

CLEY BIRD CLUB



TEMPORARY ADDRESSES. Membership & Subscriptions

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NEWSLETTER NUMBER 9

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Cley.
April 1988.

Dear Members,

Encouraged by your response to No 8 (and by several new subscriptions) the "Gang of Three" now presents Newsletter No. 9.

I, (JTC) compiled the reports for Norfolk and the Cley square, Peter has maintained Membership/Subscription records and will be organizing printing and despatch of the Newsletter. Joe Johnson collated the various items and mangled the typing. (This included editing those of my notes which were written on the "nigh-shift" after evenings at The George.) Our thanks are due to all who sent in additional items - please keep them coming, it does help to keep everyone, especially out-of-county Members. in touch.

April sees the start of the new Breeding Bird Survey intended to up-date the original Atlas of 1976. Can it really be 12 years ago? Dr Kelsey will be responsible for the Cley Square and as this is a 3 year project I am sure he will be letting us have comments on progress from time to time.

As this is the last opportunity may I, perhaps, please reiterate Eddie's plea of last year - If you see birders trampling about the Heath after Nightjars etc please "encourage" them back on to the roads and main paths. General beating about is a totally un-necessary, and very selfish, practice.

In my daily contacts with local people I frequently hear stories of thoughtless behaviour, often coupled with such terms as "b. ignorant birdwatchers". I must say that often their complaints are justified. Memories are long and we still get the "horror stories" of the Wiveton Bridge Waxwings and the Cley Church Porch R.R. Swallow. So, please park sensibly, keep to reasonable speeds through the village and don't set up 'scopes in the middle of the road. (Yes, that happens !)

After 3 months of gales and excessive rain which alternately battered and flooded the marshes (and kept down numbers of our usual Winter visitors) the local scene is now showing all its old promise of exciting times ahead. During the past 10 days or so many of the returning migrants have shown up on cue including Sandwich Terns, Wheatears, Black-Redstarts, Firecrests, Ring Ousels - in fact all the species you would expect by the first week of April. Many more are expected by the end of the month, including the returning Eddie !

Please keep sending in your news and records - all are accepted in good faith even though they do not become "official" until acceptance by the B.B.R.C. or Norfolk Rarities Committee.

Good Birding in the coming months,

J.T.C.

NORFOLK
JANUARY - MARCH 1988.

Although the main aim of this Newsletter is to give a reasonably comprehensive report on the birds in the Cley 10 km square, we feel that a brief review of events in the County as a whole will help to fill out the picture and be of interest to Members.

JANUARY

Probably the prime target for the increasingly popular New Year's Day "Thrash" was the long-staying Red-breasted Goose and it duly obliged, this time being found at Salthouse. Other birds on the 1st included 2 Smew and a Ruddy Duck at Tottenhill but the Roydon Common roost reflected the mild weather and disappointed with only one male Hen Harrier and a Hooded Crow.

On the 2nd (and for the rest of the month) a second-Winter Med: Gull frequented the area of the Overstrand Sewage Outfall and a trip to The Broads produced two adult Cranes, 3/4 Merlins (up to 8 reported), 3 Marsh and 5 Hen Harriers in the air together and 35 Whooper and 60 Bewick's Swans. At Hunstanton the cupboard was rather bare with only a handful of Scaup and a few Common Scoters on show. On the Holkham goose-fields among the various feral species were 2,000 Pinkfeet, 140 Whitefronts, 2 Bean Geese and about 1,000 Brents.

Around mid-month there were 15 Purple Sandpipers at Heacham, two Long-tailed Ducks off Hunstanton, Blackcaps at Cromer and, perhaps a forerunner of things to come, a Red Kite was seen over Weyford Bridge.

Towards the end of the month a Rough-legged Buzzard at Horsey and a Peregrine around Snettisham were seen several times. An early Avocet was at Snettisham on the 26th. On the 30th 4 Bean Geese were with Pinkfeet near Choseley where the limbless and "Little Owl-less" tree was a sad sight. (This was especially bad news as the other "Little Owl Tree" near Hindringham was blown down during the October gales last year.)

By the 30th the Long-tailed ducks had increased by 50% - there now being three off Hunstanton! At Holkham 2 Chiffchaffs and a Blackcap saw the month out.

Also during January the Whooper Swans at Welney set up a new record of 504 whilst the Buckenham Bean Geese total reached a healthy 404. Two Smew frequented Hickling Broad, a Med: Gull was at Great Yarmouth and a few Hawfinches at Holkham. Shorelarks remained very scarce, there being only 16 known birds in the whole of Britain. 10 of these were in Norfolk (5 at Thornham and 5 on Blakeney Point) the remaining 6 being far away in Lothian.

FEBRUARY

Birds present all month included the Med: Gull at Overstrand, 5 Shorelarks at Thornham (where there were also 70 Snow Buntings and two short-eared Owls), Blackcaps (Cromer 2 and Holkham) and up to 20 Hawfinches which were best seen at early morning. The remarkable Shag on Wells Quay must have been reading Oliver Twist as it regularly walked across the road with its begging-bowl and stood at the door of the Fish-shop where it was always ready for more.

FEBRUARY contd

The Burnham Mill Kingfisher continued to oblige as did the Rough-legged Buzzard and Peregrine at Horsey and Snettisham respectively. The Smew remained at Welney (where Black-tailed Godwits began to arrive) and c 20 Bramblings were near Hunworth.

At Holkham the Pinkfeet peaked at about 2,000, Whitefronts at 270, and Brents at 3,500. Up to 12 Beans and a single Barnacle were also present at this time together with the usual feral assortment including Greylags, Canadas, Snow Geese and a single Bar-headed - a good place to be if you like a good goose!

Around the new Reserve at Barney Marshes/Breydon area Bewick's Swans set up a new record for East Norfolk with 700 roosting on the 22nd, the previous best being 417 in March 1981. In the same area Wintering Marsh Harrier, Spotted Redshank and up to 6 Lapland Buntings added to the variety.

Apart from these long-stayers only a few new birds were found. In early month there was a Stonechat at Titchwell and on the 5th a Long-tailed Duck of unknown origin was on Dersingham Duck-pond ! The 7th was a better day with Iceland Gull at Paston, Great-grey Shrike at Hickling, two Whooper Swans at Thornham and a Common Buzzard near Hunstanton where there were still only a very few sea-duck including 12 Scaup, a few Common Scoter and the odd Goldeneye.

Around mid-month 2 Smew were at Ranworth, 4 Little Gulls off Cromer, Grey Phalarope on Horsey Broad and four Avocets turned up at Holme - perhaps some of the 8 which were at Cley on the morning of the same day but later disappeared. Twenty Scaup were off Heacham at this time while in the Brecks Woodlarks were singing and Crossbills appeared numerous.

Towards the end of the month a Little Auk was seen at Overstrand (25th) and on the 26th interesting birds at Burnham Mill included Kingfisher, Shag and Grey Wagtail. On the same day a very much out-of-season Turtle Dove was recorded at Sculthorpe. A surprise on the 27th was a Winter plumage Dotterell with Golden Plovers on the fields East of Lady Anne's Drive at Holkham. (Remained in the area for at least a week.) Also on that date 8 grey geese near Horsey Corner proved to be 6 Beans and 2 Pinkfeet.

MARCH

March ! So near and yet so far - why does it always seem to last longer than any other month ? How often over the past few Springs has the weather flattered to deceive with mild spells and favourable winds to bring the vanguard of returning migrants to our shores and then, wham, back to Winter conditions and an abrupt stop ! Perhaps, this year we will fare better and may even be favoured with an "early" April. Anyway, back to the present.

The month opened with Rough-legged Buzzard at Snettisham on 1st and again on the 4th with the Horsey bird still being seen. The Holkham Park Hawfich flock peaked at 20+ on the 13th and at least 5 were still present at the end of the month. Med: Gulls were at Titchwell (3rd), Hunstanton (5th) and Overstrand (6th) and the Shorelarks were still at Thornham until at least the 21st. On the 3rd a Jack Snipe was found at the now traditional site - the reedy fringes of Abraham's Bosom (Wells Boating Lake) - yet another bird which has been noticeably absent this Winter.

MARCH contd

The Holkham Dotterell was seen again on the 5th, 6th and 7th and an Iceland Gull was at Hunstanton on 5th and 6th. (This bird suffered a bad "dip" as it failed to tick me for its year list !) On the 5th a Great-grey Shrike was near May Day Farm and at Burnham Mill the Kingfisher and Shag were in company with a pair of Grey Wagtails - wouldn't it be nice if they stay to breed.

An unusually high number of Shags (for Norfolk) were recorded on the 9th when a party of 6, including two adults in Summer plumage, were together on Abraham's Bosom at Wells in addition to the "resident" bird at the quay. A Blackcap was also present at the Lifeboat House. On the same date a Slavonian Grebe was off-shore at Hunstanton and several Golden Pheasants were seen at Wolferton - how co-operative this species has been this Winter. On the 9th only a single Hen Harrier was coming into roost at Roydon but by the 12th there had been a sudden increase at that site with 9 Hen Harriers, 2 Merlins, two Short-eared Owls and a Hooded Crow claimed ! Also on the 12th a Black-throated, probably the scarcest of the Norfolk divers, was at Snettisham Pits where it remained until at least the 14th. At this time the Rough-legged Buzzard still patrolled the Horsey area but only 8 Whoopers and two Bewick's Swans remained. A pair of Stonechats was a welcome sight nearer to Winterton - a species which appears currently to be in decline along the East coast. 12 Long-tailed ducks were off-shore at Gore Point.

On the 14th a careful search was made for Little Owls in likely "lurking places" in the vicinity of the former traditional "stake out" at Choseley and this proved successful with a pair located along a roadside hedge.

The 18th produced an amazing sight for Norfolk - no fewer than 4 Red Kites at Holme-and over the next few days singles were being reported from all over the County. Everywhere, that is, except the Cley square ! The nearest I have heard about being at Holkham (twice on the 19th) and at Gresham on the 24th when the lucky observers were able to watch from their car as the bird ate a dead rabbit on a country road.

On the 18th up to 20 + Avocets were at Cley, mainly in pairs, and a pair of colourful Black-tailed Godwits were also present and beginning to display. On the 19th Smew were at Welney and a Grey Wagtail spent some time at Beeston Common but Holme was the place to be on the 20th when a Common Buzzard was over the marsh and Gore Point held 40/50 Long-tailed Ducks, 20 Red-breasted Mergansers plus Red-necked, Black-necked and Slavonian Grebes !

At this time the first reports of Spring migrants began to come in. An early Garganey at Welney on the 19th, Wheatear at Granboro', Green Sandpiper at Hindringham and two Woodlarks (one in song) at the West end of the Holkham Pines were all recorded on the 20th. By the 21st at least one Stone Curlew had returned to Weeting Heath, on the 22nd Firecrests were at Wells (drinking pool) and Holme. On the 23rd and 24th Sandwich Terns were on Arnold's Marsh at Cley and on 24th a Black Redstart was in the expected area in the Wells "Horse field" together with up to 6 Wheatears. (Reports of Wheatears from various spots along the coast continued to come in from the 20th until the end of the month). Two Med. Gulls were at Sheringham on the 24th and another Firecrest at Waxham on 26th and 27th.

CLEY 10 Km SQUARE - 1988.**JANUARY**

The year began with the Red-breasted Goose and a Purple Sandpiper at Salthouse on the 1st. On the same date, on the Eye Field at Cley was a Lapland Bunting with "Boy George", the Glaucous Gull, and about 20 Twite nearby. 20 Pinkfeet passed through.

A Stonechat was along the East Bank on the 3rd while on the 4th a Merlin created some panic among the inhabitants of the Reserve, including two Ruffs. The Red-breasted Goose had moved to Blakeney.

On the evening of the 7th a Little Owl was calling near Wiveton Church, very probably one of the pair which were in the vicinity of Newgate Green around Christmas. It is just possible that these were the Hindringham pair which disappeared after their breeding and roosting tree was blown down during the October gale. It would be nice if they were to set up home locally as formerly pairs bred regularly on both Wiveton and Cley churches.

The 8th saw the Barnacle goose back on the Eye field with the Brents, and there was a slight piscatorial diversion when a large Sunfish was trapped in shallow water near Cast Corner in the Harbour. It eventually managed to flap and wriggle its way into the Cley channel where another, smaller one was found washed up dead on the river bank about a week later.

Some of the birds in the Harbour probably "lost their deposit" in fright as a Peregrine zoomed over near The Watch-house on the 9th. On the 11th the Grey Wagtail was still at Cley Sewage works (perhaps looking for its lost deposit) while nearby a most unusual sight (at least, for me J.T.C.) was a mixed covey of 6 Grey and 8 Red-legged Partridges - not just a casual meeting but seen together regularly.

On the 12th a female Merlin and a male Sparrow Hawk both made almost hourly attacks on the finch flock around the stack-yard at Swan Lodge though neither were seen to score a hit. The Red-breasted Goose moved off to Saxlingham for a couple of days.

The Peregrine was seen again on the 13th, this time over the Reserve. The Purple Sandpiper was still at Salthouse on the 16th and by the 18th, probably missing its many admirers, the Red-breasted Goose had returned home and was seen regularly at both Cley and Blakeney during the next few days.

A trip to Blakeney Point on the 20th confirmed that the Shorelarks were still present. Two Stonechats were along the East Bank on the 21st and a single Lapland Bunting was still frequenting the Eye Field on the 23rd.

On the 24th a Water Rail gave very good views feeding on an area of flooded marsh near "The Swallows" while another was by the "Dun Cow" at Salthouse on the same day. This raises the question - "Do Water Rails like pubs". I have decided this obviously calls for serious research and explains why I have been reluctantly forced into spending so much time in "The George" recently. Perhaps the species will have to be renamed Water Ale ?

JANUARY contd

The Peregrine visited the Reserve again on the 26th as did a male Hen Harrier and an uncommon bird for Cley - a Corn Bunting was feeding with Reed Buntings between the West Bank and the Glaven. However, the day really belonged to the geese with the Red-breasted and the Black Brant playing hide-and-seek with about 1,000 Brents. 8 Whitefront which stayed aloof and fed alone were probably wild birds as at least three other resident birds fed with the Canadas at the same time while 3 Bean Geese dropped in and joined the Greylags. On the same day the very wet conditions in the Eye Field made it extremely attractive to waders, especially around high-water in the Harbour. It was a magnificent sight with about 900 Golden Plovers, 100 Ringed Plovers, 70 Dunlins, 6 Turnstones, 350 Lapwings, 2 Curlews, 3 Ruffs, 20 Redshanks, 20 Oyster Catchers and several Snipe all in view together.

Also on the 26th a trek to the Point produced only 15 (7 males) Red-breasted Mergansers and 10 Goldeneye in the Pit.

The Common Sandpiper came out of hiding on the 27th and was seen on the North Scrape and 20 Corn Buntings were recorded feeding with Tree Sparrows at Stiffkey. On the 29th the Water Rail was still tip-toeing around near The Swallows and the Common Sandpiper was again on the North Scrape. A Stonechat near the Bittern Hide brought the month to a close - Roll on Spring !

FEBRUARY

No prizes offered for guessing the name and location of the first notable bird at the beginning of the month - yes, you've got it, Red-breasted Goose on the Eye Field. Also at around this time 2 Bewick's Swans had a quick dabble in the newly constructed area of grass wet-land (a Memorial to the late Billy Bishop) and an unusual sight was that of a Sparrow Hawk repeatedly mobbing a Barn Owl over the marsh near The Swallows.

On the 4th a flock of mixed finches on the Allotments included 3 Bramblings (very scarce in the Cley square this Winter) while on the 5th a Green Woodpecker looked out of place in the Eye Field, feeding along the edge of the North Drain.

By the 6th The Swallows' Water Rail had found itself a playmate - perhaps there were two all along - and half a dozen Redwings were nearby (scarce around Cley since Christmas). The Common Sandpiper popped up again, this time near Cley Mill while the Eye Field held Red-breasted Goose, Black Brant and two Lapland Buntings with a female Hen Harrier at dusk. On the same day a loose pack of 6 Red-throated Divers fished off the Coastguards and a wader, which was probably a Grey Phalarope flew West low over the sea. Two Short-eared Owls were near the Watchhouse but the star bird of the day, a Goshawk, was seen to come in off the sea by Roger Thompson whilst he was in a boat off The Point.

"Oddments" on the 7th included a Ruff in the Eye Field, a Chiffchaff at the Sewage Works and a Purple Sandpiper at Salthouse. On the 10th a Short-eared Owl was along the West Bank while on the 12th the first Chaffinches were trying out their voices. As if inspired by this "Boy George" called long and loud as he/she flew around the Beach Car Park - the first time I've ever heard it utter a sound ! Has anyone else heard the voice ?

FEBRUARY contd

Things of interest on the 13th included Chiffchaff and Grey Wagtail still at the Sewage Works and a Cormorant on Arnold's showing the characteristics of the Contintal race (sinensis).

The 15th was warm, sunny and Springlike (in mid-Feb: !) and a honey bee and midges were on the wing and birds included Avocet in the Harbour, Short-eared Owl along Beach Road and a small, but noticeable, passage of Pied Wagtails along the coast.

By the 16th 8 Avocets had returned but soon moved on - perhaps to the harbour - 2 more, or perhaps part of the earlier flock were on Pat's Pool on the 17th when the Common Sandpiper was on Simmond's Scrape. The Short-eared Owl was still around on 19th.

On the 20th a party of 24 Black-tailed Godwits dropped in and a 1st Winter Glaucous Gull passed West off the Coastguards. 2 Stonechats were again along the East Bank and on 21st a Blackcap was present in Rob Chidwick's garden in the village. The Red-breasted Goose and the Black Brant remained in the Eye Field.

Possibly the first of the season's Lesser Black-backed Gulls was on the North Scrape on the 26th and on 27th a Short-eared Owl patrolled the Morston saltings. A good bird on the 28th was a Little Auk passing West at the Coastguards followed by 4 Purple Sandpipers. The 29th was a day of strong Northerly gales with driving sleet and any hope of sea-watching proved futile as it was impossible to use bin's, much less a 'scope, but whatever was moving past included lots of Kittiwakes.

MARCH

The month began quite nicely with two sightings of the Peregrine at Blakeney and Morston on the 1st. The male Hen Harrier was over the Reserve on the 2nd and a pair of Common Scoter headed West off the Coastguards. On the 3rd 3 Avocets were on Pat's Pool but soon moved on and both the Black Brants were seen together on Blakeney Freshes. The 3rd was probably the last day the Red-breasted goose was with us - does anyone have any later dates? Whilst on the subject of dates - does anyone have a later date than the 6th for the Glaucous Gull which our last record was for the Eye Field on that day. Also on the 6th 2 Water Pipits were at Weybourne, Blackcap still in the village and the Water Rail around the usual area near The Swallows.

On the 7th a Jack Snipe - a bird which has been very scarce in these parts this Winter - was seen on the "Serpentine" just to the East of the East Bank. The Peregrine was over the Reserve again, two Avocets called in and there was a good Westerly movement of Kittiwakes and Common Gulls. A Barn Owl made an interesting sight as it jumped about on the roof of our Greenhouse presumably able to see some rodent through the glass but unable to get at it.

On the 8th a Shag was off the Coastguards and on the Eye Field the Golden Plover flock had swollen to 1,600+ with half a dozen already into Summer plumage and a single Ruff wandered among them. On the sea were 3 Red-throated Divers and 3 Curlews passed over them heading out to sea, presumably on return passage. The Common Sandpiper turned up again on the 8th on Simmond's Scrape and a Spotted Redshank appeared on Pat's Pool. A fine whisp of at least 100 Snipe was careering about all over both scrapes at this time.

A Bittern made a rare, and very welcome, appearance on the 9th doing a fly-past over the full length of the Reserve.

MARCH contd

Also on the 9th a Greenshank was new as were 12 Avocets which stayed only briefly. A ring-tail Hen Harrier was seen on the same day and 6 Pinkfeet - presumed to be wild - were feeding alongside Billy's Wash. 20 Twite were on Morston Quay.

On the 10th a Green-winged Teal (male) was on Blakeney Freshes and on the 13th a Whooper Swan spent some time on Pat's Pool. Several Gannets were seen off-shore. On the 16th no fewer than 80 Turnstones were in the Eye Field - this must be an unusually high number for this species feeding on grassland? A Merlin was seen at Morston and at the Coastguards 3 Eiders passed to the West while a small party flew out to sea calling loudly.

On the 17th 8/10 Bearded Tits were a welcome sight in the reed-bed alongside the pathway to Daukes while on the Eye Field the Brent Geese and Golden Plovers could each still muster flocks of about 1,000.

The first Wheatears (2) were seen at Morston on the 17th when a Corn Bunting was also present and by the 19th Wheatears were being reported from several places along the coast including Granboro' Hill at Salthouse and on Beeston Bump. Also on the 19th a Water Pipit and a White Wagtail were near the Beach Cafe with a second Water Pipit at Salthouse. By this time Avocets on the Reserve had built up to at least 35/40 with 40 Ruffs and 2 Black-tailed Godwits. A male Hen Harrier was over the Reserve and it was good to note that Bearded Tits were more noticeable than for some time. The Bittern was heard giving a practice boom several times during that week.

The first Sandwich Terns arrived on the 20th along with a very noticeable passage of Pied Wagtails moving West. The 21st produced yet another first with an early Whimbrel moving West at Cley and a gathering of 30 Pied Wagtails were feeding together with about 50 Meadow Pipits on a small muddy patch at Salthouse. The next "first" was a Sand Martin at Weybourne on the 22nd and the Meadow Pipits were performing their first song flights of the year. On the Reserve the Avocet numbers were still increasing but the Brent flock was down to about 200. The Water Rail was still faithful to the favoured area, handy for The Swallows.

On the 23rd a Chiffchaff was at Hilltop, two Wheatears in the Eye Field and Sandwich Terns with a Spotted Redshank on Pat's Pool. Two different Med: Gulls were identified on the Salthouse Scrape on the 24th where there were also several Sandwich Terns and 3 Wheatears. 7 Whitefronts flew East over the Reserve where the Brent flock was down to about 25.

Black-tailed Godwits increased to 12 on the 25th while on the 26th several Chiffchaffs were around Cley, some in song. On the same day 6 Wheatears were at Salthouse, Blackcap in Cley village and a Green Sandpiper was new on the Reserve. At about this time the Short-eared Owl was giving what were thought to be farewell appearances over the Marsh but these proved to be "Frank Sinatras" and were still taking place after the end of the month.

On the 27th an early Ring Ousel was at Weybourne and an adult Little Gull was on the North Scrape, staying until the following day.

MARCH contd

A stroll around the Reserve on the 29th revealed a big increase in Avocet numbers and a count several days later gave a total of nearly 100 - still below last year's peak counts but very high for the end of March. At the same time 38 Black-tailed Godwits, 6 Ruffs, 50 Snipe and 80 Dunlins were counted. Bernard Bishop told me that he had seen a Bittern in flight while, at the same time a second bird was booming from a reed bed. It is good to know there are at least two present - let us hope they are not both of the same sex.. It was a pleasing sight for March to see at least 15 Wheatears on the Eye Field when there were also at least 10 on The Point. Several Rock Pipits were still being seen.

On the 30th the Reserve still held 30 Black-tailed Godwits, 80 Dunlins and about 300 Golden Plovers (half of these in Summer Plumage) and at least 300 Snipe - quite a high number for Cley. 30 Brents were still present and 3 Barnacle Geese appeared - it is probable that these were from the Blakeney Wildfowlers Assoc: collection where the old pair regularly drive out their off-spring of the previous year as the breeding season approaches. With the presence of so many Wildfowl collections these days and so many feral birds in the North Norfolk area it is becoming increasingly difficult to determine the true origins of quite a lot of geese and ducks seen during the course of a year. Two Sparrow Hawks were seen - a species very regularly visiting the Reserve these days.

On the 31st two very nice birds "just made it" for the March records. The welcome sight of a male Garganey at Salthouse and a particularly beautiful male Black Redstart at Weybourne.

And that's just about it for this Quarter. Good Birding in the Spring - especially in THE CLEY SQUARE !

POSTSCRIPT

J.T.C.

Since putting together the forgoing notes I have received two additional items of interest.

The first is from Rob Chidwick. Rob's work takes him out and about in the early morning and he has summarized the Barn Owls he saw during the last week of January and the first week of February. All were not in the Cley Square but were sufficiently local to be of interest.

Birds were seen at Gunthorpe, Fakenham, Blakeney, Salthouse (2), Kelling, Sheringham/Weybourne (2), Cley (2), Holt, Thornage, Binham, Morston and Stiffkey. Most were seen on several occasions. Nearly all the sightings were in the early morning and 8 of the locations had suitable breeding sites - barns, old trees etc. 17 birds were seen in the two weeks and at least 15 different individuals were involved. Breeding pairs were known to be present in at least 4 or 5 of the areas.

The second article, received from Mrs Bendix of Swan Lodge reports that in conversation with Bob Moore, the local farm foreman, he mentioned that he and his wife were strolling along Old Woman' Lane in Cley on March 20th when they noticed some "crested birds" which were not familiar to them. They were a bit Sparrow-like but there was something about them which reminded him of Goldfinches (yellow on the wings, perhaps ?). When shown pictures of Waxwings he immediately identified them as the birds they had seen.

So, it looks as though they may have been "The ones which got away".

CLEY MARSH WILDFOWL COUNTS

1987	September	October	November	December
Mute Swan	1	13	10	8
Whitefront (Nominate)	1	-	-	3
Greylag (Feral)	260	-	1	152
Canada	28	-	4	31
Brent (Dark-bellied)	-	12	75	800/1,000
Egyptian	6	-	-	-
Shelduck	27	14	41	75
Wigeon	176	550	1,875	1,850 +
Gadwall	5	3	35	28
Teal	410	182	504	310
Mallard	156	127	220	223
Pintail	-	21	88	410
Shoveller	19	20	69	31

1988	January	February	March
Mute Swan	4	4	1
Whitefront (Nominate)	-	-	2
Pinkfoot	1	1	-
Greylag (Feral)	158	105	65
Canada	10	5	3
Brent (Dark-bellied)	222	730	70
Shelduck	119	123	87
Wigeon	1,500 +	676	66
Gadwall	48	99	29
Teal	195	248	180
Mallard	197	110	55
Pintail	81	42	8
Shoveller	52	128	48
Pochard	2	-	-
Tufted	-	4	-
Goldeneye	7	3	3

NOTE A single Garganey was present in September and one Scaup was recorded in January. During several periods up to three Barnacles were present and a single Snow Goose kept company with the Greylags for most of the Winter but these were all presumed to be escapes.

WILDFOWL AT CLEY, WINTER 1987/88.

Each month, from September to March, the Wildfowl Trust arranges a co-ordinated Wildfowl Count Day with a view to monitoring the populations of wildfowl Wintering in the U.K. For the past three years the counting on the N.N.T. Cley Reserve has been organized by Dr Derek Kelsey and members of the Cley Bird Club have been involved in the work. We thank him for making the figures for the current season available to us for inclusion in this Newsletter.

These latest figures do, however, present a clear reminder of the special problems our local conditions do create for would be census takers and of the special care needed when assessing and interpreting the figures obtained.

We all know there are physical difficulties in making the actual counts. Heavy cover, areas of largely inaccessible "dead ground", drains, creeks, hidden pools, reed beds and other hiding places. All very different from the inland reservoirs with clearly visible rafts of birds.

But the real problems arise from the vast areas of alternative feeding and roosting habitat, virtually adjacent to the Reserve, and the almost continuous movement of the flocks as the result of disturbance, tidal influences or the natural feeding and resting needs of the birds themselves. Many of the "Cley Birds" spend a good deal of their time in the vastness of Blakeney Harbour and its surrounding marshes and rafts of Wigeon, Teal and Mallard are frequently on the sea off Cley Beach.

The mobility of the Brent Goose flocks soon becomes obvious when a "target" bird is present and those who sought the often elusive Red-breasted Goose quickly discovered that it, and its companions, ranged freely between Salthouse and Langham, via Cley, Blakeney and Morston with no readily observable pattern.

The fluctuating figures for the local feral Greylag flock also illustrate this problem. Parties regularly commute between Cley Marsh and Bayfield Park (a mile or so to the South) but being non-migratory the total number in the area remains fairly constant throughout the Winter months. It would certainly not be safe to interpret the figure of 65 for March 1988 as indicating a true fall in the local population of about 75% since last September.

To dismiss the results of these regular counts as showing little more than the numbers and species using the Reserve at the times the counts are made would be to under-value the work. Dr Kelsey already has thoughts of reviewing in some depth the figures for the past 6 years, not so much to look at the fluctuations which may prove difficult, or impossible, to evaluate, but to see what might be deduced about the way different species use the Reserve.

This is a subject on which the C.B.C. Members' views could be most helpful. May we have your comments please.

J.J.J.

WEYBOURNE CAMP RESERVE - 1988.

Up to 20 Red-throated Divers were present off-shore in January and February and single Black-throated Divers on January 21st and February 1st. A Little Grebe in breeding plumage appeared on the scrape on March 24th but only stayed for 3 days. Offshore, a Slavonian Grebe was noted on March 6th and 9th while single Shags on January 1st and on several dates between February 27th and March 27th. were also recorded.

The only geese of note were 22 Whitefronts heading West on January 2nd.

Water Rails were calling in the reed-bed on March 20th and 29th while one was caught by hand on the edge of the scrape on the first date. The first wader to be recorded on the new scrape was surprisingly a Knot and during the excavation in February an adult Little Gull joined 200 Black-headed Gulls feeding on the freshly turned soil. The first Lesser Black-backed Gull of the Spring was recorded moving West on February 27th and in addition to the regular "Cley" adult Glaucous Gull which was seen in February, a second Winter bird flew West on January 24th and a first Winter on February 20th. The first Sandwich Tern was seen on March 23rd, a dead Little Auk was picked up on the fields on March 20th and a Sand Martin flew West on March 22nd.

Two Summer-plumaged Water Pipits which landed on the scrape on March 8th unfortunately only remained a few minutes before flying on West and 1 - 2 were also seen on 19th. The only record of Grey Wagtail was of a pair on the Sewage Works on March 20th and the first White Wagtail was noted on the 21st.

An adult male Black Redstart contrasted starkly with the Army Tank on which it chose to perch on March 31st. The first Wheatear was found on March 22nd but 15 were present by the 29th. Up to 3 Stonechats remained in the area between February 23rd and March 17th but sadly have not remained to breed.

The first Chiffchaff was singing by the scrape on March 29th on which date a Bearded Tit was present in the reed-bed.

Two Hooded Crows arrived from the North-east on January 12th and one was feeding with the local Rooks on March 29th. Single Lapland Buntings flew over the Reserve on many dates between January and mid-March and 4 flew East with Linnets on March 14th, Up to 40 Snow Buntings were recorded in the area in late February and a Corn Bunting sang briefly near the Sewage Works on March 8th but has not been recorded since.

Observers are reminded that Weybourne Camr Reserve is Private and access is limited to those people holding permits. It would be very much appreciated if this fact could always be remembered.

Moss Taylor.

MAURICE'S GOOD TERN.

At about 11 o'clock on Tuesday morning 1st September 1987 C.B.C. Member, Maurice Eccleshall and his Wife were walking the beach to Blakeney Point when they saw three Terns flying westward low over the shoreline near Halfway House.

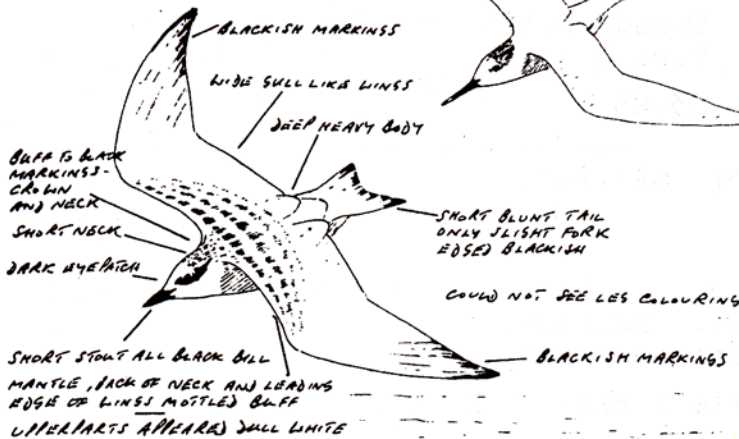
Two of the party were Sandwich Terns (*S. sandvicensis*); the third, a distinctive bird was provisionally identified as Gull-billed (*Gelochelidon nilotica*). No other bird-watchers were in sight at the time but it has since been discovered that Peter Clarke and R. Kimber recorded an exactly similar bird, also accompanied by two Sandwich Terns, flying westward at Holme about 1½ hours after the Blakeney sighting.

Maurice has submitted the record to the B.B.R.C. and we are indebted to him for providing us with a copy of his notes and excellent drawings (a model for us all !) for inclusion in this Newsletter.

and a detailed description of the bird(s), preferably based on notes taken at the time of the observation before reference to books. Attach original field notes if available. Attach extra sheets if required.

(Copy of drawings and notes made shortly after sighting)

"GULL-BILLED TERN"



TUESDAY 1ST SEPTEMBER 1987 (WIND SLIGHT EAST)

"GULL-BILLED TERN" - JUV - 1ST WINTER

HALF WAY HOUSE CLAY - BLAKENEY POINT - NORFOLK

APPROX 11.00 AM - FLYING WESTWARDS LOW OVER SHORELINE

ACCOMPANIED BY TWO SANDWICH TERNS

SIZE NEARLY AS SANDWICH TERNS BUT THICKER BODY - SHORT STOUT ALL BLACK BILL - BLUNTER TAIL THAN SANDWICH.

HEAVY FLIGHT (GULL LIKE) FLYING LOW AND JUST ABOVE THE SEA - SHALLOW WINGBEATS.

We were sitting on the beach observing a Guillemot, perching on the shoreline when my wife said "what is this tern coming along low". I picked it up with binoculars and then telescope, and followed it through as it flew low westwards towards Blakeney Point accompanied by two Sandwich Terns. The Gull-billed Tern was flying buoyantly up and down but this bird flew straight and low on shallow wing beats. From my viewpoint it vertically looked on top of it, very gull like, heavy body and this blunt black bill (definitely Gull-billed Tern).

And finally, is this record 100% certain? YES.

Any who disagree? -

But not another bird watcher in sight. - next day at Holme bird observatory

PACK PHOTOGRAPHS AND SLIDES CAREFULLY - keep copies if possible.

The wife told me we had seen a unusual Tern. He had questioned me on my sighting and said "pick it off" - the same bird came through here at approx 11.00 AM - pleased to know at least two other people had seen this bird besides the wife and myself.

M. J. ECCLESHALL 10/11/87

SPONBILL - AUGUST 1987.

The C.B.C. Newsletter Number 7, under the heading of August Bird News included a note which read " A juvenile Spoonbill arrived on the 21st, it was sporting a grand selection of colour rings on each leg, above the joint. This bird was present to the end of the month, frequenting Pat's Pool, Whitwell and North Scrapes. We hope to publish details of the origins of this bird, it came from Holland, as they all do of course."

Now, thanks to John Hampshire who submitted the detailed record we are able to complete the story. The following is a copy of the details sent to John from the Ringing Station in Holland.

We are grateful to you for your report of a ringed bird. You will find the details below. If you notice an error in the details please write down your remarks and return the whole form. The purpose of ringing is to obtain particulars about migration and other habits of birds.

Vogeltrekstation Arnhem - B.P.40 - 6666 ZG Heteren - The Netherlands.

Ring Number... Arnhem .8038203

Species... SPOONBILL.

Age... Nestling.

Ringing Date.. 12 06 1987.

Ringing Place. Tweede Duintjes. Terschelling
Terschelling, NETHERLANDS.

53.25 N 05.28 E.

Finding Date. 21 08 1987.

Finding Place.. Gley,
Norfolk.
G. Britain.

52.58 N 05.28 E.

Condition...Alive. Released.

Find. Details colour marks read.

Comment.. L: White & Blue. R. Red.

Distance.. 298 km.

Direction 260 degrees. Elapsed Time 70 days

ref. 111187.

Ringer 217

Poorter E.P.R.
Oostrandpark 124
8212 Av Lelystad

Reported by

John Hampshire.
Riverbank, Hunworth.
Melton Constable,
Norfolk. England.

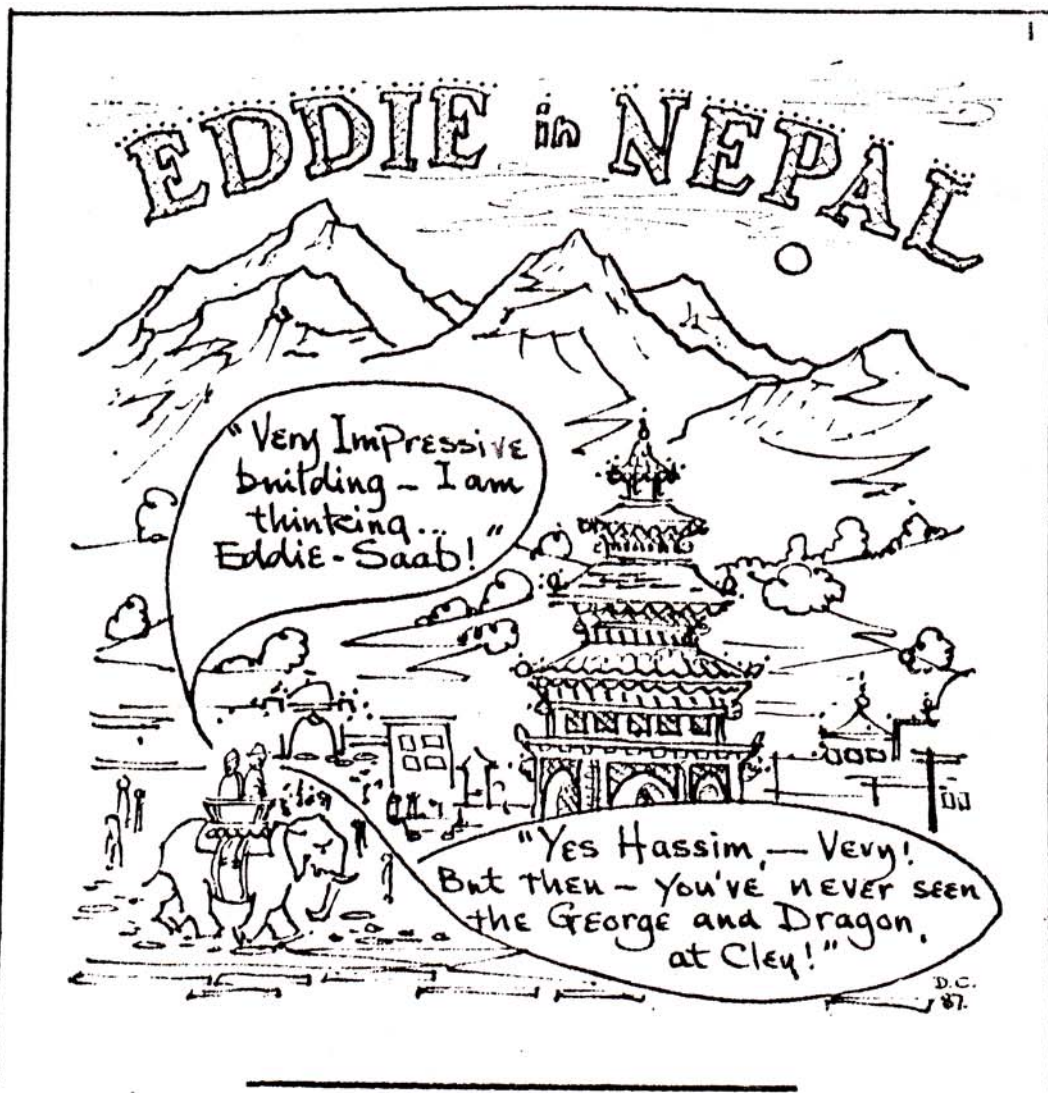
SUBSCRIPTIONS

A reminder that the 1988 Subscription is £2.50 only.

Those Members who receive a Renewal Form with this Newsletter are due to pay their Subscription as soon as possible - before June 30th please - by Cheque or P.O. made payable to Cley Bird Club.

A few Members whose Subscriptions were due by March 31st have overlooked payment. They will find S O D (Subscription Over-Due) in Red on Page 1 of this Newsletter. Will they send their Subscription by return please, non-payment must lead to deletion from the Members' List before the next Newsletter.

P. Gooden.



Thanks for the Drawing to
Dudley Chambers.

ACCOMMODATION.

Information regarding reliable accommodation in Birding areas is always useful so if you have used any such facilities and know them to be good value and of acceptable standard, please let us have the name, address and telephone number and we will include details in future Newsletters.

For instance ;-

Mrs Fotheringham,
Steornabagh, Deshar Road,
Boat of Garten. (047 983 371)

Offers B & B, also Evening Meal and is highly recommended.

Or, in the same general area, this one is offering B & B @ £8 50 and Dinner @ £5 50 and has asked to be included in this Newsletter.

Elizabeth Matthews M.Sc.

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