



Blakeney Point Breeding Bird Report **2013**



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Coastal Ranger

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Map and aerial photograph



(Ordnance Survey/ National Trust, 2008)



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

Breeding bird report

Summary

Winter was particularly harsh with severe conditions extending throughout March and into early April. Consequently, the breeding season was delayed. The first Sandwich Terns arrived two weeks later than usual. However, the season quickly got into full swing with some species doing particularly well, although all in all it was not a hugely successful year for many species. A warm and dry summer helped chick survival, although egg and chick predation by gulls was particularly high early in the season, affecting ducks and Oystercatchers particularly badly. Little Terns and Ringed Plovers did not have a great year due to predation and big tides.

Species that had a particularly good breeding season were Grey Partridges and Avocets. This is the second year that Avocets have bred on the shingle ridge and they seem to have done even better than last year. Good numbers of young Shelduck were also seen.

There was a record 4,120 pairs of breeding Sandwich Terns. Despite being slightly higher than last year, the number of fledged young was slightly lower, with a maximum of 2,000. Like last year, the other terns were nowhere near as successful, with Common Terns showing a continuing decline.

Oystercatchers and Ringed Plovers suffered from high predation at the egg stage. Footage of a Common Gull preying on Ringed Plover eggs can be seen on our blog: <http://norfolkcoastnationaltrust.blogspot.co.uk/2013/07/18th-of-july-nature-can-be-cruel.html>. However Redshanks did well, with most clutches successfully hatching.

There was a notable increase in breeding Herring Gulls this year. Eggs were removed under licence from Natural England. Herring Gulls were seen taking Oystercatcher and duck eggs and Common Gulls were seen taking Ringed Plover and Oystercatcher eggs. Common Gulls attempted breeding but nests were washed out by high tides.

Generally most passerines did fairly well, although Skylark numbers were slightly down on last year. A pair of Wheatears (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) appeared to be holding a territory by a rabbit hole in the dunes for a week at the end of April, but did not go on to breed.

Renovation of the Lifeboat House prevented nesting opportunities in the roof. As a consequence, pairs of successful breeding swallows were reduced and Stock Doves did not breed. Pied Wagtails, however, used a nest box on the side of the shed.

Like last year, considerable effort was put into nest recording for the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and again a nest log was kept. This year recording was done using the IPM Reporter computer software rather than filling out cards, this proved to be more efficient. The number of records for each species is mentioned in the systematic list.

Table of breeding birds

Common name	Scientific name	No. of breeding pairs	No. of young fledged	Comments
Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	60+	c.93	
Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>	3-4	0	No nests known to have hatched
Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	1	?	Eggs believed to have hatched
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	5	0	No nests known to have hatched
Grey Partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>	8-9	40+	
Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	1	1	
Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	102	c.20	
Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avocetta</i>	9-12	10+	
Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	12	5+	
Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	15+	?	Several nests hatched
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	c.2200	?	Many young seen
Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	2-3	0	Nests destroyed by high tides
Mediterranean Gull	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>	c.15	25+	
Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	12	1?	10 nests removed under licence
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	1	0	Eggs predated
Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>	121	24	
Sandwich Tern	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	4120	1700-2000	
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	48+	4+	
Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	5	0?	No flying young seen
Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	2	1	
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	33	?	Some young seen
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	3	21	

Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	c.100	?	Many young seen
Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i>	1	4-5	
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	8	?	Young seen
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	10+	?	Young seen
Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	c.40	?	Many young seen
Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	16+	7+	

Systematic list

Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

Number of breeding pairs: 60+

Number of young fledged: c.93

Number of nest records: 3

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
No. breeding pairs	c.30	c.41	35+	32-44	40-50	60+

An early morning count was conducted on the 23rd of April. The main gathering areas were surveyed simultaneously and 137 birds were counted. A maximum of 68 pairs was presumed, however some of these birds may have been unpaired. It is probable that 60+ pairs nested, this is twice as many as five years ago, showing a steady increase in the number of pairs breeding on the Point. Two nests were found on the Hood amongst brambles and another two containing cold eggs were found in shallow burrows between the boardwalk and old Tern Hide.

The first ducklings (22) were seen in the harbour near the Hood on the 24th of June. Another 18 were seen on the mud outside the Lifeboat House on the 28th. On the 26th of July six pairs were seen with a crèche containing 53 ducklings. This gives a combined total of 93; however there is a chance that some of these Shelduck families bred in other areas, so this figure should be treated with caution. It looks like Shelduck had a good year.

Gadwall *Anas strepera* (first bred on the Point: 1966)

Number of breeding pairs: 3-4

Number of young fledged: 0

Number of nest records: 5

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
No. breeding pairs	3-4	4-5	1+	2	2-3	3-4

Several pairs were seen along the shingle ridge early in the season. It is thought that three to four pairs bred. Three nests were found amongst *Suaeda* on the marsh side of the ridge between Cley and the Watch House and two near the Long Hills. The first nest at the Long Hills was predated and it is believed that this bird relayed at the end of Beach Way, this second nest was also predated. Of the three nests along the shingle ridge no hatched egg shells or young were seen. It is possible that no young fledged.

Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

Number of breeding pairs: 1

Number of young fledged: ?

Number of nest records: 1

A nest containing 10 eggs was found on the 17th of May. It was located west of Cley Beach car park by the edge of the old Glaven channel. The eggs are thought to have hatched, judging by the appearance of the empty shells left in the nest, but the number of chicks is unknown as they were not seen.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* (first bred on the Point: 1964)

Number of breeding pairs: 5

Number of young fledged: 0

Number of nest records: 3

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
No. breeding pairs	2	2+	2-3	0	5	5

Two females and several male Mallards were seen amongst the main gull and Sandwich Tern colonies, but no nests were found inside the colonies themselves. A nest containing 9 eggs was found on the 16th of June in the dunes on Far Point. This nest was predated in early July. A nest found in the dunes west of the Lifeboat House was abandoned in early June. A nest containing 10 eggs was found at the eastern end of the Hood on the 25th of May, but the outcome of this nest is unknown. It is possible that no young fledged this year as no ducklings were seen on the Point.

Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix* (first nested on the Point: 1961)

Number of breeding pairs: 8-9

Number of young fledged: 40+

Number of nest records: 1

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
No. breeding pairs	1	2-3	3-5	3+	5+	8-9

Breeding pairs of Grey Partridges on the Point have shown an increase over the last five years. This year has proved to be their most successful yet. Eight to nine pairs were holding territories along the Point: the Marrams near the Watch House; the Hood; the Long Hills; at least three pairs in the main dunes; at least two pairs on Far/Middle Point. At least seven pairs hatched young:

- A nest containing 21 eggs was found behind the Plantation on the 26th of May from which 19 chicks hatched on the 11th of June. On the 26th of June a covey containing just two chicks was seen near the Plantation.
- On the 24th of June about 20 small chicks were seen near the old Tern Hide, four flying chicks were seen in this area on the 7th of July.
- Ten chicks were seen on Far Point on the 3rd of June.
- On the 11th of July 16 small chicks were seen at by the top of the boardwalk.
- On the 14th of July a covey containing about 10 large chicks were seen on Near Point. Seven flying juveniles were seen in this area on the 21st of July.
- A pair with one flying young was seen by the Watch House on the 21st of July.
- On the 5th of August 10 small chicks were seen in the dunes near Beach Way.

There were frequent sightings of large family groups in August. On the 6th of August 12 fledged Grey Partridges were seen on Near Point (these were seen almost daily throughout August and September) and 10 near the beach colony. It is possible that over 40 chicks fledged.

Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* (first bred on the Point: 2012)

Number of breeding pairs: 1

Number of young fledged: 1

Number of nest records: 0

A male was seen regularly in April and with a female at least once. The male was heard frequently near the Plantation throughout spring. On the 29th of September a female and chick only just able to fly were flushed behind the garden. The chick is unlikely to have moved onto the Point from elsewhere so probably hatched nearby.

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

Number of breeding pairs: 102

Number of young fledged: c.20

Number of nest records: 81

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
No. breeding pairs	c.124	c.135	118	110	103	102

Oystercatchers had a slightly less successful year to normal due to heavy gull predation. Several eggs were taken not just by Common Gulls, but also many Herring Gulls early in the season. Most first clutches on the landing ridge were taken by gulls. However, second clutches seemed to fare better in this area.

The first Oystercatcher nest was found on the 2nd of May and the last chick hatched on the 24th of July. Of nests monitored, 14 are known to have hatched, 3 were washed out by the tide, and 32 were presumed to be predated. In addition to gulls, Kestrels and a Short-eared Owl were seen in the vicinity of predated nests. Oystercatcher scrapes beside nesting Herring Gulls on Far Point were predated at the egg stage. Four pairs nested densely amongst Black-headed Gulls on the tip of Middle Point and were seen hatching. It is likely that most of these chicks were eaten by Black-headed Gulls; this was observed near the Lifeboat House.

Use of trail cameras revealed two cases of Grey Partridges in the vicinity of an Oystercatcher scrape. The Oystercatchers acted aggressively towards them, causing them to move away from the scrape.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avocetta* (first bred on the Point: 2012)

Number of breeding pairs: 9-12

Number of young fledged: 10+

Number of nest records: 12

As predicted, Avocets nested on the eastern end of the shingle ridge again this year (see Appendix 2). The first nest was found on the 19th of May. By the 18th of June there were eight nests in the colony. A total of twelve nests were found, of which up to three may have been second clutches. The last nest was found on the 9th of July, interestingly this was not within the colony but several hundred metres west, close to the Little Tern colony. It will be interesting to see if the colony expands westwards in the future.

The fourth nest, found on the 5th of June, belonged to a colour-ringed female (left leg: red over black; right leg: yellow over metal). It is thought her first clutch failed on Cley Marshes and so she moved to the Point to lay her second clutch, like last year.

Signs were erected and the colony was fenced to reduce human disturbance. The fence line had to be extended several times. Each individual nest was subtly marked with a numbered stone and checked every four days. Mike Harcup acted as our first Avocet Volunteer, asking visitors not to go near the fence line and to keep dogs on leads.

It is thought that most eggs hatched, with only one scrape showing signs of predation. The adults would sit tight and acted aggressively towards other birds. It is impossible to know the total number of young fledged as they leave the scrape soon after hatching and head off into cover. On the 9th of July seven juveniles were seen inside the fence line. On the 21st a pair with a freshly hatched chick were seen on the shingle and two small juveniles were seen in the old Glaven channel. It is presumed that a minimum of 10 young fledged. Following a second successful year, it looks like the Point will become an annual breeding site for Avocets.

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Number of breeding pairs: 12

Number of young fledged: 5+

Number of nest records: 10

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
No. breeding pairs	13	13	15	17	14	12

Numbers were slightly lower than last year, with just 12 pairs on the Point (see Appendix 1). The first nest was found on the shingle ridge east of the Watch House on the 2nd of May. A single chick fledged from this nest on the 29th. Two chicks fledged from a nest further east on the 7th of July and another nest in this area is thought to have hatched. Two chicks fledged from a nest in the dunes west of the Sea Hide on the 10th of June. Of the other nests monitored, one was washed out by a big tide, two were abandoned and two were predated. We captured a Common Gull predated eggs near the Lifeboat House with a trail camera (see link to blog on page 4). A pair nested on Stiffkey Meals and fledged two chicks.

A colour ringed bird was seen on the shingle ridge near Cley Beach in June. This female was ringed as a chick at Snettisham in 1999 and has been seen holding a territory on Blakeney Point at least seven times since 2003, including last year. Her nest was found on the 20th of July but the outcome is not known. Another three apparently incubating adults were recorded in the beach colony and on Far Point, but the outcomes of these nests are also unknown.

Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Number of breeding pairs: 15+

Number of young fledged: ?

Number of nest records: 8

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
No. breeding pairs	5	14+	10-13	14+	15	15+

Another good year for Redshanks. Their population has been relatively stable over the last four years. Nesting amongst vegetation makes them far less vulnerable to aerial predation than Ringed Plovers and Oystercatchers. Eight nests were found, of which seven hatched. Chicks were seen in many nests. Trail camera footage of chicks leaving a nest beside the Laboratory can be seen on our blog: <http://norfolkcoastnationaltrust.blogspot.co.uk/2013/06/9th-of-june-rings-chicks-and-large.html>. A number of territories were identified where nests were not found, but alarm calling adults suggested that chicks were present. It is impossible to know the exact number of fledged chicks due to them quickly being led away from the nest and into creeks by their parents. It is believed that fledging success was reasonable. Fledged juveniles were seen later in the summer, but it is likely that many of these were from the saltmarsh on the other side of the harbour, at Morston and Stiffkey, where there are high numbers of breeding Redshanks.

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Number of breeding pairs: c.2200

Number of young fledged: ?

Number of nest records: 0

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
No. breeding pairs	1250	1900+	1800+	1807+	c.2000	c.2200

Typical numbers bred in the *Suaeda* on Far Point. As usual there was also a small colony on the beach and another in *Suaeda* to the eastern side of Middle Point (see Appendix 3). The latter area appeared to have more nests in that last year; therefore it is believed that the number of breeding Black-headed Gulls on the Point is probably above 2,000 pairs. Eggs were observed at the end of April and chicks were observed hatching on the 25th of May. Many juveniles were seen on the wing. The main colony was empty by the 15th of July.

Common Gull *Larus canus* (first nested on the Point: 1964)

Number of breeding pairs: 2-3

Number of young fledged: 0

Number of nest records: 1

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
No. breeding pairs	1	2-3	1	0	0	2-3

In early June two pairs of Common Gulls were seen frequently between the Lifeboat House and Near Point. On the 8th of June a nest was found in *Spartina*, this was washed out by the tide, as was a subsequent relay. Another pair nested on the edge of the beach colony and also lost their eggs to the sea in early June.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* (first bred on the Point: 1992)

Number of breeding pairs: c.15

Number of young fledged: 25+

Number of nest records: 0

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
No. breeding pairs	c.3	c.5	5+	c.10	12+	c.15

Another good year for Mediterranean Gulls. Although it is very difficult to get exact figures as they nest amongst hundreds of Black-headed Gulls and their eggs look very similar. Nine pairs were seen regularly in late April, but it is believed that there were probably around 15 in total. Three juveniles were seen in the beach colony on the 5th of July and 18 were seen outside the main colony on the 10th. It is highly likely that other chicks fledged at different times but were not seen.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* (first bred on the Point: 1972)

Number of breeding pairs: 12

Number of young fledged: 1?

Number of nest records: 0

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
No. breeding pairs	0	0	0	0	3	12

This year 12 pairs nested on Far Point and Middle Point. This is a marked increase from three pairs last year and the highest since 2001. Most pairs nested in a small colony on a dune to the east of the main Black-headed Gull colony (see Appendix 3). Under licence from Natural England, ten nests were destroyed. A single small chick was seen on the edge of the Black-headed Gull colony on the 1st of July.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* (first bred on the Point: 1978)

Number of breeding pairs: 1

Number of young fledged: 0

Number of nest records: 1

A nest containing three eggs was found on the 1st of June on Far Point. This is the first confirmed breeding on the Point since 2002. It is thought the eggs were predated by Herring Gulls seen frequently near the nest.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*

Number of breeding pairs: 121

Number of young fledged: 24

Number of nest records: 3

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
No. breeding pairs	101	c.86	<70	150	139	121

The first Little Terns were not seen until the 26th of April. Numbers built up very slowly. Birds started to settle in the beach colony on the 7th of May, east of the Watch House and east of the Hood on the 14th and on the tip of Far Point in the second half of the month. A coordinated nest count was conducted on the 12th of June as all four colonies were on eggs at this time. A total of 121 breeding pairs were recorded, which is 18 less than last year. Al Davies acted as Little Tern Volunteer for the third year running, mostly by the Watch House and Hood as usual. The first chicks were seen on the 22nd of June in the beach colony.

On the 24th of June big tides washed away at least 11 nests from the beach colony. On the 3rd of July three nests were found some distance east of the beach colony, all with two eggs. Like the other colonies, this area was fenced off. These nests were closely monitored and trail camera footage from one of them can be seen on our blog: <http://norfolkcoastnationaltrust.blogspot.co.uk/2013/07/25th-of-july-pirates-and-butchers.html>. One nest was washed away by another big tide on the 24th of July. That same day single chicks hatched from the other two nests, but sadly these were predated within 24 hours, probably by Common Gulls. Three pairs also relayed in this area following big tides in the beach colony last year and were also unsuccessful.

The colony east of the Hood only fledged one juvenile from 11 pairs and was empty by the 18th of July. Precise reasons for such poor productivity are not known. The colony east of the Watch House fared better, with 15 pairs fledging six young, which were seen on the beach on the 17th of July. Another fledged juvenile was seen here on the 15th of August. Four fledged Little Terns were seen on Far Point on the 11th of July and 12 outside the beach colony on the 22nd.

Location	No. of breeding pairs	No. of young fledged
East of the Watch House	15	7
East of the Hood	11	1
Beach colony	81	12
Tip of Far Point	13	4
Total	121	24

A total of 24 young fledged, which gives a productivity of just 0.2 per pair. This is the same productivity as last year. Predation seems to be part of the problem, with Common Gulls, Kestrels and Hobbies seen near the colonies. No predation was actually witnessed or captured by trail camera, but a headless adult was found near the Watch House early in the season. Big tides accounted for the loss of about 10% of nests. More time, staffing and resources will be put into observing and conserving Little Terns next year thanks to funding from the Little Tern Life bid project.

As in previous years, fencing for Little Terns was put up at Stiffkey Meals. Six sitting birds were recorded there on the 4th of June. All nests were washed away by big tides on the 24th of June.

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*

Number of breeding pairs: 4120

Number of young fledged: 1700-2000

Number of nest records: 0

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
No. breeding pairs	2400	3100	2500	3562	3735	4120

A record number of breeding pairs nested on the Point this year. The previous peak year was 1992 when 4,000 were recorded. Following a harsh winter, they were late to arrive. The first sighting on the Point was a pair on the 1st of April. By the 7th 83+ were roosting on Far Point and numbers built steadily throughout the month. On the 29th of April only 150 Sandwich Terns were seen in the day, but over 4,000 roosted that evening. It is thought they may have been spending the day at a feeding site. A fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) was present regularly throughout April and the first half of May, but like last year it then disappeared without causing any problems in the colony. Thanks to the usual fencing, disturbance was minimal.

The annual nest count was conducted on the 19th of May. This proved to be a good time as the eggs had not started to hatch. Like in 2011 and 2012, the “pasta method” was adopted, enabling each individual nest to be marked efficiently. 3,974 nests were counted, which is 239 more than last year. This year no Sandwich Terns nested in the usual place amongst the *Suaeda*, but all nested further along on the tip of Far Point on sand and shingle and amongst Marram (*Ammophila arenaria*) (see Appendix 3). After the nest count, a few late arrivals settled on the very tip of the Far Point. On the 1st of June an additional 326 nests were added to the count, totalling a record 4,120. The first chicks were seen at the end of June and plenty of Sandeels (*Ammodytes*) were seen being brought into the colony.

On the 19th of June a sample of 50 nestlings were colour-ringed by Jez Blackburn of the BTO. This trial proved to be successful and did not cause significant disturbance to the colony. Therefore we plan to ring more chicks in future summers with the aim of increasing our knowledge of post-breeding behaviour. The first juvenile was seen on the wing on the 8th of July.

It was difficult to get an accurate fledging count this year. It is thought that the figure was somewhere between 1,700 and 2,000. This represents a productivity of around 0.45 chicks per pair, which, although good, is slightly lower than expected. Predation is not thought to have been particularly high. Rene Beijersbergen spent five days observing the colony and only witnessed one case of chick predation by a Herring Gull. Around 200 un-hatched eggs were noted in late June. In late July a count of dead chicks in the colony totalled 80, which is low for such a large colony.

Rene mentioned that Mediterranean Gull predation is a major problem on the continent. Mediterranean Gull predation was also the main reason for Sandwich Tern fledging failure on nearby Scolt Head Island this year. No such predation was witnessed on the Point, probably because the Mediterranean Gulls instead target the Black-headed Gulls they nest amongst.

On the 8th of August one of the juveniles ringed as a nestling on the Point (code: KCC) was reported 250 kilometres east at Camperduin de Putten on the northern Dutch coast. It was reported again on the 20th of August at Wanerooge Island, north of Germany, and again on the 13th of September at Vejers Beach in Denmark.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Number of breeding pairs: 48+

Number of young fledged: 4+

Number of nest records: 1

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
No. breeding pairs	103	c.81	<75	92+	<67	48+

The long term decline of Common Terns continues with even fewer pairs breeding on the Point in 2013. The first birds of the year were seen on the 14th of April. Pairs began to settle in two small colonies in early May, these were the beach colony and Far Point. The first chicks were seen in the beach colony on the 26th of June. On the 30th of June 15 chicks were counted on Far Point. Four fledged young were seen on the beach on the 22nd of July. It is likely that more chicks fledged, but only these four were observed. On the 11th of August 32 juveniles were seen on the beach, but these were probably not all born on the Point. This represents another year of poor productivity for Common Terns on Blakeney Point, for reasons still uncertain.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*

Number of breeding pairs: 5

Number of young fledged: 0?

Number of nest records: 2

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
No. breeding pairs	17	9	9	7	7	5

Five apparently incubating adults were observed on the 1st of June. These were all on the very tip of Far Point. No Arctic Terns nested in the usual location by Middle Point. A possible explanation is that this area has become notably more vegetated by *Suaeda* and now hosts a larger population of breeding Black-headed Gulls. On the 30th of June three small chicks were seen, believed to be from two nests, and two adults were still incubating. No flying Arctic Tern chicks were seen; therefore it is possible that no chicks fledged.

Stock Dove *Columba oenus*

Number of breeding pairs: 0

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
No. breeding pairs	1	1	1	1	1	0

Since 2004 a pair of have nested in the Lifeboat House roof. Due to the re-cladding of the building, the nesting location was no longer accessible this year. Although birds were seen in March and April, Stock Doves did not breed on the Point this year.

Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus* (first bred on the Point: 2003)

Number of breeding pairs: 2

Number of young fledged: 1

Number of nest records: 2

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
No. breeding pairs	4	2-3	2	1+	1	2

Two pairs were present late in the season. A bird was found sat on empty nest in the Plantation, in the largest Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), in early July. The empty nest was finally abandoned two months later. The second nest was found in the garden, in the Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*), in mid August and contained two eggs. One chick fledged around the 19th of September, making it the latest chick of the season to fledge on the Point.

Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

Number of breeding pairs: 33

Number of young fledged: ?

Number of nest records: 3

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
No. breeding pairs	36	39	43	32	35	33

Three nests were found this season. The first one hatched on the 19th of May but was predated within three days. A second nest fledged three young. The third failed at the egg stage. Fledged young were seen, but not in great numbers. Skylarks are showing a long term decline from 120 pairs in 1967 to 80 in 1990 to 42 in 2000.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Number of breeding pairs: 3

Number of young fledged: 21

Number of nest records: 5

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
No. breeding pairs	5+	3	4	7	5-6	3

Numbers of breeding swallows were reduced this year. Previously favoured nesting locations in the Lifeboat House roof were lost due to the re-cladding of the building. Also, the storage shed had to be kept locked due to the installation of a new generator, prohibiting access to another favoured nesting location. Pairs attempted to nest in several places, which were abandoned before completion: front of Lifeboat House; Laboratory; inside Seaman's Hut; Watch House toilet; Silver Dawn wreck. A pair fledged two broods of five in the old Tern Hide. The other two pairs nested under the roof of the Old Lifeboat House. The first nested on the western side, fledging a brood of four. The other nested twice on the eastern side, fledging a brood of four, then hatching a second brood of five, of which three fledged and two died.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

Number of breeding pairs: 100+

Number of young fledged: ?

Number of nest records: 15

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
No. breeding pairs	107	109	111	102	110	c.100

Another good year for Meadow Pipits. Breeding bird surveys revealed the usual number of pairs. Of 15 nests monitored, at least 9 fledged young. Good numbers of flying juveniles were seen.

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba yarrellii*

Number of breeding pairs: 1

Number of young fledged: 4-5

Number of nest records: 1

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
No. breeding pairs	3+	1+	1	?	1	1

Last year a pair bred in the Lifeboat House roof. With this space no longer available, due to renovation work over the winter, we were delighted to find a pair using a nest box on the side of the quad shed. A single brood was raised. Several juvenile Pied Wagtails were seen near the Lifeboat House, these included many that probably fledged from boats in the harbour. One pair nested in a Beans' boat and successfully fledged young.

Wren *Troglodytes troglodydes* (first bred on the Point: 2002)

Number of breeding pairs: 8

Number of young fledged: ?

Number of nest records: 0

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
No. breeding pairs	2-4	11	15	15	9	8

It is thought that Wrens had a reasonable breeding season. Flying young were seen being fed by adults at the Marrams on the 21st of July. There were also a few other sightings of fledged chicks around the reserve in the summer.

Dunnock *Prunella modularis* (first nested on the Point: 1961)

Number of breeding pairs: 10+

Number of young fledged: ?

Number of nest records: 0

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
No. breeding pairs	4-8	9	10	6+	11	10+

A minimum of 10 pairs were recorded in spring. No nests were found, but young were seen around the reserve, including near the Lifeboat House in the summer. It is thought that Dunnocks had an average year.

Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*

Number of breeding pairs: c.40

Number of young fledged: ?

Number of nest records: 8

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
No. breeding pairs	22+	17	30	20+	c.30	c.40

Breeding bird surveys recorded around 40 pairs. This is the highest number in the last ten years. Eight nests were monitored of which six were successful. Nesting was delayed due to the cold April. The first nest was not found until May, with the first chicks seen on the 19th. Many fledged young were seen. Along with Meadow Pipits, Linnets have been the most successful breeding passerines on the Point this year.

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* (first nested on the Point: 1960)

Number of breeding pairs: 16+

Number of young fledged: 7+

Number of nest records: 1

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
No. breeding pairs	22	26+	21	16+	22	16+

Breeding bird surveys recorded 16+ pairs. As usual, most were on Yankee Ridge and in *Suaeda* along the main shingle ridge. A minimum of seven young were seen. A single nest was found containing four eggs; rather curiously it was in Sea Purslane (*Halimione portulacoides*) on the marsh at the end of Yankee Ridge. It was destroyed by the big tides in late June.

Nest recording

For a second year, nests were recorded for the BTO Nest Recording scheme. Again a nest log was kept, recording 173 nests of 22 species. This year, instead of filling out cards, data was put straight in to the IPM Recorder dataset on a computer. This made the nest recording process easier, enabling a higher number of nest records to be sent to the BTO and should continue next season.

Discussion

There have been mixed levels of success for breeding bird species this year. Through surveys, counts, monitoring and use of trail cameras, a lot of information has been gained. But there is still a lot to learn about factors affecting success.

A limiting factor, as usual, was gull predation. Species affected being Ringed Plovers, Oystercatchers, ducks, terns and some passerines. Increased presence of Herring Gulls had an impact, perhaps as a result of the cold start to the year. Removing nests was necessary and a licence will be applied for again next year. Common Gulls were responsible for taking many eggs. Controlling Common Gulls would benefit Ringed Plover success, as they predated several nests. Caging is done for nests on shingle, but is not an option for nests on sand as it builds up around the cage.

Increased use of trail cameras and more observation next season will aid knowledge of predation. Little Terns should be given a much focus due to their poor productivity this year and last. Thanks to EU funding for the next five years, there is the opportunity to put more people and resources into Little Tern protection. Research should be a priority; there is interest from the University College London. Increased observation may help to better understand the reasons for poor success. Continuing Rene Beijersebergen's feeding observations could be beneficial if data can be collected in differing weather conditions and throughout the stages of the breeding cycle. Carefully walking through one of the colonies, as a trial, would increase our understanding. This has not been attempted on the Point before, but is done at other sites, and would give information on egg laying and hatching.

More research into the Sandwich Terns on Far Point would be useful, especially their interactions with gulls. Erecting some form of hide in or near the colony is a possibility. Mediterranean Gulls are increasing and this could become a problem for terns and Black-headed Gulls. Accurate Black-headed Gull nest counts should be conducted each year to see if their population is changing.

A second successful year for Avocets suggests they will continue to nest on the ridge next year. There were a number of disturbances caused by dogs. Seasonal dog restrictions are in place to benefit Little Terns. Discussions have taken place about extending the restricted area to include the Avocet colony; however we first need to establish the eastern limit of our land ownership. This is being investigated with Norfolk Wildlife Trust.

As always, fencing off Middle and Far Point proved successful, with no cases of people crossing the fence-line. The fencing was put up between the 27th of March and 2nd of April before nesting began. This year the fence-line extended right to the information board at the Gap, which proved a better place to approach visitors. Daily "Gap duty" began on the 14th of April and ended at the start of August when the tern colonies were empty and fledged juveniles had moved off the beach. In addition to signage, having people stationed at the Gap is the ideal way to inform visitors of the sensitive ground-nesting bird colonies. Mike Harcup kindly spent a day talking to visitors near the Avocet colony, and Al Davies spoke to visitors about disturbance within his Volunteer Little Tern Ranger role. Next year, it would be a great advantage to have more of a presence around the Avocet and Little Tern colonies on the main ridge. Thanks to the EU Life bid for Little Terns, this will be possible.

Renovation of the Lifeboat House has made the accommodation more comfortable. Re-cladding the exterior has, however, removed some nesting places previously occupied by Barn Swallows and Stock Doves. Swallows have also suffered from a lack of available sheds to nest in. Before next spring, more ledges will have been put up to encourage Swallows; ledges have been successful on the Old Lifeboat House. Also, a nest box to encourage Stock Doves is being looked into. Recordings of Swift (*Apus apus*) calls were played on loop for a third year, between May and August, with a couple of birds seen flying near the nest boxes on the look-out tower. Playing the calls should continue for two more years and then cease if unsuccessful, there is a chance that there is not a sufficient drop below the boxes.

Predator Control

As usual, tunnel traps were set to target small mammals. A total of 15 springer traps were put in strategic locations and checked daily. Only two Weasels (*Mustela nivalis*) were caught, both on the 21st of August. Few signs were seen of other small mammals, just the very occasional Stoat (*Mustela erminea*) or Brown Rat (*Rattus norvegicus*). The effort put in over the winter to eradicate rats from Far Point paid off, with no signs recorded near the tern colony throughout the season.

Time spent on fox control was less than ideal this year. This was largely due to the length of time taken to process licences. A fox was captured by trail camera taking bait on the 26th of March and again on the 2nd of April. During lamping sessions, a fox was seen in the dunes west of the gap on the 4th and 9th of April. Graham Lubbock, Iain Wolfe, Jason Pegden, Lucas Ward and Max Marriner should all be thanked for their time and assistance. No foxes were seen after the 9th of April and no baits were taken, but prints were still found regularly. Driving on the shingle ridge in late April was far from ideal and caused concern for breeding Ringed Plovers and Oystercatchers. Fox control work should start earlier next year. More time should be spent walking the dunes and marsh path to look for fox signs and greater effort put into baiting. Chris Everitt has put together a fox control report for the reserve. Joe Reed should also be approached due to his many years of experience on Blakeney Point. It should be noted that the fox control work done on Blakeney Freshes and Cley Marshes, by Barrie Slegg and Bernard Bishop respectively, greatly benefits the Point. It would also be ideal to have a member of staff with a rifle licence who is willing to put in time, ideally based in the Lifeboat House.

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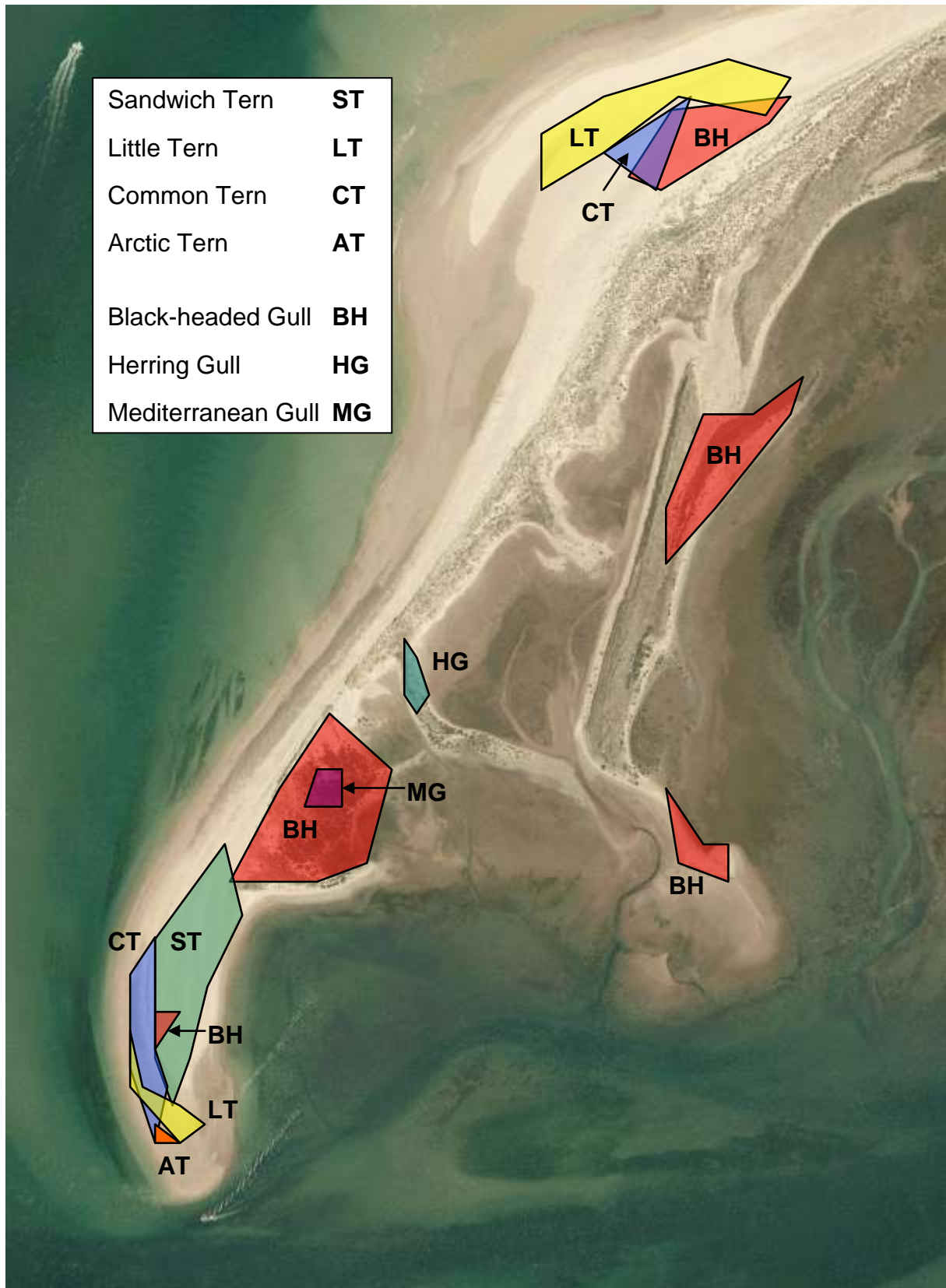
Appendix 1: Ringed Plover territories



Appendix 2: Avocet colony



Appendix 3: Far Point tern and gull colonies



Please note that the exact shape and size of the colonies may not be completely accurate. The aim of this figure is to show the location and proximity of the colonies.

Appendix 4: Butterfly transect data

Week	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	Total	
Date	Mar 04	Mar 11	Mar 18	Mar 25	Apr 01	Apr 08	Apr 15	Apr 22	Apr 29	May 06	May 13	May 20	May 27	Jun 03	Jun 10	Jun 17	Jun 24	Jul 01	Jul 08	Jul 15	Jul 22	Jul 29	Aug 05	Aug 12	Aug 19	Aug 26	Sep 02	Sep 09	Sep 16	Sep 23	Sep 30	Oct 07	Oct 14	Oct 21		
Large White					0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	11	2	0	0	0	0	0	0						21
Small White					0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	112	65	6	1	0	6	4	3	0						199
Small Copper					0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	8	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	8	10	5	28	2	1	0	3	4	2						78
Brown Argus					0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	3	1	3	0	0	0						13
Common Blue					0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	0	1	0	0	0						7
Red Admiral					0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0						3
Painted Lady					0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	1	2	0	0	2	0	0	0							9
Small Tortoiseshell					0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	3	4	0	8	3	0	0						21
Peacock					0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	8	2	0	0	0	1	0	0						12
Dark Green Fritillary					0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0						8
Wall Brown					0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0						6
Grayling					0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	6	4	39	6	3	5	0	0	0						78
Gatekeeper / Hedge Brown					0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	16	17	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0						44
Meadow Brown					0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	5	8	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0						17
Ringlet					0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0							2
Total (Summary)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	10	5	1	4	0	4	0	11	58	161	102	90	19	5	26	11	7	2	0	0	0	0	518	

(UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme, 2013)

This table shows the data collected on the weekly Blakeney Point butterfly transects in 2013. In addition to the 15 species recorded on transects, Clouded Yellow (5+), Comma (2), Queen of Spain Fritillary (1) and Speckled Wood (1) were seen this year.

Appendix 5: Low tide seal counts

Low tide seal counts were conducted approximately every fortnight from April to September. Hauled out seals on Far Point and the West Sands were counted. Nicola Beard, an undergraduate at Plymouth University, studied seals for her dissertation. Her low tide counts are included as they give an insight into daily fluctuations.

Date	Common Seal	Grey Seal	Observer
08/04/2013	223	862	Paul Nichols
21/04/2013	156	466	Paul Nichols
27/04/2013	135	512	Ajay Tegala
07/05/2013	83	518	Paul Nichols
16/05/2013	108	533	Ajay Tegala
25/05/2013	65	616	Ajay Tegala
26/05/2013	75	587	Nicola Beard
27/05/2013	48	489	Nicola Beard
28/05/2013	64	505	Nicola Beard
10/06/2013	38	521	Ajay Tegala
22/06/2013	136	616	Paul Nichols
02/07/2013	92	587	Matt Twydell
25/07/2013	59	516	Paul Nichols
26/07/2013	120	700	Nicola Beard
28/07/2013	208	887	Nicola Beard
11/08/2013	309	932	Ajay Tegala
22/08/2013	212	366	Nicola Beard
23/08/2013	128	520	Nicola Beard
25/08/2013	232	555	Nicola Beard
04/09/2013	326	612	Paul Nichols
15/09/2013	305	903	Ajay Tegala
27/09/2013	231	884	Paul Nichols
17/10/2013	164	902	Paul Nichols