



THE HOBBY

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PROGRAMME MATTERS

Welcome to the October 2021 edition of The Hobby. Feels really autumnal today, windy and wet and clearly winter just around the corner with plenty of our migrants having arrived and no sign of any summer visitors any more.

We are pleased to share details of our winter program of talks which will remain on Zoom for the foreseeable future while concern remains about the on-going status of Covid infections. We continue to consider the requirements that we would need to put in place to safeguard our members as part of any indoor meeting should we have the opportunity to organise a face-to-face event.

Once again this year our program is kindly sponsored by Opticron.

Tuesday October 26th 2021 – “Yunnan” presented by Jeff Bilncow. A Zoom meeting and the First of our Winter Programme.

This talk highlights the superb birds seen on a trip to south-west China in the winter. Yunnan has a varied landscape with snow-capped mountains, lakes, deep gorges and rich sub-tropical forest in the south. At first, visiting in winter would appear an unusual idea, but the lowland forests along the Burmese border hold a strong resident avifauna and the region is the wintering ground for migrants from nearly all points of the compass.

Jeff Blincow has been lecturing on wildlife since 1980 on such topics as Ecuador, New Zealand, Australia and bird families. He has travelled widely and his focus on South America in the 1990s led him to be one of the founder committee members of the Neotropical Bird Club.

Tuesday November 30th 2021 - Raptor Persecution by Mark Thomas.

Perhaps the most persecuted family of birds, raptors are facing tough times as their very existence is seen by some as a threat to habitats managed for hunting. Mark Thomas takes us on a journey through the varied and often challenging work of the RSPB Investigations Team.

Mark is a Senior Investigations Officer at the RSPB, setting up protection schemes for rare breeding birds like Bee-eaters and also investigating wildlife crime and catching raptor killers. Away from work, Mark spends most weekends on the Yorkshire coast at his birding and ringing site at Buckton. Mark is fascinated by weather and migration

Tuesday December 21st 2021 - Christmas Meeting and Review of the Year by Chairman Richard Bashford. Join us for virtual mulled wine and mince pies with Richard's annual film show detailing the many avian highlights of the year. Please do send Richard your footage for inclusion in this excellent ongoing project. Please email him at ribashford@gmail.com

If you are interested in attending the talks, please send an email to Peter Nash who is co-ordinating the setup of the Zoom at peternash2@sky.com to confirm. Peter will then send you a personal acknowledgement. Then all you need to do is to look out for the joining instructions email. We only have capacity for 100 participants (screens), so please book as early as possible to avoid any possible disappointment.

Future dates for 2022 will be 25th January, 22nd February and 29th March. We may have an extra talk put in to the programme if the opportunity arises.

We hope you continue enjoy your birding in this continuing difficult period. Stay safe...

JULY – SEPTEMBER 2021 BIRD NEWS

July 2021

Garganey - one at Broom East CWS on 10th and 11th

Pintail - female reported from MCP Wetlands NR on 12th, 23rd and 24th

Quail - two reported calling from wheat fields during the month, near Maulden and Shillington

Alpine Swift - second for the county was over Broom East CWS briefly on 5th,



Ringed Plover - birds at Broom East CWS on 1st, Black Cat GP on 7th and Rookery South CIP from 20th to the end of the month

Whimbrel - recorded over Meppershall on “nocmig” on 12th

Curlew - four over Southill on 25th, three flew over Brogborough Hill on 30th and one over Sharpenhoe Clappers on 31st

Black-tailed Godwit - recorded at Broom East CWS from 5th to 10th including a group of 12 on 8th, singles at Grovebury on 6th, 20th and 29th, three at Dunstable STW on 9th

Turnstone - one at Grovebury SP on 19th

Dunlin - one at Broom East CWS on 7th, one at Grovebury SP on 18th, and another at Rookery South CIP on 22nd

Greenshank - one at Broom South Quarry on 13th

Caspian Gull - an adult at Rookery South CIP on various dates from 11th to end of the month, up to eight different individuals at Grovebury SP during the month

Yellow-legged Gull - reported at Grovebury SP throughout the month with a minimum of 19 on 16th

Cattle Egret - one near Marston Moretaine on 16th

Great White Egret - two at Rookery South CIP on 22nd

Peregrine - bred in Luton Town Centre again this year, unfortunately the two young did not survive after successfully fledging

Grasshopper Warbler - two interesting records suggesting some movement. One reeling on 23rd at a site north of Barton-le-Clay where birds have been heard in previous years but had not been located in April and May, one reeling at East Hyde on 24th was noted as only the third record for the site.

Whinchat - early returning migrants at Tetworth on 18th and Houghton Brook Pools on 21st

Stonechat - three young fledged from a nest in the south of the county. Otherwise recorded at Henlow on 9th and Gadsey Brook on 25th

Wheatear - one at Rookery South CIP on 20th

Crossbill - five near Pottton on 23rd

August 2021

Ruddy Shelduck - one at Broom South Quarry on 14th, five at Stewartby Lake on 21st

Goosander - three roosted at Broom South Quarry on 12th and 13th

Avocet - one at Dunstable STW on 27th and 28th

Ringed Plover - singles at Rookery South CIP on 7th and 21st with four there on 30th, one at Brogborough Tip on 21st, three at Grovebury SP on 29th

Whimbrel - a group of nine flew over Brogborough Hill on 7th, one sound recorded over Meppershall on 10th and three near Felmersham on 17th

Black-tailed Godwit - eight at Grovebury SP on 1st, one at Broom East CWS on 1st and 3rd, another on 11th, eleven on 18th; two at Rookery South CIP on 18th and 21st, a group of four more through Broom East CWS on 23rd

Knot - one at Grovebury SP on 12th

Ruff - one in Rookery South CIP on 28th to 30th, one at Grovebury SP on 31st

Dunlin - one at Rookery South CIP on 7th was watched being taken by a Peregrine, two at Grovebury SP on 20th and 26th, another there on 29th

Spotted Redshank - one at Broom East CWS on 13th, three at Dunstable STW on 28th

Greenshank - a good passage in the second half of the month with birds noted in the month at Broom East CWS, Dunstable STW, Grovebury SP, Meadow Lane GP, Pottton, Rookery South CIP and Toddington Services Pools

Green Sandpiper - five together in MCP Wetlands NR and up to seven at Dunstable STW were good counts

Wood Sandpiper - one at Grovebury SP on 9th

Turnstone - one at Grovebury SP on 6th, another on 20th

Mediterranean Gull - perhaps as many as eight different birds were seen at Grovebury SP during the month including seven noted in a roost there on 21st

Caspian Gull - two roosted at Grovebury SP on 6th, an adult on 7th and a juvenile on 12th at Broom South Quarry, an adult in Rookery South CIP from start of month until 13th, a first-summer at Grovebury SP on 23rd

Yellow-legged Gull - a peak count of 22 at Grovebury SP on 12th

Cattle Egret - one at Broom East CWS on 5th

Spoonbill - a juvenile at Grovebury SP on 23rd

Swift - a flock of 350 moved south over Galley Hill Luton in advance of a storm cloud on 1st

Marsh Harrier - one near Upper Caldecotte on 6th, another at Henlow Grange on 11th, one at Meadow Lane GP on 18th and another at Quest Pit on 28th

Osprey - one over Langford on 7th, one over Broom East CWS on 11th, another over John O'Gaunt GC on 26th

Whinchat - birds reported at Poppy Hill from 25th with a maximum of six on 28th, three near Potton on 29th, at least eight at Sandy Heath on 30th. Birds also noted in the month at Pegsdon Hills, Brogborough Tip, Upper Caldecotte (2) and Houghton Brook Pools



Redstart - birds at Galley Hill on 1st, and 22nd, Brogborough Hill on 7th, 12th, 21st, 25th and 29th, Eaton Bray, Renhold and Potton on 29th, Streatley and Sandy Heath on 30th, three females on Galley Hill on 30th. Photo by Andy Grimsey

Pied Flycatcher - one at Coopers Hill on 23rd to 26th

Spotted Flycatcher - four in Little Staughton on 11th, one at Galley Hill on 22nd, one at Pegsdon Hills and two by the Gatehouse of The Lodge RSPB noted on 23rd, eight around Coopers Hill on 26th, groups of four in both Ampthill Park and near Potton on 29th, one at Galley Hill on 30th

Tree Pipit - two sound recorded over Meppershall on 27th, one over Luton and two over Eaton Bray on 29th on visible migration watches

September 2021

Black-necked Grebe - one at Priory CP on 25th

Garganey - a juvenile at MCP Wetlands NR from 21st - 24th

Pintail - one female at MCP Wetlands NR from the start of the month to 15th at least and an eclipse male there also on 22nd - 24th

Goosander - two at Henlow 24th, perhaps same as roosted at Broom Quarry same day

Ringed Plover - one at Rookery South CIP on 4th, one at Grovebury SP on 5th, one at Broom East CWS on 12th, two on 14th

Black-tailed Godwit - one at MCP Wetlands NR on 2nd

Ruff - one at Dunstable STW on 13th to 16th

Sanderling - one at Grovebury SP on 3rd

Dunlin - three at Grovebury SP on 3rd, two on 5th, four there on 6th and 7th, three on 9th. Elsewhere just one at Black Gat GP on 4th

Pectoral Sandpiper - an adult at Grovebury on 17th and another, a juvenile, at Brogborough Tip pools from 17th to 20th.

Superb portrait of the bird at Brogborough Tip by Trevor Ellery



Little Stint - noted at Grovebury on 13th and 17th

Greenshank - one at Black Cat GP on 4th, Rookery South CIP on 11th

Little Gull - four flew over Meppershall on 19th

Caspian Gull - one at Broom Quarry on 2nd, one at Grovebury SP on 5th and 17th

Mediterranean Gull - one roosted at Broom South Quarry on 8th, 19th, 23rd and 24th

Black Tern - one at Grovebury SP on 6th

Sandwich Tern - one through Brogborough Tip Pools on 8th

Bittern - one at MCP Wetlands NR on 8th

Great White Egret - one over Eaton Bray on 9th, one at Broom East CWS on 15th

Osprey - one over Eversholt on 1st, another over Leighton Buzzard on 7th, one near Felmersham GP on 18th, another south over Brogborough on 19th

Marsh Harrier - one over Broom Quarry on 12th, another over Broom East CWS on 18th

Merlin - one at Broom South Quarry on 1st, one at Meadow Lane GP on 2nd

Hobby - five over Warden Warren on 3rd, four at Quest Pit on 11th

Redwing - first of the autumn were five noted over Sandy on 26th

Spotted Flycatcher - up to 12 at Ampthill Park at the start of the month, one at Streatley on 4th, one at Blows Down on 7th, one on Stopsley Common on 8th, one near Upper Caldecotte on 8th, two at Brogborough Hill on 12th to 21st, one in Wardown Park Luton on 19th

Pied Flycatcher - one reported near Stanford on 10th, one at Brogborough Hill noted on most days from 12th to 19th.
Image by Steve Blain



Common Redstart - two at Galley Hill on 1st, two at Knocking Hoe on 3rd, one at Pegsdon on 4th and 5th, one at Wigmore Valley Park on 5th, three at Brogborough Hill on 5th, one at Stopsley Common from 7th, two there from 8th to 11th, one in Houghton Regis Quarry on 12th

Whinchat - a well watched group at Poppy Hill, Henlow, from the start of the month with seven still present on 10th, four at Houghton Brook Pools on 4th, two at Wigmore Valley Park on 5th, two near Warden Hill and one at Streatley on 7th, one at Blows Down on 9th, one at Little Staughton on 10th, one at Stopsley Common on 11th, two on Blows Down 16th, one near Butterfield Green 19th, one from earlier in the month remained at Brogborough Tip until 20th, one at Houghton Brook Pools on 21st

Stonechat - one at Blows Down on 7th, one at Brogborough Tip on 11th, one at Pegsdon Hills on 12th, three north of Bedford on 21st, three at Blows Down on 29th

Wheatear - two at Galley Hill on 5th, three near Butterfield Green on 7th, later one at Bourne End on 25th and one at Upper Caldecotte on 30th

Tree Pipit - one over Pegsdon Hills on 4th, one over Brogborough Hill on 18th, one over Potton on 21st, all on visible migration

We thank all contributors who have submitted their records directly to the Recorder, or via Bedsbirds Email Group as well as other sources. Please note that we currently have no official appointed County Bird Recorder and that this role is being managed by Peter Nash with support from Andy Grimsey where required. Records are welcomed to the email address below, and any questions, requests or reports otherwise can be directed to Peter on 07753411786 or Andy on 07402429312.

Records are preferred via the online system BirdTrack.

Compiled by Andy Grimsey
recorder@bedsbirdclub.org.uk

BIRD REPORT 2020 AND THE HOBBY

Coming along nicely with majority of items completed, final editing and compilation is now underway. We would welcome other members to assist with this work next year, and to provide contributions for The Hobby and if you are interested, please contact any of our committee members. Thanks !

NEW MEMBERS

We are pleased to welcome the following new members to the Beds Bird Club since the last edition:

Ellie Armstrong, Luton
Tony Baker, Toddington
Eric Burgess, Houghton Regis
Ellis Caswell, Flitwick
Sam Keeble, Sandy
Yvette Key, Arlesley
Andrew Martin, Biggleswade

Mark Newman, Luton
Richard North, Maulden
Mark & Vanessa Webb, Liddington
Nigel Webber, Leighton Buzzard
Nic Wilson, Hitchin
Claire & Robert Young, Maulden

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

NOTES ON BARNACLE GOOSE IN BEDFORDSHIRE



Following the appearance of a group in the clay pits this summer, and some anecdotal comments on the Bedsbirds email group about lower breeding pairs and potential reduction of previous numbers of birds around Willington, there has been some on-going discussion about the birds we see in the county and their origins. From this chatter, the following is reproduced from an email shared by Dave Kramer:

“The discussion of Barnacle Geese in Bedfordshire stimulated me to look into my copy of 'The Birds Of Bedfordshire' where, under this species, I found an email note to BedsBirds from Errol Newman to dated 05/01/2010 which I had copied and stuck in. It says:

"I was speaking to Arnoldus Zwetsloot a short while ago and he told me how he acquired the original Barnies and the origins of the feral Beds population.

"Our" birds derive from the Svalbard population. There were deliberately taken by shooters on the Solway in the late 'sixties and brought back to Blunham. They were rehabilitated and they bred in captivity. In the 'seventies, Arnoldus gave some of their descendants to his (now deceased) brother Peter, who was living at Lock Cottage at

Tempsford at the time. Unfortunately, in the late 'seventies, some of the offspring of these escaped to nearby waters and bred 'in the wild' (in the 'eighties) as they were not pinioned.

Errol goes on to say that he considered these birds to be the origin of c20 birds at Roxton and the family of nine birds in the Marston Vale at the same time.”

We know also that there are other established groups in a number of counties of southern England. An estimate of the UK naturalised population was 4400 as noted in the Bedfordshire Bird Report 2018 (quoting Frost et al. 2019) of which between 300 and 400 are potentially represented by our population. The vast majority exist in a flock that favours the fields to the east of Willington GPs in winter and disperses to neighbouring sites in summer with breeding noted at Blunham GP and Roxton GP. Interestingly, apart from the occasional single individual each year, they are not recorded in the southern part of the county but a flock was sound recorded on nocturnal migration over my garden in Luton on 22nd February which suggests that our either our birds move out, or other populations do reach Bedfordshire during the year.

Andy Grimsey

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