



THE HOBBY

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EDITORIAL

Spring has sprung and bird song is starting to pick up as this newsletter is compiled. Although birding can actually be good in Bedfordshire in winter, the next few months is when it all seems to happen and many species are in their best condition and making themselves most visible. In this month's Hobby, we look at this year's surveys for House Martin and Rook and include an update from Roger Hicks on rookeries in Bedfordshire following the detailed survey results published in the last Bird Report for 2013. Barry Nightingale highlights some data on arrival dates of summer migrants as we look forward to this year's first records and consider the link between the avifauna of our county and the changes that are occurring with longer term changes in climate. Peter Smith's review of the 1975 Bird Report also highlights different fortunes of species in the county over the last 40 years
Good birding to all this spring...

Andy Grimsey

JANUARY – FEBRUARY 2015 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.

January 2015

Whooper Swan - The adult was still present at Radwell Lakes on 30th-31st.

Pink-footed Goose - Regular birds were at Broom GP and Harrold and Odell CP all month.

Brent Goose - One was at Meadow Lane GP on 4th-8th (SE).

Pintail - A male was at Grovebury on 10th and two were at Blunham Lake on 11th.

Red-crested Pochard - Eight were at Priory CP on 9th, with up to six in the brick pits from 17th.

Common Scoter - The drake on Stewartby Lake remained until 17th.

Great White Egret - A good run of records - one then two were found at Roxton Lakes on 10th (RIB, MST et al), with a single remaining in the area until 21st, with perhaps the other individual responsible for records at Blunham Lake on 11th (LC et al), Shuttleworth on 18th (TS).



Photo: Sean D'Arcy

Black-necked Grebe - Two were found - at Dunstable Sewage Works and in Quest Pit.

Northern Goshawk - One was reported from Biggleswade Common on 31st (GN).

Merlin - The regular Broom GP male was popular throughout, with a female also present on 29th.

Jack Snipe - Up to seven were around Broom GP.

Mediterranean Gull - Up to two were in the Marston Vale (an adult and a first-winter) and another was seen near Henlow.

Caspian Gull - A first-winter was at Grovebury SP on 5th (LGRE).

Short-eared Owl - One was between Willington and Moggerhanger on 24th.

Great Grey Shrike - The wintering bird at Sandy Smith NR was seen intermittently through the month.

Penduline Tit - A possible was seen briefly at MVCP on 4th (ED).

Common Chiffchaff - A single Siberian Chiffchaff was at Marston Sewage Works and up to three were at Bedford Sewage Works.

Tree Sparrow - Up to 22 were still near Upper Caldecote on 24th. Two were also present at Wilden on 17th, and up to nine near Potton on 22nd.

Brambling - Only two were reported - from Old Warden and Dunstable Sewage Works.

Siskin - The only site where small numbers were recorded from was around the Lodge and Biggleswade Common.

February 2015

Whooper Swan - The adult was still present at Radwell Lakes on 12th

Egyptian Goose - A pair at Wyboston Lakes were seen with two small goslings on 22nd!

Pintail - A drake was in Quest CLP on 8th and five were at Grovebury SP on 22nd.

Greater Scaup - A drake was on Chimney Corner South lake on 7th-10th.

Smew - A drake was found at Brogborough Lake on 28th

Great White Egret - The bird was still at Roxton Lakes on 1st (PG), with other records from Cardington on 2nd (MH), over the Bedford bypass near Bromham on 9th (SW)

Glossy Ibis - One flew north over Sandy on the morning on 20th (DG), potentially Bedfordshire's fourth record

Black-necked Grebe - The individual at Dunstable STW remained all month.

Marsh Harrier - An unusual winter record came from Quest CLP on 13th.

Merlin - The male was present at Broom GP all month with two seen on 21st.

Black-tailed Godwit - One was at Meadow Lane GP on 15th

Common Sandpiper - One was found wintering on Woburn Road Wetlands on 9th.

Mediterranean Gull - An adult was at MVCP on 14th and 19th, and a first-winter there on 20th and 25th. An adult also flew over Sandy on 23rd, with another adult at Stewartby Lake on 28th.

Rose-ringed Parakeet - One was seen regularly around Arlesey.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker - There were records from John O'Gaunt GC and Sheerhatch Wood during the month.

Great Grey Shrike - One was found near Pegsdon Hills on 12th (MP) and seen again on 17th (LJ). The Sandy Smith NR bird was still present early in the month but as elusive as ever.

Common Chiffchaff - A Siberian Chiffchaff was again present at Marston SW on 20th (SN)

Water Pipit - One was at Meadow Lane GP on 14th (SCB)

Observers:

Derek Gruar – DG; Ethan Diver – ED; Graham Nunn – GN; Lee Evans – LGRE;
Lol Carman – LC; Lawrence Jarrett – LJ; Mark Hawkes – MH; Mark Thomas – MST;
Mick Price – MP; Patrick Giles – PG; Richard Bashford – RIB; Steve Blain – SCB;
Steven Northwood – SN; Stuart Elsom – SE; Stuart Warren – SW; Tony Squire – TS;

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

BIRD RECORDS FOR 2014 - REMINDER

We would please ask that all records of birds in 2014 are submitted to the County Recorder as soon as possible. For easy management of the records, the preferred method of submission is through Birdtrack or alternatively through the form on the bird club website. Please also refer to the website for guidelines on which species require particular levels of records, either of presence or breeding, and which species require descriptions for the Rarities Committee should you have been lucky enough to encounter anything particularly notable. <http://bedsbirdclub.org.uk/records>

PROGRAMME MATTERS

Hopefully you will be reading this before our March meeting which I mentioned in the previous Hobby. I do want to encourage you to come along to this last gathering of the Winter season on Tuesday 31st March at 8.00pm in Maulden Village Hall. We are pleased to welcome back Dr Robert Prys-Jones, Head of Bird Group at the British Natural History Museum, Tring. He will talk about two amazing British birders, Alfred Russel Wallace and Allan Octavian Hume.

As we end our Winter Programme we would like to thank everyone who has helped at indoor meetings and outdoor trips in so many different ways. Without your help these activities would not be possible.

You will receive your Summer Programme with this Hobby and I hope everyone finds something to tempt them to come out birding. It would be good to see some of our members this summer who have not previously joined us on a field outing. You would be most welcome.

Finally if you need new optics don't forget our sponsors, Opticron. With their extensive range of bins and 'scopes at very competitive prices you need look no further. See them at all the major suppliers including the RSPB shop at the Lodge.

Don Green

BEDFORDSHIRE ROOKERIES: 2014 SUMMARY

In 2013 I started a project to map Bedfordshire's rookeries. With the help of Bedfordshire Bird Club (BBC) and BedsBirds email group members the locations of 154 rookeries were mapped. This total included 19 sites that had been used in previous years but were either not used or not visited in 2013. The 135 active rookeries contained 3744 nests (average rookery size 28 nests) (Hicks 2014).

The Bedfordshire Rookery survey was repeated in 2014 with the aim to increase coverage within the county and fill in some of the gaps in the 2013 data. For comparison with previous and, hopefully, future surveys a rookery is defined as any group of nests 100 metres or more from the next nearest group (Sage and Vernon 1978).

A Google Map was created showing the location of all rookeries recorded in 2013 with yellow markers. As observations were received during 2014, these details were added to the map and the colour of the marker changed to green (Fig. 1). Eleven rookeries recorded in 2013 were not apparently used in 2014 (red markers) and a further three rookeries used in 2013 were not visited in 2014 (yellow flags). The results can be viewed online at <http://tinyurl.com/BedsRookeries2014>. During 2014 168 rookeries were located containing 4643 nests (average rookery size 28 nests). This was 33 more rookeries and 899 more nests than in 2013. The 'new' rookeries were mostly from sites not visited last year. However, some rookeries would appear to be new builds, e.g. Jonathan Palmer recorded a small rookery of 4 nests at Rotten Corner, Leagrave Park, Luton (map ref. TL059246) and Tony Revill recorded another in a single horse chestnut tree south-west of Higham Bury (map ref. TL053329). Interestingly, a rookery was recorded at approximately the same location during the 1980 BTO Rookery survey.

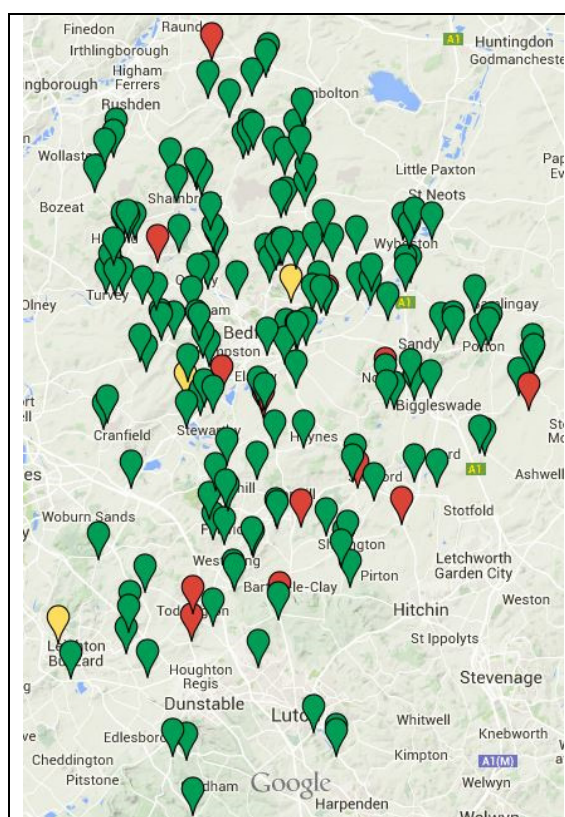


Fig. 1. Google Map showing location of rookeries in Bedfordshire in 2014

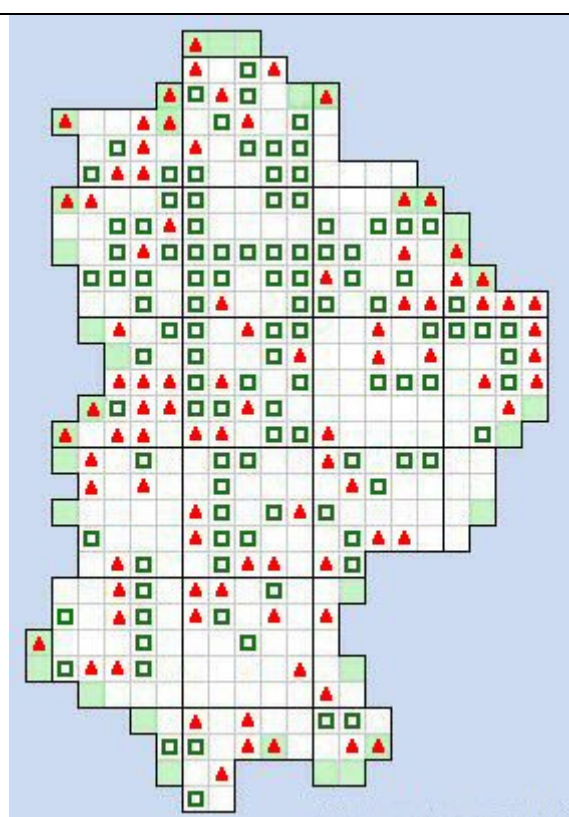


Fig. 2. Tetrad map of Bedfordshire showing location of active rookeries in 2014 (open squares) and where breeding was confirmed during atlas fieldwork, 2007-2011 but not in 2014 (triangles)

Fieldwork for the most recent atlas (2007-2011) confirmed Rooks breeding in 179 tetrads while during the 2014 survey rookeries were recorded from 110 tetrads (Fig. 2, open squares). During atlas fieldwork breeding was confirmed in 89 tetrads where no rookeries were recorded during 2014 (Fig 2, solid triangles) and conversely during 2014 rookeries were recorded in 19 tetrads where breeding was not confirmed during atlas fieldwork. Excluding tetrads that contain only a small part of Bedfordshire (lightly shaded tetrads in Fig. 2), tetrads where rookeries are known to be outside Bedfordshire, e.g. Holwell (TL13R) and rookeries known to be no longer used, e.g. Northill (TL14N) and Eyeworth Lodge Farm (TL24H) suggests there may possibly be a minimum of 60 rookeries (assuming one rookery per tetrad) still to be found in the county giving a projected total of 6301 nests (assuming average size of rookery is maintained). If this proves to be the case, then since the last national rookery survey in 1975 (Livett 1977) there will have been an increase in the number of rookeries (11%) and a greater increase in the number of nests (+44%). In order to compare the Bedfordshire Rook population in 2013 and 2014 nest counts from rookeries counted in both years were included plus any abandoned rookeries, i.e. those used in 2013 but (apparently) not in 2014 and any 'new builds', i.e. those sites where rookeries were (apparently) built for the first time in 2014. 136 rookeries meet these criteria including five (apparently) abandoned and seven apparent 'new builds' giving totals of 3678 nests in 2013 and 3731 nests in 2014 for an increase of 1.44%. The Eastern England long term trend (from Breeding Bird Survey) is +8%.

However, this is probably an over-simplification as, within Bedfordshire at least, it seems rookeries are readily abandoned and new ones built, e.g. the rookery at Priory Country Park (map ref TL074488, tetrad TL04U) was first recorded in 2012 (D.Kramer pers. comm.) and that at Willington: River Great Ouse (map ref TL074488, tetrad TL04U) was first recorded in 2014 (M.Bird pers. comm.) while others have been abandoned since field work for the latest atlas was completed, e.g. Barton Hill cutting (map ref TL074290, tetrad TL02U). The violent storms of 2013/2014 winter blew out all of the nests in some rookeries, e.g. New Mill End (map ref TL120181, tetrad TL11J, D.Anderson pers. comm.) and Milton Ernest: South (map ref TL021533, tetrad TL05H, pers. obs.). The New Mill End rookery was rebuilt with one nest on the opposite of the road, while the Milton Ernest: South rookery was abandoned and rebuilt about 100m to the east. Some movements of nests within rookeries was also noted, e.g. the nests in the Haynes: Warren Plantation rookery (map ref TL089412, tetrad TL04V) were in trees much closer to the road this year than last. Six rookeries recorded in 1945 were also recorded in 2014 (table 1); another at Renhold Water End has apparently only been abandoned in the last couple of years. The rookery at Renhold: Green End (map ref. TL098523, tetrad TL05W) has been continuously occupied since 1969 (A.Whitfield pers. comm.) while a further 24 rookeries were recorded by the 1975 and 2014 surveys, although that does not necessarily imply continuous occupancy.

Table 1: Rookeries in Bedfordshire, used in 1945, 1975, 2013 and 2014

Tetrad	Map Ref	Rookery	1945	1975	1980^a	2013	2014
SP96F	SP929601	Hinwick Dungee	8	30	103	58	65
TL05V	TL094514	Howbury Park West	53	42	36	38	25
TL15A	TL100513	Howbury Park East	25	6	11	23	27
SP95R	SP966518	Picts Hill House	23	-	8	38	26
TL15A	TL104514	Renhold: Water End	12	- ^b	-	4? ^c	-
SP92S	SP960254	Eggington House	52	119	-	- ^d	74
SP92T	SP962272	Hockliffe Grange	55	41	-	- ^d	31

^a In 1980 only a sample survey of rookeries was conducted;
^b A rookery was recorded in this tetrad in the first atlas (Harding 1979)
^c The rookery at Renhold: Water End was probably not used in 2013;
^d Rookeries not visited in 2013

The colony size, number of nests in a rookery, ranged from one to 143, with an average of 28 nests per rookery. Only two rookeries contained over 100 nests, those at that at Meppershall: Nunswood (map ref. TL142374, tetrad TL13N) and Tempsford: East of A1 (map ref. TL163532, tetrad TL15R) with 143 and 114 nests respectively. Nearly 86% of all rookeries were in the two lower colony size groupings (1 -25 nests and 26 – 50 nest) while over half the rookeries (56.55%) were in the lower colony size grouping (Table 2 and Fig. 4)

Table 2: Rookeries by Colony Size, Bedfordshire, 2014								
Size Categories	Unused	1 – 25	26 – 50	51 – 75	76-100	101-125	126+	Totals
No of Rookeries	15	95	49	15	7	1	1	168
% of Total	-	56.55	29.17	8.93	4.17	0.59	0.59	
No of Nests	-	1140	1735	929	582	114	143	4643
% of Total	-	24.55	37.37	20.01	12.53	2.46	3.08	
Average Nests per Rookery		12.00	35.41	61.93	83.14	114	143	28.18

Likewise, the majority of nests (61.9%) are in rookeries in the two lower colony size groupings with the greater proportion being in the 26 – 50 nest grouping (Table 1 and Fig. 5).

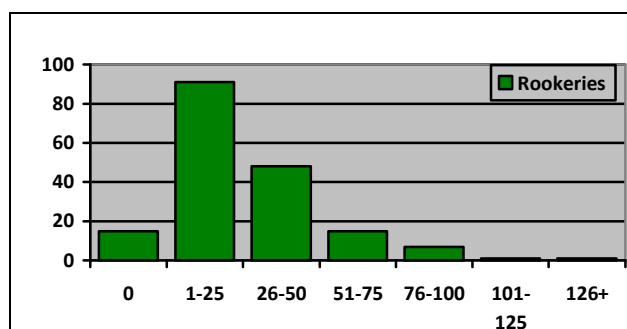


Fig 3. Rookeries by Colony Size in Bedfordshire, 2014

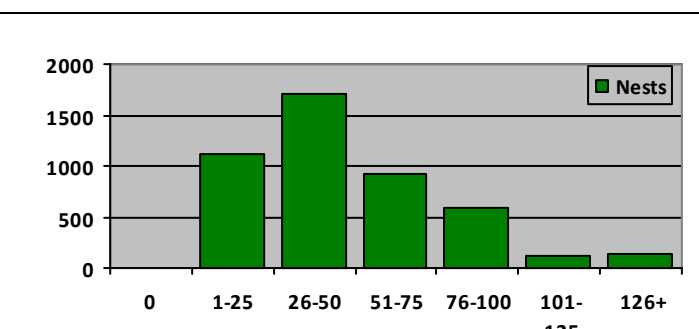


Fig 4. Nests by Colony Size in Bedfordshire, 2014

The altitudes of all rookeries recorded in 2014 were read off the relevant Ordnance Survey maps. Rookeries were recorded from 18m, at Wyboston (map ref: TL168574) up to 216m at Whipsnade Zoo (map ref: TL007175) with most rookeries (63) and nests (1639) recorded between 26m and 50m (Table 3, Fig 5 and Fig 6).

Table 3: Rookeries by Altitude, Bedfordshire, 2014										
Height Above Sea Level	Metres	1 – 25	26 – 50	51 – 75	76-100	101-125	126-150	151-175	176-200	>200
	Feet	0 - 82	83-164	165-246	24-328	329-410	411-492	493-574	575-656	>656
No of Rookeries	168	18	63	44	24	15	1	2	0	1
% of Total		10.71	37.50	26.19	14.29	8.9	0.59	1.19	-	0.59
No of Nests	4643	494	1639	1125	819	445	15	100	0	6
% of Total		10.64	35.30	24.23	17.64	9.58	0.03	2.15	-	0.01
Average Nests per Rookery		27.44	26.02	25.57	34.12	29.67	15.00	50.00	-	6.00

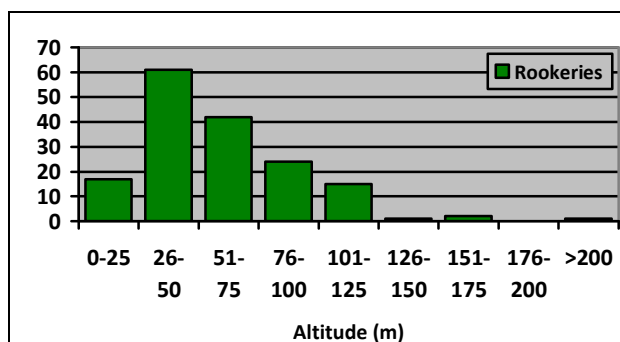


Fig 5. Rookeries by Altitude in Bedfordshire, 2014

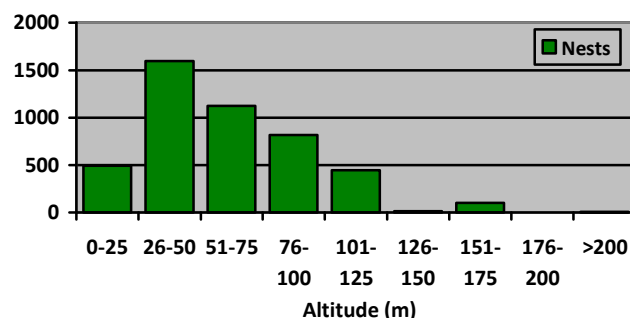


Fig 6. Nests by Altitude in Bedfordshire, 2014

Rooks were recorded nesting in 17 species of tree (Table 4). A large proportion (29.92%) of rookery nest trees remained unidentified partly as a result of trees coming into leaf earlier in 2014 than 2013 and as a consequence making it more difficult to count nests per tree species at some rookeries. For the same reason the counts for some tree species, particularly Field Maple and Sycamore are lower than for last year. The great majority of nests, where trees were identified, were in deciduous (96.99 %) rather than coniferous (3.01%) trees. Nesting in coniferous trees was only noted from 14 rookeries and no rookery was built wholly in coniferous trees. Ash was by far the most frequently used tree, accounting for over 36% of nests. Oak was second most used tree, followed by Black Poplar, Beech, Scots Pine, Sycamore, Horse Chestnut and Field Maple. Less than 3% of nests were built in the remaining nine species. No incidences of ash dieback were noted while conducting the rookery survey during the early spring of 2014.

Table 4: Rookeries by nest tree, Bedfordshire, 2014			
Trees	Rookeries	Nests	%
Ash	74	1691	36.82
Oak	32	507	11.04
Black Poplar	12	267	5.81
Beech	15	185	4.25
Scots Pine	14	139	3.03
Sycamore	13	136	2.96
Horse Chestnut	15	111	2.42
Field Maple	6	74	1.61
Hornbeam	2	29	0.63
Sweet Chestnut	3	26	0.57
Silver Birch	5	20	0.44
Holm Oak	2	19	0.41
Lombardy Poplar	1	16	0.35
Weeping Willow	3	12	0.26
Alder	2	8	0.17
Cypress	1	3	0.07
Lime	1	2	0.04
Unidentified		1389	29.92
Total	168	4643	100.00

All rookery data collected in 2014 has been entered on Birdtrack and a spreadsheet of the raw data has been deposited with the Bedfordshire Bird Club. Google maps have been produced for the current and previous surveys and these can be viewed online at:-

<http://tinyurl.com/BedsRookeries1945>
<http://tinyurl.com/BedsRookeries1975>
<http://tinyurl.com/BedsRookeries2013>
<http://tinyurl.com/BedsRookeries2014>

I will be running the Bedfordshire Rookery Survey again in 2015. A Google map showing location of all rookeries used in recent years has been prepared and can be viewed at <http://tinyurl.com/BedsRookeries2015>. Currently, all rookery markers are yellow, as data is received these will be changed to green. If you would like to contribute to the survey, please get in touch (contact details at end).

Acknowledgements:

A big thank you to all the Bedfordshire Bird Club and BedsBirds email group members who supplied rookery information: Peter Almond, Dave Anderson, Stefan Baltruschat, Richard Bashford, Graham Bellamy, Michael Bird, Steve Blain, Sheila Brooke, Ian Cook, Lee Evans, Mark Fitzpatrick, John Kirkham, Judith Knight, David Kramer, Darren Oakley-Martin, Jonathan Palmer, Tony Revill, Peter Smith and Aidan Whitfield. And last but by no means least, very special thanks to Jenny for not only putting up with me but also offering encouragement.

References:

Hicks, R.K. 2014. Rooks and rookeries in Bedfordshire. *Beds. Bird Rep.* 2013. 68 (2): 136-152.
Sage, B.L. & J.D.R Vernon. 1978. The 1975 National Survey of Rookeries. *Bird Study* 25: 64-86.

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40 YEARS AGO – A RETROSPECTIVE VIEW OF THE 1975 BIRD REPORT

Ah forty years ago it only seems like yesterday, at least to me. I was Chairman of the BNHS council, Julian Knowles was programme secretary and a young Don Green was on the committee.

Never mind the nostalgia you are saying; what was the birding like in the county in 1975 ?
Well it certainly was different!

No new species were added to the county list and the total number of species seen during the year was 160 compared to the 204 seen in 2013. The number of observers submitting records for publication in the annual report was only 47, compared with 407 in 2013 and that doesn't include records gleaned from the Beds email Group, Birdline East Anglia, Birdnet, Birdguides and the contributors to the Garden Bird Survey. Clearly with such a vast increase in observer coverage it is not surprising that the total number of species seen annually is so different. Also forty years ago the popularity of bird watching as a hobby was not as great as today, we now have better optics, more identification books and of course much better communications with the internet and mobile phones. In an attempt to illustrate how times have changed I have extracted and summarised the following from the 1975 Bird Report.

An increase in the number of **Cormorants** in the county was considered worthy of note with a total of 20 being seen during the year.

A high count of 133 **Wigeon** at Harrold GP (now Harrold-Odell CP) on 2nd February was reported as notable. In 2013 during 'The Great Duck Hunt' 1249 were recorded, along with a high count of 511 at Radwell Lakes alone on 10th February.

Four sightings of **Common Buzzard** caused some excitement with observers having no idea that 40 years later they would be regular breeders throughout the county.

1975 was a good year for **Rough-legged Buzzards** with two present over Pegsdon Hills during January/February.

There were only six records of **Sparrowhawk** in the county during the whole year. This species was still being heavily persecuted by gamekeepers and also recovering from the effects of DDT.

There was a rare sighting of a female **Montagu's Harrier** on the outskirts of Luton on 9th June, this being the ninth post 1946 county record.

Sightings of **Hobby** were few and far between in 1975 with only five being reported and no signs of breeding. This was another bird of prey that suffered greatly at the hands of DDT. Thankfully this delightful falcon is now an established breeder.

A **Spotted Crake** was at Dunstable STW on 12th/13th August and only the third seen in county since 1946.

At least seven **Spotted Redshanks** were seen during the spring and autumn passages in 1975 a high figure compared with today's numbers.

A singing male **Firecrest** was present in Warren Wood on 8th-9th June, although no proof of breeding was found. We had to wait until 1984 for our first breeding record when a pair raised young at The Lodge (RSPB Sandy).

Without doubt the headline news of 1975 was the first breeding record of **Red-backed Shrike** in the county since 1971, when a pair raised three young near Arlesley. Sadly this proved to be the last breeding record in the county.

Twelve pairs of **Tree Pipit** were present in suitable habitat during the breeding season. Sadly the Tree Pipit no longer breeds in Bedfordshire but is still seen occasionally on passage.

It was reported that the breeding population of **Nightingales** was continuing to expand with 16 singing males being heard during the breeding season.

So they were the highlights of the 1975 Bird Report, different in many ways from today but nevertheless exciting for those of us who were around at the time.

Peter Smith

ARE OUR SPRING MIGRANTS REALLY ARRIVING EARLIER ?

Whilst I was browsing through some of the earlier journals, I came across an article that I'd written for *The Bedfordshire Naturalist* for 1979 about the average arrival dates for our more regular spring migrants. In that article I compared the average dates for the period 1946-59 with 1960-79.

Of the 20 species listed in that article, nine had earlier arrival dates for the period 1960-79, three had the same dates, but eight species had later arrival dates. The dates from that article are repeated below in Table 2.

Even by 1979 it was becoming more difficult to recognise the earliest arrivals for Common Chiffchaff and Blackcap, as the picture was increasingly clouded by overwintering individuals. That situation has become even more difficult, to the point now where it is sometimes a matter of guesswork identifying the earliest arrivals of those species. I also mentioned that in 'the early days' there were not as many active fieldworkers in the county, and that much of their birdwatching time was restricted to the weekends. That is certainly not the case today, where many sites, such as Priory CP, Blows Downs and Broom GP have virtually daily coverage, so we are much more likely to find the first arrivals soon after they get here.

For the journal of 1991 Rob Dazley brought my original article up to date, adding the average arrival dates for more species, and also including dates for the period 1980 to 1990. As the periods in my original article covered 14 and 20 years respectively, and the period he added was only for 11 years he took a more statistically sound approach by ignoring the extreme dates of arrival, that is to say the

first arrival in each of those years. Extreme dates, in a shorter time span, will of course have a bigger influence on the average. Rob recognised weekend bias for the earlier periods, but mentioned that with the increasing number of active birders across the county, it almost certainly meant that it was more likely that species were being found closer to their real arrival date. Although other factors have an influence, such as availability of habitat, the skill and experience of fieldworkers, and the weather, he was able to demonstrate the growth in active fieldwork by showing the average number of species found each year in the county. I have subsequently added the data since 1991 and that is all shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Average number of species recorded in the county

Period	1946-59	1960-69	1970-79	1980-90	1991-2000	2001-13
Average number of species each year	138	147	162	181	194	203

So, with the smaller weekend-bias effect, and a growth in the number of active birders, should we expect that all recorded arrival dates will continue to become earlier? There seems to be a correlation between the arrival dates and the health of that species' population. As species become less common then the arrival dates appear to be getting later in the spring, rather than earlier. Looking back, the Common Whitethroat was, as today, a very common summer visitor. Then, in 1968-69 there was a huge population crash as a result of a prolonged drought in the wintering quarters in the Sahel region. From 1960 to 1968 the average arrival date was 16th April. From 1969 to 1979 the date went out to the 23rd April, seven days later. More recently, following a recovery in the population, the arrival date moved to the 18th April during 1980-90 and to the 13th April during 2003 to 2013. Similarly, for the Turtle Dove, the average arrival date has moved from the 16th April for the period 1980-90 to the 22nd April for 2003-13, whilst the Tree Pipit now arrives around the 19th April, more than a week later than in 1980-90. One simple reason for that, of course, is that there are far less individuals of those species to find. The dates for the Spotted Flycatcher, despite more intensive coverage, have hardly changed at all though since the 1960 to 1979 period. Of the other species under threat, the Common Cuckoo and the Yellow Wagtail still seem to be arriving earlier.

Table 2 Average arrival dates in periods from 1946 to 2013

	1946-59	1960-79	1980-90	2003-13	Difference (days)	Difference (days)	Difference (days)
					1946-59 to 2003-13	1960-79 to 2003-13	1980-90 to 2003-13
Hobby		11-May	24-Apr	17-Apr		-24	-7
Lt Ringed Plover	15-Apr	27-Mar	22-Mar	18-Mar	-28	-9	-4
Black Tern		07-May	26-Apr	24-Apr		-13	-2
Common Tern		30-Apr	12-Apr	04-Apr		-26	-8
Arctic Tern		29-Apr	19-Apr	14-Apr		-15	-5
Turtle Dove	30-Apr	27-Apr	16-Apr	22-Apr	-8	-5	+6
Common Cuckoo	14-Apr	17-Apr	14-Apr	10-Apr	-4	-7	-4
Common Swift	26-Apr	26-Apr	24-Apr	19-Apr	-7	-7	-5
Sand Martin	01-Apr	02-Apr	22-Mar	14-Mar	-18	-19	-8
Barn Swallow	31-Mar	07-Apr	28-Mar	23-Mar	-8	-15	-5
House Martin	10-Apr	09-Apr	06-Apr	01-Apr	-9	-8	-5
Common Chiffchaff	20-Mar	18-Mar	21-Mar	14-Mar	-6	-4	-7
Willow Warbler	26-Mar	06-Apr	29-Mar	30-Mar	+4	-7	+1
Blackcap	13-Apr	13-Apr	08-Apr	22-Mar	-22	-22	-17
Garden Warbler	28-Apr	30-Apr	22-Apr	19-Apr	-9	-11	-3
Lsr Whitethroat	25-Apr	29-Apr	19-Apr	16-Apr	-9	-13	-3
Com. Whitethroat	17-Apr	20-Apr	18-Apr	13-Apr	-4	-7	-5

	1946-59	1960-79	1980-90	2003-13	Difference (days)	Difference (days)	Difference (days)
					1946-59 to 2003-13	1960-79 to 2003-13	1980-90 to 2003-13
Grasshopper W	21-Apr	21-Apr	15-Apr	13-Apr	-8	-8	-2
Sedge Warbler	21-Apr	14-Apr	09-Apr	06-Apr	-15	-8	-3
Reed Warbler	09-May	08-May	23-Apr	16-Apr	-23	-22	-7
Ring Ouzel		08-Apr	30-Mar	01-Apr		-7	+2
Spot Flycatcher	08-May	05-May	04-May	04-May	-4	-1	=
C. Nightingale	23-Apr	01-May	20-Apr	17-Apr	-6	-14	-3
C. Redstart		23-Apr	09-Apr	06-Apr		-17	-3
Whinchat		30-Apr	19-Apr	19-Apr		-11	=
N. Wheatear	28-Mar	23-Mar	18-Mar	13-Mar	-15	-10	-5
Yellow Wagtail	08-Apr	06-Apr	02-Apr	28-Mar	-11	-9	-5
Tree Pipit	21-Apr	12-Apr	11-Apr	19-Apr	-2	+7	+8

Looking at Table 2, the evidence overwhelming points to virtually all these species (apart from Tree Pipit) arriving earlier now compared to the period 1960-79, in some cases by extraordinary margins – Hobby by 24 days, Common Tern by 26 days, Sand Martin by 19 days, Reed Warbler by 22 days and Common Redstart by 17 days for example. Similarly, we can also see that between the periods 1980-90 to 2003-13, there are 22 species that arrive earlier, only four that arrive later and two that have the same average arrival date. So are our summer migrants really arriving *that much* earlier, and are there other factors playing their part?

Barry Nightingale

BIRD CLUB RARITIES COMMITTEE

The Committee met in February and a list of accepted records will appear in the next edition of *The Hobby*.

We would like to welcome Matt Burgess to the Committee who has taken on the role of Secretary at this meeting to replace Richard Bashford. Thanks to Richard for all his work supporting this part of the Bird Club's activity over the last few years.

SURVEYS 2015

Rookeries:

The Bedfordshire Rookeries survey will continue in 2015 and to this end a base map <http://tinyurl.com.BedsRookeries2015> has been created from the 2014 data. Most rookery names have been taken from a feature on the OS maps; these may differ from how the rookery is known locally. Please let me know if any of the existing names need changing. The yellow markers are rookeries from 2014 not yet visited in 2015. Rookeries visited in 2015 will be marked green; rookeries no longer used will be marked red. For comparison with past (and future) surveys a rookery is defined as any nest or group of nests more than 100m from the next nearest nest or group of nests. If you would like to contribute, all rookery data will be gratefully received. For each rookery I am collecting: Rookery Name, ordnance survey grid reference, count date, nest count and species of tree with number of nests per tree species. If you are interested taking part in the rookery survey or if you have rookery counts from previous years, please contact Roger Hicks at rogerkhick@hotmail.com

House Martins:

The BTO will be running a UK House Martin Survey, spanning two years, which will commence in spring 2015. House Martins are in trouble, with long-term monitoring revealing a 65% population decline between 1966 and 2012 but the reasons for these declines are unknown. The survey over the next two years will collect more information on population size, breeding ecology and habitat

preferences, so that some key questions about this eagerly awaited summer visitor can be tackled. In 2015 the nationwide random square survey will involve volunteers visiting 2,000 – 3,000 ‘random’ (i.e. pre-selected) 1-km squares throughout the UK. By surveying random squares a robust population estimate to monitor future changes can be produced. The survey will consist of three visits – a recce visit in mid to late May to map the location of colonies followed by two survey visits (an early visit in the first three weeks of June; and a late visit in the last week of June or the first half of July). During the survey visits, volunteers will be asked to record some basic information about the nests and the buildings they are on, and to count the number of complete nests and the number of apparently occupied nests. I will be advised of the county’s random squares in January-February so if you are interested in participating in this survey, please let me know as soon as possible. Hopefully, it will be possible to extend this survey on a local basis if the random squares are all allocated and there are additional observers wishing to take part, allowing a more complete coverage of Bedfordshire and giving an idea of how Bedfordshire’s House Martin population is faring. In 2016 the Nest Monitoring Study will involve volunteers making regular observations at individual nests to collect information about nesting activity. This study will be ideal for observers who have nests on their home or place of work. If you are interested in taking part in either, or both, years of this survey please contact Roger Hicks at rogerkhicks@hotmail.com

Roger Hicks



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