



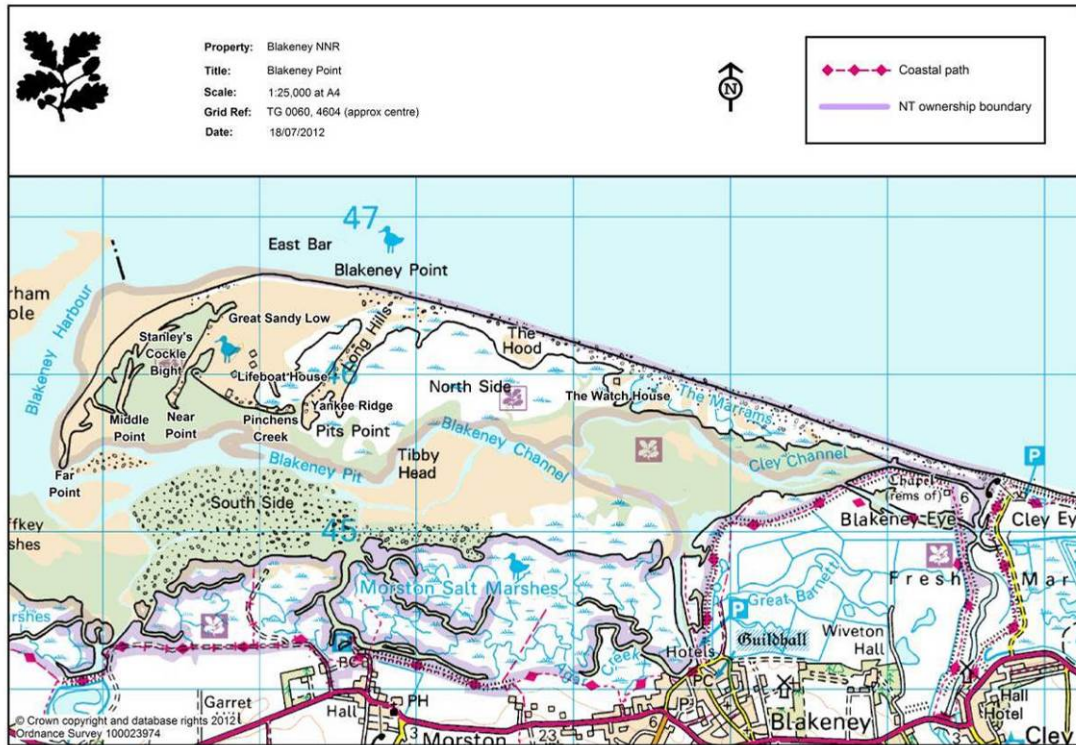
National  
Trust

Blakeney Point  
Breeding Bird Report  
**2014**



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Coastal Ranger

## Map and aerial photograph



Blakeney Point (Ordnance Survey/ National Trust, 2008)



Looking southeast across Blakeney Point (Ian Ward, August 2014)

## Summary

The weather in March was very mild. Black-headed Gulls soon moved in to the colony on Far Point. The first Sandwich Tern was seen on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, a week earlier than last year when harsh weather delayed the breeding season. Passerines quickly started nesting. A Dunnock was seen feeding young on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April. Despite mild conditions, Oystercatchers and Ringed Plovers were notably late to start laying.

Species that had a good breeding season included Linnets and Meadow Pipits. Many pairs of the latter were double-brooded, with young seen throughout the season. There was an increase in pairs of Skylarks and Reed Buntings. Avocets had another good year on the shingle ridge. Redshanks appear to be stable. The pair of Pied Wagtails had a good season, fledging two broods of six. Although just 11 pairs nested and several Ringed Plover eggs were predated, 12 young were seen.

Grey Partridges fledged significantly fewer young than last year. Although there was an increase in pairs of Shelduck, less young were seen this year. No young Mallard or Gadwall was seen. Swallows were down to just two pairs this year, with one pair fledging one brood and the other failing completely.

This year fox problems resulted in a poor year for Sandwich Terns. Disturbance by fox at the start of May led to several pairs relocating on Scolt Head Island. Pairs that nested on the Point were over 1,000 less than last year. Persistent fox problems throughout the season meant that numerous adults, eggs and young were predated. Productivity was a disappointing 0.19. However, the Black-headed Gulls took a worse hit from the fox, with productivity at just 0.05. Common Tern eggs were also taken by a fox, as captured by a camera trap.

Little Terns faced a number of challenges and had a very poor year, with productivity a mere 0.06. The beach colony, containing the largest number of pairs, lost most nests to big tides in mid-June and re-lays in the area failed due to wind-blown sand in July. Common Gulls were seen taking eggs and Hobbies were seen taking adults. Common Gulls were also seen taking Oystercatcher eggs. Oystercatchers appear to be declining with breeding pairs down 17% on last year and a productivity of just 0.09. Three adults were killed on the nest by a fox.

The tidal surge on the 5<sup>th</sup> of December 2013 caused changes to the shingle ridge and north-facing dunes. The shingle ridge was pushed inland, burying much vegetation. This reduction in vegetation did not affect breeding numbers of nesting Little Tern, Avocet, Oystercatcher or Ringed Plover. Sea Sandwort *Honckenya peoploides* recovered quickly, providing cover for chicks. Shingle was pushed over Far Point, partly burying some of the Shrubby Sea-blite *Suaeda vera* bushes. This reduction in cover seemed to benefit the Sandwich Terns. The surge scoured parts of the beach, forming a ridge on the shoreline with low areas behind. Some 67 pairs of Little Terns nested in one of the low areas, which filled up with seawater during the big tides of mid-June.

## Table of breeding birds

Common name	Scientific name	Breeding pairs	Young fledged	Comments
Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	68	43	
Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>	5		No young seen
Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	1		No young seen
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	4		No young seen
Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	1	0	
Grey Partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>	7	14	
Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	1	3	
Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	85	8	
Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avocetta</i>	13	17+	
Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	11	12	
Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	16	7+	Fledging thought to be good
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	2,419	120	Fox predation
Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	3	0	Only one pair laid, failing at egg stage
Mediterranean Gull	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>	8	4	
Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	3	0	All eggs pricked (under licence)
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	1	0	
Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>	110	7	Predation, big tides, wind-blown sand
Sandwich Tern	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	2,859	539	Fox disturbance and predation
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	87	19	
Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	4	1	
Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	1	0	Three nesting attempts abandoned
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	39		Young seen

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Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	2	5	Only one brood fledged
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	102		Very many young seen
Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i>	1	12	Two broods of six fledged
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	4		No young seen
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	11		Young seen
Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	45		Many young seen
Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	27		Young seen

## Systematic list of breeding birds

### **Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna*

Regular breeder, increasing

Number of breeding pairs: 68

Number of young fledged: 43

Comment: Fair

Number of nest records: 7

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Breeding pairs</b>	30	41	35+	32-44	40-50	65	68

An early morning count was conducted on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May. A total of 68 pairs were recorded. This is slightly up on last year, showing a continuing upward trend.

Location	Number of pairs
Great Sandy Low	21
New Glaux Low	12
Main dunes (excluding Great Sandy and New Glaux Lows)	18
Garden	1
Far Point	6
Long Hills	3
Hood	5
Watch House area	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>

As usual, most pairs nested down holes in the main dunes and a number also amongst brambles. Fox prints around holes, numerous predated egg shells and at least four predated adults were found early in the season.

The first young were seen in the harbour on the 17<sup>th</sup> of June; a brood of six. Ten freshly-hatched chicks were seen in a nest in the 'Last Chance' bramble bush at dawn on the 28<sup>th</sup> of June and had been led away by mid-morning. A brood of eight young were seen in the harbour on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July.

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One pair nested in a hole amongst the brambles in the garden. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of July, five abandoned day-old chicks were found near the garden. It is presumed that the family was disturbed whilst being led into the harbour and the parents stayed with only half of the clutch. The chicks were sent on a seal ferry to Morston, collected by the RSPCA and cared for at East Winch. Two survived and were released at King's Lynn Point on the 4<sup>th</sup> of September.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of July a pair with six young and a pair with 11 young, all aged about five days, were seen in the harbour. This makes a total of 43 young fledged. This figure should be treated with caution as some of the birds seen in the harbour may have come from elsewhere. Significantly less young were seen in the harbour than last year, perhaps an impact of fox predation.

### **Gadwall** *Anas strepera*

Regular breeder in small numbers (since 1966), relatively stable

Number of breeding pairs: 5

Number of young fledged: No young seen

Number of nest records: 2

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Breeding pairs</b>	3-4	4-5	1+	2	2-3	3-4	5

A total of five pairs were counted on the shingle ridge and in the old Glaven channel on the 17<sup>th</sup> of April. A nest was found near Silver Dawn (the wrecked boat at the Marrams) on the 14<sup>th</sup> of May. On the 28<sup>th</sup>, three nests were found amongst *Suaeda* on the Fairway, one of which contained 11 eggs. This is the first known record of three Gadwall breeding so close together on the Point. No nests were found on the headland. No young were seen, although there is a chance that some may have been led into the harbour without being seen.

### **Shoveler** *Anas clypeata*

Occasional breeder (since 2004)

Number of breeding pairs: 1

Number of young fledged: No young seen

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Breeding pairs</b>	0	1	0	0	0	1	1

A pair was seen in the old Glaven channel on the 17<sup>th</sup> of April. A nest was found adjacent to the Point on the Chapel field in late April. A female and two drakes were seen in the channel near the Marrams near where a nest was found last year. No nest was found this year. Breeding is suspected at the Marrams, although no young were seen.

### **Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*

Regular breeder in small numbers

Number of breeding pairs: 4

Number of young fledged: No young seen

Number of nest records: 2

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Breeding pairs</b>	2	2+	2-3	0	5	5	4

A nest containing 21 eggs was found under a *Suaeda* bush on Far Point on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March. This was most likely a case of egg dumping; two females and one male were seen in the area. By the 19<sup>th</sup> of April, the nest had been

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abandoned, probably due to the presence of nesting Black-headed Gulls nearby. A nest was found in the garden on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April, but had been predated by the next morning, more than likely by nearby crows. A pair was seen at the Marrams on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April and a nest found near Silver Dawn on the 28<sup>th</sup> of May. A nest was also found near the Watch House, also with an unknown outcome. It is possible that no young fledged, as none were seen.

### **Red-legged Partridge** *Alectoris rufa*

Regular breeder in small numbers, usually one pair

Number of breeding pairs: 1

Number of young fledged: 0

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Breeding pairs</b>	1	1	1	0	1	0	1

A pair was reported near the Bunting Bush on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April. All subsequent sightings were of a single bird: in Glaux Low with a Grey Partridge on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May, near the Plantation on the 26<sup>th</sup> and by the boardwalk with a four Grey Partridges on the 30<sup>th</sup> of July. It is presumed that one of the pair died between the 1<sup>st</sup> of April and 3<sup>rd</sup> of May. Fox predation is a possible explanation; three dead Grey Partridges were found this year, two of which were killed by a fox.

### **Grey Partridge** *Perdix perdix*

Regular breeder, was increasing

Number of breeding pairs: 7

Number of young fledged: 14

Comment: Pairs slightly down on last year, poor fledging

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Breeding pairs</b>	1	2-3	3-5	3+	5+	8-9	7

An estimated seven pairs are thought to have bred, although there may have been up to ten territories early in the season. It is hard to know exactly as they hold large territories, which are difficult to map. The first chicks were seen in the garden on the 20<sup>th</sup> of June. Six flying young were seen regularly in the vicinity of the Lifeboat House throughout July, this had dropped to three by the 9<sup>th</sup> of August. Four flying young were also seen regularly throughout July and early August in Great Sandy Low. Two running young were seen on near the Old Tern Hide on the 26<sup>th</sup> of July, and one flying young by the 31<sup>st</sup> of August. Six flying young seen near the Plantation on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> of August, taking the total up to 14 from four pairs in the main dunes. Three coveys were seen daily in the main dunes into September, totalling 15 birds on the 14<sup>th</sup>; presumably nine juveniles. No young were seen at the Hood (adults killed by a fox were found at the Hood and on Yankee Ridge), Watch House or on Far Point where territories were presumed. Poor fledging may be linked to a reduction in insects as a consequence of the December tidal surge.

### **Pheasant** *Phasianus colchicus*

One pair since 2012

Number of breeding pairs: 1

Number of young fledged: 3

Number of nest records: 1

	2012	2013	2014
<b>Breeding pairs</b>	1	1	1

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A male was present all season, first seen on Pelvetia Marsh on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March. He was heard calling in the main dunes from April to July and presumed to be unpaired due to the apparent absence of a female and persistent calling. However, on the 21<sup>st</sup> of August a female and three small chicks were seen in the Plantation. Three days later the remains of the female were found in Great Sandy Low after having been predated by a raptor. It is therefore highly unlikely that the chicks survived.

### **Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus*

Regular breeder (until 1891 and since 1906), declining

Number of breeding pairs: 85

Number of young fledged: 8

Productivity: 0.09

Comment: Very poor

Number of nest records: 44

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Breeding pairs</b>	124	135	118	110	103	102	85

Despite milder weather conditions than last year, Oystercatchers were notably late to start laying eggs. Although the first scrapes were seen on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April, the first egg was not found until the 10<sup>th</sup> of May; on the beach near the Gap. The first chicks were seen on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June; two at the Watch House.

Two cases of egg dumping occurred this year, the usual one on the beach behind the garden (this year making a scrape in the side of a dune that had collapsed in the December tidal surge), containing five eggs, and one containing six eggs at the end of Near Point. The former hatched two chicks and the latter failed in mid-June either due to predation or big tides.

Although unusual nationally, several Oystercatchers have typically laid clutches of four eggs on Blakeney Point. This season, however, only one clutch of four was found, in the dunes west of the Gap, this could be a sign of poor feeding. All four hatched around the 16<sup>th</sup> of June and all survived for over a week, but by the 4<sup>th</sup> of July only one was present, this individual was seen into August. Five young fledged from four nests on the landing ridge and two from a nest on the main ridge, making a very disappointing total of just eight.

As usual, many eggs were taken by gulls. Common Gulls were seen on two occasions taking eggs near the huts and Herring Gulls were regularly seen hunting on Yankee Ridge. A Common Gull was seen with a chick over Near Point and a Peregrine was seen with a chick near the Hood.

Three adults on Far Point were killed at their nests by a fox in May. One of these had been ringed as an adult in 1987. It would seem that the Point has an aging population of breeding Oystercatchers, indeed several pairs have returned to the same nesting location for years. This year, breeding pairs have dropped by almost 15%, significantly steepening the decline of the last five years. The particularly aggressive bird that used to nest at the north end of Glaux Low was not seen this year. This bird had a metal ring starting with 'FA', although the full combination was never read, the bird ringed in 1987 also started with 'FA', suggesting that it may well have been ringed around the



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same time. There is a strong chance that the Point's Oystercatchers area about to head into a rapid decline comparable to that of the Ringed Plover.

### **Avocet** *Recurvirostra avocetta*

Regular breeder (since 2012), stable/increasing

Number of breeding pairs: 13

Number of young fledged: 17+

Comment: Good

Number of nest records: 11

	2012	2013	2014
<b>Breeding pairs</b>	9+	12	13

Avocets enjoyed another good breeding season since first breeding on the ridge two years ago. The first pairs were seen sitting on the shingle ridge in the last week of April. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of May the first nest was found, a week earlier than last year. The first pairs settled in the usual area between Cley and the start of the dog free zone, they spaced themselves out significantly and our fence-line had to be continually extended. A total of 13 pairs bred, continuing to expand west, see Appendix 2. The ninth nest was found inside the Watch House Little Tern enclosure on the 9<sup>th</sup> of June.

The first chicks hatched in early June. Three chicks fledged from the first nest and three from the second. The fourth nest was predated. Three are thought to have fledged from the fifth nest and three from the eighth. In addition, a pair with four chicks was seen near the Cley West Bank on the 17<sup>th</sup> of June and a pair with one small chick was seen near the Cley Beach car park on the 8<sup>th</sup> of July. This totals 17 young, but outcomes are unknown for some nests; it is thought that most were successful. It is likely that over 20 young fledged. Although nesting in an often busy area, the adults seemed to sit tight and act aggressively towards other birds to protect their eggs. Increased volunteer presence at the Cley end led to reduced human and dog disturbance, but there were still two cases of dogs off leads running inside the colony. Improved signage asking dogs to be kept on leads was put up in the beach car park, but presence is still important as not all visitors read the signs.

### **Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula*

Regular breeder, declining

Number of breeding pairs: 11

Number of young fledged: 12

Number of nest records: 8

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Breeding pairs</b>	13	13	15	17	14	12	11

Displaying was witnessed in February and by early March six pairs were holding territories along the main ridge. A total of eleven pairs bred, which is one less than last season and the lowest number on record. See Appendix 1 for map of territories. As usual, a number of nests failed at the egg stage. Two nests near the Lifeboat House were both near Oystercatchers that probably took eggs and Common Gulls were also seen near nests.

A total of 12 chicks were seen, which is over twice as many as last year. The first chicks seen on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June; three chicks near the Gap, which were

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seen regularly over the following weeks. A brood of two and a brood of three were seen on the shingle ridge east of the Watch House. One chick was seen on the saltmarsh opposite the Lifeboat House. Two small chicks were seen near the Gap on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July and a week-old chick was seen there for a week from the 8<sup>th</sup> of August.

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

Regular breeder, stable/increasing

Number of breeding pairs: 16

Number of young fledged: 7+

Comment: Fledging thought to be good

Number of nest records: 4

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Breeding pairs</b>	5	14+	10-13	14+	15	15+	16

The usual number of pairs was observed. There were nine pairs at the Marrams, two near Yankee Ridge, two on Far Point, one on Near Point, one near the huts and one near Beach Way. The first nest was found on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May and chicks seen on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Freshly hatched chicks were seen in the nests on Near Point (four) and near the huts (three). A number of territories were identified where nests were not found, but alarm calling adults suggested chicks were present. It is believed that fledging success was good.

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

Regular breeder (first bred 1925), stable/increasing

Number of breeding pairs: 2,419

Number of young fledged: 120

Productivity: 0.05

Comment: Very poor

Number of nest records: 21

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Breeding pairs</b>	1250	1900+	1800+	1807+	c.2000	c.2200	2419

This year, Black-headed Gulls nested in numerous locations spread out along the whole of the Point. As usual, the main colony was amongst the *Suaeda* on Far Point, with the first eggs appearing on the 19<sup>th</sup> of April. In early May, 20 pairs nested in a small colony on Near Point west of the Old Tern Hide. They have not nested there in many years. This may have been a response to fox disturbance. All eggs soon disappeared from this small colony, which may well have been fox predation. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of May, 41 adults killed by a fox were counted in the main colony. It is suspected that a fox also wiped out the Middle Point 'arm' colony as this was abandoned towards the end of June and no young fledged. The beach colony appeared to fail as did all nests on the ridge. All nests on the saltmarsh were flooded by big tides in mid-June. The main colony was frequently visited by foxes throughout the season and just 120 fledged, with several dead juveniles and predated eggs found.

Individual nests have not been counted in recent times. This year, an accurate nest count was done; marking each nest with a piece of penne pasta to avoid double-counting (the methodology used to count Sandwich Tern nests). This was done in mid-May when all pairs were settled on eggs.

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Location	No. of nests
Tip of Middle Point (14/5)	18
Main Far Point colony (15/5)	1,684
Middle Point 'arm' (15/5)	627
Beach colony (16/5)	12
Near Point (16/5)	33
Shingle ridge 'Hood' (16/5)	1
Saltmarsh near Watch House (19/5)	23
Tip of Far Point (1/6)	30
Shingle ridge 'Watch House' (2/6)	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,419</b>

### Common Gull *Larus canus*

Occasional breeder (first bred 1965)

Number of breeding pairs: 3

Number of young fledged: 0

Number of nest records: 2

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Breeding pairs</b>	1	2-3	1	0	0	2-3	3

Three pairs were present. A pair spent a lot of time in the beach colony, predated Common and Little Tern eggs. They seemed agitated when approached in July, although no nest was found and no young seen. A second pair spent much time at the Gap colony and built a nest by the 'A'-frame in late May but did not lay any eggs. The third pair nested in the main dunes east of the boardwalk, two eggs were laid but were abandoned.

### Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

Regular breeder (since 1992), was increasing

Number of breeding pairs: 8

Number of young fledged: 4

Comment: Significantly down on last year

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Breeding pairs</b>	c.3	c.5	5+	c.10	12+	c.15	8

They were first seen on Far Point, amongst Black-headed Gulls, on the 11<sup>th</sup> of March. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of April, eight pairs were recorded. This is almost a 50% decrease on last year. As usual, once nesting had got underway they became inconspicuous amongst the Black-headed Gulls. One was seen predated Sandwich Tern eggs on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of May, six nests were found amongst the Far Point colony and one in the shingly area by Middle Point. A fledged juvenile was seen on the beach near the Gap on the 8<sup>th</sup> of July and three were seen near the colony on the 18<sup>th</sup>. This was a very poor season compared to recent years. Fox predation is a possible explanation, although no dead adults or young were found.

### Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

Occasional breeder (first bred 1972)

Number of breeding pairs: 3

Number of young fledged: 0

Number of nest records: 3

Comment: Significantly down on last year

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	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Breeding pairs</b>	0	0	0	0	3	12	3

Just three pairs bred this year. Two pairs nested on the tip of Far Point. The eggs were pricked, under licence from Natural England, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of June a third nest was removed from the small dune overlooking the Sandwich Tern colony.

### **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus*

Rare breeder (first bred 1978)

Number of breeding pairs: 1

Number of young fledged: 0

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Breeding pairs</b>	0	0	0	0	0	1	1

A pair was present in the main colony on Far Point throughout April, May and June. They were frequently seen sitting on the small dune overlooking the Sandwich Tern colony but no nest was found and no young were seen.

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

Regular breeder, fluctuating

Number of breeding pairs: 110

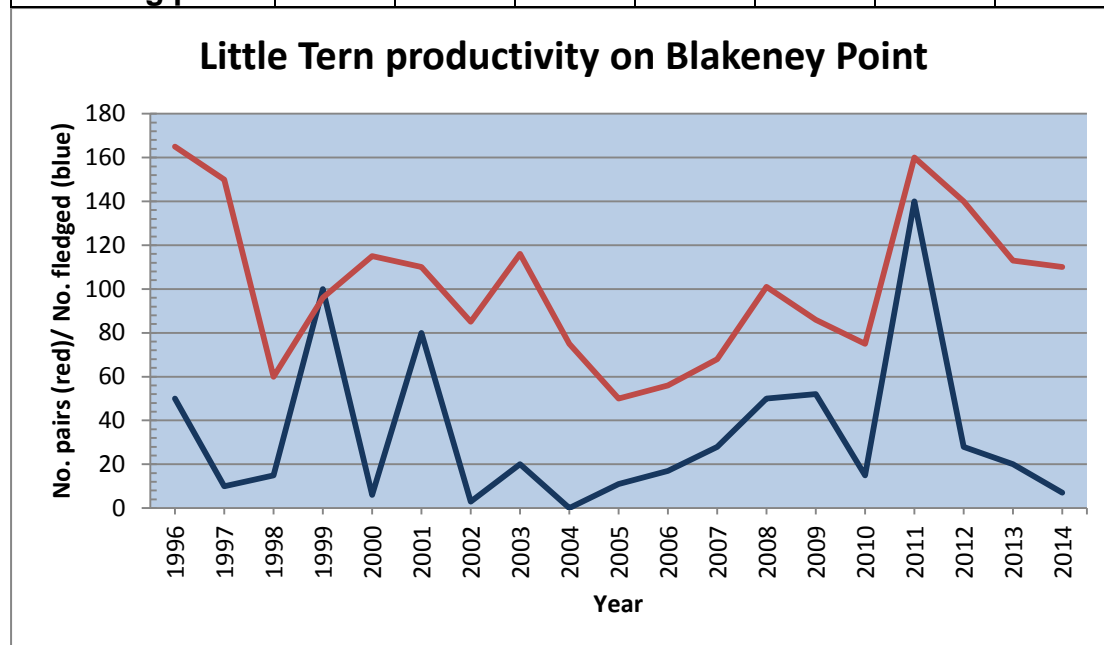
Number of young fledged: 7

Productivity: 0.06

Comment: Very poor

Number of nest records: 114

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Breeding pairs</b>	101	86	70	150	139	121	110



The first birds were seen on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April. Displaying was witnessed four days later and birds began to settle in mid-May. The first eggs were found on the main shingle ridge on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May. Two nests were found near the Gap on the same date. Birds have re-laid here in the previous two years, this year it was fenced at the same time as the other colonies, prior to birds arriving. As usual, most pairs nested in the beach colony. However, this year they nested

further east in a slightly lower, shingly area that had developed over the winter. We entered this colony on the 26<sup>th</sup> of May and marked 24 nests. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of May, the tide flooded this area. Entering a few hours after the tide receded revealed that three nests had been completely washed away, six scrapes were found to contain broken shells or yoke (probably Common Gull predation) and all other scrapes contained cold eggs.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of June, an egg-bound female was found dead in the beach colony. The bird had an English metal ring. The code has been submitted via the EU Ring web-site, but we are still awaiting the details.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of June, four adults were colour-ringed by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). This trial ringing session took place in the colony east of the Watch House colony, trapping birds on the nests. Malcolm 'Al' Davies observed nests occupied by ringed and non-ringed birds in this colony, collecting chick provisioning data. His data revealed poor attendance, with both adults often leaving chicks unattended to go and forage. This suggests poor feeding, which may have had a big impact on fledging success.

With big tides and onshore winds forecast from the 14<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> of June, all nests in the beach colony were marked and numbered so that they could be collected in and kept warm over the tide, then replaced when the water had receded. When the first tide flooded, on the 14<sup>th</sup>, there were 67 nests, one of which contained two newly-hatched chicks. Five nests were lost to the tide. On the 18<sup>th</sup>, after the last flood, there were seven active nests left. Although a number of eggs and young were collected in over the tides, many eggs were abandoned or predated by Common Gulls, with 60 nests lost over the four days. It was concluded that attempting to move so many nests over so many tides was a bit too ambitious and not worthwhile, however seven nests were saved that would otherwise have been lost. The colony on the tip of Far Point also suffered flooding, with six nests lost.

After the floods, 18 additional nests appeared: 14 in the beach colony, two in the Gap colony (totalling four) and two in the colony east of the Watch House (totalling 23). Whilst these are almost certainly second clutches, rather than late arrivals, it is impossible to know if they were birds that first attempted on the Point or elsewhere. An adult ringed on the Point (UP7) turned up at Winterton on the 15<sup>th</sup> of July. This was one of the birds that were observed at the nest, with use of a trail camera. It hatched one chick from two eggs, last captured on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July when it was four days old.

It is believed that a total of four young fledged from the Watch House colony. Three were seen making small flights in the colony on the 7<sup>th</sup> of July. A single chick was colour-ringed by the RSPB on the 8<sup>th</sup>; it was believed to be around 13 days old. Three non-ringed young capable of flight were seen on the foreshore on the 16<sup>th</sup>. From the Hood colony, a single bird was seen taking its first flight on the 6<sup>th</sup> of July, by which time it was the only chick left in the colony. Two broods of two day-old chicks had been seen on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June along with a dead one that had what appeared to be peck marks on its back.

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On the 9<sup>th</sup> of July, strong onshore winds blew sand through the beach colony, burying all remaining eggs and killing all remaining small chicks. The colony was then abandoned. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of July, 86 loafing birds were present on the shingle ridge.

A juvenile was seen being fed on the beach near the Gap colony on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August. On the 9<sup>th</sup>, two juveniles were present, bringing the total young fledged to seven. This gives a productivity of 0.06, the lowest since 2004 when all eggs and small young failed due to weather in late June causing all adults to abandon (2004 was also the last known case of egg theft, when ten Little Tern nests were taken from the Watch House colony).

<b>Colony</b>	<b>No. breeding pairs (12/6)</b>	<b>No. young fledged</b>	<b>Productivity</b>
East of the Watch House	21	4	0.19
East of the Hood	6	1	0.17
East of the Gap	2	2	1
Beach	67	0	0
Tip of Far Point	14	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0.06</b>

Poor productivity at the beach colony can be attributed to combination of big tides, poor weather and Common Gull predation (the latter witnessed at the Gap colony). As mentioned above, poor feeding may have affected the shingle ridge colonies. In late July and early August, however, a pool near the Gap filled up with whitebait as each tide receded, leading to a feeding frenzy of gulls and all four tern species. A Hobby was seen taking an adult bird on the 4<sup>th</sup> of June, with at least three prior reports and a subsequent one. The wings of a juvenile were found on the beach on the 31<sup>st</sup> of July. A weasel was reported in the Hood colony on the 27<sup>th</sup> of May, although it was not captured on any nest cameras. Students from the UCL – Devanshi Kasana and Jodie Thwaites – put out eight trail cameras on nests in the shingle ridge colonies and did not capture any small mammals. They did, however, capture a camouflaged photographer inside the Watch House colony at 05:53 on the 16<sup>th</sup> of July. The image was circulated widely but the man was not identified.

Human disturbance in the daytime was low thanks to a dedicated team of Little Tern volunteers. This is the first time volunteers have been recruited specifically to warden the Little Tern colonies on the shingle ridge, building on the work that AI started in 2011. Having more of a presence helped reduce disturbance, educate visitors and increase observation. It also revealed how often visitors do try to cross fence-lines and bring dogs into the excluded area. Josh Herron, Bill Landells, Richard Timson and Nick Bell all did a great job helping to protect the shingle ridge colonies.

A very unusual discovery was made on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June: a shared nest on the tip of Far Point. It contained two Little Tern eggs and one Common Tern egg. We have not been able to find any record of this occurring anywhere before. A trail camera revealed that the eggs were incubated by a pair of Little Terns; however a pair of Common Terns was frequently present. The Little Terns attacked the Commons when they attempted to incubate. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of June,

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a single day-old Little Tern chick was present. By the 24<sup>th</sup>, the chick had disappeared but the Common Tern egg was starring, but failed to hatch.

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

Regular breeder (since 1921)

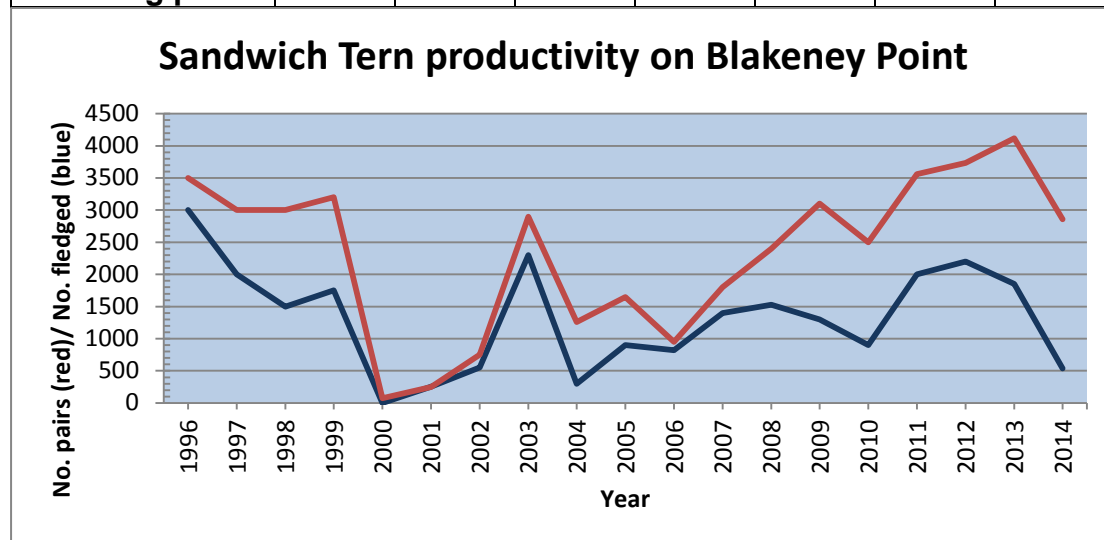
Number of breeding pairs: 2,859

Number of young fledged: 539

Productivity: 0.19

Comment: Very poor

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Breeding pairs</b>	2400	3100	2500	3562	3575	4120	2859



The first birds were seen on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of April, there was a big arrival of birds heading west; an estimated total of 1,000 throughout the day. Colony build-up data was collected:

Date	Number of birds
31 <sup>st</sup> of March	94
5 <sup>th</sup> of April	445
8 <sup>th</sup> of April	1,100+
11 <sup>th</sup> of April	c.3,000

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May, 18 nests containing one egg each were counted. This year, birds settled on the shingly tip of Middle Point for the first time (as far as we are aware), see Appendix 3. A total of 71 nests were counted here on the 14<sup>th</sup> of May. This was probably a response to fox disturbance. A fox entered the colony on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May – killing over 40 gulls, but only two terns were found – and the following around 1,000 Sandwich Terns arrived along the coast at Scolt Head Island, undoubtedly birds from the Point. These went on to breed and fledge young on Scolt Head for the first time since 2007. Approximately 250 birds were also seen on Scrobby Sands, but breeding is uncertain.

On the 17<sup>th</sup>, 2,465 nests were counted in the main Far Point colony, combined with the Middle Point count the total is still 1,258 less than last year's 19<sup>th</sup> of May count. Within a week, over 150 additional nests appeared on an arm of shingle to the southeast of the main colony, as well as more on Middle Point. In early June birds laid on the very tip of Far Point also. Additional nests were

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counted on the 8<sup>th</sup> of June, bringing the 2014 total nest count up to 2,859, the lowest since 2010.

Fox problems persisted throughout the season. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of June, 35 dead adults were found in the colony. The first chicks were seen on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June and the fox was finally shot on the 14<sup>th</sup>, with a chick in its mouth. With the fox out of the way, 58 chicks were colour-ringed by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) in the main colony on the 18<sup>th</sup> of June. On the same date, the Middle Point sub-colony was visited and found to contain 28 dead and five dying chicks. It is presumed that this small sub-colony suffered from kleptoparasitism by gulls, no young fledged.

By the 20<sup>th</sup> of June, a second fox was appearing regularly at the colony and was captured by camera traps taking eggs and young from three different locations every night for four days. On the 14<sup>th</sup>, 41 dead chicks were found in the colony. This fox was shot on the 26<sup>th</sup>. With the second fox removed, the BTO colour-ringed a further 47 chicks on the 7<sup>th</sup> of July. It was decided that this stage in the breeding season is the ideal time to ring Sandwich Terns, as the chicks are large and no birds are on eggs, so disturbance is much lower than three weeks earlier.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of July, fox prints were found once again and became regular. On the 15<sup>th</sup>, 521 fledged birds were seen on the beach and saltmarsh around Far Point. The third fox was shot on the 19<sup>th</sup>. By the 25<sup>th</sup>, the colony was empty and 37 dead chicks were counted along with 41 adults. The later arrivals on the tip of Far Point fledged a small number of young; 18 flying juveniles were counted at high tide on the 29<sup>th</sup>, taking the total up to 539. This gives a productivity of 0.19, the lowest since 2000 when the colony suffered serious rat problems and did not fledge any young.

<b>Colony</b>	<b>No. breeding pairs</b>	<b>No. young fledged</b>
Main colony, Far Point	2,621	521
Tip of Middle Point	154	0
Tip of Far Point	84	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,859</b>	<b>539</b>

The birds that nested on Scolt Head Island were more successful than those on the Point. Approximately 1,050 pairs nested, fledging 625 young. This gives a combined productivity of 0.27 for the two sites.

A number of colour-ringed juveniles were sighted around northern Europe. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of July, three birds were seen 46km WNW at Gibraltar Point, Lincolnshire. On the 31<sup>st</sup>, two were seen 517km NNW at the Ythan Estuary, Aberdeenshire, one of which was seen 99km S at Port Seton, East Lothian on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August and 178 km N at Findhorn, Moray on the 31<sup>st</sup>. Another four birds were seen at Findhorn between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> of August. One bird was seen 402km SW at Dawlish Warren, Devon from the 29<sup>th</sup> of August to 1<sup>st</sup> of September. Another bird was seen 392km S at Le Harve, France on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August and one 230km SE at Westkapelle, Netherlands on the 29<sup>th</sup>.



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### **Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo*

Regular breeder, declining

Number of breeding pairs: 87

Number of young fledged: 19

Productivity: 0.22

Comment: Poor

Number of nest records: 10

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Breeding pairs</b>	103	c.81	<75	92+	<67	48+	87

The first birds were seen on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April. Pairs began to settle in the beach colony in May, the first egg was found on the 21<sup>st</sup>. A total of 34 pairs nested in the beach colony and 53 on the tip of Far Point. This is the highest number in three years. A camera trap captured a fox taking Common Tern eggs on Far Point on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June. On the 24<sup>th</sup>, 20 live chicks and eight dead were observed on Far Point. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of July, 12 flying juveniles were seen on Far Point and on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August four juveniles were seen on the beach. Two flying juveniles were seen on Far Point on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August and one taking its first flight on the 19<sup>th</sup>. This totals 19 fledged young, which is higher than the last two years, but still poor.

Having had several recoveries of Sandwich Terns ringed on the Point, it would be interesting to try colour-ringing Common Terns here in the future too. As a declining species on the Point, it would be useful to find out more about the movements of the few juveniles that manage to fledge.

### **Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea*

Regular breeder (since 1922), declining

Number of breeding pairs: 4

Number of young fledged: 1

Productivity: 0.25

Number of nest records: 2

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Breeding pairs</b>	17	9	9	7	7	5	4

The first birds were seen on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April. Eight pairs were seen on the tip of Far Point on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Just four pairs nested, this is the lowest number since 2000. Two nested on the very tip of Far Point and two in the beach colony, both amongst Common Terns. The first chick was seen in the beach colony on the 14<sup>th</sup> of June. Two chicks on the very tip showed well to ferry passengers in mid-July. One recently-fledged juvenile was seen on the beach near the Gap on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August, this was the only confirmed fledgling.

### **Wood Pigeon** *Columba palumbus*

Regular breeder, at least one pair (since 2003)

Number of breeding pairs: 1

Number of young fledged: 0

Number of nest records: 3

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Breeding pairs</b>	4	2-3	2	1+	1	2	1

As usual, slightly odd behaviour was witnessed late in the season. Although present in the Plantation and garden in May and seen displaying over Yankee

## Blakeney Point Breeding Bird Report 2014

Ridge in June, nesting did not take place until July. A single pair nested in the garden, with a single egg incubated until early August when it was apparently abandoned. Incubation commenced again on the 18<sup>th</sup> (presumably the same pair), with three eggs observed on the 22<sup>nd</sup>; one dead and two live. The nest was soon abandoned again and the pair was seen frequently in the Tamarisk and Plantation. A nest appeared in the Tamarisk at the end of the month. Two eggs were laid at the start of September, but the nest had been abandoned within a week, more than likely due to human disturbance.

### **Skylark** *Alauda arvensis*

Regular breeder, relatively stable

Number of breeding pairs: 39

Number of young fledged: Young seen

Comment: Pairs up on last year, fledging fair

Number of nest records: 1

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Breeding pairs</b>	36	39	43	32	35	33	39

Breeding bird surveys recorded 39 territories, six more than last year. Pairs were concentrated in the main dunes, although no nests were found. Young were seen, although not in great numbers. Fledging thought to be fair.

### **Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*

Regular breeder, declining

Number of breeding pairs: 2

Number of young fledged: 5

Comment: Poor

Number of nest records: 3

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Breeding pairs</b>	5+	3	4	7	5-6	3	2

Just two pairs bred this year. The usual pair in the Tern Hide arrived around the 19<sup>th</sup> of April. Six dead chicks were found on the floor on the 7<sup>th</sup> of June and a second attempt was not made. The other pair nested under the Old Lifeboat House roof, fledging five chicks on the 9<sup>th</sup> of July. Their second brood, four chicks, hatched on the 16<sup>th</sup> of August but were abandoned a week later. A pair were seen prospecting at Silver Dawn in mid-April, but did not nest there. The newly-built open-fronted storage shed by the Lifeboat House may attract a pair next year.

### **Meadow Pipit** *Anthus pratensis*

Regular breeder, stable

Number of breeding pairs: 102

Number of young fledged: Very many young seen

Comment: Very good

Number of nest records: 9

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Breeding pairs</b>	107	109	111	102	110	c.100	102

As usual, a good breeding season for Meadow Pipits, with the usual number of pairs. All nine nests monitored fledged young. The first hatched chicks were seen on the 26<sup>th</sup> of April. Very good numbers of flying young were seen throughout the season, many pairs fledged two broods.

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### **Pied Wagtail** *Motacilla alba yarrellii*

Regular breeding pair in recent years

Number of breeding pairs: 1

Number of young fledged: 12

Comment: Very good

Number of nest records: 2

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Breeding pairs</b>	3	1	1	0	1	1	1

A pair bred in the nest box on the shed like last year. Six chicks hatched in early May and left the nest on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Fledged juveniles were seen on Fair Point on the 21<sup>st</sup>. The pair had a second clutch in late May, nesting inside a fish box in the gas cage. Another six chicks hatched in mid-June and left the nest on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Juveniles were present around the Lifeboat House regularly into August. On the 16<sup>th</sup>, five were seen together in Great Sandy Low.

### **Wren** *Troglodytes troglodydes*

Regular breeder (since 2002)

Number of breeding pairs: 4

Number of young fledged: No young seen

Comment: Down

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Breeding pairs</b>	2-4	11	15	15	9	8	4

Breeding bird surveys of the dunes and main ridge in May recorded just four pairs. Two pairs are thought to have bred near the Watch House, one at the Marrams and one at the Long Hills. No young were seen, probably due to lack of observation rather than lack of success.

### **Dunnock** *Prunella modularis*

Regular breeder (since 1961), stable

Number of breeding pairs: 11

Number of young fledged: Young seen

Comment: Thought fair

Number of nest records: 1

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Breeding pairs</b>	4-8	9	10	6+	11	10+	11

Breeding bird surveys recorded 11 pairs: ten from the Marrams to Yankee Ridge and one on the end of Near Point. Young were seen being fed at the as early as the 20<sup>th</sup> of April at the Long Hills and 27<sup>th</sup> of April on the Fairway. Fledglings were seen at the Hood, Long Hills (two on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August), Yankee Ridge (June), Watch House and Marrams. Fledging is therefore believed to be fair.

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

Regular breeder, stable/increasing

Number of breeding pairs: 45

Number of young fledged: Many young seen

Comment: Good

Number of nest records: 4

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Breeding pairs</b>	22+	17	30	20+	c.30	c.40	45

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Breeding bird surveys recorded 45 pairs, although few nests were actually found. Good numbers of fledged young were seen throughout the season. Young were seen being fed in the garden on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May.

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

Regular breeder (since 1960), stable/increasing

Number of breeding pairs: 27

Number of young fledged: Young seen

Comment: Significantly up on last year, fledging thought good

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Breeding pairs</b>	22	26+	21	16+	22	16+	27

An increase in pairs compared with last season. Particularly high numbers recorded at the Marrams, Watch House and Long Hills. At least nine broods of young were observed throughout May and June.

## **Systematic list of not quite breeding birds**

### **Canada Goose** *Anser canadensis*

Pair held a territory once (2004)

An adult with five young was seen in the harbour on the 21<sup>st</sup> of July. A pair had been seen in the old Glaven channel earlier in the season. They probably nested adjacent to the Point, on the Chapel field south of the channel.

### **Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus*

A single pair bred once (1961)

Throughout June, a pair was seen frequently alarm calling over Yankee Ridge. No young were seen. There has been one previous breeding record: a pair fledged two young from a nest on shingle near Pelvetia Marsh in 1961.

### **Swift** *Apus apus*

Never recorded breeding

For a fourth consecutive year, calls have been played from the look-out tower in the hope of attracting Swifts to the nest boxes. Unfortunately they have still not yet been used. There were a couple of occasions when Swifts flew near them, but no significant interest was apparent. There is a chance that the location is too far from other breeding Swifts and also that there is not a sufficient drop below the boxes.

### **Stock Dove** *Columba oenas*

Previously regular breeder (1987-2012)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
<b>Breeding pairs</b>	1	1	1	1	1	0

A single bird was seen in the garden on the 4<sup>th</sup> of April. This may have been one of the pair that bred in the Lifeboat House roof each year from 2004 to 2012 when renovation of the building closed up its favoured location under the roof. A nest box was attached to the building on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May, although there were no subsequent sightings (the last being a pair on the Fairway on the 29<sup>th</sup> of April). It is hoped that the nest box might be used next season.

**Robin** *Erithacus rubecula*

Never recorded breeding

A fledged juvenile was seen at the Long Hills on the 7<sup>th</sup> of June. It was heard calling in the garden the following day. Presumably the bird had fledged from somewhere nearby on the mainland. To fly so far at such a young age is most unusual. Robins have never bred on the Point.

**Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Never recorded breeding

A female was present for the first three weeks of July. Due its presence at an unusual time of year, it was presumed to be a failed breeder. There is a small chance it noticed the Black Redstart nest box attached to the shed.

**Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Bred in small numbers until 1936

There were at least two cases of rabbit holes being inspected and territories being held in the second half of April. None went on to breed.

**Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Singing males present twice in recent times (2010-11)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
<b>Breeding pairs</b>	0	0	1?	1-2?	0	0

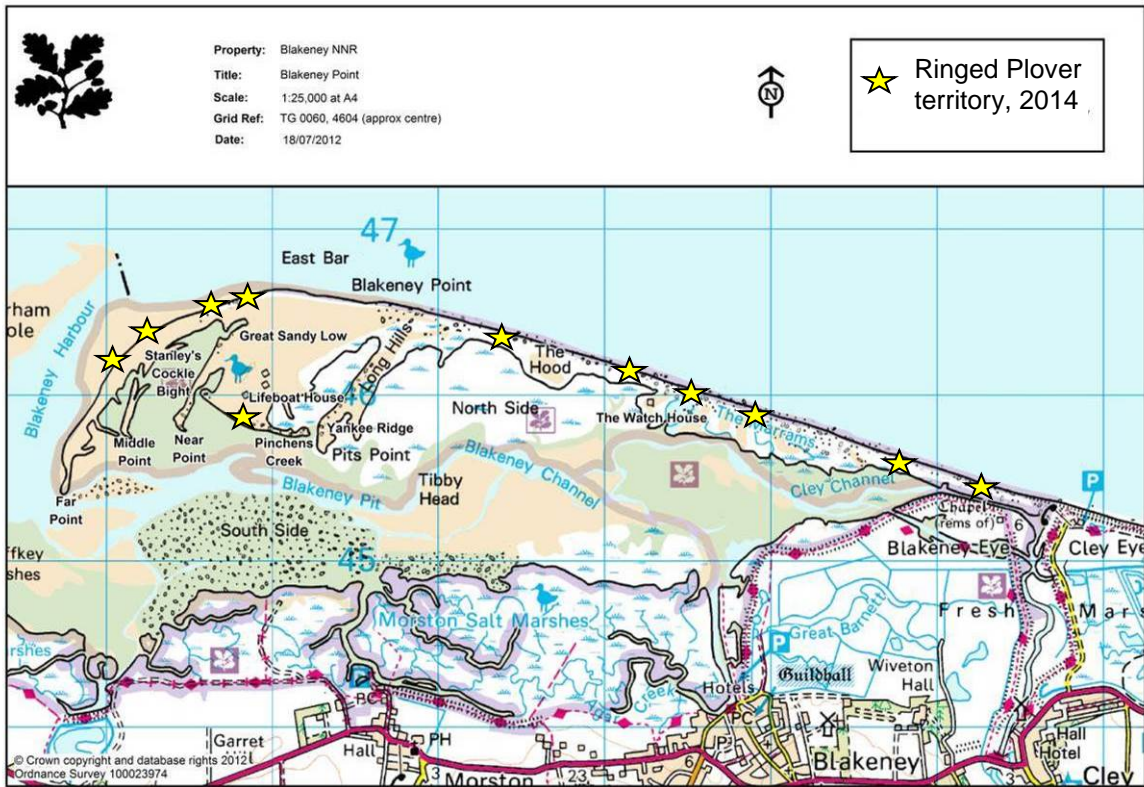
A singing male was present on the opposite side of the Old Glaven to the Marrams in mid-May. This bird may well have bred close by, although not on the Point itself. A singing male was also present near Silver Dawn on the 16<sup>th</sup> of July. Singing males were present in the same location in both 2010 and 2011. There was no evidence of breeding this year. Although young were seen at the Marrams in 2011, these may well have hatched elsewhere, therefore Sedge Warbler is not a confirmed breeding species, but there is a chance it could become one in the future.

## Acknowledgements

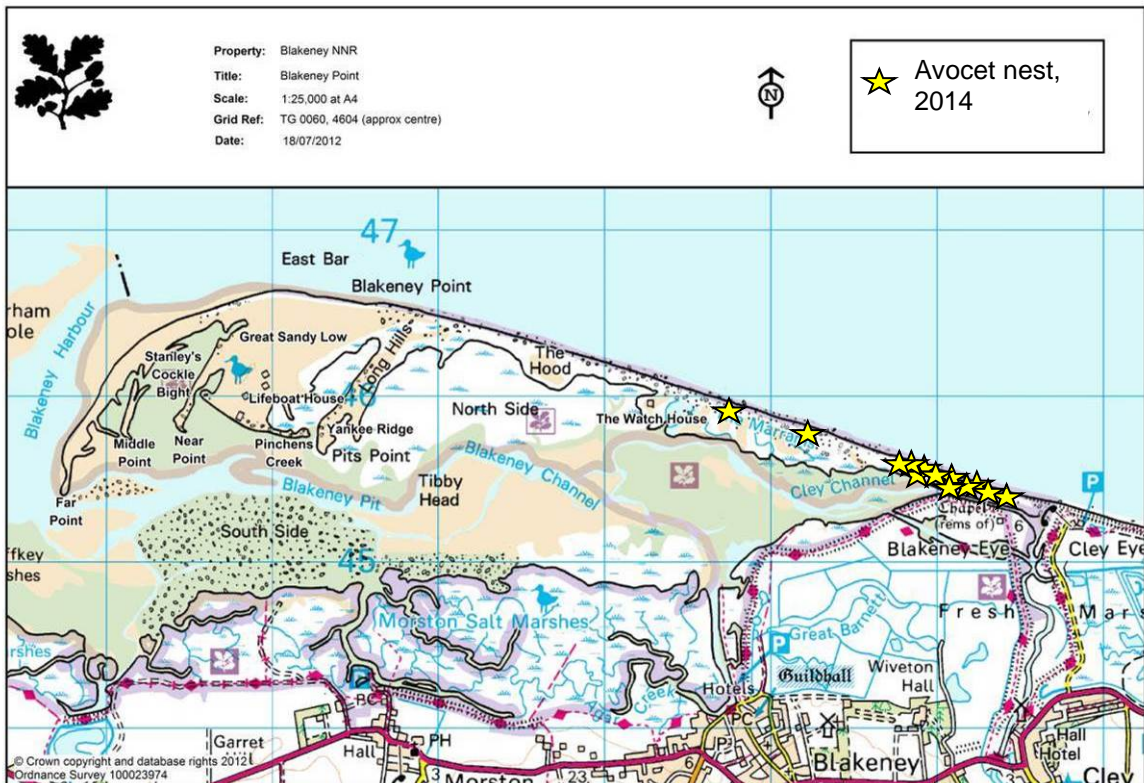
Very big thanks to Seasonal Rangers Paul Nichols and Sarah Johnson for assisting with surveys, monitoring and protection, and for their consistent hard work and good attitudes when foxes and big tides became problematic. Special thanks to Richard Porter, Malcolm 'Al' Davies and James McCallum for their observations, surveys, support and advice. For their assistance and support – including Little Tern protection and predator control – I would like to thank Graham and Marilyn Lubbock, Chris Everitt, George Baldock, Alex Green, Josh Herron, Bill Landells, Nick Bell, Richard Timson, Barrie Slegg, Lucas Ward, Victoria Egan, Stuart Banks, Iain Wolfe, John Sizer, Joe Reed, Andrew and Kay Clarke, David and Pat Wileman, Neil Lawton, Jim Temple, Martin Perrow and Andy Stoddart.

**Ajay Tegala,  
Coastal Ranger**

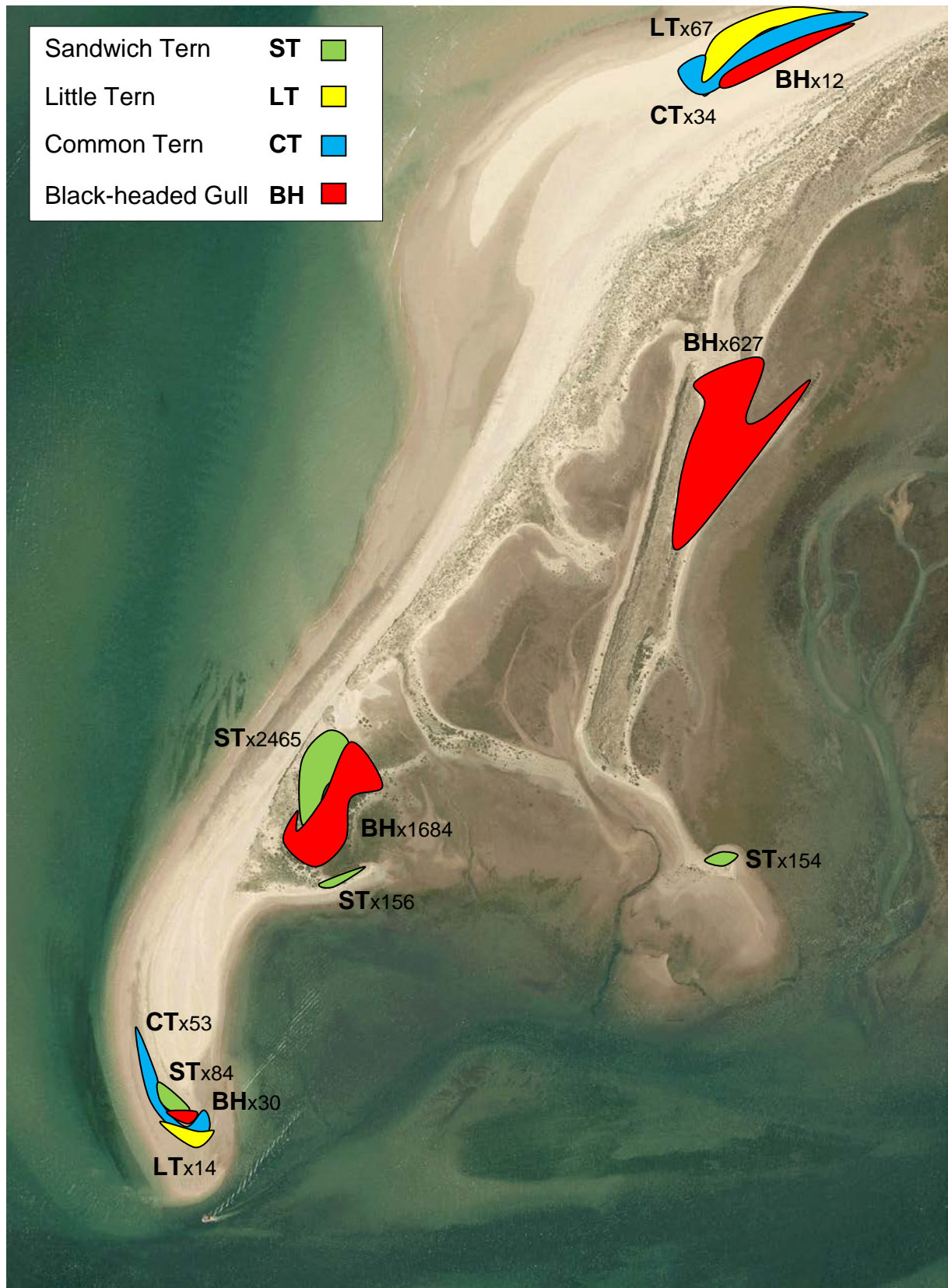
## Appendix 1: Ringed Plover territories



## Appendix 2: Avocet nests



## 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. The numbers shown are peak nest counts.