



The Harrier

Suffolk Ornithologists' Group



Inside:

- Sandhill Crane
- County rarities, 'Bumper' autumn
- SORC 2011 update

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Contact details for articles and observations, etc are:

Phil Brown, Editor, c/o The Coach House, Denham Road, Dalham, Suffolk CB8 8UB p.brown@doc-doc.com

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The Harrier

December 2011 Magazine No.167

Suffolk Ornithologists' Group

Welcome to the latest Harrier

We have a bumper crop of goodies for you this quarter. As it's been one of the most stunning autumns on record for rarities, the majority of this issue of the Harrier has been dedicated to them.

We open with what is probably destined to become SOG's 2011 Bird of the Year – the Boyton Sandhill Crane. This bird is our lead feature and well-covered in this issue's colour supplement. But Suffolk's Common Cranes have not been overlooked – nor for that matter have Norfolk's. Then there's a substantial BINS report – while weighing-in at three pages, it still only covers the highlights of this autumn's many rarities. Next up is a full SORC update of outstanding descriptions and confirmed status records for 2011. Then finally the regular 'Looking Back' feature that's also a little larger than usual.

Because of this bumper autumn several articles previously scheduled for this issue have had to be postponed until March. These include an article about the Brecks Stone Curlews' status, an interesting debate between two authoritative birders on bird name standardisation and a review of the membership survey findings. This last will now be featured at the AGM on 16th February 2012 and then covered in more detail in the March issue of the Harrier.

Lastly may I, on behalf of the SOG Council, wish you all a very merry Christmas and a happy (and profitable birding) New Year.

Sorry, one final reminder, please note that the deadline for the next issue will be 25 February – so please keep your articles coming in.

Views expressed in *The Harrier* are not necessarily those of the editor or the Suffolk Ornithologists' Group

Steve Piotrowski and John Grant

Sandhill Crane – A flight of fancy?

It's all very well taking a stuffy, studious approach to birding but sometimes, just sometimes, there's an ornithological event that

transcends any dry taxonomic debate or any interminable, po-faced poring over P10 or P6 or whatever.

Sometimes it's as well to steer clear of the science, stand back and simply enjoy, have a bit of fun and let your imagination run riot. Step forward, in stately fashion, our friend the Sandhill Crane!

Estonian, Finnish and Suffolk firsts

Surely this creature is already engrained in the folklore of Suffolk birding. An exciting vagrant, a county first, a British tick for most...but this bird, possibly above all others, should never be reduced to a mere tick on a list – at least for us it never will be. It's as if it was destined to be entwined in our lives in such a quirky way that we are simply left to look back in wonderment. Here's why. Just before we were about to co-lead a Waveney Bird Club trip to Estonia, jaw-dropping news came through of a Sandhill Crane near Tallinn. Tracked over Laajalahti, in Espoo, Finland, on September 5th, becoming a Finnish 'first' as a result, it dropped in to Kiia, Estonia, the next day as another national 'first'. Right, we thought, we'll take a detour, be part of this historic occasion and revel in an international twitch. Alas, the Crane wandered off before we touched down in Tallinn. Undeterred, we had a wonderful visible migration-filled holiday and returned to Blighty to the equally jaw-dropping news of 'a' (we like to think 'the') Sandhill Crane being tracked down the east coast of Scotland and northern England.



Trapped on Orfordness

With the Crane merely shimmering as a distant vision somewhere in the recesses of our consciousness, we headed to Orfordness to lead the annual SOG trip on October 2. Now, Orfordness is remote. Isolated. You need a boat to get over there (don't walk down from

Slaughden. Just don't.) Of more relevance, you need a boat to get off. Nearing lunchtime, the news not so much broke, more exploded. "Crane sp over Kessingland" ...could it be???? Then, atomic explosion, which was somewhat appropriate considering where we were: "Sandhill Crane on South Marsh, North Warren!!!" We could see Aldeburgh in the distance. North Warren is just beyond. A Sandhill Crane (we like to think 'the' Sandhill Crane) was tantalisingly close, yet we were well and truly stranded! Boat at 4.00pm – oh dear!!

Crane ahoy

Don't panic Captain Mainwaring! Privately, each and every one of us did panic though. What to do? Get us a boat Steve P! With good old British stiff-upper-lip pragmatism, we decided to have lunch by the lighthouse! Then it went nuclear. The message from our Vice Chairman, Steve Abbott, stationed at North Warren, came through loud and clear: "Sandhill Crane is now in flight over Aldeburgh", which had us shinning up to the roof of the wartime bomb-ballistics building that affords panoramic views of The Ness and the River Alde complex. The rest is history – glorious, delicious history! A flock of roosting gulls exploding skywards in the distance alerted us to a descending grey blob that was soon to become an elegant Sandhill Crane as it alighted in a ploughed field across the river at Sudbourne. We were afforded distant, albeit unsatisfactory views as our bird slowly wandered around the field in the shimmering heat of the day. And then, a majestic flying vision of almost mystical significance as it headed south over the River Ore at Orford, Havergate, Gedgrave and beyond. Directions were yelled out by our leaders to ensure that everyone stayed on our bird, but these were being mysteriously echoed by another member who was talking to someone on his mobile telephone. Once the excitement had died down, we were told that our directions were being relayed to another group of SOG members, not attending this field trip, that

were now in 'headless-chicken' mode having chased the bird from site to site for several hours only to find that it had gone moments before they arrived!

BINS tracking

Regular updates were being provided by Suffolk's own Birders Information Network Services (BINS), so no need for satellite tracking for this particular bird. There was a momentary touch of sadness though when we learnt that the BINS supremos had taken a birding break to Shetland and no way could they get back! It's gone and not coming back guys!

Our paths had, magically, crossed at last. The crane had come to us. OK, there's no incontrovertible proof – hard-headed, peer-reviewed, scientific proof – that this was the same bird that had eluded us in Estonia. But look at the dates and locations right. Let your hearts melt a little. Join us in thinking that this was not just 'a' Sandhill Crane, it was 'the' Sandhill Crane and that it had become, in some wonderful, spirit- uplifting way, 'our' Sandhill Crane to be imprinted in our memories for evermore.



Editor: Steve, thanks for this exciting 'field trip' report but, sorry to be stuffy, I fear you're being a little too romantic about 'the' Crane (turn to the centrespread to find out why). Whatever the identity of the Strathbeg bird, it then appears to have reverted to form and simply headed south, from A to B as it were – in this instance from Aberdeenshire to Badajoz!

The Sandhill Crane's historic passage into ornithological history:

1. **September 5, 2011:** South-west with Common Cranes over Laajalahti, Espoo, Finland, becoming the first for Finland.
2. **September 6:** In fields with Common Cranes, Kiia, Estonia, becoming the first for Estonia.
3. **September 16:** South over Dunbar, Lothian, 8.15 a.m.
4. **September 16:** Over A1 at Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland, 10.45 a.m.
5. **September 22 to 26:** Loch of Strathbeg RSPB reserve, Aberdeenshire.
6. **September 29:** Various locations from Blyth to Whitley Bay, Northumberland, during the morning into the early afternoon.
7. **September 29:** south over Kettleiness, North Yorkshire, 2.00 p.m.
8. **October 1:** South over Rimac, Lincolnshire, noon.
9. **October 1:** In fields at Snettisham RSB reserve, Norfolk, late afternoon.
10. **October 2:** In fields at Barnby, Suffolk, early-morning.
11. **October 2:** South over Kessingland, mid-morning.
12. **October 2:** On South Marsh, North Warren RSPB reserve, around noon into early afternoon.
13. **October 2:** South over Aldeburgh, landing in fields at Sudbourne, early afternoon.
14. **October 2:** On Boyton Marshes RSPB reserve, early afternoon, staying in Boyton area until October 7 when it flew high south and out to sea at 10.25 a.m. It had gone!

Footnote: The story does not end at Boyton, but at Badajoz. What was presumably 'the' Sandhill Crane was found consorting with Common Cranes in Extremadura, Spain, during November.

Acknowledgements: Thanks are due to BINS for providing an exemplary service on the day that allowed people all over the county to keep track of the whereabouts of this majestic bird. It was so exciting! Thanks also to Fred Stentiford, Chairman of Boyton Parish Council, who organised car parking in Boyton village. His efforts raised over £1800, the money going towards the parish church, so a big thank you to all the birders who kindly donated.

Cranes at Lakenheath Fen

Four hundred years ago the Common Crane, as its name suggests, would indeed have been a common bird in Britain. The Fens of East Anglia then covered 1300 square miles of wetland habitat, providing the perfect home for thousands of these magnificent birds.

Local place names such as Cranwich and Cransford suggest that Cranes were part of a breeding population rather than just wintering visitors. However, habitat loss and over-exploitation caused the population to dwindle and eventually die out as a breeding species in Britain.

Cranes return

A small breeding population re-established on the Norfolk Broads in 1979, and remained the only known breeding population in Britain until the Lakenheath Fen Cranes turned up in 2007. The Lakenheath Fen Cranes have now established themselves at the reserve and furthermore have formed the core of a Fens population. It's fair to say that this appearance of a pair of Cranes on grazing marsh at the western end of Lakenheath caused a bit of excitement among staff. It was an excellent record for the reserve, but that was as far as it went. Little did we suspect that they would stay and attempt to breed.

That first pair of Cranes became known as the 'Breeding Pair' and were joined in the same year by another pair, which were quickly nicknamed 'Little and Large' due to the slight difference in size between the male and female bird. The discovery of the first nest

came as a surprise to all, and it was found more or less by accident when it was literally tripped over by reserve staff conducting a Bearded Tit survey within the reedbed.

Sensitive to disturbance

We quickly learned that Cranes are very secretive and elusive birds, and also very sensitive to disturbance. Whereas the first pair sensibly chose a quiet spot well away from any visitors, 'Little and Large' selected an area within the visited half of the reserve. Unfortunately, their timing also coincided with the busy summer season, the opening of the new visitor centre, and the decision to publicise the Cranes. This all resulted in a large influx of visitors and lots of disturbance (albeit at a distance), and the Cranes soon moved to a quieter part of the reserve. Every care is now taken to prevent disturbance. It is however interesting to note that both pairs of Cranes have become more habituated to people and regular vehicles. In particular, the reserve's Land Rover and the grazier's vehicles no longer have the effect of making the Cranes take to the air, and they have also been known to follow local farmers drilling wheat!

Successful breeding

The initial attempts in 2007 and 2008 were unsuccessful, failing at either egg or chick stage. 'Little and Large' finally fledged their first young in 2009 at about 11 weeks old – the first known Crane chick to have fledged in the Fens for over 400 years! Interestingly, for the last few weeks before fledging, the young Crane was brought out onto an area in full view of one of the viewpoints.

Visitors regularly saw these Cranes and the chick's first attempts at flying were even caught on camera! 'Little and Large' were again successful in fledging a single young in 2010. The 'Breeding Pair' have taken their time, but this year finally fledged their first young! The family kept us on tenterhooks for nearly 13 weeks (the usual time for a Crane

chick to fledge is about 10 weeks), keeping the youngster hidden from view for weeks at a time, before it finally took to the skies. If the



'Little and Large's' 2010 chick grew up fast – in the space of 8-9 weeks the tiny chick above grew into the strong young adult below



Editor: For those of you that would like to know more about Lakenheath's Cranes prior to 2010 then, if you are a joint SNS member, look no further than Norman Sills' excellent articles in your copies of the 2007 and 2009 Suffolk Birds reports.

Book Review

Editor: By way of a counterpoint to Adam Gretton's review of *Say Goodbye to the Cuckoo's* distressing theme in our last issue, here's something much more positive:

Phil Brown (with input from Chris Durdin)

The Norfolk Cranes' story

John Buxton and Chris Durdin

(Wren Publishing, 2011, ISBN 978-0-9542545-5-1, £30.00)

previous two years are anything to go by, the youngster will stay with its parents over the winter months, before being 'encouraged' to make its own way early next spring.

The future?

The current whereabouts of our five Cranes is unknown (the five consist of the two pairs, plus a solitary), although they have been seen to spend time at the RSPB's Nene Washes, the Ouse Washes and WWT's Welney reserves, as well as popping back to this reserve from time to time. It is also important to note that the Cranes at Lakenheath Fen are no longer the only breeding pairs in the Fens; a pair have successfully bred at RSPB's Nene Washes reserve for the past two years and, this September, there was a total of 14 Cranes in the area. Given the reserve's size it is possible that another pair could become resident at Lakenheath Fen – we certainly hope so!

All of us look forward to the day when flocks of Common Cranes, with their evocative bugling calls, once again become a common sight and sound across the East Anglian Fens.

This short, 133pp volume (that's less than the present Booker prize winner) is copiously illustrated (mainly colour photographs) and tells the nowadays rare and uplifting tale of conservation success – the re-establishment of Cranes as a breeding species in Norfolk after a 400-year UK absence.

As related to Chris Durdin by John Buxton, the owner of the Horsey estate and in effect the Horsey Cranes' guardian, Part one of the

book chronicles the Horsey story from 1979 up to 2010.

The Cranes' achievements for every year are noted but, because of frequent failures, some of these annual entries are short (at an early stage John had calculated that, over a ten-year period, 30 Crane eggs were laid on the Estate, yet only four chicks were fledged¹). The species' susceptibility to disturbance during breeding and the vulnerability of their eggs and chicks to predation explains the brevity of many entries. Nevertheless, by the time we reach the present day, the species' success is substantial with at least 13 nesting pairs, numerous solitaires and unconfirmed pairs, making up a regular wintering Broadlands flock of 50 – altogether a real success story.

In Part two the history² and the future of Cranes in the UK are reviewed, along with observations about Crane behaviour and various management issues. Finally, in Part

three, penned by the filmmaker Nick Upton, the species' European context is considered. His descriptions of the birds on migration reminded me of my own Hortobágy

experiences where I've witnessed the sky filled from horizon to horizon by these monumental birds' evening return to roost at the area's fishponds. Like Nick you feel privileged to see and hear them en masse and it has encouraged me to get back over the Suffolk border to see them again next year.

All together a very readable, thorough and fascinating read – my only tiny niggle, the book's lack of an index. But don't let that stop you purchasing it.



The Norfolk Cranes' Story is hardback with 65 colour photos, six black & white photos and three colour illustrations, price £30. It is on sale in bookshops and nature reserves, including RSPB Minsmere and RSPB Lakenheath Fen, via www.norfolkcranes.co.uk or directly from the authors. Chris Durdin can be contacted at 36 Thunder Lane, Norwich, NR7 0PX, tel. 01603 300552, email chris@honeyguide.co.uk.

Editor: The last issue's piece on White-tailed Eagles stirred this interesting information from one of our members:

Clive Collins

Some historical evidence for the White-tailed Eagles' presence in England

Richard Rafe, in his conversation with Phil Brown about the proposed reintroduction of the White-tailed Eagle to Suffolk, made the interesting point that evidence from place-names suggested that the species was once widespread in England. Let me add a few examples to illustrate this fact.

¹ Happily the latest breeding productivity averages prove to be much more positive than this.

² *Editor:* Interestingly, paralleling Clive Collins' article on the 'earn' in this issue of the Harrier, the book notes that the name of Cranwich near Brandon, a mere six miles from Lakenheath Fen, translates from Old English as 'the bog where cranes breed'. So perhaps the Cranes' appearance at the Fen was inevitable.

The Old English word for the eagle was “earn”¹, and this occurs as an element in about 25 names for villages and natural features across England. It does not, of course, distinguish between the two species, Golden and White-tailed; both species would at one time have been common. However, if we reasonably assume that the Golden Eagle would have been confined to upland, open habitats – giving us Arncliffe in the Yorkshire Dales and Ingleby Arncliffe on the edge of the North York Moors, for example – this still leaves a good number which could refer to the White-tailed Eagle, since, as Richard points out, the habitat for this species includes wetlands and broad river valleys.



Domesday evidence

If we look at the earliest written records for some place-names, and many of these are from the Domesday Book of 1086, we can see how they have evolved from “earn”. There are Arnold in the Trent Valley near Nottingham, *Ernehale* in 1086, and Arnold, *Aernhale* in 1190, between Hornsea Mere and the Humber Estuary, from *earn* and *halh* – a piece of land frequented by eagles; Upper Arley and Arely Kings in the Severn Valley, *Erneleie* in 996 and 1086 respectively, from *earn* and *leah* – a woodland clearing where eagles are found.

Another Earnley, recorded as *Earneleagh* as early as the 8th Century, is on Selsey Bill, hardly Golden Eagle territory, but close to Chichester Harbour and the Solent, so perfect habitat for White-tailed Eagle. One from the West Country, Yarnscombe in Devon, *Hernescome* in the Domesday Book, from *earn* and *cumb* – eagle valley, also probably refers to the White-tailed Eagle; it lies between the Torridge and the Taw valleys, and near the cliffs of the North Devon coast.

Suffolk connections?

Unfortunately I haven’t been able to find any eagle names in Suffolk². We have to be content with Gosbeck, a stream frequented by geese; Yaxley, a woodland clearing where the cuckoo is found, *Jacheslea* in 1086, from the Old English word *gaec* for a cuckoo; and Great and Little Finborough, *Fineberga* in 1086, woodpecker hill, from the Old English *fin*, a woodpecker. We can’t even claim Crowfield; it derives from “open land near a corner”. And Magpie Green near Diss must have been named much later because, until the 16th Century, the usual name for the bird was “haggister”. The modern name is a contraction of “maggot pie”: Macbeth speaks of “magot-pies, and choughs, and rooks”.

Editor: I’ve always found these ancient and/or traditional terms fascinating. Mark Cocker in *Birds Britannica* (pp120-1) includes several more White-tailed Eagle location name examples and one of a bone find at a fifth century archaeological site in Berkshire. And DW Yalden in *British Birds #100* mentions several Roman era sites in this region where their bones have been found, viz. London, Colchester, Stonea (Cams) and Dunstable. Although these could be evidence of their ceremonial use rather than of a breeding presence.

¹ ‘Earn’ was just one of several terms in use – there was also the Middle English ‘erne’ and ‘erens’ can be found in some Medieval documentation

² Ed.: Adam Gretton suggests Yarn Hill at Iken might be a possible contender

Editor: We were all delighted to have this sedentary species turn up at Landguard in the spring. Nigel Odin now casts some light on the reason why it may have hung around so long.

Nigel Odin

Weight-gain and fat storage accumulation in a 'migrant' Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla*

The Short-toed Treecreeper is generally described as a highly sedentary species (Cramp *et al.* 1993¹) with almost no published information on its migratory habits.

Nevertheless one appeared at Landguard Point, Suffolk from 24th March to 6th April this year. It was trapped several times over this period and during its stay the recorded weight increased from a low of 7.6g, noted early morning on the second day, to 9.2g on the afternoon of the last day of its 14-day stay.

During this period the bird's fat score increased from 0 to 3, with the pectoral muscle score remaining the same throughout. These weights appear to be within the range of the small sample published in BWP. While a

bird gaining weight after a long flight is not ground-breaking news, I can find no published data on weight gain or an increase in the fat score of an individual migrant of this species and, as such, it may be of interest.



Editor: It is also interesting to see that this woodland species could find sufficient food at this often bleak and windswept site to fatten up before departing.

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Date | 24th | 25th | 26th | 27th | 29th | 31st | 1st | 4th | 5th | 6th |
| Hour | 07 | 06 | 06 | 07 | 07 | 09 | 09 | 10 | 10 | 14 |
| Weight | 7.8g | 7.6g | 8.0g | 8.2g | 8.6g | 8.7g | 8.7g | 9.0g | 8.9g | 9.2g |
| Fat | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Pec | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |

¹ Cramp, S & Perrins, C.M. (eds) (1993) The Birds of the Western Palearctic Vol. VII. p.365 – 376

Suffolk BINS – 'Bumper Autumn Harvest'

Following on from what was a great summer overall, and moving into the autumn, who would have predicted it would have thrown up so many surprises, and what must be considered a fantastic past three months.

I suppose at this point, I should really mention that Crane thingy-me-bob, but having been one of many Suffolk birders on Shetland, I personally didn't really see what all the fuss was about! Ok, yes, alright, it was pretty spectacular I suppose, but what else did the autumn have up its sleeve?...

Suffolk, the new Scillies or Shetland?

September – The month of September produced what can only be described as a spectacular sea bird passage over a couple of days, with the highlight being a superb Fea's Petrel spotted north past Ness Point at 18:00 hrs on the 15th, and a Sooty/Bridled Tern reported past Southwold that same morning. The 16th saw an amazing passage of sea birds noted off the Suffolk coast, with some six Great Shearwaters, thirteen Cory's, two Balearics, good numbers of both Manxies and Sooties also being noted throughout the day, with a Sabine's Gull, several Long-tailed Skuas and good numbers of Bonxie, Arctic and Pom Skuas helping to make this one of the most remarkable Suffolk sea-watching periods for many a moon.

Other September Highlights: On the 4th and 5th, Covehithe Broad produced a Pectoral

Sandpiper, with a Wryneck noted there on the 7th. The 9th saw another or the same Pec again at Covehithe until the 10th. While a possible further bird frequented Minsmere from the 11th, being joined by a second bird from the 15th. The 11th was a good day, with a Barred Warbler at Felixstowe, juv. Rose-coloured Starling at Minsmere, and a Balearic Shearwater off Southwold. A Cattle Egret was noted over Ipswich on the 17th, with four Black-necked Grebes off Levington that same afternoon. The 18th produced the first Yellow-browed Warbler of the autumn at Minsmere North wall, with an 'Icky' also there. An adult Dotterel was found at Levington on the 19th, a further 'Icky' was found along 'Flycatcher Alley' on the 25th, a drake Fudge (Ferruginous) Duck was discovered at Leathes Ham on the 26th, and an Arctic Warbler reported along the River Gipping, Ipswich on the 29th, with a number of 'usual suspect' common migrant passerines and waders making up the month of September.

Headless chickens aplenty...

October – Well, where do we start? At the beginning I hear you cry, and surely what occurred on that Sunday, 2nd will live in the memory of many forever, when an adult **SANDHILL CRANE**, a first for Suffolk, was seen, heard calling, and photographed as it flew south along the Suffolk coast. It is thought the bird was originally on Kessingland levels as it was seen to gain height from this area before heading south. The bird was then seen to land at North Warren and was observed by five lucky Suffolk birders before it took flight after just half an hour. It was again tracked south with the help of Suffolk BINS (we sent an incredible 2080 messages to our members on that day alone), where it next stopped at Sudbourne Marsh, then Gedgrave and finally settling down for most of the afternoon on fields between Boyton Marsh RSPB and Hollesley Marshes, to be admired by the masses from far and wide, until the 7th when it flew high south from Boyton Marsh RSPB at 10:25hrs and was sadly lost to view. Despite

the quality of our scopes I just couldn't pick it up from Shetland, although Lee sinking up to his waist in a peaty ditch that afternoon did bring a short respite to my depression! This must surely be a prime candidate for 'Bird of the Year', but the month of October was far from over...

Other October Highlights: What a month indeed... The 1st saw a Richard's Pipit fly south over Landguard, a juv. Fudge Duck discovered at Leathes Ham, and the Dotterel remained at Levington to set the month off to a good start. The 5th saw two Glossy Ibis fly off and land on Hollesley Marshes. A probable Pallid Swift was seen over Minsmere on the 6th, 7th saw a Glossy Ibis located on Dingle Marsh where it remained on the shore pools till the 8th. Also on the 8th, a juv. **Woodchat Shrike** was found at Links Road car park, Lowestoft where it remained until the 14th. The 9th saw a Glossy Ibis found on West Scrape, Minsmere, with a second bird noted to fly over, whilst the sea produced two Cory's, one off Felixstowe, and the second off Thorpeness, plus a Balearic Shearwater, with a Richard's Pipit noted low over Sizewell Common. For the 10th we again turned to the sea, where yet another Fea's Petrel was seen to fly north past Thorpeness, a Cory's and 56 Bonxies making up the supporting cast. The 13th turned into a bumper day with two **Red-flanked Bluetails**, one at Minsmere, and another trapped and ringed on Orfordness, with a Little Bunting also trapped there helping this to be a great day for the Ness, with four Great Grey Shrikes also noted around the Lowestoft area. The 14th produced another cracking mega for Suffolk, with only the second **Isabelline (Daurian) Shrike** for the county being found at Dunwich, although sadly this only remained for the 2.5 hours that afternoon, but provided an opportunity for many to grip this one back on those lucky enough to have connected with the only other record at Boyton over a decade ago.

With it only being the 15th, the glut of rarities continued when the north of the county continued with its good run of form, with the discovery of an **Olive-backed Pipit** in Sparrows Nest Park where it remained through to the 16th although generally elusive at times. Also on the 15th, three Glossy Ibis were noted to fly over Tuddenham Avenue, Ipswich, and a welcome addition to the garden list for me! The 16th produced yet another county mega, with the discovery of a **Booted Warbler** at Landguard, which performed well throughout the day, and provided excellent views for the large crowd which passed through the site, whilst nearby a Red-throated Pipit was seen, albeit for a short period in fields east of Martlesham Creek.



Booted Warbler, Landguard, 16 October

The 20th saw a Glossy Ibis fly north over Minsmere in the morning, with possibly the same bird north over Dingle later that morning. We knew it wouldn't be long before the north of the county would come up trumps again when, on the 21st a drake Green-winged Teal was noted at Benacre

Broad, whilst the 22nd saw a Dusky Warbler trapped at Kessingland sewage works. The 31st saw the last of the month's biggies, with a Pallid Swift seen to fly south over Landguard at 09:55. Throughout the month of October, there were also numerous decent scarcities, including Yellow-browed Warblers, waders, further Great Grey Shrikes and the sea was seemingly worth a look at any time, ensuring October will be a month people will remember for many a year – oh yeah, and that Crane.

The excitement continues...

November – Providing no let-up in a sensational autumn for the county when on the 1st five Glossy Ibis were noted to fly low west over Rigbourne Hill Lane, Beccles at 06:15hrs and a Great Grey Shrike was again seen at West Stow country park by the main car park with the first Waxwing of the autumn/early winter being noted at Castle Marsh SWT by the visitor centre, also a Great Grey Shrike was seen by the farm siloes. The 2nd saw the first of four Pallas's Warblers of the month, discovered along the disused rail track just south of the bridge on Stirrup's Lane, while the drake Green-winged Teal was again noted at Benacre. The 6th saw a Dusky Warbler found at North Warren, which remained until the 10th, with a possible Pallid Swift seen over Leiston town centre early morning. A **Hume's Leaf Warbler** was seen and heard in copse opposite Bawdsey Hall on the afternoon of the 8th, the first of three for the month, but sadly no sign of this one the next day. Three Taiga Bean Geese were seen mid-afternoon on Barsham Drain, viewable from Rooshall cottage on the 9th.

The north of the county was at it again on the 13th when the second Hume's Leaf Warbler of the month was discovered at Dip Farm, Gunton at 10:35hrs before moving to the shelter-belt by the car park, and remained until the 15th at least, whilst a Dusky was trapped and ringed on Orfordness. The 14th and Landguard was again on the map when a Red-flanked

Bluetail was trapped, ringed and released just prior to 09:00hrs, and remained on site until mid-afternoon, although was very elusive, while the drake Green-winged Teal remained at Benacre Broad. Lizzard Land was again on fire on the 15th with the discovery of yet another Hume's Leaf Warbler, where it was found in Sycamore trees opposite Tesco's behind The Crop Shop on London Road North and performed very well throughout the day and was still present until the 16th at least, whilst a Dusky Warbler was trapped, ringed and released at a private ringing site at Shingle Street, then re-found in Buckthorn just west of the Martello tower, though generally elusive.

So as we now enter the winter period, let's hope the 'rares' continue to flow, but most importantly, let's get out there and enjoy our bird-watching in what is a fantastically productive county with many areas and habitats to explore.

Please, please don't forget to submit those all-important records via your area recorders, including a SORC form for the county rarities (you can down-load one from our sogonline website), and a BBRC form for those numerous national rarities this autumn, in what has been a genuinely bumper autumn harvest.

For any of our SOG members reading this, and wanting to enjoy daily updates, superb photography and much, much more, please visit the Suffolk BINS website at: <http://www.freewebs.com/suffolkbirding/>, as there was so much more that the Editor couldn't include in this edition, so it's well worth a look.

Finally, I would again like to pass on my continued thanks to all our BINS members for their tremendous and ongoing efforts – we couldn't do it without you, and the next time I feedback to you, will be well into the new year, so I would also like to take this opportunity to pass on our best wishes for a wonderful Christmas and happy New Year.

Field Trip Report

Steve Fryett

Sizewell for Summer Migrants

September 24th

Leader: Steve Fryett

Eight members attended a rather low-key event at Sizewell that would clearly struggle to provide much in the way of excitement or noteworthy bird records given that it was a warm sunny day – clearly better for a barmy sail at sea than ornithology. The previous two weeks' excellent passage, including a stupendous sea movement caused by a tail end of a hurricane would not be surpassed.

To begin, we moved north noting that our chances of anything remotely tern or skua-like from the Sizewell rigs was thwarted by a shutdown on pumping from the power station. Personally I have never seen these rigs so bereft of seabirds. Checking the area between 'A' and 'B' stations a male Black Redstart was welcome, followed by a juvenile, confirming breeding at this site once again this year. The nearby Sycamores held at least three Chiffchaff with one small warbler sp remaining unidentified. One would hope to record a Wheatear and, on cue, a south-bound single individual was duly noted. Several Meadow Pipits were seen passing overhead or disturbed from the grass, but remained in low numbers for the time of year.

Continuing north we reached Kenton Hills and overlooked the Minsmere levels. Here many more pipits were seen in longer grass with some finches that may well have been Linnets. High above the tree line two distant Hobbies were seen picking off insects as they passed south.

Returning we stopped off at Kenton Hills Bridge where a large tit flock contained mainly Long-taileds. A very brief sighting, by just one member, of a Kingfisher was noteworthy. As we continued our return more Meadow Pipits were spotted amongst the dunes. During the meeting we also noted Small Copper and Small Heath with an excellent specimen Parasol Mushroom. Harebell and Scabious were in flower and provided additional interest.



BINS Bumper Autumn Harvest



1



2



3

- 1 Sandhill Crane & Orford Lighthouse, Bill Baston
- 2 Woodchat Shrike, Links Road car park, Lowestoft, Lee Woods
- 3 Red-flanked Bluetail, Minsmere, Jon Evans
- 4 Isabelline (Daurian) Shrike, Dunwich Heath, Jon Evans



4



"The Crane I



The Boyton Sandhill Crane landed on October 2nd and was then seen by well over 2000 birders before departing southwards. As has been variously reported, this bird was only the fourth British record and a first for Suffolk. So it's a strong candidate for becoming Suffolk's 2011 'Bird of the Year'.

Fun Crane Fact

A Miocene Crane fossil, thought to be about ten million years old, was found in Nebraska and is structurally identical to the modern Sandhill Crane, making it the oldest known bird species still surviving!



The Sandhill Crane is the most abundant of the world's fifteen Crane species with a population estimated at over half a million¹. Not surprisingly it has more subspecies than any other Crane too. Six races have so far been identified.

Where it came from is an interesting question posed earlier in this issue by Steve Piotrowski? The UK bird is most likely to be a *Grus canadensis tabida* from the Great Lakes Northern race. Originally it may have been intending over wintering in Central Florida until being 'kidnapped' by Katia. Its response to its four thousand mile translocation was to then revert to form and head south and land at Boyton.

The identity of the Finnish/Estonian bird might be more interesting. It's arrival was too early

for Katia and it may in fact have been caught up in the earlier Hurricane Irene that had skirted the eastern seaboard of the US in late August. Again it could be a *tabida* – or, more fancifully, a *G c canadensis* from Eastern Siberia that unaccountably flew over the Pole!

As to whether the Estonian bird would then fly due west along 59°N for almost a thousand miles, as Steve would wish, is debateable. While in terms of timing it's a possibility, this journey would have been unusual. It would have taken a minimum of 22 hours of continuous flight, most of it over open water², probably against a head wind to become the Scottish bird. Sadly I think the science is against Steve on this one!

¹ This is the 'official' estimate from the 'Handbook of the Birds of the World' volume 3, however Mark Cocker at the November SOG Indoor Meeting reported that the Nebraska fly-way is estimated to comprise 600,000 + Sandhills, which could mean a total North America/Mexico/Cuba population in excess of a million.

² The previously recorded longest continuous flight was 575kms (or 357 miles) in 9.5 hours.



Flight sequence by David Hermon





BINS Bumper Autumn Harvest



- 1 Olive-backed Pipit, Sparrows Nest, Lowestoft, Chris Darby
- 2 Booted Warbler, Landguard Bird Observatory, Lee Woods
- 3 Yellow-browed Warbler, James Kennerley
- 4 Hume's Leaf Warbler, London Road, Lowestoft, Andrew Easton

Suffolk Ornithological Records Committee – 2011 Reports

Here is the latest table of
accepted records for this year.

Hopefully you'll find some of your
records here!

| STATUS OF 2011 RECORDS | | | | |
|------------------------|--|--------------------------------|---|--------|
| Date(s) | Species | Location(s) | Observer(s) | Status |
| 03/01/11-11/01/11 | Green-winged Teal | North Warren | C Holden <i>et al.</i> | A |
| 10/01/11-14/01/11 | Taiga Bean Goose x4 | Boyton Marshes | Multi-observer (photo) | A |
| 16/01/11-30/01/11 | Rough-legged Buzzard | King's Forest/Berner's Heath | DF Walsh, N Moran, L Gregory <i>et al.</i> (photo) | A |
| 19/01/11-27/01/11 | Ferruginous Duck – 1st Winter Female | Needham Lakes | J Rankin <i>et al.</i> (photo) | A |
| 22/01/2011 | Hooded Crow | Slaughden | T Hodge | A |
| 25/01/2011 | Black Brant x 2 Adults | Bawdsey Quay | P + J Kennerly | A |
| 29/01/11-04/02/11 | Black Brant x 2 Adults | Felixstowe Ferry | W J Brame | A |
| 30/01/2011 | Goshawk | Ampton | C Fulcher | A |
| 06/02/2011 | Northern Bullfinch | Dunwich | G Grieco | S |
| 12/03/11-13/03/11 | Coue's Arctic Redpoll - Male | Mayday Farm | L Gregory, S Abbot <i>et al.</i> (photo) | A |
| 16/03/2011 | Serin | Landguard Bird Observatory | D Pearsons <i>et al.</i> | S |
| 20/03/2011 | White-spotted Bluethroat | Carlton Marshes | RC Smith (photo) | A |
| 21/03/2011 | Rough-legged Buzzard | Minsmere | R Chittenden (photo) | A |
| 28/03/2011 | Cattle Egret | Carlton Marshes | A Easton, R Wilton <i>et al.</i> (photo) | A |
| 29/03/2011 | Nordic Jackdaw | Landguard Bird Observatory | P J Holmes, GJ Jobson <i>et al.</i> | P |
| 04/04/2011 | White-tailed Eagle | Breydon South Wall – 09.38 hrs | R Fairhead | A |
| 04/04/2011 | White-tailed Eagle | Hopton – 10.10 hrs | As per Bird news services | A |
| 04/04/2011 | White-tailed Eagle | Corton – 10.33 hrs | As per Bird news services | A |
| 04/04/2011 | White-tailed Eagle | Lowestoft – 10.38 hrs | A Easton (photo) | A |
| 04/04/2011 | White-tailed Eagle | Carlton Coalville – 11.00 hrs | C Buttle + R Hammond | A |
| 04/04/2011 | White-tailed Eagle | Bradwell | R Fairhead | A |
| 07/04/2011 | White-tailed Eagle | Ipswich | M May | P |
| 17/04/2011 | Rough-legged Buzzard | Southwold | S Howell | S |
| 17/04/2011 | Bee-eater | Ashwell, Sizewell | J Gibbs | A |
| 17/04/2011 | Montagu's Harrier – Male | Kessingland | C Darby (photo) | A |
| 21/04/2011 | Rough-legged Buzzard | Orfordness | A Howe, D Fairhurst + G White (photo) | A |
| 22/04/2011 | Serin | Minsmere | D Fairhurst, C Lodge, E Marsh + R Drew | A |
| 25/04/2011 | Montagu's Harrier – Ringtail | Minsmere | R Drew, C Fulcher, S Mayson + L G Woods | A |
| 26/04/2011 | Montagu's Harrier – 2nd summer male (melanistic) | Landguard Bird Obs | T Holland <i>et al.</i> | A |
| 28/04/11-03/05/11 | Woodchat Shrike – 1st summer male | Halesworth | Multi-observer (photo) | A |
| 30/04/11-03/05/11 | White-winged Black Tern | Minsmere | Multi-observer (photo) | A |
| 04/05/2011 | White-tailed Eagle – Juvenile (same) | Leiston – 17.45 hrs | M Cartwright | A |
| 04/05/2011 | White-tailed Eagle – Juvenile (same) | Eastbridge – 18.05 hrs | As per Bird news services | A |
| 04/05/2011 | White-tailed Eagle – Juvenile (same) | Walberswick – 18.39 hrs | As per Bird news services | A |
| 04/05/2011 | White-tailed Eagle – Juvenile (same) | Dunwich Forest – 18.45 hrs | S Abbot, D Fairhurst, R Marsh <i>et al.</i> | A |
| 04/05/2011 | White Stork (same) | Needham Market – 13.50 hrs | J Rankin | A |
| 04/05/2011 | White Stork (same) | Minsmere – 16.29 hrs | Multi-observer | A |
| 04/05/2011 | White Stork (same) | Southwold – 17.40 hrs | As per Bird news services | A |
| 04/05/2011 | White Stork (same) | Reydon – 18.14 hrs | B Small + D Fairhurst | A |
| 05/05/2011 | White-tailed Eagle – Juvenile (same) | Oulton Broad – 09.10 hrs | As per Bird news services | A |
| 06/05/2011 | White Stork (same) | Barnby Broad – 10.30 hrs | J Trew | A |
| 06/05/2011 | White Stork (same) | Minsmere – 12.10 hrs | Multi-observer | A |
| 06/05/2011 | White Stork (same) | Shadingfield – 13.25 hrs | J Trew | A |

STATUS OF 2011 RECORDS (Continued)

| Date(s) | Species | Location(s) | Observer(s) | Status |
|-------------------|-------------------------|---|--|--------|
| 07/05/2011 | Honey Buzzard | Hasketon | A Batley | S |
| 07/05/2011 | White Stork | North Cove | R Fairhead | A |
| 07/05/2011 | Honey Buzzard - female | Trimley Marshes <i>et al.</i> 09.45 hrs | W J Brame, E Marsh, D Pearsons, EM Zantboer + J Zantboer | A |
| 08/05/2011 | Black Kite | Minsmere | R Harvey, S Nixon <i>et al.</i> (photo) | A |
| 09/05/2011 | White Stork (same) | Carlton Coalville <i>et al.</i> 10.45 hrs | N Loath | A |
| 09/05/2011 | White Stork | Bawdsey | N Andrews | A |
| 09/05/2011 | White Stork | Lakenheath Fen | As per Bird news services | A |
| 14/05/2011 | Rough-legged Buzzard | Ramsholt | M L Cornish + N Mason | A |
| 14/05/2011 | Red-rumped Swallow | Minsmere | J A Rowlands <i>et al.</i> | A |
| 16/05/2011 | Purple Heron | Minsmere | Multi-observer | A |
| 19/05/11-21/05/11 | Quail x 2 | West Row | N Mason + P Whittaker | A |
| 20/05/11-01/06/11 | Purple Heron | Minsmere | Multi-observer (photo) | A |
| 21/05/2011 | Quail | Erwarton | R Tomlinson | A |
| 24/05/2011 | Quail | Guntton | R Wilton <i>et al.</i> | A |
| 30/05/2011 | Red-necked Phalarope | Great Livermere | D Balmer + P Wilson (photo) | A |
| 30/05/2011 | White-winged Black Tern | Minsmere | A Rowlands <i>et al.</i> | A |
| 07/06/11-08/06/11 | Purple Heron | Minsmere | Multi-observer | A |
| 09/06/2011 | Quail x 2 | Barsham | S Piotrowski | A |
| 10/06/2011 | Quail | Havergate Island | K A | A |
| 14/06/2011 | Quail | Pipp's Ford | J Rankin | A |
| 16/06/11-02/08/11 | Ferruginous Duck | Minsmere | M Muttit <i>et al.</i> (photo) | A |
| 21/06/2011 | Quail | Freckenham | N Mason | A |
| 06/07/2011 | White-rumped Sandpiper | Orfordness | D Crawshaw <i>et al.</i> | A |
| 12/07/2011 | Bee-eater | Stowmarket/Woolpit | A Berry | S |
| 15/07/2011 | Quail x 2 | Kenny Hill | N Mason + P Whittaker | A |
| 28/07/2011 | Marsh Warbler | Oxley Dairy, Shingle Street | B Thompson <i>et al.</i> | S |
| 30/07/2011 | Cattle Egret | Minsmere | P Green <i>et al.</i> | A |
| 31/07/2011 | Black Kite | Benacre | G Grieco | S |
| 01/09/2011 | Raven x2 | Benacre | B Galpin <i>et al.</i> | S |
| 10/09/2011 | Balearic Shearwater | Sizewell | J H Grant | A |
| 11/09/2011 | Balearic Shearwater | Southwold | L G Woods <i>et al.</i> | A |
| 11/09/2011 | Balearic Shearwater | Southwold | S Mayson <i>et al.</i> | A |
| 16/09/2011 | Balearic Shearwater | East Lane, Bawdsey | N Mason | S |
| 16/09/2011 | Great Shearwater | Landguard Bird Observatory | J Clarke + K Perry | S |
| 16/09/2011 | Cory's Shearwater | Slaughden | D Marsh | S |
| 17/09/2011 | Cattle Egret | Ipswich | M Riley | S |
| 10/10/2011 | Balearic Shearwater | Thorpeness | S Mayson + T Hodge | S |

A = Accepted. NP = Not Proven. P = Pended. C1 = First circulation. C2 = Second circulation.

Second, here is a list of the sightings that still require descriptions for 2011. Please take the time to read through them. If you have seen

any of these birds, please fill in a SORC description form (see the SOG website), then email it to the relevant recorder.

OUTSTANDING DESCRIPTIONS FOR 2011

| Date(s) | Species | Location(s) |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| 03/01/2011 | Hooded Crow | Walberswick Common |
| 22/01/2011 | Hooded Crow | Blythburgh |
| 27/01/2011 | Hooded Crow | Covehithe |
| 30/01/2011 | Black Brant - x2 adults | Trimley Marshes |
| 12/02/2011 | Hooded Crow | Covehithe |
| 13/02/11-20/02/11 | Taiga Bean Goose | North Warren |
| 21/02/11-18/03/11 | Ferruginous Duck - 1W drake | Oulton Broad |
| 22/02/2011 | Rough-legged Buzzard | Norton/Tuston |
| 05/03/2011 | Nordic Jackdaw | Westleton |
| 08/03/2011 | American Wigeon | Trimley Marshes |
| 10/03/2011 | Rough-legged Buzzard | Somerleyton |
| 18/03/2011 | Spotted Crake - x2 | Westwood Marshes |

OUTSTANDING DESCRIPTIONS FOR 2011 *(Continued)*

| Date(s) | Species | Location(s) |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 19/03/2011 | Rustic Bunting | Southwold |
| 21/03/2011 | Rough-legged Buzzard | Minsmere |
| 22/03/2011 | Rough-legged Buzzard | Minsmere |
| 22/03/2011 | Rough-legged Buzzard | Boyton |
| 23/03/2011 | Rough-legged Buzzard | Boyton |
| 27/03/2011 | Rough-legged Buzzard | Ipswich |
| 28/03/2011 | Rough-legged Buzzard | Kessingland |
| 29/03/2011 | Rough-legged Buzzard | North Cove |
| 29/03/11-30/03/11 | Nordic Jackdaw | North Cove |
| 30/03/2011 | Rough-legged Buzzard | Woodbridge/Westleton |
| 02/04/2011 | Rough-legged Buzzard | Aldeburgh |
| 02/04/2011 | Rough-legged Buzzard | Lound |
| 03/04/11-05/04/11 | Siberian Chiffchaff | Trimley Marshes |
| 04/04/2011 | Rough-legged Buzzard | Southwold |
| 04/04/2011 | Alpine Swift | Dunwich |
| 04/04/2011 | Alpine Swift | Great Glemham - 1045hrs |
| 04/04/2011 | Alpine Swift | Leiston - 1400hrs |
| 16/04/2011 | Hooded Crow | Leiston |
| 17/04/2011 | Bee-eater - x4 | Sutton Common |
| 20/04/2011 | Serin | Landguard Bird Obs. |
| 21/04/2011 | Rough-legged Buzzard | Benacre |
| 22/04/2011 | Rough-legged Buzzard | Benacre |
| 22/04/2011 | Rough-legged Buzzard | Aldeburgh |
| 24/04/2011 | Purple Heron | Minsmere |
| 24/04/2011 | Honey Buzzard | Lakenheath Fen |
| 24/04/2011 | Rough-legged Buzzard | Shingle Street |
| 24/04/2011 | Montagu's Harrier - Male | Trimley Marshes |
| 24/04/2011 | Raven | Chelmondiston |
| 25/04/2011 | Rough-legged Buzzard | Copdock |
| 25/04/2011 | Rough-legged Buzzard | Oulton Marshes |
| 25/04/2011 | Goshawk | Bawdsey Manor |
| 26/04/2011 | Raven | Westleton Heath |
| 01/05/2011 | Kentish Plover | Kessingland |
| 01/05/2011 | Bee-eater | Covehithe |
| 07/05/2011 | Honey Buzzard | Harkstead - 0915 |
| 07/05/2011 | Red-necked Phalarope | Orfordness |
| 10/05/2011 | Black Kite | Woodbridge |
| 11/05/2011 | Montagu's Harrier - Male (same) | Westleton Heath |
| 12/05/2011 | Montagu's Harrier - Male (same) | Minsmere |
| 12/05/2011 | Montagu's Harrier - Male (same) | Sizewell |
| 12/05/2011 | Honey Buzzard | Westleton Heath |
| 12/05/2011 | Honey Buzzard | Kessingland |
| 13/05/2011 | Black Kite | Stowmarket |
| 14/05/2011 | Rough-legged Buzzard | Reydon Marshes |
| 14/05/2011 | Red-rumped Swallow | Alton Water |
| 15/05/2011 | Honey Buzzard | N Warren |
| 15/05/2011 | Honey Buzzard - x3 | Wherstead |
| 15/05/2011 | Red-rumped Swallow | Landguard Bird Obs. |
| 20/05/2011 | Black Kite | Sibton |
| 21/05/2011 | Honey Buzzard | Pipps Ford |
| 25/05/2011 | Quail | Henstead |
| 30/05/2011 | Quail | Thorpeness |
| 30/05/2011 | Quail | Wenhaston |
| 06/0/611 | Quail | Mutford |
| 11/06/2011 | Bee-eater | St James South Elmham |
| 12/06/2011 | Serin | Landguard Bird Obs |
| 13/06/2011 | Red-footed Falcon | Corton |
| 14/06/2011 | Bee-eater | Dingle |
| 27/06/2011 | Quail | Benhall |
| 05/07/2011 | Honey Buzzard | Lakenheath Fen |

OUTSTANDING DESCRIPTIONS FOR 2011 (Continued)

| Date(s) | Species | Location(s) |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| 08/07/2011 | Honey Buzzard | Castle Marshes |
| 15/07/2011 | Honey Buzzard | Minsmere |
| 16/07/2011 | Ferruginous Duck – Male | Minsmere |
| 20/07/2011 | Honey Buzzard | Breydon Water South Wall |
| 01/08/2011 | Montagu's Harrier – Female | Woodville, Ipswich |
| 03/08/2011 | Montagu's Harrier – Female | Minsmere |
| 06/08/2011 | Dotterel | Gorleston |
| 08/08/2011 | Black Kite | Stutton Mill |
| 16/08/11–17/08/11 | Purple Heron - Juvenile | Benacre Broad |
| 20/08/2011 | Woodchat Shrike | Pipp's Ford |
| 21/08/2011 | Bee-eater | Ashbocking |
| 23/08/2011 | Red-necked Phalarope | Gt Livermere |
| 23/08/2011 | Dotterel | Landguard Bird Observatory |
| 23/08/11–24/08/11 | Icterine Warbler | Minsmere |
| 24/08/2011 | Alpine Swift | Bury St Edmunds |
| 26/08/2011 | Greenish Warbler (probable) | Thorpeness |
| 26/08/2011 | Dotterel (probable) | Bawdsey, East Lane |
| 27/08/2011 | Hoopoe | Gosbeck |
| 04/09/11–05/09/11 | Pectoral Sandpiper | Covehithe Broad |
| 11/09/2011 | Barred Warbler | Landguard Bird Observatory |
| 11/09/2011 | Balearic Shearwater | Southwold |
| 11/09/2011 | Rose-coloured Starling | Minsmere |
| 12/09/2011 | Sabine's Gull – Adult | Felixstowe |
| 15/09/2011 | Honey Buzzard – Juv | Ashbocking |
| 16/09/2011 | Cory's Shearwater | Lowestoft – North – 10.10 (same as below?) |
| 16/09/2011 | Cory's Shearwater | Kessingland – North – 10.03 (same as above?) |
| 16/09/2011 | Cory's Shearwater | Kessingland – North – 10.35 |
| 16/09/2011 | Cory's Shearwater | Pakefield – North – 15.33 (same as below?) |
| 16/09/2011 | Cory's Shearwater | Southwold – North – 14.43 (same as above?) |
| 16/09/2011 | Cory's Shearwater | Benacre – North – 13.07 (same as below?) |
| 16/09/2011 | Cory's Shearwater | Sizewell – North – 12.53 (same as above?) |
| 16/09/2011 | Cory's Shearwater | Sizewell – North – 13.05 |
| 16/09/2011 | Cory's Shearwater | Bawdsey, East Lane – North – 8.40 |
| 16/09/2011 | Cory's Shearwater | Bawdsey, East Lane – North – 12.00 |
| 16/09/2011 | Cory's Shearwater | Felixstowe – South – 12.55 |
| 16/09/2011 | Great Shearwater (probable) | Lowestoft – North – 09.10 (same as below?) |
| 16/09/2011 | Great Shearwater (probable) | Kessingland – North – 09.05 (same as above?) |
| 16/09/2011 | Great Shearwater | Southwold – North – 08.40 (same as above?) |
| 16/09/2011 | Great Shearwater x 2 | Kessingland – North – 11.50 |
| 16/09/2011 | Balearic Shearwater | Lowestoft |
| 16/09/2011 | Sabine's Gull – Adult | Thorpeness – South – 14.50 |
| 16/09/2011 | Sabine's Gull – Juv | Sizewell – South – 10.15 |
| 16/09/2011 | Sabine's Gull – Juv | Bawdsey, East Lane – South – 12.30 |
| 18/09/2011 | Icterine Warbler | Minsmere |
| 19/09/2011 | Quail | Pakefield |
| 19/09/2011–03/10/2011 | Dotterel | Levington |
| 24/09/2011 | Tawny Pipit (probable) | Landguard Bird Observatory |
| 25/09/2011 | Icterine Warbler | Lowestoft |
| 26/09/2011 | Ferruginous Duck | Leathes Ham, Lowestoft |
| 01/10/2011 | Ferruginous Duck (Juv) | Leathes Ham, Lowestoft |
| 01/10/2011 | Richard's Pipit | Landguard Bird Observatory |
| 02/10/2011 | Honey Buzzard | Ipswich |
| 03/10/2011 | Great Shearwater | Lowestoft (north mid pm) |
| 08/10/2011 | Woodchat Shrike (Juv) | Lowestoft |
| 09/10/2011 | Richard's Pipit | Sizewell |
| 09/10/2011 | Balearic Shearwater (probable) | East Lane, Bawdsey |
| 09/10/2011 | Cory's Shearwater (probable) | Thorpeness |
| 09/10/2011 | Cory's Shearwater | Landguard Bird Observatory |
| 09/10/2011 | Grey Phalarope (fly by) | Landguard Bird Observatory |
| 10/10/2011 | Cory's Shearwater | Thorpeness |

OUTSTANDING DESCRIPTIONS FOR 2011 *(Continued)*

| Date(s) | Species | Location(s) |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 10/10/2011 | Balearic Shearwater | Thorpeness |
| 13/10/2011 | Little Bunting | Orfordness |
| 15/10/2011 | Goshawk | Dunwich (In Off) |
| 15/10/2011 | Richard's Pipit | Corton (south 9am) |
| 16/10/2011 | Red throated Pipit (probable) | Martlesham Creek |
| 19/10/2011 | Rough-legged Buzzard | Covehithe (in off and south 9.35am) |
| 19/10/2011 | Rough-legged Buzzard | Southwold (south 9.50am) |
| 20/10/2011 | Rough-legged Buzzard | Havergate (west 12.30pm) |
| 20/10/2011 | Rough-legged Buzzard | Boyton (12.50pm) |
| 21/10/2011-14/11/11 | Green-winged Teal | Benacre Broad |
| 22/10/2011 | Dusky Warbler | Kessingland Sewage Works |
| 23/10/2011 | Rough-legged Buzzard | Sudbourne |
| 24/10/2011 | Grey Phalarope x2 (fly by) | Bawdsey |
| 28/10/2011-01/11/11 | Rough-legged Buzzard | Orfordness |
| 28/10/2011 | Rough-legged Buzzard | Havergate |
| 02/11/2011-05/11/11 | Pallas's Warbler | Corton |
| 02/11/2011 | Grey Phalarope (fly by) | Dunwich |
| 05/11/2011 | Black-necked Grebe x2 | Thorpeness |
| 05/11/2011 | Nordic' Jackdaw | Thorpeness |
| 06/11/2011 | Grey Phalarope (fly by) | Thorpeness |
| 06/11/2011 | Grey Phalarope (fly by) | East Lane, Bawdsey |
| 06/11/2011-10/11/2011 | Dusky Warbler | North Warren |
| 07/11/2011 | Puffin | Bawdsey |
| 07/11/2011 | Red-necked Grebe (fly by) | Bawdsey |
| 07/11/2011 | Puffin | Landguard Bird Observatory |
| 08/11/2011 | Puffin | Landguard Bird Observatory |
| 09/11/2011 | Puffin | Landguard Bird Observatory |
| 09/11/2011-11/11/11 | Taiga Bean Goose x 3 | Barsham |
| 09/11/2011 | Grey Phalarope (fly by) | Dunwich |
| 09/11/2011 | Pallas's Warbler | Lowestoft |
| 09/11/2011 | Pallas's Warbler | North Warren |
| 12/11/2011 | Pallas's Warbler | Lowestoft |
| 13/11/2011 | Dusky Warbler | Orfordness |
| 14/11/2011 | Hooded Crow | North Warren |
| 14/11/2011 | Hooded Crow | Felixstowe |



Looking back – October to December 1961 and 1986

Slected highlights from 1961 and 1986 Suffolk Birds reports for the period October to December

50 years ago *Coastal records*

This was a remarkable three-month period for coastal birders with a particular interest in visible migration. October witnessed some impressive totals of passerines moving south at Minsmere including 2350 Tree Sparrows in three hours on 11th, 50 Bullfinches on 21st and 40 Dunnocks on 12th. On 25th October observers at Lowestoft witnessed a southerly movement of Goldfinches, Greenfinches, Yellowhammers and Meadow Pipits totalling 2500 birds.

A huge immigration of thrushes, particularly of Blackbirds, was apparent along the whole length of the Suffolk coast during 4th and 5th November. On the latter date at Walberswick *“a constantly changing population of several thousand blackbirds was present in the fields and hedges and on the shore”*. On the same date, it was estimated that up to 3000 Blackbirds were at Minsmere.

As well as witnessing large numbers of thrushes, the period 4th to 6th November was also noted for a very big southerly movement of ducks, geese and waders, while large numbers of Lapwings, Starlings, Skylarks, Rooks, Jackdaws, Chaffinches and Meadow Pipits were crossing the coast and heading off westwards. At Lowestoft the movement, which included unexpectedly high totals of

Common Snipe, was thought to be the largest for 30 years.

Severe weather just after Christmas killed many Redwings and brought in large totals of ducks, geese and waders, while a ‘fall’ of at least 100 Woodcock was apparent at Minsmere. The harsh weather was presumably also responsible for single Bitterns, being noted well away from the breeding areas at Mildenhall, 17th December and Long Melford, 26th December.

Perhaps the most unexpected waterbird record involved a Greylag Goose that was picked up by a trawler in the North Sea near South Dogger Bank, 9th November and brought into Lowestoft where it recovered in captivity. Also at Lowestoft, 25 Scaup were present, 6th November and a long-staying Great Northern Diver remained in the vicinity of Waveney Dock, 5th November to 29th December.

Suffolk’s third record of Red Kite since 1901 involved an immature at Minsmere, 28th and 29th November with what is assumed to have been the same individual at Tunstall, 10th December and Snape, 13th December. What must have been a fascinating sight involved a Hen Harrier being chased out to sea by 15 Carrion Crows at Benacre, 5th November. Single Ospreys were present in mid-October at Minsmere and Nacton.

Little Stint record

Avocets did not overwinter in Suffolk 50 years ago – the last of the year were two at Havergate Island, 20th November. Notably late waders were a Temminck’s Stint at Walberswick, 5th October and a Red-necked Phalarope at Havergate Island, 8th October. Undoubtedly the most remarkable wader record, not just of this period but of the year, was the presence of as many as 22 Little Stints at Minsmere as late as 15th December.

Laggard summer visitors included a Swift, Southwold, 8th October; Common Redstart, Covehithe, 4th November; House Martin, Lowestoft, 26th November and Swallow, Bucklesham, 1st December. Suffolk's first mid-winter record of Black Redstart since 1953 involved one at Aldeburgh, 19th December.

Suffolk's third record of Yellow-browed Warbler was at Minsmere, 2nd October, the second having been seen as long ago as 12th September 1915 at Aldringham; the observers of the 1961 bird would surely have been amazed at the number of Yellow-browed Warblers that have occurred in Suffolk 50 years later. The only other scarce warbler was a first-winter Barred Warbler at Walberswick, 8th October.

There was a good showing by other scarce passerines, although it was a poor autumn for Shore Larks with a maximum of only three at Walberswick in late October. Up to five Great Grey Shrikes were located on the coast from 21st October onwards. The first Waxwing was on 9th November and the subsequent small influx peaked at 23, Reydon, 23rd November. An impressive total of 270 Twite was at Walberswick, 26th November while up to 15 Lapland Buntings frequented a stubble field at Minsmere during November and December. Two Bearded Tits late in the year at an unspecified locality in south-west Suffolk constituted the first site record for up to 40 years.

25 years ago

Landguard record

As we have come to expect, this was another excellent three-month period for rarities and scarcer species, principally at Landguard where the site's hard-working observers added yet another species to the Suffolk list. A Great Grey Shrike in the Observatory compound, 6th December did not look quite right – it was trapped and a detailed description obtained. It was eventually identified as being of the

southern race "*pallidirostris*", the first record for Suffolk and only the third for Britain. A decade later this race was elevated to full species' status as Southern Grey Shrike by BOURC. Additional scarce species at Landguard involved a Little Bunting, 10th October (the first in Suffolk since 1976), Barred Warbler, 5th to 13th October and a total for the autumn of seven Yellow-browed Warblers including a distinctly tardy individual, 13th November. The scarcest passerine elsewhere was a Red-breasted Flycatcher at Lowestoft, 18th October.

A Leach's Storm Petrel collided with some crane wires at Felixstowe Docks, 12th October; it was caught, taken into care and released at Felixstowe beach the next day. Another Leach's was off Aldeburgh, 30th October. Observers at Covehithe counted 142 Northern Gannets heading north offshore, 12th October – at the time this was a record total for Suffolk.

Offshore passage

A northerly airflow in the first three days of November induced a marked offshore passage, principally of ducks and seabirds. The highlights were seven Velvet Scoters off both Lowestoft and Benacre, 2200 Brent Geese off Lowestoft (the highest total recorded off Suffolk in autumn 1986), the unexpected sight of 71 Gadwall north off Covehithe and four Atlantic Puffins off Benacre. The weather conditions were also ideal for bringing Little Auks down into the southern North Sea – totals included 60 off Lowestoft, 52 off Covehithe and one well inland on The Black Bourn at Fakenham Magna, 2nd November. Also on 2nd November, up to 4000 Black-legged Kittiwakes were off Lowestoft and a straggler inland at Cavenham. The main influx of Red-throated Divers occurred in mid-December and resulted in at least 600 being noted on 14th between Minsmere and Easton Bavents.

The year's only Grey Phalarope occurred inland in the Stour Valley at Thorington Street Reservoir, Stoke-by-Nayland, 29th October;

the only other scarce wader species was at Minsmere where two Pectoral Sandpipers were present, 8th to 13th October. Additional notable wader sightings included 30 Purple Sandpipers, Lowestoft, 17th November (max. nine in November 2009), 40 Bar-tailed Godwits on the Orwell Estuary at Levington, 16th November, 22 Sanderling on the Orwell December BoEE (now WeBS) count and eight tardy Whimbrel north, Lowestoft, 2nd November on which date one was also at Covehithe.

An Iceland Gull, now in adult plumage, had returned for its fourth successive winter at Felixstowe on 5th November; it was originally noted in first-winter plumage on 18th January 1984 at this site to where it subsequently returned each winter up to and including 1991/92. What is assumed to have been the same late juvenile Arctic Tern was at Benacre and Sizewell, 1st November.

Owl influx

There was a widespread influx of Long-eared Owls on the British East Coast in mid-November, with Landguard hosting as many as 20 on 15th – elsewhere, there were five at Aldeburgh, 18th. Additional sightings of particular interest at Landguard during this period included 13 Short-eared Owls passing through the site during 11th October to 13th November, a peak of ten Black Redstarts, 19th October with three overwintering in December, Shore Lark, 6th to 14th October and up to three Firecrests in November.

Big flocks of sparrows, finches and buntings featured prominently in Suffolk in December 1986. Up to 400 House Sparrows were noted on 10th at Sroughton Beet Factory Pits where on 26th as many as 350 Bramblings were present – these latter birds also frequented Chantry Park, Ipswich at this time. The year's largest gathering of Tree Sparrows was of 120, Lakenheath, 21st. The small reedbed in Chantry Park was used as a roost site by up

to 340 European Greenfinches during the month, while on the Orwell Estuary saltings at Levington as many as 300 Twite were present, 7th. On the coast, the Sudbourne/Orfordness area held 130 Snow Buntings, 20th.

Wryneck an unexpected laggard

A completely unexpected late summer migrant was the Eurasian Wryneck at Benacre, 6th to 8th November – this remains as the species' latest-ever recorded date in Suffolk. Other notably late migrants included a Common Swift, Kessingland, 31st October with what was possibly the same bird at Lowestoft, 7th November; single Barn Swallows at both Minsmere and Benacre, 6th December; House Martin, Walberswick, 6th December; Ring Ouzel, Landguard, 20th November and Garden Warbler, Landguard, 6th November. Another record breaker was the first-winter Yellow Wagtail discovered at a small sewage farm at Holbrook Bay, 27th December that remained there into 1987 – this is the first recorded attempt by this species to overwinter in Suffolk.

Finally, sightings of general interest including an adult Red-breasted Goose, initially present in the Gedgrave/Havergate area, on 16th and 17th November, then it moved south to Falkenham where it created much excitement amongst the birding community from 25th November onwards into 1987. Unfortunately its close association with Canada Geese and eventual over-summering meant that it was classified as being an escapee. Elsewhere, a Ruddy Duck was on the sea off Felixstowe, 11th November and a Bearded Tit was present in the small reedbed in Chantry Park, Ipswich, 2nd to 4th December. Perhaps the most unexpected behavioural sighting was of a Eurasian Treecreeper noted bathing in a puddle on a road at Cavenham 9th December; having bathed, it hopped across the asphalt surface before ascending a roadside tree.

Thrushes all at sea: a striking migration spectacle

On 13th October 2011 I spent five hours at Thorpeness sea-watching and during my stay I saw a variety of seabirds. I was using a 30X scope and 10x40 binoculars. The weather was mainly overcast, with a few sunny spells breaking through occasionally. Winds were light, south-easterly perhaps about 5-7mph. I noticed a number of groups of passerines coming in from the east during the sea watch and these were mainly, Skylarks and Meadow Pipits.

Individual Fieldfares and Redwings were also seen throughout the stay. These birds however, appeared to be finding it difficult to reach land. The first bird I picked out was at a considerable distance from the shore and although I initially considered it to be a passerine, I became confused when it landed on the water and sat bobbing about. The first thought was I was actually watching a petrel sp. This idea was soon dashed when it lifted off with some difficulty and regained its pursuit of the coast. Eventually it revealed itself as a thrush sp.

Predators intervene

As it got closer I could see it more clearly and realised I was watching a Fieldfare. Its flight was very hesitant and close to the sea and it was obviously in difficulty. The bird's circumstances changed quite dramatically

when it was about 100yds offshore and it was attacked by four Herring Gulls which harried it and hit it repeatedly with their bills. The Fieldfare swerved and dipped continuously and eventually out-flew its assailants and made it to the beach flying up and over the cliff.

Throughout my day thrushes appeared at infrequent intervals and all sighting involved only lone birds, both Redwings and Fieldfares in similar difficulties. The second bird I noted was not as fortunate as the Fieldfare and was seen to disappear in a flurry of gull wings about 500yds out – presumably taken by one of the dozen attacking gulls. Other similar gatherings of gulls seemed to indicate more birds being taken further out to sea. Again and again I saw single birds dipping onto the sea and resting for 2 or 3 minutes, three or four times before they could make land. It appeared that they just could not fly anymore, but were finally able to muster the last drops of energy needed to make it ashore. One was taken by a juvenile Peregrine which I did not see approaching, but I watched it lift off the water with a Redwing firmly held and dispatched with repeated beak to head thrusts whilst flying strongly south. This falcon may also have been migrating and sustaining itself on its fellow travellers.

The last bird I saw landed on the water four times during its pursuit of the coastline and making its final leap for shore from about 15yds out. It looked like a very weak effort but, when it finally made it, it landed a few feet from the tide line where it sat motionless with eyes fully closed for over 30 minutes. I eventually walked down to the beach to check the bird out and it did not move as I approached. It was seemingly unaware of my presence at about 2 meters and I could have picked it up easily, but decided to leave it to its own devices.

An interesting spectacle

This scene presented an interesting spectacle of

visible migration and it was quite a surprising phenomenon, one I had not experienced before. I have talked to a number of Suffolk birders who had had similar sightings on the Suffolk coast, but none were in good weather. Why these birds were in such distress when the weather at least in Suffolk was good remains to be seen. Perhaps they had hit some poor weather much farther out at sea. That said, I assume that the pipits and larks presumably had experienced the same journey yet had been unaffected as many seemed to be approaching the coast from the same direction. It has been suggested to me that a possible answer as

to why the thrushes suffered more than the Larks and Pipits might have been due to their respective sizes – the larger birds having to expend more energy output to make their sea crossing. The gulls and the Peregrine seemed to be essential parts of this snapshot of migration and took clear advantage of the easy prey.

The pure exhaustion of these birds landing on the sea so close to the shore provided quite a contrast to the many Redwings and Fieldfares I have seen migrating over my local patch in mid-Suffolk this October.

News

Minsmere hide improvements

As some of you were aware the Island Mere Hide was recently closed for replacement. The new hide, which is part of the Minsmere Discover Nature Project, is planned to be complete by the time you read this. It will be all on one level – equivalent to the old hide's upper level – and will be eight metres further forward to improve views along the reed edge and up the ditches running east and west from the hide. The new hide will also have large deep windows to improve the all-round viewing and will be accessed via a longer ramp to ensure it is fully wheelchair accessible.

The EA sea defences project mentioned in the last issue is also progressing well. It is currently ahead of schedule, with the main body of work on the North Wall completed, as has work on the two cross bunds along the frontage. The contractors are presently working on the new sluice through the North Wall.

Lackford Bittern

Ian Goodall reported the first Bittern of the season on Wednesday afternoon (16th November) at Lackford. "It obligingly stayed in view for about 40 minutes before flying out of sight. But we did manage to capture it on film":

[Skulking Bittern on 23 November, shot using a Canon 50D and 100-400mm](#)



Announcements

Bill Stone

2012 Subscriptions Increased

From 1 January 2012 SOG Individual Membership will be £15.00 and SOG Family Membership will be £17.00. For those of you who hold joint membership of the Suffolk Naturalists' Society, individual joint membership will be £28.00 and family joint membership £32.00.

To join SOG or renew your membership, contact: The Membership Secretary, c/o 27 Draymans Way, Ipswich IP3 9JT

Gift Aid declaration form request from your Treasurer

SOG's claim to HM Revenue & Customs in respect of Gift Aid is in hand. At present for every £1 paid in membership fees SOG can claim an extra 28p by claiming Gift Aid. However, before a claim can be made against membership fees a Tax Declaration needs to be completed by the member. To date only 130 forms have been returned. As this is so potentially valuable to the Group I would, therefore urge all members who have not yet completed a SOG Gift Aid declaration form to do so. They are available for download on our SOG website or direct from me, my contact details are above.

Nick Mason

Don't Forget Your Insurance

This is just a little reminder to birders of the need to keep insurance policies up to date. The price of many optics have risen considerably and replacements, on a like-for-like basis, for many will be up in the thousands of pounds.

Recently I had to get a new pair of bins (Leica 10 X 42 HD) on insurance in October. To replace them with what is now the equivalent costs £1500. Because I hadn't increased their price on my insurance schedule I was only given the original cost. I will now have to fork out £800 to update.

Oh, and if that's not stupid enough, keep them round your neck and don't place your bins on top of the car when you are transferring from one to another!

Jean Garrod

A big thank you to Field Trip Leaders

Jean Garrod has asked me to convey her thanks to all of our trip leaders for their sterling efforts in supervising the 23 outdoor meeting SOG put on this year (and helping with the planning for 2012). For those of us who participate, they are a very valuable feature of the SOG programme and we all much appreciate the leaders' time and effort to make these trips as effective as they are. A big thank you to you all.

STOP PRESS

Gift Aid benefit

Over £1000 has now been received, providing a very valuable financial cushion to SOG. Well-done Bill.

Landing Bittern, shot with a Canon 1DMk 3 and Sigma 150-500mm



Christmas Wordsearch

Find 40 common Scottish birds; the vagrant rail (if found) should not be included. Letters may be used more than once, but birds can only be found up or down, backwards or

forwards, not diagonally. The unused letters taken in order, left to right, top to bottom, give the name of a mountain in north-west Scotland. Please send the list of 40 birds alphabetically and the name of the Scottish mountain to the Editor by 31st January 2012.

The first correct answer drawn from a hat will receive a book token prize.

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| A | D | R | A | Z | Z | U | B | L | A | C | K | C | A | P | J |
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Bill Baston (front cover, colour supplement #1 & page 17), Chris Darby (colour supplement #4), Andrew Easton (colour supplement #4), Jon Evans (page 2 & colour supplement #1), Ian Goodall (pages 22 & 23), David Hermon (page 3 and colour supplement #2 & #3), James Kennerley (colour supplement #4), Jonathan Lawley (back cover), Nigel Odin (page 8), Pat Rolph (page 5), Barry Woodhouse (pages 10 and 12) and Lee Woods (colour supplement #1 & #4)

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Bird Recorders

North East Area Recorder:

Andrew Green, 17 Cherrywood, HARLESTON, Norfolk IP20 9LP
Tel: 07766 900063 Email: andrew@waveney1.fsnet.co.uk

South East Area Recorder:

Scott Mayson, 8 St Edmunds Close, Springfields, WOODBRIDGE IP12 4UY
Tel: 01394 385595 Email: smsuffolkbirder@gmail.com

West Area Recorder:

Colin Jakes, 7 Maltwood Avenue, BURY ST EDMUNDS IP33 3XN
Tel: 01284 702215 colin@jakes.myzen.co.uk



Suffolk Ornithologists' Group

Who we are and what we do

As an independent Group, SOG provides a network and a voice for birdwatchers in the county. Administered by Suffolk birdwatchers, for Suffolk's birdwatchers, this Group keeps birders in touch with what is going on and with each other.

Through the Group's Council, SOG has links with other naturalist and conservation organisations throughout the region.



Trips and meetings

SOG organises an extensive programme of field meetings – an opportunity for members, young or old, novice or expert, to see birds and to share camaraderie with fellow enthusiasts.

Indoor meetings are also arranged in Ipswich with quality speakers entertaining members with stories of birds and birdwatching, both local and from around the world.

Media

The Group has a strong web presence with www.sogonline.org.uk. The site is regularly updated and is chock full of sightings news and photography.



The Group's magazine, *The Harrier*, is published quarterly and keeps members in touch with what's going on – providing a mixture of articles about birds, conservation, reserves, organisations and people.

Once a year the Group and its team, with the support of the Suffolk Naturalists' Society, publish the Suffolk Birds report.

Protecting birds

SOG organises and promotes surveys and projects about the birds of Suffolk and provides an opportunity for members to participate. SOG is also able to support worthwhile projects through bursaries.

Membership of SOG is open to anyone with an interest in the birds of Suffolk.

About birds and birding – for birders

www.sogonline.org.uk