



The Pied Flyer

North East Norfolk Bird Club



April 2025 – Issue 118

The NENBC Monthly e-Newsletter

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Through a Lens



By Nigel Redman

As regular readers of my columns must be aware by now, I do like to air my views on certain topics such as taxonomy and English names of birds. If you thought that I had exhausted all my grievances, you were wrong! As a former editor with an eye for detail, I have a particular dislike of what I call 'Lower Case Lunacy'. Few things upset me more than when a bird name is spelt with lower case initial letters, thus, great tit instead of Great Tit. Maybe this doesn't bother most people, but it certainly irritates me big time. Why do this? What is the point of using lower case letters? It doesn't look better, it's more confusing, and it's plain wrong in my view.

It has long been customary in the ornithological literature to use initial capitals for English bird names, for all parts of the name unless after a hyphen of course. So, Greater White-fronted Goose, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker etc. Then, maybe about 30 years ago, the RSPB started to use lower case letters in its publications. The Wildlife Trusts also use lower case letters (I'm not sure when they started or who started first), and also the mainstream press (newspapers, non-birding magazines etc). It's a creeping disease. Thankfully, most scientific publications and bird clubs don't follow this practice (except in New Zealand), so why does the 'popular press' think it's so much better?

When a *British Birds* reader challenged the RSPB about this a few years ago, two of the arguments given for using lower case for bird names were that it's "more modern and less intrusive". More modern when? If it was more modern 30 years ago, it certainly isn't now. And 'less intrusive'? They went on to claim that capitals interrupt your flow of reading. But that is precisely why I like them! I want the bird names to stand out. I want to be able to scan a piece of text and pick out the bird names, to see if it contains something about a particular species. My eye doesn't stop at a capital letter; I keep reading. The capital simply signifies a proper name. Of course, the RSPB's use

of lower case is not consistent anyway, as undisputed proper names of people and places are still capitalised, such as Iceland gull and Ross's gull (but not the 'g' in gull).

The main reason for *not* using lower case is that it can be downright confusing. If you read something about a little gull, is it about some kind of small gull or a Little Gull? And what about an elegant tern or an aquatic warbler? Most terns are elegant, but an aquatic warbler? That could really confuse someone who did not know that Aquatic Warbler was a particular species (which doesn't swim!). And what about green warbler and greenish warbler? There could be all sorts of confusion with these. You have to be so careful in structuring a sentence if you use lower case letters. I have been reading Tim Birkhead's new book about the Great Auk (or should I say about the great auk?). In one passage he was describing the terrible slaughter of auks on Funk Island, off Newfoundland in Canada. Several species of auks bred on Funk Island (and still do, except for the Great Auk), and there are accounts of the sailors enjoying a 'great auk feast'. So, was that a feast of only Great Auks, or was it a great feast of many auks of several species? There are so many potential pitfalls and confusions. As Ken Douglas wrote in a letter to *British Birds*, 'Why should editors have to fiddle about with sentence construction just to serve the god of lower case?' If capitals are used, these problems disappear.

But, surely, the best argument is that bird names are proper nouns. The *Oxford English Grammar* states: 'Proper nouns name specific people, animals etc. They have a unique reference and in writing they begin with a capital letter.' Birds are animals and they have a 'unique reference'. Each species has a unique set of characters, and this entitles them to equal status with people and places. Bird names *are* proper nouns. It is high time that the RSPB, the Wildlife Trusts and the various other culprits recognised this. Down with Lower Case Lunacy!

A Note from the Editor



By Carol Thornton

Hi folks. Welcome to our April issue. Lots going on this spring and summer so make sure you check the website for all our events at which we would love to see you! Thanks to those who have rolled up to our new initiative, our Pop-Up Coordinated Seawatches- not the best of weather for them so far but we all learnt something and enjoyed it! The annual Big Sit is next month and don't forget the conference in June and the social the night before!

We need to do things a little different next month as we won't be able to get the newsletter out at a reasonable time to promote the activities of the month so our cunning plan is that at the beginning of May we will email you all with a list of events plus the Monthly Bird Report for April. Events are listed in full on the website and you should look here for any announcements. The newsletter will eventually follow at the tail end of the month.

Due to other commitments I am going to be a bit light on articles and time constrained for the upcoming May and June newsletters so if anyone fancies putting 'fingers to keyboard' (or even 'pen to paper') and writing something bird-related, I would be very much obliged! Short or long, expert or novice, with photos or without, whatever suits. Any subject is great but if you want a bit of a steer, what about your favourite bird, a fab birding experience, a book review, some poetry or an article with a conservation theme? Examples in this issue! Many thanks to those who have already answered the call!

Last month's **Through a Lens** subject for the front page was **BIRDS IN FLIGHT** and our cover images this time are 1st row Kestrels and Skylark (Richard Farrow), 2nd row Red Kite (Richard Farrow), Herring Gull, Buzzard, Marsh Harrier, (Mark Clements) Barn Owl (Trevor Williams). Thanks all! The **theme for this month is birds exhibiting breeding behaviour**. So have a think about singing, collecting nesting material, nest building, maybe even juveniles!

Below is my pick from March of some great photos from our website of the more common birds that don't always make it to the Monthly Bird Highlights section: Kestrel (Jane Crossen), Dartford Warbler (Richard Farrow), Long-tailed Tit (Francis Farrow), Turnstone (Ellie Farrow), Carrion Crow (Dave Billham), Skylark (Mark Clements). Thanks all of you.





By Paul Laurie

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

≈ 9,200 individual records covering 147 bird species were added in March

March 2025: Fine weather reduced the species and numbers of wintering birds as the month progressed; though birding in the sunshine, March 2025 was one of the driest and sunniest for many years, ensured locally common species were turning their efforts to the breeding season.

During the month NENBC recorded 147 species compared to March 2024 when 155 species were seen. Best birds included a single observer Glaucous Gull, a 1st year Caspian Gull, Jack Snipe, Short-eared Owl, migrating Spoonbills and once again the Mundesley Hooded Crow. The last week of the month saw records of House Martin, Swallow, Ring Ouzel and an early Tree Pipit. Eighty-eight recorders logged 9,192 records during the month compared with 9,961 records in March 2024.

Barnacle Goose On the 1st, 21 flew east and 2 west off Weybourne with the 2 westerly birds also seen at Cromer East Cliffs. On the 7th a single flew over Cromer town heading out to sea. The last report of the month featured a single west off Weybourne Camp on the 29th.

Whooper Swan An impressive group of up to forty birds were settled on the sea off Weybourne Camp on the 6th. The largest group recorded in the club area in recent years was a flock of 80 birds seen flying north over North Walsham on the 25th of February 2019.

Mandarin The female seen at Gimingham in January and February was still present in March, seen on both the 8th and 9th. On the 14th a pair were on a large pond at Saxlingham and what may have been the drake of this pair flew over Gunthorpe village on the 20th. *Photo 1 courtesy of Paul Laurie*

Long-tailed Duck The two wintering drakes remained offshore from Weybourne, seen on many dates from the 1st until the 30th. *Photo 2 courtesy of Tony Pope*

Goosander All coastal sightings this month; one west Weybourne Camp on the 6th, a drake east at Sheringham on the 14th and the last, a bird east at Weybourne Camp on the 22nd.

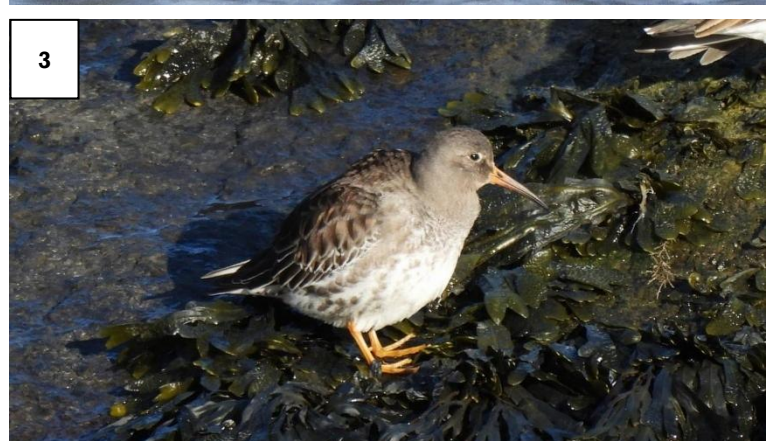
Avocet The first of the year were two birds west at Weybourne on the 6th. On the night of the 19th a bird was recorded (nocmig) calling over Sheringham and the last record was one west at Weybourne Camp on the 22nd. Typical March records.

Bar-tailed Godwit A single flew west on the 26th passing Cromer East Cliffs.

Ruff Singles west on the 29th and 30th off Weybourne Hope were the only reported birds.

Purple Sandpiper West Runton beach held one bird on the 1st and one on the 23rd. Between the 4th and 23rd 1–2 birds were recorded on the usual spots at Sheringham. *Photo 3 courtesy of Mark Clements*

Jack Snipe The two wintering birds were reported again with one at the western end of Thornage



Common, Brinton on the 19th and an individual again at Felbrigg Park reported only on the 20th. At Weybourne Camp, likely migrants were present late in the month with a single bird from the 26th to the 29th and then two birds on the 31st. A single was also well found at Baconsthorpe on the 29th. *Photo 4 courtesy of Paul Laurie*



Green Sandpiper Two continued to winter in the Sharrington/Saxlingham area favouring the quickly drying pig fields all month. Singles were also seen at Barningham Hall Lake on the 14th, which had been present in February. A bird was nocmig recorded over Sheringham on the 19th and birds were seen at Walcott on the 22nd and Gresham on the 24th.

Little Gull One occurrence of an adult feeding on the sea off Weybourne Camp before moving east on the 18th.

Glaucous Gull An unaged bird was reported from Happisburgh on the 12th day of the month.

Caspian Gull One record of a first-year bird on the 10th settled on the field south of Beeston Bump.

Red-throated Diver On the 11th an impressive easterly movement with 601 seen at Sheringham and 412 at Cromer East Cliffs.

Great Northern Diver Reports from Happisburgh on the 11th and Sheringham on the 12th.

Spoonbill Birds moving west offshore began with a single at Weybourne on the 6th, then one on the 25th was seen at Cromer and Weybourne, two passed Beeston Bump on the 27th and the last on the 29th seen from Weybourne Camp. *Photo 5 courtesy of Mark Clements*



Cattle Egret The bird that frequented the pastures around Brinton and Thornage in late February was still present at Brinton Hall Lake early in March and was last reported on the 8th.



Great Egret On the 1st two landed in trees at Weybourne Camp before moving west. A bird moved west at Beeston Bump on 20th and was later seen at Weybourne Camp. *Photo 6 courtesy of Mark Clements*

Goshawk An expected increase in sighting this month with many observers noting display behaviour at several sites. Swanton held up to five birds all month and birds were reported from Letheringsett, Selbrigg Pond, Kelling Heath, Thornage, Saxlingham, Holt Country Park, Hempstead and Weybourne Camp.

Hen Harrier Three records of “ring-tail” birds; Dilham Canal on the 10th, Thornage on the 16th and Weybourne on the 23rd.

Long-eared Owl A bird present from at least the 12th of March until the month’s end on Thwaite Common, where it was watched hunting the meadows at dusk. Much more on this next time!

Short-eared Owl On the 3rd a bird was seen by several observers on Kelling Heath. On the 25th a bird flew west along Weybourne Cliffs.

Merlin One record of a perched bird at Thornage on the 1st.

Hooded Crow The Mundesley bird was seen on nine dates between the 5th and the 31st also making a trip to Paston on the 18th.



Raven Eight sites recorded single birds between the 2nd and 25th including records from Kelling Heath, Gresham and Beeston Common. *Photo 7 courtesy of Mark Clements*

Marsh Tit A welcome increase in sightings during March after a poor February for this species. Recorded at twelve locations with reports of one or two pairs and often with males in song.

Woodlark Away from this species stronghold there were a spell of coastal records; one seen by three observers at Beeston Bump/Common on the 2nd, a bird flew east at West Runton on the 7th as did two birds on the 22nd. Beeston Bump recorded another bird west on the 25th. *Photo 8 courtesy of Andrew Crossley*

Sand Martin The first were three birds on the 20th west over Weybourne Camp. Then birds were reported daily, in small numbers, until the end of March, all between West Runton and Weybourne

Swallow On the 26th 2-3 birds were seen at Beeston Bump and Weybourne Camp. On the 31st a bird returned to Southrepps and was the earliest record there for nine years.

House Martin One west over Beeston Bump on the 27th. A typical date for the first occurrence of the year for this species.

Chiffchaff The expected increase in sightings occurred with a mix of wintering birds beginning to sing augmented by near migrants. During the first week 1-2 birds were recorded from fourteen sites, then on the 7th ten birds were observed at Sheringham Cliffs/Golf Course. The first peak occurred on the 19th when the following were logged; eleven at Field Dalling, nine at both Beeston Common and Dilham Canal and five at both High Kelling and Felbrigg Park. The second peak was on the 26th/27th with 25 at Saxlingham/Field Dalling, 19 Southrepps Common, 12 Beeston Common and eight at both Bacton Woods and Dilham Canal.

Photo 9 courtesy of Richard Farrow

Blackcap Presumed wintering birds in song at Aylmerton on the 7th and Baconsthorpe & Gimingham on the 9th. Then no reports until the 22nd when a bird was heard at Beeston Bump after which an increase in birds occurred with thirteen sites reporting birds in song over the last seven days of the month including; Aylsham, Blickling Park, Southrepps Common and Mannington Hall. *Photo 10 courtesy of Richard Farrow*

Firecrest Seen by 32 observers at ten sites during the month accumulating 52 records, with many reports of males in song. Most records from the Cromer – Holt ridge between Cromer and High Kelling. Bacton Woods, Beeston Common and West Runton also recorded singing birds. Looking at the five-year averages there has been a 125% increase in sightings. The average number of records for the period 2020 – 2024 was 23 and the number of recorders was only fourteen. *Photo 11 courtesy of Geoff Snelson*

8



9



10



11



Ring Ouzel A male on Weybourne Cliffs on the 24th.

Black Redstart On the 7th and 8th and bird was present at Upcher's Court Sheringham and seen by many club members. On the 22nd a fine male was on Weybourne Camp and finally a female was found at Gimingham on the 30th. *Photo 12 courtesy of Jane Crossen*

Wheatear The first of the year was a bird at Beeston Bump on the 22nd. Followed by birds most days along the coast between West Runton and Weybourne Camp with highest count being three on Weybourne Cliffs on the 26th. *Photo 13 courtesy of Claire Brayne*

White Wagtail The first was a bird that flew west on the 25th over Weybourne Camp. Then on the 31st at least two birds were present on Cromer Golf Course. *Photo 13 courtesy of Trevor Williams*

Tree Pipit A bird flew west over Beeston Common on the 30th. This was the first March record for the NENBC club, though the first birds are often found within the first ten days of April.

Hawfinch A bird was photographed on a garden feeder at High Kelling on the 19th and 20th.

Redpoll The garden feeders at High Kelling continued to attract birds with three on the 1st and then one on the 4th and 14th. Birds were then reported from Kelling Heath with one on the 8th and then four on the 9th. On the 14th a bird was seen at Beeston Common and on the 15th at Aylmerton.



April: What to look forward to



Migrants will be flooding northwards (fingers crossed!) and anything is possible with some favourable weather and time spent in the field. South easterly winds may bring good numbers of **Ring Ouzels** as well as **Yellow Wagtails** and ever-increasing species of warblers. Pea fields are worth checking for Dotterel and movements of raptors and soaring birds, including **Cranes**, can occur in light south-west winds on warm days. Any north-easterly wind with rain fronts could produce Scandinavian birds with **Wryneck** and **Icterine Warbler** always possible. April is the peak month for **Alpine Swift** with records in 2023, 2019 and 2018.

Bon Chance !

Member Extras: observations from last month

Extra!

Ringed Bird Highlights

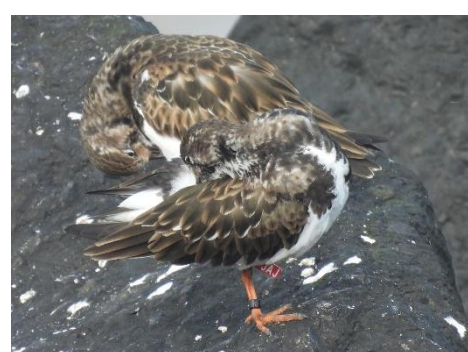
Just a reminder to folk logging ringed birds on our website. Although we send our data off en masse to the county recorder through BirdTrack uploads, we don't directly contact ringing coordinators of individual projects – that needs to be down to you if you have a sighting. Project coordinators love to get data on their birds – after all, that is the reason for ringing them - so here is a reminder on how to do it from Chris Lamsdell:

“Please report your colour ring birds to the relevant project co-ordinator which can be found through the EU Colour Ring website <https://cr-birding.org/>. Locally ringed Turnstones (red flag three letters starting JAA), Black-headed Gulls (red rings starting 2C00) and Marsh Tit (white rings 00-99) can be reported through <https://iceni.shinyapps.io/sightings/> Metal only rings can be report to the BTO <https://app.bto.org/euring/lang/pages/rings.jsp>”



Turnstone

Ref	First Sighting	During the month	Last Sighting
JAA Sheringham	4 th	6 th , 12 th , 13 th , 14 th , 28 th	31 st
JAЕ Sheringham	4 th	7 th , 12 th , 23 rd , 28 th	31 st
JAJ Sheringham	7 th	8 th , 10 th (possibly showing breeding plumage), 12 th , 13 th , 14 th	23 rd
metal ringed bird, (right tarsus)	12 th		23 rd



Turnstone photos from Jane Crossen; Great Black-backed Gull from Richard Farrow

Great Black-Backed Gull

"Taken from coast path. Right leg Black ring with white letters J222Y. Ringed in Norway. Metal ring on left leg." | Richard Farrow | Beeston Bump | 16th |



Noc-Mig Highlights

Calling all those members out there who dabble in nocturnal recordings of over-flying birds ... please do pop your confirmed records on the website. They don't count towards your Star or Green badges but they are an interesting addition to our data. Supporting sonogram images welcome. But what about those off-the-wall identifications the analysis software comes up with? The advancements in technology are great but they are a guide rather than a definitive ID so you do need to check your recordings yourself using website databases like Xeno-Canto or BirdNet for example. Please don't log these 'dodgy' records on the website, but do drop us an email to let us know your best 'if only' records of the month!



During March Andy Clarke positively identified and logged nocturnal calls from **17 species** over his Sheringham garden: **Wigeon, Teal, Common Scoter, Water Rail, Moorhen, Little Grebe, Oystercatcher, Avocet, Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Ringed Plover, Green Sandpiper, Common Gull, Grey Heron, Blackbird, Redwing and Song Thrush**. On the website he lists the dates and times of the records. In most cases there may just be a single call. In others, there may be a call several times which could be several birds or a circling bird. In other cases it is possible to discern a flock. For example "Song Thrush - 36 calls registered throughout the night, but mostly faint (and some too faint to be completely certain of identification)" and "Redwing – 25 flight calls from 0030 to at least 0450". If you want to look at the detail, download the records for March from the Records page and sort by 'Notes' alphabetically. Andy very helpfully begins each of his records with "Nocturnal flight calls over garden ..."

If only Ken & Carol Thornton, not as adept at this noc-mig malarky as Andy, have had some 100% confirmations over Gresham and will start to log these on the website in the coming months. However, they allegedly had Bluethroat (30%), Turtle Dove (40%), Golden Oriole (51%) and Pied Flycatcher (59%) and find that passing cars can be identified as a range of species.

Member Highs, Lows and Ponderings

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



Mute Swan | "Two of the overwintering eight have moved on but the three youngsters, their parents, and one young adult remain" | Ellie farrow | West Runton | 11th

Mute Swan | "Starting to nest ?" | Kala Nobbs & Mike McConnell | Blickling Park | 18th

Whooper Swan | "30x flock of swans on sea, too far out to positively id, circumstantial evidence would suggest whooper. UPDATE AS OF 7/3/25, having spoken to Kevin Shepherd, who was observing from Sheringham, he has confirmed they were Whooper swans." | Phil Borley | Weybourne | 6th

Egyptian Goose | "2x Sitting on roadside bank, in the dark just a couple of feet from passing traffic!" | Hilary Stevens | Little Barningham | 5th

Mandarin Duck | "Found her at last! Third time lucky." | Stephanie Witham | Gimingham | 9th

Mallard | "These three have been crowding our pond and hoovering up everything in sight! They keep on returning despite my best efforts to make them feel unwelcome!" | Geoff Snelson | At Home | 29th

Grey Partridge | "At last! Everyone else seems to have been seeing them. My first in Thornage. In field west of Glaven valley lane" | Roger Unite | Thornage | 6th

Pheasant | "Crossing the road at the roundabout at the top of Holt Rd - caused chaos with the traffic! | Val Stubbs | Cromer | 10th

Woodpigeon | "1 going into Bay tree - it's quite comical to watch it land on the fence and then sidle along the top before disappearing into the foliage; probably nesting. 2 under seed feeder in back garden" | Val Stubbs | Weybourne | 15th



Coot | "7x I can't remember when I last saw as many adults together at this location" | Trevor Williams | Felbrigg Park & Lake | 29th

Great Crested Grebe | "on lake, caught and ate a perch" | Phil Borley | Barningham Hall Lake (private) | 14th

Great Crested Grebe | "On lake, including a pair beginning to display, and a lot of aggression between the others" | Val Stubbs | Blickling Park | 14th

Black-headed Gull | "450x Extraordinary spiral of mixed gulls that took to the air south of the village along with 800+ wood pigeons that all flew to a great height before plummeting to earth rapidly. An obvious predator response unfortunately not seen." | John Hurst | Mundesley | 6th

Great Egret | "A pair flew in from the west and landed in the pine plantation next to the scrape, where they sat at the top of the trees for five minutes before flying back to the west. Perhaps they were checking out on a potential new nesting site?" | Moss Taylor | Weybourne Camp | 1st

Sparrowhawk | "Flew low W over Mill Lane, straight over my head - I felt the wind from its wings!" | Val Stubbs | Weybourne Cliffs | 7th

Red Kite | "4x Some interaction; one kite dropped something small - this was then caught by another of the kites." | Tony Pope | Weybourne Cliffs | 23rd

Buzzard | "Fantastic views of the resident/local pair. Really bonding today. And the farmer was ploughing the strip between the farm and field west of the cemetery so the birds were feeding in the ploughed area. Caught prey and flew back to the telegraph poles. Also, a great example of the difference in size between the male and female. Magic!" | Jane Crossen | Sheringham Cemetery | 13th

Green Woodpecker | "Well not really singing but calling while fly across my garden I'm so pleased I ate my Sandwich outside !!!" | Anne Sims | Gresham | 22nd

Swallow | "Returning bird to a previous known breeding site, the earliest record for this site over the past 9 Springs" | Stella Baylis | Southrepps Common | 31st

Cetti's Warbler | "In brambles by Hope reedbed - right in front of us, though invisible as ever!" | Val Stubbs | Weybourne | 18th

Chiffchaff | "6x Well! A bit of a 'fall' methinks! At least 5 around the coastguard hut on Skelding Hill (I think possibly two more but I don't like to double count). I know this because they all came in - one after the other! I watched for around 30 minutes and there were birds behaving in the same way - like flycatchers! And on the way back across the golf club there was one singing in a garden. I think around three were singing or calling on Skelding Hill. Sadly, no decent photos! But it was lovely watching them." | Jane Crossen | Sheringham Cliffs & Golf Course | 6th

Chiffchaff | "19x A census of singing Chiffchaffs this morning, I covered all the commons and surrounding paths of my local patch, centred around Lower Street and Southrepps Common, some undoubtedly passage birds" | Stella Baylis | Southrepps Common | 26th

Chiffchaff | "One Singing it's heart out (contender for Avian Eurovision Song Contest) from Gorse bushes" | Jonathan Anderson | Sheringham Park | 30th

Redwing | "67x Just now, high over the house heading east into the gathering dusk. Hope you enjoyed your stay...see you in October." | John Hurst | Mundesley | 26th

Mistle Thrush | "Bit of a thrush 'sing off' this morning between Song and Mistle, Song Thrush more musicality but Mistle Thrush absolutely belting it out" | Stella Baylis | Southrepps Common | 6th

Meadow Pipit | "Best ever view. Perched on top of a bush at far end the golf course. Very obliging and a close view for at least 5 mins" | David Barrass | Sheringham Cliffs & Golf Club | 29th



Welcome to our new members – look forward to meeting you soon!

* Tam & Mary Steele * Chris & Pam Boyes * Jonathan & Lynn White *

417 individual members
across 273 households

30,780
bird records logged

174 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** from [page 37](#).

Please see membership renewal information for 2025 on [page 11](#) and our 'switch-off' note if you aren't renewing.

Club Achievement Awards

Star Badges

No new achievers this month but the Peer Review Panel are reviewing at a few soon so we are looking forward to a few more coming through!

Currently, **4** members have achieved **GOLD STAR** status, **21** members have been awarded **SILVER STAR** status and a fabulous **84** 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 achievers his month but a couple in the pipeline for the near future!

We currently have **26** members who have achieved their **GREEN ECO-BADGES** [Coastal: 16 | Inland: 10] and 7 who have achieved **SUPER-GREEN** [Coastal: 6 | 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.

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.

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!

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



Speaker Suggestions

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

Thank you!












Membership Renewal - Subscriptions for 2025

We hope you will continue to support the club in 2025, our **10th Anniversary Year**, by renewing your membership with us. **If you haven't renewed by Easter and haven't spoken to us about it we will assume that you are stepping back this year and we will take you off our circulation lists and you will lose your website access.** The subs, which were due on 1st January, remain the same as last year:

2025 calendar year membership of £15 per household to include a copy of the club's printed 2024 Annual Bird Report which we hope will be ready for publication in the summer, or **£12 without the report.**

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

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 16th April | 9.00am-11.00am |
Felbrigg Park Monthly Walk
 with Dave Billham



No advance booking needed

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

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

Sunday 4th May | 9.00am-1.00pm |
Snettisham Country Park Walk
 with Janice Darch



Booking required : janicedarch@gmail.com by Thursday 1st May

WALK DESCRIPTION: We will follow a drain on a level path northwards through an area which is one of the few reliable Norfolk sites left for Turtle Dove. To the landward side of the sea defence are a series of scrapes which should have Avocet, Black-tailed Godwit, Bar-tailed Godwit, Curlew, Redshank and other waders. Common Tern and gulls are often on or over the scrapes and the reed beds may have Sedge and Reed Warbler.. Our return will be through the sandy country park where day flying Barn Owl are a possibility along with Marsh Harrier, Kestrel and passerines in the bushes. On the shore and offshore we will look for more terns and gulls.

MEET & PARK: RSPB car park Beach Road, Snettisham PE31 7RA RSPB members free, otherwise pay and display | **DISTANCE:** 3 miles | **ACCESSIBILITY:** The walk is along footpaths which aren't suitable for wheelchair users. | **FACILITIES:** loo in car park | **BADGES:** Outside the club area so records can't count for Star Badges, or Green Eco-badges this time.

This Month's Evening Club Talk

Thursday 24th April | 7.30pm-9.30pm |

Gresham Village Hall and via Zoom



“Swifts – Masters of the Sky” *A talk with the RSPB's Laurinda Luffman*

**Note - apologies but we are not able to offer a Zoom option this month*

A BIT ABOUT THE SPEAKER AND THEIR TALK: *Laurinda Luffman is Head of Trusts & Foundations and the Swift species lead at the RSPB, helping to coordinate support and knowledge-sharing for this Red-listed bird across the charity. She is a founder member of Bedfordshire Swifts, one of the many dedicated Swift Local Network (SLN) groups. In her talk, Laurinda will cover amazing facts about the Common Swift and reveal some of the latest findings, as well as touching upon what steps can be taken to help these masters of the sky.*

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

BOOKING ARRANGEMENTS: It is always nice to know if you are coming to the hall but by no means essential so if it takes your fancy on the evening, please just turn up as we would love to see you! You can get in touch via nenbc@aol.co.uk.

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

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

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

A couple more dates to note....

International Dawn Chorus Day 2025 - Sunday 4th May

So, why not embrace the dawn at first light on the 1st weekend in May and take the time to really appreciate what nature has to offer? We are asking all NENBC members to make a special effort to log their early morning records (including noc-migged) on the club website over the weekend, sliding the 'SINGING' button across on your record. This will help us with our on-going Bird Song Periods Project. If you can get out in your garden or out for a walk at dawn, please do but, don't forget, if that is a bit too keen for a weekend, just open your window, whether you are town or rural based, and just listen..

Also, don't forget we have an additional 'walk' in May. As well as the Snettisham Country Park Walk, also on 4th May, we have our annual evening trip to **Kelling Heath for Nightjars**. We'll be starting at 8:45pm on Tuesday 27th May, full details on website.

NENBC 10th Anniversary Conference

'Whose birds are these? - exploring Anglo-African bird migration'

Saturday 14th June 2025 | Gresham Village Hall, Gresham, Norfolk



By Stella Baylis | NENBC conference organising group

Following on from the announcement of this conference in February's newsletter, members have been steadily booking tickets – thanks to all who are coming along so far. It is sure to be a fun and fascinating day!

The event will showcase research around the threats our much-loved and familiar migrant birds face, such as habitat destruction, climate change and hunting. We will also hear how the international conservation community is responding to protect our avian migrants and the part that we can play in their protection. There will be a stellar line up of speakers from academia and environmental organisations, including Prof. Juliet Vickery, Chief Executive Officer of the BTO. We will also hear from Prof. Will Cresswell from St Andrew's University and Wenceslas Gatarabirwa, Head of Flyway Conservation at the RSPB. The day will conclude with what is sure to be a lively panel discussion.

Thanks to our generous sponsor, the Leventis Foundation, the conference is a free event, with buffet lunch and refreshments. Members can book a maximum of 2 places per household, and we will operate on a 'first come first served' basis.

At the time of writing, there are still some tickets available for members. If you are planning to come along, please book as soon as you can via the email:

nenbc-events@outlook.com

We look forward to seeing you in June on what promises to be a highlight of the local birding year!

We are also hoping to have a club social on the Friday before the conference, that's the evening of 13th June, so pop the date in your diary and we'll get some more details out in due course.

If you could help us out with a quiz or organising an art display or a photographic competition then please get in touch ASAP!

The Big Sit: Saturday 17th May NENBC's Dawn to Dusk Static Bird Count



The Big Sit Made Easy



- Choose a site with good views and set a notional 17 feet diameter circle to base your team in
- Record all bird species seen or heard from the circle during a 24 hour period (realistically dawn to dusk)
- Where possible records should be confirmed by a 2nd team member and spotters out in the field are allowed as long as the bird is recorded from the circle
- Maintain a birdlist in 10 minute intervals during the day and later log results on the club website
- Keep in touch with other teams for possible fly-throughs and bragging rights
- Bring a picnic and enjoy the company of others
- The club will compare results across sites and years in the newsletter

How many bird species can we see from the same spot dawn to dusk – join us to find out!

We are looking forward to this year's event following last year's washout – many thanks to the valiant souls who braved the conditions in 2023! This time we are going to be based at two sites, Felbrigg Park and Beeston Common and very much hope you can come along to give us a bit of support and join in the general excitement of the day. For those of you new to it, there is a bit of general info on the right but basically we hang about in the same spot watching, listening and taking note of what is about. It is always a fun day out with the chance to chat during the slower periods, engage with the passing public and with the added bonus at Felbrigg of an events shelter if the weather is a little inclement. You absolutely don't need to be a birding expert to take part and we would love to see you for all or some of the

day. If you can make it down for dawn to either of the sites for the dawn chorus that would be great but if you just want to pop by at a more civilised hour then that is also great!

FELBRIGG PARK with Trevor Williams & the gang | Dawn (5am) to Dusk | Above the lake on 'The Warren' so we have a view onto the water, across the grassland, a bit of the water meadow in the scopes and of course the trees and sky.

BEESTON COMMON PILLBOX with Francis Farrow & the gang | Dawn (5am) until 1300 (possibly longer if plenty of birds and it's not too cold!) | At Pill-box Hill, towards the south of Beeston Common as usual. Grid ref: TG164240 / W3W: edgy.yourself.wolves

This year we aren't able to coincide our event with **Global Big Day** which is the previous weekend. Nevertheless we will be supporting the cause by entering an NENBC 'Team' on the eBird website for Global Big Day 10th May so if you are birdwatching then, please log as many of your records as possible on the club website from your walks, your garden potterings or other activities as all records count!

February's Mid-Week Club Walk

Felbrigg Park | 19th March



By Dave Billham

It had to happen eventually; for the March walk we were greeted by blue skies, sunshine, and the lightest of winds. Nick S. turned up in his shorts and sandals, and Carol wished she had done the same – minus the sandals! With Trevor back in the lead, we waited in the car park for the allotted start time to arrive, watching in amazement as more and more club members drifted in; by five to nine there were a super 28 of us, ready to start. During the wait and Trevor's brief the birds were also turning up in numbers, the list being at a smashing total of 15 by the time nine-o'clock came round –

Buzzard, Carrion Crow, Rook, Jackdaw, Blue Tit, Herring Gull, Common Gull, Woodpigeon, Blackbird, Robin, Chaffinch, Goldfinch and overhead a **Red Kite**, plus around 20 **Redwing** flitting past in small groups. Heard only was the drumming of **Great Spotted Woodpecker**, a sound that would accompany us all morning.



Setting off towards the church, a flock of **Starling** crossed in front of us, and another **Buzzard** was noted in the distance. Singing **Skylark** could be heard all around, joined by **Dunnock** and **Wren** as we reached the church. The adjoining field revealed a very distant **Red-legged Partridge**, and a **Kestrel** was seen sat atop a small tree; otherwise the area was quiet, the large numbers of thrush found here on the February walk having left for pastures anew. Leaving the church for the water meadows, we found a much larger flock of **Starling** feeding in the grass; new for the list was a calling **Pheasant** and a lone **Magpie**. On reaching the fence above the meadows a pair of **Greylag Goose** and a single **Grey Heron** could be seen down by the beck. It was at this point that Carol discovered she wasn't as flexible as she thought, tripping over the bench she was attempting to stand on to take this team pic. Thanks to Nick for the literal support!



Continuing on down the slope to the dam wall we were greeted by a pair of very mobile **Chiffchaff**, whilst on the water were seen **Mute Swan, Tufted Duck, Mallard, Gadwall, Coot**, and **Moorhen**. The two parent Mute Swan were still trying to chase off the last remaining youngster from last year, and still not having any luck; a plucky young 'un as a photo I took of one of the adults in full chase mode is not a sight I would want to see heading towards me!



A **Cormorant** was sat in a tree, conspicuous by having a very white breast as shown by the Scandinavian variety. As we were paused scanning the lake, a **Stock Dove** flew over followed by a pair of **Greenfinch**. Once we were happy there was nothing else to be found on the water, we walked the wooded path alongside the lake, where the calls of **Nuthatch** were heard, but no bird seen. As a **Black-headed Gull** passed over us, John H. came up to me to ask if I had **Tawny Owl** on the list. I did not, and quizzed him as to where it was; he replied that needing to answer a call of nature he had retired to the woods, and whilst there had heard a single call from a hidden bird! Minutes later a **Little**

Grebe call was heard from the reeds in front of us, but despite its calling again, like the owl, it remained stubbornly invisible. Rather surprisingly, both of these species are new to the walk report species list since I started the recording in 2022.

Leaving the lake's edge we entered the woods where we found **Treecreeper** and **Long-tailed Tit**. My attempts to get a good photograph of the Treecreeper were thwarted by its habit of always being on the wrong side of the branch it was moving along.



Truncated calls heard from trees near Park Farm could not be positively identified, but could have been Mistle Thrush; however we were not certain so it avoided joining the list. A **Pied Wagtail** was spotted on the cottage roof, and **Great Tit** were in and around the garden. At this point John H. came up to me once again; did I have **Green Woodpecker** on the list? Once again I did not. Guess what, he had heard one calling as we were in the woods!



We had now reached a riding between the trees; the group had gradually split into three sections as we walked and I was temporarily in the middle group. Halfway along the riding a **Woodcock** suddenly appeared from the trees on our right, flew across the riding some twenty feet up right in front of us in the middle group, and disappeared into the trees on our left. Super views of this secretive species!

Unfortunately for most of the folk on the walk, it was behind the lead group, and the rear group were just leaving the woods, so we were the only ones to enjoy the spectacle.



With our two hours almost up we set off back towards the house, adding only **Jay** to the list. When the rear group joined us it transpired that they had seen a pair of **Common Snipe** unusually in a small clearing in the woods, giving a grand total of **47** species for the morning's jaunt, not too bad at all.



The summer arrivals that we had hoped might show up were conspicuous by their absence (and continue to be so as I write this in early April); hopefully they will be much more evident when the mid-April walk takes place. Hope to see you there!



March's Weekend Club Walk

Letheringsett Ford and Spout Hil | 12th April



By Janice Darch

A lovely spring day saw 12 of us gather in a layby on the Holt to Letheringsett road at the start of our walk through the village of Letheringsett village to the ford and then over the hill to the old railway line which took us to Spout Hill and back to the cars. During our walk we saw 31 bird species including some newly arrived migrants. The road to the village was busy and noisy but even so viewing from it yielded Lapwing, Magpie, Skylark, Red legged Partridge and Carrion Crow. We soon got to the quieter road and firstly we visited the mill and had our first view of the River Glaven. Along the road to the ford we scanned the trees and gardens finding House Sparrows, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Blue and Great Tits, Robin, Dunnock, Collared Dove, Woodpigeon and Pied Wagtail with a Red Kite over in the distance. It was pretty quiet at the ford except for a Mallard, Greylag Goose and a perched Buzzard and more House Sparrows. As we climbed out of the Glaven Valley we had extensive views of the rolling countryside until we entered the woods on the old railway line at the crest of the hill. We added Herring Gulls in the distance as we climbed. Along the old railway line we found Blackcaps, a year tick for many. Being near midday the woods did not produce much bird activity but there were calling, but hidden, Robins, Great Tits, and Wrens. The back end of the group was lucky to see a Coal Tit and Treecreeper. On entering Spout Hill we found another Blackcap in the Blackthorn blossom and a Kestrel on the wires. It was then time for us to amble back to the cars and disperse. A pleasant 2 mile walks on a lovely day.

Pop-up Seawatching Review!

Our new initiative to get more of you seawatching



Our annual coordinated seawatch has always proved popular, attracting plenty of participants at multiple locations. The Committee have been considering more ways to raise the profile and share the excitement of seawatching. We are actively considering introducing a special badge - achieved through a combination of time spent and relevant species seen - and are also planning a number of 'pop up' seawatching sessions. The trouble with seawatching is that it is highly dependent on weather conditions which are difficult to predict more than a few days in advance.

So, as a trial, we are planning on running a couple of **'pop up' seawatches this spring**. This is how we see it working: a few days before the event we will make an announcement on the home page of the website regarding date, time and location. An experienced seawatcher will be on hand to run the event and help beginners become more confident in the 'dark art'! Each pop-up session will last a maximum of two hours. We will also make an announcement via the Seawatching WhatsApp group. In this way we hope to increase opportunities for more productive seawatching, share knowledge and gain more valuable data. *Trevor Williams*

Well, since that announcement in the March newsletter we have had two attempts at this new initiative, both at the shelter in North Lodge Park Cromer from 06:30 to 0830. The positives were that we had a fair few people turn up, it was great for discussion on the birds seen (and not seen) along with migration in general, it enabled those of us less used to seawatching to get our hand in without the sometimes frenetic recording of a club coordinated seawatch, learn how to shout out locations and directions of birds so others can 'get on them' even if you don't know what you are looking at and I generally chat to others about how best to watch seabirds. The not-so-positives was that despite trying to gauge the weather for maximum bird appeal we still didn't get it quite right!

Tuesday 25th March Ten members attended, we had reasonable weather and a good selection of birds – 17 species plus a few locals. Red-throated Diver, Common Scoter, Fulmar, Teal, Guillemot, Brent Goose, Gannet, Shelduck, Eider, Mediterranean Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Black-headed Gull, Greylag Goose, Great Crested Grebe, Cormorant, Pied Wagtail, Meadow Pipit, Woodpigeon, Wren, Dunnock

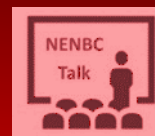
Sunday 6th April Five members attended with enough to entertain the participants but nothing like what we might have expected with the weather coming from the east. Red-throated Diver, Fulmar, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Gannet, Guillemot, Cormorant, Common Scoter, Common Gull, Brent Goose, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Wren, Carrion Crow, Jackdaw, Dunnock.

We will certainly be repeating this. Anyone out there fancy hosting a pop-up event? We'd love to have you on board so just get in touch!



Last Month's Evening Talk "Cuckoos, Nightingales and Willow Warblers"

zoom



A talk with BTO's Phil Atkinson

By Alan Stevens

For our March meeting we were pleased to continue with our 10th Anniversary idea of asking back previous speakers with the return, for a third visit, of Phil Atkinson who first spoke to us in April 2015, and with the themes of Africa, migration and the question of whose birds are our summer visitors? Phil is the BTO's Head of International Research & Principal Ecologist where he has developed a program of international work focussing on the impacts of environmental change on bird populations and the ecology of Palaearctic migrants and he leads the BTO's international research program.

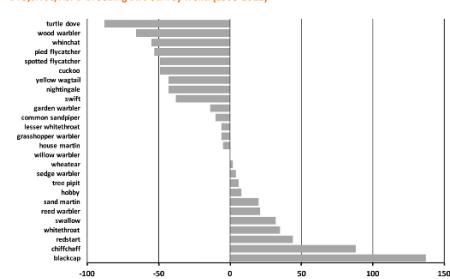
He began the evening by returning to the Cuckoo, about which he has previously spoken to us, one of our iconic summer visitors and the condition of the species as understood at this time through his research at the BTO. Members present knew that the news was not going to be good, and this was confirmed by the data showing cuckoo numbers have declined with numbers down in England by 72% in the last 27 years but on the upside have increased by 62% over the same period in Scotland. Breeding bird survey trends reveal, as expected, a decline in many species and Phil explained these with the first of his illustrative graphs showing the 'winners and losers' with Turtle Dove showing the greatest decline and Blackcap the greatest increase in numbers.

These numbers came from 1995 – 2012 and interestingly showed the climatic regions where the bird spend their time in Africa, Northern, Arid, Humid and Southern. Losses are not evenly distributed over these regions, but further graphs revealed the greatest losses to be among birds overwintering in humid areas. There are relationships between known, or suspected, winter destinations and population trends so there is a need to know more about the migration of species. Trends between 1970 and 2012 show the biggest rise in populations are among those spending their time in northern region and the largest losses, as above, in humid regions. The expected background to this can lie with climate change, habitat loss, hunting *et al.*



Migrants: population declines

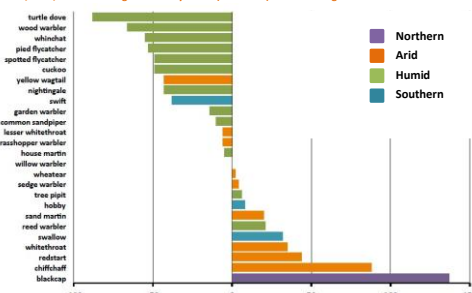
BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey Trend (1995-2012)



Ockendon et al. (2012) *Bird Study* 59: 111-125

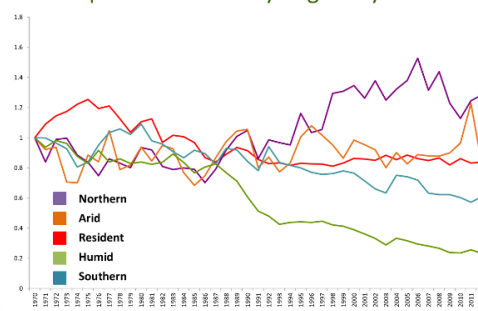
Migrants: population declines

BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey Trend (1995-2012) and wintering zone



Ockendon et al. (2012) *Bird Study* 59: 111-125

Population trends by migratory status



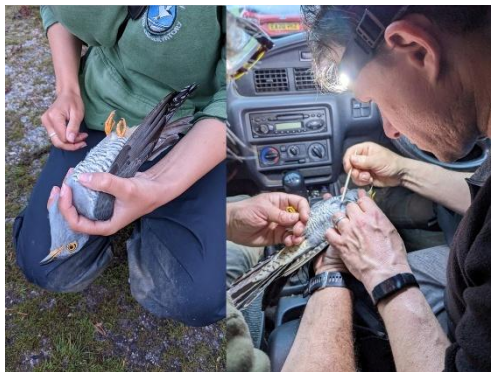
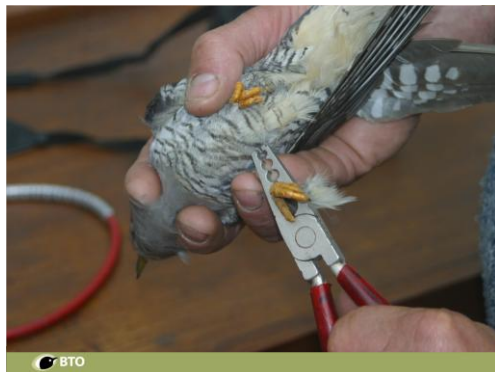
Phil then turned to look at the Cuckoo in greater detail explaining that as a study species the Common Cuckoo is a 'model' with a declining population and is the largest 'small' nocturnal migrant whose migration is poorly known but is getting to be better understood as we were to hear.

Advances in the way migration is tracked was illustrated by a copy of paper record of a Cuckoo ringed in Eton in 1928 and recovered in Cameroon in 1930. No longer do we have to depend on such chance discoveries as we can now utilize space-based radio tracking by tagging birds with 5g PTT-100 Microwave Telemetry (for the technically minded!) Solar powered batteries provide longevity of performance and close to real-time tracking is available over the entire annual cycle and as expected access to this wealth of data has shed light on previously dark corners of the life of the cuckoo.

We were shown a series of slides of ringing sites in the UK from Scotland, the New Forest, the re-wilding project at Knepp and closer to home at Carlton Marshes where birds are caught in nets and tags are attached, followed by another showing the change in Cuckoo numbers in the UK 1994-96 to 2007-9.

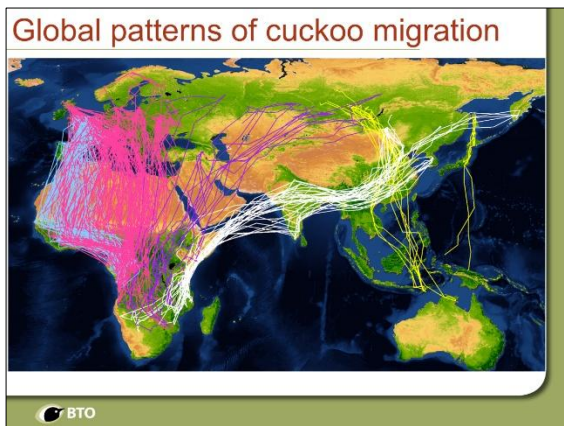
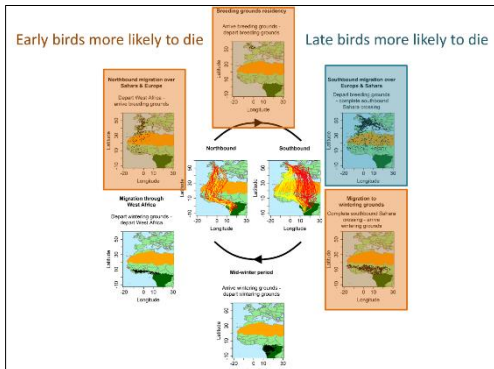
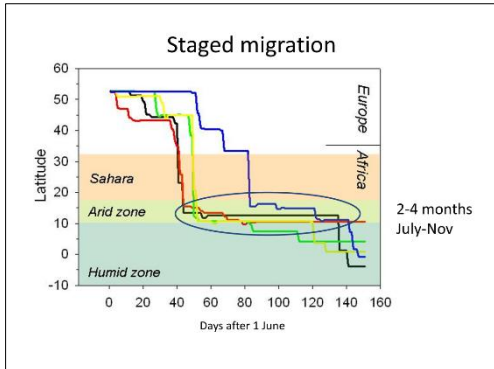
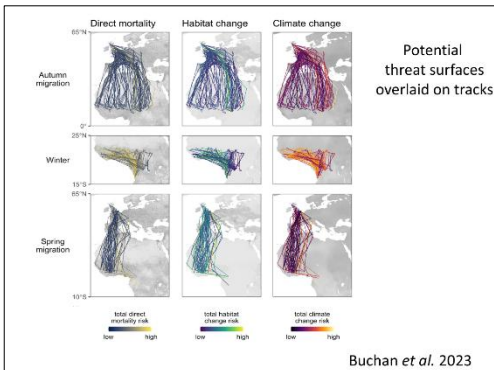
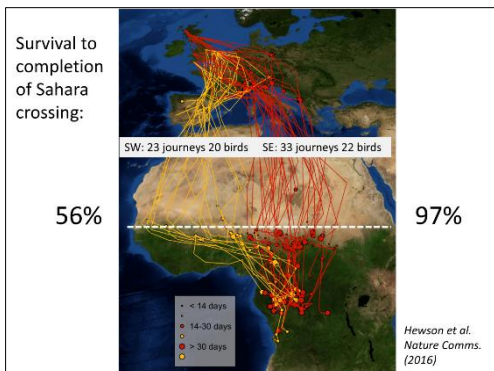


No. of Ring.	Date.	Name of Bird.	Place where Ringed.	Name of Ring.
27928	June 23 1928	Cuckoo	ETON, WICKS.	A. MAYALL
457	30-1-30			
Remarks: 80045, 5731, 037W, in Red Wattle nest, Village of Lembe, Kamerun, W. Africa, Killed +				



Taking 2011 as a starting point Phil looked at the southerly migration that year which highlighted the importance of a stopover for birds at the Po Watershed where 22 of 56 birds stopped that year and when all survived the Sahara crossing. The information available now reveals that cuckoos take two specific routes on migration, one to the west over Spain and West Africa and the other east over eastern Europe and across the Sahara with both journeys broadly taking between 14 – 30 days. The survival rate varies significantly between the two routes standing at 56% on the western and 97% on the eastern track. Interestingly there is a bias east or west from where the birds are tagged in the UK. Survival is of course subject to several variables – route-specific effect of UK conditions, conditions in Spain and Italy and interaction between UK and southern Europe. This led through to the reasoning behind mortality numbers where our speaker explained the inputs of direct mortality, habitat change and climate anomalies during both migration periods and the winter period spent in Africa where the longitude of southbound migration routes versus exposure to potential threats in tropical Africa were considered. This revealed that birds migrating further to the west were exposed to higher levels of potential threat suggesting that those birds may be at greater risk beyond Europe as well. Comparisons were drawn with other species such as Swift and Nightjars.

There followed a look at 'staged migration' depending on routes and habitat in Africa and more detail of the cuckoo's habitat in Africa with an example from the Congo where it has been found that Cuckoos prefer forest edge locations and therefore some opening up may be beneficial, but not too much which could be problematic as a general loss of habitat. A key discovery has been that cuckoos have not advanced their arrival back in the UK in line with the earlier springs we now have, which in turn has consequences throughout the annual cycle and this was fully explained by a series of interesting graphs. The key points around the springtime arrival are that the departure from West Africa is the prime determining factor behind the arrival in breeding grounds. The timing of the rains before departure is associated with the ITCZ which is determined by global climatic conditions and ultimately astronomical events rather than by local or regional conditions and it is this that is delaying the cuckoo's arrival on our shores and constrains their ability to breed with variations of associated mortality between early and late birds. Turning to be future the study plans to continue research into the contribution of habitat quality vs rainfall to timing of migration from the West Africa stop-over, to continue the tagging programme, trial GPS level



accuracy tags, understand the impact of habitat quality, design habitat interventions for 'head-starting' birds on the southbound migration and increase habitat quality to advance migratory timing and reduce mortality. To finish we were shown a slide of global patterns of cuckoo migration – astonishing!

Last year the first club record of a Cuckoo came on the 25th April, let's see what this year brings.

After the break Phil returned with a look at what they are doing at the BTO to unravel the decline of the Nightingale, and it centres around much the same methodology as that employed for the Cuckoo. Charts showing the alarming drop in Nightingale abundance between 1965 and 2005 drove home the parlous state of this species and another showed the loss of breeding areas up to 2011. A brief burst of 'A Nightingale sang in Berkley Square' reminded us of the importance of this bird in the national psyche before looking at managing scrub for Nightingales the availability of which is so important to their breeding success (something touched on in later questions from the members with the effect of ever rising Muntjac populations).

A close look at Geolocators which were attached to Nightingales explained that they recorded light-levels and while accuracy for latitude was lower, longitude was easier to determine. These devices must be retrieved so information can only be gathered from returning birds and were used between 2009 and 2020 after which they were combined with GPS tags.

A look at tracking birds in the Fens was followed by an illustrative example of a tag where a bird was fitted with one on the 2nd May in Norfolk, departed on 24th July, stopped in southern Portugal 1st-19th September, moved to the Canary Islands 20th September and after a stopover on Senegambia to mid-December spent the winter in Western Guinea.

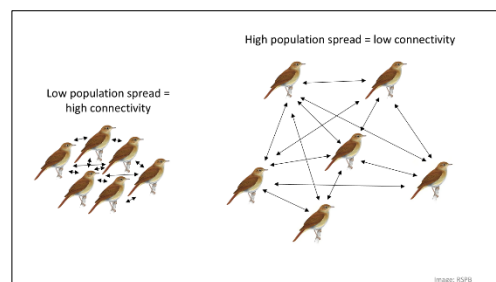
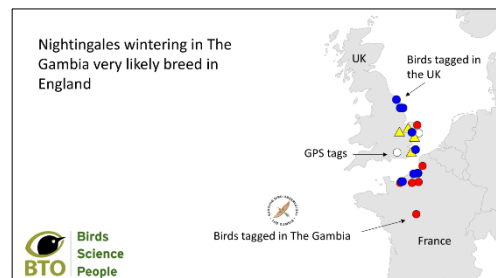
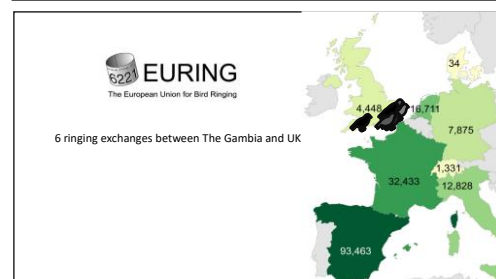
The areas where the Nightingales over-winter in West Africa include The Kartong Bird Observatory with which the NENBC have forged a link for our 10th Anniversary and was the subject of our January indoor meeting.

EURING, the European Union for Bird Ringing' figures revealed the differences between numbers of Nightingales ringed in Western Europe with 93000 plus in Spain and around 4500 in the UK with six ringing exchanges between The Gambia and the UK. The low population spread and resultant high connectivity between breeding and wintering grounds leads we heard to a vulnerability among UK Nightingales. The question was raised as to whether they mix with other populations in Africa a problem approached through reciprocal tagging in Africa. As more data is being collected it has become apparent that birds wintering in The Gambia are likely to breed in the UK.

Phil's conclusions on the Nightingale were that there is extreme connectivity between The Gambia and the UK, that deteriorating of wintering grounds may be contributing to UK population decline, that restoring and protecting habitats in the wintering grounds may be beneficial for this population and that Light-level geolocators may underestimate connectivity, so very high connectivity may be more common than so far suspected.

Lastly our speaker turned to recent Willow Warbler research and migration tracking. Again, a marked change in breeding abundance was evident with the decline in the south and east of the UK again being the greatest while those in Scotland appear stable. Potential drivers for this were identified by reasons of changes in demography, wintering locations and food availability. A further look at Geolocators led to specific studies in Scotland at in Thetford Forest as examples and an explanation of the practicalities of catching, tagging and ringing birds. The small sample size of tracked birds must be treated with caution but some patterns of migration routes and wintering regions are emerging.

Photo: Chas Holt



Once again, a fascinating talk by Phil, linking in well with our 10th Anniversary theme, and giving an insight into the valuable work undertaken by him and his colleagues to learn more of the summer visitors we now look forward to and to try and secure a future for them. A thought-provoking evening for all there that prompted a number of questions and discussion from our members.

By John Swallow

With many UK ringers keen to explore Afro-tropical birds there is competition to gain a place at Kartong Bird Observatory (KBO) so I was very pleased when I was asked to join the two week trip in Nov 2016. I was warned it would be hot and blimey it was very hot, not just during the day but also during the evening, dinner was a sweaty affair and sleeping was very difficult. I tried sleeping inside the mosquito net but found this was even hotter! There were so few mozzies around that I abandoned using the net and was down to, shall we say, next to nothing to try and sleep. Of course there were other disturbances too, loud scurrying came from the thatched roof above and pre-dawn donkey activity outside. On my first day in the field I backed into a thorn (thorns are everywhere) and in the heat Savlon was just not strong enough to stop the wound going septic. A few days later and it had become inflamed and sore. To my relief Roger kindly painted the area with Iodine which immediately calmed things down. The ringing was fantastic and each evening, as we took our medicine, we swapped stories from the day.

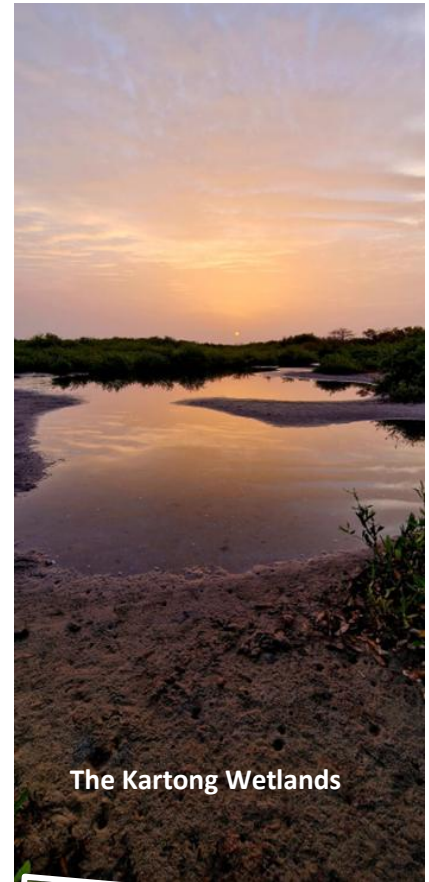
Lessons learnt, I was well prepared for my 5th trip on 20th Feb this year having attended the excellent club talk by Roger Walsh on KBO at Gresham Village Hall on 30th Jan. I joined the group at Premier Inn Gatwick airport the night before our flight. We are very lucky that Roger organises the flights, car hire and accommodation. Roger has booked through the Gambian Experience for many years so we receive a generous hold and carry on weight allowance which helps as we take extra kit for the Obs and items to be donated.

On arrival we clear Immigration and Customs within an hour and meet our Gambian friends once again. Michael, who I first met in 2016 is now very much the Team Leader. It has been 18 months since my last visit and over the course of this trip I can see how much the younger members have also grown in confidence. We all learn so much from being together again.

Nowadays the hire cars are waiting for us and as we leave the airport we have an early taste of The Gambia. Driving there is always memorable, there are no rules and on leaving the airport we drive through a suburb called Brikama. Everyone is on the road people, lots of children, oxen, goats and sheep as well as buses cars and local taxis. It is why you travel, the contrast with the UK is so very stark. It takes just over an hour to reach Kartong. We drop off our kit, change and then we head into the field, the first ringing site at Baraccunta a few hundred metres from the sea. It is that quick, we set nets and start ringing our first birds before furling as darkness arrives, around (7pm) and we head back for dinner.

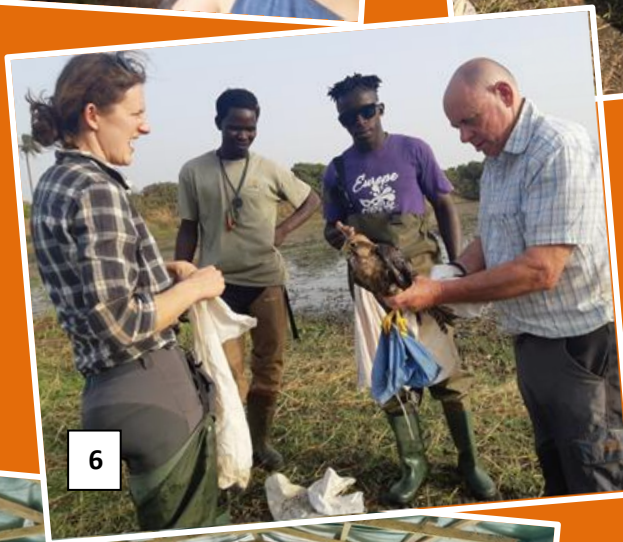
After dinner on dark nights with no moon, ideally warm and calm, long-tailed nightjars are waiting to catch moths along the tracks between KBO and the sea. This is the best time to go out and try catch them using strong torches and a hand net. Several were caught and other species including waders were caught using this technique along the shoreline and estuary. Ringing is done at KBO before a curfew at around 23:30.

We rise at 05:30, make a quick coffee then head out, as the Fajr call to prayer rings out, arriving into the field in the dark. We begin by opening a few nets where nightingales are known to be. *[photo: Nightingale with tracker]* As it gradually becomes lighter there is a phased opening of the other nets primarily to avoid catching bats before they have gone to "bed" *[photo: one of many species of bat]*.



The Kartong Wetlands





On net rounds once birds had been extracted we place them in different birds bags. If they were Western Palaearctic species such as Blackcap, Subalpine, Reed and Melodious Warbler etc we placed the birds into paper bags inside the usual cloth bags. This was so that if a birds “poops” its sample could be collected and form part of an ongoing study into diet. On return to the ringing base the birds are ordered into a queue for processing, on this trip many of the Afro-tropical birds after ringing were also sampled for blood parasites. We took over 500 samples for this study.

Breakfast arrives in the field at around 09:00, Caddy from Halahin bringing rolls, bacon, boiled eggs and FRESH coffee! *[photo right]*

We finish at around 11:00 after stripping some nets and putting more in a new location. We return for lunch, a nap and/or some birding before heading out again into the field at around 16:00.

We naturally divide into flexible teams between those who check the nets around the many types of dry scrub, the “estuary crew” and the “swamp team”. The “estuary crew” are to be found at “odd” hours always in waders and out on the estuary erecting, moving and checking various wader nets, their activities following the rhythm of the tides.

The “swamp team” head into the various quarries around the main ringing base, the nets cross open water and go through reed beds and we set crane traps too. Dionne and I went to join David and Billy as they set a net into a piece of reed, we had just turned the corner when we saw first Billy, then David running towards us and a young cow charging after them and towards us. We all dived for cover! Thankfully there was space for the frightened youngster to make good it’s escape. And we thought it was the crocodiles and snakes we had to keep an eye on!



[Photos: “Swamp team” furling a net, with quiet adult cattle Swamp team setting a reed bed net before being charged by a cow....]

Every day we followed this routine but with the addition of cannon and whoosh netting for Hooded Vulture, Cattle Egret and Sanderling.

I was part of the twinkling team as we attempted to catch the Sanderling flock running along the shoreline. We found they would move up the beach at high tide but they wouldn’t come into the catching area. However, a chance conversation between Michael and a fisherman in the water produced some small fish we could use as bait. This was working the flock, attracted by the bait, moved towards the catching area.. As I walked forward I saw on my right a family party appear, they carried prayer beads, a bucket, a knife and a sheep. As an outsider with a walkie talkie to my ear I didn’t want to disturb their ritual so I carefully moved forward and past them as they

walked down to the shoreline. Moments later there was a bang and I was running up the beach to help extract the Sanderling, including a control ringed on the Wash in 2023. I have no idea what the family party made of me but I was glad to have not disturbed them and also missed watching the fate of the sheep.

The range of teams in different habitats means that we caught and ringed a wide range of species from the tiny Pygmy Kingfisher to African Harrier Hawk and Western-Pal Warblers to Waders. Initial results show a total of 2000 birds ringed from 120 species and lots of scientific data collected; geolocators deployed, colour rings read, blood samples, faecal samples and swabs taken.

We also came away having renewed friendships, made new friends and enjoyed life changing and memorable experiences together.

Plus I had my best room ever, a comfy mattress and a shower with water, don't ask.... He he

Photo page:

1 *Praying Mantis*

2 *Donation of telescope by Claire and Northumberland birders to local birders*

3 *Dinner at Halahin Lodge*

4 *Setting a scrub net*

5 *Emmanuel with African Harrier Hawk, note mist net behind*

6 *Lanner Falcon moments after being extracted from a net*

7&8 *Early morning bird ringing and processing*

9&10 *The team taking a boat trip and landing in Senegal*



The Super Green Badge Challenge

Episode 14 – March 2024-March 2025



By Val Stubbs

Another year has passed since I last gave an update on my quest to see 175 species using shanks' pony. At that time, my green bird tally stood at **144**, and it has gradually crept up since then – at the current rate, we are likely to be into the next decade before I reach the target!

14th March 2024 We were walking the dogs in the woods where Sheringham Park joins Weybourne Heath when a ping came through on the NENBC Rare and Scarce Birds Alert that a White-tailed Eagle had been spotted at Aylmerton. This was followed by a succession of further pings which tracked the bird heading in our direction. We headed to the ridge on Weybourne Heath keeping our eyes skywards as reports placed the bird at Upper Sheringham and then over the back of Sheringham Park – we couldn't possibly miss a bird of that size, could we? Yes, it turned out we could! When it was clear that it had somehow eluded us, we continued our walk along the ridge, slightly peeved. Perched at top of one of the pines by the recently cleared area, we spotted a small bird, and while I assumed it was probably a Goldfinch, I decided to have a proper look at it, and after a while was rewarded with a clear view of a crossed bill – a **Common Crossbill**.

14th April 2024 We ambled down to Weybourne Camp to give the dogs a stretch of their legs. Peering down into the scrape we were surprised by the sight of a male **Tufted Duck** – that was an easy tick.

28th September 2024 There seemed to be a spate of reports of Yellow-Browed Warblers towards the end of September, but this continued to be a bird that eluded me in the Club area, until one day we were wandering along the ride to the south of the ridge in Weybourne Heath when I heard a sharp call that put me on high alert. I've only ever heard one once before, during a NWT course on autumn migrants led by a certain Trevor Williams, but it was obviously lodged in my mind, and it immediately came back to me, and I knew instantly what I was hearing. We waited patiently in the hope that the bird would show itself but it remained firmly hidden in the conifers. Nonetheless, I am confident that I can add the **Yellow-Browed Warbler** to my list – though maybe one day I will actually set eyes on one of the little blighters!

2nd November 2024 As I passed the Village Hall, I heard squawking from behind the building, though there was no visible sign of the squawker. However, I knew the call well - **Ring-necked Parakeet**. Indeed, only the week before I had seen a pair of the green interlopers in the Cambridge area, squawking vigorously as they were pursued by a Buzzard over my daughter's suburban garden. Although I was confident of my ID based just on call, I was hesitant to log this on the Club website, but then two Ring-necked Parakeet were reported the next day at Weynor Gardens, less than a mile away as the parakeet flies.

25th January 2025 I spent most of January out of the county waiting for and then helping to care for my new grandson (Eric – arrived 10 days late weighing in at 10lbs!) and his big brother Alfred. In among playing with Numberblocks and changing nappies, I watched with growing frustration as member after member reported the mixed goose flock in the fields by Mill Lane, just a stone's throw from home. On returning to Weybourne I pleaded for our first dog walk to take in Mill Lane, just in case the geese were still there. We arrived to find Roger Unite and Tim Stowe just leaving with satisfied smiles on their faces. They were most helpful in pointing out where the various species of goose were hanging out and we were delighted to be able to find, among the hundreds of Pink-footed Geese, 5 Barnacle Geese, a Tundra Bean Goose and 2 of the much coveted "green" **White-fronted Geese**. Whew! *Photo courtesy of Mark Clements*



25th February 2025 Standing at Weybourne Hope with Phil Borley on my first sea-watch of the year, I was hopeful that the Long-tailed Duck that had been putting in an appearance regularly throughout January and February would put in an appearance. Unfortunately, this was not to be my day. However, while we were watching flocks of Pink-footed Geese flying over inland, I was treated to a bonus of a great view of a **Great Egret** which flew past just inland of us.

28th February 2025 I was up a ladder painting my kitchen when my phone pinged with a text from Phil B "LTD Weybourne". I hopped down from my perch, threw on a coat, grabbed my 'scope and legged it down to the beach, where Phil and Roger Unite were watching. "Is it still there?" I gasped, only to be told by Roger that it had just flown. Doh! And then I spotted the twinkle in Roger's eye and realised I had fallen for his prank. Taking pity on me, they pointed out the Scoter flock to the west and in among them I could pick out a much lighter duck, but to get a good view I headed along the beach in front of Weybourne Camp until I could see the wonderful **Long-tailed Duck** properly – I think they look like patchwork ducks designed by children. While I watched, a Herring Gull flew over and the Scoters and the Long-tailed Duck dived as one – marvellous.

So now I am up to 151 birds in my Super Green quest – only 24 more to go. It doesn't sound too bad if you say it quickly!!

NENBC Alerts: WhatsApp Group

January to March 2025



By Tony Forster

January to the end March 2025, we welcomed 2 new members bringing the total to 64, there were more than 30 species posted of which 2 were new for the group taking the group list to **116**, a good quarter all round.

The two new birds added this month were **Long-tailed Duck**, present with the Common Scoter flock at Weybourne from January 11th onwards and **Lesser-spotted Woodpecker** which made a fleeting appearance at Selbrigg pond on March 5th.

Two birds that didn't make it on to the group were Hooded Crow which has been seen on and off in and around Mundesley, first reported January 2nd and again on March 31st literally as I write this... The second sighting was of a Pallid Harrier seen in company with 2 Common Buzzards at Sustead by a non-club member, always worth checking groups of Buzzards, you never know what you might find...

There were 9 reported Ravens, 6 Cattle Egrets, a Parakeet (unspecified), 4 Goosanders and 5 Whoopers, plus regular sightings of Purple Sandpipers, a single Merlin, Tree Sparrow and Kingfisher to add interest.

Outside of the area a flock of Lesser white-fronted Geese were regularly seen at Cley occasionally venturing East and I believe Moss Taylor managed to get them on his Weybourne Camp list but unfortunately the NENBC club area failed to lure them in.

Spring is on the horizon with the first spring arrivals having been recorded. My hopes are high that there will be something to excite everyone in the group in the next 3 months... Happy Birding

NENBC ALERTS

An NENBC members-only group to share news of interesting birds within the club area.

Please share records of species early/late dates, notable counts, scarce and rare birds.

Be mindful of potential rare breeding birds, sensitive locations and locations with no public access.

Please post news in a single message and keep messages to bird news ONLY, this is not a chat group.

The Norfolk Recorder may extract records for the bird report, please be as accurate as you can with locations and dates.

Birding through the year in Norfolk

Comments on some interesting observations

March 2025



By Moss Taylor

This year Moss is going to give us a commentary inspired by some of his interesting sightings around Norfolk during each month, a great pointer for some of the birds and features we can all be looking out for with a nice bit of background. Here is his February offering

March 1st | Oystercatcher – FR14808 controlled at Snettisham.

I recently received a phone call from Nigel Clark of the Wash Wader Ringing Group to say that at the end of January one of over a hundred Oystercatchers caught by cannon netting on the Wash at Snettisham, carried the BTO ring number FR14808. Not unusual for ringed birds to feature in their catches, but this one had been ringed 41 years and 8 months earlier, and was the oldest Oystercatcher to date from BTO ringing. Despite its age, the ring was still easily legible, and in good condition if rather thin, and did not need replacing. However, the reason he was phoning was to say that I had ringed it as a juvenile at Kelling Quags on 30th May 1983! On checking my ringing log, I see that it was from a brood of three and was ringed on the same day as three young Lapwings.



Oystercatchers first breed when they are 3-8 years old and very often breed close to where they themselves were reared, so FR14808 may well be nesting each year at Cley or Blakeney. The wintering population on the Wash consists of both British birds, as well as winter visitors from Norway and the Low Countries, which arrive in late summer/early autumn to moult and stay on for the winter months, before returning in the spring. Oystercatchers breed widely around the coasts of Britain and Ireland, and since the 1960s also at inland localities. The main wintering areas are around the coasts of the North and Irish Seas, where they feed on mussels and cockles. So why are they called 'Oystercatchers'?

The name was coined by Mark Catesby in his *Natural History of Carolina* and was referring to the American Oystercatcher, which may sometimes feed on "clams and coon-oysters". More appropriate local names for the European Oystercatcher are 'Mussel Cracker' in the North of England and 'Mussel Picker' in Ireland. But the most widespread vernacular name was 'Sea Pie' a reference to its pied, black-and-white plumage.

When *The Birds of Norfolk* was published in 1999, the longevity record for a British-ringed Oystercatcher was 33 years, the longest for any species of British wader.

The accompanying photo, taken in 2003 on Blakeney Point, shows a young Oystercatcher at about the same age at which FR14808 would have been ringed.

March 11th | Hawfinch – one at Lynford Arboretum.

At last our patience was rewarded. We had been standing at the entrance to the 'tunnel' at the Arboretum for over an hour, having arrived a few minutes after a female Hawfinch had flown off. Isn't it always the way? Then it suddenly re-appeared on the ground only 20 yards in front of us, but as luck would have it, its return coincided with a man pushing a wheelbarrow at the far end of the tunnel and it leapt into the air, briefly perching on one of the overhanging, horizontal branches before flying off, not to be seen again. But at least we had a reasonable, if brief view of one of the most elusive British birds.



My first encounter with a Hawfinch was way back in April 1961 at Kew Gardens in London. My mother and I were on our first visit to this world-renowned visitor attraction and were sitting in the open parkland having our picnic lunch, when one flew

over landing at the top of a nearby tree. Unfortunately I didn't have my binoculars with me and it was initially mistaken for a woodpecker, due to its rather undulating flight. However, there was no mistaking the prominent white wing bars and short, white-tipped tail, and while perched the massive, conical bill was very apparent. It even started to sing! Since then I have been lucky enough to have many encounters with this most charismatic bird, including one in the hand in Morocco and a male at the nest at Kelling Triangle in 1987. Sadly sightings have become less frequent in recent years, but they do include a male sitting by a nut-feeder in my garden on 3rd April 2018.

The Hawfinch is the sole representative of the Genus *Coccothraustes*, a name from the Greek meaning 'kernel breaker', while the name Hawfinch comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *haga* meaning an enclosure or hedge, a reference to it often appearing on hawthorn in winter. The Norfolk name is 'Coble bird' or Cobble bird'.

One of the most striking features of a Hawfinch is its massive bill, used to crack open the stones of cherries and olives, two of the hardest stones in nature. In this it is aided by a specially adapted skull, and muscles and ligaments, enabling the bird to access the kernel by opening the hard outer case along the suture lines and not simply by crushing the stone. Although usually associated with hornbeams, Hawfinches feed on the ripening fruits of a large variety of woodland trees and are thus found in a great variety of habitats from large gardens, parks and orchards to broadleaved and mixed woodland, and are thus very adaptable birds. Their presence is often betrayed by the constant volley of snapping noises as they crack open the dry seeds. As a result of their diet, they also make frequent visits to drink at shallow pools and ponds.

When moving between feeding sites, Hawfinches slip stealthily from wood to coppice, from coppice to thicket and along hedgerows. As a result they suddenly appear, as if from nowhere. Alternatively if the journey crosses open country, they will fly high and fast, plunging into the shelter of the first trees they encounter. When feeding on the ground, they are often the first birds in a mixed flock to detect and react quickly to potential danger, springing vertically from the ground and only returning after the other species have recommenced feeding. At Lynford, a loose flock of up to 14 Yellowhammers (worth visiting just to see these), were often the first birds to return when disturbed.

The accompanying photo was taken in April 2018, when a male graced my garden in Sheringham.

March 18th | Mediterranean Gull – 25+ pairs of adults at Titchwell.

Adult Mediterranean Gulls are magical birds with their glistening white upperwings and genuinely black heads. Their name, however, is a misnomer, as the main breeding area was originally around the Black Sea. From there they spread westwards and now have a fragmented breeding range in the Western Palearctic extending east to the Caspian Sea and west to Ireland. The species first bred in the British Isles in Hampshire in 1968 and nest at a handful of coastal sites in Norfolk, one of which is Titchwell.

At Titchwell, as at most breeding locations, they are attracted to, and nest among colonies of Black-headed Gulls. On the day of our visit, a glorious cloudless, sunny day, there was a continuous coming and going of pairs of Mediterranean Gulls, drawing attention to their presence overhead by their very distinct, mew-like calls, with some landing on the islands and others simply flying around, but always in their pairs.



The first Norfolk record, in December 1886, was most fortuitous as a local Breydon wildfowler, Charles Harwood, being unable to extract a cartridge from his gun fired at the first bird he saw, which was subsequently identified as an adult male Mediterranean Gull! It was only the second British record. The first one in the NENBC area was found by Peter Clark on the beach at Sheringham on 19th November 1952. At the time he was living in Station Road with his parents, who had a bait shop. The bird subsequently returned to Sheringham for the next five winters.

My first encounter with what was to become one of my favourite species of gull (along with Lesser Black-backed) was at Walton-on-the-Naze in Essex on 16th September 1961. A friend and I had gone to The Naze, specifically to look for the adult Mediterranean Gull, which had been present over the previous five autumns, since it was first found in July 1956 (only the second Essex record and the first for 90 years). We were delighted to see it in flight and on the water, while we were walking along the cliff top, but even more exciting we found a Wryneck in the bushes at the base of the cliffs. Two lifers in one day, so it was a very memorable occasion for both of us.

The accompanying photo of an adult Mediterranean Gull was taken in summer 2016 at Weybourne Camp.

March 20th | Kingfisher – flying west offshore at Weybourne Camp.

The Kingfisher, or more correctly the Common Kingfisher, is the most northerly and widespread species of kingfisher, and frequents most lowland watercourses, although the British population has declined in recent years. It is particularly vulnerable

to periods of severe winter weather, while other threats include river pollution, wetland drainage and the removal of riverside vegetation. It is also found around the coast in autumn and winter, especially in sheltered harbours and on saltmarsh creeks. However, seeing one flying low over the waves a couple hundred offshore is a rare occurrence, as happened off Weybourne Camp in March. My only previous sighting of such an event, was on 16th September 2013, and indeed the species is not seen annually in the Camp recording area.

Although apparent 'arrivals' have been recorded offshore from many sites around the British Isles, there is little evidence that these relate to birds from the Continent. In fact there have been very few recoveries of foreign-ringed Kingfishers in Britain. Although occasional autumn sightings were reported from offshore light vessels in the 19th century, not a single Kingfisher has been recorded in recent years from the North Sea oil platforms.

So exactly from where the Kingfisher off Weybourne had departed and to where it was going remains a mystery. But the fact that some Norfolk Kingfishers do travel fair distances was demonstrated by one that I ringed on Brent Pope's marsh at Salthouse in November 1972 that was found dead at Buckden GP in Huntingdonshire the following April.

The accompanying photo of a female was taken in 2020 at Mannington Hall.



Out and About in the NENBC Area: If Not Now When Wood, Suffield

By Val Stubbs



After following a twisty-turny route, guided by the SatNav we arrived in Brick Kiln Lane. We parked just off the road, but would advise against this - a large lorry came along a minute later and struggled to squeeze past our little car! As we walked towards the entrance of the site, we were greeted by the calling of a Sparrowhawk. A signboard by the five-

bar gate described the history and wildlife of the community orchard. And it recommended parking by the village hall – so we shall know for next time!

Entering the field, we were surprised to find ourselves in a lovely wet meadow (though if we'd have read the signboard, we would have known that this is a County Wildlife Site, designated as a rare habitat). Goldfinches were twittering in the trees and Peacock, Meadow Brown and Large White butterflies were fluttering among the watermeadow plants - Water Mint, Agrimony, Soft Rush, Common Fleabane, Wild Carrot, Rough Chervil, to name but a few. A nice little stream runs there and no doubt attracts wagtails at times. We followed the mown path through the meadow and round to the right. There were plenty of thistles for the Goldfinches to eat, and brambles to attract bees and butterflies. In the trees edging the meadow, a Chiffchaff was calling in a desultory fashion.

On passing through another five-bar gate, there was a complete change of habitat, as we entered the community orchard. Here a very wide range of tree species have been planted; I spotted Birch, Alder, Pear, Apple, Oak, Holly, Guelder Rose, Pine, Sweet Chestnut, fastigate Oak, Rowan, Copper Beech, Field Maple, Willow, Walnut, Elder, Dogwood, Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Sycamore and Poplar! Bird boxes had been fixed to many of the trees around the grassed areas.

We met a family picnicking in the Circular Mown area with their toddler exploring the ground maze. Wandering through the arch we were led to another grassy area with a couple of curious-looking mounds with steps up them. Never one to resist such an invitation, I scampered up to the top and followed the white stone path along the top. It turns out that these mounds are actually shaped like a question mark, and act as a huge butterfly bank!

We explored further and came across a vine-clad gazebo, picnic areas, a fire pit, a swing hanging from a magnificent Ash tree, strawberry beds and fruit trees and some impressive bug hotels. Along the western edge a secret path cut between the woods and the perimeter hedge, with arable fields beyond., and an owl box was placed there. A couple of Blue Tits chattered above me. As we meandered back through the meadow, we could hear a Chaffinch singing.

Highlight - although birds were thin on the ground, it being early afternoon in mid-August, this location has so much to offer, packed into a small space – a great place to bring a picnic to and just enjoy meandering through the different areas.

Memorable experiences and favourite birds



In February we told you about a new series we are hoping to get off the ground. Two of the questions we asked of the 10 members who were interviewed for our 10th Anniversary Commemorative Book were **“Tell us about a stand-out birding experience you’ve had and what made that particularly memorable for you”** and **“Everyone has a favourite bird or bird family don’t they? What’s yours and why?”**. Our respondents waxed lyrical about both these topics, so much so that for some we couldn’t fit their full answers in, and they were so varied and interesting! That got us thinking. We are going to include some of the missed accounts in the newsletter going forwards but what we would really like is to extend the questions out to the whole membership.

We’d really love to hear from you all! It doesn’t have to be a Norfolk experience or bird, or even a UK one, but it could be. It doesn’t have to be long (but we aren’t going to say no if it is!). It doesn’t have to include a photo if you don’t have one (although pics are always lovely) as some of the best experiences happen when there isn’t time or need for a photo. **Please do get in touch with your contributions!**

A top birding experience: Yellow-eyed Penguins by Tracy Brighten

One of Tracy’s top birding experiences that she wrote about for our 10th Anniversary Commemorative Book was in New Zealand where she lived for 12 years. We just couldn’t fit it all in that publication so here is her entry in its entirety:

“My stand-out birding experience abroad is watching Yellow-eyed Penguins on the Otago Peninsula, South Island, New Zealand, not only for the experience itself but knowing the challenges to their survival, mainly due to past and present human activities. An extract from my short memoir describes this experience.

Huddled behind the hide at the far end of Sandfly Bay, we shelter from winds whipping sand across the dunes. The sun is yet to break as we wait for yellow-eyed penguins to make their way from the headland to the rocks below. It’s a perilous journey from forest nests to ocean feeding grounds, and I wonder why a penguin makes this long trek across farmland each day...

In the ethereal light, I watch penguins resplendent in yellow crowns start their steep descent. Leaning forwards over their pink feet and jumping down the craggy slope, I can't take my eyes off them. I'm willing them to stay safe. At six weeks old, fast-growing chicks are left alone in twiggy nests while both parents go to sea. If they don't come back, their chicks will starve. We watch this feat of endurance for almost an hour, knowing these birds will have an even tougher climb when they return.

Penguins gather on the rocks below waiting for the morning light. Waves break over the rocks, licking, foaming and teasing. I can hear the penguins calling out, heads thrown back. Their Maori name is Hoiho or 'noise shouter'. I could listen to their trilling forever."

Favourite birds by Stella Baylis

Stella too had more to tell us in her 10th Anniversary submission than we could fit in ...

"It's very difficult to pick a favourite and it very much depends on the season. In winter, wetland birds hold a special place for me, although it is more about the spectacle, rather than an individual species. A Norfolk winter full of swans, geese, ducks and waders is there to be appreciated and enjoyed, and these fabulous birds enlighten a dark time of year that can be difficult. Come Spring, the Nightingale is my top bird. I spent 8 years monitoring and mapping Nightingale territories at Castor Hanglands NNR in Cambridgeshire, alongside colleagues and volunteers. I have many happy memories of being blown away by the sheer strength and variety of that song. The first sound of the tuning up of the Nightingale in Spring is an unbeatable feeling. I also have to mention both Peregrine Falcon and Bee-eater as favourites, having spent time volunteering at their respective breeding sites in recent years. It is such a privilege getting to know birds, learning more about them and watching their behaviours."

Cromer Peregrine Project

The 2025 Season (hopefully!) ...



By Jane Crossen

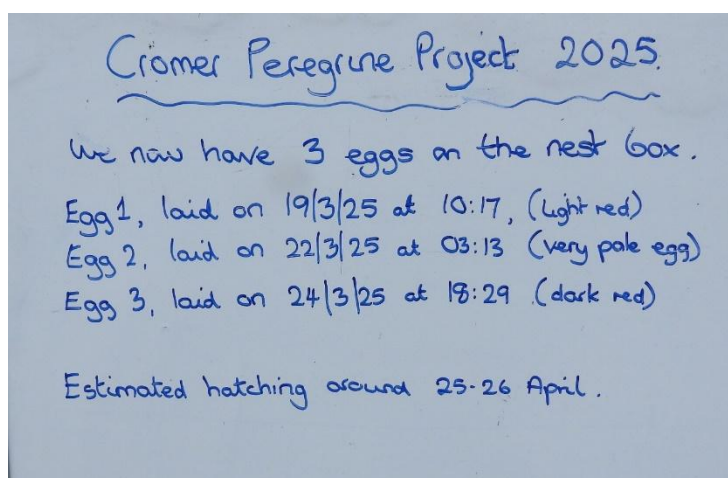
... and we're off – well almost – hopefully!

This is the whiteboard we have at the watchpoint detailing information about this year's eggs.

We've been officially open since the beginning of April and have already had lots of enthusiastic visitors wanting to know the history of the birds at Cromer church and general information about Peregrines. The webcam showing in the church is still as popular as ever too.

We have five cameras now, including one at a new location – the nave end (outside the church – obviously!) – which allows fantastic views of the birds around the church – not just on top of it! People far and wide have been able to see such things as a food pass and the adults seeing off intruders which include Red Kites - there are definitely more around the church this year. Here's a link to the webcam coverage of a Red Kite being seen off [a Red Kite being seen off](#) (courtesy of the Cromer Peregrine Project). They have also warned off Buzzards, the odd gull and even Crows. There have been a couple of occasions where a female juvenile happened by. She didn't stay long! There is always the worry at this time of the year that a newly-fertile female is looking for a nest site – and they don't get much better than Cromer church!

The main surprise to visitors is that the adults are year-round residents. When we explain that there are probably fewer better sites for catching the volume and selection of birds (especially the incoming tired ones), they understand why they stay here!



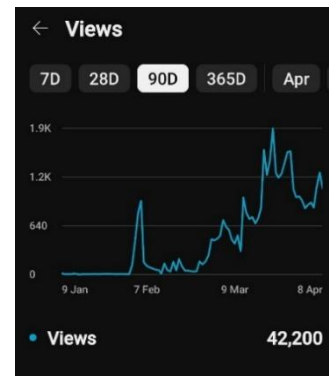
As ever lots of excellent views of the adults around the church. They don't go far this time of the year and are usually in good view through the telescopes. We have new volunteers this year too which is excellent news as the numbers had dwindled a bit over the years, for various reasons.

Hopefully by the time the next newsletter comes around there will be good news about hatchings. It's always a nervous time for the would be volunteer-parents!

A reminder of the YouTube webcam link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xWRXa1ah9Xo>

On the right are the figures for webcam viewings so far this year:



Some pics from me

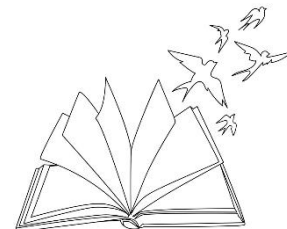


.... And some stills from the webcam



Review of the Month

I've Just Read



This month we have Moss again with an interesting look at old British Bird magazine articles to see how they match up with today's views and observations.

Here's a call to all of you. We are struggling these days to get articles in from the wider membership to compliment those I receive from our regular contributors (to whom I am eternally grateful). I am sure there are loads of you out there who enjoy a good read or watch about birds and nature and you have some gems you can share with other members. Whether it is fact or fiction, (the material not the review obviously!), **we would love to get some reports in from the rest of you so please see what you can let me have for next month** – thank you!

'British Birds' By Moss Taylor

I'm fortunate to have a full set of the monthly journal *British Birds* from the very first one published in 1907, and I get enormous pleasure from reading articles that were written 50 or more years ago. How things have changed – but have they really? I was fascinated particularly by two articles that related to fieldwork on visible migration in 1953 and 1956, both of which relate to NE Norfolk.

The first was entitled '**Migration at the Smith's Knoll Light-vessel Autumn 1953**' (*published October 1956*). Four observers took part, including the legendary Bert Axell, and observations covered mid-September to mid-November. The Light-Vessel is sited 26 miles off the north Norfolk coast and 100 miles from The Netherlands, thus it is out of site of land, so that the direction taken by migrants is unaffected by any coastlines.

The most numerous species recorded were: Starling 6,500, Rook 960, Chaffinch 825, Lapwing 300 and Skylark 220. They were all flying in a WSW to SSW direction at an estimated speed of c.30mph, and apart from the Lapwings, the peak passage was 3-4 hours after dawn. Many of the Chaffinches were simply heard calling, but were flying too high to be seen, and while few Bramblings were recorded during the day, many more were heard passing at night, as were Skylarks. During the two months, a total of 65 species was recorded on or from the Smith's Knoll Light-vessel including 9 Leach's and 20 Storm Petrels, 3 Water Rails, and single Moorhen, Tawny Owl, Wren, Barred Warbler and Tree Sparrow. It was considered that the majority of diurnal migrants had left the coast of mainland Europe at around dawn.

The second was an article penned by R K Murton, well-known for his work on agricultural pests in particular Wood Pigeons, entitled '**Visible Migration in NE Norfolk in November 1956**' (*published July 1959*) ...

While on a two-week holiday, he and his wife recorded visible migration from the cliff-top at East Runton. Each morning from 0600hrs to 1200hrs they kept counts of all the species passing their observation point, noting the time of arrival, direction and height of flight. The total counts over the two weeks for the five most numerous species were: Starling 3,700, Lapwing 1,150, Rook 680, Skylark 490 and Chaffinch 150. Whereas the Starlings were all flying W following the coastline with the majority between 0700 and 0900hrs, the other species tended to arrive an hour or two later and from the N to NE. Peak numbers were noted with a light southerly wind and no migrants were seen in gale-force north to north-westerly winds.

BRITISH BIRDS	
AN ILLUSTRATED MONTHLY MAGAZINE	
Edited by E. M. NICHOLSON W. B. ALEXANDER A. W. BOYD I. J. FERGUSON-LEES P. A. D. HOLLAND N. F. TICEHURST	
Editorial Address: 35, St. Leonard's Avenue, Bedford. Photographic Editor: G. K. YEATES	
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12 NOV 1956 PUBLISHED	
VOL. XLIX No. 10	
OCTOBER 1956	
BRITISH BIRDS	
MIGRATION AT THE SMITH'S KNOLL LIGHT-VESSEL, AUTUMN 1953	
By D. B. PEAKALL	
(1) INTRODUCTION	
This paper sets out the observations made from the Smith's Knoll Light-vessel (52° 43'N., 2° 18'E.) from mid-September to mid-November 1953. The vessel is 26 miles from the Norfolk coast and some 90 miles from Holland. Four observers did spells of a fortnight each:—	
17th September to 1st October	H. E. Axell
1st October to 15th October	E. G. Longman
15th October to 29th October	J. H. R. Boswall
29th October to 11th November	D. B. Peakall
The expedition was organized by J. H. R. Boswall. Where field-notes are given in the systematic list of species the observers are referred to by their initials.	
The main period of the autumn migration was given a far longer coverage than had been the case with any previous work carried out on light-vessels. The first studies of migration from light-vessels were carried out by Eagle-Clarke (1912) in 1903 on the Kemish Knock, where he watched from 17th September until 18th October; Owen (1953) carried out further studies from the same light-vessel from 22nd October to 5th November in 1952. A comparison with this work will be given under species headings. On the other side of the North Sea, Verwey (1922) watched from the Dutch Light-vessel "Doggersbank" from 26th August to 23rd September 1920, which is too early in the season for comparison with the present study. Mözzer Bruyns (1939) visited the "Terschellingerbank" Light-vessel from 13th to 26th October 1937. From this light-vessel, being fairly near the chain of islands off the Dutch coast, migration was observed in many directions and cannot therefore be compared with the present work. There are also some observations made from drifters in the Dogger Bank area by Murray (1927, 1930, 1931); however, although many species were identified the numbers of migrating Passerines seen	
373	

They assumed that the average flight speed was 25-30mph, so the time of arrival suggested that the migrants were not leaving from the Dutch coast (150 miles away) at dawn, otherwise the peak arrivals would be expected after 1100hrs. But instead that they were leaving Scandinavia and the Baltic region at dusk on the previous day, which was supported by David Lack's radar studies in East Anglia, which showed that migrants were arriving directly from Scandinavia into Norfolk.

So here were two different interpretations of the origins of the migrants, despite the fact that the same five species were involved. If the exercise was to be repeated nowadays, I doubt if the same five species would be at the top of the list and the numbers of birds involved would certainly be far fewer.

If you aren't as fortunate as Moss in having your own back-copies to lovingly flip through, they are available online for free via Internet Archive <https://archive.org/> so you can read the articles mentioned in full:

[Migration at the Smith's Knoll Light-vessel Autumn 1953](#)

[Visible Migration in NE Norfolk in November 1956](#)

Contemplating Conservation Operation Turtle Dove

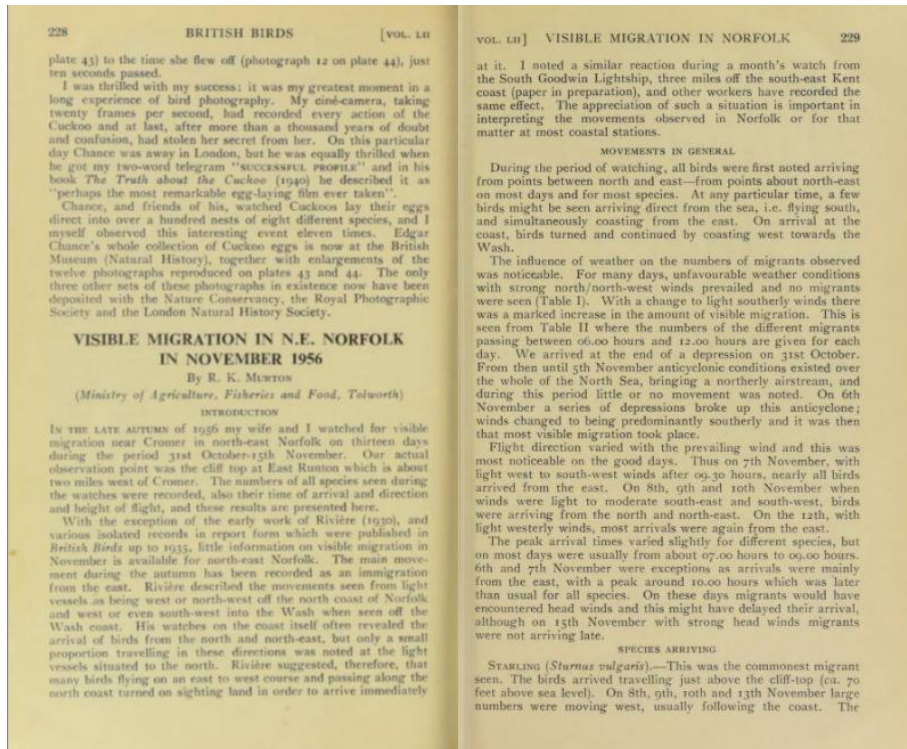
By Val Stubbs

Here's an article from the most recent [Felbeck Trust \(FT\)](#) newsletter from FT Trustee and NENBC member Val West Beckham Old Allotments is one of FT's [sites](#) and sits in our area. This former allotment and daffodil field is being restored to wildflower meadow, boundary hedges are being gapped up and native trees are being planted. The reserve is part of the RSPB's "Operation Turtle Dove" project – intended to reverse the decline of Turtle Dove, and several drinking ponds have been created to meet the requirements of these scarce birds. NENBC members are welcome to visit the site which has walk on access. If you fancy a spot of practical conservation volunteering, or if you would like further information on the site or FT, do contact drop Val a line.

"With spring in the air, Turtle Doves will be commencing their hazardous journey back from Africa. We will restart our supplementary feeding programme with food supplied by the RSPB, and from April 1st we have closed access to the Western half of West Beckham Old Allotments and the whole site will be a no dog area until after the breeding season.

The good news – just in – is that the hunting bans that have been in place in France, Spain and Portugal are beginning to have a dramatic effect on the number of Turtle Doves. According to Bird Guides, there has been an "extraordinary population recovery in western Europe, with a 40% increase reported in breeding pairs between 2021 and 2024".

[European Turtle Dove shows signs of rapid recovery - BirdGuides](#)



Operation
Turtle Dove
SAVING A BIRD ON THE BRINK

This means that there will be more Turtle Doves looking for suitable breeding habitat, which makes the role of Operation Turtle Dove in protecting and creating suitable habitat all the more important.

The habitat management work done as part of Operation Turtle Dove doesn't just benefit Turtle Doves. According to a [recent article](#) by one of Operation Turtle Dove's farmland advisers, the three essentials for Turtle Doves – tall, thick, thorny hedges; an accessible water source; and a supply of arable wildflower seeds – are also beneficial for many other species.

The dense scrub and hedgerows which are ideal for Turtle Doves to nest in also support a wide range of other species from across the taxa. For example, Blackthorn is a major source of pollen and nectar due to its early flowering, while its early foliage is a foodplant for the caterpillars of various moths. Later in the year, sloes, the fruit of Blackthorn, are a favourite for birds.

Many farmland bird species depend on this kind of habitat, such as the Yellowhammers recently ringed at the site.

Hedgerows provide shelter for Hedgehogs and other mammals as well as reptiles and amphibians.

Turtle Doves feed on the seeds of low-growing wild flowers and arable plants, found on disturbed soil or very short sward. These wild flowers are important for pollinators such as bumblebees, bees and butterflies. The seeds of these wild flowers also provide food for birds.

The bare ground that benefits Turtle Doves is also important for invertebrates, providing nesting habitat for about 250 species of solitary bees, mining bees, wasps, ants and beetles. It serves as a hunting ground for beetles and spiders, and basking sites for butterflies. Bare ground also causes thermoregulation and provides warmth to reptiles and amphibians.







As Turtle Doves have short legs, they need puddles or ponds with a gentle slope so that they can access water, as they consume only dry seed. Such ponds provide habitat for frogs, toads, newts, dragonflies, damselflies, beetles, spiders, other invertebrates and aquatic plants – two-thirds of the UK's freshwater species are found in ponds. Ponds located in areas of intensive arable cultivation are particularly crucial, as these farmed areas often lack accessible water, and creatures will often travel long distances in search for water.



Yellowhammers: so beautiful it's worth showing you the same photo twice

Check This Out!

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

-  [Evaluating protected areas for migratory birds - BirdGuides](#) [12-Apr]
-  [High microplastic levels in bird lungs point to widespread air pollution - BirdGuides](#) [09-Apr]
-  [Lucy McRobert: money talk - BirdGuides](#) [30-Mar]
-  [Possible functions of Bearded Vulture's 'beard' - BirdGuides](#) [26-Mar]
-  [Major Hoopoe influx hits Britain and Ireland - BirdGuides](#) [02-Apr]
-  [Going low for waders - BirdGuides](#) [23-Mar]

[Link to BlueSky thread](#)

[Link to BTO website](#)



BTO | British Trust for Ornithology
@btobirds.bsky.social








1/ ⚠️ Blackbirds are in trouble & we need your help! Threatened by the Usutu virus, we need you to submit your garden Blackbird sightings so scientists can better understand the virus' spread & potential impacts on these songbirds. 🟢 Sign up www.bto.org/blackbirds #UKBirding #Ornithology

BLACKBIRDS IN GARDENS SURVEY
We need your help!
www.bto.org/blackbirds

13 April 2025 at 19:00 🗨️ Everybody can reply

84 reposts 4 quotes 122 likes

6 88 122

-  [Egyptian Vulture promoted to Category A of British list - BirdGuides](#) [27-Mar]
-  [Another record year for British bitterns - BirdGuides](#) [25-Mar]
-  [Discover Senegal and the birds we share along the flyway RSPB](#) [09-Apr]
-  [Colourful city birds | ScienceDaily](#) [Max-Planck-Gesellschaft 09-Apr]
-  [New research finds fluorescence in feathers of long-eared owls | ScienceDaily](#) [Drexel University 08-Apr]
-  [Peregrine falcon eggs smashed in St Albans Cathedral live stream - BBC News](#) [07-Apr]
-  [Traffic noise makes birds aggressive, Cambridge researchers find - BBC News](#) [23-Mar]


Simon Gilling's
@simongillings.bsky.social

1/ 🐦 Bird songs and calls are an important way that people experience the natural world. They're also one of the key means of surveying bird populations. In this #BOU2025 talk I will review @btobirds.bsky.social research to explore opportunities and challenges of #bioacoustics in #ornithology


92% of Wrens recorded on UK Breeding Bird Survey squares were first detected by sound

2 April 2025 at 11:30 🗨️ Everybody can reply

31 reposts 4 quotes 97 likes

 4
 35

[Link to thread on BlueSky](#)

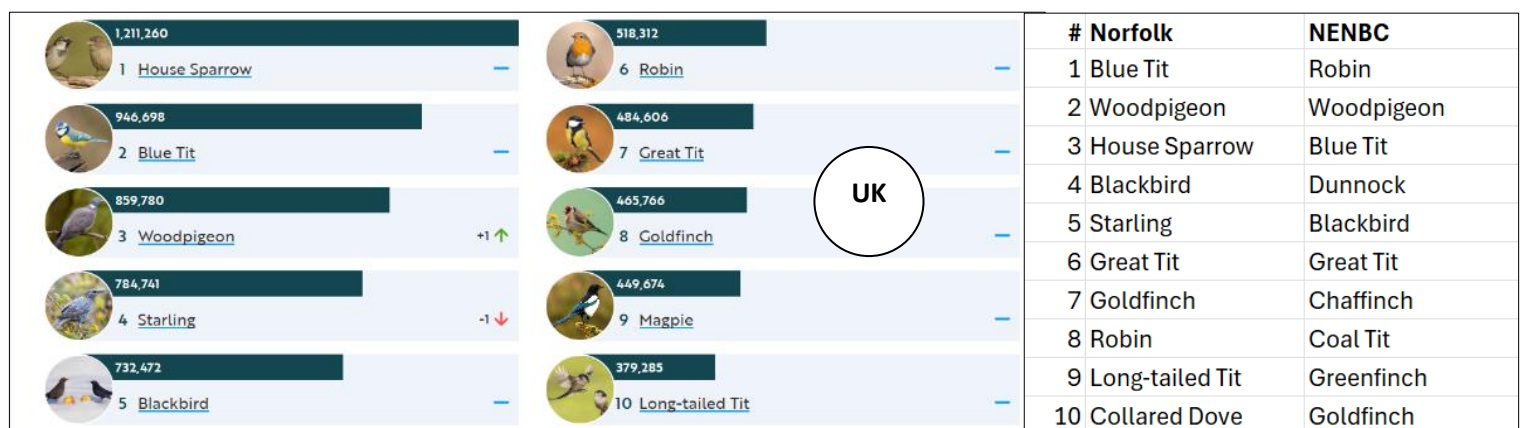
RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch 2025


The results are in!





From [Rare Bird Alert](#): “The results from this year’s Big Garden Birdwatch have revealed the Starling has dropped from third to fourth place as the lowest number ever was recorded. House Sparrow held onto top spot once again and Blue Tit remains at number two, with Woodpigeon and Blackbird making up the other top five most recorded species in UK gardens. Starlings are a red listed species in the UK and considered a high conservation concern due to their declining numbers. Although there is not currently enough evidence to confirm what is causing these decreases, the UK breeding population declined by 82% between 1970 and 2022. Prior to 2000, the Starling was regularly the most numerous species recorded in the Big Garden Birdwatch.


The RSPB’s Chief Executive, Beccy Speight said: ‘Starlings are one of our most charismatic garden birds, but this year’s Big Garden Birdwatch results is a reason for concern. With one in six species at risk of extinction from Great Britain, we’ve done more damage to our natural world than we realise. However, we can all do our bit to support these threatened birds by taking small actions that can not only benefit Starlings, but a wealth of other garden wildlife.’” Here’s the results in video format ... [Big Garden Birdwatch: The results have landed](#)






Cleeve
ID: 262930
Status: active



Cuach
ID: 242386
Status: active



Cuach Jor
ID: 242384
Status: active



Cuthbert
ID: 262937
Status: active



George 2
ID: 262934
Status: active



Hafren
ID: 262938
Status: active



Henry
ID: 262933
Status: active



Joe
ID: 232670
Status: active



KE
ID: 242388
Status: active



MacSpornan
ID: 262931
Status: deceased


Nick 2
ID: 262928
Status: active


Sayaan
ID: 242502
Status: active


Severn
ID: 262932
Status: active


Trent
ID: 242383
Status: presumed dead


Wilfrid
ID: 262936
Status: active

Current Cuckoos



movements and read some updates on progress.

If you were enthralled by Phil Atkinson’s talk covering Cuckoos last month (see write-up on [page 18](#)) and want to see how the current BTO tagged Cuckoos are doing, here’s the link to the website [Cuckoo Tracking Project](#) | BTO - British Trust for Ornithology where you can scroll down and view an interactive map of


Gordon Hamlett @gordonhamlett.bsky.social · 23h

Last year, I took abuse from a woman in the hides at Cley, who complained that my phone was making too much noise and would I please turn it off. I pointed out that the noise was, in fact, coming from the swallows nesting inside the hide! And guess what? They’re back this year too. Yay! #ukbirding

 3

 35



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.](#)

"Sweet 'tsee' or 'schlee', loud 'sfeesp' or 'sureee' from perch. Song weak repetition of short, slurred notes."
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

"In much of Europe call a fine 'psit' or slightly fuller 'tslie' (also 'tsrlie'), but in Balkans and in parts of E Europe (feldegg) usually a more grating, frothy 'zrri(e)'. Song is one of the most modest of all bird songs, usually consisting of two (occasionally one or three) scraping notes, with the last generally slightly stressed, 'srrii-srriiht'; often delivered from top of a post, low bush or fence-wire perch."

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

"Call is a loud 'psweep' that is given in flight and from a perch. Sings from May until July. Song is a variation on the call, interspersed with a rather feeble warble"

from RSPB Handbook of British Birds 4th Edition by Peter Holden and Tim Cleeves

Wordsearch

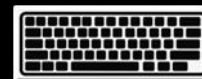


This month, we have the 22 species or races recorded in April 2024 for which we have less than three records for each – you never know what might crop up on your walks at this time of year so keep your eyes peeled! For the purposes of this puzzle, ignore any hyphens, apostrophes, brackets and spaces. Solution is at the end of this newsletter.

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

Avocet
Cuckoo
Glossy Ibis
Great Skua
Grey Plover
Guillemot
Hooded Crow
Kittiwake
Merlin
Nightingale
Redshank
Tree Pipit
Wigeon
Woodcock
Black-tailed Godwit
Dunlin
Golden Oriole
Golden Plover
Goshawk
Kingfisher
Raven
Twite





No new rare bird record have been 'Accepted' by the Norfolk Records Committee [NRC] for our area since our last newsletter update. You can view their current '**NRC work in progress**' file on their website [16th Dec 24]. The British Birds Rarities Committee also have a '**BBRC work in progress**' file available on their website [16th Dec 24].

NENBC Website



A huge thanks to the **107** of you who have uploaded records to our website so far this year date. It is very much appreciated by us and the bodies we send the data on to for inclusion in the county reports. Not started adding records yet? Make it your spring resolution this year! If you need any assistance, just drop us a line on nenbc@aol.co.uk or through the messaging element of the website.

Over the coming months we are going to try and get a bit more in this section on the data side of things. Val is going to start us off with some monthly 'Prolific Poster' stats and we will be combining this going forward with some more varied info. Some suggestions we have had so far include most improved member, a locations leader board, under-watched areas, species not seen in some areas etc. It will take a while to get some of this sorted so watch this space but in the meantime, if you have any ideas about what you would like to see reported, please get in touch and we will work out whether we can add it in.

Prolific Posters is Back!

By Val Stubbs

I know some people weren't fans of the Prolific Posters page on the old website. If this is you, don't read any further (apart from the final paragraph – please). However, if, like me, you miss the friendly rivalry and challenge of the Prolific Posters page, read on, because this is for you. Below is the table of the 30 most prolific posters in the Club so far this year. It will come as no surprise to most of people that Phil Borley and Mark Clements are out in the lead by a country mile – but they do put in the hours, both in the field and at the computer!

Rank	Birder	Points	Rank	Birder	Points
1	Phil Borley	54,250	16	David Griffiths	4,080
2	Mark Clements	31,280	17	Alan Stevens	4,070
3	Philip Cartlidge	21,760	18	Andrew Kershaw	4,070
4	Valerie Stubbs	20,900	19	Dawn & Tim Wright	3,910
5	Tony Pope	20,610	20	Moss Taylor	3,900
6	Trevor Williams	7,730	21	Michael Harcup	3,890
7	Paul Laurie	7,640	22	David Barrass	3,770
8	John Hurst	6,120	23	Philip Hall	3,700
9	Peter Geary	5,830	24	Roger Unite	3,690
10	Stephanie Witham	4,990	25	Russell Page	3,680
11	Stella Baylis	4,870	26	Carol Thornton	3,550
12	Di & Richard Farrow	4,800	27	Christopher Mason	3,290
13	Colin Blaxill	4,780	28	Thomas Wright	3,050
14	Doug & Jenny Cullern	4,740	29	Ann Gladwin	2,940
15	Peter & Sue Morrison	4,420	30	Andrew Clarke	2,660

This version of the prolific posters table is rather less sophisticated than the one previously on the website, and is based purely on birds recorded – at this stage there are no points awarded for early arrivals, comments, photographs etc. Points are allocated according to the likelihood of seeing a species. So the common birds, such as Wood Pigeon, Blue Tit and even Goldcrest and Curlew, will earn you 10 points. 'Mildly' interesting birds, like Marsh Tit, Cuckoo and Grey Wagtail gain 20 points. Interesting species – the likes of Dartford Warbler, Firecrest and Ring Ouzel – will garner you 30 points, while very interesting birds such as Glossy Ibis, Lapland Bunting or Richard's Pipit add 40 points to your score. And if you are lucky or persistent enough to spot a real rarity such as Lesser White-fronted Goose, Dusky Warbler, Pallas's Leaf Warbler or Brunnich's Guillemot you are awarded 50 points.

I will update the table monthly, but won't be able to include records that are added late – so if you want all your birds to count, please make sure that you upload them by the end of the first week of the following month (i.e. for April records to be included in next month's Pied Flyer, you need to be sure to get them uploaded to the website by May 1st). Timely logging is a good thing anyway, as it also means that other members can see what's about. And in any case, it's better to keep on top of

your records so that you don't end up with that horrible feeling in the middle of December that you'll never get your year list finished in time! (I was still logging at about 11.30 on New Year's Eve last year – never again!!)

As well as the fun of seeing where you rank, there's also a more serious reason for the Prolific Posters listing: to encourage people to log their records. All NENBC's records are added to the BTO's BirdTrack, whose data is used by the county recorders to compile the annual Norfolk records. These form part of the data that can be used to analyse trends in bird populations – both abundance and distribution. This in turn can inform strategies to protect birds and their habitats, so that these wonderful creatures can flourish for us and future generations to enjoy.

For our first foray into trying to extract a little more data from our website records, here's a table of the top ten locations in terms of number of records posted from that site last month. The second column shows the number of species recorded there and the third the number of observers reporting from there. I had to double check the figures as I was amazed that Kelling Heath produced 61 species and actually more members posted March records from there than from anywhere else except Sheringham. Whenever I visit Kelling Heath I invariably come away thinking I haven't seen much but this is obviously because I haven't been looking or listening hard enough!

Location	#recs	#spec	#obs
Weybourne	1215	90	13
Beeston Common	539	58	11
Weybourne Camp	539	101	11
Beeston Bump	486	69	15
Selbrigg Pond (Lower Bodham)	436	56	22
Sheringham	435	78	39
Kelling Heath	407	61	26
Weybourne Cliffs - Coastal Path	363	54	14
Felbrigg Park & Lake	351	66	22
Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs	232	49	8

Social Media



markclements27.bsky.social
@markclements27.bsky.social

Eider passing Sheringham this morning



17 March 2025 at 18:58 👤 Everybody can reply



bridgetjanejones.bsky.social
@bridgetjanejones.bsky.social

Cromer Church peregrines looking pretty cool today!
@nenbc.bsky.social @rsbp.bsky.social @rspbengland.bsky.social @cromerpereregrines.bsky.social



29 March 2025 at 21:12 👤 Everybody can reply



bridgetjanejones.bsky.social
@bridgetjanejones.bsky.social

Highlight of the day definitely 3 x Treecreepers on Beeston Common. Beautiful markings on this bird. Chiffchaffs were out in force, singing away and 3 x Red Kites over Beeston Common - that's unusual for these 'ere parts (just out of shot were five Buzzards). @nenbc.bsky.social @rsbp.bsky.social



31 March 2025 at 21:41 👤 Everybody can reply



Ken T
@velociraptor500.bsky.social

Mallard looking rather colourful in the sunshine but this Water Rail seemed to be avoiding the sunlight as it skulked along at the bottom of a ditch. Blackthorn starting to flower and spotted this Pheasant on the local fields yesterday.



17 March 2025 at 19:01 👤 Everybody can reply




markclements27.bsky.social
@markclements27.bsky.social

Terrible photo, I know, but still able to make out a House Martin heading west past Beeston bump this morning




27 March 2025 at 19:18 👤 Everybody can reply




Ken T
@velociraptor500.bsky.social

Primroses on top of the bank on a roadside verge. Yellowhammer seen quite regularly on recently sown arable field, often in the company of a small flock of Linnet. Roe Deer, its antlers covered in velvet in the water meadow at Felbrigg NT.




29 March 2025 at 18:31 👤 Everybody can reply



Carl Chapman
+44 7833 463034

Lesser spotted Woodpecker at Selbrigg Pond this am in trees around Forestry England entrance ... opposite pond. Plus Raven South over Kelling Heath.

18:58 👍👍 2



Trevor Williams

First pop-up sea-watch this Tuesday, NLP. See website and March Newsletter for details.

20:10



The Noisy Magpie

By Betty Docking

taken from 'Once in a Blue Moon and Other Poems' published 1960

A plump little Magpie screeched: "Fiddle-de-dee!"
As he sat on the branch of a sycamore tree

He sounded so cross that the other Birds said:
"He must have climbed out of the wrong side of the bed.
Just look how he's flapping and screaming with rage!
He really deserves to be put in a cage."

But old Mothe Magpie said : "Come, Birdies, come!
I fancy he's swallowed a very tough crumb;
And tho' he is making a fearful to-do
Remember, the same thing may happen to you.

"So don't be too ready to scold him my dears,
A pat on the back is more helpful than jeers!"

Photos from Doug Cullern, Richard Farrow (x3), Dave Billham



The bird voice variously described was that of a [Yellow Wagtail](#). 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 Bird Facts Yellow Wagtail](#) page and their ID video [Identifying Yellow-Coloured Wagtails](#). *Photos from the top Jane Crossen, Richard Farrow, James Appleton, Jane Crossen, Moss Taylor*

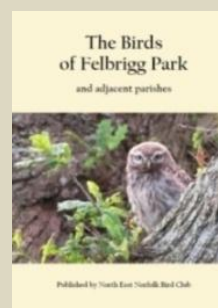


This month's **Wordsearch Solution:**
BIRDS RECORDED IN THE NENBC AREA IN
APRIL 2024

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



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 the 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

For Annual Reports or The Birds of Felbrigg Park, contact Carol on nenbc@aol.co.uk.

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** 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