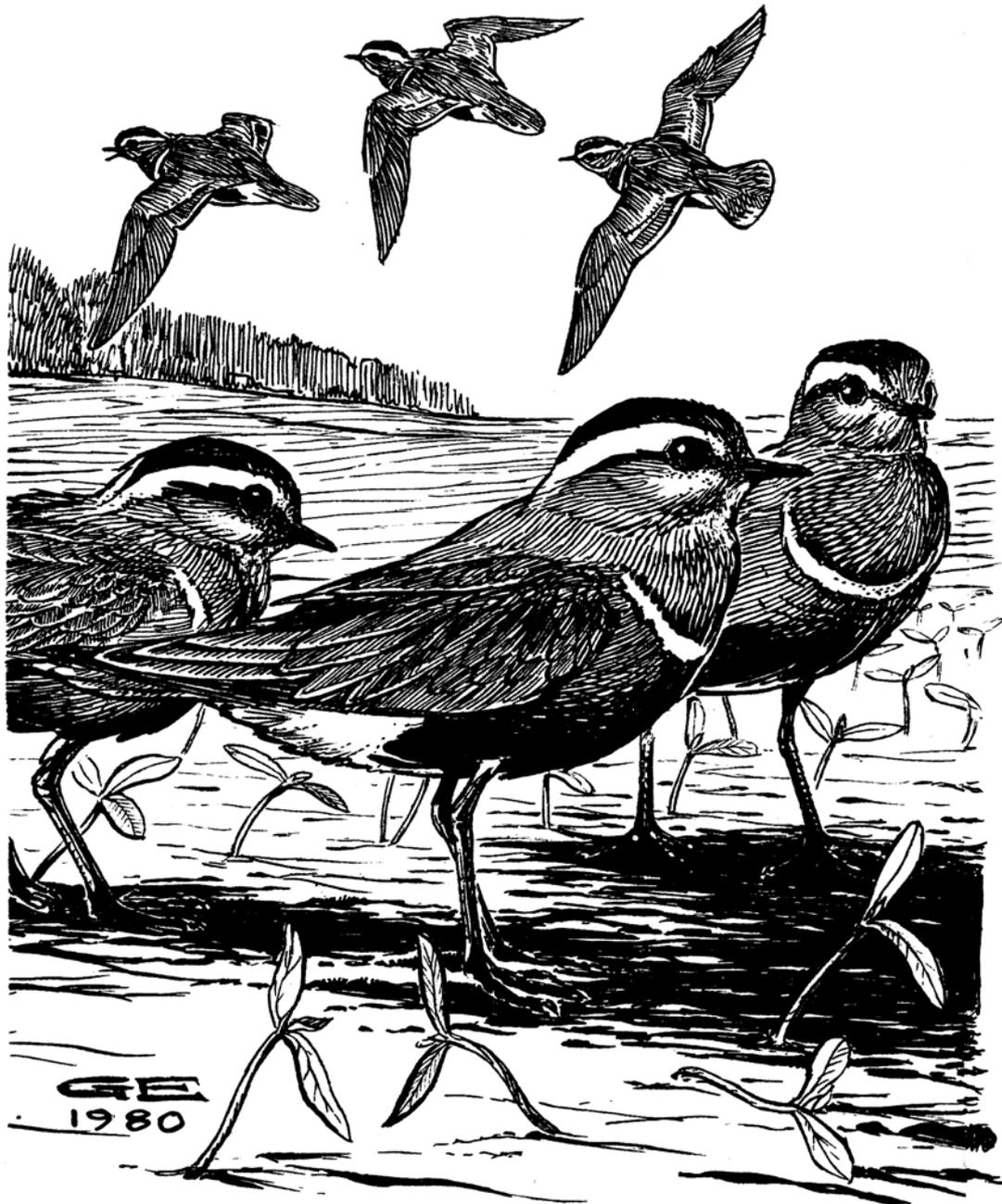


The Day of the Dotterels

Graham Easy

On May 15th 1980 I went along with Tom Talbot in his VW Beetle for a day on the Ouse Washes. On the journey there we spotted a distant flight of plover at Willingham Fen which proved to be a group of 8 Dotterel. Later while sitting on the Ouse Washes bank at Earith we thought seriously about this flock on black fenland. Dotterel were regular visitors on the south Cambs chalk upland fields, being found there regularly since 1949. Frank Pepper of Melbourn had been the source of the bulk of these records, gathering information from his farming friends and providing an Early News Service by circulating these arrivals to Bird Club members. In contrast fenland reports had been practically non-existent for 20 years prior to this Willingham group. We decided to abandon our Washes count to visit 'ancient' sites for Dotterel in the fens (information mostly gleaned by Tony Vine from farmers and landworkers during the 1950s). Chatteris Fen was the nearest of these with regular visits from 1937 to 1955. En route we noted a few suitable-looking fields at Sutton Meadlands; three Dotterel were feeding next to the road at our first stop and one at the next. At the 'historic' Chatteris Fen site sure enough a flock of 8 birds was found after a few stops and searches.

Fired by this we made our way to the second on our list: Burnt Fen, Littleport. Information from this area suggested Dotterel had been regular visitors in springs from 1950 to 1959 and possibly earlier. Our first stop was successful with a remarkable group of 16 again close to the road with a further bird nearer Mildenhall. To end this survey of historical sites we moved to the fenland edge at Isleham. There were some 1960 records from this area; not black peat soils but well away from the chalk upland mecca areas at that time. Here an obvious huge expanse of sugar beet to the south of the village looked suitable and sure enough a distant flight proved, on closer inspection, to be 18 Dotterel. To add to these records Tom had noted a flock of 11 birds on his regular watch patch at Chittering, which was on black peat.



What a remarkable series of observations considering the rarity of Dotterel on fenland up to that time. In fact the group at Chatteris Fen and Sutton Meadland proved to total up to 100 birds on later scrutiny, which showed our trip across fenland was far from thorough. We made a more detailed coverage of the Isle of Ely on later days that May without any further finds – showing the benefits of drawing on past data for this species with its traditional spring stopping-places.

These days the fenland sites are fully realised and are now well scrutinised. It seems possible that we were remiss in not examining the region prior to 1980!

Cambridge Conservation Forum 2008 Summer Symposium
Future farming in the UK: global implications for society and biodiversity
Thursday 3rd July 2008, New Hall, Cambridge

This one-day conference aims to identify likely trends in agriculture (including biofuels) in the UK over the next 10–20 years, their likely biodiversity and socio-economic impacts in the UK and elsewhere, and possible mitigation measures. The conference programme is available at the CCF website together with further details on the conference and venue: www.cambridgeconservationforum.org.uk. Note that the Cambridgeshire Bird Club became a member of the Cambridge Conservation Forum earlier this year so individual Bird Club members are entitled to attend the conference.

WARBLER WORKSHOP ON 10 MAY 2008

On 10 May, at 7a.m., 20 people gathered for the second warbler workshop, organised by the Club in co-operation with RSPB Fowlmere NR, part of the celebrations of World Migratory Bird Day (www.worldmigratorybirdday.org). While the first workshop a year ago, saw an extremely cold (but bright) morning, this year it was a day like in mid-summer, seemingly perfect conditions to learn about warbler identification. We split in two groups, led by Peter Herkenrath and Tony Fulford, respectively. In total, we recorded nine species of warbler, and of the Fowlmere regulars, it was only Grasshopper Warbler that we missed. But it wasn't all that easy. Reed Warblers, Willow Warblers, Chiffchaffs and Blackcaps were all obliging, singing and showing well. It took slightly more efforts to get Sedge Warbler and Common Whitethroat, and Garden Warbler seemed almost absent, until a few participants managed to hear just one singing. Also Goldcrest proved difficult, with only one of the two groups scoring just one bird. A fine Lesser Whitethroat showed very well to one group while the other enjoyed listening to one's song. A Blackcap put on a fantastic display with so much mimicry the group began to doubt whether it was a Blackcap at all until the bird was seen. It gave some very passable impressions of Blackbird, Reed Warbler and Blue Tit and started each song with a strange 'see see see' like a Robin or Song Thrush alarm call – an illustration of how difficult warbler song identification can be! Other birds observed included a Hobby, a Sparrowhawk, several Turtle Doves, a few Gadwalls, Bullfinch and a pair of Green Woodpeckers; two Fallow Deer were simply watching us without making an effort to get up and away. Feedback from participants confirmed that such workshops are indeed something the Club should continue to offer.

Peter Herkenrath and Tony Fulford

BIRD CLUB ARCHIVES: CAN YOU HELP?

Last year Roger Clarke's widow kindly gave his Bird Club archive to the Club. This highlighted the fact that the Club had no archives, mainly I suspect because it had no repository for one. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many senior members of the Club possess important material that would help to give substance to such an archive. As we know the Club has an exceptionally distinguished history and it would be a tragedy if no permanent record of its activities were held. The Council feels that its archive should be held in Cambridge and I have secured provisional agreement from the Balfour Library in the University Zoology Department for it to be housed there. Before that can be put into action I need to know how much material we might have. So this is an appeal to all members of the Club, especially those who have held posts on Council, to let me know if they have any material they would be happy to place in the Club's archives, either now or at some time in the future. Roger Clarke had in his possession the records of the Cambridge Sewage Farm in the late 1950s and some from Wisbech, priceless records of a distant era of wader recording, as well as membership cards, attendance lists and other more formal documents, but his material is only a start. The Balfour Library has a complete run of Annual Reports, so we don't need those, but anything else is of value. Particularly interesting would be any photographic material from the pre-digital age, as we have it in mind to try to create a photographic archive as well. So, in the first instance, please email me with a rough idea of what you might be happy to give to the Club. I can be contacted on jch@theleys.net. Many thanks for your help.

John Harding

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

OUTDOOR MEETINGS

Monks Wood National Nature Reserve on Friday July 11th

Meet at 7p.m., in the car park of Monks Wood Centre for Ecology and Hydrology for a guided natural history walk with a warden.

Booking is necessary for this event: for booking and enquiries contact Vicki Harley (see back page for contact details).

Monks Wood NNR is one of the best examples of ancient ash-oak woodland in the East Midlands. Breeding birds include Tawny Owl, Nightingale, Marsh Tit and Woodcock. Plant life includes species typical of ancient woodlands and rarer species include greater butterfly orchid, violet helleborine and crested cow-wheat. A wide range of tree and shrub species are found in the reserve; the site is also notable for its population of rare wild service trees. Monks Wood is an important site for beetles with over 1000 species being recorded in the area, and butterflies, including the rare black hairstreak.

Location and access: Monks Wood is 10 km north of Huntingdon and 1 km to the east of the A1 (M) between junctions 14 and 15. The reserve is accessed via the B1090 (from the B1043). The nearest village is Woodwalton. There is car parking at a lay-by on the B1090, near the entrance to the reserve (but see above re. car parking).

To download a leaflet describing this reserve, see the webpage www.english-nature.org.uk/special/nnr/nnr_details.asp?NNR_ID=112

Barbecue at Fowlmere RSPB Reserve on Friday August 8th

Guided walk led by the Warden or a volunteer warden at 6.30 pm. Barbecue cooking in the picnic area from 7.30pm. Bring your own food to cook. Salad, baps, sauces, soft drinks available – donation towards costs welcome.

We hope to arrange a moth trapping session later in the evening.

Toilets are available.

LIFTS TO CLUB MEETINGS

Recently, we were approached by a Club member living in Fenstanton who finds it difficult to drive in the dark. She asked whether she could be given a lift to Club meetings. The Club Council is very willing to help. Please let us know if you need a lift to get to outdoor or indoor meetings of the Club and also if you are willing to give other Club members a lift. We could then bring the latter together with those in need of a lift. In the given case: is there anyone driving from Fenstanton to Club meetings? Please contact either Vicki Harley or Peter Herkenrath (see backpage for contact details).

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 (see back page for contact details).

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

We welcome the following new members – Richard Hall of Cambridge, David & Carol Hollin of Grafham, Rebecca Nason of Little Abington, Peter Oakley of Royston, Gill Parrish of Fen Drayton and Hugh Venables of Cambridge.

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. I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this bulletin.

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

CBC BULLETIN BY EMAIL

If you would like to receive your bulletin by email, please contact me. This will save paper and save the Club the costs of distributing the bulletin by post.

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

CBC/BTO CONFERENCE: CAMBRIDGESHIRE WETLANDS WEEKEND

Saturday October 18th: Cottenham Village College

Sunday October 19th: wetland sites in Cambridgeshire

Cambridgeshire holds outstanding wetland habitat, home to conservation success stories and a source of fascination and enjoyment for the county's birdwatchers. This conference will review of the status of wetland birds in winter and the conservation projects in the county, investigate the likely effects of climate change and survey the importance of our wetlands for the migration of internationally important species.

Over three sessions on Saturday October 18th we will be informed and entertained by Andy Musgrave and Mark Rehfisch of the British Trust for Ornithology, Peter Bircham and Roger Beecroft, who will talk about wetland bird populations, climate change and conservation. Simon Wotton and Jen Smart from the RSPB will talk about the biology of Bittern and Lapwing. Our artist-in-residence will be Ben Green.

On Sunday October 19th there will be an opportunity to visit to several wetland sites in the county to learn about the habitats and their conservation – and maybe do a little birdwatching as well! A full programme and booking form will be distributed in August with the next bulletin.

For further information contact Vicki Harley or check the Club website.

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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 July 7th

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

Next Bulletin due out August 2008, covering May–June 2008

GOOD BIRDING!