

Cley Breeding Report 2012

Introduction

Once more we have attempted to document the breeding species on Cley Marshes. This report is based on sightings made during visits to the NWT reserve and areas between East Bank and Iron Road (the area which includes the new land being purchased by the NWT) during spring and summer 2012. It also includes sightings that have been passed to us by other local observers.

It was not a scientific survey, but most areas were visited regularly. We merely took records of nesting birds and youngsters seen, and tried to follow the progress of each family. All sightings were from the hides and public footpaths around the reserve and eastern area.

The following species notes give our interpretation of these sightings together with our best guesses of the total numbers breeding and young that fledged.

Summary

These first tables list birds that bred, or attempted to, in our area this year with counts where known.

Species	Minimum Pairs	Min. young fledged	Earliest chicks seen
Mute Swan	4	10	21 st May
Greylag Goose	40	?	14 April
Canada Goose	3	7	16 th May
Shelduck	13	64	23 rd May
Gadwall	9	16	7 th June
Mallard	31	64	28 th April
Shoveler	10	8	6 th June
Pochard	1	7	26 th May
Tufted Duck	4	0?	28 th June
Little Grebe	1	2	23 rd May
Little Egret	7	6?	5 th June
Grey Heron	3	4	5 th June
Marsh Harrier	4	9	23 rd June
Water Rail	3?	?	
Moorhen	19	20	12 th May
Coot	18	17	9 th May
Oystercatcher	10	0	
Avocet	80	55	10 th May
Little Ringed Plover	2	1	13 th July
Ringed Plover	1	3	31 st May
Lapwing	77	58	21 April
Redshank	25	13	19 th May
Black-headed Gull	40	0	24 th May

Passerines

Species	Min. Pairs	Species	Min. Pairs
Skylark	16	Sedge Warbler	25
Swallow	4	Reed Warbler	47
Meadow Pipit	17	Bearded Tit	12
Stonechat	1	Linnet	2
Cetti's Warbler	6	Reed Bunting	15
Grasshopper Warbler	1		

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The following species also bred, or are thought to have, but numbers are unknown:

Common Pheasant	Wren
Kestrel	Dunnock
Wood Pigeon	Whitethroat
House Martin (houses along Coast Rd)	Goldfinch
Pied Wagtail	

The following may have bred but we have no evidence:

Sparrowhawk	Long-tailed Tit (N Foreland)
Tawny Owl (N Foreland)	Greenfinch
Great Tit (N Foreland)	

Each year that we have been monitoring breeding has been different and has given us surprises and more insight into breeding behaviour; this year was no exception.

The weather this year was, yet again, unusual. The dry winter and early spring followed by the very wet late spring and summer meant that high water levels on the meadows made them extremely good for breeding ducks and waders, but the resulting high grass levels meant birds were very difficult to see. Pope's meadows and the Serpentine also stayed reasonably wet with some water on the Serpentine most of the summer.

Two pairs of Little Ringed Plover successfully hatched young on the reserve for, as far as we know, the first time ever, with one youngster fledging.

Avocets had their best year since we started recording them in 2003. 55 young fledged this year as opposed to 9 last year.

Lapwings also had an exceptionally good breeding season, fledging 58 young (17 last year and only 5-10 in previous years).

Stonechats bred for the first time in 20 years and for the first time since 2004, we had evidence of a pair of Grasshopper Warblers breeding. Cetti's Warblers and Bearded Tits did well, recovering after the reduced numbers last year due to the cold winter of 2010/11.

Little Egrets nested alongside the Herons in North Foreland Wood again, with 7 nests this year. Bitterns failed to breed again and no Egyptian goslings were seen. Marsh Harriers didn't do as well but 9 young did fledge. Mute Swans made a comeback from their failure last year and fledged 10 young.

Oystercatchers again failed to hatch any young but Ringed Plovers successfully raised one brood of 3 on Simmond's scrape.

Moorhens and Coot did better than last year.

The table on the next page shows comparisons with previous years for all species.

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Comparisons with previous years

Species	Minimum Pairs breeding				Minimum Young fledged			
	2012	2011	2010	2009	2012	2011	2010	2009
Mute Swan	4	1	4	3	10	0	7	7
Greylag	40	44	45	57	?	?	c.100	c.150
Canada Goose	3	2	1	0	7	8	5	
Egyptian Goose	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	7
Shelduck	13	17	10	5	64	34	35	33
Gadwall	9	13	17	14	16	24	23	65-73
Teal	0	1				?		
Mallard	31	46	33	34	64	52	48	76-94
Garganey	0	1						
Shoveler	10	7	5	1	8	4	8	4
Pochard	1	4	4	4	7	3	1+	8
Tufted Duck	4	2	4	4	0	0	6	7-17
Little Grebe	1	1	5	3	2	1	3	7
Little Egret	7	3	1	0	6?	4	2	
Grey Heron	3	4	3	4	4	7	4	5+
Marsh Harrier	4	5	6?	6	9	12	15	20
Water Rail	3?	?	?	?				
Moorhen	19	14	21	15	20	7	24	19-31
Coot	18	8	13	19	17	8	5	21-30
Oystercatcher	10	10	13	13	0	0	0	0
Avocet	80	70	62	96	55	9	10	3
Little Ringed Plover	2	1	1	2	1	0	0	0
Ringed Plover	1	1	3	4	3	0	3	3
Lapwing	77	30	40	35	58	17	7-10	5
Common Snipe	0	0	1?	?				
Redshank	25	20	17	15	13	7	13	5
Black-headed Gull	40	31	57	77	0	0	0	11
Common Tern	0	1	0	1		0	0	0
Skylark *	16	12						
Swallow *	4	7			26	10		
Meadow Pipit *	17	16						
Stonechat	1	0	0	0	9			
Cetti's Warbler *	6	1			9	1		
Grasshopper Warbler *	1	?			2			
Sedge Warbler *	25	69						
Reed Warbler *	47	48						
Bearded Tit *	12	3						
Linnet *	2							
Reed Bunting *	15	12						

* These species were not counted before 2011

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Species Details

Mute Swan

4 pairs, 10 young fledged

Three nests were seen and young were hatched from two of them. A further brood was found; we don't know where they nested but it was probably between Simmond's and North Scrapes.

A pair was seen using last year's nest site by the Catchwater drain near the bench between Bishop's Hide and E Bank from 27th April, but they never settled. No young.

Another pair nested at the edge of the reeds on Keeper's Marsh. The nest was well hidden so not seen often. A pair, assumed to be these, was seen in the Catchwater Drain west of Watcher's Cottage on 21st June. One appeared to have cygnets on her back but how many couldn't be ascertained. Although the cygnets continued to hitch a ride for several days, on the 22nd we determined there were 2 young. This family continued to be seen together into October, mainly in the Catchwater drain but quite often sitting on the path out to Bishop's Hide, hissing at passing visitors.

Another pair was first seen on a nest at the edge of the reeds on Pope's Marsh on 7th April. They were seen in the area with at least 2 small cygnets on 23rd May and were then seen on and off with 2 until 13th June. By 27th June only 1 remained. They continued to be seen occasionally into October and adults and the cygnet were seen flying over Iron Road on 28th October.

On 21st May a pair with 7 small cygnets appeared on N Scrape. We don't know where the nest was but assume it was in the grass/reeds south of N Scrape. They continued to be seen throughout the summer, often swimming in line with an adult at the front and back and the 7 cygnets between them. On 4th October they were having flying lessons on Pat's Pool and were seen flying properly on the 8th.

A pair was seen with 8 cygnets in the Catchwater Drain near Iron Road on 16th May, but these were thought to have come from Salthouse, outside of our survey area.

Greylag Goose

c.40 pairs bred, number fledged unknown

As usual Greylags started to pair up and lay eggs from late March. Pairs were counted on a few days during late March when around 40 were present. This year fewer nests were seen than usual and three, possibly four, of the nests along East Bank were obviously predated (broken eggs, remains of unhatched chicks) and we strongly suspected several more had also been predated but we could not see into those nest clearly. Due to the location of the nests we doubt the predator was a fox and suggest it was most likely one of the otters that was occasionally seen around the reserve.

The first goslings were seen on 14th April by the Serpentine. Gosling counts are always difficult, we start off with enthusiasm but once the numbers get high and other species start to have young, we begin to ignore them. The maximum count for any one day was 76 on 4th June, but we think that in total there were at least 150 seen. We don't know how many fledged.

Canada Goose

3 pairs bred, 7 young fledged

A goose was seen sitting on a nest in Pope's reedbed on 5th April and a pair was seen there with 4 small goslings on 16th May. On 18th May another pair was seen with 1 tiny gosling on Pope's Marsh. By the 24th the first pair seemed to have adopted the tiny gosling. On the 27th only 4 were seen, but this still included the smaller one. They then stayed together until all 4 fledged in July.

Another goose was seen sitting on a nest on Billy's Wash from 10th April and a pair was seen there with 3 small goslings on 22nd May. This family continued to roam around the western meadows until they fledged in early July.

Egyptian Goose

None again this year.

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Shelduck

13 pairs, 64-70 fledged

As with most years we don't see any Shelduck nests so have no idea how many pairs actually nest in our area. We do know that this year two of the broods/crèches seen were brought onto the reserve by adults when just a few days old.

Shelducklings can form crèches when still very young and also can become independent within 15 days of hatching while still quite small. This can make following the progress of individual broods tricky, but the following table gives our best view of this year's broods and how the numbers were arrived at.

		N ^o . fledged
<u>Main Reserve</u>		
W1	A pair with 2 tiny ducklings was first seen on N Scrape on 23 rd May. These continued to be seen with the parents until early July when they had probably fledged.	2
W2	Another brood of 15 tiny ducklings were on N Scrape on 2 nd June. These continued to be seen with the parents until 22 nd July when they fledged.	15
W3	On 8 th June a pair with 7 small ducklings was on Pat's Pool. They had moved to Simmond's Scrape on 4 th July where they stayed until late July when fledged.	7
W4	On 24 th June another brood of 2 small ducklings were seen on N Scrape. These continued to be seen with the parents until 16 th July, after which the broods on N Scrape started to get mixed up, but it is thought they both probably fledged.	2
W5	On 28 th June, Bernard rescued a brood of 9 ducklings from almost certain death crossing the A149. He'd caught one and took it to the gate to Bishop's hide and the others followed. They then made their way to Pat's Pool where they stayed until fledged in early August.	9
W6	On July 10 th , a pair with at least 22 mixed sized ducklings was seen crossing west to east over Beach Rd into Bull Marsh. About 15 minutes later they appeared on Simmond's Scrape (now counted as 25) and then moved to N Scrape where they stayed until at least 27 th July when they got mixed up with the other broods there. We have no reason to believe they didn't all fledge. These were probably part of a crèche of c.30 that had been seen on the Glaven Channel a week earlier.	25
W7	On 15 th July another brood of 4 small ducklings were seen on N Scrape. At least 3 survived till the end of the month but we lost track of them after that.	0
<u>East of East Bank</u>		
E1	A pair with 6 tiny ducklings was seen in the Main Drain behind Arnold's Marsh on 29 th May. The brood had reduced to 4 by 13 th June. They weren't seen again but up to 4 large ducklings seen in early July could have been these.	4?
E2	What is thought to be a different brood of 5 small ducklings were on the Serpentine on 5 th June. 1 was limping badly on the 25 th and only 4 were present on the 26 th . These 4 survived to fledge in mid-July.	4
E3	On the 7 th June, 1 tiny duckling was seen by the Serpentine but this wasn't seen again.	0
E4	A brood of 5 tiny ducklings was seen on Sea Pool on 2 nd July with 2 small being seen there from the 11 th to 18 th . They weren't seen again.	
E5	A brood of 6 small/medium ducklings were first seen on Arnold's Marsh on 11 th July. 2 remained at the end of the month when they were quite well grown. They weren't recorded again but could have been present with the groups of fledged birds and have fledged.	2?
E6	A single small/medium duckling was on Pope's Pool on 28 th and 31 st July.	0

Gadwall

9 pairs bred, 16 fledged

This year's numbers were down on the last few years. Many small ducklings were seen but all broods roamed widely around the scrapes and the drains in the reedbeds (which cannot be seen) so often went for days without being seen and ones not seen again could just have been keeping out of sight. Also this year the extra growth in the vegetation caused by the wet weather added to this problem. By mid-July when many got to three-quarter size they became difficult to tell from the groups of eclipse ducks on the scrapes so easily got lost. These counts are therefore probably an underestimate.

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Gadwall cont.

The following table shows what we think to be the progress of the broods seen.

	Notes	N ^o . fledged
Main Reserve		
1	c.7 ducklings were seen on South Pool from the Visitor Centre on 7 th June but not again.	
2	5+ small ducklings were seen on Cricket Pool on 7 th June with 4 there on the 10 th . 4 on Simmond's Scrape on the 22 nd were thought to be the same brood. The brood had reduced to 3 by 2 nd July. 2 or 3 continued to be seen until late July when they had fledged.	2 or 3
3	6 small ducklings were seen on N Scrape on the 19 th June with 7 there the next day. 7 seen on Cricket Pool on 22 nd June were thought to be the same but they weren't seen again.	0
4	10 tiny ducklings were seen on N Scrape on 17 th & 18 th June, with 9 there on the 20 th . What is thought to be the same brood, now only 8, were seen on Simmond's on the 23 rd . There were only 7 on the 28 th and after this they were seen on and off till mid-July and are assumed to have fledged at the end of July.	7
5	A single tiny duckling was seen on Whitwell Scrape on 27 th June. It continued to be seen on the scrapes until the end of July when it was quite large.	1
6	A second single duckling was seen on Whitwell Scrape on 27 th June. A small/medium duckling in front of Dauke's Hide on the 9 th -10 th July could have been this. It wasn't seen again.	0
7	2 small ducklings on N Scrape on 10 th July moved to Simmond's Scrape on the 13 th where they remained until the 28 th when medium sized – they weren't seen again.	0
8	5 small ducklings on N Scrape on 11 th July weren't seen again.	0
9	5 tiny ducklings first seen on N Scrape on 30 th July moved to Whitwell on 1 st August and were seen on and off there and nearby until the end of August when well grown.	5

Teal

Did not breed this year

Only 1 female was seen on the reserve during the breeding season this year. On 12th August a female with 2 near full grown young was seen in the drain in front of Bishop Hide, but we have no evidence to show that these were raised on the reserve.

Mallard

31 broods were seen, at least 64 fledged

Following Mallard broods is always difficult. Mallard take at least 50 days to fledge but can become independent before this which means that broods can break up before fledging and hence become difficult to follow. Some of the large ducklings are difficult to tell from adults if on their own. In general if ducklings have reached a medium/large size we assume that they will survive to fledging.

Only one nest was seen, near Teal hide, so we cannot be certain which part of the reserve they actually bred on but for ease of reporting the following list summarises the broods by the area where the ducklings were first seen. However, not much should be read into this as obviously it is far easier to see ducklings on a scrape than in a drain or long grass that is not in easy view. Although some broods seem to stay around the same area until fledged many move around and can move right across the reserve in a very short time, even giving rise to them being seen in different areas on the same day. The first ducklings seen were broods of 10 and 5 on Cricket Marsh on 28th April.

Because of the numbers involved we have summarised them by area.

Summary of broods

Area first seen	No. Broods	Earliest date	Total ducklings	N ^o . Fledged
Western Meadows & Billy's Wash	11	28 th April	75	26
Central Scrapes	8	16 th May	42	13
North Scrape	6	10 th June	40	12
Eastern Meadows	6	30 th April	29	13
Total	31		186	64

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Garganey

No evidence of breeding this year

Both a drake and a duck were seen regularly during the spring and summer and reported as a pair in late April and during May but we have no direct evidence to indicate that they bred in our area. Two juveniles were seen in mid-August but these could have come from elsewhere.

Shoveler

10 pairs, 8 fledged

Shoveler are a nationally rare breeding species but we always have a few pairs at Cley. 39 birds were seen around the area in April and this reduced to 20 in May when the females would have been on nests. The first duckling was seen in the long grass of Cricket Marsh on the 6th June with more broods following, nearly all on the Scrapes.

	Notes	N ^o . fledged
Main Reserve		
1	At least 1 tiny duckling was seen on Cricket Marsh on 6 th June with 3 seen on the 9 th . They weren't seen again	0
2	10 small ducklings were first seen on Simmond's Scrape on 9 th June and 1 was lost by the 14 th . After this a brood of 8 or 9 were seen regularly on Simmond's or Whitwell Scrapes. These were initially thought to be two separate broods but they were never seen at the same time and one day one of the 9 was seen to stray well away from the family, so we concluded that all sightings of 8, 9 and 1 in this area referred to the same brood. They were only medium sized when last seen together on 28 th June, but we believe 3 large/fledged birds seen in mid-July were from this brood.	3
3	At least 2 ducklings were seen on the meadow around South Pool on 8 th June but not again.	0
4	7 small ducklings were first seen on Pat's Pool on 13 th June and up to 5 continued to be seen there or on Richardson's Scrape up until 15 th July when almost fledged.	5
5	3 small/medium sized ducklings were on Whitwell on 30 th June. They were last seen on 18 th July when still only medium sized.	0
6	Another brood of 4 small ducklings was on Whitwell on the 10 th July but these were not seen again.	0
7	A brood of 4 medium sized ducklings were first seen in front of Dauke's Hide on 10 th July. 2 medium/large birds there on 17 th were thought to be the same but they were not seen again.	0
8	2 small medium ducklings were on Pat's Pool on 23 rd July but they, also, were not seen again.	
9	A brood of 7 small ducklings appeared on North Scrape on 15 th July but were never seen again.	0

Pochard

1-3 pairs, 7 fledged

Another nationally rare breeding species, at Cley we see very few Pochard in the winter months but they arrive in the spring to breed. At least 3 pairs were present in April this year around the reserve. In previous years we have seen a few broods of tiny ducklings but then lost them until we suddenly see a female or two with fledged young. This year the only young seen were a single brood of 9, first seen on 26th May from Dauke's Hide. The brood soon reduced to 8 but these continued to be seen regularly on the central scrapes until 19th June. They weren't seen again until 8th July when only 7 were present but they were well grown. They continued to be seen through to the end of July when they had fledged.

Tufted Duck

4 pairs, 0 fledged

Late breeders, these broods always get lost in the reeds that grow in the drains, and this year those reeds were very thick. 10 drakes and 6 ducks were seen on 31st May but after that no more than 4 ducks were observed. 3 broods of young were seen plus a single duckling without a parent but no large or fledged young were seen.

A female with 5 small ducklings was seen on Billy's Wash on 28th June but not again.

A single tiny duckling with no parent was seen on Simmond's Scrape on 8th & 9th July, this was probably the same as one on N Scrape on the 26th.

A female with 8 tiny ducklings was in the Main Drain by Iron Rd on 15th August.

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Tufted Duck Cont.

A female with 5 small ducklings was in the Catchwater Drain between Bishop's Hide and E Bank on 19th August. A single duckling with a female in the Catchwater Drain near Bishop's Hide on the 23rd may have been one of these, but there were no further sightings.

Red-legged Partridge

No evidence of breeding on the reserve this year, but probably bred in neighbouring fields

Common Pheasant

A few bred on or around the reserve

Two broods were recorded but we don't know where they nested and there may have been more. A brood of 6 or 7 tiny chicks was seen on Keeper's Marsh in late May, but were not seen after the end of the month. Another brood of 4 or 5 was also seen on Keeper's Marsh from 11th July. This brood continued to be seen around the meadows until mid-September.

Little Grebe

1 pair, 2 fledged

A pair was first seen on Snipe's Marsh on 22nd April. They were seen apparently tending chicks from 23rd May. Two juveniles fledged around 16th July with one lingering until the end of August. A possible second nesting attempt by this pair failed.

Bittern

Did not breed this year

Single birds were seen a few times during spring but may have been just passing through.

Little Egret

7 nests in North Foreland Wood, number fledged unknown but probably 6

Egrets were seen flying in and out of North Foreland from late February with 7 being seen together on 31st March. Only 3 nests were seen on 17th May but by 5th June there were 7 nests, one of which had 3 downy chicks. The first fledged young, 2 begging from an adult, were seen on the reserve on 30th June. On 4th July there were still at least 4 feathered chicks moving around in the treetops which would be in addition to the fledged birds already seen. We can't be certain how many young there were and how many fledged but we think at least 6.

Grey Heron

3 nests in North Foreland Wood, at least 4 but probably 7 fledged

Hérons were heard calling in North Foreland wood from late February. On 9th March 9 were seen to fly out of the wood. In early June, 3 nests were seen in the wood with a total of 7 large chicks, but it is thought some others may have already fledged. Juveniles were seen around the reserve from the 12th flying and landing clumsily at first. A maximum of 4 young were seen together, but 7 seen at different spots on the reserve on 7th July were probably all different.

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Marsh Harrier

2 nests on main reserve + 2 on Pope's Marsh, 9 (4 + 5) fledged

Main Reserve

In early April there appeared to be three male Marsh Harriers on the reserve, one young bird (thought to be a 2nd calendar year) and two adults. The young male paired with a mature female and they were seen taking nesting material into the reeds near Billy's Clump. They made a food pass on 17th May then regular food passes were seen in early June. However, later that month the male wasn't seen to bring in food although the female was hunting regularly.

Another male (which by late April had a gap in its tail and was nicknamed 'Slotty') paired with a female and appeared to be nest building east of Bishop's Hide in the region of Bittern Pool. The first fledged youngster from this nest was seen on 13th July with 2 seen on the 16th and 3 on the 20th. A fourth youngster was seen on the 23rd but this seemed to stay separate from the other three so may have been from the other nest.

Pope's Marsh

Two females nested in the Pope's reedbed but there was only one male. The first fledged young seen here were 3 on 23rd June. Interestingly one of these birds had a distinctive white belly. They were seen regularly over the reedbed and on 12th July were joined by two more which are thought to be from the other nest. The first 3 dispersed soon after this.

Sparrowhawk

Possible breeding

A pair possibly bred in North Foreland but no direct evidence.

Kestrel

Probably bred in our area

There were two pairs hunting over our area during the breeding season. One over the reserve possibly bred in the wood behind Hilltop. Another pair was hunting over Pope's Marsh and the male was twice seen to catch prey and carry it directly into the west side of N.Foreland wood but no other signs of breeding were seen.

Water Rail

Possible breeding

Birds were heard calling from beside the drain or reedbed west of East Bank from 30th March to 5th April with two calling there on 31st May. Another was heard by the boardwalk on 30th April and 29th May with two there on 1st June. Another was calling from Snipes Marsh on 3rd April. Although obviously in the area there was no evidence of breeding.

Moorhen

19 pairs, at least 20 fledged.

Many small chicks were lost and several nests were found which did not appear to produce chicks, or the chicks were lost within a few days. We think most of these pairs tried again but cannot be sure. Moorhens regularly have two broods in a year and siblings from one brood will help feed young from the later brood. The following is a summary of this year's breeding around our area.

Area first seen	No. Pairs	No. Broods	Earliest date	Total chicks	Nº. Fledged
Central Scrapes	4	7	6 th June	22	7
North Scrape	1	2	15 th July	6	1
Western Drains & Meadows	7	11	12 th May	22	8
Eastern Drains & Meadows	7	7	23 rd May	11	4
Total	19	27		61	20

This year's figures are about average but an improvement on last year when they did very poorly.

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Coot

18 pairs, 17 fledged.

An improvement on the last few years figures but again no nests, nor chicks, were found in the Catchwater Drain. Unlike Moorhens, Coot rarely have a second brood but this year the pair on Snipe's Marsh did, although the chicks from the second brood didn't survive long. On Billy's Wash 4 pairs were seen to build nests but only 1 chick was ever seen.

As you will see from the following table, only those on and around the scrapes appeared to do well.

Area first seen	No. Pairs	No. Broods	Earliest date	Total chicks	N ^o . Fledged
Central Scrapes	11	11	9 May	28	11
Billy's Wash	4	1	1 July	1	0
Western Meadows	1	1	2 June	2	0
Pope's Marsh	1	1	?	5	2
Snipe's Marsh	1	2	9 May	6	4
Total	18	16		42	17

Oystercatcher

10 pairs attempted to breed, no young seen

As usual a few Oystercatchers attempted to breed, laying eggs and sitting for a while. This year 10 pairs were involved, all eventually looking as if they were sitting on eggs. Some had a few attempts with nests only lasting a few days. In the end only two nests got anywhere near full term, one on the shingle behind N Hide and one on the meadow by South Pool, but once more no chicks were seen. Half the nest sites were on shingle with the rest on meadows, none on the scrapes. We guess that all experienced birds nest on Blakeney Point and that only the younger or weaker birds try at Cley.

Avocet

At least 80 pairs bred, 55 fledged

This is the best year since we started recording breeding Avocets in 2003, with 55 fledged young as opposed to only 9 last year. The number of breeding pairs this year was similar to previous years although a little higher than last year but they were all more successful.

The first Avocets were seen sitting on Pat's Pool on 16th April and the first hatched on 10th May when there were 54 nests there. This is much greater than the maximum 17 nests that were recorded there last year. In the past Avocets always preferred Pat's Pool for nesting but following high predation in 2005-7 (mainly by a Heron) they had appeared to have abandoned Pat's. At the same time there were a further 11 nests on the reserve. Unlike the last few years when all nests on a scrape were abandoned overnight, presumably due to predation, this year that didn't happen and young were hatched from nearly half of them. By the end of May around 40 fluffy youngsters were running around on Pat's Pool, in fact it was becoming overcrowded and some young were being moved to Simmond's Scrape almost as soon as they had hatched. It was also becoming very difficult for us to keep track of them. Birds were also nesting elsewhere on the reserve but not in such a high concentration. By the end of June, 111 chicks had hatched and the first ones had fledged.

As so many had succeeded with their first broods there were far fewer birds nesting late in the season, with only 4 broods hatching after the end of June. This also meant that we got less birds nesting in outlying areas than we have done in the previous few years.

As with last year one pair started to sit on the shingle just north of N Hide on 21st May and was soon joined by another 7 pairs. The wardens again roped off the area but all were gone by 13th June. We don't think any eggs hatched; the earliest pair could have gone full term but we didn't see any chicks.

As the chicks all got large it was difficult to tell when they actually fledged but by mid-August 55 had definitely fledged.

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Avocet cont.

The following table shows details of the nests in each area.

Avocets	Earliest nest	Max nests at one time	Date max nests seen	Earliest hatchings	N ^o . broods seen	N ^o . chicks seen to hatch	Min N ^o . Pairs involved
Pat's Pool	16/4	54	12/5	10/5	23	77	55
Simmond's	1/5	9	9/5	25/5	2	5	9
Whitwell	1/5	2	9/5	3/7	1	4	2
Billy's Wash	15/4	6	10/5	25/5	2	5	6
North Scrape	15/4	4	10/5	26/5	5	15	4
Eye Field/ Pool	28/4	3	9/6	26/5	2	7	4
Brackish Pool	16/5	3	4/6	28/5	1	1	3
E of E Bank	1/5	7	17/6	1/6	4	6	8
Beach	21/5	8	5/6				8

Note: 'Minimum pairs involved' for an area is taken from the maximum nests on any one day plus any other breeding pairs we knew of that were not on a nest on the day concerned (e.g. if they had hatched young).

From these figures we believe that the minimum number of pairs attempting to nest was 80, but could be much higher. A total of 40 broods hatched with 120 chicks being seen and 55 surviving to fledge.

In addition to these, while manning the car-park on 7th July, Carl Brooker saw a pair of Avocets usher 3 small chicks across Beach Road by the car park. They stopped in the road trying to tell cars to get out of the way. One chick was taken by a Black-headed Gull but the rest of the family took up residence on the Eye Pool. The female of this pair was a colour-ringed bird which has nested in the area for the last few years and was known this year to have hatched young on the shingle of Blakeney Point about 400yds west of the car-park. Unfortunately none of them fledged.

We don't know why Avocets did so well this year. Since one main difference from the last few years was that they did not suffer the major nest predation of recent years on Pat's Pool, it could be that the work undertaken to dig out Pat's Pool last year, effectively making a deep moat around the islands where the birds nest, reduced land-based predators (but not avian ones). Another idea is that the weather actually made food more plentiful for their predators meaning they had less need to take chicks. But in the end we don't know the answer, perhaps someone else does.

Little Ringed Plover

2 pairs bred, 1 fledged

In mid-May pairs were seen displaying on Pat's Pool, North Scrape and by Eye Pool. In late May and in early June, what was thought to be one pair were trying to nest on the south side of Pat's Pool on the island nearest to Bishop's Hide but kept getting moved on by Avocets.

On 20th June a pair was seen sitting on eggs on the island nearest to Teal Hide. On 13th July 2 tiny chicks were seen there, followed by another 2 over the next couple of days.

On the 16th July another brood of 3 chicks were seen on the island closest to Bishop's Hide.

The brood of 4 by Teal Hide reduced to 3 on the 19th and that evening a further chick was attacked and killed by a young Mallard. The remaining 2 and the other brood of 3 by Bishop's Hide were seen daily until the 28th. On the 29th none could be found; water levels had increased but we don't know whether this had anything to do with it or whether chicks were just predated. 1 remaining chick, from the Teal Hide brood, was found again on the 30th and this survived to fledge c. 8th August.

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Ringed Plover

1 pair bred, 3 fledged

At least 3 males were seen displaying around the beach, scrapes and at Sea Pool during the spring, but no nests were found. On the evening of 31st May 1 tiny chick was seen on one of the islands on the northern side of Simmond's Scrape. The next morning there were 3. They survived there, being brooded by both parents and all fledged in early July.

Lapwing

77 nests found, 46 nests hatched, producing 123 chicks, 58 fledged.

This was an excellent year for Lapwings with much higher numbers of breeding birds than in recent years (77 nests this year, 12-40 over the past four years). Despite poor weather conditions chick survival was good, no doubt due to several reasons. The meadows were very wet but not completely flooded and no known nests were washed away (known losses were due to predation or other causes). These wet meadows with ample vegetation were apparently full of invertebrate food. Chicks needed to be brooded frequently, for long periods, during heavy rain, strong winds and low temperatures, but did not need to move far from the parent in order to feed. This probably had significant effects on their survival: they were able to keep warm and be well-fed and they were exposed to predators for shorter periods. In areas with a high density of nests (e.g. 9 nests on the Serpentine field) all chicks may have benefitted from the combined effort of numerous adults deterring predators. It was notable that in areas with few nests chicks were often feeding a considerable distance from any adults.

Fledging success was good this year; 33 nests produced fledged young and from seven of those nests all the hatched chicks fledged. Four eggs is the normal clutch-size and two nests hatched and fledged four chicks.

In areas with several nests fairly close together we found it easier than usual to follow the progress of individual broods as these chicks roamed over a smaller area, close to their nest-site (was this due to defended territories, or was it because of ample food?). The only real difficulty this year in surveying Lapwing was the progressively worsening visibility as vegetation quickly grew in the wet conditions. We probably missed nests and chicks on Cricket Marsh and Billy's Wash as vegetation obscured our views and for some broods we could only say "at least one" reached the fledging stage even though we suspected more, so 58 fledglings is probably an underestimate.

The earliest chicks seen were on 21st April, the last clutch hatched on 1st July. The following table summarises the nests which produced chicks.

	Nº. Broods Hatched	Nº. Chicks Hatched	Nº. Fledged
Main Reserve	33	82	33
East of East Bank/ Marsh	13	41	25
Total all areas	46	123	58

Common Snipe

No evidence of breeding

One was drumming over South Pool on 16th April, but there was no other evidence of breeding.

Redshank

25 pairs, 48 chicks, at least 13 fledged although probably more

As usual Redshank chicks proved almost impossible to track as they spent a lot of time in the reeds and long grass and only rarely came into view, but we have attempted to make sense of the sightings we did record. Our general impression was that there were a lot of Redshanks around this year so the above figures are probably an underestimate.

Area first seen	No. Pairs	No. Broods	Earliest date	Total chicks	Nº. Fledged
Main Reserve	17	17	31 st May	35	11
East of East Bank	9	2	19 th May	13	2
Total	25	23		48	13

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Black-headed Gull

c.40 pairs attempted to breed, no young fledged.

Up to 40 gulls were seen sitting, as if on eggs, this year. These were on the scrapes, Billy's Wash, the Brackish Pools and on Pope's Pool. At other sites odd birds were seen but never for more than a day or two. The only chicks seen were from two nests on the largest of the small but tall grassy 'tussock' islands at the east end of the Brackish Pools and these produced 1 and 2 chicks respectively, the first on 24th May. However as in previous years, these chicks only survived for a few days. We're not sure if they were predated or if they fell off the tussock and then drowned.

Common Tern

No birds attempted to breed

Higher water levels on Arnold's Marsh this year due to the wet spring meant that no terns attempted to breed there.

Wood Pigeon

Bred in N Foreland wood and attempted to breed on the reserve, numbers unknown

At least 4 birds were sitting on nests in trees on the reserve. On 24th July a visitor saw a Stoat climb the Willow behind Bishop's Hide and take a Woodpigeon chick. There was no further sign of the adult after this.

Tawny Owl

Possibly bred

Often heard calling from North Foreland and the wood behind Hilltop but never seen

Skylark

16 singing males, number of young unknown

Skylarks were first recorded from 17th March. Their favourite area, the Eye Field, was very dry and the grass was short early in the season, although rough areas suitable for nesting remained on the beach, the Beach car park overflow and alongside the drains.

Eye Field and adjacent beach: 7 singing males. Several visits throughout April revealed that this area was popular again. Four males were singing over the northern half (two by the car park, two on the beach) and three on the south and west sides of Eye Field.

North Hide: 2 singing males. These both sang outside the hide window, one using the eastern side and the other more often going on to the southeast corner of the Eye Field.

Bull Marsh: 1 singing male. This was singing in April and June by Beach Road.

Cricket Marsh: 1 singing male. This area was kept very wet for the waders but a male eventually sang late in April to June in the northeast corner.

East Bank: 2 singing males. There were two males on the Serpentine, one at the north end and one near the south. The northern male was defending his territory from very early on and both were still there in July.

Pope's Marsh: 3 singing males. These were using the southeast corner of Pope's Marsh. A male was singing on each of the two fields on the west side of the Iron Road south of the Main Drain and a third over the next field along the main road.

Breeding success is not known. Adults were seen carrying food into the rough area on the beach and to young/nests on the overflow beach car park and the area outside North Hide. The lush grass in June and July meant juveniles were hard to see.

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Swallow

At least 4 pairs bred, 26+ fledged

The only confirmed breeding this year was from the Beach car-park area in the shelter and the pillbox.

Shelter: 3 Pairs, two broods each, produced 26 chicks all of which fledged.

First broods: 3 pairs / 3 nests

East side	1 nest	4 eggs	4 chicks hatched c.9 June	4 fledged c.3rd July
South side	1 nest	5 eggs	5 chicks hatched c.15th June	5 fledged c.5th July
West side	1 nest	4 eggs	4 chicks hatched c.16th June	4 fledged c.6th July

Second broods: 3 pairs / 3 nests (new nests built, presumed same pairs)

North side	1 nest	5 eggs	5 chicks hatched on 3rd Aug	5 fledged 26th August
South side	1 nest	4 eggs	4 chicks hatched c.12th Aug	4 fledged 3rd September
West side	1 nest	4 eggs	4 chicks hatched on 10th Aug	4 fledged 1st September

Pillbox: *at least 1 pair, number of young unknown*

At least 1 pair was seen entering the pillbox from 7th June and young were seen on the fence nearby on 4th July. Adults were seen entering the pillbox again in mid-July so may have had a second brood but no young were seen.

Other Areas:

A pair probably nested under the sluice on the Main Drain (Beach Road) from the end of July into August but this could not be confirmed.

On 4th July an adult was seen feeding 2 recently fledged young by the Catchwater Drain west of Bishop's Hide then 4 young were seen on the fence by the gate opposite the Visitor Centre – but it is not known where these were hatched from, it may have been outside our area.

There were no nests this year on the hides.

House Martin

Did not breed on the reserve

These nested on houses along the Coast Road. Overall numbers are unknown but there were 11 nests on the Warden's House.

Meadow Pipit

18 pairs/singing males, fledged young seen but numbers unknown

These held exactly the same territories as last year with birds having a preference for any area along the coast with saltmarsh nearby. They were not found in the southern half of the Cley reserve or Pope's Marsh.

East Bank: 3 pairs. There were three territories close to East Bank, one at the north end of the Serpentine, one by the National Trust sign and the third in the northwest corner of Arnold's Marsh.

East Bank to Sea Pool: 3 pairs. Another two males sang behind Arnold's Marsh and in early July there was a juvenile on the beach with an anxious parent nearby. At the east end of Sea Pool another couple of juveniles with an anxious parent were present on July 9th.

Iron Road: 3 pairs. Two males sang over the field NW of Iron Rd and a parent with food was seen here on 22nd June. A third male sang over the field to the south of this.

Central Hides: 1 pair. A male was singing north of Whitwell Scrape in April, May and June.

Eye Field, Beach car-park and Beach Road: 4 pairs. Five males were singing round the edges of Eye Field, one by the new sluice Beach Road, two in the rough area between Beach car-park and Eye Pool and a fourth in the middle of the east end of the beach rough grass. The fifth, on the west side of Eye Field, was assumed to have bred over on Blakeney Freshmarsh.

North Hide: 2 pairs. There was one male on each side of the hide, east and west. A large juvenile was seen by North Hide with a male singing from a fence post on 4th June. On 17th June a pair was trying to feed young near the gate to the hide while birders came and went for the Pacific Golden Plover.

Shingle area north of the Main Drain: 2 pairs. Two pairs were seen here in April, May and June and a pair was feeding juveniles on 9th July.

It's likely that the absence of observations earlier in the season caused some broods to be missed.

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Pied Wagtail

Bred, numbers unknown

As usual a lot of young wagtails were seen on the reserve, but we have not found any nest sites and do not know how many are bred in our area and how many come in from outside.

Wren

Bred, numbers unknown.

Dunnock

Possibly bred

Birds were often singing in bushes along the north side of the Coast road but we haven't any evidence that they bred there.

Stonechat

1 pair bred, 2 broods of 4 & 5 respectively fledged

A pair of Stonechats had been present most of the winter on East Bank and behind Arnold's Marsh. The female was a colour-ringed bird that had hatched on Kelling Heath in 2011. In early May it was realised that they were breeding and food was being taken to a nest. Young were first seen being fed outside the nest on 16th May with 4 (the maximum seen) there on the 17th. 3 were seen regularly until the 29th and 2 remained with the parents until at least the 7th June. These young were not ringed. The female was then thought to be on a nest again and, having now got permission from the various authorities, five young were ringed in the nest on 26th June. These fledged on 9th July. All 5 were seen (identified by their rings) but never all at the same time. 3 of the young continued to be seen with the parents until at least the end of July.

As far as we know, this is the first record of Stonechats breeding at Cley since 1992 when a pair bred in the vicinity of North Hide.

Cetti's Warbler

6 pairs bred, at least 9 young fledged

		Fledged
1	A male was singing from early in the season behind the central hides. Nest building was seen close to the boardwalk on 24 th April. Feeding activity was noticed much later, on 19 th June, and two juveniles just out of the nest were seen on 20 th June.	2
2	An early bird was singing and showing off well in March between the bus stop and just east of the exit from the Visitor Centre car park. Later it was much quieter and only heard to sing twice, competing against the nearby bird 3 (below). Its habits were hard to watch and there was no evidence of breeding.	
3	A male was singing between the houses next to the Visitor Centre and Old Woman's Lane. He arrived on the scene later than bird 2 (above) and was often seen south of the road or showing off well to visitors by the bridge here over the Catchwater Drain. An adult was seen with four well feathered juveniles sitting in a row on 20 th June.	4
4	A male was singing by the bench on the footpath east of Bishop's Hide. He also crossed the road to feed and was also thought to sing north of Carter's Scrape up one of the drains. An adult was seen taking food to a nest along the Catchwater Drain on 23 rd May and again on 7 th June. Probable juveniles were calling from thick bushes south of the road just east of the nest site on 20 th June (three strong voices heard calling 'pit' repeatedly).	3

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Cetti's Warbler cont.

		Fledged
5	Another early singer easily seen was next to East Bank and moving up to a favourite willow by the bank or going off west along a drain into the reedbed and back down the bushier drain to the Catchwater Drain. It was seen with a second bird on 22 nd April. A photographer reported seeing food being taken to the nest or juveniles on East Bank in the second week of June. The young were not seen.	
6	A male was heard frequently singing from Snipe's Marsh against the East Bank bird but hardly ever seen as it was often in scrub on the west side of the reeds.	
7	Another male was singing at east end of Walsey Hills. It was seen more than once to cross the A149 to the Catchwater Drain.	

Also, outside of our recording area, another male sang at Sarbury Hill within earshot of the Walsey Hills bird. Juveniles were seen there on 10th June.

Grasshopper Warbler

1 pair (possibly 2) bred, at least 2 young fledged

A male was singing from 18th April near the south end of East Bank and continued to do so, on and off until 14th May. A pair was reported, possibly carrying food, there early morning on the 25th, then the male was singing again on the 26th until 8th June. On 13th June, two juveniles were seen being fed along East Bank by the car park area. The male continued to sing until 17th June but was then not heard again until 9th July.

Another male was singing by Beach Road on and off from 21st-30th April and again on 16th & 17th July but there was no evidence of breeding there.

Sedge Warbler

At least 25 singing males present, recently fledged young seen

This was a poor year for Sedge Warblers which was noticeable when walking around the reserve.

A series of partial counts of singing birds in April showed numbers increased from 5 on the 14th to 19 on the 30th. A full count on 11th May produced a total of 23 on the main reserve and there were a further 2 between E Bank and Iron Road. By 2nd June only 4 males were still singing and 13 were seen collecting food or defending territory.

The first juveniles were found on East Bank on 13th June and one bird was even nest building on the bank as late as 7th July. They usually only have one brood a season.

This was a lot lower than last year's count of 69 singing males, but that was very high and birds arrived earlier. Numbers can fluctuate annually for Sedge Warbler and Cley usually has between 16 and 30 in May. The vegetation had been cleared along the main road for the new path where last year 19 singing males were recorded between Beach Road and East Bank, this may have reduced numbers but it may just have been a poor year.

Reed Warbler

At least 47 singing males present, recently fledged young seen

The numbers this year were similar to last year but appeared much higher, probably due to the lack of Sedge Warblers.

The first Reed Warbler of the year was heard singing on 22nd April and numbers had increased to only 6 by the 30th. By 19th May, 44 males were singing around the reserve with a further 3 on Pope's Marsh.

The first young were seen on 19th June on East Bank and several juveniles were present along the Catchwater Drain and the boardwalk to the main hides by mid-July.

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Whitethroat

Probably bred in area

At least 4 were singing on the reserve during spring. On the edge of the area two juveniles were seen in scrub alongside the Catchwater Drain, west of Beach Road near the new footbridge on 17th June. It is likely that they had hatched near here. Another family with 3 large young were seen by the footpath opposite the Visitor Centre on the 20th.

Great Tit

Do not breed on reserve, but probable in N Foreland woods

Long-tailed Tit

Do not breed on reserve, but probable in N Foreland woods

Bearded Tit

12- 14 pairs bred, fledged young seen

This was a good year for Bearded Tits. After last year, when only a few were seen in the breeding season, there was an influx of birds in September and in March this year pairs were seen in three main areas – the boardwalk to main hides, around Carter's Scrape and the length of East Bank. Later, more were noticed in reedy ditches alongside Cricket and Keeper's marshes and birds were seen to fly across Beach Road to Blakeney Freshmarsh. Two were seen distantly on Pope's Marsh and late in June, individuals flew across to Pope's from East Bank.

By 9th April it seemed there could be 10 pairs breeding but by 15th June there were 12 definite pairs and possibly two more. There were extra males around so it was not always easy to count 'pairs' at a distance. Three males were often seen together early in the season, socialising with the different groups or pairs.

It takes a minimum of 14 days between eggs (usually 4) being laid and hatching (maximum 22 days for 8 eggs) and fledging is 12-13 days. The first eggs are usually laid at the end of the first week of April but can be laid up to the third week of June, so young can be seen from the third week of April to early September, although the main period is from mid-May to first week of August. Post-fledging care usually lasts two weeks. Fledging takes longer in cold springs!

This year the first juveniles were seen along East Bank on May 22nd.

During June there were comments such as "Bearded Tits being seen everywhere" as more and more juveniles appeared and adults were flying long distances over the reeds. Adults carrying food were still being noted at the end of June. In July the reeds were taller, weather poor and most birds kept out of sight.

Greenfinch

No evidence of breeding in our area

Goldfinch

1+ pairs bred, fledged young seen but numbers unknown

Plenty of Goldfinches were singing around the reserve in the early spring but no nesting activity or food being taken to nests was seen. A juvenile was being fed by Teal Hide on 20th June and in late July and early August young were being seen on the boardwalk and behind Dauke's Hide, with some being fed.

Linnet

2-3 pairs bred, many more bred just outside our area but fed in it

Two or three pairs bred in gorse by North Hide. Birds were seen there regularly from mid-March. A pair was seen there with 3 youngsters on 26th May, a male with 4 on 4th June and another male with 2 on 15th July. Others feed on the reserve but nest on Walsey Hills and the gorse over West Bank.

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Reed Bunting

15 pairs, fledged young seen but numbers unknown

There was a slight increase from last year in number of singing males. An interesting fact about Reed Bunting behaviour can be read on BTO Birdfacts: "50% of the chicks are not fathered by the pair male but are the result of an adulterous liaison, the highest recorded rate of any bird". This explains why so many pairs had another male singing only a few yards away from them this season.

The same areas as last year were occupied in March with 15 males down Beach Road, the boardwalk, near Bishop's Hide and Carter's Scrape, East Bank and North Hide. There were also males on Pope's.

Beach Road: *1 pair.* Males early in the season like to sing from the wires but three of the four recorded took up territories over the west side of West Bank. One male sang from the reed belt north of Cricket Marsh during the late May period.

Boardwalk: *2 pairs.* Two males with females were seen often along the boardwalk to the main hides and sang from the large bushes near the Joyce Bishop seat. Pairs carrying food were seen on 5th and 7th June, and juveniles were seen with adults on 13th July at both ends of the boardwalk.

Bishop's Hide: *3 pairs.* Three males were here. Two were mainly to the west of the path to the hide in June and one sang NE of Carter's Pool. A female was seen on 15th June building a nest next to the Catchwater Drain.

East Bank: *5 pairs.* One male held the area south of the Bittern Drain and two males fought a lot near the main drain end of the bank in March. Another pair was just north of halfway up the bank and was thought to be going to a nest site on 25th May. On 19th June the first male was by the Bittern Drain, the pair halfway up were carrying food and three more males were on bush tops between them and the Main Drain – five altogether. An adult with food was seen north of the Bittern Drain on 12th July.

Snipe's Marsh: None were found here this year.

North Hide: *2 pairs.* One male was consistently close to the hide on the east side and one by the fence halfway to East Bank.

Pope's Marsh: *2 pairs.* Two males were seen here on 7th June, both singing on 9th July.

Notes:

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

Our team this year was made up of Pat & David Wileman, Kath & Mick Claydon and Sue & Peter Morrison. We also had a lot of help from Mike Harcup with his monitoring of the Herons & Egrets and also filling gaps when any of the team was away, especially with the Avocets early in the season. Also Trevor Davies helped us with passerine counts and other sightings of young. Each year we have managed to cover more species in depth but to continue to improve our results we need more people. We would so much like to spend more time on some species, especially Marsh Harriers where time spent watching their behaviour would give us far more accurate results.

If you think this report is worthwhile and would like to help next year we would love to hear from you. You don't have to be an expert (but we don't mind if you are!); we weren't when we started and still aren't now but have learnt a lot. You will just need a little time to spare and some enthusiasm, then we are sure you will find it rewarding.

Copies of this report are sent to the County Recorder, the NWT, BTO and RSPB and made available to Cley Bird Club members to download on the website. A summary is published in the Cley Bird Club newsletter.

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