

October 2012 Magazine No.170



The Harrier

Suffolk Ornithologists' Group



Inside:

- Barn Owl conservation
- Reedbed creation
- BTO's BirdTrack
 - Getting started

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Cover photograph – Hen Harrier

Photographer: Carl Wright. Shot from the 'double-decker' hide overlooking Jason's Pool at Lackford Lakes, SWT on 25 February 2012. Using a Nikon D300 with 500mm Prime Lens at ISO 320, F#4, 1/2000. This shot won Birdguides' Photo of the Week and a copy of it is displayed in the foyer of the Lackford Lakes Visitor Centre.

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Editorial

In the last Harrier I dwelt on some conservation issues – this time I'm closer to home, but I trust I'm not being self indulgent when I say, I want to talk about Council's efforts on your behalf.

It takes a great deal of effort to propel the Group forward, but that is what the Council's activity this year continues to do.

Improved presentation

First up, you'll have noted a number of initiatives. The Group's standard of presentation has come on apace with a new set of display boards, a flier, a PowerPoint presentation and, of course, the business card/presenter (as previously included in the Harrier) – which will be re-printed early next year. Every item features the same new slogan – SOG 'For birds & for birders' – that neatly summarises the Group's role.

Articles about us have appeared in Local Wildlife News and the Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership newsletter. We hope to soon appear in the Suffolk Norfolk Life magazine too. There have also been regular articles in the Ipswich Evening Star and news about us on the SOG Twitter feed. Then the SOG display has been seen at Chantry Park, Legal & General's call centre in Ipswich and fund raising at Sainsbury's Warren Heath. So it is safe to say our presence is not only improved, but increasing too.

Added fund-raising

Then there has been successful fund-raising

activity too. Along with several generous donations from Legal and General we have also pitched for funding from the Suffolk Naturalist's Society. This was successful and we're very grateful to SNS for supplying sufficient monies to allow us to purchase a new SOG laptop. Once that arrives our webmaster will then make a start on our long overdue website 'spring-clean' – so look out for the results over the next three months or so. Next there was the sponsored bird race in which ten teams participated on September 15th. All achieved very respectable scores (see the article), but more importantly a four-figure sum was secured (we'll publish the final figures in December) allowing us to purchase equipment for the county recorders.

Upon the completion of a biodiversity survey, monies are also expected from Viridor for their site at Lackford. This report has been well received and we have been asked to continue next year. If any members want to help with our surveys or to engage our surveying services, in return for a small fee and our expenses, do get in touch with the Editor.

Our departing Treasurer, Bill Stone, who stands down at the end of the year, has also been working with SNS to secure our share of the membership Gift Aid monies. In effect this

means for every pound we collect, we receive an additional 20% if the donor is a UK taxpayer – so this is a very worthwhile effort. As a result Bill's final act has been to have very impressively turned a potential Group deficit into a surplus. Well done Bill!

On a separate note, sadly I have to report that Paul Gowen, another stalwart of SOG for many years in a variety of roles, has also decided to step down. We all wish Paul the best in his retirement and that his golf handicap improves commensurately!

A number of other initiatives are about to get underway with more fund-raising at supermarkets across the county, as well as chasing additional sources of funding. All of which is designed to improve our presence and perceived value to the wider community. To that end we are also scheduled to co-operate with SWT and large commercial organisations that undertake community-based activities, to provide their participating staff with a better awareness of nature and wildlife as they undertake volunteer work on reserves.

Reduced costs

In an effort to reduce our printing costs, we have begun to produce an electronic version of the Harrier. Let the Editor know if you'd prefer to receive this publication that way.

We are also embarking on a programme of improving our communications to you. Having to wait three months for the next issue of Harrier for us to deliver messages is slow and can be frustrating. So instead we've decided to investigate introducing an email

communications programme, enabling everyone who participates to quickly get feedback on various events. Just let us have your email addresses and we will add you to the official email list.

Volunteers needed

So, apart from the extra funding, what else has been achieved? Most important of all has been a slew of new members and the return of several lapsed ones – welcome to all of you. But, to maintain this wide range of effort we are definitely in need of volunteers – as Council is being stretched thin.

This issue

Finally, what have we got for all of you in this issue? First, there's a detailed report on the important Suffolk Community Barn Owl Project. This is followed by a short article that completes the Titchwell Marsh 'counteracting sea erosion' story, then BINS run us through this summer's and the early autumn's rarities. Next, there is a short piece that describes an attempt at kleptoparasitism among raptors. Then there is our 'Improving record keeping' feature – 'Log it or lose it', which includes the first of two BirdTrack tutorials and a reminder piece from SORC. We then introduce you to a SORC committee member, followed by 'Looking back', which continues to provide us with reminders of some of the more significant Suffolk bird records – twenty-five and fifty years ago, then some news about trail developments at Minsmere, plus much more.

Enjoy the magazine and good birding for the remainder of this autumn.



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

Editor: The Suffolk Community Barn Owls Project (SCBOP) is one of the most important conservation projects currently underway in the county. Suffolk's population of Barn Owls had been in steady decline since the last war and, by the mid 90's, it was estimated to have shrunk to between 50 and 90 pairs. Urgent countywide action was clearly required and SOG proposed there be an effort to stem this decline.

In his detailed report Alec Hillier, Recorder and Ringing Secretary of the SCBOP, brings us up to speed with a project that SOG originally instigated.

Alec Hillier

Stemming the decline in an iconic species – Suffolk Community Barn Owl Project Results

The Suffolk Community Barn Owl Project is seven years on from its inception with the initial installation of Barn Owl nest boxes by Steve Piotrowski and Colin Carter in 2005. Formalised into a project managed by SOG in June 2006¹ its initial aim was to erect 90 nest boxes in north-east Suffolk over a five-year period with the possibility of covering the rest of the county in later years.

The response from the community was so enthusiastic that by February 2007 the project team had erected 150 boxes and become responsible for another 90 existing boxes. This rapid expansion led to the management of the project being transferred to Suffolk Wildlife Trust later in 2007 and the aims revised to:

- Erect over 500 Barn Owl boxes in Suffolk by 2010

- Increase the number of Barn Owls in Suffolk
- Advise landowners on habitat management for Barn Owls
- Increase awareness of the Barn Owl
- Monitor Barn Owl populations

Box distribution

From the beginning of the project, the supply and installation of Barn Owl nest boxes was the first objective. Boxes were built using sustainable timber and the work contracted to a local charity, providing work for disabled people, and later to a local prison. The boxes are installed by the landowners, or trained tree surgeons as shown in figure 1 below.



Figure 1 Project Barn Owl box being installed by tree surgeon

¹ Harrier #146 June 2006

The project started in the north-east of the county and has now extended to cover all of Suffolk, but with a higher density of boxes in the north-east. Figures 2 and 3 below show the distribution of boxes in 2007 and 2012. It includes not only boxes set up by the project, but also many existing boxes and projects, particularly those of David Wilkin on the Stour Valley and Roger Buxton on the Upper Waveney, all now reported by SCBOP.



Figure 2 Location of SCBOP boxes and nest sites 2007



Figure 3 Location of SCBOP boxes and nest sites 2012

Data gathering and reporting

The large number of boxes, now about 1400, spread over the county, requires a well-coordinated monitoring policy. The county has been divided into 12 geographic areas where data gathering is headed by an experienced monitor, known as the Area Coordinator, who controls the activities of the monitors and ringers living and active within the area. There are currently 127 monitors trained by Suffolk Wildlife Trust who are all covered by a Schedule 1 licence which permits disturbing Barn Owls in order to monitor their breeding.

The large number of boxes results in many boxes only being monitored once in a season and, unfortunately, some do get missed. A few boxes have been fitted with cameras so very detailed records can be kept in these cases. The results are transferred to the Project Recorder who maintains an Excel spreadsheet with 25 columns and 1400 rows where all the data are compiled.

Results

This report covers the years from 2007, when monitoring was formalised, up to 2011, the last year with full reporting. Results of 2012 are still coming in but, from the information received so far, it looks like being an excellent year for the Barn Owl in the project area, with more Barn Owls being ringed than ever before – 500 plus to date. A successful brood of Barn Owl chicks that have been ringed



Figure 4 What it is all about – three Barn Owl chicks ringed and ready to fledge

and are almost ready to leave the nest is shown in figure 4.

Barn Owls

Over the period there has been a year on year increase in the number of Barn Owl nest sites found and, importantly, an increase in the number of nests successfully producing live young – from 76 in 2007 to 200 in 2011, with breeding attempts rising from 89 boxes to 225, see figure 5 below.

In the chart below:

“Pellet” refers to a nest with fresh Barn Owl

pellets that is probably a roost site.

“Adult” refers to a nest where live adults have been seen but no eggs or young, again a roost site or perhaps a site monitored before a breeding attempt took place.

“Egg Live” refers to a nest where live eggs were found but the box was not rechecked.

“Egg Failed” refers to a nest where eggs were found which were re-found at a later date after the end of the brooding period and hence were unfertile or deserted.

“Young Live” refers to a nest where live young were found in the nest, these are often ringed.

“Young Failed” refers to a nest where the young were found dead or rechecked before the possible fledging date and found to have disappeared, probably as a result of predation.

The minimum number of pairs of Barn Owls in the project in 2011 is more than 200, which compares very favourably with the estimate of 51 – 90 pairs for 1995-98 (Wright 2001)². The total number of boxes with Barn Owl evidence rose from 108 to 314 over the same period.

The distribution of boxes with evidence of Barn Owls is shown for 2007 and 2011 in figures 6 and 7 on page 6.

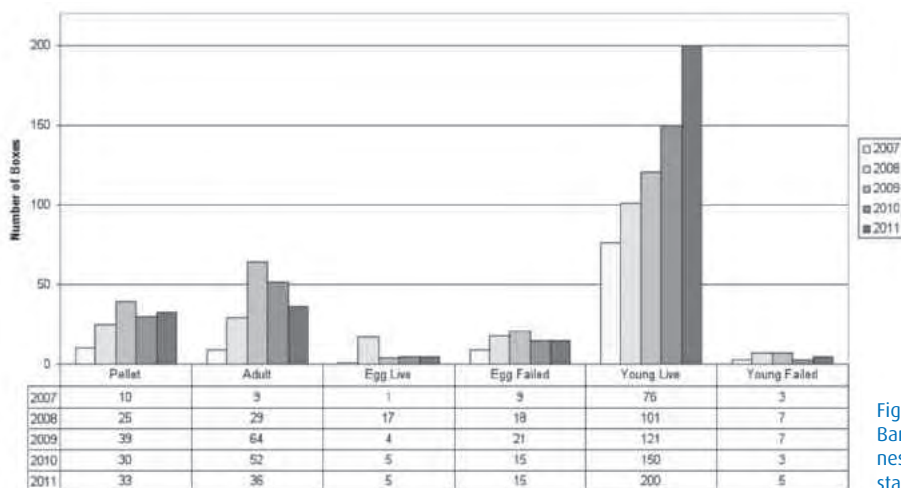


Figure 5 Barn Owl nest final status

² Cited in “The Birds of Suffolk” Piotrowski 2003

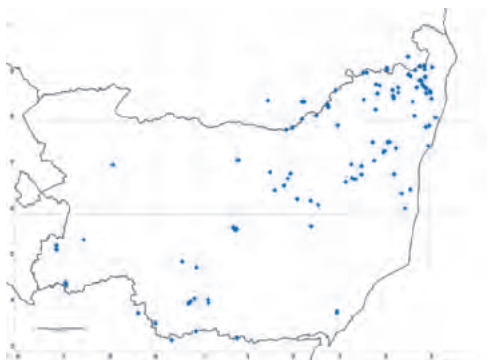


Figure 6 2007 Barn Owl nest distribution



Figure 7 2011 Barn Owl nest distribution

Although this is a very obvious rise, the number of boxes has risen considerably and the percentage of monitored boxes containing Barn Owls has fluctuated over the years as shown in table 1 below.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Checked Boxes	363	572	913	1018	1164
Barn Owl Occupied boxes	108	197	256	255	314
Barn Owl % Occupancy	30%	34%	28%	25%	27%
Barn Owl % increase since 2007		82%	137%	136%	191%
Checked Box % increase since 2007		58%	152%	180%	221%

Table 1 Proportion of monitored boxes occupied by Barn Owls

Other species

Although designed for Barn Owls the boxes have been adopted by several other species of birds, mammals and insects, as shown in figure 8 right and repeated and enlarged in

the Harrier's centrespread (CS4&5). Note that in a few boxes more than one species can be found in a single season. To aid mapping multiple species occupation of boxes has not been shown here. Barn Owls are given precedence, as this after all is a Barn Owl project, followed by Tawny and Little Owls, Kestrels, Stock Doves, Jackdaws and finally other species.



Figure 8 Box occupation by species in 2011

The chart figure 9 opposite shows the prime species occupying boxes each year.

Small but significant numbers of boxes were occupied by Tawny Owls, Little Owls, Kestrels and Grey Squirrels.

The "Other Species" category comprises Feral Pigeon, Wood Pigeon (nest on top of box), Mallard, Mandarin Duck, Shelduck, Robin, Great Tit, wasp species, Hornet, Stoat, Field Mouse and even a Cat, found in one box two years in a row.

As is obvious from the chart, the second most frequent occupant of the boxes over the years is the Stock Dove, an amber listed species, which does not disturb the Barn Owls. A map showing the distribution of Stock Dove occupied nest sites in 2011 is shown as figure 10 opposite.

The next most common occupant, the

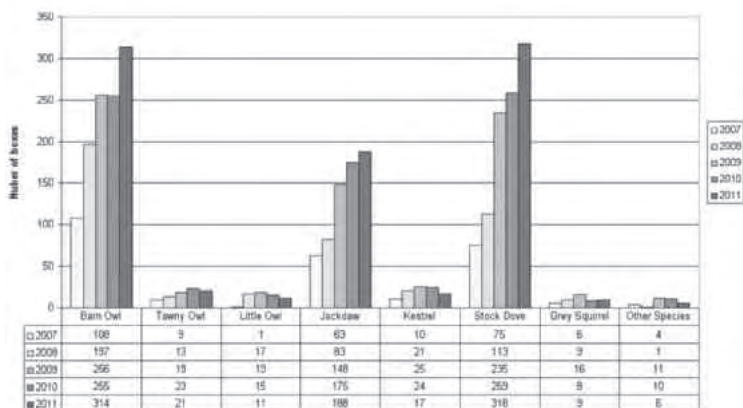


Figure 9 Box occupancy by year

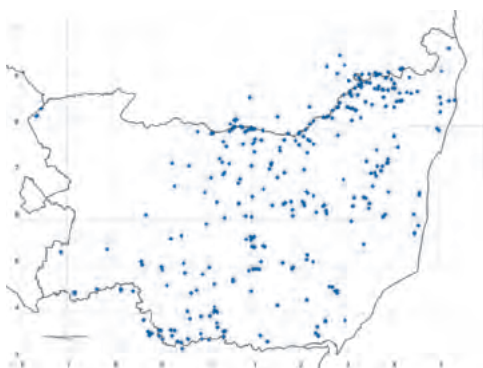


Figure 10 2011 Stock Dove nest distribution

Jackdaw, does cause a severe problem by filling the box with sticks, in some cases leaving no space and in others remarkably leading to the Barn Owls being blocked into their nest and starving to death, or being forced to desert their eggs.

An example of this behaviour this year involved a tree box on my own land. A Barn Owl pair had started brooding eggs, identified by observation of the male bringing food into the box when, after some days, I observed sticks protruding from the entrance hole, see photo figure 11.

I removed the sticks to find the female Barn Owl sitting on six eggs totally blocked in. The next day she was again sitting happily on the

eggs. Two days later again there were sticks protruding from the hole and this time I found both the male and female Barn Owls stuck in the box with their eggs.

On release the owls then deserted the nest and eggs and moved into a box in a barn about 100 m away. This box had a web cam installed, which enabled continuous monitoring without disturbance. The pair produced six eggs, resulting in five young, of which two failed to grow and were eaten by the female, leaving three healthy chicks that fledged in August. The Jackdaws laid a single egg that resulted in a large chick that died in the box, probably as a result of

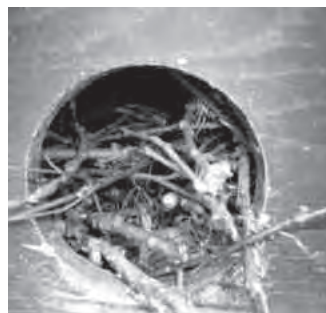


Figure 11 View into Barn Owl nest box showing blocked entrance hole

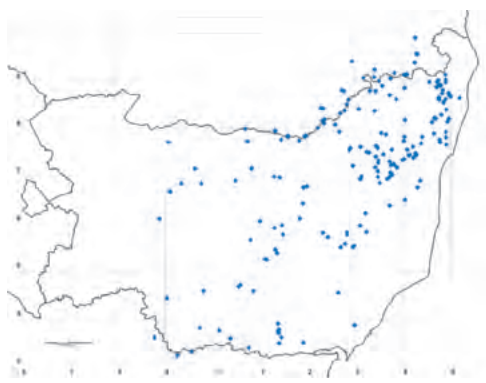


Figure 12 2011 Jackdaw nest distribution

the bad weather causing it to be chilled; it was fat and naked when found dead. The distribution of Jackdaw nests in 2011 is shown in figure 12 on page 7.

External reporting

Reporting of the results to BTO takes place through their nest recording and ringing schemes. The effect of the project on the numbers of these reports in Suffolk is shown in the tables 2 and 3 below for Barn Owls.

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Submitted by SCBOP	0	0	57	121	73	129	150
Submitted by others	10	4	31	0	16	6	6
Total	10	4	88	121	89	135	156

Table 2 Barn Owl nest records in Suffolk

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Submitted by SCBOP	Pulli	0	40	161	142	164	246
	Juvenile	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Adult	0	3	14	19	22	12
Submitted by others	Pulli		24	49	51	33	50
	Juvenile		4	0	0	1	5
	Adult		1	1	0	2	2
Total	Pulli	64	210	193	197	296	418
	Juvenile	4	0	0	1	5	4
	Adult	4	15	19	24	14	22

Table 3 Barn Owl ringing records in Suffolk

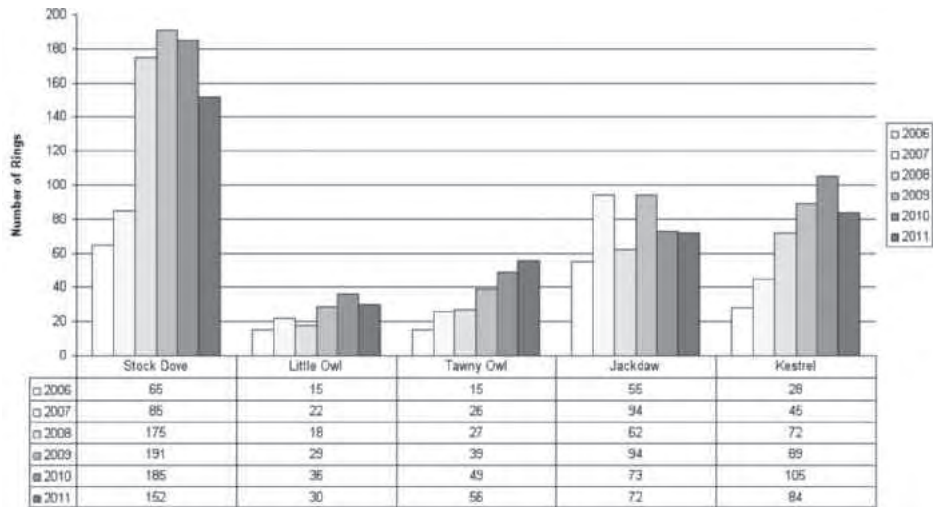


Figure 13 Number of large cavity nesting birds ringed in Suffolk

From these tables the large effect on data gathering in the county by the project can be clearly seen. On a national scale the Suffolk Barn Owl pulli made up 1.6%, 2.1%, 3.5%, 2.7%, 4.3% and 5.1% of the total ringed nationally in the years 2006 to 2011 inclusive.

For other large cavity nesting birds recorded in the project sites, the ringing totals for Suffolk per year of the project activity are given in Figure 10.

This shows an increase in all species except Jackdaws, which tend to nest early in the year before monitors visit to check for Barn Owls and hence are not found as often in the nest boxes. Most Jackdaw reports are based on finding the empty nests following fledging. These old nests are removed and so the finding of a new nest signifies activity in the current breeding year.

Conclusions and the future

The project has been successful almost beyond the dreams of its founders. The monitoring of 1400 nest sites in the county, some 650 being project-supplied boxes, easily exceeds the first aim.

The year-on-year increase in the number of Barn Owls reported and being raised to fledging in the monitored nests, together with the increase in the numbers of Barn Owls ringed, strongly suggests that the population has indeed increased, and certainly the population is well monitored.

Suffolk Wildlife Trust's team of Volunteer Conservation Advisors have carried out hundreds of site visits to work with landowners and communities on habitat management and nest box siting for Barn Owls. The advisors focus on influencing the creation of wildlife-rich feeding habitats that also benefit many other species. In many cases the host farms have been encouraged to enter agri-environment (ELS/HLS) agreements, where not already in such schemes.

Press reports in both local and national newspapers and TV programmes, together with many local talks about the project and the Suffolk Wildlife Trust Barn Owl website, which includes the interactive "iSpy a Barn Owl" mapping system to plot public Barn Owl sightings, ensures that awareness of the Barn Owl is increased.

In the future the aim is to bring back Suffolk's Barn Owls to the whole of the county, with a push to extend the number of nest boxes in

the west being a priority. Management of the monitors will need to be upgraded to ensure a better distribution of the workload and to improve the recording process.

The history of the current boxes will be checked to see if unsuccessful boxes can be relocated or the habitat improved. There is a wealth of information that can be analysed to determine the reasons for the acceptability of individual nest boxes to Barn Owls and to try and quantify the reasons for change in occupation of particular boxes. Older boxes will need to be maintained. Although the project supplied boxes are made of very durable ply, some of the "found" boxes are in need of refurbishment.

The project initially conceived as benefiting a single species, has shown that wildlife cannot be considered in isolation:

- The provision of the nest sites has aided many other cavity-nesting birds and animals.
- The habitat management has increased the numbers of voles, shrews and mice.
- The collection of Barn Owl pellets at the nest sites has greatly increased the knowledge of the distribution of Harvest Mice in the county.

Thus it appears clear that SCBOP is not only good for Barn Owls but for nature in general.

Acknowledgements

This article is based on the activities of the 127 monitors coordinated by the area coordinators, in alphabetic order of surnames, Ian Archer, Patrick Barker, Colin Carter, Simon Evans, John Glazebrook, Chris McIntyre, Sandy Jackson (now retired from the coordinator role but still very active in monitoring and publicising the project in the west), Alan Miller, Dave Pearsons, Carl Powell, Etienne Swartz, Mike Swindells (also now retired from coordinating but still monitoring and ringing), Janette Troop, and John Walshe.

Oka Last of the SWT keeps the office side running, coordinating the actions of the SWT Barn Owl conservation advisors, ordering and arranging installation of new boxes, and publicity as well as acting as a monitor.

Steve Piotrowski and Colin Carter continue to manage the project that they instigated. Felicity Hillier produced the maps and assisted in the compilation of this report.

Editor: So now you can clearly see that a massive and valuable effort by over a hundred individuals has helped to arrest this iconic species' decline. Everyone connected with this project should be warmly congratulated. Perhaps the most telling evidence for this project's success is indicated by the tongue-in-cheek proposal that the Barn Owl in Suffolk might now be re-named the Box Owl!

Editor: Last year Robert Coleman of Titchwell Marsh presented the RSPB's adaptation to coastal erosion at this reserve. At that stage one aspect of the project was incomplete – the development of a new reedbed habitat. Now we can finish the story with an overview of this reedbed's creation.

Of course the creation of new reedbeds is not news, what is news here is the positive nature of the thinking that led to its development. Hopefully, this will serve to encourage Suffolk's coastal reserves' managements to be equally visionary when the time comes again for them to create further replacement habitat too.

Phil Brown with Paul Eele, RSPB Reserve Warden

Turning a deficit into an asset

A new reedbed for Titchwell Marsh

In 2009, when Robert Coleman and his site management team were faced with a gaping

hole in the southern edge of the reserve, they decided to turn this potential negative into a positive and create a new reedbed.

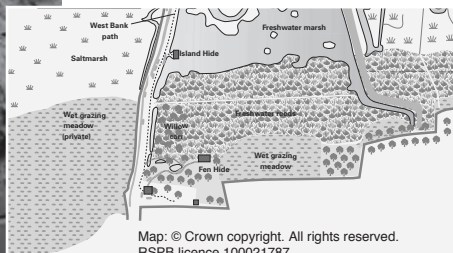
Today Patsy's Reedbed testifies to that decisive thinking – a two and a half hectare mere of water plus scrub margins, fed by springs to form the new and accessible southern border of Titchwell Marsh.

The £1.4 million pound Titchwell Coastal Change Project had demanded the re-building of the freshwater marsh's north seawall (now known as the Parrinder Bank) as well as strengthening the West Bank to protect both from the encroaching sea when the Brackish Marsh was breached. The rebuilding of these banks would require considerable quantities of clay to reinforce their foundations.

A novel traffic-reduction measure

In order to reduce the numbers of lorries using the busy A149 coast road transporting the vast quantities of material the project required to strengthen the banks, it was hoped instead that the necessary material could be mined on site. Once the landscape company's engineers had confirmed that the proposed source

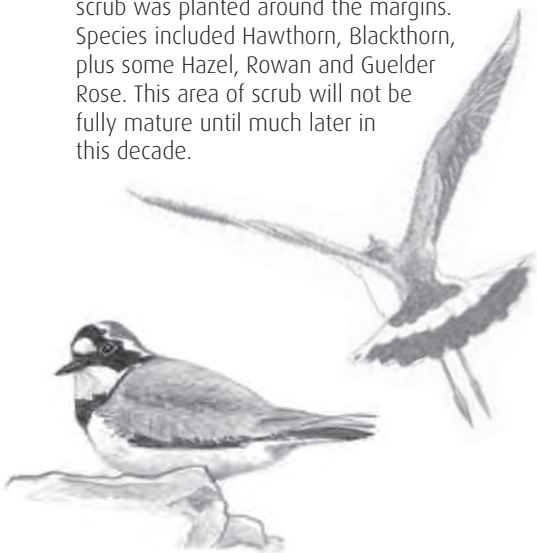
material would be fit for purpose, approval was given to extract tonnes of clay from beneath the grassland to the south of the present reedbeds. This did not constitute a loss to wildlife as the grassland found above the clay was of low biodiversity value.



Habitat creation

The clay was duly excavated in 2009. A series of ditches connecting two 3m deep pools were then dug into the residual clay floor of the reedbed in order to facilitate subsequent water and fish movement once the 'hole' was flooded around the new reedbed. While the two banks were created and strengthened with this clay over the course of 2010–2011, the natural springs located under this grassland ensured that the 'hole' quickly filled with water.

Signs of natural reed regeneration were swiftly noted – although some supplementary reed planting was required in early 2012. In the course of late 2011 and spring 2012 native scrub was planted around the margins. Species included Hawthorn, Blackthorn, plus some Hazel, Rowan and Guelder Rose. This area of scrub will not be fully mature until much later in this decade.



The margins of this new wet habitat have already attracted breeding Little Ringed Plovers, in both 2011 and 2012, and Lapwing earlier this year. While it is hoped the surrounding scrub should increasingly act as a magnet for spring and autumn migrating passerines.

New trails

Finally, in the autumn of 2012, two new trails (the East trail and the Autumn Trail) were



The 'hole', before becoming Patsy's Reedbed.

added to make the new reedbed accessible, as well as affording additional viewing access to the south-east corner of the Freshwater Marsh.

The East Trail is in effect a continuation of the present Fen Trail and will provide birders with good viewing access to the dense scrub area just beyond the current Fen Hide. This scrub is already beloved by passerine migrants alike, such as Redstarts and Pied Flycatchers in the spring and Yellow-browed Warblers in the autumn. From the hide it is now possible to continue east, via the Tank Track, to the southern edge of Patsy's Reedbed, where there are now two viewing points overlooking the deep pools in which autumn waders are expected to congregate.

During August, September and October this trail then temporarily extends further east, before bearing north (just past the Willow



New view into the Freshwater Marsh.

Wood) to intersect with the south-east corner of the Freshwater Marsh. This is known as the Autumn Trail and, at its termination, the viewing point is a perfect birding spot during autumnal mornings for passage waders – but it will be off-limits for the rest of the year when the Marsh Harriers and Bitterns breed in the adjacent reedbed and saltmarsh.

A valuable additional asset

Importantly the provision of this new area introduces a more relaxed and informal air into birding at Titchwell Marsh, as there will now be an opportunity to wander off the trails around Patsy's Reedbed.

Editor: This new freedom, plus the reedbed with its accompanying trails, has in my opinion transformed Titchwell Marsh from a 'one-track' reserve into a full day's birding experience – thanks to the vision of the site's management team. The team's vision inspired the conversion of a potential site deficit into a real reserve asset, without involving any additional investment – a real win-win. For in tough times, as the sea continues to invade some of our present coastal reserves, replacement habitat will need to be created in an equally economic fashion.

Roy Marsh

Suffolk BINS – 'A summer to remember?'

With the spring now long behind us and as we looked forward to a scorching summer, it seemed with disbelief that the early part of it seemed more like the monsoon season in the Far East, with June 2012, officially becoming the wettest June in history. We can at least rely on the British Summers, I thought... but could we rely on the birds to deliver a welcomed uplift to the spirits?

Potential first?

June – The month opened in good style with a White Stork noted in fields just north of Sudbury on the 1st, while the Wood Warbler continued to please, as does a Serin at LBO, and a Raven seen over Wangford, a female Red-backed Shrike on Westleton Heath on the 5th with the two Glossy Ibis noted on the levels at Minsmere throughout the month. The 8th saw the discovery of a mobile adult Rose-coloured Starling on Upper Hollesley Common. The

10th saw a Woodchat Shrike on Walberswick Common, a Bee-eater circled over Dingle, while a male Red-backed Shrike was found at LBO on the Butts. The 11th saw a probable American Golden Plover briefly on the Common at LBO, while a male Red-backed Shrike was noted at Minsmere on the 17th. The 19th saw a move away from birds, with a male Yellow-spotted White-faced Darter (dragonfly) a probable first for the UK being seen early morning in Docwra's Ditch, Dunwich Heath, for its third day, while a Woodchat Shrike was noted on Gunton Warren, and a soaring Raven over Melton Park on the 28th made up the month's highlights.

A Summer of Fun?

July – A Glossy Ibis was seen to fly over the Alde towards Orfordness on the 1st, while the Glossy remained at Minsmere until the 15th, a further bird was also noted at Southwold on the town marsh in the afternoon only and, possibly, the same bird then flew south over Minsmere that evening. The 2nd saw a Red-necked Phalarope on South Scrape Minsmere for the afternoon and evening only, with South Scrape coming up trumps again on the 6th with a Caspian Tern present 15:12 – 15:50 only. An early Wryneck was noted on North Wall on the 10th and the 15th saw an impressive count of 188 Mediterranean Gulls on the

practice green, Southwold. Three adult and up to four juvenile Cranes were seen on the 21st, while two Orioles, one male remained. The 22nd saw a White-rumped Sandpiper spend just 35 minutes on Havergate Island before moving on. A Caspian Tern was noted 100m offshore flying south on the 25th, possibly the far-ranging individual which had also frequented Strumpshaw and Buckenham Marsh, as well as being noted at Breydon Water on the 18th and 19th. The 28th saw a short-staying White-winged Black Tern drop in on Minsmere on the aptly named 'Lucky Pool' just ahead of the obliging individual at Alton Water on the 29th, which was happy to please all-comers with some fantastic views. A further White-winged Black Tern was present all day on Orfordness on the 29th and a Ferruginous Duck was noted on Island Mere on the 31st rounding off the month in good style.

Something to shout about?

August – The month kicked off in good shape, with the Ferruginous Duck still showing on Island Mere from the 1st, and a Pectoral Sandpiper noted briefly on Lucky Pool on the 8th and again on the 10th. The 9th saw a Pectoral Sandpiper on Orfordness, while the 12th produced a Barred Warbler briefly at LBO, and a Montagu's Harrier was seen to head west over Sizewell at 16:00 hours. A Red-spotted Bluethroat was trapped and ringed at Hollesley on the 19th. Mid-month saw the usual increase in wader movements with good numbers of Green, Common and Wood Sandpipers being noted, with a great count of eight Curlew Sandpipers seen on Orfordness on the 14th. A Honey Buzzard was observed to drift SE over the Blyth on the 20th.

County first

On a personal note, August produced the bird of the period for me, with a cracking first for the county on the 24th in the form of a male Spanish Sparrow at Landguard, although I did have to say a special 'hola' when I eventually connected a full week later. It had been

photographed on the 24th, although was not relocated for a further week, when it brought great pleasure to many from the 1st September onwards, proving best in the warmer still evenings. The 30th produced a juvenile Montagu's Harrier low south over Bawdsey with the 31st seeing two Honey Buzzards – the first flew south over Bawdsey in the morning, with the other noted north over Thorpeness at 16:15, to complete the August highlights.

The 'French' Connection!

September – With geography clearly not a strong point of mine (thank goodness for Sat Navs!), and as outlined above, the Spanish Sparrow having now been relocated on the 1st opposite the Butts at LBO, amongst the Sparrow roost just inside the dock complex off View Point Road, it continued to perform for county and out-of-county birders on and off until the 14th, but not again by the 25th at least, although the Sparrow roost had decreased significantly. Other news: a Common Rosefinch was on Orfordness on the 1st, with a further Rosefinch seen in Hollesley on the 2nd, along with a Montagu's Harrier, again on Orfordness also on the 2nd. The 4th saw an Icterine Warbler discovered behind St Peters Church, Kirkley, Lowestoft. A Pectoral Sandpiper was noted around Minsmere from the 7th and remained until the 11th at least. A Great White Egret was seen to fly NE over Bawdsey Hall on the 8th at 11:20, and with a juvenile Montagu's Harrier being noted over Minsmere levels, having probably been present for several days, makes up the September highlights to date.

So as we look forward to an exciting autumn, and one where, hopefully, the best bird of the year does turn up when I am on Shetland, let's us hope for an oddity or two! May I also remind you to submit those all-important records via your area recorders, including the completion of any SORC forms for the county rarities, and BBRC forms for any national

rarities, they really are vital!

My ongoing thanks goes out to our BINS members for their prodigious efforts in helping to provide Suffolk with such a fantastic service. For SOG members wanting to enjoy daily updates, superb photography and much more, please visit Suffolk BINS at:

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

Finally, with my SOG hat on, I would like to pass on my own personal thanks to all who

took part in the SOG Sponsored Bird Race, and to those who sponsored us, or made donations. This was a critical event for the Group, and I have been overwhelmed by the generosity of the general public, friends, families, work colleagues, members and external organisations, who have all helped us raise some well-needed funds. So a big thank you goes out to one and all, and I very much look forward to catching up with many of you at the forthcoming indoor events between now and Christmas.

David Carter

Osprey and Red Kite

Occasionally we get Red Kite drifting through Brettenham and, on a Saturday morning in June, one appeared to land in a wooded area about a mile away from the house, so we jumped in the car and went to investigate.



Much to our surprise the first bird we encountered was an Osprey sitting in an oak tree with a fish. It flew off with the fish and, after walking down a nearby footpath, we managed to relocate it in another tree. As I was taking a few photos of the bird (see left) a Red Kite reappeared and flew close to the Osprey, maybe attempting to rob it of the fish before flying off.

From my photographs I was able to read the letters on the leg ring of the Osprey and these were sent, via the BTO, to Roy Dennis who was featuring the Osprey Project on *Spring Watch* this year. Below is the reply I received:

David Carter

"Many thanks for your report and excellent picture of the Osprey BN which Roy Dennis forwarded to me. The BTO ring that you saw is No. 1408262.

It is one of the Ospreys ringed by Cyril Ostroznik of North Solway Ringing Group and it is a delight to hear of it. The bird (a male) is one of a brood of three ringed near Crawford, South Lanarkshire on 24 July 2010 in a nest that Cyril constructed.

Another of the Ospreys ringed that year – near Castle Douglas – was photographed in September 2010 in Brittany, France. These sightings just show the value of the darvc rings with their large letters and the increased reports that come from them."

Derek Skilling, Dumfries.

Yarn Hill confirmation?

Adam Gretton's comment in #167 that Yarn Hill, not far from Snape, might be a contender as evidence of White-tailed Eagle's presence in the area during earlier times might have been borne out by a recent article.



This article appeared in *Bird Study*, and was entitled 'The history of eagles in Britain and Ireland: an ecological review of placename and documentary evidence from the last 1500 years' (*Bird Study* Vol. 59 number 3 pp.335 – 349). The authors utilised placenames to infer evidence for the presence of both Golden and White-tailed Eagle in Britain and Ireland.

The supplementary evidence table attached to this article only revealed three such names across Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk – all were Old English (i.e. pre 1150) and were suggestive of White-tailed Eagles' presence more than 900 years ago. The three were Arnold's Farm in Essex, Erneford in Norfolk and, last but not least, Yarn Hill at Iken in Suffolk.

But Clive Collins raises some reservations about this 'evidence'. He wrote "There would have to be a question-mark over the Essex 'Arnold's Farm' at TQ4997. According to the standard reference work 'The Place-names of Essex' by P. H. Reaney, published as Volume XII in the English Place-name Society series (CUP 1935), 'Arnold's Farm' in the Chelmsford Hundred (which is in the TQ4997 grid square) took its name from the family of a John Arnold, recorded as living in the area in 1289." So the inference drawn in the *Bird Study* article from the name may have been wrong and the assertion that it was from Old English possibly incorrect too.

Clive then continued, stating that he'd "had a look at 'The older history of the White-tailed Eagle in Britain' by Derek Yalden (*British Birds* 100, August 2007 pp.471 – 480). His map – Fig. 1 'Map of place-names including the element 'earn' ' – shows nothing for Essex or Suffolk, and one dot for Norfolk, somewhere near Lowestoft... but nowhere near Erneford, which is inland near Swaffham. The accompanying Table 1, a list of place-names with 'earn' elements, has nothing for East Anglia at all, although it does include a Yarns Hill in West Riding Yorkshire, and many others with 'Yarn' in various compounds, mostly in the south-west." Then Clive added "Mary Gelling in 'Anglo-Saxon Eagles' (*Leeds Studies in English* Vol. 18, pages 173-181) lists nine 'yarn' place-names but not a Suffolk 'Yarn Hill', and nothing at all for Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex."

What are we to make of this? Personally I'd like to congratulate Adam for recalling Yalden's article and raising the entire subject. On balance, given the habitat, it was certainly possible that White-tailed Eagle were present in Suffolk, but perhaps not in great numbers.

Log it or lose it!

This is the theme of our latest SOG initiative.

This slogan aims to capture the idea that, if we do not regularly log even everyday birds (let alone rarities), we won't obtain an accurate picture of bird life across the county. Then there are two senses to the 'lose it' part of the slogan.

The first refers to that very human frailty that, as we get older, so we progressively forget things. As a result, unless we quickly record an interesting bird sighting then the details dissipate and, in time, we come to forget altogether. So if we don't log it we lose the record.

The second sense arises from the consequence of a lack of records. Without adequate bird records our understanding of bird populations is diminished. Ultimately, if that picture remains inadequate, then we can inevitably struggle to really understand what is going on. In due course this lack of knowledge will mean we are less able to appreciate what is happening to certain birds and are less capable of coming up with measures to save them. Thus, if we don't log birds better, we are more likely to lose them – so let's log them, not lose them.

This is why SOG and SORC are backing the BirdTrack partnership in its efforts to encourage more individuals and local recorders to put their patch and roaming records onto BirdTrack. Because BirdTrack can then add value to that local data by providing regional and national-scale analyses of it. While BirdTrack was originally created to examine arrival and departure dates for migrants, now it is beginning to be used

to provide 'trends' for some poorly monitored species. So, to put it simply, the more data BirdTrack has to work with, the better the job it can do in helping to guide the development of conservation measures.

So let's log it and not lose it!



The challenge

While Suffolk is already doing well contributing to structured surveys, such as WeBS and the BBS, the addition of yet more day-to-day records would help to fill in gaps and/or provide early warnings for some species.

When considering BirdTrack records, compared with Norfolk (which is probably already the most 'BirdTracked' county) Suffolk is presently being out-performed. According to 2011 BirdTrack data 95 Suffolk residents submitted 85,312 records, whereas Norfolk's 175 resident 'recorders' provided 154,327 records – that's still at about the same rate per observer, it's just there are more of them.

This then is the challenge we have set ourselves over the next twelve months or so. Simply to encourage more Suffolk residents (and SOG members in particular) to record birds on BirdTrack and raise the overall numbers of records. In return users of BirdTrack will benefit from having access to BirdTrack analysis tools that can readily reveal interesting facts about their own patch, as well as having the satisfaction of knowing that this patch data is contributing to our overall knowledge of bird populations.

BirdTrack

Recording birds across Britain and Ireland








BirdTrack

Recording birds across Britain and Ireland


About BirdTrack Maps & Reports Bird Recording Surveys

[BirdTrack home page](#) > [Data Home](#)

BirdTrack Data Home

This page provides the main menu for access to BirdTrack data entry and retrieval systems. If you are unsure how to proceed please review the [BirdTrack instructions](#) or the [Frequently Asked Questions](#). This link contains instructions for adding optional data to BirdTrack

 The **Comments** box is now with the optional details in Lists and Casual Records, accessed by clicking the + button.

Welcome **Ieuan Evans**

[My Details & Settings](#)


Your options


ADD RECORDS


L C R U L U C


VIEW / EDIT RECORDS

L C R

 **Create new site**

 **View/edit my sites**

 **Explore My Records**

 **Compare obs**

1st Spring obs

Above: The BirdTrack Home Page with Options button inset.

Below: Adding Casual Records.

BirdTrack

Recording birds across Britain and Ireland

[BirdTrack Data Home](#) > [Casual observations](#)

Casual Records Form


If you have completed a list of species, please use the [Species List Form](#).

Click name in other settings. [Back Menu](#)


Visit details

Site Selection or First-time site creation:

A. Select a site from your existing list

Landguard Bird Observatory (TM23 V) 

B. Choose new site from a list

beginning location name in the box to start, or click  for a full list

☒ Add to my site list

or C. Create a new Custom Site


WHAT did you see?


Birds **Dragonflies**

Use the check box to record species, adding a count if possible. Approximate counts can be added as, for example, L50 or 50+ [\(see help\)](#)

Date	Time	Species	Present	Count	(Breeding) Status	Optional
12/9/2012	14:07:45	Wheatear	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3		
12/9/2012	14:07:59	Spanish Sparrow	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1		

Agreed Active Breeding Proposed Direction of flight Habitat Sexes? Remarkable? Comments

Remarkable? 

Remarkable 



- 1** Spanish Sparrow, a county first at Landguard, Jack Levene
- 2** Adult Red-backed Shrike, Felixstowe, Chris Baines
- 3** Pectoral Sandpiper, Minsmere, Dick Walden





The Suffolk Community Ba

Inevitably, as more boxes were installed, so the numbers occupied by other species has increased too. By 2011, with an installed base then of almost 1300, of which two-thirds were occupied, 21% unoccupied and almost 10% had not been checked.



As the map right makes plain, Barn Owls and Stock Doves represented approaching 50% of these occupied boxes, Jackdaws about 13%, while other Owls constituted another 2%.

The map also shows that the distribution of boxes is distinctly biased towards the north-east. In future more effort will be dedicated to increasing the western population of Barn Owls.

Editor: Thanks to the efforts of over a hundred enthusiasts and experts sacrificing hours of their time over many years we may have turned the corner for Barn Owl survival in Suffolk. Well done to everyone concerned.

Hopefully others will be inspired by this example to help with another equally pressing problem – the plight of farmland birds.

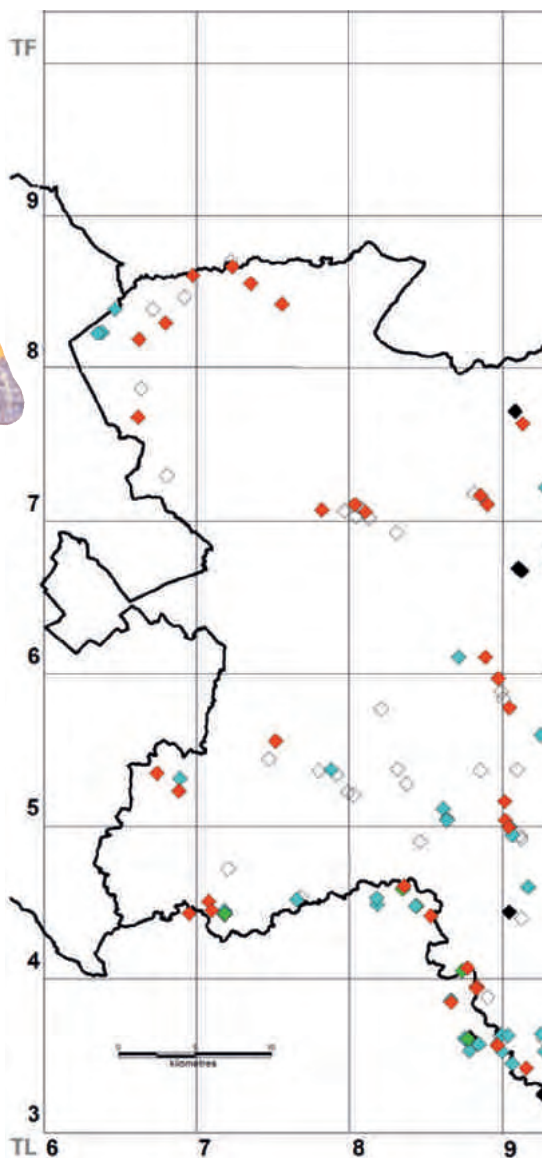
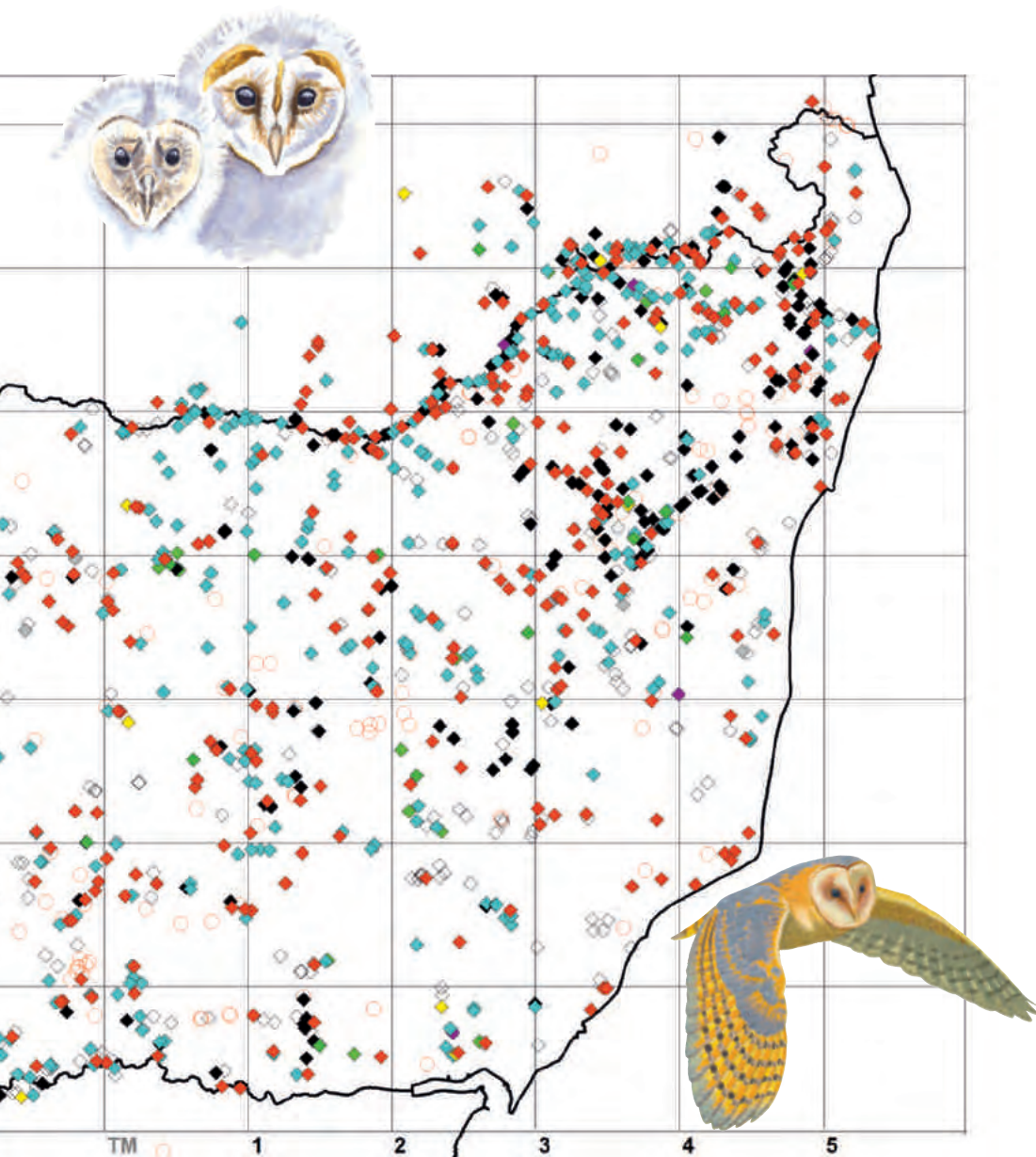


Figure 8, from page 6, box occupation by species in 2011

Ern Owl Project 2007 – 2011



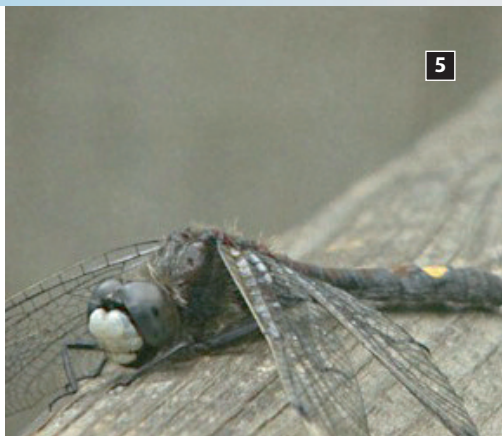
- | | | | | |
|----------------|------------------|---------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Barn Owl (314) | Little Owl (11) | Jackdaw (188) | Grey Squirrel (9) | Empty (280) |
| Tawny Owl (21) | Stock Dove (318) | Kestrel (17) | Other species (6) | Not checked (120) |



BINS Summer Specials

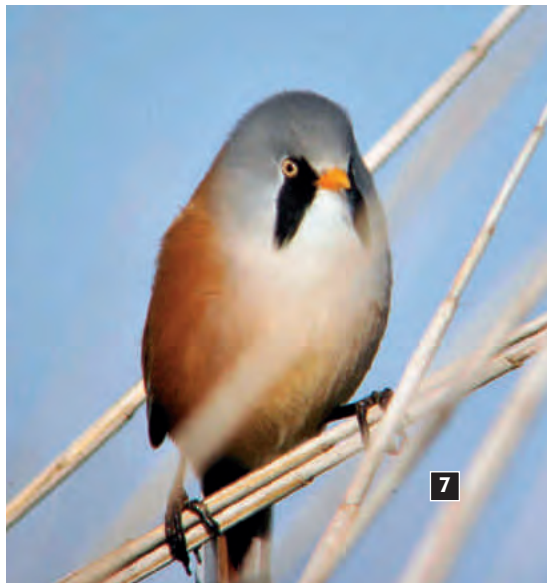


4 White-winged Black Terns,
Alton Water, Bill Baston



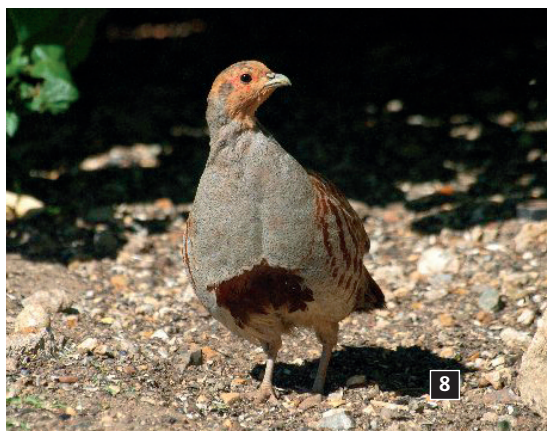
5 Male Yellow-spotted White-faced Darter, a possible UK first at Dunwich Heath, Dave Fairhurst

6 Adult Spoonbill, Minsmere, Lee Woods



7 Bearded Tit, Barry Woodhouse

8 Grey Partridge, another denizen of David Tomlinson's garden



H & A Designs

Birds and other wildlife in a range of media
*as seen in *The Harrier* and *Suffolk Birds**



(Hooded Wheatear, UAE)

Artwork by Su Gough, Photography by Luke Delve
Pet Portraits a speciality. Commissions welcome.
Illustrations available for use or sale.

www.handadesigns.co.uk

(Hoopoe on Olive, Andalucia. Acrylic)



Wildlife Art by

Birdwatch artist
of the year 2008

COMBINING A PASSION FOR NATURE
WITH GREAT ARTISTIC SKILL



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

Editor: Almost every birder keeps records. Some, like me, now and again in a pretty desultory fashion – whilst others maintain immaculate records stretching over decades. Whichever type of record keeper you are, BirdTrack and its partners would be delighted to receive records from you.

This is one of the reasons why the BTO and its partners have been re-vamping the entire BirdTrack system. Consequently, once you have uploaded your records to BirdTrack you can then access all of them and manipulate the data as you require.

From our 2011 members' survey we know that possibly around 10% of SOG members didn't have access to a computer at that time. Whilst we hope this figure has since dropped, we appreciate that the following article may not apply to you, however perhaps it will provide the impetus for some to take the plunge into the digital age.

Having introduced you to the revised BirdTrack in the last issue of the Harrier, Nick Moran of the BTO has prepared a series of BirdTrack tutorials for those with computers and internet access. This, the first, guides you through getting started with BirdTrack.

Nick Moran

BirdTrack: Tutorial #1 Getting started



BirdTrack is designed to capture your records in a way that is relevant, interesting and meaningful to you.

At the same time your records feed into a national database being used to study migration movements and distribution of birds throughout Britain and Ireland, thereby supporting species conservation and, with your permission, the data may also be made available for use by the local bird recorder(s) and bird report writer(s).

Register/login

Bird records are most valuable when they are linked to a named, contactable observer. For this reason, you are asked to provide some details when you register for BirdTrack via the 'Register' button on the BirdTrack Home page (www.birdtrack.net). Existing BirdTrack users can login with their username and password. Anyone who has used the online data entry systems for Bird Atlas 2007–11, the Breeding Bird Survey, the Wetland Bird Survey, Garden BirdWatch or any other BTO online survey can set up BirdTrack using the same username and password, via the relevant 'setup' button on the BTO Survey Home page.

Creating sites

BirdTrack has a strong site-based component. The idea is to encourage birdwatchers to keep an eye on their local patch(es) and submit records from them on a regular basis. Setting up a site is easy: just click the 'Create New Site' button on the BirdTrack Data Home page (the page we've illustrated in the colour supplement and which you see once logged in) then either point the cursor over the right place then hold down the shift key (open up-arrow) and left-click with your mouse (if you've a Mac, just double-click the mouse), or enter the postcode or grid reference if you know it. There is also a pre-populated list of 'Top County Birding Sites', where you can find some of the better-known birding sites in your area – by using this route to set up sites for

better-known spots, you can help the local bird recorders by using the agreed names for particular sites.

Once you have located the site, you will be asked whether the whole site fits into a 1-km, tetrad or 10-km square. This is just so that we know whether all of your records from a particular site can be allocated to an OS grid square, for mapping purposes. Don't worry if the site overlaps one or more square boundaries; simply chose the appropriate size of square that encompasses your entire site.

With the site created, it will be available in a dropdown menu when you come to add records.

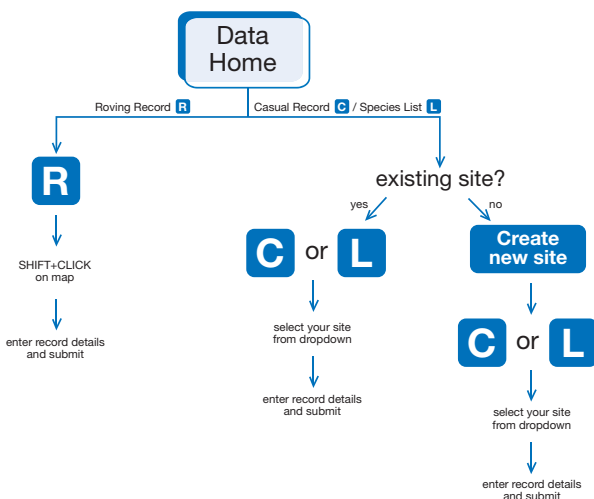
Adding records

You can add Species Lists and Causal Records for visits to your birdwatching site(s). **Species Lists** are for easily recording all of the species you identified whilst birdwatching at a site, while **Casual Records** allow you to record one or a few of the more interesting records, or any highlights of a short visit to a site.

For either method, you can include as much detail as you like; present-only can be indicated with a tick, or you can add extra information by clicking the '+' button to reveal a selection of optional details such as age/sex/plumage, habitat notes and direction of flight. Adding a count is worth doing wherever possible, as it can give you a rough idea of the relative abundance of different species at the sites you visit.

'Complete lists' are Species Lists that feature all the species you positively identified and recorded during your visit. These lists are particularly valuable because they offer a

measure of absence as well as presence, providing a powerful tool for looking at both arrival and departure times of migratory species. You can mark a list as complete by ticking the box at the top or bottom of the list, marked "Please check this box if the list you are submitting includes ALL the bird species you saw or heard during your visit".



When you're ready to get started, simply click the prominent 'Add Records' button on your BirdTrack Data Home page, then choose either 'Add Species List' or 'Add Casual Record'.

The **Roving record** tool is the 'no frills' way to log your sightings, designed to capture your sightings from one-off locations, such as a Red Kite flying over the road (when someone else is driving, of course!). The records are not linked to one of your existing sites, and are located by moving the cursor over the right spot on a map, then holding down the shift key (open up-arrow) and left-clicking with your mouse. Hey presto, the grid reference is captured; all you need to do is give the place a name, add the date and species, and a count if you wish.

Finally, if you already use another piece of software or a spreadsheet to store your bird records, there is an upload tool with which you can import up to 5,000 records at a time into BirdTrack. All you need to do is put your records into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, standardise the format to match the BirdTrack fields, then follow the online instructions.

BirdTrack is organised by the BTO, on behalf of the BTO, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), BirdWatch Ireland, the Scottish Ornithologists' Club (SOC) and the Welsh Ornithological Society (WOS).

Don't forget: *Log it or lose it!*

Editor: As you can now see there are some real benefits in using BirdTrack to record your patch data. First, your input can be automatically routed if you agree to the county recorders and all other authorities analysing this bird data. Second, you can easily reveal more about what's going on in your local patch by analysing your data using the BirdTrack systems. Third, you have the satisfaction of knowing your BirdTrack patch data is contributing to everyone's understanding of Suffolk birds' status.

In the next issue Nick will review some simple ways of analysing and presenting your patch data using BirdTrack tools. SOG are co-operating with the BirdTrack team to assist with piloting of the re-vamped BirdTrack system in the county. With this team we are currently hoping early next year to hold at least one workshop at which we will take members through the system and its tools on your own laptops. It is also planned by BirdTrack to have a couple of explanatory web videos available on their site as well as, possibly, a detailed down-loadable user manual. We'll keep you abreast of these developments.

By the time we publish Harrier #171 we hope to have finalised all of these developments.

Steve Abbott

SORC – Logging rarities

As has already been made plain, the keeping and distribution of records is central to bird conservation.

Responsibility for recording the county's avifauna recording lies with the Suffolk Naturalists' Society (SNS), although SOG compiles the report, which SNS then publish,

to deliver a comprehensive account of Suffolk's birds every year (a.k.a. the Suffolk Birds report, which is free to all joint SOG/SNS members and due in November/December).

At the heart of this report are records for the year concerned that have been passed to the relevant county recorders. Rather than dwell on these I'd like to talk here about recording the more unusual birds. The form illustrated below (which can be down-loaded from the SOG website) clearly indicates the information typically required to report a rarity or a vagrant. All such records are scrutinised by SORC and, in the case of rarities or scarce species, verification will be additionally

sought. The list of species considered by SORC, in effect the Suffolk Checklist, can be found in Suffolk Birds – in the 2011 edition it's expected to appear around page 165.

So that you have a better appreciation of what is needed, here's an example of a completed SORC form 'I prepared earlier':

Species:	BEE-EATER		
Number of birds:	1	Age / Sex:	'ADULT'
Locality:	BOYTON MARSHES		
Date(s):	08/07/08	Time(s):	1930-1940 HOURS
Duration:	TEN MINUTES		
Earlier / later dates by others, if known:			
First / last dates if known:			
Observer:	STEVE ABBOTT		
Address:			
Optical aids used:	LEICA 8X32 ULTRAVID, LEICA 8X30 TRINOVID AND SWAROVSKI 80 HD X 20-60.		
Distance from bird:	INITIALLY PERCHED AT c.100M, THEN FEEDING OVER HEAD AT c. 20M, THEN LOST TO VIEW.		
Weather conditions:	OVERCAST WITH A LIGHT SSW THEN BECAME ALMOST CALM LATER.		
Previous experience:	EXTENSIVE IN FRANCE, SPAIN AND CYPRUS PLUS SEVERAL ENCOUNTERS IN BRITAIN OVER THE YEARS.		
Experience of similar species:	NONE!		
Who found it:	I DID	Who identified it:	I DID
Other Observers: NONE			
Was it photographed:	NO		
Name of photographer:	N/A		
Was it trapped / ringed:	NO		
Name of ringer:	N/A		
Calls:	WHILST FLYING AND FEEDING OVER HEAD IT WAS CALLING MOST OF THE TIME. THE VOICE WAS THE CLASSIC BEE-EATER RINGING/ROLLING 'PRRUP PRRUP'		
Is this record 100% certain:	YES	Any who disagree:	N/A

Description: Please include an account of the relevant circumstances of the observation and a detailed description of the bird(s), preferably based on notes taken at the time of the observation before reference to any literature. Please attach copies of the original field notes / photographs where possible.

AS I WALKED OUT ONTO THE MARSH I VIEWED THE SMALL DEAD/DYING OAKS JUST SE OF BUNTER'S BARN AS PER NORMAL AND SAW AT ONCE A BIRD PERCHED ON THE TOP OF THE CLOSER TREE. THROUGH THE BINS IT WAS OBVIOUSLY A BEE-EATER!! PUTTING THE SCOPE ONTO IT X 60 REVEALED THE CLASSIC BEE-EATER PLUMAGE AND FINER STRUCTURAL DETAIL - INCLUDING VERY LONG CENTRAL TAIL FEATHERS. THE BEAUTIFUL YELLOW THROAT CONTRASTING WITH THE BRIGHT TURQUOISE BLUE UNDERPARTS WAS STRIKING. THE LONG DOWN CURVED BILL WAS NOTED, AS WAS THE DARK MASK THROUGH THE EYE.

THE BIRD APPEARED SETTLED AND HAVING ENJOYED IT FOR c. FIVE MINUTES I PHONED BINS TO ALERT OTHER BIRDERS. WITH IN SECONDS OF MAKING THE CALL THE BIRD TOOK TO THE WING AND FLEW STRAIGHT TOWARDS ME! IT PROCEEDED TO CIRCLE OVERHEAD, CALLING AND TAKING INSECTS. DURING THIS BRIEF CLOSE RANGE SHOW IT DISPLAYED THE CLASSIC BEE-EATER FLIGHT DYNAMICS OF RAPID PURSUIT ALTERNATING WITH SLOW GLIDES ON FLAT ALMOST TRIANGULAR WINGS. AFTER A MINUTE OR TWO THE BIRD DRIFTED SLOWLY NNW TOWARDS BUTLEY FERRY FARM WHERE IT JOINED A LARGE FEEDING FLOCK OF SWIFTS. AFTER A FURTHER MINUTE OR TWO I LOST THE BIRD AMONGST THE SWIFTS AS THE FEEDING FLOCK DRIFTED AWAY NW.

UNFORTUNATELY THE BIRD WAS LOST TO VIEW BEFORE THE FIRST BIRDERS ARRIVED AND COULD NOT BE RELOCATED THAT EVENING.

Editor: As many of you know, Steve Abbott is SOG Vice-chairman, as well as Chair of the Suffolk Ornithological Records Committee (SORC), where several committee members ably support him. So you get an idea of who these individuals are, we thought (from time to time) you'd be interested in seeing some biographical notes about them.

Today we kick-off by introducing you to the Committee's youngest member, Scott Mayson of Woodbridge, who is also one of our county bird recorders.

Meet Scott Mayson

Biographical notes:

Scott is 35, married and is Suffolk born and bred. Now living in Woodbridge, having moved there from Leiston where he'd spent the previous 27 years.

How did I get into birding?

My interest started when I was quite young while visiting my grandparents when, through boredom, I watched the birds outside their kitchen window. But my interest probably only really got going when my father, who was a keen birder, took me out bird watching. I started regularly birding aged about eight or nine, so that is about 27 years so far . . .

Earliest birding memory?

My first exciting birding memory was visiting Minsmere one evening, when I was about ten, where we saw a Spoonbill asleep on the Scrape from the old public hide. This was the start of a lifelong love for this reserve and of birds in general.

Places birded?

In 2005 I birded in Kazakhstan, then the next year on Lesvos and in the Bay of Biscay, to be followed by Cyprus in 2011. Currently I'm planning a trip to Thailand in 2014.



Favourite place to go birding?

This is a difficult one, I spent a large portion of my birding life at Minsmere and this is where I learnt my trade. I have seen many great birds there, in fact my Minsmere list is 269, so it does hold a special place in my heart. However, I think Thorpeness Caravan park has knocked it into second place. Minsmere was always something of a local patch, as I lived in Leiston at the time, but on passing my driving test I spread my wings and soon found the old caravan park at Thorpeness. This was the start of a change in my birding career, I started to realise the potential the site had and began to dream of finding my own birds.

Favourite bird?

In the UK it has to be the Firecrest. They brighten any day and, even when things are slow, a Firecrest popping up in a bush always makes the trip worthwhile. While, on a global scale, Banded Pitta is top, which I hope to see when the Thailand trip comes off – I even have a picture of one on my bankcard!

Best birding moment?

That's another difficult one. As I have begun to twitch more and more over the last few years I have seen some great birds both around the UK and in Suffolk. So, to give you an answer I will have to give you two!

First, seeing the Black-and-white Warbler on the Scilly Isles last year was special for a number of reasons: one, we had twitched the Isles for a Solitary Sandpiper and it was only mid-morning after seeing the Sandpiper that the pager danced to the tune of a Black-and-white Warbler just down the road. Two, I have always wanted to twitch a bird on an island. Three, I had always wanted to fly in a helicopter (Editor: Sadly this service is now threatened). And, finally, Black-and-white Warbler is a bird I have long wanted to see, so this trip combined all four factors.

However for Suffolk I think it has to be the thrill of finding birds at Thorpeness Caravan Park – in particular the Greenish Warbler a couple of years ago, two days after I got married, a great wedding present and hopefully the start of things to come.



Favourite sort of birding?

Seawatching is a bit like Marmite – you either love it or hate it. I love both Marmite and

seawatching! You never know what is going to go past your eyes – I have seen all sorts of birds whilst staring at the grey North Sea in gale force winds (I'm not selling it am I?). Part of the love is trying to advance my ID skills while I'm being battered by wind and/or rain as a bird shears and dips in and out of troughs. It is really rewarding when you spot a bird a long way off and, based on 'jizz' alone, you have a pretty good idea of what the bird is and, as it approaches, more and more parts of the jigsaw fall into place, a wing flash here, or a dark cap there, and the ID is confirmed.

Seawatching is also a great way to view migration in action, be it duck or waders heading south, or owls, thrushes and finches arriving en masse in the autumn. Satisfyingly they all bring the whole wonder of migration home to you.

Why did I become county recorder?

I was asked if I was interested in taking the position and, to be honest, I jumped at the chance. As already mentioned, much of my birding career was spent at Minsmere and most of it was done alone, my father having died when I was 18 and, because I didn't know any other birders, I spent many of the subsequent years solo birding. I saw this position as an opportunity to become more involved in the Suffolk birding scene. I have been doing the job for three years now and love it. It can be a labour of love, but it is also very rewarding. Strange as it may seem I have never been one of those birders that records every sighting I make, however I have begun to see the importance of recording species however common they are; do we need reminding of the population crash of the humble House Sparrow?

Do you have any birding hates?

As I have spent more and more time in the recording role I have come to appreciate the importance of keeping a record of the birds seen within the county. Information services

can only go so far in providing a record of what is seen and it is up to groups such as the Suffolk Ornithological Records Committee (SORC) to produce as accurate a representation of the birding year as possible.

What gets my goat is people who go to the trouble to report birds to a news service, but fail to send their records to the county recorder – be that directly or via services such as BirdTrack. These records can be as extensive as they wish, not everything needs to be reported (although that would be nice), it's enough to send in high counts, unseasonal records or records of species that are showing population declines such as Turtle Dove or Spotted Flycatcher. The more records we receive the more accurate the picture of Suffolk birds we can produce and the better our understanding of the county situation.

With all of your birding experience, have you got any 'hot' ID tips you'd like to pass on to readers?

First is a seawatching ID tip. The Balearic Shearwater is a rare visitor to Suffolk waters but, in my opinion, is probably under-recorded. A helpful way of picking them out when plumage details are hard to see, is that they appear dumpier and often just glide low over the water surface undertaking much less shearing than Manx Shearwaters.

The second ID tip is being familiar with birdcalls. Birders generally locate far more birds through hearing them first, the Marsh Warbler being a typical example. Most of my birding is done using my ears, especially at Thorpeness where the cover is thick and, typically, birds only show briefly. I find using a recording of a bird that has the bird introduced by a narrator helpful as, when you hear a bird call or sing, the narrator's voice often comes into my head telling me what it is. Another way is to relate the call to another call you are familiar with, for instance a Richard's Pipit flight call is similar to that of a House Sparrow.

Field Trip Reports

Phil Brown, Jonathan Lawley & Adam Scott

STANTA Trip

July 14th

Leader: Paul Holness

Stanta Facts:

26,000 acres of unspoilt English countryside. Grazed by 8000 sheep. Fences and hedges noticeably absent. At the time of the trip the water levels in the meres, scattered across STANTA, were low but filling slowly from the north.

Key target species for the trip:

Stone Curlew
Redstart

SOG on Parade

As much of Suffolk experienced heavy rain early in the day, this did not bode well for SOG's annual pilgrimage to the Army's battle area. SOG by name, soggy by nature? But we were to be lucky, as it stayed dry, though often overcast.

This year a party of 14 departed by coach from Bury St Edmunds and en route a Barn Owl was encountered near Barnham. At the East Wretham gate of the STANTA army training area Paul Holness, who has led all the SOG expeditions into the battle area and knows it intimately, greeted us. Besides six more members of the SOG party, also waiting for us was Regimental Sergeant Major Trevor Gedge of the STANTA HQ staff. Once all were aboard



formidable Italian lady called Flavia for whom we waited for some time, did not show up. Despite careful scrutiny of the surrounding area the party failed to reveal any Stone Curlew lurking in the tall grassland.

Next, lunch was taken besides the River Wissey at Langford, gin clear and teeming with trout. Here a mixture of birds were encountered, including a

the coach we set off at around 10am for our first stop of the day, Frog Hill where the introductory shots of the TV series *Dad's Army* were filmed.

A spectacular vista

The view from this vantage point is spectacular – a vast vista (much grander than a view) of open countryside uninterrupted stretching north to Swaffham's wind turbines on the horizon. Intensely attractive, rolling Breckland grassland, dotted with sheep, while in the background Goldfinches were calling in the nearby pines. The entire party paused to take it all in.

Following a brief sortie into a scrub/deciduous woodland area that turned up some Yellowhammer and a Linnet, the coach then carried the party down the hill and deeper into STANTA. First was a brief stop at Smokers Hole where Stonechat and singing Meadow Pipit were turned up, along with masses of Wild Thyme.

Stone Curlews no-show

Returning to the coach the party were transported across the battle area, hopefully to see Stone Curlew chicks being ringed. Sadly the breeding performance of the Stonies this year has been disappointing and the ringer, a

party of Mistle Thrushes that passed over, a Hobby also overhead, Grey Wagtail, a shy Reed Bunting heard, along with Kestrel, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, House Martins (it was thought there was a colony on a nearby derelict church), five Swifts and a Banded Demoiselle being spotted. Some of the party also sighted a possible Kingfisher.

With our repast complete, from there the coach carried the party onto the aptly named Harrier Strip – of the military aviation rather than avian variety. To the delight of the botanists with us this abandoned section of runway was surrounded by ranks of Viper's Bugloss and surprisingly extensive displays of other flora, including Common and Greater Knapweed, two dead Broomrapes (thought to be Knapweed Broomrape), Kidney Vetch, Eyebright, Dark Mullein, Common Centaury, Sickle Medick (a Breckland speciality), White Melilot, and Basil Thyme. It was here that in previous years we have seen the rare Hummingbird Hawkmoth, but this was another no-show this year.

Entering a ride in the adjacent largely coniferous woodland a Garden Warbler was spotted and two Woodlarks in an adjacent field, a Siskin passed over, plus a raucous Jay calling and more Linnet and Blackcap.

On the return journey, at Hole Point, the first Common Buzzard of the day was at last put up and then around Stanford Water the party ticked off Kestrel, Great Spotted Woodpecker, two Green Woodpeckers and at the sandpits the last of this year's Sand Martins – a total of three.

Redstarts

Next up, Redstarts – STANTA is the East Anglian stronghold of this attractive species – in fact it is estimated around 100 pairs breed here. They proved to be still resident in small numbers and all of the party obtained reasonable, though sometimes fleeting, views.

Then a short walk down the hill to the River Wissey where Marsh Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Nuthatch, Goldcrest, and Kingfisher were all

spotted and the entire party was entertained by a goodly number of Banded Desmoulin.

On the return to East Wretham three Curlews, two Stock Doves, two Roe Deer with a fawn, a Brown Hare and yet another Common Buzzard completed the day's list.

A very worthwhile trip

All thanked Paul Holness and the RSM for their efforts. While birding-wise the field trip turned up nothing spectacular, the wonderful views of the Brecks countryside and the excellent flora more than made up for the 'dips'. Hopefully training commitments will allow us to visit again next year, even if the trip takes place later than the ideal time for seeing breeding birds.

Steve Fryett

Around Minsmere from Eastbridge

September 22

Leader: Steve Fryett

I must have had a senior moment when I penned this meeting in October last year, how did I agree a start of 8.30am as I am not an early riser these days.

So I arrived bleary eyed about 8.10am at the appointed venue in Eastbridge and, with a bit of time, I wandered around to check what our first birds might be. It occurred to me that as the time was now 8.20 with no other members having arrived I should have to go home and decorate! 8.25, thank the Lord for the Welsh as Bronwen and Terry arrived, then 8.31 a tad late, but I was pleased to be joined by Brian & Ian.

Just five of us set off towards Eastbridge village on a glorious sunny but cold September morning, perfect for migrants as we had had a lot of overnight rain. By the bridge over the Hundred River we took delight in seeing about 100 Swallows resting on overhead wires getting ready to complete the rest of their marathon journey south. Close by 60 House Martins busily fed on the wing around a large Willow tree.



This was quite a unique experience watching the Martins momentarily alighting on the upper branches of the Willow to pick off insects and, on occasions, also flying right into the leaves. Presumably the warm morning sun had attracted the insects to this side of the tree. The sun had also warmed up a Comma and Speckled Wood. Continuing to make our way to the Minsmere sluice on the beach alongside the River Hundred we noted many calling Chiffchaffs and a female Marsh Harrier over the reedbeds. Near the sluice a flock of 22 Goldfinches was noteworthy. The sluice bushes were surprisingly quiet with just the tail end of a Common Whitethroat noted.

On Lucky Pool we fared much better with three Grey Plover, two Bar-tailed Godwits, three Dunlin, one Snipe and a lone Curlew Sandpiper. A family of four Kestrels were noted over the south levels. A bout of seawatching was next, as the wind from the north-west was increasing, but we managed only a couple of Common Scoter and Gannets, and grudgingly we agreed a better sea passage was likely tomorrow. In fact a stupendous sea passage occurred the following day all along the Suffolk coast.

We continued a walk north to the public hide where a very obliging male Common Redstart was recorded. From the hide amongst

numerous geese and ducks a few waders were noted including Ringed Plover, Dunlin and a very well found Little Stint. The North bushes were out of bounds due to ringing activities by Waveney Bird Club, which we had hoped to check for migrants, but we bumped into one of the ringers who promptly pulled from his bag a juvenile Brambling and described the young bird's features.



We decided to take the woodland walk behind Scotts Hall and over the Westleton road back to the cars. A good choice as we noted three Stone Curlews sitting typically in a sandy scrape beside a bed of nettles. We agreed these were the best views of Stone Curlews we had seen for years. Scanning for more we noted the resident herd of Red Deer preparing for the oncoming rutting season with the stags looking in fine fettle. Finally we arrived back at the cars and there closed a very interesting day in the field.

Philip Murphy

Looking Back

– July to September 1962 and 1987

Selectd highlights from the 1962 and 1987 Suffolk Bird reports for the period July to September.

50 years ago

Wader passage was the highlight of a relatively quiet three months in late summer and early autumn in 1962. An addition to the county list came in the form of a White-rumped Sandpiper in the Minsmere/Walberswick area from 20th August to 7th September; it was trapped and ringed at the latter site on 25th August, so becoming only the second individual of the species to be trapped in Britain. The Nearctic

was also represented by Pectoral Sandpipers at Minsmere, 27th July, Easton Broad, 23rd August and Aldeburgh, 27th September – but it is conceivable that just one wandering individual was involved in all of these sightings.

Kentish Plovers regular visitors

Kentish Plovers, now verging almost on national rarity status, were of regular occurrence 50 years ago – singles were noted in this period at Minsmere, 22nd July and 26th/27th August. Additional wader highlights at Minsmere in August included ten Wood Sandpipers, 50 Spotted Redshanks and 15 Little Stints. Early returning Purple Sandpipers were at Walberswick, 30th August and 6th to 10th September and, at Iken, on 21st July, fourteen Avocets was an exceptional record for the early 1960s.

Also exceptional was a Whooper Swan on Orfordness, 21st August – perhaps it had over-summered at this remote site, to which access was severely restricted in the 1960s? Another early arrival was a Goosander at Minsmere, 20th September, but the principal wildfowl sighting involved up to 1000 Common Scoters off Walberswick at the end of July.

Shotley Corncrake

Corncrakes were scarce even 50 years ago, so the occurrence of one at Shotley, 15th September was noteworthy.

The year's only Great Skua was, perhaps surprisingly, at Havergate, 27th September, and up to four Roseate Terns were noted in July and August at both Havergate and Minsmere.

Notable near-passerines involved an Alpine Swift over Minsmere, 12th July and an injured Hoopoe found at Westleton, 15th August.

The rarest passerine to be reported was a Tawny Pipit at Walberswick, 7th September, only the fourth Suffolk record. Additional passerines were few and far between but did

include as many as 500 Bearded Tits in the Walberswick reedbed in September and an exceptionally early Fieldfare at Aldeburgh, 15th August.

25 years ago

The immense effort put into seawatching off the Suffolk coast in 1987, principally at Covehithe, really began to pay dividends in late summer and early autumn. A low-pressure system stationary over the eastern North Sea produced a period of northerly winds between 24th and 27th August.



A 'surf-it' of skuas

On 26th August observers at Covehithe recorded 26 Arctic Skuas, four Great Skuas, three Manx Shearwaters and Suffolk's 13th record of Long-tailed Skua. What was, at the time, a county record movement of skuas was noted off Covehithe on 27th August when 88 Arctic Skuas, seven Great Skuas and two Pomarine Skuas were noted moving south ahead of torrential rain.

Northerly winds and heavy overnight rain on 30th September produced one of Suffolk's best-ever seawatches as seabirds were forced close inshore. The highlights off Covehithe involved four Leach's Petrels, 16 Sooty Shearwaters (part of what was at the time a record annual Suffolk total of 94), 12 Arctic Skuas, 1500 Kittiwakes and fourteen Little Gulls, while off Ness Point the fifth county record of Cory's Shearwater flew north.

An unexpected occurrence was that of six pale-bellied Brent Geese in the Orford and Sudbourne area as early as 12th September, with at least 20, and possibly as many as 36, there the next day – the presence of these geese coincided with a marked arrival of Nearctic wildfowl into Britain. One of these Nearctic wildfowl was Suffolk's third record of Blue-winged Teal, a female, which graced Minsmere from 13th to 15th September and again 24th to 27th September.

A Spotted Crake, which was evidently in no hurry to move on elsewhere, remained at Minsmere during 12th August to 14th September; on one occasion it was watched following a rat on the path behind West Hide in broad daylight.

Autumn Wader passage – coastal & inland

No major rarities were located during autumn wader passage, the highlights of which were two Red-necked Phalaropes at Walberswick in late September, Dotterel, Covehithe, 5th September and single Pectoral Sandpipers at Minsmere, 8th to 17th September and Walberswick, 25th September. Temminck's Stints have been very scarce on autumn passage in Suffolk in the 21st century but in 1987 three were located at Minsmere – one, 30th July and two, 12th and 13th September.

Inland wader highlights included a Knot, at Cavenham gravel pit, 23rd July, Curlew Sandpiper, Lackford, 22nd August and Spotted Redshank, Lackford, 22nd August.

There were two reports of atypical behaviour by Common Sandpipers; at least five fed on floating weed on the River Lark at Mildenhall during torrential rain on 25th August and two were feeding in a ploughed field at Benacre, 27th August.

The most unexpected report of an Arctic Skua involved a dark-phase immature in a field at East Bergholt, 4th September. The over-

summering Glaucous Gull remained at Felixstowe Ferry throughout this period.



Cavenham and Lackford were both graced by a Caspian Tern during 21st and 22nd August, only Suffolk's second inland record. Other notable tern records included up to five Sandwich Terns at Lackford in late summer, 839 Common Terns south off Landguard, 20th August and 100 Arctic Terns off Sizewell, 10th August.

Turtle Dove gatherings

Post-breeding gatherings of Turtle Doves were still to be expected in the late 1980s; the largest to be recorded in 1987 were 150, Hollesley, 12th September and 58, Mendham, 2nd September – such sights are now becoming a distant memory. Likewise with the Cuckoo, of which as many as eight were at Bawdsey, 13th September, Landguard had its first site record of Hoopoe, 1st September and another was at Rendlesham, 19th September.

North-easterly winds in the last week of August resulted in above-average totals of Wrynecks including six at Benacre, 30th, five, Gunton, 29th and four, Landguard, 28th to 31st; inland, two were at Bradfield St Clare, 5th and 6th September.

The harsh winter of 1986/87 was considered to have wiped out Suffolk's resident population of Cetti's Warblers, so the year's only record at Minsmere, 27th September to 10th October, was considered to have been a migrant from elsewhere. [Editor: It is good to see from the latest Bird Atlas findings how well this species has recovered]

Rare warblers a plenty

Lowestoft and Landguard dominated the rare warbler scene during this period. Lowestoft's highlights were Suffolk's fifth record of Aquatic Warbler, 26th August, Icterine Warbler, 26th

August and the autumn's first Yellow-browed Warbler, 27th to 29th September.

Landguard recorded four Icterine Warblers during 29th August to 18th September, Barred Warbler, 29th September and as many as eight Wood Warblers between 25th July and late August.

Willow Warblers featured very strongly at Landguard in August, during which month the site's ringers trapped as many as 416 – the peak day was 23rd when about 500 were on site. By contrast, the peak day-total for this species at Landguard in the autumns of 2009 and 2010 was only 30 in both years.

Accompanying the Willow Warblers came impressive totals of Pied Flycatchers with at least 100 on the coast in late August and early September; site totals included up to 16 at Lowestoft and ten at Landguard.

Landguard's first record of Treecreeper occurred on 31st July and 1st August – this site also hosted a male Serin, 24th August and a very early Twite on 1st September. Signs of the approaching winter included two Bramblings, Landguard, 29th September, four Lapland Buntings, Havergate, 15th September and a Snow Bunting, Benacre, 26th September.

News

Stonies' 2012 Cavenham roost

Mike Taylor advises that the annual autumn roost at Cavenham Heath for Stone Curlews is once again into three figures – though lower than last year. The full list of results are:

Jul 4	14	M Taylor (NE)
Jul 9	19	Martin Peers
Jul 11	26	M Taylor (NE)
Jul 24	41	J Jones (RSPB)
Aug 1	47	J Jones (RSPB)
Aug 8	79	J Jones (RSPB)
Aug 12	82+	B Woodhouse
Sep 4	109	J Jones (RSPB)
Sep 8	95+	D Carter
Sep 15	50+	SOG bird race team
Sep 16	58+	Nick Moran (BTO)
Sep 18	70+	Tim Cowan (RSPB)
Sep 24	None!	Roost walk
Oct 1	13	Jonny Rankin
Oct 4	52	M Taylor (NE)

The highest count on 4 September indicated at least 109 birds were present – but it is acknowledged that this year the heather's height has made accurate counting difficult. The 24 September count revealed a zero suggesting that for some Stonies migration to Africa was underway before the end of the month. However,

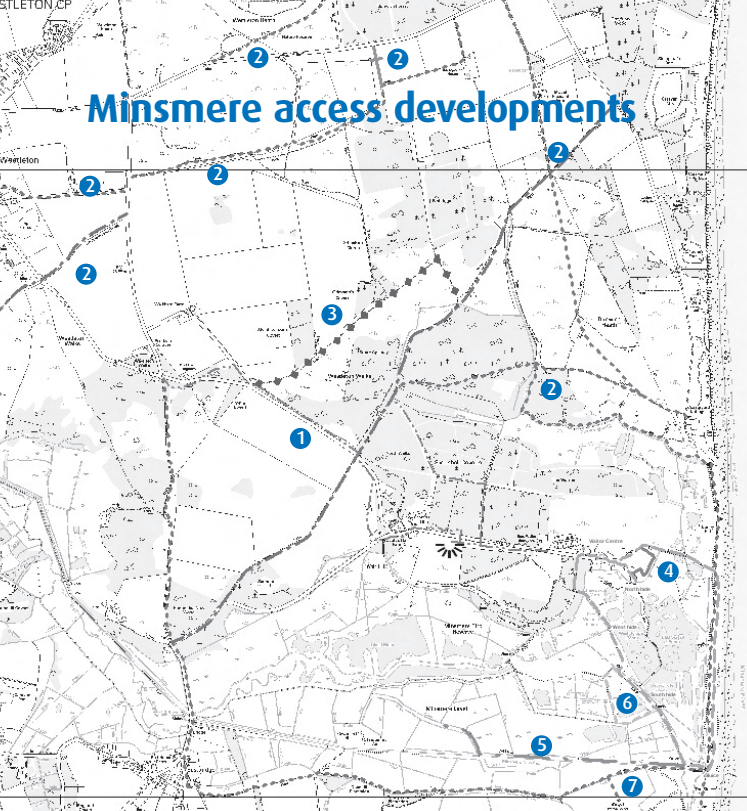
with the most recent figures revealing laggard migrants or potential over-winterers? The earlier zero count was surprising, but the weather was poor and the roost appears to have shifted temporarily in the Heath area. Mike Taylor felt, "Just speculation on my part, but perhaps they [Stonies] are less predictable at Cavenham as migration approaches as they are moving around more locally to find the best feeding sites – feeding-up prior to migration." Time will tell.

SOG calls-in at a call-centre's charity day

With the support of Yvette Marsh, SOG were invited to attend the Legal & General call centre's charity day on 26 July in Ipswich. Around twenty charities attended and had the opportunity to present their benefits to staff. The SOG display was manned by Council members and proved of interest for many. A prize draw secured additional funding and the 'Bill Oddly's Bird ID Clinic' went down well.

As a result of this exercise SOG were invited, as part of community engagement and education activities, to run bird walks at a volunteer day on SWT's Knettishall Heath for Legal & General later in the autumn.

Minsmere access developments



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Alongside the established trails (Scrape and Woodland/Butterfly) serving all of the reserve's hides the RSPB have now added:

- ① An alternative route to walking along the access road from Crossbill Corner, to the bridleway, then Scottshall Cottage to Scotts Hall, then the Canopy Hide, Whin Hill Watchpoint (an excellent new viewing point with sky watching seats) to the Work Centre and then onto the Visitor Centre.
- ② There are various rights of way bordering the reserve to the south and west, plus connections across to Westleton Heath and via Mount Pleasant to Dunwich Heath. Several temporary seasonal trails have also been opened – these will change every year according to weather and ground conditions:
- ③ The 'Powerlines' ride – a $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile stretch of path open from November – February
- ④ North Bushes, a short hundred or so meters long, usually open from September – February – but can be closed for ringing etc.
- ⑤ Autumn Wader Trail – North Levels – a $\frac{3}{4}$ mile trail running from the sluice on the north side of the New Cut up to North Levels Pool 1, and then on up to the SE corner of Pool 2 for passage waders (mid August to end October).

- ① — — — Off road
- ② — — — Bridleway
- ③ — — — Footpath
- ④ — — — Permissive path
- ⑤ ◆ ◆ ◆ Powerlines trail
- ⑥ — — — North Bushes trail
- ⑦ — — — Autumn wader trail
- ⑧ — — — Reedbed trail
- ⑨ — — — Chapel viewpoint

⑥ Reedbed – about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile long loop off the Scrape trail.

⑦ Chapel viewpoint, a short 200m 'there and back' path offering good views over the South Levels.

As this map indicates, along with the year-round footpaths, bridleways and the permissive path, this autumn and for the early part of the winter Minsmere's access is considerably enlarged. Taken together you can see that the RSPB trails network is substantial.

Editor: Ten teams participated, with two categories of bird racer, the motorised and the greens; a total of 147 species achieved.

Roy Marsh

Bird race results

With what seemed an age since deciding to hold our Group's inaugural Autumn bird race, and having scooped some 1st division teams to take part in the form of RSPB from Minsmere, The Waveney Bird Club and The Lounge Lizards, alongside a number of other teams made up of local birders, friends and fellow SOG members and committee members (and offspring in one case) the scene was set.

It was soon to become clear that this was going to be much tougher than our usual race on January 1st, as it had been impossible to

stake any birds out, being in the middle of migration, which in itself added a further dimension and a necessity for some tactical decision making.



The 'Pied Twitchers'.

Our team of four were known as the 'Pied Twitchers', following an early rise before 3am, our day officially kicked off at 4am, as we collected our final member of the team at Bredfield... to be continued in Christmas edition!

As said, I will come back to the stories and statistical findings from the event in our bumper Christmas edition, but for the time being, we felt it important to confirm the final results, and to make a few acknowledgements. Please note the table below, to which in the Christmas edition, we will also look to include sponsorships raised by the teams, thereby providing a transparent record to you, our members, as well as

hopefully some day reports too. It was a fantastic day, and feedback suggests enjoyed by all teams, so hopefully will be something we can look to do each year, although it probably would not be sponsored next year, more for fun and statistical analysis, oh and some local rivalry too I'm sure!

One other thing for sure, I didn't expect quite the level of support from friends, family, work colleagues and corporate sponsors, the latter two being in the form of my works at CSD, Customer Service Direct, Suffolk County Council, allowing me to run articles in our company publications, litter areas with leaflets and business cards, as well as allowing me to canvas for sponsorships and put sponsor forms up around our building. Amazingly, the generosity of my work colleagues alone saw my sponsorship rise by over £300. In addition, my wife, Yvette was also able to run a smaller campaign at her company, Legal & General, who again deserve special thanks, by again helping to bolster my overall sponsorship, Yvette is also currently reviewing the data taken from the day to pull together some vital stats for us. Corporate-wise, I know Scott Mayson, part of our Pied Twitchers team was also able to secure some corporate sponsorship, in the form of £50 from

Swarovski, and incredibly, a pair of binoculars from Viking, which will be auctioned/ raffled at our AGM. It just goes to show, that if you ask, you sometimes get; we even managed to get £40 from Rare Bird Alert, and a huge thank you should go out to one and all.

I don't think it would be right to speculate at this time as to the true level of likely sponsorship we will ultimately raise, particularly with many racers still out

Team Name	Team Members	Type - Full, Green (Non Motorised)	Score
Team RSPB Raspberry Fools	Robin Harvey, Jon Gibbs, Paul Green, Ian Salkeld & Rachel Coombes	Green - On foot - Walked 14 miles+	114
Pied Twitchers	Roy Marsh, Craig Fulcher, Scott Mayson, Craig Holden	Full County - 157 miles mainly coastal	110
Deben Dragons	Phil Whittaker, Steve Abbott & Nick Mason	Full County - Restricted themselves to Deben	110
Sooty & The Sweeps	Gi Grieco, Eddie Bathgate & Chris Keeling	Full County - Miles tbc	109
Waveney Bird Club Thursday Branch	Steve Piotrowski, Eric Patrick, Andrew Green & John Grant	Green - On foot - Walked 10 miles	108
Lounge Lizards tbc	Andrew Easton, Rob Wilton, Paul & Jane Ferguson, Josh Cyprus	Lizard Land - Lowestoft and surrounding areas	96
Hadleigh Harriers	Adam Gretton & Anna Gretton	Full County - River Orwell and Minsmere	87
Wild West 'Boyz'	Phil Brown, David Collins & John and Georgina Owen	Green on bikes - 25 miles plus 5 miles on foot	75
Birder Bill	Bill Stone	Birds rung and around Bawdsey Manor only	59

collecting, or away, but needless to say, every pound really does help make a difference and helps secure a future for our illustrious Group, so if you were unable to sponsor any particular team, the bank is still well and truly open, and all donations would be very much welcomed, simply send your cheques made payable to SOG to Bill Stone at the address given on the inside back cover.

Wanting to finish on a further positive note, it must be said the support that has been received, has far outweighed both my own and the SOG Council's expectations, and I want to take this opportunity to personally thank all members of the teams taking part; without them, there would have not been an event. Also, I want to say a big thank you to everyone who has sponsored the many teams across the county, thank you all for your generous support, it really will help make a difference!

Tree Sparrow update

David Tomlinson kindly gave us a follow-up to his article published in Harrier #169. Apparently the resident pair of Tree Sparrows (with the ringed male) was seen in the garden every day throughout their protracted nesting season – which started in March and finished in August. To his knowledge they fledged at least two broods from their Schwegler nest box. Although he suspects it might have been more, but he was away a number of times in the spring when other broods may have fledged.

The pair has not been seen since mid-August, but he is anticipating that they'll return to the feeders in the autumn. His hope is for two pairs next year. I'm sure everyone wishes David luck in this respect.



Announcements

New Treasurer appointed

Matthew Deans, a long time SOG member known to many, has kindly volunteered to perform this role and, like Bill, he will also act as Membership Secretary. He will take up this post in January. We all wish him the best of luck in fulfilling this vital task.

Back numbers available

Birdwatch issues 3–110, 1992–2001. Free to anyone who'll come and collect them. Contact rlattenborrow@btinternet.com or phone: 01473 213025

An evening with Mark Cocker

Mark Cocker, the acclaimed writer, will present 'Crow Country' on Monday 19th November at The Fisher Theatre Bungay. Doors open at 19:00. This event is being held in conjunction with Waveney Bird Club and all profits will be going to support farmland bird research and conservation.

We understand tickets are going fast, so book now to avoid disappointment. If you'd like a £5.00 ticket, they are from The Fisher Theatre, 10 Broad Street, Bungay, Suffolk, NR35 1EE. With half the tickets already sold, it is probably advisable to phone for them direct on: (01986) 897130, or visit the Fisher Theatre on-line booking system: boxoffice@fishertheatre.org

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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

Jon Warnes [to 2013]
Robin Harvey [to 2014]
Jean Garrod [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

Treasurer

Bill Stone, 27 Draymans Close, Ipswich IP3 9JT



Suffolk Ornithologists' Group



Who we are

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

What we do

Networking

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

Media

- Strong web presence – www.sogonline.org.uk
- Active Twitter feed – @suffolkbirds1
- Quarterly magazine – **The Harrier**
- Annual review – **Suffolk Birds report**

Trips and talks

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



Protecting birds

- Actively lobby to protect habitats and birding amenities
- Provides a county-wide field force of bird surveyors (100+)
- Organises and promotes bird surveys
- Inspires and undertakes conservation projects
- Numerous achievements:
 - Contributed to many species breeding successes (Peregrines, Barn Owls etc.)
 - Undertakes monitoring
 - Involvement on community and education projects
 - Organises and hosts dawn chorus walks
 - Assisted with fund-raising for bird hides
 - On-going participation in key bird surveys for the BTO, such as BBS, the Bird Atlas and the recent Nightingale survey
 - Provides studies for environmental waste companies etc.



For birds & for birders