



The Pied Flyer

North East Norfolk Bird Club



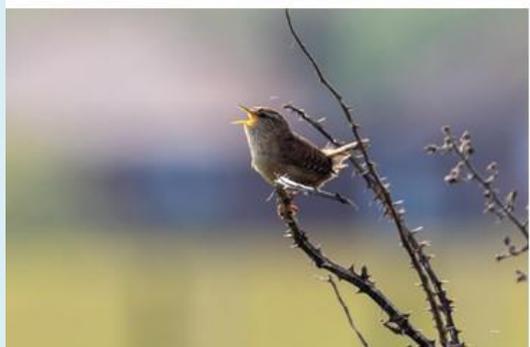
May 2024 - Issue 107

The NENBC Monthly e-Newsletter

Contents - if something is underlined, you can Ctrl-click / press on it etc to jump to an external website link or that point in the newsletter

<u>Chair's Corner</u>	Page 2	<u>Last Month's Holme/Thornham Walk</u>	Page 11
<u>A Note from the Editor</u>	Page 2	<u>Last Month's Felbrigg Walk</u>	Page 12
<u>Membership News and Statistics</u>	Page 3	<u>Last Month's Talk: Bermuda's Birds with Andy Dobson</u> ...	Page 14
<u>NENBC Bird Highlights</u>	Page 4	<u>Cromer Peregrine Project: Watchpoint</u>	Page 18
<u>April 2024</u>	Page 4	<u>A Year at Weybourne Camp: April 2024</u>	Page 20
<u>What To Watch For in May</u>	Page 8	<u>Contemplating Conservation: Birds & Insects</u>	Page 21
<u>Club Notices</u>	Page 9	<u>Check This Out</u>	Page 23
<u>What's On?</u>	Page 10	<u>Member Highs, Lows & Ponderings</u>	Page 24
<u>Walks: Felbrigg Park / Kelling Heath Nightjars</u> ...	Page 10	<u>Data, Records, Posts & Tweets</u>	Page 25
<u>Wild About Mannington</u>	Page 11	<u>Back Page Club Info</u>	Page 26
<u>Felbeck Trust Folk Night</u>	Page 11		

Through a Lens ...





By Trevor Williams

In a typical year May is one of the most exciting months in a birder's calendar. Spring migrants begin to arrive in numbers, left-over wintering birds pop up in surprising places and there's always the chance of an off-course rarity.

I'd spent most of April in the Midwest of America, touring Colorado and west Kansas, looking for grouse in the Rockies and Prairie Chickens in... well the prairies! There had been a trickle of migrants moving north along the inland fly-ways but out of thirty or more species of warbler which make the annual journey from South and Central America to breed in northern USA and Canada we saw just four. On the plane home I began to wonder what I'd been missing back in Norfolk - the short answer turned out to be practically nothing! As in the US where large weather systems were stuck over the Gulf of Mexico blocking northerly migration, so it was in Europe with similar weather patterns holding back our migrants in North Africa and Iberia. This abnormal weather is rapidly becoming the expected. To my relief I was quickly able to catch-up with traditionally early migrants like Wheatear and Sand Martin - but only in ones and twos. The floodgates were still to open. With our annual Big Sit already scheduled for the 'optimal date' of 11th May I was initially confident of ticking off the rest of our Spring migrants - and

some of those lingering winter birds to. A full account of this year's Big Sit - the highs and lows - will appear in next month's Newsletter, but to cut to the chase - it didn't happen! As I write this piece most of our summer breeders have now arrived back - certainly in terms of spread of species but what is very evident is the reduction in numbers. Still only a handful of Swift in the skies over Cromer (arriving here two weeks later than usual), very few singing birds in the woods at Felbrigg and as for sea-bird passage on our regular sea-watches, well almost non-existent. The big question is 'are they still on route' or has there been a step-reduction in numbers of breeding birds in Norfolk? Despite this worrying backdrop there have definitely been some 'highs'. For me personally catching up with Short-eared Owl, a late returning winter bird in Felbrigg - my first there in 25 years of watching - was definitely a highlight. Let's hope there are still more to come in this 'Silent Spring'. On a more up-beat note, our collaboration with UEA students is going well - we hope to bring you the conclusions of their projects in future Club publications and our 2023 Annual Report is in an advanced state, with publication expected in the summer. So plenty to look forward to. Now I must go and find some birds...

A Note from the Editor



By Carol Thornton

Hi folks. Welcome to our May newsletter. Apologies – later than expected and shorter than planned this month primarily due to me being away from Norfolk for an extended period. We'll be back to normal for the June issue but I could do with some assistance with any articles / anecdotes / holiday stories / mullings etc that you could supply. Cheers!

Thanks to everyone who turned out in dismal weather for our annual **Big Sit** at both Beeston Common and Felbrigg Park last Saturday, coinciding with **Global Bird Weekend**. We'll have a write up in the June newsletter on that.

Last month's **Through a Lens** subject for the front page was **BIRDS EXHIBITING BREEDING BEHAVIOUR** and we are going to continue with a similar theme for May. Let's see how you do with photos of **JUVENILE BIRDS**.

Our cover images this time are courtesy of Richard Farrow [Sedge Warbler, Wren, Sand Martin] and Doug Cullern [Blackbird, Great Crested Grebe].

Editor's Pic of the Month this time is this Jay from Alan Stevens taken at Felbrigg Park. I really love the colours on a Jay – they look so exotic.

If reading Francis Farrow's article last month entitled 'Silent Spring' gave you pause for thought then you may be interested in this article on a similar theme from The Guardian – **"No birdsong, no water in the creek, no beating wings: how a haven for nature fell silent"**





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

*** Paula Richings-Riches * Andy Dobson ***

419 individual
members across
273 households

36,826
bird records
logged

193 bird species
reported

Please keep adding all your sightings to our website at www.nenbc.co.uk. Let us know if you have forgotten your password and need it resetting or need assistance on how to upload your records. More information from our website records, Twitterings and social media presence in **Data, Records, Posts & Tweets** from [page 25](#).

Club Achievement Awards

Star Badges

Well done Ian Prentice – a Silver Star achieved this month – and Thomas Wright with a Bronze Star!

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

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

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



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

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

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

Eco-Badges

Congratulations to Ellie Farrow and Thomas Wright who both achieved their Coastal Green Badges last month – Congratulations!

We currently have **25** members who have achieved their **GREEN ECO-BADGES** [Coastal: 16 | Inland: 9] and **4** who have achieved **SUPER-GREEN** [Coastal: 3 | Inland:1].

Those of you wanting to submit, please let us have a list of species, dates seen and locations that is derived from your website records (we can help you download your data) as we can't yet tell on our website if you are driving or not! If you need help getting your list of species downloaded, please ask!



Number of bird species recorded in the NENBC area at or from home without the use of motorised transport since 1st January 2020 (or date of joining if later):

GREEN ECO-BADGE: 75 species required for lists with only inland sites / 100 for lists with any coastal locations
SUPER-GREEN ECO-BADGE: 125 species required for lists with only inland sites / 175 for lists with any coastal locations

Lists to be submitted by members from **their club website records** to nenbc@aol.co.uk along with a declaration that award requirements have been met.



By Carol Thornton

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

≈ 8,700 individual records covering 161 bird species were added in April

There were 8,727 records submitted for April which is 1,891 less than those submitted for the same period last year and 777 less than the previous month of March. Total species records were 161 which was 6 less than was recorded in the same period in 2023.

The more unusual records this month were **VELVET SCOTER** (1st and 17th around Weybourne), **MANX SHEARWATER** (16th around Weybourne and 17th Sheringham), **GLOSSY IBIS** (18th Weybourne Camp) and **GOLDEN ORIOLE** (29th West Runton). Also of note, and detailed below, were records of **BARNACLE GOOSE**, **CRANE**, **MEDITERRANEAN GULL**, **GREAT SKUA**, **SPOONBILL**, **GREAT WHITE EGRET**, **OSPREY**, **GOSHAWK**, **MERLIN**, **PEREGRINE**, **HOODED CROW**, **RAVEN**, **WOODLARK**, **GRASSHOPPER WARBLER**, **DARTFORD WARBLER**, **FIRECREST**, **RING OUZEL**, **BLACK REDSTART**, **REDSTART**, **WHNICHAT**, **TREE PIPIT** and **TWITE**.

Grey Partridge Nine records in April, mostly from the Bodham area with a high count of 4 on 24th. Other records from Felbrigg Park & Lake (2) 25th and Ingworth (3) 26th. *Photo 1 courtesy of Philip Cartlidge*



Brent Goose There were 17 coastal records throughout the month from Weybourne Camp to Happisburgh. With the exception of the high count of 9 birds east at Weybourne on 12th and the individual on cereal fields at Happisburgh on 14th, all were heading west

Barnacle Goose A record of 4 east at Weybourne on 10th and 5 east there on 27th, with the other 6 records being of 2 birds on 29th recorded in both directions between the Runtons and Weybourne Camp. *Photo 2 courtesy of Thomas Wright*



Mandarin Duck One drake with 3 Egyptian geese over Weybourne Camp 11th, two males at West Runton on 13th and again 2 birds at Hillside Animal Sanctuary pond on 14th.

Velvet Scoter One drake west with Common Scoter and 2 east on 1st at Weybourne / Weybourne Camp plus one west at Weybourne on 17th.

Cuckoo One at Sustead Common on 25th.

Crane All 9 records were between the 6th and 8th. Four birds on the 6th seen heading west over Pretty Corner Woods, Beeston Regis and Weybourne and The were well tracked afterwards at Cley and Holkham. Three birds were over Sheringham on 7th and a single was picked up at East Runton (Coastwatch Station), high over cliffs at West Runton and followed out to sea before it turned inland and flew SW over Beeston Regis church. It then headed west over the Bump and Sheringham, later being seen over Cley.

Avocet One record of 2 birds west from Weybourne Camp on 30th.

Grey Plover One record of 11 birds west at Weybourne on 10th

Whimbrel Twenty two records from the 7th onwards predominantly from the Weybourne sites, with other records from West Runton and Beeston Bump. Mostly 1-2 birds but with 4 at Weybourne Camp on 14th (including one on beach) and past Weybourne on 25th.

Bar-tailed Godwit Up to 3 birds reported at Weybourne / Weybourne camp on 19th.

Knot Eight birds were reported at Weybourne Camp on 14th with further records at Weybourne on 17th (1), 19th (2) and 25th (4). All birds were heading west.

Purple Sandpiper Records of 2 birds at Sheringham up to the 4th and then singles at Sheringham and East Runton until 11th. *Photo 3 courtesy of Richard Farrow*

Woodcock A single bird accidentally flushed from scrub by central marsh at Beeston Common on 8th.

Jack Snipe A single bird was recorded at Weybourne Camp on 10th, 11th 12th and 15th with one in wetland at Felbrigg Park & Lake on 20th.

Kittiwake A single record of 2 birds at Happisburgh on 1st.

Mediterranean Gull Nearly 40 records throughout the month from Weybourne Camp along to Walcott. High counts were 36 birds at Weybourne Camp on 12th, 18 pairs of adults west offshore including flocks of 6 pairs & 5 pairs, and 14 there on 8th, all in pairs in breeding plumage.

Sandwich Tern Records throughout the month of mostly 1-3 birds but up to 8 birds along the coast. A high count of 20 at Weybourne on 28th, with 5 east and 15 west.

Arctic Tern Two birds were reported west off Weybourne on 19th and 4 west, close in, at Mundesley on the same day.

Great Skua One record of a single bird west off Weybourne on 28th

Red-throated Diver Twenty four records throughout the month from the Weybourne area, Sheringham and Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs. The high-count was at Cromer, 5 east and 2 west, during a 2 hour seawatch.

Fulmar Over 60 reports last month of this species, with many being described as local birds. One observer recorded 8 occupied ledges with 1-2 birds on each in the colony on the cliffs west of Cromer on the 5th, with 19 birds seen and heard there on 26th, and 7 birds were reported nesting on the cliffs at Sheringham Cliffs & Golf Course on 2nd.

Manx Shearwater A single bird west past Weybourne / Weybourne Camp on 16th, and a single, again west, at Sheringham on 20th.

Glossy Ibis One bird, west at Weybourne Camp, on 18th.

Spoonbill Fifteen coastal records of between 1 and 3 birds throughout the month. *Photo 4 courtesy of Mark Clements*

Great White Egret records of a single bird west at Weybourne and West Runton on 13th and west again at Weybourne Camp on 29th. *Photo 5 courtesy of Mark Clements*

Osprey A single bird was picked up over ridge at top of Britons Lane on 6th, which flew towards the Bump then veered west high over the Sheringham and west over the golf course towards Weybourne. An inland sighting at Oxnead on 13th where a single bird stopped for a brief fishing stop before heading north.

Goshawk A pair was seen displaying on 8th (undisclosed) and a single was over Swanton Novers on 24th.

Hen Harrier A ringtail was west over the Camp at Weybourne on 7th and a male there on 10th. A ringtail female flew east from the level crossing at Kellin heath on 28th.

Short-eared Owl A single was reported at West Runton on 29th and on 30th, one was being harried by Herring Gulls off Weybourne Camp.

Kingfisher On 3rd, one flew along the beck between Thurgarton and Sustead and there was one at Selbrigg Pond on 23rd.

3



4



5



Merlin At Weybourne Camp on 11th, a bird was recorded in prolonged aerial pursuit of a Meadow Pipit.

Hobby Singles reported at Thornage on 13th, Weybourne Camp and West Runton on 28th, Kelling Heath and West Runton on 29th and Weybourne Cliffs on 30th.

Peregrine Records of the 2 Cromer birds throughout the month at Cromer. A juvenile was reported on 10th at both Weybourne Camp and Crome. Additional Peregrine records at West Runton on 13th, Bodham on 14th and Upper Sheringham on 30th.

Golden Oriole On 29th, a single west overland at West Runton.

Hooded Crow One report in Hillside Animal Sanctuary donkey field at West Runton on 15th.

Raven A single was over Beeston Bump and Regis on 3rd before heading south towards the Cromer Ridge. *Photo 6 courtesy of Mark Clements*

Marsh Tit Just five records throughout April from Weybourne, Selbrigg Pond, Thwaite Common, Mannington Hall Park and Swanton Novers. *Photo 7 courtesy of Doug Cullern*

Woodlark Records of 1-2 birds from Kelling Heath between 8th and 29th, with 5 there on 13th. Additional records from Weybourne Heath on 4th and 17th.

Willow Warbler A huge 86 records throughout the month from over 20 locations across the north of the club area. High counts were 7 at Weybourne Camp on 10th, 5 there on 12th, 4 at Beeston Common on 26th and 6 at Kelling Heath on 29th. *Photo 8 courtesy of Francis Farrow*

Grasshopper Warbler All records were of singles - heard at Pigneys Wood on 24th and 29th, Mundesley 26th and Weybourne 29th.

Lesser Whitethroat Over 60 records from more than 20 locations from 11th onwards. High count 3 at Beeston Bump on 30th.

Dartford Warbler Twelve records from Kelling Heath during April, mostly single birds, male and female, but 2 males reported on 6th. *Photo 9 courtesy of Doug Cullern*

Firecrest Eight records from a range of locations – Aylmerton, Felbrigg Park & Lake, Selbrigg Pond, Pretty Corner Wood and High Kelling, with a high count of 3 on Weybourne Heath on 17th.

Nuthatch Lots of records of 1-2 birds through the month with Felbrigg Park & Lake and Pigneys Wood being good locations. *Photo 10 courtesy of Doug Cullern*



Ring Ouzel Records of 1-4 birds from 15 locations in the northern part of the club area from the 6th onwards. *Photo 11 courtesy of Janet Stephenson*

Nightingale A male in “glorious full song” was heard at Kelling Heath on 8th.

Black Redstart Single males were recorded at West Runton on 16th and North Walsham on 25th with a bird also in a Sheringham garden on 28th.

Redstart Singles reported at Weybourne Camp (male) on 6th, West Runton (female) and Suffield – If Not Now When Wood - on 15th, and Weybourne Camp again on 18th (female).

Whinchat A male in coastal fields with Wheatears at Walcott on 13th and various reports of a “cracking male” near Sheringham Community Centre on 29th.

Wheatear Over 80 reports of mostly up to 8 birds throughout the month, including from the Weybourne area, Thurgarton, Beeston and Sheringham area, Southrepps Common, the Runtons, Felbrigg Park & Lake, North Walsham and Happisburgh. Double-figure counts were 27 at Walcott on 13th (two singles and a loose party of 25+ on fields just inland of the coast road), 12 at West Runton on the same day, up to 17 there on 29th and 10 on 30th. *Photo 12 courtesy of Dave Billham*

Yellow Wagtail Nearly 40 records from a range of sites of up to 6 birds throughout the month. There were also 29 west past West Runton and 20 past Weybourne Camp 12th, 21 west past West Runton 13th and 19 past there on 29th and 20 Weybourne Camp the same day with 19 the following day,

Grey Wagtail Records of 1-2 birds from Stody, Felbrigg Park & Lake, near Thurgarton, Blickling Park, Beeston Bump, Dilham Canal, Selbrigg Pond, Mannington Hall Park and Southrepps Common. *Photo 13 courtesy of Andrew Crossley*

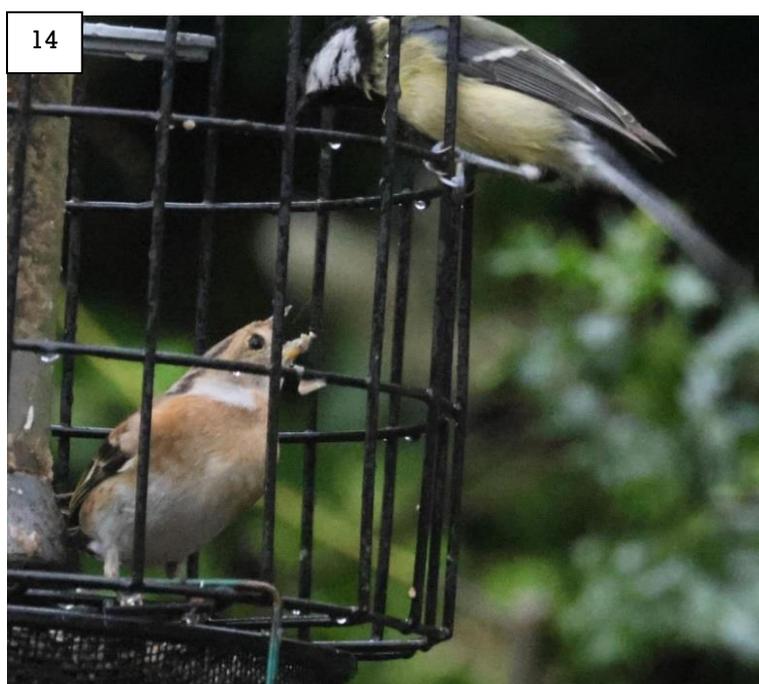
Tree Pipit A record of a single west calling at Beeston Bump on 30th.

Brambling Thirty records in April with 1-2 birds on garden feeders around Southrepps Common being the most frequently reported site. A high count of 60 in mixed seed crop at Bodham was recorded on 6th. *Photo 14 courtesy of Ken Thornton*

Twite A flock of 20 flew low over North Lodge Park, Cromer on 2nd, calling continuously before heading off east.

Lesser Redpoll Records of single birds up to 25th from Weybourne Camp, Beeston Bump, Sheringham, Kelling Heath and Upper Sheringham.

Common Crossbill One over calling Kelling Heath Holiday Park Centre on 12th, a flock of 10 west at West Runton on 13th and 2 over Upper Sheringham calling on 25th.





By Russ Malin

May is really the last real month of spring migration and, in my opinion, one of the most amazing. As a teenager I made my first ever birding trip to Norfolk one Saturday in May, with a local bird club, and had an incredible day seeing birds I had only dreamed about. It really is a special month.



All the staple migrants have arrived, and it is an excellent time to connect with some scarcer visitors such as [Turtle Dove](#) and [Nightjar](#). It also a great month to see [Spotted Flycatcher](#) and there were over 30 reports of this species in 2022. Try looking in the larger parks and churchyards. [Photos courtesy of Mark Clements]

May can be a good month for some rarer visitors such as [Golden Oriole](#), [Hoopoe](#) and [Red-rumped Swallow](#), not to forget [Bee-eater](#), and who knows that Cley [Purple Heron](#) might head this way!

Historically, May has had its share of really good birds ...



A [Black Stork](#) was noted from several locations in 1999 from the 8th onwards, last being seen over Inceborough Hill in the 15th. In 1982 a [White Stork](#) was present at Suffield from May 1st until July 14th before relocating to Gunton Park. Staying with Gunton Park, that was also the location for the first, and only, record of [Marsh Sandpiper](#) where one was discovered on May 20th 1992, remaining until the 22nd. Moving on to raptors, a first-summer [Pallid Harrier](#) was seen at Aylmerton on May 1st 2009, and although there have been quite a few records of [Black Kite](#) over the years, the first Norfolk record was a bird over West Runton on May 14th 1966. 1993 saw the first Norfolk record of [Oriental Pratincole](#). It was first discovered at Gimingham on May 14th. This bird stayed in north Norfolk until August 17th when it was subsequently relocated in both Suffolk and East Sussex. Our first [Gull-billed Terns](#) were noted flying over arable land at Weybourne on May 12th 1959. For perhaps the most outrageous May record we need to go all the way back to 1888 when the UK had its largest ever irruption of [Pallas's Sandgrouse](#). A flock of 200 were noted at Bacton on the 29th and 80-100 flew out to sea on the following day. Incredible. On May 31st, 1995, a [Great Reed Warbler](#) was found at Weybourne Hope reed-bed and was subsequently caught and ringed. Remarkably a second bird was trapped and ringed the following year on May 21st at Dead Man's Wood, Sheringham. Along the coast at Happisburgh at least three [Red-throated Pipit](#) were found between May 14th and 19th including a singing male. This remains a record count for Norfolk. Finally, the third and fourth Norfolk records of [Black-headed](#)



[Bunting](#) occurred in the month of May. A male was seen at Cromer on May 26th 2014, and, remarkably, just a couple of miles away, a female was at West Runton from 28th May to June 1st 2014.

Historic records taken from 'Rare and Scarce Birds in North-east Norfolk' by kind permission of the author, Moss Taylor

A Members' Night of 4 Mini Talks! September 2024

We are looking for volunteers to take to the floor for our next "Members' Night" and give us a 20-minute talk of their choice on something about birds or any other related subject. This has been a popular event previously with an eclectic a range of subjects embraced by our members.

It doesn't have to be scientific or funny (but could be!) – an appreciation of any aspect of a birding life, a birding patch or holiday, a related hobby, a cause you are passionate about, a grumble to get off your chest, a project you would like some help with.

A simple talk would be lovely, but slides are a great addition and if you needed some support with that then help is at hand!

Please get in touch if you want to have a chat.

| Alan Stevens | 07765892515 |
| ahstevens52@gmail.com |

Conservation Corner

If you have any suggestions for content for our Conservation Corner slot, please let us know and we'll pass your ideas on to our writers.

Speaker Suggestions

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

Thank you!

Restocking our 2nd hand bookstall

We could do with some more book donations for our birds and other nature stall at our indoor events. We have rather a lot of Field Guides to the rest of the world so don't really need any more of those, but we could do with some more reading material from a bit closer to home. If you have any books languishing on your shelves that might suit, bring them along to one of our events or let us know on

nenbc@aol.co.uk

Urban Birding - Help!

For a forthcoming project we need some help with suggestions of good urban birding in the NENBC area. Do you bird in Cromer, Aylsham, North Walsham, Holt or Sheringham? If so, do you have any good locations for birding, any exciting sightings or interesting anecdotes? Any information on where, when and how you bird in a built-up setting would be great - contact Val via

vstubbs1961@gmail.com,

or catch us at one of the monthly Club walks at Felbrigg. Thank you!

Nick and Val Stubbs

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!

WhatsApp Groups.....



The club runs two WhatsApp groups:

NE Norfolk sea-watching is administered by Trevor Williams and is for any active and participating seawatchers along the north east Norfolk coast whether they are club members or not.

NENBC Alerts is administered by Tony Forster and is solely for club members to share news of interesting birds within the club area – no gossip allowed!

The advantage of both these groups is that you can get instant details about a bird sighting rather than having to rely on looking at the website later in the day and missing out. If either of these groups are of interest, drop us an email on nenbc@aol.co.uk and we'll put you in touch with the appropriate administrator. You'll need to provide your mobile number and sign up to the group rules. Both groups are free but to get the most out of them you'll need to be able to use the internet on your phone when you are out and about.

Club Sponsor **Bird Ventures** offer a 5% discount on own-branded wild bird food to NENBC members all year. Have a look at the Bird Ventures website www.birdventures.co.uk as they also supply feeders and much more with good advice and help for garden bird enthusiasts. Free local delivery available

Bird Ventures, The Wildlife Shop,
9B Chapel Yard, Albert Street,
Holt, Norfolk NR25 6HG

Telephone 01263 710203
salesbirdventures@aol.com

Opening Hours:
Monday
10:15am–4:00pm
Tuesday to Saturday
9:00am–4:00pm
Sunday Closed



A couple of other non-club events you may be interested in



WILD ABOUT Mannington

A celebration of Norfolk wildlife and bioblitz
Saturday 15th June 2024

Headlined by Nick Acheson and Patrick Barkham

Walks and Talks by local experts

Bird ringing demonstration

Local wildlife group stands

Childrens activities

Moth trapping

Wildlife Art Exhibition

10am - 4pm
£10 entry
Under 16's Free

Mannington Estate
NR11 7BB 01263 584175
admin@walpoleestate.co.uk

MANNINGTON ESTATE

FOLK NIGHT

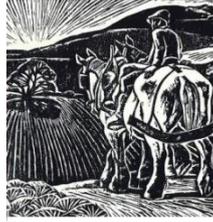


IMAGE BY PERMISSION OF THE H. W. TUCK ESTATE

GRESHAM VILLAGE HALL
SATURDAY 8TH JUNE 2024
7 - 10.00PM - DOORS OPEN 6.30PM

2 BANDS
THREESCORE & TONY HALL

TICKETS £15 INC. HOT MEAL
FOR TICKETS CONTACT - ffnewsletter@aol.com

CASH BAR & RAFFLE
ALL PROCEEDS TO THE FELBECK TRUST



We'll be at Mannington Hall, sharing a stand with Felbeck Trust on the 15th and it would be great to see some of you there for the **Wild About Mannington** day. Coming up before that, Felbeck Trust's Folk Night fundraiser on the 8th. Lots of NENBC members also volunteer with our local wildlife conservation charity so please come along and join us for a lovely sociable night out – what's not to like!

CANCELLED: **2024 Birding for Beginners Course**

Unfortunately we have had to cancel this spring's course as we just didn't get the interest in it that we have had in previous years. We very much hope to be back with it again next year so please do get in touch if this could be of interest to you or someone you know.

Last Month's Club Weekend Walk

Holme and Thornham walk | 27th April

By Janice Darch

Well we saw 68 species of birds in 6 hours on a windy day with showers, not the best of weather for birding. In comparison I had just returned from walking the breadth of England from The Solway to Wallsend near Newcastle on the Hadrian's Wall Long Distance Path and saw just 66 bird species in 9 day's walking covering 84 miles –that must put birding in Norfolk into perspective. Our spring migrant highlights were Garganey, Ring Ouzel, Whimbrel, Cattle Egrets, Common White Throat, House Martins and Common Terns, several of which were first sightings of the year.



We met in the Norfolk Ornithological Association (NOA) car park at Holme, to investigate a new area of Norfolk for many of the group. The walk took us through the NOA area to the coastal sand dunes where we did a short seawatch before walking eastwards along the North Norfolk Coast Path to Thorham Harbour. After a short walk into Thornham Village we followed a path paralleling the Coast Road back west to Drove Orchard track which lead us back onto the Holme Reserve and lunch at the Norfolk Wildlife Trust (NWT) café. The group opted for a short further period of birding after lunch so that we could try for the Ring Ouzels which we hadn't been able to go for at the start as the NWT area does not open until 10am. Other good sightings during the day were a Short-eared Owl for some as we assembled in the car park at the start, three Marsh Harriers, including a very pale female, Ruff coming into breeding plumage, Little Ringed-Plovers on the fresh water scrapes, a pair of Red-breasted Mergansers in Thornham Harbour mouth and great comparisons of Whimbrel with Curlew in the same bins field of view. We had a great day and excellent birding. A return visit was requested! Thank you to Sarah Hanson for the photos.



By Dave Billham

With Trevor and Carol both birding in different parts of the USA, it had fallen to Alan Stevens to lead the April walk. Grey skies, a cold wind and the chance of showers was the order of the morning, though this did not worry the eighteen members who gathered in the car park in the hope of interesting sightings, spring migrants or just a meet-up with like-minded souls. There were also two members who were on their first Felbrigg walk, both named John, though in the case of John Hurst it was actually his second-first walk, as he had initially turned up the previous Wednesday, only to wonder where everyone else was. He didn't waste the opportunity however, and had a solo wander around for a couple of hours; good practice for the real thing!

A quick round-up of the birds seen and heard around the car-park revealed **Jackdaw**, **Chaffinch**, **Rook**, **Woodpigeon** and **Goldfinch**, whilst seen in the air was a lone **Buzzard** and a group of four **Cormorant** which were leaving the lake. Alan asked if anyone had seen anything else on the way in; he had found **Grey Wagtail** and another member admitted to having almost run over a pair of **Red-legged Partridge**! During his brief Alan said that although evidence of migration had been locally sparse, and the day's weather was not conducive to movement, we should still keep a good lookout as nature

often surprises, and to call out anything that might be of interest.

Following a discussion of the route, we set off over the fields in the direction of the church. A **Carrion Crow** was the first addition to the list, followed by the distant song of a **Duncock** – from the car-park we had just left! Entering the churchyard (having eventually managed to call back two members who, deep in conversation, had passed the gate and were disappearing off into the distance), we heard the song of both **Blue Tit** and **Wren**; otherwise it was rather quiet. After leaving the churchyard in the general direction of the lake we were over-flown by a pair of **Linnet**, whilst seen more distantly was a single **Magpie**. A pair of **Kestrel** flew near to us, followed by a pair of **Greylag Goose** also leaving the lake. Reaching the gate overlooking the lake, Alan decided we would follow the track towards Marble Hill Lodge in the hope that the hedgerows might contain recently arrived species.

Walking along the track, and despite the grey skies, we were accompanied by the almost constant song of **Skylark**, a real sound of spring. A pair of **Swallow** whizzed low along the hedges giving great views as they flicked past us. Bird-song could be heard everywhere; **Blackbird**, **Blackcap**, **Robin**, **Common Whitethroat** and **Lesser Whitethroat** were

identified. Val also spotted a Muntjac, feeding on the fresh shoots in the adjacent field. Reaching the small pond some way down the track a **Yellowhammer** could be heard singing; it was located in a distant hedge by an observant member and we spent a little time ensuring everyone could find it; it is surprising how invisible yellow and brown can be against a green hedge! Nick also spotted a **Red Kite** drifting across in the distance. Turning around we re-traced our steps back up the track, with a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** overhead the only new species to add. One member did pick up **Garden Warbler** using the merlin app on his phone, but we were unable to visually confirm this.

Reaching the gate once again we turned downhill towards the lake. A singing **Great Tit** was added to the list, the other interesting sightings being a Kestrel leaving a nest-hole in a tree and further Swallow over. On the lake were **Mute Swan** and **Moorhen**, but surprisingly no Mallard, including the female with ducklings seen over the previous few days. Alan told us that an otter was present, and had probably taken the ducklings, in the process scaring off the adults as further breeding here would be extremely risky. With so few birds present we were rather glad to hear a singing **Reed Bunting** and see a **Grey Heron** near the beck, both of which could be put on the list. An over-flying **Sparrowhawk** was also gratefully received!

We then followed the wooded path alongside the lake, where we heard the calls of a **Nuthatch**. In amongst the trees we were soon surrounded by song, so we paused awhile to look and listen; many species were identified but the only new addition to the list was **Long-tailed Tit**, a small flock of which flitted around our heads in their confiding way. The song of **Chiffchaff** was also finally detected; we had been wondering why we were not hearing them when all the other species were being so vocal. Walking on, the drumming and call of a **Great Spotted Woodpecker** penetrated the woods, then on reaching the end of the wooded part of the path, those at the front of the group were treated to the sight of a displaying Wren, a lovely sight to see.

Moving into the open overlooking the beck we heard the calls of both **Pheasant** and **Jay**, and enjoyed the sight and sound of a **Song Thrush** in full flow. The softer calls of **Bullfinch** were also audible from nearby bushes. On the pools we finally found a few **Mallard**, along with a pair of **Gadwall** and a few sleeping **Teal**. By the bridge a Linnet was posing on a fencepost right in front of us, inviting photos to be taken, for which it obligingly remained in place. A brief burst of song from a **Sedge Warbler** was the last addition to the list here.

With our time almost done we set off towards the house, and the discussion turned to numbers seen so far. Not realising that I had put Goldfinch on the list twice I thought the count was 47, as opposed to the real total of 46. So, hearing a **Green Woodpecker** call caused great excitement as it seemed

we could be in with a shout of seeing fifty species, the first time this would have happened for quite some time. Despite much scanning of the skies and ground no further species were seen enroute to the house, but with a good number of members deciding to head for the café it was decided the list was still running, and a **Pied Wagtail** in the courtyard brought us to number 49 - or so we thought! Unfortunately (at the time) the magic number fifty did not materialise in the time it took for coffees and cakes to be consumed, which I was later very glad for, for I would not have enjoyed raining on that particular parade when I discovered my double-goldfinch error. However, a total of **48** for the two hour walk was not too bad at all, and we stayed dry the whole time.

Finally, a big thanks to Vision Stubbs for writing up the previous month's walk, and a smashing job they did too. According to Vision, when Carol asked for a volunteer, they didn't look away quickly enough, a lesson learnt there I reckon. I should know, I have a feeling that may have been how I got caught too!

I gather that there was much muttering going on during the walk bemoaning the lack of Little Owls. We certainly don't seem to be seeing them as regularly as we used to and I know that I often find myself excitedly scoping a rounded branch in the distance. So, just to prove that there are still some about, this picture was taken at Felbrigg Park half an hour before our walk started by Andrew Crossley – I guess you just need to be in the right place at the right time!



Last Month's Club Talk

"Bermuda's Birds"

with Andrew Dobson



By Alan Stevens

Those members who came along to the last indoor meeting of our 2023/24 winter season had little idea of the treat they were in for from our truly engaging and entertaining speaker.

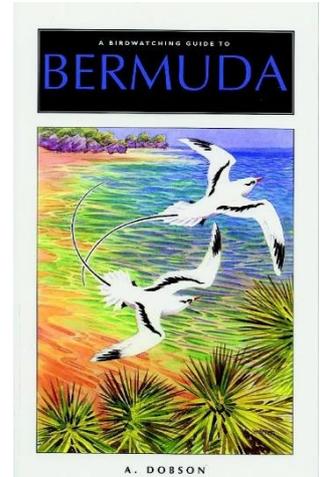
Andrew Dobson took the time to come over from Cambridge to visit us and tell us something of his time spent in Bermuda. He took a teaching post on the island and stayed for some 30 years over which time he gained a vast knowledge of the birds found there, served as President of the Bermuda Audubon Society and of Birds Caribbean. He remains regional editor for the Journal of North American Birds and his photography has been widely published. Among his own published works is the widely regarded 'Birdwatching Guide to Bermuda'. Back in the UK now Andrew was recently elected chair of the Cambridgeshire Bird Club.

Andrew started his presentation by confirming just where Bermuda is, saying that he had to look it up before moving there. A fish hook shape island it lies about 100km east of the US and 1500 km north of the Bahamas in the western Atlantic. It is an isolated place measuring just 26 miles by 15 miles, and less than that as the crow flies.

Originally part of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge that moved westward the island is a volcanic mount which over millennia formed a limestone cap which surprisingly hides a widespread system of caves.

Explaining some more about the island we learnt from Andrew that viewed from a vantage point it can be appreciated that most of Bermuda is suburban and that the buildings have white roofs specifically to catch rainwater for domestic use and that this has to be done by law. A short appreciation of life on the island covered a bird cage for policemen to control traffic from (for the tourist's benefit), a note that no building is allowed to be higher than the Cathedral, that the America's Cup has been held there. We were introduced to one of Andrew's pupils, Flora Duffy, who is a world and Olympic Tri-Athlon Gold Medallist, the only Bermudan to achieve gold. Having given us a taste of the location Andrew made his first mention of birds by way of their depiction on the island's currency and stamps. After brief introduction to the governance of the island, including a reference to a past Governor, Sir Richard Gosling, a birding companion while there together and in the audience with us, and a quick look at the population makeup Andrew concluded his introduction to the place and moved on to the amazing bird life found there.

First inhabited in 1609, since then the vegetation has largely changed with much the cedar forests and mangroves disappearing to make way for development and, therefore, wetland and marsh habitat is at a premium. Ninety percent of the island's vegetation is now introduced. Much of the early recording of birds was done by military personal with a scientific interest. In 1851 Hurdus provided an early count of species on and



around the island at 124, by 2002 that had risen to 365 and now stands at 400, an extra 35 in this century alone, from an urban island with very limited habitats. However, there are beaches and the important Spittle Ponds Reserve ([eBird Link](#)) which alone has recorded more than 250 birds, boosted by the presence of fresh water. But Andrew related those urban spaces can provide surprises, a Yellow-crowned Night Heron on a building site, a Peregrine on an office block and Swallow-tailed Kites passing over his house.

An extraordinary bar-chart illustrated the importance of the island in terms of bird life and land mass. In the region only Cuba, the largest Caribbean Island, can match Bermuda, a tiny western Atlantic island with 400 species. Why is this? Andrew explained several specific reasons why this comes about.



Isolation has something to do with it. The only land mass in a vast area of ocean is a magnet for birds in bad weather and they arrive from the north, with some birds familiar to us, Iceland Gull, Northern Wheatear, Snow Geese and occasion Gannets; from the south, overshoots passing more southern islands Whistling Duck, Black-legged Stilts, Brown Pelican; from the Atlantic Redshank, Garganey, Tufted Duck, Eurasian Wigeon and from the west, from the other side of the Rockies, Western Tanager and Kingbirds, Hammond's Flycatcher and Black-tailed Gull.

The Gulf Stream coming up from the Gulf of Mexico, along the Florida coast on its way north and creating eddies of water which head out into the Atlantic result in slightly warmer water in the winter and cooler in the summer so allowing some species to stay year-round. On the same latitude Dallas can be -20C in winter whereas Bermuda never dips below +8C. This means for example that Tropic Birds and winter warblers can breed there without having to go further south.

Migration patterns mean quite a lot of birds come over the island, it lies on a straight line from north to south America. Examples were drawn from the Arctic Golden Plover, whose migration takes them from the Arctic to southwest America, and Blackpoll Warblers, sometimes in their thousands forced to ground on the island due to bad weather,

Weather patterns have an obvious cause and effect on birds arriving on the island. In the autumn low pressure fronts come out from North America across the Atlantic eventually reaching Bermuda. Rain bearing clouds knock the birds out of the sky and the lucky ones are able to take a break in on the island, Yellow-billed Cuckoos were cited as an example. Lying in the hurricane belt, the season can run from August until the end of October. Andrew picked out Hurricane Wilma which did not, as many hurricanes do, form off the west coast of Africa, but in the Caribbean off Jamaica and then tracked up to Florida as a Category 5 storm. It was the type of hurricane that birders on the island favour as it was blowing birds their way. When a hurricane passes over the island birds trapped in its centre drop out of the sky to make landfall in the calm weather as they are unable to make it through the wall of weather. Such events can bring about extraordinary events – Frigate Birds are rare there with a maximum of 2 only ever recorded at one time, Wilma brought 70! Likewise, Sandwich Terns from 3 to 200. Franklin's Gulls, Chimney Swifts and winter wrens added to the list.

Human factors of course come into play and are as important these days as natural ones as we interact with birds and the environment. Our speaker touched on early shotgun collectors who proved what they had seen by shooting it and then proudly recording it.

Field Guides have enabled more and better identification of species and the Sibley 'Guide to North American Birds', the first to sell over 1m copies was used as an illustration. These guides enabled more birds to be added to the Bermuda list, as indeed they can everywhere. Andrew related the tale of receiving a call telling him there was a Bohemian Waxwing in a garden 2001, a species at the time unknown on the island – but it was and, but for the guide the finder used, could well have been missed. Similarly, the first White-winged Tern was identified by a novice birder who looked it up in his book.

Advancement in optical equipment enabled us to see birds more closely and more clearly. Andrew, while counting Turnstones, found Bermuda's first Purple Sandpiper, and digital photography has transformed identification from images. A lovely example of this was of a teacher who took a picture of a Snowy Owl on a smart phone and sent it to Andrew for identification – not possible not so long ago, and as a result the bird was not missed on that day. Similarly, a lady took a picture of a what turned out to be a West Indian Whistling Duck, the only other previous record coming from 1907.

The advent of citizen science has, with more birders recording more easily accessible data on ebird or Bird Track for example, has led to more species being recorded. Christmas bird counts have resulted in records of White-winged Dove, in 2004, the first record of Kirkland's Warbler and in 2016 of an Eider Duck. Another three added to Bermuda's list.

Habitat loss has to some degree been ameliorated by man-made habitats and added to the species list. Golf courses, with greenery and ponds, attract birds and is where the first White Pelican and Ross's Goose were recorded on the island.

Social media, we must all acknowledge, has transformed the way news of bird sightings is spread and Andrew told us that the first Bermuda record of a Grey-headed Swamp Heron came about after an image was posted on-line, and of an Atlantic Puffin snapped off-shore by two brothers fishing. They were the only ones to see it but they had the record of it to post. Another first via social media came with a Black-tailed Gull, which should really have been off the east coast of China and was another first for Bermuda.

Sound recording and identification has become more common and led to the discovery of a *Phylloscopus* warbler, proven to be an Arctic Warbler, of a species breeding in Alaska and which should have been in eastern Asia at that time. As Andrew said, a magical moment.

Leading up to the break Andrew gave a little summary of the birds of Bermuda. Only 20 species breed on the island, 17 as residents, and 12 are endemic or native, so the vast majority making up the 400 recorded are migrants or vagrants. Why so few residents? Well, there is not much in the way of habitat, you must be a long-distance flyer to get there, when you arrive you are out-competed by birds already there, and of course there are invasive species such as cats and rats. Andrew then ran through some of the resident birds, Pied-billed Grebe, Yellow-Crowned Night Heron, Killdeer (*Photo: Andrew Dobson*) and Green Heron, Mourning Dove, to mention a few. Particularly interesting was the background to the Great Kiskadee. Briefly, Cedar trees were dying out because of scaley insects, so ladybird beetles were bought in to eat them, but they were eaten by lizards bought in to eat fruit flies, so the Kiskadees were bought in to eat the lizards which it they failed to do but their numbers exploded. A biological experiment gone wrong with daily counts of 1000 making it Bermuda's most numerous bird.



After the break Andrew turned to migrating breeding birds starting with the provision of artificial nesting domes for Tropic Birds to encourage breeding, and with some success, on Nonsuch Island, one of the chain of islands making up Bermuda. A relic population of Common Terns, decimated by hurricanes, continue to breed in limited numbers. Roseate terns bred on the island in the C19th but have, in recent years, returned again. (Photo: White-tailed Tropicbird – Andrew Dobson)



Nonsuch Island has been restored to look like Bermuda originally was with the reestablishment of habitat such a Cedar and Juniper trees and scrub allowing Bermuda Petrels, known locally as Cahow, to breed again. Though to have disappeared around 1620, and only rediscovered in the early 1950s there are now nearly 150 pairs. Geo-locators on birds have shown just how far they roam, as far as Ireland, the Azores and Newfoundland. A real success story.

To finish up Andrew ran through the seasons and what to expect to see as the year rolls on. Aided by an impressive gallery of images each came up with a few words of explanation and was an excellent way to round off an evening packed full of knowledge accrued over 30 years of a birding life on Bermuda, enlivened with interesting anecdotes and a sense of humour and thoroughly enjoyed by all there.



Poster images from www.birdscaribbean.org

A big thank you to all of you who helped out on the evening when we were a tad short on committee members – it was much appreciated!

NOTE: The webcam is now up and running and you can view it here: [Livestream Link](#)

Episode One – Oh! Wow!

By Jane Crossen

Visitor numbers for April: 3,120

Three eggs were laid on 17th, 20th and 22nd March and the watchpoint was set up on 31st March. We don't have as many volunteers as previous years, so if anyone would like to step forward please contact me and I will put you in touch with Mike Harmer, the volunteer co-ordinator. Please don't feel you have to be a peregrine expert. I mean, I'M doing it! You would have some very informal training but more to the point you would definitely be on with someone who knows their stuff and, if you wanted, you could say absolutely nothing for a few shifts, until you felt confident enough to speak to the public.

The first thing we were told was: "If you are asked a question and you don't know the answer just say, wait for it, "I don't know the answer" and then ask someone who is on the watchpoint with you who, more than likely, WILL know the answer.

Bearing in mind that at the early stages of the birds' nesting regime there is not much to see, we had a large amount of visitors in the first few weeks. Even after the Easter holidays we were getting really good numbers, particularly on the Saturday shift.

The first full Saturday we had just over 300 visitors (we use a clicker to record numbers, very high-tech eh?!). Saturday, 20th April we had 394!

And at 7.52am on Tuesday, 23rd the first chick hatched. It had started pipping on the Saturday. Within four hours of hatching it was having its first feed. The second chick hatched the next day (it was, in fact, the egg that was laid last). Sadly, the third egg (which was laid second) did not hatch, but that is not uncommon and we were pleased to have two healthy chicks.

So far, the same as last year and previous years, the favourite expression of people looking at the birds through the telescopes (again kindly lent to us by [Viking Optical](#) and kindly stored for us by Cromer Museum) for the first time is: "Oh! Wow!" It's a standing joke between the volunteers. I even had cards made last year using one of my photos as a back drop.



One of the strangest encounters I've had this year was with a couple. The man suddenly broke into full-blown Lawrence Olivier playing Richard III mode and started to recite a poem. He didn't tell me he was going to, or tell me the title of the poem, but I realised it was *The Wind Hover* by Gerald Manly Hopkins.

At the end he bowed and, still channelling Olivier, said: "there you are, I give you a poem dedicated to the Peregrine". I very gently broke the news that "windhover" is rural-speak for the Kestrel. "Ah, yes", he said "that makes sense". I did politely thank him for a good rendition of the poem though and he did give us a nice donation of £10!

Last year we had nearly 15,000 visitors to the watchpoint. That's a truly amazing number and a truly amazing amount of talking!

On one of the REALLY cold days recently (as opposed to just cold ...) we decamped to the church. Check out this photo of the visitors! It was so packed some people were waiting outside the door – I ushered them in as the screen is at a really good level so that even people at the back get a good view.

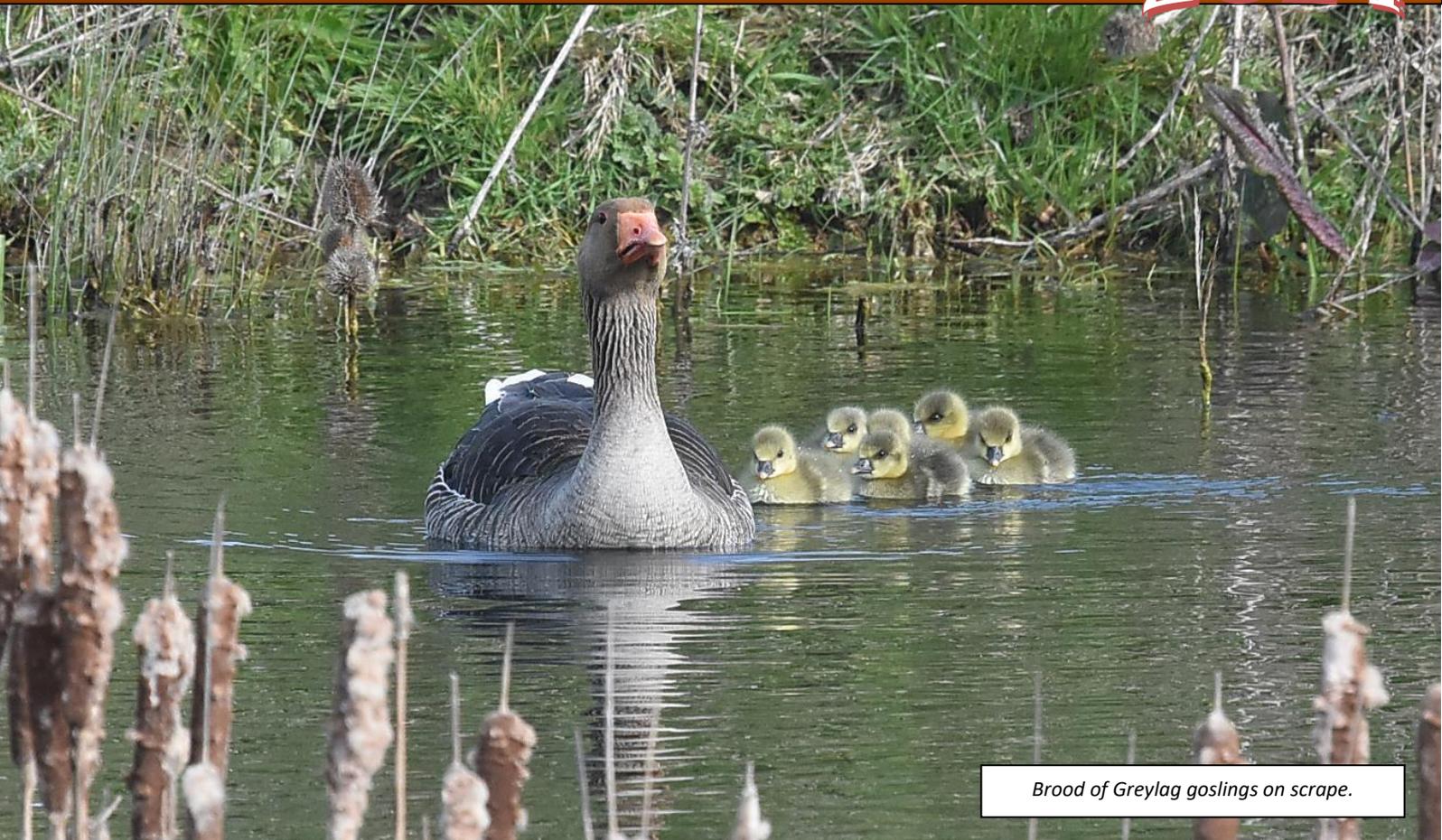
A big well-done to the NENBC members who volunteer. Almost all are from the club and there simply would not be a watchpoint/CPP without NENBC members. Having said that, I'm sure they would agree that it is really rewarding and there is much camaraderie amongst us.

(the chicks being fed on 12th May. Photo credit: CPP)



(photo of some of the visitors in the church who were lucky enough to witness the first feed of the first chick and an early view of the first chick, soon after it hatched)





Brood of Greylag goslings on scrape.

By Moss Taylor

This is the 4th in a monthly series this year of the wildlife at Weybourne Camp during 2024 ...

What a strange month April has been. To paraphrase an old saying, April came in like a lamb and almost went out like a lion. Surely the weather can only improve in May?

As in previous years, the Greylag Geese that nest on the islands at Weybourne Hope walked their newly-hatched goslings along the shingle bank and the family parties spent a day on the scrape. The first brood of six appeared on 18th and the second of four on 25th, after which they were presumably led west to Kelling Quags. The most interesting wildfowl were up to two pairs of Tufted Duck, hopefully if the high water level is maintained they may breed on the scrape later in the spring/early summer. Offshore 3 Velvet Scoters were recorded on 1st and a few Common Scoters were still present close inshore at the month's end. Cranes were noted flying west on two dates with a party of four on 6th. The first Whimbrel was recorded on 7th and Little Ringed Plover on 18th.



Pair of Tufted Ducks on scrape.

Mediterranean Gulls were seen passing west on many dates in April, the majority as pairs of adults in summer plumage with a peak of 18 pairs on 12th, including one flock of 10 birds. Exceptional numbers of Common Gulls were recorded during the first couple of hours after dawn on many days with the highest count of 1,630 west on 15th. By the month's end three species of tern had been recorded with Sandwich on 2nd, Common on 15th and Arctic on 19th. A Cormorant briefly on the scrape on 7th was only the second record, while a Little Egret flying high east dropped down for a short stay on the scrape on 25th. A Glossy Ibis flew west on 18th and up to 3 Spoonbills were recorded flying over on four dates.

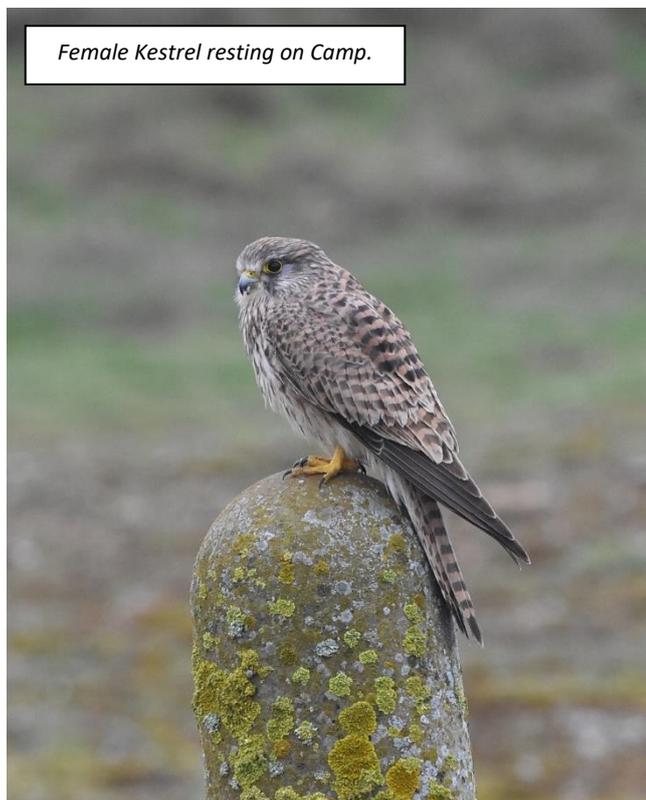
Nine species of raptor were recorded in April including a male Hen Harrier east on 5th and a ring-tail west on 7th, Red Kites were present almost daily peaking at 5 together on 18th, and single Merlin and Peregrine were noted.

Several species of warbler arrived unusually early, especially considering the poor weather. Good numbers of Willow Warblers were present from 1st with a maximum of seven on 10th, the earliest ever Reed Warbler, by eight days, was singing at Weybourne Hope on 8th and the earliest ever Whitethroat by two days on 10th. Up to 3 Ring Ouzels were present on most dates from 6th to 18th and the first two Redstarts on 6th and 10th broke the record for the previous earliest, made as long ago as 1992! Yellow Wagtail passage peaked with 20 west on 12th the same day that 400 Meadow Pipits flew west in ideal conditions for migration, and a single male Blue-headed Wagtail flew west on 25th.

The weather at last improved on 28th with the wind veering to the south, and from then until 30th migration started to pick up. On 28th the first Swift flew west accompanied by 260 Swallows, the first Hobby of the spring flew rapidly west over the Camp and a Great Skua was noted offshore. On the following day the first Cuckoo, an adult male, made its albeit brief appearance and Carrion Crows took advantage of the fine weather with 81 flying west in flocks of up to 20. On the last day of the month 2 Avocets passed west offshore, 6 Black-tailed Godwits flew south-east over the Camp and a Short-eared Owl flew west c.500yds offshore being harried by a posse of Herring Gulls.



One of the local Red Kites.



Female Kestrel resting on Camp.



Male Orange Tip.

By the end of the month a total of 11 species of butterfly had been recorded on the Camp, including the first Green Hairstreak on 15th.

This report would not have been possible without the major contributions made by James McCallum and Phil Borley, and other members of the NENBC including Russell Page and Tony Pope. To them all I am extremely grateful.

Contemplating Conservation

Migratory birds need a feast of insects



By Tracy Brighten

Bird migration is one of the wonders of the world as birds of all sizes make extraordinary journeys. Whether flying solo or in small or large flocks, migratory birds risk their lives between wintering and breeding grounds. En route, their survival is threatened by extreme weather, predation, hunting, disorientation, and collision with infrastructure. Furthermore, when coastal wetlands are lost to human developments, exhausted birds are deprived of refuelling grounds, and when they reach their destinations, food sources are affected by climate change and pollution.



In May and October each year, World Migratory Bird Day highlights the phenomenon and the challenges of avian migration. This year, the theme is the importance of insect populations to migratory birds. Over the past few weeks, Common Swifts, House Martins and Barn Swallows have been arriving in urban areas and countryside to nest in our crevices, eaves and open barns. But for how much longer? The UK breeding population of Swifts has decreased by an alarming 60% from 1995 to 2020 [BTO], and House Martin numbers declined by 57% between 1969 and 2018. Both species are now on the UK Red List for Birds. Across the UK, birdwatchers who enjoy these high-flying summer visitors are seeing fewer and fewer return. *Photo: Swift courtesy of Julian Thomas*

A key reason for the decline in House Martins and Swifts is the disappearance of nest sites. For House Martins, this is due to modern houses having no eaves or shallow eaves, destruction of nests by homeowners who are intolerant of the mess, and dry weather making moist mud harder to find. Swifts' nest sites are often blocked when buildings are insulated or renovated, roofs and eaves especially, and airtight modern buildings have no crevices for swifts. But this is not the only challenge.



Swallows, House Martins and Swifts are insectivores. The latest State of Nature report warns of the global decline in insect populations. In the UK, the Bugs Matter Citizen Science Survey (where dead insects on vehicle number plates were counted), shows a staggering 59% decline in the number of flying insects between 2004 and 2021. Through the media, people are now aware of the decline in popular insects such as bumblebees and butterflies, but there are more than 27,000 species of insect in the UK. Insects not only help pollination of plants but provide natural pest control, nutrient recycling, soil fertility, and food for birds, fish, mammals and reptiles, says the Royal Entomological Society. The Society proposes two key

actions: increasing diversity in the landscape by allowing wild field margins, corners and hedgerows between productive fields; and reducing the toxicity of pesticides. A 2023 study of European data finds that the increased use of pesticides and fertiliser on farmland is the main cause of most bird population declines, and insectivorous birds are hardest hit. *Photo: Six-spot burnet moth*

Swifts travel long distances for food, circumnavigating cold and wet weather in search of insects, often abundant over wildflower meadows, woodlands, water bodies and sewage treatment works. They feed their chicks with a ball of invertebrates bound with saliva, which they carry in their throat pouch. On a fine day, a breeding pair may catch up to 20,000 airborne insects and spiders daily to feed chicks, says the Oxford Swift Research Project. Swifts target a variety of aerial insects, including hoverflies, pollen beetles, parasitic wasps, flying ants, mosquitoes, flies and aphids. When adults cannot find enough food, chicks lower their body temperature to save energy. But there is a limit to the Swift's superpowers. To help insectivores, we need to boost insect numbers fast.

Across Norfolk, nature NGO and community projects are providing more habitats for wildlife, including pollinators and other insects. Norfolk Wildlife Trust's (NWT) Churchyard Conservation Scheme is helping to transform churchyards, balancing people's needs for areas to be tended with wildlife's needs for areas to be left wild. NWT's newest reserve opened recently at Sweet Briar Marshes in Norwich, providing an urban green space of mature woodland, dry grassland, scrub, wet meadows and ponds. So far, surveys have found evidence of almost 1,000 invertebrate species, over two hundred flowering plant species and six bat species.

In north-east Norfolk, the [Felbeck Trust](#), co-founded by NENBC's Trevor Williams and supported by a dedicated team of volunteers (including many NENBC members), complements the work of larger nature organisations. The Trust manages thirteen sites of varied habitats, including hedgerows, woodland, scrub, grassland, streams and ponds. Local councils like Aylsham Town Council are heeding the biodiversity message by reducing the mowing frequency and varying the cut height to increase the variety and number of grasses and wildflowers. In Weybourne, NENBC's Val and Nick Stubbs persuaded their council to leave verges uncut until late summer, and [Cromer Green Spaces](#) is making more space for nature with projects at North Park Lodge and the Meadow.



Climate aware North Norfolk District Council runs tree-planting projects, and Broadland Tree Network (an offshoot of [The Tree Council](#)) supports their tree wardens for Aylsham to plant trees, including an orchard earlier this year. This community-wide effort in gardens, public spaces, parkland and farmland will provide connected habitats and create healthy ecosystems where wild animals can feed, breed and thrive. Photo: *Dandelions at Blickling National Trust*

GO WILD FOR WILDLIFE

With around 23 million gardens and over 62,000 urban green spaces in the UK, we can make a difference for wildlife. Every wild patch helps! Photo: *Hoverfly on a marsh marigold in a garden pond*

- **Let grass grow.** Leaving areas uncut allows wildflowers to bloom. Mow a path through the uncut area, so neighbours know you are wild for a reason.
- **Create a wetland.** Large or small, a pond with aquatic plants or a small bog is a magnet for insects. Frogs, newts and birds will benefit too.
- **Create a log pile.** Insects love your dead wood piled up in a corner or border.
- **Leave the leaves.** Fallen leaves provide habitat for insects, and worms pull leaves underground, breaking them down and enriching the soil.
- **Grow pollinator-friendly plants.** Trees, shrubs and flowers feed pollinators and their larvae in spring and summer and provide shelter in autumn and winter.
- **Avoid or reduce pesticides.** Pesticides harm pollinators and other insects and wildlife. Try companion planting to control unwanted insects. Pull weeds by hand.
- **Check out [Wild About Gardens](#).** The Wildlife Trusts and the Royal Horticultural Society's campaign gives advice on wildlife-friendly gardening, with a fabulous "Wild about high fliers" leaflet.



Check This Out!

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



- 🕒 **"The 5 best British birdwatching apps"** from the [BirdGuides website](#) [17-Apr]
- 🕒 **"Landmark study gives major shake-up to evolutionary history of birds"** from the [BirdGuides website](#) [07-Apr]
- 🕒 **"Understanding eggshells"** from the [BirdGuides website](#) [31-Mar]
- 🕒 **"Cause for optimism following 2023 Hen Harrier survey results"** from the [BirdGuides website](#) [09-Apr]



“Britain's national parks failing, report finds” from the [BirdGuides website](#) [24-Apr]



“Early analysis finds eclipse had noticeable effect on birds” from the [Rare Bird Alert website](#) [30-Apr]



“Ducks take a dive as milder winters keep birds in an unfrozen north” from the [Rare Bird Alert website](#) [24-Apr]



“Bird mimicking police siren leaves inspector fooled” from the [BBC News website](#) [11-Apr]

Monthly 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!

Greylag Goose: “Pair of adults with 6 newly-hatched goslings on scrape having walked them along the beach from Weybourne Hope” | Moss Taylor | Weybourne Camp | 18th |

Greylag Goose: “pair +four gosling on camp, later seen walking west along beach and out of club area.” | Phil Borley | Weybourne Camp | 27th |

Egyptian Goose: “Grazing in front of hall with **Ruddy Shelduck hybrid**” | Alan Stevens | Felbrigg Park & Lake | 23rd |

Mallard: “Pair plus five ducklings. I was drawn to a kerfuffle in the wetland where the duck and a crow were engaged in a vicious fight - I assume the crow had tried to take a youngster. The duck eventually pushed the crow underwater and swam off. The crow sat, dazed, in the water for some five minutes before flapping slowly off, dripping, to the nearest bush. The drake, of course, ignored the battle!” | Chris Mason | Felbrigg Park & Lake | 15th |

Mallard: “Nest with 10 eggs now reduced to 2. Suspect visiting Heron - probably couldn't manage all 10 at once.” | Alan Stevens | Gresham | 17th |

[Rock Dove] Feral Pigeon: “Flying along cliff edge. Is this the same group that I often see circling over my house in Weybourne?” | Val Stubbs | Weybourne Cliffs | 6th |

Stock Dove: “Fledgling at Hillside Shire Horse Sanctuary - they nested in the trees near the Old Forge. First time I've ever seen a young one.” | Ellie Farrow | West Runton | 9th |

Stock Dove: “Unusually flying west parallel to the coast some distance from it.” | John Hurst | Mundesley | 19th |

Little Grebe: “pair duetting on scrape” | Moss Taylor | Weybourne Camp | 1st |

Turnstone: “12 on prom by The Tank, 29 on rocks; as tide rose they flew off the rocks and to the outflow, where they seemed to really enjoy bathing in the stream” | Val Stubbs | Sheringham | 2nd |

Spoonbill: “Heading east over Cromer Church. Luckily for it, it was very high and the Peregrines didn't spot it!” | Jane Crossen | Cromer | 1st |

Red Kite: “Apparently in off sea, though I only saw it when it was already close in.” | Tony Pope | Weybourne Camp | 9th |

Jackdaw: “Flying over. Carrying nesting material. Conclusion of the 30 minute 'conservatory observations'. Nineteen species today.” | John Hurst | Mundesley | 12th |

Willow Warbler: “In scrub and trees. One near layby was a 'mixed singer' with Chiffchaff notes followed by normal Willow Warbler flourish. It was also a brown and white bird similar to a Northern Willow Warbler type 'acredula'” | Francis Farrow | Beeston Common | 26th | (see sonogram image right)

Chiffchaff: “In neighbours garden, literally hopped into tree over our heads as we sat having coffee break!” | Lin Pateman | Edgefield | 6th |

Whitethroat: “Earliest record for this site, in hedgerow along footpath heading north from Warren Barn” | Stella Baylis | Southrepps Common | 13th |

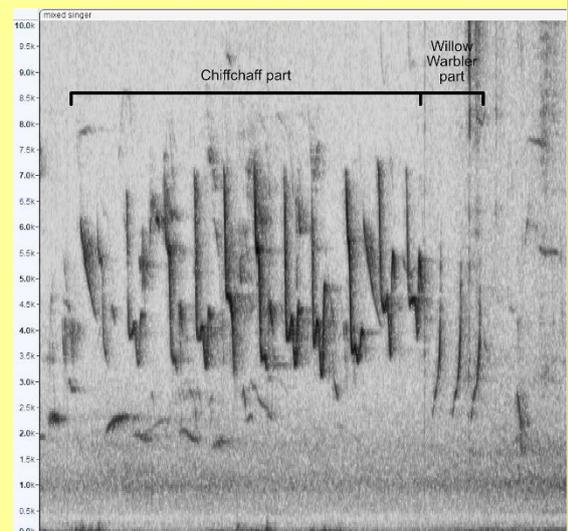
Treecreeper: “Watched nest building in broken bark at bottoms of large still living oak tree amongst the bluebells. Taking small/tiny twigs into nest.” | Stu Buck | Blickling Park NT | 17th |

Blackbird: “Pair feeding young in the grounds of the flat. Definitely the earliest I've seen them feeding young this early here.” | Jane Crossen | Sheringham | 2nd |

Mistle Thrush: “On field getting ready for potato planting, Long Lane, looks good for Wheatear or Ring Ouzel in next few weeks!” | Stella Baylis | Southrepps Common | 1st |

House Sparrow: “Males, arrived at the fatball feeder. First record for the garden and only the second house sparrow seen locally. Still enthusing as if they're major rarities!” | John Hurst | Mundesley | 26th |

Brambling: “Pair, seen around garden feeders. Our garden is not unlike their breeding habitat, a micro version, with small trees of birch, field maple and hazel, we'll miss them when they go!” | Stella Baylis | Southrepps Common | 10th |



Data, Records, Posts and Tweets



A couple of new rare bird records have been 'Accepted' by the Norfolk Records Committee [NRC] for our area since the last newsletter. You can view their current '**NRC work in progress**' file on their website [24th Nov 23]. The British Birds Rarities Committee also have a '**BBRC work in progress**' file available on their website [11th Mar 24].



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



NENBC Website

A huge thanks to the **112** of you who have uploaded records to our new website this year. It is very much appreciated by us and the bodies we send the data on to for inclusion in the county reports.

Up to the end of April we have collectively recorded **193** species across the NENBC area this year. Don't forget that 100 species will earn you a Bronze Star badge from the club so do get out there recording yourself and telling us what you see. Attending club walks is a great way to see more birds with the added bonus of the extra sets of eyes from other members. The monthly Felbrigg walk is within the club area so all sightings there count towards your Star badges (and your Eco-badges if you have walked or cycled there) and some of the weekend walks are in the club area too.

Most recorded species for April was Blackbird for the 2nd month running, closely followed by Chiffchaff, Woodpigeon, Robin and Wren. The location with the most records overall was Weybourne again. We also had 2,266 singing records covering 67 species. Chiffchaff was the most commonly reported.

NENBC Twitterings from (the platform formerly known as) Twitter



We very much welcome users tagging us **@NENBC_info** to keep us posted and so we can Retweet them but please refrain from posting any discussion that could be construed as abusive, derogatory or inflammatory to or by other users – thank you!

Please continue to tag us **@NENBC_info** in your own Tweets. Here are some highlights from the last month ...



Here's a list of the members who we know have a Twitter account they use for bird sightings, although not all are NENBC area residents - let us know if you're not on here!

- | James Appleton | Colin Blaxill | Tracy Brighten | Emma Buck | Stu Buck | Ben Clark | Sally Clark |
- | Jane Crossen | James Emerson | Ian Gordon | Andy Hale | Sarah Hanson | Emma Hurrell | Russ Malin | Louis Parkerson |
- | Lin Pateman | Steve Stansfield | Val Stubbs | Alan Stevens | Carol Thornton | Ken Thornton | Pauline Walton |
- | Lizzie Wallis | Trevor Williams |

Don't forget that you don't have to have a Twitter account to peruse Twitter pages – take a look at our feed on your computer / laptop / phone etc: www.twitter.com/NENBC_Info

Back Page Club Info



NENBC Annual Bird Reports are compiled from the records and photographs added to the club website by members since we were established in January 2015 and complemented by articles on club activities. Member price for most recent report is £3 and back-copies £2 (postage extra).

The Birds of Felbrigg Park is a systematic review of the records of all 220 species seen in and around the park over the past 50 years, indicating their current status and highlighting, for the rarer species, every recorded sighting. The publication includes photographs and artwork from local artists. The book is now reduced to £5.00 (postage extra) and all profits from the sale of this book go to Felbeck Trust, our local wildlife conservation charity:

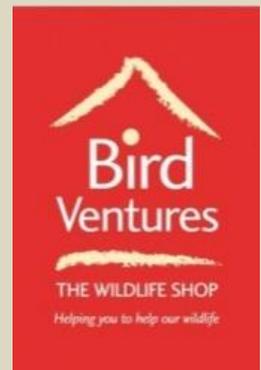
www.felbecktrust.org.uk

My Birding Life by Club President Moss Taylor. Moss has been watching birds and keeping records of his sightings since 1953, as well as ringing and photographing birds for over 50 years. Although only a hobby, birding has really taken over his life, especially during the last 25 years since he retired from general practice. Since 1969 he has lived in Norfolk and much of the action in this book takes place there. All profits from the sale of this book will be going to his charity Love for Leo. See below for more details on this charity and contact details for Moss. £20 (or £18 if collected from Sheringham when restrictions permit).

Rare and Scarce Birds in North-east Norfolk This book by Moss Taylor presents all the records of rare and scarce birds that have been recorded in the NENBC area up to the formation of the Club in 2014. There is a Classified List and a chapter on the historic habitats and birding activities in the area plus all additional rarity records from 2015 to 2018. It is also illustrated with 78 colour photographs and runs to 104 pages. Now out of print, but there is an electronic version on our website.

For Annual Reports or **The Birds of Felbrigg Park**, contact Carol on nenbc@aol.co.uk. For **My Birding Life**, or emailable recent Annual Summaries of the Bird Life at Weybourne Camp, contact Moss Taylor, 4 Heath Road, Sheringham, NR26 8JH, phone 01263-823637 or email: moss.taylor@btinternet.com

Club Sponsor: A 5% discount on Bird Ventures branded wild bird food is available to NENBC members at their shop in Holt all year on production of a current NENBC Membership Card. Have a look at the **Bird Ventures website** as they also supply feeders and much more with good advice and help for garden bird enthusiasts. **Bird Ventures, The Wildlife Shop, 9B Chapel Yard, Albert Street, Holt, Norfolk NR25 6HG, Telephone 01263 710203, Email salesbirdventures@aol.com**



The NENBC objectives:

- Encourage and share the enjoyment of birdwatching in North East Norfolk with people of all abilities and experience.
- Promote diversity and inclusion in all its activities.
- Gather and collate data on birds in the recording area.
- Share information between members.
- Participate in regional and national surveys incorporating the recording area.
- Administer the Club in an environmentally sensitive manner.
- Promote the conservation of birds and wildlife within Norfolk.
- Liaise with other conservation groups within the local area and more widely.
- Hold regular indoor and field meetings and social events throughout the year.
- Put the interests of birds first and respect other people, whether or not they are interested in birds, in line with the birdwatchers' code.

Monthly mid-week bird walks around Felbrigg Park on the 3rd Wednesday of the month from September to July / Varied **monthly weekend bird walks** to a range of local birding hotspots from September to July / **Occasional evening walks** in the spring and summer / **Monthly evening talks** on the last Thursday of the month from September to November and January to April - refreshments provided / An annual **Big Sit** birding event at a number of locations across the club area in May, recording the total number of species seen from one spot between dawn and dusk / Autumn **Global Big Day** birding challenge / Annual **Coordinated Seawatch** event along the coast in the autumn recording visible migration / A **Birding for Beginners** workshop series combining practical and theoretical elements of birdwatching / **New Year's Day Birding Challenge** / **Occasional master-classes, lectures, workshops and conferences** to develop better skills and understanding of the birding world / A combined **Christmas Social and AGM Evening** in December