



# Thorndon Birdlife

October 2021



Let's start with a Cuckoo update, something catastrophic has happened to Grove or his tag. No signal has been received for a long while, it could be a tag failure or Grove has been predated. Ellis has flown a further 564 km south east from Central African Republic into Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) He is south of the Equator and just over 100 km east of Cuckoo AJ. They are both now deep within the Congo rainforest in north western DRC. Victor is in Niger towards the Nigerian border. Daniel has made it to Chad. Clive is crossing the Sahara. Harry's tag suggest that he is still in central Mauritania. Norfolk Cuckoo Attenborough made that extraordinary movement from Spain to Greece, sadly though we think that route may have signalled the end for this bird, possibly because he was unable to build up sufficient fat reserves to fuel his crossing of the Sahara. He did make it as far as the Tibesti Mountains in northern Chad where his journey ended, his travels will of course contribute useful data to the growing understanding of Cuckoo migration. JAC, PJ and Calypso are somewhere in Nigeria.

I was bird ringing on the Suffolk coast on Tuesday and ringed 53 birds including Willow warbler, Chiffchaff, Common Whitethroat, Lesser Whitethroat, Blackcap and Meadow pipits.

The Meadow pipit (*Anthus pratensis*) is a small bird which breeds in much of the Palearctic from south-eastern Greenland and Iceland to just east of the Ural Mountains in Russia and south to central France and Romania; there is also an isolated population in the Caucasus Mountains. It migrates over much of its range, wintering in southern Europe, North Africa and South-western Asia, but is resident all year in western Europe, they will vacate upland areas in September and October, returning in March and April. During the winter they reside in lowland winter stubbles, marshes and unimproved grassland and most of the birds move to coastal areas in the winter. The genus name *Anthus* is the Latin name for a small bird of grasslands and the specific *pratensis* means "of the meadow" from *partum* "meadow"



The male and female Meadow pipits are alike, the upperparts are grey to olive-brown with darker streaks. The underparts are pale grey or buff with bold streaks and spots on the breast and flanks. The belly and outer tail feathers are white and the legs a dull pink. The juvenile birds are a pinkish-buff and has fewer dark streaks on the flanks. The tree pipit is very similar, but has a slightly sturdier bill and a much rarer bird.

The Meadow pipit feeds primarily on small insects and other invertebrates and in winter eats the seeds of grasses, sedges, rushes and heather.

It nests on the ground in dense vegetation with 3-5 eggs, the eggs hatch after 11-15

days, with chicks fledging 10-14 days after hatching. Two broods are commonly raised each year. This species is one of the most important nest hosts of the Cuckoo and it is also important prey species for the Merlin and Hen harriers.

The chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*) is a bird of woodland, scrub, parks and gardens and is named after its song. They are summer visitors to the UK and are one of the first migrants to arrive in the spring. They winter in western Africa and southern Europe and as a result of climate change a lot of Chiffchaffs remain in the UK during the winter months. It is a small petite bird and one of our smallest. It is predominantly green/grey above and off white below in colour with dark legs and a pale stripe above the eye, a supercilium.



Chiffchaffs feed on insects, such as midges and other flies, caterpillars and moths which they find by foraging in the tree canopies and among bushes. The name *Phylloscopus* means leaf explorer and Chiffchaffs search the underside of leaves where aphids congregate. It has a number of subspecies, some of which are now treated as full species. The female builds a domed nest on or near to the ground, and assumes most of the responsibility for brooding and feeding the chicks, whilst the male has little involvement in nesting but defends his territory against rivals and attacks potential predators.

Your local sightings would be appreciated

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