

Cley & Salthouse Marshes Breeding Bird Report 2016

Introduction

We declared at the beginning of the year that we would not be doing the full breeding survey and report this year as none of us is getting any younger and it has become too much work. However once we started seeing signs of breeding we could not resist watching and decided to keep notes. The result is this report. We have spent less time watching some species and the notes for these are not as detailed as they have been in the past.

The area covered is, as usual, Norfolk Wildlife Trust's (NWT) Cley & Salthouse Marshes between West Bank and Iron Road 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.

As in previous years most areas were visited frequently during spring and summer 2016. We took notes of nesting birds and youngsters seen, and tried to follow the progress of each family. Again this year the NWT wanted to do full surveying of the land between E Bank and Iron Rd. to enable them to see the effect of their habitat improvements, so in addition to our normal monitoring we did fixed format transect type walks that could be repeated in future years. These were done between late-April and early-July. To do these fully we were given permission to go onto the new land to monitor the pools and the reedbeds in more detail but we only walked up the central track to avoid too much disturbance. All other sightings were from the hides and public footpaths around the reserve.

Compared with the last few years there have been fewer changes affecting the habitat on the reserve since the last breeding season. The new path, Attenborough's Walk, beside the road from E Bank to Iron Rd was opened and vegetation had grown on the new pools created last year. The pond-dipping platform was created by the Catchwater Drain at the entrance to Bishop's Hide and the new shelter 'The Lookout' was built on the newly surfaced East Bank. Regular maintenance jobs such as clearing the drains, mowing East & West Banks and reed cutting were carried out by the Environment Agency and NWT.

This year there was no full time warden at Cley during the breeding season and Bernard Bishop who had semi-retired was off sick following a knee operation. Although temporary cover was in place, not having a full time warden on site did have an impact on how quickly issues were dealt with – for example how quickly nests were roped off in public areas.

To show the different breeding on both parts of the extended reserve we have, where possible, split breeding records for 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

Ducks did very well this year with Shelduck and Gadwall having the best year since we started recording. Most waders did poorly but one pair of Oystercatcher fledged 3 young which were the first on the reserve for 10 years. Little Grebes, Moorhens and Water Rails also had a good year.

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	
	W	E	W	E	W	E
Mute Swan	1		1		6 July	
Greylag Goose	50		?		13 April	
Canada Goose		2		0		
Egyptian Goose		1		2		26 May
Shelduck	12	11	43	50	27 May	4 Jun
Gadwall	11	10	36	17	7 June	15 June
Mallard	21	20	56	21	25 April	22 May
Shoveler	5	4	14	8	23 May	27 June
Pochard	3	1	9	6	11 May	17 May
Tufted Duck	2		6		19 June	
Little Grebe	2		9		14 June	
Little Egret	9					
Grey Heron	2					
Marsh Harrier	1	2	4	2	27 June	29 June
Water Rail	3		5		9 June	
Moorhen	15	6	13	1	16 April	27 May
Coot	10	5	8	1	14 May	14 June
Oystercatcher	6	7	0	3	27 May	11 June
Avocet	49	23	0	4	11 May	16 May
Little Ringed Plover	1	2	0	0	8 May	
Ringed Plover	2	2	2	0	2 August	13 June
Lapwing	11	25	0	3	1 May	2 May
Redshank	9	9	5	3	29 May	9 May
Black-headed Gull	56	154	3	3	3 June	22 May

Table 2. Passerines

Species	Min. Pairs/ singing males		Species	Min. Pairs/ singing males	
	West	East		West	East
Skylark	8	8	Reed Warbler	22	6
Swallow	1	0	Whitethroat	1	1
Meadow Pipit	-	-	Bearded Tit	5	1-2
Wren	-	-	Goldfinch	-	-
Cetti's Warbler	2	1	Linnet	-	-
Grasshopper Warbler	0	0	Reed Bunting	11	6
Sedge Warbler	26	7			

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Table 3. Comparisons with previous years

Species	Minimum Pairs breeding				Minimum Young fledged			
	2016	2015	2014	2013	2016	2015	2014	2013
Mute Swan	1	0	3	3	1	0	2	11
Greylag	50	54	40	35	?	57	?	?
Canada Goose	2	2	3	1	0	3	4	4
Egyptian Goose	1	1	0	0	2	2		
Shelduck	23	7	10	14	93	22	26	54
Gadwall	21	16	8	17	53	26	19	48
Mallard	41	33	35	30	77	46	23	65
Garganey	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	
Shoveler	9	7	4	9	22	11	0	26
Pochard	4	3	0	8	15	0		2
Tufted Duck	2	0	0	2	6			0
Little Grebe	2	0	0	2	9			3
Little Egret	9	12	8	2		?	?	?
Grey Heron	2	4	3	1		?	?	?
Marsh Harrier	3 (nests)	4 (nests)	3 (nests)	2	6	5	7	6
Water Rail	3	2	2		5	1	?	
Moorhen	21	16	9	16	14	11	5	12
Coot	15	15	16	9	9	11	13	9
Oystercatcher	13	13	15	15	3	0	0	0
Avocet	72	64	80	100	4	10	14	37
Little Ringed Plover	3	5	6	2	0	2	2	5
Ringed Plover	4	4	4	5	2	0	1	2
Lapwing	36	51	51	47	3	13	19	14
Redshank	18	18	20	22	8	4	?	6
Black-headed Gull	210	253	121	32	6	32	50	3
Common Tern	0	2	0	0		0		
Little Tern	0	0	2				0	
Skylark	16	23	18	?				
Swallow	1	1	3	5	7	5	0	9
Meadow Pipit	-	20	15-16	?				
Wren	-	3	1	3				
Stonechat	0	0	0	0				
Cetti's Warbler	3	2	3	4				
Grasshopper Warbler	0	1	0	0				
Sedge Warbler *	26	30	46	60				
Reed Warbler *	22	20	61	44				
Whitethroat	2	5						
Bearded Tit	6-7	10	12	6				
Linnet	0	3	2	2				
Reed Bunting *	17	24	21-22	22				

For many species the level of coverage of the eastern area has varied over the last four years with greater coverage in 2014 and 2015. However, for the species marked with an * detailed surveys have not been done of the interior of the eastern sector except in 2013 when they were surveyed by Reg Land (an NWT consultant) whose figures are included. 2015-16 counts for Reed and Sedge Warblers are only for the western sector.

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Species Details

Mute Swan

1 pair, only 1 cygnet seen, assumed to fledge

No nests were found. A pair with a single cygnet was first seen in front of Daukes Hide on 6 July. The family with the then large cygnet were still present on 6 October; it is due to fledge in late October.

Greylag Goose

c.50 pairs bred, 95 goslings seen, number fledged unknown

	No. Pairs	Earliest Chicks Seen	Chicks Seen
Total	50	13 Apr	135

From WeBS counts in early spring we assume 50 pairs. The first goslings hatched from a nest we had been watching on Don's Pool on 13 April and others soon followed. A total of 135 goslings were counted with the majority east of E Bank. Plenty of young appeared to fledge but these were not counted.

Canada Goose

2 nesting attempts (both failed),

One pair appeared to be nesting on Wigeon Marsh for a few days in April and another nested on an island on Watling Water for 20 days in late April/early May. No young were seen.

Egyptian Goose

1 pair 3 goslings 2 fledged

No nest was seen, but a pair with 3 tiny goslings was seen on the meadows bordering the Coast Road on 26 May. One was lost but the other 2 fledged in early August.

Shelduck

23 pairs, 158 ducklings, 93 fledged

	No. Broods Seen	Earliest ducklings seen	No. Ducklings seen	No. Fledged
West	12	27 May	71	43
East	11	4 Jun	87	50
TOTAL	23		158	93

Our best year ever. The first young seen were a brood of 5 on Pat's Pool on 27 May. As usual we don't know whether these had actually bred on the reserve or had been brought in from nearby fields etc.

Gadwall

21 pairs bred, 150 ducklings seen, 53 fledged

	No. Broods Seen	Earliest ducklings seen	No. ducklings seen	No. Fledged
West	11	7 June	76	36
East	10	15 June	74	17
TOTAL	21		150	53

A very good year for Gadwall with more pairs and ducklings than we had recorded before. However we lost sight of many broods early on and the percentage seen to fledge was lower than usual so whether they were predated or just lost to sight in the long vegetation we will never know.

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Mallard

41 pairs bred, 249 ducklings seen, 77 fledged

	No. Broods Seen	Earliest ducklings seen	No. ducklings seen	No. Fledged
West	21	25 April	119	56
East	20	22 May	130	21
TOTAL	41		249	77

A good year for Mallard our highest fledged count ever (just).

Garganey

No evidence of breeding this year

A pair was on Simmond's Scrape on 11 May but there was no evidence of breeding. Fledged juveniles seen from mid-July probably came from elsewhere.

Shoveler

9 pairs, 32 ducklings seen, 22 fledged

	No. Broods Seen	Earliest ducklings seen	No. ducklings seen	No. Fledged
West	5	23 May	21	14
East	4	27 June	11	8
TOTAL	9		32	22

A fairly average year for Shoveler,

Pochard

4 broods, 25 ducklings seen, 23 fledged

	No. Broods Seen	Earliest ducklings seen	No. ducklings seen	No. Fledged
West	3	11 May	19	17
East	1	17 May	6	6
TOTAL	4		25	23

Pochard started to return this year in early March with a maximum of 15 on the 26th. Only 6 females were seen.

We have often, in the past, only seen ducklings soon after hatching then no more until we start seeing fledged juveniles. This year we had 4 broods including 3 that we managed to follow right through. The first brood of 9 ducklings was seen on Don's Pool on 11 May; they moved to Snipe's Marsh on the 28th and 7 fledged around the end of June. Another brood of 6 was seen on Watling Water on 17 May and by 5 June they were roaming around the drains east of Watling Water and were even seen east of Iron Rd on several occasions; we believe all 6 fledged. Another brood of 8 was only seen occasionally in the drains around E Bank area, but we believe they all fledged. A fourth brood of only 2 ducklings was seen in the Catchwater Drain west of E Bank from 23 June, both fledged.

Tufted Duck

2 broods, 16 ducklings seen, 6 fledged

	No. Broods Seen	Earliest ducklings seen	No. ducklings seen	No. Fledged
West	2	19 June	16	6
East	0			
TOTAL	2		16	6

After two years of seeing no broods it was nice to see young again. A maximum of 14 adult Tufted's were seen this spring including 5 females. A brood of 9 ducklings were first seen on Snipe's Marsh on 23 June with 10 there on the 25th they successfully crossed the A149 at the end of June and were then seen on Don's Pool till 13 July when only 8 remained – they were not seen again. Another brood of 6 was first seen in front of Daukes Hide on 19 June, they moved to the Catchwater Drain and then gradually east along this till they fledged at the beginning of August.

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Little Grebe

2 pairs, 3 broods, 9 fledged

	Pairs	No. Broods Seen	Earliest chicks seen	No. chicks	No. Fledged
West	2	3	14 June	11	9
East	0				
TOTAL	2	3		11	9

A nest was found on Don's Pool on 22 May and 4 chicks hatched from it on 14 June, 3 of these fledged at the end of July. An adult was seen with 2 fledged juveniles on Snipe's Marsh from 22 July, these had not been seen as chicks. A pair was seen with 5 recently hatched chicks on Snipe's on 9 August, from which at least 4 fledged in mid-September. We assume the two broods on Snipe's were from the same parents. Occasional adults were seen on Watling Water but there was no sign of breeding there.

Bittern

Did not breed again this year

There were regular sightings of single birds during the winter but only 3 in March and none in April. No booming was heard.

Little Egret

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

11 visits were made, with permission, to this private wood. Only 9 nests were definitely seen but some could have been missed in the difficult viewing. Young were seen on the reserve from 22 June.

Grey Heron

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

The first young were reported on the reserve on 24 June.

Marsh Harrier

3 females (2 males), 2 broods, 6 fledged.

	No. nests	No. broods	No. Fledged
West	1	1	4
East	2	1	2
TOTAL	3	2	6

The regular female (Blondie) and her mate had wintered in the main reedbed on the western part of the reserve and mating and nest building activity were seen in early April. On 22 May Blondie was seen hunting so we thought young may have hatched. The first fledged youngster was seen on 27 June with 4 on the 28th.

In the eastern area during late April and early May, a total of 2 males and up to 4 females were individually identified but very little behaviour indicative of breeding was observed. By mid-May, 2 adult females, one dark with a pale-tipped tail and the other much lighter overall with a striking pale crown, face and upper-wing coverts, were seen to take food passes from a tri-coloured male. The first indication that young may have hatched was when the dark female was observed to drop an unidentified food item into the NW corner of the reedbed west of the central track on 15 June. The first sighting of young harriers was 2 birds perched in the SW corner of the reedbed on 29 June. Also on 29 June, the male was observed to make a food pass of a Moorhen to the paler female which was taken down into the reedbed. There were reports of up to 4 young harriers together in the second week of July but whether all had fledged from nests on Pope's remains uncertain.

Sparrowhawk

No evidence of breeding

Common Buzzard

No evidence of breeding

Although a pair were seen over N Foreland Wood regularly in early spring, displaying there on 15 May and seen on and off throughout the summer we have no evidence of breeding.

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Kestrel

No evidence of breeding

One or two were seen regularly throughout the season with young seen by Arnold's in August, but we have no evidence to prove they bred in our area.

Water Rail

At least 3 pairs, 5 broods, 11 chicks seen, probably at least 5 fledged

	Potential Pairs	Broods (young) seen	No. Fledged
West	3	5 (11)	5
East	0		
TOTAL	3	5 (11)	5

Unusually this year there were a lot of sightings of young Water Rails, especially around Daukes Hide. The first chicks seen were a brood of 5 on Whitwell on 9 June. There were no further reports until an adult was seen with 2 half-grown chicks, also on Whitwell, on 11 July, by which time the first brood would have been well grown. A juvenile was seen fluttering across the drain on the south side of Daukes Hide on 15 July. On 20 July a dead chick was dropped by a Stoat on the boardwalk, so this must have been another brood; were they all taken by the Stoat? 3 different aged young were seen on Simmond's Scrape on 5 & 13 August. Young were also seen near Bishop's Hide with 2 different ages reported on Pat's Pool on 13 August.

We cannot be certain of the number of pairs involved but there appear to have been 2 pairs around Daukes Hide, probably 1 on Whitwell and the other south of the hide and at least one of these had 2 broods. There was also a pair near Bishop's Hide which also had 2 broods. Regular visitors to Daukes Hide in the evenings also reported seeing a pair of adults on the northern edge of Simmond's Scrape, but we have no details of young from this pair. A juvenile was also seen on North Scrape in late August but we have no evidence of breeding there. We cannot be certain but we guess that at least 5 fledged.

Moorhen

21 pairs/27 broods min. 57 chicks. 14 fledged

	No. Pairs	No. Broods	Earliest date/chicks	Total chicks	No. Fledged
West	15	21	16 April	44	13
East	6	6	27 May	13	1
	21	27		57	14

This was a fairly average year for Moorhens. No nests were found. The first young seen were a brood of 3 small in the Catchwater Drain near the Visitor Centre on 16 April. Single fully grown chicks first seen by Daukes Hide on 21 July and in the Catchwater Drain on 2 July were thought to be from earlier broods that had not been seen.

Coot

At least 15 pairs, 18 broods, 34 chicks, 9 fledged

	No. Pairs	No. Nests seen	Broods seen	Chicks seen	No. Fledged
West	10	0	15	30	8
East	5	4	2	4	1
Total	15	4	18	34	9

Coot was another species with a fairly average year. Only 4 nests were found this year, 3 on Watling Water and 1 on the meadow west of there, though this may have been due to less time spent looking for them. An adult with at least 2 tiny chicks seen on Keeper's Marsh near South Pool on 14 May were the first for the year.

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Oystercatcher

13 pairs attempted to breed, 5 broods (10 chicks) hatched, 3 fledged

	No. Pairs	Nesting attempts	Successful nests	Chicks seen	No. Fledged
West	6	9	3	4	0
East	7	16	2	6	3
TOTAL	13	25	5	10	3

This year we did not pay a lot of attention to Oystercatchers that appeared to be on eggs for only a few days, so our estimate of the number of pairs and nesting attempts may be a bit low. Otherwise this was a good year for Oystercatchers in our area. 5 nests went full term, hatching a total of 10 chicks. Some only survived a few days but 2 pairs were more successful. A pair that nested on a patch of shingle by the “2nd gap” on Arnold’s hatched 3 chicks on 11-12 June. One was lost after a few days and a second only survived 10 days. The third chick survived for 27 days when it was due to, and looked about to, fledge but it was not there the next day and not seen again. Young Oystercatchers tend to remain dependent on their parents for some time after fledging until their bill grows to full length. Another pair that nested on the shingle east of Sea Pool hatched 3 chicks on 14-15 July; these 3 survived to fledge in mid-August and were still with the parents being fed well into September. This was the first time since 2007 that young had fledged on the reserve.

Avocet

72 pairs, 71 chicks seen, at least 4 fledged

	No. pairs	No. Broods	Earliest Hatching Date	No. Chicks seen	No. Fledged
West	49	25	11 May	51	0
East	23	10	16 May	20	4
TOTAL	72	35		71	4
<i>+ from Blakeney Pt</i>		12		37	1

Overall allowing for birds relaying after their early nests had failed we believe there were 72 pairs that attempted to breed in our full area.

As usual the first nests were seen on Pat’s Pool in mid-April with 26 present there in mid-May. The first chick was seen there on 11 May and others soon followed with a maximum of 12 recorded on 29 May. By 4 June all chicks were gone and any new ones hatching were being predated within a day. There were also a few nests and chicks on Simmond’s & North Scrapes. The resident female Marsh Harrier seemed to be the main predator with a little help from her mate who was also seen breaking eggs to take nearly hatched chicks. By 16 June no nests or chicks were left and no more seen on the area west of E Bank except for broods from Blakeney Point – see below.

Including birds resitting as their nests failed 42 nests were seen on the eastern sector, initially on the Serpentine and later on Arnold’s and further east, some of these probably being 2nd attempts by the birds displaced from the central scrapes. Only 1 chick was seen on the Serpentine on 8 June and by this time the ‘Cley’ female Harrier was being seen hunting over this area. The first chicks were seen on Pope’s Pool (just east of the Serpentine) in late May and many more followed. These seemed to have a better survival rate possibly because this was the territory of the ‘eastern’ Harriers with the result that the ‘Cley’ female Harrier didn’t hunt that far east. However a lot of these were lost but 4 chicks from two broods (2+2) did survive to fledge after the parents had taken them to Arnold’s and Wigeon Marsh.

In addition to the broods hatched from the reserve several pairs were seen moving their chicks across Beach Road and the car park from Blakeney Point. It is presumed that 12 pairs did this but not all can be traced back to their nests. They usually went to the pools in the Eye Field but some moved further east with one brood being seen on North Scrape. Most succumbed to predation but one chick which had stayed on the pool close to the road at the north of Eye Field did survive to fledge.

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Little Ringed Plover

3 pairs, 2 chicks seen, none fledged

	Pairs	No. Chicks seen	No. Chicks fledged
West	1	0	0
East	2	2	0
Total	3	2	0

One or two pairs were seen on the scrapes and around Eye Field early in the season but we think there was only 1 pair that attempted to nest in the western area. 2 nests were seen on the shingle north of N Scrape but neither of these went full term.

A few observations of 1 or 2 birds flying to the fields south of the coast road make us believe a pair may have been nesting there but we have no evidence to prove this.

A nest was first seen on the Serpentine on 24 May and then regularly until 11 Jun; on the 13th there was no sign of the nest or any chicks so we fear it failed. Single birds, looking as if they had a nest, were seen around Pope's Pool in late May and the well-hidden nest was eventually found on 28 May; 2 chicks were seen briefly in the area on 8 June but not again. 2 other nests were found later on Arnold's and the shingle behind Sea Pool but these were not successful. As we have no evidence of extra birds in the area we think this was the same 2 pairs trying again.

Ringed Plover

4 pairs, 5 chicks, 2 fledged

	Pairs	No. Chicks Seen	No. Chicks Fledged
West	2	3	2
East	2	2	0
Totals	4	5	2

As in previous years it was difficult to determine territories early in the year but by mid-May we were seeing 2 pairs in the area between Beach car park and E Bank and another 2 pairs along the shingle east of E Bank. Although Ringed Plovers were visiting the scrapes there was no sign of any attempting to nest. All this year's nests were on the shingle.

The first nest found was on the shingle inside the fence E of N Screen close to the Main Drain on 12 May. This was watched on and off but on the 28 May it had gone and no chicks could be found, so we assume it failed.

Another nest was found on the shingle, outside the fence, mid-way along Sea Pool on 3 June. This hatched on 13/14 June and 2 tiny chicks were seen in Sea Pool on the 15th. These only survived 3 days. Another pair in the area were hassling both the adults and the chicks. On 29 June another nest was found high up on the beach beyond the E end of Sea Pool. Although close to the remaining shingle bank it was quite close to where people walked. The nest was watched for 2 weeks but by 15 July it was gone.

On 18 July another nest was found right on the top of the beach N of the Brackish Pool. It must have been there for about 10 days but was immediately fenced off and 3 chicks hatched on 2 August. The parents took them to the nearby pools where they remained. One chick was lost by 18 August but the other 2 survived to fledge, the first on 24 August but the other not until the beginning of September.

Lapwing

36 nesting attempts, 19 broods, min. 37 chicks, min. 3 fledged

	No. Nests	No. Broods Hatched	Earliest Hatching Date	No. Chicks	No. Fledged
West	11	4	1 May	8	0
East	25	15	2 May	29	3
TOTAL	36	19		37	3

This was a very poor year for Lapwing with fewer nests than in recent years and only 3 chicks known to fledge. Some meadows that have held a few breeding birds in the past were mostly unoccupied. The only area with a good number of nests was immediately east of East Bank around the Serpentine. However, many of those attempts failed and most chicks were lost. Repeated nesting attempts were also made on Bull Marsh but these, too, appeared to fail. Reasons for failure are not clear but very poor weather conditions may have had an impact on young chicks. Other

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possible causes, such as predation, were not assessed. We spent fewer hours this year trying to follow chicks from hatching through to fledging but many of the chicks that were watched disappeared within days.

Common Snipe

No evidence of breeding

Small numbers of birds were seen during April but then none until July. No drumming was heard or other evidence of breeding seen.

Redshank

18 broods 38 chicks 8 fledged

	No. Broods Hatched	First chicks seen	No. chicks known to hatch	No. fledged
West	9	29 May	21	5
East	9	9 May	17	3
TOTAL	18		38	8

An average year for number of pairs seen. As usual very few chicks were followed through to fledging.

Black-headed Gull

210 pairs, at least 33 chicks, at least 6 fledged

	No. Pairs	No. chicks seen	No. fledged
West	56	17	3
East	154	16	3
Total	210	33	6

As usual there were nesting attempts on various spots on the scrapes and other pools across the whole reserve with low success. The odd thing this year was a mass of gulls on the eastern pools in early May. Circa 800 birds with at least 100 nests were counted on 4 May. By the end of the first week of June nearly all had dispersed and only a handful of chicks were seen.

Mediterranean Gull

2-3 pairs, did not nest

2 or 3 pairs were seen regularly with the Black-headed Gulls on the Watling Water throughout April but no nests were seen.

Sandwich Tern

Did not nest

Several were in with the Black-headed Gulls on the eastern pools in early May with 68 on the western Shooters Pool on the 9th. They were displaying and mating but no nests were seen. They had all left by 15 May.

Common Tern

No birds attempted to breed this year

Little Tern

No birds attempted to breed this year

Wood Pigeon

Present, no breeding on the reserve

Very few bushes have enough cover for Woodpigeons to breed in but they are often seen on the reserve.

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Skylark

16 singing males (8 west, 8 east)

The east area was counted 4 times but the west was less visited; however, 8 singing males were recorded on each side of the reserve. There were fewer birds on the Eye Field than in previous years but, as usual, one pair chose to breed in the overspill car park at Coastguards where the grass is longer. A nest with chicks was found by the wardens when checking the area prior to mowing on May 4th, it was left unmown. Elsewhere juveniles were seen on the Serpentine and in the fields beside Iron Road.

Swallow

1 pair bred, possibly 7 young fledged

This was another very poor year for Swallows on the reserve with the only signs of nesting being at the Pillbox. The first report of birds entering the pillbox was late this year on 7 June. Young birds were seen nearby on 21 July with a brood of 7 there on the 27th. There was no breeding in the Car Park Shelter this year, nor anywhere else on the reserve.

House Martin

Did not breed on the reserve

They nested on houses along the Coast Road with 20 pairs on the Warden's House. Overall numbers are not known.

Meadow Pipit

Not counted, juveniles seen.

No figures this year but a highlight was the discovery of a juvenile Cuckoo just east of Arnold's Marsh being fed by Meadow Pipits on July 16th. It was a young but full-size Cuckoo with characteristic white patches on the crown. It sat mostly on a fence post and was fed by both host parents but occasionally dropped to the grass apparently to forage for itself. It was thought to be not long out of the nest, which was presumably in long grass.

Other Meadow Pipits were seen taking food to sites by Sea Pool and the overspill car park at Coastguards.

Pied Wagtail

Probably did not breed on the reserve but adults often collected food from Keeper's Marsh which was taken across Beach Road. A female with food was twice seen entering a roof below Cley Windmill on July 30th and collecting more nearby.

Wren

Bred but not counted

Once again a Wren held a territory by the central hides. Young were heard in late July while an adult collected food by Daukes Hide. Another pair had taken their family nearly to the north end of East Bank, feeding close to the ditch all the while.

Stonechat

Did not breed

Cetti's Warbler

3 singing males (2 west, 1 east)

A very vocal bird held a territory by the Visitor Centre and across to the Catchwater Drain opposite. A second male was heard occasionally on Snipe's Marsh (NWT) but most likely was visiting the Walsey Hills Reserve opposite where 2 were heard singing on May 11th. The third male was heard often at the east end of Walsey Hills where the hill drops down and it was also seen singing on the north side of the main road by the Catchwater Drain. We have no evidence to confirm breeding.

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Meanwhile NOA ringers caught 3 Cetti's this spring on their Walsey Hills Reserve: a female with a brood patch on April 28th, a male and a bird of indeterminate gender on May 26th. They had caught no juveniles by the end of July.

Another bird was also singing, outside our area, opposite the Iron Road on Sarbury Hill, Salthouse.

Grasshopper Warbler

Did not breed

Two records only. One was heard outside the reserve by Old Woman's Lane on May 1st and another much later on July 8th at the south end of Beach Road near the steps.

Sedge Warbler

26 singing males (west), juveniles seen. No complete count on eastern area.

The first bird heard in spring was at the Borrow Pit, Beach Road on April 7th. Counts round the perimeter of the western area were done on April 20th (24 singing males) and on April 30th (26 singing males). In the east 7 singing males were recorded by several observers from the central track and points on the perimeter but no full count was made here. Parents were seen with juveniles on June 16th and adults were seen carrying food on July 30th. Numbers have been slightly lower than pre-tidal surge. Sedge Warblers are more easily seen beside those drains which still have tall reeds and bushes which can be used as song posts.

Reed Warbler

22 singing males (west), juveniles seen. No complete count on eastern area.

The first bird was heard and seen on East Bank on April 23rd. Counts round the perimeter of the western area were done on May 7th (17 singing males) and on May 16th (22 singing males). In the east 6 singing males were recorded by several observers from the central track and points on the perimeter but no full count was made here. On May 12th a female was seen collecting material and one pair was constructing a nest next to the west drain of East Bank on May 16th. As the reeds grew it was lost to view. By July 6th a noisy family was showing at the north end of East Bank and adults were still collecting food by the boardwalk to the central hides on July 30th. Compared to previous years numbers are still at low levels on the western area. Reed Warblers are mainly found in tall reeds at the north end of East Bank and beside the boardwalk to the main hides.

Whitethroat

2 singing males (1 west, 1 east)

A male was singing by the Visitor Centre during May and another next to the Catchwater Drain below Walsey Hills on May 22nd. Two others were south of the A149 east of the Visitor Centre and by Old Woman's Lane. No juveniles were seen.

Bearded Tit

6-7 pairs (5 west, 1-2 east), juveniles seen

Early in the season 2 pairs were seen several times off East Bank, 1-2 pairs heard or glimpsed from the boardwalk to the central hides and one was seen near Bishop's Hide occasionally. In the eastern area there were sightings of 2-3 birds west of the central track.

The cold, windy days in the spring kept the birds low and it wasn't until May that a nest was located. A pair had been visiting a site next to East Bank and food was being taken there on May 16th. By May 28th two family parties were seen, one along East Bank and the other by the boardwalk to the central hides. Then a family of 5 juveniles and an adult female was seen by Bishop's Hide on June 13th.

In the east a couple of juveniles were seen on their own in June and a family party of juveniles and an adult female on July 6th, west of the central track.

The adults were elusive again in late July and August although juveniles were seen exploring many parts of the reserve.

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Goldfinch

No evidence of breeding.

Birds were seen on the reserve along the boardwalk to the central hides but, by the beginning of August, no nests or juveniles had been found in the willows and elders favoured in some years, perhaps because they had very little foliage this year.

Linnet

No evidence of breeding.

Males were seen perched on dead gorse by the North Screen and on suseda by Arnold's Marsh but no breeding evidence was obtained.

Reed Bunting

17 singing males (11 west, 6 east), juveniles seen

There were fewer pairs than last year but not unusually low in number. Areas that have lost them are the southern half of East Bank and near the Dipping Platform. Juveniles were seen along the boardwalk to the central hides, beside East Bank and near the Iron Road.

Notes:

Once more we would like to thank the wardens, Bernard Bishop, Adam Pimble 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, Noel Elms, Mike Harcup, Sue & Peter Morrison and Pat & David Wileman.

As mentioned in the introduction, we spent less time this year watching some species and writing this report but it was still much more than we feel able to maintain in future years. 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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