

# BIRDING NEWSLETTER

Ely & District U3A Birdwatching Group



## Planning Team

Graham Cole  
Sean Greenway  
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## Forthcoming Events

### 25th February Soham Lode

(Sean & Sue)

### 15th March The Brecks

(Graham & Babs)

## Happy New Year!

January 14th

Dear Birdwatchers,

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2022 and let's hope this year will be a better one for us all.

Our first outing of the year was on 10th January and unfortunately I couldn't join. Graham Cole led the outing to Titchwell and was supported by Babs York. Babs has kindly written a lovely report on the day at Titchwell and compiled a list of birds seen. Sean Greenway was the photographer of the day and provided some lovely pictures.

It came to my attention that some of the newer members of the birding group may not be aware of our WhatsApp "Ely U3A Bird Alerts". We set this up just over two years ago and members can send messages to the others in the group, if they see a rare/unusual bird. This has proved to be a very fast and reliable way of sharing information amongst the group.

For example, last Friday Babs York pinged a green-winged teal at Ely beet pits and Sean Greenway went over the next day and took this picture.



If you have WhatsApp and would like to join the "Ely U3A Bird Alerts" group, then please send a request to me by email together with your mobile phone number and I will add you to the group.

Enjoy your birding! Nigel

## From Babs York - 10th January, RSPB Titchwell

We kicked off the 2022 programme of events with a visit to Titchwell; with optional early start at Thornham harbour, led by Graham Cole and me. Although it was a dull day weatherwise, that could not be said of the birding or the group. The following gives a flavour of our day.

Eight keen birders braved the rather chilly temperatures at Thornham at 8.45 to see what this area had to offer. Both meadow and rock pipits greeted us with their high-pitched calls. A couple of sky larks flew over and landed on the road and reed buntings foraged in the low vegetation. The air was filled with the rippling calls of curlew, with birds all around us and I hadn't even got my boots on yet!



Golden Plover

We walked up to the bank to view the partially flooded field behind the sea-wall. A good selection and number of waders and duck were present including golden plover, black-tailed godwit, lapwing, curlew, teal and wigeon. The first marsh harriers of the day appeared and they continued to do this throughout the day. A male stonechat hunted from advantage points along the fence. We

turned our attention to the muddy creeks and saltmarsh. Brent geese delighted with their rolling, guttural calls, the first of many seen throughout the day. Grey plover, bar-tailed godwit and ringed plover fed quietly, whilst red-breasted mergansers played hide and seek in the narrow channels of water. The large flock of linnets was flighty and we did our best to find something else in with them, but in the end concluded they were all linnets.

We met up with the rest of the group at 10.00 at Titchwell's visitor centre. Graham cracked the whip and we got down to some serious birding straight away, fortunately I'd managed to grab a quick coffee to warm me up. There were a couple of bramblings with a large flock of goldfinches, but they were rather tricky to get good views of and very mobile. Every time I got my scope on one, it moved. They were feeding on the alder cones in and around the feeding station. Chaffinches and a few greenfinches were doing likewise, as the feeders seemed to be dominated by some very chubby grey squirrels. A couple of goldcrests were distracting and then a call of "water rail" had the pied piper effect. We watched the rail poking about in the ditch at the back of the feeders, its red bill bright in the gloom. Then the brambling landed on the feeding table briefly giving good, if brief views. Eventually we had to tear ourselves away from the centre and make our way along the path towards the sea. The fresh-marsh contained many of the birds we had already seen. We scanned through the common snipe, but couldn't find a jack. A sparrowhawk shot by, but didn't seem to flush the birds. Avocets waded in the deeper water, oystercatchers rested on the islands and tufted ducks dived for food. The newly shaped banks held hundreds of waders, showing that the work done in 2021 has proved well worth it. There were brief views of bearded tits, but the calling Cetti's warbler was well hidden. Dunlin and redshank worked the island edges, while we watched some pink-footed geese in flight. Grey heron, little and great white egrets were sparse, often partially hidden in the marsh and reedbeds.



Brambling

We reached the dunes an hour or so before high tide. Birds in flight included red-throated and great northern divers and a fulmar. A raft of c40 goldeneye bobbed about and 2 Slavonian grebes took some work to find. We walked along the beach to try for better views, but a boat had disturbed them. Shag, more red-breasted mergansers and great crested grebes were also on the sea together with several grey seals and a couple of porpoises. Along the shore were sanderling, turnstone and a single knot as well as waders encountered earlier. As we were heading back along the beach, a call of “purple sandpiper” alerted us to the bird which had joined the wader group. Most only got brief views before it took flight and headed inland. Fortunately, it had settled on the brackish marsh and then gave excellent views. We headed back to the centre for a late lunch and a much-needed hot drink.



Red-breasted Merganser

After the break we walked the East Trail of the reserve and around the woodland. More tits were seen mainly long-tailed with a few blue and great. Gadwall was the commonest duck on the pool, whilst robins made the most of the disturbance caused by us visitors. Distant pink-footed geese were seen grazing on an inland field. Wrens busied themselves in the undergrowth, popping up every now and then to make a claim on their territory. Great spotted woodpecker and dunnock were seen. A few bullfinches gave themselves up, the males in their bubble-gum pink attire looking ready for the breeding season. As the light was now fading fast, we called it a day and made our way to the car park. As we changed out of our rather muddy boots, a song thrush sang from a hidden perch reminding us that although spring is a few weeks away for us, for our native birds, nest-building is just around the corner.



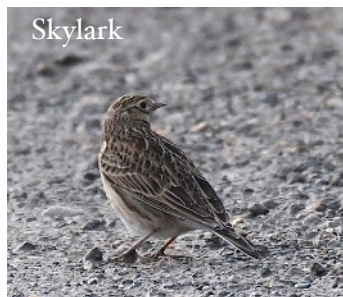
Purple Sandpiper



Black-tailed Godwit



Water Rail



Skylark



Curlew

**Bird List 10<sup>th</sup> January- Thornham Harbour and Titchwell Marsh RSPB- Ely u3a Birding Group**

Red throated diver	Pheasant	Meadow pipit
Great northern diver	Water rail	Rock pipit
Little grebe	Moorhen	Pied wagtail
Great crested grebe	Coot	Wren
Slavonian grebe	Oystercatcher	Dunnock
Fulmar	Avocet	Robin
Cormorant	Ringed plover	Stonechat
Shag	Golden plover	Blackbird
Great white egret	Grey plover	Song thrush (H)
Little egret	Lapwing	Mistle thrush (H)
Grey heron	Knot	Cetti's warbler (H)
Mute swan	Sanderling	Goldcrest
Pink footed goose	Purple sandpiper	Bearded tit
Greylag goose	Dunlin	Long tailed tit
	Common snipe	Blue tit
Brent goose	Black tailed godwit	Great tit
Shelduck	Bat tailed godwit	Magpie
Wigeon	Curlew	Carrion crow
Gadwall	Redshank	Starling
Teal	Turnstone	Chaffinch
Mallard	Black headed gull	Brambling
Pintail	Common gull	Greenfinch
Shoveler	Lesser black-backed gull	Goldfinch
Tufted duck	Herring gull	Linnet
Goldeneye	Great black-backed gull	Bullfinch
Red breasted merganser	Woodpigeon	Reed bunting
Marsh harrier	Collared dove	
Sparrowhawk	Great spotted woodpecker	<b>Mammals</b>
Buzzard	Skylark	Grey seal
		Porpoise



## From Sean Greenway

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Sue and I took advantage of the University Lecturer strike by visiting Abberton before picking our daughter up for a long weekend. Although it was sunny, it was very cold and windy. If you look at the photos in a refrigerated wind tunnel, you will get the full experience. A lot of the birds on the water were sheltering in the bank. There were large rafts of coots, tufted, pochard (and red-crested pochard) in the banks and egrets sheltering against the wind. Abberton has lots of sites, there were Bewick swans at one end and red-necked and Slavonian grebe at the other. They were visible in the far distance and without Sue's scope I would have missed them. Travelling to the older causeway we passed cattle fields that had 4 cattle egrets flying around. There was a good number of waders, redshank, ruff, lapwing and black-tailed godwits. The occasional peregrine put the birds up, so it was quite hard to keep track.

