

# BIRDING NEWSLETTER

Ely & District U3A Birdwatching Group



## Planning Team

Graham Cole  
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Mavis Middleton  
Nigel Puttergill  
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## Forthcoming Events

### 21st February

Deeping Lakes / Nene Washes  
(Graham & Sue)

### 13th March

Sculthorpe Moor (Nigel & Graham)

### 11th April

Monks Wood (Babs & Sue)

### 28th April

Lakenheath / Maids Cross  
(Babs & Graham)

### 17th May

Snettisham & Dersingham  
(Babs & Graham)

## Swan feed!

7th February

Dear Birdwatchers,

We had a good turnout for our trip to Welney on Monday including three new members. Hopefully, they were not disappointed as we did manage to spot 76 different species of birds.

A big thank you to Sean Greenway for supporting me on this field trip and for organising a pre-meeting visit to Pymoor Railway bridge, which was just down the road.

At one o'clock we gathered in the Welney WWT cafe for a hot drink and snack, before going out on the reserve. Despite the mist and fog in the morning, the afternoon was absolutely splendid with a clear sky and a feeling that Spring might be coming soon.

As our group comprised of 25 members and the reserve was pretty busy with lots of visitors (including a bus load of 48 from the RSPB), we decided to split into two groups, one led by Sean and the other by myself.

Sean started off at the main hide, while I marched the other group to the furthest hide on the site. Fortunately, by splitting into two groups the hides were not too crowded and everyone could get a good view of the reserve. Sean moved his group hide-by-hide towards our group and we moved slowly back towards the main hide for the big event of the day, the "Swan Feed".

Unfortunately there were not too many swans on the reserve, as during the day they fly off to the local fields to feed off the remnants of the beet crop. They usually return at dusk to roost for the night, so if you want to see large numbers of swans, it is best to go to one of the weekend floodlight feeds at 18:30. Despite the small number of swans, we did manage

to see all three main species - the mute, the whooper and the Bewick. The latter being the rarest and most sought after.

We couldn't have asked for better weather and the reserve looked splendid with sunlight reflecting off the water. The icing on the cake was the close sighting of a barn owl hunting over the field behind the reserve centre at the end of our day and the distant "brown blob", which was a short-eared owl. A lovely end to a perfect day.

Below are some pictures taken by Sean Greenway on the day and a picture of whooper swans landing on the reserver that I took on my recce last Friday.

Enjoy your birding! Nigel



Kestrel



Pochard



Barn Owl



Chiffchaff

## From Babs York - Operation Turtle Dove

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On Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> February at 8pm Bethany Kiamilo from the RSPB will be giving a talk on **Operation Turtle Dove**. This talk is part of the Haddenham Conservation Society's 2023 programme and will be held in the Arkenstall Centre, 7 Station Road, CB6 3XD. Members free and non-members £2.50 including a cuppa. Rachel will describe how the RSPB aims to reverse the fortunes of the fastest declining bird in the UK. Come along and show a little love for our most beautiful member of dove family. Usually includes an unofficial adjournment to the Three Kings pub too.

Annual membership of the Haddenham Conservation Society is £7 and includes a year's worth of excellent talks and newsletters.

## From Sean Greenway

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Sue and I went to Eldernel to try and get the owls seen there. We had tried to go to Holkham the day before, but the potholes at Queens Adelaide took out two of my tyres so we had to go home. Sue went to Eldernel whilst I got the car sorted, but we went back next day thanks to Graham's directions. We had great views of the owls, as well as red kites and a kingfisher. Unfortunately the wind and clouds made photography difficult, but we got the owls. We went to Welney to see how the floods are getting on and all the paths are still closed. We did see a spoonbill fighting a strong headwind but there's so much water there the birds are well spread out.



Tawny Owl



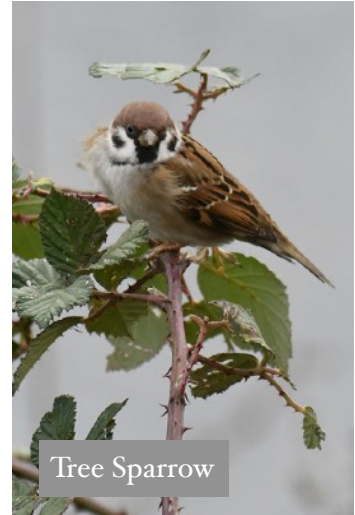
Short-Eared Owl



Long-Eared Owl



Mallard



Tree Sparrow