



The Pied Flyer

North East Norfolk Bird Club



August 2024 – Issue 110

The NENBC Monthly e-Newsletter

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Through a Lens



By Nigel Redman

As I write this, at the end of a disappointing July, the garden is in full bloom but it's raining again – it must be summer! This year, July has been particularly poor for weather, with temperatures well below average and rainfall higher than normal. There were a few glorious days in June, but they are now long forgotten. Ornithologically, autumn has already started. Many birds have finished breeding and a new generation of juveniles is learning to survive our unpredictable climate (and our sparrowhawks!). On the coast, a sprinkling of skuas has enlivened seawatches, and a smattering of shorebirds presumably signifies failed breeders returning south from their arctic breeding grounds.

But before we look forward to autumn, how has your summer been? Fairly quiet, I assume. There weren't many big rarities this year, although Snettisham seems to be getting a few American waders in the past few days. Recently, the local WhatsApp group has been awash with reports of 'rare' herons – notably, flocks of Cattle and Great Egrets. There were no fewer than 29 Cattle Egrets at Cley the other day, and at least 15 Great Egrets. What's more, several of the Cattle Egrets were juveniles with black bills. That's not a plumage that most of us are familiar with, largely because the black bill very quickly turns to yellow. Clearly, these birds were locally-bred, and no doubt the Great Egrets have been breeding locally too – and quite likely at a site closer than Holkham. We have only just got used to Little Egrets and Spoonbills breeding in Norfolk, and now they are spreading from their primary colony at Holkham to other sites. Stiffkey Fen regularly gets post-breeding groups of 60 or more Spoonbills in late summer.

All this long-legged shorebird activity was brought into focus in an article in the latest Cley Bird Club newsletter. First, it looked at all the birds that had been lost as breeding species in the Cley Bird Club square (immediately adjacent to the NENBC recording area) since the 1970s – that's within the lifetime of most of us! It was a surprisingly long list, headlined by iconic species such as Red-backed Shrike and Stone-curlew, and including formerly-familiar farmland species such as Tree Sparrow and Corn Bunting as well as Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and Willow Tit. But on the other side of the page was a list of the species that only started breeding in the area in the same time period. It was almost as long, featuring several now-familiar long-legged shorebirds as well as species such as Mediterranean Gull and Raven – the latter successfully bred this year for the first time! Even the noisy Avocet only started breeding at Cley in 1977. Perhaps we shouldn't be too surprised. Bird distributions and populations have always fluctuated for a variety of

reasons, although mainly human-induced in recent times. Farmland birds have been in serious decline for decades, while the increase in southern European birds is no doubt in response to climate change. There will probably be many more changes in the next 50 years too.

To end on a more positive note, July is most notable in my calendar for the annual Global Birdfair. This incredible 3-day event, held as usual on the shores of Rutland Water (although at an impressive new site this year), has been going for some 35 years now, attracting birders and birding-related businesses from all over Britain and the rest of the world. It's been called 'Glastonbury for birders' – but without the music – and if you've never been, you should give it go! There is so much to see and do: entertainment events, quizzes, lectures, optical gear to try out, books to buy, ideas for future birding holidays, birding celebrities, and even great local produce to sustain you. But the main reason to go, for me, is to connect with old friends. This year was no exception, and it was great to catch up with so many people, reminisce about old times and exchange news about recent birding trips. I even saw some friends from Norfolk! And you never know, you might even make some new friends while you're there.

Photo: Two Nigels and a big lizard (NR with Nigel Marven and his reptilian friend at the Rockjumper stand, Global Birdfair, July 2024).





By Carol Thornton

Hi folks. Welcome to our August newsletter!

Thanks to all those who led and participated in our August Walks Week – from the feedback we got you all enjoyed yourselves. Those of you who didn't take part, well we'll be telling you all about it in next month's newsletter and hopefully you will be inspired to join us next time!

We don't have any further events planned for this month – our traditional summer rest period – but included this newsletter from [page 12](#) is our **schedule of events for the next year** and we have some exciting news announcements. Those of you at our AGM in December will have heard our Chair Trevor mention that we would be reaching the milestone of being established as a bird club for a decade come the end of 2024. Wow – where did the time go? With that in mind, the schedule for 2025 includes lots of themed events and activities for our **10th Anniversary Year**. In addition we'll have some giveaways at our January 2025 evening talk meeting when we will be formally launching our celebratory year so hope many of you will come along.

One of our key anniversary events will be a **day-long summer conference** on Saturday 14th June 2025 to consider **the challenge facing Anglo-African migrants using the East Atlantic fly-way**. We have an international cast of speakers and the event will help share knowledge, 'join the dots' for birds between Norfolk and Africa and hopefully promote conservation amongst young people - raising the profile of the club in the process. We are **looking for a club member**, with relevant skills / experience to help the Steering Group plan and deliver the event. If you are interested in finding out more, please drop us an email and we will be in touch.

Back in June we had two worthy achievers of the club's Green Eco-Badge (Coastal), Ellie Farrow and Thomas Wright, who had recorded 100 bird species in the NENBC area at or from home without the use of motorised transport. Recently Francis Farrow, one of our Vice Presidents, caught up with them both on Beeston Common to present their certificates and badges. Well done guys – Super-Green now on your radars we hope!



Last month's **Through a Lens** subject for the front page was **BIRDS OVER THE SEA** and our cover images this time from the top are from Richard Farrow (Sandwich Tern), Ken Thornton (Sandwich Tern), Mark Clements (Oystercatcher), Richard Farrow (Sand Martin) and Mark Clements (Mediterranean Gull). Thanks all! **The theme for August is – FINCHES.**

Here on the left is my pick for July of some great photos from our website of the more common birds that don't make it to the Monthly Bird Highlights section: Lesser Black-backed Gull (Mark Clements), Robin (Phil Cartledge), Kestrel (Richard Farrow), Rook (Andrew Crossley) and Wren (Mark Clements).



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

* **Philippa Monteith** * **Wynne Ashlin** *

429 individual
members across
279 households

56,131
bird records
logged

213 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 36](#).

Club Achievement Awards

Star Badges

No new achievers this month but we are looking forward to a few more coming through soon!

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

No new badges to award this month but ... see the presentation pics on previous page for some of our recent achievers.

We currently have **26** members who have achieved their **GREEN ECO-BADGES** [Coastal: 16 | Inland: 10] and 5 who have achieved **SUPER-GREEN** [Coastal: 4 | 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.

≈ 5,200 individual records covering 146 bird species were added in July

There were 5,200 records submitted for July which is 168 less than those submitted for the same period last year and 576 less than the previous month of June. A total of 146 species were recorded which was 2 less than was recorded in the same period in 2023. Listed below are summaries of the less common species in our area last month.

Brent Goose Just one record this month, 3 Dark-bellied east during a seawatch. *Photo 1 courtesy of Trevor Williams*



Egyptian Goose Records this month of mostly singles from Thornage on 4th and 29th, Blickling Park on 16th (2) and West Runton 24th.



Pintail a single bird west at Weybourne Camp on 13th.

Tufted Duck Inland, reports of singles at Blickling Park and Felbrigg Park, with 5 west at Weybourne / Weybourne Camp on 11th plus 5 west there again on 13th, 4 west Sheringham on 13th with 2 west there on 16th and 4 (2 east and 2 west) on 21st. A male was west in the company of Teal at Walcott on 21st and a single east at Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs on 31st.

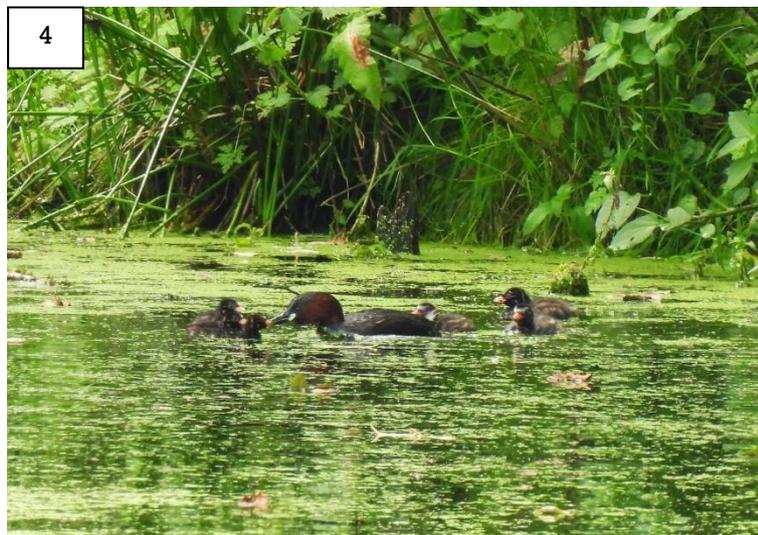
Scaup A single female distantly west with 3 Common Scoter at Walcott on 13th. *Photo 2 courtesy of James Appleton*



Grey Partridge Mostly singles from Weybourne Camp this month – 1st, 8th, 19th (2), 20th and 21st with a bird heard calling from Weybourne Cliffs on 8th.

Nightjar Records from 17th to the end of the month of up to 6 birds from the regular hotspot at Kelling Heath, with churring, flight call and wing clapping heard at Weybourne Heath on 21st and on at Inceborough Hill on 29th. *Photo 3 courtesy of Francis Farrow*

Cuckoo An adult male reported from Weybourne Camp on 8th and 9th and reports of a juvenile there from 11th to 19th. One was feeding in a Sheringham garden on 20th and sadly a dead bird on the road near Southrepps Common on 12th.



Turtle Dove There were 15 records throughout the month of mostly singles at Kelling Heath. Two were reported there on 8th and tantalisingly there was also a glimpse of a possible juvenile on 30th.

Water Rail A single record of 2 birds calling from Dilham Canal in Swafield.

Little Grebe Reports from 7 locations throughout the month with a pair with 2 newly hatched chicks on the scrape at Weybourne Camp on 7th and a pair with six chicks near Swanton Abbott. *Photo 4 courtesy of Mark Clements*

Great Crested Grebe In addition to sightings of up to 2 birds at the regular spot at Blickling Park, 3 were west at Sheringham on 12th, 2 east during a seawatch at Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs on 17th and 2 on the sea at Weybourne also on 17th.

Avocet A juvenile was on the beach at Sheringham on 11th. *Photo 5 courtesy of Ken Thornton*

Golden Plover Just 1-2 birds reported off Sheringham and Weybourne Camp / Weybourne on 5 dates in the second half of the month, all heading west.

Grey Plover A single west at Sheringham on 21st.

Ringed Plover A single came in off the sea and appeared to land at Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs on 31st. Singles were also reported heading west off Sheringham on 2nd, and past Weybourne and the Camp on 11th, 13th, 16th, 23rd and 28th.

Little Ringed Plover A single west Weybourne Camp on 1st and 16th.

Whimbrel Reports of between 1 and 4 birds predominantly west from coastal locations over 14 dates from the 10th onwards plus 16 birds seen heading inland from Weybourne Cliffs on 27th.

Bar-tailed Godwit There were 37 records along the coast throughout the month, all heading west, with a high-count of 65 during a seawatch at Sheringham on 13th.

Black-tailed Godwit There were 9 records over 5 dates of birds heading west from Weybourne / Weybourne Camp with a high-count of 10 on 10th.

Knot Records of 1-4 birds heading west during seawatches from Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs, Sheringham and the Weybourne area between 13th and 28th, with a high-count of 12 off Weybourne on 17th.

Ruff Seven west at Weybourne 13th was the only report this month.

Curlew Sandpiper All records were of birds heading west, Sheringham on 3rd, 2 at Weybourne on 10th and one there on 11th.

Sanderling One west at Weybourne 16th with the remaining records from Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs on 17th and two there on 23rd.

Little Stint An adult with a Dunlin on the shoreline at Walcott on 29th.

Common Sandpiper There were records of 1-2 birds at Sheringham on 14th, 16th, 21st (2) and 29th (2) with a high-count of 11 there on 21st. Two birds were reported on the RNL slip-way from Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs on 23rd. *Photo 6 courtesy of Mark Clements*

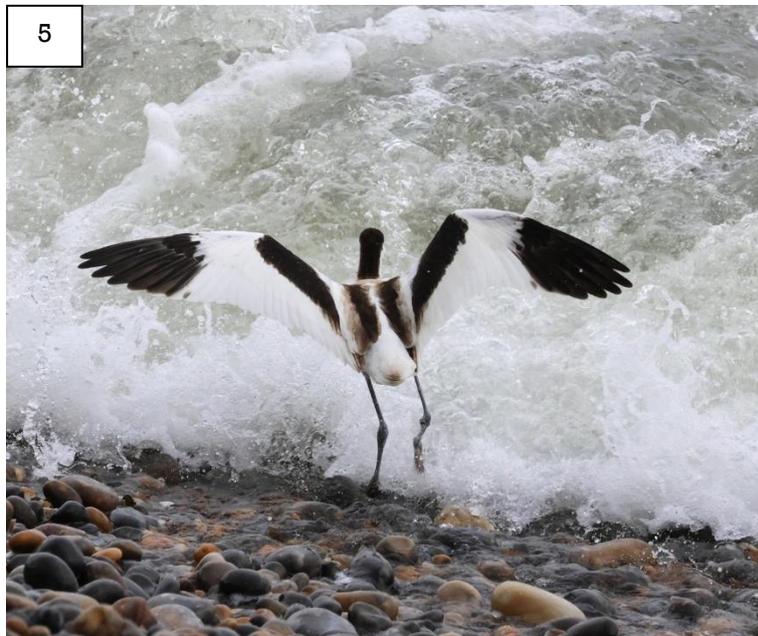
Green Sandpiper Singles near Letheringsett & Ford on 6th, first at Weybourne Camp on 9th and in Scarrow Beck below the dam at Felbrigg Park & Lake in 17th.

Greenshank One west at Weybourne Cam on 15th, the first of the autumn.

Kittiwake There were 50 reports of Kittiwake throughout the month with six counts in triple figures between the 12th and 17th, with the highest count being 508 west at Sheringham on 13th. *Photo 7 courtesy of Trevor Williams*

Little Gull Singles west at Weybourne on 10th, Sheringham 13th and 16th, all the Weybourne sites on 23rd and Weybourne Camp on 24th.

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Mediterranean Gull Just one inland report of 2 birds from Bodham on 2nd and nearly 90 records at coastal locations throughout the month. Most reports were of single figure counts and of the 14 double-figure counts the highest was 3 east and 45 west at Weybourne on 7th. *Photo 8 courtesy of Trevor Williams*



Caspian Gull The 11 records this month included at least 4 individuals both ringed and un-ringed. See Ringed Bird Records [below](#). *Photo 9 courtesy of Trevor Williams*



Yellow-legged Gull A 4th calendar year bird was at Walcott on 21st, 25th and 29th. A juvenile was on the beach at Cromer Pier on 26th and 27th with records of 2 juveniles there on 28th. *Photo 10 courtesy of Stu Buck*

Sandwich Tern Over 90 records throughout the month along the length of coast from Walcott to Weybourne Camp. Ten of the records were of triple-figure counts during seawatches, with the high-count of 204 at Weybourne Cliffs on 25th (24 west, 180 east).



Little Tern Two west at Sheringham on 4th plus one east Weybourne Camp 11th and 3 west there on 27th. At Weybourne 1 on 14th, 3 on 16th and 4 on 27th, all west.

Arctic Tern One record of an adult west at Walcott on 13th. *Photo 11 courtesy of James Appleton*



Arctic Skua Forty two records between Walcott and Weybourne Camp. Most were single-figure counts but of note were 8 west and 2 east at Sheringham on 21st, 4 east, 9 west and 1 offshore at Weybourne on 25th plus 5 east, 5 west and 4 offshore at Weybourne Camp on 27th. *Photo 12 courtesy of Mark Clements*

Guillemot Just 6 records of single birds at Sheringham on 6th and 13th, Weybourne on 14th, 16th and 23rd plus Weybourne Camp on 19th.

Razorbill Two east Weybourne 5th, 1 east Sheringham 6th plus 1 west Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs 25th.



Red-throated Diver Seventeen records of singles from Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs, Sheringham, Weybourne and Weybourne Camp, with 2 there (1 on sea and 1 west) on 29th.

Fulmar Forty five records of 1-3 birds during seawatches with 4 west at Sheringham on 3rd, and again there on 13th, with 7 (3 west, 4 offshore) also there on 16th.

Spoonbill Singles west offshore at Weybourne | Weybourne Camp on 11th, Sheringham on 13th plus Weybourne on both 14th and 26th.

Cattle Egret Ten west offshore at Weybourne on 25th. Seven birds flew west past Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs on 27th which were speed-checked a little later at Weybourne Camp.

Great White Egret Flights were reported on 9 days Single birds on 5th, 22nd (2), 23rd and 25th at Weybourne, 7th (settled

on the scrape), 16th 23rd, 24th (2) and 25th at Weybourne Camp, Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs 25th and 4 east offshore on 15th from East Runton (Coastwatch Station).

Little Egret Twenty two records of predominantly 1-4 birds throughout the month, with 5 at Weybourne on 25th, 6 west there on 17th and 8 on 14th.

Goshawk A breeding record of 4 birds from a private site near Briston on 17th of female carrying prey to 2 begging youngsters heard in the wood with the male seeing off a Buzzard overhead. *Photo 13 courtesy of Paul Laurie*

Marsh Harrier Singles over Weybourne / Weybourne Camp on 3rd, 5th and 24th plus at Sheringham on 25th, Felbrigg Park & Lake on 26th and Weybourne Cliffs on 12th

Red Kite Over 30 records of 1-2 birds from 14 sites throughout the month.

Barn Owl Fifteen mostly hunting records of singles from Edgefield, Felbrigg Park & Lake, Mannington Hall Park and Weybourne Cliffs with 2 in Gresham on 20th. *Photo 14 courtesy of Alan Stevens*

Kingfisher Selbrigg Pond was the most reliable spot for this species. Mostly singles, but 2 there on 14th and again at Mannington Hall Park on 23rd. There was an additional report of a single at Felbrigg Park & Lake during the club walk on 17th. *Photo 15 courtesy of Mark Clements*

Bee-eater A single report of one bird calling high over the village at West Runton on 19th.

Hobby Forty one records of predominantly singles from Briningham, East Runton & Thains Lane, Felbrigg Park & Lake, Gresham, Letheringsett & Ford, Swanton Abbot, Sheringham (2 on 19th), Swanton Novers, Trimingham and around the Weybourne sites (2 over Deadman's Wood on 31st). *Photo 16 courtesy of Ken Thornton*

Peregrine Continuing reports of the family of 3 at Cromer Church throughout the month. Other records came from Sheringham, East Runton & Thains Lane, Weybourne and Bodham, all singles.

Marsh Tit Just one record of a single at Mannington Hall Park on 3rd.

Woodlark Two reports from Kelling Heath of singles on 10th and 12th. *Photo 17 courtesy of Doug Cullern*

Cetti's Warbler A single was heard on 1st at Baconsthorpe with further singing records from Weybourne / Weybourne Camp on 7th, 15th (juvenile male) and 19th.

Sedge Warbler reports of singles at Felbrigg park & Lake on 7th, 15th and 22nd, Beeston Bump on 19th and Blickling Park on 23rd.

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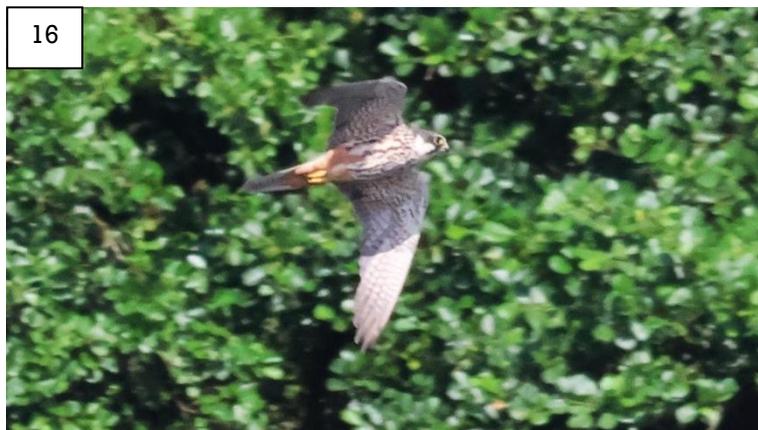
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Reed Warbler Twenty records predominantly from Felbrigg Park & Lake, but also from Mannington Hall Park on 3rd, Weybourne on 7th, 11th and 20th, Weybourne Camp 19th, Pigneys Wood 19th, Gimingham 21st.. Blickling Park was another good site with 12 birds including young in 4 territories there on 16th.

Lesser Whitethroat Adult feeding 2 juvenile at Weybourne Camp with a family party of 4 juveniles there on 15th. Other reports of singles at Beeston Common on 3rd, 4th, 5th and 28th with 1 at Cromer Lighthouse & East Cliffs on 16th. *Photo 18 courtesy of Trevor Williams*

Dartford Warbler Four records of up to 3 birds at the usual Kelling Heath site, with at least one juvenile reported.

Firecrest Singles at High Kelling on 1st singing and at Beeston Common on 3rd.

Nuthatch Eleven reports from 6 sites only, with 4 birds, including 2 juveniles, reported at Beeston Common on 15th.

Spotted Flycatcher One record of a pair feeding from a garden apple tree in Briningham on 30th. *Photo 19 courtesy of Paul & Jan Williams*

Stonechat Nineteen records of 1-3 birds from Weybourne Camp (up to 3 juveniles), Weybourne, Kelling Heath, Sheringham Cliffs & Golf Course, Muckleburgh Hill, Weybourne Cliffs and Kelling Heath (one juvenile). *Photo 20 courtesy of Doug Cullern*

Yellow Wagtail Three records, all from Weybourne Camp and of singles, on 8th (first of the autumn), 14th and 18th.

Grey Wagtail Records from Weybourne Camp on 5th and Felbrigg Park & Lake on 22nd with reports of juveniles at Selbrigg Pond (15th) and Letheringsett & Ford (6th).

Siskin A male a and a female on separate occasions on garden feeders in Bodham sporadically throughout the month with other records from a High Kelling garden on 21st and from east Runton & Thains Lane on 20th.

Yellowhammer Forty three records from 13 locations throughout the month. Lots of records were heard only by the distinctive song with the maximum count a minimum of 10 birds reported at Ingworth on 19th.



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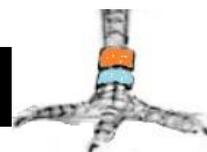


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Ringed Bird Records



Mediterranean Gull:

“West slipway beach 1 darvik ringed. Ringed in Belgium 9/7/2019 as a pullus (fledgling) seen in Spain 2020 then several records from Scolt Head from 2023” | Peter Geary | Sheringham | 5th |



Black-headed Gull:

“Colour-ringed adult, just west of pier (likely to be Norwegian - awaiting confirmation)” | Trevor Williams | 24th | *Photo 1* |

Herring Gull:

“On the beach including a very dark individual with long primaries and a single red band left tarsus.” | John Hurst | Walcott | 26th |

Caspian Gull:

“adult on East Beach - yellow ring P:6US (from Poland per AH)” | Trevor Williams | Cromer Pier | 18th |



“Adult colour-ringed (Poland) on west beach. A second, red-ring lower leg, bird was a 'probable' but not seen well enough to confirm” | Trevor Williams | Cromer Pier | 20th |

“Ad Polish ringed and 2cy - also ringed (was at Blakeney Point earlier in the month) - on the west beach” | Trevor Williams | Cromer Pier | 25th |

“1 Polish ringed adult and 1 Dutch ringed 2CY on west beach” | Phil Hall | Cromer Pier | 25th |



“Three or possibly four this evening - Ad Polish, 2cy Dutch and two un-ringed juvs” | Trevor Williams | Cromer Pier | 25th |

“West slipway beach colour ringed, then flew west, details sent. P6US” | Peter Geary | Sheringham | 26th |

“Pointed out by Andy Hale. Polish ringed bird yellow P6US” | Stu Buck | Cromer Pier | 28th | *Photo 2* |

Lesser Black-backed Gull:

“colour-ringed juvenile (Holland - details from AH) on west beach” | Trevor Williams | Cromer | 20th | *Photo 3* |

What to Look and Listen For in August



Historical August Records by Russ Malin

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

Historically, August was the month that gave us our first report of Great Shearwater with two birds seen off Weybourne on August 18th 1972. The first 20th century reports of Red-necked Phalarope were centred around the month of August at Weybourne with single birds offshore on August 28th 1971 and August 6th 1972. Another bird was off Sheringham on August 19th 1978. In 1993 the second Norfolk record of Lesser Crested Tern concerned an adult flying east off Sheringham on August 22nd. A Greenish Warbler was found at Paston on August 28th 1987 and, finally, the first Norfolk record of Sykes’s Warbler was in August 23rd 2002 when an individual was found near Dead Mans Wood, Sheringham.

August is still a busy time and an excellent month for wader passage. Godwits should be noticeable, and it can be a good month to see Whimbrel and check any floods or flashes for Ruff. Common and Green Sandpiper can also be seen with some ease. Skuas, divers and auks are just some of the possible rewards on offer for those who spend their time sea-watching. Last year at this time there was even a Brown Booby and in 2022, two rare terns, Caspian and White-winged Black Tern were reported. If you are a regular seawatcher and you haven’t yet joined our Seawatching WhatsApp Group then please consider doing so – just drop us an email. There are still plenty of passerines to see- you may be lucky enough to see something unusual like an Icterine Warbler but the commoner birds on autumn migration are also quite exciting, with Pied Flycatcher, Redstart and Whinchat all possible. *Photo of Bar-tailed Godwit courtesy of Tony Pope*



Conservation Corner – can you help??

Would you be interested in joining or team of article writers for the Conservation Corner slot? We currently have two members writing excellent articles alternate months but a bit of back up would be very handy for months when they have other commitments.

If you don't fancy writing an occasional article, please let us know any suggestions for what you'd like to see covered in this spot and we'll get researching!

WhatsApp Groups.....



The club runs two WhatsApp groups:

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

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

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

Restocking our 2nd hand bookstall

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

Contributions to the Newsletter

The newsletter is reliant on input from others, is certainly much richer from having a wide range of articles included and we could really do with some of your interesting stories! You really don't have to be a birding 'expert' to write something for our newsletter. It can be long or short, with or without photos, whatever suits. Please have a think about whether there is anything you could write about for a future publication. The copy deadline for any issue is the last day of the previous month, but it would be good to know in advance if you are planning to submit an article.

Looking forward to hearing from you!

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!

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





Here's a summary of our provisional offer of walks, talks and special events. As always, full details are on (or are about to be on) the website ...

September

- Wed 18th | Felbrigg Park Walk with Trevor Williams | 9:00am to 11:00am |**
- Sat 21st | Coordinated Seawatch at various sites | 7:30am to 10:30am |**
- Thu 26th | Members' Night with 4 mini evening talks from club members | 7:30pm to 9:30pm |**
 - 1) John Hurst: "Short or Tall Stories? – You Decide!"**
 - 2) Kirsty Turner: "Delaware Bay - shorebird paradise?"**
 - 3) Mark Boyd: "150 Norfolk Birds in 2023"**
 - 4) Andy Clarke: "Finland - owls, waders and buntings"**

October

- Sat 12th | Blakeney Harbour and Friary Hills Walk with Janice Darch | Midday onwards |**
- Wed 16th | Felbrigg Park Walk with Trevor Williams | 9:00am to 11:00am |**
- Thu 31st | "Shelduck migration in relation to offshore wind farms" an evening talk with Ros Green | 7:30pm to 9:30pm |**

November

- Sun 17th | Winterton Dunes and Somerton Estate with Janice Darch | 9.00am to 1.00pm |**
- Wed 20th | Felbrigg Park Walk with Trevor Williams | 9:00am to 11:00am |**
- Thu 28th | "A Year at Cley and Salthouse Marshes" an evening talk with David North | 7:30pm to 9:30pm |**

December

- Sat 7th | Back Lanes of Cley and Bayfield Estate with Janice Darch | 9:00am to 1:00pm |**
- Thu 12th | Christmas Social and AGM | 7:30pm to 10:00pm | Gresham Village Hall |**
- Wed 18th | Felbrigg Park Walk with Trevor Williams | 9:00am to 11:00am |**

Felbrigg Park Mid-week Walks are on the 3rd Wednesday of every month except August from 9am to 11am. They are usually led by Trevor Williams and start from the main National Trust Car Park at Felbrigg Hall. No booking required, rust roll up if you fancy a walk, a chat and a spot of birdwatching – we always record over 30 species of bird. All birds seen or heard can count towards your Star Awards as the site is fully within the club recording area and if you can get there without the use of motorised transport, they can also count towards your Eco-Badges.

Evening Talks are on the last Thursday of the month from September to November and January to April from 7:30pm to 9:30pm. They are based at Gresham Village Hall but in addition we usually have a Zoom online option for those staying at home. If they do, they'll be missing out though as refreshments are provided at half-time and we have a 2nd hand wildlife book stall at each event, for which we are always on the lookout for donations. A great chance to catch up with other members and hear some great speakers on a range of bird and other wildlife topics.

Weekend Walks are to a range of interesting locations and habitats and so the birdlife can be quite varied. Whether the birds observed count towards Star Awards of Eco-Badges depends on whether the walk site is on or out of the club recording area.

Special Events are generally themed occasions where we hope to involve as many folk as possible, maybe participating in something birdy they wouldn't usually do, and are suitable for birders of all levels. Often there is a social element too.

10th Anniversary Events



NENBC was launched in January 2015 so at the end of this year we reach our 10th anniversary. Who'd have thought it?! A celebration of this momentous occasion will feature in many of our activities throughout 2025 so look out for more info on that in the coming months. For starters we'll be revisiting some old walk haunts we haven't been to since the early years, repeating some of our more popular walks from more recent times, calling back some of our previous speakers for updates, producing a 10th Anniversary Commemorative publication for all members and, in the summer, hosting a conference event. Below are some diary dates for the provisional events we have sorted so far, more events to come!

January

- Wed 1st | New Year's Day Birding Challenge | All day |**
- Sun 5th | Buckenham Marshes Anniversary Walk | 12:30pm to 7:00pm |**
- Wed 15th | Felbrigg Park Walk with Trevor Williams | 9:00am to 11:00am |**
- Thu 30th | Launch of 10th Anniversary Events and our International Young Birder Bursary plus "The Kartong Bird Observatory, The Gambia" a talk with Roger Walsh | 7:30pm to 9:30pm |**



February

- Sat 1st | Sculthorpe Moor Nature Reserve Walk with Janice Darch | 9:30am to 1:00pm |**
- Wed 19th | Felbrigg Park Walk with Trevor Williams | 9:00am to 11:00am |**
- Thu 27th | "Aride - the story of an island in the Seychelles" a talk with Rob Lucking | 7:30pm to 9:30pm |**



March

- Sat 8th | Horsey Gap and Brograve Farm Anniversary Walk | 9:00am to 1:00pm |**
- Wed 19th | Felbrigg Park Walk with Trevor Williams | 9:00am to 11:00am |**
- Thu 27th | An evening talk – speaker to be confirmed | 7:30pm to 9:30pm |**



April

- Sun 6th | Letheringsett Ford & Sprout Hill Walk with Janice Darch | 10:00am to 1:00pm |**
- Wed 16th | Felbrigg Park Walk with Trevor Williams | 9:00am to 11:00am |**
- Thu 24th | An evening talk – speaker to be confirmed | 7:30pm to 9:30pm |**



May

- Sun 4th | Snettisham Country Park Walk with Janice Darch | 9:00am to 1:00pm |**
- Sat 10th | The NENBC Big Sit | Dawn to dusk |**
- Tue 20th | An Evening at Kelling Heath for Nightjars with Janice Darch | 8:45pm to 10:30pm |**
- Wed 21st | Felbrigg Park Walk with Trevor Williams | 9:00am to 11:00am |**



June

- Sat 7th | Weeting Heath & RSPB Lakenheath Walk with Janice Darch | 9:00am to 3:30pm |**
- Sat 14th | 10th Anniversary Conference | 'Whose birds are these? - exploring Anglo African bird migration' – with speakers, 'in conversation with ...', lunch, exhibits & panel discussion**
- Wed 18th | Felbrigg Park Walk with Trevor Williams | 9:00am to 11:00am |**



July

- Sun 6th | NWT Cley and Salthouse Reserve Anniversary Walk | 10:00am to 1:00pm |**
- Wed 16th | Felbrigg Park Walk with Trevor Williams | 9:00am to 11:00am |**



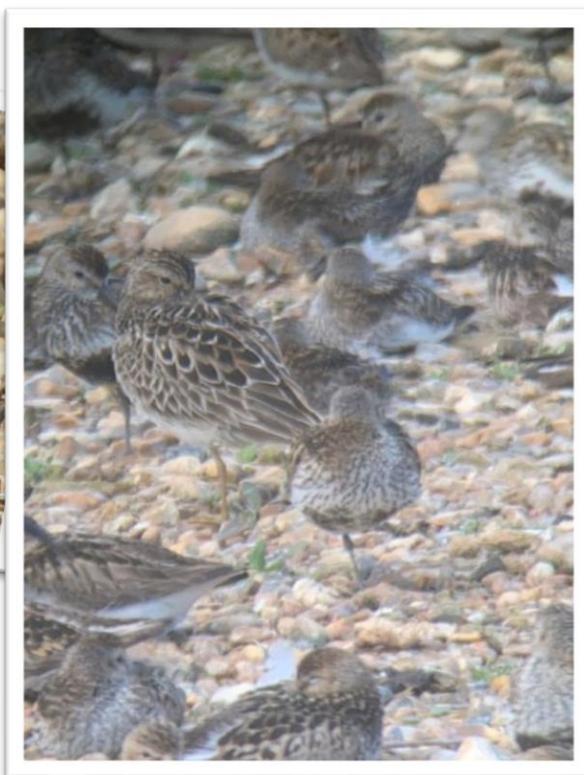


By Janice Darch

Epic, awesome, incredible were just some of the adjectives used by my group to describe their experience of the high tide roost at Snettisham during our visit. It was not without pain as we met in the car park at 6.30 am so we had risen from our beds at around 4.30 am in order to get there. At Snettisham you have to arrive at least 2 hours or more before high tide to get into position to see the 1,000s of wading birds arriving from all over The Wash. They feed on the mud and are gradually pushed nearer and nearer to the shore with the rising tide which creeps quickly up the creeks and eventually, before you know it, is covering the mud. As the water comes closer 1,000s of Knot, Dunlin, Oystercatchers, Avocets and Redshank swirl around in murmurations along with lesser numbers of Bar-tailed Godwits, Curlew and other waders such as Ringed Plover. Eventually when the tide is full all of these birds take off over your head and come to rest on the islands on the lagoons where they are viewable from various hides.

I had planned this visit for one of the highest tides of the year in daylight hours during autumn migration. So, as well as the expected birds we lucked into some rarer birds as well which we all saw. During our walk to the best sites we stopped along the way to view waders feeding all over the mud. Our first main stop was at the old jetty where we joined many others looking for rarer waders including a Pectoral Sandpiper amongst 1,000s of Dunlin. We found it! Then our only Whimbrel of the day flew over. Seeing the White-tailed Sandpiper, an American wader of which there were 3 reported at the site, was not going to be easy but we eventually all got good scope views, a new species for several members of the group. It was a jostle in the hides but plenty of directions were being given. We also saw two Curlew Sandpipers and a Spotted Redshank plus all of the aforementioned bird species. Returning to the mud as the tide fell we experienced the waders return flights from the lagoons to the mud and then we were able to continue to pick out more species some we'd already seen earlier and some we hadn't seen before that morning--including Mediterranean, Common, Black-headed and Lesser Black-backed Gulls, Sandwich, Common and Little Terns, Greenshank, Greylag Geese, Sandling, Shelduck and Little Egret. Looking skywards we picked out Marsh Harrier, Red Kite and Common Buzzard plus Swallows, Sand Martins and Swifts. Passerines had been noted in our walk to and from the car park. These included Chiffchaff, Common Whitethroat, Wren, Dunnock, Blackbird, Linnet and Goldfinch. In all we saw 51 species during our visit to the high tide roost. After lunch most of us voted to walk northwards into the Country Park. It was quiet but we found a further 11 species to add to our day list including Spoonbill, Kestrel, Sedge Warbler and Tufted Duck. Our aim to turn the calls of a Turtle Dove into a sight record wasn't to be though but no one was complaining after such a mammoth day. Our final total of birds for the day was 61 species.

Photos courtesy of William Earp – two of White-rumped Sandpiper and third pic also with Pectoral Sandpiper



Last Month's Club Mid-Week Walk

Felbrigg Park | 17th July



By Dave Billham

It hasn't happened much at all this year, but for the final Felbrigg walk of the season we had warm and sunny weather; quite a bonus as the previous few days had seen a fair bit of rain and wind. Was this finally the start of summer? As it turned out, no, but on this morning it felt like it could be. Eighteen members gathered together in the car park, including new member Wynne, on her first club walk. For reasons known only to themselves there were also a few sheep wandering around the car park, but none of them were inclined to join us. Once we had all signed in, Trevor went through his briefing; July, he told us, is traditionally a quiet month bird-wise, but hopefully we would be able to find insects and butterflies as a bonus. The recent rain meant that the ground was muddy in places, but he was glad to see that we were all wearing suitable footwear; well, almost all, as Nick S was inevitably sporting his trusty sandals. He was, however, confident that he would be fine.

Chiming with the briefing, the start of the list was shorter than usual and mostly corvid-based; in and over the car-park we saw **Woodpigeon, Jackdaw, Carrion**

Crow, Magpie and a single **Robin** perched on a gate post. We began the walk by crossing the field towards the church, accompanied by the song of a lone **Skylark**; distant **Swallows** and an even more distant **Swift** were the only additions to the list here. Arriving at the church we noted a **Herring Gull** in a nearby field; much nearer and more obligingly perched was a lovely Ringlet butterfly.

The area around the church was otherwise quiet, so we continued onwards in the direction of the lake. A hawk-shaped bird-scaring kite was flying in a field bordering the park, and I know I wasn't the only one to start to call it out to the rest of the group! More recordable was a **Black-headed Gull** high overhead. A pair of Hare were seen chasing each other across a field, and a **Buzzard** lifted from the woods to start thermalling upwards. We were now pretty much in the middle of the field between church and lake, so the sound of a singing **Blackcap** was a slight surprise. After a bit of confusion as to which direction the song was coming from, we decided the singer was hiding in a distant copse of trees, with the song clearly audible over quite a distance. A **Jay**

flying between trees was the final species noted from the field.

Having now reached the crest of the rise overlooking the lake we were able, through binoculars, to see the hole in the dead tree that on the previous month's walk had been full of Kestrel chicks. Today it had but a single occupant, a rather cracking **Little Owl**, which was sat in plain view on the lip of the hole. A **Kestrel** could be seen, hunting over the water meadows, but from the owl's presence it appears they have permanently left the nesting tree. As we walked down the slope towards the owl it was heard to call once. In the hope of the owl staying put and allowing closer views Trevor called for silence from the group, a call lost on John who was regaling Carol with a tale, possibly tall and probably involving birds! Fortunately the owl was unfazed and remained in place, giving us all excellent views and photos. After a time it flew into a nearby oak, from where it was still visible. Whilst the owl was present we also heard a **Whitethroat** singing, saw a **Red Kite** soaring and watched a **Goldfinch** fly into the same tree as the owl.



Time for a cautionary tale of my own here, on the danger of birding in a group; intent on keeping the owl in sight I stepped into a muddy hole and only just managed to avoid measuring my length on the ground; recovering and turning around I spied Carol with a big smile on her face and her camera in her hands. "If you had gone down there I would have got a really good photo of it" she laughed. And if I had gone down there, and she had got a photo of it, I just know you would be looking at that photo right now!

Once the owl had eventually disappeared we covered the remaining few yards to the lake's edge. Here we found a Gatekeeper butterfly, and Val spotted a **Stock Dove** in a tree. I commented that it was so quiet bird-wise that on the water we would probably only get the usual three species, and sure enough we quickly found **Mallard**, **Moorhen** and **Mute Swan** (both parents and four cygnets). Otherwise the water and the air above was devoid of movement; no birds, dragonflies, butterflies or other insects to see. So quiet that a lone fly basking on a leaf caught our attention, soon identified as a species of Soldier Fly, specifically a Banded General. A comment that General was a good rank for a soldier fly rapidly garnered the answer "probably why it is sat there doing nothing"! Whilst examining the trees on the far side of the lake, Tracy asked "Is that a Cormorant sat in the tree over there?" To which Carol replied "No, I think it is a Hobby!" After a little confusion we realised that we had a **Cormorant** low down in a tree, whilst higher up was sat a **Hobby** - what a find! Ensuring the whole group had seen it, albeit distantly, the route of the walk was rapidly amended to follow the bank opposite to the bird so that we might get better views. Tracy had also briefly seen a **Kingfisher** as it flitted into cover.



As we followed the path along the lake a Norfolk Hawker dragonfly was found, the green eyes being the most obvious identifier. On the brambles we found Meadow Brown and Comma butterflies, along with another Gatekeeper. A Small Skipper was also seen, resting on a campanula. At this point we realised that the grass under our feet was alive with tiny frogs; we tried to move carefully to minimise the impact we might be having. A **Song Thrush** and a **Reed Warbler** were both heard singing as we walked, and a probable Essex Skipper was found. Apart from one quick foray over the lake the Hobby remained in its tree, probably due to the fact there was little in the way of prey to be had. A good chance, however, for us to get views of a bird much more usually seen in flight.

As we moved on from the lake to parallel the water meadows Nick K found me and asked if I had **Blue Tit** and **Blackbird** on the list; I did not. After he had left, a question was asked; had Nick been suppressing these species? Surely not we said, it was more likely because he had been at the back of the now strung-out group whilst we were at the front. Heading for the 'ice pond' to see if there were dragonflies present, we noted **Linnet** and **Grey Heron** on the way; but arriving there,

no dragonflies were found. With the two hours almost up we returned to the house, where we found a Jay 'anting' in the garden. A **Feral Pigeon** sat on the roof was the final species for the list. Or so we thought, for here Nick K sidled up to us once more and asked if we had seen **Nuthatch** and **Pheasant**? No, we had not. Whisper it quietly, further evidence of suppression? (Fear not, for Nick K is a marvellous birder, and what's more he can reliably differentiate the songs of Sedge and Reed Warbler, a feat which, despite his patient instruction, still eludes me). Anyway, a total of **34 species** for the walk, not too bad for a July morning, and with some smashing birds included.



In the summer the café can be very busy, and after a few hour's walking the last place anyone wants to find themselves is at the back of a long, slow queue for drinks. Therefore, as Trevor and Carol inform us of up-

coming club events, the old hands can usually be seen edging their way nearer to the gates to ensure a good starting position for the race to the café. On this occasion the courtyard could be seen to be full of people, and in a break with tradition John, Tess and Ainsley (I hope I spelt that correctly!) decided not to wait for Trevor and Carol to start talking, never mind finish, and made an early break for refreshments. Which meant they missed the opportunity to commiserate with Nick S, who had suffered a terminal sandal failure at some point in the walk. However, with most of the group staying on, we ended this series of Felbrigg walks with a good chat over coffee and cakes etc, and the satisfaction of Little Owl and Hobby, both seen well.



Dodgy photos of Little Owl and Hobby courtesy of Carol Thornton

Cromer Peregrine Project ... Notes from the Watchpoint



By Jane Crossen

Episode Four **The Boy Done Good!**



VNN – showing his ID bands
(Jane Crossen) and inset
Taking prey (Trevor Williams)



We are coming to the end of the Cromer Peregrine Project watchpoint set-up for this year. The weather has been disappointing (understatement!). That had the potential to affect our viewing figures, which I am sure is no surprise to anyone, as we had to either not open, or close early, quite often, due to the rain. I've been a regular on the watchpoint since its inception in 2019 and I volunteer a lot and I've only had to close or not turn up at all, ONCE. This year it's been at least half-a-dozen times. However, **as of 11th August our viewing figures were 14,720, just above last year.**

Weather aside, the other problem is volunteers. I have mentioned it previously but will just reiterate. We have really struggled this year. **If anyone would like to volunteer next year please let me know** and I will give you the volunteer co-ordinator's email. All this obviously assumes we have a successful laying-of-the-eggs. Although it is obviously good that people are able to commit, you don't have to commit to the same spot every week or even volunteer every week. It's always been understood that some people are not able to commit to regular spots. Even if you can only do the odd occasion, that's fine. And please don't worry if you are not confident about talking about the birds, you would always be with someone who is. Mike issues a rota in advance and if there are any slots with just one or two people, you would just need to get in touch with him. You would never need be on your own. *Photo: A rare shot of both the adults close together on one of the church ledges.*



VNN (aka Vinnie to a lot of us), is (as of mid-August) doing very well indeed. He's very feisty and after he fledged, the adults gradually stopped feeding him so much. He's very noisy and if he is hungry he lets the adults know and if they ignore him he dive-bombs them. Instead of them just going off on their own to comply, nowadays one of the adults takes off, hotly pursued by Vinnie. He usually goes with the male. This is just my opinion: I think that is possibly because watching the female catch a Wood Pigeon, or an even heavier bird, is pretty pointless, as he won't be able to do that himself (unless he's Superbird which, much as I love him, I don't think he is!). So, watching how the male does it makes a lot of sense. Just my opinion so please don't write and complain! *Photo: Vinnie – he was particularly hungry that day...*



We are still getting good views of the birds around the church and so some of us will continue to go over on an ad hoc basis, as we did last year. Viking Optical, who very kindly lend us two telescopes every year, have taken them back now and so we go over with our own gear. It is very valuable to do that as, not only are the birds still around (as we know, they in fact don't leave Cromer for the winter, which always surprises visitors), so are the tourists! Last year the viewing figures were considerably extended by our ongoing presence. As were the donations!



Here are some statistics regarding the CPP webcam on YouTube (courtesy of Chris Skipper who organises the webcam feed):

"This season we had 159,905 views. The total viewing figures since the channel started in 2020 is 897,268 (all being well might reach 1million next year!). UK viewers made up 75% of views followed by the USA, Japan, India and Australia and we have had viewers from far and wide including Ukraine, Iraq, Singapore and New Zealand. London was the most popular viewing location followed by Cromer, Sheringham, Norwich and Peterborough. 56% of viewers were of retirement age - with females making up 54%." *Photo: Adult male looking really well – mid August*



Photo: A selection of the bodies/feathers etc gathered on ONE DAY. Any help IDing the bird that the wing bottom left was attached to, greatly appreciated!

Photo: Another image I show folk asking why we don't ring the adults!



Photo left, one of our busiest days! Really have had a lot of school groups passing by this year and wanting to know all about the birds and we were able to give them excellent views.

Apart from the usual "I've got one in the garden...." (the description of which is obviously a Sparrowhawk), this month we had "I've had a Goshawk in the garden..." (the description of which is obviously a Sparrowhawk) AND "I've had a Harris Hawk in the garden..." (the description of which.....!!)

The birds of prey seen by some of us at the watchpoint: Peregrine (a couple of juveniles flying over early in the season), Red Kite, Buzzard, Goshawk, Kestrel (juvenile, which had the audacity to sit on a ledge near the adults recently!) and, obviously, a Sparrowhawk or two.

So there you have it. That's the official end to the season. If anything exciting happens I'll make sure it gets into the newsletter (last year both juveniles were still around the church as late as October).

The downside was obviously the loss of one chick and the laser-beam incident. Hopefully the guy who handed himself in has learned his lesson. Doubt very much he realised how much publicity (of the negative kind) it would garner.

Oh and I'll leave you with another look at the Storm Petrel. The rare-bird tick of the year.





Great White Egret in flight over scrape

By Moss Taylor

This is the 7th in a monthly series this year of the wildlife at Weybourne Camp during 2024 ...

July is a month of change: the end of the breeding season and the beginning of autumn migration. During the spring and summer a total of 44 species nested on the Camp or pairs held territories that included part of the area. Amongst the more interesting was a pair of Grey Partridges, although no young of either partridge species have been seen. Single pairs of Moorhens and Little Grebes nested on the scrape, each raising two young. A pair of Barn Owls that nested in the box put up near the Muckleburgh Collection compound in the spring, fledged two young.

Two pairs of Mistle Thrushes nested and the post-breeding flock of adults and young peaked at 14 on July 5th. The most numerous breeders were Skylarks, Whitethroats, Wrens, Dunnocks and Linnets with up to 10 territorial males of each species.

The westerly passage of wildfowl continued throughout most of the month with the first Pintail on 13th and Wigeon on 16th, while Common Scoters peaked at 385 also on 13th. A total of 16 species of wader was recorded during July, the vast majority flying west, including 2 Little Ringed Plovers and 2 Curlew Sandpipers, and single Green Sandpiper and

Female Barn Owl nestlings ringed aged two months (John Taylor)



Juvenile Lesser Whitethroat - two pairs nested on the Camp



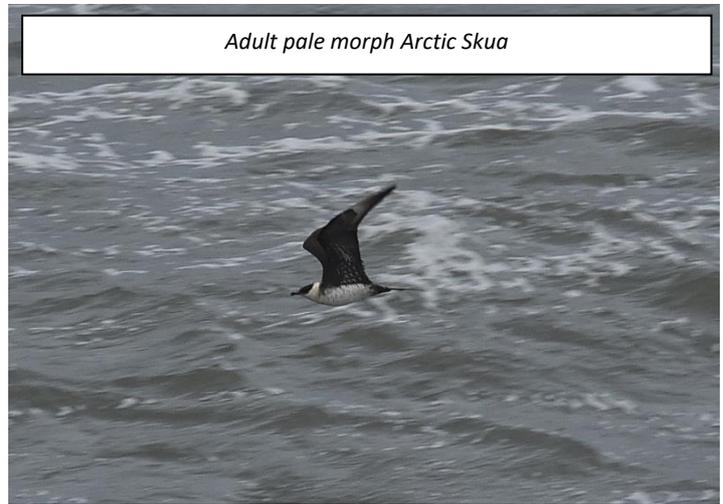
Greenshank. Arctic Skuas were recorded on many dates after 12th with a maximum of 9 on 27th, while up to 5 Manx Shearwaters flew offshore during the first half of the month.

Heron and their allies were well represented during July, the highlight being a party of 10 Cattle Egrets (including 5 breeding-plumage adults and 4 juveniles) west on 25th and a further 7 west two days later. Previously the highest count in the area had been just two.

A minimum of 32 Little Egrets flew west between 4th & 30th, while Great White Egret totals over a similar period were 5 west and 3 east, and an adult Great White Egret on 7th was a new species for the scrape. At least 13 Grey Herons flew west during the month, the majority offshore, as well as a minimum of 4 Spoonbills.

An almost daily passage of Swifts flew west, peaking at 465 on 7th and the first Yellow Wagtail of the autumn was recorded on 8th.

Five new species of dragonfly for the year were seen in July, including Hairy Dragonfly and Green-eyed Hawker on 1st, Brown Hawker on 18th and Migrant Hawkers from 23rd.



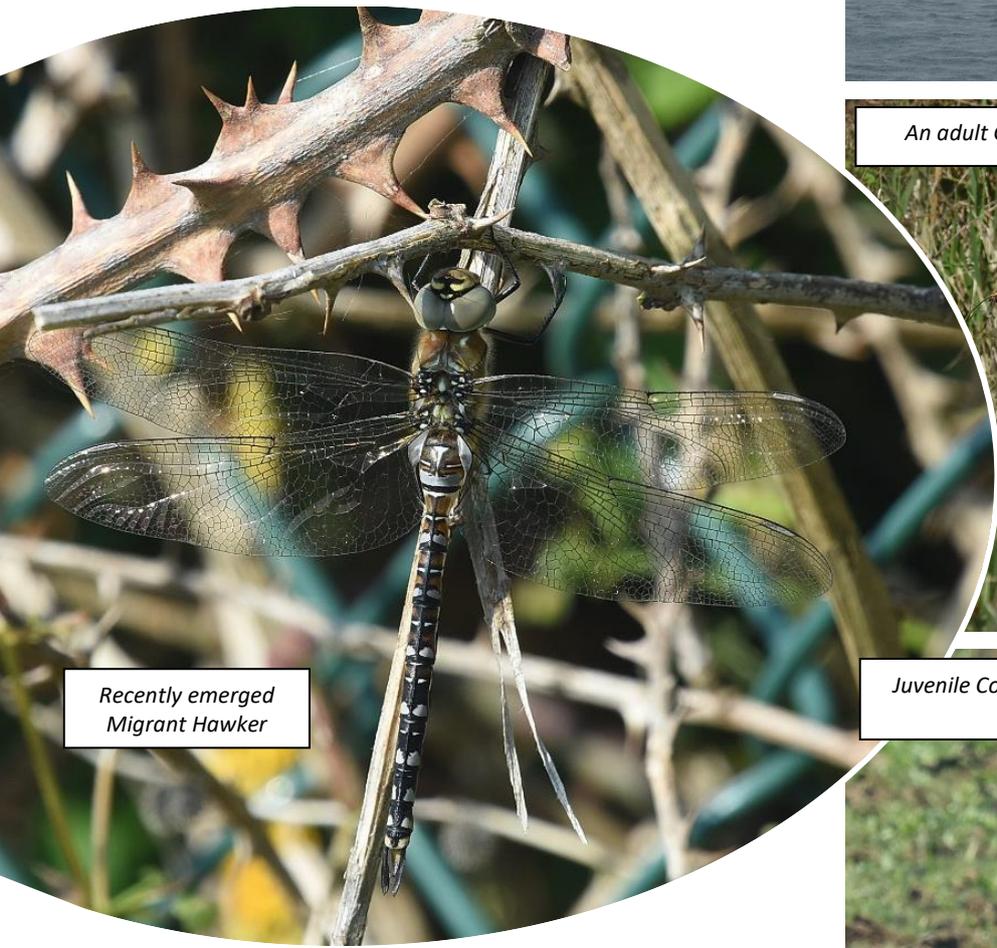
Adult pale morph Arctic Skua



Record-breaking flock of 10 Cattle Egrets, including 4 juveniles



An adult Great White Egret was a new species for the scrape



Recently emerged Migrant Hawker



Juvenile Common Buzzard, one of three fledged from the nest in the Muckleburgh Collection compound

Once again I am indebted to all members who have entered records on the NENBC website, in particular Phil Borley, who covers the early seawatch on most days.

An Unusual Chiffchaff Call

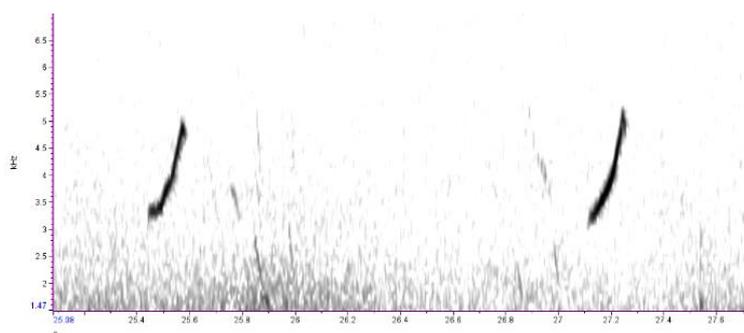
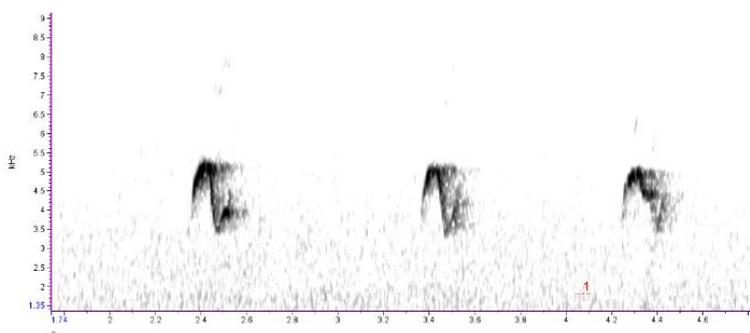


By Andy Clarke

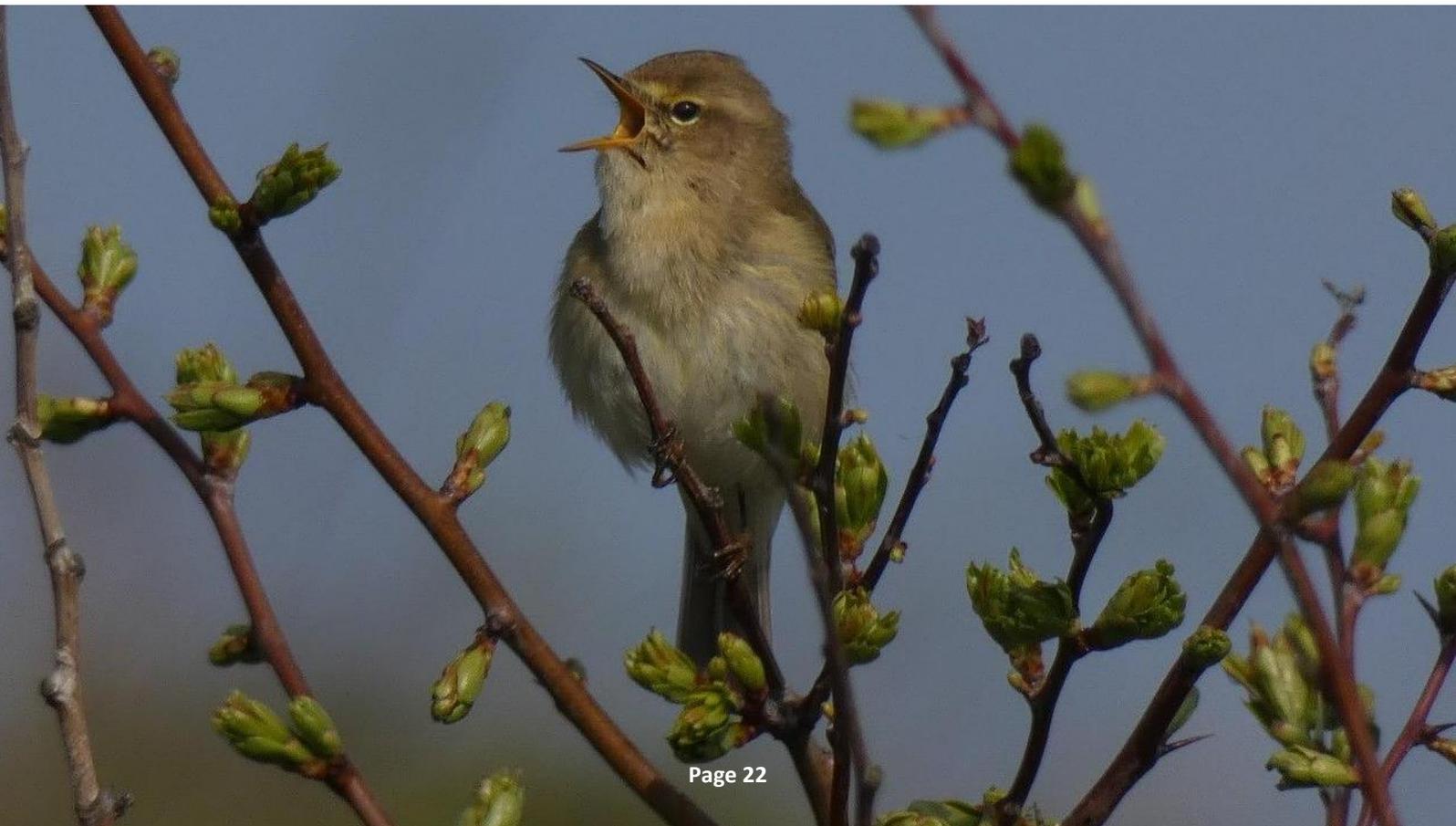
Earlier this month I was in the garden and heard a call I could not immediately identify. It was coming from deep in cover, and the owner resolutely refused to show itself. Over the next few days I heard the call regularly, often in the late afternoon, and eventually the perpetrator showed. It proved to be a juvenile Chiffchaff, and I assume one raised by the birds that held territory this summer on Franklin Hill (a wooded area of Sheringham, just behind the house). I think it was a male, as there were also occasional brief snatches of weak song. I then remembered some discussion a few years back about Chiffchaffs with unusual calls. These calls are often transcribed as 'sweeooo', though they don't sound anything like that to me. But then I have trouble with many written descriptions of bird sounds (including those collated each month for us by Carol for the newsletter, which I often fail to identify!) so maybe it's just me.

The call was distinctive in that instead of being the typical smoothly rising contact call of an adult bird in spring and many passage migrants in autumn, this call was hard, sharp and disyllabic. It reminded me in many ways of the contact call of a Greenish Warbler. These calls are shown on the two sonograms and they are strikingly different. The first shows a typical call I recorded from a Chiffchaff on Beeston Common, and you can see the smooth rise in pitch. The second shows the variant call, which you can see is quite different in shape, with an initial rise then a longer fall in pitch, and also somewhat variable from call to call. It seems likely that this variant call comes from a juvenile bird that is learning its call. What is interesting about this variant call is that in many years it is heard only rarely (and I have never knowingly heard this call before), but in some years it is remarkably common. For a discussion of this, and some more sonograms, see:

<http://deanar.org.uk/general/articles/chiffchaffcalls.htm>



There is clearly much we have to learn about bird sounds. [Library photo of Chiffchaff courtesy of Mark Clements]



By Ben Clark



Cast your minds back to the December 2023 Newsletter when we announced that the first NENBC Young Birder Bursary has been awarded to **Ben Clark**. Ben was the first young member of the club to be featured in the NENBC newsletter (May 2022). At that time, he was working two days a week in Cley Spy and also running his own vegetable growing and delivery company, appropriately titled “Ben’s Veg”. Since then, Ben has been working for Rare Bird Alert where he mans the news desk, processing reports sent in by the public and posting them on the RBA app, website, and paging systems. Here’s an update from Ben on his bursary ...

As part of the young birder bursary scheme organised by the NENBC, I was thrilled to receive a bird box equipped with a camera. This gift has allowed me to closely observe a Blue Tit roosting every night from late May until at least late June. Although I was of course hoping for a nesting pair, it has still been very valuable.

The bird box, generously funded by the club, is fitted with a small, discreet camera designed to monitor avian activity without causing any disturbance. Positioned in my garden, on the garage wall to be precise, this bird box has become a focal point of my daily observations and a source of excitement.

Every evening, just before dusk settles in, the Blue Tit arrives at the bird box. The camera captures its entrance, showing the bird settling down for the night. It engages in a series of pre-sleep activities, such as preening and fluffing its feathers, before finally getting comfortable and falling asleep. Watching these nightly rituals has been very educational.

To summarise, the experience has shown me how crucial secure roosting sites are for the wellbeing of birds like the Blue Tit. I look forward to continuing my observations and expanding my avian knowledge.





By David North



The us I'm referring to are cattle egrets. The recent influx of cattle egrets at NWT Cley and Salthouse Marshes got me thinking about this species. And thinking leads to reading about and learning more about a species which, until quite recently, was a rarity in Norfolk.

There were up to 30 of these small white egrets at Cley in late July and early August, a number quite unprecedented for the reserve. True to form they hung about with the black Aberdeen Angus bullocks which George the warden had put on to Pat's Pool. They had work to do. The cattle that is. Their hooves nicely churn up the mud and create miniature ponds in each hoof print. Like unruly youngsters they make a bit of a mess poaching the edges of the pools, knocking back some of the fringing vegetation and scattering their dung in insect-attracting cow pats. Too many of them might be a bad thing but, in the right number, for the right length of time, they do an excellent, if messy, job of making the pools more diverse and richer for invertebrates for the birds to feed on.

I never saw all 30 cattle egrets, but I did count 24 one morning. This is certainly the most I have ever seen together in North Norfolk. Some were in summer plumage with a striking wash of orange on the tops of their heads, breasts and backs. The amount of orange varied considerably from individual to individual. On the breast this orange colouration was mainly on silky plumes that sometimes blew in the wind. On their heads the orange feathering would sometimes be raised giving them a punk 'hairstyle', untidy sticking up feathers forming an unruly mop. Their colour peaked my interest. Why so variable? And why did it often look like an orange watercolour wash over the feathering?

Reading required! Apparently these are actually all white egrets. When they moult the new feathers they grow have no orange tints. The orange comes from an oil secretion they make when their hormones in spring start to get them in the mood for egret love. Like other members of the heron family, along with bustards, parrots and

tinamous, cattle egrets have powder-down feathers – feathers which grow continuously and are never moulted. These specialised feathers break down into a very fine talcum powder like substance, slightly oily, and rich in keratin. Herons and egrets use it for preening. Presumably it's an efficient way of cleaning off any scales, oils and slime from fish, eels and other prey items. Natural oils in this powder-down help it stick to feathering but when cattle egrets start producing orange oils it works like a dye. Variations in the amount and colour intensity of the oils between individual cattle egrets probably explain why the intensity and coverage of orange on their breeding plumes varies so much.

Watching this big group of cattle egrets of course made me wonder where a group of this size had arrived from? Are they local birds? Have they arrived from across the North Sea? There were several totally white individuals with black bills within the group. Had I seen one alone I might have mistaken it for a little egret. Another useful thing I've learnt – recently-fledged cattle egrets have black bills, not yellow like the adults. Note to self – pay more attention to overall shape and behaviour and don't rely on bill colour to separate a cattle egret from a little egret.

Further reading! Cattle egrets can fly very long distances. A North Sea crossing from the Netherlands might be little more for one of these egrets than an evening stroll to the local pub for us. This is a species on the up. A species which has a cunning plan – world domination*. I learn that cattle egrets were once restricted to Africa, Southern Spain and Portugal. But then they performed one of the most phenomenal range expansions of any bird in the world. Cattle egrets flew across the Atlantic colonising Brazil and from there they spread north and south across South America, and via Florida, across the USA. They also spread north in Europe, then headed into Asia and island hopped to Australia.

Of course this didn't all happen overnight. The very first cattle egret was seen in Florida in 1941. They first bred there in 1953. But spreading north and west across America they were breeding in Canada by 1962. Over similar time scales they spread across Europe into Asia. Reaching India and south-east Asia they then island hopped across to Indonesia and Melanesia reaching Australia in the 1940s and New Zealand by the 1960s. This is a bird that knows how to travel!

During the 20th century cattle egrets were a rare vagrant in Norfolk. It's only in recent decades that they have become recorded more regularly. They first bred in Norfolk in 2020 and now nest annually in small numbers along with the spoonbills, cormorants, little egrets and great white egrets at Holkham National Nature Reserve.

I'm always amazed by the stories that birds have to tell. Once our interest is sparked it's so easy, courtesy of Google and the web, to learn more. I may still not know whether Cley's egrets were of local origin, or from the continent, but I do now know a lot more about this species. So let me make a prediction – over the next few years in the NENBC area there will be more cattle egrets recorded. Wherever there are large grazing animals (they are not fussy, elephants, buffalo, horses, cows, water buffalo or wildebeest will do), and grazing marshes or tall grasslands, then look out for a white bird living dangerously around the hoofs of grazing animals, or even perched on their backs. Your cattle egret may or may not have orange feathering (depending on the season and the individual) and may or may not have a distinctive yellow bill. They've conquered North and South America, much of Asia, Australia and New Zealand. Is North Norfolk (and the NENBC area) next?

Photos courtesy of Trevor Williams (he recent Cley influx) and Moss Taylor (library photo from Weybourne Camp)

Footnote:

* The real reason that has enabled cattle egrets to spread is our own world domination. Cattle egrets love cattle and all over the world humans have been busy over the last century replacing diverse natural habitats with cattle grazed grasslands. Today there are around 30 billion domestic cattle roaming the planet which may be great news for cattle egrets but is not such good news for much other wildlife or for climate change given the methane they emit and the impact they have on natural carbon sinks.



Ask the Audience ...



If anyone has a question they have been puzzling over, do please drop us a line and we will try and find out the answer for you. We'd really appreciate any club members writing in with their responses to the questions asked too.

White birds: a question from David North

Having recently had the delight of watching three species of egret and spoonbills here in North Norfolk it got me thinking about white birds. In the distance whether perched in trees, wading in water or feeding on mud it's usually the white birds that stand out from a distance. They're the first ones you notice. But we don't have any all-white land birds. Why?

There are quite a few species of water or wetland birds that are all or mainly white: mute swans, our terns and black-headed gulls as well as the aforementioned egrets and spoonbills. Beyond our shores this also holds pretty much true. Think of pelicans and white storks – mainly white wetland birds.

So this raises two questions. Why so few all-white land birds? Yes, I know there are a few global exceptions – white cockatoos and white doves spring to mind. But I still think these are exceptions that prove the rule. Or if not a rule at least a trend. The other question that springs to mind is what advantage is there for water birds in being white? And, why so few small white water birds? It's usually the big wetland birds that are white.

Any answers or thoughts? We'll publish your responses in next month's newsletter so please do email in!

UEA Environmental Consultancy Projects



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 3rd 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 Zoom or in-person, and at the end of the process present us with an individual consultancy report. This time we worked with three students and jointly alongside Felbeck Trust with a fourth. Below is part of the brief for the second of these along with the Executive Summary from the student consultant and we'll have the remaining projects in the coming months. If you would like to be emailed the full consultancy reports for any of these projects then just let us know.

The history of breeding Bee-eaters in the UK and the conservation implications going forwards

Although there have been relatively few breeding attempts in the UK by European Bee-eaters, the successful breeding season of the 'Trimingham Bee-eaters' in 2022 and their subsequent return in 2023 was significant and potentially reflective of a developing change in breeding range of this species further northwards from predominantly southern and central Europe, Africa, and western Asia. Climate change has been widely promoted as the reason for this range extension but what does the data tell us? How does the experience here in Norfolk fit in to any emerging patterns? What are the conservation implications?

Bee-eaters Norfolk by Amy Hallahan

Disclaimer: This material is based upon work supported by Amy Hallahan for ENV-6031B Environmental Consultancy module in the School of Environmental Sciences, UEA. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations are those of the author and do not reflect the views of the School of Environmental Sciences, UEA its employees or its administration.

Executive Summary

Purpose and Aims

The aim of this project is to produce a comprehensive literature review outlining the history of European Bee-eater breeding attempts in the UK. I have compared and contrasted sites within the UK, whilst also considering the drivers and constraints that

occur at these sites. Finally, I also looked at the reasons why these birds are now extending their breeding range into the UK and what conservation implications this has.

Context

The European Bee-eater (*Merops apiaster*) is part of the Meropidae family, most species have a long, slender, slightly curved beak (Fry, 1969) which allows for a generalised insectivorous diet (Arbieter, 2014). These species are characterised by their bright plumage with a black stripe through the eye (Fry, 1969). The European Bee-eater is classified as Least Concern (BirdLife International, 2019). These birds are a social species that nest in sandbanks or quarries where there is plenty of loose soil that allows for easy excavation during nesting (RSPB, 2024).

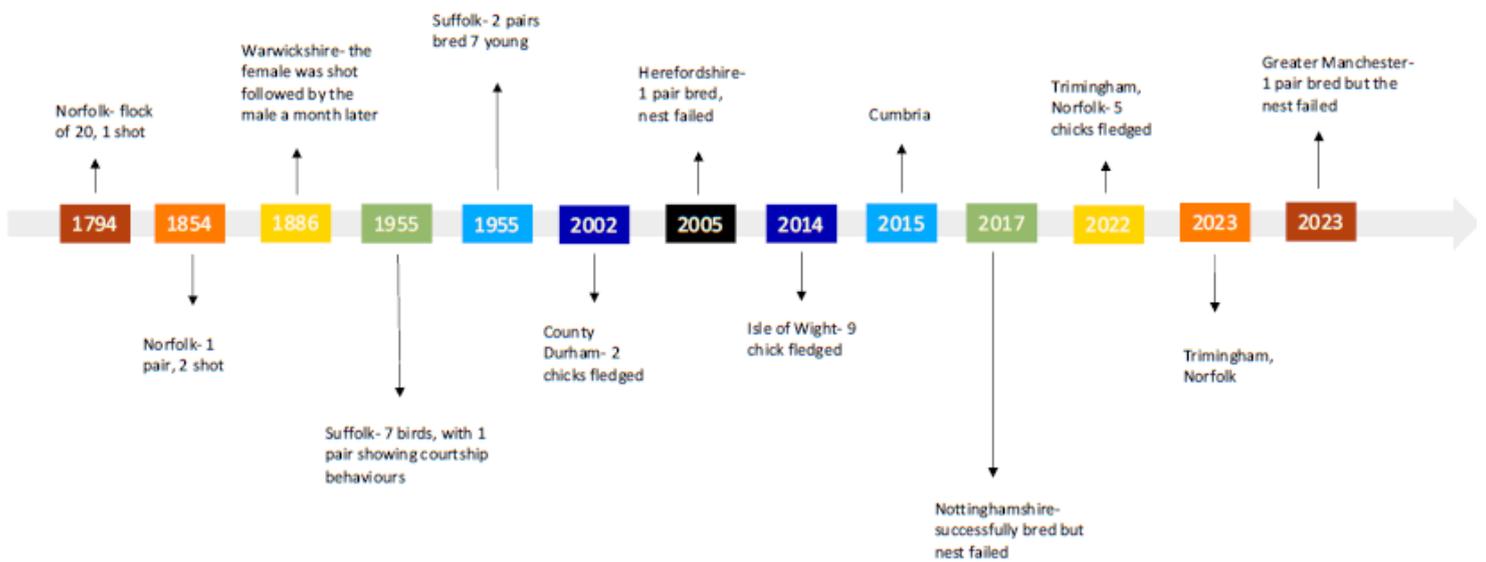
Within the UK, sightings of the European Bee-eater have increased since the start of the century (Arbieter, 2016; iNaturalist, 2022). In 2022, Bee-eaters bred for the first time in Norfolk fledging five chicks successfully (Thornton, 2022). History was made in 2023, when three Bee-eaters returned to the same site in Norfolk (Scotter, 2023).

Methodology

For this literature review, sources were reviewed from Google, Google Scholar, Web of Science and Wikipedia and cover a period from 1700 to 2024 (Naylor, 2024; The Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists Society, 2000; The Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists Society, 2002; The Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists Society, 2009; BBC, 2021; Coates, 2021; Holling & Thomas, 2024 unpublished).

Year	Number of Birds Sighted	Location	Notes
1794	20	Mattishall (Norfolk)	Some of the flock lingered until October
1854	2	River between Norwich and Yarmouth	A pair seen and later shot, the female was not found to be with eggs, suggesting she had already laid them; however, no nest was found
1886	2	Red Hill (Warwickshire)	The female was shot, followed by the male a month later. The female was found to be with eggs and would have likely nested had she lived
1920	2	River Esk (Musselburgh)	Confirmed nesting, likely the first in the British Isles. Unfortunately, the female was found exhausted after laying one egg
1955	7	Orfordness (Suffolk)	One pair showed courtship behaviours but no breeding was observed
1955	6	East Chiltington (Sussex)	Two pairs bred seven young between them
2002	2	County Durham	Successfully fledged two chicks
2005	2	Herefordshire	Successfully hatched chicks, however, did not fledge as the nest was predated by foxes
2014	4	Isle of Wight	Only the third recording in the UK, fledged nine young
2015	4	Cumbria	Breeding pair seen at a quarry in Cumbria
2017	2	Nottinghamshire	They successfully hatched chicks; however the nest was predated and the chicks did not survive
2021	9	Great Yarmouth (Norfolk)	Discovered on a plot of land behind a retail park
2022	4	Trimingham (Norfolk)	Successfully fledged 5 chicks
2023	3	Trimingham (Norfolk)	Returned to the same site in Norfolk, however the nesting attempt failed with stoats thought to be the cause
2023	2	Greater Manchester	The birds abandoned the nest, the site was kept confidential in the hopes that the birds will return in 2024





Compare and Contrast Breeding Sites

All breeding sites within the UK were areas of cliffs with loose sandy soil, typical of quarries and riverbanks. All known locations occur in rural areas, with most being on private land. It is probable that these sites are also high in insect populations, ensuring the birds have ample food supplies. It is hard to know exactly what characteristics of each site are attracting the bee-eaters as there is little information regarding the specific conditions of each location. The major difference between the sites is their location within the country.

Cetti's Warbler Case Study

The Cetti's Warbler is a well-known case in which climate change is the cause for the expansion into the UK. The Warbler showed the expected progression of species impacted by climate, they colonised and spread throughout the south of England (Robinson *et al*, 2007), but it is thought that breeding range is currently restricted by cold winters (Wotton *et al*, 1998). The range expansion of the Warbler contrasts with Bee-eaters, in that Bee-eater breeding sites in the UK are random and not limited to the south of England. Current breeding sites seem to indicate that climate change may not be the only reason behind increased Bee-eaters within the UK.

Conservation Implications

There is little concern regarding the conservation of this species. However, within the UK they are a rare visitor (Zakir-Hussain, 2022), and it is important to observe areas that have successful breeding attempts, with returning Bee-eater populations i.e. Trimingham. The organisations involved in monitoring the nesting attempts of Bee-eaters should evaluate any locations of previous successful nesting attempts to see if they are suitable for public viewing, or if the location should be protected to keep the birds safe. This may not always be possible if the birds are breeding on private land.

Recommendations

- Continuation of the literature review in the coming years would be important to decipher any future patterns of breeding sites.
- Sites reused by Bee-eaters for breeding should be given protection and conservation to allow for future breeding attempts.
- Continued observation of Bee-eater progression into the UK to inform conservation decisions.

Conclusion

Despite popular opinion, climate change does not seem to be the cause for the range shift of European Bee-eaters. There may be some degree of niche space being unfulfilled which the increase in climate is now allowing the birds to access. With such limited breeding attempts currently, it is hard to decipher any conclusive evidence of the reasons behind the shift in range. However, continued monitoring of the birds occurring in the UK should help to understand why these birds might be colonising the UK. *Photos courtesy of Jane Crossen*



Figure 2. Shows the European Bee-eater breeding range within the UK from eBird (2024).



Contemplating Conservation

New Hope for Turtle Doves?



First a quick plea – is there anyone out there who can share the load of writing a Conservation-themed article? We already have a pool of three of us but we would be very happy to be joined by others so the rotation doesn't come round quite as quickly! If you think you can help, please do give us a shout nenbc@aol.co.uk. Oh, and whilst you are there, if you don't fancy writing but have any suggestions for topics we could explore, we would love to hear from you too! Carol

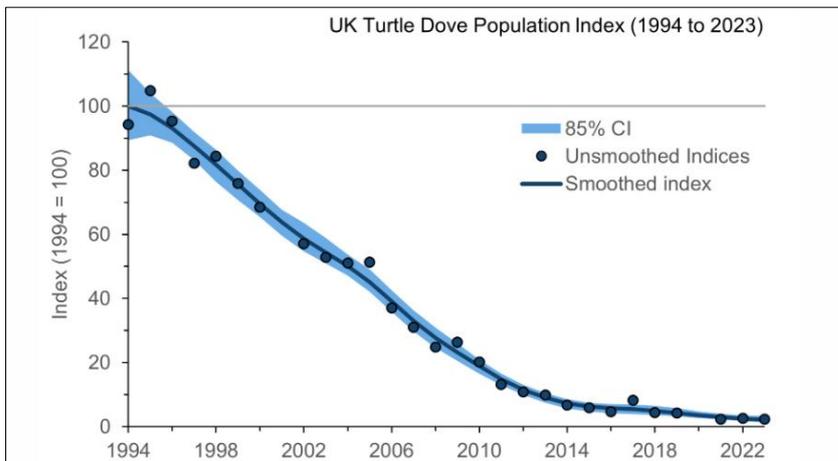


By Carol Thornton

Background

Turtle Doves are in trouble, and not just here at home. They are 'red-listed' in the UK (Birds of Conservation Concern) but are also internationally 'vulnerable' (Species of European Conservation Concern and IUCN Red List of Threatened Species [global]). The graph below shows the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) Index for Turtle Dove in the UK taken from the "Population trends for Turtle Dove in the UK and England | JNCC - Adviser to Government on Nature Conservation" published on 7 December 2023. The BBSs report population trends annually for over 100 UK breeding bird species and are led by BTO/JNCC/RSPB UK. Also within this report from last year was a table of Trends in the Turtle Dove Population Index. Neither make happy reading.

Photo courtesy of Richard Farrow



Graph notes

- Legend: dots = unsmoothed indices; solid line = smoothed index; shading = 85% confidence interval.
- The 85% confidence interval is shown to allow approximate visual comparisons between years. If 85% confidence intervals for any two selected years do not overlap, the difference between these years will (in general) be statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.

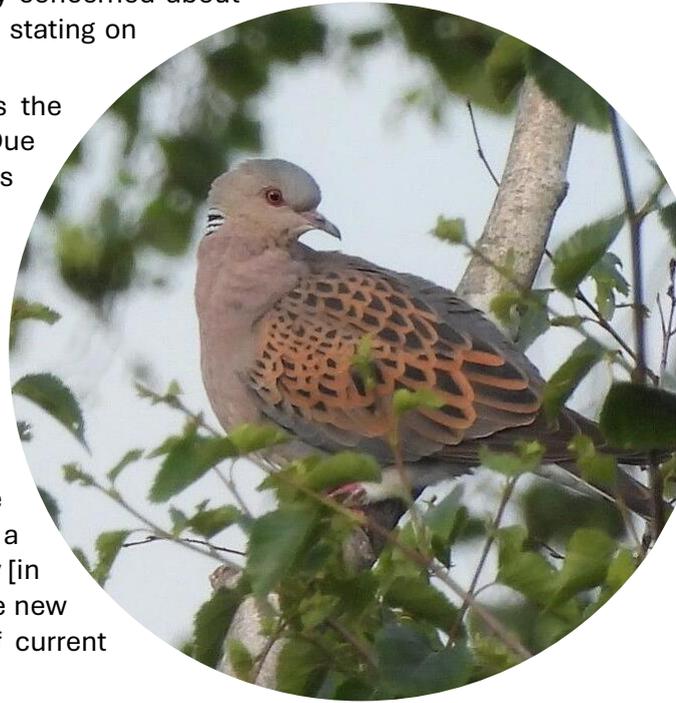
	1-year trend (2022-23)		5-year trend (2017-2022)		10-year Trend (2012-2022)		27-year trend (1995-2022)		
Region	Change	LCL, UCL	Change	LCL, UCL	Change	LCL, UCL	Change	LCL, UCL	n
UK	-11	-65, 133	-54*	-69, -32	-78*	-87, -67	-97*	-99, -96	107
England	-11	-66, 137	-54*	-71, -35	-78*	-87, -67	-97*	-99, -96	105
East of England	-35	-72, 124					-97*	-99, -95	50
South-east England							-98*	-99, -97	35

Table notes:

- LCL = Lower 95% confidence interval
- UCL = Upper 95% confidence interval
- n = Average number of BBS squares on which turtle dove was recorded over the duration of the trend period
- * = Statistically significant change – the 95% confidence limits of the change do not overlap with zero.
- 1-year trends for South-east England are not presented because Turtle Dove was only recorded on two squares in 2022 and 2023.

Some of you will have heard Dawn Balmer, the current Chair of the [Rare Breeding Birds Panel \(RBBP\)](#), speak at our Tripartite Evening with Norfolk Wildlife Trust (Local Group) and Cley Bird Club back in February on the work of the panel and how they categorise different species, collate records (with huge volunteer / contributor support) and subsequently monitor and report trends. Back in 2020, the RBBP were sufficiently concerned about Turtle Dove decline to instigate a full single-species national survey, stating on their website:

“Having declined by 98% since the 1970s, the Turtle Dove has the unenviable claim of being the UK’s fastest-declining bird species. Due to the severity of the decline, the annual sample size of Turtle Doves in the BBS has fallen below the level required for robust monitoring. As a result of this, and a suspicion that the population of Turtle Doves might be approaching the 2,000 pair threshold used by the RBBP to identify species as “rare”, Turtle Dove was added to the list of species the RBBP collates data for, from the 2018 breeding season onwards. Although it is likely to improve with time, the level of reporting of Turtle Doves through the RBBP since the species was added to our list is considered to be below the level needed to monitor trends robustly. Therefore, to give a comprehensive overview of the current status of the UK’s remaining Turtle Doves, a different approach was needed. The first dedicated national survey [in 2021] aimed to provide a revised population estimate and a create new baseline to help monitor future trends and the effectiveness of current conservation interventions.”



Information on the survey techniques are available on their [website](#) but the provisional results from the 2021 survey showed that there were “only around 2,100 Turtle Dove territories left in the UK, down from an estimated 125,000 in 1970. The population is increasing becoming concentrated within the south-east and East Anglia, with Kent, Suffolk and Essex being key counties, but other hotspots remain as far north as North Yorkshire.”

Conservation Scientist Andy Stanbury, an RBBP member, said at the time: “The survey has created a new baseline to help monitor the impacts of [...] interventions. We hope to repeat it in 5 years’ time.”

Photos courtesy of Mark Clements and Doug Cullern

Supporting Turtle Dove Conservation

So, what is causing this and what can be done to reverse the trend? Back in 2012, a new project called [Operation Turtle Dove \(OTD\)](#) launched, a partnership of four like-minded organisations with the “determination to save this dainty dove” - [RSPB](#), [Fair to Nature](#), [Pensthorpe Conservation Trust](#) and [Natural England](#). Their stated aim was “to reverse the decline of one of England’s best loved farmland birds.”? On their website they explain their journey:

“Our work to help Turtle Doves has science at its heart. When we first started, our focus was on identifying why Turtle Doves were declining and identifying ways to best help these birds. We have now reached the stage of rolling out, at scale, measures that we know will benefit Turtle Doves. We have very good scientific evidence showing that there are two key issues to address to save Turtle Doves in the UK. Firstly, we must **provide them with better quality breeding habitats**, particularly feeding opportunities, so that they can produce more chicks each year. Secondly, we must **see an end to unsustainable levels of hunting along their flyway in south-west Europe.**”

And the RBBP’s Andy Stanbury also supports this approach:

“It’s hard to imagine now that there were records of flocks of up to 800 Turtle Doves in East Anglia during the 1970s. Research shows that the decline is being driven by two main factors: **the loss of suitable habitat on the breeding grounds** and **unsustainable levels of hunting when they migrate** through south-west Europe on spend the winter in Africa. Much conservation effort is currently being focussed on Turtle Doves both to improve breeding habitat in England and to reduce the level of hunting on migration.”

Improving breeding habitats

Operation Turtle Dove are “working with farmers, other land managers, communities and other groups to help them create suitable habitat for Turtle Doves [and have] a team of advisors who provide bespoke advice on how to create the feeding, nesting and drinking habitats that the birds need.” In 2023, they “worked with 370 farmers and land managers to



provide an amazing 230 hectares of suitable feeding habitat.” They state that Turtle Doves require three key breeding season resources:

1. **Food:** Turtle Doves feed on the ground, almost entirely on seeds of low growing wild plants or spilt crop seeds. They need sparse vegetation and / or patches of open ground to be able to find the seeds. The past decline of Turtle Doves has been so serious that in addition to growing seed-bearing plants we recommend supplementary feeding, particularly early in the breeding season, when naturally occurring seeds are scarce. This can be done with a specially-designed seed mix to provide an additional food source.
2. **Nesting habitat:** dense woody vegetation, particularly tall, dense thorny broadleaved scrub or tall, wide hedgerows.
3. **Accessible water:** such as a well-managed pond, ditches, puddles and shallow troughs with suitable access for Turtle Doves.

They have produced an excellent guide, primarily aimed at farmers and other land managers, “[Providing feeding resources for turtle doves \(operationturtledove.org\)](#)” on how to best meet these needs. Our local wildlife conservation charity [Felbeck Trust](#) has been involved with the project for some years now, using their network of mini reserves to encourage and support this species. Trust Chair Trevor had this to say: “Felbeck Trust have been working with Operation Turtle Dove, creating optimal breeding habitat and providing supplementary feed to improve the condition of returning birds prior to breeding.” They are hopeful that there will be some medium-term success as a result of these interventions, but still early days.



Photo courtesy of Mark Clements

Tackling unsustainable hunting

Quite a lot of positive work has been taking place over the last few years on this front. According to Operation Turtle Dove, “all Turtle Doves breeding in western Europe, including the UK, migrate south through three countries where the species used to be legally hunted in large numbers: France, Spain and Portugal. Up to 2018, around one million Turtle Doves were legally hunted every autumn in just these three. Research clearly showed this was unsustainable and was preventing the recovery of the entire Western European breeding population. The publication of an [International Species Action Plan for the Turtle Dove](#) in 2018, a huge cross-border project involving experts from fifty states within the Turtle Dove’s range, was a major milestone. It recognised the impacts of hunting and drove international conservation efforts, to end unsustainable levels of Turtle Dove hunting in Europe. The result was a sustainable management system, now adopted by the European Commission. This led directly to a halt in Turtle Dove hunting in France, Spain and Portugal in 2021, 2022, and 2023...” [BirdGuides](#) have run some interesting articles over the past few years charting the progression of the hunting bans and these countries have recently all agreed to extend the ban into 2024 which is excellent news.

In some further good news, Turtle Dove numbers in Western Europe are on the up according to a [recent report to the European Commission](#), authored by an international team of scientists advising governments on how to manage their populations of Turtle Doves sustainably – see graph from the report on the overleaf.

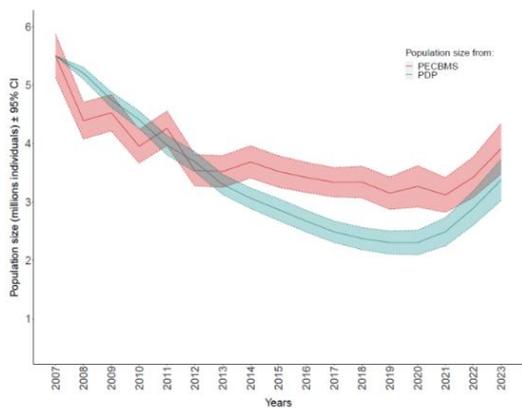


Figure S2. Population size of turtle dove for the western flyway extracted from PECBMS (in orange colours) and estimated using the Population Dynamics P Systems method (PDP, in green colours) from 2007 to 2023. 95% Confidence intervals are shown with dashed lines.

Operation Turtle Dove again: “Recovery begins ... the western European population of Turtle Doves increased by an incredible 25% following two years of a hunting ban in France, Spain and Portugal that began in 2021. A 25% increase means an additional 400,000 breeding pairs from 2021 to 2023 for the western European population, of which the UK is a part. With the western European population now numbering nearly two million breeding territories, it is predicted that more Turtle Doves will be reaching the UK, to take advantage of the habitats that hundreds of farmers and landowners are creating – from flowering plots and patches providing seed food, to dense thorny scrub to offering safe nesting sites. In turn these birds will raise more chicks of their own, further boosting numbers. The UK sits at the northern edge of this large western European population, and the ‘recovery wave’ is expected to take slightly longer to reach us. But reach us it will.”

Hopefully we are beginning to turn a corner and the proposed RBBP Turtle Dove Survey planned presumably for 2026 should tell us how well the actions of projects like Operation Turtle Dove in the UK, and conservation initiatives in Europe guiding governments to follow science, have been.

Further reading and listening



Want some info on status, trends and more? Take a look at the BTO’s BirdFacts page:

[Turtle Dove | BTO - British Trust for Ornithology](#)



Struggling with identifying a Turtle Dove? Click on this link to one of the BTO’s excellent video ID guides:

[Identifying Collared Dove & Turtle Dove | BTO - British Trust for Ornithology](#)



Not sure what a Turtle Dove sounds like? Have a listen to the recordings on the Xeno-Canto website:

[European Turtle Dove \(Streptopelia turtur\) :: xeno-canto](#)

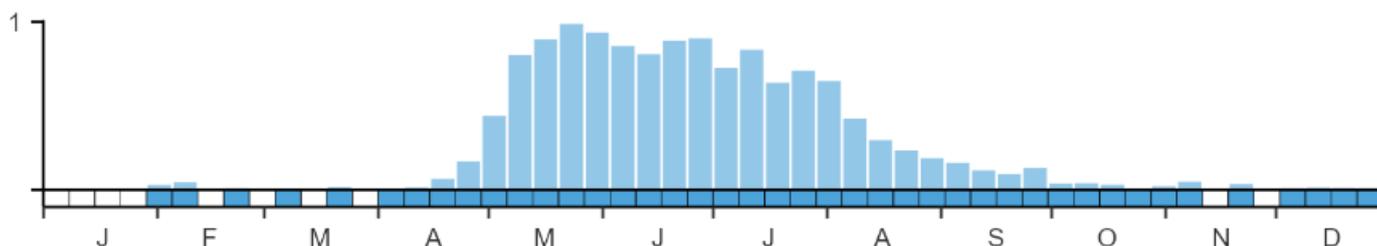


Wondering where or when to find a Turtle Dove locally? Since 2015 we have had 345 records of Turtle Dove logged on our website. These have come from over 25 locations within the club recording area but 73% [252] of them are from Kelling Heath with a further 12% [40] from the Weybourne / Weybourne Camp vicinity. There have been 108 records in 2024 so far compared to 68 for last year, but before we celebrate too much, there were only three confirmed breeding pairs along the coastal belt this year that we are aware of (Salthouse & Kelling). Peak month for records to be added to our website is May for all years except 2017. Note that this simply reports the number of records – it is therefore a record count and not a bird count – many members uploaded records of probably the same birds. Here’s the corresponding (but much more scientifically produced!) seasonality graph from the [BTO website](#) using BirdTrack data:

NENBC Turtle Dove Records (NB: counts records not bird numbers)

YEAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	TOTAL
2015		6	4		1		11
2016	1	11	6	9	4	1	32
2017	2	7	9	2	6		26
2018		4	3	2			9
2019	1	5	3	1	1	1	12
2020	1	16	6	13			36
2021	1	16	5	2	1		25
2022		11	6		1		18
2023		33	27	5	3		68
2024		53	40	15			108
TOTALS	6	162	109	49	17	2	345

Turtle Doves are summer visitors, arriving gradually from mid April with reporting tailing off through summer; most birds usually departed by September but occasional birds winter.



Weekly occurrence patterns (shaded cells) and reporting rates (vertical bars) based on [BirdTrack](#) data. Reporting rates give the likelihood of encountering the species each week.

Check This Out!

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



-  [Early signs of success for Lakenheath Fen expansion - BirdGuides \[10-Jul\]](#)
-  [Next few weeks 'critical' for Long Nanny tern colony - BirdGuides \[11-Jul\]](#)
-  [Wildlife Trusts outline nature priorities for new UK government - BirdGuides \[12-Jul\]](#)
-  [Spoonbill enjoys successful breeding season in Britain - BirdGuides \[20-Jul\]](#)
-  [Redpolls to become one species - BirdGuides \[22-Jul\] and something similar from across The Pond \[Lumping Redpolls and Splitting Seabirds: This Year's Updates to North American Bird Names\]\(#\) | \[Audubon\]\(#\) \[07-Aug\]](#)
-  [Poor weather poses challenges for UK nightjars - BirdGuides \[24-Jul\]](#)
-  [Rising sea levels spell danger for shorebirds such as the Oystercatcher, \[#birds\]\(#\) \[#birding\]\(#\) \[#ornithology\]\(#\) news via \[@RareBirdAlertUK\]\(#\) \[10-Jul\]](#)
-  [Seabirds threatened by trawl fisheries, \[#birds\]\(#\) \[#birding\]\(#\) \[#ornithology\]\(#\) news via \[@RareBirdAlertUK\]\(#\) \[30-Jul\]](#)
-  [Britain has been invaded by parakeets – and it's got nothing to do with \[Jimi Hendrix\]\(#\) | \[Tim Blackburn\]\(#\) | \[The Guardian\]\(#\) \[10-Jul\]](#)

New postal stamps feature island's wetland birds



Jersey Post said its latest stamp collection features birds found on the island

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: "Sustead Road. Spent most of afternoon in garden - perhaps been before as made way directly to our table as we were having a snack." | Alan Stevens | Gresham | 22nd |

Mute Swan: "Took a photo (*right*) of a swans feather floating on the lake" | Andrew Crossley | Selbrigg Pond | 15th |

Swift: "Lots of swifts screeching over Hungate St, difficult to count as groups swooped around - at least 20 in a single group, probably many more. One see flying under eaves in Mill Rd; it stayed in for 13 minutes, so probably investigating nesting potential for next year, rather than an active nest." | Val Stubbs | Aylsham | 21st |

Cuckoo: "Phone call from a near neighbour to say the Cuckoo was feeding on her lawn. Rushed round but it flew off seconds before we got there. Hung about for ten minutes when it suddenly flew straight over our heads going towards the coast path." | Di & Richard Farrow | Sheringham | 20th |

Turtle Dove: | "Heard purring; also glimpsed a bird that I suspect was a juvenile." | Tony Pope | Kelling Goose | 30th |

Water Rail: "two birds calling from dense Sparganium in Dilham Canal, one responded to playback, but although it came closer and called it didn't show" | Julian Thomas | Swafeld | 24th |



Oystercatcher: "The pair on the pond at Hillside Shire Horse Sanctuary. They've not been seen together much this past month, it's possible they had a second clutch and have been more hidden. At least one adult is usually seen most days on the pond calling loudly. Today the pair were seen attacking and chasing a crow, I wondered if the crow found their egg/young if they had some, but saw no sign of either. After chasing the crow off the pond one adult took off calling, and the other remained on the pond calling too." Ellie Farrow | West Runton | 12th |

Common Tern: "A lone bird passing west at 5:58am showed characteristics of one of the Eastern races, 'minussensis / longipennis'" | James Appleton | Walcott | 21st |

Sparrowhawk: "Loud crash on the full length double glazed rear door. I was in the kitchen approx 3 feet from the door. I whipped round to see the feathers of the Wood Pigeon with the dark wings of the Sparrowhawk spread wide behind it. Stunned Woody fell away to the left stunned onto the ground where upon the Sparrowhawk pounced. It subsequently flew down to garden to start plucking and enjoying its meal." | Di & Richard Farrow | Sheringham | 7th | *See photo below*

Sparrowhawk: "I was on the Cromer Peregrine Project watchpoint. We were just closing up and a Sparrowhawk landed very low down on the church nave near the museum! Meanwhile the adult male Peregrine was on the church." | Jane Crossen | Cromer | 8th |

Barn Owl: "Sustead Rd. Watched bird/birds for 30 minutes while they passed with 3 voles one of which was eaten while the other two were carried away." | Alan Stevens | Gresham | 16th |

Kestrel: "No less than five juveniles and one adult present around the priory. Wonderful views of the recently-fledged juveniles" | Jane Crossen | Beeston Regis | 7th | *See photo below*

Hobby: "Club Walk 9.00-11.00, in tree by lake, best view I've ever had - if only I had brought the scope!!" | Val Stubbs | Felbrigg Park & Lake | 17th |

Peregrine: "Great display seeing off the buzzard high above my caravan" | Julia & David Ivison | East Runton & Thains Lane | 5th |

House Martin: "Hunting over our meadow; all 3 appeared to be going to the nest on no 41 - is this normal?" | Val Stubbs | Weybourne | 4th |

House Martin: "One nest with young [...] Nest is natural mud cup on north facing [house] wall, artificial nests on neighbouring houses not used." | Peter & Sue Morrison | Holt | 26th |

Reed Warbler: "hope reed bed. adult + juv, probably on first flight, managed to fly into parked car." | Phil Borley | Weybourne | 7th |

Goldfinch: "A Merry little flock enjoying the last of the sun shine !!!" | Bessingham | 2nd |

Goldfinch: "1 on front seeds, 1 eating Field Scabious and Knapweed seeds in meadow - a joy to watch! 2 juvs wandering along by wildflower verges" | Val Stubbs | Weybourne | 24th |



Val asks if this is normal behaviour for House Martin – can anyone advise?





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.](#)

“Call is a shrill ‘tee wee wee’, usually given in flight as an alarm call. Song is a twittering version of the flight call.”
from RSPB Handbook of British Birds by Peter Holden and Tim Cleeves

“Distinctive call – loud, ringing ‘swee-wee-wee-wee’ with slight melancholy fall in pitch and volume. Song varies this into fast rhythmic trills and runs.”
from WILDGuides BRITAIN'S BIRDS 2nd Edition - An identification guide to the birds of Britain and Ireland 2nd Edition by Hume, Still, Swash, Harrop and Tipling

“Vocal. Flight-call a rapid series of clear, high-pitched whistling notes falling in pitch slightly, ‘swee-swee-swee-swee-swüü’, often heard on dark August nights. Alarm-call is a drawn-out whistling note, ‘heeeep’. Song, in pulsating song-flight, is rhythmic repetition of finely twittering phrase, ‘swididii-dide-swididii-dide-swididii-dide-...’.”
from Collins BIRD GUIDE 3rd Edition by Mullarney, Svensson, Zetterström

Wordsearch



This month, we have the 24 species or races recorded in August 2023 for which we have just one or two 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.](#)

- Avocet
- Black Redstart
- Brown Booby
- Caspian Tern
- Curlew Sandpiper
- Great Shearwater
- Honey-buzzard
- Little Ringed Plover
- Osprey
- Pintail
- Purple Sandpiper
- Roseate Tern
- Spoonbill
- Spotted Redshank
- Velvet Scoter
- Water Rail
- Woodcock
- Black-tailed Godwit
- Egyptian Goose
- Goshawk
- Grey Wagtail
- Lapwing
- Little Stint
- Red-breasted Merganser

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





No 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].

There are a couple of things to note from both NRC and the BBRC this month as posted on X-Twitter ...



	Norfolk Bird Records @NorfolkBirds	13 Jul 2024
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Half way through 2024 records and it looks like combined @Team_eBird and @BirdTrack records will be >1.5 million records for this year. Despite automating our processes, the main problem with both sets of data continues to be unknown/invalid sites names. Unknown sites including 'my garden', 'home', 'riverside walk', 'bedroom window' etc. If you are not using a suggest site or hotspot please include actual place. Invalid site names such as Norfolk Coast AONB Holt and Norfolk Coast AONB King's Lynn actually relate to Cley and Titchwell. Due to the huge volumes of data now being received it is not practical to investigate every unknown/invalid site name which numbers 100s, as a result some records may be ignored. Finally please check spelling of site names, there are lots of Tichwell, Clay, Holm, Holcomb etc being used, please use suggested Birdtrack/Ebird hotspots or sites. Thanks

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

NENBC Website



A huge thanks to all of you who have uploaded records to our new website this year to date – nearly 60,000 records of over 200 species! It is very much appreciated by us and the bodies we send the data on to for inclusion in the county reports. We are a bit down on record numbers this year, so if you get the time we'd love to see you adding more of your sightings.

Total Records
58,891

Unique Species
214

Recorders
120

The most recorded species for July were Woodpigeon (200 records – *photo courtesy of Doug Cullern*), Swift (175), Goldfinch (150), Blackbird (137 – down from top spot for the past 4 months) and Buzzard (131). At the other end of the spectrum, we had single records of the following species: Arctic Tern, Bee-eater, Goshawk, Greenshank, Little Stint, Marsh Tit, Pintail, Rose-coloured Starling, Ruff, Scaup, Spotted Flycatcher, Water Rail and Wigeon.

The location with the most records overall was Weybourne (754) followed by Sheringham, Weybourne Camp, Bodham and Felbrigg Park & Lake.

Fifty six members logged records on our website last month. Phil Borley posted the highest number of records during July (1,104), followed by Philip Cartlidge (702), Val Stubbs (523), Tony Pope (342) and Mark Clements (325).

Many members have been using the 'singing' button on the website for when either the bird they are watching is singing or when they have only heard the bird. Approximately 10% of last month's records (549) were tagged as 'singing'.

The most number of records were generated on Sunday 21st (327) and the least on Tuesday 9th and Friday 12th (94),





Washing Day by Rita Summers

The cormorants hang their feathers out to dry – black velvet rags showing threadbare in the wind.

Like old women living in the past, they tend their tattered finery with talon fingers and black remembering eyes.



Photos courtesy of Richard Farrow, Mark Clements (3), Stu Buck, John Wheeler, Ken Thornton, Doug Cullern (2)

The bird voice variously described was that of a [Common Sandpiper \(*Actitis hypoleucos*\)](#). 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 or call. Don't forget to have your sound turned on and the volume up! Here's a link to the [BTO BirdFacts: Common Sandpiper](#) page. Sadly no BTO Bird ID Video available for Common Sandpiper but to boost your overall sandpiper ID skills, why not take a look at the [Wood and Green Sandpiper](#) one?

Photos from Jane Crossen, Julian Thomas, and Trevor Williams

This month's **Wordsearch Solution:**
 BIRDS RECORDED IN THE NENBC AREA IN
 AUGUST 2023

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



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