



The Harrier

Suffolk Ornithologists' Group



Inside:

- Brecks Stone Curlews
- Standardising bird names
- Death of the field notebook?

Contents

Editorial	1
Stone Curlews in the Brecks	Tim Cowan.....2
Record autumn roost at Cavenham Heath	Mike Taylor.....6
Standardising names feature	
Against.....	David Collins.....7
For.....	Tim Inskipp.....10
Comment.....	Mark Cocker.....12
BINS Winter Wonderland	Roy Marsh.....13
Colour supplement	
No. 1 Introducing the Stone Curlew	
No. 2&3 Stone Curlews	
No. 4 BINS Winter Wonderland	
Field Meetings	
Orfordness 'Crane Day'.....	Val Lockwood.....15
Walberswick.....	Adam Gretton.....17
Iken Cliff	Steve Fryett.....18
Death of the field notebook?.....	Steve Abbott.....19
Looking back.....	Philip Murphy.....20
Members' Survey findings.....	Phil Brown.....22
Knettishall Heath bought by SWT	Steve Aylward.....24
News	
SOG on Twitter.....	Phil Whittaker.....25
Announcements	
Nightingale Survey: help needed	Mick Wright.....26
Dragonflies Atlas: help needed	Adrian Parr.....27
Christmas Wordsearch Result.....	28
Suffolk Birds available.....	28
Cranes correction	28
Sponsored bird race.....	28
Drought warning.....	28

Cover photograph – Kingfisher

Digiscoper: Barry Woodhouse. Shot taken in July 2011 from the 'double-decker' hide overlooking Jason's Pool at Lackford Lakes, SWT, using a Nikon D3000 attached to a Celestron Ultima 80ed scope. ISO 400 with shutter speed 1/100th

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All material for the July 2012 Harrier should be with the Editor no later than w/e 15 June

Subscription rates (2012)

SOG: Adults – £15.00; Family £17.00

Joint SOG/Suffolk Naturalists' Society: Adults – £28.00; Family – £32.00

Website: www.sogonline.org.uk Email: info@sogonline.org.uk

Suffolk Ornithologists' Group Registered Charity No. 801446



The Harrier

March 2012 Magazine No.168

Suffolk Ornithologists' Group

Greetings birders!

As was promised last summer, in this issue we have an outline of the key findings obtained from the 2011 members' survey.

Although the level of response to this research was light, nevertheless it still provided SOG's Council with valuable feedback and has assisted us in formulating SOG strategy afresh. As the presentation of the findings at last month's AGM (note a full review of the AGM will appear in the June issue of the Harrier) made plain, overall members appear to be largely satisfied with the Group, but there were a couple of areas where change might be considered and some future issues that could profit us if planned for.

Chief amongst the suggested changes was, according to some members, a need to grow SOG's membership, especially amongst younger bird watchers. In considering this request the Council concluded that efforts first needed to be dedicated to enhancing SOG's presence in the wider birding community. To that end Council were pleased to authorise an experimental SOG Twitter account (see Phil Whittaker's article on page 25 about this subject).

Council also decided that some form of 'presenter' summarising the benefits of SOG for Suffolk's birders was needed. Accordingly a 'business card' was commissioned and a printed sample of this has been inserted into this issue. The card is for presentation by SOG members to potential members and seeks to encourage their interest in the Group.

To further enhance SOG's presence but, more importantly, to enable us to support our recorders and the numerous survey projects many members are involved in, computer and presentation equipment is being sought. As SOG has always run a financially tight ship, the necessary funding for these important investments has to be sought. While the Suffolk Naturalists' Society has been approached, we still need additional sponsorship monies or gifts in kind to help us amass the necessary funds. Any suggestions in respect of funding sources should be passed to Roy Marsh (info@sogonline.org.uk).

Meantime, look out for news of more developments over the course of the year and we wish you an excellent spring bird season.

Finally, there's my usual plea for more articles and thanks to those members who responded last time, plus apologies to those who are awaiting their article's publication.

Views expressed in *The Harrier* are not necessarily those of the editor or the Suffolk Ornithologists' Group

Editor: Tim Cowan is the RSPB's Stone Curlew Project Officer for the Brecks. He has been in post for the last ten years and, over that time, has built up an extensive knowledge of this important conservation priority species. Given its recent shift in conservation status in the UK it seemed timely to ask Tim for his view on how this important project is going and what the species' future could be?

Tim Cowan

Stone Curlews from red to amber status – but can this amber status be maintained?

Following 25 year's of hard work, in 2009 the conservation status of Stone Curlews in England was downgraded from red to amber. By then the population had more than doubled, from around 150 breeding pairs in 1985 to over 370 in 2009, with much of this conservation work undertaken in the Brecklands of Norfolk and Suffolk.

How was this successful population recovery achieved, and how secure is the future for these special birds?

Stone Curlews – once common

In the nineteenth century there would have been thousands of Stone Curlews nesting throughout England, wherever there were light, free-draining, stony soils. Nowhere better typifies perfect Stone Curlew habitat in England than the Breckland area of Norfolk and Suffolk. This relatively open landscape underwent clearance at the hands of Stone Age farmers and, by the thirteenth century, Breckland was a vast grass heathland grazed by sheep and rabbits, with some areas farmed

for short periods and then allowed to return to heath. Largely due to over-grazing, so bare and open was the landscape that sand dunes were a feature and sand storms were common¹. The Brecks were then the main stronghold of Stone Curlews in England and remain so today.

However, by the mid 1980s barely 150-160 pairs of Stone Curlews remained in England, having declined by 85% since the 1940s. Their range had contracted massively, with the majority of birds confined to two main areas; about one third of the population in the Wessex area (Hampshire and Wiltshire) and two-thirds in Breckland with small outliers on the Suffolk coast and in north Norfolk.

A recovery project launched

So, in 1985, the RSPB² launched a Stone Curlew recovery project in Breckland, with a similar project starting in Wessex a few years later. The project consisted of two parts; a research project, to establish the causes of the decline and to develop solutions, and the formation of a monitoring and protection team.

Research findings

i. Habitat loss

This research quickly established that the principal reason for Stone Curlew decline was habitat loss. The amount of critically important grass heathland habitat had reduced enormously during the twentieth century. In 1900 there was 29,000ha of grass heathland in Breckland. By the mid 1980s this had shrunk to 7000ha – that's a loss of almost 80%. The

¹ Editor: In some instances these storms were on a massive scale. The medieval village of Santon for example was completely overwhelmed by the Great 'Sand Flood'. In the mid 1600s, several sandstorms drove a huge body of sand, covering up to a thousand acres, from Lakenheath to the edge of Santon, then, over the period 1665 to 1670, it progressively buried most of the village and finally drove the last parishioner away that year. ² This project was partially funded by English Nature, then subsequently known as Natural England, under the guise of the jointly funded 'Action for Birds in England'.

loss of grass heathland began in the 1920s with the planting of Thetford Forest³. Then this reduction continued pre and post the Second World War when improvements to farming techniques made it viable to plough the land for agriculture. Urban and road expansions also contributed to further heathland loss.

ii. Grass sward length critical

The research further showed that Stone Curlews nested in areas where the grass sward was less than 2cm tall⁴. This highlighted a problem of sward length at many of the existing heaths, where sheep grazing had declined and rabbit numbers had still not recovered fully from the 1954 outbreak of myxomatosis. Indeed, through under-grazing, many of these heaths were in very poor condition causing growth of rank vegetation and scrub encroachment.

iii. Negative effect of reduced livestock

This research also showed that Stone Curlews favoured feeding in areas where there were livestock⁵, which suggested they might have been negatively effected by a reduction of livestock farming, largely sheep, in Eastern England during the twentieth century.

vi. Arable preference problematic

A high proportion of Stone Curlews was increasingly nesting on arable land, at times as many as three-quarters of the Brecks birds. The bare ground provided by spring sown cropping provides ideal nesting habitat, but the nest and chicks become vulnerable to farming operations, for example when fallow land is put to crop, or during rolling of spring barley or hoeing of sugar beet.

Research conclusions

The species management conclusions derived from this research were two-fold. First, it proposed the team should seek to reverse the loss and degradation of the heathlands and second, an attempt should be made to

protect nests on arable land from farming operations. In order to assess the success of these project objectives it was also realised that it was vital to have accurate data on the size of the Stone Curlew population and their annual productivity – hence the need for a team on the ground.

Monitoring and protecting

Thus the second of the project's aims was the creation of the RSPB monitoring and protection team. This aspect of the project started in earnest during the 1985 breeding season and continues in much the same way today. The team's work involves, as a means of determining the size of the breeding population, locating as many Stone Curlew nests as possible and then protecting those on arable land by informing farmers of their exact location so they can be avoided during farming operations. Stone Curlew chicks leave the nest soon after hatching, so the work also involves catching chicks and holding them whilst farming operations take place – a time-consuming task. This work obviously involves close cooperation with farmers, to whom the team are very grateful, and the vast majority of which are very keen to protect the Stone Curlews on their land. Between 1990 and 2010 25% of fledged chicks monitored by RSPB had survived due to human intervention – which is the difference between a declining and an increasing Stone Curlew population.

In addition, Stone Curlew chicks are fitted with colour-rings (see colour supplement) to make them individually identifiable. A large proportion of the population is now so ringed and this enables the RSPB to far more accurately determine population size and productivity.

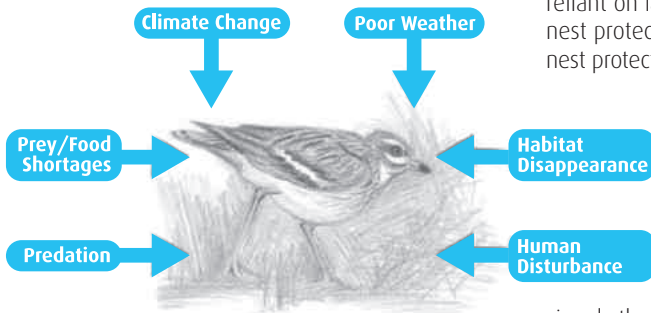
A vulnerable species

Overall this species' breeding productivity has fluctuated considerably from a peak of 1.15

³ Editor: The Forestry Commission has since begun a programme of heathland re-generation within the Forest which, it should also be observed, contains substantial areas of clear-fell in it which Stone Curlews have been known to utilise. ⁴ Green and Griffiths, 1994.

⁵ Green, Tyler and Bowden, 1999.

chicks fledged per pair in 1996, to an average of around 0.9 in the Project's early years, dropping to 0.6 of late – although still securing an average across the project of over 0.7, enough to maintain population increase. It is interesting to note that the two least productive years in 2009 and 2010 followed the end of the set-aside scheme. In 2011 there has been some improvement, possibly due to increased participation in the 2005 Environment Stewardship Scheme mitigating the effects of set-aside loss.



The Stone Curlew is subject to multiple pressures.

With the loss of nests to farming operations significantly reduced, the main causes of nest failure prior to hatching are attributable to predation, nest abandonment due to the surrounding crop becoming too high and some egg infertility. Chicks are also lost to predation and if the spring/early summer weather is wet and/or cold then chick losses can be high.

Steady growth

The protection of nests on arable land has proved very successful and the UK Stone Curlew population has grown steadily to over 400 pairs in 2011 (circa 260 in Breckland). In the Brecks, this increase has mainly taken place on arable sites, with now around 200 pairs, whereas the number of pairs on heathland has increased little since the mid 1980s. The research into preferred sward

height for Stone Curlews was used to inform heathland management but, whilst some heaths have been improved and new heathland created, other sites have deteriorated. The net result of this is that there is little increase in the overall Stone Curlew population on heathland.

Is this programme sustainable?

Certainly Stone Curlews are in a much healthier state than 25 years ago, however to maintain the population this robust situation is heavily reliant on labour-intensive, time-consuming nest protection on arable land. Without this nest protection the Stone Curlews would decline again. Furthermore, as species numbers continue to grow, it also becomes increasingly difficult to monitor and protect – which inevitably demands yet more time and effort. So, while the status shift from red to amber is cause for celebration, it also

signals the need to find a new approach to Stone Curlew conservation that will allow the population to flourish without the need for such intensive intervention measures and, in the long-term, a shift of resources to other red list species in need of urgent attention.

More heathland and nest plots

This need for intensive intervention might be reduced if enough nesting habitat were provided so that a high proportion of Stone Curlews could safely nest in non-cropped areas. This 'safe' nesting habitat would take the form of heavily grazed grass heathland, and fallow nest plots on arable land. Fallow nest plots can be created on arable land through the Environmental Stewardship Scheme (ESS), and are already used to good effect, but in small numbers. It is worth noting that although the Stone Curlew is a flagship Brecks species, the efforts being dedicated to it are

⁶ In the Breckland Biodiversity Audit the guild representing the Stone Curlew's preferred habitat, the 'Disturbance and Intensive Grazing Guild', is said to contain 132 conservation priority species and 30 specialist Breckland species, including beetles, bugs, moths, flowering plants, spiders, flies and lichen, plus the Woodlark. ⁷ Johnston and Green, 2009. ⁸ Ibid.

doubly helpful as it benefits other species⁶. Research has shown that, if nest protection on arable land were to cease and the present rate of increase in the Stone Curlew population is to be maintained, ten times as much good quality grass heathland habitat would be required than currently exists. This research also indicated that to merely maintain the existing Stone Curlew population (i.e. with no further population increase) four times as much heathland would be required⁷. Either way, the project would involve large-scale heathland restoration and/or creation.

The proportion of arable Stone Curlews nesting on fallow nest plots required to cease nest protection measures altogether would be 100%⁸. From the present total of 50 fallow nest plots, this would involve the provision of some 150 more nest plots throughout Breckland. This said, it would be impossible to achieve 100% nesting on such plots, as some birds would continue to nest in crops no matter how many plots are provided.

So our vision for the future of Stone Curlews in Breckland involves large-scale improvement of existing heathland and/or creation of new heathland and widespread provision of fallow plots on arable land. In the short-term we will continue our nest protection programme until this vision has been realised. By this means we believe this bird's amber status will be maintained, perhaps improving to green over the medium to long-term.



Resting Stone Curlew.

Editor: The RSPB are to be congratulated by all birders for their substantial and sustained efforts on behalf of Stone Curlews and most would agree they should continue to be supported by the birding community into the future as well.

But I think a note of caution needs to be aired. Some time ago it was appreciated by the RSPB, before the withdrawal of Natural England funding for this protection work, that such intensive intervention is not sustainable over the long-term. Thus in time these RSPB efforts will inevitably be scaled back. They are determined this will not occur until the new conservation measures are introduced – i.e. more suitable heathland and further fallow plots are available. So, while to the RSPB the need for the continued conservation of Stone Curlews is not in doubt, I understand there remain imponderables over what is to be done, and by when. Once the RSPB's future plans are clear and as more evidence of their efforts' impact becomes available, I've asked Tim to give us an update.

Meanwhile, I think we can all rest assured that the Brecks' Stone Curlews are in safe hands. So, well done Tim and your team!

References:

- Green, R.E. & Griffiths, G.H., 1994. 'Use of preferred nesting habitat by Stone Curlews *Burhinus oediacnemus* in relation to vegetation structure'.
- Green, R.E., Tyler, G.A. & Bowden, C.G.R., 1999. 'Habitat selection, ranging behaviour and diet of the Stone Curlew (*Burhinus oediacnemus*) in southern England'.
- Johnston, A & Green, R., 2009. 'Projections of future population trends in the population of Stone Curlews in England'.

Editor: In Suffolk the Stone Curlew is no longer confined to the Brecks. In 2011 there were twelve pairs of breeding Stone Curlews along the Suffolk coast at Minsmere and other locations. A total of ten chicks were fledged. In the next issue, we are hoping to get up to speed with the heathland habitats developments around Dunwich that could benefit this species still further.

Cavenham Heath Stone Curlews

– 2011's unprecedented pre-migratory roost

Cavenham Heath NNR is one of several places in Breckland where Stone Curlews traditionally gather post-breeding and prior to migrating south.

The birds tend to favour the area of heath to the north of the unclassified road running through the reserve. Here the habitat is a mosaic of short, rabbit-grazed acid grassland and heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) heath. The extent of apparent heather cover has changed markedly over the last 10 years – in 2000, very little was evident at a distance as it was intensively grazed by rabbits but, in the last few years, the heather has flourished and become much more obvious, perhaps due to a few wetter summers and reduced rabbit numbers. The increasingly mature heather presumably affords the birds shelter, as does the topography of that part of the heath, both natural and man-made (a large WW2 anti-glider ditch and resultant hummocks of spoil run across the heath). The birds also frequent the adjacent quarry at times, and can often be seen flying backwards and forwards between the quarry and the reserve.

A traditional roost

Usually the roost begins to develop around the middle of July and reaches a peak between late August and mid-September. Numbers drop sharply in October, with normally only a few remaining by the end of the month, and

very few seen after early November¹. The table below summarises roost information for the years 2000-2011:

Year	Max Count	Date	Date last seen
2000	49	27 September	
2001	28	2 September	
2002	28	Late July	
2003	30	2 October	20 October
2004	47	17 September	3 November
2005	38	21 September	13 November
2006	60+	Late August	Early November
2007	42	25 August	Late October
2008	105	10 September	
2009	70	16 August	Early November
2010	94	18 September	27 October
2011	157	23 September	8 January 2012

An exceptional year

As can be seen there is evidence of an increase in numbers of birds at the roost from 2008, with 2011 proving to be a truly exceptional year, and not just in terms of numbers. First, the roost started to build up unusually early – at the beginning of July. Second, the numbers involved were unprecedented – Jo Jones of the RSPB counted 157 on 23 September². Then a couple of days later SOG member Barry Woodhouse arrived at a similar count – at least 150 and possibly as many as 170 birds. These two counts quite possibly constitute the largest³ recent known aggregation of Stone Curlews in Suffolk (see colour supplement for pictures of this roost).

Third, although as usual numbers declined rapidly in October, a few remained long into the winter (presumably as a result of the mild conditions), with the sighting of two birds on 8 January being the latest ever according to the site's records. The table right summarises chronologically the roost of 2011.

A reflection of breeding success?

The increase in the Cavenham roost may illustrate the success of the RSPB Stone Curlew

¹ There are several reports of up to six birds overwintering at Cavenham this winter. ² This count was made from a vehicle, north of the roost, actually on the heath, which is closed to the public at this time. This is usually the only way to view the whole roost (essential for monitoring the Stone Curlew population) as many birds are hidden from the track by the combination of mature heather and the topography mentioned above. ³ The largest on record appears to be that of Troston Heath in the 1940s when 600 were reported. Cited in 'The Birds of Suffolk' Steve Piotrowski, Helm 2003.

Date	Number of Birds	Observer
2 July	15	M. Taylor
22 July	25+	M. Taylor
24 July	30	B. Woodhouse
28 July	59	M. Wright
24 August	97	M. Taylor
12 September	114	J. Jones (RSPB)
15 September	144	J. Jones (RSPB)
23 September	157	J. Jones (RSPB)
25 September	150-170	B. Woodhouse
27 September	120	M. Taylor
12 October	61+	M. Taylor
28 October	5	M. Taylor
12 November	6	C. Hainsworth
20 November	8	T. Humpage
22 November	3	M. Taylor
27 November	2	D. Balmer
7 December	1-2	C. Hainsworth
8 January	2	J. Rankin

recovery project. This success may also be due in part to the increasing suitability of the habitat with the developing heather on the reserve affording better cover for the roosting birds.

Editor's note: Stone Curlews are renowned for the quality and nature of their visual acuity, with reference often made to their 'binocular vision'. Given this apparent reliance on their eyes and a tendency to migrate overnight, I have wondered whether they rely on moonlight to assist them in picking out landmarks during migration and, therefore, do they prefer to travel on moonlit nights?

Editor's note: The issue of bird name standardisation remains contentious. In this feature two advocates put the case for and against standardisation. Then Mark Cocker sets the debate into a wider natural history context.

David Collins – *with thanks to Tim Inskip for helpful comments on the draft article*

The case against standardisation

The editor's 'deliberate error' of referring to Pallas's Warbler rather than the 'standardised'

English name Pallas's Leaf Warbler (or should that be Pallas' Leaf Warbler?) in Harrier #165¹, prompts me to write an article on this controversial subject.

Back in the 1970s, when I was just old enough to worry about which birds I had or hadn't seen, it was still just about respectable to use any vernacular name for a bird. Hence what is now generally known as the Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* (or according to the 'official

language' Northern Lapwing) was locally (Northamptonshire) known also as either Peewit or Green Plover. Up and down the country these and others were names that are now increasingly being consigned to history.



Pallas's Warbler or, to be precise, Pallas's Leaf Warbler

World travel suggests need for standardisation of English names

Then birdwatchers began travelling throughout Europe and beyond. At first it was just a trickle of enthusiasts, but with the advent of mass tourism and cheap flights, the trickle soon became a flood. And with this freedom to roam came the realisation that English common names were sometimes completely different between continents or even neighbouring countries. What to do about it?

¹ So now you all officially know – although some of you, more eagle-eyed than Adam and I, spotted a few others errors! Hélas!

Ornithological opinion was mixed. Karel Voous of the Zoological Museum in Amsterdam, who compiled the 'List of Recent Holarctic Bird Species'² on behalf of the British Ornithologists' Union (BOU), put it rather well:

"A recent tendency can be observed to make English names as scrupulously subject to regulations and rules as scientific nomenclature, often requiring what are called 'modifiers'. Thus, the Robin *Erithacus rubecula* should be called European or Eurasian Robin, instead of simply Robin, because of the secondary use of this name for the North American thrush *Turdus migratorius*. Personally I do not favour attempts to give individuality in vernacular names to all birds of the seven continents: in the list of non-passerines I applied the name Black Vulture to both the New World *Coragyps atratus* and the Old World *Aegyptius monachus*."

Robin vs.
Eurasian
Robin?



He added; perhaps rather tongue in cheek: "I must admit that, in these days of world travel, it may be important to bird-listers and tourists that the same name should not be applied to two different bird species, even when they occur in opposite parts of the world".

Voous was quite happy to give two alternative vernacular names where he felt it would be helpful. For example, *Gavia immer* was

referred to as Common Loon (the North American name) or Great Northern Diver. The point here is that, as a scientist, it didn't matter to him what the vernacular name was because he was able to refer to a scientific name that everybody understands.

Great Northern Diver
vs. Common Loon?



BOU gets involved

Then, in 1988, an article appeared in *British Birds*³ that had a stunning effect on the birding world. The records committee of the BOU, which maintains the official British List, had taken upon itself the task of recommending name changes to no less than 192 of the 804 species that were then on the British Birds List of Birds of the Western Palearctic. Note that it was all Western Palearctic birds they were recommending changes to, not just British birds.

Many of the recommended name changes were to bring English names into line with names in common use in North America or Africa. For example, *Catharus ustulatus* was revised from Olive-backed Thrush to Swainson's Thrush. Many of these were readily accepted. But for those one word English names like Nuthatch and Jay, which had no obvious second name to use, the committee suggested entirely new Wood Nuthatch and Acorn Jay. Rightly or wrongly, the conjuring up of entirely new names by a small group of people was widely regarded as arrogant. Sometimes the committee itself was clearly split on what changes were reasonable, one example being the proposal

² Voous, K.H. 1977 'List of Recent Holarctic Bird Species'. The British Ornithologists' Union (BOU). ³ British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee 1988 suggested changes to the English names of some Western Palearctic birds. *British Birds* 81: 355-377.

to change Dunnock to Hedge Accentor (the justification for this in the article has a discussion spanning 15 lines of closely spaced text).



International collaboration

Subsequent to the British Birds paper, there was a meeting of the International Ornithological Congress in New Zealand at which the various national representatives got together to set up a process through which it was hoped that a single list of standardised English names for the world's birds could eventually be agreed. Subsequently, in 1992, a second paper in British Birds⁴ set out proposed new English names subsequent to the consultation process. The changes recommended at this stage included Wood Nuthatch but not Acorn Jay (Eurasian Jay being preferred). And it was recommended that the name for our friend the Pallas's Warbler should be changed to Pallas's Leaf Warbler. However, there were still a few species where it had not been possible to identify a single preferred name, and there was a 'cut-out-and-send' page accompanying the 1992 article for birders to choose a preference between alternative names. For *Aegypius monachus* you could chose between Cinereous Vulture or Monk Vulture, but Black Vulture was not to be tolerated. What would Dr. Voous have voted for I wonder?

End result: no definitive list

So did we end up agreeing what to call

everything? Well not really. A quick trawl through a few widely used current references shows that differences of opinion are alive and well. For example, the Association of European Rarities Committees list of Western Palearctic birds uses Cinereous Vulture, Canary Islands Stonechat, Pallas's Leaf Warbler and Great Northern Diver, whereas the latest edition of the Collins Bird Guide refers to (Eurasian) Black Vulture, Fuerteventura Stonechat and Great Northern Loon. The most recent version of the Clements checklist of the Birds of the World has Pallas's Leaf-warbler (note the subtle difference) and sticks with Common Loon ('cos that's what it's called in the US of A and that's what Cornell Laboratory is gonna stick with). In fact, I can't help thinking that the attempt at standardisation has to some extent fuelled an explosion of possible names, at least for some species.

A personal example

Perhaps I may be allowed one personal example of how all this does or doesn't work in practice. I was surprised to read the recommendation in the first BB paper for keeping the name Canary Islands Stonechat for *Saxicola dacotiae*, as opposed to adopting Canary Islands Chat. They suggested that it was unclear whether the bird in question was more closely related to Stonechat or Whinchat. Yet my paper in British Birds on the subject in 1984⁵ and the Birds of the Western Palearctic vol. 5⁶, both confirmed that the bird is in fact closely related to Stonechat.

My article on the chat included a paragraph on what the vernacular name should be. Previous names for the bird include Meade-Waldo's Chat (after the Victorian ornithologist who first found it) and the Fuerteventuran Chat (after the only island on which it is now found). I see that I also proposed the name Canarian Chat, on the basis that that was what I found myself

⁴ Inskipp, T.P and Sharrock, J.T.R 1992 'English names of Western Palearctic birds'. British Birds 85: 263-290. ⁵ Collins, D.R. 1984 'Studies of West Palearctic Birds 187: Canary Islands Stonechat'. ⁶ Cramp, S. 1988 'Handbook of the birds of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa: the birds of the Western Palearctic. Vol. 5 Tyrant flycatchers to thrushes'. Oxford University Press.

calling it. The thing is, when you are referring to the bird on a regular basis, Canary Islands Stonechat is just too much of a mouthful. Twenty-seven years later I find myself preferring the name Fuerteventura Chat, which is not too different from what now appears to be the 'standardised' English common name of Fuerteventura Stonechat in Collins.



Spoilt for choice! Fuerteventuran Chat, Fuerteventura Chat, Fuerteventura Stonechat, Canarian Chat or Canary Islands Chat? The variations seem to be endless.

An inconclusive conclusion

All of which, I think, shows nicely how impossible it is for vernacular names to ever be entirely standardised. And of course there

is no need to do so because the scientific names are fully standardised anyway. I'm with Dr Voous!

It was probably inevitable that, subsequent to worldwide travel becoming easy, an attempt would be made to standardise English names. And to be honest some of the changes that have subsequently been made are for the better. It makes no great sense, for example, for Swainson's Thrush to be called Olive-backed Thrush when it is a vagrant to the UK. But surely the reality is that language evolves and cannot be standardised (though maybe the French would disagree!). I grew up with Pallas's Warbler, and both you and I know it's not the same as Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler (or Pallas's Sandgrouse for that matter). So long live the Fuerteventura Chat!

Only one question then remains: do I win that pint of bitter Phil?

Editor: Possibly.

Tim Inskipp

The case for standardisation

David Collins asked me to comment on a draft of the article that preceded this and, since our take on the subject was clearly quite different, it occurred to us that another point of view might be of interest to Harrier readers.

One of the main points made by David was his suggestion that Voous' view as a scientist meant that "it didn't matter to him what the vernacular name was because he was able to refer to a scientific name that everybody understands."

First of all 'vernacular' is not the right word here. Its dictionary meaning is, 'of one's native country, native, indigenous, not of foreign origin or of learned formation.' And this is the crux of the matter – the process of standardisation of English common names of birds is not trying to suppress vernacular names such as Peewit. Within a particular region every birder uses the names that are most familiar to them, in the knowledge that these will be readily understood by their peers. Thus Bonxie (a Shetland name) is widely used by British birders for the Great Skua *Stercorarius skua*, but you may well get a blank look if you use the name in other English speaking countries.

The objective – unambiguous communication in English

What the standardisation process is trying to

do is to get international agreement on a single name for each species so that birders in different parts of the English-speaking world can communicate unambiguously with each other. Most English-speaking birders do not want to learn scientific names because they are quite happy to use English names – however, when they travel abroad they may find English-speaking birders in other countries do not know the names they are using, or find them annoyingly ambiguous, e.g. Wheatear, which at home would be taken to mean Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*, might be construed by a foreign birder to refer to a non-specific wheatear *Oenanthe* sp.

The means – a standardised process

David cited an article in British Birds (BB) that recommended many English name changes and had a “stunning” effect. As the lead author of that article I am clearly biased, yet I think that it had this effect partly because of the number of proposals, but also because it sought comments on the proposals. Previously name changes had been made on an *ad hoc* basis without any consultation and nobody apparently noticed – some of our familiar bird names have not been accepted names for very long: Heron became Grey Heron, Redbreast became Robin and Wild Duck became Mallard – in fact between the first BOU checklist¹ and the latest list² about 90% of English names have changed in some way!



Heron became Grey Heron.

The BB exercise was the first attempt to standardise the process right across the board. Although there was an outcry at the time, many of the proposed names have been recognised as useful, e.g. the second edition of the popular Collins Bird Guide³ lists many of them as alternative names.

The result

There is now a ‘generally accepted’ list of English common names (worldbirdnames.org), which is clearly not fully accepted, as David points out, but is used by many English-speaking birders that want to communicate globally.

If any of you reading this know the scientific names of all the birds you have seen you will be in a tiny minority of birders. And, even if you do know them, can you pronounce them in a way that will be intelligible to foreign non-English speaking birders? In my experience of attending many international conferences (mainly CITES – the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) the British are particularly bad about pronouncing scientific names in an intelligible way (note that I don’t say the right way because that is subject to much debate), although the Brits are not as bad as the Americans!

Even scientific names change

It is a common misbelief that the scientific names of birds (and other animals and plants) are fixed and can only be changed in extreme circumstances. However, this is far from the truth and changes can take place in three ways:

- (a) a species may be split into two, following taxonomic work, e.g. Sykes’s Warbler *Hippolais rama* split from Booted Warbler *H. caligata*;
- (b) a genus may be split, e.g. a recent proposal to separate the genus *Iduna* from *Hippolais* – this would lead to Sykes’s Warbler becoming *Iduna rama*;

¹ BOU (1883) ‘A list of British birds’. ² BOU (2010) ‘The British list’. <http://www.bou.org.uk/thebritishlist/British-List-2010.pdf>.
³ Svensson, L. et al (2009) ‘Collins Bird Guide’. London.

(c) species names are subject to certain rules and may be replaced because of date priority, e.g. the Asian Brown Flycatcher was long known as *Muscicapa latirostris* Raffles, 1822 but is now *M. dauurica* Pallas, 1811.

All this means that the scientific names of British birds are far from stable – there were 55 changes between the 1971⁴ and 2010 BOU checklists!

Standardised English names – the twin advantages

Another advantage that English names have over scientific names is that they can show broader relationships – 8 species of owls have been recorded in Britain and they all have ‘owl’ in their name, showing their close relationships. However, they fall into 7

different genera and one needs specialist knowledge to determine that they are all members of one group of birds.

David tells us that he “grew up with Pallas’s Warbler” (what a strange family life!) and that “both you and I know it’s not the same as Pallas’s Grasshopper Warbler...”. However, King *et al.* (1975)⁵ used the name Pallas’s Warbler for *Locustella certhiola* in an Asian context and many birders from that region will have grown up with that name.

So please continue to use whatever English bird names you think are most suitable, but don’t dismiss the attempts at global standardisation out of hand.

⁴ BOURC (1971) ‘The status of birds in Britain and Ireland’. ⁵ King, B. F. & Dickinson, E. C. (1975) ‘Field guide to the birds of South-East Asia’.

Mark Cocker comments on the debate

Dear Editor,

The two proponents in this debate and the divergent opinions they represent make one point abundantly clear: the business of names is important both at an intellectual level, but also at an emotional and even visceral level. We love names. We need names. Yet both of the parties to this debate would surely converge on the idea that, without names, natural history cannot flourish.

English names

It is this wider issue of English nomenclature that concerns me. Ornithology, arguably the most popular branch of natural history and a study devoted to the most charismatic of all life forms, flourishes precisely because we have suites of English names that people readily recognise. It is by means of this simple cartographic tool that people are able to navigate the field and communicate with one another not only their knowledge of birds, but also their deep and shared commitments.

Yet there are many branches of natural history where English names do not exist, or are at a tentative stage. What is worse, specialists in these forgotten branches of natural history themselves seem determined to resist the development of common English names for their subjects, on the grounds that it dilutes the scientific purity of their discipline. Yet birds are a relatively small part of our overall British fauna and flora. In terms of species diversity some groups outnumber them by a ratio of 100:1. For example, there are more than 24,000 insect species in Britain and Ireland. Only three charismatic orders (or parts of them) the dragonflies, butterflies and moths, and bumblebees have readily recognisable English names. Thus much of this vast class of life is without the essential first tool by which naturalists can come to express both knowledge and emotional attachment.

The importance of common names

If we are to engender a conservation commitment to these neglected parts of our

fauna then it is not a question of standardising different vernacular versions for the same species; we need to develop and embed in natural history practice common names that make orders such as beetles, grasshoppers and flies more accessible, more understandable and

more cared for by a greater section of the public than they are at present. The same of course applies in the case of other Cinderella group of British nature such as micro-moths, lichens and mosses.

Editor: So having aired the issue, what are we to conclude? In effect, as Mark Cocker shows, both are correct. As was demonstrated at the AGM, the local use of 'Fudge Duck' can also provoke debate.

Roy Marsh

Suffolk BINS 'Winter Wonderland, or Wonder-When?'

Leaving the incredible Autumn of 2011, it was time to think of hats and gloves with winter's biting cold approaching, or so we thought... however, November was in fact the warmest ever recorded, with an amazing average of 10.2°C recorded in Newmarket.

The winter did strike a modicum of normality, with the onset of a severe cold spell and snowfall on 5th February, followed by cold winds staying with us until late February. So, with such a mixed bag of weather, would this prove to be the magical mix of depressions for birds, or depression for the birders?

Suffolk, still delivering...

November – The 24th gave us a glimpse of winter visitors, with 72 White-fronts at Benacre and 46 Waxwings at Reydon. The 25th saw an influx of **Short-eared Owls** and seven Common Cranes over Reydon, then performing at Boyton from the 28th. Numbers of **Common Crossbill** increased at Hollesley, providing excellent opportunities for some stunning shots

throughout the winter! A Glossy Ibis was noted at Minsmere on the 26th, two Taiga and four Tundra Beans at Lackford 28th made up the month's main highlights.

Other November Highlights: A probable Ring-billed Gull was noted at Melton and a possible Pallas's Leaf Warbler at Dunwich on the 20th, the late staying Common Tern remained at Lake Lothing 26th until relocated at Oulton Broad on the 29th, later moving to Hamilton Dock in December.

Surprise, surprise...

December – The month kicked-off in good form with a Cattle Egret over LBO on the 2nd, an adult Black Brant frequented the Felixstowe peninsular, the 12th saw two Ross's Geese with 5000 Pinkies along the 'Acle Straight', and around 11,000 leaving their Berney roost on the 20th. A Hooded Crow was picked up at Eastbridge on the 16th, and remained until at least 27th February. A **Great Grey Shrike** was noted on Hollesley Common from 23rd and another at Lower Layham from 27th and on into late February at least, providing some excellent photos at times. The 31st saw the surprise of the month, with a **Hoopoe** discovered at Lake Lothing bringing the year to an exciting end.

Other December Highlights: A further Great Grey Shrike was seen at Shottisham on the 1st, up to 100 Waxwing had now accumulated at Eastbridge, with smaller groups noted around the county. The seven Common Cranes continued to please at Boyton and Gedgrave.

On the 8th a cracking count of 70 Egyptian Geese were seen at Breydon Water, with 87 noted, plus a Ruddy Shelduck at Bradwell on the 26th that remained into the new year, a Grey Phalarope seen from Southwold on the 8th and another off Thorpeness on 17th. A Curlew Sand at Melton was a noteworthy record, and still present into late February. Numbers of White-fronted Geese began to grow at North Warren with 125 on 27th and double-figure Tundra Bean Geese noted there throughout the winter.

January Blues?

January 2012 – The 1st provided a good selection of birds, with the Hoopoe remaining until the 2nd, and a Yellow-browed Warbler at Ness Point providing the New Year's Day surprise. A drake Green-winged Teal was present on and off throughout the month at Alton Water. Beccles Marsh, 4th saw a Hooded Crow, with a Siberian Chiffchaff at Long Melford sewage works. A Great White Egret was at Fritton on the 15th, before being spotted at Chedgrave Marsh.

Other January Highlights: A possible Baltic Gull was at Minsmere on the 2nd. There was a report of a Ring-billed Gull from the Orwell, with adult Iceland Gulls at Lowestoft and Great Livermere. A Black Brant was on Hollesley Marsh 13th, a further Great Grey Shrike found at Lakenheath on the 14th plus a good smattering of Waxwings around the county throughout the month. Noteworthy counts: 36 Corn Buntings, Chelmodiston on 19th and 100 Tree Sparrows performing at Ampton plus 50 Brambling at Gedgrave rounding off the month.

Wild Goose Chase...

February – This month kicked off in good style with the discovery of a 1st winter drake American Wigeon, North Warren 1st – 4th, Glaucous Gull briefly at Ness Point on the 3rd. The 7th saw a report of a Little Bunting at Dunwich, plus a **Greenland White-fronted Goose** was viewed at Gedgrave Marsh, to set the scene for the month ahead? The 10th produced a **Red-breasted Goose** with Brents

at Felixstowe Ferry, remaining throughout the month. A Great White Egret was discovered at Thorpeness Meare on the 19th, then showed on and off distantly at Minsmere from 24th. A further Greenland White-fronted Goose was found at North Warren on the 20th through to 28th at least, while the other bird again showed at Boyton on the 28th. Five Glossy Ibis showed on Berney Marsh on 23rd and another at Minsmere on same day, remaining until the 28th at least, rounded off an exciting February.

Other February Highlights: With the severe 'Cold Spell' and several inches of snow across the county on the 5th, there were noted influxes of Waxwing, Goosander, Smew and Woodcock alongside White-fronts, Brent and Pale-bellied Brent Geese. Eight Shorelark were on Havergate on the 8th. An obliging Red-necked Grebe was discovered at Alton Water on the 9th, with a good supporting cast of Slav Grebes, Smew and Goosander, while nearby a Black-necked Grebe showed on and off on the Orwell along the Strand from the 11th, with another off the pier at Gorleston on the 12th.

So, as we look forward to the lighter nights and our first returning summer visitors, we hope for a few 'rares' too. But please don't forget to submit those all-important records via your area recorders, including any SORC forms for the county rarities, and a BBRC form for any national rarities.

As always, I want to pass on my continued thanks to our BINS members for their tremendous ongoing efforts, and helping to provide Suffolk with a fantastic service. For our SOG members wanting to enjoy daily updates, superb photography and much more, visit the Suffolk BINS website at:

<http://www.freewebs.com/suffolkbirding/>

Finally, I would like to pass on my best wishes and hopes for a bird-filled spring for SOG and BINS alike, and hope for a bumper Nightingale year to give all our Atlas surveyors plenty to record.

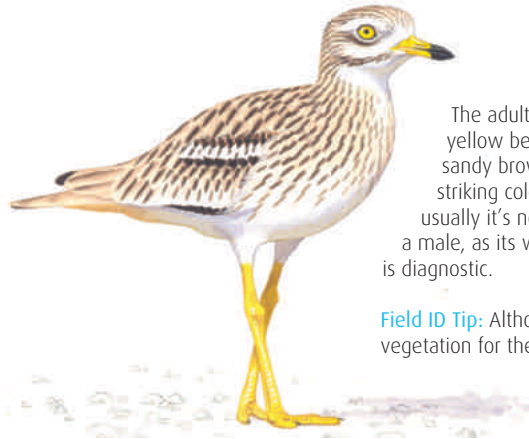
Stone Curlew (*Burhinus oedicnemus*)



The Stone Curlew is unusual in several respects.

First, despite its name, it is not a curlew. The nearest a Stone Curlew gets to being one is its haunting cry. Second, while taxonomically it is defined as a wader, its choice of habitat is far

removed from water. Third, although nominally part of the thick-knee family, anatomically-speaking this is a misnomer as none of the family are – the ‘knobbly’ joint we note in our bins, is the Stone Curlew’s ankle! Finally, unlike all other members of the *Burhinus* family, the Stone Curlew migrates.



The adult is distinctive: a large, almost reptilian eye; striped head; yellow beak with black tip; long yellow legs; a cryptic plumage of sandy brown upperparts with narrow black stripes. Yet, despite this striking colour scheme, in its normal habitat it is well camouflaged – usually it’s not until they move that you spot them! This adult could be a male, as its white covert bars are strongly bordered with black – which is diagnostic.

Field ID Tip: Although usually inactive during the day, it can pay to scan the vegetation for the bird’s large and distinctive yellow eye.

When chicks hatch they are precocial (i.e. immediately active) and nidifugous (i.e. able to leave the nest/scrape) although they rely on adults for food and are brooded.

This downy chick was only a couple of weeks old when it was sketched – the clues are its legs are yellow – they change colour from a bluish hue over the first week or so; the eye is yellow – they are born blue; but the white and black wing bar is not yet apparent – that is usually after three weeks.





Stonies in

While the Brecks are home to the majority of English Stone Curlews, Hampshire/Wiltshire now has 30% of the population. There is also a small population in north Norfolk and the Suffolk coast hosts a tiny but recovering number of breeding pairs.



There are circa 260 pairs in the Brecks, of which 120+ were to be found in Suffolk last year. Many English birds are monogamous.



Clutch size is usually two, occasionally one. While there are no records of more than two eggs in a single clutch, the RSPB have found two females laying two eggs each in the same scrape at the same time – both involved with the same male (so much for monogamy!).

The most young reared in one breeding season in the Brecks by a single pair is four (2 broods of 2).



Not only are the adults cryptically plumaged, but these Brecks Stonie eggs are well camouflaged too – can you spot them?





Above: The title of this shot is 'Chick in parsnips' – no it's not a recipe, but a demonstration of how hard they are to spot, even for ringers on the ground. As shown here, after about a week when chicks are disturbed they typically lie flat on the ground with head and neck outstretched.

Left: Since the start of this project the RSPB has ringed 3352 chicks in the Brecks. Elveden and Euston estates also ring birds and the total is now thought to be around 3700 birds – plus this one!

Cavenham Heath – an exceptional autumn roost



Last year's roost was an amazing sight. At its height in late September it comprised a modern record 150 to 170 birds.





BINS Winter Wonderland



1



2



3



4

- 1 Great Grey Shrike, Lower Layham, Bill Baston
- 2 Short-eared Owl, Gedrave/Boyton, John Richardson
- 3 Red-breasted Goose, Kirton Creek, Will Brame
- 4 Greenland White-fronted Goose, North Warren, Dave Fairhurst
- 5 Common Crossbill, Hollesley, John Richardson
- 6 Hoopoe, Lake Lothing, Dick Walden



5



6

Field Trip Reports

Val Lockwood

Orfordness (National Trust)

2 October 2011 'Crane Day'

Leaders: Steve Piotrowski and John Grant



As we were ferried across to Orfordness, not in our wildest dreams could we have envisaged what excitement the day ahead would bring. It was a beautiful sunny day and exceptionally warm for the time of year.

In the clear blue skies above us the first birds seen flying over were four Siskins, swiftly followed by a Barn Owl (the first of two) that was noted quartering the area looking for a morsel for breakfast. A Grey Heron was also searching stealthily for a meal. A flock of 35 Avocet and 20 Redshank was flushed for no apparent reason as we made our way across to the first small pool beside an area of reedbed. Here we added Pied Wagtail, Snipe and Greenshank to the morning's list of birds.

On the way to the second pool we heard a Meadow Pipit calling and picked up our first Marsh Harrier, plus a Reed Bunting and Skylark. At the second pool we were rewarded with Siskins and Redpolls in flight overhead and a lone Ringed Plover at the water's edge. After determining that there were no other waders at the pool, we pressed on towards the ringing hut, on the way adding several more species to the list for the day. Of note were a flock of 200 Golden Plover, another 20 Redpoll and three Brambling and, in addition to our feathered friends, some of the group had views of a Stoat, as well as Red Admiral, Peacock and Comma butterflies which were

admired as they took nectar from any available late flowering plants.

We arrived at the ringing station in time to see the moth traps being opened and in addition to a beautiful array of moths we were able to see a Birch Shield Bug and a Black Rustic Hawthorn Shield Bug. A Wheatear, two Lesser Whitethroats and a Chiffchaff were seen in the brambles close to the ringing hut. A Hobby flew close by and then two Buzzards were picked up circling over towards Orford.

Crane alert

It was at this point that Steve made an announcement to the group that all birders on the Suffolk Coast were on standby, as a Crane had been seen at Kessingland and there was just a chance that this could be the Sandhill Crane that had been seen earlier in the week in different parts of the country. If this was indeed the bird, then it would be a mega as previously there had only been four seen in this country before and never in this county.

Eager eyes scanned the skies behind binoculars and scopes and someone picked up a large bird. But this turned out to be another Buzzard, and three Spoonbills flew over, but there was no sign of any Crane. Other birds noted included eleven Stonechat, two Reed Warblers, a Swift and yet another Barn Owl. At the hut the ringers then gave a demonstration.

Sandhill sighted at last

It is here where things become a bit of a blur as everything happened so quickly. We were making our way across to the lighthouse for a sea watch before lunch when a call came through to say that the Sandhill Crane had been seen flying over North Warren. At first the leaders decided that our best vantage point would be to walk back to the bridge. As we did so there was a mixture of murmurings of excitement at the prospect of possibly seeing the crane and of disbelief that "we were stuck on an island, unbelievably close to where the crane was, but unable to do anything about it".

It seemed that we had been pointlessly looking up at the sky for an age when another BINS message came through to say that the Crane was flying south over Aldeburgh. Tensions were running at fever pitch as we raced towards the bomb ballistic building that would be the highest point on that side of the Ness. Then a further message came through that the Crane was now flying over Sudbourne. The atmosphere was electric with everyone running to the bomb ballistic building, the Crane had landed!



The Sandhill Crane at Boyton.

The Crane had landed

Steve now had a phone call and was given details of the location of the field the Crane had landed in and we are all indebted to the person on the river wall at Sudbourne Marshes with the red rucksack who happened to be walking past, just where the Crane had alighted. This unknown person helped pinpoint the exact location. It was totally amazing. Everyone was helping each other get on to the Crane. Those who didn't pick it up immediately were frantically searching until they had their first glimpse. Then mobile phones started going off everywhere, or members were making calls, as people were checking on the location and ensuring that others got to see the Crane too. A few minutes later the Crane took off and flew south towards Havergate Island, we all had even better views as it flew past. The buzz was incredible, we could not believe how fortunate we had been.

More additions to the day's list

Now our steps were much lighter as we made our way towards the lighthouse for lunch,

some members were still chatting to others on mobiles about the Crane. On reaching the lighthouse we were greeted by three members who had started to carry on to the lighthouse for lunch earlier and so had not made it back across to the bomb ballistic building. Thankfully they had all seen the Crane, though this had been a more distant view.

Sea watching was very quiet; the only new species for the day was Brent Goose, a total of 46 were seen. At the lagoon we picked up twelve Pintail, eight Grey Plover and three Redshank. Of slightly macabre interest along the way a fairly large skeleton was discovered along the high tide line just off the beach. A couple of members stopped to take a photograph of this and there were discussions as to whether this could be the skeleton of a dog. We realised that we were all thinking along the wrong lines, for we noticed that the animal's bone structure was such that it would have originally had flippers and in fact this was the remains of a seal.

Time was slipping by so we pressed on towards the BBC building. A Merlin was flushed as we came into the vicinity of the building, possibly by a Muntjac that was seen in the reeded area. A Peregrine was spotted on one of the masts. The fifth Wheatear of the day was seen near to the bridge. In addition three Greenshank, 16 Lapwing, three Ruff and a Knot were seen along the estuary. Finally an elusive Green Sandpiper piped us off the island.

A most memorable day

The author could have been forgiven if this article had begun with the words "Once upon a time" for, as birders, this had been the kind of day that fairy tales are made of!

Thanks to Steve and John for a truly remarkable field trip that will never be forgotten by those SOG members fortunate enough to have shared the experience.

Walberswick in winter

December 10th 2011

Leader: Adam Gretton

Having met for several years in mid-May, those at our last such visit (in May 2010) agreed that it would be interesting to switch to a winter meeting, so this was a new departure – and we were lucky both with the birds and weather.

A dozen SOG members met at Westwood Lodge on a frosty and bright morning, with at least one participant particularly wanting to see Bearded Tits well (and a subsequent suggestion from another of refunds (?) if we failed to connect with them!).



Reedbed sightings

After watching a Marsh Harrier over the reeds, we set off past Old Covert, seeing a tit flock including Treecreeper and Marsh Tit, though not all the group saw the latter, which was very mobile. Between Old Covert and East Hill, some of the group saw a Chinese Water Deer, with its 'teddy bear' ears, as described by Chris Packham on Autumnwatch.

Crossing the reedbed, very good views of Marsh Harrier were enjoyed, along with a more distant Common Buzzard towards

Walberswick village. Some reedbed management was in progress, in the form of commercial reedcutting, which has long been practised at Walberswick. A pair of Goldeneye in flight was welcome, but initially there was no sign of the sought-after Bearded Tits. They were just biding their time, however, and halfway across the reedbed the first calls were heard – eventually at least a dozen birds were seen close by, providing excellent scoped views. The group came even closer, separated from us by just a narrow strip of reeds; when alarmed they erupted in an explosion of pinging calls. Though not unexpected, for several of the group this was perhaps the highlight of the day, which added to my relief at having 'come up with the goods' (and avoided any free meeting refund claims!).

Along the shore

As we passed Dingle Great Hill and approached the shore, the reported very high tide was apparent (fortunately now falling), with a breach of the shingle ridge near to the hill resulting in flooding of part of Dingle Marshes – showing the dynamism of this coast, which has been the norm for millennia (demonstrated by recent soil cores taken here). Very distant Snow Buntings were seen, only identifiable in flight from the 600+m range, but much closer views were gained of the regular Twite flock – feeding close to some Dunlin, at the edge of the tide, next to the footpath, but unfortunately then disturbed by two passing non-birders. Rock Pipit, Sanderling and a lone Brent Goose were also added here to the day's list, along with several Red-throated Divers flying offshore.

Returning inland, a Stonechat before the old windmill was reached was a welcome addition, and we were relieved we were not intending to take the (lower) footpath to Walberswick, which was under at least two feet of water! With time running out, and packed lunches

back at the cars beckoning, we skipped the heath habitat and great views from East Hill, and returned to Westwood Lodge, seeing more Marsh Harriers on the way, this time over arable fields.

Classic winter birding

The meeting ended with some 50 species seen; although there had been no major surprises, we had enjoyed some classic winter birding on a perfect crisp sunny day. Rod Plowman later told me that a few minutes after most people left, a small group of Waxwing flew into a nearby tree, providing the icing on the cake for him at least. I thank all those who attended for adapting so readily from May to a winter meeting (and for not seeking refunds for the late-appearing Waxwings!).

Steve Fryett

Field meeting to Iken Cliff

December 17th

Leader: Steve Fryett

Theoretically the final field meeting of the year is always likely to encounter seasonal inclement weather, a low turnout or few noteworthy birds.

Inclement weather, but...

So my theory was correct on the first two counts. All of us had a slippery drive to Iken cliff car park after overnight rain had frozen when clouds cleared during the night. The turnout was low, with just seven of us declaring our avoidance of Xmas shopping. Heading off downstream from the cliff we had already noted a sizeable flock of finches that we proposed to relocate on the way back. The

estuary held only a few waders and duck with a couple of Dabchicks, the expected flocks of Avocet were not recorded at all. A Tawny Owl was heard to call as we made our way to Iken church. Here we noted a female Kestrel and a single Goldcrest. We made our way back by the road to find the finch flock had now moved to the far corner of a field near to the car park at a distance of 100 metres. There we noted 100 Goldfinches and 100 Chaffinches with at least two Bramblings. It was possible some Linnets were also present, but all the birds were very nervous and continued to take flight frequently from longish weeds to treetops and back.

...many noteworthy birds

We then decided to move onto the Boyton Marsh where, as usual, it was about five degrees colder than any other part of Suffolk, and an increasing wind further chilled our extremities. First noted were the seven long-staying Common Cranes duly found on the marsh looking towards Havergate and clearly visible before they took off with a majestic fly past over the river to Gedgrave before landing in a beet field and remaining in view. Teal and Wigeon were abundant on the flashes as we made our way to the Butley River. We quickly noted a Spoonbill circling overhead before deciding to pass over, then on the riverbank a Short-eared Owl was located just sitting, but was put up by an oncoming man and his dog thus flying off over the river and back giving us all excellent views. A large number of geese were feeding on the marsh near the ferry and included 18 White-fronted amongst Greylag and Canada, a single Barnacle Goose may have been a wayward feral from north east Suffolk. Further away towards Butley Mills a female Marsh Harrier was noted.

We returned to the car park with a brief glimpse of a male Bullfinch in the hawthorns alongside the barns. The third part of my theory for the day failed to materialise, as we'd had an excellent afternoon's birding to end the final meeting of the year.

Death of the field notebook?

Is it important to birding if the field notebook is a dying art? With Smartphones, i-Pads, MP3 players and digital cameras all being widely used in the field, when did you last see a birder with a field notebook?

Nowadays this is a rare sight and chances are the person was an artist preparing drawings – like the person I saw making field sketches of the Roller last spring on Upper Hollesley Common!

Has all the digital technology available to the active birder killed off the old techniques used by Charles Darwin and the great ornithologists of the past?

Today, as a modern birder, when you are out in the field you are more likely to check your Apps on your Smartphone for help with a tricky species ID than consult a hard copy of the latest Collins Guide.

When I started out in birding, many birders made detailed notes and annotated drawings of their observations in their field notebooks. They were useful field descriptions and sometimes works of art.

As you will know, if you have ever submitted a record to the Rarities Committee, a full written description of the bird is an essential requirement for the scientific record and it is easy enough to produce from a good set of field notes.

For some of us it is enough to have seen the bird, make an ID, put it out to fellow birders on social networks and/or bird information



services so that others can enjoy it and then it's 'Job-Done' and on to the next goody!

This is great fun and fine for the leisure birder but for those who are charged with keeping the complete scientific record of ornithology, is this going to be sufficient for the future? Does it matter to the birding community if it's incomplete?

Today if enough people have seen the bird and nobody submits a written description it might go down as multi-observers and/or as per County Recorder so the finder will probably not get the credit they deserve for their discovery and if there is any question the record may even be lost through lack of evidence.

I believe it is important for the record to be complete and as accurate as humanly possible. Any lack of ornithological evidence due to poor recording would be a great loss to science. Sound biological data has intrinsic value to our knowledge of the natural world and an accurate database will benefit future researchers and conservation policy decision-makers at all levels.



Birders' options for recording species are now wide.

Of course to make good field notes there is no need to rely on the old techniques of writing in a field notebook! I would suggest that excellent field records can be produced using digital photography, sound recording systems and even dictating into our phones – and all these can easily be turned into a reliable and acceptable description.

With the advent of social media and bird information services, a lot of quality field time is spent on going to see a good bird found by somebody else. Because it has already been identified we assume someone else is going to submit a record. Unfortunately this is not always the case so please feel free to put in your own description even if you did not first find or ID the bird.

The importance of a detailed description substantiating a rare bird record cannot be overstated. It is essential for acceptance onto the county and national databases. This is likely to remain the convention for the foreseeable future. We need to embrace the

technology and use it to produce quality descriptions, so keep those records coming in!

If you still use a field notebook and enjoy this method of recording your observations then carry on the good work. For the rest of us, how you gather your description is up to you! Embrace the digital revolution, find the birds, describe them and send in your records electronically.

In conclusion, the field notebook is probably on its way out for many of us and is approaching extinction! Long-live the evolution of the digital age of bird recording!

Philip Murphy

Looking back – January to March 1962 and 1987

Selectd highlights from the 1962 and 1987 Suffolk Bird Reports for the period January to March.

50 years ago

Record coastal passage

A severe spell of snow and frost had set in just after Christmas 1961. This induced hard-weather movements of birds which peaked on 1st January 1962 when *“vast numbers of ducks, geese, waders and passerines were pouring south down the Suffolk coast.”* The report states that at Lowestoft a *“continuous stream of thrushes, Lapwings, gulls, waders, larks, buntings, Meadow Pipits, Siskins and Linnets and including a lone Bittern, was moving south along the shoreline.”* Further south, at Minsmere, the movement also included 2000 Lapwings, 1000 Chaffinches, ten Dunnocks and, remarkably, 200 Bullfinches. Up to 40 Bullfinches were recorded at Havergate but there were no

reports of this vast southerly movement from any site south of Orfordness. The report writers concluded that: *“it must be presumed that it followed the usual pattern of coastal passage in heading out seawards towards the Kent coast instead of following the indented Essex coastline.”* Given the enormous benefit of hindsight, was the lack of sightings simply because of a lack of observers? Impressive hard-weather movements have been recorded at Landguard in recent years.

Seabirds had a rough time during this period – “many” oiled Guillemot corpses and “numerous” Fulmar corpses were washed up onto the beaches. A “wreck” of Shags in March produced totals of 20 in Ipswich Docks and nine elsewhere on the Orwell Estuary; away from the coastal region, three were found at Bury St. Edmunds (only one live individual) and Lord Tollemache found one at Helmingham.

As expected, wildfowl were much in evidence. Notable sightings included 6000 Wigeon on Havergate in January, two female Long-tailed Ducks on Benacre Pits from early January onwards into April, up to 12 Eiders on the Orwell Estuary from mid-January to early March and 32 Whooper Swans in from offshore at Aldeburgh, 1st January. The Orwell

and Stour Estuaries were the principal sites for Brent Geese with peaks of 210 and 450 respectively.

The sole national rarity was an immature White-tailed Eagle at Havergate, 14th February – there were to be no further sightings of this gargantuan raptor in Suffolk until 1982.

Passerines

Notable passerines were few and far between. Up to three Great Grey Shrikes were located on the coast, and Havergate hosted seven Shore Larks, 2nd January. “Unusually high” totals of Bearded Tits were present in the Waveney Valley reed beds from St. Olaves seawards and up to 250 were at Minsmere in January. Given the regularity with which Blackcaps are noted in the winter months in the 21st century, it is worth noting that overwintering by this species was still relatively rare 50 years ago – a pair which frequented a Lowestoft garden up to mid-March attracted “a number of observers.” It is unfortunate that details of what seem highly likely to have been six Arctic Redpolls on Bungay Common, 9th March were not submitted to the British Birds Rarities Committee.

Spring was late to arrive in 1962. The only records of the summer migrants in this period were of Wheatear at Minsmere 23rd March and a Sandwich Tern on Havergate, 28th March.

Perhaps the most unexpected discovery during this period was of a Water Rail trapped behind a water pipe in a house at Southwold, 26th March.

25 years ago

Unforgettable Great Bustards

Very severe weather in January 1987 resulted in the occurrence in Suffolk of a species that will be long remembered by those who were fortunate enough to see it. The ever-eloquent, and Suffolk birding stalwart, John Grant wrote in the Bird Report that “*Unquestionably THE event of the winter, and for many of us the*

most unforgettable sight we are ever likely to see in Suffolk¹, was the appearance of the Great Bustards... no doubt forced out of the east European steppes by unimaginably severe conditions. Their loss was very much our gain.” In summary, at least four highly elusive, wary and mobile Great Bustards both frustrated and enthralled observers at Harkstead, 16th to 20th January, in the Kirton/Waldringfield area, 18th January to 7th February, on the disused Theberton airfield, 11th to 21st February and at Sizewell, Minsmere and Blythburgh all on 21st February. Slightly further north, two bustards were in the Benacre/Kessingland area, 7th February and then at Horham, 14th to 28th February. One at Sudbourne, 7th March is assumed to have been one of the above.

Harsh weather triggers memorable offshore passage

The severe weather conditions resulted in thousands of wildfowl evacuating the frozen continent in order to seek milder climes. A reasonable proportion of these birds would appear to have passed Landguard where in January observers braved the harsh weather to record a memorable offshore passage. Totals of this movement, principally in the middle third of the month, involved 30,400 Wigeon, 4414 Shelduck, 273 Mallard, 700 Pintail, 144 Pochard, 45 Scaup and 100 Bewick’s Swans. The principal movement occurred on 10th January when 27,900 Wigeon (a record Suffolk total) and 2700 Shelduck moved south past some very busy observers!

Ipswich Docks is often a refuge for ducks fleeing the continent in hard weather and this proved to be the case in January 1987 with 275 Tufted Ducks, 98 Pochard, 80 Goldeneye and 20 Red-breasted Mergansers all noted at this well-watched site. Overall totals on the Orwell Estuary at this time included 76 Scaup, 151 Goldeneye and 48 Red-breasted

¹ Editor: Correct until last year’s Sandhill – although our Chairman might not agree!

Mergansers, while on the Deben Estuary there were as many as 186 Goldeneye. Weather of such severity inevitably results in Smew arriving in Suffolk; between 70 and 100 of these immaculate sawbills were reported including 18 on Benacre Broad and 17 on Alton Water.

A small influx of Red-necked Grebes occurred in mid-January with about a dozen being reported including three in the Benacre area and singles inland at Lackford Lakes and Weybread GP. Lackford Lakes also attracted two Slavonian Grebes in this period while nearby at Cavenham GP unexpected sightings involved a first-winter Gannet, 2nd January and a Sanderling, 10th January.

Despite the weather, single overwintering Common Sandpipers were located at Martlesham Creek, Falkenham Creek and Ipswich Docks. There was an almost complete exodus of Suffolk by Lapwings in January and additional wader sightings of note included a peak of 34 Sanderlings at Southwold, 17th January and up to 30 Purple Sandpipers at Lowestoft.

Four Glaucous Gulls and three Iceland Gulls were sighted, but eclipsed by a county record of 1500 Great Black-backed Gulls on Minsmere Levels, 14th January.

Blackcaps continue to over winter

A few Blackcaps managed to survive the harsh conditions with sightings at nine localities in January and February. Single Chiffchaffs were at Ipswich and Lackford before the onset of severe weather in early January, but no more were reported until 27th March.

The Yellow Wagtail discovered on 27th December 1986 at a small sewage works at Holbrook Bay remained there until at least 4th January when, following the onset of severe weather, it presumably succumbed.

It was the coldest March since 1962. However, there were some unexpectedly early arrivals of summer migrants including two Whimbrel on Orfordness, 18th March, a Yellow Wagtail inland at Haverhill, 18th March and a Wheatear at Landguard, 15th March.

Phil Brown

Who we are and what we think

A short review of the findings from the 2011 SOG Members' Survey

Based on the members' response to this survey, then only 1 in 3 or 4 of you are likely to recall what this image is – it is of the SOG survey questionnaire that under a third of members completed. This low number was a pity as, despite Council's hard work collecting, coding and analysing the 5000+ items of data, we cannot now be definitive about our findings.

Let us begin this review by explaining why there is some uncertainty about the findings.

Slightly skewed data?

Looking at the members' demographics that were gathered from the completed questionnaires it appears that almost 90% of the membership was male. However, when as a control we examined the current members' list, it showed that the total of male membership was actually nearer 80%.

According to the survey's findings, 49% of respondents claimed to reside in the SE of the County. From the membership list we were



also able to double-check where members actually lived. It emerged that actually a much smaller 30% were actually living in Ipswich, Woodbridge, Hadleigh and Stowmarket (i.e. SE Suffolk) – so in the findings there is a skew in favour of the south easterners’ opinions.

Do these disparities really matter? Well, when we come to interpret the data we have to be aware of a slight masculine skew to the opinions expressed – although that’s likely to be negligible and probably safely discounted. However, over the issue of indoor meetings’ location, the balance of opinions voiced is likely to be biased towards meetings in the Ipswich area being acceptable – this could be problematic, as we know a sizeable ‘minority’ saw this as an issue of complaint. In this case, to compensate, SOG Council has acknowledged this possibility and begun to address the matter in the 2012 events programme.

Sadly two examples of skews like this are sufficient to cast some doubt over the findings and left us wondering just how representative the results really are? But we move on, let’s review the findings we have.

Who are we?

In short we suspect the Group is not much different from most birding clubs in the country. The Group’s membership is, as noted above, preponderantly male (80%), largely aged over 50 (83%), mostly with Internet access (almost 90%), claiming to be fairly knowledgeable about birds (74%) and demonstrating great loyalty (81% have been members for over six years and 68% for over ten years).

It is also interesting to note that the longer an individual’s membership is, the greater is their claimed knowledge level too – so seemingly we don’t stop learning when we join SOG.

Wide-ranging interests

On the whole members, over and above birds, appear to have a wide range of interests

across the natural world. Around 75% expressed a general interest in natural history. As to specialist interests, on average every member claimed to have between 3 and 4 others. 62% of respondents stated they were interested in butterflies, 50% mammals, 50% flowers, 35% moths and 27% dragonflies. This is a wide breadth of interest that might possibly be reflected in the Harrier – although I’d temper this by saying that’s probably why a goodly proportion of SOG members have a joint SNS membership and thus can read more about their interests in the White Admiral.

What do we think?

First about SOG itself, it would appear that with around 70% of respondents offering no views or saying “it is fine” there is a high degree of satisfaction. The suggested changes were relatively few in number and concentrated on meetings locations, information needs and membership levels/recruitment issues.

More people had suggestions about SOG’s future (50%). These were varied and, on the whole, were confined to one or two responses each. However a sizeable number (25) did mention recruitment/membership levels, 18 mentioned the need to recruit younger members and a further 13 indicated a need for better coverage of conservation issues.

Good attendance levels

Turning to meetings, there seems to be good overall attendance levels, with two thirds of members attending either indoor or outdoor meetings and a few both.

Harrier – a favourable verdict

The questionnaire’s delivery last year was deliberately timed to give members a taste of the ‘new’ Harrier magazine. The overall reaction to it was favourable, with 82% finding the new presentation attractive or acceptable. Content was also adjudged good or fine (98%) with 86% saying it completely or acceptably met their needs. As to dislikes, 92% offered no answer/nothing, though 2%

considered it was a poor quality publication! There's no pleasing some people.

Since the survey results were collated the Harrier re-design has been completed and many members have expressed satisfaction with it.

sogonline

Turning to our website, the level of non-use was surprisingly high given that so many members have Internet access. Only 17% of members with Internet access claimed to use it regularly, 54% occasionally and 29% never.

The website has undergone a lot of improvements since the survey (although progress has been somewhat stalled for lack of a more powerful laptop and software to work on – any offers greatly accepted), so there's every reason to believe that usership levels have increased.

Those actually using the site were largely comfortable with its ease of use and layout, with a very low level of disagreement being expressed about it. However, again, the level

of 'no answers' was high at around 33%. So what do we conclude from all that we have learnt?

Conclusions

On the whole members are satisfied. The Council thus felt SOG was reflecting its members' needs well; this said something needed to be done about membership recruitment. A few expressed concerns about membership, information provision and meetings' locations too, with a small proportion giving voice to the need for alternative locations for indoor meetings away from Ipswich.

Of course, despite this overall positive outcome, there's no room for complacency, which is why the Council is already addressing the issue of recruitment and are reviewing the indoors meeting venues.

So it only remains for me, on behalf of the Council, to thank all of you who participated in this survey as you have contributed to guiding the Council forward.

Steve Aylward

Suffolk Wildlife Trust adds its largest reserve yet

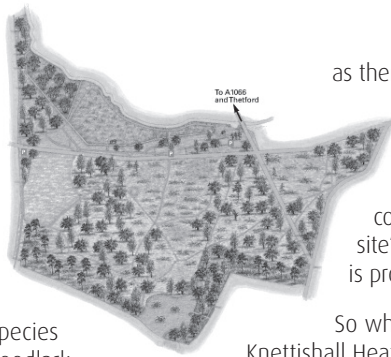
Through the support of Trust members and local people, on February 20th SWT became custodians of Suffolk County Council's Knettishall Heath Country Park.

This is a 434 acre reserve and is the largest to date in SWT's estate, comprising the original country park, of around 350 acres, plus a further 80 acres of wet woodland in the north west of the new reserve and a mixture of conifer plantation and deciduous woodland running along the site's southern border.

Knettishall Heath is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and it is one of Suffolk's largest surviving areas of Breckland heath. The Little Ouse meanders along the northern boundary, making this one of the few places in Breckland where there is a natural gradation of habitats from dry heath down to the river valley.

A herd of Exmoor ponies have been introduced to the Heath to help maintain the more open landscape of Breckland heath and the scattered trees that are needed by many unique Breckland species. Amongst these, Nightjar will be a target species for the reserve. In time Woodlark and Tree Pipit could also be possible.

A detailed bird survey of the site will be undertaken this spring/summer. Meantime,



as there is little baseline data to draw on, SWT will be delighted to receive species records from visiting birders. All of this information will then be collated and used to inform the site's management plan when it is produced later this year.

So what are you waiting for? Visit Knettishall Heath between Thetford and Diss as soon as you can – full details can be found on SWT's web site:

www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/reserves-and-visitor-centres/knettishall-heath/

News

Phil Whittaker



Birds sing because they like to: Twitter, Social Networking and Birding

The rise and rise of social networking is a worldwide phenomenon and our interest in birds, birding and ornithology is not immune from these developments. Social network sites are now an integral aspect of many peoples' lives providing instant communication, fora for discussion and the exchange of information.

A new 'Twitter' initiative

SOG has recently launched a Twitter account to enable a constant flow of news and comment from and to members locally, nationally and even internationally.

Our Twitter site will enhance support and promote the main aim of the SOG by providing a network and a voice for birdwatchers in the county. Using it is intended to promote SOG's events and activities, attracting new members and participants for both Indoor and Outdoor events. Most importantly, it will also provide a virtual meeting place for an exchange of information and views related to birds and conservation. The site is not intended to be

a Bird Information News service. However, followers will be free to report sightings individually.

There are now over 200 followers and we hope this continues to grow. Followers already include local birdwatchers, local press and some national and international birders and organisations such as the RSPB and BTO. Individuals and organisations are tweeting on a regular basis about all things ornithological, birding conservation and wildlife. It is accepted that users will also tweet and re-tweet about other personal non-bird topics and there can be no control of this aspect, except in respect of offensive comment that will be censured.

Start tweeting

If you are not already tweeting, sign up at twitter.com. It's a totally free service. If you already have a twitter account then follow us @suffolkbirds1. You can become 'always-connected' no matter where you are. It's great fun. It gives you a voice that can resound across the web. It's very informative but, beware, it can be quite addictive!

Editor: SOG needs to move with the times and Phil Whittaker's initiative seems to be helping SOG carve out a more prominent position in the birding community.

Announcements

Mick Wright

Help us with surveying Suffolk's Nightingales

Nightingales in decline

Within Britain, the distribution of Nightingales has always been restricted to the south-east. But Atlas data since the 1960s has shown a clear contraction of breeding range away from the western and northern limits. Census data also show that numbers have declined strongly in recent decades. The BBS indicates that, between 1995 and 2009, the British Nightingale population decreased by 57%. One possible explanation for the decline is that habitat suitable for Nightingales to breed in is becoming scarcer. Also, as Nightingales are long-distance migrants, wintering in West Africa, with the extension of the Sahara they might be encountering added barriers to successful migration.

Full survey now underway

During the 2012 breeding season, volunteers will be conducting a full survey of breeding Nightingales across Britain. The main aim of the survey is to map all singing males and compare their numbers and distribution with results from the previous national survey in 1999.

A completely new element of the 2012 survey will investigate how many males are singing at night later in the spring. Recent research suggests that only unpaired males continue to sing during the darkest hours of the night, whereas all territorial males sing in the daytime (especially at dawn and dusk).

Current BTO Atlas data indicates Nightingales are chiefly breeding in the south-east and north-west of the county.

Methodology

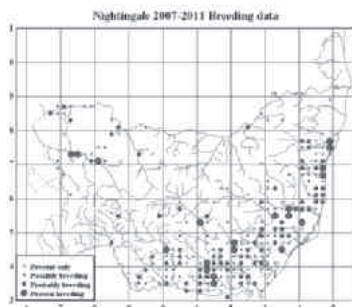
There are 350 tetrads selected for surveying, with 258 of these being priorities for the nocturnal surveys. Visits to tetrads known to have been recently occupied by singing Nightingales will form the main part of the survey. Volunteers should visit each of their allocated tetrads at least twice during the early spring (27 April to 14 May). Each visit should cover all suitable Nightingale habitat within the tetrad and should be made in the early morning (before 8.30 a.m.). Volunteers should map any singing Nightingales onto a pre-printed survey form. Basic habitat information will also be requested.

There will also be optional nocturnal visits to occupied tetrads (ideally at least two during the period 18 May to 4 June). The main aim of these visits will be to discover whether singing birds already detected by the daytime surveys are in song during the hours between midnight and 3 a.m., indicating that these are unpaired individuals. A sample of tetrads will be priorities for nocturnal visits, but these visits will be useful in any occupied tetrad. Nocturnal visits **will not** be required in tetrads found to be unoccupied from daytime surveys.

All casual observations of singing Nightingales in 2012 should be reported to the Regional Organiser (Mick Wright) or using [BirdTrack](#). Each record should include

the time of day, a six-figure grid reference and, where possible, an indication of habitat type.

Are you prepared to help? – If you can please contact Mick on 01473 710032 (mickwright@btinternet.com) for info or to be allocated a tetrad to survey for Nightingales in 2012.



(This article was extracted from the newsletter 'Dragonflies in Suffolk, No. 1, Jan 2012)

Help needed with the Dragonfly Atlas

The new national Dragonfly Atlas will provide a key insight into recent changes that have taken place, particularly those driven by "global warming". Suffolk has already been strongly influenced by such changes, with the colonisation of Small Red-eyed Damselfly and Willow Emerald Damselfly being amongst the highlights.

This coming summer will be the last season for fieldwork towards the new Atlas. The previous Atlas ("Atlas of Dragonflies of Britain and Ireland" by R. Merritt, N.W. Moore & B.C. Eversham, HMSO, 1996) was based on records made before the early 1990s, so much has changed since then.

Submit sightings details

In the light of the approaching deadlines for publication of the findings from recent Atlas work, readers are strongly encouraged to submit details of their dragonfly sightings for the last few years to the County Recorder (see contact details at the end of the article), if they have not already done so.

For those not used to submitting records, the basic details needed are the "four Ws", i.e.:

"What" – i.e. species.

"Where" – preferably an Ordnance Survey grid reference*, though a location name or a post code etc., will do (*see <http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/osweb/site/gi/nationalgrid/nationalgrid.pdf>).

"When" – self evident!

"by Whom" – name (and preferably contact details) of finder.

In addition, an estimate of numbers seen and/or any evidence for breeding (e.g. tandem pairs noted or ovipositing females seen) would also be useful.

Significant Suffolk news includes:

Willow Emerald damselfly discovered in Suffolk

This species was discovered in Suffolk during 2007 near Trimley St Mary – this being the first British record since a report from Kent in the early 1990s. Remarkably it has now consolidated as a breeding species, and was widely reported from the south-east of the county during 2011. Records came from as far inland as Sudbury and Stowmarket, and included a number from previously unreported sites and more extensive searches in 2012 might well prove productive.

Growing presence of Scarce Chaser

For much of the second half of the 20th century, this species was known in Suffolk only from the River Waveney area, but in 1997 it was discovered on the River Stour, where it had once before been reported in the 1940s. In recent years the River Stour population has continued to strengthen, and sightings have also been made from the Lakenheath region, and from the River Gipping near Needham Market. This fits the national trend for the species, which is currently expanding its breeding range quite markedly. In 2011 records continued to be plentiful, with Nick Mason finding the species to be quite widespread in Fenland.

Please submit your records to:

Adrian Parr (County Dragonfly Recorder); adrian.parr@btinternet.com; 10 Orchard Way, Barrow, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP29 5BX

Sponsored September Bird Race

Look out for details on our website.

Suffolk Birds

Copies of Suffolk Birds Report 2010 can be obtained from the Visitor Centre, Lackford SWT @ £7.50 as well as at RSPB Lakenheath and Minsmere

Cranes correction

The Editor has been asked to point out that in 'The Future' paragraph of the article in the last issue of the Harrier, the mention of five cranes "consist of the two pairs, plus a solitary". We have been asked to point out that this is not a random extra crane loafing about with the pairs, but in fact this was last year's youngster, who will stay with its parents until at least February. So our five is very much a pair and a family of three, rather than two pairs and a solitary.

Drought warning

As we go to press, springs across the region are drying up to put more pressure on the environment – we'll report this fully in #169.

Wordsearch Solution

The forty birds were:

Blackcap, Buzzard, Coal Tit, Cuckoo, Curlew, Dipper, Eider, Fulmar, Gannet, Goldcrest, Golden Eagle, Goldeneye, Goosander, Great Tit, Jackdaw, Kestrel, Knot, Linnet, Merlin, Osprey, Puffin, Purple Sandpiper, Red Grouse, Redshank, Redwing, Reed Bunting, Robin, Rock Pipit, Rook, Shag, Siskin, Snipe, Swallow, Tawny Owl, Teal, Tufted Duck, Twite, Waxwing, Wigeon, Wren

... and the Scottish mountain was:

Ben More Assynt

Congratulations to the many that got the answer right. Of the winners, Jan Cawston was drawn by Steve Piotrowski from the 'hat' at the AGM and duly received a book token for £20.00.

Finally, once again, very many thanks to Brenda Rafe who spent a considerable time compiling this Wordsearch puzzle for us – as the many comments received indicated it was much appreciated by many of us. Thanks Brenda.

Wildlife Art by

Birdwatch artist
of the year 2008

COMBINING A PASSION FOR NATURE WITH GREAT ARTISTIC SKILL

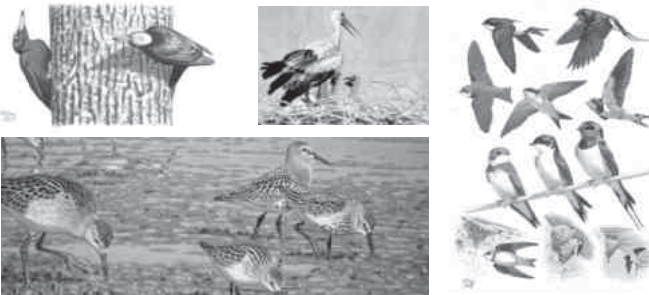


Photo credits:

Barry Woodhouse (front cover); Su Gough (page 9); David Collins (page 10); Standing pair, Andy Hay (rsfb-images.com); Stone Curlew with eggs, Chris Gomersall (rsfb-images.com); Nearly invisible eggs, Jo Jones; Chick in parsnips, Tim Cowan; Chick in hand, Jeff Kew (all colour supplement #2/3); Mike Taylor (colour supplement #3); Bill Baston (colour supplement #4 pages 16 & 22); John Richardson (colour supplement #4); Will Brame (colour supplement #4); Dave Fairhurst (colour supplement #4); Dick Walden (colour supplement #4); Barry Cooper (page 17); Rob Barton (page 19); Steve Aylward (page 24)

Illustration credits:

Su Gough (pages 4, 5, 7, 8, 11 & 18); Szabolcs Kokay (colour supplement #1); Mike Langham (page 15)

Available for private or commercial commissions – black and white illustrations, high quality paintings and even murals, contact Szabolcs Kokay.

www.kokay.hu email: kokayart@gmail.com

Council for 2012:

Officers

Honorary President: **Steve Piotrowski**
Chairman: **Roy Marsh**
Vice-Chairman: **Steve Abbott**
Secretary: **Phil Whittaker**
Treasurer/Membership Secretary: **Bill Stone**
Project Officer: **Mick Wright**
Magazine Editor: **Phil Brown**
Website Co-ordinator: **Gi Grieco**
Bird Report Editor: **Nick Mason**
Outdoor Events Organiser: **Jean Garrod**
Indoor Events Organiser: **Adam Gretton** [co-opted]

Members

Paul Gowen [to 2013]
Jon Warnes [to 2013]
Jean Garrod [to 2014]
Robin Harvey [to 2014]
Craig Fulcher [to 2015]
Scott Mayson [to 2015]

Honorary Vice-Presidents

Jean & Ken Garrod
Mike Jeanes
Mike Hall
Robin Hopper



Bird Recorders

North East Area Recorder:

Andrew Green, 17 Cherrywood, HARLESTON, Norfolk IP20 9LP
Tel: 07766 900063 Email: andrew@waveney1.fsnet.co.uk

South East Area Recorder:

Scott Mayson, 8 St Edmunds Close, Springfields, WOODBRIDGE IP12 4UY
Tel: 01394 385595 Email: smsuffolkbirder@gmail.com

West Area Recorder:

Colin Jakes, 7 Maltwood Avenue, BURY ST EDMUNDS IP33 3XN
Tel: 01284 702215 colin@jakes.myzen.co.uk



Suffolk Ornithologists' Group

Who we are and what we do

As an independent Group, SOG provides a network and a voice for birdwatchers in the county. Administered by Suffolk birdwatchers, for Suffolk's birdwatchers, this Group keeps birders in touch with what is going on and with each other.

Through the Group's Council, SOG has links with other naturalist and conservation organisations throughout the region.



Trips and meetings

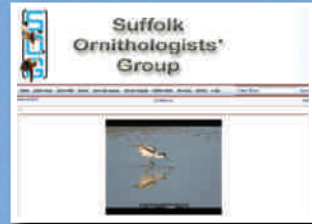
SOG organises an extensive programme of field meetings – an opportunity for members, young and old, novice or expert, to see birds, get practical ID tips and to share camaraderie with fellow enthusiasts.

Indoor meetings are also arranged with quality speakers entertaining members with stories of birds and birdwatching, both local and from around the world.

Media

The Group has a strong web presence,
www.sogonline.org.uk.

The site is regularly updated and presents sightings news and photography.



The Group's magazine, *The Harrier*, is published quarterly and keeps members in touch with what's going on – providing a mixture of articles about birds, conservation, reserves, organisations and people.

Once a year the Group and its team, with the support of the Suffolk Naturalists' Society, publish the Suffolk Bird Report.

Protecting birds

SOG organises and promotes surveys and conservation projects about the birds of Suffolk and provides an opportunity for members to participate. SOG is also able to support worthwhile projects through bursaries.

Membership of SOG is open to anyone with an interest in the birds of Suffolk.

For birds & for birders

www.sogonline.org.uk