

Cley & Salthouse Marshes Breeding Bird Report 2019

Introduction

The area covered is, as usual, Norfolk Wildlife Trust's (NWT) Cley & Salthouse Marshes between West Bank and the Iron Road plus 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. In addition, this year some basic monitoring of key species of breeding waders was carried out on the rest of the NWT managed land east of Iron Road but this was not a complete survey. Results of this and other activity noted are shown at the end of this article in the section headed Salthouse but next year more will be done and reported on fully.

As in previous years most areas were visited frequently during spring and summer 2019. We took notes of nesting birds and youngsters seen, and tried to follow the progress of each family. Some transect counts in the reedbed for passerines were also done.

Again, in the winter of 2018/9 there was no major flooding on the reserve so there were no significant changes to the habitat and areas of shingle. Work was done by the wardens to improve the meadows opening up drains and creating new pools and the water levels were maintained on the scrapes during the main part of the breeding season.

As we have come to expect the weather is different each year. In 2019 we had hot, dry spells alternating with cold, wet easterly gales. It is amazing how many nests survived some of these.

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

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
Canada Goose	1	1	16 May
Greylag Goose	c.100	?	17 April
Mute Swan	2	3	15 May
Egyptian Goose	2	7	1 April
Shelduck	21	69	29 May
Shoveler	11	21	27 May
Gadwall	17	11	12 June
Mallard	64	75	21 April
Pochard	5	8	10 May
Tufted Duck	3	0	26 June
Little Grebe	0		
Grey Heron	7	?	
Little Egret	4	?	
Marsh Harrier	2	1	13 July
Water Rail	5	6	9 July
Moorhen	17	7	12 May
Coot	6	2	24 April
Oystercatcher	12	0	18 June
Avocet	60	20 (+1) *	22 May
Lapwing	48	29	24 April
Ringed Plover	4	5	11 July
Little Ringed Plover	2	3	16 June
Redshank	34	13	29 May
Black-headed Gull	52	4	5 June

* at least 5 broods of Avocets walked across to the reserve from Blakeney Point, 1 chick from these is thought to have fledged

Table 2. Passerines

Species	Min. Pairs/ singing males	Species	Min. Pairs/ singing males
Bearded Tit	10	Wren	1
Skylark	17	Pied Wagtail	6-9
Cetti's Warbler	4	Meadow Pipit	12
Sedge Warbler	22	Linnet	1?
Reed Warbler	30	Reed Bunting	13
Common Whitethroat	4+		

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Table 3. Comparisons with previous years

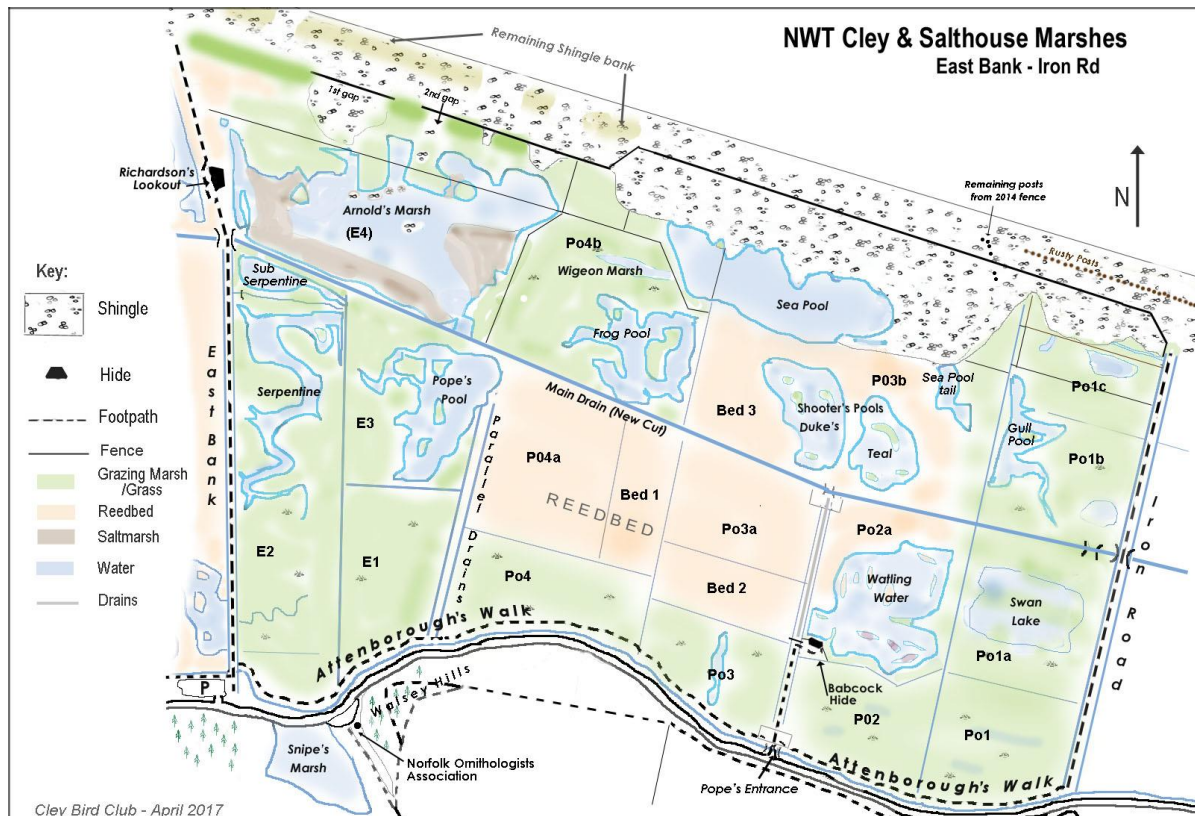
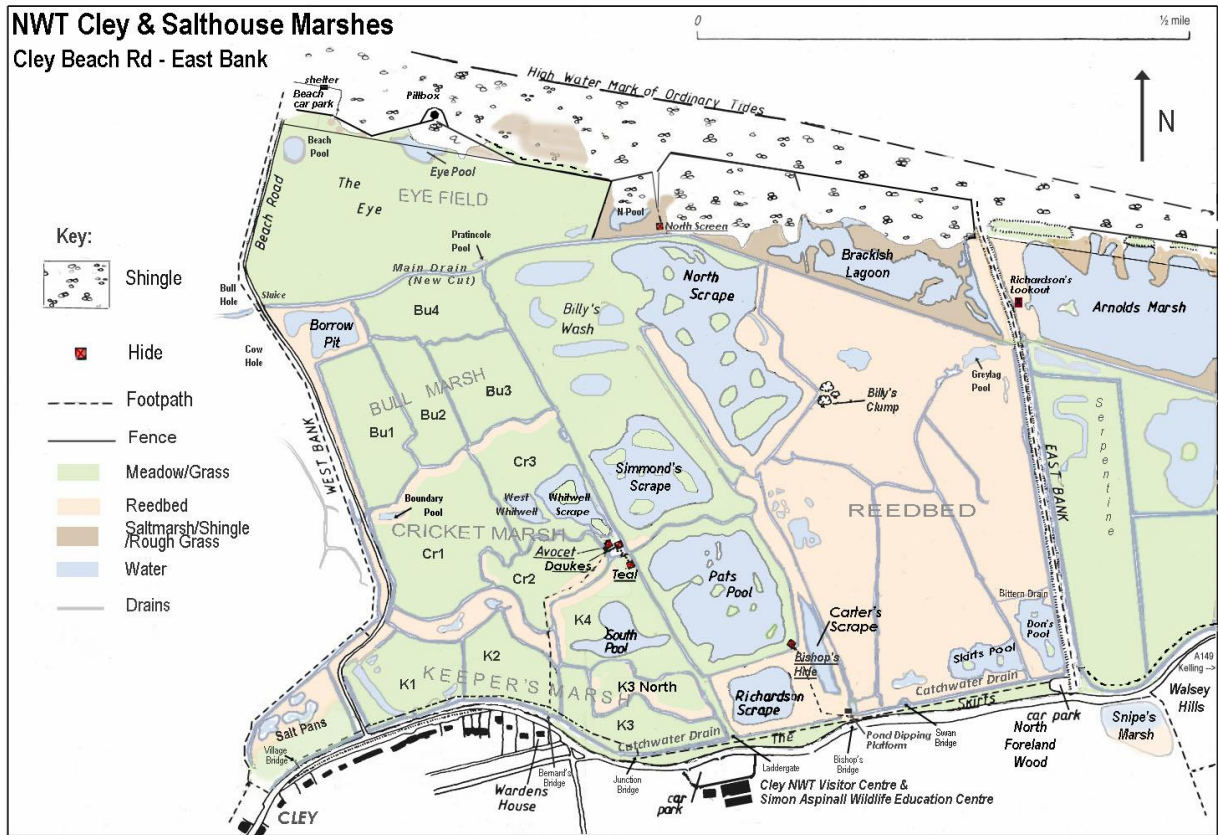
Species	Minimum Pairs breeding					Minimum Young fledged			
	2019	2018	2017	2016		2019	2018	2017	2016
Canada Goose	1	2	2	2		1	5	5	0
Greylag	c.100		70?	50					?
Mute Swan	2	3	4	1		3	8	1	1
Egyptian Goose	2		0	1		7		0	2
Shelduck	21	12	33	23		69	42	85	93
Shoveler	11	2	7	9		21	4	20	22
Gadwall	17	19	24	21		11	10	62	53
Mallard	64	39	42	41		75	77	55	77
Pochard	5	4	3	4		8	11	1	15
Tufted Duck	3	2	2	2		0	0	0	6
Little Grebe	0	1	2	2		0	3	4	9
Grey Heron	7	2	3	2					
Little Egret	4	6	7	9					
Marsh Harrier	2	1	1	3 (nests)		1	4	4	6
Water Rail	5	2	1	3		6	3		5
Moorhen	17	13	8	21		7	10	1	14
Coot	6	9	8	15		2	8	3	9
Oystercatcher	12	11	14	13		0	2	0	3
Avocet	60	90	71	72		20	10	15	4
Lapwing	48	34	44	36		29	7	8	3
Ringed Plover	4	4	5	4		5	0	5	2
Little Ringed Plover	2	4	3	3		3	0	7	0
Redshank	34	19	27	18		13	12	21	8
Black-headed Gull	52	73	23?	210		4	3	0	6
Bearded Tit	10	11	8	6-7		12			
Skylark	17	16	16	16					
Swallow	0	0	0	1					7
Cetti's Warbler	4	2	2	3		4			
Sedge Warbler *	22	19	27	26		9			
Reed Warbler *	30	17	10	22		8			
Common Whitethroat	4+								
Wren	1	1	1	-					
Pied Wagtail	6-9	0	1	0		28			
Meadow Pipit	12	15	19	-					
Linnet	1?	2	1	0					
Reed Bunting	13	16	15	17		10			

* These may not be an accurate comparison as surveyed by slightly different methods with different personnel

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Maps

These maps show the area covered and place names that are used in the text.



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Species Details

Canada Goose

1 pair 2 goslings 1 fledged

The only report of a nest was on Billy's Wash on 6 May but it was difficult to see and not reported again. A pair were seen with 2 goslings on Whitwell on 16 May then on Billy's Wash on the 22nd. They were then seen on and off on N Scrape, the Main Drain and Eye Field reducing to 1 by 15 June. It remained with its parents until late July when fledged.

Greylag Goose

Bred. Young fledged but were not counted.

243 were counted on the WeBS in February. Probably c. 100 pairs bred. As usual the first nests were seen in March with 1 on the Shooter's Pools on 22 March. The first broods of 1 on Pat's Pool and 7 on Don's Pool were seen on 17 April. Many followed and we lost count. The largest count of goslings was 89 on 15 May but there were probably many more. We don't know how many fledged but there were large numbers (336 on Watling Water) of adults/juvs in August.

Mute Swan

2 nests. 1 brood. 4 cygnets (reduced to 3)

On 19 March a pair was nest-building on the same spot on Don's Pool as last year. For the next ten days the female spent a lot of time sitting on the growing mound but, exactly as happened last year, the pair were also seen 'prospecting' on the West Skirts and Greylag pools. By 1 April they were settled on Don's Pool with the female apparently turning eggs by 8th. 4 cygnets hatched on 15 May and the family roamed the Catchwater Drain and side channels from East Bank as far as Laddergate opposite the Visitor Centre. In July one cygnet was lost but the remaining 3 continued to be seen until 20 August by which time they were old enough to fledge.

A pair was nest-building on top of the east bank of Watling Water on 5 April and one was seen on the nest until 26 April. Two adults were often in the area after that but no cygnets were seen.

No other nests were found.

Egyptian Goose

2 broods, 13 goslings (10 + 3), 7 fledged.

No nests were seen. The first brood, a pair with 10 goslings was seen on Attenborough Walk west of Iron Rd on 1 April. By 5 April there were only 7 young left. These continued to be seen throughout the summer, fledging in June.

Another pair were seen with 3 tiny goslings on 15 June. On 10 July this had reduced to 2 goslings and from 13 July there was only 1 adult with them. They were last seen on 2 August when the goslings were still only half sized so we assume they were then lost.

Shelduck

21 broods, 143 ducklings seen, 69 fledged

The first brood was seen on 29 May, a pair with 2 ducklings on Pope's Pool.

There were 12 broods centred on the Main Drain which were also seen on the Brackish, Pope's Pool, Serpentine and Wigeon Marsh as water levels varied. These were difficult to follow but 22 young were thought to have fledged. A brood of 7 seen a few times on the Shooters Pools also probably fledged. 26 juveniles were counted on Arnold's in mid-August.

There were 6 broods on the central scrapes, 3 of which merged into a creche of 27 ducklings then stayed together until late July when they fledged. In total, 40 young are thought to have fledged from the central scrapes.

There was also a single sighting of a brood of 11 small ducklings on a pool in the western meadows on 9 July and a brood of 4 medium sized ducklings were on N Scrape for c.10 days in early July but neither of these broods were seen again.

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Garganey

No evidence of breeding this year

Shoveler

11 broods, 59 ducklings seen, 21 fledged

The first brood seen this year was 10 tiny ducklings in front of Teal Hide on 27 May and 6 of these survived to fledge in early July. There were a further 7 broods seen on the central scrapes but 4 of these were only seen once and only one had young that survived to fledging. Elsewhere there was a single sighting of a brood of 4 small ducklings on the Skirts Pool. Broods of 4 large ducklings on Snipe's on 13 July and 3 large ducklings on Watling Water on 21 July probably fledged but we don't know where these had come from. The number of sightings of this species was very low so how many more broods survived hidden in the drains in the reeds out of sight we will never know.

Gadwall

17 broods, 106 ducklings seen, 11 fledged

As with other ducks they can roam widely along the drains on the reserve so the figures we give are only those we have followed and are probably an under-estimate.

The first brood seen was a brief view of a female with at least 7 tiny ducklings on Billy's Wash on 12 June; they were never seen again.

11 different broods (total 69 ducklings) were seen on and around the central scrapes from 17 June but all disappeared by the time they got to medium sized in mid-July. However, a female with 4 large (possibly fledged) ducklings in the Catchwater Drain were probably from here.

A brood of 7 first seen on Don's Pool on 29 June and then in the Catchwater Drain on 8 July was probably the family of 7 fledged birds on Don's Pool on 2 August. A brood of 2 small on Don's Pool on 5-9 July weren't seen again.

A female seen with 9 medium/large ducklings in the Catchwater Drain west of E Bank on 19 July and again with 8 on the 27th was probably a brood we hadn't seen before.

Broods of 5 young in late June and 7 young in mid-July seen on Watling Water were lost after about a week.

Mallard

64 broods, 327 ducklings seen, at least 75 fledged

This was an above average year for Mallard in terms of broods and chicks seen but the fledged total looks low so we think we probably lost sight of many of the broods in the drains and small reedbed pools.

As usual no nests were found but the first chicks, a brood of 9, were seen swimming across the back of Whitwell on 21 April. In total 31 different broods were seen on the central scrapes throughout the summer, 12 on the Serpentine and small numbers in drains and other pools. Many of these broods were only seen when the ducklings were small so many were either predated or we lost sight of them in the drains and small reedbed pools. 75 large ducklings from 22 broods were seen when large enough to consider as fledged but we believe there were probably many more.

Pochard

5 broods, 22 ducklings seen, 8 fledged

Pochard started to return in February this year with the first drake seen on the 14th and female on 19th. The highest counts were of 10 drakes on 30 May and 6 ducks on 21 March. The last drake was seen on 9 June by which time 5 females were on nests or had young.

Four broods were seen on Snipe's Marsh. The first was a duck with 2 tiny ducklings on 10 May these continued to be seen there regularly until they fledged at the end of June. The second was a brood of 7 on 1 June, these continued to be seen regularly until 21 June when they were still quite small but were not seen again. The third was a brood of 5 first seen on 18 June, these were seen irregularly but it is thought that 2 of them did fledge in early August. The last was a late brood of 3, first seen on 3 July, these were seen regularly till 29th July when medium sized but not after that.

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Another brood of 5 was first seen on Don's Pool on 17 June. These were seen regularly there until early July after which they moved to the Brackish Pool reducing to 4 by mid-July. They then remained on the Brackish till all 4 fledged in early August.

Up to 5 females/juveniles remained around the Snipe's/E Bank area until late August.

Tufted Duck

3 broods, 16 ducklings seen, 0 fledged

The first returning birds were seen on 24 February with a maximum count of 18 (10 drakes, 8 ducks) on WeBS on 5 June.

Only 3 broods were seen. The first was a female with 4 tiny ducklings on Don's Pool on 26 June, these were never seen again. The next was an anonymous report in the log of a duck with 4 ducklings on Watling Water on 27 June; 2 were seen again there on 28 June and 1 & 13 July but not after that. A further brood of 8 were on Carter's Scrape on 12 July and then on Don's Pool on the 14th again they were not seen again.

Although Tufted ducklings can disappear into the drains and be rarely seen, this year it looks as if they could all have been predated.

Grey Partridge

No proof of breeding

A pair were seen regularly throughout the period in Eye Field but no evidence of breeding was seen during the summer. Pairs were seen with well grown young late in the year, 3 on Eye Field on 16 September, 2 in front of Daukes Hide on the 20th and 3 on Bull Marsh on 3 October but we do not know if these had bred on the reserve or elsewhere.

Little Grebe

Did not breed this year

Although pairs were seen regularly and heard singing on both Snipe's and Don's Pool throughout the spring, we saw no evidence of breeding this year.

Bittern

No evidence of breeding

For the first time for 8 years a Bittern was heard booming in the main Cley reedbed on 29 March and then on most days till 11 May. One, or possibly 2, was seen in flight on several occasions. On 16 June one flew in from Blakeney and started booming mid-afternoon and the next day it was seen flying west from near Don's Pool early morning booming. It was then booming again from 18-21 June. On 22 June two flew in from Salthouse, around the reserve then dropped into the reed-bed at around 10:15 – booming was heard. There was no more booming or sightings until 7 July when one was seen to drop into the reedbed near North Scrape. There were no more reports of it after that.

We definitely had 2 birds at one point of which 1 was a male but there was nothing to indicate breeding such as the regular feeding forays that we saw when they last bred in 2008. Maybe next year!

Grey Heron

7 pairs nested in North Foreland wood, number of young unknown.

North Foreland Wood was visited 10 times between 20 March and 3 June by which time tree leaf growth made observations very awkward.

A total of 7 active nests were noted, the highest number in recent years.

The first juvenile was seen sitting up in the wood on 22 May and at least 2 were seen on the reserve in June and July.

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Little Egret

4 pairs nested in North Foreland wood, number of young unknown.

Little Egrets start nesting activity a few weeks later than Herons and the first pair observed standing on an old nest was on 5 April. The first incubating bird was noted on 15 April. The maximum number of active nests noted was 4 - a lower count than in recent years. It is not known if this is a real drop in numbers or is down to the difficulty of spotting nesting birds when the trees are in full leaf.

The first juveniles (2) were seen on the reserve on 28 June with 4 together on 14 July but, as always, we cannot prove these were from N Foreland.

Marsh Harrier

2 pairs, 1 fledged.

The long-staying female Blondie and her mate nested in the main reedbed at Cley again this year. Blondie was hunting Avocet chicks on 25 May and food was seen being taken to the nest area so we assume eggs had hatched. On 12 June the male was seen taking Avocet eggs and later chicks from Simmond's. In mid-June activity ceased and it looked as if the nest may have been predated. No young were seen to fledge and we have no record of Blondie being seen again.

A male was seen taking nesting material into the reeds on Popes and a pair were seen hunting together over there from early April. A single newly fledged juvenile was seen over Pope's from 13 July.

Common Buzzard

No evidence of breeding

A pair of Buzzards were regularly heard calling over or seen entering North Foreland during visits to check Heron and Egret nesting activity. One of the pair was easily identifiable throughout as several primaries were missing on one wing. Although it seems likely that nesting took place in the wood no records of young birds or family groups were made during the season.

Water Rail

At least 5 pairs, 9 chicks seen, 6+ fledged.

This species is always difficult to see and confirm where they have bred but this year, we think at least 5 pairs bred.

The first young seen were 2 chicks by Pat's Pool on 9 July at least 1 of these fledged. There were probably 2 pairs on Simmond's first seen on 17 June, 1 of which had 2 broods, at least 2 fledged. 1 pair on Snipe's with a large chick/juvenile seen there on several occasions from 16 July. A pair was seen with 2 small chicks on the Sub-serpentine on 30 July and again on 12 August with 2 fledged juveniles in the area from late August.

Moorhen

17 pairs, 18 broods, min. 43 chicks, min. 7 fledged

As in 2018 there seemed to be few Moorhen in the Catchwater Drain with only 8 known nesting attempts along the whole length (the same number as 2018); encroaching reed may have kept others hidden from view but considerable effort was made to listen for the characteristic calls of chicks and adults. Overall more broods were found this year and chick numbers were higher, too. However, most of the chicks were soon lost and only 7 reached the fledging stage. 3 of these juveniles were not seen by us until they were well-grown. The first chicks were seen on 12 May.

Coot

6 pairs, 3 broods, 8 chicks, 2 fledged

Coots used to be at Cley all year round but recently they have left in winter and only return to breed. The first returning bird was seen by the Dipping Pool on 11 February with the highest count being 20 on 22 March. Nests are difficult to find especially when there is thick vegetation along the drains as there was this year.

The first nest was found on Snipe's Marsh on 3 April and 5 chicks hatched from this on 24 April. They weren't often all seen together but 4 were still present on 9 June. After that only 2 were seen and these both fledged in late June.

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Nests were also seen on Richardson's Scrape, N Scrape and Cricket Marsh but were soon lost to view in tall vegetation, no chicks were seen.

Although the nest wasn't seen a pair with 2 small chicks were seen in the drain in front of Teal Hide on 5 May. They weren't seen again for 10 days then a single small chick (probably from this brood) was seen on Simmond's on 16 May then most days until 4 June when still only half-sized. It wasn't seen again.

Another single smallish chick was seen in the Catchwater Drain west of Bishop's Hide on 11 June, we don't know where this came from and it wasn't seen again.

We have seen a sharp drop in this species from 30 pairs in 2005 down to single figures in the last 3 years. Will we soon be losing them as a breeding species?

Oystercatcher

12 pairs, 1 brood (1 chick) hatched, 0 fledged

Oystercatchers often have many attempts, sitting in one place for a few days then moving a short distance and trying again. This makes following them difficult.

Although there were more birds around on the reserve in spring there were probably only 12 pairs attempting to breed.

There were 6 pairs across Eye Field, Bull Marsh and Billy's Wash on 15 April with the first nest seen on 18 April but in the end probably only 2 pairs were responsible for the 7 nesting attempts seen. The longest one lasted for 16 days but then failed.

1 pair on N Scrape nested in the long grass/reeds at the north end and hatched in early June. 1 smallish chick was seen on 18 June but not again.

There were 3 pairs around the Brackish Pool and shingle. As last year 1 pair took over one of the Tussocks at the east end from Black-headed Gulls but then got ousted by the gulls after a few days. They didn't try again. Two pairs had several attempts within the fenced off area of shingle north of the Brackish Pool, but all failed the longest lasting nest being 20 days but failed after a day of heavy rain.

1 pair nested on the beach north of Arnold's Marsh. This was soon roped off and lasted for 26 days (incubation period is 24-27 days) but was presumed to fail when bad weather and high tides washed over the nest – no young were found.

Elsewhere there were 3 pairs on the shingle north of Sea Pool, 1 Arnolds, and 1 on Po2 in the eastern meadows but no long-term nests.

Avocet

c.60 pairs, 63 chicks seen, 20 fledged

+ 5 broods, 17 chicks, came across to Cley from Blakeney Point of which 1 fledged

The numbers of birds on the reserve built up as usual from single figures in January to 164 by mid-March.

The first nest was seen on Pat's Pool on 21 April when it was immediately predated by a Marsh Harrier and a Crow. Over the next month more attempts were made on Pat's and Simmond's but all failed. Meanwhile on Whitwell there were at least 31 pairs nesting and at least 3 nests hatched, the first chicks being seen on 22 May. Back on Simmond's more nests were started in early June and 4 of these together with a late nest on Whitwell hatched. In total on the central scrapes there were 53 nests, though some of these were very short lived and may have been 2nd or 3rd attempts by the same birds, from which 21 chicks hatched from 8 nests. In addition to these there were 10 chicks (4 broods) that had come from unknown nests.

Four pairs nested on the shingle north of the Brackish Pool, 1 of which hatched on 17 June when 1 adult was seen brooding a single tiny chick and the other was still on the nest. They were gone the next day and not seen again.

At least 17 pairs nested in the Serpentine/Arnold's/Pope's Pool/Sea Pool complex and 18 chicks hatched from 9 of these nests. Another 5 broods (13 chicks) were seen which we could not allocate to known nests. Further east 2 pairs nested on Watling Water, 4 on Swan Lake and 9 on the Shooter's Pools but no nests lasted long so there was probably duplication in pairs here and no nests hatched.

Although it is difficult to be sure with some birds having multiple attempts, we think around 60 pairs nested on the reserve this year which is slightly less than normal. A total of 63 chicks were seen from 27 broods with 27 (9 broods) of these coming from unseen nests. 20 chicks fledged which is the highest number since 2013.

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In addition to the birds nesting on the reserve, 5 broods were seen on and around Eye Field and Beach car-park which are all assumed to have come from Blakeney Point. Some of them were last seen being led across Eye Field at a great pace for such small legs. 1 of these, a brood of 3, was probably seen a few days later on Simmond's and 1 of the chicks survived to fledging. The rest weren't seen again. It is possible that some of the chicks from unknown nests had also come from Blakeney Point but we cannot prove this.

Lapwing

48 nests, 30 broods, min.82 chicks, min.29 fledged

Lapwing responded well to all the effort put in across the reserve over the winter to improve the habitat. They successfully nested over a wider area and it was a good year for them with at least 48 nesting attempts. The first nest was found on Eye Field on 10 April and the first chicks seen were on Cricket Marsh on 24 April. Ten nests were lost at the egg stage and eight of those remaining were lost around hatching time. 30 broods gave a total of 82 chicks, 29 of which went on to fledge. Although these figures are not a record (that goes to 2012 with 123 chicks/58 fledged) this year was well above the average and is very encouraging.

The most favoured nesting areas were those that were kept wet throughout the season: the newly-wet Bull Marsh, fields to the east of East Bank, around Swan Lake and south of Watling Water.

Ringed Plover

4 pairs, 7 chicks seen, 5 fledged

As always it was difficult to determine territories early in the year especially when northern birds migrate through in late May and early June.

On 19 April a pair was seen mating on the shingle in the fenced area north of the Brackish Pool and throughout the rest of May and June they were seen on and off on the shingle. A bird was seen loitering on the south edge of the shingle, mid-way along the pool in mid-June and on 20 June it was seen to be on a nest there. This failed after a week. A pair was displaying over the beach on 6 July and a nest was found nearby on the shingle on 11 July. The female was last seen on this nest on the 25th. No young were seen and the pair weren't seen again. On 11 July a pair was found on the shingle just west of the old cross fence with 3 tiny chicks and they appeared to be looking for a fourth. They could not be found the next day but a pair with 3 chicks were seen again on the beach on the 15th. After that 1 was seen a few times on the north bank of the Brackish Pool towards the west end, viewed distantly from E Bank. It probably fledged in early August.

A nest was found on the shingle in the fenced off area north of Sea Pool near the western end on 24 May. This went full-term and is thought to have hatched on 19 June. No chicks were seen but adults were seen regularly 'on guard' at the southern edge of the shingle looking down at the pool so we assume they had at least 1 chick hidden under the bank. Another pair was seen regularly further east mid-way along the Sea Pool shingle but no nest was found. On 19 July a pair was seen with 1 small chick and other(s) being brooded on the shingle inside the fence south of the 'nesting sign' mid-way along the pool. Searches failed to find them again but adults appeared to be 'on guard' by the pool edge. On 8 August what looked like a pair with 4 large chicks was seen briefly in the same area with the adults, alarm calling before they disappeared over the cliff to the pool. These are assumed to be the same brood and would have been almost fledged.

Little Ringed Plover

2 pairs, 7 chicks seen, 3 fledged

The first returning bird was seen on Whitwell Scrape on 17 March and there were 2 pairs on Whitwell & Simmond's on the 30th.

On 20 May 2 birds were seen by the E1/3 drain south of Pope's Pool in the area where they have nested in previous years. 1 or 2 birds continued to be seen in this area over the next few weeks but the nest was never found. On 16 June an adult was seen brooding a small chick west of Popes Pool. This is a difficult area to view, distant from E Bank and with fairly long grass, but 2 or 3 chicks were seen on and off over the next 14 days. On 2 July the pair was on the Serpentine with the 3 chicks, we hadn't seen them fly but thought they must have fledged to get there. We saw them fly on the 8th; they remained in the area till the 17th then were gone.

Four birds were often seen around the central scrapes during May and June but no nest could be found. In mid-June one was seen a few times around the Visitor Centre car park and on the 19th a nest was found at around 5pm with 1 egg in it, by 6pm there were 2 eggs. Early the next morning the area was roped off and on the 22nd a bird was sitting on 4 eggs. The pair sat there for 23 days oblivious to the disruption they were causing by the lack of parking space and the attention they were drawing. Early morning on 16 July they started hatching and all 4 chicks were hatched

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and beginning to walk around by 9am. It was hoped they would move on and find somewhere safe to feed but they insisted on staying in the car park, watched over by NWT staff and volunteers and despite some coaxing to cross to the reserve, until the 19th. On the morning of the 20th they were gone and never seen again.

Redshank

34 broods, min.63 chicks, min. 13 fledged

Redshank is not an easy species to monitor and figures given are certainly under-estimates. The first chicks were seen on Pope's Marsh on 29 May. A total of 34 broods were found which is quite high, as is the total of 63 chicks seen across the reserve, but following these through to fledging was, as always, difficult because they moved around a lot and were often hidden in vegetation. A minimum 13 chicks fledged. Many more juveniles were seen across the reserve, e.g. 11 on Simmonds scrape on 16 July, but we have no proof that these particular birds hatched on our area so they are not included in our figures.

Black-headed Gull

52 pairs, 20 chicks seen, 4 fledged

There were a few nests on Whitwell Scrape in May but these all failed. On the Brackish Pool, the recent stronghold for Gulls at Cley, there were up to 52 nests mainly on the grassy tussock type islands at the east and west ends, and at least 20 chicks hatched from these, the first being seen on 5 June. Most chicks, especially those on the tiny tussocks, didn't survive for long but we think at least 4 fledged. These figures give an idea of the numbers but we do not spend a lot of time on this species so may be underestimates.

Stock Dove

One was singing from North Foreland Wood on 4 April and again on 4 June.

Wood Pigeon

One nest was located at the Visitor Centre Car Park. Several birds regularly flying into the woods at North Foreland throughout Spring and Summer. No nests evident from outside the wood.

Tawny Owl

Heard calling from North Foreland at mid-day on 6 April and several more days until 1 June, but no evidence of breeding.

Bearded Tit

10 pairs, 12 juveniles

Up to ten pairs noted around the reserve – between Beach Road and East Bank. None noted elsewhere. Three pairs along East Bank, two around Bishops Hide, three in the reedbeds around the boardwalk and main hides, one along Beach Road and one south of North Scrape. This is probably an underestimate as there are several records of birds seen flying regularly deep into the main reedbed west of East Bank.

The first juveniles were seen around 21 April with two males and a female feeding a single juvenile in Bittern Drain. Thereafter reports were steady with juveniles seen through to mid-August. 23 juveniles logged and probability of second broods for those nesting along East Bank and the main Boardwalk.

Skylark

17 singing males

Singing males noted on 25 February during unseasonal warm spell and then silence until early April to mid-May when song flights observed daily across all grassy areas of reserve. Stronghold on Eye Field as in previous years but also around Serpentine/Popes and Swan Lake. Probable nest related activity near North Scrape observed on 26 April and two adults collecting food by Beach Car Park in early July probably indicating a late or second brood. No feeding of juveniles noted. Eye Field particularly difficult to survey this year due to height of vegetation.

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Swallow

Did not breed

Prospecting pair seen around Babcock Hide on 29 May but no evidence of any nest being constructed.

House Martin

Did not breed on the reserve

Sixteen nests counted around the eaves of Watchers Cottage. Almost continuous nest attention from late April and continuing into late August.

Cetti's Warbler

4 singing males, 4 young seen

Very vocal from 18 March to 7 June after which almost silent. Singing males noted at four sites: two along Catchwater Drain – opposite Watcher's Cottage and Laddergate (very vocal and seen well); East and West sides of Snipes Marsh. Two juveniles probably from the pair at the east side of Snipes Marsh seen on 7 June. The male from Laddergate was occasionally seen and heard singing from shrubs in the VC carpark and a juvenile was seen in the shrubs in early August. Another juvenile was noted in area of Catchwater Drain in the third week of August opposite the junction of the A149 and Old Woman's Lane.

Sedge Warbler

22 singing males; 9 juveniles seen

First arrival at K1/Cr1 on 6 April and second singing opposite the Visitor Centre on 7th. Thereafter only these two until influx around 19 April with 17 more singing and display flight primarily at sites on perimeter of reserve. Only one displaying male seen during main reedbed transect on 12 May and two additional singing/displaying from other sites on 12 and 19 May. Proof of breeding with food carrying observed on 6 June and a pair feeding at least one juvenile at Junction Bridge on 7 June. Further food carrying seen at two sites and 2 juveniles around Daukes and 2 at Bishops on 23 July. Three juveniles seen opposite Teal Hide and a singleton on Snipes on 25 August.

Reed Warbler

30 singing males; 8 fledged young and 4 in nest

First arrival on 21 April and slow build up noted to end of month but peak arrival first week of May. A total of thirty singing males; stronghold remains main reedbed – transect on 12 May with 13 singing birds. Otherwise Catchwater Drain and East Bank with 5 singing around Watling Water and Iron Road.

First proof of breeding on 6 June with adult removing faecal sac from nest site opposite the Serpentine with no further evidence until a juvenile seen opposite Daukes on 7 July. Food carrying by two presumed pairs in vicinity of Daukes on 10 July possibly indicates second broods. Damselflies and Crane flies as food source. On 19 July more food carrying by adults on East Bank. Juveniles noted in early August around East Bank (2), Daukes (2) and Catchwater Drain (1). Last three juveniles seen at north end of Pats Pool on 11 August.

These details no doubt represent an underestimate as it was not possible to survey the reedbeds around Popes Marsh except distantly.

Grasshopper Warbler

No evidence of breeding

Singing male heard briefly on 18 April but only brief calls. Heard and seen well on following three days singing from shrubs on north side of main footpath 50 metres east of the Visitor Centre. No activity thereafter.

Common Whitethroat

4+ singing males, probably bred

Male seen taking food items into the large shrub west of the cattle gate opposite the Visitor Centre on several dates in last week of May. Three singing and flighting males along the Skirts on 12 May. Singing males noted on 7 July at west side of East Bank carpark and in brambles near carpark at south end of Iron Road on 9 July.

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Wren

1 singing male, no evidence of successful breeding

Activity associated with breeding noted around the main hide cluster – male singing actively in April, but no evidence of successful breeding.

Song Thrush

One singing at North Foreland Wood on 26 and 28 April.

Stonechat

1 or 2 singing males, no evidence of breeding

Male and female present in area east of main boardwalk in late April – male singing over a three-day period. Another male present at same time and perched up on shrubs in main reedbed from East Bank.

Northern Wheatear

No evidence of breeding

Influx of 16 on Eye Field on 29 April was daily maxima for the spring. A female was seen carrying nesting material across the Eye Field on the 29th but no evidence of breeding.

House Sparrow

1 nest, outcome unknown

Male seen carrying food into area next to Bishop's Hide in April. No other evidence of nests on the reserve however possible nesting around Watcher's Cottage and several newly fledged juveniles seen May to early August.

Duncock

1 singing male

One singing in hedge opposite Visitor Centre on 1 April.

Pied Wagtail

6-9 pairs: minimum 28 young seen

Pairs noted at six sites around the reserve from 18 April onwards with food carrying first observed on 20 May. Thirteen juveniles noted at these locations or nearby from 25 May – 2 to 4 juveniles per location but probable that further juveniles not seen at this time. Possible second or late broods at Simmonds with 3 newly fledged birds on 1 June and a different group of 4 near Daukes Hide on 16 June. A pair was seen feeding six juveniles at Swan Lake on 9 July and another single juvenile was being fed outside Daukes Hide on 21 July. On Simmonds Scrape on 18 August some 36 juveniles were present along with about 12 adults.

Meadow Pipit

12 song-fighting males, number of young unknown

Males in display flight around Eye Field and Popes/Watling Water and Iron Road noted on 27 February during unseasonal warm spell. 12 probable territories around reserve. Adult seen collecting food near Watling Water on 17 May and another on 20 May at north end of East Bank.

Later song-flight at K1 on 6 June and a group of 15 birds north of Arnolds Marsh on 11 July. Further song-flights noted around Popes on 19 July.

Greenfinch

1 pair, outcome unknown

Male seen carrying food into the hawthorn west of Laddergate on 26 May.

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Linnet

No evidence of breeding

One seen collecting nesting material (feathers and grass) along fence-line in Beach Carpark on 28 April but no firm identification as to potential nest location. Pair seen north of Arnolds in late May with female collecting feathers and flying into Arnold's Dunes. One singing male in the suaeda north of Arnold's Marsh on 19 July.

Reed Bunting

13 males, 10 juveniles

First singing male near Don's Pool on 27 February during unseasonal warm spell and next singing noted on 20 March with 2 males along East Bank. Thirteen singing males appearing to hold territory around reserve. First food-flights on 20 May at Don's Pool site and single newly fledged birds on East Bank on 28 May and 6 June. Three newly fledged birds being fed outside Daukes on 8 June, 2 more near the boardwalk on 16 June and probable second brood juveniles on East Bank on 7 July and 4 August and another Bishops Hide on same date.

Salthouse

This year, some basic monitoring of key species of breeding waders was carried out on the reserve, between Iron Road and the Eastern boundary of NWT managed land (c500m East of Gramborough Hill).

5 visits were made throughout the season. Although not looked for specifically some other breeding activity seen in this area was also noted. The results are below:

One pair of Mute Swan on the Duck Pond fledged 5 young. A Cetti's Warbler was singing opposite the Dun Cow. Elsewhere 1 pair of Moorhen fledged 2 young, 7 pairs of Avocets nested but only 1 chick fledged and 3 pairs of Lapwing fledged 1 chick. There were 3 pairs of Ringed Plover, one had 2 broods from which 5 chicks fledged, another pair fledged 3 chicks but the 3rd pair lost their 2 chicks. Other species were not recorded.

Habitat improvements are planned to be carried out on these marshes over the next few years to increase breeding productivity, so further, more in depth monitoring will be carried out, moving forward and reported here.

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, David Griffiths, Mike Harcup, and Pat & David Wileman on the main reserve and George Baldock and John Rea at Salthouse.

We are still looking for more people to help with the monitoring of nests and chicks needed to produce this report 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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