

Norfolk Wildlife Trust Cley & Salthouse Marshes

Breeding report 2021

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Introduction

After a difficult survey season in 2020, due to covid restrictions, 2021 allowed a full survey to be carried out, as the volunteer team and members of the public were able to visit the reserve throughout the breeding season.

Surveys were carried out of all areas between West bank at Cley, through to, but not including Kelling Water Meadows.

In addition to the regular monitoring carried out, the BTO's BWWMs survey was undertaken, which consisted of 3-4 visits at key times during the breeding season, the results of which have been incorporated into the data in this report.

Weather

A very wet start, until beginning of April resulted in lots of standing water on marshes, remaining wetter than usual for the time of year. Some days gave stormy conditions, with strong northerly winds, which affected some species.

A quick change, with a long dry and also cold spell throughout the whole of April, where water levels quickly dropped. South Pool remained wet, due to problems with a sluice and not being able to drop levels in the Catchwater drain.

Long periods of cold NE winds later in the season. W/C May 3rd, strong winds and heavy rains.

Species Summaries

Grey Partridge

Pairs: 2 Fledged: 3

As in past years, a pair were recorded on the Eye Field, the exact nesting location unknown, but the pair were seen later in the season with 3 young.

Canada Goose

Pairs: 4 Fledged: unknown

Small numbers of Canada Geese bred on the reserve this year, with nests on Brackish pool, Richardsons and Watling Water. No young were seen.

Mute Swan

Pairs: 5 Fledged: 15

Mute Swans nested in similar locations to last year, on Don's Pool, Pope's and along the Catch water drain at Salthouse. 2 broods were regularly seen by the pond dipping platform at Cley, the other nests were presumably predated.

Shelduck

Broods: 23 Fledged: 8

As usual, Shelduck were seen to be nesting on the Eye field and also on Salthouse Little Eye (NT). Several pairs were also seen moving young from nearby arable land, across the A149, to the reserve. Good numbers of broods were noted, however fledging success seemed lower than usual.

Shoveler

Pairs: 4 Fledged: 19

4 Broods were recorded, mostly within the main scrape complex, with at least 19 chicks fully fledging. One brood was recorded on popes.

Gadwall

Broods: 10 Fledged: 26

Most broods were recorded on the main scrapes at Cley, with other numbers recorded in the Catchwater drain and on Watling Water.

Mallard

Broods: 33 Fledged: 38

Broods were noted across the reserve, mostly at Cley and on Popes, with 2 broods recorded at Salthouse.

Tufted Duck

Pairs: 4 Fledged: 4

4 broods were noted across the reserve, 3 at Cley, 1 at Salthouse with only 1 of these broods being successful, fledging 4 young, on Snipe's Marsh.

WaterRail

Pairs: 5 Fledged: 6

A Pair were regularly recorded at the main hides and a separate bird was noted calling by bishops hide. Pairs were recorded on Pats Pool, Snipes Marsh the Serpentine and 2 on Simmonds. Each pair being monitored fledged 1, with the pair on the Serpentine fledging 2.

Moorhen

Pairs: 9 Fledged: 7

All pairs of Moorhen that were recorded were located in or close to the catch-water drain. This number is likely to be lower than the actual figure, as a lot of the catch-water drain east of East Bank is difficult to monitor. There were good numbers of small chicks seen, but only a few grew to fledging size.

Coot

Pairs: 5 Fledged: 0

3 Pairs were recorded between Don's pool and Snipes Marsh, another pair on the main scrapes and a 5th on Pope's. 10 chicks were recorded throughout the season, however none of these are thought to have fully fledged.

Little Grebe

Pairs: 3 Fledged: 4

Single adult birds were noted on Snipes marsh, Don's pool and Richardson's pool, from Bishops hide, all showing signs of breeding.

2 birds fledged from Don's and 2 later from Snipes.

Oystercatcher

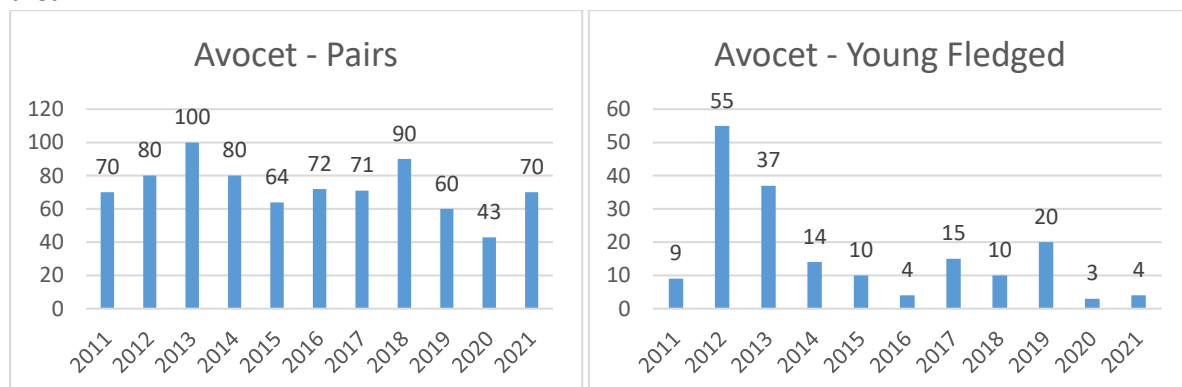
Pairs: 5 Fledged: 0

Nests were mostly located along the beach or along the northern edge of the reserve, with the exception of one on PO2. Only one nest successfully hatched chicks (Brackish Pool) but these were not seen a few days after hatching. Again, one pair nested on the shingle, near East bank but soon failed after being disturbed by walkers.

Avocet

Pairs: 70 Fledged: 4

This year, despite a good number of breeding pairs on site, Avocet experienced high levels of predation. The general breeding pattern of Avocet didn't follow suit from previous years, with minimal breeding attempts on the main scrapes and an early relocation to the shingle and brackish areas of the reserve. All but 2 nests were predated at egg stage. Of these 2 nests, 8 chicks were hatched and 4 successfully fledged. Both of these broods were located on the serpentine/popes pool area.

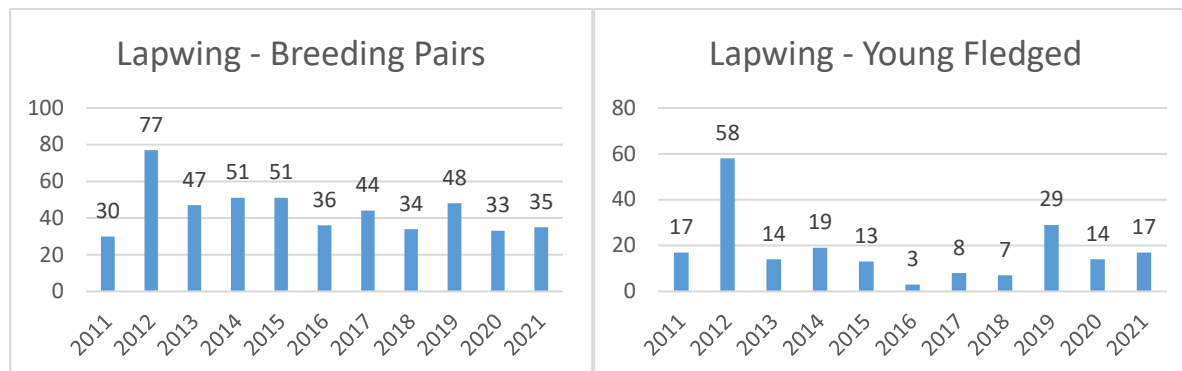


Lapwing

Pairs: 35? Fledged: 17

Early nesting birds were quite successful, with the first broods seen 27th April .c10-12 broods hatched across the reserve by 1st may. Later in the season, young birds succumbed to predation, from Crows and Kestrels on Popes.

Again, like 2020 PO2 proved to be very productive, with 14 nesting attempts and fledging 5 young.



Ringed Plover

Pairs: 10 Fledged: 2

All territories were yet again on the shingle areas. There were again no pairs on the meadows or freshwater scrapes. Of the 7 nests located 5 were behind the fence lines. 10 pairs produced just 4 broods of chicks. Only 8 chicks were seen - none at Cley, 4 at Pope's Marsh and 4 at Salthouse. Two of these chicks fledged successfully

Year	Pairs	Nests found	Broods seen	Chicks seen	Chicks fledged
2012	4	1	2	5	5
2013	7	7	3	9	2
2014	6	3	1	2	1
2015	6	4	3	12	0
2016	6	6	4	10	7
2017	9	8	4	11	5+*
2018	6	8	3	8	4
2019	7	3	6	19	13
2020	7	3	5	17	16
2021	10	7	4	8	2

Little Ringed Plover

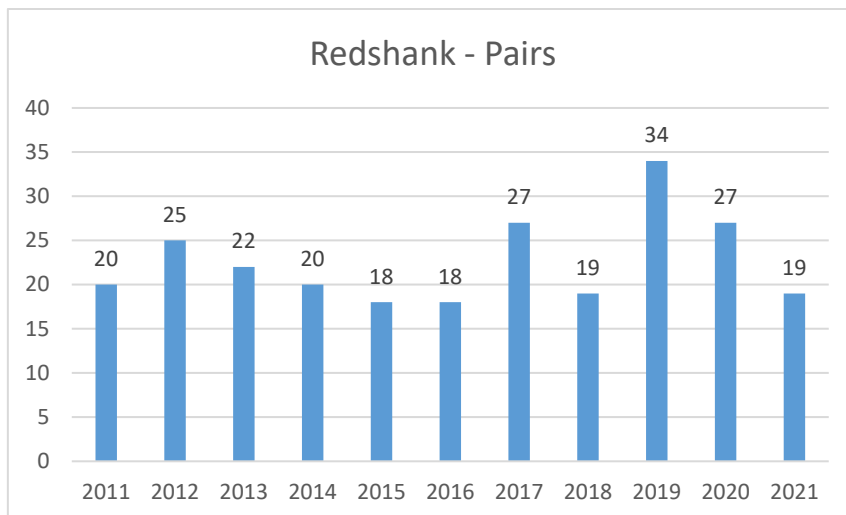
Pairs: unknown Fledged: 7

Little Ringed Plover were quite elusive this year, with adult birds clearly flying back and forth to arable land behind the visitor centre and also the field to the East of North Foreland woods. 4 fledged Juveniles on Whitwell Scrape were seen at the end of August and 3 on the Serpentine

Redshank

Pairs: 19 Fledged: unknown

Redshank pairs were recorded when surveying the grazing marshes, watching breeding behaviour and nests located by monitoring adults changing over to share incubation. Highest numbers of nests and young seen were on the wet grazing marshes (Bull Marsh, Serpentine, PO2) and the saltmarshes (Arnolds, Brackish Pools, Sea Pool)



Bittern

Territories: 1 Fledged: 0

For a 3rd year, a male was present on site, booming from mid-March, 1 month earlier than previous years. Booming also seemed quieter and less frequent than in previous years. Monitoring of breeding activity was carried out throughout April, May and June, but no feeding flights or other activity was noted.

Grey Heron

Pairs: 5 Fledged: min 3

Little Egret

Pairs: 6 Fledged: min 5

The heronry, located in North Foreland woods was once again monitored throughout the season. Visits to the site were carried out but visibility through the trees quickly reduced which made monitoring of nests very difficult. Further monitoring was carried out by estimating numbers of birds leaving and arriving the woodland and also number of young seen on the reserve.

Marsh Harrier

Nests: 3 Fledged: 6

Similar to 2020, one nest was located in boardwalk reed bed, keeping the boardwalk closed after covid lockdown. A second nest was located north of Pats Pool and a third nest on Popes. For reasons unknown, the boardwalk nest failed after hatching, however the nest at Pats fledged 2 and Popes fledged 4.

Bearded Tit

Territories: 11 Fledged: 32 +

Numbers were mostly recorded from public paths and from the usual set transect within the main reed bed, which was carried out 3 times throughout the season. 11 territories were noted, which is average for the last few years. Fledging is likely to be under recorded as access to parts of the reserve around North scrape and Billies wash in the breeding season is difficult without causing disturbance to the scrapes.

Swallow

Pairs: 1 Fledged: 7

Having not had breeding Swallows on the reserve since 2016, it was nice to see a pair utilising Daukes Hide, which was closed due to covid. 4 chicks successfully fledged from the first attempt and despite late in the season, the same pair laid a second clutch in a new nest and fledged a further 3 young.

Cettis Warbler

Territories: 7 Fledged: unknown

As usual, all territories were located mostly along the Catch-water Drain and 1 along East Bank. Some young are thought to have fledged but none were recorded.

Sedge Warbler

Territories: 35 Fledged: 22

Reed Warbler

Territories: 19 Fledged: 26

Reed and Sedge warbler were mostly recorded from public paths, with 3 surveys being carried out along the usual transect route, through the main reed bed and some records from the reed bed on Pops. These records are a minimum count, as some parts of the main reed bed and also in the centre of the main reserve are overlooked, due to access/disturbance issues. Numbers of territories recorded are very similar to last year. The number of fledged birds seen has increased as a result of an increased monitoring effort, but remain consistent with data from 2015.

Grasshopper Warbler

Territories: 1 Fledged: unknown

A single singing male was heard from the 23rd April in front of the visitor centre for several weeks which then seemed to relocate to the reed bed, near East Bank car park. No young were recorded.

Stonechat

Pairs: 2 Fledged: 1

2 pairs were noted on the reserve, during the breeding season. A pair were seen several times in the main reed bed and a single fledged juvenile was seen on June 13th.

Yellow Wagtail

Territories: 2 Fledged: 0

A singing male was noted, on territory on the Serpentine on May 16th. It was still present in July. A juvenile was seen in this area on July 18th, but not thought to be associated with the male. A second singing male was briefly seen by the shooter's pools in early June, but no further sightings were recorded after this.

Reed Bunting

Territories: 14 Fledged: 6

Singing males and breeding behaviour were recorded as territories, which were up on last year. Similar to Sedge and Reed warbler, fledging numbers are a minimum, as some areas are overlooked due to access/disturbance issues.

Other notable species

Other breeding species were recorded nesting in the hedges, willows and boxes around the visitor centre. These species include:

Wood Pigeon, Great Tit, Long Tailed Tit, Wren, Blackbird, Greenfinch, Goldfinch.

Lesser Whitethroat and **Common Whitethroat** were recorded along the skirts path. **Linnet** were recorded feeding young along the Eye Field fence line.

A pair of **Wrens** and **Pied Wagtail** also chose to nest in Daukes Hide, whilst it was closed to the public.

Acknowledgments

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