

Cley & Salthouse Marshes Breeding Bird Report 2017

Introduction

Once more 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 albeit a bit later than usual. 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 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 2017. We took notes of nesting birds and youngsters seen, and tried to follow the progress of each family. Whereas in past years nearly all sightings have been from the hides and public footpaths around the reserve, this year the warden did some counts and viewing from within the reedbed in areas we do not normally cover.

On the evening of 13 January a surge tide flooded the whole reserve and the Coast Road again. The next morning all was under water. The water drained off over the next few days but the central hides were closed for a week while they dried out and repairs were made to them and the boardwalk. Attenborough's Walk and Babcock Hide were reopened by the 28th. The shingle bank behind Arnold's was damaged and a further movement of shingle behind Sea Pool reduced the size of the pool and buried the fence. The shingle also moved further south along the stretch between North Screen and East Bank flattening any remaining stretches of the bank and burying the fence. New fences, enclosing larger areas of shingle were put in place at the end of March before the start of the breeding season. Although the salt water was drained off by the 19th it will probably have affected the soil and invertebrates and therefore some of the breeding results.

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

Shelduck and Gadwall did well again this year with more pairs and ducklings than previously recorded. We also saw good numbers of Redshank and young. Marsh Harriers did poorly with only one pair successfully raising young, the lowest number since we started recording them. Black-headed Gulls also did poorly with few nests being seen and no young.

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
Canada Goose	1	1	3	2	21 May	16 May
Greylag Goose	70-80				14 April	
Mute Swan	4		1	0	25 May	
Egyptian Goose	0	0				
Shelduck	16	17	61	24	18 May	20 May
Shoveler	2	5	7	13	9 June	12 June
Gadwall	11	13	37	25	10 June	10 June
Mallard	26	16	34	21	8 May	24 April
Pochard	2	1	1	0	28 May	30 June
Tufted Duck	1	1	0	0	-	4 Aug
Little Grebe	2	0	4	-	25 June	-
Grey Heron	3		?		12 May	
Little Egret	7		?		?	
Marsh Harrier	1	0	4	-	24 June	
Water Rail		1		?		28 Aug
Moorhen	2	6		1	4 June	2 June
Coot	5	3	3	0	9 May	24 June
Oystercatcher	8	6	0	0		22 June
Avocet	28	43	0	15	14 May	20 May
Lapwing	13	31	0	8	4 May	4 May
Ringed Plover	1	4	2	3	5 June	2 June
Little Ringed Plover	1	2	0	7	-	29 May
Redshank	7	20	2	19	9 June	24 May
Black-headed Gull	20	3	0	0		

Table 2. Passerines

Species	Min. Pairs/ singing males		Species	Min. Pairs/ singing males	
	West	East		West	East
Bearded Tit	8		Grasshopper Warbler	0	0
Skylark	16		Wren	1	0
Swallow	0	0	Pied Wagtail	0	1
Cetti's Warbler	2	0	Meadow Pipit	19	
Sedge Warbler	27	-	Linnet	0	1
Reed Warbler	10	-	Reed Bunting	10	5

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Table 3. Comparisons with previous years

Species	Minimum Pairs breeding					Minimum Young fledged			
	2017	2016	2015	2014		2017	2016	2015	2014
Canada Goose	2	2	2	3		5	0	3	4
Greylag	70?	50	54	40			?	57	?
Mute Swan	4	1	0	3		1	1	0	2
Egyptian Goose	0	1	1	0		0	2	2	
Shelduck	33	23	7	10		85	93	22	26
Shoveler	7	9	7	4		20	22	11	0
Gadwall	24	21	16	8		62	53	26	19
Mallard	42	41	33	35		55	77	46	23
Pochard	3	4	3	0		1	15	0	
Tufted Duck	2	2	0	0		0	6		
Little Grebe	2	2	0	0		4	9		
Grey Heron	3	2	4	3				?	?
Little Egret	7	9	12	8				?	?
Marsh Harrier	1	3 (nests)	4 (nests)	3 (nests)		4	6	5	7
Water Rail	1	3	2	2			5	1	?
Moorhen	8	21	16	9		1	14	11	5
Coot	8	15	15	16		3	9	11	13
Oystercatcher	14	13	13	15		0	3	0	0
Avocet	71	72	64	80		15	4	10	14
Lapwing	44	36	51	51		8	3	13	19
Ringed Plover	5	4	4	4		5	2	0	1
Little Ringed Plover	3	3	5	6		7	0	2	2
Redshank	27	18	18	20		21	8	4	?
Black-headed Gull	23?	210	253	121		0	6	32	50
Common Tern	0	0	2	0				0	
Little Tern	0	0	0	2					0
Bearded Tit	8	6-7	10	12					
Skylark	16	16	23	18					
Swallow	0	1	1	3			7	5	0
Cetti's Warbler	2	3	2	3					
Sedge Warbler *	27	26	30	46					
Reed Warbler *	10	22	20	61					
Grasshopper Warbler	0	0	1	0					
Wren	1	-	3	1					
Pied Wagtail	1	0	0	0					
Meadow Pipit	19	-	20	15-16					
Linnet	1	0	3	2					
Reed Bunting *	15	17	24	21-22					

For the species marked with an * detailed surveys have not been done of the interior of the eastern sector. 2015-17 counts for Reed and Sedge Warblers are only for the western sector and a different method of counting was used in 2017.

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Species Details

Canada Goose

2 pairs 6 goslings 5 fledged

1 pair nested on the eastern Shooter's Pool where there was a nest 2 years ago. 3 chicks were first seen on Swan Lake on 16 May but this reduced to 2 by the 21st. These 2 fledged. No nest was seen but a pair was seen with 3 tiny goslings on Simmond's Scrape on 21 May. It was assumed they had nested on Billy's Wash. These continued to be seen around the central scrapes and Billy's Wash and fledged in late June.

Greylag Goose

Bred with young seen and fledged

No detailed counts were done this year but plenty of young were seen. WeBS counts in March & April gave 172 and 154 birds respectively so we can assume around 70-80 pairs bred. The first goslings (a brood of 7) were seen on Don's Pool on 14 April and others soon followed.

Mute Swan

Min.4 pairs, 1 cygnet, assumed to have fledged

Throughout the breeding season there were at least 4 pairs, possibly 6, across the reserve. However, it was a repeat of last year with just one pair (perhaps the same birds as last year) producing 1 cygnet. The reserve warden found the nest by one of the central scrapes and on 25 May a pair was seen on Billy's Wash accompanied by a single small cygnet, which remained in the area and probably fledged. Other pairs remained on the reserve and a few times showed signs of nesting behaviour but nothing came of these efforts and no other cygnets seen.

Egyptian Goose

None bred this year

Shelduck

33 pairs, 252 ducklings, 85 fledged

	No. Broods Seen	Earliest ducklings seen	No. Ducklings seen	No. Fledged
West	16	18 May	146	61
East	17	20 May	106	24
TOTAL	33		252	85

2017 was another very good year for this species with the highest number of ducklings ever recorded. The first young seen were a brood of 8 on Pat's Pool on 18 May. As usual we don't know whether these had actually bred on the reserve or had been brought in from nearby fields etc. Broods are difficult to follow as Shelduck often form crèches and adopt ducklings from other pairs but we think at least 85 ducklings fledged.

Garganey

No evidence of breeding this year

Shoveler

7 pairs, 44 ducklings seen, 20 fledged

	No. Broods Seen	Earliest ducklings seen	No. ducklings seen	No. Fledged
West	2	9 June	14	7
East	5	12 June	30	13
TOTAL	7		44	20

This was a fairly average year for Shoveler but numbers were low in the western area.

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Gadwall

24 pairs bred, 161 ducklings seen, 62 fledged

	No. Broods Seen	Earliest ducklings seen	No. ducklings seen	No. Fledged
West	11	10 June	73	37
East	13	10 June	88	25
TOTAL	24		161	62

Gadwall numbers continue to increase with more pairs and ducklings than last year's record.

Mallard

42 pairs bred, 212 ducklings seen, 55 fledged

	No. Broods Seen	Earliest ducklings seen	No. ducklings seen	No. Fledged
West	26	8 May	125	34
East	16	24 Apr	87	21
TOTAL	42		212	55

This was an above average year for Mallard.

Pochard

3 broods, 6 ducklings seen, 1 fledged

	No. Broods Seen	Earliest ducklings seen	No. ducklings seen	No. Fledged
West	2	28 May	4	1
East	1	30 June	2	0
TOTAL	3		6	1

Pochard started to return this year in late February with the first female on 2 March and a maximum of 17 on the 9th. 10 females were seen on 1 April.

The first ducklings were a brood of 2 on Don's Pool on 28 May. They were seen there daily until 2 June except on 31 May when a female was seen with 2 small ducklings on Snipe's Marsh. This could have been the same brood but as they were quite small we think it unlikely that they would have crossed the road for 1 day then gone back so we have treated this as 2 broods. 1 of these ducklings remained on Don's Pool until late July when it had fledged. A female with a single medium sized duckling seen east of the Serpentine on 15 June is thought to have been the brood from Snipe's.

In the eastern section a female with 2 small ducklings was on Watling Water on 30 June. They continued to be seen on Watling and then in the moat around it until 19 July but not again.

Tufted Duck

2 pairs, 1 failed nest, 1 brood, 2 ducklings seen, 0 fledged

	No. Broods Seen	Earliest ducklings seen	No. ducklings seen	No. Fledged
West	0			
East	1	4 August	2	0
TOTAL	1		2	0

Following last year's good result we were back to normal this year. 18 birds were present on 3 June including 7 females. Unusually a nest was found; on 3 June a female took over a deserted Black-headed Gull nest on one of the grassy tussocks in the Brackish Pools west of the north end of E Bank. She continued to sit here until 12 June but the nest was deserted on the 13th with no eggs to be seen. A female was seen with 2 small ducklings on Watling Water on 4 August and again on the 6th and 11th but not again.

Little Grebe

2 pairs, 2 broods, 4 fledged

	Pairs	No. Broods Seen	Earliest chicks seen	No. chicks	No. Fledged
West	2	2	25 June	4	4
East	0				
TOTAL	2	2		4	4

Pairs were heard trilling on both Snipe's Marsh and Don's Pool in the spring and an adult was seen carrying nest material on Don's Pool on 27 July but no other evidence of breeding was seen at either of these sites. A single

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juvenile was seen in the Catchwater Drain west of Bishop's Hide on 25th and 26th June but not again. On 1 September there was a pair with 3 juveniles on Snipes Marsh which we assume but cannot confirm had bred there. No small chicks were seen.

Bittern

Did not breed again this year

Grey Heron

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

Heron nests are easier to see than those of the Egrets especially in early spring before the leaves are on the trees. The first occupied nest was seen on 13 March. Only 3 occupied nests were found but there may have been more as at least 12 adults were seen flying around the wood or settled on the Reserve near the wood prior to birds seen actively nesting in the wood. The first chick was seen on a nest on 12 May and young were reported on the reserve on 24 June.

Little Egret

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

Only 3 nests were definitely seen but it is thought that 7 pairs nested in the wood. Young were seen on the reserve from 19 June.

Marsh Harrier

1 pair, 1 brood, 4 fledged.

	No. nests	No. broods	No. Fledged
West	1	1	4
East	0		
TOTAL	1	4	4

The regular female (Blondie) and her mate had, once more, wintered in the main reedbed on the western part of the reserve and mating and nest building activity were seen in April. The first fledged youngster was seen on 24 June with 4 from the 27th.

In the eastern area on 2 May, a medium-brown female with extensive pale head and lower-neck patches, was seen dropping into the reedbed W of Pope's entrance track. A male was seen over Pope's from 9 May. These were both seen on and off during May but there were no definite signs of breeding.

Common Buzzard

No evidence of breeding

A pair was seen displaying over N Foreland wood on 27 February then the female landed in the wood. 1 was flushed from the wood on 17 March. They continued to be seen around the wood on several occasions through to mid-May but there was no evidence of breeding.

Water Rail

At least 1 pair, 1 chick seen.

Birds were heard calling from Bishop's Hide, Whitwell/ Daukes Hides, Catchwater Drain opposite the Visitor Centre, E Bank near the sluice, Don's Pool and Watling Water during April-June. The only evidence of breeding was an adult with a fluffy chick seen on Watling Water on 28 August.

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Moorhen

8 pairs/8 broods, min.18 chicks, min.1 fledged

	No. Pairs	No. Broods	Earliest date/chicks	Chicks seen	No. Fledged
West	2	2	4 June	5	unknown
East	6	6	2 June	13	1
	8	8		18	1

A very poor year for Moorhens with just 18 chicks being found. We saw far fewer adults than normal, particularly in the Catchwater Drain, although the first chicks were seen there to the east of East Bank on 2 June (they were not seen again). Most chicks soon disappeared but at least 1 from broods near the Serpentine reached full size and presumably fledged. Another large chick was seen on Watling Water on 10 August but we had not seen it at a younger stage and do not know where the nest had been located.

Coot

8 pairs, 3 broods, 7 chicks, 3 fledged

	No. Pairs	No. Nests seen	Broods seen	Chicks seen	No. Fledged
West	5	1	2	6	3
East	3	4	1	1	0
Total	8	5	3	7	3

Either a very poor year or they were being very elusive. Birds were seen carrying nesting material on Keeper's by South Pool and by Daukes Hide. Nests were seen on Don's Pool, Swan Lake and 3 on Watling Water but none of these hatched. A pair with 2 tiny chicks was seen on Cricket Marsh on 9 May but not again. A brood of 4 was first seen on the Central Scrapes on 26 June and 3 of these survived to fledging. A pair with a single chick was on Swan Lake for 11 days from 24 June but then not seen again.

Oystercatcher

14 pairs, 1 brood (3 chicks) hatched, 0 fledged

	No. Pairs	Nesting attempts	Successful nests	Chicks seen	No. Fledged
West	8	10	0	0	0
East	6	11	1	3	0
TOTAL	14	21	1	3	0

Following last year's successes, this year the situation with Oystercatchers was back to normal. Again 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. Many of this year's nests were on the beach and the fenced off shingle behind the Brackish Pools and Sea Pool. Two nests on the beach were roped off soon after being found. One of these, just west of E Bank, survived someone driving a vehicle through the ropes and near the nest site on 13 June but failed 10 days later. The other, behind Arnold's, hatched 3 chicks on 22 June which the parents soon took to Arnold's. Only 2 remained on the 24th and on the 29th, following heavy rain the previous day none could be found. Another two nests, on the fenced in shingle behind Sea Pool, went to full term but no chicks were seen.

Avocet

71 pairs, 64 chicks seen, 15 fledged

	No. pairs	No. Broods	Earliest Hatching Date	No. Chicks seen	No. Fledged
West	28	10	14 May	20	0
East	43	20	20 May	44	15
TOTAL	71	30		64	15
+ from Blakeney Pt		4		14	0

Overall allowing for some birds relaying after their early nests had failed we believe there were 71 pairs that attempted to breed in our full area. It was a very poor year on the western part of the reserve but the east did well in the end giving the highest number fledging for several years..

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As usual the first nests were seen on Pat's Pool in mid-April with 21 present there on 22 May. The first chick was seen there on 14 May and others soon followed with a total of 9 broods (18 chicks) being seen by 10 June but no chicks survived more than a few days. By mid-June all chicks and nests were gone from the central scrapes. The only other nesting attempts seen west of E Bank were 4 pairs that made several attempts on the shingle north of the Brackish Pools including 1 which went full term but no chicks were seen. The Marsh Harriers again seemed to be the main predators.

In the eastern sector 57 nests were seen, initially on the Serpentine and later on Arnold's and further east, some of these may have been second attempts by the birds displaced from the central scrapes but we cannot be sure of that. The first chicks seen in the east were a brood of 2 on Arnold's on 20 May, one of which survived for a week. During June there were up to 13 nests on Arnold's about half of which went to full term but few chicks were seen and then only on one day. Six pairs had several attempts on the shingle behind Sea Pool but only 2 nests went full term and only 1 brood of 3 was seen, again only on 1 day. 2 broods were seen on Watling Water, 1 from a nest we had been watching; the other may have been from a nest that was not visible behind an island. 10 nests were seen on Pope's Pool but only 1 appeared to go full term, possibly hatching on 14 June but no chicks being seen. However over the next 6 weeks 21 chicks (9 broods) were seen here and on Wigeon Marsh; 14 of these fledged. Whether these were from nests we couldn't see on Pope's Pool or chicks brought in from other areas we do not know. Again we believe that most of the predation was by Marsh Harriers although Crows were also seen taking eggs on Arnold's. It is interesting to note that all chicks that fledged would have hatched around or after the date that the Marsh Harrier young fledged and all were raised on either Pope's Pool or Wigeon Marsh.

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

Lapwing

44 nesting attempts, 22 broods, min.52 chicks, min.8 fledged

	No. Nests	No. Broods Hatched	Earliest Hatching Date	No. Chicks	No. Fledged
West	13	5	4 May	10	0
East	31	17	4 May	42	8
TOTAL	44	22		52	8

This year saw a good number of nesting attempts, mainly on the East, but many nests were lost and chick survival was poor. Of the 52 chicks seen many were lost after just a few days and only 8 went on to fledge. Probably many factors contributed to this outcome, with numerous predators being present but also poor weather at critical stages for the chicks must have had an effect. Nesting was concentrated in just a few areas, mainly around the Serpentine/Pope's Pool and Swan Lake/Watling Water, with smaller numbers on Eye Field/Bull and Cricket Marshes.

Ringed Plover

5 pairs, 5 chicks, 5 fledged

	Pairs	No. Chicks Seen	No. Chicks Fledged
West	1	2	2
East	4	3	3
Totals	5	5	5

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 4 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.

In the Eastern area, 3 pairs nested on the fenced off shingle between Wigeon Marsh and Iron Rd. The first nest was found on 13 May and hatched 3 chicks on 2 June. These spent the next few weeks on the shingle and Sea Pool and all fledged at the end of June. The other 2 pairs had several nesting attempts but all failed. Another nest was found on the beach behind Arnold's near to where an Oystercatcher was nesting on 1 June. The nest was roped off but failed after a few days.

In the Western area a pair was defending territory between Eye Pool and N Screen from late April and a nest was found on the beach north of the Brackish Pool on 21 May. It had probably been there for up to 10 days but not seen. It was soon roped off and hatched around 5 June with 2 chicks being seen inside the fenceline by the pool on the 6th.

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They continued to be seen there until the end of June when both had fledged. Another pair was seen around the Brackish and Eye Pool in mid-June and a nest was eventually seen near the pillbox on 5 July but this failed. This pair was thought to be one of the pairs that had failed in the east having another late attempt. Another single male was also in this area.

Little Ringed Plover

3 pairs, 7 chicks seen, 7 fledged

	Pairs	No. Chicks seen	No. Chicks fledged
West	1	0	0
East	2	7	7
Total	3	7	7
+ field E of Vis Centre	1	0	

One or two pairs were seen on the scrapes early in the season but we think there was only 1 pair that attempted to nest in the western area which was on the shingle near N Screen, but this failed.

Birds feeding on Pat's Pool were seen to fly to the field south of the Coast Rd just east of the Visitor Centre and on 11 June a nest was seen in an area of bare soil close to the road. We don't know how long it had been there but was seen regularly till the 24th. No chicks were seen but we think it could have hatched.

A pair was seen between the Serpentine and Pope's Pool (near where a pair had nested in 2016) on several days in early April with further sightings of 1 or 2 during May and June. We never found a nest but on 10 July a pair was seen there with 3 juveniles so we think they probably did breed.

A pair was found nesting beside Watling Water on 2 May. 4 chicks hatched on 29 May and despite often being out of sight they were seen on and off and all fledged in late August.

Common Snipe

No evidence of breeding

Small numbers of birds were seen during early April but then only occasional singles until mid-July. One was reported drumming from Iron Rd on 28 May but not again and there was no other evidence of breeding.

Redshank

27 broods, 60 chicks, 21 fledged

	No. Broods Hatched	First chicks seen	No. Chicks Known to Hatch	No. Fledged
West	7	9 June	12	2
East	20	24 May	48	19
TOTAL	27		60	21

It was good year for Redshank with at least 27 breeding pairs producing a minimum 60 chicks, 21 of which reached full size and probably fledged. As usual with this species, these figures will be an underestimate as the chicks are very hard to see (most are found by watching behaviour of adults) and are even more difficult to follow through to fledging. Visibility over suitable habitat is restricted on the western side of the reserve and both adults and chicks will have been missed.

Black-headed Gull

23 pairs, no chicks seen

	No. Pairs	No. chicks seen	No. fledged
West	20	0	0
East	3	0	0
Total	23	0	0

A very poor year for gulls although we were not concentrating on this species so it may not have been as bad as the figures look. However we definitely didn't see any chicks. Nests were seen in the usual places, 3 on Pat's Pool in May, up to 17 on the Brackish Pools (mainly the grassy tussocks at the eastern end) and 1 on Wigeon Marsh but all failed.

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Common Tern

No birds attempted to breed again this year

Bearded Tit

8 pairs

This year sightings from inside the reedbeds were added to those seen from footpaths around Cley and Pope's. Several previously used areas of reeds round the perimeter were covered in a thick thatch of debris from the tidal surge and the reeds were slow to grow this year.

Inside the main reedbeds Bearded Tits were found along the south and east side of North Scrape, north of Carter's Scrape and near Don's Pool on 25 March. East Bank had 3 pairs and 3 juveniles were first seen on 10 May near Don's Pool. Adults were recorded carrying food on 18 May further up the bank. On 10 June, 2 adults were seen there with 3 juveniles. In Pope's adults were carrying food to a nest west of the central track on 13 June. Other juveniles were seen by Cricket Marsh, from Daukes Hide and on the west side of Pope's reedbeds.

No mixed flocks of more than five adults and juveniles were reported before early August, and then 8 were seen along the boardwalk on 11 August. On 21 & 22 August a group of 13 was seen, first by East Bank, later by the scrapes, along the boardwalk and further west. Later in the season as the juveniles became independent a larger group of 40 was observed and up to 50 from groups added together over a day. By then birds could have spread to Cley from other reserves like Blakeney.

Skylark

16 singing males

This was the same number of males as last year. The Eye Field and the Serpentine were the first areas to be occupied, with 5 singing over the former (5 March and 20 April) and 2 singing over the latter. Fields by the Iron Road, A149 and Cley Beach Road also had singing males.

No time was spent looking for nests but an active nest was noticed on a field by the Iron Road on 21 May, then further west food carrying was seen on 26 June. On 31 July there were two juveniles begging for food from a parent on the path along East Bank.

Swallow

Did not breed

A pair was seen flying in and out of the Pillbox by Beach car park on 13 May but we have no record of further breeding evidence. A pair was prospecting the Lookout on E Bank on 18 & 20 May but was not seen after that.

House Martin

Did not breed on the reserve

They nested on houses along the Coast Road.

Cetti's Warbler

2 singing males

One was singing from the southeast corner of Snipes Marsh and a second along the Catchwater Drain between the Visitor Centre and Watcher's Cottage. No proof of breeding was observed. At the start of the season a rival to the Snipe's Marsh bird sang from the adjacent Walsey Hills NOA Reserve.

Sedge Warbler

27 singing males (west)

The first of the spring was heard on 31 March. No perimeter count was done this year but instead a transect within the Cley reedbed was counted on 9 May during which 27 singing males were heard. This can be repeated next summer. This compares to 26 heard on a perimeter count of the area W of E Bank on 30 April 2016. By 18 June the first juveniles were heard and food carrying was taking place along East Bank. A later brood was seen on 1 August.

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No count was done of the area east of E Bank again this year but 2 males were heard singing from Snipe's Marsh, 1 by the track to Babcock Hide and 1 from the south end of Iron Rd. In late July an adult with what was probably 3 young was seen by the Catchwater Drain just west of Iron Road.

Reed Warbler

10 singing males (west)

The first of the spring was heard on 15 April and breeding evidence noted on 18 June. As with Sedge Warblers no perimeter count was done this year but instead a transect within the Cley reedbed was counted on 9 May during which 10 singing males were heard. This compares to 22 heard on a perimeter count of the area W of E Bank on 16 May 2016.

Only the Cley reedbed was counted again this year but birds were also heard singing around Snipe's Marsh and on the west side of Iron Road.

Grasshopper Warbler

Did not breed

None seen or heard during the breeding season this year.

Wren

1 pair nested

Once again a pair built on or next to Daukes Hide and the brood fledged on 13 June when they were 'peeping' from the reeds along the boardwalk. The male was still present in early August. Occasionally a Wren was singing along East Bank but it was not obvious whether it nested here or in Foreland Wood.

Pied Wagtail

1 pair nested, 2 broods

A pair chose to nest in the skip positioned in the centre of Pope's and the adults were seen carrying food in on 21 May. They made three nesting attempts (all in the skip) and though the first one may have failed the second fledged one and the third fledged five. Other pairs nested outside the reserve but visited to collect food for nests in Cley (1 June and 11 August) and Salthouse.

Meadow Pipit

19 singing males

A similar number to the 20 recorded in 2015 (they were not counted in 2016). The pipits have always bred along the areas next to the shingle so were pushed further south this year as shingle fans had spread across the saltmarsh and grass during the tidal surge in January.

They settled into their remaining favourite areas from Coastguards along the overflow car park to North Screen, round the edge of Arnold's, on the Serpentine and the northern fields by the Iron Road. In addition one was heard singing in the centre of Pope's. Food carrying was first noticed on 18 June and a family group was seen by Arnold's on 25 June. On 21 & 31 August a parent was taking food onto Arnold's Marsh to a second brood.

Linnet

1 pair

From early in the season Linnets were foraging by Arnold's and along the coastal strip. A pair seemed to settle by the Suaeda patch next to Arnold's and others over West Bank up Beach Road. No definite proof of breeding by Arnold's was obtained but a juvenile was seen with the pair on 23 July.

Reed Bunting

15 males, 10 west, 5 east

The numbers have come from observations both from within the reedbeds and from the perimeter.

Males were harder to find along the boardwalk and near Bishop's this year as the surge seemed to have killed all the bushes up the boardwalk and left large amounts of debris at the entrance to Bishop's. 3 were eventually found, 1

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along the boardwalk, 1 by West Whitwell Scrape and 1 near Bishop's Hide. A further 3 were seen from within the Cley reedbed, 1 near the eastern side of North Scrape, 1 between Pat's and Simmond's Scrapes and 1 by Don's Pool. Another male was seen visiting a nest site close to Beach Road on 24 May. 3 males were also seen regularly along the northern half of East Bank and were later out on the footpath on the bank itself, especially when the vegetation began seeding on the path.

On Pope's, 1 male was seen close to the Iron Road and a further 2 along the central track. There was also 1 by the Suaeda bushes behind Arnold's Marsh and another by Sea Pool.

Notes:

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

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

As mentioned in the introduction, we spent even 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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