



THE HOBBY

Website: www.bedsbirdclub.org.uk

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the January 2019 production of The Hobby. This month we have included a selection of articles on our local birds and birding. Also with this newsletter are two forms; firstly for our long-running Summer Garden Bird Feeding Survey which starts as soon as 10th March, and secondly a notice of the Bird Club AGM which includes the nomination for any member that wishes to bring their skills to help with the running of the club. We always welcome new ideas, and support into the committee and any questions about this can be shared with any current member. As noted in the bulletin we would particularly welcome any volunteers interested in taken on the role of Membership Secretary supporting both the Bird Club and BNHS. These forms are attached electronically for those members that have elected to receive their copy of The Hobby this way and are also on the website. Good birding to all...

PROGRAMME MATTERS

Programme of Indoor Meetings 2018 / 19

Our next indoor meeting will be on Tuesday 29th January when Nick Moran from the BTO will talk to us about birding in the Arabian peninsula, an area in which he had lived for five years, noting the birds of the surprising variety of habitats and the scarce migrants that occur. For any members that have not been to talks given previously by presenters from the BTO, I would advise that they are always a well worth attending.

The following meeting on 26th February will start at the earlier time of 7:45pm to allow for the short formality of the Bird Club AGM and will be following by a talk from Paul Laurie about the birds of Blakeney Point. Paul has been studying and photographing birds for 46 years including the last twenty years at this exciting site in North Norfolk that many of us will have visited on a few occasions.

Our indoor talks all take place at Maulden Village Hall at 8pm, with doors open from 7:30pm. (other than the February talk as noted here!)

Outdoor Meetings

Following the Bedfordshire Great Duck Hunt on the 19th/20th January, our next outdoor meeting on 10th February is a trip to Wallasea Island, a new flagship RSPB coastal reclamation project on the Essex coast, for wintering wildfowl, waders and hopefully some interesting raptors.

More locally there will be a morning walk around Priory Country Park in Bedford on 3rd March, and a future date for the diary is a trip to Breckland on 24th March, with an initial plan to visit the reserves at Cavenham Heath and RSPB Lakenheath.

Contact Kevin Sharpe (07827 440394) if lifts are required or with any queries regarding attendance of events in the outdoor programme.

Details about the entire winter outdoor meetings program are also included on our website at bedsbirds.org.uk

NOVEMBER – DECEMBER 2018 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. Another option for recorded is now available on the internet; If you only have one or two bird records to send us (or if you're not keen on trying the rather fabulous BirdTrack website) please use the iRecord form at <http://bedsbirdclub.org.uk/irecordbirdrecord/>

November 2018

Whooper Swan - One was at Radwell Lakes and one at Roxton Lakes on 10th.

Brent Goose - One was at Grovebury SP on 17th (DB), another at Meadow Lane GP on 26th (MJP)

Pintail - Seven were at Brogborough Lake on 10th.

Common Scoter - Six were at Stewartby Lake on 17th.

Great Northern Diver - A juvenile was found at Brogborough Lake on 30th (JB)

Great White Egret - One was at Wyboston Lakes from 9th, and another at Radwell Lakes on 10th.

Merlin - A juvenile was at Wilden on 5th, and again on 21st.

Eurasian Curlew - One was at Brogborough Tip Pools on 3rd.

Mediterranean Gull - An adult was at Grovebury SP on 11th.

Caspian Gull - At least five were at Grovebury SP early in the month (DB). Others were at Brogborough Lake on 10th (NW)

Yellow-browed Warbler - One was found in Hulcot Wood on 3rd (NW)

Waxwing - 16 were seen around the Lodge on 2nd-3rd (RP et al), and five at John O'Gaunt GC on 26th (ST)

Common Stonechat - Reasonable numbers appear to be wintering with up to five at Sandy Heath

Common Crossbill - Small numbers were seen in our pine woodlands during the whole period following a handful on visible migration watches at the start of the month.

Hawfinch - One flew over the Pinnacle (SCB, PN, NC), and two over Sharpenhoe Clappers (AG) on 3rd. Another flew over the Pinnacle on 4th (SCB)

December 2018

Bewick's Swan - Two were at Chimney Corner South Lake on 16th.

White-fronted Goose - An adult was at Broom GP on 9th (TH), with it wandering to various sites throughout the month.

Brent Goose - One was at Langford Water Tower on 15th (SW)

Smew - A redhead was at Brogborough Lake on 23rd.

Great Northern Diver - The juvenile from November was present all month, with a second joining it from 28th (MJP).

Shag - One flew over Broom GP on 3rd (SCB)

Eurasian Bittern - One was at Brogborough Lake on 22nd.

Great White Egret - One flew over Sandy on 8th, and another was in the Priory CP/Willington GP area from 16th, one was at Roxton Lakes and another at MVCP both on 27th.

Slavonian Grebe - One was found on Brogborough Tip Pools on 22nd (PS) and stayed into the New Year – a write up on this species' recent appearances in the county can be read in this bulletin

Rough-legged Buzzard - One was reported at Upper Gravenhurst on 16th (KB)

Merlin - A male was at Broom Quarry South on 1st and 9th, with another nearby at Broom GP on 2nd, a juvenile at the Lodge on 6th, and another at Broom Quarry South on 31st.

Mediterranean Gull - An adult was at Stewartby Lake on 1st and 16th-17th, with a second adult at Brogborough Lake also on 16th-30th.

Caspian Gull - A third-winter was at Dunstable SW on 3rd (JL), a first-winter was at Brogborough Lake on 8th (NW), and an adult at Houghton Brook Pools on 15th (JP)

Yellow-legged Gull - Up to three roosted in the brick pits

Short-eared Owl - One was at Brogborough Tip on 1st-2nd, with another on Biggleswade Common on 9th, and a third was at Wilstead on 27th.

Firecrest - One was seen at the Lodge on 11th.

Tree Sparrow - Two were at Upper Caldecote on 29th into the New Year.

Corn Bunting - Up to 100 were at Southill and around 300 were at Stotfold during the month.

Observers:

MJP - Martin Palmer; JB - John Bowler; SCB - Steve Blain; DB - Dave Bilcock; NW - Neil Wright
PS - Peter Smith; RP - Richard Patient; SW - Stuart Winter; NC - Nick Curtis; ST - Steve Thompson
AG - Andy Grimsey; TH - Tony Hukin; KB - Kevin Brown; JL - John Lynch; JP - Jonathan Palmer

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

GREAT DUCK HUNT 2019 – 19TH/20TH JAN – VOLUNTEERS PLEASE !

The Beds Great Duck Hunt is nearly upon us once more. This year it is taking place the weekend of 19th-20th January.

For anyone who doesn't know what this is, basically it is when we try and count all the water birds in Bedfordshire over one weekend. Great fun and a huge task too!

There is a provisional list of all sites which need counting now on the Beds Bird Club website here: <http://bedsbirdclub.org.uk/great-duck-hunt/>

We need people to count all those sites listed with a 'no' under the 'Counter' column. If you want to volunteer to count a site please simply drop me an email with which site you want to cover and who you are. The current list of sites that still need covering is below too, but the up to date list will be found on the Bird Club website link above. If you can't see a site on the list but know it has a few ducks please also cover those sites too - the list is not exhaustive, especially when it comes to the rivers and canals of Bedfordshire.

Please select a site and get in touch!

Cheers

Steve Blain

BIRDING AT GYPSY LANE EAST (BROOM EAST)

As some of you will know, certain dog owners have continued to access this site by going inside the stock fence and letting their dogs run around, and into the water. Such activity, particularly during the breeding season, causes disturbance to breeding birds and wildlife in general.

Thanks to the many thousands of submitted bird records, the site is recognised as a County Wildlife Site, and as such, it will be managed by Tarmac for the next 20 years under the guidance of a Biodiversity Management Plan. Information boards will be erected and 'No Access' signs have been posted in strategic positions around the site. If you visit the site, please abide by the signs and do not go inside the stock fence. It is imperative that we all set a good example.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Graham Goodall.

Hon. Research Officer: Bedfordshire Bird Club; BNHS.

SLAVONIAN GREBES IN BEDFORDSHIRE



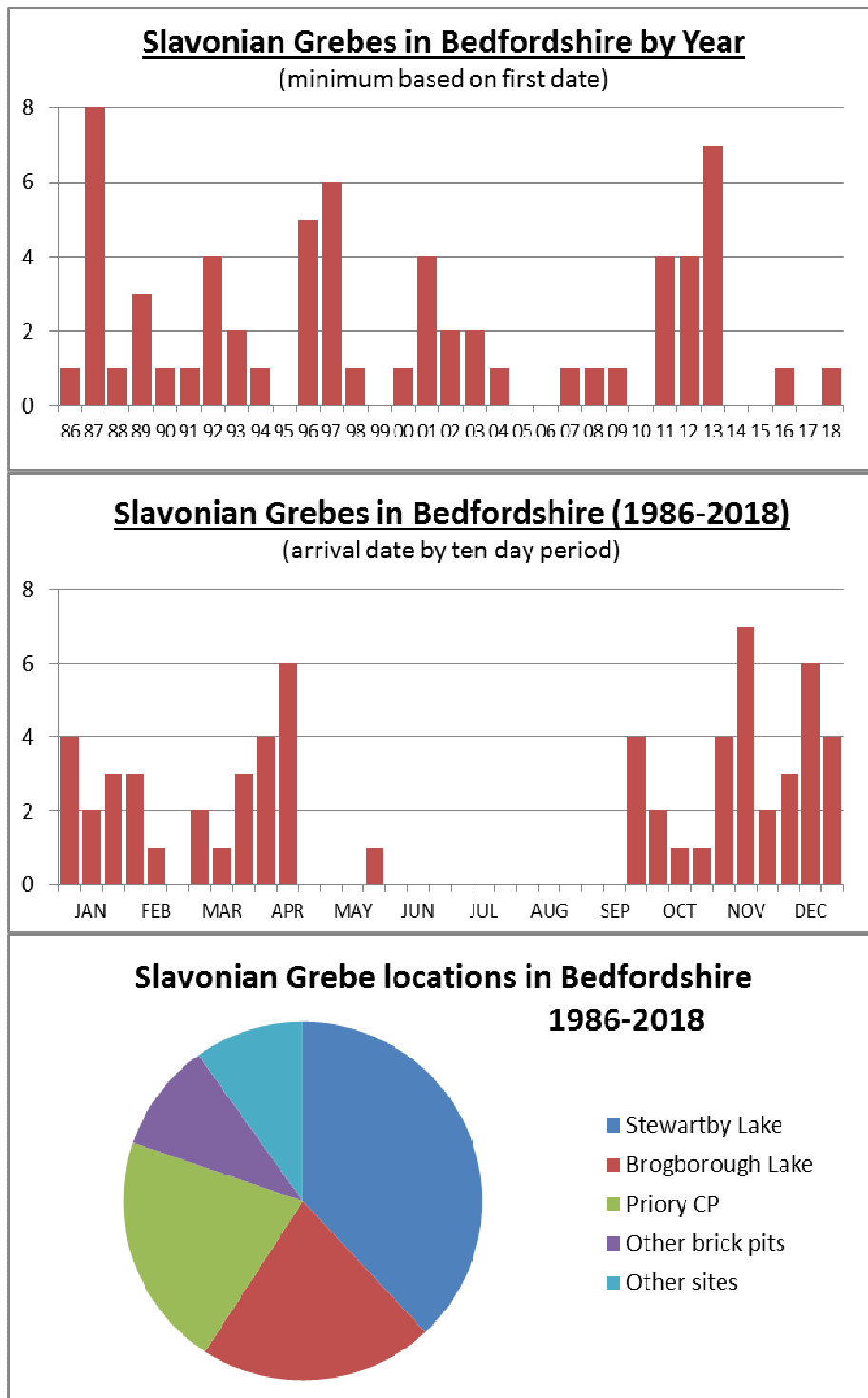
The arrival of a Slavonian Grebe at Brogborough Tip Lake on 22nd December 2018 was welcomed by local birders as the first in the county since January 2016 which itself had been the first since the good spring of 2013 when seven individuals were located. This species seems to have become less common in the county generally recently, with an increasing number of blank years, and this recent bird fitted the typical arrival date of this species.

The species is described as a “scarce visitor occurring as a winter visitor and a passage migrant”, and is one of those scarcities that is both frequent enough to potentially be found by any birder in the county, yet scarce enough, and smart enough to be worth going to look at when already found by another.

The majority of birds have been in winter plumage, though individuals present in late March or early April are beginning to develop summer plumage. One of the birds remaining into the start of May in 2013 was in full summer plumage before it departed (and made it on to the bird race list) as was the bird that was seen at Priory on 21st May 2011.

The Bird Report from 2006 graphically represented occurrences for the preceding 20 years and the graphs below show an update of this information up to the end of 2018. As can also be seen from the pie chart, the favoured locations have been the larger pits with Stewartby Lake, Brogborough Lake and Priory CP accounting for 80% of the 64 noted minimum individuals over this 33 year period.

Image of December 2018 bird at Brogborough Tip Lakes by Sean D’Arcy
Article and graphs by Andy Grimsey



**MAKING OUR BIRD DATA MORE VALUABLE;
KEY SPECIES TO RECORD ANNUALLY.**

There are species on the Bedfordshire Red List of Breeding Birds that we should collect breeding records for every year. All records should be entered on to the BTO BirdTrack website and each entry should contain a breeding code, if applicable. This important information confirms the status of breeding species and allows us to prove how valuable some of the county’s sites are in supporting scarce and rare species.

The key period for recording breeding behaviour is mid-March to the end of July.

BTO BirdTrack breeding codes:

Probable breeder:

- Pair in suitable nesting habitat (P)
- Permanent Territory (defended over at least 1 week) (T).
- Courtship and display (D).
- Visiting probable nest site (N).
- Agitated behaviour (A).
- Brood patch of incubating bird (I).
- Nest building or excavating a nest hole (B).

Confirmed breeder:

- Distraction display or injury feigning (DD).
- Used nest or eggshells found from current season (UN).
- Recently fledged or downy young (FL).
- Adults entering or leaving nest site in circumstances indicating occupied nest (ON).
- Adult carrying faecal sac or food for young (FF).
- Nest containing eggs (NE).
- Nest with young (NY).

Species.

Common Pochard	Eurasian Bittern	Northern Lapwing
Ringed Plover	Eurasian Curlew	Turtle Dove
Common Cuckoo	European Nightjar	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker
Marsh Tit	Woodlark	Grasshopper Warbler
Mistle Thrush	Spotted Flycatcher	Common Nightingale
Yellow Wagtail	Grey Wagtail	Tree Pipit

Graham Goodall; Research Officer
Steve Blain; County Bird Recorder
Roger Hicks; Regional representative, BTO

Records and Research Committee, Bedfordshire Bird Club; BNHS.

NEW MEMBERS

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

Carolyn Chamberlain, Linslade
Rick Cousins, Clifton
Paul Wright, Winslow

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

Mary Sheridan

AN APPEAL FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Many of you will already be aware of my intention to resign as Membership Secretary. My resignation will take effect from the March 2020 AGM which may seem a long way off but is actually only 14 months away! This means of course that we are looking for some kind person to volunteer to take over my role. Many of our members are already involved in BNHS/Bird Club roles – as Officers,

Council members, various Committee members, Recorders and others, all working hard for everyone's benefit; however, there are many more who are not involved and it is to these people that I appeal. Please do consider giving some of your time to helping us and ensuring that the wheels of BNHS/Bird Club continue to run smoothly. There is nothing difficult about the role and it is quite varied. I have enjoyed my 30 years as Membership Secretary but it is now time for me to hand over the reins.

If you would like to know more about what is involved please feel free to come and have a chat with me at any of our meetings, give me a ring, or you are welcome to come over to my house, have a coffee and I can show you the membership database, and explain more about the role there.

Mary Sheridan

PS Thirty years in the role isn't compulsory!! I just lost track of time

Email: membership@bnhs.org.uk

Tel: 01525 378245

ACCEPTED COUNTY RARITIES

Following review by the Rarities Committee, the following records have been accepted for the first half of 2018. Table supplied by Matt Burgess

Species	Location	Date	Number	Observer
Great White Egret	Brogborough Lake	01/01/2018	1	J Temple
Hawfinch	Wayn Close, Woburn	01/01/2018	5	B Nightingale
Hawfinch	Gatehouse, The Lodge	01/01/2018	1	M Brandon
Hawfinch	Ickwell	01/01/2018	3	S Blain
Hawfinch	Old Warden	01/01/2018	5	S Blain
Red-throated Diver	Brogborough Lake	01/01/2018	1	J Temple
Great White Egret	Brogborough Lake	04/01/2018	2	M J Palmer
Hawfinch	Woodbury Hall, Everton	05/01/2018	10+	S Blain/R Bashford
Hawfinch	Upper Drakelow Pond, Woburn	09/01/2018	25	M Bird
Hawfinch	Upper Drakelow Pond, Woburn	10/01/2018	30	A Cutts
Hawfinch	Southill Park	10/01/2018	20	S Blain/R Bashford
Hawfinch	Southill Park	11/01/2018	45	S Blain/M Ward
Hawfinch	Woburn Park	14/01/2018	94	M Ward
Common Redpoll (Mealy)	Brogborough Lake Tip	28/01/2018	1	N Wright
Common Eider	Rookery North	05/03/2018	1	S Northwood
Hawfinch	Warden Warren	11/03/2018	9	T Robson
Common Crane	Tetworth Estate, Everton	05/04/2018	3	Tom (gamekeeper) DOM
Common Crane	MVCP	07/04/2018	2	N & P Wright
Common Redpoll (Mealy)	Southill	08/04/2018	1	Steve Heath
Spoonbill	Langford Rd, Bigglewade	09/04/2018	10	M Stevens
Black-necked Grebe	Brogborough Lake	19/04/2018	1	D Oakley-Martiin
Red-necked Grebe	Priory CP	21/04/2018	1	Dave Barnes
Tree Pipit	Pegsdon Hills	21/04/2018	1	D Oakley-Martiin
Wood Warbler	near Castle Mill lock, Bedford	22/04/2018	1	Patrick Giles
Wood Warbler	Flitwick Moor	23/04/2018	1	Lol Carmen
Black-necked Grebe	Brogborough Lake	13/05/2018	1	N Wright
Common Rosefinch	Cartmel Drive, Dunstable	18/05/2018	1	Paul Brown
Golden Oriole	Langford TL179410	28/05/2018	1	Pete Marshall Gen Carpenter
Honey Buzzard	The Lodge	29/05/2018	1	Doug Denny Richard Greasby

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