

The Birds of Whitlingham & Thorpe 2014



Compiled by James Emerson

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Get in touch

I would welcome any comments, corrections or constructive criticisms about this report. These can be sent to me, along with any sightings for inclusion in the 2015 report, by emailing: whitlinghambirds@yahoo.co.uk.

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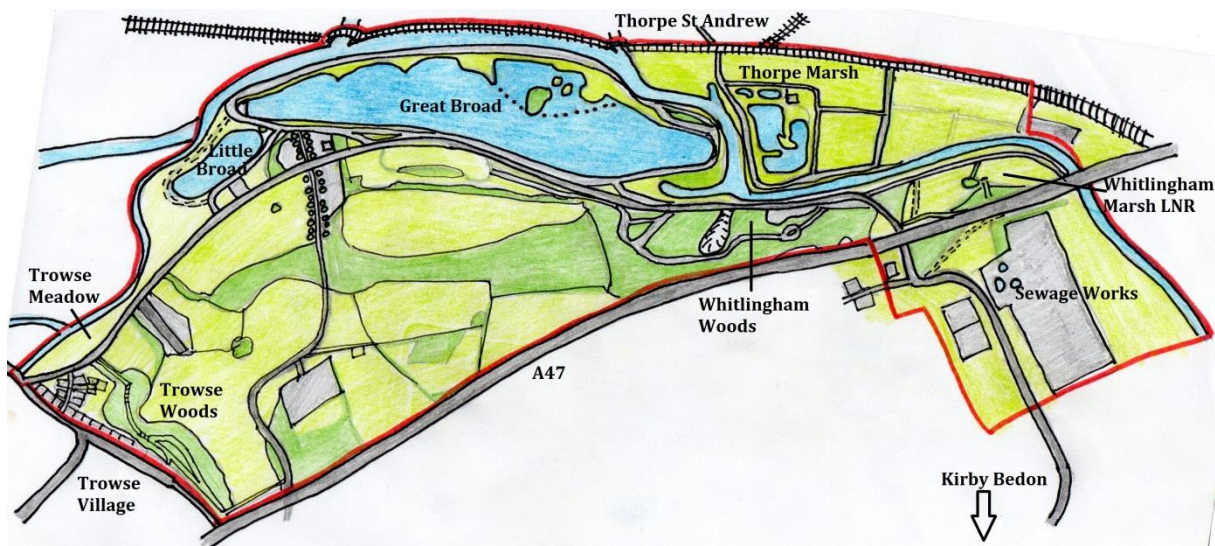
The Booted Eagle illustration is copyright © David Bryant 2014.

Introduction

This is a record of the bird species reported from the Whitlingham area (including Thorpe Marshes NWT reserve) during 2014. These areas are treated together for reasons mentioned in previous reports. It should be noted that this bird report is independent from any of the organisations that manages these sites, notably the Broads Authority, Whitlingham Charitable Trust, Norfolk Wildlife Trust and South Norfolk Council. A map of the Whitlingham recording area can be found below.

Local observers may be interested to note that from 1st January 2015 Norfolk has a new bird recorder, Chris Allen. Use of the BTO's BirdTrack system is being encouraged for submitting sightings of birds in Norfolk (county/national rarities will still also require specific forms as before). Another development since the previous Whitlingham Bird Report is a number of changes to the systematic order of the British list, notably separating the falcons from the other birds of prey. These changes are described in more detail later in this report.

The majority of the sightings described in this report have been made by the author or by other local observers, however sightings reported through the internet or bird news providers have been included for completeness. Therefore all sightings are reported 'as is'. Where a scarce species has been photographed or seen by several observers this is noted in the text. Any observer lucky enough to find a species at Whitlingham that is a county rarity is asked to send a description to the [Norfolk Records Committee](#), who will publish their verdict in the Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report 2014, to be published in autumn 2015.



The Whitlingham Recording area, comprising of Whitlingham C.P, Trowse Meadows, Trowse Woods, Whitlingham Marsh, Whitlingham Sewage Works, Thorpe Marsh NWT and Crown Point Estate land north of the A47.

Movements of a Whitlingham Cuckoo

James Emerson

Abstract

The BTO are currently electronically tagging Cuckoos as part of a European project to learn about their migratory routes to and from Africa. One of these Cuckoos, Skinner, was tagged at Whitlingham Sewage Treatment Works in June 2013 and returned to the Whitlingham area in summer 2014. The movements of Skinner and the other Cuckoos are shown on a dedicated part of the BTO website (<http://www.bto.org/science/migration/tracking-studies/cuckoo-tracking>), offering an unprecedented opportunity to observe both the migration and the local movements of a bird from the Whitlingham Recording Area.

The scheme

Cuckoos are one of a number of migratory birds that have shown a steady decline in recent years. Whilst their behaviour and habitat in the UK has been studied, little is known about the routes taken on migration and stopping-off areas in Africa. Traditional ringing approaches can provide data about presence at a particular site, but do not identify the route taken between ringing sites. The number of ringed migratory birds that are subsequently re-controlled is also very low. Tracking birds has been limited in the past by the size, weight and battery charge of potential tags, but this changed with the recent development of small electronic tags weighing only around 5g. These tags, known as Platform Transmitter Terminals (PTTs) can transmit the position of the bird for a period of 10 hours before going into 'sleep-mode' for 48 hours, during which they recharge using solar power. PTTs operate using satellites, and are accurate to within around 500m.

Early data from the project

The first five Cuckoos in this scheme were tagged in May 2011. After leaving the UK three of them headed to Italy before flying south through Africa, whilst the other two flew south-west to Spain and tracked along the west coast of Africa. The varying routes are illustrated in Figure 1. All five Cuckoos survived the journey, ending up in the Congo rainforest.

Another nine Cuckoos were tagged in 2012, but many either died on route or the tags stopped working. Most of the Cuckoos took the Italian route, with one going through Spain and one taking an eastern path, migrating via Greece.

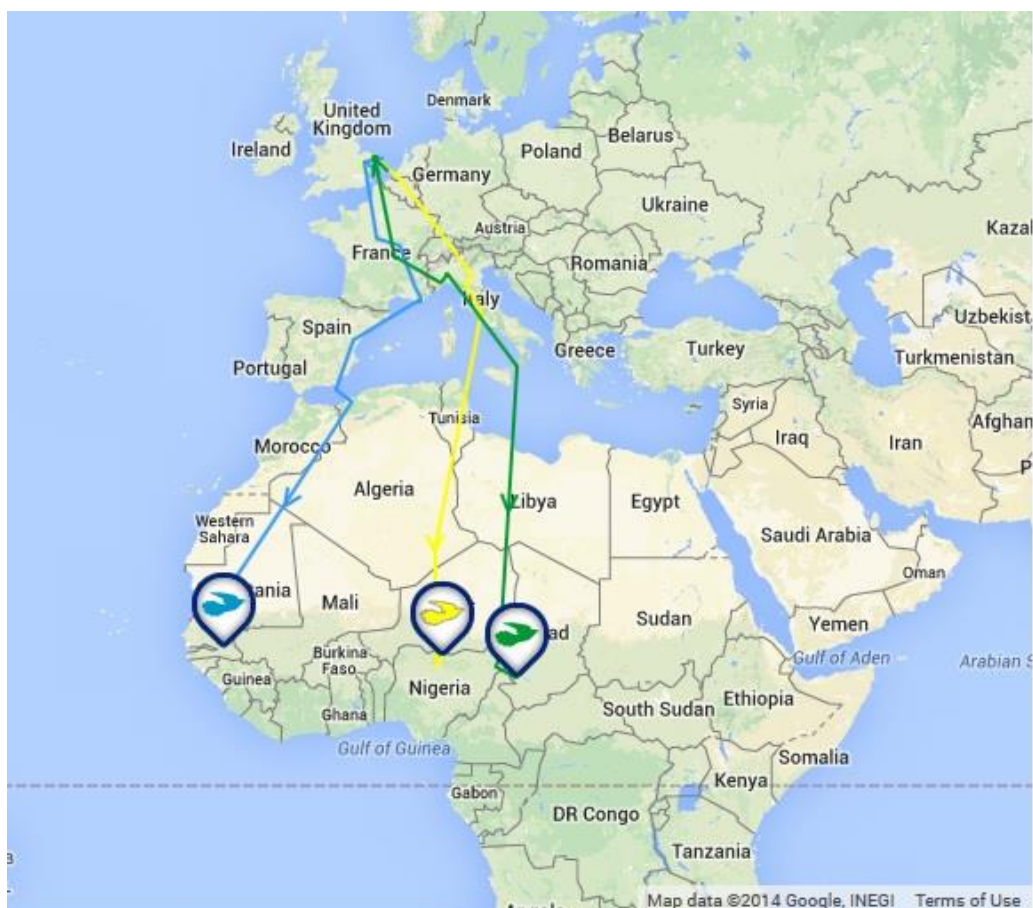


Figure 1 – Migratory routes taken by Cuckoos in 2011 (Blue = Clement, Yellow = Kasper, Green = Martin)

Skinner, the Whitlingham Cuckoo

Autumn migration 2013

Several of the tagged Cuckoos have been caught in Norfolk, but the focus of this article is an adult male Cuckoo, number 128302, named “Skinner” after Chris Skinner, a farmer and conservationist at the nearby High Ash Farm (Chris is also a regular contributor to Radio Norfolk’s wildlife hour programme). Skinner was caught at Whitlingham Marsh near the sewage treatment works on 2nd June 2013 (see Figure 2). A month after being tagged Skinner left the UK, being detected on 2nd July in the Netherlands. Skinner remained in the Netherlands for around a week, departing on 10th July, flying through France and into Spain. After a prolonged period in Spain (until 7th August), the Cuckoo flew into Africa, spending August in Algeria, Mali, Burkino Faso, Niger and Nigeria.

In September Skinner headed west back into Niger, possibly as a result of poor feeding conditions in Nigeria. He remained here until 28th September before heading back into Nigeria. This time Skinner continued through, arriving in Cameroon. Skinner remained in Cameroon for two weeks, reaching the Congo rainforest in North-east Gabon by 25th October. He moved across the border into Congo, staying another two weeks, before

heading further south to Angola. On 18th November Skinner broke the record for the furthest south a tagged UK Cuckoo has reached. Skinner remained in Angola into the new year. This route is plotted on Figure 3.



Figure 2 - Skinner the Cuckoo having been fitted with the electronic tag. Photo courtesy of and copyright Chris Hewson/BTO.

Spring migration 2014

In the first half of January Skinner began moving quickly north, covering over 1200km as he travelled out of Angola, through Gabon and into Cameroon. This early momentum was not sustained, as by the middle of February Skinner had actually travelled 250km southwards, back into Gabon. The next migratory step came on 18th March when he flew north to Togo. During the 9.75 hours the tag was transmitting Skinner travelled 500km, an average speed of 51kmph! He continued northwards over the next couple of weeks, going through the Ivory Coast, Mauritania, Mali, Algeria and Morocco before arriving back in Europe on 7th April. After moving up through Spain and France, Skinner arrived back in the UK on 21st April, and after a rest stop near Northampton he arrived back at Whitlingham on 22nd April.

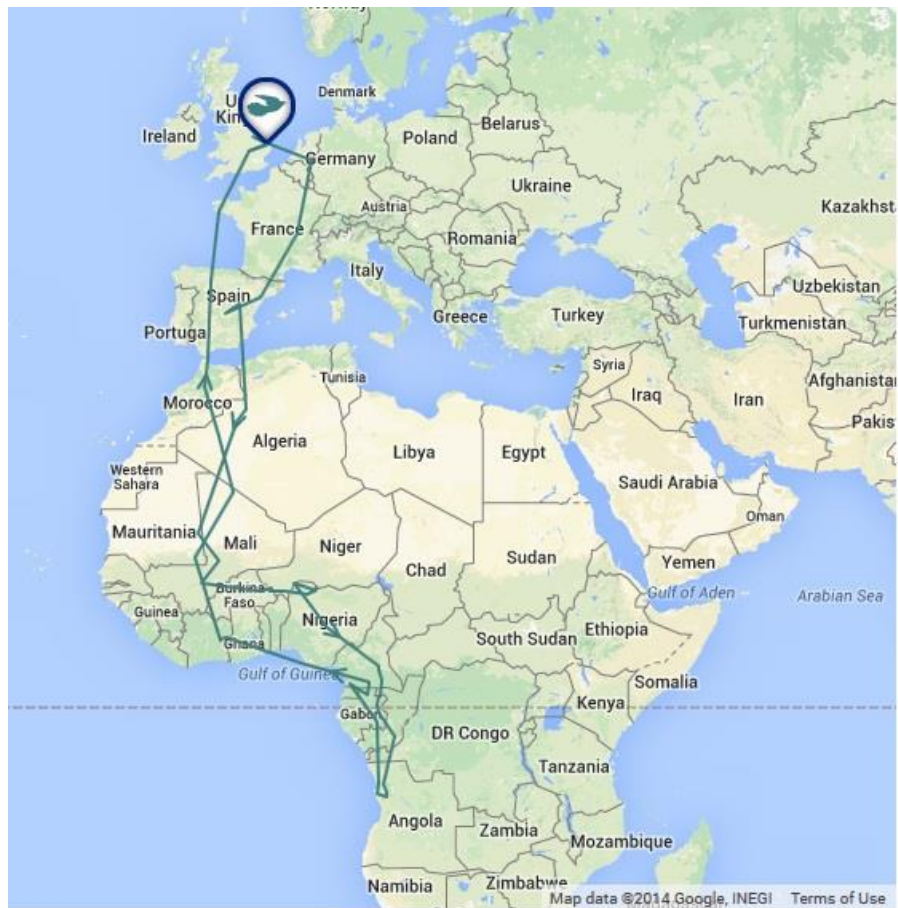


Figure 3 – Migration route of Skinner in Autumn 2013 and Spring 2014

UK movements

One of the most interesting things about Skinner's satellite traces in the two months that he was present in Norfolk was the constant movements. Skinner spent most of the time in the Whitlingham area, creating a veritable spider's web of lines on the satellite-tracking map. He also made numerous other short-distance movements around the area. At the start of May Skinner was particularly active, flying to Eaton, before heading back to the sewage works and then south on a one-day trip to Bungay. For the rest of the month Skinner spent most time around Whitlingham, with a trip to Surlingham on the 17th and several short trips south-west of Norwich later in May.

In June a flight to the Hemblington area (north-west of Norwich) on the 9th was the only significant journey in the first three weeks of the month. On the 23rd Skinner left Whitlingham for the last time this year, moving near to Filby in the broads, then on to Halvergate on the next day and next to Freethorpe. After that it was across the channel to France.

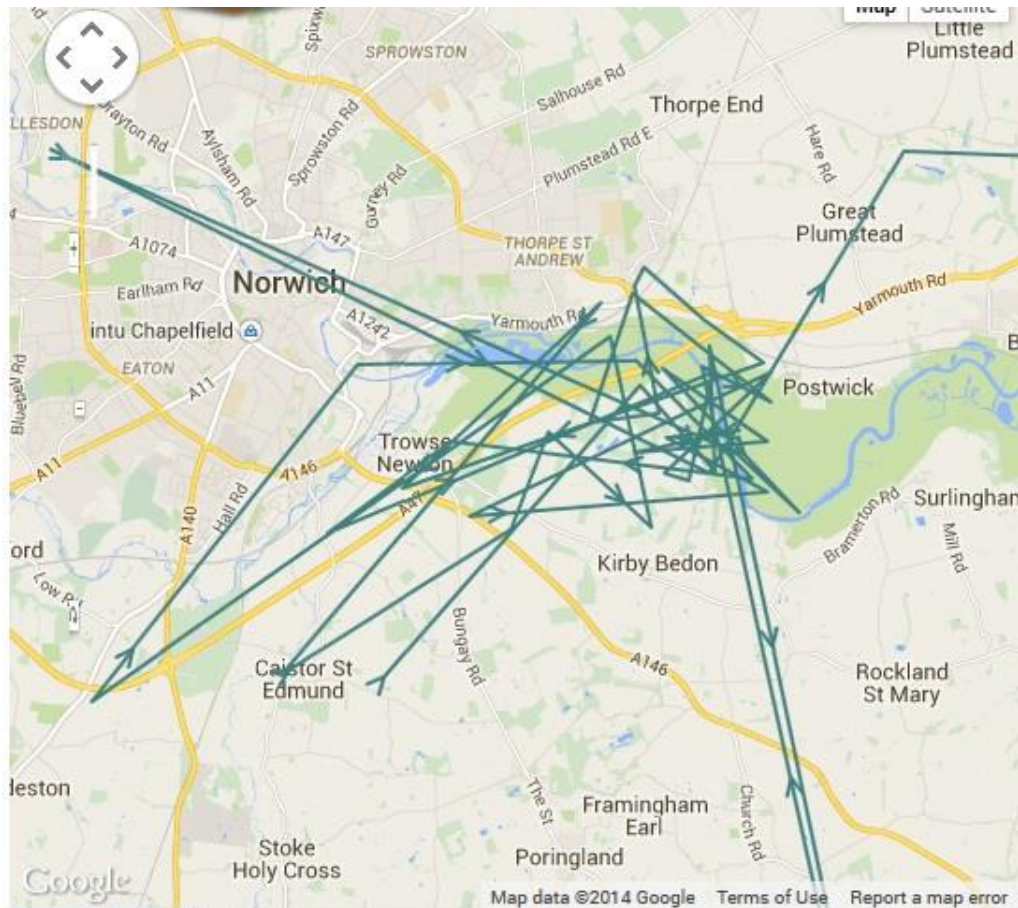


Figure 4 – The key movements of Skinner during summer 2014

Autumn migration 2014

Skinner left the UK at the end of June, and was recorded in France on the 30th. A week later he had headed on to Spain, apparently choosing the same route as the previous year. Skinner remained in Spain until 30th July, then in the next few days migrated southwards through Africa, reaching Mali on 2nd August. Two weeks later he was in Niger, moving on a fortnight later into Nigeria. From here Skinner continued south, reaching western Cameroon by the start of October. By the 17th October Skinner had flown through Congo and reached Angola, close to the area where he wintered in 2013. This route is shown in Figure 5.

Skinner's tag last transmitted data at the start of November. This doesn't necessarily mean that he is deceased (provided the tag was still above ground it would transmit a stationary location). It could be that the tag stopped working, or that there wasn't enough light to recharge the solar batteries. If you see a Cuckoo at Whitlingham in 2015, please check for a transmitter on its back – it could just be Skinner.

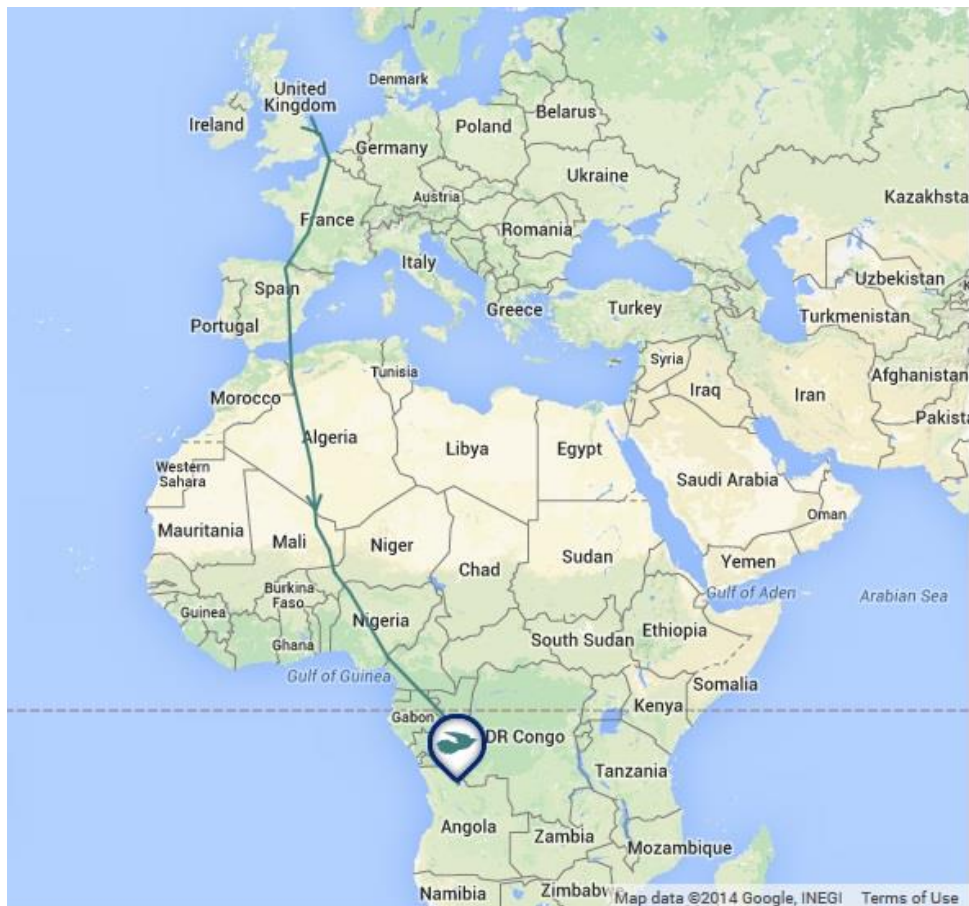


Figure 5 – The route Skinner took after leaving Norfolk in autumn 2014

Finding out more and getting involved.

This Cuckoo tracking project is ongoing. In addition to the initial cost of £2500 to buy the electronic tags, the satellites used to track the Cuckoos are effectively rented (another £60 per month), so the more money that is raised, the more work can be done. Any of the tagged Cuckoos can be followed on the BTO Cuckoos Blog [here](#), and there are also details should you wish to donate to the project. If you choose to sponsor a Cuckoo you will receive email updates on its progress. The BTO also carry out a range of other surveys, so if Cuckoos aren't your thing why not see if there are any other projects that you could help with?

Acknowledgements

This article is wholly based on data provided by the BTO's Cuckoo tracking project. Many thanks to the Paul Stancliffe and the BTO for allowing me to use their data to write this article, and for providing the photo of Skinner.

Some more ringed Black-headed Gulls at Whitlingham

James Emerson

Introduction

An article in last year's Whitlingham Bird Report set out the origins of a number of ringed Black-headed Gulls seen at Whitlingham in 2013, and briefly discussed how they fitted in with ring recoveries from elsewhere in Norfolk. This short article updates this data with records of the ringed Black-headed Gulls seen at Whitlingham during 2014. Many thanks to James Appleton for supplying much of the data, and to the various ringers involved.

2014 ringed Black-headed Gull records

Ring number	Date seen	Place ringed	Date ringed	Distance travelled/Km	Seen previously?
White J5JR	01/01/14	Oslo, NORWAY	06/09/12	996	Yes (2013)
ST272401	02/01/14	Eura, FINLAND	24/06/09	1560	No
ST109275	28/01/14	Kustavi, FINLAND	29/06/06	1506	Yes (2013)
White A341	13/11/14	Neumunster, GERMANY	16/12/12*	600	No
White KCA	13/11/14	DENMARK	Data not yet received		?
6405918	13/11/14	SWEDEN	Data not yet received		?
6405xxx	17/11/14	SWEDEN	Full ring not read		?

* This bird was ringed in winter. Subsequent sightings of it from Denmark (in March) and Finland (July) suggest that this may be another Finnish bird that flies south-west to winter.



Black-headed Gull 'White A341', ringed in Germany (Photo (c) James Appleton 2014)



Black-headed Gull 'White KCA', ringed in Denmark (Photo (c) James Appleton 2014)



Metal-ringed Black-headed Gull, ringed in Sweden (Photo (c) James Appleton 2014)

Booted Eagle reports – an overview

James Emerson

Introduction

On 26th May a bird of prey, thought by the observers to be a Booted Eagle, was seen over the A47 along the southern edge of the Whitlingham recording area. David Bryant kindly sent me a sketch he made of the bird along with some brief notes, which are included here. There were several other reports of a Booted Eagle (some reported with more certainty than others) both prior to and after the Whitlingham sighting, and in order to write this article I researched these sightings, corresponding with another four observers in all. As well as attempting to provide background to the Whitlingham sighting, I was also keen that as much detail as possible about the sightings was recorded. None of the observers that I have spoken to are submitting their sighting to the BBRC, for varying reasons, and the only information in the public domain is largely confined to rather transient social media websites.

I had established a timeline including the three most detailed sightings, at Norwich Cathedral, Whitlingham and Northrepps. However, when I discussed the cathedral sighting in more depth with Nick Acheson it became apparent that despite the similar times and notable pale wedge between dark primary and secondary feathers, that the cathedral bird and the Whitlingham bird could not be the same individual. The cathedral bird had a dark underwing except for the aforementioned pale wedge. The Whitlingham and Northrepps birds also showed this feature, but with the dark primaries and secondaries contrasting with pale underwing coverts.

As a result, the rest of this article has undergone something of a re-write, as the order of the sightings is no longer of particular importance. Indeed, the supporting nature of two sightings close together has now become two different Booted Eagles being seen in the same area within an hour of each other. Despite the now tenuous Whitlingham link to the first sighting, given that the observers have taken the time to provide me with details of their sightings I have decided to include the data in a similar format to that originally intended, with slight editing to reflect the fact that the cathedral sighting should be considered separately to those that followed. The birds are referred to throughout as Booted Eagles – this is for ease of reading and does not reflect my personal judgement either way on the identity of any of the birds reported.

The initial Norwich sighting

On 26th May Nick Acheson and Harry Ewing were manning the Hawk & Owl Trust Peregrine watchpoint at Norwich cathedral. At around 11:20 they were alerted to an approaching bird of prey by the calls of the nesting female Peregrine. Based on his experience at the watchpoint, Nick had ascertained that the Peregrine used two different calls, one was the regularly used call for food and the other was used to alert the male of the pair to an interloping Peregrine near the cathedral. He had noticed that this call was reserved for other Peregrines, and that other raptors including Sparrowhawks, Common Buzzards and Red Kites did not illicit this call. Having expected to see another Peregrine, Nick & Harry were surprised to see a large and slim-winged dark raptor with a long square-ended tail flying towards them from the south. As they observed it they noticed a pale 'wedge-shape' in the inner primaries, and also noted the flat-winged flight.

Once the bird was passed the cathedral Nick was able to locate it in the telescope and found it circling above a Red Kite. Having quickly ruled out most of the possible options (Marsh Harrier, Osprey, Black Kite) on either structure or plumage, Nick and Harry identified the bird as a Booted Eagle. As it flew back along the cathedral they were able to pick out the dark end of the tail fading paler near the body, but were unable to see 'landing light' markings. Nick has seen many Booted Eagles whilst leading winter tours to India, as well as thousands of Black Kites and almost all of the European raptor species. Based on the shape, plumage and mode of flight he remains confident that the bird they saw was a Booted Eagle.

The Booted Eagle departed in a north-easterly direction and news was broadcast of the sighting on Twitter before being picked up by other news services. A summary of the points noted by Nick and Harry is as follows:

- Long "droopy" wings mostly held flat
- A pale head
- Long, square-ended tail
- Tail dark, becoming pale towards the body
- Long dark primaries
- A pale "window" visible on the wings between primaries and secondaries

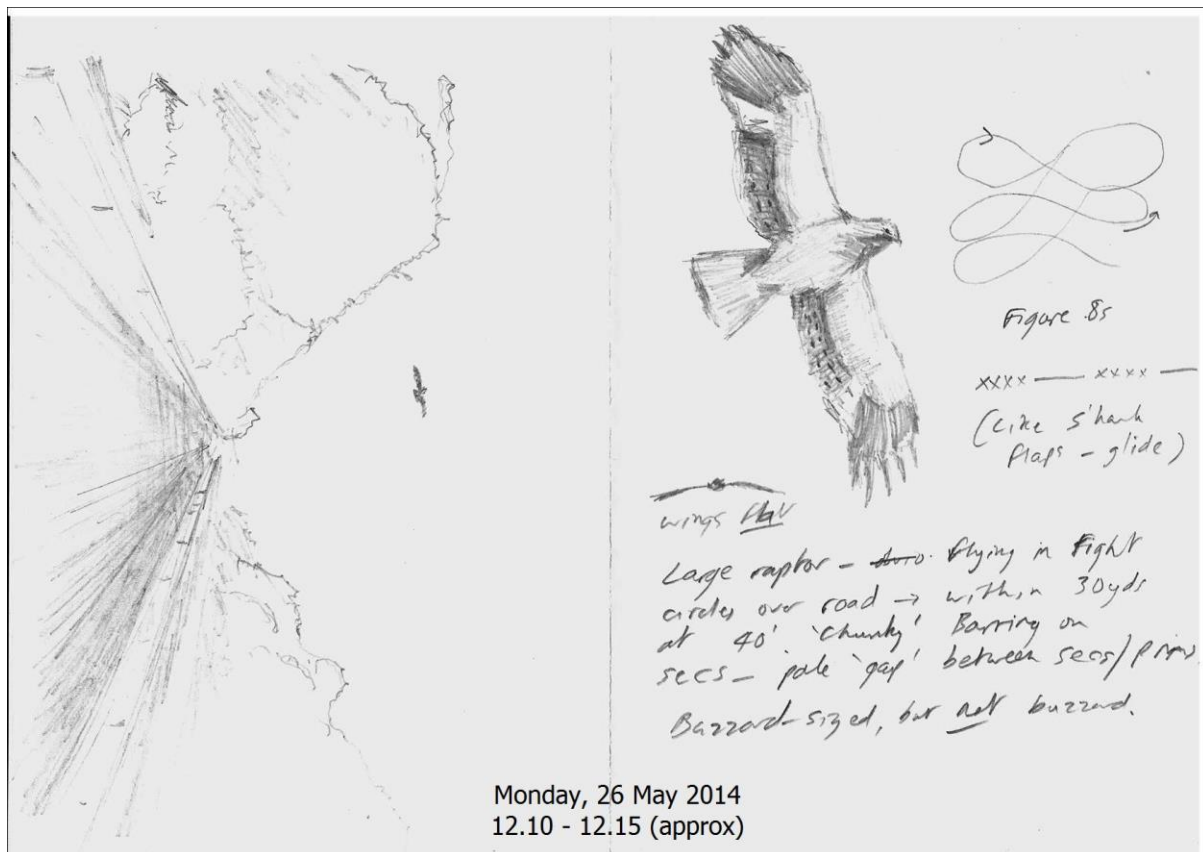
The next hour

Following the release of news from the cathedral, birders were on alert across the county. The next sighting came in from North Walsham, where a possible was seen heading west at 11:40. No plumage traits were observed (the bird was flagged up based on a combination of silhouette and 'jizz'). Due to the relatively close time to the Norwich sighting it seems unlikely that this bird could be the same individual as the cathedral bird seen before it, or indeed the Whitlingham bird seen afterwards.

The Whitlingham sighting

The next Booted Eagle sighting (and the one that justifies this article) was from the A47 southern bypass that composes the southern edge of the Whitlingham recording area. The woodland along the A47 here is good for raptors, as it marks the interface between the countryside and urban areas and is higher than the surrounding river valley. Road-works on this section of dual carriageway resulted in numerous stoppages and delays in late spring, and it was in one such holdup that David & Linda Bryant saw a large raptor sp. above the road. The sighting took place between approximately 12:10 and 12:15 whilst the car was stuck in traffic.

David was sure that the bird was one of the smaller Eagle sp, almost certainly a Booted Eagle. This ID was made before he was aware of the Norwich cathedral sighting that had occurred 50 minutes earlier, thus heading off one of the potential dismissals of the latter sightings (whereby a cynic may say that after a Booted Eagle is reported every Buzzard becomes a possible Booted Eagle). David has allowed the sketches he made of his sighting to be included here, although he asks that they are not copied or used elsewhere.



Sketches of the raptor seen above the A47 at Whitlingham. Copyright & credited to David Bryant.

Key points noted were:

- Buzzard size, but not a Common Buzzard
- Flying upwards in a figure of eight
- Level flight similar to Sparrowhawk
- Wings held level
- Secondaries dark but barring visible
- A pale gap between the darker secondaries and primaries.

The afternoon sightings

Despite observers stationed in the Yare Valley there was no sign of a Booted Eagle heading eastwards, and instead the next sighting took the form of a 'probable' heading north over Rush Hills scrape at Hickling, roughly 13 miles NE of Whitlingham at 12:55. Unfortunately I have no further details about this particular sighting.

I have also been told of a possible sighting in the Felbrigg area by an experienced observer that wasn't reported at the time. In addition to this, another large unidentified raptor seen over Felbrigg on the same afternoon posed an identification conundrum, however this particular bird had pale primary feathers with dark tips and bases so could not account for either Booted Eagle seen earlier.

The penultimate sighting was at Northrepps (which is about 17 miles NW of the Hickling possible sighting). The Booted Eagle was seen at around 13:45 by two observers, both of whom provided me with a brief description of their sighting. The bird seen was described as a large raptor but not a Common Buzzard (two local Common Buzzards were present in the area for comparison), with a laboured flight mixed in with glides. Views were brief but both birders got a clear look at the underwing pattern as the bird was mobbed by Carrion Crows. It had white underwing coverts contrasting strongly with blackish primaries and secondaries. When seen flying lower it flew with bowed wings. It was lost to sight heading north towards Cromer, where it was also reported at 14:40.

This description of a pale morph bird fits with the Whitlingham sighting, and it is quite possibly the same bird. One of the observers remarked that had the sighting occurred within the natural range of Booted Eagles he would have had no hesitation in identifying it as such.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to everyone who reported/tweeted their sightings of the Booted Eagle on 26th May. In particular I am grateful to Nick Acheson, Harry Ewing, David Bryant, Carl Chapman & Andrew Chamberlin for allowing their descriptions to be used in this article, and to Simon Chidwick for information about the mystery raptor seen at Felbrigg.

Whitlingham Wildfowl Survey

Complete wildfowl counts were made once per month by the author to contribute to the BTOs Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS). The data here is based on the combined counts for Whitlingham Little Broad, Great Broad and Thorpe Broad, however some counts differ from the figures submitted to WeBS in that they also include birds seen on nearby land. This mainly relates to the geese, which can sometimes be found on the meadow opposite the CP, and Cormorants, which sometimes roost on a pylon across the river. The counts are not necessarily high counts for the month – ad hoc and high counts are described in the individual species accounts.

Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Mute Swan	31	29	44	43	36	74*	95	63	45	32	32	21
Greylag Goose	45	12	36	45	63	158*	113	7	104	102	47	1
Canada Goose	8	8	10	14	15	54*	92	5	3	8	5	3
Egyptian Goose	2	6	2*	4*	6	6	34	14*	5*	7	9	6
Shelduck	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gadwall	230	157	45	7	0	0	0	0	2	33	48	245
Teal	8	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	0	19
Mallard	69	52	31	40	22	34	155	133	89	94	64	48
Shoveler	0	12	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Pochard	17	28	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	47
Tufted Duck	134	179	56	41	11	0	3	4	26	5	66	236
Goldeneye	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Goosander	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cormorant	28	24	17	0	0	1	9	19	24	38	29	28
Grey Heron	2	1	0	1	0	0	2	2	1	2	2	2
Little Grebe	1	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	2
Great-crested Grebe	4	5	2	6	4	2	8	8	4	7	7	6
Water Rail	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Moorhen	19	8	7	10	3	6*	3	7	8	12	12	7
Coot	208	98	26	6	5	2	10	28	25	121	162	173
Oystercatcher	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
Lapwing	7	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Snipe	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	9	5
Green Sandpiper	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Common Tern	0	0	0	0	2	1	3	2	0	0	0	0
Black-headed Gull	485	480	160	5	0	14	54	18	10	193	160	255
Common Gull	28	21	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	26	11	6
Lesser Black-backed Gull	1	0	4	32	38	17	15	38	24	68	13	0
Herring Gull	15	9	3	12	5	1	1	7	1	2	7	8
Yellow-legged Gull	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Great Black-backed Gull	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Kingfisher	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	4

*Goslings/ducklings seen but not included in count figures as less than $\frac{3}{4}$ grown.

Review of the Year

January

January was particularly mild, resulting in lower than average wildfowl numbers and none of the scarcer species associated with winter cold snaps. Despite a number of observers present on the 1st there was no sign of the Red-necked Grebe that had been reported after dark on the last day of 2013. A Bittern was seen on the Great Broad on the 19th.

February

The mild weather continued into February. Across at Thorpe 2 Wigeon on the 18th were the pick of the ducks, whilst a Reed Bunting was singing on the 21st. Two Jack Snipe were seen on an inaccessible area of Thorpe Marsh near the end of the month.

March

Chiffchaffs were first heard singing on the 13th, a fairly typical first date, but there was little other migrant activity throughout the rest of the month. On the 31st Little Ringed Plovers were seen for the first and only time.

April

The first week of April saw the arrival of Willow Warblers, Sedge Warblers (slightly earlier than normal). A Whimbrel on the 25th April was possibly the scarcest bird of the spring. By the end of the month all of the common warbler species and the first Cuckoo had arrived, and two Common Sandpipers had also been seen.

May

Swifts were first reported on the 6th, with Common Terns and Hobbies also present from mid-month. Two Shelduck were present on Thorpe Broad during the second half of the month, an unusual occurrence in recent years.

June

A relatively quiet month. An increase in Kingfisher sightings along the river near Thorpe suggested possible breeding nearby.

July

A flyover Curlew seen during an evening NWT guided walk at Thorpe was the only sighting here of this species in 2014, and the highlight of a quiet month.

August

House Martins and Swifts were feeding up over Thorpe Broad on the 12th, perhaps the last sighting of the latter before they headed off back to Africa.

September

Highlight of the month was a small passage of Whinchats mid-month, following a large influx at the coast earlier in September. Both male and female-type birds were seen individually before two were seen together. Pochard and Snipe returned for the winter, whilst Green and Common Sandpipers were seen on passage.

October

October saw an increase in Buzzard sightings, with up to three being seen regularly. The remnants of Hurricane Gonzalo resulted in heavy flooding on the 22nd, particularly affecting Thorpe Marsh where the paths across the marsh were all under water. Duck numbers continued to increase, with around 100 Teal in the area.

November

As expected November saw the return of more wildfowl, with around 70 Gadwall and a similar amount of Tufted Ducks present during the month. Shoveler also returned, along with up to three Goldeneye & three Wigeon. A cold spell (including the first frosts of the winter locally) saw the arrival of a flock of 36 Pochard and more Tufted Ducks. A Bittern was reported on 29th.

December

North-easterly winds and a hard frost near the start of the month ensured that duck numbers continued to build, with over 200 Gadwall and Tufted Ducks present on the 6th, along with 47 Pochard. Redwing and Skylarks could also be heard flying over on this date. After Christmas there was a relatively cold spell, which resulted in the Little Broad freezing part of the way across. There was a minor influx of wildfowl, including more Shoveler, a drake Wigeon and a presumed Wigeon x American Wigeon hybrid.

Whitlingham and Thorpe Classified List

This list follows the latest taxonomical order taken from the British Ornithologists Union (BOU), available here: <http://www.bou.org.uk/thebritishlist/British-List.pdf>. Using this list ensures consistency with the most up-to-date checklists and bird reports, but it inevitably means that the order of birds will change on a fairly frequent basis. This year it is the turn of the falcons, which have been moved from the other birds of prey and are now to be found after the woodpeckers. The other main change is with the finches. There is a slight reordering, but the main change is with the genus names, as Linnet, the Redpolls and Siskin are all changed from *Carduelis*.

As in previous reports the descriptions of abundance on the right refer to the chances of encountering a species if visiting at the appropriate time of year, rather than the number of individuals present.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

Common resident



Present all year round. Six pairs nested (2 on the Little Broad, 3 on the Great Broad and 1 at Thorpe Marsh). The Thorpe Marsh pair hatched five cygnets, seen on 31st May. Four of the five Whitlingham pairs successfully hatched cygnets. By mid-June three of the pairs still had cygnets (5, 2, 1), but there was no sign of cygnets from the other two pairs. Many of the resident Mute Swans are metal-ringed, but so far all of those queried have been ringed at Whitlingham and not travelled anywhere! This was the case for one reported in January (ZY0480). The highest count of Mute Swans was 95 on 14th July.

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

Common resident



A flock of 77 were present on 1st Jan, including one white bird. The first broods of the year were noted on 18th April (12, 3, 3). By 14th May there had been another three broods, and on 17th May there were up to 10 broods on the Great Broad (plus two broods at Thorpe). Note that because the Greylags crèche their young (sometimes with Canada Geese in addition to other Greylag families) unless the goslings are seen early after emergence it can often be difficult to work out brood size and even number of broods. The highest count of the year was 158 on 14th June. Only one was present during the December WeBS count, although it is likely that the remaining birds were out of sight at Thorpe Green rather than having left the area completely.

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

Common resident



Present all year round in small numbers (typically between three and eight). April & May saw a small increase in adults before the large annual June/July increase, culminating in the highest year count of 92 on 14th July. The first brood (3 goslings) was seen on 28th April and another brood on 14th May.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*

Common resident.



Four pairs present on 1st Jan. Always the earliest of the geese to breed here, the first brood of two goslings were seen on 16th March but died soon after. A second pair hatched 6 goslings in April. After a large gap a brood of eight young goslings was present on 8th August, five of which reached adulthood. Numbers typically in single figures, but 34 present in July.

Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

Scarce spring visitor



Two present at Thorpe in mid-April were seen regularly until at least 26th May, with one still present on 31st May. Sadly despite this prolonged stay there was no sign of a breeding attempt.

Wigeon *Anas penelope*

Scarce winter visitor



One was present on 1st Jan and occasionally throughout the rest of the month. Two present at Whitlingham on 29th Jan with presumably the same two at Thorpe Broad on 18th Feb. In the second winter period three were on the Great Broad on 15th November, with two still present on 23rd November. These birds moved on, but a drake was present at Thorpe on 27th December.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

Common winter visitor



313 present on 1st Jan, with 95 still present on 23rd February. The last two-figure count of the first winter period was 45 on 16th March. Six were on Little Broad on 8th April and after that between 1-5 birds were present, usually at Thorpe, until at least 31st May. Returning birds were seen from 7th September, with number reaching 75 by the end of November and 245 in early December.

Teal *Anas crecca*

Common winter visitor.



Relatively low numbers of Teal were recorded in 2014. On 1st Jan around 40 were present, with 65 seen on 29th Jan, but numbers remained low into March. Numbers began to build up again in October, with around 120 present when Thorpe Marsh was flooded by the aftermath of Hurricane Gonzalo. Many of these departed afterwards, but at least 10-15 could be found at Whitlingham during December.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Common resident.



Present throughout the year as usual. The resident birds are a mixture of domestic-type and wild-type plumages. The highest count of the year was 155 on 14th July, with further three figures counts into August. The first brood of piebald ducklings (five) were already quite large when first noted on 21st April. Another brood of four were noted on the river on 14th May.

Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

Scarce winter visitor



Two were present on 1st Jan, but by 29th Jan numbers had increased to 11. Another one made 12 present on 8th Feb, whilst the highest count of the year was 13 on 28th Feb. The double-figure counts continued into March, with 11 present on 16th March, and 10 on 23rd March. The final bird of spring was one on 8th April. An eclipse drake was back on 8th October, with numbers peaking at five in mid-November, with 3-4 present throughout December and 11 on the Little Broad on 31st December.

Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Common winter visitor



45 present on 1st Jan, 54 on 8th February, down to 20 on the 16th February. At Thorpe numbers peaked at 38 on 13th February. A pair was still present on 6th April, and what was presumably the same female was still present on the Great Broad on 18th April. In the second winter period 10 were present on 13th September, down to one on 8th October. Numbers increased from mid-November onwards, with 49 present on the 29th and 77 on 5th December. By the year's end around 40 were present.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

Common winter visitor



133 were present on 1st Jan, and numbers remained at a similar level with 100+ still present on 6th April, decreasing to 30 on 18th April. The highest count of the year was 236 on 6th Dec, followed by 203 on 14th March, 179 on 16th Feb and 164 at Thorpe on 25th Feb.

Tufted Ducks were seen in every month of the year except June, but the presence of a breeding pair at Thorpe Marsh implies that birds were present throughout the summer. Four young were first noted at Thorpe on 23rd June, with three surviving and as last year transferring to the Great Broad when large enough. The first flock of newly arrived birds was on 7th September, when 22 had joined the summering four birds. Between 20-30 were present into early October, rising to 75 by mid-November and 90 by the end of the month.

Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Scarce winter visitor



One was first seen on Jan 8th, with two later in the month and a drake on 25th. During January the female was observed following a Coot about, making a rather odd couple. There were no further sightings until 8th November, when a female was present on the Great Broad (this bird may have also been the individual seen at UEA and/or Strumpshaw in the preceding days). Three were present on the 26th November (an adult male, 1st winter male and female). One remained throughout December, usually at Thorpe, where it was joined by a second on 23rd Dec.

Goosander *Mergus merganser*

Scarce winter visitor



After no reports in the first winter period, a drake was present on the Great Broad (and also seen on the river towards Postwick) between 18th and 21st April, an unusually late date for the site. Note that on one day of its stay this bird was erroneously reported as a Red-breasted Merganser.

Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

Scarce resident



Present throughout the year but surprisingly unobtrusive, mainly being found around the wooded areas. The female pictured left was an exception to this, being seen at the edge of the second car park on Jan 1st.

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Common winter visitor



Present all year round, with numbers over the winter period typically 20-30. A potential site-record roost count of 63 was made on 29th Jan (one more than the previous record count of 62 made a year earlier on 21st Jan 2013)

A metal-ringed bird was seen on several dates near the Frostbite sailing club (first observed on 27th July), but despite a determined effort (the observer attempted to get closer to the bird by canoeing past it and taking a photo!) the letters on the ring couldn't be read. The same observer also noted some unusual fishing behaviour from a bird 'treading water' in the river adjacent to Thorpe Island.

The photo above demonstrates the size difference between a small 1st-winter *sinensis*-race bird (left) and an adult *carbo*-race bird (right) seen on 8th Nov. Based purely on size the smaller bird resembled a Shag, although closer views and photos showed it was just a Cormorant.

Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

Rare winter visitor

Two sightings in the first winter period, on 19th Jan and 1st Feb, with another seen on 29th Nov. Interestingly these sightings didn't occur in freezing conditions, suggesting that at least one Bittern may now return to Whitlingham annually rather than just in response to shallower sites such as Strumpshaw freezing over.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Occasional flyovers



One at Thorpe Marsh feeding on the scrape and marshes on 1st March. Also seen at Whitlingham in a tree on the main island (6th April), and several sightings in flight, including over the Great Broad on 23rd April, 5th May and over Thorpe Marsh on 18th June.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Common resident



Typically two present throughout the year at Whitlingham, with another across the river at Thorpe Marsh. Three at Whitlingham on 23rd November was the only time more than two were noted at any one location.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Common winter visitor



Four seen on Jan 11th, of which three were still present on 16th March. The only April sighting was one at Thorpe Broad on April 14th. The first one back was on 11th October, with two more arriving mid-November. Four present on the River Yare in mid-December had presumably been displaced from the Great Broad by the boating activity.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Resident



Present all year round, with a maximum count of eight present in July & August. One pair bred in the cut-off channel between the C.P. and woods. Some near-adult birds seen on the river in late spring were presumably the offspring from this nest, the grebes here showing preference for bring up young on the river rather than the broad.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

Occasional flyovers



A wing-tagged bird was seen just outside the patch boundaries at Trowse regularly in the last week of March and continued to be seen frequently in the Whitlingham area through April and May (last noted on 26th). The tag was red, suggesting a bird tagged in central Scotland, but the letters couldn't be read to confirm this. Two Red Kites were seen over Whitlingham campsite on 31st March. The second bird

could have been a migrant or perhaps an interloping bird from a nearby territory further down the Yare valley (note another bird present in spring in the Postwick area).

(Booted Eagle) *Aquila pennata*

Extreme vagrant)

This species is not currently on the British List and therefore is not included on the Whitlingham List, however see pages 12-15 for an article describing a sighting just within the boundaries of the Whitlingham recording area.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Occasional flyovers

Only three sightings received this year, all of a male bird. Firstly one flew over Whitlingham on 7th January, followed by one over the Great Broad on 5th May and presumably the same bird over Thorpe on 31st May. Interestingly all of the records from the past three years have come from the first six months of the year.

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Resident

Present throughout the year at Whitlingham and Thorpe Marsh. A male flew along the south edge of the Little Broad on 11th Jan, showing well sat in a broad-side Alder. On 4th Feb a Sparrowhawk hunting over Thorpe Marsh flushed around 80 Snipe off the marsh, whilst on 21st Feb a pair were displaying over the marsh.

Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Occasional flyovers

A number of sightings during March, mostly on sunny days when at least one could often be seen soaring above the woods. The peak count at any one time was three (23rd April and then several other dates throughout the year). Good views were had of one perched in dead tree at Thorpe Marsh on 5th October, where it stayed until eventually seen off by a combined force of Magpies and Carrion Crows.

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

Secretive resident

Not seen near the Little Broad during the first winter period, although probably present. Seen (and more frequently heard) at Thorpe in both winter periods.

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Common resident



Present all year round, easiest to count in the evenings when they wander out from the edge of the broad to feed near the path. The highest Whitlingham C.P. counts of the year were 21 on 14th March and 19 on 19th Jan. A minimum of two pairs bred, with young seen around the slipway in June.

Coot *Fulica atra*

Resident/Common winter visitor



235 present on 1st Jan, decreasing to around 100 in February. After this there was a sharp decrease in numbers, culminating in just two being recorded on one date in June. Numbers increased back past the hundred-mark in October, reaching around 200 at the start of December.

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

Scarce spring visitor



Two pairs were seen displaying at Thorpe Broad on 13th March, with one of the pairs seen on a number of other dates in March and also on 19th May. In addition, three were present on 10th April, with one seen frequently in the first half of the year, last reported on 11th July.

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Common winter visitor

Present at Thorpe Marsh in single-figures throughout the first half of the year. Numbers in general seemed lower than in previous years, perhaps due to the flooding that occurred a couple of times this year. 17 on 2nd August and 14 on 16th September are the only double-figure counts that I'm aware of, but I suspect that larger counts must have gone unnoticed or unreported. Eight were present at the end of the year.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

Scarce spring visitor

Two were seen at Thorpe Marsh on 31st March, however unlike previous years when there have been sporadic sightings throughout April this was the only record in 2014. I was told in the spring that a pair of Little Ringed Plovers, quite possibly this pair, bred at an undisclosed site further down the valley – perhaps choosing this site soon after arrival meant they didn't need to return to Thorpe.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Scarce passage migrant

One record, from Thorpe Marsh on 25th April.

Curlew *Numenius arquata*

Occasional passage migrant

One was seen flying over Thorpe Marsh by participants of an NWT walk on the evening of 11th July.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Spring migrant

The first sighting of the year was one at Thorpe Marsh on 23rd April, with two present on 30th April and at least one still present on 19th May. What was presumably a returning bird, the first of the 'autumn', was seen on the river between Whitlingham and Thorpe on 26th July and again the following week. The last sightings of the year were of one seen at Thorpe Marsh on 21st September and presumably the same bird on the river on 25th September.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Spring migrant

In spring the first Green Sandpiper was seen at Thorpe Marsh on 5th March and then two were present at Thorpe on 2nd April. In autumn two were at Thorpe on 17th September and one was on the shingle spit on 11th October.

Jack Snipe

Two seen at Thorpe Marsh on 25th February and apparently also in the week previously. Jack Snipe are known for their reluctance to fly when disturbed (in contrast to Common Snipe) and it remains likely that they are present most winters in the undisturbed areas of the marsh.

Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*

Scarce winter visitor

The only sighting from the first winter period was of one that flew over the A47 on 11th January. A second sighting of one just outside the recording area at Thorpe Island was made on 28th December after some hard weather on the continent.

Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

Common winter visitor

All records bar one from Thorpe Marsh rather than Whitlingham. 35+ were present on Jan 1st, with around 50 on Jan 19th. The highest count, probably still an underestimate, was of c100 birds on 19th February. Another high count came as a result of birds being flushed by a Sparrowhawk, which spooked around 80 birds on 4th February. The first birds of the autumn were noted on 17th September, building up to c25 at the end of November. The sole Whitlingham sighting was one flushed from the reedy area near the start of the bird screen on 6th December.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Common spring migrant

Earliest arrival was 24th April then regular sightings of one or two until 8th August. Three on 14th July was the only sighting of more than two birds.

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Common resident



As last year several ringed Black-headed Gulls were present, including birds ringed in Finland, Denmark, Germany and Sweden – see the article on pages 10-11 for details. It remains to be seen whether signs banning the feeding of wildfowl with bread will affect the reading of gull rings in future years!

Good numbers present in the first winter period, with counts of 480+ made in both January and February. Numbers declined steeply during March, to the point where none were present during the May WeBS count. Numbers in October were back up to around 200, although they decreased slightly to 160 in November. A large number were also present during the cold weather in late December, including one bird with a complete summer 'hood'.

Little Gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

Scarce spring migrant

Two in winter plumage were seen on the Great Broad on 3rd April. Two other sightings were made nearby during spring - two adults in Norwich city centre on 1st May were seen flying along the river in the general direction of Whitlingham, and one was also seen on 29th May flying west along the river under the A47 into the Whitlingham recording area.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

Scarce visitor

One report, of a bird on the Great Broad on 22nd December.

Common Gull *Larus canus*

Common winter visitor



Around 20-30 present in the first winter period, with no large gatherings reported. The last one of the spring was seen at Whitlingham on 6th April. In the autumn one was back on 9th Sept, but the main arrival was mid-October when numbers went back into double figures.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Common summer visitor



Present all year round, albeit only 1-3 until April. The highest count noted was 68 on October, but this doesn't include any counts from the large pre-roost gatherings that take place in late summer/autumn. There is a constant turnover of birds arriving, bathing and leaving before heading off eastwards, making counts particularly difficult.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

Fairly common migrant



Present in every month of the year, but seldom more than 12 (excluding the pre-roost mentioned in the LBB Gull entry). Two ringed birds were noted. A red-ringed 2nd winter bird at Whitlingham in February was traced to the Landguard ringing scheme and had also been seen at Whitlingham in Jan 2013. A red-ringed adult at Thorpe on 10th Jan was probably also from Landguard.



Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*

Scarce migrant

Three records, all 1st-winters. Whether this accurately depicts the age of most of the Whitlingham birds or is as a result of this age being the most recognisable of the sub-adult plumages is an interesting question. Dates for the three records (all on Whitlingham Great Broad): 7th September, 8th October and 27th October.

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*

Scarce migrant

Always scarce locally, this year only reported twice although this is probably an underrepresentation. In spring one present at Whitlingham on 18th April, and in autumn one was on the Great Broad on 9th November.

Feral Pigeon *Columba livia*

Common resident

Makes the report by virtue mainly of the small flock in Trowse that can regularly be seen in flight from Trowse Meadow. The flock at Thorpe St Andrew is also still present although contains lots of white doves.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas*

Scarce resident



Present at Thorpe Marsh throughout the year, although seemingly in lower numbers than recent years. A minimum of six were present there on 14th April.

Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*

Common resident

Common and seen on every visit. Birds are present on site but also often seen flying over from the farmland south of the country park.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Scarce resident

No records from Whitlingham C.P proper this year, the only birds seen within the recording area were birds from the edge of Trowse.

Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

Scarce spring migrant

The first Cuckoo of the year was heard at Whitlingham on 23rd April, a week earlier than in 2014. Tagging data suggests that this first Cuckoo was Skinner, who arrived back in the area on 22nd April (see the article on pages 4-9 for more information). In general quite a quiet year, other sightings received include two calling at Whitlingham on 29th April and one at

Thorpe on 2nd May, still calling on 2nd June. One observer investigated a loud bird call and was fortunate enough to see a Cuckoo chick being fed by a Reed Warbler during June.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

Scarce resident

Only two reports this year, both in September, one each from Whitlingham C.P. and Thorpe Marsh. This species used to breed near the sewage works but I'm not sure whether this is still the case – confirmation of presence or absence from this area would be appreciated.

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*

Scarce resident

As with Barn Owl, only reported in autumn. None heard whilst on a Norwich Bat Group walk in late August, but two heard in mid-September. A Thorpe Island resident commented that Tawnys were regularly heard during the autumn, whilst just outside the recording area in Trowse Tawny Owls were also heard frequently near the old mill.

Swift *Apus apus*

Common summer visitor

First seen on 5th May and then again on 14th May. The only three-figure count of the year was 100+ over the Great Broad on 6th May. The last sighting of the summer was of several heading over on 23rd August.

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Scarce resident



Three present on Jan 1st. After that one or two seen regularly throughout the year. Increased activity on the river near Thorpe Marsh during June suggested a pair may have bred in the riverbank somewhere nearby. The highest count of the year was four seen on 6th Dec, three on the Little Broad and one on the Great Broad. A pair also present on the river near Trowse Meadow throughout the year.

Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*

Scarce resident

Seen or heard regularly up until July, but sightings few and far between in the second half of the year.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopus major*

Scarce resident

Present throughout the year but less obvious than in previous years. The only record of a drumming bird was one heard on 23rd March.

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Resident

Seen less regularly than in previous years, mostly at Thorpe.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Scarce spring migrant

One flew over on 23rd April and a couple of other reports, but in general not as many sightings as in recent years. The only sighting of more than one was of two seen on a guided walk on 19th May.

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

Regular flyovers

A pair seen at Thorpe Marsh then flying back over Whitlingham on 30th March. One over the meadows south of Whitlingham on 8th April and again over the meadows on 23rd December.

Magpie *Pica pica*

Common resident

A roost count of 126+ on 28th February was potentially a new site record. No regular counts of the roost were made, with 40+ on 8th October the only other count received.

Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

Common resident

Frequently seen, although no more than four noted on any one visit.

Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*

Common resident

A flock still present around the meadow south of Whitlingham Lane, and often seen/heard flying over the site.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

Scarce resident

As usual not present with any regularity at the C.P. but present near the sewage works and occasionally seen in flight near the A47.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

Common resident

Still common and likely to be encountered on any walk around the Great Broad.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

Common resident

Still present in Whitlingham Woods, where their stronghold is the area of conifers south of the woodland carpark. In addition one was present in the Little Broad Alders on 6th Dec.

Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Common resident

Common and presumably breeding but no formal counts made.

Great Tit *Parus major*

Common resident

Common and presumably breeding but no formal counts made.

Coal Tit *Periparus ater**Scarce resident*

Still the scarcest of the common five tit species here, with only two records this year, one from the country park and one from Trowse Woods, both in September.

Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris**Scarce resident*

Present in low numbers around the country park and Whitlingham Woods, most noticeable during the spring when they can be located by call.

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus**Rare visitor*

An adult female Bearded Tit was seen within the recording area on June 12th, only the second Whitlingham area record as far as I am aware. Given the time of year it is possible that breeding may have been attempted in or close to the Whitlingham recording area, although no further sightings were reported.

Skylark *Alauda arvensis**Scarce winter visitor*

No singing birds at Thorpe Marsh this year, so the only sightings were flyovers during spells of colder weather, specifically noted on 16th Feb and after a hard frost on 6th Dec.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia**Common spring visitor*

A single bird through on 6th April was the first of the year, slightly earlier than last year, with more seen later in the month. Unusually there were no further records for the rest of the year in what was a reasonably poor year for hirundines here.

Swallow *Hirundo rustica**Common summer visitor*

Three through on 8th April, and low numbers present over the Great Broad during April and May. Birds were still present (or migrating through) on 19th August. Last year birds were still present in mid-September, underlying the lack of numbers locally in 2014.

House Martin *Delichon urbicum**Common spring visitor*

First sighting of the spring was on 14th April, a day later than in 2013. Birds still present on 12th August but not noted afterwards.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti**Common resident*

No proper counts carried out this year, but a minimum of three males on territory around the Great Broad and at least one at Thorpe Marsh, usually heard singing from near the railway line.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus**Common resident*

Seen in every month of the year, but most noticeable in November and December when small flocks were visible around the Little Broad, Great Broad and Whitlingham Woods.

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita**Common summer visitor*

No reports of overwintering birds were received from the first winter period. The first singing bird was on 13th March at Thorpe Marsh, a fairly typical date. By the 16th March there were a minimum of four in song around Whitlingham C.P. Singing birds continued to be heard regularly until mid-July, when most birds became silent or only called. In the autumn nine were still present at Thorpe Marsh on 7th September (perhaps gathering before migration?), with the latest singing bird one at Thorpe Marsh on 26th September. At least two wintered; one was present with a mixed tit flock in early December (and possibly the same bird on 31st Dec), and another was present nearby on Thorpe Island on 28th December.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus**Common summer visitor*

After a late arrival in 2013 the first bird seen back was at Thorpe on 5th April, with two back at Whitlingham on 6th April. These two singing birds continued to be present throughout spring, being last heard on 14th June. 2014 was a poor year for this species, an observation that was also noted by the BTO's CES (Constant Effort Sites) scheme results.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla**Common summer visitor*

The first singing Blackcap of the year was noted on 3rd April, with 8-10 counted along Whitlingham Lane from Trowse to the A47 on 4th April. At least four were singing around Whitlingham on 6th April. Birds continued to be heard until 18th July. Given the ever increasing numbers of wintering birds (including as close as Lakenham) it is likely that one or two birds may be going unreported over the winter.

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin**Scarce summer visitor*

First seen on 24th April at both Thorpe Marsh and Whitlingham, much earlier than 2013 when not seen until May. At Whitlingham a pair seen bringing in food to a presumed nest site on 14th May, with a singing bird in a different area noted in June.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca**Scarce summer visitor*

Heard at Thorpe Marsh on NWT guided walk on 30th April, a typical first date. One heard at Whitlingham on 14th May was not seen again. The only other record came from the sewage works.

Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

Common summer visitor

First seen at Whitlingham C.P. on 18th April, the same date as 2013. After that commonly seen or heard at Whitlingham and Thorpe through until July, although no particular counts made this year.

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*

Scarce summer visitor

Disappointingly no records from either Whitlingham or Thorpe Marsh this year, although a record was received from the sewage works, so there was at least one in the area.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Common summer visitor

One singing at Thorpe Marsh on 6th April was the earliest arrival in recent years (and anecdotally this bird may have been present a few days before this date). At least four present at both Thorpe Marsh and Whitlingham C.P, heard until July.

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Common summer visitor

First seen at Whitlingham C.P. on 23rd April and then at Thorpe the day after. Four were present at Thorpe in May, no counts were made at Whitlingham C.P. The most interesting sighting was of a pair of Reed Warblers feeding a young Cuckoo at Whitlingham during June. Whilst Reed Warblers were always the most likely hosts for Cuckoos here, it is nice to see this confirmed.

Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*

Scarce resident

One present on Jan 1st, with at least two calling males in Whitlingham Woods in March. Further birds were heard during April, then noted again in September and December.

Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*

Common resident

As with the previous species, most noticeable in winter and autumn. Presumably present in Whitlingham Woods all year round, but one also present in Little Broad Alders on 11th Jan and again in December.

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Common resident

Very common – no specific counts made but in likelihood 20+ present around the country park.

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Common resident

Sporadic sightings throughout the year, mostly in the meadow south of Whitlingham Lane or seen in flight.

Blackbird *Turdus merula*

Common resident



A common species, seen on the majority of visits, in particular in the scrub around the archery range.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

Common winter visitor

Surprisingly scarce in both winter periods, with a small flock over in late January the only sighting received until 31st Dec when also seen flying over.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

Common resident



Present all year round but most noticeable in spring. The pictured bird was looking for food amongst the ruins of Trowse Newton Hall.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

Common winter visitor

A poor year for this species, with most records of small flocks flying over. Seen several times in January and February but then no further sightings until mid-November.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

Scarce resident

A group of eight on 15th January was a particularly high count for the site. Other than that one or two present, most often heard calling from the tall trees on the lime tree avenue near the car parks.

Robin *Erithacus rubicula*

Common resident

Common and omnipresent throughout the recording area.

Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*

Scarce spring migrant

Sadly no singing birds in the area of scrub favoured in the past two years, but one heard in Whitlingham Woods in late May, and elsewhere in the recording area a pair nested, fledging four young.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*

Scarce passage migrant

An excellent year for this species, with a minimum of two individuals seen at Thorpe Marsh on a number of dates throughout September. Whinchats are usually less than annual here, and more likely to be seen in spring, but these sightings followed a large arrival around the coast of East Anglia. All records: one on 6th Sept, one on 17th September, two on 21st September and one on 26th September. It is likely that particularly in the second half of the month at least one bird was present in the area in between sightings.

Dunnock *Prunella modularis*

Common resident

Common throughout the recording area.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Former resident, now irregular

A flyover bird at Thorpe on 10th March was the only sighting in the first half of the year, but a spate of autumn sightings of one or two flying over the Great Broad suggest that a pair may have re-colonised this stretch of the river. Just outside the recording area there have been regular sightings near Thorpe Island during autumn, presumably the source of the Whitlingham birds.

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Common resident



Present all year, often seen on the roof of the visitors centre barn and along the Great Broad edge nearby. The river near the sailing club is another regular spot.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

Passage migrant

Seen at Thorpe Marsh on 1st March and then on multiple occasions from late September through to early November.

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Common resident

Present all year round.

Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Scarce resident

Several sightings in April and May, presumably an under-representation of this species here.

Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*

Common resident

Possibly no longer resident at Whitlingham, with sporadic sightings during the spring, followed by a large flock around the car park area in December.

Linnet *Linaria cannabina*

Scarce visitor

One seen at Whitlingham C.P. on 16th February and also noted at Thorpe Marsh in mid-April.

Lesser Redpoll *Acanthis cannabina*

Common winter visitor

Finch numbers were down across the board in the first winter period, presumably due to the mild conditions. In fact the only sighting of any Redpolls was of five flying over on 3rd January.

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

Common resident

Common and seen flying around the site on most visits.

Siskin *Spinus spinus*

Common winter visitor

There wasn't any sign of a Siskin flock for most of January, but around 20 were present on 8th February and seen again on 23rd February. What may have been some of the same birds were seen flying over Thorpe Marsh on 1st March.

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Common winter visitor

The first singing bird of the year was at Thorpe Marsh on 21st February. No reports of singing birds were made at Whitlingham until May (April is typical). In late spring up to six birds were present at Thorpe, with several more at Whitlingham. A sighting from Thorpe in mid-November was unusual, as usually the Reed Buntings have departed during the autumn, presumably to feed on nearby farmland such as that at Caistor St Edmund.

Total: 111 species

Appendix A – Unrecorded but likely species

These species are birds that are either seen in most years but not reported during 201, or birds that were seen very close to Whitlingham and/or flying in the direction of the Whitlingham without being actually observed there.

Bewick's Swan – Likely flyover in winter.

Whooper Swan – Likely flyover in winter.

Pink-footed Goose – Likely flyover in winter.

Brambling – Present nearby at High Ash Farm (Caistor St Edmund) during December. Possibly overlooked, or at least likely to occur flying over in winter.

Appendix B – Escapes and birds of dubious origin

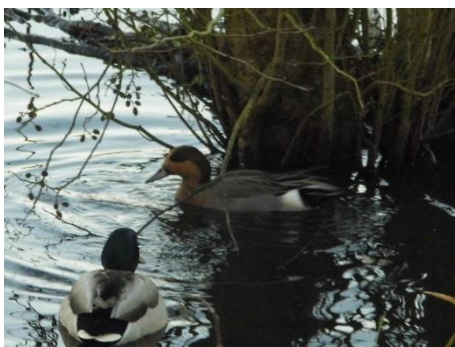
None this year, not even a Black Swan!

Appendix C – Hybrids & domestic wildfowl

Greylag x Swan Goose – One of these resident and rather aggressive hybrids remains, usually around the slipway or south edge of the Great Broad.



Greylag x Canada Goose – One on the Great Broad on 23rd March.



Wigeon x American Wigeon – A drake thought to be a hybrid of these species was seen on the Great Broad on 31st December, keeping close to a pair of Mallard. It had closed rings on both legs, indicating that it had escaped from captivity.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to everyone who has reported birds from the Whitlingham area this year, be it directly to myself, to the bird news services or by posted sightings on websites such as [BirdForum](#) or Twitter. In particular I would like to thank the following for providing records or information: D. Andrews, J. Appleton, M. Arreff, I. Barr, D. Bryant, R. Chittenden, R. Cleverley, P. Davidson, G. Dawson, C. Durdin, H. Ewing, K. Forbes, J. Gearty, J. Harkness, J. Lansdell, B. Lewis, A. Manvell, R. Moores, C. Small, C. Thornton, P. Westley, G. White and P. Woolnough. My thanks also go to the Broads Authority staff at Whitlingham, and the people that I have spoken to whilst in the field.

Local information

The following websites regularly contain sightings from the Whitlingham area:

<http://jamesbirdsandbeer.blogspot.co.uk/> (The author's blog, containing updates from Whitlingham & Thorpe, and a site guide and a site bird list)

<http://www.honeyguide.co.uk/thorpemarshes.htm> (Thorpe Marsh NWT unofficial site)

<http://yarevalleywildlife.synthasite.com/bird-notes-2012.php> (Yare Valley Birding website)

<http://shakysbirdingblog.blogspot.co.uk/> (Ricky Cleverley's Blog containing updates from Thorpe Marsh)

<http://www.birdforum.net/showthread.php?t=249220&page=9> (The Norwich thread of BirdForum)

Bird information services

Several sightings and dates relate to sightings reported to the bird information services. If you are fortunate enough to find a rare or locally scarce bird, please report it to one of them. Contact websites and phone numbers of the main providers can be found below.

[Rare Bird Alert](#) (0207 0382820), [BirdGuides](#) (0333 5772473), [BirdNet](#) (0115 8712888) or [BirdLine East Anglia](#) (07941 333970).