

# Cley Breeding Report 2013

## Introduction

Once more we have attempted to document the breeding species on Cley Marshes. The area covered is NWT Cley Marshes between West Bank and East Bank, the area between East Bank and Iron Road (which includes Pope's Marsh, the new land being purchased by the NWT) and Snipe's Marsh. We have 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.

It was not a scientific survey, but most areas were visited frequently during spring and summer 2013. We took records of nesting birds and youngsters seen, and tried to follow the progress of each family. All sightings were from the hides and public footpaths around the reserve and eastern area. We have also included sightings that have been passed to us by other local observers.

Every year is different but this year the cold wet spring really slowed down the start of the breeding season with the early breeders being about 4 weeks later than last year. Vegetation growth was delayed and summer migrants were late returning having been held back by the poor weather in southern Europe. The first sightings of Sedge Warblers were about a week later than normal but the later returning Reed Warblers were only a day later than last year. The result of this was that the breeding season was compressed and this may have affected the comparative timings of predators and prey species.

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

## Summary

These first two tables list birds that bred, or attempted to, in our area this year with counts where known.

Species	Minimum Pairs	Min. young fledged	Earliest chicks seen
Mute Swan	3	11	Early June
Greylag Goose	35	?	21 April
Canada Goose	1	4	5 May
Shelduck	14	54	30 May
Gadwall	17	48	22 June
Mallard	30	65	2 May
Garganey	1		26 April
Shoveler	9	26	31 May
Pochard	8	2	3 June
Tufted Duck	2	-	20 July
Little Grebe	2	3	26 July*
Little Egret	2	?	-
Grey Heron	1	?	12 July*
Marsh Harrier	2	6	28 June
Moorhen	16	12	11 June
Coot	9	9	3 June
Oystercatcher	15	0	5 July
Avocet	100	37	16 May
Little Ringed Plover	2	5	30 May
Ringed Plover	5	2	25 May
Lapwing	47	14	17 May
Redshank	22	6	25 May
Black-headed Gull	32	3	2 June
Herring Gull	1	0	-

\*- this was when young were first seen but they were quite well grown so would have hatched much earlier

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## Passerines

Species	Min. Pairs	Species	Min. Pairs
Swallow	5	Bearded Tit	6
Wren	3	Goldfinch	8
Cetti's Warbler	4	Linnet	2
Sedge Warbler	60	Reed Bunting	22
Reed Warbler	44		

The following species also bred, or are thought to have, either on the reserve or near-by, but numbers are unknown/unconfirmed:

Common Pheasant	Meadow Pipit
Water Rail	Pied Wagtail
Kestrel	Dunnock
Wood Pigeon	Grasshopper Warbler
Skylark	Whitethroat
House Martin (houses along Coast Rd)	Lesser Whitethroat

The following may have bred in nearby fields/woods but we have no evidence:

- Sparrowhawk
- Red-legged Partridge
- Tawny Owl (N Foreland)
- Greenfinch

The table on the next page shows comparisons with previous years for all species.

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## Comparisons with previous years

Species	Minimum Pairs breeding					Minimum Young fledged			
	2013	2012	2011	2010		2013	2012	2011	2010
Mute Swan	3	4	1	4		11	10	0	7
Greylag	35	40	44	45		?	?	?	c.100
Canada Goose	1	3	2	1		4	7	8	5
Shelduck	14	13	17	10		54	64	34	35
Gadwall	17	9	13	17		48	16	24	23
Teal	0	0	1					?	
Mallard	30	31	46	33		65	64	52	48
Garganey	1	0	1			0			
Shoveler	9	10	7	5		26	8	4	8
Pochard	8	1	4	4		2	7	3	1+
Tufted Duck	2	4	2	4		0	0	0	6
Little Grebe	2	1	1	5		3	2	1	3
Little Egret	2	7	3	1		?	6?	4	2
Grey Heron	1	3	4	3		?	4	7	4
Marsh Harrier	2	4	5	6?		6	9	12	15
Moorhen	16	19	14	21		12	20	7	24
Coot	9	18	8	13		9	17	8	5
Oystercatcher	15	10	10	13		0	0	0	0
Avocet	100	80	70	62		37	55	9	10
Little Ringed Plover	2	2	1	1		5	1	0	0
Ringed Plover	5	1	1	3		2	3	0	3
Lapwing	47	77	30	40		14	58	17	7-10
Common Snipe	0	0	0	1?					
Redshank	22	25	20	17		6	13	7	13
Black-headed Gull	32	40	31	57		3	0	0	0
Herring Gull	1					0			
Common Tern	0	0	1	0				0	0
Skylark *	?	16	12			?			
Swallow *	5	4	7			9	26	10	
Meadow Pipit *	?	17	16						
Wren *	3	?	?						
Stonechat	0	1	0	0			9		
Cetti's Warbler *	4	6	1				9	1	
Grasshopper Warbler *	0?	1	?				2		
Sedge Warbler *	60	25	69						
Reed Warbler *	44	47	48						
Bearded Tit *	6	12	3						
Goldfinch **	8								
Linnet *	2	2							
Reed Bunting *	22	15	12						

\* These species were not counted before 2011

\*\* not counted before 2013

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## Species Details

### Mute Swan

*3 pairs, 11 young likely to fledge*

#### Pope's Marsh

Presumably the same pair as in previous years was back at their nest site on Pope's Marsh. 7 cygnets hatched at the beginning of June, one of which was white rather than the usual grey colour. By 20th June 4 had been lost, leaving 2 grey and 1 white cygnets. This family was rarely seen, probably out of our view in the drains of Pope's Marsh or venturing further towards Salthouse, but was still together at the end of September and it is likely these 3 will fledge in October.

#### East Bank

A pair by a pool off East Bank hatched 5 cygnets, 3 of which were white. These 5 continued to be seen until mid-October when they had fledged.

#### Main Scrapes

A pair with 5 grey cygnets first appeared on Pat's Pool on 17th June; we do not know where the nest was. One cygnet was lost by 23 August (aged about 11 weeks) and another was lost by 29th. Hopefully the remaining 3 will fledge in October.

#### Salthouse

As usual, a pair reared their young by Salthouse duck pond, this time 8 cygnets (all grey) hatched. 1 was soon lost but the remaining 7 fledged at the end of September. They have occasionally been recorded close to our area but are not included in our figures.

We were keen to watch the behaviour of family members towards the white cygnets in order to compare it with our observations in 2010. That year the male parent, and sometimes the siblings, showed considerable aggression towards the white youngsters as they grew (perhaps they looked like intruding adults?) and by the time they were 10 weeks old these white cygnets were apparently ousted from the family unit. Unfortunately, this year both families containing white cygnets kept well out of sight, allowing us few close observations. The only indication that this behaviour might be repeated came on 29th September when 2 large white cygnets were aggressively chased off by the male parent (leaving 1 white and 2 grey with the female parent) but a few days later the whole family was back together. These cygnets were about 16 weeks old and had not yet fledged.

### Greylag Goose

*c.35 pairs bred, at least 106 goslings seen, number fledged unknown*

Goose counts in late February and March only gave c.100 birds and given a considerable number of non-breeders we guess only about 35 pairs bred. The first nests were not found this year until 6<sup>th</sup> April. Only 5 were found and of these only one survived to hatching.

The first goslings, a brood of 4 on Pat's Pool, were seen on 21<sup>st</sup> April and these were shortly followed by many more. As there does not appear to be a lot of movement between the broods/crèches on the E side of East Bank and those on the main reserve, at least when they are small, we have treated these separately. The maximum count for any one day in the western area was 37 on 18<sup>th</sup> May, after that 17 further small goslings were seen giving a total of 54. On the eastern side 52 were counted on 26<sup>th</sup> June with no further small seen. This gives a minimum total of 106. We don't know how many fledged but expect it was a high proportion of these.

### Canada Goose

*1 pair bred, 4 young fledged*

A goose was seen sitting on a nest on Billy's Wash on 9<sup>th</sup> April. 4 goslings hatched on 5<sup>th</sup> May. They stayed together roaming the western meadows until all 4 fledged in late June.

### Egyptian Goose

*None again this year.*

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## Shelduck

*14 pairs, 54+ fledged*

As usual no nests were seen on the main reserve or the area between East Bank and Iron Road so we don't know if any pairs actually nested on the marshes or if all nested south of the Coast Road and then brought their young to the marshes. At least one brood was seen crossing the road onto the reserve near the Visitor Centre.

Shelducklings can form crèches when still very young and also can become independent within 15 days of hatching while still quite small. This can make following the progress of individual broods tricky. Also the numerous drains where ducks can hide from view throughout the marsh but more specifically on Pope's Marsh means that where full broods disappeared it may have been they just found an area out of our view.

This year the first ducklings were seen on 30<sup>th</sup> May when a brood of 8 tiny ducklings came off the field south of the A149 and caused a traffic jam as they attempted to cross the road. All eventually got onto the reserve but later only 7 ducklings were seen on Pat's Pool where they remained till mid-July when they had fledged.

Overall 8 broods were seen on the main reserve with a total of 38 ducklings of which 25 fledged. In the eastern half of the area 6 broods were seen with a total of 51 ducklings of which 29 fledged.

## Gadwall

*17 pairs bred, 48 fledged*

A good year with a lot more pairs than last year. As with previous years, broods roamed widely around the scrapes and the drains in the reedbeds (which cannot be seen) so often went for days without being seen and ones not seen again could just have been keeping out of sight. By August many of the broods congregate in the same areas along with Mallard broods and spend a lot of time asleep in the grass so it becomes difficult to sort out the individual broods.

We think 17 different broods were seen with a total of 97 ducklings. As usual no nests were seen but the first ducklings were seen on 22<sup>nd</sup> June on North Scrape. Altogether 13 broods were seen on the main reserve, 9 on the central scrapes, 3 on N Scrape and 1 in the meadows and from these we estimate 40 ducklings fledged. On the eastern part of the area 4 broods were seen but only one brood of 8 were seen to fledge.

## Mallard

*30 broods were seen, at least 65 fledged*

Following Mallard broods is always difficult. Mallard take at least 50 days to fledge but can become independent before this which means that broods can break up before fledging and hence become difficult to follow. Some of the large ducklings are difficult to tell from adults if on their own. In general if ducklings have reached a medium/large size we assume that they will survive to fledging.

Only one nest was seen this year, near Dauke's hide, and this was predated. Therefore for all pairs we cannot be certain where they nested but assume it was on the reserve and fairly near where they were first seen.

Although some broods seem to stay around the same area until fledged many move around and can move right across the reserve in a very short time, even giving rise to them being seen in different areas on the same day. A brood could very easily be out of sight for long periods in the many drains in the reeds and meadows and there could be some we never see at all.

The first brood seen this year was 2 tiny ducklings walking down Anterton Hill (SW of the bottom of Old Woman's Lane) calling for their mum on 29<sup>th</sup> April. It is thought they were part of a larger brood which crossed to the reserve but as they were not knowingly seen on the reserve they are not included in our figures.

Following this 19 broods were seen in the area west of East Bank with a total of 116 ducklings and of these 50 survived to fledge. Interestingly, the earlier broods were mainly on the meadows, the later ones on the scrapes. This could have been because the vegetation on the meadows got so high that young ducklings couldn't be seen. If so we could have missed some! On the eastern side of the area, 10 broods were seen with a total of 50 ducklings of which 15 are thought to have fledged. A further brood of 1 tiny duckling was seen once on Snipe's Marsh.

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## Garganey

*1 pair, 4 ducklings,*

A nationally rare breeding species; we often suspect breeding at Cley but rarely get any sightings to confirm this.

A pair was seen together on the Serpentine and then Pat's Pool on 26<sup>th</sup> April. On 1<sup>st</sup> May a female flew up from Billy's Wash and a male came up to join her, possibly indicating a nest there. On 10<sup>th</sup> June a female was seen with 4 small ducklings on Carter's Scrape but they weren't seen again. 2 fledged juveniles with a duck and 2 with a drake on the central scrapes on 29<sup>th</sup> July could have been these but could have flown in from elsewhere.

## Shoveler

*9 pairs, 26 fledged*

Shoveler are also a nationally rare breeding species but we always have a few pairs at Cley. This year we managed to follow many more through to fledging than we have done before.

This year c.40 birds were seen around the area in March and April and this reduced to 5 in May when the females would have been on nests. The first ducklings seen were a brood of 5 or 6 on the Serpentine on 31<sup>st</sup> May. We have evidence of 9 pairs breeding (7 on the main reserve and 2 in the east) and we saw 52 ducklings of which we believe 26 fledged..

Shoveler are often seen on Whitwell and Richardson's Scrapes where they disappear into the reeds. By the way we suddenly lose sight of large broods we think they may spend a lot of time there.

## Pochard

*8 pairs, 2 fledged*

Another nationally rare breeding species. At Cley we see very few Pochard in the winter months but they arrive in the spring to breed.

This year up to 9 males and 6 females were seen during April on the scrapes and Snipe's Marsh. This reduced to 2 females during May when the others were probably on nests. The first ducklings were seen on 3<sup>rd</sup> June with broods on both Carter's Scrape and Snipe's Marsh. In all 6 broods were seen on the main reserve, 1 on Snipe's Marsh and 1 on Pope's Marsh with a total of 38 ducklings. As in previous years females were seen with broods of small ducklings but were then rarely seen again, we don't know if they got predated or if they just disappeared into the reedy drains and stayed out of view. Pochard ducklings are extremely difficult to count; they dive a lot and can also stray quite a long way from the brood, so it is very easy to miss some of a brood. Only 2 fledged birds were seen on Snipe's Marsh at the end of July but there could have been more that we didn't see.

## Tufted Duck

*2-3 pairs, 0 fledged*

Late breeders, these broods always get lost in the reeds that grow in the drains, and again this year those reeds were very thick. 10 drakes and 7 ducks were seen in late May but after that no more than 3 ducks were observed. Few ducklings were seen this year. A brood of 4 small ducklings was seen on the Serpentine on 20-29<sup>th</sup> July. A brood of 4 in the Catchwater Drain nearby on 26<sup>th</sup> July could have been these or a separate brood. A female, seen with 2 smallish ducklings on the Borrow Pit by Beach Road on 31<sup>st</sup> July must have been another brood. None of the families were seen again.

## Red-legged Partridge

*No evidence of breeding on the reserve this year, but probably bred in neighbouring fields*

## Common Pheasant

*Recorded with young chicks on Keeper's Marsh*

These were less obvious than last year on the reserve.

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## Little Grebe

*2 broods, 3 fledged*

A pair on Snipe's Marsh was feeding 2 well-grown chicks on 26th July; these continued to be seen until 14th August and were then assumed to have fledged.

Another pair probably bred out of view along the Main Drain east of North Hide; at least 1 large chick/juvenile was seen and probably fledged.

## Bittern

*Did not breed this year*

Single birds were seen a few times during spring but may have been just passing through.

## Little Egret

*2 nests in North Foreland Wood, number fledged unknown.*

This year saw a sharp drop from the 7 pairs that bred last year. We don't know why but it could have been due to the weather, management work in the wood or the presence of a Buzzard in one of their nesting trees. The first record of activity in North Foreland this year was 7 Egrets seen flying east from the wood on 8<sup>th</sup> March. On 13<sup>th</sup> May one was seen with a full crop flying into the wood which was followed by a lot of squawks. On 30<sup>th</sup> May a possible 2 or 3 nests were found but could not be seen properly because of ivy cover. On 24<sup>th</sup> June an Egret was seen either sitting on eggs or brooding small chicks in the same tree. The first juveniles seen on the reserve were 3 pairs with 2, 1 & 1 juveniles on Cricket Marsh on 30<sup>th</sup> June but these may have come from elsewhere. Juveniles were then seen regularly in early July. They may also have nested in a wood south of the village but we have no definite evidence of this.

## Grey Heron

*1 nest in North Foreland Wood, number fledged unknown*

As with Little Egrets this year saw a drop in nesting pairs from the last few years, but this year at least 3 pairs also nested in a nearby wood south of the village (not included in our counts). Herons were seen flying in and out of North Foreland wood from late February. On 6<sup>th</sup> April 5 were seen sitting in tree-tops in the wood. Sightings of birds flying in and out and noise coming from the area led us to believe there was at least one nest occupied. Eventually on 12<sup>th</sup> July a nest was found with large young. The young could not be seen properly but wings were seen being tested-out right on the top and then an adult dropped in and fed the young which caused them to be very noisy but we could still not see how many there were. The first juvenile was seen on Pope's Marsh on 1<sup>st</sup> July but, of course, this could have come from anywhere. On 20<sup>th</sup> August an adult with 3 juveniles was seen on Arnold's, could these have been from North Foreland? We will never know.

## Marsh Harrier

*2-3 pairs, 2 broods, 6 fledged.*

The Marsh Harrier activity became very confusing this year.

**Main Reedbed:** There appeared to be two pairs early in the season, a bright male, an almost brown male, an 'old' female with white crown and shoulders and a duller bird and we thought there were two nests, one east of Carter's Scrape and one further NW. By early June food was being brought in to both sites though by now we were only seeing one male. This male was not seen very often and when he was seen he only had small prey. Whether he was a poor hunter or there was a scarcity of food in the fields, we don't know. On 10<sup>th</sup> June a female was seen to take Avocet chicks from the now plentiful supply on Pat's Pool. By 25<sup>th</sup> June there was no sign of the duller female so we assume she had lost her young. The white-shouldered female continued feeding her young on Avocet chicks which, for a while, were still hatching faster than she could catch, but by 5<sup>th</sup> July only large Avocet chicks remained so the source dried up. This coincided with her 3 young fledging.

**Pope's Marsh:** There was only 1 pair on Pope's this year, but odd immature birds did pass through. This pair appeared to nest just west of the hide/hut by the shooting pools south of Sea Pool. On 28<sup>th</sup> June 2 young were seen flying in the area and were joined by a third on 1<sup>st</sup> July.

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Throughout the season there was interaction between the birds on the main reedbed and Pope's, and sighting of 4 juveniles at both sites were probably caused by the juveniles moving around as well.

In order to get a more accurate view of Marsh Harrier breeding we need to spend much more time watching them but don't have that time. So if anyone would like to do it next year, please let us know.

## Sparrowhawk

*No evidence of breeding*

## Common Buzzard

*Did not breed*

Buzzards were seen regularly around North Foreland wood in late March and early April with 4 seen displaying above it on 30<sup>th</sup> March and 1 calling from the wood with a second circling then joining it on 7<sup>th</sup> April. One was seen leaving either a nest or roost tree on 25<sup>th</sup> April and again from the same area on 9<sup>th</sup> May. Although 1 or 2 birds were seen in the area of the wood during June, July and August there were not enough sightings to lead us to believe they had nested or even attempted to. Maybe next year.

## Kestrel

*Did not breed in our area but probably bred in the wood behind Hilltop*

A pair was seen in display over the reedbed on 6<sup>th</sup> April. A male was seen taking prey into the wood on Hilltop on 17<sup>th</sup> June and a female was seen with 2 juveniles outside the Visitor Centre on 11<sup>th</sup> July. A female seen hunting over Pope's Marsh in late June could have been from this pair or a different pair nesting further east.

## Water Rail

*Probably bred, numbers unknown*

Birds were heard squealing from the reed bed near the sluice on East Bank and the boardwalk to the hides on several occasions in late April/early May but no other evidence to confirm breeding.

## Moorhen

*16 pairs/17 broods, 49 chicks. At least 12 fledged.*

This was another poor year for this species with figures down on last year. As before, many small chicks were lost and some nests did not appear to produce chicks or the chicks were lost within a few days. Some nests were probably missed as drains became filled with vegetation and obscured our view.

Moorhens regularly have two broods in a year with siblings from one brood helping feed young from the later brood. This year at least one pair produced a second brood, fledging 1 chick from each brood. Other pairs may have attempted a second nest but we cannot be sure of this.

Area First Seen	No. Pairs	No. Broods	Earliest date	Total chicks	No. Fledged
Central Scrapes	4	5	28 June	13	3
Western Drain & Meadows	6	6	11 June	16	6
Eastern Drains & Meadows	6	6	12 June	20	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>		<b>49</b>	<b>12</b>



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## Coot

*9 pairs, 9 fledged.*

This was also a poor year for Coot with no nests or broods seen on the Eastern meadows or pools.

At least two nests were seen this year. One in the reeds between Dauke's and Teal Hides belonged to a pair of which the male had a colour ring with the code B76. He had been ringed as an adult in Bedfordshire in December 2012. This nest was sat on between the 5<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> May but then abandoned (presume predated). The pair was swimming together in the drain in front of the hides on the 21<sup>st</sup> but the male wasn't seen again after that so we presume he left the area. Another nest was seen in reeds at the edge of Carter's Scrape from 31<sup>st</sup> May to 11<sup>th</sup> June – we're not sure what happened to this. Possible nests were seen on Billy's Wash and the western meadows but weren't observed for more than 2 days so there were probably no eggs.

Most chicks this year were seen on the central scrapes where, as they got larger, it was difficult to split them into broods; they looked as if they were forming a crèche. The table below tries to explain the broods seen.

Area first seen	No. Pairs	No. Broods	Earliest date	Total chicks	Nº. Fledged
Central Scrapes	7	6	18 June	15	7
Western Meadows	1	1	2 July	1	0
Snipe's Marsh	1	1	3 June	4	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>		<b>20</b>	<b>9</b>

## Oystercatcher

*15 pairs attempted to breed, 2 broods of 2 & 3 chicks were seen but none fledged*

This year 15 pairs attempted to breed, all eventually looking as if they were sitting on eggs. Many had a few attempts with nests only lasting a few days. The first nesting attempt was seen on 2<sup>nd</sup> May on Eye Field but only lasted 2 days. Only four nests lasted more than 20 days (full term is 24-27 days) and these are detailed below.

Location	Dates (no. days) on nest	No. eggs	Outcome
Shingle bank just east of N Hide	26 May – 23 Jun (29)	3	May have hatched but no chicks seen
Roof of N Hide	8 Jun – 4 Jul (27)	?	2 hatched on 5 <sup>th</sup> July. We lost track of these so assume neither fledged.
Shingle bank N of E end of Arnold's seaward side	17 May-8 Jun (23)	3	Nest abandoned
Beach N of Arnold's level with 1 <sup>st</sup> gap	23 Jun – 21 Jul (29)	3	3 chicks hatched on 21 <sup>st</sup> /22 <sup>nd</sup> July. On 23 <sup>rd</sup> the parents took them to Arnold's where they then brooded and fed them. The brood reduced to 2 on 3 <sup>rd</sup> August and then 1 on the 4 <sup>th</sup> . This one survived till 13 <sup>th</sup> when it was 24 days old (28-32 days to fledge) but wasn't seen again.

Of interest, one of the pair that nested on the beach had a BTO metal ring. It was ringed in the Wash in 2001 as an adult so was at least 13 years old.

## Avocet

*c. 100 pairs bred, 250 chicks hatched and 37 fledged.*

As with all species the cold, wet spring delayed nesting and the first nests were seen a week later than last year on 23<sup>rd</sup> April. After last year's successes on Pat's Pool most Avocets decided to nest here again this year with them noticeably avoiding other sites. By mid-May there were 57 nests on Pat's Pool and the first chicks were starting to hatch. On the 28<sup>th</sup> May there were 30 broods of chicks on the central scrapes plus 47 birds still sitting on nests. In total on the main reserve (Beach Road to E Bank) at least 87 pairs nested. Between East Bank and Iron Road at least another 13 pairs nested.

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The following table shows details of the nests in each area. Some of the later nests were assumed to be birds resitting after earlier failed attempts so are not included in the overall totals given above.

Avocets	Earliest nest	Max nests seen at one time	Date max nests seen	Earliest hatchings
<b>MAIN RESERVE</b>				
Pat's Pool	23/4	57	16/5	17/5
Simmond's	27/4	2	16/5	none
Whitwell	23/4	3	7/5	3/6
Cricket Marsh	28/4	4	2/5	None seen
Billy's Wash	25/4	17	2/5	16/5?
North Scrape		None		
Eye Pool	27/4	2	29/5	24/6
Beach	17/6	1		none
<b>POPE'S MARSH</b>				
Arnold's Marsh		None		
Serpentine	25/4	9	17/5	11/7
Pope's Pool	28/4	3	13/6	?
Wigeon Marsh	6/6	4	6/6	16/6
Sea Pool	5/6	1	5/6	
E of Sea Pool*	7/6	2	7/6	24/6

\* not well watched

The first chicks seen this year were a brood of 4 on the northern side of Simmond's on 16<sup>th</sup> May. As there were no suitable nests on Simmond's that these could have hatched from we assume they must have come from Billy's Wash where several nests were due to hatch but we cannot be sure. On 11<sup>th</sup> June, 96 chicks from c.40 broods were counted on Pat's Pool and by then quite a few broods had been taken by their parents across to Simmond's to avoid the crowded conditions. After this it became impossible to count broods as there were Avocets of varying sizes running everywhere. Avocets usually only lay 4 eggs but this year we saw at least 3 broods of 5. On 10<sup>th</sup> June a female Marsh Harrier was seen to take small chicks from Pat's Pool; her young obviously took a liking to this delicacy as she continued to take several chicks each day until 5<sup>th</sup> July when all nests had hatched and no small chicks remained. Included amongst the birds nesting on Pat's was a colour-ringed female (Red D2) which had been ringed in Ely as a chick in 2009. We're not sure how many chicks she had but the last one was taken by the Harrier in mid-June. In total we estimate the Harrier took at least 100 chicks and Lesser Black-backed Gulls took a few too. Only one brood of 2+ chicks was seen on Billy's Wash but we suspect others hatched and the young were taken to Simmond's and North Scrapes. No nests hatched from Simmond's. As usual a pair nested on Eye Pool but the nest got predated just before the eggs were due to hatch on 20<sup>th</sup> May. They re-laid and 4 chicks hatched on 24<sup>th</sup> June; one was lost early on but the remaining 3 were seen until 26<sup>th</sup> July when Eye Pool dried out in the hot weather. The chicks were large but not fledged so we assume the parents took them off to find water but we never saw them again so don't know if they survived. In total we estimate at least 231 chicks hatched from the main reserve and 30 fledged.

Due to the NWT now having management rights on Pope's Marsh the water was well managed on the Serpentine and Wigeon Marsh (the wet meadow just E of Arnold's Marsh) this year. This resulted in quite a few Avocets nesting there early on as opposed to only using the area when nests on prime sites failed, as they had done in earlier years. Unfortunately all these early nests on the Serpentine failed. However the Wigeon Marsh nests were more successful and 3 broods hatched. In total 19 chicks were seen on the marshes between East Bank and Iron Road including 4 broods on Sea Pool where we hadn't seen the nests, so there may have been more. 7 of these fledged.

Overall another successful year for Avocets, with many more chicks but less fledging but at least the Marsh Harrier had well fed young!

## Little Ringed Plover

*2-3 pairs, 3 broods, 5 fledged*

After last year's successful breeding this year gave an improvement in fledging success. Pairs were displaying on the scrapes in late April/early May.

Despite the unwanted attention of the Avocets, by 7<sup>th</sup> May one was sitting on a nest on Pat's Pool on the island closest to Teal Hide. The eggs appeared to hatch over a few days from 30<sup>th</sup> May and by 2<sup>nd</sup> June three tiny chicks were running around. It is difficult to know exactly when they fledged but by the end of June all 3 were fledged. On 17<sup>th</sup> June a pair

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was seen mating near the earlier nest site, and on 26<sup>th</sup> one was sitting on a new scrape nearby. By the way the sitting bird tolerated the young from the earlier brood we think it was probably the same pair or at least one of that pair. 3 chicks were hatched from this nest on the 21<sup>st</sup> July with 4 there on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. 3 were shortly lost with only 1 remaining on the 29<sup>th</sup> but this survived to fledge in mid-August.

On 10<sup>th</sup> July a brood of 3 small chicks was seen on the island in the NE corner of Pat's Pool. We never saw the nest so it must have been behind the island or in grass. They could only be seen from the central hides and the chicks were often out of sight at the back of the island. The brood reduced to 1 by 20<sup>th</sup> July but this one survived to fledge at the end of the month.

### Ringed Plover

*5 pairs, 2 fledged*

A declining breeding species on the North Norfolk coast, the number of pairs increased this year but success was low. They like to nest on the shingle but will also nest on the scrapes and by inland pools where they tend to be more successful, probably due to lack of disturbance from people walking along the paths. The following table details this year's attempts.

		fledged
Pair 1	A nest was found on Simmond's scrape in mid-May and 2 chicks hatched on the 25 <sup>th</sup> . One was lost by 8 <sup>th</sup> June but the other fledged on 17 <sup>th</sup> . On 13 <sup>th</sup> June the adults were back on another nest in the same area. The sitting adult was last seen on the 7 <sup>th</sup> July when the eggs were about due to hatch. It was foggy on the 8 <sup>th</sup> and on the 9 <sup>th</sup> there was no sign of the adults, nest or any young.	1  0
Pair 2	A pair was displaying near Arnold's from mid-May and on the 28 <sup>th</sup> was found sitting on a nest $\frac{2}{3}$ <sup>rd</sup> way up the inland side of the shingle bank behind Arnold's by the 1 <sup>st</sup> gap. Despite passing people they hatched 4 chicks on 23 <sup>rd</sup> June. The parents took the chicks onto the beach and then to the Brackish Pools west of E Bank where they were found on the 27 <sup>th</sup> . Only 3 could be found on the 28 <sup>th</sup> and by 5 <sup>th</sup> July only 1 remained. However this survived to fledge by the 20 <sup>th</sup> when it was seen on the beach with its parents.	1
Pair 3	A pair was found with a nest on the shingle close to the fence by Sea Pool on 28 <sup>th</sup> June. It was right in the middle of the path. The site was roped off on the 29 <sup>th</sup> and 4 eggs were seen in the nest. On the 30 <sup>th</sup> the adult was nearby but not on the nest. On 1 <sup>st</sup> July the nest and eggs had gone.	0
Pair 4	A male was displaying in Eye Field in late May and then a pair was sitting by Eye Pool 6-12 <sup>th</sup> July. They were not there on the 13 <sup>th</sup> and the nest was deserted.	0
Pair 5	An adult with 3 chicks was seen on Billy's Wash on 21 <sup>st</sup> July. No nest had been seen and by then the area had high vegetation and the chicks weren't seen again.	0

### Lapwing

*47 nests found. 25 nests hatched 66 chicks. Min. 14 fledged*

After last year's outstanding success for Lapwing, this year was a disappointment. In 2012 nesting activity started around 23<sup>rd</sup> March but this year's very cold weather delayed things by almost four weeks. At the end of March there seemed to be very few female Lapwings on our area, mostly males, and it wasn't until 19th April that the first nesting attempts were noted. Far fewer nests and chicks were seen compared to 2012 and fledging was poor but despite this the figures are better than in some earlier years. The first chicks hatched on 17th May on Cricket Marsh; the last clutch hatched on 30th June on Keeper's Marsh.

Figures presented here are presumed to be under-estimates because many nests, and chicks, quickly became hidden by growing vegetation and we could not determine the outcome of the nesting attempt. In several cases we could only say "at least one" chick hatched or fledged. Undoubtedly we missed nests on Billy's Wash and Cricket Marsh. Of the 47 nests located, 9 became obscured from view and we do not know whether they were successful. Chicks were known to fledge from 11 nests. 14 nests produced chicks but their fate is unknown. 5 nests were incubated to full-term but poor visibility meant no chicks were found. 8 nests were known to fail before hatching.

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The following table summarises nests which we were able to follow through from incubation to fledging.

	<b>No. Broods Hatched</b>	<b>Earliest Date</b>	<b>No. Chicks Hatched</b>	<b>No. Fledged</b>
Main Reserve	13	17 May	29	7
East of East Bank	12	18 May	37	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>25</b>		<b>66</b>	<b>14</b>

## Common Snipe

*No evidence of breeding*

Although several birds were seen in April and May there were no sightings in June and no reports of drumming.

## Redshank

*22 pairs, 47 chicks, at least 6 fledged although probably more*

Normally Redshank chicks spend much time in reeds and long grass but sightings this year were rather different and we often had views of small chicks in more open areas. We still found it difficult to follow individual broods and, although we felt there were more Redshanks around this year, the figures are a little down on 2012. No doubt this is an underestimate, especially the number that fledged.

<b>Area first seen</b>	<b>No. Pairs</b>	<b>No. Broods</b>	<b>Earliest date</b>	<b>Total chicks</b>	<b>No. Fledged</b>
Main Reserve	11	11	2 June	16	3
East of East Bank	11	11	25 May	31	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>22</b>		<b>47</b>	<b>6</b>

## Black-headed Gull

*c. 32 pairs attempted to breed, 3 young fledged.*

Black-headed Gulls seem to have little success at Cley these days and this year was no exception. 32 pairs were seen on nests, some having more than one try but only 7 chicks were seen.

On the main reserve at least 7 pairs nested on the "tussocks" on the Brackish Pools and two chicks hatched from one of these nests on 2<sup>nd</sup> June. As has happened in previous years, they did not survive more than a day or so. After a few early failed attempts at least 3 but probably 4 pairs nested on Pat's Pool. One nest probably hatched on 23<sup>rd</sup> June but chicks were not seen when small but a single large chick seen on 15<sup>th</sup> July was thought to be from this nest and this fledged around the end of the month. On 2<sup>nd</sup> July, two small chicks were seen on Pat's Pool, these were rarely seen after that as they kept hidden in tall vegetation on one of the islands but two large chicks seen there in early August were thought to be these and they fledged c. 10<sup>th</sup> August. Elsewhere there were nests on Billy's Wash and Cricket Marsh but no chicks were ever seen.

East of East Bank at least 3 nests were seen on the Serpentine and 2 chicks were seen there in early June but not again. There were also nests on Arnold's Marsh, Wigeon Marsh and Sea Pool but again no young were seen.

## Herring Gull

*1 pair, no young*

A pair was nest building on Wigeon Marsh 26<sup>th</sup> -29<sup>th</sup> April, then abandoned. On 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> June one was sitting on a nest again on Wigeon Marsh but by the 12<sup>th</sup> it had gone and a Black-headed Gull was standing on the nest.

## Common Tern

*No birds attempted to breed this year*

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## Wood Pigeon

*Probably bred, numbers unknown*

Present on the reserve again on the large bushes by Bishop's Hide, main hides and near the visitor centre.

## Tawny Owl

*Possibly bred in N Foreland*

Birds were calling from North Foreland on 27<sup>th</sup> April, but no other evidence of breeding.

## Skylark

*Confirmed breeding, numbers unknown, fledged young seen*

Males were singing from the usual areas – the Eye Field, the Serpentine, the Iron Road and adjacent fields, Cricket Marsh and Bull Marsh. A new place where one sang was over South Pool area on Keeper's Marsh.

Skylarks have up to 4 nests a year so it is not surprising that one on the Eye Field was building a new nest on June 24<sup>th</sup> while another parent was feeding three juveniles standing on a tussock there. 6 adults were seen with food for juveniles by Pope's Bridge on June 29<sup>th</sup> but the following day a female Kestrel took the young and after that no more feeding activity was seen. The last juveniles, one with wisps of down still, were seen on the Eye Field on August 19<sup>th</sup>.

## Swallow

*At least 5 pairs/7 nests. At least 5 nests produced eggs. 9 chicks fledged*

Not a good year for Swallows on our area. The weather was often poor at crucial times and insects seemed to be in short supply, so adults may have struggled at times to feed themselves as well as the chicks. The beach shelter was again a favoured nesting site. It was heavily used by people taking refuge from strong winds (that's what it was built for....) and although this might have affected the birds, adults continued to visit the late nest on the north side even when it was full of sea-watchers. There was a nest on North Hide but none on other hides this year. Pairs were regularly seen around bridges over the drains but we have no proof of breeding at these sites.

### BEACH CAR PARK SHELTER

#### **North Side**

Nest 1: 5 eggs/5 chicks hatched on 8th June. **3 fledged** by 28th June.

Nest 2: 4 eggs/3 hatched on 30 August. None fledged.

#### **South Side**

Nest 1: Nest-building completed early May, no eggs, failed in early stages.

Nest 2: Nest-building completed 13 June, 5 eggs/5 chicks hatched early July. **3 fledged**.

#### **West Side**

Nest 1: Nest-building completed early July. 5 eggs on 26 July but nest empty on 1st Aug. Failed.

### PILLBOX

At least 1 pair attempted breeding here but we have no record of success or otherwise.

### NORTH HIDE

Nest 1: Nest-building completed by 19th June. 3 chicks seen, **3 fledged** by 30 July.

### BEACH ROAD SLUICE

5 newly-fledged chicks on 20th June by the Cattle Pen on Beach Road may have been from presumed nests beneath the sluice, as may the 3 juveniles there on 2 July, but we have no proof of this.

## House Martin

*Did not breed on the reserve*

These nested on houses along the Coast Road including on the Warden's House. Overall numbers are unknown.

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## Meadow Pipit

*Confirmed breeding, numbers unknown, fledged young seen*

Males were singing from the same territories as last year. Popular areas are the overflow car park at Coastguard's, North Hide surrounds, the northern half of the Serpentine and Arnold's Marsh and fields north of the Main Drain by the Iron Road.

Juveniles were seen on June 24<sup>th</sup> by the Eye Pool and parents seen with food by North Hide. On July 9<sup>th</sup> adults with food were by East Bank and Arnold's.

## Pied Wagtail

*Probably bred, numbers unknown*

As usual a lot of young wagtails were seen on the reserve, but we have not found any nest sites and do not know how many, if any, bred in our area and how many came in from outside.

## Wren

*3-4 males singing, fledged young seen*

One Wren was often heard in the bushes of the southeast corner of the main reedbed, while others sang in Foreland Wood. They were mapped from April 20<sup>th</sup> onwards and a second male was on the Cley reserve in bushes opposite the visitor centre by the footpath. One was seen carrying material here on June 2<sup>nd</sup>. The third Wren was next to the main hides where one bred last year. On two occasions another sang against him at the other end of the boardwalk and by the Catchwater Drain. Young were seen near Dauke's Hide in the third week of July and two broods were heard in Foreland Wood.

## Dunnock

*Possibly bred*

## Stonechat

*Did not breed*

Following last year's successful breeding behind Arnold's Marsh, this year the same colour-ringed male was seen in the area in early March with an unringed female. She soon left and although other females were seen, he ranged between Cley and Salthouse but never found a mate.

## Cetti's Warbler

*4-5 males singing, 1 brood seen*

Boardwalk: One was singing here as early as Feb 28<sup>th</sup> and heard again on April 19<sup>th</sup>. The area near the hides which held a nest last year was damaged by the snow and wind.

Bridge by warden's house: The male above could have also sang here. It was heard on April 9<sup>th</sup> and continued to sing from the Catchwater Drain. On April 13<sup>th</sup> it was seen to be wearing a metal ring which was read from photos. It had been ringed as a juvenile at Weybourne Camp in August 2011. Interestingly the male who was breeding by the hides last year was also ringed but we don't know if it was the same bird. It was the most successful of all the males this year and 2 juveniles were seen by the bridge on June 26<sup>th</sup> with three-quarter length tails and a parent.

Opposite the visitor centre: A popular male was singing from bushes by the path opposite the visitor centre car park from April 9<sup>th</sup> to May 1<sup>st</sup>. Two birds were seen here on April 15<sup>th</sup>. The bird here last year also quickly went quiet. It was possibly heard calling on June 28<sup>th</sup>. No young seen. Much later one sang here again on September 15<sup>th</sup>.

Snipe's Marsh: The male who sang the most. Heard briefly on March 31<sup>st</sup>, he sang up to June 1<sup>st</sup>, often going into the Walsey Hills NOA reserve.

East Bank: Male singing from April 6<sup>th</sup> up as far as the "Bittern Drain". It moved around the southeast corner of the reed bed and was seen to cross the road and sing from the west side of Snipe's on April 20<sup>th</sup>. Occasionally both the "Snipe's"

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bird and this one sang together. It was last heard on May 26<sup>th</sup>. Two males were singing again at the north and south ends of Snipe's Marsh on September 15<sup>th</sup>.

## Grasshopper Warbler

*Possibly bred, 4 singing males, no young seen. (1-2 territories – the BTO defines a territory as being held for over 10 days)*

East Bank: The first male was heard here on April 17<sup>th</sup>. This bird held a territory in the southeast corner of the main reedbed south of the old pathway to the Bittern Hide. Despite many days of bad weather he was heard singing 6 times up to May 5<sup>th</sup>. He was heard again on June 24<sup>th</sup> hopefully indicating that he was paired up and a second brood was being attempted. Young were seen being fed here last year.

West Bank: Another area long favoured by Grasshopper Warblers. This time some of the bramble habitat they used to sing from had been removed which has confused the results. One was first heard and seen here on April 20<sup>th</sup> on reeds by the roadside near the south end of Beach Road. Also, possibly the same male was heard singing in this direction from the boardwalk on April 22<sup>nd</sup> and again on May 2<sup>nd</sup> near the area of the steps. A male was heard by the Cley Salt pans on May 21<sup>st</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> – possibly the same male relocating?

Near the Visitor Centre: A third male gave close views on bushes between the visitor centre and Bishop's Hide between April 23<sup>rd</sup> and April 29<sup>th</sup>. It was not seen after this.

Other: Birds were reported singing in bushes in the northeast corner of the main reedbed on May 7<sup>th</sup>, June 5<sup>th</sup> and June 10<sup>th</sup>. Migrants or a territory? Lastly one was seen along Beach Road, Cley on July 1<sup>st</sup>.

## Sedge Warbler

*60 singing males (30 Cley, 30 Pope's), fledged young seen*

This was a slight increase on last year. The first returning bird was seen on April 15<sup>th</sup>. Numbers increased slowly over the next few days. By April 24<sup>th</sup> there were 21 singing males around the perimeter of the main reserve. The next day it had increased to 30 males. Another 4 were counted along the Catchwater Drain and Iron Road area on May 25<sup>th</sup>. Reg Land surveyed the Pope's reed beds and counted 26 males singing on May 16<sup>th</sup>. Birds were eventually seen feeding young on July 7<sup>th</sup> and some late juveniles were begging on August 14<sup>th</sup>.

## Reed Warbler

*44 singing males (21 Cley, 23 Pope's), fledged young seen*

Only three Reed Warblers had arrived by April 29<sup>th</sup> and numbers remained low compared to last year. They had risen to 10 by May 3<sup>rd</sup> and Trevor Davies found 14 on May 12<sup>th</sup> in cold conditions. By the last week of May the reeds had grown a bit, the weather was better and there were 31 singing on the main reserve perimeter and Snipe's Marsh. Two were singing from the Iron Road reed clumps on June 8<sup>th</sup>. Reg Land counted 21 males singing in the Pope's reedbeds on May 16<sup>th</sup>. The date when the first juveniles were being fed was not noted but by July 16<sup>th</sup> both Reed and Sedge Warblers were busy with youngsters.

## Whitethroat

*4 males singing, most of these bred*

Recorded from May 1<sup>st</sup>, they were mapped in four places between the warden's house and East Bank. Young Whitethroats were seen and heard from the footpath.

## Lesser Whitethroat

*2 were present throughout the season next to the reserve but south of the A149.*

One was seen by North Foreland Wood, the other by Old Woman's Lane which was seen beside the Catchwater Drain on July 5<sup>th</sup>.

## Great Tit

*Did not breed on reserve, but probably did in N Foreland woods*

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## Long-tailed Tit

*Did not breed on reserve, but probably did in N Foreland woods*

## Bearded Tit

*5 pairs Cley (12-14 pairs last year) and 1 pair Pope's, 3+ broods seen,*

There were worries as to whether the Bearded Tits had survived the cold winter. We recorded sightings from March 3<sup>rd</sup> onwards and on the few better days it was possible to hear and see them briefly up East Bank, both sides of the boardwalk and later near Carter's Scrape. Numbers seemed much reduced.

Having watched for many hours it seemed difficult to see any nesting activity that was leading to any definite broods. Then we found a pair visiting a site west of the boardwalk. By the end of May and early June several other pairs were active near Carter's Scrape gathering food. Another nest was found close by and three more pairs were taking food off to the main reedbed, some flying a long way. We had not seen food taken to anywhere close to East Bank so concluded that five pairs were all we could hope to see from the perimeter.

Soon after, the first juvenile was seen by Richardson's Scrape on June 11<sup>th</sup> and 12 juveniles were seen on June 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> – 9 along East Bank and 3 by Carter's Scrape. No more definite nest sites were identified after this but the adults became less visible and were assumed to be breeding again. Groups of birds were seen from North Hide feeding at the base of the reeds on both sides of the Scrape at the end of July.

Reg Land found at least 1 pair, possibly 3 pairs, on Pope's Marsh and we saw 6 birds moving down the west side of the Pope's reedbed on July 6<sup>th</sup> which looked of mixed ages from our viewpoint on the beach.

After the moulting period it was good to see a group of 12+ birds by East Bank and more heard by Carter's Scrape on September 12<sup>th</sup>.

## Greenfinch

*Did not breed on the reserve but probably close by on the south side of the A149.*

Often singing near Cley village and the old visitor centre, it was thought they bred on the south side of the A149. Young were thought to be calling from bushes opposite the visitor centre on June 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## Goldfinch

*8 males singing, bred on Cley Reserve*

More numerous than Greenfinch these were seen singing from bushes and wires from the main hides, Bishop's Hide and as far up East Bank as halfway on elders and hawthorns. We attempted mapping them and thought there could be 8 pairs – they often breed colonially. We were all looking at them more carefully this year and Mike Harcup was rewarded with a view of an adult actually sitting on a nest in a bush by the boardwalk. Later he could see a well-developed chick just visible in the same bush on June 29<sup>th</sup>.

Breeding continued into late summer and our last sighting of juveniles begging was on September 1<sup>st</sup> outside Dauke's Hide.

## Linnet

*2-3 males, juveniles seen*

Two to three pairs were seen on the gorse near North Hide again but not watched closely. Others breed over West Bank and on Walsey Hills. Juveniles were seen following parents on to North Scrape later in the summer.

## Reed Bunting

*23 males singing (14 Cley, 9 Pope's), bred successfully, numbers unknown*

Beach Road: 3 males were singing from the wires, which then spent most of the summer over West Bank on Blakeney Marshes.



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Boardwalk: 2 males again, with one turning up later this year. The male nearest the main hides successfully raised a brood, heard within feet of the path on May 30<sup>th</sup>. Young were seen soon after, on June 9<sup>th</sup>, outside the hide windows.

Bishop's Hide: 2 males were singing, mainly to the west of the path to the hide. One nest was very apparent on the far side of Carter's Scrape at the end of May as both parents were eagerly collecting insects from round the pool and taking them to the nest.

East Bank: 5 males. 4 males were singing on the freshmarsh and a fifth on the saltmarsh by the Main Drain. Nesting activity was seen for most of these. By August 10<sup>th</sup>, 12 birds, of mixed ages, now moulting, were feeding along the bank, in the reeds or on the path.

Snipe's Marsh: no males seen or heard.

North Hide: 2 males. These were seen either side of the hide and both sides of North Scrape on three occasions. Juveniles were seen here also.

Pope's Marsh: 9 singing males. Reg Land counted a minimum of 1 pair and 9 singing males for the Pope's reedbeds on three visits carried out on May 16<sup>th</sup>, June 2<sup>nd</sup> and June 26<sup>th</sup>.

## Notes:

Once more we would like to thank the wardens, Bernard Bishop and Carl Brooker, and all local 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, Mike Harcup, Sue & Peter Morrison and Pat & David Wileman. We also had a lot of help from Trevor Davies especially with passerine counts when some of us were away in the spring and Noel Elms who helped to fill some of our gaps.

As part of the work to obtain The Heritage Lottery Fund grant for the purchase of Pope's Marsh, Reg Land did a survey of the reedbeds there in June. The results of this have been included in this report.

Each year we try to cover more species in depth but to continue to improve our results we need more people. We would so much like to spend more time on some species, especially Marsh Harriers where time spent watching their behaviour would give us far more accurate results and other passerines. So if you think you could help next year we would love to hear from you. 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. You will just need a little time to spare and some enthusiasm, then we are sure you will find it rewarding.

Copies of this report are sent to the County Recorder, the NWT and the BTO and are made available to Cley Bird Club members to download via the website. A summary is published in the Cley Bird Club newsletter.

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