

CLEY BIRD CLUB



TEMPORARY ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE.

Cobbles, Holt Road,
Cley-next-the-Sea,
Holt, Norfolk.
NR25 7TU.

NEWS-LETTER NUMBER 11.

OCTOBER 1988.

Dear Members,

We now have the word processor back, at vast expense to yours truly! Though it will be well worth the expense in the long run, as it makes the news letters so much easier to produce. It'll not completely solve all the grammatical and spelling errors, but it'll make it look nicer!

This is the eleventh newsletter produced by the club, but it seems just as hard as ever to find things to write about, except the monthly goings on in the bird world. This quarter we have no drawings to fill out the pages and bring a bit of "colour" to the product! So any of the members out there who would like to send in drawings, or even an article for inclusion, please do, the more people who write the thing the more interesting they will become.

Cley reserve must have had its worst year ever for rare waders this year, with not a single BB rare wader noted, and as if to rub salt into the wound a small flooded field at Holkham has had an excellent season. Hopefully this will only be a once in a lifetime occurrence, and everything will return to normal next year.

The autumn was a rather quiet one though a few good birds were seen in each of the three months covered, and there's still October to come, a potentially good month for rarities. July was a reasonable month, with a small number of good birds seen around the county. The highlight at Cley was a Red-necked Phalarope, whilst for the county it was a Baird's Sandpiper at Wells.

August was a much better month, with far more rarities dotted about the county. The bird of the month for the county, was a juvenile White-winged Black Tern at Beccles. The highlight for the 10km square, was a Lesser Crested Tern.

The highlights of September were, for Norfolk a juvenile Sociable Plover at Titchwell, Holme and off the Hunstanton to Holme road, sadly a brief stayer and only seen by a handful of birders. Whilst the best birds of the month for the Cley square were undoubtedly during the numerous sea-watches, 2 or 3 Sabine's Gulls, 5 or 6 Long-tailed Skuas and a hat full of Leach's Petrels.

You will have noticed that the September news is up to the 25th only, this is due to the fact that the Cley Bird Club annual holiday begins on the 1st October. The editorial board leave for the Isles of Scilly on the 30th of September, so the news letter had to be finished before they left and off to the printers and ready for mailing on the 5th October. There will be a bumper issue in the New Year, covering the end of September.

SUBSCRIPTIONS.

Members receiving a renewal form with this newsletter are due to pay their subscription (£2.50) as soon as possible before December 31st. Cheques and postal orders made payable to the Cley Bird Club, please.

Members who have overlooked payment - will find SOD (subscription overdue) in red on page one!! Will they please send their subscription by return.

ADDITIONS TO LIST OF MEMBERS.

D. Buffey.	T. Binham.	G. Carlisle.
D. Clarke.	P. Day.	G. Fichett.
M. Flack.	Mrs M. Longstaff.	Mr & Mrs C. Lister.
Mrs R. Nicholas.	Mr & Mrs S. Proctor.	J. Richardson.
S. Saxton.	Mrs M. Smith.	R. Sellwood.
T. Wright.	Mr & Mrs M. Watts.	

THE END OF AN ERA.

The bad news is that Nancy's cafe is closing at the end of this year, and Mrs Nancy Gull is retiring. After 17 years the cafe closes on Sunday 11th of December, this of course means that the visiting birders to the Cley area will not have a friendly cafe in which to cat or to while away a few boring hours drinking tea during a lull in the birding. The cafe was also the home of the Cley Bird Club's Log book, which not only covered the bird news for the Cley area and Norfolk, but also the rest of the rare bird news for the British Isles, this facility will also be missed. The only other cafe in the Cley area is the Beach Cafe at the Coastguards, but due to lack of staff this will only be opened during the period spring to autumn. The Cley Bird club will produce a log book for this cafe, if the owner is willing to have it there, but due to the limited opening hours it will not always be fully up to date. This also has a telephone but not for phoning out, but news will always reach there, via local birders or by telephone.

The Cley Bird Club has decided to have a collection for Mr and Mrs Gull to start off what we all hope will be a happy retirement. There has not yet been a decision on what to buy them with the money collected, but a colour television would be a nice gift as they have never owned one and still have a rather poor old B & W set. All you birders out there who have spent many a happy hour in the now legendary Nancy's cafe in Cley, I hope will donate generously, I myself have started off the collection with a £10 donation.

Please send all cheques or postal orders to Peter Gooden at the usual address, and make them out to the 'Cley Bird Club'.

E T Myers.

A BIRDING TRIP TO TEXAS, PART 2.

After a breakfast of 'easy over' eggs, bacon and coffee, dawn found us at the Kingsville filling station preparing to run to the Kings ranch when the first good bird of the day a Black-shouldered Kite drifted overhead - an omen of

things to come perhaps. At the first stop we had our first views of Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Hooded Orioles and Pyrrhuloxia (or as Roy named them "paradoxicals"). Moving on we began to pass numerous Scissor-tailed Flycatchers at regular intervals with Turkey Vultures beginning to rise on the first thermals of the day, while a large raptor perched on a telegraph pole turned out to be a Harris' Hawk.

Pulling into the Santa stop we were met by a Kiskadee feeding in the layby. Climbing the stile into the wood we soon encountered a pair of Carolina Wrens, while it was Roy who amazed all by declaring the bird at the top of the tree to be a male Summer Tanager, due to the lack of dark wings, confirmed by all when a few minutes later a superb Scarlet tanager appeared giving prolonged 'scope views'. As we prepared to leave a Louisiana Waterthrush was found creeping amongst some fallen trees. A few hundred yards along the road we were again pulled up short as a bright red ball flew across in front of the van to perch in full view on a fence - a full blown adult male Vermillion Flycatcher complete with 'dayglow' jacket, a truly stunning bird.

A few miles along the road we again had to hit the brakes hard for our first 'Bernard Mathews' (a Wild Turkey) walking along the central divide; as the heat of the day began to increase, a steady stream of Broad-winged Hawks began to drift over head - we counted 300 in only a few minutes.

As we left the Kings ranch we began to anticipate our first Texan twitch - leaving the small town of Rio Hondo we quickly found the small overgrown roadside pond and the female Masked Duck, trying to conceal itself in the rank vegetation along with Least Grebe (another southern Texas special), Ruddy Ducks and Fulvous Whistling Ducks. Having our fill we pressed on to Laguna Astuscosa arriving in the early afternoon.

Walking some of the tarmac trails that intersected the thick mesquite scrub, we soon found Long-billed and Curve-billed Thrashers, Common Ground Doves and a group of Chachalacas, while overhead Northern Rough-winged and Tree Swallows were flying around. It wasn't long before we were lured further into the bush by a strange and persistent song, which when tracked down turned out to be a Verdin, which everybody had good views of except Roy.

On reaching the van we were about to congratulate ourselves on how well the day was going, when it became apparent that we were all infested with small crab like ticks, but Roy who had been in longer than every one else actually had ticks buried into his legs, so the next half-hour was spent de-ticking Roy with glowing splinters of burning wood.

As we arrive at the foreshore we found good numbers of birds present, including Eared Grebes (Black-necked), Olivaceous and Double-crested Cormorants, Willets and Gull-billed Terns, while a Horned Lark and a Wilson's Plover fed on the drier part of the beach. Heading back to the HQ we passed a flock of White Ibis and a Grasshopper Sparrow found at the edge of the road.

After checking in we spent a magical couple of hours birding in the grounds, starting with Green Jays and a family of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers feeding in some dead trees, before settling down by a shady pool where we watched a Wood Thrush, Northern Waterthrushes, and Indigo Bunting when Bryan found what turned out to be a Chuck-will's Widow perched along a branch - quietly we fixed up our scopes and while we were watching the bird suddenly took wing and flew off low through the trees only for Roy (why is it always Roy?) to inform us that his bird was still perched. When we looked through his 'scope it was nicely focused on a dead branch!!

Leaving Astascosa behind we had some good views of a Coyote wandering across

a field before we ran into the town of Brownsville, finding Coria Street more by luck than by any navigational skills.

Along with some other birders already present we set about the task of finding the Red-crowned Parrots eventually seeing about eight individuals, when suddenly the sky was full of Mississippi Kites - we counted 94 as they spiralled into a kettle looking for a roosting site.

While talking to the other birders we gleaned some news of two rarities at Sable Palms - so we hastily rescheduled tomorrow's itinerary to take in Sable Palms.

The following morning found us struggling to find our way through Brownsville - eventually finding the road to Sable Palms. On arrival we found a small band of birders waiting for the warden to lead us round. Although the two major rarities Crimson-collared Grosbeak and Gray-crowned Yellowthroat failed to show, a good selection of birds were seen at the sanctuary including Green-backed Heron, Black-shouldered Kites, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Swainson's Thrush and Bronzed Cowbird, while the warbler section included Tennessee, Nashville, Black and White and a Black-throated Green.

Leaving the sanctuary we headed back into Brownsville and to the infamous dump, although not the most beautiful place in the world it did offer an American rarity in the form of Mexican Crow which we duly found amongst the hoards of Ring-billed, Herring and Laughing Gulls. Also present were Chihuahuan Ravens, a single Franklin's Gull and surprisingly a Horned Lark.

From the dump we took the old military highway which led us up the Rio Grande valley to Santa Anna where we arrived during the middle of the afternoon, to find the birding very slow. However we did find Cinnamon Teal, and a Green Kingfisher which was only seen by Paul and Mick. We decided to cut our losses and we then headed straight out to Bentsen where we again met up with Hannah and Arty, who made us a welcome mug of coffee while they baited the picnic tables with popcorn for the Clay-coloured Robins. Unfortunately no robins came to the bait but the Green Jays did just as good a job of eating the popcorn.

With Hannah and Arty being here the night before they were more than keen to show us around. Unfortunately Hannah led us into the Great Horned Owl a little too quickly and we flushed her off the roost, although we later saw the owlets in the nearby nest.

Standing on the road waiting for dark we watched Broadwings, Mississippi Kites and a Harris' Hawk come into roost while overhead Couch's and an Eastern Kingbird appeared on the overhead wires. As darkness fell we parked up in the entrance to the park, catching a glimpse of an Eastern Screech Owl before walking out onto the levee to look for Pauraque (a species of nightjar) of which we finally saw two. Arriving back in the park we quickly located the Elf Owl which was calling constantly and we had some excellent views of it in the torchlight before leaving for the motel.

An hour before dawn we were back at Bentsen driving slowly around the roads, the Pauraques were much easier to see this time, picking up the orange eye shine in the car headlights as they sat about on the tarmac. As dawn broke we again baited the picnic tables with the required popcorn and this time we successfully attracted the Clay-coloured Robins out into view - having had our fill we then headed back to Santa Anna to give the others another chance at the Green Kingfishers. On arrival we quickly slipped around to a small pool to tick off Anhinga before going to where we saw the kingfisher the previous day. While waiting we met two well known American birders, Benton Basham and Jim Anderson, while talking to them I noticed a large raptor breaking cover of the trees, which was not recognised by anyone present except Benton, who without hesitation

called out Crane Hawk (this bird was the one that had produced the first record for North America and it had been present for several weeks. Shortly afterwards a pair of Hook-billed Kites gave us a prolonged ariel display. Although we failed to see the kingfisher again we left Santa Ana feeling pretty good.

Moving up the valley our next stop was the Santa Marganta ranch, on arrival we duly paid our US dollar a head entrance fee and made our way down to the river seeing Bewick's Wren on the way. Just as we had started to bird our way along the river bank a jeep of young Mexicans arrived firing shot-guns and generally making a lot of noise. It was shortly after this that two rifle shots were fired into the trees above our heads, at this point we decided that Santa Marganta was a washout and we made a prompt withdrawal.

Heading up river to Salineno - which turned out to be a much better place to be, sitting on the river bank we scoped a pair of Altimira Orioles building a nest on the other side. During the next hour or so we picked up most of the Rio Grande specialities which included Red-billed Pigeon, Brown Jay, Muscovy Duck and the enormous Ringed Kingfisher. Having cleaned up Salineno we pressed on to Falcon Dam. As we arrived we found Lark Buntings and American Golden Plovers feeding on the grass verges. As it was late in the day we decided to find the camp site and finish the days birding there. As the last of the light faded the Lesser Nighthawks became active with up to eleven in the air at once. It was here we spent our first night under the Texan stars.

Awakening the next morning we found that the weather had taken a turn for the worse with heavily overcast skies and a strong wind was blowing. Making our way back to the dam, nobody felt confident of our chances with the Ferruginous Pygmy Owl. Walking along the river bank it had started to rain hard dampening our spirits even more - having given the owl an hour we decided to cut short our search and drove on to San Ygnacio.

The birding was no easier there, even if the rain had stopped. Although the seedeaters were being elusive we managed to find Common Yellowthroat and Lincoln Sparrow, while on the river Anhinga and American White Pelican were birds of note. We were just about to give up, when Benton and his crew arrived, now with the aid of a tape recorder we managed to coax out a White-collared Seedeater briefly to the top of the reeds along with a Swamp Sparrow. Having achieved our target the next hour was spent in a small cantina eating and discussing how to spend the rest of the day - as we had no special sites to visit we decided to break with tradition and start the long drive to Big Bend in daylight and stop and bird at suitable sites on the way.

Driving westwards across the trans Pecos the land was now becoming more arid, stopping to check the culverts and bridges we were soon finding more Cave than Cliff Swallows. As we continued our attention was drawn to a flock of birds in a roadside field near Fronton, on closer inspection they proved to be Lark Buntings but also present were Black-throated Sparrows, Cactus Wren, Pyrrhuloxia, while a distant raptor turned out to be a Caracara. Travelling ever westwards we were again brought too a sudden stop, this time by a flock of Purple Finches which on closer inspection held a single House Finch along with some dark backed Lesser Goldfinches.

As darkness fell we picked out a couple of Great Horned Owls sitting on low trees close to the road. After a short stop to take on more coffee we continued uneventfully to Big Bend arriving in the early hours.

To be continued, Mick Fiszer.

PROPOSED NAME CHANGE.

In a previous newsletter I remarked on the curious fact that the only Water Rails in the area were in the vicinity of the local pubs. This posed an interesting question - Do they have a penchant for pubs, and if so, should not the species be renamed Water Ale?

So, in the true traditions of the Cley Bird Club, famed throughout the land for its contributions to serious ornithological research, I determined to resolve the mystery.

As is often the case with such research, sacrifices have to be made and in my case it meant giving up much of my leisure time and reluctantly spending many evenings in the local hostelrys. But in the end my devotion to duty paid dividends and I am now in a position to present the results of my labours, an event, for which I'm sure, the more scientifically minded of our members have been waiting agog!

At first I spent many fruitless hours without seeing a single Water Rail in a pub, but gradually I began to notice one or two scuttling along in the shadows as I walked home and it soon became apparent that they kept quite late hours, only appearing towards closing-time with the unfortunate consequence of my not being able to leave the pub until "chucking-out time" and also as the evening wore on, having to crawl around the floor trying to spot a rail - I'm sure people thought I'd been drinking.

The great break-through came late one evening, when at last I managed to engage a pair of rails in conversation. The birds were a female called Virginia and a young male known as "Ginger" to his friends and gradually young Ginger Rail told me the whole story.

At first I was somewhat crestfallen to learn my research was not original and that I was simply resurrecting once well-known facts, now long-forgotten and that rail was once a by-word for boozing and carousing etc and indeed literature abounds with such allusions, - RAIL - to utter abuse. RAILLERY - friendly banter, noisy good humour. TO GO OFF THE RAILS - leading a reckless, dissipated life.

Indeed, so well known was their liking for beer that many pubs were built along their migration routes (known as Rail-ways), many of which still exist today e.g. Railway Hotel, Inn or Tavern. Incidentally the term Rail-ways should always be used in Britain, never Rail-roads, as this applies only to the routes of flightless rails which have to walk when on migration.

Other modern terms originating from around this time include Railway sleeper, stemming from their habit of celebrating too well and simply falling asleep across the Rail-way. Porter, is a dark, heavy beer and a favourite tippie, sold at every pub along their route and soon became known as Rail-way Porter. Railway Station was originally spelt Rail weigh-station, where they checked for any undue weight loss whilst on migration.

Ginger Rail also gave me an interesting piece of local information in that, the "Three Swallows" in Cley, was named after old Fred Rail who spent many hours there and always downed his pint in three gulps - in fact he spent so much time there that he earned the nickname of Bar Rail.

Another well-known character around this time was a young rail called Tommy, who due, to the crepuscular habits of the species, met many owls on his jaunts, eventually even marrying one. This young lady was very reluctant to give up her maiden name completely, so they agreed to hyphenate it and were known as Mr and Mrs T.Owl-Rail.

In the unlikely event that there are still one or two sceptics amongst you, muttering darkly into your beards (Oops! - sorry ladies) and asking such

questions as "What about the four or five Water Rails around the Pool Hide in September, far away from any pub?", well thats easily explained,- they were members of the Pool(8 ball)team practising for an important game.

Another question I can hear you asking is, "Where do they get their beer-money from then?", Ginger told me that they were in great demand on T.V., and Film doing sound effects, such as the screeching of boggarts or someone garroting a Wart Hog, also doing adverts for Kellogg's Corncrakes, Bird's Custard etc.

Another lucrative occupation is in todays pop-music - just listen and you will soon realise just how many records they are on.

Obviously now, even the most sceptical amongst you must agree that the evidence is overwhelmingly in favour of a name-change from Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*) to Water Ale (*Rallus blottoensis*), and as this hallowed journal is obviously required reading for all members of the B.O.U. Committee, I'm sure that it will not be long before the change is anounced officially.

Well, thats about it and what a relief that I wont need to visit the pub so often. But wait, a thought has just occured to me, "Are Water Rails unique in their dipsomaniacal habits or are there other species with similar tendencies?". "What about Woodpecker Cider, Famous Grouse Whisky and Wild Turkey Bourbon?". It looks as though my work is not yet over and I may be forced to visit the pub again, so bye-bye, I'm off to do a bit of research!

J. T. Corcoran.
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High Street,
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Norfolk.

NORFOLK MONTHLY BIRD NEWS.

JULY BIRD NEWS.

A second summer plumaged Mediterranean Gull was at the sewage outflow off Overstrand, on the 10th.

On the 15th during strong onshore winds, 250, Manx Shearwaters were seen off Hunstanton and Holme, a lesser number were seen off Cley on the same day.

A Buff-breasted Sandpiper was at Welney on the 21st, but it only stayed briefly leaving later in the same day.

On the 25th a female Woodchat Shrike was found at Waxham, possibly staying to the 26th?

On the 26th a Pectoral Sandpiper was found at Titchwell RSPB reserve, but this too was a short stayer, and was not seen the following day.

A Baird's sandpiper was seen roosting at the high tide wader roost in Wells Harbour, on the 27th, unfortunately it was only seen by a single observer.

On the 31st a Buff-breasted Sandpiper appeared at Holkham Fresh Marshes, it was on the newly created "flash" out on the meadows, and had to be viewed from the roadside about a half a mile distant. This bird was to stay for a couple of weeks, and a few lucky birders saw it on a small pool off Bone's Drift at close range. Also present on this flash and the pool off Bone's Drift was a Pectoral Sandpiper, it had been there for a number of days, and this too was a long stayer.

AUGUST BIRD NEWS.

A Pectoral Sandpiper was found at Welney Wildfowl trust Refuge on the 7th, where it stayed to the 15th, it was thought to be the Holkham bird which had disappeared just a few days earlier.

A Bee-eater was seen by Mick Fiszler (a Cley Bird club member) flying west over Paston, at 7am on the 14th.

On the 16th the Bee-eater was seen briefly over Holme at 9am, and later two Cranes came in off the sea and flew off inland, whilst at Heacham an Osprey and a Mediterranean Gull were seen later in the afternoon. A Spotted Crake was at Welney Washes, from the 17th to the 18th.

A Mediterranean Gull was at the high tide roost at the RSPB reserve at Snettisham, on the 19th.

On the 20th, a juvenile White-winged Black Tern was found on a flooded riverside meadow at Beccles, it stayed there to the 21st.

On the 21st a juvenile Purple Heron was found at Holkham, it stayed there to the 29th. It roosted each night in a small reed-bed off Bone's Drift, and each evening from the 23rd it put on a show as it flew in from the east to a large and appreciative crowd.

On the 22nd, a Pectoral Sandpiper was at Breydon Water near Gt Yarmouth and a Temminck's Stint was at the RSPB reserve at Titchwell, the latter bird was also present on the 23rd.

On the 24th a juvenile White-winged Black Tern roosted out the high tide, also seen there was a Mediterranean Gull.

SEPTEMBER BIRD NEWS.

The Norfolk Bird News will be written up in the January issue, it'll beef up that issue as it's usually a thin one.

CLEY MONTHLY BIRD NEWS.

by J. T. Corcoran.

In the last newsletter I gave June 23rd as the last date for the Cley Great Reed Warbler, but I have since received a letter from Mr V.J. Hanlon, informing me that he and several other birders saw the bird on the 24th. So thank you Mr Hanlon for taking the trouble of letting us know. And if any of our members have earlier or later dates than the ones published in these pages for birds in the Cley square, I would be grateful for details. With the ever increasing number of birders visiting the area these days, the task of keeping up with every bit of gen' increases proportionately.

Thanks are due to Mr John Hampshire and Mr Ian Brooks of Hickling who responded quickly to my suggestion of our providing nest-boxes for the local Barn Owls. Mr Brookes generously supplied us with three tea-chests, and John delivered them with an offer of help and advice in siting them.

Another item of interest was a ring, passed on to me by Mr John Wright of Cley, bearing a number and the words MUSEUM-PARIS. He informed me that the ring was on a warbler(?) squashed beyond recognition, the only undamaged bit being the leg to which the ring was attached, this sticking straight into the air. I sent the details in but have had no news so far.

There must have been a mass-breakout somewhere this summer as an unusual assortment of escapes were seen in and around the area, including a Red-billed

Blue Magpie (July 9th) at Walsey Hill (could it be the same individual seen at the same location a couple of years ago?). Interestingly another, or possibly the same was seen in late June at the Naze in Essex. Also on July 9th there was a Glossy Starling at Salthouse. Next came a Red Bishop (nicknamed a Tu-Tu bird after an Archbishop of that name), in gardens at Cley. August 6th saw a Red-headed Bunting at Langham, with a Budgie there on the 18th and finally a Namaqua Dove at Holkham on the 30th.

JULY BIRD NEWS.

There can only be one word to describe the July weather - grotty. A succession of depressions bringing dull skies and lots of rain. Temperatures were above average but sunny days were almost non-existent.

The first four days produced only average numbers of waders, including one Wood Sandpiper. Three Garganey were also present, increasing to six birds by the 5th (adult and 5 juveniles) on which date over 600 Sand Martins were roosting in the reed-bed and 62 Bearded Tits, the great majority juveniles, 'pinged' from the tall dead reeds near Dauke's Hide, presumably drying-off after some particularly heavy rain.

On the 6th a nice adult summer plumage Temminck's Stint arrived on Simmond's Scrape (staying to 10th), Green Sandpipers numbered 5, 50+ Black-tailed Godwits and a single Little Ringed Plover was present whilst Whimbrel and Dunlin were heard over the village, calling in the dark at 11.30pm. Along the 'Skirts' two Grasshopper Warblers were still reeling.

The first Common Sandpipers returned by the 7th and there were 6 adult Little Ringed Plover on Simmond's Scrape, and a Hobby was over the reserve on the 8th and the first juvenile Ruff was noted on this date. Whilst the 9th was notable for a Kingfisher at Snipe's Marsh and a second summer Glaucous Gull around Blakeney Pit.

The Hobby performed over the reserve again on the 11th, being seen daily for the next week or so and a Barn Owl was seen at dusk hunting the banks of Richardson Scrape and perched up on a post in front of the Observation hide. A stroll around the various scrapes on the 12th revealed only average numbers of waders - 40+ Black-tailed Godwits, 12 Spotted Redshank, 10 Ruff, 4 Little Ringed Plover and 3 Green Sandpiper. By the 13th Avocet numbers showed a marked decrease and only a single Dunlin was present, whilst on Salthouse Heath three Nightjars still 'churred' in the evening.

Metaphorically, but not meteorologically speaking, the 15th was a much brighter day when strong onshore winds resulted in good numbers of waders and seabirds passing through, some dropping in to stay a while. The 'droppers-in' included a moulting adult Red-necked Phalarope, 2 'Red' Knot, a Purple Sandpiper, 4 Little Stints, an early Whimbrel, 12 Golden Plover (first of the autumn), and Dunlin numbers rose dramatically from 1 to 80 including several early juveniles. Black-tailed Godwits also increased to 76 (peak for the month), Ruff numbered about 30 and Spotted Redshank about 20, but only a single Wood Sandpiper. A good selection of seabirds (for July) also passed through with over 125 Manx Shearwaters, 6 Bonxies, 3 Arctic Skuas, a Little Gull, a few Gannets, 7 Scaup, 3 Red-breasted Merganser, 55 Common Scoter and a single Red-throated Diver. The Hobby performed over Billy' Wash, even alighting on the ground at one stage, as we sat in the North Hide watching the phalarope.

The first Curlew Sandpipers arrived on the 16th, rising to 6 on the 17th and varying between 1 to 4 to the months end. A Grey Wagtail passed west on the 17th

and the first returning Wheatears (2 juveniles) were in the Eye Field on the 19th.

A pleasing sight on the 21st were three pairs of Spotted Flycatchers each feeding young on a 500 yard stretch of Leatherpool Lane and on 22nd a female Red-crested Pochard was on the North Scrape (staying until 29th) but waders were still unremarkable with only 4 Curlew Sandpipers and a Little Stint being notable. An adult Mediterranean Gull was also seen on 22nd.

Garganey had risen to 7 by 23rd, and a Crossbill headed west over the East Bank.

The 25th and 26th were notable only for rather late nesting birds, with 2 Song Thrushes, Blackbird, Chaffinch and Moorhen all still sitting on eggs and on 27th Garganey rose to 8, mainly frequenting Pat's Pool and on Simmond's Scrape at dusk there were 7 Little Ringed Plover present. By the 28th Wood Sandpipers numbered three and the Dunlin 370 and a female Marsh Harrier was over the reserve.

Garganey again increased, to 9 and 7 Green Sandpipers were present on 29th, whilst the first of the autumn's Sooty Shearwaters was seen off Salthouse.

The month ended with reasonable numbers of sandpipers, 10 Green, a Wood, 4 Curlew and 13 Common Sandpipers, whilst 9 Garganey were still on Pat's Pool.

AUGUST BIRD NEWS.

Again, a month dominated by westerly winds and although the first half was warm and dry the skies remained dull and overcast. Around mid-month the south-westerlies gained strength for a few days, resulting in lower temperatures, warming up again until the 19th when strong westerlies and heavy showers cooled things down again for a day or two. The last week was unsettled with south-westerly winds and a little warmer.

On the 1st, wader numbers remained fairly unremarkable, but Ruff had risen to 60, Common Sandpipers to 15, with 8 Green and 1 Wood Sandpipers. And a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker tapped around in the bushes at Walsey Hill, like a be-feathered wood chisel. A Tree Pipit in my back garden was a garden-tick.

The 2nd was notable for the large reduction in Swifts, most of which had left quite suddenly or more appropriately they made a 'swift' exit. And 5 Garganey still pattered about Pat's Pool.

15 Common Scoter headed west on the 3rd, like a line of distant coal-scuttles and on the reserve there were 250 Dunlin on the North Scrape, and next day the late-nesting Moorhens finally had chicks, when an adult winter plumaged Mediterranean Gull was on Pat's Pool (seen regularly to the month's end). At dusk on the Whitwell Scrape there were 5 juvenile Little Ringed Plovers, and 20 Black-tailed Godwits flew about the reserve.

The highlight (for me anyway) of the 7th, was a female Goshawk over Old Womans Lane, coming from the direction of Bayfield and retracing its 'steps' about 10 minutes later heading back in the direction from which it came. New waders on the reserve were 2 Sanderling and 4 Little Ringed Plovers, whilst Wood, Green, Curlew and Common Sandpipers were present in small numbers together with a single Little Stint.

Unusual on the 9th was a Grey Wagtail amongst 25 Yellow Wagtail on Blakeney Point, which held very little else apart from a moulting male Redstart, Tree Pipit and a dozen Wheatear, although a Black Tern and 2 Arctic Terns were offshore as were 3 female Eider, brown, sleeping lumps, about as interesting as a similar number of pillows (stuffed with Eider-down of course). A Little Gull

visited the reserve and with a walk around the reserve and a look at Blakeney harbour it was possible to see 24 species of wader.

A Purple Sandpiper was at Salthouse on the 10th and on the 11th, 2 and a single Crossbill headed west over the reserve, 7 Turtle Dove moved south and a fulmar flew inland over Cley Mill. A Bittern was seen over the reserve reed-beds several times during the day. The Mediterranean Gull was seen again on Pat's Pool, and the Bittern was seen on a number of occasions through the day, flying back and forth over the reserve.

The first juvenile Spotted Redshank was on Simmond's Scrape and Pat's Pool, in the evening of the 12th. By the 12th most of the Little Terns had left and a Manx Shearwater passed east on the 13th off the Coastguards, 3 Gannets did likewise on the 14th when Curlew Sandpipers numbers had risen to 11, one of which was a juvenile the first of the autumn. On the 15th a Grasshopper Warbler could still manage a snatch of song along the 'Skirts' and a Kingfisher was on Snipes Marsh (I'm surprised that the woman's libbers don't demand we call the females, Queenfishers *(a little difficult to sex in the field I think, Eds)* - we could get our own back by calling male Hen Harriers, Cock Harriers!). Little Stints had built up to a grand total of three individuals, by the 16th. A Green Woodpecker flew over Cley Mill towards Marsh Lane on the 17th and a Hobby was over the reserve (seen irregularly to months-end).

New on the 19th was a Temminck's Stint (which was present up to the 28th) a female Marsh Harrier passed through, as did a Black Tern. On the 20th, 3 Manx Shearwaters, several Arctic Skuas and a Red-necked Grebe were offshore and the following day over 50 Manx Shearwaters, 2 Sooty Shearwaters and a Pomarine Skua passed through. The highlight of the 22nd was an adult summer plumaged Sabine's Gull which passed west off the Coastguards and 5 or 6 Bonxies moved in the opposite direction.

On 23rd, a Jack Snipe was on Pope's Marsh, a very unusual date as both adults and juveniles remain to moult in the breeding areas during August/September, normally not arriving here until October/November, so possibly this individual remained in Britain through the summer for one reason or another? Also on 23rd a Dotterel was seen on the reserve and later along towards Blakeney Point, and the Kingfisher was seen again both near Dauke's Hide and at Cley Mill on the Glaven (possibly different birds as two birds were seen together later on in the month).

A walk on 24th to Blakeney Point produced a beautiful summer plumaged Black-throated Diver, 3 Red-breasted Mergansers, 80 Common scoter west in a half hour period, 2 Arctic Terns and a Little Tern, 2 separate Grey Herons in off the sea and 30 Wheatears, whilst the Dotterel was in the Eye Field in the early morning. On the 25th a Shag was near the 'Wreck' off the Coastguards, Little Stints totalled 6 and Curlew Sandpipers had risen to 20 most of the latter now juveniles. A flock of 9 juvenile Spotted Redshank flew west over Dauke's Hide at 8am, and later there were 3 adults and another 2 juveniles on Pat's Pool.

On 26th there was an overnight increase of Curlew Sandpipers, with 30 juveniles and 3 adults. Two Wood Sandpiper were on the Bittern Pool, and the Bittern was still flying about the reserve with some regularity. Whilst waiting for the Holkham Purple Heron to perform its evening fly-past at 7.15pm, the gallery was informed that a Lesser Crested Tern was on Arnold' Marsh (from about 5 to 7 pm), and most jogged off like demented Lemmings, but the bird (unknown to them at the time) had flown. It was claimed twice next day on Blakeney Point, where also a Pied Flycatcher was seen and Dotterel both there and at Salthouse. Another good bird for this date was a Long-tailed Skua and a Black Tern passed offshore as did an early Brent Goose. A single Nightjar was seen on Salthouse Heath.

On 28th a Sooty Shearwater, several Skuas and Gannets plus a Red-necked Grebe were offshore but Steve Gantlett had the cream with a Roseate Tern flying west and (with Peter Gooden) a Pectoral Sandpiper briefly on Arnold's Marsh.

On 30th a Spotted Crake was found on the Big Pool by Peter Gooden and Eddie Myers, the bird was rather elusive and it was seen by very few other birders, in fact it was not 'spotted' on subsequent days. Also on this date a pretty early female Hen Harrier was over the reserve (also on 31st) and there was a noticeable increase in Wigeon, Teal and Mallard. The Eye Field held over 50 Bar-tailed Godwit, 35 Whimbrel and 25 Curlew. The Shag was again near the Wreck, and 3 Great Crested Grebes nearby were new and a Grey Heron came in off the sea.

The month ended with at least four Water Rails around the Big Pool, 5 Little Stints, a Wood Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper and a single Avocet.

SEPTEMBER BIRD NEWS.

The most noticeable feature of the 1st was the heavy westerly passage of Curlew and Whimbrel, with at least 200 and 150 respectively in the fields around the reserve and others passing through all day. The female Hen Harrier was again over the marsh and a Black tern and 3 Little Gulls were offshore, wader numbers were small, but a Water Rail (Pool Hide) and a Garganey were still present, whilst an Oortolan Bunting was claimed at the Hood on Blakeney Point.

Garganey numbers had risen to four by the 2nd, both Hen Harrier and Black Tern were seen again. 5 Little Ringed Plover, a Wood and 3 Green Sandpipers were on the reserve scrapes.

A Bee-eater played hit-and-run along the coast on 3rd, the sequence of sightings (12.50 to 250pm) going thus, Cley-Blakeney Point-Cley-Salthouse-Cley, what a busy little Bee-eater. Another good bird on this date was an adult Sabine's Gull in summer plumage which headed west off Coastguards, also passing offshore were 10 Arctic and 1 Pomarine Skua, 2 Manx Shearwaters and a Kestrel came in off the sea.

Our busy little friend of the 3rd passed through again on the 4th, being seen at Cley and on Blakeney Point, where 2 Black and 1 Arctic Tern, together with a Tree Pipit were also seen. Wader numbers improved with 4 Little Stint, 3 Curlew Sandpipers, the remaining 3 Avocet and the adult Mediterranean Gull were noted on Cley reserve.

12 Curlew Sandpipers were reported from Arnold's Marsh on the 5th and a lone Swift was over the village, whilst on the 6th, the first Lapland Bunting of the autumn was found near the North Hide, with a Little Gull on the North Scrape and a Kingfisher in front of Dauke's Hide. News of a suppressed Barred Warbler at Weybourne Camp was leaked out to us by a 'Mole'.

Sea-watching was the order of the day on the 7th when, despite the relatively small numbers of birds passing offshore, the quality content was high with an adult Long-tailed Skua and later an adult summer plumaged Sabine's Gull. This bird spent at least 20 minutes feeding into the wind, then circled back to cover the same beat again. It was seen to chase Sandwich Terns on 3 occasions and once, even had the cheek to briefly pursue an Arctic Skua which had just robbed a tern. Other birds involved in this movement included 2 Little Gulls, about 20 Arctic Terns and 2 'latish' Little Terns along with a continuous stream of Gannets and a noticeable number of waders moving west, which was reflected on the scrapes with Curlew Sandpipers rising to 35 (building up to 48 on the 9th, then gradually falling to 10 on the 15th), Little Stints stood at a dozen (17 on 8th, 10 on 10th and then 24 on 11th reducing to 4 on 13th). Ruff reached their peak for the month at 40. Ten Spotted Redshank, 6 Green Sandpipers

and 3 Little Ringed Plover added variety and around 50 Bar-tailed Godwits fed in the Eye Field (with similar numbers until 18th, with lesser numbers after this). An immature Spoonbill arrive (until 14th) and a party of 6 Whinchat was behind 'Billy's Hut'. 5 Black Terns also headed west with 22 passing Blakeney Point the following day when an Osprey flew south over the marshes. A Dotterel was near the Watch House (until 12th)

The 9th saw similar numbers of waders on the marsh with the addition of 2 Wood Sandpipers and a Knot and the Mediterranean Gull was still in the area. Again the sea produced some good birds with an immature Long-tailed Skua taking pride of place, other birds included a Leach's Petrel, 50 Manx and a Sooty Shearwater, 20 Arctic Skua, 50 Gannet and 5 Little Gulls (1 adult) - "What happened to our party of non-breeders during May-July this year?".

The sea was quieter on the 10th, but 2 Red-necked Grebes (adult and a juvenile), 2 Sooty Shearwaters, 3 Little Gulls (2 adults) and 2 Purple Sandpipers were seen with a summer plumaged Black-throated Diver reported from Blakeney Point (possibly the August 24th's bird), as were 2 Woodlarks, a scarce bird in the square. Also on Blakeney Point were Red-backed Shrike, Dotterel, Lapland Bunting, around 15 Whinchat and 20 Wheatears. On the reserve 2 Kingfishers were seen together from Dauke's Hide, and a Garganey was still present.

Similar species and numbers remained on the 11th on both the reserve and Blakeney Point but the sea was busier, Skuas, Gannets and Manx Shearwaters moving past. One lucky observer, who shall remain nameless, but hid initials are SJMG, got Crossbill on his garden-list as 5 passed over his house in Cley and they headed off towards Wiveton Hall Woods? Things were quieter on the 12th, but 5 Sooty Shearwaters were off the Coastguards and a Wryneck was reported from the car-park in front of the NNT centre, but as it was Monday, the centre was closed, the news never got about the local grapevine and no one else saw it?

The next two days (13th and 14th) produced excellent sea-watching and to save repetition (and Eddie's typing-finger), figures for the 14th are in brackets - an adult and a juvenile Long-tailed Skua, an adult and a juvenile Sabine's Gull, 11 (12) Leach's Petrel, 30 (7) Sooty Shearwaters, c60 (12) Manx Shearwaters, 10 (15) Bonxies, 8 (3) Red-throated Divers, 3 (20) Common Scoter, 1 (2) Red-necked Grebe, 2 (1) Shag, 50 (30) Gannet and 2 (1) Purple Sandpiper; Additional birds were a Grey Phalarope, a Pomerine Skua, 2 Little Gulls and an Arctic Tern. Also on the 14th the Lapland bunting was still near the North Hide, and there were 3 Redstart on Blakeney Point.

It may be worth mentioning at this point, that in the cases of the two rarer species, Long-tailed Skua and Sabine's Gull it is hard to assess how many individuals were involved, with several sightings of each (5 between 7th to 16th and 4 - 3rd to 13th respectively), over a relatively short period. There has been 22 past records, involving 28 individuals, including 5 on 30th September 1973, but excluding two records (December 1979 and January 1980) recently rejected of Sabine's Gull in the Cley square since 1960. Long-tailed Skuas have been a bit more numerous with around 28 records of 34 birds since 1975.

Whilst on the subject of past records, it may be relevant to note that the numbers of Leach's Petrels on the 13th equelled and the 14th surpassed the former highest daily count which was 11, on 14th September 1975.

The strong winds abated on by the 15th, and the sea-passage was much reduced, nevertheless a few Arctic Skuas, 30 gannets, 7 Little Gulls, a Leach's Petrel, 3 Shag, 3 Red-breasted Merganser, a Red-necked Grebe and 2 Purple Sandpipers were noted. Presumably the strong wind was responsible for the increase in duck on the reserve (or was it the shooting season starting on the 1st) and 500 Wigeon and over 150 Pintail were counted.

It's pleasant to record how Pintail numbers at Cley have shown a steady increase in the last 30 years. In the late fifties 20 birds was a good number, but by the late seventies peak counts totalled over 400 and in the early eighties several counts of 1,000 were made (*This paragraph was included after a donation of two Mallard and a Wigeon for the authors freezer, by the Blakeney and District Wildfowlers*).

Also on the 15th Timmy Lubbock (NT Coastal Warden) told me an amusing tale of a Bonxie on Blakeney Point, which was found feeding avidly on a pile of dead seals, placed in a deep hole for burial. The bird was unable to get out of the hole - it must have made a proper pig of its self - and had to be rescued by being lifted out with the aid of a couple of long pieces of wood and when freed, merely waddled off down the beach.

On the 16th a particularly obliging juvenile Long-tailed Skua spent most of the afternoon passing to and fro off the Coastguards, 3 more Leach's Petrels were seen and a few early Brent Geese arrived. At Walscy Hill, 4 Siskins were in the bushes.

Sea-passage slowed to a trickle on 17th, but a Sooty Shearwater, a Red-necked Grebe, 2 Little Gulls, Shag and an early Goldeneye were seen. A Merlin was by the Coastguards and a Bluethroat and 2 early Snow Buntings were on Blakeney Point, and a Red-backed Shrike was at Morston.

The 18th saw the return of an old friend, Boy George (the regular wintering Glaucous Gull), after fears that it may have been a case of R.I.P., due to his return being later than usual (9th September 1986 and 31st August 1987). Seven Brent Geese headed west offshore and on 19th the first Rock Pipit of the autumn - returned.

The first Fieldfare was seen on the 20th, a drake Scaup headed west and the Red-backed Shrike was still present near Morston, whilst on 21st a Stonechat was along Blakeney Bank and on the 23rd good numbers of Arctic Skuas passed offshore along with a couple of Manx Shearwaters.

Yet again, on the 24th the sea was worth a look, producing an adult Long-tailed Skua, 5 or 6 Pomerine Skuas, 10 each of Bonxie and Arctic Skua, 3 Manx Shearwaters and an Arctic Tern, whilst on the 25th there were very few birds of note at all on the sea-watch. the reserve held just a few waders, which included the following; 12 Little Stints, 3 Greenshank, a Green Sandpiper and a Kingfisher.