



Normal Reserve Opening Times:

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

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

Trustees:

Kirsty McLeod - Treasurer  
David Nesham  
Peter Murphy  
Jerry Knapp  
Maggie Bellwood  
John Hart  
Andrew Woodall  
Denese Swann  
Louise Staniland  
Carolyn Finn  
Rachel Gander

Company Secretary - Peter Murphy  
Report Editor - Peter Murphy

## CONTENTS

3	Introduction
5	Monthly Roundup
15	Introduction to the Systematic List of Birds
17	Systematic List of Birds Recorded
53	First and Last Dates for Winter Visitors 2024
54	First and Last Dates for Summer Visitors 2024
55	Mammals
60	Amphibians
61	Butterflies
69	Butterflies - First/Last Dates 2024
70	Moths
76	Dragonflies and Damselflies
82	Dragonflies and Damselflies - First/Last Dates 2024
83	Dragonflies and Damselflies - Earliest and Latest Dates
84	New Invertebrate Records for 2024
86	Fungi Review
89	Photograph Credits
90	Acknowledgements

### Photographs:

Front cover: Banded Demoiselle - from an original photograph by Richard Harper

See page 89 for other Photograph Credits.

## Introduction

We ended the introduction to the 2023 Annual Review with a reminder that we still had, at some point, 18 months of noise and disturbance to look forward to when work started on the proposed housing development on the Airedale Mills site next to the Reserve entrance. With nothing happening this year the same reminder applies.

As regards the new bridge over the canal it continues to have its moments but it hasn't caused any major problems this year. It is nice, therefore, to be able to concentrate on all the positive things that have happened this year thanks to the efforts of our hard working volunteers.

We again ran a full programme of events starting with the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch on 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> January and Build a Nest Box on 18<sup>th</sup> February, these particularly aimed at involving families and interesting children in the natural world. Aireborough Rotary Club again ran their very popular Grand Easter Egg Hunt and Autumn Seed trail events on the Reserve, raising valuable funds for local charities. We are grateful to Rodley Cricket Club and the William Merritt Centre for allowing us to use their parking facilities for these two big events.

Among other events this year were three Bat Nights, three Fungus Forays, Nature Quest Day and the Halloween Event. Supervised Pond Dipping started at the beginning of June on Saturdays and Sundays and was extended to include Wednesdays during the school summer holidays. As always this proved very popular with families.

Teaching children about the importance of the natural world and providing an outdoor learning experience will always be an important part of the Reserve's work. Our own children's club, the Rodley Robins is a good example of this and there is no charge for membership. This year our Education Team welcomed 29 primary school classes and 12 uniformed organisations and there were several visits from older students. No charge is made to the schools and other organisations for these visits. The fact that we were fully booked for school visits in 2024 before the end of 2023 shows how much they are appreciated by the schools.

On the work front our habitat management team of volunteers had another busy year. Some major maintenance work took place at the Dragonfly Ponds. What was known as the Marsh area had become overgrown with reeds and had to be cleared with the help of a digger. A new liner measuring 20mx15m was laid and the banking turfed. Water plants will

be introduced next year. As the biggest single body of water at the ponds it should appeal to those species such as Common Blue Damselfly that prefer larger areas of water. Work to clear excess vegetation from several other ponds was carried out in the autumn.

The boxes in the Swift nesting tower came down in the autumn gales of 2022. The construction and erecting of a block of new boxes was a big job for our volunteers but the task had been achieved by the end of the year and we look forward to the return of the Swifts next year when, hopefully, the new boxes will appeal. Sadly the Swift was added to the Red List in 2021 due to worsening declines in the UK breeding population.

Maintenance work is needed on the Sand Martin nesting bank on the Lagoon every year. This involves erecting scaffolding, clearing out the old nest holes and repacking them with fresh sand prior to the arrival of the birds in the spring. Since its completion early in 2014 it has proved to be very successful but the number of nest holes has reduced in recent years.

We have made great efforts over the years to make the Reserve more user friendly for wheelchair users and other visitors with walking problems. A lot of work had already been done on improving the paths and making special facilities for wheelchair users in the bird watching hides but in the latter part of this year major improvements were made to the Blue Badge parking area near the visitor centre.

Our Barn Owls and Kestrels had another successful year using nest boxes on the Reserve and visitors were again able to enjoy live footage from the boxes on the monitors in the visitor centre. However, of the five eggs laid this year the Kestrels only fledged two young and of the seven eggs laid by the Barn Owls only three fledged. The boxes and cameras were cleaned by the experts early in September so we should again have nice clear images on the monitors in 2025, the birds permitting.

As regards the Little Owls in the Manager's Garden without a camera in the nest box it is difficult to know for certain just how successful they have been. However, in the early part of the year they proved to be the most popular birds to see and photograph from the number of images appearing on social media.

## **Rodley Nature Reserve - Monthly Roundup for 2024**

### **January**

There were hard frosts and some cold, clear days around the middle of the month but it became increasingly milder and windy from 20<sup>th</sup>. Storm Isha overnight on 22<sup>nd</sup> - a very wild night and storm Jocelyn followed with strong to gale force winds overnight on 24<sup>th</sup>. The wind was again very strong from 26<sup>th</sup>.

A total of 1100+ Pink-footed Geese flew over in multiple skeins during the day on 28<sup>th</sup>. On the wetlands Gadwall numbers peaked at 54 on 26<sup>th</sup>, Teal at 36 on 10<sup>th</sup>, but Tufted Duck numbers were disappointingly low with a maximum of only 10 on 16<sup>th</sup>. A Goldeneye was present on 1<sup>st</sup> with a peak count of four on 31<sup>st</sup>. There were single records of Pochard (17<sup>th</sup>) and Shelduck (6<sup>th</sup>) and four Shoveler on 10<sup>th</sup>. Roosting Goosander numbers on the Duck Marsh peaked at eight on 19<sup>th</sup>.

Sightings of birds of prey were regular, with Common Buzzard seen on nine dates (including three together on 31<sup>st</sup>) and Red Kite was also noted on nine days. A Kestrel was seen most days, but Sparrowhawk was only seen on five occasions. A Merlin was spotted on 15<sup>th</sup>, and Peregrine was seen on four days, usually perched on the pylons behind the Manager's Garden. Three species of owl were recorded. Little Owl was seen in the Manager's Garden on eight days and Barn Owl noted in the nest box in the Scrubland on five days (including a pair on 31<sup>st</sup>). Tawny Owl is resident but was only recorded once on 10<sup>th</sup>.

Peak counts of seed eaters in Tim's Field were low, with a maximum of c50 Linnet and 28 Chaffinch. About 20 Siskin were seen feeding in the Alder and Birch trees opposite the visitors' car park on a few dates.

### **February**

Snow throughout the day on 8<sup>th</sup> left a good covering but it had almost gone by the next day. Just a week later on 14<sup>th</sup> we had the warmest Valentine's Day for 25 years and it proved to be the warmest February on record for England and Wales.

Common Buzzards were seen on 10 dates including six on 24<sup>th</sup>, also Red Kite and Sparrowhawk on several occasions. A Barn Owl was seen in its box on a few dates and Little Owl was very visible in the Managers Garden

with one or two birds seen on 11 days. Kestrel was seen regularly and Peregrine on six dates.

On the wetlands the first Great Crested Grebe was seen on 21<sup>st</sup>, a little earlier than last year. The first returning Oystercatcher was spotted on 3<sup>rd</sup>. It was joined by a second bird on 5<sup>th</sup> and by 19<sup>th</sup> two pairs were present. Small numbers of Lapwing were seen most days, but there was a high count on 53 on 17<sup>th</sup> on the farmland. Snipe were seen on six dates, joined by Jack Snipe on four dates at the start of the month. Water Rail were present during the month and were reported on six days.

Gulls could be seen on most days around the Reserve and congregated on the farmland. Black-headed and Common were the most numerous with smaller numbers of Lesser Black-backed and Herring. The annual arrival of the Yellow-legged type gull was first noted on 27<sup>th</sup>.

Other interesting records were Kingfisher on 10 dates, a Green Woodpecker heard on 14<sup>th</sup> with the more common Great Spotted Woodpecker noted on nine days. The first overwintering Chiffchaff was heard on 14<sup>th</sup>, a Skylark on 18<sup>th</sup> and a Coal Tit on 24<sup>th</sup>. Ravens were seen over the Reserve on 24<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>.

## **March**

The month overall was unsettled, wet and dull but there were a few brighter days and three fine days on 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> saw temperatures reaching 15°C.

Whooper Swans were seen over the Reserve on three dates with 60+ noted on 26<sup>th</sup>. On the wetlands Gadwall, Teal and Mallard were present in good numbers. These were joined by a pair of Mandarin Duck on six dates, Shoveler on several dates including four on 18<sup>th</sup> and two to four Shelduck were present from 21<sup>st</sup>. Small numbers of Tufted Duck were seen on most days with a peak count of 10 on 27<sup>th</sup>. Goldeneye were seen most days, up to six birds being present.

Little Egrets were noted on seven dates and a single Great Crested Grebe was resident on the Lagoon. Snipe were a fairly regular sight and other waders seen were Curlew on three occasions, a Green Sandpiper on 30<sup>th</sup> and a Woodcock on two dates at the start of the month. Water Rails were still occasionally seen or heard.

Red Kite, Common Buzzard, Kestrel and Sparrowhawk were regularly seen. Less common were Peregrine on only three dates. The Barn Owl was still regularly seen in the nest box and it was joined by a second bird for the first time on 15<sup>th</sup>. Little Owl was again seen most days in the Manager's Garden.

Black-headed Gulls remained present in good numbers with a peak count of 106 on 11<sup>th</sup>. The Yellow-legged Gull was present all month.

The first Sand Martin of the year arrived on 16<sup>th</sup> and numbers had risen to eight by 27<sup>th</sup>. Cetti's Warbler was heard on most days with up to four birds being noted. Chiffchaff was also common with 14 recorded on 17<sup>th</sup>.

Other noteworthy records for the month included a Green Woodpecker heard on 6<sup>th</sup>, a Rook on the farmland on 3<sup>rd</sup>, Stonechat on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> and a Wheatear briefly near the manure heap on the farmland on 18<sup>th</sup>. Goldcrest, Treecreeper, Dipper and Meadow Pipit were also seen on a few dates.

## **April**

With sunshine in short supply the UK had its sixth wettest April since records began in 1836. Storm Kathleen brought strong winds and rain on the weekend of 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> and this was followed closely by another area of low pressure.

This month is when most of the summer visitors arrive. The first Willow Warblers and Blackcaps were seen on 1<sup>st</sup>, Common Whitethroat on 6<sup>th</sup> followed by records of Grasshopper Warbler and Sedge Warbler on 13<sup>th</sup>. Reed Warbler was first noted on 20<sup>th</sup> with Garden Warbler on 21<sup>st</sup>.

Cetti's Warbler continued to be heard on most days with counts in the range of three to seven.

Sand Martin numbers increased with a high of 75 on 13<sup>th</sup>. The first Swallow was seen on 1<sup>st</sup> and House Martin on 6<sup>th</sup>.

On the wetlands Gadwall and Mallard were present in good numbers and Mandarin Duck and Shoveler in small numbers. Tufted Duck were seen all month with a peak of 11. Up to 20 Teal were noted at the beginning of the month but the last birds were seen on 22<sup>nd</sup> and a few Shelduck were present until 24<sup>th</sup>. The last Goldeneye were seen on 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Little Egret were seen on six dates. The Great Crested Grebe that arrived during March was joined by a second bird on 7<sup>th</sup> and they quickly began courtship.

The two pairs of Oystercatcher set up territories on the Duck Marsh and Lagoon. Lapwing were present all month, joined by Little Ringed Plover on three dates, a Curlew on 13<sup>th</sup>, Common Sandpiper on five dates and Snipe on four days.

Common Buzzard, Red Kite, Sparrowhawk and Kestrel were again ever present. An Osprey passed over on 6<sup>th</sup>. Little Owl was seen on 11 days and a Barn Owl roosted in the nest box most days.

The last Redwings of the season were seen on 7<sup>th</sup>, though unusually no Fieldfares were seen on the Reserve between January and April.

Other notable records were a Raven and Rook on 10<sup>th</sup> and two Rose-ringed Parakeet on 20<sup>th</sup>. A Pied Flycatcher was seen on 14<sup>th</sup>, Common Redstart on three dates and Dipper on two dates.

## **May**

Temperatures reached 19°C in the first week of the month. It became unsettled from 21<sup>st</sup> with rain on and off, quite windy at times and cooler up to the end of the month.

Sightings of Common Buzzard, Red Kite and Sparrowhawk were much less frequent during May, but a Marsh Harrier seen over the Reserve on 1<sup>st</sup> was notable. Kestrel and Barn Owl were seen almost daily and the Little Owl continued to show occasionally in the Manager's Garden. A Hobby was seen on 19<sup>th</sup> and two Peregrine on 25<sup>th</sup>.

The pair of Mute Swans on the Duck Marsh paraded their seven new cygnets for the first time on 25<sup>th</sup>. Oystercatcher and Lapwing made attempts at breeding, and Little Ringed Plover and Common Sandpiper made sporadic appearances.

Gull numbers dropped to their summer levels with only a few Black-headed, Lesser Black-backed and Herring Gulls present. Two Arctic Terns that passed through on 1<sup>st</sup> was a first record since 2015.

The first Swifts of the year were seen on 1<sup>st</sup>. 100+ Sand Martins were recorded on 1<sup>st</sup> but counts of less than 50 were the norm for the rest of



the month and only 67 holes were noted in the nesting bank. Swallows were seen most days in low numbers with the very occasional House Martin.

All the usual Warblers were again recorded during the month, but a Lesser Whitethroat and two Grasshopper Warblers on 1<sup>st</sup> were highlights.

A Lesser Redpoll was seen on 4<sup>th</sup> and on the same day a Yellowhammer was photographed in the Manager's Garden, the first record since 2018.

## **June**

Temperatures reached 21°C on 2<sup>nd</sup> on what was a lovely sunny day. Rainfall was in relatively short supply throughout the month.

On the wetlands good numbers of Gadwall and Mallard continued, but other species of duck started to appear. Two Shelduck were seen on 17<sup>th</sup> and two Mandarin Duck on 19<sup>th</sup>. The first Teal of the season were spotted on 22<sup>nd</sup> and an early Wigeon on 30<sup>th</sup>. Little Egret numbers grew during the month with a high count of 10 on 26<sup>th</sup>.

Oystercatcher and Lapwing were spotted with young; a Little Ringed Plover was present for a few days at the end of the month and a Curlew was seen on the farmland on two dates. Common Sandpiper was occasionally seen. The usual gulls were present in small numbers and a Common Tern was photographed on 26<sup>th</sup>, the only record for the year.

Seven eggs were laid in the Barn Owl box and three hatched during the month. Of the five eggs laid in the Kestrel box two young had fledged by the end of the month. A Hobby was seen on 19<sup>th</sup>.

Records of Kingfisher were daily with counts of two or three birds on several dates.

Two House Sparrows were seen at the top of the entrance road on 2<sup>nd</sup>; Collared Doves were seen on 8<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> and two Stonechats on 29<sup>th</sup>. Rose-ringed Parakeets were spotted on five dates and Rooks were seen on the farmland with other crows on seven dates, including nine on 8<sup>th</sup>.

## **July**

The first two weeks of the month were unsettled with rain and strong, blustery winds at times, reaching nearly 40mph on 4<sup>th</sup>. The temperature

did reach 23°C on 15<sup>th</sup> - a rare sunny morning and feeling much warmer but rain returned the following day. Temperatures remained between 22°C and 24°C, reaching 27°C on 19<sup>th</sup>. Fortunately, it remained dry and warm for the Reserve's Nature Quest Event on 20<sup>th</sup>. Temperatures reached 26°C 29<sup>th</sup> and it remained very warm for the next two days.

On the wetlands, unusually, Mallard outnumbered Gadwall this month, but apart from small numbers of Tufted Duck other duck species were few and far between. Little Egret was seen most days.

The pair of Great Crested Grebe on the Lagoon produced two young, but only one of the immature birds remained by the end of the month. There were good numbers of Little Grebe, mainly on the Lagoon, with several immature birds on view with a high count of 12 on 21<sup>st</sup>.

The Oystercatcher and young dispersed during the month and were last seen on 21<sup>st</sup>. Lapwing were seen most days, Common Sandpiper was reported on a few days at the start of the month and a Green Sandpiper was first seen on 10<sup>th</sup>.

Black-headed Gull numbers increased during the month, ranging from 10-50 birds, exceptionally with c.1000 gulls seen overhead on 17<sup>th</sup>. The other regular gulls were seen in small numbers.

Three young Barn Owls were being successfully reared in the owl box during the month. Kingfisher was regularly seen.

Sand Martin numbers were greatly reduced by the end of the month, but 10-30 Swallows were seen around the Reserve on some days.

## **August**

There was a spell of very heavy rain overnight on 1<sup>st</sup> but the sky had cleared by mid morning and temperatures reached 25°C. It proved to be a month of contrasts weatherwise. A very wild, windy day on 9<sup>th</sup> was followed by a beautiful cloudless day on 11<sup>th</sup> and just a light south easterly breeze. It became more unsettled again from 12<sup>th</sup> with a spell of heavy rain and thunder that morning. It was also very windy at times and Storm Lilian brought gale force winds for a time on 23<sup>rd</sup>. It continued to be unsettled for a time but the month did end with three fine sunny days.

On the wetlands Gadwall numbers increased with a high count of 69 on 19<sup>th</sup>, outnumbering the Mallard once again. Teal started appearing on 10<sup>th</sup>

with numbers increasing during the month, but the only other ducks were a Mandarin on 5<sup>th</sup>, a Shoveler on 26<sup>th</sup> and a single Tufted Duck on 30<sup>th</sup>.

24 Cormorants were seen on 18<sup>th</sup>, but other records were usually in single figures. Little Egret was reported most days with seven on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

The remaining immature Great Crested Grebe was last seen on 10<sup>th</sup> and double figure counts of Little Grebe were common with a high of 13 birds. Lapwings were a regular sight and two Green Sandpipers were present by the end of the month.

An Osprey passed through on the 24<sup>th</sup>. The other usual raptors were seen regularly, though Kestrels were scarce following their young fledging the nest. Peregrine was spotted on three dates.

The only other notable record in August was a Yellow Wagtail seen flying over the Willow Path/Lagoon screen on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

## **September**

The first half of the month was very unsettled with wind, rain, hail and fog all in the mix. Fortunately, the Bioblitz event on 17<sup>th</sup> enjoyed a lovely sunny day with hardly any breeze. Two further fine days followed but it was unsettled thereafter with daytime temperatures around 12°C and a good deal of rain. Temperatures dropped as low as 5°C overnight.

A skein of c65 Pink-footed Geese flew over on 11<sup>th</sup>.

On the wetlands Mute Swan numbers were boosted by wintering birds with regular double figure counts. Gadwall numbers grew as the month progressed with a high count of 107 on 27<sup>th</sup>. Wigeon was first seen on 1<sup>st</sup> and numbers increased to c20. Teal was seen most days with a high of 21 on 21<sup>st</sup>. Shoveler were regularly seen and by the end of the month up to six were present.

The Little Egrets were joined by a Great White Egret on 18<sup>th</sup> and it was also seen on 25<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>. Little Grebe numbers remained high with a maximum count of 18 on 9<sup>th</sup>.

Water Rail began to show from the start of the month and up to three birds were being reported by the end of the month. Lapwing was ever present and up to three Green Sandpipers were regularly seen. The first Common Snipe was reported on 25<sup>th</sup>.

The last Swift was seen on 8<sup>th</sup>. Swallow numbers peaked at 92 on 1<sup>st</sup> and the last was seen on 29<sup>th</sup>. House Martins gathered to feed up before heading south with a count of 150+ on 8<sup>th</sup>, but they were all gone by the end of the next day.

A Hobby was spotted on 11<sup>th</sup> and a Peregrine on 4<sup>th</sup>.

The summer warblers all left during the month, with Sedge Warbler last seen on 7<sup>th</sup>, Reed Warbler on 28<sup>th</sup> and Blackcap on 29<sup>th</sup>.

The first Redwing was seen on 27<sup>th</sup>. Stonechats were seen on 27<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>. Meadow Pipits were noted on four dates and a Tree Pipit was heard calling over Tim's Field on 15<sup>th</sup>.

## **October**

After a wet start the first week of the month produced some pleasant sunny days with temperatures reaching 17°C. It was generally a fairly typical October for weather though Storm Ashley brought wet and windy conditions to the UK on 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> with the strongest of the winds across north western areas.

On the wetlands, Gadwall numbers remained high with a peak of 132 on 6<sup>th</sup>. Wigeon were ever present in good numbers with a high of 28 on 30<sup>th</sup>. Teal showed a high of 16 on 20<sup>th</sup> and Shoveler numbers were notable with 20 seen on 16<sup>th</sup>. Tufted Duck numbers were disappointing with a maximum of only three.

Further skeins of Pink-footed Goose were seen passing over at the end of the month.

Little Egret remained in small numbers and a Great White Egret was seen on 30<sup>th</sup>. Little Grebe was still visible in high numbers with 15 reported on 20<sup>th</sup>. Water Rail was seen regularly with four noted on 28<sup>th</sup> near the Lagoon hide.

Lapwing were common with a high of 20 on 18<sup>th</sup>. Two Green Sandpipers were regularly seen and Common Snipe were spotted on six dates.

A high of 170+ Black-headed Gull on 16<sup>th</sup> was over double the monthly average and 110+ Common Gull were seen on the same day, mainly

grouped on the farmland. Small numbers of Lesser Black-backed and Herring Gull were amongst the same flock.

The Barn Owl was regularly seen roosting in the owl box and Little and Tawny Owl showed occasionally. Kestrel returned again and was seen on seven dates and Peregrine a few times.

A Swallow and a House Martin made a brief final appearance on 5<sup>th</sup> and Chiffchaff were reported at the start of the month, the last remaining warbler other than the Cetti's that was still regularly heard.

Large 300+ groups of Redwing and Fieldfare passed over on 30<sup>th</sup> and c200 Starling were seen on the farmland the same day. Skylark was seen on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> and Stonechat was seen on three dates.

Seed-eater numbers were relatively low, though 23 Linnet and 11 Siskin were seen on 26<sup>th</sup> and c80 Goldfinch on 30<sup>th</sup>.

## **November**

The first half of the month was mild with temperatures as high as 14°C on 6<sup>th</sup>. Temperatures dipped sharply overnight on 17<sup>th</sup> leaving a frost the following morning. Snow left a good covering on 19<sup>th</sup>. Temperatures were as low as 1°C during the day on 21<sup>st</sup>. More snow overnight on 22<sup>nd</sup> left a thick covering on 23<sup>rd</sup> but this soon turned to rain with the temperature reaching 14°C at midnight the same day. The month ended with a fine, dry day on 30<sup>th</sup> and temperatures reaching 12°C.

Gadwall numbers fell to 30-60 birds and Wigeon peaked at 35 on 16<sup>th</sup> before a final bird was seen on 30<sup>th</sup>. Teal numbers increased with 64 counted on 24<sup>th</sup>. Shoveler remained in small numbers and a Pochard was seen on 10<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>.

Little Egret numbers increased to nine by 13<sup>th</sup>, and a single Great White Egret was ever present for the first half of the month. Water Rail was still seen regularly with six on 17<sup>th</sup> exceptional.

Lapwing numbers dropped off, though 13 were reported on 20<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>. A Black-tailed Godwit passed through on 3<sup>rd</sup> and the Green Sandpiper remained all month. Common Snipe was seen on six dates and a Woodcock was flushed from the edge of the Wet Grassland on 29<sup>th</sup>.

A Little Gull was spotted on 2<sup>nd</sup> and a 2<sup>nd</sup> winter Caspian Gull on 27<sup>th</sup>.

A Chough was seen with some Jackdaws over the farmland on 24<sup>th</sup>, a new bird for the Reserve.

Chiffchaff and Cetti's Warbler were occasionally reported, as was Treecreeper. Skylark was noted on three dates.

High numbers of Redwing and Fieldfare passed over at the start of the month and small numbers remained around the Reserve for the rest of the month.

## **December**

There was a wet but mild start to the month. There were some strong winds at times reaching 40mph on 18<sup>th</sup> and 50mph on 21<sup>st</sup>. Temperatures reached 12°C on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. The year ended on a wet and windy note with some heavy rain on 31<sup>st</sup>. The year also ended relatively quietly for bird records.

Gadwall numbers remained in the 30-60 region and other than a count of 70+ on 1<sup>st</sup> Mallard was in the range of 10-20 birds. Teal numbers were maintained, with 50 on 2<sup>nd</sup>. A few Shoveler were present all month and two Pochard appeared on 28<sup>th</sup>.

The Egrets left and Little Grebe numbers reduced to low single figures. Water Rail became less conspicuous and was only seen on two dates.

Lapwings became scarce, other than a large flock of 97 on 7<sup>th</sup>. The Green Sandpiper remained, and Common Snipe were regularly seen with 14 noted on the Wet Grassland and Duck Marsh on 7<sup>th</sup>. Jack Snipe was spotted on four dates and a Woodcock on 9<sup>th</sup>. A Great Black-backed Gull was picked out over the farmland on 1<sup>st</sup>.

On top of occasional records of Chiffchaff and Cetti's Warbler, a Siberian Chiffchaff was spotted on three dates at the end of the month.

Tim's Field remained quiet.

## Introduction to the Systematic List of Birds

The bird's name is followed by the Latin name and a description of the 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 area elsewhere/
Migrant	Generally only present for a short time, usually on passage.
Visitor	Usually present for more than a day at a 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:

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



## **Systematic List of Birds Recorded**

### **Mute Swan      *Cygnus olor*      Resident Breeder**

At the start of the year 2 adults and one cygnet from last year were still present. By March, pairs appeared to be establishing territories on the Wet Grassland, Reedbed and Duck Marsh. A swan was seen on a nest in the Wet Grassland on 19<sup>th</sup> April but there were no further reports of breeding there. The first report of successful breeding was on 25<sup>th</sup> May when 7 new cygnets were seen on the Duck Marsh. By 3<sup>rd</sup> June only 5 cygnets were regularly reported on the Duck Marsh and by 4<sup>th</sup> October the number reduced to 4. By 18<sup>th</sup> October the swan family had vacated the Duck Marsh and took up residence on the Lagoon and 2 adults plus 3 cygnets were regularly reported for the rest of the year. Other than the resident birds other swans regularly visited the reserve with maximum counts of 14 in October and November.

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

Sightings of flocks flying over the reserve reported on 3 occasions in March this year. 17 on 9<sup>th</sup> (BE) plus photo by PH, 26 on 10<sup>th</sup> during WeBS count (also photo by MH) and finally 60+ flew over on 26<sup>th</sup> (MB). First records since 2021 of this winter passage visitor.

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

Two were seen in farmland next to the Reserve amongst the Canada Geese on 8<sup>th</sup> January (SB), otherwise records were of skeins passing over the Reserve at the beginning and end of the year. In January, a total of 1100+ flew over during the day on 28<sup>th</sup> and another 27 on 31<sup>st</sup> (JWC). February saw 86 on 24<sup>th</sup> (BE) and c150 on 25<sup>th</sup> (EC). At the end of the year there were c65 on 11<sup>th</sup> September; in October there were c120 on 23<sup>rd</sup>, c50 on 26<sup>th</sup> and c100 on 30<sup>th</sup>. c80 passed over on 6<sup>th</sup> November and the year ended with c200 on 28<sup>th</sup> December.

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

The trend for lower reported counts of Greylags has continued this year, with only numbers in tens rather than the hundreds recorded early in the year. Small numbers were reported in the summer months, but breeding again occurred in small numbers with a pair seen with 4 goslings on 3<sup>rd</sup> June (SB). Numbers picked up in the late Autumn/early Winter, with the

highest count for the year of 100 seen during the WeBS count on 15<sup>th</sup> December. Monthly maxima are shown below:

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
18	6	31	30	23	2	4	4	10	47	40	100

### **Canada Goose**

*Branta canadensis*

**Resident Breeder and Winter Visitor**

Counts were dramatically lower than the record numbers reported over the last few years. Highest count was 154 on 14<sup>th</sup> February compared to c400 in January last year. Some breeding probably occurred as usual but there were no specific records. Shooting activity on neighbouring farmland probably affected numbers, which remained low for the remainder of the year other than a small peak of 90 noted during the WeBS count on 18<sup>th</sup> August. Monthly maxima are shown below:

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
64	154	88	76	35	11	5	90	13	35	4	6

### **Barnacle Goose**

*Branta leucopsis*

**Rare Visitor**

There have been no sightings in the last 14 years. A single bird seen on the farmland during an early morning WeBS visit on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2010 was the first record since 26<sup>th</sup> April 2003 and these are the only records for the Reserve.

### **Dark-bellied Brent Goose**

*Branta bernicla*

**Rare Visitor**

There has been just one record to date. A single bird was found on the farmland with other geese on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2016. Not surprising for a species that is generally a winter migrant to coastal areas.

### **Egyptian Goose**

*Alopochen aegyptiaca*

**Rare Visitor**

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

### **Common Shelduck**

*Tadorna tadorna*

**Scarce Visitor**

Last year Shelduck was only recorded on five dates. However this year at least 2 birds were present (mainly in the Duck Marsh) for 35 consecutive

days in March and April. The first record was on 21<sup>st</sup> March and they were last reported on 24<sup>th</sup> April. Four birds were present on 24<sup>th</sup> March and 1<sup>st</sup> April. A single bird was spotted on the Lagoon on 6<sup>th</sup> January (SB) and the final record for the year was 2 birds on the Duck Marsh on 17<sup>th</sup> June. Maybe Shelduck should now be reclassified as an uncommon visitor rather than scarce?

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

This colourful introduced species of duck was spotted at the Reserve on 31 days last year, a big increase on the previous record of 13 sightings in 2021. It was only seen on four dates in both 2022 and 2023, so it is either visiting the Reserve more frequently or people are getting better at noticing it. Most of the sightings were in March and April when a pair of birds were frequently seen together. The brightly colour male cannot be missed, but the more plainly coloured female is harder to spot, particularly if it is hidden within a group of other female ducks. A female was recorded on its own on several occasions in May, June, July and August in different areas of the Reserve, the last sighting being on 5<sup>th</sup> August in the river (SB).

**Wigeon**                      *Anas Penelope*                      **Winter Visitor**

A good year for Wigeon with above average numbers reported in the Autumn and early Winter. No sightings were recorded early in the year, but a single bird turned up on 30<sup>th</sup> June (BE). Birds started to show up again at the start of September in small numbers and these built up to a peak of 21 by the 21<sup>st</sup>. Numbers were maintained in October with a maximum of 28 noted on the 30<sup>th</sup> and the maximum count of the year was 35 on 16<sup>th</sup> November. Numbers started to tail from then onwards, and the last sighting for the year was a single bird on 30<sup>th</sup> November (BE).

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	21	28	35	-

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

Still the most numerous breeding duck on the Reserve, with generally higher counts than last year and birds recorded on all four main wetland areas with the biggest concentration on the Duck Marsh and Lagoon. Lots of reports of families of ducks, with a group of six ducklings on the Wet Grassland on 8<sup>th</sup> May being the first noted. Counts in the later part of the year were particularly high, with 107 noted on 27<sup>th</sup> September (JWC) and a joint record count of 132 on 6<sup>th</sup> October (SB). Numbers in October were

consistently high with over a hundred birds noted on four days during the month.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
54	48	41	44	17	36	36	69	107	132	66	59

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

No sightings again this year. First recorded on the Reserve in 2011, single birds have only ever been seen on six years since.

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

A relatively common winter/passage visitor to the Reserve, good numbers of Teal were again reported this year. The highest count of 36 on 6<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> January was slightly down on the 49 reported in January 2023, but this was compensated for by higher than average counts at the end of the year. 64 were seen on 24<sup>th</sup> November (BE), the highest November count since 2011 and the peak number in December was 51 on the 7<sup>th</sup> (BE).

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
36	24	26	20	-	2	-	8	22	16	64	51

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

A common resident breeding duck on the Reserve, numbers for the first half of the year were relatively low with maximum counts of under 20 birds reported. Numbers picked up in the post-breeding period with a report of 51 birds seen on 8<sup>th</sup> July (SB) clearly boosted by the presence of ducklings from the year's successful breeding attempts. Numbers fell back in the autumn, but the high count for the year was noted on 1<sup>st</sup> December with 70+ birds seen on the Wet Grassland (JWC).

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
19	20	18	14	18	29	51	40	25	17	22	70+

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

There were no reported sightings of Garganey this year. A male bird was present for six days in June 2023. Prior to that there had been no records since 2018 when a male bird spent 11 days on the wetlands from 4<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> April.

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

Sightings followed a similar pattern to last year, with records showing only two to four birds present in January to April. There were no records in May to July, then a single bird was present on 26<sup>th</sup> August. Numbers built up during September to a maximum of six, then October saw a new record count of 20 on the 16<sup>th</sup> (EC/DW) beating the previous record of 14 in October 2021. After that numbers present gradually fell and the highest count in December was back down to four.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
4	2	4	3	-	-	-	1	6	20	7	4

**Pochard***Aythya farina***Winter / Passage Visitor**

Another poor year for Pochard on the Reserve, with only single birds recorded on one date in January and two days in November. Two birds present together on 28<sup>th</sup> December was the best count for the year.

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

**Tufted Duck***Aythya fuligula***Former Breeder / Winter Visitor**

Overall numbers were slightly up on last year, but this former breeder was still only present on the Reserve in single figures for most of the year. The biggest count was 11 on the Lagoon on 22<sup>nd</sup> April (SB), down from the high of 20 in January last year and c50 in December the previous year. The record count for this species of duck was 122 in December 2010.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
10	6	10	11	10	6	7	1	3	3	6	6

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

It is now five years with no records of this species. 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. Before that there had been no sightings since 9<sup>th</sup> March 2014.

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

The only record of this sea duck at the Reserve was a female or immature bird on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2016

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

A slightly better year for this winter visitor to the Reserve. A single bird was reported from the start of January on four dates before four appeared on 31<sup>st</sup> January. By 5<sup>th</sup> February a maximum of six were seen on the Lagoon and they remained on and off during March. The final record for the year was three birds on the Lagoon on 3<sup>rd</sup> April.

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

**Goosander** *Mergus merganser* **Resident Breeder / Winter Visitor**

Most birds are seen in the winter months and spring when groups gather to roost on the Duck Marsh or Lagoon. After dispersal for breeding numbers drop and most sightings are along the river or in flight. Breeding has occurred at the Reserve in the past and family groups have been spotted along the river, but no signs of breeding were reported this year.

J	F	M	A	B	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
8	12	8	9	12	5	1	-	4	-	3	2

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

There have been no sightings of this introduced species on the Reserve since 24<sup>th</sup> April 2012. Its distinctive call was heard near the Manager's Garden last year, but nothing was reported this year.

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

Small releases of birds were made in July and October 2020 and there were two further small releases in 2023. A single female bird was seen on numerous occasions in January in the Bee Garden, Poplar Field or in the Manager's Garden and the last report was on 19<sup>th</sup> February in the Manager's Garden (SB). Presumably the released birds have moved off site or suffered from predation as there have been no records since that date.

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

A common bird on the Reserve that is seen on most days, typically in the Bee Garden or the Manager's Garden near the feeders. The best count of the year was on 10<sup>th</sup> January when a stream of 25 birds was seen passing through Tim's Field. There were the usual reports of breeding success with family groups spotted on several occasions.

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

Present all year in varying numbers and is regularly spotted fishing in the river, Duck Marsh or Lagoon or resting on the pylons behind the Reedbed or in the trees on the islands in the Lagoon. Numbers are highest in the late summer, presumably after breeding elsewhere judging by the number of juvenile birds. The best counts of the year were during early morning WeBS visits, 24 on 18<sup>th</sup> August and 16 on 15<sup>th</sup> December.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
3	3	8	4	5	9	9	24	8	3	10	16

**Bittern***Botaurus stellaris***Rare Visitor**

The only record of a Bittern at the Reserve was in 2016 when a bird spent several weeks in the Reedbed from 16<sup>th</sup> January until 26<sup>th</sup> April. With the species expanding its range there is always the chance that another one could appear.

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

No more records this year. It was a new bird for the Reserve last year when a first summer bird was spotted on the Duck Marsh on 18<sup>th</sup> August and was last seen on the evening of 21<sup>st</sup> August. Another species that is expanding its range northwards.

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

The species is now being sighted at the Reserve annually since it was first spotted as a "fly over" on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2018. This year the first record was of a single bird in the Duck Marsh on 18<sup>th</sup> September. There were 2 further sightings in September. A single bird was again present from 30<sup>th</sup> October until 17<sup>th</sup> November, mostly in the Duck Marsh. The final report for the year was on 27<sup>th</sup> November (BE).

**Little Egret***Egretta garzetta***Common Visitor**

This species can now be seen at the Reserve most months of the year. It was only reported in ones and twos from January to May, but numbers increased from then onwards. The highest report for the year was 10 on 26<sup>th</sup> June (BE) and 9 were reported during the WeBS count on 18<sup>th</sup> August. Most sightings were in the Duck Marsh or in the trees on the islands in the Lagoon with Cormorants.

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

A similar pattern to most years, with the biggest groups either being noted in the Duck Marsh or on the farmland adjacent to the Reserve. Like last year the highest count for the year was recorded during an early morning WeBS visit, 12 on 15<sup>th</sup> December.

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

**Black-necked Grebe***Podiceps nigricollis***Rare Visitor**

No records again this year. The only record was on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2022 when one was spotted feeding in the river upstream from the bridge.

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

Birds were seen in all the wetland areas and the river, but as usual the highest numbers were present on the Lagoon. A count of eight on 1<sup>st</sup> January was a new record for that month and at the other end of the year a count of eight on 14<sup>th</sup> December (BE) was a joint high for that month. Numbers were highest in the second half of the year after breeding. The high count for the year was 18 on 9<sup>th</sup> September (SB), 14 of which were on the Lagoon. The next highest was 15 on 20<sup>th</sup> October during a WeBS visit.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
8	8	4	4	5	6	12	13	18	15	7	8

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

A successful breeding year for the Great Crested Grebes. The first bird arrived on 21<sup>st</sup> February and was spotted again on and off during March. A second bird was first reported on 7<sup>th</sup> April and three birds were present



on 20<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> April. Things settled down and the final pair were seen pair bonding and nest building during May and June. The first sighting of two young birds was on 3<sup>rd</sup> July and the last sighting of the family of four together was on 15<sup>th</sup> July. The adult birds disappeared at that point leaving the two immature birds to fend for themselves. The two young birds were last seen together on 29<sup>th</sup> July and the last remaining bird left on 10<sup>th</sup> August.

**Red Kite**

*Milvus milvus*

**Common Visitor**

Usually, one or sometimes two Red Kites can be seen over the Reserve any month of the year. Three were seen together on 5<sup>th</sup> February (SB), two of them appearing to be displaying together. The highest count of the year was on 8<sup>th</sup> June when 8 were seen together following some work on the farmland.

**Marsh Harrier**

*Circus aeruginosus*

**Rare Visitor**

A female or juvenile bird was seen and photographed (PH) over the Reserve on 1<sup>st</sup> May. This was the first record since 21<sup>st</sup> August 2021 and only the 5<sup>th</sup> for the Reserve.

**Sparrowhawk**

*Accipiter nisus*

**Casual Breeder**

Recorded in every month of the year and often seen darting around the Reserve after its prey. No evidence of nesting but is suspected to breed in the woodland across the river from the Reserve. Just one bird seen on most occasions but sometimes two. Four were seen together on 30<sup>th</sup> March (BE).

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

Now seen every month of the year, commonly spotted emerging from the woodland across the river from the Reserve or soaring high in small groups in thermals. Larger groups are now becoming more regular, with 11 seen passing over on 30<sup>th</sup> March (BE) and another group of 11 on 21<sup>st</sup> September (BE).

**Honey Buzzard**

*Pernis apivorus*

**Rare Visitor**

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

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

An immature bird was photographed high over the Reserve on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2021 but that was the only record to date.

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

There is always the chance of seeing Ospreys during passage to and from their breeding sites and this year was one of those years. One was spotted high over the site on 6<sup>th</sup> April and photographed (RH) and another one later in the year on 24<sup>th</sup> August (PH).

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

Reports of this species increased again this year, records of it either being seen or heard (more likely) on 52 days during the year. Most records were in the autumn or winter, except for one record on 29<sup>th</sup> June (BE). It is a very secretive species and most records were for brief glimpses of single birds; but several reports of multiple birds did occur. On 28<sup>th</sup> October four were seen together near the Lagoon hide and during a WeBS count on 17<sup>th</sup> November six were reported.

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

There have been no sightings for the last six years. A bird was seen in the Wet Grassland between 25<sup>th</sup> August and 2<sup>nd</sup> September in 2018. Prior to that the last record was in 2005.

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

A common resident breeding species, Moorhen is visible in all the wetland areas and along the river and the riverbanks throughout the year. Numbers peak in the late summer and autumn when many juvenile birds are also present. The highest count for the year was 25 on 4<sup>th</sup> October (SB), 15 of which were on the Lagoon.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
9	8	8	9	7	10	10	16	21	25	18	10

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

Another common resident breeding species, seen in all the wetland areas and particularly numerous on the Lagoon. Numbers are generally lower in

the winter months when many of the resident Coots seem to move on to other locations. Counts build during the spring and peak in the autumn when numbers are boosted by the presence of immature birds. The high count of 33 during WeBS on 16 October was the best for 7 years.

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
4	8	8	16	9	16	16	17	19	33	17	2

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

Not seen on the Reserve for the past six years. Two birds were seen standing on adjacent farmland on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2018 and this was a first record for the Reserve.

**Oystercatcher**    *Haematopus ostralegus* **Summer Visitor / Breeder**

The first Oystercatcher of the year was spotted on 3<sup>rd</sup> February and was joined by a second bird on 5<sup>th</sup> February. By 19<sup>th</sup> February four birds were regularly reported, generally two on the Duck Marsh and another two on the Lagoon. Both pairs seemed to have successful breeding attempts as young birds were seen in both areas over the following few months. The peak count for the year was on 19<sup>th</sup> June when 9 were seen. The final record for the year was on 21<sup>st</sup> July when two were reported.

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

No reports of Avocet again this year. The first record for this species was in 2018 when two spent the day on the Duck Marsh on 27<sup>th</sup> June and another sighting on the Lagoon on 2<sup>nd</sup> July the same year, but no records since then.

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

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

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

This species breeds in the uplands during the summer and can be spotted in large flocks anywhere in lowland Britain during winter and spring movements but is only scarcely seen at the Reserve. No sightings for the last three years and just two records in 2021.

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

A similar pattern to most years for this species, with large flocks appearing on some days during the winter months and a smaller number remaining for the rest of the year with breeding attempts in the Wet Grassland and Tim's Field. The highest counts at the start of the year were c30 on 17<sup>th</sup> January (EC) and 53 on 17<sup>th</sup> February (BE), then 20 on the farmland on 18<sup>th</sup> October (SB) and finally a flock of 97 on 7<sup>th</sup> December. Three chicks were reported as being seen in Tim's Field on one occasion and larger juveniles were seen later in the season with adult birds, but there appears to be only limited breeding success. Peak monthly counts are shown below:

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
c30	53	6	8	8	9	5	10	9	20	13	97

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

A reasonable year for Little Ringed Plover with single birds recorded on 11 days, mainly on the Duck Marsh. The first was spotted on 30<sup>th</sup> March (BE) and the final sighting was on 26<sup>th</sup> June (BE)

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

Another year with no reports of Ringed Plover for the Reserve. The last record was in 2007 on 13<sup>th</sup> September.

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

There have been no records since 2012.

**Curlew**    *Numenius Arquata*    **Passage Visitor**

Records of Curlew are usually of birds heard calling when flying over the Reserve or seen on the farmland. This year there were seven records of single birds, the first on 6<sup>th</sup> March (BE) and the last on 21<sup>st</sup> June (DW)

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

A bird seen on 3<sup>rd</sup> November (BE) was the only record for the year. The last records were in 2021 when four were seen on the Duck Marsh on 10<sup>th</sup>

July and in 2022 when 15 dropped in on 31<sup>st</sup> July but had moved on by the next day.

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

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

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

Not recorded this year. The only record was of a single bird on the Duck Marsh on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2006.

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

There have been no records of Dunlin for the past three years. A single bird was reported on the Duck Marsh on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2021 and that was the first record since 1<sup>st</sup> February 2012.

**Common Sandpiper**                      *Actitis hypoeucos*                      **Passage Visitor**

Recorded on 12 separate days this year, mainly single birds in the Duck Marsh area. First seen on 8<sup>th</sup> April (SB) and last reported on 6<sup>th</sup> July. Two birds were seen together on 13<sup>th</sup> April (BE) and 29<sup>th</sup> April (SB).

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

Records of Green Sandpiper at the Reserve seem to be becoming more common, especially in the second half of the year. After only single birds being reported on 30<sup>th</sup> March and 10 July (BE), from 25<sup>th</sup> August until the end of the year there were sightings on 39 different dates, usually single birds but sometimes two or three birds. Generally seen in the Wet Grassland or Duck Marsh but also seen flying over the Lagoon or along the river.

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

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

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

No sightings this year. The last records were of a single bird seen on the Duck Marsh on 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2021.

**Common Redshank***Tringa tetanus***Scarce Passage Visitor**

No sightings this year. A single bird was seen on the Duck Marsh on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2023 and before that one was seen flying over on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2022, this being the first record since 17<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

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

Birds were recorded on eight dates this year, with mainly single birds spotted in the Wet Grassland. They are very difficult to spot and were sometimes picked out with the aid of thermal imaging, so were probably present on the Reserve on many other days but were not spotted. They were seen on four days in February, the first being on the 4<sup>th</sup> (BE) and four days in December, the last being on the 28<sup>th</sup> (EC). Two birds were seen on 14<sup>th</sup> December (BE).

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

Another species that is sometimes very hard to spot, they were seen on 46 days this year, up from the 35 reported sightings last year. Mainly seen in the Wet Grassland they were occasionally picked out in the Reedbed and Duck Marsh. First seen on 1<sup>st</sup> January, the highest count at the start of the year was 11 on 7<sup>th</sup> January (EC). They do not seem to be present during the summer months but reappear in the autumn and early winter. The best count for the year was 14 on 7<sup>th</sup> December (BE). Monthly best counts are shown below:

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
11	6	3	3	-	-	-	-	1	3	3	14

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

An elusive bird that feeds at night and is only seen during the day if it is disturbed when hiding on the ground. One was seen on 2<sup>nd</sup> March (JWC) and again on 3<sup>rd</sup> March. Another was flushed from the edge of the Wet Grassland on 29<sup>th</sup> November (JH) and the final record for the year was on 9<sup>th</sup> December (JH) when one was disturbed close to the Willow Path.

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

Once again there were very few sightings of this species that as recently as 2017 nested on rafts on the Lagoon. In fact, the only confirmed record this year was one bird seen in a photo taken on 26<sup>th</sup> June (PL) amongst some Black-headed Gulls.

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

Two birds were reported on 1<sup>st</sup> May (BE), and that was the first record since 24<sup>th</sup> May 2015 for a species that was first seen at the Reserve in 2011.

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

Not surprisingly, there were no records of Kittiwake at the Reserve this year. This species of gull is almost exclusively a maritime bird and is only seen on land when it comes ashore to breed on coastal cliffs. It was first recorded at the Reserve last year when an adult bird was seen over the Lagoon on 26<sup>th</sup> February (EC) and on the Duck Marsh on 12<sup>th</sup> March (JWC).

**Black-headed Gull***Chroicocephalus ridibundus***Common Visitor / Casual Breeder**

Numbers are highest at the start and the end of the year and counts are a lot smaller during the breeding season when most birds disperse to their colonies. The highest count for the year was when a large flock of c1000 birds was seen overhead on 17<sup>th</sup> July (BE), but generally around 100 birds can be seen around the Reserve and on the farmland in the winter months. Monthly maxima are shown below:

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
144	c80	106	36	6	6	c1000	65	92	170+	67	c100

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

An adult bird in winter plumage was spotted on the Lagoon on 2<sup>nd</sup> November (JWC), but this was the first record in the last six years. The first record for the Reserve was on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2018 when an adult bird paid a brief visit to the Lagoon.

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

There were no reports of Mediterranean Gull at the Reserve this year. There was a single record last year on 22<sup>nd</sup> October amongst other gulls on the flooded farmland. First recorded on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2015. It is worth checking out flocks of Black-headed Gulls for this species as it has been known to breed locally.

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

Numbers were again disappointing for the first three months of the year with a maximum count of only 15 during January. From the start of April Common Gulls move to their breeding grounds further north, so were not present until a few started to reappear from July onwards. Numbers at the end of the year were better than last year, with a count of 110+ noted on 16<sup>th</sup> October (EC/DW) being the best for some time. Monthly maxima are shown below:

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
15	10	11	2	-	-	4	2	17	110+	45	38

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

Recorded every month of the year but usually only in ones and twos. There were higher numbers present from March to June with a high of eight noted on or over the Duck Marsh on 8<sup>th</sup> April (SB).

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

Seen every month in low numbers with the highest counts in the winter months as part of the gull flocks on the farmland or on the Lagoon. A high of 23 was noted on 10<sup>th</sup> January (EC) and 11 were seen on the farmland on 2<sup>nd</sup> December (SB).

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

A second winter bird was seen on the farmland on 27<sup>th</sup> November (BE) and that was the only record for the year. First seen on the Reserve on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2019 it has only been seen on a few occasions since then.



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

This was a new species for the Reserve in 2021 with numerous sightings of a single bird. Probably the same bird has been visiting the Reserve each year since. This year it was first noted on 27<sup>th</sup> February and was then present for all of March and on several dates in April. It then disappeared but was spotted during a WeBS visit on 18<sup>th</sup> August. It appears to be paired up with a Lesser Black-backed Gull and it shows features that are atypical of pure Yellow-legged Gulls, so may be a hybrid bird, but without further evidence it will continue to be recorded as a Yellow-legged.

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

Just one record this year of a 1<sup>st</sup> winter bird over the farmland on 1<sup>st</sup> December (JWC).

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

First recorded on the Reserve on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2009, this species was last seen on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2021 but has not been reported since.

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

A species that is not very often reported at the Reserve and probably overlooked. Two flocks of about 25 birds were noted flying over the Reserve from housing over the valley during counts in January but were only recorded occasionally since then.

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

Most records of this species come from the Manager's Garden, with typically up to 10 birds noted most months. Higher counts come from the farmland in the winter months, with 60 on 30<sup>th</sup> October (BE) and a high of c100 on 7<sup>th</sup> December (BE).

**Wood Pigeon**

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

During most of the year around 20 birds are present around the Reserve, but in the winter months these numbers are boosted by large flocks from elsewhere. 200+ were noted on 7<sup>th</sup> January (EC) and c2000 Wood Pigeons were seen flying over the Reserve on 27<sup>th</sup> October (BE). A report

of 125 in Tim's Field on 2<sup>nd</sup> December (SB) is more typical for the species in winter.

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

This species is fairly common locally but is rarely seen within the Reserve. This year there were only two records, a single bird on 8<sup>th</sup> June (JWC) and two on 29<sup>th</sup> June (BE).

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

No records this year. There were two sightings last year on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> July.

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

The camera in the Barn Owl nest box on the Scrubland enables a year long view into the lives of these birds. An adult was roosting in the box from the start of January and was joined by a second bird by the end of the month. Seven eggs were laid in due course of which only three hatched (mirroring last year's nesting activity). Three young had successfully fledged by the end of August, meaning that a total 14 young have fledged in the last four years. The adult birds continued to use the box for roosting for the rest of the year and were occasionally spotted hunting over the Scrubland.

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

The Manager's Garden has been a popular place to see this species for many years and the two resident birds regularly seem to be happy to pose for photographers near their new nest box that was installed last December. They were seen to go into the nest box on many occasions but there appears to be no evidence of successful breeding this year.

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

This nocturnal species of bird is rarely seen (but occasionally heard) and is most likely to be encountered only in the early morning when the Reserve is being opened up by volunteers. This year could be regarded as a good year for sightings, as they were reported on nine days throughout the year. The best month was October when one was seen/heard on three separate days (DW/EC).

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

The first record for the year was three birds on 1<sup>st</sup> May. 50+ Swifts seen over the Reserve on the weekend of 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> June was a high for the year, and there were counts of 12 on 10<sup>th</sup> July (BE) and 20 on 10<sup>th</sup> August (BE). A single bird seen on 8<sup>th</sup> September (EC) was the last record for the year. A new Swift nesting tower was installed at the end of the year that could hopefully encourage some Swifts to nest on the Reserve in 2025.

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

Recorded around the Reserve every month, usually only single birds were seen but occasionally there were reports of two or three together. There were no signs of nesting in the Kingfisher bank in the Duck Marsh and it is more likely that breeding was attempted along the riverbank. Birds were seen on 104 days this year, slightly down from the 135 days that they were reported last year. June was the busiest month with 18 sightings and December the quietest with only two records.

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

An occasional visitor to the Reserve, this was a particularly good year with one seen or heard on five different days. It was first reported on 14<sup>th</sup> February (BE), then heard on 6<sup>th</sup> March (BE) and 8<sup>th</sup> July (SB) with further sightings later in July and August.

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

Seen around the Reserve every month, but most commonly seen in the Manager's Garden. Also, frequently heard hammering against trees and strangely against the metal of the pylons that pass through the wetland areas. Breeding occurred on the Reserve this year as adults were seen entering a hole in a large ash tree near the Fish Pass to feed young on 31<sup>st</sup> May (JSK). A group of three were spotted together in trees on Poplar Field on 9<sup>th</sup> September (SB).

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

A pair were first seen together on 14<sup>th</sup> January and frequently during February. Four Kestrels were seen close by over the Reserve during a WeBS count on 11<sup>th</sup> February. Breeding activity occurred in subsequent months resulting in five eggs (one of which was all white). Two young had

successfully fledged by the end of June and were later seen being fed around the Reserve by the adult birds. The camera in the nest box continues to provide a great insight into the lives of the Kestrel family.

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

One was seen flying fast and low over Tim's Field on 15<sup>th</sup> January (SB), which turned out to be the only record this year. There were four sightings last year.

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

Arriving from Africa in April this raptor hunts both small birds and dragonflies, often low over water. There were brief sightings on 19<sup>th</sup> May (EC) and 19<sup>th</sup> June (BE) before a final late record on 11<sup>th</sup> September (BE). Only one was recorded last year.

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

A bit better year for Peregrine sightings with birds seen on 22 different days this year. Two were seen around the Reserve together on 31<sup>st</sup> January (JWC) and 25<sup>th</sup> May (BE), all other records being of single birds. The best place to see one still appears to be on the pylons behind the Manager's Garden. They were only seen on 18 dates last year, much down from the 2021 record of sightings on 51 dates.

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

This species that started from a small feral population in the southeast of England is spreading northwards and is now believed to have a population of up to 12,000 pairs in the wild. This is reflected by the number of sightings at the Reserve, up from just one last year to sightings on seven dates this year. Pairs were seen on 20<sup>th</sup> April (BE), 29<sup>th</sup> June (BE) and 18<sup>th</sup> September (EC), with records of single birds noted on four further dates in June.

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

Still a very common bird on the Reserve, noisy groups of as many as 15 birds can be seen together on the farmland, particularly in the winter months but big groups can be seen at any time of the year. There are

probably several breeding pairs around the Reserve, judging by the number of juveniles seen later in the year.

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

A common bird seen every month, with groups of three to five birds often first heard before they are seen, particularly in the late summer and autumn when they are building up their caches of acorns. A likely breeder on the Reserve, though there is not usually any evidence of such as they become more secretive during the nesting period.

**Red-billed Chough**    *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*    **Rare Visitor**

A new and totally unexpected species record for the Reserve this year. A single bird was spotted flying over the farmland with Jackdaws on 24<sup>th</sup> November (JWC). It could be picked out in a video that was taken at the time. Presumably a one-off for the Reserve as it was way off the normal habitat and range for the species.

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

A common sight around the Reserve all year. It can generally be seen in flocks of 30+ on the farmland or Tim's Field. Larger groups sometimes accumulate, such as 100+ on 21<sup>st</sup> January (EC), c150 on 23<sup>rd</sup> March and 60+ on 7<sup>th</sup> December (BE).

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

Reports of this species at the Reserve seem to be becoming more frequent, with records on 18 different dates spread throughout this year. All the sightings were from the farmland amongst the other crow species, the first record being on 14<sup>th</sup> January during a WeBS count. The highest count for the year was nine on 8<sup>th</sup> June (BE) with a further seven records during the same month. At the end of the year there were records on four dates during December.

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

Present throughout the year with maximum counts of 30+ on the farmland and across the Reserve each month. The highest count for the year was 160+ on the farmland on 12<sup>th</sup> October (BE). No reports of breeding on the Reserve but more than likely to have bred in the woodland adjacent to the farmland.

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

This species is closely related to the Carrion Crow and is mainly found in North and West Scotland where it replaces that species. It is also a winter visitor from Scandinavia. There have been no sightings for the last six 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**

This species was recorded on six dates at the beginning and at the end of this year, so is either becoming a more common visitor or is being noticed more often by observers. Whilst it breeds in upland areas it tends to roam to lowland areas during the winter. Two birds were heard and seen high over the Reserve on 24<sup>th</sup> February (BE) and another seen on 27<sup>th</sup> February (BE). At the end of the year another two were seen on 29<sup>th</sup> September (BE) and there was a final record on 30<sup>th</sup> November.

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

There was only one brief sighting of Waxwings at the Reserve this year. Sixteen were seen flying over the River Bridge towards the entrance gate on 21<sup>st</sup> January (JWC). Hopefully there will be another large irruption of Waxwings from the Continent in future years.

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

Not a common sight on the Reserve and was only reported on two occasions this year, first on 24<sup>th</sup> February (BE) and again on 6<sup>th</sup> November (BE). The most likely place to spot one is in the Manager's Garden or possibly near to the Visitor Centre.

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

The majority of sightings of this common species come from the Manager's Garden and Bee Garden where it is a daily visitor to the seed feeders. Also frequently seen along the Willow Path and in the hedges around the John Ackroyd meadow. The highest count for the year was 18 during a WeBS count on 14<sup>th</sup> January, but daily counts of around ten are common throughout the year. Breeds every year on the Reserve and juvenile birds are frequently seen later in the season.

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

Commonly found at the same locations as Blue Tits, though always reported in slightly higher numbers. The high count for the year was again during the WeBS count on 14<sup>th</sup> January when 23 were reported. Generally a very successful breeder, mixed groups containing juvenile birds were reported from June onwards.

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

There have been no sightings here since 13<sup>th</sup> November 2013.

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

Very similar in appearance to its cousin the Willow Tit, it is best identified by its call. However, it is very unlikely to be seen at the Reserve as the UK population has declined significantly. Not recorded here since 2004.

**Woodlark**                      *Lullula arborea*                      **Rare Visitor**

No further records at the Reserve in the last five years. First recorded here in 2019 when one was reported flying south over Tim's Field on 23<sup>rd</sup> March.

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

Generally, only heard calling or seen flying over the Reserve. There had been no records since 2021, but this year they were reported on eight dates. The first record was over the farmland on 18<sup>th</sup> February (JWC) then again on 7<sup>th</sup> April during a WeBS count. There were six further records at the end of the year including a report of three on 6<sup>th</sup> November (BE) and a final sighting on 30<sup>th</sup> November (BE).

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

The first sighting this year was on 16<sup>th</sup> March (EC) over the Lagoon, a few days later than last year. There were a few more records for March the highest count of eight being reported on 27<sup>th</sup> March (BE). Numbers grew from then onwards with 40+ on 6<sup>th</sup> April, 75 on 13<sup>th</sup> April and 100+ on 1<sup>st</sup> May. Counts of 50+ continued in June and July before numbers started to reduce with a count of only seven on 19<sup>th</sup> August. The final record for this year was three on 30<sup>th</sup> August which was almost a month earlier than the last record for last year.

Year	No. of nest holes
2019	180
2020	142
2021	133
2022	67
2023	35
2024	67

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

Two birds were spotted on 1<sup>st</sup> April, earlier than last year for a first record but still a bit later than the average. Other than the c20 seen on 28<sup>th</sup> April numbers in single figures were reported during May and June. 30 were seen over the Reserve on 8<sup>th</sup> July (SB) before numbers grew dramatically in the post-breeding period as flocks gathered prior to their return south to their winter feeding grounds. 92 were counted on 1<sup>st</sup> September but were down to 45 by 9<sup>th</sup> September and the final report for the year was a single bird on 5<sup>th</sup> October, a little later than last year. Breeding was reported from the usual place in the containers close to Tim's Field and adults were frequently seen taking food to the nest.

**House Martin**     *Delichon urbicum*     **Summer Visitor**

One bird was picked out amongst the Sand Martins over the Lagoon on 6<sup>th</sup> April (BE), six days earlier than the first record last year. Four more were seen on 17<sup>th</sup> April, then just a few single figure records for May, June and July. Numbers began to increase in August with twelve seen on the 17<sup>th</sup> before September saw big numbers around the Reserve prior to their migration south. 75 were seen on 2<sup>nd</sup> September (SB) before 150+ birds were reported by many as they gathered on overhead cables near the Visitor Centre or fed over the farmland. By the next day only about 30 remained around the Reserve (SB) and the final record for the year was a single bird spotted on 5<sup>th</sup> October, a little later than last year.

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

This species was first recorded on the Reserve on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2014 and has been reported every year since. It is rarely seen but often heard and its explosive call is unmistakable once heard. There may be over four territories present on the Reserve now, as up to eight males can be heard calling from the Wet Grassland, Reedbed, Duck Marsh and Lagoon areas at various times. Reported on 78 dates throughout this year, the only



month when there were no records was August. Most frequently recorded between February and June.

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

A fairly common sight and sound around the Reserve, most likely seen in the winter months when they forage in larger groups often with other tits and the occasional Chiffchaff. The largest count of sixteen was on 26<sup>th</sup> January (SB) including a group of six together in the Manager's Garden. Less conspicuous during the breeding season, they become more visible again in the autumn when larger family groups move around the Reserve together.

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

This was a new species for the Reserve in 2021 when one was heard on the Willow Path on 16<sup>th</sup> October and both heard and seen briefly on the following day. There have been no records since.

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

Recorded every month except January this year, a few of this species commonly overwinter in the area. First heard and seen around the Reserve on 14<sup>th</sup> February near the River Bridge, the summer influx began in March and by the 17<sup>th</sup> fourteen singing males were reported. Daily counts of 10+ birds continued until the end of September, but after that counts dropped to one to three birds for the remainder of the year, presumably the overwintering population.

**Siberian Chiffchaff**

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

This subspecies of Chiffchaff breeds in coniferous taiga forest from the Ural regions eastwards and mainly winters in India, but a few birds stray to Western Europe each year in the autumn. It differs from the Common Chiffchaff in having a greyer body and black legs but is most easily distinguished by its different song and call. First reported at the Reserve in December 2018 it was last reported on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2021. This year there were records on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> December (JWC), all presumably the same bird.

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

Not as common around the Reserve as its close relative the Chiffchaff, its song was first heard this year on 1<sup>st</sup> April, a little earlier than last year. Although 11+ singing birds were reported by 10<sup>th</sup> April these birds must have dispersed to other areas as for the remainder of the summer the highest daily count for the Reserve was only three singing birds. The final record for the year was of two birds on 18<sup>th</sup> August, although the species was presumably still around the Reserve well into September but not heard.

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

No records of overwintering birds, as the first report for the year was of three birds on 1<sup>st</sup> April and this had increased to eight singing males by 22<sup>nd</sup> April (SB). Reports continued in the region of six to eight birds for the remainder of the summer and the final record of the year was a bird seen on 29<sup>th</sup> September. It must have been a successful breeding season judging by the volume of distinctive sharp “teck-teck-teck” calls heard coming out of shrubs around the Reserve.

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

This species is a lot less numerous than the other summer warblers at the Reserve and can be overlooked. Its song could be confused with Blackcap, but once the source of the song is spotted the plain appearance of the bird confirms its identity. The first record for the year was of two birds on 21<sup>st</sup> April but the rest of the year there were only a few reports of single birds. The final record for the year was a bird heard on 27<sup>th</sup> July.

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

Smaller and more secretive than its more conspicuous cousin the Common Whitethroat, this species is only very rarely seen and occasionally heard at the Reserve these days. There were no records for the last two years and the only record this year was when one was heard on 1<sup>st</sup> May (BE).

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

Not a great year for Whitethroat at the Reserve, with a maximum count of only six noted on 15<sup>th</sup> July (SB). First reported on 6<sup>th</sup> April (BE) this year, records of only one to four birds were the best for the rest of the season.

The final sighting was of two birds on 19<sup>th</sup> August (SB). Best places to see them continues to be Poplar Field and the Scrubland, though they can also be seen regularly in the hedges along the entrance road.

### **Grasshopper Warbler**

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

Its presence on the Reserve is always first indicated by the sound of its unmistakable “reeling” song. It had not been recorded here since 2019, but this year one was heard on 13<sup>th</sup> April (BE) and also seen and well photographed. It continued to be heard during April, usually in scrub at the side of the entrance road near the Lagoon hide. Two were heard in different locations on 1<sup>st</sup> May (BE) and the final record for the year was when one was seen (but not heard) in bushes at the edge of the coppice on 15<sup>th</sup> July (SB).

### **Sedge Warbler**

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

There was a relatively early first record this year with one heard on 13<sup>th</sup> April. Disappointingly small numbers were noted for the rest of the season with only one or two birds recorded on all occasions. The last record was of a single bird on 7<sup>th</sup> September. Most productive areas to spot them were the Wet Grassland and Reedbed, with occasional records from the Duck Marsh.

### **Reed Warbler**

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

The first record for the year was a single bird on 20<sup>th</sup> April and the count had increased to four by the time of a WeBS count on 12<sup>th</sup> May. The highest count for the year was five birds on 9<sup>th</sup> June; otherwise counts of two or three were the norm for the remainder of the season. The final report was of two birds on 28<sup>th</sup> September. The Wet Grassland and Reedbed were the most common areas for records, with the Duck Marsh also a good place to spot one.

### **Firecrest**

*Regulus ignicapilla*

**Rare Visitor**

No records this year. Last reported at the Reserve on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2020 and first seen on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2017.

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

This resident species is rarely seen at the Reserve during the summer months and is more commonly noted in autumn and winter. One was spotted on 1<sup>st</sup> January and four were seen during a WeBS count on 14<sup>th</sup> January, two near the visitors car park and two in the Manager's Garden. They were occasionally spotted during the rest of the year in ones and twos with a notable summer record of one on 27<sup>th</sup> July.

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

A common bird around the Reserve in all areas. Counts of between 7-11 birds were common most days. A secretive breeder, one conspicuous breeding site of note was the hide in the Manager's Garden where a pair of Wrens continued to use an old Swallow nest box to rear their young. They could regularly be seen coming into the hide to feed their chicks, oblivious of the people watching other birds.

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

No confirmed records this year after just two sightings last year. There are Nuthatches in woodland nearby but they rarely seem to come into the Reserve.

**Treecreeper***Certhia familiaris***Casual Breeder**

A species that is present at the Reserve all year but not often seen. There were 12 records again this year, with sightings in trees near the bridge, along the Willow Path and in the Manager's Garden. Unlike last year there were a few records of two birds together. One such occasion was during a WeBS count on 11<sup>th</sup> February when two were seen in trees along the entrance road adjacent to the Lagoon.

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

Usually seen feeding on the farmland or perched on overhead cables around the Reserve. It does not appear to breed within the Reserve these days but was seen carrying food off site on several occasions. Recorded every month usually in low numbers, but notable records were 50 on 15<sup>th</sup> June (EC), c200 on 30<sup>th</sup> October (BE) and 60+ on 6<sup>th</sup> November (BE), all on the farmland.

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

This thrush spends the winter in North Africa before returning in the spring to breed in upland areas. It is always possible that one may drop into the Reserve on passage, but they are rarely seen. First recorded at the Reserve in 2017, when there were sightings on 6<sup>th</sup> May and 4<sup>th</sup> November, there have been no records since.

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

A common breeding bird on the Reserve with counts of 5-10 birds regularly reported each month. There were no specific reports of juvenile birds but male and female adults were seen on many occasions carrying beaks full of worms, so it is likely that there are several pairs located all around the site.

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

This thrush spends the winter months here to escape the colder conditions in Northern Europe. Unusually, there were no records of Fieldfares at the start of this year, although there were plenty of records of Redwing, another winter thrush that is usually seen in mixed flocks with Fieldfares. This situation was rectified on 30<sup>th</sup> October (BE) when a noisy flock of c300 were seen flying over the Reserve. Another group of 50 were seen on 3<sup>rd</sup> November and nine on 4<sup>th</sup> December was the last record for the year.

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

There were numerous good counts in the late winter and spring, with 20+ on 10<sup>th</sup> January (EC) and 24 on 23<sup>rd</sup> March (BE). The last record in the early part of the year was a single bird on 7<sup>th</sup> April during WeBS. The earliest record in the autumn was on 27<sup>th</sup> September (JWC), then the winter influx began in earnest with c300 on 30<sup>th</sup> October (BE) and c170 on 2<sup>nd</sup> November (JWC). More normal numbers were seen around the Reserve after that, such as four on 4<sup>th</sup> December.

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

There are probably three to five pairs of Song Thrush in and around the Reserve and they are seen regularly but only in ones and twos. The best time of day to assess the population in the area appears to be the early morning when the males are singing, as the highest monthly counts are

always recorded during WeBS visits. Five were counted in both February and March and on 12<sup>th</sup> May seven were heard/seen. At the end of the year it was more normal to record just two or three birds.

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

The least numerous of the common thrushes at the Reserve, the most likely place to spot one was feeding on the farmland. At the start of the year two were seen on the farmland on 26<sup>th</sup> January (SB) and later in the year a pair was seen flying over the Visitor Centre on 17<sup>th</sup> June (SB). They were only recorded on eight dates this year, mainly single birds on the farmland or heard singing in the distance.

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

There were no records this year for this species that has shown a rapid decline in population in recent years.

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

This was a new species for the Reserve in 2020 when a ringed juvenile was photographed on the Willow Path on 1<sup>st</sup> August. One seen this year on 14<sup>th</sup> April has been the only other record since.

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

This is a common sight and sound around the whole Reserve and is usually seen daily in the Manager's Garden, Bee Garden and along the Willow Path. Daily counts of between five and eight are normal throughout the year, with a high count for the year of 11 in November.

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

One was seen in 2022 on the manure heap on the farmland on both 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> April, but these were the first records since 9<sup>th</sup> February 2008. There were none last year or this year.

**Common Redstart**  
*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*      **Uncommon Passage Visitor**

Following three years with no sightings there were two last year on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> August and both on the Scrubland. This year saw reports of a bird on the 6<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> of April (BE).

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

No records this year. There were just two records last year on 20<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> August.

**Stonechat**      *Saxicola rubicola*      **Uncommon Passage Visitor**

A good year for reports of Stonechat. At the start of the year one was photographed on 31<sup>st</sup> January (PH) and another seen on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of March. Two were spotted on 29<sup>th</sup> June (BE). Later in the year one was seen on 27<sup>th</sup> September (JWC), two on 29<sup>th</sup> September (BE), presumably the same two again on 2<sup>nd</sup> October (EC) and finally one on 30<sup>th</sup> October (BE).

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

Only one record this year. A male was spotted on and around the area of the manure heap on the farmland on the morning of 18<sup>th</sup> March but it had moved on by the afternoon.

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

Sightings of Dipper in the river from the River Path are only very occasional and much dependent on the water level in the river. This year there were six records of single birds at the start of the year, including one during a WeBS count on 7<sup>th</sup> April when a bird was heard singing from the opposite riverbank. There were no sightings for the rest of the year until November when there were a further three records of single birds.

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

This species is not present within the Reserve but can frequently be seen along the canal bank on the way to the entrance. They occasionally venture a little down the entrance road and this year a pair were spotted near the entrance gate on 2<sup>nd</sup> June (JWC).

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

No records this year. This species appears to have disappeared from the Reserve again after being seen on several occasions last year, mainly in the Manager's Garden or close to the Visitor Centre.

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

Common across the Reserve its song can be heard everywhere in the spring. Recorded every month it appears to be most visible earlier in the year with many counts in double figures. The highest count for the year was 13 on 10<sup>th</sup> March during a WeBS survey. Later in the year counts were usually in the region of three to six birds.

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

Just one record this year when one was seen flying over the Willow Path/Lagoon screen on 28<sup>th</sup> August. Very rarely seen at the Reserve, this was the first record since 2021.

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

A frequent sight around the Reserve, but usually just one or two birds. The commonest places to see one are near the manure heap on the farmland or along the river when viewed from the River Path. Notable records for the year include three seen on 10<sup>th</sup> January (EC) and a count of four on 19<sup>th</sup> August (SB), three on the riverside and one near the manure heap. Probably breeds annually along the river.

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

Usually seen around the manure heap at the edge of the farmland, inside the Yorkshire Water compound or on top of the Visitor Centre. Seen all year and most records are of two birds together, though four were seen during a WeBS count in October. Breeds somewhere around the Reserve as juvenile birds were seen in the autumn.

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

This is the continental variety of wagtail of which the Pied Wagtail is a subspecies. It has a grey back rather than the black back of the Pied Wagtail. One was spotted on the farmland on 3<sup>rd</sup> April and was the first record since 6<sup>th</sup> April 2020.

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

Fairly common locally on higher ground this species is only occasionally seen at the Reserve at the start and end of the year when numbers are boosted by winter visitors from Northern Europe. That proved to be the



case this year when there were two records in March, including three birds on the 6<sup>th</sup> (BE), and six records at the end of the year including four on 2<sup>nd</sup> October (EC).

**Tree Pipit**

*Anthus trivialis*

**Rare Passage Visitor**

Just one record this year when one was heard calling over Tim's Field on 15<sup>th</sup> September (JWC). This is only the fifth record for the Reserve. The last record was on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2019 when a bird was heard calling as it flew over the Visitor Centre.

**Chaffinch**

*Fringilla coelebs*

**Resident and Winter Visitor**

The small resident population can increase markedly in the winter due to birds migrating from more northern areas and attracted by the seed crop in Tim's Field. January saw 26 birds on the 8<sup>th</sup> (SB) and 28 on the 27<sup>th</sup> (BE). This had reduced to 15 birds by 10<sup>th</sup> March, then down to the normal resident level of one or two birds in April and May. Strangely, there were no sightings July-August, but then up to three were seen in September and October. The winter arrivals then increased counts to 12+ on 30<sup>th</sup> November (BE) and 20+ on 4<sup>th</sup> December (BE).

**Brambling**

*Fringilla montifringilla*

**Scarce (Winter) Visitor**

No records this year. There were records on five dates last year but that only takes the total number of records in the last six years to 15 sightings of mainly single birds, so there appears to be little chance of seeing one of these finches at the Reserve most years.

**Bullfinch**

*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

**Resident Breeder**

Common around the Reserve and regularly seen on the feeders in the Manager's Garden and around the Visitor Centre. Also frequently heard from within the coppice and the trees adjacent to the Lagoon. Usually seen in pairs, normal counts around the Reserve are two to four birds, but at the end of the year bigger groups move around together. 15 were reported during WeBS on 14<sup>th</sup> January and again on 15<sup>th</sup> January (SB). At the other end of the year 10 were counted during another WeBS visit on 17<sup>th</sup> November.

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

Not as common as Bullfinch but still reported each month in smaller numbers. The Manager's Garden and Visitor Centre were good areas to spot some and they could sometimes be heard singing and calling from hedges around Tim's Field and the John Ackroyd meadow. Four during a WeBS count on 14<sup>th</sup> January and five on 3<sup>rd</sup> August (BE) were the best counts for the year.

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

No records this year. The last record was of a single bird seen on 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> November 2017 amongst a group of Linnets. Prior to that there had only been just two records for the Reserve in 2000 and 2003.

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

Large flocks of well over a hundred were a common sight in Tim's Field in the past, but counts in recent years have been much lower and the trend was continued this year. Counts of 43 on 8<sup>th</sup> January (SB) and c50 on 17<sup>th</sup> January (EC) in Tim's Field were the best of the year. A single bird was seen on 22<sup>nd</sup> April (SB) and then 23 on 23<sup>rd</sup> October (BE).

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

Only recorded on six dates this year, the best count was c10 on 7<sup>th</sup> January (EC). One was spotted on 4<sup>th</sup> May followed by three reports of two birds during October. The final record for the year was four seen on 3<sup>rd</sup> November (BE). There has been a reclassification recently of the three types of "Redpoll" by the BOU and IOC and from next year all will be regarded as the same species, Redpoll *Acanthis flammea*.

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

No records this year. This species is found in coniferous habitats throughout Britain and Ireland and is resident. In some winters numbers are boosted by arrivals from Northern Europe. The Reserve does not have the ideal habitat to encourage any visiting Crossbill, so all the few past records have been of "flyovers". First recorded in 2018, one was seen flying over the Dragonfly Ponds on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

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

Numbers of this colourful finch appear to have improved slightly, with some good counts at either end of the year. Twelve were reported during WeBS on 14<sup>th</sup> January and 15 on 27<sup>th</sup> January (SB). A flock of c80 was seen on 30<sup>th</sup> October (BE) and 15+ on 4<sup>th</sup> December. For the rest of the year counts were generally of less than 10 birds.

**Siskin***Spinus spinus***Passage and Winter Visitor**

This is one of our smallest finches and it breeds in coniferous and mixed forest, but in winter it can be found almost anywhere with suitable food and its numbers are boosted by arrivals from more northern areas. Alder and birch trees along the entrance road are good sites to check in winter and that proved to be the case this year. 20+ were noted there on 6<sup>th</sup> January (JWC) and 20 again on 10<sup>th</sup> January (BE). Smaller numbers were again reported later in the winter and early spring before counts of 11 on 26<sup>th</sup> October (BE) and c15 on 6<sup>th</sup> November (BE).

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

This is a very scarce bird in the area and another bird that is in long term decline in the UK. The last record for the Reserve was in 2018, so it was a very pleasant surprise when a single bird was photographed in the Manager's Garden on 4<sup>th</sup> May (CR) this year. Sadly, that was the only report of this colourful bird.

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

This species breeds in the wetland areas and its song/call can be heard in the spring, but it is most reliably seen on the feeders in the Manager's Garden and around the Visitor Centre. Eight were counted around the Reserve during a WeBS on 11<sup>th</sup> February and the high count for the year was nine on 4<sup>th</sup> March (SB). Counts of between two and six were common for the rest of the year.

## ESCAPED SPECIES

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

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

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

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

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

There have been no records in the last seven 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**

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

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

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

**FIRST AND LAST DATES FOR WINTER VISITORS**  
**2024**

<b>SPECIES</b>	<b>LAST</b>	<b>FIRST</b>
Whooper Swan	26 <sup>th</sup> March	-
Wigeon	-	1 <sup>st</sup> September *
Goldeneye	3 <sup>rd</sup> April	-
Waxwing	21 <sup>st</sup> January	-
Fieldfare	-	30 <sup>th</sup> October
Redwing	7 <sup>th</sup> April	27 <sup>th</sup> September
Brambling	-	-

\* A single Wigeon was seen on 30<sup>th</sup> June

**FIRST AND LAST DATES FOR SUMMER VISITORS**  
**2024**

<b>SPECIES</b>	<b>FIRST</b>	<b>LAST</b>
Garganey	-	-
Hobby	19 <sup>th</sup> May	11 <sup>th</sup> September
Osprey	6 <sup>th</sup> April	24 <sup>th</sup> August
Marsh Harrier	1 <sup>st</sup> May	1 <sup>st</sup> May
Avocet	-	-
Little Ringed Plover	30 <sup>th</sup> March	26 <sup>th</sup> June
Whimbrel	-	-
Black-tailed Godwit	3 <sup>rd</sup> November	3 <sup>rd</sup> November
Greenshank	-	-
Common Sandpiper	8 <sup>th</sup> April	6 <sup>th</sup> July
Common Tern	26 <sup>th</sup> June	26 <sup>th</sup> June
Arctic Tern	1 <sup>st</sup> May	1 <sup>st</sup> May
Cuckoo	-	-
Swift	1 <sup>st</sup> May	8 <sup>th</sup> September
Sand Martin	16 <sup>th</sup> March	30 <sup>th</sup> August
Swallow	1 <sup>st</sup> April	5 <sup>th</sup> October
House Martin	6 <sup>th</sup> April	5 <sup>th</sup> October
Yellow Wagtail	28 <sup>th</sup> August	28 <sup>th</sup> August
Common Redstart	6 <sup>th</sup> April	24 <sup>th</sup> April
Whinchat	-	-
Wheatear	18 <sup>th</sup> March	18 <sup>th</sup> March
Ring Ouzel	-	-
Grasshopper Warbler	13 <sup>th</sup> April	15 <sup>th</sup> July
Sedge Warbler	13 <sup>th</sup> April	7 <sup>th</sup> September
Reed Warbler	20 <sup>th</sup> April	28 <sup>th</sup> September
Garden Warbler	21 <sup>st</sup> April	27 <sup>th</sup> July
Common Whitethroat	6 <sup>th</sup> April	19 <sup>th</sup> August
Lesser Whitethroat	1 <sup>st</sup> May	1 <sup>st</sup> May
Willow Warbler	1 <sup>st</sup> April	18 <sup>th</sup> August
Spotted Flycatcher	-	-
Pied Flycatcher	14 <sup>th</sup> April	14 <sup>th</sup> April

## MAMMALS



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

Like last year there were sightings in every month and on all areas of the Reserve with the months June to September being the most productive. On 22<sup>nd</sup> February one was watched catching voles on the Scrubland. At least one pair again bred and single cubs were photographed on several dates from 18<sup>th</sup> May, on two occasions on the entry road. Most reports were of single animals but two were seen on the entry road during a WeBS visit on 22<sup>nd</sup> September. Small mammals are probably their major source of food here along with earthworms and beetles but fruit is also popular, particularly

Blackberries as evidenced from their droppings which often contain pips and seeds.

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

In 2023 there were sightings in ten months of the year with 15 in February alone and all on the Lagoon. This year was very disappointing with only nine records in total. On 11<sup>th</sup> February one was spotted on the Lagoon early in the day during a WeBS visit. On 7<sup>th</sup> May one was seen briefly near the base of the Kingfisher Bank on the Duck Marsh (POG) and on 3<sup>rd</sup> July one was photographed swimming in the same area (PH). The other six sightings were all on the river and riverbank. October proved to be the most productive month with sightings on three dates, one of these on 28<sup>th</sup> possibly involving two animals in the river upstream of the bridge (PH et al).



### **American Mink** *Neovison vison*

Mink presence, fortunately, is much less than it was a few years ago with just three records in each of 2021 and 2022, eight in 2023 and six this year. Five of these were between 30<sup>th</sup> March and 20<sup>th</sup> April. On 30<sup>th</sup> March there were two reports of what was probably the same animal on the riverbank, one observer referring to nest building



under tree roots (KH/BE). On 10<sup>th</sup> April one was seen in the same area at the side of the river at a possible den site (BE) and on 13<sup>th</sup> April there was a further sighting on the river (BE). There were no further records until 16<sup>th</sup> November when one was photographed on the river from the river path (CW).

### **Weasel** *Mustela nivalis*

2023 was a particularly poor year with just nine sightings reported. There was a distinct improvement this year with the majority of sightings in the period from February to June. The road between the Visitor Centre and Dipping Ponds has always produced sightings in the past and there were several here this year. On 3<sup>rd</sup> April two animals were reported just by the Visitor Centre (EBa/SBa). On 12<sup>th</sup> June one was seen with a young Brown Rat that it had killed in the Bee Garden (CF) and in July one was seen with a Brown Rat kill in the same area (SF). There were no sightings reported after 17<sup>th</sup> September.



### **Stoat** *Mustela erminea*

Much less common on the Reserve than its smaller cousin the Weasel, there were just two records this year compared to three the previous year. On 30<sup>th</sup> March one was seen at the far end of the River Path (JHa) and on 5<sup>th</sup> June one was reported on the Duck Marsh (AWi).

### **Roe deer** *Capreolus capreolus*

This is still quite a common mammal on the Reserve though there were rather fewer reported sightings than most years. Most were of single animals but on 10<sup>th</sup> January three males were seen on the Scrubland (PH), this one of only two records in the first two months of the year. Three were reported on Tim's Field on 20<sup>th</sup> March (DW ) and a male and two females were seen at the back of the Lagoon on 29<sup>th</sup> March (MB). There was just one report of young this year - a female photographed on 6<sup>th</sup> July with the ears of a juvenile just showing in the long grass close by (AO'C). Unusually there were records on just three dates in the last four months of the year, all of single animals.



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

Apart from the occasional report of a dead animal, probably left by a predator, sightings are few and far between. However, there is always plenty of evidence of their presence in the form of molehills all around the



Reserve. This year fresh molehills were still appearing up to the last week in December.

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

As with the Mole sightings of live animals are few and far between though one or two do turn up in Longworth traps during small mammal surveys. Dead animals are found on occasions as large mammals such as Foxes will kill them but not eat them because of the foul tasting liquid produced from glands on the skin. There were two such records this year - on the path on Poplar Field on 4<sup>th</sup> September (PM/BM) and on the Winter Walk on 4<sup>th</sup> October (LBe/MJ).



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

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

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

This is the largest shrew found in Britain but sightings are nevertheless few and far between. In 2021 a dead individual was found at the edge of the Lagoon but there were no sightings in 2022 or 2023. Surprisingly, sightings were reported on five dates this year. On 5<sup>th</sup> June one was recorded on the River Path (BE). On 24<sup>th</sup> August one was seen in the beak of a Grey Heron on the wetlands (RAH). On 1<sup>st</sup> September one was photographed on the Willow Path (JWC/AP). On 4<sup>th</sup> October one was found dead on the Winter Walk (LBe/MJ) and on 17<sup>th</sup> November another dead individual was found in the same area (JWC).

### **Harvest Mouse** *Micromys minutus*

There were again no sightings reported of these tiny mice or their nests but there is no reason to suppose they are not doing well on the Reserve following a major breeding and release project which started in 2012. While they will always be difficult to spot in the wild they can be seen very easily in the permanent display area in the Visitor Centre.

### **Wood Mouse** *Apodemus sylvaticus*

Also known as the Long-tailed Field Mouse this is a very common small mammal on the Reserve. It is most often seen in Longworth traps during surveys. Four were found along the Willow Path during such a survey on 17<sup>th</sup> September. Being an excellent climber it is also a user of nest boxes

and one or two are found most years when the boxes are checked at the end of the nesting season.

**Bank Vole** *Clethrionomys glareolus*

This is another very common species that regularly appears in Longworth traps. Two were found this year during a survey carried out as part of a Bioblitz event on 17<sup>th</sup> September. There were no other records.

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

This species is rather less likely to be seen than the Bank Vole as it spends most of its time in runs and burrows. It is a common species in grassland and is probably at its most numerous here on the Scrubland. In the absence of any Longworth trap surveys in this particular area this year the only evidence of their presence was in the form of remains in the pellets of the resident Barn Owls.

**Water Vole** *Arvicola amphibius*

Sightings are few and far between. This species is under serious threat from both habitat loss and predation by American Mink. Last year was one of the better ones with three sightings - on the Wet Grassland, on a pool by the Education Pond and at the Dragonfly Ponds. Sadly there were no reports this year despite limited American Mink activity.

**Brown Rat** *Rattus norvegicus*

Almost certainly under-reported this year there were nevertheless 16 records of this species in and around the Bee Garden and all in the period from 8<sup>th</sup> June to the end of the year. Animals were clearly visiting for fallen seed under the bird feeders. Most sightings involved single animals but two were recorded on three dates and three on 5<sup>th</sup> November. There were just two other sightings reported - single animals in the Manager's Garden on 3<sup>rd</sup> July (PH) and 5<sup>th</sup> October (MGo).

**Grey Squirrel** *Sciurus carolinensis*

This is a common visitor to the Reserve and is seen much more often than the relatively few records would suggest. Unfortunately, the Manager's Garden provides the majority of records and particularly the area around the Little Owls' nest box there where it made numerous attempts to take over. Dreys have been found in the Willow Coppice in the past but there was no evidence of breeding on the Reserve this year.

**Rabbit** *Oryctogalus cuniculus*

This is still a rare visitor to the Reserve. There were four records of single animals in 2021 but there have been none since then.

**Brown Hare** *Lepus capensis*

There have only been four records in the Reserve's history, the last one on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

**Hedgehog** *Erinaceus europaeus*

Not surprisingly, there were again no records this year. There have only been three since the Reserve opened, the last one seen under the main entry gates on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2019.

**Common Pipistrelle Bat** *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*

This is the most numerous of the four bat species recorded on the Reserve during Bat Night events. Four events took place this year between 27<sup>th</sup> July and 21<sup>st</sup> September. The species was found to be particularly numerous along the Willow Path which is usually the case most years.

**Soprano Pipistrelle Bat** *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*

Very similar in appearance to the Common Pipistrelle this has been classed as a separate species since 1999 on the This has only been classed as a separate species since 1999 when the Common Pipistrelle was split into two species on the basis of the different frequency echolocation calls. Like the Common Pipistrelle it was recorded during all the Bat Night events this year.

**Noctule Bat** *Nyctalus noctula*

This is one of the largest of the British species and is the first bat to appear in the evening, sometimes before sunset. Numbers recorded last year seemed lower than usual and it was the same again this year. Woodland edge on the far bank of the river proved to be one of the best places to see it.

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

The Water Bat, as it is known, is recorded over both the river and the wetlands where it catches insects on the surface of the water. This medium sized bat was recorded during all four events this year and put in what was said to be a particularly good display over the Duck Marsh during the final Bat Night on 21<sup>st</sup> September.

## **AMPHIBIANS**

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

The first spawn this year was found in the ponds on Poplar Field on 4<sup>th</sup> March (SB), just three days later than last year where the first spawn was found in the same ponds. The first at the Dragonfly Ponds was found two weeks later on 18<sup>th</sup> March in four of the ponds with two frogs on Chadwick Pond on the same date (PJM). Large numbers of tadpoles were reported in several of the ponds on 18<sup>th</sup> May but there were few reported sightings of adults after this date. Good numbers of froglets were seen along the Willow Path and in the grassland around the Dragonfly Ponds during school visits in the summer months. The species is almost certainly more common on the Reserve than the relatively few records of adult frogs received would suggest.

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

The first reported sightings were on 18<sup>th</sup> March, a total of 65 being counted at the Dragonfly Ponds, 54 of these on Co-op Pond, these probably freshly arrived from the Scrubland (SBI). On the same date one was recorded on one of the dipping ponds (SBI) and three on ponds on Poplar Field (JH). On 25<sup>th</sup> March spawn was noted in the new Mill Pond (SBI). Six were counted at the Dragonfly Ponds on 8<sup>th</sup> April (JH) but no more than two were recorded after this.

### **Smooth Newt** *Lissotriton vulgaris*

Between February and June is the best time to see this species as this is when they move into water to breed. They can be found in all the ponds on the Reserve at this time but very few sightings are actually recorded. Young newts or efts do turn up during supervised pond dipping sessions in the summer months and good numbers were reported this year both in the Education Pond and the two dipping ponds by volunteers in the summer months. Away from the breeding season adults can sometimes be found by lifting the lids on the wooden shelters along the Willow Path and one or two were recorded during school visits this year.

## **BUTTERFLIES**

2024 was an interesting but not a good year for butterflies at Rodley. The weather to some extent restricted observers. Although on average across the year 2024 was a warm year in England the early spring and summer was relatively cool and damp – not ideal for butterflies.

It is clear that some butterflies had very bad years but it is not certain whether this was an acceleration of the downward trend in numbers and distribution or was caused by the poor weather conditions. Poor weather is bad for both butterflyers and observers! Notably we only received one record of breeding in 2024.

Sharp reductions in numbers were noted for several species, notably Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Small White, Speckled Wood, Red Admiral, Peacock, Comma and Small Tortoiseshell. The information for Small Tortoiseshell is a particular cause for concern. It was also a very poor year for Common Blue, Holly Blue, Purple Hairstreak, Small Skipper and Small Copper. All these small butterflies are probably normally ‘under-recorded, but this year numbers were very low.

Records for Brimstone, Orange Tip and Ringlet appear to have stayed pretty constant in 2024.

The trends observed this year at Rodley are very similar to the findings of the Big Butterfly Count organised by Butterfly Conservation, which has declared a ‘Butterfly Emergency’.

There were two surprises this year. The first was the appearance of one or two Walls, a butterfly not seen at Rodley since 2017. Walls have declined nationally and are considered by Butterfly Conservation to be endangered. The second was the appearance of several Large Coppers, a species never seen before at Rodley probably because it is ‘officially extinct in the UK and has been for many years!

The regular transect counts (HS/PS) have now been conducted for four years and are providing valuable numerical data allowing year on year comparisons. This data is complemented by the other records ‘which fill in the gaps’ to give a fuller picture. We are greatly indebted to all who offer butterfly records but we still require more records in order to get a true impression of the state of play. Information about the numbers, timing and location of records is valuable as it helps to inform our management of the reserve. Trawling through social media pages also provides some useful records and some good pictures, however Facebook posts rarely give details of numbers and locations and sometimes dates aren’t clear either. So, if you are posting on Facebook,

please include this information, or preferably enter the records on the record sheets in the visitor centre.

Ranking 2024	Species and number of dates seen on in 2024	Ranking 2023	Ranking 2022	Ranking 2021	Ranking 2020	Ranking 2019
1 <sup>st</sup>	Speckled Wood - 40	2 <sup>nd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup> =	5 <sup>th</sup>	-
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Small White - 38	4 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Red Admiral - 36	5 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	-	2 <sup>nd</sup>
4 <sup>th</sup>	Brimstone - 35	-	-	-	6 <sup>th</sup>	-
5 <sup>th</sup>	Comma - 32	3 <sup>rd</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	-	3 <sup>rd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>
6 <sup>th</sup> =	Peacock - 24	-	5 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup> =	2 <sup>nd</sup> =	5 <sup>th</sup>
6 <sup>th</sup> =	Small Tortoiseshell - 24	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>

Jerry Knapp  
Recorder

## HESPERIDAE

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

This is a fairly new species for the reserve, it was recorded first in 2019 and then in 2021, with no records in 2020, 2022 or 2023. It re-appeared in 2024, the first of the year being seen on 20<sup>th</sup> July (JWC), but there were only three records in all, the last one on 31<sup>st</sup> July (JWC).

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

A bad year for Small Skipper with only two records both on the same day (8<sup>th</sup> July) but from different observers in different locations – Poplar Field (SB) and Butterfly Bank (HS/PS). In the previous four years it was only recorded on four to six dates, with no more than 2 individuals.

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

The first sighting of the year was on 9<sup>th</sup> June (JWC) and there were sightings on twelve days in all. Most daily records were of single specimens but there were at least five on the Butterfly Bank and the River Walk on 26<sup>th</sup> June (AT) and four on Poplar Field and the River Walk on 8<sup>th</sup> July (SB). Overall, Poplar Field, the wildflower meadows and the River Walk were the best sites. The last sighting was on 19<sup>th</sup> August (SB).

## PIERIDAE

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

The first Orange Tip of the year was recorded on 17<sup>th</sup> April (JWC) and on 13 days in all. The maximum daily count was of 20+ on 12<sup>th</sup> May (AT), with 13 seen on 1<sup>st</sup> May and 11 seen on 6<sup>th</sup> May (HS/PS) and 7 on 20<sup>th</sup> April. Orange Tips were seen across the reserve with the Dragonfly Ponds, Butterfly Bank and the Willow Walk being good sites. The last sighting of the year was four on the 3<sup>rd</sup> June (SB). On transect counts the numbers were very similar to last year and greater than in 2022 or 2021 (HS/PS). Overall, it appears that the population is holding up well.

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

The first of the year was recorded on 2<sup>nd</sup> May by the Education Team. Large Whites were recorded in all on thirteen days, on ten of which only a single specimen was recorded. The highest count of the year was of three on 30<sup>th</sup> August (SB). They were seen randomly across the reserve with no favoured sites. Transect counts suggest a decrease on 2023 numbers, but numbers are low and other records don't suggest a decrease. The last of the year was seen on 4<sup>th</sup> October on John Ackroyd Meadow (SB), making it a long season with very few individuals seen (which is typical).

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

A common butterfly recorded on 38 days this year, making it the second most recorded species. The first of the year was seen on 21<sup>st</sup> April (JWC). Numbers were low earlier in the year peaking from late July to late September. The maximum daily counts were eighteen on the 31<sup>st</sup> July and sixteen on 11<sup>th</sup> August (both HS/PS) – compared with maximum daily counts of fifty-nine and sixty in 2023 and 2022. Although frequently seen the overall numbers were relatively low – in transect counts (HS/PS) they were about 46% less than in 2023 and 2022; although the total count was very similar to the 2021 figure. The final sighting of the year was on 18<sup>th</sup> October (JWC).

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

The first of the year was seen on 1<sup>st</sup> May (HS/PS) and they were recorded on sixteen days in all, always in ones or twos; in fact two were seen on only three days. Transect counts were about 50% less than in 2023 and 50% less than in 2022, but very similar to 2021 which is a similar pattern to that of Small Whites. The last of the year was seen on 18<sup>th</sup> Sept (HS/PS).

**Brimstone** (*Gonepteryx rhamni*)

The first sighting of the year was on 24<sup>th</sup> March (JWC) and it was recorded on 35 days in all, making it the species recorded on the 4th most days. The daily numbers reported were relatively low, mainly being singles, two or more per day only being seen on 11 out of 35 days. The highest daily counts were of six on 6<sup>th</sup> May, five on 25<sup>th</sup> May (both HS/PS) and five on 19<sup>th</sup> June (AT). These daily maximums were very similar to those seen in Transect counts in 2023. The last of the year was seen on 14<sup>th</sup> September (JWC). Sightings were made all over the reserve but the Butterfly Bank was probably the most frequent site.

**NYMPHALIDAE****Wall** (*Lasiommata megera*)

Last year we commented that as no Walls had been seen since 2017 perhaps the species was extinct at Rodley. It was therefore a great surprise and pleasure to encounter one or possibly a second on the edge of Poplar Field on the footpath to the Managers Garden on 17<sup>th</sup> May. (JSK/DW). There were no other reports of this species. The status of this species remains uncertain so we can only hope it will recolonise Rodley.

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

The first of the year was recorded on 14<sup>th</sup> April (HS/PS, JWC) and it was subsequently seen on 40 days in all – the greatest number of days recorded for any species this year. It was second in the list in 2023 and first in 2022. Daily counts were mostly quite low with no more than two per day being recorded on 16 days. Early season counts were low, only beginning to increase in late June and peaking from late July to mid-September. Highest daily counts were of 15+ on 6<sup>th</sup> September (JSK), 11 on 5<sup>th</sup> August (SB) and 10 on 24<sup>th</sup> August (HS/PS) which were lower than in 2023. Transect counts (HS/PS) show that the total number recorded was about half that in 2023 and two thirds that in 2022, although very similar to the 2021 count. They were seen all across the reserve with no preferred location. The last of the year was on 18<sup>th</sup> October (JWC).

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

There have been no sightings since 2005.

**Ringlet** (*Aphantopus hyperantus*)

The first of the year was seen on 22<sup>nd</sup> June (JWC) and they were recorded on 14 days in all. Numbers were quite good with highest counts of about 30 on 27<sup>th</sup> July (AT) and 25 on 15<sup>th</sup> July (HS/PS). The best areas were, as expected, the wildflower meadows and Poplar Field. Transect counts



(HS/PS) recorded a similar number of individuals to 2023 but these numbers were less than half those recorded in 2022 and 2021, which is a cause for concern. The final sighting was on the 5<sup>th</sup> August (SB).

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

The first record of the year was on 19<sup>th</sup> June (JWC) and they were then recorded on 22 days, similar to the 24 last year and 21 in 2022. Counts started low but nine were recorded on 26<sup>th</sup> June and thereafter there were several days with double figure counts. Highest daily counts were ca. 50 on 27<sup>th</sup> July (AT), 25 on 15<sup>th</sup> July, and 29 on 28<sup>th</sup> July (both HS/PS). The transect total counts showed a 40% decrease compared to 2023 and 30% decrease on 2022 (HS/PS) but only about 13% fall on 2021 numbers. The last record of the year was of five seen on 21<sup>st</sup> August.

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

Another year with no sighting following its first appearance in 2021, further suggesting its vagrant status.

### **Gatekeeper** (*Pyronia tithonus*)

The first record of the year was of three on 15<sup>th</sup> July (SB) and they were then recorded on 18 days, similar to the previous three years. Double figures were seen on seven days. The highest count was of 24 on 5<sup>th</sup> August (PM/BM) with 20+ noted on three days - much less than the 40+ maxima noted on six days in 2023. Transect counts (HS/PS) recorded 52 individuals similar to the 53 in 2021, but much less than the 100 seen in 2022 and the remarkable 192 seen in 2023. In summary then a disappointing year for the Gatekeeper, but still considerably better than 2020 and 2019. They were seen fairly widely across the reserve but the best locations were Poplar Field and the Butterfly Bank. The last of the year was of one seen on the access road on 2<sup>nd</sup> September (SB).

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

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

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

The first of the year was recorded on 6<sup>th</sup> May (JH) and they were seen on 36 days in all - 3<sup>rd</sup> in the numbers of days reported. However numbers were low with records of only a single individual on 27 days. The highest daily count was of 11 or 12 on 6<sup>th</sup> of September (JWC, JSK) feeding on the buddleias near the visitor centre and the next highest being seven on 7<sup>th</sup> September. Transect counts only recorded 19 individuals, 72% less

than last year, but fairly close to the 27 and 22 recorded in 2022 and 2021, respectively (HS/PS). In summary, a fairly typical year for Red Admiral, but disappointing compared to the excellent year in 2023. The last sighting of the year was on 13<sup>th</sup> November (JWC) – the 2<sup>nd</sup> latest date for the species at Rodley.

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

Another poor year for Painted Lady with only two records at Rodley on 11<sup>th</sup> August (JWC) and 6<sup>th</sup> September (JSK). However this was twice the number last year when none were seen on transect counts.

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

The first sightings of the year were on the 18<sup>th</sup> March with individuals seen in the Coppice (JSK) and the River Walk (SB). Peacock were recorded in small numbers on 24 days in all with counts of two or more on only nine days. The highest daily counts were of eight on 5<sup>th</sup> August (SB) and 11 on 11<sup>th</sup> August (PM/BM). Transect counts showed a 52% decrease on 2023 (HS/PS). The last record of the year was on 1<sup>st</sup> December (JWC), only the 3<sup>rd</sup> December record at Rodley. Disappointingly the only record of breeding for this species was of a single caterpillar spotted walking across the access road on 20<sup>th</sup> July (JSK), presumably seeking a site for pupation.

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

The first record of the year was of three on 24<sup>th</sup> March (HS/PS), after which they were seen on 24 days. This means that Small Tortoiseshell was 6<sup>th</sup> on the list of the number of days it was observed on. In the previous five years this species was first on the list for four years and second for one year only. The decline in the number of days seen suggests a real decline in the species in 2024. Numbers were also low with the highest daily count of the early generation of nine on 6<sup>th</sup> May (HS/PS) and five were recorded on 1<sup>st</sup> May (HS/PS) and also 17<sup>th</sup> May (SC/JSt). Otherwise, daily records were generally of one or two. The last of the first generation was on 29<sup>th</sup> May. The second generation was even worse with the first sighting being on 5<sup>th</sup> July (PM/BM) and the last of the year on 18<sup>th</sup> August (PH). Transect counts (HS/PS) showed a 62% decrease on 2023 numbers and a slightly larger decrease on numbers in 2022 and 2021. There were no breeding records this year.

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

The first of the year was seen on 24<sup>th</sup> March (JWC) after which it was recorded on 32 days all over the reserve. As usual daily numbers were generally low, mostly one or two with more than three being recorded on

only seven days. The highest daily counts were of seven on 11<sup>th</sup> August (HS/PS) and six on 29<sup>th</sup> July (SB) and 28<sup>th</sup> September (HS/PS). Transect counts (HS/PS) were 50% less than in 2023, which was a good year for this species but much greater than in 2021 and 2022. The last of the year was very late - on 20<sup>th</sup> November (JWC) which was the latest Comma sighting recorded at Rodley since 2000, the previous latest being on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2010.

## LYCAENIDAE

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

The first of the year was on 3<sup>rd</sup> June (SB), thereafter it was seen on only three days with single butterflies. So, a dreadful and worrying year for this lovely little butterfly. The last of the year was seen on 11<sup>th</sup> September on the Mike Fisk Meadow (HS/PS).

### **Large Copper** (*Lycaena dispar*)

The appearance on 3<sup>rd</sup> August of not just one but at least 8 of this stunningly lovely, but extinct butterfly was the shock of the year!

It was first seen by PH but then by many others. Large numbers of 'butterfly twitchers' appeared, intent on spotting and photographing them, thoroughly trampling the area of grass in John Ackroyd Meadow where most were seen. They were also spotted on Tim's field and the Dragonfly Ponds area. Most were male but there were some females too. Individuals were seen until 14<sup>th</sup> August.

Large Copper is a fenland butterfly which became extinct in Great Britain (although not in Europe) due to habitat loss in the 1860's. There have been several attempts at re-introduction in the fens, the most successful being at Woodwalton Fen (Huntingdonshire) in 1927 using Dutch butterflies. The population limped on for some years before dying out again in the 1990's due to changes in habitat.

This was clearly an unauthorised release of captive bred insects. It may have been a 'guerrilla' attempt at re-introduction by an unknown person which was doomed to fail since the specific food plant (Great Water Dock – *Rutilus hydrolapathum*) does not grow at Rodley.

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

Only two reports this year, the first on 17<sup>th</sup> July and the second and final on 11<sup>th</sup> August (both JWC). Purple Hairstreak have been recorded in eight of the last nine years but never on many days and only in small numbers. One suspects that they are probably commoner than the data suggests.

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

There were no records again in 2024. The last record was in 2018 and they have only been reported in four years since 2000. Essentially this species must be regarded as an 'accidental' at Rodley.

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

The first of the year was recorded on 6<sup>th</sup> May (JWC) but there were only three records, the last being on 31<sup>st</sup> July (JWC). Non were seen on transect counts. Clearly a very poor year for Holly Blue, it is impossible to know if this was due to the poor weather or to a natural fluctuation in numbers due to a high level of parasitism.

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

Another year with no records and indeed there have been no reports since the species first appeared at Rodley in 2019.

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

Most years we have only a few records of small numbers. But 2024 was a very poor year for Common Blue at Rodley, with only one sighting - on the Butterfly Bank on 6<sup>th</sup> September (JSK). Non were seen on the transect counts.

**Butterflies**  
**First and Last Dates - 2024**

<b>Species</b>	<b>First date</b>	<b>Last date</b>
Essex Skipper	20 <sup>th</sup> July	31 <sup>st</sup> July
Small Skipper	8 <sup>th</sup> July	8 <sup>th</sup> July
Large Skipper	9 <sup>h</sup> June	19 <sup>th</sup> August
Orange Tip	17 <sup>th</sup> April	3 <sup>rd</sup> June
Large White	2 <sup>nd</sup> May	4 <sup>th</sup> October
Small White	21 <sup>st</sup> April	18 <sup>th</sup> October
Green-veined White	1 <sup>st</sup> May	18 <sup>th</sup> September
Clouded Yellow	-	-
Brimstone	24 <sup>th</sup> March	14 <sup>th</sup> September
Wall	17 <sup>th</sup> May	17 <sup>th</sup> May
Speckled Wood	14 <sup>th</sup> April	18 <sup>th</sup> October
Small Heath	-	-
Ringlet	22 <sup>nd</sup> June	5 <sup>th</sup> August
Meadow Brown	19 <sup>th</sup> June	21 <sup>st</sup> August
Gatekeeper	15 <sup>th</sup> July	2 <sup>nd</sup> September
Dark Green Fritillary	-	-
Red Admiral	6 <sup>th</sup> May	13 <sup>th</sup> November
Painted Lady	11 <sup>th</sup> August	6 <sup>th</sup> September
Peacock	18 <sup>th</sup> March	1 <sup>st</sup> December
Small Tortoiseshell	24 <sup>th</sup> March	18 <sup>th</sup> August
Comma	24 <sup>th</sup> March	20 <sup>th</sup> November
Small Copper	3 <sup>rd</sup> June	11 <sup>th</sup> September
Purple Hairstreak	17 <sup>th</sup> July	11 <sup>th</sup> August
White-letter Hairstreak	-	-
Holly Blue	6 <sup>th</sup> May	31 <sup>st</sup> July
Brown Argus	-	-
Common Blue	6 <sup>th</sup> September	6 <sup>th</sup> September

## **MOTHS**

The situation across the county in 2024 has been described by the Yorkshire County Recorder as an extraordinary year and one of the worst he's known with the number of moths appearing significantly lower than the previous year.

For the Reserve, however, 2024 proved to be an exceptional year with a total of 773 records of 203 different species including 20 new for the Reserve. Whilst this does not appear to follow the county trend it possibly reflects the fact that more trapping events and significantly more daytime sightings have been recorded during 2024.

### **MOTH TRAP COUNT 2024**

MACRO	
Species	No. of Moths
73	446

MICRO	
Species	No. of Moths
46	125

### **INDIVIDUAL RECORDS 2024**

MACRO	
Species	No. of Moths
24	50

MICRO	
Species	No. of Moths
60	152

NUMBER of SPECIES : 119 (119)

NUMBER of SPECIES : 84 (29)

NUMBER of MOTHS : 571 (921)

NUMBER of MOTHS : 202 (80)

(2023 numbers in bkts)

**THE TOTAL SPECIES COUNT FOR THE RESERVE NOW STANDS AT –  
MACRO 245, MICRO 223**

### **SPECIES NEW TO THE RESERVE 2024**

Macro		Micro	
Species	Date	Species	Date
Mottled Umber (larval)	08/05/2024	<i>Coptotriche marginea</i> (leaf mine)	14/02/2024
Common Lutestring	19/07/2024	<i>Phyllonorycter ulicicolella</i> (larval)	24/04/2024
Box-tree Moth	29/07/2024	<i>Elachista rufocinerea</i>	24/04/2024
Maidens Blush	23/08/2024	<i>Coleophora serratella</i> (larval)	28/04/2024
		<i>Glyphipterix fuscoviridella</i>	05/05/2024
		<i>Coleophora otidipennella</i>	08/05/2024
		<i>Grapholita internana</i>	08/05/2024
		<i>Calybites phasianipennella</i>	08/06/2024
		<i>Homoeosoma sinuella</i>	08/06/2024
		<i>Stigmella lemniscella</i>	10/08/2024
		<i>Stigmella plagicolella</i> (leaf mine)	23/10/2024
		<i>Ectoedemia occultella</i> (leaf mine)*	12/11/2024
		<i>Parornix devoniella</i> (leaf mine)*	12/11/2024
		<i>Phyllonorycter sorbi</i> (leaf mine)*	12/12/2024

<i>Phyllonorycter nicellii</i> (leaf mine)*	12/11/2024
<i>Phyllonorycter acerifoliella</i> (leaf mine)*	12/11/2024
* Recorded by Aidan Smith and John Cooper on the visit of Wharfedale Naturalists on 12 <sup>th</sup> November	

**Mottled Umber (Larval)** : (JWC) Whilst this species is regarded as common and a widespread resident the first record for the Reserve on 8 May was larval. The adult moth, flight season October to January, has yet to be recorded.

**Common Lutestring** : Trap event 19 July - This species frequents light woodland and is fairly common across the County. The larvae feed on birch and occasionally other broad leaved trees which can be found across the Reserve.

**Box-tree Moth** : Trap Event 29 July - An invasive species native to eastern Asia, this moth first appeared in Europe (Germany) in 2006 reaching the UK in 2008. It has subsequently reached Canada (2018) and the USA (2021). It is believed that its spread is as a result of imported food plants. The species can have 2 or 3 generations per year with its larval plant, Box, being defoliated and destroyed.

**Maidens Blush** : Trap event 23 August - An attractive macro moth formerly regarded as rare and very local has become far more widespread across the south and east of the County. Over the years an ample supply of standard oak has been planted on the Reserve which should encourage its presence as an oak feeder.

***Coptotriche marginea* (leaf mine)** : (JWC) Recorded on the Riverside Path bramble, this is a common species across much of Yorkshire and is regularly recorded as a leaf mine on bramble leaves.

***Phyllonorycter ulicicolella* (larval)** : (JWC) Spotted on gorse on the Poplar Wildflower Meadow, this species is listed as nationally scarce and was one of only 9 recorded across Vice County (VC) 64 in 2024. The species is usually spotted as either a leaf mine or larval and is rarely seen as an adult.

***Elachista rufocinerea*** : (JWC) Again spotted on the Poplar Wildflower Meadow the species is listed as nationally common with the Yorkshire

status being listed as scarce and a local resident. This is the first record for the 10km square. Grasses are its foodplant.

***Coleophora serratella (larval)*** : (JWC) Spotted on Birch on the Poplar Wildflower Meadow this species is widespread and abundant throughout all 5 Yorkshire Vice Counties feeding on Birch, Alder and Hazel. Recorded in its larval stage the species has yet to be spotted as an adult.

***Glyphipterix fuscoviridella*** : (JWC) A widespread and fairly common species but with only occasional records for VC64. Spotted on the John Ackroyd Meadow its food plant is the Field Wood-rush.

***Coleophora otidipennella*** : (JWC) Listed as rare and a very local resident this species requires genitalia examination (gen.det.) and was subsequently confirmed as a female of the species. Species foodplant is the Field Wood-rush. There are only 6 other records across VC64 one of which was back in 1885!

***Grapholita internana*** : (JWC) A rare and local resident with only 4 other records for VC64 and the very first ever record for the 10km square. With gorse as its foodplant 3 of these micro moths were spotted on the Poplar Wildflower Meadow on the 8 May.

***Calybites phasianipennella*** : Recorded at the trap event on 8 June this species, classed as a local resident, is a relative newcomer to the county but has become commoner over the last few years. Its food plants are Redshank and Broad-leaved Dock amongst others. It is the first record for the 10km square.

***Homoeosoma sinuella*** : Classed as uncommon and thinly distributed or restricted resident with only a few previous records for VC64, this micro came to light at the 8 June trap event. It feeds on the rootstock of plantains.

***Stigmella lemniscella*** : (JWC) Spotted in the Visitor Centre on 10 August this micro required gen. det. Identification and was subsequently confirmed as a male of the species. The species is recorded sparsely across Yorkshire and indicate that the adult form is a rare sighting which are usually as a leaf mine or larval. (Yorkshire records 2024 - 14 mine, 4 larval and 1 adult at the Reserve). First record for the 10km square.

***Stigmella plagiolella (leaf mine)*** : (JWC) The food plant of this species is the plentiful Blackthorn with four leaf mines being spotted on the Poplar



Wildflower Meadow on 23 October. The latest status records the species in all five vice-counties but rather local and seldom common. First record for the 10km square.

***Ectoedemia occultella* (leaf mine)** : (JWC/AS) Common across the county found in most places where Birch is present. Adult sightings are rare with most records being either leaf mine or larval.

***Parornix devoniella* (leaf mine)** : (JWC/AS) This species is common and widespread across the county and is found regularly where Hazel grows. Rarely seen as an adult most records are of leaf mine or larval.

***Phyllonorycter sorbi* (leaf mine)** : (JWC/AS) Whilst the Yorkshire status is common and a widespread resident it is only recorded sparsely across the vice-counties. The vast majority of records are of leaf mine found on Rowan which is abundant on the Reserve.

***Phyllonorycter nicellii* (leafmine)** : (JWC/AS) This species is fairly common across the county wherever Hazel grows but rarely recorded in its adult form being regularly spotted as a leaf mine or in its larval form. This is the first record for the 10km square.

***Phyllonorycter acerifoliella* (leaf mine)** : (JWC/AS) Feeding on Field Maple this species is well distributed across the county but can be a little local and sometimes difficult to find. Predominantly identified as a leaf mine it can also be spotted as a larva or in its adult form. Again this is the first record for the 10km square.

## **HIGHLIGHTS – Individual and Trapping Records**

Whilst the Reserve held 7 trapping events in 2024 compared to only 4 in 2023 the number of moths actually recorded was well down – 571 compared to 921 and followed the county trend. The species count, however, remained the same at 119 in both years.

The highlight for 2024 was the significant increase in individual sightings of day time moths with 84 species recorded compared to 29 species in 2023. Included within the species numbers, however, are the records for 9 leaf mines previously rarely recorded at the Reserve.

Of interest, the **Muslin Moth** re-appeared after a 6 year absence having made regular appearances prior to 2018. Regarded as a common and widespread resident the white female was spotted on the Dragonfly Pond area on 5 May. (JWC)

The **Silver Y** is an abundant and widespread migrant which can be seen daytime and also readily comes to light. It can be recorded all year round but was spotted on the John Ackroyd Meadow on 12 May (JWC) the earliest ever record for the Reserve.

**Peach Blossom** came to the trap on two separate occasions this year on 24 May and 8 June. This represented only the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> records for the Reserve since 2014. Widespread across the county this is an attractive unmistakable species with its larvae feeding on bramble.

**Common Swift** was trapped on three occasions this year on 24 May, 8 June and 9 August with a total of 16 moths being recorded. An abundant and widespread moth its larvae feed on grass roots and other herbaceous plants. The last previous record was in 2019 but has previously reached heady heights in terms of numbers with 157 being recorded between 2011 and 2016 (max. 40 in 2012). Perhaps 2024 represents the start of a re-emergence at the Reserve for this species.

***Gillmeria ochrodactyla*** (Tansy Plume) This rare and locally resident micro came to the trap on 29 July after a 6 year absence with the Reserve being the only location where it is recorded within the 10km square. As its name suggests the species frequents Tansy which is found in abundance along the roadside adjacent to the Visitor Centre.

***Adania microdactyla*** (Hemp Agrimony Plume) This species also came to the trap on 29 July and again is regarded as a rare and local resident. Its foodplant, Hemp Agrimony, can be found across the Reserve grasslands and, whilst recorded regularly at the Reserve since 2016, has been recorded at only one other location within the 10km square.

## POPULAR SPECIES 2023 AND 2024

MACRO			MICRO		
Species	Recorded		Species	Recorded	
	2024	2023		2024	2023
Common Rustic	52	102	<i>Scoparia ambigualis</i>	14	3
Square-spot Rustic	41	19	Mother of Pearl	12	21
Large Yellow			<i>Agriphila straminella</i>	10	12
Underwing	35	176	<i>Chrysoteuchia culmella</i>	9	74
Straw Dot	33	3	Bird Cherry Ermine	5	14
Flame	21	16			
Marbled Minor					
agg	21	40			
Common Swift	16	0			
White Ermine	15	0			
Flame Shoulder	14	9			
Middle-barred Minor	13	0			

2024 proved to be another successful mothing year for the Reserve particularly in terms of day time records. Here's hoping that 2025 will prove as successful.

Dave Nesham  
Recorder

**Acknowledgments** – Yorkshire Butterflies and Moths Review, John Cooper (JWC), Aidan Smith (AS)

## **Dragonflies and Damselflies – 2024**

2024 was a good year with 17 species being recorded. As usual the Red-eyed and Azure Damselflies were the first to be seen, closely followed by the Broad-bodied Chaser and the Banded Demoiselle. This year the Four-spotted Chaser also appeared early. There were further records of the Willow Emerald, the Small Red-eyed and the Red-eyed Damselflies, the last of which was first recorded in 2023. Unusually there was a marked shortage of records for the Common Darter which was only noted on five separate days. Similarly, there was only one definitive record for the Small Red-eyed Damselfly. Reproductive activity was recorded for only seven of the seventeen species recorded on the reserve. Again there were, disappointingly, no records of exuviae. As exuviae and teneral are the only records that confirm successful breeding, the Azure and Large Red Damselflies and the Common Darter were the only species for which breeding could be established for 2024. A plea is made to locate and identify exuviae in 2025. There needs to be some caution regarding the blue & black damselflies - the Common Blue Damselfly is being seen more often and care needs to be taken to distinguish it from the Azure Damselfly as they are often found together and at first sight appear very similar.

Species	Wheel	Tandem	Ovipositing	Teneral
Large Red Damselfly	-	4	2	-
Azure Damselfly	5	9	10	2
Blue-tailed Damselfly	1	-	-	-
Red-eyed Damselfly	-	-	1	-
Southern Hawker	-	-	2	-
Broad-bodied Chaser	-	-	4	-
Common Darter	-	4	2	-

**Table 1.** The number of days on which the different phases of reproductive behaviour (wheel, tandem and oviposition) were recorded; also the number of days on which tenerals were observed.

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

It was a very good year for the Banded Demoiselle. The first record was on 19<sup>th</sup> May down by the Dragonfly Ponds (PM/BM). It was seen on many occasions and at many sites over the reserve, including at the Dragonfly Ponds (PJM, MG/PG, AT, PM/BM), on the River Path (AW, AT) and on the Wet Grassland (MG/PG); also far away from the river - near the Manager's Garden (MG/PG), at the Poplar Field (MG/PG) and at the car park (MG/PG, AT). Both sexes were seen but there was a predominance of males. The largest counts were 20+ males and five females on 2<sup>nd</sup> June

(AT) and 100+ males on both 26<sup>th</sup> June and 27<sup>th</sup> July (AT). The last recorded sighting was on 5<sup>th</sup> August at the Dragonfly Ponds (PJM).

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

It was another very disappointing year for the Emerald Damselfly, with only two records, both at the Dragonfly Ponds. The first record was of one male and one female on 26<sup>th</sup> June (AT), the last record of a single male on 20<sup>th</sup> July (PJM). This is in contrast to the 11 days on which this species was seen in 2021.

### **Willow Emerald Damselfly (*Chalcolestes viridis*)**

It was a rather poor year for records of the Willow Emerald Damselfly. It was only seen on three days, the first on 20<sup>th</sup> July when it was recorded on the Willow Path (JWC). However, the good news is that nine individuals (seven males and two females) were recorded at the Willow Path Hide on 29<sup>th</sup> September (JWC) and on 26<sup>th</sup> October (the last recorded date) at least 10 were seen, including three ovipositing on the Wet Grassland (JWC). This was the latest date on which it has been observed at the reserve since it was first recorded in 2022. In 2023 it was first seen on 26<sup>th</sup> July and then on various occasions throughout August and into early September, mostly along the Willow Path.

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

The first record for the Large Red Damselfly was on 12<sup>th</sup> May, when about 20 (including two teneral) were recorded at the Dragonfly Ponds. This included six pairs in tandem and a further six pairs ovipositing (AT). Tandem pairs were seen on three other days (MG/PG, AT) and there was one other instance of oviposition noted (AT). The only record away from the Dragonfly Ponds was on 19<sup>th</sup> May on the River Path (PM/BM). In total it was seen on only six separate days, the last record being on 5<sup>th</sup> July (PM/BM).

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

It was an excellent year for the Azure Damselfly, which was recorded on 18 separate days. The first sighting was on 12<sup>th</sup> May, when about 20 (mostly teneral) were seen both at the car park and at the Dragonfly Ponds (AT). Thereafter they were seen regularly throughout June and July, the last record being on 5<sup>th</sup> August at the Dragonfly Ponds (PJM). Teneral were seen on two occasions (AT). Reproductive behaviour was well recorded with the wheel position being seen on five days, tandem pairs on nine days and oviposition on 10 days. The largest number recorded was over 500 at the Dragonfly and Dipping Ponds on 26<sup>th</sup> June, of which there were 20+ pairs in the wheel position, 100+ pairs in tandem

and 100+ pairs ovipositing (AT). The next highest number, also at the Dragonfly Ponds, was 112 on 15<sup>th</sup> July. This included one pair in the wheel position, seven pairs in tandem and 38 pairs ovipositing (PJM). Almost all of the records were at the Dragonfly and Dipping Ponds but there were sightings on the River Path (19<sup>th</sup> May) (PM/BM) and the car park (AT). Care needs to be taken with the identification of this species as it looks very similar to the Common Blue Damselfly when seen in the field.

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

We are seeing more of the Common Blue Damselfly in the Dragonfly Ponds area. In 2023 there was only a single record but in 2024 it was recorded four times there (PJM) and was also seen between the Lagoon and Mike Sheldon Hide (AT) as well as by the car park and on the Willow Path (AT). It is a species that prefers larger water bodies and so, with the large New and Lake ponds established, it is likely to be recorded more frequently at the Dragonfly Ponds. This does raise a problem in that the Azure and Common Blue Damselflies are not that easy to separate in the field. The first record was on 19<sup>th</sup> May (AT), the last on 5<sup>th</sup> August (PJM).

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

After a disappointing 2023, it was an excellent year for the Blue-tailed Damselfly in 2024, being seen on 15 separate days. The first record was on 12<sup>th</sup> May at the Dragonfly Ponds (AT), the last on 5<sup>th</sup> August, also at the Dragonfly Ponds (PJM). Indeed, most of the records were from the Dragonfly Pond area ((AT, PJM, MG/PG, BM), although there were sightings at the Dipping Ponds (PJM) and a single record from the car park (AT). There was just one instance of breeding behaviour, with a pair in the wheel position seen on 24<sup>th</sup> June at the Co-op Pond (PJM).

### **Red-eyed Damselfly (*Erythromma najas*)**

Last year (2023) was disappointing, with the Red-eyed Damselfly only being seen on one occasion. However, 2024 was much better with this species being recorded on seven separate days. The first and last records were both at the Dragonfly Ponds - on 19<sup>th</sup> May (JWC) and 19<sup>th</sup> June (AT) respectively. These dates were the earliest and latest that this species has been seen at the reserve. Apart from records at the Dragonfly Ponds (JWC, RB, PJM, AT), the Red-eyed Damselfly was also seen at the Duck Marsh (JWC) and the Lagoon (JWC). The most individuals seen on any one occasion was 14, comprising 11 males and 3 females, the latter all ovipositing.

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

There have always been few sightings of the Small Red-eyed Damselfly. There were no sightings in either 2021 or 2022 but it was recorded on three separate days in 2023, all at the Co-op Pond. In 2024 it was only recorded at most twice – once at the Willow Path Hide on 28<sup>th</sup> July (recorded by JWC as ‘probable’) and once on the Co-op Pond again on 31<sup>st</sup> July (JWC).

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

There were no records of the Common Hawker in 2024. It was last seen in 2019. As noted in previous reports, Rodley NR is a long way from its normal habitat.

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

It was a very disappointing year for the Migrant Hawker with no records. In 2022 it was seen on eight days and in 2023 on four days. As the name implies it is a migrant species and so, hopefully, it will turn up again in 2025. It has previously bred on the reserve but not for many years.

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

After poor years in 2022 and 2023, 2024 turned out to be a good year for the Southern Hawker, with it being seen on 10 separate days. The first record was on 20<sup>th</sup> July at the Dragonfly Ponds (PJM), the last on 9<sup>th</sup> November along the Willow Path (MGo/JWC). This latter date is the latest that this species has ever been recorded at the reserve. Other records were from the Dragonfly Ponds (BM, JWC, PJM) and the Dipping Ponds (PM/BM). On each occasion only one individual was seen and most were females. On two separate occasions, on 2<sup>nd</sup> September and 13<sup>th</sup> September, a female was seen ovipositing in the Dipping Ponds (PM/BM)

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

It was a good year for the Brown Hawker, which was recorded on 11 separate occasions, the first on 19<sup>th</sup> June near the Mike Sheldon hide (AT), the last on 5<sup>th</sup> August at the Dragonfly Ponds (PJM). Although most records were from the latter site (MG/PG, PM/BM, PJM), it was also seen at the Lagoon (AT), along the River Path (MG/PG) and over Tim’s Field (MG/PG). On each occasion only small numbers were seen, the highest being five on 31<sup>st</sup> July (MG/PG). There was no recorded breeding behaviour, which was surprising for such a common species at the reserve.

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

It was a fairly good year for the Emperor Dragonfly, being recorded on six separate days, the first on 26<sup>th</sup> June over the Wet Grassland (MG/PG, AT), at the Lagoon and at the Dragonfly Ponds (AT), when a total of about 10 were seen. Apart from being recorded at the Dragonfly Ponds (AT, DW, PM/BM, MG/PG, PJM), it was observed at the Duck Marsh (MG/PG) and over the river (AT). On two occasions females were seen ovipositing – on 5<sup>th</sup> July (DW) and 6<sup>th</sup> July. It was last seen on 28<sup>th</sup> July (PM/BM)

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

This was another poor year for the Four-spotted Chaser with only three records, all of singletons, at the Dragonfly Ponds. The first sighting was on 18<sup>th</sup> May (JWC). It was seen again on 19<sup>th</sup> June (AT), with a final record on 15<sup>th</sup> July (PJM). It is somewhat strange that it was only seen at monthly intervals.

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

It was a very good year for the Broad-bodied Chaser, much better than in 2023. It was recorded on a total of 17 separate days, the first being on 18<sup>th</sup> May at the Dragonfly Ponds (Freya); indeed all of the records were from there. It was regularly seen throughout June and July with it last being seen on 3<sup>rd</sup> August (PM/BM). Most of the records were of single individuals. On four occasions females were observed ovipositing – on 1<sup>st</sup> June (JWC), 5<sup>th</sup> June (PJM), 26<sup>th</sup> June (AT) and 31<sup>st</sup> July (MG/PG)

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

It was a better year than 2023 for the Black-tailed Skimmer although it was only seen on four separate days. The first recording was on the John Ackroyd Meadow on 5<sup>th</sup> June (PH), the last on the path between Tim's Field and the Willow Coppice on 31<sup>st</sup> July (MG/PG). It was also seen over the Wet Grassland (MG/PG, AT) and at the Dragonfly Ponds (PM/BM)

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

There have been no records since 2015. It is clearly a species that is not breeding anywhere close to the reserve.

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

This species has not been seen since 2021. It is another species for which the reserve is a long way from its normal habitat.

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

It was a poor year for the Common Darter, with fewer records than in 2023, which were also down on those in 2022. It was only recorded on five



separate days in 2024, the first at the Dipping Ponds on 27<sup>th</sup> July (AT) and the last at the Willow Path Hide on 26<sup>th</sup> October (JWC). It was also recorded at the Dragonfly Ponds (PM/BM, PJM). This species used to be one of the most numerous on the reserve and the downwards trend is very disturbing. However, a teneral was observed at the Dipping Ponds on 27<sup>th</sup> July (AT), which indicates that the species has bred successfully. It is possible that it has been under-recorded and it will be interesting to see how it fares in 2025.

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

As in 2023, the Ruddy Darter was only recorded on one day, the 20<sup>th</sup> July, on the Ditch at the Dragonfly Ponds (PJM). This species has only been recorded rarely, with just two records in both 2021 and 2022.

Recorder  
Peter Mill

**Dragonflies and Damselflies**  
**First and Last Dates (in order of first date seen) - 2024**

First recorded		First recorded			Last recorded
		2021	2022	2023	
Large Red Damselfly	12 <sup>th</sup> May	1	1	1=	5 <sup>th</sup> July
Azure Damselfly	12 <sup>th</sup> May	2	2=	1=	5 <sup>th</sup> Aug
Broad-bodied Chaser	18 <sup>th</sup> May	6	2=	4=	3 <sup>rd</sup> Aug
Four-spotted Chaser	18 <sup>th</sup> May	7=	7	4=	15 <sup>th</sup> July
Banded Demoiselle	19 <sup>th</sup> May	3	5	3	5 <sup>th</sup> Aug
Red-eyed Damselfly	19 <sup>th</sup> May	-	-	8	19 <sup>th</sup> June
Common Blue Damselfly	19 <sup>th</sup> May	5	9	11=	5 <sup>th</sup> Aug
Blue-tailed Damselfly	27 <sup>th</sup> May	4	2=	4=	5 <sup>th</sup> Aug
Black-tailed Skimmer	5 <sup>th</sup> June	7=	8	7	31 <sup>st</sup> July
Brown Hawker	19 <sup>th</sup> June	11	6	13	5 <sup>th</sup> Aug
Emperor Dragonfly	26 <sup>th</sup> June	9	10=	10	28 <sup>th</sup> July
Emerald Damselfly	26 <sup>th</sup> June	12	10=	11=	20 <sup>th</sup> July
Common Darter	27 <sup>th</sup> July	10	10=	14	13 <sup>th</sup> Sept
Willow Emerald Damselfly	20 <sup>th</sup> July	-	17	15	26 <sup>th</sup> Oct
Southern Hawker	20 <sup>th</sup> July	14	10=	18	9 <sup>th</sup> Nov
Ruddy Darter	20 <sup>th</sup> July	13	10=	19	20 <sup>th</sup> July
Small Red-eyed Damselfly	31 <sup>st</sup> July	-	-	16	31 <sup>st</sup> July
Hairy Dragonfly	-	-	-	9	
Migrant Hawker	-	15	16	17	

**Dragonflies and Damselflies**  
**Earliest and Latest Dates**  
**(As at the end of 2024)**

<b>Species</b>	<b>Earliest Date</b>	<b>Latest date</b>
Large Red Damselfly	22 <sup>nd</sup> April 2015, 2017, 2019 and 2020	6 <sup>th</sup> August 2008
Blue-tailed Damselfly	25 <sup>th</sup> April 2020	23 <sup>rd</sup> September 2006
Broad-bodied Chaser	30 <sup>th</sup> April 2011	11 <sup>th</sup> August 2012
Azure Damselfly	1 <sup>st</sup> May 2011 and 2019	30 <sup>th</sup> September 2015
Common Blue Damselfly	9 <sup>th</sup> May 2020	4 <sup>th</sup> October 2006
Four-spotted Chaser	9 <sup>th</sup> May 2020	12 <sup>th</sup> August 2020
Banded Demoiselle	12 <sup>th</sup> May 2017	8 <sup>th</sup> September 2012
Common Darter	23 <sup>rd</sup> May 2010	13 <sup>th</sup> November 2021
Emerald Damselfly	24 <sup>th</sup> May 2019	2 <sup>nd</sup> October 2015
Emperor Dragonfly	25 <sup>th</sup> May 2008	29 <sup>th</sup> September 2007
Black-tailed Skimmer	27 <sup>th</sup> May 2018	26 <sup>th</sup> August 2020
Brown Hawker	10 <sup>th</sup> June 2018	19 <sup>th</sup> October 2014
Red-eyed Damselfly	19 <sup>th</sup> May 2024	19 <sup>th</sup> June 2024
*Hairy Dragonfly	10 <sup>th</sup> June 2023	10 <sup>th</sup> June 2023
Southern Hawker	12 <sup>th</sup> June 2014	9 <sup>th</sup> November 2024
*Keeled Skimmer	1 <sup>st</sup> July 2015	1 <sup>st</sup> July 2015
Migrant Hawker	3 <sup>rd</sup> July 2019	12 <sup>th</sup> November 2006
Ruddy Darter	10 <sup>th</sup> July 2022	18 <sup>th</sup> October 2006
*Black Darter	14 <sup>th</sup> July 2018	27 <sup>th</sup> September 2013
*Golden-ringed Dragonfly	24 <sup>th</sup> July 2022	24 July 2022
Willow Emerald Damselfly	26 <sup>th</sup> July 2023	26th October 2024
*Common Hawker	27 <sup>th</sup> July 2010	18 <sup>th</sup> September 2004
Small Red-eyed Damselfly	29 <sup>th</sup> July 2020	27 <sup>th</sup> August 2019

\*Rare visitors to the reserve

## **New Invertebrate Records for 2024**

Nineteen species were recorded for the first time in 2024.

*Stenopsocus stigmaticus* is only the second species of barklice (order Psocoptera) recorded on the reserve; it belongs to the group known as the Narrow Barklice (Stenopsocidae). It is a widespread but rather infrequent species. Its main habitat is Hawthorn, of which we have plenty on the reserve.

Five bugs (Hemiptera) were recorded for the first time. *Eupterycyba jucunda* is a leafhopper (Cicadellidae), which is found mainly on Alder. *Apolygus spinolae* and *Lygus pratensis* are both capsid bugs (Miridae), the former found on a range of plants, including Creeping Thistle, Meadowsweet, Nettle, Bog-myrtle and especially bramble. Both the larvae and adults of *Lygus pratensis* feed on the juices of various plants. The Bronze Shieldbug (*Troilus luridus*) and the Box Bug (*Gonocerus acuteangulatus*) both belong to the Pentatomoidea. The Bronze Shieldbug is predatory, its larvae feeding on both plants and caterpillars. The Box Bug is found on Hawthorn and Buckthorn.

A total of five dipterans were newly recorded, three of them being crane flies (Tipulidae). These latter are the Orange-sided Comb-Horn (*Ctenophora pectinicornis*), the Tiger Crane Fly (*N. flavescens*) and *Tipula lunata*, for which there appears to be no common name. The remaining two dipterans are a soldier fly (Stratiomyidae) called the Ornate Brigadier (*Odontomyia ornata*) and the Common Stiletto (*Thereva nobilitata*), belonging to the Therevidae. The larvae of the Common Stiletto thrive on rotting plants, insects and worms.

Three hymenopterans were recorded, namely the Hornet (*Vespa crabro*), which is the largest eusocial wasp native to Europe, and two sawflies – the Wayward Sawfly (*Tenthredo temula*) and the larva of the Birch Sawfly (*Nematus septentrionalis*), the latter feeding mainly on alders and birches (now well-established in the Dragonfly Ponds area) and which can be found from late August to October. The Wayward Sawfly is a wasp mimic, with black head and thorax and a yellow band across its black abdomen.

There were three new beetles. The chrysomelid Small Striped Flea Beetle (or Turnip Flea Beetle) (*Phyllotreta undulata*) has broad yellow longitudinal stripes on its black elytra. It can easily be confused with the Large Striped *Phyllotreta nemorum*. The Swollen-thighed or Thick-legged Flower Beetle

(also known as the False Oil Beetle) (*Oedemera nobilis*), belongs to the Oedermeridae and is a pollinator of open-structured flowers such as Cow Parsley, Ox-eye Daisy and Bramble. The male can be distinguished from the female by the enlarged femora of its hind legs, hence the common name. The third beetle is a weevil (*Liophloeus tessulatus*) (Curculionidae), which feeds on a wide variety of plants, including Creeping Thistle and Cow Parsley.

There was also one new member of the Araneidae, the Walnut Orb Spider (*Nuctenea umbratica*) and, as the common name indicates, it builds an orb web. Its abdomen is wide and flattened, enabling it to hide itself under loose bark or in wall crevices.

Finally, the *Green Hydra* (*Hydra viridissima*) was found in the ponds. The green colour is due to the presence of the unicellular alga *Chlorella vulgaris* (Chlorophyta) which lives within the *Hydra* and with which it has a symbiotic arrangement.

We then have the strange case of sightings of the Large Copper Butterfly (*Lycaena dispar*), a species which has been extinct in the British Isles since 1851. An attempt to reintroduce it was made between 1969 and 1973 at Woodwalton Fen National Nature Reserve in Cambridgeshire. Although initially successful, it was not self-sufficient and hence is still extinct. Can the Rodley records have been the result of an illegal release of bred specimens!

## **Rodley Nature Reserve Fungi Review for 2024**

We are constantly adding to the list of fungi found on the reserve. There are a number of reasons for that. One major reason is that fungi can be there on a site but may only fruit once every few years. Most fungi spend the majority of their lives under ground or inside trees and other vegetation. Only when conditions become suitable do they produce mushrooms, brackets, clubs or other more unusual shapes. These fruiting bodies are the rough equivalent of a plant's flower and fruit, rolled into one. Some of these fruiting bodies last for years, like the big Artist's Brackets we have on the reserve. Others may only last a couple of days and if you are not there at the right time you'll miss them. Fruiting can be very dependent on the weather.

As the climate changes we can also expect new species appearing. The UK gets many new species added to the national list every year. This may be partly due to climate but also to increased travel and global trade. It is commonplace for people to have far flung holidays and spores can be brought back unbeknown on shoes, clothing and food. Garden centres and tree nurseries accidentally import new species and it is common for garden mulches such as wood chippings to be imported from America.

Perhaps the best additions to our list at Rodley come from the way the reserve is being managed and maturing. The Mike Fisk Wildflower Meadow has seen an increase in the number of waxcap species and numbers of individual waxcaps over the years. These waxy little mushrooms are often brightly coloured and easy to spot. (Apart from the grass-green Parrot Waxcaps, though the Rodley Robins group were excellent at finding them.) The waxcaps are a good barometer of the quality of a grassland for wildlife. The more species of waxcaps, the better the environment. We found five different species of waxcaps on the public forays this year- Parrot, Blackening, Snowy, Scarlet and Spangle Waxcap. Meadow Waxcap was found a few days before. In recent times we seem to find an additional species of waxcap each year. We must be doing something right!

One of the newest additions to the Rodley list was the Purple-staining Milkcap or Shiner *Lactarius uvidus* (uvidus meaning moist) which we found in the coppice on the October public foray. The milkcaps produce a milk like latex when broken and this one exudes a white latex that turns dramatically lilac! The milkcaps are very beneficial to the birch and oak trees that they grow with. The strands of fungi in the soil (mycelium)

connects and wraps around the tree roots giving the tree water, phosphates and trace elements in return for sugars.

In 2024 we found several interesting spring species such as Vinegar Cup and Thimble Morel, mentioned in a previous article. As I write this in April 2025 it has been very dry and I've not yet found any of those same species this year. Rain is predicted over the next few days and perhaps that will change my luck. Every cloud has a silver lining!

## **Rodley Nature Reserve Public Forays 6<sup>th</sup> October 2024**

### **Fungi**

Potato Earthball	<i>Scleroderma Bovista</i>
Scaly Earthball	<i>Scleroderma verrucosum</i>
Wrinkled Club	<i>Clavulina rugosa</i>
Crested Coral	<i>Clavulina coralloides</i>
False Artist's Bracket	<i>Ganoderma adspersum</i>
Blushing Bracket	<i>Daedaleopsis confragosa</i>
Turkeytails	<i>Trametes versicolor</i>
Hairy Curtain Crust	<i>Stereum hirsutum</i>
Elder Whitewash	<i>Hyphodontia sambuci</i>
Jelly Ear	<i>Auricularia auricula-judae</i>
Common Jelly Spot	<i>Dacrymyces stillatus</i>
Brown Rollrim	<i>Paxillus involutus</i>
Shiner Milkcap	<i>Lactarius uvidus</i>
Parrot Waxcap	<i>Gliophorus psittacinus</i>
Blackening Waxcap	<i>Hygrocybe conica</i>
Fairy Ring Champignon	<i>Marasmius oreades</i>
Drab Bonnet	<i>Mycena actites</i>
Angel's Bonnet	<i>Mycena arcangeliana</i>
Nitrous Bonnet	<i>Mycena filopes</i>
Scurfy Deceiver	<i>Laccaria proxima</i>
Deceiver	<i>Laccaria laccata</i>
Glistening Inkcap	<i>Coprinellus micaceus</i>
Bald Inkcap	<i>Parasola leiocephala</i>
Brittlestem	<i>Psathyrella sp.</i>
Sulphur Tuft	<i>Hypholoma fasciculare</i>
Scalycap	<i>Pholiota species ..too young to identify</i>
Velvetfoot Poisonpie	<i>Hebeloma velutipes</i>
Webcap	<i>Cortinarius sp.</i>
Split Fibrecap	<i>Inocybe rimosa</i>
Conecap	<i>Conocybe subovalis</i>
Round-spored Oysterling	<i>Crepidotus cesatii</i>
Peeling Oysterling	<i>Crepidotus mollis</i>
Wood Pinkgill	<i>Entoloma rhodopolium</i>
Candlesnuff	<i>Xylaria hypoxylon</i>
Ergot	<i>Claviceps purpurea on Rye grass and Cock's-foot</i>

## **Robins Fungus Foray November 2024**

Handsome Club	<i>Clavulinopsis laeticolor</i>
(False) Artist's Bracket	<i>Ganoderma adspersum</i>
Blushing Bracket	<i>Daedaleopsis confragosa</i>
Turkeytails	<i>Trametes versicolor</i>
Yellow Curtain Crust	<i>Stereum subtomentosum</i>
Elder Whitewash	<i>Hyphodontia sambuci</i>
Netted Crust	<i>Byssomerulius corium</i>
Jelly Ear	<i>Auricula-judae</i>
Snowy Waxcap	<i>Cuphophyllus virgineus</i>
Scarlet Waxcap	<i>Hygrocybe coccinea</i>
Blackening Waxcap	<i>Hygrocybe conica</i>
Spangle Waxcap	<i>Hygrocybe insipida</i>
Parrot Waxcap	<i>Gliophorus psittacinus</i>
Drab Bonnet	<i>Mycena aetites</i>
Angels' Bonnet	<i>Mycena arcangeliana</i>
Ivory Bonnet	<i>Mycena flavoalba</i>
Oyster Mushroom	<i>Pleurotus ostreatus</i>
Deceiver	<i>Laccaria laccata</i>
Willow Knight	<i>Pluteus salicinus</i>
Japanese Parasol	<i>Parasol asp.</i>
Common Rustgill	<i>Gymnopilus penetrans</i>
Yellow Fieldcap	<i>Bolbitius titubans</i>
Ellipsoid Conecap	<i>Conocybe subovalis</i>
Oysterling	<i>Crepidotus sp.</i>
Wood Pinkgill	<i>Entoloma rhodopolium</i>
Silky Pinkgill	<i>Entoloma sericeum</i>
Bonnet Mould	<i>Spinellus fusiger</i>
Violet Bramble Rust	<i>Phragmidium violaceum</i>
Birch Woodwart	<i>Jackrogersella multiformis</i>
Candlesnuff Fungus	<i>Xylaria hypoxylon</i>
Bracken Map Fungus	<i>Rhopoglyphus filicinus</i>
Ergot	<i>Claviceps purpurea sl....on Cock's-foot grass</i>
Lemon Disco	<i>Calycina citrina</i>
Black pimples on Hogweed spotted by a Robin were a type of Leptosphaeria	

Recorder  
Andy Woodall



## **Photograph Credits**

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