



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  
Peter Murphy  
Graham Barlow  
Ian Willoughby  
Jerry Knapp  
Maggie Bellwood  
John Hart

Company Secretary - Peter Murphy  
Report Editor: Peter Murphy

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### Photographs:

Front and back cover: Autumn colours on the Reedbed - from an original photograph by Barbara Murphy.  
See page 142 For other Photograph Credits.

## Introduction

We ended the introduction to last year's Annual Report by saying we hoped 2018 would turn out to be less eventful than 2017 had been. In fact, 2018 was even more eventful, but in most respects in a very good way.

In January we were surprised to learn that we had been nominated for the BBC Countryfile Magazine Awards 2018 in the Nature Reserve of the Year category and had reached the final shortlist of five reserves. The public were then asked to vote for their favourite and when voting ended on 5<sup>th</sup> March we were even more surprised to learn that we had won. Winners in the various categories were announced in the May edition of the magazine and in it we were described as “ a David among Goliaths, Rodley Nature Reserve in Leeds took first place in this category thanks to the evocative story of its incredible transformation from a water treatment works into a haven for wetland wildlife”. Looking back 20 years, what has been achieved by volunteers since those early days is indeed truly amazing.

We certainly didn't win because we were the best nature reserve in the country. We were up against some very high profile RSPB reserves with impressive arrays of wildlife. We won because of the value our visitors place in this wonderful community asset and the fact that they took the trouble to vote for us.

We had more good news in January when we were informed that the Reserve was no longer being considered as a location for flood water storage under Phase 2 of the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme. Again we must thank the public for the huge amount of support we had during the consultation process.

It has long been the aim of the Trustees to make the whole of the Reserve accessible to wheelchair users and other less able visitors. All of our bird watching hides now have special facilities for wheelchairs and we had already constructed a hard path along the full length of the Willow Path, making access to several of the hides so much easier for wheelchairs. Thanks to the generous support of the Co-op Local Community Fund this year we have been able to

construct a further hard path to the Manager's Garden Hide and work is well underway on another path between the Reedbed Hide and Dragonfly Ponds.

Our efforts have been recognised by the Harrogate-based charity Open Country, whose aim it is to help people with disabilities access the countryside. In November we learned that the Reserve had been chosen as the 2018 winners of their Good Access Award and on 1<sup>st</sup> December we were presented with a trophy which now has pride of place in the Visitor Centre display cabinet. Another great accolade for our volunteers who have done the back-breaking work on the paths in all weathers. In a press release the Chief Officer of Open Country said "We see a lot of positive developments in accessibility across the county, but Rodley Nature Reserve stood out for going the extra mile to ensure its open space can be enjoyed by everyone, no matter what their ability".

Our brilliant volunteers not only construct paths, they build hides too. In 2017 they constructed an extension to the Manager's Garden Hide and over the winter work started on the rebuilding of the original part of the hide to include a special viewing point for wheelchair users. On 19<sup>th</sup> March we were pleased to be able to welcome to the Reserve board members from Green Leeds Ltd for the official opening of the hide. Since 2008 Green Leeds has provided valuable support in terms of funding for viewing hides, accessible footpaths and maintenance equipment.

Away from the Reserve, we again had a stand at the Science Fair at Leeds City Museum on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> March. We took along some of our Harvest Mice with Barn Owl pellets for dissection. Both were as popular as ever and, fortunately, no Harvest Mouse remains turned up in the pellets!

The first of the main events of the year at the Reserve took place on Easter Sunday -1<sup>st</sup> April. Organised by Aireborough Rotary Club, the now annual Easter Egg Hunt raises valuable funds for local charities and introduces many visitors to the Reserve. Following the almost Arctic conditions of March we might have worried about poor weather affecting numbers but we needn't have done. The event enjoyed a largely dry, albeit cold day, sandwiched between a very wet day on

the Saturday and heavy snow on the Monday and families turned out in force to support it.

The 3rd Leeds Birdfair took place on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> June and for once there were no worries about the weather in what was to prove one of the driest Junes on record, although there was a good deal of cloud and a cool breeze at times. The event was again very well supported by the leading wildlife organisations and the public and a big thank you must go to Linda Jenkinson of Start Birding who had the vision to stage these events here and was able to encourage so many high profile organisations to support them.

There was the usual Bird Walk in May, a Moth Trapping Event in June, two Bat Nights in July, a Small Mammal Survey in August and Moth Trap Opening Events for children on Wednesday mornings through the main school holidays. Our other main event of the year - the Summer Fair - took place on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> August and attracted its usual big following. The final event of the year - Pie and Peas followed by a Fungus Foray - took place on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> October. A big thank you must go to the Friends of Rodley Nature Reserve who not only organise these events but also man the Visitor Centre throughout the year, raising valuable funds for the Reserve.

One of the stated objects of Rodley Nature Reserve Trust is “the education of the public in the understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of wildlife”. It is estimated that at least one third of the food we eat each day is pollinated, mainly by bees but also by other insects, birds and even bats. We are seeing alarming declines in all these creatures thanks to the intensification of farming and resultant loss of habitat and many are facing real threats of extinction. The education of children in particular and getting them to appreciate the importance of our wonderful wildlife is a major part of our work and this is why we launched the Rodley Robins children’s club in May 2016. Our Education Team had another busy year looking after the many primary school classes and uniformed organisations that visit. Bird watching and pond dipping are popular pursuits but a talk from our beekeeper about the importance of bees for what we eat never fails to amaze. Let us hope we can inspire at least one future David Attenborough to fight for our wildlife.

As regards wildlife, each year produces new bird species and there were seven this year - Avocet, Common Crane, Crossbill, Egyptian Goose, Great White Egret, Little Gull and Zebra Finch, the last one a very obvious escapee from somewhere and two of them admittedly just flyovers. Two Avocets spent a whole day on the Duck Marsh on 27<sup>th</sup> June and many visitors enjoyed excellent views. The Reserve bird list now stands at 173 species. Firecrest was recorded for the first time last year and what was probably the same bird continued to be seen through January and into February this year. A Spotted Crake on the Wet Grassland from 25<sup>th</sup> August to 14<sup>th</sup> September was only the second ever record for the Reserve and it was the best year ever for sightings of Green Sandpiper, a bird that had only been reported on one date in the previous six years. Barn Owl, Little Owl and Kestrel all nested successfully in boxes this year but tit boxes endured their worst hammering ever from Great Spotted Woodpeckers, 12 boxes being virtually demolished.

As always, there were a few disappointments. The arrival of the Common Terns in April is always eagerly awaited but this year the one or two birds that did turn up quickly moved on and the nesting rafts remained empty. The Great Crested Grebes raised just one chick from four nesting attempts and the pair of Oystercatchers lost their two young under the farmer's tractor with Red Kites on hand to enjoy an easy meal. Tufted Ducks failed to nest successfully yet again and only 88 Sand Martin nesting holes were excavated on the Lagoon. This may sound an impressive figure but it was well down on last year's 145. Despite a good summer it was a year of mixed fortunes for our butterflies with the long term decline of Small Tortoiseshells and Peacocks continuing and the buddleias outside the Visitor Centre often devoid of butterflies between July and September.

With most of the events over and done with one might imagine autumn should be a quiet time on the Reserve but not this year. Work finally started on the long awaited improvements to our toilet facilities on 15<sup>th</sup> October. We had hoped the work would be completed by Christmas but these things rarely work to plan. The work was finally finished by the middle of January. We now have a very nice, modern toilet block which was desperately needed for our increasing visitor numbers. The work has involved converting part of our workshop

area, hence the acquisition of the new prefabricated garage in June for additional storage space.

In addition to the valuable habitat management work done by our volunteers throughout the year there are occasions where it is necessary to bring in a contractor with heavy equipment. This was the case with the Reedbed in December 2016. This year it was the turn of the Wet Grassland. The ditch system is a very important feature of this habitat but the Boxing Day flood of 2015 deposited huge amounts of silt, leaving most of the ditches barely visible. Following failed attempts to cut the area by tractor last autumn we knew that a tracked vehicle was the only answer. To achieve this it was first of all necessary to drop water levels and dry the area out as far as possible. Work finally started on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> November and was completed on the 8<sup>th</sup>, enabling us to restore water levels for the winter.

There is still one cloud on the horizon and this relates to the possible development of the old Barkers site. The entry gate to the site is just to the right of our main gates by the canal towpath. The site has been derelict since the old Barkers factory there was demolished in 2007. Over the years the area has become overgrown with vegetation including numerous buddleias. It was inevitable that the area would be a candidate for development at some point and an outline planning application for up to 69 dwellings and details for a new swing bridge over the canal was submitted to Leeds City Council Planning Department by Dynamic Capital and Investments Ltd last year. Rodley Nature Reserve Trust is not in principal opposed to the development of this site but it does have some serious concerns over its impact on wildlife and the practicalities surrounding the project. A full response has been submitted by the Trust to the Leeds City Council Planning Department detailing its concerns.

Development of the site is dependent on replacement of the current, ageing swing bridge. While the construction of a new swing bridge over the canal may have some benefits we are seriously concerned over problems of access to the Reserve by visitors, volunteers and suppliers during the period of construction. Because the canal can only be closed to boat traffic in the month of February we had thought work on the new bridge might start as early as January 2019 but in

view of the very tight timescales this was not feasible and if planning permission is granted the work will probably be delayed until January 2020. Be assured the Trust will be watching out for developments and will liaise with the developers and our landlords, Yorkshire Water, to get the best outcome we can for the Reserve.

## **Rodley Nature Reserve - Monthly Roundup for 2018**

### **January**

The weather was certainly very varied this month with snow, ice, gale force winds and a lot of rain. Storm Eleanor on the night of 2<sup>nd</sup> brought gale force winds with gusts of up to 60mph at the airport. As the winds fell light temperatures plummeted as low as minus 3°C overnight. Several grey days from 9<sup>th</sup> saw fog at times but it was largely dry until the middle of the month. A wet day on 15<sup>th</sup> and colder conditions from 16<sup>th</sup> brought sleet and snow and a thin covering by evening. There were wintery showers for the next few days with daytime temperatures struggling to reach 3°C. Gales and heavy snow on 17<sup>th</sup> created problems for many parts of the country but we escaped both though there was a lot of rain. There was more snow on 21<sup>st</sup> leaving a good covering and temperatures at no more than 2°C but it soon turned to rain. The month ended on a very chilly note with a very strong, blustery, north westerly wind and showers of sleet and snow.

As last month, the Willow Path continued to be the focus of attention for most birdwatchers, all hoping to see the Firecrest which had been first reported on 17<sup>th</sup> December. Goldcrests were seen here daily with up to five reported but the Firecrest was a little harder to find in the thick vegetation at the edge of the Coppice though it was seen most days. Chiffchaffs were a bonus with numerous sightings and two on two dates.

Much of the wetlands were frozen over some days but the Lagoon always had some open water and there were some decent counts of wildfowl, often later in the afternoon. Twenty-two Wigeon were counted here on 11<sup>th</sup> but five or six was the norm with none some days. Goosanders come onto the Lagoon towards dusk in the winter months and numbers reached 12 on 10<sup>th</sup> but a count of 15 on 28<sup>th</sup> was the highest since January 2015. Tufted Duck numbers too were often at their highest late in the day and 25 were counted on the Lagoon on 21<sup>st</sup>. Both Goldeneye and Pochard were present on the Lagoon most days with up to four of the former and five of the latter. Shovelers could be found on both the Lagoon and Reedbed with up to six in total. After some encouraging counts of Mallard on the Duck

Marsh in December there were further good records this month with 74 here on 3<sup>rd</sup>. Teal numbers though remained generally low with just two reports of more than 10 birds - 22 on the Wet Grassland on 27<sup>th</sup> being the best.

The first Oystercatcher arrived on the Lagoon on 27<sup>th</sup>, a week earlier than last year and it was joined by a second bird on 30<sup>th</sup>. Water Rails were recorded on the Lagoon, Wet Grassland and on the river bank but were hard to find in the latter part of the month. Kingfishers were reported catching fish in the Kingfisher Pool on two dates but one was also observed fishing on the public dipping ponds and at the Dragonfly Ponds. Water levels on the Wet Grassland were gradually raised this month but not before two Jack Snipe were seen here on 6<sup>th</sup>. Single birds were subsequently reported on 7<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>.

Other sightings this month included a Lesser Redpoll on 1<sup>st</sup>, a Meadow Pipit on the farmland on the same date and one on 20<sup>th</sup>, a Green Woodpecker over the Scrubland on 7<sup>th</sup>, two Treecreepers on the Willow Path on 20<sup>th</sup> and one in the car park on 31<sup>st</sup>. A flock of more than 100 Golden Plover on the far farmland on 21<sup>st</sup> was a rare event these days. Linnets remained low throughout the month with a best count of just 47 in a bush at the end of the Bee Garden on 21<sup>st</sup>. Grey Partridges were reported on six dates with up to four birds seen. The farmland manure heap was productive for both Grey and Pied Wagtails throughout much of the month. It was also a good month for raptors with Peregrine Falcons on three dates with two on 1<sup>st</sup>, a Common Buzzard on seven dates and Red Kites on ten dates with three on 7<sup>th</sup>.

Winter thrush numbers were disappointing apart from one large flock of more than 300 Fieldfares on the farmland on 21<sup>st</sup>. The best count otherwise was just 37. Redwing numbers were even lower with a best of just 20.

There were two good mammal records this month. A Water Vole seen by the river bridge on 23<sup>rd</sup> was the first since 4<sup>th</sup> October 2015. Following a report of Otter tracks by the bridge on 28<sup>th</sup> one was seen on the Lagoon briefly the following day.

Greylag Geese and Canada Geese could be seen on the farmland most days, the Greylag flock there reaching 175 ( the highest ever January count) and the Canada flock 163. The flocks usually started to move onto the wetlands at dusk but there were several good daytime counts of Canada Geese on the Lagoon early in the day with 150 on 10<sup>th</sup> the highest. There were just two reports of Pink-footed Geese - c120 flying south west on 1st and a small group of 13 flying south on 21<sup>st</sup>.

Work continued on the rebuilding of the old Manager's Garden Hide this month; willow coppicing was in full swing and a new dead hedge was constructed along the roadside by the Lagoon using the coppiced willow.

## **February**

Rain was a feature throughout much of the first two and a half weeks of the month. There was a distinct improvement for a few days after that with a good deal of sunshine to help dry out the ground but things went rapidly down hill in the last three days of the month with the arrival of the so-called "Beast from the East" from Siberia. Despite bitterly cold easterly winds, sub-zero temperatures, driving snow and an accumulation of several inches a few hardy souls still turned up to watch the birds on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup>.

Easterly winds and snow can bring in some interesting wildfowl at times but duck numbers generally were on the low side with no more than 12 Tufted Duck on the Lagoon. Up to five Pochard were to be seen most days and a few Goldeneyes but no more than six Wigeon. Cormorants fished on the Lagoon daily and as many as 12 were lined up on the middle island one day. The two Oystercatchers were present throughout the month with a third bird briefly on 10<sup>th</sup> and four on the Wet Grassland on 21<sup>st</sup>.

It was nice to see the first Great Crested Grebe back on 24<sup>th</sup> and it was joined by a second bird on 28<sup>th</sup>. It was a good month for Snipe with numerous sightings on the Wet Grassland and Duck Marsh. As many as eight were seen from the Willow Path Hide but 23 were accidentally flushed on the Duck Marsh on 12<sup>th</sup> during habitat management work, showing just how many of these secretive birds

are hidden away in the grasses. Two Jack Snipe were seen again on the Wet Grassland on 11<sup>th</sup> and on the Duck Marsh the next day. Two Water Rails were on the Duck Marsh on 4<sup>th</sup> and one on 21<sup>st</sup> and there were also two sightings on the Lagoon. Two Golden Plovers that arrived on the Lagoon in the blizzards on 28<sup>th</sup> were an unexpected bonus for one hardy birdwatcher.

Other sightings this month included a Barn Owl at 7.00am on 9<sup>th</sup>, a Peregrine on the pylon on the farmland on 18<sup>th</sup>, a Tree Sparrow and a male Blackcap in the Bee Garden on 22<sup>nd</sup> and a Stonechat on Tim's Field on 28<sup>th</sup>. Goldcrests were recorded on seven dates with two on three occasions but the Firecrest was harder to find with just two sightings on 4<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, the last in riverside trees from the bridge. It was a good month for Treecreeper sightings with birds seen on five dates from the river bridge with four on one occasion on 18<sup>th</sup>. The same area also produced two overwintering Chiffchaffs on 24<sup>th</sup> and one on 25<sup>th</sup>. One was also seen on the Willow Path on three dates.

There was a good deal of Common Buzzard activity with sightings on seven dates with three on one date and two on four dates. Red Kites were also reported on seven dates with four on one date. There was plenty of Kestrel activity at the east facing Barn Owl box in the compound with both male and female birds seen at the box.

On the farmland the manure heap was always worth checking for wagtails with Grey Wagtails recorded on five dates and Pied Wagtails on six dates. Winter thrush numbers were generally low with no more than 40 Fieldfares seen there. Redwings were only reported on three dates but 50 were recorded in the poplars on 18<sup>th</sup>. Flocks of Lapwings have been a rare event in recent winters so 60 on the farmland on 2<sup>nd</sup> was a real bonus as was a flock of 35 to 40 over the Reserve on 28<sup>th</sup>.

Flocks of Pink-footed Geese passed over the Reserve on two dates - 140 flying west on 4<sup>th</sup> and c300 west on 28<sup>th</sup>. A single bird was seen on the farmland on 25<sup>th</sup>.

The Linnet flock on Tim's Field peaked at 70 on 23<sup>rd</sup> but the real excitement here was caused by the discovery of a number of old Harvest Mouse breeding nests at the western end of the field.

## March

March certainly came in like a lion, the so-called “Beast from the East” bringing sub- zero temperatures, strong bitterly cold easterly winds and snow on 1<sup>st</sup> - a good five to six inches of it. It remained bitterly cold for the next two days but as temperatures rose it was the turn of grey and murky wet weather before the next fall of snow on 8<sup>th</sup>, a good three inches falling during the rush hour and bringing traffic chaos. Fortunately, this was followed by a rapid thaw and temperatures had risen as high as 13°C by 10<sup>th</sup>.

Then it was “Beast of the East Mark 2” with the return of bitterly cold easterly winds and more snow from 17<sup>th</sup> leaving several inches and leading to the cancellation of the monthly WeBS count. Milder conditions followed from 22<sup>nd</sup> and a lovely sunny day on 25<sup>th</sup> brought out the first butterfly of the year – a male Brimstone. Another sunny day on 26<sup>th</sup> produced the first Small Tortoiseshell of the year. However, things soon went downhill again and the month ended on a very wet note with a day of rain on 31<sup>st</sup>.

Most of the wetlands were frozen over for a time but a good deal of the Lagoon remained ice-free even in the coldest of conditions and good numbers of birds congregated there. More than 400 Black-headed Gulls and 137 Common Gulls assembled there on 3<sup>rd</sup> and there were further big counts on 18<sup>th</sup> in the snowy conditions. Up to five Goldeneyes and six Pochard could be seen and Tufted Duck numbers reached 26 late in the day on 4<sup>th</sup>, this the highest March count since 2011. A male Mandarin on one of the islands on 30<sup>th</sup> was a surprise. However, the highlight of the month was undoubtedly the arrival of 17 Whooper Swans that dropped in on 5<sup>th</sup> and spent several hours on the Lagoon despite constant harassment from the resident Mute Swans. Nine Whooper Swans also flew over later in the month on 24<sup>th</sup>.

The two Oystercatchers were present throughout the month and five were seen on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> but the additional birds didn't stay. The two Great Crested Grebes could also be seen on the Lagoon throughout the month and a third bird was reported on 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>. It was an excellent month for Snipe with numerous double figure counts and birds very active, particularly in the snowy conditions. On 10<sup>th</sup> a

group of 28 flew onto the wetlands; on 24<sup>th</sup> 14 were seen on the Duck Marsh and a further 20 flew into the Reedbed on the same date. A single Jack Snipe was also reported on two dates. One or two Lapwings could be seen on the wetlands some days but 26 were on the farmland briefly on 4<sup>th</sup>. Water Rails were recorded on six dates with sightings on the Lagoon, Reedbed and Duck Marsh.

The geese flocks on the farmland started to reduce in numbers this month with more birds looking at nesting sites on the wetlands. But it was still worth checking the flocks for the odd vagrant. An Egyptian Goose with the Greylags on the farmland on 4<sup>th</sup> was a new bird for the Reserve. Unfortunately, it wasn't seen subsequently. A Pink-footed Goose was also present from 24<sup>th</sup> to the end of the month.

Other sightings this month included two Treecreepers on 4<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, a Brambling in the Manager's Garden on 14<sup>th</sup>, a Merlin on 15<sup>th</sup>, a Barn Owl on the River Path on 16<sup>th</sup>, a Grey Wagtail on six dates, Woodcock on four dates and Grey Partridge on three dates. Goldcrests were reported on eight dates but the Firecrest proved much more elusive with just one sighting on the River Path on 21<sup>st</sup>. A Little Owl finally put in an appearance with sightings on four dates in the Manager's Garden. Two Pipistrelle Bats over the entry road on 11<sup>th</sup> was an unusually early record.

Raptor-wise, it was another good month for Common Buzzards and Red Kites with the former reported on eight dates and the latter on seven dates. In each case up to four birds were seen together. With Stock Dove and Wood Pigeon numbers much reduced this month Peregrine Falcons were rather harder to spot and there were just two sightings, both in the last week of the month. There was again a lot of Kestrel activity with birds visiting the east facing nest box in the compound.

At this time of year birds start to pass over the Reserve on their way to their breeding grounds without stopping and two Curlews flying over on 24<sup>th</sup> was the first record of the year of this declining species. Skylarks are rarely heard here these days but birds were recorded flying over on three dates with nine on one occasion. Meadow Pipits were frequent flyovers but 16 on Mike Fisk Meadow on 17<sup>th</sup> was a nice record.

Winter thrush numbers would normally start to fall away in the latter part of March but numbers remained low throughout with Redwings reported on just six dates and a best count of just 26. Around 80 Fieldfares were on the farmland on 17<sup>th</sup> but there no other counts of more than 18.

With hostile weather conditions for much of the month the early arrival of any summer visitors seemed unlikely and while Chiffchaffs were recorded on eight dates many of these were probably overwintering birds. The first singing bird was heard on the River Path on 11<sup>th</sup>. A male Blackcap on the Willow Path on 19<sup>th</sup> could also have been an overwintering bird. Hardy single Sand Martins were seen on three dates from 25<sup>th</sup> and a Common Sandpiper was reported on four dates from 24<sup>th</sup>.

## **April**

After a very wet day on 31<sup>st</sup> March it wasn't looking too encouraging for the Easter Egg Hunt on 1<sup>st</sup> April. However, we were lucky and it stayed dry until the event finished. The following day produced several hours of snow and it turned out to be a very wet month – not at all like last April which was exceptionally dry. Paths became a sea of mud and much of the Dragonfly Ponds area was under water for several days. With high pressure across Europe things improved considerably from 16<sup>th</sup> and temperatures reached 23°C on 18<sup>th</sup>. A cloudless hot day on 19<sup>th</sup> saw temperatures soar to 24°C - the warmest April day since 1949. Cooler, fresher conditions returned from 22<sup>nd</sup> and by 27<sup>th</sup> temperatures had dipped as low as 5°C.

Adverse weather conditions can sometimes work in the birdwatcher's favour, bringing down birds that would normally fly over without stopping and this was illustrated on 2<sup>nd</sup> during and after a morning of heavy snow. A total of 192 Meadow Pipits were counted in a "mad half hour", between 30 and 40 landing on the grass by the Visitor Centre. A further 32 were counted on the farmland manure heap with three Skylarks. The total Meadow Pipit count for the day was an amazing 339.

The arrival of the first Common Tern is always something to look forward to in April and the three nesting rafts had been launched on the Lagoon early in the month in readiness. A single bird was seen on 21<sup>st</sup> and a different, ringed bird was seen the next day but both quickly moved on and there were no further sightings. However, there were two highlights on the wetlands this month. A male Garganey which arrived on the 4<sup>th</sup> was the first record since June 2015. The bird alternated between the Duck Marsh and Wet Grassland and provided some good opportunities for the many photographers seeking it before it disappeared on 14<sup>th</sup>. A Little Gull which paid a brief visit to the Lagoon on 7<sup>th</sup> was a new bird for the Reserve. Away from the wetlands, two Common Cranes on the farmland were another new species for the Reserve but sadly on a day when we were not open to the public.

Summer visitors usually start to arrive in numbers in April and the first four Swallows were seen over the Lagoon on 4<sup>th</sup>. The first Willow Warbler was seen on 7<sup>th</sup> with the first singing Blackcap on the same date but we had to wait until 21<sup>st</sup> to record Common Whitethroat, Lesser Whitethroat, Reed Warbler and Sedge Warbler. The first Swifts and House Martins were reported the next day. A Grasshopper Warbler was heard and seen at the Dragonfly Ponds on 27<sup>th</sup>. Two Wheatears were on the farmland on 4<sup>th</sup> and there were further sightings of a single bird on the farmland manure heap on 8<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>. Sand Martin numbers started to build on the Lagoon and by the middle of the month between 15 and 20 nest holes had been excavated in the nesting bank.

Winter visitors had largely gone by the beginning of the month and the last flock of around 50 Fieldfares was seen flying north east on 2<sup>nd</sup>. A late Redwing was reported on the Willow Path on 15<sup>th</sup>.

The first ducklings of the year were seen on 25<sup>th</sup> – a female Goosander with nine tiny young on the river upstream of the bridge. The first family of Moorhens on the middle island of the Lagoon was less fortunate, falling prey to a Lesser Black-backed Gull. The Great Crested Grebes also settled down to nest on the middle island and by 20<sup>th</sup> four eggs had been laid. Between two and four Oystercatchers were present throughout with at least one bird possibly on a nest on the middle island.

Other sightings this month included a Goldcrest on 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, a Woodcock on 8<sup>th</sup>, a Bar-headed Goose on the Lagoon on the same date, two Common Sandpipers there on 18<sup>th</sup>, a White Wagtail on 25<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, two Siskins on 27<sup>th</sup>, a Peregrine Falcon on three dates and two Grey Partridge on four dates. A Pink-footed Goose was present on the farmland throughout the month and one or two Curlews flew over on three dates. A Nuthatch on 11<sup>th</sup> was a good sighting here. Common Buzzards were recorded on nine dates and Red Kites on six dates. A report of 11 Jays together on 8<sup>th</sup> was an interesting sighting. Eight Fox cubs were caught on a camera trap at a den on the Reserve on 15<sup>th</sup> - this a very big family!

Little Owl activity in the Manager's Garden increased considerably this month and there were sightings most days with two seen on 28<sup>th</sup>, one of these peering out of the nest box. There was again a good deal of Kestrel activity near the nest box in the compound and the birds were observed mating on 19<sup>th</sup>.

Outside volunteers had a very busy month digging out an abundance of Hemlock on Tim's Field prior to ploughing on 23<sup>rd</sup>. On the same date work started on digging out the foundations for a new hard path to the Manager's Garden.

The Linnet flock on Tim's Field might have been expected to disperse following ploughing but numbers actually increased with around 90 birds present on 28<sup>th</sup>, clearly still finding seed on the bare ground.

## **May**

It proved to be the sunniest and warmest May on record in the UK and most unusually the Bank Holiday weekend from 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> saw clear blue skies with temperatures soaring to 25°C. In the latter part of the month severe thunderstorms brought flash floods further south but here it was a very dry month. Butterflies and dragonflies responded in numbers and Orange Tips had a particularly good month.

On the Lagoon it was another disappointing month for Common Terns. What may have been the same ringed bird was seen on 6<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> but there were no further sightings until 28<sup>th</sup> May when two

birds were present briefly - sadly the tern rafts remained devoid of customers. A Great Crested Grebe chick made its first appearance on the Lagoon on 6<sup>th</sup> but what happened to the other three eggs? An immature Herring Gull had been reported taking goose eggs very close to the grebes' nest on the same date and that may have been the culprit. Nevertheless, later in the month the grebes had constructed a new nest near the tern rafts, hoping for a second family. Two Oystercatcher chicks were seen for the first time on 23<sup>rd</sup> May on the middle island but were often difficult to spot in the thick vegetation. Earlier in the month up to five adults had been seen. Water Rails can be hard to see at this time of year but one was spotted at the edge of the Lagoon on 6<sup>th</sup>.

Hirundines enjoyed mixed fortunes. By the end of the month 71 nesting holes had been excavated in the Sand Martin Bank on the Lagoon but numbers were well down on last year when 115 were counted by 11<sup>th</sup> May. House Martin numbers were typically low with no reports of more than four birds but peak Swallow counts were a little higher than in the same period last year and birds were nesting in the dumper truck shed by early in the month.

Unusually, both pairs of Mute Swans failed to produce young last year so it was a relief to see the Duck Marsh pair with six cygnets on 26<sup>th</sup>. The Wet Grassland pair had constructed a new nest among the Yellow Flag Iris this year but there were no signs of cygnets by the end of the month. The first Mallard families appeared on the Lagoon and Wet Grassland on 9<sup>th</sup> and the first two Little Grebe chicks were reported on the Duck Marsh on 28<sup>th</sup>. The first Coot family was seen on the Wet Grassland on 20<sup>th</sup>. Away from the wetlands, a Moorhen was seen with three chicks on Poplar Ponds on 11<sup>th</sup>.

Summer visitors continued to arrive with the first Garden Warbler on 5<sup>th</sup> in roadside trees between the car park and Lagoon Hide - this always a productive area for this species. Roadside brambles opposite the Lagoon Hide can always be relied on to hold Common Whitethroats and it was the same again this year though numbers generally across the Reserve seemed to be down on last year.

Other sightings this month included a Little Owl on six dates, Common Buzzards on seven dates with up to four reported, Red

Kites on six dates, a Whinchat on 13<sup>th</sup>, a Hobby high over the Reserve on 19<sup>th</sup>, two Grey Wagtails on the Fish Pass on 20<sup>th</sup> and a Peregrine Falcon on 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>. Two Pink-footed Geese were on the farmland on 5<sup>th</sup> with a single bird on four subsequent dates. The Kestrels at the compound nest box were quite secretive this month but a bird was seen at the box on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>. Great Tits nesting in the box on the side of the Visitor Centre had a very successful month with all nine young fledging successfully. The last 12 Linnets were still finding seed on Tim's Field on 2<sup>nd</sup> but they had gone by the following day. It was a good month for Fox sightings with an adult on four dates and Fox cubs on five dates.

A further release of Harvest Mice was made on the Scrubland this month, a total of 61 mice going into the release pens on 26<sup>th</sup>.

Habitat management-wise, work continued on digging out the new hard path to the Manager's Garden and large amounts of Hemlock were removed manually from Tim's Field, volunteers working in some very warm, but for a change dry conditions.

## **June**

It was another very dry month with plenty of hot sunny days and it was inevitable that things would soon begin to struggle. Tim's Field was finally sown on 6<sup>th</sup> June with the usual bird-friendly seed mix but with no rain germination was very poor and the field was still bare at the end of the month. The grasses on the wild flower meadows had gone brown by the middle of the month and the Wet Grassland was dry. Fortunately, the dragonflies and butterflies enjoyed the sunshine and they responded in numbers. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Leeds Birdfair held on 23<sup>rd</sup> had one of the cooler, cloudier days but it was very well supported.

A Little Owl seen coming out of the nest box in the Manager's Garden on 2<sup>nd</sup> was encouraging and on 30<sup>th</sup> a juvenile was reported at the entrance to the box. The Kestrels at the compound nest box were much more obvious this month and on 12<sup>th</sup> an adult was seen feeding a juvenile at the box. On 27<sup>th</sup> June four juveniles were counted on the ledge and roof of the box. Sadly, there was no activity at the Barn Owl box on the Scrubland.

On the wetlands the Wet Grassland Mute Swans finally showed off five tiny cygnets for the first time on 13<sup>th</sup> and there were regular sightings of the family on the Kingfisher Pool up to 27<sup>th</sup>. The first Gadwall family of 10 ducklings appeared on the Lagoon on 5<sup>th</sup> and there were at least seven families to be seen here a week later. A total of 88 nesting holes were counted in the Sand Martin Bank on 26<sup>th</sup> and large numbers of birds could be seen over the Reserve late in the evening with many juveniles among them hawking for insects. But not all families were so successful. The Oystercatchers decided to take their two youngsters across the road and onto the farmland on 6<sup>th</sup> - unfortunately on the same day the farmer was grass cutting. It appears the juveniles were killed by the machinery rather than by the three Red Kites that inevitably turn up for tractor casualties.

The Great Crested Grebes were certainly persistent. A second nest by the tern rafts was probably predated by a Herring or Lesser Black-backed Gull but by 10<sup>th</sup> the birds had constructed a third nest further down the Lagoon. This was soon discontinued and a fourth nest was under construction by 27<sup>th</sup>. The remaining juvenile from the first nest continued to prosper.

Snipe and Teal are very infrequent in the summer months but a Snipe was on the Duck Marsh on 27<sup>th</sup> and a male Teal was seen here on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>. However, the highlight on the Duck Marsh this month was the appearance of two Avocets on 27<sup>th</sup>. The birds spent a whole day here, providing excellent views for many birdwatchers from the Willow Path Hide.

Among other sightings this month were a Raven over the farmland on 3<sup>rd</sup>, a Yellowhammer on 6<sup>th</sup>, two Grey Wagtails in the compound on 9<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, a Goldcrest in the Coppice on 17<sup>th</sup>, a Spotted Flycatcher on three dates and a Common Sandpiper on 29<sup>th</sup>. A Little Ringed Plover flying over the Dragonfly Ponds on 2<sup>nd</sup> was the only record in another poor year for this species. Twenty-three Lapwings were reported on Tim's Field on 4<sup>th</sup> but none stayed to nest this year, almost certainly due to a lack of any cover. Common Buzzards were seen on four dates with three on one occasion and Red Kites on six dates with up to three birds reported. It was a better month for Kingfisher sightings with birds seen on seven dates.

It was an excellent month for Weasel sightings. On 5<sup>th</sup> three very small juveniles were found on the path outside the Willow Path Hide during a primary school visit and on 23<sup>rd</sup> a family of five was seen at the Dragonfly Ponds. A female Roedeer and fawn were reported in long vegetation at the back of the Duck Marsh on 13<sup>th</sup>.

It was another very warm month for the outside volunteers. With the unusually long dry spell of weather many of the young trees on Poplar Field were showing signs of stress and watering became a vital task. Himalayan Balsam removal got into full swing along the riverside this month and work continued on the new hard path to the Manager's Garden.

## **July**

Temperatures reached a sizzling 28°C on 1<sup>st</sup> and this set the scene for pretty well the rest of the month. On 8<sup>th</sup> a temperature of 31°C was recorded in the shade near the Visitor Centre. There was some heavy rain for a time later in the day on 16<sup>th</sup> with some thunder but it was otherwise very dry until 28<sup>th</sup>. Temperatures again topped 30°C in the last week of the month but it became increasingly humid and desperately needed rain arrived on 28<sup>th</sup>, fortunately not affecting the Moth Trapping Event and Bat Night which were held on the same date. There was a very wet day on 29<sup>th</sup> with a blustery wind.

July is always a quiet month for the birdwatchers but this year it was an excellent one for the butterfly enthusiasts with sightings of Common Blue, Purple Hairstreak, White-letter Hairstreak and record counts of Gatekeepers. Sadly, it was another poor one for Small Tortoiseshells after a promising start.

On the wetlands the main talking point was the disappearance of both families of Mute Swans, leaving just a solitary cygnet on the Lagoon. An Avocet and a Little Egret were seen briefly on the far side of the Lagoon on 2<sup>nd</sup> but there were no further reports of either species. Little Grebe families were seen on the Lagoon and Duck Marsh but it was a disappointing month for the Great Crested Grebes, their fourth nest with at least two eggs being either abandoned or predated. Unusually for July, there were regular sightings of Teal on the Duck Marsh with up to six birds reported. Seven were seen on the Wet

Grassland on one occasion. Snipe too are usually hard to find in July but one or two were seen on the Duck Marsh on a number of dates. A Water Rail on the Duck Marsh on 28<sup>th</sup> was the first record for almost three months. Three juvenile Lapwings were there on the same date.

After a disappointing June, Tufted Duck numbers reached 12 on 17<sup>th</sup> but there was again no evidence of nesting. Two Common Terns dropped in on the Lagoon briefly on 7<sup>th</sup> and one was seen on 8<sup>th</sup>. It was a good month for Kingfisher sightings. Most involved single birds but three were seen from the river bridge on 12<sup>th</sup> and two juveniles were in the Reedbed on 21<sup>st</sup>.

Other sightings this month included a Peregrine Falcon on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, a Dipper on the river on 2<sup>nd</sup>, a Grey Partridge on John Ackroyd Meadow on 4<sup>th</sup>, a Barn Owl on the Scrubland on 18<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, a Grey Wagtail in the compound on 21<sup>st</sup>, a Coal Tit on the Willow Path on 22<sup>nd</sup>, a Yellow Wagtail over the Visitor Centre on 25<sup>th</sup>, a Grasshopper Warbler on 26<sup>th</sup>, Red Kites on six dates and Common Buzzards on five dates.

The Kestrel family continued to be seen until 8<sup>th</sup> but then, typically, vacated the Reserve. Little Owls were reported on seven dates. On 17<sup>th</sup> an adult and juvenile were seen on the wall on the farmland.

Hirundines, Swifts and bats benefited from the very warm weather and large numbers of insects on the wing. Around 45 Swifts were counted over the Visitor Centre on 5<sup>th</sup> and 40 were reported over the Reserve on 29<sup>th</sup>. More than 20 Swifts were flying round the nesting tower in the Reedbed on 21<sup>st</sup>, one bird entering one of the boxes - may be next year?

As regards mammals, Roedeer are hard to find at this time of year with the very high vegetation but a female and two young were reported on the Duck Marsh on 11<sup>th</sup>. Another release of Harvest Mice was made this month, this time at a new site near the Lagoon. A total of 73 animals were released.

The new hard path to the Manager's Garden had been completed by the end of the month, volunteers again working in some very warm

conditions, shovelling and spreading the material for the path. The John Ackroyd and Mike Fisk Meadows were cut on 31<sup>st</sup>.

## **August**

It was back to very warm conditions in the first week of the month with temperatures reaching 26°C but it became much fresher from 8<sup>th</sup> with a top temperature of just 17°C on 10<sup>th</sup> with showers. There was some heavy rain on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> followed by a stiff wind - just in time for the Summer Fair on 18<sup>th</sup>! As we know full well – wind and gazebos don't go well together. Fortunately, despite a windy start, the wind did ease down during the day and it stayed dry for what was once again a very well supported event. The weather was quite unsettled for the remainder of the month.

Some of our common birds can be hard to find in August but it can provide some interesting birdwatching as passage migrants start to move through. This year was no exception.

There was certainly plenty of activity on the wetlands. To our relief, one of the missing families of Mute Swans reappeared on the Kingfisher Pool on 3<sup>rd</sup> – Yellow ringed female no. 232 but now with just three cygnets. Two further adults were on the Back Reedbed on the same date. The single cygnet remained on the Lagoon throughout the month. There were no further sightings of the Great Crested Grebes after 4<sup>th</sup> but up to 19 Little Grebes were counted on the Lagoon including numerous fully grown juveniles.

Activity at the Sand Martin Bank on the Lagoon started to die down towards the end of the month but more than 200 birds could be seen hunting over the Reserve late in the evening, suggesting a decent nesting season. It had been another disappointing year for House Martins but around 30 were counted over the Wet Grassland on 26<sup>th</sup>. One or two Swifts were still present up to 27<sup>th</sup>.

There were regular sightings of Snipe on both the Wet Grassland and Duck Marsh with up to five birds reported. A juvenile Water Rail was seen on the Duck Marsh on 8<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> and single adults were reported on the Wet Grassland on four dates. Two Little Egrets were on the Back Reedbed on 11<sup>th</sup> and there were daily sightings

thereafter with as many as five birds present from 29<sup>th</sup>. It was another good month for Kingfisher sightings with the Lagoon the most productive site.

With no reports of activity at the Barn Owl box on the Scrubland, nesting this year had seemed unlikely but there was then a spate of activity from 11<sup>th</sup>. On this date a bird was seen disappearing into the box and on 13<sup>th</sup> one was seen on the ledge of the box. On 15<sup>th</sup> one was reported on the ledge of the box at 1.45pm. On 16<sup>th</sup> a juvenile appeared from the box and made a short flight at 9.15pm making a shaky landing as it returned. Constant hissing coming from the box suggested the possible presence of at least one other juvenile.

Other sightings this month included a Treecreeper on the Willow Path on 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>, two Tree Sparrows over the Coppice on 25<sup>th</sup>, a juvenile Grey Wagtail in the compound on the same date, five Linnets on Tim's Field on 29<sup>th</sup>, a Little Owl on six dates, Common Buzzards on seven dates with up to four birds, one or two Red Kites on six dates and a Peregrine Falcon on two dates. A male Kestrel was seen at the east facing box in the compound on 4<sup>th</sup>. Curlews are rarely seen at this time of year so eight over the farmland on 18<sup>th</sup> was a surprise. The previous day one was heard on the Wet Grassland. Seven "red-headed" Goosanders on the river on 3<sup>rd</sup> almost certainly included juveniles and five juveniles were reported in the same area on 12<sup>th</sup>. Three juvenile Grey Partridges were on the River Path on 6<sup>th</sup> and three birds were reported on the road on 29<sup>th</sup>.

Birds passing through or over the Reserve included a juvenile Whinchat on the farmland on 11<sup>th</sup>, a Wheatear there on 15<sup>th</sup>, a Spotted Flycatcher on 15<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, two Common Redstarts at the edge of Tim's Field on 25<sup>th</sup> and two Tree Pipits on Tim's Field on 28<sup>th</sup>. A single Marsh Harrier flew over on 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>. However, the three real highlights of the month were all found on the Wet Grassland on 25<sup>th</sup> – only the second Spotted Crake for the Reserve, a Green Sandpiper and a Greenshank. There were further sightings of all three species over the following days with two Green Sandpipers briefly on 29<sup>th</sup>.

There were more sightings of Roedeer this month. On 12<sup>th</sup> two adults and two juveniles ran across Tim's Field, one juvenile becoming

separated and dashing off down the Willow Path. On 14<sup>th</sup> a female and two juveniles were observed feeding on blackberries at the side of the Lagoon. Still on the mammal theme, a further small release of 28 Harvest Mice was made this month at the new site near the Lagoon.

## **September**

It was a windy month with the first of the autumn gales between 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> and some very heavy rain in the same period putting down an inch and a half in a little over 24 hours. There were some lovely autumn days though in the last week of the month with the first frost of the autumn on the morning of 29<sup>th</sup>.

Water levels on the Wet Grassland had to be dropped this month in preparation for ditch clearance work later in the autumn but the area nevertheless continued to provide some good sightings. A Spotted Crake was seen again on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> with another sighting on 14<sup>th</sup>. A Greenshank was again reported on 2<sup>nd</sup>; two Jack Snipe were seen in the same area on 14<sup>th</sup> and one on 30<sup>th</sup> and there were numerous sightings of up to three Snipe. However, the best place for Snipe this month was the Duck Marsh with birds unusually obliging, sightings most days and up to six birds reported. Water Rails were seen on the Wet Grassland on four dates and on the Duck Marsh on two dates. A Green Sandpiper flew over the Wet Grassland on 1<sup>st</sup>; one was there on 2<sup>nd</sup> and there were further sightings of a single bird on 16<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>. Little Egrets were reported on seven dates with up to three birds.

Still on the wetlands, a Cetti's Warbler called briefly near the Lagoon Hide on 23<sup>rd</sup> and on 30<sup>th</sup> one was seen well at the corner of the Wet Grassland - these the first records of this elusive bird since 27<sup>th</sup> December last year.

Visible migration was much in evidence this month with birds passing over the Reserve. Meadow Pipits and Siskins were reported; five Golden Plovers flew over on 15<sup>th</sup> and 19 Chaffinches on 22<sup>nd</sup> but eight Crossbills flying south over the River Path calling on 29<sup>th</sup> was a real bonus.

Tim's Field is always worth checking this month for birds dropping in. Stonechats, Whinchats and Wheatears can all turn up but it turned out to be a quiet one for these species with just one Whinchat there on 8<sup>th</sup>. A Stonechat was recorded on the roadside fence on 22<sup>nd</sup>. A few Linnets started to arrive but with most crops still in flower on Tim's Field there was little for them to feed on yet. Reed Buntings had been few and far between in recent weeks but seven were reported on the field on 30<sup>th</sup>.

A late Common Whitethroat was on Poplar Field on 26<sup>th</sup> but most summer visitors, other than hirundines, had gone much earlier. Two Swallows were reported on 29<sup>th</sup> but the last confirmed sighting of Sand Martins was on 12<sup>th</sup>. Unusually, House Martins were recorded in good numbers with a count of 50+ on 15<sup>th</sup>. There was a report of c200 unidentified hirundines drifting high over the Reserve on 22<sup>nd</sup> feeding. On 30<sup>th</sup> just a single House Martin was recorded.

Other sightings this month included a Spotted Flycatcher on 1<sup>st</sup>, two Tree Sparrows in the Bee Garden on 4<sup>th</sup>, a Goldcrest on 8<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>, a Treecreeper on 8<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>, a Green Woodpecker on the Willow Path on 19<sup>th</sup>, a Curlew on the farmland on 30<sup>th</sup>, a Barn Owl on two dates, a Little Owl on the farmland on six dates and Grey Wagtails on six dates. It was a good month for raptors but 23<sup>rd</sup> was a particularly good day for the raptor fans with five Common Buzzards together, two Red Kites, two Peregrine Falcons, a Kestrel and a female Sparrowhawk on the list. One of the Peregrines was seen to take a House Martin and return to the pylon with it. Peregrines were seen on five dates this month and Common Buzzards on eight dates. A Marsh Harrier over Tim's Field on 21<sup>st</sup> was a good record.

Greylag Geese numbers on the farmland started to build in the last week of the month, reaching 112 on 28<sup>th</sup> - the highest ever September count. The following day 66 Pink-footed Geese flew over in a westerly direction with 31 the next day.

A further small release of Harvest Mice was made in the latter part of the month.

Volunteers started work on the extension of the hard path from the Reedbed Hide to the Education Pond this month and on 20<sup>th</sup> a large

team of volunteers from the Coop spent the day digging out a long section of the new path.

## **October**

There were the usual windy autumn days but temperatures generally remained high, reaching 21°C on 10<sup>th</sup> – a beautiful, sunny day and the warmest October day since 2011. Plenty of sunny days brought out late butterflies and dragonflies. Temperatures did fall away sharply in the last few days of the month with a cold northerly wind but it stayed dry for the Pie and Pea Event and Fungus Foray on 27<sup>th</sup>. The month ended with a white frost followed by a beautiful sunny day and a maximum temperature of just 10°C.

Winter thrushes start to arrive this month and the first few Redwings were reported flying over on 5<sup>th</sup>. More than 400 were counted flying west on 7<sup>th</sup> and 580 on 17<sup>th</sup> with smaller numbers on several dates. With fine weather conditions most kept going and only a few birds dropped in to refuel. Fieldfares started to move through from 13<sup>th</sup> with 240 flying west on 20<sup>th</sup>. Nine Crossbills flew over with the Redwings on 17<sup>th</sup>, the former picked out from their characteristic calls.

Among other birds passing over the Reserve this month were six Whooper Swans on 6<sup>th</sup>, 19 Siskins on 7<sup>th</sup> and 10 on 13<sup>th</sup>, a single Brambling on 21<sup>st</sup> and 300+ Starlings on 28<sup>th</sup>. Small numbers of Skylarks were reported on six dates all flying south, a few Meadow Pipits on four dates and eight Lapwings on 20<sup>th</sup>. Wood Pigeons too were on the move this month. More than 300 flew over on 13<sup>th</sup> and a total of 630 were counted flying south on 28<sup>th</sup>.

On the wetlands it was an excellent month for sightings of Green Sandpiper, a bird being seen almost daily. Water Rails were reported on all four main wetland areas, the Wet Grassland being the most productive. Single Little Egrets were seen on four dates with two on the middle island on the Lagoon on 25<sup>th</sup>. Snipe were reported most days, often on the Duck Marsh, but five were accidentally flushed on the Wet Grassland on 15<sup>th</sup> during habitat management work. There were sightings of the elusive Cetti's warbler on three dates.

With the back Duck Marsh and Wet Grassland drying out for habitat management work most ducks were concentrated on the Lagoon and front Duck Marsh. Teal numbers were inevitably low with a best count of just 11 on the front Duck Marsh though 14 did turn up on the Wet Grassland briefly on 31<sup>st</sup>. Wigeon numbers too were low with a best count of 11 on the front Duck Marsh on 31<sup>st</sup> but otherwise no more than six. Nine Pochard dropped in briefly on 25<sup>th</sup> but didn't stay. Tufted Duck numbers reached 10 on 6<sup>th</sup> but there were no more than five by the end of the month. Up to 64 Gadwall were counted on the Lagoon with as many as six Shovelers on several dates from 13<sup>th</sup>. A Great Crested Grebe and a juvenile spent a day on the Lagoon on 3<sup>rd</sup>, the first record since 4<sup>th</sup> August.

The meadows were cut on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>, an activity always guaranteed to bring in Red Kites looking for easy pickings. Three followed the path of the tractor on 29<sup>th</sup> with a single Common Buzzard also taking interest. It was a good month for sightings of both these large raptors with Red Kites recorded on six dates and Common Buzzards on 15 dates with as many as six Buzzards together. It was a good month too for sightings of Barn Owls with records on eight dates on the Scrubland – sadly all very early in the morning or at dusk when the Reserve wasn't open to the public.

It was another quiet month on Tim's Field with no Stonechats or Wheatears to report and just nine Linnets on 6<sup>th</sup>. Fodder Radish was at last starting to set seed by the end of the month and with a bumper crop of Quinoa it looked promising for November.

Other sightings this month included a late Swallow over the farmland on 7<sup>th</sup>, a Peregrine Falcon on 13<sup>th</sup>, a Treecreeper on 20<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>, a Little Owl on three dates, a Coal Tit on eight dates – usually a scarce bird here - and Goldcrests on four dates with six on 28<sup>th</sup>. Five Lesser Redpolls were seen in a tree at the Dragonfly Ponds on 20<sup>th</sup> and 12 flew over the Coppice on 31<sup>st</sup>. There were more reports of Tree Sparrows this month with sightings on five dates and two birds on two occasions. Three of the sightings were on feeders in the Bee Garden. Chiffchaffs were reported on eight dates with as many as six birds on 6<sup>th</sup>. Hopefully, some of these will stay and overwinter along with the Blackcap which was seen on the Willow Path on 21<sup>st</sup>.

It was a good month for mammal sightings. Roedeer were seen on several dates with five on the Wet Grassland on one occasion and there was a lot of Fox activity in the second half of the month.

On the work front, willow coppicing started this month, providing a source of material for a new dead hedge between the Scrubland and the River Path. Hedge trimming also got underway and on the Lagoon the tern rafts were brought ashore for the winter. Hopefully these will be more successful next year.

## **November**

The first half of the month was very mild with temperatures up to 14°C but it was often grey and overcast and some days very windy. There were one or two brighter days and these produced the latest ever sightings of a Common Darter on 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>. Temperatures dropped sharply from 19<sup>th</sup> but again with a lot of grey, murky, wet days and feeling very unpleasant at just 5°C or 6°C. They did rise again in the last few days of the month but accompanied by strong to gale force westerly winds and a lot of rain.

It was a busy month for habitat management work on the wetlands. A tracked vehicle was brought onto the Wet Grassland on 5<sup>th</sup> to clear out the badly silted up ditches which are one of the main features of this habitat. The work took four days to complete. Later in the month work got underway at the eastern end of the Wet Grassland to remove an excess of willow that had sprung up over recent years. Short term disturbance but the whole area will be better in the long term. Water levels were dropped on the Reedbed to allow the required cutting of some of the reed. By the end of the month water levels had been restored here and on the back Duck Marsh where levels had been dropped for maintenance work.

Despite the work on the wetlands there was some good birdwatching to be had there. It was another good month for Water Rails with daily sightings and birds reported on all four main wetland areas. Up to three Snipe were seen on the Duck Marsh but there were also sightings on the Lagoon and Wet Grassland. A Green Sandpiper was present almost daily with two on the Wet Grassland on 17<sup>th</sup> and a Little Egret was reported on five dates. Kingfishers were seen most

days, the Reedbed being the most productive site. The elusive Cetti's Warbler was reported on five dates, usually at the eastern end of the Wet Grassland but it only provided fleeting views at best.

Duck numbers fluctuated. Gadwall reached 84 on 3<sup>rd</sup> but fell away somewhat thereafter. Eleven Wigeon were on the Duck Marsh on the same date but again numbers fell away and there were no reports after 18<sup>th</sup>. Shovelers were seen most days with as many as seven on one occasion and up to three Pochard were on the Lagoon most days from the middle of the month. Teal numbers fluctuated but 38 were on the Duck Marsh on 17<sup>th</sup> - the highest November count since 2011. The first Goldeneye of the autumn arrived on the Lagoon on 17<sup>th</sup> and one or two birds were seen daily thereafter. Four males were reported on 25<sup>th</sup>. It was a better month for Tufted Ducks with up to 14 on the Lagoon on several dates. A highlight for volunteers working on 23<sup>rd</sup> were eight Whooper Swans that flew low over the Reserve in an easterly direction, two of them turning back to spend some time on the Lagoon.

Other sightings included a male Stonechat on 3<sup>rd</sup>, a Little Owl on the Scrubland on 11<sup>th</sup>, Peregrine Falcons on 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> with two on the latter date, a female Blackcap on the River Path on 25<sup>th</sup>, single Chiffchaffs on five dates, a Treecreeper on five dates, a Grey Wagtail on five dates and one or two Tree Sparrows on three dates. Goldcrests were reported on eight dates with most sightings in trees near the river bridge. Most unusually, one or two Coal Tits were seen almost daily, usually at feeders in the Bee Garden. Yellowhammer sightings are also infrequent here so one flying off Mike Fisk Meadow on 24<sup>th</sup> was a bonus. A Hooded Crow seen over the farmland on 10<sup>th</sup> was another new species for the Reserve this year.

It was a good month for Lesser Redpolls with birds seen on a number of dates and nine near the bridge on 4<sup>th</sup>. Alders at the roadside near the bridge are a magnet for both this species and Siskins - 16 of the latter were counted here on 17<sup>th</sup>. Linnet activity on Tim's Field was again limited with a best count of just 23 but there was no shortage of Pheasants feeding there, 23 being flushed by a Fox on 25<sup>th</sup>.

The weather was seldom ideal for the larger raptors but Common Buzzards were, nevertheless, seen on seven dates and Red Kites on

four dates. There was also a lot of Barn Owl activity on the Scrubland but, unfortunately, always very early in the morning. One or sometimes two birds were reported by volunteers on 12 dates.

Canada Geese and Greylag Geese numbers continued to build on the farmland but the frequent loud explosions of the farmer's bird scaring device kept the flocks on the move. Around 120 Pink-footed geese flew high over the Reserve in a south easterly direction at 4.20pm on 18<sup>th</sup>.

## **December**

It was generally a very mild month but with a lot of rain in the first three weeks - more than four inches of it. There was a very brief cold snap on 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> and much of the wetlands were frozen over but for no more than a day. High pressure took charge over the Christmas period, bringing dry but often cloudy conditions up to the end of the year.

With the river running high and coloured for at least two weeks Kingfishers spent much of their time fishing on the wetlands and there were plenty of sightings for the birdwatchers to enjoy. Birds were reported on all the wetland areas and one even resorted to the Dipping Ponds.

Goosanders start to gather on the Lagoon towards dusk at this time of year and the first double figure count was made on 2<sup>nd</sup> with five males and five females arriving. There were further double figure counts with 15 on 16<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> the best. On the latter date 12 birds were present at 8.00am - an unusually good morning count. A report of eight Goldeneyes on the Lagoon on 1<sup>st</sup> was the highest ever for December with between one and four birds daily thereafter. Tufted Duck numbers continued to rise, reaching 28 on 15<sup>th</sup> on the Lagoon, this the highest count of the year. Teal numbers continued to fluctuate from day to day but 43 on the Wet Grassland on 12<sup>th</sup> was also the highest of the year.

Still on the wetlands, there were more reports of Cetti's Warbler, both on the Wet Grassland and Lagoon, suggesting perhaps at least two birds present. One was photographed from the Lagoon Hide on 9<sup>th</sup>. A

Green Sandpiper was again on the Wet Grassland on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> and there were further sightings from 22<sup>nd</sup> to the end of the year. A Little Egret came in to roost in trees at the back of the Lagoon late in the day on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> and one was seen on the Duck Marsh on 29<sup>th</sup>. A Great White Egret that flew over the Reserve on 9<sup>th</sup> was a new bird for us.

On the farmland Greylag numbers reached 173 on 12<sup>th</sup> but a count of 407 geese there on 14<sup>th</sup> was found to include 245 Greylags and 162 Canada Geese - both the highest ever December counts. It was a quiet month for Pink-footed Geese with just 15 flying west on 9<sup>th</sup>.

Other sightings this month included a Brambling on 1<sup>st</sup>, an overwintering male Blackcap in the Manager's Garden on 9<sup>th</sup>, Goldcrests on six dates, a Treecreeper on four dates, Grey Wagtails on five dates, a Peregrine Falcon on four dates, Common Buzzards on eight dates (up to two) and Red Kites on four dates with three on one occasion. Coal Tits continued to appear with single birds on five dates, three of these in the Manager's Garden. One or two Chiffchaffs were reported on five dates, four of these involving probable birds of the eastern race known as Siberian Chiffchaff. Flyovers included 44 Lapwings on 9<sup>th</sup> and 35 on 15<sup>th</sup> with four Whooper Swans on 9<sup>th</sup>.

A large noisy Jackdaw roost formed in trees on the far riverbank behind the Wet Grassland towards dusk with more than 200 birds gathering there. However, the real highlight for the birdwatchers was the "Nordic" Jackdaw that was picked out on the farmland on three dates.

Barn Owls were again very active but typically very early in the morning. One or two birds were seen on seven dates and pellets were found in the thatched gazebo, Poplar Carr Hide and the Mike Sheldon Hide. Little Owls were even more elusive with just two records. A bird was calling on the Scrubland on 2<sup>nd</sup> and one was seen in the same area on 29<sup>th</sup>.

On Tim's Field, Linnet numbers did increase somewhat from the middle of the month but a best count of just 40 was still disappointing. A few Chaffinches visiting the field for seed may well have been winter visitors. Goldfinches preferred the roadside alders for seed but

around 45 were recorded in a Silver Birch by the Manager's Garden on 1<sup>st</sup>. A few Siskins and Lesser Redpolls were also reported feeding in the alders some days.

There were some excellent counts of Grey Heron in the last few days of the year. Thirteen on 23<sup>rd</sup> included eight on the farmland and 14 on 29<sup>th</sup> included 11 on the Duck Marsh - this the highest ever December count. Nine were on the Duck Marsh the next day.

## 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 two resident pairs were on nests at the usual sites on the Wet Grassland and Duck Marsh from the beginning of April but there were no reports subsequently of cygnets which is most unusual here. By early April this year birds were again on nests at both sites and on 26<sup>th</sup> May six cygnets appeared on the Duck Marsh, the family subsequently alternating between there and the Lagoon. It wasn't until 13<sup>th</sup> June that the Wet Grassland pair showed off their five cygnets for the first time (the female of the pair a yellow ringed bird no. 232, ringed at Yeadon Tarn on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2015). On 24<sup>th</sup> June two males were observed in a vicious battle on the Reedbed, eventually disappearing into the reeds still fighting (PM/BM). Shortly after this the Wet Grassland family disappeared and by 8<sup>th</sup> July the Duck Marsh family had also gone, leaving just one cygnet on the Lagoon. One or occasionally two adults continued to be seen on the Reedbed and on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> July two adults and four cygnets were seen on the river (one yellow ringed adult no. 172). Then on 3<sup>rd</sup> August the Wet Grassland family were back on the Reedbed, but now with just three cygnets. The solitary cygnet remained on the Lagoon throughout. From 22<sup>nd</sup> September the Wet Grassland family was down to two cygnets. Not long after this the juveniles were making their first flights and on 14<sup>th</sup> October one was seen on the river at the same time as two adults and two juveniles were flying up river (WeBS). Two adults and two juveniles continued to be seen on the Lagoon and Duck Marsh some days but on 3<sup>rd</sup> December the remains of a juvenile were found near the Fish Pass, the bird possibly being a victim of overhead power lines.

### **Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* Winter Visitor**

Birds that have overwintered further south are occasionally recorded in March on their way back to their breeding grounds in Iceland. On 5<sup>th</sup> March 17 dropped in and spent some time on the Lagoon (JB *et al*). A further two birds were seen flying over Tim's Field the same morning. On 24<sup>th</sup> March nine flew over in a westerly direction at 6.00pm (JWC). What were probably the same birds had been reported at Eccup Reservoir earlier in the day. Autumn sightings are less common here but on 6<sup>th</sup> October six birds were observed flying over in an easterly direction (JWC). On 23<sup>rd</sup> November eight were

recorded flying low over the Reserve in an easterly direction, two landing briefly on the Scrubland (PU *et al*). Shortly after, what were probably the same two birds, an adult and a juvenile, were seen on the Lagoon (BM). The following day a single bird was reported flying over high in an easterly direction (JWC). On 9<sup>th</sup> December four birds flew high over the Reserve in the same direction (JWC).

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

Skeins of these geese pass over the Reserve in the autumn and winter months but individuals can turn up in the Greylag and Canada flocks on the farmland at other times. Around 120 flew over in a south westerly direction on 1<sup>st</sup> January (JWC). There was also a report of a small group of 13 on 21<sup>st</sup> January (JWC). On 4<sup>th</sup> February 140 flew over in a westerly direction and on 28<sup>th</sup> February c300, again flying west (JWC). A single bird was picked out on the farmland on 25<sup>th</sup> February (DC/EC) and from 24<sup>th</sup> March a bird was again on the farmland throughout April. Two were seen here on 5<sup>th</sup> May (JWC). A bird was also recorded on the Lagoon on several dates until 13<sup>th</sup> May. There were no further sightings until 29<sup>th</sup> September when 66 flew west and later 61 in the opposite direction (JWC). On 17<sup>th</sup> October c120 flew over in a north westerly direction (JWC) and on 18<sup>th</sup> November a similar number flew high over the Scrubland in a south easterly direction late in the day (PM/BM). Fifteen flying west on 9<sup>th</sup> December (JWC) were the last of the year.

**Greylag Goose** *Anser anser* **Resident Breeder/ Winter Visitor**

There has been a dramatic increase in numbers since November 2014 when the first three figure count was made. In November last year a record 410 were counted on the Lagoon. This year 122 were on the farmland on 1<sup>st</sup> January (JWC) and the number had risen to 175 by 28<sup>th</sup> January (DC/EC). Numbers remained high into the first week of February and a report of 152 on 3<sup>rd</sup> (DC/EC) was the highest ever for that month. A count of 64 on 24<sup>th</sup> March (DC/EC) was also the highest ever for that month. One or two pairs stayed to nest on the wetlands and two goslings were seen on the Lagoon on 7<sup>th</sup> May (DC/EC). Numbers were down to single figures in June and July and there were no sightings from 22<sup>nd</sup> July to 22<sup>nd</sup> September when a single bird returned to the Lagoon. Numbers started to build a month earlier than usual, reaching 112 on 28<sup>th</sup> September (JB), this the highest ever for September by a long way. Thanks to the local farmer

using bird “scarers” on the farmland, numbers dropped back somewhat in October and November but rose to a record (for December ) 173 on 12<sup>th</sup> December (DC/EC). However, the figure rose even higher two days later, a total of 407 geese on the farmland including 245 Greylags (PM/BM). A white leucistic bird was seen on several occasions last year and what was probably the same bird was seen on a number of dates this year. Ringed birds turn up from time to time in the flocks and a bird with leg ring number 4US, recorded on the farmland on 9<sup>th</sup> December (JWC), was found to have been ringed at North Duffield, Selby on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2016. It was recaptured on the River Derwent at Wheldrake on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2017 and reported at York University, Heslington on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2017. Monthly maxima are shown below (adults only).

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
175	152	64	30	31	8	7	-	112	69	100	245

**Canada Goose *Branta canadensis* Resident Breeder/Winter Vis.**

Numbers reported in January and February last year were the highest for those months since 2010 and in March, April and May the highest ever for those months. A count of 163 on the farmland on 21<sup>st</sup> January this year (JWC) was somewhat higher than last year’s best of 133. Numbers remained high in February with 152 on the farmland on 10<sup>th</sup> (DC/EC). They started to drop somewhat thereafter with 94 the highest number in March. Birds came onto the Lagoon from the farmland most days with 150 counted there on 10<sup>th</sup> January (DC/EC) and there were several subsequent three figure counts. A few birds remained throughout the summer months but there were no reports of successful nesting this year. Numbers started to build again from late September reaching 80 on 13<sup>th</sup> October (PM) but the farmer’s very noisy bird scaring devices kept the flocks on the move. However, around 100 birds were present on several dates in November but a report of 162 on the farmland on 14<sup>th</sup> December (PM/BM) was the highest ever December count, beating last December’s 155. Monthly maxima are shown below (adults only).

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
163	152	94	76	45	23	20	19	41	80	100	162

**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 13<sup>th</sup> November. There have been no sightings since this date but it is always worth checking through the geese flocks for this and other species.

**Egyptian Goose** *Alopochen aegyptiaca* **Scarce Visitor**

Feral populations of this species occur in parts of Britain and on the Continent. A new bird for the Reserve this year, one was picked out among the Greylag Geese on the farmland on 4<sup>th</sup> March (TPr *et al*). There were no subsequent sightings.

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

This species is most likely to be encountered here in spring but the only record this year was an autumn one - a bird flying over high in a northerly direction on 21<sup>st</sup> October (JWC). Last year there were just two records, both in May.

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

This species was first recorded on 4th April 2009; there was one sighting in 2014 and sightings on four dates last year. All sightings have been in March or April. There was just one record this year. On 30<sup>th</sup> March a male was on one of the islands on the Lagoon (JWC).

**Wigeon** *Anas penelope* **Winter Visitor**

The early part of the year was very disappointing in both 2016 and 2017 with no more than four birds present. January this year produced a count of 22 on the Lagoon on 11<sup>th</sup> - 11 males and 11 females (PM/BM) but the next highest count was just eight a day earlier. There were regular sightings on both the Lagoon and Duck Marsh throughout January and February with between two and six birds recorded. Up to four were seen on a number of dates in March. The last sighting of the spring came on 5<sup>th</sup> April with a male and four females on the Lagoon (PM/BM). A single bird on the Duck Marsh on

23<sup>rd</sup> September (JH) was the first of the autumn and the next day one was reported on the Lagoon. Six were on the Lagoon on 8<sup>th</sup> October (PM/BM) and there were regular sightings thereafter, usually of between one and six birds but on 31<sup>st</sup> October 12 were counted, 11 of these on the Duck Marsh (JWC). There was another report of 11 on the Duck Marsh a few days later on 3<sup>rd</sup> November (JWC), these the best counts of the autumn. Unusually, there were no sightings after 18<sup>th</sup> November until 26<sup>th</sup> December when three birds arrived. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
22	6	4	2	-	-	-	-	1	12	11	3

### **Gadwall *Anas strepera* Resident Breeder**

Numbers dropped significantly in December last year as they had done in December 2016. There was no improvement in January this year with a best count of just 18 on the Wet Grassland on 28<sup>th</sup> (PM/BM). Numbers did start to rise a bit in February but from March through to August were the highest ever for those months. The first family of 10 ducklings appeared on the Lagoon on 5<sup>th</sup> June, just one day later than last year. By 13<sup>th</sup> June seven families were on the Lagoon with a total of 43 ducklings. On 16<sup>th</sup> June the first family appeared on the Duck Marsh and on 11<sup>th</sup> July a new family of five was on the Reedbed. Numbers fluctuated widely in August with as few as 10 or 12 adults some days but a count of 92 on 12<sup>th</sup> (WeBS) was by far the highest of the month. Numbers dropped somewhat in September with a best count of 66 on the Lagoon on 26<sup>th</sup> (PA). There were similar counts there in October and at the start of November. A report of 84 on 3<sup>rd</sup> November (JWC) was the highest ever count for that month but numbers fell sharply in the second week with no more than 15 birds at best. This has now been the pattern in each of the last three years. However, the highest count in December was just 15 - the lowest for that month since 2006. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
18	22	26	58	36	56	52	92	66	64	84	15

**Pintail *Anas acuta* Scarce Visitor**

This passage and winter visitor was first recorded in 2011 and in 2012 there were sightings on two dates. There were no records in the three years from 2013 to 2015, what was probably an immature male bird in 2016 from 21<sup>st</sup> September to 19<sup>th</sup> October and a female from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> October last year. This year a male and female were seen on the Reedbed on 7<sup>th</sup> March (PJ *et al*). There was also a report of a male on the canal close to the Reserve on 8<sup>th</sup> April.

**Teal *Anas crecca* Winter/Passage Visitor**

Counts in the first three months of the year were a little lower than last year with a best of 22 on the Wet Grassland on 27<sup>th</sup> January (JWC). Numbers typically started to fall away in April with a pair on the Wet Grassland on 22<sup>nd</sup> April (JWC) the last of the spring. Although regarded as a winter and passage visitor, one or two birds can often be seen in May, June and July most years. A single male was on the Duck Marsh on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> June (JWC) and birds were seen daily from 1<sup>st</sup> July with a best count of 10 on that date (JWC) the highest ever for July. However, most days produced just a handful of birds. Numbers reached 13 at the end of August but remained low throughout September and October and a best count of just nine in September was the lowest for that month since 2001. A best count of just 14 in October was the second lowest ever for that month. However, these figures need to take account of the fact that water levels had been dropped on three of the wetland areas in preparation for ditch digging out on the Wet Grassland in November. Numbers increased considerably following the work with a count of 39 on 17<sup>th</sup> including 38 on the Wet Grassland (JWC), this the highest November count since 2011. Numbers fluctuated widely in December with as few as two some days but a report of 43 on the Wet Grassland on 12<sup>th</sup> (JB) was the highest for that month since 2013. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
22	20	14	15	-	1	10	13	9	14	39	43

**Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* Resident Breeder**

There were some excellent counts on the Duck Marsh in December last year with 108 there on 23<sup>rd</sup> the highest ever for that month. This

continued into 2018 with 74 birds there on 3<sup>rd</sup> January and a total of 90, including those on other water bodies, by far and away the highest January count ever (DC/EC). Numbers did fall away somewhat after that date but a report of 47 on the Duck Marsh on 13<sup>th</sup> January (DC/EC) was still encouraging. Numbers in February were much lower with the highest count reported just 19 and they remained low throughout March and April. The first families of ducklings appeared on 9<sup>th</sup> May - a female with 11 on the Lagoon and five on the Wet Grassland (JB). On 13<sup>th</sup> May a female was seen on the Wet Grassland with seven ducklings (DC/EC). A further family of four ducklings was on the river on 23<sup>rd</sup> May. Maximum counts from June to October were very similar to last year. In November a report of c60 on the Wet Grassland on 25<sup>th</sup> (JWC) was by far the highest of the month. December counts were well down on last year but 63 on 2<sup>nd</sup> (DC/EC) was still encouraging, 43 of these on the Duck Marsh. Monthly maxima, adults only, are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
90	19	15	20	21	31	45	45	21	29	60	63

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

Prior to this year this species had only been recorded in 2003, 2006, 2014 and 2015. This year a male bird was seen on the Duck Marsh on 4<sup>th</sup> April (JWC *et al*) and it was present until 14<sup>th</sup> April. During this time most sightings were on the Duck Marsh but it was also recorded on the Wet Grassland on 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> April.

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

This species has been recorded in every month of the year but it is more likely to be encountered here in the autumn and winter months when 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 and last year, apart from a single male on three dates in March, there were no sightings until September. This year a few birds were present from 1<sup>st</sup> January almost daily until 1<sup>st</sup> April. Six were recorded on three dates in January with three males and three females (PM/BM *et al*). A single male was seen on 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> April but there were no other sightings then until 1<sup>st</sup> July when a female was on

the Wet Grassland (JWC). Apart from a male on the Lagoon on 4<sup>th</sup> July (DC/EC) there were no other records until 5<sup>th</sup> September. No more than two were seen throughout September but up to five were on the Lagoon on several dates in October with six on 31<sup>st</sup> (JWC). Numbers reached seven on 17<sup>th</sup> November (JWC) but dropped back to two in December with no sightings after 19<sup>th</sup>. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
6	3	3	1	-	-	1	-	2	6	7	2

### **Pochard *Aythya ferina* Winter/Passage Visitor**

After two disappointing years there was some improvement this year though numbers remained in single figures. Two or three birds were on the Lagoon for much of January, rising to five on 28<sup>th</sup> (JWC). Four or five were seen daily throughout February and on 9<sup>th</sup> March six - three males and three females - were on the Lagoon (PM/BM). There were further reports of up to six birds up to 19<sup>th</sup> March after which numbers started to fall with a single male on 5<sup>th</sup> April the last of the spring. A male and female on 2<sup>nd</sup> September were the first of the autumn (DC/EC) and the only September record. On 6<sup>th</sup> October a female appeared on the Lagoon but again no further sightings until 21<sup>st</sup> October when four were on the Lagoon (DC/EC *et al*). Nearly all sightings of this species are on the Lagoon so nine on the Duck Marsh for a short time on 25<sup>th</sup> October (JB) was unexpected and the biggest ever October count. There were no further sightings until 17<sup>th</sup> November but two or three birds were then present daily to the end of the year with four on 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> (JWC *et al*). Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
5	5	6	1	-	-	-	-	2	9	3	4

### **Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* Casual Breeder and Winter Visitor**

Maximum counts in January were very similar to last year with 25 on the Lagoon on 21<sup>st</sup> (JLW) the highest. Numbers dropped back a bit in February but a count of 26 on the Lagoon late in the day on 4<sup>th</sup> March

(PM) was the highest for that month since 2011. However, a best count of just seven in May was the lowest ever for that month. Numbers dropped even further in June with a best of just four the lowest for that month since 2005. Up to and including 2009 several pairs bred here but there has only been one successful nesting attempt since and that was in 2015. Numbers increased somewhat in July and a count of 12 on 17<sup>th</sup> (BM) was the highest since 2010 but there was still no evidence of nesting. Counts in August, September and October were all a little higher than in recent years and they increased in December, possibly with the help of some winter visitors. A report of 28 on the Lagoon on 15<sup>th</sup> December (JWC) was the highest for that month since 2014 and the highest of the year. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
25	15	26	19	7	4	12	10	8	10	14	28

**Scaup** *Aythya marila* **Scarce Visitor**

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. There have been no records in the last four years.

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

Large numbers of this species winter around our shores and there is also a very small Scottish and Irish breeding population. A female or immature bird seen on the Lagoon on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2016 was the first ever record for the Reserve. Unfortunately, the bird had gone by the following day. There have been no sightings in the last two years.

**Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula* **Winter Visitor**

Numbers of this diving duck tend to peak in February and March and a count of 16 in March 2016 was the highest ever recorded. Numbers in the first three months of this year, however, were the lowest since 2014 with a best count of just five on two dates in March. Different birds were clearly involved as one report included four females and the other just two females. A single female on the Lagoon on 7<sup>th</sup> April (DC/EC *et al*) was the last of the spring. The first bird of the autumn - again a female - was on the Lagoon on 17<sup>th</sup> November (JWC *et al*). A

single male was reported the following day and on 25<sup>th</sup> November four males were recorded late in the day (PM/BM *et al*). On 1<sup>st</sup> December a report of eight - five males and three females - (DC/EC) was the highest ever December count and the highest of the year. Up to three were seen daily thereafter with four males at dusk on 16<sup>th</sup> (JB). On 31<sup>st</sup> December two males were observed displaying to a female on the Lagoon (PM/BM). Monthly maxima are shown below.

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

**Bufflehead** *Bucephala albeola* **Scarce Visitor**

This North American duck is a rare vagrant to Western Europe. On 11<sup>th</sup> May last year a female was seen and photographed on the Reedbed. The bird stayed until 14<sup>th</sup> May and was recorded during a WeBS visit that morning. The bird was ringed and had a tag on the other leg but was it a wild bird or an escapee?

**Goosander** *Mergus merganser* **Frequent Visitor**

Double figure gatherings on the Lagoon towards dusk in the winter months have always been a feature here. However, numbers have fallen in recent years and in January last year no more than four turned up. There was a considerable improvement this January with several double figure counts and a best of 15 on 28<sup>th</sup> - five males and 10 females (PM/BM). Unusually, there was also a very good morning count of 12 on 14<sup>th</sup> January - six males and six females (DC/EC). Numbers fell away rapidly with no more than four birds at dusk in February. A few birds continued to be seen on the river and some days on the Lagoon. On 4<sup>th</sup> March a male and four females were on the Lagoon late in the afternoon with much of it icebound (PM/BM). While successful nesting on the riverbank within the Reserve itself has never been confirmed, birds are certainly nesting close by on the river. Three pairs were seen on the river below the weir on 23<sup>rd</sup> April (JK) and on 25<sup>th</sup> April a female and nine ducklings were reported upstream of the river bridge (PA/AH). On 3<sup>rd</sup> August a party of seven “redheads” on the river downstream of the weir (JB) were almost certainly well grown juveniles and there were several further reports of up to six, the last on 28<sup>th</sup> October. A few birds started to gather on the Lagoon towards dusk from the beginning of December with the

first double figure count on 2<sup>nd</sup> - five males and five females (PM/BM). Numbers reached 14 on 12<sup>th</sup> - six males and eight females (PM) and 15 on 16<sup>th</sup> (JB). An early morning count of 12 on 30<sup>th</sup> (DC/EC) was an excellent one for that time of day and towards dusk the same day 15 were recorded - seven males and eight females (PM/JB). The maximum daily count for each month is shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
15	4	6	6	4	4	3	7	7	7	2	15

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

The national cull of this species was very successful and there have been no sightings since 16<sup>th</sup> May 2009. Birds bred on the Reserve in 2004, 2005 and 2006.

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

There have been no sightings since 24<sup>th</sup> 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. In 2017 two releases were made with a total of 22 birds, the last release on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2017. Up to four were reported regularly from the beginning of this year, usually on John Ackroyd Meadow or Poplar Field. Sightings declined after April but three juveniles were seen on the River Path on 6<sup>th</sup> August (JB). A single bird at the side of the road on 14<sup>th</sup> September was the last sighting of the year (JB).

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

Considering the healthy Fox presence on the Reserve this species continues to do remarkably well here and numbers, if anything, are probably increasing. They are daily visitors to the Bee Garden from Mike Fisk Meadow. Up to seven were under the feeders from the beginning of the year and five males were recorded here on 7<sup>th</sup> February with five males and five females on 14<sup>th</sup> February (DC/EC). On 7<sup>th</sup> March a male and 11 females were counted on Mike Fisk Meadow (PM/BM). Several broken egg shells behind the Duck Marsh on 16<sup>th</sup> April indicated an early failed nesting attempt and it wasn't until 16<sup>th</sup> June that the first juvenile appeared in the Bee Garden. On

19<sup>th</sup> August a female and seven juveniles were seen near the gate to the Fish Pass (JB); five juveniles were in the Bee Garden on 12<sup>th</sup> September (DC/EC) and seven juveniles were reported at the Dragonfly Ponds on 30<sup>th</sup> September (JB). The seed crop on Tim's Field provided an excellent food source and cover in the autumn. A total of 23 were flushed by a Fox here on 25<sup>th</sup> November (JB).

**Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo* **Resident**

A few birds can be seen on the pylon by the Fish Pass daily throughout the year. They are also regular visitors to the Lagoon where they fish and loaf on the middle island. Numbers in the first half of the year were somewhat higher than last year with as many as 12 on the Lagoon on 21<sup>st</sup> February (DC/EC) and 10 on the pylon on 18<sup>th</sup> February (MG/PG). Numbers dropped somewhat in the latter part of March for a time but on 27<sup>th</sup> May 11 were counted on the pylon (JB/MB) with 10 there on 6<sup>th</sup> June (DC/EC). Numbers in the second half of the year were somewhat lower. The species has never nested here and it would be interesting to know where they are doing. The highest counts each month are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
9	12	12	7	11	10	7	9	8	4	7	6

**Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* **Scarce Visitor**

One spent several weeks in the Reedbed and on the Duck Marsh from 16<sup>th</sup> January 2016. It was last seen on 26<sup>th</sup> April that year. The Reedbed is looking better than ever following extensive management work in December 2016 and we will surely have further sightings before too long.

**Little Egret** (*Egretta garzetta*) **Frequent Visitor**

Prior to 2014 records were few and far between. In that year there were sightings on seven dates and in 2015 on five dates. But in 2016 there was an upsurge in sightings with birds reported on 33 dates and up to four present. Last year was even better with sightings on 72 dates between 11<sup>th</sup> May and 18<sup>th</sup> November and again up to four birds present. This year was a bit disappointing in comparison with birds reported on just 32 dates and we had to wait until 2<sup>nd</sup> July for the first one - a single bird at the side of the Lagoon (JB). More than a

month elapsed before the next sighting - two in the Reedbed on 11<sup>th</sup> August (JHay). One or two birds were then present most days with three in the Reedbed and one on the Duck Marsh on 22<sup>nd</sup> August (DC/EC *et al*). On 29<sup>th</sup> August five, the highest number seen on the Reserve to date, spent time on both the Wet Grassland and Reedbed (JWC *et al*). Between one and three were recorded in the first half of September with single birds some days thereafter and two on the middle island on the Lagoon on 25<sup>th</sup> October (JB). A single bird on the Wet Grassland on 21<sup>st</sup> November looked like being the last of the year but there were then sightings on three dates in the latter part of December, a bird coming into roost in trees at the back of the Lagoon late in the day on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> and what was probably the same bird on the Duck Marsh on 29<sup>th</sup> (JWC).

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea* **Resident**

This is still a common bird on the Reserve with daily sightings but numbers most months were down somewhat on last year. They can be seen on all the wetland areas but the Duck Marsh usually produces the best counts - seven were reported here on 24<sup>th</sup> January (DC/EC). Late in the day, when most visitors have gone, one or two like to visit the Dipping Ponds. Two were seen here on 4<sup>th</sup> January (PM/BM). Gatherings can occur on the farmland for some reason in the autumn and winter months and five were reported here on 18<sup>th</sup> February (DC/EC). The Scrubland was popular towards the end of the year and six were seen here on 9<sup>th</sup> December (AT). Every year produces at least one double figure count but this was looking increasingly unlikely this year until 23<sup>rd</sup> December when 13 were reported, eight of these on the farmland (JWC). On 29<sup>th</sup> December 14 birds included 11 on the Duck Marsh (JB/MB) - these the highest ever December counts. Nine birds were on the Duck Marsh on 30<sup>th</sup> December (DC/EC). The highest counts each month are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
7	6	7	5	4	5	5	6	9	5	6	14

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

A common bird on the wetlands for most of the year, Little Grebes are thin on the ground in December and January. There was just a single

bird throughout January with another on the river on one date. Typically, a few more started to appear in the latter part of February and one or two were on all four main wetland areas in March. The first family appeared on the Duck Marsh on 28<sup>th</sup> May - an adult with two chicks (JH). Two days later an adult and two chicks were also seen in the Reedbed (JH). Further families appeared in July - two adults with five chicks on the Duck Marsh on 7<sup>th</sup> (PW) being a good sized one. The first family was reported on the Lagoon on the same date - two adults with two young (DC/EC). There were some good counts on the Lagoon in August - 10 on 4<sup>th</sup> (JWC), 13 on 11<sup>th</sup> (PW) and 19 on 26<sup>th</sup> (JWC). A count of 21 on 16<sup>th</sup> September included 18 on the Lagoon and three on the Duck Marsh (PA). Numbers on the wetlands started to tail off in October and in November just a single bird was on the Lagoon on three dates but as many as five were recorded on the river during a WeBS visit on 11<sup>th</sup>. There were just two sightings reported in December with three birds recorded during a WeBS count on 9<sup>th</sup>, two of these on the Lagoon and one on the river. Monthly maxima are shown below (adults only).

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
2	2	5	7	5	5	11	21	21	10	5	3

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

The first bird arrived on the Lagoon this year on 24<sup>th</sup> February (DC/EC *et al*), just five days later than last year. It was joined by a second bird on 28<sup>th</sup> February and three were present for a time on 17<sup>th</sup> March (JWC). Like last year, the birds chose a nest site at the back of the middle island and by 20<sup>th</sup> April four eggs had been laid. On 6<sup>th</sup> May one chick was seen on the back of an adult (BM) but there were no reports of further young. On 29<sup>th</sup> May the birds were seen at a new nest site in open water near the tern rafts but by 10<sup>th</sup> June they had constructed a third nest, again in open water, at the bottom end of the Lagoon. By 27<sup>th</sup> June they had moved to a fourth nest. At least two eggs were seen in this nest on 3<sup>rd</sup> July but this too was later abandoned. The sole juvenile from the first nest thrived and was present until 28<sup>th</sup> July. The two adults had departed by 5<sup>th</sup> August but on 3<sup>rd</sup> October an adult and juvenile were back on the Lagoon (MG/PG *et al*).

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

While the number of reported sightings (73) was very similar to last year, the pattern of the sightings was rather different. Last year there were just five records in the first two months. This year there were 17, January proving to be the best month of the year. Most sightings involved single birds but three were recorded over the Wet Grassland on 7<sup>th</sup> January (PW/JLW). On 10<sup>th</sup> February four were over the Reserve (JWC) and there were further reports of three and four birds in March. Grass cutting on the farmland is guaranteed to bring in Red Kites and three duly arrived on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> June - unfortunately at a time when the Oystercatcher family had decided to go onto the farmland. The two juveniles were taken by the Kites but it is more than likely that the birds had already been killed by the machinery. Birds were seen in all months but three of the last four months produced no more than four records and usually no more than two birds. However, grass turning on the meadows on 29<sup>th</sup> October brought in three birds (PM/BM). Three were also reported on the Scrubland on 30<sup>th</sup> December.

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

It is unlikely that this species will ever visit our small reedbed but, as was proved last year, it is always worth watching for birds flying over the Reserve. There were two such sightings on 8<sup>th</sup> October last year. There were records on three dates this year. On 4<sup>th</sup> August a bird flew over the farmland in a westerly direction (JWC) and on 5<sup>th</sup> August one flew over going east (PC). On 21<sup>st</sup> September one was reported flying over Tim's Field (DAN/ABr).

### **Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus* **Casual Breeder**

This is a common bird here with sightings in all months. As many as three were seen together over the Reserve in March and early April. The female Sparrowhawk is a powerful bird, a third larger than the male and capable of taking much larger prey. Numerous piles of pigeon feathers round the Reserve were evidence of plenty of successful hunts. On 8<sup>th</sup> April two females were reported over the Compound (PM). On 21<sup>st</sup> April a male was pursued by Swallows low over Tim's Field (MHa). Birds are probably still nesting in woodland across the river and on 17<sup>th</sup> July a juvenile male flew low across the road by the car park (PM/BM). There was a further report of a juvenile on the Duck Marsh on 27<sup>th</sup> August (DC/EC). On 9<sup>th</sup> September a

juvenile took 40 minutes to subdue a Magpie under the decking of one of the Dipping Ponds (JWC). On 15<sup>th</sup> September three birds were seen together over the Scrubland (JWC). There was a further sighting of three together over the Scrubland on 28<sup>th</sup> October (JWC). On 17<sup>th</sup> November a juvenile male hit the patio doors of the Visitor Centre and spent some time on the dead hedge recovering from its ordeal (DC/EC).

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

Sightings were reported on 92 dates this year but these birds have now become such a common occurrence that many sightings almost certainly go unrecorded. There were sightings in every month of the year with a peak in October. Many were of single birds but up to four were reported in the first half of the year on a number of occasions. On 23<sup>rd</sup> September five together over the Reserve (PA/JWC) may well have included juveniles at this time of year as birds are almost certainly nesting not too far away now. Sightings were reported on 15 dates in October. Four were seen together over the farmland on 7<sup>th</sup> and on 20<sup>th</sup> five birds were reported together over the Reserve (JWC). On 31<sup>st</sup> October a group of six was seen over the farmland (JWC *et al*). This would have been a rare bird in the Leeds area not so long ago but the number of records has been increasing since 2012 and it really took off in 2015 as can be seen from the following table.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of dates recorded</u>
2012	18
2013	21
2014	26
2015	84
2016	104
2017	85
2018	92

**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**

Last year produced sightings on four dates but there was just one record this year - a bird flying over in a north westerly direction on 5<sup>th</sup> April (JWC).

**Water Rail** *Rallus aquaticus* **Resident Breeder and Winter Visitor**

The small resident population is joined by birds from mainland Europe in the autumn and winter months. There were a number of sightings in January with two on the Lagoon on 6<sup>th</sup> (JWC) and three on the Duck Marsh on 20<sup>th</sup> (PA/AL). Birds were also reported on the Wet Grassland and Reedbed in the same period. There were sightings on several dates in February, March and April and on 6<sup>th</sup> May a bird was seen by the water inlet on the Lagoon (JB), this the last record until 28<sup>th</sup> July when one was seen on the Duck Marsh. On 8<sup>th</sup> August a juvenile was reported in the same area (ABI). There was a further report of a juvenile on 25<sup>th</sup> August, this time from the Reedbed Hide (JWC). Throughout August, September and the first three weeks of October all other sightings were on the Wet Grassland and Duck Marsh. From then on the Lagoon and Reedbed took over as the most productive sites. November, in fact, was the best month of the year with sightings reported on 16 dates, two birds on several dates and sightings on all four wetland areas. Birds continued to be seen through much of December, the last on 22<sup>nd</sup> on the Lagoon.

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

Prior to this year there had only been one record of this elusive bird - an adult on the Wet Grassland for five days from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2005. This year one again appeared on the Wet Grassland - this time on 25<sup>th</sup> August (JWC/MHa *et al*). The bird was typically hard to find but was recorded most days in the same area up to 2<sup>nd</sup> September. There was one further sighting on 14<sup>th</sup> September (JB).

**Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus* **Resident Breeder**

Standing by the gate in the car park by the river bridge in January and February and scanning the farmland edge will usually produce far more Moorhens than you will see on the wetlands at this time of year. Up to 18 were counted here in January last year but the best this year was 11 on 7<sup>th</sup> January (DC/EC). Three days earlier seven were counted wandering around in the car park. In March Moorhens were recorded in the Manager's Garden on several dates - probably

the same birds that would later nest on Poplar Ponds close by. On 20<sup>th</sup> April a nest at the bottom end of the middle island on the Lagoon was found to contain four eggs (JB/MB) but the first family appeared on Poplar Ponds on 11<sup>th</sup> May - an adult with three chicks (JK). The first family was on the Lagoon on 20<sup>th</sup> May with two chicks (WeBS) and on 28<sup>th</sup> May in the Reedbed with just one chick (DC/EC). The largest family reported - five chicks – was seen on the Lagoon on 1<sup>st</sup> June (PM/BM). Further families appeared on the Duck Marsh and Reedbed in late June and July. These two areas held the most birds throughout the autumn but numbers were, nevertheless, well down on the previous two years. Last year up to 22 were counted at the edge of the farmland near the car park in December but this year, unusually, there were no sightings here in December. Monthly maxima (adults only) are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
14	11	10	5	6	5	7	7	9	10	9	6

**Coot *Fulica atra* Resident Breeder and Winter Visitor**

Numbers have been falling here in recent years and this has been giving cause for concern. However, they did start to rise in the second half of last year with 31 birds in December 2017 the highest for that month since 2010. Coots do not look as though they are built for long migration flights but numbers do visit in winter from continental Europe and some of these may have been winter visitors. Numbers dropped a bit in January this year but a report of 24 on the Lagoon on 11<sup>th</sup> (PM/BM) was, nevertheless, encouraging and the highest January count since 2013. Numbers remained very similar in February and in the next three months, although they dropped somewhat, were very similar to last year. Several pairs again nested successfully and the first family appeared on the Wet Grassland on 20<sup>th</sup> May with two chicks (WeBS). Further families appeared on the Lagoon and Reedbed on 28<sup>th</sup> May (DC/EC). A bird with six chicks on the Lagoon on 5<sup>th</sup> June (PM/BM) was the biggest family reported. On 13<sup>th</sup> June at least four birds could be seen on nests on the Lagoon and one on the Duck Marsh, though there were no subsequent reports of young on the Duck Marsh. Numbers dropped sharply from August onwards with a best count of just six birds in September the lowest for that month since 2001. It was to get worse in October with

a single bird on the Duck Marsh on 13<sup>th</sup> the last sighting until 25<sup>th</sup> November when a bird turned up on the Lagoon. There had in fact been no sightings on the Lagoon from 6<sup>th</sup> September until 25<sup>th</sup> November. There were sightings most days in December, all on the Lagoon, with numbers finally reaching five on 19<sup>th</sup> (DC/EC) and peaking at six on 31<sup>st</sup> (MB). Monthly maxima (adults only) are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
24	22	18	14	14	11	14	14	6	5	1	6

**Common Crane** *Grus grus* **Scarce Visitor**

Seeing two Common Cranes standing on the farmland on 13<sup>th</sup> April was a real surprise for one of our volunteers (JHa). Unfortunately, it was on a day that the Reserve wasn't open to the public. Wild Common Cranes returned to the UK in 1978 after an absence of more than 400 years and together with some subsequent introductions they are starting to become established in parts of the country. But it is still a scarce bird and a new one for the Reserve. On 22<sup>nd</sup> April one was reported circling very high over Poplar Field (PM/BM *et al*).

**Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* **Migrant Breeder**

Birds usually start to arrive in February and have gone by the end of July. The first one arrived on the Lagoon this year a bit earlier on 27<sup>th</sup> January (DC/EC); it was joined by a second the next day and the following day the pair were observed mating. A third bird was present for a time on 10<sup>th</sup> February and on 21<sup>st</sup> February four were on the Wet Grassland. On 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> March five were reported (JWC/JB). Two appeared to be sitting on nests on the middle island on the Lagoon in early April but typically only one pair nested successfully. There were further reports of four and five birds in May. Two chicks made their first appearance on 23<sup>rd</sup> May (DC/EC). The two chicks last year both disappeared two weeks after first being seen and this year's young fared no better. On 6<sup>th</sup> June they vacated the island and were taken onto the farmland by the adults - unfortunately on a day when the farmer was cutting the grass. There are different versions of events but it appears the young were killed by the machinery and were then picked up by patrolling Red Kites. The two adults remained on site

until 30<sup>th</sup> June with a third bird on occasions. There was one further sighting of a single bird in the Yorkshire Water compound on 21<sup>st</sup> July (JWC).

**Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta* **Scarce (Summer) Visitor**

With birds nesting just a few miles away at Astley Lake it was always on the cards that an Avocet would one day turn up at Rodley. Two birds duly did on 27<sup>th</sup> June, spending most of the day on the Duck Marsh and providing excellent views for a lot of birdwatchers (DC/EC *et al*). One of the birds was colour-ringed and further investigation showed it to have been ringed at Seal Sands, Cleveland on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2015. On 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2015 it had been reported on the Blackwater Estuary in Essex and on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2016 at Snettisham in Norfolk. Unfortunately, the birds didn't stay for more than one day though there was a brief sighting of one on the far side of the Lagoon on 2<sup>nd</sup> July (JB).

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

There have been no records in the last two years. A single bird that flew over on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2016 was the first and only record for the Reserve.

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

There had been no records on the Reserve or farmland in the previous eight years but sky watching in the last three months of 2017 did reveal three small groups flying over. This year there were three records. On 21<sup>st</sup> January more than 100 birds were observed taking off from the farmland (JWC). On 28<sup>th</sup> February two were on the Lagoon briefly (JLW). On 15<sup>th</sup> September five flew over the Reserve in a north westerly direction (JWC).

**Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus* **Casual Breeder**

For the second year in succession there were no January sightings. The three years prior to 2016 all produced 100+ birds in January. However, there was a decent count of 60 on the farmland on 2<sup>nd</sup> February (JWC), this proving to be the highest of the year. On 28<sup>th</sup> February between 35 and 40 birds flew over the Reserve and 26 were on the farmland on 4<sup>th</sup> March (JWC). A few pairs have nested on Tim's Field in the past and at least two pairs did last year, so it was encouraging to have one or two birds present in April and May. A

total of 23 were on Tim's Field briefly on 4<sup>th</sup> June (JB) but they didn't stay. Due to wet ground conditions Tim's Field wasn't sown until 6<sup>th</sup> June and there was no cover for nesting birds. However, one pair may have nested on the wetlands as a juvenile was seen on the Wet Grassland on 8<sup>th</sup> July (DC/EC); an adult and juvenile were on the Duck Marsh on 15<sup>th</sup> July; an adult and two juveniles were there on 25<sup>th</sup> July and three juveniles on 28<sup>th</sup> July (DC/EC). Two juveniles were again seen on the Duck Marsh on 6<sup>th</sup> August (JB). There were no sightings after this date for several weeks but a few birds started to pass over the Reserve from 20<sup>th</sup> October with 22 seen on 17<sup>th</sup> November (JWC). On 9<sup>th</sup> December 44 flew over and on 15<sup>th</sup> December 35 in a westerly direction (JWC). Six were on the farmland briefly on 22<sup>nd</sup> (JWC). Maximum counts each month are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
-	60	26	2	9	23	4	2	-	8	22	44

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

It was another poor year for this species with just one record. On 2<sup>nd</sup> June a bird was reported flying in a north easterly direction over the Dragonfly Ponds calling (JWC). Last year there were sightings on three dates between 4<sup>th</sup> April and 13<sup>th</sup> May.

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

There have been no records in the last 11 years. There were just two sightings in 2007.

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

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

**Curlew** *Numenius arquata* **Passage Visitor**

There were just two records of this declining species last year. There were sightings on seven dates this year but most were of birds flying over the Reserve. Two flew over in a northerly direction on 24<sup>th</sup> March and there were further reports of one or two birds flying over on 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> April (JWC). One flew over Mike Fisk Meadow on 27<sup>th</sup> June (DC/EC) and on 17<sup>th</sup> August one was heard on the Wet

Grassland but remained elusive (JB). On 18<sup>th</sup> August eight flew over the farmland, one or two birds possibly landing briefly (PA).

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

There have only been four records of this species on the Reserve, the last on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2016.

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

This species was recorded for the first and only time on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2006 when a single bird was found on the Duck Marsh.

**Knot** *Calidris canutus* **Scarce Visitor**

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

**Dunlin** *Calidris alpina* **Infrequent Visitor**

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

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

Sightings were reported on 11 dates in 2016, nine dates in 2017 and just seven dates this year. One was on the Lagoon on the early date of 24<sup>th</sup> March (DC/EC) and there were further sightings here on 26<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> March. In between, what may have been the same bird was seen on the riverbank on 25<sup>th</sup> March (PA). On 18<sup>th</sup> April two were recorded on the islands on the Lagoon (JP *et al*). On 29<sup>th</sup> June one was seen on the Duck Marsh (JB) and on 29<sup>th</sup> July one was reported near the river bridge (JWC).

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

There was just one record last year - a bird calling on the riverbank by the bridge on 9<sup>th</sup> August. Prior to this there had been no sightings since 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2011. This year was the best yet for this species with sightings spanning the period from 25<sup>th</sup> August to the end of December. A bird on the Wet Grassland on 25<sup>th</sup> August (JWC/MHa) was the first sighting. There were several over the next week with two briefly on the Wet Grassland on 29<sup>th</sup> August before flying off in a southerly direction (JWC). There were no sightings after 2<sup>nd</sup> September until 16<sup>th</sup> September when one was seen on the Reedbed

(RB). From 29<sup>th</sup> September there were sightings most days until 2<sup>nd</sup> December with records from all four main wetland areas and all bar one of just a single bird. On 17<sup>th</sup> November two were on the Wet Grassland (DC/EC). A bird here on 2<sup>nd</sup> December looked like being the last of the year but there were then sightings of a single bird on the Wet Grassland from 22<sup>nd</sup> to the end of the year.

**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.

**Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia* **Infrequent Visitor**

A bird on the Wet Grassland on 25<sup>th</sup> August this year (JWC *et al*) was the first record since 28<sup>th</sup> August 2016. What was almost certainly the same bird was present until 2<sup>nd</sup> September, alternating between the Wet Grassland, Reedbed and Duck Marsh.

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

This species has always been an infrequent visitor to the Reserve but sightings have certainly declined over recent years. There were four records in 2015, none in 2016 and two in 2017. No sightings were reported this year.

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

There was just one record in 2017 and only 10 in the previous five years put together. It is certainly a difficult bird to find on the wetlands. However, this year there were sightings on nine dates, seven of these on the Wet Grassland. Two were seen here on 6<sup>th</sup> January (JWC), one on 7<sup>th</sup> (DC/EC *et al*) and one on 17<sup>th</sup> (DC/EC). Two were reported on the Wet Grassland on 7<sup>th</sup> February (AL) and two on the Duck Marsh the next day (JB). There were two records in March - one on the Duck Marsh on 3<sup>rd</sup> and one on the Wet Grassland on 21<sup>st</sup> (JHar). There were two autumn sightings, both on the Wet Grassland. Two birds were seen here on 14<sup>th</sup> September and one on 30<sup>th</sup> September (JB).

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

There can be good numbers of Snipe on the wetlands in the autumn and winter months and far more are probably present than are ever

seen. The Duck Marsh always produces the most sightings but even here birds can be difficult to pick out in the vegetation. On 12<sup>th</sup> February 23 were accidentally flushed during habitat management work (JB) but the highest count from the Willow Path Hide in the same period was eight (MG/PG) with no more than two most days. Birds were rather easier to spot in the snowy conditions of March with nine seen from the Duck Marsh Hide and five from the Willow Path Hide on 4<sup>th</sup> (PA). On 10<sup>th</sup> March seven were seen on the Duck Marsh and a further 28 flew over and dropped in (JWC). On 24<sup>th</sup> March 14 were counted on the Duck Marsh and a further 20 flew in from the east onto the Reedbed (JWC). As many as 10 were seen over the farmland in the same period. Numbers typically started to tail off in April and there were no sightings after 22<sup>nd</sup> April until 27<sup>th</sup> June when a single bird was found on the Duck Marsh (DW). Summer sightings here are unusual but there were numerous reports in July of one or two birds. On 7<sup>th</sup> July one was seen at the Dragonfly Ponds (JWC). August too was unusually productive with sightings most days and up to five birds on both the Duck Marsh and Wet Grassland. September and October were very disappointing last year but there was a considerable improvement this year with sightings most days and up to six on the Duck Marsh. Birds were seen at the Dragonfly Ponds on three dates in this period. Five were accidentally flushed on the Wet Grassland during habitat management work on 15<sup>th</sup> October (JHa). November and December were a bit disappointing in comparison with no reports of more than three. 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
12 (11)	73 (55)	8 (7)	28 (15)	10 (8)

Maximum monthly counts are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
3	23	35	10	-	1	2	5	6	6	3	2

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

There were five records this year, all in March and early April. On 3<sup>rd</sup> March, in snowy conditions, one flew over from the car park to the river and on the same day one flew from John Ackroyd Meadow onto the Scrubland (JWC). On 5<sup>th</sup> March there was a sighting of a bird in the Reedbed (JB) and on 24<sup>th</sup> March one flew high over the Reserve in a north easterly direction (JWC). One or two are flushed in the Coppice during management work most winters and one was seen here on one of the paths on 30<sup>th</sup> March (JB). On 8<sup>th</sup> April a bird was recorded flying over in an easterly direction (JWC). Disappointingly, there were no records in the last three months of the year despite numerous checks round the Coppice towards dusk.

**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo* **Migrant Breeder**

Last year, unusually, no more than two birds arrived, though they did stay to nest on one of the rafts on the Lagoon, two young fledging successfully. Unfortunately, a third juvenile was killed by Black-headed Gulls. This year the first bird arrived on 21<sup>st</sup> April (RAH). The next day a different, ringed bird was seen on the Lagoon (JWC *et al*). There were no further sightings until 6<sup>th</sup> May when what may have been the same ringed bird was seen on the Lagoon (JWC). A ringed individual was again seen briefly on 13<sup>th</sup> May. There were no further sightings for two weeks when two birds were recorded on the Lagoon on 28<sup>th</sup> May (DC/EC). Sadly, they didn't stay and the rafts remained empty this year. Two were reported again on 7<sup>th</sup> July (DC/EC) and one was seen on 8<sup>th</sup> July (JWC). There were no sightings after this date.

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

This was a new bird for the Reserve in 2011. There have been no sightings since 24<sup>th</sup> May 2015.

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

Numbers are at their highest between October and March. The biggest counts in the early part of the year were on the Lagoon with c250 here on 7<sup>th</sup> January (DC/EC) and several other reports of up to 150 birds. On 3<sup>rd</sup> March, in snowy conditions and the Lagoon partly frozen over, at least 400 were gathered there (JWC). On 18<sup>th</sup> March, again in snowy conditions, 372 were counted on the Lagoon (JWC). The last three figure counts were made on 19<sup>th</sup> March and numbers

then dropped sharply. A few birds remained throughout April and May but there were no nesting attempts this year. One or two juveniles did start to appear from the end of June, one being fed by an adult on the Duck Marsh on 28th (BM). Numbers in July were high for the time of year with up to 71 birds reported including numerous juveniles favouring the Duck Marsh. Numbers dropped back in August and September but typically started to rise in October, reaching 121 on 14<sup>th</sup> (WeBS). Birds increasingly gathered on the farmland from late October with around 100 here on 21<sup>st</sup> November and 2<sup>nd</sup> December. On 26<sup>th</sup> December c150 were on the farmland with a further 100 on the Lagoon (DC/EC). Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
c250	150	400+	11	12	24	71	27	22	121	145	c250

**Little Gull** *Hydrocoloeus minutus* **Scarce Visitor**

An adult bird paid a brief visit to the Lagoon on 7<sup>th</sup> April and was seen by a number of birdwatchers (JWC *et al*). This was a new species for the Reserve this year.

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

There have been no sightings in the last three years. An adult in full winter plumage on the Lagoon on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2015 was the first and only record for the Reserve.

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

Numbers in January were very low with a best count of just 35 on 4<sup>th</sup> (PM/BM) but February numbers were even lower with a best of just six. Snow and ice brought in more birds in March with 137 on the partly frozen Lagoon on 3<sup>rd</sup> (JWC). More snowy conditions on 18<sup>th</sup> produced a count of 125 on the Lagoon (JWC) - these the only three figure reports of the year and the highest ever March counts. April, May and June rarely produce more than the odd sighting with most birds back on their breeding grounds. There was just one sighting in April with five on the farmland on 2<sup>nd</sup>, just a single bird on the Lagoon on 13<sup>th</sup> May and two on Tim's Field on 30<sup>th</sup> June. There were a number of sightings in July but of no more than five birds; August produced no more than two and there were no records at all in September. Numbers would normally start to build in October but

nine on the Lagoon on 15<sup>th</sup> (PM/BM) was the best. There was little improvement in November with 15 on the Lagoon on 6<sup>th</sup> the highest (PM/BM). December produced no more than two birds - by far the lowest ever for that month. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
35	6	137	5	1	2	5	2	-	9	15	2

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

Recorded in all months except January this year, a few birds can often be picked out among the smaller gulls on the Lagoon or farmland. Two immature birds were on the Lagoon on 11<sup>th</sup> February (DC/EC) and between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> March an adult and three immatures were there (JWC). Most records involve less than a handful of birds but three adults and six immatures were on the farmland on 31<sup>st</sup> March (JWC). On 25<sup>th</sup> April an immature bird was seen to take what appeared to be a Moorhen chick from the middle island on the Lagoon (SF). An immature bird was again on the middle island on 29<sup>th</sup> April. Gulls occasionally gather on Tim's Field before the vegetation has grown too much and on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 10 adults and four immatures were counted there (PM/BM). Four adults and two immatures were on the field on 7<sup>th</sup> July (DC/EC). Single birds were regular visitors to the Lagoon from the end of July to the beginning of November with the occasional sighting on the farmland.

**Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* Frequent Visitor**

There were sightings in every month of the year with many reports of birds on the Lagoon. On 7<sup>th</sup> January between 150 and 180 flew over the Reserve in an easterly direction late in the afternoon (PM/JP), presumably heading for their roost site on Eccup Reservoir. This was to be a regular occurrence towards dusk in the winter months. Up to three were seen on the Lagoon in January and as many as six on 3<sup>rd</sup> March (JWC). On 11<sup>th</sup> March a total of 105 were recorded flying over the Reserve in an easterly direction again (JWC). On 2<sup>nd</sup> April 17 were reported on the farmland (JWC). Immature birds were seen regularly and on 6<sup>th</sup> May one was observed taking goose eggs from a nest on the Lagoon (PM/BM). There were fewer records in the last six months of the year but one or two birds continued to visit the Lagoon and small numbers were recorded flying over the Reserve in October

and November. On 26<sup>th</sup> December 15 flew over the Reserve in a westerly direction (JWC).

**Great Black-backed Gull** *Larus marinus* **Infrequent Visitor**

Most records relate to “flyovers” and there were six this year. On 10<sup>th</sup> March five birds flew over in a south easterly direction. The next day a total of 19 flew over in the same direction (JWC). On 31<sup>st</sup> March a single bird was recorded flying over and on 6<sup>th</sup> May three immature birds flew over in a south easterly direction (JWC). There were no further sightings until 25<sup>th</sup> November when an adult and two immatures flew east over the farmland (JWC). On 26<sup>th</sup> December eight flew over, seven of these going west (JWC).

**Iceland Gull** *Larus glaucooides* **Scarce Visitor**

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

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

Almost certainly under recorded, there were just 10 sightings reported this year, all bar one involving no more than two birds. From the amount of noise that could be heard under the river bridge last year birds were almost certainly roosting there if not nesting. However, major work on the bridge this year probably put the birds off and there were just three reports of one or two in this area. On 14<sup>th</sup> March seven in the Manager’s Garden was a bit of a surprise (PM/BM).

**Stock Dove** *Columba oenas* **Resident**

This is a common bird on the Reserve and farmland and most years produce 100+ counts. A flock photographed over the farmland on 24<sup>th</sup> December 2016 was found to contain 293 birds - a Reserve record. Unusually, there were no three figure counts reported this year with the best just 34 on the farmland on 8<sup>th</sup> December (JWC). Birds were daily visitors to the Manager’s Garden throughout the year but most counts were of less than 10. However, 24 were counted here on 27<sup>th</sup> May (JB/MB). Fourteen were recorded under the feeders in the Bee Garden on 9<sup>th</sup> May (PM).

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

Large flocks visit Tim’s Field for seed most winters but numbers reported in the early part of this year were very low with a best count

of just 70 on 3<sup>rd</sup> January (PM/JB). An estimated 200 were on the field at the same time last year. Numbers on the Reserve remained low throughout the autumn but there were two large movements of birds over the Reserve in October. More than 300 were recorded flying over the farmland on 13<sup>th</sup> (PM/BM) and 630 flew over in a southerly direction on 28<sup>th</sup> (JWC). There were some better counts on Tim's Field in December with c150 on 9<sup>th</sup> and c200 on 22<sup>nd</sup> (DC/EC). A few pairs again bred on the Reserve this year.

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

This species was reluctant to spread much onto the Reserve beyond the river bridge or car park prior to 2016. However, since then there have been a number of sightings, particularly on the Willow Path, but it is still far from being a daily visitor. Interestingly, nearly all sightings have tended to be in the period from May to September and it was the same again this year. There were no sightings until 2<sup>nd</sup> May when two were seen on the bridge (DW). There was a further sighting here two days later. On 6<sup>th</sup> May two flew over the Manager's Garden but in July there were sightings on four dates on the Willow Path with one in the Manager's Garden. There were further sightings of a single bird on the Willow Path on 29<sup>th</sup> August and 16<sup>th</sup> September but none subsequently.

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

There were no sightings of this declining migrant in 2015 or 2016 but there were two in 2017. This year there was just one record - a bird seen briefly at the back of the Lagoon on 23<sup>rd</sup> April (JB).

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

A Barn Owl roosted in the thatched gazebo in November and throughout December last year and continued to do so in January this year. Pellets were found in the gazebo on a number of occasions. A bird was seen at the edge of the Coppice near the roadside at 7.00am on 9<sup>th</sup> February and one flew over the River Path on 16<sup>th</sup> March (JB) but there were no further records until 18<sup>th</sup> July when one was reported perched on the Scrubland (AD). Despite some activity at the nest box on the Scrubland in April and May last year there were no subsequent signs of successful nesting. From 28<sup>th</sup> July this year there were numerous reports of a bird on the Scrubland and at the nest box, usually late in the evening but on one occasion at

1.45pm in the afternoon (JWC). On 16<sup>th</sup> August a juvenile did a very short flight from the box at 9.15pm and returned quickly (PM/BM *et al*). From the amount of hissing noise coming from the box at the time it seems likely at least one other juvenile was there. There were further sightings in September and October and on 10<sup>th</sup> October two birds flew out of the box at 6.45pm (PM/BM *et al*). From 14<sup>th</sup> October there were sightings most days but now early in the morning and on occasions two birds were observed returning to the box (DW). Pellets also started to be found in the thatched gazebo again in November, indicating a roosting bird there. In December pellets were also found in Poplar Carr Hide and Mike Sheldon Hide. Sightings continued to the end of the year with two birds on 30<sup>th</sup>.

### **Little Owl *Athene noctua* Resident Breeder**

A pair bred on the Reserve for the first time in 2012. Since 2015 the birds have used a new nest box in the Manager's Garden with some success but in 2017 squirrels took possession raising three young there. One unhatched egg was subsequently found under the squirrels' nest. Birds tend to be more elusive in December and January and last year there were no sightings until 22<sup>nd</sup> February. This year we had to wait until 7<sup>th</sup> March for the first sightings - a bird in the Manager's Garden and possibly the same bird in one of the poplars (JS *et al*). There were regular sightings thereafter, usually in the Manager's Garden. On 28<sup>th</sup> April two birds were seen there, one looking out of the nest box (DC/EC). On 30<sup>th</sup> June a juvenile was reported looking out of the box (PW). From the beginning of July there were regular sightings away from the Manager's Garden. On 5<sup>th</sup> July one was seen on a post near the workshop, getting agitated over the presence of a fox late in the evening (BM). On 17<sup>th</sup> July an adult and juvenile were seen on the old dry stone wall on the farmland (JB) and there were regular sightings in this area thereafter. A bird was also reported on the Scrubland on a number of dates. Activity died down in November and there was just one report of a bird on the Scrubland on 11<sup>th</sup> (PA/AL). One was heard calling in the same area on 2<sup>nd</sup> December and on 29<sup>th</sup> December a bird was seen in trees here (PA/AL).

### **Tawny Owl *Strix aluco* Infrequent Visitor**

Most years produce no more than a handful of records and these usually of birds calling in woodland across the river. Unusually, there were no records at all this year.

### **Swift *Apus apus* Migrant Visitor**

The first birds arrived this year on 22<sup>nd</sup> April, nine days earlier than last year. Several observers reported up to seven birds. There were no further reports until 2<sup>nd</sup> May but there were regular sightings thereafter. Most were of 10 birds or less but on 16<sup>th</sup> June 40+ were recorded flying over in a southerly direction (JWC). On 5<sup>th</sup> July c45 were over the Visitor Centre (PM/BM *et al*). On 15<sup>th</sup> July three were seen near the Swift Nesting Tower in the Reedbed and on 21<sup>st</sup> July at least 20 were circling round and one bird was seen to enter one of the boxes (JWC). Too late for this year but maybe next year? There were no reports of more than six in August and two on 27<sup>th</sup> August (PW *et al*) were the last of the year, some three weeks earlier than last year.

### **Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* Resident Breeder**

Birds were recorded in every month but, like last year, there were far more sightings in the second half of the year. The Kingfisher Pool on the Reedbed was productive in the first few weeks of the year. On 4<sup>th</sup> January a male was observed catching three fish here (PM/BM). Away from the wetlands, on 3<sup>rd</sup> January birds were reported at the Dragonfly Ponds and on the Dipping Ponds (DW). Sightings were few and far between in February and while March produced a few more the Arctic-like conditions probably didn't help. There was an unconfirmed report of a juvenile on 16<sup>th</sup> June. Sightings increased considerably from the beginning of July with many more on the Lagoon, birds often using the "goalposts" at each end of the Sand Martin nesting bank. Two were seen here on 29<sup>th</sup> July (PM/BM). Away from the Lagoon, three birds on the river by the bridge on 12<sup>th</sup> July (JK) probably included at least one juvenile and two juveniles were seen in the Reedbed on 21<sup>st</sup> July (JWC). December proved to be the best month of the year as regards number of sightings. With the river running high and coloured for more than two weeks, Kingfishers found the wetlands much easier places to catch fish. A breakdown of sightings is shown below.

Lagoon	Duck Marsh	Reedbed Inc KFP	Wet Grassland	Dipping Ponds	Other Ponds	River
41	21	28	12	2	4	19

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

Sightings of this species are few and far between with just 11 records in the previous five years. There were two records this year. On 7<sup>th</sup> January one was seen flying over the Scrubland (AL/PA) and on 19<sup>th</sup> September one was seen on the Willow Path (AH).

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

This is a common bird on the Reserve, seen in all months of the year. The birds have a habit of drumming on the metal pylons in the early part of the year and there were several reports of this behavior this year, the first as early as 21<sup>st</sup> January during a WeBS visit. They also have an unfortunate habit of breaking into nest boxes to extract young birds. On 28<sup>th</sup> May a female was observed doing this at one of the boxes on the Willow Path (MG/PG). This was one of 12 boxes that were badly damaged by woodpeckers this year. While classed as a Resident Breeder, nesting most years probably takes place in woodland across the river. However, this year a new nest hole was discovered in an old tree at the edge of the Coppice - close to where most of the damaged nest boxes were located. A juvenile was seen in the Manager's Garden on 10<sup>th</sup> June (DC/EC) and there were several subsequent reports of one here and on the Willow Path. A juvenile was also recorded in the Bee Garden on 22<sup>nd</sup> September; a female was seen here on 17<sup>th</sup> November (DC/EC) and a male on 14<sup>th</sup> December (PM/BM).

**Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus* **Resident Breeder**

The east facing Barn Owl box in the compound was again successful last year, the pair raising three young here. Birds are usually seen at the box from very early in the year and the first bird this year was on 4<sup>th</sup> February (JWC). Both birds were at the box on 17<sup>th</sup> February (DS) and there was activity most days thereafter. On 19<sup>th</sup> April the birds were observed mating on the box (JK) and on 12<sup>th</sup> June an adult was seen feeding a juvenile there (DS). Up to three juveniles were reported over the following two weeks and on 27<sup>th</sup> June four were counted (DC/EC). The juveniles were soon making their first flights

and, typically, dispersed very soon after, though five were seen together on the pylon on the farmland on 7<sup>th</sup> July (JWC). Single birds were recorded over the Reserve throughout August and September but there were just two sightings in October and November. There was more activity again in December with a single bird seen on eight dates.

**Merlin *Falco columbarius* Infrequent (Winter) Visitor**

Like last year, there was just one record this year. On 15<sup>th</sup> March a bird was reported flying low along the Mike Fisk Meadow hedgerow (JB).

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

Following a spate of sightings of this summer visitor in 2015, the next two years were disappointing with sightings on just five dates in 2016 and one date in 2017. This year there was again just one sighting and that was a bird flying high over the Reserve on 19<sup>th</sup> May (JWC).

**Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* Frequent Visitor**

Recorded in every month except June this year, there were, nevertheless, rather fewer sightings than last year when birds were recorded on a record 42 dates. This year a pair nested successfully on the Parkinson Tower of the University of Leeds, successfully fledging three young and, even closer, a bird was regularly to be seen on the tower of St Margaret's Church, Horsforth in the first part of the year. We could, therefore, have hoped for perhaps even more sightings than we had. The year started well with two birds on the pylon on the farmland with white pigeon prey on 1<sup>st</sup> January (JWC). A bird was again seen on the pylon on 10<sup>th</sup> January and two were there on 20<sup>th</sup> January (JWC). The pylon continued to produce sightings but there were some rather closer sightings too. On 2<sup>nd</sup> July a female was recorded on the ground on the farmland no more than 30 yards from the roadside fence (PM) and on 27<sup>th</sup> August what was probably a juvenile was seen on the fence (ABI). On 23<sup>rd</sup> September two birds were on the pylon and one was seen to take a House Martin over the farmland and return with it to the pylon (JWC). One of these birds was reported as having an orange leg ring. September proved to be the busiest month with sightings on five dates. Records in the latter part of the year included two over the farmland on 25<sup>th</sup> November (PC), a juvenile over woodland on the far riverbank on 8<sup>th</sup> December

(AL/PA) and a male hunting over the Wet Grassland on 15<sup>th</sup> December (JWC *et al*). On 29<sup>th</sup> December one was watched hunting over Tim's Field (JWC *et al*).

**Rose-ringed Parakeet** *Psittacula krameri* **Escaped Species or Scarce Visitor from feral population**

While the majority of birds are still in the south east of England the UK breeding range of this species is slowly spreading north. There have been no sightings on the Reserve since 2015. It was first recorded here in 2001 but there were then no further sightings until 2015 when a single bird was seen on six dates.

**Magpie** *Pica pica* **Resident Breeder**

There were only a few double figure counts reported this year but this remains a common bird on the Reserve. A total of 14 on Tim's Field on 24<sup>th</sup> June (JWC) was the highest count reported at any one location. There were no reports of juveniles but several pairs certainly nested again.

**Jay** *Garrulus glandarius* **Resident Breeder**

This is a common bird on the Reserve, recorded in every month but with a surge of activity in September and October when birds cross the Reserve on their acorn and hazelnut forays. Typically, there were several reports of small groups of birds in the spring. Five flew over the Lagoon Hide on 4<sup>th</sup> March (BM); 11 were seen together in the Lagoon area on 8<sup>th</sup> March (JWC) and a group of seven was reported on 14<sup>th</sup> April (MHa). The Willow Path is nearly always productive and there were regular sightings here throughout most of the year. There were no reports of juveniles this year, though a group of four seen upstream of the river bridge during a WeBS visit on 12<sup>th</sup> August may well have been a family party. A count of 12 on 25<sup>th</sup> December included five on the ground on Mike Fisk Meadow (PM/BM).

**Jackdaw** *Corvus monedula* **Resident Breeder**

This is a very successful species and large gatherings of birds can occur at any time of the year. In December 2016 and on several occasions last year 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. At least one bird showing these characteristics

was on the farmland on 3<sup>rd</sup> January (JWC) and one was again seen on 17<sup>th</sup> March (AL). On 13<sup>th</sup> January between 300 and 400 flew out of trees behind the Lagoon towards dusk (PM/JB) and c200 flew over the car park late in the day on 31<sup>st</sup> January (PM/BM). There were numerous reports of between 50 and 100 birds. Large numbers gathered at two roost sites towards dusk in the latter part of the year - behind the Lagoon and in woodland across the river from the Wet Grassland. A tight, noisy flock of more than 100 swooped low past the Reedbed Hide at dusk on 2<sup>nd</sup> December (PM/BM) but actual numbers at the roost site probably totaled several hundred. On 8<sup>th</sup> December more than 200 were on the farmland (JWC) and on 19<sup>th</sup> December a very noisy similar number assembled on a pylon and trees on the far riverbank towards dusk (PM/JB). There were further reports of a single "Nordic Jackdaw" on 15<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> December (JWC).

**Rook** *Corvus frugilegus* **Infrequent Visitor**

Rooks are certainly far from common in this part of the Aire Valley. There were five records last year, four of these "flyovers" involving just one or two birds. This year was probably the best to date with sightings on 13 dates, though most of these were "flyovers" and none involved more than four birds. Single birds were seen on the farmland on just three dates.

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

This is a very common bird on the Reserve with large numbers gathering at roost sites in woodland across the river towards dusk in the winter months. Around 50 were assembled in a small group on the road near the Visitor Centre at 4.30pm on 31<sup>st</sup> January (PM/BM) and, surprisingly, this was the highest number reported in the early part of the year. Up to 40 were counted on Mike Fisk Meadow after cutting in October and at least 50 very noisy birds gathered in two trees on the farmland on 10<sup>th</sup> November (PM/BM).

**Hooded Crow** *Corvus cornix* **Scarce Visitor**

Closely related to the Carrion Crow, this is mainly a bird of North and West Scotland where it replaces that species. It is also a winter visitor from Scandinavia. One was seen briefly over the farmland on 10<sup>th</sup> November but sadly was only seen by one observer (JWC). This is a new species for the Reserve.

**Raven** *Corvus corax* **Scarce Visitor**

A bird flying over the farmland in a north westerly direction at the same time as a Common Buzzard and a Red Kite on 3<sup>rd</sup> June (JWC/SW) was only the second record for the Reserve. The first record was on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2015.

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

Last seen here on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017, there were no sightings at all this year. Numbers visiting the UK vary from year to year and some winters hardly any are seen. It is a pity none arrived in 2018 as we had a bumper harvest of berries waiting for them in the latter part of the year.

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

Each of the years 2014, 2015 and 2016 produced just two records of this bird. 2017 was a bumper year in comparison with sightings on 10 dates. The increase in sightings this year was quite dramatic . Most sightings involved just one or two birds but three were in the car park on 1<sup>st</sup> January (JWC) and there were sightings on six further dates between then and July. However, from 7<sup>th</sup> October birds were reported virtually daily to the end of the year. The Bee Garden was the most productive site with one or two seen regularly at the feeders. There were also a few sightings in the Manager's Garden and a handful on the Willow Path.

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

Birds were daily visitors to the feeders in the Manager's Garden and Bee Garden from the beginning of the year but there were few reports of more than two or three at any one time. The Willow Path is always productive and a count of 15+ here on 4<sup>th</sup> January (PM/BM) was by far the highest. Last year 16 nest boxes were used by Blue Tits, many of these on the Willow Path, but exactly half failed to achieve 100% fledging success with dead chicks or broken eggs in some. This year just nine boxes were used, all young fledging in six of them - see Nest Box Report for full details. An adult and five juveniles were reported on the Willow Path on 15<sup>th</sup> August (MG/PG) but there were no other reports of family parties or indeed mixed feeding parties in the late summer and autumn, which is unusual.

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

Like the Blue Tit, this is a daily visitor to the feeders in the Manager's Garden and Bee Garden throughout the year and it is a regular user of nest boxes round the Reserve. A bird was taking nesting material into the box on the side of the Visitor Centre from 8<sup>th</sup> April and nine eggs were subsequently laid. Visitors were able to enjoy the activity at the box on the television in the Visitor Centre. All nine chicks successfully fledged in the first week of June. Last year Great Tits raised eight young in the same box. On 29<sup>th</sup> May a bird was observed taking food to a nest in the sparrow terrace box on the side of the seed store for the second year running. The last two years have been disappointing with just six nest boxes used in each year. This year seven boxes were used but all young fledged in only four of them with three containing broken egg shells or eggs - see Nest Box Report for full details. Three juveniles were seen in the Manager's Garden on 17<sup>th</sup> June and five on 17<sup>th</sup> July (DC/EC). The Manager's Garden was particularly productive from late June onwards with as many as seven or eight birds at the feeders in July and August - rather more Great Tits in fact than Blue Tits.

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

Last reported on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2013, there have been no sightings of this declining species in the last five years. Breeding Bird Survey results for 1995-2016 show an 81% drop nationally.

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

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

**Skylark** *Alauda arvensis* **Infrequent Visitor**

The song of the Skylark is rapidly becoming a thing of the past and nearly all records these days are of birds flying over. There were sightings on six dates between the beginning of the year and 8<sup>th</sup> April with a rare sighting of three on the ground on the farmland manure heap on 2<sup>nd</sup> April and an equally rare singing bird over the Visitor Centre on the same date (JWC). On 10<sup>th</sup> March five flew over in an easterly direction and the following day a total of nine flew west (JWC). There were no reports after 8<sup>th</sup> April until 29<sup>th</sup> September when one was seen flying over in a southerly direction (JWC) There were sightings of birds flying over on six dates in October, all going

south with seven on one date (JWC). Single birds were seen on five dates in November with two on one date - all flyovers and again mainly going south (JWC).

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

Last year the first bird arrived on the earliest ever date of 5<sup>th</sup> March but snow, ice and bitterly cold winds made it very unlikely we would have an early arrival this year. We had to wait until 25<sup>th</sup> March for the first sighting of a single bird (JWC). A few more started to arrive in the first week of April and the first holes were being excavated in the nesting bank on the Lagoon by 14<sup>th</sup>. By 2<sup>nd</sup> May 40 nesting holes could be seen and by 20<sup>th</sup> May 63. A final count on 26<sup>th</sup> June revealed 88 nesting holes - well down on last year.

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of nest holes</u>
2015	167
2016	186
2017	145
2018	88

The hostile weather conditions in March and a very wet April are thought to have caused many African migrants to stop short in mainland Europe this year but it will be interesting to see what happens next year, given better weather conditions during the migration period.

There were certainly plenty of juveniles from the nests that were constructed. On 29<sup>th</sup> July 26 juveniles were lined up on one of the "goalposts" close to the Lagoon Hide (DC/EC) and there were counts of more than 200 birds over the Reserve late in the evening in August. Numbers started to fall away in the latter part of August and eight over the Willow Path on 12<sup>th</sup> September (DC/EC) were the last of the year, 10 days later than last year.

**Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* **Migrant Breeder**

Four over the Lagoon on 4<sup>th</sup> April (JWC *et al*) were the first of the spring, just three days later than last year. Three birds were on overhead wires by the Visitor Centre on 9<sup>th</sup> April and there were regular sightings thereafter. Around 20 were reported over the Lagoon on 2<sup>nd</sup> May (DC/EC). The dumper truck shed again proved popular for nesting with birds seen flying in and out from early May though there were no reports of juveniles. Late summer counts were disappointing with no observers reporting more than 20 or so birds.

Up to five were recorded on overhead wires by the Visitor Centre in August. A single bird over the farmland on 7<sup>th</sup> October (JWC) was the last of the year, just one day earlier than last year.

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

Three birds over Tim's Field on 22<sup>nd</sup> April (JWC *et al*) were the first of the year, a week earlier than last year. There were a few more spring sightings than last year but numbers were again low with no reports of more than seven birds. One was reported collecting nesting material just outside the workshop on 10<sup>th</sup> June (JWC) but where it planned to nest is unknown. There was just one other June sighting of a single bird and just two records in July of no more than two birds. There were a number of sightings in the last week of August and on 26<sup>th</sup> c30 were over the Wet Grassland (JWC). On 29<sup>th</sup> more than 80 were recorded over the Reserve (JWC). There were more double figure counts in September as birds passed through - 30+ on 8<sup>th</sup> and 50+ on 15<sup>th</sup> (JWC). A count of 80+ hirundines the following day (JWC) were said to be mainly House Martins. On 22<sup>nd</sup> around 30 were seen around the river bridge and Lagoon and on the same date c200 hirundines drifted high over the Reserve feeding, too high to be positively identified (JWC). A single bird over Tim's Field on 30<sup>th</sup> September (JWC) was the last of the year, six days later than last year.

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

The true status of this species at Rodley remains in doubt. There wasn't a single record this year until 23<sup>rd</sup> September. First recorded here on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2014, there were numerous reports in 2015, 2016 and the first half of 2017. There were then no records for several months but two in December, the last on 27<sup>th</sup> December from the Lagoon Hide. A long, quite hard winter may be to blame but we will probably never know for certain. However, this year a bird was finally reported calling briefly near the Lagoon Hide on 23<sup>rd</sup> September (SW), giving some hope for optimism. On 30<sup>th</sup> September one was photographed at the edge of the Wet Grassland from the Reedbed Hide (JWC). On 6<sup>th</sup> October a bird was seen in the Dragonfly Ponds hedgerow (JWC) and from the end of October there were numerous reports, the majority of these at the eastern end of the Wet Grassland. Most sightings were typically brief and fleeting and the explosive song, which can be heard at any time of year, was

hardly ever reported. There were two reported sightings from both the Lagoon Hide and Duck Marsh Hide, a bird being photographed from the former on 9<sup>th</sup> December (DCo).

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

This is a common bird on the Reserve. Small parties of up to six were seen on the Willow Path and in roadside trees by the Lagoon in January and February. This species is an early nester and on 26<sup>th</sup> March a bird was observed pulling spiders webs from the wall of the toilet block for nesting material (BM). One or two birds were regular visitors to the Bee Garden in March and on 16<sup>th</sup> April one was seen collecting spiders webs from the window shutters of the Visitor Centre (PM/BM). There was also a report of a bird collecting feathers on 28<sup>th</sup> April (MHa). The first family party of 10 was seen on the Willow Path on 3<sup>rd</sup> June (MHa) and there were further reports of between five and six in July. The Willow Path continued to be productive with c12 here on 27<sup>th</sup> August (DC/EC). On 16<sup>th</sup> September c20 crossed the road just below the Visitor Centre from the Mike Fisk Meadow hedge (PM/BM). There were numerous reports of up to 10 birds in September and October and 13 were recorded on the Willow Path during a WeBS visit on 11<sup>th</sup> November.

**Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita* **Migrant Breeder**

Overwintering birds are becoming more frequent these days. As many as five were reported in December last year, mainly in the Coppice. There were sightings here this year throughout January with two birds on two dates (JWC). In February two were seen from the river bridge on 24<sup>th</sup> (DC/EC) and one was in the same area the following day with another in the Coppice. It can be difficult to pick out the first of the summer visitors from the overwintering birds but the first singing bird was reported on the River Path on 11<sup>th</sup> March (JWC). There were regular reports of singing birds from that point, the riverbank and Coppice being particularly productive. There were few reports of juveniles but three were recorded on the Willow Path on 1<sup>st</sup> August (MHa). Throughout August and September there were several reports of up to eight birds with as many as four together which could well have been family parties. Single birds were still being seen on several dates in November and in December there were numerous sightings of one or two birds, four of these involving birds showing all

the features of the eastern race known as Siberian Chiffchaff (see below).

### **Siberian Chiffchaff**

*Phylloscopus collybita tristis* **Scarce (Winter) Visitor**

Breeding in coniferous taiga forest from the Ural regions eastwards, these birds winter mainly in India though a few stray to Western Europe annually in autumn. Two birds on Bentley's Path on 2<sup>nd</sup> December included one which showed all the features of Siberian Chiffchaff and which responded to the call being played (JWC). Two on John Ackroyd Meadow on 8<sup>th</sup> December again included a probable Siberian (JWC). There was a report of one the next day behind the thatched gazebo (PC) and on 16<sup>th</sup> December one was reported in bushes from the Willow Path Hide (SW).

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

A bird by the Lagoon Hide on 7<sup>th</sup> April (JWC) was the first of the year, six days later than last year. Two were reported the next day. The Coppice is usually the best place to hear this summer visitor's very distinctive descending song and one or two birds were singing here from the middle of April. Birds were subsequently heard on the riverbank, at the edge of the Scrubland, at the back of the Lagoon and in the vicinity of the Manager's Garden. There were numerous sightings throughout August, most of these in the Coppice and along the Willow Path, though no observers reported juveniles. A bird in full song in the Coppice on 8<sup>th</sup> September (JWC) was the last of the year, more than two weeks earlier than last year. Perhaps a juvenile practicing for next year?

### **Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla* **Migrant Breeder**

A growing number of Blackcaps that breed in central Europe are now coming to our shores to spend the winter instead of going to the Mediterranean and North Africa. Two late sightings of a male in November last year suggested at least one overwintering bird and there was a further sighting on 22<sup>nd</sup> February this year - a male in the Bee Garden (JB). We had to wait until 19<sup>th</sup> March for the next sighting - a male on the Willow Path (JB) which could have been an overwintering bird or an early summer visitor. The first singing male was reported near the car park on 7<sup>th</sup> April (JWC) and there were regular sightings from then with as many as three pairs on the Willow

Path in April. The Coppice and Willow Path were certainly the most productive sites with birds still singing here well into August but singing birds were also recorded on Poplar Carr and along the riverbank. There was just one report of juveniles - a family party in trees by the compound on 29<sup>th</sup> August (MHa). There were again two late records indicating overwintering birds - a female on the River Path on 25<sup>th</sup> November (MHa) and a male in the Manager's Garden on 9<sup>th</sup> December (CA).

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

Roadside trees by the Lagoon have been a favourite place for this species in recent years, particularly so when they first arrive in late April and May. It was the same again this year - the first sighting being reported on 5<sup>th</sup> May (JWC), six days later than last year. There were several further records of one or two birds in the same area throughout May. Last year there were just two records after the end of May and it wasn't a lot better this year. There were no reported sightings in June but on 8<sup>th</sup> July one was seen flying from the Lagoon to the Coppice with food (JWC). There were further sightings of a bird in the Coppice on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> July and on 4<sup>th</sup> August (JWC). The last sighting of the year was on 12<sup>th</sup> August (MHa) - a single bird near the Lagoon - a month later than last year.

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

2016 and 2017 both produced records on just five dates. This year was very similar with records on six dates. Two birds were seen from the Willow Path Hide on 21<sup>st</sup> April and the next day one was reported in the Lagoon area (JWC). Three of the other records came from around the bridge/car park on 28<sup>th</sup> April, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> May - all single birds (JWC). On 19<sup>th</sup> May one was seen in nettles near the Fish Pass (JKi).

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

A bird near the Mammal Tower on the entry road on 21<sup>st</sup> April (JWC *et al*) was the first of the spring - two days later than last year. The large bramble patch across the road from the Lagoon Hide is always popular and the first bird was seen here the next day (MG/PG *et al*). One was seen near the Dragonfly Ponds the same day (JWC). By 5<sup>th</sup> May at least six singing males were on territory but, like last year, numbers were a bit disappointing compared to the estimated 15 to 20

pairs of previous years. Successful nesting certainly took place and on 23<sup>rd</sup> June two adults were reported feeding at least three juveniles on John Ackroyd Meadow (MHa). The next day seven singing males were counted round the Reserve (LJ). There were several further reports of juveniles. There were just two records in September, the last on 26<sup>th</sup> - a bird in a large bramble patch on Poplar Field (JB) - more than two weeks later than last year.

**Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella naevia* **Migrant Breeder**

It was another disappointing year for this elusive bird. Last year there were records on just three dates and this year on only two dates. On 27<sup>th</sup> April one was seen and heard at the edge of the Dragonfly Ponds (PU/JB) and on 26<sup>th</sup> July one was seen in reeds close to the Sand Martin Bank (JB).

**Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*  
**Migrant Breeder**

A single bird on the Wet Grassland on 21<sup>st</sup> April (JWC) was the first of the year - five days later than last year. The following day there were sightings on both the Wet Grassland and Duck Marsh. Birds almost certainly nested on all four main wetland areas with at least one pair in the marsh area at the Dragonfly Ponds but numbers, like last year, were a bit disappointing and it was almost certainly less numerous than its cousin the Reed Warbler. Three juveniles were reported at the Dragonfly Ponds on 1<sup>st</sup> August (MHa) and an adult was seen feeding a juvenile in the Lagoon margins on 15<sup>th</sup> August (MHa). The last record of the year, a single juvenile, was on the Wet Grassland on 26<sup>th</sup> August (JWC) - eight days earlier than last year.

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

It was another good year for this summer visitor and, like last year, it was almost certainly more numerous than the Sedge Warbler, which wasn't always the case here. A single bird in the Reedbed on 21<sup>st</sup> April (JWC) was the first of the year, just four days later than last year. There were no further sightings until 28<sup>th</sup> April when one was recorded on the Duck Marsh (JWC). The Wet Grassland and Reedbed proved to be the most productive areas. Birds were also seen on the Duck Marsh and while none were reported on the Lagoon they were almost certainly present here too in the reedy margins. There was one record of a bird at the Dragonfly Ponds

during a WeBS visit on 15<sup>th</sup> July but it seems unlikely nesting occurred here this year. Like last year, there were no reports of juveniles but there is no reason to believe several pairs did not nest successfully. A single bird on the Wet Grassland on 8<sup>th</sup> September (JWC) was the last of the year - eight days earlier than last year.

**Firecrest** *Regulus ignicapillus* **Scarce Visitor**

A bird picked out among the Goldcrests in the Coppice on 17<sup>th</sup> December last year was the first ever record for the Reserve. There were further sightings on several dates to the end of the year. What was probably the same bird was seen this year in the same area on 1<sup>st</sup> January (SW/JWC *et al*) and on seven further dates up to 4<sup>th</sup> February. There were no further sightings until 28<sup>th</sup> February when one was reported on the riverbank by the bridge (JH). There was also an unconfirmed report of one on the River Path on 21<sup>st</sup> March.

**Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus* **Frequent (Winter) Visitor**

Breeding mainly in coniferous woodland, Goldcrests are very much winter visitors here at Rodley. Last year was possibly the best ever for this tiny bird here with up to six seen in the Coppice in the last three months. This year birds were seen throughout January in the same area with four on 7<sup>th</sup> (PA/AL), four again on 14<sup>th</sup> and five on 20<sup>th</sup> (JWC). One or two continued to be reported throughout February and March with rather fewer sightings in the Coppice and many more around the river bridge and River Path. Three birds were seen near the bridge on 3<sup>rd</sup> March (JWC). A single bird in the same area on 4<sup>th</sup> April was the last of the spring (JWC). Summer sightings are rare here but one was reported in the Coppice on 17<sup>th</sup> June (JB). The first bird of the autumn was seen near the bridge on 8<sup>th</sup> September (JWC). From 29<sup>th</sup> September there were regular reports with six in the Coppice including four birds together on 28<sup>th</sup> October (JWC). Rather unusually, there were no reports from the Coppice or Willow Path after this date. In November there were several sightings of up to three birds in trees near the bridge and in December birds were reported on John Ackroyd Meadow, at the Dragonfly Ponds and in roadside bushes.

**Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes* **Resident Breeder**

Recorded in every habitat, this is a common bird on the Reserve. They have nested in the Manager's Garden Hide in the past and this

year a pair chose to nest in the new extension there, resulting in its closure for several days in April. Three chicks subsequently fledged successfully and these were seen in the Manager's Garden on 10<sup>th</sup> June (DC/EC). An adult and two juveniles were seen there on 23<sup>rd</sup> June (DC/EC). An adult and one juvenile were also reported in the Bee Garden on 15<sup>th</sup> September (DC/EC). One pair built a beautiful domed nest in a tit nest box near the Reedbed Hide and all young appeared to fledge successfully (Box no.17).

**Nuthatch** *Sitta europaea* **Scarce Visitor**

This is a very occasional visitor to the Reserve and there had been no sightings since 2012. This year one was photographed on the path to the Manager's Garden on 11<sup>th</sup> April (SS). There were no other records.

**Treecreeper** *Certhia familiaris* **Casual breeder**

There were just three sightings reported last year but there was a significant improvement this year with sightings on 22 dates. The area around the river bridge has been the most productive site in recent years but it was nice to get a good number of records on the Willow Path this year, the first on 20<sup>th</sup> January with two birds (JWC). Alders near the river bridge provided several sightings in February with four birds reported here on 18<sup>th</sup> (MHa). On 4<sup>th</sup> March two were on the River Path (PA) and on 11<sup>th</sup> March two were seen in bushes from the Duck Marsh Hide (KP). There were no further records until 8<sup>th</sup> August when a bird was seen on the Willow Path and there were a number of sightings here subsequently. On 19<sup>th</sup> December there was a rare sighting in the Manager's Garden (DC/EC) and there were further sightings on the Willow Path on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> December (JWC).

**Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris* **Casual Breeder**

Just a few years ago large flocks could be seen on the farmland in the winter and spring but recent years have seen a marked decline. Apart from one good spring count numbers this year were again disappointing. Up to 50 were on the farmland in January but numbers in February and March were rather lower. Around 300 were reported on the farmland on 2<sup>nd</sup> April (JWC) but there were no subsequent counts of more than 40 and usually far fewer. There were only a handful of records in the last three months of the year but there was a

report of 300+ flying over the Reserve in a north westerly direction on 28<sup>th</sup> October (JWC).

**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 last year. Two were seen flying over on 6<sup>th</sup> May before dropping down somewhere to the east of the Reserve and on 4<sup>th</sup> November last year one was photographed on Mike Fisk Meadow. There were no records this year.

**Blackbird** *Turdus merula* **Resident Breeder and Winter Visitor**

Numbers in the early part of the year were almost certainly enhanced by an influx of winter visitors from the continent. There were several double figure counts in January and February. Numbers then started to fall away, as was to be expected, but 15 were, nevertheless, counted during a WeBS visit on 20<sup>th</sup> May. The hedgerows and Coppice provide ideal nesting sites but there was only one report of successful nesting - an adult and juvenile in the Bee Garden on 17<sup>th</sup> June. Numbers typically started to build again in November as winter visitors arrived but there were rather fewer than in the same period last year.

**Fieldfare** *Turdus pilaris* **Winter Visitor**

Birds were seen on the farmland most days in January with usually just 20 to 40 present. However, there was one very big count of 300+ there on 21<sup>st</sup> (JWC). February produced a best count of just 40 but c80 were on the farmland on 17<sup>th</sup> March (JWC). Just a handful of birds were seen subsequently and a total of 50 flying over in a north easterly direction on 2<sup>nd</sup> April (JWC) was the last sighting of the spring. A single bird flying over on 13<sup>th</sup> October (JWC) was the first of the autumn but the first flocks started to pass over the Reserve from 17<sup>th</sup> with a total of 150 on that date, 240 on 20<sup>th</sup> and 80 on 28<sup>th</sup> (JWC *et al*). Smaller numbers were reported on several dates in November with 60+ the highest on 11<sup>th</sup> but very few dropped onto the Reserve. In December 33 flew over on 9<sup>th</sup> but there were then just four reports of single birds with two on one occasion on the farmland.

### **Redwing** *Turdus iliacus* **Winter Visitor**

Small numbers were to be found on the farmland most days in January but the best count was just 20. There were fewer records in February but 50 were counted in the Poplars on 18<sup>th</sup> (MHa). Numbers were low in March with 21 flying from the Coppice on 10<sup>th</sup> the highest (JWC). Most reports were of less than a handful of birds. A single bird on the Willow Path on 15<sup>th</sup> April was the last of the spring. The first birds of the autumn arrived on 5<sup>th</sup> October - c20 flying onto Mike Fisk Meadow (JB). There was a large movement of birds over the Reserve during the next two weeks with a total of 470 birds flying west on 7<sup>th</sup>, 170 on 13<sup>th</sup> and 580 on 17<sup>th</sup> flying south/south west (JWC). Further flocks of up to 60 flew over in the next two to three weeks with c100 on 10<sup>th</sup> November (JWC). A few birds did drop in. Eight were in trees in the Manager's Garden on 3<sup>rd</sup> November (DC/EC) and one or two were seen in the Bee Garden or feeding on cotoneaster berries outside the Visitor Centre on a number of dates. Around 30 birds were on the farmland on 30<sup>th</sup> December (JWC) but most reports were of no more than a handful.

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

There were sightings of single birds on a number of occasions in January and two were singing in the Coppice on 28<sup>th</sup> January (PM/BM). As many as seven were seen here on 5<sup>th</sup> February (JB) and three were on John Ackroyd Meadow on 9<sup>th</sup> February (JB). Four were recorded in the Coppice during a WeBS visit on 18<sup>th</sup> February. In March and April birds were singing on the riverbank, on the Butterfly Bank, on the Scrubland, along the entry road and in the Coppice. A total of 12 were seen or heard during a WeBS visit on 15<sup>th</sup> April. One was still singing in riverside trees behind the Lagoon as late as 29<sup>th</sup> July (PM/BM). Sightings typically tailed off from the end of July; there were none in August, one in September and none in October. On 11<sup>th</sup> November a bird was seen in the Bee Garden (DC/EC) and on 14<sup>th</sup> November three were seen on the River Path (AL *et al*). During habitat management work at the eastern end of the Wet Grassland towards the end of November three nests were found, one containing a dead chick - not perhaps the nesting habitat one would have expected for this species. Activity invariably increases in December and it was the same again this year with a number of sightings from 12<sup>th</sup> in the Bee Garden and around the Visitor Centre, on John Ackroyd Meadow and Mike Fisk Meadow.

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

It was a very similar year to last year with exactly half of all records coming in the first three months - a pattern which has occurred in each of the previous three years. Most sightings were on the farmland and involved between two and three birds. On 10<sup>th</sup> January five were on the farmland (DC/EC) - this one of the best counts of the year. There were just a handful of sightings of single birds in April, none in May, just three in June and one in July. On 8<sup>th</sup> August six were recorded flying over in a westerly direction (JWC). The last four months of the year produced just seven records, four of these involving "flyovers" and of no more than four birds.

**Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata* **Passage Visitor**

Like last year there were sightings on just six dates this year, all involving single birds. Three of these came in June. On 6<sup>th</sup> one was seen on the River Path (ABI), on 26<sup>th</sup> on overhead wires near the Visitor Centre (DS) and on 28<sup>th</sup> on the same wires (DS *et al*). There were no further sightings until 15<sup>th</sup> August when one was seen at the western edge of the Coppice (JWC). On 25<sup>th</sup> August there was a further sighting in the Coppice, this time at the eastern end (JWC *et al*). This latter area also produced the last record of the year on 1<sup>st</sup> September (MHa).

**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. On the Willow Path birds were much more numerous in the first three months of the year than at any other time and one wonders if some of these may have been winter visitors. While British Robins are largely sedentary, we know that our resident birds are joined by immigrants from Scandinavia and continental Europe. No nest boxes have been used for the last three years but there is no shortage of natural sites now and the first two juveniles were seen in the Manager's Garden on 23<sup>rd</sup> May (DC/EC). A juvenile was also seen on John Ackroyd Meadow on 10<sup>th</sup> June (DC/EC). Single juveniles were reported on several dates between 15<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> August.

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

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

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

Though still an infrequent summer visitor there have now been records in each of the last four years, but this year on just one date. On 25<sup>th</sup> August two birds were seen on the path between Tim's Field and the Coppice (JWC/MHa).

**Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra* **Passage Visitor**

Birds can turn up in spring or early autumn on passage but there have been very few spring records in recent years. Last year there were sightings on four dates between 2<sup>nd</sup> September and 1<sup>st</sup> October. This year there was one spring sighting on 13<sup>th</sup> May - a bird on the farmland fence (JWC/PC *et al*). There were just two autumn records. On 11<sup>th</sup> August a juvenile was seen on the farmland manure heap (DC/EC *et al*) and on 8<sup>th</sup> September a bird was reported on Tim's Field (JWC).

**Stonechat** *Saxicola torquata* **Passage Visitor**

A few birds pass through the Reserve in September and early October most years and Tim's Field is usually a good place to find any that drop in, which was the case last year. Sadly, these months were disappointing this year with just one record. However, there were sightings on two other dates, one of these on the very early date of 28<sup>th</sup> February - a male in the snow on Tim's Field (JLW). There was one September record on 22<sup>nd</sup> - a bird seen on the roadside fence (JWC). There were then several reports of what was almost certainly the same male bird on 3<sup>rd</sup> November on the roadside fence and on Tim's Field (JWC *et al*).

**Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe* **Passage Visitor**

Just like last year, there were spring records on three dates this year, but all on the farmland. On 4<sup>th</sup> April a male and female were reported (JWC *et al*). On 8<sup>th</sup> April a female was seen in the same area (DC/EC *et al*) and on 29<sup>th</sup> April there was a further sighting of a female (JWC *et al*). On 15<sup>th</sup> August a bird was again seen on the farmland (JWC *et al*).

**Dipper** *Cinclus cinclus* **Infrequent Visitor**

After a spate of records in 2013, sightings have tailed off in the last four years and last year there was just one confirmed sighting on the river near the weir on 4<sup>th</sup> December. The fast flowing water downstream of the weir always looks ideal Dipper territory and one was seen here on 2<sup>nd</sup> July this year (MA) but this was the only record.

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

A few birds can usually be found in bushes by the main gates on the canal bank but they rarely venture far onto the Reserve. There was just one record this year - a male seen from the Mike Sheldon Hide on 23<sup>rd</sup> June (JWC).

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

This species can disappear for months on end and then suddenly reappear again. Recent years have been disappointing with sightings on just eight dates last year, five of these “flyovers”. There were sightings on thirteen dates this year but only one in the first seven months - a bird in the Bee Garden on 22<sup>nd</sup> February (JB). There were no further sightings until 25<sup>th</sup> August when two were reported flying over the Coppice (JWC). Two birds were in the Bee Garden on 4<sup>th</sup> September (JB) and one and two were reported flying over on 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> September (JCW). There were a number of sightings in October and early November with one or two birds seen at the feeders in the Bee Garden on several dates between 27<sup>th</sup> October and 7<sup>th</sup> November. Two in trees near the Manager’s Garden on 11<sup>th</sup> November (JB) were the last of the year.

**Dunnock** *Prunella modularis* **Resident Breeder**

This is a very common bird on the Reserve. The laid hedges provide good dense nesting habitat but the Bee Garden and Manager’s Garden, where birds are daily visitors for seed, are the easiest place to see them. Up to six were reported under the feeders in the Bee Garden in February and a total of 19 were counted round the Reserve during a WeBS visit on 18<sup>th</sup> February. A similar visit on 19<sup>th</sup> March produced 16. In April up to six were counted in the Manager’s Garden. Rather surprisingly, numbers reported in the latter part of the year were rather lower but this may be more down to the species secretive nature rather than to a lack of birds.

**Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* **Infrequent (Summer) Visitor**

There were no sightings last year and just one “flyover” this year. On 25<sup>th</sup> July one flew over the Visitor Centre in an easterly direction (JWC).

**Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea* **Casual Breeder**

The large manure heap at the edge of the farmland is a good place to look for this species and there were sightings here most days from 1<sup>st</sup> January to the beginning of April. Two were seen here on 2<sup>nd</sup> April and there were several sightings of two birds thereafter, the compound being a productive site. A juvenile was reported here on 25<sup>th</sup> August (JWC). Water levels were dropped on the Wet Grassland in September for maintenance work and from the middle of that month the majority of sightings were in this area.

**Pied Wagtail** *Motacilla alba* **Casual Breeder**

Like its cousin the Grey Wagtail, this species is usually best looked for on the farmland manure heap. There were regular sightings of one or two birds here from the beginning of the year to the middle of May. Like last year, sightings dried up in June; there was just one in July, none in August and none in September until 22<sup>nd</sup> when two were seen in the compound (JWC). The absence of a manure heap on the farmland in the autumn probably didn't help and most sightings were of birds flying over but three were seen in the compound on 7<sup>th</sup> October (JWC). Two were reported in or near the compound in November and one or two birds were again seen here in the early part of December. Birds have nested in the compound in the past but there were again no reports of juveniles this year.

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

Black and white wagtails seen in March and April are always worth checking because the Continental White Wagtail can and does turn up on occasions. There were no sightings last year but there were two in April this year. On 25<sup>th</sup> April one was on the freshly ploughed Tim's Field (PA/AH) and on 28<sup>th</sup> one was reported on the manure heap on the farmland (JWC).

**Meadow Pipit** *Anthus pratensis* **Passage Visitor**

A single bird was on the farmland on 1<sup>st</sup> January (SW) and one was reported flying over on 20<sup>th</sup> January but there were no further sightings until 28<sup>th</sup> February. There were numerous sightings in March with a total of 17 flying over on 10<sup>th</sup>, mainly going east (JWC). On 17<sup>th</sup> March 18 were reported flying east with 16 on Mike Fisk Meadow (JWC *et al*). On 19<sup>th</sup> March six were on the farmland manure heap and three were there on 1<sup>st</sup> April (JWC). On 2<sup>nd</sup> April a total of 339 birds passed through with 30 to 40 landing on the grass outside the Visitor Centre with another 32 on the farmland manure heap (JWC) - an exceptional count for the Reserve. One or two birds continued to be seen up until 15<sup>th</sup> April. There were no further sightings until 8<sup>th</sup> September when a single bird flew over in a south easterly direction (JWC). Eight were recorded going in the same direction on 15<sup>th</sup> September, 25 on 22<sup>nd</sup> and a total of 12 on 29<sup>th</sup> (JWC). One or two birds continued to be reported up to 21<sup>st</sup> October. There were no sightings in November but a single bird was seen on three dates in December on the farmland and Tim's Field.

**Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis* **Scarce Visitor**

Two birds on Tim's Field on 29<sup>th</sup> August were only the third ever record for the Reserve (JWC). There was a "possible" sighting in 2003 and a confirmed sighting in 2012.

**Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs* **Frequent Visitor**

During the winter months our Chaffinch population is swelled by the arrival of birds from elsewhere in Europe. This was very evident from late November and through December last year when up to forty birds were reported on and around Tim's Field. Ten were seen in the Mike Fisk Meadow hedgerow on 1<sup>st</sup> January this year (PM/BM) and on 21<sup>st</sup> January 21 were counted during a WeBS visit. On 10<sup>th</sup> February at least 15 were observed flying from the edge of the Coppice onto Tim's Field for seed (JWC). Numbers fell away somewhat thereafter, as was to be expected since for most of the year this species is only present in very low numbers. The Manager's Garden is usually the most productive site. One or two could be seen here daily but six on 18<sup>th</sup> March (PM/BM) was a good count and the highest of the spring. Last year there were no sightings after 6<sup>th</sup> May until 2<sup>nd</sup> July and it was a similar pattern this year with no sightings after 22<sup>nd</sup> April until 17<sup>th</sup> June. No more than two birds were seen at

the feeders in the Manager's Garden from then and throughout July. There was just one report of juveniles - a female with two on 19<sup>th</sup> August (DC/EC). Up to four birds were seen at the feeders from early September and on 19<sup>th</sup> September a total of 19 were counted flying over the Reserve (JWC). A few more started to be seen in November and six were reported by the thatched gazebo on 18<sup>th</sup> JWC). Up to 10 were on Tim's Field in December and one or two started to visit the feeders in the Bee Garden.

**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. This year there were sightings on three dates. On 14<sup>th</sup> March a female was seen in the Manager's Garden (DC/EC *et al*). On 21<sup>st</sup> October a bird flew over the Wet Grassland in a westerly direction (JWC) and on 1<sup>st</sup> December one flew from the Dragonfly Ponds onto Tim's Field (JWC).

**Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* **Resident Breeder**

This a common bird on the Reserve and it can easily be seen at the feeders in the Manager's Garden and Bee Garden throughout much of the year. Numbers in the early part of the year, however, were a bit down on last year with no more than three reported in both gardens. The first two juveniles were seen on Poplar Carr on 7<sup>th</sup> July (MG/PG). This is now proving quite a reliable place for sightings. On 22<sup>nd</sup> July a male and four juveniles were seen on the Willow Path (DC/EC). Birds always become less visible for a time during their post breeding moult but to have no sightings at all from 20<sup>th</sup> August to 6<sup>th</sup> October was somewhat unusual. There were no sightings at the feeders in the Bee Garden from 12<sup>th</sup> August to 6<sup>th</sup> November. The best counts of the year were from late November onwards. Three males were on Poplar Carr on 25<sup>th</sup> November and 2<sup>nd</sup> December (DC/EC); five males and two females were reported on the Willow Path on 8<sup>th</sup> December (JWC); five males were seen in the Bee Garden on 15<sup>th</sup> December (DC/EC) and four males visited the feeders in the Manager's Garden on 16<sup>th</sup> December (DC/EC).

**Greenfinch** *Chloris chloris* **Resident Breeder**

This species has been very badly affected by outbreaks of the disease trichomonosis in recent years. The population is still

fluctuating due to periodic outbreaks of the disease. Numbers at the feeders in the Manager's Garden and Bee Garden were again very low in the early part of the year with no more than two reported at both sites up to the end of April. A total of 15 were counted round the Reserve during a visit on 20<sup>th</sup> May and there were reports of up to four at the Bee Garden feeders on two dates in May but numbers otherwise failed to increase until August. Up to six visited the Bee Garden feeders during that month and three juveniles were reported there on 16<sup>th</sup> August (PM/BM). Nine were counted at the feeders in the Manager's Garden on 2<sup>nd</sup> September, eight on 15<sup>th</sup> September (DC/EC) and seven at the Bee Garden feeders on 4<sup>th</sup> September (JB) - these the best counts of the month. Sightings in the Manager's Garden were surprisingly few in the last three months of the year and the majority of records came from the Bee Garden where birds were seen most days with up to six reported.

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

This species breeds on treeless moors and bare coastal heaths, many moving to the coast for the winter. There were no sightings this year. Last year there were two sightings of a single bird on 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> November, in each case associating with Linnets. Prior to last year there had been just two records - in 2000 and 2003.

**Linnet** *Carduelis cannabina* **Casual Breeder**

Tim's Field provides a wonderful source of seed in the autumn and winter months for this lover of seed-rich habitats. For the rest of the year Linnets are largely absent, though one or two pairs have stayed to nest on occasions. Numbers fluctuate from day to day but each year produces three figure counts and a report of 155 on 10<sup>th</sup> December last year was the highest of the year - almost the same as the previous year's best. This year was to prove a bit of a disappointment. Flocks were on Tim's throughout the first four months of the year but the best count in January and February was just 70 in trees at the edge of the field on 23<sup>rd</sup> February (PM). Numbers reached no more than 40 in March but in April, despite the field being ploughed on 23<sup>rd</sup>, there was a count of c90 on 28<sup>th</sup> (JB). The last few birds had gone by the first week in May. Due to very wet ground conditions seed sowing didn't take place until 6<sup>th</sup> June and this was followed by several weeks of very dry weather which resulted in poor seed germination. A further sowing was done but the

Fodder Radish crop was still in flower well into the autumn. The first few birds arrived in the last week of August but in the absence of a decent seed source numbers had only reached 23 by the first week in November. There was some improvement in December with more seed available but the best counts were of no more than 35 to 40 birds.

**Lesser Redpoll** *Carduelis cabaret* **Passage and Winter Visitor**

There were rather more records than last year, though a number of these were “flyovers”. There were just three sightings in the first part of the year, single birds flying over on 1<sup>st</sup> January, 25<sup>th</sup> March and 15<sup>th</sup> April. The first bird of the autumn was seen flying over the Coppice calling on 22<sup>nd</sup> September (JWC) and there were numerous sightings from then through October and November and into December. Many involved single birds but five were recorded in trees near the Dragonfly Ponds on 20<sup>th</sup> October; 12 flew over the Coppice on 31<sup>st</sup> October; nine were in roadside alders by the Lagoon on 4<sup>th</sup> November and six flew over the Coppice on 11<sup>th</sup> November (JWC). The alders are always worth checking at this time of year and a few birds were seen here on several dates subsequently. This species rarely turns up in the Manager’s Garden but three were seen here on 25<sup>th</sup> November (MG/PG). Thirteen flew over the Visitor Centre in a westerly direction on 1<sup>st</sup> December (JWC).

**Crossbill** *Loxia curvirostra* **Scarce Visitor**

This was a new bird for the Reserve this year, though sadly just as a “flyover”. Eight flew over the River Path calling on 29<sup>th</sup> September in a southerly direction (JWC). On 17<sup>th</sup> October nine flew over in a south westerly direction with Redwings (JWC). Again the birds were calling.

**Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis* **Resident Breeder**

Goldfinches visit the feeders in the Bee Garden throughout the year but are usually infrequent visitors to the Manager’s Garden for some reason. There were a few reports from the Manager’s Garden this year with up to 12 seen in January but sightings are invariably in the trees rather than at the feeders there. There is a good variety of natural seed on site for these birds. On 7<sup>th</sup> June seven were recorded feeding on Cow Parsley at the side of the road (BM). Numbers built up considerably towards the end of July with plenty of young birds on the wing and seed on Mike Fisk Meadow is always popular at this

time of year. A flock of at least 40 was reported feeding here on 29<sup>th</sup> July (PM/BM) but this considerably lower than the estimated 200+ on 26<sup>th</sup> July last year. Numbers at the feeders in the Bee Garden increased in August and September with up to 17 reported including many juveniles. A count of c45 in a Silver Birch by the Manager's Garden on 1<sup>st</sup> December (JWC) was the highest number recorded this year. On 22<sup>nd</sup> December 18 were counted visiting roadside alders for seed (JWC).

### **Siskin** *Carduelis spinus* **Passage and Winter Visitor**

Roadside alders by the Lagoon are always worth checking in the winter months when birds can easily be picked out feeding on the seeds. There were plenty of records this year though quite a number were "flyovers" and there were only two sightings in the first part of the year. Six flew over the Visitor Centre and Manager's Garden on 13<sup>th</sup> January (JWC) and two were in roadside alders on the rather late date of 27<sup>th</sup> April (JB). A bird flying over on 22<sup>nd</sup> July (JWC) was even more unseasonal. Autumn passage started on 8<sup>th</sup> September and there were regular sightings thereafter. Among the larger counts, c15 flew over in a southerly direction on 8<sup>th</sup> September; c40 flew over the River Path on 22<sup>nd</sup> September and 23 flew over Tim's Field on 29<sup>th</sup> September (JWC). On 30<sup>th</sup> September 12 landed in trees on the Scrubland and 18 flew over in a westerly direction on 7<sup>th</sup> October (JWC). In November and December there were numerous reports of birds in the roadside alders, the highest count being 16 on 17<sup>th</sup> November (JWC). Away from the alders, on 25<sup>th</sup> November eight were recorded on the Scrubland (MG/PG).

### **Yellowhammer** *Emberiza citronella* **Scarce Visitor**

There were three records last year but these were the first since 15<sup>th</sup> March 2015 and this remains a very scarce bird in the area. There was just one record this year - a bird photographed on the path to the Manager's Garden on 6<sup>th</sup> June (SS).

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

This is a common bird on the Reserve. Breeding on the wetlands, this species is, nevertheless, a daily visitor to the feeders in the Manager's Garden and Bee Garden for a large part of the year. Up to seven were reported at the feeders in the Manager's Garden in the first four months of the year and up to three in the Bee Garden. The

reedy eastern end of the Wet Grassland is always popular and the first singing bird was reported here on 23<sup>rd</sup> February (PM). Numbers at the feeders dropped somewhat in May as birds got down to nesting but a few still visited daily. As usual, there were a number of sightings at the Dragonfly Ponds where at least one pair almost certainly nested again in the reedy area. There were no sightings in the Manager's Garden between 19<sup>th</sup> August and 30<sup>th</sup> October with birds going through their post breeding moult and even on the wetlands there were few sightings reported. However, seven were seen on Tim's Field on 30<sup>th</sup> September (JWC). Like last year, numbers at the feeders remained low throughout the autumn and early winter with no more than four reported but there was one good total count of around 30 on 1<sup>st</sup> December on the Wet Grassland, Tim's Field and Scrubland (JWC).

## **ESCAPED SPECIES**

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

There have been no sightings in the last two years. First recorded in September 2013, a bird spent several spells on the wetlands. In 2016 two arrived on 17<sup>th</sup> January, staying on the Reserve until 5<sup>th</sup> 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 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2016.

### **Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus* Escaped Species**

One was on the Lagoon on 8<sup>th</sup> April this year and was later seen flying over the Reserve (MHa *et al*). One was previously recorded on the Reserve in 2009, 2010 and 2011.

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

Recorded for the first time in 2016, a male was seen on the Lagoon during an early morning WeBS count on 18<sup>th</sup> December that year. There was again one sighting in 2017 - a male on the Lagoon on 19<sup>th</sup> March. There were no records this year.

### **Zebra Finch *Taeniopygia guttata* Escaped Species**

One flew over the Visitor Centre on 5<sup>th</sup> August, landing briefly on the radio mast. (JWC).

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

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

**FIRST AND LAST DATES FOR WINTER VISITORS**  
**2018**

<b>SPECIES</b>	<b>LAST</b>	<b>FIRST</b>
Whooper Swan	24 <sup>th</sup> March	6 <sup>th</sup> October
Wigeon	5 <sup>th</sup> April	23 <sup>rd</sup> September
Goldeneye	7 <sup>th</sup> April	17 <sup>th</sup> November
Waxwing	-	-
Fieldfare	2 <sup>nd</sup> April	13 <sup>th</sup> October
Redwing	15 <sup>th</sup> April	5 <sup>th</sup> October
Brambling	14 <sup>th</sup> March	21 <sup>st</sup> October

**FIRST AND LAST DATES FOR SUMMER VISITORS**  
**2018**

SPECIES	FIRST	LAST
Garganey	4 <sup>th</sup> April	14 <sup>th</sup> April
Hobby	19 <sup>th</sup> May	19 <sup>th</sup> May
Osprey	5 <sup>th</sup> April	5 <sup>th</sup> April
Marsh Harrier	4 <sup>th</sup> August	5 <sup>th</sup> August
Avocet	27 <sup>th</sup> June	2 <sup>nd</sup> July
Little (Ringed) Plover	2 <sup>nd</sup> June	2 <sup>nd</sup> June
Whimbrel	-	-
Black-tailed Godwit	-	-
Greenshank	25 <sup>th</sup> August	2 <sup>nd</sup> September
Common Sandpiper	24 <sup>th</sup> March	29 <sup>th</sup> July
Common Tern	21 <sup>st</sup> April	8 <sup>th</sup> July
Arctic Tern	-	-
Cuckoo	23 <sup>rd</sup> April	23 <sup>rd</sup> April
Swift	22 <sup>nd</sup> April	27 <sup>th</sup> August
Sand Martin	25 <sup>th</sup> March	12 <sup>th</sup> September
Swallow	4 <sup>th</sup> April	7 <sup>th</sup> October
House Martin	22 <sup>nd</sup> April	16 <sup>th</sup> September
Yellow Wagtail	25 <sup>th</sup> July	25 <sup>th</sup> July
Common Redstart	25 <sup>th</sup> August	25 <sup>th</sup> August
Whinchat	13 <sup>th</sup> May	8 <sup>th</sup> September
Wheatear	4 <sup>th</sup> April	15 <sup>th</sup> August
Ring Ouzel	-	-
Grasshopper Warbler	27 <sup>th</sup> April	26 <sup>th</sup> July
Sedge Warbler	21 <sup>st</sup> April	26 <sup>th</sup> August
Reed Warbler	21 <sup>st</sup> April	8 <sup>th</sup> September
Garden Warbler	5 <sup>th</sup> May	12 <sup>th</sup> August
Common Whitethroat	21 <sup>st</sup> April	26 <sup>th</sup> September
Lesser Whitethroat	21 <sup>st</sup> April	19 <sup>th</sup> May
Willow Warbler	7 <sup>th</sup> April	8 <sup>th</sup> September
Spotted Flycatcher	6 <sup>th</sup> June	1 <sup>st</sup> September

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

Barn Owl, Little Owl and Kestrel all nested successfully in boxes this year but it was a frustrating year for the smaller species. Some tit boxes on the riverbank are impossible to access these days but we were able to monitor and check 62 boxes with the following results.

<b>Species</b>	<b>Boxes Used</b>	<b>All Fledged</b>	<b>Unhatched Eggs/Dead Chicks</b>
Blue Tit	8	5	3
Great Tit	7	4	3
Robin	-	-	-
Wren	1	1	-

Last year 16 boxes were used by Blue Tits but half of these contained dead chicks or broken eggs. This year one box contained broken egg shells, one had three eggs and one a feathered juvenile.

Last year six boxes were used by Great Tits and all young fledged in five of them. Seven boxes were used this year and all young fledged in four but one contained five or six broken egg shells, one had one egg and one two eggs. While it is not unusual to find the odd infertile egg one wonders what catastrophe occurred in the box with five or six broken egg shells. Once the young had hatched the adults would normally remove the egg shells from the nest. One pair of Great Tits successfully used a section of the House Sparrow terrace box on the side of the seed store and a pair again nested in the box on the side of the Visitor Centre. Last year they raised eight young here and this year nine. Live action from this nest was relayed to the television in the Visitor Centre.

Great Spotted Woodpeckers nested in the Coppice for the first time to our knowledge this year and almost every nest box along the Willow Path in the vicinity had been broken into by them. Metal plates are used on many of our boxes to deter woodpecker damage but the woodpeckers then simply drilled through the wood above the plate to extract any chicks to feast on. Interestingly, most of the boxes involved didn't have any nesting material in them, which suggests the

woodpeckers didn't know whether the boxes were actually worth drilling into. Perhaps they are just vandals! Twelve boxes were badly damaged and had to be replaced.

One tit box near the Reedbed Hide contained a beautiful domed Wrens' nest. All young fledged successfully from this nest (Box no. 17). One box in the Manager's Garden contained a large wasps' nest but, unusually, no Woodmice were found in any of the boxes that were checked. This mammal is an excellent climber and has no problem getting into nest boxes on posts or in trees.

There were again 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, four young fledging successfully. The Scrubland box was used by Barn Owls in 2016, two young fledging successfully, but it wasn't last year although there was activity at the box in April and May of that year. This year birds were again in residence and we believe that at least two young fledged though no more than one was seen at any one time.

Three Little Owl boxes were in operation - in the Manager's Garden, in the Coppice and on the riverbank behind the Wet Grassland. The Manager's Garden box was used in 2015 and 2016 but nesting attempts in 2017 were thwarted by Grey Squirrels that took up residence. One unhatched egg was subsequently found in the box after the squirrels had been evicted. The box was again used this year and at least one young fledged successfully. The Little Owl box in the Coppice contained a wasps' nest and the one at the back of the Wet Grassland was completely full of moss. Who could have done that we will probably never know. There are also two Goosander boxes in riverside trees. One of these was found to contain three dead juvenile Grey Squirrels last year. Neither box was checked this year.

<b>Species</b>	<b>Boxes Used</b>	<b>No. of Young Fledged</b>
Kestrel	1	4
Little Owl	1	1
Barn Owl	1	2?
Goosander	?	?

## MAMMALS

### **Fox** *Vulpes vulpes*



This species enjoyed an excellent year on the Reserve, no doubt helped by a bumper breeding season. There were 76 reported sightings covering every month of the year. On 15<sup>th</sup> April eight fox cubs were recorded on a camera trap at a den on the Reserve. The typical litter size is four or five. Cubs were reported on five dates in May and on 1<sup>st</sup> June three were seen on John Ackroyd Meadow (JB). There were many reports of juveniles throughout the summer, one particularly inquisitive individual standing at the Visitor Centre patio doors watching proceedings at a meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> August. On 14<sup>th</sup> August two juveniles were on John Ackroyd Meadow, one feeding on a pigeon carcass (PM/BM). There were numerous reports of animals basking in the warm sunshine and paying little attention to visitors during the summer and autumn. All animals seen were in excellent condition but there was one report of a fox with just half a tail in the Manager's Garden on 8<sup>th</sup> December (PS).

### **Otter** *Lutra lutra*

Daytime sightings here are few and far between, though there was a spate of them in the latter part of 2016. Last year was disappointing with only limited evidence of their presence in the form of tracks on the riverbank. This year too was a bit disappointing, though there were three reported sightings. On 28<sup>th</sup> January Otter tracks were found on the riverbank by the bridge and the following day one was seen very briefly on the Lagoon (JB). Spraint was found on the water inlet landing stage on the river and on stonework by the bridge on 23<sup>rd</sup> March (JB). On 22<sup>nd</sup> April members of the Wild Trout Trust, kayaking the river as part of World Fish Migration Day, spotted one upstream of the Reserve and on 6<sup>th</sup> May there was an unconfirmed report of one swimming on the surface of the river near the bridge. Tracks continued to be found occasionally though access



to the river bank is limited and high vegetation is a problem for much of the year. On 18<sup>th</sup> December spraint and tracks were found on the riverbank upstream of the bridge (JB).

**American Mink** *Neovison vison*

There were 21 records of this unwelcome visitor this year - one more than last year. There were no sightings in January but two in February. Activity increased in March with single animals reported on six dates. On 21<sup>st</sup> March one was seen on the river bridge (NB). On 29<sup>th</sup> April one was reported on the Wet Grassland (JH) with what may well have been the same animal under the decking of the nearby Education Pond (JB) on the same date. There was another sighting at the Education Pond on 1<sup>st</sup> May (JK). On 9<sup>th</sup> May one was seen on the Lagoon near the Sand Martin nesting bank (GJB). On 11<sup>th</sup> July an adult and three juveniles were reported by a visitor and two days later there was another sighting on the Lagoon (JB). On 22<sup>nd</sup> July two were seen near the river seat (JC). Sightings tend to die out around mid to late summer most years but there were reports from both the Kingfisher Pool and Education Pond in August this year, on 17<sup>th</sup> October on the Duck Marsh (GJB), on 26<sup>th</sup> October at the water inlet on the river (JB) and on 4<sup>th</sup> November on the Duck Marsh again (JB).



**Weasel** *Mustela nivalis*

This is a common mammal on the Reserve. There were sightings in every month except February and November though the large majority were in the first six months of the year. The area around the Visitor Centre has always been productive and the first one this year was seen in the raised bed in the middle of the Bee Garden on 30<sup>th</sup> January (SH). There were numerous sightings on the road just below the Visitor Centre. Most sightings involved single animals but on 5<sup>th</sup> June three very young Weasels were seen on the path outside the Willow Path Hide during a primary school visit and on 23<sup>rd</sup> June a family of five was reported at the Dragonfly Ponds (AT). Small rodents figure high on the menu but they are opportunists and on 29<sup>th</sup> May one was observed coming out of a nest box on the Willow Path (DS). On 14<sup>th</sup> July one was seen by the Education Pond (JLW) and



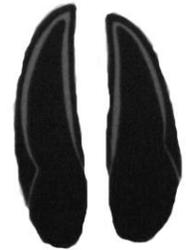
the next day one was reported carrying prey from the container area towards the pond (PW). On 8<sup>th</sup> August two were seen on the Willow Path near the Mike Sheldon Hide (MG/PG). Sightings were few and far between in the last three months of the year with just one in October, none in November and two in December, the last on the river bridge on 26<sup>th</sup> (MHa).

**Stoat** *Mustela erminea*

Much less common than its small cousin the Weasel here, Stoats nevertheless do turn up from time to time and there were reliable sightings on five dates last year - the same as in 2016. Sadly, there were no reported sightings this year. An absence of Rabbits may be one of the reasons for its scarcity.

**Roe Deer** *Capreolus capreolus*

There were sightings on just seven dates in the last six months of last year and shooting in the area round the Reserve was strongly suspected. There was a considerable improvement this year and there were records in every month. In January there were sightings on the Lagoon, Duck Marsh, Wet Grassland and farmland with two animals on several occasions. In February two were on Tim's Field on 7<sup>th</sup> (DW) and two were again seen here on 17<sup>th</sup> March (JWC). The area between the Duck Marsh and the river can be productive at any time of year and there were numerous sightings here including a female and juvenile on 13<sup>th</sup> June (PA) and a female with two juveniles on 11<sup>th</sup> July (JH). There were a number of reports of three or more animals from July onwards. On 12<sup>th</sup> August a male, female and two juveniles were disturbed on Tim's Field. The adults and one juvenile ran onto Mike Fisk Meadow but one juvenile went off down the Willow Path (WeBS). On 14<sup>th</sup> August a female and two juveniles were watched feeding on blackberries at the side of the Lagoon (JB/MB). On 3<sup>rd</sup> October three on Tim's Field probably included at least one juvenile (DW). On 7<sup>th</sup> October a male was observed pursuing four females on the Wet Grassland (PA), some of these probably juveniles. On 21<sup>st</sup> October a female and two juveniles were on the Duck Marsh (JWC); three were at the side of the Lagoon on 4<sup>th</sup> November (DW); a female and two juveniles were again seen on the Duck Marsh on 18<sup>th</sup> November (DC/EC) and four



were on the Scrubland on 21<sup>st</sup> November (DW). In December three were startled on the Duck Marsh close to the Willow Path on 25<sup>th</sup> (BM) and on 30<sup>th</sup> four were again seen on the Scrubland (PA/AL).

### **Mole** *Talpa europaea*

There was again plenty of evidence of Mole activity on the Reserve this year. Fresh Mole hills were still being excavated at the roadside and along the Willow Path in December thanks to the mild conditions but there was only one reported sighting - a live animal on the drive near the car park on 13<sup>th</sup> June (DC/EC). Sightings tend to be mainly of dead individuals.

### **Common Shrew** *Sorex araneus*

Probably much more common than the few records would suggest, this species does turn up in Longworth traps during small mammal surveys but usually no more than one or two at best. This year two females were caught on 23<sup>rd</sup> June in traps set along the Coppice fence facing Tim's Field and during the same survey a male was caught at the base of the dry stone wall near the Manager's Garden. Shrews are fierce predators but because of their small size they in turn become prey for a number of other species. Foxes will attack them but rarely eat them because of the foul tasting liquid produced from glands on the skin. As a result it is not unusual to find dead animals. One was found on the road below the Visitor Centre on 26<sup>th</sup> January (JHa) and one on the Willow Path on 7<sup>th</sup> July (JKi). On 12<sup>th</sup> June a live individual was reported in one of the minibeast dens on the Willow Path (DS).



### **Pygmy Shrew** *Sorex minutus*

The remains of this tiny mammal have been found in Barn Owl pellets but there had been no records of a live one on site until 2016 when one was caught in a Longworth trap on the Willow Path during a small mammal survey on 26<sup>th</sup> June. There were no records last year or this year.

### **Water Shrew** *Neomys fodiens*

Survey work done in the Reedbed some years ago showed this species to be present there and it is almost certainly present on the other wetland areas too. There had been no records in 2015 or 2016

but in 2017 one was seen on the Wet Grassland on 9<sup>th</sup> December. There were no records this year.

**Harvest Mouse** *Micromys minutus*

The Harvest Mouse breeding project started in 2012 and since 2014 mice have been introduced behind the Reedbed and Duck Marsh and more recently on the Scrubland. A further introduction of 61 mice (19m + 42f) was made on the Scrubland on 15<sup>th</sup> June this year and since then there have been three releases at a new site close to the Lagoon - a total of 115 mice (47m + 68f) between 13<sup>th</sup> July and 27<sup>th</sup> September. There are positive signs that the population is spreading to other areas on the Reserve naturally, the discovery of three nests by the two Dipping Ponds being particularly interesting. The occupants of these must be the descendants of the original introductions behind the Reedbed and Duck Marsh, as must the occupants of two nests discovered in reeds at the eastern end of the Wet Grassland in November. Nests have also been found on the Scrubland and near the Lagoon during the autumn.

**Wood Mouse** *Apodemus sylvaticus*

Wood Mice are very common on the Reserve and are almost guaranteed to turn up in the Longworth traps during small mammal surveys. They are also excellent climbers and have been known to take possession of nest boxes along the Willow Path. Last year a nest was found in the electronics box on the Swift Tower and three were flushed from a hole in the Sand Martin nesting bank during maintenance work. See Small Mammal Survey for further details.

**Bank Vole** *Clethrionomys glareolus*

This is another very common small mammal on the Reserve and, along with the Wood Mouse, the most likely to turn up in Longworth traps during small mammal surveys. Of 10 small mammals caught in the Butterfly Bank and John Ackroyd Meadow area on 11<sup>th</sup> August nine were bank voles, seven of these females. There were several sightings under the bird feeder stations on the Willow Path in February and March and in June two were found under corrugated iron sheets in the Rodley Robins area (DS). One in the Bee Garden on 7<sup>th</sup> October was the last record of the year (DC/EC). See Small Mammal Surveys for further details.

**Field or Short-tailed Vole** *Microtus agrestis*

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. From a study of pellets that have been found we know that they figure highly in the diet of our Barn Owls and probably Kestrels too. They seldom appear in Longworth traps during small mammal surveys but last year five were caught on the Scrubland in the area around the Harvest Mouse release pens.

**Water Vole** *Arvicola amphibius*

This is a rare mammal here these days. Loss of habitat and predation by American Mink have been major factors in its decline. In 2015 one was seen on three dates between 5<sup>th</sup> August and 4<sup>th</sup> October on the Dragonfly Ponds and Education Pond but there had been no sightings in 2016 or 2017. Tracks found on the riverbank in January this year may have been this species and there was a reported sighting of one by the river bridge on 23<sup>rd</sup> January (PC) but nothing since. Prior to 2015, to our knowledge, there had been no records on our stretch of the River Aire since 1993.

**Brown Rat** *Rattus norvegicus*

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 breeding took place in the Manager's Garden. Apart from these two years there have been surprisingly few records of this species and there were none in 2017. This year there was just one reported sighting - a single animal under the river bridge on 31<sup>st</sup> March (JB).

**Grey Squirrel** *Sciurus carolinensis*

The number of sightings continues to increase each year. One or two are seen regularly on the entry road between the main gates and the river bridge but there are now sightings well onto the Reserve throughout the year. Three dreys were found in the Coppice in the latter part of the year once the leaves had fallen and there were numerous sightings in the Manager's Garden with one reported going into the Little Owl box there on 4<sup>th</sup> September (POG).

**Rabbit** *Oryctogalus cuniculus*

This is a rare visitor to the Reserve. Prior to 2016 there had been no sightings since 28<sup>th</sup> October 2011. In 2016 there was a report of one at the edge of Tim's Field on 27<sup>th</sup> 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 26<sup>th</sup> June. There were no sightings in the following three years but there was one this year - one on the farmland behind the Manager's Garden during an evening visit on 10<sup>th</sup> April (POG).

**Hedgehog** *Erinaceus europaeus*

Surrounded by the river on three sides and improved grassland on the other, it is perhaps not surprising that Hedgehogs are rare here. The population is also in rapid decline nationally. There have in fact only been two records since the Reserve opened and none in the last 10 years.

**Common Pipistrelle Bat** *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*

Pipistrelles are the commonest bats to be found on the Reserve. There were two early records this year of a *Pipistrellus sp.* Two were seen over the entry road near the main gates at 5.40pm on 11<sup>th</sup> March and two were seen close to the Manager's Garden Hide at 8.15pm on 5<sup>th</sup> April (PM/BM). Common Pipistrelles were recorded in good numbers during the two public Bat Nights on 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> July using bat detectors, the Willow Path near the Duck Marsh Hide being particularly productive as usual. An evening survey along the Winter Walk and Willow Path on 10<sup>th</sup> October also produced numerous records (PM/BM *et al*).

**Soprano Pipistrelle Bat** *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*

Using bat detectors and based on the frequency of echolocation calls alone, this species again appeared to be present in very good numbers during the Bat Night events referred to above. It has only been a separate species since 1999 when 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.

**Noctule Bat** *Nyctalus noctula*

A number were recorded during the public Bat Night events in July and heavy rain just before the second event on 28<sup>th</sup> clearly didn't deter them from flying. Unlike the other bats this large species can often be seen flying just before sunset and occasionally during the day. A clear, calm, cold evening on 24<sup>th</sup> September with temperatures down to 8°C produced one on the River Path during a Barn Owl vigil and two over the road near the Lagoon Hide (PM/BM). On 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> October a largish bat seen during the day over the Reserve among a group of gulls (JWC) may well have been this species.

**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 public Bat Night events may well have been this species.

## **SMALL MAMMAL SURVEYS**

Surveys were carried out on three dates this year, two of these for public participation and one for the Rodley Robins children's club. The results are shown below.

### **Date of Survey: 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2018 – Public Event (3<sup>rd</sup> Leeds Birdfair)**

22 Longworth traps set at three sites - 11 of these successful.

#### **Location: Along Coppice fence facing Tim's Field**

12 Longworth traps set - 6 successful.

<b>Species</b>	<b>No. caught</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Common Shrew	2f	
Woodmouse	2f	
Bank Vole	1m + 1f	

#### **Location: Around Dipping Ponds**

4 Longworth traps set - all empty.

#### **Location: Along Dry Stone Wall**

6 Longworth traps set - five successful

<b>Species</b>	<b>No. caught</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Common Shrew	1m	
Woodmouse	1m + 2f	One female pregnant
Bank Vole	1m	

### **Date of Survey: 4<sup>th</sup> August 2018 – Public Event**

25 Longworth traps set at three sites - 15 of these successful.

#### **Location: Along Coppice Fence facing Tim's Field**

7 Longworth traps set - 4 successful

Species	No. caught	Comments
Bank Vole	3m	
Woodmouse	1f	

**Location: Willow Path - Wetlands side**

9 Longworth traps set - 6 successful

Species	No. caught	Comments
Bank Vole	2m + 1f	
Woodmouse	1m + 2f	2 young females

**Location: Willow Path - Coppice side**

9 Longworth traps set - 5 successful

Species	No. caught	Comments
Bank Vole	1m + 1f	Female pregnant
Woodmouse	2? + 1f	Young female + two escaped!

**Date of Survey: 11<sup>th</sup> August 2018 – For Rodley Robins**

24 Longworth traps - 8 set at each of three sites – 10 of these successful.

Sites: Butterfly Bank, Rodley Robins area and John Ackroyd Meadow

Species	No.caught	Comments
Bank Vole	2m + 7f	
Woodmouse	1f	

## AMPHIBIANS

### **Smooth Newt** *Triturus vulgaris*

This is a common species on the Reserve and the best place to see it is probably the Dragonfly Ponds. An adult seen in the Education Pond on 15<sup>th</sup> March was a very early record (JK). A tiny individual around 3cm long found on the same date was an unusual discovery at this time of year (JK). Young newts typically leave the water after 10 weeks. However, some are known to overwinter in the larval state, only emerging from the water the following year. Corrugated iron sheets and logs in the Rodley Robins children's club area are guaranteed to produce sightings. Many small newts and an adult were found here under a log on 9<sup>th</sup> June (DS/BM). Numerous small newts were again found under a log here on 13<sup>th</sup> June (PM/BM).

### **Palmate Newt** *Triturus helveticus*

This species may still be present in very small numbers but it is more a species of the moorlands and heathy places. Detailed surveys are needed to establish its current status here. 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*

This is a common amphibian on all the water bodies and it is easy to see at the Dragonfly Ponds in the spring when they arrive in numbers to spawn. The first spawn this year, however, was found on Poplar Ponds on 9<sup>th</sup> March (MG), eight days later than last year and just a day after a heavy fall of snow - a good three inches. The first spawn was recorded at the Dragonfly Ponds on 12<sup>th</sup> March - a small amount in Pebble Beach Pond (MG). Typically, young frogs could be seen in numbers on the Willow Path in June and July and it was often hard to avoid standing on them. Grey Herons almost certainly take large numbers every year, even at the Dragonfly Ponds, but numbers remain high. Adults turn up well away from water out of the breeding season. Several were disturbed in the Mike Sheldon Hide wildflower bed during maintenance work at the end of September.

### **Common Toad** *Bufo bufo*

Large numbers arrive in spring at the Dragonfly Ponds from the Scrubland where they have spent the winter but two struggling

through snow by the gate to the Fish Pass on 28<sup>th</sup> February (JB) was an unexpected sighting. A count at the Dragonfly Ponds, Education Pond, Dipping Ponds and Poplar Ponds on 10<sup>th</sup> April produced a total of 689 - 235 of these in the Long Ditch at the Dragonfly Ponds (PJM/DG). Last year Toads had arrived in numbers by 20<sup>th</sup> March but snow and ice in March this year put paid to any early mass arrivals. During the summer months there were numerous sightings under corrugated iron sheets in the Rodley Robins area. On 11<sup>th</sup> August many were found on the road after dark at the end of a wet Bat Night event.

## **REPTILES**

### **Red-eared Terrapin** *Trachemys scripta elegans*

There were no reported sightings this year. This species was recorded on the Reserve for the first time in 2013 when there were two sightings. 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 last year, both on the Duck Marsh in June and July. Native to the southern United States and northern Mexico, it is a popular pet in this country and, unfortunately, is often released into the wild.

## **BUTTERFLIES**

Bitterly cold easterly winds and several falls of snow in the first weeks of March ruled out any thoughts of an early butterfly record this year but milder conditions from 22<sup>nd</sup> and a lovely sunny day on 25<sup>th</sup> brought out the first one - a male Brimstone. The first overwintered Small Tortoiseshell appeared the next day.

A very poor, unsettled summer last year saw very few species do well and the decline of Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells continued. Despite the joint hottest summer on record this year both species again fared very badly and the summer emergence was very disappointing with very few butterflies to be seen on the buddleias outside the Visitor Centre in August and September. Flowering was exceptional this year but there were few butterflies to take advantage. There were in fact no reports of Peacocks anywhere on the Reserve in August or the first three weeks of September.

Two of the Vanessid species, however, did do very well last year - Red Admiral and Comma. Red Admiral was the real highlight, proving to be the most frequently recorded butterfly on the Reserve. It did very well nationally too, numbers up by 75% on the previous year during Butterfly Conservation's Big Butterfly Count. However, in this year's Big Butterfly Count, rather surprisingly, they were down 73%. At Rodley they dropped from 1<sup>st</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> place as regards number of records received. Comma had another good year here despite the late summer brood being disappointing and it finished in joint 3<sup>rd</sup> place.

The Painted Lady is an annual immigrant from North Africa. It was a poor year at Rodley with no reports of more than one butterfly. Numbers of Gatekeepers have always been low here and it was down in 11<sup>th</sup> place as regards number of records. However, with three double figure counts reported it still has to rank as possibly the best year to date for this species. Nationally it suffered its worst ever Big Butterfly Count, results being down 54%.

The common white butterflies were the standout feature in this year's Big Butterfly Count with populations soaring after several poor years. Small White was the most numerous but here it had a disappointing

year. Small Whites are said to have a penchant for white or pale blossoms and it is at its most numerous on Tim's Field where the flowers of Fodder Radish are a magnet for the second brood which emerges in July. Unfortunately, poor germination following weeks of dry weather resulted in little flower on the field in July and August and numbers of butterflies were disappointing. Numbers can, nevertheless, fluctuate considerably between years with large influxes from the Continent arriving some years. Large White can be a serious pest of Brassica crops but it is rarely numerous here though it did have a better year than in 2017. Green-veined White is a lover of damper areas and should perhaps be more common than it is around the wetlands. However, there was a distinct improvement this year, though numbers remain low. Orange Tip too had a better year here but counts nevertheless were a bit disappointing. It was the best year to date for the Brimstone with sightings on 21 dates and breeding on the Butterfly Bank confirmed.

After a poor year in 2017 both Skipper species, the Large and Small, showed an improvement this year but while there were rather more sightings there was only one report of more than one Small Skipper.

Unusually, it was one of the brown butterflies - the Speckled Wood - that proved to be the most frequently recorded butterfly at Rodley this year.

Among the Lycaenidae the Small Copper was one of the winners this year, finishing in 5<sup>th</sup> place, though numbers of butterflies remain low. Holly Blue has never been common here and there were just three records last year. This year it had one of its best years ever as regards numbers of records though all but one were of single butterflies. Nationally too it had a very good year. The caterpillars of this species are attacked by two species of parasitic wasp and these can kill the vast majority some years. As a result populations tend to be cyclical, peaking every few years and 2018 was clearly one of the good years. Common Blue is just about hanging on with single butterflies on just four dates. They will use a wide range of leguminous plants but Common Birds-foot Trefoil is perhaps the commonest. This plant has declined on John Ackroyd Meadow in the last year or so and this is clearly not helping.

Purple Hairstreak was a new butterfly for the Reserve in 2016 and there were three records in 2017. This year there were records on four dates but, spending much of its life in the tops of oak trees, it is hopefully a bit more common here than the few records would suggest.

Of the scarcer species, Wall failed to appear this year and there was just one record of White-letter Hairstreak.

The top six most frequently recorded butterflies in 2018 were as shown below:

	Species	Position Last year
1 <sup>st</sup>	Speckled Wood	5 <sup>th</sup>
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Small Tortoiseshell	2 <sup>nd</sup>
3 <sup>rd</sup> =	Comma	4 <sup>th</sup>
3 <sup>rd</sup> =	Small White	3 <sup>rd</sup>
5 <sup>th</sup> =	Orange Tip	-
5 <sup>th</sup> =	Small Copper	-

Peter Murphy

## HESPERIDAE

### **Small Skipper** (*Thymelicus sylvestris*)

Never numerous here, last year was very poor with just five records submitted. There were rather more sightings this year but only one report of more than one butterfly. One on John Ackroyd Meadow on 3<sup>rd</sup> June (DC/EC) was the first of the year, a month earlier than last year and the earliest ever first date for this species. The majority of sightings were on the Butterfly Bank or adjacent John Ackroyd Meadow but there were also two records from the Dragonfly Ponds area. On 7<sup>th</sup> July one was recorded on the Tansy Bank and one on the Butterfly Bank (PM/BM). One on the very late date of 16<sup>th</sup> September on John Ackroyd Meadow was the last of the year (DC/EC), more than three weeks later than the previous latest ever date.

### **Large Skipper** (*Ochlodes venatus*)

After a very poor year in 2017 there was some improvement this year but still well short of the double figure counts of 2015. There were several reports of up to three butterflies on 9<sup>th</sup> June (JS *et al*), just two days earlier than last year's first record. On 25<sup>th</sup> June four were seen on Poplar Field and the path to the Manager's Garden (PM/BM) and on 7<sup>th</sup> July four were recorded on the Butterfly Bank (AW) - these the best counts of the year. A single butterfly on Hemp Agrimony in the Bee Garden on 14<sup>th</sup> July (PM) was the last of the year, just one day earlier than last year.

## **PIERIDAE**

### **Orange Tip** (*Anthocharis cardamines*)

The first sightings this year were reported on 21<sup>st</sup> April with single males on John Ackroyd Meadow, near the bridge and in the Coppice (JH/DC/EC) - nearly two weeks later than in 2017. Last year there was just one report of more than two butterflies. There was certainly an improvement this year but the best count, nevertheless, was just seven on 5<sup>th</sup> May (DC/EC). A male at the edge of Tim's Field and a female on Dame's Violet by the Wet Grassland Hide on 11<sup>th</sup> June (PM/BM) were the last of the year - 11 days later than last year's very early last date.

### **Large White** (*Pieris brassicae*)

It was a rather better year for this species, though numbers of butterflies remained surprisingly low considering an inviting late *brassica* crop on Tim's Field. As its Latin name suggests, this species is a lover of *brassica* crops. One on Tim's Field on 18<sup>th</sup> April (JLW) was the first of the year, nearly a month earlier than last year and only a day later than the earliest ever record - 17<sup>th</sup> April 2011. Amazingly, this was to be the only record from Tim's Field. There were no reports of more than four butterflies and most records were of singles. One on John Ackroyd Meadow on 25<sup>th</sup> August was the last (DC/EC), a month later than last year.

**Small White** (*Artogeia rapae*)

The first brood usually emerges in April but the first record this year was on the late date of 5<sup>th</sup> May (PM/BM) - a pair mating on John Ackroyd Meadow. Numbers were typically low throughout May and June with no reports of more than five butterflies. The highest numbers are usually recorded in July with the emergence of the second brood and the Fodder Radish in flower on Tim's Field. However, poor seed germination following a period of dry weather resulted in little flowering until rather later in the year and July counts were very poor with the best just 18 and no more than 12 on Tim's Field. Last year produced 50+ which was still well short of the numbers recorded some years. Numbers remained very low throughout August and September with a best of just 12 on 4<sup>th</sup> August (DC/EC). A single butterfly on the Butterfly Bank on 24<sup>th</sup> October was the last of the year (JS), just three days earlier than last year.

**Green-veined White** (*Artogeia napi*)

The number of sightings has been declining over recent years but there was certainly a distinct improvement this year, though the number of butterflies remains low. One on John Ackroyd Meadow on 1<sup>st</sup> May (JB) was the first of the year, six days earlier than last year. There were sightings on six further dates in May but none in June. Butterflies of the second brood appear from July and a count of six on 14<sup>th</sup> July was the highest of the year - four of these on the Willow Path and two on the Butterfly Bank (MG/PG). There were sightings of single butterflies on just two dates in August and one on John Ackroyd Meadow on 12<sup>th</sup> September was the last of the year (DC/EC), three weeks later than last year.

**Brimstone** (*Gonepteryx rhamni*)

There were sightings on 21 dates this year - the best year yet for this species.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of days reported</u>
2013	5
2014	12
2015	20
2016	10
2017	17
2018	21

The first sighting was reported on 25<sup>th</sup> March - what may well have been the same butterfly near the bridge (PW/JLW) and by the Lagoon Hide (DC/EC *et al*). This is the same date as last year's first record and the joint earliest ever. Single butterflies were then reported on five dates in April and four dates in May. On 3<sup>rd</sup> June two males and a female were seen on the Butterfly Bank (AW *et al*) - one male and the female mating. Single males were subsequently seen on two further dates in June. There were sightings on eight dates in July. On 7<sup>th</sup> July two were recorded in the Bee Garden (DC/EC) and on 14<sup>th</sup> July a male was on Mike Fisk Meadow and a female on the Butterfly Bank (PM/BM). One on the Butterfly Bank on 25<sup>th</sup> July (DC/EC) was the last of the year, some three weeks earlier than last year.

## **NYPHALIDAE**

### **Wall** (*Lasiommata megera*)

This species is declining at a rapid rate in Yorkshire but in VC64 there was actually an increase in the number of sightings in 2017 from 55 to 123. However, it is nationally a "species of concern". It is certainly a rarity here these days with just four records since 2012, the last on 5<sup>th</sup> August last year. There were no reported sightings this year. This butterfly is a lover of dry, unfertilized places with an abundance of bare patches where it can bask which, of course, is not typical of the habitat here.

### **Speckled Wood** (*Pararge aegeria*)

This species can be on the wing for eight or nine months of the year, although individual adults seldom live longer than a week. It is unusual in being able to overwinter either as a caterpillar or as a chrysalis. Being lovers of dappled shade the Willow Path and Coppice are probably the best places to look for them. Among the first sightings this year on 5<sup>th</sup> May three were reported on the Willow Path (MG/PG), some two and a half weeks later than last year. There were regular sightings thereafter with six by the Lagoon on 15<sup>th</sup> June (JB) the best count in the first half of the year. The butterfly is usually at its most numerous in August and September and this year was no exception. There were sightings most days with eight in the Coppice on 16<sup>th</sup> September (JB) the best count of the year. The last sighting in 2017 was on 24<sup>th</sup> September but there were records on six dates in

October this year, the last on 24<sup>th</sup>, a single butterfly on the Willow Path (JS).

**Small Heath** (*Coenonympha pamphilus*)

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

**Ringlet** (*Aphantopus hyperantus*)

This species is somewhat unusual in that it will fly in the dullest of conditions and even in light rain. Last year the first butterfly appeared on the earliest ever date of 14<sup>th</sup> June. This year three on the Butterfly Bank on 20<sup>th</sup> June (JS) were the first. The butterfly can be very numerous during its short flight period but the last two years had been disappointing with few double figure counts. However, there was a considerable improvement this year with 50+ counts on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> July (PM/BM) and a report of 30+ just on the Butterfly Bank on 7<sup>th</sup> July (AW). The Butterfly Bank, John Ackroyd Meadow and Poplar Field were the most productive sites. A single butterfly on John Ackroyd Meadow on 25<sup>th</sup> July was the last of the year (DC/EC), just one day later than last year.

**Meadow Brown** (*Maniola jurtina*)

The majority of sightings typically come from the John Ackroyd Meadow and the Butterfly Bank but three on Poplar Field on 9<sup>th</sup> June (JH/JS) were the first of the year, eight days earlier than last year. Numbers were certainly higher than last year with plenty of double figure counts on the Butterfly Bank. Twenty plus were reported here on 7<sup>th</sup> July (AW). A count of 23 on 25<sup>th</sup> July included 10 on Mike Fisk Meadow (PM/BM), surprisingly one of the few records to come from this site. Unusually, there was only one record after 4<sup>th</sup> August - a single butterfly on John Ackroyd Meadow on 19<sup>th</sup> August (DC/EC) - just a week earlier than last year.

**Gatekeeper** (*Pyronia tithonus*)

Since it first arrived here in 2003 numbers of this butterfly have always remained low, so to have three double figure counts reported this year was a major step forward. Like last year, the Butterfly Bank proved to be one of the most productive sites but one on the Willow Path on 29<sup>th</sup> June (MG/PG) was the first of the year, nine days earlier than last year and the earliest ever first date. On 14<sup>th</sup> July a count of

11 included eight on the Butterfly Bank with one pair mating (PM/BM). On the same date 14 were counted during the Robins' Butterfly Walk. On 23<sup>rd</sup> July a report of 17 included 14 on the Butterfly Bank and three in the Bee Garden (PM/BM). Wild Marjoram appeared to be the main attraction at both sites. A single butterfly in the Bee Garden on 6<sup>th</sup> August was the last of the year (PM/BM), seven days earlier than last year.

### **Red Admiral** (*Vanessa atalanta*)

2017 was an exceptionally good year for this species in Yorkshire and across the country. It was the most frequently recorded butterfly at Rodley. A mild winter and warm spring in 2017 helped more individuals overwinter successfully in Yorkshire but there was little chance of us seeing an overwintered butterfly this year thanks to a long, cold winter and snow well into March. One photographed between the Visitor Centre and Tim's Field on 27<sup>th</sup> April (MH) was the first of the year, more than three weeks earlier than last year and almost certainly an early immigrant. There was a further sighting on the Willow Path on 5<sup>th</sup> May but then no records until 23<sup>rd</sup> June when single butterflies were seen on the Wet Grassland and Tim's Field. Sightings were reported on eight dates in July with two on the white buddleia on the Butterfly Bank on 22<sup>nd</sup> (MG/PG). There was just one record of a single butterfly in August. Buddleias outside the Visitor Centre produced one or two on several dates in September but were not as productive as last year when as many as five were seen here. Single butterflies were recorded on 20<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> October but two on 28<sup>th</sup> October were the last of the year (JWC), some three weeks earlier than last year's latest ever date on 19<sup>th</sup> November.

### **Painted Lady** (*Vanessa cardui*)

There were records of this immigrant from North Africa on 10 dates this year, three more than last year but all involving just single butterflies. One on Tim's Field on 27<sup>th</sup> May (MH) was only eight days later than the earliest ever record (19<sup>th</sup> May 2007). There was another early record on John Ackroyd Meadow on 3<sup>rd</sup> June (DC/EC). There were no sightings in September but one on Tim's Field on 10<sup>th</sup> October (PA) was only five days earlier than last year's latest ever record.

### **Peacock** (*Aglais io*)

The main summer emergence of Peacocks in the last three years has been very disappointing and there was no improvement this year. Emerging from hibernation in March or April, the first butterfly was seen on the River Path on 14<sup>th</sup> April (DS/JWC), three weeks later than last year and the latest ever first date. There were regular sightings thereafter but only one report of more than two. Three were seen on 18<sup>th</sup> April (JH). It was a strange year. On 18<sup>th</sup> June a very worn individual was seen in the Bee Garden (PM/BM) but on the same day a freshly emerged butterfly was reported at the edge of Tim's Field (JB). There was little further activity until 22<sup>nd</sup> July when five were recorded - two on the Butterfly Bank and three on the buddleia at the entrance to the car park near the Visitor Centre (DC/EC). On 23<sup>rd</sup> July six were reported on buddleias round the Visitor Centre (PM/BM) but this was to be the best count of a poor year and there were no sightings throughout August or the first three weeks of September despite an abundance of flower on the buddleias. There was just one more record - two butterflies on 23<sup>rd</sup> September - one in the Bee Garden and one by the Duck Marsh Hide (JB), eight days later than last year. The sparrow terrace nest boxes on the wall of the seed store have attracted hibernating butterflies in the past and a Peacock was found in one of them on 14<sup>th</sup> November.

### **Small Tortoiseshell** (*Aglais urticae*)

Following yet another poor summer emergence in 2017 there was little prospect of seeing many overwintered butterflies this spring. Snow and bitterly cold winds in March made sure there were no early sightings and we had to wait until 26<sup>th</sup> March for the first record - one on the riverbank (PM/BM) - some two weeks later than last year. We had to wait another week for the next record but there were then regular sightings, though mainly of just one or two butterflies. There were just a few reports of three or four and on 18<sup>th</sup> April six were recorded on Tim's Field with two more on the Wet Grassland (PM/BM). The first freshly emerged butterfly was reported on Tim's Field on 27<sup>th</sup> June (PM/BM) and on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 12 freshly emerged ones were counted round the Reserve (PM/BM). This was looking promising, but while there were regular sightings through July there were no further reports of more than three and in August buddleias outside the Visitor Centre were unusually devoid of butterflies. In

September there were just four records and two on 26<sup>th</sup> September were the last of the year (DC/EC), two days later than last year.

### **Comma** (*Polygonum c-album*)

This species was one of the few success stories of 2017 but it didn't start well with just two spring records of overwintered butterflies. It was very different this year with the first sighting on 14<sup>th</sup> April (JH/JS) and numerous reports then up to 6<sup>th</sup> May. The first freshly emerged butterfly was seen on 27<sup>th</sup> June (JH), just six days later than last year. There were regular sightings thereafter right through until 25<sup>th</sup> August. There were several reports of as many as four butterflies but six on the white buddleia on the Butterfly Bank on 22<sup>nd</sup> July (MG/PG) was the highest count of the year. The late summer brood was disappointing with sightings on just three dates in September and no more than two reported. A single butterfly near the Lagoon on 1<sup>st</sup> October (JB) was the last of the year, more than a month earlier than last year's very late record on 5<sup>th</sup> November.

## **LYCAENIDAE**

### **Small Copper** (*Lycaena phlaeas*)

After a very poor year in 2016 with records on just four days there was a distinct improvement last year in the number of sightings, though numbers of butterflies remained low with no reports of more than three. There was a further improvement this year. With three separate emergences, this species can be seen from April to October and last year produced the earliest ever record on 6<sup>th</sup> April. This year we had to wait until 10<sup>th</sup> June for a single butterfly on the Butterfly Bank (JS). There were no further sightings until 8<sup>th</sup> July but there were then records most days to the end of the month with five on the Butterfly Bank on 11<sup>th</sup> the best count (AP). The majority of sightings typically came from the Butterfly Bank but four were recorded on Mike Fisk Meadow on 25<sup>th</sup> July (DS/PS). There were records on just three dates in August, the last on 22<sup>nd</sup> but from 21<sup>st</sup> September there were a number of sightings with four on John Ackroyd Meadow on 29<sup>th</sup> September (DC/EC) the best count. Single butterflies were recorded on a number of dates throughout October, thanks to some lovely sunny days, and one on 28<sup>th</sup> October was the last of the year, exactly a month later than last year (JS).

### **Purple Hairstreak** (*Quercusia quercus*)

First recorded on the Reserve in 2016, there were three records that year and again in 2017. The first adults appear in July and can be seen throughout August and September but they are easily overlooked, spending most of their lives in the tops of oaks where they breed. This year there were records on four dates. On 7<sup>th</sup> July one was reported on an oak at the edge of the Coppice on the Willow Path (JWC). The following day two were seen at the same location (JWC). The big oak tree in the Manager's Garden was an obvious place to look and one was seen here on 11<sup>th</sup> July (JH). On 22<sup>nd</sup> July a female was reported on the path to the Manager's Garden (MG/PG *et al*). Unfortunately, there were no further sightings.

### **White-letter Hairstreak** (*Satyrion w-album*)

This species is usually associated with Wych Elms these days and is a scarce butterfly on the Reserve. There had only ever been three records on the Reserve, the last one on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2016 on the Winter Walk. One was recorded this year on John Ackroyd Meadow on 14<sup>th</sup> July (JH).

### **Holly Blue** (*Celastrina argiolus*)

2018 was an excellent year for Holly Blues in West Yorkshire. It has always been a scarce butterfly on the Reserve and while we did get a much better number of records this year actual numbers of butterflies remained low. One near the Lagoon on 5<sup>th</sup> May (JWC) was the first of the year. We had to wait until 5<sup>th</sup> June for the next one - a butterfly on Dame's Violet on the path to the Manager's Garden (PM/BM). There was then a gap of a month to the next sightings on 8<sup>th</sup> July by the Dipping Pond (DC/EC) and by the Wet Grassland Hide (JWC). There were then numerous sightings through July and August with a single butterfly on John Ackroyd Meadow on 2<sup>nd</sup> September (DC/EC) the last of the year and the latest ever record for the Reserve.

### **Common Blue** (*Polyommatus icarus*)

This species is just about hanging on here. It enjoyed its best year in 2015 with up to five butterflies reported, but then a blank year in 2016 and in 2017 just six reports of single butterflies. This year single butterflies were reported on just four dates, the first on 2<sup>nd</sup> July - a male in an area not open to the public between the Reedbed and river (PM/BM) - the first ever record from this area. On 22<sup>nd</sup> July a

female was seen on the Butterfly Bank (JS); on 19<sup>th</sup> August a male was on Poplar Field (JH) and on 25<sup>th</sup> August a female on the Butterfly Bank (JH).

### First and Last Dates - 2018

<b>Species</b>	<b>First date</b>	<b>Last date</b>
Small Skipper	3 <sup>rd</sup> June*	16 <sup>th</sup> September *
Large Skipper	9 <sup>th</sup> June	14 <sup>th</sup> July
Orange Tip	21 <sup>st</sup> April	11 <sup>th</sup> June
Large White	18 <sup>th</sup> April	25 <sup>th</sup> August
Small White	5 <sup>th</sup> May	24 <sup>th</sup> October
Green-veined White	1 <sup>st</sup> May	12 <sup>th</sup> September
Clouded Yellow	-	-
Brimstone	25 <sup>th</sup> March	25 <sup>th</sup> July
Wall	-	-
Speckled Wood	5 <sup>th</sup> May	24 <sup>th</sup> October
Small Heath	-	-
Ringlet	20 <sup>th</sup> June	25 <sup>th</sup> July
Meadow Brown	9 <sup>th</sup> June	19 <sup>th</sup> August
Gatekeeper	29 <sup>th</sup> June *	6 <sup>th</sup> August
Red Admiral	27 <sup>th</sup> April	28 <sup>th</sup> October
Painted Lady	27 <sup>th</sup> May	10 <sup>th</sup> October
Peacock	14 <sup>th</sup> April*	23 <sup>rd</sup> September
Small Tortoiseshell	26 <sup>th</sup> March	26 <sup>th</sup> September
Comma	14 <sup>th</sup> April	1 <sup>st</sup> October
Small Copper	10 <sup>th</sup> June	28 <sup>th</sup> October
Purple Hairstreak	7 <sup>th</sup> July	22 <sup>nd</sup> July
White-letter Hairstreak	14 <sup>th</sup> July	14 <sup>th</sup> July
Holly Blue	5 <sup>th</sup> May	2 <sup>nd</sup> Sept*
Common Blue	2 <sup>nd</sup> July	25 <sup>th</sup> August

\* Small Skipper - Earliest ever first date and latest ever last date

\* Gatekeeper - Earliest ever first date

\* Peacock - Latest ever first date

\* Holly Blue - Latest ever last date

## MOTHS

Light traps were run on 13 dates this year between 14<sup>th</sup> April and 11<sup>th</sup> October. Five of these were set on Tuesday evenings during the school summer holidays and were opened at special moth events on Wednesday mornings for children to participate. It had been planned to run a final trap on the night of 26<sup>th</sup> October prior to the Pie and Pea Event and Fungus Foray but this had to be cancelled due to wet overnight conditions. A total of 130 species of macro moth and 80 species of micro moth were recorded this year. Of these 11 were new species for the Reserve. Following an overall review of records the Reserve list now stands at 401 species - 221 macro species and 180 micros.

<b>New Macro Moths</b>	<b>New Micro Moths</b>
Northern Spinach	<i>Ypsolopha dentella</i> Honeysuckle Moth
Early Tooth-striped	<i>Coleophora alcyonipennella</i> Clover Case-bearer
Brown-line Bright-eye	<i>Mompha epilobiella</i>
Pale Pinion	<i>Acleris literana</i>
Vine's Rustic	<i>Enarmonia formosana</i> Cherry Bark Moth
	<i>Acentria ephemerella</i> Water Veneer

Among the new micro moths, the Clover Case-bearer - *Coleophora alcyonipennella* - turned up in the light trap at the Birdfair on 23<sup>rd</sup> June. This one had to be referred to the experts as dissection is needed to be sure of the identity of this tiny moth which is very similar to several other *Coleophora* species. Another possible new species *Parornix anglicella* could not be accepted by the VC64 recorder as adults of all *Parornix* species are very similar to each other and are only really identifiable by rearing from host plants or by examining genitalia.

The Indian Meal Moth - *Plodia interpunctella* - was a new micro last year and it was found again this year. It is described as a cosmopolitan pest of stored products and is usually encountered indoors. The larval food plants are stored products such as grain, flour and cereals. The one found in the Visitor Centre on 18<sup>th</sup> June last year was the only Yorkshire record. This year a total of seven were recorded in the Visitor Centre including two mating pairs. This species has undoubtedly arrived here with bird seed.

Our Tansy Bank near the Visitor Centre has produced two scarce micro moths in recent years and both were recorded again this year. *Dichrorampha sedatana* was reported on 12<sup>th</sup> May (JWC) and the Tansy Plume Moth - *Gillmeria ochrodactyla* - on 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> July (PM/JWC). *Dichrorampha* species are very difficult to separate and dissection is usually needed to be absolutely sure. However, the food plant they are found on is an important guide.

Hemp Agrimony is a common plant on the Reserve and in 2016 a new micro moth - the Hemp-agrimony Plume Moth - *Adaina microdactyla* - was recorded for the first time. This is classed as a rare and local resident in Yorkshire. Last year five were found on a small amount of Hemp Agrimony growing just outside the Visitor Centre and this year one was again recorded. However, Hemp Agrimony is abundant around the Lagoon and it would be interesting to see how many could be found there.

One species which is certainly not rare at Rodley is the micro moth *Pyrausta aurata* and it is all down to one native plant which has been introduced here - Wild Marjoram. A small amount was introduced in the Bee Garden and on the Butterfly Bank a few years ago and it has self-seeded and spread. The flowers are popular with several butterfly species, in particular the Gatekeeper, but it is also a larval food plant for this pretty moth which is sometimes referred to as the Mint Moth (as it will also use several species of mint). It can often be seen during the day flying in sunshine but it also comes readily to light. Probably thanks to a good summer, it was particularly numerous this year and 18 were caught in one light trap set in the Bee Garden on 15<sup>th</sup> August. It is double-brooded and can be found from March until early September.

Like last year, the day-flying moths enjoyed mixed fortunes. The Small Yellow Underwing is a moth of flower-rich grassland and is still scarce in Yorkshire but 26 records from 24 sites in 2017 was the biggest total yet for the county. Last year five were recorded on John Ackroyd Meadow in June and five were again recorded in the same area this year. Burnet Moths have been hard to find in recent years but there was a distinct improvement this year. Six Six-spot Burnets were reported on Mike Fisk Meadow on 7<sup>th</sup> July (AW), six on the same meadow on 14<sup>th</sup> July and one on Field Scabious on the Butterfly Bank on the same date (PM/BM). However, it was another very poor year for the Cinnabar Moth with just one reported on 2<sup>nd</sup> June at the Dragonfly Ponds (PM) and just two caterpillars on Common Ragwort on 7<sup>th</sup> July (AW). Common Ragwort is the larval food plant and we do have to remove it from the two meadows before cutting but there is still plenty all around the Reserve, particularly on the wetlands.

Another day flyer, the Chimneysweeper is far from common here but one or two turn up most years, usually on John Ackroyd Meadow. Unusually, there were no records last year but there were two this year - a single moth on the Butterfly Bank on 13<sup>th</sup> June and one on Mike Fisk Meadow on 17<sup>th</sup> June (PM/BM).

Among the migrant moths, there was no repeat of the huge influx of Diamond-back Moths - *Plutella xylostella* - which occurred in 2016 - the biggest since 1958 - but a few were found and five turned up in light traps. It was a much better year for the Silver Y. Last year only four were caught in the light traps but this year 32. Dark Sword-grass was recorded for the first time last year and two were caught in light traps this year on 31<sup>st</sup> July and 28<sup>th</sup> August. Hummingbird Hawkmoths have been few and far between here but one was seen feeding on buddleia flowers outside the Visitor Centre on 25<sup>th</sup> August.

With most of our larger moths in decline nationally 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.

	<b>Species</b>	<b>Number caught In 2018</b>	<b>Position in 2017</b>
1st	Large Yellow Underwing	209	1st
2nd	Common Rustic/Lesser Common Rustic	151	2nd
3rd	Square-spot Rustic	120	3rd
4th	Heart and Dart	117	
5th	Marbled Minor agg.	80	

Smoky Wainscot and Flame were 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> in 2017.

## Dragonflies and Damselflies

It was a good, but not exceptional, year for dragonflies and damselflies. The recovery from the 2015 Boxing Day flood seems now to be complete and the ponds that have been re-lined during the last few years are doing well. Much work has been carried out, clearing excess vegetation from some of the ponds.

The Azure Damselfly *Coenagrion puella* has made a complete recovery with over 100 individuals seen on one day at the Dragonfly Ponds (and around 200 on the Reserve as a whole). Similarly, the numbers of Large Red Damselfly *Pyrrhosoma nymphula* and Emerald Damselfly *Lestes sponsa* were higher than in the previous year. The Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum* has also made a good recovery and in excess of 30 were noted on a couple of days. Both of the Chasers (Four-spotted *Libellula quadrimaculata* and Broad-bodied *L. depressa*) were seen in reasonable numbers but clearing some of the more dense vegetation will hopefully produce more sightings in 2019 – they like open water. Of the Hawkers, the Brown Hawker *Aeshna grandis*, as usual, was by far the most common but Migrant *A. mixta* and Southern *A. cyanea* were both recorded. Indeed, exuviae of the last of these were found, establishing ‘Proof of Breeding’. However, many of the species recorded are almost certainly breeding. It would be helpful if 2019 could be a year for recording exuviae, as their presence shows that a species has gone through a complete life cycle. In 2019 the Reserve will become a recognised Hot Spot for dragonflies and damselflies.

Peter Mill

### **Large Red Damselfly (*Pyrrhosoma nymphula*)**

Numbers last year were disappointing with no observers reporting more than three. There was a distinct improvement this year. One on the Education Pond on 1<sup>st</sup> May (JK) was the first of the year, nine days later than last year’s joint earliest ever date. The next day one was recorded on Poplar Ponds (MG). Six teneral were counted at this site on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> May with two teneral on the Dragonfly Ponds on the same dates (JLW). On 7<sup>th</sup> May, eight on Poplar Ponds

included five females, one of these ovipositing (JLW). Five males and a female were counted at the Dragonfly Ponds on the same date (JLW). A total of 14 at the Dragonfly Ponds on 14<sup>th</sup> May included three pairs in tandem and two females ovipositing (PJM). Away from the ponds, a male and female were in tandem on the old Dipping Pond on 11<sup>th</sup> June (PJM *et al*). A male and female were seen in tandem on Bruce's Pond on the same date (PJM). A male on Mill Pond on 2<sup>nd</sup> July was the last of the year (PJM), two weeks later than last year.

**Azure Damselfly** (*Coenagrion puella*)

This is the commonest damselfly to be found at the Dragonfly Ponds but the first sighting this year was a teneral on Poplar Ponds on 6<sup>th</sup> May (JLW), four days earlier than last year. The first counts were carried out at the Dragonfly Ponds a week later on 14<sup>th</sup> May when six were recorded during an afternoon visit with one pair in tandem (PJM). Numbers increased considerably in June and a count on 11<sup>th</sup> at the various ponds (PJM/DG) produced the following results.

Site	Total	Male	Female	Teneral	Pairs in Tandem	Pairs in Wheel	Ovipositing
Dipping Ponds	52	28	24	-	3	-	20
Education Pond	15	11	4	-	1	-	1
DFP	108	72	36	-	9	3	24
Poplar Ponds	37	30	6	1	1	4	1

A further count was carried out at the various sites on 2<sup>nd</sup> July.

Site	Total	Male	Female	Teneral	Pairs in Tandem	Pairs in Wheel	Ovipositing
Dipping Ponds	21	17	4	-	1	-	3
Education Pond	6	4	2	-	2	-	-
DFP	58	40	18	-	13	1	4
Poplar Ponds	9	6	3	-	-	-	3

Breeding activity was last noted on 11<sup>th</sup> August - a female ovipositing at the Dragonfly Ponds (JLW). Two males on Mabgate Pond on 1<sup>st</sup> September were the last of the year (JLW), five days later than last year.

**Common Blue Damselfly** (*Enallagma cyathigerum*)

This is a common species on the main wetland areas but as these are only viewable from the hides the number of records received is inevitably very low. A few can be found on the Dragonfly Ponds with a bit of patient searching but they certainly have a preference for larger water bodies. One photographed by the Lagoon on 10<sup>th</sup> June was the first of the year (BM) but there were several records subsequently from various ponds. On 1<sup>st</sup> August a male was recorded on Mabgate Pond; three were at the edge of Tim's Field on 11<sup>th</sup> August; two males were seen at the Dragonfly Ponds on 25<sup>th</sup> August; two males were on Chadwick Pond on 1<sup>st</sup> September and four were found on the Dipping Ponds on 12<sup>th</sup> September (JLW). A male on the Dipping Ponds on 19<sup>th</sup> September was the last of the year (JLW) - this the latest last record since 2006 (4<sup>th</sup> October 2006)

**Blue-tailed Damselfly** (*Ischnura elegans*)

This species is never numerous here and most records tend to be of just one or two insects. However, there were several reports of between three and seven this year with a rare double figure count in August. Two on Bruce's Pond on 7<sup>th</sup> May were the first of the year (JWC), just three days earlier than last year. Two were recorded at the Dragonfly Ponds on 14<sup>th</sup> May (PJM) but there were then no further sightings until 1<sup>st</sup> June. On 23<sup>rd</sup> June seven were seen on Scarborough Pond (PJM) but, as in the previous four years, there were no reports of breeding activity. Six were recorded at the Dragonfly Ponds on 21<sup>st</sup> July and four on 25<sup>th</sup> July (JLW). On 25<sup>th</sup> August 12+ were counted on the ponds (JLW) - but still no breeding activity. The last record of the year - a single male on one of the Dipping Ponds on 12<sup>th</sup> September (JLW) - was more than two weeks later than last year.

**Emerald Damselfly** (*Lestes sponsa*)

It was a rather better year for this species after a poor year in 2017 when sightings were reported on just six dates. One on Scarborough Pond on 23<sup>rd</sup> June was the first of the year (EG), three days earlier

than last year and the earliest ever date by one day. The following day three males were recorded - two on Chadwick Pond and one on Bruce's Pond (PM/BM). Breeding activity was first noted on 4<sup>th</sup> July - a pair in wheel at the Dragonfly Ponds (JLW). Five males were recorded at the ponds on this occasion. Away from the Dragonfly Ponds, one was seen on Poplar Ponds on the same date (DG). On 15<sup>th</sup> July two pairs were in tandem on Mabgate and Woodhead Ponds (JLW) and on 4<sup>th</sup> August two pairs were again seen in tandem at the ponds (JLW). The best count of the year came on 11<sup>th</sup> August at the Dragonfly Ponds - eight males and two females - the females both ovipositing (JLW). A single male on Woodhead Pond on 1<sup>st</sup> September was the last of the year (JLW), five days later than last year. Interestingly, breeding activity was only reported on this pond last year.

**Banded Demoiselle** (*Calopteryx splendens*)

After a very poor year in 2016, almost certainly as a result of the 2015 Boxing Day flood, this species bounced back somewhat in 2017 with a best count of 19 on 12<sup>th</sup> May - the earliest ever record. This year was rather disappointing with only nine records submitted and only one report of more than four. As a river breeding species this may be more down to the limited access to the riverbank and may not be a true reflection of the numbers actually present. Two males and a female on the River Path on 23<sup>rd</sup> May were the first of the year (JLW). Six of the nine records, however, came from the Dragonfly Ponds, with a best count here of four - two males and two females on 1<sup>st</sup> June (JLW). Fortunately, there was one very good count on 11<sup>th</sup> June - a total of 23 on the Fish Pass -15 males and eight females (PM/BM) recorded during habitat management work. There was only one sighting after 4<sup>th</sup> July - a male on Bruce's Pond on 4<sup>th</sup> August, the last of the year (JLW) - six days earlier than last year. There were no reports of breeding activity.

**Common Hawker** (*Aeshna juncea*)

This species prefers acidic upland areas but there have been a few records on the Reserve in the past. There have, however, been no sightings in the last two years.

### **Migrant Hawker** (*Aeshna mixta*)

This is a species of late summer and autumn. Last year the first sighting was reported on 5<sup>th</sup> August and it was the same again this year - two males being seen on the path between the Dragonfly Ponds and the Education Pond (JS). There were sightings on just two further dates in August with one on 11<sup>th</sup> and three males on the River Path on 25<sup>th</sup> (JLW). Like last year, the best counts were made in September but were a little higher than last year. Eight males and one female were recorded at the Dragonfly Ponds on 1<sup>st</sup> and five males were there on 12<sup>th</sup> (JLW). Away from the ponds, five were seen at the edge of the Lagoon just outside the Lagoon Hide on 28<sup>th</sup> September (PM/BM). There were sightings throughout much of October thanks to some lovely sunny days and a male on the Willow Path on 24<sup>th</sup> October was the last of the year (JS), just a day earlier than last year. There were no reports of breeding activity this year.

### **Southern Hawker** (*Aeshna cyanea*)

A male in the Mike Fisk Meadow hedgerow, just down the road from the Visitor Centre, on 18<sup>th</sup> June was the first of the year (PM/BM *et al*), some two and a half weeks earlier than last year. Two exuviae were found at the Dragonfly Ponds on 2<sup>nd</sup> July (PJM/DG) but there were no further sightings of dragonflies until 11<sup>th</sup> July when a female was on Chadwick Pond (JH). Breeding activity was noted on six dates this year, the first on 21<sup>st</sup> July - a female ovipositing on Pebble Beach Pond (JLW). On 25<sup>th</sup> July and 1<sup>st</sup> August a female was observed ovipositing on Woodhead Pond (JLW/JS). A male and female were on Coop Pond on 25<sup>th</sup> August and on Woodhead Pond on 1<sup>st</sup> September, in each case the female ovipositing (JLW). Single males were seen on several of the ponds in the latter part of September and on 17<sup>th</sup> October a female was recorded ovipositing on Bruce's Pond (JLW/PW). The next day, on 18<sup>th</sup>, a male on the Dipping Ponds was to be the last sighting of the year (PM/BM), just three days later than last year.

### **Brown Hawker** (*Aeshna grandis*)

This is by far the commonest of the large dragonflies to be found on the Reserve. One at the Dragonfly Ponds on 10<sup>th</sup> June (JLW) was the earliest ever first date for this species here, the previous earliest being 11<sup>th</sup> June in 2011. There were no further sightings until 24<sup>th</sup> June when one was on Mabgate Pond. Breeding activity was first

reported on 2<sup>nd</sup> July - a pair in wheel at the Dragonfly Ponds (PJM/DG). On 3<sup>rd</sup> July a female was ovipositing on Co-op Pond (PM/BM) and on 4<sup>th</sup> single females were ovipositing on Mabgate and Bruce's Ponds (DG). Brown Hawkers will often fly late into the evening and there were several reports in July of individuals as late as 9.30pm during bat surveys (PM/BM). There were some good counts at the Dragonfly Ponds, particularly in August and the beginning of September.

Date	Number	Ovipositing	Observer
4 <sup>th</sup> August	20+	5	JLW
11 <sup>th</sup> August	12+	-	JLW
25 <sup>th</sup> August	14+	-	JLW
1 <sup>st</sup> Sept	11	2	JLW

Breeding activity was last noted on 29<sup>th</sup> September - a female ovipositing on Bruce's Pond (JLW). This was also the last record of the year, five days later than last year.

### **Emperor Dragonfly** (*Anax imperator*)

Each year produces just a handful of records. There were sightings on only three dates last year and six dates this year but breeding activity was recorded on four of these. A male and female on the Education Pond on 24<sup>th</sup> June were the first of the year (JLW/JS), six days later than last year. The other five sightings all involved single females. On 3<sup>rd</sup> July one was reported ovipositing on Mabgate Pond (PM/BM *et al*) The next three sightings were all on the New Dipping Pond - on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> July ovipositing (JK) and on 30<sup>th</sup> July (PJM). On 4<sup>th</sup> August a female was again recorded ovipositing on Mabgate Pond (JLW) - this the last sighting of the year.

### **Four-spotted Chaser** (*Libellula quadrimaculata*)

After a very poor year in 2016 with sightings reported on just four days, there was an improvement last year with sightings on 11 dates. This year there were records on 12 dates. One on the Education Pond on 12<sup>th</sup> May (JWC) was the first of the year, more than two weeks earlier than last year and the earliest ever date by some four days. Breeding activity was noted at the Dragonfly Ponds on 27<sup>th</sup> May with two females ovipositing (JLW) Three males were seen on the same occasion. Single females were subsequently reported

ovipositing on 10<sup>th</sup> June and 4<sup>th</sup> July (JLW) and a pair was in tandem on Co-op Pond on the latter date (DG). These were the last sightings of the year - nearly four weeks later than last year.

**Broad-bodied Chaser** (*Libellula depressa*)

A male on Poplar Pond on 12<sup>th</sup> May (JS/JLW) was the first of the year, 12 days earlier than last year. Breeding activity was first noted a week later on 19<sup>th</sup> May - a female ovipositing on Pebble beach Pond (JLW). Two males and an ovipositing female were recorded at the Dragonfly Ponds on 27<sup>th</sup> May (JLW). A count of seven at the ponds on 1<sup>st</sup> June included two females on Co-op Pond and a male and female in wheel on Woodhead Pond (PM/BM). There was no further evidence of breeding activity but there were a number of subsequent sightings of single males and females at the ponds and two males on Chadwick Pond on 15<sup>th</sup> July (JLW). Away from the Dragonfly Ponds, a male was seen in the Reedbed on 2<sup>nd</sup> July (PM). A male on Chadwick Pond on 21<sup>st</sup> July (JLW) was the last of the year, nine days later than last year.

**Common Darter** (*Sympetrum striolatum*)

Flying well into the autumn, this is a common species on the Reserve. Numbers in 2017 were somewhat down on the previous year but there was a considerable improvement this year with some good counts at the Dragonfly Ponds. A male on the Long Ditch on 30<sup>th</sup> June (JLW) and a teneral on Tim's Field on the same date (JWC) were the first of the year, just a day earlier than last year. The first sighting on Poplar Ponds came on 4<sup>th</sup> July - a single teneral (DG/PM). Breeding activity was first noted at the Dragonfly Ponds on 23<sup>rd</sup> July - a pair in wheel (PJM). Numbers started to build in the latter part of July and there were some good counts at the Dragonfly Ponds in August and September.

Date	Total	Male	Fem	Ten	Wheel	Tandem	Ovip	Observer
1 <sup>st</sup> Aug	8	6	2				2	JLW
4 <sup>th</sup> Aug	20+						2	JLW
11 <sup>th</sup> Aug	20+							JLW
1 <sup>st</sup> Sept	20+						5	JLW
12 <sup>th</sup> Sept	30+						3	JLW
29 <sup>th</sup> Sept	30+							JLW

Numbers started to fall away in October but there was, nevertheless, a good count of 12 on 17<sup>th</sup> October with 10 males and two ovipositing females (JLW). Breeding activity was last reported on 22<sup>nd</sup> October - a single female ovipositing on the New Dipping Pond (PM/BM) and a pair in tandem at the Dragonfly Ponds (PJM). There were two sightings in November, these the latest ever of this species. Single dragonflies were seen over the road by the Lagoon Hide on 10<sup>th</sup> November (JWC) and at the Dragonfly Ponds on 12<sup>th</sup>. The previous latest sighting was 7<sup>th</sup> November in 2005 and 2015.

**Ruddy Darter** (*Sympetrum sanguineum*)

This is a scarce species on the Reserve and sightings are few and far between. There was just one record of a single male on Mill Pond last year. There were sightings on two dates this year. On 25<sup>th</sup> July a male was recorded on Woodhead Pond (JLW) and on 25<sup>th</sup> August a male was seen on Bruce's Pond (JLW). To be certain of this species photographic evidence is needed, preferably showing the leg colour.

**Black Darter** (*Sympetrum danae*)

A male on Chadwick Pond on 14<sup>th</sup> July (JLW/JS) was only the third record of this species, which is more usually seen on acidic pools on heathland and moorland. Prior to this sighting there was one record in both 2013 and 2014.

**Black-tailed Skimmer** (*Orthetrum cancellatum*)

Last year there were sightings on just four dates and it was the same again this year, none of them involving more than one individual. A teneral on Chadwick Pond on 27<sup>th</sup> May was the first of the year (JLW/KLi), some two and a half weeks earlier than last year's earliest ever first date on 14<sup>th</sup> June. A male was seen on the Wet Grassland on 13<sup>th</sup> June (TC) and, on 8<sup>th</sup> July, a female was on Poplar Field (JS/JLW). On 15<sup>th</sup> July a female was observed ovipositing on Mabgate Pond (JLW) - this the last sighting of the year and two weeks later 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 - 2018

Species	First Date	Last date
Large Red Damselfly	1 <sup>st</sup> May	2 <sup>nd</sup> July
Azure Damselfly	6 <sup>th</sup> May	1 <sup>st</sup> September
Common Blue Damselfly	10 <sup>th</sup> June	19 <sup>th</sup> September
Blue-tailed Damselfly	7 <sup>th</sup> May	12 <sup>th</sup> September
Emerald Damselfly	23 <sup>rd</sup> June *	1 <sup>st</sup> September
Banded Demoiselle	23 <sup>rd</sup> May	4 <sup>th</sup> August
Common Hawker	-	-
Migrant Hawker	5 <sup>th</sup> August	24 <sup>th</sup> October
Southern Hawker	18 <sup>th</sup> June	18 <sup>th</sup> October
Brown Hawker	10 <sup>th</sup> June *	29 <sup>th</sup> September
Emperor Dragonfly	24 <sup>th</sup> June	4 <sup>th</sup> August
Four-spotted Chaser	12 <sup>th</sup> May *	4 <sup>th</sup> July
Broad-bodied Chaser	12 <sup>th</sup> May	21 <sup>st</sup> July
Common Darter	30 <sup>th</sup> June	12 <sup>th</sup> November **
Ruddy Darter	25 <sup>th</sup> July	25 <sup>th</sup> August
Black Darter	14 <sup>th</sup> July	14 <sup>th</sup> July
Black-tailed Skimmer	27 <sup>th</sup> May	15 <sup>th</sup> July
Keeled Skimmer	-	-

\* Earliest ever record

\*\* Latest ever record

## **RODLEY'S POND LIFE IN 2018**

In 2018 several of the Dragonfly Ponds were sampled along with the Education Pond and the Poplar Ponds. Single samples were obtained from the Kingfisher Pond, the Reedbed and a water butt in the Poplar Field. Frogspawn was recorded in some of the Dragonfly Ponds and almost 700 toads were counted on one day in early April, the highest number ever. Smooth Newts and their young were recorded but it is several years since Palmate Newts were seen.

### **Aquatic Insects**

As usual, the most common insect larva was that of the Pond Olive Mayfly *Cloëon dipterum*. The mass emergence of this species has still not been observed but this is unsurprising as it occurs at dusk when the Reserve is closed. A welcome find was of larvae of the Anglers' Curse Mayfly *Caenis* sp., almost certainly *C. horaria*. This species is found in most years but not very often; the larvae are poor swimmers and crawl around in the silt at the bottom of the pond. They feed on fine particles of organic matter in the silt. The commonest odonate larvae recorded were those of the Azure Damselfly *Coenagrion puella* but those of the Large Red Damselfly *Pyrrhosoma nymphula*, Blue-tailed Damselfly *Ischnura elegans* and Emerald Damselfly *Lestes sponsa* were also found, as were larvae of the Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum*. Particularly exciting was the discovery of two exuviae of the Southern Hawker (*Aeshna cyanea*) on the large Dipping Pond; positive proof of breeding, i.e. that a complete life cycle has occurred. Furthermore, Emperor Dragonfly (*Anax imperator*) were observed ovipositing in the same pond on a few occasions, so we hope the pond dipping in 2019 will demonstrate successful breeding. In the Education Pond, Hawker dragonfly larvae were less common than normal but Darter larvae (probably Common Darter) were more frequent and larvae of *Libellula* sp., not commonly found, were also recorded on several occasions.

Three types of Water Boatman were recorded – The Lesser Water Boatman (a corixid), which is a front swimmer and is herbivorous, along with two backswimmers. The backswimmer *Notonecta* sp. is about 15mm long; it is carnivorous and will either sit and wait for its

prey or actively hunt it. The Pigmy Backswimmer *Plea minutissima* is only about 2.5mm long and feeds on small animals such as water fleas. Pond skaters (*Gerris* sp.) were plentiful, while the Saucer Bug *Ilyocoris cimicoides*, Water Scorpion *Nepa cinerea* and Water Stick Insect *Ranatra linearis* were all recorded. However, the Water Measurer *Hydrometra stagnorum* has not been seen since 2016. The Water Stick Insect is becoming more plentiful in the Dragonfly and Education Ponds and various developmental stages, including adults, were seen. In contrast, in 2018 the Water Scorpion was only recorded from the Education Pond.

Caddis fly larvae were recorded, including some limnephilids but the only caddis identified to species level in 2018 was the swimming leptocerid *Triaenodes bicolor*. Amongst the dipterans, larvae of the Phantom Midges (*Chaoborus* sp. and *Psectrocladius obivus*) and of a culicine mosquito were recorded. The Brown China-mark moth *Elophila nympheata*, a pyralid, was again in evidence. Whirligig beetles (*Gyrinus* sp.) were, as usual, present and an adult haliplid beetle (*Halipus* sp.) was identified. An adult *Hyphydrus ovatus*, a dytiscid beetle, was recorded in 2008 and a larva of this species was found this year.

### Table 1. Aquatic Insects

Ephemeroptera
Baetidae
<i>Cloëon dipterum</i>
<i>Caenis horaria</i> (Angler's Curse)
Odonata
Zygoptera
Coenagrionidae
<i>Coenagrion puella</i> (Azure Damselfly)
<i>Pyrrhosoma nymphula</i> (Large Red Damselfly)
<i>Ischnura elegans</i> (Blue-tailed Damselfly)
Lestidae
<i>Lestes sponsa</i> (Emerald Damselfly)
Anisoptera
Aeshnidae

*Aeshna cyanea* (Southern Hawker)  
*Aeshna grandis* (Brown Hawker)  
Libellulidae  
*Sympetrum striolatum* (Common Darter)  
*Libellula* sp.

## Hemiptera

### Heteroptera

#### Corixidae

*Corixa* sp. (Water Boatman – Front Swimmer)

#### 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)

#### Pleidae

*Plea minutissima (leachi)* (Pigmy Back Swimmer)

## Trichoptera

### Leptoceridae

*Triaenodes bicolor*

### Limnephilidae

Limnephilid

## Diptera

### Nematocera

#### Chaoboridae

*Chaoborus* sp (Phantom Midge)

#### Chironomidae

*Psectrocladius obivus* (Non-biting Midge larva)

#### Culicidae

*Anopheles* sp.

Culicine Mosquito

Lepidoptera

Pyralidae

*Elophila nympheata* (Brown China-mark Moth)

Coleoptera

Dytiscidae

*Hyphydrus ovatus* [larva]

*Dytiscus* sp.

Gyrinidae (Whirligig Beetles)

*Gyrinus* sp.

Haliplidae

*Haliphus* sp.

Hygrobiidae

*Hygrobia hermanni*

### Other Aquatic Invertebrates

Two species of flatworm were recorded in 2018. *Schmidtea* (*Dugesia*) *lugubris* has two eyes, so shaped that they make it look mournful (lugubrious), hence its name. In contrast *Polycelis nigra* has a row of about 10 eyes around the periphery of its head. *Schmidtea lugubris* has not been seen since 2015 and *P. nigra* not since 2016, so these were very welcome records. Three species of leech have been recorded. *Erpobdella octoculata* and *E. testacea* both have eight eyes in two transverse rows and they can be distinguished from each other by their body patterns. They eat their prey, which consists of small invertebrates, whole. *Theromyzon tessulatum* (Common Bird Leech) has eight eyes in two longitudinal rows. It parasitizes wildfowl, where it can normally be found attached inside their respiratory tract. An interesting find was of one hanging from the surface film by its sucker in a water butt.

Amongst the crustaceans, the Freshwater Shrimp (*Crangonyx pseudogracilis*), the Water Slater (*Asellus aquaticus*) and the Water Fleas *Daphnia* sp. and *Cyclops* sp. were all common, although the last two varied in quantity between sampling occasions. On some occasions *Daphnia* and *Cyclops* contained eggs; in *Cyclops* these were in two egg sacs at the rear end of its body. Another crustacean

found was a specimen of the tiny ostracod Seed Shrimp *Cypris* which couldn't be identified to species level.

## Table 2. Other aquatic invertebrates

### Platyhelminthes

#### Dugesiidae

*Schmidtea (Dugesia) lugubris*

#### Planariidae

*Polycelis nigra*

### Annelida

#### Hirudinea

#### Erpobdellidae

*Erpobdella octoculata*

*Erpobdella testacea*

#### Rhynchobdellidae

*Theromyzon tessulatum* (Common Bird Leech)

### Crustacea

#### Cladocera

*Daphnia* sp. (Water Flea)

#### Copepoda

*Cyclops* sp. (Water Flea)

#### Ostracoda

*Cypris* sp. (Seed Shrimp) Malacostraca

#### Amphipoda

*Crangonyx pseudogracilis* (Freshwater Shrimp)

#### Isopoda

*Asellus aquaticus* (Water Slater)

### Mollusca

#### Gastropoda

#### 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) [probably]

Pea Mussel

The Great Pond Snail (*Lymnea stagnalis*), Great Ramshorn Snail (*Planorbarius corneus*), Keeled Ramshorn Snail (*Planorbis carinata*) and *Radix balthica* were all recorded frequently. Some of those identified as *Planorbis carinata* may be *Planorbis planorbis*; this will be checked in 2019. The Bladder Snail (*Physa fontinalis*) or *Physella gyrina* was found in the Reed Beds; again which species it is needs to be checked. Bivalve molluscs were also found but these are not easy to identify. One was probably the Lake Orb Mussel (*Musculium lacustre*); others were almost certainly pea mussels.

Our thanks to all those who have helped with the pond dipping and identification.

Jerry Knapp & Peter Mill.

## FUNGUS REPORT

Two Fungus Forays were again held this year, the first on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> October for the Rodley Robins and the second on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> October following the Pie and Peas Event. Despite a very wet day on 12<sup>th</sup> October the ground had been very dry up to that point and fungi were not easy to find, particularly on the meadows. The contrast in temperature for the two events was quite dramatic - 23°C for the first one and just 8°C for the second just two weeks later, both fortunately enjoying dry albeit windy conditions. The most productive site proved to be the Coppice and a full circuit of the perimeter of it was walked on both occasions. The following is a combined list of species found on the two forays.

<i>Ascocoryne sarcoides</i>	Purple Brain Fungus	Willow Path
<i>Auricularia auricula-judae</i>	Jelly Ear	Path to Manager's Gdn
<i>Conocybe tenera</i>	Common Conecap	Path to Manager's Gdn
<i>Coprinellus disseminatus</i>	Fairy Inkcap	Willow Path
<i>Coprinellus micaceus</i>	Glistening Inkcap	Coppice
<i>Coprinopsis atramentaria</i>	Common Inkcap	
<i>Coprinopsis lagopus</i>	Hare's Foot Inkcap	Coppice
<i>Cortinarius sp.</i>	A Webcap	Path to Manager's Gdn
<i>Daedaleopsis confragosa</i>	Blushing Bracket	Coppice
<i>Diatrype stigma</i>	Black Tarcrust	Coppice and Bee Garden
<i>Ganoderma australe (adpersum)</i>	Southern Bracket	Coppice + small ones on Willow Path
<i>Heboloma crustuliniforme s.</i>	Poison Pie	Path to Manager's Gdn
<i>Heboloma radicosum</i>	Rooting Poison Pie	
<i>Hyphodontia sambuci</i>	Elder Whitewash	Coppice
<i>Hypoxylon fuscum</i>	Hazel Woodwart	
<i>Lycoperdon excipuliformis</i>	Pestle Puffball	MF Meadow and Path to Manager's Garden
<i>Lycoperdon perlatum</i>	Common Puffball	MF Meadow
<i>Mycena aetites</i>	Drab Bonnet	Coppice
<i>Mycena inclinata</i>	Clustered Bonnet	Coppice
<i>Mycena vitilis</i>	Snapping Bonnet	Coppice
<i>Panaeolina sp.</i>	A Mottlegill	Path to Manager's Gdn
<i>Panaeolina foenicisii</i>	Mower's Mushroom	
<i>Parasola plicatilis</i>	Japanese Parasol	Path to Manager's Gdn
<i>Paxillus involutus</i>	Brown Rollrim	By Manager's Gdn Hide
<i>Pholiota squarrosa</i>	Shaggy Scalycap	Coppice
<i>Phragmidium violaceum</i>	Violet Bramble Rust	
<i>Polyporus leptoccephalus</i>	Blackfoot Polypore	
<i>Postia tephroleuca</i>	Blueing Bracket	Coppice

<i>Rhytisma acerinum</i>	Tar Spot	Manager's Garden on Sycamore leaves
<i>Schizopora paradoxa</i>	Split Porecrust	
<i>Scleroderma verrucosum</i>	Scaly Earthball	Coppice
<i>Trametes versicolor</i>	Turkeytails	Coppice
<i>Xanthoria parietina</i>	Yellow Sunburst Lichen	Path to Manager's Gdn
<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 greatly appreciated by all involved. The main foray, following the Pie and Peas Event on 27<sup>th</sup> October, had its usual big following with 34 adults and two children.

The Oyster Mushroom *Pleurotus ostreatus* was found growing on a wooden trailer during the forays last year. It didn't appear during this year's forays but a lovely fresh group was found in a rather nicer location on an old elder stump at the edge of the Coppice in November, this during a spell of much damper, indeed wet weather.

Other interesting late autumn finds included Yellow Brain Fungus *Tremella mesenterica*, Crystal Brain Fungus *Exidia nucleata* and Cobalt Crust *Terana caerulea*. The Crystal Brain Fungus was found growing up between the decking on the new Dipping Pond. These three species, together with Purple Brain Fungus, also known as Purple Jellydisc Fungus *Ascocoryne sarcoides*, are shown in the photo section of this report.

Peter Murphy

## **Photograph Credits**

We are grateful to the following for allowing us to use their images.

Avocets by Barbara Murphy  
Cobalt Crust Fungus by John Cooper  
Common Blue Butterfly by Barbara Murphy  
Crystal Brain Fungus by Barbara Murphy  
Emerald Damselfly by Barbara Murphy  
Emerald Damselfly Nymph by Jerry Knapp  
Fox by Barbara Murphy  
Garganey by Tony Collinson  
Golden-bloomed Grey Longhorn Beetle by Barbara Murphy  
Green Sandpiper by Alan Patterson  
Holly Blue Butterfly by Barbara Murphy  
Larva of the Diving Beetle *Hyphydrus ovata* by Jerry Knapp  
Little Gull by Tony Collinson  
Long-winged Cone-head *Conocephalus discolor* by Madge Gibson  
Patchwork Leaf-cutter Bee by Madge Gibson  
Purple Jellydisc Fungus by Barbara Murphy  
Roedeer family by John Cooper  
Yellow Brain Fungus by John Cooper

