

Norfolk Wildlife Trust Cley & Salhouse Marshes Breeding report 2022



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Introduction

2022 saw a mixture of success with highlites being the first successful breeding Bittern at Cley since 2008 and Spoonbills nesting in the woodland, adjacent to the reserve. Ringed plover also seems to do very well. Lowlites including poor productivity for Lapwing and Avocet. It was also another challenging year in terms weather, with long, dry periods and hot temperatures in July and August.

Full monitoring was once again carried out by the team of volunteers and the reserves staff between West bank and Iron road and key species were monitored east of Iron road to Kelling Quags.

Species Summaries

Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*

Pairs: 1 Fledged: unknown

Up to three birds seen regularly on Eye Field and South Scrape area in April to June. No breeding activity confirmed.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

Pairs: 7 Fledged: c4

Several pairs were recorded across the reserve. The first adults on nests were recorded on April 4th, with the first cygnets recorded on 3rd June.

Breeding pairs North of Richardson's, Salthouse Duck Pond and two on Catchwater drain, along Meadow Lane appear to have failed during the egg or very early young stage.

Most successfully hatched chicks grew to a large size, however a number of dead cygnets (no adults?) were recorded starting in August. Not clear whether this is normal with Mute Swans or related to serious outbreaks of Bird Flu prevalent in Norfolk in late summer onwards.

Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

Broods: 6 Fledged: 20

First brood (12) seen on Simmond's on 24th May

Broods seen:

2 Simmond's, tot 15 ducklings – 11 fledged

1 Pats, tot 7 ducklings 5 probably fledged

3 Serp/ Pope's/Main Drain, 17 ducklings, 4 prob fledged

Total 6 broods, 39 ducklings 20 fledged

As usual we don't know where these had nested but assume somewhere south of the Coast road.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

Pairs: 0 Fledged: 0

Despite 3 pairs being present throughout early spring, most left by mid-April and there was no evidence of breeding.

Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

Pairs: 4 Fledged: Min 7

There appear to have been at least 2 broods on the central scrapes plus 1 or 2 in the Catchwater Drain and Skirts/Don's Pools. We only have evidence of 7 ducklings fledging from the initial brood on Whitwell.

The first seen were a brood of 8 on Whitwell on 27th May and 7 of these survived to fledge in July.

There was a 2nd brood of 4 on Simmond's from 1st June we have no evidence of these fledging.

There was a brood of 6 first seen in the Catchwater Drain W of E Bank on 6th June. These were only reported for 10 days (last on 16th June)

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

Pairs: 8 Fledged: 12

All records refer to the Catchwater Drain and nearby pools (Skirts + Don's) and south side of Pat's Pool. As usual no nests were seen.

A maximum of 8 broods were seen/reported with a total of 44 ducklings though there was possibly some duplication with these.

The first ducklings, a brood of 8 on the Skirts Pool, on 4th June.

From the notes on the forum, I would guess that at least 12 fledged from 3 broods all others were lost

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Pairs: 30 Fledged: min 14

Lots were reported but seemed hard to follow.

From the records on the forum there appeared to be 30 broods with a total of 93 ducklings but there may have been some duplication. Of these we only have evidence of 14 fledging.

The first brood seen was of a single duckling on Snipe's Marsh on 18th April - this was not seen again.

Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Pairs: 1 Fledged: 1

First of year appeared in April with 6 drakes and 2 ducks present on 7th.

Numbers reduced and only 1 pair nested on Snipe's from 26th April. The female and a brood of 4 tiny ducklings were first seen on 23rd May. Early morning on 25th May the female and ducklings were still on Snipe's along with 2 drakes, then later that day a female with 4 small ducklings were seen on Don's Pool. They were never seen on Snipe's again so we assume they had crossed the road. The brood reduced to 1 duckling by 13th June. Then on 28th June the duckling was still there but there was no further sight of the female. The duckling remained until 27th July and would probably have fledged around 12th July but we never saw it fly.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

Pairs: 0 Fledged: 0

The first pair returned this year on 5th April and the maximum count was 10 on the 19th which included several pairs. There was no evidence of breeding, and most had left by 21st June.

WaterRail *Rallus aquaticus*

Pairs: 6 Fledged: 5 minimum

Territories on Snipes, Dons Pool, near Daukes, Bishops, North of Simmonds and Main Drain. 4 juveniles seen together at north side of Simmonds on 14 July and a juvenile in the Catchwater Drain on 19 July. Fledging success notoriously difficult to ascertain.

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Pairs: min.16 Broods: 19 Chicks: 58 Fledged: min.10

It proved difficult to monitor Moorhens this year with visibility along most drains being increasingly hampered by reed growth. Although viewing was easier across the scrapes and pools sightings were few. Many chicks were lost after a very short time and only 10 were known to reach the age at which they could fledge. The first chicks were seen on 3rd May in the Catchwater Drain on Pope's Marsh; this pair went on to produce three broods but there was no evidence that chicks survived to fledge. On Snipe's Marsh a pair produced two broods and, with better visibility here, 3 of the chicks were seen to mature and presumed to have fledged.

Coot *Fulica atra*

Pairs: 8 Fledged: 6-8

Nest were located at Snipes and Dons Pool, with other birds recorded with young on Pats Pool and Watling Water. Hatching rates were good with many young birds seen but numbers slowly dropped throughout the season.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Pairs: 3 Broods: 2 Chicks: 6 Fledged: 0

Adults could be heard calling from suitable areas from late March and sightings of adults were frequent throughout spring and early summer but no chicks were recorded until 6th June when the pair frequenting Don's Pool was seen with 3 chicks then 4 the following day; these chicks were not seen again. The pair remained in the area and on 7th September were seen with 2 very young chicks but they, too, disappeared. A pair was seen on Skirts Pool and another pair was on Snipes Marsh but

no chicks were seen or heard from these locations. A few sightings of an adult on Greylag Pool (off East Bank) could have been one of the Don's Pool birds.

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Pairs: 31 Fledged: 9

146 were present at Cley/Salthouse on 21st March, 119 on 7th April and 99 at Cley + 9 at Salthouse on 17th May.

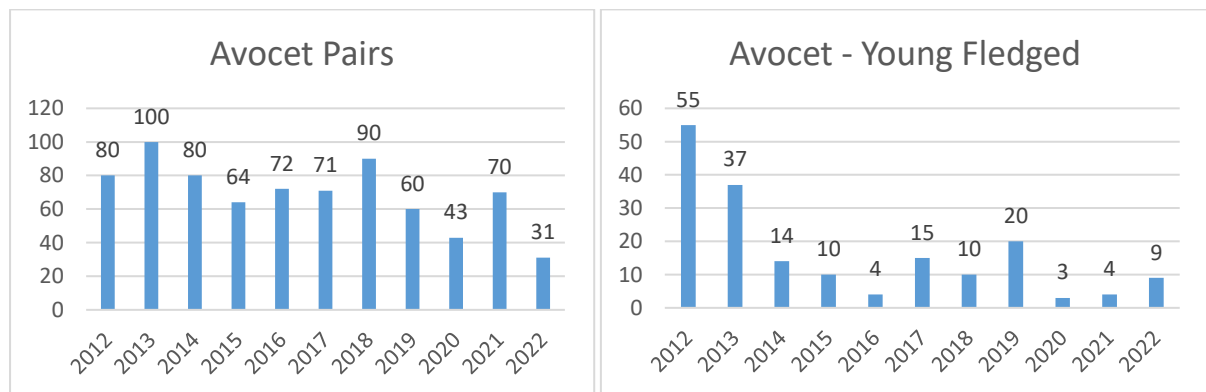
The rest refers to Cley

The first nests were seen on 21st April on Simmond's, Whitwell and Pope's Pool.

A total of 31 nesting attempts were seen but some may have been 2nd attempts after nests were lost.

17 nests hatched a total of 34 chicks. Additional broods were also seen on Watling Water and 1 on the Serpentine where the nests hadn't been seen.

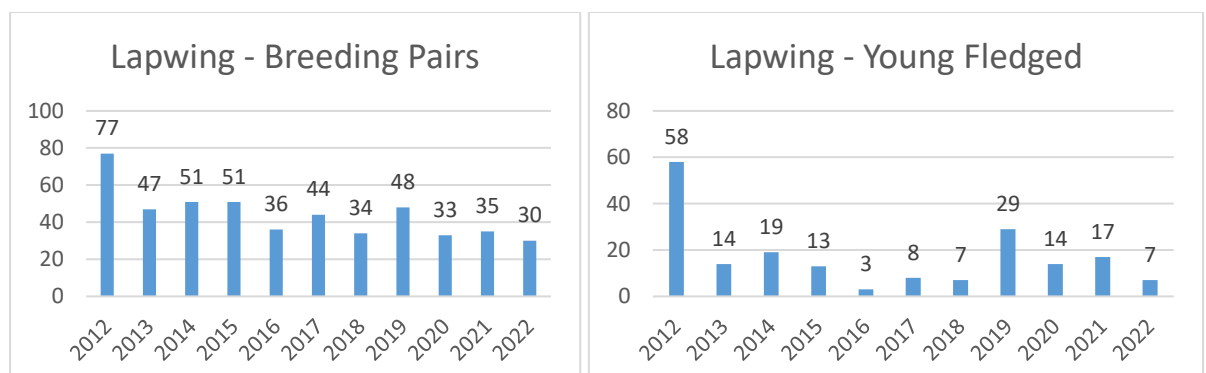
9 chicks fledged



Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Nests: 40 (incl. second attempts) Pairs: c.30 Broods: 20 Chicks: 44 Fledged: 7

An estimated 30 pairs were present across the reserve with pairs again favouring ideal conditions around the Serpentine and Pope's Marsh. The first nest was found on 23rd March and the first chicks seen on 8th May but most nests and chicks were soon lost (e.g. only 2 of the 14 nests found across the Serpentine produced chicks and just 1 of these survived to fledge). There were many second attempts but predation remained high and the 20 broods seen (44 chicks) produced only 7 fledglings.



Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Pairs: 8

Chicks seen: 18

Fledged: 9

A good year for Ringed Plover, with most, if not all nests successfully hatching. Several broods continued full term, fledging chicks.

Several nests were located on the shingle behind Sea Pool, where broods either stayed or moved to nearby areas and other nests located within fenced areas of the beach from Brackish Pools at Cley to Gramborough Hill at Salhouse.

The first, early brood of 4 small chicks recorded at Sea Pool, on 7th May.

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 min
2018	6	8	3	8	4
2019	7	3	6	19	13
2020	7	3	5	17	16
2021	10	7	4	8	2
2022	8	5	7	18	9 min

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

Pairs: 4

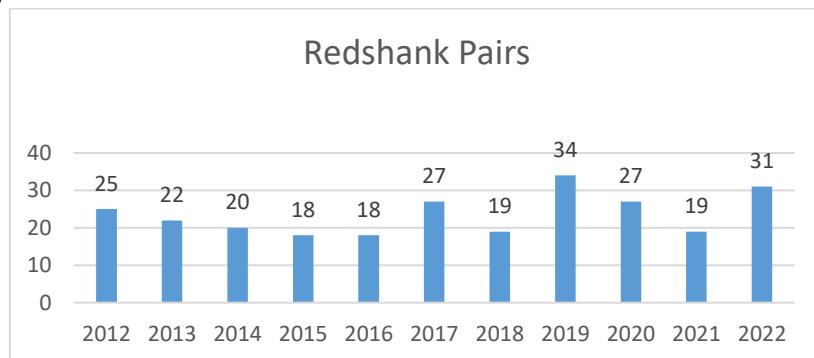
Fledged: min 6

Nesting pairs were elusive this year, apart from a pair that nested on an island on pats pool from 8th June. 2 other broods of chicks were recorded on Pats and Simmonds at the same time, both fledging 3. More young were seen at Salhouse but whether they got to a fledging age is unknown.

Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Broods: 31 Chicks: min.70 Fledged: min.6

It was a good year for this species and throughout June and July their calls were a cheerful feature of the reserve. 31 broods were seen but as Redshank broods roam widely it is almost impossible to follow them as they develop or to distinguish locally-bred juveniles from those flying in from elsewhere; they will therefore have been under-recorded.

**Black-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus ridibundus***Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia*

Pairs: 4

Fledged: 9

This year saw the first Spoonbills successfully breed in the heronry in North Foreland, with the other herons. Following 2 drone surveys of Herons and Lt Egrets, a spoonbill was seen, soon followed by nesting material being seen taken into the heronry, around 14th April.

Due to it's importance, any attempts to survey the heronry were postponed, to avoid disturbance. Once young birds were heard from the perimeter of the woods, surveying continued to try to establish exact numbers.

The first brood of 3 juveniles were seen flying to and from the heronry in late June, followed by 3 other broods of 2 young each later in July and August.

Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

Pairs: 1

Fledged: At least one

Last bred 2008. First sighting on 9 April, a bird flying in from Blakeney, settling in the main reedbed. Sightings became more regular with flights between Cley and Blakeney. Booming was heard in mid-April from Blakeney Fresh Marsh. Flights logged throughout April, May, June and into July.

Photographs appeared to show a pale adult and a much darker adult. Significant increase in flight frequency with one bird (a pale female?) travelling from a particular spot in the main reedbed, high towards Blakeney Fresh Marsh and possibly the lower Glaven Valley, returning to the same spot in the reedbeds. Regular feeding flights within the Cley reedbeds with an area behind Don's Pool favoured, but mostly it was more distant foraging.

A trailcam was set up after triangulating the "landing site" and footage was aired on the NWT website. In early July NWT observations from the visitor centre showed one bird dropping into the same spot at the back of the main reedbed, leaving that exact spot 30 mins later, flying over to Blakeney Freshes. 25-30 mins later the bird would fly back over to Cley and straight to the same spot again. There are no wet feeding areas at the landing site in the Cley reedbed. What we assume were feeding flights were reported 5 times in three hours. These flights continued regularly.

On 12 August NWT volunteers saw two Bitterns in flight, leaving the main reedbed. On 14 August protracted views of a Bittern in flight led the observers to surmise that it was a young bird with some pristine feathering but with some downy feathers on the wings. Since then, there have only been a handful of sightings in late August and only one in September.

Grey Heron *Butorides virescens*

Pairs: 7

Fledged: min 5

Early nesting activity noted from mid-February, with nest material being carried even in mid-March.

The approved drone survey at the end of March revealed five nests. First juveniles noted in mid-June on Pats and Serpentine with a maximum of 5 together with a couple of adults on Snipes Marsh on 2 July.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Pairs: 8-10

Fledged: min 9, maximum 20

First breeding activity noted end of March with at least nine birds sitting up in North Foreland. An approved drone survey at the end of March recorded 24 birds in the woods but it was still difficult to count the number of nests as the nests are at several heights within the canopy. First juvenile seen on 9 June sat up in woods only about 12 feet off the ground – very fluffy head, dull bill and legs. Late June – at least five juveniles (2 on Snipes and three with adult on nest), then 9 juveniles together seen to fly from North Foreland into Pats Pool. Estimates of 20+ juveniles as a maximum as a flock of 30 birds seen early morning on 30 June "was mainly of juveniles".

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Pairs: 1 Fledged: Unknown

1 pair Bred in North Foreland, owned by Alice Atkinson

Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Pairs: 1 Fledged: Unknown

1 pair Bred in North Foreland, owned by Alice Atkinson

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Nests: 3 Fledged: 7

Two females interacting with Pope's Marsh male in late March, with a food pass to one of the females next day. Display by two pairs (Pope's and Main Reed Bed) in early April with food passes and nest building continuing. Another pair carrying nest material to a different area of the reedbed. Presumed three nests. Multiple food passes at three sites in May. Two juveniles seen on 24 June North-East of Pats Pool and three juveniles in flight together on 2 and 4 July. On 6 July, whilst the three regular juveniles were in the air together another two juveniles flew up from the eastern end of the main reedbed, with a male providing food for both birds. On 7 July two juveniles seen flying up from Pope's Reedbed. On 11 July these two were again seen near Popes Reedbed with sightings here throughout July. Consensus in late July that there were three broods – 3 and 2 Main Reedbed, 2 Popes.

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*

Territories: 12 Fledged: 37 minimum

Numbers were mostly recorded from public paths. A transect within the main reed bed was not undertaken. Difficult to observe early in the year due to high winds but 4 territories found along the Skirts and East Bank in mid-April. Food carrying to three locations noted in main Reedbed in early May. Nest building observed near Boardwalk and on 26 May a pair with 6 juveniles was seen near Don's Pool, 3 juveniles near Bishops on 31 May and 3 juveniles East Bank on 19 June. On 23 June a female was seen carrying food to a site west of East Bank, possibly indicating a second/late brood and a possible 12 juveniles were noted there in a mixed age flock. On 4 July a very young juvenile seen off East Bank – very short tail and possibly a recent fledging. On 10 July 4 juveniles Daukes, 5 Bishops, 3 Watling Water and an adult taking food into a site near Teal Hide. 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.

Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

Territories: 14 Fledged: unknown

Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Pairs: 3 Fledged: minimum 20

After breeding in 2021 Swallows returned and started entering Daukes Hide on 7 May. A decision was made to secure viewing flaps in the open position to allow access, and later extended to all three of the Central Hides. Nests evident in all three hides in June with little or no impact from visitors. On 29 June there were 5 well developed juveniles perched up in Avocet Hide, on 3 July 4 birds fledged from Daukes and a brood (of 3-4) fledged from Teal Hide. Nesting activity continued with second broods in all three hides (Juveniles seen in Daukes and Avocet in August) and the probability of a third in Daukes Hide with much activity being noted in early September.

Cettis Warbler *Cettia cetti*

Territories: 8 Fledged: unknown

8 Singing birds noted at end of March and as usual, territories were located mostly along the Catchwater Drain and 1 along East Bank. One territory near Salthouse Duckpond. Some young are thought to have fledged but none were recorded.

Reed and Sedge Warbler were mostly recorded from public paths. No main reedbed survey undertaken this year due to unseasonal high winds and poor weather. These records therefore represent a minimum count.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Territories: 57 Fledged: 31 minimum

First recorded on 13 April, slightly later than 2021. No main reedbed survey undertaken this year as a result of unseasonal high winds and poor weather, however surveys and observations undertaken along footpaths and Cley Beach Road yielded 57 potential territories. This looks significantly higher than 2021 however 13 of these were between East Bank and Iron Road. Fledglings were noted along the Boardwalk in mid-June (4, 4, 3), Iron Road (3, 4), Catchwater Drain (3, 2, 4) and East Bank (4).

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Territories: 12 Fledged: 23

First recorded on 29 April with two birds singing along Iron Road, then three in early May. Three singing East Bank to Cley Beach Road in early May and six East Bank. Food carrying to site near Daukes Hide on 22 May and first juveniles noted in early June through to July – approximately 12. Second or late brood on 1 August with adult feeding two juveniles outside Teal Hide. Seven juveniles seen around central hides on 7 August and 4 East Bank on 9 August.

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*

Territories: 4 max Fledged: unknown

A very vocal male singing at the back of Snipes Marsh on 19 April, was followed by a far more vocal bird reeling from scrub at the month's end and continuing periodically until month's end. Another was reeling from scrub off Cley Beach Road and one heard regularly near East Bank carpark. No young were noted.

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Territories: min 7 Fledged: 3 minimum

A very difficult species to survey and no doubt under-recorded. Singing and territory holding noted at several reedbed and scrub sites through April – main reserve and as far as Babcock Hide. Suspected nest behind Bishops Hide and in vicinity of Teal Hide as 3 fledglings around Central Hides on 3 June. One carrying food near Teal Hide may indicate second brood.

Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

Pairs: 2 Fledged: 4 minimum

Male and female around boardwalk from late May/early June with two very young, downy juveniles seen perched up on shrubs in reedbed west of boardwalk in mid July. 2 very young fledglings seen on the Little Eye on 17 May.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

Territories: 0

Fledged: 0

Despite an excellent Spring passage of Yellow Wagtails the only activity of note was a singing male on the Serpentine on 24-25 April. No attempt to hold territory and no further reports.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

Territories: 20

Fledged: 7 minimum

Territories assessed in mid-April by number of song-fighting birds, nesting activity noted in only three areas – East Bank (3 pairs), Shingle Ridge/rear of Arnolds Marsh (6 pairs) and Attenborough Walk (5 pairs) with three probables on Eye Field. Food carrying noted periodically. Six juveniles seen together near Little Eye and possible second broods noted around Iron Road (3). Very young juvenile noted being fed by adult on 12 August.

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Territories: 17

Fledged: 5 minimum

Singing males and breeding behaviour were recorded as territories with the first noted at Watling water on 25 March. Thereafter pairs seen regularly across all areas of the reserve, with nest building activity noted at several sites. Juveniles seen along East Bank – 2, Boardwalk, 3 and Watling Water 1. Fledging numbers are a minimum, as some areas are overlooked due to access/disturbance issues.

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