



Reserve Opening Times:

Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday
9am - 5pm (4pm Nov - end of Feb)

Visitor Centre

10am - 4pm

Trustees:

Penny Smith - Treasurer
David Nesham
John Brook
Graham Barlow
Ian Willoughby
Jerry Knapp
Maggie Bellwood

Company Secretary - Peter Murphy

Report Editor: Peter Murphy

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Front and back cover: Tim's Field and the gazebo from the Wet Grassland Hide - from an original photograph by Barbara Murphy. See page 137 For other Photograph Credits.

Introduction

With the problems of the Boxing Day flood of 2015 and its aftermath well and truly behind us we thought we might be able to look forward to a trouble free year in 2017 and so it seemed until August. We were then hit by a series of challenges. In August we learned that the condition of the river bridge had deteriorated to such an extent that a 3 tonne/5mph limit had to be applied. Not a problem for cars but we did have to curtail or rearrange deliveries with loads shuttled over the bridge in small batches.

We thought this might be a problem for contractors booked to start work on major toilet improvements in October but again arrangements were made to transport building materials across in small loads. Work duly started on 9th October but initial excavations revealed a series of underground pipes and cabling. The cost of relocating these would have been significant and it was necessary to abandon the plan to build out from the existing toilets.

In between all this, the quiet and peace of the Reserve was shattered when bulldozers moved in on the far river bank opposite the river seat, ripping out trees and creating huge mounds of earth. This, we learned, was the Upper Reach Development and despite our protests with regard to environmental vandalism there was nothing that could be done as no planning regulations had apparently been contravened. Sadly, the peace and tranquillity that so many visitors comment on was rudely shattered for many weeks.

However, the biggest challenge we faced in the autumn was the news that the Reserve had been identified as a potential location for flood water storage under Phase 2 of the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme. We certainly had a huge amount of support from the public throughout the consultation process and we are grateful to everyone who took part. Needless to say, we were both delighted and relieved to learn in January 2018 that we were no longer being considered as a location for flood water storage. This safeguards the Reserve both as a refuge for wildlife and as a great community asset.

Of course, a lot of other things did happen throughout the year and early in the year we received two accolades. Trip Advisor awarded us

their 2016 Certificate of Excellence and BBC Countryfile Magazine named us as one of the five best places for urban wildlife in the United Kingdom.

We launched a new digital presentation about the Reserve in January - "A Year in the Life of Rodley Nature Reserve" - and this was shown to 14 different organisations in the following twelve months. It took us through all four seasons looking at the changing wildlife, habitat management, events and education and was very well received – and hopefully resulted in plenty of new visitors.

We again had a stand at the Science Fair at Leeds City Museum on Saturday 18th March and for the first time we took along some of our Harvest Mice and involved the younger visitors with Barn Owl pellet dissection – both of which were greatly enjoyed. We also had a stand at the Addingham Village Event on Saturday 13th May, again taking along our Harvest Mice and owl pellets.

The Easter Egg Hunt is the first big event of the year on the Reserve and we are grateful to Aireborough Rotary Club for organising another excellent one this year on Easter Sunday. The weather was indifferent to say the least but families turned out in numbers to support the event.

Following the success of the 1st Leeds Birdfair last year, we staged the 2nd Leeds Birdfair on Saturday 24th June, the weather behaved itself and this was also a great success. A big thank you goes to Linda Jenkinson of Start Building who first came up with the idea of a Leeds Birdfair and was able to encourage the various wildlife organisations to support it.

The two Bat Nights in July had their usual enthusiastic following but enthusiasm was somewhat dampened during the first one with a very wet evening rather spoiling things. In August we ran our usual Wednesday morning Moth Trap Opening events for children which again proved very popular and on Saturday 19th August our other big event of the year - the Summer Fair - took place, attracting its usual big following. The final event of the year - Pie and Peas followed by the Fungus Foray - took place on Saturday 28th October on a rather cold, damp day but again both were very well supported.

For our habitat management volunteers “balsam bashing” and ragwort removal from the meadows are two of the less interesting, but nevertheless important, tasks of the summer months. As this is one of the quieter times in the Manager’s Garden the opportunity was taken to build a substantial extension to the hide there. Thanks to generous funding support from Green Leeds Ltd we were also able to start work on the replacement of the old Manager’s Garden hide towards the end of the year incorporating special provision for wheelchair users. At the Dragonfly Ponds a new natural, unlined pond was constructed this year and this has been named Mill Pond. The commencement of willow coppicing towards the end of October provided our volunteers with a source of wood to start rebuilding the dead hedges along the Willow Path and a new hedge along the roadside by the Lagoon. We are grateful to the Leeds Community Fund for providing the funding for the large number of posts we needed for this work.

An annual autumn activity is the draining of the Wet Grassland to enable a contractor to bring on a large tractor to cut down the vegetation prior to reflooding for the winter. Unfortunately, in November the tractor became stuck in thick silt deposited by the 2015 Boxing Day flood and the operation had to be aborted. It will be necessary to take steps to remove silt from the ditches in this area in 2018 before further cutting can be contemplated.

At the end of November Yorkshire Water very generously fenced off a section of the compound for us to use for car parking. This has its own entrance and will prove invaluable, particularly so for the larger events like the Birdfair and Summer Fair.

Education of children is, of course, a very important part of our work and our education team had another very busy year looking after primary school classes, one secondary school and numerous uniformed organisations. Our children’s club, the Rodley Robins formed in May 2016, had a very busy first full year with different wildlife activities every month and thanks to some generous funding from the Co-op Community Fund we were able to provide them with a very smart gazebo for their garden on the Reserve. Later in the year we learned that we had been chosen to participate in the next round of the Co-op’s Local Community Fund which started on 12th November. Any

funds raised from this round will be used to construct more hard paths to make access easier for wheelchair users.

As regards the wildlife there were successes and disappointments. We added four new species of bird to the Reserve list - Ring Ouzel, Marsh Harrier, Firecrest and Bufflehead – the latter possibly of debatable origin. Kestrels again nested successfully in a Barn Owl box in the compound raising three young but Barn Owls failed to repeat the success of the previous year and the Little Owls' nesting efforts in the Manager's Garden were thwarted by a family of Grey Squirrels. Common Buzzards enjoyed another excellent year and must be nesting fairly close by now and Peregrine Falcons were reported on a record 42 dates. On the wetlands some species did very well. Little Egrets were seen on a record 72 dates and Coot numbers bounced back somewhat in the second half of the year, almost certainly due to much reduced American Mink activity. Gadwall had another excellent nesting year and a pair of Great Crested Grebes again nested successfully. The Sand Martin nesting bank on the Lagoon again proved very popular with 145 nesting holes excavated this year - down somewhat on the previous year's 186 but nevertheless still very encouraging.

It was a year of mixed fortunes for butterflies. Red Admirals had one of their best years ever but the decline in numbers of Small Tortoiseshells and Peacocks continued.

Contractors undertook extensive clearance work on the Reedbed in December 2016 and there was clearly going to be some short term disturbance for wildlife but by the middle of June the area was looking better than ever and it will surely only be a matter of time before we have another overwintering Bittern.

The Harvest Mouse breeding programme continued in full swing this year and further releases were made on the higher ground on the Scrubland. The discovery of several breeding nests at the edge of Tim's Field by the Dipping Ponds at the end of the year was an interesting and unexpected development, suggesting that ancestors of the original releases on the Duck Marsh and Reedbed had reached here.

We were saddened to learn of the death of one of our colleagues this year. Alan Patchett was involved at Rodley from the very outset and was one of the original trustees appointed in November 1997 before the Reserve was officially opened. He was a very valuable member of that small group of volunteers who worked so hard to get the Reserve up and running in those early days when funds were limited and visitor numbers much lower than they are today. Alan continued to serve as a trustee until 4th March 2014 and was still a regular visitor after that, often in his capacity as leader of Pudsey Ornithological Group. Alan died on 30th September 2017.

Let us hope that 2018 turns out to be less eventful year than 2017 was. We are still aware of the need to improve our toilet facilities to cater for the ever increasing number of visitors and plans are now in hand which will hopefully see work start later in 2018. However, we have already had one bit of good and unexpected news in January 2018 – our nomination by BBC Countryfile Magazine Awards as one of the five finalists for nature reserve of the year. The winning reserve will be chosen by a public vote and a campaign is underway to encourage as many people as possible to vote for us. This is a wonderful accolade for our volunteers who work so hard to make the Reserve the great place it is for both wildlife and the community. The winners will be announced in March 2018 - fingers crossed !

Rodley Nature Reserve - Monthly Roundup for 2017

January

The month brought a mixed bag of weather but no sustained cold snap to bring in more wildfowl. Much of the wetlands were frozen over for a time on 2nd but a mild spell of weather was followed by severe gale force winds on 11th with 75mph gusts locally. It became much colder from 12th and there was a thin layer of snow on 13th but the second half of the month was dominated by high pressure, little or no wind and leaden skies. Fog was often a problem and slow to shift in the valley and much of the wetlands were frozen over at times. The month ended on a very wet and grey note.

It was a quiet month on the wetlands and duck numbers remained low throughout. The usual gathering of Goosanders on the Lagoon at dusk failed to materialize; no more than four Wigeon were recorded and just one solitary Pochard was present. Numbers of Teal and the usually reliable Gadwall were often in single figures and Goldeneye were one of the few highlights with up to seven on the Lagoon. However, a count of 24 Tufted Duck on one occasion was the highest since November 2015. Grey Heron numbers on the Duck Marsh reached 12 on 11th and a Whooper Swan dropped onto the Lagoon briefly on 14th. Water Rails were seen or heard on eight dates with most activity on the Lagoon and as many as three birds reported.

Our eight juvenile Mute Swans had left home by the second week of the month but a visiting juvenile, which was ringed, hit overhead power lines on John Ackroyd Meadow on 30th, crash landing in the field. The damage looked a lot worse than it turned out to be and the bird managed to make its way to the new public dipping pond. The following morning it was escorted to the river and was later seen flying over the Reserve.

On the farmland geese numbers fluctuated from day to day but a count of 153 Greylag Geese on 14th was the highest ever recorded and 133 Canada Geese on 1st and 129 on two dates were the highest since February 2010. A solitary Pink-footed Goose was picked out on 1st and 4th but around 50 flew over the Reserve in an easterly direction on 21st.

Winter thrushes were absent in the first two weeks of the month but around 24 Redwings were in the Poplars on 15th and a handful were seen on three subsequent dates. Fieldfare numbers too were generally low but 50 were counted in the Poplars on 28th.

Other sightings this month included a Common Buzzard on five dates, a Red Kite on one date, a Goldcrest on five dates, a Cetti's Warbler on the Duck Marsh on 1st and a Woodcock in the Coppice on 14th. Grey and Pied Wagtails were seen regularly on the farmland muck heap and Grey Wagtails were also reported on the Wet Grassland on four dates. A Barn Owl roosted in the thatched gazebo most nights but had invariably gone by daylight. However, one was disturbed there at 9.00am on 18th and one was also reported on the Scrubland on 29th. Kestrels were only seen on two dates but both were by the east facing nest box in the compound which was encouraging.

January can be a good time to see the more elusive mammals and it proved to be an excellent month for Weasels with numerous sightings all around the Reserve.

Large flocks of Stock Doves and Wood Pigeons visited the seed crop on Tim's Field throughout the month, providing a tempting target for birds of prey. Peregrine Falcons were seen on five dates with at least two different birds visiting, one a juvenile with a red ring on the left leg. A big female Sparrowhawk was also seen on several dates. The seed crop on Tim's Field also brought in the usual flock of Linnets with a best count of 117 on 22nd.

It was a busy month for the habitat management volunteers. The islands on the Lagoon were cleared in readiness for the return of the Oystercatchers and the many nest holes in the Sand Martin bank were cleaned out and refilled with fresh sand. Willow coppicing continued and the cut willow was transported to the Winter Walk where it was used to continue rebuilding the long length of hedge along the Wet Grassland and Reedbed.

February

A mild February marked the end of a dry winter overall and it proved to be the 9th mildest winter on record for the UK. However, fine days this

month were few and far between and grey skies were the norm. Storm Doris in the latter part of the month brought strong winds and rain for a time.

The first Oystercatcher off the year arrived on the Lagoon on 3rd, seven days earlier than last year and it was joined by a second bird on 5th. Three birds were present for a time on 15th. A second male Pochard was seen from 4th; Goldeneyes were recorded daily with up to eight birds seen and there were a number of sightings of Goosanders with five birds on the Lagoon on two dates. Water Rail activity reduced with sightings on just three dates. Two Great Crested Grebes arrived on the Lagoon on 19th but only one bird was reported subsequently. Unusually, there were no sightings of Kingfishers and no more than two Snipe were reported.

Gadwall numbers started to pick up in the latter part of the month. Twenty-three Tufted Ducks were on the Lagoon on 1st but numbers had dropped back to just six by the end of the month. Teal peaked at 27.

Numbers of Canada Geese remained high with 134 on the Lagoon on 8th and a best count of 142 on the farmland on 12th the highest since February 2010. Greylag numbers were much lower with a best count of 65 on the Lagoon on 1st. More than 300 Pink-footed Geese flew over in a westerly direction on 5th and a single bird was on the farmland on 26th.

Away from the wetlands there were numerous reports of winter thrushes but numbers remained very low with no more than 15 Redwings reported. There were a few more Fieldfares with a best count of 53 on 26th.

Raptor-wise, Peregrine Falcons were again active with a bird reported on three dates. Kestrel activity increased considerably this month with numerous reports of both male and female at the east facing nest box in the compound.

Other sightings this month included a Common Buzzard on five dates, Red Kites on four dates, a Grey Wagtail on four dates, a Goldcrest on three dates, a Woodcock in the Coppice on 3rd and a Coal Tit in the

Bee Garden on 12th – this a scarce bird at Rodley. A Little Owl on Poplar Field on 22nd was the first sighting since October last year. There was an increase in reports of Cetti's Warbler this month with a bird seen or heard on the Wet Grassland on six dates. Lapwings were seen on the wetlands on four dates with three on the Lagoon on 15th. Magpies are common birds on the Reserve and don't usually get a mention but 30 noisy individuals in one small bush on the Scrubland towards dusk on 1st was unusual.

The Linnet flock was present on Tim's Field throughout the month with up to 45 birds counted. Blue Tits were bringing nesting material into the nest box on the side of the Visitor Centre in the last few days of the month - exceptionally early for them. With numerous reports of Waxwings in the local area this winter it was disappointing not to have any feeding on the Reserve. However, a flock of more than 40 flew over Tim's Field and the Wet Grassland on 25th.

March

The first month of spring produced its usual mixed bag of weather with wintery showers, strong winds and warm sunshine but temperatures generally were above seasonal norm and there were some very pleasant days to bring out the first of the overwintering butterflies. A beautiful, warm, sunny day on 12th tempted the first Small Tortoiseshells out but the first Comma and Peacocks didn't appear until much later in the month. It became much more unsettled and cooler from the middle of the month, wet and windy with sleet and hail on 21st and a very wet day on 22nd. There was a considerable improvement from 24th with temperatures reaching a very pleasant 16°C on 25th and 26th, the first Brimstone Butterfly of the year appearing on the former date. It remained very mild to the end of the month with temperatures reaching 19°C on 30th.

Winter thrushes started to disappear this month and the last Redwing was reported on 25th. Fieldfares hung on a bit longer, six being seen on the Willow Path on 29th. As winter visitors disappeared the first summer visitors started to arrive, very early in the case of Sand Martins. A single bird on 5th was the earliest ever record. By the end of the month up to 40 could be seen over the Lagoon and around the nesting bank. The first Chiffchaff was reported on the Willow Path on

8th and there were daily records thereafter with as many as four singing from 12th.

On the wetlands up to four Oystercatchers were present some days but the additional birds were far from welcome and a particularly vicious battle took place in the Lagoon between one of the resident birds and an intruder on 31st, the birds seemingly trying to drown each other. Duck numbers were generally low but Gadwall did reach 22 on 15th. Teal numbers started to fall away in the latter part of the month but 27 were on the Wet Grassland early in the day on 12th. Goldeneye failed to reach the record counts of last March with a best of just six on 5th. A male Pochard was present throughout the month and a male Chestnut Teal was a surprise visitor on 19th.

Kingfishers finally put in an appearance with a bird seen on six dates. Water Rails were also reported on six dates with sightings on the Lagoon, Duck Marsh and Wet Grassland. There were many more sightings of Snipe on the Duck Marsh this month with eight on 12th, 15 on 22nd and 12 on 30th (with another four on the Lagoon).

Other sightings this month included Red Kites on eight dates with four on one date, Common Buzzards on 12 dates with up to five birds reported, a Peregrine Falcon on four dates, Grey Wagtails on three dates with two on two occasions, Cetti's Warbler on six dates, two Siskins on 4th and one on 22nd, three Woodcock in the Coppice on 6th and two on 13th, a Goldcrest on 12th and 22nd and a Dipper on the Fish Pass on 13th. Goosanders were seen on the river most days with seven on 25th. Up to four were reported on the Lagoon. A few Meadow Pipits started to pass through this month and a single Curlew flew over on 25th.

Green Woodpeckers are far from common here so one in the Manager's Garden on 26th was a bonus. A Yellowhammer there on 4th was the first record since 15th March 2015. With Grey Squirrel activity in the Manager's Garden and at the nest box, Little Owls had been conspicuous by their absence but one was seen there on 24th and 29th.

Tim's Field was cut and ploughed in the latter part of the month but the Linnet flock continued to find seed there with up to 43 counted. On the

farmland a single Pink-footed Goose was seen on six dates and a Grey Partridge was an unexpected sighting there on 15th.

Several hundred Harlequin Ladybirds emerged from hibernation in the recesses of the Reedbed Hide on 24th. Another mass emergence occurred at the Dragonfly Ponds, around 200 Toads arriving from the Scrubland on 31st for their annual mating ritual.

April

April is always a good month for the birdwatcher. The main rush of summer visitors gets underway and the arrival of the Common Terns is always eagerly awaited. It was an exceptionally dry month and it was unfortunate that the Easter Egg Hunt on 16th had one of the few damp ones but it was, nevertheless, amazingly well supported. There were some beautiful sunny days to bring out some butterflies and temperatures reached 23°C on 9th but were back down to 12°C the next day. Chilly northerly or north westerly winds were often a feature and this probably held back many migrants. There were even wintry showers of hail and sleet on 25th with the temperature down to 7°C for a couple of days.

The first Willow Warblers and Blackcaps were very early, a Willow Warbler singing in the Coppice on 1st (nine days earlier than last year) and a Blackcap near the car park on the same date. On the wetlands the first Sedge Warbler was reported on the Duck Marsh on 16th and the first Reed Warbler in the same area the next day. Roadside brambles often produce the first Common Whitethroat of the spring and this year was no exception, a bird being seen here on 19th, four days later than last year. Grasshopper Warblers were heard “reeling” on the same date and one was seen by the Dragonfly Ponds on 26th. Garden Warblers are always among the later arrivals and a bird in roadside trees by the Lagoon on 29th was the first of the year, five days earlier than last year.

The first Swallow arrived on 1st and there were daily sightings thereafter but House Martins were typically hard to find and we had to wait until 29th for the first two birds over the farmland.

Wheatears were conspicuous by their absence last year but single birds were seen this year on 12th and 29th and on 30th three were reported on the farmland muck heap. Common Redstarts are infrequent visitors but last year was the best yet with sightings on eight dates. This year started well with a male in the Coppice on 5th, 16th and 17th.

Around the middle of April all eyes were on the Lagoon awaiting the arrival of the first Common Tern. This year the first bird arrived a week later than last year on 22nd, a second bird appearing the next day. The Oystercatcher pair on the middle island already had three eggs by 6th but only two chicks made their first appearance on 22nd. Additional birds were seen most days with up to six at times and a pair mating on the Reedbed on 16th. The Great Crested Grebes also chose a nest site on the middle island on the Lagoon and by 18th five eggs had been laid. Goosanders were seen on the Reedbed on several dates and towards the end of the month a female was seen at the nest box in the big tree at the top of the Fish Pass.

There were no early ducklings reported this month but on 15th a Weasel was photographed on the Willow Path carrying a young Moorhen back to its den.

Spring wader passage here is always light but it was encouraging to be able to report a Common Sandpiper on six dates with two birds on two dates. A Little Ringed Plover was on the Duck Marsh on 4th and two were on the Reedbed on 9th. A Redshank flew over Poplar Field on 12th. Curlew activity was very disappointing with a single bird heard on 4th only the second record of the year. One or two Lapwings were present most days.

Other sightings this month included around 30 Waxwings in the poplars on 1st, the last three Fieldfares of the spring on the same date, a Peregrine Falcon on three dates, a male Mandarin Duck on four dates, Kingfishers on four dates, Cetti's Warbler on just two dates (disappointing), two Grey Partridge on 6th, a Rook over Tim's Field on 9th (a scarce bird here), Tawny Owl on 25th and a Treecreeper on 30th – surprisingly the first record of the year. Common Buzzards were reported on 12 dates with six seen on one occasion. Little Owl activity in the Manager's Garden increased considerably this month with

sightings most days, two birds on several occasions and birds seen at the nest box. Barn Owls were rather more elusive but a bird was seen at the nest box on the Scrubland briefly at dusk on 5th and 25th.

Despite the lack of vegetation on Tim's Field this month the Linnet flock continued to find seed for a time and up to 70 birds were present on occasions. The birds finally departed around the middle of the month.

May

Temperatures reached 20°C in the first half of the month with some pleasant warm, sunny days. There was a cooler, wet spell around the middle of the month but with high pressure dominating from 21st temperatures soared to 25°C and several beautiful, sunny days brought out some early dragonflies. Banded Demoiselles were seen in some numbers along the riverbank – an encouraging sign after a poor year for them last year. Brimstone butterflies were reported on five dates and the first Red Admiral appeared on 20th.

Summer visitors continued to arrive and the first two Swifts were seen over the Lagoon on 2nd. Around 30 were wheeling over the Swift Tower on 6th but most reports were of no more than two or three birds. Common Whitethroat numbers built steadily and 15 were recorded during an early morning survey on 14th. A Lesser Whitethroat was seen on 6th and 7th. Two Ring Ouzels that flew over on 6th were a new species for the Reserve. A Cuckoo is a rare event these days but one was heard and seen in trees near the Lagoon on 30th.

On the wetlands four Great Crested Grebe chicks made their first appearance on the Lagoon on 7th but only three were seen from 17th. Two additional adults were present on 24th. A well grown juvenile Little Grebe was on the Duck Marsh on 23rd. The two Common Terns were in residence on one of the rafts throughout the month. A pair of Moorhens set up home on a second raft and six chicks were seen there on 21st. Sadly the two Oystercatcher chicks were not seen again after 7th but up to seven adults were reported on occasions though there was no further evidence of nesting. A male Shelduck was on the Lagoon on 3rd and two flew over on 20th. By the middle of the month 115 nesting holes had been excavated in the Sand Martin bank.

A female Bufflehead - a rare vagrant duck from North America - was on the Reedbed from 11th to 14th but we will probably never know whether it was a genuine wild bird. A Little Egret was reported on two dates.

Wader activity in general was very limited with a single Redshank on 1st, a Common Sandpiper on 7th and a Little Ringed Plover on 13th. However, it was an excellent month for Lapwings with up to 11 birds on Tim's Field. On 24th the field was walked by volunteers to check for nests prior to seed sowing – two nests each with one egg were found. A late Snipe was reported on the Duck Marsh on 19th.

Other sightings included two Grey Wagtails on 12th and a Peregrine Falcon on 31st. Kingfishers were recorded on just four dates – three of these on the river. Grass cutting on the farmland is always guaranteed to bring in Red Kites and Common Buzzards. Red Kites were recorded on nine dates this month with three on one date and Buzzards were seen on eight dates with two on two dates. An Osprey that flew low over the Scrubland at 8.50pm on 11th was only the third record for the Reserve and almost certainly the same bird that spent some three weeks fishing on ponds near the airport.

Activity was reported at several nest boxes. Little Owls were seen on 10 dates in the vicinity of the box in the Manager's Garden. Barn Owls were a little more elusive but a bird was seen emerging from the pole box on the Scrubland at 9.30pm on 11th. Kestrels were seen regularly at the east facing box in the compound. Eight Great Tit chicks fledged from the camera box on the side of the Visitor Centre on 29th.

The first Harvest Mouse release of 2017 was made this month, a total of 100 mice going into the soft release pens on the Scrubland on 18th.

June

It proved to be the 5th warmest June on record countrywide but it was certainly a month of extremes. After a very mixed and unsettled start, high pressure dominated from the middle of the month with temperatures reaching 29°C on 21st (35°C at Heathrow) - the hottest June day since 1979. Things went rapidly downhill from 23rd with temperatures as low as 15°C but it did at least stay dry for the 2nd Leeds

Birdfair on 24th albeit quite windy. The weather deteriorated significantly from 27th with grey skies and two inches of rain in a period of 48 hours. The month ended on a very unsettled note.

Much of the action was on the Lagoon this month and the Lagoon Hide was certainly the place to be. Gadwall seemed to be everywhere, undeterred by a thick blanket of algae. The first ducklings appeared on 4th and further families were reported as the month progressed. Families were also seen on the Wet Grassland and Reedbed. Two Common Tern chicks made their first appearance on one of the rafts on 7th and a third chick was seen on 14th. But it never goes smoothly and one chick launched itself from the raft on 26th. On 27th it did manage to get back on a raft but, unfortunately, on one occupied by Black-headed Gulls with one chick. The Black-headed Gulls viciously attacked and killed the young tern. The first Sand Martin juveniles were much in evidence this month and a total of 145 nesting holes were counted in the nesting bank on 26th. An Osprey paid a further visit on 7th and was seen over the Lagoon. The three Great Crested Grebe juveniles were present throughout the month.

Following extensive work digging out excessive reed the previous winter the Reedbed had looked quite bare and open this year but by the beginning of June the young reed was growing strongly and providing plenty of cover for Reed Warblers and Reed Buntings. Reed Warblers seemed to be particularly numerous this year with far fewer Sedge Warblers. But the Kingfisher Pool failed to live up to its name with most sightings of this beautiful bird on the river.

Mute Swans have nested on both the Wet Grassland and Duck Marsh over recent years and while birds were seen on nests at both sites no cygnets were reported this year.

Other species seen included Red Kites on 10 dates with three on one date, Common Buzzard on four dates, a Peregrine Falcon over the Lagoon on 18th, a Little Owl on six dates, a Lesser Whitethroat on 17th and 18th and a very late Snipe on the Duck Marsh on 21st. A Grey Wagtail was seen on 17th and on 23rd two adults were seen with three young by the canal swing bridge. A Cetti's Warbler heard at the edge of the Lagoon on 11th was the first record since 28th April. A Little Egret was present daily from 10th, usually on the Wet Grassland. Two birds

were reported on 26th. Swallows again nested successfully in the dumper truck shed and five young were reported being fed at the Dragonfly Ponds on 26th.

Work on an extension to the Manager's Garden Hide got underway this month. Himalayan Balsam removal and Ragwort removal on the wildflower meadows also started in the latter part of the month.

July

Low pressure dominated for much of the month and the wind was often a feature, becoming very strong and blustery some days. Temperatures fluctuated considerably, reaching 27°C on 6th but as low as 15°C just five days later. Temperatures again reached 27°C on 18th but dropped back to 17°C on 22nd with some heavy rain. The first public Bat Night on 22nd got the worst of the weather with steady rain throughout but the second event on 29th enjoyed a very pleasant evening though there were some ominous clouds. Despite the weather up to 10 species of butterfly were recorded on the Butterfly Bank.

On the Lagoon the remaining two young Common Terns fledged successfully and all four birds were flying round on 9th. Sightings became less frequent thereafter but three were over the Wet Grassland on 19th and an adult was back on the raft on 30th. The Great Crested Grebe family dwindled this month, with only one adult after 5th, two juveniles from 15th and just one juvenile from 29th. Up to six Tufted Ducks were on the Lagoon but there was again no evidence of successful nesting. This species has now only bred successfully once since 2009.

Up to 10 Little Grebes were seen on the wetlands and two nests were reported on the Lagoon this month but, unusually, there were no reports of families of young. It had been quite a disappointing year for Kingfisher sightings on the wetlands but there was a distinct improvement this month with sightings on 10 dates. A Little Egret was present throughout the month, often on the Wet Grassland, with two birds between 12th and 15th. A Water Rail in the Reedbed on 16th was the first sighting of this elusive bird since 29th March. A Snipe was also seen in the Reedbed on 21st. Other waders were thin on the ground with just a single Common Sandpiper on two dates.

It proved to be another successful year for the Kestrels in the east facing box in the compound, one juvenile appearing on the ledge of the box on 2nd and three on 5th. Like most years, the birds soon vacated the box with no sightings there after 15th. The Little Owls were seen near their box in the Manager's Garden on a couple of occasions but one was also seen at the north facing Barn Owl box in the compound! Disappointingly, there was no activity at the Barn Owl box on the Scrubland but a Barn Owl was seen over the Reedbed on 15th and over the Wet Grassland on 17th – both daytime sightings. One was also seen briefly on the Scrubland at 9.20pm on 29th during the second Bat Night event.

Juvenile birds were much in evidence this month. Up to three young Jays were seen in the Manager's Garden. Juvenile Bullfinches were regular visitors to the feeders there in the second half of the month with five seen on 23rd. A juvenile Great Spotted Woodpecker was also reported on several occasions. A large flock of Goldfinches feeding on seed heads on Mike Fisk Meadow included many young birds. Up to 200 birds were reported. Up to six juvenile Swallows were counted at the edge of the Scrubland at the beginning of the month, probably recently fledged from the nests in the dumper truck shed. Two juvenile Sedge Warblers were reported at the Dragonfly Ponds on 29th.

It was a good month for Lapwings. Up to four pairs were thought to have nested on Tim's Field this year and an adult and one small chick were seen on the Willow Path on 3rd. Two chicks were photographed there on 8th. Birds gathered on the Wet Grassland and Reedbed during the month with up to 21 counted including as many as seven juveniles.

Other sightings this month included a Tree Sparrow over John Ackroyd Meadow on 1st, a Tawny Owl heard on 17th, a Cuckoo on 19th, Linnets on three dates with five on 26th, a Grey Wagtail on 1st and 30th with two on 10th, Common Buzzard on five dates with two on 23rd and Red Kites on eight dates with five over the farmland during grass cutting on 15th. It had been another poor year for House Martins but there were sightings on five dates this month with a best count of nine on 26th.

It was an excellent month for Weasel sightings with reports from all round the Reserve but the road just below the Visitor Centre was

particularly productive as it always has been. It was also a better month for Fox sightings after a disappointing first six months with sightings on five dates including a juvenile at the roadside by the Lagoon Hide on 16th.

A release of Grey Partridges was made this month and the birds appeared to settle in well, up to four being seen on John Ackroyd Meadow. There was also a further release of Harvest Mice on 13th – 55 going into the release pens on the Scrubland.

Outdoor volunteers endured some unpleasant conditions at times but work on the extension to the Manager's Garden Hide continued throughout the month as did removal of Himalayan Balsam on the wetlands.

August

Low pressure again dominated for much of the month with a lot of windy days and some very wet ones. The weather was far from pleasant for the Summer Fair on 19th with a blustery westerly wind and squally showers at times but, as always, the event was very well supported. A Moth Trap Opening event on 23rd endured heavy rain, thunder and lightning, participants having to shelter under a gazebo. More than three weeks of rain fell in one hour that day in parts of the county. There was some warm sunshine at times but this failed to attract more than a handful of butterflies to the abundance of buddleia in flower outside the Visitor Centre. Numbers of Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells were particularly disappointing.

August is always a quiet time for the birdwatchers with common species suddenly hard to find as they go into moult at the end of the breeding season. The contact calls of Chiffchaffs and Willow Warblers could be heard all around the Reserve but seeing them was another matter. Juvenile Chiffchaffs could be heard daily and occasionally seen in bushes by the ramp to the Butterfly Bank just across from the Visitor Centre. Common Whitethroats were reported on just three dates with a Lesser Whitethroat on one date. Spotted Flycatchers, however, proved obliging with sightings on five dates – this is not a common bird here. On the wetlands the reedbeds fell silent with Reed Buntings, Reed Warblers and Sedge Warblers all proving very elusive.

On the Lagoon a Great Crested Grebe and one juvenile were present throughout the first half of the month but these had gone by 17th. There was a late report of a Common Tern carrying a fish on 6th but there were no other sightings. Two families of Little Grebes finally appeared this month with three chicks on the Lagoon and just one on the Duck Marsh. There were several sightings of Water Rails on the Reedbed and Duck Marsh in the last week of the month with a juvenile seen on the Duck Marsh on two occasions. It was another good month for Kingfisher sightings with birds seen on 11 dates. Little Egrets were less easy to find this month with a single bird on just five dates. Up to eight Cormorants roosted on the pylon behind the Fish Pass but 13 were seen on 28th. A single Snipe was seen in the Reedbed on 12th.

Activity at the Sand Martin Bank tailed off towards the end of the month but large numbers of birds could be seen over the Reserve most evenings. House Martins were typically thin on the ground apart from one excellent count of 60+ on 27th with just three records and no more than two birds. Young Swallows were still being fed at nests in the dumper truck shed and five juveniles were seen on the shed door and roof on 20th. Swift numbers started to fall away but one or two birds were still being seen at the end of the month.

Other sightings this month included a Peregrine Falcon on 5th and 26th, an Osprey on 13th and 17th, a Little Owl on six dates, a Green Sandpiper on 9th, three Tree Sparrows flying over on 13th, a Coal Tit on 16th – only the second record this year, a Grasshopper Warbler heard on 23rd, Grey Wagtail on three dates with two on one date and Grey Partridges on six dates with up to five birds reported. Common Buzzards were seen on six dates with five on 27th. Meadow cutting on 10th brought in two Red Kites with one or two birds reported on three subsequent dates. Goldfinch flocks fed on thistle seed heads throughout the month and up to 24 were counted on the feeders in the Bee Garden.

September

After a poor summer there were hopes that we would have a fine, settled September but it was not to be. It was much wetter than average and often windy. Storm Aileen promised winds of 75mph

overnight on 12th/13th but North and South Yorkshire bore the brunt of it and we escaped with just the usual moderate westerly. When the sun did shine Red Admirals were present in some numbers on the buddleias outside the Visitor Centre but the anticipated emergence of Small Tortoiseshells and Peacocks failed to materialize.

A few summer visitors hung on but many had gone by the end of August. There were late records of one or two Swifts, the last on the very late date of 17th. Three Sand Martins over the Lagoon on 2nd proved to be the last of the year after another successful breeding season. There were also a few reports of House Martins in what had been a very poor year, a count of 14 on 10th being the highest of the year. Swallows were recorded throughout the month, 39 flying through in a south easterly direction on 24th. Single Sedge Warblers were seen by the Lagoon and at the Dragonfly Ponds on 3rd and a Reed Warbler was reported on the Duck Marsh on 16th but there were no other sightings.

At this time of year large numbers of birds are on the move, many passing over the Reserve without stopping. Meadow Pipits are seen on the Reserve less often these days but small groups were recorded flying over in southerly/south easterly direction on a number of dates with the best count of 115 in a two hour spell on 10th. Skylarks too are now scarce visitors to the Reserve but birds were recorded flying through on three dates with 14 on 24th. Around 90 Pink-footed Geese flew over in a south easterly direction on 17th.

Tim's Field was looking at its best this month with a particularly good crop of Quinoa in flower, colours ranging from yellow through to red. The seed pods of the Fodder Radish were far from ripe but a small Linnet flock started to build with 31 counted on 24th. A few passage migrants start to pass through in September and stop to feed up for a day or so and Tim's Field is usually a good place to look for them. Single Stonechats started to be seen from 23rd and a Whinchat was reported there on 30th. However, the first Whinchat was seen on the Duck Marsh of all places on 2nd and 3rd. Two Spotted Flycatchers were reported on the dead tree at the edge of the Manager's Garden on 9th.

On the wetlands Little Egrets were seen daily, the large majority of sightings on the Reedbed with usually two or three birds present but

four on one date. Water Rails were reported most days with sightings on the Duck Marsh, Reedbed and Lagoon. A juvenile was recorded on the Duck Marsh on several dates. It was the best month of the year so far for Kingfishers with daily sightings, one bird even fishing on the new Dipping Pond on 25th. Teal numbers started to build with two double figure counts, the best 17 on 24th. A female Goldeneye was seen on the Lagoon on six dates from 13th and a Shoveler was there on 10th. The first Wigeon of the autumn arrived on 6th with nine birds present by the end of the month. Following a successful breeding season Gadwall numbers reached 74 on 23rd.

Other sightings this month included a Peregrine Falcon on three dates, Common Buzzard on seven dates with two on two dates, a Little Owl on six dates, a Red Kite on four dates and a Grey Wagtail on five dates. Goldcrests start to appear in the autumn and the first ones were reported on 16th and 30th. Two Tree Sparrows were surprise visitors to the feeders in the Bee Garden on 16th with one there again the next day. Two Rooks flying over on 2nd and 17th were only the second and third records this year - this is still a very infrequent visitor to the Reserve. Coal Tits too are infrequent but single birds were reported on three dates this month. The recently introduced Grey Partridges continued to be seen throughout the month with up to four birds reported. Jays were particularly numerous this month on their acorn and hazelnut forays.

On the habitat management front, water levels on the Duck Marsh, Reedbed and Wet Grassland were progressively lowered this month in preparation for cutting in October. The Harvest Mouse Breeding Programme was still in full swing and a further 66 mice were released on the Scrubland on 14th.

October

It was a very windy month but also very mild for the most part. The month started on a wild note with strong to gale-force winds overnight on 1st and 2nd and there was little let up but temperatures generally were well above normal for the time of year reaching 20°C around the middle of the month. Ex-hurricane Ophelia brought gale-force winds overnight on 16th following a very strange, calm, warm day with a yellow, misty haze caused by dust from the Sahara and smoke from

the forest fires in Portugal. It was another windy day for the final event of the year - Pie and Peas and the Fungus Foray - but at least it stayed dry. Temperatures fell away somewhat in the last few days of the month with the first frost of the autumn on the night of 29th.

The month produced plenty of activity on the wetlands for the birdwatchers. Low water levels on the Wet Grassland provided good opportunities to see the normally elusive Water Rails. There were numerous sightings with up to three birds seen at once. One or two Snipe were also reported by the eagle-eyed some days. The Wet Grassland and Reedbed were also the best places to see Little Egrets with daily sightings up to 22nd and up to four birds seen.

On the Lagoon a female Pintail was present on 1st and 6th, a female Pochard on 8th and two female Shovelers were reported on several dates but Tufted Ducks were conspicuous by their complete absence. Up to 16 Wigeon were to be seen in the first half of the month but numbers fell away in the latter half. Some of the best Gadwall counts were made later in the afternoon with 107 counted on 15th. It was nice to see Coot numbers building with 40 on 18th the highest October count since 2012.

Tim's Field was again worth checking for Stonechats and Whinchats in the first few days of the month with as many as seven Stonechats on 8th in a fairly small area of the field. Whinchats were less easy to find with just one on 1st. Linnet numbers on the field fluctuated with as few as five some days but 50+ on 21st.

Winter thrushes start to arrive this month with Redwings first. A total of 571 were counted flying over in a westerly direction during a three hour period on 8th and an amazing 2,230 in a similar period on 21st. A few did drop in and 50 were reported in a hedgerow near the Dragonfly Ponds on 20th. The first Fieldfares - seven - flew over in a westerly direction on 25th.

Visible migration was much in evidence this month with Meadow Pipits, Skylarks, Siskins and a few Lesser Redpolls all passing overhead. Golden Plovers haven't been recorded on the Reserve since 2008 but 11 flew over in a northerly direction on 8th and nine in a south westerly direction on 25th.

Other sightings this month included a female Blackcap on 7th, a Merlin over the Visitor Centre on 14th, a Yellowhammer on 25th, Goldcrests on six dates with four on one date, Grey Wagtails on four dates, Chiffchaffs on five dates, a Red Kite on three dates and Common Buzzards on six dates with four on one occasion. There were more reports of Coal Tits this month with two in the Coppice on 15th and singles in the Manager's Garden on three dates. A Little Owl was seen on four dates, one being spotted flying out of the Manager's Garden Hide at closing time on 4th. Tree Sparrows were recorded flying over on two dates but on 25th five were on the feeders in the Bee Garden. The last Swallows of the year were reported on 8th.

It was a good month for Peregrine Falcons, the pylon on the farmland always worth checking with birds seen here on six dates with two on a couple of occasions. On 22nd two were reported over the Reserve, one carrying a dove or pigeon in its talons. Peregrines are becoming increasingly frequent visitors but Marsh Harriers have never been reported here - at least not until this month. On 8th two were photographed flying over the Reserve at different times.

A further release of Grey Partridges was made on 4th and birds showed well throughout the month with up to seven seen on John Ackroyd Meadow.

On the work front, the main ditches on the Wet Grassland were cleared out by volunteers this month to assist draining of the area prior to cutting. The freshly cleared ditches certainly proved popular with Kingfishers with a number of sightings here. The back Duck Marsh was also cut and reflooded. The tern rafts were beached for the winter and work started on clearing out the holes in the Sand Martin nesting bank.

November

Temperatures fluctuated throughout the first three weeks of the month, reaching 12°C or 13°C some days but there were some frosty nights and chilly days too. It was much more unsettled from 20th with rain and very windy at times but temperatures nevertheless reached a very mild 14°C on 22nd. Temperatures plummeted from 24th with a dusting of

snow the following day and some ice on the wetlands. Wintry showers in the last few days of the month saw temperatures down to 4°C.

Attempts to give the Wet Grassland its annual cut on 3rd and 4th proved fruitless with two tractors stuck in deep silt for a time. As a result water levels were left low throughout the month and the area continued to provide daily sightings of Water Rails with up to four reported. The Reedbed and Lagoon were also productive for sightings of this secretive species. The freshly cleared main ditch on the Wet Grassland was also the best place to see Kingfishers with sightings most days.

On the Lagoon Tufted Ducks made a welcome return, numbers building up to 10 by the end of the month. A few Wigeon were present daily but no more than six. Gadwall numbers fell away somewhat this month with a best count of just 48 on 19th during a WeBS visit. Teal numbers were very disappointing with a best count of just 11 on 7th. A single Goldeneye was reported on several dates and a pair of Shovelers were present from the middle of the month. A single Little Egret was seen in the Reedbed daily up to 18th. On the Duck Marsh Snipe were the species to find and there were daily sightings with up to seven reported.

Goose numbers started to build on the farmland this month with Greylags far outnumbering Canadas. On 19th around 410 Greylag Geese flew off the farmland and onto the Lagoon at dusk - by far the highest ever count on the Reserve. Around 250 were on the farmland on 26th - this the next best count. Canada Geese numbers were much lower with a best count of just 91. A single Pink-footed Goose was picked out in the flocks of geese on three dates but large numbers passed over the Reserve in the first few days of the month with c750 on 3rd and c500 on 5th.

Winter thrushes were thin on the ground with small groups of Redwings flying over on 4th and 5th but none subsequently. A total of 52 Fieldfares flew over on 5th and five on 25th but there were no other sightings. Potentially overwintering Chiffchaffs were reported on seven dates and a male Blackcap on two dates. Goldcrests are very much autumn visitors here and are never particularly common but this month was exceptional with daily sightings all around the Reserve and up to five birds reported. The manure heap on the farmland came into its own

this month with both Pied and Grey Wagtails providing regular sightings.

It was another good month for Peregrine Falcons with sightings on six dates with a bird reported feeding on prey on the pylon on the farmland on three dates. A Common Buzzard was seen on five dates and Red Kites on seven dates.

The majority of Meadow Pipit records these days are of “flyovers” so it was nice to be able to report seven in the compound on 8th and two on the farmland manure heap on 25th. Linnet numbers started to build on Tim’s Field this month with a best count of around 100 birds. One or two keen-eyed observers picked out a Twite among them on two dates - the first record of this upland species since 2003. However, the bird of the month was almost certainly the Ring Ousel photographed on Mike Fisk Meadow on 4th - this only the second record for the Reserve following the sighting of two on 6th May this year.

Other sightings this month included a Little Owl on two dates, a Woodcock on one date at dusk and two Siskins on two dates. There was evidence of a Barn Owl roosting overnight in the thatched gazebo from the beginning of the month but no actual sightings of the bird itself. The recently released Grey Partridges continued to show well with sightings most days and up to five birds reported. November is not exactly the best month for seeing butterflies but a Red Admiral in pristine condition seen from the Willow Path Hide on 19th was the latest ever record for this species by some six days.

November is a busy month for the volunteers with willow coppicing in full swing. Work started on rebuilding the dead hedges along the Willow Path this month using the cut willow.

December

An Arctic blast brought snow and strong winds to parts of the UK in the early part of the month. We missed the snow but it was extremely cold with daytime temperatures struggling to get much above zero. Temperatures never exceeded minus 1°C for the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) on 10th and much of the wetlands were frozen over. It became much milder from 19th with temperatures as high as 12°C for a few days

including Christmas Day. Temperatures fell away again on Boxing Day and on the morning of 29th around three inches of snow fell in just a few hours. Fortunately, it disappeared within twenty four hours and the year ended on a less cold note.

The Willow Path was the place to find the birdwatchers this month with as many as five overwintering Chiffchaffs in the Coppice and numerous Goldcrests but the main highlight was the Firecrest, a new bird for the Reserve, which was first seen here on 17th and was still present on 31st. Winter thrushes were still thin on the ground with a best count of just 23 Redwings in the poplars on 31st and no more than 13 Fieldfares.

Despite a lot of ice on the wetlands in the first half of the month there was a reasonable amount of wildfowl activity. Tufted Duck numbers continued to rise on the Lagoon reaching 25 on 20th. Shoveler numbers finally started to rise, reached eight on 16th with nine on the Lagoon on 31st. Goldeneyes were seen on several dates with four over the Christmas period. Two Pochard arrived on 13th and stayed until the end of the year. A few Goosanders came onto the Lagoon towards dusk some days with eight on 10th and seven on 31st. Gadwall numbers though continued to fall this month with a best count of just 24 on 10th. Unusually, Mallard provided one of the duck highlights with some exceptional numbers in the last few days of the month on the Duck Marsh. Counts of 108 on 23rd and 91 on 24th were the highest ever recorded in December.

Still on the wetlands, a Cetti's Warbler seen and heard just outside the Lagoon Hide on 2nd and 27th was the first since 11th June. The Lagoon was also the best place to see Water Rails this month with two birds reported on four dates.

Water levels on the Wet Grassland were kept low throughout the month but the main ditch here continued to be the best place to see Kingfishers throughout the month. A Kingfisher was also seen well away from the wetlands on one of the Dipping Ponds on two dates. The Duck Marsh was the place for Snipe with sightings most days and a best count of 13 on 30th.

Canada Geese numbers on the farmland reached 155 on 16th - the highest ever December count. After last month's record counts,

however, Greylag Geese numbers fell away sharply this month with a best on the farmland of just 80 birds. Around 200 Pink-footed Geese were recorded flying over in a westerly direction on 31st. Other flyovers included eight Golden Plover on 10th and seven Lapwings on the same date.

Other sightings included a Dipper on the river on 4th, a Woodcock on 9th, 24 Meadow Pipits flying west on 10th, a Treecreeper near the bridge on 16th, Peregrine Falcons on six dates with two on two dates, Common Buzzards on nine dates with two on one date and Red Kites on 11 dates with six on 31st. A Barn Owl continued to roost in the thatched gazebo throughout the month.

Tim's Field continued to attract good numbers of Linnets this month with 155 reported on 10th and 108 on 16th. A flock of up to 40 Chaffinches was less usual here, these almost certainly winter visitors from the continent.

It was another busy month for volunteers, often working in very cold conditions, coppicing and rebuilding the dead hedges along the Willow Path. Work also started on the rebuilding of the old Manager's Garden Hide this month.

Introduction to the Systematic List of Birds

The bird's name is followed by the Latin name and a description of its status on the Reserve. In order to do this, each bird has been placed in one of the following categories:

Resident	A species which is found on the Reserve throughout the year but has not yet been proved to have bred on the Reserve.
Resident Breeder	All or part of the local population is present throughout the year and breeds on the Reserve.
Migrant Breeder	Breeds on the Reserve but all or most of the breeding population departs in autumn or winter.
Casual Breeder	Has bred irregularly on the Reserve and is likely to do so again.
Winter Visitor	All or part of the population breeds away from the Reserve but either spends the winter here or has visited the Reserve on at least 25 occasions in the winter months.
Migrant Visitor	A species which is found on the Reserve in spring and/or summer but has not yet been proved to have bred here. Most or all depart in autumn and/or winter.
Passage Visitor	Has occurred on 25 or more occasions as a passage migrant in spring and/or winter.
Frequent Visitor	A species which visits the Reserve throughout the year or a good part of the year but does not breed here.

Infrequent Visitor	Has occurred on more than 10 but fewer than 25 occasions as either a passage or a winter visitor.
Scarce Visitor	Has occurred on the Reserve on only 10 occasions or less
Escaped Species	Used where there is a possibility that some (but not necessarily all) records of a species refer to birds that have escaped from captivity.

The observer's initials appear in brackets after some records.

Abbreviations used in the Report:

BTO	British Trust for Ornithology
c	approximately
<i>et al</i>	and others
RNR	Rodley Nature Reserve
WeBS	BTO Wetland Bird Survey
YNU	Yorkshire Naturalists Union

Systematic List of Birds Recorded

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* Resident Breeder

Last year the Duck Marsh pair raised eight young and all eight were still together at the end of the year. The Wet Grassland pair produced six cygnets but, as in 2015, they all disappeared within a few days. The Duck Marsh eight were still together in the first week of January but were not seen after 7th. The Duck Marsh adults remained on site and up to five additional adults were reported in January. On 30th January a ringed juvenile hit power lines on John Ackroyd Meadow suffering a wound on the left leg. The bird was moved onto one of the dipping ponds for safety and the following day it was taken onto the river and released. The ring number was reported and we were told the bird had been ringed not far away on the canal at Rodley on 2nd September 2016. Up to seven adults were seen through February, March and into early April. The resident birds were sitting on nests at the eastern end of the Wet Grassland and the western end of the Duck Marsh from the beginning of April but activity soon died away at the Wet Grassland nest. On 22nd April a bird was observed rebuilding this nest but there were no subsequent reports of cygnets at either nest which is most unusual here. No more than three adults were present throughout June, July and August and usually just two but five adults were on the Lagoon during a WeBS count on 10th September. On 20th September a bird with a yellow ring number 23 was seen on the Duck Marsh. This bird was ringed at Yeadon Tarn on 12th February 2015 and was recorded on the Reserve in November 2015 and 2016. Up to four adults were recorded on the wetlands in October and November and seven flew over in a westerly direction on 25th November (JWC) but there were just two birds left on the Lagoon in December.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* Scarce (Winter) Visitor

These birds are most likely to be seen on their journey to and from their breeding grounds in Iceland, March and October being the best months. However, the only records this year were on 14th January - a single bird on the Lagoon briefly before being chased off by Mute Swans (JWC/BM). What was almost certainly the same bird was also recorded flying over Tim's Field on the same date (DC/EC). There were sightings on just one date in 2016 - a single bird flying over on 10th December - and on six dates in 2015, four of these flyovers.

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus* **Passage Visitor**

A single bird was on the farmland with Greylag Geese on 1st and 4th January and again from 26th February to 19th March. Flocks are recorded flying over in autumn and winter most years. Around 50 flew over in an easterly direction on 21st January (JWC) and 300+ were seen moving in a westerly direction on 5th February (PC). The first autumn flock passed overhead on 17th September - 90+ birds flying in a south easterly direction (JWC). There was a big movement of birds in the first week of November. Four skeins totaling around 750 birds flew over south east on 3rd (JB *et al*) and 500+ flew over on 5th (PA/AL). A single bird was again on the farmland with Greylag and Canada Geese from 11th to 14th November (DC/EC *et al*). There were no further sightings until 31st December when c200 flew over the Reserve in a westerly direction (JWC).

Greylag Goose *Anser anser* **Resident Breeder**

Numbers have increased dramatically since November 2014 when the first three figure count was made. In December 2016 numbers reached 145 and in January this year 153 were on the farmland on 14th (PM/BM). Sixty five were recorded on the Lagoon on 1st February (DC/EC) but numbers fell away after this date. A white leucistic individual was seen on the Duck Marsh on 8th April (DC/EC) and this bird was reported on several dates throughout the month. A few remained on the wetlands throughout April and much of May attempting to nest and a female was seen with five goslings on the Lagoon on 21st May. What was probably the same family was seen on the Duck Marsh on 23rd and the Reedbed on 29th May, by this time reduced to four goslings. Birds had vacated the wetlands by the end of May though a few could still be found on the farmland throughout June and July. A few started to return in August with 20 on the Lagoon on 6th (PM/JP) though most sightings were on the farmland, numbers here reaching 128 on 3rd November and 158 on 11th November (PM). An even larger flock of 186 was recorded on the farmland on 19th November during a WeBS count but at dusk the same day around 410 flew onto the Lagoon in two large groups (PM/BM) - a new Reserve record. There were two other big counts on the farmland in November - 217 on 25th and c250 on 26th (DC/EC). Numbers fell away sharply in December with just a handful of birds some days. A few did return in the last few days of the month with 80 on the farmland on 30th (DC/EC). Monthly maxima are shown below (adults only).

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
153	65	44	38	28	11	10	20	10	49	410	80

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis* Resident Breeder

Unlike the Greylag Goose, numbers here over the last couple of years had generally been lower than they once were and there had been no three figure counts in the period from February 2013 to October 2016. This changed from November 2016 when numbers reached 117 and this year there were several large counts. Numbers reported in January and February were the highest for these months since 2010 and in March, April and May the highest ever for those months. A total of 133 were on the farmland on 1st January (JWC) and 129 the next day (PM/BM). There was a further report of 129, this time on the Wet Grassland, on 29th January (DC/EC). The flock grew in February reaching 163 on 4th (DC/EC). As birds started to disperse in the spring one or two pairs did stay to nest and two goslings were reported on the Duck Marsh on 10th May (PA/JT). On 29th May two adults were recorded with one gosling in the Reedbed (DC/EC). Only a handful of birds remained on the Reserve from the middle of June and there were no records at all in July. A few started to return in August but numbers on the farmland only started to build from the beginning of October, reaching 55 on 9th (PM), surprisingly the highest count for that month since 2006. Numbers continued to build in November and a report of 155 on 16th December (DC/EC) was the highest ever December count. Monthly maxima are shown below (adults only).

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
133	163	131	77	59	27	-	44	21	55	91	155

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucosis* Scarce Visitor / Escaped Sp.

There were again no records this year. A single bird seen on the farmland during an early morning WeBS count on 18th April 2010 was the first record since 26th April 2003 and only the second for the Reserve.

Dark-bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* **Scarce Visitor**

This was a new bird for the Reserve in 2016 - a single bird found on the farmland with other geese on 13th November. It stayed until the next day. There were no sightings this year.

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* **Passage Visitor**

It was a very poor year for this spring visitor with just two records. A male was on the Lagoon on 3rd May (PA) and two flew over the Reserve in a westerly direction on 20th May (JWC).

Mandarin *Aix galericulata* **Scarce Visitor/Possible Escape**

First recorded on 4th April 2009, there have been just a handful of sightings since, all in March or April. There was just one sighting in 2014 and none in 2015 or 2016. This year there were sightings on four dates, all in April and probably all of the same male bird. On 4th one dropped briefly onto the Wet Grassland before flying over to the river (LJ). The next day one was reported flying over the Lagoon (ABI). On 8th there were sightings on the river from the River Path (SO *et al*) and on 12th one flew over the Reserve in a westerly direction (GP).

Wigeon *Anas penelope* **Winter Visitor**

Small numbers breed in central and northern Scotland and also in northern England but large numbers visit our shores in the autumn and winter from Iceland, Scandinavia and Russia. As in 2016, the early part of the year was disappointing with no more than four birds reported. There were no sightings after 22nd January until 26th February when a single female was on the Duck Marsh. What was probably the same female was present until 11th March. On 15th March two females were on the Lagoon - this the last record of the spring. The first bird of the autumn arrived on 6th September and by the end of the month nine could be seen on the Lagoon. Numbers reached 28 in October last year but the three double figure counts in October this time were rather lower - 14 on 1st (JWC), 16 on 8th and 14 on 14th (PM) - these proving to be the only double figure counts of the year. Birds were present throughout November but no more than six. There were sightings on the Lagoon or Duck Marsh daily in December with between six and eight most days. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
4	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	9	16	6	8

Gadwall *Anas strepera* Resident Breeder

This species continues to do very well on the Reserve. There were at least eight families of young last year and a count of 132 adults on the Lagoon on 5th October 2016 was the highest number ever recorded here. Numbers peak in September and October and tend to fall away in November. The best count in January this year was only 27, all of these on the Wet Grassland. Numbers remained around this level throughout the spring with the Wet Grassland often proving to be the most popular area during this period. The first family of six ducklings appeared here on 4th June with two more families with a total of 19 ducklings on the Lagoon on the same date (DC/EC). On 18th June 42 adults were counted on the Lagoon with four families of ducklings - a total of 34 ducklings (PM/BM). On 25th June a new family of nine appeared in the Reedbed (PM/JB). New families continued to be reported in July and it seems likely that we had at least 10 families of young this year if not more. Typically, numbers of adults started to increase in September and a total of 80 on 10th during a WeBS visit was the highest of the month. Numbers continued to increase in October reaching 119 later in the day on 15th, 107 of these on the Lagoon (PM/BM). They fell away quite sharply in the latter part of October with a best count of 48 in November (WeBS) - very similar to last November. Numbers continued to fall in December with a best count of 24 again very similar to last year. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
27	21	22	23	18	42	48	48	80	119	48	24

Pintail *Anas acuta* Scarce Visitor

This was a new bird for the Reserve in 2011 and in 2012 there were sightings on two dates. There were then no records between 2013 and 2015. In 2016 what was probably an immature male spent a month on the Lagoon from 21st September to 19th October. This year a female was seen on the Lagoon on 1st and 6th October (JWC *et al*).

Teal *Anas crecca* Winter/Passage Visitor

Winter counts in 2015 and 2016 were well down on previous years and there was little if any improvement this year. This may well be down to

the recent run of mild winters. The best January count of 26 included 24 on the Duck Marsh (PM/BM) but the next best was just 13 (WeBS). Numbers were higher for a time in the last few days of February and the first two weeks of March and a count of 27 on the Wet Grassland on 25th February (JWC) and 12th March (WeBS) proved to be the best of the year. Numbers fell away in the last week of March with less than a handful of birds most days. However, a male and female mating in the Reedbed on 4th April (LJ) raised the possibility that at least one pair might stay to nest. There were sightings on just five dates from the beginning of May to the end of July and of no more than two birds. A best count of three in August was the lowest for that month since 2005. A few birds started to return in September and numbers reached 17 on 24th (JWC) but most counts were in single figures. Numbers in October and November were very disappointing but this was almost certainly due to water levels being kept low for habitat management work. The best count for November of just 11 was the lowest since 2008 and the second lowest ever. There was no improvement in December with a best count of just 12 on 20th the lowest December count since 2010 - probably not helped by low water levels on the Wet Grassland and much of the wetlands being frozen over for a time. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
26	27	27	9	2	2	2	3	17	17	11	12

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* Resident Breeder

A total of 40 during a WeBS visit on 15th January was the highest January count since 2011 and counts in February and March were also the highest for several years, the Wet Grassland holding the most birds. A pair were daily visitors to the Manager’s Garden pond from the end of March and several birds were often to be seen flying to and from the tanks in the compound, often early in the morning and towards dusk. The first family of ducklings (10) was seen on the canal by the swing bridge on 23rd April (PM/BM) and the first evidence of successful nesting on the Reserve - a single duckling - was on the Lagoon on 3rd May (DC/EC). A family of five ducklings was reported on the river on 17th May (DC/EC). On 24th May a family of five ducklings was seen on the Wet Grassland (JB) and on 31st May a family of seven was reported here (DC/EC). Several broken eggs on the bottom path of the

Dragonfly Ponds on 27th May showed that one pair had tried unsuccessfully to nest on the ponds. The first family appeared on the Duck Marsh on 7th June (DC/EC) and on 14th June a family of six ducklings were on the Lagoon (PM/BM). Another family of seven appeared on the Lagoon in July. A count of 50 birds in the Reedbed during the evening on 31st August (BM) was the highest of the month and the best August count since 2012. Numbers fell away in September and were low throughout the autumn. The best count of just 16 in November was the lowest for that month since 2012 and the joint second lowest ever. However, there was a considerable improvement in December, possibly due to the arrival of some very cold weather conditions, and there were some exceptional counts on the Duck Marsh in the latter part of the month - 108 on 23rd, 91 on 24th and 83 on 31st (DC/EC) - the first two being the highest ever December counts on the Reserve. Monthly maxima, adults only, are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
40	38	21	15	23	28	40	50	17	29	16	110

Garganey *Anas querquedula* **Scarce (Summer) Visitor**

There were again no records this year. This species was last seen on the Reserve in June 2015. It has only been recorded in four years - 2003, 2006, 2014 and 2015.

Shoveler *Anas clypeata* **Winter/Passage Visitor**

In winter British breeding birds tend to move south and are replaced by an influx of continental birds from further north. In 2016, most unusually, there were no sightings in the first seven months of the year. This year, apart from a single male on three dates in March, there were no sightings until 10th September when a single female was seen on the Lagoon. Two females were present between 1st and 11th October and a male and female were on the Lagoon throughout the second half of November but it looked like being a very disappointing year. Fortunately, there was a considerable improvement in December with up to nine birds on the Lagoon in the second half of the month and as many as six males. This coincided with a cold snap with a good part of the Lagoon frozen over at times and birds probably relocating from other frozen up sites. We usually have some open water on the Lagoon

even in the coldest of conditions and this can be a big advantage. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	2	9

Pochard *Aythya ferina* Winter/Passage Visitor

There have been a number of double figure counts in the past with 18 in March 2013 the highest. However, 2016 was a disappointing year with no more than two birds recorded and there was no improvement this year. A female was on the Duck Marsh on 1st January and a male was on the Lagoon on the same date (DC/EC *et al*). A single male was then present throughout January. Two males were reported on 4th February (DC/EC) and were present until 22nd February. From 23rd February just one male was recorded until 4th April. There were no further records until 8th October when a female was on the Lagoon for just a day (WeBS). On 13th December two were on the Lagoon (JH) and one or two birds were then present daily to the end of the year. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
2	2	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2

Scaup *Aythya marila* Scarce Visitor

There have been no records in the last three years. In 2014 a female arrived on the Lagoon on 1st February and was present almost daily until 9th March. Prior to this there had been just two records in 2000.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* Casual Breeder

Recent mild winters have led to a much smaller influx of winter visitors from the continent and this year was no exception, though maximum counts in January and February were a little higher than in the previous three years. Numbers in March and April were similar to last year but a best count of eight in May was the lowest for that month since 2005 - not boding well for the forthcoming nesting season though in 2005 four pairs did still manage to raise 23 young. However, successful nesting here has been rare in recent years with just one family of young

since 2009 and there was again no evidence of nesting. A few were on the Lagoon throughout the summer but birds were then completely absent from 18th September and for the first time ever there were no sightings in October. One or two did start to return from 4th November and 10 were on the Lagoon at the end of the month. Icy conditions often bring more in and a cold snap in December certainly helped. A total of 22 were on the ice-free areas on the Lagoon on 10th with a further three on the river (WeBS) and a dusk count on 20th produced 25 birds on the Lagoon (PM/BM) - these the highest counts of the year. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
24	23	14	12	8	8	6	5	6	-	10	25

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra* **Scarce Visitor**

This species breeds across the boreal and subarctic zones of Eurasia and large numbers winter around our shores. There is also a very small Scottish and Irish breeding population. A female or immature bird seen on the Lagoon at 5.30pm on 21st March 2016 (JWC *et al*) was the first ever record for the Reserve. Unfortunately, the bird had gone by the following day. There were no records this year.

Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* **Winter Visitor**

There is a small breeding population in the Scottish highlands but the birds we see on the Lagoon in autumn and winter are almost certainly winter visitors from northern Europe. Numbers of this diving duck tend to peak in February and March with 16 in March last year a record count for the Reserve. Up to seven were on the Lagoon in January this year including five males on 14th (DC/EC). Birds were present daily throughout February with up to eight on the Lagoon. In March there were daily sightings up to 25th with a best count of six on 5th (DC/EC). The first bird of the autumn - a female - was seen on the Lagoon on 13th September (JH *et al*). There were further sightings of a single female on the Lagoon up to 24th September and on the river on 1st October but there was then a gap of a month before a male arrived on the Lagoon on 5th November (MG/PG). A single female was present from 12th November to 26th November. One or two birds were seen from the beginning of December with four on the Lagoon from 26th - one male and three females.

Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
7	8	6	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	4

Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola* **Scarce Visitor**

This North American duck is a rare vagrant to Western Europe. At 8.15pm on 11th May a female was seen and photographed on the Reedbed (BM). The bird stayed until 14th May and was recorded during a WeBS visit that morning. We will probably never know whether it was a genuinely wild bird. It was ringed and had a tag on the other leg.

Goosander *Mergus merganser* **Frequent Visitor**

The gathering of Goosanders on the Lagoon towards dusk in the winter months has always been a feature here but numbers have dropped considerably over recent years. The maximum January count this year of just four birds was the lowest since 2005 and it was to be the first year since 2001 with no winter double figure counts. This may be weather related to a degree as a sustained cold snap used to result in the best numbers and these have been infrequent to say the least in recent years. Maximum winter counts on the Lagoon since 2012 are shown below.

Year	January	February		December
2012	18	29		21
2013	25	12		8
2014	18	13		9
2015	15	4		11
2016	10	8		3
2017	4	7		8

A few birds were reported on the river most days to the end of April, three males and four females seen from the bridge on 25th March being the best count (MG/PG). Four males were seen on the river from the river path on 30th March (JB). Up to five birds were seen on the Reedbed in the latter part of April and a female was seen at the nest box in the big sycamore at the top of the Fish Pass on 26th and 28th

(PM/JB) but, disappointingly, there were no reports of family parties on the river this year which is unusual. One or two birds were seen on a handful of dates in May and five flew over on 13th but there were just two reports of a single female from the end of that month to 27th August when seven flew over (JWC). On 10th September a group of 13 were reported flying over in a southerly direction (JWC). A check of the Goosander nest box in a tree on the river bank behind the Lagoon on 25th September revealed three dead juvenile Grey Squirrels (SF). There were rather more sightings from the beginning of October, mainly on the river and usually of just one or two birds. Numbers remained low throughout November but a few birds did start to come onto the Lagoon towards dusk in December with eight on 10th (JB) and seven on 31st (PM/JB) the best counts. The maximum daily count for each month is shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
4	7	7	5	5	1	-	7	13	2	4	8

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* **Casual Breeder**

This species bred on the Reserve in 2004, 2005 and 2006 and was last seen here on 16th May 2009. However, the countrywide DEFRA cull proved very successful and there have been no sightings since.

Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa* **Scarce Visitor**

There have been no sightings since 24th April 2012.

Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix* **Casual Breeder**

A number of birds were released on the Reserve in 2010 and 2013 but there had been no sightings in 2015 or 2016. Two further releases were made this year and the birds appeared to settle in well. The first release consisted of six pairs. There were regular sightings of up to four birds on the two meadows, on the roadside grass verge and on the path to the Manager's Garden. The second release of ten birds took place on 4th October and up to five were seen together subsequently, on one occasion in the compound (DC/EC). In December four or five were reported on Poplar Field, at the top end of John Ackroyd Meadow and in the Compound.

Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* **Resident Breeder**

This species continues to do well on the Reserve and numbers if anything are probably increasing. They are daily visitors to the Bee Garden via Mike Fisk Meadow, picking up seed under the feeders. As many as six were seen here some days with nine (2♂+ 7♀) on 12th February (DC/EC). Several broken egg shells at the roadside by Mike Fisk Meadow on 9th April indicated an early failed nesting attempt but a nest with five eggs was found on Poplar Field on 26th May. On 4th June a female and four young were seen near the Visitor Centre (MG/PG). There were regular sightings of up to three juveniles under the feeders in the Bee Garden from the middle of June and on 28th June seven juveniles were seen on Tim's Field (JB). Further families appeared on both meadows in August. With the Wet Grassland still drained, up to 12 adults were seen on here in December and as many as 15 on Tim's Field enjoying the seed crop there. Up to seven were seen in the Bee Garden daily in the same period.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* **Resident Breeder**

Typically, no more than two birds were seen on the Lagoon in January and there were no sightings on the other wetland areas. It would be interesting to know where they all are at this time of year. More birds can usually be seen on the river then but even here it was quiet. One or two more were seen towards the end of February and there were sightings on all four wetland areas by then. Last year the first families of young appeared on the Lagoon and Wet Grassland on 5th June. This year an adult was seen with a well grown juvenile on the Duck Marsh on 23rd May (PM/BM). On 27th June a bird was reported on a nest in open water at the bottom end of the Lagoon near the Duck Marsh Hide but the nest had disappeared by 2nd July. On 21st July a well grown juvenile was seen on the Lagoon (PM/BM). Eight adults were recorded on the Lagoon during a WeBS visit on 23rd July and eight again on 12th August (DC/EC). Three adults and a single chick were on the Duck Marsh on the same date. On 13th August a family of three chicks was on the Lagoon (WeBS). Four chicks here on 27th August appeared to be with two separate pairs of adults. Autumn counts of adults on the wetlands were rather higher than last year but numbers did fall away towards the end of November and there were just three records in December - single birds on the Lagoon on two dates and two on the river on one date. Monthly maxima are shown below (adults only).

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
2	4	5	6	5	4	10	11	15	9	5	2

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* **Casual Breeder**

Prior to 2016 this species had a very poor nesting history on the Reserve. Last year was partly successful though only one of four chicks survived to fly. This year two birds arrived on the Lagoon on 19th February (DC/EC) but only one was then seen over the following three weeks. Two were again present from 11th March and there were daily sightings thereafter. On 6th April a nest with one egg was found on the middle island. By 18th five eggs had been laid. On 7th May four chicks made their first appearance (DC/EC). Only three chicks were seen from 17th May and on 24th May two additional adults paid a brief visit (DC/EC). Only one adult was seen from 8th July. A second juvenile had disappeared by 15th July and a third by 29th July. The remaining adult and one juvenile were last seen on 16th August.

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* **Resident**

These birds can be seen daily throughout the year on the pylon by the Fish Pass but they can also be seen fishing on the river and Lagoon and occasionally on the other wetlands. In January up to six were reported on the pylon and as many as three could be watched fishing on the Lagoon. Birds often gathered at the end of the middle island on the Lagoon and six were counted here on 26th and 29th March (DC/EC *et al*). Numbers increased from August with eight on the pylon on two dates that month (PM/BM) but a report of 13 on 28th was by far the best count of the year (JWC). On 6th September nine were counted on the pylon (DC/EC). The highest counts each month are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
7	5	7	5	6	6	5	13	9	7	8	5

Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* **Scarce Visitor**

One spent several weeks in the Reedbed and on the Duck Marsh from 16th January last year. It was last seen on 26th April. Following extensive management work in the Reedbed in December last year it was most unlikely that we would have a repeat performance this year and so it proved. However, with the Reedbed now at its best again and

Bitterns generally doing much better there is every possibility that we will host one again in the not too distant future.

Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*) Frequent Visitor

This species was first recorded on the Reserve in 2004 but sightings were few and far between until 2014 when birds were reported on seven dates. In 2015 there were sightings on just five dates but in 2016 on 33 dates, the large majority of these on the Wet Grassland with up to four birds reported. This year we recorded sightings on 72 dates. The first record came on 11th May - a bird flying low over the Dragonfly Ponds at 8.45pm (PM/BM). One was then seen on the Wet Grassland on 22nd May (AP) but from 10th June there were daily sightings of a single bird. Two were on the Wet Grassland on 26th June (JHa) and two were seen on a number of occasions from 12th July, the Wet Grassland again proving the most popular area and the birds clearly catching plenty of small fish. They disappeared for a couple of weeks in August but there were otherwise daily sightings until 18th November. The Reedbed proved the most popular feeding area through September and early October with three birds here on 9th and 10th September and two most days. Four were present on 23rd September (PM/BM). Three were seen at different times in the Reedbed and on the Wet Grassland on 8th October (WeBS) and on 15th October four were on the Wet Grassland (DC/EC). A single bird was still present in November with the last sighting on 18th.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* Resident

This is a common bird on the Reserve throughout the year, the back Duck Marsh usually producing the best counts. Twelve were recorded here on 11th January (DC/EC) - the joint highest ever January count - and nine on 1st February (PLi/KLi) plus one on the Wet Grassland making this the joint highest ever February count. Birds regularly visited the Dragonfly Ponds and Dipping Ponds, but mainly early and later in the day when most visitors had left. Farmland gatherings are a feature of the autumn and winter months and seven were counted here on 29th October (PW/JLW). Up to 12 were recorded on the farmland in October last year. Numbers on the wetlands in November and December were unusually low with the best counts of just four and three respectively the lowest recorded for those months for more than 10 years. Quite why the numbers should have been so low is a bit of a mystery. The highest counts each month are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
12	10	7	4	9	8	9	7	10	8	4	3

Red Kite *Milvus milvus* **Frequent Visitor**

This is a common bird in the area these days but it is surprising that it was recorded on less dates this year (71) than Common Buzzard (85). It was certainly a slow start to the year with just five records in the first two months. There was rather more activity in March with four birds on 25th (MHa). April produced just one record but in May grass cutting on the farmland brought in a few birds in the latter part of the month. In June any birds approaching the Reserve were very quickly intercepted by the resident Common Terns well before they reached the Lagoon. Three Red Kites were recorded on 18th June (JB/MB). In July grass cutting on the farmland brought in five birds on 15th (DC/EC). August, September and October produced reported sightings on a total of just five dates but there were a few more in November. December proved to be the best month of the year for number of sightings with four over the Reserve on 16th (JWC) and six on 31st (JWC).

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* **Scarce Visitor**

Except in the south and west this species is largely migratory, wintering in Africa. Breeding on wetlands, reedbeds are popular but it needs considerably bigger reedbeds than Rodley and the best we could hope for was a flyover. This year we had two in one day - the first records for the Reserve. One was recorded flying over in a westerly direction at noon on 8th October and a little later a second bird was seen (JWC).

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* **Casual Breeder**

This is a common bird on the Reserve and it has nested in the Coppice in the past. The female is a third larger than the male and specializes in larger prey, Stocks Doves and Wood Pigeons figuring high on its diet here. A female was seen over Tim's Field and the farmland on several dates in January and there was plenty of evidence of successful hunts. On 4th April a female dived unsuccessfully at a Snipe on the Duck Marsh (LJ). Most sightings involved one or two birds but there was a report of five on 25th March (MHa) and three on 8th and 12th April (JWC). On 11th May a male was reported hunting over the Scrubland as late as 9.30pm (PM/BM). Birds almost certainly still nest in woodland

across the river and what was thought to be a juvenile was heard calling on 23rd August (PA). A juvenile male was seen in the Bee Garden on 19th September (PM/BM). On 24th September and 4th October a male was reported unsuccessfully pursuing a Goldfinch over Mike Fisk Meadow (JB/MB).

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* **Frequent Visitor**

Seeing a Common Buzzard in the Leeds area a few years ago would have been a rare event but since 2012 records have increased dramatically.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of dates recorded</u>
2012	18
2013	21
2014	26
2015	84
2016	104

This year sightings were reported on 85 dates but seeing these birds now is such a common occurrence that many sightings almost certainly go unrecorded. There were records in every month but March and April were certainly the most productive with reports on 12 dates in each case followed by December with birds seen on nine dates. The majority of records involved single birds but up to six were reported. On 12th March five were seen together over the Reserve (JWC), four on 25th March (MHa) and three on three other dates in March. On 22nd April four birds were seen (JWC) and on 29th April six were recorded in the air at the same time (JWC). On 13th August one was seen carrying a large prey item across the Scrubland (PM/BM). On 26th August four were recorded (JWC) and the next day five were seen over Tim's Field (JLW/PW) - possibly a family party at this time of year as birds are almost certainly nesting not too far away now. On 30th August three were watched high over woodland on the far river bank (PM/BM). On 8th October four were reported together over the Reserve (JWC).

Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus* **Scarce Visitor**

A new bird for the Reserve in 2012, one was photographed high over the Dragonfly Ponds on 13th June that year. There have been no records since then.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* **Scarce (Summer) Visitor**

Prior to this year there had only been two records of this summer visitor from Africa, the last on 16th April 2016. This year there were sightings on four dates. On 11th May one flew low over the Scrubland at 8.50pm during a Barn Owl vigil (PM/BM). At 9.00pm the bird was seen flying very low over the river before rapidly gaining height and disappearing off downstream. What was almost certainly the same bird spent several weeks fishing at the Non Go Bye Fishery near the airport. On 7th June one was reported flying over the Lagoon (JS) - probably the same bird. On 13th August an Osprey was seen high over the Coppice and river at 9.20am before drifting off in a south westerly direction (JWC *et al*). On 17th August one was seen from the bridge flying off low upstream (JB/MB).

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* **Resident Breeder**

The east facing Barn Owl box in the compound has been a favourite nesting site for Kestrels for many years and three young fledged successfully last year. The male bird was seen at the box as early as 11th January this year and the female was reported driving off a crow on 29th January (DC/EC) - all very promising. There were daily sightings at or near the box thereafter with both birds together on several occasions. On 26th March the male was seen with prey at the box (DC/EC) and on 3rd May the male brought a small rodent to the box with the female in attendance. Both birds were very noisy (PM/BM). On 2nd July a juvenile was seen at the box (PA/AL) and on 5th July three juveniles appeared on the ledge of the box (BM). The birds were soon making their first flights and, typically, dispersed fairly quickly thereafter. There were only two sightings between 18th July and the beginning of September. A single bird was seen hunting over the Reserve on several dates in September and on 30th September the female paid a visit to the nest box (PA/AL). There was just one record of a single bird in October and two in November, the last on 25th.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo* **Infrequent (Summer) Visitor**

This beautiful falcon is a summer visitor from Africa and prior to 2015 there had been just two records. However, it is certainly spreading its range north and in 2015 there was a spate of sightings. But if we expected a repeat in 2016 we were going to be disappointed - there were sightings on just five dates. This year there were sightings on just

one date - 24th June - a bird reported over the Wet Grassland (JWC) and over the Dragonfly Ponds (KLi).

Merlin *Falco columbarius* Infrequent (Winter) Visitor

There were three records last year but only one this year. A bird flew over the Visitor Centre on 14th October while several observers were outside watching a Peregrine Falcon on the pylon on the farmland! (JWC *et al*).

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* Frequent Visitor

Sightings were reported on a record 42 dates this year, the large majority of these in the autumn and winter months, though there were records in every month except July. With Peregrines now resident in the city less than four miles away, sightings will hopefully continue to increase with the abundance of prey here, particularly Stock Doves and Wood Pigeons. On 2nd January one flew over the Scrubland calling with a pigeon in its talons (PM/BM). On 25th January a bird was seen on the pylon on the farmland with an orange ring on the left leg (GJB *et al*) - almost certainly one of the juvenile males ringed on Wakefield Cathedral in 2016. This bird was reported on several subsequent occasions. On 23rd April one was photographed chasing an Oystercatcher low over Tim's Field (MH). The pylon on the farmland proved popular throughout the year and was always worth checking. Two Peregrines were seen here on two dates in October (JH/JWC). On 22nd October two were reported over the Reserve, one with a pigeon in its talons (AL/PA) and on 27th October one was observed plucking a pigeon on the pylon (DAN/JK). Peregrines were seen with prey on the pylon on three dates in November and two birds were seen there on 6th and 13th December (DC/EC *et al*) with single birds on four more dates in December.

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* Resident Breeder and Winter Visitor

It was another good year for sightings of this secretive species. Birds were recorded most days in January, the Lagoon proving the most productive area with three seen here on 14th (AT). There were just three sightings in February but several in March, the last of the spring on 29th March - a single bird on the Wet Grassland (JB). As overwintering birds vacate the Reserve the few resident birds typically become much harder to find and there were no further sightings until 16th July when one was seen in the Reedbed (JWC *et al*). We had to

wait until 23rd August for the next sighting - again a bird in the Reedbed (JH). There were regular sightings thereafter and a single juvenile was seen on the Duck Marsh on a number of dates between 27th August and 20th September. Most records came from the Duck Marsh in this period. On 27th September two were seen here and one on the Wet Grassland (TC). The Wet Grassland comes into its own for Water Rails in October when water levels are dropped for cutting operations. These secretive birds can then be seen quite easily from the eastern side of the Reedbed Hide with a bit of patience. There were sightings most days from 8th October with two some days, three on 22nd October (DC/EC) and four on 8th November (PA/AL). On 12th November five were reported - two on the Lagoon and three on the Wet Grassland (PA/AL). The Reedbed also produced a number of sightings in November with two here on 13th (PM/BM). In December both the Lagoon and Wet Grassland were productive with two seen on several dates from the Lagoon Hide.

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana* **Scarce Visitor**

There has only been one record of this elusive bird. An adult was present on the Wet Grassland for five days from 1st October 2005.

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* **Resident Breeder**

The highest counts in the winter months typically come from the farmland close to the river bank but with the area still under water in the early part of 2016 following the Boxing Day floods numbers in January and February of that year were down in single figures. However, in January and February this year it was very much back to normal. Seventeen were counted on the farmland on 7th January (DC/EC) and 18 on 15th January (JH). Up to 11 were seen here in February. Quite why this number of birds find this particular area so appealing in the winter months is a bit of a mystery. A count of 20 birds on 12th March included 17 on the four main wetland areas which was encouraging (WeBS). However, numbers did drop back to single figures in April and May with birds well hidden on nests. On 15th April what appeared to be a very early juvenile Moorhen was killed by a Weasel on the Willow Path (IR) and a week later an adult was found dead at the Dragonfly Ponds. On 26th April adults were seen with single chicks on both the Reedbed and Duck Marsh (PM), six days earlier than the first young last year. On 20th May a family of four chicks was seen on the Lagoon (DC/EC) and on 21st May an adult with six chicks

was reported on one of the tern rafts (BM/MB). New families appeared on the Wet Grassland on 16th July (2 chicks) and on the Duck Marsh on 30th July (four chicks). Birds started to gather on the farmland close to the river bank again in December and the best count of the year - 22 on 16th - included 19 here (DC/EC). Monthly maxima (adults only) are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
20	15	20	7	8	5	13	13	16	15	12	22

Coot *Fulica atra* Resident Breeder

Falling numbers have been giving cause for concern for some time and there was little improvement in the first six months of this year. One was found dead at the side of the Lagoon on 6th February and a badly injured bird was discovered at the Dragonfly Ponds on 6th April (JB). Despite the low numbers there were sightings on all four main wetland areas and successful nesting occurred, the first chick appearing on the Wet Grassland on 14th June (PM/BM), nearly seven weeks later than last year. The first family of two young was seen on the Lagoon on 25th June (DC/EC) and further families appeared here over the next few weeks. The first family of four was reported on the Duck Marsh on 30th July (MG/PG). Numbers of adults at last started to climb in July and a count of 28 on 20th August (PM/BM) was the highest for that month since 2010. Numbers increased again in October, reaching 40 on 18th (PM), the highest for that month since 2012. November and December counts in the last four years have been in low single figures and while numbers did fall somewhat in those months maximum counts of 24 and 31 respectively were still very encouraging. Monthly maxima (adults only) are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
11	11	18	13	12	12	23	28	23	40	24	31

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* Migrant Breeder

The first birds arrive on the Lagoon in February and the first this year was reported on 3rd (BM) - the same date as last year. A second bird arrived on 5th. Three were present on 15th with four some days. A third bird on 31st March was given a very hard time by one of the residents,

the two fighting viciously in the Lagoon (BM). Nesting has always taken place on the middle island and this year was no exception, three eggs being seen in the nest on 6th April (JB). Up to seven adults were seen on the Reedbed between 17th and 22nd April (DC/EC *et al*) but there was no sign of a second pair attempting to nest. Two chicks made their first appearance on the island on 22nd April (DC/EC *et al*) but were not seen again after 7th May. Adults continued to be seen with seven on the Lagoon on 21st May (PM/BM) but usually no more than three. One or two birds were reported on the tern rafts from the middle of June and one here on 23rd July was the last of the year (MG/PG).

Little (Ringed) Plover *Charadrius dubius* **Migrant Visitor**

There has been a decline in sightings over recent years with four records in both 2014 and 2015 and just one in 2016. This year there were three records. One was on the Duck Marsh on 4th April (LJ) and two were seen on the Reedbed on 9th April (PC). On 13th May a bird flying over appeared to drop into the Duck Marsh (JWC).

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* **Migrant Visitor**

There have been no records in the last ten years. There were just two sightings in 2007.

Grey Plover *Pluvalis squatarola* **Scarce Visitor**

There were no sightings this year. A single bird that flew over on 30th May 2016 was the first record for the Reserve.

Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* **Scarce Visitor**

There had been no records on the Reserve or farmland in the last eight years but sky watching in the last three months of this year did reveal three small groups flying over. On 8th October 11 flew over in a northerly direction; on 29th October nine flew over in a south westerly direction and on 10th December eight were recorded flying west (JWC).

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* **Casual Breeder**

The three years prior to 2016 all produced 100+ birds in January but the best count in the same period last year was just 17. Unusually, there were no sightings at all in January this year. A single bird on the middle island on the Lagoon on 5th February was the first of the year (PC) and three were there on 15th February (DC/EC) but numbers remained in low single figures for much of the spring. A few pairs have

nested on Tim's Field in the past and six were seen here on 6th May (DC/EC). At least two were on nests here by 21st May with 11 reported on the field on 23rd May (PM/BM). The first chick was seen at the end of the Willow Path close to Tim's Field on 3rd July and two were seen in the same area on 8th July (AT). With little cover at this time of year chicks tend to vacate the field fairly soon after hatching. Eleven birds on the Wet Grassland on 12th July included seven juveniles (JB). Birds gathered in the Reedbed from the middle of July for a couple of weeks and there were double figure counts most days with 21 on 15th and 16th the best (SO/JWC) with several juveniles among them. There were no further sightings after 2nd August until 15th October when a single bird flew over the Reserve. There was a further report of one over the Duck Marsh on 22nd October (DC/EC). There was just one sightings in November - a single bird on the farmland on 19th - and two in December - seven flying over in a westerly direction on 10th and one flying over on 31st (JWC).

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
-	3	4	3	14	9	21	11	-	1	1	7

Knot *Calidris canutus* **Scarce Visitor**

A bird on the Duck Marsh on 28th May 2006 was the first and only record for the Reserve.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina* **Infrequent Visitor**

A single bird seen on the Duck Marsh on 1st February 2012 was the first record since May 2006. There have been no sightings in the last five years.

Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus* **Passage/Winter Visitor**

Probably more often missed than found, this can be a difficult bird to pick out on the wetlands. There were three records in each of the years 2012 to 2014, none in 2015 and just one confirmed sighting in 2016. There was just one record this year - a single bird on the Wet Grassland on 4th January (DC/EC).

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* **Passage/Winter Visitor**

Just like last year, the large majority of sightings were on the Duck Marsh. The biggest counts tend to be made when birds are accidentally

flushed by volunteers during habitat management work and while there was no repeat of the big January (29) and February (40) counts of last year, a report of 15 from the Willow Path Hide on 22nd March (PA) was nevertheless impressive. Sixteen were accidentally flushed on 30th March - four of these on the Lagoon and 12 on the Duck Marsh (JB). Numbers started to fall away in the second half of April but, unusually, an odd bird remained on site throughout the summer. Numbers usually start to increase again in September but there was just one report of a single bird that month. October counts were disappointing with a best of just three, most sightings in that month on the freshly drained Wet Grassland. There was some improvement in November with seven on the Duck Marsh on 8th (PA/AL) and 26th (PA). There were sightings on the Duck Marsh most days in December with 13 on 30th the best of the month (PA). The numbers of dates that birds were recorded in the various habitats are shown below. Last year's figures are shown in brackets for comparison.

Lagoon	Duck Marsh	Reedbed	Wet Grassland	Other
11 (14)	55 (73)	7 (4)	15 (18)	8 (3)

Maximum monthly counts are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
2	2	16	9	1	1	1	1	1	3	7	13

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* **Scarce Visitor**

There were no sightings this year. In 2016 a bird trailing a damaged leg was on the Lagoon on 16th March. This was only the fourth record for the Reserve and the first since 2006.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* **Scarce Visitor**

There were again no sightings this year. This species was recorded for the first and only time on 7th May 2006 when a single bird was found on the Duck Marsh.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* **Scarce (Summer) Visitor**

There have been no records since 2012 when a single bird was reported.

Curlew *Numenius arquata* **Passage Visitor**

Despite the continued decline of this species nationally there were a few more records at Rodley in 2016.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Dates recorded</u>
2014	7
2015	5
2016	9

Almost all records came from the farmland. However, this year was very poor with just two reports - a bird flying over the Reserve on 25th March (JWC) and one heard on the farmland on 4th April (PM/BM).

Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* **Infrequent (Winter) Visitor**

A few birds can be found in the Coppice most winters but they are most likely to be encountered by volunteers during habitat management work. However, there is always the chance of seeing one flying to or from the Coppice towards dusk. One was seen on 14th January (JWC) and 3rd February (JK). On 6th March three were accidentally flushed in the Coppice (JB) and two on 13th March (JK). At the other end of the year, one flew low over the road from the farmland towards the Coppice at dusk on 12th November (PM/BM) and on 9th December one flew over the car park (JWC).

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* **Passage Visitor**

Never numerous, sightings have declined over recent years. There were four records in 2015 and none in 2016. This year there were sightings on just two dates. On 12th April one flew over Poplar Field (ABI). On 1st May one was seen on the Wet Grassland and what was almost certainly the same bird was later seen on one of the tern rafts on the Lagoon (JWC *et al*).

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* **Infrequent Visitor**

A single bird was recorded on five dates last year - the first since 2010 and all between 13th and 28th August. There were no sightings this year.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* **Infrequent Visitor**

There had been no records in the previous five years, the last sighting being on 3rd May 2011. This year there was a report of a bird calling from the riverbank by the bridge on 9th August (JWC).

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* **Scarce Visitor**

This species was recorded for the first time in 2006 when a single bird was seen on the Duck Marsh. There have been no reported sightings since then.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* **Passage Visitor**

There were sightings on nine dates this year - two less than last year. One on the bottom island on the Lagoon on 15th April was the first of the year (DC/EC *et al*). A bird was again on the Lagoon the next day and on 17th April two were reported on the Reedbed (PC *et al*). On 21st April two were seen on the riverbank near the Wet Grassland (JK). On 22nd April a single bird was seen on both the Reedbed and Duck Marsh (DC/EC *et al*). One was again reported on the Reedbed on 29th April (PA). On 7th May one was seen on the Wet Grassland (JWC). There were no further records until 12th July when one was reported on one of the tern rafts on the Lagoon (DC/EC). On 15th July one was on the Reedbed (MG/PG), this the last record of the year.

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* **Casual Breeder**

Numbers are at their highest between October and March with birds congregating on the farmland and on the wetlands. A best count of 181 in January included 116 on the farmland (WeBS). In February a best of 218 included 108 in the Reedbed (DC/EC). Numbers started to fall away in March but a count of 223 on 12th included 150 over the Lagoon (WeBS). No more than six birds were seen in April and a report of 63 on 31st May was high for the time of year (DC/EC). This species has never nested on the Reserve but with a few birds present throughout the spring it was inevitable that it would happen sooner or later. On 28th May a bird was on a nest on one of the tern rafts on the Lagoon and on 21st June a single chick appeared, subsequently fledging successfully. Numbers started to build rather earlier than usual and 107 were recorded on the Lagoon on 6th September (PM/BM). On 20th September 142 were reported (DC/EC) - this the highest count of the month. The Lagoon produced several three figure counts in the last three months of the year. A total of 151 were recorded on 8th October

(WeBS), c130 on 12th November (DC/EC) and c200 on 16th December (DC/EC). Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
181	218	223	6	63	17	27	57	142	159	157	c200

Common Gull *Larus canus* **Frequent Visitor**

Numbers in 2016 were well down on the record 400+ counts of 2015 and there was no improvement this year. The highest numbers are to be found on the farmland with usually rather lower numbers on the wetlands and, as a result, it may have been overlooked by many observers. Thirty-five were on the farmland on 2nd January (PM/BM) but the highest count on the wetlands in January was just two. Typically, there were no sightings in April, just one in May - a single bird - and none in June. A few birds started to return in July and at least 28 were on the Duck Marsh on 26th (JWC). Despite disappointing numbers generally, a count of 75 on the farmland on 18th September (PM/BM) was both the highest of the year and the highest ever September count. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
35	23	2	-	1	-	28	5	75	55	39	33

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* **Scarce Visitor**

An adult in full winter plumage on the Lagoon on 7th October 2015 was the first record for the Reserve. There were no sightings in 2016 or this year.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* **Frequent Visitor**

There were no more than a dozen records in the first six months of the year and most of these were of small groups of up to 14 birds flying over the Reserve. On 1st February c30 were recorded flying in an easterly direction late in the afternoon (PM/BM). From the middle of September there were numerous sightings of one or two birds on the Lagoon, both adults and immatures. On 19th November 26 flew high over the Reserve in an easterly direction late in the day (PM/BM), probably heading for the roost site at Eccup Reservoir. In December

single birds were on the Duck Marsh on 6th and on the Lagoon on 13th (DC/EC).

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* Frequent Visitor

Most records relate to birds flying over the Reserve but there were a number on the Lagoon and farmland this year. Two were on the farmland on 15th January (WeBS) and three immature birds were here on 8th February (DC/EC). In May an immature bird was on the Lagoon on 3rd and an adult was there on 7th (DC/EC). There were no further records until 18th September when three were on the farmland (PM/BM). On 8th October 14 immature birds flew over in a westerly direction (JWC). On 8th November an adult was seen on the Lagoon (DC/EC). There were sightings on five dates in December, four of these on the Lagoon with up to four birds present. On 16th one of three immature birds had a yellow leg ring no. Y980. This bird had been rung at Harewood Whin Landfill Site on 4th November 2016 (JWC).

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus* Scarce Visitor

Records are usually limited to the occasional fly over but there was a report of an immature bird on the Lagoon on 3rd September (DC/EC). Birds flying over the Reserve were reported on three dates - four on 1st January, one on 23rd April and one adult on 17th December (JWC).

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucooides* Scarce Visitor

Two 1st winter birds that flew over the Willow Path on 17th January 2009 were the first and only record for the Reserve.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* Migrant Breeder

The first bird arrived on the Lagoon on 22nd April (DC/EC *et al*), seven days later than last year. It was joined by a second bird the following day. Up to five were recorded last year, though only one pair stayed to nest on one of the two rafts (a third raft being out of action last year). This year, unusually, no more than two birds were seen. Fortunately, they did stay to nest, two chicks making their first appearance on one of the rafts on 7th June and a third chick being seen from 14th June. On 26th June one of the young was seen in the water by the raft and by 27th it had managed to board a different raft occupied by a pair of Black-headed Gulls. Presumably seeing it as a threat to their own solitary chick they proceeded to kill it. The remaining two juveniles fared rather better and fledged successfully on 5th July. A single bird flying towards

the Lagoon carrying a fish on 6th August was the last record of the year (PA).

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* **Scarce Visitor**

This was a new bird for the Reserve in 2011 and there was an unconfirmed sighting in 2012. There were no records in 2013 or 2014, one on 24th May 2015 and none in the last two years.

Feral Pigeon *Columba livia domest* **Frequent Visitor**

This species is seldom recorded but is possibly now nesting and certainly roosting under the river bridge from the amount of noise that can be heard there. An under-nourished bird, picked up on the Reserve at the beginning of November, was released in the Bee Garden and took up residence there until the end of the year.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas* **Resident**

This remains a very common bird on the Reserve and adjacent farmland. In January c100 were recorded on the farmland on 11th (DC/EC) and a mixed flock of more than 200 Stock Doves and Wood Pigeons on Tim's Field on 28th January probably included around 100 Stock Doves. A further 46 Stock Doves were on Mike Fisk Meadow at the same time (DC/EC). Up to 70 were reported on the farmland in February and up to 60 on Tim's Field. Birds were daily visitors to the Manager's Garden with up to 15 recorded there in the early part of the year. The first juvenile of the year was reported here on 4th June (MG/PG). Birds also visited the Bee Garden some days and 12 were recorded here on 16th June (PM). A flock photographed over the farmland on 24th December last year was found to contain 293 birds - a Reserve record. Unusually, there was only one report of a substantial flock in December this year - c150 over Tim's Field on 23rd December (JWC). A flock of 45 birds was seen on the drained Wet Grassland on 16th December (DC/EC).

Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus* **Resident Breeder**

Large flocks visit Tim's Field for seed in the winter months and numbers in the early part of this year were very similar to last year. An estimated 200 were reported lifting off the field on 1st January (JB/MB) and there were similar counts on 1st February (PM/BM) and 8th February (DC/EC). Numbers typically started to fall away in March with no more than 60 recorded by 12th. Several pairs again nested on the

Reserve. Numbers started to build again in October and large flocks were recorded flying over in a southerly direction in the latter part of that month - 132 on 21st, 380 on 25th and 110 on 29th (JWC). On 29th October 80+ were also counted on Tim's Field (JWC). Another good crop of elderberries at the edge of the Coppice provided a tempting alternative to seed for many birds in October. On 5th November there was a large movement of birds flying south/south west - 810 counted in total (JWC). A flock of 160+ was on Tim's Field on 4th November, 200+ on 11th November (JWC) and c120 on 13th December (DC/EC) - much lower than the estimated 400 birds recorded on the field on 24th December last year.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* **Frequent Visitor**

Prior to 2016 Collared Doves were rarely seen on the Reserve much beyond the river bridge or car park. However, in 2016 that all changed and there were a lot of sightings between the beginning of June and the middle of September, a number of these on the Willow Path. The birds' advance onto the Reserve continued this year, starting on 23rd May and through to mid-September. There were a number of sightings of a single bird from 22nd March but all no further than the car park. On 23rd May one was reported on the Willow Path (PM) and on 11th June two were seen in willows on the Duck Marsh side of the Willow Path (MG/PG). There were several subsequent reports of single birds but on 6th August two were seen in the Manager's Garden (JB). There were further sightings on the Willow Path on 30th August and 10th September and on 5th November a single bird was seen in the Manager's Garden (DC/EC).

Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* **Scarce (Summer) Visitor**

The Cuckoo is one of our fastest declining migrants, having decreased by 75% in England since 1967. There were no sightings in 2015 or 2016. This year one was heard and then seen near the Lagoon on 30th May (JB). On 19th July one was photographed from the Lagoon Hide on one of the goal posts in the Lagoon (SB).

Barn Owl *Tyto alba* **Casual Breeder**

In 2016 a pair successfully raised two young in the pole nest box on the Scrubland and there was evidence of a bird roosting in the thatched gazebo and Mike Sheldon Hide to the end of the year. One continued to roost in the gazebo in January this year and on 18th January it was

disturbed there at 9.00am before flying off over the river (DW). There was a second hand report of a bird on the Scrubland on 29th January but there were no further sightings until 5th April when one was observed coming out of the nest box at 8.35pm during an evening group visit (LJ *et al*). On 25th April a bird again came out of the box during an evening visit and immediately dropped into bushes behind the box (LJ *et al*). There was a similar sighting at 9.30pm on 11th May (PM/BM) but further evening visits in June and July failed to produce any activity. However, there were two daytime sightings subsequently - one flying over the Reedbed on 15th July and over the Lagoon at 9.00am on 17th July (JB). On 29th July one was watched flying over the Scrubland at 9.30pm during a Bat Walk (PM/BM *et al*) but there was no sign of activity at the nest box. A bird again roosted in the thatched gazebo in November and throughout December, leaving several pellets and feathers.

Little Owl *Athene noctua* Resident Breeder

A pair bred on the Reserve for the first time in 2012. In 2015 birds used a new nest box in the Manager's Garden and one juvenile fledged successfully. In 2016 one juvenile again fledged from the same box and one infertile egg was subsequently found in the box. There were no sightings this year until 22nd February when one was reported on Poplar Field (ABI). There were no further records until 24th March when one was seen in the Manager's Garden (GJB). From that point there were sightings at or near the nest box most days with two seen on several occasions. On 17th July a bird was recorded in the entrance to the north facing Barn Owl box on the small building in the compound (PM/BM) and there were several subsequent reports of a bird on the roof or in the gutter of that building. Although it wasn't appreciated at the time, this was probably because Grey Squirrels had taken over the box in the Manager's Garden sometime in July, subsequently raising three young there. When the squirrels were eventually evicted one unhatched egg was found. One bird continued to be seen and there were reports on Poplar Field and Poplar Carr up to 19th November. There were no sightings after this date.

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco* Infrequent Visitor

The last four years have all produced just three records. This year birds were heard on five dates during evening visits to the Reserve, the first on 25th April in woodland across the river. Birds were again heard here

during the evening on 18th June and 17th July. On 29th and 31st August two birds were calling - one in the woodland and a second in trees at the cricket club next door.

Swift *Apus apus* **Migrant Visitor**

Two birds over the Lagoon on 1st May were the first of the year (JWC *et al*), four days later than last year. One or two were seen daily thereafter but c30 wheeling around near the Swift Nesting Tower on 6th May (JWC/DC/EC) was to prove the second best count of the year. There were no further double figure counts until 17th July when 15 were recorded over the Lagoon (JB). On 26th July more than 40 were reported over the Reserve - this the best count of the year (JWC). Numbers generally were disappointing and there was no further activity at the Nesting Tower. There were four late records in September, two birds on 17th being the last of the year (JWC), nearly three weeks later than last year.

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* **Resident Breeder**

There were records in all months except February this year but less than a quarter of the year's sightings came in the first six months of the year. Up to the end of September the best place to see Kingfishers was on the Lagoon and Reedbed with two seen on a number of occasions. The first juvenile was reported in the Reedbed on 9th August (PW). Following draining of the Wet Grassland and clearing of the main ditch there in early October nearly all sightings from that point to the end of the year were along the ditch with one or two birds fishing there most days. The Kingfisher Pool on the Reedbed, which can be one of the most productive fishing sites, ceased to appeal in the latter part of the year due to a thick growth of duckweed. Away from the wetlands, a bird was seen fishing on the Dipping Ponds near the Visitor Centre on four dates, at the Dragonfly Ponds on two dates and on the Education Pond on one date. A breakdown of sightings is shown below.

Lagoon	Duck Marsh	Reedbed Inc KFP	Wet Grassland	Education Pond	Other Ponds	River
32	11	34	28	1	6	18

Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis* **Infrequent Visitor**

Sightings of this species are few and far between. There were no records in 2012 or 2013, just one in 2014, three in 2015 and four in 2016. This year there were three records, two of these on 26th March when one was seen in the Manager's Garden (PA) and what was almost certainly the same bird was reported flying over the Reserve (PW/JLW). On 3rd November one provided good views on the Willow Path (JHa *et al*).

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* **Resident Breeder**

Like last year, there were plenty of sightings in all months, the Willow Path and Manager's Garden being the best places to see them. The birds have a habit of drumming on the metal pylons in the early part of the year and one was heard doing this on 15th January during a WeBS visit. Feeders on the Willow Path proved popular and both male and female birds were reported feeding on them. Unfortunately, they also have a taste for young birds and woodpecker damage was again noted on a number of nest boxes along the Willow Path, one box being practically demolished. Birds almost certainly nested in woodland across the river rather than on the Reserve itself and the first juvenile was seen on the Willow Path on 17th June (DC/EC). A juvenile was also seen in the Manager's Garden on 1st July (DC/EC) and there were numerous reports of single juveniles here subsequently. A male and one juvenile were seen in the Coppice on 23rd July (MG/PG).

Skylark *Alauda arvensis* **Infrequent Visitor**

This species has become increasingly hard to see on the Reserve over recent years and its song is no longer heard on the farmland. This year all records were of birds flying over in the autumn and winter months, one on 18th February being the first (JWC). There were then no further sightings until 23rd September when a single bird was reported flying south (JWC). Nearly all subsequent sightings were of birds moving south or south east. On 24th September a group of 14 flew over in a south easterly direction (JWC). There were reports of between one and six flying over on nine further dates, the last on 17th December (JWC).

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* **Migrant Breeder**

2014 and 2015 produced the earliest ever arrival dates for this summer visitor - 22nd March. This year the first bird was seen over the Lagoon on 5th March (PA), three weeks earlier than in 2016. A week later on

12th March four were reported over the Lagoon (JWC). There were no further sightings until 25th but on 29th March more than forty were recorded over the river from the bridge (PW/JLW). The first holes soon appeared in the nesting bank on the Lagoon and by 8th April around 30 had been excavated. This had increased to 70 by 19th April and by 11th May 115. A final count of nesting holes on 26th June produced 145, somewhat down on 2015 (167) and 2016 (186). Large numbers of birds including many juveniles could be seen over the Reserve late in the evening in August but numbers fell away rapidly towards the end of the month, c60 over the car park on 29th August (PM/BM) being the last substantial count of the year. Three birds over the Lagoon on 2nd September were the last of the year (DC/EC), more than two weeks earlier than last year.

Swallow *Hirundo rustica* **Migrant Breeder**

A single bird on 1st April was the first of the year (DC/EC *et al*), four days later than last year. There were sightings most days from 4th April but for much of the month no observers reported more than three birds. Eight were counted over the farmland on 29th April and in May there were a few double figure counts but the best was just 14 (DC/EC). The dumper truck shed again proved a popular nesting site - the only one on the Reserve - and several pairs nested there. The first two juveniles were seen on the adjacent John Ackroyd Meadow on 25th June (DC/EC). Up to six juveniles provided good photo opportunities on a dead tree at the corner of the Scrubland by the river seat on 1st July (MG/PG *et al*). Overhead wires by the Visitor Centre proved popular as always, birds perching here most days. Five juveniles were seen on the door of the dumper truck shed on 20th August (JS). Numbers generally were disappointing, 40+ on 27th August (JWC) being by far the highest that month. However, 113 were counted flying over in a south easterly direction on 9th September in a two hour spell and 39 flew over in the same direction on 24th September (JWC). Four birds flying east and five south on 8th October were the last of the year (JWC), six days later than last year and just one day earlier than the latest ever record.

House Martin *Delichon urbica* **Migrant Visitor**

The first birds last year were seen on the very early date of 4th April. We had to wait until 29th April this year when two were seen over the farmland (GJB). The number of spring sightings was very disappointing

and no observers reported more than two birds. There was some improvement in July with nine on one date over the meadows but August was generally poor though there was one very good count of 60+ on 27th (JWC). A count of 14 during an early morning WeBS visit on 10th September was the next best of another disappointing year. Four birds flying over in a south easterly direction on 24th September were the last of the year (JWC), just a week earlier than last year.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis* Passage Visitor

A single bird flying over on 15th February was the first record of the year but there were numerous reports throughout March and April of small groups of up to 9 birds flying over in a northerly direction (JWC). There were no further sightings until 9th September when 10 were recorded flying over in a southerly direction (JWC). On 10th September 115 were counted in a period of two hours, all flying south/south east (JWC). There were a number of further reports of birds passing overhead in September and October with the next best day's count of 29 on 17th September (JWC). On 8th November seven were seen in the compound (PA/AL); two were on the farmland manure heap on 25th November and six were on the farmland on 10th December (JWC). On this latter date 24 were also recorded flying over in one group in a westerly direction (JWC).

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* Infrequent (Summer) Visitor

On 1st May last year a bird originally thought to be the Blue-headed form of the Yellow Wagtail was subsequently considered to be a "Channel Wagtail" - the result of a hybridization between the two races, ie. our Yellow Wagtail and the continental Blue-headed. Later in the month what may have been the same bird was seen flying over the farmland and on 20th August three birds, including two juveniles, were seen on the farmland among the cattle. Prior to this there had been no records of Yellow Wagtail since 2004. Unfortunately, there were no reported sightings this year.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* Casual Breeder

Recorded in every month this year, there were sightings most days in January with birds seen on the Wet Grassland and farmland manure heap. Most involved single birds but two were on the Wet Grassland on 4th (MG/PG). On 8th March two were seen on the riverbank by the bridge (JLW/PW) and two were again seen here on 12th May - a

possible nesting site? On 3rd April two were observed going into stonework on the canal bank by the swing bridge (BM), certainly a nesting site used in previous years. Successful nesting certainly occurred here this year and two adults and three juveniles were reported on 23rd June (JB). In November the farmland manure heap became very popular again with single birds seen here most days. Two were seen close by in the compound on 4th November (JWC). In December there were sightings in the Compound, on the Wet Grassland and at the edge of the farmland with two at the latter site on 28th (JB).

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba* **Resident Breeder**

The manure heap on the farmland can be guaranteed to provide plenty of sightings and one or two birds were seen here daily throughout January and much of February. Three were reported on 14th January (PM/BM). There was just one record in March and none in April but on 14th May two were seen in the compound - an area where birds have nested in the past. However, there were no reports of juveniles this year. There was just one record in June and July and none in August but from 10th September there were regular sightings. The farmland manure heap became very productive again from the beginning of November with three here on 4th (JWC) and three again on 26th November (PW/JLW). There were sightings here most days to the end of the year.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba alba* **Scarce Visitor**

Despite careful checking of any black and white wagtails seen in March and April there were no sightings of the Continental White Wagtail reported this year. It can turn up on occasions. In 2016 one was seen on the freshly ploughed Tim's Field with seven Pied Wagtails on 30th March.

Dipper *Cinclus cinclus* **Infrequent Visitor**

In 2013 there was a spate of sightings of this river species. However, the next two years produced a total of just six records and there were none in 2016. This year there was a possible brief sighting on the Fish Pass on 13th March and on 4th December one was seen near the weir (JB). Dippers are lovers of faster flowing streams and the water downstream of the weir and the Fish Pass itself would appear to provide ideal conditions for them.

Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus* **Scarce (Winter) Visitor**

Numbers visiting the UK in winter vary from year to year and some winters hardly any are seen. However, early signs were that winter 2016/17 was looking like a “Waxwing Winter”. Birds were recorded as close as LS12 in December 2016 but there had been no sightings on the Reserve by the end of the year. However, on 25th February 40+ flew over Tim’s Field and the Wet Grassland before continuing south (JWC). On 1st April c30 were seen briefly in the poplars before flying off in a westerly direction (JWC).

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* **Resident Breeder**

This is a very common bird on the Reserve and it can be found in almost every habitat. Nine were counted during an early morning WeBS visit on 12th March with birds recorded on every wetland area as well as the dryer parts. On 10th May one was watched nest building in the Manager’s Garden Hide where successful nesting occurred last year. Unfortunately, the birds did not pursue their interest this year. The first juvenile was seen on the Butterfly Bank on 9th July (PM) and two were reported with an adult in the Manager’s Garden on 26th August (DC/EC). It appears to have been a successful nesting season with more than one observer reporting “Wrens everywhere” in October.

Dunnock *Prunella modularis* **Resident Breeder**

This is a very common bird on the Reserve, found in nearly all habitats. However, most records tend to come from the Willow Path, Bee Garden and Manager’s Garden. The Bee Garden seems particularly popular with often up to half a dozen picking up seed under the feeders there. There were no reports of juveniles but the laid hedges round the Reserve are now dense enough to provide ideal nesting habitat and there can be little doubt that plenty of successful nesting took place.

Robin *Erithacus rubecula* **Resident Breeder**

This is a common bird on the Reserve, the large majority of records coming from the Willow Path and Manager's Garden. As in 2016 no nest boxes were used again this year but there are plenty of natural sites here and the species is obviously doing very well. The first juvenile was reported on Poplar Carr on 29th May (DC/EC), three weeks earlier than last year. The first juvenile was seen in the Manager’s Garden on 10th June. Robins were particularly numerous

on the Willow Path in the latter part of the year and often very confiding but not as confiding as the Lagoon Hide Robin which seemed to spend more time in the hide with birdwatchers than outside.

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* **Infrequent Visitor**

First recorded on the Reserve in 2006, there had been no further sightings until 2012 when a female was seen on the Scrubland on 1st September. There were no records in 2013 or 2014 but there have now been sightings in each of the last three years. 2016 was the most productive year to date with a bird seen on eight dates though five of these almost certainly related to the same juvenile. This year there were three records. A male was seen in the Coppice on 5th April (JH) and a male was again seen here on 16th April (PM/BM *et al*). On 17th April there was a further sighting of a male bird on the Coppice fence (JWC) and what may have been the same one later the same day outside the Manager's Garden (MH).

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* **Scarce Visitor**

There were again no sightings this year. A female in the hedgerow opposite the workshop on 9th February 2008 was only the second record for the Reserve.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* **Passage Visitor**

This bird can turn up in spring or early autumn on passage but the latter tends to produce the best chance of seeing one these days. There were sightings on four dates this year. On 2nd September there was a second hand report of one on the Duck Marsh and the following day a juvenile was reported on Facebook. On 30th September one was seen on Tim's Field (JWC/NT) - usually the best place to see this declining species - and on 1st October what could well have been the same bird was seen there again (JWC/DC/EC).

Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* **Passage Visitor**

Late September into early October is the best time to see this passage visitor and Tim's Field is always worth checking at this time of year, the birds' habit of perching on the top of seed heads making them relatively easy to pick out. A female or juvenile there on 23rd September was the first record this year (DC/EC *et al*) and there were sightings then most days until 8th October. Sightings in September were of just single birds but seven were counted on 4th October including four males in a

relatively small area of the field (PM/JB *et al*). Four there on 8th October included three males (CR *et al*). There was one late record - a male on Tim's Field on 5th November (JWC *et al*).

Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* **Passage Visitor**

Sightings of this passage migrant are few and far between these days and there were no records at all in 2016. There were spring records on three dates this year. On 12th April one was seen on Tim's Field (JWC). On 29th April one was reported on the farmland (SO) with what may have been the same bird on Tim's Field (JWC) and on 30th April three birds were seen on the farmland muck heap (JWC/DC/EC).

Blackbird *Turdus merula* **Resident Breeder**

Numbers of this common bird increase considerably in the autumn and winter months with a large influx of immigrants from the continent. There were numerous double figure reports in January and February with as many as 15 counted on 12th February during a WeBS visit, seven of these on the Willow Path. The hedgerows and Coppice hold numerous nesting pairs but there was only one report of a juvenile, this in the Manager's Garden on 23rd August (DC/EC). Early nests in particular are almost certainly heavily predated by Magpies. Numbers started to build in November as immigrants arrived and 15 were counted on 4th (JWC). There were numerous subsequent double figure counts with 20 on 10th December the highest.

Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus* **Scarce (Summer) Visitor**

This is our only summer visiting thrush, spending the winter in the Atlas Mountains of north western Africa. Here in Britain it breeds in the uplands and numbers are declining. It was a new bird for the Reserve this year. Two were seen flying over on 6th May before dropping down somewhere to the east of the Reserve (JWC). Unfortunately, they could not be relocated. On 4th November one was photographed on Mike Fisk Meadow (JWC *et al*).

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* **Winter Visitor**

Numbers were certainly on the low side in the early part of the year. Fifty were in the poplars on 28th January (DC/EC) and a mixed flock of around 70 Fieldfares and Redwings was seen there on 1st February at dusk (PM/BM) but most reports were of less than 20 birds. There were one or two better counts towards the end of February - 41 were in trees

at the car park on 25th (DC/EC) and 53 were seen on the farmland on 26th (PA). Three birds recorded on 1st April (JWC) were the last of the spring. The first seven birds of the autumn flew over the Reserve on 25th October (JWC) and the first larger flock of 85 flying west on 28th, six of these landing briefly (JWC). A flock of 52 flew over on 5th November and 39 on 11th (JWC) but numbers were otherwise very low. Birds were seen on several dates in December but there was only one double figure count - 13 seen on 10th during a WeBS visit.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* **Resident Breeder**

Based on the number of singing birds this species is still doing very well here. However, breeding success is hard to quantify as very few juveniles are reported. The first birds were singing in the Coppice and on the riverbank from early in January with at least three singing in the Coppice in February. John Ackroyd Meadow produced a number of sightings in February and five were seen here on 6th (JB). A random count of Song Thrushes during an early morning WeBS visit on 12th March produced 15 birds, seven of these along the Willow Path and in the Coppice. On 10th May two juveniles were reported at the Dragonfly Ponds (PW/JLW) - a very welcome record. A late evening visit on 23rd May produced six singing birds and a similar visit on 18th June revealed several still singing as late as 10.00pm (PM/BM). Sightings typically tailed off from the end of July; there were just three records of single birds in August and one in September. There were a handful of sightings in October and November but, like last year, activity started to increase in December with several sightings in the Bee Garden.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus* **Winter Visitor**

Small numbers of birds were seen most days from 15th January with 24 in the poplars on that date (JH). There were only a few reports of more than six birds subsequently, the only double figure counts being 15 around the car park on 1st February (PW/JLW), 23 on the farmland on 1st March (DC/EC), 30 there on 4th March and 33 on 12th March (JWC). A single bird in the Coppice on 25th March was the last of the spring (JWC). The first two birds of the autumn flew over on 7th October (JWC), just five days later than last year. The following day a total of 571 were recorded flying over in a westerly direction between 8.00am and 11.00am (JWC). Few birds stopped to refuel on the Reserve but 50 were reported in a hedgerow near the Dragonfly Ponds on 20th October (JB). On 21st October there was a very big movement with

2,230 logged flying west in a three hour spell (JWC). Small groups passed over during the next two weeks and a few birds were recorded on the Reserve in the latter part of December, 23 in the poplars on 31st (JWC) being the biggest count.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus* **Frequent Visitor**

More than half the records this year came in the first three months of the year - a pattern which also occurred in 2015 and 2016. Many of these were on the farmland and all involved between one and three birds. There were several sightings on Tim's Field in the latter part of May involving one or two birds but there were then no records in June, just one in July and none in August but on 16th September five were seen in the poplars (JWC). In October there were sightings of one or two birds on the radio mast and in November four were seen on the farmland on 29th (PW/JLW). There were records on five dates in December but none involving more than three birds.

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*

Migrant Breeder

It was a very disappointing year for this elusive bird with records on just three dates. Brambles along the roadside have proved popular in recent years but there were no reports from this area this year. A bird was heard "reeling" at the Dragonfly Ponds on 19th April (DC/EC) and on 26th April one was heard and seen in the hedgerow between the ponds and Bentley's Path (MG/PG *et al*). There were no further reports until 23rd August when one was seen in the Butterfly Bank area (JH), this the latest ever record for this species.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Migrant Breeder

A single bird seen from the Duck Marsh Hide on 16th April (JWC) was the first of the year, six days later than last year's very early first record. Birds were seen or heard on all four main wetland areas over the next two weeks and on 10th May the first one was seen at the Dragonfly Ponds (PW/JLW) - this a regular nesting site in the past. However, numbers on the wetlands were almost certainly lower than last year based on records received which was disappointing. The Wet Grassland was the most productive area in terms of numbers of sightings but few observers reported more than one or two. There was just one report of juveniles - an adult with two at the Dragonfly Ponds

on 29th July (JWC). Birds proved very elusive in August with just two records of single birds, both on 6th. One just outside the Lagoon Hide (DC/EC) and one at the Dragonfly Ponds (PC) on 3rd September were the last of the year, more than two weeks earlier than last year.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti* **Resident or Frequent Visitor?**

The status of this species at Rodley is somewhat uncertain. First recorded on 17th December 2014, there were numerous reports of a bird or birds heard and occasionally seen in 2015 and 2016. There was just one record in January this year - one seen and heard on the Duck Marsh on 1st (KH). On 1st February one was heard at the eastern end of the Wet Grassland (PM/BM) - this a popular area in the previous two years. From 15th February there were numerous reports in this area through to 11th March. On 12th March one was heard on the Duck Marsh during a WeBS visit and on 5th April there was a further record in the same area (MW). On 28th April two were seen and heard at the edge of the Lagoon (JB) and on 11th June one was heard there during a WeBS visit. There were no further records for almost six months but on 2nd December one was heard and showed well just outside the Lagoon Hide (CG). There was a further sighting from the same hide on 27th December (MG/PG). In between these two sightings there was a second hand report of a bird at the eastern end of the Wet Grassland. Although the bird itself can be very elusive the song is loud and explosive and hard to confuse with anything else - but is it resident or just a regular visitor? .

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* **Migrant Breeder**

It was another good year for this summer visitor and it was almost certainly more numerous than its cousin the Sedge Warbler this year. A bird seen on the Duck Marsh from the Willow Path Hide on 17th April (JWC) was the first of the year, just one day later than last year's earliest ever record. There were no further sightings until 26th April when single birds were reported on both the Wet Grassland and Reedbed (DC/EC *et al*). There were daily sightings from 1st May with the Wet Grassland, Reedbed and Duck Marsh all productive. There were just two records on the Lagoon though birds were almost certainly present in the reeds along the far bank. There were sightings throughout August but there was just one record in September - a single bird on the Duck Marsh on 16th (JH) - this the last record of the

year and more than three weeks earlier than last year's latest ever record. There were no reports of juveniles but successful nesting almost certainly took place on all four main wetland areas.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* **Migrant Breeder**

The last record in 2016 came on 25th September and there were no reports of overwintering birds in the first three months of this year. A male near the car park on 1st April was the first of the year (JWC) and there were regular sightings thereafter. A male was singing on the far riverbank on 4th April (LJ) and over the next three weeks birds could be heard in the Coppice, on the Butterfly Bank and in the Manager's Garden but, based on records received, numbers did appear to be down on last year. There were surprisingly few records in June and July. Birds can be hard to find in August but there were numerous records this time with sightings in the Manager's Garden, Coppice, on the Butterfly Bank and on the riverbank, a bird singing on the Butterfly bank as late as 26th August (PM/BM). There was only one report of juveniles this year - two in the Manager's Garden on 12th August (DC/EC). There were just two reported sightings in September - two in the car park on 9th (JWC) and a male on the Willow Path on 10th (DC/EC); one in October - a female in the Manager's Garden on 7th (JH *et al*) but two late ones in November - one on 5th near the Dipping Ponds (JWC) and a male in the Coppice on 15th (PA).

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* **Migrant Breeder**

It proved to be a very disappointing year after a promising start with only two records after 30th May. One at the roadside near the car park on 29th April (JH) was the first of the year, five days earlier than last year. The next day two were seen near the Lagoon Hide (JWC). Roadside trees by the Lagoon were productive last year and it was the same again this year, almost all records coming from this area. Three birds were reported here on 27th May (PA). Unusually, the Willow Coppice only produced two records this year - a bird singing here on 13th May (PM/BM) and one on 30th May (JWC). They can be hard to find in the Coppice so were they really absent from this area or was their song simply overlooked? Records dried up after 30th May and there were no further reports until 8th July when one was seen in the Manager's Garden (JWC). There was a further sighting here on 12th July (DC/EC), this the last sighting of the year and 11 days earlier than

last year. These are very early departure dates. Prior to this birds had been seen into September in 2013, 2014 and 2015.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca* **Migrant Breeder**

It was another disappointing year with sightings on just five dates - the same as last year. One was singing in bushes at the edge of the farmland on 6th May (JWC) and the following day what was possibly the same bird was seen in the Manager's Garden (JWC). On 17th June one was reported in the Coppice (JWC) and on 18th June one was seen on the path to the Manager's Garden (DC/EC). There were no further sightings until 27th August when one was again reported in the Manager's Garden (JH).

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* **Migrant Breeder**

The large bramble patch across the road from the Lagoon Hide often produces the first bird of the spring and this year was no exception - one being seen here on 19th April (JWC), just four days later than last year. Birds were seen or heard daily thereafter with several bramble patches holding singing males. Numbers in recent years have been fairly constant with an estimated 15 to 20 pairs on territory and while 15 birds were counted around the Reserve during an early morning bird survey on 14th May some seemingly ideal habitat didn't hold pairs this year and counts generally were a little disappointing. However, it is thought that a number of pairs did nest successfully and six on the Scrubland on 23rd July almost certainly included juveniles. Unlike last year when there were daily sightings, records tailed off in August and there were just three reports, four birds seen from the Lagoon Hide on 6th being the best count (PA). A single bird by the Dipping Ponds on 10th September was the last of the year (JWC), eight days earlier than last year.

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* **Migrant Breeder**

Some Chiffchaffs are now overwintering in Britain and one or two have certainly spent the winter here over recent years. Single birds were recorded on seven dates in December 2016 but there were no sightings in January or February this year and we had to wait until 8th March for the first two birds on the Willow Path (AP/PA). Numbers soon started to build and four were reported on 12th March (JWC) with birds now singing daily. At least six were singing round the Reserve by 25th March. The Willow Path and Coppice are always popular and this year

was no exception, the majority of records coming from this area. There were numerous reports of juveniles, the elder tree on the ramp to the Butterfly Bank providing particularly good views of at least two in the first three weeks of August. One or two could be found in mixed parties of tits in August and September and from the number of contact calls around the Reserve it appears to have been a good breeding season. One was still singing in the Coppice as late as 28th October (JWC) and there were regular sightings throughout November and December. On 16th December four were seen in the Coppice and another on John Ackroyd Meadow (JWC). It is certainly unusual to see this number of overwintering birds. There was a further report of four or possibly five birds in the Coppice on 27th December (PA/AL).

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* **Migrant Breeder**

This common summer visitor has been recorded as early as 21st March but the first birds usually arrive between 10th and 15th April. However, last year the first bird was recorded on 2nd April and this year on 1st April (JWC). Birds were seen or heard daily from this date, the Coppice being the most productive area with several singing here from 4th April. At least one was heard on Poplar Carr or in the adjacent hedgerow on John Ackroyd Meadow from 19th April. The first juveniles were seen from the Wet Grassland Hide on 8th July - two being fed by adults (AT). At least three juveniles were seen at the Dragonfly Ponds on 10th August (PM/BM). There were sightings in the Manager's Garden Hide most days from 19th July to 26th August. Their contact calls could be heard throughout August all around the Reserve but they were much harder to find in September and there were just two records - the last one on the Willow Path on 23rd (DC/EC), five days earlier than last year.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* **Frequent Visitor**

2016 was a very good year for this tiny bird and there were sightings virtually daily from the middle of November to the end of the year, which is not the case most years. However, 2017 proved to be possibly the best year ever. Goldcrests tend to be very much an autumn and winter visitor to the Reserve with sightings nearly always in the first three months and last three months of the year. A few birds continued to be seen in January and February this year and one in the Manager's Garden on 22nd March was the last of the spring (DC/EC). The first bird of the autumn was also found in the Manager's Garden - on 16th September (JH). There was a further sighting on Poplar Carr on 30th

September (JH) but sightings really took off in October with up to four reported. There were then daily sightings to the end of the year, the Coppice producing the most records with up to six seen here from the Willow Path by birdwatchers hoping to catch the elusive Firecrest in December.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus* **Scarce Visitor**

Firecrests breed in the UK in very small numbers - mainly in the south east of England. Some arrive from across the North Sea in autumn along with Goldcrests. One was picked out among the Goldcrests in the Coppice on 17th December (AL/JWC). The bird inevitably caused a lot of attention and with many birdwatchers on the Willow Path scanning the Coppice there were further sightings on 24th, 26th, 27th, 30th and 31st. This was a new bird for the Reserve this year.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* **Infrequent Visitor**

There were sightings of this passage migrant on four dates last year - all between 7th May and 14th June. This year there were sightings on six dates between 5th August and 9th September. On 5th August one was reported on the Scrubland (PA) and on 9th August there was a further sighting in the same area (JWC). On 13th August one was seen on Poplar Field (JH). On 16th August one was reported on overhead wires near the Visitor Centre (BB). On 23rd August one was seen in a dead tree at the edge of the Manager's Garden and on 9th September two were reported in the same tree (DC/EC *et al*).

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus* **Resident Breeder**

These birds are early nesters, often using thick bramble patches around the Reserve. Small parties were seen most days from the beginning of the year. The Willow Path was particularly productive but there were no reports of more than five. Up to three were daily visitors to the feeders in the Bee Garden in the first half of April. Up to 10 were seen in mixed feeding parties of tits near the Visitor Centre in September but, unusually, no other double figure counts were reported. There were several reports of eight birds in the last three months of the year.

Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris* **Scarce Visitor**

There were again no sightings this year. Birds were recorded on the Reserve in 2002 and 2004.

Willow Tit *Poecile montanus* **Casual Breeder**

Last seen on 13th November 2013, there have been no sightings of this declining species in the last four years.

Coal Tit *Periparus ater* **Infrequent Visitor**

This is quite a common bird locally but it is only seen occasionally on the Reserve. Each of the last three years have produced just two records. This year was a bumper one in comparison with sightings on 10 dates, the first on 12th February - a single bird in the Bee Garden (GJB). There were no further sightings until 16th August when one was seen near the car park (JWC). On 10th September one was on the feeders on the Willow Path during a WeBS visit. There were sightings on seven further dates between 24th September and 16th December, one involving two birds and on three dates in October a bird in the Manager's Garden (DC/EC *et al*).

Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus* **Resident Breeder**

2016 was regarded as a poor breeding season, not just here but nationally and almost certainly due to adverse weather conditions at crucial times. Based on nest box returns there was certainly an improvement in the number of boxes used this year but a number contained dead chicks or broken eggs. Numbers of birds in the early part of the year were inevitably on the low side with usually no more than three at the feeders in the Manager's Garden and Bee Garden. The Willow Path is usually a productive area but here too numbers were low. A pair of birds had placed a good deal of nesting material in the box on the side of the Visitor Centre as early as the end of February but they did not pursue their interest and the box was eventually taken over by Great Tits. Sixteen nest boxes were used this year, many of these on the Willow Path, but exactly half failed to achieve 100% fledging success - see Nest Box Report for full details. Several family parties were seen in June with eight in one group near the Reedbed Hide on 11th the biggest reported but numbers of birds were again generally on the low side in the second half of the year.

Great Tit *Parus major* **Resident Breeder**

From nest box results 2016 appears to have been a generally poor nesting season for this species, as it was for Blue Tits. As a result the number of birds recorded on the Willow Path, in the Manager's Garden

and in the Bee Garden were on the low side in the early part of the year. Only six nest boxes were definitely used by Great Tits this year - the same as last year - but at least all young did appear to fledge successfully in five of them as far as we can tell. One of these was the box on the side of the Visitor Centre where all eight young fledged on 29th May - see separate Nest Box Report. There were few subsequent reports of young but three juveniles were seen at the feeders in the Bee Garden on 26th June (PM/BM). Numbers of birds at the feeders in the Manager's Garden were certainly rather higher from the end of June with up to seven here in August (DC/EC).

Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* **Scarce Visitor**

This is a very occasional visitor from woodland across the river. There were sightings on two dates in 2011 and one date in 2012 but none in the last five years.

Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris* **Casual breeder**

It was a poor year for this species with just three sightings reported. All involved single birds. The area around the river bridge has been productive in recent years and birds have nested in the stonework. All three records came from this area but there was no evidence of nesting. The first was reported on 30th April (PA). There were then two records in December - on 16th (MG/PG) and on 23rd (JWC).

Jay *Garrulus glandarius* **Resident Breeder**

This is a common bird throughout the year but activity increases considerably in September and October with birds on acorn and hazelnut forays. Most sightings are of one or two birds but small groups can be found, particularly in the spring. Five were seen together at the back of the Lagoon on 3rd March (JB). There was a lot of activity on the Willow Path and in the Coppice from the beginning of April and at least one pair probably nested there. There was certainly evidence of successful nesting. Three juveniles were in the Manager's Garden on 5th July (PW) and two were seen there on 9th and 15th July (DC/EC). In September birds were constantly flying back and forth over the Reserve on their acorn and hazelnut forays. Eight were recorded doing this during a WeBS visit on 10th September. On 19th September several were reported feeding on hazelnuts on the Butterfly Bank (PM/BM). There were a number of reports of five to eight birds in this period.

Magpie *Pica pica* **Resident Breeder**

This is a very common bird on the Reserve, often congregating in numbers outside the nesting season. Ten were in one bush in the Bee Garden on 7th January (DC/EC), 15 were counted on the Poplar Field fence on 13th January (JB) and 30 gathered in one small bush on the Scrubland late in the day on 1st February (PM/BM). Twenty four were counted round the Reserve during a WeBS visit on 15th January. There were no reports of juveniles this year but several pairs certainly nested on the Reserve. There were few double figure counts recorded in the second half of the year but there was a report of 16 assembled on overhead wires by the dry stone wall on 19th September (PM/BM).

Jackdaw *Corvus monedula* **Resident Breeder**

Large numbers of birds often congregate on the farmland and 120 were counted here on 11th January (DC/EC). Even larger numbers gather at roost sites in woodland on the far riverbank towards dusk and 200+ were recorded flying in at 4.00pm on 18th January (PM). There were two big flocks reported during the summer months - 200+ were on the farmland on 25th June (JWC) and again on 26th July (PM). There were some very big gatherings towards the end of the year and at dusk on 4th November a flock of 400+ very noisy corvids, mainly Jackdaws, flew out of trees behind the Lagoon (PM). There were some further large concentrations of birds on the farmland in December with c150 reported on 30th (DC/EC). In December last year three birds showing characteristics of "Nordic Jackdaw" *Corvus monedula monedula* were picked out on the farmland. These birds have a pale nape and sides of the neck, a dark throat and a light grey partial collar. Single birds showing these characteristics were again found on the farmland on four dates this year - on 25th February, 22nd April, 4th November and 31st December (JWC).

Rook *Corvus frugilegus* **Infrequent Visitor**

This common bird is certainly not common in this part of the Aire Valley and it would be interesting to know where the nearest rookery is. The last three years have each produced less than a handful of sightings and it was almost the same again this year. There were five records this time but four of these were flyovers involving just one or two birds (JWC *et al*). On 3rd December one was recorded on the farmland (DC/EC).

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* **Resident (Probable Breeder)**

This is still a very common bird on the Reserve and farmland with large gatherings in the winter months, particularly towards dusk. There was only one report of more than 50 birds this year - 80+ on the farmland on 23rd September (JWC) - but much higher numbers were certainly present at the roost sites in woodland across the river from the amount of noise at dusk in the winter months.

Raven *Corvus corax* **Scarce Visitor**

A bird flying over in an easterly direction on 21st March 2015 was the first and only record for the Reserve so far.

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* **Casual Breeder**

This species continues to decline, the large flocks on the farmland now just a memory. Last year there were no sightings at all in January and just one in February (20 birds). This year there were two records in January - the best just three birds - and none in February or March. There was some improvement in April with two reports of c40 over Mike Fisk Meadow on 12th and 19th (PM/BM) and 38 on the grass by the Visitor Centre on 14th (JB) but all other records were of less than 10 birds. Around 50 were on Mike Fisk Meadow on 25th May (BM) and this proved to be the best count of the spring and summer. On 17th September between 50 and 60 were on overhead power lines on the farmland (BM) and a similar number were reported on 23rd September (DC/EC). The best count of a poor year was just 80+ flying west in one group on 21st October (JWC). A few birds were on the farmland some days in November and December but no more than 26.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* **Casual Breeder**

This species rarely ventures far onto the Reserve these days. A few birds can usually be found in bushes by the main gates and five were recorded here on 14th November (PM/BM).

Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* **Casual Breeder**

This species tends to come and go for no particular reason. It can stay for a while and appear to be establishing itself on the Reserve and then suddenly disappear. Last year there were sightings on just six dates between 13th March and 12th October, one of these involving two birds. This year there were sightings on eight dates, five of these "flyovers". On 1st July one flew over John Ackroyd Meadow and on 13th August

three flew over the Visitor Centre to the Manager's Garden (JWC). On 16th September two were seen on the feeders in the Bee Garden (DC/EC *et al*) and one was there the next day. There were further reports of birds flying over on 24th September, 8th October and 15th October, the second of these involving four birds (JWC). On 25th October five were seen on the feeders in the Bee Garden (JWC *et al*) but there were no further records. It would be interesting to know how far away these occasional visitors are coming from.

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* **Frequent Visitor**

British Chaffinches are reckoned to be very sedentary, most moving no more than 5km from their natal sites. Numbers are greatly increased in winter by immigrants from northern Europe. This has rarely been more obvious than in late November and December this year. For much of the year Chaffinches are only present in very low numbers and the large majority of records come from the Manager's Garden. In the first four months there was only one report of more than four birds - a total of 12 on 18th February (DC/EC) - an unusually high count here. There were no sightings after 6th May until 2nd July when one or two birds started to return to the feeders. One or two also started visiting the feeders in the Bee Garden from early November but the only double figure count of the autumn came on 25th November when 18 were seen at the edge of Tim's Field. On 10th December 35 were counted on and at the edge of Tim's during an early morning WeBS visit, birds clearly visiting the field for seed. On 16th December there was a second hand report of c40 in a tree at the corner of the field. More than 20 were in the John Ackroyd Meadow hedge next to the field on 18th (PM/BM) and on 23rd 23 were counted at the edge of the Coppice (DC/EC). On 27th December a mixed flock of Chaffinches and Linnets at the edge of the Coppice by Tim's Field included at least 30 of the former (PM/BM).

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* **Winter Visitor**

This is a very infrequent winter visitor to the Reserve. There was just one reported sighting in each of 2012, 2013 and 2014 but none in the last three years.

Greenfinch *Chloris chloris* **Resident Breeder**

The population is still fluctuating due to periodic outbreaks of the disease trichomonosis and numbers at the feeders in the Manager's

Garden in January and February were certainly much lower than in 2016 with no more than three birds recorded. No more than one or two were seen at the feeders in the Bee Garden in the same period. Last year two or three was the norm in the Manager's Garden in the spring months and it was the same again this year though we did manage four on two dates in March. Not surprisingly then, there were very few reports of juveniles. Things did pick up a bit for a time towards the end of September with six in the Manager's Garden on 27th (DC/EC) and six again on 4th October but, unusually, there were no double figure counts reported this year. A few birds were daily visitors to the Bee Garden from the latter part of October with five on 16th December the best count (DC/EC).

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* **Resident Breeder**

Goldfinches are seen at the feeders in the Bee Garden throughout the year but are rarely seen at the feeders in the Manager's Garden for some reason. Although many stay in the UK all year they will move around in search of food sources and are partial migrants, some even migrating to France and Spain in the autumn. Up to 10 were reported at the feeders in January. Twelve were seen in trees in the Manager's Garden on 21st January (JH) but didn't visit the feeders. The first juvenile was seen at the feeders in the Bee Garden on 14th June (DC/EC), just two days later than last year. Numbers built up considerably in July with many juveniles on the wing. A flock of 70+ was reported on 15th July (JB); around 100 were on Mike Fisk Meadow during a WeBS visit on 23rd and 200+ were estimated to be on the same meadow on 26th (JWC). The seed crop on Mike Fisk Meadow was clearly very popular and there was a further report of c100 here on 2nd August (DC/EC). Numbers at the feeders in the Bee Garden were at their highest from late August to early October with many double figure counts of up to 24 birds including many juveniles. Like last year, numbers at the feeders dropped in December with no more than five birds reported. Interestingly, there are rarely reports of birds feeding on the abundant seed crop on Tim's Field in the autumn and winter months although thistle seed heads at the edge of the field certainly proved popular in August with 30 feeding on them on 21st (PM/BM).

Siskin *Carduelis spinus* **Frequent (Winter) Visitor**

The best place to see this species in the early part of the year is often the roadside alders by the Lagoon where birds gather to feed on seed. More than 20 were seen here in January last year but this year was disappointing with just two there on 4th March (PW/JLW) and one on 22nd March (AP). Summer sightings are rare so one flying over on 18th June (JWC) was unexpected. Small groups of birds started to be seen from the middle of September but all flying over without stopping. Twelve were recorded flying east on 16th September (JWC) and over the next few weeks several small groups of up to 12 birds were seen flying over, the last on 26th November - two birds flying over the bridge (JWC).

Linnet *Carduelis cannabina* **Casual Breeder**

Linnets need seed-rich habitats and their dependence on this has left them vulnerable to the effects of agricultural intensification which has contributed to their decline. The guaranteed seed crop on Tim's Field every autumn and winter has, therefore, been very important for these birds locally. A count of 150 on 28th December last year was the highest of the year but numbers tend to fluctuate daily and we had to wait until 22nd January for the first three figure count - 117 in the hedgerow adjacent to Tim's Field (DC/EC). Flocks were seen daily throughout February and March but the best count was just 45 in February, well down on the same period last year. There was an improvement in March with 73 in willows by the Education Pond on 22nd the highest count (JH). The last flock of the spring - 30+ birds - was seen on 15th April (DC/EC). One or two birds remained throughout the summer but there was no evidence of successful nesting. A few started to return in September, numbers reaching 31 on 24th (JWC). Counts reached c100 on 4th November (JWC) but they fluctuated from day to day with less than 20 some days. A count of 155 on 10th December, recorded during a WeBS visit, was to be the best of the year - almost the same as last year's best. There was one further three figure count reported - 108 on John Ackroyd Meadow on 16th December (DC/EC).

Twite *Carduelis flavirostris* **Scarce (Winter) Visitor**

Twite breed on treeless moors and bare coastal heaths, many moving to the coast for the winter. Prior to this year there had been just two records - on 11th September 2000 and 29th October 2003. There were two sightings this year, in each case the bird associating with Linnets.

On 11th November one was seen in trees in the container area by Tim's Field (JWC) and the following day what was probably the same bird was seen again close to Tim's Field (JWC *et al*).

Lesser Redpoll *Carduelis cabaret* **Infrequent (Winter) Visitor**

Alders by the roadside near the Lagoon are always worth checking in the early part of the year and this probably offers the best chance of seeing this bird well on the Reserve. Last year produced nine records but six of these were "flyovers". There were ten records this year, six of which were "flyovers". Unfortunately, there were no sightings in the alders this time and the only record in the first nine months of the year was a single bird flying over on 26th March (JWC). We then had to wait until 7th October for the next record - a single bird low over Tim's Field (JWC). On 8th October one was seen in the roadside trees and one flew over on the same date. Eight were recorded flying over on 15th October, two on 22nd and one on 25th (JWC). On 28th October three flew into the Coppice (JWC). There were further reports of single birds on 29th October and 7th November.

Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* **Resident Breeder**

Bullfinches are daily visitors to the feeders in the Manager's Garden and Bee Garden throughout the year and the species is clearly doing very well here. Up to five were seen at the feeders in both gardens in January and seven were reported from the river bridge on 14th January (AT). John Ackroyd Meadow too provided plenty of sightings in the early part of the year with up to five seen here. The first juvenile was seen in the Manager's Garden on 16th July (DC/EC) - a month later than last year. On 23rd July five juveniles were seen here and four on 29th July (DC/EC). One or two juveniles were also recorded at the feeders in the Bee Garden from the beginning of August. In the last four months of the year almost all records in the Manager's Garden were of males with very few females which is rather unusual. Five males were recorded here on 19th November and four on 22nd November (DC/EC).

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citronella* **Scarce Visitor**

This is still a very scarce bird in the area and there had been no sightings since 15th March 2015. Prior to this there had been no sightings in the previous three years. There were in fact three records this year. One was seen in the Manager's Garden on 4th March (DC/EC

et al); on 25th October one was seen flying into bushes in the Bee Garden (JWC) and on 29th October one was reported flying over the Reserve in a northerly direction (JWC).

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* **Resident Breeder**

Although it breeds on the wetlands this is a daily visitor to the feeders in the Manager's Garden and Bee Garden throughout much of the year. Numbers in the Manager's Garden were at their highest in the first four months of the year with up to seven in January and February, eight in March and seven in April. Up to five were seen at feeders in the Bee Garden in the same period. Birds were present in good numbers on all four main wetland areas throughout the spring and summer and at least one pair again nested in long vegetation at the Dragonfly Ponds. There were also occasional sightings on Poplar Carr suggesting that at least one pair attempted to nest there. Numbers at the feeders in the Manager's Garden remained low throughout the early autumn and winter with a best count of just five on 19th November. However, birds were almost certainly concentrating on the abundant seed crop on Tim's Field over this period. Eight were seen in this area on 10th December during an early morning WeBS visit. No more than three were seen at the feeders in the Bee Garden in the same period.

ESCAPED SPECIES

Black Swan *Cygnus atratus* **Escaped Species**

First recorded in September 2013, a bird spent several spells on the wetlands. In 2016 two arrived on 17th January, staying on the Reserve until 5th June. During this period they spent time on the Lagoon, Duck Marsh and farmland. Subsequently there were several sightings on the river, the last on 23rd July 2016. There have been no sightings this year.

Chestnut Teal *Anas castanea* **Escaped Species**

Recorded for the first time last year, a male was seen on the Lagoon during an early morning WeBS count on 18th December. There was again one sighting this year - a male on the Lagoon on 19th March (JWC).

Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* Escaped Species

There have been no sightings in 2016 or 2017. It was first recorded on the Reserve in 2001 but there were then no further sightings until 2015 when a single bird was seen on six dates between 29th August and 11th October.

Other species that have been recorded on the Reserve in previous years:

- Bar-headed Goose (Escape)
- Corn Bunting
- Grey Phalarope
- Marbled Duck (Probable escape)
- Red-crested Pochard (Probable escape)
- Ringed Teal (Escape)
- Sandwich Tern
- Short-eared Owl
- Tree Pipit

FIRST AND LAST DATES FOR WINTER VISITORS
2017

SPECIES	LAST	FIRST
Whooper Swan	14 th January	-
Wigeon	15 th March	6 th September
Goldeneye	25 th March	13 th September
Waxwing	1 st April	-
Fieldfare	1 st April	25 th October
Redwing	25 th March	7 th October
Brambling	-	-

FIRST AND LAST DATES FOR SUMMER VISITORS
2017

SPECIES	FIRST	LAST
Garganey	-	-
Hobby	24 th June	24 th June
Osprey	11 th May	17 th August
Marsh Harrier	8 th October	8 th October
Honey Buzzard	-	-
Ringed Plover	-	-
Little (Ringed) Plover	4 th April	13 th May
Whimbrel	-	-
Black-tailed Godwit	-	-
Greenshank	-	-
Common Sandpiper	15 th April	15 th July
Common Tern	22 nd April	6 th August
Arctic Tern	-	-
Cuckoo	30 th May	19 th July
Swift	1 st May	17 th September
Sand Martin	5 th March	2 nd September
Swallow	1 st April	8 th October
House Martin	29 th April	24 th September
Yellow Wagtail	-	-
Whinchat	2 nd September	1 st October
Wheatear	12 th April	30 th April
Ring Ouzel	6 th May	4 th November
Grasshopper Warbler	19 th April	23 rd August
Sedge Warbler	16 th April	3 rd September
Reed Warbler	17 th April	16 th September
Garden Warbler	29 th April	12 th July
Common Whitethroat	19 th April	10 th September
Lesser Whitethroat	6 th May	27 th August
Willow Warbler	1 st April	23 rd September
Spotted Flycatcher	5 th August	9 th September
Common Redstart	5 th April	17 th April

In view of the number of Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs now over-wintering in the area it is not possible to give accurate arrival and departure dates for actual migrants.

Nest Box Report

In 2016 there was a considerable drop in the number of nest boxes used by Blue Tits and Great Tits. Weather conditions may well have been a contributory factor. This year more boxes were used by Blue Tits but exactly half the boxes used contained dead chicks or broken eggs. All young fledged successfully in eight boxes but the other eight revealed the following:

- Three boxes - Between 5 and 7 broken eggs
- Two boxes - One and two dead chicks
- One box - One unhatched egg
- One box - Several feathered dead young
- One box - Predated by Great Spotted Woodpecker

One or two infertile eggs are often found in boxes but to find broken egg shells in so many boxes is a bit of a mystery - possibly an intruder such as a Woodmouse which does regularly turn up in nest boxes. Great Spotted Woodpeckers certainly predate nest boxes and woodpecker damage was noted on a number of boxes but the one mentioned above had been virtually demolished. Metal plates have been used on many of the boxes to prevent woodpeckers from enlarging the holes to pull out the inhabitants but a large percentage of these were not used and it does seem that both Blue Tits and Great Tits like to customize the entrance to the hole by pecking around it - which is not possible with the metal plates.

Only six boxes were definitely used by Great Tits this year but all young did fledge successfully in five of them. One of these was the box on the side of the Visitor Centre where live action was relayed to the television in the centre. All eight young fledged successfully on 29th May. One box on the Coppice fence facing Mike Fisk Meadow showed signs of woodpecker damage and the remains of several dead young were found in the box.

Like last year, no open-fronted nest boxes were used by Robins but from the size of the local population they are clearly finding plenty of natural nest sites. It is not just birds that use the nest boxes either. Five were found to contain wasp nests and two had Woodmouse nests.

We again had three Barn Owl boxes in operation this year - two in the Yorkshire Water compound and one on the Scrubland. The east facing box in the compound was again used by Kestrels, three young fledging successfully, but the Scrubland box, where two young Barn Owls fledged last year, was not used despite some early activity at the box in April and May.

Three Little Owl boxes were again operational - in the Manager's Garden, at the back of the Wet Grassland and in the Coppice. The box in the Manager's Garden was used in 2015 and 2016 and at least one young fledged. Birds were again in residence this year but Grey Squirrels took over for a time raising three young there. One unhatched egg was subsequently found in the box.

There are also two Goosander boxes sited in riverside trees, one in a large sycamore at the top of the Fish Pass and the other behind the Duck Marsh. When the latter box was checked in September it was found to contain three dead juvenile Grey Squirrels.

A table of results is shown below.

Species	Boxes Used	All Fledged	Unhatched Eggs/Dead Chicks
Blue Tit	16	8	8
Great Tit	6	5	1
Robin	-	-	-
Wren	-	-	-
Kestrel	1	1	-
Little Owl	1	-	1
Barn Owl	-	-	-
Goosander	?	?	-

MAMMALS

Fox *Vulpes vulpes*



The year started badly with two animals found dead in February - a young male on the river bank with no visible signs of injury and another on the grass just outside the workshop. This follows the death of a male found on 17th December. This animal was quite thin but was otherwise in good condition. On 29th March a dead fox was found in a bag by the canal swing bridge. Foxes are certainly being shot on the adjacent farmland and the number of sightings was down somewhat this year but vacant territories are soon filled and there was some improvement in the second half of the year. On 10th May one was watched hunting by the Poplar Ponds (PW/JLW) and on 18th June one was caught on a camera trap after dark feeding on peanuts in the Manager's Garden. Sightings did increase from the beginning of July and on 16th July a juvenile was seen at the roadside by the Lagoon Hide (PA/AL). A juvenile was again reported on the hard path by the Reedbed Hide during the evening on 16th August and again on 20th August on the road by the car park (PM/BM). On 31st August three were observed on the farmland muck heap, clearly feeding on a carcass (PM/BM). In September and October there were several sightings of a fox on Poplar Carr from the hide there.

Otter *Lutra lutra*

After a spate of daytime sightings from the middle of October last year hopes were a high for a repeat this year but it was not to be. It was in fact a disappointing year with only limited evidence of their presence. Camera trap images, tracks and other signs on the river bank have been the only reliable way of proving their presence in the past as they do appear to have been largely nocturnal here. Access to the river bank is also difficult due to the steepness of the banks and dense, high vegetation and so opportunities for monitoring are limited. Tracks were found on the river bank by the bridge and at the water inlet but only on a



handful of occasions. Tracks were also found in soft mud on the river bridge on 24th July (JB).

American Mink *Neovison vison*

This unwelcome visitor was reported on 20 dates this year, only one of these after the middle of July. In 2016 there were also reports on 20 dates, the last on 23rd August. Fortunately, they do seem to leave us around mid to late summer. In January there were sightings on five dates. On 4th March one was seen on the Education Pond (JLW) and there was a further sighting here on 17th March (JB/JK). In between, one was reported on the river bank on 12th and 16th March. In June last year one enterprising individual was observed scaling the Sand Martin nesting bank and pulling chicks from nest holes. This year one was seen at the base of the nesting bank on 17th and 24th May (JH/PA) but there were no reports of nests being predated. On 11th June one was seen on the Willow Path and entering the Reedbed Hide - almost certainly the same individual. There were further sightings in June on the river bank and on 30th June one was observed with what appeared to be a mole on the steps to the Mike Sheldon Hide (JHa). On 1st July one was reported with a dead juvenile Wood Pigeon on the decking at the Education Pond (TC). There were further sightings at the Education Pond on 8th and 14th (JB) and in the Reedbed on 9th. There was then just one late sighting - one on the far side of the river opposite the Dragonfly Ponds on 3rd December (MG/PG).



Weasel *Mustela nivalis*

It was another excellent year for sightings of this small mammal and there were records in every month. As always, the area around the Visitor Centre produced a lot of sightings but there were records from all around the Reserve. A consistently large population of small rodents has obviously benefited this species and there were several reports of Weasels with prey. On 22nd January one was seen with a small rodent by the Mike Sheldon Hide on the Willow Path (AT). On 15th April one was photographed on the Willow Path with a Moorhen chick (IR). On 13th August one was again seen by the Mike Sheldon Hide carrying prey (AT). On 20th August one was reported carrying prey in the



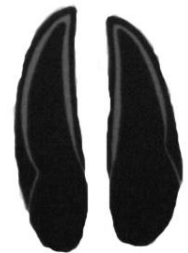
Manager's Garden (JBM/TM). On 17th September one was seen with a small rodent on the road below the Visitor Centre. In November one was observed carrying what was described as a large prey item on the river path on 12th (SO) and on 19th one pursued and caught a small rodent on the Willow Path (PA/AL). There were three reports of young this year. On 11th June an adult was photographed carrying young across the road near the Mammal Hotel (TW); on 15th July two juveniles were seen on the road near the Visitor Centre (DS *et al*) and an adult and juvenile were reported near the thatched gazebo on 22nd July.

Stoat *Mustela erminea*

There is almost certainly some confusion between this species and its smaller cousin the Weasel and some Stoat reports are almost certainly Weasels as this is a very common mammal here. However, Stoats do turn up on occasions and there were reliable sightings on five dates this year - the same as last year. On 15th April one was seen outside the patio door of the Visitor Centre (PM). On 19th July one was reported on the road below the Visitor Centre (APa). On 9th September one was seen near the Mike Sheldon Hide (PSc) and on 4th October one was reported in the Manager's Garden (AMcK/NBa). There was a further sighting in the Manager's Garden on 29th November (PA/PW/JLW).

Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus*

The number of sightings was well down on previous years and the large majority were in the first six months. Animals are almost certainly been shot when they stray onto local farmland and probably further up the valley too. There were a number of sightings in January with up to three animals seen together, on one occasion on the road by the Lagoon (PW/JLW). Two females were reported on the Duck Marsh in February and two males on the Scrubland in March. Roe Deer usually give birth to twins but in both 2015 and 2016 a female was seen with triplets. The young usually start to appear in June but this was not the case this year and a single adult on Tim's Field on 14th June was the last record until 12th August. Sightings were reported on just seven dates in the last six months of the year. A single male was seen on two dates in August and a juvenile was reported on the road near the Visitor Centre on 14th (RS/MG) - this the only report of



young this year. A male and female were on John Ackroyd Meadow on 30th September (JB) and a male and two females were seen on the Duck Marsh on 5th November (PA/AL). In December three were on Mike Fisk Meadow on one date (GJB *et al*) and three were on the Wet Grassland on 24th (MH).

Mole *Talpa europaea*

There was again plenty of evidence of Mole activity on the Reserve this year. Fresh Mole hills were still being seen up to the end of December with many along the road side. There was only one actual sighting reported - one in the hedge by the Mammal Hotel on 19th July (DS).

Common Shrew *Sorex araneus*

Small mammal surveys using Longworth traps usually produce two or three Common Shrews, particularly on the Willow Path. This year two surveys on the Scrubland in May and November failed to catch one but a female was caught at the edge of John Ackroyd Meadow during a public trapping event on 24th June. There were several other records, three of these in the Rodley Robins children's club area where shrews were found under corrugated iron sheets on 1st July, 12th August and 22nd September (DS/JB). On 5th July one was reported on the path to the Manager's Garden (MG/PG) and a juvenile was found dead near the containers on 10th August (PM/BM).



Pygmy Shrew *Sorex minutus*

This tiny mammal has a body length of just six centimetres. Its remains have been found in Barn Owl pellets but there had been no records of a live one on site up to 2015. Last year one was caught in a Longworth trap on the Willow Path during a small mammal survey on 26th June but there were no records this year.

Water Shrew *Neomys fodiens*

There had been no records in 2015 or 2016 but this year one was seen on the Wet Grassland on 9th December (JWC). Survey work done in the Reedbed in previous years certainly showed this species to be present there.

Harvest Mouse *Micromys minutus*

A Harvest Mouse breeding project started in 2012 with a view to introducing this tiny mammal to selected areas of the Reserve. Between 8th May and 18th September 2014 some 496 mice were bred and released. Further introductions took place in 2015. Sadly, the selected sites were inundated by the 2015 Boxing Day flood and mortality rates would inevitably have been very high. However, this year several breeding nests were found at the edge of Tim's Field by the Dipping Ponds in December (JB), suggesting that some of the descendants of these mice had survived the floods. Further introductions have been made this year at the new release site chosen last year on higher ground on the Scrubland. A breeding nest was found on the Scrubland in December (JB).

Wood Mouse *Apodemus sylvaticus*

Wood Mice are very common on the Reserve and along with the Bank Vole are the two species most likely to be caught in Longworth traps during small mammal surveys. Of 17 small mammals caught on the Scrubland during a survey on 6th May 12 were Wood Mice. During the winter months they are regularly caught in the workshop and seed store but they can turn up here at any time of the year. Being excellent climbers they can be found in some unlikely places. On 7th July a Wood Mouse nest was discovered in the electronics box on the Swift Tower and on 23rd October a nest and three mice were flushed from a hole in the Sand Martin nesting bank on the Lagoon during maintenance work (ABr/JHa). Two tit nest boxes were found to contain Wood Mouse nests during the annual check in November.

Bank Vole *Clethrionomys glareolus*

This is another very common small mammal on the Reserve and it is regularly caught in Longworth traps during small mammal surveys. Ten caught on the Scrubland in the Harvest Mouse release area on 3rd November included eight females. There were the usual sightings under the feeders in the Bee Garden and along the Willow Path and individuals were found under corrugated iron sheets in the Rodley Robins' area on several occasions. See Small Mammal Surveys for further details.

Field or Short-tailed Vole *Microtus agrestis*

While this species almost certainly figures highly in the diet of our Kestrels and Barn Owls it is seldom seen and rarely appears in Longworth traps during small mammal surveys. Field Voles have a rather different habitat preference to Bank Voles, preferring rough grassland full of tussocks and the Scrubland would appear to provide just the right habitat for them. Trapping has rarely been done here in the past but this year five were caught on the Scrubland in the area around the Harvest Mouse release pens. On 6th May two males were caught and on 3rd November a male and two females.

Water Vole *Arvicola amphibius*

Loss of habitat and predation by American Mink have been major factors in the dramatic decline of this once very common species. There have been no records on the Reserve in 2016 or 2017 but in 2015 one was seen on three dates between 5th August and 4th October on the Dragonfly Ponds and Education Pond. Prior to 2015, to our knowledge, there had been no records on our stretch of the River Aire since 1993.

Brown Rat *Rattus norvegicus*

There had been very few records of this species prior to 2015, which is perhaps surprising considering that the Reserve is bordered by the River Aire on three sides. However, in 2015 Brown Rats took up residence in the Manager's Garden and later in the year in the Bee Garden and successful breeding took place. There were again sightings in both gardens from the beginning of 2016 and successful breeding took place in the Manager's Garden. However, sightings petered out that autumn and there have been no records since then. Predation by a Kestrel and Weasel is known to have accounted for at least two juveniles and Foxes will also almost certainly have contributed to their disappearance.

Grey Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis*

The number of sightings continues to increase every year. One or two could be seen most days on the entry road between the main gates and the river bridge and there were sightings in every month of the year in the Manager's Garden. Last year Grey Squirrels took over the Little Owl box there in December, building a nest inside the box. This year one was seen going into the box in February and again in August and

on 4th September three juvenile squirrels were found in the box during a nest check (JB). On 25th September three dead juvenile squirrels were found in the Goosander nest box in a tree on the river bank behind the Lagoon (SF).

Rabbit *Oryctogalus cuniculus*

This is a rare visitor to the Reserve and prior to 2016 there had been no sightings since 28th October 2011. In 2016 there was a report of one at the edge of Tim's Field on 27th August but there have been no records since.

Brown Hare *Lepus capensis*

This is an uncommon mammal in this part of the valley and there had been no records on the Reserve or adjacent farmland until 2014 when one put in a surprise appearance on the Willow Path of all places on 26th June. There have been no sightings since then.

Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*

Hedgehogs are surprisingly scarce here and there have been no reported sightings of this rapidly declining species in the last nine years. There have in fact only been two records since the Reserve opened.

Common Pipistrelle Bat *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*

Pipistrelles are the commonest bats to be found on the Reserve and are often seen around the Visitor Centre during the evening in the summer months. Good numbers were again recorded on the Willow Path, particularly during the second public Bat Night on 29th July using bat detectors, the first event on 22nd July being badly affected by heavy rain. Good numbers were again recorded during Rodley Robins' Bat Night on 12th August, the area around the Duck Marsh Hide proving particularly productive as always.

Soprano Pipistrelle Bat *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*

In 1999 the Common Pipistrelle was split into two species on the basis of different frequency echolocation calls. Usually found in wetland habitats, the Soprano Pipistrelle is undoubtedly particularly suited to the Willow Path area at Rodley and, based on the frequency of echolocation calls alone, it again appeared to be present in very good numbers during the Bat Night events referred to above.

Noctule Bat *Nyctalus noctula*

Unlike the other bats this large species can often be seen flying just before sunset and occasionally during the day. Small numbers were recorded using bat detectors during all three Bat Night events this year.

Daubenton's Bat *Myotis daubentoni*

This medium-sized bat is often associated with water and seen flying low over lakes, ponds and canals just as dark is falling. Several bats flying over the Duck Marsh during the three Bat Night events may well have been this species.

SMALL MAMMAL SURVEYS

Surveys were carried out on three dates this year, one of these for public participation. The results are shown below.

Date of Survey: 6th May 2017

24 Longworth traps set on the Scrubland around the Harvest Mouse release area - 17 of these successful.

Species	M	F	Total	Remarks
Bank Vole	1	2	3	
Field Vole	2	-	2	
Wood Mouse	4	8	12	
Common Shrew	-	-	-	
Harvest Mouse	-	-	-	
Totals	7	10	17	

Date of Survey: 24th June 2017 - Public Event (2nd Leeds Birdfair)

John Ackroyd Meadow and Hedgerow - 16 traps set - 8 successful :

Species	M	F	Total	Remarks
Bank Vole	-	1	1	
Wood Mouse	3	2	5	+ one escapee!
Common Shrew	-	1	1	
Totals	3	4	7	+ one escapee!

Butterfly Bank - 4 traps set - all successful:

Species	M	F	Total	Remarks
Bank Vole	2	1	3	
Wood Mouse	1	-	1	
Totals	3	1	4	

Scrubland (Harvest Mouse release area) - 4 traps set - one successful:

Species	M	F	Total	Remarks
Bank Vole	1	-	1	
Wood Mouse	-	-	-	
Totals	1	-	1	

Date of Survey: 3rd November 2017

Scrubland (Harvest Mouse release area) - 24 traps set - 21 successful:

Species	M	F	Total	Remarks
Bank Vole	2	8	10	
Field Vole	1	2	3	
Wood Mouse	5	2	7	
Harvest Mouse	-	1	1	
Totals	8	13	21	

AMPHIBIANS

Smooth Newt *Triturus vulgaris*

This is a common species on the Reserve and can easily be seen in the Dragonfly Ponds in the spring months. Good numbers were again reported this year. They quickly arrived in the new pond in the Rodley Robins area last year and several small specimens were found under corrugated iron sheets there this year. One particularly small one found there on 14th November was the last record of the year (PM).

Palmate Newt *Triturus helveticus*

More a newt of the moorlands and heathy places, this species may still be present in small numbers but detailed surveys are needed to establish this. It was first recorded in 2010 and again in 2011. In the absence of any subsequent detailed surveys there have been no further confirmed records since 2011.

Common Frog *Rana temporaria*

Predation of adults by Grey Herons is considerable but this remains a very common amphibian on all the water bodies. The first spawn was noted on 1st March, six days earlier than last year and by the middle of March there were substantial amounts in various ponds. The first young frogs were reported in the last few days of June and it was hard to avoid them along the Willow Path in early July.

Common Toad *Bufo bufo*

Large numbers of Toads make the journey from the Scrubland to the Dragonfly Ponds each spring and the first ones this year had arrived by 15th March. On 20th March 109 were counted - 92 at the Dragonfly Ponds and a further 17 in the Poplar Ponds. On 31st March 195 were counted in the various ponds (JK) with 54 in Pebble Beach Pond, 53 in the Long Ditch and 40 in Woodhead Pond the most productive. On the same date spawn was seen in four ponds. In early April spawn was recorded in eight of the Dragonfly Ponds. Spawn was also found in the Rodley Robins pond on 7th April (DS). During the summer months individuals were frequently found in the mini-beast dens around the Reserve and under corrugated iron sheets in the Rodley Robins area.

REPTILES

Red-eared Terrapin *Trachemys scripta elegans*

Native to the southern United States and northern Mexico, this species is a popular pet in this country and, unfortunately, is often released into the wild. It was recorded on the Reserve for the first time in 2013 when there were two records. In 2014 there were three records, two of these on the Duck Marsh and one on the Wet Grassland. There were no sightings in 2015 or 2016 but there were two again this year, both on the Duck Marsh, one on 14th June (PA) and one on 23rd July (PW).

BUTTERFLIES

March produced a mixed bag of weather with wintery showers, strong winds and warm sunshine but temperatures generally were above seasonal norm and there were some pleasant days to bring out the first of the over-wintered butterflies. We had the first Small Tortoiseshells on 12th but very unsettled conditions from the middle of the month delayed further emergences and we had to wait until 24th for the first Peacock and 25th for the first Comma. Three Brimstone sightings on 25th were the earliest ever records for this species.

Few species did well this year and while a very poor, unsettled summer didn't help, there are clearly other underlying reasons for the steady decline of many of our butterflies. Some of our commonest butterflies such as Small Tortoiseshells and Peacocks are giving particular cause for concern. From the table shown below Small Tortoiseshell appears to have been one of the winners this year but this was far from the case. After a very poor summer emergence in 2016 there were plenty of spring sightings this year but numbers were very low and a complete absence of caterpillars on nettles in the early part of the summer was a worry and inevitably the summer emergence was again very poor. It was the same across the country with Butterfly Conservation's Big Butterfly Count reporting very low numbers. This species has been a cause for concern for more than a decade now.

After a poor summer emergence last year the number of over-wintering Peacocks was inevitably going to be low too and the summer emergence was poor with very few on the buddleias. Just a few years ago the buddleias would have been covered with Peacocks in August. It was a similar story in the countrywide Big Butterfly Count.

Fortunately, two of the Vanessid species did very well and saved the day somewhat for the butterfly enthusiasts. The real highlight was the Red Admiral. After a reasonably good year in 2016 numbers of this migratory butterfly soared during 2017. The Big Butterfly Count, admittedly only carried out over a few weeks, revealed that numbers were up by 75% compared with the 2016 count and up threefold compared with 2015. At Rodley it was the most frequently recorded butterfly this year and the only species seen regularly on the buddleias from the middle of July.

The top six most frequently recorded butterflies in 2017 were as shown below:

1st	Red Admiral
2nd	Small Tortoiseshell
3rd	Small White
4th	Comma
5th	Speckled Wood
6th	Peacock

The other Vanessid to do well this year was the Comma. Despite a very poor spring showing it turned out to be the 4th most frequently reported butterfly this year with a good summer emergence. This was reflected across the country, certainly in the Big Butterfly Count where numbers were up by 90% on 2016. This species benefited from a relatively warm spring by producing an excellent summer generation of the brighter orange *hutchinsoni* form that breeds immediately rather than going into hibernation.

The only other Vanessid recorded here, the Painted Lady is an annual immigrant from North Africa in varying numbers each year. It was a disappointing year for sightings with records on just seven dates - one less than last year.

All three common white butterflies decreased across the country during the Big Butterfly Count, all down by around 38%. Large White has never been particularly common at Rodley and Green-veined White appears to be declining but the second brood of Small White can be very numerous, particularly on Tim's Field. There was some improvement this year after a very poor 2016 and Small White still ranks 3rd in the list of this year's most frequently recorded butterflies.

Of the other Pieridae species, Orange Tip had a poor year with no double figure counts reported which is unusual. The upward trend in sightings of the long-lived, very mobile Brimstone dipped last year but there was an improvement this year starting with the earliest ever records on 25th March. This species may well now be breeding on Alder Buckthorn on the Butterfly Bank.

Looking at the Lycaenidae, it was a better year for Small Copper as regards number of sightings but numbers of butterflies remain very low. After a blank year in 2016 sightings of a single Common Blue on six dates this year must give some cause for optimism but Holly Blue, never common here, showed a decline with just three records. Purple Hairstreak was a new species for the Reserve last year and there were three records this year. Spending much of its time in the top of oak trees, the Willow Path and Manager's Garden are the obvious places to look. Perhaps it is more common here than the few records would suggest.

It was a poor year for both Skippers. The Small Skipper population remains very low and the number of sightings also gave cause for concern this year. It was the second poor year in a row for the Large Skipper after a very good year in 2015.

Among the brown butterflies Speckled Wood had a decent year and maximum counts were actually up a bit on 2016. It was also the fifth most frequently reported butterfly this year. Ringlets can be very numerous during their short flying season and the habitat at Rodley would seem ideal for them but both numbers of butterflies and numbers of sightings were disappointing this year. As regards Meadow Brown there were plenty of sightings, mainly on John Ackroyd Meadow and the Butterfly Bank, but numbers generally were lower than we would have expected.

The Gatekeeper is slowly extending its range north but it is never numerous here at Rodley. It did very badly across the country in 2016 but there was a big improvement in 2017, coming top in the Big Butterfly Count - up 24% on 2016. It enjoyed a better year here too with rather more sightings but it still didn't manage to figure in our top six. The Butterfly Bank is usually the best place to find this species.

Finally, a bit of good news. The sighting of a Wall Butterfly last year was unexpected and there were two sightings of this rapidly declining species this year.

Peter Murphy

HESPERIDAE

Small Skipper (*Thymelicus sylvestris*)

This species has never been numerous at Rodley but this year was very poor with only five records submitted. One on John Ackroyd Meadow on 2nd July was the first of the year (DC/EC), three days earlier than last year. A single butterfly was again reported on the meadow on 9th July (DC/EC). There were two records on the adjacent Butterfly Bank on 12th and 17th July with two on Field Scabious and Marjoram on the latter date (BM). Two butterflies on John Ackroyd Meadow on 25th July were the last of the year (PM), nearly three weeks earlier than last year.

Large Skipper (*Ochlodes venatus*)

It was a very poor year for this species with just eight records - two less than last year. This is disappointing as the species enjoyed a very good year in 2015 and appeared to be on the up with a number of double figure counts reported. One on the Butterfly Bank on 11th June was the first of the year (JH), eight days earlier than last year. Most records involved single butterflies but four were reported on the Butterfly Bank on 8th July (AWo). A single butterfly on the path to the Manager's Garden on 15th July was the last of the year (DC/EC), nine days earlier than last year.

PIERIDAE

Orange Tip (*Anthocharis cardamines*)

The first records this year came on 8th April, some three weeks earlier than last year, with sightings on the Butterfly Bank and Willow Path (BM/AT *et al*). However, numbers were low with only one report of more than two butterflies. A count of five males near the Lagoon and on the Butterfly Bank on 23rd April (AT) was by far the best count of a poor year. The last sighting came on the very early date of 31st May - a single male on John Ackroyd Meadow (DC/EC) - nearly two weeks earlier than last year.

Large White (*Pieris brassicae*)

The first brood emerges mainly in late April and May and as its Latin name suggests it is a lover of *brassica* crops. Why then do we not get

more records from Tim's Field? Last year just five records were submitted and this year just four - none of these on Tim's Field and all of just a single butterfly. One on the Butterfly Bank on 14th May (JA) was the first of the year and there was a further May sighting in the Coppice on 20th (BM). Butterflies from the second emergence are usually a lot more numerous and they are on the wing from July. There were two records in July - one on the Butterfly Bank on 12th (PM/BM) and one on 25th (WNS).

Small White (*Artogeia rapae*)

The first brood of this common butterfly usually emerges in April and the first this year were recorded on 8th (DC/EC *et al*), just two days earlier than last year. Numbers were low throughout April, May and June with a best count of just 12 on 31st May (DC/EC). The second brood is always more abundant and the highest numbers are found on Tim's Field when the Fodder Radish is in flower. Numbers were certainly higher than last year with a best count of 50+ on 25th July (PM/BM) but this was still well short of the numbers recorded some years. There were no double figure counts after 9th September and less than a handful of butterflies were seen most days. A single butterfly on Tim's Field on 15th October was looking like the last record of the year but there was then a late record of one on the Butterfly Bank on 27th October (MG), 11 days later than last year.

Green-veined White (*Artogeia napi*)

This common and widespread resident is a lover of damper areas and should be more numerous here than the small number of records each year would suggest. The number of sightings has certainly declined over recent years. Possibly more could be found around the wetlands. Butterflies of the first brood are on the wing from April but the first record this year was on 7th May - one on John Ackroyd Meadow (DC/EC) - just one day earlier than last year. There were sightings on just 10 dates this year - six less than last year. There were only two other records in May, both of single butterflies. Butterflies of the second brood appear from July and four on Tim's Field on 23rd July (MG/PG) was the best count of the year. A single butterfly on the compost heap on 21st August (PM/BM) was the last of the year, just three days earlier than last year.

Brimstone (*Gonepteryx rhamni*)

There was an increase in the number of sightings this year following a disappointing year in 2016.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of days reported</u>
2013	5
2014	12
2015	20
2016	10
2017	17

Three sightings of a male on 25th March were the earliest ever records of this species for the Reserve. They were seen from Poplar Carr Hide (JH), by the Lagoon (JH) and on the Butterfly Bank (PM/BM) and may have related to one individual as these butterflies are highly mobile and powerful flyers. Most records were of individuals but two were seen on the Butterfly Bank on 26th May (RS) where it is hoped they are now breeding on Alder Buckthorn. There were nine records in total in this area. Two males were seen in the Manager's Garden on 12th August and one on the Butterfly Bank (DC/EC). One at this latter site on 16th August (DC/EC) was the last of the year, just a day earlier than last year.

NYPHALIDAE

Wall (*Lasiommata megera*)

Nationally, a "species of concern", the Wall is rapidly disappearing from Yorkshire. With two full generations the butterfly can appear from late April through to September. It is a rarity here these days with just two records since 2012, the last on 5th September 2016 on Poplar Field. This year one was again seen on Poplar Field, a female on 3rd June (JH). On 5th August there was a second record - a male on John Ackroyd Meadow (JH).

Speckled Wood (*Pararge aegeria*)

Speckled Woods are lovers of dappled shade and the Willow Path and Coppice edge can always be relied on to produce sightings. The first brood of this butterfly appears in April and numbers are invariably low. One in the Manager's Garden on 17th April (JW) was the first of the year, more than two weeks earlier than last year. There were numerous sightings from 22nd April but no observers reported more than three

butterflies. Numbers built up considerably in August and there were some decent counts. A report of 10 on 25th August included eight in the Coppice (PM/BM). Ten on 27th August included six on John Ackroyd Meadow (DC/EC). Nine were counted by the Lagoon on 1st September (JB). A single butterfly in the John Ackroyd Meadow hedge on 24th September (DC/EC) was the last of the year, four days earlier than last year.

Small Heath (*Coenonympha pamphilus*)

First recorded on the reserve in 2005, there have been no confirmed sightings since then.

Ringlet (*Aphantopus hyperantus*)

During its short flight period this butterfly can be very numerous, flying even in dull conditions. However, like last year numbers were generally disappointing with few double figure counts. A single butterfly on John Ackroyd Meadow on 14th June was the first of the year (PA), five days earlier than last year and the earliest ever record by one day. Poplar Field and John Ackroyd Meadow tend to be the most productive areas, the latter site producing the best count of c20 on 8th July (PM/BM). One on the Butterfly Bank on 24th July was the last of the year (PM/BM), 11 days earlier than last year.

Meadow Brown (*Maniola jurtina*)

The majority of records came from the John Ackroyd Meadow and adjacent Butterfly Bank but numbers were generally disappointing. A single butterfly on the meadow on 17th June (DC/EC) was the first of the year, nine days earlier than last year. Ten were recorded here on 30th June (RS) and 15+ on 16th July (PM/BM) but most counts were in single figures. One on the Butterfly Bank on 26th August (PM/BM) was the last of the year, just two days earlier than last year.

Gatekeeper (*Pyronia tithonus*)

Numbers of this species remain low but there were plenty of sightings, the Butterfly Bank proving to be one of the most productive sites. One here on 8th July (AW) and one on the path to the Manager's Garden on the same date (PA) were the first of the year, six days earlier than last year. Up to four were reported on the Butterfly Bank in July. There were a good number of sightings in the first two weeks of August but no

observers reported more than three. One by the dry stone wall on 13th August (PM) was the last of the year, three days later than last year.

Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*)

In contrast to many others this species had an excellent year - probably its best in the Reserve's history. It was also the most frequently recorded butterfly this year. One on John Ackroyd Meadow on 20th May was the first of the year (MG/PG), nine days later than last year. There were regular reports of one or two butterflies from this point. Numbers increased considerably from 8th July with at least six in pristine condition on that date and on 17th July, four of these on the Willow Path (PM/BM). Buddleias outside the Visitor Centre proved popular from the middle of July with up to five here from the beginning of September and up to three on buddleias on the Tansy Bank. Rodley Robins wildflower area was also popular with up to three here in September. One here on 27th October and one on the Butterfly Bank on the same date looked like being the last of the year but there was then a very late record of one in pristine condition outside the Willow Path Hide on 19th November (MR), six days later than last year's latest ever record. Hopefully, this one may well try and overwinter here.

Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*)

Numbers of this immigrant from North Africa vary from year to year. They can start to appear from April but we rarely see them before June. There were records on seven dates in total - one less than last year. This year there were no sightings until 6th August when one was reported on buddleias by the Mike Sheldon Hide (PA). Two were on buddleias outside the Visitor Centre on 12th August (DC/EC) and one was here on 16th August (PM/BM). There were sightings on three dates in September - two on buddleias outside the Visitor Centre again on 4th (PM/BM), one in the Bee Garden on 10th (PM/BM) and one on Poplar Carr on 22nd (JB). There was a late record of a single butterfly on 15th October (JS), this the latest ever record for Rodley.

Peacock (*Aglais io*)

The main summer emergence of Peacocks in 2015 and 2016 was very disappointing and there was little if any improvement this year. This butterfly usually emerges from hibernation in March or April and two by the Mammal Tower at the roadside on 24th March were the first this year (PM/BM), 12 days later than last year. There were regular

sightings thereafter but most observers were reporting no more than two butterflies. Caterpillars were hard to find and there was just one report of 50+ on nettles on Bentley's Path on 17th July (MG/RS). The first freshly emerged butterflies were not seen until 10th August - four on Tim's Field (PM/BM). Buddleias outside the Visitor Centre, on the Butterfly Bank and by the Mike Sheldon Hide on the Willow Path should be covered in Peacocks in August but no more than three were seen at any of these sites. A count of five in the Rodley Robins wildflower area on 26th August was the best of the year. Butterflies were hard to find in September and one on buddleias on the Tansy Bank on 15th September (PM) was the last of the year, a month earlier than last year.

Small Tortoiseshell (*Aglais urticae*)

Following a very poor summer emergence last year it was fairly inevitable that numbers of overwintered butterflies this spring would be on the low side. Two on Blackthorn blossom near the compound on 12th March (JWC) were the first of the year, exactly the same date as last year. There were regular sightings thereafter, most observers reporting just one or two butterflies. However, six were counted on 3rd April (PM/BM) and eight on 6th April (JB). Another count of eight on 22nd May included four at the Fish Pass, one of these in unusually pristine condition for the time of year (PM/BM). Unusually, there were no reports of caterpillars this year and the summer emergence was again very poor. The first two freshly emerged butterflies were seen on the Butterfly Bank on 2nd July (PM/BM). Five on Creeping Thistle at the edge of Tim's Field on 16th July (PM/BM) was the best of the summer. There were no other reports of more than three butterflies and the normally productive buddleias outside the Visitor Centre failed to produce more than two. Two butterflies on 24th September (RB) were the last of another poor year, six days earlier than last year.

Comma (*Polygonum c-album*)

This species hibernates over the winter months and can be seen from March weather permitting. Like last year there were spring records of butterflies on just two dates - one on 25th March and two separate sightings on 8th April (AT) - not boding well for the main summer emergence. However, as it turned out, Commas were one of the few success stories of 2017. There were no sightings until 17th June but one by the gazebo on 21st June appeared to be a very early freshly emerged specimen (JH). There were regular sightings thereafter all

around the Reserve with up to four reported on several occasions. On 19th July three were seen warming up on dogwood leaves in the picnic area on the Butterfly Bank (PM/BM). Three were also seen on the Butterfly Bank on 24th July (PM/BM). There were regular sightings throughout August with up to four reported. The late summer brood was virtually non-existent last year but butterflies started to appear from 10th September, the Butterfly Bank and buddleias outside the Visitor Centre proving popular sites. One on the Willow Path on 15th October looked like being the last of the year but there was then a late record on 5th November outside the Reedbed Hide (MG/PG *et al*), some seven weeks later than last year.

LYCAENIDAE

Small Copper (*Lycaena phlaeas*)

With three separate emergences this small butterfly can be seen from April to October. 2012 was an excellent year for this species but the next four years were disappointing, last year being the worst. There was a distinct improvement in the number of days butterflies were recorded this year but numbers remain very low.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Days recorded</u>	<u>Max. no. of butterflies</u>
2013	13	3
2014	15	2
2015	25	2
2016	4	3
2017	17	3

There was a report of three at the edge of the Wet Grassland on the very early date of 6th April (JB) - the earliest ever record here - but there were then no further sightings until 14th May when one was seen on the Butterfly Bank (MB) and one at the edge of Tim's Field (PS). There were several sightings in June and July but only of single butterflies, most of these on John Ackroyd Meadow and the adjacent Butterfly Bank. Three were reported at the latter site on 5th August (JH). One on Poplar Field on 27th September (DC/EC) was the last of the year, more than two weeks later than last year.

Purple Hairstreak (*Quercusia quercus*)

This was a new species for the Reserve in 2016 with sightings on three dates. Breeding on oak, Purple Hairstreaks spend most of their lives in the treetops and as a result are easily overlooked. With just one

generation a year the first adults appear in July and can be seen throughout August into September. There were records on three dates again this year. One was seen in the Manager's Garden on 8th July (JH/JWC); one was on the Willow Path on 26th August (JWC) and a worn specimen was reported here on 27th August (AL).

White-letter Hairstreak (*Satyrium w-album*)

Usually associated with Wych Elms these days, this is a scarce butterfly on the Reserve. There have only ever been three records on the Reserve, the last one on 24th July 2016 on the Winter Walk.

Holly Blue (*Celastrina argiolus*)

This is a scarce butterfly here. 2014 and 2015 each produced sightings on four dates; there were sightings on six dates in 2016 and just three dates this year. On 9th April one was reported on the Willow Path (JWC); on 25th July one was seen in the Reedbed (WNS) and on 30th July one was found in the Bee Garden (PM/BM *et al*).

Common Blue (*Polyommatus icarus*)

This species has never been common here but it enjoyed its best year ever in 2015 with up to five butterflies reported. Hopes were high for a further improvement last year but, frustratingly, there were no reported sightings. This year there were sightings on six dates, all of single butterflies. On 14th June one was seen on John Ackroyd Meadow (PA/JH) and there were further sightings here on 17th June and 25th June (JH). There were no further records until 20th August when a male was found on the Butterfly Bank (JH/JS). The Butterfly Bank and John Ackroyd Meadow have always been the best places to look for Common Blues but on 30th August one was photographed on the path to the Manager's Garden (MG). The last record of the year came on 19th September when one was seen on the John Ackroyd Meadow hedge facing Tim's Field (PM), this the joint latest ever record.

BUTTERFLIES

First and Last Dates - 2017

Species	First date	Last date
Small Skipper	2 nd July	25 th July
Large Skipper	11 th June	15 th July
Large White	14 th May	25 th July
Small White	8 th April	27 th October
Green-veined White	7 th May	21 st August
Orange Tip	8 th April	31 st May
Brimstone	25 th March	16 th August
Clouded Yellow	-	-
Small Tortoiseshell	12 th March	24 th September
Comma	25 th March	5 th November
Painted Lady	6 th August	15 th October
Red Admiral	20 th May	19 th November
Peacock	24 th March	15 th September
Meadow Brown	17 th June	26 th August
Gatekeeper	8 th July	13 th August
Ringlet	14 th June	24 th July
Small Heath	-	-
Speckled Wood	17 th April	24 th September
Wall	3 rd June	5 th August
White-letter Hairstreak	-	-
Purple Hairstreak	8 th July	27 th August
Small Copper	6 th April	27 th September
Holly Blue	9 th April	30 th July
Common Blue	14 th June	19 th September

MOTHS

Light traps were run on 11 dates between 30th March and 16th October. Four of these were run on Tuesday nights during the school summer holidays and were opened at special moth events on Wednesday mornings for children. Despite a poor summer only one event had to be cancelled on 9th August. Many more moths were added to this year's list thanks to the efforts of a few enthusiasts who spent hours searching through hedgerows and foliage during daylight hours. A total of 135 species of macro moth and 65 species of micro moth were recorded this year. Of these, seven were new species for the Reserve. The Reserve list now stands at 380 species - 213 macro species and 167 micros.

New Macro Moths	New Micro Moths
Buff Footman	<i>Cydia ulicetana</i>
Dark Chestnut	<i>Pammene rhediella</i> Fruitlet Mining Tortrix
Dark Sword-grass	<i>Plodia interpunctella</i> Indian Meal Moth
	<i>Pyralis farinalis</i> Meal Moth

Among the new micro moths the Fruitlet Mining Tortrix - *Pammene rhediella* - is described as a rare and very local resident in Yorkshire. One was photographed on the Butterfly Bank in April (MG). Both the Indian Meal Moth and the Meal Moth tend to turn up in warehouses, pet shops, stables and food stores, the larval food plants being stored products such as grain, flour and cereals. They probably arrived here with bird seed. The Indian Meal Moth - *Plodia interpunctella* - is described as a rare and local resident in Yorkshire. One was found in the Visitor Centre on 18th June (PM/BM). *Caloptilia alchimiella* might have been another new micro moth for the Reserve this year but dissection would have been needed to rule out similar species.

Among the new micro moths last year was the Hemp-agrimony Plume Moth - *Adaina microdactyla*. As its name suggests, it breeds on Hemp Agrimony which is abundant on the Reserve. Three were caught in light traps last year. This year five were found on Hemp Agrimony growing just outside the Visitor Centre in June (RS *et al*). This is classed as a rare and local resident in Yorkshire.

Another micro moth that figured last year was the nationally scarce *Dichrorampha sedatana* which is described as “very rare and very local” in Yorkshire. This species breeds on Tansy and was positively identified for the first time last year. This has now been confirmed as the first ever record for VC64. At least 10 were found on the Tansy Bank again this year on 24th May. *Dichrorampha* species are very difficult to separate unless you are very experienced and dissection is usually needed to be absolutely sure. However, the food plant they are found on is an important guide.

The day-flying moths enjoyed mixed fortunes. The Small Yellow Underwing made a welcome return after a blank year in 2016 with five recorded on John Ackroyd Meadow in June. In previous years there had been concern about declining populations across the county due to degradation of suitable habitat, ie. flower-rich grassland, but in 2016 there were the highest number of Yorkshire records ever submitted but from only one site in Vice County 64. Unusually, there were no records of Chimneysweeper -one or two turn up on John Ackroyd Meadow most years but not in 2017. There was just one report of a Cinnabar Moth on John Ackroyd Meadow on 25th June (JH) and despite a careful search of the larval food plant Common Ragwort, not one caterpillar was found. Last year no moths and just three caterpillars were found. There were two sightings of a Burnet Moth - one on John Ackroyd Meadow and one at the Dragonfly Ponds - but neither close enough to confirm species.

A Vapourer photographed outside the Visitor Centre on 9th September (JS) was a nice record. This species was recorded for the first time last year. The female has rudimentary wings and is flightless. The males fly by day with an irregular, fluttering flight and can easily be mistaken for a butterfly.

A moth of calcareous grassland might seem a strange one to turn up at Rodley but this happens sometimes for no apparent reason. Broad-barred White is a case in point. Last year across the county was regarded as probably the worst year ever for this species with only six records - the only VC64 record being here on 6th June. This year three were caught in one light trap on the Butterfly Bank on 19th June. Larval food plants are described as the flowers of hawkweeds, hawk's beards, sow thistles and other closely related plants but it would be interesting to know what it is breeding on here.

A light trap set on the Butterfly Bank on the night of 24th July for the visit of Wharfedale Naturalists' Society the next day produced the biggest catch of the year - 448 macro moths of 46 species and 34 micro moths of 14 species. Many micro moths were almost certainly overlooked due to the size of the catch. Among the macro moths caught were four Buff Footmen and a Dark Sword-grass - both new species for the Reserve. The catch also included 110 Smoky Wainscots, 90 Common Rustics and 75 Uncertains.

Among the migrant moths 2016 was dominated by a huge arrival of Diamond-back Moths *Plutella xylostella* - the biggest influx since 1958. There was no repeat this year with just one recorded in the light traps and just small numbers on Tim's Field (where there were hordes in 2016). There were no reports of Hummingbird Hawkmoths and only four Silver Ys were caught. However, the Dark Sword-grass mentioned above was a new migrant moth for the Reserve list.

Most of our larger moths are in decline nationally and it is interesting to see which species can still be classed as common or very common on the Reserve. The top five appearing in light traps this year are shown below.

	Species	Number caught	
1st	Large Yellow Underwing	237	
2nd	Common Rustic/Lesser Common Rustic	184	
3rd	Square-spot Rustic	134	
4th	Smoky Wainscot	122	110 in one trap!
5th	Flame	88	

Dragonflies and Damselflies

Following the problems of the 2015 Boxing Day flood and the invasive New Zealand Pigmy Weed *Crassula helmsii*, the effected ponds have been relined or repaired and are now all full of water. The small pond beyond the bridge over the ditch has been extended and partially lined with puddled clay rather than using a synthetic liner. There is evidence of some recovery of the numbers of adult dragonflies and damselflies compared to those in 2016 but numbers are still below normal, particularly those of the Large Red Damselfly *Pyrrhosoma nymphula* and the Azure Damselfly *Coenagrion puella*. Bearing in mind that the life cycle of all of our species is normally two years, we are hoping for a return to normal in 2018. On the more positive side, records of the Southern Hawker *Aeshna cyanea* were up and the Migrant Hawker *Aeshna mixta* showed numbers similar to those of 2016. However, some or all of the individuals of these last two species may have come from breeding populations elsewhere.

Peter Mill

Large Red Damselfly (*Pyrrhosoma nymphula*)

Two double figure counts were recorded last year with 16 on the Dragonfly Ponds on one date in May. Numbers this year were disappointing with no observers reporting more than three. A teneral on Bruce's Pond on 22nd April (JLW) was the first of the year, 12 days earlier than last year. A teneral was also reported on Poplar Ponds the following day (JLW/JS). There were then no further records in the next four weeks. Breeding activity was only noted on two dates - a pair in tandem on the River Path on 27th May (PM/BM) and a pair in tandem on Coop Pond on 18th June (PS) - this the last sighting of the year, more than three weeks earlier than last year.

Azure Damselfly (*Coenagrion puella*)

This is the commonest damselfly to be found at the Dragonfly Ponds. Good numbers were certainly present again this year though no counts were carried out. The first sightings were reported on 10th May, four

days earlier than last year - a teneral on Pebble Beach Pond (JLW/JS) and one on the Butterfly Bank (PM). Breeding activity was first noted on 17th June with five pairs in tandem on the Long Ditch, six pairs on Woodhead Pond and one pair on each of Scarborough and Pebble Beach Ponds (PM/BM). Unusually, there were no records submitted in July and just three in August, the last on 27th, three weeks later than last year - a single male on Scarborough Pond (JLW).

Common Blue Damselfly (*Enallagma cyathigerum*)

This species has a preference for the larger water bodies and, although it is common on the wetlands, it is not easy to see from the hides. As a result records are few and far between. It can occasionally be found on the Dragonfly Ponds and two males were reported here on 29th July (JLW/JS) - this the only record of the year.

Blue-tailed Damselfly (*Ischnura elegans*)

This species is never numerous here and most reports this year were of just one or two insects. A male on the River Path on 10th May was the first of the year (JLW/JS), 10 days earlier than last year. One was reported on the Willow Path on 21st May and on Bruce's Pond on 22nd May but there were then no further records until 17th June when one was seen on the Long Ditch at the Dragonfly Ponds (PM/BM). One of the best counts of the year came on 17th July with one on Chadwick Pond, two on the Dragonfly Ponds Marsh, one on Pebble Beach Pond and one on the River Path (PM/BM) but, as in the previous three years, there were no reports of breeding activity. Up to five were reported on Bruce's Pond on 14th August (PJM). A male on Scarborough Pond on 27th August (JLW) was the last of the year, two weeks earlier than last year.

Emerald Damselfly (*Lestes sponsa*)

It was a disappointing year for this species with sightings reported on just six dates, the first on 26th June - a male on the Dragonfly Ponds Marsh (BM) - two days later than last year's joint earliest ever first date. It was nice to see the species establishing a presence on the Poplar Ponds last year and two males were seen here this year on 12th July (JLW). A male was on Mabgate Pond on 22nd July (JLW) and two females were reported on the ponds on 29th July (JLW/JS). There were no further records until 26th August when two females were on Woodhead Pond, one of these ovipositing (JLW). The next day an

ovipositing female was seen on the same pond (JLW *et al*) - this the last record of the year and 16 days earlier than last year.

Banded Demoiselle (*Calopteryx splendens*)

This river breeding species had a very poor year in 2016 following the 2015 Boxing Day floods and there were no reports of more than two insects which is very unusual. It bounced back somewhat this year and a count of 19 on 12th May (JB) was both the first sighting of the year and the earliest ever record by some seven days. Of these, nine were recorded on the river bank by the bridge, five on the River Path and five on the Lagoon. A total of 10 were males and nine females. It also turned out to be the biggest count of the year. On 26th May eight were recorded on the back Reedbed (five males and three females) and seven on the Wet Grassland (four males and three females). On 3rd June 12 males and three females were seen on the River Path (JLW). Despite the good numbers of females recorded, breeding activity was only noted on one date - a male and female in tandem on the River Path on 17th June (PM/BM). There were a number of sightings on the Dragonfly Ponds, mainly of single males. A male on Tim's Field on 10th August (PM/BM) was the last sighting of the year, some two and a half weeks earlier than last year.

Common Hawker (*Aeshna juncea*)

Despite this species preference for acidic upland areas there have been a few records on the Reserve in the past and last year there were three confirmed sightings including a female ovipositing on Woodhead Pond. There were no sightings reported this year.

Migrant Hawker (*Aeshna mixta*)

This is very much a species associated with late summer and autumn. One on the River Path on 5th August was the first of the year (JWC), 12 days earlier than last year. There were no further sightings until 23rd August when one was on Coop Pond and one on Bruce's Pond (JS). Like last year, numbers reported were low but four were counted on the Lagoon on 8th September (PM/BM); three were on Bruce's Pond on 9th September (JLW) and up to three were seen on the ponds on several dates in the latter part of September (JLW *et al*). There was just one report of breeding activity - a pair in wheel on the Willow Path on 6th October (BM). One seen from the Reedbed Hide on 25th October

(JLW) was the last of the year - more than two weeks later than last year.

Southern Hawker (*Aeshna cyanea*)

Sightings of this species have increased considerably in recent years and the increase was maintained this year. A female on Bruce's Pond on 5th July (PLi/KLi) was the first, exactly the same date as last year. Breeding activity was first recorded on 15th July - a female ovipositing on the New Dipping Pond (PM). Ovipositing was again noted on Poplar Ponds on 13th August (DG) and on Scarborough Pond on 27th August (JLW *et al*). Interestingly, all sightings up until 26th August were of single females. The first male was seen on Scarborough Pond on 27th August (JLW *et al*). All sightings from then until 24th September were of single males. A male and female were on Mill Pond on this date (JS/JLW) and two males were seen on the Long Ditch on 30th September (JLW). Ovipositing was last recorded on Bruce's Pond on 14th October, a single female with a male in attendance (JLW/JS). A male on the Long Ditch on 15th October (PLi/KLi) was the last of the year, nearly two weeks later than last year.

Brown Hawker (*Aeshna grandis*)

This is by far the commonest of the large dragonflies to be found on the Reserve. The first records came on 18th June this year, the second earliest ever date for this species (11th June in 2011). There were records from three different areas on 18th June - one on the Education Pond (JH), one on the Wet Grassland (JWC) and one on Mabgate Pond (PS). There was just one other reported sighting in June but from 5th July there were regular reports. Ovipositing was first noted on 8th July and there were numerous subsequent records on every pond but five ovipositing on Chadwick Pond on 23rd July (JLW) was the highest number. This species will often fly late into the evening and two were recorded at 9.50pm over the River Path on 17th July (PM/BM). Brown Hawkers have been recorded well into October in recent years but a male and an ovipositing female on Coop Pond on 24th September were the last reported sighting (JS/JLW).

Emperor Dragonfly (*Anax imperator*)

Sightings were reported on just three dates this year, three less than last year. A male was seen on both Coop Pond (TC) and Pebble Beach Pond (PS) on 18th June. On 19th July a female was recorded ovipositing

on the New Dipping Pond near the Visitor Centre (JLW/JS). A male seen at the Dragonfly Ponds on 25th July was the last of a disappointing year (WNS).

Four-spotted Chaser (*Libellula quadrimaculata*)

It was a very poor year for this species in 2016 with sightings reported on just four dates and no more than two dragonflies seen. There was some improvement this year with sightings on 11 dates. One on John Ackroyd Meadow on 27th May was the first (JH) - a month earlier than last year's latest ever first date. On 3rd June three males and a female were reported on the Dragonfly Ponds with one pair in wheel (JLW). All other records except one were of single dragonflies - six of these on Chadwick Pond - and there was no further evidence of breeding activity. Two were seen on Chadwick Pond on 17th July (PM/BM). A single dragonfly on Chadwick Pond on the late date of 31st July was the last of the year (PJM).

Broad-bodied Chaser (*Libellula depressa*)

A male on Pebble Beach Pond and a teneral on Mabgate Pond on 24th May (JLW/PW) were the first of the year, nearly two weeks earlier than last year. Four were recorded on the ponds on 3rd June (JLW) but on 17th June as many as four pairs were alternating between Chadwick, Mabgate and Coop Ponds - one pair in tandem on Chadwick (PM/BM). Most subsequent records were of one or two males but three males and an ovipositing female were recorded on the ponds on 8th July (JLW). Two males and a female on Mabgate Pond on 12th July (PM/BM) were the last of the year, more than three weeks earlier than last year.

Common Darter (*Sympetrum striolatum*)

This is a common species on the Reserve, flying well into the autumn. A teneral on Chadwick Pond on 1st July was the first of the year (JLW/JS), 11 days later than last year's first record. A male was seen on Scarborough Pond on 5th July but there were then no further records until 22nd July when three were on Bruce's Pond (JLW). Breeding activity was first noted on 25th July (PLi/KLi) - just two days earlier than last year - a pair in tandem on the Dragonfly Ponds. Ovipositing was subsequently noted on the Education Pond (10th August) and the New Dipping Pond (4th September). As many as four were reported ovipositing on the ponds on 30th September (JLW). Counts generally

were down on last year apart from a report of 16 on 30th September. The best counts were as shown below.

Site	Date	Total	M	F	Ten.	Wheel	Tandem	Ovip	Observer
DFP	9/9	6	5	1				1	JLW
DFP	19/9	5	5						PM/BM
DFP	20/9	5	4	1					JLW
DFP	24/9	6	4	2				2	JS/JLW
DFP	30/9	16	10	6				4	JLW

A male on the Long Ditch on 5th November (JLW) was the last of the year, just two days earlier than the latest ever record for this species.

Ruddy Darter (*Sympetrum sanguineum*)

This species had not been recorded on the Reserve since 2009 but there was then one unconfirmed sighting on 6th September 2015 and one on 11th September 2016. There was one confirmed sighting this year - a male on Mill Pond on 26th August (JH/JLW). To be certain of this species photographic evidence is needed, preferably showing the leg colour.

Black Darter (*Sympetrum danae*)

There have been no records of this species in the last three years though it is more at home on acidic, nutrient poor pools on heathland and moorland. There were confirmed sightings on one date in both 2013 and 2014.

Black-tailed Skimmer (*Orthetrum cancellatum*)

Never particularly numerous here, in 2015 up to five were seen, albeit only on five dates. Last year there were sightings on six dates with four on one occasion but no reports of breeding activity. This year there were five records on four dates, none involving more than one male. On 14th June one was seen on Mabgate Pond (JLW), this the earliest ever record by three days. On 18th June one was reported on the Wet Grassland (JH) and one was also seen on the Lagoon (AT). On 21st June one was again seen on Mabgate Pond (JH) and on 1st July one was recorded on the River Path (MG/PG), this the last of the year and some three weeks earlier than last year.

Keeled Skimmer (*Orthetrum coerulescens*)

This dragonfly is more at home in acid, boggy habitats and not one we would normally expect to find at Rodley. However, one was seen and photographed on Chadwick Pond on 1st July 2015. There have been no records since.

Terminology

Exuvia - The shed larval skeleton. Plural: exuviae

Ovipositing - The act of egg-laying

Teneral - A newly emerged adult dragonfly without the full coloration of the mature adult. Strictly speaking before its maiden flight.

Dragonflies and Damselflies **First and Last Dates - 2017**

Species	First Date	Last date
Large Red Damselfly	22 nd April	18 th June
Azure Damselfly	10 th May	27 th August
Common Blue Damselfly	29 th July	29 th July
Blue-tailed Damselfly	10 th May	27 th August
Emerald Damselfly	26 th June	27 th August
Banded Demoiselle	12 th May *	10 th August
Common Hawker	-	-
Migrant Hawker	5 th August	25 th October
Southern Hawker	5 th July	15 th October
Brown Hawker	18 th June	24 th September
Emperor Dragonfly	18 th June	25 th July
Four-spotted Chaser	27 th May	31 st July
Broad-bodied Chaser	24 th May	12 th July
Common Darter	1 st July	5 th November
Ruddy Darter	26 th August	26 th August
Black Darter	-	-
Black-tailed Skimmer	14 th June *	1 st July
Keeled Skimmer	-	-

* Earliest ever record

RODLEY'S POND LIFE IN 2017

Only nine of the water bodies were sampled during 2017 but still an impressive list of invertebrates was obtained. In addition to four of the Dragonfly Ponds and the Education Pond, the two Poplar Ponds, the Wet Grassland, the Kingfisher Pond and the pond in the Manager's Garden were sampled.

Frogspawn was first noted on 1 March and toads were present by 15 March. It was another good year for toad spawning. Although we didn't record as high a number as in 2016; nevertheless 109 were counted on one day (20 March) – 92 in the Dragonfly Ponds and 17 in the Poplar Ponds. In early April, toad spawn was observed in eight of the Dragonfly Ponds. There were also good numbers of Smooth Newts and their young (efts).

Aquatic Insects

One of the most common insect larvae is the Pond Olive Mayfly *Cloëon dipterum*, which was found in good numbers in most of the water bodies sampled. This has been the case for many years but an emergence has yet to be observed. Mayflies are unusual in that the last larval instar gives rise to a winged sub-adult (the dun of fishermen) which almost immediately moults into the adult (the spinner of fishermen). Mayflies are the only insects that moult at the winged stage. The adult stage of most mayflies only lasts a day or two but the female of the Pond Olive can live for up to 14 days. The larvae of the Azure Damselfly *Coenagrion puella* and the Large Red Damselfly *Pyrrosoma nymphula* also occurred in most, if not all, of the Dragonfly Ponds and also in the Education Pond, while those of the Brown Hawker *Aeshna grandis* and the Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum* are both fairly common. Libellulid larvae were recorded from the Education Pond. The number of Large Reds is gradually increasing but the numbers of the other four odonate species, although higher than in 2016, are not yet back to the level before the 2015 Boxing Day flood.

As usual, amongst the bugs (Hemiptera) the Lesser Water Boatmen (corixids) were abundant. These are not particularly easy to identify but one species from Bruce's Pond was identified as either *Corixa dentipes*

or *C. punctata* and two species of *Sigara* were identified as *S. dorsalis* from the Ditch and *S. semistriata* from Bruce's Pond. The latter *Sigara* species needs to be checked but, if confirmed is a new record for the reserve. The large, carnivorous back-swimming Water Boatmen (*Notonecta* species) were also found frequently but not in large numbers. As usual, the Pond Skater, *Gerris* sp. was quite plentiful and there were records of the Saucer Bug *Ilyocoris cimicoides* from several of the ponds. The three 'stars' that always cause excitement were all found in 2017 – nymphs of the Water Scorpion *Nepa cinerea* were found in the Education Pond and in one of the public dipping ponds; both the Marsh and the Education Pond had records of the Water Stick Insect *Ranatra linearis*, in the latter it appearing regularly both as adults and as nymphs of various sizes and as many as five being recorded on a single day; finally there was a single record of a Water Measurer *Hydrometra linearis* in the Education Pond, Small numbers of *Triaenodes bicolor* caddis larvae were found in the Education Pond though not as many as were found four or five years ago. However, a range of caddisfly larvae was found in the pond; most were probably limnephilids but time didn't allow for full identification. Small numbers of Brown China-mark (*Elophila nymphaeata*) caterpillars were also found in the Education Pond. This was a welcome return since they were absent in 2016, most probably due to the Boxing Day flood in 2015 which removed much vegetation from this and other ponds. Replanting with Fringed Water Lily (*Nymphoides peltata*) and Pondweeds (*Potamogeton* sp.) in 2016 was probably responsible for this resurgence, as these seem to be the preferred food plants at Rodley.

Table 1. Aquatic Insects

Ephemeroptera
Baetidae
<i>Cloëon dipterum</i> (Pond Olive)
<i>Caenis horaria</i> (Angler's Curse)
Odonata
Zygoptera
Coenagrionidae

- Coenagrion puella* (Azure Damselfly)
 - Pyrrhosoma nymphula* (Large Red Damselfly)
 - Anisoptera
 - Aeshnidae
 - Aeshna grandis* (Brown Hawker)
 - Libellulidae
 - Sympetrum striolatum* (Common Darter)
 - Libellula* sp. (Chaser)
- Hemiptera
 - Heteroptera
 - Corixidae
 - Corixa* sp. (possibly *C. dentipes* or *C. punctata*)
 - Sigara dorsalis*
 - Sigara semistriata*
 - Gerridae
 - Gerris* sp. (Pond Skater)
 - Naucoridae
 - Ilyocoris cimicoides* (Saucer Bug)
 - Nepidae
 - Nepa cinerea* (Water Scorpion)
 - Ranatra linearis* (Water Stick Insect)
 - Notonectidae
 - Notonecta* sp. (Water Boatman - Back Swimmer)
- Diptera
 - Nematocera
 - Chaoboridae
 - Chaoborus* sp (Phantom Midge)
 - Chironomids
 - Psectrocladius obvius* (Non-biting Midge larva)
 - Chironomus* sp.
- Lepidoptera
 - Pyralidae
 - Elophila nympheata* (Brown China-mark Moth)
- Trichoptera
 - Leptoceridae
 - Triaenodes bicolor* (Bicolour Sedge)

Coleoptera

Chrysomelidae

Donacia versicolorea

Dytiscidae

Agabus bipustulatus

Agabus nebulosus

Colymbetes fuscus

Dytiscus sp.

Gyrinidae (Whirligig Beetles)

Gyrinus sp.

Haplidae

Halipus ruficollis

Hygrobiidae (Screech Beetles)

Hygrobia hermanni

Hydrophilidae (Water Scavenger Beetles)

As usual, larval chironomids were present in good numbers. A number of beetle species were found. Those that were identified included larvae of *Colymbetes* (probably *C. fuscus*), Whirligig Beetles (*Gyrinus* sp.), which were plentiful on the surface of the Education Pond, adult *Halipus* sp. in the Ditch and Screech Beetles *Hygrobia hermanni* in the Education Pond.

Other Aquatic Invertebrates

The pond in the Manager's Garden was full of dead leaves, amongst which were hundreds of worms (*Lumbriculus variegatus*), the odd specimen of which was also found in the Poplar Ponds. Four species of leech were identified, two of which belonged to the genus *Erpobdella*, species of which have two rows each of four eyes. *E. octoculata* was found in the Marsh, *E. testacea* in Bruce's Pond. These species do not suck blood; rather they ingest small invertebrates. *Glossiphonia complanata* was also found in the Marsh and its main prey are snails. The Common Bird Leech *Theromyzon tessulatum* was recorded from the Kingfisher Pond; although the specimens found were free-living this species is often found in the respiratory tract of wildfowl.

Amongst the crustaceans, the Freshwater Shrimp *Crangonyx pseudogracilis*, the Water Slater *Asellus aquaticus* and *Daphnia* were, as usual, all widespread. *Cypris* sp. (Seed Shrimp) was found in both Bruce's Pond and the Ditch and is a new record for the reserve.

Table 2. Other aquatic invertebrates

Annelida

- Oligochaeta
 - Earthworm

Hirudinea

- Erpobdellidae
 - Erpobdella octoculata*
 - Erpobdella testacea*
- Glossiphonidae
 - Glossiphonia complanata*
 - Theromyzon tessulatum* (Common Bird Leech)

Arachnida

- Acari (mites)

Crustacea - Malacostraca

- Amphipoda
 - Crangonyx pseudogracilis* (Freshwater Shrimp)

Isopoda

- Asellus aquaticus* (Water Slater)

Cladocera

- Daphnia* sp. (Water Flea)

Ostracoda

- Cypris* sp. (Seed Shrimp)

Mollusca

Gastropoda

- Bithyniidae

- Bithynia tentaculata* (Faucet Snail)

Lymnaeidae

- Radix balthica*

- Lymnea stagnalis* (Great Pond Snail)

Physidae

Physa fontinalis (Bladder Snail)
Planorbidae
Planorbarius corneus (Great Ramshorn Snail)
Planorbis carinata (Keeled Ramshorn Snail)
Bivalva
Sphaeriidae
Musculium lacustre (Lake Orb Mussel)
Pea Mussel

Six gastropod snails were recorded, one of which, *Bithynia tentaculata* (Faucet Snail), was a new record for the reserve, being found in the Kingfisher Pond. The other five, *Radix balthica*, *Limnea stagnalis* (Great Pond Snail), *Physa fontinalis* (Bladder Snail) and the two Ramshorns, *Planorbarius corneus* (Great Ramshorn) and *Planorbis carinata* (Keeled Ramshorn) were all widespread, although the Bladder Snail was only found in one of the sampled Dragonfly Ponds. Two small bivalves have been recorded, one of which was a Pea Mussel. The other, newly identified at the reserve, was *Musculium lacustre* (the Lake Orb Mussel), which was found in the Co-op Pond.

Jerry Knapp & Peter Mill.

CADDISFLIES OR SEDGE FLIES

In previous years, caddis fly larvae have been recorded from a variety of water bodies on the reserve, especially in the Dragonfly Ponds. Only the Bicolour Sedge *Triaenodes bicolour* and the Brown Silverhorn *Athripsodes aterrimus* have so far been identified to species level. Others include a species of *Phryganea* sp (probably *P. bipunctata*) and some lemniphilids, including probably *Limnephilus flavicornis* and *L. lunatus*.

Adults have been recorded in previous years and the following brings the number of identified species up to date. Almost all records are from moth traps; those in 2017 from trapping in the Sensory Garden near the visitor centre.

Family	Species	Common Name	Year(s) recorded
Leptoceridae			
	<i>Mystacides azurea</i>	Black Silverhorn	2015
Limnephilidae			
	<i>Anobolia nervosa</i>	Brown Sedge	2013,2017
	<i>Glyptotaelius pellucidus</i>	Mottled Sedge	2016,2017
	<i>Halesus digitatus</i>	Caperer	2017
	<i>Halesus radiatus</i>	Caperer	2013
	<i>Limnephilus affinis</i>		2017
	<i>Limnephilus flavicornis</i>		2013,2016,2017
	<i>Limnephilus lunatus</i>	Cinnamon Sedge	2013,2017
	<i>Limnephilus marmoratus</i>	Cinnamon Sedge	2013
	<i>Sternophylax permistus</i>		2007,2013
Rhyacophilidae			
	<i>Rhyacophila</i> sp. (probably <i>R.dorsalis</i>)	Sand Fly	2017
Phryganeidae			
	<i>Phryganea</i> sp.	Large Red Sedge	2006,2013

In 2017, three species are new records for the reserve *Halesus digitatus*, *Limnephilus affinis* and the Sand Fly *Rhyacophila* sp.

Thanks are due to Ian Wallace, Liverpool Museum, for confirming the identity of most of the adults.

HOVERFLIES

Building on the results of 2016 it was decided to make a concerted effort in 2017 to find out how many species of hoverfly are present on the reserve. This has resulted in over 60 species being recorded. (Tables 1, 2) In the last report it was mentioned that there were 16 records from 2006. Of these 'historic' records all but one, *Platycheirus clypeatus* have now been confirmed as being present (Table 3).

A total of 50 hoverflies have been identified to species level or to a species aggregation (Table 1). A further 11 have been identified as far as genus (Table 2) and there are three species that were not recorded in 2017 but which were seen in a previous year, giving a total of 64 species for the reserve, 22 of which are new records. In addition *Cheilosia scutellata* is probably present. If confirmed it would be another new record for the reserve, bringing the total up to 65. Of those mentioned as having been seen before, but not in, 2017, Rodley is within the known range of all of them. However, for the record, *Sphaerophora interrupta* should be removed from the list in the 2016 report as, although it is the most likely of the six species of *Sphaerophora* with paired, yellow abdominal spots, it can only be identified with certainty by examining details of the male genitalia.

Table 1. First and last date of species recorded in 2017; also number of days on which each was recorded. Those species in bold are new records for the reserve.

	First	Last	Days
Syrphidae			
Syrphinae			
Bacchini			
Baccha elongata	24 May	12 July	3
Melanostoma mellinum		9 July	1
<i>Melanostoma scalare</i>	1 April	15 Oct	18
<i>Platycheirus albimanus</i>	3 April	8 Oct	13
Platycheirus fulviventris		24 May	1
<i>Platycheirus granditarsus</i>	31 May	4 Sept	2
<i>Platycheirus manicatus</i>	21 April	13 Aug	10
Platycheirus scutatus	26 April	27 May	2
Syrphini			
Chrysotoxum bicinctum	19 June	24 July	2
Chrysotoxum festivum		9 July	1
<i>Epistrophe elegans</i>	15 April	27 May	4
<i>Epistrophe glossulariae</i>	23 July	20 Sept	7
<i>Episyrphus balteatus</i> (Marmalade Hoverfly)	21 May	22 Oct	26
<i>Eupeodes corollae</i>	30 June	24 July	3
<i>Eupeodes latifasciatus</i>		27 Aug	1
<i>Eupeodes luniger</i>	15 April	12 July	2
<i>Leucozona lucorum</i>	21 April	28 May	6
Melangyna compositarum/labiatarum		21 May	1
<i>Scaeva pyrastii</i>	19 July	25 July	5
<i>Sphaerophoria scripta</i>	30 June	15 July	6
<i>Syrphus ribesii</i>	26 April	15 Oct	15
Eristalinae			
Cheilosini			
<i>Cheilosia albitarsis/ranunculi</i>	21 May	28 May	2
Cheilosia illustrata		11 June	1
Cheilosia pagana	13 May	25 Aug	4
<i>Rhingia campestris</i>	22 April	4 Sept	14
Chrysogastrini			
Chrysogaster cemiteriorum		26 Aug	1
Chrysogaster solstitialis		24 June	1
Melanogaster hirtella		13 May	1
Neoascia meticulosa	3 April	30 April	5
Neoascia podagrica/obliqua	21 May	13 Aug	3
Neoascia tenur		28 May	1
Orthonerva nobilis		26 Aug	1
Eristalini			
Eristalinus sepulchralis		11 June	1
<i>Eristalis arbustorum</i>	23 July	13 Aug	3
<i>Eristalis horticola</i>	4 Aug	26 Aug	3
<i>Eristalis intricaria</i>	5 April	3 May	2
Eristalis nemorum	26 April	4 Sept	7

<i>Eristalis pertinax</i>	2 April	20 Sept	7
<i>Eristalis tenax</i> (Drone Fly)	26 March	15 Oct	34
<i>Helophilus hybridus</i>	11 June	5 July	2
<i>Helophilus pendulus</i> (Footballer Hoverfly)	17 May	8 Oct	13
<i>Helophilus trivittatus</i>		22 July	1
<i>Myathropa florea</i>	24 July	4 Sept	5
<i>Parhelophilus frutetorum/versicolor</i>	27 May	15 July	5
Merodontini			
<i>Merodon equestris</i>		11 June	1
Volucellini			
<i>Volucella bombylans</i>		24 July	1
<i>Volucella inanis</i>	31 July	30 Aug	2
<i>Volucella pellucens</i> (Great Pied Hoverfly)	2 June	13 Aug	8
Xylotini			
<i>Syritta pipiens</i> (Thick-legged Hoverfly)	20 May	30 Sept	19
<i>Xylota segnis</i>	13 Aug	25 Aug	2

Table 2. Genera for individuals that could not be taken to species level but were different species from those listed in Table 1.

<i>Melanostoma</i> sp.	<i>Anasimyia</i> sp.	<i>Sphaerophoria</i> sp. (short-bodied)
<i>Platycheirus</i> sp.	<i>Eristalis</i> sp.	<i>Sphaerophoria</i> sp.
<i>Cheilosia</i> sp.	<i>Pipiza</i> sp.	<i>Syrphus</i> sp.
<i>Melanogaster</i> sp.	<i>Eupeodes</i> sp.	

Table 3. Species recorded in previous years but not in 2017.

	Year recorded		Year recorded
Syrphinae.		Eristalinae.	
<i>Leucozona glauca</i>	2013	<i>Anasimyia contracta</i>	2016
<i>Sericomyia silentis</i>	2012		

The commonest species were the Drone Fly, *Eristalis tenax* (recorded on 34 days), followed by the Marmalade Hoverfly *Episyrphus balteatus* (26 days). Other species that were recorded on at least ten days were the Thick-legged Hoverfly *Syritta pipiens* (19 days), *Melanostoma scalare* (18 days), *Syrphus ribesii* (15 days), *Rhingia campestris* (14 days), the Footballer Hoverfly *Helophilus pendulus* (13 days) *Platycheirus albimanus* (13 days) and *Platycheirus manicatus* (10 days). Fourteen species had only single records.

The flowers which hoverflies were mostly found on were buttercups, Marsh Marigold, Dandelion, umbellifers and Creeping Thistle. The paths around the Butterfly Bank, Dragonfly Ponds, John Ackroyd Meadow, Manager's Garden, Poplar area, Tim's Field and the Willow Path were particularly productive areas to search.

Larvae of two species have also been recorded. One was found on nettle on 29 October and was a species of *Eupeodes*; two more were found on sycamore leaves from a tree near the Manager's Garden and these belonged to the genus *Syrphus*.

Thanks are due to Roger Morris, Joan Childs and other members of the UK Hoverflies Facebook site for help with identifications.

Madge Gibson

FUNGUS REPORT - 2017

Two Fungus Forays were again held this year, the first on Saturday 14th October for the Rodley Robins and the second on Saturday 28th October following the Pie and Peas Event. Fungi were rather easier to find than they had been in 2016 thanks to a damp, mild autumn and a good range of species were found. The following is a combined list of species found on the two forays.

<i>Auricularia auricula-judae</i>	Jelly Ear	Coppice
<i>Bisporella citrina</i>	Lemon Disco	Coppice
<i>Bolbitius titubans</i>	Egg Yolk Toadstool/ Yellow Fieldcap	MF Meadow
<i>Calocera cornea</i>		Coppice
<i>Claviceps purpurea</i>	Ergot	Coppice
<i>Clitocybe nebularis</i>	Clouded Funnel	Coppice
<i>Coprinellus micaceus</i>	Glistening Inkcap	Coppice
<i>Dacrymyces stillatus</i>	Common Jellyspot	Coppice
<i>Daedaleopsis confragosa</i>	Blushing Bracket	Coppice
<i>Diatrype stigma</i>	Common Tarcrust	Coppice
<i>Ganoderma australe</i> (<i>adspersum</i>)	Southern Bracket	Coppice
<i>Heboloma crustuliforme</i>	Poisonpie	
<i>Hygrocybe irrigata</i>	Slimy Waxcap	MF Meadow
<i>Hygrocybe pratensis</i>	Meadow Waxcap	MF Meadow
<i>Hygrocybe reidii</i>	Honey Waxcap	MF Meadow
<i>Hygrocybe virginea</i>	Snowy Waxcap	MF Meadow
<i>Hyphodontia sambuci</i>	Elder Whitewash	Coppice
<i>Hypoxylon multifforme</i>	Birch Woodwart	Coppice
<i>Kretzschmaria deusta</i>	Brittle Cinder	Coppice
<i>Laccaria laccata</i>	Common Deceiver	
<i>Lepista flaccida</i>	Tawny Funnel	Path to Manager's Gdn
<i>Lepista nuda</i>	Wood Blewit	Coppice
<i>Lycoperdon excipuliformis</i>	Pestle Puffball	MF Meadow
<i>Lycoperdon perlatum</i>	Common Puffball	Coppice
<i>Marasmius oreades</i>	Fairy Ring Champignon	Path to Manager's Gdn
<i>Mucilago crustacea</i>	Dog Sick Slime Mould	MF Meadow
<i>Mycena aetites</i>	Drab Bonnet	Grass by workshop
<i>Mycena arcangeliana</i>	Angel's Bonnet	Coppice
<i>Mycena inclinata</i>	Clustered Bonnet	
<i>Parasola plicatilis</i>	Pleated Inkcap	
<i>Paxillus involutus</i>	Brown Rollrim	
<i>Peniophora incarnate</i>	Rosy Crust	Coppice
<i>Pholiota squarrosa</i>	Shaggy Scalycap	Coppice
<i>Pleurotus ostreatus</i>	Oyster Mushroom	Growing on trailer
<i>Polyporus tuberaster</i>	Tuberous Polypore	Coppice
<i>Psathyrella spp</i>	Brittlestem spp	MF Meadow

<i>Skeletocutis nivea</i>	Hazel Bracket	
<i>Stropharia caerulea</i>	Blue Roundhead	
<i>Terana caerulea</i>	Cobalt Crust	
<i>Trametes versicolor</i>	Turkeytails	Coppice
<i>Tremella mesenterica</i>	Witches Butter	Coppice – growing on <i>Peniophora incarnata</i>
<i>Xylaria hypoxylon</i>	Candlesnuff Fungus	Coppice

We are grateful to experts Andy Woodall and Ian Forward for giving up their time to lead the two forays which were very much appreciated by everyone involved. The main foray, following the Pie and Peas Event on 28th October, again had a big following with 36 adults and two children despite chilly and damp weather conditions.

Photograph Credits

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