

The Pied Flyer

North East Norfolk Bird Club



January 2024 – Issue 103

The NENBC Monthly e-Newsletter

Contents - if something is underlined, you can Ctrl-click / press on it etc to jump to an external website link or that point in the newsletter

Chair's Corner	Page 2	New Year's Day Birding Challenge	Page 20
A Note from the Editor	Page 2	WhatsApp NENBC Alerts 2023	Page 22
Membership News and Statistics	Page 3	The New Club Website	Page 22
NENBC Bird Highlights	Page 4	New Website Update: Q&A	Page 23
December 2023	Page 4	NENBC Young Birder: Molly Carter	Page 26
What To Watch For in January	Page 8	Felbrigg Park Monthly Walk Stats	Page 27
Club Notices	Page 9	Contemplating Conservation: To feed or not?	Page 30
What's On?	Page 10	Ask the Audience	Page 34
Walks: Felbrigg Park / North Point Pools	Page 10	Check This Out	Page 34
Talk: Wheatfen with Will Fitch	Page 11	Ficedula Fun	Page 35
RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch	Page 11	Member Highs, Lows & Ponderings	Page 36
Last Month's Felbrigg Walk	Page 12	Data, Records, Posts & Tweets	Page 37
Last Month's Holkham Walk	Page 14	Cultural Birds: Snow Bunting	Page 39
AGM 2023 & Christmas Social	Page 15	Ficedula Fun Solutions	Page 40
Review of the Year 2023	Page 18	Back Page Club Info	Page 41



Through a Lens ...



By Trevor Williams

2024 and the start of another birding year. We had a great end to the Club year with a very well attended [AGM and Christmas Social](#). My personal thanks go to everyone who made the occasion so special - it really did feel like we were getting back to the old, pre-covid days! A version of my 'end of year' report can be found on [page 18](#). The birding year was rounded-off very nicely when the Red-breasted Goose, which has been hanging around with the wintering Brent flock, finally made an appearance (two actually) in the Club area - allowing a good many members to add it to their list. What a beauty! But with the arrival of a New Year - a new list - and there were plenty of members out on January 1st taking advantage of a timely break in the bad weather to get their Club year off to a good start. For a selection of comments and stories about the New Year Birding Challenge see [page 20](#).

But that wasn't the only new thing at the start of January. As previously trailed in this Newsletter and at the AGM we took the decision to move our old website on to a new platform. The old site was beginning to fail in a number of respects - 10 years is a ripe old age for IT software - and wasn't being maintained. We had the choice of buying in IT expertise or moving to the free generic Bird.Club platform. We decided on the latter. We understand that there have been a few teething problems (there always are where a change in technology is concerned) but we appear to be through the worst and we look forward to working with the guys

at Bird.Club to deliver an improved website which will be better supported and benefit from much wider (international) usage. There is some additional info on [page 23](#) but like all aspects of the Club, if you think you can see where things could be improved please do let us know. The website isn't the only IT improvement for the coming year as we've invested in our own dedicated laptop, projector and other AV equipment. Once this has been road-tested this should lead to a much better experience for members who continue to join in Club events remotely via Zoom.

As we move into a new year, and the effects of climate change bring ever-increasing extremes of weather (some parts of Norfolk have already had a month's rain in only a few days) it will be interesting to see the impact on our birds. Will patterns of migration and breeding success continue to be disrupted as we have been seeing in the past few years - are we indeed witnessing the start of a global collapse in biodiversity, as scientists and environmental pundits have predicted? The more optimistic scenario of course is that we're bottoming out of a cyclical down-turn and with improved awareness and more measures to address climate change we can get through this - only time will tell. One thing's for certain, the combined voice and actions of the Club can make a positive impact on nature in North Norfolk. Let's strive to make 2024 better for birds - and birding.

A Note from the Editor



By Carol Thornton

Hi folks. Welcome to the first edition of 2024 of your club newsletter, The Pied Flyer. Hope you have had a relaxing time over the festive period and have started the new year off with some great birding. Just a quick reminder that 2024 subscriptions are now due and there are details about that on [page 9](#). Please also take a look at the info we have included about our new website from [page 22](#) and if you have any queries about how to get started, please drop me an email so we can get you on your way. There will be teething problems but your engagement as members along with your records and photos are what makes this club so please bear with us as we transition.

Last month's **Through a Lens** subject for the front page was **GEESE**. Our cover images this time are courtesy of Richard Farrow [main Pink-footed Goose], Doug Cullern [Canada Goose, Egyptian Goose, Pink-footed Goose x 2]. Thanks everyone, especially Doug! Mark Clements' lovely photo of a Red-breasted Goose is on [page 4](#). For January, the **Through a Lens** subject will be **Corvids** and if you fancy giving me some suggestions for the upcoming months (please!!!), I really would be very pleased to receive them! No **Editor's Pic of the Month** from December but it will be back next month so please keep uploading your shots. Whilst we are on the subject of photography, we are after new images of some of our locations to illustrate our new website. If you are out and about at any of the following sites in the coming days and weeks armed with a camera, please see if you can get a nice shot and let me have it ...

Aylsham Woodgate, Beeston Common, East Runton (Thains Lane), Erpingham, Felbrigg Park & Lake, Gresham, Hempstead, High Kelling, Holt, Hunworth, Knapton, Little Barningham, Metton, Paston, Ridlington, Sustead, Thornage, Thorpe Market, Upper Sheringham & Weynor Gardens.



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

*** Richard Skelton & Isobel Baggott * Connie Flynn & Philip Elliston ***
*** Jennifer & Ifor Jones * Stuart Jones ***

457 individual
members across
304 households

93,566
bird records
logged

3,591
photo uploads

256 bird species /
subspecies
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 37](#).

Club Achievement Awards

Star Badges

No new Star Award recipients this month.

Currently, **4** members have achieved **GOLD STAR** status, **20** members have been awarded **SILVER STAR** status and a fabulous 81 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 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

Woo-hoo! Congratulations to Phil Borley on achieving his Inland Super-Green badge this month! He is the first to do so

We currently have **23** members who have achieved their **GREEN ECO-BADGES** [Coastal: 14 | Inland: 9] and now **4** who have achieved **COASTAL 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. Key to the bird records list below:

≈ 4,283 individual records covering 147 bird species were added in December

BIRD NAME IN BOLD & CAPITALS

Bird species a rarity in NENBC area

BIRD NAME IN CAPITALS

Bird species unusual in NENBC area

Bird name in bold & lowercase

Bird species interesting but common in NENBC area

Bird name without embellishment

Bird species common in the NENBC area

Bird name in pink

Bird species selected as an NENBC 2023 survey subject

There were 4,283 species records submitted for December (excluding races / sub-species / other wildlife etc) which is 2,876 less than total records submitted for the same period last year and 2,311 less than total records the previous month of November. Total species recorded were 147 which was 30 less than last month and 6 less than was recorded in the same period in 2022.

December was however another excellent month, and the highlight was the immature **RED-BREASTED GOOSE** on a couple of occasions at the end of the month near Holt. As I write this it is still in the area and hopefully it will be back in our recording area this winter. A **TUNDRA BEAN GOOSE** was in with Pink-feet at Thornage and we had reports of both **BEWICK'S** and **WHOOPEE SWAN**. A **STORM PETREL** was off Cromer on the 10th and **RED-NECKED**, **SLAVONIAN** and **BLACK-NECKED GREBE** were all in evidence during the month along the coast. Also there we had reports of **LITTLE AUK**, **LAPLAND BUNTING** and **CORN BUNTING** were both noted in December in a flock of Skylark.

Brent Goose Over 50 reports for December including a large flock of circa 500 birds that were in the Holt area on the 31st.

RED-BREASTED GOOSE An immature/first winter bird was in the Holt Brent flock towards the end of the month. It was initially seen on the 26th but then again on the 30th showing well at times. *Photo 1 courtesy of Mark Clements*

TUNDRA BEAN GOOSE A single bird was with Pink-footed Geese in a harvested beet field at Thornage on the 12th.

BEWICK'S SWAN Three birds were in a field near to Bale village on the 25th.

WHOOPEE SWAN Three birds were in flight over Brinton, calling, on the 1st.

Egyptian Goose Reported from Baconsthorpe, Letheringsett & Ford, Barningham Hall Lake, Weybourne, Felbrigg Park & Lake, Sheringham and Hanworth with a high counts of 5 birds from Blickling Park NT on the 13th and offshore at Weybourne on the 17th. *Photo 2 courtesy of Doug Cullern*

Pintail Small numbers reported from Weybourne and Sheringham throughout the month.

Eider Reported from Mundesley on 5th plus Sheringham and Weybourne area on several dates with a high count of 20 birds (6 east and 14 west) from Weybourne on the 15th.

VELVET SCOTER Small numbers reported along the coast during December from Sheringham, Weybourne, Cromer and Weybourne Camp, with a high count of 5 on sea off Weybourne on 29th.

LONG-TAILED DUCK A single bird west at Cromer on the 24th was the only report.



Goldeneye One to three birds reported from Weybourne and Sheringham during the month with 10 birds west at Weybourne on the 23rd.

GOOSANDER Three birds were west at Sheringham on the 1st and a single bird was west at Weybourne on the 26th. A female was on the lake at Haveringland Great Wood on the 18th and a male was also present at Selbrigg Pond (Lower Bodham) from the 28th to the 31st. Finally, a male bird was at Felbrigg Park & Lake on the 28th. *Photo 3 courtesy of Andrew Crossley*



Red-breasted Merganser Just a single report of a bird west at Weybourne on the 10th.

Grey Partridge Just two records again for December. Four birds were present at Sheringham Cliffs & Golf Course on the 2nd and two birds were at Thornage on the 16th.

Water Rail Reported from Weybourne Camp and Felbrigg Park & Lake on the 6th and Weybourne on the 8th.

RED-NECKED GREBE Single birds were west past Weybourne on the 16th and Sheringham on the 18th.

SLAVONIAN GREBE A single bird was off Sheringham on the 13th, feeding amongst fishing floats.

BLACK-NECKED GREBE A single bird was west past Weybourne on the 10th.

Grey Plover Two reports from West Runton during the month with 6 birds present on the 24th and 9 birds present on the 29th.

Knot Fourteen birds were west past Weybourne on the 20th.

Ruff A single bird was east at Weybourne on the 7th, with Curlews.

PURPLE SANDPIPER Single birds were present at Walcott on the 12th and 22nd. Sheringham had up to 2 birds present from the 15th onwards. *Photo 4 courtesy of John Hayward*



Woodcock One or two birds reported on several dates from various locations. Seven birds were noted near the car park at Felbrigg Park & Lake on the 8th.

Jack Snipe Single birds were at Holt Country Park & Lowes on the 2nd, Weybourne on the 8th and Felbrigg Park & Lake on the 17th.

Green Sandpiper A single bird was observed at Little Barningham on the 8th.

Kittiwake Reported on a couple of occasions throughout the month from a range of coastal sites but an obvious easterly movement was noted on the 5th when 560 were past Mundesley in one hour.

LITTLE GULL Two birds were east off Sheringham on the 5th. Further reports of single birds were received from Weybourne Camp on the 6th and Weybourne on the 7th.

MEDITERRANEAN GULL Single birds were noted at Beeston Common on the 1st and Weybourne on the 14th. Two birds were at West Runton, also on the 14th. *Photo 5 courtesy of Mark Clements*

CASPIAN GULL A single bird was at Sheringham on the 9th.

Great Skua Single birds were west past Sheringham on the 27th and east past Weybourne on the 28th.

POMARINE SKUA A single bird was east of Sheringham on the 5th.

LITTLE AUK Two birds were east, with Guillemots, past Mundesley on the 5th and a single bird was east past Weybourne Camp on the 6th.



Razorbill Small numbers reported from coastal sites during the month with a high count of 8 birds from Sheringham on the 4th.

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER Single birds were noted along the coast during December with a bird west at Mundesley on the 17th coinciding with a noticeable movement of Red-throated Divers.

STORM PETREL A single bird was seen off Cromer on the 10th.

Fulmar Almost twenty reports from along the coast in December. A high count was of 9 birds from Sheringham on the 5th. *Photo 6 courtesy of Mark Clements*

Shag Two reports of single birds received for December. A bird east past Weybourne on the 13th and a bird feeding offshore at Sheringham on the 20th. *Photo 7 courtesy of Richard Farrow*

GREAT WHITE EGRET Single birds were reported from Beeston Common on the 1st, Letheringsett & Ford on the 7th and Bayfield Lake on the 10th. *Photo 8 courtesy of Nick Kimber*

Little Egret Single birds reported during the month from Weybourne, Thornage, Beeston Common, Blickling Park NT, Wolterton Park, Southrepps Common, Gresham and Letheringsett & Ford.

GOSHAWK A bird was hunting at Paston on the 6th plus an immature female over Thornage on the 14th and 20th.

Marsh Harrier Single birds were noted at Briningham on the 12th and Weybourne on the 21st and 31st.

HEN HARRIER A young bird was hunting over a rough field at Walcott on the 18th.

Red Kite There were 56 records, mostly of 1-2 birds, from a variety of locations throughout December. The established roost at Little Barningham held up to 40 birds on the 22nd at least. *Photo 9 courtesy of Mark Clements*

Barn Owl Single birds were reported from Aylsham on the 3rd, Felbrigg Park & Lake on the 8th and 10th, Alby on the 8th and Gresham on the 9th.

Little Owl Two birds were at Felbrigg Park & Lake on the 6th with singles reported during the month from Weybourne Camp.

SHORT-EARED OWL Two reports in December. A single bird was west over the sea from Sheringham on the 10th and Antingham & Bradfield on the 14th.

Kingfisher Single birds from Blickling Park NT 13th and 16th, Felbrigg Park & Lake on the 17th and a garden visitor to Gresham on the 23rd. *Photo 10 courtesy of Hilary Stevens*

Peregrine Falcon Reports came from the Cromer area throughout the month of two adults. Other records were received from Felbrigg Park & Lake, Weybourne and Sheringham. *Photo 11 courtesy of Richard Farrow*

6



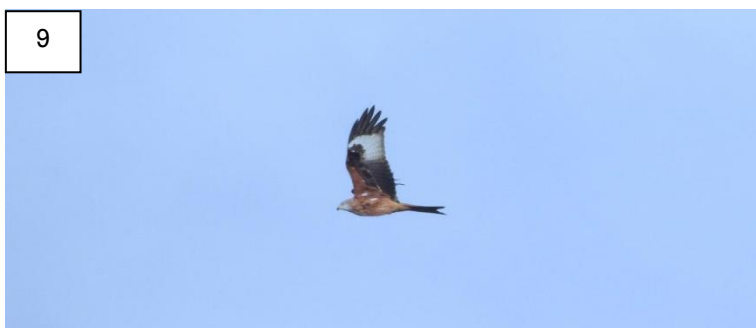
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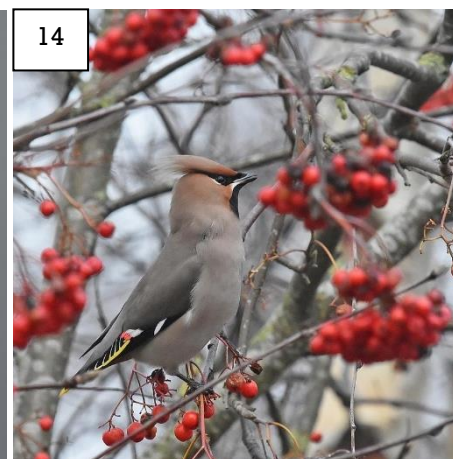


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RAVEN Two birds were at Victory Wood, Felbrigg Park & Lake on the 10th and a single bird was over Sheringham Cemetery/Sheringham Cliffs & Golf Course on the 19th.

WAXWING Up to 25 birds were present at Holt on the 3rd. Smaller numbers were reported at various sites in the area from the 1st through to the 25th – Holt, West Runton, Sheringham and Bodham. Photos courtesy of Andy Clarke [12], Michael Harcup [13] and Moss Taylor [14]



Marsh Tit Single birds were reported throughout December from Bodham, Holt Country Park & Lowes and High Kelling. Two birds were at Mannington Hall Park on the 11th, Selbrigg Pond (Lower Bodham) on the 16th and Beeston Common on the 31st.

CETTI'S WARBLER Single birds were reported from Selbrigg Pond (Lower Bodham) on the 1st, Weybourne on the 11th and Blickling Park NT on the 13th. Single birds were also reported on several dates in the second half of the month from Weybourne/Weybourne Camp.

DARTFORD WARBLER Up to two birds were present at Kelling Heath on several dates. *Photo 15 courtesy of Nick Kimber*

FIRECREST Single birds were reported from Holt Country Park & Lowes on the 5th, Sheringham Park and Selbrigg Pond (Lower Bodham) on the 6th and Aylmerton on the 7th. Two birds were at Beeston Common on the 8th.

Treecreeper Single birds reported throughout the month from High Kelling, Felbrigg Park & Lake, Pigneys Wood, Selbrigg Pond (Lower Bodham), Beeston Regis Heath, Thurgarton and Roughton. Two birds were noted at Beeston Common on the 14th and Sheringham Park on the 20th.

Stonechat Reported from several locations during December with high counts of 6 birds at Sheringham Cliffs & Golf Course on the 14th. *Photo 16 courtesy of Francis Farrow*

House Sparrow Fifty-five reports for December. Again, the café feeders at West Runton had good numbers with 75 recorded on the 23rd. A garden in Happisburgh had 27 birds on the 30th. Most other reports were of up to 10 birds. *Photo 17 courtesy of Richard Farrow*



Grey Wagtail Single birds throughout December reported from Holt, Sheringham, Cromer, Blickling Park NT and Weybourne. Two birds were at Selbrigg Pond (Lower Bodham) on the 19th.

ROCK PIPIT Up to 2 birds were present at Weybourne Camp on the 6th and 10th and a single bird was at Sheringham on the 14th.

Brambling A similar story to last month with almost 40 reports of small to medium flocks during December. However, Felbrigg Park & Lake had large numbers with a peak of 135 birds on the 6th. *Photo 18 courtesy of Ken Thornton*

Lesser Redpoll Nine birds were at Beeston Common on the 1st and six birds were at Letheringsett & Ford on the 5th.

Common Crossbill Recorded from Weybourne Heath NT with 12 birds on the 7th, 9 on the 10th and 15 on the 11th.

Siskin Lots of reports from several locations during December but Letheringsett & Ford had circa 200 birds on the 5th and Selbrigg Pond (Lower Bodham) had a flock of 150 on the 21st.

LAPLAND BUNTING Two birds were with Skylark at Sheringham Cliffs & Golf Course on several dates early in the month and two birds were at Weybourne Cliffs on the 15th.

SNOW BUNTING A single bird was at Sheringham Cliffs & Golf Course on the 2nd and 24 birds were west, close inshore, at Weybourne Camp on the 18th.

CORN BUNTING A single bird was at Sheringham Cliffs & Golf Course on the 2nd with a flock of Skylark



What to Watch Out For in January



Happy New Year to everyone and welcome to January 2024!

For winter birding there is plenty to keep us occupied. January can be a good month for **Merlin** which can turn up just about anywhere. If you have a local finch flock that has become established this winter, particularly in game cover crops, it could well be worth staking out to see if attracts our smallest falcon.

We are privileged to be an area known for its wintering numbers of **Pink-footed Geese** and if you are lucky enough to find a flock, please take the time to look through it. Already this winter, and back in 2022, we have had reports of **Taiga and Tundra Bean Geese** and **White-fronted Goose** all keeping company with Pink-feet flocks. As I write, Norfolk has a **Red-breasted Goose** that has been seen in amongst the **Brent Geese**. It strayed into our recording area in late December and who is to say that it won't again? Assuming there is only one bird of course! On the subject of Brent Geese, you can really push your ID skills to the limit trying to pick out a *nigricans* '**Black**' **Brant** but be aware of hybrid birds. Some hybrids are relatively obvious given good views, being clearly intermediate between the two parents. Others can be really tricky, with some birds very closely resembling pure Black Brant and may easily be identified as such especially if conditions and views are not perfect.

The same general rule of thumb applies to finch and bunting flocks, particularly near the coast. **Lapland Bunting** is an obvious candidate to look out for, but **Little Bunting** has also been reported from our area in recent years. Not our recording area, and probably a slightly different climate, but in Tremethick Cross in Cornwall there have been a staggering nine Little Bunting present in a flock of Reed Bunting and Linnet. If I really wanted to labour the point look at Britain's ninth record of **Black-faced Bunting** in 2023. Granted, it wasn't local as it was found in land locked Shropshire. It was at an undisclosed farmland site in the company of Reed Bunting and Yellowhammers.

Also, one to watch out for is **Water Pipit**. We haven't had a winter report of this bird since December 2020, and they have turned up along the coast as well as inland so don't assume every pipit is a Rock or Meadow. There is a really detailed, and useful article, on the Birdguides site [here](#) that offers some good pointers as well as some soundbites of calling birds.

January is a great month for birding in our area and, wherever your patch is, I hope you see some good birds.

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

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 17th January | 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.

Saturday 20th January | 1.00pm-dusk |
North Point Pools and Garden Grove walk (near Wells)



with Janice Darch

Bring a torch!

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

The 2 fresh water pools on former agricultural are good for Black-tailed Godwit, Snipe, Redshank, Lapwing, Mallard, Gadwall, Shoveler, wintering geese & raptors plus winter thrush, finch & tit flocks. Our walk will take us onto the Saltmarsh and eastwards towards Warham Greens and Garden Drove, well known raptor roost sites. Over the years several Pallid Harriers have overwintered there & we can expect to see Marsh Harriers, Common Buzzards, maybe Short-eared Owl, Peregrine and Merlin. Sometimes the marsh is studded with Great White Egret as well as Little Egrets, Grey Heron and Mute Swan. Brent Geese and maybe something rarer could be amongst them, like a Black Brant.

MEET: North Point Pools [NPP] car park | **PARKING:** The NPP car park NR23 1QB seaward of the A149 coast road $\frac{3}{4}$ mile east of Wells. | **DISTANCE:** 2 miles | **ACCESSIBILITY:** Footpaths likely to be frozen or muddy so not wheelchair-friendly | **FACILITIES:** None en route but available in Wells. | **BADGES:** Walk not within the club area so records can't count for Star Badges or Green Eco-badges. **Additional location info:** [BirdGuides website](#)

Monthly Evening Club Talk

Thursday 25th January | 7.30pm-9.30pm | Gresham Village Hall or via Zoom from home

zoom



“Wardening at Wheatfen Broad”

... an evening talk with Will Fitch

THE SPEAKER AND THEIR TALK: Wheatfen Nature Reserve is owned and managed by the Ted Ellis Trust. The talk is in three parts, focusing on the past, present and future of the nature reserve. Warden Will talks about the reserve's varied history, discussing Ted Ellis and his vast contribution to natural history, before moving on to the present day nature reserve, its wildlife and management. He will finish by discussing various future challenges they face, centred around climate change. It's a light hearted talk, full of amusing anecdotes, magical wildlife moments and discoveries and will hopefully inspire people to visit the nature reserve. Will has been the Warden at Wheatfen for a number of years now, helping to look after and manage the reserve with the help of their trusty volunteers. Photo courtesy of Annie Kerridge from the reserve's website.

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! If you are intending to join via Zoom though, you definitely need to let us know in advance so we can get the link out to you in good time. You can get in touch via nenbc@aol.co.uk.

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.

RSPB Big Garden BirdWatch 2024

Friday 26th to Sunday 28th January



Simply choose an hour anytime in the three-day period and count the birds you see land in your garden, on your balcony, or in your local park. Feed your results back to the RSPB for the national survey but also, if you live in the NENBC area, we'd appreciate having your records logged too. Thank you! You can sign up on the **RSPB website** (which also has loads more info on attracting birds, what you might see, what it's all about etc) but please add your sightings to the club website if you live in the club area, adding BGBW or something similar in the comments box, and we'll see how we all do. Don't live in our area? Just drop us an email to nenbc@aol.co.uk with your list of birds and we'll include you in our next newsletter write up. Have fun!

Last Month's Club Mid-Week Walk

Felbrigg Park | 20th December



By Dave Billham

Ten members assembled for the final walk of 2023, on a sunny, cold and thankfully rain-free morning - there had been more than enough of that in the previous few days. The wind was strong enough to potentially keep the smaller birds under cover, but despite this the group's enthusiasm was high. With the summer's dam works essentially complete, disturbance on the lake was greatly reduced, so there was always the chance that we might find an extra duck species or two. There had also been a pair of Raven reported recently in the Great Wood, so searching for signs of them had been added to the morning's menu as well.

Trevor briefed us on the usual points, confirmed Carol would be at the rear ensuring we did not lose anyone, and asked me how many species I thought we might see. I predicted 42, which was greeted with some amazement, considering our recent not-so-grand totals, usually in the mid-thirties. I had a reason for this optimistic guess though; we had, whilst waiting in the car park, seen far more species than we had managed in many a month; **Common Gull, Herring Gull, Blackbird, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Woodpigeon, Carrion Crow, Rook, Jackdaw, Feral Pigeon, Magpie** and, to our surprise, a few flocks of **Golden Plover** overhead, numbering over 200 individuals in total. A great start. Even better, as we were about to set off, a flock of around a dozen **Brambling** were noted flying into a nearby Beech tree, so we moved closer to allow everyone to get a view. **Chaffinch** were seen in amongst the flock, adding another species. As we were enjoying this winter spectacle, the calls of **Pink-footed Goose** were heard; between the branches above us we could see a flock of 50 or so passing overhead. A **Black-headed Gull**, also overhead, completed this start to the list.

Our route took us past the front of the house, then down the path towards the lake. As we descended the slope the floods along the beck came into view; here we could see four **Wigeon**, and a lone **Grey Heron**, standing upright by the beck. We could hear the calls of **Teal**, which gradually revealed themselves amongst the reeds. Tucked away with them were a few **Mallard**, and after some searching by the group a **Snipe** was picked up, motionless on the bank near a group of Teal. Active in the tall grasses were a small number of **Meadow Pipit**, visible when they flew up. Moving on to the lake we found further Mallard, along with **Gadwall** and some **Tufted Duck**; this was looking much better than the last few months results. **Mute Swan** and **Moorhen** completed the list of waterborne species. It was here that Nick informed me that the back of the group had spotted **Linnet** with the Meadow Pipits, along with a single **Robin**. (During his brief, Trevor invariably requests that we try to remain together as, a single group so that no-one misses any species. But, in keeping with true walk tradition, despite being so near the start of the walk and with only ten members present, we had managed to acquire a substantial 'back' to the group – after all, it is where the serious socialising happens!)

As we reached the gate and bridge near the end of the dam wall a flock of **Goldfinch** flew over us, whilst a **Kestrel** was seen hovering nearby. A member's good spot revealed a pair of **Stonechat** perched on some distant vegetation, so we stopped here for a while to allow Val to set up her scope to allow closer views to be obtained, an offer eagerly taken up by many who were having trouble finding them. Nick explained Stonechat ID to those who were not sure. Walking along the dam wall two **Jay** were noted hopping along a fallen tree trunk; following this sighting we turned to follow

the wooded path along the lake's edge. Here a flock of **Siskin** were seen feeding in a pine tree; just at this point the low sun briefly emerged from between the low hanging clouds, highlighting the yellow males to great effect. A calling **Wren** was heard here too.

Trevor had been trying to keep the pace up to ensure we had time to look for the Raven in the woods; however, it was around about this point that I mentioned to him that I had been compiling a species list for all of 2023's Felbrigg walks, and comparing the results to those of previous years. In the club's earlier years a count of 50 plus species on a single walk would happen four or five times each year; there had not been such a count in quite a few years. Also, somewhat unusually, we had not seen a Collared Dove at all in 2023, the last sighting being in September 2022. A change of plan was rapidly formulated and announced; firstly, the hunt was on for the dove, and secondly we would attempt to get to 50 species before the walk's end. At which point Trevor Warren wryly noted that this was a first for him, if not all of us; a bird walk where the target species was Collared Dove, something probably not undertaken in the UK since the 1960s!



We therefore set off up the wooded slope towards the farm, where it was felt that we stood the best chance of seeing our target. En-route we got a view of the lake through the trees; on the small stretch of water visible to us were three **Canada Goose** alongside a pair of **Egyptian Goose** – where on earth had they been hiding whilst we were at the lake only a short time earlier? A small flock of **Long-tailed Tit** were spotted in with a larger tit flock; as we paused to watch them a **Treecreeper** was seen on a tree-trunk a few yards away. Moving onto the road just outside the park wall, so that we could get a closer view of the farm buildings, we hit gold – a bird flashed past us; **Collared Dove**!

Staying on the road in the hope of seeing the dove on the ground, and also hoping that a Greenfinch might reveal itself, we followed the line of the park wall. A **Great Spotted Woodpecker** was heard then seen, a **Stock Dove** flew overhead and a **Dunnock** was heard singing from a spot on the other side of the wall. Next seen was a **Mistle Thrush**, perched on an overhead electrical wire running across the field to our left. We had now reached a spot where a tree had formed a breach in the park wall; there was a small space to one side of it where it was possible to squeeze through.



Once all of the group had successfully negotiated this obstacle we headed into the Great Wood in the hope of Raven, and to try to find some woodland species to help in our attempt to reach 50. **Coal Tit**, **Nuthatch** and **Redwing** were soon added; things were getting exciting, 46 seen, only four more to find. And we knew we still had not seen some very easy species; as yet no Pheasant or Buzzard, birds we almost always saw, or Pied Wagtail, often up by the house. But not today. The remainder of the walk saw no further additions to the list, including the hoped for Raven.

After re-grouping by the house Carol informed us of upcoming club events, and having wished each other 'Merry Christmas-es' most of the group retired to the café. Here we found Nick and Vision, who had left the group earlier and taken a different route back. We told them what we had, and had not found since they left us. It turned out that, fortunately, they had spotted a **Buzzard** on their way back.



So, a **grand total of 47 for the two hours**. Not the hoped for 50, but very close and the highest total of both 2022 and 2023. There is always another day; which in our case will be Wednesday 17 January, the date of the next Felbrigg walk and the first of 2024. Hope to see you there!

There's a really interesting article from Dave on page 27 about the changing fortunes of birdwatching on our monthly walks at Felbrigg Park over the past few years.

Photos from Carol Thornton and the Collared Dove (library) from Doug Cullern



Last Month's Club Weekend Walk

Holkham Park | 17th December



By Janice Darch

From the Village Car Park our morning walk at Holkham Park took us along the path inside of the park gates through the trees westwards to the lake. We walked to the northern dam and then followed the path above the lake in the trees to the church. This path gives some views north to the scrapes and flooded grazing meadows west of Lady's Anne's Drive. From the church we cut back over the grass to the hall and then along the eastern part of the lake before walking eastwards to the far side of the estate and back to the car park along the northern wall area. Apart from Common Pheasant, Wood Pigeon, Jackdaws and Blackbirds the car park area was very quiet and the walk remained so until we reached the northern part of the lake apart from a perched Collared Dove and Kestrel with Buzzard and a Red Kite overhead. Woodpigeons and Jackdaws remained in evidence. At the lake we saw Pochard, Coots, Moorhen, Tufted Duck, Gadwall, Mallard, Shoveler, Great -crested and Little Grebes, Cormorants, Grellag Geese, Egyptian Geese while two Pintail and some Brent Geese flew northwards. Further on along the western side of the lake things livened up when we found a tit flock with Long-tailed Tits, Blue , Great and Coal Tits as well as two Tree creepers, a Nuthatch , Goldcrest and a Great-spotted Woodpecker. Views north to the Holkham wetlands yielded Shelduck, Lapwing, and Pink -footed Geese, Teal and Wigeon and the two Pintail that had flown over. In the distance we had three flocks of Dunlin moving north westwards. Moving on back to the grassy parkland we found a Grey Heron and a Barnacle Goose among more grazing Teal and Wigeon. Flocks of Starling were overhead. Back near the northern estate wall a Green Woodpecker was calling but it refused to show. Although it seemed to be a slow morning we ended up seeing 40 species very respectable for a cool winter's morning in December!

Photos are kindly provided by Trevor Warren.



AGM & Christmas Social



A huge thanks to everyone who joined us for our Christmas event on Thursday 14th December in Gresham Village Hall, those who sent their apologies and also those who joined us via Zoom for the AGM and voting element of the evening. Once we had the formalities of the AGM out of the way (decisions right) and Chair Trevor had run through what we have achieved this year (see Review of the Year below) we were on to the more important part of the evening – a rather large hot and cold Christmas Buffet giving us plenty of time to socialise, and then the annual quiz, with participants aided in their concentration (or not!) by mulled wine or mulled apple juice. Personally I was delighted to see most folk in their party hats and jumpers this year! We also managed to present club VP Francis Farrow with his Silver Award for recording 200 species in the club area.

A big thank you to Julia Peters, Colin Blaxill and Roger Unite for their time and effort in putting together the very enjoyable birdy quiz and presenting their slides which, after some frantic messing about with the tech equipment that wasn't apparently feeling the Christmas spirit, included picture and music rounds.

We were able to send it on afterwards to those who couldn't make it on the night and there has been loads of great feedback about how you all enjoyed it. Congratulations to the winning team Mark Boyd & Chris Tucker and Richard & Susan Fisher who won a nail-biter quick-fire tie-breaker question on the colour of a Dunnock's head. Vouchers for Bird Ventures have been dispatched and we are pleased to hear that they are up for leading the 2024 quiz and already have some ideas.

As one happy punter said "I thoroughly enjoyed the evening, lovely food and the chance to catch up with friends."

2023 AGM Business

Committee Members (and Club Officials) elected for 2024:

Colin Blaxill, Andy Clarke, Janice Darch, Seán Dempster, Russ Malin, Alan Stevens, Carol Thornton (Secretary), Roger Unite (Treasurer), Trevor Williams (Chair)

Club President elected for 2024:

Nigel Redman

Club Vice Presidents elected for 2024:

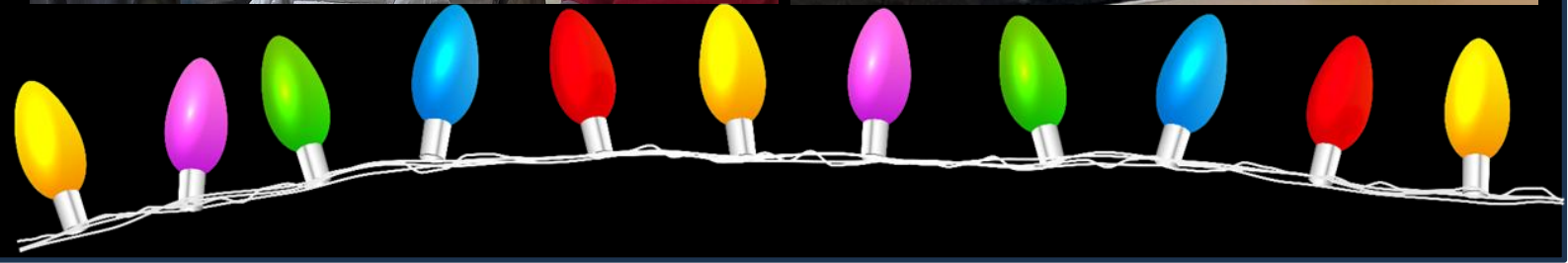
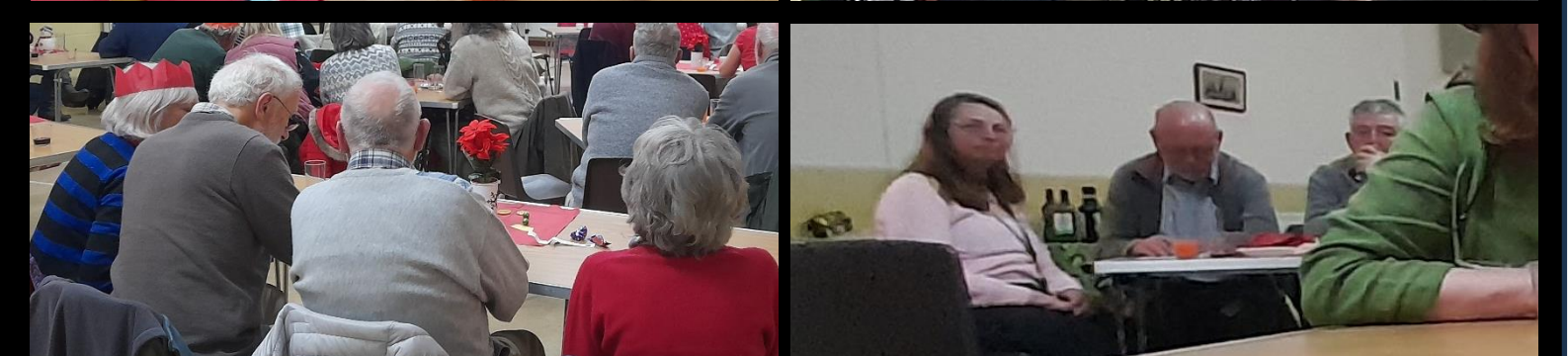
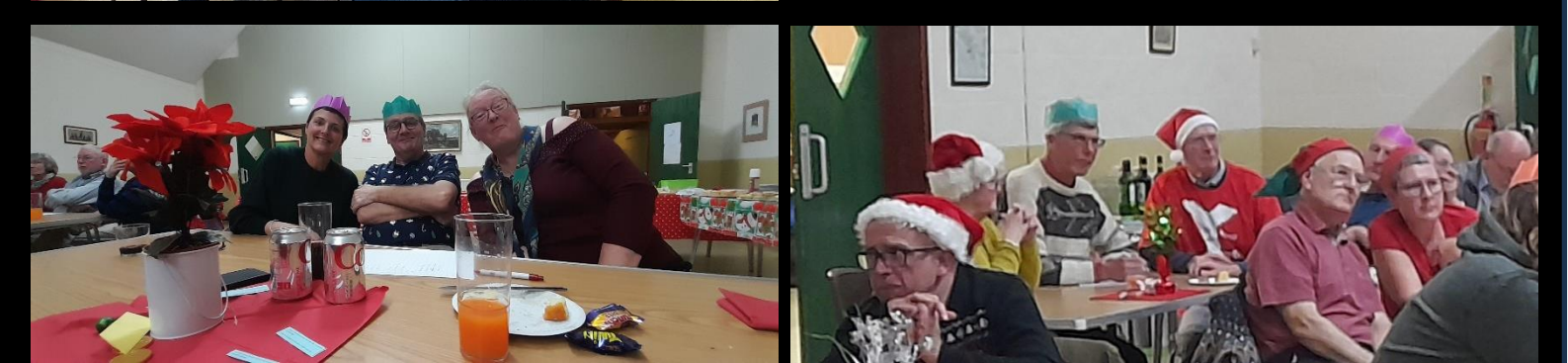
Francis Farrow, Lin Pateman

Independent Examiner of 2023 Club Accounts appointed:

David Barrass of Felbeck Trust

2022 Final Accounts and Minutes of the 2022 AGM adopted







By Trevor Williams

Our AGM is intended to provide an insight for members into how the Club is run and what it has achieved over the previous 12 months, along with giving members the opportunity to contribute to the organisation and future direction of the Club. We're always keen to hear from any member who has ideas about how we can improve the Club - especially those who are willing to help implement change by joining the Committee. Since the Covid lock-downs we've continued to share some of the Club's activities with our online audience - so tonight, a warm welcome to those of you who are joining this AGM via Zoom. So now it's my opportunity to remind you what we have achieved during the past year - the highs and the lows of the 2023 Club year.

Over the year we have continued with our **indoor meeting programme** - gradually seeing live attendance returning to pre-covid numbers, whilst continuing to broadcast 'live' via Zoom - with only a few minor technological gremlins! New equipment is coming soon! This year we've had an eclectic mix: | January - Small is beautiful - a new perspective *with David North* | February - Wader Quest *with Rick and Elis Simpson* | March - *Peregrines with Steve Watson* | April - Little Ouse Headwaters Project *with Ellie Beach* | September - Discover Beeston Common *with our own Vice President Francis* | October - Albatross: A large wingspan and a tiny island *with Alex Dodds* | November - Curlew: Saving the UK's most threatened wader *with Harry Ewing*.

Our regular walks programme continues. As well as the ever-popular monthly Felbrigg Park walk, we have also visited: | January - Lynford Arboretum for Hawfinch | February - Letheringsett Mill and Ford and Sprouts Hill | March - Southrepps Common | April - Alby area and Thwaite Common | May - Ken Hill and Snettisham Country Park | June - Kelling Heath for nightjars | September - Strumpshaw Fen | October - Morston and Blakeney Harbours | November - Mannington Hall Park | December - Holkham Park.

The **Walks Week** initiative, which we started during covid, with small groups led by members around less well visited locations continues to prove popular. This year we led walks to: | Blickling Park | Salthouse | Beeston & Sheringham | Cromer & East Runton loop | Beeston Common | Weybourne cliffs | Mannington Hall Park.

In 2023 we repeated our other annual special activities, including our spring **SkyWatch**, the annual **Big Sit** and our autumn **Coordinated Sea-watch**. For reasons mostly connected to the weather, despite the events being well attended, the birds were again mostly absent! For that reason we're planning some changes for the coming year.

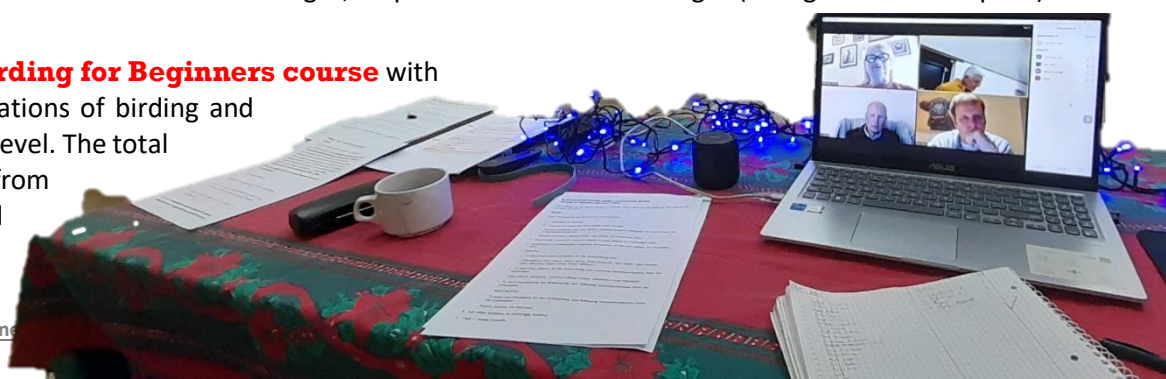
However our Coordinated Sea-watching event is becoming more popular and this is helping support our ongoing 'citizen science' project, calculating the **flying speeds of migrating seabirds**, helped by the introduction of the Club-run **Sea-watching WhatsApp group**, which facilitates live reporting of sea-bird movement along our coast. This coming year we are hopeful that one of the **UEA 3rd year Environmental Science** students will take up our project proposal to analyse that data and help us understand more about migrating seabirds. Other projects being proposed by the Club are one around the history of breeding Bee-eaters in the UK and possibility of future colonisation, and another on the occurrence of Caspian and Yellow-legged Gulls along our coast. We're also collaborating with Felbeck Trust on a project, inspired by one of our members, which examines the new phenomena of 'eco angst'. More details on all adopted projects will be announced in the Spring.

Speaking of WhatsApp groups, the introduction of another group, **NENBC Alerts**, dedicated to the reporting of scarce and rare birds in the NENBC area last year, has continued to prove useful and certainly helped connect participants with some of the rarer birds in our area - including the recent Storm Petrel at Cromer.

The Club again worked in collaboration with the **Cromer Peregrine Project (CPP)** to help protect these iconic birds which have made Cromer church their home. This year they managed to successfully fledge two more chicks. [*Initially these were assumed to be female but DNA analysis, which was hot off the press on the night of the AGM, revealed them to be male*]. The success of these birds, since their first arrival in 2018, is sufficient to maintain the population and probably expand it. Following the successful breeding season and a watch-point which attracted thousands of visitors, CPP are expecting to make a four-figure donation to the church.

At the start of covid we introduced the '**green eco-badges**' to recognise members' efforts to reduce their carbon foot-print and encourage a more environmentally friendly and healthy approach to birding. This initiative was well-received and to date we have awarded: 23 Green and 3 Super Green badges. Since the introduction of our original **Star Award** scheme (Bronze, Silver & Gold) we've awarded 81 self-certified Bronze badges, 20 peer-reviewed Silver badges (though watch this space) and 4 Gold!

2023 saw another successful **Birding for Beginners course** with participants learning the foundations of birding and taking their interest to the next level. The total number who have graduated from the programme since we started is over 70!



This year's **Annual Bird Report** was bigger & better than ever before thanks to the hard work of all those involved (but with particular thanks to Andy the Editor and Carol for design layout and illustrations). Our report collates the records of all the birds seen in the Club area during the year and provides analysis of patterns and trends of birds in North East Norfolk, together with a selection of special articles. Annual Reports continue to be distributed free to members who hold the appropriate subscription... but as postage costs continue to raise we may need to review those arrangements. In a recent bit of unsolicited feedback from someone formerly high-up in the RSPB - they thought our recent report was 'quite outstanding' - there's very little I can add.

Monthly Newsletters have continued to drop into our 'in box' as regular as clock-work - keeping members informed and entertained throughout the year. The efforts of the Editor and her numerous contributors are much appreciated and she and they are worthy of our utter admiration.

The **Club website**, has continued to function, providing an easy to use and an invaluable tool for birding in the Club area. But as I announced in the November Newsletter, we are heading for a change. Our original website template has been developed into a national format, with a number of modern features and improvements. We hope to seamlessly transition to this new format in the New Year. There's more on this in the most recent Newsletter.

As I said in my report last year 'the singular most notable event, which took us all by surprise, was the arrival and successful breeding of the **Bee-eaters at Trimmingham**'. The Club played an invaluable role in their success - as Beccy Speight, Chief Executive of RSPB, said in her thank you letter: "Without the ..NENBC.. we would simply not have been able to run the project." Who then would have thought it possible that they would return in 2023 for a second year? The first time in UK birding history. Unfortunately, despite a couple of concerted attempts they failed to breed. It proved to be an increasingly frustrating experience for our volunteers, as the birds appearance in the quarry became less and less predictable, so a huge thank you to all those members who again helped to provide site security, run the car parking and help visitors get the best from their visit. Who would put money on them not showing up again next spring?

Following a resolution passed at a previous AGM we've been attempting to be more systematic and inclusive in our use of surplus funds. This year I'm delighted that a proposal to create a **Young Birder Bursary** received financial support and indeed we have had our first recipient. We hope that the scheme will continue and may possibly expand to help birders and conservationists further afield. Watch this space... !

Just a quick heads up on our **current membership** - 304 households, 457 members - up slightly on last year and hopefully the trend continues.

So all that remains is to thank, on your behalf, those people who support the Club and continue to take it forward:

Patron: **Tasso Leventis**

President: **Nigel Redman**

Vice Presidents: **Lin Pateman** and **Francis Farrow**

Members of the Management Committee ...

Treasurer: **Roger Unite**

Membership & Peer Review Secretary: **Colin Blaxill**

Records Officer & Annual Report Editor: **Andy Clarke**

Walks Organiser: **Janice Darch**

Indoor Programme Coordinator: **Alan Stevens**

Youth Engagement: **Emma Hurrell**, **Seán Dempster** and **Russ Malin**

Club Secretary, Newsletter Editor and much more besides: the extraordinary Carol Thornton

And a big thank
you to Club Chair
Trevor Williams too
who never
mentions himself
at these events!



Also a word of thanks to our growing band of 'behind the scenes' helpers - **Jane Crossen** our Twitter manager (now assisted by Russ), **Tony Forster** our WhatsApp Manager, all the members of the **Annual Report team** and the **newsletter contributors**, **Jane Williams** for help with refreshments and website designer / web-masters **Joe & Matthew**. Thanks also go to our Sponsors, **Bird Ventures** for financial support over the year. A huge thank you goes to all those peopleand anyone I've forgotten to mention!

But the biggest thanks of the night goes to you, our members - who continue to pay your subs, contribute your bird records and photos to the web-site, support our values & ambitions and share our achievements. **Thank you!**

So, looking forward to 2024 - as I said, we'll be maintaining our core programme with some tweaks to the Special Events. But... in just over a year's time, **on January 1st 2025 the Club will be 10 years old!** Actually, the idea was born the previous autumn whilst Phil Hall, Andy Clarke and I were at Sheringham Cemetery, looking for Yellow-browed Warbler but that's another story! We have already started to map out our year of celebrations including: commissioning a new '**10 year**' badge - recognising those members who have been part of the Club for a decade or more - that will be a rolling award; a special publication - a **commemorative book** - showcasing the life, birds and people of the Club over our first ten years, and a **special day event** - to celebrate our journey and a look forward to where we are heading in the next decade. More activities and events are planned but we'd love to hear from you about how you'd like to mark the occasion.

So I hope you'll agree it's been another good year for the Club with plenty more to look forward to. Thank you all for your continued support. That's the end of this AGM.



How many species of bird did we all record in the NENBC area on the first day of the new year?



Well, the total count for Team NENBC was **112 species** recorded over **51 locations** from a fantastic **48** of us that were out and about on New Year's Day, blowing away the cobwebs and logging **1,781 records** on our club website, up over 100 from the previous year. The most commonly recorded species were Blackbird (71 records), Robin (67), Black-headed Gull (65), Blue Tit (65) and Wood Pigeon (62). Felbrigg Park & Lake produced the most records (314) followed by Selbrigg Pond (229) and Beeston Common (125).

A big shout out to all those who took part (listed on the right alongside their species count) and braved uploading their records on our new website with an extra thanks to all those who managed to complete their day on foot or bike.

[Photos courtesy of Stephanie Witham (Grey Heron), Thomas Wright (Magpie), Mark Clements (Sanderling and Lapwing)]

Trevor Williams topped the list again this year with **86 species** and this is what he had to say

"It's become quite a tradition in the bird club – the New Year Birding Challenge. An opportunity on New Year's Day to get out into the local countryside and kick-start your NENBC year list. Originally I'd planned an eco-itinerary, visiting a few of the club's hotspots on my bike, but a late change of plan in the Hall household meant Phil, and subsequently Jane, could join me on a motorised (electric car) version. We started, as usual in Felbrigg, long before it got light, to maximise our chances of owls. Tawny and Little were both heard calling before it got light but we failed to see Barn Owl. By the time we'd finished birding the park we had 45 species on our list, including Jack Snipe, Stonechat and Brambling, and it was still only 9.30! We then spent the next few



hours dropping in on local sites to boost the list by one or two per location, until a message came out that there were three Whooper Swan in the far north west corner of the area (thanks Phil B) – not a location we'd planned to visit. Fortunately they were still there after our significant detour, before returning to our schedule and arriving on the coast at Weybourne by 2.00pm. A few seabirds were added, including Velvet Scoter, before heading off to West Runton for waders. There we got Grey Plover but failed on Purple Sandpiper and I missed the fly-by Ringed Plover – I blame my compatriots for not shouting loud enough! As we headed towards Cromer we got caught up in the New Year's Day fireworks traffic but that afforded us plenty of time to scan the church tower, eventually finding the male Peregrine sat aloft one of the pinnacles. We dropped Phil back at home and took the back roads to Cromer. Passing a field I knew to be good for Skylark – just one of those inevitable omissions on the NYBC – we scanned the fields in the half-light. 'I think I can see a bird' said Jane 'and it might be a Merlin!' Telescope deployed, it was indeed a female Merlin sat on the ground (see left) – rounding off an excellent day of birding, getting my NENBC list off to a flying start with 86 species, my best ever NYBC total!"

86	Trevor Williams
70	Tony Forster
66	Phil Borley
59	Michael Harcup
55	Moss Taylor
53	Ann Gladwin
53	Carol & Ken Thornton
53	Mark Clements
51	Lin Pateman
51	Stella Baylis
51	Valerie Stubbs
50	Mick Rebane
50	Nick Kimber
49	Nick Stubbs
48	Peter & Sue Morrison
39	Anne Sims
38	Ellie Farrow
35	Thomas Wright
28	David Billham
26	Stephanie Witham
23	Christopher Mason
20	Di & Richard Farrow
19	Philip Cartlidge
18	David Barrass
18	Stephen Green & Clare Wilson
16	Barry & Jenny Lancaster
12	Shaun Ream
11	Colin Blaxill
11	Francis Farrow
11	Suzanne Taylor
10	Dave Horton
8	Emma Hurrell
7	Grant Bigg
7	Sarah Hanson
7	Stuart Buck
6	Pauline Walton
4	John Hurst
3	Andrew Gorton
3	Peter Geary
3	Sean Dempster
3	Tony & Mary Moverley
1	Alan & June Smith
1	Andrew Clarke
1	Chris & Kathrin Turner
1	Jane Crossen
1	Nik Borrow
1	Roger Lougher
1	Steve Hale

Stella Baylis was also out and about, but she went fully green with her **New Year's Day 2024 'Eco Birding Challenge'**

"Birding in the depths of the winter can sometimes be a challenge, whatever the date. As New Year's Day inevitably follows New Year's Eve, I was thankful that the light didn't start to appear until a sensible time of 07:30. The first bird of the year was Robin, which I heard singing much earlier, drifting into my emerging consciousness. Tea brewed and toast on, we kept an eye on the garden with Blue Tit and Coal Tit the early arrivals, closely followed by Great Tit, Chaffinch and Goldfinch. House Sparrows had clearly been partying the night before and only decided to get up at around 9am. A larger mixed flock of tits and finches started moving through, and we were surprised and delighted to see a single Lesser Redpoll among them, feeding briefly on a seed head of Hemp Agrimony by the pond. My lazy approach to Autumnal gardening producing the goods. A minute later, we spotted another of our rarer winter garden visitors, a female Blackcap. Wow! Year list now on 14 species.

Breakfast over, walking boots on and we were off, the car staying firmly on the drive. We decided to walk from Lower Street where we live close to Southrepps Common over to Antingham Ponds via Bradfield. The surrounding agricultural land is generally poor for farmland birds, and today was no exception. Flocks of corvids and a few gulls added to the tally and Stock Doves flew out of the game crop. A Buzzard was perched in their usual tree next to a small pasture, a small oasis of low intensity sheep grazed grassland in an arable desert. My brain fast forwarded 3-4 months and I imagined Wheatear and Ring Ouzel dropping in, both of which have done in previous Springs.

Dragging myself back to January 1st, we approached Bradfield village, where a small stream flows under the road, with an adjacent small copse of pines and alders. This is often a good place to pause. Today, after the bereft farmland, happily there was a mixed flock of twitterings to listen to and look through. We added Long-tailed Tit, Wren and Goldcrest, followed by a flyover Pied Wagtail. Best of all a pair of beautiful Bullfinch, such stunning birds, almost tropical in appearance. A Mistle Thrush and Rook were on a small paddock on the edge of the village. Year list now on 26 species.

Between Bradfield village and the valley holding Antingham Ponds, the land rises. At the top of this plateau, you can get a good view across a large area of wild and windswept tussocky grassland, which really should have a hunting owl or harrier over. Indeed, a local resident has told us of past winters with Hen Harrier and Short-eared Owl here. No such goodies today though. All was not in vain for the list. Skylarks flew over and Meadow Pipits flew up on the overhead wires, with a single Yellowhammer for company.

The wind picked up and we headed down from the plateau, glad to reach the shelter of the valley. Common and Herring Gulls and a single Cormorant flew over and Buzzards mewed.

Checking the outflow stream at the southern end of the main lake didn't add to our list and so we walked along the road on the north-eastern side of the waterbody. The house and the lake itself are private and it is not easy to birdwatch here. However, during the winter, there are gaps in the dense vegetation to peer discreetly through to the lake with binoculars. Telescope use is very difficult with narrow verges and limited viewing. Even so, the listing kicked off again: Mallard, Mute Swan, Coot, Moorhen, Gadwall, Tufted Duck, more gulls and best of all a gathering of 10 Shoveler, including 7 very smart drakes. No sight nor sound of the Teal that had been present a few weeks ago at the shallow north-western end. Year list now on 39 species.

A feature of this site is an area of wet woodland, where a private boardwalk winds through an extensive boggy area, said to be source of the River Ant. Continuing along the road towards Antingham village, we peered up to the darkening alders, eventually finding Siskin and hearing both Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers. A Kestrel showed us out of the valley and we headed across the fields back to Lower Street. Year list now on 43 species.

We paused on the way back to chat to an Antingham local and admire a large flock of finches around his feeders, checking them out for more year ticks, adding Collared Dove as we talked. He was keen on birds and had recently watched a Goshawk catching and expertly despatching a Woodpigeon. He was very impressed by this, as indeed we would have been had we seen it!

Arriving back home, we fortified ourselves with tea, Christmas cake and cheese and headed out again around Lower Street. The light was now fading. We were confident that Brambling would be along Long Lane, where a small flock had been present since November, taking advantage of the sunflower crop. Plenty of Chaffinch here, with a few Linnet and Greenfinch, but no Brambling. Consolation was adding Reed Bunting to the list and watching a smart male Grey Wagtail feed alongside 2 Pied Wagtails on a pile of manure. Surprisingly late in the day, we added Pheasant and Red-legged Partridge and did a final check of Fox's Beck. Back in the garden, I watched a Little Egret fly east along the valley, where it appeared to land somewhere on Southrepps Common, presumably roosting in the trees there. My last tick for the New Year's Day Birding Challenge.

Final tally was 51 species, 9.5km walked and a fun day at an under-watched site, with good potential for a longer list."

Below is the full list of the 112 species seen, including the 10 for which there was only one record (shown in red).

Barn Owl, **Bar-tailed Godwit**, Blackbird, Blackcap, Black-headed Gull, Blue Tit, Brambling, Brent Goose, Bullfinch, Buzzard, Canada Goose, Carrion Crow, **Caspian Gull**, Cetti's Warbler, Chaffinch, Coal Tit, Collared Dove, Common Gull, Common Scoter, Coot, Cormorant, Curlew, **Dartford Warbler**, Dunnock, Egyptian Goose, Fieldfare, Fulmar, Gadwall. Gannet, Goldcrest, **Golden Plover**, Goldfinch, Goosander, Goshawk, Great Black-backed Gull, Great Crested Grebe, **Great Northern Diver**, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Great Tit, Green Woodpecker, Greenfinch, Grey Heron, Grey Partridge, Grey Plover, Grey Wagtail, Greylag Goose, Guillemot, Hen Harrier, Herring Gull, House Sparrow, Jack Snipe, Jackdaw, Jay, Kestrel, Kingfisher, Knot, Lapwing, Lesser Redpoll, Linnet, Little Egret, Little Grebe, Little Owl, Long-tailed Tit, Magpie, Mallard, Marsh Tit, Meadow Pipit, **Merlin**, Mistle Thrush, Moorhen, Mute Swan, Nuthatch, Oystercatcher, **Peregrine**, Pheasant, Pied Wagtail, Pink-footed Goose, **Purple Sandpiper**, Red Kite, Red-legged Partridge, Redshank, Red-throated Diver, Redwing, Reed Bunting, **Ringed Plover**, Robin, Rock Dove (read Feral Pigeon for this!), Rook, Sanderling, Shelduck, Shoveler, Siskin, Skylark, Snipe, Song Thrush, Sparrowhawk, Starling, Stock Dove, Stonechat, Tawny Owl, Teal, Treecreeper, Tufted Duck, Turnstone, Velvet Scoter, Water Rail, Whooper Swan, Wigeon, Woodcock, Woodpigeon, Wren, Yellowhammer.

WhatsApp NENBC Alerts: 2023 Summary

An NENBC member group to share records of interesting birds within the club area



By Tony Forster

Membership

17 members joined the group during 2023 bringing the current membership to 52.

Bird Sightings and Records

****January to March****: A good month with 23 species reported, 21 being new to the group. Noteworthy sightings included Slavonian Grebe, Hen Harrier, and Long-eared Owl, the group's total species count reached 45.

****April to June****: An additional 23 species were reported, bringing the total to 68. Notable sightings included Bluethroat, Common Crane, and Osprey. Unreported yet significant sightings within the club area included Marsh Warbler and Hen Harrier.

****July to September****: The group added 5 new species, bringing the total to 73. New additions this quarter include Whinchat, Wood Sandpiper, Long-tailed Skua, Tree Pipit, Manx Shearwater.

****October to December****: 4 new species in what was a quiet 3 months to end the year in both the number of messages posted and the range of species, the group list total now stands at 77. New additions this quarter are Glossy Ibis, Storm Petrel, Red-breasted Goose and Brent Goose.

Six notable species seen in the club area that didn't make it onto the group were Sooty & Cory's Shearwaters, White-fronted Goose, Black and Roseate Terns and Leach's Petrel plus a Basking Shark seen off Overstrand.

Admin Comments



I had several concerns initially being an admin as some groups need constant admin input, reminders, deleting messages/members and so on, however on reflection the admin of this group has been a doddle. Consequently, I'd like to thank all group members for adhering to the guidelines which makes my task so much easier.



The intention of the group was 2 fold at inception, firstly to save NENBC the cost of texting significant bird sightings to members and secondly to give club members their own rare/scarce/hard to see in the club area sightings alerts. If you are a member of the group and you see something that falls into one of those categories we would all appreciate hearing about it preferably while you are still on site. While some birds may stick around for longer, posting news when you get home or an hour or so after seeing the bird could limit the number of club members able to get there in time.



It would be good to get the group to Bronze status in 2024, see my Red-breasted Goose update of December 27th which though negative on the goose did mention Brent Goose, a new species for the list.

Wishing everyone a healthy and happy year, I hope you enjoy good birding during 2024, be it a Robin or a Red-flanked Bluetail enjoy them all.

The New Club Website



Our new website courtesy of BirdClub launched on New Year's Eve and at time of writing, 76 of you have added 6,022 records covering 137 species so thank you! We hope that in the coming weeks that more of you will take the plunge. The old website is now closed, the relevant data has been migrated across or saved and the BirdClub team are working hard behind the scenes to ensure the transitions goes as smoothly as possible.

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.

What does the website look like?

Below is an image from the Members' Home Page. It may look marginally different on different devices be it PC, Mac, Android, iPhone or tablet but they should all look similar to this....



You can click / press on any of the words **Home**, **Members**, **Locations**, **Records**, **Calendar** and **Gallery** to jump between screens and find your way about. The icons at the top right of your screen are for the following functions:

	A generic FAQ section from BirdClub on the website itself covering things like how to add a record or how to contact other members.		Your mailbox showing message strings between you and other members. After you send / receive your 1 st message this icon will appear. If there is a green dot by it, you have an unread message		A list of the most recent posting sessions (who has been birding where) which you can click on for more info. The green dot means you have unread items on the list.
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Feedback from members to date

We have had a range of feedback so far and we definitely would like to hear from you with more. On the positive side, comments mirror much of what we said in the last newsletter:

- Adding records is much easier than on the old website
- The zoomable map of locations with a list below is much more helpful when planning trips
- Messaging members within the website is simple
- Email addresses of members are visible and easy to copy out
- It is much easier to use on the phone than the previous website was
- Loading photos as you add your records is much quicker and the ability to add more than one to a single record a definite improvement
- You can note that a bird was singing on your record with a simple click rather than typing it in comments

There have of course been some less positive comments and we appreciate that there have been some frustrations that change always brings. We outlined the rationale for the change with a bit of background in the December 2023 newsletter and Trevor has reiterated this in his Chair's Corner on page 2 of this newsletter. The majority of the frustrations have been around the new website being less easy to get data out of than the old at this stage. There will be changes and upgrades to the new website in the coming weeks and months and we'll use this section in the newsletter to keep you posted about these, to explain any issues and to answer any queries that are coming up from you to help everyone through the transition so please bear with us.

Club Website Update: Questions & Answers

To start you off, here are some of the common things that have been asked by members since we went live:

- I have tried changing my password as directed but why do I keep getting error messages?**
If you're having trouble accessing your account, you can reset your password using this link <https://www.bird.club/members/password/new>. The auto-generated email that most of you received on New Year's Eve was a one-use-only link and may no longer be valid. This link will also work for those who didn't receive the auto-generated email from BirdClub. If you do still have a problem, please let us know.

2. Why is the number of species on my personal list different on the new website compared to the old website?

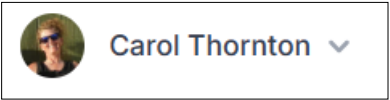
The new website uses the British Ornithologists' Union (BOU) British List at its core to log our records against whereas the old website was set up with a base list of our making and we had the ability to add in extras. Further down the line this may be an option with the BirdClub platform but not currently. This impacts in the following ways:

- a) **Species:** The BOU British List doesn't include Feral Pigeon so some of you may find a discrepancy of 1 in your lists.
- b) **Races / Sub-species:** These aren't currently included. Your existing records of these are currently in storage with a view to migrating across in the future. If you come across an interesting race or sub species whilst you are out and about, don't forget we have a member-only WhatsApp Group called NENBC Alerts that can be used to let other members know of your find and we suggest you add to the website under the main species name with some additional notes added.
- c) **Generic Species:** eg: 'redpoll species', 'diver species'. We appreciate this was a handy way of being able to record birds when we weren't 100% sure of our ID but don't forget if you are unsure about something you have seen, note down as much info about the sighting as you can and ask another birder. There are many experienced members of the club and folk are always happy to help.
- d) **Other Wildlife:** Obviously these aren't on the British Bird List so we can no longer record them. Those of you who use Twitter, please consider tagging us on [@nenbc_info](#) with your other wildlife sightings and photos as we'd still love to hear about them.

3. Why did I receive sightings notifications on my email?

During the first few hours of the website migration you may well have received some notifications to your email inbox – we apologise for any inconvenience this may have caused. This was set up as a way of letting members know when there was an interesting bird sighting but with all the New Year's Day traffic on the website with folk adding their records, this became overwhelming. These notifications have been disabled for NENBC whilst the BirdClub team look at a different way to do this for us.

If you wish to receive automatic summary emails now and again from BirdClub related to sightings in the NENBC area (different to the above) you can opt in by going to your account info on the top right of your screen (like the image on the right), click the arrow and select 'Edit Settings' and scroll down to the bottom and tick the checkbox 'I am happy to receive emails from BirdClub' and then 'Update Notifications Settings'. If you leave this box unticked, you will still receive information emails from NENBC with the newsletter and event information as the circulation list for that is entirely separate from the website.



4. I can't work out how to look at my species list

Currently it is not visible in the same way that it was on the old website. This will soon be added to your profile page on BirdClub, as well as the ability to download your own full record list as a spreadsheet. In the interim, you can see a full list of your records on the Records page:

Club Records

A list of all records submitted by members of North East Norfolk Bird Club.

1 Filter

Clear all

Add Records

Download

Reported After

01/01/2024

Family

Location

Reported Before

dd/mm/yyyy

Species

Member

Total Records

4,829

Unique Species

135

Recorders

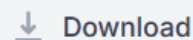
75

Date	Species	Location	Member
Jan 11, 2024	50 x Herring Gull 30 on beach. 20 east	Weybourne	Phil Borley

If you click on the option to Filter at the left of your screen (see image on the right here) it brings up various options to filter on. If you go to the Member filter and select your own name it will show you how many records you have uploaded, how many species you have seen (but not the list of what they are) and lists each of your sightings below. You can use the other filter fields to drill down further to specific sites or a specific time period. You can use the same filter approach to look at the records of other members too.



Please note that the Download function is not currently working. However, this is how you will be able to access more detailed data on your own records once it goes live.



5. Are we getting Contributor Points and a Prolific Posters table?

On the old website points were awarded for, amongst other things, records and photos uploaded and it was possible to view a league table to see how many points had been accrued by each member, how many records they had uploaded and how many species they had seen in any calendar year. We had quite polarised views on the competitive nature of this: some members loved it, some hated it. The new website does not currently have a facility to replicate this but the team at BirdClub are looking at a potential replacement with a different focus so watch this space!

6. I can't see who has a Star Award anymore

The Star Award Scheme (Bronze badge for seeing 100 species in the club area, 200 for Silver, 300 for Gold and 350 for Platinum over the lifetime of your membership) is still very much in operation but not currently visible on the new website. The ability to add club badges to member profiles is already on the BirdClub team's radar and will be released in the future. In the meantime, keep those records going up as we will be keeping an eye behind the scenes and awarding badges as folk hit the targets.

7. Will other people using the BirdClub platform around the world be able to see our records?

NENBC has a public page which is only viewable if you are logged out of your BirdClub account. It contains info about the club and how to contact us. Some of our recent sightings and photos feed through to that page as they did on the old website but are anonymised and there is no access to the full list of records and recorders.

8. I am a bit worried about my details – who can see them?

Only members of NENBC who are logged in to the member pages and BirdClub admins can see your email address, your profile picture, and your profile information. Our commitment to the treatment of personal data of members remains the same as it was with the old website. If you would like a copy of our Data Protection commitment then please get in touch.

9. Will there be an option to filter / sort on the photo Gallery page?

Watch this space, we are working on it!

10. Will there be an option to filter / sort on the Member page?

Watch this space, we are working on it!

11. I can't find the old newsletters on the new website

We don't currently have the facility to upload documents to the new website but watch this space, we are working on it for newsletters and other club documents! If there are copies of things you require in the meantime, just get in touch.

12. I can't find the club year list.

It isn't currently visible but it is one of the things we are looking at.

13. I miss the graphs and charts – can we have them on the new website?

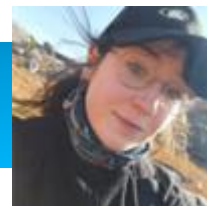
This is something we will be looking at as a future development.

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

Back in June last year we were approached by Molly, aged 21, who was working at Wildsounds during the summer and was keen to volunteer at the Trimingham Bee-eater site having visited the previous year. We signed her up as a special NENBC member and she was happy to write us a bit about what life was like for a young birder during 2023.

Making the most out of birdwatching experiences in the UK and abroad during 1 year

By Molly Carter



As my time at university studying Wildlife Conservation BSc (Hons) drew to a close with graduation in July, naturally it is a great time to reflect on the experiences that university and the birding community have provided over the past few years. Not to mention the potential in the years to come...

I have always had an interest in bird watching and wildlife, and that passion flourished since starting university in 2020; a small number of us avid birdwatchers grouped together and founded the Bangor University Birdwatching Society. Our roles as committee members were to involve young or mature students, novices to expert birders to get out and explore what North Wales could deliver us. From black grouse leks near Wrexham at 3am in the morning with bleary eyes and coffee, the wetlands of Conwy, Cors Ddyga and Cemlyn for wandering waders, to the cliffs of South Stack with colonies of clamouring sea birds; and not to mention the occasional views of the elusive Choughs. Being able to involve more people, the society bloomed when lockdowns were lifted, and before we knew it we were holding birding trips, events and quizzes with 25+ members present. The rapid-growing society managed to host a trip to Bardsey Island to encourage bird ringing observations of Manx Shearwaters in the dark of night alongside the British Trust for Ornithology and the Cameron Bepolka Trust—It is fantastic to see so many young people immersing themselves in important bird ringing schemes for conservation. I look forward to keeping up with their future endeavours and seeing the new places they have yet to explore. Here's a link to our Instagram site: Bangor Uni Birdwatching

For the previous 5 years, I have worked at WildSounds and Books situated in Salhouse, Norfolk. In the summer months I spend there, we work in preparation for the Global BirdFair held at Rutland Showground (previously the British BirdFair at Rutland Water Nature Reserve). Here, lovers of nature, conservation and wildlife from across the world get together to share their experiences, promote their organisations and encourage more people to get involved and find their own passions; in the UK and overseas. Working at WildSounds and Books has been a fantastic combination of two of my favourite things; a good book and of course nature. We distribute and provide local observatories and stores with a diverse range of natural history, non-fiction and fictional books. Additionally, as it is only a 30 minute drive down the road, we would make regular visits to the Trimingham Bee Eaters. In 2022 there were 8 of these European Bee Eaters nesting in the quarry and I recall sitting with a local Norfolk artist, NENBC member and volunteer Mark Boyd (*photo right*) where he taught me his methods of painting these magnificent birds displaying different behaviours and we spoke about each other's artwork. I returned to North Norfolk this year June to prepare for the Global BirdFair event, and was lucky enough to volunteer at the Trimingham Bee Eaters this year via NENBC. It felt amazing to introduce beginners and expert birders to the birds, see new faces of different ages getting involved and excited at the views the 3 birds provided this year. Let us hope there is only more to come from this colony!



August came around fast this year and before I knew it I was in the Southern Drakensberg in South Africa, volunteering for a vulture conservation project with Wildlife ACT in aid of Endangered Cape Vultures and Critically Endangered Bearded Vultures. I have always had a love for raptors, and after seeing the juvenile Bearded Vulture in the Peak District in 2020 my fascination with vultures sparked. The two weeks in the Berg were spent maintaining and monitoring safe feeding sites and nests, hiking up spectacular mountains in the Maloti-Drakensberg Park World Heritage Site to change camera trap SD cards, batteries and to set them up for the following few weeks of data to be collected. Back at base, time was spent either on general maintenance or data processing and entries; looking for tagged vultures from the camera traps, recording activities and species present—not only vultures, but serval, caracal, porcupine, mongoose and black-backed jackal.



*Juvenile Cape Vulture (Gyps coprotheres) keeping a close eye on the surroundings
Molly Carter, Southern Drakensberg, South Africa*

All-in-all these have been extremely inspiring experiences in their own way and have not just inspired me, but I hope will inspire others to find their own passionate niches through their own wild encounters!

You can read more about my extensive ornithological conservation experience in South Africa with Wildlife ACT on my blog: [Art in Conservation \(mollyjcarter.blogspot.com\)](http://Art in Conservation (mollyjcarter.blogspot.com))

Felbrigg Park Monthly Walk Statistics

By Dave Billham



On a number of recent club walks at Felbrigg, the subject of bird species that we have not seen that day is commonly raised. It is also often said that there seem to be less birds around than in the earlier years of the club. With this in mind I thought it would be interesting to put together some statistics for the 2022 and 2023 walks, then compare the figures to those from the club's earlier years. This will not be an in-depth look, but if anyone wants the spreadsheets I put together in order to play with the data then please contact me via the club website and I will send them to you.

I soon realised, after starting this process, that I would have to exclude the years 2020 and 2021 from the process, as the pandemic and its various restrictions meant that some walks were either cancelled, or undertaken by only one person (usually Colin B or Carol). Whilst both are extremely competent birders, these non-consistent results would skew the overall picture. For the remaining years, the methodology of a group of birders spending two hours wandering round the park on one morning each month, and recording

the birds they saw or heard, has been a constant. This should allow a meaningful comparison between years. There will always be variations, such as the weather, or the number of members present, but over the course of a year these should average out to a reasonable extent. Please note that the results are compiled across eleven months per year, as there is usually no walk held in August.

Having put together the figures for 2022 and 2023 (see the two excel charts overleaf), the first surprise I had was the number of different species we had seen over the course of the year; 82 for 2022 and 84 for 2023. Considering the usual species total for a given walk tended to be around the mid- to high-thirties, and we see many of the same species on every walk, I was not expecting this total to be quite so large. As a point of interest, it also means that for those who don't yet put their sightings on the club website, birding only the eleven Felbrigg walks in either 2022 or 2023, and recording the species seen, would mean you would be well over three-quarters of the way to a bronze badge!

2022		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total from 11
Species	Total =	41	41	44	43	35	37	30	36	44	37	35	
Buzzard													11
Carrion Crow													11
Jackdaw													11
Moorhen													11
Mute Swan													11
Pheasant													11
Wood Pigeon													11
Blackbird													10
Blue Tit													10
Great Tit													10
Jay													10
Magpie													10
Mallard													10
Robin													10
Wren													10
Goldfinch													9
Great Spotted Woodpecker													9
Kestrel													9
Rook													9
Black-headed Gull													8
Chaffinch													8
Gadwall													8
Herring Gull													8
Mistle Thrush													8
Skylark													8
Stock Dove													8
Long-tailed Tit													7
Nuthatch													7
Pied Wagtail													7
Snipe													7
Teal													7
Feral Pigeon													6
Reed Bunting													6
Starling													6
Chiffchaff													5
Coal Tit													5
Common Gull													5
Red Kite													5
Red-legged Partridge													5
Redwing													5
Song Thrush													5
Grey Heron													4
Linnet													4
Swallow													4
Blackcap													3
Collared Dove													3
Coot													3
Cormorant													3
Goldcrest													3
Greylag Goose													3
Lapwing													3
Little Owl													3
Meadow Pipit													3
Pink-footed Goose													3
Tree Creeper													3
Whitethroat													3
Dunnock													2
Fieldfare													2
Greater Black-backed Gull													2
Greenfinch													2
House Martin													2
Lesser Black-backed Gull													2
Reed Warbler													2
Sparrowhawk													2
Stonechat													2
Swift													2
Tufted Duck													2
Wigeon													2
Brambling													1
Canada Goose													1
Egyptian Goose													1
Goshawk													1
Green Woodpecker													1
Grey Wagtail													1
Ring Ouzel													1
Sand Martin													1
Sedge Warbler													1
Shoveller													1
Siskin													1
Tufted / Ferruginous hybrid													1
Water Rail													1
Wheatear													1
Species Total = 82													

2023		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total from 11
Species	Total =	38	42	39	40	45	39	36	38	31	32	47	
Blackbird													11
Blue Tit													11
Buzzard													11
Carrion Crow													11
Jackdaw													11
Mallard													11
Wood Pigeon													11
Wren													11
Goldfinch													10
Great Tit													10
Herring Gull													10
Magpie													10
Moorhen													10
Mute Swan													10
Robin													10
Rook													10
Chaffinch													9
Great Spotted Woodpecker													9
Nuthatch													9
Skylark													9
Stock Dove													9
Black-headed Gull													8
Jay													8
Feral Pigeon													7
Gadwall													7
Kestrel													7
Linnet													7
Pheasant													7
Snipe													7
Coot													6
Dunnock													6
Red Kite													6
Redwing													6
Starling													6
Stonechat													6
Teal													6
Common Gull													5
Long-tailed Tit													5
Meadow Pipit													5
Mistle Thrush													5
Pied Wagtail													5
Chiffchaff													4
Coal Tit													4
Fieldfare													4
Greenfinch													4
Grey Heron													4
Reed Bunting													4
Song Thrush													4
Blackcap													3
Pink-footed Goose													3
Reed Warbler													3
Sedge Warbler													3
Siskin													3
Treecreeper													3
Tufted Duck													3
Brambling													2
Canada Goose													2
Cormorant													2
Green Woodpecker													2
Greylag Goose													2
Lapwing													2
Little Owl													2
Red-legged Partridge													2
Swallow													2
Swift													2
Bullfinch													1
Collared Dove													1
Egyptian Goose													1
Goldcrest													1
Golden Plover													1
Green Sandpiper													1
Grey Wagtail													1
Hobby													1
Lesser Black-backed Gull													1
Lesser Whitethroat													1
Marsh Tit													1
Oystercatcher													1
Sand Martin													1
Sparrowhawk													1
Spotted Flycatcher													1
Tufted / Ferruginous hybrid													1
Water Rail													1
Whitethroat													1
Wigeon													1
Species Total = 84													

The number of species seen on every walk (the '11 out of 11' rows at the top of each chart) were pretty much as expected, but other results showed up the failings of my personal memories. For instance, after seeing Dunnock regularly at the start of this year, a four month run of no sightings found me making post-walk comments such as -

“We have not even seen a Dunnock this time, and they are always around”. I was, therefore, utterly amazed to see that we had found Dunnock only twice in 2022, which did not set me wondering why not! Other species totals were equally surprising; have a look through and see how your own memories fare.

Species seen in 2022, but not in 2023 were Greater Black-backed Gull (on two occasions), Shoveller (one occasion), House Martin (two occasions) and Goshawk (one occasion). Looked at the other way round, the number was larger; those species seen in 2023 but not in 2022 were Bullfinch, Green Sandpiper, Hobby, Lesser Whitethroat, Marsh Tit, Oystercatcher and Spotted Flycatcher, all of which were seen on one occasion respectively.

In order to look at the trends prior to 2022 I needed to find the required information; fortunately all the newsletters produced since the club’s inception are available on the club website. Well worth a look as there is some interesting reading there. *[Update – not currently on the new website but hope we will be able to add them back on soon and in the meantime you can always request any to be emailed to you!]* Unfortunately, some of the older walk reports tended to list only the more interesting species seen, meaning I was unable to produce full species lists for a particular walk. I did try looking at the sightings records for the date of a given walk, but more often than not no-one had uploaded anything! We put that down to just having a handful of members back in the early days of the club! The results are shown in the table below; note that the figure in each box is the number of species recorded on a given walk. Those highlighted in **GREEN** are the walks when 50 or more species were seen, those in **RED** where the result was 39 or less. The amount of red in 2022 / 2023 is a concern. Note 2020 and 2021 excluded as covid years.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2022	2023	Total	Average
January	41	51	45	40	41	38	256	43
February	50	50	43	46	41	42	272	45
March	41	51	48	43	44	39	266	44
April	53	37	44	52	43	40	269	45
May	42	50	40	50	35	45	262	44
June	44	41	43	35	37	39	239	40
July	41	33	40	37	30	36	217	36
September	32	39	39	40	36	38	224	37
October	35	44	51	43	44	31	248	41
November	51	46	45	39	37	32	250	42
December	47	40	40	40	35	47	249	42
Total	477	482	478	465	423	427		
Average	43	44	43	42	38	39		42

Using the combined monthly totals figures in the penultimate column, the months of February through to May are the most productive, with February just taking the lead. This begs the question why February, and not one of the peak migration months? The winter visitors are still here, and probably there is some local movement of birds, but this will be nothing like the summer migrant arrival months. Possibly, with natural food stocks at very low levels, the birds that are around are forced to venture more into the open. It could even be something as simple as the complete absence of leaves on the trees, making everything easier to see. Or a combination of all the above, and a bunch of other factors too! The quieter months are June through to September. Overall, there is a pleasing bell curve with a low point in July, curving up month by month to February before curving back down to July again.

The penultimate row of the table (combined annual totals figures) is more of a worry, as the overall trend is downwards only. This is borne out by the complete lack of 50 or above species totals since 2019 for any given walk date. Whilst there will, again, be many factors at play here, it is not showing any signs of reversing direction. For a bit of context, see the [Felbrigg walk report for December 2023](#), when we tried to reverse it.

This was an interesting exercise, and it certainly made me think. If anyone can throw more light on the results please let Carol know for inclusion in the next newsletter. I have to confess that I do not have a copy of the ‘Birds of Felbrigg’ book; if anyone does, and they care to add information that would also be much appreciated. Finally, here is an extract from the February 2019 newsletter, written by Carol:

We were asked on one of our Felbrigg walks recently which month generated the most number of species so we had a look back at the stats for the past three years. We have excluded August where we sometimes have a summer break. We had our highest number in April 2016 with a fantastic 53 species. For 2017, the maximum count was 51 in both January and March but in 2018 it was the autumn that generated the most with 51 in October. July 2017 was the worst month in the past three years with just 33 but that doesn't get anywhere near a really dire walk we had back in October 2015 which only managed 20 species. It rained the whole time and we called it a day after an hour and a half and all went home for a hot bath! During 2018, when we have larger numbers of participants scanning for birds, the lowest number of species recorded was 39. The average number of species seen on each occasion is 44 which is not bad for a 2 hour walk any month of the year!

A copy of 'The Birds of Felbrigg Park' is winging its way to Dave as we speak!

Contemplating Conservation

Are we causing more harm than good by feeding garden birds?



By Tracy Brighten

Every January, I spend a blissful hour watching birds in the garden, joining over half a million people in the UK for the [RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch](#) (see [page 11](#)). Feeding garden birds is now a popular activity worldwide, and during the Covid pandemic, public interest in feeding wild birds soared. Indeed, [scientific research](#) shows a surge in Google searches for bird food and feeders across 115 countries in the northern and southern hemispheres during the general lockdown. In the UK alone, [we spend an estimated £200-300 million on bird feeding products each year](#) (2019), providing enough food for 196 million birds, far exceeding the energy needs of the combined total population of many common garden species.



Like many people who feed birds, I want to help them through the winter. And as agricultural intensification, climate change, and urbanisation reduces natural food sources, the breeding season is more challenging for birds now too, prompting us to feed them year-round.

But are we doing more harm than good? Thinking about the pros and cons of our well-intentioned intervention, I find myself in a quandary. Should I cut back or stop altogether? On the one hand, a constant supply of food benefits individual wild birds and a range of species. Watching their antics gives me joy and respite from stress and I like to think I am helping the birds too. On the other hand, I am aware of the negative impacts of supplementary feeding such as disease transmission, poor nutrition, predator attraction, food dependency, and giving an advantage to abundant species at the expense of declining species. So, how do the benefits and drawbacks weigh up and is it time to reconsider this popular human activity? *Photo: Doug Cullern*

Benefits of providing food for garden birds

1. Supplementary food offers a lifeline.

In winter, harsh weather and reduced hours of daylight make it challenging for wild birds to find food and keep warm; wild food is less abundant and water sources may be frozen. In summer, water sources dry up during droughts and hardened earth prevents access to insects and worms. By putting out food, we may help birds survive the winter and even influence their fitness for breeding. Our food may also help adults feed their chicks: for example, [songbirds are breeding earlier due to climate change](#), [but prey such as caterpillars have not yet emerged](#) or reached peak availability to meet demand. In my garden, I watch Blackbirds, Pied Wagtails and Starlings collecting rehydrated mealworms for their chicks. Once we start providing extra food, it can be hard to stop if we feel the birds depend on it. *Photo: Andrew Gorton*

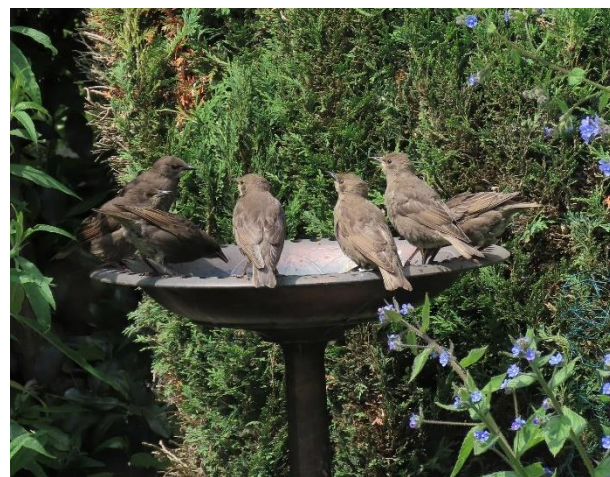


2. Bird species diversity and populations have increased in Britain's gardens.

Every winter since 1970, the BTO Garden Bird Feeding Survey (GBFS) has recorded bird activity in approximately 250 gardens where people feed birds; initially food provision was mealtime leftovers but now includes products supplied by a booming industry. GBFS data suggests these changes have increased the variety of birds visiting our gardens from 15.9 species during autumn and winter in 1970–71 to 22.7 species during the winter of 2010–2011. Using this data, researchers from BTO confirm that feeding birds is having a major influence on garden bird communities in Britain, increasing both the populations of certain species as well as the diversity visiting feeders.

3. Human wellbeing and connection with nature.

Feeding garden birds helps connect people with nature and provides opportunities for enjoyment, relaxation and learning. This wildlife experience is especially important for people who are housebound and/or lonely, and for those living in cities who cannot easily access the countryside or coast. Feeding birds is widely accessible, whether in private gardens or on balconies in apartment blocks. "As urban expansion continues both to threaten species conservation and to change peoples' relationship with the natural world, feeding birds may provide an important tool for engaging people with nature to the benefit of both people and conservation," researchers suggest. *Photo: Pauline Walton*



Drawbacks of feeding garden birds

1. Disease transmission.

If we do not clean feeders each week and empty and refill water baths and dishes daily then stale food, regurgitated or partially chewed food, and faeces can spread diseases. Food provisioning at feeding stations attracts a variety of species to one location on a regular basis and in much higher numbers than natural habitats where these species may not interact closely if at all. Using citizen science data, BTO researchers looked at the health hazards associated with feeding garden birds by exploring relationships between supplementary feeding, disease epidemiology and population dynamics, concluding that wild birds are at risk of serious diseases at garden bird feeders.

How can we reduce the risk of disease transmission?

The BTO study on health hazards noted that compliance with requests to stop feeding birds for disease prevention is likely to be low. So, rather than ban feeding, which has benefits for people and birds, researchers suggest focusing on reducing or redistributing the volume or type of food provided and promoting optimal hygiene measures. Educating the public about disease transmission in garden birds, the deadly impact of outbreaks, and prompt action to limit

In the 1970s, House Sparrow and Starling dominated garden bird feeders. Today, more species take advantage of the range of supplementary foods on offer with Goldfinch and Woodpigeon reported by over 80% of GBFS participants compared to fewer than 20% in 1973. The BTO study even found the number of feeders in a garden has a greater influence on species richness and diversity than winter temperature or local habitat. Researchers therefore suggest, "Greater coordination of feeding activities, across networks of gardens and at multiple spatial scales, could be an innovative way of delivering large-scale conservation or species management outcomes in the future."

transmission could help people accept evidence-based, best-practice advice. They suggest encouraging people to report signs of disease to the Garden Wildlife Health (GWH) initiative; to contact a veterinarian or local wildlife rescue for advice; and to take a break from feeding to prevent further transmission.

Based on this research, co-author Kate Risely offers a sensible approach to feeding garden birds. "We're calling on everyone who feeds wild birds to be aware of their responsibilities for preventing disease. Simple steps we'd recommend include offering a variety of food from accredited sources; feeding in moderation, so that feeders are typically emptied every 1-2 days; the regular cleaning of bird feeders; and rotation of feeding sites to avoid accumulation of waste food or bird droppings."

The Garden Wildlife Health (GWH) website explains diseases in wild birds, such as trichomonosis, salmonellosis, avian pox, and leg lesions. Trichomonosis has decimated Greenfinch populations. Since 2006, the UK breeding population declined from around 4.3 million to around one million birds, representing a decline of 77% according to the Breeding Bird Survey (2021). Ironically, the Greenfinch population had risen

dramatically in the 1990s as these birds exploited garden feeders. Trichomonosis is also thought to be driving the decline in the UK breeding population of Chaffinch with declines more marked where supplementary feeding in gardens is common. Other birds such as House Sparrow, Dunnock, Goldfinch, and Blackbird are also at risk if they visit gardens frequented by infected finches. GWH recommends the following year-round best practice for

2. Unbalanced diets and poor nutrition affect fledglings.

Supplementary food may compromise fledgling health and breeding productivity if the food is of poor nutritional value or provides an unbalanced diet compared to wild food. A collaborative study by the University of Exeter, the BTO and the University of Turin found reduced breeding performance in woodland Blue Tits given access to extra food the previous winter. These birds produced young that were smaller, weighed less and had lower fledging success than adults that were not fed.

Although reasons for this carryover effect are not clear, it could be that the fed birds had an unbalanced diet or that winter feeding created an “ecological trap” that encouraged birds to reproduce at a level that couldn’t be sustained. Another reason is that the extra food in winter may have allowed adults in poor condition to reproduce, thereby reducing breeding success within the population.

Similarly, a study of turtle doves in East Anglia found that young Turtle Doves raised on a diet of seeds foraged from wild arable plants rather than commercial seeds in gardens are more likely to survive after fledging. Unaware Turtle Doves were feeding in gardens as much as they seem to be, researchers are concerned these easy meals may be an “ecological trap” tricking the birds into eating foods that aren’t good for them and/or their offspring. An alternative explanation could be that adults pick up parasites at bird feeders and baths and this hinders young doves’ development. To help Turtle Doves, lead researcher Dr Jenny Dunn says: “The answer is to leave a weedy patch in your garden – what turtle doves need is natural weed seeds and areas of bare ground.”

Wild birds are not only at risk of an unbalanced diet in private gardens. Pigeons, gulls and ducks are often fed human leftovers, which have poor nutritional value for birds. A study on the nutritional implications of feeding wild birds in public urban areas found that bread was the most popular food offered (68%) in Amsterdam, followed by other remains of human food (29%). Half of respondents did not know whether the food was good for the birds. The species most attracted to this food were Feral Pigeon, various gull species, Domestic Goose, Starling and Jackdaw. Reasons given for feeding birds leftovers included not wasting it. The quantities fed to birds was mostly determined by the amount of leftover food rather than the number of birds present. Observations were made in daylight, so researchers could not confirm if a surplus of bread and leftovers at the end of the day is sustaining rodent populations. Researchers noted that Brown Rats are known to predate on the chicks and eggs of waterfowl, which could be problematic where there is an abundance of rats. *Photos: Philip Cartlidge, Mark Clements*

3. Disruption of species population dynamics.

In their article in British Birds, Dr Richard Broughton, Dr Jack Shutt and Dr Alexander Lees discuss the impact of feeding garden birds. “We provide blue tits and great tits with easy food and millions of nest boxes. What does this mean for the other species that share their habitat with these subsidised birds?” the authors ask.

While species benefit from supplementary feeding, especially in terms of winter survival, other less dominant

feeding garden birds to help control and prevent disease transmission at feeding stations: clean and disinfect feeders and feeding sites regularly; provide fresh drinking water and rinse or clean birdbaths and dishes daily; provide fresh food from accredited sources; rotate feeders to avoid contamination in one area; and clear up food on the ground each day.



species may be losing out. This is evident in the decline in woodland birds like Marsh Tit and Willow Tit that compete for nesting sites and natural food sources with species that capitalise on feeders such as Blue Tit and Great Tit and even Great Spotted Woodpecker. “British Willow Tits have far higher nest losses than other tits, or Willow Tits elsewhere, and the main cause of that is eviction by Blue Tits and predation by Great Spotted

Woodpecker,” says Broughton based on his research. And the increase in Blue Tit and Great Tit populations is not the only problem; the food-caching behaviour of Marsh and Willow Tits may involve constant visits to feeders, making them an easy target for Sparrowhawks. Willow Tits would rarely be caught by Sparrowhawks otherwise, says Broughton. He advocates not feeding in areas where Marsh and Willow Tit populations are at risk of local extinction.

A study led by Shutt shows the high proportion of supplementary food in the diet of wild birds such as Blue Tit, peanuts in particular, and reports the distances they travel to feeders are greater than imagined. Populations of woodland bird species using supplementary food resources are increasing while species that do not use these resources and/or are outcompeted by Blue Tits are declining. Due to the impacts of providing supplementary food and the implications for biodiversity conservation of the change in population and ecosystem

4. Feeding stations provide a larder for predators.

By attracting birds to our garden feeding stations, we inadvertently expose them to predation by providing a reliable and easy food source for birds of prey, crows, and cats. There may also an increased risk of nest predation near garden feeders. Cats are constant prowlers around feeders, and in my garden, I have also seen Sparrowhawks take Blackbirds. At least their predation is for survival, but it is not my ideal garden birdwatching experience.

Photo: Dave Billham

5. Commercially produced seed may not be sustainable.

Feeding birds with commercially supplied foods can be expensive if you want sustainably grown seeds. However, cheaper seeds may come at a cost to nature and biodiversity if land is cleared of natural habitat and pesticides used. It seems counter-intuitive to grow monocrops on a vast scale to feed birds when we could provide wild food for birds through nature-friendly

Feeding garden birds has benefits for people, birds and commercial food producers and suppliers, but there needs to be greater public and industry awareness of disease transmission, predation, and biodiversity, so we can feed birds responsibly. Further research could inform best practice on where, what and when to feed wild birds, so that all species have the chance to thrive. The final word goes to Dr Alexander Lees, who sums up how best to help wild birds:

“Where possible, improving habitat amount and quality in our gardens is a vastly more important gift to nature than any bird seed handouts.”

Twitter: @nenbc_info Website: www.nenbc.co.uk

dynamics, the researchers urge policymakers to be cautious about advocating supplementary feeding for wildlife engagement. They also suggest the removal of feeding from nature reserves, a reduction in the encouragement of feeding in areas known to be important for threatened species, and a reversion to winter-only feeding rather than year-round, with each suggestion recommended as potential research areas.

Lees acknowledges that House Sparrows and Starlings in cities may depend on human handouts. Likewise, Tree Sparrows in barren countryside. But he advocates an informed and responsible approach to feeding garden birds so that dominant generalists don't put more pressure on struggling specialists. “We urgently need an evidence-based approach to bird feeding, the current approach is driving disease epidemics and trophic cascades which are causing avian biodiversity loss,” says Lees.



farming and wildlife gardening, and restrict commercial foods to the winter months. Growing native fruit trees, berry-bearing shrubs, and seed-bearing, nectar-rich flowers, which support insects, and avoiding the use of chemicals is a healthy and sustainable way to provide food for wild birds. *Photo: Jane Crossen*



Ask the Audience ...

Last month we had a couple of questions in from **Val Stubbs** about Wood Pigeons ...

“On the day of storm Ciarán, in torrential rain, I saw a very bedraggled Wood Pigeon bathing in our water bowl. Why? Wasn't it wet enough?”

“Why are there so many dead Wood Pigeons around? Is it bird flu or something else?”

To the rescue (again!) came Andy Clarke ...

Bathing the rain

“I suspect the pigeons are using a mixture of rain from above to wash their upperparts with bird-bath water to wash their undersides (which even a strong storm may fail to wet). Purely a guess, but maybe the rain also acts as a stimulant to bathe. Interestingly some years back the BTO was also receiving observations along the same lines from its Garden Birdwatch participants, see: [Woodpigeon Wash](#).”

Dead pigeons

“I cannot be sure, but HPAI (bird flu) seems a likely explanation.”

You don't have to leave it to Andy each time we have one of these questions in – we'd love to hear your take on the questions asked by other members too!



If anyone has a question they have been puzzling over, do please drop us a line and we will try and find out the answer for you. We'd really appreciate any club members writing in with their responses to the questions asked too.

Check This Out!

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



 **“Bird flu found in mammals near Antarctica for the first time, scientists say”** from the [Reuters website](#) [11-Jan-24]

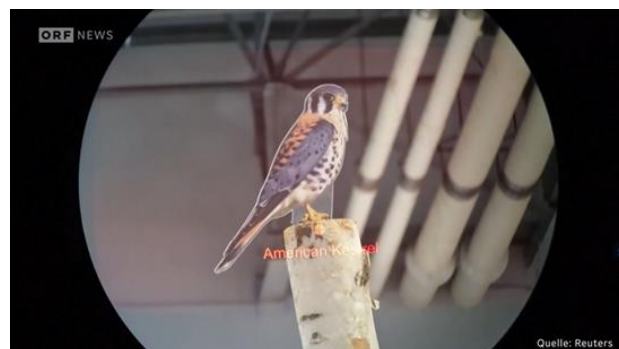
 **“Bird flu kills thousands of Common Cranes in Hungary”** from the [BirdGuides website](#) [12th Dec]

We have discussed in a couple of articles in the past few months the use of Apps like [Merlin](#) to identify birds / birdsong – a great addition to the birders' tools or the end of birding as we know it? There was also an article on the BirdGuides website last month **“New AI tool helps ecologists monitor birds”** which was interesting but what do we think about this development as reported by Reuters this week?

Artificial Intelligence [AI] binoculars detect over 8,000 species of birds

At the technology fair in Las Vegas, binoculars equipped with AI were presented, which can detect over 8,000 bird species with the help of a database. It comes from Swarovski Optik, and the cost in Europe is about 4,600 euros.

Here's a vid clip [AI binoculars make birdwatching a breeze](#) and a short article www.tomsguide.com (thanks David H for sending it in)



 **“Wicken Fen purchases land to help European Turtle Dove”** from the [BirdGuides website](#) [29th Dec]

 **“Record breeding season for Pied Flycatcher on RSPB land”** from the [BirdGuides website](#) [28th Dec]

 **“WWT celebrates 60 years of Bewick's Swan study”** from the [BirdGuides website](#) [26th Dec]

 **“Half female, half male honeycreeper caught on film”** from the [BirdGuides website](#) [21st Dec]

 **“Mixed fortunes for birds in 2023 Red List update”** from the [BirdGuides website](#) [19th Dec]

 **“Wetland project approved to prevent river pollution”** from the [BirdGuides website](#) [2nd Dec]

 **“£210,000 boost for west Norfolk's wildlife”** from the [Rare Bird Alerts website](#) [10th Jan]



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.](#)

"Frequently noisy with a 'chacker, chacker, chacker' call that is both fast and scolding. It also has a commonly heard 'cha-ka' call and a rarely heard quiet, babbling, repetitive song."

from RSPB Handbook of British Birds by Peter Holden and Tim Cleeves

"Loud, chattering, staccato 'cha-cha-cha' and variations."

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

"Most calls hoarse and unmusical. Perhaps best known is the alarm against cat or owl, long-drawn-out, fast, very hoarse staccato series, 'tsche-tsche-tsche-tsche...'. Other calls include hard, hoarse and whining sounds; disyllabic, clicking 'cha-ka!', 'chiah-cha' etc. in conversation. Song more rarely heard, a quiet, harsh twittering 'subsong'."

from Collins BIRD GUIDE 3rd Edition by Mullarney, Svensson, Zetterström

Wordsearch



This month, we have the 21 species or races recorded in January 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.](#)

Avocet
Dunlin
Goldeneye
Little Auk
Mandarin Duck
Manx Shearwater
Red-necked Grebe
Barnacle Goose
Common Redpoll
Green Sandpiper
Lesser White-fronted Goose
Red-breasted Merganser
Slavonian Grebe
Whooper Swan
Common Crossbill
Goshawk
Little Gull
Merlin
Raven
Velvet Scoter
Woodlark

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





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: "Between 1500 and 2000 went over this morning, one skein after another heading east, The most I've seen this year." / *Stephanie Witham / North Walsham / 10th*

Pheasant: "melanistic mutant, male, clifftop field" / *Phil Borley / Weybourne / 30th*

Fulmar: "Feeding to and fro west in the wake of a dredging vessel called 'Sand Fulmar'." / *John Hurst / Mundesley / 17th*

Sparrowhawk: "Sadly lost our regular Sparrowhawk. Flew into and was impaled in a small blackthorn and was unable to release itself." / *Alan Stevens / Gresham / 17th*

Marsh Harrier: "male. trying to fly west offshore in strong wind, constantly losing ground, last seen close in under cliffs." / *Phil Borley / Weybourne / 21st*

Red Kite: "the first winter that one has overwintered on the camp" / *Moss Taylor / Weybourne Camps / 6th*

Red Kite: "40x Despite the gale force wind, the birds effortlessly glided around before swooping down to roost just after 4:00 pm. A wonderful site." / *Andrew Crossley / Little Barningham / 22nd*

Coot: "On the water which at long last is becoming clear again thank goodness !!!" / *Anne Sims / Selbrigg Pond / 26th*

Lapwing: "150x number well down from a few days age but a beautiful sight wheeling around at dusk against a pink and turquoise sky" / *Alan Stevens / Felbrigg Park & Lake / 14th*

Curlew: "Distant views. Feeding in field two to the west of the farm. Largest number I've seen before in the 8 years I've been going up is 17. And there were 14 there the other day. So really pleased to see that many." Photo right / *Jane Crossen / Sheringham / 5th*

Turnstone: "Including JAC (ringed Feb this year Sheringham). Record shot as lots of sea spray." Photo right / *Jane Crossen / Sheringham / 21st*

Woodcock: "Out in the open in the water in the wet meadow, much to our surprise. Conveniently 2 Snipe walked right by it, convincing us that our original gut feeling of ID w.as correct." / *Val Stubbs / Felbrigg Park & Lake / 29th*

Kittiwake: "east 1 hour SW. Only one 1st CY in the whole passage." / *John Hurst / Mundesley / 5th*

Black-headed Gull: "There was a ringed bird by the boating lake. Not the 30+ bird which has been around the last few winters. This bird was ringed in Lithuania. Will update if/when I get any info back." / *Jane Crossen / Sheringham / 10th*

Great Spotted Woodpecker: "Two females a few minutes apart, very different markings on the feeders at back of our cottage. Could be the mum and a youngster born close by this year" / *Suzanne Taylor / Felbrigg Park & Lake / 27th*

Peregrine Falcon: "Watched bird being harassed by 2 Herring Gulls well out to sea. Eventually moved away from gulls and had a tentative go at a Fulmar! Watched for about 10 minutes in company of Mark Moody. Bird moved over land to the West of us." / *Di & Richard Farrow / Sheringham / 14th*

Rook: "in front garden, trying to work out whether it could use the seed feeder (it couldn't)" / *Val Stubbs / Weybourne / 10th*

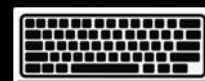
Waxwing: "Hawking flies. I've never seen Waxwings hawking flies as much as they are this year! Awful light but great to see the lovely colours in the wings and tail." / *Jane Crossen / Sheringham / 12th*

Blue Tit: "clearing garden boxes; 6 nests all Blue Tits; 3 possibly successful; 1 with deserted eggs; 1 with 6 deserted young." / *Alan Stevens / Gresham / 8th*

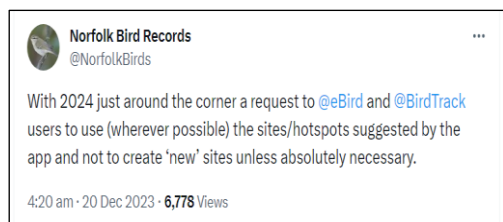
Blackbird: "In / off the sea. Narrowly missed being breakfast for a Gt. BB Gull which attempted to catch it." / *Francis Farrow / Sheringham / 3rd*

Goldfinch: "We seem to have lots of goldfinches coming to our seed feeders now we have added sunflower hearts and sunflowers to our seed mix plus they love the teasels we have grown around the feeding station hoping they would feed from them. They never liked the Niger!!" / *Suzanne Taylor / Felbrigg Park & Lake / 27th*





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 [8th Sep]. A plea from them ...



1. If using 'local' site names such as 'The Hulver Ground', 'Black Mill' etc please add the nearest place name eg 'The Hulver Ground, Horning', 'Black Mill, Upton' etc. The same applies to sites such as 'My Garden', 'Home' and 'Riverside walk' etc
2. Please check the spelling of any manually keyed sites.
3. Please do not allow the app to generate new site names based on your location. 'Norfolk coast AONB', 'Broads National Park, Broadland GB-England (52.5888,1.4701)', 'Auto selected 53.11097, 2.64810' etc are a nightmare to sort out (and there's lots of them!)

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



Just a very brief summary this month whilst we are in website transition.

A huge thanks to all **131** of you who uploaded records to the old website last year. It is very much appreciated by us and the bodies we send the data on to for inclusion in the county reports. We very much hope you will continue to report your sightings in the coming weeks and months too.

Congratulations to **Phil Borley** for recording the most number of species last year. Apologies if the figures need a bit of marginal tweaking as the websites settle down but by my reckoning he recorded a fantastic 230 species with over 15,700 records uploaded. The top 20 club birders in terms of species-counts are also listed on the right. Thanks folks!

Below are the 2023 stats for top locations and species for records on the website.

Top 10 Locations Last Year (number of records uploaded)		Top 10 Species Last Year (number of records uploaded)	
Weybourne	13,255	Blackbird	2,737
Weybourne Camp	10,252	Wood Pigeon	2,510
Sheringham	7,712	Robin	2,417
Beeston Common	5,739	Blue Tit	2,335
Felbrigg Park & Lake	5,292	Buzzard	1,957
Bodham	4,792	Jackdaw	1,910
Beeston Regis	2,798	Goldfinch	1,907
Kelling Heath	2,644	Chaffinch	1,905
West Runton	2,528	Carriion Crow	1,860
Weybourne Cliffs	2,393	Black-headed Gull	1,832

230	Phil Borley
216	Moss Taylor
204	Mark Clements
183	Russell Page
182	Dawn & Tim Wright
180	Trevor Williams
177	Julia Peters
173	Andy Clarke
171	Phil Hall
168	Andrew Kershaw
167	Tony Pope
165	Trevor Warren
164	David Billham
160	Colin Blaxill
159	Roger Unite
157	Brian Shaw
156	Francis Farrow
154	Dave Horton
154	Peter & Sue Morrison
153	Lin Pateman

The **top three spots for number of 'species' recorded** (for the purposes of this figure, races and subspecies are treated as separate 'species') were Weybourne Camp (200), Weybourne (192) and Sheringham (184). At the other end of the chart we have a couple of sites with just one record of just one species recorded – Marsham Heath (Nightjar) and Booton Common (Common Chiffchaff). I am sure there must be a bit more of a selection on offer at these sites so why not make it a priority this year to get out to some of these lesser visited corners? In terms of **species seen at the most locations**, Blackbird was recorded at 103 locations, with both Buzzard and Wood Pigeon at 96. The 'species' listed below were **reported at just one location** last year:

(Siberian) Chiffchaff
 Bluethroat
 Brown Booby
 Caspian Tern
 Cory's Shearwater
 Dark-eyed Junco
 Eastern Yellow Wagtail

European Storm Petrel
 Great Shearwater
 Isabelline Wheatear
 Leach's Storm Petrel
 Little Stint
 Marsh Warbler
 Montagu's Harrier

Pectoral Sandpiper
 Red-backed Shrike
 Red-breasted Goose
 Red-crested Pochard
 Sabine's Gull
 Short-toed Lark
 Stone Curlew

Tawny Pipit
 Twite
 Wood Sandpiper
 Yellow (Blue-headed) Wagtail
 Yellow (Grey-headed) Wagtail

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!

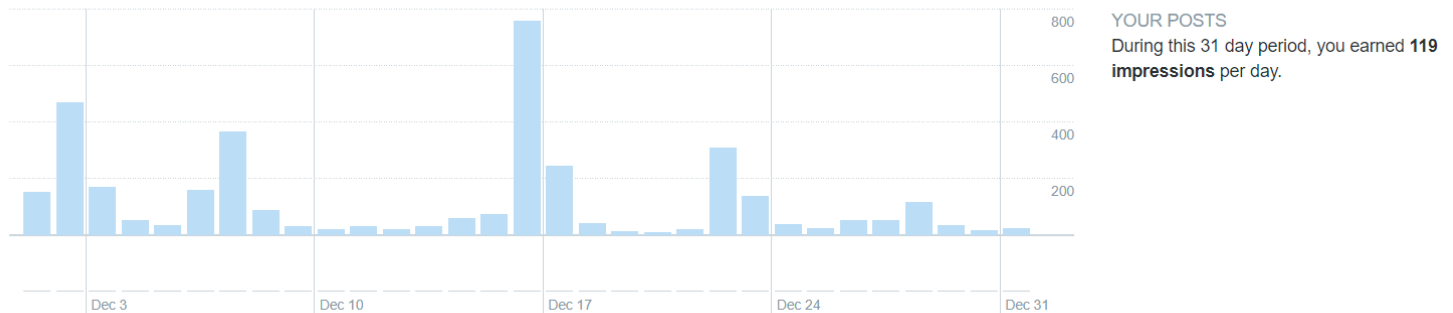
Please continue to tag us @NENBC_info in your own Tweets as we'll be doing more Re-tweeting of local, regional and national bird news. It is always great to see you sharing your outings, your photos, your questions, even your disappointments! We'd love to see you posting about club events, and your thoughts 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.

1,712
followers

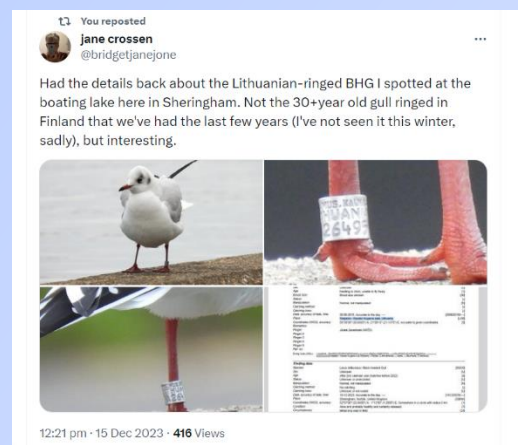


Here's a very interesting graph with some of our interaction stats from December ...

Your posts earned **3.7K impressions** over this **31 day** period



... and 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 Buntings



By David North

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.

Taken from his book “Words on Wildlife *Inspired by Nature*”



Photos courtesy of Richard Farrow, Trevor Williams, Tony Forster, Mark Clements x2



What's That Song?

The bird voice variously described was that of a **Magpie**. 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: Magpie** page. There is no BTO Bird ID Video this month as this species is quite distinctive.



Member photos courtesy of
Richard Farrow, Mark Clements,
Doug Cullern and Andrew Crossley



This month's **Wordsearch Solution:**

BIRDS RECORDED IN THE NENBC AREA IN JANUARY 2023

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

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