

# BIRDING NEWSLETTER

Ely & District U3A Birdwatching Group



## Planning Team

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## Forthcoming Events

### 25th February Soham Lode

(Sean & Sue)

### 15th March The Brecks

(Graham & Babs)

### 26th April Fingringhoe & Abberton Res'

(Sean & Sue)

### 3rd May Wicken Fen & Kingfisher Bridge

(Tony & Nigel)

### 8th June Titchmarsh

(Babs & Graham)

## Big Garden Birdwatch!

23rd January

Dear Birdwatchers,

It's that time of the year again, from 28th to 30th January is the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch. You don't have to be a member to take part and all you need to do is sit for one hour and observe what birds visit your garden. If you look up RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch on the internet, you can find out how to take part and how to report your findings. It's a good way to help the RSPB find out which birds are doing well and which are in decline.

Some good news was sent in by Babs York, who asked me to share it with you all through the newsletter. The Global Bird Fair at Rutland Water have announced they will hold an event this year. They have put out a twitter feed saying the event is going ahead at a new location with new sponsors and will be held from 15th - 17th July. You can see the announcement here:

<https://twitter.com/Rutlandbirds/status/1483723380671098884?t=n9cxVjBpWsNdyJp4jADUKQ&s=09>

I spent this Christmas and New Year in Germany and it was nice to see an interesting variety of birds in the garden. The house is in the countryside, about 580 meters above sea level and surrounded by pine forests. On arrival I filled the bird feeders, but it took about three to four days before the local birds cottoned on to a new source of food. After that I was filling them up every day. There was a good variety of tits and apart from the usual gangs of blue and great tits, I had marsh and coal tits as well. There were plenty of chaffinches, nuthatches and a number of bullfinches. In fact the highest count I had was four bullfinches at one time. For the first time ever I had a male & female tree sparrow feeding at the same time. Not only did we have the small birds, but a jay was a regular visitor and on several days we had a great spotted woodpecker having a good go at the fat balls.

Enjoy your birding! Nigel

## From Sean Greenway

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With the New Year and starting the lists from scratch, Sue and I tried to get the list going with a few trips out. We went to Welney, but a lot of the site was flooded, so could only really use the main hide. The tree sparrows, whooper swans and usual suspects were in good view. Dunlin were running amongst the other waders, mostly lapwing and black-tailed godwits.

Next we tried Kingfisher Bridge. The view from the mound didn't show much without a really good scope. Fortunately the woodlands had loads of birds to see, including chiffchaff, greenfinch, wren and treecreepers.

We went to Wicken Fen in the evening to see the hen and marsh harriers come in to roost. After a very cold wait we saw a male hen harriers coming in, with a barn owl in the distance. We even had a sparrowhawk flying across at one point.

Another opportunity to go to Abberton came up, so off we went. Abberton is always a good place to see interesting arrivals. There were Bewick, goosander, a male juvenile smew, red kite, red-throated diver and a teal/Baikal hybrid. There was even a field with eight cattle egrets in amongst the sheep. If you ever get the chance to go there, it's well worth the journey.



Short wellies are too short



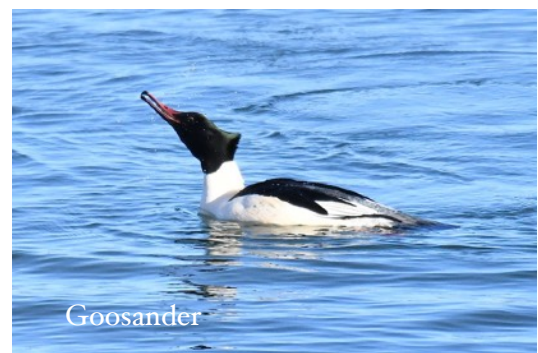
Tree Sparrows



Snipe



Teal Hybrid



Goosander



Kestrels



Scaup



Chiffchaff



Redshank



Smew

## From Babs York - Brambling Delight

On a quiet Sunday morning I was very glad to be interrupted from my dull admin tasks by the phone. The call was about resolving a tricky bat rescue and release situation which was making my brain hurt. But whenever I'm on the phone, I get up from the desk and wander to look out of the kitchen window to see what's happening in the garden. On this occasion I saw a small bird dash across the garden and land in the weigela next to the pond; "hang on" I said and dropped the phone. I picked up the binoculars that are permanently next to the window. I got a brief view of a brown coloured chiffchaff in the sun, which then dropped into the water for the quickest of splashes and then back into the bush before disappearing over the garden hedge into my neighbour's garden. I quietly opened the back door and listened, but couldn't see or hear it. "Sorry about that" I said to my caller, "was it a good bird?" she said- she knows me quite well!

After the call was over, I spent a few minutes scanning the garden for any sign of the warbler, but without success. Just as I was about to return to the admin, I saw another bird that looked interesting, but by this time I was looking directly into the sun. I hoped it was going to come closer and lower to the feeders. After a lot of flicking about in the birches it shyly approached nearer to the feeders. It was a female brambling and I was delighted as I hadn't seen one in the



garden for a few years. There were numerous chaffinches, greenfinches and goldfinches gorging themselves and the brambling timidly hid in the ivy, repeatedly dropping down to feed on the food falling from the feeders on to the ground, and back up to her safe perch. I managed to get a record shot as she waited for more food to drop. I smiled to myself, as I thought of the difficulty we had on our recent trip to Titchwell trying to get good views of the brambling. Since then she's been feeding, drinking and bathing in the garden most days, but always being rather secretive in her movements.

