



## Newsletter June 2007

### Wild About the Wensum at Pensthorpe

A great day was had by all at the Wild About the Wensum event at Pensthorpe on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> May. The day stayed fine although it was rather windy, The first walk of the day was led by Alwyn, Bill Shepherd and Colin Fenn and although the small birds were in short supply the walk lasted almost two hours and was enjoyed by a group of sixteen people showing a great interest in all aspects of birding. The day was greatly enhanced by the opening of the event by Professor David Bellamy OBE which took place in front of the **Wensum Valley Birdwatching Society** stand, followed by a photograph in Mondays EDP of Josh Leeder standing by the Professors' side in front of the WVBS stand. The club stand featured a mural of a wetland scene (kindly painted by Carole Jackson) and children and adults coloured or cut out birds and then stuck them onto the mural. By the end of the day it was completely covered and made a lovely display, - it was obviously a wonderful success.

A big thank to all the people who worked hard to make the day so successful.

### Bird Ringing Demonstration

Weather permitting (light winds and no rain) Ray Gribble & Allan Hale will be ringing birds on Whitwell Common on the evening of Sat 7th July / early morning Sunday 8th July. All members are welcome to come along and see birds in the hand. In fact it is an excellent opportunity to see many of the Warbler species close up. I suggest you arrive from 5pm in the evening or before 8.30am in the morning (after then the number of birds we catch is very limited).

In the event that the weather is unsuitable on Sat / Sun the ringing will be postponed to Sun 8th / Mon 9th July. To check that the event is on please ring Ray on 01603 872709 before leaving home.

## Excellent Garden Birdwatching

by Charles Neale

We live in the middle Wensum valley in Elsing, surrounded by woodland, arable fields, semi-permanent pasture, meadows & worked-out gravel pits.

Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> June dawned grey and cool, but by mid-morning the sun had burned off the cloud and in the increasing warmth I was doing a little gentle weeding at the top of the garden. I heard a bird call from overhead not dissimilar to that of common terns which we get from time to time. Looking up through the trees I saw what appeared to be two falcons circling around and diving at each other. No binoculars !!

I hurried down to the house for the 'bins' and got good enough views to tell that both birds were Hobbies. I could see their facial patterns and rufous thigh feathers before they circled off to the west and out of my sight. Thoughts of weeding were put aside now I had the binoculars and I turned my attention to the several Jackdaws that appeared to be hawking flying beetles (probably garden chafers, *phyllopertha horticola*), which had been emerging from the lawns for several days.

Next into view came a male Kestrel which I watched for a couple of minutes catching even larger beetles (cockchafers?) on the wing in its feet, then bending its head down to eat them in mid-flight. Into view in the far eastern distance came another larger bird flying at right angles to me. It appeared crow-like at that distance, but I was on a roll now and willed it to turn into the north-westerly wind before I would have lost it behind the trees. This it did and I could see it was very buzzard-like. It continued to circle on the wind gliding westwards towards me. As it arrived over the garden I could see it was a Common Buzzard and so did a corvid which took to mobbing it. At this point my wife, Fran, arrived home and was in time to see it before it disappeared into the west.

I showed her the Jackdaws and then into view came a single Hobby, hawking for the beetles in a similar way to that of the Kestrel. We watched it for a couple of minutes until it was lost from sight behind the trees. If I hadn't heard the initial bird call I would probably not have had this wonderful half hour experience. Two days before this we had seen 4 Mistle Thrushes and 3 Spotted Flycatchers in the garden. Later on Saturday I heard alarm calls from the Mistle Thrushes and saw a Sparrowhawk flying off towards the trees without visible prey. I wonder how many times these sorts of birds had been here before when I have had my head down weeding? I had better spend more time sky watching and less weeding !!

## **WVBS 2007 Summer Bird Count**

There are several reasons for joining in the Bird Counts-

1. To help get a complete set of records for the Society
2. An excuse (if one needs one) to spend a few hours with like minded friends enjoying birdwatching in the WVBS recording area
3. Getting more species on our yearly list if we keep one
4. Seeing how our skills compare with other members in finding the birds in our area
5. Possibly seeing completely new species

For me it is all of these although I'd be lucky if I managed the last – but you never know. Whatever your reasons it should be FUN so it was disappointing that only 3 teams entered. Those that did take part certainly enjoyed themselves and saw some exciting birds.

In total 93 species were recorded with everyone seeing such good birds as Marsh Harrier, Hobby, Common Buzzard, Turtle Dove, Kingfisher, Grey Partridge and Spotted Flycatcher. We all had excellent views of Woodcock (6 sightings) and Nightjar (3 chasing each other in good light & really close). I just hope they will perform as well on the Nightjar evening.

I know ALL birds are GOOD but let's face it some are more exciting than others.

Other special birds were Teal, Wigeon & Shoveler (all drakes) at West Raynham, Honey Buzzard, 1 male giving the best views I've ever had as it glided in front of the trees at Great Ryburgh Raptor Watch Point, Little Ringed Plover, on nest. Barry, Bridget, David and Ian saw a rufous phase Cuckoo.

The team just mentioned had a change of gendre as Ian was replaced by Bridget on Sunday morning!! Is this within the rules? Does it matter – certainly not. They enjoyed themselves.

If by now you are wondering who recorded the most species – is it important? Not really. But for the record Josh and I got 89 species with Barry et al then Sue & Bill both close behind. Bill & Sue also saw Otter at Sparham Pools.

Those who did not join in missed a great day's birding. Don't miss the Winter Bird Count. If you want help don't be shy to ask.

PS I'll be forwarding all the records to our new Recorder

Ray Gribble

## Summary of the best birds in the valley for May

Thank you to the seven members who sent in records.

**Bar Tailed Godwit** 1 at Swanton Morley on 3 (**Rare Bird Alert**)  
**Barn Owl** reported from 9 locations max 3 at Old Costessey & County School  
**Black Kite** 1 at Gt Ryburgh on 20 (PR)  
**Black crowned Night Heron** 2 Sparham Pools on 4 (RBA)  
**Cetti's Warbler** 1 at Lenwade Station on 2 (AB) and 1 Lenwade Mill on 27 (JP)  
**Bullfinch** reported from 5 locations  
**Common Buzzard** up to 4 at Gt Ryburgh (PR)  
**Common Cuckoo** reported from 7 locations  
**Common Nightingale** up to 3 calling all month at Ringland Common (AB)  
**Common Quail** 1 calling at Mill Farm, Gt Witchingham on 12 (A&CJ)  
**Eurasian Hobby** Up to 3 at RWP & Gt Ryburgh on 19/20 (RBA & PR)  
**Eurasian Marsh Harrier** 2 at Guist on 7 (IB), 1-2 at Gt Ryburgh on 19/20 (PR)  
**Eurasian Reed Warbler** 1 at County School on 20 (IB)  
**Eurasian Woodcock** 1 at County School on 20 (IB)  
**Eurasian Bee-eater** 1 at Gateley on 13 (RBA)  
**Eurasian Honey Buzzard** 6 sightings of a single bird from 17 to 20  
**Eurasian Turtle Dove** reported from 5 locations, first from Lenwade Bridge on 2 (NS)  
**Garden Warbler** reported from 8 locations, max 3  
**Goldcrest** 4 reports from 3 locations  
**Grey Wagtail** 1-2 birds reported from 5 locations  
**Little Egret** 3 reports of 1-2 birds  
**Little Owl** reports of 1-2 from 2 locations  
**Marsh Tit** 1 at Beeston on 1 (RG)  
**Northern Lapwing** up to 6 birds from 4 locations  
**Northern Wheatear** 1 at Gt Ryburgh on 4 (PR) and 1 male at Old Costessey on 22 (AB)  
**Osprey** 1 at Sparham Pools on 6 (RBA) and 1 at Guist Bridge on 12 (RBA)  
**Red Kite** 1-2 at Guist on 7 (IB & RBA), 1 at RWP on 19 (RBA) and at Honingham on 8 (RBA)  
**Ring Ouzel** 1 at Sparham on 4 (RBA) and 1 female at Beeston on 1 (RG)  
**Sand Martin** 1 at Lenwade Common on 28 (JP)  
**Spotted Flycatcher** 1 at Mill St, Elsing on 24 (C&FN) and 1 at Worthing on 24 & 31 (DK)  
**Water Rail** 4 at Dereham SW on 29 (IB)  
**Willow Tit** 1 at Ringland Common on 4 (AB) and 1 at Sculthorpe on 9 (RBA)

Andrew Brown

### **We have a new Recorder.**

Member Andrew Brown has volunteered to be Recorder for the Society from the beginning of June so would members please send any records to him his by email at [werdna46@aol.com](mailto:werdna46@aol.com)

Or by post at 6 The Glade, Old Costessey, Norwich NR8 5EB

Or by telephone on 01603 – 745556

We would like to express our thanks to Andrew for accepting this task and wish him well in his endeavours.

### **ODD BEHAVIOUR OF GREAT TIT**

We are accustomed to seeing blackbirds anting in our garden during the summer months. They normally spread their wings over an ants' nest and behave very much as though they are dust bathing.

Recently we saw a great tit over an ants' nest in our garden picking up individual ants in its bill and placing them under its wings. It carried this on for some time treating alternate wings.

Presumably this is a form of anting. We have heard various explanations of anting but am I not right in believing that it is accepted to be a way of tackling parasites?

Geoff Hemmings

### **Common Tern Raft**

I will be visiting the Tern Raft at Sparham Pools w/c 18th June to record progress and ring any young that are of a suitable size. It is likely to be in an evening and I will arrange for access if any members wish to visit. If you are interested please contact me closer the time when I'll have more details. Phone number above.

Ray Gribble

### **Subscriptions**

The committee has decided to extend the period for membership renewals until 1<sup>st</sup> July this year. This will be the last newsletter you will receive if your membership has not been renewed.

## **Forthcoming Events**

### **Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> June Pub Grub and Nightjars at Marsham. Leader Ray Gribble**

For those wanting pub grub we will meet at the Marsham Arms at 7pm. We plan to leave the pub at about 9pm to go to Marsham Heath to watch and listen for the Nightjars and other species like Woodcock and Owls. If you don't fancy any pub grub then join us at anytime before 9pm. The Marsham Arms is situated on the B1149 Horsford to Holt road just NW of Horsford (TG173200). Details of menus, etc can be obtained on [www.marshamarms.co.uk](http://www.marshamarms.co.uk). There is no need to order food in advance but so we can let the pub know how many people to expect would you please let Sue (01603 879980) know by Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> June. Thank you.

### **Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> July Evening Walk in Wensum Valley. Leaders Charles and Fran Neale**

The walk will commence at the Swanton Morley Gravel Pits at 7.30pm,  
Grid ref:- TG018188

**Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> July indoor meeting** will be Andrew Reeve on "Pensthorpe – Cranes and Corncrakes". Weston Longville Village Hall 7.30pm

### **Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> July Field Trip: Pensthorpe and Picnic.**

**Wild about Norfolk** in September will again be at Notcutts Garden Centre Norwich. We will be mounting a stand in the main marque and anyone with photographs of birdclub activities that could be used please contact Alywn (01362 - 637752 or our Secretary Liz Waller (01603 – 867638).

### **Articles/letters etc for the July newsletter to reach Sue Gibney by Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> July**

**by email at [admin@wvbs.co.uk](mailto:admin@wvbs.co.uk)**

**Or hard copy Sue Gibney 37 Norwich Road Lenwade NR9 5SH**