

# UK400 CLUB RARE BIRD ALERT

Issue 2

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UK400 CLUB  
BRITISH BIRDING ASSOCIATION

This is the UK400 Club Rare Bird Alert for [Wednesday 30th January 2008](#), utilising information gleaned from the Regional Birdlines, local email groups and websites, [www.Birdguides.com](http://www.Birdguides.com) and Rare Bird Alert pagers ([www.rarebirdalert.com](http://www.rarebirdalert.com)). All Irish rare bird news is by kind courtesy of John Coveney and BINS

In North Norfolk, the adult **WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW** remains in gardens in Cley-next-the-Sea village, showing well intermittently throughout the day. Well over 5,000 birders have now seen this North American waif, with over £4,000 raised for the local church restoration fund.

### DIRECTIONS & BIRD ACTIVITY

The bird is present literally yards from the Three Swallows Public House at the west end of Cley village. Park sensibly on the triangle of roads that meet in front of the pub and view ONLY from the road or opposite verge. Standing immediately in front of the gate is to be avoided as this generally unnerves the feeding birds and causes them to disappear for long periods. The WCS tends to arrive when a group of other birds are in attendance and feeds for up to three minutes at a time before retreating. It tends to show about once every half-hour, from about 0830, and then continues visiting at regular intervals until 1400 hours. It then generally makes a last visit before roosting between 1500 and 1515. The viewing area is very restricting, especially when taller birders stand towards the front, with perhaps only 15 birders having a good, clear view of the drive at any one given time.

This is only the 4th White-crowned Sparrow to be recorded in Britain.....and only the second twitchable (previous singles on Fair Isle, Shetland, on 15th-16th May 1977, at Hornsea Mere, East Yorkshire, on 22nd May 1977 and at Seaforth NR, Merseyside, on 2nd October 1995). Most recently, a tail-less individual was well-twitched in IRELAND at Ballynacarriga, Beara Peninsular, nearDurse, County Cork, from 20th-27th May 2003, whilst further Western Palearctic records include singles in FRANCE (at Barfleur, Manche, on 25th August 1965), ICELAND (adult male collected at Heimaey, Vestmannaeyjar, on 4th-6th October 1978) and on THE AZORES (at Vila Nova do Corvo, Corvo, from 25th-27th October 2005). Most relevant to this latest UK occurrence is one which wintered in THE NETHERLANDS at Spaarndam, Noord-Holland, from mid December 1981 to 16th February 1982, clearly marking a precedent for this midwinter Norfolk arrival.

In addition to the above, there have been several ship-assisted records of this species in the North Atlantic, including 8+ in Britain and one recently in Iceland in May 2002. The species has also been recorded in Greenland in August 1824, October 1840 and in June 1894.



White-crowned Sparrow, Cley village, Norfolk, January 2008 (Darren Robson/Daz Chapman)



White-crowned Sparrow, Cley village, Norfolk, January 2008 (Steve Arlow)  
This bird has been an international star, with birders from all over Europe travelling to Norfolk to see it, including leading French twitcher Pierre Andrew Crochet and Belgian Renee Lafontaine.

With well over 5,000 birders now having seen it, crowd numbers in this last week of January are very much reduced.



White-crowned Sparrow, Cley village, Norfolk, January 2008 (Gary Thoburn)  
Gary's images above are absolutely stunning and were taken as the bird made a foray  
into the field on the opposite side of the road to the garden.  
To obtain prints of these fabulous shots, simply email Gary on [boiler123@hotmail.com](mailto:boiler123@hotmail.com)

In Pembrokeshire, last winter's **PACIFIC DIVER** has returned to Llys-y-Fran Reservoir, showing well from the hide at the northern end. Unlike last winter, the bird now possesses a very striking 'chinstrap', and can be directly compared to a juvenile Black-throated Diver also present on the reservoir this week. A Northern Grey Shrike is also wintering at the site.



2nd winter Pacific Diver, Llys-y-Fran Reservoir, Pembrokeshire, January 2008  
(Richard Smith, above; Stevie Evans, videograbs, below)





2nd winter Pacific and juvenile Black-throated Diver at Llys-y-Fran Reservoir, Pembrokeshire, late January 2008 (Richard Stonier)

This is a remarkable occurrence with this bird returning for a second winter. Note the main differences between the two species - obvious black chinstrap on the Pacific, with a complete lack of the gleaming white thigh-patch and much heavier and darker neck-sides. The forehead and head shape is much more rounded, and the body much slighter, more akin to that of Red-throated Diver.

It has been an unprecedented January for BALEARIC SHEARWATER, with large numbers occurring in the English Channel, and being noted daily off the Dorset coast, with up to 20 off Portland Bill. There was also a very unseasonal European Storm Petrel seen off South Devon.

CATTLE EGRETS still remain in unprecedented numbers, with a flock of 20 still between Sancreed and Drift, near Treganhoe Farm (Cornwall), 5 in South Devon near the Kingsbridge Estuary at Park Farm (SX 732 427), up to 5 in North Devon in Southcott Valley, Bideford, near Pillhead Farm (SS 473 268) and 2 west of the Exe Estuary at Powderham (South Devon) half a mile north of the church at SX 963 849.

At least 6 remain in Sussex (2 south of East Trout Lake, Chichester GP, 3 by Acton's Farm NW of Hastings and another NW of Crowborough east of Hartfield by B2110), with 2 more in Somerset (north of Old Wells Road at ST 680 464) and at Wet Moor and one still in Hampshire (by North End Farm between Harbridge and Harbridge Green - SU 144 112 - 3 miles south of Fordingbridge). The Burton Marsh (Cheshire) bird was also still present on 25th.



Cattle Egret, Neston, Cheshire, January 2008 (Steve Round)

Four wintering GREAT WHITE EGRETS remain in Britain at the end of January, with the wide-ranging Outer Hebridean bird (almost certainly of the Nearctic form) now favouring Loch Fada, Benbecula, the Cambridgeshire bird favouring Dunkirk Drain, adjacent to the Ouse Washes near Pymoor, a Suffolk bird commuting between Thorpeness Meare and the north end of North Warren RSPB reserve and the regularly returning red-ringed adult at Mockbeggar Lake in Hampshire.

In Lancashire, the 2nd-winter GLOSSY IBIS continues at Warton Marsh, by Warton Lane, just west of Lytham St Anne's, where it can be located feeding on the saltmarsh.

Norfolk's two wintering white morph adult LESSER SNOW GEESE were both present with up to 20,000 Pink-footed Geese on 24th-27th in fields north of the A47, just east of the Stracey's Arms, along with one of three wintering white morph adult ROSS'S SNOW GEESE. The other two adults visited fields just SE of Langham between Saxlingham and Dalling from 22nd-27th.

Just 52 TAIGA BEAN GEESE remain in the Yare Valley at Cantley Marshes RSPB (Norfolk), with 8 TUNDRA BEAN GEESE at North Warren RSPB (Suffolk) and 3 at Welney WWT (Norfolk), whilst the adult RED-BREASTED GOOSE continues with Dark-bellied Brent Geese along the access road to West Wittering beach car park (West Sussex).



Tundra Bean Geese, North Warren RSPB, Suffolk, January 2008 (Sean Nixon)

An adult drake Falcated Duck on Broadditch Pond, Southfleet (Kent) consorting with Mallards is considered to be the bird previously present on the Royal Military Canal in Hythe and at Cliffe/Higham Bight in previous winters. It is consorting with Mallards, is unringed but exceedingly tame and is considered by the UK400 Club to be an escape.

Just four drake AMERICAN WIGEONS are present in Britain this winter, with singles on Loch Bee, South Uist (Outer Hebrides), at Vaasetter (Shetland), on the Isle of Man and in Angle Bay (Pembrokeshire).

An adult drake FERRUGINOUS DUCK remains for a 10th day SE of Heanor (Derbyshire) at Shipley Lake in the old American Adventure Park (take the A6007 SE from Heanor and turn right on to Pit Lane to view lake on right), whilst LESSER SCAUPS remain on Papil Water, Fetlar (Shetland), Coot Loch, Benbecula (Outer Hebrides) and at Sutton Courtenay GP (Oxfordshire).



First-winter drake Lesser Scaup, Sutton Courtenay GP, Oxfordshire, January 2008  
(Nic Hallam)

The first-winter drake KING EIDER remains off Girdle Ness (Aberdeenshire), with an adult drake on Shetland in Mousa Sound off Leebotten, whilst 5 female LONG-TAILED DUCKS remain inland at Hanningfield Reservoir (Essex).

Moving on to raptors, just 4 ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARDS are wintering, with singles on Orkney (in Rendall at Queenamidda) and in North Yorkshire (south of Guisborough at Sleddale; view from minor road 1.5 miles NE of Kildale at NZ 620 120), with an adult and juvenile on the Isle of Sheppey (North Kent) at Capel Fleet/Eastchurch Marshes.

An unusual number of COMMON CRANES are wintering in Northern Scotland, with a pair 4 miles SE of Castletown at Bowerroadden (ND 246 646) (Caithness) and a group of 11 NE of Elgin (Moray) west of the B9103 and north of Bailliesland Farm at NJ 253 662. Meanwhile, 27 birds remain in Norfolk Broadland, roosting each evening on Brayden Marshes, Horsey, with a further 4 adults at Lakenheath Fen RSPB (Suffolk).

Rare waders are represented by a first-winter KENTISH PLOVER at North Ford, South Uist (Outer Hebrides), a returning adult TEMMINCK'S STINT at Slimbridge WWT (Gloucs), a LESSER YELLOWLEGS at Montrose Basin (Angus) and a first-winter SPOTTED SANDPIPER at Lisvane Reservoir (Cardiff). An extremely confiding GREY PHALAROPE frequented tiny pools by Waxham Pipe Dump (Norfolk) on 25th-27th.



Grey Phalarope, Waxham Pipe Dump Pools, Norfolk, 26th January 2008 (Toni Cross)  
This very confiding individual afforded observers with views down to a few yards

Several POMARINE SKUAS remain in the North Sea and can be regularly encountered off the Kent, Essex and Suffolk coastlines whilst in NE Scotland, the adult winter BONAPARTE'S GULL remains near Fraserburgh (Aberdeenshire) by the Ugie Estuary. A further adult was noted 3 miles west of Portreath (Cornwall) on 27th.

A 2nd-winter **FRANKLIN'S GULL** roosted at Chew Valley Lake (Avon) on 29th, initially at Herriott's Bridge before moving with other gulls to Woodford Lodge, whilst the first Atlantic Puffin of 2008 was seen flying past Sennen Cove (Cornwall) on 29th.

Three SHORE LARKS frequented the shingle ridge between Cley Coastguards and East Bank (Norfolk) on 27th-29th, with the wintering bird with Skylarks still present at Rye Harbour NR (East Sussex).

Despite being a poor winter for BOHEMIAN WAXWINGS, twitchable birds include a flock of 13 in Longfornan (Fife) and in England, 2 in Burnley (Lancs), 2 in Batley (South Yorks), 1 in Strensall (South Yorks) and a long-staying first-winter at Cromer (Norfolk).



Bohemian Waxwings, Batley, South Yorks (Glyn Sellors) and at Cromer (Garry Bagnell)



Bohemian Waxwing, Batley, South Yorkshire, January 2008 (Glyn Sellors)

Cornwall now has THREE wintering HUME'S LEAF WARBLERS, with long-staying singles in Cot Valley and Tehidy Country Park (trapped and ringed on 28th) and a newly discovered bird north of Camborne at Rosewarne (by the entrance to the Duchy College), whilst YELLOW-BROWED WARBLERS include one near Jarrow Cemetery (Durham) and another north of Chew Valley Lake (Avon) at Chew Stoke Sewage Works (ST 571 619).

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Front Cover ©

White-crowned Sparrow, Cley-next-the-Sea, Norfolk, 6th January 2008  
(Paul Hill)

Back Cover ©

Bohemian Waxwing, Batley, South Yorkshire, January 2008  
(Darren Ward)

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