



Reserve Opening Times:

Wednesday: 10am - 4pm
Saturday: 10am - 4pm
Sunday: 10am - 4pm

Trustees:

Richard Fuller - Treasurer - to 3rd July 2014
Penny Smith - Treasurer - from 3rd July 2014
Alan Patchett - Retired 4th March 2014
David Nesham
John Brook
Graham Barlow
Ian Willoughby
Jerry Knapp

Company Secretary - Peter Murphy

Report Editor: Peter Murphy

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Banded Demoiselle by Jamie Illingworth

Donacia versicolorea and Small Yellow Underwing by Rob Simpson

Emerald Damselfly by Richard Musgrave

Fox by Andrew Thompson

Southern Hawker Emergence by Liz Walley

Water Stick Insect/Water Scorpion and Comma Chrysalis by Jerry Knapp

White-letter Hairstreak and *Ochsenheimeria taurella* by Madge Gibson

Back Cover by Madge Gibson and Rob Simpson

Front Cover and other photographs by Barbara Murphy

Introduction

2014 was the year of three successful major projects on the reserve. We always marvel at the amount of work our band of volunteers achieve but they have excelled themselves this year. In autumn 2013 they started work on the construction of an artificial sand martin bank on the Lagoon. A stormy December and a very wet January and February saw them working in a sea of mud at times but by the end of February the project was completed and all we needed were the sand martins. And they arrived in exceptional numbers, reaching an estimated 500 over the reserve at times in the early part of May. By the middle of May the first holes were being excavated in the nesting bank and by the middle of June around 70 nesting holes were being used. It was a major success story with large numbers of juveniles on the wing in the summer months.

Another important project was the continuation of the permeable hard path from the Willow Path Hide to the Reedbed Hide. A prolonged period of wet weather in February had taken its toll on the grass path and some areas had to be cordoned off for the public's safety so a new hard path had become a necessity rather than a luxury. Thanks to a lot of hard graft this task was completed in June. The new path has made walking on here in the winter months much easier and has been particularly welcomed by wheelchair users.

The third project this year was the construction of a thatched gazebo on the site of the children's teaching area near the Education Pond. This was completed in December using reed from our own Reedbed for the thatching. Our volunteers' ingenuity shows no limits! This will prove an invaluable asset for school visits but will be very welcome for any visitors caught in a downpour at the otherwise very open eastern end of the reserve. Our first lodger turned up before the work was even finished - a barn owl which roosted in the eaves overnight for the remainder of the month.

Yet another exciting project in 2014 was the Harvest Mouse Breeding Programme which culminated in the release of a total of 496 mice behind the Reedbed and by the Duck Marsh. Initial signs are that these have settled in well, nests and juveniles having already been found during subsequent surveys.

There were some changes behind the scenes too this year. In March we said goodbye to Trustee/Director Alan Patchett who retired after more than 16 years on the Trust. Alan had been involved with the reserve since the very outset and had a wealth of knowledge about the site. In July we also said goodbye to fellow Trustee/Director Richard Fuller. Richard had been the Trust's Treasurer since its inception on 6th November 1997. Richard has now retired to pursue other interests. In his place we were delighted to welcome Penny Smith as the new Treasurer of the Trust.

We again had a full programme of activities at the Reserve this year. On Easter Sunday an Easter Egg Hunt for children organised by Aireborough Rotary Club was well supported and raised valuable funds for Children's Air Ambulance and Martin House as well as for the Reserve. A similar event is planned for 2015.

There were the usual Bird Walks on 4th May and 21st September, Bat Nights on 19th July and 9th August, a Small Mammal Survey on 2nd August and during the school summer holidays weekly Moth Trapping Events on Wednesday mornings, all designed to try and interest children in the natural world.

We are grateful to the Friends of Rodley Nature Reserve for again organising two excellent fundraising events this year. The Summer Fair, held on Saturday 16th August, was again very well supported and while the weather could have been better it was certainly not as bad as last year. This year the Pie and Peas Event, held on Saturday 18th October, was followed by the annual Fungus Foray and both enjoyed excellent support.

Visits to the Fish Pass were held throughout the year on the last Sunday in each month and these continued to attract new visitors to the Reserve. Away from the reserve we again had a stand at the Science Fair in Leeds City Museum on Saturday 15th March.

Inevitably there were some disappointments this year. After last year's disaster for the common terns we had hoped the modified nesting rafts would deter the American mink but we hadn't counted on all nine juveniles leaving the rafts and drowning in an exceptionally thick bank of blanket weed. So it's back to the drawing board for

2015. Coot and tufted duck numbers were worryingly low and the latter failed to raise any young for the fifth year running. On the positive side, a second pair of kestrels nested for the first time in another barn owl box and the two pairs successfully raised six young - an excellent result considering the national decline of this species. At least one pair of water rails also nested successfully for the third year running and four pairs of gadwall raised 26 young. Kingfishers too had an excellent year, many visitors enjoying their first ever sightings of this beautiful bird.

A worrying development this year was the spread of *Crassula helmsii* - New Zealand Pygmy Weed - an aggressive alien water plant. This was found on three ponds. On the advice of Natural England it was found necessary to drain and dry out the small public dipping pond and two of the Dragonfly Ponds to prevent the spread of the plant. These areas will require a considerable amount of treatment before we can look at restoring them. We are not alone in having this problem as it is widespread on some Yorkshire reserves.

The popularity of the reserve as an educational resource continues to grow and we entertained more primary school classes than ever this year - 29 in total. There were also 12 evening visits from uniformed organisations. For the first time this year we ran a drawing competition for primary schools, inviting children to submit a drawing of something that had inspired them during their visit, the winning entry to appear in our 2015 Calendar. The lucky winner was Georgina Munro, aged nine, from Farsley Springbank Junior School. Georgina's beautiful drawing of one of the Dragonfly Ponds is featured for the month of April.

In addition to organising fundraising days and entertaining school groups and uniformed organisations, the Friends of Rodley Nature Reserve also look after the manning of the Visitor Centre and their aim is to provide a warm and friendly welcome to all our visitors. The fact that so many of our visitors return again and again is testament to this and we do receive some wonderful feedback from first time visitors.

A big thank you to all our volunteers for all their hard work and commitment. A big thank you too to Natural England for all their help

and support, to Yorkshire Water plc for giving us the opportunity to create this wonderful reserve for the public and to the many groups who have worked on the reserve this year.

Editor

Rodley Nature Reserve - Monthly Roundup for 2014

January

It was an exceptionally wet month with a series of depressions steaming in from the Atlantic, though there was some respite in the middle part with several very pleasant sunny days. Flooding was a major problem in some parts of the country and while the river ran high throughout the month it never burst its banks. Paths on the reserve were very wet and muddy and a section of the Willow Path had to be fenced off. It turned out to be the second wettest January on record, beaten only by January 1948.

With the first real cold snap of the winter still awaited and water logged areas everywhere wildfowl numbers remained low but a movement of pink-footed geese over the reserve between 1st and 12th provided some interest with 100 on 5th, 55 on 10th and 200 on 12th, all flying in a westerly direction. Wigeon spent much of the month feeding on the farmland with up to 17 reported; teal were seen most days with up to 37 counted and up to three male pochard were on the Lagoon with a similar number of shovelers. A male goldeneye, present from 15th, was joined by two females for a day on 22nd. A female was also present on 25th with two males on 26th.

Gadwall numbers were disappointingly low but a rare hard frost on the night of 11th saw most of the Lagoon frozen over for a time on 12th and 29 gathered in the remaining small area of open water. However, no more than seven were reported in the latter part of the month. Numbers of goosanders coming onto the Lagoon at dusk had been very low in December but there was a considerable improvement this month with up to 18 counted.

A water rail was seen on the middle island on the Lagoon on three dates from 22nd but they were hard to find elsewhere on the reserve. There was no such problem with kingfishers with more sightings in the first three weeks of January than in the first four months of 2013. The Lagoon was particularly productive with up to three birds seen there. Forced off the river by very high water levels, the generally ice-free wetlands on the reserve were clearly very popular. A jack snipe

was seen on the Lagoon on 7th and on the Wet Grassland on 21st and one or two common snipe were reported on several dates.

Numbers of coot and tufted ducks had been extremely low in the latter part of 2013 but there was some improvement this month with counts of coot reaching 15 and tufted duck 14 in the second half of the month. Up to 10 grey herons were on the Duck Marsh some days. The black swan that had spent a lot of time on the reserve in the latter part of 2013 was present on just four dates this month.

Away from the wetlands, in the Manager's Garden numbers of reed buntings visiting the feeders were disappointing with no more than seven reported. Greenfinch numbers too were generally in single figures but 15 were counted on 15th. Great spotted woodpeckers were seen on several dates but the real stars were the bullfinches with up to six on the feeders. Six were also seen at the feeders in the Bee Garden on 4th, on the entry road on 5th and on the John Ackroyd Meadow on 18th. Eighteen tree sparrow boxes were erected in the Coppice and near the Reedbed Hide this month but, disappointingly, only one bird was seen at the feeders in the Manager's Garden.

Song thrushes were singing from 8th with five singing on 19th. Mistle thrushes were reported on several dates with seven in trees near the Reedbed Hide on 12th. Winter thrushes were seen on the farmland and in the poplars most days. Fieldfare numbers reached 142 on 29th. Redwings usually numbered less than 30 but 100 were counted in the poplars and Sludge Lagoon on 16th. Starling numbers were low throughout most of the month but at least 200 were on the farmland on 28th. Linnets numbers fluctuated but up to 65 were counted on the better days.

Other sightings this month included grey wagtail on four dates, red kite on just two dates, a common buzzard on 6th, a tawny owl on the Willow Path on 12th, a little owl in the compound on the same date, two goldcrests on the river path on 19th and one on 22nd, a treecreeper near the bridge on 17th and 19th and two in the car park on 25th. An over-wintering female blackcap was seen near the main gates on 11th and a male was reported near the Reedbed Hide on 19th. Around 200 lapwings flew over the Visitor Centre on 12th and

87 were on the farmland on 22nd. Five also flew over the Lagoon on 25th.

Siskins and lesser redpolls are very much late winter visitors to the reserve. Siskins were reported feeding in alders by the roadside on three dates but with no more than four birds seen. The area around the main gates was the place to look for lesser redpolls with one on 11th, three on 18th and six on 25th.

On the management front, work continued on the sand martin nesting bank on the Lagoon despite a sea of mud and some very wet days. Volunteers also worked on willow coppicing and both repairing and building dead hedges.

February

Another very wet and windy month made it the wettest winter on record, beating the previous record set in 1915. Parts of southern Britain saw exceptional rainfall totals but some eastern parts of Yorkshire had totals not that far from normal. With again no cold snap wildfowl numbers remained low. Most of the wetlands were frozen over in the first part of February last year but this was certainly not the case this year with very few frosts and no snow. Gadwall numbers reached 46 in February last year but this year 15 was the highest with single figures most days. Wigeon spent most of their time on the Duck Marsh with 10 the best count. Teal were seen most days with 37 on the river on one date and 36 on the Duck Marsh on another. A few more pochard arrived from 12th with seven on 22nd and 11 on 23rd - all sightings on the Lagoon. Last February goldeneye numbers reached a record 14 but this time we had to settle for a single male on the river on two dates. Goosanders were seen regularly on the river but a dusk count of 13 on the Lagoon on 1st was the highest of the month. Shovelers were conspicuous only by their absence. Tufted duck numbers were disappointing with no more than 17 reported. The black swan was present most days.

Coot numbers crept up a little more but a best count of 22 was still disappointing and, unusually, there were no reports of water rail. Kingfishers had another good month with regular sightings. However,

the main highlight on the wetlands this month was a female scaup that was present throughout the month.

Other sightings this month included a female blackcap on 2nd, treecreepers on two dates, a curlew on 15th, grey wagtails on six dates, red kites on four dates, a common buzzard on 16th, two bramblings in the Manager's Garden on the same date, lapwings on five dates with a best count of 42 and a peregrine falcon on 26th. The first oystercatcher of the year arrived on 8th, four days earlier than last year and a second bird arrived on 22nd. Fieldfares and redwings were on the farmland most days. A mixed flock of around 440 birds on 5th also included around 250 starlings. Bullfinches enjoyed another excellent month with up to seven seen in the Manager's Garden but again no more than one tree sparrow visited the feeders.

Construction work on the sand martin nesting bank was completed by the end of the month, volunteers often working in very wet conditions. Further work was carried out using hired machinery to repair the surrounding areas which had been badly dug up. The prolonged period of wet weather also took a toll on the Willow Path. As well as cordoning off some areas it was also necessary to top surface other areas with wood chip as a temporary measure to improve safety aspects. In the latter part of the month Northern Powergrid carried out work to poles across the farmland and Manager's Garden resulting in even more mud! Some trees in and around the Manager's Garden also had to be reduced.

March

It was a mild and rather drier month giving the Willow Path at last a chance to dry out somewhat. A spell of beautiful sunny days between 8th and 13th saw temperatures reach 15°C, bringing out the first small tortoiseshell and peacock butterflies. Typically, there were some very windy days but the month ended on a calm note with misty starts blossoming into pleasant sunny days.

Winter visitors were still very much in evidence this month. A flock of between 150 and 200 fieldfares on the farmland on 20th looked like being the last but seven flew over the Visitor Centre on 30th. The last redwings were seen on 16th with three in the Manager's Garden. Up

to nine wigeon fed on the farmland most days up to 26th and three goldeneyes were on the Lagoon on 1st with two on the river the same day.

Other duck numbers remained low on the wetlands with only a handful of gadwall most days but 21 on one date. Tufted duck numbers reached 25 on 16th but with only half that number most days. Pochard numbers peaked at 11 on 1st with a few birds present daily until 19th. Shovelers were again conspicuous by their absence. A few teal were present to the end of the month with a best count of 21 on 23rd. The female scaup was seen daily on the Lagoon until 9th. The black swan was present throughout. A great crested grebe was on the Lagoon on 10th and 21st but there was considerable little grebe activity on all four wetland areas with up to six birds reported and a lot of calling. Snipe were seen daily on the Duck Marsh with seven on 17th, eight on 19th, 16 on 22nd and 15 on 24th. A jack snipe was also on the Duck Marsh on 19th. Water rails, however, remained elusive with just a single sighting in the Reedbed on 2nd.

There was more wader activity this month. A redshank was seen on the Wet Grassland and Duck Marsh on 9th and a curlew was reported on three dates. A few lapwings were on the Duck Marsh most days and one or two birds displayed over Tim's Field towards the end of the month. The two oystercatchers were present throughout the month but eight flew over on 24th.

As always, the first of the early summer visitors were eagerly awaited this month but the first one was somewhat of a surprise. A sedge warbler singing on the Willow Path on 8th was by far the earliest ever record, giving thought to the fact that this bird may have overwintered. The first chiffchaff was singing in trees near the bridge on 16th with three singing by 24th. A male blackcap on the Willow Path on 9th and 26th was more likely the overwintering bird. A very early willow warbler was reported in the Manager's Garden on 30th. The first sand martins (circa 15) were seen over the river in squally rain on 22nd and five were over the Lagoon on 29th. The first swallow of the year was over the Coppice on 31st.

There was a lot of kestrel activity this month. The broken ledge on the barn owl box at the regular nesting site in the compound was repaired on 14th and both birds were in residence within an hour or so.

Other sightings this month included a peregrine falcon over the farmland on 2nd, a grey wagtail on 12th, a treecreeper on the same date, two siskins in the Mike Fisk Meadow hedge on 16th, a male mandarin on the river on 23rd, two meadow pipits on the farmland on 26th, a little owl on the riverbank on 28th, a goldcrest on four dates, red kites on seven dates and a common buzzard on three dates. Two rooks on the farmland behind the Manager's Garden on 16th were the first sighting since December 2012. Linnets were singing on the Butterfly Bank and in the hedgerows from 12th and around 30 birds were still feeding on Tim's Field at the end of the month.

Frogs were active from the beginning of the month with the first spawn found at the Dragonfly Ponds and on the Scrubland on 4th. The first strands of toad spawn were found in Woodhead Pond on 31st.

On the work front volunteers started digging out the foundations for the new hard path from the Willow Path Hide to the Reedbed Hide and contractors relined one of the new seasonal ponds near the Manager's Garden on 2nd.

April

April is always a month of intense activity on the reserve with a surge of summer visitors arriving from the middle of the month and the Willow Path alive with birdsong. The final winter visitors had gone by the end of the first week. Weather-wise it was very mild - the third warmest April in fact since 1910 with some lovely warm sunny days from the middle of the month bringing out exceptional numbers of small tortoiseshells.

Blackcaps were singing from 15th and were present in good numbers by the end of the month. The first common whitethroat was singing in a patch of bramble near the Lagoon Hide on the 16th. A sedge warbler was singing near the edge of the Lagoon from 15th and by 27th at least six could be heard in the Reedbed. Reed warblers were

heard in the same area from 28th and a garden warbler was reported in the Coppice on the same date.

Small numbers of sand martins were seen over the Lagoon some days but large numbers congregated over the reserve late in the evening in the latter part of the month with up to 400 birds estimated - an exceptional number for this time of year. House martins were much harder to find with just two reported over the Duck Marsh on 13th. The first swift of the spring was seen over the Scrubland on 27th.

However, perhaps the most eagerly awaited of the summer visitors is the common tern, particularly so this year after the mink predation in 2013. The first one arrived on the Lagoon on 19th with two present from 20th and eight reported on 30th. Other summer visitors on the wetlands included little ringed plover and common sandpiper. A little ringed plover was on the Duck Marsh on 2nd with two there on 20th and again on 30th. A common sandpiper was seen on the Fish Pass on 18th but the real highlight of the month was the drake garganey that spent a day on the Duck Marsh on 28th - the first record of this species since 2006.

It was also an excellent month for two of our resident species - little owl and kestrel. Little owl had been reported on just two dates in the first three months of the year but there were sightings almost daily in April. The Sludge Lagoon fence and the poplars produced most sightings with two birds on two dates.

A pair of kestrels nest most years in one of the barn owl boxes in the Yorkshire Water compound but this year a second pair took up residence in the second barn owl box, barely 80 yards from the usual box. Visitors were able to obtain excellent views of the birds at both boxes.

Other sightings this month included red kites on three dates, a common buzzard on three dates, three curlews over the Lagoon on 6th, two shelduck on five dates between 12th and 20th, a dipper on the river on 19th and 30th and a wheatear on 23rd. A kingfisher on the river on 23rd was the first sighting for nearly a month. A female goosander and five tiny ducklings were seen in the Fish Pass on 30th

and four oystercatcher chicks made their first appearance on the middle island on the Lagoon on the same date. The first family of mallard ducklings (nine) was seen on the river on 19th. Water rails were heard in the Reedbed on several dates but only seen on one occasion.

May

Spring 2014 turned out to be the third warmest on record - in huge contrast to Spring 2013 which was the coldest across the UK since 1962. Unfortunately, although it was warm, May proved to be a very wet month, saved only by a week of warm, sunny days between 14th and 21st.

Sand martin numbers over the reserve on an evening reached an estimated 500 in the early part of the month with birds dropping in to roost in the Reedbed around 9.00pm each evening. All eyes were consequently on the new nesting bank on the Lagoon. On 10th May a few birds were observed visiting the nest bank and the first holes were being excavated from the middle of the month.

The Mike Sheldon Hide overlooking the Lagoon was undoubtedly the place to be this month, not just for the sand martins but also for the three pairs of common terns which took up residence on the redesigned tern rafts, driving off any other birds that came too close. Common whitethroats and sedge warblers were also active throughout the month in the long vegetation in front of the hide and a lesser whitethroat taking food to a nest there from 17th was an unexpected bonus.

More family parties started to appear on the wetlands this month, the Wet Grassland pair of mute swans showing off seven cygnets for the first time on 14th, but the long standing resident pair on the Duck Marsh showed no signs of nesting. The first moorhen chicks (two) were on the Duck Marsh on 2nd and the first coot chicks (three) were on the Wet Grassland on 5th. The first family of little grebes (four) appeared on the Duck Marsh on 22nd. A female gadwall and eight small ducklings were seen most days on the Wet Grassland from 23rd. Water rails had proved elusive but an adult was seen briefly with two chicks on the Duck Marsh on 28th. Kingfishers were

suddenly more active with sightings on seven dates this month. The male garganey made another appearance on the Duck Marsh on 4th but there were no subsequent sightings. A male shoveler on the Lagoon and Duck Marsh on 2nd was the first sighting for three and a half months. The black swan returned on 25th and was present to the end of the month.

Both reed warblers and sedge warblers appeared to be present in reasonable numbers in the Reedbed from the amount of song but one pair of reed warblers provided particularly good views from the viewing point on the Wet Grassland in the latter part of the month. At least one pair of sedge warblers again took up residence in long vegetation at the Dragonfly Ponds.

Away from the wetlands, both pairs of kestrels were active throughout at the two barn owl boxes in the compound but there were no reports of the little owls until 26th when one was seen around the poplars. There were then further sightings on 28th and 31st.

Blackcaps and garden warblers sang throughout the month but willow warblers appeared to be rather less numerous with no more than two singing in the Coppice and one on the Sludge Lagoon. Typically, common whitethroats were singing all round the reserve this month and were perhaps the easiest of the warblers to see thanks to their song flights. But, disappointingly, grasshopper warblers failed to put in an appearance. Swallows again took up residence in the dumper truck shed but house martins were generally thin on the ground.

Other sightings included two little ringed plovers on the Duck Marsh on 1st, a little egret there on 2nd, a common sandpiper on 4th, a wheatear on Tim's Field on 14th, a grey partridge near the Lagoon on 17th, a peregrine falcon on a pylon on the farmland on 20th, a dipper on the Fish Pass on 21st, two curlews on 25th, a red kite on five dates and goosanders on three dates with five on the river on 10th. Skylarks are becoming increasingly hard to find these days so one singing over the car park on 18th was a good record. But it got even better with one providing good views on the freshly ploughed Tim's Field on 24th and two there on 25th.

On the work front volunteers were again hard at work on the new hard path from the Willow Path Hide to the Reedbed Hide and the grass cutting season was in full swing. A large patch of Japanese knotweed on the island below the weir required a voyage in the boat to access and treat it.

June

There was a rather unsettled and often wet first half to the month followed by a very dry second half. With Tim's Field seeded and rolled on 2nd several damp but warm days were welcome and quickly produced a haze of green over the field. Fingers were firmly crossed for the June Wildlife Event on 14th but, fortunately, it enjoyed a pleasant though at times cloudy day.

The Lagoon again produced much of the action this month. The first common tern chick was seen on one of the rafts on 5th and by 14th nine could be seen with three on each raft. Red kites flying over the reserve were intercepted long before they reached the Lagoon by a squadron of terns and with limited mink activity hopes were high for a successful breeding season. However, the chicks took matters into their own hands - two jumping off one of the rafts on 23rd and floundering in the thick algae. A successful rescue mission was launched and the chicks safely returned to the raft but others subsequently decided to jump and by the end of the month only four larger juveniles could be seen.

Two great crested grebes arrived on the Lagoon at the beginning of the month and were observed displaying from 4th. By 10th a nest had been constructed on the algae close to the tern rafts and two eggs could be seen. Things again looked to be going well but on 24th two juvenile gadwall were exercising their wings on the nest and the eggs had gone.

The gadwall fared rather better, two further families appearing this month, each with eight ducklings. On the Duck Marsh a count of 12 grey herons on 11th was unusual for the time of year. The black swan, absent for most of the month, returned briefly on 23rd. Kingfishers were seen regularly throughout the month.

Activity at the sand martin nesting bank on the Lagoon was intense this month with more than 70 nesting holes by the end of the month and an estimated 300 birds over the reserve some evenings. House martins, however, remained elusive with sightings on just three dates and none after 6th.

Other sightings this month included a little owl on seven dates, common buzzard on three dates with two on 19th, a peregrine falcon on a pylon on the farmland on 7th and 25th, a common sandpiper on the river on 24th and a little egret on the Lagoon on 26th. Red kites were seen on eight dates with three over the farmland on 14th during grass cutting. It was a good month for sightings of grey wagtails on the Fish Pass with two birds on several dates and two juveniles reported on 15th. A skylark was seen on Tim's Field on two dates with two there on 7th and one flew over the entry road on 11th. One unusual sighting this month was that of a brown hare on the Willow Path on 26th - the first ever record for the reserve.

Common whitethroats sang all round the reserve throughout the month and the first juveniles were being fed at the edge of the Scrubland on 30th. A lesser whitethroat was reported on three dates. The first juvenile sedge warblers appeared on 15th and the first juvenile reed warblers on 22nd. A wren's nest in the Manager's Garden Hide attracted some over-enthusiastic photographers and the hide had to be closed off for several days to protect the three chicks. The first juvenile goldfinches were on the feeders in the Bee Garden on 4th.

It was a good month for butterflies but the larger dragonflies were a bit thin on the ground. Banded demoiselles, however, had a bumper month with as many as 32 seen on the Fish Pass on one date.

Volunteers completed work on the new hard path from the Willow Path Hide to the Reedbed Hide and attention was turned to removing ragwort from the meadows.

July

It proved to be the driest July for a number of years. A spell of very warm and sunny weather from 20th saw temperatures rise to 27°C

and, whilst bird activity dropped off considerably, butterflies were abundant. The Butterfly Bank certainly lived up to its name with excellent numbers of small tortoiseshells emerging from the middle of the month and an abundance of wild marjoram proving particularly attractive. The first fresh peacocks appeared from 22nd and a white letter hairstreak, photographed at the Dragonfly Ponds on 23rd was only the second ever record for the reserve. Dragonfly enthusiasts also appreciated the weather with increased activity at the Dragonfly Ponds. Brown hawkers were typically present in good numbers but emerald damselflies enjoyed their best year to date and a migrant hawker near the river seat on 23rd was the earliest record since 2006.

Much of the focus in the early part of the month was on the Lagoon where it turned out to be another disastrous year for the common terns and this year we couldn't blame the mink. By 2nd July only one juvenile of the original nine could be seen on the rafts with another reported at the side of the Lagoon. On 4th five dead juveniles were collected from thick algae which had surrounded the rafts - all the birds within just a few days of flying. Up to four adults hung around for a few days with birds occasionally landing on the rafts but there were no further reports of the remaining juveniles.

There were, however, a few highlights on the wetlands. A female gadwall with two small ducklings was on the Lagoon from 4th, making it the best breeding year to date for this species with four pairs producing young. A juvenile water rail was seen in the Reedbed on 6th and a new family of little grebes (three) was on the Duck Marsh from 13th. A male and female shoveler were seen on the Lagoon on the same date - the first sighting of this species for more than two months. Three little grebe nests could be seen on the Lagoon this month, all built on the thick bank of algae that covered a good part of the water. A little egret was on the Lagoon late in the day on 19th and one flew low over the Wet Grassland on 27th. However, the real success on the wetlands this year was undoubtedly the sand martin nesting bank with more than 80 holes in use this month and many juveniles on the wing. The Duck Marsh was looking particularly good this month with a fine display of purple loosestrife in flower.

The river and Fish Pass produced some good sightings. A dipper was seen on the river on 7th and twelve "red head" goosanders there on 9th were mainly juveniles. Kingfishers were seen on the river on several dates with three near the bridge on 7th. A grey wagtail was on the riverbank on 10th and two juveniles were seen on the Fish Pass on 15th.

Other sightings this month included a little owl on 6th and 23rd, a rare sighting of a cuckoo on the pylon by the Fish Pass on 9th, a common sandpiper on one of the tern rafts on 30th and a red kite on two dates. Flocks of up to 30 goldfinches, including numerous juveniles, fed on creeping thistle seed on the John Ackroyd Meadow in the first three weeks of the month. A female roedeer and two tiny fawns appeared briefly on the path between the Mike Fisk Meadow hedgerow and Tim's Field on 1st and a fawn was disturbed at the top end of John Ackroyd Meadow on 11th.

July was a month of intense kestrel activity with four juveniles making an appearance outside the old barn owl box in the compound on 7th and, for the first time ever, two juveniles also fledged successfully at the second box on the lower building. The birds in the second box were clearly a bit behind the others, spending a lot of time on the ledge of the box throughout the spell of very hot weather in the latter part of the month.

The Bat Night held on 19th was preceded by a grey and dreary day with rain throughout. It did dry up in time for the event but thick mist descended and bat activity was limited.

On the work front, the meadows were cut on 21st and whilst the expected red kites didn't turn up the kestrels certainly did, taking full advantage of what the tractor had disturbed.

August

The weather was very unsettled through much of the month. The aftermath of Hurricane Bertha brought torrential rain, flash floods and strong to gale force winds in the early part of the month but the second Bat Night on 9th was blessed with a rare beautiful evening, albeit bat activity was a bit limited with the best of the action near the

Lagoon Hide. Fingers were firmly crossed for the Summer Fair on Saturday 16th and while it felt chilly in a moderate north westerly wind with grey skies the problems of last year were not repeated and the gazebos remained firmly anchored. It was certainly brighter the following day but with a strong wind and gusts reaching gale force at times we certainly had the better of the two days. A northerly airflow from the arctic gave a distinctly chilly feel thereafter with temperatures struggling to reach 16°C and some cold nights. It proved to be the coolest August for over 20 years and the 8th wettest on record.

August can be one of the quietest months of the year for the birdwatcher and smaller birds can be hard to find with many undergoing their post breeding moult. However, the contact calls of chiffchaffs, willow warblers and blackcaps could be heard all round the reserve with many young birds on the wing. Chiffchaffs were still feeding young in the Coppice on 22nd. Elderberries in the Coppice and Manager's Garden proved particularly attractive to warblers building up weight for their long migration flights and a garden warbler was seen daily from 23rd feeding on elderberries in the Manager's Garden. Among the other summer visitors, spotted flycatchers have always been hard to find at Rodley but there were sightings on four dates between 24th and 31st of two birds - the first records since 2010. Mixed feeding parties at this time of year usually include chiffchaffs and willow warblers but one at the Dragonfly Ponds on 4th also included 28 long-tailed tits.

On the wetlands the first two teal arrived on the Duck Marsh on 16th with up to seven reported subsequently. Four female or juvenile shovelers were on the Lagoon briefly on 6th and a pochard was there on 9th and 10th. The first snipe returned on 13th with regular sightings of one or two birds on the Duck Marsh thereafter. Juvenile water rails were seen on four dates and kingfishers were reported on 11 dates. However, the main highlight was perhaps the number of little grebe present following a successful breeding season with up to 17 on the Lagoon and five on the Duck Marsh. A new family appeared on the Wet Grassland on 23rd with three chicks. Activity at the sand martin nesting bank on the Lagoon continued unabated and several hundred birds were over the reserve at 9.00pm during the Bat

Night. House martins though were reported on just two dates with no more than six birds seen - certainly a very poor year for them.

Other sightings this month included common buzzard on four dates with two on one occasion, a red kite on one date, a little owl on two dates, two linnets on three dates, a common sandpiper on the Lagoon on two dates, a grey wagtail on four dates and a little egret on the Duck Marsh on 17th. A coal tit in the Bee Garden on 23rd was the first sighting of the year - this is a scarce bird on the reserve. A juvenile cuckoo, seen from the Willow Path Hide on 6th, was the third record of the year of this declining species. Up to 60 swallows were over the meadows some days and birds were still feeding young in the dumper truck shed. Cormorant numbers increased this month with up to 10 roosting on the pylon by the Fish Pass. A swift over the farmland on 22nd was the last of the summer in what had been a very poor year for them.

To end on a mammal note, this is also the time of year when the roedeer rut occurs and visitors in the centre were able to enjoy good views of animals on Mike Fisk Meadow on several dates.

September

With the jet stream entrenched north of the UK and high pressure dominating, it turned out to be the driest September since modern day records began in 1910, the 4th warmest and the driest calendar month since August 1995.

September can be an interesting month for the birdwatcher and with summer visitors gradually drifting south anything can turn up. Tim's Field is always worth checking for whinchats, wheatears and stonechats and the more patient observers were not disappointed. Six whinchats were reported on the field on 20th with two there the following day. Three stonechats were on Tim's on 22nd with two there on 28th. On the wetlands a garganey on the Wet Grassland on 14th was another good passage migrant record.

Warbler activity reduced considerably with the last reed warbler on 7th, though one or two sedge warblers did hang on to the middle of the month. Willow warblers were still being reported up to 21st and

chiffchaffs were typically present throughout, one or two hopefully spending the winter with us. Surprisingly, there were no reports of common whitethroats. Blackcaps were being reported on the Willow Path and in the Manager's Garden up to 20th and a garden warbler was still feeding on elderberries in the Manager's Garden up to 24th.

Up to 40 sand martins were seen at the nesting bank on the Lagoon up to 7th with young birds still being fed but they had all gone by 11th. The last swallows of the month were over the lagoon on 17th and 15 house martins put in a belated appearance over the Lagoon on 13th in what had been a very disappointing year for sightings of this species.

With some summer visitors still around the first true winter visitors started to arrive. A male wigeon was on the Duck Marsh on 13th and one or two birds were then present to the end of the month. Duck numbers generally increased this month with gadwall reaching 59. Two shovelers were present from 14th and teal numbers reached 14 though tufted ducks could only manage six.

It was an excellent month for kingfishers with sightings almost daily. Water rails were seen on the Duck Marsh on four dates and snipe were there most days with up to three reported.

Other sightings this month included a treecreeper on the riverside walk on 14th, a common buzzard over the compound on 22nd, a little egret on the Duck Marsh on 27th, grey wagtail on three dates and a little owl on the farmland on three dates. There was a huge amount of jay activity this month with birds on regular acorn forays. Cormorant numbers increased with up to 11 roosting on the pylon by the Fish Pass. Grey herons were also numerous some days with 11 reported on the farmland on 28th. Twenty-two long-tailed tits were seen at one of the feeder stations on the Willow Path on 14th.

Some beautiful, warm, sunny days in the latter part of the month brought migrant hawkers and common darters out in good numbers and a black darter on 24th was a bonus for one dragonfly spotter.

On the work front volunteers started construction of a new gazebo near the Education Pond. This will be mainly used by schools but will

also provide valuable shelter for visitors caught in the rain at the otherwise very open eastern end of the reserve.

October

There was a pleasant start to the month with some warm sunshine but a very wet day on 6th produced 25mm of rain - far more than the rainfall for the whole of September. The first stormy weather of the autumn arrived on 21st, courtesy of ex-hurricane Gonzalo, but it was relatively short lived and a very warm end to the month saw temperatures reaching 20°C on 31st. Some late butterflies and dragonflies were still on the wing at the end of the month and both hogweed and blackberry were still coming into flower in the very mild conditions.

Duck numbers were slow to build on the wetlands. Gadwall numbers reached 78 on 3rd but, in the absence of a cold snap, numbers actually fell as the month went on with no more than 10 at the end of the month. Teal numbers too were low throughout and wigeon only reached double figures on one date. Up to four shovelers were on the Lagoon most days and a male goldeneye was a bonus from 26th. Tufted ducks were a little up on the same period last year but the highest count was still just nine. Coot numbers in October last year were the lowest since 2001 and while counts this year were slightly higher it was still the second worst since 2003.

On a more positive note, kingfishers had another excellent month with sightings daily and water rails were seen well on five dates, the Wet Grassland being the best site. Two little egrets were on the Wet Grassland briefly on 11th and two whooper swans dropped into the Duck Marsh for a time on 15th. The Black swan returned to the Lagoon on 25th after an absence of four months.

Away from the wetlands it was a good month for stonechats passing through with sightings on five dates and up to three birds reported. Late summer visitors also put in an appearance with two swallows at the edge of Tim's Field on 1st and 16 house martins over the reserve on 11th. Chiffchaffs were reported on five dates and hopefully some of these will overwinter. There was a hint of the first winter thrush

activity at the end of the month with two brief sightings of redwings in the car park and on the farmland on 30th and 31st.

Other sightings this month included grey wagtails on seven dates, a little owl on the farmland on eight dates, a meadow pipit near the Manager's Garden on 8th and mistle thrushes on seven dates with 17 on one occasion. A rook on the farmland on 19th was only the second record this year. Tree sparrows made a welcome return this month, the last one being seen on 2nd March. Up to five birds were seen in the Bee Garden most days from 11th. Single common buzzards were reported on three dates but six circling over Tim's Field on 2nd was an exceptional record. Linnet numbers started to build on Tim's Field this month reaching 50 some days and 80 on one occasion. The main roedeer rut should be over by now but two males sparring on the Duck Marsh on 22nd was a lucky sighting for two of our volunteers.

October is always a busy month for habitat management. Volunteers from Leeds RSPB Local Group made their annual visit on 3rd to trim the John Ackroyd Meadow hedge and our own volunteers continued with this work through the month. Water levels on the Duck Marsh, Reedbed and Wet Grassland were dropped at the beginning of the month to enable cutting to take place. Work also continued on the new gazebo near the Education Pond and reed cutting started in the Reedbed on 13th, much of the reed being bundled for the gazebo's thatched roof. Willow coppicing also got underway this month.

Due to a serious infestation of the invasive alien water plant *Crassula helmsii* Woodhead Pond and the smaller public dipping pond had to be spiked and drained this month. All pond dipping had to be stopped for the remainder of the autumn and winter to prevent the further spread of the plant and to enable the problem to be dealt with.

November

There was a rather chillier start to the month with the first frosts of the autumn but there some pleasant sunny days too. Things went downhill somewhat from the second week of the month with plenty of typical grey, wet November days. Overall though it proved to be the

fourth warmest November on record and the third warmest autumn on record.

For the birdwatcher waterfowl numbers were generally a bit disappointing and the anticipated gathering of goosanders towards dusk in the latter part of the month failed to materialise. With water levels on the Duck Marsh, Reedbed and Wet Grassland restored following autumn cutting the latter area proved the most popular with up to 31 mallard gathering here later in the day. Up to four shovelers and one or two pochard were present some days and up to 22 teal were reported daily. Wigeon numbers were low with no more than six seen. Gadwall numbers did reach 40 on 10th but subsequent days produced less than half this number. Tufted duck numbers only reached double figures on one date. A male goldeneye was on the Lagoon on 1st and 2nd. Water rails were reported on four dates, the Duck Marsh being the most productive site. Kingfishers were seen daily.

Grey heron numbers started to build on the Duck Marsh in the second half of the month with several double figure counts and a best of 14 on 26th. Coot numbers, on the other hand, were down to just two or three most days - a best count of four being the lowest for November since 2001. Unusually, greylag geese were rather more numerous than Canada geese. Numbers built steadily on the farmland reaching a record 104 on 30th.

With the generally mild and calm conditions winter thrush numbers remained low with just a handful of fieldfares and redwings most days. However, there was one report of around 70/80 redwings over the farmland on 5th and 35 fieldfares were recorded in the poplars on 29th. Goldcrests also tend to turn up in the autumn and there were several sightings. Four were on the Willow Path on 12th; around 10 were reported in trees by the Lagoon on 19th and one was on the Willow Path on 22nd. Up to 50 linnets were on Tim's Field daily.

Other sightings this month included a red kite on 5th, a curlew over the farmland on 9th, 40 lapwings over the reserve on 26th, a common buzzard on three dates, grey wagtails on seven dates, up to six tree sparrows daily in the Bee Garden and a little owl on the farmland on eight dates. A green woodpecker heard on 1st was the first record of

this species since November 2011. There were two further reports of rooks on the farmland this month with one on 2nd and three on 9th. As regards mammals, five roe deer at the back of the Wet Grassland on 29th was a nice record for one regular visitor.

On the work front, willow coppicing got into full swing; the thatched roof on the new gazebo was virtually finished by the end of the month and the dead hedge at the Education Pond was rebuilt using willow from the Coppice.

December

From a weather point of view we had a bit of everything this month. There were some hard frosts in the early part of the month followed by some very windy, wet days with winds reaching gale force at times, some very mild conditions just prior to Christmas and a good covering of snow by 27th. Hard overnight frosts saw the Duck Marsh, Reedbed and Wet Grassland frozen over from 28th with just a third of the Lagoon ice-free.

Prior to the freeze there was some improvement on the wetlands this month with an increase in tufted duck numbers, particularly towards dusk, with up to 21 recorded, but the biggest count of 30 came during the morning on 22nd. Shovelers were present daily for much of the month with five males on the Lagoon on 24th. A few goosanders started to gather on the Lagoon towards dusk with nine on two dates but as few as two some days. Gadwall numbers were very similar to last month with 40 on one date but usually less than half that number. Wigeon remained in single figures throughout. Coot numbers remained desperately low with five on the Lagoon on several dates but usually no more than two or three. A goldeneye on the Lagoon on 21st was a bonus and on 30th two were there with a third on the river. Up to six snipe were seen on the Wet Grassland and nine flew over the Lagoon on 28th. Water rails were recorded on six dates and it was a bumper month for kingfisher sightings with birds reported daily and photographers enjoying some excellent photo opportunities, particularly on the Kingfisher Pool outside the Reedbed Hide.

However, the star bird this month was undoubtedly the barn owl that roosted overnight in the new thatched gazebo from early in the

month. Unfortunately, the bird remained elusive during the day and just a few observers were lucky enough to see it early in the morning on 20th and 31st. The kestrels were much more obliging with some intense activity from the middle of the month and two very vocal birds paying visits to the old nest box in the compound.

Perhaps the most intriguing record of the month was the report of a Cetti's warbler calling on the Wet Grassland on 17th. For those who know it, the call is unmistakable but there were no further reports. Birds have been active at Swillington Ings for some months so this report was not unexpected.

Other sightings this month included an overwintering chiffchaff on the Willow Path on 6th and in the Manager's Garden on 13th, a goldcrest and treecreeper in the car park on 14th, a woodcock on 12th and two on 31st, a meadow pipit on 20th, a merlin over the river path on 31st, a grey wagtail on three dates, a red kite on two dates and common buzzards on three dates. A little owl was seen on the dry stone wall on the farmland on all but the wettest and windiest days. Tree sparrows were seen daily in the Bee Garden with up to six birds reported. What were probably the same birds were also seen in the Manager's Garden on several dates. Winter thrush numbers remained low throughout but linnet numbers on Tim's Field reached 144 on 8th and c200 on 28th.

There were some nice mammal records this month too. Six roedeer were on Tim's Field early in the day on 1st and five were on Mike Fisk Meadow at dusk on 30th. Both foxes and weasels were very active over the Christmas period, providing some more excellent photo opportunities for several visitors.

Volunteers continued willow coppicing up to Christmas week, much of the cut material being used to rebuild the dead hedge along the Willow Path and at the eastern end of the Wet Grassland.

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 on the reserve. 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 on the reserve.

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**

Up to four and occasionally six adults were present in the early part of the year but no juveniles. The long-standing Duck Marsh pair only produced three young last year and these had left the reserve by the end of December. The Wet Grassland pair lost their six cygnets last year and in the previous year. The female was seen on a nest at the eastern end of the Wet Grassland again towards the end of March and on 14th May seven cygnets made their first appearance there but from 23rd May only six were seen. For the first time the Duck Marsh pair were unsuccessful though the adults remained on site with as many as three additional adults some days. A further cygnet disappeared at the beginning of July but the remaining five were still present in October when the birds took their first flights. On 29th October another juvenile disappeared and on 2nd November a further one. Hopefully, these birds had dispersed naturally but on 17th December one of the remaining three was found dead on the grass between the Lagoon and the Duck Marsh, possibly the victim of a fox attack. The other two juveniles were present to the end of the year.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* **Scarce (Winter) Visitor**

Disappointingly there were again no spring records but two birds did drop in to the Duck Marsh on 15th October (SE) on their journey south from Iceland. Unfortunately, only a couple of observers were there to see them and the birds only stayed a short time.

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

Just like last year, there was a large movement of birds flying over in a westerly direction during the early part of January. Around 100 flew over the reserve on 1st (PM/BM) and 55 were recorded on 10th. At least 200 were reported over the farmland on 12th (MW). There were no other records this year.

Greylag Goose *Anser anser* **Casual Breeder**

Numbers reported in January and February were somewhat higher than last year. Again, like last year, the large majority of sightings in January and February were on the farmland with few on the wetlands. There were several 20+ counts in January with 32 on 29th the best (PM). Numbers increased somewhat in February with

several reports of 40+ and a best of 54 on 8th (DC/EC). A few birds started to come onto the wetlands in March with up to eight on the Lagoon in the latter part of the month. From 20th April two birds were sitting on nests on the islands on the Lagoon, three goslings making their first appearance on 26th April. On 5th May six goslings were seen on the Lagoon with a further family of five on the river (DC/EC). There were no further sightings on the wetlands after 21st May and, like last year, there were no sightings at all in June. Up to six birds were seen on the river on three dates in July but there were no further sightings until 29th September when one flew over the reserve with seven Canada geese. Birds were on the farmland daily in November with numbers steadily building in the last week of the month and reaching a record 104 on 30th (DC/EC). The previous record stood at just 59. Numbers remained high throughout December with up to 97 birds reported (DC/EC), the whole flock flying onto the Wet Grassland at dusk each day. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
32	54	25	16	22	-	6	-	1	11	104	97

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis* Resident Breeder

Numbers generally were somewhat lower than last year. Typically, most sightings in the early part of the year were on the farmland with counts ranging between 30 and 90 (JB). There were a few sightings on the wetlands, 45 on the Lagoon on 4th January and 41 on 29th January being the highest counts there. A group of 75 flew off the Wet Grassland on 19th January. Birds were on the Lagoon daily from the beginning of February with 61 counted towards dusk on 3rd but there were still daily sightings on the farmland with 73 there on 5th the highest count. A bird was sitting on six eggs on the otter raft on the Back Reedbed pool from 28th April and one pair had to be dissuaded from setting up home on one of the three tern rafts. Birds also nested on the three islands on the Lagoon but there were no reports of young. Numbers fell away considerably in June with no more than five on the wetlands. There was just one record in July - two birds on the riverbank on 20th. August produced just a handful of sightings on the river and riverbank with no more than four birds seen. There were reports on just six dates in September, three of

these on the Lagoon but with no more than two birds. There were sightings most days from the beginning of October, either on the Lagoon or farmland but numbers remained low with no more than eight seen. Birds were on the farmland daily in November and December but numbers only started to build from the beginning of December, reaching 59 on 27th (DC/EC) - the highest December count since 2010. Monthly maxima are shown below (adults only).

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
90	77	53	39	35	20	2	4	7	8	21	59

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

There were 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 record for the reserve.

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

Each year usually produces just one or two records but there were daily sightings of two birds on the Duck Marsh last year from 16th April until 6th May. There was a similar pattern of sightings this year with two birds on either the Wet Grassland or Duck Marsh between 12th and 20th April.

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

Prior to 2013 this species had only been recorded on the reserve on three occasions - on the river on 4th and 19th April 2009 and on the Duck Marsh on 26th March 2012 - in each case a single male. In 2013 there were sightings of a male on three dates - on the river on 16th March, on the Duck Marsh on 10th April and on the river again on 16th April. This year just one sighting was reported - a single male on the river on 23rd March (DC/EC).

Wigeon *Anas penelope* **Winter Visitor**

Birds were present daily from the beginning of the year, more often than not on the farmland. On the wetlands there were few records on the Lagoon, the Duck Marsh proving the most popular with 17 here on 15th January (MW). Up to 17 were also recorded on the farmland in January (PM/BM). Numbers dropped a little in February with a best

count of 10 on 12th (DC/EC). Up to nine were on the farmland throughout March and eight birds that flew over the river on 2nd April were the last of the spring (JB/MB). The first bird of the autumn arrived on the Lagoon on 13th September (DC/EC), six days later than last year. One or two were present daily thereafter but numbers remained low with no double figure counts until 30th October when 10 were on the Lagoon (PM/BM). However, both November and December failed to produce a double figure count for the first time since 2009, seven being the best for both months. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
17	10	9	8	-	-	-	-	4	10	7	7

Gadwall *Anas strepera* Resident Breeder

This species is much more common than mallard on the reserve these days. With birds nesting on the reserve in each of the last three years hopes were high for another successful breeding season. Numbers on the wetlands in the early part of the year were well down on last year but by April and May were very similar. On 23rd May there was a report of a female with eight ducklings on the Wet Grassland (ABr) and eight were seen subsequently. On 6th June a family of eight ducklings was on the Lagoon and six were seen on the Duck Marsh (PM/BM). On 13th June three families were on the Lagoon, all with eight ducklings. On 4th July a fourth family with just two small ducklings appeared on the Lagoon (PM/BM). Like last year, with very attentive parents, few if any ducklings were lost to predators. Numbers of birds built steadily in September with a best count of 67 on 19th (JB/MB). Other good counts included 59 on the Lagoon on 22nd September and 56 there on 3rd October (PM/BM). Numbers peaked at 78 on 3rd October (JB/MB), dropping back somewhat after this date with a best count of 40 for November on the Wet Grassland on 9th and the same number for December on 14th (JB/MB), this time on the Lagoon. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
29	15	21	17	13	18	29	30	67	78	40	40

Pintail *Anas acuta* Scarce Visitor

This was a new bird for the reserve in 2011, a male being seen on the Lagoon on 12th February. In 2012 there were sightings on two dates with a male on the Lagoon on 11th February and a female on the Duck Marsh on 26th September. There were no sightings in 2013 or 2014.

Teal *Anas crecca* Winter/Passage Visitor

The highest counts in January and February were very similar to last year. Thirty-seven were recorded during an early morning WeBS count on 19th January and the same number flew off the river behind the Duck Marsh on 3rd February (JB et al). The Duck Marsh usually held the most birds - 36 being recorded here during the February WeBS count on 16th. Numbers started to fall away in March and two males on the Duck Marsh on 28th April were the last of the spring. May, June and July rarely produce more than two or three birds and there were no records in this period this year. The first two returning birds arrived on the Duck Marsh on 16th August and there were daily sightings thereafter though there were no double figure counts until 21st September when 14 were reported (DC/EC). This proved to be the highest count in September which was somewhat disappointing as up to 39 were recorded in the same period last year. Numbers failed to increase in October but this may have been more down to the fact that water levels were reduced for essential maintenance work. In any event, a best count of 12 for October was the lowest ever for that month. There was a small improvement in November and more so in December which produced a best count of 35 on the Duck Marsh on 10th (PA). Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
37	37	21	6	-	-	-	7	14	12	22	35

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* Resident Breeder

Numbers on the wetlands were disappointing throughout the year, the highest count being just 51. The absence of a cold snap in the early part of the year probably didn't help matters either. The first ducklings (nine) were seen on the river on 19th April (PA), just a day later than last year and in the same area by the river path. A further family of four ducklings was seen on the river on 3rd May (DC/EC). On 23rd

May a female was on the Wet Grassland with just a single duckling. On 8th June eight small ducklings were seen on the Lagoon, apparently without an adult, and the next day a female was seen there with 11 ducklings(JB). Further families appeared on the river near the bridge on 15th June (five) and 7th July (three). Interestingly, some of the best counts in the last two months of the year were made towards dusk, numbers of birds flying onto the wetlands from the Yorkshire Water compound, the Wet Grassland proving particularly popular. Monthly maxima, adults only, are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
31	17	16	18	37	24	51	18	28	36	36	20

Garganey *Anas querquedula* Scarce (Summer) Visitor

There had been no sightings of this summer visitor since 2006 so three records this year was most welcome. A male gave good views on the Duck Marsh on 28th April (JK et al) and 4th May (JH/DC/EC). A female or eclipse male was reported on the Wet Grassland on 14th September (GH).

Shoveler *Anas clypeata* Winter/Passage Visitor

Though never common on the reserve, numbers generally were very disappointing last year and there was no improvement in the first six months of this year. There were sightings on just five dates in January with a best count of three birds (PM/BM) and there were then no further records until 2nd May when a single male was seen on the Lagoon and Duck Marsh. On 13th July a male and female were on the Lagoon (WeBS) and on 6th August four females or juveniles were reported there (PA/MW). There was some improvement from the middle of September with one or two birds seen on several dates and sightings most days in October and November with up to four birds on the Lagoon, the Wet Grassland also proving popular once levels were restored following cutting. Birds were present most days in December until 27th when most of the wetlands became frozen. Three males were seen on several dates with five on 24th (MW). Monthly maxima are shown below.

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

Pochard *Aythya ferina* Winter/Passage Visitor

In March last year we had a record count of 18 on two days in very snowy conditions. The weather was rather different this March but we still managed maximum counts of 11 in both February and March. One or two males were on the Lagoon daily in January with three on 1st. Numbers started to rise in February reaching 11 on 23rd (DC/EC). There was a further count of 11 on 1st March, 10 of these males (DC/EC). Numbers fell away subsequently and three on 19th March was the last sighting until 11th May when a male and female spent a day on the Lagoon. A single bird was also on the Lagoon on 9th and 10th August. There were then no further sightings until 2nd November when a female was seen on the Lagoon (JML). A single male or female was then seen on several more dates until 26th November when two males were present (DC/EC). There were no sightings after this date until 15th December when a single male arrived on the Lagoon again. One bird was then present daily until the end of the year with two males briefly on 27th (DC/EC). Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
3	11	11	-	2	-	-	1	-	-	2	2

Scaup *Aythya marila* Scarce Visitor

The only previous records of this species came in the year 2000 with a single female on the Lagoon on 16th October and a single male there on 24th December. Numerous hybrids do occur and identification can sometimes be difficult but various experts agreed that the female duck that arrived on the Lagoon on 1st February this year (PC et al) was indeed a Scaup. The bird was present virtually daily until 9th March.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* Resident Breeder

Maximum counts in January and February were the lowest since the years 2000 and 2005 respectively. A count of 14 was the best for January (DC/EC) and 17 for February (DC/EC). The absence of a

prolonged cold spell probably didn't help matters as this tends to bring in more ducks. There was some improvement in March with 25 recorded during an early morning WeBS count on 16th but numbers started to fall away in May. However, with up to five males and three females still present in June and much reduced mink activity hopes were high that at least one pair might breed successfully for the first time since 2009. But it was not to be and by July there was just a single female on the Lagoon. One or two birds did start to return in August but numbers remained in single figures. Counts in October and November were the best for those months since 2011 but still disappointing with just nine and 10 respectively the highest. Last December produced the lowest counts ever for that month. There was a considerable improvement this December with 30 on the Lagoon on 22nd (JB), 21 there on 24th and 21 on 30th, 15 of these on the river (PM/BM). Interestingly, most of the higher counts in the winter months do come towards dusk. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
14	17	25	19	9	8	1	4	6	9	10	30

Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* Winter Visitor

February and March in both 2012 and 2013 produced some good counts with a record 14 in February 2012. Probably due to rather milder weather conditions, numbers were much lower this year with no more than three birds recorded. Two males and a female on the Lagoon on 1st March (PA) were the last of the winter. Last year, for the first time since 2007, there were no sightings in the last three months of the year. This year a male was on the Lagoon from 26th October to 2nd November. There were no further sightings until 21st December when a female or eclipse male appeared on the Lagoon (ST et al). On 30th December a male and female were on the partly frozen Lagoon at dusk and a further male was seen on the river from the bridge (PM/BM). Monthly maxima are shown below.

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

Goosander *Mergus merganser* Frequent Visitor

From late November to February birds come on to the Lagoon at dusk to socialise before flying off after dark. Most unusually, no more than three birds came onto the Lagoon in December last year with many dusk watches failing to produce a single bird. There was some improvement in January this year with a best count of 18 (11 ♂+7 ♀) at dusk on 27th (PM/BM et al) and 15 on 29th (10 ♂+5 ♀) but numbers generally were disappointing. February produced just two double figure counts with 13 on 1st (PC) and 11 on 3rd (PM/BM). A few birds were seen on the river some days and there almost daily sightings there in March. On 30th April a female was seen on the Fish Pass with five tiny ducklings (PM/BM). Four males and a female were on the river on 10th May (DC/EC) and there were just a handful of sightings after this date. Six "redheads" which flew over the Dragonfly Ponds on 2nd June (PM/BM) were almost certainly juveniles as were 12 on the river near the bridge on 9th July (JB/MB) and six in the same area on 11th August (JB). Unusually, no more than two birds came onto the Lagoon at dusk in the latter part of November and most evenings produced none. There was some improvement in December with nine birds (5 ♂+4 ♀) at dusk on 14th, six (3 ♂+3 ♀) on 15th (PM/BM/JB) and nine again (5 ♂+4 ♀) on 30th (PM/BM). Up to five birds were seen on the river in December. The maximum daily count for each month is shown below (adults only).

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
18	13	5	4	5	6	12	6	1	1	2	9

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* Casual Breeder

Not unexpectedly, there were again no sightings this year. The countrywide DEFRA cull proved very successful. This species bred on the reserve in 2004, 2005 and 2006 and was last seen here on 16th May 2009.

Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa* Scarce Visitor

A single bird at the edge of the Willow Coppice on 24th April 2012 was the first sighting since 1st April 2010. There have been no sightings since this date.

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

A number of birds were released on the reserve in 2010 and 2013 and these appeared to settle in well but sightings have gradually dwindled and this year there were just three records. Two were heard on Tim's Field on 28th January (JB); one was seen near the edge of the Lagoon on 17th May (PM/BM) and one was reported on Bentley's Path on 1st August (DW).

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

Considering the healthy fox population on the reserve, pheasants are remarkably common here. Twenty-two were counted on Tim's Field on 12th January (JB/MB) and 14 were there on 28th January (JB), no doubt benefiting from the abundant seed crop and the supplementary seed feeding in the winter months. Birds were regular visitors to the feeders in the Manager's Garden and Bee Garden throughout the year. A juvenile on the Willow Path on 22nd June (DC/EC) was the first evidence of successful breeding this year. On 7th July a male, female and eight chicks were under the feeders in the Bee Garden (DW) and there were several subsequent visits, the birds apparently having nested on the Mike Fisk Meadow. Regular reports of adults with up to five juveniles on Mike Fisk Meadow and in the Bee Garden later in July, throughout August and September may have related to the same or different birds. Surprisingly, there were no counts of more than nine birds on Tim's Field in the latter part of the year.

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

Typically, numbers on the wetlands in the early part of the year were low with just a single bird on the Lagoon on two dates in January. Single birds were also seen on the river on several dates. There was no real improvement in February though there were two on the Lagoon on one date. Like last year, there was more activity on the Duck Marsh from the beginning of March but the Wet Grassland was the most productive area in March with up to four birds here. The first chicks (four) were seen on the Duck Marsh on 22nd May (PM/BM), the same date as last year, though two large juveniles there on 30th May (PM/BM) suggested there had been an even earlier brood. A bird was on a nest at the northern end of the Lagoon on 15th June and on 4th July three nests were noted on the Lagoon, all built rather precariously on thick beds of algae which had formed. To what extent these nests were successful is not known. On 13th July a family of

three chicks was reported on the Duck Marsh (DC/EC) and on 23rd August a new family of three chicks appeared on the Wet Grassland (DC/EC). An early morning WeBS count on 7th September recorded a total of 22 birds with 16 of these on the Lagoon. Birds became much harder to find on the wetlands towards the end of the year with no more than two reported in November and December but up to four were seen on the river. Monthly maxima are shown below (adults only).

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
1	2	6	5	6	6	11	18	22	9	2	6

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

This species continues to frustrate from a breeding point of view. A single bird still in winter plumage arrived on the Lagoon on 10th March (JK et al). There was a further sighting on 21st March but there were then no further records until 2nd June when two birds were reported on the Lagoon (ABr). The birds were observed displaying on 4th and 5th June and by 10th two eggs could be seen on a nest close to one of the tern rafts. However, on 23rd June, when the bird left the nest briefly, a coot started to remove some of the nesting material and by the next day the birds were showing no further interest in the nest which had been commandeered by two juvenile gadwall. The grebes were seen again on 25th June but there were no sightings thereafter.

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* **Frequent Visitor**

There were records most days throughout the year with sightings almost guaranteed on the pylon by the Fish Pass. The highest counts came from August onwards with birds congregating on the pylon. There were frequent reports of 10 or 11 there in the latter part of August and throughout September with several juveniles among them. Birds were observed fishing on the Lagoon throughout the year, often loafing on the middle island. There were also regular reports of birds fishing on the river. Numbers fell away somewhat through October but up to five were still present in November and December. The highest counts each month are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
5	2	6	5	5	8	5	10	12	9	5	5

Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*) Infrequent Visitor

2011 had been the best year to date for this species with sightings on five dates and three birds on one occasion - all between 7th July and 3rd August. Hopes were high for a repeat in 2012 when one was seen flying low over the Scrubland on 23rd July. Unfortunately, there was to be just one further sighting on 22nd September. In 2013 there were no records but this year was the best yet with sightings on seven dates. Unfortunately, the birds only stayed briefly and only a handful of visitors were lucky enough to see them. Single birds were seen on the Duck Marsh on 2nd May (PM/BM et al), on the Lagoon on 26th June (SHe) and on the Duck Marsh again on 19th July (PS). On 27th July one flew low over the Wet Grassland and Reedbed (JB). There were further sightings of single birds on the Duck Marsh on 17th August and 27th September (DC/EC) and on 11th October two were reported on the Wet Grassland.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* Resident

This is still a common bird on the reserve and recorded in all months but numbers do fluctuate from day to day and two or three months were somewhat disappointing. There were some good counts in January this year with 10 reported on several dates, usually on the Duck Marsh but on one occasion flying over the Visitor Centre (PC). Numbers fell away considerably in February with no more than two reported - the lowest February count since the reserve opened. Numbers in March, April and May were more in line with recent years with up to seven in April. June did produce a double figure count - 12 being reported on the Duck Marsh on 11th (PA) - but a best count of six for July was the lowest for that month since the reserve opened and six for August was the second joint lowest. September did provide one double figure count - 11 together on the farmland of all places on 28th (JLo). Volunteers opening up early morning often encounter one or two herons on the bridge parapets but five there on 1st September provided an interesting record (DAN). Counts in November were the highest ever for that month with 12 on two dates, 13 on one date and 14 on the Duck Marsh on 26th the best (PA). December too produced some good records with 11 on two dates the

highest for that month since 2003 (DC/EC/ST). The highest counts each month are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
10	2	6	7	5	12	6	6	11	6	14	11

Red Kite *Milvus milvus* Frequent Visitor

First recorded over the reserve on 26th July 2006, this species has been reported every year since and is now quite a common bird in the valley. In 2013 there were sightings on a record 63 dates but this year, surprisingly, only on 36 dates. This may be more down to the fact that observers are no longer bothering to report sightings as there is no suggestion that birds are any less common locally. Grass cutting on the farmland and ploughing on Tim's Field is usually guaranteed to bring in birds these days and three were over the farmland on 14th June during cutting operations (MB et al). Any birds wandering over the reserve, however, were very quickly intercepted by nesting common terns. Hay baling on Mike Fisk Meadow on 26th July also attracted one bird (DC/EC). The following table shows the number of dates that birds were reported each month.

Month	Number of Dates	Details
January	2	Single birds only
February	4	Two birds on two dates
March	7	Two birds on one date
April	3	Three birds on one date
May	5	Single birds only
June	8	Three birds on one date and two on one date
July	3	Single birds only
August	1	Single birds only
September	0	
October	0	
November	1	Single bird only
December	2	Single birds only
Total	36	

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* **Resident Breeder**

There were sightings most days from the beginning of the year. Wood pigeons and stock doves were regular prey items for a large female sparrowhawk, the Manager's Garden being a popular hunting ground. Occasionally the roles were reversed and on 20th August a male bird was pursued by a very foolhardy swallow low over John Ackroyd Meadow (BM). A pair almost certainly bred again in woodland across the river but there were few reports of juveniles. A juvenile male was seen flying low over the road into the Coppice on 29th August (PM/BM). On 3rd November a sparrowhawk unsuccessfully pursued a group of redwings out of bushes behind the Lagoon (PM/BM/JB). There was a lot of activity in December. On 3rd a large female was reported quartering Tim's Field more like a harrier in an effort to flush prey (PM).

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

Records of this species have increased considerably over the last three years. 2012 produced sightings on 18 dates; 2013 was even better with 21 dates and this year was the best yet with sightings reported on 26 dates. Sightings this year can be summarised as follows:

Month	Number of Dates	Details
January	1	Single bird only
February	1	Single bird only
March	3	Single birds only
April	3	Single birds only
May	-	-
June	3	Two birds on one date
July	-	-
August	4	Two birds on one date
September	1	Single bird only
October	4	Six birds on one date
November	3	Single birds only
December	3	Two birds on one date

As can be seen, most records involved single birds but two were noted on three dates and on 2nd October six were observed for some

time circling together over Tim's Field (PM/BM) - possibly a family group?

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. The record was subsequently accepted by YNU. There have been no subsequent records.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* **Scarce Visitor**

There were no sightings this year. One that flew over the reserve on 12th April 2008 was the first and only record.

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* **Resident Breeder**

It is estimated that we have lost 44% of our nesting kestrels since 1970 so to have two pairs nesting on the reserve this year was particularly pleasing. One pair had nested in a barn owl box in the Yorkshire Water compound in five out of the last six years but this year a pair also nested in the second barn owl box there. Birds were active on the reserve from the beginning of the year and by the middle of March interest was being shown in both boxes. Two birds were observed mating on a telephone post on John Ackroyd Meadow on 13th March (PM). On 28th April the male bird brought in a rodent for the female on the ledge of the old nest box. On 3rd May a bird was observed bringing a rodent to the new nest box where it proceeded to eat it on the ledge of the box (PM/BM). There was daily activity at both boxes throughout April, May and June and the first report of a juvenile at the old nest box came on 5th July (DC/EC). Two were seen on the box the next day (DC/EC) and on 7th July three juveniles were on the ledge of the box with a fourth on the roof of the building (PM/BM). The female was seen to bring in a rodent and a small bird the same day. On 12th July nine birds were seen in the air at the same time (PA) suggesting at least one juvenile had also fledged from the new box. On 19th July a juvenile was observed hovering and calling no more than three feet from the door of the Visitor Centre at 8pm. Perhaps it had heard about the harvest mice in the display tanks! There was intense activity throughout July and on 26th two juveniles were seen on the new box. August too produced daily sightings and although these reduced somewhat in September and October birds still made fairly regular visits to the two boxes.

There was a lot of activity in December with daily sightings again. Two were seen together on Tim's Field on 14th (DC/EC) and two very noisy birds were at the old nest box on 15th (DAN) and 16th (PM/JB).

Hobby *Falco subbuteo* Scarce Visitor

Prior to 2012 there had been just one reported sighting of a hobby on 10th July 2005. In 2012 one was seen just off the reserve on 7th July. There were no sightings in 2013 or 2014.

Merlin *Falco columbarius* Infrequent (Winter) Visitor

Very much a winter visitor to the reserve, there was just one record this year- a single bird flying over the river path and river on 31st December (JS/AB).

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* Scarce Visitor

Sightings were reported on five dates this year. On 26th February one was seen flying over Mike Fisk Meadow and the farmland (RS/PA). On 2nd March one was again seen on the farmland (PA). On 20th May one was reported feeding on a kill on a pylon on the farmland (PW) and one was again seen on the pylon on 7th June (PA/DC/EC). The same day what was probably the same bird was seen over Tim's Field (JH). On 25th June one was again reported on the pylon (PA).

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* Resident Breeder and Winter Visitor

Birds were hard to find in the early part of the year, the usually productive Reedbed failing to produce a sighting in January or February. There were just three records in January - in each case a single bird on the middle island on the Lagoon on 22nd (PA), 26th (PA) and 29th (ABI). The Reedbed did produce a sighting on 2nd March (PA) but there were no further records until 15th April when one was heard in the Reedbed. There were records on three further dates in April - all in the Reedbed - at least two birds calling there on 28th (JB/MB). Breeding was confirmed for the third year running, an adult and two juveniles being seen on the Duck Marsh on 28th May (ABI). There were no further sightings until 6th July when a chick was reported in the Reedbed (PC). There were further sightings of juveniles, one being seen on the Duck Marsh on 20th (PA) and 24th August (DC/EC) and on the Lagoon on 23rd and 27th August (PA). On the latter date two were reported on the Lagoon (PA/JS). Adults

were seen on the Duck Marsh on four dates in September with two on 29th (PM/BM). October produced sightings on five dates on the Wet Grassland with two birds on 15th (PA). There were also sightings of single birds on two dates on the Duck Marsh. In November birds were seen on the Duck Marsh on three dates with two there on 9th (PA). On 24th November one was heard on the Wet Grassland behind the Education Pond. There were reports on six dates in December, three of these on the Lagoon and three on the Wet Grassland, all involving single birds.

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

There were no sightings this year. An adult bird was present on the Wet Grassland for five days from 1st October 2005.

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* **Resident Breeder**

Birds were present on all four main wetland areas from the beginning of the year but typically the higher numbers were to be found on the farmland close to the river bank in January and to a lesser extent in February. Up to 15 were counted here in January. A nest at the end of the middle island on the Lagoon contained seven eggs on 18th April (JB) but the first chicks (two) were seen on the Duck Marsh on 2nd May (DC/EC). On 7th May a family of three chicks was reported on the Duck Marsh and a family of five was on the Wet Grassland (DC/EC). The first young (five) appeared in the Reedbed on 11th May and on the Lagoon (just one) on 14th May. Further families were seen on the Duck Marsh in June (four), on the Lagoon in July (six) and on the Wet Grassland on 20th August (three). Both young and adults were reported on the Dragonfly Ponds from time to time but whether they actually nested there is not known. Monthly maxima (adults only) are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
23	13	9	7	6	5	6	7	10	13	12	11

Coot *Fulica atra* **Resident Breeder**

Last year numbers in the period from September to the end of December were the lowest for many years. There was little improvement in January this year with a best count of 15 the lowest for that month since 2002. It continued in the same vein with numbers

most months the lowest for some years. The highest count of adults for the year was just 22 on 16th February (WeBS). Despite the low numbers there was some successful breeding , the first chicks (three) appearing on the Wet Grassland on 5th May (DC/EC), two weeks earlier than last year. The first chicks appeared on the Duck Marsh (four) on 18th May (DC/EC). Over the next few days at least two other families were reported. New families also appeared on the Lagoon in June and July. Numbers dropped sharply from the middle of October with a best count of four in November the lowest for that month since 2001. There was virtually no improvement in December with usually between two and four but five on two dates. Monthly maxima (adults only) are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
15	22	21	15	9	12	13	15	17	13	4	5

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* Migrant Breeder

Birds usually arrive on the reserve in February and the first report this year was of a single bird on the Lagoon on 8th (PA et al), eight days earlier than last year. There were sightings most days thereafter but it wasn't until 23rd February that a second bird arrived (DC/EC). Most sightings were on the Lagoon but birds also spent time on the Duck Marsh and farmland. Three were seen on Mike Fisk Meadow during an early morning WeBS count on 16th March and eight flew over the reserve on 24th March (IW). Two birds were seen daily, usually on the middle island on the Lagoon, and four eggs were counted in a nest here on 18th April (JB). A third adult was present briefly on 19th April and 23rd April. Four chicks made their first appearance on the middle island on 30th April but no more than three were seen subsequently. On 17th May the three youngsters were seen on the Duck Marsh with one adult. On 18th May they were back on the middle island on the Lagoon but later in the day they had returned to the Duck Marsh (DC/EC). The birds then remained on the Duck Marsh but only two juveniles were seen from 22nd May. From 4th June both adults and the two juveniles were seen feeding on Tim's Field most days. The birds were last seen on 7th July but one was heard on 15th July.

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

After an improvement in the number of records last year it was back to square one again this year with sightings reported on just four dates - all on the Duck Marsh. One was seen on 2nd April (PA); two were observed mating on 20th April (ST); one was reported on 30th April (JH) and two on 1st May (PC).

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

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

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

There have been no records in the last six years.

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* **Casual Breeder**

Like last year, the best count came in January - 100+ birds flying over the reserve on 12th (JB/MB). There were a few double figure counts on the farmland in January and February with 87 on 22nd January (PA), 42 flying over on 16th February (WeBS) and 35 on 17th February (JB). Twenty-five flew low over the Lagoon on 3rd February (PM/BM) probably en route to the farmland. A few birds were seen on the Duck Marsh in March with six the best count on 12th (BM). Up to three were still present throughout April and May and a pair displaying over Mike Fisk Meadow on 21st April gave hope that nesting might occur but it wasn't to be this year. There were a few reports of a single bird in June and July but there were then no further sightings until 21st November when two flew over Tim's Field (JB/MB). At least 40 flew over the farmland and Mike Fisk Meadow on 26th November (DC/EC) but there were no records after this date. Maximum numbers seen each month are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
100+	42	6	3	3	1	1	-	-	-	40+	-

Knot *Calidris canutus* **Scarce Visitor**

There were no sightings this year. A bird on the Duck Marsh on 28th May 2006 was the first and only record for the reserve.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina* Infrequent Visitor

A single bird seen on the Duck Marsh on 1st February 2012 was the first record since May 2006. There were no sightings last year or this year.

Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus* Passage/Winter Visitor

2012 and 2013 each produced three records and it was the same again this year. One was accidentally flushed at the edge of the Lagoon on 7th January (JB); one was seen on the Wet Grassland on 21st January (JB) and one was reported on the Duck Marsh on 19th March (PA).

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* Passage/Winter Visitor

The Duck Marsh again recorded by far the most sightings but the usually productive Lagoon margins gave us just two sightings this year. Interestingly, the first record of the year came from the new ponds near the Manager's Garden on 1st January (JK) - a single bird. Birds were generally hard to find in January and February with no more than two reported but March proved to be an excellent month with daily sightings on the Duck Marsh and often up to six birds seen by birdwatchers. The highest counts typically occurred when birds were accidentally flushed during habitat management work and surveys but a report of 16 seen on the Duck Marsh from the Willow Path Hide on 22nd March was exceptional (PC/PS). On 24th March 15 were flushed on the Duck Marsh and one on the Lagoon during survey work (PM/BM). Up to four birds were recorded on the Duck Marsh in April but there were no sightings after 30th April until 13th August when two flew over the Wet Grassland (JH). There were sightings on the Duck Marsh most days after that with usually just one or two birds but three on occasions. Three were also seen on the Wet Grassland on 29th September (JB) and on several subsequent dates. In the last two weeks of the year nearly all the activity was on the Wet Grassland with sightings most days and up to six birds reported. However, the highest count of the month came on 28th with nine reported flying over the Lagoon (PA). The numbers of dates that birds were recorded in the various habitats are shown below. Last year's figures are shown in brackets for comparison.

Lagoon	Duck Marsh	Reedbed	Wet Grassland	Other
2 (22)	66 (37)	5 (7)	18 (6)	6 (9)

Maximum monthly counts are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
2	2	16	4	-	-	-	2	3	3	4	9

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

No sightings were reported this year. This species has only been recorded on the reserve on three occasions.

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

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

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* **Scarce Visitor**

2012 produced just one report of a single bird but there were no records in 2013 or 2014.

Curlew *Numenius arquata* **Migrant Visitor**

It was another poor year for this species with records on just seven dates. One was on the Duck Marsh on 15th February (PA); one flew over the Willow Path on 5th March (DC/EC); one was calling on the farmland on 6th March (PM/BM) and one was seen there on 24th March (JB). On 6th April three flew over the Lagoon (ST) and two flew over the Willow Path the same day (DC/EC). On 25th May two flew off the farmland and over the Visitor Centre (JK). Autumn sightings are unusual here so one over the farmland on 9th November (SO) was a noteworthy record.

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

This is very much a winter visitor to the reserve, most likely to be encountered in and around the Coppice later in the day. There were four records last year but just two this year. A single bird was

accidentally flushed in the Coppice on 12th December (JB) and two flew up the entry road at dusk on 31st December (JB/MB).

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* **Infrequent Visitor**

Sightings have declined over recent years, last year producing just four records, all between 9th March and 16th April. This year there were just two records of what was almost certainly the same bird. On 9th March one was seen on the Wet Grassland (DC/EC) and on the same day one was reported on the Duck Marsh (SE).

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* **Infrequent Visitor**

There were no sightings again this year. In 2010 two birds were reported on two dates. These were the first records since 28th March 2002.

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

This species is predominantly a passage bird in Britain with a few staying throughout the winter. There have been no records in the last three years. The last sighting was on 3rd May 2011.

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

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

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

It was a disappointing year with sightings on just seven dates. One was seen on the Fish Pass on 18th April (PM/BM); one was on top of the sand martin bank on 4th May (PM/PG) and what was probably the same bird was seen on the Duck Marsh later in the day (PM/BM). On 24th June one was on the river just below the weir (PM). On 30th July a bird was reported on one of the tern rafts on the Lagoon (PA). In August one was on the Lagoon on 3rd (DC/EC) and again on 24th (LJ/BM). Finally, there was a second hand report of a bird on one of the new ponds near the Manager's Garden on 24th September.

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* **Frequent Visitor**

Numbers generally in the first three months of the year were well down on last year when it was very much colder with a good deal of snow and ice. There were a couple of good counts of c350 on the

farmland on 1st January (PM) and 236 on 19th January (WeBS) but there were no other reports of more than 200 birds. Numbers typically fell away sharply during March and there were no sightings at all in April. A few birds were on the Lagoon and Duck Marsh in May and June and the first juveniles started to appear in July, one being found dead on Mike Fisk Meadow on 11th (JK). Numbers started to build again from the middle of September but there were few counts of more than 100 birds until 23rd November when 200+ were reported on the farmland (PM). There were several 100+ counts on the Lagoon in December, 170 on 30th being the highest (PM/BM) in very icy conditions. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
c350	126	50	-	16	3	22	32	63	103	200+	170

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

Apart from a report of 40+ on the farmland on 1st January (PM) counts in the first three months of the year were well down on last year, probably due to much milder weather conditions. The next highest count was just 18. Sightings are always few and far between in April, May and June and this year was no exception. July produced just one record of six on the Lagoon on 15th and August recorded just two sightings with 16 on the farmland the best (PM/BM). Unusually, there were no reported sightings in September last year and this year was little better with just three sightings but of no more than five birds. A few birds gathered on the farmland in October with 25 the highest count (PM). A few also came onto the Lagoon in November but up to 80 were on the farmland some days. Numbers dropped back somewhat in December with a best count of just 35 on the partly frozen Lagoon on 30th (PM/BM). Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
40	2	1	-	-	-	6	16	5	25	80	35

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

Recorded in all months except September this year but with only a handful of sightings in the first three months of the year. Many

records involved single birds on the Lagoon - often immatures - but 14 flew over the Scrubland during an early morning WeBS count on 18th May; 25+ flew over the Lagoon on 18th June (PM/BM) and 10 flew over the Wet Grassland on 13th July (WeBS). In the latter part of the year 42 were counted flying over the reserve in an easterly direction at dusk on 5th November (PM/JB) and 21 flew over the farmland in the same direction at dusk on 26th November (PM).

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* **Infrequent Visitor**

"V" formations of large gulls flying high in an easterly direction at dusk in January were probably this species. More than 1,000 gulls were estimated on occasions (PM/JB). There were just two reports of birds on the reserve. An adult was on the Lagoon during the evening on 9th July (PM/BM) and two were on the farmland on 7th December (PC).

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

Records are limited to the occasional fly over and there have only been two confirmed sightings in the last ten years. There were no records this year.

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

There were no reports this year. Two 1st winter birds that flew over the Willow Path on 17th January 2009 were the first and only record for the reserve.

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

Following the disastrous events of last year when all nests were lost to American mink and with the three nesting rafts subsequently adapted to try and foil future attacks, hopes were high for a more successful breeding season this year. The first bird arrived on the Lagoon on 19th April, nine days earlier than last year. The following day two were reported on one of the rafts (DC/EC). There were daily sightings thereafter with four on 23rd April and up to eight some days. By 7th May a pair had settled down on each of the three rafts. The first chick was seen on 5th June and nine were counted on 14th June. On 20th June adults drove off a red kite over the compound on two occasions. All was going well until 23rd June when two chicks from one raft were seen struggling in thick algae at the side of the raft. Both birds were returned to the raft by volunteers and soon

recovered from their ordeal. On 28th June a juvenile was again seen in the water and on 4th July five dead juveniles were recovered from thick algae around the rafts - all very close to flying. No juveniles remained on the rafts but up to four adults were present for some days thereafter. On 9th July an adult landed on one of the rafts with a fish but was driven off by a black-headed gull. One adult was still present on 13th July but there were no sightings after this date. Clearly there comes a point prior to flying where juveniles feel the need to leave the rafts and but for the exceptionally thick algae on the Lagoon this year they would almost certainly have reached one of the islands.

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

This was a new bird for the reserve in 2011 with four flying over on 24th July. In 2012 there was an unconfirmed report of one with common terns on one of the rafts on 19th May. There have been no reported sightings in the last two years.

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

Often overlooked in the past, there were rather more records submitted this year. A flock of more than thirty birds can be seen daily on the roof of the big warehouse on Town Street near the reserve entrance and these birds do regularly fly over the reserve. The freshly cut Mike Fisk Meadow proved particularly attractive from late July and throughout August with up to 17 birds reported. The highest number recorded on the reserve this year was 26.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas* **Resident**

Most numerous in the winter months, some of the highest counts in the early part of the year were on Tim's Field with 75 there on 1st January, c50 on 25th January and 47 on 5th February (DC/EC). The farmland, however, is always productive and this year was no exception. Thirty-seven were reported on 11th January and in the latter part of the year c60 on 22nd November, 46 on 12th December, 69 on 20th December and 42 on 21st December (DC/EC). Birds visit the Manager's Garden throughout the year but a stealthy approach to the hide is needed if the birds are not to be flushed prematurely. The best count here was 16 on 29th March. A few birds also regularly visit the Bee Garden to feed on seed. Up to six were noted here.

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

Numbers are at their highest in the winter months when birds visit Tim's Field for the seed crop. There were several reports of c150 in January but there were some higher counts too. An estimated 300 were there on 12th January (JB/MB), 200+ on 15th February (DC/EC) and c200 on 16th February during an early morning WeBS count. Numbers fell away somewhat in March but up to 60 birds were still present at the end of April. Several pairs nested in roadside trees by the Lagoon and in the Coppice. An abundant elderberry crop in the Coppice attracted good numbers of birds in the autumn and up to 80 visited Tim's Field for seed in November. Numbers built through December reaching an estimated 200 over the Christmas period.

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

Although classed as a frequent visitor the actual number of reported sightings tends to be very low. This is probably because the species rarely ventures much beyond the entry road or car park. There were just five reported sightings last year and, surprisingly, none this year.

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

A juvenile cuckoo spent a week on the reserve in July 2012 but there were no sightings in 2013. There were three records submitted this year. One was seen on the pylon by the Fish Pass on 9th July (MH/JH); a juvenile was photographed on the signpost by the Education Pond on 21st July (AH) and a possible juvenile was seen from the Willow Path Hide on 6th August (M&P).

Barn Owl *Tyto alba* **Infrequent Visitor**

First recorded on the reserve in 2008, there was one sighting in August 2010 and one in July 2012. In 2013 there were several sightings between 19th March and 12th April and one further record on 10th July late in the evening. This year there were no reports until 12th December when droppings and an owl pellet were found in the newly constructed thatched gazebo near the Education Pond. A bird continued to roost there until the end of the year, leaving numerous further pellets. However, it remained elusive by day and there were only two actual sightings - on 20th December on the Coppice gate (DC/EC) and on 31st December as it flew out of the gazebo (DBR).

Little Owl *Athene noctua* Casual Breeder

In 2012 a pair bred on the reserve for the first time, raising at least three juveniles. Sadly, the adult female was found dead on 5th May 2013 with a partially ejected egg. Nevertheless sightings of a single bird continued up to 13th October. This year a bird was seen in the Yorkshire Water compound on 12th January (JB/MB) and one was reported on the riverbank behind the Duck Marsh on 28th March (JB). Throughout April there were almost daily sightings on the Sludge Lagoon fence and in the adjacent poplars close to the original nest site. On 5th April two birds were seen in one of the poplars (GJB/PC) and on 12th April two were again seen, this time in bushes in the Sludge Lagoon (PA). There were no sightings between 1st and 25th May but these resumed from 26th and there were a further 15 records between then and 26th August. There was a further gap of three and a half weeks before sightings resumed, this time on the dry stone wall on the farmland where a bird was seen most days to the end of the year.

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco* Infrequent Visitor

Probably more common in the area than the few records suggest. Like last year there were just three reports. One was seen on the Willow Path at 4.15pm on 12th January (JB). One was calling in woodland on the far side of the river during a public bat walk on 9th August (PM/JB) and one was also heard on the far side of the river at 7.15pm on 25th September (PM/BM).

Swift *Apus apus* Migrant Visitor

The run of remarkably consistent arrival dates continued with a single bird over the Scrubland on 27th April (MW). The first records over the last nine years have been as follows:

2006	26th April	2011	29th April
2007	25th April	2012	26th April
2008	26th April	2013	27th April
2009	25th April	2014	27th April
2010	25th April		

There were no further sightings until 3rd May but birds were then reported daily, albeit mainly in low numbers. Numbers over the wetlands in May were similar to last year with few observers reporting double figures - c30 over the Wet Grassland on 23rd being the best (PM/BM). Unlike last year, however, there was no improvement in

June , c30 over the entry road on the evening of 5th being far and away the best count, most reports being of just three or four birds. July too was poor with 16 over the Scrubland on 13th the best count. There were sightings on just five dates in August with no more than eight birds reported, a single bird over the farmland on 22nd being the last of the year (JB), nine days later than last year. There was no apparent interest in the Swift Nesting Tower this year - hardly surprising in view of the general scarcity of birds.

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* Resident Breeder

The pattern of sightings in the first few months of this year was very different to recent years. Last year, for example, birds were seen on just six dates in the first four months of the year. This year there were daily sightings from the beginning of the year to the end of February, almost certainly due to a very mild winter this time. The Lagoon, Duck Marsh and Reedbed all provided plenty of sightings as did the river. Even the Education Pond produced three records and there were several on the Fish Pass. Birds were hard to find in early spring with sightings on just five dates in March and one in April but there were almost daily records again from 10th May to the end of the year. There were numerous reports of two birds but up to three were seen on occasions. There were virtually no sightings on the normally reliable Kingfisher Pool (KFP) at the Reedbed from the beginning of June to the middle of November, thanks to a thick blanket of duckweed, but once this cleared there were some excellent opportunities for photographers in December, birds catching sticklebacks on almost every dive. There were 194 reported sightings this year and these were broken down as shown below.

Lagoon	Duck Marsh	Reedbed Inc KFP	Wet Grassland	Education Pond	Fish Pass	River
69	56	27	6	3	5	28

Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis* Infrequent Visitor

Ants are quite scarce on the reserve and, as a result, sightings of green woodpeckers are few and far between. There were no records in 2012 or 2013 and just one this year - a single bird heard calling near the bridge on 1st November (JB/MB).

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* Resident Breeder

This is a regular visitor to the reserve from woodland across the river with the majority of sightings on the Willow Path and in the Manager's Garden. There were daily sightings throughout much of the year. The first juvenile was seen on the Willow Path on 5th June (BM) and there were several subsequent sightings, two being reported on 30th July (MW).

Skylark *Alauda arvensis* Infrequent Visitor

This species is just about hanging on in this part of the valley but there had been no records on the reserve since 7th June 2012. This year was a relatively good one with sightings on seven dates between 18th May and 15th June. On 18th May one was reported high over the car park (MW). A single bird was then seen on Tim's Field on 24th May with two there on 25th, one on 4th June and two on 7th June (DC/EC et al). On 11th June one flew over the road (MW) and on 15th June one was again seen on Tim's Field (DC/EC).

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* Migrant Breeder

After two very poor years for this species this year turned out to be an excellent one. With the new nesting bank on the Lagoon ready for its first lodgers the arrival of the first birds was eagerly anticipated but we could certainly not have predicted the large numbers that actually arrived on site. Fifteen over the river on 22nd March (GP) were the first of the year, three weeks earlier than last year. A few birds were first seen over the Lagoon a week later but numbers then built up rapidly with some exceptional evening counts in the latter part of April and early May. Around 200 were over the reserve at 7.00pm on 22nd April (JB/MB). Between 300 and 400 were over Tim's Field and the meadows at 8.30pm on 28th April (PM/BM et al). Around 400 were over the Lagoon at 8.30pm on 3rd May and on 5th May c500 dropped into the Reedbed at dusk to roost (PM/BM). The first birds were seen using the nesting bank on 10th May and by 21st May c30 nesting holes had been excavated. A week later there were 45 nesting holes. An early morning WeBS count on 15th June recorded c100 birds over the Lagoon and 70 nesting holes in use. Between 200 and 300 birds were over the reserve at 9.45pm on 17th June (PM/BM) and on 22nd c70 were counted on the road surface and Coppice Fence (JB/MB et al). Birds were still feeding young at the nesting bank as late as 7th September with 40 counted, many of

these probably on their third broods, but these had gone by 10th with just a single bird over the Lagoon the last of the year (DC/EC).

Swallow *Hirundo rustica* **Migrant Breeder**

A single bird over the Coppice on 31st March (JK) was the first of the year, almost two weeks earlier than last year. There were no further sightings until 6th April when one was over the Lagoon but there were regular reports thereafter with 15 over the Lagoon on 13th April and 17 there on 26th April the best count of the month. The dumper truck shed again proved a popular nesting site with birds first seen flying in on 16th April. Several pairs subsequently nested here successfully. There were some decent counts in August with numbers of young birds on the wing. Forty were on overhead wires by the dry stone wall during an early morning WeBS count on 9th. At least 50 were watched as they flew low over Mike Fisk Meadow during the evening on 19th (PM/BM) and 50/60 were reported over Tim's Field on 20th (PA et al). However, numbers in August and September were well down on last year when some evening counts were well into three figures. On 25th August an adult was observed feeding four juveniles on the metal cabinet outside the Visitor Centre (DC/EC). There were a few double figure counts over the Lagoon in September with 20 on 3rd the best (DC/EC). Twelve birds over the Lagoon on 17th September looked like being the last of the year but two were then reported over Tim's Field on 1st October (M&P), six days later than last year.

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

Currently listed as amber status in the Birds of Conservation Concern listings, house martins are estimated to have declined by 65% in just over 40 years. The decline is certainly noticeable here. Two over the Duck Marsh on 13th April (PM/BM) were the first of the year, just one day earlier than last year. Surprisingly, there were no further sightings until 10th May when one was over the Coppice. May produced sightings on just four more dates and there were records on only three dates in June, 12 over the Lagoon on 1st being far and away the best count (DC/EC). It was hoped that numbers would improve with young birds on the wing but July produced just one record - three birds over the Lagoon on 13th. There were then no further sightings until 29th August when six were over Tim's Field. A count of 15 over the Lagoon on 13th September (DC/EC) looked like being the last of

the year but there was then a late record of 16 over the reserve on 11th October (PC). All in all it turned out to be an extremely disappointing year for this species.

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

Numbers of this species passing through the reserve have declined dramatically in the last 10 years. 2013 offered a glimmer of hope with sightings on 10 dates, though of no more than two birds. This year there were sightings on just three dates. Two were seen on the manure heap at the edge of the farmland on 26th March (BH/PA); one was reported on a patch of bramble near the Manager's Garden on 8th October (MW) and one was again seen on the farmland on 20th December (DC/EC).

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* **Infrequent Visitor**

There were again no sightings this year. There has now only been one confirmed sighting of this species in the last twelve years.

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

It was another good year for this species, the manure heap on the farmland proving to be the most productive area in the early part of the year. Unlike last year, when there were sightings in every month, there was a blank spell this year from the middle of March to the end of May but from the beginning of June there were regular sightings on the Fish Pass. One pair probably bred in this area again this year as there were several reports of one or two juveniles between 15th June and 9th August. From late September there were several sightings of one or two birds in the Manager's Garden and frequent reports of one or two on the farmland and in the Yorkshire Water compound.

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

Typically, nearly all sightings were in a small area around the farmland manure heap, the Yorkshire Water compound and the Visitor Centre and usually involved one or two birds. A pair almost certainly nested in the compound again and there were sightings of one adult and one juvenile on several dates from 24th May. There was a quiet spell from the second week in June with just two records of a single bird in July and just one record of a single bird on the river path in August. September too produced just one reported sighting of three birds on the workshop roof on 24th (DC/EC). Sightings picked

up again in October and up to three were seen on the farmland in November.

Dipper *Cinclus cinclus* **Infrequent Visitor**

Last year turned out to be the best to date for this species, the new Fish Pass being particularly productive in September. This year was a little disappointing with just four records, all between 19th April and 7th July. There were sightings on the river on 19th April (PA) and 30th April (PM/BM). On 21st May one was seen on the Fish Pass (DC/EC) and on 7th July one was reported on the river near the weir (JB). On 30th April the remains of what appeared to be a dipper were found on the Fish Pass, probably the victim of a sparrowhawk attack (PM/BM). There are certainly at least one or two pairs on the river between the reserve and the city centre but predation by mink is known to have been a problem this year and this almost certainly contributed to the lack of dispersal of juveniles upstream.

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

First recorded on the reserve in November 2010, there was one sighting in 2011 and one in 2012. Last year proved to be the best to date with sightings on five dates between 16th January and 21st April of up to 37 birds. There were no reported sightings this year.

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* **Resident Breeder**

This is a very common bird on the reserve and it can be found in every habitat. For the fourth year running a pair nested in the Manager's Garden Hide, three juveniles fledging successfully at the end of June. Only one pair used a nest box this year - a tit box near the Fish Pass - but there are plenty of natural nest sites on the reserve and the species is certainly breeding well here. Two juveniles were reported on the Willow Path on 15th June (MW). Juveniles were also reported in the Manager's Garden on 16th July and 9th August (DC/EC).

Dunnock *Prunella modularis* **Resident Breeder**

This is another very common bird on the reserve and it can be found in most habitats. Many of the hedgerows on the reserve are now thick enough to provide good nesting sites and a few pairs almost certainly nest in the Coppice. The first juvenile of the year, however, was reported on the bridge on 31st May (DC/EC). Three juveniles were

seen on the Willow Path on 13th July (MW) and four were reported at a feeder station in the same area on 6th August (MW). Birds are daily visitors to the feeders in the Manager's Garden and Bee Garden as well as those on the Willow Path, up to eight being seen at the latter site.

Robin *Erithacus rubecula* **Resident Breeder**

Robins can be seen on the Willow Path and in the Manager's Garden throughout the year with an influx in the winter months. Up to six were reported on the Willow Path in January, February and early March. For the second year running no nest boxes were used but birds are clearly having no problem finding natural nesting sites. The first juvenile was seen just outside the Manager's Garden on 18th May (PM). Single juveniles were subsequently reported on the Willow Path on 1st June (PC), in the Reedbed on 8th June (PM/BM) and on the Willow Path again on 15th June (MW). There were regular reports of juveniles in the Manager's Garden from 18th June and three were seen on the Willow Path on 16th July (MW). Juveniles were also seen on the Willow Path on 9th August and in the Manager's Garden on 14th September (MW). Good numbers of adults were reported in the latter part of the year, one very friendly bird regularly perching on the benches with birdwatchers in the Lagoon Hide over the Christmas period.

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* **Scarce Visitor**

First recorded on the reserve in 2006, there had been no further sightings until 2012 when a female was seen on the Scrubland on 1st September. There were no records in 2013 or 2014.

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

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

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* **Passage Visitor**

Last year there was just one spring record and one autumn record of this declining species. This year there were no spring sightings but birds were reported on two dates in September. Six were counted on Tim's Field on 20th (PA) and two were there the following day (DC/EC).

Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* **Passage Visitor**

After a run of several poor years there was some improvement this year with sightings reported on seven dates between 22nd September and 26th October. Three juveniles were on Tim's Field on 22nd September (PM/BM) and two birds were there on 28th September (KL et al). On 11th October two were seen on the farmland fence by the roadside (PA); two were on the farmland wall the next day (PA) and three were at the road side on 22nd October (PA). On 25th October a male and female were reported near the Fish Pass (JH) and one was seen at the Dragonfly Ponds (JLW). On 26th October a female was reported at the edge of the Scrubland near Bentley's Path (DC/EC et al).

Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* **Passage Visitor**

Following four blank years there were sightings on five dates in 2012 but none in 2013. This year there were two spring records. A female was seen on the ramp to the Mike Sheldon Hide on 23rd April (PA) and a female was on Tim's Field on 14th May (SO).

Blackbird *Turdus merula* **Resident Breeder**

The majority of records come from the Willow Path and the Manager's Garden but this is a common bird all round the reserve. Up to four were noted at both these sites in the early part of the year. Broken egg shell found at the northern end of the Lagoon on 20th April indicated an early thwarted nesting attempt and a bird was seen taking food to a nest close to the Willow Path on 23rd May. Eleven adults were recorded round the reserve during an early morning WeBS count on 18th May. A male was observed feeding young on the Willow Path on 15th June (MW) and one juvenile was seen there on 22nd June (DC/EC). A juvenile was also reported in the Manager's Garden on 6th August (M&P). Birds were typically hard to find in September and much of October with few observers seeing more than two at best. However, there did appear to be an influx at the end of October, 16 being counted on 30th, 11 of these around the Lagoon margins (JB). Thirteen were recorded during an early morning WeBS count on 9th November, seven of these on the Willow Path.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* **Winter Visitor**

There were sightings most days from the beginning of January to the middle of March with numerous reports of more than 100 birds. The poplars produced counts of 120 on 18th January and 142 on 29th January (DC/EC). An estimated 300 birds in the poplars on 3rd February included some starlings and redwings but were mainly fieldfares (PM/BM). A mixed flock of starlings and winter thrushes on the farmland on 5th February included at least 150 fieldfares (PM) and a similar number were there on 8th February (PC). The last big count came on 20th March when between 150 and 200 were on the farmland (JB). Seven birds flying over the Visitor Centre on 30th March were the last of the spring (PM/BM). A very mild October probably resulted in birds flying straight through and there were no autumn sightings until 1st November when a single bird was on the farmland (PA). Numbers remained low throughout November until 29th when 35 were counted in the poplars (DC/EC). Numbers were again low in December with a best count of just 20 on 14th (PA).

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

Last year, in what was a very cold, snowy January, there were just three sightings of this species. This January, in rather milder albeit very wet conditions, there were many more sightings and the first song was heard on 8th. On 19th January as many as five birds were singing round the reserve during an early morning WeBS count. The Coppice is always a stronghold for this species and up to three birds sang here throughout May. Two juveniles were seen on the Willow Path on 1st June (PC) but there were no other reports of young. On 14th June six birds were reported singing round the reserve (PM/BM), two of these in the Coppice. The river bank and the area round the Lagoon Hide were also productive. Sightings typically tailed off at the end of July, August producing just two reports of a single bird in the Coppice. There were no records at all in September and just one in October - a single bird on the Butterfly Bank on 3rd. There were four records in November with single birds in the Manager's Garden on two dates, one singing in the Coppice briefly on 9th and one on the Willow Path on 23rd. There were sightings on just two dates in December. One was on Mike Fisk Meadow on 27th and on the farmland on 28th. A bird was also a rare visitor to the Bee Garden on the latter date (DC/EC).

Redwing *Turdus iliacus* **Winter Visitor**

The best counts in the early part of the year were somewhat higher than last year. Around 100 were reported in the poplars on 16th January (JB/MB) and between 30 and 40 were on the farmland on several dates in January and February though numbers in some of the large mixed flocks of winter thrushes and starlings were probably considerably higher. A mixed flock of redwings and fieldfares in riverside trees on 2nd March included between 80 and 100 birds but numbers tailed off rapidly after that date and three in trees in the Manager's Garden on 16th March (JH) were the last of the spring. Thanks to a very mild October most incoming birds probably kept going but seven were seen in the car park hedge on 30th (JB) and around 50 were over the farmland briefly on 31st October (PM). There were several records in November, one observer reporting 70/80 flying over on 5th (MW) but other sightings were of no more than seven birds. In December 26 were seen in the Lagoon area on 11th (JB/MB) but the few other records were again of no more than seven birds.

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

There were sightings in all months this year, the majority coming in the first seven months but with a good number and the best counts in October. Most reports involved one or two birds but seven were in trees by the Reedbed Hide at dusk on 12th January (JB) and four were on the farmland on 16th February. Birds were singing in woodland across the river as early as 19th January. On 2nd June one was observed gathering food on Tim's Field and flying off over the Scrubland, suggesting nesting not too far away (PM). The best counts came in October with 17 at the edge of the farmland on 5th (GJB) and nine on 8th (PA). Eight were reported on overhead wires by the dry stone wall on 15th (PM/JB). There were no reports of more than three birds after this date.

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*

Migrant Breeder

More often heard than seen, last year was an excellent one for this species with as many as four "reeling" birds heard. Surprisingly, there were no records at all this year.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Migrant Breeder

Based on reported sightings numbers were possibly down a bit on last year. There was an intriguing report of a bird seen singing on the Willow Path near the Mike Sheldon Hide on the extremely early date of 8th March (DC/EC). There were no further records until 15th April when one was singing briefly at the edge of the Lagoon (PM/BM). From 27th April around six were reported singing in the Reedbed and by the middle of May birds were also in residence on the Lagoon, Duck Marsh, Wet Grassland and Dragonfly Ponds. The first juveniles were reported on 15th June (ST) but there were few subsequent records of young. Sightings tailed off somewhat from the end of July with just a single record in the Reedbed in August. However, one or two birds were seen on the Lagoon, Wet Grassland and Duck Marsh in September, a single bird at the Dragonfly Ponds on 27th September proving to be the last sighting of the year (DC/EC), a whole month later than the last record in 2013.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti* **Scarce Visitor**

Once heard the explosive call of this species is unforgettable. Birds are gradually pushing north and with at least three at Swillington Ings over recent months it was only going to be a matter of time before one turned up at Rodley. On 17th December one was reported calling at the eastern end of the Wet Grassland (BA). The habitat there is ideal for this species but despite further observation over the following days there were no other reports.

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Migrant Breeder

Two birds singing in the Reedbed on 28th April were the first of the year (LJ), just four days later than last year. Surprisingly, there were no further records until 17th May when one was singing on the Duck Marsh (PM/BM). An early morning WeBS count the next day recorded three singing males in the Reedbed and one on the Willow Path. Thereafter there were regular sightings in the Reedbed with a few at the eastern end of the Wet Grassland and the occasional record on the Lagoon, though reports from the latter site were certainly down on last year. Typically, sightings in August were few and far between but a bird at the edge of the Lagoon during a WeBS count on 7th September was the last sighting of the year.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* **Migrant Breeder**

There was just one report of an overwintering bird in the latter part of 2013 - a male in the Manager's Garden on 24th November. There were several records in the first three months of this year. A female was seen near the main gates on 11th January (PC); a male was in trees by the Reedbed Hide on 19th January (DC/EC) and a female was in trees near the Lagoon Hide on 2nd February (DC/EC). In March a male was reported near the Lagoon Hide on 9th (DC/EC) and a male was on the Willow Path on 26th (DC/EC). From 9th April there were regular sightings and the first singing males were heard on 15th April - one in the Coppice and one on the far riverbank (PM/BM). By 2nd May up to three were singing in the Coppice with birds also holding territory on the Sludge Lagoon, riverbank and Butterfly Bank. Overwintering birds will often visit nut feeders but it was unusual to see a male on a nut feeder in the Manager's Garden on 20th July (DC/EC). Three days later a juvenile was reported feeding on a fat ball on the Willow Path (MW). One was also seen on a fat ball feeder in the Bee Garden on 30th July (GJB). Birds can be hard to find in August but there were a number of sightings this year. Four juveniles were reported on the Willow Path on 16th August (PA) and on 25th August a female or juvenile was feeding on elderberries in the Manager's Garden (PM/SO). The last reported sightings were on 20th September - a female in the Manager's Garden (PA) and a male on the Willow Path (DC/EC).

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

A bird singing in the Coppice on 28th April (PM/BM) was the first of the year, two weeks earlier than last year and the earliest arrival date since 2009. The following day birds were singing in the Coppice again and on the Butterfly Bank. In May at least two were singing in the Coppice and there were sightings in roadside trees by the Lagoon, on the Willow Path and on the path to the Manager's Garden. There were just three reports of single birds between 20th June and 22nd August but there were then almost daily sightings of one feeding on elderberries in the Manager's Garden from 23rd August to 13th September. A further sighting of a bird in the Manager's Garden on 24th September proved to be the last of the year (DC/EC).

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

Unlike its cousin the Common Whitethroat this species is never numerous here. However, in each of the last three years trees at the far end of the Butterfly Bank have held a singing bird. This year the most productive site was the grassy area between the Mike Sheldon Hide and the Lagoon. A bird was observed taking food to a nest here on 17th May (PM/BM) and there were further sightings from the hide on 18th, 21st and 24th May with two birds seen on one occasion (DC/EC) and on 25th (JK). There was also a second hand report of one in the Coppice near the tree sparrow boxes on 25th May. On 1st and 11th June one was seen on the Willow Path (DC/EC) and on 15th June there was a final sighting of a bird from the Mike Sheldon Hide (DC/EC).

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

This is a common bird on the reserve in the spring and summer months. One singing in the large bramble patch across the road from the Lagoon Hide on 16th April ((PM/BM *et al*) was the first of the year, just four days earlier than last year. Over the next few days birds were heard in the Coppice, on the Scrubland and in the hedge just below the Visitor Centre. From 30th April birds were also singing by the Lagoon, in the Mike Fisk Meadow hedgerow and on the Butterfly Bank. Most thick patches of brambles held birds by the middle of May and the patch opposite the Lagoon Hide can always be relied on to produce good sightings. Like last year, an estimated 15 to 20 pairs were on territory in May. The first juveniles (two) were being fed by an adult at the edge of the Scrubland on 30th June (PM). One bird was still singing in this area as late as 17th July. At least one pair again nested in long vegetation at the Dragonfly Ponds. Birds were harder to find in August but one was reported feeding on blackberries in the Manager's Garden on 27th August (JH) and one on the entry road on 30th August was the last sighting of the year (SO).

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* **Migrant Breeder**

At least two overwintering birds were reported in December 2013 but there were no sightings this year until 16th March when one was seen by the Lagoon and what may have been the same bird was seen in trees by the river bridge (JH). There were further reports of singing birds from 19th March in the Coppice and on the river bank with three singing on the river bank on 24th March. The Coppice and

river bank continued to provide most sightings throughout April, May and June with the first juvenile seen in the Coppice on 30th June (PM *et al*). On 22nd August an adult was feeding two young in the Coppice and at least four other birds were seen there (PM/BM). Contact calls could be heard all round the reserve in August. There were sightings throughout September and up to 10th October and, like last year, there were reports of overwintering birds in December - one on the Willow Path on 6th (DC/EC) and one in the Manager's Garden on 13th (PA/JH).

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

A bird seen in the Manager's Garden on the very early date of 30th March was the first of the year (DC/EC *et al*). There were no further records until the more usual date of 13th April when one was reported on the Willow Path (MW). As always the Willow Path and Coppice were the best places to both hear and see this species but, unusually, no more than one bird was reported singing in the Coppice this year. From 28th April one was also singing on the Sludge Lagoon. The first juveniles (five) were seen near the Willow Path Hide on 25th June (MW). Typically, one or two were seen in mixed feeding parties of tits in August and contact calls could be heard all round the reserve but numbers breeding on site did seem to be down somewhat this year. One or two hung on well into September in the warm conditions and a single bird at the edge of the Duck Marsh on 21st was the last of the year (PM/BM), just a day earlier than last year.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* **Frequent Visitor**

Despite its status as a Frequent Visitor this species might best be described as a Winter Visitor as sightings tend to be in the first three months of the year and the last three months. This year there were sightings on two dates in January on the river walk with two birds on one occasion and four dates in March, all of single birds. November produced three records. Five birds were seen on the Willow Path on 12th (ABI) and on 19th between 10 and 12 were reported in trees by the Lagoon (MW). A single bird was seen on the Willow Path on 22nd November (DC/EC). December produced just one sighting - a single bird in the car park hedge on 14th (JH).

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

With no records since 2010 few birdwatchers were expecting any sightings this year. However, several observers reported birds in the period from 24th to 31st August. On 24th two were seen in bushes by the Manager's Garden (SA). On 27th two were reported on the river path (JS/PA). On 30th two were seen just upstream of the bridge on the riverbank (SO). One was reported near the Manager's Garden Hide on 31st (DC/EC) and a little later the same day two were seen in the garden itself (JS/SE).

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

Parties of up to eight were seen on the Willow Path in the early part of the year, often visiting the fat feeders there. Birds were seen carrying nesting material on the Willow Path on 13th and 16th March and the first family party of six was seen at the Dragonfly Ponds on 21st May (DC/EC). Parties of seven birds were reported on the Willow Path on 11th June (PA), the Scrubland on 15th June (MW) and on the Wet Grassland on 28th June (DC/EC). Seven juveniles were seen feeding on fat balls on the Willow Path on 23rd July (MW). Twenty-eight were counted in a big mixed party of around 50 tits moving across the Dragonfly Ponds on 4th August (PM/BM). Other double figure counts included 12 at the Dragonfly Ponds on 27th August (DC/EC), 22 at a feeder station on the Willow Path on 14th September (MW) and 14 in a mixed party in bushes by the Visitor Centre on 31st October (MB *et al*). Parties of up to eight birds were seen in the last two months of the year, the Willow Path producing the most sightings.

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

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

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

After a promising start to 2012 sightings came to a sudden halt after 17th March and there were no further records that year. 2013 was looking like a blank but there was one reported sighting on the Willow Path on 13th November. This year there were no sightings. This species has declined at an alarming rate in some parts of the country but is still present in many parts of Yorkshire.

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

This species is more adapted to coniferous woodland but does also occur in mixed woods and gardens. Up to and including 2011 each year had produced between one and three records and always in the Manager's Garden. In 2012 there was a spate of sightings in the last three months of the year. 2013 produced just six records and this year just two. Single birds were seen at the feeders in the Bee Garden on 23rd August (DC/EC) and 30th October (JB).

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

A common bird on the reserve and in surrounding woodland, it can be seen daily at the feeders on the Willow Path, in the Manager's Garden and in the Bee Garden. Numbers in the early part of the year were certainly up on the same period last year, no doubt helped by a relatively mild winter. Seventeen nest boxes were used this year - six more than last year - and all young fledged successfully in 14 of them. The first juveniles were seen on one of the feeders on the Willow Path on 5th June (BM) and there were numerous reports of juveniles after this date. There were few records of mixed feeding parties later in the summer, probably because they often tend to follow the riverbank, but at least 12 were in a mixed party of tits and warblers at the Dragonfly Ponds on 4th August (PM/BM). Feeders on the Willow Path continued to attract good numbers of birds to the end of the year.

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

As with the blue tit, the majority of records come from the Willow Path, Manager's Garden and Bee Garden. Considering the number of birds reported in the early part of the year, the number of nest boxes used - just eight - was disappointing. However, all young did fledge successfully. With around 100 good nest boxes on the reserve one pair resorted instead to an ancient discarded box left on staging by the container! A bird was feeding young at a sparrow terrace nesting box on the side of the workshop on 18th May but one was also still feeding young at the box on the back of the Mike Sheldon Hide as late as 22nd June. Two sparrow terrace nesting boxes on the side of the Lagoon Hide surprisingly contained a total of four great tit nests, all apparently used. The first juveniles (four) were seen on feeders on the Willow Path on 15th June (MW) and there were regular reports of juveniles after this date.

Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* **Scarce Visitor**

This is a very occasional visitor from woodland across the river. After four blank years there were sightings on two dates in 2011 and one date in 2012. There were no reported sightings last year or this year.

Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris* **Casual breeder**

A pair nested in the stonework on the side of the river bridge in 2012 and the majority of sightings in both 2012 and 2013 were in the vicinity of the bridge. This year sightings were reported on eight dates, five of these in the same area, two in riverside trees by the Fish Pass and one on the river path. In January there were reports of a single bird in trees near the bridge on 17th and 19th (JB) and two were in the car park on 25th (SO). In February one was seen in riverside trees near the Fish Pass on 3rd (JB/BM) and two were in a sycamore in the same area on 16th during an early morning WeBS count. On 12th March one was reported in riverside trees by the bridge (AS). There were no further sightings until 14th September when one was seen on the river path (JH). There was just one other record on 14th December - a single bird in the car park hedgerow (JH).

Jay *Garrulus glandarius* **Resident Breeder**

This is a common bird on the reserve with sightings most days throughout the year. Most records involved one or two birds but a period of high activity from the end of March produced sightings of four or five together with seven on one occasion. A bird was seen flying into the Coppice on 30th May carrying food and it is likely that one pair may have bred there. Three birds at the edge of the Coppice on 7th July included at least one juvenile (PM/BM). Activity is always at its most intense in September and October with birds constantly flying across the reserve on acorn forays. On 21st September three were seen in the Manager's Garden with a further nine on the farmland (JQ). On 28th September six were recorded on the river path (SE). One observer reported "Jays everywhere" on 29th September. Activity died down somewhat in November but there were still daily sightings to the end of the year.

Magpie *Pica pica* **Resident Breeder**

This is still a very common bird on the reserve, sometimes seen in large gatherings, though no observers reported more than 12 together this year. Although there was no record of nesting on the reserve this year and there were no reports of juveniles, successful breeding almost certainly did occur.

Jackdaw *Corvus monedula* **Resident Breeder**

This is another very common bird on the reserve with the highest numbers usually seen on the farmland. Among the higher counts there in the early part of the year were 53 on 24th January (PM), 65 on 8th February (DC/EC) and 78 on 26th February (GP). On the reserve itself c90 were on Mike Fisk Meadow on 30th March and c70 were counted over the bridge on 27th June (PM/BM). Ninety were assembled on overhead wires by the dry stone wall during the evening on 1st August and more than 100 flew over the compound later the same evening (PM/BM). There were a number of 50+ counts in the latter part of the year, c100 on the farmland on 10th December being the highest (DC/EC).

Rook *Corvus frugilegus* **Scarce Visitor**

This has always been a scarce bird on the reserve and there had been no sightings since 16th December 2012. This year, however, there were four records on the farmland. Two were seen during an early morning WeBS count on 16th March; single birds were reported on 19th October and 2nd November (DC/EC) and three were recorded during another WeBS count on 9th November.

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

This is a very common bird on the reserve and adjacent farmland. Typically, some of the biggest counts were on the farmland with 89 there on 8th February and 100 on 12th February (DC/EC). Tim's Field also attracted good numbers some days, among them 55 on 28th April and 37 on the freshly seeded field on 2nd June (PM/BM). Like last year, there were no reports of big counts in the latter part of the year, 43 on Mike Fisk Meadow on 21st December being the highest (DC/EC).

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* **Casual Breeder**

Numbers on the farmland in the early part of the year were generally low but there were a few better counts some days. January produced counts of 200+ on 28th and c150 on 30th (PM). On 5th February 250 were estimated in a mixed flock of more than 400 winter thrushes and starlings (PM). Numbers fell away from the middle of February with the best count just 40 on 21st April. Up to 80 were on the farmland in June but there were no sightings in July and just one in August (15 birds). September produced just two records - both of birds on overhead power lines on the farmland - the highest number being 58 on 21st. October too produced just two records - 55 on overhead power lines on 15th and c200 on the farmland on 30th (JB). On 2nd November c50 flew over the Duck Marsh (PM/JB) but in the rest of the month no more than 19 birds were recorded. Just like last year, birds were virtually absent in December with just two reports - seven on the farmland on 17th and 15 on Mike Fisk Meadow on 29th. There were no reports of nesting on the reserve this year.

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

Sightings of this species have been few and far between in recent years and last year produced just one record in the Manager's Garden. There were six records this year - all by the main gates to the reserve. Five of these involved between one and five birds but 15+ were reported there on 22nd November (PC).

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

Up to 11 birds were visiting the feeders in the Manager's Garden in the early part of 2012 and one pair did breed on the reserve that year. However, numbers gradually dwindled and no more than three were seen in 2013. A single bird visited the feeders in the Manager's Garden daily from the beginning of this year but there were no sightings after 2nd March until 11th October when one was seen on the feeders in the Bee Garden. On 17th October five were seen there and between two and four were recorded daily thereafter until 6th November when six were present (PM/BM). Birds continued to visit the Bee Garden daily but there were no sightings in the Manager's Garden until 20th December when five were reported there (JH). Up to six continued to visit the feeders in the Bee Garden throughout December.

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* **Frequent Visitor**

Birds are daily visitors to the feeders in the Manager's Garden for much of the year with very few sightings elsewhere on the reserve. Numbers this year were fairly typical with up to six in January and February, five in March and three in April. Birds were absent for much of May and there were just a handful of sightings in June with no more than two reported. Birds were back at the feeders in the Manager's Garden from 6th July and one or two also visited the feeders in the Bee Garden some days. There was only one report of more than six birds in the Manager's Garden, 10 being recorded on 6th August (M&P). One or two did start to visit the feeders in the Bee Garden again from mid November but numbers remained low in the Manager's Garden with no more than five to the end of the year.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* **Winter Visitor**

This is a very infrequent winter visitor to the reserve. There was just one reported sighting in 2012 and 2013 and it was the same again this year. A male and female were seen in the Manager's Garden on 16th February (JH).

Greenfinch *Chloris chloris* **Resident Breeder**

This is a common visitor to the feeders in the Manager's Garden and to a lesser extent the Bee Garden. In the main, numbers at the feeders were in single figures but there were just a few double figure counts in the first part of the year, 15 on 15th January being the best (DC/EC). Numbers fell away somewhat from the beginning of March with at best one or two birds in May. The first juvenile was seen at the feeders on 25th May (DC/EC). There were a few double figure counts from the end of May but numbers were generally low. Fourteen were reported on Tim's Field on 28th May (JB) and between 15 and 20 were there on 4th June (MW). There are usually a few double figure counts at the feeders in the Manager's Garden from August and this year was no exception but no observers reported more than 12 and there were no records of more than nine from 1st November to the end of the year.

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* **Resident Breeder**

Although birds visited the feeders in the Bee Garden from the beginning of the year, numbers were considerably lower than last year, probably due to the much milder weather conditions with more

natural food available. January last year produced counts of up to 25 - the best this year was just six. There were in fact only two double figure counts in the first three months of the year - 13 in trees at the Manager's Garden on 13th January and 30+ by the entry gates on 18th January (PC). The first juveniles were seen at the feeders in the Bee Garden on 4th June (DC/EC), nearly six weeks earlier than last year. With more young birds on the wing there were some reasonable counts in July. Twenty-five were reported on overhead wires on the Butterfly Bank on 12th July (PM) and around 30 were seen on John Ackroyd Meadow during an early morning WeBS count the next day. Creeping thistle seed proved popular in August with c30 feeding on it on 27th (DC/EC). Numbers visiting the feeders in the Bee Garden , however, were disappointing with a best count of just 14 compared to counts of up to 31 in September last year. The Bee Garden continued to produce the bulk of the sightings to the end of the year with a few birds most days but no more than eight.

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

The majority of records of this species tend to come between January and March and this year was no exception, the most reliable site being roadside trees by the Lagoon where birds feed on alder seed. There were reports of three here on 5th January (JH), four on 10th January (BM) and three on 22nd January (MW). Two were also seen in the Mike Fisk Meadow hedgerow near the Bee Garden on 16th March (PL/KL).

Linnet *Carduelis cannabina* **Casual Breeder**

This is a common bird on the reserve between October and April but it can be hard to find in the summer months. Numbers reached a record breaking 597 in February 2012 but the best count in 2013 was just 105. The big attraction here is the winter seed crop on Tim's Field, notably the fodder radish. Up to 65 birds were reported in January, numbers dropping back to a maximum of 34 in February, 45 in March and 32 in April. A handful of birds hung on into May and June and it appears at least one pair bred again as two juveniles were seen on overhead wires on the Butterfly Bank on 31st August (PM/BM). Numbers started to build on Tim's Field from the end of September with a small flock of around 15 birds reaching c80 on 7th October (PM/BM) but with no more than 50 most days. Numbers did

increase somewhat in December, reaching 144 on 8th (BM) and c200 on 28th (DC/EC *et al*).

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

This bird is essentially a winter visitor to the reserve in the new year. There were just three records this year, two less than last year. One was seen on the entry road on 11th January (PC); three were seen by the main gates on 18th January (PC) and six were there on 25th January (PC).

Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* **Resident Breeder**

This species is still doing very well locally and particularly so on the reserve. There were daily sightings from the beginning of January to the end of August. There was the usual quiet spell in September but birds were then reported daily from the beginning of October to the end of the year. The majority of records again came from three sites - the Manager's Garden, the Bee Garden and the Willow Path. There were some excellent counts in January and February . Six were in the Bee Garden on 4th January (DC/EC); six were seen on the entry road on 5th January (DC/EC); six were on John Ackroyd Meadow on 18th January (DC/EC) and five males and a female were in the Manager's Garden on 19th January (DC/EC). On 26th February three males and four females were reported in the Manager's Garden (GP). The first juvenile of the year was seen in the Manager's Garden on 6th August (M&P) and there were further sightings of juveniles there between 31st August and 6th September. A female in the Bee Garden on 9th August had a fungal infection on the feet - not an uncommon problem with this species. On 17th October a male was killed when it flew into the Visitor Centre window. On 29th October six males and a female were in the Manager's Garden (PA) and three males and two females were there on 2nd November (DC/EC). Up to six visited the feeders in the Manager's Garden throughout December with as many as seven at the Bee Garden feeders.

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citronella* **Scarce Visitor**

This is still a very scarce bird in the area and there were again no sightings this year. In 2010 there were three February records and in 2011 one February record and one March record - all in the Manager's Garden.

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

Numbers visiting the feeders in the Manager's Garden in the early part of the year were similar to the last two years with up to seven in January, seven in February and eight in March. Numbers generally fell away somewhat from the beginning of April but a count of 10 on 2nd April was the highest of the spring (AB). Birds were also regular visitors to the feeders in the Bee Garden with usually just two or three but up to seven on occasions. Singing males were reported on all four wetland areas during the last week of May and at least one pair again nested at the Dragonfly Ponds in long vegetation. On 8th June a male and a female were observed taking food to a nest at the edge of the Long Ditch there (DC/EC) and on 13th June a female was seen with a damselfly in the same area (PM/BM). The odd bird started to visit the feeders in the Manager's Garden again towards the end of August but numbers remained low throughout September and October with usually just two or three but six on one occasion. Numbers in November and December were very similar to last year with usually between two and five birds with six on one date. Up to three birds were daily visitors to the feeders in the Bee Garden in the same period.

ESCAPED SPECIES SEEN THIS YEAR

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

There have been a few sightings of a single bird over the years but last year one arrived on the Lagoon on 14th September and was present on and off to the end of the year. This year what was almost certainly the same bird appeared on 11th January staying until 15th January. It returned on 27th January and was then present until the end of March, alternating between the four main wetland areas. It was back again for a few days from 25th May to 31st May but was only seen on one date in June. There were no further sightings until 25th October when it turned up on the Lagoon again, staying until 12th November. The bird was seen again on the Duck Marsh on 5th December and it was still present at the end of the year. The bird can be quite aggressive to the resident mute swans on occasions.

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

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

FIRST AND LAST DATES FOR WINTER VISITORS
2014

SPECIES	LAST	FIRST
Wigeon	2nd April	13th September
Goldeneye	1st March	26th October
Waxwing	-	-
Fieldfare	30th March	1st November
Redwing	16th March	30th October
Brambling	16th February	-

FIRST AND LAST DATES FOR SUMMER VISITORS
2014

SPECIES	FIRST	LAST
Garganey	28th April	14th September
Hobby	-	-
Honey Buzzard	-	-
Osprey	-	-
Ringed Plover	-	-
Little (Ringed) Plover	2nd April	1st May
Whimbrel	-	-
Common Sandpiper	18th April	24th September
Common Tern	19th April	13th July
Arctic Tern	-	-
Cuckoo	9th July	6th August
Swift	27th April	22nd August
Sand Martin	22nd March	10th September
Swallow	31st March	1st October
House Martin	13th April	11th October
Yellow Wagtail	-	-
Whinchat	20th September	21st September
Wheatear	23rd April	14th May
Grasshopper Warbler	-	-
Sedge Warbler	8th March	27th September
Reed Warbler	28th April	7th September
Garden Warbler	28th April	24th September
Common Whitethroat	16th April	30th August
Lesser Whitethroat	17th May	15th June
Willow Warbler	30th March	21st September
Spotted Flycatcher	24th August	31st August
Common Redstart	-	-

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

There are currently just over 100 nest boxes sited round the reserve. Many of these can easily be monitored throughout the breeding season but others are in areas which are difficult to reach due to the height of the vegetation. Even in November, when boxes were checked this year, volunteers had to battle through thick patches of nettles more than six feet high. Everything grows big here. Results this year were a little disappointing with around only one in four boxes used.

Species	Boxes Used	All Fledged	Unhatched Eggs
Blue Tit	18	15	3
Great Tit	8	8	-
Robin	-	-	-
Wren	1	1	-
Kestrel	2	2	-

Of the three blue tit nests still containing eggs two had two eggs and one had just one egg. Seven more boxes were used by blue tits than last year. The low number of great tit nests was surprising considering the healthy population of great tits on the reserve. In 2011 as many as 23 boxes were used by great tits.

For the first time ever the tit box on the side of the Visitor Centre was not used this year though sparrow terraces on the side of the workshop and Lagoon Hide did have some occupants. Blue tits and great tits both used one box on the side of the workshop and one contained two overwintering small tortoiseshell butterflies when checked in late November. Each sparrow terrace box has three separate compartments and the two boxes on the side of the Lagoon Hide contained an amazing total of five nests - four great tit nests and one wood mouse nest. Clearly the great tits were quite happy nesting so close together. On the subject of wood mice, nine tit boxes were found to contain their nests with occupants in five of them. Three were discovered in three nests and one in two nests.

Great tits nested successfully in a box on the back of the Mike Sheldon Hide facing the Willow Path and one pair even resorted to an old discarded box left on some shelving near the container.

Sixteen tree sparrow boxes were put up last winter - eight at the edge of the Coppice facing Tim's Field and eight near the Reedbed Hide, again facing Tim's Field. Unfortunately, tree sparrows were few and far between in the early part of the year and there were no takers but three of these boxes were used by blue tits, all young fledging successfully.

There are plenty of natural nest sites on the reserve for wrens but one tit box near the Fish Pass was used by a pair, all young fledging successfully. Robins, surprisingly, used no boxes this year.

Of the two barn owl boxes in the Yorkshire Water compound, one had been used by a pair of kestrels for five out of the last six years but this year, for the first time ever, a pair nested in both boxes. Perhaps they had heard about the harvest mouse release programme or maybe it was just an excellent small mammal year generally. Four young were successfully reared in the old box and two, as far as we can tell, in the new box.

We are indebted to John and Maxine Brook and Barbara Murphy for checking and cleaning out the boxes and for enduring endless nettle stings in the process. A big thank you too to Robin McDermott for providing an endless supply of replacement boxes.

MAMMALS

Fox *Vulpes vulpes*

It was another excellent year for sightings with plenty of activity from the very start of the year. There were sightings in the Manager's Garden, near the Sludge Lagoon and on the entry road - two being seen here on 15th January (RG). Unlike last January, when snowy conditions offered an excellent opportunity to see just how much fox activity there is on the reserve from the multitude of tracks, this year observers had to look for other signs of their passing. There was a quiet spell with no records in February and none in March until 19th when one was watched on Mike Fisk Meadow being mobbed by crows and magpies (DC/EC). On 24th March a vixen with head wounds was found dead by the swing bridge over the canal (JB) - probably the result of a collision with a vehicle. There was no activity at last year's den which produced five healthy cubs but a very small fox cub was seen near the Sludge Lagoon on 19th April and three cubs were seen in the same area on 4th May (RSp). There were regular sightings of at least one adult male and female after this date on various parts of the reserve and adjacent farmland. There was one further report of a juvenile crossing the road onto Mike Fisk Meadow at 5.00pm on 21st August. Sightings were few and far between in September but reports increased from late October with a surge of activity over the Christmas period, a handsome male fox providing some wonderful photo opportunities on the Scrubland for one lucky visitor on Boxing Day (AT).



Otter *Lutra lutra*

It proved to be a disappointing year with infrequent evidence of otters passing along the river. A report of one swimming across the river on 19th February was more likely an American mink as daylight sightings of otters here are few and far between. Evidence in the form of footprints was found on the riverbank above the bridge on 5th March (JB) and in sand on the far side of the Fish Pass at the downstream end on



21st March (PM/BM). Tracks were again found by the bridge on 28th March (JB). There was no further evidence of otter presence until 11th July when fresh tracks were found on the sandbank by the downstream end of the Fish Pass (JB). There were further fresh tracks here on 9th August, 21st September and 25th September. On 2nd October an otter was filmed on a camera trap downstream of the weir at 6.07am - the only photographic evidence this year. Fresh tracks were again found by the bridge on 27th November (JB) but there were no further records.

American Mink *Neovison vison*

This "introduced" species continues to be a major threat to water birds on the reserve and all along the river. Remains of both coot and pheasant were found in the pump house on the Wet Grassland on 3rd January (JB). This has long been a favourite hideaway for this species. There were also sightings on the road and Fish Pass in January. There was a lot of activity on the riverbank in March with at least three different animals reported (JB). There were further sightings in April, May and June, one observer reporting one being harassed by common terns on the Duck Marsh on 25th June (HS). On 1st July an adult was seen with two juveniles at the Education Pond (CA) and there were several reports of juveniles downstream near Newlay weir that month and into early August. Activity died down somewhat towards the end of August and there were no sightings or reports of tracks and other signs until 27th November when fresh footprints were found under the bridge (JB). This individual must have been just passing through as there were no subsequent signs or sightings.



Weasel *Mustela nivalis*

There were 38 reported sightings this year though many more almost certainly went unreported as this remains a very common mammal on the reserve. Typically, there were a lot of sightings on the road by the Visitor Centre and around the Centre itself but weasels were also seen in the Manager's Garden, in the Bee Garden, by the dry stone wall, on the entry road, on the Willow Path, at the Dragonfly Ponds,



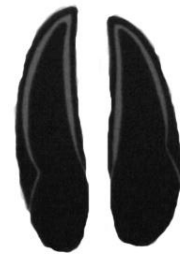
on the Butterfly Bank and on the river path. All records involved single animals this year.

Stoat *Mustela erminea*

This species is much less common on the reserve than its smaller relative, the weasel. Two records were received. One was reported at the Dragonfly Ponds on 22nd March (JKi) and one was seen by the main gates on 22nd November (PC).

Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus*

This is still a common mammal along the valley. Sightings were reported on the reserve on 65 dates this year and in all months. Most records were of between one and three animals but in the early part of the year four were seen on the Scrubland on 12th January (JB/MB); five were recorded during an early morning WeBs count on 19th January; four were again seen on 22nd January (PA) and four were on the farmland on 5th March (JB/GJB). A wealth of long vegetation on the reserve provides ideal breeding habitat for this species and there were several reports of young. A fawn was accidentally disturbed in long grass on Mike Fisk Meadow during survey work on 30th June (MD) and the following day a female and two fawns were seen between the meadow hedgerow and the dipping pond (JB/MB). A fawn was again accidentally disturbed at the top end of John Ackroyd Meadow on 11th July (PA/JK). A female and fawn were reported in the Reedbed on 26th July (DC/EC) and two youngsters were by the Kingfisher Pool on 2nd August (PS). There were numerous sightings of adults on Mike Fisk Meadow from the Visitor Centre in August, a male and female observed mating here on 3rd (PM/BM). On 13th a female and four juveniles were reported on the Willow path (PA). Activity died down somewhat from September but there were several reports of one or two animals, two males sparring on the Duck Marsh on 22nd October being a nice record (DC/EC). On 12th November three females were seen on the Wet Grassland (JH) and on 29th November five were seen in the same area (PA). However, the biggest count of the year came on 1st December when six were seen on Tim's Field early in the day (DAN). Although there were a few daylight sightings in December there was much more activity towards dusk. Three were seen on the Scrubland at dusk on 26th December



(PM/BM) and five were on Mike Fisk Meadow at a similar time on 30th (JK).

Mole *Talpa europaea*

There was again ample evidence of the presence of this small mammal throughout the year in the form of mole hills all round the reserve. However, there were no actual sightings this year.

Common Shrew *Sorex araneus*

Almost certainly much more common on the reserve than the few records suggest, there were just four records this year. One was seen by the Fish Pass on 22nd January (SF); one was found dead near the edge of the Lagoon on 4th July (PM/BM); a female was caught in a Longworth trap by the dry stone wall on 2nd August and on the same date another was caught in a Longworth trap on the Willow Path.



Water Shrew *Neomys fodiens*

Survey work has shown this species to have been present in the Reedbed since 2004 but actual sightings have been few and far between. A fine specimen was caught in a Longworth trap on 17th July 2010 but there had only been one subsequent sighting in the last three years. This year one was seen at the edge of the Lagoon on 28th May (JB) and one was reported close to the Fish Pass on 7th September (JB).

Harvest Mouse *Micromys minutus*

Despite detailed surveys, Britain's smallest rodent had never been found on the reserve. Nearly 500 mice were released on the reserve this year as part of an introduction programme and initial surveys show they are breeding successfully. See separate Harvest Mouse Report for full details.

House Mouse *Mus musculus*

There were again no records this year. Mice found in the workshop or seed store invariably turn out to be wood mice.

Wood Mouse *Apodemus sylvaticus*

This is a common mammal on the reserve, a number being caught in Longworth traps during small mammal surveys - see separate survey

report for details. It is certainly a common resident in the workshop during the winter months, four being caught in Longworth traps here between 24th and 26th December this year. It is also a very capable tree climber. Nine nest boxes were found to contain wood mice and/or their nests this autumn.

Bank Vole *Clethrionomys glareolus*

This is a very common mammal on the reserve. There were regular sightings under the feeders in the Manager's Garden and on the Willow Path throughout the year. Up to three were seen feeding on dropped seed at both locations. It was again the commonest small mammal caught in Longworth traps during surveys - see separate survey report for details.

Field or Short-tailed Vole *Microtus agrestis*

This species is rarely caught in Longworth traps so it is difficult to assess how common it really is on the reserve. However, it is probably the main prey item for the resident kestrels. There were no records this year.

Brown Rat *Rattus norvegicus*

There are surprisingly few records of this species considering the reserve's proximity to the river. Even on the riverbank there is little evidence of their presence. The only two records this year came on a camera trap in November and involved a single animal. A few footprints are found from time to time under the river bridge.

Grey Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis*

A visitor from nearby woodland, there were sightings in the Manager's Garden in all months except March and July with up to two animals reported. There were also sightings on the entry road, on Bentley's Path and on the riverbank. Squirrels were probably responsible for the disappearance of all the hazelnuts this year!

Rabbit *Oryctogalus cuniculus*

This has always been a scarce mammal on the reserve and there have been no sightings since 28th October 2011.

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 this year when one put in a surprise appearance on the Willow path of all places on 26th June (JB). There were no other sightings but a patch of fur found on the reserve on 12th December (JB) may well have come from this species.

Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*

There have been no reported sightings in the last six years. One on the bridge on 23rd July 2008 was, amazingly, only the second ever record for the reserve.

Pipistrelle Bat *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*

The commonest bat on the reserve, it is usually recorded in very good numbers during the July and August public Bat Nights. However, thick mist after a grey wet day on 19th July reduced activity considerably and the usually reliable Duck Marsh area produced just a few. A rare beautiful August evening on 9th for the second Bat Night was also a bit disappointing numbers-wise with the main activity centered around the Lagoon Hide. The third warmest autumn on record saw bats continuing to be active well into October and the last report of numerous pipistrelles was around the Visitor Centre area on the evening of 20th (JB/MB).

Noctule Bat *Nyctalus noctula*

Emerging rather earlier in the evening than the pipistrelle, the first record this year came on 5th May when one was seen over the Reedbed at 8.50pm (PM/BM). Only one was recorded during the first public Bat Night on 19th July but, as already mentioned above, weather conditions were far from ideal. Several were recorded during the second Bat Night on 9th August but there were no other reports.

Daubenton's Bat *Myotis daubentoni*

This species has not been recorded since 2007 but is probably still present in the area. A bat seen at 1.00pm on 19th February over the river may have been this species.

We are grateful to Diane Gregory for again leading two very enjoyable Bat Walks this year.

SMALL MAMMAL SURVEYS

Several surveys were again carried out this year using live traps. The results are shown below.

Date of Survey: 14th June 2014 (Public Event)

26 Longworth traps and 4 Trip Traps set in four different habitats.

1/ Path to Manager's Garden/Dry stone wall - 6 Longworth traps - 4 successful

Species	M	F	Remarks
Bank Vole	3	-	
Woodmouse	-	1	

2/ Bentley's Path - 15 Longworth traps - 9 successful

Species	M	F	Remarks
Bank Vole	4	2	
Woodmouse	1	2	

3/ Winter Walk - 5 Longworth traps - 2 successful

Species	M	F	Remarks
Bank Vole	1	-	
Woodmouse	-	1	

4/ Bee Garden - 4 Trip Traps - non successful

Date of Survey: 2nd August 2014 (Public Event)

27 Longworth traps set in two different habitats

1/ Path to Manager's Garden/ Dry stone wall - 6 Longworth traps - 4 successful

Species	M	F	Remarks
Bank Vole	1	-	

Species	M	F	Remarks
Woodmouse	2	-	
Common Shrew	-	1	

2/ Willow Path - 21 Longworth traps - 18 successful

Species	M	F	Remarks
Bank Vole	5	4	
Woodmouse	7	1	3 M were juveniles
Common Shrew	-	1	

Date of Survey: 20th October 2014

26 Longworth traps set between the Reedbed and river, primarily to monitor the success of the first Harvest Mouse releases

Species	M	F	Remarks
Harvest Mouse	1	4	1 F was a juvenile
Bank Vole	1	6	+ 1 escaped prior to ID
Woodmouse	-	3	

Date of Survey: 18th November 2014

26 Longworth traps set between the Reedbed and river and at the western end of the Duck Marsh, primarily to monitor the success of the first and subsequent Harvest Mouse releases

Species	M	F	Remarks
Harvest Mouse	-	3	2 F were juveniles
Bank Vole	-	6	
Woodmouse	1	9	

See separate article below regarding the Harvest Mouse Introduction Programme.

HARVEST MOUSE INTRODUCTION PROGRAMME

Since 2012 the Trust has worked towards the introduction of the Harvest Mouse to selected areas of the Reserve. This has required the breeding of sufficient Harvest Mice necessary for a successful release and this has taken over 12 months to achieve.

Between the 8th May and 18th September 2014, some 496 Harvest Mice have been released onto the Reserve at two release points - firstly an area to the rear of the Reedbeds and secondly at a site some 300m distant at the western end of the Duck Marsh. Since the release several very positive indicators have been found to suggest the initial success of the venture to date -

Survey carried out adjacent to the first release site on 20 October recorded 5 Harvest Mice - 3 female, 1 male, 1 juvenile female (born in the wild)

Survey carried out adjacent to both release sites on 18 November recorded 3 Harvest Mice - 1 female and 2 juvenile females (born in the wild)

Breeding nest found 25m from first release site

Breeding nest found 15m from second release site

Shelter nest found amongst reedbeds some 60 to 70m from first release site

Remembering that the winter survival rate for the Harvest Mouse can be as low as 5% it will be the Spring Surveys that will be the real test of any success.

D.Nesham

We are grateful to West Leeds Country Park and Askham Bryan College for all their help and support with this project.

AMPHIBIANS

Smooth Newt *Triturus vulgaris*

A common species on the reserve and particularly easy to see at the Dragonfly Ponds in the spring. One in Woodhead Pond and one in the Pebble Beach Pond on 24th March were the first of the year (RS), three weeks earlier than last year thanks to a much milder spring. There were surprisingly few records from the ponds subsequently but this is most likely due to the fact that it is so common that many observers fail to record it. Later in the year smooth newts are frequently found in the mini-beast refuge near the Manager's Garden and under the seed bins there. In October a large number were "rescued", at the request of Yorkshire Water, from a subterranean sump in the compound prior to engineering work and were "re-homed" in the new ponds near the Manager's Garden (JK).

Palmate Newt

Present in very small numbers, this species only tends to be identified during detailed amphibian surveys at the ponds. It was first recorded in 2010 and again in 2011. In the absence of any subsequent detailed surveys there have been no further confirmed sightings.

Common Frog *Rana temporaria*

Present in good numbers in the Dragonfly Ponds during the breeding season and in the ditches on the Wet Grassland, the first spawn this year was reported at the ponds and in a ditch on the Scrubland on 4th March (JK), five days earlier than last year. On the same date eight adults were seen on the river path (JK). Most Dragonfly Ponds and the Education Pond contained spawn by 17th March. The first young frogs were reported on the Willow Path on 21st June and over the following days good numbers could be seen on paths round much of the reserve. The new ponds near the Manager's Garden attracted a few breeding frogs this year and in October a number "rescued" in the Yorkshire Water compound were "re-homed" there.

Common Toad *Bufo bufo*

A large toad was accidentally disturbed in the Coppice as early as 13th January but there were no further records until 24th March when a mating pair was seen on the Dragonfly Ponds Marsh (PJM). The first spawn was reported four days later on Woodhead Pond (PJM).

On 31st March 88 were recorded on the Dragonfly Ponds, 72 of these in the Long Ditch including four mating pairs and nine in Scarborough Pond including one mating pair. A further count at the ponds on 7th April revealed a total of 52 toads including 12 mating pairs, the large majority of these in the Long Ditch and Pebble Beach Pond (PJM). The rigours of breeding invariably result in a few deaths but as many as 24 dead toads in the Long Ditch on the same date was cause for concern. Spawn was again reported on 14th April in Woodhead Pond and the Long Ditch. There were a few reports of adults in the summer months and on 10th October a number were "rescued" from a subterranean sump in the Yorkshire Water compound and "re-homed" in the new ponds near the Manager's Garden (JK). A large toad on a path at the edge of Tim's Field on 13th October was the last reported sighting of the year (PM/BM), exactly the same date as last year.

REPTILES

Red-eared Terrapin *Trachemys scripta elegans*

Native to the southern United States and northern Mexico, this species is a popular pet in this country and, unfortunately, is often released into the wild. It now figures on the list of the world's 100 most invasive species. There were two records last year and three this year. Last year the terrapins were recorded on the Back Reedbed. This year the records came from the Wet Grassland and the Duck Marsh. On 27th June a large specimen was caught on the Wet Grassland (JK). On 6th August a similarly large terrapin was seen on a coot's nest on the Duck Marsh (PA et al) and on 10th August one was again reported on the same nest (JH).

BUTTERFLIES

In sharp contrast to last year, Spring 2014 turned out to be the third warmest on record and a spell of beautiful sunny days between 8th and 13th March brought out the first overwintered small tortoiseshells and peacocks. April too produced some lovely warm, sunny days from the middle of the month bringing out very good numbers of small tortoiseshells. Orange tips too benefited from good weather in April with double figure counts recorded.

Brimstones enjoyed their best year to date and there is the possibility that at least one pair bred on the alder buckthorns on the Butterfly Bank this year. Another abundant crop of fodder radish on Tim's Field produced some excellent counts of small whites but both green-veined whites and large whites were disappointing both as regards numbers of sightings and numbers of butterflies. Interestingly, according to Butterfly Conservation's national Big Butterfly Count large white numbers were down by 65%, small white by 60% and green-veined white by 47% this year.

Small coppers had another disappointing year and the "blues" were typically thin on the ground with just single butterflies reported, though there were more sightings of both common blue and holly blue. The most interesting member of the Lycaenidae reported was undoubtedly the white-letter hairstreak photographed at the Dragonfly Ponds on 23rd July - only the second ever record for the reserve.

As regards the immigrants, painted lady failed to put in an appearance but red admirals enjoyed a much better year with plenty of sightings though in low numbers.

Among the Satyridae, speckled woods had a reasonable year but maximum counts of both meadow brown and ringlet were down on last year. Numbers of gatekeepers remain low but were certainly up a bit on last year.

Skippers had mixed fortunes. The large skipper enjoyed a rather better year though numbers generally were low. The small skipper had a very poor year with only seven records submitted.

Following the third warmest spring on record it also proved to be the third warmest autumn on record. As a result there were some good late records of several species though small tortoiseshells were very few and far between after the end of the third week in July, a chilly and unsettled August not helping.

The most frequently recorded butterflies this year were as follows:

- 1st = Small White
- 1st = Peacock
- 3rd Small Tortoiseshell
- 4th Speckled Wood
- 5th Comma

HESPERIDAE

Small Skipper (*Thymelicus sylvestris*)

Following two rather better years in 2012 and 2013 this year was very disappointing with only seven records submitted. One in the John Ackroyd Meadow hedgerow on 2nd July was the first of the year (DC/EC). Subsequent sightings were of either just one or two butterflies but there was one report of four on 17th July with two at the Fish Pass, one by the Education Pond and one at the Dragonfly Ponds (PM/BM). A single butterfly by Co-op Pond on 22nd July was the last reported sighting of a very poor year (PM/BM).

Large Skipper (*Ochlodes venatus*)

Unlike its cousin the Small Skipper, it was a rather better year for this species. The first sightings were reported on 11th June, more than two weeks earlier than last year - one on the River Path, one on John Ackroyd Meadow (BH) and one on the Butterfly Bank (RS). The John Ackroyd Meadow produced most sightings but the Fish Pass area was also productive with up to three recorded here. Numbers remain quite low but one observer did manage 10 on a walk round the reserve on 29th June (JS). A single butterfly on a thistle on the

riverbank on 22nd July was the last of the year (PM/BM), six days later than last year.

PIERIDAE

Brimstone (*Gonepteryx rhamni*)

This has always been a scarce butterfly on the reserve so with sightings on five dates 2013 ranked as a reasonable year. This year was certainly by far the best to date with sightings reported on 12 dates . A male on the meadows on 23rd April was the first of the year (AD). There were subsequent sightings on the Butterfly Bank, at the Dragonfly Ponds, in the Manager's Garden, on John Ackroyd Meadow, on the Duck Marsh and on Tim's Field. Most reports were of males but two males and a female on the Butterfly Bank on 21st May (RS) was interesting as there is a good deal of alder buckthorn here now - one of the main larval food plants for this species. A female was also reported on red campion outside the Visitor Centre on 6th June (PM/BM/RS) and on John Ackroyd Meadow on 8th June (DC/EC). A male on Tim's Field on 22nd September (PM/BM) was the last sighting of the year.

Large White (*Pieris brassicae*)

It was a very poor year for this species with few records. Two in the Bee Garden on 14th May (MW) were the first of the year, nine days later than last year. A single butterfly was recorded on chive flowers there just four days later. Single butterflies were subsequently recorded on the Butterfly Bank, Tim's Field and on the Willow Path with one on Tim's Field on 22nd September the last of the year (PM/BM).

Small White (*Artogeia rapae*)

Typically, the highest counts were again on Tim's Field though butterflies were reported all round the reserve. A single butterfly here on 13th April (DC/EC) was the first of the year, three weeks earlier than last year thanks to a much warmer spring. There were a few double figure counts in May and June but numbers really started to build towards the end of July with several hundred estimated feeding on another bumper crop of fodder radish flowers on the sunnier days in what was a fairly poor August. Numbers started to tail off in

September and were reduced to a handful or so in the first two weeks of October. Two on Tim's Field on 17th October were the last reported butterflies of the year (JB), just a week earlier than last year.

Green-veined White (*Artogeia napi*)

It was yet another disappointing year both as regards numbers of sightings and numbers of butterflies reported. There was an early record on 16th April with a total of three on Tim's Field and the Butterfly Bank (JS) but there were then no further sightings until 8th May when one was on John Ackroyd Meadow. There were regular sightings thereafter, most observers reporting just one or two with four or five on occasions. Sightings tailed off from the end of June with just three records in July and four in August. A single butterfly on the Butterfly Bank on 24th September was the last of the year (RS).

Orange Tip (*Anthocharis cardamines*)

It was a good year for this species with numbers somewhat higher than last year. A male seen from the Reedbed Hide on 13th April was the first of the spring, two weeks earlier than last year. There were regular sightings thereafter with some double figure counts by the end of April. Like last year the Butterfly Bank and the Willow Path were particularly productive, the former producing a count of seven on 28th April (RS). A walk round the reserve on 18th May produced the best count that month - 13 butterflies (DC/EC). A single female on the Willow Path on 11th June (BH) was the last reported sighting of the year, 10 days earlier than last year.

LYCAENIDAE

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

There was one record this year. One was photographed at the Dragonfly Ponds on 23rd July (MG/RS). There had only been one previous sighting on the reserve - in the Bee Garden on 19th July 2006.

Small Copper (*Lycaena phlaeas*)

After an excellent year in 2012 last year was somewhat disappointing and 2014 continued in the same vein with sightings reported on just 15 dates. One on an oxeye daisy on the Butterfly Bank on 10th June

was the first of the year (PM/BM), just two days later than the first sighting last year. The Butterfly Bank was the most reliable place for sightings but no observers reported more than two butterflies. There were further sightings here over the next few days and one was reported on the river path on 15th June but there then no further records until 26th July when one was seen on John Ackroyd Meadow. There were sightings on just two dates in August and three in September. October did produce sightings on five dates, all between 1st and 10th. Two were reported mating on the Butterfly Bank on 5th (JH). Single butterflies outside the Visitor Centre (JB) and on the Butterfly Bank (PM/BM) on 10th were the last reported sightings of the year, four days later than last year.

Common Blue (*Polyommatus icarus*)

The last five years have all produced just one reported sighting of this species. There were more sightings this year but again no observers reported more than one butterfly. A possible common blue was seen on Mike Fisk Meadow on 13th June (JL). There were then confirmed sightings of one on John Ackroyd Meadow on 18th June (JS), 21st June (PA), 22nd June (PM/BM) and 6th July (JH).

Holly Blue (*Celastrina argiolus*)

This is a scarce butterfly on the reserve, the last five years having produced a total of just five records. There were actually four reported sightings this year. One was seen at the far end of the Butterfly Bank on 15th July (PM/BM); one was seen from the Reedbed Hide on 16th July (JQ); one was on the Tansy Bank near the Visitor Centre on 4th August (BM) and one flew over the compound on 24th August (JB).

NYPHALIDAE

Red Admiral

Apart from an unconfirmed report on 19th May we had to wait until 7th July last year for the first record of this annual immigrant from the Mediterranean. This year there were regular sightings from 11th June, throughout July, August and September though numbers were low with no observers reporting more than three butterflies. Buddleias outside the Visitor Centre are always popular and it was the same again this year. Sightings started to tail off towards the end of

September and there were just four records in October. A single butterfly on nettles near the Lagoon Hide on 2nd November was the last of the year (JK), eight days earlier than last year.

Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*)

Last year was disappointing with just a handful of sightings between 25th and 28th August but this year was even worse with no sightings at all reported.

Small Tortoiseshell (*Aglais urticae*)

It was an exceptional spring for overwintered small tortoiseshells. Several beautiful sunny days between 8th and 13th March brought out the first of them, three at the back of the Wet Grassland on 10th being the first record (JK). Another good spell of warm, sunny days from the middle of April saw very good numbers of butterflies on the wing, one regular visitor referring to "scores" and double figure counts were certainly common place. Dame's violet on the Butterfly Bank proved attractive in June with 11 reported on this plant on 1st. Twenty plus counts were still being made in June. Good numbers of caterpillars were noted on nettles on John Ackroyd Meadow and at the Dragonfly Ponds from 13th June. The first freshly emerged butterflies were seen from 30th June. Some good counts were made in July, a walk round the reserve on 17th producing 32 (PM/BM). On 22nd July at least 20 were counted around the steps to the Butterfly Bank (PM/BM). Numbers tailed off abruptly after this date with just a few reports of single butterflies. A very unsettled August brought just one sighting of a single butterfly on buddleia on the Willow Path on 30th. Single butterflies were reported on 17th and 19th September and two freshly emerged specimens were noted at the side of the Lagoon on 22nd September (PM/BM) but there were no sightings of butterflies on the wing after this date though two overwintering ones were discovered in a nest box on the side of the workshop during the annual nest box check on 24th November (PM).

Peacock (*Aglais io*)

This species hibernates over the winter and usually emerges in March or April. There were several reports of either one or two butterflies on 9th March with regular sightings thereafter but numbers remained low, four on 31st March being the best count. Apart from one report of 12 on 11th April (RS) numbers remained low throughout

April, May and June with no observers recording more than five. The last overwintered butterfly was noted on John Ackroyd Meadow on 2nd July and on 7th July large numbers of caterpillars were reported at the Dragonfly Ponds. The first freshly emerged butterflies appeared on 22nd July, four days earlier than last year, but numbers were disappointingly low with no observers reporting more than four until 4th August. Buddleias outside the Visitor Centre attracted a few most days but the white buddleia on the Butterfly Bank, which attracted up to 30 last August, failed to produce a double figure count this year, though very unsettled weather conditions throughout the month didn't help the situation. September produced just one record of a single butterfly on Tim's Field on 17th and this looked like being the last sighting of the year. However, a very warm, sunny day on 31st October brought out a late butterfly near the Visitor Centre (JB).

Comma (*Polygonum c-album*)

This is another species that hibernates over the winter months and usually emerges from early March onwards but thanks to a particularly cold spring last year there were no sightings until 19th May. This year a much milder spring with some beautiful, warm, sunny weather in the second week of March brought out the first overwintered butterfly at the back of the Wet Grassland on 10th March (JK) . However, there were then no further sightings for another month. There were sightings on just four dates in April, three on the Willow Path on 23rd being the best record (DC/EC). May produced just one record - a single butterfly in the Bee Garden on 21st. The first freshly emerged butterfly was reported on the Butterfly Bank on 23rd June (PM/BM) and from 30th June there were regular sightings throughout July and much of August. Most reports were of between one and three butterflies but five were recorded on 10th July (PM/BM), five again on 13th July (RS), six on 15th July, five on 22nd July and five on 4th August (PM/BM). Caterpillars of this species are rarely reported but one was found on the Butterfly Bank on 4th August and on 20th August a butterfly was hatched from a chrysalis in a breeding cage in the Visitor Centre. A caterpillar was also reported on the river path on 24th September (RS). Freshly emerged butterflies from a second brood were reported from 21st September, albeit in small numbers, though there was one report of six on John Ackroyd Meadow on 24th September (JH). With a very mild October we might have expected a few more sightings but there were just two

- one at the side of the large Dipping Pond on 5th October and one by the Wet Grassland gate on 31st October (JHa). This one looked like being the last of the year but there was a further record on 3rd November - a beautiful sunny day - a single butterfly on nettles near the Manager's Garden (PM/BM) - 10 days later than last year.

SATYRIDAE

Speckled Wood (*Pararge aegeria*)

The first records this year were a month earlier than last year thanks to some warm, sunny weather in the second half of April. Three on the Willow Path on 18th April were the first of the year (PM/BM) and there were regular sightings thereafter, the Willow Path and John Ackroyd Meadow being the most productive areas. Numbers were, however, on the low side with few reports of more than three. There was one count of six on 13th June (PM/BM), five on 21st June (JS) and six again on 31st July (PM/BM). Late August and September produced the best numbers with seven on the Willow Path on 30th August (NT), seven again on 31st August (DC/EC) and 10 on 7th September (DC/EC) which included six on John Ackroyd Meadow. The highest count of the year - 14 - was made on 26th September, 10 of these in the Coppice (RS). There were no sightings from 3rd October until 28th October when one was reported in the Fish Pass area (JB) - a whole month later than last year thanks to some very mild weather conditions.

Wall Brown (*Lasiommata megera*)

This species has suffered a drastic decline in the Leeds area in recent times and there had only been one sighting on the reserve in the previous six years - a single butterfly on the river path on 5th September 2012. There were again no reported sightings this year.

Gatekeeper (*Pyronia tithonus*)

There were a reasonable number of sightings and numbers were certainly up a bit on last year. One on Mike Fisk Meadow on 6th July was the first of the year, eight days earlier than last year. The most reliable sites last year were the Butterfly Bank and the Willow Path and whilst the former again produced most sightings the latter produced none this year. The bank of tansy across the road from the

Visitor Centre was also productive with up to five seen here. The highest count this year came on 28th July with five on the Tansy Bank and three on the Butterfly Bank (PM/BM). A very poor August curtailed sightings somewhat and a single butterfly at the Dragonfly Ponds on 9th August (PS) was the last of the year, some two weeks earlier than last year.

Meadow Brown (*Maniola jurtina*)

A single butterfly at the roadside by the Lagoon Hide on 14th June was the first of the year (JH), eight days later than last year. John Ackroyd Meadow proved to be the most productive site with counts of up to 10 here in June and 20+ counts in July on both this and Mike Fisk Meadow but none approaching the 40 and 50+ counts made in July last year. Numbers tailed off in what was a very unsettled August and one on John Ackroyd Meadow on 13th August proved to be the last of the year (DC/EC), two weeks earlier than last year.

Ringlet (*Aphantopus hyperantus*)

This is usually one of the most numerous butterflies on the reserve during its short flight period but numbers this year were somewhat disappointing. Four on John Ackroyd Meadow on 21st June were the first of the year (JS), five days earlier than last year. This meadow subsequently proved to be the most productive area but even here there were no counts of more than 20 butterflies. One on Tim's Field and two on John Ackroyd Meadow on 20th July were the last of the year (DC/EC), some two weeks earlier than last year.

Small Heath (*Coenonympha pamphilus*)

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

BUTTERFLIES

First and Last Dates - 2014

Species	First date	Last date
Small Skipper	2nd July	22nd July
Large Skipper	11th June	22nd July
Large White	14th May	22nd September
Small White	13th April	17th October
Green-veined White	16th April	24th September
Orange Tip	13th April	11th June
Brimstone	23rd April	22nd September
Small Tortoiseshell	10th March	22nd September *
Comma	10th March	3rd November
Painted Lady	-	-
Red Admiral	11th June	2nd November
Peacock	9th March	31st October
Meadow Brown	14th June	13th August
Gatekeeper	6th July	9th August
Ringlet	21st June	20th July
Small Heath	-	-
Speckled Wood	18th April	28th October
Wall Brown	-	-
White-letter Hairstreak	23rd July	23rd July
Small Copper	10th June	10th October
Holly Blue	15th July	24th August
Common Blue	13th June	6th July

* This is the last date Small Tortoiseshells were seen on the wing. However, two overwintering butterflies were found in a nest box on the side of the workshop on 24th November.

MOTHS

The reserve moth list continues to grow and among the 186 species recorded this year were 13 new ones. Moth traps were run on 13 nights between 30th March and 31st October but many additional species were also recorded by observers patiently searching hedgerows during the day. Trapping was carried out at various locations including around the Visitor Centre, on the Butterfly Bank, in the Manager's Garden and in the Reedbed. Traps were run on Tuesday nights throughout the summer school holidays with a public opening on Wednesday mornings designed to try and involve children and generate an interest in the natural world.

A total of 112 macro species were recorded this year including just two new ones for the reserve - December Moth and Small Yellow Underwing. Both were significant records. We understand the December Moth was the first for the 10km square. In 2013 the Small Yellow Underwing was only recorded in one Vice County in Yorkshire - VC63. There were no records in VC64 (our Vice County) or in any of the others. Flying in sunshine and feeding at flowers, this is described as a species of flower- rich grasslands. This year one was photographed on the Butterfly Bank on 2nd May and 4th May (RS). The larval food plants are the seed capsules of Common Mouse-ear and Field Mouse-ear. This moth is certainly one to look out for again in spring 2015.

Among the 74 micro species recorded were 11 species new for the reserve. These included two of the so called Longhorned Moths, *Nemophora degeerella* and *Cauchas rufimitrella*, several specimens of which were photographed in the John Ackroyd Meadow hedgerow (RS). Other new species included *Ochsenheimeria taurella*, *Caloptilia stigmatella*, *Aspilapteryx tringipennella*, *Elachista albifrontella*, *Esperia sulphurella*, *Neofaculta ericetella*, *Acleris emargana*, *Grapholita compositella* and *Pammene aurana*.

Neofaculta ericetella was an interesting find as this is a common species of heathland and moorland, the larval food plants being heather, bell heather and cross-leaved heath. Hardly a typical moth for Rodley but it does apparently have a reputation for being a bit of a wanderer.

First recorded on the reserve in 2012 *Gillmeria ochrodactyla*, otherwise known as the Tansy Plume Moth, is nationally scarce and is classed as a rare and very local resident in Yorkshire. There were several more records this year - on 16th July (PM/BM), on 25th July (RS) and on 28th July (JK) - all on the large bank of Tansy across the road from the Visitor Centre. However, perhaps the most interesting find this year was that of *Ochsenheimeria taurella*, a micro moth which is regarded as nationally scarce. There are only around 10 Yorkshire records so a single specimen photographed on the reserve on 18th August this year (MG) was probably the moth of the year. The adults fly in sunshine between July and September and the larvae mine the stems of several coarse grasses including Cock's-foot which is abundant on the reserve.

Among the many larvae found this year were those of the macro moth Chamomile Shark. There were very few Yorkshire records last year and only a handful or so this year. Four larvae were found on Scentless Mayweed flower heads on the Butterfly Bank on 11th June (PM/BM/RS). Scentless Mayweed is one of the larval food plants for this species along with several types of chamomile and it is abundant at Rodley. Interestingly, the moth itself has never been recorded on the reserve so this is certainly one to look out for in April and May 2015.

Among the day-flying moths the Cinnabar Moth had a bit better year with eight seen between the middle of June and 6th July. However, the striking larvae were again generally hard to find but 20 were reported on Ragwort, the larval food plant, by the new ponds near the Manager's Garden on 1st August (DAN). The Chimneysweeper Moth is still just hanging on with just one record on the John Ackroyd Meadow on 23rd June (PM/BM) but there were no reports of burnet moths this year.

One nice record worth reporting was that of a Hummingbird Hawkmoth seen on the Willow Path near the Mike Sheldon Hide on 17th May (DS). This is an immigrant moth from southern Europe and north Africa which is active by day visiting various flowers. It has been recorded on the reserve before but not for some considerable time.

The total number of species recorded on the reserve now stands at 352 of which 205 are macros and 147 micros.

LADYBIRDS AT RODLEY NATURE RESERVE - 2014

Native to eastern Asia, the Harlequin Ladybird - *Harmonia axyridis* - was introduced to North America and Europe to control aphids and scale insects. Since its introduction to North America in 1988, it has increased dramatically and is now the most widespread ladybird species on the continent. Said to be the most invasive ladybird in the world, it has already invaded much of northwestern Europe. It arrived in the UK in 2004 and can now be found almost everywhere, although it is still uncommon in Wales and rare in Scotland and the far north of England. It is known here as the Harlequin Ladybird because it occurs in numerous colour forms. The two most common forms in the UK are orange with 15 to 21 black spots and black with two or four orange or red spots. It can be difficult to tell apart from some of our native species but it is considerably bigger.

Recorded on the reserve each year since 2009 it now appears to be the commonest ladybird here though this may be due to the fact that few observers take the time to report the native 7-spot Ladybird (*Coccinella 7-punctata*). Nevertheless, there were a lot of records of Harlequins this year and, on occasions, in impressive numbers.

One on buddleias outside the Visitor Centre on 15th April was the first of the year (PM/BM) - the common orange form - *H.axyridis succinea*. This again proved to be by far the most common form recorded here though there were plenty of records of the black form with two or four orange spots - *H.axyridis conspicua* - the first of these in the John Ackroyd Meadow hedge on 9th May (RS).

In the late summer and autumn the area around the sycamore outside the Manager's Garden produced a lot of records, one observer reporting 43 nymphs there on 17th September with several adults (RS). Very warm, sunny conditions on 31st October saw scores in the Reedbed, volunteers cutting reed emerging covered in

them. Again the orange form was by far the most numerous. The last record of the year came on 1st December , 10 being found on the insect tower outside the Manager's Garden (RS), almost certainly seeking a hibernation site.

It seems that Harlequins get all the publicity these days but they do tend to be much more obvious. Twenty two-spot ladybirds certainly had a better year with 10 near the Manager's Garden on 18th August the best count (RS). There were just a handful of records of 2-spot Ladybirds and 14-spot Ladybirds but the best record of the year was undoubtedly the Water Ladybird - *Anisosticta novemdecimpunctata* - photographed by the Lagoon on 29th September - this a first for the reserve (RS/MG).

THE WETLAND BIRD SURVEY (WeBS)

This survey is a joint scheme of the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), in association with Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT), to monitor non-breeding waterbirds in the UK. The principal aims of the scheme are to identify population sizes, determine trends in numbers and distribution and identify important sites for water birds. Monthly coordinated counts are made by volunteers throughout Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Rodley Nature Reserve is delighted to be involved in WeBS.

DRAGONFLIES AND DAMSELFLIES - 2014

This was an excellent year for dragonflies, with the earliest records so far for both Large Red Damselfly and Southern Hawker. The highlight of the year was undoubtedly the sighting of a much greater number of Emerald Damselfly than in previous years and the first signs of breeding activity for this species. Also the numbers of Large Red Damselfly and Southern Hawker continue to increase.

Of the 16 species recorded in 2014, 10 or 11 are almost certainly breeding in the 'dragonfly' ponds. For three of these (Azure Damselfly, Large Red Damselfly and Brown Hawker) exuviae have been found. This indicates absolute proof of breeding for these species, as a full life cycle from ovipositing through to adult has occurred; also they have all been observed ovipositing this year. Breeding behaviour has been observed in six other species, with Migrant, Southern and Brown Hawkers, Emperor Dragonfly and Common Darter all having been seen ovipositing, while a pair of Black Darters were seen in the tandem formation. However, caution is needed in the case of Black Darter as the reserve does not have any of its normal habitat (pools on moorland and heathland), so breeding here would be unusual.

A further indication of breeding success is that larvae of Azure Damselfly, Emerald Damselfly, Brown Hawker and Common Darter have been found, admittedly with only a single specimen of Emerald Damselfly. Although Banded Demoiselle has not been observed showing breeding behaviour, there is a regular presence of both sexes in good numbers, a sign of 'probable' breeding. This may also apply to Blue-tailed Damselfly but numbers of this species are not very high and it is surprising that no breeding behaviour has been observed on the dragonfly ponds, which are well monitored.

The remaining five species have only been seen as unattached adults and in relatively small numbers, i.e. Common Blue Damselfly, Common Hawker, Four-spotted and Broad-bodied Chasers and Black-tailed Skimmer. Interestingly, an immature Broad-bodied Chaser was seen (and larva(e) of this species have been recorded in the past) so there is the possibility that this species is still breeding somewhere on the reserve. Common Blue Damselfly prefers larger bodies of water than those provided by the dragonfly ponds and may well be breeding in the lagoon. In 2015 detailed searching for

exuviae on the emergent vegetation and the grasses immediately surrounding the ponds would be extremely useful; also a more detailed study of the larger water bodies.

Peter J Mill

Large Red Damselfly (*Pyrrhosoma nymphula*)

Sightings of this damselfly are certainly on the increase and, after a good year last year, the improvement was maintained in 2014. A teneral at the Dragonfly Ponds on 27th April (MG) was the earliest ever sighting of this species and nine days earlier than last year. The following day seven tenerals were seen on Mabgate Pond and five on Chadwick Pond (PJM/RS). Single exuviae were found on Mabgate, Chadwick and Woodhead Ponds. On 14th May 12 adults were reported on the river walk (JS/JLW). Breeding activity was first noted on 16th May on Co-op Pond with a pair in tandem (PM/BM). Pairs in tandem were noted on Mabgate Pond, Scarborough Pond, the Long Ditch and the Pebble Beach Pond over the next three weeks. Ovipositing was first noted on Chadwick Pond on 6th June and subsequently on the Pebble Beach Pond on 10th June (PM/BM). Away from the Dragonfly Ponds breeding activity was also observed on the public dipping ponds on 6th June (PM/BM) - two pairs in tandem - and on 23rd June - one pair in wheel (PJM). There were no further sightings after 23rd June.

Azure Damselfly (*Coenagrion puella*)

A report of five individuals at the Dragonfly Ponds (DFP) on 17th May (JS) was the first of the year, eight days earlier than last year. Breeding activity was recorded just two days later on 19th with seven pairs in tandem in total on Mabgate, Chadwick and Woodhead Ponds (PM/BM). Numbers built rapidly after this date and the higher counts can best be summarised as follows:

Site	Date	Total	M	F	Wheel (pairs)	Tandem (pairs)	Ovip. (pairs)	Observer
Dipping Ponds	6/6	30	15	15	-	10	5	PM/BM
DFP	9/6	85	61	24	-	4	20	PJM
DFP	14/6	50+	-	-	1	-	30+	PJM
DFP 10.45- 11.45	23/6	66	65	1	-	-	1	PJM
River Path 10.45- 11.45	23/6	21	20	1	-	-	-	PJM
Dipping Ponds 10.45- 11.45	23/6	28	27	1	-	-	1	PJM
DFP 12.45- 3.45	23/6	171	128	43	2	10	31	PJM
Dipping Ponds 12.45- 3.45	23/6	27	19	8	-	6	2	PJM

There were very few records in July, the following being the best:

Site	Date	Total	M	F	Wheel (pairs)	Tandem (pairs)	Ovip. (pairs)	Observer
Pebble Beach Pond	10/7	16	8	8	-	8	-	PM/BM
DFP	28/7	32	-	-	-	2	-	PM/BM

There were just two records of single insects at the Dragonfly Ponds in August but one there on 7th September (JS) was the last of the year, some three weeks later than last year.

Common Blue Damselfly (*Enallagma cyathigerum*)

Although this species does turn up at the Dragonfly Ponds it is much more likely to be found around the main water bodies. Two on the river path on 14th May were the first of the year (JS/JLW), more than two weeks earlier than last year. There were subsequent records from the Mike Fisk Meadow hedgerow, the dipping ponds, the Butterfly Bank and the Dragonfly Ponds though no observers reported more than six. The most reliable site in the past has been the Lagoon. Unfortunately, little recording was done there this year but one male was noted between the Duck Marsh and Reedbed on 7th July (PJM). One on the Fish Pass on 22nd July (PM/BM) was the last sighting of the year, two and a half weeks earlier than last year.

Blue-tailed Damselfly (*Ischnura elegans*)

One on the river path on 14th May (JS/JLW) was the first of the year, two and a half weeks earlier than last year's latest ever first date. Apart from an exceptionally high number found on the middle island on the Lagoon in July last year, numbers of this species have always been low at Rodley and this year was no exception. Around 10 at the ponds and on an adjacent path on 14th June (PJM) proved to be the second highest count of the year, most observers reporting no more than four most days. Among other higher counts seven were recorded at the Dragonfly Ponds and dipping ponds on 17th July (PM/BM) and eight were reported at the Dragonfly Ponds on 20th July (ST). The highest count of 11 came on 4th August with six at the Dragonfly Ponds and a further five at the dipping ponds. Like last year, no observers actually reported breeding activity. A single damselfly at the Dragonfly Ponds on 7th September (JS) was the last of the year, nearly two weeks later than last year.

Emerald Damselfly (*Lestes sponsa*)

This species was first recorded on the reserve in 2006 but there were no records in 2008, 2009 and 2010. In 2011 there were two records and in 2012 again just two records. Last year sightings were reported on three dates. This year there were sightings on a record 18 dates. Single males at the Dragonfly Ponds and on one of the Dipping Ponds on 2nd July (TS) were the first of the year. Over the next few days there were reports of single insects at the Dragonfly Ponds both

on the Marsh and Co-op Pond. Between 10th July and 28th July there were some excellent records on the ponds.

Site	10th July	17th July	28th July
Co-op Pond	2♂+1♀ Pair in wheel	-	1♂
Mabgate Pond	2♂	-	-
Scarborough Pond	1♂	-	1♂
Woodhead Pond	-	2♂	-
Long Ditch	-	1♂	1♂
Chadwick Pond	-	-	1♂
Large Dipping Pond	-	1♂	-
Small Dipping Pond	1♂	1♂	1♂
Total	7	5	5

Breeding activity was also noted on Co-op Pond on 27th July (JLW), Chadwick Pond on 15th August (BM) and Co-op Pond again on 24th August (JH) - one pair in each case. A report of two males on the Dragonfly Ponds on 7th September (JS) was the last record in what had been an excellent year for this species.

Banded Demoiselle (*Calopteryx splendens*)

After a disappointing year in 2013 there was a considerable improvement this year with some excellent counts made. A male on the Fish Pass on 19th May (JB) was the first of the year, some two and a half weeks earlier than last year. There were regular sightings thereafter, the Fish Pass and River Path proving particularly productive. Eight males were recorded on the riverbank below the bridge on 27th May (JB). On 2nd June 23 males and nine females were counted on the Fish Pass (JB). On 6th June eight males were noted on the Fish Pass and seven males between the Duck Marsh and Lagoon (JB). There were further good counts on the Fish Pass on the following dates:

Date	Total	Males	Females	Observer
8th June	21	13	8	JB
18th June	19	12	7	JB/MB
19th June	26	18	8	PM/BM et al

Numbers fell away somewhat from the end of June but there were sightings throughout July of one or two insects. A single male on the River Path on 6th August (JB) was the last of the year, just one day earlier than last year.

Common Hawker (*Aeshna juncea*)

This species shows a preference for acidic upland areas but there have been confirmed sightings here in the past. There were three reported sightings at the ponds in July this year but none could be verified.

Migrant Hawker (*Aeshna mixta*)

Single dragonflies on the Fish Pass and the Lagoon on 11th July (JB) were the second earliest ever records for this species, the earliest being 5th July 2006. There were no further sightings until 23rd July when one was seen in the hedge by the river seat (JLW). Two were reported at the Dragonfly Ponds on 26th July but there were then records on just three dates in what was a very unsettled August, although one of these produced a count of six by the gate to the Wet Grassland on 31st (BM). The best count of the year was made on 7th September with 10 seen on a walk round the reserve (JS), including one pair in tandem and ovipositing at the Dragonfly Ponds. Following this there were no further reports until 21st September when two were on the Willow Path. There were then sightings most days all round the reserve to 12th October with up to seven in one day reported. One at the Dragonfly Ponds on 29th October (JLW) was the last of the year, five days later than last year.

Southern Hawker (*Aeshna cyanea*)

This species enjoyed perhaps its best year ever at Rodley. On 12th June one lucky group of school children were able to watch the emergence of a Southern Hawker from its larva on the fencing at the edge of the Education Pond (See photo section). This proved to be the earliest ever record by almost two weeks. There were no further

sightings until 22nd June when two males were reported on the Wet Grassland (JH *et al*), one male at the Dragonfly Ponds (JLW) and one on the Duck Marsh (JB). Breeding activity was first noted on 6th August with two females ovipositing on the Long Ditch at the Dragonfly Ponds (JLW/JS). Ovipositing was subsequently recorded on 17th August - a single female on Mabgate Pond (DC/EC); 18th August - a single female on the large Dipping Pond (RS) and one on the Long Ditch (PM/BM) and on 27th September - a single female on Chadwick Pond (PS). Unlike last year, a very mild October produced sightings on six dates including two late records of females ovipositing - one on a head of reedmace on Bruce's Pond on 5th (PM/BM) and one on the same pond on 31st October (PJM) - this the last record of the year, three and a half weeks later than last year. It was also the latest ever record for the reserve by some nine days (22nd October 2006).

Brown Hawker (*Aeshna grandis*)

A single dragonfly on the Willow Path on 20th June (MG *et al*) was the first of the year, 10 days earlier than last year. There were regular sightings thereafter on all the wetland areas. Breeding activity was first noted on 9th July - a single female ovipositing on Co-op Pond (BM), five days earlier than last year. On 17th July 10 females were reported ovipositing - on Co-op Pond again, Mabgate Pond, Scarborough Pond, the Long Ditch, the Education Pond and the small Dipping Pond. A total of 20 dragonflies was counted on that date (PM/BM). A count of 19 on 25th July included eight females ovipositing on Scarborough Pond (PM/BM). Breeding activity was last recorded on 7th September, with five females ovipositing at the ponds. This was also the last double figure count of the year - a total of 20 recorded round the reserve (JS). A single dragonfly at the ponds on 19th October (JLS) was the last reported sighting of the year, nearly two weeks later than last year and the latest ever record on the reserve, the previous latest being 16th October in 2010.

Emperor Dragonfly (*Anax imperator*)

2010 and 2011 each produced four records and 2012 and 2013 each produced two. This year sightings were reported on four dates, with breeding activity on two of them. A female was seen ovipositing on Mabgate Pond on 5th July (JLW); a male was on Bruce's Pond on 13th July (ML); two were on the same pond on 23rd July (RS) and a

female was observed ovipositing on Co-op Pond on 13th August (JLW).

Four-spotted Chaser (*Libellula quadrimaculata*)

After two poor years, with just three records in 2012 and four in 2013, there was at least some improvement this year with nine records submitted. One at the Dragonfly Ponds on 16th May was the first of the year (PM/BM), two and a half weeks earlier than last year. There were further sightings of single dragonflies on several of the ponds from 21st May but there was no evidence of breeding activity. A single dragonfly at the ponds on 15th July was the last sighting of the year (DSm).

Broad-bodied Chaser (*Libellula depressa*)

It was another disappointing year, with sightings reported on just seven dates - the same number as last year. An immature male on the river path on 31st May (JLW) was the first record of the year, 12 days later than last year. Single males were subsequently seen at the Dragonfly Ponds on 1st June, 18th June and 7th July. Single males were also seen on the Butterfly Bank on 18th June, the path to the Manager's Garden on 15th July and later the same day on one of the new ponds near the Manager's Garden. There were no reports of females.

Common Darter (*Sympetrum striolatum*)

A male on the River Path on 29th June (JS) was the first of the year, two and a half weeks later than last year's first record. Single dragonflies were reported on the small Dipping Pond and Bruce's Pond over the next two and a half weeks and, on 17th July, five males were recorded on the ponds (PM/BM). Breeding activity was first noted on 28th July, 11 days earlier than last year - single females ovipositing on the Long Ditch, Woodhead Pond and Co-op Pond (PM/BM). Ovipositing was first recorded on Chadwick Pond on 18th August. The new ponds near the Manager's Garden also produced two records - a single male on 25th July and a pair in wheel on 22nd August (JK). The best counts were very similar to the last two years, with 11 on 28th July, 10 on 13th August, eight on 18th August and eight again on 2nd October. Some warm sunny days in the latter part of October and early November provided some late breeding activity with a pair in tandem on Chadwick and Co-op Ponds

on 29th, on Bruce's Pond on 31st and at the ponds again on 1st November. Three males at the ponds on 5th November (JLW) were the last of the year, just two days later than last year.

Ruddy Darter (*Sympetrum sanguineum*)

There were again no confirmed sightings this year. This species has not been seen on the reserve since 2009 when there were two records.

Black Darter (*Sympetrum danae*)

The Black Darter is not a species we would expect at Rodley as it is more at home on bogs and moors in northern and western regions. However, a male was photographed at the edge of Mabgate Pond on 27th September 2013 and shortly afterwards on the same day a male and female were seen in tandem over the same pond. There was another record this year on 24th September - a single male on the handrail on one of the Dipping Ponds (JLW). There was a further sighting of what was probably the same dragonfly just outside the Visitor Centre later the same day.

Black-tailed Skimmer (*Orthetrum cancellatum*)

A female on the Pebble Beach Pond on 1st August last year was the first record since 17th August 2010. There was just one record this year - a female on Chadwick Pond on 12th July (JLW).

Terminology

Exuvia - The shed larval skin. 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 - 2014

Species	First Date	Last date
Large Red Damselfly	27th April	23rd June
Azure Damselfly	17th May	7th September
Common Blue Damselfly	14th May	22nd July
Blue-tailed Damselfly	14th May	7th September
Emerald Damselfly	24th June	7th September
Banded Demoiselle	19th May	6th August
Common Hawker	7th July?	16th July ?
Migrant Hawker	11th July	29th October
Southern Hawker	12th June	31st October
Brown Hawker	20th June	19th October
Emperor Dragonfly	5th July	13th August
Four-spotted Chaser	16th May	15th July
Broad-bodied chaser	31st May	15th July
Common Darter	29th June	5th November
Ruddy Darter	-	-
Black Darter	24th September	24th September
Black-tailed Skimmer	12th July	12th July

Entries in red indicate that these are the earliest or latest ever records for the reserve.

RODLEY'S POND LIFE IN 2014

Rodley's great variety of water bodies - ponds, lagoon, the river Aire, reed beds etc. -are a constant source of interest and excitement to all the 'pondies' and 2014 has been no exception. The Education Dipping Pond is probably the most sampled site with schools, scouts, brownies, beavers and rainbows between them doing over 50 dipping sessions – and involving at least 1000 visitors! The other Dragonfly Ponds come next with regular sampling to find what lurks within them. This year we also had the benefit of a Leeds University student who surveyed pond-life in several of our other water bodies.

Dragonfly Ponds, including the 'Education' Pond

So what was new or special in 2014? We regularly find hawker dragonfly larvae in the Education Pond in large numbers, the size varying according to the season. This year we noted a lot of very small hawker larvae (3-4 mm long) a few weeks before the 1st adult dragonflies had emerged and started egg laying, suggesting that these little larvae must have emerged from eggs which had overwintered in the pond and hatched in the spring. In general we find that the dragonfly larvae we encounter in the Education Pond are all hawker larvae but this year we found a larva of the Common Darter (*Sympetrum striolatum*), a common species on the reserve but a new find for this pond. The most exciting discovery in this group of insects was that of a single larva of Emerald Damselfly (*Lestes sponsa*) in the Education Pond, a first for the Reserve. Although adults of this damselfly have been seen on the reserve in increasing numbers in recent years, this is the first proof of successful breeding at Rodley. Dragonflies often provide excitement and one lucky school group was fortunate enough to see a Southern Hawker (*Aeshna cyanea*) emerging from its larva while hanging from the fencing around the pond. This final stage of metamorphosis was captured on film by Liz Walley and is reproduced in the photograph section.

Hawker dragonfly larvae also provided excitement for a more 'senior' group of visitors to the RSPB 40th birthday party. At the first dip of a net they snared a brace of hawker larvae, one of which darted across

their sample tray and captured, killed and started to eat a stickleback. Nature 'red in tooth and claw' or rather mandible!

As in previous years, the most abundant insect larvae on the Dragonfly Ponds was the Pond Olive (*Cloëon dipterum*); indeed, apart from an occasional record of Angler's Curse (*Caenis* sp.) from the Education Pond, this was the only mayfly species for which larvae were recorded. The most common odonate larvae were those of Azure Damselfly (*Coenagrion puella*) but Brown Hawker (*Aeshna grandis*) larvae were also found in good numbers. On one occasion 10 larvae of Common Darter were recorded from the Beach Pond. Exuviae have been recorded for Azure Damselfly, Brown Hawker and Large Red Damselfly (*Pyrhosoma nymphula*), the last being another first for the Reserve.

As always, hemipterans were well represented, especially Lesser Water Boatman (corixids) and Water Boatman (or Back Swimmer) (notonectids); also Saucer Bug (*Ilyocoris cimicoides*). Pond Skaters (*Gerris* sp.) were present on many of the ponds. However, what has been really exciting on the hemipteran front this year is that, not only has the Water Scorpion (*Nepa cinerea*) been found again – in the Education Pond and in the Marsh - but two new species for the Reserve have been recorded – The Pigmy Back Swimmer (*Plea minutissima*) has been found in the Education Pond, and a single specimen of the Water Measurer (*Hydrometra stagnorum*) was found in Bruce's Pond - and a rare species the Water Stick Insect (*Ranatra linearis*) has been re-discovered, in the Education Pond. The Pigmy Back Swimmer may have been present on the reserve previously but been overlooked – it is after all only 3mm long. The Water Stick Insect was the real 'star' insect of the year and it was found by a school group in May; this was only the 2nd sighting on the reserve. Both the Water Measurer and the Water Stick Insect have very thin bodies. The former lives on the surface and is quite small (9-12 mm long) and easily overlooked because of this; in comparison the Water Stick Insect is quite a massive beast with a body length of 30-35 mm and a hind breathing tube (not a sting!) about 25 mm long. Like the Water Scorpion, the Water Stick Insect lives under water and uses its breathing tube to contact the surface. It hides amongst the stems of submerged vegetation, resembling a Praying Mantis in the way it sits. It is an 'ambush' (or 'sit-and-wait') predator, which captures other

creatures within the pond with its grasping front legs before piercing them with its sharp beak (rostrum) and sucking out their juices.

This year no Small China-Mark (*Cataclysta lemnata*) moth larvae were found but adults were again present; larvae of the Brown China Mark (*Elophila nymphaea*) were found in the Education Pond. Phantom Midge larvae were, as usual, abundant. There were also a number of different caddis fly larvae belonging to the family Limnephilidae but no attempt has been made to trace these down to individual species. As usual, the Whirligig beetle (*Gyrinus* sp.) was found on the Education Pond and was also found on Scarborough Pond. Larvae of dytiscid beetles were also present. The Whirligig beetle is interesting in that each eye has two parts, an upper part for seeing above water and a lower part for seeing below water. Another species recorded at Rodley for the first time in 2014 was (*Donacia versicolorea*), a small (6-10mm), aquatic, chrysomelid leaf beetle, which was regularly seen on leaves of Broad-leaved pondweed (*Potamogeton natans*) in the Ditch and is shown in a photograph taken by Rob Simpson. Its larvae feed on the roots of water plants and obtain their oxygen from air spaces in the roots. Several specimens of the Screech-Beetle (*Hygrobia hermanni*) have been recorded in the Education Pond and its screech was always found amusing.

Table 1. Aquatic insects in the Dragonfly Ponds

Ephemeroptera

Cloëon dipterum Pond Olive

Odonata

Zygoptera

Coenagrion puella Azure Damselfly

Lestes sponsa Emerald Damselfly

Pyrrhosoma nymphula Large Red Damselfly

Anisoptera

Aeshna grandis Brown Hawker

Sympetrum striolatum Common Darter

Hemiptera

Heteroptera

Corixidae

Corixa sp. Lesser Water Boatman

Gerridae

Gerris lacustris Water Skater

Hydrometridae

Hydrometra stagnorum Water Measurer

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)

Diptera

Nematocera

Chaoboridae

Chaoborus sp. Phantom Midge larva

Chironomidae

Chironomus sp.

Trichoptera

Leptoceridae

Triaenodes bicolor

Limnephilidae

Limnephilus (probably *L. lunatus*)

Limnephilid

Lepidoptera

Elophila (Nymphula) nympheata (Brown China-Mark Moth)

Coleoptera

Chrysomelidae

Donacia versicolorea

Dytiscidae

Dytiscid larva

Gyrinidae

Gyrinus sp. Whirligig Beetle

Hygrobiidae

Screech-Beetle *Hygrobia hermanni*

The flatworm *Polycelis tenuis* was found again and, as usual, there were large numbers of both the freshwater shrimp *Crangonyx pseudogracilis* and the Water Hog-louse (or Water Slater) (*Asellus aquaticus*). The former is an amphipod and is flattened sideways whereas the latter is an isopod and flattened dorso-ventrally and somewhat similar in appearance to the well-known Woodlouse. It is almost certain that the leeches identified in 2013 as *Erpobdella testacea* were in fact the Common Bird Leech (*Theromyzon tessulatum*).

The usual compliment of molluscs was again present this year – the two lymnaeids the Pond Snail (*Lymnea stagnalis*) and the Wandering Snail (*Radix balthica*), and the two planorbids the Great Ramshorn (*Planorbarius corneus*) and the Keeled Ramshorn (*Planorbis carinata*). A small bivalve belonging to the family Sphaeriidae, probably *Pisidium* sp., was also found

Table 2. Other aquatic invertebrates in the Dragonfly Ponds

Platyhelminthes

Tricladida

Planariidae

Polycelis tenuis

Annelida

Hirudinea

Rhynchobdellida

Theromyzon tessulatum (*Protoclepsis tesselata*)

Common Bird Leech

Crustacea - Malacostraca

Amphipoda

Crangonyx pseudogracilis

Isopoda

Asellus aquaticus

Mollusca
 Gastropoda
 Lymnaeidae
 Radix balthica
 Lymnea stagnalis
 Planorbidae
 Planorbarius corneus
 Planorbis carinata
 Bivalvia
 Sphaeridae
 Pisidium sp. (probably)

Larger Water Bodies (Lagoon, Duck Marsh, Reed Beds and Wet Grassland)

The species of *Cloëon* found in the Lagoon was, as in the Dragonfly ponds, the Pond Olive. Another mayfly larva was the Angler's Curse, a species belonging to the genus *Caenis*. The species of *Cloëon* have gills down the sides of the abdomen which are easy to see, whereas in *Caenis* all of the gills except the very small first pair are hidden under flat plates at the front of the abdomen. The Lagoon was the only place where *Psectrocladius obivus* was found this year.

The finding of a Water Stick Insect in the Lagoon in September was only the 3rd for the reserve (see above). Hopefully more will be found as we explore these water bodies further. One of the Water Stick Insects is pictured in the photograph section together with a Water Scorpion, a related water bug, which is much more common on the reserve. The Pigmy Back Swimmer (see above) was also found in the Reed Bed and in the Wet Grassland.

A first for the reserve was the larva of the caddis fly *Agrypnia* sp. (probably *A. pagetata*), which was found in the Duck Marsh. Whereas most species of caddis that live in cases construct their case from bits of plant, shell or inorganic material. *A. pagetana* sometimes inhabits a single piece of plant stem (as found here); it is typical of lakes, large ponds and canals.

Table 3. Aquatic insects in the large water-bodies

Ephemeroptera	
	<i>Cloëon dipterum</i> Pond Olive
	<i>Caenis</i> (probably <i>C. horaria</i>) Angler's Curse
Odonata	
Zygoptera	
	<i>Coenagrion puella</i> Azure Damselfly
	<i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i> Common Blue Damselfly
	<i>Ischnura elegans</i> Blue-tailed Damselfly
Anisoptera	
	<i>Sympetrum striolatum</i> Common Darter
Hemiptera	
Heteroptera	
Corixidae	
	<i>Corixa sp.</i> Lesser Water Boatman
Naucoridae	
	<i>Ilyocoris cimicoides</i> Saucer Bug
Nepidae	
	<i>Ranatra linearis</i> Water Stick Insect
Notonectidae	
	<i>Notonecta sp.</i> Water Boatman (Back Swimmer)
Pleidae	
	<i>Plea minutissima (leachi)</i> (Pigmy Back swimmer).
Diptera	
Nematocera	
Chironomidae	
	<i>Psectrocladius obvius</i>
Trichoptera	
Phryganeidae	
	<i>Agrypnia</i> (probably <i>A. pagetana</i>)

The second part of the name of the flatworm *Dugesia lugubris* is based on its paired eyes, each of which has a white surround, giving the animal a 'lugubrious' look. Of the two species of leech, *Glossiphonia complanata* has six eyes and feeds on invertebrates,

whereas the Common Bird Leech has eight eyes and is a parasite of wildfowl, where it can be found in the nasal cavity. Its eggs are enclosed in a cocoon, which is attached to a submerged rock or a plant. The adult covers the cocoon and, when the young hatch (after about 10 days) they remain attached to the adult for two to four months. One of those caught had two or three young attached to it. The young may require up to three blood meals to reach maturity. They leave their host between meals and can probably survive up to nine months without feeding.

Table 4. Other aquatic invertebrates in the large water-bodies

Platyhelminthes	
Tricladida	
Planariidae	
<i>Dugesia</i> sp. (probably <i>D. lugubris</i>)	
Annelida	
Hirudinea	
Glossiphonidae	
<i>Glossiphonia complanata</i>	
<i>Theromyzon tessulatum</i> (<i>Protoclepsia tesselata</i>)	
Common Bird Leech	
Crustacea - Malacostraca	
Isopoda	
<i>Asellus aquaticus</i>	
Crustacea – Branchiopoda	
Cladocera	
<i>Daphnia</i> sp.	
Mollusca	
Gastropoda	
Lymnaeidae	
<i>Radix balthica</i>	
<i>Lymnea stagnalis</i>	
Planorbidae	
<i>Planorbis carinata</i>	

'New' Ponds near the Manager's Garden

We also have two new ponds that were established about a year and a half ago by Yorkshire Water in the area between the Manager's Garden and the YW compound. This is where the waste soil was put that was produced during excavation of the Fish Pass. This isn't currently part of the reserve but Yorkshire Water intends to add this area to the Rodley Nature Reserve's lease in due course. Currently there is no public access to this area but it is hoped to change this in the future. The ponds were created as 'scrapes' on top of the spoil heap and were then lined. One pond collected water during 2013, but the other area did not and had to be re-lined. Currently, both ponds hold water and have spontaneously developed an interesting pond ecosystem as plants or animals were not introduced to the area, with one specific exception in October (see below). The plant colonists may have been present as seeds in the spoil from the fish pass area but also may have arrived as wind-blown seeds or on the feet of birds. The first colonists seen were algal species. The most obvious, however, is Greater Reed Mace, commonly known as Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*), which is particularly numerous on the pond further from the Visitor Centre. Given the 'snow storm' of fluffy seeds that result when the brown cigar-like flowers/seed-heads of this plant disintegrate it is likely that this is an airborne colonist! Other pond plants include Branched Bur-reed (*Sparganium erectum*), a Rush (*Juncus* sp.), Celery-Leaved Buttercup (*Ranunculus sclertus*), a Crowfoot (*Ranunculus* sp), Duckweed (*Lemna minor*) and a *Potamogeton* pondweed. Adult Dragon and Damselflies have been seen around the new ponds and we have confirmed breeding by finding larvae of Common Darter and Azure Damselfly (*Coenagrion puella*). Other insects include chironomid midge larvae, Water Boatman, Lesser Water Boatman, Pond Skater and Whirlygig Beetle. It was particularly exciting to find two species of diving Water Beetles belonging to the family Dytiscidae in the pond nearer to the Visitor Centre, which have been identified as *Agabus bipustulatus* and *A. nebulosus*. Larvae of a dytiscid beetle were also found.

The new ponds also attracted breeding frogs for the first time. In addition to the 'lower orders' of animals the ponds attract a number of water birds; snipe, mallard and heron are regularly seen there. It has

been interesting to observe how quickly the ponds have become populated with a considerable range of plants and animals which have all found their own way there.

The only introduction so far has been of amphibians (150 to 200). A large number of smooth newts together with some frogs and toads were 'rescued' in October, at the request of Yorkshire Water, from a subterranean sump (about 4 x 4 metres wide and 3 metres below the surface) in the YW compound prior to engineering work and were 're-homed'. Some of these amphibians may have been trapped in the sump accidentally but took the opportunity to spawn as frog tadpoles were found in small numbers.

Table 5. Aquatic insects in the 'new' ponds

Ephemeroptera	<i>Cloëon dipterum</i> Pond Olive
Odonata	
Zygoptera	<i>Coenagrion puella</i> Azure Damselfly
Anisoptera	<i>Sympetrum striolatum</i> Common Darter
Hemiptera	
Heteroptera	<i>Corixa</i> sp. Lesser Water Boatman
	<i>Notonecta</i> sp. Greater Water Boatman (Back Swimmer)
	<i>Gerris</i> sp. Pond Skater
Coleoptera	
Dytiscidae	<i>Agabus nebulosus</i>
	<i>Agabus bipustulatus</i>
	<i>Agabus</i> sp. larva
Gyrinidae	<i>Gyrinus</i> sp.

Diptera
Chironomidae
Chironomid larva

Other Water Bodies

There are a few other new water bodies on the reserve which have been colonised by aquatic life. The smallest is a large plastic water butt installed in the coppice for watering newly planted trees. Despite its small size, relative isolation and apparent inhospitability it has attracted several water insects. Water Boatmen and mosquito/midge larvae were the first to appear. These were followed by small numbers (up to 6) of diving water beetles. These are hard to identify with certainty but were probably *Agabus* species. The other species noted were Pond Skaters.

Another fairly new habitat on the reserve is the Fish Pass. This area has proved popular with the Banded Demoiselle (*Calopteryx virgo*) this year, with often 2 to 3 dozen flying around, and oviposition has been observed in the pass. Larvae of this species haven't been found yet. Sampling did, however, result in recovery of Lesser Water Boatman and larvae of Blue-tailed Damselfly (*Ischnura elegans*), both pond lovers, in the 'mouse-ear' section of the Fish Pass, suggesting that this new water feature will be attractive to insects favouring both fast and more static waters.

We would like to thank Lucy Jeffrey for sampling the larger water bodies and the two new ponds on the reserve; also Liz, Pam, Jill, Claire, Brian and Bal of the 'Education' group who helped to capture and identify creatures during the educational pond-dipping sessions.

Jerry Knapp & Peter Mill.

FUNGUS REPORT - 2014

The annual fungus foray took place on Saturday 18th October this year and attracted an excellent following of around 40 participants including at least six children. An exceptionally dry September didn't auger well but a spell of mild, damp weather around the middle of October saw a reasonable number of fungi around the reserve. The following list includes the 24 species found during the foray and others found shortly prior to it.

<i>Ascocoryne sarcoides</i>	Purple Jellydisc
<i>Auricularia auricula-judae</i>	Jellyear
<i>Calocera cornea</i>	Small Stagshorn
<i>Chondrostereum purpureum</i>	Silverleaf
<i>Claviceps purpurea</i>	Ergot
<i>Conocybe sp.</i>	a Conecap
<i>Coprinus lagopus</i>	Hare'sfoot Inkcap
<i>Coprinus micaceus</i>	Glistening Inkcap
<i>Dacrymyces stillatus</i>	Common Jellyspot
<i>Daedaleopsis confragosa</i>	Blushing Bracket
<i>Exidia recisa</i>	a Brain Fungus
<i>Exidia thuretiana</i>	White Brain
<i>Flammulina velutipes</i>	Velvetshank
<i>Hygrocybe Pratensis</i>	Meadow Waxcap
<i>Hygrocybe virginea</i>	Snowy Waxcap
<i>Hyphodontia sambuci</i>	Elder Whitewash
<i>Lepista nuda</i>	Wood Blewit
<i>Lyophyllum decastes</i>	Clustered Domecap
<i>Melanoleuca melaleuca</i>	a Cavalier
<i>Mycena aetites</i>	Drab Bonnet
<i>Mycena galericulata</i>	Common Bonnet
<i>Mycena sp.</i>	a Bonnet
<i>Nectria cinnabarina</i>	Coral Spot
<i>Parasola plicatilis</i>	Pleated Inkcap
<i>Psathyrella corrugis</i>	Red-edged Brittlestem
<i>Rhytisma acerina</i>	Sycamore Tar-spot
<i>Stereum hirsutum</i>	Hairy Curtaincrust
<i>Stereum rugosum</i>	Bleeding Curtaincrust

<i>Trametes versicolor</i>	Turkeytails
<i>Tubaria furfuracea</i>	Scurfy Twiglet
<i>Xylaria hypoxylon</i>	Candlesnuff

The foray concentrated on some of the more productive areas such as the approach to the Manager's Garden, the Mike Fisk Meadow and the Coppice.

The following additional species were also identified on the reserve this year.

<i>Clitocybe nebularis</i>	Clouded Agaric
<i>Marasmius oreades</i>	Fairy Ring Mushroom
<i>Pleurotus ostreatus</i>	Oyster Fungus

We are grateful to Mary Larner for leading another very enjoyable foray and to Andrew Woodall for providing additional records.

SURVEY OF ALGAE IN 2014

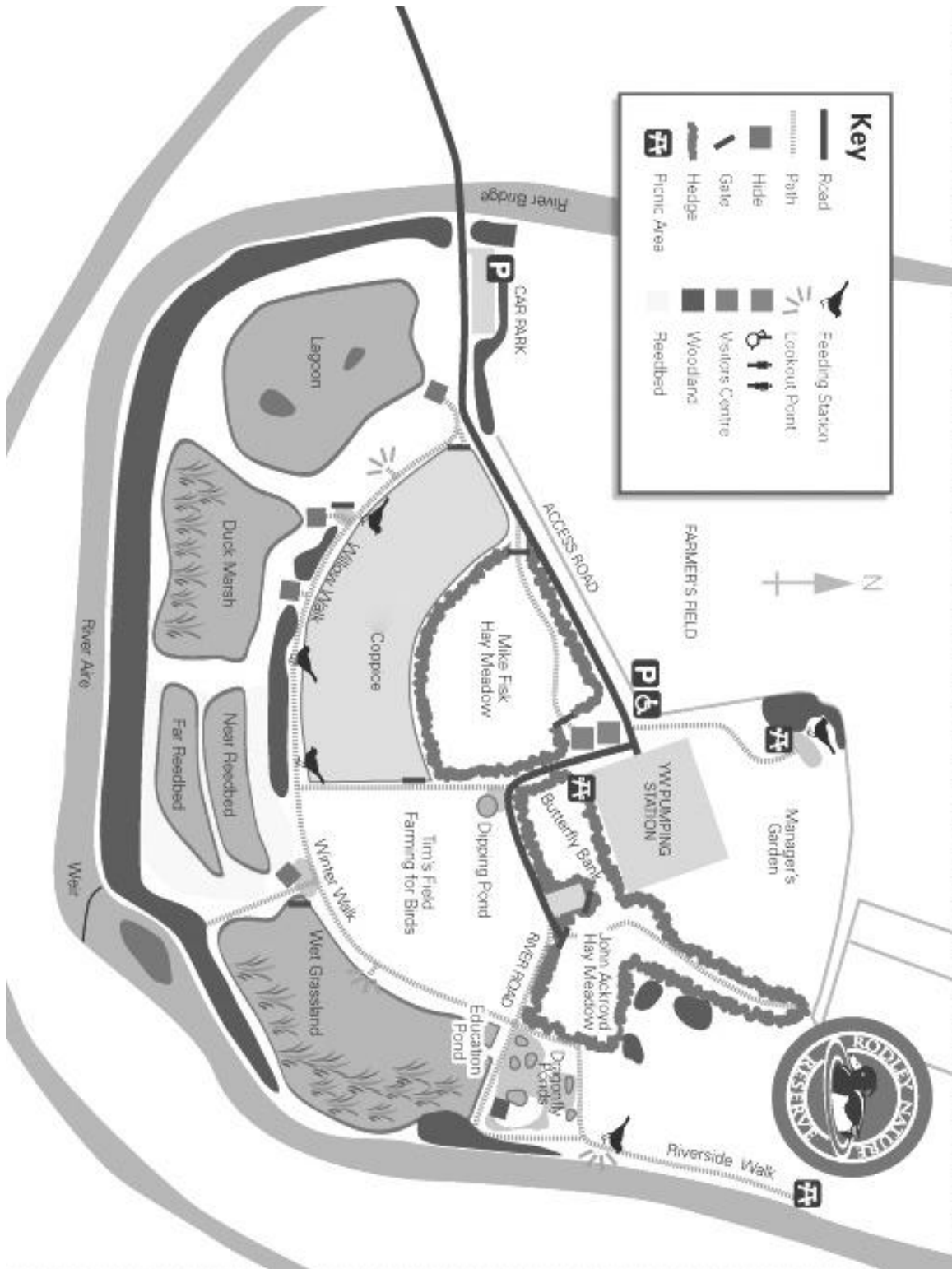
January began with 46 species logged, very good for winter and included *Coenochloris fottii*, not easy to see, also *Geminella* and *Tolypothrix*, though not new, quite rare. February yielded 45 with unusually at this time of year, *Merismopedia*. March found 52 species including the illusive cyanophyte, *Schizothrix muieleri*. April though only logging 48 showed two diatoms, *Diatoma* and *Hannaea*. New to us in May was *Palmodictyon* and the not always found *Tetraspora*.

In June, what seemed like an explosion all over the county, *Micrasterias truncate*, now on the reserve for the first time. In July our catch increased to 51, then in August, *Staurastrum armigerum*, unusual at these low altitudes. Although the count now falling, *Symploca muralis* was found in quantity; maybe not rare, but new to our collection. The count still falling in October, found *Mischococcus convervicola*, these usually found in earlier months, plus three chunks of *Ophiocytium*, normally a mid-summer species.

Due to health problems, no survey was conducted in November and December. It was good to see the attractive *Goniochloris* in seven months. These are found in different species, some simple triangles, others elongated into long legs rather like the Three Legs of Man. The total survey has 81 genera, some of which with three species, typically *Closterium*, is displayed in the Visitor Centre.

Looking at pond water under the microscope, with a little expert guidance, one can find even the rarest or those which only appear at set times, such as *Chroococcus*, *Crucigenia*, and shaped like a cello, *Didymosphenia*, and like tiny green balls inside a tube, *Palmodictyon*, also the scary looking *Pseudostaurastrum* which has claws like some animal!

John R Hey



Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to the following individuals and organizations (with apologies for any inadvertent omissions) without whose records the compilation of this report would not have been possible.

P Allan	PA	A Hardy	AH	J Quirk	JQ
C Allen	CA	J Hayes	JHay	S Ramsay	SR
S Allen	SA	J Hayley	JHa	B Reeder	BR
G Ashton	GA	J Hayter	JH	D Royston	DR
B Austin	BA	S Henderson	SHe	P Shires	PSH
A Barber	AB	B Hewitt	BH	R Simpson	RS
G J Barlow	GJB	J Hey	JHe	D Smith	DS
R Barnes	RB	G Hipkin	GH	D Smith	DSm
S Beach	SB	M Hooper	MH	T Smollett	TS
A Blackwell	Abl	J Illingworth	Jl	R Spencer	RSp
D Briggs	DB	P Jefferson	PJ	A Stancliffe	AS
R Brock	RBr	L Jeffreys	LJe	A Storcliffe	ASt
A Brook	ABr	L Jenkinson	LJ	J Stratford	JSt
J Brook	JB	B Johnson	BJ	P Strickland	PS
M Brook	MB	J Kilner	JKi	J Sykes	JS
D Cebb	DCe	J Knapp	JK	S Tetlow	ST
P Colley	PC	M Larner	ML	A Thompson	AT
J Conlin	JC	P Larner	PLa	B Thompson	BMT
T R Cook	TRC	J Lee	JL	G Thompson	GT
D&E Cowan	DC/EC	M Leeming	MLe	N Tonge	NT
M Dickinson	MD	K Limb	KL	P Unia	PU
A Dodds	AD	P Limb	PL	D Walker	DW
C Ducker	CD	J Longhorn	JLo	JL Walker	JLW
J Ellwood	JE	Mick & Pauline	M&P	Liz Walley	LW
S Excell	SE	P J Mill	PJM	P Wardley	PWa
S Fairclough	SF	P&B Murphy	PM/BM	M Wilkinson	MW
M George	MGe	R Musgrave	RM	I Willoughby	IW
M Gibson	MG	D Nesham	DAN	P Willoughby	PW
R Graham	RG	S Oxley	SO	A Woodall	AW
P&M Greenwood	PGr/MGr	G Phillips	GP		
D Gregory	DG	J Pickard	JP		
P Griffin	PG	C Pottle	CP		

Bradford Environmental Education Service	BEES
Pudsey Ornithological Group	POG
Leeds RSPB Group	LRSPBG
Wharfedale Naturalists Society	WNS

