

Magazine Summer 2015 No.181



# The Harrier

Suffolk Ornithologists' Group

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Bearded Reedling (*Panurus biarmicus*) Photographer: Craig Shaw

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# The Harrier

Suffolk Ornithologists' Group

## Guest Editorial

It's thirty years since I first joined SOG; back then I never have thought I'd become Chair for the group, but I'm privileged to do so for the next four years. My membership of the group almost covers my overall Suffolk birding life, which had started a few years before at Primary School. Although I've moved away a couple of times, when I've got back into Suffolk birding, a lot of that has been through SOG. Over the years I've met many Suffolk birders through the group, not least Jean and Ken Garrod, both of whom made me welcome on my first trip as a teenager, as they did to many over the years. Sadly, Ken passed away this year but it's in great part due to Ken and Jean's friendliness and encouragement that I've enjoyed Suffolk birding and SOG to this day. It was also thanks to Jean's gentle arm-twisting that I led my first SOG trip in 1997 and then the following year joined SOG Council as the web administrator.

I follow in this role Roy Marsh, who became Chair with membership slowly declining and funds decreasing due to increased costs such as The Harrier. He pushed for Council to be pro-active in addressing this and his drive galvanised the group to raise more funds, so that today the group has a better standing and I'm glad to say Roy has remained on Council as Vice-Chair. Although now on a better footing, funds will always be an issue. As is the case with many natural history organisations, membership numbers are

constantly under pressure so it's important that as a group SOG promotes the work it does, tries to increase membership and makes sure it continues to provide a voice for the great birdlife that can be found in Suffolk.

SOG's emphasis on Suffolk's birdlife has always been to "enjoy, record and protect". Enjoyment comes from the field trips, which are open to all members (thanks must be given to all the trip leaders for their help) and a variety of indoor meetings, including in recent years the popular joint events in north-east Suffolk with Waveney Bird Club. The recording aspect comes both through the Suffolk Bird Report, in collaboration with SNS, and the BTO surveys that the group helps organise and promote within Suffolk. Projects have been an important aspect of SOG, some with fantastic success such as the placing of a Peregrine nest box on the Orwell Bridge which led to the first nesting Peregrines in Suffolk in 200 years, and the increase in the Barn Owl population due to the Suffolk Community Barn Owl Project. More recently, the plight of the Turtle Dove has seen SOG, in conjunction with multiple groups, organisations and landowners (as with SCBOP) involved in Operation Turtle Dove. Our latest project is a partnership project with SWT for Swift conservation: Save Our Suffolk Swifts. Our wildlife is under ever increasing pressure and, as can be seen from the above, I feel that cooperation between

organisations will give a better and more forceful voice in protecting our wildlife and environment.

As ever, SOG Council welcomes any ideas and feedback from our members, so please feel free to

email with any suggestions. We encourage members to be actively involved in the group and if anyone is interested in volunteering at one of our events or would like to join Council, then please get in contact.

*Gi Grieco*

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Chris Keeling

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## SOS... Save Our Suffolk Swifts



Photo: Andrew Easton

Common Swift

Plants and animals have evolved to exploit almost every available opportunity that our planet can provide. Birds and mammals and a host of invertebrates have all evolved sophisticated physiological adaptations for life in the most extreme environments on land and in the oceans.

To the best of our knowledge, only the Common Swifts have come close to exploiting a wholly aerial existence, although the larger Alpine Swift *Apus*

*melba* will cling to vertical surfaces to roost at night. The Latin name of the Common Swift *Apus apus* means 'without feet' and refers to their small, almost invisible feet with sharp claws that they use to cling to brickwork and stone when nesting. They sleep – and, it is believed, even mate – on the wing, briefly descending to earth only to nest under roof tiles, the eaves of domestic and commercial buildings, spires and towers, laying a clutch of two or three eggs, each weighing 3.5 grams.

Swifts appear as if from nowhere, gliding silently at first in ones and twos and small groups in May until their numbers build, shrieking as they course the rooftops and church spires, before they disappear – almost as suddenly as they came – in August, the sudden silence emphasising the certainty of their going. It should come as no surprise that, as with owls, they quickly became the subject of folklore and legend. In England they were called the Develing, Devil's screech, Skir devil or Devil's bird due to the belief that the screeching packs were sent to chase departing souls ascending into heaven.

### **Swifts in trouble**

Whether in fact or folklore, Swifts are as much a part of our urban and village culture as ancient churches and pubs by the village green. Sadly, however, there are signs that this iconic bird of summer is in trouble. Numbers have declined so dramatically in the past 10 years that they are currently on the Amber List – as birds of Conservation Concern. Red listing – which is a 50% decline in 25 years – might indeed be warranted, were it not for the fact that viable data are only available for the last 20 years.

A study by the RSPB found that nearly 80% of Swift nests were on houses, with more than half of these houses being of pre-1919 construction. Re-development of many old properties has resulted in the loss of fixtures and fittings that traditionally provided nest sites for Swifts. The design of new buildings rarely allows for the inclusion of spaces and apertures suitable for Swift nests. So what can be done?

The two main aims of the SOS Swifts campaign are to raise awareness and preservation of current possible nest sites and to encourage nesting facilities to be added on new and existing buildings.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (England and Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2004 is the primary legislation which protects animals, plants, and certain habitats in the UK. It is an offence under the WCA 1981 to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird, or intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built.

Developers need to be clear about the law and understand that the destruction of Swifts' nests could constitute an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act. However, they may not be aware that a church spire, office building or merely the blank face of a prominent brick wall might provide a nesting site for Swifts, so it is vitally important that we raise developers' awareness and understanding of swifts and the places where their nests might be found so they can be protected.



### **SOS Swifts**

SOG's Edward Jackson attended a Swifts Local Network meeting at RSPB Leighton Moss on 11th April on behalf of SOS Swifts and has provided encouraging reports on the progress of groups working to protect Swifts throughout the UK. All of this is similarly encouraging for the Suffolk Wildlife Trust and Suffolk Ornithologists' Group, who have previously joined forces on a very successful Barn Owl project and are working together again to address the plight of our Swifts.

Inspired by the Action for Swifts Website and Swift Conservation, the Suffolk Ornithologists' Group launched SOS Swifts in 2014 with the aim of raising awareness of Swifts and the threats to their survival in Suffolk.

SOS Swifts is already celebrating early successes. Swift nest boxes and a call system have been installed on Stowmarket Church and a resident of Peasenhall has successfully used a call system to lure Swifts to new nesting sites.

The Suffolk Wildlife Trust is working with local authority planning departments creating a 'Developers' Checklist' to determine whether existing buildings are already used by nesting Swifts. SOS Swifts will also work with developers and property managers to maintain existing nest sites and create new ones. One way this can be achieved is by incorporating specially designed 'Swift bricks' (designed to allow Swifts access to ready-made cavities and apertures) into the walls of new buildings.

Swift bricks can also be used to restore nesting sites that are lost when renovating older buildings. SOS Swifts will also provide ready-made Swift nest boxes that can be attached under the eaves of residential or business properties. There are plans to follow this with a factsheet for planners, architects, builders and householders providing advice on Swifts, nest sites and nest box design and installation. Documents are already available within Swift Local Network (SLN) on external boxes and Swift bricks, with information on internal boxes to follow.

Here in Suffolk, if you can't easily fit a nest box or install a Swift brick, you can assist SOS Swifts by recording your sightings with date, location, numbers and behaviour, for example screaming parties – noisy groups of young Swifts chasing one another over

the rooftops – and nesting sites. To help SOS Swifts please submit your information on the Suffolk Wildlife Trust's website.

Ed Keeble of SOG has produced striking and evocative logos for display and information for a series of events throughout Suffolk which will raise awareness of SOS Swifts.

## Swift events around Suffolk in 2015

**Thursday 2nd July** – Swift evening at Lower Layham Village Hall.

An illustrated talk by Edward Jackson of Suffolk Ornithologists' Group, followed by Swift viewing around St Andrew's Church. Admission free from 7:00pm.

Please book through Suffolk Wildlife Trust on 01473 890089.

**Monday 13th July** – Swift evening at Blaxhall Village Hall.

An illustrated talk by Edward Jackson of Suffolk Ornithologists' Group, followed by Swift viewing around the village.

Admission free from 7:00pm.

**Friday 17th July** – 'Swift Fest' at All Saints Church, Worlington.

Visit this shining example of Swift conservation in action. View Swifts as they use up to 40 nest boxes, four of them with cameras inside. Hear national Swift experts Dick Newell and Edward Mayer speak about these amazing and mysterious birds.

Admission free from 6:00pm.

**Thursday 5th November** – 'Swifts: Problems and Opportunities' – an illustrated talk by Dick Newell of Action for Swifts.

Holiday Inn, London Road, Ipswich IP2 0UA. Admission £2:00 starts at 7:30pm.



# Raise money for Suffolk Ornithologists' Group – without parting with a penny!

Everyclick.com has launched a new way to donate. Called 'Give as you Live', the scheme, which is free to the user, has over 3,800 participating stores including Amazon and eBay, and has raised almost £6 million for charity since its launch.

Sign-up takes a few moments on the 'Give as you Live' page – select Suffolk Ornithologists' Group as your chosen charity

– and you can even set a browser tool to remind you to use it every time you shop.

When you shop at your usual stores going via the 'Give as you Live' website, each purchase will raise funds for us. You can even track how much of the current total you have raised – who thought online shopping could be so satisfying?



*For birds & for birders*  
**SOG merchandise**

**Remember, every item you order will make a small contribution to SOG – allowing us to offer more in the way of bursaries supporting Suffolk's birds.**

**To order please call Mark at GM Supplies on 01394 383562 or visit his store at 8 Gloster Road, Martlesham IP5 3RB**

You can pick from six different types of garments that come in five standard colours (specials can be requested) and a size-range of S/M/L/XL/XXL. Other items are available for your home or office.

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## Trumpeter Swans

On the 14th December 2014, pagers alerted the birding community to the presence of two apparently unringed and fully winged adult Trumpeter Swans at RSPB Boyton Marshes. As quickly as I could, I travelled from the Midlands to see these beautiful birds associating closely with a Mute Swan flock. Yes, they did look wary and nervous, certainly in contrast to the ever-feeding Mutes.

Trumpeter Swan is currently not on the British list, as it has never been thought to occur naturally. The species is found in North America, with a population that had been greatly in decline due to hunting and lead-poisoning – though in recent years the species has made a comeback supplemented by an introduction scheme. In terms of evidence, it is worth noting an historic record in Ticehurst's 'The Birds of Suffolk', which states that a flock of five were seen at Slaughden in October 1866, four of which were shot. However, these were thought to have originated from ornamental waters.

Could these birds have been produced by the recent so-called "weather-bomb" that had been in the news? The weather-bomb was a powerful low pressure system that had traversed the North Atlantic, bringing severe gale-force winds with it straight across from North America.

Predictably, on websites like Birdforum, much discussion ensued – leading to over 450 posts. These ranged from the usual cynicism about the provenance of such birds; to romantic notions of these birds possibly being swept in by the recent extreme weather conditions. Others – such as Richard Klim – provided invaluable detail about population growth and distribution, including

statistics about the North American east coast re-introduction program. The general discussion was progressed by a birder using the pseudonym "Melodious", and some useful contributions from Abbotsbury Swannery regarding possible feather condition that might have been indicative of captive origin. Brett Richards helped age the birds as 2nd-winters, which highlights the educational value of Birdforum: some of us had in all honesty only looked at swans in simple 'juvenile' or 'adult' terms.

Whilst I personally couldn't contribute much to the ornithological discussion, through the power of the web I could start to make contact with breeders to see if they had lost any birds. My thinking was that this would be an easier exercise with large white swans that cost over £450 than with smaller wildfowl that could be kept on any small garden pond. And so it proved.

It transpired that there were fewer than ten breeders of Trumpeter Swans in England, including Anglia Wildfowl and Anglia Waterfowl. However, all of them responded in the negative regarding the loss of any birds. They suggested that their birds would definitely be ringed and kept in a secure space. Hmmm!! I also contacted the UK Wildfowl Association to see if there was a 'lost and found' register for such birds – but again the answer was no.

My next lead was a tip-off that that two 'ornamental' Trumpeter Swans had gone missing from Southview Caravan Park in Skegness, Lincolnshire. I contacted local birding groups, Gibraltar Point reserve staff, and the caravan park itself. Yet again, my efforts were to little avail – they were all inactive over Xmas!



Time wore on, and we began to fear the birds were no longer traceable, but local birder George Gregory, one-time Landguard Bird Observatory warden, managed to confirm that they were still present on 21st December. So on with the chase....

I then focused on large stately homes and trawled the net for private sales. I searched websites such as [buybirds.co.uk](http://buybirds.co.uk), [birdtrader.co.uk](http://birdtrader.co.uk), [birds4sale.co.uk](http://birds4sale.co.uk), which between them had nearly 1,000 individual wildfowl for sale. These ranged from Ringed Teal to Pintail to Barnacle Geese – but no Trumpeter Swans at all – further highlighting the relative scarcity of this species in UK captivity.

By January, my ‘needle in the haystack’ search appeared doomed. Could it be that the Trumpeter Swans were actually wild?

But the trail was not yet cold. On January 5th, I received an email from Mike Attew of UK Waterfowl, the only remaining breeder to respond. His email told me that he thought the two birds were from a marsh near Wickham Market, and had belonged to a friend who had passed away. I reported this back to Birdforum, and it was over to birder Ben Rackstraw to perform the role of Sherlock Holmes.

Following an internet search, Ben discovered

that the owners of Letheringham Lodge near Wickham Market had bred Trumpeter cygnets in December 2013 from their pair kept in the house’s moat. It was then pleasingly fitting that the finder of the birds Sean Minns (aka “Lost In Japan” on Birdforum) concluded the discussion by contacting Letheringham Lodge and established that the now 2nd-winter birds had indeed flown off in mid-December – less than five miles from RSPB Boyton Marshes.

They are still stunning birds to see, but the cygnets were right all along. Case closed.

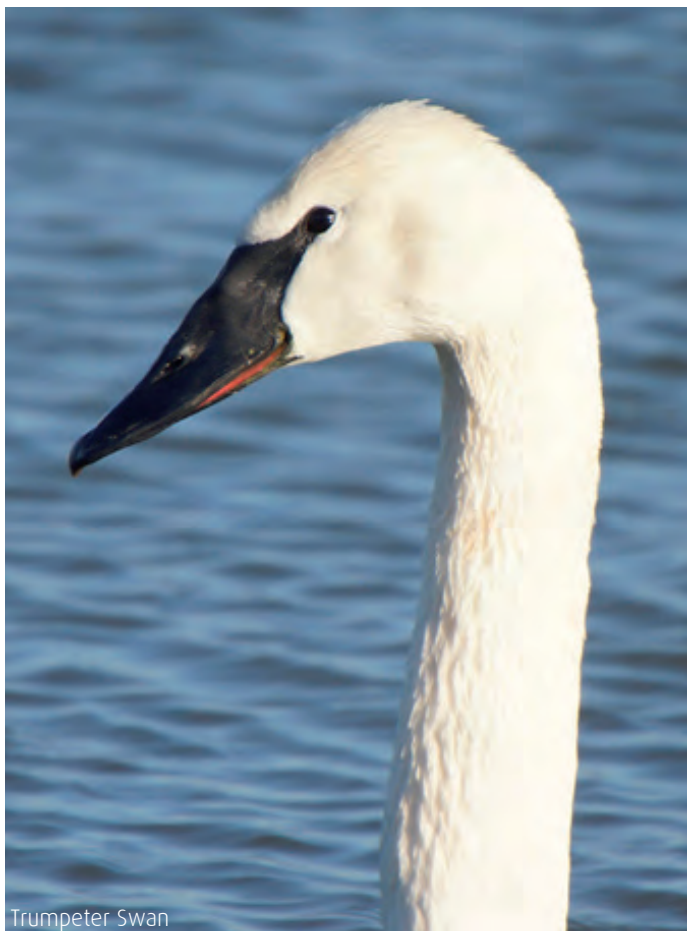


Photo: David Borderick

## BINS Spring

### March 2015

A second winter **White-tailed Eagle** toured East Anglia during March. In Suffolk it was at Micklemere 15<sup>th</sup> and then cruised over Minsmere RSPB 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> and Sizewell (20<sup>th</sup>) and was seen perched at Benacre Broad (20<sup>th</sup>). Last seen to head south over Minsmere RSPB and Felixstowe 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Could the **White Stork**, seen over Southwold 20<sup>th</sup> and at Covehithe Broad 22<sup>nd</sup>, have actually been a wild bird from the continent and not one of the free-flying birds from Thrigby Zoo?

The **Surf Scoter** continued to be seen on River Stour from Stutton Ness. Also on the River Stour were up to eight **Slavonian Grebe**. A **Black-necked Grebe** was also nearby at Alton Water reservoir 15<sup>th</sup>. A **Ferruginous Duck** was at Lakenheath Fen RSPB 21<sup>st</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>.

Two **Garganey** were at Southwold 12<sup>th</sup> and three **Tundra Bean Geese** at Minsmere RSPB.

**Great Grey Shrike** was still at Santon Downham and another was at Upper Hollesley Common from 23<sup>rd</sup>. Three **Shorelark** ranged between Benacre Pits and Easton Broad and two **Shorelark** were at Shingle Street 14<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>. A **Turtle Dove** was at Moulton 12<sup>th</sup>.

Up to two **Waxwings** were at Mildenhall, up to 11 at Kesgrave and up to 13 in Ipswich. Up to two **Iceland Gulls** were at Ampton Water and surrounding pig fields. A **Glaucous Gull** was at Lowestoft until 8<sup>th</sup> and one was at Sizewell 27<sup>th</sup> and Minsmere RSPB 28<sup>th</sup>.

Finally, a **Yellow-legged Tortoiseshell** (aka Scarce Tortoiseshell) was at Felixstowe 27<sup>th</sup>.

### April 2015

The long-staying **Surf Scoter** was last seen on the Stour Estuary 2<sup>nd</sup>. This bird (county 1<sup>st</sup>) was first seen on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2014. Three **Tundra Bean Geese** were present and showing well on Island Mere 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>.

In the west of Suffolk, a sub-adult **Iceland Gull** was seen on the scrape at Micklemere, other **Iceland Gull** sightings included an adult on Minsmere scrape 8<sup>th</sup> and a juvenile was noted in fields by Rymer Barn, Great Livermere 17<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup>.

Three **Pomarine Skuas** offshore at Landguard 4<sup>th</sup> were noteworthy. Thirteen **Waxwing** were again seen at Kesgrave on 4<sup>th</sup> and what were presumably the same flock – now 15 birds – noted on Sutton Common 17<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>, though mobile.

The **Great White Egret** continued to show well at times at Lakenheath Fen RSPB. One of the adult **Black Brants** remained on the Orwell Estuary up to 8<sup>th</sup>.

A flurry of **Raven** sightings occurred; initially south over the A12 Foxhall roundabout 6<sup>th</sup>, then two over Broom Heath, Woodbridge 7<sup>th</sup>, then the next day (8<sup>th</sup>) one sat in fields by the rubbish dump at Foxhall. Further up the coast, two **Raven** were seen to fly north over Island Mere, Minsmere 24<sup>th</sup>.

A fine drake **Lesser Scaup** was initially seen on the reservoir at Trimley Marsh SWT 6<sup>th</sup> then 'firmed up' the following morning. This bird was the first for the county since the individuals at Suffolk Water Park, Bramford in 2004 and 2006.

A 1<sup>st</sup> winter **Glaucous Gull** was seen on the scrape at Hollesley Marsh RSPB 7<sup>th</sup> only. Five **Garganey** (three drakes) were present on Botany Marsh, Snape from 8<sup>th</sup>.

A **White Stork** (unknown origin) was seen SE over Homersfield 8<sup>th</sup> and a definite escaped **White Stork** was seen on the scrape at

Carlton Marshes 16<sup>th</sup>. The over-wintering **Little Stint** was seen throughout the month at Trimley Marsh SWT.

A small influx of **Ring Ouzels** occurred mid-month with 22 birds being reported, with the peak count being six birds between Minsmere sluice and Eastbridge.

A **Great Grey Shrike** was a good inland discovery at Great Waldringfield, the bird seen for one evening only in roadside hedges at TL.903.425. Numerous **Black Redstarts** were seen with the peak being five birds from Landguard.

Two **Common Cranes** were seen over Carlton Marsh 11<sup>th</sup>, then four were seen regularly between Reydon and Minsmere throughout the rest of the month.

**Wrynecks** were found by Beach Farm, Benacre 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> and Thorpeness 15<sup>th</sup>. **Lesser-spotted Woodpeckers** were seen from Santon Downham and Pipp's Ford, Needham Market.

A **Red-rumped Swallow** was briefly seen from Minsmere North Wall 15<sup>th</sup>; the same day also had six **Red Kites** observed together over Brettenham.

A **Rough-legged Buzzard** was seen over Snape village on the morning of the 21<sup>st</sup>; the same morning also saw an adult **White-tailed Eagle** NW over Boyton Marsh.

A female **Serin** was seen on the common at Landguard during the morning of 23<sup>rd</sup>, amazingly three **Serins**, of which two males, were seen on the common on 26<sup>th</sup>. **Black Tern** over the reservoir at Trimley Marsh 23<sup>rd</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>.

Two **Black-winged Stilts** were present at Trimley Marsh SWT for a couple of hours during the morning 26<sup>th</sup> before flying off high north. A juvenile **Glaucous Gull** was seen by Lowestoft South Pier 26<sup>th</sup>.

A **Great White Egret** took up residence on North Marsh 24<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup>. Ringtail **Hen Harriers** were seen at both Westleton and Boyton 26<sup>th</sup>. A **Stone Curlew** was seen away from the traditional breeding ground at Shingle Street 27<sup>th</sup>.

**Osprey** were noted from Felixstowe and Lakenheath Fen RSPB 27<sup>th</sup> and Martlesham 30<sup>th</sup>.

The **Yellow-legged Tortoiseshell** was again seen at Peewit Hill 2<sup>nd</sup> and two further sightings of this rare butterfly were forthcoming from North Warren 15<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup>.

## May 2015

The **Great White Egret** continued to be seen at Minsmere and is seen intermittently from either Island Mere or on the South levels. A ringtail **Hen Harrier** was a notable discovery along the Gipping Valley on 1<sup>st</sup>; the same day also saw two **Common Cranes** north over Ipswich docks.

A **Raven** was seen over the cliffs at Bawdsey 2<sup>nd</sup> and then possibly seen over the nearby saltings. **Black Terns** were seen at both Trimley Marsh SWT and Livermere Lake 3<sup>rd</sup>.

A **Rough-legged Buzzard** was noted SE over Melton Park 4<sup>th</sup> and a smart 1<sup>st</sup> summer male **Pied Flycatcher** was a good inland find at Chilton Hall, Sudbury the same day.

**Wood Warbler** present along the cycle track between Church Road and St. Margaret's Road, Lowestoft 5<sup>th</sup>. Up to three **Spoonbills** were seen intermittently at Minsmere during the month. A **Honey Buzzard** was seen south over Christchurch Park, Ipswich 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Golden Orioles** were heard from both Lakenheath Fen 7<sup>th</sup> then Minsmere 8<sup>th</sup>. **Grey-headed Wagtails** were noted at North Warren 7<sup>th</sup>, Trimley Marsh SWT 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> and Tinkers Marsh Walberswick 20<sup>th</sup>.



Curlew Sandpiper

A nice summer-plumaged **Curlew Sandpiper** was seen on the winter flood at Trimley Marsh SWT 7<sup>th</sup> and again 13<sup>th</sup> and sightings of this smart wader were forthcoming from both Minsmere 17<sup>th</sup> and Tinkers Marsh, Walberswick 20<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> where three birds were present at both sites.

A single **Temminck's Stint** was found on the scrape at Hollesley Marsh 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>, then two birds were present 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>, joined by a third bird from 13<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>. Further **Temminck's Stints** were seen from Trimley Marsh SWT 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> and three on Orfordness 16<sup>th</sup>. **Osprey** north over the Bird's Eye factory, Lowestoft 8<sup>th</sup> and over Minsmere 13<sup>th</sup>.

A **Bee-eater** was seen north over Covehithe Broad early morning of the 10<sup>th</sup> and then the same evening a second was noted South over the Old Sewage Works at Corton. A male **Montagu's Harrier** was seen to fly through the Benacre estate 10<sup>th</sup>.

A **Black Kite** was seen south over Shingle Street at 06:00hrs 13<sup>th</sup>; the escaped Wrentham **Black Kite** remains in residence by the church.

Two **Black-winged Stilts** spent the day at Micklemere 13<sup>th</sup>. The same day also saw a **Honey Buzzard** over Newmarket in the company of two **Common Buzzards**. A **Roseate Tern** was seen off Landguard on the mornings of both 14<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup>.



Black Kite



A **Red-throated Pipit** was seen briefly on Westleton Heath early morning of 15<sup>th</sup> whilst nearby a smart **Red-spotted Bluethroat** was present and showing well along the North Wall at Minsmere the same day.



Photo: Eddie Marsh

Red-spotted Bluethroat

On the morning of the 16<sup>th</sup>, news broke of a male **Little Bittern** singing from the reed bed at Lakenheath Fen RSPB. The bird was then seen that evening before going missing for four days, only to reappear from 20<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> enabling many to add this species to their county lists!

Along with the **Little Bittern**, the 16<sup>th</sup> saw both **Serin** and **Red-backed Shrike** at Landguard, **Black Kite** east over the

plantation at Trimley Marsh SWT, **Honey Buzzard** south over Westleton Heath and finally at least one **Bee-eater** (heard only) west over the South Wall at Breydon Water.

A male **Red-necked Phalarope** was seen on the scrape at Minsmere on the evening of 18<sup>th</sup> and remained until 26<sup>th</sup> though would often go missing for long periods. A ringtail **Montagu's Harrier** was seen at Brettenham before heading off eastwards 18<sup>th</sup>.



Serin

Photo: Stephen Wayman



A full-summer-plumaged **Red-necked Grebe** was seen at Lackford Lakes SWT 19<sup>th</sup> then on Broadwater Lake, Great Livermere 24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>. The adult **Black Brant** was again seen on the Orwell estuary from Levington 21<sup>st</sup>.



Red-necked Grebe

A 1<sup>st</sup> summer **Bonaparte's Gull** was reported from the South Wall of Breydon Water on the afternoon of the 21<sup>st</sup> before flying west towards Burgh Castle. This long-overdue bird has yet to be fully accepted in the county but surely it's only a matter of time!

A very smart adult **Broad-billed Sandpiper** was found on Tinkers Marsh, Walberswick mid-morning of the 22<sup>nd</sup> and remained the following day, allowing many to make the trek up the Blyth estuary to view this characteristic little wader.

A **Bee-eater** was seen north over the sluice at Minsmere 27<sup>th</sup>, four **Red Kite** were noted on 28<sup>th</sup> at Willisham, Brettenham, Winesham and Kirton Creek and four **Little Stint** were present on Tinkers Marsh, Walberswick 29<sup>th</sup>.

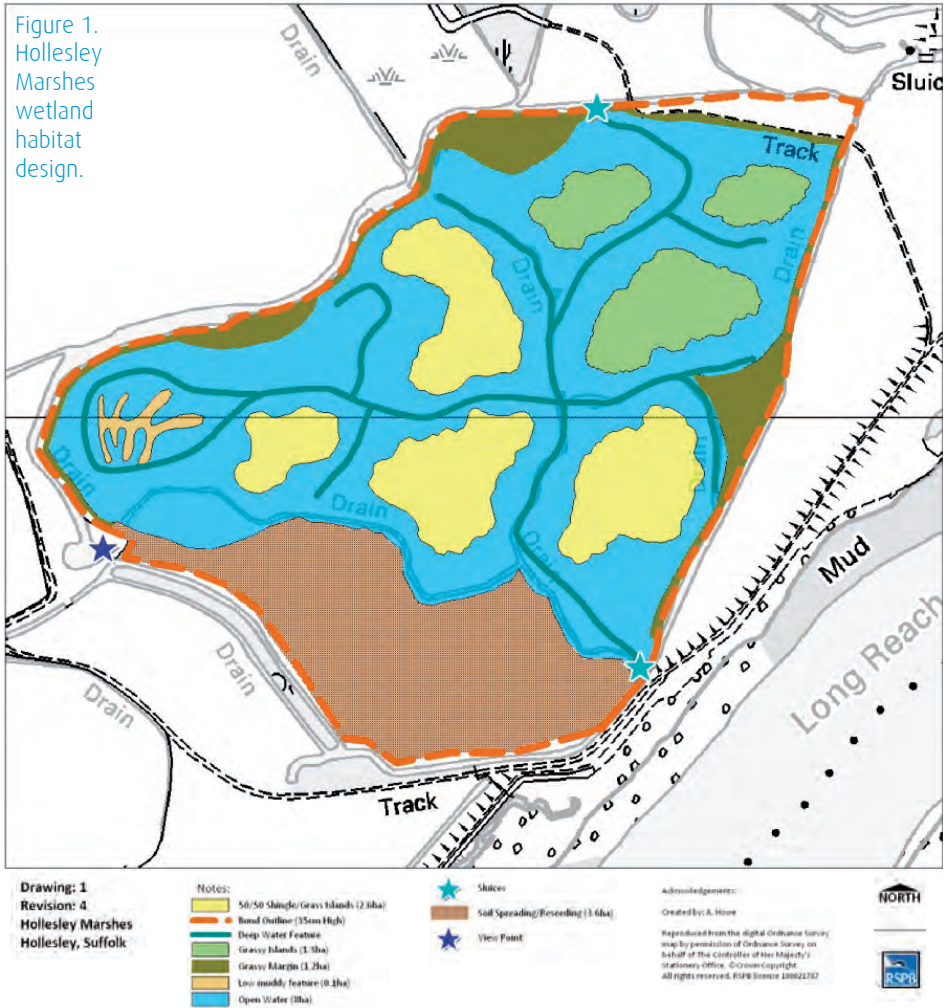
Another **Red-necked Phalarope**, this one a female, was found on the Minsmere scrape on the 30<sup>th</sup> as well as a **Temminck's Stint** at Trimley Marshes SWT and a male **Red-backed Shrike** at Southwold. The **Little Bittern** was present until the end of the month.



Broad-billed Sandpiper

# A wetland utopia at Hollesley, Suffolk

Figure 1. Hollesley Marshes wetland habitat design.



The Wadden Sea islands in the Netherlands are remarkable for both migrant and breeding birds. Texel, at the southern end of the chain, is perhaps the best known of the islands and has high levels of conservation management. In 2010, the Dutch conservation organisation Natuurmonumenten created a new nature

reserve on Texel at Utopia Farm. The reserve is a 28ha brackish lagoon behind the seawall adjacent to the Wadden Sea. Formerly a grass field under agriculture, the land was excavated to create a series of islands in a shallowly flooded lagoon. Around 84,000 m<sup>3</sup> of soil was removed and 2,000 m<sup>3</sup> of cockle

shells were brought in to cover some of the islands, which were a mix of grass, shell and mud. Seawater can enter the lagoon at high water via a sluice.

In July 2011, a group of ecologists from the RSPB visited the Netherlands and were impressed with the development of the reserve at Utopia. The site already supported good numbers of breeding Common (600 pairs), Arctic (60) and Little Terns (54), Avocets (73) and Ringed Plovers (10). Black-headed Gulls (200 pairs), Black-tailed Godwit, Oystercatcher, Lapwing, Redshank and Eider also breed. Spoonbills feed in the lagoon, and passage and wintering waders use the lagoon for both roosting and feeding. Terns and other seabirds have a distinct advantage on Texel: the island has virtually no mammalian predators, apart from a few stoats.

This type of habitat is sadly lacking in the UK, with coastal habitats under severe pressure from human activity and sea level rise. We set about looking for a suitable location to create our own 'Utopia' and settled on an under-performing area of grassland at Hollesley Marshes on the Suffolk coast.

Hollesley Marshes had seen very few breeding and passage waders, sustaining only two pairs of breeding Lapwing annually. This fell well short of our aspirations and targets for the reserve. The main issues concerned the layout of the field system and the inability to raise water levels high enough. We planned to create a new 13ha coastal wetland habitat following the design of 'Utopia'. However, the wetland would be freshwater rather than brackish, at least in the short term, due to the difficulty of constructing a sluice through the sea wall.

Holl-utopia, as the scheme was nicknamed, is a shallow wetland with a high percentage of islands (see figure 1); some grassy, some bare, some covered in sand or gravel. The

landform creates extensive areas of shallow water down to a depth of 20cm, with a deeper central ditch system. Water levels will drop during the spring and summer to expose extensive muddy areas and ultimately dry out, only retaining water in the deeper ditch features. The drying out is seen as important for rejuvenating the wetland in the future. New water control structures would allow water to both enter from, and drain to, the adjacent existing ditch system. An electric anti-predator fence around the margin of the wetland will keep the local foxes and badgers as mere spectators.

The objective was primarily to attract breeding waders such as Avocet, Ringed Plover, Lapwing and Redshank, and certainly passage and roosting waders, but also hopefully breeding terns such as Little, Sandwich and Common. All these species are under pressure in the Alde-Ore Estuary from loss of habitat, disturbance and predation. On the nearby Havergate Island, Avocets, terns and smaller gulls have been all but replaced by Lesser Black-backed and Herring Gulls relocating from elsewhere in the Estuary, and the long-term future of the island itself is far from secure due to sea level rise. Creating a new habitat for these species on the 'mainland' aims to secure their future in the local area.

By early in 2013 the RSPB received the news that it had been successful in receiving a sizable grant towards the project; the South Alde-Ore Estuary – Future for Coastal Wetlands Project. The project was generously funded by WREN (Waste Recycling and Environmental Limited) through their Biodiversity Action Fund.

The wetland creation groundworks started in August 2013, once all of the consents required to progress the project had been granted. It took the contractors 11 weeks of hard work to form the basic shape of the wetland. The striking thing about these

earthworks was their sheer industrial scale and, from the outset of the build, we knew the lower Alde and Ore would never be the same again. The work on the wetland was undertaken by Barry Day and Sons Ltd and they started by taking off an average of 20cm across the land and moving 16,000m<sup>2</sup> of soil. This material was used to form a low bank around the perimeter of the site and build up a higher area to the south of the field.

Once the land was lowered, we then set about creating 10km of deeper features using a rotary ditcher. As part of the project, the RSPB purchased a replacement rotary ditcher from the USA. This specialist machine is powered by a very large tractor and can create some fantastic features on wet grassland. In addition to creating the deeper features, the machine created a fine covering of loose soil which would produce a perfect bed for invertebrates to flourish.

To create the islands for terns we imported 1,250 tonnes of shingle from a local quarry in Wangford. This was enough to spread across one hectare of island. This was laid on a geotextile which should suppress the grass growth and keep it suitable for terns for some time.

The islands have very gently sloped edges to create lots of feeding edge for young Avocet, Lapwing and Redshank and hopefully Ringed Plover and Oystercatcher. These edges should prove popular with passage waders.

To manage the water we installed two sluices to control water levels on the site. This very simple system diverts water from the current ditch through the wetland and then feeds it back into the same ditch system. This has worked very well and the water supply for the wetland is more than sufficient to keep it wet if required – even in a dry summer. To keep the grass and rush in check across the site, we will be using Konik/Exmoor ponies from the nearby Minsmere reserve. This

hardy Polish pony is at home in this mix of shallow water and grassland and will graze the site every year to maintain the required short-grass conditions. The final task was to install the 5 foot high anti-predator fence around the edge of the wetland to prevent mammalian predation. The ‘combination’ fence (standard fence plus electric fence) is a high tensile badger mesh which is dug into the ground with four strands of electric wire. This was completed by the end of March 2014. The total cost of the project was £250k which includes the purchase of the rotary ditcher, with the groundworks costing an additional £180k.

The first breeding season has clearly shown the project to be a complete success. A variety of scarce birds appeared from the first day of flooding, including Glossy Ibis, Temminck’s Stint, Garganey, Blue-headed Wagtail, 11 Ruff, 50 Dunlin and 25 Ringed Plover. The breeding bird figures for 2014 were amazing for year one, with 41 pairs of Avocet fledging 82 young, 25 pairs of Lapwing fledging 60 young, 3 pairs of Ringed Plover fledging 9 young, 10 pairs of Redshank fledging 30 young, and 3 pairs of Oystercatcher. This is the highest level of Avocet productivity on the Suffolk coast for 30 years.

In mid-March 2015, a joint RSPB-NE-SWT workshop was held at Minsmere to discuss a wider strategy for improving the prospects for breeding waders on the Suffolk coast, both on reserves and on farmland. Hollesley provides a very useful example of what can be done to provide a secure home for waders with the vision of creating a mosaic of sites that complement each other. With the addition of other measures (such as raising water levels and adjusting grazing) working more widely with land managers we hope to reverse the declining trends for breeding waders.



# 'Open mic night'

## SOG Indoor Meeting

24 March 2015

This SOG indoor meeting was one with a difference, based on an idea by new council member Ed Keeble, who suggested that we try an 'open mic night' [albeit without a microphone!] where we could have a number of speakers giving short talks rather than the usual single speaker per event. Initially four speakers offered to speak, with a further one added when the SOG events card was sent out asking for any further contributions.

The evening started with some information from SOG President Steve Piotrowski who, along with local birder John Grant, had attended a recent 'Birders Against Wildlife Crime' conference 'Eyes In the Field', where a number of speakers including TV presenter Chris Packham had shared their views on how to help tackle wildlife crime more effectively.

Our first speaker of the evening was Ben Moyes, a young birder from mid-Suffolk, who gave an excellent talk entitled 'My birding career...so far'. Ben gave a similar talk at the BTO Conference 2014 last year when he and a few other young birders were asked to share their thoughts on how they had become inspired by birds. Ben's SOG talk detailed birding in his local River Gipping patch as well as some of his birding holidays with his family, showing a selection of photos. Ben's humorous comments got the audience chuckling when he compared his (in focus) photos with his father's (out of focus)

record shots! Ben writes a blog: <http://moysiesbirdtrips.blogspot.co.uk/>.

The next speaker was Jonny Rankin, who has made a name for himself by being proactive in raising awareness of the plight of the Turtle Dove and fund-raising to help turn the tide in its decline. Jonny talked about Dove Step – a 300-mile walk from Lakenheath Fen RSPB to Saltholme RSPB reserve undertaken over 13 days in 2014, covering the Turtle Dove's range in England. Dove Step raised £3,000 for Operation Turtle Dove. Earlier this year a team including Jonny successfully completed

Jean Garrod and Ben Moyes



Photo: Gi Grieco

Dove Step 2, a 700-mile journey via kayak, cycle and on foot from Suffolk to the French/Spanish border, mirroring part of the Turtle Dove migration route. Jonny will be speaking to SOG about this journey on 5th November. SOG Council had decided that takings on the door for the evening would go to Jonny's fundraising; the total thus raised was £92, and with £8 from the Dove Step badges, a total of £100. Jonny offered a thank you for the evening: -

'It was a pleasure to speak with Suffolk Ornithologists' Group (SOG) members on the evening of 24th March. It was clear from the evening that the group members are committed to birds both at county level and beyond. This commitment is also made abundantly clear by their generous support of the Dove Step 2 fundraising total. Thank you SOG'.

Our last speaker before the interval was Adrian Parr, Suffolk county recorder for dragonflies and damselflies, talking about insect migration. His first slides showing bird ringing – his interest years ago – included one of SOG's very own Adam Gretton on an expedition to Kashmir! Adrian remarked that whilst people are familiar with bird migration, insects too have their own migration strategies, the best-known being the Monarch butterfly. Other notable migrations include European butterflies such as Red Admiral and Painted Lady, although thanks to 'citizen science' and new research, ever more knowledge is being gained. Adrian then talked about dragonflies including the Green Darner, a North American species that can migrate in huge numbers and has even turned up in Europe. The Globe Skimmer is an interesting species with observations and stable isotope evidence suggesting that, amazingly, they migrate from India to Africa.

After the break it was the turn of Adam Gretton who talked about gathering data on the Emerald Starling. Adam was very

fortunate to visit Sierra Leone in 2013, volunteering as part of a project by RSPB and the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) to assess the distribution of Emerald Starling. BirdLife International had labelled the species 'Data Deficient' regarding its ecology, movements and population size. Adam detailed his findings (with over 260 birds seen going to roost one evening!) as well as possible problems in the future due to mining and the wild bird trade. He also drew comparisons between the number of globally threatened birds in Sierra Leone and in the UK and specifically Suffolk and then contrasted the number of people working in conservation or belonging to bird clubs. Perhaps surprisingly, CSSL has a comparable membership to that of SOG, but the country has 14 globally-threatened birds compared to 4 in the UK, where over 1.1 million people are RSPB members.

Only four months after Adam was there, Sierra Leone (still recovering from the war) was struck by the tragedy of Ebola. Although it will clearly be some time before things return to normal, Adam hoped that in time SOG members would be able to visit this wonderful country, and offered to advise anyone considering a visit.

The final talk of the evening, given by Gi Grieco, was on the birds of Mallorca. The thrust of this talk was to show how birding on the island could be combined with a family holiday. Gi had visited S'Albufera and the Boquer Valley – both relatively easy to visit, being a short distance from nearby holiday resorts such as Puerto Pollensa.

From feedback, the meeting and format were successful and thanks go to everyone who gave a talk. Other SOG members have already volunteered to give further talks next year and we look forward to hearing from anyone else who would like to offer a talk – long or short.



# Field Trip Reports

Jonathan Lawley

## STANTA

16 May 2015

**Leader: Paul Holness**



We were a full complement of 16, having had to turn down four applicants, who met up with Paul Holness and an old military friend Trevor Geddes at West Tofts camp on 16th May. This was the first time for some years that a spring visit was possible and, although it was hardly a blazing day, mostly the sun shone and the rain stayed away.

As has become the norm, Paul took us first to Frog Hill where we debussed and took in the best view in East Anglia before being released to walk on along the road in search particularly of Redstarts. It might have been the cool weather, but at first hardly a bird showed itself. Then, with the sun, out came a great array including a pair of Redstart nesting in a Scots pine and a female Goshawk amongst many other species including Skylark, Nuthatch, Tree-creeper, Blackcap and Garden Warbler.

We moved on for a walk down to Fowlmere where the shallow water stretching over eight or nine acres was covered with numerous Little Grebe, Pochard, Tufted Duck, Moorhen, Coot, Greylag Geese and Mallard. Above it all and against a background of the forest and clear sky, a pair of Hobbys jinked in pursuit of apparently abundant prey.

Then it was back to the road and a stop at Smokers Hole where more than one Stonechat posed obligingly on the top of clumps of gorse. Now it was time to move on to a place where Paul said there was a chance to see Stone Curlew. The piece of

rough ground, cultivated like several others by the military, did not look promising. Paul had given no guarantees and as we all surveyed the scene with scopes and binos, it did not look as if it would be possible to pick out a bird, even were it there. It was Paul who spotted the Stone Curlew apparently sitting on eggs, about sixty yards away. There was great excitement as in turn we all managed to focus on the incredibly well-camouflaged bird, invisible but for a yellow bill and a huge eye. Being keen not to disturb the nesting pair, we moved on without due delay, having seen two more Redstarts, to our usual luncheon spot beside the crystal clear Little Wissey River. Here, as we munched our sandwiches, we spotted a Tree Pipit bathing, a Reed Warbler and a pair of nesting Grey Wagtail.

After lunch we moved on to the Harrier landing strip, where on previous visits in July we have found a great variety of rare flowers as well as butterflies and other insects. In May there is a lot less to be seen, although we were surprised to see two Curlew. In addition we saw Skylark, Tree Pipit and a Woodlark with food in its beak. As the latter was giving an anxiety call, we moved on.

We stopped at Stamford Water for the first time for several years and saw four Gadwall, a good sixty Mute Swans but only one brood of six cygnets, as well as Grey Heron, Tufted Duck and Reed Warbler. Water Rail was heard but not seen. The main botanical interest of the trip was here in the shape of a dozen rare water-avens, as well as winter cress, bugle and celery-leaved buttercup.

It had been a superb day with fifty-nine bird species seen. Thanks are due to Adam Stuart for recording them. Once again many thanks to Paul Holness with all his knowledge and commitment for leading us round this very special part of England, and to the Stanta Commandant and the British Army for sanctioning the visit.



Photo: Allan Myatt

Steve Fryett

## Shingle Street and Upper Hollesley Common

25 April 2015

### Leader Steve Fryett

Once again it was raining at Shingle Street and somewhat chilly. With 11 members assembled we set off into the wind to the tennis courts finding several obliging Linnets but little else. A long-distance female Marsh Harrier was noted perched in a bush beyond Oxley Marsh. Approaching the allotments we saw a couple of hares were “hareing” around as they do but few species were noted except singing Blackcap and Chiffchaff. Passing the allotments we decided to take a shorter route back past the Martello noting Garden Warbler, Common Whitethroat and another Blackcap. We had a good opportunity to listen to and distinguish the song of Garden Warbler from Blackcap as they sang from the same bush. We headed back to the Coastguard Cottages without noting any new addition to the day so far. Getting back early gave us an opportunity to nip round to Hollesley Marsh to check out

the waders. Goldcrest and Blackcap were quickly seen along the track to the wader pools. Sedge and Reed Warbler both sang in nearby reeds with good numbers of House Martins and Swallows overhead. But it was the waders we had come for and we were not disappointed by the good selection. We recorded several Avocet, two Ruff, eight Dunlin, Redshank, Ringed Plover, two Black-tailed Godwits and a single Whimbrel that dropped in. Long distance they may all have been, but two Yellow Wagtails stood out very well for all to see.

We left the Marsh for Upper Hollesley Common and lunch. From the car park a Woodlark was displaying in flight with at least two singing Blackcaps. With the rain replaced by sunshine we planned the full circuit of the common, quickly noting overhead raptors with at least five Common Buzzard and a pair of displaying Kestrels. A tricky species to spot on the ground was a Mistle Thrush, well-camouflaged on the common, looking for food. One of our target species was Common Redstart and we were lucky enough to hear one singing in birch woodland although no visual contact was made. Finally we recorded Dartford Warbler and a pair of Stonechat, noting the male with food, as we returned to the car park. Non-avian species noted were two small copper butterflies and a female adder.

# Kessingland to Benacre 22

March 2015

**Leader: Richard Smith**

En route to the start of the meeting, I and a couple of other SOG members decided to stop off at Blythburgh to have a scan of the river. We found a number of waders including good numbers of Avocet, several Black-tailed Godwit that flew in with the odd Curlew and Redshank, and some Dunlin. Up river we saw a Kestrel while the other way a Buzzard and over the far shore lots of waders flew up, chased by a Peregrine. The falcon was unsuccessful and gave up the chase but then proceeded to fly over the river, turn and go right over our heads – a fantastic sight. These raptors were a forerunner of the day ahead.

Of the 12 members who assembled at the car park, half were recent new members,

which was lovely to see. Our first port of call was at Kessingland sewage works where we saw a single Grey Wagtail amongst the Pied, a few Goldcrest and a Chiffchaff along the hedgerow. We were all able to see a Chiffchaff in the hand a little while later as we bumped into the Kessingland Ringing Group and they had just caught one in their nets. We thanked them and headed down the path towards the church. This gave us views across the Kessingland Levels and we spent a productive time scanning the area. Standing stationary in a nearby field was a lone Grey Heron until a couple of Herring Gulls mobbed it and chased it off. One of the local hybrid Hooded Crows was there too. In the skies we started to pick up some raptors, a couple of Kestrels then a number of Buzzards, counting up to six.

We then headed down to the beach and walked along to the sluice, finding two Black Redstarts and Richard briefly saw a Wheatear. Further scanning from there produced further views of raptors with the addition of a Sparrowhawk hunting a murmuration of Starlings. Out to sea were several Red-throated Divers on the sea and



Grey Wagtail

Photo: Craig Shaw

small groups of Gannet north including an adult that banked round to come closer in.

At Benacre Broad we couldn't traverse the breach caused by the recent high tides and get to the birdhide, so stopped for lunch on the beach viewing both the Broad and the sea. On the Broad were lots of gulls, ducks including Teal and a few waders with Dunlin, Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover and four Sanderling. We continued to see a number of raptors, including four Buzzards in the scope at one time and a couple of Marsh Harriers. Whilst scanning above the trees we briefly saw a Raven, probably the one recently reported in the area.

We returned north to the sluice, admiring the Black Redstarts again and another member managed to catch up with the Wheatear which unfortunately eluded everyone else. Whilst there, we picked up news from Suffolk BINS that a White Stork had been seen nearby in a field at Covehithe that morning as well as a Red Kite later.

Back at the car park, we thanked Richard for an excellent trip, some said goodbye while those remaining decided to have a search around the back roads of Covehithe to try and relocate the White Stork. Driving into Wrentham we noted a raptor overhead. We pulled in to have a look and identified it as a Red Kite – not the escaped Black Kite that had been in the area – which for some of us was the sixth raptor species of the day. We then drove around South Cove and Cove Bottom but had no luck finding the stork although stopping off at Potters Bridge we had a lovely female Sparrowhawk skim across the reedbeds in the late afternoon light, then nearby a close Buzzard in a tree followed by two others over some trees. There were also three Marsh Harriers hunting over the reedbeds and two Barn Owls. Overall it was a fantastic day, with great company and a treat to encounter so many raptors.

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Eddie Bathgate

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## Landguard Bird Observatory

Christopher Bridge is the new Warden at Landguard Bird Observatory for 2015 where he will be ringing until mid November.

Now aged 24, Chris studied Environmental Conservation at Bangor University, graduating in 2012. A bird ringer for eight years, Chris has worked abroad in Iceland, Kenya, Norway and Spain. His UK experience includes ringing at Spurn Bird Observatory and on Hillbury Island off the Lancashire coast.

Off to a flying start, Chris has already spotted a White-tailed Eagle – the first site record for this bird.



## A poet's eye view of the Starling

The Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) by John Heath-Stubbs

The starling is my darling, although  
I don't much approve of its  
Habits. Proletarian bird,  
Nesting in holes and corners, making a mess,  
And sometimes dropping its eggs  
Just any old where - on the front lawn, for instance.

It thinks it can sing, too. In springtime  
They are on every rooftop, or high bough,  
Or telegraph pole, blithering away  
Discords, with clichés picked up  
From other melodists.

But go to Trafalgar Square,  
And stand, about sundown, on the steps of St. Martin's;  
Mark then, in the air,  
The starlings, before they roost, at their evolutions -  
Scores of starlings, wheeling,  
Streaming and twisting, the whole murmuration  
Turning like one bird: an image  
Realized, of the City.



Photo: Gi Grieco



If you start looking for and reading poems about birds, you will find that birders are not the only ones capable of incredible powers of observation; that the looks, habits and behaviour of birds can be appreciated and used by poets to convey not only observations about birds but about humanity.

Let me take you through some of my favourite details of this poem. I love the surprise that John Heath-Stubbs creates in the first stanza. He begins by calling the starling his 'darling'. Was that just a convenient rhyme or does it refer to an old Scottish song called, 'Charlie is my darling, my darling'? It doesn't matter if it does or doesn't because it begins a lovely wittering rhythm for the whole of the first stanza. If you can listen to the words in your head they sound like a starling 'blithering away'. Not only is the rhythm wittering, but informal language such as 'making a mess' and 'just any old where' convey that sense of chattering pointlessly at length. From the rhythm, I next enjoy the poet's observations about the starling's habits. He makes me smile when he describes how this bird will nest anywhere such as 'holes and corners' and carelessly drop its eggs 'anywhere'. Its behaviour, he suggests, with no concern for what is the politically correct approach to making non-judgemental comments, is 'common' like the meaning of the starling's Latin name *vulgaris*. I also love the way that he begins by taking us in one direction – making us think he adores the bird: 'my darling,' then moving in a totally different direction by insulting the bird by calling it 'proletarian' and drawing attention to all the negative aspects of its behaviour. We wonder at the end of the first stanza, what does he actually feel about this bird?

The second stanza seems to answer my question as the poet draws attention to further negative behaviour. Clearly, Heath-Stubbs does not appreciate the musicality of the starling, as 'blithering away' is fairly insulting. Look it up in the Oxford English Dictionary and the definition does

not hold back: 'senselessly talkative'. Oh dear... and this followed by both 'discords' and 'clichés'. What? Surely we are being invited to join in his disapproval and class-conscious snobbishness about the behaviour of this common bird? Possibly. But then the argument changes once again...

And we move to that moment of awe and appreciation which any birder instantly recognises. How magical, how breathtaking... how do they do that?

Be in the right place at the right time and watch these birds at their evolutions as they come into roost. OK, John, I get the near pun on revolutions and evolutions as well as the double meaning which conveys the question: 'How have these birds developed and evolved to be able to fly (revolve) in their thousands, creating that magical aerial display which leaves us astounded, amazed, awestruck?' As Heath-Stubbs asks us to share with him the 'wheeling, streaming and twisting' of thousands of birds flying at incredible speed and in close proximity to each other, we instantly recognise his description and the birding observation. It is a staggering piece of behaviour. And thus we move to the close of the poem with a sense of how magical these common birds are.

I can see the poem's theme is really about the way thousands and thousands of people in London move through the space of the city in a strange kind of organised, controlled way. I can see them in my mind's eye getting on buses, walking across bridges and getting on tube trains – they move like an organised mass without apparently communicating but, in some kind of way, in touch with one another.

John Heath-Stubbs uses the characteristic behaviour of starlings that he has so closely observed to create a magical metaphor to convey the behaviour of people in London. It is a fascinating observation but, if I am honest, I enjoy his observations about the behaviour of *Sturnus vulgaris* even more than his observations about humanity.



## Council for 2015

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**Vacant Post** (2016)  
**Adam Gretton** (to 2017)  
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**Keven Verlander** (to 2018)  
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**Mike Jeans**  
**Mike Marsh**  
**Philip Murphy**



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### Treasurer/Membership Secretary

**Matthew Deans**, c/o 49c Oak Hill, Hollesley, Suffolk IP12 3JY



# Suffolk Ornithologists' Group



## Who we are

- Founded in 1973 by a group of Suffolk birdwatchers
- Associated with the Suffolk Naturalists' Society
- SOG remains an independent birding group and is a registered charity

## What we do

### Networking

- A voice for Suffolk birdwatchers
- With established links to many naturalist and conservation organisations

### Media

- Strong web presence - [www.sogonline.org.uk](http://www.sogonline.org.uk)
- Active Twitter feed - @suffolkbirds1
- Quarterly magazine - **The Harrier**
- Annual review - **Suffolk Birds** report

### Trips and talks

- Annually (20+) field trips - ideal for novices or experts and young or old alike
- Opportunities to visit hot spots and receive practical ID tips in the field
- Programme of talks and presentations - variety of topics (county, national, or international) with quality speakers



### Protecting birds

- Actively lobbies to protect habitats and birding amenities
- Provides a county-wide field force of bird surveyors (50+)
- Organises and promotes bird surveys
- Inspires and undertakes conservation projects
- Bursaries available
- Numerous conservation achievements:
  - Contributed to several species breeding successes (Barn Owls, Peregrines, etc.)
  - Undertakes monitoring and ringing
  - Involvement on community and education projects
  - Organises and hosts dawn chorus walks
  - Assists with fund-raising for bird hides
  - On-going participation in key bird surveys for the BTO, such as BBS, the Bird Atlas, various species surveys and WeBS
  - Provides surveys for commercial organisations, such as environmental waste companies etc.



Suffolk Ornithologists' Group

*For birds & for birders*

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