

Wicken Fen Group End of Month April 2020

1. All totals were zero. There was no ringing all month as a result of the Coronavirus COVID-19 lock-down, in its fifth week at the end of April. The day after its inauguration, the Ringing Team at the BTO issued the following instruction:

“BTO Surveys in the wider countryside

Following the Government statement on 23 March, our Senior Leadership Team has reviewed the BTO advice and is asking all volunteers to follow the guidelines presented by the Prime Minister. While the monitoring work undertaken by volunteers is extremely important, it must not compromise public health. To avoid this potential risk, we are requesting that all BTO surveyors, including ringers and nest recorders, refrain from undertaking survey work at sites to which they would need to travel by any means until this guidance is reviewed.

The Government has said that the restrictions announced on 23 March will initially last for three weeks, at which point they will look at them again and relax them if the evidence shows this is possible. We will continue to monitor the Government position, including the review planned for 13 April, and will continue to update you accordingly.

We appreciate that the current situation is likely to impact specifically on our monitoring results for 2020, as Foot & Mouth Disease did in 2001, but we are very fortunate, thanks to your efforts, to hold long-term datasets that can continue to inform conservation work despite these short-term interruptions. The health of the public, including our staff and volunteers, must come first.

At present we have a few staff still working at The Nunnery, a situation that is constantly being reviewed. This means that Ringing Sales are currently operating normally, with order caps imposed last week still in place, though please note that the speed of service may be reduced and that the situation could potentially change between order placement and mailing.

The team responsible for permit issue had a very positive meeting at the start of the week and we remain confident that all renewed permits, including that of the Head of Scheme, will be issued by the end of the week.

Many thanks again for the support that you have all shown to staff during a very challenging period; it really does make our lives much easier and the positive feedback is always appreciated. If you or those close to you are impacted by the virus, we wish you a swift recovery.”

This was followed by an update on 17th April:

“The BTO position across all survey activities remains the same and we are still asking all ringers and nest recorders NOT to collect data for BTO surveys at sites outside the boundary of the property in which they reside. This restriction applies regardless of the mode of transport used, so covers sites that can be reached on foot as well as those to which you need to cycle/drive, and applies to solo activities in the same manner as it does to group activities. There are no exemptions for monitoring undertaken during permitted daily exercise, nor for data collection undertaken at the workplace.

We appreciate that this is a frustrating situation but it continues to be essential that BTO survey activities do not influence the probability of disease transmission, nor cause lasting damage to the reputation of BTO and our valued surveyors. We are hugely grateful to the overwhelmingly positive response from volunteers interacting with the Ringing & Nest Recording Team; your support is always appreciated but particularly so at this time.

The next Government review is currently scheduled for 7 May 2020. We will continue to monitor the situation and to update you accordingly.”

2. For those of us living in Burwell, the ringing locations are near enough for a permitted exercise cycle ride, and some of us are old enough to appreciate a brief rest stop. It was during such a recovery period on 22nd, I was treated for 30 minutes to a Bittern stepping stealthily through the flooded reedbed where the reed had been cut earlier in the year. Attracted by the obvious shape, I raised the binoculars when a Marsh Harrier took off filling the field of view. These exciting sightings were accompanied by songs of Grasshopper Warbler, Cuckoo and what seemed at the time to be a snatch of Nightingale.

Whilst there, I received a report of a Garganey pair recently in the vicinity and missed a pair of Cranes flying over. The considered view on their breeding was that they failed at the egg stage.

An earlier trip checking out the Piggeries gave the first view of a Swallow, over the Wicken boat house on 5th.

Away from Wicken, Andy reported the first cuckoo at Fen Drayton Lakes on 24th and plenty of bittern noise from Ouse Fen, and lesser whitethroats arrived in numbers during the same week. At the British Antarctic Survey base in Cambridge, a Blue Tit was sitting on 8 eggs and a Kestrel had just laid its first egg.

On the same day that Andy sent his sightings, I received a memory of another BAS employee: "Being neighbours in the village, Jane and I were friends with Pete Prince. It was Pete that introduced us two townies to bird and nature watching. I remember once, when he was actually at home, we were having drinks in their garden, and he produced some gin and tonics with some glacial ice in them, which he had shipped back with some BAS specimens in a refrigerated ship! The ice had a slight blue tinge and was very fizzy as it melted. There we were sitting in the summer shade, enjoying some million year old ice, while million year old antarctic air fizzed out of it. That was the life."

Other reports included sightings of familiar species in unusual places. Martin Lester, Wicken Fen Countryside Manager, was on the local television news, Look East, explaining that while the Fen had been closed, birds, animals and plants had been appearing in places more usually populated by people. He appeared amused when asked if visitors would be welcomed back in due course.

3. Almost six weeks without any ringing on the Fen is not the longest such period of inactivity. Breaks during the winter were not so unusual before feeding and tape luring and the foot and mouth outbreak enforced a stoppage for a couple of months.

4. While not being permitted to maraud Barn Owls, my seven year old niece saw one while out walking and drew this picture to remind us how they look.



Neil Larner

2. Movements to and from Wicken Fen received this month from the BTO. (Codes are from DemOn and include U = Unspecified)

Here are the details of a recovery of one of your birds.

Species: Blue Tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*) Scheme: GBT Ring no: **ANC3152**

Ringling details

Age: 5 Sex: U Sex meth: U P.ringed: 0 P.alive: 0 Condition: U

Colour marks added: - Metal marks added: N Act1: U Act2: U

Ringling date: 06-Feb-2020 11:00:00

Reg code: WFG Place code: WFG Site name: Wicken Fen, Cambridgeshire, UK

County code: GBCAM Grid ref: TL5469 Accuracy 1 - Co-ords: 52deg 18min N 0deg 16min E Accuracy 1

Hab1: A4 Hab2: G8

Biometrics: Wing: 61.0 mm. Weight: 10.7 g. Time: 11:00:00hrs

Remarks: -

Ringer: Wicken Fen Group, 9098

Finding details

Ring not Verified Age: 5 Sex: U Sex meth: U

Colour marks added: - Metal marks added: - Act1: U Act2: U

Finding date: 16-Mar-2020 (0) 11:30:00

Reg code: - Place code: STOCK Site name: Stocking Green, Essex, UK

County code: GBESS Grid ref: TL5938 Accuracy 0 - Co-ords: 52deg 1min N 0deg 19min E Accuracy 0

Hab1: E3 Hab2: --

Biometrics: Wing: 62.0 mm. Weight: 10.0 g. Time: 11:55:00hrs

Finding condition: 8:20 Movement: 9

Subsequent Capture by Ringer Intentionally Taken

Remarks: -

Duration: 39 days Distance: 32 km Direction: 174deg (S)

Finder: Upper Cam Ringing Group, 9204

Link to report: <https://app.bto.org/ringingteam/ring-prints/ANC3152-32540592-R-16032020-32476887>

Ringed at Wicken by Michael Holdsworth (MYH)

Here are the details of a recovery of one of your birds.

Species: Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*) Scheme: GBT Ring no: **Z404151**

Ringling details

Age: 5 Sex: F Sex meth: U P.ringed: 0 P.alive: 0 Condition: U

Colour marks added: - Metal marks added: N Act1: U Act2: U

Ringling date: 03-Mar-2016 13:30:00

Reg code: WFG Place code: WFG Site name: Wicken Fen, Cambridgeshire, UK

County code: GBCAM Grid ref: TL5670 Accuracy 1 - Co-ords: 52deg 18min N 0deg 17min E Accuracy 1

Hab1: A1 Hab2: --

Biometrics: Wing: 76.0 mm. Weight: 16.5 g. Time: 13:30:00hrs

Remarks: -

Ringer: Wicken Fen Group, 9098

Finding details

Ring not Verified Age: 6 Sex: M Sex meth: U

Colour marks added: - Metal marks added: - Act1: U Act2: U

Finding date: 16-Mar-2020 (0) 10:20:00

Reg code: - Place code: KFB Site name: Kingfisher Bridge, Wicken, Cambridgeshire, UK

County code: GBCAM Grid ref: TL5472 Accuracy 0 - Co-ords: 52deg 19min N 0deg 15min E Accuracy 0

Hab1: B7 Hab2: --

Biometrics: Wing: 77.0 mm. Weight: 16.5 g. Time: 10:20:00hrs

Finding condition: 8:20 Movement: 9

Subsequent Capture by Ringer Intentionally Taken

Remarks: Sex discrepancy

Duration: 1474 days Distance: 2 km Direction: 270deg (W)

Finder: Kingfisher Bridge Ringing Group, 9223

Link to report: <https://app.bto.org/ringingteam/ring-prints/Z404151-32537909-R-16032020-25914136>

Ringed at Wicken by Mark Peck (MSP)

Here are the details of a ringed bird you have reported.

Species: Great Tit (*Parus major*) Scheme: GBT Ring no: **S814982**

Ringling details

Age: 3 Sex: F Sex meth: U P.ringed: 0 P.alive: 0 Condition: U

Colour marks added: - Metal marks added: N Act1: U Act2: U

Ringling date: 23-Oct-2019 08:50:00

Reg code: - Place code: KFB Site name: Kingfisher Bridge, Wicken, Cambridgeshire, UK

County code: GBCAM Grid ref: TL5472 Accuracy 0 - Co-ords: 52deg 19min N 0deg 15min E Accuracy 0

Hab1: B7 Hab2: --

Biometrics: Wing: 73.0 mm. Weight: 17.2 g. Time: 08:50:00hrs

Remarks:-

Ringer: Kingfisher Bridge Ringing Group, 9223

Finding details

Ring not Verified Age: 5 Sex: M Sex meth: U

Colour marks added: - Metal marks added: - Act1: U Act2: U

Finding date: 14-Mar-2020 12:15:00

Reg code: WFG Place code: WFG Site name: Wicken Fen, Cambridgeshire, UK

County code: GBCAM Grid ref: TL5670 Accuracy 1 - Co-ords: 52deg 18min N 0deg 17min E Accuracy 1

Hab1: A1 Hab2: --

Biometrics: Wing: 72.0 mm. Weight: 17.0 g. Time: 12:15:00hrs

Finding condition: 8:20 Movement: 9

Subsequent Capture by Ringer Intentionally Taken

Remarks: Sex discrepancy

Duration: 143 days Distance: 2 km Direction: 91deg (E)

Finder: Wicken Fen Group, 9098

Link to report: <https://app.bto.org//ringingteam/ring-prints/S814982-32572268-FIR-14032020-32262421>

Recovered at Wicken by Mark Peck(MSP)