



Normal Reserve Opening Times:

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

Visitor Centre
10am - 4pm (3.30pm Nov - end of Feb)

Trustees:

Kirsty McLeod - Treasurer
David Nesham
Peter Murphy
Graham Barlow
Ian Willoughby
Jerry Knapp
Maggie Bellwood
John Hart
Andrew Woodall
Denese Swann
Louise Staniland

Company Secretary - Peter Murphy
Report Editor - Peter Murphy

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Front and back cover: The Duck Marsh - from an original photograph by Barbara Murphy

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Introduction

With no vehicle access for our visitors throughout 2022, thanks to the long delay in installing the new swing bridge over the canal, we certainly needed some good news and it came early in the year. To mark its 60th birthday in January BBC Wildlife magazine asked 60 people from their network of conservationists, writers, presenters and photographers to share their favourite places for wildlife in the UK. Rodley Nature Reserve was nominated by Pam Taylor of the British Dragonfly Society as a dragonfly and damselfly hotspot on the edge of the city.

The nominations were then put to a public vote and the Reserve was voted top for the Yorkshire region. The 10 ten regional finalists then went to a final poll and we finished 5th in the country. This was a remarkable achievement and only happened because so many of our friends and visitors bothered to vote for us. A big thank you must go to Pam Taylor for nominating us in the first place.

We were finally able to resume three day opening of the Reserve in January 2023 but if we thought that this would be the end of our problems then we were to be disappointed. The new bridge certainly looked very impressive but operating it manually certainly proved a problem for most boat owners resulting in delays for our visitors both arriving at and leaving.

Despite these ongoing problems it was possible to bring back our three big events this year - Aireborough Rotary Club's Easter Egg Hunt, their Autumn Seed Trail and the Leeds Birdfair - all of which proved very successful thanks to the support of the public. We are grateful to Rodley Cricket Club for again allowing us to use their parking facilities for these events.

The Reserve offers primary schools and uniformed organisations visits free of charge throughout the spring and summer months with various activities organised for them by our Education Team. These visits provide a valuable outdoor learning experience for the children to enhance their classroom learning and the fact that we were fully booked for school visits in 2024 before the end of 2023 shows how much they are appreciated by the schools.

Our own children's club, the Rodley Robins continues to go from strength to strength and during the summer they were given an exciting opportunity to learn how to be beekeepers. Thanks to the generosity of our resident

beekeeper the Robins now have their own beehive and protective bee suits.

It was a year of mixed fortunes for wildlife on the Reserve but there were some notable successes. Being able to have cameras in both the Barn Owl and Kestrel nest boxes last year and being able to relay live footage to monitors in the Visitor Centre certainly proved a great success. It was the same this year, the Kestrels again raising five young and the Barn Owls three again, this despite the loss of an adult bird in April.

On the wetlands Little Egrets had another good year with a record count of 19 on the Duck Marsh in September and a Great White Egret was also present on the Duck Marsh for much of July with two birds on several dates. Once upon a time these were birds we would never have seen in the north of England and certainly Black-crowned Night Heron was a bird we would not have expected to see even now. However, a first summer bird turned up on the Duck Marsh on 18th August and a small number of observers were lucky enough to see it. Unfortunately, the bird only stayed a few days.

Kittiwake was another new bird added to the Reserve list this year with an adult seen on the Lagoon on 26th February and on the Duck Marsh on 12th March. It was another good year for Otters with sightings reported in every month of the year except June. An adult and two young were seen on several occasions.

We were not the only ones to have a Black-crowned Night Heron pay us a visit this year. An ongoing drought in south west Europe is thought to have caused an influx of these birds to Britain in the spring with as many as 76 birds recorded during this period. With climate change we will no doubt see more of these birds that we associate with southern Europe - Night Herons, Egrets, Black-winged Stilts and Purple Herons - in the future. This is all great news for the birdwatchers but there is a down side. The latest State of Nature Report published in September 2023 shows that the UK's wildlife is continuing to decline. We are already classed as one of the world's most nature depleted countries with nearly one in six species of the more than 10,000 species assessed at risk of being lost. Climate change is undoubtedly one of the biggest drivers of this loss of nature but the UK's biodiversity had already been depleted by scores of years of habitat loss, development and the intensive way the land is managed for farming.

Avian Flu has also played its part, decimating many colonies of our seabirds but also making its impact felt inland with many other species of birds being affected. Fortunately, to date its affect has been limited on the Reserve but we do need to remain vigilant and any dead or distressed birds seen should be reported at the visitor centre.

Despite being a relatively small nature reserve in terms of size Rodley does have a wide range of different habitats including wetlands, meadows, crop field and willow coppice and all require a degree of management. Fortunately, we do have a large team of volunteers working on habitat management on Mondays and Fridays throughout the year making this a wonderful place for wildlife despite its proximity to a major city.

Autumn is a particularly busy time for habitat management work on the wetlands. This is the time of year when the Wet Grassland is drained for its annual cut before being reflooded for the winter. A very wet October resulting in high water levels made this task more of a problem than usual this year. The ground proved too soft for the tractor to cope and much of the work had to be done manually. When volunteers were able to get onto the area to rake up reed cuttings they had to beat a hasty retreat as the water started to rise around them!

Rather more work had to be done on the Reedbed in the autumn but this time by contractors with heavy equipment. If left too long with no management a reedbed will start to dry out and willow will take a hold. Seven years ago work was done by the same contractors digging out some of the reed but looking out from the Reedbed Hide this year you could see that the reed had again spread across the open areas and it was hard to spot any open water. The opportunity was also taken to enlarge the Kingfisher Pool in front of the Reedbed Hide and bring it a bit closer to the hide. Not only will this give better views of the whole area for our visitors in 2024 but it will also provide much improved habitat for the wildlife.

As we move into 2024 we have to remember that we have, at some point, 18 months of noise and disturbance to look forward to when work eventually starts on the proposed housing development on the Airedale Mills site next to the Reserve entrance. However, the Trust continues to work closely with local councillors, Leeds City Council planning officers and Yorkshire Water to ensure the interests of the Reserve, its users and local communities are protected.

Rodley Nature Reserve - Monthly Roundup for 2023

January

The first half of the month was quite mild and very wet. Temperatures dropped sharply from 16th and there was a light covering of snow on 17th. A WeBS visit on 22nd found the Lagoon 60% icebound and the other wetland areas completely frozen over. Temperatures started to rise again from 23rd and the remainder of the month was ice-free. .

On the wetlands a count of 49 Teal on 2nd, 44 of these on the Wet Grassland, was the highest for nine years. Gadwall numbers peaked at 63 on 23rd. A count of 20 Tufted Ducks on the Lagoon on 22nd was the only double figure count of the month. Three male Goldeneyes were there the same day. Water Rails were recorded on eight dates and on all four main water bodies. The first Oystercatcher of the year arrived on 29th. Six Lapwings were on the Duck Marsh on 22nd but 43 were counted on the farmland the next day. A Cetti's Warbler was heard on three dates, on each occasion on the Wet Grassland.

Linnets, Chaffinches and Reed Buntings were among the birds visiting Tim's Field for seed. Linnets usually numbered between 20 and 45 but 137 were counted on 22nd in icy conditions. Chaffinch numbers reached 25 on the same date.

Among the birds of prey Common Buzzards were seen on nine dates with two on two dates. A Kestrel was spotted at the nest box at the edge of John Ackroyd Meadow on 13th and a Barn Owl was in residence in its box on the Scrubland throughout the month.

It was a good month for mammal sightings. An Otter was seen on the Lagoon on 8th and two were reported there on 14th and 15th. Water Voles are few and far between these days but one was spotted on the Wet Grassland on two dates. Foxes and Roedeer were seen on a number of dates and both Stoat and Weasel put in an appearance in the Bee Garden.

February

There was a windy start to the month but with temperatures between 10°C and 12°C. Though there were a couple of frosty starts daytime temperatures remained between 8°C and 12°C for most of the month. It was also a particularly dry month with no rainfall until 22nd and then not much. Storm Otto brought gale force winds overnight on 16th and 17th and

it remained very windy for the next three days but with temperatures as high as 14°C on 20th.

Common Buzzards were seen and heard most days with as many as eight birds over the Reserve on 6th and six on 27th. A Peregrine Falcon on the pylon on the farmland on 8th was the first record of the year and a pair of Sparrowhawks were displaying over Tim's Field on 22nd. A Barn Owl was again in residence in its box on the Scrubland throughout the month and a Little Owl was seen in the Manager's Garden on 11th.

On the wetlands a Little Egret was reported on five dates, usually on the Duck Marsh and a Yellow-legged Gull was spotted there on 27th. The first Great Crested Grebe arrived on the Lagoon on the same date. It was a good month for Cetti's Warbler with birds calling frequently and reported on six dates. However, the birding highlight on the month was probably a Kittiwake seen on the Lagoon on 26th - a new bird for the Reserve.

Still on the wetlands, it was an excellent month for Otter sightings on the Lagoon with two animals seen on several occasions. A black American Mink photographed on the Duck Marsh on 18th was a much less welcome visitor.

Among other interesting sightings this month were an early Stonechat on the entry road on 15th, a Woodcock on Poplar Carr on the same date and a Brambling on Tim's Field on 22nd, the latter picked out among the various finches visiting for seed at the time. It was a good month for sightings of Grey Partridge with two or three birds seen on several dates.

March

England had its wettest March since 1981, much of it falling as snow here in the second week of the month. There were a good six inches of snow by 10th and daytime temperatures were no higher than 1° or 2°C. There was more snow on 14th and 15th but a much milder spell followed from 16th with temperatures in double figures and reaching 15°C some days. The month ended on a mild but wet note.

On the Lagoon a second Great Crested Grebe was seen briefly on 12th but from then to the end of the month just one bird was present. A single Sand Martin was seen near the bridge on the early date of 12th March but there were no further sightings until 24th when 15 were counted flying around the nesting bank.

Much of the activity on the wetlands was on the Duck Marsh and Wet Grassland. A Kittiwake put in another appearance, this time on the Duck Marsh on 12th and there was a further sighting of a Yellow-legged Gull there on 19th. Goosanders were regular visitors to the Duck Marsh with as many as nine here on 3rd. Shovelers alternated between both wetland areas with nine on the Wet Grassland on 19th including six males. Water Rails were seen on five dates with two birds on two occasions. It was another good month for Cetti's Warbler with birds both heard and seen on seven dates and on all four main wetland areas. Little Egrets were again reported on five dates with three on 24th.

There was a lot of Little Owl activity in the Manager's Garden from the middle of the month with two birds seen on one occasion and a bird going into the nest box on at least two dates. It was also busy at the Kestrel nest box with two birds seen there on several occasions. A Barn Owl was still in residence in its box on the Scrubland throughout most of the month but there was no sign of a second bird and the box was empty on 31st.

Small numbers of winter thrushes could be seen on the farmland in the first half of the month but more than 100 Redwings were reported there on 1st. Fifteen in trees on Poplar Field on 13th were the last of the spring. Overwintering Chiffchaffs had been reported in both January and February but several birds singing in the last week of this month were almost certainly early summer visitors.

April

More summer visitors started to arrive this month with the first Willow Warbler on 5th followed by the first Swallow on 7th and Blackcap just five days later. Later in the month the first Common Whitethroats were seen on the Scrubland and Poplar Field on 26th. A Garden Warbler was also spotted at the latter site on 29th. Several Swifts over the farmland on 30th were also the first of the year. On the wetlands the first Sedge Warbler was heard at the edge of the Reedbed/Duck Marsh on 23rd.

On the Lagoon a second Great Crested Grebe turned up on 17th and the birds were observed displaying but neither bird was seen after 19th. The first Oystercatcher chick was seen on the middle island on the Lagoon on 30th. Shelduck are infrequent visitors here with just two records in the last two years but two birds that arrived on the Duck Marsh on 5th were seen daily until the end of the month. Goosanders were again frequent visitors to the Duck Marsh with a best count of eight on 4th.

Having cameras in both the Kestrel and Barn Owl boxes provided some interesting viewing on the monitors in the Visitor Centre this month. In the Kestrel box the first egg was laid on 14th and ten days later five eggs could be seen. Things were much less straight forward for the Barn Owls. Early in the month a bird was found dead by the thatched gazebo but from the middle of the month two were in residence and the first egg was laid on 30th. Little Owls were seen most days in the Manager's Garden in and around the nest box.

Wheatears are uncommon passage visitors here and last year there was just one reported sighting. This year a male was on Tim's Field on 8th and two males and a female were seen there on 30th.

Otters were reported on the river on three dates this month. A single animal was seen from the bridge early in the day on 4th and 6th and on 26th an adult and two young were reported in the same area.

May

A fine sunny day of 7th saw temperatures reach 22°C and the Leeds Birdfair enjoyed a very similar day on Saturday 27th.

The Kestrel and Barn Owl boxes were the main focus of attention for many people this month. In the Kestrel box all five eggs hatched successfully. The Barn Owls went two better with seven eggs visible by the middle of the month.

On the wetlands the two Shelduck were present throughout the month, often on the Duck Marsh and a second pair was seen on 7th. A Little Ringed Plover on the Duck Marsh on 30th was the first record of the year. An Oystercatcher was reported on the middle island on the Lagoon with two chicks on 4th but, disappointingly, there was no sign of Lapwing chicks despite a few birds appearing to be sitting on nests around the middle of the month.

Last year's juvenile Mute Swans were reluctant to leave home but a new family of seven cygnets was on the Duck Marsh on 15th May and a second family of seven was on the Wet Grassland on 29th.

There was more Otter activity this month with two seen upstream of the river bridge on 8th and probably the same two from the River Path on 10th. The first Fox cubs put in an appearance with two small ones seen in the Coppice on 21st.

Rooks are very infrequent visitors here but four were reported on the farmland on 29th. A Peregrine Falcon was seen on the pylon on the farmland on three dates.

June

It proved to be not only the warmest June on record but also a very dry month.

A male Garganey on the Duck Marsh on 2nd was the first sighting of this scarce summer visitor since 2018. The bird alternated between the Lagoon and Duck Marsh and was last seen on 7th. The Duck Marsh also produced a Common Sandpiper on two dates and two Little Ringed Plovers on two dates. Little Egrets were seen daily with as many as seven on 24th and six on 30th. Three Kingfishers were also seen on the Duck Marsh on the latter date.

On the Lagoon the number of nest holes in the Sand Martin bank was very low - just 35 - only half the number of last year which was itself disappointing.

With the river running low as a result of the dry weather a Dipper put in an appearance on 28th, producing good views from the River Path, this the first record for nearly four months. A female Goosander was seen with seven ducklings in the same area on the same date.

Away from the wetlands there were more Rook sightings on the farmland in the first half of the month with six birds recorded on one date. Nuthatches are scarce visitors here and one seen in the Manager's Garden on 21st was the first record of the year. There was a report of two Lapwing chicks on Tim's Field on one date but there were no other sightings.

All five young Kestrels fledged successfully this month. Only the female Barn Owl was seen and only three of the seven eggs hatched but all three chicks could still be seen at the end of the month. As regards other birds of prey a Peregrine Falcon was seen on the pylon on the farmland on 7th.

July

The month was cooler and wetter on average and often windy. Despite the frequent grey skies and rain it was an excellent month for Gatekeeper

butterflies with record numbers reported, Poplar Field and the Butterfly Bank being two particular hot spots.

There were also several highlights for the birdwatchers, starting with a Hobby that flew low over the Lagoon on 1st. A Cuckoo on 8th and 9th was another good find. On the wetlands two Great White Egrets joined the Little Egrets on the Duck Marsh on 3rd and were present daily until 12th after which only one was seen. There were no sightings after 24th. Up to eight Little Egrets were recorded on the Duck Marsh but early in the day on 19th as many as 12 were seen in trees on the Lagoon. A Little Ringed Plover was on the Duck Marsh on 1st with two there on 3rd, a Common Sandpiper on 2nd and a Redshank on 24th - this, surprisingly, only the second record of this species in the last four years.

The three young Barn Owls in the Scrubland nest box grew quickly and an adult bird was seen on a number of occasions during the day, on four dates over Mike Fisk Meadow. On 31st only two young were seen in the box, the other hopefully having fledged. A Little Owl was seen in the Manager's Garden on four dates this month, one photographed on 22nd almost certainly a juvenile.

It was a good month for mammal sightings, a Water Vole seen at the Dragonfly Ponds on 21st being only the third sighting in the last five years. Much less welcome was the appearance of an American Mink on three dates, on one occasion well away from the wetlands just down the road from the Visitor Centre. An Otter on the Lagoon on 26th was the first reported sighting since 10th May.

August

There were some nice warm, sunny days but the weather was generally unsettled throughout the month and often windy. Fortunately, two Bat Night events arranged for 19th and 26th enjoyed pleasant evenings and the bats responded in good numbers.

The odd new bird species is added to the Reserve list most years and this year it was a juvenile Black-crowned Night Heron, recorded on the Duck Marsh by volunteers working close by on 18th. The bird was seen again in the same area prior to the Bat Night event the following evening but was otherwise elusive with just a couple of flight views.

Bird song typically starts to die away in August and birds can be hard to find but it can be a good time of year for passage migrants such as Spotted

Flycatchers moving through. Two were spotted on John Ackroyd Meadow on 16th, four in trees on the Scrubland on 23rd and a single bird there on 26th. A Common Redstart in the same area on the same two dates were the first reported sightings of this species since 2019. Other birds passing through included a Wheatear on 16th and a Whinchat on 20th and 27th.

It had been a poor year for House Martins but a gathering of around 70 on the roof of the workshop and overhead wires on 26th included many juveniles. As many as 120 were recorded feeding over the buildings later the same day.

All three young Barn Owls were flying this month and spending less time in the nest box. There was plenty of Common Buzzard activity with young birds frequently heard calling in woodland on the far riverbank. On 20th as many as six birds were reported over John Ackroyd Meadow and the Scrubland.

There was a considerable amount of Otter activity this month, starting with three on the grass between the Lagoon and Duck Marsh on 2nd. Two juveniles were reported on the river two days later and two were watched on the Duck Marsh on 18th. There was a second hand report of three on the Lagoon on 30th. There was also a further report of an American Mink, this time on the river from the River Path on 23rd.

September

Beautiful warm, sunny days saw temperatures soar to 28°C in the early part of the month. It was much cooler from 12th with a spell of heavy rain and the weather was very unsettled from the middle of the month, the Autumn Seed Trail Event on Sunday 24th fortunately enjoying a rare dry day.

On the wetlands the Duck Marsh is always a good place to look for Little Egrets with the best counts usually early in the day. Numbers built in the last few days of the month reaching a record 19 on 29th. Three Green Sandpipers here on 2nd was a nice record and there were several further sightings of one or two birds from 13th to the end of the month. A juvenile Ringed Plover was seen in the same area on 13th and 16th. Water Rails had been hard to find during the summer months but two were seen on the Wet Grassland on 13th, one on the Reedbed on 27th and one on the Duck Marsh on 30th.

House Martins continued to gather in good numbers as they drifted south. Around 130 were counted over Tim's Field on 2nd and 100+ over John Ackroyd Meadow on 17th. More than 80 were reported low over the Lagoon in rainy conditions on 27th.

As summer visitors drifted away the first early winter visitors started to arrive with two Wigeon on the Lagoon on 13th. Teal numbers started to grow reaching 42 on 20th and surprisingly all sightings reported were on the Duck Marsh.

Tim's Field is always worth checking at this time of year for passage visitors such as Stonechats. The first bird of the autumn was spotted here on 24th with two on 27th and four on 30th.

There were further reports of a Dipper on the river this month and four juvenile or female Goosanders were seen in the same area on 13th. Otters were rather harder to find and the only two reported sightings were both on the river from the bridge on 4th and 11th.

October

Storm Babet brought exceptional rainfall and some very strong winds to many parts of the country between 18th and 21st resulting in widespread flooding. Volunteers working on the Wet Grassland on 20th had to vacate the area as water flooded in from the river. On a slightly more positive note flooding on the farmland behind the bridge car park did bring in good numbers of birds with a Mediterranean Gull picked out among the many Black-headed and Common Gulls gathering there on 22nd being a highlight.

Little Egret numbers on the Duck Marsh remained high into the first week of the month reaching 15 on 4th but started to fall away in the second week. A Great White Egret was seen from the Lagoon Hide on 18th and one flew over the road near the Lagoon on 29th. It was another good month for Green Sandpipers with one or two on the Duck Marsh most days up to 25th with three there on one date. Two Common Sandpipers put in an appearance in the same area on 15th with one on 18th. The Duck Marsh was also the place to see Water Rails this month with sightings reported on six dates and two birds on one occasion. Two were also seen on the Wet Grassland on 23rd. Cetti's Warblers were heard on all four main wetland areas this month following a quiet spell with just two records in the previous three months.

On the river an Otter was again seen from the bridge on 15th. Three days later one was reported swimming in the Lagoon at the base of the Sand Martin nesting bank.

Most summer visitors had departed by now but two juvenile Sedge Warblers on the Wet Grassland on 22nd were the latest ever record and first ever October record. The first winter thrushes were reported on 9th - around 300 Redwings flying over the Reserve between 8am and 9am that day. A few birds did drop in with 12 counted in trees at the back of the Lagoon on 15th with five on 18th and nine on 22nd. Around 100 Fieldfares flew over on 22nd. Bramblings are classed as scarce winter visitors here and there were no reports last year, so four on Tim's Field on 22nd was a nice record.

November

More rain was the main feature in the first three and a half weeks of this month though there were a handful of fine sunny days interspersed. It was also very windy at times. Temperatures plummeted from 25th and were well below seasonal average from this point but with plenty of sunshine. When the Reserve opened on 25th the temperature was minus 4°C with much of the wetlands frozen over. The month ended with a thin covering of snow on 30th. Nevertheless, autumn this year was one of the warmest on record in the UK.

Ten Pochard on the Lagoon on 1st and seven Mandarins on 4th was a promising start to the month but other visitors to the wetlands were thin on the ground. The Duck Marsh was again the most likely place to see Water Rails with birds reported here on three dates but there were also two records on the Wet Grassland. Cetti's Warblers were again recorded on all four main wetland areas. Four Snipe were spotted on the Wet Grassland on 25th. A Great White Egret flew over Tim's Field towards the river on 13th but Little Egrets were hard to find with single birds on just two dates.

Winter visitors were also hard to find away from the wetlands, six Waxwings flying over the Scrubland on 19th being a rare highlight for at least two observers. Single Bramblings were reported on three dates.

Among the raptors it was a good month for sightings of Kestrels, a male bird being seen on top of the Barn Owl box on several occasions and also visiting its own box. A Merlin was seen flying low over the entry road on

13th and over Tim's Field on 25th. A Peregrine Falcon was spotted on the pylon on the farmland on two dates.

There were more Otter sightings this month. On the wetlands two were recorded on the Duck Marsh on 1st and on 22nd two were seen on the Lagoon. There were also two sightings on the river. On 10th one was seen from the bridge and on 25th three were seen from the River Path.

December

There was a cold and frosty start to the month with another thin covering of snow on 3rd but it became much milder from 7th with heavy rain and strong winds a feature for much of the month. However, we did avoid the very worst of Storm Pia on 21st and Storm Gerrit on 27th and 28th. Thunder and lightning for a time during the evening on 28th was unusual for the time of year.

With the river running very high and coloured for much of the month Kingfishers found the wetlands and particularly the Lagoon much more to their liking and there were numerous sightings here. With so many flooded fields in the valley to choose from duck numbers on the wetlands were disappointing but it was a good month for Water Rails, Snipe and a very hard to spot Jack Snipe.

In the Manager's Garden the Little Owls' nest box was looking in a sorry state and the decision was taken to replace it with a new box this month., Fortunately, the birds took to their new home and there were numerous sightings of them in and around the box.

On the farmland Lapwing numbers built up considerably this month and a flock photographed flying over the area on 20th was found to contain 248 birds. As many as 53 were counted on the Wet Grassland.

Raptor-wise a Merlin put in two more appearances this month and both male and female Kestrels were reported making visits to their nest box and the roof of the Barn Owls' box on the Scrubland. There was also a good deal of Barn Owl activity, one bird visiting the box on occasions.

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.
Common	A species which is present regularly or in large numbers but not necessarily all year.
Uncommon	Occurs most years but only on a few days or in low numbers
Scarce	Has occurred more than 10 times but not on an annual basis.
Rare	Has occurred fewer than 10 times.
Passage	Seen when moving between winter and breeding areas elsewhere.
Migrant	Generally only present for a short time, usually on passage.
Visitor	Usually present for more than a day at any time.
Casual Breeder	Has bred irregularly on the Reserve and is likely to do so again.
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

et al 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

Two pairs nest on the Reserve most years but their lives have rarely been straightforward. This year was perhaps one of the better ones. Last year's two adults with their five juveniles were still on the Lagoon at the start of the year. By the middle of April adults were on nests on both the Wet Grassland and Duck Marsh and on 15th May seven new cygnets were reported at the latter site (SB). Last year's juveniles started to move off site from this point. On 29th May the Wet Grassland pair also showed off a family of seven cygnets for the first time (EC). One pair vacated the wetlands in the latter part of August and on 26th August two adults were seen with six juveniles on the river from the River Path (PM/BM). One pair was still present on the Reserve at the end of the year but only one juvenile was seen from the end of November, the others hopefully having left safely.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* Passage Visitor

The few sightings that are reported are usually of birds flying over the Reserve. In 2021 there were four such records but there have been none since.

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus* Passage Visitor

Skeins of around 60 and 70 birds were recorded flying over the Reserve on 26th and 27th February (LB/JHa). Between 19th April and 15th May one or two were picked out among other geese on the farmland on a number of occasions and a single bird was seen on the Lagoon on two dates during the same period. There were several second hand reports of large skeins passing over the Reserve in the last three months of the year but only two dates were given - c125 on 30th December (BE) and 80+ on 31st December (LB).

Greylag Goose *Anser anser* Resident Breeder/ Winter Visitor

Three figure counts have been the norm each January since 2017 but this year the highest was just 85 on the farmland on 9th January (SB). There were no other counts of more than 52 birds for the remainder of January and February. A few pairs usually stay to nest and the first two goslings appeared on the Duck Marsh on 26th April (LB *et al*). Only one other family appeared - five goslings on the Lagoon on 21st June (EC). Numbers of birds on the farmland reached 140 on 15th October (WeBS) but dropped back sharply after that to no more than 20 in November and December due to shooting taking place on the neighbouring farmland. Monthly maxima are shown below (adults only).

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
85	35	29	30	28	3	18	4	2	140	20	20

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

Counts in the last three years have been the highest ever recorded. January 2022's record count of 240 was dwarfed by an estimated 400 on the farmland and river on 23rd January this year (SB). Numbers remained very high with 272 on the Lagoon on 10th February (SB) and at least 150 still by the end of that month. As always a few pairs stayed to nest, the first seven goslings being seen on the Lagoon on 6th May (EC). Numbers typically started to build in October reaching a record 240 for that month on 23rd (SB). They dropped back sharply in November due to shooting on the neighbouring farmland. Monthly maxima are shown below (adults only).

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
c400	272	124	67	48	35	10	64	58	240	54	c200

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

There have been no sightings in the last 13 years. A single bird seen on the farmland during an early morning WeBS visit on 18th April 2010 was the first record since 26th April 2003 and only the second for the Reserve.

Dark-bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* Rare Visitor

There has been just one record to date. A single bird was found on the farmland with other geese on 13th November 2016.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca* Rare Visitor

Feral populations of this introduced species occur in parts of Britain and on the Continent. A single bird picked out among the Greylag Geese on the farmland on 4th March 2018 was the first and only record to date.

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* Scarce Visitor

Birds were recorded on five dates this year, all between 10th May and 2nd June. On the first date a pair was seen on both the Wet Grassland and Duck Marsh (EC/LB). On 14th May a pair was reported on the Duck Marsh again (EC) and on the Wet Grassland the next day (SB). There were then two reports of a single bird on the Duck Marsh on 28th May (EC) and 2nd June (DW). There were just two records last year with seven birds on 27th April and five on 20th November.

Mandarin *Aix galericulata* **Scarce Visitor**

There were sightings of this introduced species on 13 dates in 2021. Prior to this it had been recorded on little more than a handful of occasions. There were sightings on four dates in 2022 and this year on four dates again. On 19th February one was recorded flying upriver during a WeBS visit. A month later on 19th March a male was reported on the Lagoon (EC) and on 25th March on the Duck Marsh (EC). There were no further sightings until 4th November when seven birds were on the Lagoon (EC), beating 2021's best count of six.

Wigeon *Anas penelope* **Winter Visitor**

Birds have been hard to find in the early part of recent years and this year there were no sightings reported during this period. A male and female on the Lagoon on 13th September were the first of the year (BE/EC). One or two birds were seen subsequently and on 11th October three males were on the Lagoon (EC). Four were present on 18th October (EC) but, surprisingly, there were no sightings reported after this date. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	4	-	-

Gadwall *Anas strepera* **Resident Breeder**

This is the most numerous duck on the Reserve but numbers this year were lower than last year in all months except April. The highest count of the year came in January with 63 birds, all on the Lagoon, on 30th (SB). Numbers dropped back considerably after this. Birds were recorded on all four main wetland areas but, unusually, the only reports of families of young were on the Duck Marsh, the first two families both consisting of seven ducklings recorded here during a WeBS count on 18th June. Numbers rose for a time in September, the best count of 62 that month coming during another WeBS count on 17th, 52 of these on the Duck Marsh.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
63	39	34	34	17	20	46	35	62	45	30	24

Pintail *Anas acuta* **Rare Visitor**

First recorded in 2011, there were sightings in 2012 and each of the three years from 2016 to 2018. In 2020 a male in eclipse plumage was present from 3rd October until 18th October and in 2021 a male in eclipse plumage

was again recorded, this time just on 13th October. Sadly, there were no sightings reported this year or last year.

Teal *Anas crecca* Winter/Passage Visitor

It was a good year for this species on the Reserve. The year started well, a count of 49 on 2nd January (SB) being the highest ever for that month. In February, March and April numbers were also the highest for several years. A report of 52 on 13th March (SB), 45 of these on the Wet Grassland, proved to be the highest count of the year. As birds started to return in the autumn a report of 42 on the Duck Marsh on 20th September (BE) was the highest for that month since 2006 and 40 on 25th October (BE) the highest for that month since 2011. As in most years the Wet Grassland and Duck Marsh were the most productive sites. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
49	39	52	20	2	-	1	4	42	40	23	39

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* Resident Breeder

A count of 48 birds on 8th January included 42 on the Wet Grassland (EC) and was a good start to the year. However, numbers thereafter were much lower with birds probably spending more of their time on the nearby canal. The first family of seven ducklings was seen on the Duck Marsh on 5th May and on 24th May eight ducklings were recorded on the Wet Grassland (EC). There were further reports of families on all four main wetland areas over the following weeks, the Duck Marsh appearing to have been the most popular site. The Duck Marsh in fact continued to provide the majority of records up to the end of September, 48 birds here on 10th September (EC) being the highest count throughout the autumn. Counts in December were very low, probably due to the amount of waterlogged land in the valley attracting birds elsewhere. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
48	22	23	10	11	32	61	35	48	32	45	19

Garganey *Anas querquedula* Scarce (Summer) Visitor

A male bird was present for six days from 2nd June, being first seen on the Duck Marsh (DW). The bird alternated between the Lagoon and Duck Marsh and was last seen at the latter site on 7th June (EC). Prior to this there had been no records since 2018 when a male bird spent 11 days on the wetlands from 4th to 14th April.

Shoveler *Anas clypeata* Winter/Passage Visitor

Almost all sightings in the first half of the year were on the Wet Grassland and Duck Marsh. No more than four birds were present in January and February but a report of nine (6Γ+3E) on the Wet Grassland on 19th March (EC) proved to be the highest ever for that month. No more than two were recorded from the beginning of April until 18th October when there were several reports of between four and six birds on the Lagoon (BE *et al*). However, no more than three birds were reported in the last two months of the year. Monthly maxima are shown below.

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

Pochard *Aythya ferina* Winter/Passage Visitor

2022 was the worst year ever for this species on the Reserve with a single male on just two dates. This year a single male was seen on the Lagoon on two dates in January and we had to wait until 1st November for the only other record but at least it was a rare double figure count - 10 birds on the Lagoon (DW/EC). Unfortunately, the birds only stayed a day. The last double figure count was as far back as February 2019 when 11 birds were recorded.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	-

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* Former Breeder/ Winter Visitor

Last year on 26th December around 50 birds were seen taking off from the freshly flooded Wet Grassland - an exceptional count here these days. Apart from this counts were very similar to last year and very disappointing. With more than half the Lagoon frozen over a report of 20 here during a WeBS visit on 22nd January proved to be the best of the year, the next highest being just 10 birds on 12th March during another WeBS visit. No more than five were present during the spring and there was no evidence of successful nesting for the eighth year running. Birds were completely absent from 6th November to 23rd December with just two males on the Lagoon in the last week of the year. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
20	9	10	5	4	4	3	-	2	2	1	2

Scaup *Aythya marila* Rare Visitor

There have been no sightings in the last four years. In 2019 an immature bird arrived on the Lagoon on 10th November and was seen most days until 15th December. Prior to that there had been no sightings since 9th March 2014.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra* Rare Visitor

Large overland movements of this sea duck occur at times and this is when a bird is most likely to drop in at the Reserve. However, there has only been one record so far and that was on the Lagoon on 21st March 2016 - a female or immature bird.

Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* Winter Visitor

Due to a recent severe decline in the winter population this species is now on the Red List. Last year was disappointing but this year was even worse. Up to three birds were present on the Lagoon throughout January but in February just a single male was seen on the river on three dates, the last on 19th during a WeBS count. There were no further sightings until 6th December when two males were recorded on the Lagoon on a small patch of ice-free water (PM/BM). The birds stayed for just a week and from 24th December just a single male was on the Lagoon until the end of the year. Monthly maxima are shown below.

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

Goosander *Mergus merganser* Resident Breeder/ Winter Visitor

Numbers are at their highest in the winter months when birds gather on the Lagoon towards dusk. Counts in January and February this year were very low which may have been due more to a lack of observers at that time of day rather than a lack of birds. In January 2021 and 2022 January counts were 20 and 21 respectively but in the same month this year most reports were of birds on the river with just two males and two females recorded on several dates. Islands on the Duck Marsh had proved popular in April in the previous two years and it was similar again this year with up to nine birds seen in March and eight in April (DW). On 4th May a female was seen on the river with two chicks (PM/BM) and on 28th June a female was reported there with seven juveniles (MG/PG). The large majority of sightings from this point were on the river but with no more than four birds reported. The maximum daily count for each month is shown below.

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

Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa* Rare Visitor

There have been no sightings of this introduced species since 24th April 2012. However, its distinctive call was reported in the area of the Manager’s Garden and Poplar Field on three dates last year - 29th August, 11th September and 14th September.

Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix* Casual Breeder

Small releases of birds were made in July and October 2020 and there were two further small releases last year. The birds obviously settled in well and there were numerous sightings this year. On 27th January five were seen on the compost heap by the path to the Manager’s Garden (DW) and there were further sightings here, on the farmland and on Mike Fisk Meadow over the following weeks. There were no reports in the period from August to October but from 5th November a bird was seen most days under the feeders in the Bee Garden up to the end of the year. On 29th November four were also seen on the farmland (EC).

Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* Resident Breeder

Seen daily throughout the year this is a common bird on the Reserve. As always the Bee Garden and Manager’s Garden were guaranteed to produce sightings with birds visiting for seed spilled under the feeders. There was plenty of evidence of successful nesting, a female with seven chicks in the Bee Garden on 28th June (CF) being the first family party reported this year. There were daily sightings of smaller family parties from this point. Tim’s Field proved popular in the autumn and winter months, birds being attracted by the abundant seed crop, but the best counts were in the Manager’s Garden and Bee Garden with up to 10 birds seen at the former site and nine at the latter.

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* Resident

Numbers are usually at their highest in August and September and this year was no exception. Birds regularly assemble in trees on the bottom island on the Lagoon and counts there this year were considerably higher than last year. As many as 20 were counted here late in the day on 21st and 29th August (PM/BM). The biggest count of the year was made during a WeBS visit on 20th August with 19 out of a total of 27 recorded in the trees. Birds regularly fish on the Lagoon and in the river and the pylon by the Fish Pass is another good place to find them. Numbers typically started to fall away in October and no more than two birds were reported in December. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
6	12	10	5	10	11	16	27	17	9	4	2

Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* **Rare Visitor**

There have been no records in the last seven years. A bird spent several weeks in the Reedbed and on the Duck Marsh from 16th January 2016. It was last seen on 26th April that year.

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* **Rare Visitor**

This was a new bird for the Reserve this year. On 18th August volunteers working on habitat management spotted what turned out to be a first summer bird on the Duck Marsh (DW/JSK *et al*). The following evening it was seen again and photographed in the same area before the start of a bat night walk for volunteers (PM/BM/PU). The next evening it was photographed flying over the Duck Marsh towards the Lagoon (KMCL). It was again seen flying over the wetlands on the evening of 21st August. An ongoing drought in south west Europe caused an influx of these and other wetland birds into Britain this year and at least 76 Night Herons were recorded.

Great White Egret (*Ardea alba*) **Scarce Visitor**

First recorded as a “fly over” on 9th December 2018, this was the best year so far for sightings of this species. On 24th April a bird was seen flying over the Wet Grassland (PM/BM). There were no further sightings until 3rd July when two were found on the Duck Marsh (SB) and from that point there were sightings most days up to 24th July, though only one bird was seen from 15th. The large majority of sightings were on the Duck Marsh. On 18th October a bird was seen from the Lagoon Hide (BE) and on 29th October one was recorded flying over the entry road (MG/PG). On 13th November one was reported flying over Tim’s Field towards the river (JHar), this proving to be the last sighting of the year.

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

This species can now be seen on the Reserve in every month of the year, the large majority of sightings being on the Duck Marsh. Prior to this year the highest number seen was just seven birds but this year there were a number of double figure counts reported in the period from July to October. On 19th July 12 were recorded in trees on the Lagoon (DW). On 27th and 28th September 13 were on the Duck Marsh (EC/PM/BM) and one day later on 29th 19 were seen there early in the day (DW). In October 15 were on the Duck Marsh on 4th and 13 on 5th (DW). Numbers started to fall away from the middle of October. In November a single bird was seen on just two dates and in December one bird was recorded flying over during a WeBS visit on 17th.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* Resident

Gatherings of birds can be seen on the farmland some days and the second best count of the year -13 - included eight here on 30th January with five more on the Lagoon (SB). The highest count of the year, however, came on 24th July – a total of 14 birds including seven on the farmland and five on the Duck Marsh (SB). Since its redevelopment the Duck Marsh has been the most popular area for this species and as many as seven or eight birds were recorded here on several dates in the summer and autumn months. A WeBS count of 12 birds on 17th December included nine on the Duck Marsh. The highest counts each month are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
13	7	3	3	1	7	14	10	8	8	8	12

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* Rare Visitor

There were no reported sightings this year. This was a new bird for the Reserve last year, one being watched feeding on the river upstream of the bridge on 7th November. The species breeds at St.Aidan's RSPB Reserve where it can be found for much of the year.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* Resident Breeder

Birds were recorded on all the main wetland areas but the Lagoon again produced the large majority of sightings. Birds were seen daily here throughout the year. No more than six were reported in January but, like last year, it was nevertheless the joint highest ever count for that month. Deeper stretches of the river can also be productive. Three were seen here during a WeBS count on 19th February with a further seven on the Lagoon making this the highest ever February count. The first chick was seen on the Duck Marsh on 18th June during another WeBS count but there were then no further reports of young until 15th July when four were seen on the Lagoon (BE). Numbers of birds recorded in the second half of the year were higher than most years and were the highest ever for the months of July and October. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
6	10	8	3	4	5	16	19	19	16	10	7

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* Summer Visitor/ Breeder

As is usually the case the first bird arrived on the Lagoon in February, this time on 27th and just a week later than last year. A second bird was

reported on 12th March but was not seen after this date. One bird continued to be seen but it wasn't until 17th April that two were reported displaying (SB). Sadly, neither bird was seen after 19th April. This species hasn't done well here in recent years. In 2021 the early disappearance of three juveniles and a later chick was a mystery and in 2022 there were no reports of young.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus* **Common Visitor**

Seen in all months, most sightings involved no more than two birds flying over the Reserve or woodland across the river. Grass cutting on the farmland in May is always guaranteed to attract a few birds looking for an easy meal. Four were reported over the field on 24th May (EC), this the highest count of the year.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* **Rare Visitor**

There have been no sightings reported since 21st August 2021 when one was seen flying along the river. Prior to this there had only been three records, all in the period from 4th August to 21st September 2018 and all involving single birds flying over.

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* **Casual Breeder**

Recorded in every month of the year this remains a common bird on the Reserve. A male and female were reported displaying over Tim's Field on 22nd February (JHar) and while there was again no evidence of nesting taking place on the Reserve it almost certainly occurred close by in woodland across the river. There was the usual evidence of successful kills around the Reserve in the form of piles of feathers and on 2nd September a bird was observed pursuing a Grey Wagtail along the River Path (AL).

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* **Common Visitor and Casual Breeder**

It was an excellent year for this species with sightings in every month of the year on a total number of 110 days and with the highest number of birds ever recorded in the air at one time - eight. There were sightings from 2nd January but on 6th February eight were counted soaring and calling high over the Wet Grassland, river and far woodland (PH/JHar). On 27th February six were seen in the air at once (JHar). There was again a lot of activity in woodland across the river where successful nesting probably occurred in each of the previous four years. On 14th August a juvenile was seen on a pylon behind the Reedbed while other birds called in the woodland (SB). On 20th August six birds were recorded high over John Ackroyd Meadow and the Scrubland during a WeBS visit and four

were seen over the same area the next day (SB). There were several reports of two adults and a juvenile over the Reserve in August.

Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus* **Rare Visitor**

There has been just one record of this species. On 13th June 2012 one was photographed high over the Dragonfly Ponds.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* **Rare Visitor**

There have been no sightings in the last two years. An immature bird photographed high over the Reserve on 5th May 2021 was a new bird for the Reserve.

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

Birds have occasionally been recorded flying over or close to the Reserve but there have been no sightings reported in the last two years.

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

Birds were reported on 40 dates this year. Typically, the large majority were in the autumn and winter months. Being a very secretive species several of the reports were of birds heard rather than seen. Most records involved single birds but two were reported chasing each other at the back of the Lagoon on 15th March (BE). There were no records after 22nd March until 4th July when a possible juvenile was seen very close to the Lagoon Hide (DS/GC). There were then no further reports until 13th September when two were seen on the Wet Grassland (EC/SB). A juvenile was seen in the same area on the same date (BE). The Duck Marsh produced the majority of records from this point with the wet ditch at the side of the Willow Path also productive in December.

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana* **Rare Visitor**

There have been no sightings in the last five years. In 2018 a bird was seen on the Wet Grassland on 25th August and was recorded most days in the same area up to 2nd September. Prior to this in 2005 one spent five days on the Wet Grassland from 1st October. Thanks to its small size, secretive nature and love of thick vegetation this species can very easily be missed.

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* **Resident Breeder**

This common bird can be found on all four main wetland areas, the Dragonfly Ponds and farmland edge by the river though the large majority of sightings from July onwards this year were on the Duck Marsh. The first family of three young were seen on the Lagoon on 15th May (SB) and on 21st May an adult was seen with three chicks at the Dragonfly Ponds

during a WeBS visit. There were subsequent reports of young on the Duck Marsh. The best counts of the year were reported in the period August to October and probably included some juveniles. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
12	12	8	6	6	6	9	20	20	20	12	9

Coot *Fulica atra* Resident Breeder and Winter Visitor

Just like last year the highest counts came in February and March but they were hardly memorable - 19 and 21 respectively (SB/EC), the majority of birds in each case on the Lagoon. There was some nesting success, three chicks being reported on the Duck Marsh during a WeBS visit on 21st May but there were no reports of young on the other wetland areas. Numbers fell away sharply in the second half of the year with counts in September and October the second lowest ever for those months (2020 being the lowest) with three and two birds respectively. Birds were totally absent in November and there was just one reported sighting in December - three birds on the Duck Marsh on 13th. Quite why birds are vacating the site and where they go is a bit of a mystery. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
12	19	21	15	15	10	6	4	3	2	-	3

Common Crane *Grus grus* Rare Visitor

There have been no sightings in the last five years. This was a new bird for the Reserve in 2018 when two were seen standing on the farmland on 13th April that year. Just over a week later one was seen circling very high over the Reserve.

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* Summer Visitor/ Breeder

The first bird arrived on the wetlands on 29th January (EC/SBe), exactly the same date as last year. It was joined on the Duck Marsh by a second bird on 3rd February and three were seen there on 8th February (DW). Like last year, with birds very mobile and moving between Lagoon, Duck Marsh and farmland, it was difficult to be sure how many were on site - certainly four and possibly as many as six. One pair settled on the Duck Marsh and another pair on the middle island on the Lagoon. The first chick was reported at the latter site on 30th April with two there on 4th May. There were no further reports of young after this and two adults were last seen on 11th July - on the Duck Marsh. There was just one more sighting - a single bird flying over the entry road to the farmland on 2nd August (EC).

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

This was a new bird for the Reserve in 2018 when two spent a day on the Duck Marsh on 27th June. There was just one other brief sighting of one on the far side of the Lagoon on 2nd July that year. There have been no sightings reported in the last five years.

Grey Plover *Pluvalis squatarola* **Rare Visitor**

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

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

During the summer this is a bird of the uplands. In winter it can form large flocks anywhere in lowland Britain but it has always been a scarce visitor here on the Reserve. There were no records this year or last year and just two in 2021.

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* **Winter Visitor and Casual Breeder**

Fifteen birds were counted on the farmland on 18th January (LB) and six were on the Duck Marsh just four days later (EC). The following day 43 on the farmland (LB) proved to be the highest count for the remainder of the winter and spring. A few birds were on the wetlands daily from the middle of February but there was only one second hand report of successful nesting - two chicks on Tim's Field towards the end of June, a site where birds have nested in the past. The Duck Marsh was the most popular site from July to the middle of October with up to 10 birds seen there. From that point most sightings were on the farmland with the highest counts coming in December. A flock of 81 was photographed there on 6th (PH) but an even larger flock photographed on 20th December was found to contain 248 birds (PH). The largest flock on the wetlands during this period totalled 53 on the Wet Grassland on 24th December (PM/BM). Maximum counts each month are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
43	12	13	11	11	12	8	10	10	22	21	248

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

There had been a considerable increase in the number of sightings in the last two years thanks to the newly developed Duck Marsh. Another good year had been hoped for this year but it was not to be, birds being recorded on just five dates - all on the Duck Marsh. The first bird was seen

here on 30th May (BM) but there were then no further sightings until 14th June when two were reported (MG/PG *et al*). Two birds were still present the next day. On 1st July there was a further sighting of a single bird (BE) and on 3rd July two were reported (SB), these the last of the year.

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* **Rare Visitor**

With no records since 2007 it would be fair to say that a bird seen on the Duck Marsh on 13th September (PG/BE) was unexpected. The bird, which was a juvenile, flew in at 4.40pm but was chased off by a Lapwing.

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

There have been no records since 2012.

Curlew *Numenius arquata* **Passage Visitor**

This species is now on the Red List as a result of a steep decline in the UK population in the last 25 years or so. The very few records that are received are of birds flying over the Reserve and usually in the period from February to April. There were just two such records last year and this year only one - a bird calling as it flew over on 17th April (SB).

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

There were no sightings reported this year. In 2021 the newly developed Duck Marsh attracted four birds on 10th July and last year 15 dropped in on 31st July but had moved on by the next day.

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

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

Knot *Calidris canutus* **Rare Visitor**

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

Dunlin *Calidris alpina* **Scarce Visitor**

There have been no records in the last two years. A single bird on the Duck Marsh on 12th July 2021 was the first since 1st February 2012.

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

The number of reported sightings has been going down in recent years and while the “new” Duck Marsh did produce a number of records in 2021 there were just five reported sightings last year, all of single birds. There was little improvement this year with sightings on just seven dates. There was a second hand report of one at the edge of the Lagoon on 23rd March

but we then had to wait until 4th June for the next - a single bird on the Duck Marsh (EC). Single birds were recorded here again on 28th June (DW/EC) and on the Lagoon on the same date (BE). There was a further sighting on the Duck Marsh on 2nd July (EC). On 26th August one was seen on the river (GP). The last two records of the year were on the Duck Marsh with two there on 15th October and one on 18th October (EC).

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* **Passage Visitor**

2021 was an excellent year for this species with sightings reported from 24th March through to 27th December. With access to the Reserve restricted last year there would inevitably be fewer records but there were just two - on 24th July and 21st August. This year there was just one sighting reported in the first seven months - a single bird on the Wet Grassland on 5th February (JH). We had to wait until 27th August for the next record - two birds photographed on the Duck Marsh. From this point there were regular sightings of one or two birds here with three on 2nd September (BE) and three again on 11th October (EC). There were sightings on the Duck Marsh most days throughout much of October, the last sighting of a single bird here on 25th October (DW).

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* **Rare Visitor**

There have been no sightings since 2006 when a single bird was seen on the Duck Marsh. This was the first and only record for the Reserve.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* **Scarce Passage Visitor**

There were no sightings this year and just two in the previous four years - a bird seen on the Duck Marsh on 21st and 22nd August in 2021.

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

A single bird flying over the Lagoon and Duck Marsh on 11th September last year was the first record since 17th March 2019. There was again just one record this year - a single bird on the Duck Marsh with Lapwings on 24th July.

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

A single bird was seen on just five dates, all in the period from 9th to 26th December and all on the Wet Grassland (BE *et al*). These were the first records since 30th October 2021.

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

Although the majority of the 35 reported sightings were on the Wet Grassland the first of the year was a single bird on Tim's Field on 18th January (JHar). No more than two birds were recorded in the first half of

the year and there was no improvement in the second half until 25th November when four were seen on the Wet Grassland (AL/DS). Birds were reported most days from this point with four again on 26th (EC) and 30th (BE). Maximum monthly counts are shown below.

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

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

The few records that are received tend to be mainly of birds accidentally flushed in the Willow Coppice by volunteers doing habitat management work there. Like last year there was just one record reported this year. However, this was a bird seen on Poplar Carr on 15th February (AL).

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* **Summer Visitor**

There are very few sightings here these days and it is hard to believe that birds nested on rafts on the Lagoon as recently as 2017. Nevertheless, the species has been recorded every year, though there was just one sighting last year and two this year. On 30th April two were seen on the Lagoon (PA) and on 15th May one flew over the Reserve calling (SB).

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* **Rare Visitor**

First recorded here in 2011, there have been no records since 24th May 2015.

Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* **Rare Passage Visitor**

This was a new and unexpected record for the Reserve this year. An adult bird was seen over the Lagoon on 26th February (EC) and on the Duck Marsh on 12th March (JWC).

Black-headed Gull

Chroicocephalus ridibundus **Common Visitor/Casual Breeder**

Numbers are at their highest in the winter months with birds gathering on the farmland, Lagoon and Duck Marsh. This species has been badly affected by Avian Flu in many places but there was no evidence of this among the birds here this year. A count of 240 on 23rd January included 155 on the farmland (SB) and proved to be the highest number reported in the first three months of the year. The Duck Marsh proved to be the most popular wetland area with several counts of between 150 and 200 birds here in February and March. Numbers typically dropped shortly after this as birds returned to their breeding areas and it was not until September that they started to rise again. The flooded farmland proved

popular in October with at least 300 gathered here on 22nd and 25th (BE). Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
240	194	c200	22	10	14	25	25	97	300+	202	100

Little Gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus* **Rare Visitor**

There have been no records in the last five years. This was a new species for the Reserve in 2018 when an adult bird paid a brief visit to the Lagoon on 7th April that year.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* **Rare Visitor**

There was one record this year - a single bird picked out among other gulls on the flooded farmland on 22nd October (ALet a). First recorded on 7th October 2015, there were no further sightings until 2021 when a single bird was reported on four dates. Last year there was one sighting on 27th November.

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

Numbers in the first three months of the year were disappointing, the highest count in this period being just 30 birds on the Lagoon during a WeBS visit on 22nd January. Very few stay into April, most birds returning to their breeding grounds. Numbers typically start to increase again from July. Three figure counts have been made in July as recently as 2019 but no more than one bird was reported on five dates this year. There were in fact no double figure counts reported until October when flooding on the farmland brought more birds in. A total of 53 assembled here on 23rd October (SB) proved to be the highest of the year. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
30	22	12	-	-	-	1	4	8	53	35	21

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

The pattern of sightings was very similar to last year with none in January, the first not until 26th February and just one in the last two months of the year. Numbers last year were generally lower than in 2021 and it was the same again this year with a best count of just 11 birds flying over the Lagoon on 1st April (LB). The Duck Marsh again produced most sightings but of no more than three birds.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* **Common Visitor**

Surprisingly, a count of nine birds on 2nd January (SB) proved to be the highest of the year. Last year numbers on the farmland throughout January totalled between 40 and 50 birds. This may have been due to shooting on the farmland during this period. A few birds could be seen on the Lagoon or Duck Marsh some days but no observers reported more than five.

Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans* **Rare Visitor**

This was a new species for the Reserve in 2019 when a near adult was found on the flooded farmland on 24th February that year. In 2020 there were sightings of a single bird on three dates between 4th January and 1st March and in 2021 just one sighting on the farmland on 28th February. There have been no sightings reported since this date.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis* **Scarce Visitor**

This was a new species for the Reserve in 2021 with numerous sightings of a single bird. There were just three records in 2022 and five this year. On 27th February one was on the Duck Marsh (PM/BM) and on 19th March one was again recorded in the same area (MG/PG). On 12th April and 24th May one was reported on the Lagoon (EC) and on 25th August on the Duck Marsh again (PM/BM).

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

Sightings are few and far between most years and often involve bird flying over the Reserve. There was just one record this year - two birds flying over the Lagoon Hide in a northerly direction on 5th August (BE).

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides* **Rare Visitor**

There have been no reported sightings in the last two years. On 12th and 13th March 2021 a juvenile bird was seen further up the valley at Calverley bridge and on three dates between 4th and 11th December 2021 a 2nd winter bird was recorded on the farmland. Prior to this there had been just one record on 17th January 2009.

Feral Pigeon *Columba livia domestica* **Common Visitor?**

Almost certainly under recorded, there were just three sightings reported this year. Two of these involved small flocks flying over, the largest of these comprising 20 birds over the farmland during a WeBS visit on 19th November.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas* **Resident (probable) Breeder**

As always the majority of records came from the Manager's Garden with up to 10 recorded here in the early part of the year. Counts of more than 100 birds could be made on the farmland in years gone by but not these days. However, a report of 73 here on 18th November was by far the highest of the year and a particularly good count these days.

Wood Pigeon

Columba palumbus **Resident Breeder and Winter Visitor**

Large flocks have been recorded on Tim's Field in the winter months most years. A flock photographed over the field in January last year was found to contain around 300 birds. Counts reported this year were considerably lower, the best being just 73 during a WeBS visit on 19th February.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* **Uncommon Visitor**

It was another very disappointing year for this species with just a single bird seen on 21st June (BE). There were no sightings reported last year and a total of just five in the three year period prior to that.

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

There were two sightings reported this year, both almost certainly of the same bird on 8th and 9th July. On 8th the bird was seen on the Wet Grassland and the following day on the coppice fence during a WeBS visit. There were no records last year but 2021 proved to be the best year ever here with sightings reported on six dates, one of these the latest ever on 11th August.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba* **Resident Breeder**

The "new" nest box on the Scrubland had been successful in both 2021 and 2022 and thanks to the camera installed in it a bird could be seen roosting there from the beginning of the year. Sadly, in April a bird was found dead near the thatched gazebo but just two days later on 15th April two could be seen in the nest box. Seven eggs were laid but only three chicks were seen subsequently. However, all three fledged successfully. One adult continued to roost in the box to the end of the year and there were a few sightings of a bird hunting over the Reserve. A total of 11 young have now fledged from this box in its first three years.

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

The Manager's Garden has been a popular place for this species for many years and the nest box there had been used successfully in the past, most recently in 2019. Since then there have been no reports of young though birds have continued to be seen in the area. On 19th March this year a

Grey Squirrel peering out of box with an owl close by was not a good sign but on 26th March a bird was seen going into the box, two having been seen in the vicinity the previous day. On 1st April a bird was photographed looking out of the box (PH) but despite frequent sightings throughout much of the year there was no real evidence of successful nesting again. Most sightings involved just one bird but two were seen on 25th November ((EC/PS). As there were now several holes in the box the decision was taken to replace it with a new one in December. Just a few days later on 20th December a bird was photographed peering out of its new home (PH). From then to the end of the year there daily sightings with two birds on 30th and 31st (EC *et al*).

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco* **Uncommon Visitor**

Sightings are few and far between and five in 2021 ranked as a good year. There were two this year and both were daylight sightings. On 23rd January one was seen on the River Path and on 5th May one was spotted near the river bridge (DW). Bat Night walks in the summer months have sometimes produced records in the past, if only of a bird calling in far woodland. However, the four such walks this year failed to produce.

Swift *Apus apus* **Summer Visitor**

Seven birds over the farmland on 30th April (AL) were the first of the year but there were no double figure counts until the latter part of July, 20 over the Reserve on 29th (BE) and the same number over woodland across the river on 31st (PM/BM) being the highest of the year. A single bird over Tim's Field on 23rd August (EC) was the last of another disappointing year and nine days later than last year.

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* **Resident Breeder**

Recorded in all months, the Lagoon, Duck Marsh and river were the three most productive sites. Despite the activity on the Duck Marsh there was again no evidence of birds using the nesting bank there. On 12th and 15th March a male and female were seen by the Sand Martin nesting bank on the Lagoon (BE) but again there was no evidence of birds trying to use the site. Two were seen together on a number of occasions but there were also reports of three birds. On 1st May three were reported on the river from the River Path (DW); on 30th June three were seen on the Duck Marsh (DW); on 8th August three were watched from the river bridge chasing downstream (KMCL) and on 1st November three were again seen on the Duck Marsh (DW). Very high river levels in November and December resulted in a spate of sightings on the Lagoon. A breakdown of sightings is shown below.

Lagoon	Duck Marsh	Reedbed	Wet Grassland	River	Other
49	33	5	1	39	8

Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis* **Uncommon Visitor**

This is a very occasional visitor to the Reserve. There were no sightings reported this year or last year and just five in the previous four years.

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

The Willow Path and Manager's Garden are usually the most productive sites for seeing this species but, unusually, there were only two reports from the Willow Path this year. However, the Manager's Garden produced plenty of sightings, a male there on 8th January being the first of the year (LB). Sightings in the Bee Garden are infrequent but a male was seen there on 22nd July (EC). Successful nesting obviously took place close by as a juvenile was seen in the Manager's Garden on 5th and 6th August and in the Bee Garden on 16th August (EC). The Bee Garden produced another record on 6th September, two birds being seen there (DW). On 30th September a male, female and juvenile were seen in the Manager's Garden and on 29th November three males in riverside trees was a nice record (BE).

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* **Resident Breeder**

The new nest box proved very successful in its first year in 2022, five young fledging successfully. This year a bird was seen at the box as early as 7th January (DW) and both birds were first seen together there on 4th March (PH). With a camera in the box it was possible to follow the birds progress and the first egg was laid on 14th April. By 24th April five had been laid. All five hatched and all young subsequently fledged successfully. The male bird continued to make visits to the box to the end of the year, the female being recorded less often. However, both were seen at the box on 6th December (EC). There were also numerous sightings of a bird perched on the Barn Owls' box on the Scrubland, no doubt a good vantage point for surveying this popular hunting area.

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

Breeding in the uplands in the summer months birds come down to lower levels in the winter months where hunting is easier. There were four reported sightings this year compared to just one in 2022. On 13th November one was seen flying low over the entry road (DS/PS) and on 25th November one was reported flying over Tim's Field (AL/DS). In

December one was seen over Mike Fisk Meadow on 6th (EC/DW) and in the same area again on 24th (PM/BM).

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

Arriving from Africa in April this raptor hunts both small birds and dragonflies, often low over the water. A bird gave excellent views as it flew low over the Lagoon towards and over the hide on 1st July (BE). Unfortunately, it proved to be the only sighting of the year and the first since 2021 when there were sightings on six dates between 12th May and 8th August.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* **Uncommon Visitor**

After a record year in 2021 with sightings reported on 51 dates, 2022 was disappointing with birds seen on just 18 dates. However, this year was more disappointing with sightings reported on just 13 dates - all of these of a bird on the pylon on the farmland behind the Manager's Garden. April and May proved to be the most productive months with a bird seen on three dates in each.

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

This species was accepted onto the British list in 1983. While the population is centred on south east England birds are being seen locally and it was first recorded on the Reserve as far back as 2001. There were further sightings in 2015 and one in both 2019 and 2021. This year one was seen flying high over the Wet Grassland on 23rd April during a WeBS visit.

Magpie *Pica pica* **Resident Breeder**

This is still a very common bird on the Reserve, often gathering in numbers when something attracts it - usually a raptor. Several pairs probably nested as they do most years. On 8th February 15 gathered in one tree on the farmland (EC) and there were similar examples throughout the year. There was just one report of successful nesting, two juveniles being seen with five adults on the Winter Walk on 25th June (EC).

Jay *Garrulus glandarius* **Resident Breeder**

This is a common bird seen in every month of the year. Noisy parties can occur at any time but more often in late summer or autumn. Seven birds were counted on the Scrubland on 10th April (EC). There were more sightings than usual in the Manager's Garden this year giving thought to the possibility of birds nesting close by. The only evidence of successful nesting was in fact at this site on 23rd July when an adult and one juvenile

were seen (EC). Activity always increases in late summer and autumn with birds arriving on their hazelnut and acorn forays. There were sightings most days to the end of the year of one to three birds with four on occasions.

Jackdaw *Coloeus monedula* **Resident Breeder**

In the winter months large numbers gather in trees along the river later in the afternoon to roost. More than 200 have been recorded in recent years including 2022 but there were no such reports this year. Farmland gatherings during the day were also disappointing with a best count of just 62 on 10th February (SB). A few pairs do nest on and close to the Reserve and seven juveniles were recorded in the Bee Garden on 16th July (EC). Numbers reported in the latter part of the year were also disappointing apart from one three figure count on the farmland of 123 birds on 27th December (BE). A brief highlight was a bird showing characteristics of Nordic Jackdaw photographed in the Manager's Garden on 10th and 20th December (PH).

Rook *Corvus frugilegus* **Uncommon Visitor**

The few records that are received are usually of birds flying over the Reserve and there were none last year. However, there were several reports of birds on the farmland this year in the period from 29th May to 11th June. Most sightings involved one or four birds but six there on 3rd June included two juveniles (LB). There was just one other sighting reported. On 13th September three were seen flying over the Reserve (GP).

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

Large gatherings occur at roost sites across the river later in the day in the winter months but no counts were made last year or this year. The highest numbers reported were on the farmland, again in the winter months, but numbers were on the low side with no more than 55 recorded. Though classed as a "Probable Breeder" there were no reports of nests or young this year.

Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix* **Rare Visitor**

This species is closely related to the Carrion Crow and is mainly found in North and West Scotland where it replaces that species. It is also a winter visitor from Scandinavia. There have been no sightings in the last five years. One seen briefly over the farmland on 10th November 2018 was the first and only record for the Reserve.

Raven *Corvus corax* **Rare Visitor**

Only recorded as an occasional “flyover” there had been no records in the previous three years. This year a bird was reported flying high over the Reserve and being pestered by a Lesser Black-backed Gull on 24th April (SB).

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

Sudden large arrivals or irruptions of Waxwings occur from time to time, the last being in 2016/17. The species was in fact last seen on the Reserve on 1st April 2017. This year has proved to be another irruption year with birds starting to arrive in Britain in October. On 19th November six were seen flying over the Scrubland in the direction of the Manager’s Garden (AL/JWC). Sadly, there were no further sightings.

Coal Tit *Parus ater* **Uncommon Visitor**

It was a fairly typical year with sightings reported on just five dates. All were in the Manager’s Garden, involved single birds and were in the period from 16th August to 13th September.

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

The majority of sightings of this common bird come from the Manager’s Garden and Bee Garden where it is a daily visitor to the seed feeders. It is also the main user of nest boxes on the Willow Path. There were numerous reports of juveniles, the first on 14th June - a single bird near the Lagoon (MG/PG). On 28th June five juveniles were recorded in the Willow Coppice (EC) and one observer reported “lots of young birds around” in early July. It can be very numerous in mixed feeding parties in the autumn and winter months but there were no reports of such parties this year or last and numbers at the feeders in that period were in the main lower than Great Tits which was surprising.

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

As with the Blue Tit the large majority of records come from the Manager’s Garden and Bee Garden where birds visit for seed. One was watched taking nesting material into a box on the side of the visitor centre as early as 31st March and on 4th May eight eggs could be seen there. The first five juveniles were seen in the Manager’s Garden on 21st June (EC) and from that point there were several reports of good numbers of young birds there. As usual, several nest boxes were used on the Willow Path. Unlike last year when numbers in the latter part of the year were on the low side numbers at the feeders in the same period this year were encouraging

Willow Tit *Poecile montanus* **Rare Visitor (former Breeder)**

This species has suffered the worst population decline of any UK resident bird in recent times. Numbers have fallen sharply since the 1970s and it has become locally extinct in many of its former haunts, which is the case here on the Reserve. There have been no sightings here since 13th November 2013.

Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris* **Rare Visitor**

Very similar in appearance to its cousin the Willow Tit, it is best identified by its call. However, it is unlikely to be seen here again as the UK population has declined significantly. Birds were last recorded on the Reserve in 2004.

Woodlark *Lullula arborea* **Rare Visitor**

This was a new species for the Reserve in 2019, one being recorded flying south over Tim's Field on 23rd March that year. There have been no records in the last four years.

Skylark *Alauda arvensis* **Uncommon Passage Visitor**

The few records that are received are nearly always of birds flying over the Reserve. There were six such reported sightings in 2021 but there have been none in the last two years.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* **Summer Visitor and Breeder**

Several observers reported the first bird of the year over the river bridge and the Lagoon on 12th March, eight days earlier than the first record in both 2021 and 2022. However, there was then only one further sighting reported that month - 15 birds at the nesting bank on the Lagoon on 24th (DW). A few more birds arrived in May but by 15th only 23 nest holes had been excavated. Last year the number of holes was well down on the previous three years and this year proved to be even worse with a final count of just 35 on 1st July.

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of nest holes</u>
2019	180
2020	142
2021	133
2022	67
2023	35

Numbers of birds reported throughout July and August were very low and usually just in single figures. Twenty five were counted on overhead wires by the visitor centre on 14th September (CF) and several were reported flying over with House Martins on 28th September (LJ), this the last sighting of the year and the latest ever (26th Sept in 2007 and 2020).

Swallow *Hirundo rustica* **Summer Visitor and Breeder**

First dates in three of the last four years have been the earliest ever. However, the first bird this year was not seen until 7th April - one over John Ackroyd Meadow (JHar).

Year	First Date	Year	First Date
2019	24 th March	2020	6 th April
2021	23 rd March	2022	25 th March

Two days later two were seen over Poplar Field (EC) but there were no reports of more than six throughout the rest of April, May, June and July. Numbers did start to increase in the second half of August and there were numerous double figure counts from that point. Twenty-five were recorded over the Reserve on 19th August; 43 were on overhead wires by the path to the Manager's Garden on 8th September (PM/BM) and 40 there the following day (EC). A report of around 60 over the Reserve on 13th September (BE) proved to be the highest count of the year. One pair nested at the regular site in the dumper truck shed and three juveniles were reported on the door of the shed on 26th August (EC). A single bird over Tim's Field on 1st October was the last of the year (MG/PG).

House Martin *Delichon urbica* **Summer Visitor**

A single bird picked out among a small group of birds flying near the Sand Martin nesting bank on 12th April (PMA) was the first of the year and the only sighting reported that month. On 10th May four were seen over the Lagoon (EC) but there were then just six reported sightings in the next three months and none involving more than six birds. There was a distinct improvement thereafter as birds started to move through in decent numbers, often gathering on overhead wires near the Visitor Centre. There was a report of more than 120 feeding over the buildings on 26th August (GP) and on the same date 70 counted on the roof of the workshop/toilet block and nearby wires was said to include many juveniles (PM/BM). Further sizeable gatherings were reported over the next five weeks including c130 over Tim's Field on 2nd September (BE) and 100+ over Poplar Field and the compound on 17th September during a WeBS visit. Around 30 birds over Tim's Field and Poplar Field on 1st October (MG/PG) were the last of the year.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti* **Uncommon Resident**

This species was first recorded on the Reserve on 17th December 2014 and has been reported every year since. It tends to be more often heard than seen. Last year there were no reports until 9th October but this was probably partly because of a lack of observers due to limited access. The first record this year came on 9th January when a bird was heard in reeds

behind the Education Pond with a possible second bird not far away (SB). There were frequent reports from this point with birds heard or seen briefly on all four main wetland areas with as many as three birds involved. There were only four records from the beginning of June to the middle of October but there were then regular reports from that point to the end of the year. On 15th October birds were heard on the Lagoon, Wet Grassland and Duck Marsh during a WEBS visit.

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

Often heard before they are spotted, small parties can be seen all round the Reserve throughout the year. In the winter months they will often join up with other tits to form large wandering bands. They are early nesters and on 8th March one was photographed carrying nesting material (CT). A party of 13 seen near the Lagoon and on the Willow Path on 14th June (MG/PG) almost certainly included juveniles and there were several further reports of groups of up to 12 birds from the middle of August to the end of the year. Four juveniles were recorded in the Bee Garden on 26th August (GP). However, the biggest party of the year, consisting of around 20 birds, was recorded by the main gates on 5th November (EC). On the same date 12 were seen by the same observer in the bridge car park.

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* **Rare Visitor**

Birds arrive on the east coast in the autumn, numbers peaking in October though a few are sometimes present into the winter and occasionally spring. This was a new bird for the Reserve in 2021, one being heard on the Willow Path on 16th October and both heard and seen briefly on the following day. There have been no records in the last two years.

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* **Summer Visitor and Breeder**

A few birds are now overwintering most years and the first sighting this year was on 2nd January - one seen in trees near the river bridge (SB). There were several further reports in the next two months with two heard by the bridge on 19th February during a WeBS visit. Several birds were singing round the Reserve by the third week of March and there were numerous reports from that point of up to seven both heard and seen. The edge of Poplar Field produced numerous records with the first juveniles of the year seen here during a WeBS visit on 18th June. Five birds seen near the Manager's Garden on 26th July probably included juveniles and five were seen in the same area again on 30th August (BE). There were numerous sightings throughout the autumn and birds continued to be reported into December, one photographed in the Willow Coppice on 26th December (GW) being the last.

Siberian Chiffchaff

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

There were no records last year or this year. Breeding in coniferous taiga forest from the Ural regions eastwards these birds winter mainly in India, though a few stray to Western Europe each year in autumn. A bird showing all the features of Siberian Chiffchaff was seen on four dates in December 2018 and on one occasion responded to the call being played. There were no records in 2019 or 2020 but on 24th November 2021 the song of a bird heard at the corner of the Coppice near the Lagoon Hide was recorded and later matched to that of this species.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* **Summer Visitor/ Breeder**

The Willow Path has always been a good place to listen for this bird's distinctive song in April, the Coppice being a popular nesting site. However, the first records this year came from near the Dragonfly Ponds on 5th April (EC), six days later than last year's first sighting. The path to the Manager's Garden produced a number of sightings over the following four weeks. The UK population has certainly declined substantially in recent years and maximum numbers recorded were a little lower than last year, no observers reporting more than four birds. Unlike last year, however, there were a number of sightings in August and into September, several of these in the Bee Garden. A single bird there on 14th September (CF) was the last of the year.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* **Summer Visitor and Breeder**

This species seems less likely to overwinter on the Reserve than the Chiffchaff and there were no records this year until 12th April - a male on the path to the Manager's Garden (DW/EC), just one day later than last year's first record. There were regular sightings from this point as more birds arrived. The Willow Path is usually productive and three males and a female were recorded here on 26th April (MG/PG). The River Path also produced numerous sightings. There were no reports of juveniles but successful nesting almost certainly took place. A female in the Bee Garden on 10th September (EC) looked like being the last of the year but there was then a report of two birds being seen several weeks later on 23rd October (SB).

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* **Summer Visitor and Breeder**

There were no sightings reported last year but this was most likely due to a lack of observers as a result of limited access rather than an absence of birds. However, it is never numerous here and is easily overlooked. Having said that, there were a reasonable number of records this year, the first bird being seen on Poplar Field on 29th April (EC). There were

reports of up to three birds throughout May and June and on 7th July one and possibly two were singing at the back of the Duck Marsh (PM/BM). However, this also proved to be the last record of the year - the earliest last date since 2007.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca* **Summer Visitor and Breeder**

There were no records this year or last year and just three in 2021. Prior to this birds had been recorded every year since 2005. Smaller than its cousin the Common Whitethroat this species is rather more secretive and is more often heard than seen.

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* **Summer Visitor/ Breeder**

Poplar Field and the Scrubland are always popular with this species and the first birds this year were recorded at these two sites on 26th April (EC/LB), nine days later than last year's first sighting. On 18th June as many as 10 were reported during an early morning WeBS visit, four of these on the Scrubland. There was only one report of juveniles, two being seen on the Scrubland on 26th August (GP). There was just one sighting after this date - three birds on Poplar Field on 17th September during another WeBS visit and just six days later than last year's final sighting.

Grasshopper Warbler

Locustella naevia **Uncommon Summer Visitor and Casual Breeder**

More often heard than seen, the loud "reeling" song is unmistakable. Most years prior to 2020 produced a few records but there was just one in 2019 and there have been none since. The species is on the Red List of Birds of Conservation Concern due to long term severe breeding population decline.

Sedge Warbler

Acrocephalus schoenobaenus **Summer Visitor and Breeder**

Last year the first bird was reported on the latest ever date of 15th May. However, this was almost certainly due to limited access and a lack of observers rather than a lack of birds. Most years the first bird has been seen between 20th and 22nd April and this year it was on 23rd April - one heard on this date between the Reedbed and Duck Marsh during a WeBS visit. There were reports from all four main wetland areas from this point, the Wet Grassland and Reedbed being the most productive sites. Birds are often still present into September but one seen on the Wet Grassland on 2nd August (EC) looked like being the last of the year. However, there was then a report of two juveniles there on 22nd October (BE), this proving to be the latest ever record and the only ever October record, the previous latest being 27th September in 2014.

Reed Warbler

Acrocephalus scirpaceus **Summer Visitor and Breeder**

A single bird on the Duck Marsh on 7th May (LB) was the first of the year, this the latest first date since 2009. Birds were recorded subsequently on the Wet Grassland, Reedbed and Duck Marsh though the number of sightings reported was disappointing. Away from the main wetlands on 21st May one was heard and seen in reeds at the Dragonfly Ponds (WeBS/LB). On 24th June an adult and two young were recorded in the corner of the Wet Grassland from the Reedbed Hide (BE). Sightings fell away from the beginning of August with just a single bird on the Wet Grassland on 6th August (MG/PG). . One month later on 6th September two juveniles were reported on the Duck Marsh (BE), this the last sighting of the year.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus* **Rare Visitor**

There have been no sightings reported since 1st February 2020. First recorded on 17th December 2017, there were sightings in 2018, 2019 and 2020.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* **Winter Visitor**

This very much an autumn and winter visitor to the Reserve, spring and summer sightings being unusual. The resident population is enhanced in the winter months with an influx of birds from Northern Europe. There were a number of sightings of one or two birds throughout January but there were then none after 12th February until 28th September when one was seen on the Willow Path (LJ). There were no further sightings reported until 29th October but from the second week in November to the end of the year there were regular reports of up to three birds at various locations around the Reserve, the Willow Path being particularly productive.

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* **Resident Breeder**

This common bird can be found in almost all habitats. Birds have been known to nest in the Manager's Garden Hide in previous years and a check of the Swallow nest box there in December last year revealed a nest, most likely constructed by a Wren. On 4th June this year one was photographed feeding young in the same box there (KJC). An adult and one juvenile were seen in the Bee Garden on 10th September (EC). These were the only reports of successful nesting but there were almost certainly others as the species is very secretive.

Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* **Scarce Visitor**

There were no records last year and just two this year. On 21st June one was seen in the Manager's Garden (EC) and on 25th November one was spotted on trees near the Reedbed Hide (JWC).

Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris* **Casual breeder**

Riverside trees by the bridge have proved to be the best place to have a chance of finding this species in recent years. However, of the 12 sightings reported this year half of them were on the Willow Path. Sightings in the Manager's Garden are few and far between but there were two this year - on 26th August (PA/PH) and on 18th October (EC). All records involved single birds.

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* **Casual Breeder and Winter Visitor**

There has been a sharp decline in the breeding population since the 1960s. The large majority of sightings are on the farmland and very large flocks used to be seen here in the past. Nowadays three figure counts are few and far between and there was just one this year. In the early part of the year a report of 50+ on the farmland on 26th February (LB) was the highest. In the latter part of the year a count of around 150 birds reported on the farmland on 18th November (BE) proved to be by far the highest of the year. Other sightings in this period were of no more than 50 birds.

Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus* **Rare (Passage) Visitor**

Spending the winter as far south as North Africa, this is our only summer visiting thrush. As it nests in the uplands sightings are inevitably going to be few and far between. It was a new bird for the Reserve in 2017 when there were two records - on 6th May and 4th November. There have been no further sightings in the last six years.

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

This is still a common bird on the Reserve and numbers remain similar to recent years with no real evidence of an influx of winter visitors. As in 2021 and 2022 there was only one report of juveniles, in this case one with two adults in the Manager's Garden on 2nd July (EC). However, there is plenty of suitable nesting habitat in the hedgerows and Willow Coppice and it would be surprising if several pairs hadn't nested successfully.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* **Winter Visitor**

There were regular sightings from the beginning of the year though most were of no more than a handful of birds. Sixteen were counted on the

farmland on 1st March (EC) and 17 on 6th March (SB) and these proved to be the last of the spring. Around 100 birds flying over on 22nd October were the first of the autumn and the only decent sized flock reported. Eight were counted on the Reserve the next day (SB) but there were then no further sightings until 17th December when 15 flew over the farmland during a WeBS visit. Around 50 were on the farmland on 27th December (EC) but there were no other sightings reported.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus* **Winter Visitor**

There were numerous sightings throughout January and February but mainly of no more than 20 birds. The best count in the early part of the year was of 100+ on the farmland on 1st March (MG/PG). A report of 15 in trees on Poplar Field on 13th March (SB) proved to be the last of the spring. The first record of the autumn came on 9th October when around 300 birds were seen flying over between 8am and 9am (JH). There were several sightings from that point to the end of the year but numbers were low - the best just 12 birds in trees at the back of the Lagoon seen during a WeBS count on 15th October.

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

The first bird this year was recorded in the Bee Garden on 18th January (EC). There were regular sightings thereafter, most involving single birds but a walk round the Reserve on 19th February did produce five for one observer (SB). A bird was photographed carrying nesting material on 19th April (RH) and on 20th August a juvenile was recorded at the edge of the Lagoon during a WeBS visit - these the only evidence of nesting taking place. There was the usual quiet spell in September and October with single birds seen on just two dates but there was more activity towards the end of November and throughout December with several sightings in the Bee Garden and Manager's Garden and a report of three birds on the Wet Grassland on 23rd December (BE).

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus* **Uncommon Visitor**

The population has undergone a decline in the UK since the 1970s and it is certainly a far from common bird here on the Reserve. The farmland tends to be the most productive area most years and it was the same again this year. Most sightings involved just one or two birds but three were recorded on 27th February (SB) and on 19th November during a WeBS visit.

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

There has been a severe decline in the breeding population in recent times and even the best years only produce little more than a handful of

sightings, usually in August or September. This year was fairly typical with birds reported on just three dates, all in the third and fourth weeks of August. Two were seen on John Ackroyd Meadow on 16th August (JH), four on the Scrubland on 23rd (PA/PH), and one there on 26th (PA/PH).

Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* **Rare Visitor**

This was a new species for the Reserve in 2020 - a juvenile, which was ringed, being photographed on the Willow Path on 1st August that year. There have been no records in the last three years.

Robin *Erithacus rubecula* **Resident Breeder and Winter Visitor**

This common bird is a daily visitor to the Bee Garden and Manager's Garden but it can be found all around the Reserve. Numbers can increase in the autumn and winter months when birds can arrive from Continental Europe. A count of 11 around the Reserve during a WeBS visit on 19th February was higher than normal but a report of 17 on 12th March, including five of these together on a table in the Manager's Garden (BE), was an exceptionally high number. The first juvenile was recorded in the Manager's Garden on 24th June (EC) and from that point single juveniles were seen there on several dates. On 19th July three juveniles were reported in the Manager's Garden and two in the Bee Garden (EC). From records received there was no obvious increase in numbers of birds in the latter part of the year.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* **Rare Visitor**

There were no records this year. On 1st April last year one was seen on the farmland manure heap and two days later it was photographed in the same area. These were the first records since 9th February 2008.

Common Redstart

Phoenicurus phoenicurus **Uncommon Passage Visitor**

There had been no records in the last three years and only one in each of the previous two years but there were two this year. Both were almost certainly of the same bird and both on the Scrubland on 23rd and 26th August (JH *et al*).

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

Thanks to a recent severe decline in the breeding population the chances of spotting this passage visitor have become increasingly difficult. With just one record in 2019 and none in 2020 there was a slight improvement in 2021 with sightings on three dates, all between 4th and 12th September, the first of these involving two birds. There were no reported sightings last

year but there were two this year, possibly both of the same bird. Both were on Tim's Field on 20th August (JWC) and on 27th August (EC).

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

In each of the previous two years there were no spring records with sightings reported on just four dates in the autumn. There was an improvement this year. On 15th February one was seen at the edge of the entry road (AL/JH). On 12th March three were recorded on the Scrubland during a WeBS visit and on 15th March a single female was seen there (BE/*et al*). In the autumn there was a productive period between 20th September and 15th October with birds seen on eight dates and several observers reporting between one and four birds on Tim's Field.

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

There were three reported sightings this year. On 8th April a single male was on Tim's Field (JH) and on 30th April two males and a female were seen there (JHar/AL). On 16th August one was recorded on the farmland (JH). Last year produced just one sighting on Poplar Field on 1st May.

Dipper *Cinclus cinclus* **Uncommon Visitor**

Since the partial collapse of the weir further downstream at Newlay and the resultant change in the nature of the river downstream of our weir sightings have been much more frequent, particularly from the River Path. There were sightings on four dates in January, two birds on boulders in the river on 20th (DW) being the first of the year. On 13th February a bird was heard singing on the riverbank in the same area (SB). From March to the end of September there were reports of single birds on nine dates. There were just two sightings in the last three months of the year, almost certainly due to high river levels through much of the period.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* **Uncommon Visitor**

This species is very much a bird of built up areas and while the UK population has been in decline since the mid 1970s double figure counts are still being made in gardens locally. In past years, before all the work started on the new swing bridge, a few birds could be seen at times close to the main entrance gates. However, with all the work in progress sightings have been few and far between and there were none last year or this year.

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

This species has a tendency to disappear at the end of the breeding season and only return again at the start of the next breeding season. This is certainly the case on the Reserve. There were just three reported

sightings in the first three months of the year but from the beginning of April birds were seen daily around the Visitor Centre and on several occasions in the Manager's Garden. All sightings involved just one or two birds. On 3rd April one was seen on the sparrow terrace box on the wall of the Visitor Centre where nesting took place last year. Two birds were recorded on five dates in April in the Manager's Garden (EC). On 15th May a bird was seen leaving the sparrow terrace box but there were no subsequent reports of young. On 19th July three birds were recorded in the Bee Garden during a WeBS visit, this the only report of more than two birds. Sightings ceased after 26th July and it wasn't until 7th November that one was seen in the Bee Garden again (LJ *et al*). There were no sightings after this.

Dunnock *Prunella modularis* **Resident Breeder**

The large majority of records come from the Manager's Garden and Bee Garden where birds can be seen under the feeders. However, because of its secretive nature it is not often reported elsewhere on the Reserve though it is a very common bird. Two juveniles were seen in the Bee Garden on 26th August (GP) but this was the only record of successful nesting.

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

Wintering in trans-Saharan Africa birds return from early April to breed on grassland and often close to cattle. There has been a major decline in numbers since the 1970s and it has always been a very infrequent visitor to the Reserve. There were no sightings this year or last. There were no records between 2005 and 2015, none in 2020 and in 2021 there were two. On 21st August that year a bird was heard calling on the farmland but could not be located and on 5th September four were seen around cattle on the farmland.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* **Common Visitor/Casual Breeder**

The farmland manure heap and the shallow stretch of the river that can be seen from the River Path are usually the best places to look for this species. The former site produced several sightings of one or two birds in January and from then to the end of September the River Path was the most productive area. With high river levels in the autumn birds resorted to the Duck Marsh and there were numerous sightings of one or two birds there throughout October. They were hard to find in November and December and there were sightings on just three dates in this period.

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba* **Common Visitor/Casual Breeder**

As in previous years the majority of sightings in the early and late parts of the year were around the manure heap at the edge of the farmland and involved no more than two birds. They have nested in the Yorkshire Water compound in the past and a report of an adult feeding a juvenile on the roof of the visitor centre on 18th June during a WeBS visit was therefore interesting, particularly as birds were recorded in that area on several dates.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba alba* **Scarce Passage Migrant**

Birds usually pass through Britain in early March through to May and from mid-August to early November. It is always worth carefully checking any black and white wagtails seen in these periods as this passage migrant can turn up on occasions. There have been no sightings reported in the last three years. The last was on 6th April 2020 when two birds were seen on Tim's Field.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis* **Passage Migrant**

The fact that there were only two reported sightings last year, both on the farmland manure heap in April, was put down to a lack of observers due to limited access. However, there were no sightings this year either in the spring or autumn periods which was most unusual. The majority of sightings have usually been of birds flying over but they do on occasions drop in to feed up and the manure heap can be a good place to find them.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* **Rare Passage Visitor**

There have been no sightings in the last four years. A bird that flew over the Visitor Centre calling on 25th August 2019 was only the fourth record for the Reserve.

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* **Resident and Winter Visitor**

The small resident population can increase considerably in the winter months with an influx of visitors drawn in by the seed crop on Tim's Field. These birds may well be from Northern Europe. There were some good counts on and around the field in January - 16 on 9th (SB), 20 on 22nd during a WeBS visit and 15 on 29th (EC). A walk round the Reserve on 23rd January produced a total of 22 birds. They were regular visitors to the Manager's Garden throughout the year but, as always, numbers were low with no more than five seen until 15th November when 10 were reported there (BE). There were no reports of juveniles for the second year running. A few birds were recorded on Tim's Field again from the last week in October but numbers were low with no more than 11 recorded until 6th

December when a total of 27 were counted in one tree by Tim's Field (BE).

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* **Scarce (Winter) Visitor**

There were no sightings last year and just 10 in total in the previous four years. This year sightings were reported on five dates, just one of these in the early part of the year - a single bird on Tim's Field on 22nd February. In the latter part of the year four were reported in the same area on 22nd October (BE *et al*). On 1st November one was reported in the Manager's Garden (JH) and on 25th November single birds were seen on the Wet Grassland and by the containers (AL). On the following day one was seen at the edge of Tim's Field (KH).

Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* **Resident Breeder**

BTO Garden Birdwatch results show that monthly counts for much of this year were lower than in 2022. This comes after years of steady decline. However, it remains quite a common bird here and is easy to see in both the Manager's Garden and Bee Garden throughout the year. A count of six in the Manager's Garden on 21st April (PM/BM) was the best here in the first nine months of the year but there were several reports of between six and eight birds in the period from 1st October with 13 on 20th December - seven males and six females - (BE) an exceptional number. Surprisingly, there were no reports of juveniles last year and this year just four, all of single juveniles., the first of these in the Manager's Garden on 28th June (EC).

Greenfinch *Chloris chloris* **Resident Breeder**

The disease Trichomonosis has hit this species particularly hard and it has undergone a major population decline in the UK since the mid-2000s. Three males in roadside trees on 8th January (MG/PG) was a nice start to the year but there were no further reports of more than one bird for the next three months. The second best count of the year - just five birds - came on 18th June during a WeBS visit but the best count was on 10th September with five seen on the path to the Manager's Garden and two in the Bee Garden (EC).

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

There have been no sightings reported in the last six years. In 2017 a single bird was seen on 11th and 12th November, on each occasion associating with Linnets. Prior to this there had been just two records - in 2000 and 2003.

Linnet *Carduelis cannabina* **Casual Breeder and Winter Visitor**

The UK population has been declining for many years now and the big winter flocks that used to be found on Tim's Field in the past are becoming just a memory. Having said this there were several counts of between 176 and 200 birds in the latter part of 2021. However, last year produced a best of just 70 birds. This year there was just one three figure count - 137 in trees and flying around Tim's Field during a WeBS visit on 22nd January. There were numerous reports of between 40 and 50 birds from this point with 68 on 1st March (EC) proving to be the second highest. The last bird of the spring was seen on 2nd April. Up to three birds were seen on two dates in August but there was no evidence of nesting. A few started to return from the end of September but there were no reports of more than 40 birds from then until the end of the year.

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

There has been a sharp decline in the UK population in recent years but most years produce a few records with birds visiting the Reserve to feed on birch and alder seed. Four sightings were reported in the early part of the year. On 2nd January five were picked out in a mixed flock with Goldfinches near the Manager's Garden (SB). On 15th January five were seen in the Willow Coppice and 10 in roadside trees near the bridge car park (AL). On 19th February one was photographed at the pond in the Manager's Garden (CT) and on 1st March two birds were seen in the same area (EC). There were three records in the latter part of the year, all of birds feeding in roadside trees near the bridge car park - three on 29th November, five on 20th December and 25 on 23rd December (BE *et al*).

Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra* **Rare Visitor**

This species is found in coniferous habitats throughout Britain and Ireland and is resident. In some winters visitors arrive from their home range in taiga forest in Eurasia. First recorded as a "flyover" in 2018, there were no sightings in 2019 or 2020 but there was one in 2021 - three birds flying south over the Coppice on 16th October that year. There was also just one record last year - a single bird flying over the Dragonfly Ponds on 18th September. There were no sightings reported this year.

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* **Resident Breeder**

Numbers in the last three years have been disappointing and there was no improvement this year. In the first six months of the year there were no reports of more than 12 birds. As recently as 2019 a flock of around 120 was recorded on Mike Fisk Meadow feeding on the ripe seed heads there and on 22nd July this year a "large flock" was reported there but no numbers were provided. The highest count in fact came on the same date

- 30 birds flying out of a Buddleia on the Tansy Bank near the Visitor Centre (PM/BM). A report of 26 on a track on the farmland on 13th September was said to consist solely of juveniles (GP). Small numbers of birds visited the feeders in the Bee Garden throughout much of the year but, interestingly, feeders in the Manager's Garden produced sightings on just five dates.

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

This is one of our smallest finches and it breeds in coniferous and mixed forest. In the winter it can be found almost anywhere and the breeding population is enhanced by birds arriving from elsewhere in Europe. Alder and birch seed is a popular food source here and trees at the side of the entry road by the bridge car park can be productive in the winter months. There were numerous records in 2021 but only one last year and none this year. Limited access for birdwatchers last year was probably a factor but a nil return this year was unexpected.

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citronella* **Rare Visitor**

This is a very scarce bird in the area and another bird that is in long term decline in the UK. There was just one record in 2018 and there have been none in the last five years.

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

Although this species nests on the wetlands the majority of sightings away from the breeding season are in the Manager's Garden and Bee Garden where birds visit daily for seed. As many as five were counted at the feeders in the Manager's Garden in the first four months of the year. During the spring and summer months birds can be found on all four main wetland areas but the Wet Grassland once again appeared to be the most popular place. There were no reports of young but successful nesting almost certainly occurred. One or two birds continued to visit the feeders in the Bee Garden throughout the summer but only returned to the Manager's Garden again from the end of October though no more than three were recorded there.

ESCAPED SPECIES

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

There have been no records in the last two years. First recorded in 2013, there were sightings in 2016 and each of the three years from 2019, the last on 12th February 2021 when a single bird was seen flying round the Lagoon.

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

There have been no sightings in the last five years. One was seen on the Lagoon on 8th April 2018. Prior to this there were sightings in 2009, 2010 and 2011.

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

There have been no records in the last six years. Recorded for the first time in 2016, a male was seen on the Lagoon during an early morning WeBS count on 18th December that year. There was again one sighting in 2017 - a male on the Lagoon on 19th March.

Cockatiel *Nymphicus hollandicus* **Escaped Species**

One flew over the farmland to the river on 2nd March 2019. This was the first and only record of this species.

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

First recorded on 5th August 2018 there was a further sighting on 30th June 2021 when a bird was seen briefly at the edge of one of the Dragonfly Ponds. There have been no sightings in the last two years.

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

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

FIRST AND LAST DATES FOR WINTER VISITORS
2023

SPECIES	LAST	FIRST
Whooper Swan	-	-
Wigeon	-	13 th September
Goldeneye	19 th February	6 th December
Waxwing	-	19 th November
Fieldfare	6 th March	22 nd October
Redwing	13 th March	9 th October
Brambling	22 nd February	22 nd October

FIRST AND LAST DATES FOR SUMMER VISITORS
2023

SPECIES	FIRST	LAST
Garganey	2 nd June	7 th June
Hobby	1 st July	1 st July
Osprey	-	-
Marsh Harrier	-	-
Avocet	-	-
Little (Ringed) Plover	30 th May	3 rd July
Whimbrel	-	-
Black-tailed Godwit	-	-
Greenshank	-	-
Common Sandpiper	23 rd March	18 th October
Common Tern	30 th April	15 th May
Arctic Tern	-	-
Cuckoo	8 th July	9 th July
Swift	30 th April	23 rd August
Sand Martin	12 th March	28 th September
Swallow	7 th April	1 st October
House Martin	12 th April	1 st October
Yellow Wagtail	-	-
Common Redstart	23 rd August	26 th August
Whinchat	20 th August	27 th August
Wheatear	8 th April	16 th August
Ring Ouzel	-	-
Grasshopper Warbler	-	-
Sedge Warbler	23 rd April	22 nd October
Reed Warbler	7 th May	6 th September
Garden Warbler	29 th April	7 th July
Common Whitethroat	26 th April	17 th September
Lesser Whitethroat	-	-
Willow Warbler	5 th April	14 th September
Spotted Flycatcher	16 th August	26 th August
Pied Flycatcher	-	-

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.

MAMMALS



Fox *Vulpes vulpes*

There were sightings in every month of the year and on all areas of the Reserve. At least one pair bred, two small cubs being photographed in the Willow Coppice on 21st May (KMCL). A month later on 21st and 23rd June a juvenile was seen on the entry road close by (DW). Single juveniles were reported on a number of dates from this point and on 19th August two were seen on the road by the Dipping Ponds (PM/BM/PU). Most reports in the latter part of the year were of single animals but two were seen on the Willow Path on 3rd December (EC).

Otter *Lutra lutra*

2022 had been the best so far for daytime sightings with an adult and two juveniles seen on numerous occasions on the river and the wetlands. There were sightings in 10 months of this year with peak activity in February - 15 sightings, all on the Lagoon and with two animals on several occasions. On 1st February one was watched catching three fish there (MG/PG) and four days later one was observed feeding on three fish near the far bank (MG/PG). While there were only two sightings reported in March camera trap footage in the first week of the month revealed a good deal of nocturnal activity as animals moved between the river and Lagoon between 9.45pm and 4.34am. On 26th April an adult and two juveniles were seen from the river bridge (CF). August proved to be the second most productive month with three on the grass between the Lagoon and Duck Marsh on 2nd (JWC) a good start, the river running high and coloured at the time. The last sighting of the year came on 25th November with three animals seen on the river from the River Path (MG/PG).



American Mink *Neovison vison*

Sightings have been fewer in recent years, probably due to the considerable increase in Otter activity. There were just three records in each of 2021 and 2022 but an increase this year to eight, seven of these in the second half of the year. A very black individual was photographed on the Duck Marsh on 18th February (PH). There were no further sightings until the beginning of July but there were three that month - on the river from the River Path on 3rd (SB), on the Duck Marsh on 17th (PM/BM) and on the road close to the Visitor Centre on 28th (JSK *et al*). On 23rd August one was again seen on the river from the River Path (PA). There was no further activity until 28th December when one was seen at the back of the Duck Marsh (MB).



Weasel *Mustela nivalis*

There were only nine sightings reported this year which is rather fewer than most years. The road between the Visitor Centre and the Dipping Ponds has always produced sightings in the past and three of the records were in the same area this year. There were two sightings close by in the Bee Garden on 21st January and 30th December (EC). There were also sightings in the Manager's Garden, on the Winter Walk, on the river bridge and at the Dragonfly Ponds, in the latter case an animal reported swimming across Scarborough Pond on 26th August (PL).



Stoat *Mustela erminea*

Sightings of this species here have always been few and far between but last year produced six records. Prior to this one photographed in the Manager's Garden on 28th November 2021 was the first since 2017. This year three sightings were reported. On 21st January one was seen by the patio doors to the Visitor Centre (GJB). On 25th March one was recorded in the Manager's Garden (GJB) and on 11th May by the Willow Path hide (CF).

Roe deer *Capreolus capreolus*

There were sightings of this common mammal in every month of the year. As many as three were seen together on numerous occasions, the first of these on 2nd January when three were spotted on the path between Tim's Field and the Willow Coppice (JHar). The Scrubland is always a good place to look for them at any time of year and there were a number of reports of three animals here. As in previous years the deer-proof fence around the Willow Coppice did little to deter them and there were several sightings of animals or signs of their presence in the Coppice itself. There were no reports of young this year but a male and female were observed mating on the Wet Grassland on 24th July (PM/BM).



Mole *Talpa europaea*

Sightings of this species are few and far between but evidence of their presence in the form of molehills is not hard to find. Like last year there was just one record of a dead animal, probably left by a predator on 30th August near the Dragonfly Ponds (BE).

Common Shrew *Sorex araneus*

There were no records this year. One or two have turned up in Longworth traps during small mammal surveys in the past and dead animals are also found on occasions as large mammals such as Foxes will kill them but not eat them because of the foul tasting liquid produced from glands on the skin.



Pygmy Shrew *Sorex minutus*

This tiny mammal only lives for a year or so and has to eat every two to three hours just to survive. It has only turned up once in a Longworth trap in June 2016. The only real evidence of its continued presence on the Reserve is from its remains which have been found in Barn Owl pellets on occasions.

Water Shrew *Neomys fodiens*

This is the largest shrew found in Britain. Detailed survey work needs to be done to establish its current status on the Reserve. When surveys were

last carried out some years ago in the Reedbed it was found to be present there and almost certainly on the other wetland areas too. In 2021 a dead individual that appeared to have been predated was found at the edge of the Lagoon but there have been no sightings reported in the last two years.

Harvest Mouse *Micromys minutus*

These tiny mice are difficult to spot in the wild but they can easily be watched in the permanent display area in the Visitor Centre. The Harvest Mouse breeding project started in 2012 and since 2014 mice have been introduced at several locations on the Reserve, most recently in June last year at the edge of Tim's Field. There were no sightings of mice or their nests this year which is not unusual.

Wood Mouse *Apodemus sylvaticus*

This is a very common small mammal on the Reserve. It is regularly found in Longworth traps during small mammal surveys and being an excellent climber it is a user of nest boxes. With no surveys or nest box checks carried out this year there was just one reported sighting - a single animal in the Bee Garden on 13th December (DW).

Bank Vole *Clethrionomys glareolus*

This is another very common species that used to turn up in Longworth traps during small mammal surveys. In the absence of any surveys this year there was just one sighting reported - a single animal in the thatched gazebo on 19th September (CF).

Field or Short-tailed Vole *Microtus agrestis*

In the absence of any Longworth trap surveys this year there were no records of live animals to report. However, their remains continue to turn up in the pellets of the resident Barn Owls. This vole is probably at its most numerous on the Scrubland where it is undoubtedly preyed on by both Barn Owls and Kestrels.

Water Vole *Arvicola amphibius*

This species is under serious threat from both habitat loss and predation by American Mink. Sightings are inevitably few and far between. There were none in 2019 or 2020, two in 2021 and none in 2022. However, this year there were three, two of these in January. On 1st one was seen on the Wet Grassland (AL) and on 14th on a pool by the Education Pond (EC). On 21st July one was reported at the Dragonfly Ponds (BS).

Brown Rat *Rattus norvegicus*

Bordered on three sides by the river, it is surprising there are not more sightings of this common mammal here on the Reserve. Between December 2020 and December 2021 there were a number of sightings of up to five animals feeding on spilled seed under the feeders in the Bee Garden. Last year there were just two sightings, both in the Manager's Garden, with three animals on one occasion and two on the other. There were no reports this year.

Grey Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis*

In the past this mammal has been a much commoner visitor than the few reported sightings would suggest but this year there was a considerable increase in the number of records, particularly so in the last four months of the year. On 22nd January four were seen in the Willow Coppice during a WeBS visit, this an area where dreys have been found in the past. On 19th March one was photographed peering out of the Little Owls' nest box in the Manager's Garden with the owl close by (PH). From September onwards the majority of sightings were in the Manager's Garden with one again seen going into the nest box. There were also numerous sightings of one or two animals in the Bee Garden visiting the feeders there.

Rabbit *Oryctogalus cuniculus*

This is a rare visitor to the Reserve. In 2021 there were four records, all involving single animals, but there have been none in the last two years.

Brown Hare *Lepus capensis*

Even rarer than the Rabbit here, there have only been four records in the Reserve's history, the last one on 15th November 2020.

Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*

The population is in serious decline across Britain and is believed to be down by more than half in rural areas. Here on the Reserve it has always been a rare mammal with only three records since the Reserve opened. The last sighting was actually on the road under the main entry gates on 19th July 2019 so it just qualified as a Reserve record!

Common Pipistrelle Bat *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*

This small bat is one of the commonest British species and weighs the same as a 20p piece. Populations have declined in the last few decades but it is still a common bat on the Reserve. It was recorded in good numbers during all four Bat Night events this year in July, August and September, being particularly abundant in July with many recorded over

Tim's Field. The Willow Path is another good place to find them and is always guaranteed to produce records.

Soprano Pipistrelle Bat *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*

This has only been a separate species since 1999 when the Common Pipistrelle was split into two species on the basis of different frequency echolocation calls. As regards appearance the two species look very similar. Sopranos feed both in wetland habitats and can be found around woodland edge. Like the Common Pipistrelle it was recorded during all four Bat Night events this year.

Noctule Bat *Nyctalus noctula*

This is one of the largest of the British species and is the first bat to appear in the evening, sometimes before sunset. It lives in holes in trees, sometimes utilising old woodpecker holes. It is never particularly numerous here but numbers this year seemed lower than usual with only a handful of records over woodland on the far bank of the river.

Daubenton's Bat *Myotis daubentoni*

Known as the Water Bat, this medium sized species specialises in catching insects on the water surface with its large feet. It also uses its tail to scoop up insects from the surface. It is not uncommon on the Reserve and is recorded both over the river and the wetlands during Bat Night events. It was recorded during all four events this year.

AMPHIBIANS

Common Frog *Rana temporaria*

The first spawn was found in the ponds on Poplar Field on 1st March ((PW) and just five days later in the Dipping Ponds (JHa). On 6th March several were disturbed during work on Mill Pond at the Dragonfly Ponds (JHa). On 19th March spawn was found in the small pond in the Manager's Garden. Many sightings almost certainly go unrecorded and there was in fact only one report of an adult from that point - one swimming across Mill Pond on 21st August (PJM).

Common Toad *Bufo bufo*

Toads tend to breed in larger, deeper ponds than frogs. The Scrubland provides ideal habitat for this species away from the breeding season and toads are well known for their mass migrations back to their breeding ponds in February. While there were no reports of large numbers gathering at the Dragonfly Ponds a few were recorded there in March.

Smooth Newt *Lissotriton vulgaris*

This species lives on land, hiding throughout the day and emerging at night to feed on invertebrates. As a result there are seldom many sightings outside the breeding season. Between February and June is certainly the best time to see them when they move into water and breed. Young newts usually leave the water in August or September and one or two turn up regularly during supervised pond dipping activities for children in the summer months. Newts can also sometimes be found by lifting the lids on the wooden shelters along the Willow Path.

BUTTERFLIES

2023 was an interesting year for butterflies with some species showing notable increases compared to recent years and some decreases too. Numbers of Ringlet were down this year; this is possibly associated with dry summers. It is not perhaps surprising that Ringlets don't like dry weather as this is the one species which notably is willing to fly on dull rainy days! Unfortunately, we had only one record of Painted Lady in 2023 but as this is a long-distance migrant this is most likely to be due to weather factors affecting breeding and migration in Europe. Some species like Wall and Small Heath failed to appear again and must be considered extinct at Rodley. Other species at the edge of their distribution like Brown Argus and Essex Skipper don't appear to have established a regular presence at Rodley.

Holly Blue appear to have done well, but Common Blue less so. Numbers of Brimstone and Orange Tip were up on 2022 as were Meadow Brown and Speckled Wood. Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock numbers held up overall but while the first generations produced relatively low numbers the second generation was stronger. Both species disappeared from the scene very early on compared to their usual last sighting dates.

This year the stars of the colourful Vanessa group of butterflies were the Comma and Red Admiral, both of which were present in very good numbers, showing big increases on 2022. There was also a report of breeding activity of Comma. Caterpillars of Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock and Brimstone were also seen and reported. The final notable success of the year was the Gatekeeper which produced very good numbers – the best ever for Rodley by a long way!

This report, which shows the state of butterfly populations on the Reserve, depends on the regular submission of records of species, numbers and locations. The transect survey (HS/PS) and the regular whole Reserve walk arounds (SB) have provided great information but more records are needed from volunteers and visitors to fill in the gaps and give a complete picture, so please submit records using the record sheets in the Visitor Centre.

A lot of interesting and beautiful photos of butterflies appear on our Facebook pages but it is very difficult to monitor population levels using this source. Records of the smaller, duller species would be very welcome as would records of breeding, e.g. of caterpillars and pupae. It is likely that some species like the skippers and Small Copper are under recorded.

The butterflies recorded at Rodley on the most days in 2023 are shown below with comparisons for the four previous years.

Ranking 2023	Species and number of dates seen on in 2023	Ranking 2022	Ranking 2021	Ranking 2020	Ranking 2019
1 st	Small Tortoiseshell - 33	2 nd	1 st	1 st	1 st
2 nd	Speckled Wood - 31	1 st	3 rd =	5 th	-
3 rd	Comma - 30	7 th	-	3 rd	3 rd
4 th	Small White - 29	4 th	2 nd	4 th	6 th
5 th	Red Admiral - 28	3 rd	4 th	-	2 nd
6 th	Meadow Brown - 24	6 th	5 th	-	-

Jerry Knapp
Recorder

HESPERIDAE

Essex Skipper (*Thymelicus lineola*)

Essex Skipper is relatively new to the Reserve being first recorded in 2019 and then again in 2021. It was not recorded in 2020 and 2022 and there were no records in 2023. However, this is a difficult species to identify and is near the edge of its distribution in the country.

Small Skipper (*Thymelicus sylvestris*)

Another year with few records, only five compared with four in 2022. The first was on 9th July with four seen at various sites (SB). The final sighting of the year was on 28th July with a single seen on the Butterfly Bank (PM/BM). On most days only one or two were recorded.

Large Skipper (*Ochlodes venatus*)

The first of the year were seen on 17th June with three on the Butterfly Bank (HS/PS). They were only seen on six days in 2023, compared to seven in 2022, 15 in 2021 and seven in 2020. Large Skippers were seen all across the Reserve, but never in large numbers, four on 29th June being the largest daily count (JSK). It seems that this charming butterfly is probably under recorded at Rodley. The last records of the year were on 9th July which is the 2nd earliest last date of the year in 20 years.

PIERIDAE

Orange Tip (*Anthocharis cardamines*)

The first Orange Tip of the year appeared on 5th April on Poplar Carr (JH) and they were recorded on a total of 19 days compared with seven days in 2022, 19 in 2021 and 14 in 2020. On half the days only one or two were recorded. Maximum daily counts occurred in mid-May with nine on 14th (HS/PS) and 11 on 15th May (SB). Orange Tips were seen across the entire Reserve. Two on 5th June (SB) were the last of the year.

Large White (*Pieris brassicae*)

The first Large White of the year was seen on 17th April on John Ackroyd Meadow (SB). This was the second earliest first date of the year. Thereafter they were only recorded on nine further dates in small numbers (one to three) with the last record of two in the Dragonfly Ponds area on 21st August (SB). So, the recent trend of sightings of only small numbers on a small number of days continues.

Small White (*Artogeia rapae*)

A common species, frequently recorded often in large numbers, this is clearly the most successful of the 'Whites' at Rodley. The first record of the year was of two seen on 7th April (HS/PS) and it was seen in all on 29 days, making it the 4th most recorded butterfly. As usual it was seen across the Reserve but with Tim's Field being the most regular site.

Numbers were small initially but reached double figures by 21st May. They were then very variable building up in July with a maximum of 58 (roughly half on Tim's Field) on 9th July (HS/PS). The last record was of one on Tim's Field on 23rd September (HS/PS). The overall population of Small Whites was similar to last year as shown by the very similar numbers seen on the transect counts (248 over the season compared to 249 last year – HS/PS).

Green-veined White (*Artogeia napi*)

The first sighting was of one on the Butterfly Bank on 4th May (PM/BM) after which Green-veined White were recorded on 16 days, similar to the 17 and 19 days in 2022 and 2021. As usual numbers were generally low with counts of one to two on most of the days. The highest counts were of nine and seven on 3rd June and 6th August (HS/PS). Sightings were fairly spread across the Reserve. A single on the Butterfly Bank on 21st August (SB) was the last of the year.

Brimstone (*Gonepteryx rhamni*)

In 2023 Brimstone were recorded on 22 days which is similar to the daily observations for the last few years, 18 in 2022, 22 in 2021 and 16 in 2020. The first record of the year was on 22nd March with one seen in the coppice (KH, HS/PS) . This is the second earliest first of the year, the earliest date being 20th March (in 2019) – yearly first dates have been in late March for the last 7 years. Most daily records are of one to two individuals but there have been daily counts of four or more on five days, with five seen on 15th May (SB) and 3rd June (HS/PS) and six on 5th June (SB). Sightings occurred across the entire Reserve. There was again evidence of breeding with caterpillars seen on the Butterfly Bank and the Dragonfly Ponds area. The final sighting of the year was of one in the coppice on 13th August (HS/PS).

NYMPHALIDAE

Wall (*Lasiommata megera*)

Once more no Walls were recorded in 2023. None have now been seen since 2017. Sadly, this species now appears to be extinct at Rodley NR. It is not clear if re-colonisation is possible or likely.

Speckled Wood (*Pararge aegeria*)

The first record of the year was of one on Bentley's Path on 18th April (BM). Speckled Wood were seen on 31 dates in all, the second largest number of days for a species in 2023 - it was in first place last year. Again, it was seen in every month from April to September. For the first three months numbers were generally low, one to two, but in late July they increased steadily and from mid-August to mid-September were often in double figures. The highest count of the year was on 28th August with 28 (HS/PS) seen across the Reserve – 12 on the Willow Path alone. This charming butterfly can turn up anywhere on the Reserve but the Willow Path is clearly a favoured haunt. The last record of the year was on 23rd September (HS/PS).

Small Heath (*Coenonympha pamphilus*)

There have been no sightings since 2005.

Ringlet (*Aphantopus hyperantus*)

Ringlet appeared this year on 24th June with seven seen in the various grassland areas (HS/PS). They were recorded on 16 dates, the highest daily count being 37 on 9th July (SB). The last sightings of the year was of three on 26th July (HS/PS). The numbers reported seemed lower than in other years and transect counts were much lower than in 2021 and

2022 – less than half (HS/PS). This decrease may be associated with dry summers in 2022 and 2023.

Meadow Brown (*Maniola jurtina*)

The first of the season appeared on 17th June with two seen in Mike Fisk Meadow (HS/PS). They were seen on 24 dates all across the Reserve but with Poplar Field and the wildflower meadows being the best sites. Daily counts were often in double figures with a maximum daily count of 57 on 9th July (SB). The last sighting of the year was on 21st August. Transect counts were higher than in 2021 and 2022 – 15% higher than 2022.

Marbled White (*Melanargia galathea*)

Following its debut appearance at Rodley in 2021 there have been no sightings in the last two years.

Gatekeeper (*Pyronia tithonus*)

One on the Butterfly Bank on 1st July (JW) was the third earliest first date at Rodley and heralded an excellent year for Gatekeepers on the Reserve. They were recorded on 19 days, similar to the 16 days in 2021 and 2022. They were seen across the Reserve but Poplar Field, the Butterfly Bank and the wildflower meadows were the best locations. Numbers were very good, those on transect counts being nearly twice as high as last year (HS/PS). Double figure counts were made on 12 out of the 19 days they were recorded on and were 40+ on 6 days. Numbers peaked in late July; the highest daily count was of 89 on 24th July (SB). The final sighting of the year was of two on the edge of the coppice on 28th August (HS/PS). This concluded a great year for this charming butterfly.

Dark Green Fritillary (*Argynnis aglaja*)

There were no sightings this year after the first and only record in 2019. Given the lack of suitable habitat and food plants it is unlikely that Dark Green Fritillary will ever be other than an accidental vagrant at RNR.

Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*)

A single on Mike Fisk Meadow on 17th June (HS/PS) started what proved to be an excellent year for Red Admiral at Rodley. They were seen regularly, on 28 days in total (5th in the list of dates seen on) until the last record of the year of four on Buddleias near the Visitor Centre on 1st October (MG/PG). Numbers were good with four or more in a day on half the dates and the numbers recorded on transect counts were more than double those seen in 2022 – a 152% increase (HS/PS). The top daily counts were of 10 on 26th and 29th July and 19 on 23rd September.

Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*)

It was a very poor year for Painted Lady at Rodley with only one sighting. One was seen on the Visitor Centre Buddleias on 23rd September (HS/PS).

Peacock (*Aglais io*)

Peacock were relatively late this year. The first record of the year was of four individuals on Poplar Field and Mike Fisk Meadow on 7th April (HS/PS), the 15th latest first date of the year. The first generation was present in April and May, mostly in ones and twos, but the second generation only appeared in July with caterpillars seen on the Butterfly Bank on 1st July and adults on 14th July. Second generation counts were higher with maximum daily counts of 11 on 26th July and nine on 6th August (HS /PS). The last sighting of the year was on 6th August – the earliest last sighting of the year on record at Rodley. Despite the late start and early finish to the season numbers were quite good, transect counts being higher than in 2021 and 2022.

Small Tortoiseshell (*Aglais urticae*)

A single butterfly near the Visitor Centre on 8th February (DW) was the first of the year, but we then had to wait until 27th March for the next on Mike Fisk Meadow (PM/BM). Numbers of the first overwintering generation were typically low with a maximum of six on 8th April (HS/PS). Counts improved with the second generation, peaking in July with 18 on 20th (PM/BM), 16 on 24th (SB) and 17 on 28th July (HS/PS). They were recorded on 33 days in all. Transect numbers were similar to those seen in 2021 and 2022. The last record of the year was of two on 6th August (HS/PS), this being the earliest last sighting of the year on record at Rodley.

Comma (*Polygonum c-album*)

The first sighting of the year of one on John Ackroyd Meadow on 19th March was pretty much on schedule. Commas were recorded on 30 days during the year, putting it 3rd on the list of most dates in the year for a species. On most days only one or two were recorded (which is the typical pattern). However, on 13 days counts were more than three and on seven days more than five. The top counts of the year were of 15 on 26th July and 12 on 29th July (both HS/PS). The number of individuals seen was much greater than in recent years; transect counts suggested a 260% increase in numbers compared with 2022 (HS/PS). This increase may have been due to successful local breeding – photos of a Comma caterpillar in the Dragonfly Ponds area were posted on the Rodley Nature

Reserve – Wildlife Conservation Interest Group on Facebook in mid-June (JM). Commas were seen all over the Reserve and the final sighting of the year was of two on 23rd September (HS/PS).

LYCAENIDAE

Small Copper (*Lycaena phlaeas*)

The first report of the year was on 27th May with three seen on the John Ackroyd Meadow (F&SB). After this they were seen on a further ten days with only one or two seen each day. They are most often seen on the grassland areas with John Ackroyd Meadow seemingly the best location. The last of the year was a sighting of one in the Dragonfly Ponds area on 23rd September (HS/PS).

Purple Hairstreak (*Quercusia quercus*)

There were no reports in 2023. It is not clear if this represents a decrease in numbers of butterflies or of observers. This is not the easiest of butterflies to observe and is generally seen fluttering around the canopy of Oak trees. On past evidence the best place to spot Purple Hairstreak is on Oak trees in the Manager's Garden and on the Willow Path. The increasing number and size of Oaks on the Reserve will help this species and there is a good population of mature Oaks in the nearby Swaine Woods.

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

There were no records in 2023. There are no Elm trees (the caterpillars' food plant) on the Reserve and the nearest are very scrubby stunted specimens on the canal towpath – stunted by Dutch Elm disease. Essentially this species must be regarded as an 'accidental' at Rodley.

Holly Blue (*Celastrina argiolus*)

The first Holly Blue was recorded on 1st May on Poplar Field (JH). They were then seen on nine days, less than the 11 in 2022, but much more than in 2021 and 2020 (two and 0 days respectively). All but one record were of a single insect, just one being of two. Most of the records were in May with just one in June and two in late July. The last of the year was on 29th July (HS/PS).

Brown Argus (*Aricia agestis*)

Again, there were no records for Brown Argus and indeed there have been no reports since the species first appeared at Rodley in 2019. It has clearly not established a colony as yet.

Common Blue (*Polyommatus icarus*)

The first record of the year was on 27th May in John Ackroyd Meadow (F&SB and PM/BM). They were only recorded on four days in all (compared with six in 2022 and 12 in 2021). Most sightings were of one or two butterflies but three were seen on John Ackroyd Meadow on 27th May. The last record of the year was on 21st August on Poplar Field (SB).

Contributors

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J W Cooper	JWC	J Michael	JM
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C Finn	CF	D Swann	DS
R Gaynor	RG	P Unia	PU
M & P Greenwood	MG/PG	M Unsworth	MU
J Hart	JHar	D Walker	DW
J Haytor	JH	V Waterhouse	VW
B Hewitt	BH	A Worrillow	AW
K Hockeridge	KH	J Worrillow	JW
E Jackson	EJ	N Tong	NT
J Knapp	JSK		

Butterflies
First and Last Dates - 2023

Species	First date	Last date
Essex Skipper	-	-
Small Skipper	9 th July	28 th July
Large Skipper	17 th June	9 th July
Orange Tip	5 th April	5 th June
Large White	17 th April	21 st August
Small White	7 th April	23 rd September
Green-veined White	4 th May	21 st August
Clouded Yellow	-	-
Brimstone	22 nd March	13 th August
Wall	-	-
Speckled Wood	18 th April	23 rd September
Small Heath	-	-
Ringlet	24 th June	26 th July
Meadow Brown	17 th June	21 st August
Gatekeeper	1 st July	28 th August
Dark Green Fritillary	-	-
Red Admiral	17 th June	1 st October
Painted Lady	23 rd September	23 rd September
Peacock	7 th April	6 th August
Small Tortoiseshell	8 th February	6 th August
Comma	19 th March	23 rd September
Small Copper	27 th May	23 rd September
Purple Hairstreak	-	-
White-letter Hairstreak	-	-
Holly Blue	1 st May	29 th July
Brown Argus	-	-
Common Blue	27 th May	21 st August

MOTHS

The 2022 Review concluded with the hope that, after covid and access issues, 2023 would be more representative of the moths to be found at Rodley. That hope was more than fulfilled with 1001 recordings of 148 different species including 12 new to the Reserve.

Four trapping events were held during the year with the 28th July event proving to be a phenomenal night with 540 moths coming to light made up of 83 species. Events were also held on 1st and 7th July (Rodley Robins Club), and 25th August.

MOTH COUNT FOR THE YEAR

	Number of Moths		Number of Species	
	Individual Records	Trap Records	Individual Records	Trap Records
Macro	28	727	15	80
Micro	52	194	14	39
Total	80	921	29	119

**THE TOTAL SPECIES COUNT FOR THE RESERVE NOW STANDS AT –
MACRO 241, MICRO 207 - TOTAL 448**

NEW SPECIES

Macro	Date	Micro	Date
Beautiful Hook-tip	01/07/2023	<i>Agapeta zoegana</i>	28/07/2023
Gold Spangle	28/07/2023	<i>Apotomis betuletana</i>	01/07/2023
Golden-rod Pug	28/07/2023	<i>Batia lunaris</i>	07/07/2023
		<i>Cydia splendana</i>	28/07/2023
		<i>Dichrorampha alpinana</i>	18/06/2023
		<i>Dichrorampha plumbana</i>	18/06/2023
		<i>Limnaecia phragmitella</i>	28/07/2023
		<i>Ypsolopha horridella</i>	28/07/2023
		<i>Ypsolopha sequella</i>	28/07/2023

Beautiful Hook-tip, a lichen feeder, was recorded at the trap event on 1st July and whilst listed as a “rare and very local resident”, numbers continue to rise steeply and can now be found more or less all over the county except for the Dales.

Gold Spangle came to light on the 28th July and is listed in Yorkshire as “uncommon and fairly widespread resident”. Records across the county suggest that the species appears to be deserting lowland areas with the average altitude of all records increasingly dramatically – possibly encouraged by climate change.

Golden-rod Pug similarly came to the trap on 28th July with its Yorkshire status listed as “scarce and thinly distributed or restricted resident”. Late July would suggest that this will have been a second generation moth which is now outnumbering the first generation (May-June). The species is fairly widespread across the county and could be under-recorded being similar to the Grey Pug and White-spotted Pug.

Agapeta zoegana (Bright Straw) was recorded at the trap event on 28th July. Common knapweed is the moth’s foodplant which can be found in the meadows at the Reserve. This micro is “fairly common and thinly distributed” across the county.

Apotomis betuletana (Birch Marble) was the second new micro attracted to light on 1st July. A second moth also came to light at the 28th July trap. This species is “fairly common and fairly widespread resident” feeding on the plentiful birch found on the Reserve.

Batia lunaris (Lesser Tawny Crescent) is another lichen feeder and was recorded at the trap event on 7th July. The species is listed as “uncommon and thinly distributed or restricted resident” but has now become well established and quite widespread since first recorded in the county back in 1985.

Cydia splendana (Marbled Piercer) (2no.) was the third of the new micros attracted to light on the 27th July. It is listed as “common and fairly widespread resident” and is now recorded commonly and widely in 4 of the 5 Yorkshire Vice Counties. (RNR reports to VC64). At Rodley it will feed on the numerous oak established on the Reserve.

Dichrorampha alpinana (Orange-spot Daisy Moth) (JWC) was one of two micro moths not recorded at trap but by daytime net sweeping. Species confirmation was required via genitalia examination (gen. det.)

and was confirmed as a female of the species. The moth is listed as “rare and local resident” and feeds on the oxeye daisy which is abundant on the Reserve’s meadows.

Dichrorampha plumbana (Lead-coloured Daisy Moth) (JWC) was the second of the two new micros recorded by sweeping and again required gen. det. to confirm species. Listed as a “rare and very local resident” it feeds on oxeye daisy and yarrow.

Limnaecia phragmitella (Bulrush Down Moth) recorded in Yorkshire as “uncommon and thinly distributed or restricted resident”. As its name suggests feeds on phragmites (bulrush) to be found along the margins of the Reserve’s wetland habitats.

Ypsolopha horridella (Dark Tufted Scallop) First recorded in Yorkshire in 2011 this micro is listed as “very rare and very local resident” feeding on apple and blackthorn.

Ypsolopha sequella (Pied Rabbit Moth) This species is fairly common and widespread but has evaded recognition at the Reserve until now – one of its food plants is the Field Maple which can be found in our managed hedgerows and occasionally allowed to grow on into hedgerow trees.

HIGHLIGHTS – Individual and Trapping Results

Individual Recordings

First record of the year was the **Orange Underwing** on 16th March (JWC). This represents only the third record for the Reserve previously being spotted in March and then again in April 2021. This “scarce and local resident” frequents birches.

Also worthy of note was the **Marsh Pug** spotted on 7th May (JWC), with only two previous records in May 2019 and again in May 2021. This species is labelled as “rare and local resident”.

Two recordings of ***Nemophora degeerella*** (Yellow-barred Long-horn aka Yellow-banded Longhorn) were made on 10th June (PS and JWC) with the only previous records for the Reserve in June 2015 and June 2021. A fairly common moth which enjoys daytime sun amongst the leaf litter and also comes to light.

Trap Records

Macro

After an absence of four years the 28th July trap saw the welcome return of the **Bulrush Wainscot** which was last recorded in August 2019. The Reserve provides an abundant supply of its foodplant and should really be recorded more often on the Reserve.

Another welcome return was the **Dark Barred Twin-spot Carpet** on the 28th July - its last appearance being April 2014. Whilst listed as common and fairly widespread in Yorkshire it is regarded as a declining species (BAP R).

The trap on the 7th July produced 7 **Elephant Hawk-moths** which was thought to be an exceptional result but this is overshadowed by the 11 recorded on 20th June 2015 and 14 in a June 2009 trap - habitat at Rodley clearly suits this species.

The **Pebble Hook-tip** made a reappearance on the 28th July after a 6 year absence, being last recorded back in July 2017. This is a fairly widespread resident moth which frequents birch woodland.

The abundant migrant **Silver Y** came to light at three of the four traps totalling 5 moths this year. According to Yorkshire records, the species had a very poor year 2022 so it will be interesting to see the County results for 2023. Reserve records peaked back in 2018 with 32 moths and numbers have slowly declined since.

The **Slender Brindle** appeared in the 28th July trap with only one previous record for the Reserve back in July 2017. This species can do well in open wooded grassy areas but is quite rare at Rodley.

There is only one previous record for the **Small Elephant Hawk-moth** back in July 2019 with a second being recorded at the trap on 7th July. This species favours bedstraws as its foodplant and with the abundance of cleavers on the Reserve numbers are somewhat disappointing.

The 28th August trap produced a **Vine's Rustic** for only the third time on the Reserve with previous records in August 2018 and June 2019. Yorkshire records for 2022 indicate that this species continues to grow with records now extending into late October and early November.

Micro

The tiny dusk flying **Borkhausenia fuscescens** (Dingy Concealer) appeared in the 7th July trap which was only the second ever record for the Reserve, the first being recorded July 2019. Whilst common nationally the species is described as a "scarce local resident" in Yorkshire.

The 28th of July trap was successful in bringing to light a **Spilonota ocellana** (Bud Moth) for only the third time at the Reserve. Interestingly this species has now appeared after a six year gap on each previous occasion being recorded in 2011 and 2017.

Last recorded back in 2010 the **Ringed China-mark** made a welcome return after a 13 year absence. This species is predominantly aquatic, feeding on water based plants, and can be disturbed by day from the waterside but will also come to light.

Popular Species 2023

MACRO		MICRO	
Species	No. Recorded	Species	No. Recorded
Large Yellow Underwing	176	<i>Chrysoteuchia culmella</i>	74
Common Rustic agg.	102	Mother of Pearl	21
Dark Arches	50	Bird-cherry Ermine	14
Marbled Minor agg.	40	<i>Agriphila straminella</i>	12
Smoky Wainscot	28	<i>Agapata hamana</i>	11
Heart and Dart	25		
Mottled Rustic	23		
Square-spot Rustic	19		
Uncertain	19		
Bright-line Brown-eye	16		
Flame	16		

Micro Recording

Members of the mothing fraternity will be aware of the recent publication of the second edition of the Field Guide to the Micro-moths of GB and Northern Ireland.

The publication has moved away from the scientific notation to English names as its primary ID and whilst the Yorkshire Moths website continues with the scientific names it does also show the English version as secondary.

The Reserve’s records commenced in 2001 and to preserve their integrity, records will continue to be maintained on this basis i.e. based on scientific notation where no previous English name has been established.

 2023 has proved to be an excellent mothing year and it’s hoped that after all the recent issues and problems this level of activity will continue into 2024

Dave Nesham

Acknowledgements

Yorkshire Butterflies and Moths Annual Report 2022,
 JWC – John Cooper, PS – Penny Smith

DRAGONFLIES AND DAMSELFLIES

It was a mixed year. On the one hand we had the exciting record of the Willow Emerald Damselfly ovipositing in the branches of the willow tree on the far side of Beach Pond. On the other, there were still no records of exuviae. What is really disappointing is that very few observers enter their records in the book in the Visitor Centre but rather post them on-line without any precise details as to location. This has meant that our records have been less extensive than in previous years. For instance, this year we have no records of confirmed breeding, seven species probably breeding and one possibly breeding. This compares to figures for 2022 of four, five and two respectively. Furthermore, there was no breeding activity of any sort for the Common Blue Damselfly, the Blue-tailed Damselfly and the Migrant Hawker, for which species breeding activity was recorded in 2022. There were two species recorded for the first time at the reserve – the Red-eyed Damselfly and the Hairy Dragonfly.

Species	Wheel	Tandem	Ovipositing	Teneral	Exuviae
Willow Emerald Damselfly	-	1	2	-	-
Large Red Damselfly	-	1	-	-	-
Azure Damselfly	1	>24	>20	-	-
Southern Hawker	-	-	1	-	-
Brown Hawker	-	1	4	-	-
Broad-bodied Chaser	-	-	1	-	-
Black-tailed Skimmer	-	-	1	-	-
Common Darter	-	4	2	-	-

Table 1. The number of occasions on which the different phases of reproductive behaviour (wheel and tandem) were recorded, the number of times females were seen ovipositing and the number of tenerals and exuviae.

Banded Demoiselle (*Calopteryx splendens*)

It was a good year for this species. It was first recorded on 22nd May, just one day earlier than in 2022 and the earliest it has ever been recorded on the reserve. It was recorded on several more occasions in May through to the middle of June at the Dragonfly Ponds (PJM). It was recorded on the Willow and River paths in July and early August (PM/BM), with a final record of the season on the Willow Path on 12th August.

Emerald Damselfly (*Lestes sponsa*)

The Emerald Damselfly was only recorded on one occasion – on 1st July on Bruce's Pond (PJM), which was very disappointing when compared to the 11 days it was seen in 2021 and the four days in 2022.

Willow Emerald Damselfly (*Chalcolestes viridis*)

It was a good year for the Willow Emerald Damselfly, with an increase in the number of records compared to 2022, when it was first recorded on the reserve. The first sighting was of a single individual on the Willow Path on 26th July (JWC). Three days later two individuals, one at least of which was a male, were recorded at the border of the Bee Garden and Mike Fisk Meadow (HS/PS). Further sightings through August and into early September were mostly along the Willow Path (PM/BM, Fozzy, JWC, MG/PG, PL/KL). On 3rd September five were seen at the Beach Pond; this included two tandem pairs with the females ovipositing in the branches of the willow tree overhanging the pond (PL/KL). A further three were seen on the same date on the Willow Path (PL/KL). Three were recorded at the same site on 5th September, two of which were in tandem (PM/BM). This was the last sighting for 2023.

Large Red Damselfly (*Pyrrhosoma nymphula*)

As in 2022 it was a disappointing year for this normally common Spring species; it was only recorded on five separate days, the first at the Dragonfly Ponds (Bruce's Pond) on 15th May (PJM), over a fortnight after its earliest ever first day of recording. It was recorded three more times in May, the most individuals being in excess of six, seen on 27th May (PJM). There was just one record of reproductive activity – a pair in tandem at the Dragonfly Ponds on 22nd May (PJM). After 29th May it was not recorded again until 20th July when a single individual was recorded at Bruce's Pond (PM/BM). This was the last date on which it was seen in 2023.

Azure Damselfly (*Coenagrion puella*)

This was definitely an under-recorded species in 2023. A single male seen at the Dragonfly Ponds (Bruce's Pond) on 15th May was the first record of the season (PJM). Interestingly this was a week earlier than the earliest ever record for this species at the reserve. It was sighted on only eight separate days, all at the Dragonfly Ponds and all except one in May and June (PJM). The largest count was on 29th May when 25 males and 12 females were seen. This included five pairs in tandem and six pairs ovipositing (PJM). However, there were estimates of over 100 individuals

on three separate occasions, with eight pairs observed ovipositing on 27th May and in excess of 21 pairs in both tandem and ovipositing on 21st June (PJM). The last sighting was of two males at the Dragonfly Ponds on 1st July (PJM)

Common Blue Damselfly (*Enallagma cyathigerum*)

There was just a single record of this species, a male, on 1st July at the Dragonfly Ponds (PJM).

Blue-tailed Damselfly (*Ischnura elegans*)

This was another disappointing year for records of this species, with it being seen on only six days. It was first recorded on 27th May, when at least half a dozen were observed at the Dragonfly Ponds (PJM), this being the largest number seen on any one day. Two were seen on 29th May but, after that, only singletons were recorded. It was only noted on two dates in June (PJM) and two in July, the last being on 20th July (PM/BM). All sightings were at the Dragonfly Ponds.

Red-eyed Damselfly (*Erythromma najas*)

The Red-eyed Damselfly was seen on just one occasion, when two males were observed at the Willow Path Hide on 4th June (JWC). This was a first for the reserve. Although mainly found in the southern half of Britain it is well-established at sites in Yorkshire such as the Levens and Pocklington canals. It is usually found at water bodies where water-lilies are present.

Small Red-eyed Damselfly (*Erythromma viridulum*)

After two years of no sightings, it was very encouraging that this species was seen on three separate days in 2023, all at the Co-op Pond. The first record was on 12th August (JWC) and four males were seen the following day (JWC). The final record of the season was of a single specimen on 16th August, just four days after it was first seen (MG/PG & PM/BM).

Hairy Dragonfly (*Brachytron pratense*)

This species was seen on just one occasion – a male at the Butterfly Bank on 10th June (JWC). This is a new record for the reserve.

Common Hawker (*Aeshna juncea*)

This species has not been seen at the reserve since 2019. It is a very rare visitor, the reserve being a long way from its normal habitat.

Migrant Hawker (*Aeshna mixta*)

It was a poor year for the Migrant Hawker, only being recorded on four days compared to the eight days recorded in 2022. The first sighting was of two individuals on the Duck Marsh on 2nd September (PM/BM), at least two weeks later than its earliest ever sighting. On 5th September singletons were seen on the Duck Marsh, at the Dragonfly Ponds and at the edge of Tim's Field (PM/BM). Another individual was seen at the Dragonfly Ponds on 13th September (SB) and the final recording was of two individuals on Woodhead Pond on 22nd September (PM/BM), which is almost a month earlier than its latest ever recording.

Southern Hawker (*Aeshna cyanea*)

It was another rather poor year for the Southern Hawker, only being recorded on three separate days. The first sightings were on 5th September – a male by the Visitor Centre (PM/BM) and two females - one on the path to the Manager's Garden (PM/BM) and the other ovipositing on Beach Pond (PM/BM). Another individual was seen the following day on Bruce's Pond (MG/PG). No more sightings were recorded until the final one, on 22nd September, when a male was seen flying at the Dragonfly Ponds (PM/BM).

Brown Hawker (*Aeshna grandis*)

The Brown Hawker was first seen on 7th July, with one on the Duck Marsh and another at the edge of Tim's Field (PM/BM). There were further sightings in July, August and September, with the last individual seen on 22nd September over Tim's Field. On 20th July a pair were seen in tandem on the River Path (PM/BM). Females were observed ovipositing on four occasions – on 20th July at Bruce's Pond, on 24th July at the Dragonfly Ponds (PJM), on 5th September at the Co-op Pond (PM/BM) and on 6th September at the Dragonfly Ponds (MG/PG). The greatest number of individuals recorded on any one day was four on 9th August at the Dragonfly Ponds. This included at least one male and one female (Fozzy).

Emperor Dragonfly (*Anax imperator*)

The first sighting of this species was of a male on 14th June on the drive leading to the Visitor Centre (DW). The next record was three weeks later (on 7th July) when two males were seen, one on the Duck Marsh, the other flying over Co-op Pond (PM/BM). The last sighting, also of a male, was on the Dragonfly Ponds on 24th July (PJM). As in 2022 there were no records of females, the last being seen in 2021.

Four-spotted Chaser (*Libellula quadrimaculata*)

This was an even worse season for records than 2022, with it being recorded on only three separate days. The first sighting was of a female on 27th May at the Dragonfly Ponds (PJM). A male was seen two days later on Bruce's Pond (PJM). There were no records at all in June, the last record being of an individual on 1st July at the Dragonfly Ponds (PJM).

Broad-bodied Chaser (*Libellula depressa*)

It was a reasonably good year for the Broad-bodied Chaser, which was first recorded on 27th May, when both a male and a female were seen at the Dragonfly Ponds (PJM). Indeed, all records in 2023 were from the Dragonfly Ponds. A male was seen on Co-op Pond on 29th May but there were just two days in June when it was recorded (PJM). A singleton was seen on 1st July (PJM) and the final recording was on 7th July when three males and a female were seen, with the female observed ovipositing in Co-op Pond (PM/BM).

Black-tailed Skimmer (*Orthetrum cancellatum*)

It was a very poor year for sightings of the Black-tailed Skimmer, it being recorded on only two occasions, compared with eight in 2022. The first record was of a female on 3rd June at the Dipping Ponds (PJS); the last on 26th July of a female ovipositing in Co-op Pond (MG/PG).

Keeled Skimmer (*Orthetrum coerulescens*)

There have been no records of this species since 2015.

Black Darter (*Sympetrum danae*)

This species was last seen in 2021.

Common Darter (*Sympetrum striolatum*)

As usual, there were a good many sightings of the Common Darter but the numbers recorded were considerably down on those in 2022. It was first recorded on 20th July when a female was seen at Bruce's Pond (PM/BM). It was not seen again until 11th August when eight males and two females were seen at the Dragonfly Ponds, the females being in tandem with males, one pair at Chadwick Pond, the other at the Ditch (PM/BM). This was the greatest number recorded on any one day. There was just one more record in August, also at the Dragonfly Ponds (PJM). There were records on six separate days in September. An ovipositing female was seen on 4th September at Beach Pond (PJM). On 5th September three males and a female were seen at the Dragonfly Ponds (PM/BM) and, on 6th September, three males and three females were seen at the Dipping Ponds (MG/PG). On 25th September, eight

individuals, including a pair in tandem and an ovipositing female, were recorded at the Dragonfly Ponds, the ovipositing female being on Woodhead Pond (PJM). The last recording of the year was on 9th October at the Dragonfly Ponds, when five individuals were seen, including a tandem pair (PJM).

Date	Total	Males	Females	Pairs in Tandem	Ovipositing
1 July	1	1	-	-	-
20 July	1	-	1	-	-
11 August	10	8	2	2	-
21 August	1	-	-	-	-
4 September	2	-	-	-	1
5 September	4	3	1	-	-
6 September	6	3	3	-	-
11 September	3	1	-	-	-
13 September	2	-	-	-	-
25 September	8	2	2	1	1
9 October	5	2	1	1	-

Table 2. Records of the Common Darter in 2023.

Ruddy Darter (*Sympetrum sanguineum*)

There was only one record of the Ruddy Darter, when at least four were seen at the Dragonfly Ponds on 13th September (SB). This compares with just two records in both 2021 and 2022.

Terminology

Exuvia - The shed larval skeleton. Plural: exuviae

Ovipositing - The act of egg-laying.

Tandem pair - When the male attaches to the female at the back of her head before mating and, in many species, after mating as a form of mate guarding.

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

Wheel position - The mating position when the male and the female form a wheel shape with their bodies.

Dragonflies and Damselflies
First and Last Dates (in order of first date seen) - 2023

Species	First recorded	First recorded		Last recorded
		2021	2022	
Large Red Damselfly	15 th May	1	1	20 th July
Azure Damselfly	15 th May	2	2=	1 st July
Banded Demoiselle	22 nd May	3	5	12 th August
Broad-bodied Chaser	27 th May	6	2=	7 th July
Blue-tailed Damselfly	27 th May	4	2=	20 th July
Four-spotted Chaser	27 th May	7=	7	1 st July
Black-tailed Skimmer	3 rd June	7=	8	26 th July
*Red-eyed Damselfly	4 th June	-	-	4 th June
*Hairy Dragonfly	10 th June	-	-	10 th June
Emperor Dragonfly	14 th June	9	10=	24 th July
Common Blue Damselfly	1 st July	5	9	1 st July
Emerald Damselfly	1 st July	12	10=	1 st July
Brown Hawker	7 th July	11	6	22 nd September
Common Darter	20 th July	10	10=	9 th October
Willow Emerald Damselfly	26 th July	-	17	5 th September
Small Red-eyed Damselfly	12 th August	-	-	16 th August
Migrant Hawker	2 nd September	15	16	22 nd September
Southern Hawker	5 th September	14	10=	22 nd September
Ruddy Darter	13 th September	13	10=	13 th September

*First record for the reserve.

Dragonflies and Damselflies
Earliest and Latest Dates

(As at end of 2023)

Species	Earliest Date	Latest date
Large Red Damselfly	22 nd April 2015, 2017, 2019 and 2020	6 th August 2008
Blue-tailed Damselfly	25 th April 2020	23 rd September 2006
Broad-bodied Chaser	30 th April 2011	11 th August 2012
Azure Damselfly	1 st May 2011 and 2019	30 th September 2015
Common Blue Damselfly	9 th May 2020	4 th October 2006
Four-spotted Chaser	9 th May 2020	12 th August 2020
Banded Demoiselle	12 th May 2017	8 th September 2012
Common Darter	23 rd May 2010	13 th November 2021
Emerald Damselfly	24 th May 2019	2 nd October 2015
Emperor Dragonfly	25 th May 2008	29 th September 2007
Black-tailed Skimmer	27 th May 2018	26 th August 2020
Brown Hawker	10 th June 2018	19 th October 2014
*Red-eyed Damselfly	4 th June 2023	4 th June 2023
*Hairy Dragonfly	10 th June 2023	10 th June 2023
Southern Hawker	12 th June 2014	31 st October 2014
*Keeled Skimmer	1 st July 2015	1 st July 2015
Migrant Hawker	3 rd July 2019	12 th November 2006
Ruddy Darter	10 th July 2022	18 th October 2006
*Black Darter	14 th July 2018	27 th September 2013
*Golden-ringed Dragonfly	24 th July 2022	24 July 2022
Willow Emerald Damselfly	26 th July 2023	2 nd October 2022
*Common Hawker	27 th July 2010	18 th September 2004
Small Red-eyed Damselfly	29 th July 2020	27 th August 2019

*Rare visitors to the reserve

New Invertebrate Records for 2023

In 2023 there were few additions to the invertebrates recorded on the Reserve. One was an orthopteran, Roesel's Bush-cricket (*Metrioptera roeselii*) which belongs to the family Tettigoniidae, a group that includes both the grasshoppers and crickets. It is named after August Johann Rosel von Rosenhof, a German entomologist and it is at the northern edge of its range.

An ichneumon wasp *Ephialtes manifestator* (family Ichneumonidae) was recorded. This is an entirely black species with orange legs. There are few records in Britain and this would be a first for Yorkshire. A larva of the Thistle Gall Fly (*Urophora cardui*), belonging to the Tephritidae, was also found. This record is near the northern range limit of this species.

Rodley Nature Reserve Fungi Report for 2023

Most of the records come from the two forays we held in 2023. On 15th October we had a public foray which was heavily oversubscribed due partly to the rather pleasant weather that day. Though I also like to think that there has been a marked increase in interest in fungi over the last few years. Around a hundred people turned up! ..and my usual fellow mycologist was away on holiday. We did our best to cope but in 2024 people will need to book and we'll limit the numbers to twenty odd. We also had a foray for the Rodley Robins on 11th November. The Robins are excellent budding mycologists. They are so good at spotting fungi and ask the best questions.

Rodley NR isn't the sort of place I would naturally choose to do a fungus foray as it lacks extensive, old woodland and/or ancient grasslands but I think we are providing a useful baseline survey. As the reserve matures and develops we are seeing more species in the meadows, along with the maturing hedges and in the willow coppice. Willow, Elder, Alder and Birch are all good species for fungi and we have quite a few examples of these. The few oaks on the reserve also can be productive.

We got Golden and Scarlet Waxcaps as well as Parrot Waxcaps. We've also found Meadow Waxcap this year. On the Robins' foray we found Blackening and Snowy Waxcaps. That means that there are at least six species of Waxcap found on the reserve. Waxcaps and a mix of them are always a good sign of a healthy grassland and I expect the number of species to increase each year.

We have found Common Earthball previously at Rodley but this year we also had two other species - Scaly and Potato Earthball. They all look very similar but it's good to know that there is this diversity of Earthballs on the site.

Although many of the fungi are perennial, the fruiting bodies-the mushrooms only appear for a few days or weeks. The rest of the time they remain in the wood, roots or soil. Some, however have truly perennial fruit bodies that are there on a tree all year round. It's nice to have a few of these 'bankers' when leading a foray, especially if they are fairly spectacular like the Artist's Bracket *Ganoderma adspersum* in the Willow Coppice.

Some of the brackets and crusts seem to be on the increase, not just at Rodley, but nationally. One of these is Yellowing Curtain Crust *Stereum*

subtomentosum. It looks superficially like the very common Turkeytails *Trametes versicolor* but has no pores underneath and turns yellow on the growing edge when pinched.

There are many fungi which go unrecorded because they look little more than black spots on leaves or twigs. Some are very common once you know about them and start to look for them. One example is Willow Barkspot *Diatrype bullata* which I first recorded in 2023 on the reserve. No doubt it has been there all along but as its name implies it is just little dark spots on willow bark which need microscopy to confirm the identity. Hence a lot of these 'spots' slip through the net.

Another couple of good species found on the Robins' foray were the Silvery Knight *Tricholoma argyraceum* under Hazel and the Burgundydrop Bonnet *Mycena haematopus*. Both required agile Robins to scabble under the densest hedges. In the latter species, both the English and specific scientific name refer to the red latex that oozes from the stem if pricked with a pin. *Haematopus* literally meaning blood foot.

Another species that seems to have been common this year (but was not noticed on the forays) is Alder Tongue *Taphrinaalni*. Look out for long twisting tongue like projections coming out of the alder 'cones', the female flowers.

Andy Woodall
February 2024

FUNGUS FORAY AT RODLEY 15th October 2023

Scaly Earthball *Scleroderma verrucosum*
Potato Earthball *Scleroderma bovista*
Wrinkled Club *Clavulina rugosa*
Artist's Bracket *Ganoderma adspersum*
Blushing Bracket *Daedaleopsis confragosa*
Turkeytails *Trametes versicolor*
Yellowing Curtain Crust *Stereum subtomentosum*
Blackfoot Polypore *Cerioporus varius*
Jelly Ear *Auricularia auricula-judae*
Yellow Brain *Tremella mesenterica* (on *Peniophora* species)
Parrot Waxcap *Gliophorus psittacinus*
Scarlet Waxcap *Hygrocybe coccinea*
Golden Waxcap *Hygrocybe chlorophana*
Grey or Drab Bonnet *Mycena aetites*

Angel's Bonnet *Mycena arcangeliana*
Iodine Bonnet *Mycena filipes*
Ivory Bonnet *Mycena flavoalba*
The Deceiver *Laccaria laccata*
Velvetfoot Poisonpie *Hebeloma velutipes*
Poisonpie *Hebeloma crustuliniforme* sl.
Glistening Inkcap *Coprinellus micaceus*
Yellow Field Cap (aka Yellow Cowpat Toadstool) *Bolbitius titubans*
Sulphur Tuft *Hypholoma fasciculare*
Fibre-cap *Inocybe* species
Willow Webcap *Cortinarius hemitrichus*
Webcap *Cortinarius* species
Ergot *Claviceps purpurea*
Holly Speckle *Trochila ilicina*
Lemon Disco *Calycina citrina*
Willow Barkspot *Diatrype bullata*

RODLEY ROBINS' FORAY

Rodley Nature Reserve

10-12 on 11th November 2023

Potato Earthball *Scleroderma bovista* (in coppice)
Scaly Earthball *Scleroderma verrucosum* (remains of an old one)
Wrinkled Club *Clavulina rugosa*
Turkeytails *Trametes versicolor*
Hairy Curtain Crust *Stereum hirsutum*
Yellowing Curtain Crust *Stereum subtomentosum*
Jelly Ear *Auricularia auricula-judae*
Common Jelly Spot *Dacrymyces stillatus*
Blackening Waxcap *Hygrocybe conica*
Snowy Waxcap *Cuphophyllus virgineus*
Silvery Knight *Tricholoma argyraceum* (under Hazel)
Common Bonnet *Mycena galericulata*
Angels Bonnet *Mycena arcangeliana*
Drab Bonnet *Mycena aetites*
Ivory Bonnet *Mycena flavoalba*
Burgundydrop Bonnet *Mycena haematopus*
Deceiver *Laccaria laccata*
Oyster Mushroom *Pleurotus ostreatus*
Wood Blewit *Lepista nuda*
Pinkgill *Entoloma* species (too far gone to tell which)
Round-spored Oysterling *Crepidotus cesatii*
Poisonpie *Hebeloma* sp.
Conicap *Conocybe* species
Blue Roundhead *Stropharia caerulea*
Candlesnuff Fungus *Xylaria hypoxylon*

Photograph Credits

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Lapwing	Barbara Murphy
Little Owl	Peter Humphrey
Orange Tip	Barbara Murphy
Pebble Hook-tip	Dave Nesham
Red Admiral	Barbara Murphy
Roesel's Bush-cricket	Anne Riley
Small Red-eyed Damselfly	Peter Humphrey
Yellow Brain Fungus	Barbara Murphy
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