



The Pied Flyer

North East Norfolk Bird Club



March 2024 – Issue 105

The NENBC Monthly e-Newsletter

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Through a Lens ...



By Trevor Williams

The weather so far this year has been pretty dismal - the birds, or absence of them, appears to reflect that. When you're stuck inside for days on end it makes you feel gloomy and when you do get out and don't see much you don't feel much better either. With all that time on your hands you can't help thinking about how things used to be in the 'good old days' of birding and how much worse things are getting. Read any number of articles on birds and conservation and it really does feel like the predicted global collapse in biodiversity is becoming a reality. Global warming, which even a decade ago was still being talked about as some vague scientific theory, is impacting all around the world. Go to a Club night talk on the spread of Avian Flu and, just when you thought things were bad, they seem to be getting a whole lot worse!

You get the picture - this cumulative effect and the feelings they create inside us are now being more widely recognised as 'eco angst'. This is the very subject which one of the current UEA 3rd year student projects is being focused on, and this is where we'll need your help. As part of the project a questionnaire is being developed to record and calibrate people's reaction to

these environmental changes and their ability to do anything meaningful about them. We'll be asking NENBC volunteers to complete the questionnaire, along with our colleagues at Felbeck Trust, and then the results will be analysed and any common threads identified. Club member Sarah Hanson, who works in this field at the University, believes we could be on to something - this could be the 'new narrative' in nature. Depressing though it may appear to be, the point of the project is, having first quantified these possible feelings of gloom and helplessness, to come out the other side with some practical ideas, backed by research, which could make a real difference to the way we feel about ourselves and the state of nature we all cherish. We look forward to some of you at least taking that journey with us.

But it's not all doom and gloom. Spring is with us once again and those annual migrants will be on their way - we might just have to look a little harder to find them. And who knows, come the end of May, we might be witnessing the consolidation of the first breeding Bee-eater colony in the UK. Watch this space....

A Note from the Editor



By Carol Thornton

Hi folks. Welcome to our March newsletter. Hope the birding is going well for you - there have certainly been some good birds around despite the general perception that things aren't quite on the usual track at the mo. I missed them all obviously!

The eagle-eyed amongst you might have spotted a new Location on the website "**Suffield - If Not Now When Wood**". This was a request from a new member to cover off his local patch so why not give it a try if you are down towards Felmingham, west of North Walsham? We are always happy to add extra Locations if they are going to be used on a regular basis, not just a one-off, if a write-up and photos are submitted.

Last month's **Through a Lens** subject for the front page was **BIRDS IN FLIGHT**. Our cover images this time are courtesy of Mark Clements [main Skylark] and underneath Francis Farrow [Great Spotted Woodpecker]. Down the left Dave Billham [Skylark], Francis Farrow [Buzzard], Doug Cullern [Kestrel] and down the right Great Black-backed Gull [Mark Clements], Andrew Crossley [Meadow Pipit], Doug Cullern [Mute Swan].

For March, the **Through a Lens** subject will be **BIRDS EXHIBITING BREEDING BEHAVIOUR**. Can you get a pic of a singing bird, or one collecting nesting materials, or checking out a bird box or building a nest? I am sure you can!

My **Editor's Pic of the Month** from February was this Robin from Richard Farrow taken in his Sheringham garden. Welcome to spring!

Due to other commitments I am still going to be a bit light on articles for the upcoming April and May newsletters so if anyone fancies putting 'fingers to keyboard' (or even 'pen to paper') and writing something bird-related, I would be very much obliged! Short or long, expert or novice, with photos or without, whatever suits. Many thanks to those who have already answered the call!





Welcome to Our New Members - we look forward to seeing you soon!

*** Mike Harmer * Phil Atkinson * Michael & Wendy Amos ***
*** Amy Hallahan (UEA) * Charles Gunn (UEA) ***

396 individual
members across
256 households

18,538
bird records
logged

151 bird species
reported

Please keep adding all your sightings to our website at www.nenbc.co.uk. Let us know if you have forgotten your password and need it resetting or need assistance on how to upload your records. More information from our website records, Twitterings and social media presence in **Data, Records, Posts & Tweets** from [page 34](#).

Details on **2024 membership renewal and switch off** on [page 9](#) if you haven't already. If we don't hear from you soon we will assume you don't wish to renew this year. Thanks for your support thus far.

Club Achievement Awards

Star Badges

CONGRATULATIONS to Ellie Farrow on achieving her Bronze Star this month.

Currently, **4** members have achieved **GOLD STAR** status, **20** members have been awarded **SILVER STAR** status and a fabulous **82** members now hold the **BRONZE STAR** status.

For any of the club events that take place in the club area you can include all of the species you see or hear so join us for a walk. It always helps to get on to more birds when you are in a group of like-minded folk.

Keep up the good work everyone – star badges are within everyone's reach!



Number of bird species recorded in the NENBC area since joining the club:

BRONZE [100] self-certified
SILVER [200] peer reviewed
GOLD [250] peer reviewed
PLATINUM [300] peer reviewed

We will notify members when they achieve the Bronze badge but for the higher-level badges, members should notify us on nenbc@aol.co.uk when they are ready for their website records to be peer reviewed by the Peer Review Group.

Eco-Badges

No new Eco-Badge recipients this month.

We currently have **23** members who have achieved their **GREEN ECO-BADGES** [Coastal: 14 | Inland: 9] and **4** who have achieved **SUPER-GREEN** [Coastal: 3 | Inland:1].

Those of you wanting to submit, please let us have a list of species, dates seen and locations that is derived from your website records (we can help you download your data) as we can't yet tell on our website if you are driving or not! If you need help getting your list of species downloaded, please ask!



Number of bird species recorded in the NENBC area at or from home without the use of motorised transport since 1st January 2020 (or date of joining if later):

GREEN ECO-BADGE: 75 species required for lists with only inland sites / 100 for lists with any coastal locations
SUPER-GREEN ECO-BADGE: 125 species required for lists with only inland sites / 175 for lists with any coastal locations

Lists to be submitted by members from **their club website records** to nenbc@aol.co.uk along with a declaration that award requirements have been met.



By Russ Malin

All records are from the NENBC website and submitted by members unless otherwise stated.

≈ 7,100 individual records covering 137 bird species were added in February

There were 7,142 records submitted for February which is 2,057 less than those submitted for the same period last year and 4,282 less than the previous month of January. Total species records were 137 which was 1 more than was recorded in the same period in 2023.

February had a single **TUNDRA BEAN GOOSE** over Muckleburgh Hill on the 3rd. Wildfowl numbers, perhaps not unsurprisingly were down in February but a drake **LONG-TAILED DUCK** was noted from Weybourne. **BLACK-THROATED DIVER** were noted offshore along with **GREAT NORTHERN DIVER** and **RED-NECKED GREBE**. Two **GREAT WHITE EGRET** were past Weybourne and a single **Shag** was noted at Sheringham on the 5th. **RAVEN** were noted a couple of occasions and **DARTFORD WARBLER** and **WOODLARK** were taking up territories locally. In what has been a good year for the species along the Norfolk coast,

Brent Goose There were 100 records from a number of locations throughout the month. High count involved 214 birds east at Weybourne on the 9th. *Photo 1 courtesy of Mark Clements*

TUNDRA BEAN GOOSE A single bird reported from Muckleburgh Hill on the 3rd, flying west and calling repeatedly.

Egyptian Goose Just over 20 reports during the month from Marsham Heath, North Barningham and Baconsthorpe amongst others. A high count of 4 birds was made at Wolterton Park on the 17th. *Photo 2 courtesy of Philip Cartlidge*

Pintail Five reports for February all from the Weybourne and Weybourne Camp area. Eight birds were west past Weybourne Camp on the 1st.

Common Eider Small numbers offshore at coastal locations during February including Sheringham Cliffs & Golf Course, Weybourne Camp, Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs, Sheringham and Weybourne Camp.

VELVET SCOTER A single bird off Weybourne Camp on the 7th was the only report.

LONG-TAILED DUCK A drake was off Weybourne on the 21st.

Goldeneye There were four reports for February. Two drakes west at Weybourne on the 4th and single birds from Weybourne on the 13th and Sheringham on the 26th.

GOOSANDER The three birds last month Haverlingland Great Wood has increased to 6 birds. A male and 5 'redheads'. Single males were noted off Weybourne area on the 13th and 27th.

Grey Partridge Small number involving up to three birds reported from Sheringham Cliffs & Golf Course, Bodham, Weybourne Camp and Weybourne Cliffs. *Photo 3 courtesy of Mark Clements*



BLACK-THROATED DIVER An adult bird was east past Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs on the 10th. A further report was received involving a single bird inshore at Weybourne Camp on the 21st.

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER Single birds were reported on several dates in January from Weybourne, Sheringham and Weybourne Camp. Two birds were past East Runton on the 12th.

Fulmar Over 50 reports for February received from Sheringham, Weybourne, Sheringham Cliffs & Golf Course, Beeston Regis, Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs and Weybourne Camp. 15 birds were noted from East Runton on the 27th. *Photo 4 courtesy of Mark Clements*

RED-NECKED GREBE A single bird was west from Weybourne on the 1st.

GREAT WHITE EGRET Two birds were west offshore from Weybourne and Weybourne Camp on the 13th.

Little Egret Reports of single birds received from Sheringham, Beeston Common, Hunworth and Blickling Park NT. Two birds were at Mundesley on the 7th and 3 birds were at Pigneys Wood on the 29th.

Shag A single bird from Sheringham on the 5th. *Photo 5 courtesy of Richard Farrow*

GOSHAWK Up to three birds were noted at the Swanton Novers Watchpoint during the month.

Marsh Harrier Single birds were recorded from Muckleburgh Hill, Weybourne Cliffs and Bodham with 2 birds from Weybourne on the 23rd.

HEN HARRIER Reports received from three locations all involving female 'ringtail' birds. Sheringham Cliffs and Swanton Novers on the 1st and Thornage on the 2nd.

Red Kite Many records from a variety of locations throughout January including Felmingham, Heydon, Kelling Heath, Edgefield and East Beckham.

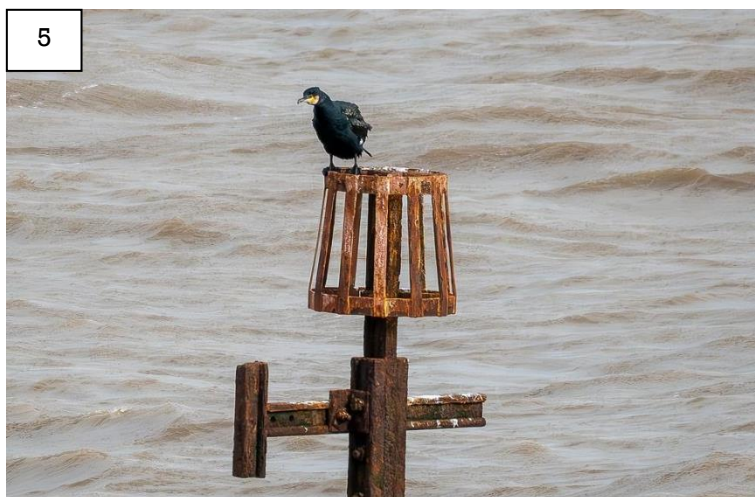
Water Rail Small numbers during the month from Felbrigg Park & Lake, Pigneys Wood and Weybourne Camp.

Grey Plover Recorded on several dates in the Weybourne and Weybourne Camp areas were 13 birds were west on the 19th. *Photo 6 courtesy of Richard Farrow*

Knot Thirteen birds were west past Weybourne on the 26th and 7 birds west at Sheringham on the same date. Single birds were past Weybourne on several dates.

Ruff A single bird east with Curlew at Weybourne on the 24th.

PURPLE SANDPIPER Up to 2 birds at Sheringham throughout the month with 1-2 birds at West Runton on several dates and 2 birds were noted at East Runton on the 6th. *Photo 7 courtesy of Jane Crossen*



Woodcock Small number were seen at several locations during the month including Bodham, Sustead Common, Cromer, Southrepps Common, Kelling Heath and Brinton. Eleven birds, in small groups, flew over an address in Aylmerton in 13 minutes!

JACK SNIBE Two birds were reported from Felbrigg Park & Lake during the month. The only other record came from Beeston Common on the 14th.

Green Sandpiper Single birds reported in from Hunworth on the 10th and Felbrigg Park & Lake on the 21st.

Kittiwake A single bird was east past Weybourne Camp on the 11th followed by 5 past the same location, & past East Runton and 10 past Sheringham, all east and all on the 26th.

CASPIAN GULL A single bird was on the beach at Sheringham on the 28th. *Photo 8 courtesy of Mark Clements*

Razorbill Two birds west at East Runton on the 12th were followed by single birds from Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs on the 22nd and 28th.

Barn Owl Reports received during the month for single birds from Weybourne Camp, Bodham, Thorpe Market, West Beckham, East Beckham, Suffield Common, Suffield Green and Bessingham.

Little Owl Reported throughout the month from Felbrigg Park & Lake, Weybourne Camp, Bodham and Haveringland Great Wood. *Photo 9 courtesy of Philip Cartlidge*

Kingfisher Only five records received all involving single birds were reported from Hunworth, Mannington Hall Park, Holt Lowes and Mannington Hall Park. *Photo 10 courtesy of Richard Farrow*

MERLIN Singles reported from Weybourne on the 4th, Weybourne Cliffs on the 10th and Felmingham on the 27th.

Peregrine Falcon Reports from Cromer throughout the month of both adults plus other reports from Holt on the 5th and Mundesley on the 26th.

RAVEN Two birds were over Weybourne Camp on the 13th and a single bird was noted at the same site on the 20th. A single bird was also seen at Aylmerton on the 20th.

Marsh Tit A real drop in reports for February with reports mainly involving 1-2 birds received from Selbrigg Pond (Lower Bodham), Mannington Hall Park, Holt Country Park & Lowes, Swanton Novers, Kelling Heath, Beeston Common and Brinton. *Photo 11 courtesy of Doug Cullern.*



WOODLARK Kelling Heath was the only site for this species in February with up to 8 birds reported. *Photo 12 courtesy of Andrew Crossley*

CETTI'S WARBLER Reported throughout the month from Weybourne and Weybourne Camp. Other reports came from Felbrigg Park & Lake, Pigneys Wood, Blickling Park and Gimingham

DARTFORD WARBLER Up to 7 birds were reported from Kelling Heath during the month. *Photo 13 courtesy of Adam Jones*

FIRECREST Single birds were noted from Pretty Corner Wood, Aylmerton and two birds were at Felbrigg Park & Lake on the 27th.

Treecreeper Reports of birds received during the month from lots of locations including High Kelling, Edgefield, Southrepps Common and Beeston Common.

European Stonechat A similar picture to the previous month, mainly involving 1-2 birds, but up to 8 birds were present at Sheringham Cliffs & Golf Course. *Photo 14 courtesy of Richard Farrow*

Grey Wagtail Single birds recorded from several locations during the month including Antingham & Bradfield, Brinton and Southrepps Common. *Photo 15 courtesy of Richard Farrow*

ROCK PIPIT Single birds were recorded from Cromer Pier on the 7th and Weybourne Camp on the 13th and 25th.

Brambling Reports of small numbers received from almost 50 locations including Sheringham Park, Aylmerton and Beeston Bump. Circa 100 birds were present at Bodham, again in the vicinity of the church on the 28th. *Photo 16 courtesy of Philip Cartlidge*

12



13



14



15



16



TWITE This species appears to have a much better winter along the North Norfolk coast and consequently we had up to 7 birds feeding with Linnet in cultivated fields at Weybourne Cliffs from the 24th to the 28th.

COMMON (MEALY) REDPOLL Single birds reported from Weybourne Cliffs and Beeston Regis during February. *Photo 17 courtesy of Adam Jones*

Lesser Redpoll Small flocks throughout the area but the high count was of 15 birds at Beeston Common on the 14th.

Siskin Almost ninety reports of small groups received from numerous locations during February with Letheringsett & Ford, again, giving us a high count of circa 100 birds on the 10th. *Photo 18 courtesy of Geoff Snelson*

LAPLAND BUNTING Up to 5 birds were at Weybourne Cliffs and Sheringham Cliffs during the latter half of the month. *Photo 19 courtesy of Mark Clements*

SNOW BUNTING Single birds reported from Sheringham Cliffs & Golf Course on the 28th and Weybourne Camp on the 29th.

CORN BUNTING Up to 2 birds were at Weybourne Cliffs and Sheringham Cliffs from the 25th to the 28th.



What to Watch Out For in March



March is the month where we get the first trickle of migrants in our area.

Wheatear (*Philip Cartlidge*) should be quite easy to pick up and **Chiffchaff** (*Richard Farrow*) are already in song as I write this, although they may potentially have been here all winter. **Sand Martin** (*Chris Moorhouse*) will be returning from south of the Sahara to their colonies and the coastal fields are worth checking for **Ring Ouzel** (*Mark Clements*). **Sandwich Tern** (*Moss Taylor*) should also be able to be spotted along the coast. Last year they were regular from mid-month onwards.

Another bird which we may be able to see in March is **Garganey** (*Richard Farrow*). There have been March reports over the last few years from certain locations. It is never an easy bird as females often get overlooked and we went for four years in the club area without a single sighting. One of the places they have been seen previously is Felbrigg and how good would it be to find one again. Perhaps on the club walk on the 20th?

Last year we had a quite unprecedented influx of **Alpine Swift** (*Mark Clements*). It started mid-month in Ireland and spread eastwards with at least a couple of reports in March from the club area. I wonder if it will ever happen again, or perhaps there will be something else equally exciting during the month?

Although we are a bird club, we are allowed to look at other things. In the butterfly world the first Brimstones, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacocks and Comma will be on the wing, especially if we can string together a few sunny days.

Also, check out local ponds for spawn. Just to help you pin down whether it is a Frog or Toad, frogspawn is laid in large jelly-like clumps in shallower water whereas toad spawn lay long strings of eggs that are often wrapped around aquatic vegetation in slightly deeper water.



A Members' Night of 4 Mini Talks! September 2024

We are looking for volunteers to take to the floor for our next "Members' Night" and give us a 20-minute talk of their choice on something about birds or any other related subject. This has been a popular event previously with an eclectic range of subjects embraced by our members.

It doesn't have to be scientific or funny (but could be!) – an appreciation of any aspect of a birding life, a birding patch or holiday, a related hobby, a cause you are passionate about, a grumble to get off your chest, a project you would like some help with.

A simple talk would be lovely, but slides are a great addition and if you needed some support with that then help is at hand!

Please get in touch if you want to have a chat.

| Alan Stevens | 07765892515 |
| ahstevens52@gmail.com |

Conservation Corner

If you have any suggestions for content for our Conservation Corner slot, please let us know and we'll pass your ideas on to our writers.

Restocking our 2nd hand bookstall

We could do with some more book donations for our birds and other nature stall at our indoor events. We have rather a lot of Field Guides to the rest of the world so don't really need any more of those, but we could do with some more reading material from a bit closer to home. If you have any books languishing on your shelves that might suit, bring them along to one of our events or let us know on

nenbc@aol.co.uk

Speaker Suggestions

We are always on the lookout for recommendations for speakers for our indoor programme, or ideas you may have of subjects you'd like us to find a speaker on. If you have any thoughts, please drop Alan an email on ahstevens52@gmail.com

Thank you!

Membership Renewal Subscriptions for 2024

We hope you will continue to support the club in 2024 by renewing your membership with us. The subs, which were due on 1st January, remain the same as last year:

2024 calendar year membership of £15 per household to include a copy of the club's printed 2023 Annual Bird Report which we hope will be ready for publication in the spring, or £12 without the report.

Our preferred method of payment is by standing order, but one-off payments can be made electronically to the club account (Account Number: 20842968 / Sort Code: 30- 94-34; TSB) or by posting a cheque to the membership secretary Colin Blaxill at Caitlins, Bernard Close, High Kelling, Holt NR25 6QY. Cheques need to be made payable to "North East Norfolk Bird Club" and not NENBC. If you want to pay by cash then catch Colin or one of the other Committee Members at one of our events.

Many thanks for your continuing support and engagement. If we haven't heard from you by the end of March we'll assume you don't want to renew and remove you from our circulation lists, NENBC WhatsApp Alerts if applicable and close website access.

Contributions to the Newsletter

The newsletter is reliant on input from others, is certainly much richer from having a wide range of articles included and we could really do with some of your interesting stories! You really don't have to be a birding 'expert' to write something for our newsletter. It can be long or short, with or without photos, whatever suits. Please have a think about whether there is anything you could write about for a future publication. The copy deadline for any issue is the last day of the previous month, but it would be good to know in advance if you are planning to submit an article.

Looking forward to hearing from you!

WhatsApp Groups.....



The club runs two WhatsApp groups:

NE Norfolk sea-watching is administered by Trevor Williams and is for any active and participating seawatchers along the north east Norfolk coast whether they are club members or not.

NENBC Alerts is administered by Tony Forster and is solely for club members to share news of interesting birds within the club area – no gossip allowed!

The advantage of both these groups is that you can get instant details about a bird sighting rather than having to rely on looking at the website later in the day and missing out. If either of these groups are of interest, drop us an email on nenbc@aol.co.uk and we'll put you in touch with the appropriate administrator. You'll need to provide your mobile number and sign up to the group rules. Both groups are free but to get the most out of them you'll need to be able to use the internet on your phone when you are out and about.

Club Sponsor **Bird Ventures** offer a 5% discount on own-branded wild bird food to NENBC members all year. Have a look at the Bird Ventures website www.birdventures.co.uk as they also supply feeders and much more with good advice and help for garden bird enthusiasts. Free local delivery available












Bird Ventures, The Wildlife Shop,
9B Chapel Yard, Albert Street,
Holt, Norfolk NR25 6HG

Telephone 01263 710203
salesbirdventures@aol.com

Opening Hours:
Monday
10:15am–4:00pm
Tuesday to Saturday
9:00am–4:00pm
Sunday Closed



Summary of our annual offer directly below with info after that of upcoming events. Our website is the place to go for the most up to date and detailed info.

-  Talks on the last Thursday evening of the month at Gresham Village Hall from Sep-Nov and Jan-Apr, also available live via Zoom
-  Walks around Felbrigg Park on the 3rd Wednesday morning of the month Sep-Jul
-  Varied monthly weekend walks and the odd evening one from Sep-Jul
-  Special events including:
 -  Coordinated Seawatch
 -  Walks Weeks
 -  Christmas Social & AGM
 -  New Year's Day Birding Challenge
 -  NENBC Big Sit
 -  Global Big Bird Day activities
 -  Birding for Beginners Course

Car-sharing is always encouraged, or even better, walking or cycling.

INFO FOR ALL WALKS:

Please wear clothing suitable to conditions - footpaths can be muddy at any time of the year - and continue to respect social distancing on the walk if appropriate.

YOUNG PEOPLE: Children are always welcome if accompanied by well-behaved adults and we would be happy to see young members aged 16 and 17 attend unaccompanied with prior written consent from a parent or guardian who has also supplied a phone number where they can be contacted in an emergency.

DOGS: We regret no dogs.

EQUIPMENT: Binoculars are always recommended to gain full enjoyment from your birding and for some of our walks, a scope is definitely useful.

ACCESSIBILITY: Unfortunately most of our walks aren't suitable for wheelchair users but please do contact us on nenbc@aol.co.uk to see which of our events are or could be adapted to be so.

BADGES: Birds seen on club-area walks count towards individual Star Status badges & if you walk or cycle from home, they also count towards your Eco-Badges.

BOOKING: For the Felbrigg Park Walks no booking is required so just turn up on the day if you fancy it, although it is always nice to know to expect you so feel free to let us know! For the other, generally weekend, walks that are led by Janice, booking is essential and numbers are limited to 15. Please book with Janice at least 2 days prior to the walk on janicedarch@gmail.com

**Wednesday 20th March | 9.00am-11.00am |
Felbrigg Park Monthly Walk
with Trevor Williams**



No advance booking needed

This sociable walk caters for all levels of birding ability so come and give us a try. We take a leisurely stroll around the park and lake, route dependent on the local bird and other wildlife recently reported or likely to be present on the day. We regularly see over 40 bird species on an average walk and even on the 'worst' of days more than 30.

MEET: Main car park | **PARKING:** Although access to the grounds is free to all and parking is free in the main car park for National Trust [NT] members with their machine-validated membership card, a parking fee is payable via the machines for non-NT members (£5 per vehicle at time of writing). Sexton's Lodge car park at the western end of the estate however remains free to all users and you can walk up from there along the internal estate road to the start point. | Check out the [NT website](#). | **DISTANCE:** up to 2-mile circular walk | **ACCESSIBILITY:** The walk is usually 'off-road' along dirt footpaths and tracks, across fields, through woods and can include a few stairs by the lake. As such, this event isn't suitable for wheelchair users. | **FACILITIES:** Toilets and café facilities available at Felbrigg Hall. | **BADGES:** Walk within the club area so records count for Star Badges plus Green Eco-badges if non-motorised transport conditions are met.

**Sunday 31st March | 9.00am-1.00pm |
Burnham Overy Dunes walk
with Janice Darch**



Booking required via Janice by 5pm on the Thursday before janicedarch@gmail.com (15 places)

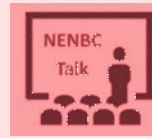
We'll walk the track to the seawall & dunes looking for spring migrants plus with luck some early arrivals. The seawall overlooking Overy Creek is good for water birds including wildfowl, waders and gulls & the grazing marsh may have grazing Wigeon, Teal & Geese and Marsh Harriers overhead. We will walk through the dunes and along the beach to Gun Hill & Burnham Harbour. A sea watch may yield Scoter, Divers or Gannets passing plus we'll be able to see Scolt Head Island across the channel at the turning point of our walk. The channel can be good for seeing divers up close while the dune habitat should have Stonechats, Linnets or an early Wheatear & maybe Shorelark and Snow Buntings. Our return walk will be inside of the dunes where can continue to view the channel and saltmarsh.

MEET: Crossroads at PE31 8JJ | **PARKING:** small car parks off the coast road | **DISTANCE:** 4 miles | **ACCESSIBILITY:** Through dunes so not wheelchair-friendly | **FACILITIES:** None on walk but available at Burnham Overy town and staithe | **BADGES:** Walk outside club area so records can't count towards Star or Green Eco-badges.

Monthly Evening Club Talk

Thursday 28th March | 7.30pm-9.30pm |

Gresham Village Hall



Really sorry but we are unlikely to be able to offer a Zoom option on this occasion unless there are any volunteers who are comfortable running it as Carol can't be there.

“Bengal Tigers, Birds and the Taj Mahal”

... an evening talk with Trevor Williams

THE SPEAKER AND THEIR TALK: In this illustrated talk, Club Chair Trevor Williams provides an introduction to the birds, animals and tourist attractions within easy travelling distance of the capital Delhi. Centred on the premium wildlife reserves of Ranthambore, Bharatpur and the Chambal River this talk provides a beginners' guide to the local wildlife, tourist attractions and fascinating culture of India. The sort of trip which is popular with wildlife holiday companies but one which, with a few local contacts, you could easily organise yourself.

AT THE HALL: Those of you attending in-person at the hall can expect a selection of home-made cakes plus tea, coffee, hot chocolate, wine and cold drinks during the interval and of course the chance to socialise with other members. We can cater for gluten-free or other requirements if you let us know in advance. We have a 2nd hand 'natural world' book stall for you to purchase from / contribute your no-longer-required stock to, supplies of our club publications to buy (including our annual bird reports), a display of member photos and details on our upcoming events. We are happy to offer members' old birding equipment for sale at our events (or in our newsletter) with a contribution going to club funds.

BOOKING ARRANGEMENTS: It is always nice to know if you are coming

to the hall but by no means essential so if it takes your fancy on the evening, please just turn up as we would love to see you!

ACCESSIBILITY: The hall is wheelchair accessible. The level car park at the hall is shingle but we can reserve a space next to the entrance if you need it.

DIRECTIONS: Gresham Village Hall, East Beckham Road off Church Lane, Gresham, Norfolk, NR11 8RT but note the published postcode might not take you to exactly the right spot! If you are coming through Aylmerton and Lower Gresham, turn right by the church (just after the school) and the hall is on your left. If you are coming through Gresham, turn left at the church (just before the school) and the hall is on your left. If you are dropping down from

East Beckham, the hall is on your right opposite the church.

PARKING: Access to the hall car park is actually off East Beckham Road, opposite the church. There is additional parking on the road along the side of the church itself and an overflow car park has kindly been offered to us by Gresham Village School. The school car park is located on Cromer Road to the left of the school as you face it and at the left-hand end of the row of houses - about a 300m walk from the hall. Please park considerately to allow maximum number of cars in the car parks and on the road but with enough space for passing traffic to be able to get through, including agricultural vehicles. We can send you a map of the locality on request.

Advance Notice: Birding for Beginners Course



Heads Up folks – we have another of our **Birding for Beginners** courses in the pipeline for 2024 with Trevor Williams and Carol Thornton. Run over three evenings 6.30pm to 9.30pm in late spring / early summer, probably at Gresham Village Hall at a total cost of £10 per club member (£15 non-members). Full details next month but topics covered include:

Workshop 1 – The Basics of Bird ID including: bird topography, feathers, moult, size, structure, colour, behaviour, sound

Workshop 2 – Finding & Seeing Birds including: field guides, optics, attracting birds to your garden, where to watch

Workshop 3 – Migration including: reading the weather, bird movement, visible migration, vagrancy, taking your interest to the next level, making the most of the new club website.

If you are interested, or know someone who would be, please drop us a line so we can see what the interest is: nenbc@aol.co.uk

A date in your diary – NENBC Annual Big Sit | Saturday 11th May

How many bird species can we see from the same spot dawn to dusk – join us to find out! Full details in next month's newsletter.





The Really Wild Flower Show 2024 | 29th & 30th June

A bit of advance information here to enable you to get your creative hats on about a local show that might be of interest to you at Natural Surroundings, Bayfield, this summer. We know that many of you have adapted the way you garden to attract more wildlife so here's a chance to enter your native garden-grown wildflowers in a local show in one of 10 categories. Full details will be on their website www.naturalsurroundings.info soon or speak to Lin at an indoor NENBC meeting for an entry form. NENBC will have a display (not of flowers!) there over the weekend which we hope will bring in some new members.

"You are invited to the 1st Annual Show to be held as part of the Natural Surroundings *Wildflower Festival* on Saturday 29th & Sunday 30th June. Free admission to the show (normal charges apply for admission to Gardens & Grounds; guided walks on both days)."

TRIO

JACQUI HURST RICHARD CARTWRIGHT

JOHN HURST

CLEY VILLAGE HALL

30th, 31st March, 1st April

10am—5pm Daily

A Mixed Media Exhibition

Many of you will know club member and artist John Hurst from his NENBC Member Night's talk, or his artwork and associated books. His Easter Exhibition this year is featuring a larger section of birds within the landscape than usual, as well as work by Richard Cartwright, a fenland sculptor and lino prints by John's wife Jacqui.

Here's a bit of info about the event::

"Here is an opportunity to enjoy three diverse art forms presented by local, well-respected artists John and Jacqui Hurst with Richard Cartwright, who have come together to present wonderful exhibition of contemporary lino prints, unique furnishings, sculpture and fine watercolours. John is known for his atmospheric, figurative watercolours of the Norfolk coast. His wife, Jacqui is inspired to print from the desire to create narrative using simplified forms whilst incorporating Norfolk's natural environment with its birds and animals, reflecting her love of the countryside and the Norfolk coast. Richard's abstract sculptures are made from hardwood and resin, keeping detail to a minimum whilst maintaining a smooth shape

that captures the essence and spirit of the animal. His furniture is made from found, upcycled and scrap wood, recovering anything from tables found fly tipped in ditches, pallet wood, old barrels, unwanted wardrobes and off cuts from the trade. Richard believes that old wood is often discarded, thinking it has no purpose or value yet time leaves traces that only increases its beauty. Hence, the most decayed and pitted wood can be transformed into an object of beauty."

If you don't know John's work you can have a look on his website www.marshlandarts.co.uk. John would be very happy to see and chat to any NENBC members at the exhibition and is additionally offering a 10% discount to club members for any originals purchased. There is free entry and adjacent parking.



Last Month's Club Mid-Week Walk

Felbrigg Park | 21st February



By Dave Billham

The Inuit people have over sixty words describing snow in its various forms (or more, or less, depending on who you read). We don't have quite so many words defining rain, but a surprising number had been used in the previous few day's weather forecasts. Varying from a positive deluge to steady drizzle, the only certainty was that, for at least some of the walk, it was going to be raining. So when ten members turned up on the morning, it was an unexpectedly large number.

Having arrived fifteen minutes early to find only Trevor present, we had joked that if no-one else turned up it was a quick scan around the car park area then off to the café to sit in the dry. That idea was soon dashed as over the next ten minutes the hardy members arrived to join us. Come nine-o'clock we were all ready, suitably suited, and in many cases, welly-booted. Val, as always, was equipped with her scope, but on hearing that our route would be mostly in the woods (for reasons of variety and dryness) she decided to return it to her car, though she did say that she hoped it was not a decision she would regret – spoiler alert, it wasn't. In fact, the walk became very much a story of 'thirds', as will be revealed.



As Trevor ran through his brief, we noted the following around the car-park; **Carriion Crow, Rook, Jackdaw, Wood Pigeon, Blue Tit, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Blackbird**, a lone **Maggie** and a singing **Robin**, whilst overhead was a **Herring Gull** and a duet of raptor species; a lone **Buzzard** and a pair of **Red Kite**, the latter obligingly drifting right over our heads at low level, giving fantastic views without any optics needed, and allowing us to see how they used their tails to effortlessly adjust their flight path. Into double figures before setting off; considering the weather, not too bad at all. We started the walk by following the path round behind the house and then onwards towards the woods. On our way we found a few **Great Tit** feeding in the leaf litter on the path, and a pair of **Stock Dove** in a tree. At this point, we entered the woods.

NENBC describes itself as a friendly club, not just for the recording of bird sightings but for socialising as well. Which is a very good thing, because for the next hour and a half, as we made our way through the various wooded sections of the park, we were able to do a lot of socialising. I even got to spend some time in Carol's domain at the back of the group, which has only happened once before! The generally inclement conditions meant that the woodland species were not showing well at all, or vocalising to any extent. We heard the contact calls of **Treecreeper** and **Coal Tit**, enjoyed the song of a **Wren**, and were assailed by the screeching of **Jay**. We saw further Blue and Great Tits, fortunately along with a pair of **Long-tailed Tit**, which were added to the species list. We did look for bats in the cracks in the walls of the ice house (none found), and saw a Grey Squirrel or two, but otherwise it was very quiet. However, it was a great opportunity to chat to the other folk in the group.



With less than half an hour of the walk left, we emerged from the trees onto the path that runs above the water meadows and towards the lake. A **Song Thrush** was spotted by the path before it flew off to a bush by the beck, where it started singing. A singing **Greenfinch** was next heard and seen, then a shout alerted us to a group of **Common Snipe**, which were rising up from, then immediately dropping back into, the tall grasses by the water. The water meadows had been swollen by all the recent rain, and found on the open areas of water were **Teal**, four **Wigeon**, a few **Gadwall** and some **Mallard**. There were two **Moorhen** present, and single examples of **Coot**, **Mute Swan** (possibly a visiting bird?) and **Black-headed Gull**. Standing upright and still by the beck was a **Grey Heron**, which flew off as we watched. The least expected bird here was seen only by a lucky few at the front of the group; a **Green Sandpiper**, which briefly appeared in flight before dropping out of sight into the old course of the beck, not to re-appear.

With time rapidly running out we moved nearer to the lake to see what was present, finding only a flock of eight **Tufted Duck**; it was otherwise deserted.



The walk back to the car park revealed nothing else to add to the morning's list, resulting in a grand total of 33 species seen, not too bad at all considering the weather. As for the 'thirds', we had found thirteen of these species in the first few minutes around the car park, and another thirteen in the last twenty minutes by the water meadows and lake, with only seven new species noted in the ninety plus minutes we were amongst the trees!



After Trevor and Carol had run through upcoming club events, folk either headed home or to the café for a well-deserved coffee and dry-out. The next Felbrigg walk will be on March 20th starting at 9am; hopefully with less added rain!

Photos from Carol Thornton

Last Month's Club Weekend Walk

Gresham Village & Bessingham Churchyard | 2nd March

By Janice Darch

As I sit at my desk writing this on Saturday afternoon after our lovely walk this morning I realize how lucky we were to have had sunny skies as its now raining! A small group of 5 of us gathered outside of Gresham Church at 9am for our walk. The habitat surrounding the Village Hall and church were productive with **Blackbird, Blue and Great Tits, Robin, Nuthatch, Jackdaws, Song Thrush** heard and several **Red-legged Partridges** all showing well. We walked a little way north and then took a wooded track across to the path that leads behind the school to the Sewage Works. On this path we saw **Carriion Crows, Rooks and Magpies**. The Sewage Works yielded a **Pied Wagtail**. From here we took the road south the Bessingham Church scanning the fields and trees as we went. A large flock of **Redwings** were in the trees, a **Red Kite** was overhead together with a **Kestrel** and several **Buzzards**. Two **Skylarks** were overhead. At a grassy field margin we disturbed two **Yellowhammers** which sadly did not want to stay around. From Bessingham Churchyard we spotted several **Stock Doves** in a tree along with **Wood Pigeons** while in the road hedge we found our only **Coal Tit** of the morning along with **Long-tailed Tits**. Turning right onto a wooded footpath we lucked into a flock – **Bramblings** with **Chaffinches** and two **Meadow Pipits**. Overhead we spotted a **Black-headed Gull** and a **Common Gull** plus more **Buzzards** while **Pheasant** and **Red-legged Partridge** were very evident. In the village there are some feeders where we had **Goldfinch** and more tits. In addition the walk through the village added **Collared Dove** and a **Stonechat** to our list totalling **35 bird species** for the morning.

People pic courtesy of Chris Rahner and recent library photos from Martin Browne (Brambling), Mark Clements (Yellowhammer) and richard Farrow (Gorldfinch)



The Annual Tri-partite Talk

"The work of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel"

with the BTO's Dawn Balmer



Cley Bird Club
KEEPING BIRDERS IN TOUCH WITH CLEY



NORFOLK
WILDLIFE
TRUST

On the 15th, a number of us ventured 'out of area' to the village hall at Cley for our annual joint event with Cley Bird Club and Norfolk Wildlife Trust [Local Group]. This year's speaker was Dawn Balmer, the chair of the [Rare Birds Breeding Panel](#) (RBBP) and keen Norfolk birder.

The RBBP monitors the status of the rare and scarce breeding birds in the UK and Dawn's illustrated talk covered how the work of the panel (pictured right) contributes to the conservation of these birds, how they report annually on their numbers, trends and distribution, and maintain a secure archive to support conservation and research for these species. The data collated are used to set conservation priorities and are also used in wider assessments of biodiversity such as governmental wild bird and priority species indicators, and '[The State of the UK's Birds](#)' and '[State of Nature](#)' reports and Dawn talked through some of the work that goes into preparing this data.

The RBBP's definition of a rare breeding bird is those species with populations of less than 2,000 pairs and in the UK that covers about 80 regular breeding species. Their work also covers some occasional, potential and non-native species.

Very Rare	<30 pairs	Redwing, Red-backed Shrike, Slavonian Grebe, Savi's Warbler
Rare	30-300 pairs	Garganey, Spoonbill, Osprey, Wood Sandpiper
Scarce	301-1,000 pairs	Pochard, Little Ringed Plover
Less Scarce	1,001-2,000 pairs	Merlin, Shoveler, Little Egret,

Dawn gave us some examples of species within the various categories they use and was able to give a bit of an East Anglian flavour to some of those she covered as shown below.



DATA FLOWS

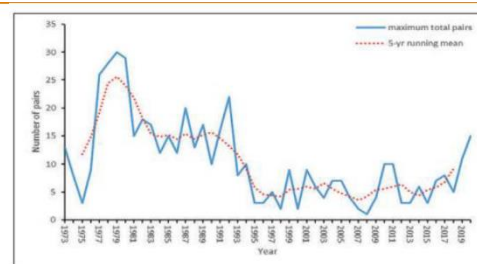
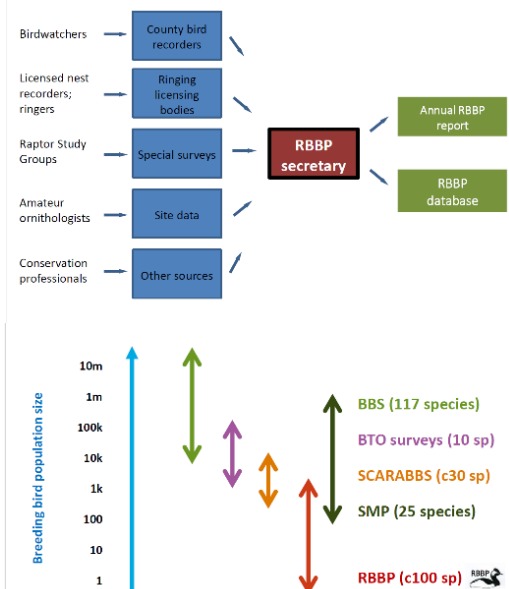
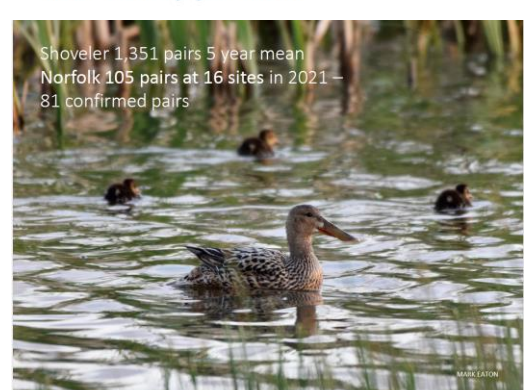


Fig. 8. Numbers of breeding pairs of Savi's Warblers *Locustella luscinoides* in the UK, 1973-2020.

Norfolk - three singing males in 2021



Dawn explained how they use RBBP data to set conservation priorities, measuring the state of nature, assessing conservation actions and enabling research. RBBP stats showed that Highland and Norfolk were the top two counties for diversity, with over 100 RBBP-monitored species recorded as at least possible breeders.

RBBP – rank by native species

Recording area	Total no. species	Total native species	Total non-native species	Rank native species	Annual total pairs, all species (2015-19 mean)	Rank total pairs	Density of total pairs (pairs/km ²)	Rank density
Highland	106	98	8	1	1093.4	6	0.031	60
Norfolk	105	88	17	2	2158.2	2	0.342	6
NE Scotland	88	83	5	3	253.2	26	0.033	59
Kent	97	82	15	4	1491.6	4	0.315	8
Yorkshire	94	79	15	5	1312.2	5	0.085	28
Suffolk	87	76	11	6	1641	3	0.379	5
Perth & Kinross	77	73	4	7	289.4	23	0.053	42
Camb	84	70	14	8	747.2	11	0.22	10
Lincolnshire	76	70	6	8	776	9	0.1	24
Lancashire & North Merseyside	85	68	17	10	464.2	15	0.11	23

RBBP – most important counties for rare breeding birds by combined population size

Recording area	Total no. species	Total native species	Total non-native species	Rank native species	Annual total pairs, all species (2015-19 mean)	Rank total pairs	Density of total pairs (pairs/km ²)	Rank density
Hampshire	65	55	10	25	2667.6	1	0.66	3
Norfolk	105	88	17	2	2158.2	2	0.342	6
Suffolk	87	76	11	6	1641	3	0.379	5
Kent	97	82	15	4	1491.6	4	0.315	8
Yorkshire	94	79	15	5	1312.2	5	0.085	28
Highland	106	98	8	1	1093.4	6	0.031	60
Argyll	66	61	5	14	1080.8	7	0.064	38
Dorset	64	56	8	21	784.2	8	0.229	9
Lines	76	70	6	8	776	9	0.1	24
Outer Hebrides	58	58	0	18	763.4	10	0.064	39

Dawn went on to talk about gaps in data and therefore knowledge. Not everywhere is monitored consistently and she talked about the possibilities of Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers being in more places than realised. She spoke on Bee-eaters and Hoopoes and unexpected breeding occurrences and on whether some stats reflect changes in numbers or changes in monitoring regimes

This interesting talk concluded with some advice on how we can all help with conservation and data collection.

Many thanks to NWT Local Group for leading on this year's event.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Be alert – think RBBP!
- Remember wildlife legislation and birdwatcher's code of conduct
- Submit all breeding records of RBBP species
- Use 'usual' channels – county bird recorder
- Use BirdTrack (www.birdtrack.net)
- Include breeding evidence
- Include precise location details

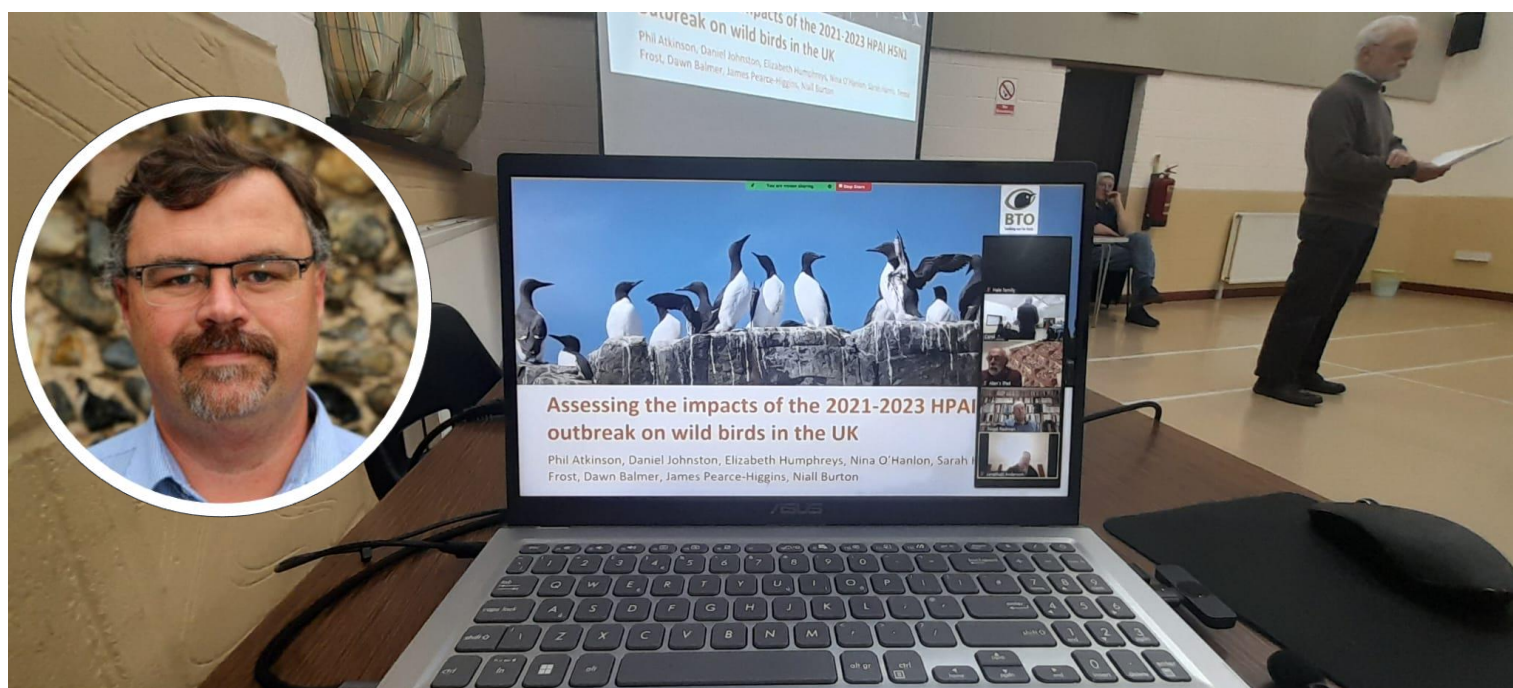
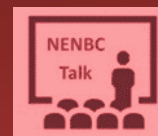


Last Month's Club Talk

"Avian influenza in the UK: impacts and conservation"

zoom

with the BTO's Phil Atkinson plus a Cuckoo Update



By Alan Stevens

Our February meeting saw the return of Phil Atkinson from the BTO to deliver a talk of two halves, firstly about Avian influenza, not, as he indicated from the outset, the happiest of subjects and secondly a more uplifting update on the BTO's work with cuckoos.

As Head of International Research and Principal Ecologist at the BTO he was able to give us the background to and the current situation on **avian influenza** affecting bird populations across the globe. Indeed, as I write this today there are further reports of outbreaks in the [penguins of South Georgia](#). Photos below from the BTO website.

By way of background Phil told us that Avian influenza is not new and is a super diverse virus in domestic poultry and other birds. Low pathogenicity (LPAI) occurs naturally in wild birds and shows few clinical signs in them or poultry.

Highly pathogenicity (HPAI) evolved from LPAI in poultry with the H5N1 stain emerging on a goose farm in China in 1996. It has a high mortality rate among poultry with wild birds being asymptomatic to fatal infection, dependant on the species infected, individuals and viral strain. Phil explained how spread occurs in wildlife through environmental persistence, geographical dispersal and foraging, and in agriculture through contamination resulting in sporadic disease and mortality.

Since 2014 HPAIVs have become increasingly widespread and destructive and in 2021 a new variant emerged resulting in both unexpected and unprecedented changes in geographical spread to new species in wild birds and mammals and unparalleled mortality of more than 80%. While these threats seem to have gained

headlines, at least in rural areas with the threat to poultry, livelihoods and economies there is also a significant threat to wildlife which is now only to apparent from the evidence before us.

The UK is concerned about HPAI as it hosts around 8 million seabirds all experiencing increasing pressures, and by example we have 80% of Manx Shearwater and 56% of Northern Gannet global breeding populations. During the winter have around 12.8 million waterbirds.

Phil moved on to detail how they gather their data from UK Government testing of dead birds, conservation bodies, NGO's monitoring of mortality and population and demographic monitoring schemes such as WeBS, GSMP and SMP. The results of the data give timelines which for example have shown massive mortality across species with an unbelievable 22000 plus Gannets being lost in 2022 by way of example. Testing results have confirmed that since 2022 around 70 species have tested positive including seabirds, waterbirds and raptors as scavengers eg 47% of Common Buzzards tested. Carcass counts add to the picture and point to the numbers involved; to pick just one illustration showing 4000 Great Skua deaths, and these are of course only of carcasses actually recovered. It appears that infection rates are seasonal and not necessarily repeated.

Phil explained that in the summer 2023 HPA1 moved into inland freshwater and from zero cases rapidly spread across England with significant losses but did not impact as many species as it was thought it would.

As may be anticipated, with Phil's field of expertise, much of his talk was illustrated by graphs and tables and these gave us a real feeling of the sheer numbers of bird deaths involved. These included interesting banding and finding data, the latter illustrated by maps showing dead recoveries of ringed Gannets from Alderney along the south coast of the UK and northern shores of France. Productivity monitoring on Alderney showed a significant decline between 2019 and 2022.

Moving on to estimating mortality using count data an example was again drawn from Great Skuas showing in 2023 a 76% decline, 45% of the global population from an RSBP led multi- partner survey. Phil underlined the huge effort to manage such massive surveys.

Our speaker then moved on to more familiar territory for club members and the use of bird watching data to look at the wider impacts of HPAIV. Explaining that studies to date have been primarily species or site based in the UK it is known that seabirds have been impacted elsewhere, say terns and gulls around the Wadden Sea. Using the standardised method of recording provided by Trektellen they looked at east coast watch sites. Comparisons were made from 19 sites comparing counts from 2018-21 and 2022 and/23 including weather conditions. The results confirmed data from other sources showing declines in populations but perversely an increase in Manx Shearwater numbers, the reason for which is unclear but may be related to sea temperatures. Phil said that sea watching data gives an overall effect and helps confirm findings from carcass counts.

In summary Phil rounded of by confirming that H5N1 is present in water and sea birds, raptors and other species in the UK. That not all species have been affected and mortality rates can vary across colonies. Ecological traits are important in determining which species are hit, although many are not, the importance of long-term monitoring of



abundance, productivity and survival, and that counts from 2023 are showing a patchwork of decline and increases across different colonies.

Research will continue into all aspects of the disease requiring global input to establish why some colonies are hit harder than others, how long any immunity may last, the role of mammals, the impact on scavengers and now that the disease is endemic what are the long-term implications including the effect on human health?

Refreshments enjoyed and the book stall stock diminished by the 'free' offer Phil returned to the floor with the subject of the **BTO Cuckoo Tracking Project** about which we have heard before, so the update was going to be interesting. Regrettably again the news was grim with confirmation that cuckoo numbers have declined with numbers down in England by 71% in the last 25 years but on the upside have increased by 69% over the same period in Scotland. Breeding bird survey trends reveal, as expected, a decline in many species and Phil explained these and that as a study species the Common Cuckoo is a model with a declining population and is the largest



'small' nocturnal migrant whose migration is poorly known. Advances in the way migration is tracked was illustrated by a copy of paper record of a cuckoo ringed in Eton in 1928 and recovered in Cameroon in 1930. No longer do we have to depend on such chance discoveries as we can now utilize space-based radio tracking by tagging birds. Solar powered batteries provide longevity of performance and close to real-time tracking is available over the entire annual cycle. And as expected access to this wealth of data has shed light on previously dark corners of the life of the cuckoo. *Photo from the BTO website courtesy of Neil Calbrade*

Taking 2011 as a starting point Phil looked at the southerly migration that year which highlighted the importance of a stopover for birds at the Po Watershed where 22 of 56 birds stopped that year and when all survived the Sahara crossing. The information available now reveals that cuckoos take two specific routes on migration, one to the west over Spain and West Africa and the other east over eastern Europe and across the Sahara with both journeys broadly taking between 14 – 30 days. The survival rate varies significantly between the two routes standing at 56% on the western and 97% on the eastern track. Interestingly there is a bias east or west from where the birds are tagged in the UK. Survival is of course subject to several variables – route-specific effect of UK conditions, conditions in Spain and Italy and interaction between UK and southern Europe.

This led through to the reasoning behind mortality numbers where our speaker explained the inputs of direct mortality, habitat change and climate anomalies during both migration periods and the winter period spent in Africa. Comparisons were drawn with other species such as Swift and Nightjars.

A key discovery has been that cuckoos have not advanced their arrival back in the UK in line with the earlier springs we now have, which in turn has consequences throughout the annual cycle and this was fully explained by a series of interesting graphs. The key points around the springtime arrival are that the departure from West Africa is the prime determining factor behind the arrival in breeding grounds. The timing of the rains before departure is associated with the ITCZ which is determined by global climatic conditions and ultimately astronomical events rather than by local or regional conditions and it is this that is delaying the cuckoo's arrival on our shores and constrains their ability to breed with variations of associated mortality between early and late birds.

Turning to the future the study plans to continue research into the contribution of habitat quality vs rainfall to timing of migration from the West Africa stop-over, to continue the tagging programme, trial GPS level accuracy tags, understand the impact of habitat quality, design habitat interventions for 'head-starting' birds on the southbound migration and increase habitat quality to advance migratory timing and reduce mortality. To finish we were shown a slide of global patterns of cuckoo migration – amazing! Last year the first club record of a Cuckoo came on the 22nd April, let's see when it is this year?

Thanks to Phil for his time and two very comprehensive talks. For greater detail on [Cuckoos](#) or [Avian Flu](#), please visit the BTO website.

Birdwatching as pattern recognition:

some thoughts and questions



By David North

As humans we are very good at noticing some things and very poor at noticing others. Like many other animals nothing draws our attention like movement. That's quite useful to us birders as our visual system is hard-wired to respond to any movement across our visual field. Birds in flight, or even birds hopping on the ground, or diving and swimming in water, immediately draw our attention.

I suspect our brains are also hard-wired for pattern recognition. And though we perhaps don't often think about it in these terms most bird recognition, whether of song and calls, or the identification of species by plumage, shape and colour, comes down to recognising patterns.

In recent years, partly through my interest in photography, I have become a bit obsessed with patterns in nature. My observations of patterns in nature have made me think and wonder more about their meanings.

The natural world is full of patterns, though we perhaps don't always think of them as patterns. The pattern of each day, the pattern of seasons, the ebb and flow of tides, the meanders of water, the shapes of trees – all perhaps share some features in common. Let me share a tentative thought about the way patterns in nature often work. This idea crystallised as I was walking along our North Norfolk shingle shore watching waves breaking and surging in white foam almost to my feet.

Each wave shares a common pattern. The wave increases in height as it moves towards the shore, then begins to break, curling in white foam from its top, before losing height and shape as it swashes up the shingle in a curve of bubbles and foam. But though this basic pattern is true for every wave no two waves are ever identical. Some are more powerful making you dash quickly back to avoid wet feet and each wave leaves a different pattern of foaming froth and bubbles behind, but always as a series of curves along the shore. However many waves I photograph they are all different!

Bear with me. We will come back to birds! This wider truth that many patterns in nature repeat but never in quite the same way seems one of the fundamentals of how the natural world works. Think seasonal change, or each day's sunrise and sunset. I think it's true for us too, and birds, and every living species. Each species is a pattern, and each individual is the pattern repeating in new, creative and different ways.

When we are birding we are all, perhaps unconsciously, using our innate, evolutionary ability to see patterns in nature. Patterns have meaning. They not only enable us to identify species, but when we observe more closely often the sex or ages of birds can be determined by consistent patterns that change over time or between sexes.



My interest in patterns in nature adds to my fascination and wonder at birds. The way a flock of snow buntings can vanish when they land, or how rarely I spot a woodcock (*Photo: Andy Clarke*) or snipe before accidentally disturbing it, shows another type of pattern which is common in nature – disruptive colouration. Many birds break up the shapes of their bodies with plumage patterns of dark and light stripes, spots and shapes. Think the bright, contrasting, cream-yellow lines on a snipe's back, or the patterned back of a turnstone making it almost invisible when resting. We most often notice these camouflaged birds only when they move. We're good at movement detection! Camouflage patterns bring obvious survival benefits, but what of other patterns. There are many bird patterns that birds use for communication – think moorhens (*Photo: Doug Cullern*) flicking those white undertail coverts when alarmed.

Some patterns are clearly there for attracting mates – think of all the male birds that take on their brightest plumage only for the breeding season. The bright, shiny colours on the heads and wings of various ducks – drake mallard with their shiny green (or purple depending on the angle of the light) heads, the yellow crown stripe on drake wigeon, or, one bird I never tire of watching, the shiny green on a drake teal's brown head (*Photo: Mark Clements*). Other patterns are more difficult to interpret. Many birds that fly in flocks, geese and waders for example, have white rumps and / or wing bars. Could these patterns indicate alarm to others becoming prominent only when a bird flies? Or could they, as perhaps in the case of geese (*Photo: Jane Crossen, Brent Geese*), help in keeping flocks together when birds are flying behind another member of their species? Perhaps you know of other, and better, explanations for white rumps, sometimes accentuated with a contrasting dark tail band, or why so many waders have patterns which include wing bars?

Thinking about patterns when I'm birding always leaves me with more questions than answers. Why do coots (*Photo: Richard Farrow*) have that bright white bill and face shield? Why do some birds have yellow eyes, or red, black, orange, blue, or green? I know eye colour, at least for me, creates an emotional response. Herring gulls (*Photo: Doug Cullern*) look mean with their cold, staring yellow eyes, whereas take a close look at a black-headed gull (*Photo: Richard Farrow*) and I defy you not to find the pools of its dark eyes more attractive. Why do I respond that way?

One of the things I love about birding is that every single time I go out I see things that I don't understand. Birds always, in their patterns, their movements and behaviours, make me wonder – **WHY?**

PS: A note of caution when it comes to interpreting colour patterns in birds. Colour is a strange phenomena and birds may not see the same colour patterns that we see. Recent research has shown that unlike us humans, who have three types of cones in our eyes for colour vision, birds have four. This means that many, perhaps even most, bird species can see into the ultraviolet end of the light spectrum which is invisible to our eyes. This means that for many species, where the male and females appear identically plumaged to us, they may not look that way to other birds. Their plumage may hold patterns invisible to us. Not only do birds have more colour receptors than us, their eyes contain oil pigments which almost certainly add to their colour tone perception. In the same way that birds can hear a huge range of additional complexity in their songs which we can only perceive when we slow bird song down. They also probably perceive many more shades of colour than we are able to. It's always a dangerous assumption to think that other species that we share our world with are as limited in their senses as we are. The sounds and colours of this world must be even more wonderful if you are a bird!

Interesting info in this Wiki article on [Bird Vision](#).





One of several watercolours painted by James McCallum of the flock of Common Scoters off Weybourne Camp during February, all of which will feature in his exhibition in November.

By Moss Taylor

This is the 2nd in a monthly series this year of the wildlife at Weybourne Camp during 2024 ...

Unfortunately the cold, wet weather continued throughout much of February and despite almost daily visits, few birds of note were recorded. However, a lone Tundra Bean Goose flying west on 3rd and a total of 24 Bewick's Swans flying north-east out to sea on 10th were noteworthy. The Bewick's in two flocks of 7 and 17 were also noted off Sheringham. The raft of Common Scoters remained present offshore but numbers steadily declined as the month progressed from a peak of 850 in early February to less than 200 by the month's end. A drone Long-tailed Duck flying west on 21st was the first for the year.

[Photos: Carrion Crow, one of two pairs present on the Camp and Male Stonechat, one of two pairs present on the Camp]

The scrape remained full to overflowing and attracted a pair of duetting Little Grebes, a Moorhen, a Water Rail and a singing male Cetti's Warbler, all of which were present during the second half of the month. Great Crested Grebes, some of which were displaying,



remained on the sea throughout February peaking at 27 in mid-month. The only wader of note was a Ruff flying east with a flock of Curlews on 24th. Sightings of single adult Mediterranean Gulls became more frequent as the month progressed, mostly flying west presumably to their breeding colony on Blakeney Point.

Three species of diver were recorded with Red-throated peaking at 192 east on 15th. A maximum of 173 Cormorants, of which 150 flew east (including a single string of 40) was noted on 7th and the first 2 Great White Egrets of the year flew west on 13th. The most notable passerines were 2 Ravens tumbling around in the sky as they flew high east on 13th and a single Raven flying west with a Carrion Crow a week later. However, a singing Treecreeper in the sycamore wood on 25th was the first record for four years, while a Snow Bunting flew west on the last day of the month.

[Photos: Winter plumaged adult Mediterranean & Black-headed Gulls and Lone Raven flying west]

If anyone would like to visit the camp in April, could they let me know by email on moss.taylor@btinternet.com, saying which days of the week are suitable. I will then choose a date nearer the time, based on a favourable weather forecast. Copies of the Weybourne Camp report for 2023 also available, please just drop me an email.



Don't dismiss it as only another Cormorant

By Moss Taylor



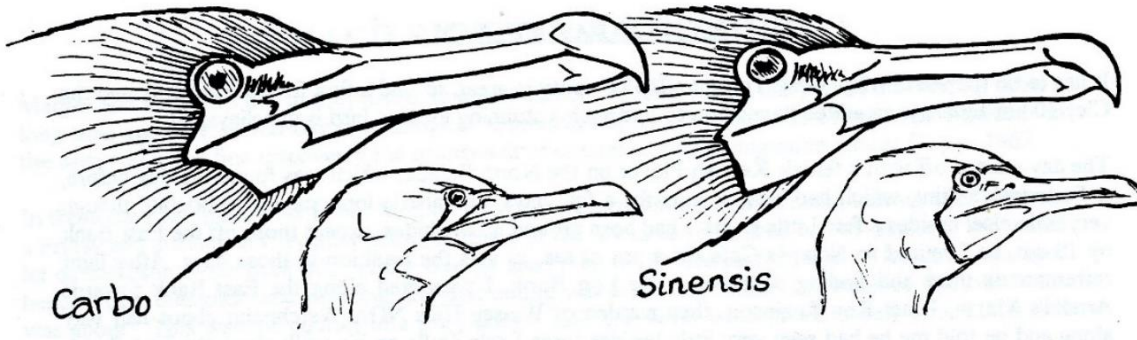
From the early accounts of Norfolk's birds we learn that Cormorants were breeding in the county as early as the 1500s and probably well before. At that time they nested in tall, riverside trees alongside Grey Herons, but due to persecution the species ceased to breed in Norfolk in the early 1800s. Throughout most of the 20th century only occasional pairs bred in Norfolk, although increasing numbers began to overwinter, with a large night-time roost becoming established at Ranworth Broad by 1981. This was also the year that nine pairs of the continental race *sinensis* first nested at Abberton Reservoir in Essex and subsequently colonised many inland locations in south-east England and the Midlands. Currently nearly 200 pairs of *sinensis* nest at Holkham but elsewhere in Norfolk it is still a scarce breeding bird.

Despite the name Great Cormorant, to distinguish it from the other 38 species of cormorants around the world, it is actually lighter in weight than the Flightless Cormorant of the Galapagos Islands. The name Cormorant is derived from the Latin *corvus marinus*, meaning sea crow/raven, while the generic name *Phalacrocorax* is from the Greek *phalakros* (bald) and *korax* (crow) and the specific name *carbo* is Latin for charcoal. But what exactly is the race *sinensis* and how does it differ from the nominate race *carbo*?

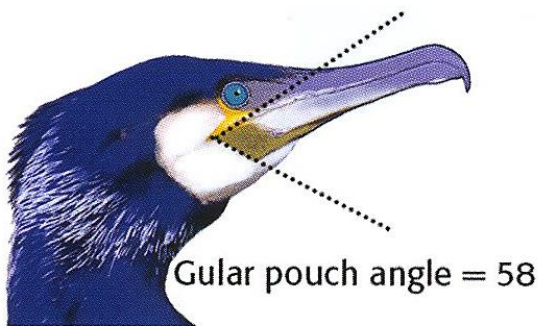
The rock-nesting race *Phalacrocorax carbo carbo* breeds mainly in northern Europe around the coasts of Iceland, Norway, France and the British Isles, and is only partially migratory or dispersive. While the 'Continental' race *Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis* nests mainly in trees and is found in Central and Southern Europe, east to India and China (thus the subspecific name of *sinensis*). It is migratory throughout most of its range, those breeding in Western Europe migrating SSW and those in Eastern Europe moving SSE. The population of *sinensis* in mainland Europe underwent a rapid expansion in the late 1900s and spread into the British Isles. However, nowadays Cormorants breeding inland originate from both British coastal-breeding *carbo* colonies as well as *sinensis* from the Continent, and to complicate matters further the two races interbreed.

So, is it possible to differentiate between the subspecies in the field? Although *sinensis* tend to be generally smaller with a shorter, thinner bill than *carbo*, in both races males are larger than females and a male *sinensis* is on average larger than a female *carbo*. But there is a method by which the two races can be separated in at least 80% of birds, as illustrated in the accompanying line drawing by Richard Millington from his excellent article in the Cley Bird Club Newsletter published in 1998, on the Cormorants at Cley, and it is based on the skin of the gular pouch. Quoting from Richard's article "... the most important point [is] the shape of the gular sac. *Sinensis* differs from *carbo* by having proportionately more bare skin; note especially the angle of the skin at the gape, which in *sinensis* is usually obviously obtuse, but in *carbo* is essentially square or acute. As well as the wider gape angle, *sinensis* also tends to exhibit more bare skin above the lores and around the eye." In addition, in non-breeding and juvenile birds the bare skin is a rich, yolk-like yellow in *sinensis* compared to a rather paler lemon yellow in *carbo*. Of course

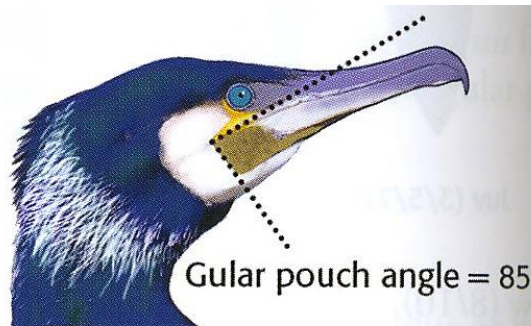
these differences are far more apparent in perched or swimming birds but a close flight view or photo may also enable the race to be determined.



Line drawing by
Richard Millington

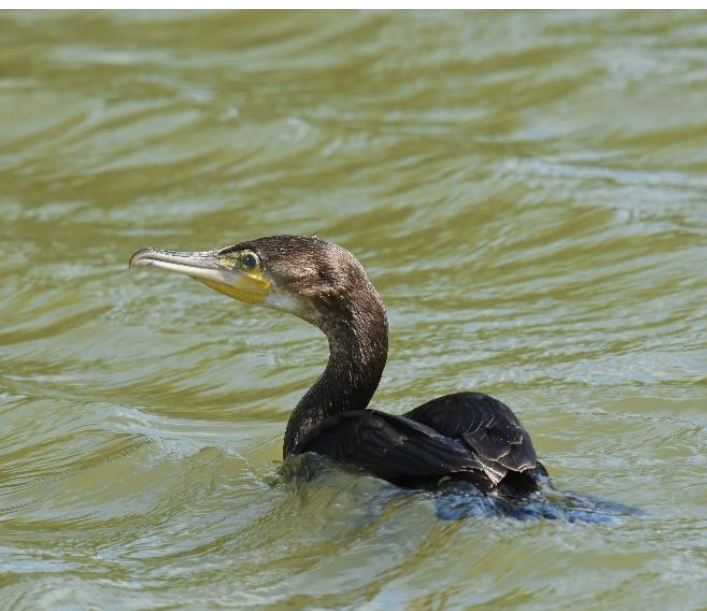


P.c.carbo



P.c.sinensis

Illustration from
*Identification of
European Non-
Passerines* by Jeff
Baker



P.c.sinensis at Willows Lake, Bodham



P.c.sinensis in flight off Weybourne

As far as north Norfolk is concerned, ringing recoveries have confirmed the presence of birds from the rock-nesting colonies of *carbo* in Scotland, Wales and northern England, and birds of the *sinensis* race from Abberton Reservoir in Essex, Nottinghamshire, the Netherlands and Denmark. But without doubt, the vast majority seen in the NENBC area are of the race *sinensis*.

I always enjoy seeing 'strings' of Cormorants passing offshore at Weybourne, the highest daily count so far this winter has been of 150 flying east (including one flock of 40) on February 7th. But exactly where are they moving to is a mystery. It may well be that these are simply movements between night-time roost and feeding sites. However, some of them may be birds of the *sinensis* race returning to the Continent, an hypothesis perhaps supported by the occasional mixed flocks of Cormorants and Brent Geese also noted flying east?



By Val Stubbs

Well, it's nearly a year since I last gave an update. At the end of March 2023, **my green bird tally stood at 135**. So what's been happening since then?

16th May 2023

During our usual "round-the-block" dog walk along Weybourne Cliffs, I was struck by a large dark gull-like bird flying west over the sea, quite close in. On closer examination I had a clear view of white wing patches – a great view of a **Great Skua**!



2nd June 2023

Having heard that there was a **Garden Warbler** singing at Weybourne Hope reedbed, we headed down towards the beach, dogs in tow. After a few minutes' wait we could hear one singing in the tallows by the beach car park which still counts. We never did spot it!

9th June 2023

Probably the easiest green bird tick – I glanced out of bedroom window and there on the sunflower seed feeder was a **Siskin**. Unfortunately, it didn't hang around long enough for Nick to see it.

17th August 2023

As we walked down Mill Lane towards the Coastguard Cottages on Weybourne Cliffs, Nick pointed out a dowdy bird flitting about among the Alexanders. As he had his hands full of

dog leads and I was the only one with binoculars, I got to have a good view of a **Pied Flycatcher**, probably an adult female.

2nd January 2024

We decided not to pay a visit to Weybourne Camp for the New Year's Day birding challenge. When I discovered that there had been a large Common Scoter flock, which included a number of Velvet Scoter, I regretted that decision. So the next day we walked the dogs along the beach by the Camp. Ominously, there was no crowd of birders huddled over their scopes, and indeed no Scoter flock on the sea. Frustrated, we turned back at the mound to return home, but at that moment, two large, bulky ducks flew past west, closely followed by eight Common Scoter. The first two birds were slightly larger than the Common Scoter. They were very dark, with a white wing patch, and a small white mark on their heads. Flight was low and direct. And I was satisfied that I had seen my first ever **Velvet Scoters**.

7th January 2024

After an hour's disappointing seawatch on Weybourne Beach, during which I recorded the magnificent total of 2 Oystercatchers, 4 Eider, a Cormorant and a Shelduck, I was making my way back along Beach Lane when I spotted a couple of Starlings on the wires by the Beck. But something about them made me give them a second look, upon which I realised they had crests. A third bird was sitting in a bush even closer, and I could clearly see that my Starlings were in fact **Waxwings**. What a delight. I watched them for about 20 minutes, and they were completely unphased by dog walkers passing by, people chatting on the pavement opposite where they were perched, and the arrival of fellow birdwatchers, summoned by the magic of the NENBC WhatsApp Group. *[Just for the record following the headline royal news this week, Carol has manipulated this photo so we can see the stunning colours better on a grey day! 😊]*



5th March 2024

Since mid-February there had been reports of Lapland Buntings on the fields behind Weybourne Cliffs, and day after day I had watched the list of people that had seen them grow longer and longer, but illness and family commitments meant I was unable to go to look for them myself. Finally, on 2nd March we found ourselves able to go, and on a blustery drizzly day, Nick Vison and I, armed with two dogs and a telescope, walked east along the cliff, meeting a couple of birders who confirmed that the birds were there. At the spot, a well-wrapped and bedraggled birder was looking into the field – in between wiping the lens of his scope. It turned out to be Stu, who reported no sign of the Lapland Buntings, though the Linnet flock was present, with a number of Snow Buntings among them. However, they were very flighty, hardly settling, and if a Lapland Bunting were present, it would have taken a much better birder than I to pick it out. There seemed little incentive to continue to stand there getting colder and wetter, so we gave up, much to the relief of the dogs.

On 5th March Vision and I decided to have another bash at the Lapland Buntings, as it was a much calmer day. We headed down Mill Lane and along the cliffs towards Spalla Gap, and met Phil B returning from the location. We were pleased to hear that the Lapland Buntings were still present, although the Linnet flock containing the Twites had flown off. Heartened, we quickened our pace. In the distance we could see a huddle of birders with their scopes aimed at the field ahead of us.

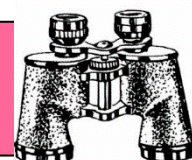
We joined them and were told that the Lapland Buntings were with the Snow Buntings. The field was very stony and ridged, and it was hard to pick out birds among them. Every now and again a movement would catch my eye, but each time it proved to be a Skylark. Then I caught a bunting shaped bird in my scope, but no, it was a Snow Bunting – lovely, but not what I was hoping for. A few more Snow Bunting hopped around in the field, and suddenly a well-marked bunting, clearly different from the Snow Buntings, came into view. I zoomed in on it and was at last satisfied that I had the target in my sights. Although the bird was moving fast, Vision was also able to get a view through the scope. A quick check in the field guide confirmed the ID: **Lapland Bunting** – a lifer for both of us.

The watchers we had joined were gradually drifting away (though there was a steady flow of new ones to take their places). They were now congregating further west, and focusing on the back of the field. Were they after the Twite? We made our way over to them and they confirmed that the Twite were visible among a flock of Linnets. After working my way across the flock – Linnet, Linnet, Linnet, Linnet, Linnet... – I finally picked out a darker bird. I was pretty certain it was a **Twite**, but would it turn so that I could see the bill? Would it heck as like! Eventually, however, patience paid off and it gave a clear view of its beak. Another lifer for Vision, and an NENBC tick for me. As we were about to leave, a couple of Grey Partridges waddled into the scope – a third new species for Vision. We returned home flushed with success.

Later, as I stepped out of the house to go shopping in Cromer, a huge bird flew over the garden. "It's a Stork!" I squeaked, rushing back into the house to grab a pair of binoculars, muttering that a Crane was much less unlikely. By the time I was back in the garden, it was way off in the distance and the bins didn't really help a lot, so I reported it on the NENBC app as a Crane. However, I soon received a message asking whether it could have been the White Stork, which had moved from Stiffkey at 1329 and was then over Sheringham at 1345 - 'my' bird flew over at 1338. I must learn to trust my gut instinct! Anyway, **White Stork** is a UK tick for me, and a completely un-awaited green bird.

Now that's what I call a great day's birding! (And I was also treated to a view of one of the Peregrines on Cromer Church and a handful of Waxwings at West Beckham Old Allotments – neither of which were green or new for the year, but wonderful anyway.) **Bird tally up to 144** and just 31 to go!

Back in the Day The changed fortunes of our local birdlife



SHERINGHAM'S FLYING VISITORS.

Visitors and holiday makers have been coming to Sheringham for over 100 years. But I wonder how many people realise that other kinds of visitors, from much further afield, have been passing through the Sheringham area for over a thousand years! I'm referring, of course, to the many varieties of birds which visit North Norfolk every year.

However, it's only now that the origins and destinations of these avian visitors are becoming apparent, as a result of catching them and marking them with small leg rings. Each ring bears the address of the British Museum and a unique combination of letters and numbers. Thus each bird can be individually identified should it subsequently be trapped or found dead.

During the last twenty years, about forty thousand birds have been ringed in Sheringham and as a result we now know a great deal more about the movements of many species visiting our area. For some, such as the Blue Tit and Dunnock, ringing has shown that the majority remain within a small area for their entire lives, but for many others the story is very different.

In winter, the Black-headed Gulls that stand like sentinels along the groyne, include breeders and nestlings from as far afield as the Baltic states of Estonia and Latvia, from Finland, Sweden and Denmark. Whilst many of the Starlings that scrap on our lawns spend the summer in central Europe and some as far east as Russia.

As the days lengthen and spring flowers appear, our resident birds are joined by those that have been wintering further south. In Sheringham we have caught both Linnet and Goldcrest ringed in Spain, and Redpolls from France, Belgium and Holland. Sheringham-ringed Blackcap, Garden Warbler and Spotted Flycatcher have been found in Morocco, either in their wintering areas or en route to West Africa.

But perhaps the most amazing journey is made by Europe's smallest bird, the Goldcrest which weighs only a few grams. Those breeding in northern Europe move south in autumn but are often caught up in the north-easterly gales in October. They are blown across the North Sea and the lucky ones which survive make landfall around the Norfolk coast, many so weak that they can be caught by hand. Amongst those trapped in Sheringham have been Goldcrests ringed in Belgium, Norway and even Russia. Quite a journey for such a mite, but as we all know, people come from far and wide to visit Sheringham every summer, so why shouldn't the birds?

Moss Taylor (Sheringham Shantymen).

Moss Taylor has sent us in this piece he did from the Sheringham Shantymen's Songbook 1995. Lots of interesting species covered but we thought we would pick up on **Goldcrest**. You can look up lots of the current info on trends and distribution here: [Goldcrest | BTO - British Trust for Ornithology](#) and the site includes this interesting chart (right) on ringing recoveries.

RINGING RECOVERIES

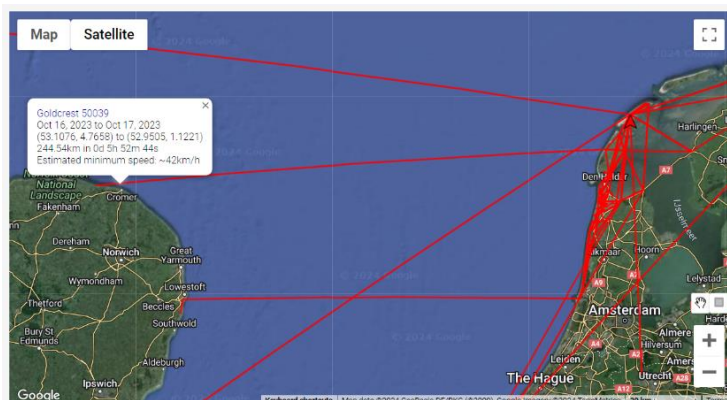
View a summary of recoveries in the [Online Ringing Report](#).

Foreign locations of birds ringed or recovered in Britain & Ireland



Since this article was written, things have moved on a bit with the advent of the **Motus Wildlife Tracking System** which we had a talk on in Jan 2022 from club member Ewan Parsons (birds) & Jane Harris (bats). This is the scheme where birds etc are tagged and tracked using automated radio telemetry which pings when they pass a receiver station. One interesting record past Weybourne in October last year, a station supported by NENBC, was this **Goldcrest record** (map below). Ewan tells us that "It was originally tagged in the Netherlands and remained on the Dutch coast for 8 days before leaving on the evening of 16th of October and **after a crossing of nearly 6 hours** it arrived at Weybourne just after midnight. The BBC WinterWatch back in January covered an even

longer crossing by a Goldcrest that went from the Netherlands to Spurn in October 2022. Do any members know if there are there any seawatching reports of Goldcrest arriving at this time of year as I wonder if this is regular, if under reported, occurrence?" That earlier bird tracked & recorded by Spurn (the upper line on the map) was reported in a [BirdGuides article](#).



Goldcrest photo from Richard Farrow

Anyone else got any old literature lying about that has a mention of birding life back in the day?

Cromer Peregrine Project ...



Reports and webcam photos / stills from Cromer Church. Those in the know say the falcon is spending more time closer to the platform, and we should see the first egg in less than 3 weeks. The webcam will be going live in the near future and the work in the church should also be finished soon so we can look forward to business as usual.



Contemplating Conservation

Free-roaming dogs are harming nature



By Tracy Brighten

I look across the lake to the lawn at Blickling National Trust. A Grey Heron stands poised like a statue on the grassy bank. Jackdaws gather in the treetops, and I hear a Song Thrush. Two Great Crested Grebes dive close to the reeds where I saw a nest last year, opposite the bank with the 'No Dogs' sign the size of a beer mat. As the sun sets, the parkland is peaceful. There isn't a dog in sight, but this is rare.

I like dogs and I can see why they are popular pets. Their companionship is good for mental health, they keep us active, and some people may even foster a closer connection with nature through walking their dog. Dogs are part of the family, so we want to give them a good life, and this includes exercise outdoors. But what about the impact on nature of 13 million dogs kept as pets in the UK?

The number of dogs in the UK is trending upwards, with a surge seen during the pandemic. Since then, we've seen an increase in irresponsible dog owners' behaviour. Stories on social media reflect the frustration and desperation many of us feel about dogs disturbing water voles along riverbanks, chasing waders and flushing nesting birds. But just how much of a threat are free-ranging dogs?

Dogs off the lead kill wildlife.

Unlike cats that roam all hours predating birds and small mammals, dogs aren't usually associated with killing wildlife. But a study of dog-wildlife interactions in Italy, published in *Biodiversity and Conservation*, says unleashed dogs are a

threat to be taken seriously where encounters with wildlife are most likely. The study analysed reports of dogs killing or harassing wildlife and found that dogs attacked and killed 95 species, mostly mammals and birds. Over 90% of attacks were caused by unleashed dogs in the presence of their owner in urban and peri-urban areas. Most dog attacks caused their victim's death. The study found that even leashed dogs attacked wildlife, highlighting the need for dog walkers to be alert. With different laws and cultural views on dogs, the frequency of owned dogs roaming varies widely between countries, as does the number of strays and feral dogs. But this study shows the potential for all dogs to harm and kill wildlife.



In the UK, local Red Squirrel populations are affected by dogs off the lead as The Wildlife Trusts explains. Even if dogs don't catch squirrels, the chase depletes their energy and causes stress, which can affect survival in winter when food is harder to find. In summer, squirrels may abandon their nest when chased by a dog. Young or sick hedgehogs are also vulnerable to dog attacks, likewise, adders, other reptiles and amphibians too.

Dogs off the lead cause wildlife disturbance.

With many of their reserves facing issues with dogs, The Wildlife Trusts urge pet owners to keep wildlife and livestock safe. Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust found unleashed dogs caused 40% of wildlife disturbances compared to 5% by dogs on leads. Lancashire Wildlife Trust reports dogs scaring ground-nesting birds and chasing livestock. Somerset Wildlife Trust has restricted dogs to public rights of way at two more reserves in the Avalon Marshes due to irresponsible dog owner behaviour: "There have been increasing instances of dogs swimming in the lakes after sticks have been thrown into water. Dogs are disturbing birds and other wildlife including several instances of ground nesting birds abandoning nests after being disturbed by dogs. Fragile habitats have been trampled, wildlife killed, birds disturbed and chased, and grazing animals harassed and bitten." While restrictions must be frustrating for responsible dog owners, a blanket rule is easier to enforce. *Photo credit: Gisela Merkuur, Pixabay*



With open public access, beaches can be more difficult to regulate. Around the UK, teams of wardens and volunteers are getting ready to protect beach-nesting birds from the onslaught of visitors and dogs. At Winterton-on-Sea and Eccles beaches, the RSPB protects Little Tern colonies with electric fencing.



At Holme Dunes, Norfolk Wildlife Trust has signs along the coastal boardwalk to make people aware that birds are nesting in the scrub and dunes, and on the beach. However, restricting dogs' freedom is contentious and compliance is problematic, especially among seasonal visitors who aren't familiar with the local wildlife. I've seen dog walkers pass the

signs at Holme, claiming they hadn't seen the request to keep dogs on leads when I mention it.



At Holkham National Nature Reserve, areas are roped off in winter and summer to protect beach-nesting Shore Larks, Snow Buntings and Little Terns. But while birdwatchers with dogs understand how important it is to keep dogs on leads when asked, the wider public seem oblivious, or simply defiant.



When I volunteered as a Little Tern warden, dog walkers told me their dog wouldn't hurt a fly, or worse, that they can do as they please in a public place. Many people aren't aware that birds see free-roaming dogs as predators and that birds waste energy when flushed from eggs or chicks, which are then exposed to weather and wild predators. Adults and fledglings on the shoreline are flushed every time a dog is off the lead. *Photo credit: Little Tern, David Brighten*



Ringed Plovers fare worse because their nest scrapes are unlikely to be within electric fencing and eggs are easily trampled or eaten by dogs. Chicks freeze when they hear a parent's alarm call, but this can work against them when the threat is a dog. For this reason, dogs will be banned from a section of beach on Landguard Nature Reserve in Suffolk to protect Ringed Plovers. Dogs are not the main threat, but we need to minimise threats to increase red-listed birds' breeding success.

A similar disturbance problem occurs inland. At Felbrigg and Sheringham National Trust, the electrifying Skylark is heard over meadows in summer skies. Signs ask visitors to keep dogs on leads. However, unless I blinked and missed it, there is no sign in the meadow at Blickling NT where skylarks sing and dogs roam. Small print on notice boards asks people to remove dog waste and keep dogs on leads around livestock. A tiny sign by the lake shows a dog with a line through, not exactly friendly or informative. Yet this the lake is bordered by reeds, wildflowers, scrub and trees and is a wonderful habitat for all kinds of birds. Over the past several years, I have enjoyed watching birds in relative peace. However, this is becoming difficult as the number of visitors with dogs increases and fences are removed to give people wider access. But more access often means less wildlife. And when dogs enter lakes and rivers, disturbance isn't the only problem.



Dogs compound environmental pollution.

There are many causes of environmental pollution – pesticides on crops, animal waste from mega-farms, and waste from transport and manufacturing to name a few. But the pollution related to dogs needs attention.

1. Faeces and urine affect plant diversity.

While many dog walkers might think dog waste is harmless, a study in Belgium says otherwise. The volume of dog faeces and urine deposited in nature reserves around Ghent created nitrogen and phosphorus levels that would be illegal on farms. Researchers say this is likely to be reflected across Europe due to the number of domestic dogs. High nutrient levels over-fertilise natural habitats, which allows dominant plants like nettles and hogweed to crowd out the variety of plants that wildlife depends on. Picking up dog poo and disposing of the bag responsibly removes most of the phosphorus but only half the nitrogen, the remainder being in the urine.

2. Flea, tick and worming treatments pollute watercourses.

A study in 2020 revealed that toxic insecticides used in flea and tick treatments harm aquatic ecosystems in England, killing aquatic insects and, in turn, affecting the fish and birds that depend on them. Imidacloprid, which belongs to a class of pesticides known as neonicotinoids, was found to be present in English rivers in concentrations that exceed safe limits for wildlife. To show the scale of toxicity, Prof Dave Goulson says one flea treatment of a medium-sized dog with imidacloprid contains enough pesticide to kill 60 million bees.

Scientists urge vets to cut treatments containing fipronil and imidacloprid, often used as a preventative treatment. These toxic chemicals, banned from use on farms since 2018, reach watercourses via sewage treatment works. When owners wash their hands after treating or stroking their pets, and wash contaminated clothing, soft furnishings and bedding, the chemicals enter the drains. Once applied, chemicals remain in the skin, hair and excretions. Another route of contamination is when treated dogs enter ponds, rivers and lakes.

Worming treatments are also problematic. Many worming treatments tackle different parasites, including worms, fleas and mites. These products usually contain a combination of drugs, including imidacloprid. Worming treatments are often given in tablet form, but drugs can still be excreted in faeces or urine.

Buglife first reported high levels of neonicotinoids in rivers in 2017, but the Government has taken no action. Buglife and other environmental and veterinary organisations have now sent an open letter asking the Government to ban five toxic pesticides from treatments for cats and dogs. These pesticides don't just harm wildlife, they affect human health too.

In a briefing paper, Imperial College London researchers consider the impact of flea and tick treatments on wildlife against the benefits, or not, to humans and dogs. Dr Andrew Prentis says: "Concerned cat and dog owners should talk to their vets about what is best for their pet, what is safe for the environment and whether such regular preventative treatments are needed. In the same way that we only take antibiotics when we're ill - not every month - we may need to apply the same principle to parasite treatments for our pets."

Natural flea treatments include lemon juice or apple cider vinegar with specific herbs and natural ways to eliminate worms from a dog's gut include pumpkin seeds.

Dogs (and income) before wildlife?

Over the past few years, I've seen changes at Blickling NT that seem negative for wildlife. The National Trust has partnered with pet food maker Forthglade in a Dogs Welcome project where each NT property is awarded a rating. Blickling is a three-paw attraction, welcoming pooches into the café and giving them access to most of the parkland. Heritage properties are costly to maintain, so I appreciate they want to attract visitors, but The National Trust is also a partner in the Save Our Wild Isles campaign. Wildlife has already been pushed out with agricultural intensification, urban expansion,

and “easy-to-maintain” gardens. To support wildlife in managed habitats like Blickling, we surely need areas where dogs can’t roam free?

The Canine Code is promoted on the Blickling NT website, but as far as I’m aware, this isn’t displayed in the reception area or on notice boards outside. The Code asks for close or effective control, which means “being able to recall your dogs in any situation at the first call; being able to clearly see your dog at all times (not just knowing they have gone into the undergrowth or over the crest of the hill); not allowing them to approach other visitors without their consent; and having a lead with you to use if you encounter livestock or wildlife, or if you are asked to use one.”

This code would exclude many of the dog walkers I see at Blickling. Owners watch their dogs leap into the water, scattering geese and ducks, adults and young alike. In winter, a large flock of Jackdaws suddenly alighted from a field – I could see no obvious reason until a dog came bounding towards me. The owners were way down the path, chatting and oblivious. Jackdaws are not a threatened species, but dogs can’t tell a Jackdaw from a Skylark or a Curlew. Dogs off the lead can easily get out of control when they see wildlife, farmed animals or other dogs, especially when several dogs are being walked together.

When I see plastic bags of dog poo dumped behind trees, tossed into brambles, or audaciously left hanging from branches, I feel anger towards the polluters. I’ve mentioned the problem to the Trust and other birdwatchers have too. Our concerns are ignored. It isn’t all doom and gloom, however. Clearly, many people do use the dog waste bins provided. I meet dog owners who care about wildlife and keep their dogs on a lead, and they have my respect and gratitude.

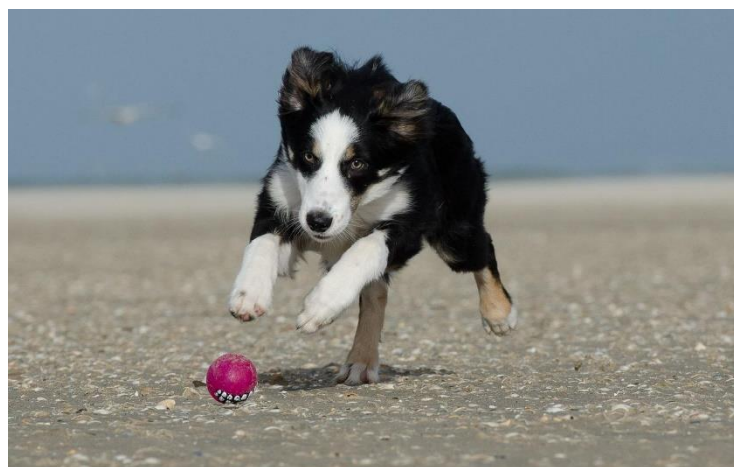


How can we encourage responsible behaviour?

The problem of wildlife disturbance and pollution seems out of control, but there are ways we might change irresponsible behaviour.

- Dog owners can encourage others to follow the guidelines for leads and dog waste bins, setting an example by keeping dogs on short leads during the breeding season.
- Friendly, eye-catching signs can inform people about wildlife, although these may be at risk of vandalism in quieter places.
- Places like Blickling NT could set up dog exercise areas with bins so dogs can run around and do their business, and leads can be used outside these areas.
- Dog holiday businesses can promote responsible behaviour. I was heartened to see Holidays4Dogs giving advice to dog owners on how to protect wildlife.
- New housing developments must include open public spaces where people can exercise their dogs, along with areas protected by brambles and prickly shrubs to keep wildlife safe.

In national parks, nature reserves, parklands and beaches, nature organisations and local and national authorities face the dilemma of balancing wildlife conservation with keeping dog owners happy. But those of us who want to see less disturbance to wildlife and watch birds in peace should be heard too. *Photo credit: Pixabay ref 825545*



On the Market ...

Last month William Earp asked if anyone had a second-hand telescope and tripod for sale for a birding project in India. Well, we are pleased to report that following a recent upgrade, Andy Clarke’s old scope has found a new home Thank you!

We are also delighted to say that at our last evening event we had a taker for Chris Mason’s mule pack scope and tripod carrier and lots of books found new homes. The **Garmin personal navigator** is still up for grabs if anyone fancies it.

If anyone else has anything to sell that they are happy for some of the proceeds to go to NENBC then let us know.

**DONATIONS
ACCEPTED**

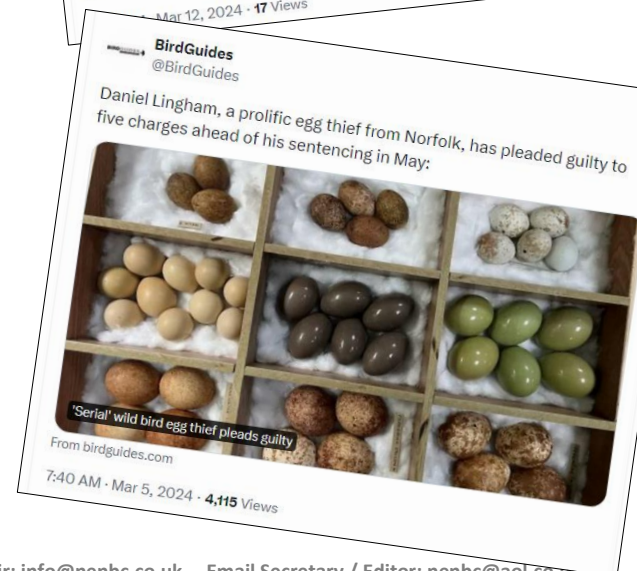
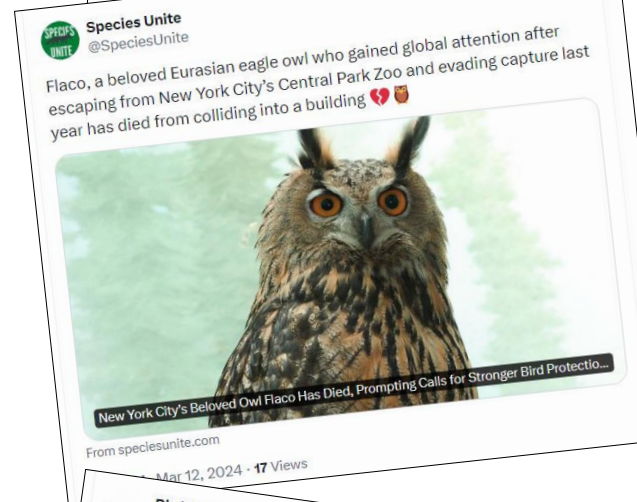
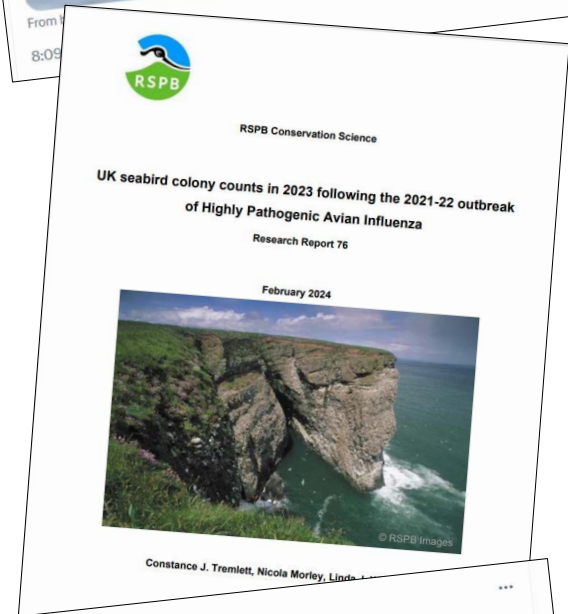
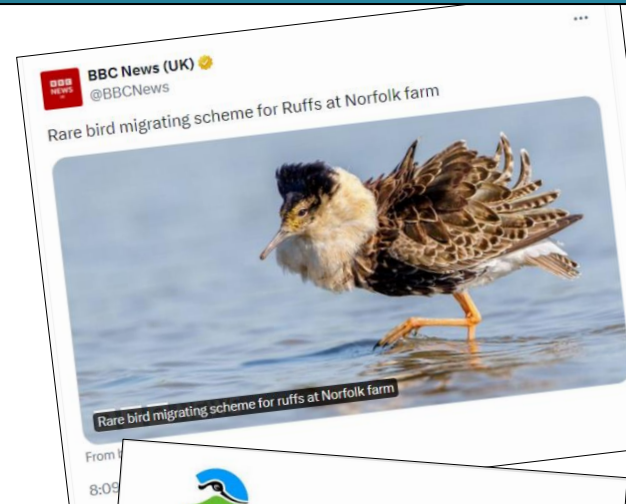


Check This Out!

A few bits and bobs in the news this month ...



- 🔍 **“Norfolk Ruff breeding scheme given green light”** from the [BirdGuides website](#) [12-Mar]
- 🔍 **“Bird flu reaches mainland Antarctica”** from the [BirdGuides website](#) [09-Mar]
- 🔍 **“Bird flu impact on UK seabirds revealed in RSPB report”** from the [BirdGuides website](#) [21-Feb] with the [HPAI Seabird Survey Report](#) and background info available on the [RSPB website](#)
- 🔍 **“Hedge cutting rules reinstated by the government”** from the [RareBirdAlert website](#) [12-Mar]
- 🔍 **“Mixed fortunes for UK’s herons and egrets”** from the [RareBirdAlert website](#) [02-Feb]
- 🔍 **“Sandwich Terns avoid entering offshore wind farms”** from the [American Ornithological Society](#) [14-Feb]
- 🔍 **“Slimbridge sees earliest ever nesting kingfishers after mild winter”** from the [BBC website](#) [19-Feb]
- 🔍 **“British birds photographed with rainbow wings”** from the [BBC website](#) [18-Feb]
- 🔍 **“The Bird Oscars”** from the [RSPB website](#) [01-Mar]
- 🔍 **“BirdTrack migration blog – early spring”** from the [BTO website](#) [01-Mar]
- 🔍 **“Hope on the Frontline of Conservation: Beccy Speight’s Story”** from the [BirdLife International website](#) [23-Feb]
- 🔍 **“Flaco, New York City’s beloved owl, dies after striking building”** from [The Guardian website](#) and **“FLACO Act essential to prevent bird strikes, combat population declines”** from the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology website](#) [26-Feb]
- 🔍 **“Illegal songbird trapping on the rise again in Cyprus”** from the [BirdGuides website](#) [08-Mar]
- 🔍 **“Concern for Kittiwake colony after cliff fall”** from the [BirdGuides website](#) [06-Mar]
- 🔍 **“New Suffolk wetland receives major £2m boost”** from the [BirdGuides website](#) [02-Mar]
- 🔍 **“State of the World’s Migratory Species report gives stark warning”** from the [BirdGuides website](#) [26-Feb]
- 🔍 **“Community order for men caught trading wild Peregrine Falcons”** from the [BirdGuides website](#) [23-Feb]
- 🔍 **“Which birds return first in Spring?”** from the [RSPB website](#)
- 🔍 **“NWT Cley Marshes to host Robert Gillmor retrospective”** from the [NWT website](#) [08-Feb]
- 🔍 **“Prolific Norfolk egg thief in possession of thousands of eggs”** from the [RareBirdAlert website](#) [21-Feb]
- 🔍 **“Population of UK’s tallest bird hits record-breaking high”** from the [NWT website](#) [02-Feb]





What's That Song?



Many of us find it difficult learning or remembering bird song whilst others seem to have a natural knack for it, a bit like a foreign language or music skill. Can you recognise a bird from the description of its voice though? The descriptions come from three different books, but they all refer to the same bird – no

wonder it is so confusing! As you can see, some books go into more detail than others. Answers are on the last page of this newsletter, along with a link through to a website where you can listen to an audio excerpt and decide which description resonates best with you! [Solution at the end of this newsletter.](#)

"Call is a hard 'chack, chack'. It also has pleasant warbling song that is given on the ground or during a short song-flight."
from RSPB Handbook of British Birds by Peter Holden and Tim Cleeves

"Whistled 'wheet' and hard 'chak'. Song often given in short, fluttery song flight, or from low perch, quick-fire phrase of chattering and ticking notes with musical chirps."
from WILDGuides BRITAIN'S BIRDS 2nd Edition - An identification guide to the birds of Britain and Ireland 2nd Edition by Hume, Still, Swash, Harrop and Tipling

"Call a straight whistle, like indrawn 'hiit', as well as a tongue-clicking 'chack'. Song often delivered from elevated perch (top of a rock, wire or the like) but sometimes in short song-flight, an explosive, fast, hard, chirpy and crackling verse with interwoven whistling 'hiit', varying in details and hard to transcribe; sometimes contains one or two imitations of other birds. Often sings at first light and just before, but also during the day."
from Collins BIRD GUIDE 3rd Edition by Mullaney, Svensson, Zetterström

Wordsearch



This month, we have the 16 species or races recorded in March 2023 for which we have just one, two or three records for each – you never know what might crop up on your walks at this time of year so keep your eyes peeled! For the purposes of this puzzle, ignore any hyphens, apostrophes, brackets and spaces. [Solution is at the end of this newsletter.](#)

Barnacle Goose
Black-tailed Godwit
Jack Snipe
Long-tailed Duck
Mandarin Duck
Manx Shearwater
Ring Ouzel
Green Sandpiper
Raven
House Martin
Kingfisher
Great Northern Diver
Hawfinch
Little Ringed Plover
Merlin
Pintail

W	J	P	D	G	U	R	T	A	M	R	A	M	P	R	H	I	O	P	M
Y	C	W	B	L	A	C	K	T	A	I	L	E	D	G	O	D	W	I	T
E	R	M	C	I	V	C	W	X	N	O	A	R	T	B	B	J	N	J	W
Y	V	S	J	T	H	W	K	K	X	M	L	M	I	D	Q	V	D	T	G
T	F	E	U	T	A	E	L	P	S	X	Q	L	E	Z	R	Q	I	W	P
O	X	Q	X	L	G	U	E	E	H	V	F	D	X	H	E	H	S	L	N
Z	X	P	A	E	Q	Y	Z	E	E	W	X	N	M	T	V	A	H	O	E
A	G	I	N	R	M	U	U	A	G	M	T	E	X	I	W	S	N	B	
F	R	N	O	I	Y	R	O	N	R	O	S	G	N	H	D	F	B	G	X
L	E	T	E	N	O	H	G	R	W	S	Z	J	U	O	N	I	V	T	Z
O	E	A	L	G	H	P	N	Q	A	S	W	L	F	U	R	N	M	A	M
A	N	I	K	E	U	G	I	I	T	L	P	S	M	S	E	C	J	I	D
G	S	L	W	D	X	E	R	V	E	U	D	D	R	E	H	H	J	L	R
H	A	J	O	P	G	O	A	V	R	A	U	O	J	M	T	E	B	E	J
W	N	A	S	L	B	G	V	M	J	T	L	H	U	A	R	T	C	D	C
K	D	C	D	O	B	W	E	S	T	Z	N	G	I	R	O	Z	A	D	G
M	P	K	S	V	J	A	N	D	O	E	G	U	K	T	N	D	I	U	A
G	I	S	E	E	B	B	E	K	B	Q	H	T	G	I	T	X	D	C	N
J	P	N	L	R	K	C	U	D	N	I	R	A	D	N	A	M	L	K	V
I	E	I	B	A	R	N	A	C	L	E	G	O	O	S	E	M	C	F	A
X	R	P	L	Z	K	M	K	V	I	B	Q	X	W	G	R	U	W	H	M
V	C	E	G	K	H	R	M	R	T	H	Y	B	D	B	G	A	I	C	Y
R	E	H	S	I	F	G	N	I	K	F	D	S	K	U	G	F	Y	G	M
T	N	I	L	R	E	M	R	C	S	X	X	Q	M	O	Z	Q	O	P	Z
W	S	K	Y	A	Z	H	J	H	U	P	K	G	G	F	W	Y	A	N	U



Monthly Member Highs, Lows and Ponderings



All member comments are taken from the notes section of the website. We are getting a lot more detail on the birds and their activities these days which makes these summaries longer, but much richer, so please keep it up everyone!

Pink Footed Goose: "x570 Flew east over Gunton station in several loose skeins, lovely to see and hear as we waited for the train" | Stella Baylis | Southrepps Common | 7th

Mute Swan: "2 adults 3 juveniles. Two of the juveniles ,taking flying lessons !" | Doug & Jenny Cullern | Selbrigg Pond | 4th

Mallard: "Pair on scrape - female a Khaki Campbell" | Moss Taylor | Weybourne camp | 9th

Mallard: "M + F on small pond opposite Crayford & Abbs - at least someone is enjoying all this rain!" | Val Stubbs | Bodham | 19th

Tufted Duck: "This is the most I have seen together on the lake" | Andrew Crossley | Felbrigg Park & Lake | 23rd

Stock Dove: "Investigating Barn Owl box" | Alan Stevens | Gresham | 27th

Collared Dove: "Feeding on seaweed covered rocks in the manner of a Purple Sandpiper" | Peter & Sue Morrison | Sheringham | 25th

Little Grebe: "Much calling and territorial dispute noted, likely pair and one other, on fishing lake" | Stella Baylis | Gimingham | 28th

Great Crested Grebe: "On sea, associating with another bird, appeared to be 'duck-shaped', all dark with white breast and possibly neck. Both distant, binoculars only" | Dave Billham | Sheringham | 28th

Lapwing: "Peering into my pond, looking for any amphibian activity, I saw a reflection of the unmistakable silhouette of a Lapwing flying over, a pond tick you could say" | Stella Baylis | Southrepps Common | 10th

Turnstone: "I was really surprised to see a small amount of Turnstones in a flock with Lapwing and a small flock of Starlings. They were near the road - can't think I've seen Turnstone so far away from the beach here before! The whole mixed flock took of circled around together and then landed together - so clearly happy in each other's company. A very interesting sighting I thought" | Jane Crossen | near West Runton | 2nd

Woodcock: "Flying along at about 30metre height over canal before veering off towards Paston Way and Pigneys Wood. Very surprising." | Bob Farndon | Pigneys Wood | 29th

Lesser Black-backed Gull: "adult west (1st of 'spring', a typical date) & regular adult" | Moss Taylor | Weybourne Camp | 11th

Cormorant: | "east, including 1 leucistic bird speed checked from Weybourne at 08.56 - during 2 hour sea-watch" | Trevor Williams | Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs | 16th

Green Woodpecker: "In the garden twice recently having a good poke around the swamp that used to be our lawn." | Geoff Snelson | High Kelling | 24th

Peregrine: "Flew from church tower, caught a small bird and came back to south west pinnacle to enjoy its snack." | Stephanie Witham | Cromer | 7th

Jackdaw: "Pair checking out their hollow tree they nested in last year !!!" | Anne Sims | Selbrigg Pond | 4th

Starling: "On the roof of BET FRED - gambling addicts?" | Michael Harcup | Sheringham | 26th

Song Thrush: "Singing on Franklin Hill. First song from a local bird this year." | Andy Clarke | Sheringham | 10th

Mistle Thrush: "Along track to CG cottages; behaved like migrants (very wary)" | Andy Clarke | Weybourne Cliffs | 28th

Robin: "On seed feeder in back garden - tolerating each other, so presumably M + F" | Val Stubbs | Weybourne | 19th

Stonechat: "x14 Early migrants, inc. one flock of 8" | Ian Prentice | West Runton | 16th

Duncock: "On the fence line. Lots of amorous wing flapping flirting!" | John Hurst | Mundesley | 4th

Twite: "In the Linnet / Skylark flock, flock very flighty but perseverance paid off when one walked through my scope view." | Tony Forster | Weybourne Cliffs | 24th

The New Club Website: Q&A



Getting Started

If you haven't yet, take a look at this short video clip on how to get started on the website so you know what to expect once you are in:

NENBC on BirdClub

If you haven't yet 'activated' yourselves on the new website by changing your password then you can do that by clicking this link and following the instructions

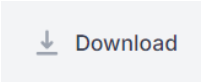
<https://www.bird.club/members/password/new>

Don't forget to use the email address for yourself that you had registered with the old NENBC website – if you reset your password and then try and log in using a different email address then it won't work.

If you are already a user of the BirdClub platform with another club or group, you shouldn't need to change your password and you can switch between your different clubs once you are logged in to any of them - click on the arrow by your name at the top right of your screen.

Do give the new website a go and please contact us if you are struggling, have questions or queries or want to provide some feedback - nenbc@aol.co.uk

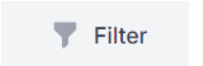
Great to see so many of you using and getting to grips with the website. Anyone out there still having issues? Please let us know if you haven't been able to log in or have any queries about how to use it. We have had over 22,100 records uploaded since launch on New Year's Eve bringing our club tallies to over 698,000 records – phenomenal achievement! One new note this month:



1. Data Downloads

There is now an option to download records from the website in spreadsheet format. **This isn't a function that most of you will need to ever use** as you won't need access to your records in this format outside of the website. As we mentioned in last month's newsletter, you can view your species list (or that of others) online via your (others') Profile which is what most folk like to keep an eye on. [Go to Members, search by typing in your or another member's name and just click on Profile]. If you do really need this info offline, **please contact us** as we might be able to get that data for you more easily. If however a full spreadsheet is something that is important for you **PLEASE HOLD YOUR HORSES AND READ THE NOTES BELOW BEFORE TRYING TO USE IT!** It is important to **make use of the FILTER option BEFORE you click download so you just get the info you want.** The spreadsheet that downloads will list line by line every record uploaded with all the associated details. Without filtering BEFORE you press Download, your machine will attempt to download every record uploaded by everyone from the club's inception. It will give you a warning first though if you are attempting to download more than 10,000+ records in case you have pressed accidentally!

Still want to do it? Go to the Records page, click Filter, then the arrow on the Member box so you can select your own name. You can additionally Filter by Reported After / Reported Before dates or Species or Family or Location or a combination. Please only press Download once you have done this.



Filter

Download

Reported After

dd/mm/yyyy

Family

Location

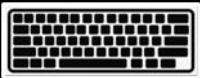
Reported Before

dd/mm/yyyy

Species

Member

Data, Records, Posts and Tweets



No new rare bird records have been 'Accepted' by the Norfolk Records Committee [NRC] for our area since the last newsletter. You can view their current '**NRC work in progress**' file on their website [27th Sep]. The British Birds Rarities Committee also have a '**BBRC work in progress**' file available on their website [27th Dec].

Here are some bits and bobs from our website and social media...

NENBC Website



A huge thanks to the **99** of you who have uploaded records to our new website this year from **116** locations. It is very much appreciated by us and the bodies we send the data on to for inclusion in the county reports.

So far this year we have collectively recorded **151** species across the NENBC area and already **5** members have

Top 10 Locations February (number of records uploaded)	
Weybourne Camp	931
Weybourne	930
Bodham	546
Sheringham	430
Felbrigg Park & Lake	380
Weybourne Cliffs	380
Kelling Heath	261
Beeston Common	210
West Runton	163
Holt	140

Top 10 Species February (number of records uploaded)	
Robin	239
Wood Pigeon	227
Blackbird	223
Blue Tit	222
Black-headed Gull	201
Dunnock	191
Chaffinch	183
Herring Gull	180
Carrion Crow	167
Buzzard	167

recorded over 100 species - congratulations to Phil Borley, Mark Clements, Moss Taylor, Trevor Williams, Tony Forster. Plenty more of us are heading in that direction with a further 17 members with over 70 species logged. Don't forget that 100 species will earn you a Bronze Star badge from the club so do get out there recording yourself and telling us what you see.

Most recorded species for February was Robin and the location with the most records overall was Weybourne Camp – just! We also had 786 'At Home' records too last month from 15 of you garden birding.

NENBC Twitterings from (the platform formerly known as) Twitter

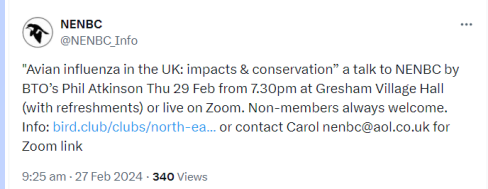
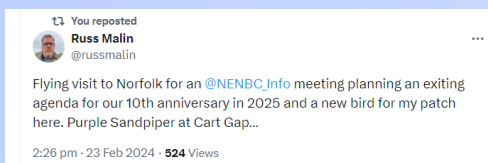
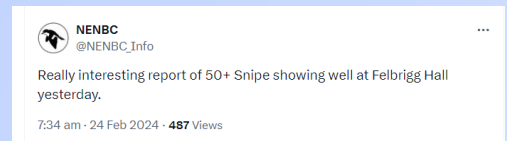


We very much welcome users tagging us **@NENBC_info** to keep us posted and so we can Retweet them but please refrain from posting any discussion that could be construed as abusive, derogatory or inflammatory to or by other users – thank you!

Please continue to tag us **@NENBC_info** in your own Tweets as we'll be doing more Re-tweeting of local, regional and national bird news. It is always great to see you sharing your outings, your photos, your questions, even your disappointments! We'd love to see you posting about club events, and your thoughts on them, with photos of birds or members (with their permission of course!) and expect to start getting reminders about club events direct from us with a brief write up of how they went.

1,750
followers

Here are some highlights from the last month ...



Here's a list of the members who we know have a Twitter account they use for bird sightings, although not all are NENBC area residents - let us know if you're not on here!

James Appleton	Colin Blaxill	Tracy Brighten	Emma Buck	Stu Buck	Ben Clark	Sally Clark	Mark Clements
Jane Crossen	James Emerson	Ian Gordon	Andy Hale	Sarah Hanson	Emma Hurrell	Russ Malin	Louis Parkerson
Lin Pateman	Carl Sayer	Steve Stansfield	Val Stubbs	Alan Stevens	Carol Thornton	Ken Thornton	Pauline Walton
Lizzie Wallis	Trevor Williams	Riley Woodhouse					

Don't forget that you don't have to have a Twitter account to peruse Twitter pages – take a look at our feed on your computer / laptop / phone etc: www.twitter.com/NENBC_Info

Cultural Birds – Snow Bunting

By David North

Snow Buntings nest in the far north. Each winter small flocks arrive on the east coast of England and spend the winter feeding on seeds along the strandline. Holkham Bay in Norfolk is one of the best sites to spot this attractive black and white winter visitor.

Within the club area they have been observed this month along Weybourne and Sheringham cliffs in flocks of up to 25.

Snow Buntings

A flurry of snow buntings, wind-blown wanderers out of the north, vanish like melting snowflakes into the sands. Then, lifting on the wind, these dancers in black and white fly onwards, over dune, marsh and creek into the grey distance.

Photo credits from the top:

Mark & Jenny Johnson, John Wheeler, Nik Borrow, Richard Farrow



What's That Song?



The bird voice variously described was that of a [Northern Wheatear](#). Click on the bird name to take you through to the xeno-canto website where, if you click on any of the play arrows on the left of the page, you will be able to hear the song. Don't forget to have your sound turned on and the volume up! Here's a link to the [BTO BirdFacts: Wheatear](#) page. There is also a BTO Bird ID Video featuring Wheatear: [Identifying Chats: Whinchat, Stonechat, Wheatear](#).

Photos courtesy of: Richard Farrow
Trevor Williams
Mark Clements
Jane Crossen

This month's **Wordsearch Solution:**
BIRDS RECORDED IN THE NENBC AREA IN MARCH 2023

W	J	P	D	G	U	R	T	A	M	R	A	M	P	R	H	I	O	P	M
Y	C	W	B	L	A	C	K	T	A	I	L	E	D	G	O	D	W	I	T
E	R	M	C	I	V	C	W	X	N	O	A	R	T	B	B	J	N	J	W
Y	V	S	J	T	H	W	K	K	X	M	L	M	I	D	Q	V	D	T	G
T	F	E	U	T	A	E	L	P	S	X	Q	L	E	Z	R	Q	I	W	P
O	X	Q	X	L	G	U	E	E	H	V	F	D	X	H	E	H	S	L	N
Z	X	P	A	E	Q	Y	Z	E	E	W	X	N	M	T	V	A	H	O	E
A	G	I	N	R	M	U	U	U	A	G	M	T	E	X	I	W	S	N	B
F	R	N	O	I	Y	R	O	N	R	O	S	G	N	H	D	F	B	G	X
L	E	T	E	N	O	H	G	R	W	S	Z	J	U	O	N	I	V	T	Z
O	E	A	L	G	H	P	N	Q	A	S	W	L	F	U	R	N	M	A	M
A	N	I	K	E	U	G	I	I	T	L	P	S	M	S	E	C	J	I	D
G	S	L	W	D	X	E	R	V	E	U	D	D	R	E	H	H	J	L	R
H	A	J	O	P	G	O	A	V	R	A	U	O	J	M	T	E	B	E	J
W	N	A	S	L	B	G	V	M	J	T	L	H	U	A	R	T	C	D	C
K	D	C	D	O	B	W	E	S	T	Z	N	G	I	R	O	Z	A	D	G
M	P	K	S	V	J	A	N	D	O	E	G	U	K	T	N	D	I	U	A
G	I	S	E	E	B	B	E	K	B	Q	H	T	G	I	T	X	D	C	N
J	P	N	L	R	K	C	U	D	N	I	R	A	D	N	A	M	L	K	V
I	E	I	B	A	R	N	A	C	L	E	G	O	O	S	E	M	C	F	A
X	R	P	L	Z	K	M	K	V	I	B	Q	X	W	G	R	U	W	H	M
V	C	E	G	K	H	R	M	R	T	H	Y	B	D	B	G	A	I	C	Y
R	E	H	S	I	F	G	N	I	K	F	D	S	K	U	G	F	Y	G	M
T	N	I	L	R	E	M	R	C	S	X	X	Q	M	O	Z	Q	O	P	Z
W	S	K	Y	A	Z	H	J	H	U	P	K	G	G	F	W	Y	A	N	U



Back Page Club Info



NENBC Annual Bird Reports are compiled from the records and photographs added to the club website by members since we were established in January 2015 and complemented by articles on club activities. Member price for most recent report is £3 and back-copies £2 (postage extra).

The Birds of Felbrigg Park is a systematic review of the records of all 220 species seen in and around the park over the past 50 years, indicating their current status and highlighting, for the rarer species, every recorded sighting. The publication includes photographs and artwork from local artists. The book is now reduced to £5.00 (postage extra) and all profits from the sale of this book go to Felbeck Trust, our local wildlife conservation charity:

www.felbecktrust.org.uk

My Birding Life by Club President Moss Taylor. Moss has been watching birds and keeping records of his sightings since 1953, as well as ringing and photographing birds for over 50 years. Although only a hobby, birding has really taken over his life, especially during the last 25 years since he retired from general practice. Since 1969 he has lived in Norfolk and much of the action in this book takes place there. All profits from the sale of this book will be going to his charity Love for Leo. See below for more details on this charity and contact details for Moss. £20 (or £18 if collected from Sheringham when restrictions permit).

Rare and Scarce Birds in North-east Norfolk This book by Moss Taylor presents all the records of rare and scarce birds that have been recorded in the NENBC area up to the formation of the Club in 2014. There is a Classified List and a chapter on the historic habitats and birding activities in the area plus all additional rarity records from 2015 to 2018. It is also illustrated with 78 colour photographs and runs to 104 pages. Now out of print, but there is an electronic version on our website.

For Annual Reports or **The Birds of Felbrigg Park**, contact Carol on nenbc@aol.co.uk. For **My Birding Life**, or emailable recent Annual Summaries of the Bird Life at Weybourne Camp, contact Moss Taylor, 4 Heath Road, Sheringham, NR26 8JH, phone 01263-823637 or email: moss.taylor@btinternet.com

Club Sponsor: A 5% discount on Bird Ventures branded wild bird food is available to NENBC members at their shop in Holt all year on production of a current NENBC Membership Card. Have a look at the [Bird Ventures website](http://www.birdventures.co.uk) as they also supply feeders and much more with good advice and help for garden bird enthusiasts. **Bird Ventures, The Wildlife Shop, 9B Chapel Yard, Albert Street, Holt, Norfolk NR25 6HG, Telephone 01263 710203, Email salesbirdventures@aol.com**



The NENBC objectives:

- Encourage and share the enjoyment of birdwatching in North East Norfolk with people of all abilities and experience.
- Promote diversity and inclusion in all its activities.
- Gather and collate data on birds in the recording area.
- Share information between members.
- Participate in regional and national surveys incorporating the recording area.
- Administer the Club in an environmentally sensitive manner.
- Promote the conservation of birds and wildlife within Norfolk.
- Liaise with other conservation groups within the local area and more widely.
- Hold regular indoor and field meetings and social events throughout the year.
- Put the interests of birds first and respect other people, whether or not they are interested in birds, in line with the birdwatchers' code.

Monthly mid-week bird walks around Felbrigg Park on the 3rd Wednesday of the month from September to July / Varied **monthly weekend bird walks** to a range of local birding hotspots from September to July / **Occasional evening walks** in the spring and summer / **Monthly evening talks** on the last Thursday of the month from September to November and January to April - refreshments provided / An annual **Big Sit** birding event at a number of locations across the club area in May, recording the total number of species seen from one spot between dawn and dusk / Autumn **Global Big Day** birding challenge / Annual **Coordinated Seawatch** event along the coast in the autumn recording visible migration / A **Birding for Beginners** workshop series combining practical and theoretical elements of birdwatching / **New Year's Day Birding Challenge** / **Occasional master-classes, lectures, workshops and conferences** to develop better skills and understanding of the birding world / A combined **Christmas Social and AGM Evening** in December