

CLEY BIRD CLUB



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Cley-next-the-sea
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NEWS-LETTER NUMBER FOUR

JANUARY 1987

Hello again,

Well that's another year gone, and the end of the first year of the Cley Bird Club. I hope you've all enjoyed the first year's news-letters, they've got better with each one, or at least I think so. (Well I've not had too many complaints.) The contents of the first four news-letters have been largely up to me; I hope I have't bored you too much. Any change will have to come from you, the membership. Up to now I've written most things, with a few other people sending in things to be included. A rather nice write up on 25 years of birding at Cley from Moss Taylor is included in this news-letter: this is the sort of thing we need. If you write it and think it's good enough to include in future news-letters, then we will include it usually un-edited.

The year overall has been a poor one, with the exception of one or two nice birds. Three White-billed Divers, a Red-breasted Goose, a Kentish Plover, a late Dotterel, a Broad-billed Sandpiper, a world record breaking stay for a migrant Buff-breasted Sandpiper, a Spotted Sandpiper, an Iceland Gull, 2 Roseate Terns, a Tawny Pipit, a Dartford Warbler and 3 Red-breasted Flycatchers sounds like an amazing list of rarities to have in one place in a single year, but this is Cley and we're used to more!

1985 was a really exceptional year and 1986 just couldn't compete, but there's always next year...

ETM.

CAR STICKERS.

Have you got yours yet? They're still available, price 50p each.

BREEDING BIRD ATLAS.

After seeing the Norfolk Breeding Bird Atlas, the committee thought it would be an excellent idea if we were to do one on the breeding birds of the Cley 10km square. This would be as far as we know the first 1km square breeding bird atlas ever attempted. It would make Cley probably the ornithologically best known square in the country. Let's show the rest of the birding world that the Cley Bird Club is a pioneering club in every sense. Let the Cley Bird Club lead the way!

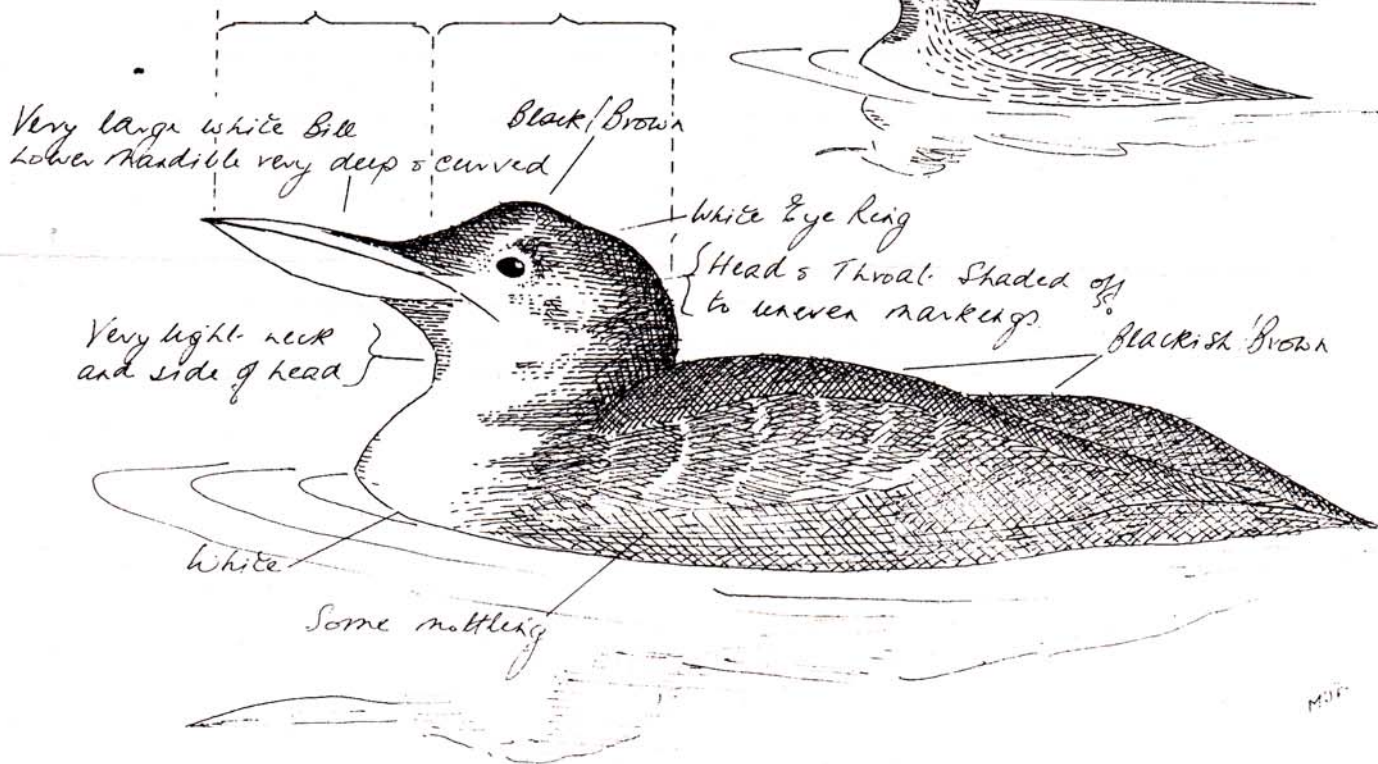
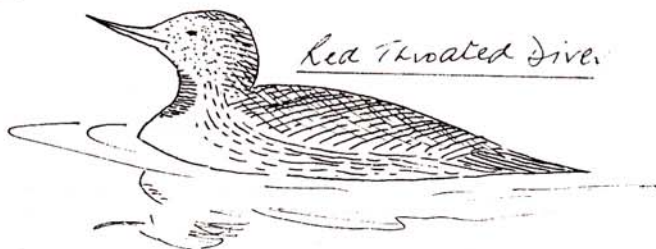
If we are to get this project underway this coming season then now is the time to start doing something. Get out your Ordnance Survey map and pick one or two 1km squares to bird this spring. The coastal squares are

likely to be well covered, so perhaps pick one of the more obscure-looking inland ones. Let us know which squares you are doing so that we can try to get all of them covered. The keener people can do several squares each. Just a few spring morning visits may be all that is needed to turn up an interesting list of singing and/or proved breeding birds. Who knows what surprises we might turn up in seldom watched corners of TG04?

WINTER BIRD ATLAS.

Another idea would be an atlas on the wintering birds of the Cley 10km square. We have a fairly good list of wintering species with some nationally and inter-nationally important numbers. The only regular wintering flock of Shorelark, and good numbers of Brent Geese and dabbling duck.

CLEY COASTGUARDS 11.15AM - 11.30AM FRIDAY 17TH OCT. 86.
SUNNY AND WARM - WIND: SLIGHT NE TO NIL
SEA - FLAT CALM LIKE A MIRROR
"WHITE BILLED DIVER"



WHITE-BILLED DIVERS OFF CLEY IN OCTOBER.

This is an excellent drawing of the second of this October's White-billed Divers by Maurice Eccleshall. This bird was seen off the Coastguards' between 11.15am and 11.30am on Friday the 17th of October 1986.

The first one was a second summer bird, also off the Coastguards', on the 4th. It was on the sea close inshore for 15 minutes before it flew off westwards. This bird was seen by numerous birders including Dave Holman, Giles Dunmore, Mick Fiszler and Rosemary Damon. These constitute the 2nd and 3rd records for Norfolk, and they've all been inside the Cley 10km square. The first record was of one off the Watch House, Blakeney Point on the 29th of September 1985. A long dead bird found on Blakeney Point in late July 1986 was quite probably the same.

Many thanks must go to Maurice Eccleshall for the drawing, and permission to use it in the news-letter and the Cley 10km square Bird Report.

MEMBERSHIP LIST.

Robin Abel.	Geoff Game.	Pete Morris.
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T Broom.	Carol Inskipp.	Richard Saunders.
Allan & Valerie Brown.	Arthur Jenkins.	Steve Saxton.
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Nigel Driver.	Mrs Mary Longstaff.	K Warmington.
Maurice Eccleshall.	Andy Lowe.	Richard Webb.
Martin Elliot.	Tim Lubbock.	Julian White.
Herbie & Mabel Ellis.	Clive Lucas.	Bob White.
Graham Etherington.	Mrs A Mansfield.	Mark Wickins.
R Eve.	Rod Martins.	Colin(SAS)Wilbourn.
Steve Fairburn.	Ian Mayer.	Jamie Williams.
Mick Fiszer.	John Millar.	Michael Williams.
Tom Fletcher.	Richard Millington.	Peter Wolstenholme.
Ms Liz Forster.	Neil Moody.	Tim Wright.
Peter Fyldes	Brian Moore.	Steve Young.

NEW MEMBERS.

Miss Louise Cassels.	Andrew Colledge.	Dave Sutton.
David Hall.	Les Roker.	Clive Watters.
John Selvey.	K J Bentley.	

ANSWERPHONE.

One of the original ideas was to set up a local 'Grape-vine' to inform people of a raritie, either local or national. The time and effort involved in such a scheme, phoning up 2 or 3 people, some who are never in then re-phoning them untill they get the message. Then when you do get hold of them, they've already seen it, in some cases they're the one who found it which has happened to me on more than one occasion. Or you phone them up with the hot news and their answer is, 'seen one', 'could'nt be bothered', 'is it a Gen bird' or some other negitive answer, when you could have been eyeballing the 'Mega'. Which is a good 40 minutes walk off on the Point, and you could have been there if you had'nt wasted your time phoning round.

An Answerphone would be a fairly good idea but a rather expensive one, thats if we set it up from scratch which is the best idea in this case. I've gone into it a little and worked out that it would cost some where in the region of £350, that would be for a new phone line with private number, an Answerphone a good one costs £150 and extra beepers so the information could be up-dated constantly by a couple of local birders in the know. Ofcourse even this will not be the same as a grapevine system, as you will have to phone up the number your selves but at least if you miss the birds then you've only your self to blame.

The advantages of an answerphone over a grapevine is that its always in when you phone it, will have all the latest Cley and Norfolk news on it, a 24 hour service and be a part of the Cley Bird Club membership and available to Cley Bird Club members only. This of course means another increase in the subscription, probably of 50 pence or so which is'nt bad value really. This will go down as the membership goes up, because in the second and subsequent years all we will have to pay for is the rental and repairs. This line will not be used for making phone calls, so we won't be getting any bills.

If any of you are interested in this idea and you think its a good one, something that will help you plan your week-ends to better effect, or just keep you in the know. Then please let me know by giving me a ring and tell me what you think about the idea, and what you would like to have on it. We would need finance, so we would like some volunteers to put up the cash, as I did for the Car stickers, this money would be repaid of course except for the yearly sub which would be as low as possible. This yearly sub would decrease as the membership rises, only the setting up of the system would be expensive.

Now that Roy Robinson has closed down up at Walsey hills and Nancy's cafe is increasingly more difficult to get through to on the telephone, an answerphone with just news of the Cley and Norfolk birds on would be just the thing. Plus one that did'nt cost a fortune to be a part of as the two national ones will and are doing so, plus you wont have to wait for an age to find out what is at Cley or if its still there because we will deal with this area only.

If any one is interested in the setting up of this system or helping in the finance of it, please drop me a line or give me a ring to let me know your thoughts. All people who help finance this answerphone will be repaid in full, in time. This will be one of the many selling points to get new members to join up, and this will of course make the system cheaper to run for each individual.

Eddie Myers.

A QUARTER OF A CENTURY AT CLEY.

The passing away of Billy Bishop sees the end of an era at Cley. Although many other birdwatchers will have many memories stretching farther back than mine, very few of the faces present in the early 1960's can be seen at Cley today. During the 25 years since my first visit in September 1961, I have noticed many changes, not only in the birders, but also in the habitat, the birds, the equipment and even the language.

A trip to the area in 1960 was incomplete without seeing the three local ornithologists, who to many epitomised Cley. I am of course referring to Billy Bishop, Dick Bagnall-Oakley and Richard Richardson. Both Billy and Dick had an apparently unlimitless supply of birding and Norfolk stories, which could be guaranteed to liven up even the dullest of days. Richard could invariably be found on his beloved East Bank, complete with beret and leather jacket, accompanied by his two small terriers and, more often than not, by a small group of admiring birdwatchers, eager to learn from one of the finest field ornithologists that ever lived. Sadly, all now are just memories for those of us privileged enough to have known them.

Anyone visiting Cley today, for the first time since 1960, would immediately notice the changes in the Reserve itself. The extensive reedbed has been interspersed with scrapes and their accompanying hides, thanks to the foresight of Billy Bishop. Previously, most of the waders were to be found on Arnold's marsh. The far end of the East Bank was therefore the place to find most of the birders, hoping to glimpse a visiting rarity, which in those days included the scarce Avocet!

Whilst the variety of waders visiting the Cley area has undoubtedly increased in recent years, some winter visitors have become far scarcer. Rarely did a year pass when a Great Grey Shrike did not winter on Salthouse Heath and it was 'nt necessary to walk out to Blakeney point to locate wintering Shorelarks. It was also in the early 1960's that 'Weybourne Willie', as 'George' was originally known, first appeared in immature plumage, patrolling the beach in winter, between Cley and Weybourne.

Without doubt, the time to be at Cley was at the end of August or early September. It was almost possible to guarantee an east wind during this period, which resulted in a good fall of drift migrants. Incidentally, this would invariably include the odd Bluethroat, a species now far more likely to be found in late spring. Once October had arrived, many people considered the best of the autumn to be over!

Most record of rarities or semi-rarities were made on Blakeney Point, usually in the, then more-extensive, tree lupins or plantation. However, Bluethroats tended to prefer the dune slacks and the Yankee Ridge was always worth checking for Wrynecks and Ring Ouzel. Ten or more observers were considered to be a 'crowd', as was the case when a dozen of us watched an Arctic Warbler, found in the Long Hills by Tim Sharrock in August 1968. After watching my first Red-breasted Flycatcher on the Point in late September 1962, I drove along to the Holkham Pines. At the time the great potential of Wells and Holkham had not been realised and it came as a very pleasant surprise to find, not one, but two Red-breasted Flycatchers gracing the pines. Apart from the three friends with me, there was 'nt another birder in the woods, despite a strong easterly wind. How different the story would be today.

The following day, I was fortunate to be present when a goldcrest-sized warbler was found in the sueada on the Hood. The supercillium and double wing-bar left no doubt that the bird was a Yellow-browed Warbler-the first Norfolk record since 1928! Although a mist net was erected, the bird was too small for the mesh and twice it flew through the net, to everyones disappointment. Since then, of course, the species has become an annual autumn visitor, not only to Cley but to many other parts of coastal Norfolk. Surely this can't be due to increased observer coverage?

Although sea-watching has only become popular in recent years, Cley beach has been used for this for well over thirty years. Initially the original Cley Bird Observatory building sited on the shingle beach was used, but after the 1953 flood, seawatchers sheltered behind, and beside, the concrete remains scattered along the shingle bank. Over the years, these slabs too, disappeared and Weybourne beach, on which it was possible to drive a car, became the favored seawatching site. Now, as anyone visiting Cley can witness, the beach at the Coastguards is the favorite viewing point, and the sea is watched most days irrespective of the wind direction. Whereas twenty years ago, a few of the draw tube 'Broadhurst and Clarkson' scopes could be seen at Cley, nowadays the majority of observers are armed with the modern short telescopes, mounted on tripods.

When not out in the field, Nancy's is, of course, the place to find many of the visiting and local birders. Twenty five years ago, the village fish and chip shop provided many with their only hot meal of the day, particularly if they were camping by the bank along the Beach road. Maintaining its association with birding, the chippy eventually closed, was converted into a house and is now the home of Bryan and Betty Bland. Accomodation was also available in the old green caravan in Billy Bishop's back garden. But woe betide anyone who woke Billy too early in the morning.

The George and Dragon has had a chequered history in the life of the Cley birders. For many years, Mrs Burnett ran the pub and is warmly remembered by visitors in the 1950's and early 1960's. Her successors, Ann and Harry Heap also ran it for both the locals and the visiting birders, setting aside a small room at the back, where birding talk often continued into the small hours. In those days MFMM, DIMW and JTRS were all familiar faces at Cley. Andy Lowe's short reign as 'mine host' will no doubt be remembered with affection by many reading this article. There followed a number of years when the new landlord, who for some reason, decided not to welcome the birders custom, which accounted for the declining trade. Fortunately, the present owners welcome everyone to the George and once again it has become a natural meeting place for birders in the evenings.

Nowadays the village is understandably attracting an increasing number of resident birders and it is interesting to speculate who will become the unforgettable characters in twenty five years time. Perhaps Bryan Bland, who is as well known as his Questar and shorts, as for his extensive birding knowledge; perhaps Steve Gantlett, who was originally responsible for trying to sort out the many stringy records entered in the log in Nancy's, with the curt words 'CRC REJECTED'; or even the founder of the Cley Bird Club, Eddie Myers, who is rapidly discovering that some very unusual 'firsts' can be recorded from the top of a ladder.

Moss Taylor.

WBD
Bill Total Length from Gape 118
Fixed length of lower mandible 55
Depth of bill at base of nostril 29
Culmen length 96
Nostril to tip 74

OCTOBER BIRD NEWS.

A rather quiet month unless you happened to see everything that is, when are we going to get an October with some decent easterly winds and some decent eastern vagrants?

A few Black-throated divers were seen off the coast during the month, October and November are the best two months to see this species off the North Norfolk coast. After November they become rather scarce, they must move further north as if we only get them as an overshooting winter migrant. The records for October are as follows, 2 off the Coastguards on the 10th, 3 off Blakeney point on the 18th, and singles seen off the coast between Blakeney point and Weybourne on a number of dates during the month. A Great-northern diver was seen off the Coastguards on the 9th, a scarce bird off the North Norfolk coast. Not one but two White-billed divers were seen off the Coastguards and Blakeney point this month, after the first last year and possibly the second record earlier this year we get 2 in less than a fortnight in October. The first one was a second summer bird off the Coastguards in the morning of the 4th, sitting on the sea close inshore for half an hour before flying off westwards. The second bird was a juvenile on the sea just off the Coastguards on the 17th, quite close inshore alongside a Red-throated diver for good comparison. This bird drifted off slowly out to sea and towards Blakeney point, where it was seen later again close inshore just off the Long hills. A drawing of the latter bird by Maurice Eccleshall appeared earlier in this news-letter, with a brief account and description.

A good month for Red-necked grebes, with up to 3 off the Coastguards for most of the month. Earlier in the month some were still showing signs of summer plumage, but no sign of any juveniles. Also quite a number of Slavonian grebes were seen off our stretch of the coast, sightings were as follows. Singles seen on the 5th, 10th, 11th and the 12th. 3 on the 13th, and 2 on the 26th. Quite a few more than in other years, if you know of any other records please send them in for inclusion in the 10km square bird report.

Shearwaters were few and far between, mind you its getting a bit late in the year really. the records are as follows, 2 Sooty shearwaters flew east off the Coastguards on the 19th. Manx shearwaters were recorded on the 4th, when a sickly looking bird was on the sea off the Coastguards. The 5th when 2 flew east off the Coastguards, and on the 31st when a single bird flew east also off the Coastguards.

Only one record of a single Shag this month, it was seen off the Coastguards on the 2nd. A fairly uncommon bird in the 10km square, but an annual visitor in small numbers.

A rather nice Bittern performed out in the open in Snipe's marsh on the 3rd, possibly a bird of the year as it showed no fear of people which it could clearly see as it strutted about in the open within 30 or so feet of the birders on the bank.

An adult Whooper swan was seen to fly in off the sea at Salthouse on the 21st, then head westwards towards Cley marshes where it was found later on Pat's pool with some Mute swans. It was seen later the same day flying off in a south-westerly direction.

A gaggle of c200 Pink-footed geese were heard in flight over Cley village after dark on the evening of the 4th, these were the only grey geese of note to be seen this month. The Brent geese flock soon built up to a thousand or more birds by the end of the month, and a pale breasted bird was seen in the flock on the Eye field on the 31st. Keep an eye out for the Black brants which have been regular at Cley over the last few years, no reports of them as yet but they'll be about any day now. Also Dr Moss Taylor is very interested in the colour combination and numbers of any colour ringed Brent geese seen in both the 10km square and Norfolk, so if you see any colour ringed Brents let me know and I'll forward the information.

A very nice male Red-crested pochard appeared on Pat's pool on the 15th, which is about the same time as others turned up in Tring, Chedder and Chew. So there every chance that this bird is a wild one, so another Cley and Norfolk tick for some of us. The bird was rather elusive towards the end of the month, but it was claimed in mid-November so it's still around the area some where. A few Velvet scoter were noted during sea-watches, 2 west off the Coastguards on the 11th, a male on sea off Salthouse on the 15th, a male on the sea off Weybourne on the 21st and 5 flew east on the 31st off the Coastguards,

A female Hen harrier flew west over the reserve in the early morning of the 20th, sexed by size. A ringtail Hen harrier flew in off the sea on the 30th during a south-westerly gale, it flew past the Coastguards twice before it made it ashore near the East bank. Too many people on the beach for it's liking, and mine. It flew off inland after a few minutes of quartering the reed-beds, looked like a female by the size of it. The only other bird of prey of note seen during the month, was a Merlin seen over the Three Swallows public house on the 23rd. A poor month for B.O.P's.

Two Avocet flew onto Pat's pool in the early morning of the 20th, they then moved onto the South scrape. One bird still present the next day and up to the end of the month, a late record but they have wintered at Cley in previous years. Golden plover numbers went up quickly from a dozen or so in the early part of the month to c400 on the 13th, c620 on the 23rd, c850 on the 24th and c1,500 by the months end. The Eye field pool held all the records for Little stint's in the square in the first half of the month, with the records as follows. 1 on the 1st, 4 from the 2nd to the 4th, 5 from the 5th to the 8th and 2 from the 9th to the 11th. There were no other records after these dates. The Temminck's stint stayed through into October on the Barnet in Blakeney, being seen there on the 1st. The same bird or possibly another was on the Eye field pool with the Little stint on the 6th, a good pool the Eye field pool. The latter date for Temminck's stint was the latest in the square since 1977, when a bird stayed through until the 23rd of the month. The only Curlew sandpiper of the month stayed on the Eye field pool on the 6th and 7th, I wonder what the attraction is over the scrapes on the reserve? A good

year for Purple sandpiper we've had a dozen or more, another one flew west along the beach at the Coastguards on the 20th, the only sighting of October. The peak count for Ruff was c50 on Pat's pool on the 11th, most of the Ruff feed on the fields above the Hangs during the winter and use the reserve for roosting. The Barnet or Crake pool at Blakeney held all the Jack snipe in the 10km square during October, the records are 3 on the 11th and 2 on the 12th and 19th. The only Woodcock was one flying in off the sea over Coastguards on the 30th. There were 3 Spotted redshank on Pat's pool on the 15th and 2 there on the 19th, with at least one staying on the reserve up to the end of the month. Peak count of Greenshank on the reserve was, 4 on Pat's pool on the 6th and at least one was present throughout the month. A Green sandpiper was seen feeding in the roadside dyke near the NWT carpark and visitors centre on the 20th, it was seen later to fly off inland over the public Lookout above the carpark. A very late Wood sandpiper was present on the Bittern pool for the last week of the month, it was still present in mid-November, this is the latest record for the 10km square.

The Skua passage was rather poor this autumn, though there were a few more Long-tailed skuas than usual. Very few Pomerine skuas were noted during the month, and the only dates I have is of one off the Coastguards on the 20th flying westward, and 3 flying west off the Coastguards on the 24th, these were seen by Mark Cavanagh. There's a few more in Nancy's log book, but I haven't included those because there's no initials against them. A juvenile Long-tailed skua was seen sitting on a sandbar off Blakeney point, on the 4th by JTC. The peak count of Bonxies was of c15 off the Coastguards on the 24th, and the species was recorded almost daily during the month.

An adult Mediterranean gull in winter plumage was seen on Pat's pool each day up until the 7th, please let me know if you saw it after this date. It fed on the newly ploughed fields around Cley and Wiveton, only coming to the reserve to bathe and roost. Little gulls were seen most days off the coast, with peak counts of 10 on the 19th, 12 on the 20th, 10 on the 21st and 5 on the 24th.

Late dates for the Terns in October were, Sandwich tern the 30th off Coastguards. Common tern was the 30th off the Coastguards, an immature. Arctic tern was the 31st off the Coastguards, an immature. A small number of Black terns were seen off the beach in the earlier part of the month, with at least 8 flying west off the Coastguards on the 5th.

There seemed to be a large number of Auks off the coast towards the end of the month, more so than usual for this time of year. Most of which seemed to be Razorbills, whereas normally the Guillemot is by far the more numerous of the two off Cley. A Black guillemot was seen off the Coastguards by JTC, on the 9th, a scarce bird off Cley. A Puffin was seen flying west off the Coastguards with some Razorbills, on the 20th.

A Long-eared owl was seen to fly in off the sea at Salthouse on the 18th, November is the best month for this species as a migrant coming in off the sea. Three Short-eared owls were seen in the square during the month, 1 in off the sea at Coastguards on the 13th, another in off the sea on the 24th and then west along the beach. This bird was seen to

drop down into the Sueada, and the other bird was hunting the marshes at dusk on the 30th.

A Kingfisher was seen near the East bank car park feeding in the Catchwater drain on the 11th, it was also seen there on a couple of dates in September so it could be a regular feeding place for this individual. A very uncommon bird in the Cley square.

The only Lesser-spotted woodpecker I heard about was one at Hammer hills, on the 7th.

A Wood lark was seen and heard to call in flight over the George hotel on the 22nd, it flew off towards the Wiveton hall woods area. This species is dispersive in the winter, so they can turn up anywhere in Norfolk at this time of year. The Shorelarks are back and they have started to build up in numbers to 7 birds by the end of the month, in the usual area at the far end of Blakeney point. Also there were 5 birds at Titchwell last week, and a few in Kent so maybe they're on the way back to good wintering numbers.

The last Sand martins were recorded on the 14th, when 2 birds were seen over the North scrape. Both House martins and Swallows were present over the village at the end of the month, but these species are usually recorded well into November.

A Water pipit was seen on the Glaven near the Sluice on the Beach road on the 1st, this now is a separate species and was written up in Ibis so we can all tick it off now.

A Grey wagtail was seen on the 21st down the Beach road near the Coastguards, another scarce bird at Cley.

The Passerine movement was the poor feature of the autumn, with very few falls and a real dearth of real megas. C10 Redstart were on Blakeney point on the 12th, and there were 2 at the North hide the next day, the 13th. Black redstarts were seen on the following dates, 3 on Blakeney point on the 12th, 1 at the Coastguards on the 13th and 1 at Weybourne camp on the 14th. There were also 4 Whinchat on the point on the 12th, along with a female or immature Siberian stonechat that stayed until the 13th. The first record of this sub-species for the Cley area. A Wheatear was one on the Eye field on the 16th, and the last record was of one near the Watch house on the 22nd, showing characteristics of the Greenland race.

Two Ring ouzels were reported during the month, 1 at the Coastguards on the 13th and 1 on Blakeney point on the 17th.

Warblers were a bit thin on the ground in October, but we did get quite a few Yellow-broweds. 2 Lesser-whitethroats were seen on Blakeney point on the 12th, the last sightings. A Barred warbler was found in the bramble scrub near the Barnet in Blakeney on the 1st, a late record found by Graham Etherington. A nice fall of Yellow-browed warblers in the first week of the month, with quite a few recorded in Norfolk. With 8 or 9 seen in Holkham meals, the records for the 10km square are as

The fall on the 12th produced a nice 1st year Red-breasted flycatcher, which was in the Lupins behind the Tea rooms on Blakeney point. The third in the square this year. There were also 6 Pied flycatchers in the same fall, these are the latest records to date.

3 Blue tits were seen to fly in off the sea at the Coastguards on the 13th.

A Great-grey shrike was seen on the wires half way along the Beach road at Cley on the 17th, it was seen and photographed by Robin Abel.

A nice flock of c50 Bramblings were present at Hammer hills from the 6th to the 17th, along with 2 Siskin on the 8th. The first reported Twite were on the 13th, from the sea end of the East bank.

After a Lapland bunting at Weyborne camp on the 12th and 2 there the next day, they became almost a daily sighting from the Eye field with up to 6 present in early November. Lots of little flocks of Snow buntings were seen up and down the beach between Weybourne and Blakeney point, but none bigger than 15 or so.

NOVEMBER BIRD NEWS.

Usually a month of transition from some excellent drift migrants and regular autumnal passage migrants, to winter visitors. It can be good and it can also be rather poor, this November was fairly good.

A number of Black-throated divers were seen during the month, with the reports as follows: 3 off the Coastguards on the 2nd, 2 west off Coastguards on the 21st and 1 on the sea off the Watch house on the 30th. Red-throated diver numbers were fairly low with only a dozen or so off the coast usually, many more in sea-watches, most of which flew west. A Great-northern diver was seen flying west off the Coastguards on the 1st, another off the Coastguards on the 2nd and another flying west close inshore off Coastguards on the 3rd. The latter one still in good summer plumage.

A good month for Grebes, with all five of the regular species being seen off the Coastguards. An unusual record of a Little grebe on the sea off the Coastguards on the 2nd - you don't usually see this species out there much more a fresh water bird. As normal the numbers of Great crested grebes increased over the month, with over a dozen off the beach between Coastguards and Blakeney point. Red-necked grebes were more numerous than usual and records for the month are: 6 off Coastguards on the 2nd, 1 on the 5th, 2 on the 6th, 1 on the 7th, 3 on the 8th, 4 on the 21st, 1 on the 29th and 1 on the 30th. Slavonian grebes were again seen in good numbers as was this species last month, records are as follows: 2 off the Coastguards on the 1st, c6 off the Coastguards on the 2nd, 2 on the 8th off Coastguards and 2 or 3 off the Coastguards during a sea-watch in force 10 north-westerly gales on the 21st. Black-necked grebes were recorded in the 10km square reliably for the first time for some years during the month. It has always been the rarer of the grebes and has lived up to this label for the 9 years I've been coming to and living in Cley. The records are as follows: 3 off the Coastguards on the 21st drifting back and forth just offshore, these were seen by Richard Millington and John Kemp. 7 seen by Richard Saunders out on the Pit in Blakeney harbour on the 28th, a rare

influx. 3 seen off the Watch house by John Kemp on the 29th, again close inshore.

A single Sooty shearwater was seen by Steve Gantlett, flying east in the early afternoon of the 1st off the Coastguards, the only record in the month. Manx shearwaters were few and far between due to the time of year, records are as follows: 5 off the Coastguards on the 2nd and c3 east off the Coastguards on the 3rd. A Leach's petrel was noted off the Coastguards on the 2nd, a very good year for this species with 15 or so records to date.

Again a single Shag put in an appearance, flying east off the Coastguards on the 21st. I wonder where it spends the rest of the month?

A Grey Heron was seen coming in off the sea on the 4th, and headed off inland over the Coastguards.

A flock of 34 Bewick's swans flew west over the reserve on the 3rd, 5 others were seen off Blakeney point on the 29th. These were the only records. Scaup were seen off the Coastguards for the first time this autumn/winter, with 3 flying west on the 3rd. A number of Long-tailed duck were seen off the Coastguards during the month, mostly in twos or threes. 4 Velvet scoter flew west off the Coastguards on the 2nd, and 5 more passed west off the Coastguards on the 4th. On the 2nd JTC had 39 Red-breasted mergansers flying west off the Coastguards, 2 or 3 is a more usual number. Goosander were seen off the Coastguards: 2 west on the 2nd and a female on Pat's pool on the same date, and 2 west on the 3rd, these were the only records.

A ringtail Hen harrier was seen to fly in off the sea on the 3rd, another ringtail was seen over the reedbeds at dusk on the 20th, this was being mobbed by a Short-eared owl. SJMG had a female Merlin flying west off the Coastguards on the 2nd, and ETM saw one over the rough pasture near the North scrape on the 28th. An uncommon winter visitor to the Cley 10km square.

The Avocet made it into November, staying on the North scrape up to the 10th. A juvenile or first winter Dotterel was found on the Eye field on the 9th and stayed through until the 27th, the latest record for the 10km square and probably the latest record for Norfolk. Two Purple sandpipers were seen flying west over the sea off the Coastguards on the 2nd and another flew west off the Coastguards on the 4th.

Numerous Little gulls were noted on sea-watches during the month with peak counts being on the following dates: c30 east on the 1st, c20 on the 2nd, c50 on the 21st, c25 on the 29th and c75 on the 30th. A 1st winter Iceland gull was seen off the Coastguards on the 2nd and 3rd. A rather scarce bird in the 10km square, it was seen by Peter Gooden and John Kemp amongst others.

Latest records for Terns off the 10km square are: for Common tern - 1 off Coastguards on the 4th, and for Arctic tern - 1 off the Coastguards on the 1st.

A good wreck of Little auks happened on the 2nd and 3rd when Cley had a good north-westerly gale, with c200 and c20 respectively. There were c15 more off the Coastguards on the 21st, again during a strong north-westerly gale.

The latest Swift record is of 1 over Weybourne in the late afternoon of the 4th. Inside the 10km square as Rob Chidwick saw it overhead from the top of Gramborough hill.

The only Tawny owl record of the month was nearly a dead one: on the 22nd Peter Gooden narrowly missed one sitting in the road late on in the evening (probably poor driving!). Short-eared owls were seen during the month: over the North scrape on the 7th, over the Eye field on the 10th and 1 mobbing a ringtail Hen harrier over the Reserve's reedbed, on the 28th. An Asio spp coming in off the sea during a sea-watch on the 2nd (seen by Richard Millington) was probably a Long-eared, the nearest we got to one this month. So much for predictions.

The Lesser spotted woodpecker was seen by JTC at Hammer hills again on the 4th and the 7th, this may be the new site for them since they have become irregular at Wiveton Hall woods.

The Shorelark numbers have not yet built up to last years winter average, on the 29th there were only 9 birds present again on the farthest sand spit beyond the Tea rooms, a walk of four miles.

Late dates for Hirundines were: the 29th for House martin (with 4 on Blakeney point), and the 10th for Swallow, with 1 near the Watcher's house.

A Great-grey shrike was seen briefly on the reserve on the 2nd (by Spliffer).

A number of Lapland buntings frequented the Eye field for most of the month, records are as follows: 6 on the 10th, 3 on the 12th, 2 or 3 on the 23rd, 2 on the 28th and 2 on the 30th. 2 others were seen on Blakeney point on the 29th.

DECEMBER BIRD NEWS.

This is usually one of the quietest months of the year, but this December was a very good month in fact one of the better ones of a rather dull year. The Dotterel stayed through until the end of the year, a small flock of Waxwings gave every one a nice Christmas present and the Black-necked grebes were present all month.

Divers were few and far between, but JTC did have a Black-throated diver off Blakeney point on the 18th. A juvenile Red-throated diver was present in the 'Pit' for a few days around the 11th, didn't look ill and it was fishing away quite happily.

A good month for grebes with good numbers of all the regular species seen in the Cley 10km square. Red-necked grebes were noted off the Coastguards on the following dates: 1 on the 6th, 2 on the 9th, 1 on the 12th and 1 on the 14th, Plus 3 seen on way to the point on the 18th. Slavonian grebes

were noted in the area on the following dates: 3 on the sea off the Coastguards on the 12th and 5 on the sea from Coastguards to the Point on the 18th. The Black-necked grebes were again seen in the 'pit' on the 9th, when JTC saw 4. SJMG saw 10 on the 10th, and at least 6 were still present on New years day. One was present in the channel at Wells near the lifeboat station over Christmas, probably one of the Blakeney birds.

A single Shag was seen fishing in the 'Pit' on the 11th, this was the only sighting this month.

The Black Brant was first seen this winter on the fields off the East bank on the 26th, by Chris Kightley. It was seen again on the 27th opposite the Caravan park in Blakeney, in amongst a gaggle of c1500 Brent geese. JTC had a nice male Velvet scoter in the 'Pit' on the 9th. The Pit is a good place for sea duck and it holds most of the wintering Red-breasted mergansers in the 10km square, plus most of the local Goldeneye and Eider.

A male and a female Hen Harrier were using the winter roost in the Cley square during the month, a lot of disturbance from 'Dudes' walking dogs and birdwatchers on the occasion I was there watching caused the female to fly off to roost elsewhere. If you know of this roosting site please watch from a distance, you get far better views that way anyway. A female Sparrowhawk was seen in flight over the meadows opposite the Three Swallows pub on the 28th, and off over the fields in the direction of Hammer hills. A male Merlin was seen on Blakeney point on the 9th. These were the only bird of prey records I received for last month, rather poor really.

The Dotterel was present on the Eye field on a couple of dates during the month and is still present in the New year, this is possibly the first record of a wintering Dotterel in Norfolk. The Golden plover built up to a peak of c1500, which spends most of their time on the Blakeney freshes. A few Ruff were seen on the Eye field during the month, but no large flock up on the newly ploughed fields as there has been over the last few years. A Woodcock was flushed from the wood next to the Caravan site in Blakeney on the 27th, the only record this month?

A dark phase Arctic skua was seen over the Coastguards flying east on the 22nd, and again flying west with the gulls at dusk on the 23rd. A Bonxie or Great skua flew west off the Coastguards on the 14th, the only sighting in the month.

A first winter Iceland gull was seen over the Coastguards car park on the 19th, it flew off in to Blakeney harbour where the finders could not relocate it later. These were John Hampshire, Tom Fletcher and Paul Herrieven.

The Shorelark numbers are up on the last few years with a peak of 18 on the 9th, feeding on the Near point on the tip of Blakeney point. A couple of birds made an appearance on the Eye field and the Shingle ridge near the Coastguards, on the 24th.

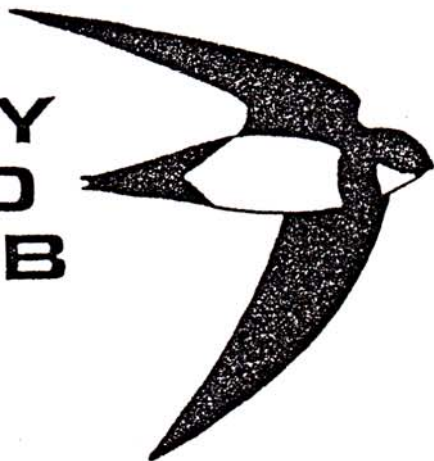
A Grey wagtail was seen in the village of Kelling on the 17th, flying up and down the street calling and perching on the telephone wires.

A single Waxwing was seen by ETM at Leatheringsett in the morning of the 23rd, which flew off towards Glandford and into the square. Later in the afternoon of the same day Tim Lubbock found a group of 5 feeding in a roadside hedge in Wiveton, and another in his garden in Marsh lane whilst phoning out the news. Another bird was seen in Langham opposite the Bluebell pub, feeding on Cotoneaster berries for most of the day. The flock at Wiveton increased to 7 on the 24th, and 9 on the 26th. They became rather mobile soon after this and were seen all over Wiveton and Cley, and rather difficult to find until they put in an appearance at the garden near the Stone bridge in Wiveton or in the gardens on Church lane in Cley.

Lapland buntings frequented the Eye field throughout the month, with a flock of 24 on the 24th. With at least a couple present each day, but rather difficult to find amongst the Skylarks and when in the deep grass.

Good Birding for 1987.
Eddie Myers.

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ANSAFONE SERVICE.

Welcome to the Cley Bird Club Ansafone service, which is as you know open only to members of the Cley Bird Club. The number of callers will be limited to the number the Ansafone can easily cope with, if in the future the number of birders wanting to join is greater than the upper limit then we will purchase another line and ansafone.

Please keep the number to your self it is important that it remains a secret, otherwise the line will be blocked with non-members phoning the machine for free. The Cley Bird Club and the Ansafone membership fees are kept as low as possible so as many people can benefit as possible, if they can't afford to spend a mere £5.00 per year then they don't deserve the number. Remember the more people that phone up this number the less chance you have of getting through, and you'll only have your selves to blame. I'll be trying my best, please help me by not giving the number away to non-members. I will from time to time be answering the phone my self to ask the caller for his name and membership number, and to keep a check on possible abuse. The less times the number has to be changed the less it will cost me, and the less it will cost you in membership fees in future years!

The Ansafone number is:

CLEY 740 168.

Please use this number for obtaining news only, to leave a message phone the following number:

CLEY 740 095.

The Ansafone service will cover the whole of Norfolk, with a slight bias towards the birds of the Cley area as this is the area that I live in. If all the membership phones in news as it is happening, then the system will be a success. The Bird Information Service will be updating the tape when it is needed, so on occasions it will be changed 5 or 6 times a day. News of rarities outside Norfolk will be included in the message, but details will only be obtainable from BIS or another source.