



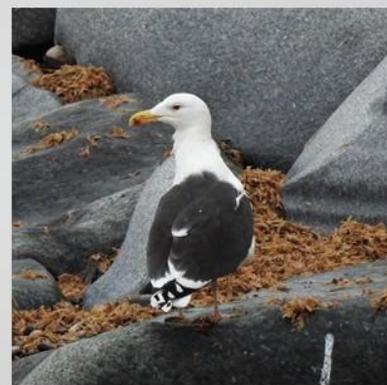
**March 2025 – Issue 117**

**The NENBC Monthly e-Newsletter**

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**Through a Lens**





## By Trevor Williams

It's been a busy couple of months for NENBC. We launched our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year at the January indoor meeting, with an excellent talk about the Kartong Bird Observatory in Gambia - the home location of our International Young Birder Bursary recipient. We also distributed our commemorative book - which has received universal appreciation - and the '10 year' badges. Since then we've been busy planning our **Anglo-African bird migration conference** to be held on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> June at Gresham village hall. Tickets, which are free to members, are still available though they are going quickly. You can apply by emailing: [nenbc-events@outlook.com](mailto:nenbc-events@outlook.com). More info on [page 15](#). Last weekend I took part in the first of our special 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary walks - revisiting popular locations from the early years of the Club. It was well attended and we saw over fifty species including Raven, Crane, Great Egret and Rock Pipit. Good birds, good company and plenty of heathy exercise! I'm very much looking forward to the next one.

As we get further into spring, our summer visitors will begin arriving and there will be more migration through our area. I'm noticing more activity on my morning seawatches with the departure of most of our ducks and wintering geese. Soon they'll be replaced by waders passing through on their way to their breeding grounds in Scandinavia and the Arctic. Other oceanic species will also appear. With this increased opportunity to connect with some of these hard to see species we've decided to launch a trial of **'pop up' seawatching events**. A bit like our annual coordinated seawatch but a bit more spontaneous. To see how you can participate read the short article on [page 15](#).

With longer days and warmer weather birding opportunities in the NENBC area abound. Trying leaving the car behind and take a walk out from home. You'll be surprised what you can find on your doorstep. I'm keeping a 'green list' in this 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year. I'm already approaching the hundred mark - which I'm very pleased with. You should try it...

## A Note from the Editor



### By Carol Thornton

Hi folks. Welcome to our March issue already – where is the time flying to?. 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! Last month's **Through a Lens** subject for the front page was **GULLS** and our cover images this time are Herring Gull (Doug Cullern), Common Gull, Mediterranean Gull, Great Black-backed Gull (Mark Clements), Black-headed Gulls (Richard Farrow, main). Thanks all! The **theme for this month is birds in flight**. Below is my pick from February of some great photos from our website of the more common birds that don't make it to the Monthly Bird Highlights section: Green Woodpecker (Phil Cartlidge), Starling (Andrew Gorton), Buzzard and Nuthatch (Richard Farrow), Robin (Doug Cullern), Tufted Duck and Siskin (David Griffiths).

Due to other commitments I am going to be a bit light on articles and time constrained for the upcoming April and May 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!





By Paul Laurie

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

≈ 7,600 individual records covering 140 bird species were added in February

The regular input of bird records from club members is remarkable and has created a wealth of data and in particular highlighted changes in bird populations we are experiencing in the NENBC area. To help with the data there are a few details that would be useful to include when members complete their bird records:

- Uncommon and scarce birds - notes regarding the bird's age and sex are helpful to ascertain if more than one individual was involved or if there has been a turnover of birds.
- Time of observation is helpful with seawatching and vis-migging records and direction of flight can be of great use to gauge numbers of individuals involved.
- Finally "At Home" or "Out and About" makes it difficult to include in the monthly highlights as I don't know where you live! Please put the general location of large numbers of uncommon birds.

Many thanks, *Paul Laurie*

The only scarce bird this month was a probable "Eastern" **Lesser Whitethroat**. **Cattle Egrets** continued their good start to the year and other birds of interest included **Caspian Gull**, **Black Guillemot**, **Jack Snipe**, **Black-throated Diver** and the Mundesley **Hooded Crow**. There were 140 species reported during February from 7,624 records compared to 7,219 records with 137 species in February 2024. Over the last nine years, 2017 – 2025, the NENBC records show the February average of total bird records was 8,098, with an average of 137 species found.

**Brent Goose** A Pale-bellied Brent Goose, ssp. *Hrota* - the Svalbard and Greenland race was seen east of Weybourne village on the 8<sup>th</sup> associating with 110 *bernicla* Brent Geese. Single *Hrota* birds were then reported in flight past Weybourne, all heading east, on the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and finally the 24<sup>th</sup>. *Photo 1 courtesy of Mark Clements*



**Barnacle Goose** The good numbers reported in January were not replicated this February with just one record of two birds east past Weybourne on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Pink-footed Goose** The only significant counts were 3,230 west at Weybourne on the 5<sup>th</sup> and then 3,000 west again at Weybourne on the 26<sup>th</sup>. *Photo 2 courtesy of Mark Clements*



**Tundra Bean Goose** The only record this month was of two birds at Weybourne cliffs with 30 Pink-feet on the 9<sup>th</sup>.

**White-fronted Goose** The strong showing of birds in the club area during January was not repeated in February with just one record of three birds at West Runton on the 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Whooper Swan** A pair flew west over Field Dalling on the 12<sup>th</sup> and five "wild swans" over Felbrigg Park on the 19<sup>th</sup> were thought to be this species.

**Mandarin** The female, present at Gimingham in January, was recorded on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of February on the same water. *Photo 3 courtesy of Tim Wright*



**Wigeon** The only reliable site was the Hillside Sanctuary at West Runton where two males resided from the 1<sup>st</sup> until the 26<sup>th</sup> at least.

**Teal** Two-hundred & eighty flew west, in three groups, past Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs on the 9<sup>th</sup>; this was easily the largest count during the month. *Photo 4 courtesy of Richard Farrow*

**Velvet Scoter** The only record this month was a single west on the 23<sup>rd</sup> past Weybourne.

**Long-tailed Duck** Similar pattern to January records; only recorded at Weybourne this month with 1 – 2 birds throughout. *Photo 5 courtesy of Mark Clements*

**Goldeneye** Coastal birds were seen on four dates starting on the 7<sup>th</sup> with a bird west at Sheringham, then two birds east at Sheringham on the 11<sup>th</sup>. On the 20<sup>th</sup> two flew west past Weybourne and the final record was a one west at Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs.

**Goosander** A single drake on the private lake at Letheringsett on the 1<sup>st</sup>, then on the 2<sup>nd</sup> four birds, two drakes and two red-heads were on the same water. Then no further records at Letheringsett after the 2<sup>nd</sup>. An increase in coastal records, compared to last month, included one – two passing Weybourne on the 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>. On the 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> two birds were on Selbrigg Pond and on the last day of the month a pair were on the sea off Weybourne. *Photo 6 courtesy of Mark Clements*

**Red-breasted Merganser** Two birds flew west past Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs on the 12<sup>th</sup> and were subsequently seen flying west past Weybourne. On the 16<sup>th</sup> a “red-head” was on the sea off Weybourne Camp. Two past Weybourne on the 19<sup>th</sup> and three west on the 28<sup>th</sup> were the final records.

**Water Rail** Overnight on the 26<sup>th</sup> bird/s were recorded calling from or flying over a Sheringham garden.

**Great Crested Grebe** An increase in the number at Weybourne compared to last month with a peak of 40 on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February.

**Oystercatcher** The expected regular sighting along the coast this month as well as the first returning inland breeding birds with two at West Runton on the 24<sup>th</sup> and three at Saxlingham on the 25<sup>th</sup>. *Photo 7 courtesy of Richard Farrow*

**Golden Plover** Once again widespread in varying numbers with reports from fifteen sites during the month; 400 at Wickmere on the 16<sup>th</sup> being the highest count.

**Purple Sandpiper** Reported on only six dates in February with 1 – 2 birds moving between West Runton, Sheringham and Cromer. *Photo 8 courtesy of Geoff Snelson*

**Jack Snipe** Two wintering birds with one at Felbrigg Park and one at the western end of Thornage Common.



**Green Sandpiper** Five wintering birds in the club area; three in the Brinton/Sharrington area on flooded pig fields all month. Other singles seen in the Glaven Valley on the 4<sup>th</sup> and Barningham Hall Lake on the 12<sup>th</sup>.

**Redshank** The single bird at Saxlingham on the 24<sup>th</sup> of January was still present on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February. *Photo 9 courtesy of Richard Farrow*

**Little Gull** On the 3<sup>rd</sup> a bird roosted with other gulls on Felbrigg Park Lake and a bird was offshore at Weybourne Camp on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Caspian Gull** A fine adult was seen on pig fields at Sharrington on the 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Razorbill** A poor winter for offshore auks the only Razorbill reported was a bird off Weybourne on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Black Guillemot** An unaged bird flew east off Weybourne on the 8<sup>th</sup>. Only the second February record in the club area since 2015.

**Black-throated Diver** Weybourne on the 3<sup>rd</sup> an bird was observed on the sea before flying east.

**Great Northern Diver** A bird was recorded off Weybourne between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> two birds were reported flying with one in adult breeding plumage.

**Spoonbill** The first of the year were a flock of six birds seen flying west offshore at Weybourne on the 21<sup>st</sup> followed by one west there on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and two west there on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Cattle Egret.** Two birds remaining from January were still present at Walcott on the 18<sup>th</sup>. A single bird, between the 21<sup>st</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, frequented the pastures around Brinton and Thornage. *Photo 10 courtesy of Mark Clements*

**Great Egret** Only one record this month of a bird over Weybourne Cliffs on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Goshawk** Swanton Novers impressed with seven individuals seen on the 6<sup>th</sup>. Single birds were reported during the month from Thornage, Selbrigg Pond and Saxlingham. *Photo 11 courtesy of Geoff Snelson*

**Hen Harrier** A single sighting of a "ring-tail" flying along the Glaven Valley on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**Merlin** A bird photographed sat in a hedge at Thornage on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, the January Weybourne bird was last seen on the 9<sup>th</sup> of February and a bird was found at High Kelling on the 21<sup>st</sup>. *Photo 12 courtesy of Mark Clements*

**Peregrine** The adults were present at their Cromer breeding site all month. Birds also reported from Field Dalling, Glaven Valley, Gresham, Thornage Weybourne / Weybourne Camp, Sheringham and Swanton Novers. *Photo 13 courtesy of Jane Crossen*

9



10



11



12



13



**Hooded Crow** The Mundesley bird from January was seen on three dates in February; 6<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>. *Photo 14 courtesy of John Hurst*

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**Raven** An increase of sighting in February with the first, a bird perch on a post, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> at Sharrington. On the 6<sup>th</sup> a bird was seen at Southrepps and a group of four flew over Kelling Heath. Two over Aylmerton on the 13<sup>th</sup>, one at Holt the next day and a bird seen at Letheringsett on the 20<sup>th</sup>. The only coastal record was of two in a field at West Runton on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

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**Marsh Tit** Only ten records this month from four sites, this compared with February 2020, when there were 52 records from thirteen sites, this highlights a worrying decline of this species at least within the NENBC area.

**Chiffchaff** Eight sites recorded this species during the month with two birds along the Dilham Canal on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Lesser Whitethroat** A bird, thought to be an eastern race of this species, was present in a Sheringham garden from the 18<sup>th</sup> until the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

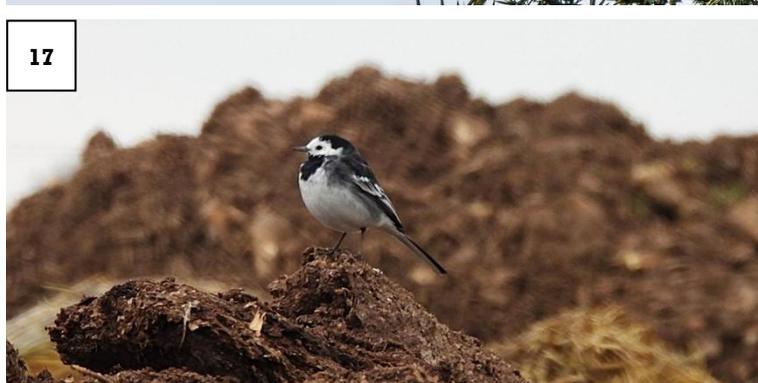
**Dartford Warbler** Kelling Heath provided the bulk of this month's sightings but one male was watched in a thistle field at Field Dalling on the 12<sup>th</sup> and on the 28<sup>th</sup> a bird was seen in gorse at Sheringham Cliffs just west of Sheringham Golf Course. *Photo 15 courtesy of Richard Farrow*

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**Stonechat** One to three birds reported from several sites until the third week when numbers increased. Ten Weybourne Camp on the 20<sup>th</sup>, six West Runton on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and six Weybourne Cliffs on the 28<sup>th</sup>. This mirrored an increase of sightings at inland sites during the same period including new birds found at; Bale, Dilham Canal, Saxlingham, Southrepps and Swanton Novers. *Photo 16 courtesy of Richard Farrow*

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**Pied Wagtail** Two roosts were observed with 57 birds at Cromer on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 25 birds at Thornage on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Feeding flocks included 31 in the Glaven Valley on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 39 at Holt Water Treatment Works on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 31 at Saxlingham on the 19<sup>th</sup>. *Photo 17 courtesy of Mark Clements*

**Rock Pipit** The first record of the year was at Sheringham on the 23<sup>rd</sup> followed by sightings at Weybourne Camp and West Runton.

**Brambling** A marked decrease in sightings during February with six at Gresham Water Treatment Works being the most seen at one site.

**Hawfinch** The first of the year was making the most of sunflower hearts from bird feeders at Roughton on the 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Redpoll** One bird at Southrepps Common on the 5<sup>th</sup> was the only record there. A garden at High Kelling recorded up to three birds on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>. On the 14<sup>th</sup> five birds were seen on Beeston Common.

**Siskin** Widespread throughout the month with the following high counts; 70 Glaven Valley on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 50 along the Dilham Canal 13<sup>th</sup>, 50 at Briston 17<sup>th</sup> and 60 Brinton on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**Yellowhammer** Thirty-six birds in stubble at Brinton on the was easily the highest count.

# What to look and listen for this month



Early migrants will begin to move in greater variety and numbers in March ensuring sea-watchers and vis-miggers are rewarded. Finches, pipits, larks and “alba” wagtails will be on the move, as well as corvids, and thrushes returning north will bring with them the first Ring Ouzels especially in light north-east winds. Stonechat numbers normally peak in late March and Black Redstarts can be numerous towards the end of the month. Teal flocks can be checked for Garganey, and any inland pools of water could produce a Little Ringed Plover. Along our coast the first Sandwich Terns, Sand Martins and Wheatears will be found. Scarce birds occurring in March, with warm temperatures and south-east winds, may include Hoopoe and Alpine Swift, a speciality of the club area, between Sheringham and Mundesley. Good luck !

## Historical March Records

*Extracted by Russ Malin*

*Records taken from “Rare and Scarce Birds in North-east Norfolk” by kind permission of the author Moss Taylor*

The history books don't give us much for the month of March but the first Red Kite for the area was seen over Kelling Heath on March 22<sup>nd</sup> 1958 and the first 20<sup>th</sup> century record of White-tailed Eagle involved a bird at Melton Constable in March 1934. The earliest dated record of Great Grey Shrike came from Hanworth on March 27<sup>th</sup> 1936 and the first dated record of Shore Lark involved a bird shot on the beach at Sheringham in March 1830. However, pride of place goes to the report of two Great Bustard that were seen to fly in off the sea at Bacton on March 2<sup>nd</sup> 1979.

## Member Extras: observations from last month .....

# Extra!

Of particular note this month was the Starling murmuration at Thornage which many members managed to witness over several days at the beginning of February. Estimated numbers varied but members reported up to 80,000 birds involved! Some of the words you used to describe it on our website ...

**fantastic, amazing, huge, spectacular, magnificent**



*Alan's video clip plus photos below from Trevors Williams, Doug Cullern and Alan Stevens*



Did you know there is a [Starling Murmuration Location Map](#) which gets updated with Starling murmurations throughout the country?

## 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

- 🕒 “Tank groyne, with JAC red flagged.” | Peter Geary | Sheringham | 1<sup>st</sup>
- 🕒 “32x On rocks including tagged JAC.” | Di & Richard Farrow | West Runton | 2<sup>nd</sup>
- 🕒 “43x Including JAA, JAC and the bird with the upside down silver ring!” | Jane Crossen | Sheringham | 3<sup>rd</sup>
- 🕒 “47x Including tagged JAC and JAA.” | Di & Richard Farrow | Sheringham | 3<sup>rd</sup>
- 🕒 “42x East beach slipway area, with JAA” | Peer Geary | Sheringham | 5<sup>th</sup>
- 🕒 “43x East beach slipway area, with JAA” | Peer Geary | Sheringham | 6<sup>th</sup>
- 🕒 “52x On prom near Museum and below The Crown including tagged JAC, JAA and JAE.” | Di & Richard Farrow | 6<sup>th</sup>
- 🕒 “32x Tank area, with JAA” | Peter Geary | Sheringham | 7<sup>th</sup>
- 🕒 “50x Good views of JAA, JAC, JAE and JAJ. First time I've seen JAE and JAJ this winter.” | Jane Crossen | Sheringham | 9<sup>th</sup>
- 🕒 “54x Including JAA and JAJ and the bird with the upside single silver ring.” | Jane Crossen | Sheringham | 18<sup>th</sup>
- 🕒 “35x Min of 35 by museum including tagged JAE and JAJ.” | Di & Richard Farrow | Sheringham | 20<sup>th</sup>
- 🕒 “41x Tank area, JAA, JAE, and metal ringed birds present.” | Peter Geary | Sheringham | 21<sup>st</sup>
- 🕒 “45x Turnstones, including metal ringed bird and tagged JAA.” | Di & Richard Farrow | Sheringham | 22<sup>nd</sup>
- 🕒 “42x Tank area, with JAE/JAJ flagged birds” | Peter Geary | Sheringham | 27<sup>th</sup>
- 🕒 “42x min count with JAJ and metal ringed (right tarsus) birds” | Peter Geary | Sheringham | 28<sup>th</sup>

Photos: JAA, JAC and JAE Richard Farrow, JAJ and silver ring Jane Crossen

## Great Black-backed Gull

- 🕒 “6x including ringed bird (J222Y) Danish ringed bird I last saw at Sheringham 5/3/24.” | Mark Clements | West Runton | 14<sup>th</sup>

Photo: Mark Clements

## Marsh Harrier

- 🕒 “hunting over Hope Reed Bed. Orange Wing Tagged” | Russell Page | Weybourne | 7<sup>th</sup>
- 🕒 “2x One wing tagged” | Andrew Kershaw | Weybourne | 13<sup>th</sup>



## 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!

**Water Rail** "Nocturnal flight calls over garden; 3 calls (1853 x 2), 1932, 0328; same bird wandering or different birds?" | Andy Clarke | Sheringham | 26<sup>th</sup>

**Golden Plover** "x1 Nocturnal flight call over garden" | Andy Clarke | Sheringham | 26<sup>th</sup>

**Redwing** "x24 Nocturnal flight calls over garden" | Andy Clark | Sheringham | 26<sup>th</sup>

**Song Thrush** "x2 Nocturnal flight calls over garden" | Andy Clarke | Sheringham | 26<sup>th</sup>

**If only .....** Ken & Carol Thornton allegedly had a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker over their garden this month (we wish!) and whenever a Muntjac calls, the software identifies a Crane!

## Thermal Imaging Highlights



The 'new kid on the block' – not just useful for finding birds in the dark like Nightjar but also for secretive species in dense cover like Jack Snipe. We are starting to get a few comments on the website of birds found in this way so please do make a note on there if you are using one.

**Jack Snipe** "1x From footpath across Thornage Water Meadows between Thornage and Brinton. Found with thermal imager in tiny area of bog uphill from wooden plank bridge towards Brinton end of path. Watched down to c20 feet!" | Roger Unite | Thornage | 20<sup>th</sup>

**Snipe** "5x found initially with Thermal imager" | Russell Page | Felbrigg Park | 20<sup>th</sup>

## 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!

**Canada Goose** "6x Flyovers heading north west. Sad to say but a garden tick. Seen plenty Pinks, Greylags etc but never Canadas!" | David Griffiths | Holt | 5<sup>th</sup>

**Common Scoter** "21x On sea near Fishermen's gate; dived en masse when a Herring Gull flew over" | Val Stubbs | Weybourne Camp | 28<sup>th</sup>

**Goosander** "2x Splendid drake and his more dowdy mate, head bobbing" | Val Stubbs | Selbrigg Pond | 25<sup>th</sup>

**Stock Dove** "On ground under garden feeders, alternately flashing its iridescent green and purple neck patch depending on how the light fell on it" | Stella Bayliss | Southrepps Common | 16<sup>th</sup>

**Woodpigeon** "35x 2 under seed feeder, 2 on roof of no 28, courting (though the female didn't seem very impressed), 31 flew over, east" | Val Stubbs | Weybourne | 9<sup>th</sup>

**Water Rail** "1x Skulking in reeds by Top pond as seen from a walk up Inceborough Hill." | Jonathan Anderson | East Runton & Thains Lane | 6<sup>th</sup>

**Oystercatcher** "2x A pair flew over the fields at Hillside Shire Horse Sanctuary calling loudly. I'm hoping they are the breeding pair that nest in the pond paddock each year." | Ellie Farrow | West Runton | 24<sup>th</sup>

**Turnstone** "42x On rocks and beach, including 1 with an injured leg that seemed to be managing quite well - hopping rather than running" | Val Stubbs | Sheringham | 19<sup>th</sup>

**Woodcock** "1x A roe deer ran into gorse scrub and when it emerged from the other side it was accompanied by a woodcock it had kindly flushed." | Andrew Kershaw | Kelling Heath | 26<sup>th</sup>

**Common Gull** "100x On winter cereal field NE of Pit Common, not had many gulls this winter so this was a welcome sight" | Stella Baylis | Southrepps Common | 22<sup>nd</sup>

**Great Black-backed Gull** "1x Tussle over a fish, needless to say GBbG won and flew off with the prize." | Di & Richard Farrow | Sheringham | 12<sup>th</sup>

**Herring Gull** "2x Juvenile in North Lodge Park rose garden. Getting very close , hoping for a share of my picnic." | Andrew Gorton | Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs | 12<sup>th</sup>

**Herring Gull** "6x on roofs, pairing off and sorting nest sites" | Roger & Janet Fickling | Cromer | 22<sup>nd</sup>

**Little Egret** "3x My first sighting near Cuckoo Bridge of these three that I knew were wintering around the village." | Pauline Walton | Briston | 16<sup>th</sup>

**Little Egret** "1x On Breeding Bird Survey training at Blickling " | Andrew Gorton | Blickling Park | 25<sup>th</sup>

**Sparrowhawk** "1x On feeders, though definitely not after the peanuts" | Dave Billham | Beaston Common | 1<sup>st</sup>

**Sparrowhawk** "2x Displaying; dwarfed by displaying Gos!" | Andrew Clarke | Swanton Novers | 5<sup>th</sup>

**Sparrowhawk** "1x Must be hungry, visited 3 times over the day and on each occasion sat in the Pine Tree for 15-30 minutes." | Di & Richard Farrow | Sheringham | 16<sup>th</sup>

**Goshawk** "One calling loudly from private woodland west of the pond. Not seen or recorded, but identification confirmed from listening to a range of recordings on Xeno Canto. Although bird only heard, record uploaded in light of JH's sight record at this location." | Andy Clarke | Selbrigg Pond | *and* "Female dashed down the ride then soared north." | John Hurst | 3<sup>rd</sup>

**Marsh Harrier** "1x female-type. One of seven species of raptor seen from Watch Point 1100-1145hrs" | Moss Taylor | Swanton Novers | 6<sup>th</sup>

**Barn Owl** "1x In my village at last it's been a few months since I've seen one here ." | Anne Sims | Gresham | 13<sup>th</sup>

**Tawny Owl** "3x Hooting vigorously at each other from the centre of the village. Goodness knows where their nesting sites are?!" | John Hurst | Mundesley | 27<sup>th</sup>

**Peregrine** "I went back to see if the golden plovers were still there to find a peregrine standing in the field instead. No doubt had scared them off." | Andrew Crossley | Gresham | 12<sup>th</sup>

**Jackdaw** "3x Squabbling over tree cavities, we sometimes forget they can be 'woodland birds'" | Stella Baylis | Felbrigg Park | 12<sup>th</sup>

**Woodlark** "5x Singing and displaying in air and on ground. Two pairs plus possible interloper. Pair singing and flying together just north of car park. Another pair flying together singing and play fighting over railway line. Then landed together on fence. Male on top of post, still singing, fluttering wings, raising crest, puffing out chest. Female on wire below him also fluttering wings, spreading tail and depressing it. Estimate 10 minutes of this. They attempted to mate on the wire but dropped to ground out of sight. Later pair singing again and play fighting in the air when joined/attacked by a third bird." | Peter & Sue Morrison | Kelling Heath | 22<sup>nd</sup>

**Chiffchaff** "Calling by mound, not singing, and so probably a wintering bird rather than a spring migrant" | Moss Taylor | Weybourne Camp | 21<sup>st</sup>

**Blackbird** "Howards Hill. Practicing with Merlin app to get to know birdsongs." | Andrew Gorton | Cromer | 6<sup>th</sup>

**Dunnock** "Creeping around under the fatball feeder, looking for small particles along with two resident bank voles that also appear to forage" | John Hurst | Mundesley | 15<sup>th</sup>

**Pied Wagtail** "30x On filter bed at SF. An accurate count not an estimate. Could one or two of these actually be White Wagtails?" | Moss Taylor | Holt | 6<sup>th</sup>

**Pied Wagtail** "57x Counted whilst waiting for a train in Morrisons car park. Always thought that the roost was in the supermarket eaves but not so. Evergreen shrubbery at the east end of the car park." | John Hurst | Cromer | 22<sup>nd</sup>

**Chaffinch** "2x Female on feeder (first for some weeks); male singing (first song of the year in the garden)" | Andrew Clarke | Sheringham | 13<sup>th</sup>

**Chaffinch** "2 M too busy squabbling to actually feed on the seed feeder in the back garden; later F with mixed finch flock, feeding on seed feeder in back garden" | Val Stubbs | Weybourne | 19<sup>th</sup>



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

\* Nick Edwards \* Steven & Barbara Lines \* Helen Dixon \* Jonah Tosney \*  
\* Karen Oakley \* Alan & Janet Hughes \* Kala Nobbs & Mike McConnell \*  
\* Lucian Delany \* Jasmin Evans \* Josh Pepper \* Izzy Twigg \*

405 individual members  
across 266 households

22,742  
bird records logged

155 bird species reported

Please keep adding all your sightings to our website at [www.nenbc.co.uk](http://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 12](#) 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](mailto: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 1<sup>st</sup> 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](mailto: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](mailto: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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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](mailto: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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:ahstevens52@gmail.com)

Thank you!

## Membership Renewal - Subscriptions for 2025

We hope you will continue to support the club in 2025, our **10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year**, by renewing your membership with us. **If you haven't renewed by the end of March 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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](mailto: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](mailto:janicedarch@gmail.com)

Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> March | 9.00am-11.00am |  
**Felbrigg Park Monthly Walk**  
with Trevor Williams



No advance booking needed

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

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

Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> April | 10.00am-1.00pm |  
**Letheringsett Ford and Spout Hill**  
with Janice Darch



Booking required : [janicedarch@gmail.com](mailto:janicedarch@gmail.com) by Thursday 4th April

*This walk provides a range of habitats to explore from road side verges, to a watermill, a stretch of the River Glaven, some agricultural fields, wet meadows, woodland and a disused railway track. Along the river and at the mill we will look for Grey Wagtail and there is sometimes a Water Rail hiding in the vegetation. The wet meadows may have geese and duck, Curlew and Mute Swan whilst Pheasant and Red-legged Partridge are likely to be found in the fields with Buzzard, Kestrel and the possibility of Red Kite overhead. At this time of year passerines are setting up their breeding territories and some early migrants will have arrived. Spout Hill, just outside of Holt, is a lovely mix of deciduous woodland, grassland and it has a brook running through it. Possible birds are Nuthatch, Treecreeper, tit flocks, finches and resident and wintering thrushes.*

**MEET & PARK:** In the 2<sup>nd</sup> layby on A148 between Holt and Letheringsett NR25 6RZ | **DISTANCE:** 3 miles | **ACCESSIBILITY:** The walk is along footpaths which aren't suitable for wheelchair users. | **FACILITIES:** none | **BADGES:** Inside the club area so records can count for Star Badges, or Green Eco-badges if you aren't using motorised transport each way.

## This Month's Evening Club Talk

Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> March | 7.30pm-9.30pm |

Gresham Village Hall and via Zoom

zoom



### “Getting to Africa and back - what have we learnt from 10 years of tracking Cuckoos and Nightingales?” *A talk with the BTO's Phil Atkinson*

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**A BIT ABOUT THE SPEAKER AND THEIR TALK:** *Phil Atkinson will be talking about a variety of BTO projects. "I will start with an update on migrants, in particular two of our most loved migrants the Cuckoo and the Nightingale. Ten years tracking of Cuckoos has told us a lot but a recent paper came out looking at the migration as a whole. We think of trans-Saharan migrations as being difficult and risky, but where do the constraints actually occur? Use of geolocators on UK-breeding Nightingales has revealed for the first time where they winter and the result is surprising. Unlike any other European populations they are concentrated in a very small part of Africa. After the break I will touch on a new project that we are starting in 2027 - the new Breeding and Wintering Bird Atlas. These mammoth projects are undertaken every 20 or so years and we are just starting to plan. Birders and bird clubs will be integral to its success and I will highlight its importance and what the previous atlases have told us."*

*Phil is the BTO's Head of International Research & Principal Ecologist. He has developed a program of international work focussing on the impacts of environmental change on bird populations and the ecology of Palearctic migrants and leads the BTO's international research program.*

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

**BOOKING ARRANGEMENTS:** It is always nice to know if you are coming to the hall but by no means essential so if it takes your fancy on the evening, please just turn up as we would love to see you! If you are intending to join via Zoom though, you definitely need to let us know in advance so we can get the link out to you in good time. You can get in touch via [nenbc@aol.co.uk](mailto: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.

# NENBC 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference

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

Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> 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!

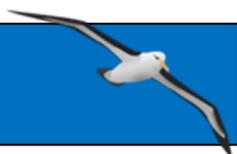
With a stellar line up of speakers from academia and environmental organisations, this event will showcase the latest research related to bird migration along the East Atlantic highway. We will also hear how the international conservation community is responding to protect our avian migrants and the part that we can play in their protection. For more information, please see the article in the February newsletter.

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](mailto:nenbc-events@outlook.com)

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

## Pop-up Seawatching! Fancy a go?



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*

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

**THE MUSICAL INFLUENCE OF BIRDS**  
An illustrated talk by Mike Green  
**Wednesday 30th April 2025:**  
**The Hive, Kelling Heath Holiday Park,**  
**at 4.15-6.00 pm**  
Tickets £5, all proceeds to charity.  
Pre-booking essential, limited seating,  
Payment on the door.  
Contact Tel: 0758 558 6469 (Text or leave a Message)  
Email: [thehealingharbour22@gmail.com](mailto:thehealingharbour22@gmail.com)



Three Ravens, from Mark Glaister's images in *Birds and Their Gift of Music*

Local author Mike is well known for his many musical talks on birds and other subjects. On this occasion he will be illustrating the many ways in which composers and musicians have been influenced by birds and birdsong. Drawing on examples from his recent book, *Birds and their Gift of Music* with a variety of recordings from classical, pop, jazz and folk music, we will visit several countries and the outcome should be fascinating, sometimes surprising and enjoyable.

The talk is in support of The Healing Harbour Charity, based in Sheringham, which supports people living with serious illnesses that shorten their lives (and their families/carers). Contact [thehealingharbour22@gmail.com](mailto:thehealingharbour22@gmail.com)

Mike will have copies of his book for sale at a discounted price and £2.00 from each sale will be donated to the charity.

Mark Glaister, who provided all the art work for the book, will have some of his recent paintings on display and will donate 20% of total sales to the charity.

Refreshments will be available



### By Dave Billham

With Trevor away and no-one else available, I found myself not only keeping the list for the second Felbrigg walk of the year, but, for the first time, leading it as well. No pressure there then! When planning what to do I had considered the variables. Possessing a notoriously shaky sense of direction, I would keep the route simple, and especially, stay out of the woods, where getting lost was a distinct possibility! So far, so easy. However, February is consistently the month when we get one of the better species totals of the year, and is the 'highest scoring' month overall. Supposing a simple route meant we saw a greatly reduced number of species? Oh, that pressure was mounting.

On the morning concerned it was no better; any hopes of being able to blame the weather faded as I looked out of the window; cool, with scattered sunshine and a bit of wind; we have had a lot worse. At the car park, the hope for a smaller group (just to ease the pain if we scored badly) faded and blinked out of existence as the twenty-sixth participant arrived (including Tim Turner on his first walk in eight years!). Hmm.

All my concerns were for nothing, however, as I had forgotten one important factor; the friendliness of the club and its members. Carol's assurances on the

morning that she would not let me get lost, and later assistance from others in the group, meant I need not have been concerned at all.

A good start was made with the first species noted being a lone **Red Kite** as we arrived; other 'car park' species were **Woodpigeon, Rook, Carrion Crow, Jackdaw, Black-headed Gull, Blackbird, Blue Tit, Greenfinch, Dunnock** and a couple of **Redwing** in the nearby treetops. Following a briefing, and a request to shout out any sightings, we set off towards the church. At first the field we were crossing appeared to be devoid of birds, but a movement under one of the small trees that dot the area was identified as a **Mistle Thrush**; further movement a couple of Redwing. Then a **Fieldfare**, then more Fieldfare; we soon realised that the grass was alive with thrush, more than we had seen in the club area all winter. We paused for a while to watch this spectacle, and to allow less experienced members the chance to sort out the ID of winter thrush species. Nick called a **Common Gull** passing by, and someone else a **Green Woodpecker**, which flashed yellow as it flew away from us. A cloud of **Lapwing** then rose up from a fold in the ground behind the church, briefly circling before dropping and disappearing; we estimated around 80 of them.

Because not all of the group had got a good look at the Lapwing we decided to go through the churchyard and onto the bridgeway behind it, in the hope that we could see into the dip. A **Wren** calling from amongst the graves was noted before we entered the bridgeway, which did indeed give us good views of the Lapwing flock, along with many more Fieldfare and Redwing scattered across the grass. In amongst them were **Starling** and a single **Jay**, whilst overhead we saw a **Herring Gull**, two **Goldfinch** and four **Linnet**. We followed the bridgeway down to its junction with the track to the lake, accompanied by the song of **Great Tit** and **Skylark**.

Slowly walking the track we spotted a **Magpie**, and a distant **Common Buzzard**. A **Robin** serenaded us from the hedgerow before a call went out alerting us to a very pale looking bird sat in a tree by the lake; very far off and hard to identify. When it eventually flew to the ground and back into the tree it revealed itself to be an extremely pale Buzzard and not the hoped for 'something better'. (There is, of course, nothing wrong with Buzzards, even ones that try to look like something else!). As we descended the slope towards the lake we spied **Teal** on the water meadows, and a pair of **Grey Heron** trying to be invisible by the water's edge.



There were a number of wildfowl visible on the lake so we stopped for a while to ensure we missed none; **Mute Swan** (both adults and four juveniles), **Tufted**



**Duck, Mallard, Gadwall, Moorhen** and a lone **Coot** were all found, along with a **Cormorant** in a tree. **Great Spotted Woodpecker** could be heard drumming as a pair of **Stock Dove** flew over; a flash of grey and yellow announced the arrival of a **Grey Wagtail** alighting on the dam wall, which posed nicely for enough time for good views to be had.



We then moved up to the 'feeding logs', but despite Carol putting seed on them, for once nothing appeared. Eventually giving up, we headed along the path bordering the lake; there was a definite lack of smaller birds along here, as all we added to the list was a pair of **Chaffinch**.



Reaching the shelter belt we spotted **Feral Pigeon**, and a **Bullfinch** could be heard calling; we also found one of the Woodpeckers that had been drumming, after a lot of looking. With a smidge under half-an-hour of the allotted time left I was wondering where we could go to try to find some of the smaller species; Nick suggested trying the area by the keepers cottage, as he has feeders in his garden. This was an inspired choice as not only did we pick up **Coal Tit**, **Long-tailed Tit** and **Nuthatch** there, and got views of a second Bullfinch, but the back of the group also collected three **Snipe** and singleton **Shoveler** and **Stonechat** on the water meadows en-route; a brilliant group effort!

All that was left to do now was to complete the short walk back to the house; as we wandered gently back,

and not expecting to find anything of any significance (though Kestrel, we hoped, was a possibility, as we had not yet seen one) when shouts and fingers pointed upwards allowed us to see five large swans, low above us, heading east. Unfortunately our viewing angle, from behind and almost directly below, did not let us determine bill colour, but the general opinion was that they did not look quite right for Mute; besides, the local swans we knew to be on the lake, having just seen them there. Bumping into Carol's Ken soon afterwards, we found he had seen them too, and from a better angle - he thought they were **Whooper Swan**. (Carol later got confirmation that five Whooper had been seen heading east over Cley fifteen minutes or so before our sighting).



Thanks to the efforts of the whole group, and especially Carol, Nick and Val, we had found a very

creditable **49 species**, more than I had stated on the day due to mis-counting. Now, if only that Kestrel had put in an appearance...



**Thanks Dave!**

## March's Weekend Club Walk

### Horsey Gap and Brogrove Farm | 8<sup>th</sup> March



By **Janice Darch**

Our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary walk to the Horsey area of east Norfolk could not have been better- a lovely sunny, warm, still day, 17 club members and one of our first birds was a Raven from the car park!! We then had a pair of Pied Wagtails in the car park on a roof. We had met at the Horsey Wind Pump car park which gave us access to a great view over Horsey Mere where we had two Common Cranes overhead. A Grey Heron was also showing at the Mere. Could things get any better? From the Mere we made our way north to Brograve Drainage Mill passing through deciduous wood, reed bed and rough grazing land. Passerines were in evidence in the woodland including Robins, Blackbirds, Dunnock and Wren. The rough pasture had Lapwings, Starling, Magpie, Skylark and Linnet and the reed beds contained Reed Buntings while the channels supported Mute Swans. Ponds within the pastures held Teal, Mallard and Snipe. A flock of 300



*Sarah Hanson*

Pink Footed Geese fly over and landed nearby but before we could scope them they took off again spooked by something. That was a shame as we didn't get the opportunity to check if the flock contained any other species. Other geese we saw during our walk were Greylags, Egyptian and Canada. Moving into Horsey Village we spent a few minutes watching some feeders in a garden and added Chaffinch, Greenfinch and Goldfinch, House Sparrow, Blue and Great Tits to our list. Onwards to Horsey Gap we spotted a distant Great Egret in the grass. On the beach great views of Grey Seals were had but our bird highlight was a Rock Pipit on the groynes. Herring Gulls, Lesser and Great Black-backed Gulls were showing with Turnstones and a distant Red-throated Diver was scoped. The coast path south from the Horsey gap car park produced Kestrel, Buzzard, Marsh Harrier and Stonechats. Our walk concluded with a walk back to the car park through wet pasture which wasn't really very wet at all. Some of us had lunch at the café picnic benches and to conclude our 51<sup>st</sup> species flew over - a Little Egret.

### Here's what some of the participants had to say ...

"I really enjoyed the walk - which was well-led by Janice. We saw lots of birds starting with Raven from the carpark! The Cranes were a popular addition to the list, which finished at over fifty species. The walk, which included a wide variety of habitat and wildlife interest, finished at the NT cafe for lunch. It was nice to be able to wake up, see the sun shining and head off for the walk. A great group - some joining us for the first time - re-visiting one of the most popular of our early years walks. Happy 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!"

"It was great. Big thank you to Janice for a fab morning. A lovely walk and over 50 species too! It was lovely to have a few more people as it made it a nice buzz. Coffee and cake at the end is always a plus!"

"We really enjoyed it and will start coming on a more regular basis."

"It was a most enjoyable walk!"

"What a wonderful morning it was. The weather couldn't have been better. It was good to see so many club members had decided to attend. I am very fond of Horsey, having enjoyed numerous walks there over the years. It is an ideal venue, with parking, toilets and a snack bar serving drinks and snacks. Highlights for me were cranes in flight, a raven (previously only seen by me at the Tower of London) and a rock pipit. I thoroughly enjoyed the morning and look forward to more anniversary walks."

"It was great to join a large group on this lovely walk, allowing me to mingle with existing friends and to get to know some new people. We were spoiled with good weather and great birds - fancy getting such a good view of a Raven before we had even left the car park, and the Cranes put on a wonderful display for us! Those of us in the middle of the pack had the advantage of being in a sandwich of knowledgeable birders, with Janice calling out from the front and Trevor as backstop rather than his usual position at the front."

### Why not come and join us next time?!

*Photos courtesy of Trevor Williams*



# Last Month's Evening Talk

## "Twelve Years of River Restoration in Norfolk"

A talk with NRT's Jonah Tosney

zoom



By Alan Stevens

When planning the NENBC's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year we thought it would be an excellent opportunity to try and arrange return visits by 'speakers from the past' to hear how things have changed in their speciality over the decade. For the February meeting we were lucky to have with us again Jonah Tosney, who was last with us in March 2017, not quite a decade, but long enough for an update. Jonah is the Technical Director at the Norfolk Rivers Trust (NRT) and has worked there since 2012 having previously worked at other similar conservation organisations. He has a PhD in aquatic ecology and an enthusiasm for anything that lives in the water. His job is to help the team deliver river restoration and wetland creation projects and make sure that are moving in the right direction for Norfolk's wildlife. The team, originally of 4 or 5, has now grown to 34.



Jonah set the scene explaining that The Norfolk Rivers Trust (NRT) was established in 2011 with a mission to restore, protect and enhance the water environments of Norfolk for people and wildlife through aquatic habitat creation, conservation and restoration, education and engagement, land management and advice to the farming community. The scale of the challenge working across Norfolk's catchment areas necessitates partnership working with a wide range of organisations including farmers, landowners, water companies, government bodies and the third sector, as well as the public. Funding for their work comes from the Environment Agency, DEFRA, The World Wildlife Fund and private commercial sources.

The talk centred around Norfolk's chalk streams which we learnt should provide clean water with a constant flow. Fed from the chalk layer from where water can return to the surface after many years it is at a constant temperature of about 8°C and, rich in minerals, ideal for plants and invertebrates to thrive in. We were reminded that chalk streams are globally rare numbering only about 300 with 220 in England of which 21 are in Norfolk.

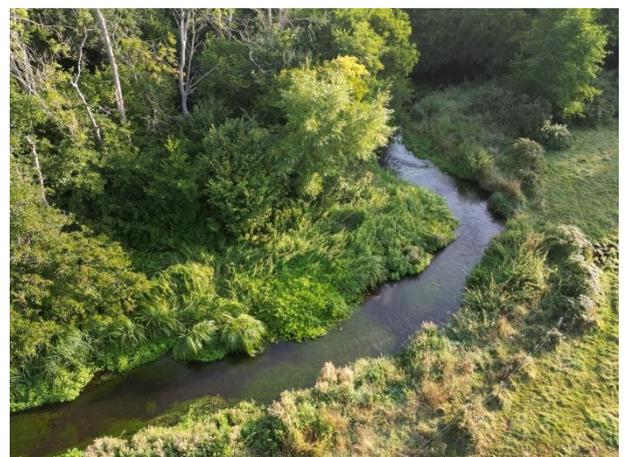
Aptly Jonah called on a 'Wind in the Willows' moment when describing more of a typical chalk stream environment and what should be found there, the vegetation, example Stonewort, mammals, the Water Vole whose population has decreased by 90% a range to just 9% of that previous held due to loss of habitat and predation by Mink. Our indigenous Crayfish population strongholds have been drastically reduced due to being largely being outcompeted by the introduced American Signal Crayfish. He reminded us that the river is not 'just a river' as the ecological environment extends to the wet margins, their plant life and all the life they support.

Our speaker then turned to the ecological problems affecting our rivers, straightening where meanders are lost removing quiet areas of water and increasing flow rates and at the same time removing flood plains. Straightening a river usually results in it being lowered, whereas a chalk stream should sit in height close the level of the surrounding land, slowing the flow, reducing the risk of flooding downstream and providing another valuable environment. Siltation was the next problem where the riverbed becomes covered smothering invertebrates and affecting their life cycle and the breeding requirements of fish. Barriers across rivers prevents fish movements while phosphates, essential as a fertilizer, now enter the river system from a variety of sources (together with other products of modern life such as pharmaceuticals) which some plants exploit the detriment other less dominate species.

Next came the steps to improve the quality of our rivers.

### English Chalk Streams

- Clean water
- Constant flow
- Constant temp
- Mineral rich



**Water quantity** came first centring around restoring floodplains. By re-connecting a river to the floodplain effective water storage can be achieved together with an improvement in marginal biodiversity. Nutrient re-cycling can be achieved, together with improved silt management. An example of this work was drawn from the superb floodplain created at Warham which interestingly resulted in the 're-discovery' of the long-lost earlier route of the river and resultant archaeological discoveries.



Next came achieving **clean water** where Jonah concentrated on the outfall from local sewage works with an example taken from a project at Northrepps, a site visited during his earlier talk. The creation of a wetland, downstream from the treatment works, planted with appropriate species filters out phosphates so enhancing the quality of the water passing downstream. If my memory serves me well at his last talk Jonah told us that this method achieved the desired result at a fraction of the cost of a fully 'hard engineered' alternative. Jonah also touched on the other perils now found in our rivers, pharmaceuticals, microplastics and cocaine by example.



**Habitat quality**, the penultimate step, led us through the agents of morphological change, the importance of habitat, the availability of food and shade. The desirability of leaving fallen trees in a river was explained, something often perceived as a problem, actually proven to be very much a positive. Again, from his previous talk, Jonah returned to the example of the creation of the 'new' course for the River Glaven through the Bayfield Estate and the creation of a new habitat from scratch still doing well and proving the worth of bold actions.



The final step came with **achieving a diversity of wildlife** and here our speaker concentrated on the reintroduction of Beavers looking at the project on our doorstep. Jonah has an obvious enthusiasm for Beavers and explained that they 'tick all the boxes' when it comes to a natural way to enhance the quality of our rivers and wetlands. Through their dam building they encourage water storage, improve water quality, help achieve a greenhouse gas balance by carbon sequestration and provide a habitat for birds, amphibians, reptiles, aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates and plant communities. What amazing animals they are!



To round the evening off our speaker turned to the possible re-introduction of the Burbot, a fish lost to the UK, so far as we know, since 1969. A lover of slow waters and floodplains the habitats being restored by the NRT lend themselves to such a project which has already achieved success in Belgium and France. A final reference was made to Crayfish and the efforts being made to re-establish colonies of our native species.



At the end of his talk Jonah begged the question of who benefits from their work? Well, aside from environment and the species they are helping through their work, the real answer is all of us!

An engaging and topical talk based around our home patch of North Norfolk which prompted a good few questions from the members. Perhaps we can look forward to having another update from Jonah in a few years' time?

For more information visit: [www.norfolkrivertrust.org](http://www.norfolkrivertrust.org) and [Beaver wild release](#) announcement.



### Beaver Enclosure Visit!

On the night, Jonah offered us a couple of guided visits to the 7 acre beaver enclosure near Baconsthorpe. He said that actual Beaver sightings were unlikely but you would get to see the habitat that the beavers have reshaped to meet their needs. We now have dates:

**Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> April at 14.00 and Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> April at 13.00**

Numbers limited to 12 on each and wellies are needed. We expect that interest will be high so we will be allocating slots on a **first come first served basis** with a waiting list. Please let us know on [nenbc@aol.co.uk](mailto:nenbc@aol.co.uk) as soon as you can if you are interested.

In all the beaver excitement, we completely forgot to take any photos on the evening, sorry! We had a great turn out on Zoom and apologies that after months of things working fine, we had a bit of an issue in the 1<sup>st</sup> half with the mics. John Hurst was there selling our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Prints / Cards and he instigated getting a plug in all the local printed news outlets last month too – thanks John! A big thanks also to Jane and Hilary on the refreshments. See you next month!



### The North East Norfolk Bird Club Ten Special Years

In January 2015, led by Trevor Williams, a small, local group of friends joined forces to form a new birdwatching club. They could not have remotely envisaged the subsequent enthusiasm, dedication, enjoyment, amassed data, and wellbeing support resulting from their scheme. With the desire to be inclusive and sociable, aiming to bring together everyone who has an interest and love for birds and the natural world, whilst sharing knowledge and encouraging participation, the club has certainly achieved its goal.

Covering eight, ten-kilometre squares, with a recording area extending from Weybourne Camp in the west, Happisburgh in the east, with Haveringland and Swanton Novers in the southwest, the variety of habitats create year-round interest.

The inaugural meeting took place on 29th January 2015 with a presentation by eminent ornithologist and author, Moss Taylor. With a current membership of over four hundred, supported by an industrious committee, the club plays a vital role in the local community. Social activities including guided walks, guest speakers, beginners' courses, sea and raptor watches, are supported by a broad range of expertise in the fields of ecology, publishing, overseas travel, literature, the arts and ornithology. Meeting for evening events in Gresham Village Hall, the club operates two WhatsApp groups, extensive website, presents a wonderfully illustrated monthly newsletter produced by editor, Carol Thornton, supported by members' contributions and a professionally produced annual report. To encourage submission of records and an awareness of sustainable travel, the club introduced a series of badge awards, green for eco birding with bronze, silver, gold and platinum for the number of species recorded. A highly esteemed purple badge has also been presented to four

individuals for their outstanding contribution to ornithology.

Of the many decade highlights, returning bee eaters to Trimmingham in 2022/2023 and the Cromer Peregrine Project have seen involvement by the club. Observations of ringed migratory species and the alarming changes of bird distribution created by climate change have also been recorded by members. We question the absence of cuckoo, turtle dove and tree sparrow, whilst querying the arrival of greater numbers of nightjar, spoonbill, cattle and great white egret, species which a decade ago would have been centred in southern Europe.

When peering through their optics, many club members enjoy engaging with the public, who will usually ask, "So, what are you looking at?" The interaction can be most enjoyable, sometimes resulting in new friendships, membership or simply a desire to 'Google' the species. This positive ethos continues to be endorsed during the 2025 anniversary year with many activities and celebrations. New members will be warmly welcomed to this informal, inclusive club whether they can identify a robin or rufous tailed robin!

To support the club and celebrate his birding encounters over the decade, local professional artist and club member since its inception, John Hurst has painted in watercolour a montage of many north Norfolk locations featuring the birds often found there. Reproduced as a fine art print and supporting set of greetings cards, John is donating part proceeds to the club for the 2025 initiatives.

To find out more about the North East Norfolk Bird Club or view John's contribution to the anniversary celebrations and his new watercolour collection, please see [www.nenbc.co.uk](http://www.nenbc.co.uk) and [www.marshlandarts.co.uk](http://www.marshlandarts.co.uk)



Sheringham Purple Sandpiper by John Hurst

**Birds and Locations:** The NENBC anniversary print £98.00 at club events or £110.00 including UK p&p

**Ten favourites:** The pack of 10 NENBC anniversary greetings cards. £20.00 at club events or £25.00 including UK p&p

To order: Email [johnhurst303@btinternet.com](mailto:johnhurst303@btinternet.com) (he'll need your delivery address) and payment is either by BACS to Marshland Arts | Sort Code 40-41-38 | Account No 11389300 |

or by Paypal via the [www.marshlandarts.co.uk](http://www.marshlandarts.co.uk) order form

Postal orders dispatched on receipt of payment. Thank you.

We were delighted to be back working with the University of East Anglia's Environmental Science department again this year. This is where, along with other organisations, we pitch real-life environmental consultancy projects to a group of 3<sup>rd</sup> year students in the capacity of 'client' and we get selected by 'consultant' students in line with their areas of interest. Working on the briefs provided by us, they research and document their topic, feedback regularly via email, Zoom or in-person, and at the end of the process present us with an individual consultancy report.

This time we worked on three briefs which Trevor and Andy presented to a lecture theatre of UEA students in January whilst Carol tuned in online. We linked our offering this year to our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference theme '**Whose birds are these? - exploring Anglo-African bird migration**'.

Our first project proposal was around a single species – the Golden Oriole – the why, what and where of their changes in fortune.

Project proposal two asked the student to look at changes in the timing of migration of Anglo-African birds (phenological trends) using historic Norfolk and comparative data.

Our final proposal asked the student to look at the population changes of 10 selected Anglo-African migrants.



## D1 Project overview - Golden Oriole

### Background:

- \* breed across much of Europe - wintering in the Sahel and Southern Africa
- \* in East Anglia a small but sustainable population bred 1980 to 2000 - loss linked to habitat change
- \* since 2015 an annual *westerly* movement of a few birds noted along the Cromer Ridge

### Project challenge:

- \* analyse the data, mapping changes in density and range of European population - incl UK
- \* consider impact of choice of migration flyways e.g Cuckoo
- \* attempt to explain recent pattern of sightings in Norfolk
- \* assess impact of habitat changes, identifying potential conservation / protection measures & implications for conservation across Africa and Europe

## Phenological trends (changes in timing of migration)

### E1: Project challenge:

- \* Using data published in the Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report (published by the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society, and available on their web -site), compile a database of arrival and departure dates for migrant birds in Norfolk.
- \* Examine these data for major trends such as long -term shifts in arrival or departure dates (and thereby length of stay), whether patterns vary between species wintering in different areas, and compare these results with those from elsewhere in UK or Europe, to establish how general these patterns might be. Differences in phenology may allow distinction between factors operating primarily in UK that influence the timing of migration, and those operating mostly in Africa.
- \* Summarise your results in a report, including simple but informative tables, graphs or maps.

## Population trends

### F1: Project challenge:

- \* Using the selection of ten migratory species that are found in Norfolk in summer, or which pass through Norfolk in spring and autumn, assess recent population changes and identify what the key pressures might be (bearing in mind that these pressures may differ from species to species).
- \* Suitable initial lines of enquiry would be the historical assessments and distribution maps published by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), the indices from State of Nature Reports, patterns of ringing recoveries and results from recent geolocator studies.
- \* Summarise your results in a report, including simple but informative tables, graphs or maps.



We are delighted to have been matched with four students. That means a double-up on one of the projects but we are tweaking the theme slightly to accommodate a two-pronged approach. We have already had our first meet with

all of the students and they will be reporting back at the end of May so look out for their Executive Summaries in our summer newsletters.

As always it was interesting to hear the projects being presented by other organisations – the students get to choose from such wide ranging and varied themes. This year's other offerings included ....

- The co-benefits of mangrove forests in wave attenuation and carbon capture from the Defra Executive Agency the Centre for Environment, Fisheries, and Aquaculture Science
- Carbon offsetting/insetting options for North Norfolk District Council
- Farming strategies for climate change resilience from Norfolk Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
- Assessing the current landscape for electric vehicle adoption & services in the Irish market with Cornwall Insight
- Evaluating Planning Appeals for ancient/veteran trees with South Norfolk and Broadland Council
- Assessing the value of locally sourced ingredients from the UEA Campus Kitchen
- UEA Solar Farm Project from UEA Estates
- Walking Partners from Pathmakers
- What are the benefits of trees to streams? from Felbeck Trust
- Valuing green spaces from Cromer Green Spaces

## Birding through the year in Norfolk

### Comments on some interesting observations

February 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 .....

**February 3<sup>rd</sup> | Bewick's Swans – 10 with 20 Whooper Swans at Ingham.**

Bewick's are the smallest and rarest British swans and were named in 1830 after the renowned ornithologist and wood engraver Thomas Bewick. They breed in the Arctic, the range stretching from northern Siberia to the Pacific. The Eastern population winters in Asia, while those in Western Russia winter in North-west Europe, including the British Isles. They leave their Russian breeding grounds in early September, arriving in England from mid-October with peak numbers in January and early February. By mid to late February some have started back on their return migration to Russia.

The peak number overwintering in the British Isles was recorded in 1995 with 30,000,

falling to 7,500 in 2009 with the majority on the Ouse and Nene Washes, but only 1,278 were counted during the most

recent International Swan Census carried out in January 2020. There are several possible explanations for this steady decline. Firstly, milder winter temperatures further east, mean that there is less need for the Bewick's Swans to undertake such long migrations, known as 'short stopping' and nowadays the main epicenter of the wintering range is Germany, whereas previously it was in the British Isles and The Netherlands. They are also spending less time in the wintering areas, known as 'short staying'. However, the population is also in decline due to loss of wetland habitats, collisions with power lines and wind turbines, and lead poisoning. Although lead shot has been banned in wetland habitats, it is still legal to use it over land, and this is where the swans find most of their food, especially waste root crops, such as sugar beet tops. Finally despite being protected, Bewick's Swans are shot on migration, as shown by the fact that a third of those that are trapped for ringing are shown to contain shot gun pellets on Xray. In order for the population to remain stable, the herds need to contain 18% of first-winter birds, whereas over the last two decades, the percentage in the wintering flocks has been between 6% and 15%.



Much of what we know about the family dynamics in Bewick's Swans comes from the work carried out by Peter Scott at Slimbridge in the 1960s. It was realized that the bill pattern of each swan could be used in the same way as a fingerprint, enabling individuals to be recognized over a period of years. From this it was discovered that Bewick's Swans pair for life, and that cygnets stay with their parents all winter, sometimes being joined by offspring from previous years, and that pairs were formed by the third or fourth winter. Perhaps surprisingly, bill patterns were not inherited.

It was just as well that the herd of swans that I was watching at Ingham contained both species, as it is not always easy to separate Bewick's from Whooper Swans, especially at a distance. However, on the day the smaller size, slimmer build and shorter neck of the Bewick's was apparent, as was the extent of yellow on the bills of the adults.

The accompanying photo of Whooper and Bewick's Swans was taken at Ludham in 2016.

### **February 17<sup>th</sup> | Lesser White-fronted Geese – 9 at Warham Camp.**

For the first time in well over a week, the morning of February 17<sup>th</sup> dawned with clear blue skies and so I decided to take the opportunity to visit Warham Camp in search of the small flock of Lesser White-fronted Geese that had first been reported there five days earlier.

Lesser White-fronts, as I shall call them from now on, are the smallest and most attractive of 'our' 'grey geese', and are also very rare throughout their range. The species breeds eastwards from northern Scandinavia across Siberia, wintering in south-eastern Europe and Asia. But the population has been steadily declining over the last 50 years. In an attempt to stem this decline, a re-introduction programme has been running in Sweden since 1979, with Lesser White-fronts' eggs initially being placed in the nests of Barnacle Geese. This newly established Swedish population is now self-sustaining and estimated to be about 150 birds. Traditionally they have overwintered in The Netherlands.



In January, a gaggle of 24 Lesser White-fronts landed at Titchwell during a day of dense fog over the North Sea, and later re-located to Ken Hill Marshes, where they have remained ever since. The party included both ringed adults and five wild-born juveniles from the Swedish re-introduction programme.

Then on January 21<sup>st</sup> an additional skein of 9 Lesser White-fronts flew in off the sea over Burnham Norton, again in foggy conditions, and were subsequently found at Warham Camp on February 12<sup>th</sup>, where they had presumably been grazing undetected. As with those at Ken Hill, they consisted of both adults and first-winter birds. Finally a flock of 7 Lesser White-fronts (5 adults & 2 juveniles, one of the adults was colour-ringed with a different code to those at Warham), was found on the Stiffkey Floods on February 25<sup>th</sup>.

Although the flock at Warham Camp was rather distant and often in hollows or behind bushes, reasonable views were possible through binoculars and even better through a telescope. They were noticeably smaller and shorter-necked than the Greylag Geese with which they were feeding, in fact at times they appeared to be barely taller than nearby Wigeon. The short, triangular bill was apparent, as was the white 'front' on the forehead, extending further back on to the crown where it ended in a distinct point. Even at this range the yellow orbital ring was obvious, especially in the adults. For no apparent reason, the flock became rather agitated and began uttering high-pitched yapping calls before taking off and flying round a couple of times, and then landing in another field further away. In flight, the upperwings appeared darker than in Greater White-fronted Geese, and the wings were rather longer and slimmer.

It was only after I returned home that I discovered I had not previously seen a 'wild' Lesser White-front, and so these became lifers for me, a rare occurrence now in Norfolk. I had mistakenly believed that when I first moved to Great Yarmouth in 1969, I had seen the adult Lesser White-front that consorted with the Taiga Bean Geese at Buckenham or Cantley, but my records showed otherwise. It's strange the tricks that one's memory plays as one gets older!

The accompanying photo was taken at Pensthorpe in 2015.

### **February 18<sup>th</sup> | Goshawk – 2+ males displaying at Swanton Novers.**

Another bright, sunny morning with a gentle breeze, surely a perfect day to see the Goshawks at Swanton Novers. So Robina and I set off in mid-morning, arriving on site at 11.15am. Although Goshawks are resident they are most easily seen in February and March when both sexes are displaying, as at other times of the year they are generally elusive and very shy. Ideally late morning is the time to look for them, from 11am to 1pm, on sunny days but with some cloud and with a wind of about force 3.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Goshawks became extinct in the British Isles due to deforestation and persecution by gamekeepers, but became re-established in the 1960s and nowadays, over 1,000 pairs breed in Great Britain. It is thought that their recovery was due to falconers' escapes and deliberate re-introductions. They are most abundant in areas with extensive coniferous

forests but hunt over any type of closed-canopy woodland, feeding on corvids, pigeons, squirrels and rabbits. In fact one of the best indications that a Goshawk is in the area is when Wood Pigeons and corvids suddenly take off in panic.

They usually build their nest in a conifer tree, and if the same site is used over a number of years, the nest can become several feet high, as fresh pine branches are added each year. In Finland, at least, 2-3 alternate nests are constructed within the pair's territory and the male may mate up to 500 times in a season - allegedly!

Unlike Sparrowhawks, they often perch at the top of pines, when their glistening white underparts glow in the sunshine. In flight, too, the white underparts and underwings are very apparent and give a clue to their identification. The females are almost as large as Buzzards, but the smaller males can even approach the size of a female Sparrowhawk. The adults of both sexes are blue-grey above with a broad white supercilium and a dark mask, while immature birds are browner above and streaked darker below compared with the barring on a juvenile Sparrowhawk.

In flight, Goshawks have a very distinct silhouette, likened to a crucifix with long, paddle-shaped wings but a narrow, almost pointed 'hand' and a broad protruding head and thick neck, far more obvious than in a Sparrowhawk. The tip of the tail is rounded compared with the square end of a Sparrowhawk's tail, and in display the extensive white undertail coverts wrap around the sides of the tail. When displaying Goshawks fly with deliberate, deep, elastic wing beats, producing a slow, rather lazy flapping flight. Both sexes display in spring and the 'sky dance' is spectacular, often including a fast, deep plunge, followed by shooting back up towards the sky. Do take the opportunity to witness this for yourself, surely one of the highlights of the early spring.

The accompanying photo of a pair of Goshawks, which shows the differences in the flight silhouettes of the male and female, was taken over Swanton Novers village in 2019.



## Memorable experiences and favourite birds



Last month 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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.

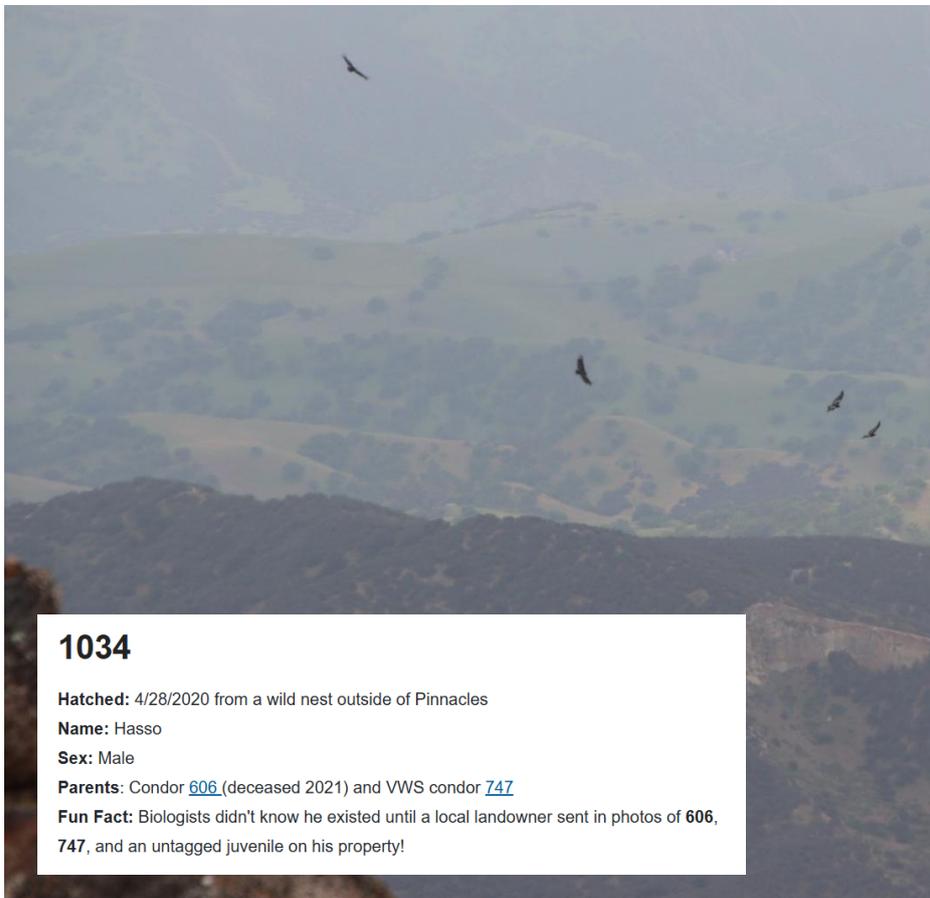
As we weren't exactly inundated with folk dropping us emails of their favourite moments, Carol is starting you off below. We'd really love to hear from you all though! It doesn't have to be a Norfolk experience or bird, or even a UK one, but it could be. It doesn't have to be long (but we aren't going 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 so Carol doesn't have to write about her favourite bird next month!

### A top birding experience: California Condors by Carol Thornton

“I have been very fortunate to have travelled to California a few times. My sister has lived out there for 20 years and what started as an initial trip to keep in touch with family has morphed somewhat in subsequent trips, I rather guiltily have to admit, into a brief visit to see people within a longer visit to see birds. There are so many beautiful and wonderful species to see, hear and ID, with many specialisms we just don't see over here like with hummingbirds and such stunning bright colours. However, a standout moment for me was seeing not-very-colourful but 'awesome' California Condors at Pinnacles National Park last year. I had distant views at the Grand



Canyon many years ago but we hoped that as Pinnacles is a release and management site for the [California Condor Recovery Scheme](#) we might get some closer views. We started early and had quite a climb to get high enough but had no Condor joy on the way up, however loads of wildflowers and song birds kept us enthralled en route. We thought we were going to be unlucky as despite a couple of hours scanning the skies and the rocks, we could 'only' pick out Turkey Vultures. Munching some lunch and resigned to dipping, the weather started to warm up a bit - California isn't always hot! One last scan with my scope and I spotted a blob on a pinnacle at the far limit of my equipment and over the next hour this became several distant blobs, then several moving distant blobs and then plenty of birds in the thermals actually flying beneath us. My jaw-dropping moment was when one flew right over my head, so close that it wouldn't fit in my camera viewfinder. I knew they were big (a wingspan of up to 3m) but I really couldn't believe quite how huge this bird was up close! Remember that our 'barn door' White-tailed Eagles have a wing span of up to 'just' 2.4m. The same bird flew over me a few times gradually getting higher and I was able to take a few pictures as well as just staring in awe. Suffice to say I was very excited and accidentally skipped most of the way down in the sunshine!"



**1034**

**Hatched:** 4/28/2020 from a wild nest outside of Pinnacles  
**Name:** Hasso  
**Sex:** Male  
**Parents:** Condor [606](#) (deceased 2021) and VWS condor [747](#)  
**Fun Fact:** Biologists didn't know he existed until a local landowner sent in photos of [606](#), [747](#), and an untagged juvenile on his property!

**Favourite birds by Ellie Farrow**

When we asked Ellie to select her favourite bird for her profile slot in our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Book she struggled crying "This is so difficult as I love so many different ones!". We could only put one in the book – and even then Ellie managed to expand it to include all gulls! – but here are the remainder of her top 5

"Feral pigeons! It breaks my heart knowing we humans captured, bred, used, and then discarded rock doves in their millions leaving them to fend for themselves as a domesticated pigeon breed that is now dependent on humans to survive, but we treat them like garbage. Or breed them into mutated extremes that have no hope



of survival in the wild, while the wild rock dove struggles. Pigeons are awesome lil' guys, and deserve so much more recognition and respect for what we humans put them through. *Photo Doug Cullern*

Another underdog would be the **turkey**, these big birds, although not native to the UK, are a firm favourite of mine after getting to know many rescued ones at the sanctuary I work at. They are very smart, affectionate, emotional, and amazing with their chameleon-like colour-changing skin. So cool!

Another big bird I love is the **brent goose**. Their magical bubbling call and cute little faces are a welcome sight every year. *Photo James Appleton*



And finally the **blackbird**, gotta love a blackbird - so neat, so smart, and a beautiful voice. The pair that frequent my garden are wonderful parents too, and make me smile every time I see them." *Photo Richard Farrow*

## Our Birding Trip: Lincolnshire

Friday 7<sup>th</sup> -Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2025



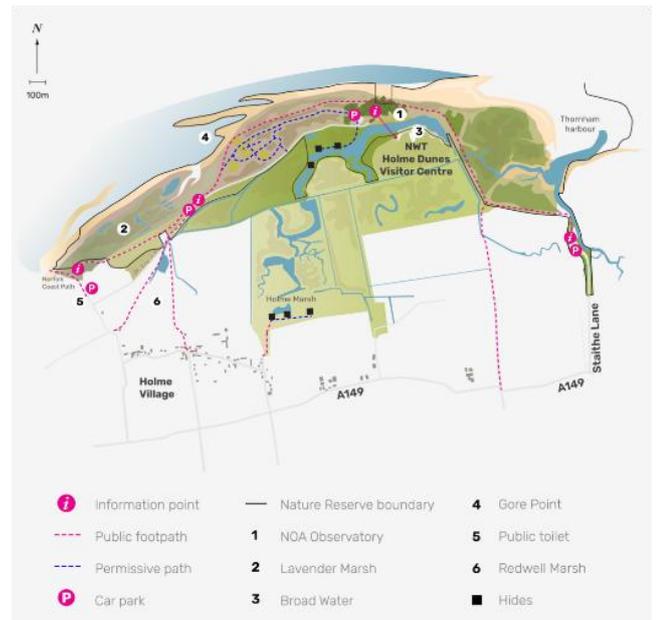
By Jonathan Anderson

My Mum (Judith) and I went away for our annual Birding Trip away, and this year we decided to head over to Lincolnshire for a change to explore the other side of the Wash.

On the Friday we called in at **Holme Dunes NWT** reserve and saw a Red Kite at Burnham-Overy-Staithe from the Car. We first popped into the hides to get a variety of Wildfowl and Curlew. Then when we were having our lunch in the Café, we bumped into Janice Darch and a friend. We then went for a walk and added Coot on the Broadwater, before Walking west and added Knot to our list. After being windswept and a well-earned Hot Chocolate, we continued to Sutton Bridge to our accommodation.

On Saturday we went to **RSPB Freiston Shore** and **RSPB Frampton Marsh** reserves as we were booked on a Sunset Walk at Frampton Marsh.

Our first port of call was Freiston Shore where we saw a variety of wildfowl including Brent Goose, Greylag Goose, Canada Goose and a Little Grebe as well as Robin, Blackbird and other common woodland species. (We also found out that there are major development plans including a brand-new underwater Hide (which will be interesting to see otter and other wildlife).





We then went on to Frampton Marsh and having checked the sightings list (as one does) we decided to pop into one of the 4 hides (Visitor Centre Viewing point, East Hide, Reedbed Hide and 360 Hide) so we decided upon the 360 Hide and were treated to a Jack Snipe (and other Waders) which landed in front of the hide and went into the reeds. That was the first Highlight (*library photo courtesy of Moss Taylor*). After Lunch we popped into the East Hide and added Ringed Plover to our list, The Reedbed Hide produced Pochard. Then it was time for the Sunset (overcast) Walk. Where we added Ruff, Great White Egret, Hen Harrier, Marsh Harrier, Goldeneye, Pintail and the sight and sound of 100+ Whooper Swans coming into roost. On our return we did check for any Bewick Swans, but no Luck.

On Sunday we took a walk along the **River Nene** and added Barnacle Goose, Stonechat, Meadow Pipit, Little Egret (*library photo courtesy of Moss Taylor*) and Cormorant to our growing list. We decided to go somewhere inland on Monday, so we went to **Dersingham Bog** and **Sandringham Country Park** and added Treecreeper (*library photo courtesy of Julian Thomas*) and Jay and heard Great Spotted Woodpecker and Wren from our walk.

On Tuesday it was time to leave Sutton Bridge and head back home, but we called in at **RSPB Titchwell Marsh** and added Long Tailed Tit, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Dunnock etc on the Feeders, Tawny Owl which was well hidden in a tree covered with Ivy, Barn Owl and 3 Water Rail visible from paths. Other species seen were

Grey Heron and excellent views of Common Snipe in front of the Parrinder Hide (*library photo courtesy of Mark Clements*). Then it was time to return home to Cromer.

**Total number of Species:** 70 bird species and Muntjac, Rabbit and Cattle (with GPS tags in case cattle go missing).



# Cromer Peregrine Project

## The 2025 Season (hopefully!) ...



By Jane Crossen

The project committee and team of volunteers are all raring to go and everything is in place for this year's Peregrine activity. Not that it ever goes away! They are a resident pair, of course, and so good views of both birds have been seen all winter.

The fantastic, upgraded, webcam is up and running now:

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

Check it out – it really is top notch. Cameras can now scan the top of the pinnacles and there is one set out on the nave end so, for the first time, there will be excellent views of the birds on the ledges, grotesques and window arches. This is where most of the activity is once the bird(s) have fledged.

OF COURSE, this is dependent upon a successful season – it won't be for want of trying – they have been, to use the technical word, 'copulating', a LOT!

We are pretty sure they are the original pair – certainly the female - as she has a specific white feather on her cheek (very useful when the watchpoint volunteers are trying to ID the birds!).



There was a report undertaken detailing the 2020 season's prey, when three juveniles successfully fledged (so a lot of food needed). There was no watchpoint (Covid intervened) so the details were taken from prey brought in and ID'd via the webcam.

There were 267 food items in 39 days recorded: including 104 x wood pigeon/feral pigeon/dove, 43 x starlings, 20 x blackbirds and a good selection of other birds – including a Temminck's Stint! They have had a fair few 'uncommon' and 'rare' birds over the years. I will delve more into that report next time.

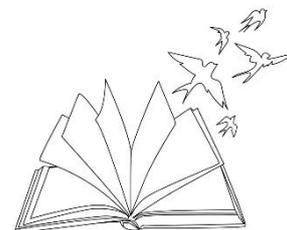


Over the last couple of weeks, the interesting remains of the prey have ben Teal and, wait for it, Little Owl! That's considered an 'infrequent' catch apparently! Fingers crossed that we have eggs soon – expected mid-March.

*Images are stills from the webcam*

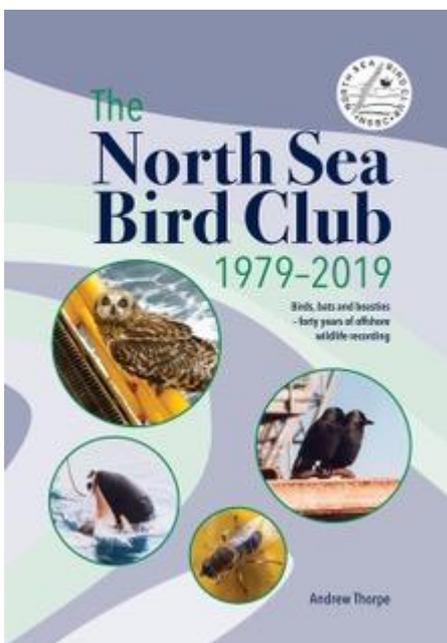
# Book Review

## I've Just Read .....



By Moss Taylor

As is often the case, here is Moss starting us off on a new series this time it is book reviews. I am sure there are loads of you out there who enjoy a good read about birds and nature and you have some gems you can share with other members. Whether it is fact or fiction, (the book, 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!



I can guarantee that members of the North East Norfolk Bird Club will find the recently published **The North Sea Bird Club 1979 – 2019** an absolutely fascinating read and a most useful reference book. Its sub-title is Birds, bats and beasts – forty years of offshore wildlife recording.

One of the founders of the club was Dr Robin Cox, a Gorleston general practitioner, who was born in Cromer and was a great friend of the late Richard Richardson. One of Robin's duties at the North Sea Medical Centre in Gorleston was to provide medical assistance when it was needed to the workers on the North Sea oil rigs, which entailed being flown out by helicopter to attend his patients. I first met Robin when I was working at Great Yarmouth General Hospital and knowing that I was interested in entering general practice, he offered me a post as an assistant practitioner in his surgery with a view to becoming a full partner. Knowing that this would involve not infrequent flights out to the rigs, I declined, as at the time I was not that keen on flying. As it turned out, soon after this Robin left general practice and took up the post of Medical Director for the oil giant Phillips and he began collecting information on bird migration from Phillips' North Sea installations. He could see the unique

potential of forming the North Sea Bird Club, stating: 'A string of bird observatories down the middle of the North Sea might well have been the impossible dream of Eagle Clark on Heligoland or Ken Williamson on Fair Isle, but it is the reality of the North Sea Bird Club'. So the club was inaugurated in 1979, with well-known ornithologists Stan Howe, Alan Knox, Bill Bourne and Bryan Sage all involved. Following the decommissioning of oil and gas platforms, as wind power took over, the North Sea Bird Club was wound up in 2019.

The book opens with 14 introductory chapters covering such topics as the formation and aims of the club, and the personal observations of many of the workers on the rigs. One of the most interesting, and to me surprising species involved, was the Wren, of which 2-3 were recorded annually but an amazing 58 in 1998. One ringed on the south coast of Norway in September 2001, was found 499km away on the Janice A platform, two weeks later.

Unfortunately it landed in a pot of glue and was not found until after it had died – the first recovery in the UK of a Norwegian-ringed Wren. This highlights the hazards facing birds trying to land on an offshore rig: the gas flare, metal cranes and a tower, and potential helicopter activity. But it was also not easy for the rig workers to find and record any birds. Free time, when it was possible to do some birding, was dictated by your shift pattern, and Health and Safety rules restricted your ability to go into certain areas, and there were a vast number of potential 'hiding' places on a rig where birds could be sheltering. Workers also had to wear approved Health and Safety clothing at all times, including heavy boots, hard hats and high-vis overalls. The platform was constantly vibrating due to the machinery being used, which made it difficult to hold binoculars steady, often accentuated by a strong wind, and noise from the machinery and the flare made it very difficult to hear any bird calls, while the artificial lighting could make a greyish warbler appear yellowish. Finally cameras with batteries required the user to have obtained a Hot Work Permit.

One of the rarest birds to be found on a North Sea rig was a Pacific Swift, as recounted in both *The North Sea Bird Club 1979 – 2019* and *British Birds*: 'On 19 June 1981, R Walden was on the deck of the Shell BT gas platform on the Leman Bank ... about 45km off Happisburgh, Norfolk, when a bird attempted to land on his shoulder. It then flew past him and clung to a wall on the rig. He caught the exhausted migrant at about 13.30hrs, and sent it ashore on the next helicopter flight for release, as caring rig-workers often do. At 19.30hrs the helicopter arrived at Beccles

Heliport in Suffolk'. It turned out to be a Pacific Swift and was a new species for the Western Palearctic. However, as the bird had first made 'landfall' 28 miles from the coast, and its further progress to Suffolk was man-assisted, it qualified for Category E of the British List. It was released two hours later at Beccles and was seen the following day by Cliff Waller at Shadingfield, 4½ km to the south-west. On the strength of that it was included in The Birds of Suffolk as the first county record, but despite originally being found off Happisburgh, it was not considered as a first for Norfolk. This was just one of many exhausted, injured or hungry birds that were rescued by rig-workers.

But it was not just birds that found their way on to the rigs, perhaps the most bizarre being a Common Frog on Maureen platform (named after Robin Cox's wife) in September 1993. Clearly it hadn't swum out to the rig and the most likely explanation was that it had hopped into some pipework or other equipment lying around in an onshore yard, before being transported offshore. Butterflies and moths were not infrequently recorded, the commonest being Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell and Painted Lady, and Silver Y moths. Very occasionally dragonflies were also seen, the most frequently identified being Mifact or fiction/kjjjgrant Hawkers.

Another chapter covers the ringed birds that were found on rigs and included a Barn Owl from Germany, Blue Tit from Norway, Robin from Poland and 30 ringed Starlings. The rarest, however, was a Little Bunting ringed on 27th September 1994 on Fair Isle and found freshly dead seven days later on Cleeton platform, 50km NE of Hull. The final chapter is a Systematic List of the 168 species of birds recorded over the 40 years and includes five Budgerigars!

To obtain a copy of the book please email [Andrew.Thorpe147@btinternet.com](mailto:Andrew.Thorpe147@btinternet.com) (£17.50 + £3.50 towards p&p)

## Contemplating Conservation

### Cats Part 2: Reconciling cat welfare and wildlife conservation



By Tracy Brighten

February's article discussed the impacts of free-roaming domestic cats on wildlife, especially on urban fringes with high densities of cats. Loss and Marra describe cat management as "one of the most challenging conservation, animal welfare, and public health issues of our time". This article covers cat owner perspectives, animal welfare, and reconciling cat culture and wildlife conservation to move forward on cat management.

Back in 2015, a University of Exeter study found that cultural attitudes can be a barrier to wildlife protection. Cat owners are often unaware of the scale of predation by cats, and when informed, they say their cat doesn't hunt or that hunting is a natural behaviour. They generally oppose keeping cats indoors, prioritising their cat's welfare over wildlife conservation. "If we are to successfully reduce the number of wildlife deaths caused by domestic cats, the study suggests that we should use cat welfare as a method of encouraging cat owners to get involved," said lead author Dr Jenni McDonald.

Sponsored by SongBird Survival, the University of Exeter has since conducted further studies to identify drivers of cats' hunting behaviour and barriers to and opportunities for managing predation of wildlife. Researchers analysed perspectives of cat owners and identified five types of owners based on views of cats' roaming and hunting behaviours.

Concerned Protectors focus on cat safety; Freedom Defenders prioritise cat independence; Tolerant Guardians support outdoor access but dislike their cats hunting; Conscientious Caretakers feel some responsibility for managing their cats' hunting; and Laissez-faire Landlords were mostly unaware of the harm to wildlife of hunting behaviour. [Figure: Cat owner types Crowley et al. (2020)]



Most participants valued outdoor access for cats and opposed confinement to prevent hunting. Although they wanted to stop their cats hunting, they believed this is natural behaviour outside their control. Researchers proposed that giving owners practical ways to manage their cats' hunting would gain more support than enforced confinement, and that humane strategies for reducing cat populations would receive wide support.

Another study looked at options for cat management informed by drivers of hunting behaviour, identifying five categories to control populations and hunting: lethal control, non-lethal control, devices to reduce predation, home enrichment, and outdoor access management.

Lethal control includes trapping, shooting, poisoning and introducing diseases and is effective for predator eradication on islands. Non-lethal control includes neutering of males and females and spaying of females and contraceptives. However, Trap–neuter–return (TNR) requires sterilisation rates of 51% to 94% to be effective for population control.



Devices to reduce predation include a collar with a bell; CatAlert, a collar-mounted sonic warning device; CatBib, a 'pounce protector' bib attached to a collar; and BirdsBeSafe, a brightly coloured collar that alerts birds. However, while devices may reduce predation of birds and mammals, cat owners seem reluctant to use them due to perceived (not real) safety issues. Furthermore, devices do not reduce indirect fear effects. *[Photo: Cat wearing BirdsBeSafe collar via Victoria University Wellington]*

A cat's hunting behaviour can be reduced by enriching a cat's indoor environment

with cat trees, scratching posts, hiding places and appropriate feeding, drinking, toileting and rest areas. Dedicated playtime with owners and feeding premium meat-rich food can also reduce predation of wildlife and improve cat health and welfare.

Ultimately, the most effective way to limit predation and stress impacts on wildlife is to keep cats contained in homes and gardens, especially at night when birds sleep, at dawn and dusk when birds are most active, and in the breeding season when nests are vulnerable. Cat behaviour specialists say it only takes a few weeks to train a cat to spend the night indoors if owners are persistent. Offering cats a regular treat in the evenings, playing games with them to release energy, and providing a safe sleeping spot helps. Contrary to common belief, cats are not an effective control for rats. It seems the reason we see fewer rats in the presence of cats is that rats go into hiding!

Keeping cats indoors or in a catio is popular in the U.S. mainly for safety reasons and is recommended by animal charities. This popularity is not reflected in the UK. According to a Cats Protection survey, 64% of owned cats are allowed outdoor access and 36% are kept indoors. Like the U.S., safety is the main reason for keeping cats indoors in the UK. Cats can be victims of traffic accidents, fights, disease, theft, cruelty and poisoning.



Acceptance and normalisation of keeping cats at home in the UK is heavily influenced by public discourse. A social sciences study considered how perceptions of cats, personal experience, and media discourse influence cat guardianship. The idea that cats need to hunt for a happy life was prevalent, even among indoor advocates who recognised the importance of playing with their cat in ways that mimic stalking and chasing prey. However, caring for indoor cats entails more work and doesn't fit with the common idea in UK discourses that cats are "low maintenance pets". Interestingly, a higher proportion of young owners (18 to 34) than other age groups keep cats indoors in the UK, mainly to spend more time with their pets.

The polarisation of cat welfare advocates and wildlife conservationists isn't helped by a minority of free-roaming cat campaigners who use misinformation to stall action on cats. Determined to keep the status quo of cats roaming, such campaigns can include misinformation and even discreditation of peer-reviewed scientific research. Researchers responded to emotive criticism and science denial by cat protection groups with an article published in *Biological Invasions*.

Conflict is stirred by the media too where clickbait journalism hooks readers but hinders policymaking. This was seen recently when the Scotland Scottish Animal Welfare Commission (SAWC) published their report on responsible ownership and care of domestic cats in Scotland. The SAWC focuses on the welfare of wild and companion animals in Scotland and provides scientific and ethical advice to the Scottish Government. Their report covers the impact of cats on wildlife and potential measures that could reduce this impact, listing pros and cons of each, including cat containment in vulnerable areas for wildlife *and* considering cat welfare. The Scottish Government said they would consider all aspects of the report, which is good practice surely? Yet, provoking media headlines claimed the Scottish Government wants to lock up cats.

UK discourses on cats are also influenced by conservation NGO policies, which are influenced by *perceptions* of public and political support. A University of Oxford study examined why cat predation is not on the agenda for most UK-focused conservation NGOs. The study says NGOs are uncertain about whether cat predation presents a widespread conservation problem in the UK. However, researchers argue that NGOs may avoid looking into the issue due to a belief that the cat predation problem is irresolvable. Perceived pressures relating to the attitudes of donors, members of the public, and politicians may incentivise NGOs to not talk about cats. The study also suggests politics, culture, and human-animal relations drives UK conservation NGOs to set a high bar for scientific evidence on cats upon which they will act.

Members have criticised the RSPB for remaining silent in the cat debate to avoid upsetting cat-owning members and the wider public. In the past, the RSPB has not been concerned because cats are thought to primarily take weak or injured and common birds. Instead, conservation efforts focus on intensive agriculture, climate change, urbanisation and loss of habitat and food. Responding to criticism, the RSPB says they encourage people to reduce predation in gardens and recognise that "Cat predation can cause particular problems for vulnerable and restricted populations of birds, in particular birds that nest low to or on the ground such as Dartford Warblers and Nightingales".

Beyond NGO policy and domestic laws, researchers considered the role of nature conservation law to assess how far, if at all, countries are meeting their legal obligations under global treaties such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, Convention on Migratory Species, and World Heritage Convention. The study noted that "many national authorities are required, under international law, to adopt and implement policies aimed at preventing, reducing or eliminating the biodiversity impacts of free-ranging domestic cats, in particular by (a) removing feral and other unowned cats from the landscape to the greatest extent possible and (b) restricting the outdoor access of owned cats".

However, the study finds a blind spot when it comes to applying these obligations. Reasons are "feasibility, scientific uncertainty, the interests of cat owners and the (perceived) interests of domestic cats themselves", but these reasons do not justify non-compliance with international wildlife law from a legal perspective. Rather than use uncertainty to justify inaction, the study recommends the precautionary principle to guide decision making, especially with the increasing evidence concerning domestic cats. Researchers questioned why private interests of letting domestic cats roam outdoors should outweigh the public interest of biodiversity conservation (and public health), the interests of prey animals, or the private interests of people who don't want to witness the stress, suffering and death of wild animals caused by cats.

When it comes to welfare, cats are beneficiaries of speciesism. Welfare is the main reason cat owners and protection groups oppose keeping cats indoors, yet the welfare of prey animals is disregarded even though they suffer a slow and painful death. Cats instinctively "play" with prey to tire the animal for an easier to kill. Injured animals may be taken home not as a gift but to cache in a safe place. Animals may not even be eaten if the hunter is a well-fed pet.

Examining survival rates of birds attacked by cats and admitted to RSPCA wildlife centres in the UK, a study published in *Animal Welfare* recommended ways to decrease the suffering of an estimated 7.2 to 21.6 million prey animals presented alive to cat owners each year. Animals suffer when they are released by cat owners with injuries or infection from cat saliva that wasn't apparent, and while waiting for transportation to and treatment from a

wildlife rescue. In this study, 78% of 3,597 birds presented to four wildlife centres run by the RSPCA following an attack by a cat did not survive to be released.

Lead author Philp Baker says: “Cats are one of the biggest welfare issues – if not the biggest welfare issue – for wildlife in this country, in terms of the number of individual birds and animals affected, and the length of time many will suffer before they die,” adding that the numbers of animals involved in badger culls and foxes killed for sport “pale into insignificance” in comparison.

Although sixty-four species were attacked by cats, indicating that many are vulnerable, most attacks involved Blackbird, Wood Pigeon, Collared Dove, House Sparrow, Starling, Robin, Dunnock and Song Thrush. These are ground-foraging species commonly found in urban and suburban areas, indicating that the species submitted for treatment tend to reflect the higher number of cats in urban areas and the distribution of prey species. The potential impact of cat predation on these species at a population level is uncertain, but the study notes that predation may become proportionately more important as species decline. Indeed, House Sparrow, Starling and Song Thrush are already red listed in the UK. Other red listed victims included Greenfinch, House Martin, Mistle Thrush, Swift, and Lapwing. Greenfinch populations have declined steeply due to trichomonosis and Blackbird from the Usutu virus. Reducing predation pressures could help.

			
<i>Philip Cartlidge</i>	<i>Doug Cullern</i>	<i>Doug Cullern</i>	<i>Ken Thornton</i>
			
<i>Richard Farrow</i>	<i>Mark Clements</i>	<i>Doug Cullern</i>	<i>Mark Clements</i>

While cat containment is generally accepted in Australia, culture could be slow to change in the UK, especially when division is deepened by the media. To improve outcomes for wild animals in the meantime, targeted conservation measures to control predation and fear effects in wildlife sensitive habitats may be better accepted and easier to enforce than wider containment policies. Targeted measures could also be linked to seasonality with cat curfews during the spring and summer. Eighty-eight percent of cat interactions with small birds and mammals presented to the Wildlife Center of Virginia from 2000 to 2010 occurred between April and September.

Targeted measures are also used when species reach a critical breeding population level. In one of the last homes of the Ground-nesting Crested Lark in Germany, residents in Walldorf were ordered to keep cats indoors or face substantial fines, during the summer of 2022 and for three subsequent years to protect the last three breeding pairs. However, a precautionary approach by policymakers makes more sense than waiting until populations are at critical levels. By closely monitoring species populations, including the impact of cats and other threats, we could avoid a panic response and local extinctions. In the UK, further research on the negative ecological effects that cats may be exerting on local biodiversity could inform targeted conservation policy.

Reviewing the extensive literature, Loss and Marra (2017) conclude “the domestic cat is among the most ubiquitous and environmentally damaging invasive predators on Earth”. Disturbance and fear effects could have greater impact on prey species populations than predation, so in their view, containment is the only way to prevent the harmful

impacts of cats. With rising numbers of roaming domestic cats adding to other pressures on wildlife, the challenge is to encourage responsible cat guardianship, including keeping cats contained at least some of the time and in wildlife sensitive areas. In the interests of wildlife conservation, public health, and welfare of prey animals as well as cats, perceptions of public opinion on cats should not control policy and research funding. The former RSPB Director of Policy and Advocacy is now the Advocacy & Influence Director for Cats Protection, leading a team that gives cats a voice. I hope he will continue to give nature a voice too, building a bridge between cat advocacy and conservation sectors, between culture and science.

## Check This Out!

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



-  [Dire winter for Slimbridge's Bewick's Swans - BirdGuides](#) [11-Mar]
-  [Artificial intelligence outwits humans in Norfolk seal survey - BirdGuides](#) [08-Mar]
-  [RSPB celebrates 40 years of Eurasian Stone-curlew conservation - BirdGuides](#) [06-Mar]
-  [Bird flu detected in Norfolk seals - BirdGuides](#) [03-Mar]
-  [Solar farms can be important for nature - BirdGuides](#) [25-Feb] with **Full article: Solar farm management influences breeding bird responses in an arable-dominated landscape** from the BTO's Bird Study [12-Feb]
-  [Pesticides a major contributor to global biodiversity crisis, says study - BirdGuides](#) [16-Feb]
-  [RSPB celebrates Bearded Tit boom - BirdGuides](#) [08-Feb]
-  [David Campbell: internet birding – the past, present and future - BirdGuides](#) [16-Feb]
-  [Fritton Owl Sanctuary says bird flu rules are affecting income - BBC News](#) [25-Feb]
-  [US bird populations continue alarming decline | ScienceDaily](#) [Cornell University: 07-Mar] [Infographics from Audubon Society](#)
-  [Guernsey vets say not to leave hair out for nesting birds - BBC News](#) [02-Mar]
-  [North Sea collision: fears for impact on seabirds and other marine life](#) [RSPB 11-Mar]
-  [A step forward for Peregrines as licensed take of wild birds ends in England](#) [RSPB 07-Mar]
-  [A wild guide to wooing](#) [RSPB 14-Feb]
-  [New RSPB Ambassadors revealed! Who are they?](#) [RSPB 12-Feb]
-  [Decades after peregrines came back from the brink, a new threat emerges | Environment | The Guardian](#) [13-Mar]
-  [Natural England closes the hen harrier brood meddling trial & delays decision on wider roll-out of licences – Raptor Persecution UK](#) [14-Mar]
-  [Echoes of the Past: The Role of Age and Immigration in Birdsong Evolution | @RareBirdAlertUK](#) [14-Mar]
-  [The Lifeline of a Vanishing Sandpiper | @RareBirdAlertUK](#) [14-Mar]





# 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.](#)

“Often heard from ‘invisible’ birds on marsh or reservoir; male gives a high, sharp, ringing whistle, ‘cree’ (may not bring ‘duck’ to mind); female has low, gruff, nasal quack.”

*from WILDGuides BRITAIN'S BIRDS 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition - An identification guide to the birds of Britain and Ireland 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition by Hume, Still, Swash, Harrop and Tipling*

“Vocal male has a clear, ringing whistle, ‘tree!’, confusable only with Pintail’s, but higher-pitched. Female quacks feeble, high-pitched with nasal voice, first note higher, following descending, ‘peeht par pat’; also a hard, fast ‘krek-ekekek’ when pursuit by male is causing stress.”

*from Collins BIRD GUIDE 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition by Mullarney, Svensson, Zetterström*

“Call of male is a piping, far-carrying whistle, ‘prip-prip’. Female’s call is a rapid, high-pitched quacking.”

*from RSPB Handbook of British Birds 4<sup>th</sup> Edition by Peter Holden and Tim Cleaves*

## Wordsearch



This month, we have the 24 species or races recorded in March 2024 for which we have less than four 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.

- Dotterel
- Dusky Warbler
- Lesser Spotted Woodpecker
- Little Stint
- Montagu's Harrier
- Penduline Tit
- Red-breasted Flycatcher
- Rose-coloured Starling
- Storm Petrel
- Tawny Pipit
- Waxwing
- White Stork
- Wood Sandpiper
- Corn Bunting
- Garganey
- Honey-buzzard
- Marsh Warbler
- Water Pipit
- Leach's Petrel
- Long-eared Owl
- Quail
- Ring-necked Parakeet
- Shag
- Wryneck

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





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 [16<sup>th</sup> Dec 24]. The British Birds Rarities Committee also have a '**BBRC work in progress**' file available on their website [16<sup>th</sup> Dec 24].

## NENBC Website



A huge thanks to the **100** 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](mailto:nenbc@aol.co.uk) or through the messaging element of the website.

## Social Media

We have taken the decision to switch across from Twitter / X to **BlueSky** so please follow us there on **@NENBC**. We will be starting slowly, initially just advertising and celebrating our events, following members and sharing their posts and communicating any other local news until we get the hang of it! Look forward to seeing some of you over there! Please tag and/or follow us. Here's our 1<sup>st</sup> post and some from our members ....

**North East Norfolk Bird Club NENBC**  
@nenbc.bsky.social

Felbrigg Park Monthly Walk | 9am - 11am | Weds 19th March | Meet in main NT car park. | Approx 2 miles | We cater for all levels of birding ability so come and give us a try! We are a friendly bunch & always pleased to have folk join us whether they are NENBC members or not.

16 March 2025 at 16:09 | Everybody can reply

**Stella Baylis**  
@silyab22.bsky.social

A local patch walk early this morning. Yellowhammers back on territory along the 'Green Lane' and Stonechat, a patch tick. First Chiffchaff of the year, probably overwintering and Song Thrush belting out its song, complete list on BirdTrack #NorfolkBirding @birdtrack.bsky.social @nenbc.bsky.social

26 February 2025 at 16:39 | Everybody can reply

**bridgetjanejones.bsky.social**  
@bridgetjanejones.bsky.social

Cromer Peregrines looking fab in the sun yesterday. Lots of movement/scraping around the nest box too. Female was tucking into a pigeon. We found the remains of a Teal around the church. They do like a variety! We did an 'ouch' about the Little Auk tho! @nenbc.bsky.social @rspengland.bsky.social

26 February 2025 at 07:57 | Everybody can reply

**bridgetjanejones.bsky.social**  
@bridgetjanejones.bsky.social

Sheringham Greend Woodpecker. How cool does he look? @nenbc.bsky.social

2 March 2025 at 14:39 | Everybody can reply

**Ken T**  
@velociraptor500.bsky.social

Yellowhammer on field margin, first one seen this year. Seemed to be an lots of Treecreepers in the woods today. Bumblebee climbing in and then climbing out of a Crocus.

9 March 2025 at 18:40 | Everybody can reply

**markclements27.bsky.social**  
@markclements27.bsky.social

1 of 8 Siskin on Beeston Common today

17 February 2025 at 19:22 | Everybody can reply

**markclements27.bsky.social**  
@markclements27.bsky.social

Black Redstart at the Leas at Sheringham this morning on the roof top of the flats

7 March 2025 at 18:58 | Everybody can reply

**markclements27.bsky.social**  
@markclements27.bsky.social

Raven over Beeston Common this morning

2 March 2025 at 18:56 | Everybody can reply

# Cultural Birds – RSPB Riddles

A collection of bird descriptions from the RSPB. Can you ID them?

*Solutions overleaf*



RSPB  
@rspb.bsky.social

My name reveals the colour I wear,  
A flash on my flanks as I cut through the air.  
I roam in the frost, when the berries are sweet,  
A winter guest, you may chance to meet.  
Who am I?



RSPB  
@rspb.bsky.social

With feathers white, I glide with grace,  
My neck forms hearts in soft embrace,  
I stay with one my whole life through,  
On mirrored waters, just us two.  
Who am I?



RSPB  
@rspb.bsky.social

With yellow so bright, and a bold black tie,  
A cap of black as I flit nearby.  
From branch to feeder, I hop and play,  
A garden favourite on a winter's day.  
Who am I?



RSPB  
@rspb.bsky.social

I spiral upwards, clinging tight,  
Hidden in bark, I'm out of sight.  
With a slender beak, I probe and pry,  
Scaling trees while staying shy.  
Who am I?



RSPB  
@rspb.bsky.social

I flash orange, black & white  
where the shore meets the sea,  
With a call that announces,  
"Make way, peep peep peep!"  
My beak is my tool, a precise, chiselled key,  
Who am I...breaking shells with glee?



RSPB  
@rspb.bsky.social

My song is mighty, my frame is small,  
Amongst brambles and bushes,  
I rarely stand tall.  
With tail straight up, and a burst of sound,  
In secretive spots, I flit around.  
Who am I?



RSPB  
@rspb.bsky.social

I stand in reeds, unseen, unheard,  
My streaked brown cloak keeps me blurred.  
A deep boom shakes the air,  
Yet few will spot me hiding there.  
Who am I?



RSPB  
@rspb.bsky.social

With a beak built for cracking, and feathers like rust,  
In treetops I vanish, blend in if I must.  
My head is broad, my bill full of might,  
Who am I, hidden just out of sight?

The bird voice variously described was that of a [Eurasian Teal \(\*Anas crecca\*\)](#). 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 Teal](#) page and their ID video [Identifying Garganey and Teal](#). Photos from Mark Clements, John Wheeler and Richard Farrow (main pic)



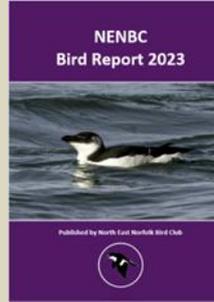
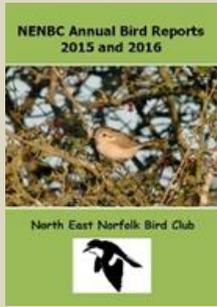
This month's **Wordsearch Solution:**  
 BIRDS RECORDED IN THE NENBC AREA IN  
 MARCH 2024

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



**RSPB Riddles Solutions**  
 Redwing, Swan, Great Tit,  
 Treecreeper, Oystercatcher, Wren,  
 Bittern, Hawfinch

## 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](http://www.felbecktrust.org.uk)

For Annual Reports or The Birds of Felbrigg Park, contact Carol on [nenbc@aol.co.uk](mailto: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](mailto: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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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