

Cley & Salthouse Marshes Breeding Bird Report 2018

Introduction

Despite our statement that 2017 would be the last year that we produced this report here it is again.

The area covered is, as usual, Norfolk Wildlife Trust's (NWT) Cley & Salthouse Marshes between West Bank and the Iron Road plus Snipe's Marsh. We also noted any breeding activity in areas due south of the A149 including North Foreland wood but, apart from specific species, these were not watched thoroughly.

As in previous years most areas were visited frequently during spring and summer 2018. We took notes of nesting birds and youngsters seen, and tried to follow the progress of each family. As last year the warden again did some transect counts in the reedbed for passerines and watched other areas we could not easily access.

There were no major flooding incidents in winter 2017/18 so apart from a little more build-up of shingle in places and the sea eating into the seaward side of the shingle bank north of Arnold's Marsh the habitat wasn't significantly changed from last year.

The weather appeared to have a significant effect on breeding this year delaying the arrival of several species. We had a fairly mild winter but at the end of February the 'Beast from the East' arrived and we had a very cold spell with frozen scrapes and snow. It remained cold and wet throughout March and April apart from a brief warmer spell mid-April. It turned warmer in early May but onshore winds brought a lot of cloud onto the coast keeping temperatures down. This persisted into July but it then got drier and warmer and although it was always cooler on the coast than the rest of the country we had a very warm dry spell and the meadows and pools started to dry out.

To show the different breeding activity on each part of the extended reserve we have, where possible, split records between the Western (Beach Rd, Cley to E Bank – including Snipes Marsh) and Eastern (E Bank to Iron Rd) areas in this report.

The following species notes give our interpretation of this year's sightings together with our best estimates of the total numbers breeding and the young that fledged.

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Summary

Tables 1 and 2 list birds that bred, or attempted to, in our area this year with counts where known.

Table 1. Ducks, Waders etc.

Species	Minimum Pairs		Min. young fledged		Earliest chicks seen	
	West	East	West	East	West	East
Canada Goose	1	1	4	1	13 May	25 Apr
Greylag Goose						
Mute Swan	2	1	6	2	25 May	12 Jul
Egyptian Goose						
Shelduck	6	6	31	11	23 May	26 May
Shoveler	2	0	4	0	21 May	
Gadwall	16	3	3	7	8 Jun	4 Jul
Mallard	28	11	51	26	29 Apr	14 May
Pochard	4		11		21 May	
Tufted Duck	2		0			
Little Grebe	1		3			
Grey Heron	2					
Little Egret	6					
Marsh Harrier	1	?	4		25 Jun	
Water Rail	2		3		5 Jul	
Moorhen	10	3	8	2	29 May	4 Jul
Coot	8	1	8	0	17 Jun	26 May
Oystercatcher	6	5	0	2	8 Jul	13 Jun
Avocet	60	30	5	5	17 May	18 May
Lapwing	12	22	2	5	7 May	4 May
Ringed Plover	1	3	0	0		21 Jun
Little Ringed Plover	2	2	0	0		
Redshank	5	14	4	8	21 May	26 May
Black-headed Gull	73	0	3		28 May	

Table 2. Passerines

Species	Min. Pairs/ singing males		Species	Min. Pairs/ singing males	
	West	East		West	East
Bearded Tit	8	3	Grasshopper Warbler	0	0
Skylark	8	8	Wren	1	0
Swallow	0	0	Pied Wagtail		
Cetti's Warbler	2	0	Meadow Pipit	7	8
Sedge Warbler	19 (+15) *	4	Linnet	1	1
Reed Warbler	17 (+27) *	7	Reed Bunting	13	3

* These counts are the transect counts with the perimeter counts in brackets.

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Table 3. Comparisons with previous years

Species	Minimum Pairs breeding					Minimum Young fledged			
	2018	2017	2016	2015		2018	2017	2016	2015
Canada Goose	2	2	2	2		5	5	0	3
Greylag		70?	50	54				?	57
Mute Swan	3	4	1	0		8	1	1	0
Egyptian Goose		0	1	1			0	2	2
Shelduck	12	33	23	7		42	85	93	22
Shoveler	2	7	9	7		4	20	22	11
Gadwall	19	24	21	16		10	62	53	26
Mallard	39	42	41	33		77	55	77	46
Pochard	4	3	4	3		11	1	15	0
Tufted Duck	2	2	2	0		0	0	6	
Little Grebe	1	2	2	0		3	4	9	
Grey Heron	2	3	2	4					?
Little Egret	6	7	9	12					?
Marsh Harrier	1	1	3 (nests)	4 (nests)		4	4	6	5
Water Rail	2	1	3	2		3		5	1
Moorhen	13	8	21	16		10	1	14	11
Coot	9	8	15	15		8	3	9	11
Oystercatcher	11	14	13	13		2	0	3	0
Avocet	90	71	72	64		10	15	4	10
Lapwing	34	44	36	51		7	8	3	13
Ringed Plover	4	5	4	4		0	5	2	0
Little Ringed Plover	4	3	3	5		0	7	0	2
Redshank	19	27	18	18		12	21	8	4
Black-headed Gull	73	23?	210	253		3	0	6	32
Common Tern	0	0	0	2					0
Bearded Tit	11	8	6-7	10					
Skylark	16	16	16	23					
Swallow	0	0	1	1				7	5
Cetti's Warbler	2	2	3	2					
Sedge Warbler *	19	27	26	30					
Reed Warbler *	17	10	22	20					
Grasshopper Warbler	0	0	0	1					
Wren	1	1	-	3					
Pied Wagtail	0	1	0	0					
Meadow Pipit	15	19	-	20					
Linnet	2	1	0	3					
Reed Bunting	16	15	17	24					

* for Sedge and Reed Warblers the 2017/18 counts are for the same transect in the western reedbed whereas the 2015/16 figures are for perimeter counts.

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Species Details

Canada Goose

2 pairs 9 goslings 5 fledged

1 pair nested on one of the islands on Watling Water and the eggs hatched c.24 April. 4 goslings were first seen with the parents on the meadow south of Watling on 25 April. On 16 May there was a pair with 5 small goslings just north of the Main Drain by Iron Rd. which was presumed to be the same brood. They continued to be seen on the meadows west of Iron Rd until the end of May. On 2 June only 3 were present and by 23 June this had reduced to 1 which fledged in early July.

No nest was found but a pair was seen with 4 tiny goslings on Whitwell Scrape on 13 May. It was assumed they had nested on Billy's Wash. The goslings continued to be seen around the central scrapes and Billy's Wash and all fledged in late June.

Greylag Goose

Bred with young seen and fledged

No regular counts were made this year but plenty of young were seen. WeBS counts on 5 March & 17 April gave 330 and 139 birds respectively so we guess at least 80 pairs attempted to breed. The first goslings were seen on the Serpentine on 23 April and others soon followed. A creche of 22 was counted on Eye Field on 30 May and one of 62 on the Serpentine on 28 June.

Mute Swan

3 pairs, 14 cygnets, 8 fledged.

	No. Pairs	No. Broods	Earliest Cygnets Seen	No. Cygnets Seen	No. Fledged
West	2	2	25 May	11	(6)
East	1	1	12 July	3	(2)
Total	3	3		14	(8)

An improvement this year after very low numbers in recent times. A pair nested near the central scrapes and the eggs hatched on 22 May. What is assumed to be this brood was often seen from 25 May, initially there were 7 cygnets but this soon reduced to 6 and then to just 2 by 18 June; they have remained on the area and are due to fledge in late October. Another pair nested on Don's Pool, producing 4 cygnets on 31 May. All 4 remain on the reserve and should fledge by the end of October. On 12 July a pair was in the Catchwater Drain west of Iron Road accompanied by 3 small cygnets, reduced to 2 by 30 July, we think these may have come from a nest reported along Mill Drift, Salthouse. This family is still occasionally seen on the eastern side of the reserve and hopefully both cygnets will fledge around mid-November.

The "Salthouse swans" bred again this year, bringing their brood of 4 onto the duck pond as usual. These are not included in our figures.

Egyptian Goose

None bred this year

Shelduck

12 pairs, 79 ducklings, 42 fledged

	No. Broods Seen	Earliest ducklings seen	No. ducklings seen	No. Fledged
West	6	23 May	42	31
East	6	26 May	37	11
TOTAL	12		79	42

Back to normal after last year's record counts. The first seen were a brood of 11 on Simmond's Scrape on 23 May. A further 5 broods were seen on the scrapes and these stayed together in their broods making them easy to follow. East of East Bank the first seen were a brood of 7 on the Shooter's Pools on 26 May. They were then seen on Pope's Pool on 1 June. The 6 broods this side were much more difficult to follow as they wandered between the different pools and drains so our estimate of 11 fledged may be a bit low.

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Garganey

No evidence of breeding this year

Shoveler

2 pairs, 12 ducklings seen, 4 fledged

	No. Broods Seen	Earliest ducklings seen	No. ducklings seen	No. Fledged
West	2	21 May	12	4
East	0			
TOTAL	2		12	4

This was a poor year for Shoveler with no broods seen at all in the eastern area. A brood of 4 were first seen in the Catchwater Drain opposite the Visitor Centre on 21 May. By 4 June they had moved to Pat's Pool where they remained until they fledged around 8 July. Another brood of 8 were seen on Pat's Pool on 18 June but weren't seen after the end of the month.

Gadwall

19 pairs bred, 104 ducklings seen, 10 fledged

	No. Broods Seen	Earliest ducklings seen	No. ducklings seen	No. Fledged
West	16	8 June	88	3
East	3	4 July	16	7
TOTAL	19		104	10

The season started off well with similar numbers of pairs and small ducklings as last year but by early July few were being seen and only 10 well grown ducklings were seen. Either there was high predation or they had moved deep into the reedbed where we couldn't see them.

Mallard

39 pairs bred, 225 ducklings seen, 77 fledged

	No. Broods Seen	Earliest ducklings seen	No. ducklings seen	No. Fledged
West	28	29 Apr	152	51
East	11	14 May	73	26
TOTAL	39		225	77

This was an above average year for Mallard.

Pochard

4 broods, 20 ducklings seen, 11 fledged

	No. Broods Seen	Earliest ducklings seen	No. ducklings seen	No. Fledged
TOTAL	4	21 May	20	11

Pochard started to return early this year with the first drake seen on 10 January and females on 22 February. 13 (7 male, 6 female) were present on 14 April. 4 broods were seen, initially in the western area but 1 moved east.

A female with a single duckling was in front of Teal Hide on 21 May then moved to Don's Pool where they remained until 13 June when they were seen together with another brood of 5 ducklings. 4 of this combined brood survived to fledge in late July.

A brood of 4 small ducklings was seen on Snipe's Marsh on 5 June. It reduced to 3 in late June and these fledged in early July.

Another brood of 7 tiny ducklings was on the central scrapes on 1 June; they reduced to 6 then also moved to Don's Pool where the number reduced to 5 but they were not seen after 18 June when they were still fairly small. A brood of 5 largish ducklings first seen on Watling Water on 30 June were possibly these and at least 4 of them fledged in mid-July.

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Tufted Duck

2 pairs, 2 broods, 15 ducklings seen, 0 fledged

	No. Broods Seen	Earliest ducklings seen	No. ducklings seen	No. Fledged
West	2	3 July	15	0
East	0		0	0
TOTAL	2		15	0

The first returning birds were seen on 6 March with a maximum count of 17 (6 females) on 6 May.

A female with a brood of 8 tiny ducklings was seen on Don's Pool on 3 July and then most days until 18 July but not after that. On 25 July a female was in the Catchwater Drain by E Bank with a brood of 7 tiny ducklings. These were too small to be the previous brood. They continued to be seen in the drain until 31 July. On 5 – 11 August a female was on Don's Pool with 3 medium-sized ducklings which were probably from this 2nd brood. A single duckling was there on 13 August but was not seen again. We have no evidence of fledging but up to 3 females or fledged young were seen on Don's Pool, Watling Water and Snipe's Marsh in late August.

Little Grebe

1 pair, 2 broods, 3 fledged

	Pairs	No. Broods Seen	Earliest chicks seen	No. chicks	No. Fledged
West	1	2	First Brood ? Second Brood 20 July	First Brood 2 Second Brood 1	First Brood 2 Second Brood 1
East	0	0		0	0
TOTAL	1	2		3	3

A pair was present on Snipe's Marsh from the end of May and their trilling calls were heard throughout June but no small chicks were seen. However, from 11 July the pair was accompanied by two fully-grown chicks. Then on 20 July a very young chick was with two adults and thereafter all five birds were often together, the adults occasionally half-heartedly chasing off the two juveniles. It seems likely, therefore, that this one pair had two broods with 3 chicks fledging.

Bittern

Did not breed again this year

Grey Heron

2 pairs nested in North Foreland wood, no. of young unknown.

Nests seem to become more difficult to see in North Foreland Wood each year. Only 2 nests were seen this year, an adult standing on a nest on 21 March then 2 adults standing on nests on 9 May. However, 9 birds were seen over the wood on 22 March. The first juvenile was seen on the reserve with an adult on 22 June and an adult was seen with 2 young on 4 July.

Little Egret

6 pairs nested in North Foreland wood, no. of young unknown.

Birds were seen flying into North Foreland Wood from early April when 'gurgling' noises were also heard. 12 birds were counted on the reserve on 17 April including a 'flock' of 10 together off E Bank. Three nests were definitely seen on 9 May but it is believed that 6 pairs nested this year. Young were seen on the reserve from 2 July with 4 seen together on Watling Water on the 19th. On 26 July, 14 birds (adults and juveniles) were sat in the tree-tops of N Foreland with at least 11 more on the reserve at the same time.

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Marsh Harrier

1 pair, 1 brood, 4 fledged.

	No. nests	No. broods	No. Fledged
West	1	1	4
East	?		
TOTAL	1	1	4

The regular female (Blondie) and her mate had, once more, wintered in the main reedbed on the western part of the reserve and mating and nest building activity was seen in early April. The first fledged youngster was seen on 25 June with 3 on the 27th and a fourth from 8 July.

Two males and two females were seen over the eastern area during April and May. In late April a male with a very white head was displaying with a normal looking female on several dates. On 29 April the same female was seen flying up and down regularly with a bright tri-coloured male near the big tree and they were seen to make a food pass on 10 May. At the same time a dark female was also occasionally interacting with this male. The bright male and dark female were seen together again on 19 May. They continued to be seen occasionally through June and early July occasionally carrying food but no young were ever seen.

Common Buzzard

No evidence of breeding

One or two were seen regularly over and in North Foreland wood in March and April and later in the summer but there was no evidence of breeding there. They are believed to be breeding in woods to the south of our area.

Water Rail

At least 2 pairs, 4 chicks seen, 3 fledged.

Birds were heard calling from Bishop's Hide, Teal/ Daukes Hides, Catchwater Drain south of Teal Hide, E Bank near the sluice, N Scrape and the boardwalk during April and May. The first youngster was seen south of Daukes Hide on 5 July and was reported as a large chick on the 10th. It continued to be seen through to mid-August when it would have fledged. As far as we know there was only 1 brood. Another pair was seen with 3 young in the drain in front of Bishop's Hide on 23 July and at least 2 fledged.

Moorhen

13 pairs, 12 broods, min.30 chicks, min.10 fledged

	No. Pairs	No. Broods	Earliest date chicks seen	No. Chicks Seen	No. Fledged
West	10	9	29 May	26	8
East	3	3	4 July	4	2
TOTAL	13	12		30	10

A better year for Moorhens, particularly in the west around the central scrapes. The Catchwater Drain seemed to support fewer individuals than in previous years with only 8 known nesting attempts along the whole length. Visibility along many of the drains was restricted by encroaching reed and it is likely broods were missed although we did spend a lot of time listening for contact calls in these areas. As before, many chicks disappeared at a very early stage. Several young were not seen by us until they were well-grown.

Coot

9 pairs, 10 broods, 16 chicks, 8 fledged

	No. Pairs	No. Nests seen	Broods seen	Chicks seen	No. Fledged
West	8	2	9	14	8
East	1	0	1	2	0
Total	9	2	10	16	8

Another poor year. Only 2 nests were found, 1 in the channel running North from Bishops to the East of Pat's on 8 May and 1 on Don's Pool from 26 May which hatched on 17 June. 6 broods were seen on the central scrapes but 3 of these were of just a single large chick when we first saw them so must have hatched from elsewhere on the reserve, possibly the drains or Richardson's scrape, part of which is not visible. Elsewhere a single chick hatched

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(and fledged) from the nest on Don's Pool and a brood of 3 was on Snipe's Marsh (2 fledged). The only evidence of breeding on the eastern side was of a brood of 2 tiny chicks in late May but these weren't seen again.

Oystercatcher

11 pairs, 3 broods (3 chicks) hatched, 2 fledged

	No. Pairs	Nesting attempts	Successful nests	Chicks seen	No. Fledged
West	6	18	1	1	0
East	5	8	2	2	2
TOTAL	11	26	3	3	2

Although the figures do not look brilliant this was a good year for Oystercatchers at Cley being only the fifth time in the 15 years we have been monitoring them that they have fledged young.

West

Once more all nests were on the shingle although 1 or 2 pairs were seen trying on the meadows beside Beach Rd but were never in the same place for more than a few days. 3 pairs had multiple attempts on the fenced off shingle between N Screen and E Bank but none were successful. One bird took over an abandoned Black-headed Gull nest on the grassy tussocks at the east end of the Brackish Pool. This went full term and hatched on 8 July. No chicks were seen for a few days but 1 was seen briefly being fed on 11 July but never again. Another pair had a nest on the shingle in the fenced off area just west of N Screen from 28-31 May then probably the same pair nested on the shingle ridge directly north of the entrance to N Screen in an area where a lot of people and dogs walked. This was roped off but the nest failed after 6 days.

East

As in the west all nests were on the northern fringe of the area. 2 pairs were around Arnold's Marsh throughout the period but only 1 nested successfully. A nest was found on the beach towards the west end of Arnold's at the end of May but only lasted a couple of days. Probably the same pair then nested inside the fence line in the '1st gap' at Arnold's. This nest went full term and hatched on 16 July. Only 1 chick was seen and although it seemed slow to grow it finally fledged around 20 August and was still being fed by the parents in September. The other pair mainly frequented the east end of Arnold's and were only once seen sitting on a possible nest.

There were 3 pairs on Sea Pool shingle. The first nest was found at the eastern end on 14 May and only lasted 10 days. This pair didn't appear to try again but may have moved east to Salthouse. Another pair nested mid-way along the shingle behind Sea Pool. It was first seen on 13 June and survived to hatch on 8 July. A single tiny chick was seen on 9 July and grew quickly. It fledged around 8 August after which it and its parents moved away. Another nest was found on 18 June and went full term, but if any chicks hatched they were not seen.

Avocet

90 pairs, 120 chicks seen, 10 fledged

	No. pairs	No. Broods	Earliest Hatching Date	No. Chicks seen	No. Fledged
West	60	23	17 May	64	5
East	30	21	18 May	56	5
TOTAL	90	44		120	10
<i>+ from Blakeney Pt</i>		4		9	0

As usual the first nests were seen on Pat's Pool in mid-April but this year birds also started nesting on both Simmond's and the newly renovated Whitwell Scrape with 52 active nests counted on 8 May. The first chicks were seen there on 17 May, a brood of 3 on Whitwell. Others soon followed with a total of 19 broods (54 chicks) being seen by the end of May. By 7 June all nests and chicks had gone from Pat's Pool but some chicks may have moved to Simmond's and Whitwell where some nests and chicks survived through the summer. Elsewhere in the western area, 3 pairs nested on and around the Brackish Pools with 1 pair hatching 2 chicks from the western end which then moved to Pope's Pool.

Very few birds nested on the Serpentine, Pope's Pool and Arnolds, an area that often gets a lot of birds trying again after they fail on the scrapes. However, this year there were good numbers on the Shooter's Pools after a poor year in 2017. At least 16 pairs nested there and 9 broods (27 chicks) were seen. They had all gone by mid-June and none were seen to fledge there but we think some of the families may have moved to Pope's Pool, Watling Water or

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further east out of our area but we haven't proved this. Families seemed very mobile across the eastern area and in the end 4 chicks fledged on Pope's Pool which hadn't hatched there and a further 1 from Watling Water.

In addition to the broods hatched on the reserve at least 4 pairs were seen moving their chicks across Beach Road and the car park from Blakeney. They usually went to the pools in the Eye Field but some were seen on North Scrape and some may have walked further east but none are thought to have survived long

Lapwing

34 nesting attempts, 14 broods, min.36 chicks, min.7 fledged

	No. Nests	No. Broods Hatched	Earliest Hatching Date	No. Chicks seen	No. Fledged
West	12	4	7 May	11	2
East	22	10	4 May	25	5
TOTAL	34	14		36	7

Although there were 34 nesting attempts this year the number of broods and fledglings were low. Nesting was concentrated in just a few areas, mainly around the Serpentine and along the eastern boundary. The highest density was adjacent to the East Bank but in contrast to most years success here was very low with most chicks being lost after just a few days. Very few nesting attempts were made on Eye Field, Bull and Keeper's Marshes. Across the whole reserve only 7 chicks were known to fledge, 2 on the west and 5 on the eastern boundary. As always, we know we will have missed some nests in areas that are difficult to observe (Billy's Wash, for example) but by watching for breeding behaviour of adult birds we believe the number missed to be low.

Ringed Plover

4 pairs, 4 chicks, 0 fledged

	Pairs	No. Chicks Seen	No. Chicks Fledged
West	1	0	0
East	3	4	0
Totals	4	4	0

As always it was difficult to determine territories early in the year but by mid-May we were regularly seeing 1 pair in the area between Beach car park and E Bank and another 3 pairs along the shingle east of E Bank. As reported last year although Ringed Plovers were visiting the scrapes there was no sign of any attempting to nest and all this year's nests were on the shingle.

West

Birds were regularly on N Scrape and the shingle between there and E Bank during May and June and even occasionally appeared to be on a nest but were never in the same place the next day. Then on 28 June a nest was found not far south of the fence mid-way along its length. This was watched for a week but then on 6 July the pair were flying around and didn't go on the nest. The next day the female was seen sitting but in a different position. The pair stayed in the area for a few more days then appeared to give up.

East

Pair 1: A nest was found on 6 May mid-way along the shingle behind Sea Pool. We had been away for 2 weeks so it could have been present for a while. It was then seen regularly until 21 May. On 23 May there was no sign of the birds near the site or of any chicks. As we don't know exactly when the birds first sat we cannot be sure if chicks hatched or the nest was lost.

Pair 2: A nest was found on 8 May a little further west than pair 1's nest but it was abandoned after 2 days. They had another attempt on 13 June which lasted 3 days. They were seen regularly in the same area in late June and then eventually the nest was found on 6 July only 1-2 metres inside the fence over a slight ridge so very difficult to see. A sitting bird was then seen regularly until the 20th when we thought it might have hatched but could not see the adults or any chicks. On the 21st a pair were seen on the sand beside Sea Pool with 3 tiny chicks. Only 1 chick could be found on the 23rd and on the 24th there was no sign of the adults or any chicks.

Pair 3: On 11 June a nest was found near the eastern end of Sea Pool c.15m inside the fence line. This was then watched regularly until the 18th after which the weather turned wet and windy making viewing difficult. Although the site was visited regularly it was not seen again and we assumed it had failed. Then on the 29th a bird was seen walking back to the same position and settling down. It was then seen daily until 4 July. On the 5th the nest was empty and a pair were seen on the beach north of the fence, behaving as if they had young but no chicks were seen.

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On the 9th a pair were seen on Sea Pool with 1 tiny chick. It was seen again on the 11th but not after that so we assume it was predated.

Little Ringed Plover

4 pairs, 0 chicks seen, 0 fledged

	Pairs	Nests	No. Chicks seen	No. Chicks fledged
West	2	2	0	0
East	2	2	0	0
Total	4	4	0	0

A pair was displaying on Whitwell on 11 May and a nest was found there on the 17th. A Black-headed Gull was seen to take the eggs on the 20th. What is presumed to be the same pair tried again on Simmond's in mid-June but the nest lasted less than a week. Another pair was displaying around the pool west of N Screen entrance from early May but they were in competition with a pair of Ringed Plovers here and no nest was ever seen.

In the east a nest was found south of Pope's Pool on 13 May but never seen again. This is an area where they have nested the last 2 years. A nest found on Arnold's on 9 June was thought to be the same pair. They were still in the area on the 12th but not on a nest. Another pair was displaying on Watling Water in early/mid-May but no nest was ever found.

Common Snipe

No evidence of breeding

15 birds were reported on the reserve on 8 April with a few around for the rest of the month. There were no reports of drumming or any other evidence of breeding.

Redshank

19 broods, 38 chicks, 12 fledged

	No. Broods Hatched	First chicks seen	No. Chicks Seen	Min. No. Fledged
West	5	21 May	11	4
East	14	26 May	27	8
TOTAL	19		38	12

After last year's success, the number of broods found in 2018 was nearer the average. At least 38 chicks were seen and although tall, thick vegetation made the task of following these broods difficult we believe at least 12 fledged.

Black-headed Gull

73 pairs, 12 chicks seen, 3 fledged

	No. Pairs	No. chicks seen	No. fledged
West	73	12	3
East	0	0	0
Total	73	12	3

There were a lot of gulls on nests on Pat's Pool during May and a chick hatched from the first nest on 28 May. Another 3 nests hatched over the next week but all chicks and nests were gone by 9 June. There were also a few nests on Simmond's and Whitwell Scrapes but none hatched from these and again all were gone by 9 June. As usual there were up to 8 nests on the grassy tussocks at the east end of the Brackish Pools and chicks did hatch from 2 of these but did not survive long. There were another 6 nests elsewhere on the Brackish and 3 chicks hatched from those at the west end, these 3 survived to fledge.

None were seen nesting east of E Bank.

Wood Pigeon

A few pairs breeding

At least three bushes had nests in during July and August by East Bank and along the Skirts.

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Bearded Tit

11-12 pairs (8-9 west, 3 east)

After the awful weather in March it was very cheering to know that two flocks of Bearded Tits had been seen, a mixed sex group of 14 on 29 March in the main reedbed and another of 6 on 1 April in the eastern reedbed.

During April the areas the pairs were using were noted and it was thought that there were 8-9 pairs between Beach Road and E Bank and 3 pairs east of E Bank.

The first juveniles were seen along East Bank by Don's Pool on 13 May (10 May last year in the same place). Then between the 18th and 31st up to 3 families could be seen along the Boardwalk to the Main Hides. In the east a pair with 3 juveniles were on the western side of the reedbed and birds were heard north of Babcock Hide. Another adult with 2 juveniles was seen in the reedbed west of the Shooter's Pools.

There were regular sightings of juveniles seen with adults or by themselves over the next few weeks, particularly on the western side of the reserve.

Skylark

16 singing males (8 west, 8 east)

Singing males were counted between 14 March and 28 March. Favourite areas in the west were the Eye Field, the Coastguards overflow car park and North Screen. Additional males sang over Bull Marsh, Cricket Marsh and Billy's Wash perimeter.

To the east, the Iron Road is often fought over for territories and males could be seen here and along Attenborough's Walk as far as the track up to Babcock.

There are always 2 males occupying the Serpentine with a third further over towards Wigeon Marsh. It is usually on the East Bank path that juveniles are seen well and on 14 July this year a parent was feeding two begging youngsters there. Later, on 25 July two probable chicks were fluttering towards an adult on the Serpentine.

Juveniles were seen later in early August feeding themselves among the seeding vegetation beside the path along the bank.

Swallow

Did not breed

A pair was seen prospecting the Lookout on E Bank on 11 June when a pair was also reported entering Bishop's Hide but they weren't seen again. As far as we know none were seen at the traditional site of the Pillbox by Beach car park this year.

House Martin

Did not breed on the reserve

As in previous years they nested on houses along the Coast Road including Watcher's Cottage.

Cetti's Warbler

2 singing males, 3 young seen

One regularly sang from bushes by the Catchwater Drain between the bridge opposite Watcher's Cottage and the Visitor Centre and a second from the SE corner of Snipe's Marsh.

The first proof of breeding was when 3 very recently fledged juveniles showed along the Skirts path between the Visitor Centre and Old Woman's Lane on 14 July. The next day one had to be rescued from the path and put back into the vegetation.

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Sedge Warbler

19 singing males (West interior transect), 15 singing males (West perimeter) + 4 in the east

The first bird wasn't seen until 16 April, much later than usual, and it soon became apparent that numbers were poor.

West

The main reedbed was counted along the same transect as last year on 9 May and again on the 22nd. There were 19 males heard singing on the 9th and 10 on the 22nd which shows that some at least had found a mate by the second visit. A considerable drop in numbers from the 27 males heard singing in 2017.

A perimeter count was done between West and East Banks, including Snipe's Marsh and paths to the hides on 24 April when 15 singing males were seen and again on 26 May when the number had reduced to 5. In 2016, the perimeter had 26 singing males on 30 April.

East

In the central area, only 1 was heard on 9 May although 3 more were singing by drains next to East Bank, Attenborough's Walk and the Iron Road on other visits.

Proof of breeding was first seen on 4 July when food-carrying was seen near the Bridge opposite Watcher's Cottage. On 19 July fledged juveniles were seen along the Boardwalk and a family was still present in the Catchwater Drain on 8 August.

Reed Warbler

17 singing males (West interior transect), 27 singing males (West perimeter) + 7 in the east

The first arrival was heard on 19 April by Snipe's Marsh. Then on the 22nd four were heard singing by East Bank, but after this migration halted and numbers remained low until the second half of May.

West

The main reedbed transect was counted on 7 May when 5 singing males were located, then on another count on 22 May this had increased to 17 singing. An increase from the 10 heard in 2017.

A perimeter count was done on 22 May when 26 males were heard, plus a new one the next day bringing it up to 27. These were mainly along East Bank but there were 4 singing on Snipe's Marsh, a few along the Skirts and more up the Boardwalk. None were heard along Beach Road. The 2016 total was only 22.

East

Males were heard singing from the perimeter paths, 5 on 21 May by the Iron Road and Catchwater Drain and 2 more by the Serpentine on 29 May.

Proof of breeding was first noted on 18 June when a juvenile was seen by the Bittern Drain. More chicks were heard further up the E Bank and parents were seen food carrying that week and later into July by the Iron Road, the Boardwalk and Junction Bridge. A couple of very young chicks were photographed on the Boardwalk sheltering from the wind on 29 July. Adults were also seen in August taking food into reeds by Bishop's Hide on the 11th and a family party by Bittern drain on 6th.

Grasshopper Warbler

Did not breed

None were seen or heard during the breeding season this year.

Wren

One pair bred

Once again, a nest was built close to or actually in one of the main hides and an adult was carrying food on 29 May. It was still singing on 10 June and 3 July.

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Pied Wagtail

None bred on the reserve this year but presumed local juveniles were feeding on the scrapes and begging from their parents in June.

Meadow Pipit

15 singing males (7 west, 8 east)

Numbers were much the same as the Skylarks, with most Meadow Pipits occupying the northern half of the reserve, often where the pasture or saltmarsh meets the shingle.

The first breeding evidence was seen on 25 April from Babcock Hide, where a pair were building a nest in long grass. Next to Sea Pool, food-carrying was seen on 18 May and by the east end of Eye Field on 16 July. Meadow Pipits have two broods per year.

Linnet

2 pairs

A pair was seen next to North Screen where a female took material into the gorse while the male stood guard on 10 June. On another visit to the Screen on 16 July a male was still present nearby. The outcome is not known.

A pair was also seen by the suaeda patch north of Arnold's Marsh on 16 July where a male was singing until a second bird emerged from the bushes and they flew off together.

Reed Bunting

16 males (13 west, 3 east)

Numbers seem to be stable with 13 males recorded west of East Bank and 3 to the east as far as the Iron Road. On the west side they are spread fairly evenly round the main reedbed. Four territories were found along the western transect route on 22 May and other singing males were seen from East Bank, West Bank, the Boardwalk and near Bishop's Hide.

In the east a pair was seen by the central track, a male at the east end of Sea Pool and a third by Swan Lake. He was seen twice escorting his mate while she collected nest material there on 6 and 29 May.

No young birds were seen well until 11 August when large juveniles were seen accompanied by one or both parents, feeding along East Bank in three places and also near the Visitor Centre on the Skirts path. While the seeding weeds remained along East Bank birds could be seen there regularly.

Notes:

Once more we would like to thank the wardens, George Baldock, Bernard Bishop and Ken Foster, and all local and visiting birders who told us of their sightings of nests and young birds around the reserve thus helping to complete the picture.

Our team this year was made up of Kath & Mick Claydon, Sue & Peter Morrison and Pat & David Wileman with help from Mike Harcup and George Baldock.

We are still looking for more people to help with the monitoring of nests and chicks needed to produce this report so if you think you could help next year we would love to hear from you now. You don't have to be an expert (but we don't mind if you are!); we weren't when we started and still aren't now but have learnt a lot, and continue to do so. You will just need enthusiasm and some time to spare, then we are sure you will find it rewarding.

This report is sent to the NWT and the county recorder. It is published on the Cley Bird Club website. Copies are also sent to the Norfolk Coast National Trust, representatives of the BTO, Natural England and RSPB and also to others who in the past have expressed an interest in seeing it. A summary is published in the Cley Bird Club newsletter.

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