



## Blakeney Point Bird Report, 2012



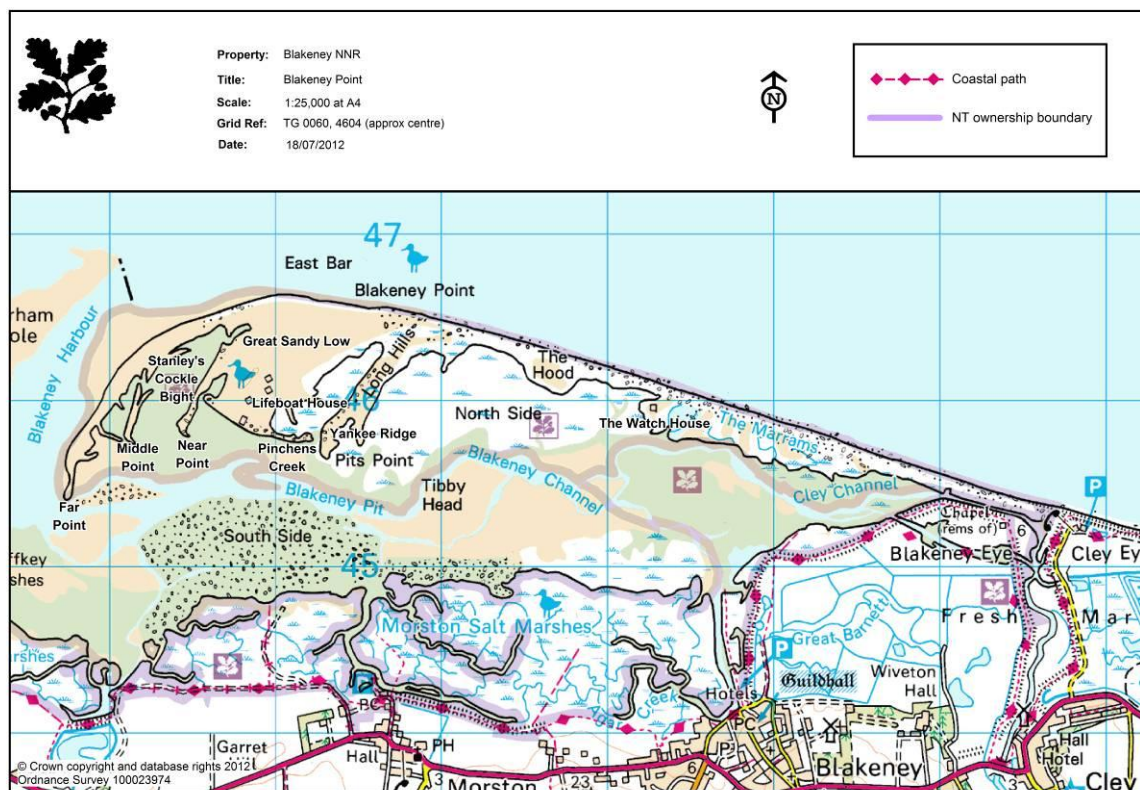
Tern, rainbow and windfarm juxtaposition (Richard Porter)

**Edward Stubbings, National Trust Coastal Ranger**

## **CONTENTS**

<b>Map and aerial photograph</b>	3
<b>Birds</b>	
Summary	4-5
Table of breeding birds	5-7
Systematic list	7-16
Nest recording	16

# MAP AND AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH



(Ordnance Survey/ National Trust, November 2008)



Looking east along Blakeney Point (M. Page, 2006)

## Breeding birds

- Summary

With a dry late winter and drought conditions in March, 2012 looked like being a very dry year. However, from April onwards the situation changed dramatically and the late spring and summer were the wettest since 1912. This represents an interesting cycle as 2012 was also our centenary year. For the birds it was a mixed year and the success of the Sandwich Terns *Sterna sandvicensis* was a consolation for the low or average breeding success of most other species. The wet breeding season (as well as other factors) seemed to have a negative impact on Little Terns *Sternula albifrons*, Grey Partridges *Perdix perdix* and some of the passerine species. To mark the centenary, a paper entitled *the birds of Blakeney Point: 100 years of National Trust ownership* was published in the September issue of *British Birds*. In addition James McCallum published his new book: *The Long Wild Shore - Bird and Seal Seasons on Blakeney Point* to coincide with our 100 years celebrations.

There were 3,735 Sandwich Tern nests and 2,200 chicks eventually fledged. The amazing success of the Sandwich Terns makes the almost total failure of the other terns even more baffling. Common Terns returned to nest in small numbers (67 pairs) and, although some pairs were difficult to see behind dune ridges, not a single non-flying chick was seen on the Point. Little Terns slowly reached a peak of 140 pairs spread over six colonies (between the Marrams and Stiffkey Meals) and 28 young eventually fledged. In the case of the Little Terns it was thought that predation, the weather and spring tides led to their low productivity. The same factors may also have affected the Common *Sterna hirundo* and Arctic *Sterna paradisaea* Terns.

Waders did reasonably well and average numbers nested. Avocets *Recurvirostra avocetta* were recorded nesting on the shingle ridge for the first time ever, reflecting a move to the coast over a wider area. Three broods left the colony to find feeding habitat but some were known to have been predated soon after leaving. Ringed Plovers produced roughly 0.5 chicks per pair with failure at the eggs stage (with eggs being lost to predators and high tides) being the main problem.

In July a pair of Pheasants *Phasianus colchicus* were seen with two flightless chick on Yankee Ridge. This constitutes the first successful breeding attempt for Blakeney Point.

An extremely unusual nest was found on Middle Point containing seven Gadwall *Anas strepera* eggs and eleven Grey Partridge eggs. The nest was found on the 18<sup>th</sup> of June being incubated by a female Gadwall and her eggs were hatching. A fuller account of this nest, with pictures, can be read on our new blog <http://norfolkcoastnationaltrust.blogspot.co.uk/2012/06/18th-of-june-egg-dumping.html>, in a letter which has been sent to British Birds and in the species accounts below. The outcome was, however, not in the Grey Partridges favour and all eleven chicks died whilst hatching.

The cold weather also meant that some of the passerine species started displaying and nest building only to stop again when the weather turned rainy and cold. Generally, however, most passerines did well with the notable exception of Skylarks *Alauda arvensis*. Unfortunately Sedge *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* and Grasshopper Warblers *Locustella naevia* showed no signs of breeding this year but a pair of Wheatears *Oenanthe oenanthe* were present in suitable breeding habitat in June. Considerable effort was put into nest recording for the BTO and a nest log was kept. The number of records for each species is mentioned under the species text.

- **Table**

Species	Common name	No. of breeding pairs	No. of young fledged	Comments
<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	Common Shelduck	40-50	60?	Number of young fledged to be taken with extreme caution
<i>Anas strepera</i>	Gadwall	2-3	7?	Seven chicks left nest on Far Point
<i>Anus clypeata</i>	Shoveler	?	?	
<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Mallard	5	?	
<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	Red-legged Partridge	1	3?	
<i>Perdix perdix</i>	Grey	5+	16+	

	Partridge			
<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	Common Pheasant	1	1-2	First confirmed breeding record for Blakeney Point
<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	Oystercatcher	103	40+	
<i>Recurvirostra avocetta</i>	Avocet	9	?	First recorded colony on shingle ridge. Three broods left the colony
<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	Ringed Plover	15-16	8+	
<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	Lapwing	1	?	
<i>Tringa totanus</i>	Common Redshank	15	?	Several nests known to have hatched
<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	Black-headed Gull	c. 2,000	?	Many young seen
<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>	Mediterranean Gull	12+	40	
<i>Larus argentatus</i>	Herring Gull	3	0	Nests removed under licence
<i>Sternula albifrons</i>	Little Tern	140	28	
<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	Sandwich Tern	3,735	2,200	Nests count conducted on the 26 <sup>th</sup> of May
<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	Common Tern	67 max	?	Possibly no chicks fledged!
<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	Arctic Tern	7	1?	
<i>Columba oenas</i>	Stock Dove	1	?	
<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Wood Pigeon	1	0	
<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	Skylark	35	?	No nests found and few young seen
<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Barn Swallow	5-6	?	Many young seen
<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	Meadow pipit	110	?	Many young seen
<i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i>	Pied Wagtail	1	6+	At least two broods fledged from Lifeboat House
<i>Troglodytes</i>	Wren	9	?	

<i>troglydydes</i>				
<i>Prunella modularis</i>	Dunnock (Hedge Sparrow)	11	?	
<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	Linnet	c. 30	?	Many young seen
<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	Reed Bunting	22	?	Many young seen

- **Systematic list**

**Common Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna*

Number of breeding pairs: 40-50

Number of young fledged: 60?

Number of nest records: 0

Number of BTO nest record cards: 0

Breeding Shelducks gather at favoured spots early in the morning throughout the spring. They are usually in pairs and use this time for social interaction and bonding. These gatherings are called 'parliaments' or 'communes'. The main gathering areas are the Hood, the Long Hills, Great Sandy Low, Beacon Hills and Far Point. An early morning count was conducted in all of these areas simultaneously on the 18<sup>th</sup> of May and 110 were present in total. This may be a slightly higher figure than the actual number of nesting burrows occupied. Females usually don't breed until two years of age and there may be a few unpaired birds in these crepuscular 'parliaments'. However, it is probably safe to say that between 40 and 50 burrows were occupied by breeding females.

A crèche containing 30+ ducklings was seen in the Glaven Channel on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July. Further crèches were seen on the 10<sup>th</sup> (eight ducklings), 17<sup>th</sup> (seven ducklings) and 21<sup>st</sup> (17 ducklings) of August in the harbour and Glaven Channel respectively. Shelduck families are extremely mobile and crèches fluctuate in number from day to day. The harbour could also receive families of Shelduck from other areas so the number of fledged young quoted above should be treated with extreme caution.

**Gadwall** *Anas strepera*

Number of breeding pairs: 2-3

Number of young fledged: 7?

Number of nest records: 2

Number of BTO nest record cards: 1

Three pairs could regularly be seen chasing each other around, often around the Long Hills. Two nests were found, one, mentioned below, on Far Point which hatched seven chicks and one on the shingle ridge. The one on the shingle ridge was in a suaeda bush and contained a maximum of 15 eggs but it is not known whether the eggs successfully hatched.

**Shoveler** *Anas clypeata*

Number of breeding pairs: ?

Number of young fledged: ?

Number of nest records: 0

Number of BTO nest record cards: 0

As is normal, there were at least three drakes around the Chapel site but breeding was not proven.

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*

Number of breeding pairs: 5

Number of young fledged: ?

Number of nest records: 5

Number of BTO nest record cards: 1

The first nest of the season was a Mallards on Middle Point on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April containing fifteen eggs. Unfortunately this nest was predated five days later. Another was found in the main tern colony on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April containing ten eggs but the outcome of this nest is unknown. Mallards regularly nest amongst the terns and gulls, often at the base of suaeda bushes, in the main ternery and another was found there on the 24<sup>th</sup> of May.

**Grey Partridge** *Perdix perdix*

Number of breeding pairs: 5+

Number of young fledged: 16+

Number of nest records: 2

Number of BTO nest record cards:

In a year with a lot of rain at the crucial chick rearing period for partridges it is a surprise that any young were raised at all, and indeed one notable clutch was witnessed dieing as they hatched during such weather, although this was exceptional and no Grey Partridge was ever seen incubating the eggs. This was the nest found on the 18<sup>th</sup> of June containing seven Gadwall eggs and eleven Grey Partridge eggs. The Gadwall eggs were hatching at the time and the next day the female Gadwall led her seven ducklings away from the nest. Unfortunately the Grey Partridge eggs then started hatching but had nothing to incubate them and died whilst breaking out of the eggs, in cold rainy conditions. Some nests were successful however and the first chicks were seen on Far Point in the first week of July. Coveys will then have been formed and observations include:

8<sup>th</sup> July – 3 chicks on Far Point

9<sup>th</sup> July – 5 chicks by Lifeboat House

11<sup>th</sup> July – 12 on Far Point and 9 by Lifeboat House

24<sup>th</sup> July – Male and female with 10 chicks on Middle Point, male and female with 2 chicks near plantation and male and female with 4 chicks at the Lifeboat House (sixteen chicks in total)

17<sup>th</sup> September – 7 on shingle ridge

21<sup>st</sup> September – 31 (Grey Partridges, over whole Point)

6<sup>th</sup> October – 11 on shingle ridge

11<sup>th</sup> October – 16 on Near Point

It is thought that there were a little over five pairs spread out over the Point. Their breeding success has been good in recent years and although the population is healthy at the moment they are still vulnerable. This is very encouraging especially given that breeding has not been noted on Blakeney Freshes in recent years despite plenty of suitable habitat.



**Common Pheasant** *Phasianus colchicus*

Number of breeding pairs: 1

Number of young fledged: 1-2

Number of nest records: 0

Number of BTO nest record cards: 0

First confirmed successful breeding attempt for Blakeney Point. An adult female was seen with a small chick at the Plantation on the 25<sup>th</sup> of July. And there was a sighting of an adult with two chicks on Yankee Ridge at some point in July.

**Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus*

Number of breeding pairs: 103

Number of young fledged: 40+

Number of nest records: 82

Number of BTO nest record cards: 31

2012 was a typical breeding season for Oystercatchers with probably less than 0.5 chicks fledged per pair. Predation of eggs and chicks, weather, spring tides and disturbance are all thought to be influential in their low breeding success. In spring, Kieren Haynes, a student from the University of East Anglia (UEA), spent several weeks studying the nests of Oystercatchers. His aim was to compare nests in highly disturbed areas with those in the fenced of (undisturbed) areas. His hypothesis was that nests in the disturbed areas would take longer to hatch because of the adults being kept off their eggs for longer periods and that although this may increase the chances of them being predated they may gain a little in the way of protection from predators by the increased human presence. Thus the advantage of nesting in an undisturbed area may be cancelled out by the increased chance of being predated. We eagerly await his results. The density of nests in disturbed and undisturbed areas was also studied.

The first nest was found on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April and the last one on the 7<sup>th</sup> of July.

**Avocet** *Recurvirostra avocetta*

Number of breeding pairs: 9

Number of young fledged: ?

Number of nest records: 15

Number of BTO nest record cards: 0

Avocets have bred on the Chapel Site for the last few years but have never bred on the shingle ridge its self, as far as I am aware. At the end of May and beginning of June it was becoming clear that a colony was forming on the Shingle ridge directly opposite the Chapel Site. Two nests were identified on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June and a fence went up to protect the nests. This fenceline had to be extended on several occasions to accommodate pairs which laid on the 'wrong side' of the string. The new colony also presented challenges by the fact that they are a schedule 1 species. This means that you need a licence to photograph them on the nest, and just about everyone passing with a camera was taking pictures of them incubating. This was not such a problem, as it was for the Little Terns, as the birds would happily sit tight and no photographers were seen crossing the fenceline. Even so, we spoke to everyone we saw taking photos of them on the nest to explain the situation and signs were put in place to warn people.

The first chicks were seen on the 29<sup>th</sup> of June and quickly left the colony to look for feeding habitat. One pair included a colour ringed adult female which was ringed as a nestling at Holme, Norfolk in 1993. This pair hatched out three chicks on the 7<sup>th</sup> of

July and also quickly left the colony. While manning the car-park on that day, Carl Brooker (Assistant Warden at Cley NWT) saw a pair of Avocets usher three small chicks across Beach Road by the car park. They stopped in the road trying to tell cars to get out of the way. One chick was taken by a Black-headed Gull but the rest of the family took up residence on the Eye Pool. Unfortunately none of them fledged. A Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* reportedly took one from Eye Pool on the 15th. The last one was seen until the 18th but it and the parents had all gone on the 19th.

One of the birds in the shingle ridge colony was colour ringed (red over dark blue on the right leg and yellow on the right RA);

**Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula*

Number of breeding pairs: 15-16

Number of young fledged: 8+

Number of nest records: 18

Number of BTO nest record cards: 18

Slightly down on last years total of 17 breeding pairs and this total (of 15-16 pairs) includes a pair or two that attempt to nest on the Meals at Stiffkey. The number of breeding pairs has averaged around fifteen for the last ten years and breeding success has sometimes been low so eight plus young fledged in 2012 is not as bad as it sounds. Moreover, newly hatched Ringed Plover chicks do not survive well in cold wet conditions, so the eight or so that fledged came from slightly later nesting attempts. The first nest was found on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May and the last on 22<sup>nd</sup> of July. In 2011 the Little Tern Working Group (made up of representatives from the National Trust, the RSPB and Natural England (NE)) decided that helping Little Terns could also benefit Ringed Plovers (which incidentally have probably become more of a conservation priority than the Little Tern in Norfolk). To gain accurate baseline data, every effort was made in 2012 to determine exact breeding figures and record every nest. Every single nest found on the reserve was recorded on a BTO nest record card, photocopies for our own records and sent to the BTO. We also carried out a feasibility study on a nest cam project which will hopefully go ahead in 2013. To test the effectiveness of monitoring nests in this way we used some trail cams borrowed from NE.

A colour ringed bird was seen along the shingle ridge on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June with the combination: Yellow on tibia and red over blue on tarsus on the right leg and black over metal on tarsus on the left leg. This bird was a female ringed as a chick at Snettisham in 1999.

A chick seen from an unfound nest just east of gap in mid August bringing the total number of fledglings up from seven plus to eight plus.

**Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus*

Number of breeding pairs: 1

Number of young fledged: ?

Number of nest records: 0

Number of BTO nest record cards: 0

An apparently incubating adult was observed through a telescope on the Chapel site on the 19<sup>th</sup> of May but breeding was not confirmed and it is becoming less common as a breeding bird in this area as the vegetation succeeds.

### **Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus*

Number of breeding pairs: 15

Number of young fledged: ?

Number of nest records: 7

Number of BTO nest record cards: 7

2012 was another good year for Redshanks and for the finding and recording of nests. Again the fenced off area on Far Point seemed to hold the highest density of nests five of the seven nests monitored hatched and many chicks were seen in the nest. The usual problem of the adults quickly leading the young chicks well away from the nest and into saltmarsh creeks meant that following the chicks through to fledging was impossible. Birds with paler, orange legs and buff fringed feathers on the upper parts were observed feeding around the Point from July onwards but with high densities breeding on the Saltmarsh on the other side of the harbour it is still impossible to say whether they hatched on the Point itself. There are particularly high densities on the saltmarshes at Morston and Stiffkey.

### **Black-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Number of breeding pairs: c. 2,000

Number of young fledged: ?

Number of nest records: 0

Number of BTO nest record cards: 0

Good numbers bred in the suaeda on Far Point and behind the terns on the beach on Far Point but there were no outlying colonies along the shingle ridge or elsewhere on the Point. The first fledged chicks were seen on June the 16<sup>th</sup> and good numbers were observed from then on. An adult Black-headed Gull was observed predated a Little Tern chick on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July.

### **Mediterranean Gull** *Larus melanocephalus*

Number of breeding pairs: 12+

Number of young fledged: 40

Number of nest records: 1

Number of BTO nest record cards: 0

The monitoring of Mediterranean Gulls is just as problematic as it is for Black-headed Gulls. The breeding birds nests in amongst thousands of other gulls and terns, their nests are usually in or at the base of a suaeda bush and their eggs are almost identical to those of the Black-headed Gulls. During the Sandwich Tern nest count a quick effort was made to locate any nests we could and we think we may have found and photographed one. It is our aim to become more familiar with the nests and eggs of this species by building up a catalogue of photographs. However, the counting of chicks as they leave the colony in late June definitely remains the best way of monitoring this increasing species and 40 chicks were counted on the 9<sup>th</sup> of July. During the nest count we also saw a colour ringed bird with .....

### **Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus*

Number of breeding pairs: 3

Number of young fledged: 0

Number of nest records: 0

Number of BTO nest record cards: 0

Three nests were removed from the main ternery on the 24<sup>th</sup> of May. Even so a pair stayed around the colony and were observed eating Black-headed Gulls and Sandwich Tern chicks alive before they could fly properly in early July.

### **Little Tern** *Sternula albifrons*

Number of breeding pairs: 140

Number of young fledged: 28

Number of nest records: 0

Number of BTO nest record cards: 0

The cold spring and bad weather meant that Little Terns were late to arrive and only in average to low numbers. Numbers built up very slowly indeed and only the main beach colony received more than a handful of birds. There were at least six colonies across the NNR. Some were fenced before the birds had arrived and some once the birds had decided to lay eggs. Problematic tides in early June and predators, such as Hedgehogs and birds of prey, caused problems by eliminating clutches of eggs and removing adult birds from the breeding population. The late start, big tides and the attentions of the predators (and possibly a lack of small fish inshore) all added to the problems faced by the Points Little Terns in 2012.

The first bird was seen on the rather late date of 24<sup>th</sup> of April and the first birds went down on eggs in late May on the beach on Far Point. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of June big tides washed out several of the beach colony nests. By the end of that week there were four colonies containing a total of around 100 nests. A fifth colony sprang up just east of the main beach colony from the 12<sup>th</sup> of June containing just three pairs. These three nests all subsequently disappeared and no birds returned to this colony. The Stiffkey Meals colony was fenced off as normal but only one nest (along with one Ringed Plover nest) was recorded there and the outcome of this nest is unknown. On the Point, the beach colony peaked at 97 pairs on the 17<sup>th</sup> of June and the first chicks were seen in the first week of July, but in very small numbers. A UCL student trying to study the feeding behaviour of the terns was unable to study the Little Terns due to the low numbers of chicks. This colony deserted on the 26<sup>th</sup> of July after the attentions of several predatory birds (including Grey Heron, Hobby, Kestrel and Short-eared Owl) and a Hedgehog. The two colonies near the Watch House seemed to do a little better and half of the fledged chicks came from these two colonies. Al Davies once again acted as Volunteer Little Tern Warden, mostly at the Watch House colonies. The first predated adult was found (headless) on the 10<sup>th</sup> of June by the Watch House. A Black-headed Gull was also observed predated a Little Tern chick from the beach colony on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July. A Hobby was photographed just after killing an adult Little Tern in late August. Some trail cams (on loan from Natural England) on far point captured the aforementioned Hedgehog, a Stoat and a Short-eared Owl on camera within 50 meters of the beach colony.

Predators seemed to be a problem, however, as mentioned, big tides, the weather and possibly a dearth of small fish inshore meant that 2012 was a poor year for Little Terns on Blakeney Point. Also, on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June, a photographer was seen, by a visitor staying at the Watch House, inside the Hood colony fence line creeping up to a nest to get a close up shot of an incubating adult. Little Terns are, as Avocets, a schedule 1 species meaning that a licence is needed to photograph them on the nest. They are also easily disturbed and the nests are easily trampled by people entering the colonies.

In 2012 a joint Natural England, JNCC survey of Little Tern foraging areas was carried out. Natural England organised the inshore (land based) surveys which were undertaken by the Point wardens and volunteers. JNCC organised the offshore (boat based) surveys.

Number of pairs at each individual colony

Stiffkey Meals: 1 AON

Far Point: 15 AIA

Beach colony: 97 AIA

Just east of beach colony: 3 AON

West of Watch House: 17 AIA

East of Watch House: 7 AIA

Total: 140

Number of fledged young: 28

Breeding success: 0.2 per pair

### **Sandwich Tern** *Sterna sandvicensis*

Number of breeding pairs: 3,735

Number of young fledged: 2,200

Number of nest records: 0

Number of BTO nest record cards: 0

Sandwich Terns enjoyed their best breeding season since the 1990s. Plenty of sandeels *Ammodytes*, sprats and herrings (Clupeidae) were seen being brought into the colony and disturbance was minimal. A Fox *Vulpes vulpes* was present throughout the spring but mysteriously disappeared in late May leaving the terns with, at least, a Fox free season. A nest count was conducted on Sunday the 26<sup>th</sup> of May. This was a very serious and well-planned operation. We have a license that enables us to enter the colony. Due to the great numbers of nests we used small pieces of macaroni to mark each one. Before entering the colony, we counted out four bags of 1,000 pieces of macaroni, then we double-counted them to ensure accuracy. This meant that we didn't have to count nests whilst in the colony; we counted the amount of macaroni left afterwards and subtracted this from 4,000. Having allocated different parts of the colony between four of us, we entered the colony at 6am and began the nest count. We carefully chose this time to cause minimum disturbance to the birds. The conditions were warm and clear, so the eggs would not get too cold. It was low tide, which meant that the birds had plenty of places nearby to settle, preventing them from panicking. And this particular date was chosen because it was late enough that all of the terns have laid eggs, and early enough that all of the chicks hadn't hatched and left the nests. This enabled us to find out the exact number of Sandwich Tern nests on Blakeney Point: 3,735. Last year 3,562 were counted using the same method, which was 35% of the total UK population. This year we may be nearer to 40%. The progress of the chicks was followed closely and our peak chick count was achieved on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July, when 2,200 chicks were counted. This represents a productivity of 0.58 chicks per pair. Chick counts are conducted at high tide to ensure that all the chicks are together in a small area, with one person counting from land with a telescope whilst another counts from the boat with binoculars. 100 dead chicks were counted in the colony on the 31<sup>st</sup> of July but this is thought to be a low number in such a large colony.

Another student, Niki Lowndes, this time from the University College London (UCL), did a study on the feeding ecology of the Sandwich Terns.

**Common Tern** *Sterna hyrundo*

Number of breeding pairs: 67

Number of young fledged: ?

Number of nest records: 0

Number of BTO nest record cards: 0

The long term decline of Common Terns continues at an alarming rate and 2012 represents the worst productivity since 2005. Indeed, in 2012 not a single non-flying chick was seen and it is possible that not a single chick fledged from the Point. It is unclear what is causing the poor breeding success of Common Terns on the Point but, as discussed, it may well be the same factors that affected the Little and Arctic Terns. It is also possible that it is a part of a wider problem which is driving a decline in coastal breeding Common Terns.

**Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea*

Number of breeding pairs: 7

Number of young fledged: 1?

Number of nest records: 1

Number of BTO nest record cards: 0

Seven pairs of Arctic Terns returned to breed on the Point in 2012. There were two pairs in the beach colony with Little and Common Terns and five pairs on Middle Point. Three or four chicks were seen on Middle Point in June but it was thought that all of these were predated within two weeks. However, a recently fledged juvenile was seen in this area in July and it is just possible that one of the chicks had remained hidden and fledged from here or the beach colony.

**Stock Dove** *Columba oenus*

Number of breeding pairs: 1

Number of young fledged: ?

Number of nest records: 0

Number of BTO nest record cards: 0

A male was constantly heard singing (if you can call it that) from the Lifeboat House above my bed at four o'clock in the morning throughout the summer but no chicks were seen this year.

**Wood pigeon** *Columba palumbus*

Number of breeding pairs: 1

Number of young fledged: 0

Number of nest records: 1

Number of BTO nest record cards: 0

A nest was found in the Black Pine *Pinus nigra* on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July containing one egg but was abandoned soon after and there were no autumnal nests found on the Point.

**Skylark** *Alauda arvensis*

Number of breeding pairs: 35

Number of young fledged: ?

Number of nest records: 0

Number of BTO nest record cards: 0

2012 was the first year where not a single nest was found. This is worrying considering the amount of effort that went into nest finding. The first chick was seen on the 21<sup>st</sup> of May and a few others were seen so a few young were raised.

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*

Number of breeding pairs: 5-6

Number of young fledged: ?

Number of nest records: 2

Number of BTO nest record cards: 1

Most nests were on or around the Lifeboat House and there was one in the tern hide at the start of Near Point. Many young were seen but many young were also known to have fallen out of nests and died. Most pairs made at least two breeding attempts so by the end of the summer quite a few young had fledged from the Point. There were also a few days later in the summer where hundreds of migrant Swallows (mostly juveniles) swarmed around the garden and dunes. The last nest of the season was under the roof of the Old Lifeboat House in mid September.

**Meadow pipit** *Anthus pratensis*

Number of breeding pairs: 110

Number of young fledged: ?

Number of nest records: 19

Number of BTO nest record cards: 10

Another good year for Meadow Pipits with lots of nests found and many young seen. We completed 19 nest record cards but could have done more. Meadow Pipits can display and sing in almost any month of the year so by the time we moved out in late March they were in full song on any sunny day. The first nest was found on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April. Most of the nests monitored produced chicks and it is still unclear why Meadow Pipits are doing so well whilst Skylarks are doing so badly.

**Pied Wagtail** *Motacilla alba yarrellii*

Number of breeding pairs: 1

Number of young fledged: ?

Number of nest records: 1

Number of BTO nest record cards: 0

One pair only bred in the Lifeboat House but there could have been a few pairs in boats in the harbour. The Lifeboat House pair seem to have found at least one safe and secure breeding cavity under the roof of the main building and both breeding attempts produced young.

**Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Number of breeding pairs: 9

Number of young fledged: ?

Number of nest records: 0

Number of BTO nest record cards: 0

A family party with recently fledged young was seen near the Long Hills on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May and another was seen on the end of Yankee Ridge in June. A few other just fledged chicks were seen around the reserve during the spring/summer and it is thought that it was a fairly good breeding season for this species.

**Dunnock** (Hedge Sparrow) *Prunella modularis*

Number of breeding pairs: 11

Number of young fledged: ?

Number of nest records: 1

Number of BTO nest record cards: 1

Eleven pairs were picked up on our breeding bird survey in spring and a few young were seen during the summer. A nest containing three young was found in the Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* next to the boardwalk on the 18<sup>th</sup> of May and by the 23<sup>rd</sup> they had fledged. Also on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May a fledged chick was seen begging for food in the garden next to the Lifeboat House. It was probably an average breeding season for Dunnocks in 2012.

### **Linnet** *Carduelis cannabina*

Number of breeding pairs: c. 30

Number of young fledged: ?

Number of nest records: 11

Number of BTO nest record cards: 11

It was a good year for Linnets in 2012 and eleven nests were found and monitored, seven of which were successful (the others failed at the egg stage). As mentioned the nest building and breeding cycle was often disrupted by bad weather but still many young fledged. The first nest was found on the 17<sup>th</sup> of April and the last on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August. The first chicks were seen on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May.

### **Reed Bunting** *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Number of breeding pairs: 22

Number of young fledged: ?

Number of nest records: 2

Number of BTO nest record cards: 2

Twenty two pairs of Reed Buntings bred on the Point in 2012. Most were in the suaeda along the shingle ridge and Yankee Ridge. Two nests were monitored. Both fledged young and one on the end of the landing ridge was a popular sight for visitors and the occasional small groups of visitors. Both nests started with five eggs but in both cases only a proportion of the eggs hatched.

### **Nest recording**

The increasing importance of nest recording for the conservation of species and the fact that we had three assistant wardens meant that in 2012 we could do a lot more recording. A nest log was kept; some nest record cards were filled out and sent to the BTO and a UEA student studying Oystercatchers sent nest record cards in for the nests that he studied. The terns and gulls nests were not recorded, neither were the burrows of Shelducks. 171 nests of 17 species were recorded in the nest log and 85 BTO nest record cards were completed for eleven species. The biggest disappointment of the 2012 nest recording season was the fact that not a single Skylark nest was found. This is especially worrying considering the amount of effort put in to nest finding and the recent decline of this species on the Point.

### **Edward Stubbings**

**National Trust Coastal Ranger, Blakeney Point**

**National Trust Office, Friary Farm, Cley Rd, Blakeney, NR25 7NW**

**01263 740480/741694 or 07786690062**

**edward.stubbings@nationaltrust.org.uk**