

## Birdlife June 2022

New updates from the BTO showed that Cuckoo PJ had flown the final 1000 km from northern Spain and was back in the UK. Further updates received since tell us that he is safely back on his breeding grounds in the King's Forest in Suffolk having completed his record breaking sixth tracked migration between the UK and Africa. Each complete migration from Suffolk to his wintering grounds in the Congo basin and back again is approximately 16,000 km (9,940 miles) so we have now tracked him over the last 96,000 km (59,640 miles) He was a second-year bird when he was tagged so he had already completed a full migration circle before he was tagged in 2016. This means that over the course of his life so far, he has flown 112,000 km (69,580 miles) on migration alone. It is a wonder he has any energy left to chase around his breeding grounds defending his territory and searching for partners! The oldest ringed UK Cuckoo was caught alive at Wicken Fenn in Cambridgeshire in 1983 – 6 years, 11 months and 2 days after he was ringed as an adult, making him at least 7 years, 11 months and 2 days old. PJ will have to survive another year to vie for the crown of the UK's oldest known Cuckoo but his achievements so far have already exceeded our wildest expectations – keep going PJ.



PJ (Suffolk)

### Other Cuckoo up-dates

Daniel, Lake Vyrnwy, Wales.

JAC, Llangollen and Wrexham.

Calypso, Worcestershire.

Victor 11, Scotland.

Ellis, Loch Lomond, Scotland

One of the most abundant birds in the UK is the Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*) especially if you have feeders in your garden, they have increased their use of gardens quite dramatically over recent decades, exploiting new foods such as Nyjer seed and Sunflower hearts. The Goldfinch population has spread northwards within Britain and the species is now absent only from open mountains (it prefers low ground). Widespread persecution up until the 1930s almost certainly kept the population below what it could achieve. This distribution appears to reflect the distribution of its favoured food species, since the Goldfinch specialises on seeds of the family Compositae (groundsels, ragworts, dandelions and thistles).

The black wings, with their band of bright yellow, and the black tail with its white terminal spots, are distinctive in all ages of Goldfinch, sexes are alike or nearly so. In adult birds, the striking head pattern of red, white and black is equally characteristic, it is absent in juveniles. In size, the Goldfinch is smaller than a Greenfinch, delicate in appearance with a noticeable finch bill. Goldfinch calls are a beautiful series of notes and an equally wonderful song. Both

are liquid in nature, with a real fluidity to the constantly uttered ‘Tswitt-witt-witt’ Goldfinches appear to nest in areas with scattered trees and shrubs, including gardens where they often adopt the loose colony structure seen in other cardueline finches. The nest itself is neatly constructed from grasses, moss, roots and lichens, interwoven with wool and hair. This is usually positioned some way off the ground, though may be positioned in hedges and evergreens. The cup of the nest is quite deep relative to its width. Ring-recoveries suggest that during autumn many of the species in Britain migrate south, some reaching southern Europe.



Sightings in my garden; 5 Buzzards, 2 Red Kites, 1 Hobby, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Garden warbler, Blackcaps, Chiffchaff, Mistle thrush, Song thrush, Green & Great-spotted woodpeckers, Swallow, Swifts, House martins.

Butterflies: Painted Lady, Brimstone, Orange tip, Peacock, Speckled wood, small white.

Around Thorndon; While albino pheasants are known, they are much rarer than the white ‘leucistic’ variety. Both conditions are caused by a genetic abnormality. The difference can be determined by observing the eye colour – leucistic birds have the normal dark, while albinos have pink eyes.

Chris McIntyre 07704 437662 01379 678345 [mcintyrechris@btinternet.com](mailto:mcintyrechris@btinternet.com)