

Autumn 2017 No.190



# The Harrier

Suffolk Ornithologists' Group

£4.50



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## Cover photograph:

Grasshopper Warbler (*Locustella naevia*) at East Lane, Bawdsey by Craig Holden

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All material for the Winter Harrier should be received by December 3rd please.

## Subscription rates (2017)

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# The Harrier

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## Guest Editorial

Welcome to The Harrier 190. Hopefully, as guest editor, I can keep to the standards that Eddie has carried out over the last three years. Unfortunately Eddie, due to work and family commitments has had to step down as editor of The Harrier and we will miss his sterling work. The group would like to extend our thanks for him taking on the role, initially on an interim basis, but as he did such a fantastic job, he stayed on! Thanks must also go to his wife, Nonie, for help in proof-reading and being the IT expert. As you'll see inside, there is a request for new editors required both for The Harrier and the Suffolk Bird Report, both important publications for the group.

There are details to obtain tickets to the first Derek Moore Memorial Lecture, held in conjunction with Suffolk Wildlife Trust. We welcome Mark Avery, an environmentalist, author and a vocal campaigner against wildlife crime, particularly raptor persecution. The talk is 'Conserving Wildlife: Are We Winning?'. Other indoor talks coming up are 'Birds of Morocco: Coast, Mountain and Desert' by David Walsh on Thursday, September 28th at The Cedars Hotel, Stowmarket and we welcome Mike Crewe back to Suffolk with his talk on 'Cape May: North America's Migration Mecca' on Thursday, November 30th at the Holiday Inn, Ipswich.

We have a great selection of articles, pleasingly many stories of conservation successes including the return of breeding



Whinchat

Photo: John Richardson

Sandwich Terns to Suffolk and dedicated effort to ensure Ringed Plover breeding success at Landguard. It will be interesting to see the results of the Ringed and Little Ringed Plover Survey that were carried out this year; these will be published in The Harrier at a future date. Wildlife protection comes in various ways such as the major conservation strategy to protect vulnerable species on an island in the southern Atlantic Ocean. Sadly, one local success, the return of breeding Peregrines to Suffolk, has been marred by the discovery of the shooting of a juvenile bird.

There is some great news from the Save Our Suffolk Swift project and we have an article on the Cormorants observed at Landguard. Finally, there is the summer bird review showing some of the birds that have been encountered recently in the county as well as those seen on some SOG trips as well as an article observing interaction with two species at Flatford and some details of SOG I would like thank all the contributors who have supplied articles and photos, to Eddie for his guidance and Alex for the proof-reading.

*Gi Grieco*



# Harrier and Suffolk Bird Report editors

We are seeking new editors to the two publications that SOG are involved in, both their quarterly magazine The Harrier and the Suffolk Bird Report, which is produced in collaboration with Suffolk Naturalists' Society.

For more information, or to apply for the positions, please get in touch with any member of council or email [info@sogonline.org.uk](mailto:info@sogonline.org.uk).

After nearly four years of great work Eddie has stepped down as editor of The Harrier and we're seeking someone to carry on this role; The Harrier is an important part of the membership of SOG.

For the SBR, Nick Mason had very kindly carried on in the role of editor while we've been seeking someone new to take over the role but after the next edition, due out later this year, we need to find a new editor. The editorship is a key role at the heart of the annual documenting of Suffolk bird life.

We do have a potential editor, but that person will only be available in two years' time, so we're either looking for some to cover the interim period or permanently. There is also the possibility to work in conjunction with other people as we've had an offer of support in the editing side of the process. What is required is someone to cover the administration side; to do the liaising with the area recorders, section writers and link with the publishers.



# Derek Moore Memorial Lecture



Suffolk Ornithologists' Group and Suffolk Wildlife Trust are teaming up again for a special evening in November, the inaugural Derek Moore Memorial Lecture. As many will know, Derek was formerly Director of Suffolk Wildlife Trust and also a long-standing member of SOG, editor of Suffolk Bird Report and trip leader. He was a committed conservationist who encouraged people to access and enjoy the countryside and wildlife. Derek was well-known for his great talks of which he gave many to SOG over the years and it was felt this would be a good way to commemorate him.

We have invited leading conservationist Dr Mark Avery to reflect from his wide experiences on the current state of wildlife conservation across the UK.

The lecture is called **'Conserving our wildlife: are we winning?'** Mark

Avery is a scientist by training and a naturalist by inclination. He writes about and comments on environmental issues on his blog, *Standing up for Nature*, as well as in his

monthly *Birdwatch* column (the political birder) and column in *British Wildlife* (Naturally Opinionated). His books include *Fighting for Birds*, *A Message from Martha*, *Inglorious* and *Remarkable Birds*.

Mark worked for the RSPB for 25 years until standing down in April 2011 to go freelance. He was the RSPB's Conservation Director for nearly 13 years.

Mark lives in rural Northamptonshire and is a member of Cheltenham Racecourse, the RSPB, the Wildlife Trusts, the BTO, the National Trust and the Labour Party.

## **How do we achieve nature conservation? Are we winning? And what would Derek Moore have done?**

Details of the event and to purchase a ticket can be found here -

<http://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/events/2017/11/15/%E2%80%98conserving-our-wildlife-are-we-winning%E2%80%99-lecture-dr-mark-avery?instance=0>

Proceeds from the evening will go to the SWT Suffolk Broads appeal to fund land acquisitions that will greatly extend and enhance the Trust's landholding at Carlton Marshes. This reserve was created during Derek's time at Suffolk Wildlife Trust and was one of his proudest achievements.





Photo: Andrew Moon

Eddie Bathgate

## Peregrines in Suffolk

Peregrines successfully bred at several locations in Suffolk this year. They bred for the first time in 2008, 200 years since the rector of Corton used to remove an egg out of the nest on his church tower every year for falconry. Four fledged off The Mill building in Ipswich, two off the Orwell Bridge and two off the Bury St. Edmunds sugar beet factory; their best effort yet in central Suffolk. However the nest site in Bury St. Edmunds isn't visible from public areas, unlike the Orwell Bridge nest box, and the industrial area there has strict security. Peregrines, however, failed to breed at both Lowestoft and Felixstowe Docks although it is encouraging to hear of younger birds frequenting sites elsewhere, both inland and on the coast.

It is also good to learn of injured young being successfully recuperated and re-released back onto their nest sites in both Ipswich and Colchester. Peregrines normally fledge at 36-40 days although remain vulnerable in their early flights. Young birds from both the Ipswich and Colchester nest sites crash landed; however they were recovered by members of the public and handed in. After rehabilitation by SOG's Peter Merchant, both juveniles were successfully returned onto their nest sites.

Recently there has been a horrific incident of persecution with a juvenile male off The Mill nest box in Ipswich being shot. Peregrines have been breeding there in their roof-top tray for four years. The emaciated bird was handed in to a veterinary practice, weighing

just 500g instead of the expected 650g, and died soon afterwards. Although initially the cause of death was thought to be natural causes, concern that it may not have been then instigated a post-mortem examination that revealed that he had been shot with an air rifle. There has now been a request from the police to remove the pellet for inspection.



Photo: Riversbrook Veterinary Group

Previously, a Peregrine that had been shot over Long Melford in September 2014 was successfully re-released after treatment. The culprit of which was never brought to justice.

**Please do be vigilant – Suffolk Police are there to help. If you witness a crime in progress, dial 999; or to report cases of persecution, use the 101 number.**



## Towering success in campaign to Save our Swifts

Conservationists across Britain are going to great lengths to help ease the plight of our Common Swifts – but the *Save Our Suffolk Swifts* partnership has gone to great heights too. A dizzying 30 metres up, to be precise, on a well-known coastal landmark.



Photo: Edward Jackson

Southwold Tower

That's the height of Essex & Suffolk Water's Art Deco-style water tower at Southwold, and that's where the partnership has installed a series of new Swift nest boxes and a sound system that belts out Swift calls. The partnership – led by SOG and Suffolk Wildlife Trust – has teamed up with Essex & Suffolk Water in the venture that provides new and much-needed 'des-res' nest sites for Swifts and makes the tower a beacon of hope for a species that has suffered serious and widespread population declines in recent years.

The boxes and the sound system were installed in June 2017 during a £290,000 refurbishment of the structure that was carried out by contractor Stonbury for the water company. Alex Mueller, Conservation Adviser for Essex & Suffolk Water, said: "Research has shown that new nesting boxes that use the call broadcasting system have up to a 60% success rate of attracting a mating pair of Swifts and this is proving successful in getting birds to use new facilities.

"Swifts like to nest in small cracks and holes and on a water tower this might not be the best location for their homes. We are keen for them to use the nesting boxes so there is no damage to our buildings and the Swifts have a better place to bring up their chicks.

"Supplying high-quality drinking water to 1.8 million customers in Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk means that our business is intrinsically linked with the natural environment. We work wherever possible to protect and enhance the natural world.

"Providing sanctuary for wildlife like this while we are carrying out improvements works is a great example of this," she added.

A plaque commemorating the initiative was unveiled high up on the tower by SOG president John Grant and campaign lead volunteer Edward Jackson, who is Secretary to SOG Council.

"Swifts are amazing birds," said Edward. "Apart from a few weeks each summer when they are with us raising their young, they spend the rest of the time in the air at heights of up to 3,000 metres, travelling



Southwold Swift box team

Photo: Essex and Suffolk Water

between the UK and southern Africa - and even sleeping on the wing. Their screaming calls, as they chase each other over the rooftops, are one of the special sounds of summer.

“Across the UK we have lost almost half our Swifts in the past 25 years. We believe this is mainly due to nest sites being destroyed as old buildings are demolished or roof repairs and other improvements seal up existing nest sites. Most people don’t realise they may have Swifts nesting in their roofs, as the birds are so fast and also very clean as well.

“*SOS Swifts* is working to help Swifts in communities all across Suffolk and was delighted to work with Essex & Suffolk Water and Stonbury to provide 16 new nest sites on the Southwold tower.

“It may take several years, but we hope that young birds from the existing colony of Swifts breeding in Southwold each summer will find and use these new homes and help secure the future for this most iconic bird of summer.”

The completion of the Swift initiative at the tower gained a wealth of publicity for the campaign, with coverage on BBC Look East and ITV’s Anglia News, Essex & Suffolk Water’s own news platforms and widespread social media exposure in addition to extensive print and web coverage in the East Anglian Daily Times and Lowestoft Journal.

And Southwold isn’t the only place with a tower where *SOS Swifts* has been active this summer. We know from the phenomenal success at Worlington in north-west Suffolk that Swifts happily take to nest boxes in churches, given a bit of encouragement. Back in 2009, faced with the imminent demolition of a building where Swifts had nested for generations, Dick Newell, Judith Wakelam, Simon Evans and others arranged alternative accommodation in the form of nest boxes high up in the church belfry. Eight years on and over 60 young successfully fledged this year.





Harkstead Swift boxes in the church tower

With this inspiring story very much in mind, *SOS Swifts* is hoping other churches will follow suit and on the Shotley peninsula parishioners at St Mary's, Harkstead have responded to the call. Invited by Simon Leatherdale on behalf of the Parochial Church Council, Edward found himself climbing skywards again, this time up the winding spiral stair of the tower and then a ladder into the third storey. The back of the belfry 'windows' are ideal locations for Swift nest boxes, so measurements were taken and sent to Dick, who quickly responded with some smart computer-drawn designs.

These were sent to John Stimpson, who made up four made-to-measure Swift terraces, with four boxes in each.

The terraces are in place, one over the other, along with a Swift attraction call system, which was played mornings and evenings until the end of July via an automatic timer. Any Swifts that take to boxes will either be birds displaced from a traditional nest site by building works or some other disturbance, or two to three year-old birds prospecting nest sites for their first attempt at breeding. Swifts live for seven or eight years on average – much longer than other birds of similar size – so once they have an established nest site, the chances are they will be able to breed there for five years or more. Their own young will also look for nest sites in the same area when they are ready, so the prospects for an expanding colony are good, once the first pairs take up residence.



Simon Leatherdale and John Stimpson at St Mary's, Harkstead

If you think a church or other building in your community could be a suitable location for Swift nest boxes, please contact Suffolk Wildlife Trust on 01473 890089 and ask for your message to be passed on to the *SOS Swifts* team.





Nigel Odin

## Winter Cormorant movements over Landguard Bird Observatory, Suffolk

The number of Great Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo* recorded at Landguard Bird Observatory has increased in recent times. Prior to the winter of 2016/2017 no count had reached four figures with a peak count of 958 on 17th January 2016. The usual pattern of occurrence is for counts to increase rapidly from in the single figures late October, peaking mid-January and declining rapidly again mid-February to single figures in early March. During the winter of 2016/2017 counts went through the roof with peaks off 3020 25th December 2016, 3253 January 16th 2017 & 3100 January 22nd 2017.

Birds are counted early in the morning flying overhead in an easterly or south-easterly direction straight out to sea to the sandbanks around the area of the Cork

Sands. If the tides are low, birds sit on parts of the exposed sandbanks making them look like a distant oil slick. Some birds can be seen returning inland before the last few birds have gone out suggesting that the sea fishing is extremely productive and they can fill their bellies for the day in the matter of a few minutes fishing. After an hour or so most remaining birds have departed to the north, having either finished fishing or being forced off the sand banks by changing tidal conditions.

Counts are very cyclical in nature often declining into only double or low three figure counts for a few days before returning to high levels. The exact reason for the erratic numbers counted was suspected as being linked to culling. A simple request for information on when this was taking place

at the birds roost at Trimley was made to Natural England. Presumably due to the sensitive nature of this topic this was passed onto a solicitor in London to be treated as a "Freedom of Information" request. A reply came back within the statutory time for such requests that was very detailed on information that was not requested but was deliberately obfuscate on when culling was being carried out. The request was so that counts over Landguard could be scientifically correlated with times of disturbance at the roost. As such it can be assumed that English Nature issue licences for shooting but do not bother monitoring when and what is actually going on at the trout lake.

It is well known that killing Cormorants has no effect on the overall populations of these birds and with persecution of the species either legally, or illegally, widespread which causes numbers to rapidly increase at some sites as disturbed birds quickly return bringing their congeners back with them (Chamberlain *et al.* 2013). Wintering populations have increased in line with an

increase in breeding numbers to the east of Britain on mainland Europe (Frost *et al.* 2016). The bulk of the wintering birds will be females and immatures from the Low Countries, southern Scandinavia and the areas around The Baltic (<https://www.bto.org>). If the numbers counted in the winter of 2016/2017 are maintained then the roost at Trimley and the feeding areas offshore will qualify the area as being of international importance for the species as they equate to almost 10% of the entire British wintering population.

References:

Chamberlain, D.E., Austin, G.E., Green, R.E., Hulme, M.F. & Burton, N.H.K. (2013) Improved estimates of population trends of Great Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo* in England and Wales for effective management of a protected species at the centre of a human-wildlife conflict. *Bird Study* 60: 335–344.

Frost, T.M., Austin, G.E., Calbrade, N.A., Holt, C.A., Mellan, H.J., Hearn, R.D., Stroud, D.A., Wotton, S.R. and Balmer, D.E. 2016. *Waterbirds in the UK 2014/15: The Wetland Bird Survey*. BTO/RSPB/JNCC, Thetford.

*Nigel Odin, Landguard Bird Observatory,  
View Point Road, Felixstowe, Suffolk IP11 3TW*

Photo: Nigel Odin



## Sandwich Tern success

Sandwich Terns are regular spring and late summer passage migrants to sites right along the Suffolk coast, but unlike their Common and Little cousins breeding in the county is not annual.

That wasn't always the case, with a large colony present on the Scrape at RSPB Minsmere during the 1970s. However, despite a few failed attempts in recent years, they had not bred successfully at Minsmere since 1978, that is until this summer.

Our largest breeding tern nests in large colonies at only a handful of sites around the UK, with odd birds occasionally settling among tern or gull colonies elsewhere. This spring, 13 pairs nested among the huge Black-headed Gull colony on East Scrape, successfully raising four chicks.

These chicks, the first at Minsmere in almost 40 years, are the only Sandwich Terns to fledge successfully in the county this summer.

Sandwich Terns often nest among gull colonies for added protection from predators, so their success this year may be linked to the record size of Minsmere's Black-headed Gull colony.

It's interesting to note that one colour-ringed Sandwich Tern had been ringed on the Farne Islands, Northumberland, and numbers also increased at some Norfolk colonies.

This wasn't the only cause for celebration on the Scrape either as a record 35 pairs of Mediterranean Gulls fledged 28 chicks. Later in the summer, an incredible post-breeding gathering of Mediterranean Gulls peaked at a record 535 birds.

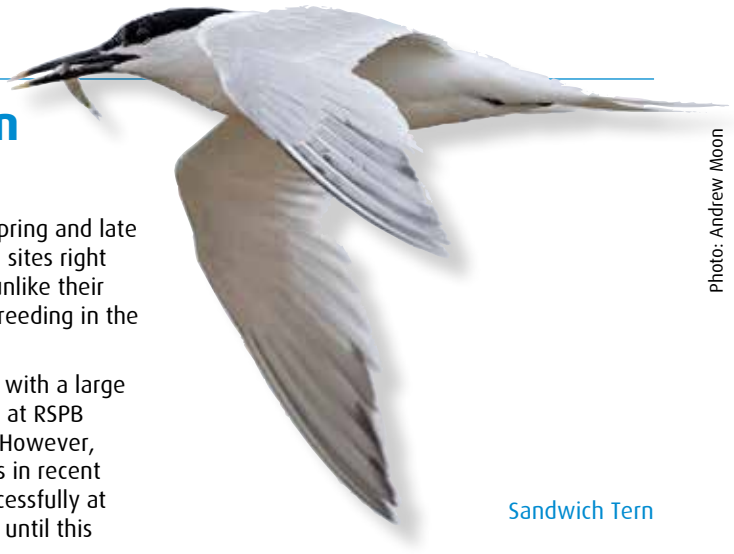


Photo: Andrew Moon

Sandwich Tern

In addition, many of the 76 pairs of Common Terns nested on newly shingle-covered islands that have been created to attract Little Terns in future. Breeding success was high, with 58 chicks fledged.

Another interesting record on the Scrape was the first nesting attempt by a pair of escaped Bar-headed Geese. They were unsuccessful.



Photo: Sean Nixon

Juvenile Common Tern



Ringed Plover

Chris Ryde

## Ringed Plovers at Landguard Nature Reserve

When I was first approached to submit an article on the Ringed Plovers at Landguard for *The Harrier* I felt a little reticent as I am not an out-and-out birder so felt unqualified. However as I am very proud of the achievements that we have had with numbers of fledged Ringed Plovers over the last 4 years I thought I would give it a go. As someone that has been in the business of practical habitat management since 1998 and seen the dramatic effect that this can have on the conservation of wildlife this is often my first approach to a wildlife issue.

The issue with the Ringed Plovers at Landguard was that the Reserve was struggling to produce any fledged Ringed Plovers and number of pairs attempting to nest had fallen correspondingly. In my first year at Landguard 4 years ago 3 pairs nested and one nest was outside the roped off beach cordon that was historically put up for nesting Little Terns. To protect this nest I put up another small cordon so that the nest would go undisturbed. This action coupled with a concerted effort to educate the visitors with dogs helped ensure that

we had 7 fledged chicks. Another important factor in that year's success was that the local Kestrel had been killed by the local Peregrine. The following year I decided to increase the area of beach protected by a cordon, more than doubling the historically protected area but another Kestrel had taken up residence nesting in the gap between disused containers at the Port and we managed to get 4 Ringed Plovers fledged. The next year 5 pairs started the nesting season but 1 pair gave up early after a failed attempt but incredibly we had 8 fledged Ringed Plovers. 1 pair had 4 chicks ringed and all 4 fledged in the new cordoned off area. This success came with the Kestrels nesting in the Port again. We also have several pairs of Magpies that nest on site and Carrion Crows that nest on the lighting towers in the Port, not to mention Foxes. You name a predator and we have probably got it! The success of that year told me that if the disturbance by man (and his dogs) could be limited then there is fighting chance of Ringed Plover success and certainly justified the extra beach cordon being put in place. Another factor in their success seems to be coupled with timing as most of the fledged chicks occur before the Kestrel chicks fledge. It appears that while the chicks are in the nest the kestrels are more content to hunt on the north end of the Reserve where the rougher grasses conceal more Voles and Common Lizards.

I also noticed that Anglers using the beach in front of the beach cordons attract Gulls to the beach which puts them artificially in the vicinity of Ringed Plover chicks and so more nest failures and predations. The last 2 years I have requested that anglers do not fish in front of the cordons until the end of June, this would of course be better if it was the end of July but I thought I would get better compliance with just 3 months. This I believe has made a difference as the beach has hardly a Gull on it when anglers

are not there. The anglers could as well be unwittingly keeping birds off their nests by sitting close to the cordons.

This season was a struggle despite 5 nesting pairs all having second and some third attempts we managed 7 fledged Ringed Plovers. The possible nail in the coffin of Ringed Plover success at Landguard may be the rapid advance of Marram Grass towards the Point. This rapid increase has followed storms that caused inundation of sand which was loaded between the groins further up the coast as part of sea defences. Ringed Plovers preferring to nest amongst shingle for camouflage may not eventually find suitable habitat. Chicks are also more easily spotted crossing sandy areas. Any way it has all been an education and nothing beats seeing another Ringed Plover chick take to the air!

## Ringed Plover diary 2017

20<sup>th</sup> March - 8 to 10 Ringed Plovers seen on the beach in recent days

3<sup>rd</sup> April - Nest found by CR (Chris Ryde) south end of large south enclosure four eggs (nest failed 10<sup>th</sup> April possible predation by Crows)

8<sup>th</sup> April - Nest found by CR middle of north enclosure four eggs (nest failed 1<sup>st</sup> May)

9<sup>th</sup> April - Eggs south enclosure not being incubated pm

10<sup>th</sup> April - Eggs south enclosure not being incubated am. 2 Crows seen foraging. Nest failure south end of large south enclosure

13<sup>th</sup> April - Nest found by CR north end of small south enclosure four eggs

16<sup>th</sup> April - Nest found by NO (Nigel Odin) south end of north enclosure two eggs (nest failed 1<sup>st</sup> May)

20<sup>th</sup> April - Nest found by CR middle of large south enclosure four eggs

23<sup>rd</sup> April - Nest found by CR south end of large south enclosure four eggs (same pair nest failure 10<sup>th</sup> April)

26<sup>th</sup> April - All five pairs are still incubating  
1<sup>st</sup> May - Two nest failures in north enclosure. Nests were attended up until lunch time and both unattended directly after lunch. An onshore squall was blowing through lunch time. Grounded Gulls, 2 immature Crows were seen foraging in enclosure

4<sup>th</sup> May - Three remaining nests are still being incubated. Cold overcast north westerly wind

8<sup>th</sup> May - Nest Sea Pea enclosure hatch 3 chicks seen

10<sup>th</sup> May - 3 chicks still in same area of Sea Pea enclosure. Failed nest pairs have not been seen for the past 2 days

14<sup>th</sup> May - Nest found by NO north end north enclosure 3 eggs; 2 chicks seen last 2 days in Sea Pea enclosure

16<sup>th</sup> May - Nest found by CR south end of north enclosure 4 eggs; Nest failed eggs predated 7<sup>th</sup> June

17<sup>th</sup> May - Nest middle of south enclosure hatch 4 chicks seen

22<sup>nd</sup> May - Nest south end of large south enclosure hatch 2 chicks seen; Nest checked one unhatched egg

23<sup>rd</sup> May - 3 chicks seen from middle nest south enclosure; 2 chicks seen from south nest south enclosure; 2 chicks seen from Sea Pea enclosure; 2 clutches being incubated

27<sup>th</sup> May - 4 chicks seen from middle nest south enclosure; 2 chicks seen from south nest south enclosure; 2 chicks seen from Sea Pea enclosure

31<sup>st</sup> May - 2 chicks seen from Sea Pea enclosure; 3 chicks seen from middle nest south enclosure

3<sup>rd</sup> June - 2 surviving chicks from Sea Hide nest ringed; 2 Sea Pea chicks seen now 27 days; 2 sitters

6<sup>th</sup> June - 2 chicks from Sea Pea nest fledged. 3 Sea-hide chicks seen

7<sup>th</sup> June - Nest failure south of north enclosure (possibly predated on hatching)

8<sup>th</sup> June - Nest north of north enclosure hatch 3 chicks seen

12<sup>th</sup> June - 2 chicks from middle of south enclosure fledged; 1 chick seen from south nest south enclosure; 2 chicks seen from north nest north enclosure

15<sup>th</sup> June - 1 chick fledged from nest south of south enclosure

17<sup>th</sup> June - Nest found NO north end of south enclosure 4 eggs (same pair that failed 7<sup>th</sup> June)

21<sup>st</sup> June - Nest found NO middle of Sea Pea enclosure 4 eggs (same pair that nested 13<sup>th</sup> April); 2 chicks from north nest large north enclosure ringed 14 days

22<sup>nd</sup> June - Nest found CR north of south enclosure 4 eggs (same pair that nested 20<sup>th</sup> April)

25<sup>th</sup> June - Nest found CR south of south enclosure 3 eggs (same pair that nested 23<sup>rd</sup> April)

1<sup>st</sup> July - 2 chicks seen, 24 days; 4 sitters

4<sup>th</sup> July - 2 chicks from nest north of north enclosure fledged

6<sup>th</sup> July - Nest failure north of south enclosure (same pair that failed 7<sup>th</sup> June)

9<sup>th</sup> July - 3 sitters morning but by evening..... Nest failure north of south enclosure (Same pair that nested 20<sup>th</sup> April). Angling now attracting more Gulls. Crows about on the beach and good weather bringing more visitors. Several footprints inside the enclosure in the vicinity of the predated nest.

13<sup>th</sup> July - Sea Pea enclosure nest 4 chicks seen am (same pair had 2 chicks fledge 6<sup>th</sup> June)

22<sup>nd</sup> July - Nest south of large south enclosure 4 chicks seen am; At least 2 Sea Pea chicks seen - now 10 days old

1<sup>st</sup> Aug - 1 Sea Pea chick predated

2<sup>nd</sup> Aug - 1 Sea Pea chick ringed at 21 days

5<sup>th</sup> Aug - Last Sea Pea chick predated at 24 days! Herring Gull seen to be warded off by adults around 11.30 am. The Gull attracted to area by anglers.

6<sup>th</sup> Aug - 3 chicks seen from Sea Hide nest now 16 days

8<sup>th</sup> Aug - Only 2 chicks seen

10<sup>th</sup> Aug - No adults or chicks seen, presumed predated (the last couple of evenings had mixed Gull flocks on the grassland adjacent to beach where remaining chicks were and very active Kestrel)

12<sup>th</sup> Aug - Verified no chicks left

## Summary:

5	pairs of Ringed Plovers
12	nests
6	nest failures
46	eggs laid
20	chicks hatched and seen alive
13	chicks predated / non-viable
7	fledged chicks

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Alison Neil

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## South Georgia – Tackling Island Invasives

A remarkable chapter drew to a close on the sub-Antarctic island of South Georgia on 23 March 2015. The South Georgia Heritage Trust concluded the baiting phase of its multi-year project to remove the invasive rodents which have destroyed most of the native birds in one of the world's most important seabird sanctuaries.

The Island of South Georgia in the sub-Antarctic was once thought to hold the greatest concentration of breeding seabirds on earth – it was a sanctuary and breeding ground for hundreds of different species. However, after discovery by Captain Cook

Season got off to a cracking start with 5 pairs RP on the beach and the earliest recorded Ringed Plover nest at Landguard 3<sup>rd</sup> April. This nest was predated on the 10<sup>th</sup> April along with 2 other early nests on the 1<sup>st</sup> May. (2 immature Carrion Crows were spending a lot of time on the beach and main suspects). The season settled down with 5 chicks fledging in June and 2 on 4<sup>th</sup> July. There were 2 more nest failures in July with 2 more clutches hatching with surviving chicks getting very close to fledging but in the end all were predated as mixed flocks of Gulls post-breeding grouped on the Reserve and an active Kestrel was seen more than once hunting in the vicinity of the RP's. Over the last 4 years I have noted that the back end of the RP breeding season at Landguard seems the most hazardous as regards predations with this year being no different. As far as I understand it 7 fledged RP chicks for 5 pairs of RP's represents a reasonable species survival rate and should ensure the continual return of breeding Ringed Plovers to Landguard Nature Reserve? Another successful breeding year for this bird at Landguard.

in 1775 the island attracted sealers and whalers who unwittingly brought rodent stowaways on their ships.

Those rats and mice had a catastrophic impact on the seabirds of South Georgia, who had evolved in the absence of furry predators and who nested on the ground or in burrows. Rodents spread quickly across the habitable parts of the island, eating the eggs and chicks of the seabirds. As the island's glaciers began to rapidly melt towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, yet more of the island was accessible to rats, putting the endemic South Georgia Pipit and



the South Georgia Pintail at risk of extinction and threatening the permanent loss of tens of millions of seabirds denied a place to breed safely.

The situation on South Georgia looked dire until a small Dundee charity came to the rescue - The South Georgia Heritage Trust.

During the third and final phase of fieldwork in 2015, 95 tonnes of bait were laid by the Trust's helicopters over an area of 364 square kilometres. The three month field operation involved almost 350 flying hours, requiring 260 bait pods to be laid, and 350 drums of fuel to keep the helicopters in the skies above South Georgia. On 23 March, bait was spread over the last rat-infested area of the island to be treated, making the total area baited between 2011 and 2015 a staggering 1000km<sup>2</sup>. It would only take a matter of days for the island to potentially be rodent-free, although success could not be declared for a further two years.

Already South Georgia's seabird population has responded in areas where the furry tyrants have been removed. In January the first South Georgia Pipit nest was discovered in an area cleared of rodents, Schlieper Bay on the South coast of the North-West baiting zone at Weddell Point. This area was treated in May 2013 as part of Phase 2 of the project. The nest, containing five chicks, was discovered by none other than Sally Poncet, a former member of Team Rat and expert on the wildlife of South Georgia. This thrilling news shows the rapid impact of the Habitat Restoration Project on this potentially endangered species.

Project Director, Professor Tony Martin, Professor of Animal Conservation from the University of Dundee explains what the completion of baiting work will

mean to the island's wildlife: "When I first began coming to this magical island 20 years ago, I only dreamed that it could one day be free of rats, and now because of our work, I can say that it is very likely that South Georgia is now rat free. Already the South Georgia Pipit, the world's most southerly songbird, and South Georgia Pintails, both endemic species found only here, are returning in numbers we could never have imagined, along with other species which were the victims of rats. But it will take decades, even centuries, before the birdlife returns to the numbers which existed before man - and rodents - arrived."

But the story is far from over. The Habitat Restoration Project now enters a new phase, which in 2017-18 will include intensive monitoring to identify whether the baiting phase has been successful. The Trust is also sharing its experience and lessons learned in order to contribute to the future success of other eradications around the world (including projects planned on UK Overseas Territories Gough Island and Henderson Island, and in July 2017 co-hosted the third in the series of IUCN Island Invasives conferences, where passionate and dedicated conservationists from around the world discussed the damage caused by, and how to control or eradicate an increasingly diverse range of invasive species.



South Georgia Pipit nest

Photo: Sally Poncet

## Summer Bird Review

June 2017

### Weather:-

June was a very warm, dry month with 21 days with no rain, although the nine days with rain brought it above the average for the month. On the 6th, 30mm and on the 28th, 23mm were the only two days with rainfall into double figures. Daytime temperatures ranged between 14C to 30C, the hottest was a three day spell between 17th and 19th. There were only three nights of single figure temperatures.

### Birds:-

As usual for this time of year June seemed to be a relatively quiet month on the birding front, but did produce some good quality birds. Still a few **Garganey** being seen on and off around the county sites as were **Great Egrets** with a few **Spoonbills** seen throughout the month at usual coastal locations. The **Red-footed Falcon** (sub-adult male) lingered into June, being reported from Minsmere and North Warren until the 13th, then no further sightings; this bird had given birders and photographers excellent value during its long stay. Then on the 17th an adult male was reported over Somerleyton late afternoon.

At North Warren on the 19th, a **Honey Buzzard** flew NW over Aldringham Road early afternoon. On the 22nd there was a count of 396 **Mediterranean Gulls** at Minsmere in the evening gull roost with 400 on the 23rd. A few **Little Gulls** were reported during the month with a count of 5 first-summer birds at RSPB Hollesley on the 3rd and 9th. An **Arctic Tern** was seen at Minsmere on the 18th, 22nd and 23rd, plus a **Black Tern** at SWT Trimley. A **Wood Sandpiper** at Lakenheath RSPB on the 24th and a further 2 at Minsmere RSPB on the



Arctic Tern

Photo: Sean Nixon

29th. The two **Savi's Warblers** continued to be present at Minsmere from Island Mere but distant and often only heard reeling. A late singing **Grasshopper Warbler** turned up at East Lane, Bawdsey on the 29th and 30th.

### Scarcer Bird Sightings:-

At Landguard on the 1st an **Iberian Chiffchaff** was trapped and ringed at 04.30hrs and sang between the hours of 07:00 - 08:30 before vanishing. This sighting represents a first for the county. A **Marsh Warbler** was heard singing from scrub east of footbridge crossing at Brantham on the 1st, then another singing individual at Minsmere on the 17th only. The **Wood Warbler** continued into June singing and giving stunning views at Gas House Drive, Brandon from the 1st and last reported on the 5th. A **Greenish Warbler** was found at Landguard behind the kitchen on the 20th, but was very elusive and it was still present on 21st, but was only seen again twice, very briefly, all day. In an Ipswich back garden along Henley Road an adult **Rose-coloured Starling** appeared with 50 Starlings on the 2nd and was present in gardens of Larchcroft Rd and Larchcroft Close on the 3rd.



Rose-coloured Starling

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> a **Little Bittern** was reported in flight from RSPB Lakenheath and heard singing on the 4<sup>th</sup>, but no further reports afterwards.



Purple Heron

Photo: Ian Goodall

At Minsmere RSPB on the 4<sup>th</sup>, a **Purple Heron** was seen on and off during the day and it remained all month although often very elusive and sometimes needed several hours sitting in Bittern Hide to catch a brief sighting! At Blyford, on the 10<sup>th</sup>, 3 **Bee-eaters** flew over the Halesworth Road. A **Red-backed Shrike** (a nice male) was found early afternoon NNE of Burgh Castle by Pump House along Breydon South wall on the 25<sup>th</sup> and showed well again on the 26<sup>th</sup>. At Landguard a **Serin** was seen on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

## July 2017

### Weather:-

July was a mixed month, with 15 dry days and 16 days with rain while daytime temperatures were very good with 28 days of 20C and above with a high of 26C on the 19<sup>th</sup>. The lowest night temperature, 9C, was on the 13<sup>th</sup>, otherwise all normal for the rest of the month. The highest rainfall

figures were 15mm on the 11<sup>th</sup>, 19mm on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 18mm on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

### Birds:-

**Garganey** and **Great Egrets** still being seen and reported on and off around the county during the month. **Spoonbills** increased throughout the month with Havergate having the highest count, 27 on the 29<sup>th</sup>. A **Common Crane** was noted from Minsmere on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. At Minsmere a **Honey Buzzard** flew N/NW at 16.20hrs on the 8<sup>th</sup>. A nice male **Hen Harrier** was at East Bergholt on the 18<sup>th</sup>. On the 22<sup>nd</sup>, two **Pomarine Skuas** south off Ness Point, Lowestoft. Plenty of **Little Gulls** being reported along the Suffolk coast all month, the highest reported count being 59 at Minsmere on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Another high count was at Minsmere with **Common Terns** 550 on the 28<sup>th</sup>. A few **Arctic Tern** sightings, both adult and juvenile, during the month at Minsmere on South Scrape and there was also a juvenile off Felixstowe on the 26<sup>th</sup>.



Roseate Tern

Photo: Sean Nixon

Nice to see **Roseate Terns** stopping off on their way south, all sightings from Minsmere with singles on the 11<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> (ringed bird), 18<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup> and two birds on the 29<sup>th</sup> seen at Sizewell. **Black Tern** sightings included Slaughden on 12<sup>th</sup>, Minsmere 18<sup>th</sup>, two on the 25<sup>th</sup>, one at Sizewell on the 25<sup>th</sup> and an adult at SWT Trimley on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

Good numbers of **Wood Sandpiper** reported throughout the month with sightings from Minsmere, Aldeburgh Town Marshes, Hollesley RSPB and Lakenheath RSPB. Early

Photo: Lee Woods

**Curlew Sandpipers** appeared with a full summer-plumaged bird on the 22<sup>nd</sup> at Minsmere, plus two on the 28<sup>th</sup>, Havergate had three on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and Blyth Estuary three on the 31<sup>st</sup>. A few **Little Stints** arrived in July with sightings from Aldeburgh Town Marshes on the 19<sup>th</sup>, Minsmere on the 24<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> and 2 on the 30<sup>th</sup>, Benacre Broad 2 on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.



Cuckoo

Photo: Barry Woodhouse

A nice juvenile **Cuckoo** reported from East Lane Bawdsey on the 25<sup>th</sup>. The singing **Grasshopper Warbler** remained all month at East Lane Bawdsey, although the news was withheld as breeding was suspected. During the first part of the month this bird was totally confiding, singing in the open at close range, it was a birders and photographers dream, often **Corn Buntings** were observed in nearby bushes.

### Scarcer Bird Sightings:-

Star bird of the month was a **Collared Pratincole** found on Aldeburgh Town Marshes on the 13<sup>th</sup> by Mark Cornish, it remained until dusk but no sign on the following day. Presumably the same bird was seen on Havergate a few days later and then it appeared on Orfordness on the old disused airfield on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Photo: Andrew Moon



Collared Pratincole

A juvenile **Shag** was found off Minsmere on the 25<sup>th</sup>, a very early bird, and it was also reported from Sizewell during the day. At Minsmere RSPB the **Purple Heron** continued to be seen until the 12<sup>th</sup>, although still very elusive. A **Glossy Ibis** was found at Trimley Marshes SWT on the 17<sup>th</sup> and was still present until the 31<sup>st</sup> at least.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> a **Black Kite** was seen over the A12 at Wickham Market late morning, presumably the same individual was seen west over Glebe allotments at 14:30hrs, it was also seen at Iken in the afternoon. It was reported again over Glebe allotments on the 17<sup>th</sup>. It will be up to the SORC to determine if this is the escaped bird that was favouring the Wrentham area! Another **Black Kite** flew NW over the sewage works at 11:42hrs at Long Melford on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and another sighting over Trimley Marshes SWT on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.



limosa Black-tailed Godwit

Photo: Sean Nixon

Of interest, a Dutch leg-flagged (*limosa* race) **Black-tailed Godwit** at Minsmere on the 1<sup>st</sup>, no age given, this bird was around for a few days, also there was a juvenile reported on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

A brief moulting adult **Temminck's Stint** at Minsmere on the 18<sup>th</sup>, was flushed by a Sparrowhawk and not relocated. There was also one reported from Benacre Broad on the 21<sup>st</sup>, though distant. A **Marsh Warbler** was trapped and ringed at Minsmere on the 20<sup>th</sup>, probably the individual singing at Minsmere on the 17<sup>th</sup> of June!

The **Savi's Warbler** continued into July at Minsmere from Island Mere often distant and often only heard, it was last reported to BINS on the 10<sup>th</sup> of July. Brian Buffery found a cracking adult female **Red-backed Shrike** late afternoon at Hollesley RSPB on the 7<sup>th</sup>. A **Raven** was reported over the Orwell Bridge on the 14<sup>th</sup>.



Red-backed Shrike

Photo: Brian Buffery

### Rare Insect News:-

At Minsmere on the 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> a **Vagrant Emperor** was seen on the reserve with a **Lesser Emperor** also present on the latter date.

### August 2017

#### Weather:-

August was a warm month with 17 dry days and 14 days with some rain. Daytime temperatures were very good with 24 days with 20C and above, with the highest of 26C on the 29<sup>th</sup>. The lowest recorded night time temperature was on the 31<sup>st</sup> being 6C. The highest rainfall figures were 46mm on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 9mm on the 17<sup>th</sup>.



Temminck's Stint

Photo: David Walsh

### Birds:-

With some bird migration taking place in Suffolk during August, comes the realisation that autumn is well on its way. A **Black-necked Grebe** seen going south off Slaughden on the 5<sup>th</sup> and another south on the 17<sup>th</sup>. **Great White Egrets** still being seen and reported from Minsmere RSPB and Hollesley RSPB all month with 2 birds often being reported. **Spoonbills** increased throughout the month with Havergate having the highest count, 29 on the 14<sup>th</sup> and the birds were commuting as 22 on Hazelwood the 21<sup>st</sup>. At Minsmere a **Honey Buzzard** flew north over car park at 13.40hrs on the 5<sup>th</sup>. **Osprey** sightings came from LBO on the 21<sup>st</sup> and the Blyth Estuary on the 27<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>.

A bit of **Bonxie** movement towards the end of the month, 1 over Hollesley RSPB on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1 north at Minsmere on the 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, 1 south off Covehithe on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 1 past Southwold on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Also 3 **Arctic Skuas** past Southwold on the 30<sup>th</sup> and 2 north off LBO on the 10<sup>th</sup>. A few big gulls started to be reported this month, an adult **Caspian Gull** at Minsmere on the 1<sup>st</sup> and a ringed juvenile at Southwold Harbour on the 12<sup>th</sup>. A count of 8 **Yellow-legged Gulls** at Minsmere on the 1<sup>st</sup>. Good counts of **Little Gulls** still being reported in the county, the highest reported being 106 at Sizewell on the 20<sup>th</sup> and still 90 there on the 26<sup>th</sup>. There were several sightings of both adult and juvenile **Arctic Terns** along the coast. **Black Tern** sightings came from Minsmere on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 2 there on the 20<sup>th</sup>, Slaughden 2 on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 1 Southwold on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Some nice wader movement during August; good numbers of **Wood Sandpiper** reported throughout the month, most sightings came from Minsmere with 7 on the 17<sup>th</sup> and other sightings from Walberswick, Aldeburgh Town Marshes, Hollesley RSPB, East Lane, Botany RSPB, Trimley SWT, Needham Market and Lakenheath RSPB.



Cattle Egrets

Photo: David Walsh

### Scarcer Bird Sightings:-

At Botany RSPB reserve a **Quail** was heard calling/singing on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> a **Cory's Shearwater** south past Southwold at 07.20hrs and then it went past Sizewell at 07.41hrs. At Minsmere on the 3<sup>rd</sup> they had 4 **Cattle Egrets** that stayed for one day only! The **Glossy Ibis** continued to be present at Trimley Marshes until the 5<sup>th</sup> and maybe the same bird was at Minsmere on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>.

**Curlew Sandpipers** were still appearing, with sightings from the Blyth Estuary, Minsmere and Havergate being the favoured sites. There were 8 adults at Minsmere on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 3 adults at Benacre on the same day. Only 3 **Little Stints** reported in August with sightings from Minsmere on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> and Hazelwood on the 30<sup>th</sup>. There was an impressive count of 60+ **Yellow Wagtails** around East Lane area of Bawdsey on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

A very smart juvenile **Dotterel** found by Carl Buttle, at Covehithe on the 26<sup>th</sup>, it showed very well and remained through to the 29<sup>th</sup>; these birds are so confiding with seemingly having no fear and a dream for birders and photographers alike. Lots of happy people seeing this bird as it was right by the path of a potato field and even walkers with dogs were passing it at 2-3 metre range. A very nice **Red-necked Phalarope** (juvenile)



Dotterel

Photo: Eddie Marsh



Photo - D&M Carter

White Stork

was on the Old Airfield on Orfordness on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>. The *limosa* race **Black-tailed Godwit** continued to be seen at Minsmere and another one was found at Hollesley during the month - this one supported a Norwegian white colour ring. A brief **Pectoral Sandpiper** at Havergate on the 31<sup>st</sup>. A very elusive **Temminck's Stint** appeared at Hollesley on the 20<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, it was usually very distant in heat haze and difficult to locate even though some of the vegetation had been recently mowed.

A long staying **Caspian Tern** at Breydon Water on the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> this bird may have been tide dependent as it was commuting further up into Norfolk for long periods during the day, it seemed to prefer mornings and evenings. A cracking

**White-winged Black Tern** was found by Dave Fairhurst on Havergate on the 12<sup>th</sup>.

An early **Wryneck** at Lound Water Works on the 11<sup>th</sup> and a **Bluethroat** was trapped and ringed early morning at Lakenheath RSPB on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, then released near the visitor centre and last reported at 10.40hrs. This cracking species seems to have become a lot scarcer these days, I remember in the late nineties when they were really very regular at LBO.

### STOP PRESS:-

The **Purple Swamphen** at Minsmere, present between July 31<sup>st</sup> to August 5<sup>th</sup> 2016 has been accepted onto the British List by the BOURC; a first for Suffolk and Britain.

# Field Trip Reports

David Walsh

## Havergate Island

Sunday August 6th

Leader: David Walsh

10 members of Ipswich RSPB and just two from SOG (the Chairman and today's leader!) met RSPB warden David Fairhurst at Orford Quay just before 10am on a warm, sunny and calm morning. We made the short boat journey before reaching the landing jetty where we embarked. Having walked to Main Hide we were pleased to find the place packed with waders, in marked contrast to last year. We didn't attempt a full count but estimated 450 Dunlin, 300 Avocet, 200 Black-tailed Godwit and perhaps 200 Redshank. A smart Bar-tailed Godwit was scrutinised; nearby we watched two Grey Plovers, one of which was still in breeding plumage. Having moved to North Hide, giving us a different view of the same area, David found a moulting adult Curlew Sandpiper amongst the Dunlin, but it was hard to pick out even with our scopes! He told us that over 600 juvenile gulls had fledged on Havergate this year, a mix of Lesser Black-backed and Herring, despite the presence of Fox and Badger which they knew had been there via the camera traps. The island is clearly a very important site for the big gulls; nearby reserves Hollesley and Boyton are being managed for breeding waders, trying to keep the two apart. On the saline lagoon, 22 Spoonbills were seen, all asleep as is the norm! Sadly they were taking no notice of the 'forest' provided to encourage them to breed.

We drifted back to Main Hide for lunch, the botanists pointing out Robin's Pincushion developing on the stems of wild roses close to the path; a Blue-tailed Damselfly in the dyke was our only odonata of the day. Common Blue butterflies were seen close to Bird's Foot Trefoil, the food plant of its caterpillars. In the early afternoon we strolled south,

Photo: David Walsh



Spoonbill platform

finding a juvenile Ruff in front of Belper's Hide and enjoying summer plumage Turnstones alongside both Common and Sandwich Terns from the adjacent viewing screens overlooking Cottage Flood. A couple of juvenile Willow Warblers were evidence of passerine migration. Painted Lady, Small Heath and Small Copper were the pick of nine butterfly species and we were impressed by the displays of Sea Campion and Sea Lavender.

Hares are a sought-after species on Havergate so we were pleased to find a couple, especially as numbers have



Hare

Photo: Gi Grieco

declined in recent years. With time marching on, some of us returned to Main Hide where the Spoonbills had stirred from their slumbers, a number feeding actively; we counted 24 in total – had we miscounted in the morning, or had two arrived? A couple of Golden Plovers disappeared as soon as they had been spotted before, after finding another Whimbrel, we made haste for the boat at 2.45pm.

I first visited Havergate in May 1971! An annual summer trip to the island is well worth it, not least as it is somewhere 'different', and this year's was one of the best not just due to the large numbers of migrant waders but also because of the informative commentary of David Fairhurst, to whom we were very grateful. See <https://www.rspb.org.uk/reserves-and-events/find-a-reserve/reserves-a-z/reserves-by-name/h/havergate/about.aspx> for details of how to visit the reserve.



## East Lane, Bawdsey

Sunday 27th August

Leader: Gi Grieco

With fewer SOG trips during the summer months it was good to meet up and explore this part of south-east Suffolk for some migration. We also welcomed two new members for their first SOG trip. Weather conditions were calm and quite hazy as we marvelled at the number of Swallows in the sky, rising from the lagoon reedbeds where they'd roosted overnight. In the area a few Yellow Wagtails flew over with one or two obligingly landing on a fence and allowing good views. We first walked south exploring the hedgerow by the track. Unfortunately it was quiet for warblers and we managed singles of Willow Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat, Whitethroat and Blackcap.

Towards the Martello tower, in the fields opposite a number of gulls were present including Common Gull and a covey of Red-legged Partridges. Scanning out to sea and along the shoreline we saw Oystercatcher and a few Sandwich Terns.

Retracing our steps we had a fantastic sighting of a Weasel, hunting around some out-buildings of which it flushed a Brown Rat that ran away quickly. Back towards the car park further hirundines were in the air with a big number of House Martins, large numbers of which landed on the prisoner-of-war building. In amongst them were the odd Sand Martin and at one time they all flew



Weasel

Photo: Chris Courtney

up calling in alarm with the culprit being a fine Hobby. We scanned the lagoons seeing Little Grebe, Tufted Duck and several Coot. The willows in front held more warblers mostly Reed and Sedge but a family party of Cetti's



Swallow

Photo: Gi Grieco

Warbler also showed surprisingly well and were a nice treat. In the tamarisks on the seaward side further Reed Warblers were making their way through. The temperature was rising and the haze was making viewing difficult but we did see two Marsh Harriers over the fields distantly plus a Sparrowhawk overhead. We'd noted a few butterflies as we walked up, so on our return we decided to take the bottom track to take a closer look and saw Clouded Yellow, Common Blue and numerous whites - Large, Small and Green-veined. Odonata were also about and included Common Blue Damselfly, Migrant and Brown Hawkers. Viewing of insects was halted when those on the upper track called to say they had found a Guillemot offshore. With the sea so calm it was fascinating to watch the Guillemot swim against the tide with its feet visible at the back paddling away, something we're not used to seeing. A great find by Matt, who self-proclaimed it was 'bird of the day'!

We then moved on to Shingle Street where there had been Whinchat seen the previous

day and we eventually counted four birds along with three Stonechat. A Hobby was being mobbed by a Crow which then turned its attention to a Kestrel. A single Wheatear was near the tennis courts and a Whitethroat in some bushes but otherwise it was fairly quiet. It was getting hotter and hotter so we stopped for lunch before a final visit of the day to Hollesley Marsh. We had a nice selection of waders including up to three Green Sandpiper, two Common Sandpiper, one Wood Sandpiper, three Little Ringed Plover, two Ruff plus a number of Dunlin, Avocet and Black-tailed Godwits. As we decided to call it a day there was still wildlife to be seen, a Wasp Spider that we hadn't noticed right in front of where we were sitting, Grayling on the seawall, Ruddy Darter along the track and back at the car park, two Holly Blue butterflies and a Willow Emerald damselfly.

An enjoyable day and we had to agree with Matt that the Guillemot paddling in the calm, hazy conditions on the sea was the highlight of the day.

# The Garrod Award

This award was created to celebrate the warm welcome Ken & Jean gave to all – but especially younger – newcomers to SOG. In recognition of this support for younger people, the award is made annually to a young Suffolk-based bird or wildlife enthusiast for their involvement or contribution. This is the third year of the award and previous recipients have been Ben Moyes and Ellie Zantboer.

A nomination form can be entered online on the SOG website - <http://www.sogonline.org.uk/the-garrod-award/> or a paper copy can be obtained by phoning Gi Grieco on 07951 482547. The winner will receive a certificate, a SOG T shirt and a year's membership of SOG. They'll also have the opportunity to have an article published in The Harrier about their wildlife experiences. The closing date for nominations is January 15th 2018 and the award will be presented at the SOG AGM in March.



Photo: John Richardson

Turtle Dove



Hobby with Swift

Gi Grieco

## SOG and Wild Ipswich

In June, two SOG committee members assisted in a Big Wildlife Count at Belstead Brook Park Meadows, leading a couple of bird walks including a dawn chorus. Highlights included a family of Jays, a brief Nightingale singing and a very vocal Lesser Whitethroat around the main marquee area. It was part of a weekend Bioblitz of enjoying, studying and counting a variety of wildlife around the site. We were also treated to lots of other wildlife on the other walks, from moths to snakes and lizards and from flowers to mammals. At Sunday lunchtime all the groups gathered as it was the official launch of Wild Ipswich, with press coverage from the East Anglian Daily Times. The aim of Wild Ipswich is to maintain and develop all the green networks which link open spaces in Ipswich

for the benefit of wildlife. Wild Ipswich is a partnership between a number of wildlife and conservation organisations and charities who share the same vision for Ipswich.

The vision statement of Wild Ipswich is **“By 2050 Ipswich will be a nature-rich town that puts wildlife at its heart and on our doorsteps, giving everyone the opportunity to experience the joy of nature every day”**.

SOG are pleased to be involved in this important project, to work with other organisations to protect and enhance the wildlife and open spaces areas in the town, to increase those wild spaces and get the public and communities to be actively encouraged and involved in the environment around them.



Photo: Rasik Bhadresa

The Flatford Heron

Rasik Bhadresa

## The Heron and the Moorhen

One summer evening, on one of our customary walks to Flatford, we spied on the far side of the Haywain pool a Grey Heron in the shadow of the emergent flora, gracefully carrying a crest on its head, looking quite regal. Keeping dead still and eyeing through its keen yellow eyes its immediate surroundings, silently and patiently it waited. It waited and waited like only a heron can. We succeeded in hiding from its sharp gaze behind the maturing bulrushes in front of us. Emulating its attitude, we waited gripped by the closeness, especially through the binoculars, of this lovely beast. Suddenly it plunged its large yellow beak into the dark water and out came a four-inch wriggling Chub, the reddish lower fin clearly visible. But not for long because the very next second it had been guzzled down, its days ending in an acid bath.

After a while, the heron decided to move on its pinkish brown sticky legs. It looked as if it was balancing on stilts. Stealthily, but confidently, it progressed along the edge towards the front of the pool. Gently, deliberately, seemingly soundlessly. But unknowingly, it had come too close to a nesting Moorhen in the reeds. The rail, considerably smaller and nervous, suddenly and daringly darted out and set upon our large heron. Startled, not even looking back at its attacker, its huge grey wings expanded to immediately carry it away from the perceived danger.

The following evening our tenant heron was back again in its favourite haunt, fishing. This time it stayed where it was.

# Dates for your diary

## Thursday 28th September

### 'Birds of Morocco: coast, mountain and desert'

David Walsh

**Please note venue:** The Cedars Hotel,  
Needham Road, Stowmarket, Ip14 2AJ

## Sunday 1st October

### Thorpeness for Autumn Migrants

Park in the village and meet by the village  
store behind the dolphin inn at 7.00 Am.

*(Long walk possible).*

Map ref: TM472598.

**Leader:** David Walsh. Tel. 07947 051223.

## Saturday 14th October

### Corton for seawatch and migrants

Meet at Corton church at 7.30 am.

Map ref: TM538980.

**Leader:** Gi Grieco. Tel. 07951 482547.

## Saturday 21st October

### Autumn open morning at Landguard Bird Observatory

Meet at main car park, View Point Road,  
Felixstowe at 8.00 am.

Map ref: TM284319.

**Leader:** Nigel Odin. For details contact  
Gi Grieco. Tel. 07951 482547.

## Wednesday 15th November

### 'Conserving Wildlife: are we winning?' The inaugural Derek Moore Memorial Lecture

Dr Mark Avery

The Great Hall, Ipswich School, Ivory Street  
Entrance, Ipswich IP1 3SG

## Saturday 25th November

### Wintering birds on the Stour

Meet at Stutton village hall car park  
at 9.00 am.

*(Long walk possible).*

Map ref: TN143347.

**Leader:** Ed Keeble. Tel. 07768 827385.

## Thursday 30th November

### 'Cape May: North America's Migration Mecca'

Mike Crewe

The Wolsey Room, Holiday Inn,  
London Road, Ipswich IP2 0UA

## Saturday 16th December

### Boyton Marsh – Burrow Hill for raptors

Meet at Banter's Barn car park,  
Dock Lane at 9.30 am.

*(Long walk possible).*

Map ref: TM386474.

**Leader:** Steve Fryett. Tel. 01394 383413.



Sand Martin

Photo: Barry Woodhouse

## Council for 2017

### Officers

President: **John Grant**  
Chair: **Gi Grieco**  
Vice Chair: **Roy Marsh**  
Secretary: **Edward Jackson**  
Treasurer: **Matthew Deans**  
Membership Secretary: **Kevin Verlander**  
Communications Officer: **Alex Rafinski**  
Publicity Officer: **Eddie Bathgate**  
Projects Officer: **Chris Keeling**  
Harrier Guest Editor: **Gi Grieco**  
Suffolk Bird Report Editor and SORC Link: **Nick Mason**  
Outdoor Events Coordinator: **Gi Grieco**  
Indoor Events Coordinator: **Adam Gretton**

### Members

**Robin Harvey**  
**Nick Mason**  
**Ed Keeble**  
**Samantha Lee**

### Honorary Vice-Presidents

**Jean Garrod**  
**Mike Hall**  
**Robin Hopper**  
**Mike Jeanes**  
**Mike Marsh**  
**Philip Murphy**



### Bird Recorders

#### North-east Area Recorder:

**Andrew Green**, 17 Cherrywood, HARLESTON, Norfolk IP20 9LP  
Tel: 07766 900063 Email: bird-ne@sns.org.uk

#### South-east Area Recorder:

**Scott Mayson**, 8 St Edmunds Close, Springfields, WOODBRIDGE IP12 4UY  
Tel: 01394 385595 Email: bird-se@sns.org.uk

#### West Area Recorder:

**Colin Jakes**, 7 Maltwood Avenue, BURY ST EDMUNDS IP33 3XN  
Tel: 01284 702215 Email: bird-w@sns.org.uk

### Membership Secretary

**Kevin Verlander** 9 Heron Close, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 1UR



# Suffolk Ornithologists' Group



## Who we are

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

## What we do

### Networking

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

### Media

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

### Trips and talks

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



### Protecting birds

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



Suffolk Ornithologists' Group

*For birds & for birders*

SOG Registered Charity No. 801446

[www.sogonline.org.uk](http://www.sogonline.org.uk)

