



# THE HOBBY

**Website:** [www.bedsbirdclub.org.uk](http://www.bedsbirdclub.org.uk)

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## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the September edition of The Hobby.

The season has once more turned to autumn which for many birders is the season of the best rarity potential, let's hope some come to our county this year !

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. This programme, along with details of outdoor meetings can be found enclosed with this newsletter, or alternatively on the website. With the breeding season over, we would encourage you to send in all records, particularly of the more unusual species and those we know are declining or increasing so we can document a clear picture on their populations. Good birding and enjoy the autumn migration...

Andy Grimsey

## JULY – AUGUST 2015 BIRD NEWS

Contributors: please phone Steve Blain on 07979 606300 or email [recorder@bedsbirdclub.org.uk](mailto: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 2015

**Egyptian Goose** - At least 21 were at Wyboston Lakes on 21st. (RIB)

**Goosander** - A red-head was reported on the Ivel at Biggleswade on 28th (RG) and again on 7th August (VT).

**Common Quail** - One was in fields near Swedish Cottages, Streatley on 16th-29th.

**Little Egret** - Five nests produced 13 young at Blunham Lake, and another pair bred at a new location this year.

**Hen Harrier** - A female flew over East Hyde on 18th.

**Osprey** - One flew over Box End on 9th.

**Sanderling** - One was at Broom GP on 25th, and another on 29th-30th.

**Curlew Sandpiper** - One was reported briefly at Broom GP on 29th. (TH)

**Black-tailed Godwit** - One at Derek Whites Egg pit on 6th, one at Broom GP on 9th with another there on 25th.

**Eurasian Curlew** - One flew over Henlow on 14th.

**Greenshank** - Two were at Broom GP from 31st.

**Mediterranean Gull** - An adult was at Broom GP on 27th.

**Common Redstart** - An adult male stayed in Sandy Heath quarry for over a month. Two were at Galley Hill on 29th, with three there on 30th staying into August.

**Whinchat** - One was at Brogborough Tip on 19th.

**Common Crossbill** - Just a handful of records across the county including a group of 20 at Stockgrove CP on 9th.

### August 2015

**Garganey** - One was present at Broom GP from 8<sup>th</sup> through to the end of the month.

**Great Cormorant** - The leucistic bird was back in the Marston Vale from 1st.

**Marsh Harrier** - Singles flew over Broom GP on 19th, Thurleigh Airfield on 27th and Tempsford Airfield on 28th.

**Sanderling** - One was at Broom GP on 19th.

**Little Stint** - One was present briefly at Broom GP on 8th, with another present there on 17th.

**Ruff** - Up to six were present at Broom GP throughout the month.

**Black-tailed Godwit** - One was at Broom GP on 11th, with two present on 12th-15th, four there on 20th, and a further four there on 27th. One was at Grovebury SP on 30th.

**Greenshank** - Up to four were at Broom GP for most of the month, with others at Grovebury SP on 9th, Radwell Lakes on 16th, Henlow Grange on 21st, two at Grovebury SP on 23rd.



**Wood Sandpiper** - One was at Broom GP from 13th until the months end, with two present from 20th-25th. Two more were at Toddington Services Pools on 17th-18th, with one from 19th.

**Mediterranean Gull** - An adult was at Broom GP on 2nd, with a juvenile there on 23rd.

**Caspian Gull** - Juveniles were noted at Broom GP on 18th (SCB) and Stewartby Lake on 31st (KRO, MJP)

**Little Tern** - Two were at Stewartby Lake on 14th-15th (NW), with another there on 31st. (JF)

**Black Tern** - Four were at Stewartby Lake on 14th, with two still the next day. Ten were brief visitors to Broom GP on 20th. A further four were at Stewartby Lake on 31st.

**Sandwich Tern** - 8 were present at Grovebury SP on 23rd. (PS)

**Common Redstart** - Records came from Sandy Heath Quarry, Galley Hill (two), Brogborough Hill (two), Blows Downs, Henlow Grange, Pegsdon Hills (two), Biggleswade Common, Meadow Lane GP and Knocking Hoe (two).

**Whinchat** - One was at Blows Downs on 23rd, two on Biggleswade Common on 27th (with one on 28th), one at Meadow Lane GP on 28th, one at Brogborough Tip another at Southill on 29th and three at Henlow Grange on 29th-30th. Two were at Pegsdon Hills on 31<sup>st</sup>



**Pied Flycatcher** - One was on Brogborough Hill on 15th.

**Yellow Wagtail** - Around 50 were on Biggleswade Common towards the end of the month, along with 20 at Henlow Grange.

**Common Crossbill** - Two flew over Henlow Grange on 4th.

**Observers:**

John Francis – JF; Neil Wright – NW; Richard Bashford – RIB; Val Thompson – VT;  
Richard Good – RG; Tony Hukin – TH; Martin Palmer – MJP; Steve Blain – SCB;  
Peter Smith – PS;

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**

**opticon SPONSORSHIP**

We are pleased to tell you that Opticron have generously agreed to continue their support for our programme for yet another year. This helps to fund our series of lectures throughout the winter months and enables us to invite some of the most interesting and entertaining speakers along. Luton based Opticron has become a leading supplier of optics to the retail trade and supply a very wide range of both binoculars and telescopes. Their products are sold through all major outlets including the gatehouse shop at the Lodge, Sandy. You can view the latest Opticron catalogue at all of our indoor meetings. So next time you are in the market for new optics first have a look at the Opticron range.

**Forthcoming meetings**

Our new Winter Programme is now on our website at [www.bedsbirdclub.org.uk](http://www.bedsbirdclub.org.uk) in the “Events Programme” section. Those who still rely on a paper copy will receive it with this *Hobby*. We hope you can be encouraged to attend some evening events and we especially look forward to welcoming those members who we seldom see.

**Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> September** ‘A very Fine Swan indeed: Art, Science and *The Unfeathered Bird*’ by Katrina van Grouw. Just a reminder as this talk was previewed in the previous edition.

**Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> October** ‘Woodpeckers and Woodland Birds’ by Ken Smith.

Ken has been studying woodpeckers for over 30 years mainly in neighbouring Hertfordshire woods and before his retirement he led the woodland birds research team at the RSPB where he worked for 27 years. He is especially interested in the reasons behind the dramatic decline in Lesser Spot numbers. Ken is now busier than ever with his many responsibilities including being Chairman of Herts Bird Club, Herts County Bird Recorder and member of the BTO Council. We welcome him back to Maulden where he last addressed us on habitat management for Bitterns some 14 years ago.

**Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> November** ‘A Lane in Brazil’ by Mike Lane FRPS

Mike is a full time professional wildlife photographer specialising in birds and mammals both at home and abroad. He has visited Brazil several times including time spent in the amazing Pantanal region to see and photograph such specialities as the Hyacinth Macaw and the elusive Jaguar. You can be sure of an entertaining evening with top class images.

Don Green

**THE GARDEN BIRD FEEDING SURVEY – WINTER 2014/2015**

**Introduction**

For last winter we received details from (just) 68 gardens, the lowest since our winter surveys started. That was a drop of 13 gardens, or 16%, compared to the previous winter, with returns from urban gardens in particular dropping by 25%. Such a reduction will have affected some of the statistics, with those species that favour rural gardens (e.g. Green Woodpecker) seeming to have occurred in a higher percentage of the total gardens, whilst those species that favour urban gardens (e.g. Black-headed Gull) will seem to have occurred in a lower percentage of gardens. That situation should be kept in mind when looking at tables 2 and 3. For space reasons both Tables 2 and 3 have been restricted to show results for winters 2007/08 to 2014/15. Note also that in Table 2 there are some species (listed after Herring Gull) with zeros in the columns. Those species occurred in the previous winters to 2007/08 but not since.

TABLE 1  
AVERAGE NUMBER OF SPECIES PER GARDEN - WINTERS 2008/09 TO 2014/15

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Rural gardens	24.7	26.9	26.5	26.8	25.6	27.2	24.3	26.1
Urban gardens	20.4	21.7	20.6	21.4	20.1	23.3	18.1	19.1

The previous, mild, winter (2013/14) was most notable in that fewer birds were recorded in our gardens, but as can be seen in Table 1 the average number of species in rural and urban gardens for last winter reverted to a more ‘normal’ level. Moreover, the number of species in our gardens last winter increased too, with the total of 67 species equalling the previous highest, set in 2010/11.

As can be seen in Table 2, there were three species that were recorded in all participating gardens – Blackbird, Blue Tit and Robin. In addition, Dunnock, Chaffinch and Wood Pigeon were reported from all rural gardens. Species that were recorded in a higher proportion of the gardens since our winter survey started in 1993/94 were Carrion Crow, Jackdaw and Rook and, breaking the corvid monopoly, the Kingfisher. Species that occurred at a lower level than before included the Collared Dove and Mistle Thrush.

TABLE 2 PERCENTAGE THAT EACH SPECIES WAS RECORDED IN - WINTERS 2007/08 TO 2014/15									
position		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
		14/15	13/14	12/13	11/12	10/11	09/10	08/09	07/08
1st=	Blackbird	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
1st=	Blue Tit	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
1st=	Robin	100	100	100	100	100	99	100	100
4th	Wood Pigeon	99	99	99	99	100	99	100	100
5th=	Great Tit	97	100	99	99	100	98	100	97
5th=	Dunnock	97	99	99	100	99	99	97	100
5th=	Chaffinch	97	94	99	95	96	97	99	100
8th	Wren	94	81	90	93	89	91	97	95
9th	Collared Dove	91	93	92	92	92	93	95	95
10th=	Goldfinch	90	91	88	89	88	84	86	89
10th=	Magpie	90	88	92	92	89	92	93	92
12th	Greenfinch	85	83	83	91	88	91	95	91
13th=	Starling	84	84	91	88	92	92	92	93
13th=	Long-t Tit	84	84	92	88	90	82	86	73
15th	House Sparrow	81	79	85	84	82	81	84	85
16th	Coal Tit	79	64	74	69	84	68	83	66
17th	Sparrowhawk	68	69	65	64	71	66	62	73
18th	C Crow	62	51	55	53	56	54	58	57
19th	Gt Sp Woodpecker	60	53	66	48	59	56	53	55
20th=	Jackdaw	56	51	51	47	42	50	49	43
20th=	Song Thrush	56	46	65	64	68	78	80	76
22nd=	Blackcap	38	26	53	29	29	31	34	27
22nd=	Jay	38	17	44	24	29	22	38	19
24th	Green Woodpecker	37	26	34	39	35	44	36	34
25th=	C Pheasant	32	32	33	33	38	39	43	43
25th=	Pied Wagtail	32	23	47	39	73	57	51	44
27th	Redwing	28	30	43	53	48	61	43	27
28th	Bullfinch	26	16	23	25	21	20	23	16
29th	Goldcrest	25	27	40	29	29	17	44	24
30th	Rook	24	15	15	21	21	22	20	23
31st=	Nuthatch	19	11	21	12	15	7	14	9
31st=	Fieldfare	19	16	71	41	32	49	50	23
33rd	Stock Dove	18	16	19	16	9	9	5	8
34th=	Tawny Owl	16	12	13	19	11	12	13	9
34th=	Reed Bunting	16	11	26	18	18	18	12	7
36th	Grey Heron	15	10	14	12	16	21	19	15
37th=	Mistle Thrush	13	20	24	20	19	24	24	18
37th=	Grey Wagtail	13	11	12	11	16	6	8	13
39th=	Y'hammer	12	6	15	8	8	13	14	7
39th=	Common Buzzard	12	10	7	7	4	2	5	1
39th=	Red Kite	12	6	9	5	4	4	1	1
42nd=	Lesser Redpoll	10	9	24	13	11	8	5	3
42nd=	Feral Pigeon	10	15	19	9	15	12	10	9
42nd=	Treecreeper	10	2	6	7	13	3	9	5
42nd=	Chiffchaff	10	9	12	9	5	1	5	7
42nd=	Moorhen	10	6	10	11	13	10	9	9
47th=	Kestrel	7	6	9	11	8	10	13	9
47th=	Black H Gull	7	9	19	12	13	20	15	7
47th=	Kingfisher	7	4	1	1	3	2	3	2
50th=	Siskin	6	14	37	16	19	12	31	22
50th=	Mallard	6	6	3	6	10	4	8	7
52nd=	Marsh Tit	3	1	7	4	7	7	9	3
52nd=	Common Raven	3	0	2	1	0	0	0	0
52nd=	Tree Sparrow	3	0	5	5	8	2	1	2
55th=	Common Gull	1	1	3	0	1	3	1	0
55th=	Brambling	1	9	21	4	19	8	20	26
55th=	Little Egret	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
55th=	Red-l Partridge	1	2	2	4	4	1	2	3
55th=	Linnet	1	0	1	1	2	1	2	1
55th=	Little Owl	1	0	1	2	0	1	1	2
55th=	Waxwing	1	0	5	0	7	1	1	0
55th=	Little Grebe	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
55th=	R-ringed Parakeet	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
55th=	Mute Swan	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
55th=	Lesser B B Gull	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
55th=	House Martin	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
55th=	Yellow Wagtail	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 3 shows the ‘Top 20’ (actually 21) species that were the most frequent in our gardens. The frequency is calculated by taking the total number of weeks each species is recorded in and comparing that to the maximum possible total (i.e. 22 weeks x 68 gardens). Of the top 21 species two occurred more frequently in our gardens than ever before – the Goldfinch and Jackdaw, whilst the Greenfinch occurred at a lower frequency than before, a continuing source of concern.

TABLE 3 FREQUENCY OF OCCURENCE WINTERS 2007/08 TO 2014/15									
Position		14/15	13/14	12/13	11/12	10/11	09/10	08/09	07/08
1st	Blue Tit	92	89	91	91	94	94	91	90
2nd=	Blackbird	91	89	94	91	93	97	95	94
2nd=	Robin	91	84	91	86	89	93	92	90
4th	Wood Pigeon	89	87	91	87	90	91	86	86
5th	Great Tit	81	74	77	77	82	78	76	76
6th	Dunnock	79	72	77	77	81	84	82	79
7th	Chaffinch	71	69	77	71	75	77	77	79
8th	Collared Dove	66	64	68	69	68	76	76	75
9th	Goldfinch	61	57	59	54	56	58	55	49
10th=	House Sparrow	59	55	63	61	61	60	59	63
10th=	Magpie	59	51	53	51	53	59	57	51
12th	Starling	55	50	61	56	60	67	69	69
13th	Greenfinch	44	47	49	51	52	54	66	66
14th	Wren	37	22	32	37	31	34	40	43
15th	Coal Tit	36	24	32	28	42	33	44	29
16th	Jackdaw	32	22	24	22	21	25	21	19
17th	Long-tailed Tit	30	26	35	37	39	30	35	22
18th=	G S Woodpecker	22	20	27	21	25	24	27	22
18th=	Carriion Crow	22	19	20	23	23	24	26	24
20th=	Song Thrush	14	10	13	17	15	22	24	19
20th=	Jay	14	6	14	7	9	8	14	8

## **The Main Results**

### **Waterfowl, Game Birds, Herons, Raptors and Gulls**

The Mallard and Mute Swan were the only wildfowl species reported from our gardens last winter, the former at about the average showing and the Mute Swan from just one garden. The Pheasant dropped out of our ‘Top 20’ most frequent garden visitors, although it appeared in 32% of the gardens last winter. As usual, just about hanging on as a garden visitor, is the Red-legged Partridge, last winter featuring in just one of the gardens covered.

The Grey Heron appeared in 15% of gardens last winter, the highest since the winter of 2010/11 and, like the previous winter, Stefan Baltruschat managed to attract a Little Egret to his Henlow garden.

Sparrowhawks are the most widely-reported raptor in our gardens, last winter from 68% of those covered. Three other raptors appear in our list for last winter - Kestrel, Red Kite and Common Buzzard.

The Black-headed Gull, from 7% of gardens, and as usual much preferring urban gardens, was at the lowest level since 2007/08, with the Common Gull and Lesser Black-backed Gull reported from just one garden each.

## **Pigeons, Owls, Kingfisher, Woodpeckers and Crows**

For the last four winters the Wood Pigeon has been recorded from 99% of all gardens in our survey, and it has not been lower than that level since 2006/07. As Table 3 shows, it was our fourth most frequent garden visitor. As already mentioned, the Collared Dove appeared in only 91% of gardens last winter, the lowest level since 1994/95. Garden appearances of the Stock Dove have stabilised at a new high level, with the average for the last four winters about double that of the previous four. I still cannot attract them into my Woburn garden however, although during the summer months I can hear them singing close by. The result for the Feral Pigeon dropped considerably, but that in part might have been as a result of fewer urban gardens covered last winter.

Two owl species appear in the results for last winter, the Tawny in 16% of gardens and the Little Owl in just one. The Kingfisher, for a few lucky garden owners, appeared in the highest percent of gardens since our survey started.

The Great Spotted Woodpecker was recorded in more gardens than in the previous winter, and was more frequent too, thus retaining its place in our 'Top 20' garden visitors. The results for the Green Woodpecker also showed an increase, not to unprecedented levels, but I suspect partly due to the change in the mix of gardens covered last winter.

For the Magpie the results have stayed remarkably consistent over the last eight winters, appearing between 88% and 93% of the gardens. It also remains in the 'Top 20' most frequent garden visitors, last winter at the highest level since 2009/10. Corvids seemed to do rather well in our gardens last winter, with the Carrion Crow, Jackdaw and Rook all appearing in a higher percentage of gardens than ever before. Even the Jay, which in the previous winter had taken a tumble, recovered to a higher level, and also sneaked in to the 'Top 20' most frequent visitors.

## **Goldcrest, Tits and Warblers**

The Goldcrest appeared in 25% of our gardens last winter, another fall after the large drop in the previous winter. Typically, they much preferred rural gardens.

The Blue Tit is one of our most familiar garden species, found in all surveyed gardens for the last eight winters. It was also, last winter, our most frequent garden visitor. The Great Tit was missing from one rural and one urban garden, but the level of frequency was still rather high. Appearances of the Long-tailed Tit held at the same level of gardens as the previous winter, with the frequency slightly up. After a big drop in results in the previous winter, the Coal Tit bounced back, and was found in the highest proportion of gardens and the highest frequency since 2010/11.

Results for the Blackcap tend to be rather erratic, last winter showing in 38% of gardens, a large increase compared to the previous winter, and although not at a record level, that was a much higher level than average. It much prefers urban gardens, presumably because of the slightly better micro-climate that those gardens offer.

## **Wren, Starling and Thrushes**

After a very disappointing set of results in the previous winter, the Wren showed at much better levels. In terms of the proportion of gardens it was at the highest level since 2008/09, and in terms of frequency the highest since 2011/12.

The result for the Starling (in 84% of gardens) was the same as the previous winter, but that was at the lowest level since our survey started, 22 winters ago, so there is no sign of any improvement.

After a fairly disastrous showing in the previous winter, the Song Thrush recovered somewhat, but was still well below previous levels. They were recorded from 73% of rural gardens, but from less than 30% of gardens in urban sites, and from none of those for more than six of the weeks in the survey period.

The Blackbird has been recorded in all gardens covered by our survey for the last nine winters, and last winter it was the second most frequent visitor. By comparison the results for the Mistle Thrush were something of a disaster, and in only 13% of gardens was the lowest since our winter surveys started. Again it was almost entirely absent from urban gardens, appearing in just one of those.

Over the total survey period, statistics for the two winter thrushes have been very erratic, and for both the Redwing and Fieldfare the results were on the low side for last winter.

The Robin was reported from all gardens last winter, with the frequency back to where we would expect it.

### **Dunnock, Sparrows and Wagtails**

The Dunnock was recorded from all rural gardens, but was missing from two of the urban gardens. The overall frequency though, returned to the pre-2013/14 levels.

Results for the House Sparrow seemed to have stabilised, both in terms of the percentage of gardens and the frequency, but at lower levels than earlier years. As we've mentioned before, they show a preference for urban gardens. After a complete absence in the previous winter, the Tree Sparrow was reported from two of the gardens. Better than nothing I suppose.

One of the biggest drops during the previous winter was for the Pied Wagtail, and although results for last winter show an improvement, they were still well below the levels of previous winters. As in the 2013/14 winter it was almost absent from urban gardens, appearing in just two of those. Over the last five winters the garden appearances of the Grey Wagtail have been rather stable, one for Lawrence Jarrett in Luton being a garden first for him.

### **Finches**

The most widespread finch in our gardens remains the Chaffinch, last winter occurring in 97% of the total number of gardens, and in all gardens in rural areas. The frequency, however, remains lower compared to previous winters.

By comparison, one of the big success stories remains the Goldfinch. After the record high level of 91% of gardens in the previous winter, it still reached 90%. It was also at the highest level of frequency since our winter surveys began (and thus remains more frequent than House Sparrow and Starling). Stefan Baltruschat, in Henlow, had up to 60 roosting in his garden during January and February. The Bullfinch also showed rather better last winter, in 26% of gardens being the highest since 1999/00. Not such a happy tale for the Greenfinch, and although the percentage of gardens in which it appeared increased slightly, the frequency dropped to a new record low.

Of our winter finches, Siskins were very scarce in our gardens last winter, appearing in just 6% (compared to 37% in 2012/13!). Bramblings too, were almost completely absent, appearing in just one of the gardens covered. Lesser Redpolls appeared in 10% of gardens, about average for the previous ten winters.

## Summary

Typically, there was a mix of highs and lows, with generally those species that are struggling having failed to make any sort of improved showing, but with those species doing rather better being able to strengthen their situation.

As recently as 2006/07 we received 106 replies for our winter survey, and after 22 continuous winters of recording our garden birds, it was rather disappointing that a much smaller number of observers took part, but for those that did once again we thank them for their tremendous and continued enthusiasm. We look forward to receiving your feedback for future winters. For those that receive *The Hobby* by mail the survey form for next winter will be included. Otherwise you can retrieve the survey form on the Bird Club website. If you have difficulty in finding it, then please contact me by email ([barrynightingale154@btinternet.com](mailto:barrynightingale154@btinternet.com)) and I will forward a copy to you.

Barry Nightingale

## ENJOY AN UNRIVALLED SCIENCE EXPERIENCE AT THE MUSEUM AFTER-HOURS



Nothing compares to talking to a world expert face-to-face and for one night only on Friday 25 September, the Natural History Museum at Tring will give visitors a rare opportunity to do just that at the annual *Science Uncovered* event.

Part of European Researchers' Night, the annual free adult event gives the public the chance to get up close with the Museum's scientists, as well as its scientific treasures that are rarely on public display. Museum curators will be on hand to unravel some of the mysteries surrounding these specimen treasures and explain how they are contributing to vital research today.

*Science Uncovered* is your chance to discover what goes on behind-the-scenes at the Museum, learn more about the life of researchers and curators and find out new and exciting facts about the world we live in.

This year's event will include:

- **Presentations and talks** from our scientists and visiting experts on a variety of topics from **the Quest for the Tasmanian Tiger** to species under threat of extinction showcasing **some of the rarest specimens**, and **John Gilbert of Never Never**, the enigmatic English explorer-naturalist who discovered more than 8% of the birds and mammals in Australia
- An up-close encounter with specimens from the **national bird collection** and books from the **Rothschild library**
- A **live demonstration** on how skins are prepared for use in the Museum's collections.
- **Live streaming** of presentations from the *Science Uncovered* event at the Natural History Museum in London.
- **The Quadrangle Bar** where Tring Brewery beers, local ciders, soft drinks and snacks will be available to purchase.

Come and ask your burning scientific questions, enjoy stimulating chats with our world-class scientists and discover the important science that goes on behind the scenes every day over a drink in the historic galleries.

### Visitor information

**Address:** The Natural History Museum at Tring,  
The Walter Rothschild Building,  
Akeman Street, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 6AP

**Dates and times:** 25 September 2015, 18.00–22.00

**Admission:** **Free** (tickets not required)

**Access:** There is lift access throughout the public areas of the Museum

**Visitor enquiries:** 020 7942 6163

**Nearest train station:** Tring

**Website:** [www.nhm.ac.uk/whats-on/science-uncovered](http://www.nhm.ac.uk/whats-on/science-uncovered)

### DUNSTABLE SEWAGE TREATMENT WORKS NEST BOX USE REPORT 2015.

A better year for the Blue Tits inhabiting the nest boxes on the Dunstable Sewage Treatment Works but a very disappointing year for the Great Tits. The initial use of 47 of the 54 boxes (9 new for 2015) - 87% - was encouraging compared with the 70% & 67% of 2014 & 2013 respectively. However only 33 of them went on to having completed nests totalling in the region of 240 eggs (208 in 2012 - 167 in 2013 & 192 in 2014), average clutch size of 7.27 was down on 2014 (7.68) and 2013 (7.95) but the increased number of boxes from which young birds fledged, 28 (21 in 2014) increased the total number of birds fledging. Of these 28, 16 were used by Blue Tits, fledging 127 young birds, 11 were used by Great Tits, fledging 57 and for the first year 6 Robins fledged from an open fronted box. On the down side 1 nest was deserted with 5 well advanced Blue Tits and 4 others youngsters were found dead after their siblings had departed. Great Tits had a really bad time for some unknown reason with 3 nests deserted with 7, 7 & 6 young with a further 9 dead in nests from which others had fledged. 10 unhatched Blue Tits eggs and 2 Great Tits eggs were found in vacated nests



12 half grown Blue Tits



Robin on nest in well fortified predator proof nest box.

**Final overall summary:**

28 boxes hatched 226 young birds, 190 fledged, 36 died prior to fledging (21 in 2014 & 45 in 2013), 12 unhatched (dead) eggs (22 in 2014 & 21 in 2013) total. These records will be submitted to BTO as part of the "National Nest Record Scheme".

**Historical details:**

2009 - 76 fledged (28 boxes on site); 2010 - 125 (34 bos); 2011 - 158 (45 bos); 2012 - 167 (45 bos); 2013 - 83 (45 bos); 2014 - 130 (45 bos); 2015 - 190 (54 bos). **Overall total c929.**



At least six well grown Great Tits: almost ready to leave "home"



Six young Robins doing well in their 'caged' home (see above)

**\*Please note!** Dunstable Sewage Treatment Works is a private site – permit holders only – however assess can be obtained on the first Sunday of the month from 08:00 until noon except for November to February inclusive when it will open at 9.00 am. Park in Birdwatchers' car park inside the main gate off Thorn Road TL003243.

To contact the Honorary Warden, Rob Dazley, call 07719 700512

**NEW MEMBERS**

We would like to welcome Brett Dawson from Sharnbrook to the Beds Bird Club

We hope you will enjoy many years of membership with us.

Mary Sheridan

**50 YEARS AGO - LITTLE EGRET**

The following comment comes from the Bird Report of 1965:

“A Little Egret at one of the Heath and Reach Sand Pits on 5<sup>th</sup> June was the rarest species seen during the year “

**IMAGES BY:**

Neil Wright: Pied Flycatcher  
Steve Blain: Wood Sandpiper

# opticon

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*The Bedfordshire Bird Club is the ornithological section of the Bedfordshire Natural History Society  
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