

CAMBRIDGESHIRE BIRD CLUB

Bulletin No. 435



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

Welcome to the July / August 2014 Edition

RECENT BIRD REPORTS

The records in this bulletin are unchecked and may be revised at a later date; where there is an asterisk beside the name of the bird it indicates that this species requires a description to be sent to the County Recorder. Where no numbers are given the record relates to single birds.

July – August Headlines



Black-winged Pratincole on the Ouse Washes; photograph by Brendan Doe

BLACK-WINGED PRATINCOLE* Jul and Aug: Ouse Washes (19th July to 7th August). *Only two previous records in the county and this is the first since 1982.*

GREAT WHITE EGRET* Jul: Ouse Washes (2nd – 6th), Wicken Fen (9th, 16th and 22nd), March Farmers (11th), Burwell Fen (15th and 25th). **Aug:** Berry Fen (5th, 24th – 28th, 2 on 25th – 26th), Wicken Fen (5th to 8th then 24th – 28th), Ouse Fen (9th), Ouse Washes (2 on 9th – 10th), Nene Washes (15th), Fen Drayton Lakes (16th – 21st), Holme Fen (17th), Pondersbridge (23rd, possibly in the area for up to two weeks prior to this). *Overall, a minimum of two and probably up to five or six birds in the county.*

GLOSSY IBIS* Jul: March Farmers/Nene Washes (2nd – 7th), Ouse Washes (9th – 13th), Berry Fen (19th – 30th). **Aug:** Kingfishers Bridge (19th), Wicken Fen/Baker's Fen (22nd – end of the month).

SPOONBILL Jul: March Farmers/Nene Washes (2nd – 3rd, 15th).

SPOTTED CRAKE Jul: Berry Fen (one heard calling on 23rd – 24th).

HONEY BUZZARD* Jul: Eaton Socon (a dark-phase bird flyover on 8th).

TEMMINCK'S STINT Jul: Ouse Washes (25th – 28th). **Aug:** Grafham Water (28th – end of the month).

SABINE'S GULL* Jul: Paxton Pits (a 2nd summer bird on 26th); *an extraordinary record for July with only 15 previous occurrences up to the end of 2012, almost all in autumn.*

GOLDEN ORIOLE* Jul: Shrubbs's Marina, River Cam (one reported singing in a poplar plantation in 'early July'). *If confirmed this would be the first record for two years.*

Other records

Wildfowl

Whooper Swan Jul: March Farmers (an injured bird on 20th). **Aug:** Ouse Washes (24th, presumably also an injured bird).

Greylag Goose **Aug:** Berry Fen (356 on 13th), Burwell Fen (maximum 250 on 15th).

Canada Goose Jul: Barleycraft GP (180 on 15th). **Aug:** Berry Fen (184 on 13th).

Barnacle Goose **Aug:** Granta Science Park (up to 12 from 10th to 29th).

Egyptian Goose Jul: Paxton Pits (maximum 3), Isleham Washes (19th), Berry Fen (2 with tiny goslings on 22nd). **Aug:** Paxton Pits (max 2 on 2nd), Fen Drayton Lakes (max 9 on 29th), Berry Fen (2 on 28th).

Shelduck Jul: Burwell Fen (20+ juveniles on 14th). **Aug:** Burwell Fen (2 juveniles all month).

Wigeon Jul: Fen Drayton Lakes (38+ on 23rd). **Aug:** Fen Drayton Lakes (35 on 23rd), Berry Fen (35 on 19th), Ouse Washes (a female on 2nd, single on 17th), Paxton Pits (4 on 5th), Burwell Fen (21st).

Gadwall Jul and Aug: Broods reported from 5 sites. Maximum count Burwell Fen (211 on 26th Aug).

Teal Jul: Ouse Washes RSPB (130 on 3rd). **Aug:** Ouse Washes (female with 9 ducklings on 2nd), Berry Fen (c220 on 28th), Ouse Washes (300 on 28th) Paxton Pits (38 on 26th), Burwell Fen (c 200 on 31st).

Mallard **Aug:** Ouse Washes (400 on 17th), and 4 other sites with counts over 100.

Pintail Jul: Paxton Pits (20th). **Aug:** Paxton Pits (3 on 9th, 13 on 28th), Kingfishers Bridge (17th), Grafham Water (24th).

Garganey Jul: Ouse Washes RSPB (all month maximum 26 on 6th), Paxton Pits (3rd), Burwell Fen (max 2). **Aug:** Ouse Washes (maximum 18 on 17th), Paxton Pits (max 4 on 26th), Fen Drayton Lakes (2 on 3rd), Burwell Fen (max 5 on 15th), Maxeys Pits (female on 18th), Berry Fen (25th – 27th, then 2 on 28th).

Shoveler Jul: Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 200 on 3rd), Paxton Pits (12 on 20th).

Red-crested Pochard Jul: Paxton Pits (maximum 3). **Aug:** Paxton Pits (maximum 4 on 28th and 30th), Grafham Water (2nd, 16th and 23rd), Fen Drayton Lakes (23rd).

Pochard Jul: Bradley Fen (18 on 13th), Paxton Pits (8 on 20th). **Aug:** Somersham GP (71 on 23rd).

Tufted Duck Jul: Paxton Pits (at least one pair bred; count of 347 on 20th), broods reported from 5 other sites, Godmanchester GP (198 on 25th). **Aug:** Colne GP (196 on 2nd).

Common Scoter Jul: Paxton Pits (2 on 12th – 13th). **Aug:** Bolton's Pit, Cambridge (5th – 7th, a presumed immature).

Goldeneye Jul: Fen Drayton Lakes (22nd). **Aug:** Fen Drayton Lakes (3rd), Paxton Pits (4th).

Gamebirds

Grey Partridge reported from 11 sites (max 10 at Toft on 27th). **Aug:** reported from 6 sites, (max 20 at Burwell Fen on 31st).

Quail **Jul:** 8 reports mostly in the Fowlmere and Heydon areas (max 2). **Aug:** Mepal/Witcham (2nd).

Cormorant, egrets and herons

Cormorant **Jul:** Paxton Pits (27 on 23rd). **Aug:** Drysides BP (33 on 31st).

Bittern **Jul:** reported from Ouse Washes, Ouse Fen (3 on 6th). **Aug:** Wicken Fen (several dates), Ouse Washes (4th), Ouse Fen and Barleycraft GP.

Little Egret **Jul:** Nene Washes (160 on 7th), Berry Fen (c20 on 10th), Burwell Fen (maximum 44 on 22nd), Grafham Water (max 16 on 19th), Isleham Washes (4 on 19th), March Farmers (large numbers most of the month peaked at 240 on 7th), Ouse Washes (peaked of 125 on 6th), Paxton Pits (max 7 on 20th). **Aug:** Berry Fen (maximum 8 on 4th), Burwell Fen (max 13 on 4th), Fen Drayton Lakes (22nd) Gamlingay (13th), Grafham Water (max 18 on 9th), Great Shelford (2 flyovers on 30th), Paxton Pits (max 15 on 18th), Wicken Fen (max 6 on 23rd).

Grey Heron **Jul:** Ouse Washes (12+ on 2nd, up to 31 on 5th, 45 on 6th). **Aug:** Berry Fen (11 on 31st).

Grebes

Little Grebe **Aug:** Bradley Fen (29 on 24th), Paxton Pits (pair with young on 9th), Burwell Fen (pair with small young on 27th).

Great Crested Grebe **Jul:** Godmanchester GP (33 on 25th). **Aug:** reported from Colne Fen GP (28 on 24th), Burwell Fen (juvenile), and Wicken Fen.

Raptors

Red Kite **Jul:** Heathfield (6th), Ouse Washes (27th). **Aug:** Ouse Washes (2nd), Paxton Pits (9th), Grafham Water (17th).

Marsh Harrier **Jul:** reported from Burwell Fen (2), Ouse Washes RSPB(4), Fowlmere NR (6th). **Aug:** Buckden, Burwell Fen (3), Fen Drayton Lakes, Grafham Water (2), Ouse Fen (maximum 5), Ouse Washes (6), Wicken Fen (2).

Sparrowhawk **Jul:** reported from Burwell Fen, Ouse Washes, Paxton Pits. **Aug:** Cambridge/Jesus College (regularly seen and one found dead on 12th), Chippenham Fen (bred), Grafham Water (3), Wicken Fen (one caught and ringed on 16th).

Buzzard **Jul:** reported from Burwell Fen, Chippenham Fen, Grafham Water (3 broods noted on 26th), Haddenham, Paxton Pits (2), Ouse Washes. **Aug:** Burwell Fen (3), Chippenham Fen, Dullingham, Grafham Water (maximum 20 on 24th), Six Mile Bottom.

Osprey **Jul:** Nene Washes (9th and 22nd), Glinton (11th). **Aug:** Wicken Fen (5th and 19th), Grafham Water (2 on 9th – 10th, singles on 17th, 24th, 26th, then 2 on 31st), Gamlingay (13th), Little Paxton (24th), Brampton Wood (27th), Paxton Pits (27th), Cambridge /Lovell Road (a flyover on 29th).

Rails and crane

Water Rail **Jul:** reported from Fowlmere NR, Chippenham Fen, Ouse Washes RSPB, Baker's Fen (7 on 30th). **Aug:** Chippenham Fen, Grafham Water (3), Ouse Washes.

Corncrake **Jul:** Earith (one calling on 28th – 29th then 2 on 31st). **Aug:** Earith (one calling on 2nd).

Coot **Jul:** Colne Fen (297 on 22nd).

Common Crane **Jul:** March Farmers (3 on 2nd), Ouse Washes RSPB (2 on 12th and 28th – 30th), Burwell Fen (2 flyovers on 27th). **Aug:** Ouse Washes (2 on several dates).

Waders

Avocet **Jul:** Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 6 on 6th).

Oystercatcher **Jul:** Ouse Washes RSPB (12th), Paxton Pits (maximum 6 on 4th), Burwell Fen (2 on 5th and 8th). **Aug:** Paxton Pits (maximum 3 on 4th).

Golden Plover Jul: Paxton Pits (8th), Ouse Washes (9th and 27th), Burwell Fen (2 on 14th). Aug: Berry Fen (6 on 25th).

Lapwing Jul: Ouse Washes RSPB, Paxton Pits (50 on 5th, 72 on 7th, 206 on 8th, c350 on 20th, 500+ on 27th), Ouse Fen (650 on 17th), Burwell Fen (321 on 22nd and 150 on 25th). Aug: counts of 100+ at Paxton Pits (max c500 on 1st), Burwell Fen (max c300 on 5th), Ouse Fen (1000 on 5th).

Little Ringed Plover Jul: Paxton Pits (all month max 4), Burwell Fen (1 – 3 all month, maximum 9 on 30th), Ouse Washes (1 – 5 from 6th to 18th, maximum 8 on 25th), Berry Fen (3 on 10th), Heydon Grange GC (12th). Aug: Paxton Pits (maximum 4 on 2nd), Ouse Washes (6 on 2nd and 2 on 30th), Burwell Fen (maximum 3 on 5th), Grafham Water (22nd and 2 on 26th).

Ringed Plover Jul: Ouse Washes (6th), Paxton Pits (2 on 16th and on 26th, 5 on 30th), Burwell Fen (22nd). Aug: Paxton Pits (maximum 7 on 28th), Ouse Washes (2nd), Burwell Fen (max 13 on 23rd), Grafham Water (max 24 on 26th), Grunty Fen (9 on 24th).

Whimbrel Jul: Ouse Washes (4 flyovers on 12th), Burwell Fen (flyover on 22nd), Over (14 flyovers on 27th), Colne (27th). Aug: Ouse Fen (5 flyovers on 2nd), Cambridge ('sizeable flock' heard passing over on 2nd), Paxton Pits (flyover on 5th, a single on 28th and a flyover on 30th), Ouse Washes (4 flyovers on 9th), Aldreth (flyover on 25th).

Curlew Jul: March Farmers (2nd), Grafham Water (flyover on 3rd), Paxton Pits (3rd and 10th), Burwell Fen (5 on 3rd), Foxton (flyover on 6th), Colne (flyover on 17th). Aug: Ouse Washes (3rd and 7th), Grafham Water (2+ on 17th), Paxton Pits (25th), Eaton Ford (flyover on 26th), Burwell Fen (31st).

Black tailed Godwit Jul: March Farmers (maximum 70 on 3rd), Ouse Washes RSPB (max 69 on 16th), Paxton Pits (max 8 on 26th), Burwell Fen (from 8th, max c55 on 15th), Isleham Washes (10 on 19th). Aug: Fen Drayton Lakes (3rd and 23rd), Burwell Fen (max 5 on 29th), Paxton Pits (600 on 14th), Grafham Water (3 on 24th – 25th).

Turnstone Jul: Paxton Pits (2 on 23rd, one on 28th and 2 on 31st). Aug: Paxton Pits (2 passing through on 3rd, 2 on 19th and 6 on 27th – 28th), Grafham Water (3 on 17th), Fen Drayton Lakes (23rd).

Knot Aug: Paxton Pits (c50 passed through on 2nd), Grafham Water (a juvenile on 21st – 24th).

Ruff Jul: Ouse Washes RSPB (small numbers early on built up to 92 on 30th), March Farmers (6 on 6th built up to 23 on 22nd), Burwell Fen (3 on 22nd – 25th and 10 by 30th), Isleham Washes (19th), Paxton Pits (31st). Aug: Ouse Washes (over 50 for most of the month, maximum 97+ on 3rd), Burwell Fen (maximum 22 on 29th); singles elsewhere.

Sanderling Jul: Paxton Pits (22nd, 27th and 31st). Aug: Paxton Pits (18th), Grafham Water (24th).

Dunlin Jul: Ouse Washes RSPB (maximum 12 on 9th), Paxton Pits (max 7 on 30th), March Farmers (11 on 11th), Burwell Fen (from 22nd, max 11 on 30th). Aug: Paxton Pits (maximum 11 on 2nd), Ouse Washes (2nd, 2 on 4th), Burwell Fen (max 21 on 29th), Grafham Water (max 14 on 26th), Fen Drayton Lakes (max 3 on 25th – 26th), Ouse Fen (3 on 20th), Grunty Fen (12 on 24th).

Little Stint Aug: Ouse Washes (2nd – 10th), Paxton Pits (a juvenile 19th – 30th), Burwell Fen (a juvenile on 27th).

Curlew Sandpiper Aug: Ouse Washes (7 on 29th, 4 on 30th).

Common Sandpiper Jul: Paxton Pits (from 4th, maximum 19+ on 22nd), Burwell Fen (from 5th, maximum 6+ on 30th), March Farmers (6th, 2 on 15th), Foul Anchor (2 on 13th), Maxeys Pits (16th), Grafham Water (2 on 19th), Ouse Washes RSPB (2 on 19th), Isleham Washes (2 on 19th). Aug: Paxton Pits (maximum 5 on 1st – 4th), Ouse Washes (2nd, 7th and 30th), Berry Fen (3rd), Burwell Fen (1 or 2 throughout the month), Grafham Water (max 10+ on 22nd), Gamlingay (13th), Kingfishers Bridge (17th).

Green Sandpiper Jul: Ouse Washes (2 near Earith on 3rd, RSPB maximum 8 on 12th), Paxton Pits (2-3 all month), Burwell Fen (reported all month with a max of c13 on 8th), Berry Fen (max 8 on 10th), Maxeys Pits (10 on 16th), Grafham Water (2 on 19th), Isleham Washes (4 on 19th). Aug: Berry Fen (max 7 on 2nd), Ouse Washes (max 6 on 9th), Grafham Water (max 10+ on 3rd), Burwell Fen (max 11 on 5th); 1 – 3 birds at Paxton Pits, Fen Drayton Lakes, Fowlmere NR, Kingfishers Bridge, Cam Washes and Berry Fen.

Spotted Redshank Jul: March Farmers (3rd, 11th and 20th), Ouse Washes (6th – 30th). Aug: Ouse Washes (2nd – 7th), Berry Fen (24th – 28th), Fen Drayton Lakes (26th).

Greenshank Jul: March Farmers (1 – 4 from 3rd to 22nd), Ouse Washes RSPB (from 3rd, maximum 10+ on 9th), Paxton Pits (from 2nd, 2 on 16th – 26th), Wicken Fen (6th, 9th) Berry Fen (2 on 10th), Burwell Fen (2 on 14th, 3 on 15th and 22nd, singles on 27th and 30th), Maxey Pits (2 on 16th), Isleham Washes (19th). **Aug:** Ouse Washes (maximum 5 on 24th), Paxton Pits (4 on 29th and 2+ on 30th), Grafham Water (max 13 on 24th), Fen Drayton Lakes (5 on 20th – 21st, 9 on 22nd), Berry Fen (5+ on 26th and 28th), 1 – 3 at Fowlmere NR, Burwell Fen, Gamlingay and, Cottenham.

Wood Sandpiper Jul: March Farmers (2 on 6th, one on 19th), Ouse Washes (1 – 3 from 7th to 27th), Berry Fen (2 over on 10th), Burwell Fen (30th). **Aug:** Ouse Washes (2 on 1st), Burwell Fen (2 on 4th, one on 8th).

Redshank Jul: Burwell Fen (maximum 13 on 15th), Ouse Washes RSPB (19 on 12th), Paxton Pits (1 – 4 all month), Isleham Washes (3 on 19th). **Aug:** Grafham Water (3 on 3rd), Paxton Pits (4 juveniles on 18th), Burwell Fen (2 on 23rd).

Woodcock Jul: Wicken Fen (2 roding on 2nd), Chippenham Fen (3 on 3rd). **Aug:** Monks Wood (24th).

Snipe Jul: Ouse Washes RSPB (2 on 12th, 6 on 26th and 51 on 30th), Burwell Fen (up to 20 all month, maximum 45 on 30th), Isleham Washes (4 on 19th), Paxton Pits (3 on 26th). **Aug:** Burwell Fen (42 on 4th, 70 on 5th, 10+ on 15th, 11 on 20th and 6 on 23rd), Paxton Pits (maximum 19 on 28th), Ouse Fen (5+ on 20th), Chippenham Fen (20th), Fen Drayton Lakes (10+ on 25th), Berry Fen (10+ on 25th).

Skuas, terns and gulls

Arctic Skua* Aug: Sutton Bridge (20 seen flying into Cambs on 26th in the early morning).

Great Skua* Aug: Sutton Bridge (6 seen as above).

Black Tern Aug: Grafham Water (3rd, a juvenile on 26th – 29th), Paxton Pits (a juvenile on 26th, possibly the same bird as at Grafham), then Grafham Water (5 on 30th and a single on 31st).

Sandwich Tern Aug: Grafham Water (3 on 24th).

Common Tern Jul: Grafham Water (20 on 19th), Burwell Fen (7 on 22nd). **Aug:** Fen Drayton Lakes (20+ on 3rd and 12 on 25th), Grafham Water (72 on 12th).

Arctic Tern Aug: Grafham Water (2 juveniles on 26th).

Black-headed Gull Jul: Paxton Pits (c100 pairs bred; counts of 276 on 10th and c500 on 30th). **Aug:** Grafham Water (c6,000 on 20th), Fen Drayton Lakes (roost of 1000 on 23rd).

Mediterranean Gull Jul: Paxton Pits (adult on 13th), Burwell Fen (juvenile on 22nd) Grafham Water (juvenile on 26th). **Aug:** Grafham Water (2nd), Ouse Washes (2 flying south on 17th), Ferry Meadows CP (27th).

Common Gull Jul: Paxton Pits (maximum 12 on 10th), Fowlmere (12 on 13th), Grafham Water (19th). **Aug:** Grafham Water (c200 on 4th).

Lesser Black-backed Gull Jul: Fowlmere (120 on 6th), Burwell Fen (29 on 8th), Paxton Pits (240 on 10th), Heydon (250 on 12th), Grafham Water (4,124 on 19th). **Aug:** Grafham Water (c1000 on 17th and 5180 on 20th, roost of 'minimum 4,000' on 30th), Fen Drayton Lakes (roost of 280 on 23rd).

Herring Gull Aug: Grafham Water (c20 on 4th), Fen Drayton Lakes (7 in the roost on 23rd).

Yellow-legged Gull Jul: reported from Fowlmere (2), Grafham Water (maximum 104 on 19th), Paxton Pits (maximum 24 on 26th). **Aug:** Paxton Pits (maximum 25 on 8th), Grafham Water (25+ on 3rd, then 50 – 70 in the days following), Milton Tip (4 on 17th), Fen Drayton Lakes (7 in the roost on 23rd).

Caspian Gull Aug: Grafham Water (3rd, a juvenile on 17th, adults on 21st – 22nd and 30th), Milton Tip (a juvenile on 17th).

Great Black-backed Gull Jul: Grafham Water (15 on 19th). **Aug:** Grafham Water (30 roosting on 30th).

Doves, cuckoo, owls and kingfisher

Turtle Dove Jul: reported from Chrishall, Fowlmere NR (maximum 4 birds), Heydon, Little Staughton (2) Gt Staughton (4), March, and Ouse Washes (4 on 3rd). **Aug:** Fowlmere NR (4), Wilbraham Common (3).

Cuckoo Jul: Wicken Fen (3 calling on 2nd), Fowlmere NR (6th), Paxton Pits (2 on 26th). **Aug:** Maxey GP (3rd), Holme fen (31st).

Barn Owl Jul: reported from Fowlmere NR (bred), Heydon, Ouse Washes (2), Paxton Pits, and Wicken Fen (2). **Aug:** Burwell Fen, Ouse Washes, Wicken Fen (several broods were ringed), Barton and Byron's Pool.

Little Owl Jul: reported from Burwell Fen, Paxton Pits, Stow-cum-Quy (2), Wicken Fen.

Tawny Owl Jul: Fowlmere NR (pair bred), Paxton Pits (pair bred), and 7 other sites. **Aug:** reported from Chippenham Fen, Grafham Water (2) and Wicken Fen, and 10 other sites.

Swift Jul: large gatherings at Whittlesey (160+ on 15th), Burwell Fen (c200 on 15th), Eaton Ford (100+ on 27th). **Aug:** Paxton Pits (14 on 9th, 3 on 22nd), Great Shelford (2 on 11th), Paxton Pits (c15 on 12th), Tubney Fen (3 on 15th), Burwell Fen (c100 on 20th and 15 on 23rd), Bar Hill (23rd), Buckden (2 on 24th), Wicken Fen (25th), Paxton Pits (28th), Grafham Water (28th), Burwell Fen (29th), Grafham Water (25+ on 30th), Paxton Pits (30th).

Kingfisher Jul: Chippenham Fen, Ouse Washes (2), Paxton Pits (2) and 10 other sites. **Aug:** Burwell Fen, Chippenham Fen, Paxton Pits (3+), and Wicken Fen.

Falcons and parrots

Kestrel Aug: Grafham Water (3 on 23rd), Burwell Fen (3 on 29th).

The Grafham Kestrels were part of an amazing raptor fest that day with 6 Buzzards, 2 Marsh Harriers, 3 Sparrowhawks, 2 Hobbies and a Peregrine – only a Red Kite was missing from the list. Likewise Burwell Fen also produced 3 Marsh Harriers, 3 Buzzards and a Hobby on 29th); raptor watching that would have been unthinkable thirty years ago.

Hobby Jul: reported from Berry Fen, Burwell Fen, Fowlmere NR, Ouse Washes RSPB, Paxton Pits, and Stow-cum-Quy. **Aug:** reported from Berry Fen, Burwell Fen, Chippenham Fen, Fen Drayton Lakes (family on 16th), Fowlmere NR (2 + 3 young on 17th), Gamlingay, Grafham Water (2), Leighton Gorse Wood, Ouse Fen, Ouse Washes (2), Paxton Pits, and Wicken Fen (one ringed).

Peregrine Jul: reported from Cambridge, March Farmers, Ouse Washes RSPB, and Fowlmere NR.

Aug: Berry Fen, Cambridge, Grafham Water and Paxton Pits.

***Ring-necked Parakeet Jul:** Ouse Washes (regularly reported, presumably the breeding pair plus young; maximum 5 on 13th). **Aug:** St Neots (2 on 1st), Foxton (6th), Ouse Washes (17th).

Tits

Coal Tit Aug: reported from Great Shelford, Paxton Pits, Grafham Water (20 on 24th).

Marsh Tit Jul: Ditton Park Wood (3 on 14th). **Aug:** reported from Chippenham Fen and Paxton Pits.

Bearded Tit Jul: Wicken Fen (30 ringed in July). **Aug:** Ouse Fen ('lots' on 2nd), also seen and ringed at Wicken Fen.

Hirundines and warblers

Sand Martin Jul: Paxton Pits (c200 on 10th), Burwell Fen (30 on 15th). **Aug:** Burwell Fen (40 on 5th, c1000 on 15th, 150+ on 22nd, c300 on 23rd, c150 on 29th), Tubney Fen (c100 on 15th), Cam Washes (c1500 on 20th), Wicken Fen (c200 on 24th), Fen Drayton Lakes (500+ on 25th).

Swallow Aug: Tubney Fen (30 on 15th), Wicken Fen (52 on 4th), Fen Drayton Lakes (250+ on 25th).

House Martin Jul: Granta Science Park (150 on 17th). **Aug:** Tubney Fen (30 on 15th), Burwell Fen (200 on 23rd), Trumpington (c150 on 24th).

Cetti's Warbler Jul: Wicken Fen (8 ringed), Stanground and Kings Dyke NR. **Aug:** reported from the July sites and at Paxton Pits and Drysides BP.

Willow Warbler Aug: Ferry Meadows CP (20 on 19th).

Whitethroat Jul: Comberton (18 on 23rd).

Grasshopper Warbler Aug: reported from Wicken Fen and Stanground Gullet (3rd).

Nuthatch, starling and thrushes

Nuthatch Jul: Ditton Park Wood (5 on 14th), Grafham Water (family party on 26th).

Starling Jul: Sutton North Fen (800 on 26th), Fen Drayton Lakes (roost of 'several hundred' on 22nd). **Aug:** Ouse Washes (300 on 12th).

Mistle Thrush Jul: Heydon Grange GC (22 on 6th and 29 on 12th), Fowlmere (83 in a pre-roost gathering on 11th).

Nightingale Jul: Paxton Pits (one calling on 3rd), Castor Hanglands (26th).

Spotted Flycatcher, Starts and chats

Spotted Flycatcher Jul: reported from 13 sites with breeding at 4 of these. **Aug:** reported from Berry Fen, Brampton Wood, Cambridge, Castor Hanglands (bred), Fowlmere NR, Granta Park (bred, 6 – 7 reported), Ouse Washes, Paxton Pits, Southey Wood (bred), Wimpole Park (clusters of 5, 6, and 11 on 19th and 10 on 24th).

Black Redstart Aug: Murrow (22nd).

Redstart Jul: Wicken Fen. **Aug:** Blackbush (immature/female type on 20th), Paxton Pits (28th and 2 on 29th), Fowlmere NR (2 on 30th).

Whinchat Aug: Paxton Pits (23rd and 29th), Great Fen (4 on 30th), Grafham Water (2 juveniles on 30th), Burwell Fen (2 on 31st).

Wheatear Jul: Nene Washes/Eldernell (22nd), Wicken Fen (22nd). **Aug:** Ouse Washes (7th and 24th), Tubney Fen (one on 15th and 2 on 16th), Fen Drayton Lakes (17th), Fowlmere (2 on 17th), Paxton Pits (19th – 22nd), Horseley Fen Chatteris (24th), Paxton Pits (26th).

Sparrows, wagtails and pipits

House Sparrow Aug: Wicken Fen (count of 60 on 10th).

Yellow Wagtail Jul: Ouse Washes (26 on 30th). **Aug:** Burwell Fen (19 on 4th), Paxton Pits (14 on 18th, 30+ on 26th), Grafham Water (40+ on 24th), Ouse Washes (40+ on 24th, c60 on 29th and 30th), Great Fen (c30 on 30th), Fowlmere (c70 on 31st).

Grey Wagtail Jul: reported from 9 sites, max at Kennet (3 on 3rd, bred). **Aug:** Grafham Water (2 on 3rd), Paxton Pits (2 on 25th), Buckden (flyover on 24th), Byron's Pool (2 juveniles on 5th and 11th).

Tree Pipit Aug: Buckden (flyover on 24th), Grafham Water (24th), Coploe Hill (31st).

Finches and buntings

Goldfinch Jul: Diddington (flock of c100 on 30th), Hinxton (86 on 19th). **Aug:** Tubney Fen (160 on 27th).

Linnet Aug: Huntingdon A 14 (60 on 27th).

Exotica

Ross's Goose Aug: Burwell Fen (usual bird from the Wicken-Upware area associating with Greylags on several dates).

Black-winged Stilt Jul & Aug: Berry Fen (the escaped bird was seen on several dates).

Budgerigar Jul: Wicken Fen (one reported on 14th).

African Grey Parrot Aug: Comberton (a single bird on 25th – valuable if apprehended!).

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BTO Breeding Bird Survey – 20 years old

Club Members who contribute to the BTO Breeding Bird Survey will have recently received the annual report for 2013, which also celebrates 20 years of the survey. It contains fascinating and in some cases worrying statistics for population trends of widespread UK bird species. Tables are also presented for the constituent countries of the UK and for the English regions. Amongst the data are two personal accounts of volunteers who have been surveying the same 1km grid square for those 20 years. They contrast the woods and farmland of Kent with the Hebridean Island of Rum, and provided a readable and informative break from statistics.

I wondered what experiences surveyors in Cambridgeshire have had, and why they are still prepared to walk the same route, across the same square, twice each year. Here, two long-term contributors summarise their experience, and I offer my own reflections on some relatively recent inputs.

Louise Bacon writes “I became a BTO member about 22 years ago, and decided I wanted to participate in a survey. Enquiring about the Common Bird Census, I was directed towards the pilot of a new, less time consuming survey called the Breeding Bird Survey. I took part in the pilot year, and have been walking that BBS square ever since, having added a second square to my portfolio more recently.

A 1km square of farmland with a block of woodland, close to Wimpole estate – maybe it will be quite interesting. In reality, it is probably less interesting than the average farmland in this part of Cambridgeshire, as I have come to know over the past decade as I now survey birds for several farmers in that area; and my BBS square is DULL. So why do I keep doing it? I like bird-watching in a farmland and woodland setting, and as a scientist I appreciate the value of persisting with an average square of farmland, to enable the gathering of data to show just how badly our farmland birds are doing. I live close to farmland with a much higher than average amount of arable birds, and I enjoy the contrast, in an odd way. Also, although my second BBS square has more diversity, I always find time to start my first BBS square as a priority. Amongst the highlights was finding one of the pioneering Buzzard nests of the area about a decade ago – very close to section 4 of my route; oddly, walking close underneath never seemed to flush them, and I even managed extra visits to the area to watch the birds from a safe distance. I often manage chats to the farmer – he is interested in the birds on his land, and always interested in what I have seen, although he does think he has too many Buzzards around and that his farmland birds are doing OK! There is always education to be done.”

Mike Foley writes “Regular listeners of Radio Cambridgeshire will remember the humorous wit and wisdom of Dennis of Grunty Fen, “Britain's favourite vocal yokel”. I mention him because the same Grunty Fen was given to me as my first BBS square in 2005, so I had already built up a picture of the area in my mind, from Dennis’ fictional descriptions of fenland life.

In late winter I made my first venture into the fen – which lies roughly half-way between Witchford and Wilburton – expecting to find just arable fields and ditches. I was therefore somewhat surprised to come across a row of neat, modern dwellings along the straight main road, many of which had large yards filled with trucks, heavy-goods lorries, and even arrays of mobile funfair rides. Standing with these buildings behind me, I scanned my allocated area, a mix of unimproved grassland, autumn-sown cereals and oilseed rape, with some small strips of vegetables such as beans. The arable crops appeared intensively managed with small field margins unsuited to birds, but at least the numerous ditches and sparse low hawthorn provided some better breeding habitat, and much of the grassland area was lined with high hedges with some trees.

For my two transects, it was by sheer chance that I was able to use a farm track and the disused Ely to St Ives railway line, which run in parallel across the survey area. I recorded 29 species in the first season, and none were particularly special or rare. Reed Buntings were noted only within the oilseed rape, but there was no time to check if they were nesting in it or just feeding. On my first

visit the oilseed rape covered one-third of the square, and was like a yellow sea stretching over many fields to the north – mono-cropping at its worst. Skylarks were quite numerous but some red-listed birds I was hoping to find, especially Corn Bunting, didn't want to show. Over the past ten years the number of species has slowly crept higher such that the square has now yielded a total of 62 species – not so bad, though of course not all breeding species.

An area towards Wilburton has been a Turtle Dove hot-spot for years, and the singing birds have been tantalizingly close to my survey area. I managed to count them in 2007 and 2008 but these were birds just briefly entering survey air space. A Marsh Harrier drifted through one year, and Barn Owls nesting towards Wilburton use the area to hunt. Lapwings took up territory one year in a less intensively cropped field but successful breeding was not confirmed. On the brighter side, Whitethroats seemed rather numerous this year and some were singing from territories that were based on nothing more than ragged hawthorn growing in a ditch. But Corn Buntings continue to elude me, though flocks of up to 60 visit during the winter. The appearance of the first-county record Franklin's Gull in the area on 29th July 2006 also eluded me; it was present too late in the season and also it was seen in the evening, so I never had a chance! But this does show the need always to look out for the unexpected, even at Grunty Fen."

For my own part, I took on a square near Six Mile Bottom in 2012. In some respects it is another stretch of arable desert. The first 1000 metre transect is along the side of a single field. Happily there is some permanent grassland and woodland within 50 metres, and the second transect takes in the narrow pine and beech shelterbelts which are common in this part of the county, and which make the area feel just slightly different from the Cambridgeshire norm. So Wrens, Chaffinches and Green Woodpeckers are logged annually. There are plenty of Skylarks (though fewer in the last two years than in 2012) and indeed lots of Brown Hares; in my first season there were so many Hares that when I entered the survey results on line, a warning flashed up to the effect "are you sure about this?"

Unsurprisingly, numbers of common birds are quite low, and the annual species count ranges from 21 to 27; but there is usually a surprise each year – two Lesser Whitethroats last year and two Treecreepers this June. One of the tree belts has produced a pair of Hobbies in each of the last two years, and the local gamekeeper tells me of a second pair on the estate (presumably unrecorded, as there are hardly any public footpaths or roads in the area). The final saving grace is that the walk between my two transects is along the Cambridge to Ipswich railway, though because of the survey methodology, sightings here are not recorded. The banks of the railway cutting provide scrub habitat full of Whitethroats, and the fence song-posts have in each year been occupied by Corn Buntings. So the area is not a complete desert, and I do gain some satisfaction from making my birding activity useful, in a small way.

Chris Brown

The Club's Archives

The Club's archival collection has not been mentioned for some time, so it is worth giving an update on the range of literature that forms a permanent record of the Club's activities; this is held in the Cambridgeshire Collection at the Cambridge Central Library.

The Club owns the stored documents and maintains full control over the archive. Core documents include one set of Cambridgeshire Bird Reports (CBRs) and club Bulletins (from number 3 onwards). In addition there are files with some information from bird surveys, for instance the famous Cambridge sewage treatment works surveys, 1948-49 and 1956-59. Data for several surveys are not stored centrally but the results are available in various publications, notably the CBRs. Some interesting older books held alongside the Club's publications include "A Naturists Calendar" which mentions bird historians from the 17th Century onwards, and "Recollections of Ornithologists and

other Naturalists" (W H Thorpe). There are also several ledgers of an administrative nature: for those who have a burning need to know the titles of meetings and who attended them 50 years ago, there are programme cards for 1950 – 91 and meeting attendance books from 1959 – 82. We also hold a range of publications from other UK bird clubs and organisations, and currently exchange annual Reports with around eight clubs (these Reports are added to the archives one year after receipt); we also have older Reports from a wider range of counties, including some from the 1950s. Some more recent documents are held by various members with a Club role and are used by them as reference material.

There are also some birding books and documents owned by the Library itself which are displayed in the reading room or are in the vaults. The latter can be viewed by request but none is loaned out; this also applies to the Club's material. Typing "Cambridgeshire Birds" into the Library's on-line catalogue search box lists many of these.

Archives on the Web

The Club's web site will soon have an archival section which will grow over time. The first item to be added will be the informative "The Birds of Cambridgeshire: Checklist 2000", recently copied digitally and shortly to be uploaded for viewing. If you have something which could be considered as a potential item, or any ideas for items, or any queries concerning the archives in general, please contact me at mfpfoley@gmail.com. There must surely be items of general interest gathering dust in members' attics; if you come across such items I would like to hear from you!

Mike Foley

Cambridgeshire Bird Club Winter Garden Bird Survey.

A reminder that recording for the Winter Garden Bird Survey 2014-2015, begins in the week starting 5th October. Details of the survey were in the May / June Bulletin and are on the club website, where you can download the recording form. All members are invited to take part. If you have any queries please email Rebecca Buisson at Cambsgardenbirds@gmail.com.

Forthcoming meetings

Friday 10th October, Cottenham Village College

Northumberland through the Seasons by Martin Kitching

Wintering wildfowl and waders, including Pale-bellied Brent Geese from Svalbard, Bar-tailed Godwit, Purple Sandpiper and Long-tailed Duck in iconic landscapes; Black Grouse, Golden Plover, Ring Ouzel and other moorland specialities in the spring; internationally important seabird colonies, including Arctic, Sandwich, Common, Little and Roseate Terns during the summer and the magic of the North Sea's shearwater, skuas, whales and dolphins and some prime east coast migration in the autumn; with everything from vast forests to wide open moorland to rolling sand dunes and hidden precipitous valleys Northumberland is the perfect destination for the birdwatcher who just wants to get away from it all. Martin Kitching is the Senior Guide and photography tutor at Northern Experience Wildlife Tours. Martin has over 40 years of birdwatching experience, and 17 years of organising offshore pelagic trips in the North Sea and is also the North East Regional Officer for the marine conservation charity MARINELife.

Friday 14th November, St Johns Hall, Cambridge

Birdwatching in the Caucasus by Paul French

Georgia is one of the most mysterious, unique and scenic countries in the Western Palearctic and contains some of its most sought after and rarely seen birds. From incomparable mountain birding in the Greater Caucasus to one of the largest raptor migration spectacles in the World, Georgia is a

land that every European birder should visit at least once. Paul French started life working short term contracts around the length and breadth of Britain, including two years as assistant warden at Fair Isle Bird Observatory, three seasons on Shetland working for the RSPB studying seabirds and breeding waders, and a winter in deepest Cornwall producing an atlas of the county's Barn Owls. After a further six years working for the RSPB as a warden and then habitat restoration advisor, he branched out and became a freelance ornithologist. Travel has always been a big part of Paul's life, and he has birded extensively in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and East Asia. Paul is now a leader for Sunbird and serves on the British Birds Rarities Committee, a position that calls for almost as much diplomacy as identification knowledge!

The club needs a member (or two) to make the refreshments at the St John's Hall evening meetings. If you are able to help in this way, please contact Vince Lea.

Friday 12th December, St Johns Hall, Cambridge Christmas Social

Come and enjoy mince pies and mulled wine in good company while listening to inspiring short talks by club members. Please contact Vicki Harley if you would like to give a short presentation.

Non-CBC events:

Saturday 18th and Sunday 19th October

WILDLIFE ARTWATCH

An exhibition at St Mary's Church, Buckden, PE19 5TL on Saturday 18th and Sunday 19th October.

Prominent members of the Society of Wildlife Artists will be displaying paintings and sculpture, all of which will be available to purchase. The artists are Peter Partington, Robert Greenhalf, Brin Edwards, John Davis, Richard Allen, Bruce Pearson and Dafila Scott. All these artists are from East Anglia.

The exhibition is open on Saturday from 10.30am to 5pm and on Sunday from 1pm to 5pm. Tea and home-made cakes are available on both days.

On Saturday evening at 7.00pm there is a very special WILDLIFE ARTWATCH Evening entitled The Birds and the Butterflies. Renowned artist Peter Partington will demonstrate how to draw birds (as recently seen live on BBC TV's Springwatch Unsprung and expert Nick Greatorex-Davies will give an illustrated talk on British Butterflies.

Tickets are £8 and include a complimentary glass of wine. Box Office 01480-431037.

Profits will go to St Mary's Church, Paxton Pits Nature Reserve in Cambridgeshire and The Bob Scott Memorial Appeal for Trans-Saharan Birds

Saturday 8th November 2014, BTO Garden Wildlife Conference

Venue: Whittlesford Memorial Hall, CB22 4NE

Time 10:00 - 16:30, doors open 9:30

Cost: £12 including two coffee breaks and lunch.

To book: call the Garden Ecology team on 01842-750050

Speakers so far include: Kate Plummer from the BTO talking about recent research on Blackcaps, Iain Webb from BCN Wildlife Trust talking about wildlife gardening and invertebrates and Peter Pilbeam talking about mammals in gardens. The conference is open to anyone - you don't have to be a BTO member.

Club Contacts

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Other Council Members: Ali Cooper, Mike Foley

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

The editors would welcome contributions to the E-Bulletin and print edition, on topics such as identification problems, behaviour, summaries of club talks, and book reviews. Contact us at cbcbulletin@cambridgebirdclub.org.uk, and use this address to let us know if you would like to receive your bulletin in e-mail format rather than paper.

Bird Records, sightings and news

If you have seen a scarce or local bird, please submit the news to the '[What's about](#)' page on the Club website via [Pete and Paul](#) who maintain an up-to-date selection of recent highlights. You can also report interesting sightings on the [Cambirds](#) email group (not run by the Club, but we access the records). Any major rarities can be phoned in to Birdline East Anglia on 07941 333970.

Full lists of your records should continue to be submitted monthly to **Louise Bacon** the County Recorder, preferably using the [spreadsheet](#) available on the Records section of the website, **by the 5th of the following month.**

GOOD BIRDING!