



THE HOBBY

Website: www.bedsbirdclub.org.uk

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the March 2017 production of The Hobby, the 150th edition of the bi-monthly magazine. This milestone is reached in our 25th year as a Club and we look to mark this event in a number of ways which will be announced through The Hobby and our club website. As a celebration of this achievement, we felt it was appropriate to try to organise a high profile speaker for our first meeting of the 2017/18 program and we were delighted to announce this below. This is a ticket event and a form is supplied at the back of this Hobby for applications.

Andy Grimsey

PROGRAMME MATTERS - AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

To celebrate the Bird Club's 25th Anniversary this year we are very pleased to say that we will have a visit from **Mr Iolo Williams**, who most members will know from BBC Springwatch programmes.

The date is **Tuesday 26th September**, the first meeting on our winter programme. Iolo's talk will be on **'Birds of Prey'**.



It has been decided to hold the meeting in our usual venue, Maulden Village Hall, as this has been our 'spiritual' home for all of the 25 years since the inception of the Club in 1992. This does mean that the hall's capacity is likely to be tested so it will be necessary to make this a ticket only event.

For the first time in our history we will have to charge Bird Club/BNHS members to attend a meeting but at £5.00 per head, £8.00 for non-members, we think it is affordable and represents excellent value but is unlikely to cover costs. High profile speakers do not come cheap!

To give members an early opportunity to buy their tickets we shall commence selling at the next indoor meeting on 28th March. We highly recommend that you come along to that meeting and secure your ticket before we start selling to non-members via Bedsbirds email group etc from 1st April. As this will be the only opportunity to sell direct to members before the event we shall need to sell by mail order thereafter.

When ordering tickets please use the order form provided in this Hobby- see page 11

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Tuesday, 28th March. ‘Making your records count’ by Nick Moran, BTO organiser of BirdTrack. As mentioned in the previous issue, this is your chance to learn more about this vital recording tool and to raise any questions you are burning to ask. A long overdue talk and a chance to buy your ticket for our birthday bash!

Our Summer Programme is issued with this Hobby offering regular field meetings and excursions through the summer months. We aim to cater for all levels of knowledge and are pleased to welcome new faces if you can be tempted to join us.

For those without paper copies, it is on the Bird Club website with a link from the front page to the Events Programme page.

Don Green

JANUARY – FEBRUARY 2017 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 2017

White-fronted Goose - Four remained at Cainhoe Lakes throughout. Eight were at Blunham Lake on 26th (JG) rising to 16 there on 28th (SCB). Four were at Broom GP on 28th (MJS), with six there next day (MB) and one from 31st (JL). One was at Grovebury SP on 28th (JL).



Pintail - A drake (of suspect origin) remained on Clifton duck pond until 21st. Others were at Broom GP on 20-24th and 28th and at Meadow Lane GP on 23rd-24th, on Biggleswade Common on 21st, Chimney Corner Lakes on 22nd and at Brogborough lake on 27th.

Mandarin - A count of 22 at Cainhoe Lakes on 22nd.

Greater Scaup - One was at Brogborough Lake on 8th-17th, with drakes reported at MVCP on 11th and Rookery North CIP and 14th (although a very close hybrid was also seen in this area!).

Eurasian Bittern - A good showing included two at Brogborough Lake and two at Rookery North CIP, and one at MVCP, all of which became visible with ice forming mid-month.

Great White Egret - One flew over Biggleswade Common on 21st (MBr).

Red Kite - A Bedfordshire record count of 31 was at Woburn on 13th (BJN).

Merlin - A male was at Broom GP on 14th, and over Upper Caldecote on 18th.

Mediterranean Gull - An adult was at Brogborough Lake on 5th, and on 13th-20th. A first-winter was at Grovebury SP on 21st.

Caspian Gull - A first-winter roosted at Brogborough Lake on 21st (NW), and a second-winter visited Broom GP on 20th (JP).

Yellow-legged Gull - A 3rd winter was at Brogborough Lake on 13th, with two adults there on 14th, a first winter and an adult on 17th, and three on 21st. Two adults roosted at Grovebury SP on 22nd.

Turtle Dove - One was reported from a Stevington garden on 23rd-24th - a very unusual winter record (per HM-H).

Long-eared Owl - One was at Flitwick Wood on 28th (LC, BC).

Short-eared Owl - Two were at Tetworth Hall lakes on 14th.

Bearded Tit - Birds were seen at Broom GP, MVCP and one other brick pit location.

Waxwing - Six were in Leighton Buzzard on 3rd, two were in Sandy on 4th, 12 in Bedford on 6th-8th. 12 were in Sandy on 8th, one at Pegsdon on 9th, two in Luton on 10th, two in Dunstable on 17th-18th, seven in Sandy on 20th-21st, four in Flitwick on 24th.

Tree Sparrow - Singles were on garden feeders in Eversholt and Willington on 3rd.

Twite - One flew over Broom GP on 1st (SCB).

Common Redpoll - One was at The Lodge RSPB on 6th (MW).

February 2017



White-fronted Goose - Five were at Broom GP on 1st, with one there from 12th until the end of the month with probably the same bird at Henlow Grange on 20th. The four remained at Cainhoe Lakes throughout the first three weeks of the month at least.

Pintail - One was at Henlow Grange on 1st.

Greater Scaup - two females were at Chimney Corner on 12th.

Aythya hybrids - two different male birds have been in the brick pits, one resembling Scaup, the other more closely resembling Lesser Scaup.

Ruddy Duck - One was in the brick pits during the second-half of the month.

Great White Egret - One flew over the Bedford bypass near Elstow on 6th (BC).

Merlin - A male was still in the Upper Caldecote area on 17th.

Mediterranean Gull - An adult was at Brogborough lake on 11th, two adult at Stewartby Lake on 17th, a 1w and adult there on 18th, and an adult there on 24th.

Common Chiffchaff - A Siberian Chiffchaff was at Bedford SW on 3rd (PG)



Waxwing - Three were in Potton on 18th-21st.

Common Stonechat - Small numbers were scattered across the county - a much better winter for them than recent years.

Brambling - Up to 38 were in a Sandy garden during the month.

Twite - One was reported from Sandy Heath on 1st (MK) and again nearby on 6th (DD) with the last report between The Lodge and Biggleswade Common on 28th (RP).

Lapland Bunting - One was present in fields near Upper Caldecote on 14th (SCB, RIB).

Corn Bunting - 200 were near Stotfold on 19th.

Observers:

SCB - Steve Blain; MJS - Martin Stevens; MB - Matt Burgess; NW – Neil Wright;
JL - John Lynch; RIB – Richard Bashford; MBr - Matt Bruce; BJN - Barry Nightingale; JP – Jim Porter;
LC – Lol Carman; BC – Bob Chalkley; MW - Mark Ward; PG - Patrick Giles; MK - Matthew Kirkland;
DD - Douglas Denny; RP - Richard Patient; HM-H - Helen Muir-Howie;

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

A BRIEF REPORT OF THE 2017 BIRD CLUB AGM

The AGM was held at Maulden Village Hall on Tuesday 28th February, and was attended by 60 members.

David Anderson chaired the meeting, his last as Hon. President.

The elected officers for 2017 are:

Hon. President (2017-19):	Peter Holden MBE
Hon. Secretary:	Sheila Alliez
Hon. Research Officer:	Graham Goodall
Hon. Assistant Treasurer:	Sonnie Wing
Hon. Bulletin Editor:	Andy Grimsey
Hon. Meetings Secretary:	Don Green
County Bird Recorder:	Steve Blain

BNHS Membership Secretary: Mary Sheridan

The elected committee members for 2016 are:

Richard Bashford
Steve Blain
Stuart Elsom
Roger Hicks

Nominated as Hon. Chairman (subject to BNHS approval): Matt Burgess

The Club membership at the end of December was 295. The Assistant Treasurer's summary of the accounts stated that expenses came close to, or below, budget, with one additional item, a £500 contribution to the Chiltern Bird Atlas. A plea was made for members to consider switching to electronic delivery of *The Hobby*, which could save up to £700. Income was up from 2015, thanks to a donation from G&M Growers Ltd, and thanks were also due to Opticron, who had maintained their generous sponsorship of indoor meetings.

The Research Officer summarised the work of the Records & Research Committee: 14 members had taken part in the Breeding House Martin Survey (135 nests in 26 colonies); the planning application for Thurleigh Autodrome had retained an area of old concrete for breeding Little ringed plovers, and the owners had erected five nestboxes for owls and kestrels; comments had been submitted for the country park element of the Cainhoe Lakes planning application; and he was currently pressing Tarmac to install pipes at Gypsy Lane East to control the water level.

Following his election as our new President, Peter Holden briefly addressed the meeting, apologising for being, until now, an almost invisible member, and undertaking to be more visible during his term of office. It is an important time for bird clubs, particularly in how they engage with the new generation of birdwatchers, and how we cope with the challenges of the huge amount of development planned, particularly in Central Bedfordshire.

After the completion of business, Mike Alibone gave an illustrated talk entitled "Birding Israel".

Sheila Alliez
Hon. Secretary

RECORDS & RESEARCH COMMITTEE REPORT: AGM February 2017.

Breeding House Martin Survey 2016

Records were received from 14 observers; of 135 nests in 26 colonies (a colony is defined as one or more nests on a single building or structure).

Bedford Autodrome Thurleigh; by working with the owners, we have retained a concrete area for breeding Ringed Plovers, plus the erection of five nest boxes for Barn Owls, Kestrels, Little Owls and Tawny Owls.

Gypsy Lane East. 20 year Management Plan

We are working closely with Tarmac on the future management of the site;

- The construction of a pipe-sluice to control water levels in the pit throughout the year.
- Fencing to stop disturbance of ground nesting birds.
- Future prospects for grazing the site.

Waterways Breeding Birds Survey 2017.

If you wish to take part in this survey, choose a waterway close to where you live and where public access is available. Make a note of the start and finish points using 1km squares or specific grid references; plus

place names where applicable. Please inform Graham Goodall of your chosen route in order to avoid duplication. Email: g.goodall052@btinternet.com.

The route you choose should keep as close as possible to the edge of the watercourse; ideally, within 25 metres of the water's edge. The length of the survey is up to you, but please bear in mind that you will probably need to retrace your route to get back to your car if you have driven to the site. The survey route should be a minimum of 1km (one way); 2km or more would be better. Record the birds you see or hear within 25 metres either side of your route. Surveys should be carried between the hours of 6 – 11am and should be at least four weeks apart, as follows: first survey: mid-March to mid-May. Second survey: mid-May to mid-July.

The Survey Methodology can be found on the Bird Club website, under Surveys and Research Projects.

Graham Goodall

DAY TRIP TO EAST NORFOLK - 8TH JANUARY 2017

We started the day at Strumpshaw Fen RSPB car park at 9.00am. Heading to the reception centre hide we started off with crackin' views of a Kingfisher feeding right in front. Marsh Harriers were flying about and a Cetti's Warbler and Bearded Tits were calling, Pheasants feeding in an area of cut back reeds, along with Water Rail, Common and Jack Snipe for some lucky people. On the bird feeders among the Great and Blue Tits, Coal and Marsh Tits fed with Finches in the trees and half a dozen Siskins.

Buckenham & Cantley Marsh RSPB was our next destination for Pink-footed, White-fronted and Egyptian Geese. The flocks were distant and we could not find any Bean Geese mixed in with them. Chinese Water Deer showed well along with a Peregrine Falcon sitting on a gate post before taking to the wing and putting ducks, mainly Wigeon and Teal, waders, mostly Lapwings, and other small birds to flight.



Heading east down the road for 6 miles we came to Halvergate village and in a field alongside the road with a group of cattle was a Cattle Egret feeding, one of six that had been seen in the area. Parking as best we could, we stopped and had a good look at the bird as it followed behind picking up insects that the cows disturbed as they moved about. We all had a go with our cameras taking pictures as we eat our lunch. Thank you Sean D'Arcy for the little snap shot. (We hope that the next Cattle Egret shot in The Hobby will be our much awaited county first record – Ed.)



The next stop was at Winterton Dunes for a sea-watch and a chance of Snow Buntings that had been seen there for the last couple of days. We set our scopes up on top of the dunes near the car park and started looking. There was a good number of Grey Seals bobbing their heads up and down in the sea which helped to confuse things. We had five Red-throated Divers, four different rafts of Common Scoters, which, when they took off had two Velvet Scoters in one of the groups. A single Brent Goose and two Turnstones flew up the beach, with three to four Guillemots on the sea along with a single Slavonian Grebe. As we started sea-watching we were lucky enough to have a group of 30+ Snow Bunting fly down the beach and 10 minutes later fly back up.

We decided to call it quits at 3.30pm, thanking our leader, Pete Marshall, for a wonderful day and started to make our way home. Along the road going towards Clippesby I saw Malcolm and Carolyn Hawkes had parked up and were looking over the fields, so quickly pulling up next to them and getting out I managed to jam in on the sight of 14 Common Cranes feeding in the fields. So ending the day on a high as the light started to go we again started on our way home.

Ten members made the trip and we ended up with a total of 65 species for the day.

Kevin M Sharpe

BEDFORDSHIRE ROOKERIES : 2016 SUMMARY

The Bedfordshire Rookery survey was repeated in 2016, building on the work of the previous three years. 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).

As in previous years a Google Map was created showing the location of all rookeries recorded in 2016. Originally the rookery markers were yellow, as observations were received during 2016, details were added to the map and the colour of the marker changed to green, giving an indication of how the survey was progressing. During 2016 181 rookeries were located containing 4418 nests. This was one more rookery but 66 fewer nests than in 2015, although that is not the complete story. Six rookeries were abandoned in 2016, including the sizeable rookery at Lower Dean and two others that numbered more than 20 nests, at Ducksworth Farm and Carlton Hall Wood. The rookery at Grovebury Road, Leighton Buzzard was destroyed when the nest trees were cut down, but the Rooks apparently moved 100m down the road and rebuilt alongside the by-pass. Eight new rookeries were recorded although one of these was a long-standing rookery reported for the first time. Two of the new rookeries re-occupied locations used previously, e.g. in Wardown Park (last recorded in 1945) and Ampthill beside the A507 (last used in

2011). Breeding Rooks were recorded from 116 tetrads, an increase on previous years, but still well below the number where breeding was confirmed during fieldwork for the 2007-2011 atlas. This suggests there are probably several, and possibly as many as 50, Bedfordshire rookeries yet to be recorded by the survey.

The colony size, number of nests in a rookery, ranged from one to 126, with an average of 24 nests per rookery, slightly down on 2015 and continuing a downward trend over the four years of the survey. Only one rookery contained over 100 nests in 2016 and that was at Meppershall: Nunswood although the rookery at Henlow: Stockbridge Farm held 99 nests (I counted several times to make sure!). The rookery at Tempsford: East of A1 which previously has held over 100 nests, only had 61 nests in 2016 (and seems to have spread west of the A1).

Rooks were recorded nesting in 15 species of tree. A large proportion (35%) of rookery nest trees remained unidentified. This was partly as a result of mistiming visits, at some rookeries trees were in full leaf making it more difficult to count nests per tree species. For the same reason the counts for some tree species, particularly Field Maple and Sycamore are lower than for previous years. Ash was by far the most frequently used tree, accounting for over 34% of nests. Oak was second most used tree, followed by Black Poplar, Scots Pine, Beech and Horse Chestnut. No incidences of ash dieback were noted while conducting the rookery survey during the early spring of 2016.

All rookery data collected in 2016 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>

<http://tinyurl.com/BedsRookeries2015>

<http://tinyurl.com/BedsRookeries2016>

I will be running the Bedfordshire Rookery Survey again in 2017. A Google map showing location of all rookeries used in recent years has been prepared and can be viewed at <http://tinyurl.com/BedsRookeries2017>. 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).

A rookery website was recently launched, this can be viewed at www.rookeries.uk. This displays the data from earlier surveys on various maps, tables and charts. If you register and log-in, you can enter, amend or delete your own observations.

Acknowledgements:

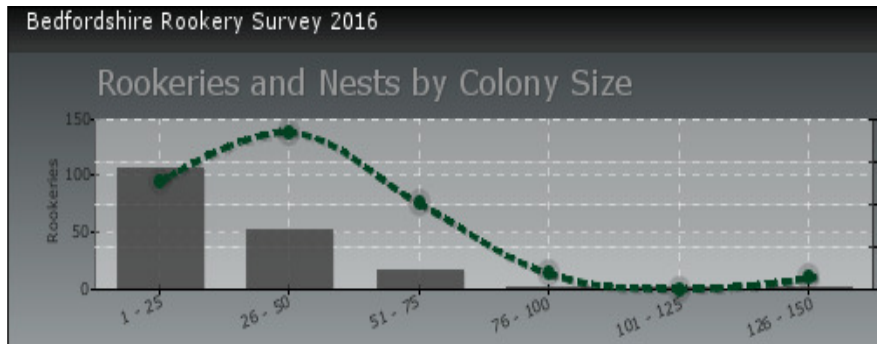
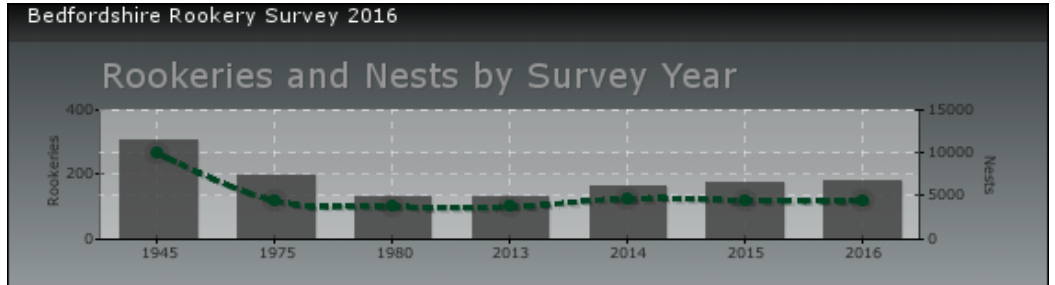
big thank you to all the Bedfordshire Bird Club and BedsBirds email group members who supplied rookery information: Peter Almond, Dave Anderson, Stefan Baltruschat, Richard Bashford, Graham Bellamy, Michael Bird, Steve Blain, Hereward Corley, Robin Edwards, Mark Fitzpatrick, Lawrence Jarrett, John Kirkham, Judith Knight, Trevor Morgan, Jonathan Palmer, John Pitts, Tony Revill, Mike Russell, Peter Smith, Aidan Whitfield and Sonnie Wing. And last, but by no means least, very special thanks to Jenny.

Roger K. Hicks, 3 Elm Close, Henlow, SG16 6BY; email: rogerkhicks@hotmail.com

BEDFORDSHIRE ROOKERY SURVEY 2016 SUMMARY

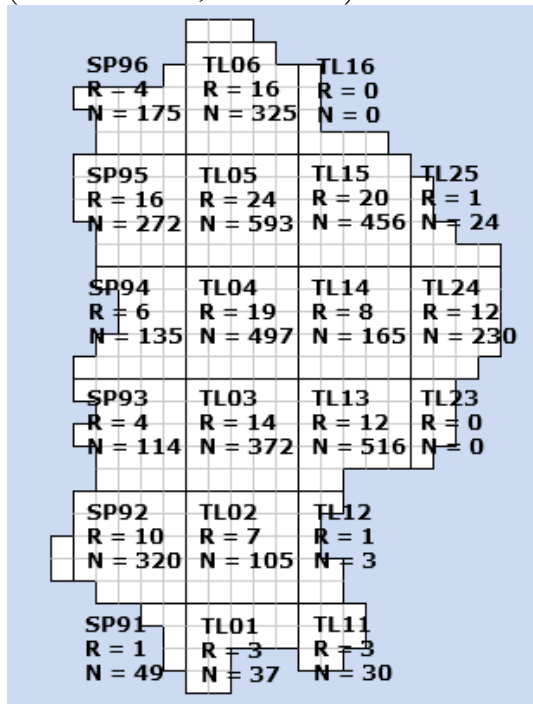


Survey Years	1945	1975	1980	2013	2014	2015	2016
Rookeries	312	202	134	134	169	180	181
Nest Count	9945	4436	3756	3740	4688	4484	4418
Average	31.88	21.96	28.03	27.91	27.74	24.91	24.41
Tetrads	151	122	84	97	109	113	116



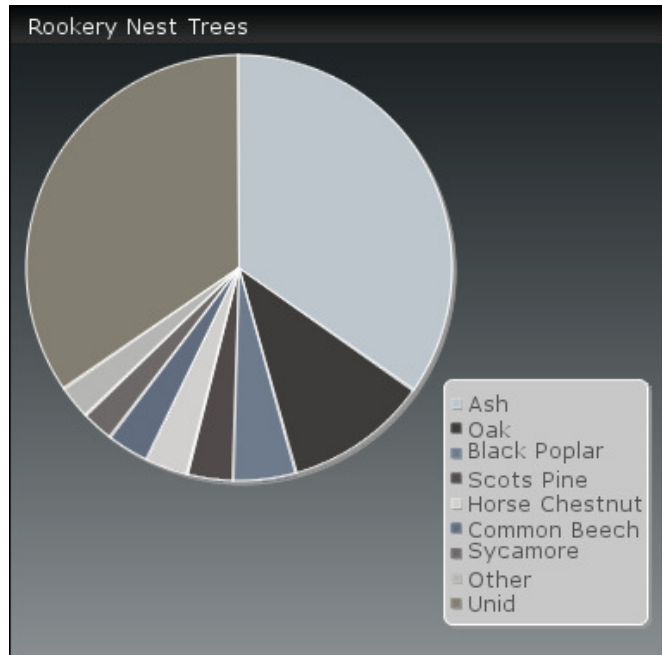
KEY FINDINGS
 181 Rookeries
(1 more than in 2015)
 4418 nests
(Reduction from 2015)
 In 116 Tetrads
Increase from 2015 (but Still fewer than in Atlas)
 9 Rookeries recorded for first time plus 2 re-used after many years
 7 Rookeries abandoned (from 2015)

Rookeries in Bedfordshire by 10km Square (R = Rookeries; N = Nests)



Rookery Nests by Tree Species

35% of nests in Ash but 35% of nest trees unidentified



REPORT OF THE RARITIES COMMITTEE

The following records have all been accepted following the latest meeting and considerations of the Bedfordshire Bird Club Rarities Committee. Thank to Chairman Matt Burgess for the data.

Great White Egret	Woburn	From 2015	1	Don Green
Great Grey Shrike	Poppy Hill, Langford	From 2015	1	Roger Hicks
Great White Egret	Roxton Lakes	17 January 2015	1	Patrick and Roger Safford
Common Redpoll	Broom GP	01 January 2016	10	Martin Palmer
Great Northern Diver	Rookery North CIP	01 January 2016	2	Martin Palmer/Alan Cutts
Shag	Brogborough Lake	16 January 2016	1	Neil Wright
Great Grey Shrike	Palmers Wood, Old Warden	17 January 2016	1	Andy Jackson
Shag	Stewartby Lake	17 January 2016	1	Chris Deary
Slavonian Grebe	Brogborough Lake	22 January 2016	1	Martin Palmer
Northern Goshawk	Meadow Lane GPs	11 February 2016	1	Darren Oakley-Martin
Common Redpoll	The Lodge, Gate House	10 March 2016	1	Martin Palmer
Red-necked Grebe	Radwell GPs	18 March 2016	1	Richard Bashford
Sandwich Tern	Broom GPs	02 April 2016	2	Jim P
Sandwich Tern	Broom GPs	02 April 2016	2	Jim P
Black-necked Grebe	Brogborough Lake	03 April 2016	1	Andy Grimsey
Red-breasted Merganser	Brogborough Lake	11 April 2016	2	Chris Deary
Black-necked Grebe	Meadow Lane GPs	12 April 2016	2	John Bowler
Sandwich Tern	Stewartby Lake	16 April 2016	1	Steve Blain
White Stork	Fenlake Meadow	21 April 2016	1	Darren Oakley-Martin
Black-necked Grebe	Brogborough Lake	23 April 2016	1	Neil Wright
Dartford Warbler	Aspley Heath	28 April 2016	1	John Lynch
Eurasian Spoonbill	Broom GPs	06 May 2016	1	Martin Stevens
Little Tern	Broom GPs	10 May 2016	1	Andy Jackson
Black-necked Grebe	Brogborough Lake	10 May 2016	2	Neil Wright
Black-necked Grebe	Brogborough Lake	13 May 2016	1	Neil Wright
Spotted Crake	MVCP	19 May 2016	1	Bob Hook
Rose-coloured Starling	Caddington	02 June 2016	1	Elizabeth Jones

BTO HOUSE MARTIN NEST STUDY 2017

The BTO have extended the House Martin nest study for another year. The aim is to monitor the activities that take place over the course of the breeding at individual nests with the emphasis on timing of nesting activity, the number of broods and outcome of nesting attempts. Full details are available on the BTO website (www.bto.org/housemartins-2016), from where you can log in or register to the House Martin Nest Study, and download the forms and instructions in preparation for the start of the survey. If

you registered for the 2015 survey or 2016 nest study, you will be able to log in and will not need to register again this year. You do not need to be a BTO member to participate.

You can select your own site(s) to monitor. The BTO would prefer complete coverage of a small number of nests rather than partial coverage of a many. With this in mind please consider selecting a subset of nests if your local colony is large. Please try to start recording by the end of May at the very latest, or sooner if possible so that we can obtain information about the state of the nests before breeding activity begins in earnest.

NEW MEMBERS

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

Tim Mason, Wilstead
Philip and Hilary Pask, Harpenden
Bob Wingate, Dunstable

We hope you will enjoy many years of membership with us

Mary Sheridan



A talk by Mr IOLO WILLIAMS entitled 'BIRDS OF PREY'

ORDER FORM FOR TICKETS

Please supply the following tickets for the Bird Club celebration on 26th September 2017

Qty for paid-up members @ £5.00 each

Names of members (essential).....
.....
.....

Qty for non-members @ £8.00 each

Total payment by cheque enclosed £..... Please make cheques payable to BNHS

Contact email or phone number

Please enclose a stamped/addressed envelope if applying by mail.

Apply to: Don Green, Red Cow Farm Cottage, Bidwell, Dunstable, LU5 6JP

ILLUSTRATIONS BY:

Jim P White-fronted Goose
Malcolm Gladman: Pintail
Martin Hickman: Waxwing
Sean D'Arcy: Wigeon; Cattle Egret



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Registered Charity Number 268659*