

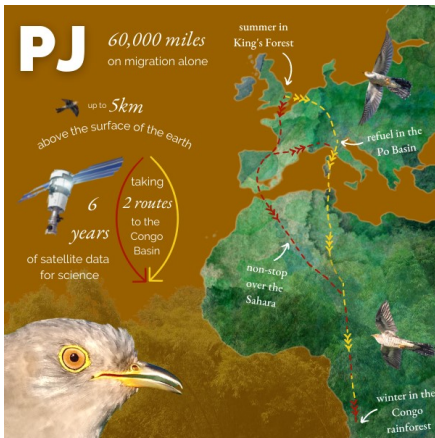


Thorndon Birdlife



July & August 2022

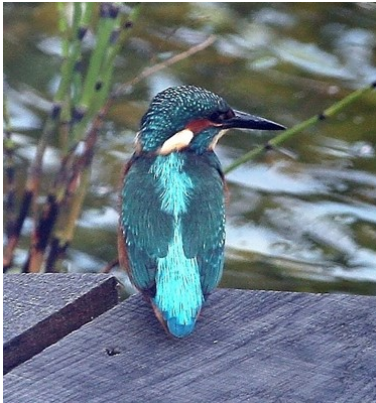
Sad news indeed from King's Forest, Suffolk, PJ the cuckoo is no longer with us, one bird, twelve journeys, 60,000 miles and invaluable scientific data: PJ has left an incredible legacy. Sadly, there has been no transmission from his tag since 6th May. Tag failures are rare in the UK where they are not exposed to such harsh conditions as when the birds are on migration, so we must assume that PJ has reached the end of his life. He was at least seven years old when he arrived back in Kings Forest this spring, only one year short of the longevity record for a wild UK cuckoo. He became a record-breaking Cuckoo in the summer of 2021 by completing the most migratory journeys of any tagged bird of this species. This year, he surpassed his own record by completing his sixth complete migration from the UK to Africa and back again whilst wearing a transmitting satellite tag and clocking up over 60,000 miles. His greatest legacy is the way he engaged an enormous number of people in the BTO Cuckoo project as they followed him on migration, checking his journey on the BTO website, reading about him in the monthly updates and seeing him in the national newspapers.



He was a truly remarkable bird.

No matter how often you might see one, the novelty of seeing a kingfisher never wains. Two weeks ago, I saw a Kingfisher (*alcedo atthis*) by my pond for the first time this year. But so many people don't see them often or sometimes never see one. They are a small bird and despite their magnificent colours can be quite inconspicuous. They are also very shy and easily spooked into flight. Their scarcity means they are protected under the Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 offering them some protection. The common kingfisher is also known as the Eurasian kingfisher and River kingfisher, it is small with seven subspecies

recognized within its wide distribution across Eurasia and North Africa. It is resident in much of its range, but migrates from areas where rivers freeze in winter. This bird has the typical short-tail, large-headed kingfisher profile, it has unmistakable plumage, its back is bright metallic blue and its breast is a coppery-brown. The bill is long and black though females have a red patch at the base.



The common kingfisher is highly territorial; since it must eat around 60% of its body weight each day, it is essential to have control of a suitable stretch of river. It is solitary for most of the year, roosting alone in heavy cover. If another kingfisher enters its territory, both birds display from perches, and fights may occur, in which a bird will grab the other's beak and try to hold it underwater. Pairs form in the autumn but each bird retains a separate territory, generally at least 1 km long, but up to 3.5 km and territories are not merged until the spring. They fly rapidly low over water and hunt for fish from riverside perches occasionally hovering above the water's surface. They are vulnerable to hard winters and habitat degradation through pollution or unsympathetic management of watercourses.

For breeding, they tunnel into high-sided riverbanks to make a small chamber for their eggs, producing two to three broods a year. Each clutch can contain up to seven eggs, the first hatching in March to May. The egg takes around 20 days to incubate and chicks fledge after 25 days. The parents feed their young for a further four days before chasing them off and starting the next brood, they become sexually mature at one year old.

I was back to the same area as last year to yet again ring and wing tag two Red Kites (*Milvus milvus*) The tags are white with black lettering DP and DN.

Sightings in my garden; 2 Buzzards, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Garden warbler, Black-caps, Chiffchaff, Song thrush, Green & Great-spotted woodpeckers, Swallow, Swifts, House martins, Tawny owls at night.

Butterflies: Painted Lady, Comma, Speckled wood, Small white, lots of Meadow browns.

Chris McIntyre 07704 437662 01379 678345
mcintyrechris@btinternet.com