



Normal Reserve Opening Times:

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

Visitor Centre

10am - 4pm

Trustees:

Kirsty McLeod - Treasurer  
David Nesham  
John Brook  
Peter Murphy  
Graham Barlow  
Ian Willoughby  
Jerry Knapp  
Maggie Bellwood  
John Hart

Company Secretary - Peter Murphy  
Report Editor - Peter Murphy

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Photographs:

Front cover: Kestrel - from an original photograph by Barbara Murphy

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## Introduction

The Coronavirus continued to affect all our lives through 2021. Following a further government announcement on 4<sup>th</sup> January to introduce a national lockdown the decision was taken to close the Reserve again with immediate effect and suspend all non-essential volunteering activities. This was done after a great deal of consideration and after further risk assessment. Following the Government's Roadmap guidance and an easing of restrictions the Reserve grounds were able to be re-opened from Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> March but only on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons from 1pm to 5pm. The Visitor Centre remained closed but from Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> April a sales table was set up in the doorway to provide hot and cold drinks and a limited range of merchandise and bird seed.

Fortunately, one big project that was able to go ahead in the early part of the year was the Duck Marsh development. With the area forming part of a flood plain several permissions needed to be obtained from the Environment Agency before work could commence. Once these had been received work got underway and machinery moved on site on 8<sup>th</sup> March. The project took a little over two weeks to complete and the area had been filled with water from the Lagoon by the end of the month. This project was made possible thanks to the generous support of Yorkshire Water under their 5 year Biodiversity Enhancement Programme and we must take this opportunity to thank them again for both their investment and technical assistance without which the development would not have taken place.

With its spits, islets, varying water depths and larger area of water it was hoped this new wetland area would be more attractive to wading birds such as Little Ringed Plovers and Common Sandpipers, species which had been increasingly hard to find here in recent years. So far it has exceeded all expectations. The re-opening of the hides from Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> June enabled visitors to have excellent views of a range of species including some unlikely ones and wading birds did not disappoint. Little Ringed Plovers had their best year for a very long time; Green Sandpipers were regular visitors; a Dunlin photographed on 12<sup>th</sup> July was the first record since 2012; a Great White Egret put in an appearance on several dates and Little Egrets could be guaranteed most days.

We are constantly checking all waterbodies on the Reserve, both large and small, for signs of the very invasive alien water plant *Crassula helmsii* - New Zealand Pygmy weed. Only a tiny piece on a bird's foot is sufficient

to spread it from one water body to another. It is a serious threat to wetland habitats everywhere. Unfortunately, it was discovered at the Dragonfly Ponds some time ago. To make sure no trace remains the remedy is quite drastic. This year it was found necessary to drain one of the larger ponds after spiking the liner. A new liner will be laid over it in 2022.

Back in February an event occurred further downstream which would affect life on the river for the remainder of the year. A very wet January and heavy snow on the night of 1<sup>st</sup> February followed by a rapid thaw saw the river running very high. The following weekend the weir at Newlay partially collapsed under the pressure of water. As a result the river level below the Rodley weir dropped considerably and where there were once deep glides there were now rippling shallows - ideal conditions for Dippers, a bird which had been hard to find here in recent years. The Dippers responded and it proved to be one of the best years for this species with numerous sightings of one and on occasions two birds together.

The odd new species is added to the Rodley bird list most years but a White-tailed Eagle was perhaps the last bird we would have expected. However, one did turn up on 5<sup>th</sup> May - an immature bird which was spotted from the Willow Path as it drifted over from the north, circled overhead and then flew off in a westerly direction. Two other new species were also recorded this year - Yellow-browed Warbler and Yellow-legged Gull, the former heard and seen briefly on the Willow Path on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> October but the latter a frequent visitor from the middle of April for several weeks. Among birds doing well here the Common Buzzard continues to go from strength to strength and can now be regarded almost as resident. Sightings were reported on a record number of dates and a pair again nested successfully in trees on the far bank of the river raising at least two young. The Kestrel population has declined significantly in recent times but it continues to do well here. A pair again nested this year raising three young.

Having been open to the public on just Wednesday and Saturday afternoons since 31<sup>st</sup> March and after careful consideration the decision was taken to extend the Reserve open hours to Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays from 9.00am to 5.00pm from 26<sup>th</sup> June. The Visitor Centre opened from the same date (10.00am to 4.00pm) but with no seating inside at this stage. However, it did give visitors their first opportunity to see live images from the new Barn Owl box on the Scrubland on a monitor in the centre where five chicks would successfully fledge.

Several hard paths have been constructed in recent years to make access easier for all visitors but particularly so for wheelchair users. This year another such path was constructed by the Reserve's volunteers from the Dipping Ponds along the edge of Tim's Field and the Coppice down to the end of the Willow Path. We are grateful to the Co-op Local Community Fund for again providing the funding for this project.

Involving children in the natural world is an important part of our work on the Reserve and school visits have always proved very popular. Sadly, none were able to take place in 2020. However, they were able to resume this year, the first ones taking place in June, albeit with reduced numbers of children on each visit. Our children's club, the Rodley Robins were also able to resume their monthly activities, starting with a Spring Bird Walk on 8<sup>th</sup> May, this the first time the group had been together since March last year.

Some of the big events such as the Easter Egg Hunt, Birdfair and Summer Fair were again unable to take place this year but it was possible to organise a few smaller ones in July at fairly short notice - the first of two Moth Trap Opening Events on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> and the first of three Bat Nights on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup>. We do know how popular the Bat Nights can be and so pre-booking for these is essential and numbers of participants limited. All three were very quickly fully booked. It was also possible to resume pond dipping for children from the end of June, though this was all supervised by volunteers this year and at fixed times.

Aireborough Rotary Club's annual Easter Egg Hunt at the Reserve had been very popular for a number of years, raising valuable funds for local charities. With an easing of restrictions it was decided to run a similar event in the autumn this year and the answer proved to be the Autumn Seed Trail. For the first time a pre-booking system was used, giving families a start time to enable numbers to be spread out throughout the duration of the event and avoid overcrowding at any point. The event took place on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> September; it was blessed with a warm, sunny day and proved to be a great success.

Two smaller events took place on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> October - Pie and Peas followed by the ever popular Fungus Foray. More than thirty adults and a small number of children spent two hours looking for and identifying the various species found on the Reserve with the help of experts Andy and Ian. This event too enjoyed pleasant weather. A Halloween Event on Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> October wasn't as lucky with the weather with heavy rain drenching the hardy volunteers setting it up. However, the sun did emerge

later and the event was well supported. The final event of the year was the Christmas Fair held on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> December. Despite a wet day this too enjoyed excellent support from the public and raised valuable funds for the Reserve. We are grateful to Rodley Cricket Club for allowing us to use their parking facilities for these bigger events and, of course, to our volunteers who work so hard to organise them, often in very trying conditions.

Writing this in April 2022, just like last year, the Reserve was closed again for the first three months of the year but it wasn't due to the Coronavirus this time. Sadly, the long threatened development of the Airedale Mills site (formerly Barkers factory) next to the entrance to the Reserve is finally about to happen; the old swing bridge over the canal has gone and it appears its replacement is going to take rather longer than we were originally led to believe. With access only available on foot along the tow path the Reserve re-opened at the beginning of the month on a trial basis on Sundays only which is far from ideal for many of our visitors. The Trust is working closely with local councillors, Leeds City Council planning officers and Yorkshire Water to ensure rapid progress is made to protect the interests of the Reserve, its users and local communities. Once the new bridge is in place we will, of course, then have many weeks of noise and inconvenience to look forward to as work starts on the housing development itself.

However, we cannot end without saying a big thank you to all our volunteers and visitors who have supported us throughout yet another challenging year and, of course, the Friends of Rodley Nature Reserve who have continued to raise the valuable funds needed to maintain this wonderful place.

## Rodley Nature Reserve - Monthly Roundup for 2021

### January

Following a further Government announcement on 4<sup>th</sup> January to introduce a national lockdown again the decision was taken to close the Reserve with immediate effect and suspend all but essential volunteering activities. Two tasks that need to be done early in the year are the cleaning out of the Sand Martin nesting bank and clearing the vegetation on the islands on the Lagoon in readiness for the return of the Oystercatchers which can be as early as the end of January. Fortunately, these two tasks were completed during a brief improvement in the weather in what proved to be a very cold, wet, icy and sometimes snowy month.

Snow and ice were the main problems in the first half of the month with temperatures most days between 1°C and 3°C and much of the wetlands frozen over for several days. There was a brief respite but a heavy fall of snow throughout the day on 14<sup>th</sup> left a good covering of around four inches. Temperatures did rise from 16<sup>th</sup> and a rapid thaw saw most of the snow gone by 17<sup>th</sup>. This resulted in a rapid rise in the river, not helped by Storm Christoff which brought two solid days of rain on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>. The river finally burst its banks on 21<sup>st</sup> flooding the farmland behind the bridge car park and bringing in large numbers of gulls. With very low overnight temperatures again for a time most of the wetlands were frozen over from 23<sup>rd</sup> but part of the Lagoon remained free of ice throughout. Temperatures did reach 9°C on 27<sup>th</sup> but a bitterly cold easterly wind in the last two days of the month saw daytime temperatures struggling to get above zero.

A limited amount of survey work was carried out by individual volunteers throughout the month during security visits and the wildlife, fortunately, was unaffected by the lockdown. On the wetlands a count of 28 Tufted Ducks on the Lagoon on 2<sup>nd</sup> prior to lockdown was the highest for two years though numbers soon dropped to less than half this number some days. Coot numbers had been unusually low in the second half of last year but there was an improvement this month, numbers reaching 21 on the Lagoon on 31<sup>st</sup> with only a small area free of ice. The same small ice-free area and the middle island hosted a record January count of 80 Gadwall on the same date.

There were some good Goosander counts on the Lagoon this month. Birds gather here towards dusk in the winter months but the gatherings had become smaller in recent years. Twenty here on 17<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> were the highest counts since January 2013. With the river running very high

and coloured for much of the month some birds could be found here earlier in the day but a count of 16 at 3pm on 28<sup>th</sup> was exceptional.

Other birds recorded on the Lagoon in January included Goldeneye, Shoveler, Wigeon and Pochard but all in very low numbers. Goldeneyes were seen on five dates with three on 22<sup>nd</sup> and two on 28<sup>th</sup>, Shovelers on five dates with three on 29<sup>th</sup> and Wigeon on just two dates with three on 25<sup>th</sup> and two on 31<sup>st</sup>. A male Pochard was recorded on 17<sup>th</sup>.

When it wasn't frozen over the Wet Grassland was the best place to find Teal, 20 here on 27<sup>th</sup> being the best count of the month. Other wetland birds were hard to find. There were no records of Water Rail. Kingfishers can be infrequent at this time of year, particularly when river levels are high but there were just two records on the wetlands. One was seen on the Reedbed on 12<sup>th</sup> and on 17<sup>th</sup> there were sightings on the Lagoon, Reedbed and Wet Grassland of what may have been the same bird. On 23<sup>rd</sup> one was spotted in a sheltered bay on the river with the water running very high and coloured. Little Egrets are not easy to find at this time of year but single birds were recorded on three dates, one of these a flyover. Snipe were accidentally flushed during essential habitat management work on several occasions with five the best count.

December last year produced a record count of 216 Canada Geese on the farmland. Numbers remained high into this month in the absence of any culling and 206 were counted there on 25<sup>th</sup>. Greylag Goose numbers peaked at around 100 on 31<sup>st</sup>. A single Pink-footed Goose was picked out among a flock of Greylags flying around the Reserve on 4<sup>th</sup>.

There was a reasonable amount of raptor activity. Up to three Common Buzzards and three Red Kites were recorded. A Sparrowhawk was seen on six dates and a male Kestrel was seen on the light by the east facing nest box in the compound on 22<sup>nd</sup>. Three days later a bird was calling as it flew into the box. A Peregrine Falcon was recorded flying off the Reserve with prey on 22<sup>nd</sup> and a female Merlin provided excellent views perched on the River Path on the same date.

Little Owls are always hard to find at this time of year and there were no sightings. Barn Owls were in residence at their new box on the Scrubland throughout the month and there was ample evidence of their presence in the thatched gazebo and Mike Sheldon Hide in the form of pellets and droppings. Daytime sightings of Tawny Owls are few and far between but one was seen flying low along the edge of the Coppice fence facing Tim's Field around 7.30am on 27<sup>th</sup>.



Woodcocks can sometimes be seen in the winter months flying to and from the Coppice towards dusk. They are also occasionally flushed at the edge of the Coppice, as was the case on 12<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> with two on the latter date. The Coppice is also proving popular with Roe Deer these days, despite the supposedly deer-proof fence. A young male and two females were seen here on 10<sup>th</sup> and four were reported on 13<sup>th</sup>. There was a lot of both Roe Deer and Fox activity throughout the month. Foxes were seen on nine dates with two together on three dates. On 26<sup>th</sup> one was watched chasing nine Pheasants off Tim's Field. A Rabbit caught on a camera trap near the Manager's Garden at midnight on 31<sup>st</sup> was an unusual record.

Although much of the crop had been flattened by snow small birds continued to visit Tim's Field for seed with Linnets, Tree Sparrows, Reed Buntings and Chaffinches all recorded. Linnet numbers were disappointingly low for the time of year but as many as 19 Chaffinches were counted, these almost certainly migrants as this species is rarely seen here in these numbers except in winter.

To end the month with an unusual record, on 30<sup>th</sup> an adult Mute Swan was discovered on one of the Dipping Ponds. The bird looked very healthy but was still there the following day breaking the ice. If it was still there on 1<sup>st</sup> February the plan was to try and walk it down to the Wet Grassland and lock it in!

Footnote: The mission was carried out successfully on 1<sup>st</sup> February

## **February**

Heavy snow overnight on 1<sup>st</sup> left a covering of some four to five inches by the next morning but this was followed by a rapid thaw and several very grey, murky days. Heavy rain on 6<sup>th</sup> coupled with snow melt saw the river running very high and coloured with further flooding on the farmland. Temperatures plummeted from 7<sup>th</sup>, rarely exceeding 1°C and with a fresh easterly wind and frequent snow showers. Water levels were very high on the Reedbed and Wet Grassland for a time and much of the eastern end of the Dragonfly Ponds was under water. Overnight temperatures fell as low as minus 7°C leaving much of the wetlands frozen over and less than half the Lagoon ice-free.

Temperatures did start to rise from the middle of the month reaching 14°C on 24<sup>th</sup> but often with a strong, blustery south westerly wind. It stayed mild to the end of the month, the 28<sup>th</sup> being a beautiful, clear, calm day.

The first Oystercatcher arrived on the middle island on the Lagoon on 4<sup>th</sup> and was joined by a second bird three days later. Two Lapwings were also there on 5<sup>th</sup> but on 20<sup>th</sup> a total of 56 flew in and circled the Reserve before heading off in an easterly direction. Great Crested Grebes typically arrive on the Lagoon in February and the first bird was seen on 18<sup>th</sup>, just two days earlier than last year. Two further birds arrived on 28<sup>th</sup>, one of these a sub-adult. The two adults were seen displaying on the same date.

February can be a good month to see some of the scarcer ducks but numbers were generally disappointing. Goldeneyes were recorded on several dates with five on 14<sup>th</sup> and seven on 20<sup>th</sup> the best counts. Two male Pochards were on the Lagoon on 4<sup>th</sup>, a male and female on 14<sup>th</sup> and a single male on four dates. No more than two Wigeon were recorded and then only on less than a handful of dates. Three Shovelers were present on 13<sup>th</sup> but otherwise just a single male.

With the river again running high and coloured in the early part of the month 11 Goosanders gathered on the Lagoon at 2.30pm on 4<sup>th</sup>. A few were seen most days throughout the month with two decent counts of 12 on 13<sup>th</sup> and 11 on 19<sup>th</sup>.

Teal counts continued to rise with 36 recorded during a WeBS visit on 14<sup>th</sup>. Tufted Duck numbers on the Lagoon reached 24 on 14<sup>th</sup> during the same visit but by the end of the month just four were present. Gadwall numbers too dropped considerably in the latter part of the month. A count of 24 Coots on 16<sup>th</sup> was the highest of the year so far.

Among the other wetland birds Water Rails were again elusive for much of the month but one was heard calling on the Lagoon on 25<sup>th</sup> and two were squabbling on the Duck Marsh the following day. Three Snipe seen at the edge of the Lagoon on 28<sup>th</sup> was the only record and there was also just one Kingfisher sighting - a bird flying down the Reedbed on 20<sup>th</sup>. A Little Egret was on the Wet Grassland on 21<sup>st</sup> and on the bottom island on the Lagoon on 26<sup>th</sup>. A Black Swan flying round the Lagoon on 12<sup>th</sup> was a surprise sighting and the first for 11 months.

On the farmland a count of 250+ Greylag Geese on 1<sup>st</sup> was the highest number ever recorded. Numbers started to fall after this date with 150+ on 10<sup>th</sup> and less than half that during a WeBS visit on 14<sup>th</sup>. On 28<sup>th</sup> a bird was on a nest on the middle island on the Lagoon. Canada Geese were also present in record numbers with c240 on 10<sup>th</sup> and c310 on 12<sup>th</sup>. A Pink-

footed Goose was picked out among the Canadas and Greylags on several dates with three on 21<sup>st</sup>.

Two scarce gulls were a highlight this month. A second winter Mediterranean Gull on the flooded farmland on 19<sup>th</sup> and on the Lagoon on 21<sup>st</sup> was only the second record for the Reserve. An adult Caspian Gull on the farmland on 28<sup>th</sup> followed one sighting in 2019 and three in 2020.

As regards raptors, it was an excellent month for Common Buzzards with birds seen on 12 dates and up to three recorded. Red Kites were seen on six dates with three on 27<sup>th</sup>. There was also a good deal of Kestrel activity throughout the month with birds back in residence in their box in the compound.

The Barn Owl box on the Scrubland was monitored regularly, both mornings and evenings. Birds were again in residence throughout. On 28<sup>th</sup>, most unusually, both were out hunting the Scrubland in bright sunshine around 5pm but “gangs” of Magpies and a possible female Merlin gave them no peace. There were again no reports of Little Owls on the Reserve but two were seen close by on 1<sup>st</sup>.

Other sightings included a Treecreeper in riverside trees on 8<sup>th</sup>, a Chiffchaff on two dates, a Woodcock in the Coppice on three dates, a single Redpoll flying over on 26<sup>th</sup>, a Curlew flying north west over the Visitor Centre on the same date and a Grey Wagtail on the riverbank on 28<sup>th</sup>. Winter thrushes were unusually hard to find. Ten Redwings were by the Lagoon on 8<sup>th</sup> and 13 flew in over the river bridge on 20<sup>th</sup> but Fieldfares were conspicuous by their absence.

A Song Thrush singing on the Butterfly Bank in the last week of the month and a pair of Long-tailed Tits nest building on the River Path were early signs of spring approaching. Tree Sparrows were also nest building in the camera box on the Visitor Centre in the last few days of the month. The Linnet flock on Tim’s Field reached around 40 in the latter part of the month and at least 15 Chaffinches were among other birds visiting for seed.

Mammal-wise, there were further sightings of up to three Roe Deer in the Coppice this month. Three were also seen on Tim’s Field on 1<sup>st</sup> and on the Wet Grassland on 14<sup>th</sup>. A Rabbit again put in an appearance, this time in the Coppice on 28<sup>th</sup>. Foxes were reported on six dates with two on the Scrubland on 12<sup>th</sup>.

The collapse of the weir downstream at Newlay had resulted in a considerable drop in the water level below the Rodley weir which was particularly noticeable along the River Path as flood water ran off. How this would affect bird life on the river with more shallow, streamy sections remained to be seen.

## **March**

The month started on a cold, misty note with daytime temperatures as low as 2°/3°C, not helped by a chilly easterly breeze. The end of the month was in sharp contrast with daytime temperatures as high as 20°C on 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> and the first overwintered butterflies out in some numbers. Parts of the UK enjoyed the 2<sup>nd</sup> warmest March day on record, temperatures hitting 24.5°C in some parts. In between it became very windy from 10<sup>th</sup> with strong to gale force westerly winds and squally showers. Temperatures did reach double figures on 15<sup>th</sup> and there were some quite pleasant days with good sunny spells but it became much more unsettled again for a time from 26<sup>th</sup> with wind and heavy rain at times.

However, there was considerably less rainfall than in the previous two months which at least meant the ground was dry enough to prevent heavy machinery working on the Duck Marsh development digging the ground up too much. Work started on 8<sup>th</sup> and was completed by 25<sup>th</sup>.

There was inevitably some disturbance to wildlife and wildfowl numbers on the Lagoon remained low with even the usually numerous Gadwall thin on the ground most days. A best count of 36 on 24<sup>th</sup> was well down on the record counts for the same month in 2019 and 2020. However, it was still worth looking out for some of the scarcer ducks and up to three male Goldeneyes were on the Lagoon some days. Pochard were harder to find with just a pair on two dates, as were Shovelers with just a single male on two dates and a pair on one date. A few Teal were to be found on the Wet Grassland some days and 12 were on the Lagoon on 22<sup>nd</sup>. A count of 12 Goosanders there during the evening on 6<sup>th</sup> was high for the time of year and three pairs were seen on the river on 20<sup>th</sup>.

By the last week of the month the Great Crested Grebes had constructed a nest out in open water attached to one of the buoys used to moor the tern rafts. Two rafts were, nevertheless, successfully launched and attached to the remaining buoys close by on 29<sup>th</sup>.

Still on the wetlands, a Little Egret was seen throughout the month but there were no reports of Kingfishers or Water Rails. Jack Snipe can be

hard to spot but on 8<sup>th</sup> one was accidentally flushed by contractors on the Duck Marsh. Two Oystercatchers were present throughout the month with a third bird on occasions. Two Lapwings were on the middle island on the Lagoon most days and three additional birds were on the farmland on 23<sup>rd</sup>. A Green Sandpiper was seen in the Reedbed on 24<sup>th</sup> and three Snipe were accidentally flushed at the edge of the Lagoon on 14<sup>th</sup> during a WeBS visit.

Winter visitors can still be numerous in March and good numbers of Redwings and Fieldfares can be seen on the farmland some years. This year a single Fieldfare was seen on just one date as were 18 Redwings. A flock of 59 Whooper Swans flew over the Lagoon in a north westerly direction on 19<sup>th</sup> en route to their breeding grounds in Iceland.

As winter visitors disappeared the first summer visitors started to arrive. The first Sand Martin was seen on 20<sup>th</sup> and a few more birds were seen daily thereafter with around 40 on 31<sup>st</sup>. Two Swallows over the Duck Marsh development on 23<sup>rd</sup> were the earliest sighting of this species by one day. The first singing Chiffchaff was heard near the river bridge as early as 1<sup>st</sup> and from 15<sup>th</sup> at least two were singing on the Reserve. Six were counted on 31<sup>st</sup>. The first Blackcap was heard by the river bridge on 30<sup>th</sup> and the following day four were singing round the Reserve.

Other sightings included a Cetti's Warbler heard and seen in trees near the Reedbed on 1<sup>st</sup>, a Goldcrest on 14<sup>th</sup>, a Grey Wagtail on the riverbank on two dates, a Green Woodpecker on 24<sup>th</sup> - a scarce bird here, a Curlew calling over the farmland on 22<sup>nd</sup> and two Lesser Redpolls on 27<sup>th</sup>. Little Owls had proved elusive but one was spotted at the corner of Poplar Field near the Manager's Garden on 31<sup>st</sup> - this the first sighting of the year. Geese numbers dropped considerably this month but a single Pink-footed Goose was spotted on five dates. Roe Deer were reported on a number of occasions with further sightings in the Coppice. A Fox was seen on seven dates.

Tim's Field was ploughed on 22<sup>nd</sup> bringing in at least 12 and possibly as many as 20 Pied Wagtails to feed on invertebrates. Six had been counted on the farmland muck heap at the beginning of the month. The field continued to attract a small flock of Linnets and more than 50 were still feeding there on 27<sup>th</sup>.

There was a lot of raptor activity some days. On 5<sup>th</sup> a Peregrine Falcon was spotted over the Wet Grassland and far woodland at the same time as four Red Kites and a Common Buzzard. The latter were seen on 15

dates with three birds on several occasions and four on one date. Kestrels were in residence and very evident throughout the month. On 7<sup>th</sup> one was observed harassing a Barn Owl hunting over the Scrubland at 5pm and on two occasions one was seen perched on top of the Barn Owl nest box. Two Barn Owls were in residence throughout the month. An Osprey flying low over the Lagoon in a north westerly direction on 30<sup>th</sup> was a nice record.

Now filled with water, the newly developed wetland, which was formerly the Duck Marsh, was looking very different by the end of the month with its small gravel topped islands looking ideal for visiting waders.

## **April**

After the very warm end to March the start of April was very different with a chilly north easterly breeze and temperatures no higher than 9°C. It was to get even chillier with wintery showers and a maximum of just 5°C some days. Cold clear nights and frosts were a feature throughout the month and it turned out to be the frostiest April for at least 60 years. The buddleias outside the Visitor Centre took a beating and all the fresh growth was scorched by the frosts. It was certainly a very dry and sunny month overall with the bulk of the rainfall in a period of just two hours during the evening on 27<sup>th</sup>.

Identifying summer visitors from their songs can be a bit of a challenge early in the season. However, telling a Blackcap from a Garden Warbler or a Sedge Warbler from a Reed Warbler does get easier as the spring wears on. Chiffchaffs and Blackcaps sounded to be present in good numbers but, like last April, Willow Warblers were again thin on the ground. The first bird was seen on 5<sup>th</sup> April but there were no reports of more than one singing bird in the Coppice, this usually a stronghold for this species.

Garden Warblers usually arrive a bit later and the first birds were reported on 22<sup>nd</sup>. The first Common Whitethroats were heard at two of their regular sites in brambles near the Manager's Garden and at the edge of the Scrubland two days later. The first Sedge Warbler was singing in the Reedbed on 22<sup>nd</sup> and two Reed Warblers were reported there on 24<sup>th</sup>.

As regards the hirundines, four House Martins were over the Lagoon on 7<sup>th</sup> but there were no other sightings of more than two birds. Sand Martins were much more numerous with 89 new holes counted in the nesting bank on the Lagoon on 21<sup>st</sup>. A few Swallows were seen most days with a best count of nine over the Lagoon on 28<sup>th</sup>.

On the wetlands all eyes were on the “new” Duck Marsh and it soon attracted its first visitors, among them two Little Ringed Plovers on 3<sup>rd</sup> and a Common Sandpiper on 11<sup>th</sup>. Less expected visitors were 11 Goosanders on one of the islets during the evening on 21<sup>st</sup> and 12 there on 29<sup>th</sup>, unusual gatherings at this time of year. A Yellow-legged Gull there on 15<sup>th</sup> was a new species for the Reserve. This bird was seen on several dates subsequently but was often harassed by Lesser Black-backed Gulls. One or two Lapwings and Oystercatchers were to be seen on the islets most days with four Oystercatchers counted there on 10<sup>th</sup>. A Snipe was spotted on two dates and a Coot and Mallard were on nests in the reeds round the Kingfisher nesting bank from 18<sup>th</sup>.

On the Lagoon the first Great Crested Grebe chick was spotted on the back of one of the adults on 24<sup>th</sup> and a couple of days later two could be seen. Sadly, there were no reports of Common Terns and both rafts were taken over by nesting Canada Geese. A male Wigeon paid a visit on 21<sup>st</sup> but duck numbers generally were on the low side with a best count of just 28 Gadwall, nearly half of these on the “new” Duck Marsh. Tufted Duck numbers on the Lagoon did reach 14 on 26<sup>th</sup>, this the best April count since 2018.

The Mute Swans have had a difficult time here in recent years but one pair chose a nest site on the middle island on the Lagoon this month and a bird was sitting from 11<sup>th</sup>. By 21<sup>st</sup> birds were on two more nests on the Wet Grassland and at the western end of the “new” Duck Marsh.

There was at last some Kingfisher activity, a bird being seen on four dates but Water Rails remained elusive. A Little Egret was seen on nine dates. Having dropped considerably last month geese numbers suddenly increased again and a count of 46 Greylags on 4<sup>th</sup> proved to be the highest ever April count. A single Pink-footed Goose was present throughout the month.

Other sightings this month included a Little Owl in the eaves of the small building in the compound on 6<sup>th</sup> and in the Manager’s Garden on 30<sup>th</sup> - these only the second and third records this year. Nuthatches are scarce birds here but one called for some time in trees in the Manager’s Garden on 11<sup>th</sup> without showing itself. A Goldcrest was seen on two dates and a pair of Mandarin Ducks on the canal by the Reserve entrance on 25<sup>th</sup> was an interesting record. There had been just two Dipper sightings in the last three years but one was seen on the river from the River Path on 26<sup>th</sup>. Sightings of Curlews are few these days and most are of flyovers, as was

the case this month, three birds flying over in an easterly direction on 18<sup>th</sup>. Rook sightings too are few and far between but two were spotted flying over on 24<sup>th</sup>. A small flock of Linnets continued to visit Tim's Field for seed in the early part of the month with 34 counted there on 10<sup>th</sup>.

Long-tailed Tits are among the early nesters and there was a lot of activity in bushes on the Tansy Bank across the road from the Visitor Centre this month, a pair constructing a well concealed nest in a small holly bush there. At least two further nests were found round the Reserve. The Tree Sparrows were in residence in the camera nest box on the wall of the Visitor Centre and on 14<sup>th</sup> one was seen entering a nest box in the Rodley Robins garden.

It was another excellent month for Common Buzzards with birds reported on 16 dates and three birds on several occasions. By way of comparison, Red Kites were recorded on just five dates. As regards the smaller raptors, a Kestrel was seen at or near the nest box in the compound on four dates but there was only one reported sighting in the second half of the month. Sparrowhawks were very active and were recorded on nine dates.

Among the mammals, Roe Deer were seen on nine dates with three together on one occasion. Foxes were reported on six dates with two on Tim's Field on 2<sup>nd</sup>. Weasels are quite common on the Reserve but one on the Willow Path on 10<sup>th</sup> was, surprisingly, the first record this year.

## **May**

In sharp contrast to last month May was a very wet month. There were some chilly nights too with overnight frosts and daytime temperatures as low as 8°C in the first week. There was thunder, lightning and heavy rain for a time overnight on 11<sup>th</sup>. The weather did finally improve in the last three days of the month, temperatures reaching 21°C on 31<sup>st</sup> - a beautiful, warm, sunny day.

On the wetlands the "new" Duck Marsh was again very much the focus of attention, though with the hides still closed watching from the Willow Path through the increasing amount of foliage was never easy. A Little Ringed Plover put in another appearance on 11<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> and a Common Sandpiper on 5<sup>th</sup>. A Snipe spotted there on 1<sup>st</sup> was to be the last record of the spring. One or two Lapwings were seen daily and on 23<sup>rd</sup> four young were reported. The area continued to appeal to Goosanders with six "redheads" on one of the islands on 15<sup>th</sup> and 12 there on 30<sup>th</sup>.



The “new” Duck Marsh was also popular with the larger gulls and numbers were particularly high this year. Up to 15 Lesser Black-backed Gulls were counted and around 20 Herring Gulls on one occasion. A Yellow-legged Gull was present throughout the month.

On the Lagoon it became evident early in the month that the Great Crested Grebes had three chicks and not two as originally thought. Four Mute Swan cygnets were seen there for the first time on 19<sup>th</sup> but only three were present at the end of the month. Sadly, the two pairs on the Duck Marsh and Wet Grassland were unsuccessful. Duck numbers on the Lagoon were low most days but a male Shoveler did put in an appearance on two dates. Gadwall numbers fluctuated throughout the month with only a few double figure counts but one family of young did appear on the Wet Grassland on 29<sup>th</sup>. Two Common Terns were reported on one of the rafts on 9<sup>th</sup> but didn't stay. Two Oystercatcher chicks were seen on the middle island on 15<sup>th</sup>. By the middle of the month 116 Sand Martin nest holes had been excavated in the nesting bank.

A Little Egret was reported on the Wet Grassland on five dates and a Kingfisher was seen on five dates but Water Rails failed to put in an appearance. A Dipper was again seen on the river from the River Path on 8<sup>th</sup> and a family of three tiny Goosander ducklings was reported on the river by the bridge on 18<sup>th</sup>.

Goose numbers were much higher than in the same period last year and a count of 49 Greylags on 22<sup>nd</sup> was the highest ever for May. The first family of four goslings was seen on the Lagoon at the beginning of the month along with the first family of six Canada goslings.

Swifts are among the last of the summer visitors to arrive and the first eight birds were seen over the Reserve on 8<sup>th</sup>. Among the scarcer summer visitors a Lesser Whitethroat was reported on 1<sup>st</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. Other summer visitors were already well established and both Reed and Sedge Warblers could be heard on all the wetland areas this month.

It was an interesting month for birds of prey but a White-tailed Sea Eagle was the last species anyone expected to see. On 5<sup>th</sup> an immature bird drifted over from the north, circled over the Reserve dwarfing a nearby Common Buzzard, before heading off in a northerly direction again. Common Buzzards were recorded on 10 dates with two or three birds on several occasions. Red Kites were reported on just four dates with two on one date. A Hobby and a Peregrine Falcon were both seen on two dates.

Kestrels were seen at the nest box in the compound on several dates in the latter part of the month but were otherwise elusive. A new Kestrel box was erected on a pole at the corner of the Scrubland this month and a camera link to both this and the Barn Owl box on the Scrubland was set up. The first images of the Barn Owls in residence were relayed to a monitor in the Visitor Centre and by the third week of the month five eggs could be seen. Whether the Little Owls were in residence in their box in the Manager's Garden was far from certain with just one sighting of a bird in the poplars on 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Mike Fisk Meadow can usually be relied on to produce some mammal sightings before the vegetation gets too long. A female Roe Deer and fawn were spotted here on 18<sup>th</sup> and a family of five Fox cubs was seen on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>.

## June

After what was a very wet May this month was mainly dry with hardly any rain in the first three weeks and the bulk of the month's rainfall in one night between 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>. Temperatures did vary considerably in the latter part of the month. The overnight temperature on 22<sup>nd</sup> reached no more than 4°C in some parts. They reached 22°C on 24<sup>th</sup> but no more than 11°C on 25<sup>th</sup> after the night's rain.

The opening of the Visitor Centre and hides again from Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> June enabled visitors to get their first views of live footage from the Barn Owl box on the Scrubland as well as the first good views of the "new" Duck Marsh. There were more reports of the Barn Owls hunting during the day now with five hungry chicks in the nest box to feed.

The "new" Duck Marsh area was designed to attract more wading birds and it certainly proved popular with Little Ringed Plovers this month with sightings most days with often two birds and three on two dates. One or two Lapwings and Oystercatchers were present daily with up to four juvenile Lapwings reported. A rather scruffy looking Shoveler spent a day there on 7<sup>th</sup> but perhaps the biggest surprise was the number of Mallard loafing on the islands - 49 on 27<sup>th</sup>, a total of 60 on the wetlands that day being the highest June count since 2011. A few Mallard families were reported on the other wetland areas. Little Egrets were seen on nine dates with five on the new area on 2<sup>nd</sup> the highest count of the year so far. A Common Gull here on 27<sup>th</sup> was the first since 18<sup>th</sup> March. The Yellow-legged Gull was seen here again on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>.

On the Lagoon the Great Crested Grebes were at a new nest, a new chick being spotted on the adult's back on the nest on 26<sup>th</sup>. The Mute Swan family there continued to reduce with just two cygnets left now. Common Terns remained elusive with just a single bird seen flying along the river on 16<sup>th</sup>. It was by far the best month of the year so far for sightings of Kingfishers with birds recorded on 11 dates, five of these on the Lagoon where two were seen on 27<sup>th</sup>. Two were also seen on the Wet Grassland on 13<sup>th</sup>. On the river what may have been the same Goosander family of five young was seen on 13<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>.

The cutting of the farmland is always guaranteed to bring in Red Kites and this year was no exception. Ten were among an impressive array of raptors attracted to the area on 9<sup>th</sup>. Other raptors included at least four Common Buzzards, a Peregrine Falcon, a Hobby and a Kestrel. A Peregrine was also seen high over Poplar Fields on 7<sup>th</sup> and a juvenile was on the pylon on the farmland on 27<sup>th</sup>. Common Buzzards were reported on 12 dates in total with nesting again strongly suspected in woodland across the river.

Seeing a Cuckoo here these days is a rare event but on 27<sup>th</sup> one was reported flying over from the farmland and down the Willow Path late in the afternoon. Grey Wagtails had been thin on the ground this year but a bird was seen on the river from the River Path on three dates between 18<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>. Little Owls too remained hard to find with just one sighting on 1<sup>st</sup>.

Up to three juvenile Tree Sparrows were seen on the feeders in the Manager's Garden in the latter part of the month, probably from the nest box on the side of the Visitor Centre. There were further sightings of a bird in the Rodley Robins garden where one pair was thought to have used a nest box.

Spotting Foxes and Roe Deer on Mike Fisk Meadow became difficult this month with the height of the vegetation but a female Roe Deer and fawn on the road near the Lagoon Hide on 30<sup>th</sup> presented no such problems.

## **July**

After a fine start to the month the weather turned very unsettled and the first two weeks produced more than three inches of rain. Things did settle down again from the middle of the month with some very hot days and temperatures approaching 30°C. They dropped somewhat in the last few

days and it became very unsettled again with heavy cloud, rain and thunder at times and temperatures as low as 15°C. A very wet day on 30<sup>th</sup> saw rain throughout the day.

With the five chicks growing rapidly the Barn Owls had to work hard this month bringing in prey and providing some excellent opportunities for the photographers. The Kestrels quickly saw the opportunity for an easy meal, robbing the owls of their prey on several occasions as the birds approached the nest box.

It was a good month for birds of prey generally. A Common Buzzard was seen on nine dates with two on one date. Peregrine Falcons were reported on the pylon on the farmland on four dates with a juvenile there on 4<sup>th</sup> and two birds on 11<sup>th</sup>. One was also seen on the River Path on 31<sup>st</sup>. A Hobby provided excellent views for the photographers on 21<sup>st</sup>, initially perched in a dead tree at the end of the River Path, then flying low up river and over Tim's Field. A Tawny Owl was spotted flying out of a large tree on the riverbank near the bridge at 8.45am on 4<sup>th</sup> and a Little Owl was seen in the Manager's garden on 24<sup>th</sup>.

The "new" Duck Marsh continued to produce good sightings with one or two Little Egrets daily and six together on one of the islets on 26<sup>th</sup> but the real highlight was the Great White Egret, first seen here on 3<sup>rd</sup> and recorded most days up to 14<sup>th</sup>. The bird was very mobile, moving between the Dragonfly Ponds, Wet Grassland, Reedbed and Duck Marsh. A Green Sandpiper was reported on five dates between 4<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> with two on 7<sup>th</sup>. There was a further sighting on 31<sup>st</sup>. A Little Ringed Plover put in another appearance on 4<sup>th</sup>; four Black-tailed Godwits dropped in briefly on 10<sup>th</sup> and a Common Sandpiper on 13<sup>th</sup>. A Dunlin on 12<sup>th</sup> was the first record since 2012! Grey Herons loafed here daily with as many as seven on two dates. The Yellow-legged Gull was seen on several dates and a juvenile Mediterranean Gull was picked out on 31<sup>st</sup>.

It was another good month for Kingfisher sightings with birds reported on 11 dates, nine of these on the "new" Duck Marsh with a juvenile on 21<sup>st</sup>. A report of three birds at the Kingfisher Bank here on 30<sup>th</sup> was interesting to say the least.

The "new" Duck Marsh continued to be popular with Mallard that had certainly taken a liking to the islets. As many as 54 were counted resting here. With a good deal of the Lagoon covered in algae Tufted Ducks also preferred the conditions on the "new" Duck Marsh and up to nine were seen here in the first week of the month. However, numbers dwindled as

they do most years about now and a WeBS visit on 25<sup>th</sup> failed to produce a single one. Coot numbers too dwindled and no more than a single bird was present in the second half of the month. Among the less common ducks three male Pochard spent a day here on 6<sup>th</sup>, the first sighting of this species for four months and two juvenile Mandarin Ducks on 28<sup>th</sup> were surprise visitors. One or two Teal were present on several dates. On the Lagoon the two juvenile Great Crested Grebes were last seen on 5<sup>th</sup> and the two adults were still at their new nest at the end of the month.

Other sightings this month included two Treecreepers on the Willow Path on 14<sup>th</sup> and one on 28<sup>th</sup>, a Coal Tit here on 21<sup>st</sup> - the first record of the year, a Nuthatch heard near the river bridge on 26<sup>th</sup> and a Goldcrest on the River Path on 28<sup>th</sup>. A Grey Partridge on John Ackroyd Meadow on 21<sup>st</sup> was the first sighting for five months. A Cuckoo was reported on four further dates this month. At least one pair of Swallows nested in the dumper truck shed, two juveniles being seen on the top of the door on 7<sup>th</sup>. Low water levels below the weir proved popular with Grey Wagtails, three seen from the River Path on 10<sup>th</sup> including at least one juvenile.

As many as nine Tree Sparrows were seen at the feeders in the Manager's Garden with up to three juveniles. Birds were still feeding young in the terrace box on the side of the Visitor Centre late in the month.

There were reports of terns passing through on three dates with four birds flying over low on 14<sup>th</sup> and then heading west. There was also a movement of Swifts over the Reserve on 24<sup>th</sup>, a total of 105 counted heading south east between 8.30 and 9.40am on 24<sup>th</sup>.

July often produces a number of reports of American Mink but one on the River Path on 5<sup>th</sup> was the first record of the year and the only one of the month. They have almost certainly been largely responsible for the disappearance of the Water Vole but one did make a rare appearance on the Reedbed on 24<sup>th</sup>. Rabbits too are very infrequent visitors here and one on John Ackroyd Meadow on 21<sup>st</sup> was the first sighting for five months. There were some interesting Fox sightings. On 5<sup>th</sup> a Roe Deer was reported pursuing a Fox which in turn was pursuing a Lapwing. Four Foxes on the road on 15<sup>th</sup> included several juveniles.

## **August**

Though there was rather less rainfall than in July the weather was unsettled for much of the month with some strong and blustery winds in the first two weeks. In the latter part of the month winds were light but from

a north easterly direction and temperatures some days reached no more than 15°C.

Bird song typically dies away as August progresses with nesting largely finished and birds going through their post breeding moult. Even common birds such as Blackbirds can be hard to find at this time of year. But it is also a time of year when tit flocks start to form and if you are lucky enough to encounter one of these wandering bands they can contain dozens of birds of different species. Although bird song had largely finished the contact calls of Willow Warblers and Chiffchaffs could be heard all round the Reserve.

With a lot of birds on the move August can be a good month for spotting passage visitors. Spotted Flycatchers are uncommon here but there were sightings on three dates between 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> with two birds on one occasion. Wheatears are also uncommon passage visitors here but one was photographed on the Wet Grassland hide on 11<sup>th</sup>; three were on the farmland on 18<sup>th</sup> and one there three days later.

A Reed Warbler was reported feeding young on the “new” Duck Marsh on 1<sup>st</sup> and there were sightings on the Wet Grassland and Reedbed but there was only one report of a Sedge Warbler, this on Tim’s Field on 28<sup>th</sup>. Tim’s Field also proved popular with another summer visitor, the Common Whitethroat this month, an abundant flowering of Fodder Radish presumably attracting large numbers of insects for them. Swifts are among the first of the summer visitors to leave us. More than 20 were over the Reserve on 1<sup>st</sup> but a single bird on 21<sup>st</sup> proved to be the last of the year. Another summer visitor, the Swallow was still feeding young in the dumper truck shed as late as 22<sup>nd</sup>.

On the wetlands Gadwall numbers varied from day to day but a count of 100 on 2<sup>nd</sup> was the highest ever for August. In complete contrast Tufted Ducks were conspicuous by their absence with just a single female on four dates. Coots too remained hard to find with a single bird on just three dates. The Great Crested Grebes soon gave up interest in their second nest and both birds had departed by 12<sup>th</sup>. There were further sightings of Mandarin Ducks with as many as four birds seen on the “new” Duck Marsh. Up to three Teal were reported most days. Grey Herons were daily visitors to this area with as many as 13 recorded on the islets. Little Egrets were present most days with up to four seen.

It had been an unusually poor year for Water Rails but there were three records this month - on the Lagoon (a juvenile), “new” Duck Marsh and

the Wet Grassland. It was another good month for Kingfisher sightings and there was a further report of a juvenile on the “new” Duck Marsh on 1<sup>st</sup>. This area continued to attract a few waders with a Common Sandpiper on seven dates and a Greenshank on 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>.

The River Path had always looked likely to produce another Dipper sighting and one was photographed on the rocky shallows on 13<sup>th</sup>, this just the third record of the year. Other sightings this month included a Treecreeper in the Manager’s Garden on 7<sup>th</sup> and three on the Willow Path on 11<sup>th</sup>, a Nuthatch on the far riverbank on 8<sup>th</sup> and a juvenile Cuckoo on 11<sup>th</sup>. A total of 16 Curlews flying over in a north westerly direction on 18<sup>th</sup> was a rare event these days. A juvenile Grey Partridge was accidentally flushed on Mike Fisk Meadow on 24<sup>th</sup> and the following day one was seen on Poplar Field with three on John Ackroyd Meadow.

It was another good month for birds of prey with Common Buzzards reported on 17 dates, up to six birds seen and two very noisy juveniles from the nest in woodland on the far riverbank making their first appearance. A Peregrine Falcon was seen on five dates, on one occasion perched on the Coppice gate. A Hobby put in further appearances on 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> and a “cream crown” Marsh Harrier was spotted flying east along the river at tree height on 21<sup>st</sup> before drifting off in a southerly direction.

By the end of the month four of the five young Barn Owls were out flying and participants in the Bat Night Walk on 28<sup>th</sup> were treated to three birds over the Scrubland towards dusk. A Tawny Owl flew low over the group while they were on the Winter Walk later the same evening. A Little Owl was reported on three dates between 14<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, both in the Manager’s Garden and in the compound.

A Water Vole put in another appearance, this time at the Dragonfly Ponds on 25<sup>th</sup> but less welcome was a further sighting of an American Mink on the riverbank on 9<sup>th</sup>. An Otter provided brief views from the river bridge on 8<sup>th</sup>.

## **September**

Temperatures fluctuated considerably in the first half of the month, rising from 15°C on 3<sup>rd</sup> to as high as 28°C on 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> but down to 16°C on 12<sup>th</sup>. There was a spell of heavy rain with thunder and lightning later in the day on 9<sup>th</sup> but it was generally quite a dry month.

September is another good month for passage visitors. Two Whinchats were on Tim's Field on 4<sup>th</sup> and one was on the Scrubland later the same day. A single bird was also seen on Tim's Field on 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>. The first Stonechat of the autumn was seen here on 26<sup>th</sup>.

Four Yellow Wagtails were spotted on the farmland among the cattle on 5<sup>th</sup>. A few other summer visitors hung on. Two Garden Warblers were seen feeding in a Rowan on the Willow Path on 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> and a Lesser Whitethroat was recorded on the Scrubland on 5<sup>th</sup>. Two Common Whitethroats here on the same date were the last of the year. A Spotted Flycatcher was reported on 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. Chiffchaffs were seen and heard daily all around the Reserve. There were rather fewer reports of Blackcaps but four together in the Mike Fisk Meadow hedgerow just below the Visitor Centre on 14<sup>th</sup> included two males. On the wetlands a Reed Warbler on the Reedbed on 4<sup>th</sup> was the last of the year as were two Sedge Warblers on the Wet Grassland on 12<sup>th</sup>. At least 60 House Martins were recorded flying south west in rainy conditions on 20<sup>th</sup> and the last few birds of the year were seen on 29<sup>th</sup> flying south.

Wildfowl numbers started to build this month and the "new" Duck Marsh was popular with Teal, as many as 31 being counted here on 29<sup>th</sup>. Shovelers were seen most days with up to 11 birds present in the latter part of the month. The first four Wigeon arrived on 1<sup>st</sup> and there were daily sightings thereafter with seven on the Lagoon at the end of the month. Twenty-six flew over high heading west on 19<sup>th</sup>. Three Whooper Swans were also seen flying over on 25<sup>th</sup>. Tufted Ducks, however, remained elusive with five birds on 22<sup>nd</sup> but no other sightings. Six Mandarin Ducks were on the "new" Duck Marsh on 4<sup>th</sup>. A few Coot started to return this month but numbers were very low with no more than six on the Lagoon.

There were three more reports of Water Rails this month - on the Reedbed on 4<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> and on the Lagoon on 5<sup>th</sup>. A single Snipe was seen on the "new" Duck Marsh on seven dates from 1<sup>st</sup> and Little Egrets were seen here most days with as many as five reported. A Great White Egret on the back Reedbed on 22<sup>nd</sup> was the first sighting since 15<sup>th</sup> July. Green Sandpipers were recorded on five dates with two on three dates and sightings on both the Reedbed and "new" Duck Marsh. A Kingfisher was recorded on three dates. Cormorant numbers increased considerably this month with as many as 25 birds counted in trees on the bottom island on the Lagoon.

On the river, the rocky shallows at the downstream end of the Reserve produced three more Dipper sightings in the last week of the month with



two birds there on 25<sup>th</sup>. Up to three Grey Wagtails were seen in the same area on several dates.

The first Linnets of the autumn arrived on Tim's Field and at least 20 were present by the end of the month. Other sightings this month included a Goldcrest on two dates, a Curlew on the farmland on 9<sup>th</sup>, a Grey Partridge on Mike Fisk Meadow on two dates, a Treecreeper in the bridge car park on 20<sup>th</sup> and a Tawny Owl over the river bridge during a Bat Night on 18<sup>th</sup>. A report of 85 Canada Geese on the farmland on 6<sup>th</sup> was the highest ever September count and the first flocks of Pink-footed Geese passed over the Reserve in the last week of the month - a total of 72 on 25<sup>th</sup> and 59 on 29<sup>th</sup>.

It was an excellent month for sightings of Peregrine Falcons. A bird was reported on 10 dates, in nearly all cases on the pylon on the farmland. Common Buzzards were recorded on 12 dates with sometimes three and on one occasion four birds seen. Kestrels were reported on seven dates and a Merlin was seen flying south over the farmland on 19<sup>th</sup>.

It was the best month so far this year for sightings of Little Owls with a bird reported on six dates, on three occasions in the gutter of the small building in the compound. On 1<sup>st</sup> a Barn Owl was seen flying out of the nest box on the same small building. One or two Barn Owls continued to be seen in the box on the Scrubland throughout the month and four on the box during the evening on 2<sup>nd</sup> included three of the juveniles.

Following last month's sighting of a Water Vole at the Dragonfly Ponds tracks were found on the riverbank by the River Path on 17<sup>th</sup>. There were no Otter sightings this month but spraint was found on the wooden jetty at the water inlet from the river on 10<sup>th</sup>. A Weasel that crossed the road from John Ackroyd Meadow to Tim's Field on 22<sup>nd</sup> was, surprisingly, only the second record of the year.

## **October**

It was a mild month with a lot of rain and very windy at times. There was the first real feel of autumn with winter thrushes passing over in good numbers. A total of 1,230 Redwings were logged flying west up to midday on 13<sup>th</sup>. Later the same day a further 510 were counted. More birds flew over in the next two and a half weeks and small groups were recorded in the Manager's Garden and Willow Coppice. The first four Fieldfares were seen flying over on 23<sup>rd</sup>. Other birds passing over the Reserve this month included a single Brambling on 13<sup>th</sup> and small numbers of Redpolls,

Siskins, Skylarks and Meadow Pipits. Fourteen Golden Plovers were recorded high over the Reserve flying south on 6<sup>th</sup>.

October is usually the best month to see Stonechats passing through and Tim's Field always proves a popular feeding point. Disappointingly, they were only recorded on three dates this year. One was on Tim's Field on 6<sup>th</sup> and on 10<sup>th</sup> three were seen there with one on the farmland. There was a further sighting of a single bird on Tim's Field on 16<sup>th</sup>. Wheatears are much less frequent passage visitors here these days but one was reported on the farmland on 10<sup>th</sup>. Tim's Field is also the place for Linnets and numbers built up rapidly this month with several reports of between 50 and 70 birds in the first two weeks, peaking at 184 on 23<sup>rd</sup>.

The first Goldeneye of the autumn, a female, was on the Lagoon on 25<sup>th</sup> and a male Pintail in eclipse plumage was on the "new" Duck Marsh on 13<sup>th</sup>. A count of 123 Gadwall on the Lagoon on 18<sup>th</sup> was the highest of the year to date. Shoveler numbers reached 14 on two dates in the first half of the month but dropped somewhat in the second half. Eighteen Wigeon on 27<sup>th</sup> was the highest count since January 2018. Tufted Ducks were only reported on four days and no more than four birds. Teal were rather more numerous with up to 25 recorded. Mandarins put in another appearance, five on the Lagoon on 18<sup>th</sup> including four males. Coot numbers reached 14 on 20<sup>th</sup>.

Geese numbers continued to build on the farmland and a count of 135 Canada Geese on 18<sup>th</sup> was the highest ever for October. Greylag numbers reached 97 on 25<sup>th</sup>. More skeins of Pink-footed Geese passed over the Reserve this month - a total of 100 birds on 6<sup>th</sup> and 121 on 10<sup>th</sup> with smaller numbers on a couple of dates. Ten Whooper Swans flew over in a south easterly direction on 16<sup>th</sup>.

There were just three reports of Little Egrets this month and all of single birds. A Great White Egret was recorded flying over high in a southerly direction on 10<sup>th</sup>. It was a much better month for Kingfishers with sightings on nine dates. Water Rails were recorded on seven dates and on all four main wetland areas. Snipe were seen on nine dates with the "new" Duck Marsh producing the majority of sightings. A Jack Snipe on the Wet Grassland on 30<sup>th</sup> was a nice record and was seen and photographed by a number of visitors.

A Green Sandpiper was on the "new" Duck Marsh daily from 17<sup>th</sup> to the end of the month. Two Lapwings were there on several dates but 25

dropped in for a while on 13<sup>th</sup> and a similar number were recorded on 16<sup>th</sup>. On 10<sup>th</sup> a group of 16 was reported over the Lagoon and farmland.

Cetti's Warbler had proved elusive this year with just one sighting as far back as 1<sup>st</sup> March but there were four this month. On 10<sup>th</sup> a bird was heard on the riverbank from the bridge during a WeBS visit and on 20<sup>th</sup> one was recorded at the Reedbed Hide. There was a further report of one on the Reedbed on 23<sup>rd</sup> and a bird was heard on the "new" Duck Marsh the next day.

The month did produce another new bird for the Reserve - a Yellow-browed Warbler heard calling on the Willow Path on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> but only seen briefly. Other sightings included a late Blackcap at the Dragonfly Ponds on 6<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> and in the Manager's Garden on 23<sup>rd</sup>, Goldcrests on six dates with three seen from the river bridge on 10<sup>th</sup>, a Little Owl on three dates and a Grey Partridge on Poplar Field on 13<sup>th</sup>. On the river there were two more Dipper sightings on the rocky shallows on 10<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>. There was plenty of raptor activity with a Peregrine Falcon on four dates, Sparrowhawks on seven dates, Kestrels on six dates, a Red Kite on four dates and Common Buzzards on 12 dates.

An Otter provided good sightings for one watcher on the river upstream of the Reserve near the Ring Road bridge on 13<sup>th</sup> but there were no reports on the Reserve. Sightings of Weasels had been surprisingly few and far between this year but there were two this month - one on Tim's Field and one near the Dipping Ponds.

## **November**

It remained mild for the first three weeks of the month with temperatures in double figures. After a wet and windy first week there were some fine days with just a light breeze and temperatures reaching 14°C. The fine weather produced the latest ever record of Common Darter from the Reedbed Hide on 13<sup>th</sup>. It became much cooler from 21<sup>st</sup> with the first white frost of the autumn on 22<sup>nd</sup> but despite the frost some warm sunshine later that morning produced the latest ever record of a Small Tortoiseshell outside the Willow Path Hide.

It turned very unsettled from 26<sup>th</sup>, Storm Arwen bringing not only near 100mph winds overnight in some parts but also a good covering of snow. A bitterly cold day on 27<sup>th</sup> saw temperatures dip to zero during the day. More snow on 28<sup>th</sup> left a further good covering but it was much milder by the end of the month and the snow had gone.

On the Lagoon the single female Goldeneye was present until 10<sup>th</sup> and a few Wigeon could be seen most days but six on the Duck Marsh on 10<sup>th</sup> was the best count. A few Shovelers were also on the Lagoon daily with up to eight birds recorded. Up to 19 Teal were counted on the freshly flooded Wet Grassland this month with 24 in total on site. Gadwall numbers fluctuated throughout the month with a best count on the Lagoon of 70 on 29<sup>th</sup>. Tufted Duck numbers remained low with no more than eight on the Lagoon but Coot numbers did reach 15 on 29<sup>th</sup>.

Water levels on the Duck Marsh had to be dropped later in the month in readiness for essential tree work and clearance of vegetation on the islets in December but a Green Sandpiper was there most days and Little Egrets were recorded on six dates with two there on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>. It was another good month for Water Rail sightings with birds seen or heard on eight dates. Kingfishers were reported on five dates with two on the Lagoon on 6<sup>th</sup> and two on the Duck Marsh on 21<sup>st</sup>. Snipe were seen on six dates with two over the Wet Grassland on one occasion. There were also two more reports of a Cetti's Warbler this month, a bird being seen at the edge of the Duck Marsh on 13<sup>th</sup> and on the Wet Grassland the following day.

On the farmland Canada Geese numbers reached 197 on 22<sup>nd</sup>, this the highest ever November count. Greylag numbers peaked at 116. A small skein of 44 Pink-footed Geese were recorded flying west on 3<sup>rd</sup> and six Whooper Swans flew low over the farmland in a north easterly direction on 10<sup>th</sup>.

There was a further large movement of Redwings in the early part of the month with 240 logged flying west/south west up to 9am on 3<sup>rd</sup> and a total of 780 throughout the rest of the day. There was just one record on the Reserve itself, two birds being seen in the Manager's Garden on 17<sup>th</sup>. Fieldfares remained unusually elusive with just two flying over on 8<sup>th</sup> and three on 17<sup>th</sup>.

On Tim's Field Linnet numbers fluctuated throughout the month but around 200 were reported on 28<sup>th</sup>. Up to 15 Chaffinches were also counted visiting the field and on 10<sup>th</sup> a single male Brambling was seen among a group of them at the edge of the field.

Late Chiffchaffs were recorded in the Coppice on 6<sup>th</sup> and at the edge of the Reedbed on 21<sup>st</sup> but one recorded singing in the Coppice on 24<sup>th</sup> proved to be a Siberian Chiffchaff when the song was later checked. Other sightings this month included a Little Owl on three dates, Goldcrests on

four dates with three on John Ackroyd Meadow on 20<sup>th</sup>, a Grey Wagtail on three dates and a Treecreeper on four dates with two on 20<sup>th</sup>. A group of 33 Greenfinches flying low over the Coppice on 6<sup>th</sup> was an unusually high count these days for a species that has recently gone on the Red List. On the river it was the best month of the year so far for Dipper sightings, a bird being reported on the rocky shallows from the River Path on six dates.

There was a lot of Peregrine Falcon activity this month, a bird being reported on nine dates, on one occasion pursuing a Snipe across the Reserve. Kestrels were also very active with birds seen most days. Common Buzzards were reported on 10 dates with three birds on two dates and Red Kites on nine dates.

As regards mammals, a Stoat photographed in the Manager's Garden on 28<sup>th</sup> was the first record of this species here since 2017. There were just two reports of Weasels, one of these, unfortunately, caught by a Grey Heron on the Scrubland. On 17<sup>th</sup> an Otter provided good views for one observer on the river bridge when it swam from downstream up towards the cricket field.

## **December**

It was a very mixed month weather-wise. There were a handful of lovely sunny days with overnight frosts on a few occasions but there were also some grey, wet and windy days. It was also very mild some days too with temperatures in double figures during the second week of the month. Sunshine was in short supply from 18<sup>th</sup> with fog and low cloud often a feature. Overnight snow left a covering on Boxing Day but it soon turned to rain with daytime temperatures as low as 3°C in a light south easterly breeze. It became very mild at the end of the month with temperatures reaching 15°C on New Year's Eve - the warmest on record.

On Tim's Field Linnet numbers fluctuated from day to day. There were often as few as 35 but a flock photographed on 1<sup>st</sup> was found to contain 184 birds and on 7<sup>th</sup> in trees by the Reedbed Hide 176 birds. Chaffinch numbers visiting the field increased considerably this month with 34 counted on 4<sup>th</sup> and 36 on 22<sup>nd</sup>. Wood Pigeons too feasted on the seed crop, more than 200 lifting off on 25<sup>th</sup>.

Checking the many gulls on the farmland and Lagoon can sometimes produce one of the scarcer species at this time of year. On 1<sup>st</sup> an adult Mediterranean Gull was a good find on the Lagoon. There was a further

sighting on the farmland on Boxing Day. The farmland also produced an Iceland Gull on three dates between 4<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>.

Not surprisingly, Gadwall were the most numerous duck on the Lagoon most days with more than 50 on several occasions. Shovelers were present daily with 12 on 6<sup>th</sup> the highest ever December count. Tufted Duck numbers remained very low with no more than seven birds, the joint lowest ever for December. One or two Goldeneyes were recorded on 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> and just one female Wigeon on two dates. A few Goosanders typically started to gather on the Lagoon later in the day with seven there on 28<sup>th</sup> the best count.

It was the best month of the year for Water Rails , birds being reported on 10 dates with sightings on the Lagoon, Duck Marsh, Reedbed and at the Dragonfly Ponds. A Green Sandpiper was on the Duck Marsh most days but two were seen calling and flying around the Wet Grassland on 22<sup>nd</sup>. A Little Egret was on the Duck Marsh on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> - making this the first time this species has been recorded in every month of the year.

Two skeins of Pink-footed Geese totalling 88 birds flew over in a north westerly direction on 5<sup>th</sup> and on the farmland Canada Geese numbers remained very high, reaching 229 on 11<sup>th</sup>, this the highest ever December count. A count of 69 Stock Doves on the farmland on 29<sup>th</sup> proved to be the highest of the year.

Among the smaller birds it was a good month for Chiffchaffs with sightings on nine dates, mainly in the Coppice with two birds there on 11<sup>th</sup>. Goldcrests were reported on six dates with two at the Dragonfly Ponds on 27<sup>th</sup>. The rocky shallows on the river continued to produce Dipper sightings with two birds seen together on four dates. Other sightings included a Brambling on two dates, a Grey Wagtail on four dates and two Treecreepers on 18<sup>th</sup>.

Apart from a flock of 60 Redwings that flew over on 1<sup>st</sup> and around 12 in the Coppice on 12<sup>th</sup> winter thrush activity was limited. Fieldfares were particularly hard to find with just two small groups flying over - nine on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 11 on 26<sup>th</sup>.

It was another excellent month for Peregrine Falcons with sightings reported on 10 dates and two birds photographed on the pylon on the farmland on 17<sup>th</sup>. Kestrels and Sparrowhawks were also very active, Tim's Field being a particularly good place to spot the latter species. Common Buzzards were reported on 12 dates with birds seen on the Coppice fence

on several occasions and Red Kites on 10 dates. Two Barn Owls were in residence in the nest box on the Scrubland throughout the month and a Tawny Owl was spotted in roadside trees on 6<sup>th</sup>.

There was more Otter activity this month. One was caught on a camera trap on two dates and on 19<sup>th</sup> one was photographed fishing just downstream of the river bridge. An American Mink caught on the camera trap was a less welcome visitor. There were just two reports of Weasels in what had been a very poor year for this species. For the second month running one of these was caught by a Grey Heron, the bird being photographed with its prey at the edge of the Reedbed. Three Roedeer were seen on the Willow Path on 10<sup>th</sup> and four were on the River Path and Scrubland on 18<sup>th</sup>.

## 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**

A pair nests on both the Duck Marsh and Wet Grassland most years but the last four years have been far from successful. Last year five of the nine cygnets from the former pair disappeared in the space of two months and the latter pair failed to produce any young. This year was rather less eventful but it didn't start well. On 30<sup>th</sup> January an adult bird was found on one of the dipping ponds. The bird seemed healthy and on the next day it was breaking ice there. On 1<sup>st</sup> February it was escorted down to the Wet Grassland. As many as seven adults were recorded during the first three months of the year and by 21<sup>st</sup> April birds were on nests on the middle island on the Lagoon, the Duck Marsh and Wet Grassland. Four cygnets were seen on the Lagoon on 19<sup>th</sup> May but by 30<sup>th</sup> May one had disappeared and by 19<sup>th</sup> June a second had also gone. There were no reports of cygnets at the other two sites. On 25<sup>th</sup> June the remains of what appeared to be an adult bird were found between the Fish Pass and Reedbed. It is thought the bird may have collided with overhead power lines there. Two additional juveniles were present for just over a week from 14<sup>th</sup> November, initially on the Wet Grassland and subsequently on the Duck Marsh. They were last seen there on 22<sup>nd</sup> November. The remaining two cygnets and both adults were still on the Lagoon at the end of the year.

### **Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* Passage Visitor**

Birds that have overwintered further south are occasionally recorded in March on their way back to their breeding grounds in Iceland. On 19<sup>th</sup> March this year a flock of 59 birds was reported flying over in a north westerly direction (JWC/JKi). There were no autumn records last year but there were three this year. On 25<sup>th</sup> September three flew over in an easterly direction before veering off south (JWC/EC). On 16<sup>th</sup> October 10 flew over going south east and on 10<sup>th</sup> November six flew low over the farmland in a north easterly direction (JWC).

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

This species breeds in Spitsbergen, Iceland and Greenland and large numbers spend the winter in Britain. Skeins can be seen passing over the Reserve between September and March. There were no reports of skeins in the early part of this year but it is always worth checking the geese flocks here as the odd Pink-footed Goose does turn up among them from time to time. One was picked out in a flock of Greylag Geese flying round the Reserve on 4<sup>th</sup> January (JWC). There were a number of further reports of single birds with the last on 4<sup>th</sup> May. Most were on the farmland with

three there on 21<sup>st</sup> February (JWC) but one was also recorded on the Lagoon on three dates and on the Duck Marsh on one date. April was the most productive month for sightings, a bird being reported on the farmland on seven dates and on the river on three dates. The first small skeins of the autumn passed over the Reserve on 25<sup>th</sup> September - 50 and later 22 all flying south (JWC) - just two days later than last autumn. Further skeins were reported on six dates between then and the beginning of November, the largest of these consisting of 121 birds on 10<sup>th</sup> October (JWC). There was just one further record - a total of 88 birds in two skeins flying north west on 5<sup>th</sup> December (JWC).

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

The highest January count of 100+ on the farmland on 31<sup>st</sup> (PM/BM) was the lowest for that month since 2016 but a report of 250+ the next day (JWC) proved to be the highest ever for February. Numbers fell away sharply from the middle of February. A few birds typically stayed to nest and one appeared to be sitting on the middle island of the Lagoon as early as 28<sup>th</sup> February. One was again reported sitting there on 21<sup>st</sup> March. As many as four birds appeared to be on nests there a month later on 22<sup>nd</sup> April and on 1<sup>st</sup> May the first four goslings were reported. On 27<sup>th</sup> May an adult was in the car park by the bridge with five small goslings and one with two large goslings. Numbers started to build on the farmland again from October reaching 116 on 6<sup>th</sup> November but fell away towards the end of the month. Monthly maxima are shown below (adults only).

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
100+	250+	9	46	49	24	21	10	5	97	116	5

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

Counts in January and February were the highest ever recorded. The flooded farmland produced 206 on 25<sup>th</sup> January (PM/BM). On 10<sup>th</sup> February 240 were on the farmland and c310 just two days later (PM/BM). On 14<sup>th</sup> February more than 200 flew from the farmland onto the Lagoon (WeBS). Numbers fell away sharply after this but, as usual, a few pairs stayed to nest, though breeding success appears to have been quite low. In April one attempted to nest on one of the tern rafts and one, possibly two on one of the islands on the Lagoon. There was a report of six goslings on the Lagoon early in May (JB), three on the farmland on 12<sup>th</sup> May and three on the Duck Marsh on 18<sup>th</sup> May, some of these possibly the same birds. Numbers on the farmland started to build again in the second half of August and counts in that month and the following three months were

the highest ever for these months, peaking at 197 on 22<sup>nd</sup> November (SB). Monthly maxima are shown below (adults only).

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
206	c310	26	50	50	42	23	76	85	135	197	165

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

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. There have been no sightings since then.

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

This was a new bird for the Reserve in 2016 - a single bird found on the farmland with other geese on 13<sup>th</sup> November. There have been no sightings since this date.

**Egyptian Goose** *Alopochen aegyptiaca* **Rare Visitor**

Feral populations of this species occur in parts of Britain and on the Continent. It was a new bird for the Reserve in 2018 - a single bird picked out among the Greylag Geese on the farmland on 4<sup>th</sup> March. There have been no further sightings.

**Common Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna* **Scarce Visitor**

There was just one record last year and one again this year - a male and female on the Duck Marsh on 15<sup>th</sup> May (JWC).

**Mandarin** *Aix galericulata* **Scarce Visitor**

Introduced from China, there is an established feral population at Harewood Park. It was first recorded here in 2009 but since then it has been reported on little more than a handful of dates, most recently on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2019. On 25<sup>th</sup> April this year a male and female were seen on the canal by the entrance to the Reserve (JWC), these almost certainly the same birds seen further along the canal in the previous two weeks. There were no further sightings until 28<sup>th</sup> July when two juveniles were seen on the Duck Marsh (JWC/AL/PA). From this point birds were seen on the Duck Marsh on a further nine dates up to 22<sup>nd</sup> August with three on one date and four on one date (SB), all female/juvenile types which are very similar in appearance. On 4<sup>th</sup> September six birds were seen here (JWC). On 18<sup>th</sup> October four males and a female were on the Lagoon (SB) but were not seen subsequently.

**Wigeon *Anas penelope* Winter Visitor**

Numbers in the early part of last year were very disappointing and it was the same again this year with just three birds on the Lagoon on 25<sup>th</sup> January (JWC *et al*) and two on 31<sup>st</sup> (JSK). However, on each occasion less than half the Lagoon was free of ice. No more than two were reported in February, none in March and a single male on 21<sup>st</sup> April was the last of the spring (MG/PG *et al*). The first four birds of the autumn arrived on 1<sup>st</sup> September (JWC/EC) and two or three were recorded daily from this point. On 19<sup>th</sup> September 26 were reported flying high over the Reserve in a westerly direction (JWC). Numbers on the wetlands started to build from the end of September and there were several double figure counts in October, some of these on the newly developed Duck Marsh - 16 on 23<sup>rd</sup> (JWC) and 14 on 26<sup>th</sup> (PM/BM). The best count of 18 on 27<sup>th</sup> included 11 on the Lagoon and seven on the Duck Marsh (JWC). Numbers dropped after this. There were no more than six birds present in November and just a single female on two dates in December. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
3	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	7	18	6	1

**Gadwall *Anas strepera* Resident Breeder**

Several counts in January were the highest ever for that month, the highest being 70 on the flooded farmland late in the day on 25<sup>th</sup> and 80 on the partially frozen Lagoon on 31<sup>st</sup> (PM/BM). Numbers started to drop from the second week in February. Last year February and March produced the highest ever counts for those months but numbers were rather lower this year. The first family of ducklings appeared on the Wet Grassland on 29<sup>th</sup> May (JWC), just four days later than last year. The first family of four was recorded on the Lagoon on 14<sup>th</sup> June (SB) and on 1<sup>st</sup> July a family of seven ducklings was seen there (PM/BM). On 21<sup>st</sup> June a female with seven very small ducklings were seen on the river from the River Path (SB). On 12<sup>th</sup> July two females with seven large young and three small ducklings had to constantly fight off a Lesser Black-backed Gull intent on taking the ducklings (SB). A count of 100 birds on 2<sup>nd</sup> August (SB) was the highest ever for that month but numbers dropped considerably after this with the next best just 47. Numbers did typically fluctuate from day to day and a report of 123 on the Lagoon on 18<sup>th</sup> October (SB) was by far the highest that month and the highest of the year. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
80	64	36	28	23	26	52	100	92	123	72	59

**Pintail** *Anas acuta* **Rare Visitor**

First recorded in 2011, there were sightings in 2012 and in each of the three years from 2016 to 2018. There were no records in 2019 but last year a male in eclipse plumage was present from 3<sup>rd</sup> October until 18<sup>th</sup> October. This year there was just one record - again a male in eclipse plumage and this time just on 13<sup>th</sup> October (JWC).

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

The Duck Marsh has usually been the favourite site for this species but a major redevelopment of this area in the early part of the year resulted in most birds using the Lagoon and Wet Grassland rather more during that period. A count of 36 birds during an early morning WeBS visit on 14<sup>th</sup> February was the highest for that month since 2014 and also the highest of the year. On 26<sup>th</sup> February a bird wearing a nasal saddle YXblue was spotted on the Wet Grassland (JWC). Subsequent investigation showed that the bird had been marked at the Tagus Estuary Nature Reserve in Portugal on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020. It had been seen briefly over the Lagoon on 7<sup>th</sup> February in a group of 16 birds. Numbers typically started to fall away during March and from April to August no more than four birds were seen. They started to build again in September and a count of 35 on 20<sup>th</sup> (JWC) was the highest for that month since 2013. The Duck Marsh with its new islets and scrapes was again proving popular and 31 birds were counted here on 29<sup>th</sup> September (JWC). A report of 25 birds on 25<sup>th</sup> October was the highest for that month since 2011 (SB). Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
20	36	17	4	-	2	2	4	35	25	24	23

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos* **Resident Breeder**

The best January count of just 19 on 22<sup>nd</sup> was the joint lowest since 2007 but in February 53 recorded during a WeBS visit on 14<sup>th</sup> was by far the highest for that month since 2007. The species is certainly still quite common in the area but they are known to be alternating between the Reserve and canal which might explain why numbers are high some days and not others. The first family of ducklings was seen on the Wet Grassland on 21<sup>st</sup> April, exactly the same date as last year, but there was no further evidence of successful nesting until June when the first ducklings appeared on the Lagoon. Counts in the summer months were the highest for some years. A total of 67 birds reported on 27<sup>th</sup> June included 49 on the newly developed Duck Marsh (EC) and a total of 86 on

14<sup>th</sup> July included 63 on the Lagoon (EC). Numbers dropped back somewhat after this but were, nevertheless, considerably higher than in 2020 in the last three months of the year. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
19	53	14	10	14	60	86	50	34	58	50	42

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

There have been no sightings in the last three years. In 2018 a male bird spent 11 days on the Reserve from 4<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> April. Prior to this the species had only been recorded in 2003, 2006, 2014 and 2015.

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

A male on the Lagoon on 17<sup>th</sup> January was the first of the year. There were frequent sightings on the Lagoon from this point with two or three birds on occasions. There were none in April but a single male was on the Duck Marsh on 15<sup>th</sup> May, 23<sup>rd</sup> May and 7<sup>th</sup> June. There were no further sightings until 23<sup>rd</sup> August when a female was on the Duck Marsh (PM/BM). Two birds arrived on 4<sup>th</sup> September and on 5<sup>th</sup> September five were present (JWC). There were daily sightings thereafter both on the Lagoon and Duck Marsh, numbers rising to 11 on 20<sup>th</sup> September (SB) - the first ever double figure count in that month. On 2<sup>nd</sup> October 14 were recorded (JWC) - this the highest ever count on the Reserve. There was a further count of 14 on 10<sup>th</sup> October during a WeBS visit. Birds continued to be seen daily but there were no further double figure counts reported. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
3	3	2	-	1	1	-	1	11	14	8	9

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

This is certainly not a common winter visitor though there have been double figure counts in the past, the most recent in 2019 with 10 or 11 birds on several dated in both January and February that year. This year was very disappointing. A single male was on the Lagoon on 17<sup>th</sup> January (PM/BM) and there were sightings there on six dates in February with two males on 4<sup>th</sup> (PM/BM), a male and female on 14<sup>th</sup> (WeBS) and single males on four dates. A male and female were again on the Lagoon on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> March (JSK) , these the last of the winter. The one highlight was the unexpected appearance of three males on the Duck Marsh on 6<sup>th</sup> July

(PM/BM), this only the second ever July record here. The last three months of the year were very disappointing in both 2019 and 2020 with just one bird in November. This year there were none in this period. Monthly maxima are shown below.

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

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

Counts on the Lagoon in the first six months of this year were all higher than in the same period last year with 28 on 2<sup>nd</sup> January (JWC) proving to be the best of the year. A count of 24 on 14<sup>th</sup> February (WeBS) was the highest for that month since 2012. Numbers dropped considerably after this date and while a number of birds were present throughout the spring there was no evidence of nesting for the sixth year running. The few birds remaining gradually disappeared in mid-summer and a WeBS visit on 25<sup>th</sup> July failed to record a single one. Birds were entirely absent in August 2019 and August 2020 and just a single female was recorded in August this year. There were no sightings in September until 22<sup>nd</sup> when five were present (JWC/EC) but numbers remained disappointingly low and a best count of 7 on 4<sup>th</sup> December was the joint lowest ever for that month. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
28	24	12	14	13	10	9	1	5	4	8	7

### **Scaup *Aythya marila* Rare Visitor**

There have been no records in the last two years. In 2019 an immature bird arrived on the Lagoon on 10<sup>th</sup> November and was seen most days until 15<sup>th</sup> December. Prior to that there had been no sightings from 2015 to 2018. In 2014 a female was present on the Lagoon almost daily from 1<sup>st</sup> February until 9<sup>th</sup> March. There had only been two previous records, both in 2000.

### **Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra* Rare Visitor**

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



**Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* Winter Visitor**

As many as 16 have been recorded here in the past, most recently in February 2019. However, most counts are in low single figures, as was the case in January with no more than three birds on the Lagoon. There was some improvement from the middle of February with five on 14<sup>th</sup> (WeBS) and seven on 20<sup>th</sup> which included five males, one immature male and a female (JWC). Three males were present on several dates in March. A single male on the Lagoon on 21<sup>st</sup> March was the last of the spring (PM/BM). A female on the Lagoon on 25<sup>th</sup> October (SB) was the first of a very poor autumn. What was probably the same bird was reported there on several dates up to and including 10<sup>th</sup> November. There were no sightings in December until 26<sup>th</sup> when two males arrived (JWC). The following day one male and one female were present (EC). Monthly maxima are shown below.

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

**Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola* Rare Visitor**

This North American duck is a rare vagrant to Western Europe. On 11<sup>th</sup> May 2017 a female was seen and photographed on the Reedbed. The bird stayed until 14<sup>th</sup> May and was recorded during a WeBS visit that morning. The bird was ringed and had a tag on the other leg.

**Goosander *Mergus merganser* Common Visitor**

In 2020, with the exception of December, numbers in all months were lower than in the previous year. There was a considerable improvement this year. Late afternoon gatherings on the Lagoon in the winter months have always been a regular feature and this year counts in January were the highest for that month since 2013. Twenty birds on 17<sup>th</sup> January included four males and 16 females (JSK). Twenty were again reported on 23<sup>rd</sup> January (JSK). Numbers dropped in February but along with March, April and May were still the highest for a number of years. Islands on the newly developed Duck Marsh were an instant success - a count of 11 (six males plus five females) on one island on 21<sup>st</sup> April being the highest ever count for that month (JB/MB). On 29<sup>th</sup> April 12 birds here included five males plus seven females (DW) and on 30<sup>th</sup> May 12 birds counted were all “redheads” (PM/BM). On 18<sup>th</sup> May a female was seen with three tiny chicks on the river by the bridge (PM/BM). There were reports of two adults and five juveniles from the River Path on 13<sup>th</sup> June (WeBS) and a female with five juveniles on the river behind the Wet

Grassland on 25<sup>th</sup> June (JSK). On 10<sup>th</sup> July 11 fully grown young were seen from the River Path (JWC). On 29<sup>th</sup> September 12 birds seen from the River Path were all “redheads” (JWC). Males leave the females around late June to carry out their amazing moult migration to a fjord in Norway, usually returning in October. The first returning male this year was not recorded until 31<sup>st</sup> October. Late afternoon counts on the Lagoon in December were disappointing with seven (three males and four females) on 28<sup>th</sup> (PM/BM) the best. The maximum daily count for each month is shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
20	12	12	12	12	2	11	1	12	7	2	7

**Ruddy Duck** *Oxyura jamaicensis* **Now Rare**

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

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

There have been no sightings since 24<sup>th</sup> April 2012.

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

Small releases of birds have taken place on the Reserve in the past, the most recent last year when two were made - in July five breeding pairs and at the beginning of October 25 young birds. There were a number of sightings this year which was encouraging. On 24<sup>th</sup> January two were seen on Tim’s Field with a third bird near the Dipping Ponds. On 27<sup>th</sup> January one was in the Bee Garden and one on Bentley’s Path (JB). There were further sightings at the end of that month, both in the Bee Garden and in the Manager’s Garden. There was another sighting in the Bee Garden on 16<sup>th</sup> February but then no reports until 17<sup>th</sup> July when one was spotted on John Ackroyd Meadow (EC). A juvenile accidentally flushed at the edge of Mike Fisk Meadow near the Visitor Centre on 24<sup>th</sup> August (BM) was evidence of at least one successful nesting attempt this year. The following day three birds were reported on the same meadow (DW) and one on Poplar Field . Single birds were also seen on two dates here in September and on Poplar Field again on 13<sup>th</sup> October (EC).

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

This is a common bird on the Reserve seen in nearly all habitats. Tim’s Field is popular in the autumn and winter months, providing as it does good cover and a plentiful supply of seed. Nine were recorded flying off

on 12<sup>th</sup> January and on 25<sup>th</sup> January nine were chased off by a Fox (JB). On 14<sup>th</sup> February seven were seen along the Willow Path during an early morning WeBS visit. The Bee Garden and Manager's Garden are popular throughout the year, birds visiting for seed under the feeders. The latter site was the only place where juveniles were reported this year with one or two on several occasions from 11<sup>th</sup> August and three with a male and female on 6<sup>th</sup> November (EC).

**Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* Resident**

Birds are present daily throughout the year. Numbers in the early part of this year were a bit lower than in 2020 but were otherwise similar throughout the spring and early summer. Like last year there were some particularly high counts in August and September. A few birds could be seen on the pylon by the Fish Pass most days but the biggest counts were in trees on the bottom island on the Lagoon - 13 on 21<sup>st</sup> August (JWC) and 20+ on several dates in September, the highest being 25 on 19<sup>th</sup> (JWC). Numbers started to fall away in October and there no further double figure counts. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
3	5	6	5	7	5	7	13	25	8	4	5

**Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* Rare Visitor**

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

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

A bird was present daily from 3<sup>rd</sup> July to 15<sup>th</sup> July, usually on the Duck Marsh but also at times on the other wetland areas. There were no further sightings until 22<sup>nd</sup> September when one was spotted on the Reedbed (DW). On 10<sup>th</sup> October a bird was recorded flying high over the Lagoon in a southerly direction (JWC), this the last sighting of the year. First recorded as a flyover on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2018, there were a number of sightings in 2019 but just three last year, one of these half a mile further up the valley.

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

Last year we had to wait until 14<sup>th</sup> May for the first bird to arrive. This year, for the first time ever, there were sightings in every month of the year, the first bird dropping in on 2<sup>nd</sup> January (JWC). From the end of February one was reported roosting in trees on the bottom island on the Lagoon. There were sightings most days from that point throughout March and April, on

a handful of dates in May and then almost daily through June, July, August and most of September. Only single birds were seen up to the end of May but on 2<sup>nd</sup> June five were on one of the islets on the Duck Marsh (JWC/EC). The islets here provided the large majority of sightings from this point with one or two birds daily, six on 26<sup>th</sup> July with a seventh bird on the Lagoon (SB), three or four on several dates and five on 15<sup>th</sup> September (DW). Single birds were recorded on just three dates in October, one or two on six dates in November and single birds on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> December, almost all again on the Duck Marsh.

**Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* Resident**

Seen almost daily throughout the year, the highest numbers came in the period from June to November with the newly developed Duck Marsh by far the most popular wetland area this year. One or two birds were often to be seen at the Dragonfly Ponds and even on the public dipping ponds early and later in the day. Gatherings of herons occur on the farmland at times and 12 here on 5<sup>th</sup> January last year proved to be the highest count of that year. August produced two double figure counts on the Duck Marsh - 11 on 8<sup>th</sup> (JWC) and 13 on 23<sup>rd</sup> (SB). On 1<sup>st</sup> September 10 were counted here (EC) and there were several reports of between seven and nine throughout that month, October and November. Weasels were very much on the menu this year. On 3<sup>rd</sup> November one was seen on the Scrubland catching and flying off with one (PL/KL/JWC) and on 4<sup>th</sup> December one was photographed with a Weasel in its bill in the Reedbed (CR). The highest counts each month are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
6	5	7	5	5	7	8	14	10	8	9	5

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

Birds can normally be found on all four wetland areas and on the deeper stretches of the river. Most sightings were on the Lagoon and river in the first three months of the year with four birds on the Lagoon on 14<sup>th</sup> March the best count in that period (WeBS) and indeed in the first six months of the year. The newly developed Duck Marsh started producing sightings from the second week in April with two birds there some days. The first chick was seen on 8<sup>th</sup> June last year but the extent of successful nesting this year was hard to determine. However, it appears to have been limited to the Lagoon which is disappointing. Four juveniles were among seven birds seen here on 26<sup>th</sup> July (SB) and five juveniles were reported on 16<sup>th</sup> August (SB). The highest counts typically came from August onwards and

most probably included some juveniles. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
3	2	4	2	2	2	6	13	13	12	10	5

**Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus* **Summer Visitor/ Breeder**

The first bird arrived on the Lagoon this year on 18<sup>th</sup> February and was joined by two more birds, one a sub adult, on 28<sup>th</sup> February. The pair were reported displaying the same day (JSK/JWC). The sub adult wasn't seen subsequently and by the end of March a nest had been constructed by one of the buoys. The first chick was recorded on 24<sup>th</sup> April but three were seen subsequently. On 19<sup>th</sup> May the adults were mating and displaying again and refurbishing the old nest. Subsequently a new nest was constructed further down the Lagoon but was later abandoned. However, on 26<sup>th</sup> June a new chick was spotted on the adult's back (JWC). Only two of the three juveniles were seen from this point and neither was seen after 5<sup>th</sup> July. There were also no further sightings of the new chick. By 8<sup>th</sup> August only one adult remained and that was last reported on 11<sup>th</sup> August. The pattern of arrival in February and departure around August is fairly typical of most years here but the early disappearance of the juveniles and the later chick is a mystery.

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

Recorded in all months this year, birds can often be seen over the woodland across the river but unlike the Common Buzzard they have never attempted to nest here as far as we are aware. Up to three were seen on several occasions in the early part of the year with four over the woodland on 5<sup>th</sup> March (PM/BM). Grass cutting on the farmland is guaranteed to bring birds in and as many as 10 were recorded over the field on 9<sup>th</sup> June (JWC *et al*). There were no records of more than two birds after this date but this is such a common bird in the area now that many sightings almost certainly go unreported.

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

Prior to this year there had been just three records of this species and all between 4<sup>th</sup> August and 21<sup>st</sup> September 2018. This year a bird was seen flying along the river at tree height on 21<sup>st</sup> August. It then gained height and drifted off in a southerly direction (JWC).

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

The characteristic flight of this bird, involving a few quick wingbeats followed by a short glide, is a common sight over the Reserve. There were reports of both males and the considerably larger females from the beginning of the year. There were also plenty of signs of successful hunts in the form of piles of feathers on some of the paths. There was no evidence of nesting actually taking place on the Reserve but a pair almost certainly nested again in trees across the river. On 11<sup>th</sup> August an adult and young were reported calling in this area (JWC). The female is capable of taking much larger prey than the smaller male and on 23<sup>rd</sup> September one was observed making an unsuccessful attack on a Magpie on Mike Fisk Meadow (KMCL). The number of both small birds and pigeons visiting Tim's Field for seed in the autumn and winter months proves a big attraction for Sparrowhawks and there were numerous sightings over the field. On 26<sup>th</sup> October an immature male was photographed perched on vegetation on the field following an unsuccessful hunt (BM).

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

Recorded in all months and on a record 140 dates this year, this species could now almost be regarded as resident. In 2019 birds were very active in woodland just across the river and nesting almost certainly took place. Last year there was again a lot of activity in this area; nesting definitely occurred and two juveniles fledged successfully. This year there were regular sightings over the woodland from the beginning of the year with three birds there on 11<sup>th</sup> January (PU). There were further reports of two and three birds with four on 18<sup>th</sup> March (JB/MB). Four were again recorded on 9<sup>th</sup> June during grass cutting on the farmland (JWC). On 1<sup>st</sup> August an adult and juvenile were seen over the river (JWC) and on 7<sup>th</sup> August two juveniles were reported in one tree on the far riverbank (PM/BM), close to where nesting occurred last year. As many as six birds were recorded around the Reserve just four days later. On 23<sup>rd</sup> August a family party of two adults and two juveniles were calling over the Visitor Centre (PM/BM); five were seen over the woodland on the same date (SB), four on 5<sup>th</sup> September and five again on 13<sup>th</sup> October (JWC). In December there were several reports of a bird on the Coppice fence and there were more reports of up to three birds over the Reserve.

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

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

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

An immature bird photographed high over the Reserve on 5<sup>th</sup> May (JWC) was, not surprisingly, a new bird for us. The bird was spotted from the Willow Path drifting over from the north and circling overhead before flying off in a westerly direction. From the missing feathers on one wing the bird was clearly the same individual present in Norfolk earlier in the week which was thought to be from the continent.

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

There was one reported sighting this year - a bird flying low over the Reserve in a north westerly direction on 30<sup>th</sup> March (JWC). Last year also produced just one sighting, albeit a little way from the Reserve - a single bird recorded in Rodley flying north over Bramley on 3<sup>rd</sup> April.

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

Birds were recorded on 32 dates this year but only two of these came in the first seven months - both in February. On 23<sup>th</sup> February a bird was heard calling on the Lagoon (JWC) and the following day two were seen squabbling on the Duck Marsh (DAN). There were no further records until 8<sup>th</sup> August when an immature bird was seen on the Lagoon (JWC). Birds were recorded on all four main wetland areas after this. October, November and December were by far the most productive months. On 16<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> October individuals were seen on the Lagoon, Duck Marsh and Reedbed (JWC). On 10<sup>th</sup> November two were heard calling on the Duck Marsh with a third bird heard on the Lagoon (JWC). On 1<sup>st</sup> December two were seen at the Dragonfly Ponds (PH) with one there again just three days later, these probably wanderers from the nearby Wet Grassland. There were several sightings on both the Lagoon and Duck Marsh in December.

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

Being similar in size to a Starling and with its habit of skulking in thick cover this species is always going to be difficult to spot and there have been just two records of this elusive bird. In 2005 one spent five days on the Wet Grassland from 1<sup>st</sup> October. In 2018 one again appeared on the Wet Grassland on 25<sup>th</sup> August and was recorded most days in the same area up to 2<sup>nd</sup> September. There was one further sighting that year on 14<sup>th</sup> September.

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

Numbers reported were particularly low in January and February, a period when double figure counts would normally be expected, but the situation was not helped by the closure of the Reserve, absence of observers, the

ice-bound wetlands in part of January and the redevelopment of the Duck Marsh. There was, nevertheless, some successful nesting with chicks on the Lagoon on 23<sup>rd</sup> May (WeBS) and five there the following day (SB). An adult and three chicks were on the Lagoon on 7<sup>th</sup> June and what may have been the same three were on the Duck Marsh on 13<sup>th</sup> June (WeBS). On 13<sup>th</sup> July an adult and one small chick were seen on the Dragonfly Ponds (PM/BM). Counts reported in August, September and October were particularly high and most included a number of juveniles. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
3	5	6	5	5	7	6	22	25	25	16	13

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

With only a very small area of the Lagoon ice-free a count of 21 there on 31<sup>st</sup> January with another bird on the river (PM/BM) was the highest for that month since 2018. There were similar counts in February but numbers dropped considerably from March. On 18<sup>th</sup> April a bird was on a nest in reeds by the Kingfisher Bank on the newly developed Duck Marsh and on 7<sup>th</sup> May one was seen on a nest on the middle island of the Lagoon. The first chick was reported on the Duck Marsh on 17<sup>th</sup> May and there were subsequent sightings of families on the Lagoon and Wet Grassland in the following few days. However, the number of adults recorded in the summer months was again very disappointing, maximum counts in July and August being the lowest ever, only a single bird being reported in August and on just three dates. Last year birds were totally absent in October for the first time ever and no more than three were seen up to the end of the year. There was certainly an improvement this year, numbers on the Lagoon reaching 14 on 20<sup>th</sup> October (JWC), 15 on 29<sup>th</sup> November (SB) and 13 on 4<sup>th</sup> December (JWC) though they did fall away after this date. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
22	24	12	11	9	9	6	1	6	14	15	13

### **Common Crane *Grus grus* Rare Visitor**

There have been no sightings in the last three years. This was a new bird for the Reserve in 2018 when two were seen standing on the farmland on 13<sup>th</sup> 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 Lagoon on 4<sup>th</sup> February, just six days later than last year. A second bird was present on 7<sup>th</sup> February and two were seen daily from 21<sup>st</sup> February with three on occasions. On 10<sup>th</sup> April four birds were on the Duck Marsh (DW). The middle island on the Lagoon is usually a popular nesting site and on 15<sup>th</sup> May two adults were seen with two chicks here (JH). On 27<sup>th</sup> May six adults were on the Duck Marsh (JWC) but didn't stay. Unlike last year, when three chicks disappeared within days of first being seen, the young did well this year and were seen on the farmland with the two adults on 12<sup>th</sup> June. The newly developed Duck Marsh with its spits and islets proved very popular and nearly all sightings were here from the middle of June with as many as seven birds reported. Two birds here on 2<sup>nd</sup> August were the last of the year (BM/SB).

**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 27<sup>th</sup> June. There was just one other brief sighting of one on the far side of the Lagoon on 2<sup>nd</sup> July that year. There have been no records in the last three years.

**Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola* **Rare Visitor**

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

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

There were two records this year. On 9<sup>th</sup> January six birds circled the Reserve without landing and on 6<sup>th</sup> October 14 flew over high in a southerly direction (JWC). There was just one record last year and two in 2019, all flyovers.

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

There were just two double figure counts on the farmland in January - 12 birds on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 15 on 25<sup>th</sup> (JWC) but the best count of the year came on 20<sup>th</sup> February - 56 birds that flew in and circled the Reserve before going off in an easterly direction (JWC). The first two birds on the wetlands had arrived on the Lagoon on 5<sup>th</sup> February (JB) but there were no further sightings here until 9<sup>th</sup> March when one arrived with a second from 11<sup>th</sup>. A pair were observed mating on the newly developed Duck Marsh on 13<sup>th</sup> April (JWC) and on 19<sup>th</sup> April four were displaying over Tim's Field (SB). The large majority of sightings from the beginning of May were on the Duck Marsh and four chicks made their first appearance here on 23<sup>rd</sup> May (JWC). However, from 2<sup>nd</sup> June only two chicks were seen. Adults and

juveniles were reported up to the middle of July but from then only one or two birds were present almost daily to the end of October. On 10<sup>th</sup> October 16 flew over the Lagoon and farmland (WEBS). Three days later 25 dropped onto the Duck Marsh for a while and on 16<sup>th</sup> a total of 24 were seen flying round the Duck Marsh with a further six birds going east (JWC). The last sighting of the year was on 3<sup>rd</sup> November - eight birds flying over in an easterly direction with two more on the farmland (JWC). Maximum counts each month are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
15	56	5	6	5	4	6	2	2	32	10	-

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

There was just one sighting reported last year but this was not helped by the closure of the Reserve from 24<sup>th</sup> March to 11<sup>th</sup> July. Nevertheless, the number of sightings has been going down in recent years. The newly developed Duck Marsh certainly made a difference this year with 21 sightings reported, all on this wetland area, the first on 3<sup>rd</sup> April when two birds flew in (JWC *et al*). There were no further sightings until 11<sup>th</sup> May when one bird was reported. From 11<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> June two were present with three on 12<sup>th</sup>. Three were again seen on 27<sup>th</sup> June (JWC). A single bird on 4<sup>th</sup> July was the last of the year.

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

There have been no records since 2007.

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

There have been no records since 2012.

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

Most years produce just a handful of sightings these days and these are mainly flyovers. This year was fairly typical with birds reported on just six dates. February to April tends to be the most productive period and it was the same again this year though there were two much later records. On 24<sup>th</sup> February one flew over the Reserve in a north westerly direction calling (JWC). On 22<sup>nd</sup> March one was heard calling over the farmland (JHa). On 18<sup>th</sup> April three flew over calling in an easterly direction (JWC) and on 26<sup>th</sup> April one was again heard as it flew over (SB). On 18<sup>th</sup> August 16 birds flew over the farmland in a north westerly direction (JWC) and on 9<sup>th</sup> September one was seen on the farmland (GJB).

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

The last sighting was in 2019 - a single bird on the Duck Marsh on 26<sup>th</sup> June that year. Prior to that there had been just four records, the last on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2016. This year four birds were seen on the Duck Marsh briefly on 10<sup>th</sup> July (EC).

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

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

**Knot** *Calidris canutus* **Rare Visitor**

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

**Dunlin** *Calidris alpina* **Scarce Visitor**

A single bird on the Duck Marsh on 12<sup>th</sup> July (SB) was the first record since 1<sup>st</sup> February 2012.

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

There were no sightings last year but this wasn't helped by the fact that the Reserve was closed from 24<sup>th</sup> March to 11<sup>th</sup> July. However, sightings had been going down every year prior to that and there were only four records in 2019. There was certainly an improvement this year, the newly developed Duck Marsh producing all bar one of the sightings. On 10<sup>th</sup> April a bird was spotted on the far bank of the river from the River Path (JWC). The following day what was probably the same bird was seen on the Duck Marsh (PM/BM). There were no further sightings until 5<sup>th</sup> May when one was again on the Duck Marsh (JWC) and then a gap until 13<sup>th</sup> July when one was seen there again. A single bird was present daily from 11<sup>th</sup> August to 22<sup>nd</sup> August. There were no reports after this date.

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

The last four years have seen the number of sightings of this previously rare visitor increase considerably. The first this year came on 24<sup>th</sup> March - a single bird on the Reedbed (JWC). There were no further sightings until 4<sup>th</sup> July when a bird was on the Duck Marsh. There were sightings on five further dates in July with two birds on 7<sup>th</sup> (JWC) - all on the Duck Marsh. There were no records in August but on 4<sup>th</sup> September two were on the Reedbed (JWC). The birds were there again the following day and on 8<sup>th</sup> September on the Duck Marsh. Single birds were recorded on two further dates in September and on the Duck Marsh almost daily from 17<sup>th</sup> October until 27<sup>th</sup> December. On 22<sup>nd</sup> December two were reported calling and flying around the Wet Grassland (JWC).

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

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

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

A single bird was seen on the Duck Marsh on 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> August (PL/KL *et al*). Prior to this there had been no records since 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2018.

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

There were again no sightings this year. This species was last recorded on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2019 when two birds were on the flooded farmland.

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

The Wet Grassland has been the best place to find this secretive bird in recent years but there were no records at all last year. There were two this year. On 8<sup>th</sup> March a bird was accidentally flushed twice on the central strip of the Duck Marsh during development work (DAN) and on 30<sup>th</sup> October one was watched and photographed on the Wet Grassland (JWC/EC *et al*).

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

With the Reserve closed throughout the first three months of the year the only records in that period were of birds accidentally flushed by volunteers working on habitat management. Three took flight from the edge of the Lagoon on 18<sup>th</sup> January during work on the Sand Martin nesting bank and on 23<sup>rd</sup> January five were recorded round the Lagoon and Duck Marsh (DAN). On the latter date a bird was also flushed from the John Ackroyd Meadow hedgerow near the Dipping Ponds (JSK). There were reports of three birds at the edge of the Lagoon on 29<sup>th</sup> January, 28<sup>th</sup> February and 14<sup>th</sup> March. Single birds were seen on the newly developed Duck Marsh on 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> April and on 1<sup>st</sup> May, this the last of the spring. The first returning birds were on the very early date of 22<sup>nd</sup> August - two flying in high over the Manager's Garden and compound (JWC). Single birds were seen on the Duck Marsh frequently from 1<sup>st</sup> September with two on occasions. There were, in fact, little more than a handful of sightings away from this area, two of these on the Wet Grassland where two birds flew over on 7<sup>th</sup> November (WeBS). On 28<sup>th</sup> November one was pursued by a Peregrine Falcon over the Manager's Garden and across the Reserve to the Wet Grassland (JWC). There were also sightings of single birds at the Dragonfly Ponds and Education Pond in the latter part of November. Maximum monthly counts are shown below.

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

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

Being largely crepuscular the best chance of seeing this species is towards dusk when a few birds fly into the Coppice from the farmland. However, the only records this year were of birds accidentally flushed in the Coppice by volunteers working there. In January one was flushed on 12<sup>th</sup> and two on 24<sup>th</sup> (JB). In February one was flushed on 17<sup>th</sup> (DW), on 19<sup>th</sup> (JSK) and 28<sup>th</sup> (PM/BM). There were no records in the latter part of the year.

**Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* Summer Visitor and Breeder**

We have to go back to 2017 when a pair last nested successfully on one of the rafts on the Lagoon. The last two years have been very disappointing. In 2019 for the first time there were no sightings in either April or May. It was the same again last year but lack of observers due to the Reserve being closed clearly didn't help. There was some encouragement this year when two birds were seen on one of the rafts with one carrying a fish on 9<sup>th</sup> May (JWC) but the birds didn't stay and there were no further sightings until 16<sup>th</sup> June when one was seen flying west along the river (JWC/EC). On 3<sup>rd</sup> July two terns were seen flying east over the Coppice and on 7<sup>th</sup> July a bird was reported over the Lagoon and Duck Marsh (JWC). On 14<sup>th</sup> July four were seen flying low over the wetlands before going off in a westerly direction (JWC). There were no sightings after this date.

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

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

**Black-headed Gull**

*Chroicocephalus ridibundus* **Common Visitor/Casual Breeder**

Numbers are at their highest in the winter months when birds gather on the farmland and Lagoon. A count of 270+ on the flooded part of the farmland near the river on 22<sup>nd</sup> January (PM/BM) proved to be by far the highest of the year, though considerably less than the 600+ there on 29<sup>th</sup> February last year. With more than half of the Lagoon frozen over around 200 gathered there on 10<sup>th</sup> February (PM/BM). Numbers started to fall away after this date. July produced several three figure counts on the newly developed Duck Marsh with 150+ there on 17<sup>th</sup> (JWC) but dropped back again in August and September. They started to build from the end

of October and there were several three figure counts reported from then until the end of the year but none exceeding 150 birds. Leucistic birds can turn up occasionally and a leucistic Black-headed Gull was found on the Lagoon on 20<sup>th</sup> March and 20<sup>th</sup> October (JWC).

Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
270+	c200	40	40	19	9	150+	83	50	c150	142	131

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

There have been no records in the last three years. This was a new species for the Reserve in 2018 when an adult bird paid a brief visit to the Lagoon on 7<sup>th</sup> April.

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

An adult in full winter plumage on the Lagoon on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2015 was the first and only record for the Reserve prior to this year. On 19<sup>th</sup> February a second winter bird was photographed on the flooded farmland (JWC). The following day what was probably the same bird was recorded a little further up the valley at Calverley and on 21<sup>st</sup> February it was seen on the Lagoon (JWC). On 31<sup>st</sup> July a juvenile bird was on the Duck Marsh and on 1<sup>st</sup> December one was seen on the Lagoon (JWC).

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

January has produced some big counts in previous years - 400+ in 2015 and 230 last year but numbers do vary enormously. This year the best January count was just 30 on the flooded farmland on 25<sup>th</sup> (JWC). Numbers in February and March were even lower and, not surprisingly, birds were absent altogether April and May as they returned to their nesting grounds. A few started to return from the second week in July and a report of 56 on the farmland on 22<sup>nd</sup> August (JWC) proved to be the best of the year. Monthly maxima are shown below.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
30	13	19	-	-	1	10	56	1	14	39	45

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

Recorded in all months except October and December this year, no more than five birds were reported up to the end of April. Like last year numbers increased in May with a count of 15 on the Lagoon on 5<sup>th</sup> (JWC) being a particularly good one here. The newly developed Duck Marsh proved to

be the most popular place throughout much of May with daily counts of up to 12 birds. Numbers increased further in June, a WeBS visit on 13<sup>th</sup> June producing 20 of varying ages on the farmland. On 3<sup>rd</sup> July as many as 37 were counted here (EC). There were no further double figure counts after this but a few birds continued to be seen on the Duck Marsh most days until early September. There were just two records in the last three months of the year, both in November and of no more than two birds.

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

A few birds could be seen on the Lagoon and farmland most days from the beginning of the year but there were certainly more double figure counts this year than last. Eighteen were recorded on the Lagoon on 2<sup>nd</sup> January (JWC) and on 7<sup>th</sup> February 25 on the flooded farmland included numerous immature birds (PM/BM). On 9<sup>th</sup> May around 20 were among a group of 28 large gulls on the newly developed Duck Marsh (JWC). Sightings were much less frequent after this date and throughout June, July and August with no more than five birds reported. Numbers started to build towards the end of the year with several double figure counts, the best being 40 mainly adults on the farmland on 14<sup>th</sup> December (JWC). On 25<sup>th</sup> December a total of 35 birds on the farmland were again mainly adults (PM/BM).

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

This large gull used to be classed as a race of Herring Gull but is now a species in its own right. It can easily be missed by all but the most experienced observers. It is still a scarce bird locally but it is now starting to turn up more often and it is always worth checking the large gulls on the Lagoon or farmland. It was a new bird for the Reserve in 2019 when a near adult was picked out on the flooded farmland on 24<sup>th</sup> February that year. In 2020 there were sightings on three dates - a first winter bird on the farmland on 4<sup>th</sup> January, a sub adult on the flooded farmland on 29<sup>th</sup> February and what was almost certainly the same bird in the same area on 1<sup>st</sup> March. This year there was another February record - an adult on the farmland on 28<sup>th</sup> (JWC).

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

Like the Caspian Gull this species was formally considered to be a race of Herring Gull but is now recognised as a species in its own right. It was a new bird for the Reserve this year. On 15<sup>th</sup> April one was photographed on the Duck Marsh from the canal towpath (JWC). What was almost certainly the same bird was on the Lagoon on 21<sup>st</sup> April and on the Duck Marsh the following day (JWC). From this point there were daily sightings throughout the rest of April, the whole of May and up to 2<sup>nd</sup> June. The

large majority of records came from the Duck Marsh . There were no further sightings until 30<sup>th</sup> June when one was again on the Duck Marsh. There were sightings on four dates in July, the last on the Duck Marsh on 18<sup>th</sup> (JWC).

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

The very few records of this species are usually of birds flying over the Reserve. There was just one this year and that was of a bird flying off Tim's Field during an early morning WeBS visit on 13<sup>th</sup> June.

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

Prior to this year there had only been one record of this species and that was as far back as 2009 when two 1<sup>st</sup> winter birds were reported flying over the Willow Path on 17<sup>th</sup> January that year. On 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> March this year a juvenile bird was seen further up the valley at Calverley bridge fields (JWC). There were no sightings on the Reserve until 4<sup>th</sup> December when a 2nd winter bird was reported on the farmland (JW). What was probably the same bird was seen there again on 8<sup>th</sup> December (JWC) and 11<sup>th</sup> December (JWC/JW).

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

There were just eight reported sightings this year but the bird is almost certainly under recorded. Six of these sightings were on Tim's Field between 26<sup>th</sup> April and 13<sup>th</sup> June with the highest number being nine on 24<sup>th</sup> May (SB). The underside of the river bridge has been a popular roosting and possibly nesting site in the past and birds can often still be heard here.

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

This species is much less common here than it used to be and while there was no shortage of records this year few were of much more than a handful of birds. There was just one double figure count in the first 10 months of the year - 12 birds on Tim's Field on 26<sup>th</sup> February (JWC). The majority of records typically come from the Manager's Garden and up to eight birds were reported here. Although well short of the 100+ counts of former years, there were some decent records on the farmland in the latter part of the year - 24 on 27<sup>th</sup> October, 52 on 5<sup>th</sup> December and 69 on 29<sup>th</sup> December (JWC).

**Wood Pigeon**

*Columba palumbus* **Resident Breeder and Winter Visitor**

Almost certainly under recorded in the early part of this year due to the Reserve being closed, there were no three figure counts which are usually



typical of the winter months. There was one unusually big movement of birds on 3<sup>rd</sup> November, a total of 770 being logged flying south between 8.00am and 9.30am (JWC). Tim's Field can be very productive in the autumn and winter months with birds visiting for seed. Around 70 were counted here on 15<sup>th</sup> November (SB) but numbers increased considerably in December with c100 on 7<sup>th</sup> (PM/BM), c180 on 11<sup>th</sup> (JWC) and 200+ on 25<sup>th</sup> (PM/BM). At least 180 were counted in trees on the far bank of the river on 28<sup>th</sup> December (PM/BM).

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

A few years ago this species was most often seen on the entry road between the main gates and the river bridge, only occasionally venturing further onto the Reserve. However, sightings have declined dramatically in the last three years. In 2019 it was recorded on just two dates and last year again on just two dates - a single bird in each case. This year there was just one record - a single bird flying over the Visitor Centre on 4<sup>th</sup> August (JWC). The BTO Garden Birdwatch reports steep declines throughout the country, probably due to the continued spread of trichomonosis which the species is prone to.

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

There had been just one record of this declining species in the previous three years but this year proved to be the best ever with sightings reported on six dates. On 27<sup>th</sup> June one flew over the road from the farmland and along the Willow Path (JWC). On 6<sup>th</sup> July a bird was seen on the River Path (DF/NF). There were then sightings on three further dates in July - on 14<sup>th</sup> at the back of the Duck Marsh, on 17<sup>th</sup> on the Scrubland and on 18<sup>th</sup> again on the Scrubland (JWC). On 11<sup>th</sup> August a juvenile was recorded near the river bridge (AH), this the latest ever record on the Reserve.

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

In December last year the old nest box on the Scrubland was replaced with a new box incorporating a camera. A male and female were in residence from the beginning of the year, the first sighting being over Tim's Field at 5pm on 3<sup>rd</sup> January (DW). In May this year the nest box camera was finally linked to a monitor in the Visitor Centre which certainly helped with the checking of the birds progress. An interesting discovery at this point was the presence of a dead female bird in the nest box which meant that the male had subsequently found a new partner. Five eggs had been laid by 18<sup>th</sup> May and all five hatched successfully. Most sightings up until then had been early and late in the day but with the young growing rapidly and needing feeding there was more daytime activity from July with

the adults bringing prey items to the box. On more than one occasion they were pursued by the resident Kestrels. All five young subsequently fledged successfully. As in previous years, from the amount of droppings and pellets found, birds were obviously roosting regularly in the thatched gazebo and the open Mike Sheldon Hide. One was accidentally disturbed on several occasions at the former site. Both adult birds were still in residence in the nest box at the end of the year.

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

A nest box in the Manager's Garden was used in 2019, two young fledging successfully but last year's outcome is unknown. Nearly all records of this species come from the Manager's Garden or close by at the small building in the compound and on Poplar Field. The first sighting this year was on 31<sup>st</sup> March - a bird seen from Poplar Field in a bush at the corner of the Manager's Garden (MG/PG). There were just five records in the next four months but there was then a distinct improvement from the middle of August, a bird being seen on several occasions in the gutter of the small building in the compound and in the Manager's Garden. On 21<sup>st</sup> August and 5<sup>th</sup> September one was heard calling at the latter site (JWC). One was also seen on the dry stone wall on the farmland on two dates (PH/JWC). The last sighting was in the Manager's Garden on 29<sup>th</sup> November (SB) but whether successful nesting took place this year is again unknown.

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

There were five records this year, the first two early in the day. On 27<sup>th</sup> January one was watched flying low along the eastern edge of the Coppice at 7.30am (JB). On 4<sup>th</sup> July one flew out of a tree on the riverbank near the bridge at 8.45am (JHar). Evening Bat Walks in the summer months sometimes produce sightings and there were two this year. On 28<sup>th</sup> August one flew over the participants' heads at dusk on the Winter Walk and on 18<sup>th</sup> September one flew over the river bridge, again at dusk. The last record came on 6<sup>th</sup> December when one was seen in roadside trees early in the day (DW).

### **Swift *Apus apus* Summer Visitor**

Due to population declines this species was just one of a number placed on the Red List of greatest conservation concern in the latest report published this year. The first sighting this year was on the latest ever first date of 8<sup>th</sup> May - at least eight birds flying low over the Reserve (JWC). Most reports in the following two months were of no more than a handful of birds but between 20 and 25 were recorded over the Lagoon on 18<sup>th</sup> July and on 24<sup>th</sup> July 105 were logged flying south east in a little over one hour (JWC). A single bird over the Reserve on 21<sup>st</sup> August was the last of

the year (JWC), some two and a half weeks earlier than last year and the earliest last date since 2013. Sadly, boxes in the Swift Tower in the Reedbed again failed to attract any nesters.

**Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* Resident Breeder**

There were sightings in every month of the year with the newly developed Duck Marsh the most productive area. While there was no evidence of nesting in the Kingfisher bank on the Duck Marsh single juveniles were reported here on 21<sup>st</sup> July and 1<sup>st</sup> August (JWC). Three birds actually on the bank on 30<sup>th</sup> July almost certainly included at least one juvenile with two birds on 4<sup>th</sup> and one the next day (DW). Three birds were also seen on the river from the bridge during a WeBS visit on 25<sup>th</sup> July. The months of June, July and October provided most sightings this year. Interestingly, there was only one reported sighting on the Lagoon in the last three months of the year - two birds together on 6<sup>th</sup> November (JWC). A breakdown of sightings this year is shown below.

Lagoon	Duck Marsh	Reedbed	Wet Grassland	River	Other
11	32	9	3	22	4

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

This is a very occasional visitor to the Reserve and there had been just three records in the last three years with none last year. This year there were two sightings. On 24<sup>th</sup> March one flew across the river from the cricket field and onto the Reserve and on 15<sup>th</sup> May one was heard behind the Duck Marsh (JWC).

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

There were only 10 records in the first six months of the year, not helped by the fact that the Reserve was closed until the end of March. On 10<sup>th</sup> April one was photographed on the Barn Owl nest box post on the Scrubland (PH). However, the majority of records came from the Manager's Garden and the Willow Path/Coppice. A number of nest boxes at the latter site again showed signs of substantial woodpecker damage. On 13<sup>th</sup> June an adult and juvenile were seen in trees near the bridge car park during a WeBS visit and on 10<sup>th</sup> July two juveniles were reported hammering on a nest box in the Poplars. Later in the month a juvenile was reported in the Manager's Garden on 25<sup>th</sup> July (EC). It is not known whether the nest site at the edge of the Coppice close to the Willow Path was used this year but much of the nest box damage was in this area.

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

The east facing Barn Owl box in the compound was again used by a pair last year and three young fledged successfully. As usual birds were at the nest box from January this year and on 7<sup>th</sup> February both were reported perched on the Barn Owl box on the Scrubland late in the afternoon. (DW). On 7<sup>th</sup> March one was watched harassing a Barn Owl that was hunting over the Scrubland (DW), an activity that was reported again later in the year more than once. Two juveniles made their first appearance on the ledge of the nest box on 13<sup>th</sup> June during an early morning WeBS visit and on 24<sup>th</sup> June the adult female and two juveniles were seen on a post on John Ackroyd Meadow (PM/BM). However, it was not until 7<sup>th</sup> July that three juveniles were recorded together for the first time on overhead wires between John Ackroyd Meadow and the Scrubland (NT). With the nest box starting to look well past its best the decision was taken to put up a new box on a pole close by in the hedgerow between the meadow and Scrubland and it wasn't long before a bird was seen on the box for the first time. Last year with the young dispersing there were just two sightings in November and none in December. It was very different this year with sightings of the adult birds daily to the end of the year. An interesting sighting on 10<sup>th</sup> November was of two birds fighting on the ground in the Coppice (MG/PG).

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

There were sightings on two dates last year and on just one date in each of the previous three years. This year there were two and probably three sightings. On 22<sup>nd</sup> January a female was seen perched on a post on the River Path early in the morning (DW). On 28<sup>th</sup> February a small raptor pursuing a Barn Owl across the Scrubland at dusk may well have been a Merlin (PM/BM/JB). On 19<sup>th</sup> September one was seen flying over the farmland in a southerly direction (JWC).

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

With just two reported sightings in the 15 years from 2000 to 2014 this was a rare visitor here to say the least. However, there were then sightings in each of the five years from 2015 to 2019. There were none in 2020 but with the Reserve closed for a lengthy period this was perhaps not surprising. This year sightings were reported on six dates between 12<sup>th</sup> May and 8<sup>th</sup> August. Prior to 12<sup>th</sup> May one had been seen further upriver towards the paddocks on 30<sup>th</sup> April (JWC). One over the Lagoon on 12<sup>th</sup> May was the first actually on the Reserve (JWC) and on 15<sup>th</sup> May one was seen circling over the Visitor Centre and Tim's Field for several minutes (JWC *et al*). There were two reports of a bird flying over on 9<sup>th</sup> June (DW *et al*). On 21<sup>st</sup> July there were a number of sightings and a bird was

photographed flying along the river (AH). There were two sightings in August. On 4<sup>th</sup> one was reported flying low over the Reedbed Hide and on 8<sup>th</sup> one landed briefly in a dead tree in the same area (JWC).

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

Despite the Reserve being closed for the first three months of the year there were sightings on a record 51 dates with September (10), November (9) and December (10) the most productive months.

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of days recorded</u>
2017	42
2018	26
2019	29
2020	18
2021	51

The pylon behind the Manager's Garden has always been a good place to look for this bird and there were numerous sightings here this year with two reported on 11<sup>th</sup> July (JWC) and two photographed on 17<sup>th</sup> December (BM). Birds certainly hunt over Tim's Field and Wood Pigeons probably figure high on the menu but sightings over the field are infrequent. However, one was seen perched on the Coppice gate facing Tim's Field on 20<sup>th</sup> August (DW). On 18<sup>th</sup> October one flew from the pylon and a few minutes later was seen carrying prey (SB). On 28<sup>th</sup> November one was watched pursuing a Snipe over the Manager's Garden to the Wet Grassland (JWC) and on 27<sup>th</sup> December one was seen carrying prey over John Ackroyd Meadow to a pylon on the far bank of the river.

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

There was one record this year. On 19<sup>th</sup> December two birds were seen flying round the Reserve (AL). First recorded here in 2001, there were no further sightings until 2015 when a single bird was seen on six dates. There were then no sightings in the three years from 2016 to 2018, just one in 2019 and none last year.

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

This remains a very common bird on the Reserve with substantial gatherings occurring at times, particularly so on the Scrubland. On 22<sup>nd</sup> January 24 were counted here in one small area, something presumably attracting their attention (PM/BM). There were no reports of nesting but several pairs almost certainly did so again. At the back end of the year 25 were counted on John Ackroyd Meadow on 7<sup>th</sup> November (JWC).

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

This is a common bird on the Reserve throughout the year but it tends to be at its most numerous in late summer and autumn with noisy parties of birds flying over on their hazelnut and acorn forays. There were, nevertheless, several reports of up to four together in the early part of the year and on 31<sup>st</sup> March seven were seen in bushes at the back of the bridge car park (MG/PG). Successful nesting certainly took place, a family of five being seen on the Willow Path on 2<sup>nd</sup> August (PU). Acorn crops were said to be very poor in many parts of the country this year, resulting in lower counts of Jays in the autumn months. This may not have been the case here as groups of eight birds were recorded on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> August (JWC) but there were no other counts of more than four together.

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

This is a very common bird on the Reserve and large flocks can be seen in the winter months. More than 150 were on the flooded farmland on 25<sup>th</sup> January (JWC). Tim's Field proved an attractive source of food in the spring with up to 50 recorded here on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> April (DW). A bird showing characteristics of "Nordic Jackdaw" *Corvus monedula* was picked out on 24<sup>th</sup> October and on 27<sup>th</sup> October a gathering of around 200 included three such birds (JWC). On 29<sup>th</sup> December c270 on the farmland included two birds showing all the characteristics of *Corvus monedula*. Large noisy gatherings occur late in the day in the winter months as birds come in to roost in trees across the river. Around 250 were recorded circling over the river upstream of the bridge towards dusk on 31<sup>st</sup> December (PM/BM).

**Rook** *Corvus frugilegus* **Uncommon Visitor**

This species rarely ventures onto the Reserve and all 12 records this year, 10 of these between September and the end of November, were of small numbers flying over. The highest numbers reported were 10 on 25<sup>th</sup> September and seven the following day (JWC). All other records were of between one and three birds.

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

This is a very common bird on the Reserve with large gatherings occurring, particularly in the winter months. Tim's Field is popular in the spring months before the crop gets too high and there were daily counts here of between 40 and 60 birds and a best count of 78 on 26<sup>th</sup> April (SB). The Wet Grassland is another popular gathering place at certain times of the year. A total of 56 were counted here on 17<sup>th</sup> November (EC). Large numbers occur at roost sites across the river late in the day in the winter months though no counts were submitted this year.

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

Closely related to the Carrion Crow, this bird 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 three years. One seen briefly over the farmland on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2018 was the first and only record for the Reserve.

**Raven** *Corvus corax* **Rare Visitor**

There have been no records in the last two years. It is most likely to be recorded as a flyover and in 2019 there were reports of a bird over the Reserve on four dates.

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

There have been no records in the last four years. This species was last seen on the Reserve on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017.

**Coal Tit** *Periparus ater* **Uncommon Visitor**

Each year produces just a few sightings and these are mainly in the autumn and winter months. Last year there were seven records and this year just five - all of single birds, the first a rare summer sighting on the Willow Path on 21<sup>st</sup> July (JWC). There was a further sighting on the Willow Path on 27<sup>th</sup> October, by the Visitor Centre on 14<sup>th</sup> November (JWC), in the Manager's Garden on 22<sup>nd</sup> November (SB) and in trees at the edge of the Duck Marsh on 27<sup>th</sup> December (EC).

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

This common bird is a daily visitor to the feeders in the Manager's Garden, Bee Garden and along the Willow Path where it is the main user of nest boxes. It was only possible to check around 30 of the boxes this year and of these seven were used by Blue Tits with all young apparently fledging successfully in four of them. One box contained at least three broken egg shells; one contained one unhatched egg and one a dead feathered juvenile. There was again evidence of woodpecker damage on several boxes but a cold spring is thought to have been the main problem for the limited breeding success this year. In the autumn months good numbers can sometimes be encountered in mixed feeding parties and on 5<sup>th</sup> September 13 were counted moving through with several warblers (JWC). Surprisingly, there were few other reports of such parties this year.

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

This is another common bird here. Like the Blue Tit it is a daily visitor to the feeders and regularly takes to using nest boxes. Of the nest boxes

checked 10 were used by Great Tits in 2019, seven in 2020 and just four this year. All young appear to have fledged successfully in two of these and one contained two broken egg shells. The box on the back of the Mike Sheldon Hide was certainly used again this year but with what success is not known, though birds were observed feeding young here on 30<sup>th</sup> May (PM/BM). Birds continued to visit the feeders in the Manager's Garden and Bee Garden to the end of the year but from records received numbers were certainly on the low side which is perhaps not surprising after a poor nesting season.

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

This is the second fastest declining species in the UK (after the Turtle Dove) and is red listed. The population is said to have dropped by 94% since the 1970s. It was last reported on the Reserve on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2013.

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

Birds were recorded on the Reserve in 2002 and 2004. There have been no sightings reported since then.

**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 23<sup>rd</sup> March that year. There were no records last year or this year.

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

This year was fairly typical with just six reported sightings and all of birds flying over. February and March provided a few records last year but with the Reserve closed for the first three months of this year there was only one report and that was of just a handful of birds flying west seen from the canal towpath on 16<sup>th</sup> February (JWC). The other five reported sightings came in the period from 29<sup>th</sup> September to 20<sup>th</sup> October and involved between one and four birds.

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

A single bird over the Reserve on 20<sup>th</sup> March (JWC) was the first of the year, five days later than last year's early first date. By the end of the month some 40 birds could be seen over the Lagoon. Around 20 nest holes had been excavated in the nesting bank by the end of the first week of April. More holes appeared every day, the number reaching 89 by 21<sup>st</sup> April and a final count on 13<sup>th</sup> June revealed 133 holes, down very slightly on last year. Certainly not all holes are used and some are only partially



excavated so it is difficult to ascertain the size of the population with any certainty.

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of nest holes</u>
2015	167
2016	186
2017	145
2018	88
2019	180
2020	142
2021	133

Last dates have varied considerably in the last few years - from 26<sup>th</sup> September last year (the joint latest with 2007) to 1<sup>st</sup> September in 2019. Four birds over the Coppice on 22<sup>nd</sup> August this year during an early morning WeBS count was the earliest last date since 2013.

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

Two birds over the Reserve on 23<sup>rd</sup> April were the first of the year and the earliest ever date for this species, the previous earliest being 24<sup>th</sup> March in 2019. There were no further sightings reported until 5<sup>th</sup> April when a single bird was seen over the Lagoon (JWC). Birds were recorded most days from this point and on 8<sup>th</sup> May more than 40 were seen from the River Path feeding over the river (JWC). One or two pairs nest in the dumper truck shed every year and this year was no exception. Two juveniles and an adult were photographed on the door of the shed on 7<sup>th</sup> July (RAH) and birds were seen flying in and out on a number of occasions. Among the several double figure counts reported were 19 on 25<sup>th</sup> July on overhead wires by the car park (EC). On 4<sup>th</sup> September at least 31 Swallows were watched flying over cattle on the farmland (JWC) - this the best count of the month. Four over the river and one over Tim's Field on 6<sup>th</sup> October (JWC) were the last of the year, just seven days earlier than the latest ever date of 13<sup>th</sup> October in 2019.

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

Due to population declines this species has been moved onto the red list in the RSPB's Birds of Conservation Concern latest report published this year. Four birds over the Lagoon on 7<sup>th</sup> April (DW) were the first of the year, eight days earlier than last year. Numbers remained very low with no more than three reported up to the end of July. A few more birds were recorded in August with c20 over Tim's Field on 15<sup>th</sup> (AL). At least 20 were counted in a mixed gathering of hirundines over the cattle on the farmland on 4<sup>th</sup> September and a similar number were reported the following day (JWC). On 20<sup>th</sup> September more than 60 were counted over the Visitor Centre flying south west in rain (JWC) and a total of six flying south on

29<sup>th</sup> September were the last of the year (JWC et al), just one day earlier than last year.

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

Recorded every year since the first sighting on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2014, reports are spasmodic with often long gaps between. On 1<sup>st</sup> March one was heard and seen in trees near the Reedbed (JHa). More than seven months were to pass before the next record on 10<sup>th</sup> October - a bird heard but not seen at the edge of the river near the bridge on 10<sup>th</sup> October (WeBS). There were three further records in October - in the Reedbed on 20<sup>th</sup> (PG) and 23<sup>rd</sup> (JWC) and on 24<sup>th</sup> one was heard on the Duck Marsh (JWC). There were two sightings in November - at the edge of the Duck Marsh on 13<sup>th</sup> and on the Wet Grassland on 14<sup>th</sup> (JWC).

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

These birds are early nesters and two were nest building in bushes on the River Path as early as 27<sup>th</sup> February this year (JB) while others were still being seen in small groups of up to five birds. Nest building was also underway in a small holly bush by the compound fence opposite the Visitor Centre from 11<sup>th</sup> April (PM/BM). A third nest was reported in bushes at the edge of the Lagoon near the Lagoon Hide on 29<sup>th</sup> April (JB/MB). The first family party of around 15 birds was recorded on 15<sup>th</sup> May (SBa). Large and sometimes mixed feeding parties can be seen in the autumn months. At least nine were seen in a mixed party with other tits on the River Path on 26<sup>th</sup> September and a party of around 15 on the Willow Path on 16<sup>th</sup> October included one Goldcrest. Eighteen birds were counted in one group of Long-tailed Tits on the Willow Path on 27<sup>th</sup> October and around 10 were seen on John Ackroyd Meadow on 20<sup>th</sup> November (JWC).

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

The breeding range of this species west of the Ural Mountains has begun to expand and more of these once rare visitors are being seen in the UK. A new bird for the Reserve this year, one was heard on the Willow Path on a few occasions on 16<sup>th</sup> October. The following day it was calling along the Willow Path again and was seen briefly (JWC). The bird was present most of that day but was not heard or seen subsequently.

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

According to the BTO Breeding Birds Survey the breeding population of this species in England has increased by 114% during the last 24 years. It is certainly a common summer visitor here and overwintering birds can almost be guaranteed these days. On 23<sup>rd</sup> February one was seen and heard singing on the riverbank upstream of the bridge and on 27<sup>th</sup>

February one was seen in trees at the back of the Lagoon (JWC). On 1<sup>st</sup> March one was seen singing by the bridge (KMCL) and from the middle of March birds could be heard in the Coppice. By the end of the month at least six could be heard around the Reserve. With many young birds on the wing the contact calls of *Phylloscopus* warblers could be heard all round the Reserve in August and into the start of September. On 26<sup>th</sup> September birds were still reported singing at the back of the Lagoon, on the Willow Path and in the Manager's Garden (PM/BM) and on 10<sup>th</sup> October in the Coppice (JWC). Birds continued to be reported most days in October, on just two dates in November but on nine dates in December, mainly in the Coppice with two there on 11<sup>th</sup> December. One on Poplar Carr on 29<sup>th</sup> December was the last of the year (JWC).

### **Siberian Chiffchaff**

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

These birds breed in coniferous taiga forest from the Ural regions eastwards and they winter mainly in India, though a few stray to Western Europe annually 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 24<sup>th</sup> November this year 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 (JWC).

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

This species is found in similar habitats to its cousin the Chiffchaff but, unlike the latter, its breeding population here has declined by 45% in the last 24 years. A bird seen between the entrance and the river bridge on 5<sup>th</sup> April (JWC) was the first of the year, just a day earlier than last year. One was singing in the Coppice just four days later (PM/BM), this usually the best place to hear this species distinctive song. At least one could be heard here throughout May but there were certainly fewer birds reported than in past years. A bird was also singing on the Barkers' site in April. There was some breeding success. On 25<sup>th</sup> July an adult and juvenile were seen in the Manager's Garden and on the same date an adult and three juveniles were recorded on Poplar Carr (EC). Typically, the contact calls of *Phylloscopus* warblers could be heard all round the Reserve in August and around 20 were counted on 21<sup>st</sup> August (JWC). A similar number were recorded on 5<sup>th</sup> September but there were no reports after this date. The last record in 2020 was on the early date of 30<sup>th</sup> August.

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

A bird going into the Manager's Garden on 7<sup>th</sup> November last year was almost certainly overwintering but there were no further records until 30<sup>th</sup> March this year when one was heard singing by the river bridge (JWC). The following day as many as four could be heard singing - in roadside trees, in the Coppice, at the back of the compound and on the Scrubland. Birds were heard and seen daily from this point. On 26<sup>th</sup> July a female was seen with juveniles near the Manager's Garden (JWC). Last year there were only a handful of sightings after the end of August but there were plenty of records after this date this year throughout September and into October. On 14<sup>th</sup> September two males and two females were seen together in the Mike Fisk Meadow hedge just below the Visitor Centre (PM/BM) and on 19<sup>th</sup> two males were seen near the Dipping Ponds (JWC). A female in the Manager's Garden on 23<sup>rd</sup> October (JWC) was the last of the year.

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

Never numerous and easily overlooked, sightings were reported on just five dates this year. On 22<sup>nd</sup> April two were heard and seen in the Manager's Garden and a bird was also heard at the back of the Duck Marsh (PM/BM). On the same day one was also seen in trees by the river bridge. There were no further sightings until 2<sup>nd</sup> June when a bird was seen near the Lagoon (JWC). There was an unconfirmed report of three in the Manager's Garden on 11<sup>th</sup> August. On 5<sup>th</sup> September two were seen feeding in a rowan on the Willow Path and on 8<sup>th</sup> September two were again seen in the same area (JWC), this the last sighting of the year.

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

Most years produce just a handful of sightings and this year was no exception. There were just three records, in each case just a single bird - in the roadside hedgerow on 1<sup>st</sup> May, in the car park by the bridge on 8<sup>th</sup> May and in willows on the Scrubland on 5<sup>th</sup> September (JWC).

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

Large bramble patches provide ideal nesting sites for this species and the first bird this year was seen in such an area near the Manager's Garden on 24<sup>th</sup> April (JWC), eight days later than last year's first sighting. On the same date one was also seen between the Dragonfly Ponds and the Scrubland. These areas continued to be the most productive sites with up to seven birds seen and heard over the next few days. From 15<sup>th</sup> May a bird was also on territory on the Butterfly Bank. Unusually, there were no reports of juveniles but there were several sightings of up to four birds feeding on Tim's Field in August which could well have included one or

two. Watching the Scrubland from the River Path provided several sightings in the first few days of September with up to three birds reported. Two here on 5<sup>th</sup> September (JWC) were the last of the year - exactly the same date as last year.

### **Grasshopper Warbler**

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

The loud “reeling” song of this skulking species usually gives it away but it is never numerous and there was just one record in 2019, none in 2020 and none again this year. Prior to 2019 most years used to produce one or two records in April.

### **Sedge Warbler**

*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* **Summer Visitor and Breeder**

First dates had been remarkably similar in the previous three years - 21<sup>st</sup> April in 2018 and 20<sup>th</sup> April in both 2019 and 2020. This year it was 22<sup>nd</sup> April - a bird singing in the Reedbed (PM/BM)). The first one was singing on the Wet Grassland just two days later and there were regular sightings thereafter though numbers reported were on the low side. There were just two reports of young. Four were seen flying from the corner of the Dragonfly Ponds to the Wet Grassland on 23<sup>rd</sup> June and on 3<sup>rd</sup> July three were seen being fed on the latter area (JWC). There were a few reports of birds at the Dragonfly Ponds but no evidence of nesting taking place there this year. Two birds on the Wet Grassland on 12<sup>th</sup> September were the last of the year (EC).

### **Reed Warbler**

*Acrocephalus scirpaceus* **Summer Visitor and Breeder**

First dates for this species have been getting a bit earlier in recent years, ranging between 15<sup>th</sup> April (the earliest ever last year) and 21<sup>st</sup> April. This year the first two birds were recorded in the Reedbed on 24<sup>th</sup> April (JWC). From the beginning of May there were regular sightings on all four main wetland areas with the large majority on the Reedbed and Wet Grassland. A count of 20+ on 3<sup>rd</sup> July included numerous juveniles, the majority again on the Reedbed and Wet Grassland (JWC). On 1<sup>st</sup> August a bird was reported feeding young on the Duck Marsh. Around seven were seen in the Reedbed on 8<sup>th</sup> August but there were only two records after this date, the last a single bird in the Reedbed on 4<sup>th</sup> September (JWC).

### **Firecrest** *Regulus ignicapillus* **Rare Visitor**

First recorded on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2017, there were sightings in 2018, 2019 and 2020, the last on 1<sup>st</sup> February that year. Sadly, there were none this year.

**Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus* **Winter Visitor**

This bird is very much an autumn and winter visitor to the Reserve, preferring mainly to breed in coniferous woodland. The area around the river bridge can often be productive and there were sightings here most days last year from the beginning of January and into March. This year there were only three records of single birds in this period, though this was largely due to the closure of the Reserve. One in trees near the bridge car park on 26<sup>th</sup> April (SB) was the last of the spring. An unseasonal bird was recorded on the River Path on 28<sup>th</sup> July (JWC) but the first of the autumn was recorded on the Willow Path on 8<sup>th</sup> September. On 25<sup>th</sup> September one was seen by the Reedbed. There were numerous sightings from the second week in October, most involving one or two birds but three were reported near the river bridge on 10<sup>th</sup> of that month. Three were also seen on John Ackroyd Meadow on 20<sup>th</sup> November (JWC). The Willow Path/Coppice edge and the river bridge continued to be the most productive areas but one on Poplar Carr on 29<sup>th</sup> December was the last of the year (JWC).

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

Found in every habitat, this is a very common bird here. A total of 15 were heard or seen round the Reserve during an early morning WeBS visit on 13<sup>th</sup> April. Birds have nested in the Manager's Garden Hide in the past. They do not appear to have done so this year but on 4<sup>th</sup> May one was reported feeding young in the garden (DW). Except in the extreme north Wrens can have two broods in a year which would explain why an adult was recorded feeding three young at the Dragonfly Ponds as late as 7<sup>th</sup> August (AT *et al*).

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

2020 had to rank as a good year for this species with records on five dates and all in the first half of the year. This year there were three records but all just of a bird heard rather than seen. On 11<sup>th</sup> April one was heard calling in trees in the Manager's Garden (PM/BM). On 26<sup>th</sup> July one was heard in trees near the river bridge (SB) and on 8<sup>th</sup> August one was heard on the far riverbank (JWC).

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

January and February last year were very productive, particularly the area around the river bridge, but due to lockdown for the first three months of this year there was only one record in this period - a bird in riverside trees on 8<sup>th</sup> February (JWC). This was in fact the only sighting reported in the first six months of the year, the next being of two birds on the Willow Path

on 14<sup>th</sup> July. There were sightings on three further dates on the Willow Path with three birds there on 11<sup>th</sup> August (JWC). There was just one report from the Manager's Garden - a single bird on 7<sup>th</sup> August (EC), two sightings in roadside trees by the Lagoon with two birds there on 20<sup>th</sup> November and one sighting in the car park by the bridge on 20<sup>th</sup> September (JWC). One on the River Path on 24<sup>th</sup> November was the last of the year.

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

This once common species is now on the Red List and this year was the worst ever for the number of sightings reported - just five and three of these just single birds. On 13<sup>th</sup> June four flew over the river bridge and two over the river path during a WeBS visit and on 17<sup>th</sup> November around 40 flew over the Reserve in a westerly direction (JWC).

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

Breeding in the uplands, this is our only summer visiting thrush. It was a new bird for the Reserve in 2017 when there were two records - on 6<sup>th</sup> May and 4<sup>th</sup> November - the last one photographed on Mike Fisk Meadow. There have been no sightings since then.

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

The hedgerows and Willow Coppice provide plenty of ideal nesting sites for this species but reports of young birds are few and far between. There was just one this year - two adults and a single juvenile on Poplar Carr on 4<sup>th</sup> July (EC). There was no real evidence of a large influx of Continental birds in the winter period, the best counts this year being 12 on 7<sup>th</sup> November (EC), 14 on 15<sup>th</sup> November (SB) and 12 on 6<sup>th</sup> December (SB).

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

It was a very poor year for sightings of this species. One flying along the river and onto the Reserve on 26<sup>th</sup> March (JWC) was the only record in the first three months of the year and the only bird to be actually seen on the Reserve, all others being flyovers. According to the BTO far fewer of these birds arrived in the UK in the latter part of the year, due in part to mild temperatures in northern Europe and unfavourable winds. It appears that higher numbers of birds remained in Scandinavia rather than moving further south. Here there were just five records in the last three months and none involving more than 11 birds. Four flying in a westerly direction over Tim's Field on 23<sup>rd</sup> October were the first of the autumn and 11 flying south on 26<sup>th</sup> December the last (JWC).

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

With the Reserve closed there were just a handful of sightings reported in the early part of the year. At least 30 were seen from the canal towpath flying onto the Reserve from the cricket field on 4<sup>th</sup> January (JWC). Ten were seen by the Lagoon on 8<sup>th</sup> February (SF) and 13 flew in across the river bridge 20<sup>th</sup> February (JWC). A group of 18 flying over the Reserve on 18<sup>th</sup> March (JWC) was the last of the spring. The first of the autumn were reported on 13<sup>th</sup> October (JWC). Up until noon that day a total of 1,230 were logged flying west. The rest of the day produced a further 510 birds all flying west. Birds continued to pass over in considerable numbers for the next three weeks - 240 on 20<sup>th</sup> October, 220 on 24<sup>th</sup> and a total of 1,020 on 3<sup>rd</sup> November (JWC). A few birds did drop in - 28 in the Manager's Garden on 20<sup>th</sup> October and c30 in the Coppice on 24<sup>th</sup> among the best counts. There were just a few sightings in the last two months of the year. Around 60 flew over the Reserve on 1<sup>st</sup> December and c12 were seen in the Coppice on 12<sup>th</sup> (JWC).

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

The Willow Coppice often produces the first singing bird of the year but the first this year was on the Butterfly Bank on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> February (PM/BM). Two were heard in the Coppice on 6<sup>th</sup> May and on 13<sup>th</sup> May five were recorded round the Reserve (PM/BM). On the latter date broken egg shell was found in the Rodley Robins garden. Four birds were still singing round the Reserve as late as 13<sup>th</sup> July. Sightings do tend to dry up in August and last year there were none that month or in September and October. Birds can be very hard to find in this period and this is the pattern most years. This year there were a few records in August including a juvenile in the Manager's Garden on 28<sup>th</sup> (EC). Three were seen on John Ackroyd Meadow on 25<sup>th</sup> September but there were then no further sightings until the beginning of November. There were sightings on seven dates that month and on four dates in December, all of single birds.

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

This is another species that is on the Birds of Conservation Concern Red List. Recorded on just 14 dates last year and 17 dates this year, the pattern of sightings this year was rather different, the large majority coming in the last six months of the year. None involved more than two birds. One on the Scrubland on 3<sup>rd</sup> March was the first of the year (DW) and one was recorded on three further dates between then and 2<sup>nd</sup> May. There were two sightings of single birds in July and two birds were seen on 6<sup>th</sup> September (SB). On 27<sup>th</sup> October two were seen by the river bridge (JWC). The last two months of the year produced eight records, two of



these flyovers with two birds in each case. One in the Manager's Garden on 19<sup>th</sup> December was the last of the year.

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

Even the best years produce little more than a handful of sightings and the last two years have been particularly poor with just one sighting in August 2019 and none in 2020. This year was one of the better ones with sightings reported on five dates, the first on 21<sup>st</sup> August - two birds on the River Path (PA *et al*). The Manager's Garden produced one bird on 25<sup>th</sup> August (KH), two on 28<sup>th</sup> August (EC) and one on 8<sup>th</sup> September (JWC). On 6<sup>th</sup> September one was seen in the bridge car park (SB).

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

There were no reported sightings this year. This was a new species for the Reserve last year - a juvenile, which was ringed, being photographed on the Willow Path on 1<sup>st</sup> August.

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

This is a common bird on the Reserve and particularly easy to see on the Willow Path where it is usually very confiding. There were no reports of juveniles until 14<sup>th</sup> July when one was seen with an adult in the Manager's Garden (EC). Last year the first juvenile was reported on 28<sup>th</sup> May, rather appropriately in the Rodley Robins' garden. There were further reports of single juveniles subsequently on the Willow Path and John Ackroyd Meadow. Numbers sometimes increase in the autumn and winter months with the arrival of birds from Continental Europe but other than a report of 11 on 10<sup>th</sup> October during an early morning WeBS visit there were no other records of more than nine birds.

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

There have been no sightings since 2008. A female in the hedgerow opposite the workshop on 9<sup>th</sup> February that year was only the second record for the Reserve.

**Common Redstart**

*Phoenicurus phoenicurus* **Uncommon Passage Visitor**

There were no sightings this year or last year. There was just one record in 2019 on 26<sup>th</sup> August and one in 2018 on 25<sup>th</sup> August. .

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

Most years produce a few records but there was just one in 2019 (7<sup>th</sup> Sept) and none in 2020. There were again no spring records this year but there were sightings on three dates in September. On 4<sup>th</sup> two birds were seen

on Tim's Field, one later going onto the Scrubland (JWC) where probably the same bird was seen later the same day in some bare branches with three Common Whitethroats (PM/BM). On 8<sup>th</sup> September one was again reported on Tim's Field and on 12<sup>th</sup> September there was a further sighting of a bird here (JWC/EC *et al*).

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

Autumn passage was particularly good last year, a good crop of Quinoa on Tim's Field providing ideal perches for birds feeding there with as many as five on several dates. This year was disappointing with no spring records and sightings on just four dates in the autumn, mainly on Tim's Field and between 26<sup>th</sup> September and 16<sup>th</sup> October. A single bird was seen there on 26<sup>th</sup> September and 6<sup>th</sup> October (JWC). On 10<sup>th</sup> October three were on Tim's Field with a bird also reported on the farmland (JWC *et al*) and on 16<sup>th</sup> October a single bird was seen on the field.

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

There were just two records in 2019 and none in 2020. Birds can turn up in both spring and late summer/early autumn. This year there were four records in the latter period, three of these in August. On 11<sup>th</sup> one was seen perched on the Wet Grassland Hide; on 18<sup>th</sup> three were on the farmland and on 21<sup>st</sup> August one was seen on the farmland manure heap (JWC). On 10<sup>th</sup> October one was again seen on the farmland manure heap (JWC).

**Dipper** *Cinclus cinclus* **Uncommon Visitor**

This bird is a lover of shallow, fast flowing rivers and apart from the area immediately downstream of the weir conditions here have never been ideal. However, this all changed with the partial collapse of the weir downstream at Newlay in February last year. The nature of the river by the River Path changed completely and where there were once deep glides there were now fast flowing shallows. Dippers were quick to take advantage. There were sightings on just one date in April, May and August but from the last week in September there were regular reports to the end of the year with two birds together on several occasions.

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

The population of this species has declined dramatically in recent years and the few records that are received these days are usually close to the main gates by the canal tow path and rarely of more than two or three birds. However, there were two sightings of single birds further onto the Reserve this year - on 21<sup>st</sup> June (SB) and in the Manager's Garden on 11<sup>th</sup> August (MG/PG).

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

This species is doing well here at the moment but we know from previous experience that they can disappear for months on end. After a successful year in 2020 birds were seen daily from the beginning of this year and one was nest building in the camera box on the east facing wall of the Visitor Centre as early as 22<sup>nd</sup> February. Just three days later one was also observed going into the sparrow terrace box on the north facing wall. Both these boxes were used successfully last year. On 14<sup>th</sup> April a bird was also reported going into a nest box in the Rodley Robins' garden (DS). Two and possibly three broods of young fledged successfully from the two boxes on the Visitor Centre. Birds were daily visitors to the feeders in both the Bee Garden and Manager's Garden from the latter part of June with the first two juveniles reported in the Manager's Garden on 27<sup>th</sup> June (EC). Up to nine birds were seen round the feeders in the Bee Garden in the second half of the year and at least 12 were reported flying into the Manager's Garden on 8<sup>th</sup> September to join birds already calling there (JWC). There were sightings in both gardens to the end of the year.

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

This is a very common bird on the Reserve but it is often overlooked because of its secretive nature. The Willow Path, Bee Garden and Manager's Garden can usually be relied on to produce sightings and seven were recorded in the Bee Garden on 31<sup>st</sup> January (JB). A total of 16 were counted on a walk round the Reserve on 19<sup>th</sup> April (SB). The hedgerows provide ideal nesting sites but there were only two reports of young this year - a single juvenile in the Manager's Garden on 17<sup>th</sup> July and three on the Willow Path on 7<sup>th</sup> August (EC).

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

This is a very infrequent visitor to the Reserve. There were no records between 2005 and 2015 and none last year. This year there were two. On 21<sup>st</sup> August a bird was heard calling on the farmland but could not be located and on 5<sup>th</sup> September four were seen around cattle on the farmland (JWC).

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

The partial collapse of the weir further downstream at Newlay in February affected the river level below the Rodley weir dramatically and this was very noticeable from the River Path where we now had rippling shallows rather than deep glides. This particularly suited birds like the Grey Wagtail and the large majority of sightings were recorded here for the rest of the year. Three birds here on 10<sup>th</sup> July included one juvenile (PM/BM). Two or three birds were seen on three further dates in July and on a number

of dates thereafter. Away from the River Path two were recorded on the Duck Marsh on 22<sup>nd</sup> August and 6<sup>th</sup> October (JWC). On 30<sup>th</sup> October three were on the manure heap on the farmland (JWC). There were further sightings of a single bird here in November and December.

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

The majority of sightings were on the farmland this year. On 1<sup>st</sup> March six were counted on the manure heap there (JHa). Away from the farmland the highest count of the year was on the freshly ploughed Tim's Field on 22<sup>nd</sup> March - at least 12 and possibly as many as 20 probably feeding on invertebrates there (PM/BM). There were only six records from April 1<sup>st</sup> to the end of September but from the beginning of October there were a number of sightings on the farmland with four there on 2<sup>nd</sup> October (JWC). There were a few sightings in the compound where birds have nested in the past but there were no reports of young this year.

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

It is worth carefully checking any black and white wagtails seen in March or April as this passage migrant does turn up on occasions. The few records that have been received have tended to be in this period though autumn sightings are also possible. There was just one confirmed sighting last year - two birds on Tim's Field on 6<sup>th</sup> April - and none this year.

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

All sightings were of birds flying over the Reserve. There were less than a handful of records in the spring period and those only involving single birds. There was rather more evidence of autumn passage with birds recorded flying south on a number of dates from 8<sup>th</sup> September with 14 on 25<sup>th</sup> September and 28 the following day the highest counts (JWC).

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

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

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

Throughout the spring and summer months almost all sightings were at the feeders in the Manager's Garden but never more than a handful of birds. Numbers are considerably higher in the autumn and winter months with an influx of visitors, probably from Northern Europe, attracted by the abundant seed crop on Tim's Field. In January and February there were a number of double figure counts with up to 19 birds recorded. Numbers fell away after the first week in March. There were several reports of

juveniles at the feeders in the Manager's Garden in July and August with five seen there on 25<sup>th</sup> July (EC). Birds were again recorded visiting Tim's Field for seed from the second week in November, counts varying between eight and 16. Numbers increased considerably in December with 34 reported on 4<sup>th</sup> and 36 on 22<sup>nd</sup> (JWC).

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

Sightings of this winter visitor here are very infrequent. There were just three sightings in 2018, two in 2019 and just one last year - all involving single birds. This year sightings were reported on four dates. On 13<sup>th</sup> October one was recorded flying over the Reserve in a north westerly direction (JWC). On 10<sup>th</sup> November one was seen in trees at the edge of the Coppice by Tim's Field with around eight Chaffinches (JWC *et al*). There were further sightings in the same area on 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> December (AL/JWC).

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

This species is a daily visitor to the feeders in the Manager's Garden and Bee Garden throughout the year. There were also a number of sightings on Poplar Carr this year. The first juvenile was reported in the Manager's Garden on 30<sup>th</sup> June (EC) with two there on 12<sup>th</sup> July (SB). There were further sightings of one or two juveniles up to the end of September. Numbers of birds were similar to last year with a best count of seven on 19<sup>th</sup> December during an early morning WeBS visit. This included three males and three females in the Manager's Garden.

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

In the latest assessment of the status of all the UK's bird species the Greenfinch has moved directly from the Green List to the Red List, due to the population crash (62% since 1993). Not surprisingly, numbers remained very low on the Reserve throughout the year with one notable exception. There were very few reports of more than three or four birds, though there was at least some evidence of successful breeding with two adults and two juveniles at the Dragonfly Ponds on 30<sup>th</sup> June (JWC). Birds were regular visitors to the feeders in the Manager's Garden from the beginning of August to the end of the year but the best count there was just four on 20<sup>th</sup> October (EC). On 6<sup>th</sup> November a report of 33 birds flying low from the Coppice over the road and across the farmland (JWC) was an exceptional number in a year when the next best count was just seven.

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

There have been no sightings in the last four years. In 2017 a single bird was seen on 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> 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**

Most years prior to 2018 produced 100+ birds feeding on the ripe seed crop on Tim's Field but the last three years had been somewhat disappointing. Numbers did reach 96 on 2<sup>nd</sup> December last year but counts most days produced less than half this number. In the early part of this year numbers ranged mainly between 20 and 40. A number did remain even after the field was ploughed in March and more than 50 were counted there on 27<sup>th</sup> March (PM/BM). A report of 34 on 19<sup>th</sup> April was the last flock of the spring (JWC). There was the occasional sighting after this but numbers only started to build again from the end of September. Numbers fluctuated from day to day but reached 184 on 23<sup>rd</sup> October (JWC). There were no further three figure counts until 28<sup>th</sup> November when c200 were recorded and on 1<sup>st</sup> December 184 (JWC). A photograph of a large gathering of birds in trees by the Reedbed Hide on 7<sup>th</sup> December was found to contain 176 (PM/BM).

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

It was a disappointing year for this species with just seven records submitted, six of these "flyovers" and five of these just single birds. On 27<sup>th</sup> March two were seen in a tree near the Reserve entrance and on 13<sup>th</sup> October four birds flying over were the first of the autumn (JWC).

**Crossbill** *Loxia curvirostra* **Rare Visitor**

This was a new bird for the Reserve in 2018, though only as a "flyover". Eight were recorded on 29<sup>th</sup> September and nine on 17<sup>th</sup> October that year, on both occasions calling. There were no sightings in 2019 or 2020 but there was one this year - three birds flying south over the Coppice on 16<sup>th</sup> October (JWC).

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

This has always been a common bird on the Reserve though numbers reported last year were disappointing. It used to be a daily visitor to the feeders in the Bee Garden and while there were a few records here this year none involved more than five birds. Mike Fisk Meadow has always been popular in the summer months with birds feeding on the ripe seed heads. A flock of around 120 was recorded here in August 2019. This year the only flock reported on the meadow consisted of no more than 30 birds. A similar number were reported on Tim's Field on 21<sup>st</sup> July and c40 on

28<sup>th</sup> July but there were no subsequent counts approaching this. Twenty were counted near the river bridge on 7<sup>th</sup> November during an early morning WeBS visit and 23 were in trees in the Manager's Garden on 11<sup>th</sup> December.

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

The area around the river bridge car park is a good place to look for this species and particularly the roadside alders where birds feed on the seeds. Counts of up to 25 were reported last year. Sadly, with the Reserve closed for the first three months of this year there were no records for this period. Summer sightings are few and far between but two were seen over the river bridge on 21<sup>st</sup> July with a third bird flying east over the Reserve (JWC). The first autumn record came on 26<sup>th</sup> September - a bird calling overhead and two over the bridge car park (JWC). Three days later three birds were seen flying south. There were numerous sightings throughout October, many of these of birds flying over but five were reported in the Coppice on 20<sup>th</sup>, two in alders by the car park on 30<sup>th</sup> and on 31<sup>st</sup> more than 25 were seen flying out of the Coppice (JWC). Three of the four sightings in November were in the bridge car park area with 11 the best count. Five birds were recorded flying over on 1<sup>st</sup> December but there were no sightings after this date.

**Yellowhammer** *Emberiza citronella* **Rare Visitor**

This is a very scarce bird in the area. There was just one record in 2018 and none in the last three years.

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

This is a common bird here, nesting in the reeds on all four main wetland areas. Away from the nesting season it is a regular visitor to the feeders in the Bee Garden, Manager's Garden and to Tim's Field for the abundant seed crop there in the autumn and winter months. Up to 12 were recorded visiting Tim's Field in January. Birds have also nested at the Dragonfly Ponds in the past and a male was reported singing here in April. Nesting was suspected in reeds at the edge of one of the ponds in July - a male appearing to be visiting a nest there. Towards the end of the year a few birds were again reported visiting Tim's Field for seed and there were regular sightings of up to five visiting the feeders in the Manager's Garden.

## ESCAPED SPECIES

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

First recorded in 2013, there were sightings in 2016, 2019 and on a number of dates between 5<sup>th</sup> January and 8<sup>th</sup> March last year. There was just one record this year - a single bird that flew round the Lagoon before heading off in a westerly direction on 12<sup>th</sup> February (JWC).

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

Previously recorded in 2009, 2010 and 2011, one was seen on the Lagoon on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2018. There have been no sightings last three years.

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

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

### **Cockatiel** *Nymphicus hollandicus* **Escaped Species**

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

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

On 30<sup>th</sup> June a bird landed briefly at the edge of one of the Dragonfly Ponds (JWC/PM/BM). This was the second record of this species on the Reserve, the first being on 5<sup>th</sup> August in 2018.

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

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



**FIRST AND LAST DATES FOR WINTER VISITORS**  
**2021**

<b>SPECIES</b>	<b>LAST</b>	<b>FIRST</b>
Whooper Swan	19 <sup>th</sup> March	25 <sup>th</sup> September
Wigeon	21 <sup>st</sup> April	1 <sup>st</sup> September
Goldeneye	21 <sup>st</sup> March	25 <sup>th</sup> October
Waxwing	-	-
Fieldfare	26 <sup>th</sup> March	23 <sup>rd</sup> October
Redwing	18 <sup>th</sup> March	13 <sup>th</sup> October
Brambling	-	13 <sup>th</sup> October

**FIRST AND LAST DATES FOR SUMMER VISITORS**  
**2021**

<b>SPECIES</b>	<b>FIRST</b>	<b>LAST</b>
Garganey	-	-
Hobby	30 <sup>th</sup> April	8 <sup>th</sup> August
Osprey	30 <sup>th</sup> March	30 <sup>th</sup> March
Marsh Harrier	21 <sup>st</sup> August	21 <sup>st</sup> August
Avocet	-	-
Little (Ringed) Plover	3 <sup>rd</sup> April	4 <sup>th</sup> July
Whimbrel	-	-
Black-tailed Godwit	10 <sup>th</sup> July	10 <sup>th</sup> July
Greenshank	21 <sup>st</sup> August	22 <sup>nd</sup> August
Common Sandpiper	10 <sup>th</sup> April	22 <sup>nd</sup> August
Common Tern	9 <sup>th</sup> May	14 <sup>th</sup> July
Arctic Tern	-	-
Cuckoo	27 <sup>th</sup> June	11 <sup>th</sup> August
Swift	8 <sup>th</sup> May	21 <sup>st</sup> August
Sand Martin	20 <sup>th</sup> March	22 <sup>nd</sup> August
Swallow	23 <sup>rd</sup> March	6 <sup>th</sup> October
House Martin	7 <sup>th</sup> April	29 <sup>th</sup> September
Yellow Wagtail	21 <sup>st</sup> August	5 <sup>th</sup> September
Common Redstart	-	-
Whinchat	4 <sup>th</sup> September	12 <sup>th</sup> September
Wheatear	11 <sup>th</sup> August	10 <sup>th</sup> October
Ring Ouzel	-	-
Grasshopper Warbler	-	-
Sedge Warbler	22 <sup>nd</sup> April	12 <sup>th</sup> September
Reed Warbler	24 <sup>th</sup> April	4 <sup>th</sup> September
Garden Warbler	22 <sup>nd</sup> April	8 <sup>th</sup> September
Common Whitethroat	24 <sup>th</sup> April	5 <sup>th</sup> September
Lesser Whitethroat	1 <sup>st</sup> May	5 <sup>th</sup> September
Willow Warbler	5 <sup>th</sup> April	5 <sup>th</sup> September
Spotted Flycatcher	21 <sup>st</sup> August	8 <sup>th</sup> September
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 from the beginning of the year and in every subsequent month. As early as 7<sup>th</sup> January a male and female were seen together on the farmland (PM/BM) and on 26<sup>th</sup> January one was watched chasing nine Pheasants off Tim's Field (JB). A male and female were again seen together on 12<sup>th</sup> February - this time on the Scrubland (PM/BM). At least one pair bred successfully again. On 22<sup>nd</sup> May five cubs were reported "playing" on Mike Fisk Meadow close to the Willow Coppice (PM/BM) and there were further sightings here over the following weeks. Four animals on the entry road late in the day on 15<sup>th</sup> July probably included at least three juveniles. On 5<sup>th</sup> July a Roedeer pursuing a Fox which was in turn pursuing a Lapwing on the Duck Marsh was an interesting record (SB). There were many sightings throughout the autumn, mainly of single animals but two were seen on Mike Fisk Meadow on 25<sup>th</sup> November (KMCL/PM).



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

Daytime sightings are usually few and far between here and even finding signs of their presence can be challenging due to the ever changing nature of the riverbank. However, Otters do probably pass through rather more often than we realise. On 11<sup>th</sup> April tracks were found on the riverbank close to the Fish Pass during a WeBS visit and on 2<sup>nd</sup> May a single print was photographed in sand on the bank looking down from the River Path. Spraint can sometimes be found on the stone work just below the river bridge and this was the case at the beginning of July. On 8<sup>th</sup> August an Otter was seen briefly from the bridge (KMCL). Spraint was also found just downstream of the bridge in September,. There was rather more activity from the middle of November, an animal again seen from the bridge on 17<sup>th</sup> swimming upstream and landing briefly on tree roots (DW). Early in December one was picked up on a camera trap on three dates, on one occasion well onto the Reserve between the Duck Marsh and Reedbed. On 19<sup>th</sup> December one was photographed fishing in the river just downstream of the bridge (KMCL).



**American Mink** *Neovison vison*

Fortunately, the number of records of this unwelcome visitor continues to go down, possibly helped by the Otter presence.

2018 - 21 records  
2019 - 16 records  
2020 - 8 records  
2021 - 3 records



Single animals were reported on the River Path on 5<sup>th</sup> July and 9<sup>th</sup> August and in early December one was photographed on a camera trap set on the riverbank a little way downstream of the river bridge.

**Weasel** *Mustela nivalis*

This has always been quite a common small mammal here and in 2019 there were sightings in 11 months of the year. In 2020 sightings were reported on just seven dates, though this certainly wasn't helped by "lockdown".



This year there were reports on eight dates, most unusually two of these of Weasels killed by Grey Herons. One was reported on the Willow Path on 10<sup>th</sup> April (EC) but there were then no further sightings until 22<sup>nd</sup> September when one was seen crossing the road from John Ackroyd Meadow to Tim's Field (PM/BM *et al*). There was a further sighting on Tim's Field on 9<sup>th</sup> October (EC) and another close by near the Dipping Ponds on 23<sup>rd</sup> October. On 10<sup>th</sup> November one was reported on the Butterfly Bank (PH) and on 29<sup>th</sup> December one was seen crossing the road by the Visitor Centre (PM/BM). This is the first time to our knowledge that predation by Grey Herons has been seen here. On 3<sup>rd</sup> November a bird was observed catching a Weasel on the Scrubland and carrying it off (PL/KL *et al*) and on 4<sup>th</sup> December one was seen with a Weasel in its bill on the back Reedbed (CR), presumably endeavouring to drown it.

**Stoat** *Mustela erminea*

This species is much less likely to be seen on the Reserve than its small cousin the Weasel and there was only one record this year. On 28<sup>th</sup> November one was photographed in the Manager's Garden (MH). This was the first sighting since 2017.

**Roe deer** *Capreolus capreolus*

Recorded in all months, sightings were reported on more than 70 dates this year and that despite the Reserve being closed to visitors throughout January, February and March. Like last year, the deer-proof fence around the Willow Coppice did little to deter the animals and there were numerous sightings in there again, particularly so in the first four months of the year. Up to four were seen there in January and on 3<sup>rd</sup> February three included a male with a broken antler (JB/MB). On 18<sup>th</sup> May a female and fawn were reported on Mike Fisk Meadow (JB/MB) and on 30<sup>th</sup> June a female and fawn were seen on the entry road (PHu). There were further reports of a female and juvenile on 25<sup>th</sup> July on the entry road again and on 1<sup>st</sup> August on the Duck Marsh. Most sightings were of between one and three animals but four were seen on the Butterfly Bank on 10<sup>th</sup> September (DW) and four were on the River Path and Scrubland on 18<sup>th</sup> December (JWC).



**Mole** *Talpa europaea*

This is clearly still a very common small mammal here as witnessed by the large number of fresh molehills appearing throughout the year right up to the end of December. They were particularly numerous this year on the farmland behind the bridge car park and several could always be found on the grass verges along the entry road. Sightings of the animals themselves are usually dead ones which have been killed and left by predators. One was found at the side of the entry road during a group visit on 6<sup>th</sup> July (WNS), this the only record of the year.

**Common Shrew** *Sorex araneus*

Compared to mice this species is very short-lived, rarely surviving much more than a year. It is rarely seen except when it turns up in Longworth traps, which one or two do most years. However, no surveys were able to take place this year. Dead animals are sometimes found as larger mammals such as Foxes will kill them but not eat them because of the foul tasting liquid produced from glands on the skin - but none were found this year.



**Pygmy Shrew** *Sorex minutus*

There have been no records in the last five years. The remains of this tiny mammal have been found in Barn Owl pellets but there had been no reports of a live one on site until 2016 when one was caught in a

Longworth trap on the Willow Path during a small mammal survey in June that year.

**Water Shrew** *Neomys fodiens*

Survey work done in the Reedbed some years ago showed this species to be present there and it was almost certainly present on all the other wetland areas too. It is a very difficult mammal to spot and the last recorded sighting was on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2017 when one was seen on the Wet Grassland. This year a dead individual, which appeared to have been predated, was found at the edge of the Lagoon on 19<sup>th</sup> July (JB).

**Harvest Mouse** *Micromys minutus*

The Harvest Mouse breeding project started in 2012 and since 2014 mice have been introduced at several locations on the Reserve. Three further small releases were made this year - in May at the back of the Lagoon, in June in the Dragonfly Ponds area and in July on Poplar Field. Numerous nests were found around the perimeter of Tim's Field from the beginning of the year. Seeing the mice themselves is rather less easy but one was spotted on 28<sup>th</sup> December at the corner of the field close to the Dipping Ponds (JB).

**Wood Mouse** *Apodemus sylvaticus*

This very common species regularly turns up in Longworth traps during small mammal surveys and, being an excellent climber, in nest boxes along the Willow Path. In the absence of any surveys this year there were far fewer records than normal. No mice were found during nest box checks this year but there was certainly evidence of their presence in some boxes. One on the Willow Path was full to the very top with acorns - almost certainly the work of a very enterprising mouse stocking up for the winter.

**Bank Vole** *Clethrionomys glareolus*

This is another very common species that regularly turns up in Longworth traps. In the absence of any surveys this year there were only four records of single animals - on the Willow Path on three dates, on one occasion on one of the feeding stations there, and under the feeders outside the Visitor Centre on one date.

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

This species is at its most numerous on the Scrubland, being a lover of rough grassland full of tussocks. It certainly features highly in the diet of the Kestrels and Barn Owls and its remains are often found in the latter's pellets. No surveys were carried out on the Scrubland this year and the

one record came, surprisingly, from the Willow Path where one was photographed on 3<sup>rd</sup> October (JWC).

**Water Vole** *Arvicola amphibius*

This is now a rare mammal here, almost certainly due in part to predation by American Mink. There had been no records in 2019 or 2020 but this year there were two sightings. On 24<sup>th</sup> July one was seen from the Reedbed Hide (JWC) and on 25<sup>th</sup> August one was reported at the Dragonfly Ponds (AB). On 17<sup>th</sup> September footprints were found on the riverbank by the River Path (JB).

**Brown Rat** *Rattus norvegicus*

Records are few and far between most years but in December last year there were a number of sightings in the Bee Garden with animals feeding on spilled seed under the feeders and four on one date. There were further sightings here this year from January and on 22<sup>nd</sup> May four juveniles were seen (PM/BM). In December up to five animals were recorded in the garden. There was only one record away from here, a dead individual being found on the River Path on 4<sup>th</sup> September.

**Grey Squirrel** *Sciurus carolinensis*

Less than a handful of observers reported sightings this year which does not give a true picture as to how increasingly common this species is here. There were sightings all around the Reserve throughout the year and on 29<sup>th</sup> October one was even seen with nesting material in the new Kestrel box (JSK). At least one drey could be seen in the Willow Coppice but whether animals actually bred on the Reserve this year is not known.

**Rabbit** *Oryctogalus cuniculus*

This is a rare visitor to the Reserve and prior to last year there had been no sightings since 27<sup>th</sup> August 2016. There were two records last year and this year there were four. On 17<sup>th</sup> January footprints were found in fresh snow on John Ackroyd Meadow (JB) and on 31<sup>st</sup> January one was caught on a camera trap at midnight close to the Manager's Garden. On 28<sup>th</sup> February one was seen in the Coppice (JB). It was almost five months before the next and last record - a single animal seen on John Ackroyd Meadow on 21<sup>st</sup> July (DW).

**Brown Hare** *Lepus capensis*

Like the Rabbit, this is another rare visitor to the Reserve. There have been less than a handful of records here, the last three being in the last three years. There were none this year.

**Hedgehog** *Erinaceus europaeus*

While Hedgehog populations continue to decline in rural areas recent reports suggest that urban populations are stable and possibly even rising. Due to the Reserve's location, surrounded by the river on three sides and improved grassland on the other, they have always been rare here and there have only been three records since we opened in July 2000. The last of these just about qualified as a Reserve record - a Hedgehog on the road just under the main gates during the evening of 19<sup>th</sup> July 2019.

**Common Pipistrelle Bat** *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*

Pipistrelles are the commonest bats to be found on the Reserve. There were three public Bat Nights this year in July, August and September and a Rodley Robins children's club Bat Night in September. Common Pipistrelles were again very numerous, particularly good areas being the path between the Dragonfly Ponds and the Wet Grassland, Bentley's Path and the Willow Path.

**Soprano Pipistrelle Bat** *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*

Using bat detectors and based on the frequency of echolocation calls alone, this species again appeared to be present in good numbers in the period between July and September when the four Bat Nights were held this year. The Soprano Pipistrelle has only been a separate species since 1999 when the Common Pipistrelle was split into two species on the basis of different frequency echolocation calls. Usually found in wetland habitats, the Soprano Pipistrelle obviously finds the habitat here to its liking.

**Noctule Bat** *Nyctalus noctula*

This large bat can often be seen flying just before sunset and occasionally during the day. A few were seen over the River Path during the August Bat Night but they were hard to find in September - just one picked up on a bat detector on the far bank of the river.

**Daubenton's Bat** *Myotis daubentoni*

This medium-sized bat is often associated with water and seen flying low over lakes, ponds and canals just as dark is falling. It was recorded during the August and September Bat Nights flying low over the Duck Marsh and also over the river from the bridge. There was one daylight sighting from the river bridge on 14<sup>th</sup> November (JWC).



## AMPHIBIANS

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

Smooth Newts emerge from hibernation from late February onwards and can usually be found in good numbers in the Dragonfly Ponds, Dipping Ponds and Poplar Ponds. They were certainly found to be numerous in the Dipping Ponds during supervised dipping sessions for children this year but there were few other records. Later in the year they can often be found under logs and debris from where they emerge to feed on invertebrates.

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

This is the smallest of our three native newt species. Its preference is for shallow pools on acidic soils such as heathland and moorland - places that Smooth Newts shun. It was first recorded in 2010 and again in 2011. In the absence of any subsequent detailed surveys there have been no further confirmed records since 2011.

### **Common Frog** *Rana temporaria*

Across the UK numbers have been declining since the 1970s. It is almost certainly still quite common here but there were nevertheless few records submitted this year, this most likely due to lockdown. There was just one report of spawn and that was at the Dragonfly Ponds on 21<sup>st</sup> March, small amounts being found in both Co-op and Woodhead Ponds. Good numbers of tiny frogs are seen on the Willow Path in June and July most years but there were few reports this year.

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

Like the Common Frog this species has been in decline across the UK since the 1970s and there has certainly been a noticeable decline here on the Reserve. Nevertheless, they do still arrive in some numbers in spring at the Dragonfly Ponds from the Scrubland where they have spent the winter. They usually breed a little later than Frogs. Due to lockdown there was only a limited amount of recording done this year. Of a total of 64 counted at the Dragonfly Ponds on 29<sup>th</sup> March 32 of these were in the long ditch there, possibly because of the Potamogeton cover. There were very few subsequent records this year. .

## **REPTILES**

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

Native to the southern United States and northern Mexico, it is a popular pet in this country and, unfortunately, is often released into the wild. The species was first recorded on the Reserve in 2013 and there were sightings in 2014 and 2017. Fortunately, there have been none since.

### **Grass Snake** *Natrix natrix*

Surveys were carried out a number of years ago to establish whether this species was present on the Reserve but no evidence was found. An atypical population is known to have been present within and around the Esholt sewage treatment facility since 1990. These snakes were suspected of originating from southern or eastern Europe. Being good swimmers it is not impossible that some may have reached Rodley via the river. A three foot long specimen seen in the margins of the river just upstream of the Reserve on 22<sup>nd</sup> April last year may have been one of these. There were no sightings this year.

## BUTTERFLIES

With the greater relaxation in regulations and increased movement following the Covid vaccination programme, we got many more records in 2021 than the previous year. However, comparison with previous years is still difficult.

We had just one new species record this year (Marbled White) and sadly a few no shows for the year - Wall, White-letter Hairstreak, Brown Argus and Dark Green Fritillary (although the latter two had only been previously recorded in one year).

Painted Lady and Holly Blue re-appeared this year and it was a good year for Red Admirals. Small Tortoiseshell and Peacocks were regularly present on the reserve but Peacocks not in large numbers. We had the earliest ever records for Gatekeeper and Peacock and latest ever for Small Tortoiseshell and Brimstone. Although, in general, such records are not ecologically important it is always exciting to see species early or late in the year and it is useful to record this information as if sustained patterns/trends are noted they can inform us about real changes which might be a cause for pleasure or biological concern.

Generally with insects we record only the adult phases, despite the fact that for many insects the adult stage is only brief compared to the time spent as a larva. So it is always useful to record presence of eggs, caterpillars and pupae and to be able to demonstrate breeding. We often note caterpillars of Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock, but it was good this year to be able to demonstrate breeding of two additional species at the reserve. Attempted breeding at Rodley was shown for two iconic species, the Red Admiral and Brimstone. It would be nice to get more records like this in the future.

The top six most frequently recorded butterflies at Rodley in 2021 are shown below, with comparisons for the two previous years.

Ranking 2021	Species and number of dates seen on	Ranking 2020	Ranking 2019
1 <sup>st</sup>	Small Tortoiseshell – 64	1 <sup>st</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Small White - 43	4 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>
3 <sup>rd</sup> =	Speckled Wood - 35	5 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>
3 <sup>rd</sup> =	Peacock – 35	2 <sup>nd</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>

4 <sup>th</sup>	Red Admiral - 34	-	-
5 <sup>th</sup>	Meadow Brown - 30	-	-
6 <sup>th</sup>	Ringlet - 26	-	-

Jerry Knapp

## HESPERIDAE

### **Essex Skipper** (*Thymelicus lineola*)

After the first record for the reserve on the River Path on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2019, Essex Skipper was not recorded in 2020. However, it was back again this year with an individual being seen on John Ackroyd Meadow on 25<sup>th</sup> July (AL/JWC). This species is gradually spreading its way northwards, reaching the southern edges of Yorkshire around 1996. However, it is probably under-recorded, being very similar to the Small Skipper, identification requiring close examination of the antennae.

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

Probably under-recorded, this species has, nevertheless, never been particularly numerous here at Rodley. It was only reported on 6 days with a maximum of 2 individuals seen. The first sighting was of a single butterfly on Poplar Field on 5<sup>th</sup> July (JSK). Two were present on Mike Fisk Meadow on 31<sup>st</sup> July (HS). The final sighting for the year was of one on John Ackroyd Meadow on 9<sup>th</sup> August (HS).

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

Large Skipper was recorded on 15 dates this year, more than twice the number in 2020. Generally in low numbers, the highest counts were of 5 on 4<sup>th</sup> July (JWC) and 5<sup>th</sup> July (SB), most other reports being of 1 or 2. The first of the year was seen on 12<sup>th</sup> June. The commonest locations were John Ackroyd Meadow, the Riverside Walk and the Furlong. The last of the year was a single on 17<sup>th</sup> July (HS).

## PIERIDAE

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

Orange Tips were again prominent this year being recorded all across the reserve on 19 days compared to 14 in 2020. The first of the year was a single male on the Wet Grassland on 31<sup>st</sup> March (JWC) - the second earliest for the reserve (29<sup>th</sup> March being the earliest). Small numbers

were then regularly seen across the reserve until early June. The highest counts were in April with 11 on 19<sup>th</sup> (SB), 7 on 23<sup>rd</sup> (JSK) and 9 on 26<sup>th</sup> (JSK/SB). They were seen throughout May and early June in small numbers. The final sighting of the year was relatively early with 4 on 7<sup>th</sup> June (SB).

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

After poor years last year and 2019 sightings improved in 2021 with records on 16 days. The first of the year was a single on the Willow Path on 19<sup>th</sup> April (JSK). The maximum count was of 8 (all across the reserve) on 19<sup>th</sup> June (SB), but most days counts were of 1 to 3 individuals. The relative scarcity of this butterfly is surprising.

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

Small White remains a common butterfly at Rodley being seen on 43 days in 2021. The season started with 2 being seen around the Willow Path and the Wet Grassland on 31<sup>st</sup> March (JWC). Sightings continued through April, May and June but with small numbers. Numbers increased sharply during July and the highest count was of 34 on 31<sup>st</sup> July (HS). Small Whites remained frequent during August and September, with later peaks of 16 on 5<sup>th</sup> and 11 on 26<sup>th</sup> Sept. (HS). The year's latest sightings were of 6+ on 6<sup>th</sup> October (PM/BM). Although they were seen across the reserve the best areas are clearly around Tim's Field and the Willow Path.

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

The first of the year was seen on Tim's Field on 19<sup>th</sup> April (SB). Although seen more regularly than last year with sightings on 19 days compared to 7 days last year, numbers were generally low. On three quarters of the days only one individual was recorded. The highest count was of 7 on 17<sup>th</sup> July, mostly around Tim's Field (HS). The last sighting of the year was of a single on Mike Fisk Meadow on 18<sup>th</sup> Sept (HS). The UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme considered 2021 was the 4<sup>th</sup> worst year on record. However, in general it is considered common and not threatened, so the reason for the relatively small numbers recorded at Rodley are unclear.

### **Brimstone** (*Gonepteryx rhamni*)

2021 was an interesting year for Brimstones at Rodley. The first sighting came with 3 on 31<sup>st</sup> March (2 males and 1 female - PU/JWC) and they were then recorded on 22 days, compared to 16 in 2020, from March to September. Sightings were made across the reserve with the Butterfly Bank being perhaps the most frequent location. Numbers were generally low (one/two) but with a maximum of 5 on 9<sup>th</sup> June (DW). The year ended with a flourish with sightings on 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> December (reported by JWC)

– the latest ever sightings for Brimstone at Rodley, the previous latest being 16<sup>th</sup> October (2019).

In 2020 we commented that despite the good numbers of sightings and the presence of food plants breeding of Brimstone had never been demonstrated - well it has now!

On 26<sup>th</sup> April a female was seen ovipositing on a Purging Buckthorn tree on the Butterfly Bank (PU/JSK/SB). Five eggs were found on two trees, all pale blue/green, laid on very young leaves emerging from buds. On 29<sup>th</sup> April 8/9 eggs were found on three trees on the Butterfly Bank but no eggs could be found on Alder Buckthorns on the scrub or the hedge of the Mike Fisk Meadow. On 10<sup>th</sup> May eggs were still present on the Butterfly Bank trees but their colour changed from pale blue/green to yellowish green, eggs still present on 17<sup>th</sup> May. On 28<sup>th</sup> May eggs were still found but some pale brown and one looked empty. Unfortunately none of these eggs appear to have hatched and no caterpillars were seen, possibly associated with a very cold period after the egg laying. However, on 7<sup>th</sup> June egg laying was again noted on a bush in the hedge at the Dragonfly Ponds area (SB). Subsequently several Brimstone caterpillars were found on a Purging Buckthorn bush in the same hedge. A few days later on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> July 2 Brimstone caterpillars were found on very small Alder Buckthorn plants in the same area and 1 or 2 on Poplar Field (JSK). No pupae were found. However, this appears to be the first record of breeding (at least attempted) for Brimstone at Rodley Nature Reserve.

## **NYPHALIDAE**

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

Once again there were no Wall records in 2021. Although seen annually until 2012 the last Rodley sighting was in August 2017, with only 4 sightings from 2012 to 2017. It is regarded as widespread in England but has declined rapidly with 87% decrease since 1976.

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

The first of the year turned up on 19<sup>th</sup> April on the Butterfly Bank (SB). Thereafter it was regularly seen across the reserve on 35 days and in each subsequent month until its final appearance on the Willow Path on 6<sup>th</sup> October (PM/BM). In the early part of the year most records were of singles but with 4 being seen on 24<sup>th</sup> (HS) and 26<sup>th</sup> April (JSK/SB). However, numbers began to improve in mid-August and peaked in September with 21 on 5<sup>th</sup>, 9 on 6<sup>th</sup> 16 on 11<sup>th</sup> and 7 on 20<sup>th</sup> September (HS/ SB).

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

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

**Ringlet** (*Aphantopus hyperantus*)

Ringlet appeared pretty much on time with the first of the year on 25<sup>th</sup> June on Poplar Field (JSK). It was regularly seen after that, in fact on 26 days in all. They were seen across the whole reserve, with Poplar Field, the Wildflower Meadows and the Willow Path being the best spots. Numbers were good, peaking in July with 20 on 7<sup>th</sup>, 43 on 11<sup>th</sup>, 48 on 17<sup>th</sup> (HS) and 19 on 25<sup>th</sup> (JW). Numbers declined in August but they persisted until 18<sup>th</sup> August (EC) - the second latest last date for the reserve, 19<sup>th</sup> being the latest.

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

The first of the year appeared in John Ackroyd Meadow on 19<sup>th</sup> June (JWC). It was then recorded on 30 days in all, numbers rising steadily with good counts throughout in July and a peak of 37 on 17<sup>th</sup> (HS). Numbers declined in August but there were still 13 on 9<sup>th</sup> (HS) and 7 on 11<sup>th</sup> (EC). The last of the year was reported on 23<sup>rd</sup> August (SB).

**Marbled White** (*Melanargia galathea*)

On 25<sup>th</sup> July we had the first report for the reserve of Marbled White (PA/AL). This was presumably an accidental 'blow in' record rather than a resident as National Biodiversity Network distribution maps and iRecord records show no reports of this species near Rodley. Marbled Whites are usually, but not always, associated with limestone rich areas – the Wolds being their Yorkshire stronghold. The nearest local sightings appear to be east of Leeds near Fairburn and St Aidan's (close to Magnesian limestone) and at the tiny Shipley Railway Station Meadow). It is not clear if the Shipley colony arose from colonisation or introduction.

**Gatekeeper** (*Pyronia tithonus*)

The year got off to a good start with Rodley's earliest ever Gatekeepers on 25<sup>th</sup> June (4 days earlier than the previous earliest) on Poplar Field (JSK). They were seen on 16 days in all, with steady numbers, usually 2 to 8, through July and August and a highest count of 20 on 15<sup>th</sup> August (HS). The last of the year was a count of 3 on 25<sup>th</sup> August (SB). Overall it was a good year for this charming butterfly.

### **Dark Green Fritillary** (*Argynnis aglaja*)

After its debut appearance at Rodley in 2019, there were no sightings this year or indeed in 2020. Disappointing but perhaps not surprising.

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

The first of the year turned up on Tim's Field on 16<sup>th</sup> June (JWC). "First appearance of the year dates" for this species are very sporadic ranging from mid-February to early July! This is probably because for many years Red Admiral were considered solely to be migrants. But now it is known that they can and do overwinter (which may account for early sightings) but also continue to come to Britain as migrants. However, 2021 was quite a good year for this species with sightings on 34 days, one less than the Peacock. There were regular sightings of small numbers (mostly singles but sometimes 2 to 4) throughout August. However, numbers increased in September with daily counts of between 1 and 8 (average 5) and 13 on one date. They then persisted until late October with the last sighting on 25<sup>th</sup> (JSK). This late flourish may have been due to local breeding as a caterpillar was found and photographed in the Dragonfly Ponds Area on 21<sup>st</sup> July (JWC). This may be the first record of attempted breeding at the reserve.

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

After being an absentee last year, Painted Ladies were back in 2021, the first appearing on the Riverside Walk on 14<sup>th</sup> July (EC). Singles were seen on 11 days, mostly in September with the last on Buddleias at the Visitor Centre on 26<sup>th</sup> September (PM/BM).

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

Rather surprisingly the first Peacock of the year at Rodley (PM/BM) was, for the second year in succession, the earliest ever sighting of the species! This time on 12<sup>th</sup> January compared to 22<sup>nd</sup> January last year. Peacocks were recorded on 35 days this year. The season proper began with 8 on 29<sup>th</sup> March and they were seen every month until September. The highest count of the year was 10 on 23<sup>rd</sup> April (JSK). Five to 8 were regularly seen until mid-June, followed by singles until the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation appeared in force in August with 7 on 8<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> (HS). Caterpillars were found feeding on nettles in several locations, notably Poplar Field, the Scrub and around the Dragonfly Ponds area. The final sighting of the year came early (the 2<sup>nd</sup> earliest ever) with a single at the Visitor Centre on 11<sup>th</sup> September (JWC). As with last year, Peacocks were seen on a lot of days but not in large numbers despite evidence of successful breeding.



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

For the 3<sup>rd</sup> year running Small Tortoiseshell was the butterfly seen on the most days, 64 in 2021. This is perhaps not surprising for a large, long lived and showy butterfly that overwinters and has 2 generations. The first of the year was seen at the Mike Sheldon Hide on 15<sup>th</sup> March (PM/BM). Numbers rapidly increased with an estimate of 30+ on 31<sup>st</sup> March (JWC) suggesting good overwintering success. Good numbers were present throughout April with 20 on 12<sup>th</sup> and 18 on 26<sup>th</sup> (JSK/SB). Small numbers followed in May and early June but the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation started to appear at the end of the month and early July, with 6 to 12 not unusual. Caterpillars were noted in good number in several locations, notably Poplar Field, the Scrub, Dragonfly Ponds and near the Reedbed Hide (SB). Butterflies continued to be present in small numbers through the autumn until the final sighting on the Willow Path on 22<sup>nd</sup> November (BM), the latest ever Rodley sighting for this species which was seen in 9 months in all this year. Considering concerns about declines in recent years this was quite a good year for this species at the reserve.

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

The first of the year was a single near the Wet Grassland on 12<sup>th</sup> April (JSK/SB). Following this there were sightings on 25 days (compared to 22 last year). However, numbers were low with only single butterflies reported on 20 days. The largest daily counts were of 7 (10<sup>th</sup> July - JWC) and 5 (17<sup>th</sup> July - HS). The last of the year was seen on 3<sup>rd</sup> October (PM/BM). The reason for the relatively low numbers is unclear. One of their food plants (nettles) is very abundant and breeding has been reported in the past.

## **LYCAENIDAE**

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

Small Copper appeared on the reserve on 12<sup>th</sup> June on John Ackroyd Meadow (DW) and was recorded on 9 days in all. This compares with 4 days in 2020. All sightings were of only 1 or 2 individuals. The final sighting of the year was on 23<sup>rd</sup> August on Poplar Field (SB).

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

Purple Hairstreak were recorded on 3 days this year, starting on 17<sup>th</sup> July with one in the Manager's Garden and concluding on 25<sup>th</sup> July with 3 individuals, 2 of these in the Manager's Garden and one on the Willow Path (JWC). This is a bit of a birder's butterfly as it is rarely reported on flowers at low level and is generally seen in the higher branches of trees where it feeds mainly on honeydew.

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

2021 was another year without a sighting. The last was in July 2018 and there have only been 4 records in all. The absence of their food plant, elm trees, on the reserve means that this will always be a rarity dependent on insects flying in.

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

There were no sightings last year and just two this year, both of single butterflies, on 21<sup>st</sup> July (KH) and 26<sup>th</sup> July (PM/BM). Holly Blue are seen in most years in small numbers but with large variations year on year due to parasitism.

### **Brown Argus** (*Aricia agestis*)

There were no records in 2021, or indeed in 2020, following their debut at Rodley in 2019. It is to be hoped that they will re-appear at the reserve. According to National Biodiversity Network distribution maps Rodley is at the NW edge of their current range.

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

After a poor year in 2020 (with only 2 sightings) there was a marked increase in 2021. The first record of the year was a single on 19<sup>th</sup> May (HS). They were reported on 12 days in all from May to mid-August when 2 were seen (SB). All sightings were of only 1 or 2, mostly on the John Ackroyd Meadow with some in Poplar Field and Mike Fisk Meadow.

## **Contributors**

P Allan	PA	P&B Murphy	PM/BM
J Brook	JB	J Payne	JPa
S Brown	SB	H Smith	HS
J W Cooper	JWC	S Stevenson	SS
E Cowan	EC	D Swann	DS
S Curtis	SC	A Thompson	AT
M&P Greenwood	MG/PG	P Unia	PU
J Hart	JHar	M Unsworth	MU
K Hockridge	KH	D Walker	DW
J Knapp	JSK	A Worrillow	AW
A Levitt	AL	J Worrillow	JWo
D Marsden	DM		

**Butterflies**  
**First and Last Dates - 2021**

<b>Species</b>	<b>First date</b>	<b>Last date</b>
Essex Skipper	25 <sup>th</sup> July	25 <sup>th</sup> July
Small Skipper	5 <sup>th</sup> July	9 <sup>th</sup> August
Large Skipper	12 <sup>th</sup> June	17 <sup>th</sup> July
Orange Tip	31 <sup>st</sup> March	7 <sup>th</sup> June
Large White	19 <sup>th</sup> April	20 <sup>th</sup> September
Small White	31 <sup>st</sup> March	6 <sup>th</sup> October
Green-veined White	19 <sup>th</sup> April	18 <sup>th</sup> September
Clouded Yellow	-	-
Brimstone *	31 <sup>st</sup> March	15 <sup>th</sup> December
Wall	-	-
Speckled Wood	19 <sup>th</sup> April	6 <sup>th</sup> October
Small Heath	-	-
Ringlet	25 <sup>th</sup> June	18 <sup>th</sup> August
Meadow Brown	19 <sup>th</sup> June	23 <sup>rd</sup> August
Marbled White	25 <sup>th</sup> July	25 <sup>th</sup> July
Gatekeeper *	25 <sup>th</sup> June	25 <sup>th</sup> August
Dark Green Fritillary	-	-
Red Admiral	16 <sup>th</sup> June	25 <sup>th</sup> October
Painted Lady	14 <sup>th</sup> July	26 <sup>th</sup> September
Peacock *	12 <sup>th</sup> January	11 <sup>th</sup> September
Small Tortoiseshell *	15 <sup>th</sup> March	22 <sup>nd</sup> November
Comma	12 <sup>th</sup> April	3 <sup>rd</sup> October
Small Copper	12 <sup>th</sup> June	23 <sup>rd</sup> August
Purple Hairstreak	17 <sup>th</sup> July	25 <sup>th</sup> July
White-letter Hairstreak	-	-
Holly Blue	21 <sup>st</sup> July	26 <sup>th</sup> July
Brown Argus	-	-
Common Blue	19 <sup>th</sup> May	16 <sup>th</sup> August

- \* Peacock - Earliest ever first date
- \* Small Tortoiseshell - Latest ever last date
- \* Brimstone – Latest ever last date
- \* Gatekeeper – Earliest ever first date

## MOTHS

Activities during 2021 were again somewhat restricted by the covid situation but it was possible to hold three trapping events during the year on the 11th June for the Rodley Robins children's Club, 17th July and 20th August. It was good to see our returning regulars together with visitors new to mothing.

The three events, together with individual sighting records, resulted in 80 macro and 45 micro species being recorded this year - whilst this was a big improvement on the covid ridden 2020 it was still well down on our 2019 performance of 110 macros and 65 micros reflecting the reduced trapping activity.

The year did, however, produce 8 new species for the Reserve.

**THE TOTAL SPECIES COUNT FOR THE RESERVE NOW STANDS AT 241 MACRO AND 195 MICRO = 436 SPECIES**

### NEW SPECIES 2021

Species	Date
<b>Macro</b>	
Orange Underwing	31 March 2021
Puss Moth	11 June 2021
Mullein Caterpillar	27 June 2021
<b>Micro</b>	
Cocksfoot Moth ( <i>Glyphipterix simplicella</i> )	02 June 2021
<i>Endothenia gentianaeana</i>	19 June 2021
<i>Mompha ochraceella</i>	26 June 2021
<i>Aproaerema anthyllidella</i>	17 July 2021
<i>Stigmella floslactella</i> / <i>S.microtheriella</i> leaf mines	29 August 2021

Only one of the new macro species was brought to light - Puss Moth at the Robins Club event on 11<sup>th</sup> June and this was not actually trapped but found resting on a nearby Buddleia during the opening session (LH). This striking moth is fairly common throughout most of Britain and recent records indicate an increasing presence in Yorkshire.

The second macro new to the Reserve was the day-flying Orange Underwing, unusually being active between March and April. One was spotted on Silver Birch in the Dragonfly Pond area on 31<sup>st</sup> March (JWC) with a second sighting recorded on Silver Birch by the Manager's Garden on 3<sup>rd</sup> April (JWC). The sightings clearly confirm this moth's association

with the Birch tree. Records, however, appear to have dipped in Yorkshire over recent years.

A third new macro species, the Mullein, was spotted in the Dragonfly Pond area in caterpillar form, one on 27<sup>th</sup> June (JWC) and one on 29<sup>th</sup> (JWC). The adult moth has yet to be recorded at the Reserve but is widely distributed in England and is attracted to light but it is more often found in the caterpillar stage.

Bearing in mind the covid situation 2021 proved to be a decent year for new micro moth species. On 2<sup>nd</sup> June a Cocksfoot Moth (*Glyphiterix simplicella*) was recorded in the John Ackroyd Meadow (JWC). The Cocksfoot can be found on Buttercup with the larvae feeding on Cock's-foot grass both of which are readily available in the meadows at Rodley. The moth is tiny (3 to 4mm) and can be easily overlooked.

On 19<sup>th</sup> June an *Endothenia gentianaeana* was spotted on teasel in the Dragonfly Pond area (JWC) - the species ID was confirmed by the Yorkshire recorder. The moth can be locally abundant in the presence of well established Teasel. This record was new for the 10km square and appears to have done well throughout Yorkshire during 2021 where Teasel is established.

A second new micro to be found in the Dragonfly Pond area this year was the distinctive orange-yellow *Mompha ochraceella* (D&LJ) - a moth that frequents damp areas and ditches. Its larval food plant is Willowherb where it mines stems and leaves.

The moth trap event on 17<sup>th</sup> July produced another micro first for the Reserve - *Approaerema anthyllidella*. This was confirmed following genitalia ID by the Yorkshire recorder and this was subsequently found to be new for the 10km square. Whilst listed as reasonably common it is mainly a coastal moth being found on dunes, dry grassland and rough pasture where Kidney Vetch occurs.

On 29<sup>th</sup> August a Hazel leaf revealed leaf mine activity and whilst it proved difficult to establish the exact species, photographic evidence submitted to the Yorkshire recorder narrowed the ID down to either *Stigmella floslactella* or *S. microtheriella* (JG) - either of these two species would be new for the Reserve.

### **OF INTEREST 2021**

On 28<sup>th</sup> June a female Yellow-barred Longhorn (*Nemophora degeerella*) was spotted (JSK) and was initially thought to be new for the Reserve. A records check, however, revealed an earlier record in June 2015. Nevertheless still a good record for 2021. The larvae feed on leaf litter which abounds throughout the Reserve.

A Marsh Pug was recorded on Field Mouse-ear in the John Ackroyd Meadow on 29<sup>th</sup> May (JWC) and was only the second record for the Reserve the first being in May 2019. This species is uncommonly distributed in scattered localities from damp habitats such as marshes and fens to drier locations such as sand dunes and waste ground.

There were two sightings of the micro *Pammene aurana* this year - one on the John Ackroyd Meadow on 2<sup>nd</sup> June (JWC) and one on the Willow Path on 23<sup>rd</sup> June (JWC). The sightings represented only the second and third records for this species the first being recorded in July 2015. A very distinctive day flyer the species is found throughout the UK but can be localised and is found on the flower of the food plant Hogweed which is abundant on the Reserve.

23<sup>rd</sup> June turned out to be a productive day for the pheromone lure with both Lunar Hornet Moth and Red-tipped Clearwing being attracted (JG) - The Lunar Hornet Moth came to the lure on the Willow Path and presents a fearsome sight as a "mimic" species resembling a giant wasp. The Red-tipped Clearwing made an appearance at the Dragonfly Pond area (2) and again on the Willow Path (4) and is found locally in England. It inhabits fens, marsh and other damp habitats and feeds as a larvae inside the stems of Willow, this tell tale activity being seen regularly when coppicing. Despite plentiful Ragwort the Cinnabar continues to struggle with no adult sightings now since July 2019. Caterpillars were also scarce with only 5 records submitted all on Poplar Field. (EC/DAN).

### POPULAR SPECIES 2021

<b>MACRO</b>	
Species	No. Recorded
Large Yellow Underwing	102
Uncertain	34
Common Rustic agg	33
Flame	28
Square-spot Rustic	28
Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing	20
Bright-line Brown-eye	20
Straw Dot	18
Dark Arches	16
Marbled Minor agg	15

<b>MICRO</b>	
Species	No. Recorded
Nettle-tap Moth	50+
Mother of Pearl	30
Celypha lacunana	16
Small China Mark	11+

With the development of the Barker's site and associated access problems it looks possible that 2022 early year trapping activities may again be frustrated but as soon as some form of normality resumes the traps will be out and once again we can share the excitement and wonders of trapping at Rodley.

Dave Nesham

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## Dragonflies and Damselflies – 2021

This was another season affected by Covid and, with the visitor centre being closed for much of the season, we had to rely on recorders emailing their results rather than entering them on the recording sheets. In spite of this we received a good number of records, although the earliest ones were not until the beginning of May. Six species were recorded showing reproductive behaviour (Large Red, Azure, Blue-tailed and Emerald Damselflies, Broad-bodied Chaser and Common Darter) (Table 1) and seven were seen ovipositing (Large Red and Azure Damselflies, Southern and Brown Hawkers, Emperor Dragonfly, Four-spotted Chaser and Common Darter) (Table 1). Although indicative that we have evidence of ten species breeding on the reserve in 2021, proof of breeding can only be confirmed when either an exuvia from the moult into an adult or a teneral stage is recorded. Only one instance of each was recorded (Table 1).

Species	Wheel	Tandem	Ovipositing	Teneral	Exuvia
Large Red Damselfly	-	1	1	-	-
Azure Damselfly	5	45	55	-	-
Blue-tailed Damselfly	2	-	-	-	-
Emerald Damselfly	2	-	-	-	-
Southern Hawker	-	-	2	-	-
Brown Hawker	-	-	9	-	1
Emperor Dragonfly	-	-	1	-	-
Four-spotted Chaser	-	-	1	-	-
Broad-bodied Chaser	-	1	-	-	-
Common Darter	1	-	1	1	-

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 teneral and exuviae.

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

It was a very disappointing year for the Large Red Damselfly. In 2020 as many as 30 were recorded on a single day (9<sup>th</sup> May (JWC)). This is considerably better than the best day in 2021 when only six were recorded, three males at the Poplar Ponds on 7<sup>th</sup> June and two males and a female at the Dragonfly Ponds (PJM), also on 7<sup>th</sup> June, although there is a record of between 6-20 (recorded as C in the accepted notation for estimates) at the Dragonfly Ponds on 2<sup>nd</sup> June (JWC). The first sighting was by the Dragonfly Ponds on 7<sup>th</sup> May (BM/PM), two weeks later than in



2020. Apart from the three males seen at the Poplar Ponds all records were at or near the Dragonfly Ponds, the last sighting being on 16th June (PJM).

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

This was another excellent year for this species. The first record was of a female recorded on the River Walk on 19<sup>th</sup> May (DS). Numbers remained fairly low until early June when 94 were recorded at the Dragonfly Ponds on the morning of 7<sup>th</sup> June, three pairs of which were in the wheel position, 18 pairs in tandem and a further 14 ovipositing (PJM) (Table 2). On the same morning 16 were recorded on the Dipping Ponds, three pairs of which were in tandem and four ovipositing (PJM) (Table 2). In this species the male stays in tandem with the female while she lays her eggs. Twenty pairs were seen on the pond in the Managers Garden on 1<sup>st</sup> July, the females of which were all ovipositing (BM/PM) (Table 2). Overall there were 55 records of oviposition (Table 2). Numbers remained high right through until the beginning of August but, from then on, there were only a few records, the last sighting being on 23<sup>rd</sup> August – one at the Dragonfly ponds, the other at the Dipping Ponds (PJM).

Date	Total	Male	Female	Pairs in Wheel	Pairs in Tandem	Ovipositing
Dragonfly Ponds (including the Education Pond)						
7 June am	94	45	36	3	18	14
7 June pm	61	41	20	1	7	12
9 June	30					
14 June	22	12	10		4	6
28 June	45	30	15		10	5
19 July	34	29	5	1		4
2 Aug	10	6	2		2	
Dipping Ponds						
7 June	16	9	7		3	4
19 July	9	9				
Manager's Garden						
1 July	20	10	10			10

Table 2. Numbers of Azure Damselflies at the height of their season.

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

This is a species that tends to be found at large bodies of water and hence, as mentioned in last year's report, is likely to be under-recorded because of the limited access to the Lagoon, Duck Marsh and Wet Grassland. In 2020 there were only three records compared with four in 2021. The first

sighting was of two individuals at the Dragonfly Ponds on 2<sup>nd</sup> June (JWC). Single males were seen on 1<sup>st</sup> July at the Mike Fisk Meadow (PM/BM) and on 8<sup>th</sup> August at the Poplar Field (JWC). The last record was of two males on the Dragonfly Ponds on 11<sup>th</sup> August (JWC).

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

The first record for this damselfly was on 29<sup>th</sup> May (JWC), more than a month later than it was first recorded in 2020 (25<sup>th</sup> April (JWC/PC)), although that was the earliest record ever from the reserve. A combination of Covid 19 and the rather elusive behaviour of this species may have caused it to be overlooked earlier in the month. Records continued throughout June, July and August, mostly at the Dragonfly Ponds, but there were records from the Education Pond and the Dipping Ponds (PJM). The highest numbers recorded were seven on 19<sup>th</sup> July and six on 9<sup>th</sup> August, both records being from the Dragonfly Ponds (PJM). Only two records of pairs in the wheel position were recorded, one on Woodhead on 14<sup>th</sup> June and one on Chadwick on 19<sup>th</sup> July (PJM). The last record was on 4<sup>th</sup> September (JWC). Two larvae were found in the Dragonfly Ponds on 21<sup>st</sup> June (PJM/DG).

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

After a disappointing year in 2020, when only one recording was made, there were 11 days when it was recorded in 2021, the first of which was on 14<sup>th</sup> July, when two males were seen at the Poplar Ponds and another male on the Co-op Pond (JLW). On only one other occasion was it seen at the Poplar Ponds, on 15<sup>th</sup> July (JWC), all other records being from the Dragonfly Ponds, Chadwick Pond being an especially good place to see it. The last record was on 15<sup>th</sup> September (JWC). The highest number recorded on any one day was five, on 4<sup>th</sup> September (JWC).

### **Small Red-eyed Damselfly** (*Erythromma viridulum*)

Sadly there were no records of the Small Red-eyed Damselfly. It was first sighted in 2019 and there was just a single record in 2020.

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

It was not such a good year for this species, with the two highest numbers recorded being three males and two females on an unspecified date (DW) and two males and two females on 14<sup>th</sup> July (JLW). This compares unfavourably with 2020, when 18 males and one female were recorded on 25<sup>th</sup> May (PM/BM). The first record in 2021 was on 28<sup>th</sup> May down by the Fish Pass (JSK). It was then recorded in small numbers regularly throughout June and July, mostly at the Dragonfly Ponds or near the river. The last recording was on Tim's Field on 8<sup>th</sup> August (JWC).

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

There were no records of the Common Hawker in 2020. Its preferred habitat is moorland and heathland. It was last seen at the reserve in 2019; before that in 2016.

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

It was quite a good year for the Migrant Hawker with the first record on 4<sup>th</sup> August on the Willow Path (JWC). However, it was another month before the next sighting, on 4<sup>th</sup> September (JWC). After that it was seen on a number of occasions in September and October with the final record being over the Duck Marsh on 24<sup>th</sup> October (JWC). The best day was 15<sup>th</sup> September, when seven were recorded, three at the Dragonfly Ponds and four elsewhere on the reserve (JWC).

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

It was also quite a good year for the Southern Hawker and the first record was of an ovipositing female at the Dragonfly Ponds on 25<sup>th</sup> July (JWC). However, it was not seen again until 23<sup>rd</sup> August, a month after the first record, when a male and an ovipositing female were seen on the Dipping Ponds (PJM). Apart from the sighting of a male on the River Path on 22<sup>nd</sup> September (PD/FD), the other records were all from either the Dragonfly Ponds or the Dipping Ponds. Usually only a male or a female was observed but one of each was again recorded on 26<sup>th</sup> September at the Dragonfly Ponds (JWC). The final sighting of the year was on the path by the Dipping Ponds on 11<sup>th</sup> October (PJM).

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

The first record for the Brown Hawker was on 1<sup>st</sup> July in the Coppice (PM/BM). It was then recorded regularly throughout July, August and into September, the last record being on 15<sup>th</sup> September (JWC). As usual it is one of the most frequently observed dragonflies on the reserve. The highest number recorded was six on 14<sup>th</sup> July (JLW) and six again on 2<sup>nd</sup> August, the latter being at the Dragonfly Ponds (PJM). Most of the records were from the Dragonfly Ponds but it was also seen along the Willow Path (JWC), by the Visitor Centre (JWC), along the River Path (PM/BM), over the John Ackroyd Meadow (DW), at the Dipping Ponds (PJM), at the Education Pond (PJM) and by the pump on the Wet Grassland (DW). In this species the female oviposits alone and ovipositing was observed between 26<sup>th</sup> July, on Chadwick and Co-op ponds (PM/BM), and 6<sup>th</sup> September on the Dragonfly Ponds (PJM); indeed all nine records of oviposition were from the Dragonfly Ponds. An exuvia was found on 19<sup>th</sup> July on one of the Dipping Ponds (PJM).

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

It was a slightly better year for the Emperor Dragonfly than 2020, when there were only two records of this species. In 2021 the first records were on 23<sup>rd</sup> June at the Dragonfly Ponds (JWC, DW). There were further sightings of singletons on 1<sup>st</sup> July (PM/BM) and 10<sup>th</sup> July (JWC), both at the Dragonfly Ponds. The final sighting was of two males and a female on 14<sup>th</sup> July (JLW). There was only one record of oviposition, on 1<sup>st</sup> July at Chadwick Pond (PM/BM).

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

There were a few more sightings of the Four-spotted Chaser than in 2020 but no more than two were seen on any one occasion. The first records were on 9<sup>th</sup> June over the John Ackroyd Meadow (JWC) and at the Dragonfly Ponds. Further sporadic sightings occurred at intervals throughout the rest of June and July, with the final record being over Chadwick Pond on 26<sup>th</sup> July (PM/BM). Apart from the individual flying over the John Ackroyd Meadow there was only one other record away from the Dragonfly Ponds and that was over the Education Pond on 15<sup>th</sup> June (JSK). Oviposition was only seen once, at the Dragonfly Ponds on the morning of 19<sup>th</sup> July (PJM).

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

The first record of a Broad-bodied Chaser was a female on 5<sup>th</sup> June at the Dragonfly Ponds (JWC). The first male was seen over the John Ackroyd Meadow four days later (JWC). Regular sightings, mostly of males, continued throughout the month. In addition to the above locations, individuals were seen in the Manager's Garden on 19<sup>th</sup> June (DW) and over the Poplar Field on 23<sup>rd</sup> June (DW). There was only one record in July, and that was the last record of the season; it was of a female at the Dipping Ponds on 14<sup>th</sup> of the month (JLW).

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

This species is one of the most commonly seen dragonflies on the reserve. The first record was of a female on 27<sup>th</sup> June at the Poplar Ponds (JWC), followed by a teneral observed at the Dragonfly Ponds on 10<sup>th</sup> July (JWC). It was then seen throughout July, August, September and October with the last sighting being on 13<sup>th</sup> November over the Reedbeds (JWC). The highest number recorded on any one day was about 15 at the Dragonfly Ponds on 15<sup>th</sup> September (JWC). It was seen at many other sites on the reserve, including the Dipping Ponds (PJM, SB), the Wet Grassland (JWC), along the River Path (BM), over the Duck Marsh (JWC) and along the Lagoon Path (JWC). In spite of the large number of

sightings, there was only one record of a pair in the wheel formation, at the Dipping Ponds on 22<sup>nd</sup> September (PM/BM), and one instance of oviposition, at the Dragonfly Ponds on 9<sup>th</sup> August (PJM). This contrasts with nine sightings of oviposition recorded in 2020 (PM/BM, PJM).

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

After an absence of sightings in 2020, this species was recorded on two occasions, both at the Dragonfly Ponds. The first sighting was on 21<sup>st</sup> July (JWC), the last, five days later, on 26<sup>th</sup> July (PM/BM).

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

There was just one record of the Black Darter, and that was at Chadwick Pond on 8<sup>th</sup> September (JS). It has been recorded in only five years, the last time being in 2019. It is unlikely to become established at the reserve, being a species of heathland and moorland.

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

It was a better year for this species, being recorded on nine days, compared to only three days in 2020. The first record was of a female on the River Path near the Dragonfly Ponds on 9<sup>th</sup> June (JWC). The highest number recorded on any one day was of six flying over the Reedbeds and the Lagoon on 18<sup>th</sup> June (JB). There were several records over the Wet Grassland (JWC, JS); others were over the Duck Marsh (JWC), along the Winter Walk (PM/BM), at the John Ackroyd Meadow (JSK) and at Tim's Field (JSK). The last records were on 14<sup>th</sup> July (PM/BM, JLW).

**Keeled Skimmer** (*Orthetrum coerulescens*)

There were no records of the Keeled Skimmer in 2021; indeed there has only been one record from the reserve and that was in 2015.

**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) - 2021**

<b>Species</b>	<b>First Date</b>	<b>Last date</b>
Large Red Damselfly	7 <sup>th</sup> May	16 <sup>th</sup> June
Azure Damselfly	19 <sup>th</sup> May	23 <sup>rd</sup> August
Banded Demoiselle	28 <sup>th</sup> May	8 <sup>th</sup> August
Blue-tailed Damselfly	29 <sup>th</sup> May	4 <sup>th</sup> September
Common Blue Damselfly	2 <sup>nd</sup> June	11 <sup>th</sup> August
Broad-bodied Chaser	5 <sup>th</sup> June	14 <sup>th</sup> July
Four-spotted Chaser	9 <sup>th</sup> June	26 <sup>th</sup> July
Black-tailed Skimmer	9 <sup>th</sup> June	14 <sup>th</sup> July
Emperor Dragonfly	23 <sup>rd</sup> June	14 <sup>th</sup> July
Common Darter	27 <sup>th</sup> June	13 <sup>th</sup> November **
Brown Hawker	28 <sup>th</sup> June	15 <sup>th</sup> September
Emerald Damselfly	14 <sup>th</sup> July	15 <sup>th</sup> September
Ruddy Darter	21 <sup>st</sup> July	26 <sup>th</sup> July
Southern Hawker	25 <sup>th</sup> July	11 <sup>th</sup> October
Migrant Hawker	4 <sup>th</sup> August	24 <sup>th</sup> October
Black Darter	8 <sup>th</sup> September	8 <sup>th</sup> September
Small Red-eyed Damselfly	-	-
Common Hawker	-	-
Keeled Skimmer	-	-

\*\* Latest ever record

## New Invertebrate Records for 2021

Eleven species of invertebrate were recorded for the first time in 2021, two dipterans, eight hymenopterans and one crustacean.

The two dipterans belong to the Cyclorhapha, a group named after the way in which the adult escapes from its puparium. The Yellow-legged Beegrabber (*Conops flavipes*) is the second member of this genus recorded at the reserve. It is one of the so-called thick-headed flies and is a wasp mimic with bands of yellow on its black abdomen. Its larvae are internal parasites (endoparasites) of bumblebees (*Bombus* sp.). They get their name from their habit of grabbing hold of flying bees and, once attached, laying an egg in them. *Anasymia transfuga* is also the second member of its genus recorded at Rodley; it is associated with emergent plants growing around ponds and slow moving streams. It is a dark hoverfly belonging to the Eristalinae, bringing the total number of hoverflies in this group found on the reserve to almost 40.

Three of the hymenopterans are Mason Bees (Megachilidae), the Patchwork Leafcutter Bee (*Megachile centuncularis*), the Red Mason Bee (*Osmia bicornis*) and the Orange-vented Mason Bee (*O. leaiana*), all of which took up residence in Bee Hotels in either the Robins area or in the one attached to the garage near the visitor centre. Four members of the Parastica were found - three Gall Wasps (Cynipidae) and an Ichneumon Wasp. The Gall Wasps have not been seen as adults but their distinctive galls were found on oak on the way to the Manager's Garden. They are the Silk Button Spangle Gall Wasp (*Neuroterus numismalis*), the Spangle Gall Wasp (*N. quercusbacarum*) and the Kidney Gall Wasp (*Trigonaspis megaptera*). Galls are areas of deformed growth of plants, usually in response to injury by another organism. There are many causes of gall formation but a lot of them are caused by insects. Oak trees alone have over 50 types of gall, mostly caused by the larvae of parasitic wasps which live inside the gall. With the increased numbers of oaks on the reserve we can look forward to finding more of these fascinating organisms. The ichneumon wasp, the Black Slip Wasp (*Pimpla rufipes*), is the second member of its genus recorded here. This striking, if rather sinister, black ichneumon with red legs was seen on railings by the Michael Sheldon hide. The hosts of this parasitic wasp include the Large White Butterfly (*Pieris brassicae*) and the Gypsy Moth (*Lymantria dispar*). The final hymenopteran is a sawfly (Tenthredinoidea, Cephidae), the Reed Stem Borer (*Calameuta filiformis*). This beautiful slender, elegant insect is about 10-12mm long and very thin, with long antennae and was seen in late June feeding on buttercups around the Dragonfly Ponds. The closed

wings give the impression of a red/purplish tinge. Its larvae spend their time excavating tunnels inside reed stems.

Finally, a parasitic crustacean larva was found, the Fish Louse (*Argulus* sp.), a member of the Brachiura. The adult is a common parasite of freshwater fish and can move easily over the surface of the fish, attaching to the skin, fins and gills using a pair of suckers and numerous spines on its underside. It feeds on the blood of its host, injecting an anticoagulant.



## FUNGUS REPORT 2021

It was nice to be able to run our Fungus Forays again this year having been unable to have them in 2020 due to Covid restrictions. Both the public foray on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> October and the Rodley Robins children's club foray on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> November enjoyed fine, dry days and were well supported as always. A good range of species was found on the public foray including six new ones for the Reserve. A list of species identified is shown below.

<i>Agaricus sylvaticus</i>	Wood Mushroom
<i>Auricularia auricula-judae</i>	Jelly Ear
<i>Chondrostereum purpureum</i>	Silver-leaf Fungus
<i>Claviceps purpurea</i>	Ergot
<i>Clavulina rugosa</i>	Wrinkled Club
<i>Clavulinopsis fusiformis</i>	Golden Spindles *
<i>Clavulinopsis umbrinella</i>	Beige Coral *
<i>Conocybe sp.</i>	Conecap
<i>Coprinellus micaceus</i>	Glistening Ink Cap
<i>Cortinarius sp.</i>	Webcap
<i>Cuphophyllus virgineus</i>	Snowy Waxcap
<i>Daedaleopsis confragosa</i>	Blushing Bracket
<i>Ganoderma australe</i>	Southern Bracket
<i>Gliophorus irrigatus</i>	Slimy Waxcap
<i>Hebeloma velutipes</i>	Poisonpie
<i>Hygrocybe chlorophana</i>	Golden Waxcap
<i>Hygrocybe conica</i>	Blackening Waxcap
<i>Hygrocybe lepida</i>	Goblet Waxcap *
<i>Hygrocybe miniata</i>	Vermillion Waxcap *
<i>Hyphodontia sambuci</i>	Elder Whitewash
<i>Laccaria laccata</i>	The Deceiver
<i>Lepiota cristata</i>	Stinking Dapperling *
<i>Lycoperdon perlatum</i>	Common Puffball
<i>Marasmius oreades</i>	Fairy Ring Champignon
<i>Mycena aetites</i>	Drab Bonnet
<i>Mycena olivaceomarginata</i>	Brown-edge Bonnet
<i>Mycena vitilis</i>	Snapping Bonnet
<i>Parasola sp.</i>	Japanese Umbrella
<i>Paxillus involutus</i>	Brown Rollrim
<i>Pholiota squarrosa</i>	Shaggy Scalycap
<i>Pluteus cervinus</i>	Deer Shield
<i>Polyporus varius</i>	Blackfoot Polypore
<i>Psathyrella spp.</i>	Brittlestem
<i>Scleroderma bovista</i>	Potato Earthball *
<i>Stropharia caerulea</i>	Blue Roundhead

<i>Trametes versicolor</i>	Turkeytails
<i>Xylaria hypoxylon</i>	Candlesnuff Fungus

\* New species added to the Reserve list this year

The Rodley Robins' foray on 13<sup>th</sup> November also produced a good range of species including several not found on the public foray in October including one new one.

Additional species not recorded on the October foray.

<i>Bolbitius titubans</i>	Yellow Cowpat Toadstool
<i>Lyophyllum decastes</i>	Clustered Domecap aka Chicken of the gravel
<i>Mycena flavaalba</i>	Yellow-white Bonnet aka Ivory Bonnet
<i>Pleurotus ostreatus</i>	Oyster Mushroom
<i>Psathyrella corrugis</i>	Red-edged Brittlestem
<i>Psathyrella piluliformis</i>	Stump Brittlestem
<i>Rhopoglyphus filicinus</i>	Bracken Map Fungus *
<i>Xanthoria parietina</i>	Sunburst Lichen

Thanks to a mild first three weeks in November conditions remained ideal for fungi and the Willow Path usually proves to be a good place to search. Another new species for the Reserve was found and photographed here later in the month (JWC) -

Sheathed Woodtuft - *Kuehneromyces mutabilis*

The rather unusual genus name of this species was in honour of French mycologist Robert Kuehner.

As always, a big thank you must go to our expert Andy Woodall who led both forays and also to Ian Forward who assisted at the public foray.

## **Photograph Credits**

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

Black Darter by Peter Humphrey  
Black Slip Wasp by Jerry Knapp  
Brimstone butterfly by Jen Houlden  
Brimstone caterpillars and egg by Barbara Murphy  
Common Sandpiper by Barbara Murphy  
Dipper by Adrian Hardy  
Galls on Oak by Peter Mill  
Golden Spindles by Meg Stone  
Green Sandpiper by Barbara Murphy  
Little and Great Egrets by Peter Humphrey  
Mullein Moth caterpillar by Jerry Knapp  
Otter by Kirsty McLeod  
Puss Moth by Dave Nesham  
Ruddy Darter by Barbara Murphy  
Stoat by Mandy Haxby  
Yellow-legged Beegrabber by Jerry Knapp