

CAMBRIDGESHIRE BIRD CLUB *Bulletin* No. 416



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

Welcome to the May / June 2011 Edition

Within this edition you find the systematic list of bird records for the period May and June, with thanks this time to writer Vince Lea.

Articles include the development of the Swift breeding tower on a site in Cambridge, by Dick Newell. Various designs were put forward, and with great care, one was selected. You will discover how the 'African Sun' and kinetic art are both linked to the project. The Cambridge City sponsored Bird Race 2010 was successfully undertaken by Guy Belcher, Ellis Selway and Iain Webb, and Guy has written up their account of the 24 hour birding event. They reached their target number of species and even had time for a snooze!

Our Chairman's remarks cover various topics, including a change to the County Recorder – please check Peter's section and also the last page for further details.

From the Editor

By Ben Green



RECENT BIRD REPORTS – MAY/ JUNE 2011

These are unchecked reports rather than confirmed records, sourced from sightings received by our County Recorder or reported on the “What’s About?” page on the CBC website.

May saw a continuation of the drought from early spring, which finally broke in June, just after the official drought notice was issued on the 10th. Near continuous fine weather during migration meant that things went ahead on schedule, with few opportunities for scarce passage migrants or vagrants to be grounded in the county, but benefiting birds aiming for Cambridgeshire as their summer residence.

There was a good showing of Black Terns and the regular passage waders in the early part of May, while June saw a few of the rarer herons and a presumed Buff-breasted Sandpiper turning up. Our scarcer summer visitors were well represented in the records received, and Cambridgeshire's rarer breeding birds continued to show consolidation, particularly raptors and some waterbirds. Just a couple of winter visitors lingered into the early part of May, with a group of Waxwings continuing their terrific performance and just missing out on a latest-date record for the county.

Our scarce woodland birds were as usual either under-recorded or truly absent – it is hard to judge whether the single site reported for Lesser Spotted Woodpecker is a true reflection of the situation when there is an equal number of sites reported for Nuthatch. However, we can be sure that Wicken Fen had good coverage, so that the only information we received regarding Lesser Redpoll, namely that there were none at Wicken during the period, is a true reflection of the sad situation for this species at that site.

No wild swans were reported in the period, while two **Pink-footed Geese** were the only northern representatives of note. Breeding **Egyptian Geese** were noted at Fen Drayton lakes. Single **Ruddy Shelducks** were seen at Grafham and Wicken, while **Common Shelducks** were reported breeding at Grafham and Kingfishers Bridge, with further records from six other sites, including 8 at Foul Anchor. There was a nice sprinkle of **Garganey** with records from seven areas, a maximum of just two being seen at several of these, but mostly just males were reported, and no confirmed breeding records. **Mallard**, **Gadwall** and **Tufted Duck** are our commonest ducks and all were seen with

young, as were the rarer breeders **Wigeon**, **Shoveler** and **Pochard**, all observed with broods at a single well protected site. **Pintail** and **Teal** were seen but not confirmed as breeding, as were **Red-crested Pochard** (Buckden), **Common Scoter** (Grafham, two on May 12th and one on June 19th) and **Goldeneye** (Paxton & Fen Drayton).

A scatter of **Common Quail** records, mainly calling birds, started with one on May 15th at Melbourn, and ran throughout the period with 6 sites holding birds, and three at the Ouse Washes was the peak count.

No confirmed breeding of **Bitterns** was reported, but the species did make appearances at six locations, two of which held birds for extended periods and one of which had a suspected pair. Doubtless two cold winters may have set back some of the earlier optimism, but this is still a good situation compared to a decade ago. No holding back the **Little Egret**, however, with a peak count of 20 at Barleycraft, two other sites holding double figures and records from a total of 17 sites. The rarer herons and allies also showed up in the later spring period, with **Black-crowned Night Heron** (Bainton on June 12th), **Cattle Egret** (Fen Drayton, June 15th), **Great Egret** (two probables at Nene Washes on May 21st), **Purple Heron** (Wicken, May 15th and Woodwalton, May 31st), **White Stork** (fly-over on May 4th), and a sub-adult **Spoonbill** at Paxton Pits on June 5th making a pretty good list! The stork was seen over Fen Drayton at 8am and Godmanchester at 9am; 10 km an hour is pretty poor progress, so surely it must have landed somewhere along the Ouse Valley.

No scarce grebes were reported in the period and the two common species were reported from just a couple of sites. There were no reports of any sea birds out of their comfort zone in the county.

A **Honey Buzzard** at Hampton Vale and a female **Goshawk** at Fleam Dyke on May 3rd made a good start to the month for raptors. Twenty-five localities had records of **Red Kite**, which is no longer considered as noteworthy for the sightings page on the website! The Wicken return summed it up as 'records of

singletons throughout each month'. Breeding activity was noted for **Marsh Harriers** at several sites while unconfirmed **Hen** and **Montagu's** came from two sites in June, and the latter was backed up by a more confident sighting 10 days later in the same area. Further **Goshawk** reports came in early May, on the 6th and 7th, relating to a male and female at sites 15km apart. As with all records of this species, accurate identification is always a concern, and the prospect of escapees is also an issue, but the species is generally thought to be increasing nationally, and perhaps this is one to watch for future colonisation in our more wooded corners. **Sparrowhawk** records came from just a dozen locations but several of these related to breeding activity, so perhaps observers are becoming blasé about this species now that Red Kite and Common Buzzard are so much more regular, the latter being regularly sighted. **Osprey** records came from four sites: Wicken May 1st, Fen Drayton May 2nd, Tubney Fen May 31st and Comberton June 7th.

Fewer **Kestrel** records were received than for Sparrowhawk, but far more **Hobby** records came in with high counts of 17 at Fen Drayton and 9 at Wicken. Oddly, no records were received from Paxton Pits, but twenty-two other sites did have them, although no breeding records came in during the period. It is quite a late breeder so hopefully the Atlas will be furnished with breeding records from later in the summer. **Peregrine** records are, mostly, still treated with confidentiality, due to the threat of disturbance from admirers or worse. Nonetheless, we can report that five pairs have been seen nesting or exhibiting breeding behaviour in the county this year, a terrific state of affairs and this is certainly one to be aware of while out and about in town or country. All records submitted to the Club's County Recorder are dealt with in confidence.

Water Rail and **Corn Crane** were also mainly detected by call with up to 7 of the former at Kingfishers Bridge, and the latter coming from Ouse Washes and, more abundantly, the Nene Washes. **Common Crane** continues to be a resident of the county, with birds seen at large wetlands in the breeding season, as well as one over Cambridge on May 6th.

Rare waders were represented by a brief visit by a **Black-winged Stilt** on May 1st at Paxton Pits, and a **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** was reported at the Ouse Washes on June 29th. A **Temminck's Stint** was at Paxton Pits on May 15th. Passage waders were really rather good, with **Grey Plover**, **Sanderling**, **Bar-tailed Godwit**, **Whimbrel**, **Curlew**, **Spotted Redshank**, **Greenshank**, **Green**, **Wood and Common Sandpipers**, and **Turnstone** all in several locations in the first half of May. Highlights include day counts of 9 **Sanderling** at Grafham, 14+ **Ringed Plover** at Paxton, 6 **Dunlin** at Maxey, 59 **Bar-tailed Godwits** through Wicken Fen on May 1st, five **Spotted Redshanks** at the Ouse Washes, 7 **Greenshanks** and 9 **Wood Sandpipers** at Wicken and 21 **Common Sandpipers** together on the dam at Grafham. **Green Sandpipers** in particular, and one or two other species, started to be seen again from the middle of June. **Ruff** put in rather a less impressive appearance with Wicken Fen and Grafham being the only sites.

Our breeding waders are in a state of flux, with **Oystercatcher**, **Avocet** and **Little Plover** seemingly on the increase, while **Lapwing**, **Redshank**, **Snipe**, **Woodcock** and **Black-tailed Godwit** are on the decline.

A 1st-summer **Mediterranean Gull** was recorded on and off at Fen Drayton lakes from May 28th to June 27th, but no other reports came in from elsewhere. **Little Gulls** were seen there too, as well as at Ferry Meadows, Godmanchester, Grafham Water (with two from 3rd–5th May), and the Ouse Washes. A huge colony of 531 **Black-headed Gulls** has developed at Kingfishers Bridge, thanks no doubt to the high level of protection offered to the site. They were joined by a breeding pair of **Lesser Black-backed Gulls**, which are also breeding at Godmanchester and Wisbech. A late-staying **Iceland Gull** just made it into this Bulletin, being seen on May 1st at Bradley Fen, while a **Kittiwake** was at Grafham on May 17th. Just five nests of **Common Tern** were at Kingfishers Bridge, after a promising count of 44 birds on May 3rd, the highest site count of the period. Other locations held small numbers including breeding pairs. **Arctic Terns** and **Black Terns** passed through in the first two weeks of May, with 13 of the former at Grafham, and

14 of the latter at Fen Drayton being the peak counts. Both were seen at 7 localities each. Black Terns also had a couple of late May/early June records. A single **Little Tern** was seen at Paxton Pits on 7th, 14th & 15th May – perhaps the same bird.

Twenty-five sites with **Turtle Doves** seem like a good return these days, with 4+ pairs at Fowlmere NR and five pairs in the Over area being two of the highest counts. Similarly, 18 sites had reports of **Cuckoo**, with one at Toft 'the first for 6 years'. Seven were at Wicken, but only two of these were females and breeding, based on monitoring Reed Warbler nests, was poor.

The Owl reports provided the following: **Barn**, present at 17 locations, **Little** at 10 locations, **Tawny** at 6 locations, **Long-eared** at 2 locations and **Short-eared** at 2 locations. Breeding was confirmed for all of these except Short-eared.

Swifts appeared in late April, and by the first week of May double-figure counts were being reported. Grafham on May 22nd had an estimated 500+ along with one **Pallid Swift**, the latter for less than an hour only. There were very few **Kingfisher** records, perhaps as an after-effect of the freezing winter, but breeding was noted at Toft and Wicken – hopefully the sign of potential re-stocking of our waterways! A single record of **Wryneck** was a treat for one householder, who had it in their garden in Southorpe. Few records were received for our resident woodpeckers, just one **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** coming from Gamlingay where a garden turned up a juvenile.

There were two reports of **Golden Oriole**, one from Girton College reported as singing (but exact details were not available), while a 'green' type flew over Ely Beet Factory on May 22nd.

A remarkable record of a **Raven** visiting a garden in Gamlingay on May 4th was followed by sightings of flying birds at Fen Drayton (May 21st) and Wothorpe A1 on the 24th.

Only three single **Goldcrests** were reported, and there was a 'nil' return from the Wicken log for the whole period – surely a reflection of

the hard winter. One **Firecrest** was recorded, a single-day singing male at Hardwick Wood on May 8th.

Marsh Tits were reported from just 3 locations. Breeding **Bearded Tits** were confirmed at two locations, while two males were also seen at Ely beet pits.

A couple of good sized breeding colonies of **Sand Martin** were reported, from Kingfishers Bridge and Block Fen, but few other records of hirundines were received.

Cetti's Warbler made it through the winter alright, although numbers at Wicken were considered down a little. Nonetheless, there were birds at 11 locations, and peak counts of 7 at Fen Drayton, five at Wicken and 4+ at Godmanchester. Higher numbers of **Garden Warbler** only came from scrubby wetland areas, such as Fen Drayton (c.10), and Diddington, (c.5).

Six **Lesser Whitethroats** in the Elm area were a notable record but few others were reported. The same number of **Common Whitethroats** was also at Elm, but higher numbers were elsewhere such as Westfield Farm at Comberton, and Ouse Fen, with 8 each. **Grasshopper Warbler** records came from 11 locations, and again Wicken was in the top league, with 6–10 pairs estimated. An incredible 65 singing **Reed Warblers** at Kingfishers Bridge was far and away the highest count received.

In the midst of the arrival of our summer migrants 12 **Waxwings** made an appearance at Ickleton, on May 3rd – two days short of the county's latest ever date for the second half of 'winter'!

Single lingering **Fieldfares** were seen in May, at Kimbolton on the 2nd and Fowlmere on the 5th.

Spotted Flycatchers were dotted about the county from the 6th May onwards, with a satisfying proportion of the records relating to breeding pairs.

An exact tally of **Nightingales** has yet to be made for 'HQ' Paxton Pits, but 5+ were singing in May. Several other wetlands or

scrubby areas had them, such as Godmanchester GP (three), Fowlmere village and Fen Drayton. Grafham Water held four, but the highest count came from Castor Hanglands with 14. One or two were heard at other less typical sites, such as Toft, Toseland and Conington. Whether these relate to territorial or migrant individuals is hard to know, this being such a skulker and which tends to go quiet when paired up, but the Toft records spanned the period 13th - 27th May, with two individuals present on the latter date, so this is encouraging. **Black Redstart** was recorded in Peterborough on June 3rd, so this is likely to be a territorial individual. **Common Redstarts** were seen in early May at Wicken and Fowlmere NR, but one later on June 26th is a less typical date, which may relate to a summering individual. Single **Whinchat** records came from three locations in early May – typical passage records – but the only **Stonechat** report was of one in June which may be another breeding record for this re-establishing species. Seven **Wheatear** records came in the first week of May, and then a final one appeared on the 14th, a female at Weybridge. These late birds are often Greenland-bound individuals.

Nuthatch was only present at Monks Wood if the records received are to be believed.

Tree Sparrow records often referred to breeding pairs/colonies, with five such reports. Singles were seen at Little Wilbraham fen and the Ouse Washes but the saddest was of a dead bird hit by a car at Trumpington.

A peak count of just 8+ **Yellow Wagtails** was submitted (from Wicken Fen) with other records coming from a few sites, and breeding noted at Witcham. Breeding **Grey Wagtails** were also suspected at Witcham, and definitely recorded from Cambridge,

Whittlesford and Lode. On May 4th, three **White Wagtails** were seen at both Wicken Fen and Fen Drayton.

A high count of 36 **Linnets** was seen at Westfield Farm in Comberton. A group of 10 **Common Crossbills** at Orton Brimbles was a good record, and was followed by singles at two sites in June. Six **Bullfinches** made the highest count, and came from Mepal.

There were no particularly noteworthy counts of any of our bunting species in the period, but breeding/territoriality was being recorded in places.

Exotica records involved sightings of **Bar-headed Goose**, **Ross's Goose**, **Small Canada Goose**, **Speckled Teal**, **Reeve's Pheasant** and **Indian Peafowl**.

Recent Reports section was compiled and written by Vince Lea, assisted by Doug Radford.

Contributors: Colin Addington, Jake Allsop, Jacqui Ann, Louise Bacon, Rowena Baxter, Peter Bircham, Roger Buisson, Malcolm Busby, Steve Brown, James Cadbury, Michael Crosby, Roger Coey, Ade Cooper, Steve Cooper, Robin Cox, Ian Dawson, Mark Eaton, Mike Foley, John Harding, Dean Harlow, Andy Harrold, Mark Hawkes, David Heath, Peter Herkenrath, David Hollin, Jonathan Hook, David Hopkins, Bob Humphreys, Andrew Knight, Colin Kirtland, John Le Gassick, Vince Lea, John Lindsell, Tony Mallyon, Owen & Monica Marks, Andy Massey, Dave Millard, Mark Missin, David Nation, Darren Oakley-Martin, Roger Orbell, Garth Peacock, Robert Pople, Michael Price, Doug Radford, Mike Redshaw, Tony Roberts, Stephen Roughley, Nigel Russell, Ian Seamark, Clive Sinclair, Nigel Sprowell, Chris Thorne, P M Warrington, John Wells, Chris Went and Mick Whitehouse, Christoph Zockler. Also, records were taken from the CBC website, with thanks to Tony Roberts.

Thanks to all contributors to the CBC database May & June 2011.

The Cambridge City Sponsored Bird Race 2010 by Guy Belcher

The date of this stimulating event was May 20th 2010, just over a year ago. Two of my companions Ellis Selway and Iain Webb took the challenge with me.

Our jobs mean that we spend lots of time in the green spaces of Cambridge and often comment on the impressive number of species seen breeding, wintering and on passage within the City limits. As a bit of fun we all got day passes from our respective families for a twenty-four hour Cambridge City bird race. So that it wasn't purely a bird watching indulgence, we decided to hassle our friends and colleagues to raise money for the Burkina Faso appeal, supported by the Bird Club in 2010.

The date chosen was towards the end of May in order to try and maximise the number of potential species up for grabs. The only appropriate vehicles for a Cambridge bird race were bicycles. The rules were simple: record all bird species seen or heard within a 24 hour period within or from the City boundary. Identification had to be confirmed by at least two members of the group for the record to count. We predicted a total of 70 species but secretly hoped for more. This is our account:

While Ellis and Iain cross Coldhams Common pre-dawn, picking up the early common songsters and Mute Swan in the gloom, I sleep in. No excuse I'm afraid. I cycle, cursing, to join the others at Bramblefields Local Nature Reserve in the north of the city at 04.20. The usual suspects have already started the chorus as well as Whitethroat and the first Swifts of the day are overhead.

In these early hours birds come in thick and fast and with a whole day ahead of us, enthusiasm is high. Just before we leave Bramblefields Iain's keen ears pick up a distant Willow Warbler in the disused railway sidings. I secretly hope for Nightingale or Grasshopper Warbler to announce its presence from this derelict haven but alas with the clock ticking we have to move on.

We view across the Cam and Ditton meadows from Hayling Way. The first few runners and dog walkers are out on what is turning into a fantastically sunny day. In a matter of minutes we hear the distinctive cry of the commoner tern we have been hoping for. This is followed by a 'reedy' quake that Iain and I instantly call 'Gadwall', an unpredicted bonus bird.

A male Grey Wagtail is on the narrow boats opposite Stourbridge Common. Although breeding locally it is surprising to see one before the first Pied Wagtail of the day.

A pair of Tufted Duck flying along the river at Midsummer Common is unexpected in the heart of the City.

Paradise Local Nature Reserve offered riverside wet woodland and we soon chalk up a pair of Spotted Flycatcher and Treecreeper, whilst Sedge Warbler and Red-legged Partridge call from the wet meadows on the other side of the river.

We turn our attentions to farmland specialists and head west along the Coton footpath. A Yellow Wagtail calls overhead and Yellowhammer, Linnet and Skylarks are in full song. Scanning with the scope reveals a distant buzzard perched in a tree by the M11. It is still only 11 a.m. but we begin to flag and realise that new species are going to be hard to come by for the rest of the day.

Our route takes us to the fields around Addenbrookes Hospital for Corn Bunting, which obligingly is singing from the railway line power-cables. Then on to Cherry Hinton Chalk pits for a sit down and to scan over the City from Limekiln Hill. We speculate wildly about what passage birds we might see from this view-point but apart from the occasional Sparrowhawk and Swift little is moving anywhere. We do hear the rattle of a Lesser Whitethroat in the scrub as one by one we fall asleep. What? We all have young families and busy lives!

Our snooze is followed by a pub lunch and talk of how we are unlikely to uncover new species in the heat of the day and perhaps we should gain some brownie points at home before going out in the evening. This would never happen if we had competition!

We reconvene at Byron's Pool Local Nature Reserve at 7.30 pm. In an attempt to make up for earlier lost time, I am first there and almost instantly locate a Pied Wagtail on the ploughed field across the river, finally breaking this bogey. Iain's keen ear once again picks out a hoped for Grey Partridge and we eventually locate a pair just on the City boundary – species number 70. We make it! I casually ask Iain who has been diligently logging the time of each new sighting so I can see the list. I scan it proudly then exclaim 'We can't count Aylesbury Duck!'. Although we have set down no rules about introduced or otherwise doubtful species, and most of our sponsors would be none the wiser, I am sure this is against some rule somewhere.

As dusk settles we somewhat dejectedly watch Noctule and Daubenton's bats over the weir when suddenly a dark shape shoots down the river in pursuit – Hobby, and a fantastic bird to end the day and we pass our target of seventy.

In the end we raised £500 for the cause and had a great day in a lovely green City. There had been a few surprise birds and some equally surprising dips such as Black-headed gull, which you'd normally expect in small numbers.

New family arrivals have meant we have not undertaken to repeat the challenge this May. However, we have discussed the possibility of other races and challenging other teams for some friendly competition. Anyone fancy a Cambridgeshire bird race by bike or maybe even boat?

Cambridge City Council Swift Tower

by Dick Newell

In the UK, as in parts of Europe, Swifts are on the decline, by roughly 3% per year. This means that the population halves every 20 years. Although things on migration and in Africa, as well as the decline of insects in the UK may be contributory causes, there can be no doubt that loss of nest-sites is an important factor, as old buildings are replaced, renovated or insulated. It is not yet a crisis, but in decades to come, if we are still to have Swifts, they will only live in places built specifically for them, as is already the case for the Purple Martin in North America.

In Cambridge, a small group of us have been active in implementing nest-box schemes, doing projects in schools, and generally making a noise about the plight of Swifts. So, it was with delight and amazement that we heard that our own City Council had allocated £35000 to build a Swift tower, and would we like to advise?

In the UK, housing developers make contributions to Section 106 funds, for the purposes of financing urban art. Cambridge City Council Nature Conservation Projects Officer, Guy Belcher, came up with the brilliant idea of making an allocation to build a Swift Tower on Logan's Meadow Nature Reserve (Pye Fen) which would be, not only an attractive piece of static urban art, but also a dynamic piece of living kinetic art as the Swifts display in the summer with their spectacular screaming flypasts. Andrew Merritt, an upcoming young London artist was commissioned to produce a range of designs, one of which, inspired by the African sun, was chosen by a committee of local councillors and Swift 'experts' Jake Allsop and myself.

The African Sun comprises 221 boxes held together in a supporting steel framework. Each

box can be removed individually for maintenance purposes. The boxes, made of 20mm thick treated pine, are 22cm x 22cm in cross section and with lengths ranging from 50 to 90 cm, so there is plenty of space inside each one for nesting Swifts.



However, although the 221 boxes provide a stunning visual effect, it would not be sensible to have such a large number of identical front entrances.

It is important that each entrance can be individually recognised by the birds, so there will be only 60 entrances in the north-facing front of the sun, arranged pseudo-randomly and also in locations chosen with minimal exposure to the sun on the south-facing back. In order to further

help the Swifts recognise individual boxes, three shapes of canopy will be placed in a random arrangement above each entrance. The variation in colour across the face of the sun will also help recognition – Swifts have extremely good colour perception. There are a further 33 entrances on the lower back and sides, in more shaded locations, with 10 boxes allocated to bats in the upper part of the back, as bats prefer warmer roosting places.

Local school children were involved in the project with a range of activities, including feathering nest concaves for the tower.

In order to attract the birds, a solar power driven 'bird scarer' device, programmed with Swift calls, is used. It may well take more than one season to attract the birds, but once the first occupants are established, the colony should grow steadily through the years, providing a sensational attraction for Cambridge residents and visitors. Already, in this first year, Swifts have been seen, on many dates, circling the tower and even 'banging' the boxes - this bodes well for next year and beyond.

The Tower was 'opened' on 4th July by Cambridge Mayor, Councillor Ian Nimmo-Smith, with attendance by the local press and the BBC. At the appropriate moment, 14 Swifts made a fabulous screaming flypast.

Hopefully, the Cambridge Swift Tower will be an inspiration to others to do something for Swifts, including architects who should look for opportunities to build attractive structures into otherwise uninspiring blank walls on their new developments.

If you want to get involved, then email us at actionforswifts@gmail.com, and for further information take a look at our blog, actionforswifts.blogspot.com.

From the Chairman

Peter Herkenrath

While I am writing this (mid July), the breeding season is slowly coming to its end. There are many young birds around and I pay particular attention in order to find more breeding evidence for the Atlas. I have finished my timed tetrad visits for the Atlas, and it has been a fantastic breeding season, where I have seen Barn Owls, Red Kites, Hobbys, Spotted

Flycatchers, Nuthatches, Marsh Tits and even an out-of-place Little Egret along a motorway. I have even developed some very modest nest-finding skills, something I have never been good at. I will certainly miss 'atlassing'.

This spring and summer I have noticed several incidents of garden owners rather ruthlessly trimming back hedges and bushes or felling trees, in the middle of the breeding season. The number of bird nests being lost to inappropriate action in our gardens would certainly make a scaring figure. Of course, hardly anyone would be aware of the damage to our bird fauna they are causing. It would help if all Club members raised awareness of the damaging potential that inconsiderate gardening activities harbour. Let's all do our bit to protect wildlife on our doorstep.

The autumn migration is nearly upon us and I look forward to checking my garden and hedges for warblers and wetlands for waders. I am less desperate to see the Swifts going but it is encouraging to see so much action for breeding Swifts happening in Cambridge and other places in the county (see article in this Bulletin).

A few days ago, we had our annual barbecue, this year for the first time at Fen Drayton Lakes, kindly hosted by the RSPB Fen Drayton team. Thank you Andy Cotton, Neil Renwick and Jacqui Miller. Also thank you to Doug Radford who had hosted our barbecue for many years at Fowlmere. This year's event was well attended and despite the rain very enjoyable. Besides socialising, we enjoyed a Barn Owl, a pair of Oystercatchers with chicks and Common Terns.

Another enjoyable recent event was the Cambridge Conservation Forum (CCF) Summer Symposium *Landscape and Localism: Future directions in habitat management*, held on June 23rd in Cambridge, with several Club members attending. We discussed various aspects of habitat management and involving local people in conservation action. Louise Bacon, the Club's Research Officer, gave a presentation on the first results of our field work for the national and Cambridgeshire Atlas. The Club is a member of CCF so our members have access to all CCF activities.

I would like to say thank you to Mark Hawkes, who after six years' service on Council, first as Secretary then County Recorder has stepped down. In recent years the job of County Recorder has become extremely time-consuming and I am very grateful for Mark's efforts and hard work for the Club. Mike Foley, our Bulletin Editor, has agreed to take up the County Recorder position on a temporary basis so we have time to find a long-term replacement for Mark. If you have any suggestions or are keen yourself, please get in touch with me. Until further notice please send all your records to Mike Foley (see announcement on last page).

It is still time to submit articles for the Cambridgeshire Bird Report 2010. If you have something to contribute or consider doing so, please get in touch with John Clark the Editor or myself (see last page for contact details).

FWAG - Volunteers for liaising with farms and farmers sought

As announced in Bulletin 414, Council has recently discussed closer collaboration with the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group. FWAG assists farmers and other people who manage the countryside by providing environmental management expertise.

Following a call in the recent FWAG Newsletter, farmers in Whittlesford, St Neots, Great Gransden, Little Gransden and Holme (Peterborough) have expressed an interest in liaising with birdwatchers about birdlife on their farms. We are now seeking Club members who would like to establish an informal long-term relationship with the farmers by recording birds

on their farms during the seasons and during changes in habitats and discussing their observations with the farmers. This does not involve full-scale farmland bird surveys or a professional environmental advice service for farmers. It provides a unique opportunity to access farms, observe the birds and other wildlife and to relate them to the management of the farm with interest and benefits for both the farmers and the birdwatchers.

If you are interested, please contact Peter Herkenrath (see contact details on the last page) and we will bring you in touch with the farmers.

FROM THE RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Final Atlas Update – Summer 2011

The BTO and County Atlas main survey period is now over.

Firstly a big thank you to everyone who has contributed with timed tetrad visits (TTVs) and roving records.

There are still birds breeding out there, and we are allowed to go out and search for evidence of late breeding up to the end of August.

The next stage of the county project is to get a team together to produce the County Atlas. Anyone who would like to help with writing some species accounts should contact Louise Bacon. We intend to have a meeting in September (date tbc), with at least the core team of writers and data-crunchers to set the ball rolling properly. The venue will either be Cambourne or Barton, depending on the number of people attending.

We also need to trawl through the records in the Club's database for the relevant years, and to use these to augment the data submitted directly to the Atlas project. This is not a small task, and again, anyone who would like to help with trawling through records for a group of species should contact Louise Bacon for further information on what would be required.

Louise Bacon (for contact details please see the last page).

FORTHCOMING EVENTS 2011

SUMMER OUTDOOR MEETINGS

Friday 12th August, 6.30pm
Roswell Pits, Ely

A General Natural History Walk

There is a good chance of seeing Marsh Harrier, Kingfisher, Hobby, Common Tern amongst the birds, and if people stay late enough, also several species of bat including Daubenton's. Roswell Pits are managed as a nature reserve by the local Wildlife Trust and have been designated as an SSSI for their wetland and geological features.

Meet at 6.30 p.m. at Kiln Lane off Prickwillow Road. There is a signpost on Prickwillow Road for the Environment Agency, Vexamus and Hyro International. The junction is at TL551807. Following the sign takes you onto Kiln Lane where there should be sufficient parking if numbers for the visit are moderate.

Please contact [Vicki Harley](mailto:vicki.harley@care4free.net) (contact details on last page, <mailto:vicki.harley@care4free.net>) if you plan to attend so we have some ideas of how many to expect.

The following sites give some background about Roswell Pits: <http://www.elywildspace.org.uk>
<http://www.wildlifebcnp.org/reserves/reserve.php?reserveid=63>

INDOOR MEETINGS

Friday 9th September
Cottenham Village College
Doors open 7.30 p.m. for 8 p.m.

'The Adventures of the Urban Birder' by David Lindo

Self-styled 'Urban Birder', David Lindo is a regular on TV and radio, has a flourishing website and blog, and he writes for a host of magazines including BBC Wildlife, Bird Watching and the RSPB's 'Birds'. He's also keen on using new technology to communicate his enthusiasm on wildlife.

See: <http://www.theurbanbirder.com>

Friday 14th October
Cottenham Village College
Doors open 7.30 p.m. for 8 p.m.

'Gardens – Good for Birds?' by Mike Toms

Mike Toms is Head of Garden Ecology at the BTO and has written widely on the topic of garden birds and wildlife gardening. Gardens, and the birds that use them, are commonly dismissed as being unimportant in conservation terms. However, increasing evidence demonstrates that gardens do have a role to play and this talk examines that evidence, drawing on data collected through the BTO's garden-based surveys.

RSPB CAMBRIDGE LOCAL GROUP – FIELD TRIPS / INDOOR MEETINGS

- Sat 20th Aug, Snettisham & Titchwell. Meet at Snettisham, 9.45am, (Titchwell, approx. 1.30pm)
- Sat 10th Sept, Walberswick, Corporation & Dingle Marshes. Meet at Dingle Marshes car park 10.00am.
- Weds, 21st Sept, Canada, British Columbia: Bears, Whales and Orcas - Indoor Meeting, St John's Church Hall, Hills Road, Cambridge
- Sat 24th Sept, boat trip, Boston, time tbc
- Sat 15th Oct, Rutland Water, meet at reserve car park 9.30am.

For more details and booking, please see <http://www.rspb.org.uk/groups/cambridge> or call 01638 741018.

'NATURE IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE'

Volume 53 of *Nature in Cambridgeshire*, has been published recently. Among the usual wide-ranging coverage, there are articles on breeding Marsh Harriers, Swifts, butterflies and the flora of Devil's Dyke, fungi and lichens. Further details of this and earlier issues are available at <http://www.natureincambridgeshire.org.uk>. Copies of Issue 53 (2010) and many others are available from Vicki Harley (contact details on back page).

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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.cambridgebirdclub.org.uk

Birdline number

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

Please email records to: Mike Foley by September 7th 2011

Please send records by post to: Mike Foley by September 5th 2011

Next Bulletin due out early October 2011, covering July/August 2011

GOOD BIRDING!