WVBS Newsletter

July 2025

I could not resist using this photo of a Kestrel chick for this month's front cover. It was taken from one of the WVBS Kestrel boxes to be ringed. There were 5 chicks in the box, which was just one of many put up in the Wensum Valley by Nick Edwards and monitored by Nick, Ray Gribble and Emily Leonard.

What a great success – thanks to Ray, Emily and Nick for doing such a great job, and for Steph and Paul Plaster for providing the boxes.

See pages 14 & 15 for more evidence of successful broods!

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From the Editor

"You are never too old to bird watch, but if you stop bird watching you will grow old".

I heard this quote recently in relation to another hobby, but I think it is equally true for us. Even if it's watching from indoors, or listening rather than seeing, birdwatching can still put a smile on your face.
And hopefully reading about it is almost as good as the real thing! This month's newsletter is full of reports on trips of various kinds. Thank you to everyone who contributed with both words & pictures.

If you have something to contribute next month, please get it to me by Monday 11th August.

Your Committee

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Secretary				
Recorder				
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Membership Secretary				
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Newsletter Editor				
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Forthcoming Events

Outdoor Meetings: Please remember to **book your place** for Outdoor Meetings, either by adding your name to the list at Indoor Meetings or by contacting the leader directly. Please also let the leader know if your name is on the list but you can't make it.

Indoor meetings are held at Great Witchingham Village Hall, usually on the third Thursday of each month.

Thursday 17th July 7.15pm	**Summer Social and talk from George Baldock – NWT Warden at Cley & Salthouse Marshes**

We are delighted to welcome George Baldock, the warden of the world-renowned Cley and Salthouse Marshes Nature Reserve. I am sure most of us will be familiar with this wonderful NWT flagship site, and we will be fascinated to hear how George and his team manage it to create this first-class birding hotspot.

After George's presentation we will share food that members bring, and the evening will be a perfect opportunity to meet up and chat with old friends. We will also provide some table quizzes for those who want to exercise their grey cells as well as their tongues!

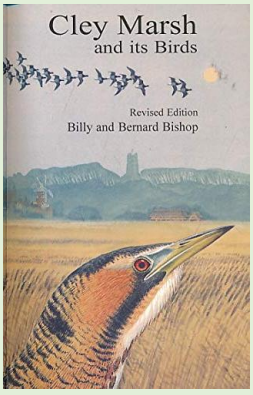
We would like to ask everyone to bring either a savoury or sweet course to share with others. Please also bring your own plates, glasses, cutlery and condiments. We will provide Summer Pimms and a non-alcoholic fruit drink, and you are welcome to bring your own favourite tipple as well.

All members, partners and friends are welcome.

We will need help to set up so please can volunteers report from 6.30 p.m.

View from Cley Visitor Centre decking

Memoirs of Cley by Billy Bishop



Outdoor Meeting
Sunday 27th July

RSPB Titchwell Marsh Nature Reserve

It's fair to say that RSPB Titchwell is one of the flagship reserves in North Norfolk and well worth a visit. Situated between the villages of Titchwell and Thornham (entrance off the A149), it has a range of habitats - reedbeds, saltmarsh, freshwater lagoons and a wide sandy beach. Hopefully we will see large numbers of waders along with ducks and geese. Marsh Harrier roost on the reserve and we may get lucky and see Bearded Tit or a Spoonbill.

We will meet in car park at 8.30 am and bird through to about 12 and then stop for lunch. There is a café which has a selection of hot and cold snacks, cakes, ice creams and hot and cold drinks, and a picnic area for those who would rather bring their own lunch.

Female Marsh Harrier (RSPB)

We will then have an afternoon session till about 4 - 4.30 pm.

Please join me for the morning or afternoon or stay all day.

There is an entrance charge of £7 per person for non-RSPB members. And please remember it's a northerly wind it may be chilly so even in July a jacket may be needed!

Address
Titchwell Marsh,
Main Rd,
King's Lynn,
PE31 8BB

What3Words
curls.grower.remembers

Grid reference
TF74964360

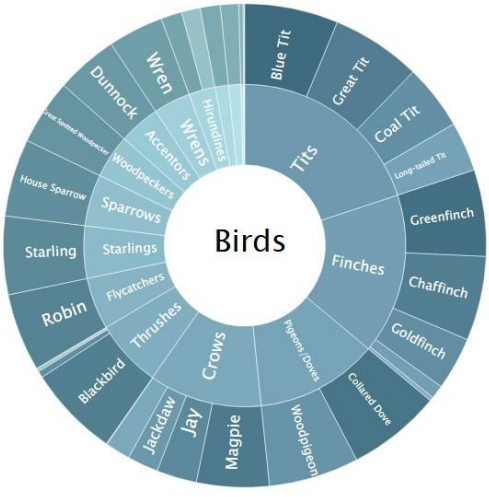
Indoor Meeting
Thursday 21st August
7.15pm

Susan Jones – BTO Garden Birdwatch

BTO Garden Birdwatch Scheme

Susan works for the BTO (British Trust for Ornithology) and helps run the Garden Birdwatch scheme. The presentation will be about this very important work which was started in 1995 and is a 'citizen science-based project'. Members of the public record and submit lists, on paper or online, of the various species of birds and other wildlife, including dragonflies and mammals, that frequent their gardens. Some members may already be participating in this invaluable scheme she'll advise how and why we can get involved.

Example of data provided about the birds in your garden.



Outdoor Meeting
Sunday 31st August
(please note change of date)

Suffolk Wildlife Trust
Carlton Marshes

Carlton Marshes is a Suffolk Wildlife Trust reserve near Lowestoft (www.suffolkwildlife trust.org/carlton).

Located at the southern tip of the Broads National Park, it is a matrix of grazing marshes, dykes, pools, meadows and scrub: good for waders and wintering wildfowl. Maybe we'll see some migrant activity as well as resident birds.

Entry is free; parking £3 donation. There is a Visitor Centre with toilets (open 10-4.30) and café. There may be (weather dependent) the option of taking the foot ferry (£3 return) across the Waveney to have a picnic, go to the Waveney Inn for lunch or just to cross the river. Walking is all flat (of course) on trails and may be up to 3 miles. There are shorter options but usually the best bits are furthest away.

Meet at 9.30 am at the Visitor Centre NR33 8HU; map ref TM 508920; w3w: invite.otter.holly or just follow the brown signs. We can start with a short circular trail to arrive back at the centre for its opening before doing the longer trail.

Aerial view of Carlton Marshes, (John Lord)

Chirping from the Chair

by Alan Hughes

Seabird Ringing in North Norfolk

I received this email from Chris & Denise Lamsdell at the end of last month:-

For information a number of Terns/Gulls were ringed at Scolt Head today as follows:

Sandwich Tern** - will have green darvic on left leg with 3 letters/numbers starting K

Black-headed Gull** - will have a red darvic on left leg with 4 letters/numbers starting 2C** & 2H

Mediterranean Gull** - will have yellow darvic on left leg with 4 numbers starting 21

All sightings can be reported via https://iceni.shinyapps.io/sightings/ where you will get full details - data will be available from 27th July

Chris & Denise Lamsdell

Iceni Bird Monitoring Group @BirdIceni

General Articles

NENBC Conference

by Stuart Malone

To both celebrate its founding and continued success of ten years, NENBC held this conference attracting close to 100 delegates. NENBC had kindly invited local Bird Clubs to share their special day and Cath Robinson and I were fortunate to be the two invited WVBS members.

The conference schedule involved lectures from three highly respected speakers (detailed at the report end) followed by a final Q&A session.

1st Lecture - Will Cresswell

With a very spirited delivery and a touch of humour, Will took us through the Anglo-African migratory pathways and the many pleasures and pains in tracking, locating, and netting these birds. Will used the Whinchat as an example to highlight the superb navigational skills of these birds who often return to the same bush! Will further highlighted some of the amazing tracking information relating to flight durations and flightpath that is now obtained, highlighting the Cyprus Wheatear found in the horn of Africa that migrates the 1600 miles to Cyprus in one hop in about 50hrs!
To the question "Whose birds are these?" Will's answer was a categoric "Theirs – African".

Although an accomplished scientist, Will's great love of hands-on birding was clear to see and highlighted when asked what is your favourite bird? He replied with "whatever I'm looking at".

2nd Lecture - Juliet Vickery

Juliet gave a lovely history of her scientific development and her journey into a birding career and her love of the Dipper. Juliet covered the work and challenges of the BTO and her role in former partnerships and collaboration to support bird conservation. I really enjoyed Juliet's honesty and humour when she said she confessed to not being the greatest birder and sometimes wore a hoody at Cley to avoid the head of BTO being spotted miss identifying a bird!

3rd Lecture – Wenceslas Gatarabirwa

Wenceslas ran through his formative training years including his Masters at UEA. Wenceslas spent time detailing the training of ornithologists and field workers in Africa, which is gradually increasing. In supporting this training NENBC financially contribute to the salary of a training staff member who will hopefully visit the UK next year.

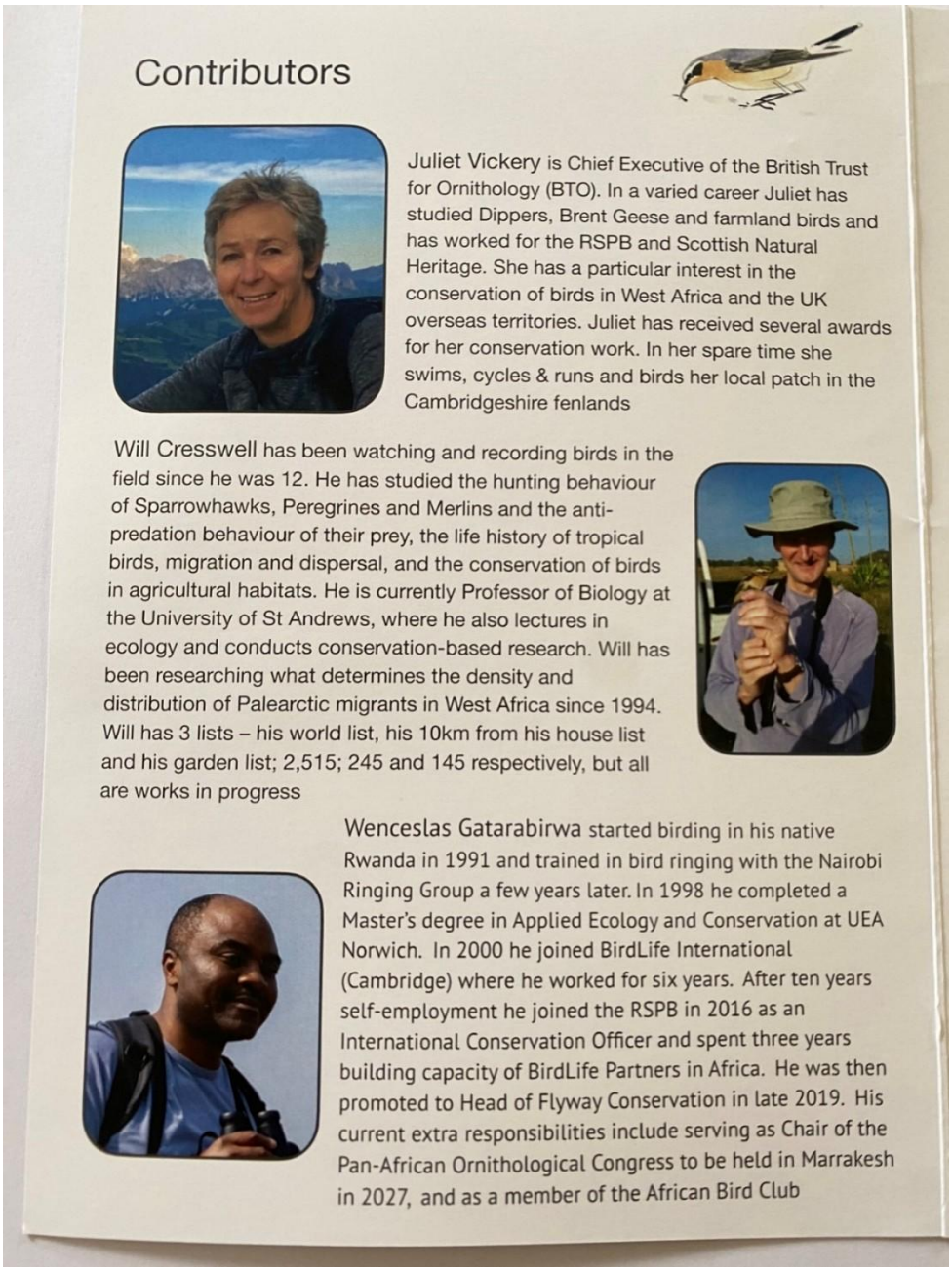
When asked what his favourite bird was, I was pleased to hear it was not an African rarity but the Skylark, which as we have some resident birds, I think can be considered both ours and theirs.

Q&A

There were a range of questions put to the panel, but I think the most enjoyed questions were when the panel engaged with three young school age birders asking them what they enjoyed, how they became interested and what can be done to attract more younger members.

When the panel were asked what the day's take home message was to improve bird conservation it was a clear and unanimous answer, "Try and encourage a new person's interest in natural history". Increasing interest, we will give greater awareness of the concerns and challenges of the natural world giving a louder and stronger voice supporting it".

In summary it was an excellent day, great lectures, lovely venue with NENBC providing superb hospitality, food and refreshments. I really enjoyed the day and felt I had experienced something very special. It certainly took my relatively new/low birding knowledge and interest to a higher level, and it was a privilege to share the experiences and thoughts of major contributors in bird conservation.



Contributors

Juliet Vickery is Chief Executive of the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). In a varied career Juliet has studied Dippers, Brent Geese and farmland birds and has worked for the RSPB and Scottish Natural Heritage. She has a particular interest in the conservation of birds in West Africa and the UK overseas territories. Juliet has received several awards for her conservation work. In her spare time she swims, cycles & runs and birds her local patch in the Cambridgeshire fenlands

Will Cresswell has been watching and recording birds in the field since he was 12. He has studied the hunting behaviour of Sparrowhawks, Peregrines and Merlins and the anti-predation behaviour of their prey, the life history of tropical birds, migration and dispersal, and the conservation of birds in agricultural habitats. He is currently Professor of Biology at the University of St Andrews, where he also lectures in ecology and conducts conservation-based research. Will has been researching what determines the density and distribution of Palearctic migrants in West Africa since 1994. Will has 3 lists – his world list, his 10km from his house list and his garden list; 2,515; 245 and 145 respectively, but all are works in progress

Wenceslas Gatarabirwa started birding in his native Rwanda in 1991 and trained in bird ringing with the Nairobi Ringing Group a few years later. In 1998 he completed a Master's degree in Applied Ecology and Conservation at UEA Norwich. In 2000 he joined BirdLife International (Cambridge) where he worked for six years. After ten years self-employment he joined the RSPB in 2016 as an International Conservation Officer and spent three years building capacity of BirdLife Partners in Africa. He was then promoted to Head of Flyway Conservation in late 2019. His current extra responsibilities include serving as Chair of the Pan-African Ornithological Congress to be held in Marrakesh in 2027, and as a member of the African Bird Club

<u>Birding In Estonia in early summer</u> **by Cath Robinson**

I know other birders who have gone to Estonia in Spring to see Stella's Eider and other sea ducks and geese in numbers, as well as owls and woodpeckers when they might be easier to see than later in the year. But I can thoroughly recommend it in the late spring/early summer when the temperature is higher and the days longer. Our Oriole group picked up 180 species, with excellent views of many.

There's a good variety of habitat: coast, wetlands, bog and fen, farmland and forest both mixed and coniferous. Just no hills. And there is hardly anyone about. Tarvo, our local leader, said that if he went birding and there was another car there, he'd go on to another site.

We saw a hunting Long Eared Owl on the drive to the first hostel while the grounds there gave us a tireless singing Tree Pipit, Whinchat, Spotted Flycatcher, Icterine Warbler, White-tailed Eagle, Marsh Harrier and we heard Golden Oriole and Thrush Nightingale.

Our first day was based around Matsalu National Park on the west coast. There was a good variety of waders but not in large numbers. We spotted a Curlew Sandpiper in breeding plumage before everything was put up by a Montagu's Harrier, the first of what was to become almost a daily sight. Nearby scrubland gave great views of a pair of Barred Warblers, our first Red-Backed Shrike, Common Rosefinch and Tree Sparrow. Then a brief lakeside spot to see 2 pairs of Slavonian Grebes in summer plumage and then on for a raptor fest: first a Lesser Spotted Eagle flying over our heads then up to 6 Montagu's Harriers quartering the fields, a Golden Eagle being mobbed by Marsh Harriers, a pair of Kestrels mobbing a Hobby - all with a background of the song of innumerable Skylarks. We heard and then saw a Corncrake and 4 Woodlarks as we were leaving. A very satisfactory stop!

Clockwise from top left;
Thrush Nightingale
Montagu's Harrier
Barred Warbler
Common Rosefinch

The next day started with a seawatch, never my favourite but there was *some* shelter from the wind and it wasn't *too* cold. We had good views of Red-Throated and Black-Throated Divers, scoters and Eiders plus Sandwich terns and Caspian terns to add to our list. Then a short walk away in woodland we spotted Firecrest, Crested Tit, Common Redstart and a pair of the northern race of Bullfinch which are definitely bigger than ours. On to a viewing platform over a reedbed and standing water: Red-necked Grebes, Great Reed Warbler, reeling Savi's Warbler and many Black terns were the highlights along with thousands of roosting dragonflies in the reeds which gradually took to the wing as it warmed up: an amazing spectacle.

Another day: more highlights! A walk along a boardwalk through a boggy area with birch, pine and masses of flowering *Ledum palustre*: "marsh labrador tea or marsh rosemary" gave us two Black Grouse and we heard and then saw several Wood Sandpipers. Strange to see them calling from the top of small pine trees (right). The inevitable Montagu's Harrier came along and was mobbed by several Wood Sands and a Common Snipe. 2 Black-tailed Godwits flew over our heads, one with a colour ring which was later determined to have been ringed in Estonia.

The guesthouse where we stayed the night overlooked a small pool by the coast and soon attracted a Marsh Sandpiper, a Ruff, Little Ringed Plover and Common Ringed Plover with several Wheatears and there were nesting House Martins and Barn Swallows. What a place to stay. That evening we went out owl-hunting in nearby Soomaa National Park where we had flypasts from several Woodcock before Tarvo alerted us to the alarm calls of Blackbirds nearby and then a quietening before a Ural Owl (below) flew over our heads into adjacent trees. And then off. At another site we heard an owl calling before it flew onto a branch in full view. And then to another nearer giving fantastic views. A life tick for many of us. And we saw a Beech marten crossing the road on the way back!

Another day: even more highlights. At our first stop we heard and saw a singing Blyth's Reed Warbler (below left) and also the rather lovely white-headed sub-species of Long -Tailed Tit (below middle). Next we found a White-backed woodpecker (below right) We couldn't leave before we saw the singing Wood Warbler: another treat. Then to a wetland site which had been unproductive in the wind of the day before: what a change! We heard and then located a pair of Penduline Tits (bottom left) at their amazing nest, great views of Citrine Wagtail (bottom right) as well as Yellow Wagtail (White Wagtails were everywhere) and at a small pool we found a small group of waders: summer plumage Spotted Redshank, a displaying Ruff, Common Snipe and Black tailed Godwit. And Sand martins to add to our Hirundine list. Just great.

In a wooded park in Tartu, we found Pied and Spotted Flycatcher, Fieldfare with young, Treecreeper and Icterine Warbler. But the star was a very vocal and obliging Greenish Warbler (below left) flying around us and giving great views. We went hunting for Booted Warbler (below right) on scrubby land just out of town. Successful but greedy, we went to a second site where we had much better views (although it looked that this site on the outskirts of the town was destined for new build). That evening we had our first attempt at a Great Snipe lek site: weather not ideal and while we heard them very clearly it wasn't very convincing: TBC.

Next day was a Woodpecker fest: although we started with a Pygmy Owl (right): so sweet looking but continually mobbed by smaller birds: Crested Tit, Wood warbler , Chaffinches….. Then Black Woodpecker and a 3 -toed Woodpecker. At another site with mature oak woodland, we saw another White backed WP and then a Middle-spotted WP. Two minutes down a track we stopped to listen to a Thrush Nightingale which was very vocal but also very active and showing surprisingly well. After lunch where we met up with an Estonian hen party, we went on a lovely riverside woodland walk (the only hills we climbed in Estonia) where after hearing Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers calling for ages we eventually saw them, then added Grey Wagtail (rare in Estonia) to our list. Our trip to the lek site was more successful and we had views of them flying silhouetted against the low evening mist. One of us had night vision binoculars and I had great views through those! On to a lakeside where 2 Little Bitterns (a national description species in Estonia but this year had seen a record influx) had been reported earlier that day and we did indeed hear both of them calling in a duet but it was too dark to see: about midnight at this point.

Our final day with a late flight gave us a chance for more birding: 2 stops en route to Tallinn gave us great views of a Red-breasted Flycatcher with a red breast (below left)! And more Lesser Spotted Eagles (below middle) and Honey Buzzards. Our final visit was to a coastal site just west of the port of Tallinn with reedbeds and a track to the sea. Clouds of Swifts, a flying Bittern, Common Rosefinch, Great Reed Warblers, many Yellow Wagtails and a good assortment of ducks and waders. But Jonathan thought he saw a fox : but was it a fox? He wasn't sure. It disappeared into long deep grassland/ reedbed but Lapwings continued to mob it so we tracked it until finally it emerged and it was indeed a Golden Jackal (below right). Apparently there is a population in Estonia whose habitat is coastal grasslands and reedbeds where wolves are "seldom present".

So great fieldwork and a wonderful end to our Estonian trip. It was truly memorable.

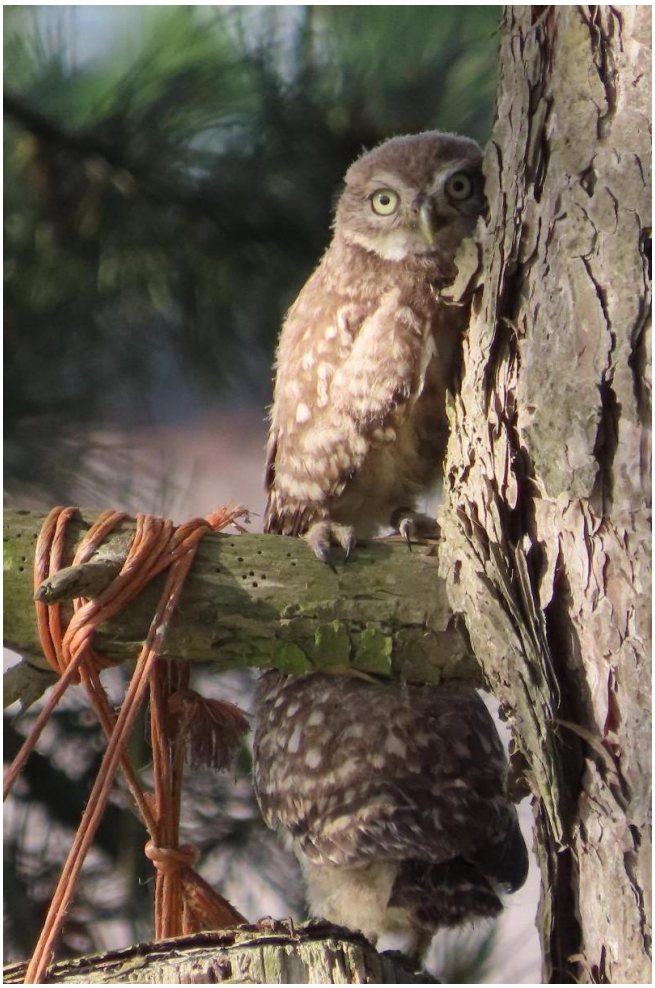
Photo credits: Jonathan Farooqi and Simon Elias . To both of you many thanks.

June Photo Gallery

Linnet (above left) and Grey partridge (above right) ***Steve Connor***

More nest box success below - recently fledged Kestrels ***Nick Edwards***

Great-crested grebe with chick
David Laurie



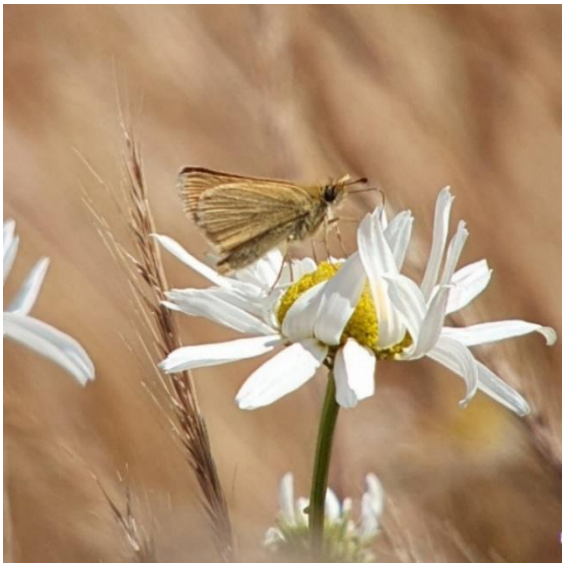
Little Owls enjoying another (slightly worse for wear) WVBS nest box. It has now been replaced with a new one. ***Beryl Hines***

I love this photo of a Little Grebe out of the water, taken by Steve Connor at Pensthorpe. As Steve says, it's unusual to see them on land, and it seems the Coot was surprised too!

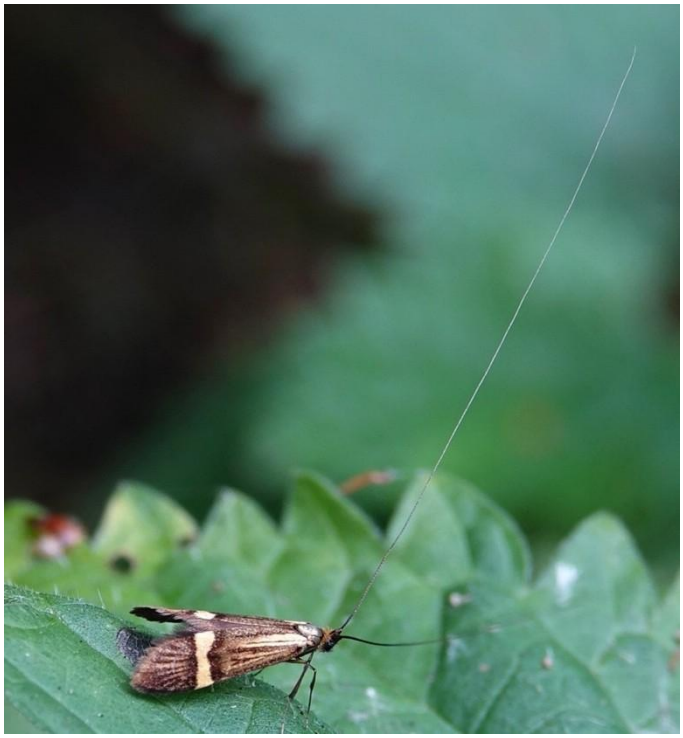
Grass snakes
David Laurie

Common Blue damselfly (above left) *David Laurie* and Black-tailed skimmer (above right) *Steve Connor*

Above left to right; Small Heath butterfly (critically endangered in the UK & Red Listed), Small Eggar Moth larval colony and Small Tortoiseshell *Steve Connor*



Small skipper (left) *Steve Connor* and Large Skipper (right) *David Laurie*



The appropriately named Yellow-banded Longhorn, Taverham Mill.
Like Ruff and Black Grouse, the males of this small moth gather at a lek to display, flying vertically up and down and occasionally settling.
David Laurie

Two-banded Spearhorn, (above) and Marsh Orchid (left)
David Laurie

Recent Events

Outdoor Meeting to Lakenheath Fen & Maids Cross (Saturday 24th May)

Reporter: Ptolemy McKinnon

Photographs Ptolemy McKinnon & Paul Adams (Bittern photos)

The morning started at RSPB Lakenheath car park where we were treated to watching Great tits going in and out of a nest location in the solar panels in the car park. A brood of young Great tits could be heard, likely not far from fledging. It gave that feel of the busy time for a lot of birds, and that was to show during the outing.

The group walked towards New Fen, hearing and seeing Reed and Sedge warblers on the way. Whitethroat was also briefly heard. At the New Fen viewpoint, we could see a lot of signs of the breeding season including Coot chicks. There were also Tufted ducks and a single male Pochard looking very smart.

A walk from here along by the south side of New Fen led to seeing a Great Crested grebe on a nest and Greylag geese with young (right).

With breeding season in full swing, it was a good time to see Bitterns as they become more active in May and June to feed chicks. There were several sightings across the outing. The first was a spot by Cath while walking along past New Fen. It gave fantastic in-flight views for most of the group. We then headed west through the reserve, hoping to have some time at Mere hide, but it was full, so it was onwards to Joist Fen. Several dragonflies started to be seen, including Black-tailed skimmer and Four-spotted chaser.

At Joist Fen (below), the group had the chance to spend some time in one spot, and it paid off. Firstly a few of the group had notice two photographers nearby facing away from Joist Fen. Alan noticed they were photographing a Bittern, with the group able to see a Bittern on the ground on this occasion from a sensible distance. Hobbies gave very good views, with upwards of a dozen individuals seen.

After a while at the viewpoint over Joist Fen, Cranes were heard. This then sparked a walk along the riverbank to see if we could see these birds. There was no joy in seeing Cranes, but there were very good views of Cuckoos, including a female bird being heard.

With the strong breeze, the group ventured no further west and turned eastwards towards Washland. A Red kite was seen over an area of woodland and a Great Spotted woodpecker was heard here too. On nearing Washland, another Bittern was seen in flight. Shoveler and Gadwall were also seen before we reached Washland (right). Here we saw Avocets, Redshanks, Lapwings and Stonechat. Seamus and Paul also saw Common sandpipers. As we walked around Washland to the viewpoint, we saw Little egret, the fourth heron species of the day, adding to sightings of Bittern, Grey heron and Great White egret. A Common tern was also seen flying along the river and over Washland.

The RSPB reserve part of the outing finished with some refreshments at the visitor centre.

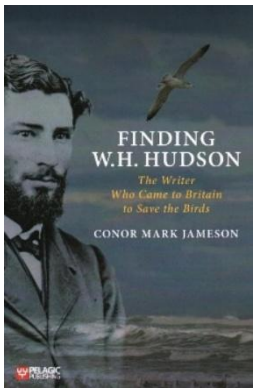
After rain had been forecast in the early morning, the second part of the outing was moved to the afternoon, a trip to Maids Cross Hill Nature Reserve (below left) between Lakenheath village and RAF Lakenheath. Most of the group stayed on to visit the reserve and the first port of call was viewing the nearby fields to look for Stone curlew. None were seen, but Pied wagtail and Roe deer were recorded. We then went into the reserve. A Glow worm larva (below right) was spotted on one of the paths while we made our way to look out to RAF Lakenheath. After a time scanning, Nightingale was heard singing. None were seen by the group, but several were heard. We also heard Garden warbler and saw Yellowhammers and Greenfinches.

WVBS spying on USAF? No, just looking for Stone Curlew!

In total, 67 bird species were recorded across the two sites.

Saving Norfolk's Birds: The W H Hudson Story – Conor Mark Jameson

Indoor Meeting 16th June **Reporter: Cath Robinson**



The club was very happy to welcome Conor back after his stimulating talk on The Goshawk in 2022. This time he was talking about his book: Finding W. H. Hudson, a rather extraordinary naturalist born in South America in 1841. After a childhood on the wild pampas of Argentina and then becoming a gaucho, he travelled to the UK - at one-point homeless sleeping in Hyde Park before becoming the doyen of the early wildlife conservation movement in the salons of London.

He had no formal education and was a completely self-taught ornithologist and naturalist. As Conor described him, we became more aware of this man deeply passionate about the environment, fearless in defending it and well ahead of this time.

After travelling to the UK, he began by familiarising himself with the local birds and habitats. Drawn to London, he met Emily Williamson and was the only man in the room when in 1889 she brought together a dozen women to launch what became known as the Society for the Protection of Birds, the forerunner of the RSPB. The focus was on ending the global trade in bird feathers for fashion and so began a long campaign against powerful vested interests. Although often controversial, he developed an extensive network with many political connections including Lord and Lady Grey and some celebrity ones including the Ranee of Sarawak.

He travelled England extensively, including a visit to the Brecks, a pilgrimage inspired by the poetry of Robert Blomefield, the "John Clare of Breckland". He also visited other parts of Norfolk including the Broads and stayed at Cromer, Wells and Hunstanton where he left his binoculars on the cliffs!

He was the author of many books, fiction, non-fiction, sci-fi! Some indeed are still in print. (I had indeed read one "Long ago and far away" about his childhood without realising that it was the same man!). But most were about natural history in some form, often about areas in the UK where he had stayed but also a rather sad pamphlet on Lost UK Birds. He was a member of a very auspicious authors group including Galsworthy, Chesterton and Conrad who all supported him.

His influence and importance were such that in 1925 a Portland stone memorial was erected in Hyde Park, designed by Jacob Epstein (Rima the bird-girl was, rather controversially for the time, naked to the waist). He is now lauded in Argentina where some of his books are published in Spanish under his name Guillermo Enrique Hudson and there is a town named after him.

He lived to see the Plumage Act become law and also the first meeting of what would become Birdlife, ensuring that there would be a truly global response to conservation. And Conor thought he would have be delighted that at least some of the Lost Birds of the UK in his pamphlet are now back including Crane, Bittern, Avocet, Spoonbill.

Many thanks to Conor for a very interesting presentation about this fascinating man and also for his enterprising use of photographs of others to compensate for the lack of the Real Thing!

Outdoor Meeting: Nightjar evening, Broadland Country Park (Friday 20th June).

Leader: Nick Edwards **Reporter: David Laurie** **Photo: Sophie Burrow**

This event is our latest start time and shortest walk, with a trek of only 50 metres from the car park. Also one of the most weather dependent, and on this occasion we had a warm, clear day that promised a good evening.

Arriving a little before the scheduled time a Great Spotted Woodpecker was calling, a Chiffchaff was briefly in song and there was time to see a little of the park before the full group of 16 settled to watch over the cleared area of heath by the picnic benches.

A Stonechat was seen flitting about, and a Chinese Water Deer was spotted grazing out in the heathery undergrowth. As the sun set a Hobby flew over.

Nightfall was understandably late as we were on the eve of the longest day but around twenty to ten we heard short bursts of churring a good way off. As the time neared ten two Nightjars were seen flying along the edge of the woodland over to our left.

This prompted a move to a spot even nearer the car park and this proved a great choice on Nick's part. A Nightjar flew directly overhead before one perched on an exposed branch at the top of a nearby birch tree and serenaded us with its long, churring, reeling song. Check out Rosie Forster's video on the WVBS WhatsApp group!

It perched long enough for excellent views with telescopes and for pictures. Great to see one so clearly before it eventually flitted off, showing us what a graceful, elegant bird the Nightjar is in flight.

This is possibly the only outing where we will encounter bats and as night gathered there were Common Pipistrelles and possibly others overhead. At this point the Nightjars had turned silent so with thanks to Nick for organizing a very successful evening we headed home.

Outdoor Meeting: Foxley Wood (Saturday 5th July)

Leader & Reporter: Sue Gale

This outdoor meeting was something of a departure from the usual, as we were looking for butterflies not birds. But it's a quiet time of year for birding and an excellent time for our target butterflies – Purple Emperor, White Admiral, Purple Hairstreak and Siver-washed Fritillary.

Although the weather forecast had not been very promising, 16 of us met at the car park on a fairly bright, warm morning. We retraced our steps along the main entrance drive so that any stragglers could catch up with us, although we were in more danger of being run over by them! Before we left the car park we had seen a Large Skipper (thankfully we had James to ID it), the first of many fresh new Gatekeepers, a Speckled Wood , Meadow Brown and Small White. By the end of the track, we had added Siver-washed Fritillary, Comma, Ringlet and Green-veined White to the list.

Turning right along the wide ride we saw many more Ringlets and Small Whites, easily the most numerous species, but we found a single Painted Lady nestled in the foliage and added Large White and Red Admiral to the list. Progress is very slow when looking for butterflies, compared with our usual birding, but we did also take note of the birds we heard (we really didn't see many). They included Bullfinch and Oystercatcher, Blackcap and Skylark.

Meeting the crossroads of paths we paused to examine the tops of the Oak trees and were rewarded with sight of a male Purple Emperor flying between trees. Although a distant view the large butterfly was very distinctive. We then turned left along the narrower path in search of closer views. Heading towards the solitary Oaks David and a small group watched Purple Hairstreaks in some relatively close Oak leaves. Several of us caught up with these on the return walk. Those ahead had managed to locate an Oak with a small sap run that was attracting Hornets, Red Admirals and yes, female Purple Emperors. Luckily for us James had brought his telescope, and I think everyone was able to have a good look at these scarce creatures. It was interesting to see them land on the tree above the sap run and then crawl down the trunk to feed on the sap.

While standing there a White Admiral flew past us. This turned out to be the hardest of our targets to find. We walked on a bit further to a spot that had many more Siver-washed Fritillaries, although the sun was not very bright and not so many butterflies were on the wing as we hoped. One of several Emperor Dragonflies was seen here too.

We walked back after two hours of fascinating watching, having added Peacock to the list. Some members also saw Brimstone and Wall Brown. A total of 18 species. We were quite pleased with that.

Butterfly list
Large Skipper. Gatekeeper, Speckled Wood, Meadow Brown, Small White, Ringlet, Silver-washed Fritillary, Comma, Green-veined White, Large White, Painted Lady, Red Admiral, White Admiral, Purple Emperor, Purple Hairstreak, Peacock, Wall Brown, Brimstone.
Bird List

Bullfinch. Oystercatcher, Blackcap, Skylark, Wren, Chiffchaff.

June Sightings

Compiled by WVBS Recorder, David Gibbons

Greylag Goose c250 on 12th, 220 on 22nd & 206 on 24th at Pensthorpe, PA, SCr, NE, ME, SMa, NP.

Canada Goose 45 on 4th at Neatherd Moor, BH.

Barnacle Goose c75 on 12th at Pensthorpe, PA, SCr**.**

Egyptian Goose 96 on 24th at Pensthorpe, SMa, NP.

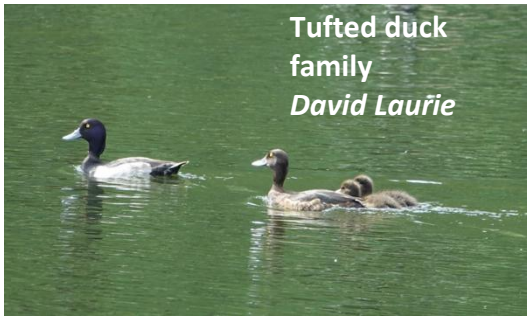
Shelduck 24 on 24th at Pensthorpe, SMa, NP.

Mandarin Duck 15 on 24th at Pensthorpe, SMa, NP.

Gadwall 89 on 12th & 71 on 24th at Pensthorpe, PA, SCr, SMa, NP.

Teal 8 on 24th at Pensthorpe, SMa, NP.

Mallard 85 on 22nd & 282 on 24th at Pensthorpe, NE, ME, SMa, NP.



Tufted duck family *David Laurie*

Shoveler 8 on 12th & 9 on 24th at Pensthorpe, PA, SCr, SMa, NP.

Pochard 2 on 4th & 3 on 12th at Pensthorpe, AH, PA, SCr.

Tufted Duck 60 on 22nd & 77 on 24th at Pensthorpe, NE, ME, SMa, NP.

Goldeneye 3 on 12th at Pensthorpe, PA, SCr**.**

Grey Partridge 2 on 2nd at North Tuddenham, BP. 2 on 3rd at Scarning, IB.

Great White Egret 1 on 4th & 2 on 24th at Pensthorpe, AH, SMa, NP.

Little Egret 1 on 4th at Pensthorpe, AH. 2 on 10th at SMHOT & 1 on 26th at Billingford Lakes, DL.

Grey Heron 6 on 4th & 3 on 24th at Pensthorpe, AH, SMa, NP. 1 on 7th at Taverham Fishery, DL. 1 on 15th at HBW, BH.

Little Grebe 2 on 12th at Pensthorpe, PA, SCr.

Great Crested Grebe 5 on 22nd & 24th at Pensthorpe, NE, ME, SMa, NP. 3 on 21st at Taverham Fishery & 4 on 26th at Billingford Lakes, DL.

Honey Buzzard 1 on 19th at Dereham, IB.

Red Kite 2 on 4th & 24th at Pensthorpe, AH, SMa, NP. 2 on 8th & 27th at Reepham, DG. 2 on 15th at HBW, BH. 2 on 18th & 4 on 21st at Beetley, IB. 1 on 22nd at Lyng, RB. 2 on 27th at Potters Fen, PA.

Marsh Harrier 1 on 12th at Guist & 2 on 17th at Colkirk, SP.
1 on 12th, 22nd & 24th at Pensthorpe, PA, SCr, NE, ME, SMa, NP. 1 on 26th at Billingford Lakes, DL.

Goshawk 1 on 13th at SNRWP, NE**.**

Sparrowhawk 1 on 7th & 27th at Potters Fen, PA. 1 on 12th at Reepham, DG.
2 on 26th at Taverham, DL.

Buzzard 2 on 4th at Sparham Pools, DL. 2 on 10th & 15th at Longham, SP. 2 on 15th at HBW, BH.
2 on 17th at Pensthorpe, JM. 2 on 20th & 6 on 29th at Beetley, IB.

Kestrel 2 on 2nd at Neatherd Moor, BH. 2 on 13th & 27th at SBM, CR, AWo, LV, NE.

Hobby 1 on 2nd at Taverham Fishery, DL, EW. 2 on 10th at SMHOT, DL.
1 on 15th at Longham & 1 on 17th at Wood Norton, SP. 2 on 24th at Pensthorpe, JM.

Common Crane 1 on 16th at Sculthorpe, NJ.

Oystercatcher 14 on 1st at Pensthorpe, DL.

Avocet 22 on 1st & 13 on 4th at Pensthorpe, DL, AH.

Little Ringed Plover 2 on 1st, 12th & 24th at Pensthorpe, DL, PA, SCr, JM, SMa, NP.

Lapwing c30 on 12th & 37 on 22nd at Pensthorpe, PA, SCr, NE, ME.

Curlew 1 on 22nd at Pensthorpe, NE, ME.

Green Sandpiper 5 on 24th at Pensthorpe, JM, SMa, NP.

Black-headed Gull 300 on 1st & 352 on 4th at Pensthorpe, DL, AH**.**

Mediterranean Gull 2 on 1st, 3 on 4th & 2 on 12th at Pensthorpe, DL, AH, PA, SCr.

Herring Gull 20 on 4th & 15 on 12th at Pensthorpe, AH, PA, SCr.

Common Tern 10 on 12th at Pensthorpe, PA, SCr. 3 on 26th at Billingford Lakes, DL.

Stock Dove 6 on 12th at Pensthorpe, PA, SCr.

Cuckoo 2 on 4th at Sparham Pools, DL. 1 on 11th & 15th at Reepham.
2 on 22nd & 24th at Pensthorpe, NE, ME, SMa, NP.

Barn Owl 1 on 11th at Neatherd Moor, BH. 1 on 11th at North Tuddenham, BP.
1 on 17th at Taverham Fishery, DL.

Little Owl 1 on 4th & 20th at North Tottenham, BP. 1 on 8th & 11th at Neatherd Moor, BH.

Tawny Owl 1 on 10th at Reepham, DG. 1 on 11th at Taverham, DL.

Nightjar 6 on 15th & 24th at Marsham Heath, JM, LT, KB. 3 on 20th at BCP, WVBS Event.

Swift 8 on 11th, 14 on 25th & 20 on 26th at Neatherd Moor, BH. c20 on 24th at Reepham, DG. 11 on 28th at Norwich, CR.

Kingfisher 2 on 4th at Pensthorpe, AH. 2 on 29th at WVBS Hide, Sparham Pools, NE.

Green Woodpecker 1 on 4th at Sparham Pools & 1 on 29th at Taverham Fishery, DL. 1 on 7th at Potters Fen, PA. 1 on 13th at Thorpe Marriott, CSm.

Great Spotted Woodpecker 4 on 1st at Pensthorpe & 2 on 19th at Foxley Wood, DL. 3 on 4th at Neatherd Moor & 1 on 15th at HBW, BH. 2 on 10th at Longham, SP. 1 on 13th at Thorpe Marriott, CSm.

Rooks/Jackdaws c800 on 29th at Reepham, going to roost, DG.

Goldcrest 3 on 22nd at Pensthorpe, NE, ME**.**

Marsh Tit 1 on 1st & 4th at Pensthorpe, DL, AH. 1 on 29th at Beetley, IB**.**

Skylark 6 on 4th & 20th at Neatherd Moor, BH.

Sand Martin 11 on 26th at Billingford Lakes, DL.

Swallow 11 on 4th & 18 on 24th at Pensthorpe, AH, SMa, NP**.**

House Martin 13 on 3rd, 10 on 20th & 14 on 26th at Neatherd Moor, BH. 7 on 8th at Reepham & 8 on 20th at Heydon, DG. 16 on 30th at North Tuddenham, BP.

Cetti's Warbler 3 on 12th & 22nd at Pensthorpe, PA, SCr, NE, ME.

Long-tailed Tit 11 on 20th at Longham, SP. 17 on 27th at SBM, LV, NE**.**

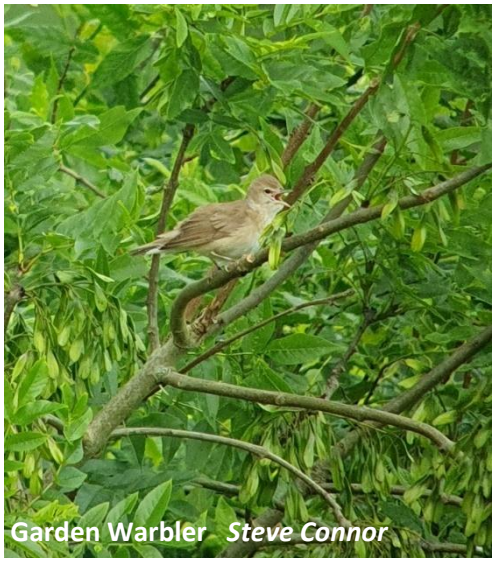
Chiffchaff 23 on 13th at SBM, CR, AWo. 9 on 15th at HBW, BH. 15 on 24th at Pensthorpe, SMa, NP. 10 on 27th at Neatherd Moor, BH.

Willow Warbler 2 on 19th at Foxley Wood, DL.

Blackcap 10 on 4th & 13 on 24th at Pensthorpe, AH, SMa, NP.

Garden Warbler 2 on 10th at Taverham Fishery, DL. 1 on 13th at SBM, CR, AWo. 3 on 17th at Beetley, IB. 4 on 24th at Pensthorpe, SMa, NP.

Whitethroat 4 on 3rd at Neatherd Moor & 3 on 15th at HBW, BH. 12 on 13th at SBM, CR, AWo. 3 on 26th at Billingford Lakes, DL.



Garden Warbler ***Steve Connor***

Sedge Warbler 10 on 4th & 3 on 22nd at Pensthorpe, AH NE, ME. 4 on 13th at SBM, CR, AWo.

Marsh Warbler 1 sighted around 4th at undisclosed site by several WVBS Members**.**

Reed Warbler 4 on 4th at Sparham Pools & 2 on 29th at Taverham Fishery, DL.
2 on 13th at SBM, CR, AWo. 11 on 24th at Pensthorpe, SMa, NP. 3 on 26th at Billingford Lakes, DL.

Wren 11 on 7th at Taverham Fishery, DL.

Song Thrush 5 on 14th & 3 on 24th & 29th at Neatherd Moor, BH.
4 on 21st at Taverham Fishery, DL.

Mistle Thrush 2 on 18th at Longham, SP. 2 on 28th at Norwich, CR.

Spotted Flycatcher 3 on 15th at HBW, BH. 1 on 17th at Beetley, IB. 2 on 27th at Reepham, AD**.**

Stonechat 1 on 20th at BCP, WVBS Event.

Tree Sparrow 1 on 21st at Beetley, IB.

Grey Wagtail 1 on 13th at Thorpe Marriott, CSm. 2 on 17th at Beetley, IB.
1 on 29th at Taverham Fishery, DL.

Goldfinch 25 on 17th at North Tuddenham, BP.

Linnet 4 on 11th at Longham, SP. 4 on 13th & 20th at Neatherd Moor, BH.

Bullfinch 2 on 10th at SMHOT, DL.

Reed Bunting 2 on 4th at Sparham Pools
3 on 29th at Taverham Fishery, DL.
2 on 13th at SBM, CR, AWo.
10 on 24th at Pensthorpe, SMa, NP.

Reed Bunting
Steve Connor

This month we received 1449 sightings with 109 species.

4.96% of sightings (72) were via the web-site.

Swallow & Reed bunting (left)
and Yellowhammer (above)
Steve Connor

Pensthorpe Reports

Wednesday 4th June.

The day was intermittently cloudy but bright, and with a cool breeze, so very comfortable for birding but perhaps more sunshine would have improved numbers, especially of flying insects, and perhaps also raptors. I was greeted on arrival with the distant call of a male cuckoo from the woods behind the Wensum Wetland, and this continued throughout the morning although he evaded visual contact. There was also the constant "chacking" of the omnipresent Jackdaws, and a pair of very noisy Oystercatchers. Moving out of the driveway and car park, and into the park, I started to hear calling Blackcaps, Sedge Warblers, Wrens, Chaffinches, Blackbirds, Chiffchaff, and an occasional Robin.

The Farmland Hide feeders were still empty, so there was little to see from it and in the wildflower meadow beyond.

At the Wensum Wetland I was entertained by an elegant Great White Egret who stalked around the scrape impersonating John Cleese. A few Avocet were feeding in the water that was shallower than normal, and 2 Kingfishers flew in formation at speed and just above the water, across the length of the pool – they are a species that always seem to fly in a very straight line! All the usual waterbirds were present as well.

Old Squaw was dominated by very noisy Black-headed Gulls that seemed to have taken over all the island and the raft for nesting and rearing their young. There was a single Common Tern sitting stubbornly on one of these islands amidst the gulls and probably nursing a headache!

Walking along the woodland track, the field to my right was a glorious mass of poppies. The Woodland Hide was notable for its lack of birds. Apart from a pair of Jays that gave me some unusually close-up views before fighting each other, and a single (ringed) Marsh Tit, they were outnumbered by 6 Grey Squirrels and a pair of loved-up Muntjac Deer.

The Wader Scrape was also dominated by Black-headed Gulls and their chicks, so I was delighted to identify 3 Mediterranean Gulls in their midst. The Avocets and Shelduck also had plenty of youngsters, and there was a single Little Ringed Plover. 2 Red Kites glided over – the only raptors of the morning, followed by a handful of Swifts.

Finally, Moon Water had its usual roost of mixed Gull species, as well as more Greylag, Egyptian, Barnacle and Canada Geese.

So, an enjoyable morning's birding with few surprises except almost complete absence of Raptors, Tits, Butterflies, and only a few Odanatas.

53 species.

Mammals: Muntjac 2, Grey Squirrel 7. Butterflies: Red Admiral 1.

Dragonflies: Broad-bodied Chaser. Damselflies: Banded Demoiselle. Common Blue Damselfly.

Alan Hughes.

Thursday 12th June.

Our walk around the car park and driveway gave us just a Marsh Harrier hawking low over the glamping site, and a Mistle Thrush on a fence post.

The farmland was quiet but the Wetland better, with a Great White Egret, two House Martins swooping to drink, and single well-grown young of Lapwing and Oystercatcher, both of which have a very low success rate locally.

The walk around Old Squaw Lake and to the Lake Hide was enriched by the delightful song of Garden Warblers on both sides of the lake including one singing around the hide, and from the hide the pleasurable sight of a pair of Common Terns with an unusual 3 newly-hatched chicks.

The Woodland and hide were also quiet, but the walk in the sun to the Scrape livened it up a bit with 2 Sand Martins among the young Swallows and Swifts overhead, and a flypast by a pair of calling Mediterranean Gulls.

The Scrape was an absolute hive of bird activity, with so much to look at. Pride of place must go to the half-grown Avocet chicks, but Little Ringed Plovers, loads of young Black-headed Gulls and good Gadwall numbers were also good to see.

On the reserve, it was very encouraging to see so much successful breeding of so many species with good numbers of young, food carrying and birds singing, displaying, and pairing up, and long may it continue.

67 Species.

Mammals: Muntjac Deer 2, Grey Squirrel 6.

Butterflies: Small Tortoiseshell, Speckled Wood, Comma.

Dragonflies: Blue Dragonfly, Broad-bodied Chaser, Brown Hawker.

Damselflies: Red-eyed Damselfly.

Paul Adams & Steve Connor.

Common tern with chicks at Pensthorpe ***Steve Connor***

Sunday 22nd June.

I must admit that I was not really looking to the prospect of doing the Pensthorpe survey in the high temperatures that had been forecast. But actually, it was pleasantly warm at 8 am with a fresh breeze. As we walked up the drive we heard and then managed to see a Blackcap, a Coal Tit and a pair of Goldcrest which was a good start to the day.

As we entered the park on the opposite side to normal, I suggested we do the route in reverse. So, we started at Moon Water where I definitely felt more enthusiastic than usual about counting the gulls!

As we headed to the Scrape we bumped into the ringing group – including Ptolemy – and they invited us to go and see what they had caught which included a Kingfisher! Such a privilege to see this beautiful bird up close.

The Scrape was busy with Lapwing, Black-headed Gulls and Geese of all sorts, plus a handful of Avocet and some young Shelduck. There was also a Swallow nest in the hide with eggs in. But the skies were generally empty of hirundine and Swift, and we saw surprisingly few raptors given the weather conditions.

The woods were quiet but the hide itself was quite busy with newly fledged Tits, always a delight, and a Nuthatch which we hadn't seen there for a while. There were a large number of Gadwall on Old Squaw and 3 nesting Coot. The Wetland had 9 Oystercatcher plus our only Grey Heron and Great White Egret of the day.

By now the sun was starting to feel really hot so, after seeing nothing at the Farmland Hide, we headed for the café. It had been a good morning with some great sightings of things often heard but not always seen.

63 species.

Mandy Etherington & Nick Edwards.

Tuesday 24th June.

A day of both autumnal and summer weather. As we arrived it was windy with rain in the air. By the time we finished at lunch we were back to summer with bright sunshine and rising temperatures. This mix of weather mirrored the birding as summer is now eliding into autumn.

The breeding season is drawing towards a close. Despite predation of some of the satellite Black-headed Gull colonies there were good numbers of fledged young about and we counted nearly 120 in total, with plenty of young chicks on the various breeding islands. Sadly, it will not be a stellar year for Common Terns. Only two pairs settled down to nest and we noted that those on Old Squaw have failed. Most disappointing is the position with the Avocets. An impressive eleven pairs hatched 26 young, but predation, presumably by Gulls, has taken its toll and we were unable to spot any young on Wader scrape. There were only a couple of pairs of adults present, and they were behaving furtively, so it is possible one or two young are tucked away in the long vegetation, but it is a sad end to what looked like becoming a really successful breeding season for them. The pairs that have lost their young have left the reserve and will not be back now until next Spring. A pair of Little Ringed Plovers was on Wetlands, but presumably it is now too late for them to nest.

We came across a pair of Cuckoos near Dark Mere and were treated to the seldom heard burbling call of the female. Warblers were still singing, and we heard good numbers of Blackcaps, Garden Warblers, Chiffchaffs, Reed, and Sedge Warblers.

The coming of autumn was represented by increasing numbers of ducks. The first Teal were back from Scandinavia and a single drake Wigeon moulting into eclipse plumage. We found fifteen Mandarin Ducks, a mix of females and moulted drakes. Best of all five Green Sandpipers feeding in the shallows on Wetlands. They are a well-studied species and these are very likely adult females that have left their mates with the young in Scandinavia. They are one of the first returning waders of the autumn and good numbers should pass through Pensthorpe over the next couple of months.

An enjoyable morning as ever. There have been mixed fortunes for different species in the breeding season and before we know it autumn is creeping up on us.

62 species.

Nick Parsons and Stuart Malone.

Lapwing incubating
Taken by Steve Connor at Pensthorpe