

WMBC NEWS

No.510 Autumn 2023



Black-crowned Night Heron - Ladywalk

Photographer - David Bird

This front page is sponsored by The Birders Store, Worcester



WMBC News

Is published in March, June, September and December each year to link members with each other, what's been happening, current issues and forthcoming events on the birding scene in our area and further afield together with a selection of your articles and a comprehensive summary of the recorded bird sightings in our area.

As I write this; we are in the middle of "Storm Antoni" and the rain has been pouring down most of the weekend- Summer seems over and by the looks of things, migration seems to be in full swing. I can't be sure if this year has been a good year for our breeding birds, it seems a very mixed picture. In my garden, my House Sparrows seem to have been doing well with about 30 hanging around and Starlings also seem to have done well. I have heard that Barn Owls seem to have had a better year and on my travels, I have seen more small rodents than I would in other years.

This issue of WMBC news is another one packed to the brim! I spent some time pulling together some information on visiting Belvide, which I hope will encourage more of you to visit if you haven't already. I hope it may inspire some of you to write similar articles about your patches. If you are interested in writing such an article but are not sure where to start, or struggle to produce a map to help illustrate it, drop me an email and maybe it is a project that can we can support you with.

In the meantime, I wish you a good Autumn Migration and I hope that you strike gold on your patches.

Liz

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Membership Matters

We are pleased to welcome the following new members of the club who have joined since the last newsletter. Please note the names shown are as on the membership form but that all family members at each address are included in this welcome.

Mr P Allen of BURNTWOOD, Mr D Amieux of BIRMINGHAM, Mr L Bagley of WOLVERHAMPTON, Dr E & Mrs S Barkell of SOLIHULL, Mrs D & Mr N Bellingham of STAFFORD, Mr A & Mrs N Benhamada of BIRMINGHAM, Mr R Berger of STOKE ON TRENT, Mr G Bexon of NOTTINGHAM, Mrs H Birch of STAFFORD, Mrs N & Mr P Boulstridge of SUTTON COLDFIELD, Mr R & Mrs S Bradbury of CANNOCK, Dr I Broadbent of ABERDEEN, Mrs J & Miss R Brownhill of RUGELEY, Mr M Burden of BIRMINGHAM, Mr T Carter of MELTON MOWBRAY, Mr T Christian of BIRMINGHAM, Mrs E Coleman of SMETHWICK, Mr J Coombes of ALCESTER, Mr W Crookshank of STAFFORD, Mr D & Mrs T Crutchley of WOLVERHAMPTON, Mr J Davenport of TELFORD, Mrs V Deacon of BURNTWOOD, Mr T Denston of STAFFORD, Mr A Dent of WOLVERHAMPTON, Mr J Earith of CREWE, Mr M Espley of TELFORD, Ms K Farrow of STAFFORD, Miss S Fitzmaurice of STAFFORD, Mr B Galbally of LEAMINGTON SPA, Mr A Gelder of RUGELEY, Mr M & Mrs S Gill of SUTTON COLDFIELD, Mrs C Gillen of STAFFORD, Mrs C & Mr D Green of LEICESTER, Mr N Gregory of WALSALL, Mr N Griffiths of BURNTWOOD, Mr C Grove of SLOUGH, Mrs J & Mr T Hall of STAFFORD, Mr B Handley of MARKET DRAYTON, Mr A Harmer of SHREWSBURY, Mx J Hart of WOLVERHAMPTON, of Mrs K & Mr K Heath of BANBURY, Mrs J & Mr T Herrington of WOLVERHAMPTON, Mr A Hiatt of HINCKLEY, Miss A Hill of RUGELEY, Mr A & Mrs C Holmes of CANNOCK, Mr D Hopkin of STOKE ON TRENT, Mrs K Hoskins of BIRMINGHAM, Mr A Hulley of STOKE ON TRENT, Miss G Hynes of LEAMINGTON SPA, Miss S Jones of WOLVERHAMPTON, Miss E Knight of NUNEATON, Mrs M Langford of TELFORD, Mr J Latham of STAFFORD, Mr K Leach of WOLVERHAMPTON, Mrs H & Mr N Lewis of STAFFORD, Miss S Ley of STOKE ON TRENT, Mr N Lunn of SUTTON COLDFIELD, Mr R Maddox of BIRMINGHAM, Mr A Matthews of STAFFORD, Mrs C Matthews of BROMLEY HAYES, Mr K Matthews of UTTOXETER, Mr S Maynes of DUDLEY, Mrs P & Mr S Mazzocchio of STOKE ON TRENT, Mr A McCann of RUGELEY, Miss J McDonnell of SLOUGH, Mr D & Mrs J McLaughlin of STOKE ON TRENT, Mr M Middleton of STOURBRIDGE, Mr L Moreton of SHIFNAL, Mrs P Myall-Chance of STRATFORD ON AVON, Mrs P Nattrass of STAFFORD, Mrs C Parsons of ARMITAGE, Mrs J & Mr J Pendleton of RUGELEY, Mr G Poyner of BIRMINGHAM, Mr C Price of BIRMINGHAM, Mr D Raybould of BURNTWOOD, Mrs C & Mr P Ricketts of CANNOCK, Mr C Roberts of TAMWORTH, Mr M Roberts of STONE, Mr J & Mrs Y Rolinson of KINGSWINFORD, Professor P Routledge & Professor H Sweetland of CARDIFF, Mr B Saunders of LICHFIELD, Mr C Shaw of TELFORD, Mr R Slater of RUGELEY, Mr K Smith of BANBURY, Mr R Stockdale of SUTTON COLDFIELD, Mr R Styles of NEWCASTLE UNDER LYME, Mrs K Sullivan of BIRMINGHAM, Mr C Taylor of CHURCH LEIGH, Mrs D & Mr K Taylor of CANNOCK, Mr R Taylor of MACCLESFIELD, Mrs H & Mr N Walker of CLAVERDON, Mrs S Walsh of DUDLEY, Ms D Waplington of NOTTINGHAM, Mrs C Warburton of STAFFORD, Mr T Warden of NUNEATON, Mr S Watkins of SUTTON COLDFIELD, Mrs A & Mr D Webb of WALSALL, Dr O West of RUGELEY, Mr G & Mrs L

**Whelan of SUTTON COLDFIELD, Mr R Willetts of DERBY, Mr G Williams of STAFFORD,
Mrs J & Mr M Willis of TELFORD, Mr S Wincott of TELFORD, Mr A Wootton of
STAFFORD and Miss S Wright of MARKET DRAYTON**

Following queries from new members, we are planning to improve the information provided as part of the members joining package, particularly about directions to our reserves. If you have any views about what should be included, I would be most grateful to receive emails with your comments.

If you have any queries about membership, please do not hesitate to email me and I will do my best to help.

Michael Bevan

Membership Secretary

64 Brookfields Road, Ipstones,

Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire ST10 2LY

Email: membership@westmidlandbirdclub.org.uk

Front Cover Feature

The Autumn issue of WMBC news is graced by David's Birds photograph of the Night Heron at Ladywalk. David was the first to see this bird and describes his discovery:

"I only joined WMBC this year. Last Tuesday (18th July) I had called in at Middleton Lakes arriving about 6 am looking for and photographing the Barn Owl. After I left there, as it's not far to Ladywalk, I drove over there, arriving about 9am.

I walked anti-clockwise calling into the first hide with not a lot showing so I walked onto Riverwalk hide. After about half an hour I saw the Night Heron on the side of the island in front of the hide. I could not identify the bird so I sent a copy on my phone to a friend and he told me what it was.

He went up the next morning and some one gave him Pete Sofley's number for me to ring up. Which I did and he was surprised by the pictures I sent him, so he made me a member of the WhatsApp group where I have posted some of my pictures. This caused a lot of excitement and a lot of members have been down to see it."

David uses an Olympus OM1 with a 100-400mm lens.

Would you like to be on the cover of the Newsletter? Send your submissions to newsletter@westmidlandbirdclub.org.uk

Liz



Gill Broadbent 1945 - 2023

I would like to thank all of you that sent condolences and to those who came to Gill's funeral on June 5th at Ingestre Church. I was married to Gill for nearly fifty six wonderful adventurous years.

Gill was one of those gifted and caring people who made a positive difference to those whose lives she touched. She was the personification of kindness accompanied by untold energy. Many found her inspirational. Those are not just my words but those written in the many cards that we received.

After she retired from a career in education and we moved to Staffordshire, Gill involved herself in the village community. She quickly became a member of the Church PCC and later served eight years as a Parish Councillor. During that time, she became a conservationist in its broadest sense devoting twelve years of her life as the project leader for the successful restoration of the Orangery in the grounds of Ingestre Hall. She was passionate too about conserving the ancient Ingestre red and yellow apples. In 2020 she became Staffordshire Trustee of the Year.

Gill loved birds whether they were at our feeders that she watched every morning before breakfast or those in far-flung quarters of our planet. Gill loved the Scillies, Shetland and learning about the different cultures of the people she met especially in Papua New Guinea, where she spent time with the wig men and in Cameroon where the women were celebrating International Women's Day. Gill believed that there was much to learn from the indigenous tribes in developing countries. In Peru she discovered that one of the tribes had not known the concept of stealing.

She enjoyed being with members of the birding community and they enjoyed her company too. One birding friend recalled from over twenty years ago that "Gill was a lovely, funny lady who fitted in perfectly with silly birding blokes. My fond memories of her are as a member of the Upton Warren Wednesday crew".

Our home over the years has given sanctity, including wonderful food and celebratory wine, all prepared by Gill, to onward traveling twitchers. On one fairly recent occasion she spent much of one day getting a puncture repaired to what had been our first vehicle of choice when we had planned to travel to Cornwall in it. When we returned after transferring to another car not only was the tyre repaired but the table was fully set for a three-course meal for four.

From November 2021 Gill suffered from a significant brain haemorrhage from which she made a good recovery. She heard that there was a Cape Gull at Grafham Water in Cambridgeshire. Pronouncing herself fit and well enough to travel she announced that we should go and see it. Sadly, and catastrophically Gill suffered a second brain haemorrhage on May 11th from which she never recovered. She died peacefully on May 15th.

I will remember that day at Grafham to my dying day plus all the wonderful memories of birding that we had together. She always will be by my side. R.I.P. my love.

Roger Broadbent, Chairperson

Vacancy

AN EXCITING OPPORTUNITY TO BE INVOLVED IN SHAPING THE FUTURE OF THE CLUB!

The WMBC is looking to appoint a new Club Secretary.

This is a voluntary, unpaid role but reasonable expenses will be paid. Hours are highly variable but at times the role is likely to be quite time consuming. The successful applicant will be expected to manage their own time in the context of the meeting cycles of the Management Committee and Trustees

The Club Secretary is one of the four Honorary Officers of the Club and as a member of the Club's Management Committee will contribute to the development of Club policies, business plans and budgets.

The successful applicant must

- have good I. T. skills;
- be a good communicator;
- be able to work collaboratively with others;
- be a good administrator, in particular have the ability to organise meetings and write minutes.

A knowledge of the birds of the West Midlands and of ornithological matters generally would be desirable but not essential.

The successful applicant will be expected to acquire a good working knowledge of the aims, policies and activities of the Club and will be required to establish good working relationships with other Management Committee members and the Trustees. They will work closely with both the Club Chairperson, who chairs the Management Committee and the Chair of Trustees.

Please apply by email in the first instance with a brief CV and an explanation of why you are interested in the role to Roger Broadbent, Club Chairperson at chair@westmidlandbirdclub.org.uk



Conservation Matters

For any queries in regards to conservation issues, planning developments which may affect local wildlife. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with Dave Jackson conservation@westmidlandbirdclub.org.uk

Members may recall that in earlier issues from 2020/21 I made representations to Stoke-on-Trent City Council giving our full support to the site protection, and ongoing conservation efforts made by the Save Berryhill Fields Action Group.

Below is an update on Berryhill Fields which in the Club's opinion is a very important site with a range of habitats for both breeding and passage birds, and is a "green lung" for the people of Stoke.

Currently I understand that there are no proposals to build on Berryhill Fields, however there is still no final draft Local Plan (including site allocations) which would provide conclusive certainty.

Dave Burgess is campaigning hard along with other Action Group members to seek a positive commitment from Stoke City Council, in order to protect and include this vulnerable range of much valued wildlife habitats in the Council's Local Plan as Greenspace.

The Government set a target in 2020 that all Local Plans should be in place by December 2023, and there is no indication at this stage as to whether or not Stoke-on-Trent City Council will achieve this deadline.

As there is no positive commitment from the Council to date, as stated by Dave Burgess of the Action Group, I was inspired to update members on the importance of this site when I saw Phil Jones's superb portrait of a Ring Ouzel with the Berryhill masts in the background, on the cover of our last WMBC News.

Phil has also kindly drawn a Black Redstart and Willow Tit to accompany this article, and Nick Pomiankowski, Staffordshire County Bird Recorder has kindly provided a summary of some of the more notable birds which have occurred in the past few years on the fields.

Birds at Berryhill Fields 2014 – 2022, by Nick Pomiankowski

This brief summary intends to give a flavour of some of the regular birds and also some of the scarcer species which have visited Berryhill Fields in the period 2014 – 2022.

Quail - An occasional migrant, six birds have been logged during the period with one year when a pair bred.

Water Rail - One or two birds regularly winter in the reed beds.

Jack Snipe and **Snipe** - Both species winter in small numbers here, the highest counts being three and 23 respectively. There are several damp areas they favour.

Woodcock - One or two birds regularly winter on site.

Barn Owl - individual birds are seen irregularly, often by dog walkers, very early in the morning or after dusk, suggesting they use the site for hunting during the winter months.

Little Owl - This species used to be seen regularly until 2016 but a recent sighting in 2021 gives hope that it may return to the site.

Long-eared Owl - Birds have occasionally roosted during the winter periods, five individuals having been logged during the period.

Short-eared Owl - Birds have been seen annually during the period and often stayed for extended periods during the winter, but this has not happened since 2016. Those seen since this time have passed through rather than lingered.

Wryneck - Birds were discovered on site on August 31st – September 1st 2015 and August 22nd 2019.

Yellow Wagtail - Not a breeding bird but small numbers are regularly seen during spring and autumn migration.

Tree Pipit - Not a breeding bird, but autumn migrants regularly pass over the high ground during August and September, the best count being 10 on August 30th 2014.

Meadow Pipit - Large numbers can regularly be seen during autumn migration and occasionally during spring migration. There have been 23 three-figure counts, three in the spring, 20 in the autumn, the highest being 5340 on October 1st 2016. On a good day,

waves of birds can be seen flying over the high ground mainly in the morning.

Black Redstart - Seven individuals have been logged here between 2014 and 2022, six in April and one in December.

Redstart - Regular during spring and autumn, with juveniles arriving from their breeding sites in the autumn often staying here and feeding up for many days before eventually flying off for their wintering sites. There have been nine double-figure counts, all in August, the best being 15 on August 20th 2017.

Whinchat - Birds are seen on both spring and

autumn passage, autumn birds often lingering on site before eventually flying off to their wintering sites. Unlike Wheatear, larger numbers occur in the autumn rather than the spring. Double-figure counts were 13 on September 9th 2021 and 10 on both September 1st 2015 and August 21st - 22nd 2017.

Stonechat - As well as a spring and autumn migrant, birds also winter here on a regular basis. A large influx during the period of October 14th - 20th 2014 gave counts of between 14 – 26 birds and there were 16 on September 19th 2020, 12 on February 21st 2021 and October 8th 2021 and 18 on October 21st 2022.

Wheatear - Birds are seen on both spring and autumn passage although the majority are seen during the spring. The highest counts have been 38 on April 26th and 30th 2017 and 36 on April 23rd 2014.

Ring Ouzel - Birds are seen here annually, more often in the spring than autumn, the best

day count being five on April 23rd 2020. The number of different birds seen in spring has varied from three to nine, the average being seven so it is a great location to search for this migrant.

Grasshopper Warbler - Birds breed here every year but territories have fluctuated between four and eleven during the period with no particular pattern so this is perhaps mainly dependent on their survival success during the winter period.

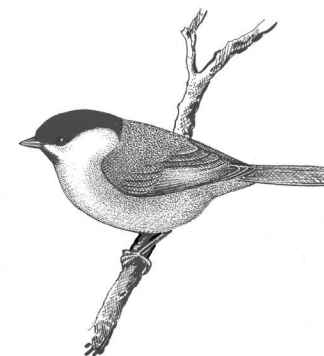
Spotted Flycatcher - A regular autumn visitor with all records in August and September, other than just one record in May. The highest counts of 10 birds were made on August 22nd 2015 and September 1st 2015.

Pied Flycatcher - A scarce migrant with just two records

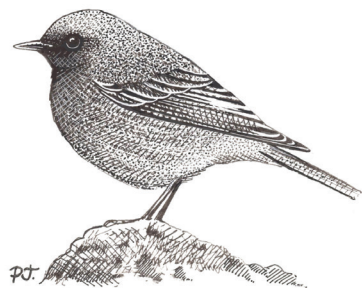
Willow Tit - Still present despite the national decline in numbers, six or seven territories were logged in 2020 but no more than two in the following years.

Hawfinch - Six have been seen but none since 2018.

Breeding Warblers on the site are **Blackcap**, **Garden Warbler**, **Whitethroat**, **Lesser Whitethroat**, **Reed Warbler**, **Sedge Warbler**, **Chiffchaff** and **Willow Warbler**.



Willow Tit
Drawing: Phil Jones



Black Redstart
Drawing: Phil Jones

Two Good News Stories - in part.

Skylarks and Corn Buntings are bouncing back in England

The latest Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) report offers hope for two iconic farmland species, Eurasian Skylark and Corn Bunting.

However, the report, produced by the BTO and RSPB, also reveals continued declines for other species typically associated with farmland in Britain, including Yellowhammer, Tree Sparrow and Grey Partridge.

Eurasian Skylark has endured a severe long-term decline across Britain. However, according to the latest report, numbers have increased by 9% during the past decade and, encouragingly, nearly 20% in the last five years in south-east England and the East Midlands. These figures buck the long-term trend, although the recent increases in England and Scotland are not mirrored in Wales, where there has been a 23% decline since 2016.

In England, the outlook looks even more promising for Corn Bunting, a species that has seen its UK population crash by 82% since the late 1960s and which has disappeared from many parts of the country. Numbers in England have increased by 35% over the past decade, the report reveals, with this partial recovery particularly evident in the South-

West.

Dr James Heywood, BBS National Organiser, said: "These positive signs for two iconic farmland species is really encouraging. We await the results of ongoing analyses to establish whether they are indeed linked to changes in farming practices. These signs of hope must not distract us from the fact that many farmland species are still in decline. There is much work to be done."

Dr Simon Wotton, RSPB Senior Conservation Science, added: "While the news of Eurasian Skylark and Corn Bunting short-term recovery is positive, it's disheartening to see that other farmland birds are still declining. We know that agri-environment schemes can work if deployed in the right way and it is essential that we have a functioning Environment Land Management scheme that supports farmers managing their land for nature and climate."

Spa Bridge Kittiwakes, Scarborough

Members might recall that in our Spring Issue No.508 last year, alongside many other objectors nationally, I wrote to North Yorkshire County Council objecting to and expressing my/the Club's dismay at the eviction of nesting opportunities for the 270 strong colony of Kittiwakes using Spa Bridge Scarborough. I received their half expected "dead bat" response.

Very sadly colonies across the UK, throughout Europe and other parts of the world are still being devastated by the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, HPAI (Bird Flu).

At the colony on Ekkeroy in Finmark over 11,000 birds have died and have been removed from rooftops, shoreline and streams, which may account for 50% of the total population!

Nick Addey, our man up north, has updated all concerned parties on the latest good news from Scarborough for the 2023 season at least, in his Blog :-

The resilience of the Spa Bridge Kittiwakes!

"Earlier this year the news of gull proofing of Scarborough Spa Bridge by North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) to evict 270 pairs of a UK Red Listed species was a shock to many all round the country. Kittiwakes have been in decline for some years in the UK, so much so that they are a species of conservation concern. Although there are signs of some levelling out of the population in localised areas of the UK after a steep decline, some of the Yorkshire colonies are showing alarming breeding results.

Spa Bridge can be classed as an "A" listed colony, a "good" colony. Studies of breeding productivity there show it to be of significant importance, averaging over one chick per nest. Some local study plots are only half that, and in some cases total breeding failures in recent years.

So how have the Kittiwakes reacted to the 2500 "fire gel" tubs? The first to return to inspect the bridge on 17th March were observed to panic as they got close to the ledges, they quickly flew back to rest on the sea in South Bay where they formed a small flock. The birds were so desperate to get back onto the ledges that where the odd gel tub had fallen off, maybe due to the weather (?), by late March some individuals started to settle for short periods. By early April up to 30 were on ledges, in gaps where more gel tubs had fallen. Many were settling on the girders on the bridge, or loafing on the roofs of local businesses, I bet the owners were pleased with the NYCC actions!

More Kittiwakes were arriving throughout April, and to our surprise, they seemed to get used to the tubs, more and more birds landing close to the tubs. After all this was a five star hotel, why settle for any less?

Early May saw nest building! A closer inspection showed a significant number of gel tubs missing. Could this be assisted by Kittiwakes? Perhaps the glue had failed on the sandstone? A count on 9th May revealed a total of 101 part constructed nests, over 200 birds around the bridge. The latest from the bridge is that 97 birds are seemingly incubating eggs, and still lots of construction of nests taking place.

This is an astonishing result, the Kittiwakes showing tremendous resilience and persistence to succeed. Not what was expected!

So what for the future of Kittiwakes on Spa Bridge? That's in the hands of NYCC. RSPB, recognising the importance of chick productivity on the bridge, are hoping links can be made with NYCC to help manage gulls in Scarborough and along the coast. The Yorkshire Coast Urban Gull Partnership has been set up with attendees from key conservation bodies, RSPCA, North Yorkshire Police Wildlife Crime Officer, and local experts who study the colonies. Hopefully everyone can work together for the mutual benefit of the Kittiwakes and local businesses."

Nick Tweets under @AddeyNick – Long Nab Birder.



Spa Bridge - Scarborough
Photo: Nick Addey

Dave Jackson, Conservation Officer

News From Ladywalk - Richard King

In the last issue I referred to the positioning of two tern rafts on B Pool and the dilemma of getting the timing right. We hoped to put the raft in position after the gulls had commenced nesting, but before the terns had settled down to nest. Impossible! Gulls soon took up residence. As for the terns, they did not successfully breed on the reserve: one member has reported seeing a Canada Goose trampling a nest. Elsewhere on the reserve there were breeding highlights, such as two **Redshank** chicks fledging, approx. 15 **Lawings** and currently there are juvenile **Little** and **Great-crested Grebes** on the pools. **Little Ringed Plovers** were consistently present and **Oystercatchers** regular visitors but there is no evidence that they nested on site. Single broods of **Teal** and **Shoveler** were seen, the former soon disappeared. Away from the pools **Sand Martins** successfully raised young from the riverbank – avoiding the high July water levels – and three **Kestrels** were raised. **Willow Tits** were not reported during the breeding season but it appears that they successfully bred on or near the reserve with a juvenile seen in July.

The highlight of the season was the second consecutive year's sighting for a few days of **Little Bittern**. This posed a number of questions and we received good advice from the RSPB about the chances of this species breeding on the reserve. This was based on their experience at their Ham Wall reserve in Somerset. There a bird appeared on two consecutive years and it led to a male attracting a mate, leading to breeding taking place. Their experience was that there was no evidence of breeding taking place at the time as the birds, especially the female, are so secretive and reserve staff did not know that the young had hatched until feeding flights were seen. With this advice it led to our deciding to close Hide B ("Ken's Hide") and part of the circular walk as they were closest to the area where it was thought that they might nest. We feel that these were appropriate measures in case a mate was attracted but it appears that this was not the case. We await developments in 2024 – we believe our reed bed has the amount of water and food to attract bittern species and we may have to make similar decisions. In such circumstances we will publicise such decisions via social media with the addition of physical notices on the reserve.

We attempt to study and record more than the birds on the reserve. Two examples are moths and butterflies; there are always interesting results when the moth trap is in use. Also this year appears excellent for butterflies and our butterfly surveyors are valued for sending in their weekly survey returns which are forwarded to Butterfly Conservation. Currently there are amazing numbers of **Red Admiral** (60 on one walk around the reserve); **Gatekeepers** and **Commas** and we await the explosion of whites in September! A welcome addition to the reserve is "Ladywalk Apiary", a small group of modern beehives in a designated area between Hide B and the helleborine area. The hives and bees are well managed and the bee-keepers invited other bee-keepers and some Ladywalk birders to an open evening in June. We hope that a similar event can be done for the wider membership in the future.

If there are enquiries please contact me ladywalk@westmidlandbirdclub.org.uk

Richard J King

Identifying Juvenile Chats

Steve Nuttall of Belvide Birding has recently posted an interesting tweet showing juvenile Whinchat and Stonechat, alongside a juvenile Wheatear and Redstart. The tweet shows how similar these juvenile birds can be. All show a degree of speckling that one would expect to see in juvenile plumaged Robins that one would see in their gardens (which are also part of the "chat" family). The top left photo shows a juvenile Whinchat, top right shows a juvenile Stonechat, bottom left a juvenile Wheatear and bottom right a juvenile Common Redstart. (All photographs kindly provided by Steve Nuttall.)



Request from our Vice-Presidents - Graham Harrison

The Vice-presidents are currently compiling a history of the Club and they would be grateful to receive any information - letters, documents, pictures, recollections etc. - that members feel might be of use.

They would especially like to receive any material from those who had family members in the earlier years.

As the Club's archive only gives surnames for the early years they would like to know first names where possible if anyone can help.

Please reply to graham.harrison21@btinternet.com

The Occurrence of Peregrine Falcons in suburban South Birmingham - Jim Winsper

My home patch lies on the southern edge of Birmingham and straddles the West Midlands - Worcestershire county boundary. Sightings of **Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus* in this area have, for many years, been regular although not necessarily frequent. Given that this species breeds and frequents the Birmingham area, it's not surprising that this should be the case, however, in recent years their occurrence in my home patch has increased considerably. An electricity pylon line is located nearby and while fly through visits are possibly the most frequent form of sightings, birds also alight on the pylon structures to rest, survey the scene or devour locally caught prey. Prey species that have been identified include: **Feral Pigeon** *Columba livia*; **Homing Pigeon** *C. I. domestica* (identified by distinctive plumage as being from a local loft/dovecote); **Wood Pigeon** *Columba palumbus*; **Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major*; **Common Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris* and **Blackbird** *Turdus merula*.

The frequency of these sightings to which I refer, obviously arise from coincidence. However, our observations are also aided during the spring and summer months by **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** *Larus fuscus* from a nearby rooftop breeding colony who vocally announce their displeasure at the Peregrines presence, especially so if the falcon has prey, or has attempted to catch prey. Upon hearing the gulls uttering a threatening/anxious 'yelp', it has become second nature for my wife and myself to immediately view the pylon structures where, on most occasions, we locate a Peregrine. Such was the frequency of these sightings in 2019 that I decided to undertake a search to find out if these birds were indeed more local than I had first imagined. My first attempt was to follow the pylon line that takes a roughly East-West route with the thought that platforms located high in the structure could provide a suitable nest location. Having travelled approximately two miles in each direction from a starting point near my home, each search proved fruitless. With the thought that the birds might be very local, going beyond two miles seemed slightly irrelevant to my aim.

My second attempt was to visit a fairly local council housing estate that contains 14 high rise residential tower blocks with the aim of checking rooftops for any Peregrine activity, despite my efforts, the searches again proved fruitless. The Covid 19 Coronavirus Pandemic and its associated lock-downs took place in 2020 and this put an end to my investigations, but not an end to Peregrine activity in the area.

What followed in 2023 was purely a chance comment in a conversation with Chris Millward (CM) who, in his capacity as WMBC Secretary, had visited me at my home. Having mentioned the frequency of Peregrine sightings in my area, CM later informed me that during a visit to the aforementioned housing estate on a business related project, he too had seen a Peregrine in that immediate area. The next set of circumstances can only be described as bizarre.

A member of the local residents group who CM was working with at the time of his sighting, reported that a bird of prey had been seen frequently at one of the tower blocks. Without any certainty of what species this might be, or indeed if the bird might have been captive, I investigated the location that CM provided for me. Upon arrival at the tower block I was greeted by the sight of an adult Peregrine perched on the balcony ledge of a 7th floor apartment, approximately midway between ground floor and roof. This was clearly not a captive bird but a free flying wild adult. During my stakeouts at the site I watched the activities of a pair of birds with the male making journeys in search of prey, while the female alternated between the occasional journey, sitting on the balcony ledge or presumably tending her clutch.



Adult Peregrine Falcon on apartment balcony ledge
Photo: Jim Winsper

At one point the on guard male became noticeably agitated and took to the air in dashing flight; on looking up from my vantage point in the direction he was heading I noticed two other Peregrines soaring high above. The local male was instantly joined by the female from within the balcony and the intruders rapidly departed the scene upon their presence, with the resident birds soon resuming normal duties after the encounter. In connection with my earlier rooftop searches, it became clear that this mid-story balcony, unlike others, had not been screened off and had open access. This open access had clearly provided the Peregrines with an opportunity to take up residence in what is obviously a favourable area, prey species are abundant with a high concentration of Feral Pigeons in the immediate vicinity. Local breeding birds also include **Wood Pigeon**, a **House Martin** *Delichon urbicum* colony, **Common Starling** and **Blackbird**. Just a very short flight from their balcony home, the birds come across open countryside and an even wider variety of prey species.

Local rooftop nesting gulls seem able to coexist with the Peregrines much as they do in other areas, this however, as mentioned previously, can be a strained relationship and the falcons, as would be expected, are not the gulls preferred neighbour.

The next move proved to be both decisive and eye opening. Ben Dolan (BD) of the West Midlands Ringing Group (WMRG) was contacted and in turn Ben contacted me with the aim of gaining the exact location of the Peregrines together with any relevant information I had to offer. Armed with the information I had provided, BD then contacted the local authorities with the intention of gaining access to the apartment and assessing the situation. The result of the exercise carried out by BD found the apartment to be occupied, although not on a permanent basis and, that the Peregrines had a clutch of three eggs located within the confines of the balcony. The occupant of the apartment was aware of the birds presence and had taken it upon himself to be their guardian, he was however, extremely relieved and most grateful of BDs involvement.

Frequent conversation between BD and the apartment occupier resulted in BD and a team of WMRG members, together with myself as an onlooker, arriving at the apartment to ring the Peregrine chicks under BTO licence on Wednesday June 7th 2023.



The female chick in the grasp of a delighted Jim Winsper
Photo: Ben Dolan

On greeting the occupier and gaining a welcoming access into his apartment, we found that one chick had not made it and had sadly deceased. While there was obvious disappointment in witnessing this, it comes as little surprise when dealing with birds of prey, in the knowledge that this is likely to happen. The other two however, a male and female, were in fine health and as correctly calculated by BD, at perfect ringing age. Once the balcony had been entered the whole necessary procedure was swift and decisive as the team worked to BDs instructions by passing each chick from the balcony into the living room, thus minimising any potential noise from the chicks and stress to the adults.

Without fuss the young Peregrines were returned to their balcony home none the worse after their experience and encounter with an alien life form.

Amongst the identifiable remains of prey around the nest was the expected variety of pigeon species and a flight feather from a **Rose-ringed Parakeet** *Psittacula krameri*, another increasingly regular visitor to the local bird scene. The ringing of Peregrine Falcon chicks in the living room of a high rise residential apartment block in suburban Birmingham must surely be regarded as a novelty. On my behalf it was something of a successful and certainly rewarding mission in finding the birds, albeit not in the circumstances that I had imagined. A bonus of this entire exercise was to watch the WMRG in action. Ben Dolan and his team were totally committed in their actions and professional to the finest detail, to the extent that all birds remained relatively stress free throughout the entire exercise that was carried out in minimal time and with great efficiency. It was certainly my privilege to be invited to join in on this memorable occasion.

So how many Peregrines are nesting in similar circumstances to these birds? Not many I suspect, but it does highlight their ingenuity and adaptability and certainly prompts the thought. It would seem that this is the first occurrence of breeding taking place on this particular balcony but as the occupier of the apartment explains, his residence at this address has been intermittent in recent times with some lengthy spells of absence, especially through the Covid lock-down periods. We cannot rule out of course that



Equally thrilled to hold the youngsters are members of the excellent WMRG
Photo: Jim Winsper

Peregrines have previously bred in this vicinity, or at least attempted to breed in similar circumstances to their present location; their occurrence in this area would support this thought. Wherever our contemplations take us, the fact that Peregrines have taken up residence and under these circumstances, has created a great deal of joy for those aware of their presence, myself included. Importantly, and most encouraging, is the fact that those local people who have been aware of these birds have taken an affectionate and protective attitude towards them.

I'm delighted to say that on Tuesday June 27th 2023 both juvenile birds fledged from their balcony nest site and took to the skies successfully. Frequent checks during the day until my last visit on the evening of this same date, found both youngsters perched comfortably on high rise apartment block rooftops, with both awaiting the next return of their food bearing parents.

In conclusion

Local council authorities have, for obvious reason, suggested that breeding birds on domestically occupied high rise balconies are to be discouraged. They have also extended their suggestion to include provisions being made for nesting Peregrine Falcons to be accommodated in appropriately positioned, purpose made facilities in the immediate vicinity. Ben Dolan will act in an advisory capacity on this project.

Jim Winsper

Call for Photographs - New Email Address!

Firstly I would like to thank everyone who has sent me their photos, especially those who managed to get better pictures than I did of the Stafford Hoopoe!

Kate and I now have a joint email address to receive your photographs. This is to enable us to use your photos in the Newsletter as well as on our social media.

photos@westmidlandbirdclub.org.uk

As we use more social media, we would also love to receive any videos and sound clips (such as nocmig recordings) to share with our followers- with credit of course.

Kate and I look forward to hearing from you!

Liz

Update on the Patshull Project - Colin McShane

Relationships with key personnel at Patshull remain very positive, and much conservation work has been done; in summary:-

- most of the gaps in hedgerows identified in our initial report have been in-filled
- several completely new hedges have been planted with a mix of species
- the woodland management plan is being put into effect, with thinning taking place in several areas
- thousands of trees have been planted in areas around the estate

Work has been progressing at pace to set up the pig and chicken units, and they now appear to be in full swing. At least one of the cottages on the estate has been refurbished and is being let to holidaymakers. The activity centre has been refurbished and added to, and bookings are now on the rise.

The involvement of Belvide Ringers has been reduced significantly at the understandable request of the owners, given that bird flu is of significant importance to the chicken dimension of the business.

However, in our drive to promote birding to young people, we are working in partnership with the Patshull Activity Centre; offering a series of bird ringing demonstrations—some of which have already occurred. Feedback has been superb. For example, the leader of the 3rd Blackheath guides contacted us after a recent demo. In addition to a range of very positive comments, perhaps the most relevant was: “The girls loved it and spent the rest of the day talking about it and they designed a new game to recap on what they had learned. Jen was just amazing”.

As explained above there is less to report about ringing on the rest of the estate than we had hoped.

Kevin Clements was given permission to ring at the entrance hedge to the Meadleys side of the estate since this is furthest away from the chicken areas—he ringed 477 Redwing, several Fieldfare, Song Thrush, Chaffinch and Yellowhammer during winter 2022.

One big disappointment for us is that it appears that the Pied Flycatchers may have failed to breed over the last 2 years after an encouraging, successful breeding season in 2021.

On the positive side however, we have confirmed breeding of Grey Partridge on the site, and there are increasing reports of Corn Bunting nearby and on the estate.

The friends of the project living around the estate are still logging the birds they see, and we are looking to produce a bird report at the end of 2023—one theme of which will be to set the parameters for how we produce a follow-up report on our major 2020 report.

Colin McShane

An Extraordinary Recovery - Rob Skeates

As a BTO ringer of many years standing, the WMBC area has proved not to be the best area of the country for foreign ringing recoveries and/or controls. (The most interesting for me was an Estonian Black-headed Gull controlled in Sutton Park).

However, this all changed when a conjunction of fortuitous factors coincided (not least, obtaining a Polish ringing licence) which allowed my wife and I to set up a small lacustrine ringing site situated in Pomerania, N.W. Poland.

Almost immediately, foreign controls and recoveries started to come and to date we have had over 150, involving 24 countries. These include Sylvia warblers to England, Israel and Libya. Most involved birds caught by ringing colleagues all over Europe, with a few sent in by the general public (one involved a photographer taking numerous digital pictures of a male Penduline Tit at its nest and then sequencing the full ring number so that it could be reported!)

However my recovery of a lifetime came about during last year's autumn migration period. Some 760 Reed Warblers were caught (and carefully identified from over 100 Marsh Warblers trapped over the same period.) Interestingly 99% were first year birds, the adults leave soon after breeding. On 12th September 2022 a Reed Warbler was netted and rung (Pol K9X7841). Fifty days later, at a fresh water lake just south of Lisbon in Portugal, a local fisherman caught a Black (Large Mouthed) Bass of 1.6Kg. (This species has been introduced from the USA).

On gutting the fish, to his amazement, he discovered a freshly ingested bird in its stomach: K9X7841. This species of bass is well known for being a voracious feeder. Whether the bird was taken alive at the water's edge or it died and dropped into the water we will never know.

I approached the BTO and they were not aware of such a recovery happening before. So this extraordinary story had an international sequence: Polish Warbler, English Ringer, American fish and a Portuguese fisherman and who knows, it may be unique!

Rob Skeates



Polish ringed Reed Warbler K9X7841, recovered from a Black Bass in Portugal
Photo: Rob Skeates

Belvide Reservoir - A Brief Visitor's Guide

A5



How do I bird Belvide?

Belvide has a variety of habitats to explore, with numerous viewpoints. I take you through just one route. I use this route throughout the year, and I try to give you an idea of what I might expect. Photos used were all taken by my husband and I on one wet Saturday in early August.

Whilst pulling on my boots in the car park, I find myself listening out for birds by ear and take the time to watch the small feeding platform in the North West corner of the car park (to the left of the gate to the reserve). This attracts many common garden birds such as Blue and Great Tits, Blackbirds often feed beneath the platform and occasionally Nuthatches may feed here too. Listen out for Chiffchaff in the spring and summer around the car park.

Through the gate, you are presented with 3 paths, all of which take you towards the reservoir. I like to take the rightmost path, This can get on the muddy side but boots are normally fine. This takes you towards the dam and spill weir. (For a less muddy route, take the left hand route which will take you past the woodland feeder).

As you pass through the plantation, listen out for warblers particularly Blackcap during the breeding season.

As you reach the reservoir, this is the best place to scan along the dam wall looking for small waders, and on the reservoir itself. During my visit in early August, the water levels were low, and managed to see a number of Common Sandpiper feeding along the shore line and along the dam wall. This can also be an excellent place to see hundreds of Common Swifts and hirundines feeding low over the water, and is a place I quite often

see Hobbies in the summer months. There is no access to the dam for members. Walk along the path to your left and towards the reed bed. The Scott reed bed is the home for many of the Reed and Sedge Warblers that breed on the reserve and early in the season, the cacophony of these warblers reminds me of birding abroad. The Scott Hide is an accessible hide which is approached from a ramp. The view looks over the reed bed, and towards tern rafts where we



can hope terns will breed in future. It is also a useful place to get out of the rain and observe the birds on the reservoir towards the dam wall. It is a good place to watch Starlings on winter evenings.

Continuing along the gravel path along the reservoir, is a good place to check the larger trees for migrant birds. There are often tit flocks moving through in the winter months. As you reach the right hand corner, you will see a screen on the right hand side. This is often opened out giving a view into the reed bed, with the screen protecting you from view. Again, this is also a good place to look for Reed and Sedge Warblers (with Sedge Warblers often singing from the scrub).



As you turn the right hand bend, the hedgerow now on your left is often busy with birds, from tit flocks in winter and Chiffchaffs and Blackcaps in the summer months often singing. The slabbed area is where the ringing team are based in the summer months, however is a pleasant place to sit and observe birds moving through. This is the spot I hear Ravens flying over, and sometimes the Green Woodpecker can also be heard. Goldfinches often fly over here.

If the ringing team are here during your visit, they are happy to talk through the process and show you any birds they are processing.

As you continue down the path, the habitat holds many passerines, often sitting in the trees on the left hand side, I find this a good spot for Willow Warblers in Spring. Look out for the elderberries in late summer- they are an attraction for the migrating warblers.



At this point you will be approaching the Andrew Chappell Hide, which with its ramped entrance is one of the accessible hides. The Belvide management team have done some extensive work here in recent years to create the Chappell Bund, which is an excellent spot for connecting with wader species at closer quarters. Species of waders are often



seen on the island and embankment. Gull species are often seen here making a good place to start during the winter gull roosts. It is also a site where some species raise their young which is a joy to watch. The hide offers a good place to look out over the water and observe good numbers of duck.

This is a small but popular hide with photographers due to proximity to the birds.

Continuing along the path, it swings left then

right between the trees, this is a place I more often than not hear Chaffinch singing. The denser trees here open enough to see the Gazebo Hide with W.C outside.

This hide has a variety of feeders outside and is very attractive to passerine and near passerine species. I enjoy sitting in this hide watching the comings and goings of the smaller birds coming in and out of the feeders which often includes the tit species, finches and Great Spotted Woodpeckers which often perch in the dead tree directly out from the hide. It is also one of the places that you can hope to see Tree Sparrow. Unfortunately in recent years the numbers of Tree Sparrows have been declining, and sightings should be recorded. The Gazebo Hide offers good views over towards the North shore and also views towards the dam and I have been fortunate to see birds such as Arctic Tern drop in from this position. A telescope is vital for views towards the North shore, but birding for passerines here is fine with just binoculars. Mallards and Pheasants are often below the feeders and it is not uncommon to have Moorhen scooting around too.



Walking from the Gazebo Hide, there is a small slope down to Gazebo Bay, which has its own reed bed. There is a well placed bench which offers good views into the bay. I remember very early one year watching Great Crested Grebes courting in the bay which was lovely to sit and watch. Ducks often come into this bay and it is always worth a scan from this viewpoint.



As you pass this bench to the tip of the bay, listen out for tit flocks as well as Reed Buntings that ring out in the summer months. Small numbers of Reed and Sedge Warblers can also be heard singing. In the winter the large trees can hold good numbers of Siskin and finches, don't forget to scan the tree tops! Mandarin Duck were seen with ducklings in the bay this year.

Look back out over Gazebo Bay as you pass various gaps, these offer slightly different views especially when the water levels are low. Earlier this year, doing just this lead to the discovery of a Night Heron!



All along this next section of path all the way to the West End offers great opportunities of migrant birds moving through, Blackcaps and Chiffchaff being the most numerous but also smaller numbers of other species can also be observed.



The West End Hide is on 2 levels offering unique views over the West End. The upper level offers better views over the northern shore, which is good for waders. The West End attracts good numbers of birds. Duck species breed in the area bringing their young to feed. This year broods of Tufted Duck and Pochard have been seen.

The islands visible to the left of the hide usually hold a large Black-headed Gull colony however they have been noted by their absence this year and the numbers of terns are low as well. We hope that they will return in future years.

From the West End Hide, you can see the Hawkshutts Hide which is the newest hide in the reserve. This is accessed via the West End track. Follow the path continuing to view over the islands and in the hedgerows. The expanse between the



path and reservoir often holds good numbers of Sedge Warbler and they have been known to show well singing from the tops of the lower scrub.

At the gates, go through, ensuring that the gate is closed behind you. Turn right out of the gate and walk along the track, there is a good view over the bay from the track. Have a look over the fields on the opposite side to the reserve as you walk down the track. Some of the larger trees can hold passerines.

Approximately 200m down the track on the right will be the entrance to the Hawkshutts Hide. Again, you will need the access code to enter. The hide itself offers a different perspective of the reserve and sometimes allows different birds to be seen. Waders can be quite close in here and a scan over the islands may lead to something different being observed.

If you were to go back on yourself from the Hawkshutts Hide along the West track, there are a number of public footpaths running around the reserve. These areas can prove good birding areas. In recent times I have had more success with Tree Sparrows in this area as well as Yellow Wagtail during passage. A big reminder here is to observe public footpaths and to abide by the Countryside Code.



In order to return to the car park, I go back through the gate on the West Track and back along the gravel path and follow my route in reverse, normally visiting each hide in turn just in case something new has dropped in. Often the return journey gives a different perspective and I frequently pick up something new for the day.



Instead of walking back to the dam viewpoint I normally cut back at the second bridge from this approach opposite the Scott Hide. This is a quick route back to the car park but also goes past the woodland feeders.

In the Summer these feeders are generally frequented

by the "usual suspects" of Blue and Great Tits, the occasional Nuthatch and Pheasants, however in the winter these really come to life. In the spring of 2022 a flock of up to around 90 Brambling were using this site and were definitely something to look out for.

Belvide does get busy at the weekend, why not visit in the week, or at dawn or dusk, you

may even be blessed with a Barn or Tawny Owl.

For up to date sightings information please check out Steve Nuttall's blog <http://www.surfbirds.com/community-blogs/Belvide84/> as well as @BelvideBirding on Twitter.

The site has had 263 species of birds recorded, and on average gets 170 different species a year. The official species list and the current year list is available on Steve's blog.

There is information in the hides on who to call if you believe to have found something unusual- the team will definitely be interested to hear. For more "run of the mill" sightings, please use the sightings boards and books within the hides.

Please do not be afraid to ask other members on site to help with ID or for advice on where is best- the regulars are all really friendly and the site always feels very safe (as a female that often goes out alone- this is something I always look for!)

The reserve relies on its team of volunteers who assist in all the habitat management as well as ensuring things such as hide maintenance and even making sure the toilets are clean and available for our use. If you are able to assist in any of these tasks, wish to meet like-minded people please join in with the work party (dates listed below) or contact Sue, the Belvide Representative by email belvide@westmidlandbirdclub.org.uk

Liz

Belvide Reserve Work Party Dates 2023-2024

The new season of habitat maintenance and improvement works at our Belvide reserve begins in October. Members who would like to take part should simply turn up as below and if you don't know him already ask for Nigel, our work party manager.

All sessions will take place on Sunday mornings and run from 9.30 until approximately 12.00 noon on the following dates

8th October 2023
22nd October 2023
5th November 2023
26th November 2023
3rd December 2023

10th December 2023
7th January 2024
21st January 2024
4th February 2024
18th February 2024

Meet on the reserve car park at 9.30am

All gloves and tools will be provided but please feel free to bring your own.

Fair Isle Bird Observatory



Picture - Max Hellicar

Due to the considerable delays encountered with the rebuild of the new observatory, the observatory will not reopen in 2023.

Accordingly no bookings will be taken for 2023 or at this point in time for 2024. Bookings will open for 2024 when a reopening date is confirmed

WMBC members planning to stay at Fair Isle B.O. are entitled to discounted accommodation costs on production of a current membership number. Members under 25 years of age may access further discounts on travel and research and should contact the club secretary for further details.

To keep up to date with the developments with the new observatory please refer to the observatory website

www.fairislebirdobs.co.uk

The latest blog update includes photographs of the work undertaken this far and explains the current situation caused by the delays.

The blog also gives details of recent sightings and makes for interesting reading.

Trip Reports - Liz Palmer

We continue to be really well supported on our Field Trips and I would like to thank everyone for this. It is also nice to see several 'new faces' on board let us hope this trend continues.

Please remember we are always open to new suggestions for places to visit as long as they are coach friendly and preferably have toilet facilities, if there is catering too that is an added bonus! Reasonable terrain too please.

Please remember that the numbers of species given below refer to those seen by 3 members or more, so individuals may have higher numbers on their personal lists.



Ruff - Frampton Marsh
Picture: Dave Corfield

SUNDAY 23rd APRIL - FRAMPTON MARSH

We had 28 members join us for this trip to one of our most popular destinations. We were lucky to have a dry mostly bright day but there was a fairly brisk wind.

After a brief comfort stop at Peterborough Services we continued on to Frampton arriving



Mediterranean Gull - Frampton Marsh
Picture: Dave Corfield

at 10.15. It was nice to have the new Visitor Centre up and running and I know many of us made good use of it throughout the day. There was quite a mixed bag of species on offer on the reserve, so something for everyone.

Surprisingly large numbers (100's) of **Brent Geese** remained on the reserve and they formed quite an impressive flock (presumably before going to roost) at the end of our visit.

Mediterranean Gulls were present among the numerous **Black-headed Gulls** and some were also able to pick out **Little Gull**. 13 wader species were identified including **Whimbrel**, **Greenshank** and **Ruff** many of which were in interesting plumages. It was also lovely to see **Yellow Wagtail**, not always easy to find these days. During the course of the day the group saw 71 species.

After leaving the reserve at 16.30 we were all safely delivered back to Birmingham after a very rewarding day.

SUNDAY 14th MAY - LACKFORD LAKES and CAVENHAM HEATH

29 members joined us for this trip to a new destination. A short comfort stop at Cambridge Services saw us arriving at the delightful Lackford Lakes at 10.15 and many were lucky enough to hear **Nightingale** along the reserve's entrance road. It was interesting to explore a new reserve and Lackford is extremely well supplied with hides, it also has a very nice visitor centre with refreshments and a gift shop.

The weather was warm and sunny and **Hobbies** put on impressive aerial displays above the many different lakes. Insect life was prolific. **Cuckoo's** were heard and seen and there was a wide selection of warblers on offer. One group was lucky enough to see a **mole** scurrying along above ground.



Hobby - Lackford Lakes
Picture: Dave Corfield

Early afternoon saw us depart for the village of Icklingham where permission had been obtained for us to park the coach in the car park of the flour mill. This avoided us causing any disruption to the local residents on the narrow roads. We then began the walk through the village and into Cavenham Heath nature reserve.

The afternoon was very warm and our target bird, **Stone Curlew**, had decided to be at the furthest point from where we had parked! I have to say that not all of us made it, but those who did were rewarded with both **Stone Curlew** and **Woodlark**. A beautiful walk, and very much worth it for some, but probably not one we will repeat!

Everyone made it safely back to the coach and after a quick comfort stop we soon arrived back in Birmingham with a total of 78 species to our credit.

SUNDAY 11th JUNE - BEMPTON CLIFFS

We had an amazing 41 members on board for this trip to Bempton.

Unusually I had made the decision to stay there for the day, partly in response to some members requests but also in the hope that if on the off chance the **Albatross** returned this year everyone would have a chance of seeing it. Unfortunately that did not



Fulmar
Picture: Steve Pattinson



Gannet - Bempton Cliffs
Picture: Dave Corfield

as they are so hard to come by these days. Quite a bit of searching resulted in many members seeing **Corn Bunting** another bird nowhere near as common as it used to be. A **Barn Owl** was very active, giving excellent views.

We headed off home and after a comfort stop again at Tibshelf we continued towards Birmingham where we hit a massive thunderstorm just North of Tamworth. The rain was torrential and the motorway was like a river, Mike our driver got a huge round of applause for getting us all safely back to Highfield Road.



Tree Sparrow - Bempton Cliffs
Picture: Steve Pattinson

An Apology - Incorrect Photo Credit



Cirl Bunting- Devon Weekend
Picture: Stephen Stroud

I need to make an apology to Stephen Stroud, as I mis-credited Steve Pattinson on the photograph of the Cirl Bunting from the Devon Weekend in WMBC News No. 509, Summer 2023.

Therefore, with the correct credit, please enjoy Stephen's photograph of the Cirl Bunting

Liz



WMBC Field Trips

Please note: All WMBC members and their families are welcome to join all WMBC field trips

Field Trip Contacts:

To book or for further information please contact Liz Palmer on 07947 456448 (please only use these numbers for trip queries or bookings).

wmbcfieldtrips.liz@westmidlandbirdclub.org.uk

Can you please contact Liz Palmer on 07947456448, however late if you have to cancel your booking so others may have a chance.

Please also ring on the day if you are delayed or have to cancel, this will help us achieve a prompt departure.

PLEASE NOTE THAT ALL FIELD TRIPS NOW DEPART AT 0700hrs.

PICK UP POINT: Behind the Physician on Harborne Road, B15 3DH. The car park is in Highfield Road.

Please do not come on the trips if you are experiencing any symptoms or have been in contact with anyone with symptoms / actual Covid.

PLEASE NOTE

Due to a fuel surcharge all trips will now cost up to £30

Sunday 10th September

ST AIDANS RSPB

Depart 0700hrs. Return 1930 hrs.

Cost £30

Please remember your RSPB membership cards

Another visit to this popular reserve, our first at this time of year so it will be interesting to see which species occur.

Sunday 8th October

GIBRALTAR POINT

Depart 0700hrs. Return 19.30 hrs approx

Cost £30

Another of our traditional autumn destinations, anything can turn up here at this time of year. There is an on-site cafe for refreshments throughout the day.

Friday 3rd November to Sunday 5th November

NORFOLK WEEKEND

L'Estrange Arms Hotel, Old Hunstanton.

Travel by own transport

Our annual pilgrimage to some birding hotspots such as Titchwell, Cley and Holme. Our itinerary is dictated by the birds but expect everything from waders galore to Harrier roosts.

Please remember your RSPB membership cards

£80 per person per night. £60 deposit per person to Liz by 1st October.

Cheques made payable to WMBC.

Please send to Liz Palmer, 58 Fontenaye Road, Coton Green, Tamworth, Staffs. B79 8JU.

If you would prefer to pay by bank transfer please see John either on the coach or contact him at the above address.

Sunday 3rd December

Conwy RSPB and Llanfairfechan.

Depart 0700hrs. Return 19.30hrs approx

Cost £30.

Please remember your RSPB membership cards.

A mixture of species and hopefully some interesting sea ducks.

LOOKING FORWARD TO 2024...

Sunday 7th January

RUTLAND WATER

We begin the year with our traditional visit to Rutland Water, a reserve that rarely disappoints

Sunday 11th February

STEART MARSHES

A return visit to Steart Marshes, we are hoping for a dry day but please come prepared for all eventualities



WMBC Branches

Please note: All WMBC members and their families are welcome to attend any Branch indoor meetings or field trips.

STAFFORD BRANCH

Branch Contact: Chris Evans

Email: stafford@westmidlandbirdclub.org.uk

Indoor Meetings

Stafford Branch winter meetings will be held at the new venue of Walton Village Hall, Green Gore Lane, Walton-on-the-Hill, Stafford, ST17 0LD (which is by the side of the Tennis Club off the Milford Road).

Tuesday 3rd October 2023

TBC

Tuesday 7th November 2023

JEFF CLARKE - "From Cape to Kruger"

This is a new talk covering the fantastic array of wildlife to be found in the Fynbos habitats of the Cape area of South Africa and in contrast the mammal and bird rich bush and plains of Kruger National Park. This talk is packed with sumptuous images of amazing wildlife and handy tips to help you get the best out of a visit to the region.

Tuesday 5th December 2023

CRAIG ROUND - "Birds of the Highlands and Islands"

Tuesday 9th January 2024

MARK SISSON- "Nature of the Falklands"

This is my latest talk, new in the autumn of 2021 to coincide with the publication of my latest book of the same title, produced in association with Falklands Conservation. This wonderful archipelago has become almost a spiritual photographic home for me over the last decade that I have been photographing here and this talk looks to illustrate just why. You can expect plenty of penguins, an abundance of albatross and a diverse array of images that will illustrate the real nature of just why these islands offer so much in terms of wildlife and photography.

Tuesday 6th February 2024

NICK MARTIN- "Journey into wild Wales"

Join Nick to look for migrant birds of oak woodlands, butterflies of the Great Orme, seabirds of South Stack and so much more from his journeys into wild Wales. From Skomer

to Worlds End we'll meet many of the best species that Wales has to offer.

Tuesday 5th March 2024

CHRIS GALVIN- "Kenya:- More than just birds"

Kenya has one of the most diverse lists of bird species in the whole continent of Africa, however, with the Great Migration and millions of large herbivores providing food for Africa's apex predators, there is just so much more to Kenya. From the dry plateaux in the shadow of Mount Kenya to the lush green grasslands of the Masai Mara, the wildlife adjacent to the bustling city of Nairobi and finally to the glistening shores of the Indian Ocean. The images in this presentation represent some of my most enjoyable moments behind the lens.

Field Meetings

The Stafford Branch, in conjunction with the Stafford U3A Birdwatching group, offer monthly field trips on Monday mornings. Transport is via our own cars, and we meet at the venue. All WMBC members are welcome. Dates for the Autumn programme are as follows:

Monday 11th September: Berry Hill Fields 9.30am

Monday 16th October: Doxey Marshes 10.00am

Monday 20th November: Martin Mere Times to be advised

There will be no meeting in December

If you are interested in any of the above trips please contact Chris Evans at staffordfieldmeets@westmidlandbirdclub.org.uk for further details. Dates and venues could change due to weather or other circumstances.

Solihull and Kidderminster Branches have vacancies following the resignations of Richard Harvey and Roger Pannell respectively.

Please get in touch if you are interested in the vacancies for Kidderminster and Solihull branches secretary@westmidlandbirdclub.org.uk



Bird Notes

May - July

Compiled from your records by David Bradford

INTRODUCTION

These notes, compiled from (mostly) unchecked records, cover from late spring to mid-summer. Many of the records are taken from online sources – thank you to everyone who takes time to log their sightings.

RARITIES



Hoopoe - Stafford
Picture: Rob Swift

was observed at Branston GPs on 5th May. One **Ferruginous Duck** was at Aqualate Mere on 6th May whilst two birds were seen at Draycote on 18th July. There were 3 records of **Short-eared Owl** namely, Hobden Hall Farm and Branston GPs on 6th May and Draycote on 7th July. **Common Quail** was noted at Belvide and Talke in May and in June at West Hagley (2 birds on 5th), Morton Bagot, Stanshope and Blithfield. **Common Scoter** was reported from Knypersley Reservoir and Draycote in May, Tittesworth Water in June and Bartley Reservoir, Sandwell Valley and Gailey Reservoir in July. Belvide and Middleton Lakes in May and Blithfield in June all had one day visits of **Eurasian Spoonbill**.

Black-necked Grebe was seen at 5 sites – Middleton Lakes and Hill Court NR (both in May), Belvide (May and July), Uttoxeter Quarry (May and June) and Blithfield (July).

Hen Harrier was recorded at Rowley Park on 13th May. A **Red-crested Pochard** was noted at Marsh Lane NR on 14th May and a **Glossy Ibis** at Grimley the same day. The long staying **Shag** at Chasewater was reported several times through May until mid-June; thereafter came records of a single bird at

Greater Scaup was present at Belvide on 1st/2nd May. Branston GPs had its first site record for **Black-winged Stilt** on 1st May – the first regional record since April 2015 when birds were seen at Fisher's Mill and Middleton Lakes. **Kittiwake** was logged at Upper Bittell on 1st May, Belvide 25th July and Branston GPs 28th July. Six **Common Cranes** flew over Bromsgrove on 2nd May. In May **Lesser Scaup** was recorded at Branston GPs (3rd, 5th, 6th), Uttoxeter Quarry (7th) and Belvide (26th). **Hoopoe** was reported from 2 locations: Stafford (4th/5th May) and Slades Green (4th July). A **Little Gull**



Caspian Tern - Lower Moor
Picture: Rob Clipson



Caspian Tern - Lower Moor
Picture: Craig Reed

on 26th May. Belvide (28th May) and Middleton Lakes (29th June) recorded **Red-backed Shrike**. An aural record of **Common Nightingale** came from Longdon on 28th May. Middleton Lakes and Ladywalk logged sightings of **Green-winged Teal** during the end of May and the beginning of June. Belvide was the only site to report **Cattle Egret**. Last seen regionally at Belvide in May 2017, a **Spotted Sandpiper** made a one day appearance at Upton Warren on 5th June. A **Tundra Bean Goose** was reported from Upper Bittell on 5th June and then probably took up residence at Arrow Valley Lake where it was reported between 3rd and 28th July. Unsurprisingly, **Eurasian Bittern** was seen at Middleton Lakes but there were also records from Ladywalk in June and July and Grimley in July. **Little Bittern** was present at Ladywalk in early June. **Little Tern** was seen at Middleton Lakes on 7th and 28th June. A **Marsh Warbler** was reported as being next to the River Trent, near the university campus at Stoke, on 14th and 15th June. A **Purple Heron** was logged flying over the West Midlands on 18th June, being seen successively at Sheepwash Urban Park, Sedgeley and Bilston that morning. On 26th June a **Caspian Tern** made a brief stay at Lower Moor. A **Night Heron** was seen on 4 days in mid-July at Ladywalk.

WMBC RESERVES

BELVIDE

Two female **Greater Scaup** were present on 1st May and one on 2nd May. A **Eurasian Spoonbill** was the highlight of the All-Dayer

Stanley Pool (23rd June) and Chasewater (14th July). **Temminck's Stint** was spotted at Middleton Lakes on 18th and 19th May. A **Great Reed Warbler** was heard singing at Grimley on 22nd May; the last regional records of this species were in May 2017 at Belvide and Branston GPs. On 23rd May there were reports of **Honey-buzzard** flying over Wassell Grove Pools and Frankton. Branston GPs saw 2 **Little Stints** on 24th May and 4 on 26th; Whitemoor Haye (2 birds on 27th May) plus Belvide and Brandon Marsh NR in early June also had sightings. **White Stork** was reported from Stafford



Purple Heron - Sheepwash Urban Park
Picture: Craig Reed



Red-backed Shrike - Belvide
Picture: Steve Nuttall



Arctic Tern - Belvide
Picture: Craig Reed

on 6th May. From 6th to 8th May a **Common Quail** was heard singing each day. The end of May recorded two site firsts: a drake **Lesser Scaup** found off the dam on 26th and a **Red-backed Shrike** spotted at the west end of the reserve on 28th. A pair of **Black-necked Grebes** was on site 29th/30th May, whilst in July 3 juveniles were observed on 4th, with records of singletons on 6th, 7th, 22nd and 28th. **Cattle Egret** was noted on 30th/31st May and 2nd June. A **Little Stint** was logged on 2nd June and a **Kittiwake** on 25th July.

Confirmation of a new breeding species for the reserve, **Mandarin Duck**, came on 31st May when a female and 7 ducklings were seen in Gazebo Bay. Around 2,000 **Common Swifts** were counted on 30th May and at least 3,000 on 2nd July. The first record for the year for **Common Cuckoo** was on 6th May. The 21 **Oystercatchers** (18 adults and 3 fledged juveniles) present on 17th June was a new site record beating the 17 seen on 22nd March 1965. **Avocet** was seen twice (20th May and 3rd June) as was **Grey Plover** (23rd /24th June). The high counts for **Ringed Plover** were 6 in May, 9 in June and 2 in July and for **Little Ringed Plover** 23 in June and 22 in July. **Whimbrel** was reported 7 times in early May (highest count being 5 on 1st) and 5 times in July (from the 9th), whilst there 2 records of **Eurasian Curlew** in June and 3 in July. A **Bar-tailed Godwit** was seen on 4th/5th May. In contrast, there were single records of **Black-tailed Godwit** in May and June but 13 in July, (with the largest count being 20 on 4th July). **Turnstone** and **Ruff** were each noted twice (on 24th May and 24th July for the former and 8th and 19th July for the latter). The 10 **Dunlin** seen on 1st May constituted the highest count of the reporting period. The first returning **Common Snipe** was noted on 11th July. **Common Sandpiper** was recorded 18 times in May, 15 in June and daily in July, the maximum count being 24 on 5th July. After a solitary record in May, **Green Sandpiper** was observed 12 times in June and 6 times in July, all single birds, except for 20th and 27th June and 11th July when 2 birds were seen. Two **Wood Sandpipers** appeared on 2nd May. The sightings for **Common Redshank** were 1 in May, 8 in June and 5 in July; the corresponding figures for **Greenshank** were 1, 3 and 6. **Mediterranean Gull** was seen 5 times during the reporting period and **Yellow-legged Gull** 9 times. Two adult **Great Black-backed Gulls** were seen on 2nd June, an unusual record for the time of year. A **Caspian Gull** was present on 26th/27th July. The highest count of **Common Tern** was 11 (4th and 8th May). There were 3 reports of **Arctic Tern** (14 May and 21st /23rd July)



Black-necked Grebe - Belvide
Picture: Steve Nuttall

and 2 of **Black Tern** (2nd June and 25th July). The count of 12 **Little Egrets** on 22nd July was a new site maximum. An adult **Northern Goshawk** was observed on 16th June and 23rd July. **Marsh Harrier** was seen once in May and 7 times in July. **Red Kite** sightings numbered 8 in May and June and 1 in July, with 8 birds being noted on 30th May. A **Little Owl** was opposite the car at dawn on the All-Dayer. **Peregrine Falcon** was seen on 3 days in total whilst **Hobby** sightings totalled 17 days in May, 9 in June and 8 in July. A **Rose-ringed Parakeet** on 23rd July was the 10th record for the reserve. During July there were 18 sightings of **Common Redstart**, the highest count being 4 on the 26th. **Whinchat** was reported on 3rd and 7th May. **Tree Sparrow** was observed on the 6th May All-Dayer and 2 birds were noted on 2nd July. **Yellow Wagtail** was also seen on the All-Dayer with 3 further records in July. A **Common Crossbill** was heard on 24th July. Two **Corn Buntings** were recorded on 5th July.

BLITHFIELD

A **Little Tern** was seen on 31st May. Two **Eurasian Spoonbills** appeared on 16th June and on 22nd June **Common Quail** was recorded. The **Black-necked Grebe** present on 20th July was the 1st sighting here since 2016. 23rd July saw a visit from a **Ruddy Shelduck**. **Common Cuckoo** was recorded on 1st May plus 3rd and 23rd June. **Oystercatcher** was on site through May, June and July, with maximum counts being 10, 6 and 11 respectively. **Northern Lapwing** attempted to breed but was disrupted by mowing and ploughing; the maximum count in June was 150 (26th) and in July 301 (8th). A **Grey Plover** was spotted on 27th/ 31st May and 3rd June. **Ringed Plover** counts were 3 on 25th May; 10 on 3rd and 2 on 11th June; and 28 on 23rd July. Observed throughout the reporting period, **Little Ringed Plover** maximum counts were 10 in May (20th), 6 in June (24th) and 57 in July (5th). **Whimbrel** was logged once in May and twice in July whilst **Eurasian Curlew** was seen once in June and most days in July. A count of 4 on 17th June and 17 on 13th July were the high counts for **Black-tailed Godwit**. There were 5 reports of **Turnstone** – 2 in May, 1 in June and 2 in July. **Red Knot** and **Ruff** were observed once in July. **Sanderling** was observed 7 times (once in May, twice in June and 4 times in 2nd half of July). After a couple of sightings in June, there were small numbers of **Dunlin** throughout July, the biggest number being 14 on 23rd. Three **Common Snipe** were seen on 24th July. Noted once in May, **Common Sandpiper** was reported regularly in June and July with 47 counted on 9th July. After one record in June, **Green Sandpiper** was present during July mostly in ones and twos, with a maximum of 5 on 12th. Similarly, **Common Redshank**, after 2 sightings in June, was around in small numbers throughout the following month. A **Wood Sandpiper** took up residence from 25th to 30th July. For **Greenshank** single birds were seen on 3 days in June and July. There was one report of **Caspian Gull** (25th May) whereas **Yellow-legged Gull** was observed most days in July, the biggest count being 10 on 30th. **Common Tern** maxima were 45 in May, 46 in June and 55 in July. **Arctic Tern** was reported on 25th July. **Black Tern** was noted 4 times in June and on 2nd June. A new site maximum of 39 **Little Egrets** was counted on 28th July. **Osprey** was seen once mid-May, most days in June and 3 days in the 2nd half of July. **Red Kite** was seen frequently in June but only twice in May and three times in July. Present throughout the reporting period, maximum counts for **Common Buzzard** were 4 in May and 3 in June and July. Sightings for **Hobby** numbered 3 in June and for **Peregrine Falcon** 1 in June and 3 in July.

At least 3 pairs of **Skylark** attempted to breed in the meadow next to the reservoir but sadly were interrupted by mowing. **Garden Warbler** was heard singing throughout May. **Spotted Flycatcher** was noticed twice in June and once in early July. A **Whinchat** appeared on 3rd May and a **Northern Wheatear** on 28th July. One **Yellow Wagtail** was seen on 28th May and 4 on 26th July.

HARBORNE

The **Tawny Owl** pair successfully bred; a well-grown chick was seen at the mouth of the nest box in late May. Not long afterwards the tree was checked and the owls had left. The box was cleaned out by the ringers who found the wing of a **Great Spotted Woodpecker**, indicating the variety of prey taken by this species.

Grey Wagtails have been observed through the period, the three seen together on July 17th were probably a family group. Juveniles of the common species have been seen. **Song Thrush**, **Blackcap** and **Common Chiffchaff** were still singing in July. Other birds of the period included **Eurasian Jay**, **Eurasian Treecreeper** and **Rose-ringed Parakeet**. **Emperor** and **Broad-bodied Chaser** were welcome additions to the summer's dragonfly list.

LADYWALK

A drake **Green-winged Teal** was reported on 1st, 3rd and 27th June. Two **Ruddy Shelducks** visited on 3rd June, a **Eurasian Spoonbill** on 6th June and a **Sandwich Tern** on 9th June. A male **Little Bittern** was seen on 6th, 7th and 8th June; this follows the appearance of a male on 19th/20th June 2022. A **Eurasian Bittern** was sighted on 11th June and 2nd July. Continuing the theme of rare herons, an adult **Night Heron** was present from 18th to 24th July, the first county record since the one at Meadowlands Fishery, Warks in 2015, which, coincidentally, appeared on similar dates (17th to 23rd July). Four **Garganey** were reported on several days in mid-June. **Common Cuckoo** was seen on 17 days in May, 13 in June and 6 in July (lastly on 20th). The high counts for **Oystercatcher** were 4 in May and June and 2 in July and for **Northern Lapwing** 25 in May, 22 in June and 80 in July. Records of **Ringed Plover** were sporadic with reports on 7 days in May, 3 in June and 1 in July. The maximum count for **Little Ringed Plover**, present throughout the reporting period, was 6 in each month. **Black-tailed Godwit** appeared on 11 days in July, the largest count being 12. **Dunlin** was logged



Grey Plover - Grimley
Picture: Brian Stretch



Night Heron - Ladywalk
Picture: David Bird

once in June and July. **Common Snipe** was observed on 2 days in June and July. **Common Sandpiper** was most frequently seen in May (on 9 days) and **Green Sandpiper** in July (on 7 days). **Common Redshank** was noted on most days in every month. **Greenshank** was present on 6 days in early June. **Mediterranean Gull** visited on 10th and 27th June. **Common Tern** was seen on 21 days in May, 18 in June and 9 in July, the monthly high counts being 8, 6 and 2 respectively. There were sightings of **Marsh Harrier** on a couple of days in June. Reports of **Hobby** were made on 5 days in May and 7 in June and July. For **Peregrine Falcon** the corresponding totals were 3, 11 and 8 days.

The maximum counts recorded for **Common Swifts** and hirundines were: **Common Swift** 15 (May), 20 (June), 100 (July); and correspondingly for **Sand Martin** 40, 10, 50; **Barn Swallow** 15, 5, 20 and **House Martin** 5, 7 and at least 100. **Willow Tit** was seen on 2 days in May and July and **Yellow Wagtail** 3 days in May, 1 in June and 2 in July.

PRINCIPAL RECORDS ELSEWHERE

NON-PASSERINES

Common Goldeneye was seen at Uttoxeter Quarry on 3rd/4th June. **Grey Partridge** was reported at Whitemoor Haye in May and June. **European Nightjar** was heard north of the Stoke city boundary on 15th, 16th and 20th June. Five **Common Cuckoos** were present at Cannock Chase on 7th May. In May, one of the **Avocets** (with ring number ER2787) at Upton Warren was determined to be almost 33 years old. The highest counts of **Northern Lapwing** came from Branston GPs in June (214 on 15th) and Tittesworth Water in July (105 on 22nd). **Grey Plover** was logged at 5 locations - Branston GPs in May and June, and in June, Grimley, Middleton Lakes, Brandon Marsh NR and Whitemoor Haye. A site record count of 57 **Ringed Plovers** was made at Branston GPs on 31st May. Sixteen **Little Ringed Plovers** at Tittesworth Water on 16th July was the highest count for the reporting period. **Whimbrel** was recorded at 7 sites in May and 3 in July. Branston GPs had double figure counts of **Eurasian Curlew** on 10 days in July, the largest count being 21 on 13th and 20th. Thirty-two **Black-tailed Godwits** at Radford Meadows on 4th May was the biggest number logged in the reporting period. Whitemoor Haye in May and Branston GPs in June reported **Turnstone**. The only record of **Red Knot** came from Tucklesholme (4th May). **Ruff** appeared at 7 locations, the maximum number being 4 at Branston GPs on 3rd May. **Sanderling** was seen at Branston GPs in May, June and July; at Whitemoor Haye, Middleton Lakes, Tittesworth Water and Uttoxeter Quarry in May and June; and Draycote and Marsh Lane NR in June. Eleven birds at Whitemoor Haye on 9th May was the only double figure count of **Dunlin**. A **Jack Snipe** was spotted at Upton Warren on 31st May. Nine **Common Sandpipers** at Tittesworth Water on 25th June was the highest count; that for **Green Sandpiper** was at Upton Warren (11 birds on 3 days in July). Park Farm Floods had 2-3 **Wood Sandpipers** on 14th/15th May, Holt 2 birds on 6th May and 6 other sites single birds in May; singletons were at a couple of locations in June and 5 places in July. **Spotted Redshank** was noted at Branston GPs on 2nd/3rd July. There were reports of **Greenshank** from 8 locations in May and June, and 4 in July. Five sites logged **Mediterranean Gull** (Middleton Lakes, Upton Warren, Branston GPs, Marsh Lane NR and Powick). **Caspian Gull** was recorded at Branston GPs (25th May) and Whitemoor Haye (18th July). Branston GPs hosted 10 **Yellow-legged Gulls** on 25th July. The largest

numbers of **Common Tern** were reported from Tucklesholme and Whitemoor Haye; for the former 26 on 1st May and the latter 26 on 20th May and 40 on 1st June. **Arctic Tern** was seen at 6 sites in May (1-3 birds) and 3 in July (with 19 going through Upton Warren on the 22nd July). In May there were double figure counts of **Black Tern** at Clifton Pits (10 on 4th); Draycote (12 on 29th and 11 on 30th); and Branston GPs (10 on 29th). At least 57 **Little Egrets** were at Draycote on 31st July. **Northern Goshawk** was a good sighting at Sandwell Valley on 21st May. **Marsh Harrier** frequented Whitemoor Haye on 7 days in July. A **Merlin** was seen at Whitemoor Haye on 1st May. Seven **Hobby** were counted at Middleton Lakes on 4th May.

PASSERINES

A flock of 150 **Jackdaws** was reported from Marsh Lane NR on 1st and 3rd July. **Marsh Tit** was recorded 4 times at Earlswood Lakes and **Willow Tit** 6 times at Tittesworth Water. On 1st May a count of 1,000 **House Martins** was made at Uttoxeter Quarry. Sandwell Valley has its first record of **Wood Warbler** since 2007 on 8th June. **Ring Ouzel** was observed at Seisdon on 2nd May and at Berryhill the following day. **Spotted Flycatcher** was reported at 7 locations in Staffordshire, 4 in Worcestershire and 2 in Warwickshire. **Whinchat** was seen at Sandwell Valley at the beginning of May. A **Greenland Wheatear** and 3 **Northern Wheatears** were recorded at Lutley Wedge on 1st May, and there were reports of **Northern Wheatear** from Malvern Hills on the 3rd and 10th of the month. **Tree Sparrow** was logged at Whitemoor Haye each month of the reporting period. In May 12 **Tree Pipits** were counted at Cannock Chase (on 7th) and 15 on the North Staffs Moors (on 29th). Eight **Common Crossbills** were spotted flying over Newcastle on 19th June and one flew over Sandwell Valley on 26th July. On 23rd July 13 **Corn Buntings** were counted at Seisdon, whilst at Whitemoor Haye 10 **Yellowhammers** were seen on 21st May and 13 on 3rd June.

David Bradford

WMBC is now on Facebook!

If you're a Facebook user, you can now follow our new WMBC Page by searching 'West Midland Bird Club' or following the URL <https://www.facebook.com/westmidlandbirdclub>.

This page will be used to share updates from the Club including upcoming events, publications, important announcements and recent sightings. The Club also has a Twitter account which you can follow at

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Kate Ashley, Social Media Development Officer

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The WMBC

Is a Registered Charity (number 213311), serving birdwatchers, ornithologists and all who have an interest in the birds of Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire and the West Midlands Counties.

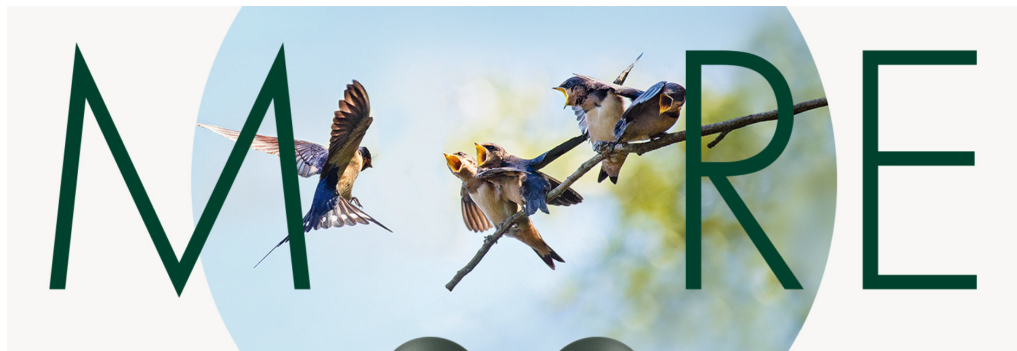
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