



THE HOBBY

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Editor: Andy Grimsey
61 Wychwood Avenue
Luton LU2 7HT
Tel: 07402 429 312
E-mail: editor@bedsbirdclub.org.uk

EDITORIAL

The seasons seem to turn over ever quicker and this month we look forward to the start of our Winter Programme of indoor meetings, once more we are indebted to Don Green who consistently provides us with a fine selection of speakers. With the breeding season over, we would encourage you to send in records of the more unusual species and Steve highlights how this can be achieved in Birdtrack. Likewise, the rarities committee would like to hear from you with descriptions of anything that requires it as with the completion of the assessments for 2013, published here, they are hoping for plenty of work in 2014. Good birding and enjoy autumn migration...

Andy Grimsey

JULY - AUGUST 2014 BIRD NEWS

Contributors: please phone Steve Blain on 07979 606300 or email recorder@bedsbirdclub.org.uk with any news or records. Records are preferred via the online system BirdTrack, using the Excel file found on the Bird Club Website, singly using the online form (<http://tinyurl.com/2v6oweh>), or on paper.

July 2014

Eurasian Wigeon - A brood were found at one site, potentially becoming the first confirmed breeding for the county.

Garganey - One at Broom GP on 24th, at Derek Whites Eggs pit on 25th, and back at Broom GP on 30th.

Common Pochard - Up to 12 broods were noted at MVCP, a fantastic breeding season!

Common Scoter - A drake was at Brogborough Lake on 27th.

Marsh Harrier - Birds were recorded from Marston Vale CP and Meadow Lane GP.

Ruff - One at Broom GP on 16th, and another on 23rd.

Black-tailed Godwit - Three were at Broom GP on 16th, with two at Grovebury SP and seven in Quest CIP on 27th.

Eurasian Curlew - Two were at Grovebury SP on 6th.

Mediterranean Gull - A juvenile was at Broom GP on 25th. One also at Quest CIP on 27th.

Barn Swallow - The roost at Broom GP reached 3000

Common Redstart - A male at Pegsdon Hills from 13th-26th, one at Streatley on 19th

Whinchat - One at Henlow Grange on 23rd.

August 2014

Great Cormorant - A striking leucistic bird was present in the brick pits for much of the month. If anyone has other sightings or news of this bird from within or outside the county these would be welcomed.



Osprey - One was at Myers Farm Reservoir on 13th.

Merlin - An exceptionally early bird was reported from Broom GP on 23rd.

Hobby - A few family groups were found. Please submit all potential breeding records to BirdTrack.

Common Crane - A probable flew over Toddington on 20th. (CD)

Avocet - Two escaped birds were reported during the period - look out for rings!

Ruff - One at Broom GP on 5th, with another at Willington GP on 24th, one at Broom GP on 28th-30th.

Black-tailed Godwit - Five were at Broom GP on 12th.

Eurasian Curlew - Two roosted at Broom GP from around 21st of the month into September

Greenshank - One at Broom GP 7th-12th, with others at Willington GP on 7th-11th and at MVCP on 9th. Two were at Myers Farm Reservoir on 10th-13th, with one remaining until 17th and another was at Broom GP on 27th.

Turnstone - One was at Grovebury SP on 10th.

Caspian Gull - A juvenile was at Broom GP on 18th-22nd

Yellow-legged Gull - Small numbers were present at Broom GP and Grovebury SP

Black Tern - One was at Brogborough Lake on 30th-31st.

Arctic Tern - Two juveniles were at Brogborough Lake on 26th.

Common Redstart - Two at Brogborough Hill on 4th-5th, one at Pegnut Wood on 8th, one at Pegsdon Hills on 15th with two on 16th, two at Brogborough Hill again on 16th, with one there on 23rd, one at Marston Thrift on 23rd-26th, one at Sandy Heath Quarry on 24th-28th, Warden Hill on 25th-26th, two again at Brogborough Hill on 31st, with a single at Pegsdon Hills on the same day.

Whinchat - One at Pegsdon Hills on 24th, and another at Henlow Grange on 31st with three at Blows Downs the same day.

Tree Pipit - One at Potton on 20th, and another at Pegsdon Hills on 28th



Observers:

CD = Chris Deary

We thank all contributors who have submitted their records directly to the Recorder, or via Bedsbirds Email Group as well as other sources.

Compiled by Steve Blain
recorder@bedsbirdclub.org.uk

PROGRAMME MATTERS

Our Winter 2014-5 Programme of Events is available with this issue either as hard copy or on-line. I do hope you will find much to interest you in the coming months.

opticron SPONSORSHIP

Our friends at Luton based Opticron have confirmed their support of the Club Programme for yet another year enabling us to attract some of the 'big names' of birding to address our monthly meetings. In exchange we ask all those members to consider the very extensive Opticron range of scopes and bins when next in the market. Copies of the latest Opticron catalogues with price lists will be located at the rear of the hall at all indoor events for you to peruse and take away if required. You can purchase products at any of the major optics outlets, such as The Lodge, Sandy.

Forthcoming Indoor Meetings

If our timing is right, you should receive this a few days before the first meeting of the season which I reviewed briefly in the July *The Hobby*.

Tuesday 30th September - 'Stray Feathers and Tall Tales – behind the scenes at the BBRC' by Adam Rowlands, chairman of British Birds Rarity Committee. Adam has been involved with the committee for the last 15 years and will provide an entertaining look at the history of rare bird recording and what makes the committee (and birders) tick. He will be looking back over the last 50

years of the BBRC and glancing forward to see what the future may hold for rare bird identification and recording in Britain. Don't miss this one.

Tuesday 28th October - 'Past, Present and Future' by Richard Crossley, author of the acclaimed Crossley Guides. In Richard's words...' Stories of lessons learned while growing up in the British birding scene, from travels around the world to living in Cape May, USA. It's a fast-paced story told with humour and depth through a camera lens that loves colour and art'. Richard is on his UK lecture tour.

Richard Crossley is an internationally acclaimed birder, award winning author and photographer. Crazy, wildly passionate, driven and single-minded are just a few of the words used to describe his love of birding and the outdoors.

Born in Yorkshire, Richard first visited Cape May, USA after graduating, and moved there in 1991 after falling in love with the birding and town. After 20 years of hiding in the business world while raising his family (wife, 2 kids and a dog – all blondes), Richard co-authored the successful The Shorebird Guide. He quickly became obsessed with the newfound opportunities provided by digital technology, Photoshop and book design. The Crossley ID Guide series was created.

The innovative design shows a more lifelike and complete picture, challenging many of the traditional 'old-school' book designs. This allows kids and beginners a better understanding of the looks and lives of birds. Recognized with multiple awards, this series has created a movement for other wildlife guides to put more emphasis on habitat, behaviour and other imagery that we can relate to in real life. Richard is also co-founder of the global birding initiative, Pledge to Fledge www.pledgetofledge.org and co-founder for the Cape May Young Birders Club. He has contributed to most major birding publications, is frequently heard on radio and is a highly sought-after public speaker. He firmly believes that the time is right to popularise birding in the USA and other parts of the world.

When recently asked why he takes on so many projects, his answer, "it beats working" sums up his passion for everything outdoors.

Tuesday 25th November - 'Inglorious Bustards and their Conservation, by Dr Nigel Collar of Birdlife International. (Puzzled! It's a take on a famous film apparently). A light-hearted title for a serious subject.

The 26 species of bustard in the world are distributed among 12 genera across the Old World from Africa to Australia, and exhibit a great diversity of intriguing and exhilarating behaviours. However, they also possess a suite of characteristics that render them highly susceptible to life in landscapes commonly shared with people: a constitutional wariness, relatively large body sizes, subtle ecological requirements for both feeding and breeding, and poor forward flight vision and low flying heights. Consequently agricultural intensification, infrastructural growth, powerlines and hunting have been identified as the principal causes, often in combination, of their declines. The most threatened species all occur in the Indian subcontinent: Asian Houbara *Chlamydotis macqueenii*, Bengal Florican *Houbaropsis bengalensis*, Lesser Florican *Sypheotides indica* and Great Indian Bustard *Ardeotis nigriceps*, the latter three breeding there and the latter two endemic. India thus has a huge challenge to meet, and some choices to make in how to do so. We will hear about current studies of Asian Houbara in Uzbekistan and Bengal Florican in India and Cambodia, involving population assessment, satellite telemetry, habitat measurement, grazing effects and conservation measures, and we will explore the pros and cons of captive breeding for the Great Indian Bustard.

Nigel is a very experienced speaker and author of many publications, his most recent being co-author of An Illustrated Checklist of Birds of the World, vol. 1 (HBW & Birdlife Int.) which made its debut at this year's Birdfair.

I must mention the planned visit to the Bird Group at the British Museum, Tring, on Thursday 4th December, a visit we have been privileged to make every 4-5 years since the mid-nineties. It is thrilling to see skins of some of the most important birds and from famous collectors such as Darwin! We are keen that members have the unique opportunity of a tour behind the scenes especially first

timers. Let me put you on the list as early as possible if you have never had this experience. Numbers are limited so don't delay. I regret it has to be during working hours so you may need to have the morning off!

Interested in Bird Ringing? Until this year we have included a Ringing demonstration in the Summer Programme but attendances dropped to an unacceptable level so we can offer members an alternative. If you would like to observe ringing you can contact Graham Buss who is Secretary of Ivel Valley ringers and rings at several sites in the county. He will be pleased for you to come along and see at first-hand what ringing is all about. Additionally he would be interested to hear from anyone interested in becoming a trainee ringer. You can get Graham initially at g.j.buss@btinternet.com

This Hobby, our club emblem bird, was caught and ringed at Dunstable Sewage Treatment Works by Graham Buss on 15th June.



Finally, you may be interest to know that our friends and neighbours Cambridgeshire Bird Club will be holding their annual conference on the subject of Woodland Birds: Habitats, Species and Conservation on Saturday 27th September. Full details can be found on their website www.cambridgeshirebirdclub.org.uk

Don Green

NEW MEMBERS

We are pleased to welcome David Buckingham from Potton and Richard Good from Broom to the Beds Bird Club. We hope you will enjoy many years of membership with us.

Mary Sheridan

RECORDING OF BREEDING EVIDENCE AND RARE BREEDING BIRDS.

Although the breeding season has long since finished, please read the suggested advice from the Rare Breeding Bird Panel about how to submit details of breeding birds to BirdTrack. It is essential detailed notes are made and submitted about our rarest breeding birds to give them the maximum protection they deserve, and also means our county bird report is as accurate as we can make it. With the breeding season now in full swing, many of you will be using BirdTrack to record numbers of breeding pairs and evidence of breeding at your sites. For this, you can make use of the optional details section of the records form (whether part of a species list or a casual record). Especially relevant to breeding birds are the tabs labelled Age/Sex and Breeding.

For the rarer breeding birds, such extra details are especially important because they enable county bird recorders to get a fuller picture of any breeding attempts and thus provide a more complete annual return to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP), who collate all such records and produce an annual report of the numbers of breeding pairs by county in the UK, published by *British Birds*.

Of course, observers should be mindful of the need to avoid disturbing breeding birds, and the special protection afforded to rare breeding birds under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb these species at or near the nest.

The RBBP reports annually all species with fewer than 2,000 breeding pairs in the UK, and there are around 75 such species which breed most years, plus a similar number which breed only occasionally or which have, to date, only shown signs of attempting to breed. A list of species considered by the RBBP can be viewed here: <http://www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-species-list-full.htm>.

The hints here of course apply to any breeding bird recorded in BirdTrack. Records of breeding can also be enhanced by follow-up visits, thus pairs of ducks or other waterfowl at a site may produce young later in the year, and singing passerines in April or May could be seen carrying food for young in the nest if the site is re-visited later in May or June.

Let's use two examples to illustrate the use of BirdTrack in this way. Shoveler is a duck where breeding evidence is usually based on pairs lingering in breeding habitat, and records of females with broods of young later in the season. Other solitary breeding birds might be recorded in this way. Little Egret is a good example of a colonial breeder where nest contents are not usually visible but where birdwatchers looking at a colony from a safe distance can contribute nest counts.

Counts of Shoveler at a potential breeding site can be recorded in the usual way but it is especially useful to provide a breakdown of adults by sex. Several visits to the site can compile a useful history of the breeding attempt, and at some locations there may be a series of records from multiple observers. In this way, the number of females may be seen to decline at a site over the season as they move onto nests, whereas the numbers of males typically stays stable as the males remain in the breeding area "guarding" females. Once the eggs hatch, females may be seen with ducklings in tow and these chicks can be counted as well. For a record of two female ducks each with a brood (one of 6 and one of 4) use BirdTrack in the following way:

Count = 12

Overall breeding status = FL (fledged young – the standard atlas code for nidifugous young which have left the nest).

Age/Sex: adult female, count =2
 chick, count =10

- Breeding: brood, count = 4
brood, count = 6
- Pinpoint: add a 6-figure grid reference (with count of 12 and any relevant comment) – this is especially important for rare breeding birds. Accurate locations of breeding pairs greatly help the calculation of the number of breeding pairs in a county and prevent duplications.
- Sensitive: depending on local circumstances and the rarity of the species you may wish to use the Sensitive tag to alert the recorder that you consider this record (or site) to be sensitive.
- Comments: free-format, any other relevant facts can be included here to help the recorder process the details.

If you wish to record a Little Egret colony, or a colony of some other species, you may only be able to count occupied nests, although later in the season some young in nests may be visible. Let's say there are 9 nests visible and in 3 of these young can be seen, although it is not possible to get an accurate count of the young (you could include them in the totals if you are able to get a good count). There are 14 adults at the colony, but the most important figure for RBBP will be the number of nests (i.e. confirmed breeding pairs).

Count = 14

Overall breeding status = NY (nest with young).

- Age/Sex: adult, count =14
- Breeding: NY – Nest with young, count = 3
ON – Occupied nest, count = 6
- Pinpoint: add a 6-figure grid reference (with count of 14 and any relevant comment) – this is especially important for rare breeding birds. Accurate locations of breeding pairs greatly help the calculation of the number of breeding pairs in a county and prevent duplications.
- Sensitive: unless the colony is well known you may wish to flag the record as sensitive; a number of counties keep the locations of colonies secret.
- Comments: free-format, any other relevant facts can be included here to help the recorder process the details.

All of these data can easily be entered online using the BirdTrack website, but many of you now are recording birds in the field using the BirdTrack apps. These are excellent for recording details at the time, but are slightly more limited as you do not have the opportunity to record optional details. We would recommend that app users record the best breeding evidence on the app, and additional details in the comments. If possible, once home, ideally you would use the field comments to populate the other fields as described above.

Steve Blain

REPORT OF THE BEDFORDSHIRE BIRDS RARITIES COMMITTEE

Following recent meetings of the committee, review has been concluded for all records submitted during for 2013. The following table lists the accepted records for the period from April to December 2013, records for the first three months of the year having been published previously. These will be documented within the 2013 Bird Report, currently in preparation for expected publication before the end of the year.

Species	Location	Date	Last date	#	Finder
Slavonian Grebe	Brick pits	April		2	
Rock Pipit	Meadow Lane GP	09/04/2013		3	Lol Carman
Water Pipit	Meadow Lane GP	09/04/2013	16/04/2013	1	Lee Evans
Rock Pipit	Broom GP; GLE	13/04/2013		3	Lol Carman
White Stork	Upper Caldecote	14/04/2013		1	Guy Shorrocks
Hoopoe	Clipstone	15/04/2013		1	E Nicholas
Slavonian Grebe	Broom GP	16/04/2013		2	Martin Stevens
Wood Warbler	Stratford Road, Sandy	19/04/2013		1	Katie Fuller
Green-winged Teal	Meadow Lane GP	21/04/2013	30/04/2013	1	Richard Bashford
Wood Warbler	Broom GP	23/04/2013		1	Martin Stevens
Spoonbill	Derek Whites Eggs pit (and Broom GP)	27/04/2013	05/05/2013	1	Mike Lawrence
Wood Warbler	Henlow Grange	29/04/2013		1	Roger Hicks
Sandwich Tern	Priory CP	05/05/2013		1	Paul Reed
Wood Warbler	The Lodge	06/05/2013		1	Andy Stanbury
Brent Goose	Brogborough Lake	29/05/2013		1	Neil Wright
Red-backed Shrike	Stotfold	03/06/2013		1	Tony Bennett
Red-footed Falcon	MVCP	23/06/2013		1	Steven Northwood
Honey Buzzard	Dunstable	20/08/2013		1	Cliff Tack
Sandwich Tern	Biggleswade	26/08/2013		3	Graham and Carla Goodall
Wryneck	Stagsden	01/09/2013		1	Heather Hadden
Spotted Crake	Bedford Boating Lake	15/09/2013	22/09/2013	1	Rosemay Brind
Common Crane	Whipsnade WAP	24/09/2013		1	Cliff Tack
Rock Pipit	Broom GP	30/09/2013		2	Steve Blain
Rock Pipit	Broom GP	01/10/2013		4	Steve Blain/Richard Bashford
White-fronted Goose	Broom GP	02/10/2013	??	2	Steve Blain
Rock Pipit	MVCP	11/10/2013		2	Steven Northwood
Rock Pipit	Broom GP	12/10/2013		1	Steve Blain
Brent Goose	Broom GP	12/10/2013		1	Jim P
Rock Pipit	Radwell Lakes	13/10/2013		1	Richard Bashford
Gannet	Broom GP/Southill	13/10/2013		1	Steve Blain/Paul Donald
Rock Pipit	Dunstable SW	13/10/2013		2	Sean D'Arcy
Great Grey Shrike	The Lodge	14/10/2013	23/10/2013	1	Tom Churchyard
Rock Pipit	Broom GP	16/10/2013		1	Steve Blain/Richard Bashford
Great Grey Shrike	Streatley area	19/10/2013	09/11/2013+	1	Darin Stanley
Caspian Gull	Broom GP	20/10/2013		1	Steve Blain
Mealy Redpoll	Cainhoe Lakes	30/10/2013		5	Peter Soper
Siberian Chiffchaff	Broom GP	31/10/2013	02/11/2013	1	Steve Blain
Rock Pipit	Broom GP	09/11/2013		1	Steve Blain
Rock Pipit	Radwell Lakes	10/11/2013		1	Richard Bashford
Mealy Redpoll	Broom GP	10/11/2013		1	Steve Blain
Dartford Warbler	Aspley Heath	10/11/2013	?	1	Neil Wright
Pink-footed Goose	Radwell Lakes	10/11/2013		1	Richard Bashford
Siberian Chiffchaff	Marston Sewage Works	30/11/2013	14/12/2013	2	Steve Blain
Mealy Redpoll	East Hyde	07/12/2013		1	Andy Grimsey
Great Northern Diver	Stewartby Lake	19/12/2013		1	Martin Palmer

Richard Bashford (Secretary Bedfordshire Rarity Panel)

THE GARDEN BIRD FEEDING SURVEY – ADDITIONAL COMMENT

Following the publication of the Garden Bird Feeding Survey for Winter 2013/14 in the last edition of *The Hobby*, it was pointed out that the reference to a piece from Lawrence Jarrett remained though for the interests of space the article had been held over to this edition.

Lawrence Jarrett commenting about the survey findings from his Luton garden had added “I suppose that the mild winter is responsible for lower numbers of some species though surprised not to see a single Wren or Coal Tit, and very few Greenfinches and Chaffinches”.

Lawrence, who has contributed every year since our garden surveys started, has made an interesting analysis of the trends in his garden, and I have taken the liberty of repeating some of his findings here.

An analysis of the average number of weeks for which each species has occurred in Lawrence’s Luton garden during each of the 22-week winter periods, in five-year intervals, since the very start of our winter survey in 1993/94. I have included the species that show the biggest changes in the following table.

	93/94 to 97/98	98/99 to 02/03	03/04 to 07/08	08/09 to 12/13	2013/14
House Sparrow	21	22	0	2	0
Starling	17	1	1	4	0
Great Tit	21	15	6	11	9
Greenfinch	17	12	16	18	3
Chaffinch	18	10	19	15	3
Wren	18	9	4	1	0
Song Thrush	9	1	4	3	0
Collared Dove	17	15	22	21	14
Magpie	16	15	22	22	21
Coal Tit	11	12	5	5	0
Carrion Crow	3	7	22	22	6
Wood Pigeon	18	11	21	21	20
Jackdaw	0	0	2	10	19

This analysis mirrors, from just one urban garden, many of the wider trends. For example the disappearance of the House Sparrow and Starling, the reductions for Greenfinch and Song Thrush, and to a lesser extent Wren, compared to the growth for Wood Pigeon and Jackdaw. Other species included in Lawrence’s analysis, for example Blue Tit, Blackbird, Robin and Dunnock (except for a low period between 2003/04 to 2007/08), show a more consistent (and high) level.

Barry Nightingale



SCIENCE UNCOVERED – NHM TRING

The following event has been brought to our attention and is published here as it may be of appropriate interest for some of our members.

The National History Museum at Tring has an annual event under the title “Science Uncovered” that will take place this year on the evening of Friday 26th September from 6pm to 10pm.

This is a free evening event for adults, designed to make science more accessible to the public by giving visitors the opportunity to learn about the science that goes into our research collections first hand through chatting to Researchers and Curators on the night. It is part of EU Researchers Night, which involves institutions in over 360 cities across Europe revealing how science research is exciting, fun and vital to our daily lives.

On behalf of Yvette Macheke, Directorate, Natural History Museum

PIC-OF-THE-WEEK PUFFIN

Congratulations to our member, Sean D’Arcy for recently winning BirdGuides photo of the week with this unusual shot of a Puffin in flight at RSPB Bempton Cliffs Reserve. What really pleased Sean was an email received which read, ‘I am generally rather bored with photos of Puffins having seen thousands but your recent one on BirdGuides was exceptional.’ It was from the eminent seabird ecologist, co-author of ‘The Puffin’ (Poyser 2011), Mike P Harris. He explained that had the photo been available at the time he would have asked to use it in his book. Praise indeed!



BIG MIG 2013 AND INVITATION FOR 2014 EVENT

Appearing in the program again this year is our BigMig event, an opportunity to be involved in the recording of visual migration at its peak period in October. Without the luxury of a coastline to act as a leading line from migrants and the added potential of sea-watching, as birders in Bedfordshire we are drawn instead to the hilltops and ridges that act as a concentration and observation point for the passage of finches and thrushes as they move into and across the country to reach their preferred wintering locations. This year’s event takes place on Sunday 19th October and will match the format of previous watches in which birds passing chosen locations will be logged over a four half-hour periods from 7:15am to 9:15am. More details of locations and observer intentions will be published through the bedsbirds yahoo group email and on the website where possible.

Unfortunately last year's count was hindered by rain which affected birders and birds alike. Despite these conditions, 3650 birds of 36 species were counted from eight locations as summarised in the table below, along with a table of the most recorded species (not all sites counted gull species).

	Birds	Species
Blows Downs	654	12
Brogborough Hill	180	10
Dunstable Downs	668	11
Old Warden Tunnel	137	7
Pegsdon - Deacon	476	13
RSPB The Lodge	477	9
The Pinnacle,	651	18
Wigmore Valley	407	19
TOTAL	3650	

Species	Birds
Redwing	808
Wood Pigeon	741
Chaffinch	571
Black-headed Gull	406
Fieldfare	349
Starling	307
Meadow Pipit	112
Blackbird	62
Pied Wagtail	60

The highlight was a Short-eared Owl passing The Pinnacle, Sandy, at dawn while Egyptian Goose, Wigeon and Crossbill were also recorded on the morning.

The list of possible species for this year is extensive and a five figure count total from this set of sites is likely in good conditions. Previously recorded in similar watches and potentially to be anticipated at some time through the visible migration period include Ring Ouzel, Woodlark, Hawfinch, Merlin, Hen Harrier and more surprisingly, Red-throated Diver! Here's hoping for dry weather and birds...



Andy Grimsey

IMAGES

Andy Grimsey: Cormorant
Graham Buss: Hobby
Mike Lawrence: Fieldfare, Redwing
Neil Wright: Redstart
Sean D'Arcy: Puffin, Coal Tit

opticon

Binoculars, Telescopes & Accessories



Binoculars

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HR 80 GA ED 899

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HDF T 28xWW/38xWW £159

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Opticron, Unit 21, Titan Court, Laporte Way, Luton, Beds, LU4 8EF UK. Fax: 01582 723559. Email: sales@opticron.co.uk

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