



The Pied Flyer

North East Norfolk Bird Club



July 2024 - Issue 109

The NENBC Monthly e-Newsletter

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Through a Lens



By Trevor Williams

I've recently returned from a cycling holiday where we rode a version of the Coast to Coast route, from the Severn to the Wash - a distance of 300 miles, mostly on cycle paths and minor roads. This event has become something of an annual tradition since completing the Land's End to John O'Groats ride in 2012 - though actually we did it the other way round, following the 'four countries' route which also takes in the east coast of Ireland. Being on a bike and mostly in the countryside brings you closer to nature, which means seeing and hearing birds provides a constant backdrop to the sometimes more arduous business of pedalling. Not surprisingly I keep a bird list on these trips and over the years I've managed to catch up with 146 species. Sadly nothing new to add on our most recent trip but Grey Wagtail, Hobby, Curlew, Corn Bunting and Little Ringed Plover, as well as a host of more 'everyday' species, provided plenty of welcome distraction.

Over the years there have been a few memorable birding moments. Cycling along the coast of Sutherland to the 'mood music' of singing Great Northern Diver, Black Guillemot in the harbours of west coast fishing villages, toiling up Struie Hill and nearly falling off my bike to the unmistakable reeling of Grasshopper Warbler, Turtle Dove purring on a common in north Essex, Hen Harrier and Short-eared Owl over the Cornish

moors and Red Grouse on the heather uplands of Northumberland - recently recognised as a separate species from Willow Ptarmigan, and becoming the UK's only endemic!

On my return home I checked on the Club website for recent sightings - the anxiety of missing something on your 'home patch' is an inevitable and necessary consequence of any trip away! Continuing the trend before I went away, I was relieved to find that I'd missed almost nothing by way of unusual birds - it's been a quiet summer as far as scarce and rare species are concerned, and not much better for our common breeding species either. The weather hasn't helped and there seems to be plenty of evidence of early returning migrants which have not managed to breed. Sea-watching has continued to produce records of oceanic birds which ought to be far away from the Norfolk coast and waders are returning only weeks after they passed through on their way to their breeding grounds. Is this a blip or a trend is the perennial question. One of the ways we can help answer it is by collecting and analysing the data - all your records helpfully brought together in the form of the NENBC Annual Report. The 2023 version will be coming to you in the very near future....

A Note from the Editor



By Carol Thornton

Hi folks. Welcome to our July newsletter. Thanks to the existing contributors as always and a shout to anyone else out there who could join us - I would love to hear from you! As well as the usual two walks this month, we have another walks week coming up in our usual quiet month of August but could do with another leader if anyone is willing - see info so far on [page 11](#) and we will update on website in due course. Come September we are back to business with talks and walks so we will have full list of 2024/25 events in next month's newsletter but you can whet your appetite with a few now, also on [page 11](#).

Last month's **Through a Lens** subject for the front page was **HIRUNDINES** and our cover images this time from the top are from Jane Crossen (Sand Martin), Mark Clements (Sand Martin x2, Swallow, Swift) and Francis Farrow (Sand Martin). Thanks all! **The theme for July is - BIRDS OVER THE SEA.**

Here on the right is my pick for June of some great photos from our website of the more common birds that don't make it to the Monthly Bird Highlights section: Feral Pigeon and Grey Heron (Doug Cullern), Herring Gull (Mark Clements) and Canada Goose (Jane Crossen).





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

*** Phil Fish * James & Sue Macmillan * Sophie Gedde * Richard Greasby ***

427 individual
members across
277 households

50,931
bird records
logged

208 bird species
reported

Please keep adding all your sightings to our website at www.nenbc.co.uk. Let us know if you have forgotten your password and need it resetting or need assistance on how to upload your records. More information from our website records, Twitterings and social media presence in **Data, Records, Posts & Tweets** from [page 31](#).

Club Achievement Awards

Star Badges

No new achievers this month but we are looking forward to a few more coming through soon!

Currently, **4** members have achieved **GOLD STAR** status, **21** members have been awarded **SILVER STAR** status and a fabulous **83** members now hold the **BRONZE STAR** status.

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

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



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

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

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

Eco-Badges

No new badges to award this month but ... see the presentation pics on [page 12](#) for last month's achievers.

We currently have **26** members who have achieved their **GREEN ECO-BADGES** [Coastal: 16 | Inland: 10] and 5 who have achieved **SUPER-GREEN** [Coastal: 4 | 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 Carol Thornton

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

≈ 5,800 individual records covering 142 bird species were added in June

There were 5,776 records submitted for June which is 675 less than those submitted for the same period last year and 2,553 less than the previous month of May. A total of 142 species were recorded which was 3 less than was recorded in the same period in 2023. Listed below are summaries of the less common species in our area last month.

Brent Goose Four offshore during a 3 hour seawatch at Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs on 2nd and 1 west Weybourne Camp on 7th.

Barnacle Goose Seven west offshore on 25th at Weybourne Camp.

Red-breasted Merganser Three records of single birds. A female identified east at Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs on 7th, plus a bird west Weybourne Camp on 19th and Weybourne on 30th.

Grey Partridge Seven records of 1-2 birds throughout the month starting with Bodham on 1st. Other records from Felbrigg Park & Lake on 5th and 12th, Weybourne Camp on 19th, 23rd and 29th plus West Runton on 21st. *Photo 1 courtesy of Andrew Crossley*



Quail The distinctive 'whet my lips' call heard on Weybourne Heath on 2nd and one flew across meadows in Mundesley on 17th before dropping down by the Mun.

Nightjar Numerous reports of flight calls, wing-clapping and churring plus some sightings throughout the month. Highlights from the 5 locations were a single bird with a display flight around the hill at Beeston Common on 3rd, a single churring record on 7th at Cawston Heath, a single bird on nest at Holt Country Park & Lowes on 2nd, a high count of 5 on Kelling Heath, and a low, quiet, slow ticking was heard between churrs on Weybourne Heath on 3rd.

Cuckoo Eighteen records from 4th to 23rd, predominantly from Weybourne Camp, with a male reported there on 6th, 13th, 17th and 18th and a female on 5th. Other records from Kelling Heath (4th and 23rd), Mannington Hall Park on 15th and a Swafeld garden on 21st.

Turtle Dove Throughout the month, 1-2 birds were heard purring and sometimes seen at Kelling Heath, with a high count of 3 there on 4th. *Photo 2 courtesy of Doug Cullern*



Crane A single slowly drifting west over Upper Sheringham and inland on 17th.

Avocet Two birds close in west at Weybourne on 2nd, two west Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs on both 4th and 5th, two west Weybourne Camp also on 5th and a single west at Sheringham on 12th.

Golden Plover A single west at Weybourne on 12th. At Weybourne Camp, three over on 23rd and one west on 27th. High count 40, east offshore there on 25th.

Whimbrel One west Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs on 12th and one west Sheringham Cliffs & Golf Course on 18th.

Bar-tailed Godwit A summer plumage bird heading west at Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs on 12th and a single west with Curlew there on 18th. Singles west at Weybourne Camp on 18th, 23rd and 29th with two there on 24th plus two west Weybourne on 30th.

Black-tailed Godwit A single west at Weybourne Camp on 27th.

Ruff Four east over Weybourne Camp on 22nd.

Woodcock One flushed at Kelling Heath on 1st plus one roding at Holt Country Park & Lowes on 28th.

Kittiwake Thirty seven reports throughout the month from 4 coastal locations. Respective location high counts were 84 west during a 3-hour seawatch at Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs on 2nd, 14 west over an hour at Sheringham on 11th, 7 east and 123 west during a seawatch at Weybourne on 2nd plus 7 west at Weybourne Camp on 4th and 19th. *Photo 3 courtesy of Dave Billham*

Little Gull Second calendar year bird west at Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs on 2nd, one west at Weybourne Camp on 29th and one west at Weybourne on 30th.

Mediterranean Gull Most of the thirty five records from 6 locations between 6th and 30th were heading west. High counts at the respective sites were: Weybourne Camp 21 (west 18th), 15 (4 on sea. 9 west. 2 east on 24th) and 23 (29th); Weybourne 11 (16th), 51 (28th) and 13 (30th). Other lower-count records were from West Runton, Sheringham and Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs.

Sandwich Tern Sixty six records throughout the month from Weybourne Camp, Weybourne and Weybourne Cliffs plus Sheringham and Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs, with most records reporting both easterly and westerly movement as the birds fed. Most records were well in to double figures during seawatches with a high count of 98 birds over 2 hours at Cromer on 14th.

Little Tern Twenty two records from along the coast from Weybourne Camp to Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs, with a high count of 94 at Weybourne on 12th (73 east. 21 west).

Arctic Tern Both records of 5 birds this month from Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs, west during a 1 hour seawatch on 1st and a single group west on 10th.

Arctic Skua Singles at Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs, a dark phase west on 2nd and pale phase west on 12th.

Guillemot Ten birds east at Sheringham on 11th with the remaining 5 records from Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs between 1st and 12th, the high count being 35 on 2nd (33 west and 2 east during a 3 hour seawatch).

Razorbill Just 9 records up to the 13th of the month from Weybourne to Cromer, with a high count of 50 at Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs on 2nd, all west during a 3 hour seawatch.

Puffin A single west at Weybourne camp on 24th.

Red-throated Diver Records of 1-2 birds between 12th and 30th from Weybourne Camp, Weybourne and Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs, generally heading west.

Fulmar Over 60 records throughout the month, the majority being of less than 6 birds. At the beginning of the month there were some higher counts at Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs (25 on 1st and 31 on 2nd) and Weybourne (23 also on 2nd) during seawatches, with birds predominantly heading west. A report of a possible nest on clifftops at Beeston Regis on 4th was followed by a further report from there on the 12th where the nest hole had gone due to cliff erosion. *Photo 4 courtesy of Mark Clements*



Manx Shearwater A single west past Weybourne Camp on 8th and one east past Sheringham on 11th.

Spoonbill One west Weybourne Camp on 6th and a further report there on 7th. On 17th, one bird west at Weybourne Camp and 4 east over Sheringham Cliffs & Golf Course.

Great White Egret One west offshore at Weybourne Camp on 6th and 3 west together at Cromer Lighthouse & Easy Cliffs on 18th.

Little Egret Eleven records at the coast this month of mostly 1-2 birds with high counts of 9 at Weybourne Camp on both 6th and 23rd.

Osprey One flew north over Holgate Road, Kelling Heath on 6th and a fly-though eastwards at the Wild About Mannington event on 15th was seen by some lucky folk not hiding in the tent from the rain!

Goshawk Two sightings of what was probably the same bird at Swanton Novers on 7th, a male over a Bale garden hunting young Jackdaw on 21st and one circled over the heathland at Roman Camp a few times on 29th before flying overhead and heading inland. *Photo 5 courtesy of Paul Laurie*

Marsh Harrier Sixteen records of mostly singles from 2nd to 28th, predominantly from the Weybourne sites including 3 birds with clearly different plumage there on 8th. Singles were also recorded over Wolterton Park on 9th and Itteringham on 10th.

Kingfisher Singles at Blickling Park on 6th, Gresham on 10th and Dilham Canal on 18th. Two were near Letheringsett at the Hall Farm pond on 22nd. *Photo 6 courtesy of Mark Clements*

Hobby Records of mainly singles from 3rd to 29th from the coast at the Weybourne sites (including 2 at Weybourne Camp on 27th and 29th) Sheringham Cliffs & Golf Course, Beeston Regis and Cromer and inland at Wolterton Park, Blickling Park and Kelling Heath.

Peregrine Up to 3 birds at the Cromer site throughout the month. The only other records came from Weybourne with a juvenile on 28th. See Jane's article on [page 15](#).

Marsh Tit Just 2 records of 3 birds at Pretty Corner Wood on 4th and Mannington Hall Park on 15th.

Woodlark Twenty two records from Kelling Heath throughout the month of predominantly 1-2 birds, with 3 on 4th and 4 on 13th. The only other records were from Holt Country Park & Lowes with 2 on 22nd. Most recorders reported hearing the birds singing. *Photo 7 courtesy of Martin Browne*

Willow Warbler Nearly all of the 48 records of predominantly 1-2, which came from Beeston Common, Bodham, Cawston Heath, Felbrigg Park & Lake, Gresham, Inleborough Hill and Kelling Heath, reported singing. There was a record of 4 birds at Kelling Heath on 4th.



Marsh Warbler An interesting couple of records. A single at Dilham Canal on 18th "I heard a bird that sounded strange - Merlin came through with the identification straight away." The bird was not seen so ID cannot be confirmed but there was a further Third Party Report from 'a professional at an undisclosed inland site on the same morning' which we will be following up on. See Andy's article on [page 19](#).

Grasshopper Warbler Mannington Hall Park was the place to be on 15th where several members attending the Wild About Mannington event heard this lovely bird reeling and watched it flitting about between rain showers. The other record this month was from Beeston Regis on 29th.

Garden Warbler Single birds were recorded at Kelling Heath (2nd, 4th, 24th and 25th), Swanton Novers (7th and 20th) and Weybourne Cliffs (11th).

Lesser Whitethroat Records of mostly singing singles at Beeston Regis, Beeston Common and Beeston Bump, Weybourne, Weybourne Cliffs and Bodham from 2nd to 27th. Two singing birds were recorded at Weybourne on 24th.

Dartford Warbler Up to 4 birds have been present at Kelling Heath throughout the month, with a report of a family group of 4 plus another bird there on 3rd. *Photo 8 courtesy of Mark Clements*

Firecrest Six records of single birds from Pretty Corner Wood, Felbrigg Park & Lake, Gunthorpe, Beeston Common and Kelling Heath.

Nuthatch Single birds reported from 3rd to 27th from a variety of locations. High count was 4 at Hunworth on 2nd, including 2 juvenile.

Spotted Flycatcher A well-watched pair were reported from the NENBC stand at the Wild About Mannington event on 15th, giving good views despite the rain. Other reports came from Blickling Park, Gunthorpe, Wolterton Park and Alby. *Photo 9 courtesy of John Hayward*

Stonechat Lots of sightings this month with over 40 records from a range of sites. Kelling Heath and Weybourne Camp had reports of 5 individuals, the latter on 3 occasions, and most records from all sites were of at least 2 birds. Maximum count of at least 6 at Cawston Heath (3 pairs plus youngsters). *Photo 10 courtesy of Martin Browne*

Wheatear Just one record from Weybourne Camp of a single bird on 24th.

Grey Wagtail Fourteen records of mostly single birds from Gresham (2 on 14th), Beeston Regis, Blickling Park, Felbrigg Park & Lake, West Runton, Thornage (3 on 8th), Beeston Common and Brinton (3 on 30th). *Photo 11 courtesy of Mark Clements*

8



9



10



11





Marsh Harrier: “O/N wing tagged bird east over camp” | Phil Borley | Weybourne Camp | 4th |

Peregrine: “Both adults and the juvenile Peregrine (VNN) showing well around the church. The juvenile is now flying well” and ongoing views throughout the month. | Jane Crossen | Cromer | 8th |

What to Look and Listen For in July



July is definitely one of the quieter months in the birding calendar but there is still plenty going on. Breeding birds may continue to fledge young as the summer months progress and in any ‘normal’ year, July will also see the continued return migration of some wader species such as Ruff, Black-tailed Godwit, Green Sandpiper and Dunlin. Check out inland scrapes and pools as well as watching for passing birds at the coast.

The underlined links in this section are to some very helpful BTO Video ID Guides for the species concerned.

It can still be a good time to see some localised breeders. Kelling Heath plays host to Woodlark, Turtle Dove and Dartford Warbler and if you go later in the day, it is a fabulous Nightjar spot. Or, why not head over to the raptor watchpoint at Swanton Novers and get to grips with some of our scarcer breeding birds of prey.

If the bird watching seems slow, then now is usually a good time to focus your nocs on butterflies or dragon/damselflies and perhaps brush up on your identification of these. Any reasonable bodies of water such as the lakes at Felbrigg and Blickling Halls are a good place to start looking for dragonflies. They have been a little thin generally this year but hopefully with some dry sunny days (fingers crossed), things may pick up a little.

The summer may also be a good opportunity to explore sites within our area that you have not yet visited. Check out the locations section of the website for details of these.

Historical July Records

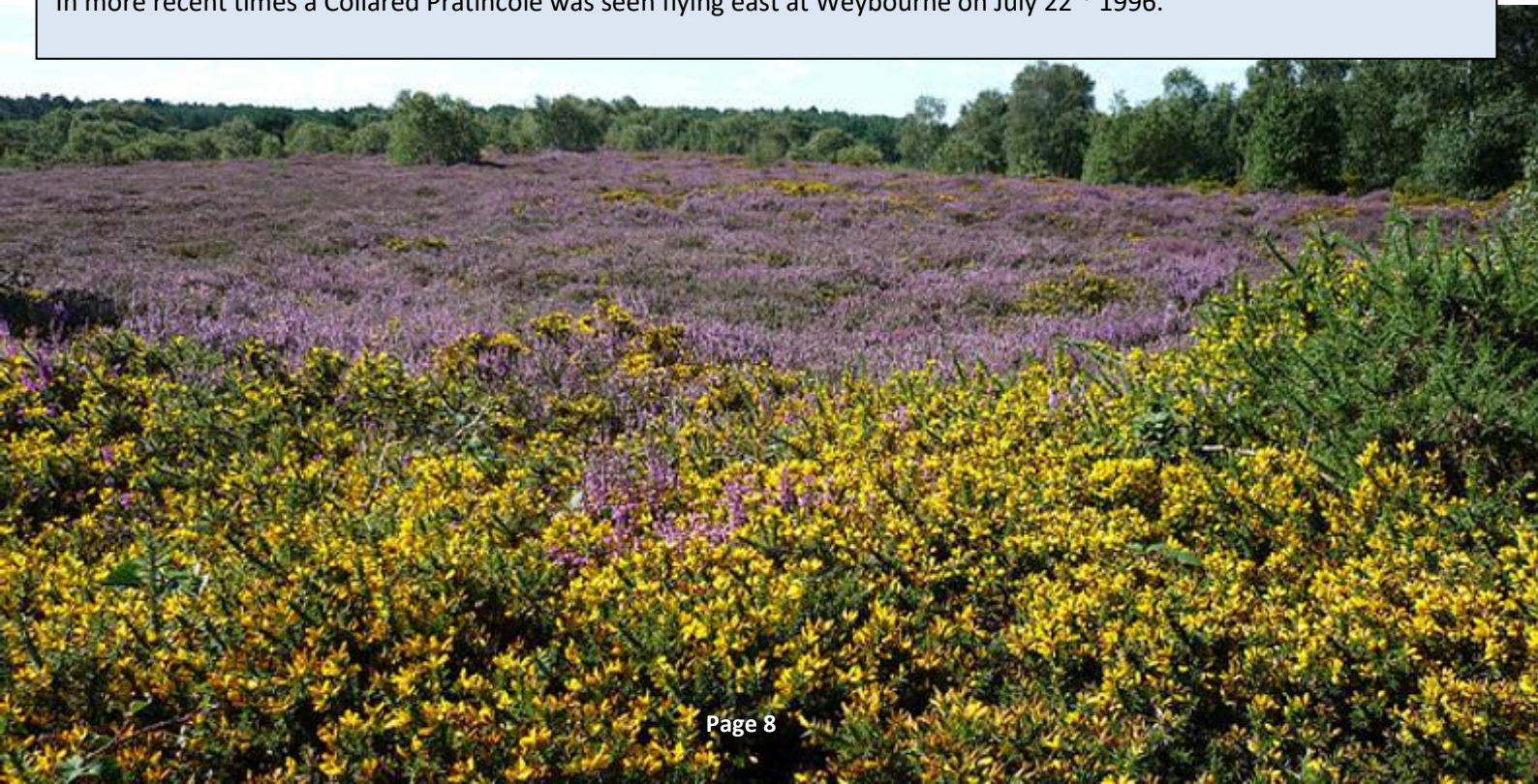
by Russ Malin

Records taken from “Rare and Scarce Birds in North-east Norfolk”

by kind permission of the author Moss Taylor

In 2010 a first-summer drake King Eider was between West Runton and Sheringham on the 27th. It had spent most of the month off the Yorkshire coast and subsequently frequented the Suffolk coast from mid-September to mid-November. Way back in 1887 our first Black-crowned Night Heron was killed at Weybourne on July 17th. Even further back, on July 29th 1832, the first Norfolk Buff-breasted Sandpiper was ‘obtained’ at Sheringham and presented to the Castle Museum, Norwich where it remains to this day.

In more recent times a Collared Pratincole was seen flying east at Weybourne on July 22nd 1996.



Conservation Corner – can you help??

Would you be interested in joining or team of article writers for the Conservation Corner slot? We currently have two members writing excellent articles alternate months but a bit of back up would be very handy for months when they have other commitments.

If you don't fancy writing an occasional article, please let us know any suggestions for what you'd like to see covered in this spot and we'll get researching!

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.

Can You Help ???

The production of the NENBC Bird Report 2023 is well under way so many thanks to those species writers who contributed to the main text. For those of you who opted for one in your annual subscription, your copy will be with you at some point during the summer. **This is a call for all those budding artists out there** – if you have any bird artwork you have done of any species that we had in the club area last year which you would like us to consider using to illustrate our publication then please scan or photograph them (squarely if possible!) and send them on to Carol on nenbc@aol.co.uk.

We look forward to seeing them as always - thank you!

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

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!

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!

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 July | 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.

Friday 26th July | 6.30am-midday | RSPB Snettisham High Tide Spectacular with Janice Darch



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

This is a special trip to see the waders coming onto the beach with the rising Spring tide. It is a 1.5 mile walk south from the car park to the best viewing areas and we need to be getting into place 2 hours before high tide to see the birds moving in, hence the early start. We will see hundreds of Oystercatchers, Avocets, Bar and Black-tailed Godwits, Redshanks, hundreds Knot many of whom who are on their journeys south from their breeding grounds. Overhead we are likely to see a variety of tern species and gulls as well as Kestrel and Marsh Harrier and maybe Hobby.

MEET: RSPB car-park | **PARKING:** Beach Road, Snettisham, King's Lynn PE31 7RA [Please bring your RSPB membership card or be prepared to pay for parking. It is wise to arrive early as the car park can get very full for these high tide events. Car sharing is encouraged! | **DISTANCE:** 3 miles | **ACCESSIBILITY:** Walking is reasonably easy but it is partially along uneven footpaths and as such this event probably isn't suitable for wheelchair users. | **FACILITIES:** None | **BADGES:** Outside club area so records can't count for Star Badges or Green Eco-badges this time. **WEBSITE:** [RSPB Snettisham](#)

We started this Walks Week programme in 2020 when we were limited by the 'Rule of 6' in terms of size of walk groups due to the Covid restrictions and we had a few members step up as novice walk leaders to show a small group of other members around their local patch. It was excellent for well-being at the time and following really positive feedback on how group size allowed more interaction with the leader and others and allowed us to visit varied and smaller locations, we are continuing with this initiative.

In August we are aiming to run 7 short walks over 7 days to 7 local hotspots with 7 leaders. Advance booking is required as spaces are limited to 7. So far we have the following walks and we are just juggling with the days – info will follow on the website shortly.

Muckleburgh and Kelling Quags (Dave Billham)
West and East Beckham (Colin Blaxill)
Swanton Novers (Nick Kimber)

Sustead lanes and footpaths (Trevor Williams)
'Down South' (Alan Stevens)
Overstrand and Sidestrand (Stella Baylis)

WE NEED MORE VOLUNTEER LOCAL WALK LEADERS TO RUN A FULL PROGRAMME Would you be interested in taking part and joining our walk leader pool? We are looking for members who have an enthusiasm for their local patch, especially if it is in a 'less-visited' spot from our Locations list. Please don't worry if you haven't led a walk before or are nervous about being able to ID individual birds – it can be a supportive joint effort by all those attending. What we really want is someone who knows and enjoys the local patch. If this could be you, give us a shout on nenbc@aol.co.uk.

A Flavour of 2024 / 2025 Events – confirmed dates for the autumn



- **Thu 26-Sep: Members' Night with 4 mini talks** from club members | 1) John Hurst: **Short or Tall Stories? – You Decide** | 2) Kirsty Turner: **Delaware Bay - a shorebird paradise?** | 3) Mark Boyd: **150 Norfolk Birds in 2023** | 4) Andy Clarke: **Finland - owls, waders and buntings** |
- **Thu 31-Oct: "Shelduck migration in relation to offshore wind farms"** a talk with Ros Green
- **Thu 28-Nov: "A Year at Cley and Salthouse Marshes"** a talk with David North
- **Thu-12-Dec: Christmas Social and AGM** – get the date in your diary!

More to follow next month when the website will also be updated.

Felbrigg Park Walks
3rd Weds of the month
18th Sep, 16th Oct, 20th,
Nov, 18th Dec
Weekend walk dates being
finalised!

Last Month's Club Walk - Hickling NWT Walk | 16th June

By Janice Darch

Hickling in the Norfolk Broads is a reserve that deserves us to visit more often than we do! It has some lovely specialities such as Common Cranes, Bittern and Swallowtail butterflies in summer, Marsh Harriers and is a good place to see Hobbys plus there is always a chance of something rarer turning up.

We saw 51 bird species during our visit including 3 Cranes, 2 Bittern, a Hobby and extremely close views of Swallowtails and an Otter too. Added to this the reserve is a large enough to absorb many people. We set off from the Visitor Centre at 9am keeping our fingers crossed that the recent stormy weather wasn't going to see us drowned by a sudden heavy shower..... In the woodland we spent a bit of time searching for passerines, finding Common Whitethroat, Wren and Goldfinch before heading to the lookout at Brendan's Marsh. Here we were able to spot a variety of wildfowl, many starting to go into eclipse plumage. These included Mallard, Teal, Shoveler and Gadwall. A Grey Heron occupied a corner of the scrape and there were several Lapwings. Several Pied Wagtails showing the difference between adult and juvenile plumage were seen as well as Greylag and Canada Geese. Marsh Harriers, Cormorants, Swifts and Swallows were overhead. In the reedbeds that we viewed on our walk around the main track we had numerous views of perched male Reed Buntings and Sedge Warblers flight displaying. Looking from Observation Hide and the boat departure point over Rush Hill Scrape gave us views of a vast number of Mute Swans, male and female Tufted Duck and Great Crested Grebe. A calling Cuckoo taunted us as did Cetti's Warblers but they never showed. Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff and Blue Tits added to our passerine total. We had superb views of two flying Bitterns. Swallowtails were giving excellent views on the way to Cadbury Hide. We made it back to the Visitor Centre having only got drenched once and after a drink and food while it rained again we set off to Stubb Mill. From the viewing platform overlooking Brendan's Marsh we added Greater Black-backed and Black Headed Gulls and Common Terns. A Hobby was spotted and from the Raptor Watch Point a young Common Crane obliged, then to cap it we had two adult cranes flying by.



Last Month's Club Mid-Week Walk

Felbrigg Park | 19th June



By Dave Billham

As I write this, sat in the late-June hot sunshine wearing t-shirt and shorts, it feels like summer has finally arrived; unfortunately the club's June Felbrigg walk fell on a day before this momentous event had reached Norfolk. Sunny intervals with a brisk, cool north wind met us as we arrived at the hall, not the best birding conditions in what is usually a quiet month anyway. It was, however, a lot better than the wetter and windier weather that we had been experiencing up till then. Nine members turned up for the morning's outing, including new member (but experienced birder) Roger Emmens, recently moved to Norfolk and attending his first club walk. With Carol away Phil Hall had been co-opted to replace her and ensure no-one got lost or left behind.

In his brief Trevor warned us that typically not much showed for the June walk, and normally there would be a greater than usual emphasis on insects and butterflies; unfortunately the day's cool wind and the recent lack of either meant we might be out of luck there too. Well, we would see! More importantly, however, there were two badges to be awarded; the first a proudly received Green Eco-badge (Inland) for Elizabeth Shadbolt, who had taken two years to achieve this, but as she told us, she only submits records if she has seen the bird well, and is absolutely and totally certain that it is what it is. Well done Elizabeth! The other was a Super-Green Eco-badge (Coastal) awarded to myself – which I have to report took a lot longer to achieve than Elizabeth's fine efforts.



In keeping with the predictions for June, the 'as we waited in the car park list' was smaller than normal, consisting of **Woodpigeon**, **Rook**, **Jackdaw**, and a lone **Herring Gull** over, bolstered by **Skylark**, **Greenfinch** and **Goldfinch** picked up by Roger on his way in. (As an aside, driving in we had noticed a Jackdaw standing on a sheep's head, an event that appeared to be perfectly normal as both bird and beast simply watched us drive past). Deciding to start the walk by visiting the new garden behind the house (officially called the West Garden) **Blackbird** and **Robin** were heard singing as we walked round to the back of the house, and **Blue Tit** and **Blackcap** were singing in the garden; the only bird we actually saw being a **Magpie**. The sign warning of many dangers was still affixed halfway down the garden (see the photo in last month's newsletter) so we went no further, returning back to the front of the house where a **Carriion Crow** was noted in the adjacent field.

The field leading towards the lake was quiet; only on sighting the lake itself did we see any new species, starting with a **Swift** spotted over the trees on the far side. We realised that there was also a **Swallow** flying lower down. A **Whitethroat** was found in the scrubby bushes, and a singing **Reed Bunting** was heard then seen, being joined by the song of a **Reed Warbler**. Despite waiting and watching in the hope of a sighting, it remained elusive. A single Red-eyed Damselfly was found on weed in the lake, a rather scrappy-looking individual but welcome nonetheless. On the water was a **Moorhen** and six **Mallard**, but no sign at all of the swans or their cygnets. They could not have flown off yet, but were nowhere to be seen.



A **Buzzard** was soaring high in the distance, and the song of **Chiffchaff** could be heard from the tops of the nearby trees. Reaching the dead tree at the junction of the lake and the field wall we found the **Kestrel** chicks still in their nest-hole, but looking very ready to leave – they took a great interest in us, equally as much as we took in

them! One of the adult birds could be seen hunting over the water meadows. One member noted that the distant **Swift** and **Swallow** had now been joined by a lone **House Martin**, which a few of us caught a glimpse of. This was the first time this species has been seen on a club walk day for at least three years. Leaving the **Kestrel** chicks in peace, we moved onto the dam wall, whilst also scanning the lake for insects; other than a rather lovely **Red Kite** soaring overhead all was very quiet.

At the end of the dam wall Trevor's plan was to turn right to follow the wooded path bordering the lake; Phil, however, had other ideas and accompanied by three others kept straight on as the rest of us paused to check the water for dragons and damsels. Dereliction of his duties indeed, and much calling was required to bring them to heel; Carol would have been appalled! Once on the wooded path John was looking for the nest of a **Great Spotted Woodpecker** he had found previously; although no birds were present we could hear an adult drumming further into the woods. **Chaffinch** and **Nuthatch** were both heard calling, and we managed to good views of a **Chiffchaff**, a species heard-only earlier in the walk. Along this path we also found **Azure Damselfly**, a **Common Blue** butterfly and an orchid species, probably common spotted. I may have missed recording one or two other species of butterfly, for which I can only apologise, though they were certainly scarce on the ground.

Crossing the beck we noticed a **Linnet** posing on a bush and were able to watch a **Sedge Warbler** flying to-and-fro amongst the reeds. **Jay** and **Pheasant** were both spotted flying, and as the lake receded into the distance one member noticed that there was now a single adult **Mute Swan** visible; they had obviously been hiding well when we were looking for them earlier. When at the top of the slope above the lake we heard and saw a singing **Greenfinch**, and as we neared the house at the end of the walk we finally managed to pick up a calling **Great Tit**, a species we had not come across in the previous two hours.

After a quick rundown on upcoming events the entire group retired to the café, where we joined the back of a long queue, which for quite some time did not get any shorter! Eventually we were all provisioned, and whilst enjoying the sun in the courtyard were able to add overflying **Stock Dove** to the list for a grand total of **35 species**; not one of our best results and the lowest total for June, equalled only by the count on the club walk in June 2019. However, everyone present had a good time, we did not get wet and there was time for plenty of chat and learning from each other during the quieter parts of the walk; another successful walk.

Wild About Mannington



A few of us rolled up to the **Wild About Mannington** day on 15th June with our friends from Felbeck Trust and fortunately managed to get our shelters up before the rain set in. Unfortunately we soon discovered that our shelters weren't as waterproof as we thought! There were a good number of stalls from local wildlife organisations plus walks (including from our Janice Darch), talks (Nick Acheson, Ajay Tegala and Patrick Barkham) and bird ringing (our John Swallow) but the weather was not in our favour and at times during the day there were more exhibitors than visitors. Still, we all enjoyed it and we did get quite a few visitors, and not all because we had a tent and it was raining! Dr Aldina Franco from UEA popped by – many of you will remember that great talk she gave us on Storks and she will hopefully return for another session soon. With the help of Felbeck Trust we were able to entertain some of the younger visitors for a while (thanks Vision!) and there were some great birds about. Highlights included Grasshopper Warbler, Spotted Flycatcher and Cuckoo. We recorded 44 species from our stand and a further 7 across the site on walks. *Obviously* we aren't in a competition but we think Wensum Valley Bird Society finished up with 49 so it was a close run thing! The low point came mid-afternoon when a visitor's dog, off the leash, ate the remains of the cake which Jane Williams had so kindly baked for the helpers! The entertainment was provided by a (nameless!) member trying to surreptitiously change wet clothes behind the display screens. Thanks to all the cake-less helpers and those members who popped by to say hello – great to see you!



Cromer Peregrine Project ...

Notes from the "We have one in our Garden" Watchpoint



NOTE: The webcam is now up and running and you can view it here: [Livestream Link](#). Pics below are either stills from it or photos from Jane

Episode Three – All About the Boy

By Jane Crossen

Visitor numbers to date (30th June): 12,037!

If we've heard "we have one in our garden" once referencing a Peregrine, we've heard it a million times.

Part of the role of the watchpoint team is to engage with visitors who aren't regular birders and if we can nudge folk in the right direction so they can begin to understand the differences between Sparrowhawk and Peregrine then we have had a good day. It doesn't always work though!

We've had lots of folded notes in the donation box but sadly some have been the locally circulating forgeries. Fortunately the bank are accepting them!

VNN (or 'Vinnie' as he is known to a few of us on the watchpoint) is, as of the beginning of July, doing really well. We have witnessed him chasing after and attempting to dive-bomb birds from various look-out positions around the church. Although, it is clear, he's not REALLY sure what he's doing or why he's doing it.

Vinnie' is quite capable of feeding himself these days. We've never seen him actually catch anything (it is still a bit early for that). Although on 23rd June we saw him shoot off and return very quickly with a small bird (not sure what it was but it didn't look like a juvenile Starling, which is a favourite of the birds at the moment as there are a lot of them about). It is quite possible that it was a food drop from an adult that was just out of view. But he wasted no time in plucking it and eating it.

When we first arrive at the watchpoint, we always look for the remains of the prey (pun intended) and on one occasion we found the body of a juvenile Starling. It didn't appear to have been injured at all but there were 'grab' marks on both sides of the body so we speculated that it could have been a near-miss or, rather, near-hit, by the juvenile. The adults certainly would not have failed in catching it.



That reminds me of one of the casual remarks from the watchpoint: "I'm just going to put this Collared Dove's head in the bin". Said in the same tone of voice as "I'm just going to make a cup of tea...."!



He is often on the south and east ledges and the north-east pinnacle and occasionally the east grotesque, in fact pretty much anywhere. Luckily for the folks on the watchpoint, he's not a big fan of the west side of the church! The east grotesque is a favourite spot for both adults too. If they think he can't see them there they are wrong – as he has been seen dive-bombing them to remind them to go get some food.

He also favours the water spouts which is where they often cache prey (or, the 'cache point' – pun intended). I love it when they sit there or on the grotesque, as the stone head looks like it's looking up and muttering "what the actual fly-past is THAT on my head?"

The number of visitors to the watchpoint is well up on last year already. That's amazing, as last year was a record year, and this year the weather has been truly appalling with the watchpoint having to close early and, on some days, we've not been able to open at all.



It's a happy coincidence that the layby right next to the watchpoint is a bus stop and coach drop-off point. We sometimes get school parties being dropped off and it's great talking to the youngsters. When I was talking to a young lad about the juvenile he looked puzzled and said "what's a juven-ile?" I explained and when he walked away he said "well, I've learned something today". Quite so.

The juvenile has been seen low on the nave roof a few times recently which gives us spectacular views at a close distance. On one occasion he flew about a foot over the watchpoint which was pretty awesome, especially as we had quite a few visitors at the time. We also had brief views of the adults low down which was special too, as that really is quite unusual.



A few more of my photos from this month. Just after he fledged – Vinnie low down on the church: slightly puzzled and not sure what he's supposed to do when something that is normally headless, not moving and being fed to him - is in full view with a head, moving about and wait a minute? He's supposed to catch it and feed HIMSELF?

One of the photos I show folk when they ask why we don't catch and ring the adults.....

And, finally, a nice shot of Vinnie proudly showing off his ID – and other things!



By Moss Taylor

This is the 6th in a monthly series this year of the wildlife at Weybourne Camp during 2024 ...

To say that June was a disappointment is an understatement, as there were very few birds of note and certainly no overshooting Mediterranean vagrants. A male Mute Swan that presumably landed in the overgrown field to the east of the mound on 29th was unable to take off but was rescued and taken to the scrape, where it remained for a couple of days. The westerly return passage of Teal commenced in the first week of June and by the end of the month the highest day-count had reached 68, while the so-far unexplained westerly movement of Common Scoters continued throughout June peaking at 220 on 18th. A pair of Grey Partridges re-appeared in late June and hopefully will stay and breed.

Swifts continued to move west throughout the month with a peak of 350 on 7th and an adult male Cuckoo was present around the mound and plantation from 6th to 23rd, before presumably commencing its journey south to Africa. Wader passage started to pick up with notable day-counts of 24 Ringed Plovers west on 8th and 59 Curlews west on 30th. Kittiwakes were recorded offshore on many dates with a maximum of 123 west on 2nd and the now annual mid-summer westerly passage of Mediterranean Gulls peaking at 51 on 28th. Black-headed Gulls also started to arrive from the Continent and Scandinavia with a day-count of 584 west on 30th. Seabirds were few and far between, despite some northerly winds, but a single Manx Shearwater on 8th and a Puffin on 24th were noteworthy.

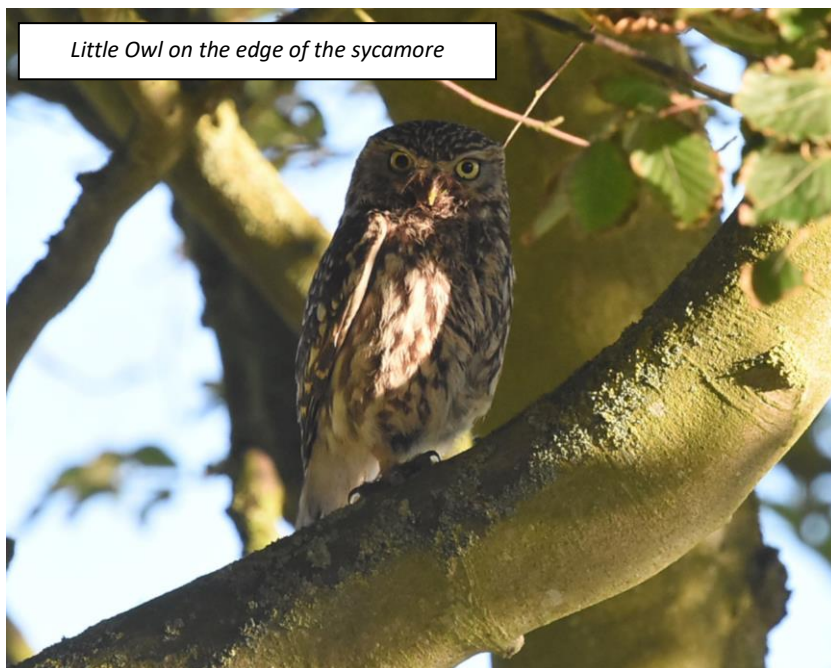
Little Egrets were regularly recorded in June with a record-equalling flock of nine flying west on 23rd. A single Little Owl re-appeared in the Muckleburgh Collection compound having apparently retaken possession of its nesting hole from the pair of Stock Doves. Up to 2 Hobbies were seen regularly over the Camp and 4-5 pairs of Stonechats nested, while an early Wheatear, probably a juvenile, was present on 24th.

Other fauna were represented by a healthy population of Brown Hares, a Polecat on 24th and four more additions to the annual tally of dragonflies: Four-spotted Chaser, Black-tailed Skimmer, Emperor and Common Blue Damselfly.

Personally I made very few visits to the Camp in June, due to other commitments, and the vast majority of the above sightings were made by Phil Borley, to whom I am most grateful.



Brown Hare, one of many on the Camp



Little Owl on the edge of the sycamore



Female Black-tailed Skimmer

By Andy Clarke

One of the more interesting recent developments in birding has been the use of artificial intelligence (AI) software to analyse bird sounds and images. For bird songs and calls there are two main products, which are [BirdNET](#) for computers and Merlin for mobile phones (though there is also BirdNet app). Both are hosted by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology in the USA, though the AI software development was a wider international effort.

AI is particularly good at recognising patterns, but it can only do this when it knows what it is looking for, so training the AI engine is critical. This is done by getting the software to examine many (often thousands) of examples of a particular song, so that it learns the characteristic features that distinguish that song from others. (For the technically minded, Merlin and BirdNet use similar deep neural network software but Merlin's algorithm is exclusively trained with data hosted by the Macaulay Library of sounds at Cornell, whereas BirdNET uses additional data sources.)

In UK, Merlin has become very popular; the key question is – can we rely on it?

At the moment, Merlin is a useful guide, but no more. This is best shown by a few examples. Over the past year or so I have been testing Merlin by using it to identify species where I know the identity of the bird, usually because I have seen it as well as heard it, and seeing what Merlin thinks the bird is (I have been doing the same with the plant identification app [PlantNet](#)). Merlin has actually got most things right, and I have been impressed by its ability to correctly identify subsong of Lesser Whitethroat and Blackcap (especially as the latter can sound very like Garden Warbler). However it has also got some things badly wrong:

It identified a common Chaffinch call as a Redstart

It failed to identify a slightly unusual Whitethroat song

It identified a single Tawny Owl call as a Knot

It struggles with non-bird sounds (for example Muntjac barking)

A particular difficulty comes with some newly arrived warblers in spring. In some species, young males returning to breed for the first time have incompletely developed songs, which can sound quite different from the mature song later in the season (I wrote about this in Blyth's Reed Warbler for the July 2020 Newsletter). One bird that has fooled many an unsuspecting birder (including me!) is Blackcap, where some early song can sound very like Marsh Warbler. So much so that many county recorders will not accept a spring record of Marsh Warbler based on song alone.

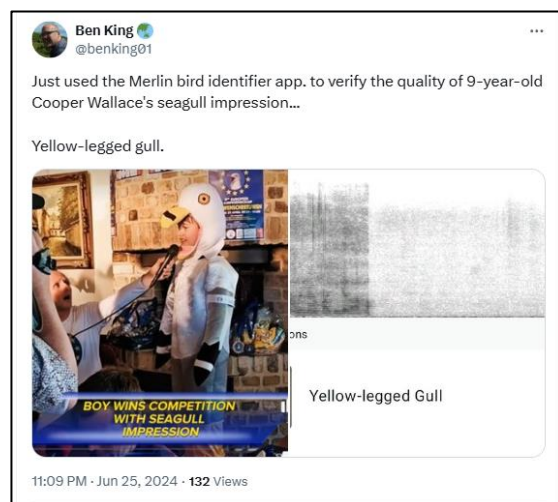
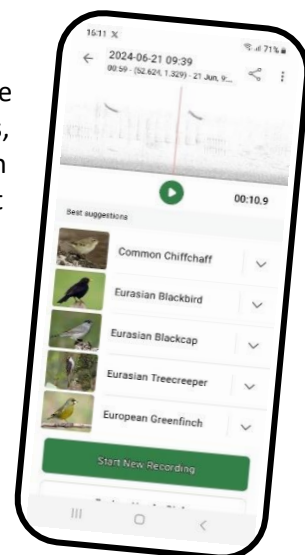
So at the moment, we cannot rely on Merlin as the sole means of identifying a bird. It provides a useful first guide, but no more. NENBC needs to move with the times, so we will be developing a club policy for handling birds identified solely by Merlin. In the meantime, if Merlin suggests you have found something interesting - go look for the bird to confirm the identification!

If you want to read a bit more, try:

[Merlin is Magical but it Still Makes Mistakes \(Audubon\)](#)

[5 Cautionary Tips to Document Birds ID'd by Merlin App \(Wisconsin Society for Ornithology\)](#)

[Identify the birds you see or hear with Merlin Bird ID \(Cornell Lab\)](#)



If you have a spare 15 minutes, this new video from Badgerland Birding on YouTube entitled **“We tried the futuristic binoculars that identify birds for you”** is an interesting view. Swarovski brought out some **new binoculars** recently which can identify the bird you are looking at for you as they have, amongst other developments, the Merlin technology built in.

Badgerland Birding have a [website](#) as well as a [YouTube channel](#). They were created by two brothers in the Wisconsin Birding Community named Ryan and Derek Sallmann. “We help people learn about birds and birding! If you enjoy birding, bird feeding, or nature in general, this is the channel for you! Join us on our birding adventures, learn how to ID birds, how to feed them, and learn about all sorts of birding gear.” Worth a look if you are planning a USA trip. Other channels available!



By Tony Forster

When I was younger that was the transition from spring to summer. Whilst it did finally happen it was more tortuous than usual with long periods of unseasonably wet and cold weather affecting both migration and early breeders.

Group membership remains steady at 57. There were 37 species reported in this period of which 10 were new for the group.

Barnacle Goose, **Short-eared Owl** and **Glossy Ibis** followed by a **Nightingale** at Kelling Heath car park which just like the Squacco Heron a few years ago was 100M outside the club boundaries. A brief sighting at Weybourne was followed by a long staying, singing male at the raptor watch point Swanton Novers.

Golden Oriole, an annual passage migrant but difficult to catch up with, spent a couple of days at Kelling Heath, personally I failed 7 times to either hear or see it!!!

Garden Warbler, **Willow Warbler** and **Grey Heron** were followed by a singing **Blyth's Reed Warbler** giving views for the patient and was around for most of the day.

Spotted Flycatcher completes the list of 10 new birds added to the group list this quarter.

Waxwing was reported on another group this month making me realise I'd not listed it so the actual group total now stands at 97.

Other notable species recorded in the area were Black Tern and an unfortunate ringed Storm Petrel fed to the Peregrine chick at Cromer church.

Merlin, good but not 100% trustworthy, gave me records of Marsh Warbler and Upland Sandpiper, perhaps worthy of another list... (see Andy's article on [page 19](#))

The group needs just 3 more records to achieve a Bronze badge so here's hoping...

Winter Gull Survey – can you help?



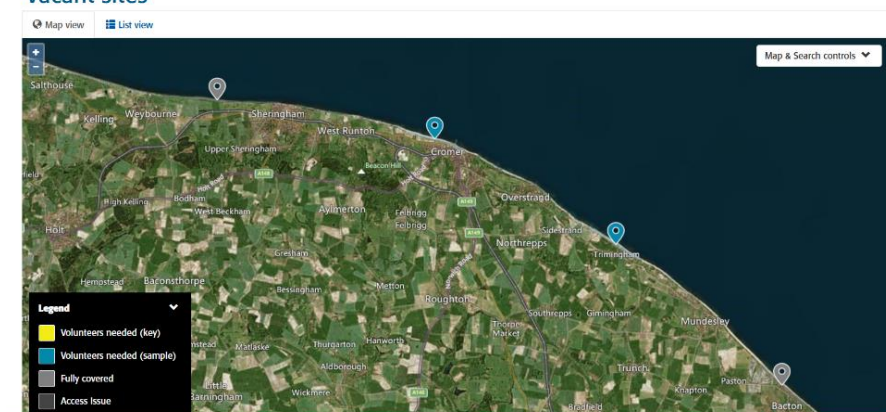
The Winter Gull Survey collects information about our wintering gull populations, through the coordinated effort of volunteer surveyors across the UK and is looking for additional volunteers to count gulls this autumn and winter.

The [Rare Bird Alert](#) website sums up the survey quite nicely: "The Winter Gull Survey (WinGS) is a long-running monitoring programme, which first took place in 1953. The project's overarching aim is to provide robust information on the numbers and distribution of wintering gulls, many of which appear on either the Birds of Conservation

Concern Red or Amber List. Now, for the first time, BTO is asking volunteers to count gulls in the autumn too as information on the whereabouts of gulls following the breeding season is limited. Some species will group in large concentrations in the autumn months, before dispersing to their wintering areas. Birdwatchers across the UK can help identify the locations of autumn aggregations and determine just how many gulls are taking advantage of each designated site. Along with the gulls that breed here in the summertime, and pass through in the autumn, thousands more head to the relatively mild UK in the winter months too, to escape the freezing conditions further north. BTO is keen to understand where the main areas of gull activity currently are, and identify those places where these seabirds now occur in much reduced numbers."

The upshot is that more volunteers are needed. There is more info [here](#) on what is required on the [BTO website](#). The map shown here is from the site and you can see there are still a couple of gaps in our area. Have a look at the criteria for volunteers and get in touch with the BTO if you can help. If you want a chat about it, our Janice Darch covers the area west of Sheringham and she would be happy to have a chat with you.

Vacant sites



By Julian Thomas



Wildlife Blindness is sadly a very common condition and in many cases sufferers are not even aware they have it. Wildlife Blindness comes in two forms. Either there is complete indifference to and lack of awareness of the natural world. This has to be the more severe form, and is particularly worrying when it affects politicians. Alternatively there can be an interest and a wish to engage with wildlife but sadly there is an inability to notice wild creatures even when they appear right under the nose. For these people wildlife is something you see on Springwatch, but not something you ever hope to see for yourself. I have noticed this particularly on cruises. A conversation on the last day of a cruise round Spitzbergen went like this ...

“It’s been a wonderful trip, but I wish I had seen a Puffin”

“Oh! Would you like to see a Puffin – look, there’s one there, and there’s another, and here is a flock of 5 flying past”

“Er, how many Puffins have you seen this week?”

“Around 5,000!”

Again on the last day of a trip to the Southern Ocean ...

“I know we saw the Wandering Albatross chick on its nest, but I would have loved to see one flying over the ocean”

“Ah! Well, your wish can be granted because here is one flying right by the boat”



Travelling to Floreana in the Galapagos Archipelago the marine life was fabulous. A pod of Orcas competed for attention with Common Dolphins and Bryde’s Whales, while below the surface the sight of giant Manta rays and Ocean Sunfish was breathtaking. At one extreme Waved Albatrosses cruised past in contrast to tiny Storm Petrels and Red-necked Phalaropes, with a supporting cast of petrels, shearwaters, Noddies and Swallowtailed and Lava Gulls. Unfortunately the only people enjoying this spectacle were Jane and myself. What the other 98 passengers on the ship were doing I cannot imagine. I believe for social media addicts FOMO means ‘fear of missing out’. This was FOMO big time!

Nearer to home an Osprey hovered over the sea pool at the end of the Salthouse Road. I pointed out the bird to a family there and said “Osprey”. They looked all round, not noticing the large raptor almost overhead, then commented “you often see Ospreys here”. Feeling slightly bemused I said “no, it’s quite a rare bird, and really special to see one”. The reply took me aback “Oh, is an Osprey a kind of bird? We thought you meant one of those helicopters”.

At Hickling a Swallowtail posed beautifully on a sprig of hawthorn. A young couple walked past, so I said “swallowtail here”, but they continued on their way. I tried again “no, it’s a swallowtail, one of the really special things we have here”. Again the reply took me aback “Oh, we can never see a bird when someone points it out to us”. Having explained that a swallowtail was in fact a butterfly they peered around, unable to see the insect 2 metres away. But finally it flew, and they were enchanted.

Having established wildlife blindness is a common condition which blights the lives of countless people is there a possible antidote? One wonderfully successful treatment is offered right in the middle of our recording area by ‘our’ Cromer Peregrines. Anyone who has volunteered at the watchpoint knows a typical interaction goes like this – firstly they stare up at the church, wondering what we are doing, then encouraged to look through the telescope there is usually a short delay while they get their eye in, then suddenly there is a ‘wow’ and you know they have seen the bird, then there is likely to be a flood of questions. Some of the comments are quite humbling “I’ve never seen one in real life, and this has made my holiday”. I believe that person’s wildlife blindness was well on the way to being cured!



We were delighted to be back working with the University of East Anglia's Environmental Science department again this year. This is where, along with other organisations, we pitch real-life environmental consultancy projects to a group of 3rd year students in the capacity of 'client' and we get selected by 'consultant' students in line with their areas of interest. Working on the briefs provided by us, they research and document their topic, feedback regularly via Zoom or in-person, and at the end of the process present us with an individual consultancy report. This time we worked with three students and jointly alongside Felbeck Trust with a fourth. Below is part of the brief for the first of these along with the Executive Summary from the student consultant and we'll have the remaining projects in the coming months. If you would like to be emailed the full consultancy reports for any of these projects then just let us know.

What's that gull eating my chips?

The rise of Caspian and Yellow-legged Gull in Norfolk

Until 25 years ago the large common gull species along the Norfolk coast was likely to be Herring Gull. A species with a close affinity with people - and their chips! Then the birds were split into two separate species: Herring Gull - in the north of Europe - and Yellow-legged Gull in the south. In 2007 the southern birds were further divided, west and east - the eastern population becoming Caspian Gull. This three-way split created renewed interest amongst birdwatchers in an otherwise much ignored bird. Separation of the three species can be an identification challenge but the more birders looked the more they found. This project will examine the occurrence of the two new species along the Norfolk coast, classify records by season and age, analysing any changes in distribution. Some individuals have been colour-ringed in their place of origin (particularly Caspian) - this data helping to assess the spread of these species across Europe. In the right conditions could either species successful breed in Norfolk - and if so are there any likely impacts on biodiversity?

The rise of Caspian and Yellow-legged gull in Norfolk by Charles Gunn

Disclaimer: This material is based upon work supported by **Charles Gunn** for ENV-6031B Environmental Consultancy module in the School of Environmental Sciences, UEA. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations are those of the author and do not reflect the views of the School of Environmental Sciences, UEA its employees or its administration.

Executive Summary

Project background and context

Historically the common large gull seen within Norfolk would be the Herring gull (*Larus argentatus*) however, with the BOU's acceptance of Caspian gull (*Larus cachinnans*) and Yellow-legged gull (*Larus michahellis*) as species, two new birds were up for grab on the British list, causing an increase in sightings. In the same period improvements in understanding their identification along with observer experience has also increased, so understanding European trends in necessary to put local patterns into context.

The aim of this project is to:

- Summarise trends of Caspian and Yellow-legged gulls across Europe, the UK and Norfolk
- Capture annual and seasonal patterns of these species in Norfolk,
- Explore the origin of Norfolk birds using ringing data,
- Cover the potential for colonisation of these species and the implications of this.

Methods

To understand European trends, I used several peer reviewed journals and data/maps from the EBCC's breeding bird atlas (using both volume 1 and 2 for changes over time). For summarising UK trends, I looked at data from the RBBP (breeding) and BTO (wintering). Norfolk data included most bird reports from 2000-2022 and NENBC data. I also used ringing data from Cley and the Cromer area to display the origin of our gull species. Graphs were created using RStudio and SPSS which also allowed stats tests.

Trends in European and UK Caspian and Yellow-legged gull populations

Human resources and activity have benefitted gull populations greatly due to their opportunistic behaviour, this along with climatic changes has led to them expanding their ranges across coastlines and further inland. Fisheries, litter and landfill sites provide foraging locations whilst many large gull species have made use of predator free roof tops as breeding sites. This has led to increases in both range and number of breeding birds for Yellow-legged gull (40.3%) and Caspian gull (83.8%). Caspian gull, migration patterns have differed leading to birds moving west and north, a trend seen by a couple of other eastern bird species, in this case its debated that this may be due to climatic changes. Yellow-legged gulls traditionally an island breeder

however, habitat suitability as declined at some locations, but the species has moved north and east along coastlines but have also moved inland to Poland. This has led to colonies of several large gull species across a few mainland countries leading to a hybrid swarm, which may pose issues in defining purity and understanding their population trends (Neubauer et al., 2006).

Rise of Caspian gulls in Norfolk

Since records began, we have seen a **significant increases in Caspian gull** records, Norfolk is traditionally important for **young birds**, which arrive in the late summer/early autumn, the region is also used by **passage and wintering birds** of all ages but mostly include young birds. Ringed birds are predictively from the mixed colonies in mainland Europe, with most birds coming from the Netherlands. Low numbers of adults are reported although all age groups are increasing therefore, colonisation may be likely.

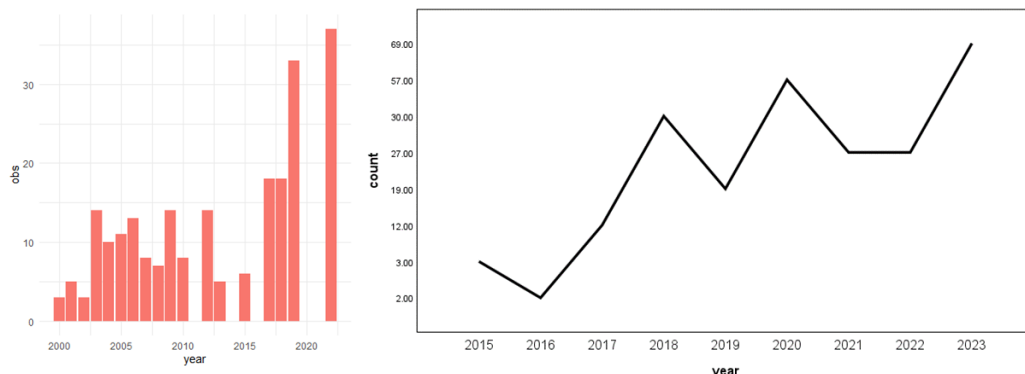


Figure.1 – Depicts the increase in observations of Caspian gull from the Norfolk bird report 2000-2022

Figure.2 – Depicts the increase in observations of Caspian gull from NENBC recording area between 2015 and 2023.

Rise of Yellow-legged gulls in Norfolk

Norfolk mainly hosts **post-breeding** Yellow-legged gulls in the summer however, perhaps **colonisation occur if climatic predictions are correct and gull suitability is maintained**. The **wintering population of Yellow-legged gulls has nearly halved since the early 2000 but recent records show numbers may be on the rise again**. At the NENBC area level, Yellow-legged gull records seem sporadic but increased significantly in the club's records over time.

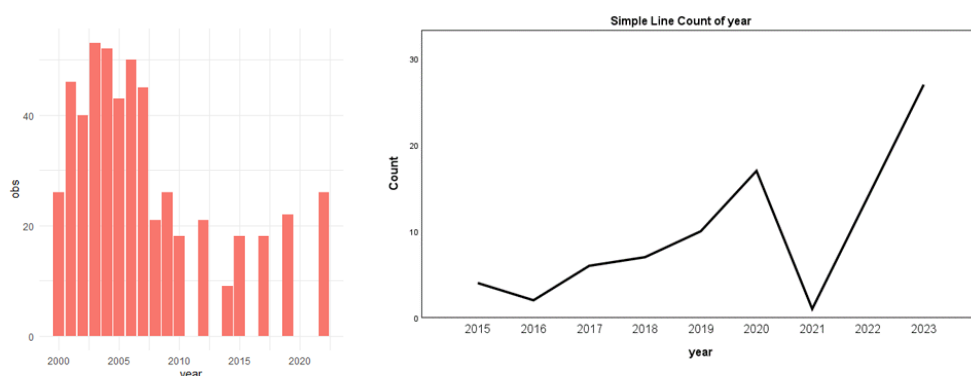


Figure.3 – Depicts the increase in observations of Yellow-legged gull from the Norfolk bird report.

Figure.4 – Depicts the increase in observations of Yellow-legged gull from NENBC recording area between 2015 and 2023.

Origins of Norfolk Caspian and Yellow-legged gulls

Recoveries of Yellow-legged gulls are low in Norfolk, comprising of a French rung individual with more modern records from Germany, ringed birds from central Europe have been on the rise in the past couple years. Since colonising the Netherlands, Dutch birds arrive as 1-2cy birds, other of the newly established colonies also have representatives in the Norfolk recoveries, recoveries from more distant colonies have been older birds.

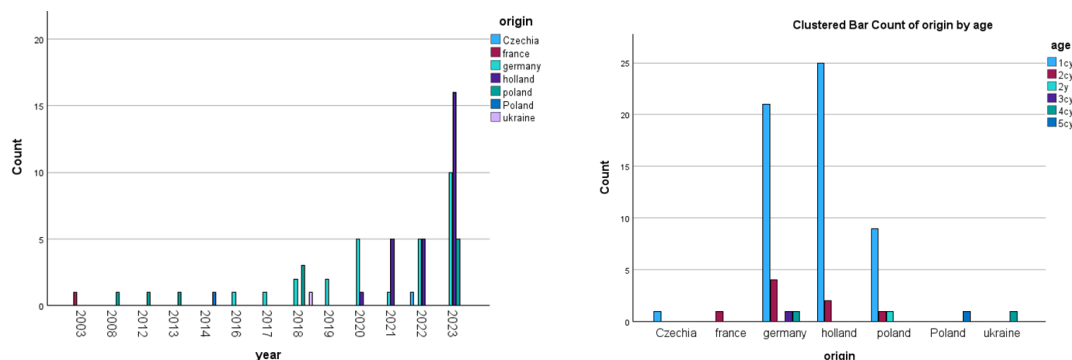


Figure.5 – Country of origin of ringed Caspian and Yellow-legged gulls

Figure.6 – Composition of colour ringed individuals

Colonisation and implications

Caspian gulls are likely to colonise inland gull sites on gravel pits whilst Yellow-legged gulls are likely to colonise coastal sites but could also appear in small inland colonies. All species of large white-headed gulls have similar diet and foraging behaviour to each other, these species are opportunistic and often greater differences are observed in individuals than between species. Both species said to have higher rates of aggression, and both breed earlier which could lead to displacement of herring gull whilst Yellow-legged gulls may have a significant predatory impact on passage birds (storm petrels) and breeding birds (little terns).

Recommendations

To keep up with changes in trends I would recommend keeping up with publications from British birds, BTO and the EBBC, along with any publications on the German, Dutch or Polish colonies as these would be most like how these birds may colonise the UK.

For a more detailed understanding of the topics a research project could easily be formed at a dissertation level, and this could be published. You could look at environmental factors in detail along with climate specifics and do greater levels of analysis on this, this could be used alongside mapping of wind direction over time (for assisting dispersal) and temperature. Due to the option for funding, you could then look at ringing data from EUring and use a larger data set (eBird, BirdTrack etc.). I think the most suitable advisor for this project would be Dr Aldina Franco.

Contemplating Conservation Saving Swifts in Our Communities



By Tracy Brighten

The breeding population of Common Swift in the UK decreased by an alarming 60% between 1995 and 2020 ([BTO/JNCC/RSPB BBS](#)) and Common Swift is now a [UK red-listed species](#). Swifts' airborne lifestyle and cavity nesting behaviour make them a difficult species to study across their annual cycle. Reasons for their decline are thought to be the loss of nesting sites, the decline in their insect prey, and poor summer weather.

Swifts have lived among us for generations, but they are left homeless when older buildings are renovated or demolished, factories and warehouses modernised, and social housing refurbished. To compound the problem, most modern buildings have closed eaves and airtight insulation, leaving no space for swifts. When nest sites are blocked temporarily by scaffolding or permanently after building work, site-faithful swifts may injure themselves, sometimes fatally, when repeatedly trying to reach their nest. A small colony of swifts can disappear from a town or village as swifts move on to seek nesting places elsewhere. *Photo: Eaves filler combs blocking access*



Finding long-term nest sites isn't the only challenge for swifts – parents must find enough food to raise their brood. Insect numbers have declined sharply due to habitat loss and widespread use of pesticides and insecticides on farmland, public green spaces, roadside verges and gardens. Insect availability is also affected by climate change with wetter summers and periods of colder and windy weather.

Research data for Swift show survival rates of adult swifts are largely stable, but there has been a decline in the survival rates of first-year birds and an increase in nesting failure rates. To better understand the drivers of Common Swift decline in the UK, a [BTO study \(2023\)](#) looked at the effects of weather and the availability of aphids, a key food source for swifts. Aphid biomass across southern and eastern England has declined, but researchers found no evidence for a link between total aphid biomass and nest failure or first-year survival rates.

Researchers did find, however, that increased rainfall is associated with a smaller brood size, higher levels of nest failure and lower first-year survival rates. This is thought to be due to decreased aphid activity in wetter weather and reduced foraging success by parents. The authors conclude that more research is needed to understand the impact of the decline in insects and nest sites here and how swifts are faring in Africa. In the meantime, they suggest conservation efforts in the UK should focus on providing safe nesting sites.

Swift Awareness Week, organised by Swifts Local Network, held recently and every year since 2018, is an opportunity for local swift groups through to nature organisations to raise awareness of swifts. At community events and via the media, Common Swift physiology, migration, and population decline are explained as well as what we can do to protect breeding colonies. Often working with local Wildlife Trusts and community groups, local swift groups support homeowners, churches, local councils and businesses to install nest boxes and nest bricks in private, public and commercial buildings. *Photo: Swift with a bolus of insects by David Grix*



'Saving Swifts' in Aylsham

Aylsham Swift Group was set up by group co-ordinator Pat Grocott and me two years ago to protect and create nesting places for swifts in Aylsham. With support from residents, businesses and town and district councils, we hope to make a difference for swifts by focusing on six areas:

1. **Existing nest sites** Locate and preserve existing cavity nest sites under pantiles and eaves or in gaps in stonework and brickwork. Offer advice on adapting fascia/soffit boards to provide access and not using bird combs, which block access to pantiles.
2. **New nest sites** Provide information and advice on external swift boxes, integral soffit boxes and universal nest bricks, which offer alternative nest sites, and swift call systems, which attract swifts to them. Nest boxes and bricks are successfully used by swifts on a variety of buildings.
3. **Insect habitat** Advocate for more natural habitats with insect-friendly plants and ponds, free from insecticides. Support and publicise public spaces where wildflowers and grasses are left to grow.
4. **Public awareness** Raise awareness of swifts and what we can do to support swifts breeding in the UK. Publicity channels include local magazines and newspapers, social media, nest surveys, talks, local community events, notice board posters, and leaflet drops in "swift streets".
5. **Local councils** Advocate for swift bricks and swift nest boxes as a condition of planning consent for new buildings, housing developments especially, and two-storey extensions. Comment on planning applications for properties where we believe swifts are nesting.
6. **Trade awareness** Raise awareness of nest protection and provision within building design, construction and repair/renovation industries, including trade suppliers. Plastic eaves filler combs, aka bird combs, and felt eaves trays block access to pantiles and are often fitted without property owners knowing.

Are Common Swifts nesting in your community?

If you have seen swifts flying low and fast over rooftops where you live, and you wonder where they nest and what you can do to help, nest surveys are a good place to start – see guidelines on right in case it's helpful. You can also see where swifts nest in your area by checking [Swift Mapper](#), a project by the RSPB, Action for Swifts, Natural Aptitude, Swift Conservation and Swifts Local Network.

Swifts are unobtrusive birds and super-fast too, which makes finding their cavity nest sites difficult. With this in mind, [a study in Germany investigated nest visit frequency in Common Swift \(2020\)](#) in order to improve the reliability and efficiency of monitoring nest sites at risk from building renovations. Geolocator light level data was repurposed to determine nest attendance and calculate the best weather, time of day and duration for surveys. Researchers found the daily number of visits was highest in early July during chick-rearing, and visits were more frequent in warmer weather and less so in wetter and windier weather. They recommended monitoring potential Common Swift nest sites in Central Europe from the last week in June until mid-July on days when the weather is warm, dry and calm. Optimum times were found to be between 0.50 hours and 7.75 hours after sunrise or from three hours before sunset until sunset. During these times, observation periods of half an hour to two hours gave a sighting probability above 90%.

AYLSHAM SWIFT SURVEY GUIDE

Frequency: Once a fortnight from May to mid-August, time permitting

Duration: 1 to 2 hours

Timing: 7.30 pm to 9.30 pm is a good time to see swifts in colonies, especially warm, dry, calm evenings an hour before dusk. Swifts may also be active around nest sites in the early morning (6.30 am to 9.30 am). Parents return to nests to feed chicks throughout the day, but as they amass food into a bolus in their throat pouch, they return much less frequently than songbirds.

Three waves of arrivals:

Late April/early May. Breeding birds reclaim their nest sites.

Late May. Second- and third-year non-breeding birds rejoin the colony and older birds look for a mate and nest site ready for next year.

Late June. First-year birds (fledged last summer) look for a colony to join. This is when screaming parties are most noticeable.

We are looking for screaming parties, bangers and nest sites!

Screamers. Low-flying swifts indicate a nesting colony nearby. Count the maximum number of swifts flying low and fast over rooftops (within 20 m) at any one time. Make a note of whether you can hear screaming or not. Do not count swifts flying higher as these birds are likely feeding and may not be part of the colony.

Bangers. 'Banging' is when a swift circles a roof and then makes an approach, knocking their wing on the gutter or tiles as they fly past. You might see them cling to a wall or nest box briefly then drop away. They may be practising their approach or checking for occupancy of a potential nest site, often provoking a screaming response from resident swifts!.

Nesters. *What to look for:* If you see one or two swifts break away from a screaming party, you may see them go to their nest site. Also look for lone swifts circling low over a rooftop or a small group circling a terrace of houses. After two or three loops, they approach their nest. The swifts I've seen swoop then rise to land on the gutter or roof before dipping under a raised tile. If you wait a few minutes, you may see them come out again, unless it's later in the evening when they turn in for the night. I have seen swifts enter nest sites as late as 9.30 pm to roost, but this gets earlier towards the end of summer. *Where to look:* I mostly noticed nest sites when I chose a spot and watched swifts in flight. The lowest row of pantiles is popular, especially tiles that sit higher near drainpipes, but some swifts went beneath raised tiles higher up the roof. Look for raised tiles near chimney stacks. Swifts also look for gaps under eaves, including holes in old soffit boards.

House sparrows. Sparrows are a sign that swifts may nest in these properties too. If you see a bird enter a nest site but cannot be sure it was a swift, please make a note: "swift or sparrow?" You might notice a bird dip under tiles, but if you missed it in flight and didn't see the bird clearly on the gutter, it may have been a sparrow!

Call and Response method. You might like to try the Call and Response method to locate active nests. When swift calls are played on a mobile phone for around five seconds near to potential nest sites, swifts on nests give a territorial response. Sheffield Swift Network provides [information](#).

Keeping records. In the Excel spreadsheet or Word document, record screaming parties, bangers and nest sites/potential nest sites with details including the street address, the location of the nest on the property, the date/time, and the weather.

Frequency of nest visits changes across the different stages of the breeding season – pre-breeding, incubation, chick-rearing, and post-breeding – and according to the weather, which affects foraging and insect availability. Based on video evidence, 8% to 16% of nest visits may not have been detected during the chick-rearing phase when visits may have been shorter than the two-minute geolocator interval. Nest visit frequency may also be affected by the number of nestlings, which was not considered explicitly in this study. Swifts amass a bolus of food to feed chicks and return to nests much less frequently than songbirds, so visits are easily missed by observers. *Photo: Swift entering nest under pantiles in Aylsham by David Grix*



The study also noted that swifts entering or leaving a cavity does not confirm an active nest. While non-breeders prospecting for a nest site for next year may enter a cavity, banging behaviour typically involves flying past and banging a gutter or tile or flying to an entrance hole and clinging briefly before dropping down. Non-breeders may roost in a potential nest site, however.

Aylsham Swift Group keeps a list of nest sites, so we can talk to property owners if scaffolding goes up. We also record data on Swift Mapper, which could be useful to local authority planning, ecologists carrying out surveys, architects designing new buildings, and even homeowners planning building work. For our first survey season last year, we looked at Swift Mapper to get an idea of which streets to include. This year, I am covering “swift streets” each week again, but a small group of volunteers are checking a street where they live once a fortnight. The more eyes the better to see these elusive birds! Swifts are the epitome of summer when they wheel over rooftops, their high-pitched screams audible even with my hearing loss. As screaming parties rush down narrow streets and past my head, I feel the draught of their wing beats and hear the thrill of their screams. If you follow their flight path (oh, to have the head rotation of an owl!), you might be lucky to see a swift dip under a tile. Such joy, and another one for Swift Mapper!

Providing new nest sites for swifts

Do nest boxes work for swifts? Anecdotal evidence across the UK says they do, especially when swift calls are played to attract new breeders to the boxes. There is scientific evidence too. Research in Germany on the occupancy of nest boxes by Common Swift after buildings were renovated shows 24.3% of the 477 boxes were occupied. On most buildings, based on the estimated cavity nesting sites prior to renovation, the number of occupied boxes was at least as high.



Swifts will occupy boxes with a front entrance or bottom entrance, although the flight path may dictate which type is most suitable. Front entrances are best where the drop is less than the recommended four to five metres as it gives nestlings the opportunity to survey the area before fledging. A variety of external nest boxes made from wood are available from Peak Boxes, including corner boxes, apex boxes and multiple units. Impeckable Nest Boxes offer a durable box up to five degrees cooler inside than out, and an extra cooling system for hotter climates. Likewise, Action for Swifts uPVC boxes provide thermal stability and durability.

Save Our Suffolk Swifts are East Anglia’s nest box champions, having undertaken many large-scale projects, including church bell towers. Church belfries are ideal in terms of height for easy access, proximity of other nesting swifts with multiple nest boxes, weather protection, and long-term security. In May 2023, thirty self-contained best boxes were installed at Aylsham Parish Church, a collaboration between the Church, Caroline Spinks of Norwich Swift Network, Pat Grocott of Aylsham Swift Group, local cabinet maker Carey Whiteman, and builder’s merchant C. T. Baker.



Universal nest bricks provide nesting spaces for swifts that last the lifetime of a building and are not easily removed when properties change hands. Action for Swifts’ universal ‘S’ brick is a self-contained box that fits in the cavity and needs no cleaning or maintenance. A choice of standard nest bricks is available to suit brick and render exteriors; bricks can also be custom made to match an external finish and cavity depth. Three properties in Aylsham have had nest bricks retrofitted, two this year. The first property (in a “swift street”) now has four out of five nest bricks occupied by swifts! An integrated soffit box is another discreet nesting space easily fitted with new fascia and soffit boards, or retrofitted when repairs are carried out.

Every new nest site for swifts could be a lifeline, whether it’s a box or two on an individual house or a suite of boxes on a public or commercial building. Let’s do it! *Photos: Swift chicks in a nest brick by Amanda Miller, Aylsham Parish Church nest boxes by Tracy Brighten and overleaf Swift leaving nest under pantiles in Aylsham by David Grix*



IDEAL LOCATION FOR A SWIFT NEST BRICK OR NEST BOX

- At least 4 m off the ground, not above outward opening windows
- A clear swoop zone so adults can enter and exit at speed and chicks can fledge safely
- Avoid south-facing walls for external boxes unless shaded by eaves or overhang
- Fit flat-roof boxes snug to soffits to prevent predators from perching
- Fit two nest bricks or boxes if possible; swifts like to nest near other swifts!

It's amazing what you see when you really look!

By Val Stubbs

In mid-June, I finally caught up with the first episode of this year's Springwatch. This featured Swifts nesting under roof tiles in Corfe. It may sound strange, but I had never really considered where or how Swifts nest apart from swift boxes. I was absolutely fascinated by the footage.

The next day, I walked down to the beach in Weybourne and watched the Swifts swooping and screaming over the Village Hall, with a smile on my face - such stunning birds. On the return leg, I stopped for a while to see whether any were using the nest boxes the Parish Council had put up last year as part of our wildlife garden project - but alas no. I continued my walk up Beach Lane, and noticed that some of the Swifts were flying very low over Hoxne House. When I paused to look, I realised that they were in fact flying under the tiles - just like on the telly! One even landed briefly on the roof. It's amazing that I have never noticed this behaviour before - but I clearly never looked properly!

Check This Out!

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



- ✎ [Corncrakes hold territory on Bardsey - BirdGuides](#) [07-Jun]
- ✎ [Initiative to create one of Britain's biggest reedbeds passes halfway point - BirdGuides](#) [12-Jun]
- ✎ [More cuckoos tagged as birds start migrating south - BirdGuides](#) [14-Jun]
- ✎ ['Long time' before Sussex White Storks 'properly established' - BirdGuides](#) [18-Jun]
- ✎ [High water levels wreak havoc at Ouse Washes - BirdGuides](#) [19-Jun]
- ✎ [England's largest rainforest becomes protected reserve - BirdGuides](#) [24-Jun]
- ✎ [Eastern Red-rumped Swallow set to be added to British list - BirdGuides](#) [26-Jun]
- ✎ [Public asked to help understand Blackbird decline - BirdGuides](#) [27-Jun]
- ✎ [European Turtle Dove increases dramatically following hunting ban - BirdGuides](#) [02-Jul]
- ✎ [Comprehensive list of birds not seen in last decade released @RareBirdAlertUK](#) [18-Jun] and link to list: [Explore](#) | [Search for Lost Birds](#)



Take a look at this vegan birthday cake made by club member Vision Stubbs for mum Val recently. The birds they made are ones Val would very much like to see again in the NENBC area.

- 🐦 [Reintroduced Bearded Vulture killed by wind turbine collision in Spain @RareBirdAlertUK \[25-Jun\]](#)
- 🐦 [Wild birds 'remember' where and when they find food - BBC News \[04-Jul\]](#)
- 🐦 [Stop using birds for gender reveals, charity says - BBC News \[05-Jun\]](#)
- 🐦 [Fake nests used in Cairngorms capercaillie project - BBC News \[20-Jun\]](#)
- 🐦 [Starlings found to expend 25% less energy in follower position compared to flying solo \(phys.org\) \[18-Jun\]](#)
- 🐦 [All About Bird Anatomy - The Cornell Lab of Ornithology \(allaboutbirds.org\)](#) an interactive learning tool to help you learn the terminology and identification of bird anatomy.
- 🐦 [What Is the Essence of Iridescence? Ask a Hummingbird - The Cornell Lab of Ornithology \(allaboutbirds.org\)](#) How do hummingbird feathers manage to be so brilliant? [28-Jun-23]



Our friends at local wildlife conservation charity **Felbeck Trust** attended the Norfolk Biodiversity Awards last month having been nominated in two categories.

They came double runner-up in the **Spaces for Nature** category for West Beckham and The Sustead Cluster. This award “celebrates spaces within communities for nature and people, whether large or small. This might be enhancing existing spaces or creating new ones. Action at a local level, by local people is vital to ensure a brighter future for biodiversity.”

In the hotly contested **Group Award** category, they scooped up the main prize! This award “recognises the achievements of groups working on biodiversity projects in their local community. Local groups inspire people to recognise and care for their local biodiversity and bring people together to work with a common purpose, [with] achievements for the group, as well as for wildlife and habitat.”

Trevor Williams, Chair of Trustees, said “Not a bad outing for Felbeck Trust – validation of all the good work our volunteers do and the beneficial impacts they have on biodiversity – well done everyone involved.”

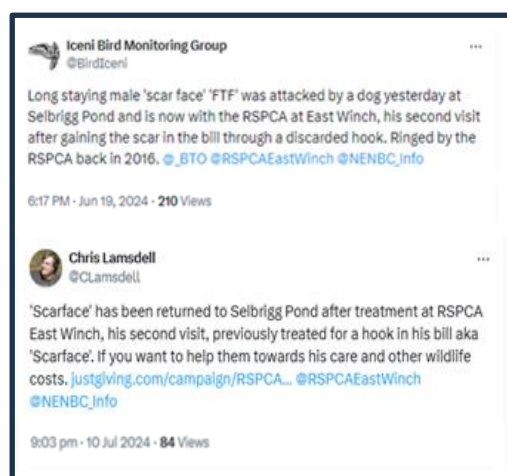
If you are interested in a bit of practical volunteering, they have regular and frequent work parties attended by many NENBC members so do just get in touch.



- 🐦 [Reduction of coastal lighting decreases seabird strandings | PLOS ONE](#) Burt TV, Collins SM, Green S, Doiron PB, Wilhelm SI, Montevecchi WA (2024) [05-Jun]

- 🐦 [Why Do Birds Incubate Rocks? | Audubon \[14-Mar\]](#)

- 🐦 This is a lovely new YouTube site that is worth a look with animated episodes on recognising birds by a chap called Will Rose. Have a look at this one and then some of the others that are being uploaded [WHAT BIRD IS THAT? EPISODE 04 SWIFT, SWALLOW, HOUSE MARTIN - HOW TO SPOT THE DIFFERENCE \(youtube.com\)](#)





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!

Canada Goose: "1 flew north out over sea until lost to view. 34 on sea, then flew west" | Phil Borley | Weybourne Camp | 8th |

Mute Swan: "Adult in field near scrape, trying to get over fence. No obvious injury, possibly unable to get run up to take off due to tall vegetation. Wandered off out of view." | Phil Borley | Weybourne Camp | 29th |

Swift: "A screaming party around our house on Chapel Road, we have one nest under the eaves and maybe two, waiting for fledging now although that is easily missed!" | Stella Baylis | Southrepps Common | 29th |

Turtle Dove: "countersinging adjacent to Holway Road with a further crooner outwith the Club area." | Chris Mason | Kelling Heath | 1st |

Turtle Dove: "3x Calling from various directions, then they came together, circled and flew off west together." | Andrew Crossley | Kelling Heath | 4th |

Oystercatcher: "Very vocal bird, on weedy ground next to Waitrose, inside fence, maybe a breeding site although I only saw one bird" | Stella Baylis | North Walsham | 13th |

Oystercatcher: "Around the pond at Hillside Shire Horse Sanctuary. They lost their chick a few weeks ago (predated?), but look to be trying to nest again." | Ellie Farrow | West Runton | 17th |

Curlew: "An uncommon sighting here, one flew over east, calling" | Stella Baylis | Southrepps Common | 26th |

Herring Gull: "88x Looks like a good breeding season on the industrial building at the back of Waitrose, 48 adults, 40 juveniles on both sides of the roof. I couldn't count the nests as I got moved on by a security guard!" | Stella Bayliss | North Walsham | 21st |

Lesser Black-backed Gull: "A rare sighting here of perched Lesser Black-backed Gulls on a telegraph pole and wires, the long rays of the evening sun really picking out the yellow legs, turning them golden. Stunning!" | Stella Baylis | Southrepps Common | 17th |

Gannet: "19x east (7 west), including group of 3 speed-checked from Weybourne - during 1 hour sea-watch" | Trevor Williams | Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs | 11th |

Grey Heron: "one successfully fishing from sea, no waves, flat sea, so able to stand in shallow water. One west." | Phil Borley | Weybourne Camp | 24th |

Sparrowhawk: "Juvenile sitting in apple tree plucking one of my baby Blue Tits!" | Val Stubbs | Weybourne | 24th |

Red Kite: "Special moment as we approached the Weybourne village sign heading east. A Red Kite was feeding on roadkill just yards in front of us. A beautiful sight to watch as it flew off." | Julia & David Ivison | Weybourne Camp | 3rd |

Kestrel: "Visiting garden for several days, seen perching on top of feeder pole. Today seen bathing in garden pond." | Ken Thornton | Lower Gresham | 30th |

Magpie: "Feeding on suet block, despite the cage that we installed to keep the Jackdaws off - it obviously has a longer bill!" | Val Stubbs | Weybourne | 8th |

Sand Martin: "Was so lucky. The young must have, literally, just fledged as there was a large number of both adults and young. Couldn't even guestimate (if I had to I'd say 40+). A lot of the time they were just sitting on the fence and one or two young were being fed. Lovely experience. It's what birding is all about for me." | Jane Crossen | West Runton | 25th |

Reed Warbler: "in Boathouse Bay - odd sub-song heard" | Trevor Williams | Felbrigg Park & Lake | 9th |

Treecreeper: "On tree (surprise-surprise!) by Hall - Wild about Mannington" | Val Stubbs | Mannington Hall Park | 15th |

Blackbird: "A Sparrowhawk had a go at a Blackbird before landing in a willow., but it was driven off by another Blackbird which came in from below. The Sparrowhawk then chased a Buzzard along Pine Walk, which set all the Blackbirds off alarm calling" | Val Stubbs | Weybourne | 25th |





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.](#)

"Usual flight call is rough 'treep'. Display song on breeding grounds is piping trill."
from RSPB Handbook of British Birds by Peter Holden and Tim Cleeves

"Call thini, scratchy / 'reedy', vibrant 'treee'. Song, often from spring flocks, develops into vibrant 'referee's whistle', which runs down – 'shrree-ruee-ruee-we-we-we-wee wee'."
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

"Flight-call a buzzing or harshly rolling 'chrreet'. Conversational calls from flocks short, rippling 'plip-ip-ip'. In display-flight, utters ascending, strained 'rrüee-rrüee-rrüee ...', which turns into a hard, descending, slightly slowing trill, 'rürrüürüürü-rü-ru-ru ru ru'."
from Collins BIRD GUIDE 3rd Edition by Mullaney, Svensson, Zetterström

Wordsearch

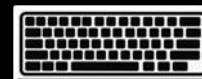


This month, we have the 21 species or races recorded in July 2023 for which we have just one or two records for each – you never know what might crop up on your walks at this time of year so keep your eyes peeled! For the purposes of this puzzle, ignore any hyphens, apostrophes, brackets and spaces. Solution is [at the end of this newsletter.](#)

Balearic Shearwater
Black Redstart
Dartford Warbler
Egyptian Goose
Eider
Goshawk
Pomarine Skua
Raven
Ruff
Shag
Snipe
Spotted Redshank
Avocet
Black-winged Kite
Common Crossbill
Green Sandpiper
Grey Plover
Honey-buzzard
Spotted Flycatcher
Water Rail
Willow Warbler

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





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 [24th Nov 23]. The British Birds Rarities Committee also have a '**BBRC work in progress**' file available on their website [11th Mar 24].

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

NENBC Website



A huge thanks to the **118** of you who have uploaded records to our new website this year to date covering **50,931** records. It is very much appreciated by us and the bodies we send the data on to for inclusion in the county reports.

Most recorded species for June remained Blackbird for the 4th month running. At the other end of the spectrum, we had single records of the following species: Barnacle Goose, Crane, Fieldfare, Puffin, Turnstone, Wheatear, Wigeon, Yellow Wagtail. The location with the most records overall was Weybourne Camp (781) followed by Weybourne, Beeston Common, Kelling Heath, Bodham and Sheringham. Phil Borley posted the highest number of records last month (1,332), followed by Mark Clements, Philip Cartlidge, Val Stubbs and Doug & Jenny Cullern. We are a bit down on record numbers this year, so if you get the time we'd love to see you adding more of your sightings.

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. We don't have much being posted at the mo but here are a few from the last month ...



The Club Website



There has been a new development on the website since the last newsletter and more on the way so watch this space.

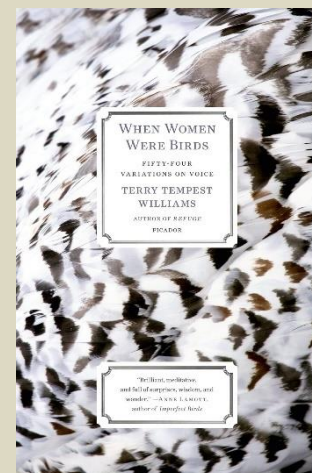
Adding Club Documents

We now have the ability to add documents to the website under the new area we let you know about last month - 'News'. This is where we will be putting copies of the newsletters from now on as well as being emailed, and we will backdate these to include all the 2024 issues.



Thank you to Anne Sims who sent this quote from Terry Tempest Williams in to us this month ...

Terry Tempest Williams (born 8 September 1955), is an American writer, educator, conservationist, and activist. Williams' writing is rooted in the American West and has been significantly influenced by the arid landscape of Utah. Her work focuses on social and environmental justice ranging from issues of ecology and the protection of public lands and wildness, to women's health, to exploring humanity's relationship to culture and nature. She writes in the genre of creative nonfiction and the lyrical essay. This is from her book "When Women Were Birds: Fifty-four Variations on Voice"



“Once upon a time, when women were birds, there was the simple understanding that to sing at dawn, and to sing at dusk, was to heal the world through joy. The birds still remember what we have forgotten, that the world is meant to be celebrated.”

Photo of Wren courtesy of Mark Clements



The bird voice variously described was that of a [Dunlin](#) ([Calidris alpina](#)). 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: Dunlin](#) page. Taking a look at the BTO Bird ID Video series, as well as the we referred to on page 8, [Identifying Knot and Dunlin](#), there is also another comparative one featuring Dunlin: [Identifying Sanderling and Curlew Sandpiper](#) Photos from Mark Clements, Richard Farrow, Moss Taylor, Trevor Williams and Moss Taylor

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

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



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