



THE HOBBY

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the May edition of The Hobby.

This month we update some of the activities of the Bird Club with some information on work that has been done by our Records and Research Committee and notes on some surveys where your help would be valued in 2019. As is usual for this time of year, we would also ask that all records of our scarcer breeding birds are shared (privately with the recorder if preferred) in order that we can continue to monitor and share vital data. As I write, the first Spotted Flycatchers and second record of Turtle Dove have come to us so all summer visitors are now arrived.

Good birding to all...

Andy Grimsey

PROGRAMME MATTERS

Outdoor summer program continues with two day trips in the next few months.

Firstly, a day trip to Attenborough NR near Nottingham on Sunday 9th June and then in July, a day trip to The Great Fen on Sunday 14th.

Closer to home a joint meeting with the BNHS will take place on the evening of Wednesday 12th June at Sandy Smith NR near Clophill.

All details are in our program and on the website at bedsbirdclub.org.uk

Contact can also be made to Kevin Sharpe for making arrangements on 07827 440394

We trust you enjoyed last year's winter indoor program and we are pleased to let you know that we have completed the line-up of some quality speakers for the 2019-2020 season starting on September 24th. First details will be shared in the next version of The Hobby.

MARCH – APRIL 2019 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.

March 2019

Whooper Swan – the seven birds from January still present in fields near Southill Lake on 7th. Party of eight (four ad, four juv) at Chimney Corner North on 23rd

Brent Goose – one near Broom GP on 9th

Ruddy Shelduck – pair, presumably the same that had been seen in late 2018 were again on Millenium County Park on the Pillinge on 11th



Common Scoter – three at Stewartby on 27th, also noted on nocmig in the last week of the month

Bittern – one sound recorded in nocturnal migration over Biggleswade on 25th

Great White Egret – one around the brick pits and probably another around Priory/Willington reported regularly through the month. One over Broom on 20th, another at Tiddenfoot 29th

Great Northern Diver – two birds from the start of the year still present at Stewartby Lake on 31st

Osprey – one heading northwards over Quest Pit 31st

Marsh Harrier – occasional reports from brick pits continue, one over Broom 30th

Little Ringed Plover – Grovebury 17th, one at Broom GLE 19th, two at Chimney Corner Nth on 23rd, four on 26th

Ringed Plover – two at Broom 19th and three there on 20th, one Grovebury 31st

Curlew – two in Chimney Corner Nth on 26th

Bar-tailed Godwit – Broom GLE 1st

Black-tailed Godwit – Broom GLE 19th

Dunlin – one at Broom 1st, one at Chimney Corner North on 2nd, one Grovebury 31st

Mediterranean Gull – one at Broom GLE 11th, first summer at G&M Pits 20th

Yellow-legged Gull – one Chimney Corner Nth 31st

Kittiwake – one at Stewartby 13th

Short-eared Owl – one at Cardington on 23rd

Wheatear – two at Blows Downs on 22nd were the first reported, four were there on 31st

Stonechat – one at Blows Downs 1st, wintering bird continued from Feb at Brogborough Tip until 2nd at least, one at Barton on 10th, one at Pegsdon on 17th and another at Wilden on 20th

Firecrest – one at The Lodge 15th

Chiffchaff – one resembling tristis at Bedford STW on 26th

April 2019

Great White Egret – one around Leighton Buzzard from 1st at least seen at Ledburn GP. Another again around Priory CP reported 10th at least

White Stork – one over Grovebury SP 10th

Bittern – at least one booming occasionally in the brick pits

Shelduck – five at Chimney Corner North on 22nd

Garganey – male at Priory on 3rd, one on 15th and eleven at Broom GP on 16th (eight drakes and three ducks)

Common Scoter – four at Stewartby 10th

Great Northern Diver – one still at Stewartby to 28th at least
Hen Harrier – one ringtail near Cople 2nd
Osprey – one over Broom GLE 8th
Hobby – first near Willington 15th
Little Ringed Plover – two at Broom GLE 2nd, nine around the brick pits 6th, four at MVCP 28th
Ringed Plover – two at Broom GP 9th, two at Chimney Corner North on 11th, five at MVCP and two at Chimney Corner North on 28th
Dunlin – one at Chimney Corner North on 6th and 11th, five Broom 8th, two Wixams 17th, Grovebury 20th
Turnstone – one at Chimney Corner North on 28th
Sanderling – one at Chimney Corner North on 22nd
Ruff – one at Meadow Lane 1st, one Chimney Corner North 9th
Curlew – Chimney Corner north 14th, pair returned to southwest of county
Whimbrel – one over Blows Down 14th, two at Grovebury 20th, one on 22nd
Black-tailed Godwit – one at Chimney Corner North on 22nd, one at Broom 24th
Bar-tailed Godwit – two at Grovebury on 30th
Common Sandpiper – one at Stewartby 24th, one at MVCP 28th
Green Sandpiper – one at Chimney Corner South on 19th – 23rd, one also at Broom on 23rd
Spotted Redshank – one at Grovebury 20th
Greenshank – one Broom GP GLE 16th, two at Wixams 18th, two at Grovebury 20th, one at Chimney Corner North 24th, one each at Broom GLE and Chimney Corner North on 30th
Caspian Gull – 1st winter at Stewartby 12th
Little Gull – Stewartby 5th then fifteen on 8th and five on 9th, one on 10th, 23 at Grovebury SP on 8th, one Broom GP 8th, two at Priory on 9th, one Southill Lake 10th, 15 at Priory on 22nd
Black Tern – one at Stewartby 25th
Common Tern – first two Stewartby 5th and two at Broom GP on same date
Arctic Tern – one at Grovebury SP 8th, one Stewartby 9th and another 28th, at least three at Priory on 22nd
Short-eared Owl – Broom GLE pits on four dates from 1st to 8th, two Brogborough Tip 10th



Turtle Dove – a pair returned to Marston Thrift from 28th

Swift – first reported at Meadow Lane/Priory on 23rd
Sand Martin – 100 at Broom GP on 4th and c500 at Stewartby on 2nd and 4th
House Martin – two at East Hyde on 1st, one Eversholt 2nd were first reported
Swallow – odd singletons around on 1st, 2nd, 3rd were first reported

Water Pipit – at least two at Broom GP 13th and one on 14th
Yellow Wagtail – two at Broom GP 8th were first reported
White Wagtail – two at Chimney Corner North on 23rd, one at Broom 27th
Willow Warbler – one at Millenium CP and two near Toddington on 1st were first reported
Wood Warbler – one reported from The Lodge on 30th
Grasshopper Warbler – birds from mid-month at Sandy Smith NR, and three sites in the brick pits
Reed Warbler – first on 17th at Priory
Stonechat – male on Blows Down 16th
Nightingale – first on 17th at Chimney Corner South, at least two at Stewartby from 18th, at least seven around brick pits complex on 19th
Redstart – one at Blows Down 7th, maybe the same 9th, one at Potton and another at Knocking Hoe both on 12th
Black Redstart – one reported at Pegsdon 10th
Ring Ouzel – Blows Down 2nd, 3rd, 5th, 10th, 11th(2), 14th (1), 16th (3). Knocking Hoe 7th, 9th (2), 10th (3), 14th (2), Pegsdon 14th (2), Willington 15th, Biggleswade Common 17th, Henlow Grange 18th (patch tick for Roger !), Warden Hill Luton on 20th & 21st (2), Bison Hill had five on 25th
Tree Sparrow – pair at potential nest site near Biggleswade 26th

Observers:

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

REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE RECORDS AND RESEARCH COMMITTEE 2018

Recording rare breeding species.

Members were asked to specifically record fifteen species on the Bedfordshire Red List of Breeding Birds:

Common Pochard	Eurasian Bittern	Northern Lapwing	Ringed Plover
Eurasian Curlew	Turtle Dove	Common Cuckoo	European Nightjar
Ls Sp Woodpecker	Woodlark	Grasshopper Warbler	Spotted Flycatcher
Common Nightingale	Tree Sparrow	Tree Pipit	

Data analysis and monitoring of rare breeding birds.

Data for rare breeding birds has been analysed in order to keep documents and systems up to date. As a result, the list of *Rare Breeding Birds in Bedfordshire* and *Breeding Bird Indices by Habitat* will be updated and formally adopted. The monitoring of key breeding species will be documented via an annual report; *The State of Red Listed Breeding Birds in Bedfordshire*. The report will show the state of each species; i.e. the number of sites where species were recorded and whether they are declining or increasing. This will be achieved by extracting information from *British Birds*, BTO *Breeding Bird Survey* reports and *Bedfordshire Bird Reports*.

BTO Surveys; the Tawny Owl Point Survey.

Breeding Bird Survey data indicates that the population of Tawny Owl has declined. It is hoped that surveys will secure better information about the habitat requirements of Tawny Owls and their

breeding numbers and provide a strong link-up between regional and national patterns. Participants were asked to make two visits to a survey square and listen for Tawny Owls for a period of 20 minutes.

Broom West - Lakes; County Wildlife Site (CWS).

The analysis of ornithological data proved that the site meets the following Wildlife Site bird criteria:

- Breeding birds: Lowland Open Water and Margins.
- Winter wetland birds other than waders.
- Winter waders.
- Passage wetland species.

As a result, the site was formally recognised as a County Wildlife Site (CWS).

Broom East CWS. Tarmac: 20 Year Biodiversity Management Plan.

A Biodiversity Management Plan (Andrews Ecology, 2017) was formally agreed by Central Bedfordshire Council on 4th September. Key objectives in the plan are:

- **Pipe-sluice and water levels.** The sluice will enable winter water levels to rise to the 31m AOD contour during the winter, and help drown some of the encroaching vegetation in the base of the pit.
- **Fencing and grazing.** The whole site has been fenced and a local grazier has been found. Signs to prevent public access and safeguard Little Ringed Plovers (Schedule 1 species) have been erected.
- **Scrub and ruderal vegetation.** The south basin will be grazed. Invasive willow will need to be controlled, either by grazing, cutting or by chemical treatment under licence from the Environment Agency. An area (c.1.5ha) was cut in December and should prove to be suitable for breeding Lapwing and Redshank.
- **Islands for scarce breeding waders.** Three gravel-topped 'islands' were constructed in September as a potential breeding habitat for breeding waders.
- **Management meetings.** The first annual management meeting was held on 17th December and management work agreed for the next twelve months. Management Plan objectives meetings will be held every five years, to assess if the management plan is working. If it is not, then changes will be made.

Planning application responses.

Application: CB/18/01252/MW. Broom Quarry South, Hitchin Road, Broom, Biggleswade. SG18 9LB.

Proposal: Extraction of sand and gravel as a northern extension to Broom South Quarry, retention and use of existing processing plant and related infrastructure.

Bird Surveys; Pleydell Smithyman Ltd (September 2017).

A total of 50 breeding bird species were identified during the 2016 surveys; 13 species were Red Listed and 8 species were Amber Listed. The results clearly showed that the site is of District Importance for breeding birds associated with arable farmland. A total of 51 bird species were identified during the 2016-17 winter surveys; 12 Red Listed species and 10 Amber Listed species. All the bird species will be impacted – displaced, suffer the loss of habitats – by the proposed quarry works.

Recommendations and Mitigation Measures.

Recommendations for habitat mitigation and creation were submitted, stating that new habitats should be included in the restoration and future management of the site, post-extraction:

- Boundary hedgerows and vegetation should be retained where possible.
- Hedgerows should be managed to create thick (dense) hedges of varying heights, up to 2 metres tall.
- New hedges should be planted.
- Rough grassland should be created.
- Six metre wide, permanent grass/wild flower field margins should be created.
- Wild bird seed mixtures should be sown adjacent to the areas of rough grassland.
- A belt of new woodland – using native species only - should be planted along the northern boundary of the site.
- Areas of new scrub should be created, using native species only.
- Two new waterbodies are proposed; a recreational (fishing) lake and a conservation (wildlife) lake. Both lakes will have islands - several in each lake – which should support birds during both the breeding season and winter months.
- The structure – profile - and future management (willow and reed cutting) of these lakes is vitally important.
- The creation of wet meadow grassland along the north-east boundary. Again, future management – preferably grazing – is vitally important.
- Bird boxes, including a Barn Owl box, should be erected around the site.

A response was sent to Central Bedfordshire Council, stating that BBC supports the proposed mitigation and habitat proposals and additional advice was given on species to be planted, the management of wetland habitats, the construction of gravel-topped islands, grazing, controlling dogs, site monitoring, and future management.

Graham R. Goodall, Honorary Research Officer.

SWIFT SURVEY – CONTINUES 2019

The Swift survey which started with the BTO House Martin survey of 2015 continues in 2019 as the species is now included on the Birds of Conservation Concern amber list. We would like to continue collecting information on where birds are breeding in the county. The recording form is located on the website at <http://bedsbirdclub.org.uk/house-martin-survey/>

SEABIRDS COUNT: BRITAIN AND IRELAND'S 4TH BREEDING SEABIRD CENSUS

URBAN NESTING GULL SURVEYS

Since 1969 there have been periodic censuses of breeding seabirds in Britain and Ireland. The last census was completed in 2002; due to the time that has passed, it is important another survey takes place. Seabirds Count was developed by the Seabird Monitoring Programme (SMP) partnership and is being coordinated by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC). Its goal is to gather vital data on the breeding numbers of seabirds, with the aim of understanding how distributions and populations have changed. Survey work started in 2015 and aims to be completed by the end of the 2020 breeding season.

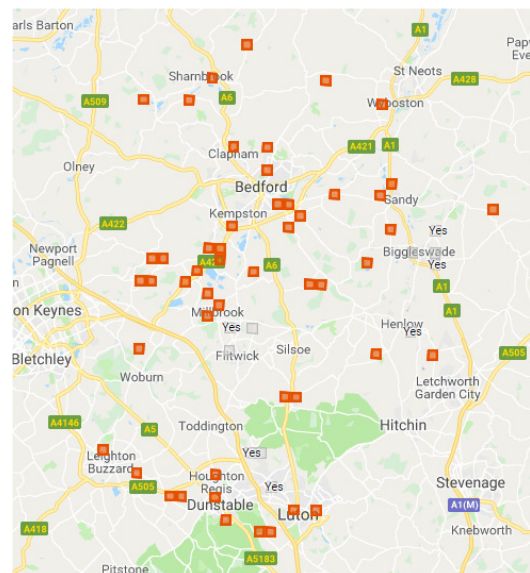
As part of the Seabirds Count census, volunteers across the whole of the UK will be participating in surveys of breeding seabirds during the spring/summer months of 2019 and 2020. During these

seasons (late March – mid June) there will be surveys of urban nesting gulls, taking place in many of our towns and cities. These urban surveys will play a vital role in understanding how the UK population of both Herring and Lesser Black-backed gulls are faring. Herring gull numbers in natural breeding sites such as cliffs, rocky coasts and moorland declined by a 3rd between 1986 and 2015. By conducting surveys of urban nesting gulls, we can understand whether these declines at natural sites are a product of these birds moving into urban areas, or if the declines are more widespread. Volunteers will mainly be using two types of survey method, one will be surveying roof tops from a vantage point, the other will be from the ground. These surveys will only happen once at each site, unless the surveyor perceives there to be an issue with the initial count.

Our contribution:

We need volunteers to survey nesting large gulls in urban areas of Bedfordshire. There are a large number of squares to cover but they are prioritised so the top ones are the highest priority. They are a mixture of locations, from Bedford, Luton, Dunstable, to smaller towns such as Biggleswade.

If you can help by doing a quick survey for large gulls within the next month we would be very grateful. The full picture of squares to cover is in the map here and there is a selection for which volunteers are still requested. Please contact Steve Blain if you are interesting in helping with this as he can advise further on the remaining availability of squares and where particular help would be appreciated. Thank you !



SPONSORSHIP OF BNHS AND BIRD CLUB ACTIVITIES

Both BNHS and the Bird Club have benefited over several years from generous sponsorship by Opticron, the suppliers of optical instruments and the One Stop Nature Shop, retailer of supplies for entomologists and birders. Both organisations are keen to support our activities and in return we offer them promotional opportunities such as advertisements and links to their websites. You may have also noticed in the back page of the recent 2017 Bird Report two colour adverts; one from Wildlife Travel, the other Sunbird Tours. All of this publicity helps to bring valuable income into the Society. If you decide to purchase any products from these suppliers please let them know that you are members of either BNHS or the Bird Club and that you were attracted to them as a result of their adverts or sponsorship. We hope that this will encourage them to continue their support for us.

Mike Bird, BNHS Hon. Treasurer

NEW MEMBERS

We would like to welcome the following new members to the Beds Bird Club:

Simon Brown, Houghton Regis
Mike and Olive Maunder, Biggleswade
Keith Smith, Bromham
Nicky Stewart, Luton

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

Mary Sheridan, Membership Secretary

IMAGES BY:

Martin Green: Ruddy Shelduck in flight
Peter Tomlinson: Turtle Dove

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