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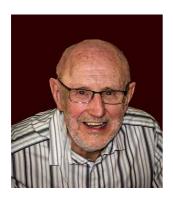
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The Lincolnshire Bird Club is sad to say farewell to three stalwart members. In their own individual and inimitable ways, Bill Brooking, Colin Casey and Steve Keightley all made immense contributions to the club over many decades, not just in supplying species records and photographs but also in providing endless technical and personal support and encouragement to fellow-members. They will all be missed greatly. Extended personal tributes and reminiscences appeared in *The Heron* - the club's monthly newsletter - in its editions of November 2020, March 2021 and September 2021.



## Bill Brooking 19th July 1945 - 26th October 2020

Bill was one of the illustrious founder-members of the Lincs Bird Club back in autumn, 1979, when it was launched at the home of Dick Lambert who was, at the time, the field warden at Gibraltar Point Nature Reserve.

As well as serving on the committee during the club's early years, Bill co-ordinated midweek and weekend bird counts from the north-east of the county, and these provided a wealth of invaluable information for the *Lincolnshire Bird Atlas*, 1980-99.

His own extensive birding patch embraced the Grimsby area and the Wolds, but he was also particularly knowledgeable

about the Louth Marshes and why this part of the county can be such a happy hunting ground for raptors of various species.

He loved exploring new landscapes and had a remarkable knack of making unexpected discoveries in even the most unpromising of habitats.

Bill was also a popular member of the Grimsby local group where his geniality and good-humour never failed to delight colleagues as they swapped birding stories over a pint.

His passion for birds and birding never waned - in fact it grew ever greater - and he was always eager to share tips and advice with younger or less experienced enthusiasts, but never in an aloof, detached or patronising way. Modest and unassuming by temperament, he was as eager to learn as he was to teach.

A true pioneer of the birding scene in Lincolnshire, Bill will always be remembered fondly by those fortunate enough to have known him.

## **Colin Casey**

## 8th August 1950 - 1st August 2021

Colin Casey was the driving force behind two of the Lincs Bird Club's most recent publications - the Lincolnshire Bird Atlas, 1980-99 and Birds of Lincolnshire.

The fact that these two authoritative volumes have been published is testament to Colin's huge determination and tenacity in tracking down data - both records and images - collating the material in



coherent form, then cajoling his co-authors into providing the accompanying context and commentary.

All the more remarkable is that he accomplished these and other feats (including rescuing, refreshing and relaunching the club's website) while debilitated by an illness which, for long periods, sapped much of his energy - but never his mischievous (not to say wicked) sense of humour and his underlying ebullience and love of life.

Although he cherished Lincolnshire's birdlife (especially its owls), Colin was not one to allow his enthusiasm to be confined by county or national boundaries.

A lover of powerful, often customised, cars, he was never happier than when taking to the wheel in his quest -

wherever in the UK - for the latest reported rarity.

The Scillies was a favourite destination, but he also relished exotic birding expeditions to the likes of the Arctic Circle, Costa Rica, Panama and notably The Gambia where he was so impressed by the endeavours and expertise of his tour guide that he later gifted him a safari vehicle which he had specially shipped from the UK.

That sums up the big-heartedness of Colin, a larger-than-life character if ever there was one.

## **Steve Keightley**

## 12th May 1959 - 4th February 2021

For dedication and birding expertise, Steve Keightley was right at the top of the tree.

He was a fount of knowledge not just about species identification but about where and when uncommon or unfamiliar birds were likely to be seen in Lincolnshire.

Affable and chatty, he was always eager to help and encourage others, more than a few of whom themselves went on to become experts.

Of adventurous spirit, he hugely enjoyed the camaraderie of fellow-birders and of meeting up with them following long-distances trips to catch up with the latest UK vagrant or rarity.

He also enjoyed holidays to the Mediterranean, Majorca being a particular favourite. His superb photographs provided material for his illustrated talks at members' evenings, not just of the Lincs Bird Club but also of the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust.

Within the county, his particular patch was the Boston area, particularly Cut End from which, over four decades, he contributed extensive precious records for the benefit both of the club's database and of the BTO's Wetland Birds Survey (WeBS) scheme.

Steve's contributions both to the club and to Lincolnshire birding are immeasurable.





## The Lincolnshire Bird Club 2020 Report

## Welcome to the 2020 Lincolnshire Bird Report

On behalf of the Lincolnshire Bird Club (LBC) we are pleased to present our annual report on the birds of Lincolnshire. The publication of the Bird Report involves a huge amount of work, with many individuals involved in its publication and thanks are due to the observers and organizations who submit and share records to LBC and our County Recorder Phil Hyde who oversees our records process and the team that processes them into our database. He also solicits, checks and edits much of the other material in the report. The Lincolnshire Bird Records Committee (LBRC) chaired by Nige Lound vets our records, and Roy Harvey provides support as secretary. Philip Espin collates our records for our annual report to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel and that information is replicated in relevant species accounts in this report. He also prepares the analysis of BBS data in species accounts and the Trends of our red data species of conservation concern on the inside back cover

### Data collection

With the sad passing of Colin Casey, our database is now under the stewardship of Charlie Barnes at GLNP. This now brings together records for all Lincolnshire flora and fauna. Unfortunately, we have not been able so far, to replicate the high-quality species data packages Colin produced for report writers. This has meant much more work for report writers and the team has been reduced to try and ensure consistency for comparisons to 2019 and earlier years. Andrew Chick is working on this issue with Jon Cooper and Charlie Barnes, and we hope to see improvements for 2021. Colin and Sheila Jennings collated the 2020 data submitted directly by members and others, their final contribution; they have now retired from records collation after 17 long years, and we offer our grateful thanks to them for their persistence and hard work. We are also grateful to John and Nicky Clarkson for proof-reading this report.

## **Ringing Report 2020**

We regret to say that there will be no summary of ringing activities in 2020. We have had no active ringers willing to volunteer their services for several years now and what has appeared here in the recent past has been a copy/paste of material from the BTO website. We feel that a ringing report should be more about ringing projects and activities than a quick lift of readily available material from the BTO website. We will continue to include interesting ringing recoveries in the individual species accounts. If any active ringers out there feel able to contribute for the 2021 report and beyond, we are all ears! Please email Phil Espin (pmjespin@gmail.com) or Phil Hyde (philhyde55@gmail.com).

## **Contributing Authors**

The LBC would like to thank all of the authors who volunteered their time to complete species write-ups or articles for the 2019 report:

Graham Catley (2) Phil Espin (97) Andrew Chick (23) Vin Fleming (2) John Clarkson (1) Phil Hyde (185)

## Photographers

LBC is very grateful to the following photographers for supplying images for the 2016 report. All images included in the report have been obtained in Lincolnshire during 2016 and many are referred to in the text. All images are labelled with the photographer's name; their contact details are listed below.

Chris Grimshaw	John Clarkson	Paul Coombes	Simon Spavin
Gary Fenwick	Mark Johnson	Paul Neale	Steve Lovell
Graham Catley	Neil Smith	Roy Harvey	Steve Nesbitt
Ian Misselbrook	Owen Beaumont	Russ Hayes	



Darren Woodhead and the Black-throated Thrush *Turdus* atrogularis Grimsby Institute Feb 8th 2020 © PAUL COOMBES

### **Front Cover**

The LBC is very grateful to Darren Woodhead for permission to use his watercolour of the Black-throated Thrush *Turdus atrogularis* outside the Grimsby Institute as the front cover of the 2020 report.

### Records and contributions

The Lincolnshire Bird Report is an annual publication of records, articles and photographs relating to all aspects of Lincolnshire ornithology. We are very keen to hear from anyone who is interested in volunteering to help produce future bird reports, please contact chairman@lincsbirdclub.co.uk.

### **Submissions of Records**

All observers are encouraged to submit records on a regular, at least monthly, basis as this helps considerably with managing the workload and speeding up production of the annual report. If it isn't possible to submit records until the end of the year, the deadline is by the end of February of the following year. Late records cause serious problems in drafting the systematic list and may be omitted. The names of all contributors will be published, unless individuals ask us to omit their names. There are several ways of submitting records to LBC, and below we list some of the best. Please remember that, as a small, volunteer-run organisation, we are unable to monitor and extract records from the many personal blogs and similar online sources that now exist. Your records are valuable, so please make sure that they are sent somewhere secure and accessible.

**Twitter:** For short messages, to get the news out to others, you can tweet @lincsbirding.

**LBC rare bird WhatsApp group:** This is used as a primary source for tracking LBRC species and is open to all members to join.

**LBC Forum:** For LBC members, you can post sightings of what you have seen, where and when you saw them, on our forum (with an image if you have one). Go to the LBC website www.lincsbirdclub. co.uk log in and follow the links to the forum.

**LBC Template:** Twitter and Forum records have to be transferred to the LBC database, which takes a lot of time. Submitting records using the LBC Excel spreadsheet template saves a lot of that work. You can either fill records into the spreadsheet yourself or export data into the spreadsheet from your recording software package and email it to info@lincsbirdclub.co.uk. Download the template from www.lincsbirdclub.co.uk/site/media/LBC\_Template\_import.zip.

**BirdTrack:** Many birders are now using BirdTrack (www.bto.org/birdtrack) to maintain their personal records online. All such records (barring confidential ones) for Lincolnshire are passed to us by BTO and are published in this report, subject to our usual checking procedures. LBC supports BirdTrack and a single submission to BirdTrack will suffice; there is no need for you to send duplicate records direct to LBC. Please ensure your BirdTrack sites have a clear geographic place name in them and an accurate OS grid reference or we cannot use the data. Site names like "Home", "Patch" or "A52" are unusable.

### **National Rarities**

Nationally rare birds are indicated as such by the identifier BBRC (British Birds Rarities Committee) after the species name in the systematic list in this report. Consideration of records of these is by the BBRC and submission of details should be made direct to BBRC at www.bbrc.org.uk and a copy sent to the county recorder at recorder\_south@lincsbirdclub.co.uk.

Records of all such rarities will only be published in our report once assessed and accepted by BBRC. The submission of descriptions of national rarities is important. Bird news providers do not assess records passed to them and without full submission to BBRC such records cannot be published and will be lost.

## **County Rarities**

Species or races considered rare at county level are dealt with by the Lincolnshire Bird Record Committee and are indicated as such by the identifier LBRC after the species name in the systematic list in this report. The committee currently comprises Owen Beaumont, Anthony Bentley, Richard Doan, Matthew Harrison, Nigel Lound and Andy Sims. The chairman of the LBRC is Nige Lound and Roy Harvey is secretary (roy.harvey100@btinternet.com.).

Details and descriptions of LBRC species can be submitted by emailing them to the LBRC secretary or using the online form (visit www.lincsbirdclub.co.uk/site/index.php/sightings and click on the green 'Submit a record' button). In most cases a decent photo will be sufficient for submission. All records of LBRC species should be submitted as soon as possible after the sighting and not left until the end of each year. County rarities accepted by the LBRC will be published in the report, together with the initials of the finder/identifier. The submission of description of county rarities is important. The verification of the data that appears in the annual report is essential to the production of an accurate and meaningful report. A systematic approach to the verification of ALL rare bird records, no matter who has reported them, prior to the production of the annual report is required before they are published.

From time to time the LBRC will reserve the right to seek additional details of other records deemed exceptional by virtue of, for example, date, location, or number. For further information on the treatment of county rarities, please contact the county recorder.

### Lincolnshire recorder

### Phil Hyde

The Hawthorns, Manor Close, Legbourne, Louth, Lincs, LN11 8NH Email: recorder\_south@lincsbirdclub.co.uk

### **LBC Data**

LBC has a data sharing agreement with the Lincolnshire Environmental Records Centre of the Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership based at LWT headquarters, Banovallum House, Horncastle. All our bird data from the late 1990s onwards can be accessed by requesting a search from the Information Officer.

Searches are free for members of LBC and students undertaking scientific research. Commercial organisations and others may need to pay a fee. There are restrictions on access to confidential data for rare breeding birds. Further details can be obtained from Charlie Barnes, Information Officer, GLNP on 01507 528381 and charlie.barnes@glnp.org.uk. Searches can be made online at www.glnp.org.uk

## Data Sources used in the 2020 Bird Report

LBC offers their thanks to the following individuals and organizations for supplying and letting us use their data in the 2020 bird report. Apologies to anyone we have missed off the list.

Rare Bird Alert Data. Data supplied by Rare Bird Alert has been used in the production of the 2020 bird report. Further details can be found at https://www.rarebirdalert.co.uk/.

**BTO BBS Data.** Sarah Harris, the Organiser of the Breeding Birds Survey, provides the Lincolnshire-specific BBS data. The BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey is a partnership jointly funded by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), with fieldwork conducted by volunteers. It is important to note that owing to Covid restrictions impacting BBS early visits in mid-April to mid-May 2020, the BBS data is more open to interpretation and trends information has not been produced this year.

**BTO BirdTrack Data.** Data supplied by BirdTrack has been used in the production of the 2020 bird report. BirdTrack provides free online bird recording software for Britain and Ireland and is being developed in a partnership between the BTO, RSPB and Birdwatch Ireland. All Lincolnshire records are available for download by the LBC. Further details can be found at www.birdtrack.net. For the

first time we have used annual BirdTrack reporting rate data for Lincolnshire. This data has been down-loaded from the BTO website.

**BTO Heronry Data.** LBC is grateful to Barrie Wilkinson, our county organiser, for supplying data on breeding Grey Heron and Little Egret in Lincolnshire. This long running dataset is extremely important for the monitoring of herons in Lincolnshire, and we would encourage all LBC members to submit data to this survey.

**BTO WeBS Data.** Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) data are used; kindly made available by the WeBS partnership, a joint scheme of the British Trust for Ornithology, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and Joint Nature Conservation Committee (the last on behalf of the statutory nature conservation bodies: Natural England, Natural Resources Wales and Scottish Natural Heritage and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Northern Ireland) in association with The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust. Although WeBS data are presented within this report, in some cases the figures may not have been fully checked and validated. Therefore, for any detailed analyses of WeBS data, enquiries should be directed to the WeBS team at the British Trust for Ornithology, The Nunnery, Thetford, IP24 2PU (webs@bto.org).

**eBird.** Data checked and supplied by Josh Hedley (Lincs eBird validator) has been used in the publication of the 2020 bird report. Further details on how to input your records to eBird can be found at www.ebird.org/. It is important that eBird users check their settings after recording species lists on the mobile app to ensure the site name and location is correctly entered.

**Gibraltar Point Dataset.** Kev Wilson for supplying data from Gibraltar Point NNR and Gibraltar Point Bird Observatory, and for answering queries about records.

**Grimsby Areas Members Group.** Bill Sterling for submitting data from the Grimsby Areas Members Group.

**Kestrel, Barn Owl and Little Owl Data.** Alan Ball and Bob Sheppard for supplying data from their extensive ringing project in Lincolnshire.

**LBC Database Team.** Charlie Barnes of the GLNP has overseen the entry of all records into the database. All records that are submitted on the LBC Forum and via the online records system are collated by the club. We are grateful to Chris Grimshaw and Carl Annall for helping Colin and Sheila with data input.

**LBC website:** A major revision of the LBC website (www.lincsbirdclub.co.uk) was made during 2017, and work on it is continuing. The website contains a section summarising the status of all bird species recorded in Lincolnshire (the Lincs List); this section is an ongoing project being coordinated by Phil Hyde.

**Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust.** Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, including Dave Bromwich, Grahame Hopwood, and Barrie Wilkinson

**North Lincolnshire Marsh Harrier Monitoring.** Graham Catley for access to his marsh harrier monitoring data. For more details contact Graham Catley at gpcatley@gmail.com or via his website at grahamcatley.com

**Ringing Data.** The Online BTO Ringing Report, the Boston Ringing Association, the Mid-Lincs Ringing Group, Gibraltar Point Bird Observatory, Wash Wader Group and the Birkland Ringing Group for submitting their annual ringing reports.

**RSPB.** For supplying data from their reserves at Frampton Marsh, Freiston Shore, Read's Island and Tetney Marsh. We are especially grateful to Anthony Bentley and Toby Collett for resolving queries concerning the Wash reserves.

Whisby Nature Park Dataset. Grahame Hopwood for supplying data from Whisby Nature Park.

## 2020 Annual Review

### James Siddle

## Highlights

- · First Record of Black-throated Thrush
- First breeding record of Common Crane for over 400 years
- Second record of Iberian Chiffchaff
- Rare and scarce spring acrophephalus warblers including the 4th Blyth's Reed Warbler
- · 4th Hume's Warbler
- 7th Gull-billed Tern
- First Great Snipe for 36 years
- · Large numbers of wintering Water Pipits
- National record passage of Common Swifts
- Good autumn passage of Pied Flycatchers
- · Good autumn for Long-tailed Skuas and Sabine's Gulls
- · Influx of nine Dusky Warblers

### **January**

The year started with a **Black Brant** - which was present only on New Year's Day - continuing from 2019 at Gibraltar Point, with a further record coming from Donna Nook from the 13th. These birds coincided with the highest counts of **Dark-bellied Brent Geese** for the year with 5000 at Frampton Marsh on the 5th the peak count. Also on the 1st was an adult **Iceland Gull** at Manby Wetlands and five **Bitterns** at Far Ings was the year's highest count. The over-wintering **Ring Ouzel** from 2019 was in the Seaview-Rimac area until the 15th.

On the 9th there were 25,000 **Golden Plover** at Read's Island. Duck records included 2000 **Common Scoter** at Gat Sands, the Wash on the 10th and a drake **Ring-necked Duck** at Woodhall Spa Airfield LWT Reserve from the 19th. On the 18th the 70 **Snow Buntings** at Chapel St. Leonards represented the peak count for the year as was the count of 150 **Yellowhammers** at Withcall on the 19th. There was an increase of around 50% in wintering **Marsh Harriers** compared to the previous year.

The month ended in spectacular fashion with the county's first **Black-throated Thrush** found in Grimsby on the 30th and remaining into April.

## **February**

A **Balearic Shearwater** off Chapel Point on the 2nd was very unusual. The 562 **Red-throated Divers** off Chapel Point on the 4th was a good count. Next day the first **Cattle Egret** of year began a protracted stay at Fiskerton Fen – the first of four records this year. Despite a winter record of **Little Stint** at Frampton Marsh from the 7th it was a rather poor year for this species. Also on the 7th, a **Richard's Pipit** was at Gibraltar Point. The only **Iceland Gull** of the month was at Rimac on the 11th.

On the 13th an exceptional 34 **Water Pipits** were noted at the north end of the West Dunes at Gibraltar Point in a pre-roost gathering. However, this number had risen to 47 by the 26th, peaking in early March; up to a dozen were also noted at Alkborough Flats.

The **Glaucous Gull** at Pyewipe Marsh from the 19th was one of only two records in a very poor year for this species. A **Waxwing** at Gibraltar Point on the 23rd was one of very few records in the first half of the year.



### March

A coordinated count at Gibraltar Point on the 1st revealed an astonishing 97 **Water Pipits** at preroost gatherings. A flurry of summer visitors started the month well - on the 1st early records of **Little Ringed Plover** came from Frampton Marsh and at Woodhall Spa Airfield NR and a **Hobby** at Wolla Bank was exceptionally early. A welcome first **Cuckoo** was at Wolla Bank on the 2nd with a **Common Sandpiper** at Frampton Marsh the same day.

The **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** at Rippingdale on the 16th was one of only three records during the year. A **Rough-legged Buzzard** was at Deeping High Bank from the 19th, with another over Gibraltar Point on the 26th. The first returning **Garganey** was at Willow Tree Fen on the 23rd. Some good finch passage was noted along the coast in the second half of the month, including over 1000 **Chaffinches** through Anderby Creek on the 24th.

### April

A **Grey Phalarope** at Paradise Pool, Saltfleet from the 5th was a rare spring record. A **Goshawk** was at Gibraltar Point on the 6th. A superb male **White-spotted Bluethroat** was at the north end of Gibraltar Point on the 9th. Clear skies and south-westerlies resulted in some raptor movement on the 11th with a **Goshawk**, 19 **Sparrowhawks** and 20 **Common Buzzards** through Gibraltar Point and 13 **Sparrowhawks** at 17 **Common Buzzards** through Anderby Creek. Also noted at Gibraltar Point on the 11th was a typically ephemeral **Red-rumped Swallow** and the first of three **Serins** during the month. Next day a **Richard's Pipit** was found at Sandilands Gold Course. On the 15th a **Rough-legged Buzzard** was over Gibraltar Point.

Swallow Hirundo rustica Gibraltar Point Aug 10th 2020 © JOHN CLARKSON





Jack Snipe Lymnocryptes minimus Gibraltar Point Oct 17th 2020 © PAUL NEALE

A superb count of 17 **Jack Snipe** was at Gibraltar Point on the 15th. The first **Osprey** of the year did not appear until the 20th – at Stamford. The only **Wood Warbler** of the spring was at Gibraltar Point on the 25th and the second **Red-rumped Swallow** of the spring at the same site on the 27th was slightly more obliging than the first but soon moved on.

Five Wood Sandpipers were at Middlemarsh on the 28th, but there was to be no repeat of the extraordinary numbers of 2019 this year. The only **Dotterel** of the year was at Gibraltar Point on the 29th – another poor year for this species. A calling **Spotted Crake** at Alkborough Flats from the 30th was an excellent record, and the only record of the year. On the same date a male **Montagu's Harrier** was at Gibraltar Point

## May

A Ring-necked Duck was on a small pond at Heckington on the 1st. The county's second Iberian Chiffchaff was a very good find at Croft from the 3rd. A **Temminck's Stint** at Frampton Marsh on the 5th was the first of several records during the month but the **Glossy Ibis** at Middlemarsh Farm the same day was the only spring record. An early morning **Wryneck** at Huttoft Marsh on the 7th was heard singing at one point. Later the same day a **Black Kite** drifted down the west side of Gibraltar Point and further raptor migration on the 9th included 32 **Common Buzzards** over Gibraltar Point and 30 at Frampton Marsh. A **Green-winged Teal** at Manby wetlands from the 9th was the only record in the first half of the year. The first **European Bee-eater** of the year was at North Somercotes on the 15th and was soon followed by one at Gibraltar Point on the 22nd.

The fourth and final **Serin** of the spring was at Gibraltar Point on the 16th. An adult male **Montagu's** Harrier was the second of the spring at Gibraltar Point with a female noted at Frampton Marsh on the 26th. A **Purple Heron** was seen south of Deeping Lakes LTW on the 23rd. On the 24th a singing Golden Oriole at Whisby remained unseen, unlike the individual next day at Gibraltar Point, although this elusive bird was not much more obliging. A **Common Rosefinch** was singing at Gibraltar Point on the 24th. A **Hoopoe** was at Paradise Pool, Saltfleet on the 29th before being relocated at Donna Nook

#### June

The month began with a **Rose-coloured Starling** at Winteringham Haven on the 1st. An **Icterine** Warbler was trapped at Gibraltar Point on the 2nd. Early in the month birders were able to enjoy



Bittern Botaurus stellaris Far Ings NNR Jan 15th 2020 © PAUL COOMBES

an arrival of rare and scarce *Acrocephalus* warblers, starting with a typically vocal and showy **Marsh Warbler** at Anderby Marsh from the 4th. This was followed by a very popular **Blyth's Reed Warbler** – just the fourth county record – at Far Ings from the 7th. Another **Marsh Warbler**, this one less a mile from the bird still present at Anderby, was at Chapel Six Marshes from the 9th.

**Manx Shearwaters** were recorded in reasonable numbers during the month including 37 off Gibraltar Point on the 8th and 57 north off Chapel Point on the 11th. Next day a female **Red-backed Shrike** was trapped at Gibraltar Point and a **Rose-coloured Starling** was in a garden in Skegness. There were intriguing records of **Honey-buzzards** in the north of the county with a male noted on the 20th. On the 23rd a pair of **Common Cranes** at Willow Tree Fen were seen with a chick – the first confirmed breeding record in the county for over 400 years.

The end of the month featured a record-breaking passage of **Common Swifts** streaming through Gibraltar Point. A phenomenal 19,418 on the 28th was eclipsed by the 46,026 next day – easily the highest ever count in the UK and an utterly spectacular sight.

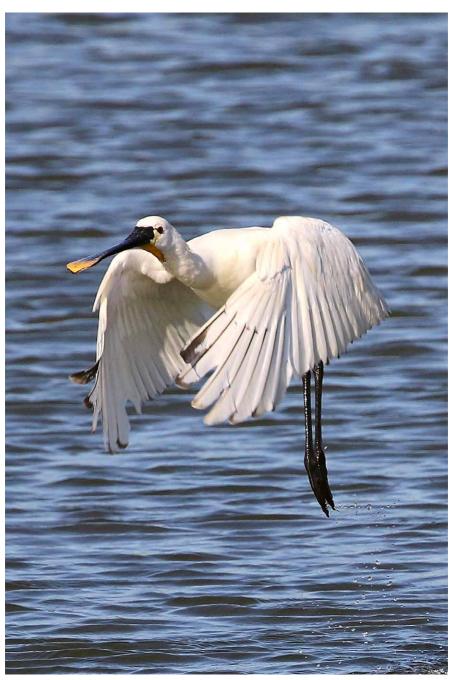
**Cetti's Warblers** continued their increase with 160 occupied territories – with a distinct stronghold around the Humber – the highest total on record.

## July

There was good news for some breeding raptors with **Goshawks** fledging two young in the county. **Marsh Harrier** numbers were up on 2019 with 40 pairs this year. It was also a good year for **Hobby** compared to 2019 with nearly double the number of probable breeding pairs.

Another **Marsh Warbler** was at Barton Pits on the 4th. One of the highlights of the summer was a long-staying **Caspian Tern** at Frampton Marsh from the 10th – this bird also made a brief sortie to Huttoft Pit on the 14th. Also on the 10th a **Rose-coloured Starling** was found in Mablethorpe. A male **Montagu's Harrier** was at Willow Tree Fen on the 16th

Rose-coloured Starling Pastor roseus Mablethorpe Jul 11th 2020 © OWEN BEAUMONT



Spoonbill Platalea leucorodia Gibraltar Point Jun 25th 2020 © PAUL NEALE



Sadly – as in 2019 – there were no confirmed breeding records of **Turtle Dove** in the county. A **Pectoral Sandpiper** was at Frampton Marsh from the 18th. The first **Roseate Tern** of the autumn was off Gibraltar Point on the 20th – with a total of ten birds during the autumn, it was a reasonable year for this species. The first returning **Osprey** was noted at Frampton Marsh on the 25th when a **European Bee-eater** was at Stallinborough Meadows. A **Wood Warbler** was at Gibraltar Point on the 29th.

### **August**

Several sightings of juvenile **Bitterns** were made during the month with seven confirmed pairs. The second **Wood Warbler** of the autumn at Gibraltar Point on the 4th was followed by another at the same site later in the month. Ten **Quail** were at Withcall on the 6th – the only double figure count of the year. The only record of **European Storm Petrel** for the year was off Freiston Shore on the 8th. The 2800 **Sand Martins** at Freiston Shore on the 10th was the highest count of the year.

Three relatively early **Red-backed Shrikes** were noted on consecutive days, starting with a juvenile at Sea View Farm on the 10th followed next day by a bird at Sutton-on-Sea and then, on the 12th, a juvenile at Stallingborough Meadows. Good numbers of **Pied Flycatchers** were noted around this time including a peak of 36 at Gibraltar Point on the 10th and 15 at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe next day.

The 14th marked the first date for **Long-tailed Skua** records in the autumn – with singles off Gibraltar Point and Chapel St. Leonards – in what was to be a memorable autumn for this species off coastal sites. There were 30 **Spoonbills** at Gibraltar Point on the 11th with 32 at both Alkborough Flats on the 12th and Frampton Marsh on the 15th. The first of eight autumn **Barred Warblers** were noted at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe and Gibraltar Point from the 11th.

Some 13,762 **Sandwich Terns** were noted at Gibraltar Point on the 16th. The **Gull-billed Tern** picked out in the evening tern roost at Gibraltar Point on the 18th was some feat considering the numbers of terns present. It was seen very briefly the next morning, but like the last county record in 2013 it failed to show for a wide audience.

Some 72 **Common Buzzards** were noted over Gibraltar Point on the 23rd. A count of four **Temminck's Stints** at Frampton Marsh on the 24th was the highest of the year. A significant arrival of migrants at Gibraltar Point on the 26th included a spectacular 525 **Willow Warblers** along with 11 **Spotted Flycatchers**.

It was a good autumn for **Sabine's Gulls** with an adult of Mablethorpe on the 28th the first of several coastal records, including three summer-plumaged adults at Witham Mouth on the 30th – with two in the Wash and one at Freiston the same day. Skua movement on the 29th included 117 **Arctic Skuas** off Gibraltar Point and 59 off Sutton-on-Sea, and it was the peak day for the **Long-tailed** 



Sabine's Gull Xema sabini Sutton on Sea Aug 29th 2020 © GRAHAM CATLEY

**Skua** passage with 17 off Gibraltar Point and a further six off Sutton-on-Sea. The first of only two **Leach's Storm Petrels** during the year was off Huttoft car terrace next day. Single **Wrynecks** were noted at Freiston Shore on the 30th and Sandilands golf course next day when an **Icterine Warbler** was found at Donna Nook.

## September

A **Pectoral Sandpiper** was the second and final record for the year at Frampton Marsh from the 5th when a **Wryneck** was present in the East Dunes at Gibraltar Point – with another **Wryneck** noted at Donna Nook on the 11th. Some good visible migration included 6,732 **Meadow Pipits** through Gibraltar Point on the 7th.

A **Glossy Ibis** at Middlemarsh farm on the 14th was the first since one at the same site earlier in the year; there were further records at three sites before the end of the year. An early **Little Auk** off Huttoft car terrace on the 17th may have given hope of a good autumn to come – in fact



**Lesser Redpoll** Acanthis cabaret Frithville Nov 9th 2020 © NEIL SMITH

this was to be the only record for the year. The last **Wood Warbler** of the year was at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe on the 17th when the first **Yellow-browed Warblers** arrived – it was another good autumn for this superb eastern sprite. Large numbers of **Lesser Redpolls** also arrived in the county including c.800 at Crowle Moors on the 17th.

The 95,000 **Knot** at Gibraltar Point on the 20th significantly exceeded the maximum count from 2019 and the highest count of **Dunlin** for the year – 14,470 – was at the same site on the same date. A **Honey-buzzard** was at Gibraltar Point on the 21st, and presumably this bird was then seen intermittently into October; additionally, 40 **Common Buzzards** were noted at the same site. Two **Sabine's Gulls** on the 25th – at Gibraltar Point and Huttoft car terrace - were the final individuals of the autumn. The same day produced the year's highest count of 15 **Pomarine Skuas** off Gibraltar Point, when 213 **Arctic Skuas** were also noted at this site and 72 were off Sutton-on-Sea. A **Leach's Storm Petrel** was off Chapel St. Leonard's on the 26th with six **Sooty Shearwaters** at the same site the highest count of the year.

#### October

The wind swung to the east at the start of the month and a **Great Snipe** – the first county record for 36 years – was on the golf course at Sandilands on the 2nd. Those looking for the Great Snipe found a showy **Wryneck** at the same location. There were plenty of **Yellow-browed Warblers** scattered along the coast early in the month with peaks of 11 at Gibraltar Point on the 1st and 3rd. **Red-breasted Flycatchers** were noted at Gibraltar Point, Donna Nook and Anderby Creek on 3rd-4th. A colour-ringed **Hawfinch** at Seaview Farm on the 5th had been ringed in Wales in 2018. A first-year **Little Bittern** seen well at Huttoft Pit on the 7th was an excellent record. Some good visible migration at this time included a peak of 897 **Skylarks** through Gibraltar Point on the 7th. It was an excellent autumn for **Stonechat** passage and numbers peaked at 48 Alkborough Flats on the 7th.

A **Lesser Yellowlegs** was Alkborough Flats or two days from the 8th. An arrival of **Redwing**, particularly on the 10th-11th, included 2765 at Gibraltar Point on the 10th and 4150 at Nettleton Moor next day. A **Red-breasted Flycatcher** was at Gibraltar Point on the 11th. **Brambling** also arrived in good numbers at this time including counts of 745 at Gibraltar Point on the 11th and 16th. A **Waxwing** flying over Crook Bank on the 14th was one of only three records in the second half of the year. A **Richard's Pipit** was found at Mogg's Eye on the 13th.







Pink-footed Goose Anser brachyrhynchus Frampton Marsh Nov 13th 2020 © NEIL SMITH



The 14th brought a **Dusky Warbler** to Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe and this bird was the start of a deluge of records with a peak of five birds scattered along the coast on the 17th and seven birds seen during the month.

Two **Great-grey Shrikes** – at Freiston Shore from the 15th and Gibraltar Point on the 18th – were the only records for the year. However, the highlight of the 15th was an **Olive-backed Pipit** at Crook Bank. The **Pallas's Warbler** at Seaview farm from the 16th-17th was very welcome but surprisingly, considering the numbers in adjacent counties, this was the only record for the autumn. A huge count of 30,000 **Pink-footed Geese** was at Read's Island on the 20th – by far the largest count of the year, and the only **Greenland White-fronted Goose** of the year was a juvenile at Worlaby Top on the 24th. A **Parrot Crossbill** was at Gibraltar Point on the 20th, to be followed by one over Frampton Marsh on the 28th. Fortunately, observers were very familiar with Common Crossbill calls this autumn with over 600 moving south at Gibraltar Point alone through the month. A **Richard's Pipit** was at Donna Nook on the 23rd.

### **November**

The month began with only the second, and final, **Green-winged Teal** of the year – this bird at Frampton Marsh from the 1st. Goxhill Haven was the place to be on the 8th with an elusive **Olive-backed Pipit** and yet another **Dusky Warbler**. In addition, a **Hume's Warbler** at reported at Anderby Creek the same day.

Seven **Shore Larks** at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe on the 10th was the only sighting in 2020. The final **Yellow-browed Warbler** of the autumn was at Belton Park on the 17th. A **Glaucous Gull** was at Chapel Point from the 21st.

### December

December began with an adult **Iceland Gull** at Rimac from the 1st. This bird was seen on several dates during the month, unlike the second-calendar year bird at Gibraltar Point, which was only noted on the 24th. A superb 338 **Goldeneye** were at Goxhill on the 5th when, perhaps inevitably, yet another **Dusky Warbler** was found – this bird at Donna Nook was the ninth and final bird of the year. A peak of 24 **Bewick's Swans** was at Holbeach St Johns on the 7th. The final records of **Glossy Ibis** for the year perhaps featured the same bird, first at Gibraltar Point on the 15th and then at Donna Nook from the 22nd.

Large numbers of **Fieldfare** were noted around the Humber in the second half of the month including 3600 at East Haldon on the 20th. The seven **Long-eared Owls** at Deeping St James on the 24th was the highest count of the year. A **Grey Phalarope** was well watched at Freiston Shore from the 27th and was the last of six records during the year.

## **Systematic List 2020**

**Collated and edited by** Phil Hyde, Phil Espin, John and Nicky Clarkson **Contributing Authors:** Graham Catley, Andrew Chick, John Clarkson, Phil Espin and Phil Hyde.

## Key to abbreviations in the species accounts

**LBRC** – Lincolnshire Birds Records Committee. Inserted after a species name indicates it is rare or scarce in Lincolnshire. Description and/or photograph required for consideration by the LBRC.

**BBRC** – British Birds Rarities Committee. Inserted after a species name indicates it is a national rarity: Description and/or photograph required for submission to British Birds Rarities Committee. Only accepted records in this category are published in the report and retained in the database.

**RBBP** - Rare Breeding Birds Panel; monitors nationally scarce and rare breeding species. Any breeding season sighting should be reported to the RBBP representative as soon as possible.

**BoCC5** - Birds of Conservation Concern 5 and IUCN 2: the fifth Birds of Conservation Concern in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man and second IUCN Red List assessment of extinction risk for Great Britain. Stanbury, A., Eaton, M., Aebischer, N., Balmer, D., Brown, A., Douse, A., Lindley, P., McCulloch, N., Noble, D., and Win, I. *British Birds* 114(2): 723-747.

**JNCC** (2016) Seabird Population Trends and Causes of Change: 1986-2015 Report. Joint Nature Conservation Committee. Updated Sep 2016. https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/seabird-population-trends-and-causes-of-change-1986-2015-report-category/

**Wintering waterbirds thresholds.** Frost, T., Austin, G., Hearn, R., *et al.* (2019). Population estimates of wintering waterbirds in Great Britain. *British Birds* 112: 130-145.

## Abbreviations used in the report

**BB** British Birds

**BBRC** British Birds Rarities Committee

BBS Breeding Birds Survey
BO Bird Observatory

**BOU** Birds of Conservation Concern BOU British Ornithologists' Union

**BOURC** British Ornithologists' Union Record Committee

**BTO** British Trust for Ornithology

CP Country ParkGC Golf CourseGP Gravel Pit(s)

**GWCT** Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust Joint Nature Conservation Council

**LBC** Lincolnshire Bird Club

**LBRC** Lincolnshire Birds Records Committee

**LWT** Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust **NNR** National Nature Reserve

NP Nature Park NR Nature Reserve

**RBBP** Rare Breeding Birds Panel

**RSPB** Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

**SQ** Sand Quarry

STW Sewage Treatment Works
WeBS Wetland Bird Survey
WWT Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust

## Bird names used in this report

From 1st Jan 2018 the BOU voted to adopt the International Ornithological Congress (IOC) World Bird List. The LBC followed this recommendation in full and first used the new taxonomy in its 2017 annual report. There has been much debate about the vernacular names most familiar to British birders and the BOURC decided to use those in current usage within Britain. The vernacular names differ from those used by IOC even though the scientific names are as the IOC recommend. In the LBC reports there has been some variation in the usage of common names and following discussion by the LBC Committee it was decided to follow the BOURC. So, in this report and others in the future, 'Eurasian Teal' and 'Northern Shoveler' become plain 'Teal' and 'Shoveler' and so on. A full discussion of this issue can be found at https://www.bou.org.uk/british-list/bird-names/. Note that since IOC 11.1 the order of bird names has significantly altered (Gill F., Donsker, D., and Rasmussen, P. (Eds). 2021. IOC World Bird List (v11.1)). In short, Order *Anseriformes* has been resequenced to precede Order *Galliformes*, so the latter now appear in sequence after Ruddy Duck and the Family Strigidae have been resequenced although for British and Lincolnshire birders this just means Tawny Owl is last in the sequence of the five species recorded in the county.

### **Tables**

Summary tables are provided for selected species. The sites included vary between species and are selected to include areas holding significant numbers (sometimes defined in the text), usually with counts in several or many months. The figures shown are the highest counts for each month.

### WeBS data

For waterfowl (wildfowl, waders, and other waterbirds), tables use data from the LBC database, from Gibraltar Point Bird Observatory and from RSPB Reserves, to whom we are grateful for sharing this information. Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) data are also used, kindly made available by the WeBS partnership, a joint scheme of the BTO, RSPB and JNCC (the last on behalf of the statutory nature conservation bodies: Natural England, Natural Resources Wales and Scottish Natural Heritage and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Northern Ireland) in association with WWT. Although WeBS data are published here, in some cases the figures may not have been fully checked and validated. Therefore, for any detailed analyses of WeBS data, enquiries should be directed to the WeBS team at the British Trust for Ornithology, The Nunnery, Thetford, IP24 2PU (webs@bto.org). The tables for some species also give the sums of Lincolnshire WeBS sector totals for the Humber (which extends to Mablethorpe) and The Wash. WeBS counts extend systematic coverage away from more intensively watched areas but are, in most cases, made on a single date near the middle of the month, and thus may miss higher counts made on other dates. Note that there may occasionally be overlap between sites in the table; we try to avoid it, but occasionally it is preferable to omitting important data. An example of this concerns the Witham Mouth WeBS sector, which includes part of Freiston Shore RSPB reserve and is used by birds from both Freiston and Frampton reserves.

WeBS thresholds for international or national (Great Britain) importance are given for all species where numbers approach, match or exceed one or more thresholds. International importance signifies that 1% of the birds of a particular flyway or which regularly use a site during their annual cycle (in Frost, T., Austin, G., Hearn, R., et al. (2019). Population estimates of wintering waterbirds in Great Britain. British Birds 112: 130-145).

### **BTO Bird Track data**

For a few selected species we have added a chart from the Lincolnshire data recorded in the BTO's Bird Track archive, which we gratefully acknowledge (BTO/RSPB/BirdWatch Ireland/SOC/WOS 2020. BirdTrack). Available at: **www.birdtrack.net** (accessed Jan 2022). These are reporting rate charts which display the percentage of birds that are recorded on complete lists submitted to BirdTrack



in 2020; the historical reporting rate is also included for comparison. The higher the reporting rate the more frequently it is recorded.

### **BBS** data

The BTO kindly supplies the BBS data. This is run by the BTO and is jointly funded by the BTO, the JNCC (on behalf of the statutory bodies listed above) and the RSPB. Each year, we choose a few species to illustrate population trends in Lincolnshire with comparable data for the East Midlands region (which includes most of Lincolnshire) and for England as a whole. In most cases, we use the 'smoothed' indices for East Midlands and England, to draw attention to long-term trends rather than to year-on-year changes. However, the Lincolnshire data are 'unsmoothed' and due to COVID-19 restrictions, out of the relatively small sample size of about 80 BBS squares in the county, only 49 were surveyed in 2020, down from 74 in 2019 (the total number of BBS squares in the UK is in excess of 3500). The problem was exacerbated by there being even fewer early visits, making the data less reliable for many species than in previous years. As a result of this, no Lincolnshire indices of changing numbers over the previous year or the period from 1994 have been calculated by BTO this year. All mentions of BBS results need to be interpreted in this context. In the absence of change indices, none of the usual BTO-derived graphs are available for any species this year but we have selected some Birdtrack weekly reporting charts for various Lincolnshire species instead. Additional BBS coverage is desirable and anyone wishing to help with this valuable and straightforward survey should contact their local BTO representative (see inside front cover) or visit the BTO website.

## Ring recovery data

A selection of the more interesting recoveries or sightings of ringed birds affecting Lincolnshire are often included with the species entries. These should be self-explanatory, with the recovery data included in either a summary table or as additional comments in the text. A summary of recoveries is also presented in a later section.

### Rare and scarce species

Many reports of rare and scarce species are submitted each year without documentation, in some cases even without a named observer. This poses difficulties, because we cannot be certain that mistakes have not been made, something that is important for understanding of species' status now and, even more so, in the future when patterns of occurrence are reviewed and analysed. However, because of the numbers of records now coming without supporting details, we continue to take a pragmatic view. Records have been included in the systematic list if the LBRC was confident that a mistake was unlikely, considering the experience of observers, the circumstances of the sighting and any verbal information received, and how the record fits into the known pattern of occurrence of the species. Information is actively sought by LBRC when possible. If a significant record is missing from the report and documentation is available, please let the editorial team know. Records, including those from national information services, which have no named observer, may often be excluded. Please note that this applies to reports of *all* species that are out of season or in atypical locations.

### Website

The recently revised Lincolnshire Bird Club website includes a section describing the status of species in the county. Brief summaries are available to all but only LBC members can see more detailed information (please join!). Population trends and seasonal patterns of occurrence are described, with detailed listing of the records of the rarest species. This can be found at:

https://lincsbirdclub.co.uk/site/index.php/information/the-lincs-list

Information on how to submit records to LBC are provided at:

https://lincsbirdclub.co.uk/site/index.php/sightings

### **BOCC5** and conservation concern

The species header indicates whether the species/sub-species is in the Red, Amber or Green List of the BOCC5. Those in the 'Red List' are 'Globally Threatened'. Those in the 'Amber List' are those with an unfavourable conservation status in Europe and those on the 'Green List' are those that don't meet the criteria for inclusion in the Red or Amber Lists (see BoCC5 for further definition of these terms). BOCC5 was published in *British Birds*, Dec 2021 and the species designations in this systematic list have accordingly been updated as the focus of the review was the status of species up to winter 2019/20 and thus relevant to this report.

A summary of the changes, below, is from the abstract to the article:

BoCC5 in the UK, Channel Islands and Isle of Man assessed and assigned 245 species to updated Red, Amber and Green lists of conservation concern. It showed a continuing decline in the status of our bird populations. In total, 70 species (29% of those assessed) are now on the Red List, up from 36 species in the first review in 1996. Since the 2015 review Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* no longer breeds. Eleven species have been moved to the Red List, while only six species moved from Red to Amber. Newly Red-listed species include Common Swift Apus apus, House Martin *Delichon urbicum*, Greenfinch *Chloris chloris* and the globally threatened Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*. There has been no improvement in the overall status of species associated with farmland and upland, or Afro-Palearctic migrants; indeed, more such species have been Red-listed. Concerns over the status of our wintering wildfowl and wader populations have also increased. As a direct result of targeted conservation action, White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* has been moved from Red to Amber. The article also presents the second IUCN Regional Red List assessment of extinction risk for Great Britain, which shows that 46% of 235 regularly occurring species, and 43% of 285 separate breeding and non-breeding populations, are assessed as being threatened with extinction from Great Britain. Overall, the article makes for grim reading.



### **Brent Goose** Branta bernicla

Winter visitor. Three distinct subspecies occur. Amber List (nominate and *hrota*).

### **Black Brant** B.b.nigricans

Former vagrant, first seen in 1982 with just three records to 1991. Very scarce but annual in small numbers, with Dark-bellied flocks. **LBRC** 

An adult with Dark-bellied Brent B.b. bernicla, first seen on Dec 7th, 2019, was still present on Jan 1st at Gibraltar Point though not after this date (KMW). The only other record was the (presumed) returning adult at Donna Nook, Jan 13th-Feb 14th (CA, OBt, PAH, et al).

### Dark-bellied Brent Goose B.b. bernicla

Very common coastal winter visitor Sep-May, mainly to The Wash and outer Humber. Scarce but regular in summer, especially on The Wash. Occasional inland. Threshold for international importance 2100; for national importance 980. Amber List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Frampton Marsh	5000	2000	2000	-	900	3	2	1	120	1000	4000	1200
Freiston Shore	89	612	590	-	4	-	-	-	1	1800	2700	798
Gibraltar Point	1060	916	576	181	138	4	-	-	13	356	503	620
Butterwick		110	775	-	-	-	42	34	76	2750	125	377
Donna Nook	618	600	40	-	-	-	-	-		150	600	1200
Grainthorpe	484	460	410	-	-	-	-	-	48	385	462	26
Saltfleet	450	170	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	173	297	632
Welland Marsh	350	350	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	600	240	-
Tetney Marshes	400	100	350	300	54	3	-	-	-	135	10	150
Leverton	725	289	367	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Dark-bellied Brent Goose B.b. bernicla Frampton Marsh Nov 13th 2020 © NEIL SMITH



The highest count for the year was 5000 at Frampton Marsh on Jan 5th. The table lists the top 10 sites reporting cumulative monthly maxima of 1350 or more birds and shows that the area from Frampton Marsh north to Butterwick is of international importance for this species. There were more individuals inland this year with one at Boultham Mere Feb 21st, three at Frithville on Jun 18th, a single at Deeping Lakes Aug 11th-15th and in winter singles at Deeping High Bank Nov 8th, Walcot Dec 8th and Kirkby GP Dec 22nd.

### Pale-bellied Brent Goose B.b. hrota



Scarce coastal winter visitor, in variable numbers. Threshold for international importance 100 (Svalbard population) and 400 (Nearctic population); national importance 34 (Svalbard population) and 16 (Nearctic). Amber List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	1	2	1	1	1	-	-	2	4	4	3	2
Tetney Marshes	-	-	14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Frampton Marsh	3	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
Chapel Point	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-
Freiston Shore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
Huttoft	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Cress Marsh	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Donna Nook	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Sutton on Sea	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-

There were records from nine sites this year up from six in 2019. The highest count was a small flock of 14 seen at Tetney Marshes on Mar 11th. The table shows monthly peak counts for all sites from which records were received.

### Canada Goose Branta canadensis

Common resident introduced from North America in the 18th and 19th centuries. The taxonomic status of Canada geese has recently changed with Canada Goose *Branta canadensis* and Cackling Goose *B. hutchinsii* now being recognised as two distinct species. Only Canada Goose occurs as a feral resident in Britain.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	120	70	42	30	10	77	84	550	580	200	150	75
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	180	200	-	-	-	-	-	3	400	500	26	85
Frampton Marsh	67	87	35	-	40	50	200	103	190	225	100	18
Manby Wetlands	2	-	-	-	-	2	7	-	223	280	384	110
Huttoft	-	180	-	-	-	-	-	15	93	270	270	75
Covenham Reservoir	17	12	30	7	7	9	18	40	265	345	112	36
Middlemarsh Farm	70	100	100	28	11	7	1	15	400	22	8	16
Huttoft	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	93	270	270	75
Grimsthorpe	4	-	19	-	-	-	-	-	5	350	232	35
Anderby Marsh	-	35	5	4	3	-	-	-	-	250	190	-

The highest count of the year was 580 at Gibraltar Point on Sep 7th. The table lists the top 10 sites reporting cumulative monthly maxima of more than 480 birds. Other large counts outside the sites listed were 420 at Winthorpe Jan 21st, 300 at Kirton in Lindsey Sep 28th and 300 at Freiston Shore Dec 1st. The highest monthly count across all sites was 3,576 in Oct. The species was found in 16% of BBS squares (2019 18%) with an average of 3.9 birds per occupied square (2019 12.3).



### Barnacle Goose Branta leucopsis

Fairly common localised feral population. Has bred as a feral bird since the late 1980s, with a large population established on the Humber (most nesting in Yorkshire). Wild birds are scarce but erratic winter visitors, mainly to the coast. Amber list.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Alkborough	1760	2412	800	180	40	56	-	-	-	-	1260	1683
Whitton Ness	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1400	-	-
Cleethorpes	130	50	50	25	20	44	250	50	70	115	92	2
Tetney Marshes	50	-	-	-	-	-	-	120	50	-	3	-
Sutton Bridge	8	-	15	14	1	-	-	1	-	17	17	15
<b>Humberston Fitties</b>	40	-	31	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	4	-
Frampton Marsh	11	4	2	1	6	3	-	1	4	-	40	-
Branston Fen	43	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nocton Fen	43	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Short Ferry	-	43	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

The highest count of the year was 2,412 at Alkborough Flats on Feb 18th. The table lists the top 10 sites reporting cumulative monthly maxima of more than 40 birds. The largest count outside the sites listed was 20 at Rimac, Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe NNR on Oct 14th. The highest monthly count across all sites was 2,556 in Feb. Although birds were present throughout the summer the only breeding evidence reported this year was from Cleethorpes where a flock of 250 birds on Jul 12th contained 50 juveniles of various ages. The Alkborough birds are considered to breed on the Yorkshire side of Whitton Island.

### Bar-headed Goose Anser indicus

Very scarce. Most, if not all, are assumed to come from feral stock in the Netherlands, but some may have come from wildfowl collections. Currently not on the British List (Cat E) but they are a species of interest to the RBBP panel which periodically reports on the rarer non-native species breeding in the UK. **RBBP** 

A single bird was seen at Middlemarsh Farm on six dates from Jan 30th-Feb 16th, possibly the same bird passing through as seen the previous winter? Another (or the same one?) was seen at Cleethorpes on Jun 3rd. The European Breeding Bird Atlas 2 (2020) reports that the Dutch feral population of this species has been under control measures since 2010 and now numbers less than 200 pairs.

## Greylag Goose Anser anser

The nominate form is a common but localised feral resident and has bred since the late 1980s, with a widespread population established throughout the county. Wild birds from the Scottish population are likely to be scarce but erratic winter visitors mainly to the coast but are difficult to detect. Icelandic and northern European/Russian birds may also occur but are likewise difficult to detect. Amber list (nominate form).

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Woodhall Spa	322	69	33	-	29	450	268	395	380	4	720	700
Messingham SQ	800	2	40	6	11	-	300	300	18	400	600	600
East Halton	74	141	-	-	-	322	165	328	321	1011	450	146
Covenham Reservoir	210	141	21	12	7	-	190	80	560	575	600	343
Frampton Marsh	135	123	120	-	201	80	250	111	400	550	400	160
Gibraltar Point	87	48	30	25	62	28	30	660	600	350	110	350
Goxhill Marsh	74	80	42	-	136	130	150	320	320	460	550	108
Baston - Langtoft Pits	240		45	165	-	60	150	5	-	276	908	400
Tattershall Thorpe	340	300	45	32	95	285	62	115	185	145	300	250
Deeping Lakes	100	164	155	-	154	75	100	260	20	200	436	327

The highest count of the year was 1,011 at East Halton Brick Pits on Oct 6th. The table lists the top 10 sites reporting cumulative annual maxima of more than 1,950 birds. The largest count outside the sites listed was 1,000 at Baston Fen on Nov 29th. The highest monthly count across all sites was 12,100 in Nov. The species was found in 12% of BBS squares (2019 40%) with an average of 10 birds per occupied square (2019 5.8).

## Taiga Bean Goose Anser fabalis

Rare winter visitor with occasional larger influxes. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 520; for national importance: 2. LBRC

Four flew south at Alkborough Flats on Nov 6th (GPC) the first site record.

## Pink-footed Goose Anser brachyrhynchus

A very common winter visitor during Sep-Apr, mainly to the Humber and The Wash, but there are many coastal and inland movements. A few injured birds remain in summer. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 5,400; for national importance: 5,100.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Read's Island	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	200	30000	8000	29
Gibraltar Point	1820	2000	1300	80	1	1	1	1	2380	3740	7210	3800
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	1500	1	22	100	-	-	-	-	850	4813	7000	6000
Goxhill	3250	1200	29	-	-	-	-	-	220	5649	4700	50
East Halton	-	-	57	-	1	-	-	-	228	5624	6779	700
Barton	1500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4500	7000	-	120
Middlemarsh Farm	8	-	2	1	1	-	-	-	62	180	7500	1210
Wroot	600	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	80	2500	1500	3000
Worlaby Top - Burnham	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		7000	-	-
Frampton Marsh	800	25	100	1	2	1	1	1	18	2000	2500	300

Pink-footed Goose Anser brachyrhynchus Grainthorpe Nov 6th 2020 © MARK JOHNSON





The highest count of the year was a massive 30,000 at Read's Island on Oct 20th. The table lists the top 10 sites reporting cumulative monthly maxima of more than 5.500 birds. The largest count outside the sites listed was 5,000 at Welland Marsh on Oct 18th. The numbers of this species in Lincolnshire increased dramatically in the county from Sep 2020 onwards. The main reason is thought to be changing agricultural practice in Norfolk which has caused the wintering population there, estimated to be in excess of 100,000 birds, to search further afield for feeding opportunities. This has resulted in a big increase particularly on the Humber, and Read's Island is a favoured roost location. Birds fan out from there to feed in fields along the Humber estuary. The Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe area and Gibraltar Point also experienced a big increase with large flocks roosting on the foreshore and feeding inland. This has meant massive skeins of geese, formerly most often seen on migration, are now being seen at many locations throughout the winter.

### Tundra Bean Goose Anser fabalis



Scarce winter visitor, mainly coastal, in variable numbers. Amber List. Threshold for national importance: 3.

A relatively good year with records from 10 sites compared to five in 2019. Two birds were at Saltfleetby St Clement on Jan 2nd and Jan 4th, and one stayed with the Whooper Swan flock there until Jan 12th. At Gibraltar Point two were with Pinkfeet on Jan 18th and 29th and at the same site there were three on Feb 6th and then one to two on 17 dates between Feb 7th-Mar 8th. There were no more reports until the autumn when a single was reported in the Deeping St James area from Oct 16th-20th and four at Gibraltar Point flying south-east on Oct 22nd. One was reported with 7,000 Pinkfeet at Worlaby Top on Oct 24th and two at Guys Head, Spalding on Oct 25th. A small influx began on Oct 28th when 13 were seen flying south over Freiston Shore ending up at Frampton Marsh later that day. Up to 14 were seen at and between these sites from Oct 29th to Nov 2nd with two at Frampton Marsh on Nov 6th and one at Freiston Shore on Nov 8th. In Dec one was at Toft Newton Reservoir on 1st, at Gibraltar Point two came in off the sea on 1st, there was a single there on 14th, and six on 24th. Covenham Reservoir had three on 10th and eight were with Pink-footed Geese near Anderby Creek on 14th-15th.

### White-fronted Goose A.a albifrons

Scarce winter visitor Sep-Apr. Northern Eurasia. Threshold for international importance: 12,000; for national importance: 21. Red List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	19	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	12	10
Anderby Marsh	33	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-
Huttoft Marsh	40	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	21	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
Saltfleetby St Clement	18	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Donna Nook	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15
Wroot	4	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Covenham Reservoir	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Kirton in Lindsey	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

The highest count of the year was a flock of 40 at Huttoft Marsh on Jan 1st seen flying in off the sea and heading north-west inland. This arrival presaged a mini-invasion and arrivals came throughout the month. The table lists the top nine sites reporting cumulative monthly maxima of four or more birds; this compares with 14 sites in 2019. On Jan 1st 17 birds arrived at Gibraltar Point and there were 19 the following day. Between Jan 3rd-17th one to five birds were seen daily. Singles were at Anderby Marsh on Jan 4th and 6th and 33 on Jan 8th. At Saltfleetby 21 birds arrived on Jan 12th and probably 18 of the same birds were seen at Saltfleetby St Clements the following day. In autumn a first-winter bird joined the Greylags at Alkborough Flats from Oct 24th – 26th and a party of six were present briefly on December 25th. Three birds were seen flying south over Anderby Marsh on Oct 18th and possibly the same three were at Gibraltar Point Oct 19th-23rd. Gibraltar Point also had three on Nov 29th and 12 on Nov 30th and then 1-10 birds on nine dates from Dec 2nd-30th Donna Nook had 15 on Dec 20th

### Greenland White-fronted Goose A.a flavirostris

Rare winter visitor. Greenland. Red List. Threshold for international importance: 190 (*flavirostris*); for national importance: 120. **LBRC** 

A single record was received this year of a juvenile at Worlaby Top, Burnham on Oct 24th (GPC).

## Mute Swan Cygnus olor

Fairly common resident and partial migrant. The breeding population may have declined by around 10% since 300 pairs were estimated in the LBA. Green List. Threshold for international and national importance: 500.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Deeping Lakes	10	15	300	-	120	248	194	131	51	64	50	35
Barton Pits	50	27	35	52	106	150	104	43	12	54	34	7
Alkborough Flats	10	-	7	52	63	40	8	4	-	1	4	2
Baston Fen	57	4	3	32	29	36	2	-	5	5	13	7
Frampton Marsh	9	20	8	-	30	50	55	13	30	15	3	14
Whisby NP	12	8	12	17	8	8	36	34	30	28	24	41
Woodhall Spa	41	19	24	-	21	30	26	25	32	25	11	8
Kirkby GP	11	6	10	27	15	16	23	31	26	29	13	14
Willow Tree Fen	12	4	22	-	3	8	2	2	3	-	3	31
Messingham SQ	8	12	12	-	-	-	29	28	17	10	8	5
Toft Newton Reservoir	1	19	23	26	17	12	13	11	1	2	1	2
Freiston Shore	-	12	13	-	12	20	15	20	12	20	24	5
Gibraltar Point	11	4	4	15	8	6	10	2	6	8	8	4
Deeping Lakes	10	15	300		120	248	194	131	51	64	50	35

Whooper Swan Cygnus cygnus Jaques Bank Nov 15th 2020 © PAUL COOMBES





The highest exact count was 248 recorded during WeBS survey at Deeping St James on Jun 5th. Recorded in all months and from numerous locations with the table above showing sites in order of peak count. Away from the tabulated sites counts of over 100 birds included 108 at Cowbit on Jan 11th, 115 at Stowgate on Feb 6th, 108 at Nocton Fen on Feb 14th, 100 at Digby Fen on Feb 26th, 104 at Branston Fen on Mar 15th, 110 at Bardney Lock on May 17th and 130 at Barrow Haven on Jun 7th.

## Tundra (Bewick's) Swan Cygnus columbianus bewickii

Scarce passage migrant and very scarce winter visitor, mainly Oct-Mar, exceptional in summer. Red List. Threshold for international importance 220; WeBS threshold for national importance: 44.

There were just three records in the first winter period with seven at Nocton Feb 13th, a single bird at Branston Fen from Feb 23rd–29th in the company of c100 Whoopers and an adult and immature at Alkborough Flats Apr 5th. In the second winter period all records were from Dec with 12 at Holbeach St Johns from 3rd-5th increasing to 24 on 7th, two at Alkborough Flats on 2nd before flying off east and two adults and two juveniles were on the Humber on the evening of the 4th, nine in flight over Manby Wetlands on 10th, one with 12 Whoopers at Baston Fen on 29th and finally two at Gibraltar Point on 31st.

## Whooper Swan Cygnus cygnus

Fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor, with a notable increase since the late 1990s. Occurs mainly Oct-Apr, exceptional in summer. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 340; for national importance: 160.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Alkborough Flats	7	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	230	35	47
Baston Fen	-	4	233	1	1	1	1	-	1	-	3	8
Boultham Mere	6	-	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	7	16	7
Covenham Reservoir	4	-	30		-	-	-	-	-	15	55	11
Deeping Lakes	24	-	60	18	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	14
Donna Nook	49	60	28		-	-	-	-	-	10	12	-
Fiskerton Fen	34	14	2		-	-	1	2	-	1	-	14
Frampton Marsh	102	145	500	3	1	1	1	1	11	128	115	126
Gibraltar Point	24	4	2	-	-	-	-	-	17	110	88	8
Huttoft Car Terrace	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	20	45	80
Manby Wetlands	-	-	1	8	1	-	-	-	-	4	25	-
Nocton Fen	189	261	412	-	-	-	-	-	-	76	-	31
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	51	-	42	-	-	-	-	1	1	35	35	94
Toft Newton Reservoir	-	-	33	-	-	-	-	-	1	20	8	9

The table shows peak monthly counts for all sites where birds were recorded on five or more months. Away from the tabulated sites in the first winter period there were c200 at Short Ferry/Branston Island on Jan 5th increasing to c350 on Feb 5th and peaking in mid-Mar with a count of 482 birds recorded on site because of extensive flooding covering over 1,000 acres of farmland after the Barling Eau was breached. Most other records involved movements of birds returning to breeding grounds from early Mar onwards. Summering birds included long staying individuals at Frampton Marsh and Baston Fen with singles at Whisby NP on Jun 26th, Saltfleet Haven on Jul 17th and at Fiskerton Fen from Jul 23rd until Aug 8th. First returning birds were recorded off Huttoft Car Terrace with seven south on Sept 17th, three at Gibraltar Point on Sep 23rd, 13 Chapel Point on Sep 26th and 17 at Gibraltar Point on Sep 27th. The first big counts of the second winter period were 61 at Gibraltar Point on Oct 6th, 34 at Frampton Marsh on Oct 8th increasing to 53 on the 9th followed by a scattering of coastal records throughout the rest of Oct. Over-wintering birds remained at Frampton Marsh with counts of 100+ recorded in both Nov and Dec, 191 were at Holbeach St Johns on Dec 3rd and 153 on Dec 5th, 137 at Crowland Falls on Dec 3rd and 94 at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe-Rimac on Dec 16th.

## Egyptian Goose Alopochen aegyptiaca

A scarce feral resident. Numbers concentrated in the Tattershall/Kirkby on Bain area, but recent increases have seen a spread of records, including breeding, more widely across the county.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Woodhall Spa	10	5	12	-	13	3	10	5	6	25	7	6
Kirkby on Bain	28	9	6	-	6	12	15	4	2	2	-	-
Tattershall Thorpe	4	6	4	8	8	15	8	6	4	6	3	3
Deeping Lakes	2	2	3	-	3	3	6	8	9	5	3	6
Messingham SQ	-	-	1	-	1	-	8	8	11	10	7	-
Tattershall	2	2	2	2	2	2	4	2	2	6	7	5
Whisby NP	2	-	-	-	6	6	6	6	1	-	2	-
Middlemarsh Farm	-	2	1	6	3	3	1	1	8	-	-	-
Gibraltar Point	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	8	5	7	-

The highest count of the year was 28 at Woodhall Spa Airfield on Jan 10th. Reports came from 51 sites this year, well up from 31 in 2019 and individuals seem to have wandered more widely this year. The table lists the top nine sites reporting cumulative monthly maxima of 20 or more birds. Confirmed breeding reports came from Jobs Lane Pit, Whisby where a pair was seen with four juveniles on May 31st; from Middlemarsh Farm, with four chicks but only one fledging; and a late record from Messingham SQ of a pair with six juveniles on Oct 14th.

### Common Shelduck Tadorna tadorna

Common resident, partial migrant and winter visitor, with concentrations mainly in the Humber, on the north-east coast and in The Wash. Fairly common as a breeding species in estuaries and coastal areas, scarcer inland. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 2,500; for national importance: 470.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Pyewipe (Grimsby)	250	1083	300	750	100	100	6650	4120	2560	1900	1450	480
Grainthorpe	257	530	428	-	363	529	225	429	320	137	450	11
Read's Island	-	-	460	-	-	-	400	1000	130	220	335	449
Gibraltar Point	87	110	82	231	245	223	97	36	197	156	102	55
Donna Nook	52	150	25	80	55	16	12	14	208	227	250	250
Tetney Marsh	208	30	56	60	55	138	64	64	15	206	20	131
Freiston Shore	-	18	55	-	2	32	3	1	5	56	700	80
Frampton Marsh	50	200	150	-	80	80	36	50	50	50	40	30
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	150	16	63	14	18	8	22	45	136	200	60	70
Saltfleet	147	98	-	4	7	6	-	9	60	180	63	182

The highest count of the year was an astonishing 6,650 seen at Pyewipe Marsh, Grimsby on Jul 26th by RSPB Humber warden and WeBS counter Mike Pilsworth. The biggest count on the Humber in nearly 30 years and over 10% of the UK population making this section of mudflat and saltmarsh internationally important for Shelduck. Pyewipe had a Jul count of 1360 in Jul 2019. Many of the birds were thought to be moulting so is this a new moulting site for Shelduck in the British Isles? There were still 4,120 birds there on Aug 16th and 2,560 on Sep 20th. All numbers greater than the previous year high count of 2150 at Pyewipe in Oct 2019. An interesting phenomenon to watch. Traditionally British birds have famously crossed the North Sea to Heligoland to moult. What is provoking this apparent change? The table below lists the top 10 sites reporting cumulative monthly maxima of 750 or more birds. These moulting birds must come from afar as the local breeding population is far too small to account for such high numbers. The species was found in 4% of BBS squares (2019 8%) with an average of 12 birds per occupied square (2019 6.0).

## Ruddy Shelduck Tadorna ferruginea

# Very scarce. Birds are recorded in most years, mostly in late summer/early autumn. Most if not all are assumed to come from feral stock in the Netherlands. **RBBP**

The first of the year was at Baston & Langtoft GP Jan 1st and 4th. One was at Gibraltar Point on Jun 30th followed by what has become an expected summer/autumn arrival on the Humber: one was at Alkborough Flats Jul 15th with two there Aug 30th, five on Sep 20th with two remaining into Oct, present 6th, and 11th.

Note: The species is currently assigned to category B (not considered to have occurred in a wild state since 1949), category D (reasonable doubt they have occurred in a natural state) or category E (introduced species whose breeding populations are not thought to be self-sustaining). However, the BOURC is currently undertaking a review of records of Ruddy Shelduck to ascertain whether individuals from the Category C population in Germany visit the UK, and therefore should the species be recategoristed and included in Category C5 (a vagrant from a naturalised population) and potentially become part of the main systematic list. If Ruddy Shelduck is added to Category C5 determining which records relate to vagrants from Germany and which are escapes from captivity will prove challenging. This species is likely to have been under-reported in the past, so please send all records in future.

## Mandarin Duck Aix galericulata



Mandarin Duck Aix galericulata Louth Jan 20th 2020 © JOHN CLARKSON

# Scarce and increasing feral resident or visitor and local escapee. British wintering population estimated at 13,000 (BoCC4, 2019).

The table lists peak monthly counts for all sites from which Mandarin records were received. The highest count of the year was two birds at Louth where a male and an immature male were present for around three weeks from late Apr to mid-May. Surprisingly all the birds for which a sex was reported were males and there was no breeding evidence reported at all. Unlike in 2019, birds were not present throughout the year with no records at all in Jul-Sep. Jan saw the most individual birds with eight across the county. It looks like the colonisation of Lincolnshire by breeding Mandarin is still in its very earliest stages.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Bourne	1	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Louth	-	-	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Whisby NP	1	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-
North Hykeham	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Tattershall Thorpe	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
North Somercotes	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Anderby	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Banthorpe GP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Belton Park	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gibraltar Point	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Goxhill Marsh	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Holywell	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lincoln	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Uffington	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Monthly Total	8	3	1	4	4	2	0	0	0	2	2	1

## Garganey Spatula querquedula

## Scarce passage migrant and very scarce summer visitor. Exceptional in winter. Amber List. RBBP

The highest count for the year was six at Alkborough, comprising five drakes and one female present May 12th-21st. Recorded in seven months of the year, there were sightings recorded from 17 sites, the same as in 2019.

Site Name	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Alkborough	-	-	-	2	6	2	-	3	-	-	-	-
Frampton Marsh	-	-	-	-	3	-	3	1	1	-	-	-
Whisby NP	-	-	2	3	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	-
Middlemarsh Farm	-	-	-	-	2	2	-	2	-	-	-	-
Baston	-	-	-	-	2	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
Barton	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	4	-	-	-
Deeping Lakes	-	-	2	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gibraltar Point	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	1	-	-	-
Anderby	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bardney	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

The table shows the top 10 sites holding maximum accumulated counts of more than two birds across the year ranked from highest to lowest. The first spring record was a single at Willow Tree Fen on Mar 23rd followed by a pair at Deeping Lakes on Mar 24th and a pair at Whisby NP on Mar 28th. A total of six pairs were reported from six sites in Apr-May though most of these were migrants. One pair was confirmed breeding at Alkborough where a female with two well grown juvs was seen on Aug 9th. A further four pairs probably bred. At Deeping Lakes, a pair was reported between Mar 23rd and Jun 1st, Frampton Marsh had up to three birds from May to Jul, Middlemarsh Farm had a pair from May 3rd to Jun 5th with the male seen displaying on May 15th and Whisby NP had a pair present from Mar 28th to Apr 23rd. In all a total of one confirmed and four probable pairs in 2019. It would be helpful if all reports of this species could record the sex of birds seen. The latest birds reported were singles at Whisby NP on Sep 23rd and Gibraltar Point on Sep 28th.



Shoveler Spatula clypeata Paradise Pools Nov 22nd 2020 © MARK JOHNSON

## Shoveler Spatula clypeata

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant, and very scarce breeding species. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 650; for national importance: 190. **RBBP** 

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Alkborough	190	199	190	65	14	2	2	73	30	86	116	101
Frampton Marsh	125	200	150	-	40	50	15	15	50	68	123	68
Gibraltar Point	53	54	35	22	7	58	4	15	36	300	60	49
Freiston Shore	-	276	42	-	-	-	3	-	-	40	47	80
Bardney	169	70	46	-	-	-	-	2	17	42	17	4
Whisby NP	68	69	54	17	2	2	1	4	24	27	49	31
Boultham Mere	6	9	16	2	-	4	5	31	55	54	38	16
Kirkby on Bain	30	28	9	4	5	6	5	32	30	45	26	15
Messingham SQ	10	16	18	-	-	-	2	22	38	49	40	16
Island Fm, Garthorpe	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	102	85

The table shows the top 10 sites holding maximum accumulated counts of more than 170 birds across the year ranked from highest to lowest. The highest count of the year was of 276 birds at Freiston Shore on Feb 24th. There were no other counts of more than 75 this year. The maximum monthly total across all sites was 1,286 in Feb compared to 1,241 in Nov the previous year. Although 13 sites held two or more birds through May and Jun, compared to 12 in 2019, only nine sites reported evidence of breeding. Four sites had confirmed breeding as follows: Alkborough Flats, where a female with four well grown chicks was present Aug 8th and three other females were thought to have nested, Baston Gravel Pits female with a brood of six Jun 14th, Frampton Marsh, two females with broods of five and four respectively on Jun 15th and Jun 20th, with three probable pairs also reported there and Middlemarsh Farm where a female with a brood of three was seen on Jul 27th. A further five sites held a total of eight probable breeding pairs as follows: Kirkby on Bain Pits (2), Gibraltar Point (2) with single pairs at Cress Marsh, Manby Wetlands and Whisby Pits. In total there were 18 reported pairs compared to 47 in 2019. The big fall was at Frampton which reported 33 pairs in 2019 and only five in 2020.

## Gadwall Mareca strepera

Fairly common though localised breeding species and winter visitor. Numbers have increased since the 1980s. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 1200; for national importance 310.

The table below lists the top 10 sites all of which have cumulative monthly maxima of more than 450 birds. The impact of COVID-19 restrictions on Apr counts at some sites is apparent. The highest count of the year of 320 at Woodhall Spa Airfield was the only count exceeding the national importance threshold of 310 and was slightly lower than the high count of 350 at nearby Kirkby on Bain in Feb 2019. The only count over 100 birds from a site not listed in the table came from Walcott in Nov.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Whisby	102	105	74	40	28	28	172	82	95	103	135	182
Alkborough	222	240	152	66	155	200	50	7	30	16	170	236
Woodhall Spa	320	165	79	-	5	15	8	6	16	26	71	81
Frampton Marsh	72	62	120	-	40	51	30	160	44	50	49	79
Tattershall Thorpe	40	15	35	25	47	56	45	70	145	125	80	38
Kirkby on Bain	140	53	19	-	-	75	24	71	93	147	17	25
Boultham Mere	95	45	34	16	5	80	96	15	95	55	61	18
Gibraltar Point	116	54	42	19	26	89	20	42	23	35	68	61
Messingham SQ	100	50	26	-	-	-	-	80	100	56	88	42
Marston STW	56	43	37	6	30	30	15	55	47	50	38	52

## Wigeon Mareca penelope

Common or very common winter visitor and passage migrant, especially to The Wash and the Humber. Scarce in summer and occasionally suspected of breeding. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 14,000; for national importance: 4,500. **RBBP** 



Wigeon Mareca penelope Frampton Marsh Dec 15th 2020 © NEIL SMITH

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Frampton Marsh	6142	5000	2160	-	20	15	21	200	630	4227	6932	7626
Freiston Shore		2365	1398	-	2	3	1	1	58	3000	6625	7566
Welland Marsh	1100	16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2500	6500	-
Alkborough	1760	1800	1060	780	2	2	6		6	55	680	1230
Baston	1180	1220	210	20	2			4	10	22	1576	1000
Gibraltar Point	329	374	290	59	1	4	1	41	590	872	382	720
Island Fm, Garthorpe	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	64	2800
Willow Tree Fen	1350	-	370	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	90	680
Middlemarsh Farm	500	400	300	60	1	-	1	2	92	200	200	600
Covenham Reservoir	315	78	80	40	2	-	-	-	65	232	620	810

The table shows the top 10 sites holding maximum accumulated counts of more than 2,200 birds across the year ranked from highest to lowest. Other counts of more than 500 birds came from Whitton Sands 1,000 Dec 22nd, Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe 700 Nov 25th, Huttoft 519 Dec 9th, Manby Wetlands 506 Feb 10th and Woodhall Spa Airfield 500 Jan 30th.

As in most years there were several summering birds principally at Alkborough, Gibraltar Point and Frampton Marsh but no evidence of breeding was reported in the form of paired or displaying birds. The largest movements at sea were reported from Gibraltar Point 544 south on Oct 12th and at Huttoft Car Terrace 487 on Dec 2nd.

#### American Wigeon Mareca americana

Rare. N. America. LBRC

No records of this species were received in 2020.

# Mallard Anas platyrhynchos

Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. BBS data suggests the population has fallen by 10% in the period 1994-2018. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 20,000; for national importance: 6,700.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Frampton Marsh	61	166	120	-	60	120	150	154	240	100	150	129
Covenham Reservoir	173	78	76	81	77	62	59	70	139	180	217	196
Gibraltar Point	106	109	82	20	28	32	124	240	118	150	92	142
Goxhill	115	195	78	-	46	30	31	147	107	36	108	41
Alkborough Flats	266	270	31	-	40	120	10	60	20	25	46	31
Baston	104	19	63	41	38	105	55	200	11	10	135	116
Boultham	54	63	68	-	38	77	99	124	81	118	71	74
Hartsholme CP	49	48	41	3	28	55	76	89	113	105	121	117
Donna Nook	95	77	114	10	48	16	22	88	89	99	96	47
Freiston Shore	-	40	44	-	138	125	26	31	24	156	116	52

BBS results show Mallard was our commonest breeding waterfowl species found in 47% of BBS squares (2019, 70%) with an average of 7.2 birds per occupied square (2019, 6.7). The table shows monthly maxima for the top 10 sites with a cumulative total of more than 750 birds. The highest count for the year at one site was 266 at Alkborough Flats in Jan. It is difficult to ascertain the real Lincolnshire population of this species in both winter and the breeding season as it is so widespread in the watercourses and ponds that abound across the county and does not flock up to the extent of other duck species in the county. The lack of counts in Apr at some of the major sites reflect the impact of COVID-19 restrictions.

#### Pintail Anas acuta

Fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor. Very scarce in summer. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 600; for national importance: 200. **RBBP** 

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Freiston Shore	89	2	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	112	390	398
Gibraltar Point	8	12	10	6	1	-	-	41	42	93	64	19
Frampton Marsh	12	32	11	-	-	-	-	11	43	40	116	15
Alkborough	56	70	14	35	-	-	-	4	4	32	6	16
Sutton Bridge	20	-	18	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	50	20
Covenham Reservoir	2	-	2	5	-	-	-	10	1	51	27	2
Chapel Point	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	7	60	-	-	-
Huttoft Car Terrace	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	43	10	4	1
Branston Island	54	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Seacroft	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	30	5	

The table shows the top 10 sites holding maximum accumulated counts of more than 46 birds across the year ranked from highest to lowest. The highest count of the year was 398 at Freiston Shore on Dec 21st. Outside the table sites, inland there were 30 at Bagmoor Floods on Oct 11th. The highest monthly total across the county was 690 in Nov compared to 482 in Feb 2019, 277 in Feb 2018 and 365 in Dec 18. This suggests 2020 was a good year for Pintail in Lincolnshire although there was no evidence of breeding activity this year. Autumn sea watching produced a good northward movement on Sep 26th with 60 off Chapel Point, 43 off Huttoft Car Terrace, 34 off Sutton on Sea and 16 off Gibraltar Point. Other good movements were of 25 off Anderby on Oct 18th and 25 south off Chapel Six Marshes on Nov 9th.



ABOVE: **Pintail** Anas acuta Frampton Marsh Apr 29th 2020 © JOHN CLARKSON RIGHT: **Eurasian Teal** Anas crecca Frampton Marsh Jan 26th 2020 © NEIL SMITH



#### Eurasian Teal Anas crecca

Common migrant and winter visitor. Scarce in summer, and very scarce and localised as a breeding species. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 5,000; for national importance 4,300.

The table below lists the top 10 sites all of which have a cumulative monthly total of more than 1,500 birds. Sites reporting counts of 500 or more outside the table were Branston Island with 500 in Jan, Baston Fen with 500 in Oct and Kirkby on Bain with 593 in Oct. The highest count this year of 3,300 at Read's Island falls below the threshold of national importance for this species at one site. As usual pairs summered at several sites and no confirmed breeding evidence was reported, but breeding was suspected at Middlemarsh Farm where at least two pairs may have bred but no young flightless ducklings were observed. The key difficulty is deciding whether female/juvenile types appearing in Jul have bred on site or migrated in from elsewhere.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Read's Island	-	1800	30	-	-	-	-	200	200	3300	2500	524
Frampton Marsh	2000	2000	200	-	-	10	15	300	420	500	1300	589
Alkborough	680	1050	380	920	3	140	68	170	600	400	628	743
Gibraltar Point	250	187	90	24	4	24	50	231	800	1520	450	246
Freiston Shore	-	30	280	-	-	-	10	20	7	128	930	700
Donna Nook	385	325	145	-	-	-	-	62	52	235	372	338
South Ferriby	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1800	-	-
Manby Wetlands	190	84	92	60	6	5	7	70	290	380	183	260
Willow Tree Fen	1000	-	220	11	20	-	-	10	1	-	4	350
Middlemarsh Farm	150	100	70	60	8	10	21	120	90	461	300	180



## **Green-winged Teal** Anas carolinensis

#### Very scarce. N. America. First record in 1984 and a regular visitor in the last 10 years. LBRC

A male visited Manby Wetlands May 9th-14th (JRC, PEs, PAH, et al) and another male was at Frampton Marsh on Nov 1st (JB) during a WeBS count; it promptly disappeared only to be re-found by the same observer on his next WeBS count on Dec 19th (JB).

# Red-crested Pochard Netta rufina

Scarce winter visitor and very scarce breeding species. Increasing numbers of feral birds present in the county, especially in the southwest. Webs threshold for international importance: 550; for national importance: no data. **RBBP.** 

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Baston	51	30	28	17	23	33	82	56	46	2	33	50
Langtoft	18	-	-	-	-	22	-	-	-	-	6	2
Tallington Lakes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	23
Messingham SQ	-	3	8	-	6	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
Deeping St James	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	5	-	1	-	-
Frampton Marsh	-	-	-	2	-	1	-	2	-	-	-	-
Kirkby on Bain	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-

The table shows the top seven sites holding maximum accumulated counts of more than five birds across the year ranked from highest to lowest. Eleven other sites held one to three birds in various months. The highest total monthly count across all sites in Lincolnshire was 84 in Jul, up from 59 in Dec 2019 but way down from the peak of 242 in Oct 2018. The highest count was 82 at Baston Gravel Pits on Jul 8th. No confirmed breeding reports or information on sex ratios was received from Baston, the main breeding site, but with 33 birds present in Jun it is likely breeding occurred. As in 2019 two pairs probably bred at Messingham. It is likely there were at least seven probable breeding pairs in the county overall, the same as 2019. Alkborough had its first record of Red-crested Pochard, two birds on Dec 28th, emphasising that this species remains local in Lincolnshire. While most records were in the south and west of the county, Gibraltar Point had one on Feb 4th-5th and there were two at Covenham Reservoir on Sep 1st.

# **Pochard** *Aythya ferina* ■

Fairly common but declining winter visitor, and a scarce breeding species found mainly in gravel and clay pits. Red List. Threshold for international importance: 2,000; for national importance: 230. **RBBP** 

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Frampton Marsh	30	234	25	-	10	20	8	30	45	6	14	41
Baston	80	5	40	10	17	31	20	25	29	38	21	27
Winterton	-	140	-	-	-	-	-	-	120	-	-	-
Deeping St James	2	21	20	-	1	10	46	154	4	-	-	2
Bardney	43	29	6	-	9	40	-	55	33	4	3	21
Barton Pits	11	28	38	30	3	18	7	5	1	6	25	40
Whisby NP	50	40	28	-	-	-	1	3	8	5	20	30
Kirkby on Bain	34	54	28	5	11	2	1	-	-	2	1	10
Messingham SQ	12	48	24	-	10	-	-	-	7	2	7	26
Woodhall Spa	27	8	9	10	3	-	-	-	19	6	13	4

The table shows the top 10 sites holding maximum accumulated counts of more than 98 birds across the year ranked from highest to lowest. Other high counts included 50 at Bardney Pits Aug 10th and 51 at Tallington Lakes Dec 29th. The county total across all sites was 641 in Feb compared to 721 in Feb



2019 implying a slight decrease in wintering birds this year. Reports of breeding pairs were up this year to 34 pairs from eight in 2019. There were 19 reports of confirmed breeding with three broods of three at Barton Pits on May 29th, one on May 31st and three on Jul 20th; there were 14 other confirmed breeding pairs between Far Ings and Barrow Pits. At Frampton Marsh a brood of four was reported on Jun 20th and three on Jul 15th. There were three probable breeding pairs here too. Elsewhere there were six probable breeding pairs in the Baston area, two at Deeping Lakes, two at Messingham SQ, one at Dawson City Pit and one at Kirkby on Bain. Summering birds were reported from Bardney but as usual failure to report the sex of birds seen in May and Jun bedevils arriving at an accurate breeding assessment.

# Ring-necked Duck

Aythya collaris

Very scarce visitor. N. America. First county record was in Jun 1979 with at least 36 more since although wandering individuals make accurate record assessment difficult. **LBRC** 

A female was at Woodhall Spa Airfield Jan 19th-Feb 25th (CA, et al) and another male was found on May 1st on a small pool at Heckington STW (R. Shrouder). This species has been nearly annual since the late 1980s, although given its mobility the number of individuals is necessarily an approximation but has probably involved 15-20 birds.



Ring-necked Duck Aythya collaris Woodhall Spa Airfield Feb 8th 2020 © RUSS HAYES

# **Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuliqula* ■

Fairly common breeding species on gravel pits and similar water bodies, and fairly common or common winter visitor. Green List. Threshold for international importance: 8,900; for national importance: 1,300

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Whisby NP	134	148	167	148	37	18	95	194	97	111	134	147
Covenham Reservoir	129	77	88	100	46	56	73	25	126	173	163	150
Baston - Langtoft Pits	191	-	162	153	98	15	30	30	-	-	242	261
Deeping Lakes	65	75	65	-	20	11	55	450	62	19	150	72
Frampton Marsh	220	76	50	-	50	29	150	20	15	52	11	21
Bardney	73	20	18	-	-	37	40	126	168	49	34	18
Tattershall Thorpe	110	72	84	26	11	15	3	45	3	71	43	85
Barton Pits	22	258	101	-	-	30	30	19	13	26	29	3
North Hykeham	118	89	61	-	3	-	-	100	30	57	27	22
Messingham SQ	50	72	45	-	2	-	5	10	12	63	60	140

The table lists the top 10 sites all of which had a cumulative annual monthly total of more than 450 birds. Other non-tabulated sites reporting over 100 birds were Kirkby on Bain GP (150) and Denton Reservoir (131) both in Jan and Bagmoor Floods in Aug (133). The species was found in 18% of BBS squares (2019 11%) with an average of 5.9 birds per occupied square (2019 9.4).

# Scaup Aythya marila

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor to estuaries and coast; numbers have declined. Rare in summer; bred in 1944. Red List. Threshold for international importance: 3,100; for national importance: 39.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Goxhill	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	29
Barton Pits	4	7	3	2	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-
Frampton Marsh	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	3
Gibraltar Point	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	3	-	2
Huttoft	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	2

The highest count of the year was 29 mixed in with a flock of 338 Goldeneye at Goxhill on Dec 5th. Sadly, this flock did not winter, declining to seven on Dec 13th and four on Dec 20th. Birds were reported from 18 sites, the same as in 2019. Twelve of these sites were on the coast and six were inland. The table lists all sites reporting a cumulative annual total of 5 or more birds. At Barton Pits the injured male that had been present since 2016 was not seen after Jun presumably having met its demise. Inland there were singles at Denton in Jan, Deeping Lakes and Woodhall Spa in Feb, Covenham Reservoir in Sep and Nov and Tallington in Dec.

# **Eider** Somateria mollissima S. mollissima (S.m. mollissima)

Present offshore throughout the year: fairly common on passage and in winter, scarce in summer. Mainly found in The Wash and rare inland. Under recorded because most of the population stays well offshore; however, numbers have recently declined. Both subspecies on the Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 9,800; for national importance (except Shetland): 770.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	906	1629	70	6	11	10	28	5	5	16	50	1559
Friskney	87	63	317	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Roger Toft Sands	350	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Freiston Shore	-	5	12	-	7	2	54	54	41	1	12	50
Wainfleet All Saints	152	19	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Leverton	61	-	41	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Butterwick	-	9	2	-	-	-	42	34	8	-	1	1
Grainthorpe	8	15	14	-	6	-	8	6	-	9	-	-
Huttoft	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	14	22	11

Birds were reported from 22 sites compared to 19 in 2019. The highest count of the year was 1,629 moving south into The Wash at Gibraltar Point on Feb 11th. Ten of these sites were in The Wash, nine along the coast and three in the outer Humber Mouth. The table lists all sites reporting cumulative annual maxima of 50 or more birds. The highest monthly count across all sites was 1,743 in Feb of which all but 32 were in The Wash. No birds were reported inland. A raft of 1,400 birds offshore from Gibraltar Point on Dec 17th made an impressive sight. The largest count outside The Wash was 24 off Crook Bank, Theddlethorpe on Jan 25th and the largest count in the Humber was 15 north of Grainthorpe Haven on Feb 11th. As usual birds were present in every month with small numbers of immature birds summering in The Wash.



#### Velvet Scoter Melanitta fusca

velvet Scoter Welanitta tusca

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor. Rare inland and in summer. Red List. Threshold for international importance: 4,000; for national importance: 34.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13	3
Gibraltar Point	-	-	1	-	3	-	-	-	1	2	3	1
Huttoft	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	1	1
Gat Sands, The Wash	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Freiston Shore	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
Tetney Marsh	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mablethorpe NE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Sutton on Sea	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Trusthorpe	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-

The table above shows peak monthly counts from all sites from which reports were received. The highest count of the year was 13 birds seen at Crook Bank, Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe on Nov 27th. Very few birds, if any, winter off Lincolnshire. Most reports are of birds flying by or resting on the sea. Birds seen consistently for periods over a week are unusual although two to three were seen off Tetney Marsh throughout Jan in a large Common Scoter flock. There were no records reported from inland.

#### Common Scoter Melanitta nigra ■

Fairly common offshore passage migrant and winter visitor, scarce in summer but autumn movements begin in Jun-Jul. Very scarce inland. Red List. Threshold for international importance: 7,500; for national importance: 1,300.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	70	250	17	500	55	110	190	346	1046	249	91	667
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	100	65	240	-	25	90	400	200	240	-	501	250
Gat Sands, The Wash	2000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Huttoft	-	-	-	-	-	16	57	73	410	182	195	300
Sutton on Sea	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	264	90	127	27
Tetney Marsh	250	-	26	6	30	82	55	20	-	-	-	-
Chapel St Leonards	5	30	33	60	7	45	45	180	50	-	-	-
Saltfleet	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	300	85	-	-
Anderby	13	2	73	-	77	5	320	70	3	16	1	-
Mablethorpe	11	30		-	-	22	80	-	-	-	-	-

Recorded in all months of the year with reports from 40 sites. The highest count of the year was 2,000 at Gat Sands, The Wash on Jan 10th. The table lists the top 10 sites reporting cumulative monthly maxima of 140 or more birds. These totals were split between The Wash 46%, the coast 45%, the Humber 8% and inland 1%. Wintering birds were much more focused with the largest numbers in The Wash, a much smaller but annual wintering flock off Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe and a flock in the Humber off Tetney. The COVID-19 restrictions from late Mar encouraged more birders to get involved in nocturnal migration either formally



**Common Scoter** *Melanitta nigra* Messingham Apr 13th 2020 © SIMON SPAVIN

with recorders or sitting in their gardens listening for calling birds as they moved cross-country overnight on the first stage of their spring migration from the Irish Sea to the North Sea. At Manthorpe an estimated flock of 100 birds was recorded on Apr 1st while one lucky midnight listener reported hearing 12 birds over Spalding on Apr 4th. More traditional inland Scoter observations came from Covenham Reservoir where there were five on Apr 9th and 10 on Apr 25th with two on Jul 24th and single birds on six dates from Sep-Dec. Toft Newton Reservoir also had single birds reported in May, Jul, and Oct.

# **Long-tailed Duck** Clangula hyemalis

# Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor, rare in summer and inland. Red List. Threshold for international importance: 16,000; for national importance: 130.

The first bird of the year was a female/imm. at N. Hykeham which moved around the local pits between Jan 2nd–22nd. A single was at Chapel Point on Feb 1st, and another flew south at Gibraltar Point on Feb 20th. There were no further records until Oct when there were singles off Huttoft on 13th and 14th and three on 15th. A female/imm. was found at Paradise Pool, Saltfleet on Oct 26th which stayed until Nov 22nd. At Gibraltar Point there were two on Nov 13th and 16th and singles on Nov 19th and Dec 20th. Dec was the best month of the year and Freiston Shore had the most birds, with one on 3rd, two on 4th and nine on 5th. Elsewhere there were singles at Huttoft on Dec 18th and Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe on Dec 31st.

# Goldeneye Bucephala clangula

Fairly common but somewhat localised winter visitor, rare in summer. Red List. Threshold for international importance: 11,400; for national importance: 190.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Goxhill	112	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	170	338
Covenham Reservoir	82	79	63	22	1	-	-	-	2	7	54	70
Barton Pits	45	99	85	35	4	1	1	1	-	2	12	1
Toft Newton Reservoir	21	23	19	11	-	-	-	-	1	10	23	31
Deeping Lakes	20	28	14	-	-	-	-	-	-		17	24
Whisby NP	34	22	22	9	-	-	-	-	-	1	5	9
Freiston Shore	4	13	8	-	-	-	-	-	-		32	22
Bardney	13	16	21	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	4	16
Baston - Langtoft Pits	33	1	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	12
Frampton Marsh	9	9	18	-	-	-	1	-	-	7	5	8



LEFT: Goldeneye Bucephala clangula Covenham Res Dec 14th 2020 GARY FENWICK RIGHT: Goosander Mergus merganser Hartsholme Park Feb 5th 2020 © CHRIS GRIMSHAW



Recorded in all months of the year with reports from 43 sites. The highest count of the year was 338 at Goxhill on Dec 5th, which surpassed the threshold for a nationally important site. The table lists the top 10 sites reporting cumulative monthly maxima of 50 or more birds. The distribution of the total cumulative counts for all sites was as follows: inland 49%, Humber 43%, The Wash 7%, coast 1%. As can be seen from the table most birds depart in Mar and return from Nov. The only site holding nationally important numbers in 2020 was Goxhill adjacent to the Humber.

# Smew Mergellus albellus ■

Very scarce winter visitor, with occasional larger influxes in severe weather. Red List. Threshold for international importance: 300; for national importance: 1.

There were seven records of eight birds this year. A redhead present in Dec 2019 at Kirkby GP was reported on eight dates there between Jan 2nd-13th. It showed white streaks on the flanks and was thought to be an immature male. At Baston GP a drake was present on Jan 1st and what may have been the same bird was reported on Jan 19th, though the sex was unspecified. A Redhead was at Covenham Reservoir on six dates between Jan 13th–Feb 3rd. There were no further records until Nov 2nd when Baston GP had a redhead and there were other singles in Nov at Boultham Park on 30th and Frampton Marsh on 30th and Dec 1st. The last records of the year were two drakes at Baston GP on Dec 28th and 29th.

# Goosander Mergus merganser

Fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor, mainly inland. Rare in summer. Green List. Threshold for international importance: 2,100; for national importance: 150.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Willow Tree Fen	65	52	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	42
Deeping Lakes	4	14	12	-	-	-	-	-	4	4	2	13
Crowland	20	6	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	8
Boultham Mere	19	6	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	9
Lincoln	6	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	14
Fiskerton Fen	10	12	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12
Gibraltar Point	7	4	7	-	-	-	-	-	3	5	3	7
Covenham Reservoir	5	3	2	-	-	-	-	-		3	12	7
Deeping High Bank	11	8	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	7
Woodhall Spa	19	5	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-



Recorded in nine months of the year with reports from 70 sites. The highest count of the year was at Willow Tree Fen on Jan 18th. The table lists the top 10 sites reporting cumulative monthly maximum of 30 or more birds. Jan peak counts across all sites totalled 272 birds. Generally, most birds left in late winter. The only inland records for Apr came from the south fens where a male was seen flying along the river at Deeping Lakes on Apr 5th and two were at Vernatt's Drain Spalding on Apr 1st. One flew south at Huttoft Car Terrace on Apr 25th. In May one was on Huttoft Pit on 13th-14th. There has never been a breeding record of this species in Lincolnshire, and it is worth keeping an eye on any site which holds birds in Apr/May. There were no records during Jun-Aug. Although there are a few records in Sep-Oct most wintering birds arrive in Nov-Dec. Some passage was observed along the coast, mainly at Gibraltar Point and Huttoft Bank, but 97% of cumulative monthly maxima came from inland waters.

# Red-breasted Merganser Mergus serrator

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor, mainly coastal and especially in The Wash. Very scarce inland and in summer. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 860; for national importance: 100.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	25	33	7	6	7	-	-	-	2	5	13	16
Freiston Shore	-	3	5	-	-	-	-	1	9	3	17	23
Witham Mouth	6	6	5	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
The Wash	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Butterwick	-	-	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Leverton	3	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sutton Bridge	-	-	2	4	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Huttoft	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	1	-
Donna Nook	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	-

Recorded in 11 months of the year with reports from 18 sites. The highest count of the year was 33 at Gibraltar Point on Feb 10th. The table lists the top nine sites reporting cumulative monthly maxima of four or more birds. Jan peak counts across all sites totalled 53 birds. The distribution of cumulative monthly maxima was The Wash 91%, coast 8%. Only two records came from the Humber, singles at Tetney Marsh Jun 13th and Barton upon Humber on Sep 17th. There was only one inland, a single at Gunthorpe on the Trent on Jan 30th. Red-breasted Merganser is very much a sea sawbill.

### Ruddy Duck Oxyura jamaicensis

Former scarce feral breeder and winter visitor, now rare, maybe extinct in the county. **RBBP.** No records of this species were received in 2020, now presumed extinct in the county.

# Red-legged Partridge Alectoris rufa

A common species of arable farmland, with a resident population augmented each year by releases for shooting.

Recorded in 33% of BBS squares (2019, 46%) with an average of 2.3 birds per occupied square (2019, 2.8/ sq.). It is the 30th most widespread species found on BBS in Lincolnshire and 61st in terms of numbers. The Red-legged Partridge shooting season runs from Sep 1st to Feb 1st and poults are released from late Jun through to early Aug. The highest count from outside this period was 45 at Trent Port (Marton) on Feb 17th, the ones that got away perhaps? The distribution map for this species in European Breeding Bird Atlas 2 (2021), shows Lincolnshire has a greater probability of occurrence of this species than its native France, but much less than its centre of distribution in the Iberian Peninsula. Whether this is because our local conditions are so suitable for this species, or the breeding population is replenished annually by shoot release survivors is a moot point, but the latter seems more likely.



Red-legged Partridge Alectoris rufa Eastoft Feb 5th 2020 © PAUL COOMBES

# Grey Partridge Perdix perdix ■

Common resident but declining resident, especially in the southern half of the county. Red List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Sturton by Stow	22	35	29	22	16	12	15	20	40	21	20	7
Boultham Mere	-	1	2	4	2	-	11	13	10	14	13	10
Toft Newton Reservoir	8	2	2	5	3	-	3	14	12	5	17	-
Normanby by Spital	-	11	7	-	-	-	-	8	12	9	2	19
Baumber Park	4	4	2	4	2	2	-	-	-	7	25	11
Tetney Marsh	15	-	-	8	7	4	3	8	-	-	-	-
Covenham Reservoir	2	2	-	-	-	-	1	-	18	9	10	-
Baumber	9	2	4	2	2	2	1	-	-	-	14	4
North Kelsey Carrs	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	9	4	11	9	-
Marton	6	2	2	3	3	-	-	-	4	-	8	8

Recorded in 18% of BBS squares (2019, 25%) with an average of 2.3 birds per occupied square (2019, 1.7/ sq.). It was the 45th most widespread species in the county with no change from 2019 and the 58th in terms of numbers, up from 65th in 2019. Although Grey Partridge has declined over the last 25 years to the extent it is a red data listed species for UK conservation purposes, the distribution map for this species in European Breeding Bird Atlas 2 (2021), shows Lincolnshire still has one of the highest probabilities of occurrence in Western Europe. The table shows the top 10 sites holding cumulative peak counts of more than 35 birds. The highest count of the year of 40 birds again came from Sturton by Stow, though in Aug rather than Dec as in the previous year.

# Quail Coturnix coturnix

#### Scarce summer visitor Apr-Sep, rare in winter. Probably much under-recorded. Amber List. RBBP

The highest count for the year was 10 at Withcall on Aug 6th. Recorded in four months of the year. There were 36 observer sightings recorded during the year from 20 sites. Up from 28 records from 15 sites in 2019. The improvement in Quail numbers following the exceptionally poor year of 2018 continued into 2020. Of the 53 records received the first arrivals of singing birds were eight days earlier than 2019 with five at Withcall on May 17th followed by one at Seacroft on May 18th and singles at Croftmarsh, Gibraltar Point and Morton Fen on May 19th. No night migrants or late coastal migrants were reported with the

last record of two calling birds coming from Withcall on Sep 3rd. In the breeding category there was also a much better showing. There was a total of 29 singing birds up from 16 in 2019 of which eight probably bred and 21 possibly bred. For the purposes of record classification birds singing inland on a single date are treated as possibly breeding and if there is more than one bird on one occasion at the same site or two or more reports of a single singing bird one week apart probable breeding is recorded. In the 2019 report it was stated "Confirmed breeding is an extremely rare occurrence for Quail in Lincolnshire and observers are challenged to attempt to establish such an event, if they are able to do so without disturbing breeding birds". At Withcall four to five calling birds were reported from May to Jul with 10 on Aug 6th. None of these birds were seen. It is speculated that the increase from Jul to Aug was of locally bred birds (and the additional five are not included in the totals) but this speculation is insufficient to confirm breeding! At Crowland one to five birds were reported from May 25th to 31st. These have been treated as three probable breeders and two possibles. All the other 18 sites were one day records. The records received came from May (18), Jun (6), Jul (6), Aug (6) and Sep (1).

#### Pheasant Phasianus colchicus

# Very common feral resident: huge numbers released for shooting annually.

Recorded in 73% of BBS squares (2019, 93%) with an average of 2.3 birds per occupied square (2019, 4.9/ sq.). It was the 11th most widespread species in the county, down from 5th in 2019. It should be noted that Pheasant display in the early part of spring makes this species easy to detect and the negative impact of COVID-19 restrictions which meant very few early BBS visits took place, is probably why this species was under-recorded more than others in 2020.

## Nightjar Caprimulgus europaeus

#### Scarce summer visitor and very scarce passage migrant. Amber List.

Unfortunately, the first bird of the year was found dead at Woolsthorpe by Colsterworth on May 6th. Further spring passage birds were a female found day-roosting at Alkborough Flats on May 14th, the first site record, and one at Tetney on the 15th. Reports from known breeding sites were mixed; a full survey



Nightjar Caprimulgus europaeus Alkborough Flats May 14th 2020 © GRAHAM CATLEY



at Crowle Moors revealed 13 churring males and one, possibly two, males were churring at Epworth Turbary and two males at Stapleford Woods, a reoccupied site following recent clear-felling. One male was churring at Walesby with a second bird presumably a female there and one was churring at Ostlers Plantation. At Scotton Common there were three birds in Jun but there was no survey in the key locality of Laughton Forest with the only reports showing the presence of at least seven churring males. The last record of the year concerned a female being pursued by a Sparrowhawk at Frampton Marsh on Aug 15th.

### Alpine Swift Apus melba

Rare. S. Europe. Recorded from Mar-Aug with a single record from Oct. **LBRC.** No records of this species were received in 2020.

# Common Swift Apus apus

Very common but declining summer visitor and passage migrant. Red List.

The highest count for the year was 46,026 at Gibraltar Point on Jun 29th. Recorded in seven months of the year from Apr to Oct. There were 2,178 observer sightings reported from 203 sites.

Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct
5	226	46026	6980	2161	15	-
1	2	266	756	100	-	1
50	400	600	300	60	300	-
-	65	400	24	2	2	-
40	500	250	70	16	20	-
10	200	150	154	15	1	-
5	450	100	3	4	8	-
30	60	14	3	3	-	-
5	220	70	30	15	8	-
	5 1 50 - 40 10 5	5 226 1 2 50 400 - 65 40 500 10 200 5 450 30 60	5 226 46026 1 2 266 50 400 600 - 65 400 40 500 250 10 200 150 5 450 100 30 60 14	5     226     46026     6980       1     2     266     756       50     400     600     300       -     65     400     24       40     500     250     70       10     200     150     154       5     450     100     3       30     60     14     3	5     226     46026     6980     2161       1     2     266     756     100       50     400     600     300     60       -     65     400     24     2       40     500     250     70     16       10     200     150     154     15       5     450     100     3     4       30     60     14     3     3	5     226     46026     6980     2161     15       1     2     266     756     100     -       50     400     600     300     60     300       -     65     400     24     2     2       40     500     250     70     16     20       10     200     150     154     15     1       5     450     100     3     4     8       30     60     14     3     3     -

The first of the year was at Frampton Marsh on Apr 17th followed by two at Covenham Reservoir on the 20th. High counts to the end of the month included 10 at Bardney on the 26th, 40 at Covenham Reservoir on the 28th and 30th, 50 at Frampton Marsh on the 28th and 30 at Alkborough Flats on the 30th. As usual there was an influx in early May with highs of 300 at Covenham Reservoir on the 5th and 120 at Toft Newton Reservoir the same day. By the end of the second week these numbers had risen to 500 and 200 respectively and there were 400 at Frampton Marsh, also on the 13th. Thereafter, smaller numbers became very widespread and other significant counts were 226 at Gibraltar Point on the 23rd and 450 at Barton on the 24th. During Jun small numbers were widespread with 100s gathering occasionally at some regular feeding sites such as Covenham Reservoir, Toft Newton Reservoir and Barton Pits. Significant coastal movements were noted in the south of the county, especially at Gibraltar Point where there were



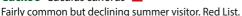
2,980 on the 19th, 19,418 on the 28th and a massive 46,026 on the 29th. Throughout Jul and Aug birds were more settled and smaller numbers were recorded very widely. There were many fewer records in Sep with a high count of 300 at Frampton Marsh on the 5th. There were just two Oct records with one at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe on the 4th and one south at Anderby Creek on the 5th.

Swift was reported in 27% of Lincolnshire BBS squares (2019, 36%) with an average of five birds per occupied square (2019, 5). It was the 36th most widespread species recorded in the Lincolnshire BBS, unchanged from 2019.

#### Common Swift Apus apus

ABOVE: Marston STW May 1st 2020 © STEVE NESBITT LEFT: Toft Newton Res May 5th 2020 © SIMON SPAVIN

#### **Cuckoo** Cuculus canorus



Site	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Gibraltar Point		6	9	8	2	2	1
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe		3	7	6	1	1	-
Baston - Langtoft Pits		3	6	5	-	-	-
Tetney Marsh		2	6	3	2	1	-
Seacroft		3	4	3	1	-	-
Alkborough Flats		-	5	2	-	2	1
Anderby Creek		2	6	1	1	-	-
Boultham Mere		3	4	3	-	-	-
Donna Nook		5	3	-	-	-	-
Trent Port (Marton)		1	3	2	1	1	-
No. of birds at all sites		67	184	83	16	8	4
No. of sites		44	99	48	14	6	4

The first was at Deeping Lakes on Apr 20th followed by birds on Apr 25th at Baston fen and Skellingthorpe. The highest count was 9 at Gibraltar Point on May 15th. The table shows the maximum peak monthly count for all sites with a cumulative annual monthly peak total of more than 8 birds. Records came from 123 sites with 68 of those reporting single birds in one month. The peak count across all sites in May was 184 at 99 sites. Recorded in 12% of BBS squares (2019, 15%) with an average of 1.2 birds per occupied square (2019, 1.1/sq.). It was the 61st most widespread species down from 59th in 2019. Fewer juveniles were reported than in 2019 and the last birds reported were at Middlemarsh Farm Sep 8th-11th and Gibraltar Point Sep 15th.

# Rock Dove (feral) Columba livia 'feral' Common and widespread resident. Green List.

The highest count of the year of 500 came from Pyewipe Marsh, Grimsby on a WeBS count on Dec 20th. Nineteen counts of 100 or more were received this year. There were 400 at Brayford Pool, Lincoln on Nov 27th and 250 at Middlemarsh Farm on Nov 19th. Freiston Shore reported 150 on Nov 26th. Recorded in 20% of BBS squares (2019, 27%) with an average of 9.8 birds per occupied square (2019, 10.2/sq.), it was the 43rd most widespread species in the county up from 44th in 2019 and the 9th in terms of numbers, up from 10th in 2019.

# Stock Dove Columba oenas

Common and increasing resident and winter visitor. Amber List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	40	57	23	22	10	6	6	5	20	21	15	19
Baston Fen	19	4	5	1	2	6	18	-	24	18	5	120
Huttoft	-	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	52	39	25
Covenham Reservoir	10	3	8	6	5	2	10	3	2	2	72	8
Manby Wetlands	55	7	6	7	4	2	2	3	-	5	16	9
Louth	5	8	10	11	6	16	10	12	16	7	4	10
Baston - Langtoft Pits	2	-	15	17	4	3	4	39	1	-	12	6
Middlemarsh Farm	14	12	4	6	5	7	7	4	3	3	12	18
Donna Nook	20	4	23	14	15	-	1	3	2	1	-	-
Trent Port (Marton)	2	4	12	4	4	6	4	4	11	9	9	2

The highest count of the year was 130 at Freiston Shore on Dec 18th. There was also 100 at Laughton Forest on Mar 7th. The highest count in 2020 was lower than the high count of 218 at East Halton in Apr 2019. The table shows the top 10 sites which held cumulative monthly counts of more than 70 and entries for at least five months of the year. Recorded in 39% of BBS squares (2019, 47%) with an average of 2.9 birds per occupied square (2019, 3.3 /sq.), it was the 28th most widespread species in the county up from 29h in 2019 and the 48th in terms of numbers, down from 41st in 2019.

# Wood Pigeon Columba palumbus

Abundant resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. BBS data suggests no significant change in the breeding population from 1994-2018. Amber List.



**Stock Dove** *Columba oenas* Grantham May 17th 2020 © STEVE NESBITT

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	450	500	1400	871	508	250	200	200	300	4490	2845	172
Lincoln	5	389	198	63	31	30	21	20	44	685	4351	300
Louth	300	30	20	202	47	207	4	50	500	100	2500	1000
Middlemarsh Farm	250	300	300	300	250	300	700	500	250	300	900	300
Covenham Reservoir	500	1500	50	30	15	-	5	3	90	20	800	50
Trent Port (Marton)	14	1400	25	18	25	18	120	20	45	85	401	160
Stallingborough	1000	700	200	-	4	50	25	40	12	50	32	30
Long Bennington	450	700	219	45	58	74	107	38	95	102	22	36
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	100	120	300	350	300	40	-	30	20	40	150	70
Manby Wetlands	100	182	350	50	120	70	9	15	160	150	100	83



Wood Pigeon Columba palumbus Grasby May 26th 2020 © ROY HARVEY

The highest count of the year was of 4,490 moving south at Gibraltar Point on Oct 27th, remarkably like the Oct 2019 high count of 4,693 at the same place. The table shows the top 10 sites with cumulative monthly counts of 1,300 or more and which had entries for at least 11 months of the year. The only other count of more than 2,000 came from Spilsby with 2,215 on Nov 11th. It is notable that all counts over 1,600 came in the period Oct 25th-Nov 25th. Recorded in 100% of BBS squares (2019, 100%) with an average of 36.1 birds per occupied square (2019, 39.2 /sq.). It was the number one most widespread species in the county, as it was in 2019, and also our most numerous bird counted on BBS in 2019 and 2020.

**Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur* Common in the early 90s now scarce and declining summer visitor and passage migrant. Red List. **RBBP** 

Site	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Pairs	Possibles
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	-	5	4	5	1	13	4	-
Dyke	-	2	1	-	-	-	2	-
Frampton Marsh	1	2	3	2	2	-	2	-
Kirkby on Bain	-	3	1	1	1	-	2	-
Eagle	1	4	1	-	-	-	1	3
Alkborough	-	1	1	-	-	-	1	-
Boatmere Scrape	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	-
Boston	1	1	-	1	3	-	1	-
Cut End	-	-	1	-	1	-	1	-
Dunsby	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-
Job's Lane Pit	-	1	1	1	1	-	1	-
Old Bolingbroke	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	-
Walesby Moor	-	1	2	-	-	-	1	-
West Keal	-	1	1	1	-	-	1	-
Pinchbeck Slipe	-	1	1	-	-	-	1	-
Thurlby Fen	-	1	1	-	-	-	1	-
Crowle Moors	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Dowsby Fen	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Dunston Heath	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Gedney Drove End	1	-	-		-	-	-	1
Guy's Head	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Hagworthingham	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Kirton Marsh	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Martin Moor	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Metheringham	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Sibsey	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Stanton's Pit	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Sutterby	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Tallington Lakes	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Witham St Hugh's	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Gibraltar Point	-	1	-	-	2	-	-	-
Manby Wetlands	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Tetney Blow Wells	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	
Total							22	17

The table above includes <u>all</u> sites from which birds were reported in 2020. The first bird of the year was at Gedney Drove End on Apr 20th, but most arrived in the first two weeks of May. As in 2019 there was no formal evidence of confirmed breeding this year and no juveniles were reported. The highest count of



Turtle Dove Streptopelia turtur North Thoresby Jun 14th 2020 © MARK JOHNSON

the year of 13 at Crook Bank, Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe on Sep 4th is suggestive of a post breeding flock at that site, which seems to be the last stronghold in Lincolnshire holding at least four pairs. The data in the table has been produced in the same way as that for 2019. In summary there were 22 probable pairs from 16 sites compared to 20 from 14 sites in 2019. There were also 17 possible breeding reports compared to five possibles in 2019. There was therefore a slight increase in reported birds if one is looking for any ray of hope in the depressing 99.5% decline of the Turtle Dove in Lincolnshire since the 1980s as outlined in the 2019 LBR. A full national survey was conducted in 2021. It seemed to be well supported and the results are keenly awaited. The survey was presaged by a fascinating paper in the Apr 2021 issue of British Birds. "Turtle Doves, trial plots and Trichomonas: understanding and conserving the UK's rarest dove" by Jenny Dunn. It identifies the fact that the decline has many facets not least shooting on migration and the poor productivity of breeding pairs evidenced in Lincolnshire by no reported juvs. in 2019 and 2020. Another factor

caused by the lack of weed seeds in the current hyper-cleansed agricultural environment may be feeding at bird tables where the risk of *Trichomonas* transmission and subsequent mortality is high. It is worth noting in this context that none of the birds reported in LBR 2020 were noted as feeding at bird tables. It is to be hoped that the experimental seed plots being developed to improve Turtle Dove productivity will be taken up by farmers and conservation organisations in Lincolnshire. The last birds of the year were three at Crook Bank on Sep 7th.

# **Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto* **Very common resident. Green List.**

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Goxhill Marsh	72	55	-	-	-	-	-	15	-	15	26	1
Keelby	12	20	18	9	-	10	16	5	15	15	25	31
Tetney Marsh	45	-	30	20	20	20	20	15	-	-	-	-
Louth	10	6	4	26	8	18	10	3	6	32	5	10
Donna Nook	2	14	2	2	20	-	-	11	2	23	-	-
Long Bennington	8	13	8	7	5	4	9	5	3	3	6	3
North Thoresby	6	8	3	5	3	8	-	6	1	7	5	14
Gipsey Bridge	-	-	2	5	6	8	3	4	2	4	12	15
Normanby by Spital	11	6	5	5	4	-	3	7	6	2	6	6
Humberston Fitties	10	5	7	6	6	6	4	2	3	_	7	2

The highest count of the year was 206 at a cattle feeding facility outside Burgh le Marsh on Nov 27th. This contrasts to the highest count of 38 at Covenham in Jan 2019. Isolated grain stores and winter cattle feeding barns, which provide great bird feeding opportunities, are probably vastly under watched and it is likely there are many more unreported winter concentrations around the county. The table shows the top 10 sites which held cumulative monthly counts of more than 57 and entries for at least five months of the year. Recorded in 45% of BBS squares (2019, 53%) with an average of 5.6 birds per occupied square (2019, 4.5/sq.), it was the 25th most widespread species in the county up from 27h in 2019 and the 21st in terms of numbers, up from 33rd in 2019.



**Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*Grantham Apr 18th 2020 © STEVE NESBITT



Water Rail Rallus aquaticus Whisby NR Mar 13th 2020 © STEVE LOVELL

# Water Rail Rallus aquaticus

Scarce resident, fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor. Much under-recorded. Ceased to be an RBBP species from 2018 onwards. Green List. Threshold for international importance: 6,400; for national importance: no data.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Alkborough	1	-	2	69	1	3	2	2	2	2	1	-
Barton Pits	5	2	3	30	-	2	-	1	-	2	4	2
Marston STW	5	1	1	-	-	-	1	1	1	5	3	8
Frampton Marsh	1	1	2	-	-	1	2	1	3	1	5	4
Gibraltar Point	2	3	1	1	1	1	-	1	2	3	4	2
Boultham Mere	1	1	1	1	-	1	3	2	2	2	3	2
Chapel St Leonards	2	2	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	4	-
Tetney Blow Wells	-	4	-	-	2	-	-	-	2	3	-	-
Messingham SQ	-	1	3	1	-	-	1	-	2	1	1	-
Whisby NP	1	2	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	2	1

The highest counts were both of territories from GPC who found 69 at Alkborough and 30 at Barton Pits from Apr through to the end of Jun. The Humber bank is the centre of the breeding area of Water Rail in Lincolnshire, but the species is widespread along the coast and inland wetland areas of the county. Reports came from 54 sites up from 36 in 2019. The table shows the top 10 sites which held cumulative monthly counts of 10 or more birds. Confirmed breeding reports all involving a single chick came from Boultham Mere Jun 2nd, Huttoft Pit Jul 13th, Frampton Marsh Jul 19th, Barton Pits Aug 6th, and Kirkby on Bain GP Aug 2nd-27th, only the second confirmed breeding at this last site.

#### Corncrake Crex crex

Very scarce passage migrant. Red List. LBRC RBBP.

No records of this species were received in 2020.

# Spotted Crake Porzana porzana

Rare migrant, though historically a breeding species up to the latter half of the 19th Century. Calling male recorded once in last 29 years to 2018. Amber List. LBRC.

An extremely poor year for this species with just one record of a calling male at Alkborough Flats Apr 30th-May 2nd only (ND, GPC).

### **Moorhen** Gallinula chloropus



Very common resident and partial migrant. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 20,000; for national importance: 3,000.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Frampton Marsh	14	22	120	-	5	35	22	40	35	45	13	143
Whisby NP	16	15	20	12	13	17	16	23	35	35	23	25
Stamford	24	14	27	2	-	4	1	1	25	22	29	30
Middlemarsh Farm	21	23	14	16	14	9	9	9	10	12	19	16
Bardney Bridge -	11	13	17	9	8	4	14	27	10	-	15	31
Kirkstead Bridge												
Boultham	14	17	9	-	4	6	3	5	9	25	24	35
Holywell	25	26	15	-	-	-	-	-	14	18	18	22
Gibraltar Point	10	8	5	5	7	11	13	11	9	16	20	9
Marston STW	3	4	8	3	7	4	4	8	21	17	13	6
Cleethorpes	11	17	11	8	4	3	2	6	8	7	10	10

The highest count of the year was 143 at Frampton Marsh on Dec 20th, up from the Mar 2019 high count of 100 at the same place. The table shows the top 10 sites which held cumulative monthly counts of more than 95 birds. There were no other counts of more than 50 that are not shown in the table. Recorded in 27% of BBS squares (2019, 34%) with an average of 2.1 birds per occupied

square (2019, 1.5 /sq.), it was 39th most widespread species in the county, down from 37th in 2019. It was 62nd most numerous bird counted on BBS in 2020 up from 73rd in 2019. Moorhen Gallinula chloropus Hartsholme Park Feb 3rd 2020 © CHRIS GRIMSHAW

Coot Fulica atra



Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. Green List. Threshold for international importance: 15,000; for national importance: 2,000.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Covenham Reservoir	106	50	34	15	19	42	82	185	330	271	171	134
Whisby NP	49	37	40	33	27	46	73	81	102	173	169	191
Frampton Marsh	35	80	200	-	75	170	256	27	55	95	7	4
Deeping Lakes	65	57	32	-	14	44	101	500	46	42	33	30
Tattershall Thorpe	220	40	26	23	23	32	45	55	75	155	115	125
Boultham Mere	31	16	16	17	7	12	50	80	116	124	116	123
Kirkby on Bain	122	75	34	-	1	33	46	46	-	69	113	115
Baston - Langtoft Pits	101	8	-	15	39	107	227	-	42	-	61	30
Woodhall Spa	200	100	52	-	15	25	40	24	50	28	46	40
Barton Pits	100	123	77	-	-	12	11	30	12	75	65	2

The highest count of the year was 500 at Deeping Lakes on Aug 23rd, the same as the Mar 2019 peak count at Gibraltar Point. The table shows the top 10 sites which held cumulative monthly counts of more than 500 birds. In addition to the tabulated sites, the following had counts of more than 100: 130. Toft Newton Reservoir on Jan 1st; 119, Bardney Pit on Sep 7th; 154 at Norton Disney Pits on Dec 13th. Recorded in 16% of BBS squares (2019, 14%) with an average of 4.1 birds per occupied square (2019, 3/sq.), it was 54th most widespread species in the county, up from 60th in 2019 and 29th most numerous bird counted on BBS in 2020 up from 43rd in 2019.

# Crane Grus grus



Scarce but increasing migrant, recorded most months. Former breeding species and a common migrant to 16th/17th centuries but has bred again 2020 and 2021. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 3,500; for national importance: 2. RBBP LBRC.

At Sandtoft, Isle of Axholme a pair was frequently seen from Jan 2nd-27th, and possibly the same pair (which may have been roosting at the adjacent Hatfield Moor across the county boundary) were observed at Epworth Turbary Jan 6th and 26th, Crowle Moors Mar 14th and Sandtoft Mar 19th

The first of spring proper was seen heading south at Gibraltar Point on Mar 25th. Four were seen at Crowle on Apr 14th and four at Norton Disney on Apr 14th and 18th. The big excitement came at Willow Tree Fen where a pair of birds was seen to drive off four other Cranes on Apr 22nd. The pair were seen again on Apr 29th apparently establishing a nest site. Flsewhere two were at Dunston on



Crane Grus arus Sandtoft Jan 19th 2020 © PAUL COOMBES



Apr 23rd, at Langtoft on May 13th and 14th and Bardney on May 16th. Two were at Crowle Moor on May 31st. All prospecting birds, moot point?! The pair at Willow Tree Fen proved to be extremely secretive. One bird was flushed by a microlite on May 21st, and one was seen flying in on May 26th and again on May 28th. There were no more sightings until the pair was seen with a chick on Jun 23rd. The pair and their growing chick were seen regularly through Jul and Aug and were last seen flying off on Sep 1st. Thought to be the first confirmed breeding in Lincolnshire in over 400 years and testament to the growing British population. LWT are to be praised for the alacrity with which they closed the site and managed a team of voluntary wardens to protect the nesting birds and their chick. See the full account of this unique event on p242-243. In the autumn six birds flew high south at Louth on Sep 15th; three were flushed from a field adjacent to Baston Fen LWT reserve on Sep 16th and the last records of the year were three reported at Deeping High Bank on Dec 5th.

# Little Grebe Tachybaptus ruficollis

Fairly common resident, partial migrant and winter visitor, the latter especially noticeable in coastal regions. Green List. Threshold for national importance: 4,700; for national importance: 150.

The highest count for the year was 41 at Cowbit on Jan 20th. Recorded in all months of the year, there were 2,497 observer sightings from 95 sites.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Baston - Langtoft Pits	2	2	7	11	6	7	9	36	12	7	9	6
Alkborough Flats	4	-	-	-	34*	-	6	-	4	10	3	1
Frampton Marsh	1	6	7	-	2	12	17	29	25	15	9	1
Woodhall Spa	33	12	4	1	-	-	2	4	7	4	13	8
Holywell	19	11	17	-	-	-	-	-	22	16	19	31
Deeping Lakes	2	4	4	-	4	4	2	7	4	7	27	14
Toft Newton Reservoir	18	9	6	-	1	-	1	2	12	15	22	24
Covenham Reservoir	6	6	5	-	2	-	1	5	7	20	9	9
Kirkby GP	19	14	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gibraltar Point	9	16	11	11	7	4	9	10	15	15	11	5

<sup>\*17</sup> pairs estimated at Alkborough during the breeding season

High autumn and winter counts were received from the usual water bodies, and most of these birds are likely to be local breeders including 1CY birds although there may be some winter immigration from the near continent too. More than 2,200 records were received from around 110 sites with the highest count of 36 from Baston & Langtoft GP Aug 12th. Confirmed breeding records came from Alkborough Flats, Anderby Creek, Baston & Langtoft GP, Cress Marsh, Deeping Lakes NR, Frampton Marsh, Gibraltar Point, West Ashby Pits, Whisby NP and Wolla Bank Pits, and involved at least 29 pairs, most seen with chicks. Whinnying birds were reported at several other sites, but breeding activity is clearly under-reported given the number of suitable sites across the county. Breeding success at Alkborough Flats was again reported as being poor with complete failure of some breeding attempts. The first fledged juvenile was seen on the relatively late date of Jun 19th and there was a minimum of 10 fledged juveniles by mid-Aug.

# Red-necked Grebe Podiceps grisegena

Scarce, and more recently very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor, Sep-Apr, rare in summer. Red List. Threshold for international importance: 500; for national importance: 1.

The first bird of the year was on the sea at Gibraltar Point on Jan 30th and a bird was off Chapel Point North Sea Observatory on Mar 1st. A bird in full summer plumage was at Bagmoor Floods from Jun 26th-29th. On Aug 30th a single flew north off Sutton-on-Sea and another off Huttoft Car Terrace on Sep 16th. A single was at Freiston Shore on Nov 17th-18th. A long-staying adult in non-breeding plumage was at Covenham Reservoir from Nov 26th until the end of the year. In Dec one was at Huttoft Car Terrace on 16th and 22nd and at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe-Rimac one flew south on 29th.

#### **Great Crested Grebe** Podiceps cristatus

Fairly common resident, partial migrant and winter visitor. Suggestion of a recent decline from submitted records. Green List. Threshold for international importance: 6,300; for national importance: 170.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	7	54	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
Covenham Reservoir	4	4	7	8	6	11	24	32	33	50	42	43
Toft Newton Reservoir	18	5	6	4	2	2	6	13	15	26	33	25
Gibraltar Point	24	16	4	2	3	2	6	3	7	5	32	16
Freiston Shore	-	-	1	-	1	3	-	6	1	4	30	14
Cowbit	2	4	24	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	-	-
Frampton Marsh	1	1	2	-	8	24	12	5	5	2	-	-
Toft next Newton	6	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	8	17	19	9
Tallington Lakes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	17
North Hykeham GP	11	8	16	-	4	2	1	13	12	6	3	-

The top 10 sites are tabulated. More than 2,000 records were received from around 120 sites, both coastal and inland. The highest count of the year was on Feb 6th between Crook Bank and Churchill Lane, Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe NNR, when an exceptional 54 birds were counted on the sea in two groups about 200 metres apart. The post-breeding build-up at Covenham Reservoir began in late Jul, peaking on Oct 18th at 50 birds and with very similar peaks of 42 on Nov 6th and 43 on Dec 14th. Toft Newton Reservoir also saw peak counts in Nov-Dec. Movement of birds north and south at Gibraltar Point was noted during Jan-Feb, highest counts being 24 south on Jan 2nd and 16 Feb 12th. Autumn movements were seen Oct-Dec, with the highest count being 27 south Nov 13th. Confirmed breeding records came from Dunston, Baston & Langtoft GP, Deeping Lakes NR, Frampton Marsh, Gibraltar Point, Kirkby GP, R. Witham (Bardney-Kirkstead Bridge), Swanholme Lakes (Lincoln), and Whisby NP. Displaying pairs were seen at several other sites.

#### Slavonian Grebe Podiceps auritus

Very scarce/ scarce passage migrant and winter visitor, mainly Aug-May. Red List. Threshold for international importance: 50: for national importance: 9.



Slavonian Grebe Podiceps auritus Covenham Res Oct 14th 2020 © RUSS HAYES



In Jan singles were on the sea at Gibraltar Point on 2nd, 4th, 15th and 24th. Singles were also seen off Chapel Point on Jan 11th and at Witham Mouth on Jan 26th. The following week a single was off Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe on Feb 5th. In the autumn a long-staying individual was at Covenham Reservoir from Oct 14th and remained until at least Nov 22nd. A single was off Huttoft Car Terrace on Nov 8th. In Nov at Freiston Shore a single was recorded on 8th, 16th, 19th and 21st with two on Dec 4th and up to nine recorded on the 5th with at least two remaining until Dec 17th and 21st.

# Black-necked Grebe Podiceps nigricollis

Rare breeder, scarce passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber List. Threshold for national importance: 1,800; for national importance: 1. **RBBP.** 

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
No of Sites	-	1	2	1	1	2	2	4	3	2	2	-
No of Birds	-	2	5	1	4	8	7	4	3	2	2	-

Birds were reported from eight sites this year. The first were two reported at Frampton Marsh for one day on Feb 5th. Toft Newton Reservoir surprised with four birds on Mar 14th, two of which were in breeding plumage. They did not stay. There was a single at Covenham Reservoir on Mar 23rd. Former breeding site A had no records this year. Site B had a single on three dates in early Jun but no other evidence of breeding. Site C had one bird on one date in Aug. The main action was again at Frampton Marsh which had two confirmed breeding pairs which could be very difficult to see. Singles were seen on and off from Apr 10th with four adults, two pairs on May 9th, one pair of which was particularly elusive. The first brood of two was seen on Jun 18th and the second brood of a single chick was seen on Jun 25th, on which date all seven birds present were seen. All seven were only seen again on one subsequent date, Jun 30th. Six were seen on Jul 11th and then numbers rapidly fell away with a single juvenile present from Jul 20th – Aug 1st. There were no reports thereafter. This was the second successive year of confirmed breeding at this RSPB reserve. Elsewhere there was at bird at Barton Pits Oct 20th and a long staying juvenile at Baston Gravel Pits from Jul 6th through to Nov 3rd, (the latest bird of the year). Covenham Reservoir had singles on Aug 2nd and 20th, Sep 3rd, and 18th and finally on Nov 2nd. There was one on the sea at Anderby Creek on Sep 22nd and 24th.

#### Stone Curlew Burhinus oedicnemus

Rare summer visitor. Former breeder. No confirmed breeding since 1904. Amber List.

No records of this species were received in 2020.

# Oystercatcher Haematopus ostralegus

Very common coastal passage migrant/winter visitor and fairly common resident. Less common inland but now breeds in increasing numbers. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 8,200; for national importance: 2,900.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	6000	1500	1800	2475	1200	170	750	5008	13100	13400	11200	3700
Wainfleet Marsh	2487	3875	517	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Friskney	2390	3573	1611	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Leverton	2820	2300	428	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Freiston Shore	-	1367	875	-	205	475	840	2000	700	2100	150	400
Cleethorpes	137	87	50	33	30	30	150	700	2000	900	600	150
Marshchapel	2000	1500	-	-	-	-	-	506	568	800	-	1
Welland Marsh	1100	600	-	-	-	1500	4	-	-	1900	220	-
Frampton Marsh	1500	70	60	-	20	236	34	14	300	700	-	-
Grainthorpe	1230	1030	950	-	685	354	320	685	1020	479	785	389

Gibraltar Point counts exceeded the threshold for international importance on five dates in Sep-Nov; Wainfleet Marsh and Friskney Marsh both had nationally important counts in one month. The Wash remains one of the top five internationally important estuaries for this species in Britain.

Confirmed breeding reports (prs) were received from both coastal and inland locations: Baston & Langtoft GP (1); Cress Marsh (1); Frampton Marsh (1); Gibraltar Point (2); Kettleby (1); Kirkby GP (3-5); Middlemarsh Farm (2); N Hykeham Pits (1); West Ashby GP (1); Whisby NP (2).

Two birds originally ringed on The Wash in 1997 (FA89752) and 1998 (FA89304) were seen in

Norway in May and Mar respectively; the latter bird has been seen in

practically the same area now in 2008, 2016, 2017 and 2020, a remarkable bird and now 22 years old. Two other long-lived birds were noted – FP08005 ringed in 1999 on The Wash was seen alive on Breydon Water in Jun and FP39616 ringed on The Wash in 2002 was found freshly dead in Oct at exactly the same location.



© PAUL NEALE

Black-winged Stilt Himantopus himantopus

Rare but increasing summer visitor. Amber List. RBBP LBRC.

No records of this species were received in 2020.

### **Avocet** Recurvirostra avosetta

Fairly common coastal breeder has colonised inland localities in the past few years. Fairly common passage migrant, scarce in winter. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 940; for national importance: 87. **RBBP** 

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Read's Island	15	13	95	-	-	-	1100	2400	1500	550	47	25
Alkborough	-	-	64	32	36	193	350	824	220	-	-	8
Frampton Marsh	4	20	150	165	200	250	300	150	50	16	9	6
Killingholme	-	13	131	-	3	34	19	54	200	300	-	-
Gibraltar Point	-	2	22	43	69	78	112	76	44	22	19	80
Goxhill	80	-	72	-	-	-	34	29	82	49	20	5
East Halton	80	-	42	-	-	2	30	3	7	48	67	20
Grimsby	-	1	75	6	1	-	3	2	4	19	106	7
Middlemarsh Farm	-	-	12	21	33	21	14	10	1	-	-	-

The table shows the top 10 sites with cumulative maxima of 112 or more in the year. Birds were present all year round. Reads Island, though it no longer supports a breeding population, continues to be the only internationally important site for Avocet in Lincolnshire. The breeding fortunes of Avocet were poor this year. The total pairs reported of 188 was up from 2019 (168) but fledging success was low. On the Humber, Alkborough Flats and Barton Pits again had no breeding birds. It has been decided that RSPB lagoons at Whitton Island fall meters to the north of the Lincolnshire/Yorkshire County boundary which runs through the south of the island. The numbers for this colony will no longer be reported in LBR and the figures for breeding pairs in 2019 have been adjusted to reflect this decision. Killingholme Pits had up to 12 pairs but only one juv. fledged and there was no breeding at East Halton. All in all, a sorry picture for Avocet breeding success on the Humber. The only slight good news was first breeding reported at Cress Marsh, Stallingborough where eight pairs raised seven young. At the estuary mouth, there were 10 pairs at Donna Nook Realignment but once again no evidence of young raised. Around The Wash which now



holds 80% of the Lincolnshire breeding population there were 118 pairs at Frampton Marsh and five at Freiston Shore but no reports either way on breeding success despite the installation of a predator proof fence which appeared to have a big impact on the breeding success of all birds on the Frampton reserve. At Gibraltar Point NNR 25 pairs raised four young. Nearby at Middlemarsh Farm six pairs raised two young. There were two reports of breeding inland this year at Kirkby on Bain GP where one pair raised two chicks and at Kettleby where three pairs nested without success.

# Lapwing Vanellus vanellus

Common but declining breeding species, becoming scarce, and very common passage migrant and winter visitor. Red List. Threshold for international importance: 20,000; for national importance: 6,200.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Frampton Marsh	4000	14500	1500	-	100	120	200	200	950	1037	6000	8801
Read's Island	4000	7500	1	-	-	-	50	50	20	5000	4000	4300
Goxhill Marsh	5500	230	14	-	18	-	34	1	45	139	414	600
Ferriby Sluice —												
South Ferriby Cliff	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5000	-	-
Alkborough Flats	4600	768	1	18	20	68	320	126	34	225	1740	4800
Island Farm, Garthorpe	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4000	4000
Skitter Ness	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	450	3500
Killingholme	-	876	22	-	2	-	2	10	50	600	3100	1418
Kirton Marsh	-	2500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marshchapel	1100	2500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14
Gibraltar Point	1300	1200	200	12	53	44	200	170	160	400	1505	2050
Kirton in Lindsey	-	-	-	-	2	-	50	-	20	-	2000	100
Short Ferry	2000	100	-	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Freiston Shore		1710	40	-	-	3	150	30	-	350	750	300

A familiar but declining species but still recorded widely across the county with records from some 280 sites. The most significant sites are included with two sites - Frampton Marsh and Read's Island - being sites of international importance. No other sites reached the threshold for national importance (6,200), though there were many counts of 1,000-5,500 with Goxhill Marsh, South Ferriby, Alkborough Flats, Garthorpe, Skitter Ness, Marshchapel, Gibraltar Point, Kirton in Lindsey, Short Ferry and Freiston Shore holding important flocks in one or more months.

Breeding activity was reported from various sites. At Middlemarsh Farm, six pairs were displaying on Apr 20th; one pair with four chicks were present on Apr 25th; an adult with two chicks was seen on May



24th; a different adult with one chick on Jun 1st. Five juveniles were seen on Jun 18th, and it was thought that a minimum of eight chicks fledged in total. Pairs with chicks were recorded as follows: Breedon Scrape, Croft (7 nests); Deeping Lakes NR (3 fledged chicks); Deeping Fen (3 fledged chicks); Fiskerton (1pr + 2 chicks); Heath's Meadow LWT (2prs, at least one nest); Kettleby Quarries (1pr + 3 chicks); Kirkby / Woodhall Spa Airfield (5-6 prs, 3 broods); Southrey (1pr + 2 chicks); West Ashby (3prs, at least one nest). Several other sites had territorial pairs but with no further information.

**Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus* Blackmoor Farm May 17th 2020 © STEVE LOVELL

# Golden Plover Pluvialis apricaria

Very common passage migrant and winter visitor, occasional in summer. Green List. Threshold for international importance: 9,300; for national importance: 4,000.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Read's Island	25000	19000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10000	2000	2000
Frampton Marsh	15000	23400	10000	-	2	-	15	21	1000	2500	7000	10000
Island Farm, Garthorpe	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	600	9000	10000
Freiston Shore	1000	1570	40	-	-	-	-	23	2000	100	440	6000
Alkborough Flats	1100	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	5000	1500
Goxhill Marsh	4000	-	-	-	-	-	118	-	-	125	75	3000
Gibraltar Point	500	125	522	15		1	15	300	903	1000	770	3000
Kirton Marsh	-	3000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nene Mouth	3000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pyewipe (Grimsby)	1000	800	60	18	-	-	-	-	300	500	3000	500

Recorded in all months of the year and from more than 130 sites; the top 10 are tabulated. Three of these sites, Read's Island, Frampton Marsh, and Island Farm (Garthorpe) exceeded the threshold figure for international importance (9,300). Read's Island held 25,000 on Jan 9th and 10,000 on Jan 17th; Frampton Marsh held 10-15,000 during Jan, peaked in Feb with a count of 23,400 on 5th and had counts of 10,000-12,000 on nine other dates in Feb. Counts at Island Farm held 10,000 on Dec 12th.

Freiston Shore (6,000, Dec 10th), Alkborough Flats (4,100, Nov 22nd) and Goxhill Marsh (4,000, Jan 18th) all met or exceeded the threshold for national importance. Other sites recording 1,000 or more in at least one month were Baston & Langtoft GP (1,000, Nov 22nd), Donna Nook (1,200, Nov 28th), Friskney Marsh (1,000, Feb 22nd), Gedney Drove End (2,000, Jan 10th), Gibraltar Point (3,000, Dec 11th), Kirton Marsh (3,000, Feb 16th), Marshchapel (2,300, Feb 14th), Nene Mouth (3,000, Jan 24th), Short Ferry (3,000, Feb 8th), Sutton Bridge (1,000, Jan 5th), Tetney Marsh (2,000, Oct 22nd), Wainfleet Marsh (1,000, Feb 22nd) and Welland Marsh (Nov 2st, 3,000). Most birds had departed by the end of Apr with a few lingering into May and Jun, the last ones at Frampton Marsh on May 27th and Gibraltar Point on Jun 1st. By the end of the month the first birds were returning with 70 noted at Bottesford on Jun 28th and Jul saw more flocks arriving with 200 at Tetney Marsh on 20th and 300 at Bennington on 25th. This influx continued through Aug, increased through Sep and numbers peaked Oct-Dec.

#### American Golden Ployer Pluvialis dominica

Rare. N. America. First record in 1974, Wisbech Sewage Farm. LBRC.

No records of this species were received in 2020.

# Grey Plover Pluvialis squatarola

Common passage migrant and common winter visitor. Very scarce inland. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 2,000; for national importance: 330.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	2670	1160	5250	4000	1100	320	36	1500	4200	6000	4610	600
Cleethorpes	270	15	8	-	-	-	-	1253	50	400	-	5
Wainfleet All Saints	812	760	391	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Leverton	520	411	76	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Friskney	491	472	282	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pyewipe (Grimsby)	100	100	110	400	350	20	-	7	26	30	320	200

The sites tabulated show all sites having at least one count exceeding the threshold for national importance (330) and with just one site, Gibraltar Point being of international importance (threshold of 2,000 exceeded

in six months of the year). Counts of 100 or more were recorded at Donna Nook (300, Dec), Marshchapel (300, Aug), Sutton Bridge (300, May), Tetney Marsh (280, Aug), Welland Marsh (260, Jan), Friskney Marsh (200, Apr), Freiston Shore (115 Mar, 100 in both Aug & Dec), and Saltfleet (115 in Dec). This is one species for which COVID-19 restrictions curtailed the counts.

Inland single birds were seen over Kettleby on Apr 22nd (a new site record) and



Grey Plover Pluvialis squatarola Killingholme Nov 7th 2020 © ROY HARVEY

at Baston and Langtoft GP on May 5th. In the autumn singles were at Middlemarsh Farm (Skegness) on Sep 23rd; Barton Pits Sep 26th; Covenham Reservoir on Oct 6th. The BTO WeBS survey shows that the Grey Plovers index compared to the 1993/94 baseline of 100 is at -44.

# Ringed Plover Charadrius hiaticula (nominate) (tundrae)

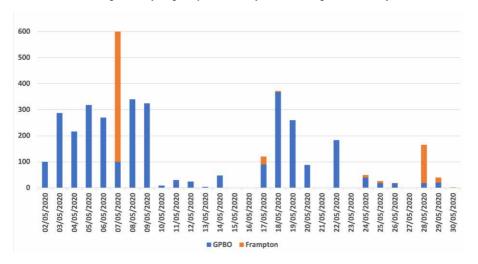
Nominate British and southern Scandinavian form fairly common passage migrant, mainly coastal. Breeding has spread to inland sites in last 40 years. Northern Scandinavian and Russian form *tundrae* ('Tundra Ringed Plover') fairly common passage migrants. Both races Red List. WeBS threshold for international importance: 540. WeBS threshold for national importance: 420.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Frampton Marsh	60	70	30	-	500	20	100	120	45	18	121	56
Gibraltar Point	5	43	39	168	368	33	78	416	200	200	49	18
Cleethorpes	100	50	-	2	20	-	-	300	40	4	30	20
Read's Island	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	300	10	1	-	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	-	62	64	38	62	3	1	150	160	-	12	18
Saltfleet	-	10	-	-	-	-	1	145	44	-	-	-
Tetney Marsh	52	-	1	6	20	-	1	120	-	-	-	-
Marshchapel	68	6	-	-	-	-	-	110	32	48	-	-
Donna Nook	8	-	-	-	100	-	-	63	20	-	-	-
Witham Mouth	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	100	-	-	-

None of our individual sites surpassed the threshold for international importance, although The Wash considered as a whole (Lincolnshire + Norfolk) does, with a Sep peak of 1,639 birds. Frampton Marsh was the only site to surpass the threshold for national importance with 500 there on May 7th; on the same date there were 300 at Gibraltar Point, although the May peak there of 368 was later, on 18th. The chart shows the summed totals of birds in May for (Gibraltar Point + Frampton Marsh) with distinct peaks in the first and last 10 days of May; the later peak presumably mainly involves the smaller northern (*tundrae*) race. Some inland passage (2-12 birds) was evident during May at Alkborough Flats, Baston Fen, Deeping Fen, Baston & Langtoft GP, Middlemarsh Farm and Covenham Reservoir. Most birds had departed the county by the end of May.

Return passage began during Jul along with other shorebirds peaking in Aug-Sep. Significant numbers remained at Gibraltar Point into the first week of Oct with 200 there on 5th but many fewer thereafter. Frampton recorded 121 on Nov 4th and smaller numbers wintered around the county by Dec with Frampton again having most (56) on Dec 19th.

#### Sum total of Ringed Plover passage, May 2020, at Frampton Marsh (orange) and Gibraltar point (blue)



# **Little Ringed Plover** Charadrius dubius

Scarce summer visitor and passage migrant since 1950. Green List. Threshold for international importance: 3100; for national importance: no data. **RBBP.** 

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Frampton Marsh	-	-	2	8	10	12	10	9	2	-	-	-
Gibraltar Point	-	-	13	4	2	3	8	2	1	-	-	-
Middlemarsh Farm	-	-	1	5	5	6	11	3	1	-	-	-
Cress Marsh	-	-	2	8	5	5	5	2	-	-	-	-
Baston	-	-	2	5	3	3	5	1	1	-	-	-
Alkborough	-	-	2	2	1	-	6	4	3	1		
Croft	-	-	6	6	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Stallingborough	-	-	-	-	4	5	5	-	-	-	-	-
Deeping St James	-	-	-	2	2	2	2	2	2	-	-	-
Woodhall Spa	-	-	1	1	6	4	-	-	-	-	-	-

Another good spring for this species with peak site counts of 76 across the county in May, the same as in 2019. Autumn peak count in Jul was also up to 81 from 73 in 2019. There were some exceptionally early spring arrivals with the first reports on Mar 1st of a pair at Frampton Marsh and a single at Woodhall Spa Airfield, 18 days earlier than in 2019; birds were widespread by

**Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius* Toft Newton Res Apr 17th 2020 © GARY FENWICK





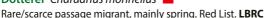
Mar 19th (which was the first arrival date in 2019). The first record for Louth occurred on Apr 3rd, a bird heard calling at night flying over the former county recorders garden. Breeding reports came from 12 sites this year compared to 13 in 2019 and the number of pairs decreased to 30 from 37. Nine pairs were confirmed breeding at seven sites: Baston (one pair with chick), Cress Marsh, Stallingborough (one pair raised two chicks), Deeping Lakes (one pair with chick) Frampton Marsh (three pairs with chicks), Gibraltar Point (one pair, nest predated by fox), Kettleby Quarry (pair on nest) and Middlemarsh Farm (one pair raised one chick). Nineteen probable pairs reported without breeding success were at Alkborough Flats (2), Frampton Marsh (9), Gibraltar Point (2), Kirkby on Bain GP (2), Woodhall Spa Airfield (2), and singles at Kettleby Quarry, Manby Wetlands, Middlemarsh Farm and Whisby Pits. The last birds of the autumn were singles at Alkborough on Sep 22nd and Oct 8th.

#### Kentish Plover Charadrius alexandrinus

Rare. Western Europe. Has bred once, in 1979. LBRC RBBP.

No records of this species were received in 2020.

#### **Dotterel** Charadrius morinellus



Dotterel remains "Rare/scarce" with just a single record in 2020, on Apr 29th at Gibraltar Point. With just three birds in 2019 the species is clearly at a nadir as a passage in the county and as noted in last year's report this now a far cry from the c30 per year recorded from the 1990s. The new *Birds of Lincolnshire* noted that in the period 2014-2018, the average number per year was 21 but varied widely between 80 seen in 2014 to just two in 2018. However, with the totals for the last three years being two, three and one the outlook seems grim.

# Whimbrel Numenius phaeopus

Fairly common passage migrant, mainly coastal. Rare in winter. Red List. Threshold for international importance: 6,700; for national importance: 1.

Site	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov
Sandilands GC	-	60	107	-	2	-	-	-	-
Gibraltar Point	-	40	32	1	37	36	17	2	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	-	13	12	-	-	30	4	-	-
Huttoft Bank Pit	-	-	26	-	5	-	14	-	-
Sutton Bridge	-	6	4	-	1	20	-	-	-
Tetney Marsh	-	7	5	-	3	16	-	-	-
Frampton Marsh	1	1	4	-	15	12	2	-	-
Anderby Marsh	1	15	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bennington	-	-	-	-	13	8	-	-	-
Middlemarsh Farm	-	12	4	-	1	-	-	-	-
Alkborough Flats	-	11	7	-	-	-	-	-	-
Freiston Shore	-	1	-	-	10	5	-	-	-

More than 70 sites filed some 550 records. The first of the year was on Mar 10th at Anderby Marsh followed another at Frampton Marsh on 18th, the only Mar records. More birds trickled through in Apr with 14 at Sandilands GC on 18th, but most arrived in the last week with 11 at Alkborough Flats 25th, and 40 Gibraltar Point and Sandilands GC on 26th. More arrived in May having flocks of 26, 63, 107 (highest of the year) and 40 on May 1st-4th and Gibraltar Point flocks of 32, 14, 18 and 22 in the same period. Singles were recorded at five sites in Jun before return passage began in Jul with 13-16 mid-month at Gibraltar Point, 37 on 22nd (highest of the autumn), and up to 33 still there to 31st. No data was received for the Sandilands GC Aug-Sep. Numbers dwindled rapidly in Sep with 14 at Huttoft Pit on 26th the last double figure flock of the autumn. Oct saw two at Gibraltar Point on 1st, two on 2nd and a single at Halton marshes on 6th. The last two of the year were a single at Barton Pits on Nov 3rd and two at Pyewipe marsh on 27th.

# **Curlew** Numenius arquata

Common passage migrant and winter visitor; scarce and local breeder. Red List. Threshold for international importance: 7,600; for national importance: 1,200.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	200	200	128	152	57	87	695	400	497	390	311	125
Goxhill Marsh	429	167	163	-	40	82	167	348	215	270	350	467
Friskney Marsh/Flats	224	450	158	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wainfleet Marshes	301	450	206	86	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	448	82	182	5	11	28	43	185	326	150	200	325
Frampton Marsh	41	52	43	-	2	7	85	4	125	440	100	37
Alkborough Flats	240	217	220	85	9	50	140	70	150	124	150	360
Pyewipe marsh (Grimsby)	50	100	300	100	15	40	100	200	175	128	243	120
Read's Island	-	30	79	-	-	-	277	262	60	30	15	17
Welland Marsh	140	240	-	-	-	-	180	-	-	250	20	-

The most important sites for Curlew are tabulated above with the highest count of the year being one of 695 on Jul 16th. Twenty-three sites in total recorded at least one monthly count of 100 or more. No sites reached the threshold for national importance. The BTO WeBS trend analyses show that the annual peak count for The Wash (6,903, Sep) is slightly higher than the 5yr moving average (6,061) while comparable figures for the Humber are slightly down (2,105, Jan v 5yr average 2,787). Note that there were no data for the significant Wash sites of Wainfleet and Friskney marshes after May.

Curlews ringed by the Wash Wader Ringing Group (WWRG) in autumn have been found wintering in Cornwall and Kent, and passage birds caught by them have come from the northeast and north Wales. These findings confirm the importance of The Wash as a transit hub for migrant Curlew as well as a wintering destination and two interesting recoveries of birds ringed on The Wash add further weight to this – FA69784 ringed as an adult male in Jul 1997 was seen alive in Finland in Jun 2020, nearly 23yr. old; FA89351 ringed as an adult in 1998 was found freshly dead in Sweden in May 2020.

# Bar-tailed Godwit Limosa lapponica

Very common coastal passage migrant and winter visitor. Scarce inland. Amber List (nominate). Threshold for international importance: 1,500; for national importance: 500.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	500	1100	650	2400	35	2	12	600	6200	9100	4000	1440
Friskney	2735	5670	1757	50	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wainfleet Marshes	2521	1500	794	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pyewipe (Grimsby)	500	1743	300	200	150	-	100	300	300	300	900	600
Cleethorpes	1400	10	21	-	3	-	20	200	1400	1500	-	2
Frampton Marsh	27	1	56	1	133	400	570	500	500	40	2	-
Leverton	1125	1100	596	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Donna Nook	-	12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	32	500
Tetney Marsh	13	-	-	35	13	-	2	300	-	-	-	-
Marshchapel	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	250	-	-	-

All sites recording 200 or more birds are tabulated with The Wash overall remaining an internationally important site for this species. Individual; sections within The Wash also surpassed the threshold for international importance – Gibraltar Point, Friskney, Wainfleet, and Frampton Marsh. Regrettably the WeBS scheme has no counter for Wrangle marsh at present, which has a history of supporting large winter flocks. On the Humber Pyewipe marsh was also of international importance. Numbers built up during the first two months of the year and tailed off through Mar-Apr as birds departed north, the last big flock of 2,400



Bar-tailed Godwit Limosa lapponica Rimac Oct 25th 2020 © MARK JOHNSON

at Gibraltar Point on Apr 7th. Returning birds began arriving in late Jun when 400 were at Frampton Marsh, continuing through Aug with large counts on The Wash in Sep-Dec culminating in a staggering 14,400 at Gibraltar Point on Dec 17th.

# Black-tailed Godwit (European) Limosa limosa limosa Rare migrant and has bred, last in 1974. LBRC

Separating nominate European race of Black-tailed Godwit L. I. limosa from the Icelandic race L. I. islandica is quite difficult on field characters alone and submissions certainly need to be accompanied by very good photographs. Individuals of this race have been regularly colour-ringed in East Anglia by the Project Godwit team for some years.

As far as we know there were no confirmed records of this rare subspecies.



Black-tailed Godwit Limosa limosa Gibraltar Point Apr 27th 2020 © PAUL NEALE

# Black-tailed Godwit (Icelandic) Limosa limosa islandica

Common passage migrant and winter visitor. Both subspecies Red List. Threshold for international importance: 1,100; for national importance: 390.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Pyewipe Marsh (Grimsby)	1500	300	200	200	5	140	200	120	300	500	500	3600
Freiston Shore	2	524	9	-	-	-	50	9	200	47	140	3500
Frampton Marsh	280	-	850	-	25	300	1200	3000	3325	870	515	54
Killingholme	-	600	103	-	16	-	500	2240	2950	2490	4	-
Welland Marsh	70	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2500	-	-
East Halton	3	-	-	-	-	-	248	634	1351	700	32	18
Leverton	-	-	700	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Goxhill Marsh	1	-	-	-	-	12	163	681	111	255	20	-
Gibraltar Point	24	6	11	40	29	54	200	400	151	9	40	21
Cress Marsh (Grimsby)	300	1	1	-	-	19	67	40	1	-	31	1

Counts this year were not as spectacularly high as in 2019. However, the top six in the table exceeded the threshold for international importance (1,100) in 11 of their monthly counts. In addition, three of the other sites had counts exceeding the threshold (390) for national importance.

Inland sites recorded passage birds, particularly at Alkborough Flats (peak of 220 in Apr), Middlemarsh Farm (peak of 40 in Apr), and Manby Wetlands (peak of 20 in Apr); one to two birds were seen at various other inland sites. Comparable numbers were also recorded during autumn, Jul-Sep with 150 at Alkborough Flats (Jul), 137 at Middlemarsh Farm (Jul) and 86 at Manby Wetlands (Jul).

The extensive catalogue of colour-ringed birds seen in the county was again added to in 2020 and the full inventory can be found at https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/ringing. Among the pick of these was an Icelandic bird ringed as a chick in Skagafjarðarsýsla (Iceland) in Jul 2013 and seen for the second time at Frampton Marsh in Aug, now more than seven years old. Another bird ringed on The Wash in 2002 was re-trapped in Aug in Kent, now 17 yr. 10mth old. For an extensive discussion on the fortunes of the Icelandic population, see the article by Appleton and Gill later in this report.

## **Turnstone** Arenaria interpres

Fairly common/common passage migrant and winter visitor. Very scarce inland. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 1,400; for national importance: 400.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Goxhill	93	-	65	-	-	-	-	76	92	160	16	6
Freiston Shore	-	6	1	-	52	40	120	150	42	16	15	4
Cleethorpes	50	100	15	80	-	-	-	23	73	61	69	76
Goxhill	-	-	-	-	19	-	12	20	2	54	95	80
Huttoft Car Terrace	-	-	-	-	-	70	-	4	1	-	1	-
Gibraltar Point	29	22	24	19	18	6	55	33	27	27	34	34
Grimsby Docks	48	44	21	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Leverton	41	7	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Donna Nook	40	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	8	3
Grainthorpe	31	19	39	-	3	-	8	13	11	22	18	-
Butterwick	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	2	8	30	5	-
Grimsby - Clee North Wall	17	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
North Somercotes Warren	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sutton Bridge	2	-	6	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	30	-

The Wash is the third most important estuary for Turnstones and the BTO WeBS data showed a peak in 2019/20 of 822 in Sep, that for the Humber was 261 in Dec. Monthly maxima in Lincolnshire in 2020 look to be less than in recent years. Only Goxhill and Freiston Shore had a count in any month of more than 100; in 2019 Freiston had an Oct peak of 600. Looking back at site maxima, 2015-2019, shows that the figures are guite variable year-to-year, but the 5yr. moving averages for The Wash and Humber have not changed very much. Recent research in NE England suggests that Turnstones make greater use of relatively undisturbed areas (offshore refuges) than those subject to greater disturbance by humans, which is perhaps unsurprising. Is this variability reflecting Turnstone mobility in response to site disturbances?

#### **Knot** Calidris canutus

Greenland and Canadian form islandica abundant passage migrant and very common winter visitor. Very scarce inland. Amber List (islandica). Threshold for international importance: 5,300; for national importance: 2,600.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	5350	5000	24000	40000	7050	1220	4600	53095	95000	80000	30580	6500
Friskney	5570	28000	15800	3000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wainfleet	1711	15000	5940	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Frampton Marsh	1000	4	10	-	60	6000	12000	4000	2000	2000	2	-
Welland Marsh	6000	300	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12000	450	-
Cleethorpes	3000	1000	300	-	-	-	-	2300	8000	8000	50	100
Grainthorpe	3140	3650	2260	-	-	-	-	228	1100	3410	6270	450
Pyewipe Marsh	500	100	500	800	600	6	11	200	1000	100	3000	6000
Leverton	2700	5480	670	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Freiston Shore	20	400	140	-	-	-	18	300	5000	550	50	-
Donna Nook	1000	3000	91	-	1	-	-	700	-	165	2000	2500

Knot Calidris canutus, Dunlin Calidris alpina & Yellow Wagtail Motacilla flava flavissima Toft Newton Res Sep 27th 2020 © SIMON SPAVIN



The most important sites for Knot are tabulated above, nine of them having internationally important counts (>5,300) in at least one month. Gibraltar Point recorded such counts in eight months as well as the highest count of the year (95,000) on Sep 20th, surpassing the 2019 peak (84,000, Sep 30th). It almost goes without saying that all of them are nationally important sites (>2,600) in at least one month. In a national context, the WeBS peak count for Knot in The Wash was also in Sep, a staggering 199,625 birds, which is some five times higher than the next most important British estuary, the Ribble (39,760). Knot numbers are always highest in the autumn and after moulting many of these birds fly west, and on The Wash, this is reflected in the drop in numbers by Dec. Returning birds in Feb-Apr swell the numbers again prior to departure for breeding grounds in Greenland and the Canadian Arctic. Two colour-ringed Knot caught in Iceland in May 2017 were both seen at Frampton Marsh in Jul 2020 (and later at Snettisham in Norfolk). Five others colour-ringed at UK sites: Aberdeen (1), Co Down (2) and Bangor (2), were also recorded at Frampton Marsh in Jul-Aug. Congratulations to all birders noticing and reporting colour-ringed birds!

Ruff Calidris pugnax Fairly common passage migrant and scarce winter visitor. Bred to nineteenth century. Red List. Threshold for international importance: 20000; for national importance: 9. RBBP.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Frampton Marsh	50	108	40	16	3	8	50	59	72	152	54	38
Alkborough	1	21	12	20	2	3	16	25	28	19	55	33
Middlemarsh Farm	-	1	1	-	1	3	5	11	4	-	-	-
Gibraltar Point	1	1	1	3	4	2	1	3	4	3	-	-
Short Ferry	15	5	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Freiston Shore	-	-	-	-	-	1	10	1	1	5	-	-
Manby Wetlands	-	-	-	-	1	3	3	11	-	-	-	-
Island Fm, Garthorpe	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	-
Donna Nook	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	1	-	-	2

Birds were present in all months of the year and the table lists all sites with double-figure counts in any month. Records came from 30 sites compared to 32 in 2019. The highest count at Frampton Marsh of



152 on Oct 1st was comparable to the high count of 150 there in Sep 2019 and reflects the strong autumn passage at this site and Alkborough, which between them account for over 80% of Ruff records. Evidence of breeding activity was scant this year with a single report of one male lekking to a single female at Frampton Marsh in mid-May. Despite the obvious attractions of the site for breeding wildfowl and waders the secret ingredient to persuading Ruff to breed remains hidden. Alkborough seems to have been less attractive than previous vears with none summering at all and numbers generally down in winter, spring, and summer.

**Ruff** Calidris pugnax Covenham Res Sep 6th 2020 © JOHN CLARKSON



# **Broad-billed Sandpiper** Calidris falcinellus

Rare. Scandinavia. First record 1959, Wisbech Sewage Farm. BBRC.

There were no records in 2020 but two late submissions from 2015 and 2017 were both accepted by BBRC (*British Birds* 114 (10): 570-628).

2015: Gibraltar Point NNR, one, May 14th, 2015 (JPS, KMW, et al)

2017: Gibraltar Point NNR. one, Jul 18th, 2017 (RDn, KMW).

# **Curlew Sandpiper** Calidris ferruginea

Passage migrant, scarce in spring and scarce/fairly common in autumn. Rare in winter. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 4,000; for national importance: no data.

Site	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov
Anderby Creek	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
Chapel Six Marshes	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Covenham Reservoir	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Croft Marsh	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
Donna Nook	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-
East Halton Skitter	-	-	-	-	6	1	-	-
Frampton Marsh	1	5	4	4	15	40	3	1
Freiston Shore	-	-		1	2	-	-	-
Gibraltar Point	-	-	1	1	6	3	-	-
Goxhill	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Killingholme Haven Pits	-	-	-	-	-	6	3	-
Middlemarsh Farm	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
North Killingholme	-	-	-	-	-	14	-	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	-	-	-	-	5	2	-	-
Sutton-on-Sea	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-

Around 15 sites recorded this species in 2020 and the first of the year was at Frampton Marsh on Apr 28th, remaining until May 6th. Thereafter, Frampton was the only site to record any spring birds at all, with two on May 22nd, a peak for the month of five on 24th, four on 25th and Jun 2nd with one to two until the end of the month. Similar numbers were present during Jul with three to four on several dates. Numbers built up during Aug peaking in the last quarter with 15 at Frampton Marsh on 27th one to six birds at eight other sites. More arrived during Sep with 20 at Frampton Marsh on 5th, 14 at Killingholme on 6th and 18-30 at Frampton Marsh 12th-16th peaking there with 40 on 19th. Just one to six birds were recorded from mid-Sep at three other sites only – Gibraltar Point, Killingholme Haven Pits, and Middlemarsh Farm. Numbers dwindled rapidly into Oct-Nov with up to three at each of Frampton Marsh (Oct 12th and 15th) and Killingholme Haven Pits (Oct 27th) with the last bird of the year at Frampton Marsh on Nov 2nd.

As ever, it is impossible to know the absolute numbers being recorded at key sites like Frampton Marsh where daily maxima can't take the turnover of birds into account.

#### Temminck's Stint Calidris temminckii

## Very scarce/scarce passage migrant. LBRC

All spring records occurred during the month of May. The first was at Frampton Marsh on 5th and singles were recorded there on many dates up to May 28th, the last of the spring, with two birds present on May 9th, 16th and 24th. Elsewhere one was at Gibraltar Point on 8th, at Deeping Lakes on 13th-14th, and at Manby Wetlands on 18th.

Autumn records were all in Aug and exclusively from Frampton Marsh. Two were found on 15th-19th, singles on 20th and 21st-23rd, four on 24th and the last of the year there on 27th.

# Sanderling Calidris alba



Common passage migrant and winter visitor. Scarce inland. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 2,000; for national importance: 200.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	370	545	452	1500	5290	1400	4500	6000	5200	3658	1827	260
Friskney Marsh	-	38	171	500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wainfleet	38	437	112	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Seacroft	4	-	6	19	350	-	-	-	110	34	55	20
Huttoft	4	6	-	-	35	8	39	41	150	80	10	310
Saltfleetby-	67	130	80	-	100	52	32	150	110	30	110	131
Theddlethorpe												
Cleethorpes	32	40	100	3	16	-	-	30	25	8	140	3
Trusthorpe	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	100	22	-	-
Sutton on Sea	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	76	32	80
Donna Nook	-	-	26	38	19	-	-	4	-	50	80	80

The most important sites for Sanderling are tabulated with Gibraltar Point being the most important by far, having three counts in May exceeding the threshold for international importance (>2000), and another 19 in the autumn, Jul-Oct; in addition, there were 66 other dates when counts exceeded the threshold for national importance. The next three sites in the table all had at least one count categorising them as of national importance – Friskney and Wainfleet marshes and Seacroft.

There were three spring peaks at Gibraltar Point: May 8th (3,250), 9th (5,290) and 27th (2,320) emphasising the short arctic breeding season. Numbers predictably fell during Jun although Gibraltar Point had 1,400 on Jun 2nd, with a nadir of 420 on Jun 6th; counts between then and early Jul are presumed to represent both non-breeders and failed breeders returning early. Autumn passage birds arrived from late Jul-late Sep with 5,200 on Sep 20th and a second later peak of 3,658 on Oct 15th. Most of these will have moved on to winter much further south in Europe and Africa. Surprisingly there was only one ringing recovery of interest when an adult ringed in May 2010 on South Uist was seen at Chowder Ness on Apr 29th, aged nearly 10 yr.



Sanderling Calidris alba (ringed South Uist 2010) Barton Apr 29th 2020 © GRAHAM CATLEY



Dunlin Calidris alpina Toft Newton Res May 6th 2020 © SIMON SPAVIN

**Dunlin** Calidris alpina (arctica) (schinzii, alpina)

Southern form 'schinzii' a common passage migrant; north-east Greenland form 'arctica' a passage migrant in unknown numbers; Scandinavian/Russian form 'alpina' a very common passage migrant and winter visitor, mainly coastal. Bred to early 20th century and in 1958. Red List.

Dunlin arriving back in the UK in Jul are mainly of the subspecies *schinzii*. The subspecies *alpina* (far north of Scandinavia and across to Siberia) and *arctica* (northern Greenland) arrive later. Threshold for international importance: 13,300; for national importance: 3,400.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	3620	2000	4200	5160	3910	80	7545	9008	14470	9060	4730	2000
Read's Island	5000	9000	400	-	-	-	500	180	-	5000	5200	3460
Pyewipe (Grimsby)	2000	6400	1000	4500	1000	-	1	100	500	500	3800	2500
Cleethorpes	4500	300	10	-	4	-	-	230	150	4000	30	30
South Ferriby	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4000	-	-
Freiston Shore	-	350	520	-	-	1	3820	520	-	563	400	600
Wainfleet All Saints	1825	2400	2410	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Leverton	2100	1059	380	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Saltfleetby-Thed'thorpe	2018	-	30	-	2	2	60	300	140	-	150	240

More than 100 sites provided records of this common wader with the majority of these and the greatest numbers coming from estuarine sites bordering the Wash and the Humber. The table shows all sites with at least one monthly count exceeding 2,000 birds. Gibraltar Point continues to be the foremost site for the species in the county with eight monthly maximum counts exceeding the threshold for national importance and that on Sep 20th exceeding the threshold for international importance. In the first part of the year, the top four sites in the table together held most of the wintering population in the county, with other notable counts at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe, and Wainfleet and Leverton on The Wash. Large numbers remained at both Gibraltar Point and Pyewipe Marsh in Apr-May prior to spring departures, and numbers at coastal sites trailed off from May into Jun as birds departed for northern breeding grounds.

Returning birds built up in number from Jul onwards where Gibraltar Point held 7,545 birds on Jul 29th and the peak count for the year for the county of 14,470 on Sep 20th. The Humber sites also recorded some high counts in Oct-Nov. Inland, spring and autumn passage was negligible with only Covenham Reservoir recording a double-figure count in either season with 13 on Aug 9th.

Underlining it's decline to a Red List species, those 'schinzii' breeding in the Baltic region have decreased by more than 80% since 1980; this race is the one which also breeds in northern parts of the UK (https:// wadertales.wordpress.com/2021/06/20/dunlin-tales-from-the-baltic/), although few winter in the UK (the main subspecies, Nov-Feb, being alpina) In addition, the WeBS data for 2019/20 show that the 25-year index for Dunlin is at an all-time low, down by some 45% since the index began in 1993/94.

### Purple Sandpiper Calidris maritima Very scarce/scarce passage migrant and winter visitor, mainly coastal. Red List. Threshold for international importance: 110; for national importance: 97.

This remains a very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. In the first half of the year, one flew south over the shore at Gibraltar Point on Jan 2nd, A second one was at Cleethorpes on Jan 3rd with it or another there on and off from Jan 31st until last reported on Feb 22nd. Spring birds were seen at Anderby Creek on Mar 23rd and a second very late bird was at Chowder Ness on May 10th before flying off to the east. The first of the autumn appeared at Frampton Marsh Sep 11th followed by another at Huttoft car terrace at 06.40 on Sep 16th and it or another at Gibraltar Point on the same date was presumed



Purple Sandpiper Calidris maritima Mablethorpe Sep 28th 2020 © OWEN BEAUMONT

heading to roost; it was also present on Sep 19th, 26th and 27th. Others were found at Killingholme Haven on Sep 26th at Huttoft Car Terrace on Sep 27th-28th and at Mablethorpe on Sep 28th. In Oct one was at Donna Nook on 15th and at Sutton-on-Sea on 15th, and presumably the same bird again at Donna Nook on 18th. In Dec, the expected wintering birds were found at Cleethorpes from Dec 2nd (2), with singles on 11th and 18th, and two again on 21st and into 2021.

#### Little Stint Calidris minuta



Passage migrant, very scarce in spring and scarce/fairly common in autumn with rare/very scarce winter records. Green List. Threshold for international importance: 3000; for national importance: 1.

Site	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov
Alkborough Flats	-	-	1	2	-	-	1	1	-	-
Baston - Langtoft Pits	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Chapel Point	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Covenham Reservoir	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	3	-
Deeping Lakes	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
East Halton Skitter	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Frampton Marsh	1	1	-	2	-	2	11	6	9	3
Freiston Shore	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-
Gibraltar Point	-	-	-	-	3	-	2	2	1	-
Middlemarsh Farm	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-
Saltfleet Haven	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-
Witham Mouth	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-



A rather poor year for this species with a single winter record in the first quarter at Frampton Marsh, Feb 7th-8th. This or another provided the only Mar record on 13th. Spring passage was almost non-existent with an adult in summer plumage at Alkborough Flats on Apr 24th followed by singles at Frampton Marsh on 6th-7th and 9th, and later 21st-24th and 27th-28th. An odd record was of three at Gibraltar Point on Jun 6th, with one on Jun 7th. Post-breeding Little Stints pass through Britain in late Jul-Oct en route to wintering areas in Africa and the Mediterranean. Very few appeared in Jul with the first at Frampton Marsh on Jul 10th, another at Baston & Langtoft GP on Jul 20th, followed by two at Frampton Marsh Jul 16th and another two Saltfleet Haven Jul 31st. A few more were seen in Aug with records from eight sites when Frampton Marsh had the highest counts of the year, with eight on Aug 15th and 11 on Aug 17th. Smaller numbers were seen in Sep at six sites, with five to six remaining at Frampton Marsh into the last week of the month. Nine were at Frampton Marsh on Oct 1st with three at Covenham Reservoir on Oct 4th and a single Gibraltar Point Oct 5th. Most had gone by mid-Oct with just a single at Frampton Marsh until Oct 29th, but later three were found there Nov 3rd, two Nov 7th and the last of the year Nov 26th.

#### White-rumped Sandpiper Calidris fuscicollis

Very scarce migrant. North America. LBRC.

No records of this species were received in 2020.

### **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** Calidris subrufficollis

Very scarce migrant. North America. Recorded May-Nov. LBRC.

No records of this species were received in 2020.

### Pectoral Sandpiper Calidris melanotos

Very scarce autumn passage migrant and rare in spring. North America, Siberia. LBRC.

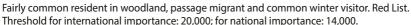
One was at Frampton Marsh Jul 18th-19th (DAn, ABe) and another Sep 5th-14th (IPM, et al). Only three in 2018 and one bird in 2019, so 2020 continues the meagre run of years for this species.

#### Long-billed Dowitcher Limnodromus scolopaceus

Rare. North America, north-eastern Russia. BBRC.

No records of this species were received in 2020.

### Woodcock Scolopax rusticola



Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	7	3	4	2	-	-	1	-	1	14	6	4
Snipe Dales	-	7	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Baston - Langtoft Pits	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Laughton Forest	-	-	2	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Swinn Wood	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Stapleford Woods	-	-	-	-	2	4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Huttoft Car Terrace	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	1
Legbourne Wood	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Middlemarsh Farm	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	1
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	1

More than 50 sites recorded this secretive species, most often seen when inadvertently flushed and with most coming from Gibraltar Point; records came in all months of the year except for Aug. In the first quarter the highest counts (7) came from Gibraltar Point on Jan 1st and Snipe Dales on Feb 19th. Eight sites reported them in Mar, but most had disappeared off the radar by Apr with two at Gibraltar Point on 1st and 4th, with one remaining until 29th. A few were reported during May with at least five birds roding in Laughton Forest on 19th, two birds roding Apr-Jun over Kirkby Moor, and presumed breeders were also

reported in Jun at Stapleford Woods and Crowle Moors. An unusual record was of one at Gibraltar Point on Jul 19th seen by one of the tern wardens coming off duty.

In autumn an early bird came in off the sea at Gibraltar Point on Sep 18th, with a few more in Oct, all from five coastal sites with a peak of 14 at Gibraltar Point on Oct 16th. More arrived during Nov with records of one to two birds from some 30 sites and a peak of six at Gibraltar Point on 29th. There were fewer in Dec but with five at each of Swinn Wood (1st) and Baston and Langtoft GP (28th).

### Jack Snipe Lymnocryptes minimus

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor. Probably much under-recorded. Green List. Threshold for international importance: 20,000; for national importance: 1,000.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	-	-	1	17	1	3	1	-
Humberston Fitties	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	2	4	-	-	-	1	1	1
Woodhall Spa	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-
East Halton Skitter	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-
Laughton Forest	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pyewipe (Grimsby)	-	3	-	1	1	-	-	-

More than 30 sites recorded this secretive and under-recorded species with singles from Jan 1st at eight sites and two at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe on Jan 12th, not an indicative total of the birds at that site. Four were located at Humberstone Fitties on Feb 2nd and another four were at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe on Feb 5th. Singles only were the fare in Mar recorded at just four sites. Apr saw an exceptional count at Gibraltar Point on 15th when five Jack Snipe were flushed out of a small area of dune slack whilst checking the Highland Ponies. This prompted a wider search of adjacent slack and saltmarsh that remained partially flooded after the recent tides. An exceptional total of 17 was seen, although it is not known whether this could be typical spring passage of this secretive species. Elsewhere just single birds again with the last of the spring at Gibraltar Point on Apr 30th. None was present after this date and the first returning bird was seen on Sep 25th at Gibraltar Point with singles at four other coastal sites Sep 26th-30th.



Jack Snipe Lymnocryptes minimus Gibraltar Point Oct 17th 2020 © PAUL NEALE



### Great Snipe Gallinago media

#### Rare. Northern and Eastern Europe.

One at Sandilands golf course Oct 2nd (JS, PS). Accepted by BBRC, *Brit Birds* 114: 570-628). This individual was lurking in the rank vegetation of the old golf course. Of the 19 previous records, the most recent four were in the period 1978-1984, so this one, the 20th, was well overdue although only well-seen by two observers. It is worth noting that this species seems to prefer drier habitat than Common Snipe and it has often been found in sandy dunes with marram grass as well as in areas of rough grassland, as here.

### Common Snipe Gallinago gallinago

Scarce breeder, fairly common/common passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 20,000; for national importance: 10,000.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Killingholme	-	1	102	-	-	-	-	-	2	25	25	45
Alkborough Flats	29	-	-	78	7	-	7	1	-	24	-	-
Marston STW	77	27	31	5	1	-	-	17	3	12	6	4
Gibraltar Point	9	19	17	73	2	-	3	5	30	31	16	7
Laughton Forest	-	64	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	-	-
Pyewipe Marsh	-	26	7	3	-	-	-	-	4	15	27	50
Middlemarsh Farm	2	3	26	48	1	1	9	13	5	6	3	1
Frampton Marsh	3	20	16	-	1	1	3	7	20	6	27	40
East Halton Skitter	-	1	31	-	-	-	-	3	1	15	35	25
Goxhill Marsh	3	-	35	-	-	-	-	11	2	14	19	1

More than 1,700 records were received from around 117 sites. the top 10 are tabulated above (as indicated by the site with the highest monthly count). Marston STW continues to be the best inland/freshwater site with a peak of 77 birds on Jan 24th and on Mar 15th 102 were recorded at Killingholme during a WeBS count. Another inland site at Laughton Forest recorded 64 on wet heath on Feb 5th. Alkborough Flats highest count of 78 was on Apr 1st and Middlemarsh Farm had 47 on Apr 3rd and 48 on Apr 7th. Breeding activity was recorded only at Alkborough Flats, where one was 'winnowing' on Apr 8th and on Apr 14th there were signs of nesting. As ever, summer records were sparse



Common Snipe Gallinago gallinago Gibraltar Point Oct 20th 2020 © PAUL NEALE

with few double-figure counts and autumn numbers were unremarkable. The year ended with a high count of 50 at Pyewipe Marsh on Dec 20th. Given the development of wet grasslands down the coast from Frampton Marsh up through Gibraltar Point and Croft, north through Anderby and Huttoft, perhaps more evidence of breeding activity will soon be forthcoming?



## Terek Sandpiper Xenus cinereus

Vagrant. North-eastern Europe.

One was found at Alkborough Flats on May 18th (ND, GPC), the 5th county record. Accepted by BBRC (*British Birds* 114 (10): 570-628). See Finder's Report, p190.



Terek Sandpiper Xenus cinereus, Ringed Plover Charadrius hiaticula & Dunlin Calidris alpina Alkborough Flats May 18th 2020 © GRAHAM CATLEY

### Red-necked Phalarope Phalaropus lobatus

Very scarce passage migrant, with generally more in autumn than in spring. Red List. LBRC.

No records were received for 2020. There was a blank run 2000-2003, and the last blank year since then was 2006. In the period 2010-2019 there were 41 records, with seven in 2015 and 2018 and eight in 2017. Frampton Marsh has become the 'go to' site for this species in recent times, let's hope this is just a blip in the species fortunes.

### **Grey Phalarope** Phalaropus fulicarius

Very scarce passage migrant, mainly autumn, rare in winter. LBRC.

A slightly better year with six records, the first of which was a surprise spring bird discovered on Paradise Pool, Saltfleet on Apr 5th-6th, although still in non-breeding plumage.

The first of the autumn Flushed on Golf Course, white outer tail feathers seen well and markings on upper wings landed in the surf off Greenshanks Creek, Gibraltar Point on Sep 9th; another was seen there on Nov 11th, flying in from the north and landing on the sea. Singles were seen from Huttoft Car Terrace Oct 10th and Dec 12th. The last of the year was a well-watched bird on the wet grasslands at Freiston Shore, Dec 27th-30th.

## Common Sandpiper Actitis hypoleucos

Fairly common autumn passage migrant, scarce in spring and a regular but very scarce winter visitor. Bred in 1979. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 12,000; for national importance: 1.

Recorded from Mar-Oct, with a single record in Dec. The first of the spring was an early bird at Frampton Marsh on Mar 2nd followed by a single at Willowtree Fen on Mar 15th, two at Gibraltar Point on Mar 23rd and another at Sutton Bridge on Apr 3rd. Thereafter the main arrivals were from Apr 15th-21st at sites across the county, with four at Middlemarsh Farm on 20th-21st and

up to 10 at Covenham Reservoir on 27th. Covenham continued to provide the highest spring counts with six to seven birds on several dates in May. Numbers tailed off in Jun but with an exceptional flock of nine at Baston and Langtoft GP on Jun 30th, perhaps the first returning birds of the autumn? In Jul, autumn passage built up with records from around 30 sites, most at Covenham Reservoir on Jul 15th-16th (7), and on Jul 24th at Baston and Langtoft GP (7) and Frampton Marsh (10). Highest counts were made in Aug, with most at Gibraltar Point on 20th (11) and at Covenham Reservoir on 30th (11); 11 remained at Covenham until Sep 6th at least. Singles were recorded at several sites in Oct with seven still at Covenham on 2nd and four at Freiston Shore on 23rd. The last of the year was found at Sutton Bridge on Dec 31st.

Common Sandpiper Actitis hypoleucos Gibraltar Point Sep 5th 2020 © PAUL NEALE



#### Green Sandpiper Tringa ochropus

Fairly common autumn passage migrant, scarce in spring and a regular winter visitor. Amber List, Threshold for international importance: 20.000; for national importance: 3.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Manby Wetlands	1	-	-	1	-	12	20	13	-	1	-	-
Middlemarsh Farm	-	-	-	3	-	6	14	16	3	1	-	-
Cress Marsh	2	4	5	11	-	-	-	3	1	-	-	1
Messingham SQ	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	11	1	-	-	-
Frampton Marsh	1	-	-	-	-	2	9	4	2	-	-	-
Freiston Shore	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	8	6	3	-	-
Kirkby GP/Tattershall	1	-	-	-	-	1	5	8	1	-	-	-
Thorpe												
Baston - Langtoft Pits	1	-	1	2	-	4	4	7	1	-	3	2
Boatmere Scrape	-	-	-	-	-	1	6	-	-	-	-	-
Alkborough Flats	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	5	3	1	-	-

More than 80 sites reported this species in at least one month of the year, and 14 of these reported overwintering birds in Jan-Feb with singles at most of these but with maxima of three reported at Marston STW on Jan 12th, 24th and Feb 27th and four at Cress Marsh Feb 1st-2nd. It is difficult to separate overwintering birds from arriving spring migrants in Mar, but of the sites not having Jan-Feb records, Gibraltar Point recorded its first one on Mar 4th, Withern on Mar 5th, and Trent Port (Marton) on Mar 12th. Small numbers were reported on passage in Apr with 11 at Cress Marsh on Apr 20th the highest count. The last bird of the spring was a single at the same site on Apr 27th; there were no May records.

The first bird of the autumn was seen at Baston and Langtoft GP on Jun 8th, two were at Middlemarsh Farm Jun 13th and a peak of 12 came from Manby Wetlands on Jun 29th. Most arrived in Jul-Aug though with 20 at Manby Wetlands on Jul 2nd and 14 at Middlemarsh Farm on Jul 14th. Middlemarsh Farm recorded 16 on Aug 3rd, Manby Wetlands 13 on Aug 10th, and Messingham SQ 11 on 10th. Numbers dwindled into Sep with six at Freiston Shore on 2nd and one to two birds at many sites. Thirteen sites reported one to two birds in Oct

with three at Freiston Shore on 5th and in Nov 15 sites reported one to two birds, with three at Baston and Langtoft GP on 17th and 20th, and another three on wet grassland near Langrick on 27th, Presence continued into Dec. with one to two birds remaining at 14 sites on every day in the month.

# Lesser Yellowlegs Tringa flavipes

Rare. North America.

A second calendar year bird at Alkborough Flats on Oct 8th-9th was the sole county record (ND, GPC, et al). This was the 20th county record and the second for Alkborough Flats.

**Lesser Yellowlegs** Tringa flavipes 2CY Alkborough Flats Oct 8th 2020 © GRAHAM CATLEY



### Redshank Tringa totanus

Nominate British and continental form a common passage migrant and winter visitor, and fairly common breeding species of coastal marshes. Scarce/very scarce inland. Icelandic form (robusta) a common passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber List (both forms). Threshold for international importance: 2,400; for national importance: 940.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Freiston Shore	-	24	143	-	2	16	263	1100	300	654	67	200
Frampton Marsh	45	112	100	-	50	35	30	22	1000	64	41	62
Pyewipe marsh	200	150	300	150	-	18	100	400	300	200	780	560
Welland Marsh	8	8	-	-	-	-	650	-	-	180	140	-
Gibraltar Point	180	290	210	255	40	28	300	480	352	200	238	206
Read's Island	-	30	26	-	-	-	120	400	12	200	19	46
Killingholme	-	145	72	-	-	-	16	265	320	200	200	29
Donna Nook	300	281	67	50	10	-	4	200	150	199	125	150
Grainthorpe	108	227	71	-	49	11	39	44	39	66	132	41
Saltfleetby- Theddlethorpe	90	140	160	8	6	-	4	136	96	60	200	47

Around 120 sites recorded this familiar wader and the most important of these are tabulated above, all of them coastal. Numbers on The Wash tend to peak in Sep although the highest count of the year was at Freiston Shore slightly earlier, 1,100 on Aug 23rd. Freiston Shore and Frampton Marsh were the only two sites of national importance; none reached the threshold for international importance. West coast sites – the Dee, Morecambe Bay and Severn – are the three most important estuaries for this species, ahead of The Wash. There were no ringing recoveries to report in 2020.

## Wood Sandpiper Tringa glareola

Scarce passage migrant, in spring and autumn. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 18,000; for national importance: no data.



Wood Sandpiper Tringa glareola Gibraltar Point May 14th 2020 © PAUL NEALE

Site	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Frampton Marsh	1	6	1	3	5	1
Middlemarsh Farm	5	3	3	1	4	-
Paradise Pool, Saltfleet	-	2	-	-	5	-
Alkborough Flats	-	1	-	1	3	-
Gibraltar Point	-	1	1	2	3	1

A very poor year for this species contrasting with the record influx in 2019; sites having a maximum monthly count of at least two in any month are tabulated, a sparse collection. The first of the year was on Apr 23rd at Middlemarsh Farm with two there on 25th and five on 28th. In May records were received from 14 sites with maxima of six at Frampton Marsh on 6th and three at Middlemarsh Farm on 6th-7th, 9th and 14th. Most had left by the month's end with singles lingering into early Jun. Birds were present again mid-Jun-Jul with one to two birds at favoured wetland sites and a small maximum of three at Frampton Marsh on Jul 20th. The modest autumn passage continued into Aug with low monthly totals and maxima of five birds at each of Paradise Pool, Saltfleet Aug 12th and Frampton Marsh Aug 30th. Most had departed by the end of the month and in Sep only singles were reported from six sites with the last bird of the year at Gibraltar Point Sep 16th.

### Spotted Redshank Tringa erythropus

Passage migrant, scarce in spring but fairly common in autumn. Very scarce but regular in winter. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 1,000; for national importance: 1.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Frampton Marsh	3	4	3	2	3	4	15	25	22	9	7	-
Alkborough Flats	6	5	-	10	7	11	12	21	19	10	-	1
Gibraltar Point	-	-	1	2	4	2	3	7	6	6	1	-

Spotted Redshank Tringa erythropus Covenham Res Aug 24th 2020 © JOHN CLARKSON



Recorded in every month of the year, there were more than 750 records from 21 sites. The main three are tabulated here; all other sites recorded mainly single birds apart from two at Grainthorpe on May 8th, although note that any site holding at least one bird is of national importance.

The wintering birds of 2020 at Frampton Marsh and Alkborough Flats remained into 2021, with six at Alkborough Jan 1st the highest count in Jan-Feb. None were at Alkborough in Mar but one to two were regular at Frampton with three on Mar 2nd and 4th, and a single appeared at Gibraltar Point on 20th. Birds began arriving during Apr with three at Alkborough on 8th and a peak of 10 on 24th, mostly in smart summer plumage. Small numbers continued to arrive in May, with one to seven birds seen at the three main sites on 11 dates. Counts in Jun were similar and there were signs of returning birds late in the month with 11 female birds in summer plumage at Alkborough on 29th. Most autumn birds though arrived in Jul-Sep with Frampton having 25 on Aug 19th and Alkborough 21 on Aug 27th. Peak counts in Sep were only slightly less and Frampton recorded counts of 10-22 on 11 dates in the month. Good numbers were still being seen in Oct with nine at Frampton on 18th and 10 at Alkborough on 19th. Numbers dwindled in Nov although Frampton still held seven on 1st and five on 18th. The last birds of the year were at Alkborough on Dec 8th, and presumably the same bird at Read's Island Dec 20th, the only bird in the county that month.

### Greenshank Tringa nebularia

Passage migrant, scarce in spring, fairly common in autumn. Very scarce in winter. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 3,300; for national importance: 8.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Boatmere Scrape (Gedney)	-	-	-	-	-	-	45	-	-	-	-	-
Frampton Marsh	1	2	4	4	9	2	7	14	18	10	5	4
Croft Marsh	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	-	-	-
Alkborough Flats	-	-	-	1	5	4	13	5	1	1	-	-
Gibraltar Point	-	-	-	9	8	1	6	12	10	3	-	-
Covenham Reservoir	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	1	8	-
Seacroft	-	-	-	1	7	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Freiston Shore	-	-	-	1	3	1	6	-	4	2	-	-
Donna Nook	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	3	2	5	-	-
Saltfleetby-	-	-	-	1	4	-	-	3	5	-	-	-
Theddlethorpe												

A wintering bird was found at Frampton Marsh on Jan 2nd and was seen on and off until Feb 19th. The next sighting there was of two on Mar 4th, arguably the first of the spring, followed by another two at Grainthorpe on Mar 7th and four at Frampton Marsh on Mar 19th. These were the only Mar records. The spring arrivals proper began in Apr when 26 sites recorded the species from Apr 9th onwards. Most were of one to three birds, with maxima of four at Frampton Marsh on Apr 24th and nine at Gibraltar Point on Apr 30th. Spring passage continued to be light but widespread with modest peaks of nine at Frampton Marsh (May 5th) and eight at Gibraltar Point (May 1st). Jun was almost a blank month before autumn passage began in Jul with a peak of 45 at Boatmere (Gedney) on Jul 23rd; this mere just inland from The Wash is becoming something

of a hotspot for the species; thirteen were also at Alkborough Flats on the same date, the next highest count. Frampton Marsh and Gibraltar Point weighed in with double-figure peak counts in Aug-Sep and there were still 10 at Frampton Marsh on Oct 19th and one to five birds at eight other sites, all coastal. Numbers dwindled into Nov-Dec with eight at Covenham Reservoir on Nov 6th, five at Frampton Marsh Nov 18th; four were still at Frampton Marsh on Dec 11th with a single, the last of the year, on Dec 15th. Colour-ringed (CR) birds continue to inform us, and DT35595 shows site fidelity to The Wash:

Aug-15-2018, ringed as an adult, Terrington Marsh, Norfolk.

Sep-22-2018, CR read at Freiston Shore.

Aug-24-2021, CR read, Boatmere, Gedney.



### **Kittiwake** Rissa tridactyla

Fairly common but declining passage migrant and winter visitor with small numbers in summer. Scarce inland. Red List. Threshold for international importance: 20,000; for national importance: no data.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Marsh Yard	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	205	-
Huttoft Car Terrace	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	5	5	190	55
Sutton on Sea	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	-	120	1
Gibraltar Point	-	14	9	7	5	26	1	13	53	14	55	9
Donna Nook	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	22	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	19	-	-	2	14
Chapel Point	5	7	9	-	-	1	-	4	1	-	-	-

An underwhelming year for this red-listed species with records in every month of the year and the highest totals coming during coastal passage on Nov 19th from two geographically close locations.

The first birds of the year were five adults north at Chapel Point on Jan 18th with a few more trickling mainly south in Feb at Gibraltar Point, maximum of 14 on 27th. This theme continued in Mar with four at East Halton Skitter on 15th and up to nine at Chapel Point on 20th and Gibraltar Point on 30th. Apr-Jun records were unremarkable apart from 26 north at Gibraltar Point on Jun 8th. More birds including juveniles were on the move in Aug and more appeared during Sep with 20 past Sutton-on-Sea on 16th and at Gibraltar Point flocks of four (19th), 29 (25th) and 53 (25th). Passage slackened during Oct but picked up in Nov with all the highest counts recorded on 19th. Dec was guiet after that with 14 at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe on 1st and 55 at Huttoft Car Terrace on 24th, the last record of the year.

#### Sabine's Gull Xema sabini

#### Very scarce coastal migrant in autumn, mainly Aug-Oct. Exceptional inland. LBRC.

A decent year for this species with the first an adult NE at Mablethorpe North End on Aug 28th (CMo) followed by it or another south at Huttoft car terrace in the evening of the same day (JS). A record of an adult in summer plumage the next day, 29th, might also refer to the same individual which was seen going north at Chapel Point (APC, ABe, RDn, et al), then at Huttoft Car Terrace





TOP: Kittiwake Rissa tridactyla Rimac Aug 14th 2020 © GRAHAM CATLEY

ABOVE: Sabine's Gull Xema sabini Sutton on Sea Aug 29th 2020 © GRAHAM CATLEY

(JRC, PEs, ACS), and finally at Sutton on Sea (GPC) where it landed on the beach in strong wind and rain before flying back out to sea. The next day, Aug 30th, the action was further south with three summer plumaged adults at Witham Mouth, one on the mud flats off Freiston Shore and two together on The Wash (JB). Another adult went south at Anderby Creek on Sep 3rd (DMi). The first juveniles were seen later in the month with one N/NE at Gibraltar Point on Sep 18th (NAL, KMW) and two north there on the 19th (BWd). An adult in winter plumage flew north past one lucky observer as he walked out to the beach at Gibraltar Point on 20th (G. Longley), a juvenile came close inshore there on 25th (KMW, NAL) with another juvenile at Huttoft Car Terrace the same day (RL), the last two of the year.

#### Black-headed Gull Chroicocephalus ridibundus

Very common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 20,000; for national importance: 22,000.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Whisby NP	117	13500	572	-	778	1	-	70	100	-	10000	-
Gibraltar Point	10940	2800	2500	700	250	300	750	6000	6000	5000	6230	5000
Toft Newton Reservoir	1000	900	60	8	10	3	140	50	280	500	3200	5200
Wainfleet Marsh	36	4100	1100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Covenham Reservoir	150	100	800	250	50	3	300	2000	2000	4000	1000	300
Pyewipe Marsh	80	3000	80	6	4	250	300	500	500	250	1000	400
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	276	30	89	2	30	16	77	2450	2000	600	42	85
Middlemarsh Farm	300	400	1200	250	200	30	400	500	2000	300	200	250

The table shows all sites recording 2,000 birds or more in at least one month of the year. The two highest counts of the year were in the first quarter with 10,940 at Gibraltar Point on Jan 2nd and 13,500 at Whisby NP on Feb 1st; Gibraltar Point also recorded 6,000 on Jan 6th and 16th. Significant counts were also recorded at Wainfleet marsh on Feb 23rd (4,100) and at Pyewipe marsh on Feb 19th (3,100). Thereafter numbers dropped off as birds departed to breed with few notable counts Apr-Jul. The only confirmed breeding records came from Whisby NP where a total of 778 nests were counted (Thorpe Lake 361, Grebe Lake 411, Teal Lake 6).

Post-breeding numbers built up during Aug-Sep with peaks on the coast at Gibraltar Point of 6,000 on Aug 18th, Sep 9th, and 19th. Oct saw peaks of 5,000 at Gibraltar Point on 19th and 4,000 at Covenham Reservoir on 25th. The highest autumn counts were made in Nov with 10,000 at Whisby NP on 21st and 6,230 at Gibraltar Point on 15th. In Dec 1,500 were in Louth on 2nd and 5,200 were at Toft Newton Reservoir on 8th. High counts continued at Gibraltar Point with a peak of 5,000 on 14th and four counts of 1,000-3,400 on four other dates. No sites surpassed the threshold for national importance.

As ever, several ringed birds were seen in the county in 2020: EL07622 ringed as a chick at Baston GP in May 2004 was seen alive at Rutland Water on Jul 21st; EL80278 ringed at Gibraltar Point in Aug 2008 was seen twice there on Feb 23rd and Mar 4th; DEH/IA128521 ringed in May 2009 in Germany was seen twice in Skegness on Feb 2nd and Sep 26th; LIK/HA13181 ringed in Lithuania in Mar 2010 was seen at Cleethorpes on Oct 28th; finally, HRZ/LS05795 ringed in Croatia in Jan 2019 was at Kirkby GP on Jan 29th.

### Little Gull Hydrocoloeus minutus

Fairly common passage migrant in spring and autumn, scarce/very scarce in summer and winter. Green List. Threshold for international importance: 1,000; for national importance: no data. **RBBP.** 

Site	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov
Gibraltar Point	-	1	5	1	2	4	23	3	1
Huttoft Car Terrace	-	-	-	-	-	4	20	-	-
Baston - Langtoft Pits	-	8	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Covenham Reservoir	8	1	1	-	-	5	6	-	-
Chapel Point	-	-	-	-	-	7	4	-	-
Sutton on Sea	-	-	-	-	-	1	7	1	-
Whisby NP	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Deeping Lakes	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Alkborough Flats	-	1	2	2	1	-	-	-	-
Frampton Marsh	-	2	2	1	-	-	1	-	-
Freiston Shore	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-

More than 170 records were received from 20 sites in nine months of the year. It was not a vintage year by any means though with only Gibraltar Point recording counts in more than five months. The first of the year was at Covenham Reservoir on Mar 22nd with eight there on 24th and another at Kirkby GP on 27th. In Apr 10 sites recorded this delightful gull with eight at Baston GP on 5th, five at Whisby NP on 20th and one to three at eight other sites. Five was the highest May count, on 1st at Gibraltar Point with just one to two elsewhere. Few were seen in Jun-Jul and autumn passage picked up from mid-Aug with up to four at Gibraltar Point and seven past Chapel Point. Covenham Reservoir was the only inland site to record any with two to three birds 30th-31st, increasing to six Sep 2nd and 6th-7th. Birds were still mainly coastal in Sep and the months peak counts were at Gibraltar Point (23). Huttoft Car Terrace (20) and Sutton on Sea (7) on 25th. Oct was very quiet with one to three at three coastal sites and the last of the year at Gibraltar Point on Nov 1st.



**Little Gull** *Hydrocoloeus minutus* Huttoft CT Aug 29th 2020 © JOHN CLARKSON

#### Mediterranean Gull

Ichthyaetus melanocephalus

Scarce, but increasing visitor throughout the year, most frequent in late summer/early autumn. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 2,400; for national importance: 40. **RBBP.** 

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	-	1	2	3	3	7	3	4	1	-	1	-
Frampton Marsh	-	2	1	4	4	7	2	1	-	-	-	-
Chapel St Leonards	1	-	-	2	2	1	-	3	1	-	-	-
Anderby	1	-	-	2	1	-	1	1	1	1	-	-
Middlemarsh Farm	1	-	1	2	-	-	1	2	1	-	-	-
Whisby	-	-	-	-	6	6	-	-	-	-	-	-
Huttoft	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	2	2	1	1	-

The table shows all sites with cumulative monthly maxima of more than five birds in 2020. The highest counts of the year were of seven at Frampton Marsh on Jun 12th and seven at Gibraltar Point on Jun 19th, well down from the peak of 17 at the latter site in Jul 2019. The maximum winter count across the county was six in Jan. The big news was the first confirmed successful breeding in the county from the Whisby area. Three pairs nested. Pair one successfully fledged one chick. Pair two apparently failed (no chicks observed). Pair three successfully fledged two chicks. These fledged chicks have been long awaited and now the first hurdle has been crossed hopefully more productive pairs will follow. At Frampton Marsh a pair was seen in early May mating, nest building and a bird appeared to be sitting on May 15th, but the nest failed. At Gibraltar Point a pair was present in Apr but no nesting attempt was observed. Having peaked at a maximum number of 20 across the county in Apr and Jun, the mid Jul build-up of previous years failed to develop and numbers in the second half of the year faded away to a single bird at Covenham Reservoir on Dec 3rd

#### Common Gull Larus canus



Very common passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber List, Threshold for international importance: 16,400; for national importance: 7,000.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	1100	800	400	68	116	22	118	150	400	500	3080	1000
Anderby Creek	450	2500	50	-	-	12	20	-	11	100	30	65
Chapel Point	300	2500	1500	-	-	4	5	29	15	-	-	-
Toft Newton Reservoir	1800	15	30	45	1	-	50	60	6	30	300	1800
Covenham Reservoir	600	1200	500	60	4	2	8	200	60	250	700	800
Louth	70	10	1200	2	-	-	-	50	250	300	200	300
Huttoft Car Terrace	300	35	1	-	-	16	4	15	100	180	350	900
Rippingale	-	-	800	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	775	-	78	-	13	7	6	30	50	24	30	28
Whisby NP	20	500	86	2	-	-	-	2	-	1	100	-

Sites recording 500 or more in one month are tabulated; none surpassed the threshold for national importance. Peak counts were down compared to those of 2019 and the highest monthly counts in the first guarter were 2,500 at Chapel Point on Feb 6th and the same number at Anderby Creek on Feb 26th. Spring passage was noticeable at many sites during Mar with 1,200 at Louth on 22nd and 800 streaming north over inland Rippingale on 28th. Low numbers of summering birds were recorded at sites across the county, and it wasn't until late Jul that returning birds were in evidence with 118 at Gibraltar Point on Jul 28th and 50 Toft Newton Jul 29th. Autumn peaks were modest with numbers building through Sep-Oct, peaking in mid-Nov with 3,080 at Gibraltar Point on 15th and 700 at Covenham Reservoir on 16th. At the year's end 1,800 were at Toft Newton Reservoir on Dec 8th and 1,000 at Gibraltar Point on 20th. There was one ringing recovery to report, a freshly dead bird at Horseshoe Point on Jul 28th, originally ringed in Norway in 2010, aged 10 yrs.

**Taxonomic note**: the latest IOC update (11.2) has split Short-billed Gull, *L. brachyrhynchus*, the north American form from the Common Gull group. There are no accepted British records to date.

#### Great Black-backed Gull Larus marinus



Very common passage migrant and winter visitor with some immatures remaining in summer. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 3,600; for national importance: 760.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	233	150	40	40	30	20	60	190	200	159	130	252
Cress Marsh	8	12	12	-	15	10	8	250	5	120	150	80
College Fm, Frampton	1	2	1	-	2	1	3	5	107	234	90	2
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	100	80	40	-	75	20	21	20	78	70	150	90
Tetney Marsh	54	-	150	140	16	12	6	15	-	-	-	-
Middlemarsh Farm	40	5	2	5	5	1	7	60	120	60	15	6
Kirkby Gravel Pits	100	70	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Donna Nook	86	70	35	11	11	1	2	5	10	33	40	25
Aubourn	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	71	5	-
Pyewipe marsh	60	25	15	25	15	15	10	35	50	70	50	50
Goxhill Marsh	31	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	3	2	65	43
Skitter Ness	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	61	2
Saltfleet	26	30	-	-	2	54	42	5	18	6	19	25
Chapel Six Marshes	-	-	-	5	1	-	-	-	1	3	50	-
Sutton-on-Sea	5	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	50	11	30	15



Gibraltar Point remains the best place to see this monster of a gull in numbers, with the years highest count of 252 on Dec 13th although Cress Marsh ran it close with 250 on Aug 7th. Birds are present all year with lowest numbers recorded May-Jul as breeding birds depart. Autumn passage begins in Aug and builds through Sep-Oct. British breeders as well as those from, particularly, Scandinavia and Russia winter here, the highest counts coming from coastal and estuarine sites. No sites in the county reach the threshold for national importance. A regular customer, HW93611, originally ringed as a 2CY bird at a landfill in Nottinghamshire and seen in Denmark in Apr 2013, was seen in 2014 at Middlemarsh Farm, at Kirkby GP in Dec 2018, and again at Kirkby GP on Jan 29th, 2020.

### Glaucous Gull Larus hyperboreus

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor, rare in summer. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 3,100; for national importance: 2. **LBRC.** 

A poor year for numbers with a 2CY bird found at Pyewipe Marsh on Feb 19th commuting between there and Cress Marsh on and off until May 12th. What is assumed to be the same individual reappeared on Jun 4th at the same locations and remained until Jul 9th. The only other record of the year was one at Chapel Point on Nov 21st and 28th.

### Iceland Gull Larus glaucoides

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor Aug-May. Kumlien's Gull *L. g. kumlieni* is a vagrant. Amber List (nominate). Threshold for international importance: 3,100; for national importance: 3. **LBRC.** 

A scarcer bird in 2020, with just two birds reported in the first half of the year. An adult at Manby Wetlands from Jan 1st-12th and it or another Feb 13th-Mar 7th (OBt, JRC, PEs, PAH, et al), while a 2CY bird was at Rimac beach Feb 11th (JRC). In Dec an adult was again at Rimac beach at the river mouth Dec 1st (GPC) and presumably the same bird later in the month on 17th, 24th, 29th and 31st. The only other site to report this species was Gibraltar Point where a 2CY bird was present on the beach on Dec 24th (RKW, KMW).



Iceland Gull Larus glaucoides Saltfleet Haven Dec 1st 2020 © GRAHAM CATLEY

# **Herring Gull** Larus argentatus (argenteus) (argentatus)

British form 'argenteus' a common passage migrant and winter visitor; fairly common and increasing breeding species. Nominate northern European form 'argentatus' a fairly common winter visitor. Red List. Threshold for international importance: 10,200; for national importance: 7,300.

It is worth mentioning that most Herring Gulls recorded in the county are of the subspecies *argenteus* but on passage and during the winter months good numbers of the more easterly and northerly nominate *L. a. argentatus* are present; typically, these are larger and darker birds, adults being safely identifiable, as primary pattern differs to that of the British breeding subspecies *argenteus*.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Tetney Marsh	120	-	4200	3000	70	220	220	300	-	-	-	-
Gibraltar Point	2840	1600	700	1150	750	300	2195	2400	2000	2000	1391	4100
Friskney Marsh	-	2000	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Middlemarsh Farm	350	300	650	200	100	150	200	500	2000	400	200	120
Wainfleet Marsh	-	1805	135	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kirkby GP/Tattershall	600	1000	900	-	1	1	120	-	-	-	3	250
Seacroft	120	15	200	125	80	110	85	350	800	400	250	160
Huttoft Car Terrace	4	20	-	-	-	18	24	35	50	110	85	520
Pyewipe Marsh	60	400	60	80	50	60	120	100	150	100	300	100
Saltfleetby- Theddlethorpe	100	15	20	24	400	126	25	20	130	60	28	300

The top 10 sites for Herring Gulls all had at least one monthly maximum count of 400 or more; none of these surpassed the threshold for national importance. The four-figure counts in 2020 were from four coastal sites – Tetney Marsh, Gibraltar Point, Friskney Marsh and Wainfleet Marsh – and two inland sites, Middlemarsh Farm and Kirkby GP and the associated landfill site. The trend appears to be that with the cessation of landfill activities the species is becoming more coastal in its habits of necessity. Several colour-ringed birds were seen in the county, three of them ringed at Rufford Waste Disposal site in Nottinghamshire and recorded on multiple occasions in Lincolnshire. GV54534 ringed in 2017 was at Gibraltar Point on Feb 14th; GV35158 ringed in 2016 was at Middlemarsh Farm on Jan 23rd; GV31646 ringed in 2015 was also at Middlemarsh Farm on Mar 30th. Two others, both ringed in Aberdeenshire were seen at Fox Covert on Jan 20th and Feb 14th aged 5.5 and 6.5 yrs. respectively.

## Caspian Gull Larus cachinnans

Very scarce all-year visitor, first county record in 2001. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 3,200; for national importance: 1. **LBRC.** 

A typical spread of records with most in the last quarter. An adult was at Kirkby GP on Jan 20th (NAL), the only record in the first half of the year. The next record wasn't until Jul when one was at Frampton Marsh on 10th (PS) and 17th (D. Agombar). Then a 1CY bird was at Middlemarsh farm on 29th and a second adult bird was there on 31st (NAL). Single 1CY birds appeared at Gibraltar Point from Aug 2nd, (seven records involving probably five individuals) with two there on 28th (KMW, NAL, BWd, et al). Elsewhere, a 1CY bird at Freiston Shore RSPB reserve on Aug 29th was a site first (ABe, et al). Other 1CY birds were recorded at three sites in Sep with two at Trent Port on 13th (DN), one of them a colour-ringed German bird now a 3CY. Another 1CY flew north along the beach at Gibraltar Point on Oct 3rd (NAL) and it or another was present there Nov 17th (NAL) and a near-adult was there 25th (KMW). The last bird of the year was another 1CY bird videoed at Goxhill Tilery Pits Dec 5th (SR).

## Yellow-legged Gull Larus michahellis

Scarce visitor, mainly in late summer/autumn. **RBBP.** Amber List (nominate). Threshold for international importance: 13,900; for national importance: 8. **LBRC.** Note that Azorean Yellow-legged Gull *L. m. atlantis* is a vagrant on the **BBRC** list.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Anderby Creek	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Barton	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Boultham Mere	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chapel Point	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Cleethorpes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Covenham Reservoir	1	1	-	1	-	1	1	2	1	1
Cress Marsh	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
East Halton Brick Pits	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Eastoft	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Frampton Marsh	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Freiston Shore	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Gibraltar Point	-	-	-	-	5	5	1	-	-	-
Louth	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Middlemarsh Farm	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-
Tetney Marsh	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Trent Port (Marton)	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Witham Mouth	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-
Woodhall Spa	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

According to the new *Birds* of *Lincolnshire*, records between 2017-2019 averaged around 50 per year, itself more than a 50% drop compared to numbers in 2013-2016. This downward trend has continued and peak monthly counts from all sites recording the species are tabulated. Few birds were seen in the first quarter and none Apr-May. A long-standing adult presumed to be one individual frequented Covenham Reservoir and Louth, being seen in eight months of the year with two present in Oct. Juveniles appear from Jul onwards with five at Gibraltar Point on 6th, five on Aug 4th and three to four present until mid-month. Numbers fell away in Sep and in Oct-Dec birds were seen only at Covenham Reservoir and Cleethorpes.

## **Lesser Black-backed Gull** Larus fuscus (graellsii) (intermedius)

Present all year: western European form 'graellsii' common on spring and autumn passage, scarce but increasing in winter and as breeding species. Danish and southern Scandinavian form 'intermedius' is a fairly common passage migrant. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 5,500; for national importance: 1,200.Birds showing characters of the northern Scandinavian form 'fuscus' (Baltic Gull) have been noted (see below).

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Lincoln West Common	1	4	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	270	29	-
Cress Marsh	-	8	10	20	40	36	90	250	11	120	70	-
Deeping Lakes	1	30	74	-	148	90	61	51	13	-	1	-
Bigby Top	-	-	-	135	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Saltfleet	-	120	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Stallingborough	1	8	9	-	15	36	120	25	1	-	-	-
Trent Port (Marton)	-	-	2	-	5	2	2	2	105	18	31	-
Welbourn	-	-	4	-	1	-	-	-	100	100	-	-

Sites recording a monthly peak count of 100 or more are tabulated; the species was widely recorded across the county at more than 240 sites and in all months of the year though much scarcer in Dec-Jan, with just five to six individuals seen and mainly at inland sites. Peak counts were seen in Apr-May and Aug-Oct. Both coastal and inland movements were recorded. Inland, 52 went north over West Common, Lincoln Oct 15th and 270 went SW there Oct 23rd for example, and smaller numbers, mainly south, at Gibraltar Point in both periods.

The species breeds widely across Britain at both coastal and inland locations. The largest nesting colony was at Deeping Lakes NR where there were at least 59 occupied nests on May 16th but only 28 on Jul 9th. Predation of chicks by Red Kites is believed to be largely responsible for the high failure rate. Confirmed breeding also occurred at Baston & Langtoft GP where at least 11 well-grown chicks were seen on Jul 18th. A pair with three juveniles was seen at Middlemarsh Farm on Jul 15th. No records of roof-nesting birds in conurbations were received, perhaps a reflection of the extent of the COVID-19 restrictions. Two ringing recoveries were of note, both of nestlings ringed on The Wash in different years – GC16785 ringed in Jun 2006 was found freshly dead in Grimsby on Aug 11th, aged 14 yr. and GC52527 ringed in Jul 2007, also found freshly dead, at Minting on Sep 24th, aged 13 yr. 2 mth.

#### 'Baltic' Gull L.f. fuscus

#### Vagrant. Scandinavia. One accepted record in 2016. BBRC.

There were no records of this rare sub-species in 2020.

#### Gull-billed Tern Gelochelidon nilotica

#### Vagrant. Western Europe.

A 2CY+ or adult bird was at Gibraltar Point Aug 18th-19th (KMW, NAL). Accepted BBRC (*British Birds* 114 (10): 570-628). A very good find among the throng of roosting terns on the beach; after the first sighting it was briefly seen again in the early morning roost of Aug 19th but not thereafter. Only the 7th county record; the previous one was a brief stayer at Kirkby GP in 2013 with the other five all occurring 1967-1978.

## Caspian Tern Hydroprogne caspia

#### Vagrant. Western Europe. BBRC

A 3CY+ bird was at Frampton Marsh Jul 10th-21st (ABa, et al); this bird was absent for long spells during its stay and was presumed to be the same bird that visited Huttoft Pit briefly on Jul 14th (RDn). Accepted BBRC (British Birds 114 (10): 570-628).

The first record was of a bird shot at Caythorpe in May 1853. The next was not until Sep 1971 and in all there have been 17 records involving about 13 birds; since the millennium they have become more frequent with records in 2002, 2009, 2015-17 and 2020.



Caspian Tern Hydroprogne caspia Frampton Marsh Jul 17th 2020 © GRAHAM CATLEY



#### Sandwich Tern Thalasseus sandvicensis



Passage migrant, scarce in spring but common in autumn. Rare inland. Occasional pairs in summer. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 1,700; for national importance: 1.

Site	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov
Gibraltar Point	254	471	463	1960	13762	2321	19	1
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	-	-	45	381	1200	46	-	-
Seacroft	-	-	7	45	700	120	1	-
Huttoft Car Terrace	-	-	2	71	400	200	7	-
Sutton on Sea	-	2	6	-	5	355	-	-
Chapel Point	2	26	23	300	300	75	-	-
Donna Nook	-	-	-	-	300	-	-	-
Saltfleet Haven	-	-	2	230	45	-	-	-
Tetney Marsh	1	-	1	7	200	-	-	-
Anderby Creek	2	18	93	130	150	61	1	-
Freiston Shore	-	-	2	1	100	8	-	-
Moggs Eye-Wolla Bank	-	-	-	100	100	-	-	-

The first of the year was at Baston & Langtoft GP on Apr 5th, one of only three inland records this year. This was quickly followed by two on 6th at Gibraltar Point, 10 there on 13th and large numbers there in the ensuing weeks of Apr – more than 100 birds north on three dates peaking at 254 on 27th. This continued throughout May with five counts of 100 or more at Gibraltar Point: 471, 1st: 177. 3rd; 169, 4th; 161, 13th; and 261, 14th. Other coastal stations had much lower counts, with 26 past Chapel Six Marshes on May 17th the most. Gibraltar Point remained the main coastal site for this species with a peak of 463 on Jun 29th, perhaps reflecting the closeness of the breeding colony at Blakeney Point, Norfolk. Inland one was at Whisby NP Jun 26th



Sandwich Tern Thalasseus sandvicensis Gibraltar Point Aug 18th 2020 © PAUL NEALE

As expected, autumn passage produced

some very high roost counts at Gibraltar Point with eight counts of more than 1,000 in Jul, 1,960 on 26th the highest, but eclipsed by the build-up during Aug: 16 counts of more than 1,000 Aug 1st-20th, peaking at 13,762 on 16th. The lone autumn record inland was of one at Boultham Mere on Aug 28th. Smaller totals were noted into Sep with the last 'big' counts at Gibraltar Point being 2,321 on 7th and 1,019 on 16th. By the end of the month few remained and 19 at Gibraltar Point on Oct 2nd and 9th were the last double-figure counts and the final bird of the year was there on Nov 12th.

In amongst the various flocks were two colour-ringed birds, both ringed on the Ythan Estuary, Aberdeenshire: ETZ/DT03177, ringed as an adult in Jul 2015 was seen at the Witham Mouth on Aug 30th; EFD/DE35918 ringed as a 1CY bird in Aug 2010 was at Gibraltar Point on Aug 8th. At the end of the summer birds often move northwards and by late Aug many of the birds on the Ythan can be from the Wadden sea. Birds from the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, and Belgium have been found there. From mid-Jul birds start to circulate within the North Sea and some then cross to the Irish sea. EFD/DE35918 was seen in S Africa in Mar 2013, Netherlands in May 2017, and S Africa again in Nov 2018 before its sighting at Gibraltar Point in 2020. Keep a sharp eye out!

#### Little Tern Sternula albifrons



Scarce summer visitor and fairly common passage migrant. Occasional inland. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 190; for national importance: no data. **RBBP** 

Site	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Gibraltar Point	4	124	144	58	246	26
Freiston Shore	-	-	-	-	54	-
Witham Mouth	-	-	-	-	13	8
Grainthorpe	-	-	7	5	-	-
Huttoft	-	-	-	-	5	6
Chapel St Leonards	-	1	2	1	4	

The table lists all sites reporting cumulative monthly maxima of more than five birds. The first birds were reported at Gibraltar Point on Apr 20th and there were four there the following day. There were two at Frampton Marsh on Apr 28th and a single at Toft Newton Reservoir on Apr 29th. Other inland birds in spring were singles at Baston Gravel Pit on Jun 3rd and Alkborough Flats on Jun 13th. As usual the main action was at Gibraltar Point which saw passage, roosting and breeding activity. The breeding colony on Millennium Ridge was wardened, 11 pairs nested and succeeded in fledging 5 juveniles in the face of wave action and fox predation which the wardens battled hard to mitigate. The rapid change in the beach at Gibraltar Point through tide action and the more southerly extension of Greenshank Creek may with luck create a higher and less accessible nesting shingle ridge at some point. Mill Hill provides the best vantage point for sea watching and peak monthly movements were observed from there as follows: May 14th 52 N, May 18th 67 S, Jun 18th 123 N, Aug 5th 245 S, Aug 15th 49 N. Freiston Shore had a count of 54 on Aug 19th and the last bird of the year was a single at Gibraltar Point on Sep 17th.

### Roseate Tern Sterna dougallii

# Very scarce passage migrant, May-Oct. Red List. LBRC RBBP.

An adult flew into the tern roost at Gibraltar Point on Jul 20th (BWd), another flew south-east towards Norfolk on 26th (KMW), then singles at Gibraltar Point on Aug 1st and 6th ((BWd, S. Hunter), and one flew south at Chapel Point 10th, presumed heading to roost. (RDn). One flew past Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe on 14th, probably an adult (GPC) and a moulting adult, presumed different to the earlier one, was in the tern roost at Gibraltar Point on 16th (BWd). A juvenile went south at Sutton-on-Sea on Aug 29th (GPC) and the last record of the year was on Sep 26th when an adult and a juvenile went north at Gibraltar Point (KMW, NAL) and both birds were seen a short time later at Chapel Point (RDn).

#### Common Tern Sterna hirundo

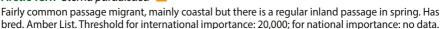
Fairly common summer visitor and common passage migrant. Most breeding colonies are now inland. Amber List (nominate). Threshold for international importance: 1,800; for national importance: no data.

Site	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Gibraltar Point	3	14	12	36	1110	81
Freiston Shore	2	60	63	184	817	16
Chapel Point	-	2	-	-	500	6
Tetney Marsh	-	-	1	3	300	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	-	-	2	3	150	-
Huttoft Car Terrace	-	-	1	6	130	80
Donna Nook	-	-	-	-	100	-
Frampton Marsh	2	20	35	100	100	6
Deeping Lakes	10	47	69	6	6	-
Kirkby GP/Tattershall Thorpe	17	52	40	9	1	-

Widely recorded across the county on freshwater and at coastal locations, records were received from more than 105 sites between Apr-Sep; there were no records in Oct. The first of the spring was noted at Deeping Lakes NR on Apr 8th. Thereafter there was a trickle of other records at 16 other sites, with 10 at Deeping Lakes NR on 26th and 17 at Kirkby GP on 29th. Arrivals peaked during May-Jun as breeding birds settled in. Breeding was confirmed at nine sites with very mixed outcomes. Up to four pairs nested at Barton Pits, all young predated; at Baston & Langtoft GP all nests predated bar one pair seen with well-grown chicks Jul 24th; Deeping Lakes NR had 45 birds on nests on Jun 1st, but only two nests remained Jul 9th, presumed predation by large gulls; two adults with chicks at Frampton Marsh Jul 11th; two pairs Tennyson's Sands, Gibraltar Point Jun 4th and a pair on nest with eggs Jun 15th at Finger Ridge; the colony at Kirkby GP had transferred to Woodhall Spa Airfield where there was a minimum of 28 nests including five with juveniles close to fledging; Messingham SQ one pair fledged two young; West Ashby two pairs fledged at least one young; Whisby NP five nests Jul 8th, minimum of two pairs with two chicks each Jul 29th, one pair with two fledged young Aug 7th.

Birds began leaving post-breeding in Jul-Aug with large numbers at coastal sites peaking in Aug with 817 at Freiston Shore Aug 4th, 300 Tetney Marshes Aug 7th, 1,100 Gibraltar Point on Aug 8th, and 500 Chapel Point Aug 10th. Birds rapidly passed south late Aug-Sep with 58 at Gibraltar Point Sep 3rd, 80 past Huttoft Car Terrace Sep 16th, and 81 past Gibraltar Point Sep 25th (71 south) and the last of the year a single at Witham Mouth Oct 2nd.

### Arctic Tern Sterna paradisaea



Site	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Gibraltar Point	20	4	-	25	40	32
Covenham Reservoir	24	-	-	-	-	-
Sutton on Sea	-	-	-	-	3	15
Toft Newton Reservoir	10	1	-	-	-	-
Chapel Six Marshes	3	9	-	-	1	-
Freiston Shore	-	-	-	6	1	6
Huttoft Car Terrace	-	-	-	4	1	6
Baston - Langtoft Pits	4	5	-	-	-	-
Witham Mouth	-	-	-	-	5	2
Barton	4	-	-	-	-	-

Recorded from more than 30 sites both coastal and inland, birds were not so numerous as in 2019 with the highest count of the year being 40 at Gibraltar Point on Aug 5th.

The first of the spring were at Frampton Marsh and Gibraltar Point on Apr 17th with flocks of birds rapidly passing through from then until mid-May. Covenham Reservoir recorded most with 24 on Apr 20th, 20 on 21st, and 16 on 29th. Inland, there were 10 at Toft Newton Reservoir on Apr 20th and smaller numbers at Baston & Langtoft GP, Whisby NP and Woodhall Spa Airfield.

Returning autumn birds appeared on the coast from mid/late Jul with a maximum of 25 at Gibraltar Point on 25th. Gibraltar Point recorded 12-40 birds on 13 dates in Aug between 1st-29th; very few birds appeared inland at this time. Birds moved through quickly with most counts in Sep being of six birds or less, except for a late surge on 25th when 15 went south at Sutton-on-Sea and 32 went south at Gibraltar Point. The last birds of the autumn were two south at each of Huttoft Car Terrace and Gibraltar Point the next day, Sep 26th.

# White-winged Black Tern Chlidonias leucopterus

Rare/very scarce migrant. C. & E. Europe. LBRC.

No records of this species were received in 2020.

### Black Tern Chlidonias niger



Scarce to fairly common passage migrant in spring and autumn. **RBBP.** American Black Tern C. n. surinamensis is a vagrant (BBRC). Green List. Threshold for international importance: 7,500; for national importance: no data.

Site	Apr	May	Jun	Aug	Sep
Freiston Shore	-	-	-	20	8
Gibraltar Point	-	-	-	6	2
Witham Mouth	-	-	-	5	2
Huttoft	-	-	-	4	1
Frampton Marsh	1	1	-	3	2
Baston - Langtoft Pits	2	-	-	-	-
Langtoft West End Pit	-	-	2	-	-
Sutton on Sea	-	-	-	2	-

An immemorable year for Black Terns with some 80 records from around 19 sites. Unlike 2019, very few were seen in the spring with the first birds seen at Baston & Langtoft GP on Apr 22nd and Toft Newton Reservoir Apr 23rd. Two birds were recorded only once – at Baston & Langtoft GP on Apr 24th and in early summer at West End Pit, Langtoft, Jun 13th; a spring to forget. There was a hiatus until autumn passage started on Aug with singles at several coastal sites from 10th, 20 at Freiston Shore on 19th and a trickle of southward movement until the end of the month. Two were at Witham Mouth Sep 1st, eight were at Freiston Shore Sep 3rd with one to two birds thereafter at Gibraltar Point, Frampton Marsh, and Huttoft Car Terrace with the final bird of the year, a juvenile, north at Gibraltar Point on Sep 27th.

#### Great Skua Stercorarius skua



Fairly common autumn passage migrant, mainly Aug to Nov and very scarce in winter and spring. Rare inland, Amber List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	-	-	33	246	4	4	2
Chapel Point	1	1	10	73	-	-	-
Huttoft Car Terrace	-	-	14	39	1	12	1
Witham Mouth	-	-	3	16	-	-	-
Sutton on Sea	-	-	4	4	1	8	-
Frampton Marsh	-	-	-	6	-	-	-

More than 150 records came from coastal sites between Saltfleetby-Gibraltar Point and The Wash. Winter records were of singles at Chapel Point on Jan 6th and Feb 4th, and at Freiston Shore Jan 15th (with an Arctic Skua there same date). The main autumn passage was seen in Aug-Sep with double-figure counts at coastal sites from mid-month, 33 being the highest at Gibraltar Point on Aug 29th. Modest passage continued into Sep peaking between 24th-26th. Thereafter numbers rapidly dwindled with one to four birds through Oct-Nov, with a peak of 12 at Huttoft on Nov 19th. A few lingered into Dec with the last bird of the year at Huttoft Car Terrace Dec 24th.

Inland records came from Covenham Reservoir (1, Aug 9th) and Sutton Bridge (1, Oct 2nd), and at Frampton Marsh six flew across the saltmarsh on Sep 8th and away up the Welland, climbing higher all the time. Skua passage overland from The Wash to the Severn is well-described.



### Pomarine Skua Stercorarius pomarinu

omarine Skua Stercorarius pomarinu

Generally scarce autumn passage migrant, with occasional larger movements, mainly Sep to Nov. Rare in winter and spring and exceptional inland. Green List.

Site	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	6	15	1	-	1
Huttoft Car Terrace	-	9	2	3	-
Freiston Shore	8	-	-	-	-
Anderby Creek	-	-	5	-	-
Sutton on Sea	-	1	2	-	3
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	-	2	-	1	1
Tetney Marsh	2	-	-	-	-
Chapel Point	-	1	-	-	-
Witham Mouth	1	-	-	-	-

A poor year for this species with only 70 records from coastal sites between Tetney-Gibraltar Point and The Wash; there were no inland records. First of the year were eight at Freiston Shore, including an adult with full 'spoons', and two at Tetney Marsh, on Aug 8th. These were followed by a steady trickle of birds at Gibraltar Point between Aug 15th-30th with six on 15th and 29th, largely juvenile birds, but four pale phase adults, one with 'spoons', on 26th. More followed in Sep in small groups, with 15 at Gibraltar Point on 25th. That was more or less it with five on Oct 18th at Anderby Creek, all pale phase adults with 'spoons'. A few were seen in Nov and the last of the year were all on Dec 1st – singles at Gibraltar Point and Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe and three at Sutton-on-Sea.

### Arctic Skua Stercorarius parasiticus

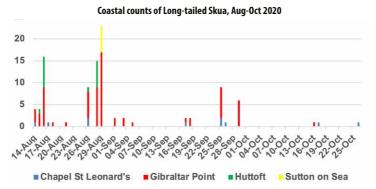
Fairly common, but decreasing, late summer and autumn passage migrant, mainly Jul to Oct. Very scarce in spring and winter and exceptional inland. Red List.

Site	Jan	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct
Gibraltar Point	-	1	117	213	56
Sutton on Sea	-	-	59	72	2
Huttoft Car Terrace	-	-	39	23	3
Chapel Point	-	1	29	12	-
Witham Mouth	-	-	11	15	-
Sandilands	-	-	-	13	-
Mablethorpe North End	-	-	12	4	-
Freiston Shore	1	-	10	2	-

Sites having monthly maxima of 10 or more are tabulated, more than 200 records were received, mostly from the coastal watchpoints between Saltfleetby-Gibraltar Point and The Wash. The first of the year was a wintering individual in The Wash off Freiston Shore Jan 15th. Inland records came from Covenham Reservoir (Aug16th) and Alkborough Flats (Sep 26th). Apart from two singles in late Jul, the main passage period was Aug-Sep with the Gibraltar Point Aug peak (117) coming on 29th when 59 were also recorded at Sutton-on-Sea, 39 at Huttoft Car Terrace and 29 at Chapel Point. Eighty-eight were seen at Gibraltar Point on Sep 11th (13N, 67S) but the next big pulse came on Sep 25th with Gibraltar Point and Sutton-on-Sea recording their biggest counts of the year. Numbers dwindled going into Oct with the last big count of the autumn being 56 at Gibraltar Point on 12th but only one to three elsewhere and the final bird of the year a single at Huttoft Car Terrace on Oct 31st.

## Long-tailed Skua Stercorarius longicaudus

Very scarce/scarce autumn passage migrant, mainly Aug to Oct and exceptional inland. Green List. **LBRC.** 



It was a good year for this species with most records referring to juvenile/1CY birds. The exceptions were immature/2CY birds at Gibraltar Point on Aug 15th and Oct 16th, and two adults at Gibraltar Point on Aug 26th. Where the colour phase of juveniles was recorded, five were intermediate and three were dark individuals.

All the records came from four coastal sites and counts are summarised in the chart above. The extreme dates were Aug 14th (Chapel St. Leonard's, Gibraltar Point) – Oct 26th (Chapel St. Leonard's); the all-time date range in the county is Aug 13th-Nov 21st (*Birds of Lincolnshire*, 2021). The peak of occurrence was the last week of Aug, and the peak count was of 17 at Gibraltar Point (13 south, 4 north) on Aug 29th. Given the proximity of these sites there is bound to have been some duplication, e.g., Aug 16th (Seven, Huttoft, six Gibraltar Point) and Aug 28th (Five at Gibraltar Point, six at Huttoft). No records were received from any inland sites.

### Little Auk Alle alle

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor, with occasional larger influxes. Green List (nominate).

The only record in a poor year for this species was a single bird in summer plumage which flew north along the tide line at Huttoft Car Terrace on Sep 17th.

## Common Guillemot Uria aalge

Fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor but can occur in any month. Rare inland. Amber List.

At Gibraltar Point the peak count (and only double-figure count for the site) was 17 on Dec 20th. Away from Gibraltar Point, birds were recorded at 21 coastal locations with the only significant counts coming from Huttoft Car Terrace and Sutton-on-Sea. In the Humber Estuary an individual was at the bridge on Sep 27th and two flew west under the bridge on Sep 28th. Only small numbers were recorded in the Wash with one off Gat Sands on Jan 10th, two at Cut End on Oct 2nd and three off Freiston Shore on Dec 5th.

## Razorbill Alca torda

Western European form (*islandica*) scarce passage migrant and winter visitor but can occur in any month. Exceptional inland. Amber List (*islandica*).

In the first half of the year individual birds were recorded at Gibraltar Point on seven dates in Jan with two birds on Jan 14th and on single dates in Mar, May, Jun, and Jul. At Gibraltar Point in the second half of the year birds were recorded on six dates in Sep with two birds on 18th, two dates in Oct with two birds on 15th and single dates in Nov and Dec. Away from Gibraltar Point birds were recorded at just eight coastal locations with a total of just 64 records for the whole of 2020 with most records involving single birds. The table shows monthly sums for all sites except for one at Donna Nook on Jun 18th.



Monthly sites sum	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Anderby Creek	1	-	1	-	6	2	4	-	-	-	-	-
Chapel Point	2	-	1	-	2	-	1	-	4	-	-	-
Freiston Shore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
Huttoft Car Terrace	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	1	1	1
Marsh Yard	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	1
Sutton-on-Sea	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-

### Unidentified Auk (Guillemot or Razorbill) Uria aalge or Alca torda

Large auks can be impossible to identify at distance, but observers are encouraged to report all movements of unidentified auks. These records are only occasionally published if there has been heavy passage.

The table below shows the monthly sum of all unidentified auk at Gibraltar Point (GPBO) along with monthly sums of common guillemot and razorbill for Gibraltar Point. When comparing monthly numbers of auks recorded with neighbouring counties it highlights how poor sea watching is off the Lincolnshire coast. The only other significant counts of unidentified Auks away from Gibraltar Point were a scattering of records off Huttoft Car Terrace from Sep – Nov and at Chapel Point where a single observer effort from the North Sea Observatory included 169 south on Jun 8th and 174 south on Jun 11th.

<b>GPBO</b> monthly summaries	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Auks Spp	56	137	-	3	9	24	4	4	28	95	48	64
Common Guillemot	21	4	-	1	1	4	4	9	19	17	14	31
Razorbill	8	-	1	-	1	1	2	-	8	3	1	1

## Black Guillemot Cepphus grylle

A rare passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber List. **LBRC** *C.g. mandtii* vagrant, one record in 2017, the sole British record to date. **BBRC**.

No records of this species were received in 2020.

#### **Puffin** *Fratercula arctica*

Scarce passage migrant but can occur in any month. Exceptional inland. Red List. LBRC.

Eight records were submitted in 2020. In Jan singles were off Chapel Point and Gibraltar Point on the 18th. In Sep singles were off Chapel Point, Huttoft Car Terrace on 26th and again at Huttoft Car Terrace on 27th. Finally, in Dec two flew north on 24th and a single flew north on 25th.

## Red-throated Diver Gavia stellata

Fairly common offshore passage migrant and winter visitor Aug-May with peaks in mid-winter. Rare inland and in summer. Green List. Threshold for international importance: 3,000; for national importance: 210.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Huttoft Car Terrace	1	40	-	-	-	-	-	1	45	8	11	54
Anderby/Chapel Point	49	562	183	20	1	-	2	-	4	2		1
Gibraltar Point	127	148	16	1	1	1	1	1	66	9	51	128
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	21	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	14	-	3	32

Peak counts were received Jan-Feb and Sep-Dec with numbers of records rapidly dropping off in early Mar and birds mostly absent from Apr-Aug. Records were exclusively received from the coast between Saltfleetby and Chapel Point, Gibraltar Point, and the Inner Wash off Frampton Marsh. There were no inland records during the period.

In the first winter period there were peak counts in Jan of more than 50 birds off Gibraltar Point on 11 dates with 127 on 12th and 104 on 13th. A significant count in Feb at Chapel Point included 562 on 4th, 342 on 12th and 183 on Mar 10th with birds observed roosting in the wind farm just south of Chapel Point and heading north to feed in the mornings, slushed by fishing/work boats going through the wind farm. There are only four counts higher than 562 in the LBC database, all from Gibraltar Point with the record count being 1,308 on Feb 20th 1999. At Gibraltar Point in Feb there were 148 on 12th and 143 on 19th, these numbers probably relating to a build-up of birds prior to departing for the summer. From Apr-Aug there were scattered records off the coast with most counts referring to individuals. The main return passage started in Sep/Oct with birds only recorded off the northeast Lincolnshire coast with counts of greater than 20 at Sutton-on-Sea, Huttoft Car Terrace and Gibraltar Point and the first record at Cut End on Oct 2nd. Nov-Dec peak counts at Gibraltar Point included 51 on Nov 24th and 28 on Dec 22nd, 54 at Huttoft on Dec 15th, 43 at Donna Nook on Dec 20th and 32 between Crook Bank and Churchill Lane on Dec 22nd. In the Wash a count of 71 on Dec 5th was noteworthy and corresponded with a large local movement of Divers.

#### Black-throated Diver Gavia arctica

Scarce winter visitor to coastal and inland waters. Mainly Sep-Apr, rare in summer. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 3,500; for national importance: 6.

In Jan there were singles at Anderby on 1st, Gibraltar Point on 12th, Freiston Shore on 15th and Anderby on 18th. In Feb singles were at Gibraltar Point on 4th and 28th with a summer plumage bird there on May 1st. In the second winter period the first bird was on the sea at Gibraltar Point on Aug 16th and again on 30th. In Sep one south at Gibraltar Point on 13th, 16th, and 17th and on the sea at Sutton-on-Sea on 28th. In Oct singles were at Anderby on 18th and Huttoft on 19th with birds on four dates at Gibraltar Point. In the final winter period individuals were at Gibraltar Point on six dates, at Huttoft on three dates, between Crook Bank to Churchill Lane on two dates, at Sutton-on-Sea on Nov 19th and Dec 23rd and at Freiston Shore on Dec 4th, four on Dec 5th and Dec 17th.

#### Great Northern Diver Gavia immer

Rare to scarce winter visitor Aug-May. Mainly coastal and exceptional in summer. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 50; for national importance: 43.

Recorded at eight coastal locations with a single inland record at Deeping High Bank/Crowland High Wash area which was well watched from Nov 8th until at least Nov 18th.

On the coast in Jan-Feb there were single birds at four sites: off Chapel Point on Jan 6th and Feb 2nd, at Gibraltar Point on Jan 6th, 24th, and Feb 4th, at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe singles on Jan 8th and 19th and Trusthorpe on Feb 10th The final bird of the first winter period was off Chapel Point on Mar 5th. The first bird of the second winter period was off Huttoft on Aug 29th with two birds at Gibraltar Point on Sep 17th and a single off Huttoft on Sep 23rd. In Oct a single at Sutton-on-Sea on 11th, Gibraltar Point 14th, 15th and 29th, Huttoft on 14th and 16th. Peak counts were received during Nov-Dec with up to three at Gibraltar Point from Nov 19th and Dec 21st. One at Goxhill Haven on Dec 5th was the only record of the year from the Humber. Birds were off Huttoft on seven dates with up to two birds recorded on Nov 19th and Dec 28th, off Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe on five dates during Dec and at Sutton-on-Sea on Nov 19th and 23rd. In the Wash a single was off Freiston Shore on Nov 8th and then a series of remarkable records between Dec 2nd and 21st which included a total of 17 past Freiston Shore on Dec 5th which corresponded with a large movement of Red-throated Diver on the same date and at the same location.

## European Storm Petrel Hydrobates pelagicus

Very scarce offshore migrant Jul-Nov averaging more than one per year but variable between years; exceptional inland and in other months. Amber List. **LBRC.** 

Considerably rarer than Leach's Storm Petrel, and just as easy to overlook during stormy seawatches, there was just a single record in 2020 on Aug 8th at Freiston Shore (ABe).



#### Leach's Storm Petrel Oceanodroma leucorhoa

Scarce offshore migrant generally Sep-Nov, but also May and Dec-Jan. Exceptional inland. Red List. LBRC.

A poor year for this species with single birds past Huttoft Car Terrace on Aug 30th (M. Easterbrook, et al) and Chapel St. Leonard's on Sep 26th (RDn). According to the new Birds of Lincolnshire there were three records per year on average in the years 2010-2019, but with huge variation; five of these years were blank, and 16 records of 27 birds in 2013 heavily skewed this average.

#### **Fulmar** Fulmarus alacialis



Offshore visitor, declined from fairly common to scarce, mainly Mar-Nov. Rare in winter and very infrequent inland. Amber List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Anderby	1	2	2	-	1	32	-	2	-	-	-	-
Gibraltar Point	2	5	-	8	1	9	2	22	4	-	1	1
Chapel Point	1	2	-	-	-	19	-	4	5	-	-	-
Huttoft Car Terrace	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	15	1	-	-	2
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	-	-	-	-	-	12	-	2	-	-	-	-

The Seabird Monitoring Scheme reported a 38% decrease in Fulmars between 2000-2018, and this has been reflected in its growing scarcity offshore here with double-figure counts increasingly rare. Around 135 records were received from coastal sites Tetney-Gibraltar Point and The Wash in 11 months of the year. Small numbers were recorded in the first quarter, maximum eight at Gibraltar Point Apr 20th, the majority going north. Aug was the peak recording month with birds at 10 sites along the length of the Lincolnshire coast and with peak counts of 15 at Huttoft Car Terrace on 26th and 22 at Gibraltar Point on 28th. A single bird off Barton in the Humber was noteworthy on 28th. Number of reports declined in Sep, no records from Oct, and reports from just two sites in Nov and Dec.

## Sooty Shearwater Ardenna grisea



### Scarce offshore passage migrant Jul-Nov, mostly Sep. A few winter records; Dec-Jan. Green List.

Small numbers were recorded past Gibraltar Point Aug-Sep. The first were two south on Aug 14th, the remaining records were all of birds heading north as follows: Aug 28th (4), Aug 29th (3), Aug 30th (3), Sep 19th (1), Sep 26th (2) and Sep 27th (5). Six went past Chapel Point on Sep 26th, one went north at Sutton on Sea. Aug 29th, four 30th and one went north Sep 25th, Singles went past Huttoft Car Terrace on several dates between Aug 16th-Sep 27th. The last two of the year were at Trusthorpe on Oct 3rd and Gibraltar Point Oct 11th.

## Manx Shearwater Puffinus puffinus

Scarce to fairly common offshore visitor/passage migrant, Apr-Nov with most Sep. Occasional inland records after south-westerly gales. Amber List.

Site	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct
Anderby Marsh	-	-	-	57	-	1	-	-
Gibraltar Point	1	-	-	37	1	4	12	1
Mablethorpe North End	-	-	-	-	-	23	-	-
Huttoft Car Terrace	-	-	-	16	-	1	12	-
Witham Mouth	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	-
Chapel Point	-	-	-	9	-	2	6	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	-	-	-	5	-	-	3	-
Sutton on Sea	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-
Freiston Shore	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-

The first bird of the year was recorded off Gibraltar Point on Mar 28th. Peak spring counts were received in Jun with birds recorded at five sites and a peak count of 37 (including groups of 17 and 12) off Gibraltar Point on 8th and on Jun 11th force five north-easterly winds resulting in nine off Chapel Point, a single group of eight past Gibraltar Point, 16 at Huttoft Car Terrace and 57 north at Chapel Point. There was just a single record during Jul with a bird off Gibraltar Point on 5th. In Aug birds were at four sites including 23 off Mablethorpe North End on 5th. Peak autumn passage was recorded in Sep with birds recorded the length of the coast and included 12 in the Wash at Witham Mouth on 16th, 12 at Huttoft Car Terrace on 16th and 12 at Gibraltar Point also on 16th. The final record of the year was a late bird at Gibraltar Point on Oct 31st.

#### Balearic Shearwater Puffinus mauretanicus



### Rare migrant. S. Europe. Red List. LBRC.

One was seen moving south close inshore from Chapel Point Observatory on the unusually early date of Feb 2nd (RDn).

#### Black Stork Ciconia nigra

#### Vagrant. Europe. BBRC.

No records of this species were received in 2020, but further clarification was received regarding the small influx of 2015 when three individuals were seen at various sites (see below).

#### Additional records, 2015:

The narrative of Black Storks in 2015 is added to with this record: One over Frampton Marsh (JB, et al), and then Boston (PS) May 22nd, accepted BBRC (British Birds 114 (10): 570-628). What was assumed to have been the same bird was later seen over Kirkby GP (previously accepted).

#### White Stork Ciconia ciconia

Rare vagrant. Status complicated by the existence of reintroduction schemes on the near continent. LBRC.

No records of this species were received in 2020.

#### Gannet Morus bassanus



Regular offshore visitor/passage migrant most of the year. Fairly common/common Jul-Nov, but scarce at other times and rare inland. Amber List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	1	7	2	11	90	85	180	394	659	240	119	24
Huttoft Car Terrace	-	-	-	-	-	9	273	96	400	148	151	5
Freiston Shore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	350	47	-	2	-
Moggs Eye	-	-	-	-	-	8	30	3	-	266	5	-
Sutton on Sea	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	183	257	50	5
Seacroft	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	220	-	2	-	-
Mablethorpe North End	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100	216	-	-	-
Huttoft	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	185	148	151	5
Chapel Point	2	6	3	-	5	78	100	100	60	1	-	-

Some 25 mainly coastal sites sent in more than 600 records and Gannets were seen in every month of 2020. One unusual inland record came from Bardney, where an adult flew NW on May 25th. Sites recording at least 100 in any one month are summarised in the table.

Records in Jan-Apr were few and far between. Gibraltar Point, and the coastal watchpoints around Chapel Point saw a few more in Jun but autumn passage began in earnest in Jul increasing through Aug and peaking in Sep with the highest count of the year of 659 at Gibraltar Point on Sep 17th. There was to be no repeat of the high Oct counts of 2019, 266 past Mogg's Eye on Oct 11th the best with several other coastal sites recording their highest counts of the month on the same date. Birds continued south during



Nov with peaks offshore largely in the first week but with another smaller peak on 19th with 89 off Gibraltar Point, 87 off Huttoft Car Terrace and 50 Sutton-on-Sea. The 24 seen at Gibraltar Point on Dec 1st was the most seen in that month and the last bird was one off Huttoft Car Terrace on 24th.

#### Cormorant Phalacrocorax carbo

Fairly common winter visitor, mainly coastal but increasing numbers inland and in summer. Inland breeding colony established 1992. Subspecies *car*bo and *sinensis* Green List. Threshold for international importance: 1,200; for national importance: 620.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Coastal												
Gibraltar Point	306	209	84	30	20	12	50	49	200	380	392	399
Saltfleet	384	23	-	-	-	2	2	38	12	18	27	52
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	160	180	180	10	14	12	44	60	75	30	60	75
Anderby Creek	3	2	100	1	-	-	10	2	6	4	2	-
Friskney	37	71	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tetney Marsh	16	-	18	8	55	29	24	69	-	-	-	-
Wainfleet Marsh	67	9	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Freiston Shore	-	-	4	-	-	1	7	10	50	6	12	3
Inland												
Woodhall Spa	114	27	36	-	6	-	25	28	20	19	81	91
Deeping Lakes	27	74	35	-	67	56	49	32	17	25	63	52
Brayford Pool	2	21	29	-	-	-	-	-	2	60	20	8
Langtoft	54	32	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	17	16	12
Whisby NP	51	44	12	14	7	9	14	23	45	28	17	19

More than 260 sites recorded this common species and in every month of the year. The table shows all sites recording a maximum count of 50 or more in at least one month split between coastal and inland sites. Gibraltar Point and Saltfleet recorded the highest counts of the year, with consistently high counts in the autumn and winter months at all sites. The county's only breeding colony at Deeping Lakes NR held 27 occupied nests on May 17th with lots of fledged young (unquantified) on Jul 3rd and young still in the nest on Sep 11th. The other inland sites held some good numbers, but no other breeding activity was reported.

## Shag Phalacrocorax aristotelis

Usually rare/scarce winter visitor Aug-May to the coast and inland, with occasional larger influxes. Exceptional in summer. Threshold for national importance: 2,000; for national importance: 1,110. Red List.

One was at Tetney Marsh Apr 23rd, the only record in the first half of the year! Another, presumably different bird, was at Tetney Marsh on Aug 24th followed by one past Huttoft Car Terrace on 31st. Singles were then seen at Gibraltar Point in Sep on 4th and 16th, another was at North Hykeham 17th, another at Huttoft Car Terrace 22nd, and two past Sutton-on-Sea 28th. Singles were seen on three dates in Oct on the coast between Sutton-on-Sea and Huttoft Car Terrace with just two more in Dec – past Huttoft Car Terrace on 5th and Gibraltar Point on 8th.

## Glossy Ibis Plegadis falcinellus

Rare but increasing passage migrant; breeding attempt in 2014. Threshold for international importance: 800; for national importance: 1. LBRC RBBP.

One spring record at Middlemarsh Farm on May 5th stayed briefly before flying off high E/NE (NAL). In the autumn another was at Middlemarsh Farm on Sep 14th (NAL) and presumably the same bird at Killingholme Pits Sep 15th (CSm). One was at Donna Nook Oct 23rd (CA) and it or another at Gibraltar Point Dec 15th (GGr) and Donna Nook Dec 22nd-25th (R. Taylor). Given the tendency this species has for wandering quite widely it is not unreasonable to think that the autumn and winter records involved a single individual.



### Spoonbill Platalea leucorodia

Scarce visitor, mainly coastal in Apr-Sep, and exceptionally in winter. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 160; for national importance: 1. **RBBP.** 

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Frampton Marsh	1	-	1	-	2	2	30	32	32	-	-	-
Gibraltar Point	-	-	-	2	3	9	19	30	28	1	-	1
Alkborough Flats	-	-	-	5	5	14	27	32	10	-	-	-
Croft Marsh	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	-	-	-
Tetney Marshes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	-
Witham Mouth	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-
Cress Marsh	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-
Croft	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-

Recorded in nine months of the year with more than 950 records from 28 sites. First of the year was at Frampton Marsh on Jan 10th, present on and off until 23rd. Singles were at three sites in Mar-Apr with five at Alkborough Flats Apr 25th, increasing to 14 by Jun 29th; this group included two fledged juveniles of the year which had come from elsewhere - it is known that the adults at Fairburn Ings travel to Alkborough during the breeding season to feed there. Up to three fledged juveniles were present there to mid-Jul. The top three wetland sites in the table above contributed the highest counts, peaking Jul-Sep with Alkborough having a record site count of 32 on Aug 12th. Gibraltar Point's Aug peak (30) came on 11th while that at Frampton Marsh (32) was recorded on Aug 15th. Duplication due to inter-site movements may have occurred but to give an idea of the numbers present in Aug there were three dates in the month when counts were made at all three of the top three sites. The combined totals were 67 (5th), 54 (9th) and

65 (14th). Birds moved on during Sep with counts of more than 20 last seen at Gibraltar Point on 14th (28). Single birds were seen at several coastal sites Oct 7th-17th, possibly the same individual; there were no Nov records but the last of the year was at Woodhall Spa Airfield on Dec 2nd. No colour-ringed birds were reported but in previous years most colourringed birds have come from The Netherlands with one from western France. Given that adult breeding birds in the UK flv into Lincolnshire sites to feed, a breeding attempt in the near future looks very likely.



Spoonbill Platalea leucorodia Gibraltar Point Jul 2nd 2020 © PAUL NEALE



Bittern Botaurus stellaris Fiskerton Fen Dec 22nd 2020 © RUSS HAYES

#### Bittern Botaurus stellaris



Rare breeder, rare winter visitor. Bred to early 19th century, from 1940s-1979 and in recent years. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 80; for national importance: 80. RBBP.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	2	2	3	7	6	6	5	1	3	5	2	1
Minimum Lincs total	6	3	4	9	10	9	7	3	4	6	2	11

Another good year for Bitterns beginning with a high count of five reported at Far Ings on Jan 1st and records from 16 sites through the year. For the second year running the Humber Bank clay pits recorded two regular booming males at Far Ings from mid-Feb, with up to four on occasion, predominantly in the West Pit/ Ness Pit/East Pit area, and regularly from Hotel Pit. Regular feeding flights by the females were noted throughout Jun suggesting at least two active nests, possibly three. Two nests fledged a total of three young in early Jul, and it seems likely that a third nest fledged two youngsters in mid-late Aug. A male boomed regularly from Barrow Haven and adjacent pits throughout the spring, but no further evidence of breeding was noted. At Alkborough Flats a Bittern was seen in the new reedbed on Feb 5th with booming first heard on Mar 4th a full two weeks earlier than 2018 and 2019. By Mar 13th two males were booming and in early May there were three males on a few dates. During Jun, two females were seen undertaking feeding flights to nests. Confirmation of successful breeding was obtained on Aug 1st-2nd when two juvs, were seen being fed by a female. In the south at Baston Fen a male was booming Apr 26th-Jun 26th. A female was also present, and the pair were thought to have nested, but no evidence of young was seen. At nearby Baston Gravel Pit a male was booming Apr 10th-Jun 13th and two birds seen on May 26th and Jun 13th; this pair nested and fledged young. There was a booming male at Willow Tree Fen May 16th-Jun 26th but no evidence of a female. Single birds were recorded at Messingham SQ on five dates between Mar 20th and Jul 16th, but booming was reported only once on Apr 15th.

In summary there were seven confirmed pairs raising seven young and a further five probable breeders, compared to four confirmed pairs raising five young and three other boomers in 2019.

At Whisby Pits a single winterer was present on five dates between Jan 22nd and Feb 6th and one returned on Oct 26th; one to two birds were reported on 25 dates until Dec 31st, with three on Dec 17th. Fiskerton Fen was a hotspot in Dec with one to three Bitterns reported from Dec 1st-27th. An American Bittern Botaurus lentiginosus was claimed by three observers during this period but sadly no photographs were obtained, and the record was judged to be "not proven" by BBRC. The best year for Bittern for many years and hopefully the start of a "boom" in the Lincolnshire Bittern population.

# Little Bittern Ixobrychus minutus BBRC

### Rare. Amber List. Western Europe.

A 1CY+ female was seen briefly and photographed at Huttoft Pit on Oct 7th before flying off south (D. Miller). Accepted BBRC (*British Birds* 114 (10): 570-628) and the 14th county record.

### Squacco Heron Ardeola ralloides BBRC

#### Vagrant. Western Europe.

No records were received of this species in 2020, but an additional location for the well-watched individual in 2019.

**2019**: Freiston Shore, Jul 6th, same as Frampton Marsh bird (DRob, et al).

### Cattle Egret Bubulcus ibis

Rare vagrant. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 2,300; for national importance: 1. **LBRC.** 

A long stayer was at Fiskerton Fen Feb 5th to Nov 27th at least (RHay, ACS, RBe, et al). Elsewhere another was at Whisby NP May 22nd (D. Lingard, GHo, ACS, et al). Later, there were two summer records from Middlemarsh Farm on Jul 23rd and on Aug 25th (NAL) presumed to be different individuals.

This species is becoming commoner especially following its establishment as a breeding species in a small but growing number of English counties. In the closest of these, Norfolk, four pairs bred on the Holkham Estate in 2020.

## Grey Heron Ardea cinerea

Fairly common resident, partial migrant and winter visitor. WeBS threshold for national importance: 450 Green List.

The results of the BTO Heronry census organised by Barrie Wilkinson are listed below. The total number of occupied nests in 2020 was 134, but this cannot be compared with 168 last year due to COVID-19 restrictions preventing visits to some sites. The long-standing site at Kingerby Wood has been removed from the list as it is now considered unoccupied after five visits with nil results.





ABOVE LEFT: **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* Fiskerton Fen Dec 22nd 2020 © RUSS HAYES ABOVE RIGHT: **Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea* Belton Jan 9th 2020 © STEVE NESBITT

Abbey Wood	NS
Appletree Ness	NS
Baston Sand & Gravel Pits	7
Belton Park	4
Bishopsbridge	6
Fitties Nature Reserve	3
Hartsholme Country Park	Р
Hospital Cottage Spinney	9
Kirkby Pits (west)	14
Lea Marsh	7
Long Wood	10
Nocton Wood	6
North Cotes Spinney	6
Patterson's Pit	17
The Deeps	6
The Mere, Deeping St James	12
Troy Wood	?
Warren Plantation	5
Welland Farm	5
Willoughby Wood	17

NS = Not Surveyed, P = Present not counted, ? = Uncertain outcome

BTO BirdTrack reporting rates show a slight peak in Aug and Sep with most counts in single figures and a peak count of 20 at Alkborough on Aug 6th. On Oct 1st there were 26 at Gibraltar Point including three south, one in off the sea and a group of 22 on the beach.

### Purple Heron Ardea purpurea Rare. Western Europe. LBRC.

One flew east along the R. Welland to the south of Deeping Lakes LWT reserve on May 23rd (J. Williams).

## Great White Egret Ardea alba

Scarce but increasing visitor recorded in all months, scarcer Jul-Aug. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 780; for national importance: 1.

Climate change is assumed to be the primary driver of the northward expansion of this species with improved protection from hunting in Europe and new wetland creation schemes (both for conservation and agriculture) fuelling this species population increase. Birds were recorded in five or more months at Boultham Mere, Branston Fen, Fiskerton Fen and Woodhall Spa Airfield with records from Frampton Marsh in 10 months and at Gibraltar Point and Middlemarsh Farm in all 12 months. The table contains sites where birds were recorded in at least three months. There were a further c. 50 sites recording individuals on at least one occasion.



**Great White Egret** *Ardea alba* West Ashby Nov 1st 2020 © RUSS HAYES

Row Labels	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Alkborough Flats				1	5	1		2				
Bardney	1			2							1	2
Boultham Mere	1				1			1	1	1		
Branston Fen	1	1		2							1	1
Deeping High Bank			1						2	1	2	
Deeping Lakes					1				3	1	2	
Fiskerton Fen	1	1	1		1					1	1	2
Frampton Marsh	1	2	2		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Gibraltar Point	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1
Messingham SQ		1						1		1	1	
Middlemarsh Farm	2	2	1	3	2	2	3	3	1	1	2	1
Woodhall Spa	1	1	2	1					1	1	1	1

The RBBP report for 2019 (*British Birds* Nov 2021) estimated that 16-24 pairs bred in the UK which was a new record total with increases in key sites in the southwest and the first breeding recorded in northern England, it is therefore only a matter of time before the first pair breeds in Lincolnshire.

## Little Egret Egretta garzetta

Formerly a rare/scarce visitor in all months, a few wintering since 1993/94. Now a scarce breeding bird and increasingly common resident. Green List. Threshold for international importance: 1,110; for national importance: 110. **RBBP.** 

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Frampton Marsh	15	15	12		30	25	35	128	50	13	19	3
Gibraltar Point	23	27	20	33	19	10	30	41	28	19	24	22
Tetney Marsh	9	8	12	29	18	28	52	73	31	7	4	5
Donna Nook	15	8	8	15	18	7	23	44	23	29	25	21
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	27	32	32	5	6	9	9	19	15	35	20	14
Alkborough Flats	8	6	6	10	25	32	64	55	3	2	4	2
Freiston Shore	5	3	21	-	8	20	20	51	30	20	14	8
Grainthorpe	17	18	15	-	16	-	11	16	9	11	13	2
Sutton Bridge	8		8	10	8	-	10	25	-	20	25	10
Saltfleet	16	26	1	-	2	2	6	27	8	6	9	1

The table shows the top 10 sites with cumulative monthly maxima of over 100 birds. Little Egrets were reported from over 200 sites in 2020 and have become increasingly widespread. The largest count of the year was 128 on Aug 8th at Frampton Marsh. With well over 5,000 records submitted from over 200 sites it has become increasingly difficult to compile meaningful county totals and no attempt has been made this year. The table below summarises the number of occupied nests reported from the known egretries in the county (sites anonymised). Sites marked NS were not surveyed owing to COVID-19 restrictions. It shows that the number of breeding pairs in 2020 increased to 146 compared with the 118 in 2019. Given that three colonies were not surveyed the total number of pairs was probably over 150. Five new colonies at sites L-P



**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* Long Sutton Jan 20th 2020 © STEVE NESBITT

were found or counted for the first time this year. Site L has been established since at least 2017. Colonies at M–P are all small but reflect the scope for growth and new colony establishment.

Site	Number of nests	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Α	Wash	8	6	7	6	25	5	150	60	65	90
В	Humber	17	12	-	8	14	13	22	6	13	20
C	Inland	7	6	8	10	12	6	4	2	4	3
D	Humber	3	3	4	20	15	22	18	13	14	NS
Ε	Humber	8	32	20	32	21	11	-	-	-	1
F	Inland	1	4	5	8	8	10	14	11	4	10
Н	Inland	-	-	-	-	2	3	5	6	7	6
I	Humber	-	-	-	-	4	4	5	5	5	5
J	Inland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	1	NS
K	Wash	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	0
L	Inland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
M	Inland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
N	Wash	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
0	Inland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Р	Inland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	NS
11	Total	45	63	44	84	101	74	218	106	118	146

### Osprey Pandion haliaetus

Scarce passage migrant, rare in summer. Amber List. RBBP.

The first of the spring was seen at Stamford on Apr 20th, much later than in 2019 when there were two records in Mar. Records came from Anderby Creek, Deeping St James, and Legbourne Apr 22nd-30th; all were of single birds. In May, two were at Gibraltar Point on 1st with another on 17th; singles were at Kelby on 3rd and Alkborough Flats 20th. In Jun, there was one at Tallington Lakes on 2nd; Heighington Fen 10th;

Gibraltar Point 13th; Barton Pits and Far Ings 30th. Another was at Holton le Moor and Nettleton on Jul 4th. Given the numbers of immature summering birds in England and the proximity of these and breeding birds at Rutland Water to S Lincolnshire, separating

these from passage birds is increasingly problematic.

Arguably the first of the autumn though was on Jul 25th at Frampton Marsh, the sole Jul record, but Aug was the main month for autumn passage. There were singles at Tetney Blow Wells 9th and 16th; Deeping Lakes/Baston GP area on 11th; Gibraltar Point on 9th, 19th (north, then out to sea) and 20th (south at sea); on 22nd at Read's Island/S. Ferriby/Barton Pits, Huttoft Car Terrace and Frampton Marsh, with presumably the same bird still at Cress Marsh and Killingholme Haven on 23rd. Passage continued into Sept with one at East Halton Skitter 1st; Wroot and Freiston Shore 5th; Howden's Pullover/Saltfleet 10th; Holton le Moor 12th and Messingham SQ 12th-13th; Frampton Marsh 13th-14th; Addlethorpe and Lolham 13th. The last two birds of the year were at Deeping Lakes NR Sep 30th-Oct 1st and at Gibraltar Point Oct 7th.

Osprey Pandion haliaetus Barton Pits Aug 22nd 2020 © GRAHAM CATLEY



of a feather collected from its roosting cliff in Derbyshire. It is a female which fledged from a nest in the Haute Savoie in the Alps of eastern France on Jul 6th, 2019; the father of this bird is a wild-hatched bird from the same area, but the mother was reared in La Garenne Zoo in Switzerland and was released as a fledgling in 2006 in Martell, South Tyrol, Italy. Looking further back, the parents of the wild-hatched male parent were both captive-bred birds, the female and male being released in 1988 and 1989 respectively (British Birds 114(1): 33-37).

## Honey Buzzard Pernis apivorus

started in Europe in 1986.

Very scarce passage migrant, with occasional larger autumn influxes. Europe. Amber List. LBRC, RBBP.

An adult male was seen over an area of woodland in the north of the county on Jun 20th (H. Hoyle) and an adult female in the same area on Aug 2nd (GPC). A dark phase juvenile was seen at Gibraltar Point on Sep 21st, and then again on Sep 28th and Oct 4th (KMW, MEd, et al).

## Sparrowhawk Accipiter nisus

Common resident and passage migrant. After extinction as a breeder in 1950s, due to pesticides and persecution, recolonised rapidly from the early 1980s. Amber List.

Recorded in every month of the year with records from around 268 sites with some overlap. Doublefigure counts were seen on the coast during migration periods, with 19 recorded at Gibraltar Point and 13 at Anderby Creek (although duplication can't be excluded) during a big raptor movement on Apr 11th. Smaller maxima were recorded at Gibraltar Point during Sep (9) and Oct (10). Displaying birds were noted at a few sites but confirmed breeding (adult on nest and fledged young) at only two, clearly an understatement of the breeding status in the county. No BBS data is available for this species.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	2	3	5	19	11	1	2	8	9	10	4	4
Anderby Creek	1	-	1	13	2	-	1	2	1	1	1	-
Sandilands GC	-	-	-	9	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Huttoft Car Terrace	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	2	3	2
Lincoln West Common	-	2	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	6	1
Brayford Pool	2	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	5	1
Baston - Langtoft Pits	1	1	1	2	4	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Laughton Forest	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lincoln	1	2	2	4	1	-	-	1	1	-	-	1



#### Goshawk Accipiter gentilis

Rare visitor/passage migrant, mainly autumn to spring, Green List, LBRC, RBBP

At the 2019 breeding site where a pair of 2CY birds fledged two young the same pair, now in their 3CY, were present and again fledged two young that flew in early Jul; in addition, a second male and a 2CY female were seen in spring. Away from the breeding site there were two reports from Gibraltar Point, an imm female Apr 6th (KMW), and an unaged female Apr 11th (BWd, S. Hunter, R. Hardwick).



#### Marsh Harrier Circus aeruginosus

Fairly common passage migrant and summer visitor, increasing in winter. Amber List. RBBP.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Alkborough	10	3	2	10	5	6	3	4	1	6	2	4
Frampton Marsh	4	7	5	3	2	2	4	3	5	3	6	6
Gibraltar Point	3	3	4	10	5	2	2	5	4	8	1	2
Anderby	1	4	5	12	1	1	3	1	6	1	1	-
Sutton Bridge	3	-	4	3	4	3	5	3	-	4	3	3
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	1	-	1	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	8	8
East Halton	4	4	1		2	2	2	2	1	3	3	2
Read's Island	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	7	4	1	11
Goxhill	3	3	2	-	2	1	2	2	1	3	3	1
Baston Fen	2	2	3	1	2	2	4	-	3	1	-	2

An improvement in breeding fortunes across the county this year with a total of 40 pairs; 24 of these fledged 45 young. This compares to the 33 pairs in 2019, 23 of which fledged 33 young. In the north, GPC's long running study found 16 males and 17 females raising 24 young, two females more and two fledglings less than in 2019. On the coast between Donna Nook and Skegness (plus probable pairs in brackets): two pairs raised five young (3). Around The Wash two pairs raised three young (4) while inland three pairs raised 13 young (9). In the early winter period in Jan around 76 birds were reported across the county up from 51 in 2019. These were split between the Humber (31), coast (2), inland (25) and The Wash (18) with a maximum of 10 at Alkborough on Jan 18th. The peak count across the county was in Apr when the combined peak total was 91. These were split between the Humber (17), coast (34), inland (24) and The Wash (16). The peak individual site count of the year was

12 at Anderby Creek on Apr 11th which involved a passage of birds south. In addition to those sites in the table, other significant counts included nine at Wingland Marsh on Nov 7th and six at Far Ings on Jan 1st.

> TOP: Goshawk Accipiter gentilis with Carrion Crow Corvus corone North Lincs Mar 10th 2020 © GRAHAM CATLEY

LEFT: Marsh Harrier Circus aeruainosus Frampton Marsh Mar 4th 2020 © NEIL SMITH

#### Hen Harrier Circus cyaneus

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor, mainly Sep-May; rare in summer. Bred to 1872. This species has become less numerous since the 1990s. Former roosting sites on The Wash used to hold double figures throughout the winter periods. Red List. **RBBP.** 

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Frampton Marsh	3	2	4	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	2	5
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	5	5
Baston Fen	3	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Gibraltar Point	2	1	2	1	1	-	-	-	1	1	2	3



Records were received from around 45 sites with the majority involving one or two birds, eight sites noted immature or adult males, the remainder involved ringtail/female birds. Over-wintering birds from 2019 remained into 2020 with up to three in the Baston/Langtoft area Jan-Feb and on The Wash saltmarshes; four were at Frampton Marsh on Mar 5th. Most birds had departed by the end of Mar with singles lingering into Apr at Gibraltar Point (4th, 25th), Sutton Bridge (11th) and a very late immature male was at Gibraltar Point on May 27th. The first autumn birds appeared in Sep at Frampton Marsh from 1st and Gibraltar Point from 12th. By Oct, singles had been noted at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe from 12th, Crowland 13th, Barton upon Humber 17th, Deeping High Bank 19th, Chapel Point 22nd, and Laughton Forest 28th. A few more birds arrived during Nov and apart from those tabulated, above, 10 other sites recorded one to two birds evenly split between the coast and inland. The picture remained much the same through to the end of Dec with up to three adult males in one of the winter roosts.

Finally, there was yet more evidence of persecution when a radio-tagged 1CY female which was seen at Goxhill on Nov 1st disappeared in suspicious circumstances in northern England in Apr 2021. She was hatched in the Scottish Borders in summer 2020. Illegal killing is the most likely cause of her disappearance, an all-to-familiar situation for this species and other raptors.

#### Pallid Harrier Circus macrourus

Vagrant. Eastern Europe.

No records of this species were received in 2020; one correction from 2012, below:

**Correction, 2012:** The first county record, a 2CY bird at Gibraltar Point (KMW) was present May 8th, 2012 (not May 9th as stated in the LBC report for 2012; date given in the BBRC report for 2012 was correct).

#### Montagu's Harrier Circus pygargus

#### Scarce passage migrant and summer visitor, though breeding irregularly. Red List. RBBP

This species remains a scarce to rare migrant now. The last nesting attempt was in 2012 and this year provided no sign of breeding activity with just a sprinkling of migrants, welcome though they were – a 3CY male at Gibraltar Point on Apr 30th (BWd, KMW) which was also seen on May 1st and 2nd; an adult male there on May 18th which was watched quartering the NW part of the reserve before gliding away south (BWd, KMW, et al). A female was at Frampton Marsh on May 26th (PS) and an adult male was at Willow Tree Fen on Jul 16th (VF), and it or another on Aug 7th which flew south (TBa).





#### Red Kite Milvus milvus



#### Scarce resident and, from 2008, very scarce breeding species mainly in the southwest of the county. Green List.

Records were received from more than 200 sites reflecting the species spread across the county and with a predominance of high totals from the south and south-west of the county. Maximum monthly counts saw 10 at Keisby in Nov, with 20 others recording four to eight birds, but at most other sites (129) records were of single birds only. Small numbers, one to four, were noted along the coast in both spring and autumn. No confirmed reports of breeding pairs were received although recently fledged juveniles were noted in two areas and were thought to have been locally bred; possible breeding was also noted in several other areas. A wing-tagged bird from Dorset (ringed in 2019, BTO ring GV57592) was seen at Keddington on Oct 13th.

#### Black Kite Milvus migrans Rare, Mainly W. Europe, LBRC.

One well seen and photographed at Gibraltar Point on May 7th before drifting off S/SW was the sole record for the year (KMW, NAL). This remains an LBRC description species and as noted by BBRC when it was a species under their jurisdiction, Marsh Harrier is the obvious confusion species.

#### White-tailed Eagle Haliaeetus albicilla

#### Very scarce visitor. Amber List.

The appearance of birds released under licence by the Roy Dennis Foundation has become a familiar sight in recent years, and two such birds were reported from the Grimsby area on Apr 4th. Tim Mackrill has kindly provided a summary article on the movements of these birds in the county in 2020 ((see pXX). These records are not added to the official county list. There were no records of potentially wild birds in 2020.

#### Rough-legged Buzzard Buteo lagopus

Rare/scarce coastal passage migrant and winter visitor, chiefly Oct-Nov and occasionally Dec-May. LBRC.

The first of the year was a 2CY+ bird seen and photographed along Deeping High Bank on Mar 19th and present in the area until Mar 23rd (J. Williams, MWE, JJ, et al). Another was seen flying out to sea at Gibraltar Point on Mar 26th (BWd, KMW, R. Hardwick) and a second bird was seen there circling over the boundary with the golf club on Apr 15th before heading off NW (GBI, et al).

#### Buzzard Buteo buteo

Bred to 19th century before local extinction. Now common breeder, passage migrant and winter visitor. Green List.

Recorded in all months of the year, sightings came from more than 250 sites across the county. Significant coastal migration was noted in spring in Apr with 20 at Gibraltar Point and 17 at Anderby Creek on 11th. Numbers peaked in May when 32 were counted at Gibraltar Point on 2nd and another 30 at Frampton Marsh on 9th. The autumn saw the highest count of the year when 72 passed over Gibraltar Point on Aug 23rd, a day of significant raptor movement in general, and another 40 were counted there on Sep 21st.

All sites having at least one double-figure count are tabulated. Displaying pairs were noted at several sites and nesting was noted at Sedge Hole Close LWT reserve (outcome unknown); at Whisby NP, where adults at a nest were noted feeding two chicks in late Jun; at Stickford; at Barton upon Humber; at Alkborough Flats; and near Cress Marsh. They clearly breed widely across the county, but nesting attempts

are reported only rarely and no reports of Buzzard chicks being ringed were received in 2020.

> Buzzard Buteo buteo Sandtoft Jan 21st 2020 © PAUL COOMBES



Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	3	3	11	20	32	7	4	75	40	11	4	4
Frampton Marsh	2	3	3	-	30	2	3	1	3	2	1	1
Chapel Pit	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	24	-	-	-
Crook Bank	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	23	4	-	-
Anderby Creek	-	-	6	17	2	3	1	-	2	7	2	-
Sutton on Sea	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	17	-	1	-
Castle Bytham	-	-	5	16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Woodhall Spa	2	1	15	-	2	-	-	-	3	-	1	1
Middlemarsh Farm	4	3	7	4	5	5	2	6	14	8	7	5
Sandilands GC	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14	-	-	-
Burgh le Marsh	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	12	-
Farforth	-	12	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	12
Laughton Forest	-	12	10	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rippingale	1	-	6	6	2	1	1	-	4	12		2
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	1	-	1	2	4	2	4	2	12	3	2	2
Cabbage Hill Wood	-	-	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Messingham	-	-	-	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Withcall	-	-	-	-	11	4	-	1	2	-	-	7
Lincoln West Common	1	3	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	5	1
Louth	5	5	6	10	4	6	5	3	7	5	4	7

#### Note: Owl ringing data

In the tables which follow below in the owl species accounts, we are again indebted to Alan Ball (AB) and his team for supplying us with their owl-ringing data. In 2020 their activities were curtailed to an extent because of COVID-19 restrictions; in the case of Tawny Owl this meant virtually nil data.

#### Barn Owl Tyto alba

Common and widespread resident with good breeding years coinciding with peaks in the vole population. Dark-breasted Barn Owl *T. a. guttata* is a vagrant. Green List. **BBRC** 

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total Number of nests**	272	280	185	296	49
Failures	41	62	31	29	12
Broods ringed	198	191	131	240	23
Chicks ringed	522	455	313	722	48
Average number of chicks/brood ringed	2.6	2.4	2.4	3.0	1.8

<sup>\*\*</sup> Total nests = "missed" and "outcome unknown" as well as ringed + failures

2020 Barn Owl brood sizes (ringed)	Number	Total
1	2	2
2	8	16
3	13	39
4	-	-
5	-	-
6	-	-
7	-	-
Total	23	48



Barn Owl Tyto alba Gibraltar Point Feb 25th 2020 © PAUL NEALE

More than 220 sites reported this iconic species but overall it was a very poor year for Barn Owls. Many regular sites were not occupied, presumably because many adults had perished in the wet and windy spell in Feb and because it was a poor vole year. AB and team only checked around a third of their Barn Owl sites, but the productivity was the poorest on record. One observer reported 10 along Deeping High Bank on Feb 26th with an amazing seven hunting the same field with a high vole population but then came the very cold, wet spring. There were two other records at the same site of five to seven birds seen on two other dates. The majority of other records involved one to two birds but three were noted at 10 other sites, mainly in fenland areas and in the first quarter of the year. An adult female found dead near Crowland on Jul 2nd was more than 12 yr. old and another female ringed as a chick in the county in 2008 was caught in the nestbox in Cambridgeshire on Sep 9th, also aged more than 12 yrs. Two other county-ringed chicks were recovered freshly dead in Partington (Manchester) on Mar 23rd aged 8 mth and near Driffield aged 3yr. 7 mth.

Tawny Owl Strix aluco Common resident, widespread but predominantly in wooded areas. Amber List.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total Number of nests**	23	42	8	36	1
Failures	2	1	2	4	1
Broods ringed	20	32	3	22	0
Chicks ringed	40	68	5	39	0
Average number of chicks/brood ringed	2.0	2.1	1.7	1.8	0

<sup>\*\*</sup> Total nests = "missed" and "outcome unknown" as well as ringed + failures



Tawny Owl Strix aluco North Somercotes Jun 4th 2020 © MARK JOHNSON

COVID-19 restrictions meant that Alan Ball and team could not visit most of their Tawny Owl nests. The single (garden) site they did visit, failed. The table is included as a reminder of their breeding record in previous years. Across the county this familiar owl, by call at least, was recorded at some 111 sites. These were mostly one to two birds although three to six were recorded at a small number of sites in either the pre-breeding phase based on calling birds or post-breeding; the record of six was of a successful pair with four fledged young. These are also incredibly site-faithful owls and long-lived if they survive their first one to two yrs. of life – the record for a ringed bird from the BTO archive is 23.5 yrs. old.

#### Little Owl Athene noctua

Common resident, very sedentary.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total Number of nests**	78	90	91	66	65
Failures	23	26	27	16	10
Broods ringed	51	50	55	39	46
Chicks ringed	138	141	152	112	120
Average number of chicks/brood ringed	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.6

<sup>\*\*</sup> Total nests = "missed" and "outcome unknown" as well as ringed + failures

The ringing totals in the table showed that Little Owls fared better than Barn Owls, as they are less reliant on voles. More generally, there were records from around 65 sites with most being of one to two birds with three sites recording three birds. Most ringing recoveries are of birds less than 100km from their ringing site, but there were four retraps in 2020 showing how site-faithful these birds are. Four adult females all ringed between 2011-2014 were all caught at their natal or breeding sites aged between six to nine yrs., and having been retrapped in similar fashion in five to nine previous years.

#### Long-eared Owl Asio otus



#### Scarce and declining breeding bird in county and scarce winter visitor. Green List. RBBP.

The highest count of the year was seven in the winter roost at Deeping St James on Dec 24th. Recorded in 11 months of the year there were 75 observer sightings from eight sites. The following table gives the percentage of observer records for each month.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
12	19	7	1	9	4	0	1	1	1	19	35

Of the 75 records received, 68 were from Deeping St James, the other seven records came from seven separate sites on one date each. The winter roost at Deeping St James held up to three birds from Jan 1st to Mar 14th. A roost of three birds at Risby Warren was found on Mar 8th and a single bird was seen at Fillingham on Mar 13th. LWT confirm three pairs bred at Deeping St James raising at least three young. Birds have bred on site for several years though that information has not previously been reported. This gives encouragement that there may be more birds breeding in the county than suspected. Later in the season a single bird was seen at Marston STW on Aug 3rd and the only autumn migrant bird on the coast this year was reported at Huttoft on Sep 21st. The winter roost at Deeping St James was occupied from Oct 30th through to the year end with a maximum of six birds in Nov and seven in Dec. A single was reported at Gedney Hill on Nov 23rd and five at Crowland on Dec 17th.



Short-eared Owl Asio flammeus Dunsby Fen Dec 9th 2020 © IAN MISSELBROOK

#### Short-eared Owl Asio flammeus

Scarce winter visitor and occasional breeder. Amber List. RBBP.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	1	-	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	5	1	1
Deeping High Bank	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	1	8
Huttoft	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4	4
Baston Fen	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	3	3
Crowland	-	1	1	-	-	-	-		-	3	1	3
Dawsmere Marsh	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Tetney	-	1	1	1	1	1		1	-	-	1	2
Frampton Marsh	1	-	2	-	1	-	-	-	1	1	1	1
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	1	4
East Halton	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-

Recorded in all months, the highest count for the year was eight at Deeping High Bank on Dec 9th. There were records from 52 sites in 2020, up from 51 sites in 2019. Twenty-five of the sites reported only one bird in one month of the year. The table shows the top 10 sites holding accumulated peak counts of eight or more birds across the year ranked from highest to lowest. The year started quietly with a total of 16 birds at nine sites in Jan compared to a total of 35 birds at 17 sites in Jan 2019. The best month of the year was Dec with 46 birds at 19 sites. With only single birds summering at Gibraltar Point, Frampton Marsh and Tetney Marsh there was no evidence of breeding reported. In the autumn, passage was observed along the coast during Oct especially at Huttoft Bank and Gibraltar Point both of which had birds in-off the sea on several dates notably four at Huttoft on Oct 13th and four at Gibraltar Point on Oct 15th and 16th.

#### **Hoopoe** Upupa epops

#### Very scarce migrant, mainly Apr-Oct, rarely to Dec. LBRC

One flew north past Paradise Pool, Saltfleet on May 29th (JRW, PRo, JRow) and later that day was found in the dunes at the south end of Donna Nook (CA).



Kingfisher Alcedo atthis Swanholme Lakes Dec 20th 2020 © CHRIS GRIMSHAW

#### Kingfisher Alcedo atthis

# Fairly common resident and partial migrant. Gradually increasing but vulnerable to hard winters. Green List.

Recorded in all months of the year, there were more than 900 records from around 145 sites/ sub-sites. The vast majority of these were of one to two birds, with seven sites having at least one record of three birds, mostly Jun-Dec. One record of four birds came from Swanholme Lakes (Lincoln) on Mar 6th. Breeding attempts were undoubtedly under-reported with records from just three sites: a vocal pair were at Chapel Pit Mar 10th; another pair were at a nest hole on Barton Pits Jun 2nd; at Boultham Mere a pair were feeding a second brood Jul 18th. Ten juveniles were ringed in 2020 bringing the all-time total to 605: to date there have been no recoveries.

#### Bee-eater Merops apiaster

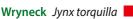
#### Very scarce migrant. Mediterranean Europe. LBRC.

One was in North Somercotes for half a day on May 15th (B. Bishell, et al) and it or another was hawking insects with Swallows *Hirundo rustica* over Mill Hill at Gibraltar Point on May 22nd (BWd). A third record came from Stallingborough Meadows on Jul 25th, another typically short stayer present for less than half a day (JWW).

**Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster*North Somercotes May 15th 2020

© MARK JOHNSON





# Very scarce/scarce declining passage migrant Apr-May and Aug-Oct, mainly coastal. Bred to early 20th century, Red List.

An early bird arrived on Apr 18th at Normanby, and a second was found singing in Pine trees adjacent to Huttoft Marsh on May 7th, a decidedly unique experience. In the autumn the first was found on Aug 30th at Freiston Shore, with another at Sandilands GC on 31st. In Sep one was at Gibraltar Point on 5th and another at Donna Nook on 11th. The last of the year was another found in gorse bushes along the boundary of Sandilands GC on Oct 2nd-3rd.



Wryneck Jynx torquilla Frieston Shore Aug 30th 2020 © NEIL SMITH

# Lesser Spotted Woodpecker Dryobates minor Very scarce and declining resident. Red List. RBBP

A repeat of the previous year with only three records, all in the west of the county. A male was seen and heard singing at Rippingale on Mar 16th. Another was reported at Bracebridge near Lincoln on May 11th, and one was heard calling in suitable nesting habitat, birch woodland, at Crowle Moors on May 31st but not seen. The last confirmed breeding recorded in Lincolnshire was in 2016.

#### Great Spotted Woodpecker Dendrocopos major

#### Common resident and partial migrant. Subspecies anglicus Green List.

The highest count of the year was 10 at Gibraltar Point on Oct 6th. Records were received from all months and parts of the county from over 200 sites. The maximum count of birds reported simultaneously drumming was five at Math and Elsea Wood on Mar 21st. Perhaps owing to COVID-19 restrictions preventing early visits when birds are more detectable "Great Spot" was reported in only 16% of Lincolnshire BBS squares (2019, 28%) with an average of 1.6 birds per occupied square (2019, 1.6). The Oct high count at Gibraltar Point included seven birds moving south of which two were flying high together.

# Green Woodpecker Picus viridis Fairly common resident and partial migrant. Green List.

The highest count of the year was six at Toft Newton Reservoir on Aug 19th, with records coming from nearly 200 sites. Other sites reporting five, were Math and Elsea Wood on Mar 21st, Belton Park Apr 16th and Jun 2nd and Deeping Lakes Jun 28th. Interestingly compared to Great Spotted Woodpecker, Green Woodpecker was reported in 28% of Lincolnshire BBS squares (2019, 24%) with an average of 1.5 birds per occupied square (2019, 1.4). The best counted site this year, based on cumulative monthly peak counts



**Green Woodpecker** *Picus viridis* Brumby Wood, Scunthorpe Jun 10th 20200 ⊚ SIMON SPAVIN

was Boultham Mere/Swanpool with a total of 28 compared to the high of 25 at Gibraltar Point in 2019. Toft Newton was close runner-up with 27 and Gibraltar Point was third with 23. Belton Park and Deeping Lakes in the south-west had 21 and 19 respectively. Fifty sites had a total of four or more which were distributed W 18, SW 15, SE 6, NW 1, NE 1, E 10. Green Woodpecker remains uncommon in the north of the county.

#### **Kestrel** Falco tinnunculus

Common resident and passage migrant. Amber List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	3	3	5	8	12	4	9	28	17	9	5	4
Middlemarsh Farm	6	3	3	2	2	2	12	5	5	6	6	6
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	3	2	3	3	4	3	-	11	7	3	3	1
Tetney Marsh	2	2	2	2	2	5	8	11	2	-	-	1
Crowle Moors	-	-	2	-	10	8	-	-	-	-	1	2
Donna Nook	1	10	3	3	3	-	-	8	2	2	2	2

This widespread and familiar falcon was reported from more than 470 sites across the county; those having at least one monthly count of 10 or more are tabulated. Most records were of one to three birds but with some impressive post-breeding totals and passage on the coast in Aug. At Gibraltar Point, of 20 seen on 23rd, 16 went south and the next day, 24th, 28 were present, 14 of which went south. Kestrel was reported in 18% of Lincolnshire BBS squares (2019, 30%) with an average of one bird per occupied square (2019, 1.4). Confirmed breeding came from Haconby Fen, Holbeach, Holbeach St Marks, and Sutton Bridge, undoubtedly a huge underestimate of the countywide picture; a pair also bred at Alkborough Flats but failed in mid-Jun where the breeding season was a poor one with a shortage of Field Voles (also adversely affecting Barn Owls). The ringing data from AB's

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total nests**	98	110	98	131	49
Failures	4	4	15	11	7
Broods ringed	58	61	56	81	30
Chicks ringed	203	195	154	294	94
Average chicks/brood ringed	3.5	3.2	2.8	3.6	3.1

group is tabulated below but note that their raptor monitoring was greatly curtailed.

Kestrel Falco tinnunculus Wyberton Dec 17th 2020 © NEIL SMITH

<sup>\*\*</sup> Total nests = "missed" and "outcome unknown" as well as ringed + failures



#### **Red-footed Falcon**

Rare. Eastern Europe. LBRC

No records of this species were received in 2020.

**Merlin** *Falco columbarius* (aesalon) (subaesalon)

British form 'aesalon' is a scarce winter visitor and passage migrant, very scarce in summer. Bred sporadically in the 19th century, Icelandic form 'subaesalon' may also occur. Red List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	2	3	3	2	1	1	1	2	2	3	4	2
Frampton Marsh	5	3	2	1	-	-	-	2	1	1	3	2
Tetney Marsh	1	2	1	-	1	-	1	1	1	-	1	1
Donna Nook	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	2	2
Freiston Shore	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	2
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	1
Baston Fen	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
East Halton Skitter	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1
Huttoft Car Terrace	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
Saltfleet	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Sutton Bridge	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Maximum birds recorded	22	17	14	5	3	1	3	8	10	20	23	19
Number of sites	16	12	9	4	3	1	3	6	9	17	17	15

The table shows all sites recording Merlins in at least three months of the year, mostly at coastal sites. The bottom two rows then sum the maximum number of birds recorded each month *at all sites*; and the total number of sites recording Merlins. In total, records were received from 51 sites and at all but two of these sites one to two birds were involved. Most birds were recorded in Jan-Feb and Oct-Dec.

Frampton Marsh recorded five birds on Jan 22nd and Gibraltar Point three in Feb-Mar; most had departed by late Apr, but late birds were at Tetney Marsh May 4th, Gibraltar Point 5th and Huttoft Marsh 16th; there was one summer record at Gibraltar Point Jun 19th. There was a small influx to coastal sites in the autumn with 20 birds recorded across the county in Oct and 23 in Nov. The majority of those aged/sexed were immatures /females with a very few being identified as adult males, unsurprisingly.

#### Hobby Falco subbuteo

Scarce summer visitor and passage migrant. Bred to early 1900s and sporadically in the 1970s, regularly from the mid-1980s. Green List. **RBBP** 

Site	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov
Baston	-	1	9	2	1	-	3	-	-
Crowle Moors	-	-	7	8	-	-	-	-	-
Alkborough	-	2	4	1	1	1	3	-	-
Gibraltar Point	-	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	
Boultham Mere	-	-	2	1	2	1	2	-	-
Middlemarsh Farm	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	-	-
Anton's Gowt	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	-	-
Frampton Marsh	-	-	1	1	-	1	2	-	-
Messingham SQ	-	1	3	-	-	-	1	-	-
Toft Newton Reservoir	-	1	-	1	1	1	1	-	-



The table shows the top 10 sites holding maximum accumulated peak counts of five or more birds across the year ranked from highest to lowest. Recorded in eight months of the year, records were submitted from 110 sites, up from the 72 in 2019. All records occurred between Mar-Oct.

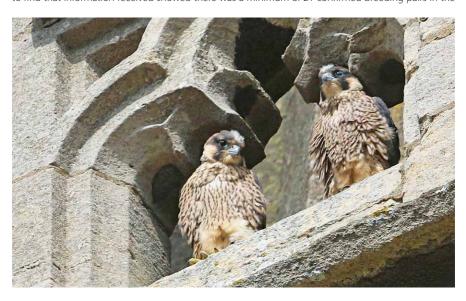
The first arrival was an early one at Wolla Bank on Mar 1st, followed by a single at Deeping Lakes on Apr 3rd. Most arrived though from Apr 22nd onwards. On that date there was a pair at Alkborough Flats mobbing a Marsh Harrier over last year's nest site. The highest count for the year was nine at Baston on May 17th. There were records from 59 sites in May compared to 29 sites in May 2019, possibly a benefit of lockdown with more birders walking in their local rural areas, or a more widespread spring migration?

There were only two reports of confirmed breeding, at Swallow where a pair fledged two young in Jul and at nearby Cabourne where another pair also fledged two young. At Laughton Forest where up to five pairs have fledged young in recent years there was no evidence of breeding. From the data received using consistent criteria applied in previous years it was judged there were a further 51 probable breeding pairs and a further 43 possibles, a total of 96 pairs compared to 50 on the same basis in 2019. The best day counts were nine at Baston GP on May 17th and eight at Crowle Moors on Jun 15th and seven there on May 31st. The last records of the year were singles at Gibraltar Point on Oct 7th and Anderby Creek on Oct 12th.

#### **Peregrine** Falco peregrinus

Scarce but widespread resident, passage migrant and winter visitor; has bred since 1963. Green List (nominate). **RBBP.** 

Peregrine numbers in the county continue to grow with reports coming from 107 sites this year compared to 81 in 2019. With COVID-19 restrictions covering most of the Peregrine breeding season it is satisfying to find that information received showed there was a minimum of 21 confirmed breeding pairs in the



TOP: **Hobby** Falco subbuteo Toft Newton Res Aug 31st 2020 © GARY FENWICK ABOVE: **Peregrine** Falco peregrinus Louth Church Jun 14th 2020 © SIMON SPAVIN

county, the same as 2019, with a further three probable pairs bringing the total to a minimum of 24 pairs. Of the 21 confirmed pairs, 13 pairs fledged a total of 32 young a mean of 2.46 per pair well up on the productivity of 2.1 per pair in 2018 and 2019. The distribution of fledged young was two pairs raised one chick, four pairs raised two chicks, six pairs raised three chicks and one pair raised four chicks. Of the balance of eight confirmed pairs, three pairs failed and there was no fledging data reported for five pairs. Two of the failing pairs were at Lincoln Cathedral and St Wulfram's Grantham, which both failed for the second successive year. The pair on St James's Louth raised three chicks and the Boston Stump pair raised four. An unringed pair bred for the first time on a church in Stamford. They were in the area for most of the preceding winter and were seen to mate on Mar 27th. The nest contained two chicks, a male and a female, and an unhatched egg on Jun 2nd. Both were colour-ringed, the male is orange VJP and female orange VJN. VJP was on the wing by Jul 13th and VJN by Jul 19th. They fed predominantly on Feral and Wood Pigeons, but other prey items included Woodcock, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Jackdaw and Black-headed Gull. Four other new sites were reported for the first time taking the total number of sites on the register to 44. Of the other 20 sites, five were not used and no information was received on 15. The 24 confirmed and probable pairs this year were spread across the county as follows: NW 8, NE 2, W 3, E 4, SW 6, SE 1.

#### Ring-necked Parakeet Psittacula krameri

#### Very scarce. Occasional visits from feral populations and local escapes.

One was seen flying over a garden at Deeping St. James on Feb 17th and 21st and another was at Denton Apr 10th. At the end of the year two were Holme (Scunthorpe) on Nov 26th.

#### Red-backed Shrike Lanius collurio

#### Very scarce passage migrant. Former rare breeder last confirmed in 1978. Red List. LBRC RBBP.

There was one spring record of a female trapped at Gibraltar Point on Jun 12th (GGr). Three records were received in the autumn: a juvenile at Sea View Farm, Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe on Aug 10th (GPC); an unaged bird at Sutton on Sea on Aug 11th (PSc) and a juvenile at Stallingborough Meadows on Aug 12th (JWW).

#### **Great Grey Shrike** Lanius excubitor

# Very scarce to scarce passage migrant and rare winter visitor Oct-Apr. Exceptional in summer. **LBRC.**

Another thin year for this species with one at Freiston Shore Oct 15th-20th (PS, ABe, et al) and a second at Gibraltar Point on Oct 18th (T. Bickerton, L. Mann, A. Moore).

#### Golden Oriole Oriolus oriolus

#### Very scarce migrant, mainly spring/early summer, but recorded Apr-Aug. Red List. LBRC RBBP

Two spring records on typical dates. The first, a singing male was at Whisby on May 24th, not seen, but accepted based on a very good sound recording (Martin Latham); a first for the reserve. The second was at Gibraltar Point, thought to be a 2CY female, found skulking in the East Dunes on May 25th (RKW).

#### Jay Garrulus glandarius

British form '*rufitergum*' is a common resident, otherwise an irregular migrant and winter visitor. Amber List. A widespread species recorded throughout the year with a strong bias to reporting from Sep onwards. Most records involved single birds with selective inland records in the first half of the year including five at Snipe Dales Feb 19th and five Welbourn Jul 1st. In the second half of the year there were five at Witham on the Hill on Aug 23rd, five Swinn Wood on Sep 18th, 12 Messingham SQ on Sep 29th, seven Lincoln Oct 16th, five Whisby NP Oct 17th, five Keelby Oct 25th, six Temple Wood Nov 6th, six Linwood Warren Nov 20th, eight Legbourne Wood Nov 27th and five Swinn Wood on Dec 1st. A strong spring movement was recorded on the east coast with a peak count of 32 at Seacroft on Apr 24th, five Sandilands GC May 2nd and five at Marsh Yard on May 6th. At Gibraltar Point passage was recorded from mid-Apr through to mid-May with selective counts including 52 on Apr 11th, 81 on Apr 15th, 39 north on Apr 19th, 63 on Apr 22nd, 110 on Apr 24th and 140 on Apr 26th. Numbers then began to drop off with 70 on May 1st, 66 on May 2nd and the final southern movement of six on May 19th.

#### Magpie Pica pica

#### Common resident. Green List.

A widespread species recorded throughout the year with no discernible monthly reporting bias. Away from Gibraltar Point selective peak counts in the first half of the year included 25 Marston STW on Feb 2nd, 25 at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe on Feb 25th, and 51 at Cleethorpes Country Park on Mar 23rd. In the second half of the year there were 40 at Crook Bank on Sept 4th, 25 Huttoft Car Terrace on Oct 13th, 25 at Aubourn on Oct 22nd, 25 at Washingborough Nov 17th, 28 at Pyewipe (Grimsby) on Nov 29th and 26 at Bottesford on Dec 12th. At Gibraltar Point peak counts of 29 were reported on Apr 3rd, 40 on Sep 4th, 45 on Nov 4th and 29 on Dec 22nd.

#### Jackdaw Coloeus monedula

Western European form 'spermologus' very common resident, also passage migrant and winter visitor. Nordic Jackdaw, C.m. monedula, rare or overlooked winter visitor. Green List (both forms).

Jackdaw was recorded in 67% of Lincolnshire BBS squares, a decline on previous years with an average of twenty birds per occupied squares. A widespread species recorded throughout the county with the peak count of the year c.1,000 at Temple wood on Dec 18th. Elsewhere, records of counts greater than 200 were received from 19 sites including 220 at Cleethorpes on Mar 30th, 490 at Witham on the Hill on Aug 22nd. 300 at Grimsthorpe Park on Sep 19th, 224 at Lincoln on Oct 9th, 250 at Huttoft Nov 13th, 300 Keisby Nov 20th, 250 at Aubourn on Nov 21st, 500 Deeping Lakes on Nov 30th, 210 at Middlemarsh Farm (Skegness) on Dec 11th, 450 at East Kirkby on Dec 12th and 400 at Tattershall Thorpe Pits on Dec 27th. The table below shows the peak monthly count at Gibraltar Point where the maximum monthly count was 658 on Mar 17th which included 458 south



**Jackdaw** *Coloeus monedula* Alkborough Flats Apr 24th 2020 © GRAHAM CATLEY

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	140	258	658	424	152	150	50	120	120	134	110	102

#### Rook Corvus frugilegus

#### Very common resident also passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber List.

A common species recorded throughout the county with 16 sites with counts of 200 or more. Birdtrack monthly recording shows a distinct peak monthly reporting rate in Apr. Several rookery counts were submitted from early Mar, but no coordinated counts were undertaken. At Gibraltar Point several records involving passage birds were received with numbers involved low except for 43 south on Apr 11th, 70 south Apr 26th and 38 South on Oct 6th.

#### Carrion Crow Corvus corone

#### Very common resident also passage migrant and winter visitor. Green List.

Carrion Crow was recorded in 89% of Lincolnshire BBS squares, a slight decline on previous years with an average of nine birds per occupied squares. Highest counts in the first winter period were Jan 133 Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe-Rimac, Feb 136 Long Bennington, 100 Gibraltar Point and Mar 140 Alkborough – Whitton and 143 Gibraltar Point. A strong spring movement was recorded at Gibraltar Point with 74 south and 73 southeast on Apr 7th, 105 south and 18 southwest on Apr 12th and 136 south on May 1st.

#### Hooded Crow Corvus cornix

# Very scarce migrant and winter visitor formerly much more common in winter. Green List. **LBRC.**

A good year with possibly six individuals recorded between Feb-May, although a degree of double-counting is likely. A single bird was in the Bagmoor Flood/Roxby Carrs area from Feb 2nd and was last recorded on Feb 29th. A single bird was at Donna Nook on Feb 14th, and another was on the coast at Anderby Creek/Huttoft from Mar 2nd and it, or another bird was recorded again between Apr 9th – 14th and finally one was recorded south off Huttoft on May 7th. A single was at Alkborough on Apr 18th and 22nd constituting the first record of this species on site while there were three records from Gibraltar Point on Mar 16th, Apr 15th and two birds on May 1st.



**Hooded Crow** *Corvus cornix* North Somercotes Apr 7th 2020 © MARK JOHNSON

#### Raven Corvus corax

Resident to 18th century but was extirpated, now a very scarce but increasing breeding resident. Green List.

Numerous records were received from widespread locations across the county. There is still a concentration of records in the southwest of the county with the peak recording period for this species being Jan-Feb with the table below simply showing the number of sites recording birds per month.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	22	13	13	18	12	5	7	12	9	15	18	18

Records of note included two at Alkborough on Jan 17th and then a single on Sep 2nd, 27th, Oct 1st, 7th and 31st possibly all involving the same individual. At Gibraltar Point two were recorded on Apr 15th and Aug 17th, singles on Sep 4th, Oct 15th and then three were noted coming in off the sea on Nov 4th. At Frampton Marsh singles were recorded on Jul 13th and Nov 7th. Several breeding records were received with a conservative estimate of a minimum of 10 pairs, although the actual number of birds breeding in the county is likely to be much higher.

#### Waxwing Bombycilla garrulus

Passage migrant and winter visitor, most in Oct-Apr. Scarce most winters but fairly common in irruption years. Green List.

One was at Gibraltar Point briefly on Feb 23rd before flying south followed by one at Whaplode Drove Mar 1st-2nd. Another turned up on Mar 5th at Cleethorpes CP to be joined by a second on 6th. One or both birds were well-watched and present to Mar 9th. These were the sole records for the first quarter of the year. In the autumn one flew south with Starlings at Crook Bank on Oct 14th, another was in Grimsby Dec 5th and the last of the year at Winter's Pond, East Halton on Dec 24th flew over calling with Fieldfares.

Waxwings were scarce in the UK at both ends of the year in 2020. Visual mapping data published by EuroBirdPortal (using BirdTrack records) for the period 22/01/20 to 16/01/21 showed that they were concentrated in Sweden and northern Denmark with only a handful of birds turning up in the far north and east of Britain.



**Waxwing** Bombycilla garrulus Cleethorpes Mar 8th 2020 © ROY HARVEY

**Coal Tit** *Periparus ater* **(***brittanicus***) (**nominate)

British form 'brittanicus' is a common resident and passage migrant. Nominate continental form presumed to be a very scarce irruptive visitor in autumn but rarely documented. Green List.

The highest count of the year was 18 at Laughton Forest Jun 19th with 13 Linwood Warren Nov 20th and 10 at Willingham Woods Dec 16th. Records were reported from just over 100 sites, similar to the 2019 total. Records of five to nine birds came from only three other sites, Tuetoes Wood, Temple Wood and Gibraltar Point. The species occurs at low density across most of the county and is usually unobtrusive apart from territorial calling, peaking in Apr and appearance at feeders during the winter. This is reflected in BBS data showing Coal Tit was reported in only 2% of Lincolnshire BBS squares (2019, 20%) with an average of 1 bird per occupied square (2019, 1.7). COVID-19 restrictions impacted the number of early BBS visits causing Coal Tits to be largely missed. Why this is crucial is obvious from Birdtrack reporting rates (chart courtesy of the BTO). A Continental Coal Tit *P. a. ater* was reported from Frampton Marsh on Oct 14th.







ABOVE LEFT: **Coal Tit** *Periparus ater* Nocton Jan 15th 2020 © STEVE NESBITT ABOVE RIGHT: **Marsh Tit** *Poecile palustris* Nocton Jan 15th 2020 © STEVE NESBITT



#### Marsh Tit Poecile palustris



Fairly common but local resident, mainly in the southwest. Red List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Temple Wood	-	-	-	4	-	3	-	-	-	-	6	10
Callan's Lane Wood	-	1	4	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	1	-
Neville Wood	3	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ingoldsby Wood	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nocton	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Dunston	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	1	-
Great Gonerby	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Haverholme Park	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		2	1	-
Keisby	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
Morkery Wood	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-
Potterhanworth Wood	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Uffington	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1

The largest count reported was of 10 birds at Temple Wood on Dec 22nd. Forty-eight records were received from 22 sites.; half of these sites reported two or more birds in any one month while the remaining 11 sites reported only one bird in any single month. The table shows all sites with a cumulative annual total of peak monthly counts of two or more. All the records came from the Kesteven part of the county with the bulk in the south. The only breeding information reported was the presence of one fledged young at Temple. Wood on Jun 27th. The highest monthly peak total across all sites was 12 in Feb. Although previous Bird Reports have suggested the species is under-reported in Lincolnshire it certainly looks as if Marsh Tit has become scarcer in recent years and can no longer be described as fairly common. A full survey would provide a better picture, but the next national Atlas is probably at least 10 years away from completion. Its scarcity is emphasised by its non-appearance in the 2020 BBS although it was in one square of 74 in 2019.

Once common and widespread, now seriously declining, and scarce. Red List. RBBP

Willow Tit Poecile montanus



Willingham Woods

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Messingham SQ	2	-	2	-	-	-	3	-	1	-	-	1
Snipe Dales	-	5	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Crowle Moors	-	-	2	-	1	3	-	-	-	1	-	-
Wroot	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
Barton Pits	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Linwood Warren	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
North Hykeham	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
Tetney Blow Wells	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Walesby Moor	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bagmoor Floods	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-
Morkery Wood	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Stragglethorpe	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Recorded in 11 months of the year, the highest count in 2020 was five at Snipe Dales on Feb 19th. There were 42 observer sightings recorded from 14 sites (up from 34 sightings at 10 sites in 2019). Site numbers have been declining, with 21 in 2017, 15 in 2018 and only 10 in 2019, but 2020 seems to be bucking this trend. The 2020 RSPB Willow Tit Survey may well have boosted coverage. Interestingly no reports were received from five sites at which birds had been reported in 2019. One of these, Laughton Forest, had 21





territories as recently as 2000. The table shows all sites reporting birds by maximum accumulated peak counts across the year ranked from highest to lowest. Crowle Moors was the only site to report confirmed breeding, where an adult with two juveniles was noted on Jun 26th. Elsewhere there was probable breeding at Snipe Dales, where one pair and three singing territorial males were recorded on Feb 19th. Barton Pits and Messingham SQ each had one pair but no other evidence of breeding, and at Linwood Warren a bird was seen excavating in a rotten birch stump. There were a further two possibles, at Stragglethorpe and Walesby Moor, a total of eight pairs and two singing males. The recorded population has now been static at eight pairs since 2018. At least the collapse seems to have temporarily halted and hopefully at even this very low level it will be possible for recovery to commence. On a less positive note, this is the first year there have been no records from the Sleaford area (Anwick Fen and Haverholme Park) and the rest of South Kesteven (Callan's Lane Wood). Have they gone from the south of the county entirely?

#### Blue Tit Cyanistes caeruleus

#### British form 'obscurus' a very common resident. Green List.

The species was recorded from over 350 sites. The highest count of the year was 85 at Aubourn on Oct 18th. Observed in 80% of BBS squares down from 93% in 2019, with a mean of 4.8 birds per occupied square (2019, 6) making it the 8th most widespread bird in the county and our commonest tit. The apparent fall from 2019 a result of COVID-19 restrictions severely reducing early visits during April when this species is more detectable. Counts of 10 or more birds were received from 75 sites up from 59 in 2019 which is suggestive of birders counting more birds and recording their results. Counts over 40 came from the following sites: Gibraltar Point (12 counts), Aubourn (3 counts) and one count each over 40 from Epworth Turbary, Chambers Farm Wood, Temple Wood, Louth and Hartsholme Park, Lincoln. Large counts came in all months except Jun and Jul with Oct (5) seeing most, all of which came from Gibraltar Point with birds noted as moving south on Oct 6th and 7th.

#### Great Tit Parus major

#### British form 'newtoni' a very common resident. Green List.

Recorded from over 300 sites compared to 200 in 2019, probably indicative of a boom in enforced local patch birding during Mar-May and Nov-Dec owing to COVID-19 restrictions. The most counts came in May (120). The highest count of the year was 70 at Aubourn on Oct 18th compared to the high of 77 at Gibraltar Point in Jun 2019. The species was found in 61% of BBS squares (2019 82%) with an average of 3 birds per occupied square compared to 3.9 in 2019. Of the top 100 counts received, which were of 27 or more. 95% came from Gibraltar Point!



Great Tit Parus major Whaplode Feb 1st 2020 © NEIL SMITH



Bearded Tit Panurus biarmicus Alkborough Flats Sep 21st 2020 © PAUL COOMBES

Bearded Tit Panurus biarmicus Scarce and localised, but increasing, resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. Green List. RBBP.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Alkborough	6	-	-	-	5	3	27	10	42	7	6	-
Barton Pits	19	3	5	4	4	6	2	-	-	-	-	-
Frampton Marsh	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	3	-	4	4	2
Goxhill	-	-	1	-	2	-	-	1	4	2	4	1
East Halton	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	3	8	
Gibraltar Point	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	8	2
Wolla Bank	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4
Messingham SQ	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-
Huttoft	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-
Walcot	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-

Recorded in all months, the highest count for the year was 42 at Alkborough on Sep 20th. Records were received from 18 sites compared to 14 in 2019. The table shows the top 10 sites holding maximum accumulated peak counts of more than four birds per year ranked from highest to lowest. A survey at Alkborough Flats revealed 40 breeding pairs but the number of birds generally observed was lower, partly due to changes in the use of reedbeds as older ones dry out. There were also fewer birds recorded in autumn irruptions. In the Barton Pits area, LWT at Far Ings reported a minimum of 19 pairs, but COVID-19 restrictions made surveying difficult for volunteers. Further east along the Humber Bank two pairs each were reported from Pasture Wharf, Barrow Haven and Fairfield Pit with three pairs at Dawson City. The total of 68 pairs was similar to that of 62 reported in 2019. No breeding was reported from elsewhere. Inland a single bird was at Boultham Mere on Jan 1st, Marston STW had one on Jun 2nd, there were five at Messingham SQ on Jun 12th and Deeping St James had one on Nov 26th.

**Erratum, 2019**: the correct maximum counts for Bearded Tit at Alkborough in Sep 2019 was 100 and in Oct 2019 was just 1, not 150 as tabulated for both months in the 2019 report.



#### Woodlark Lullula arborea

Scarce summer visitor and passage migrant, rare in winter. Bred to 1959 and again from 1984 with numbers peaking around the year 2000, although now steadily declining. Green List. **RBBP.** 

With limited access to most areas in early spring 2020 the data received was limited and there were no surveys of the key areas in the north-west notably, Laughton-Scotton, Greetwell-Twigmoor and Risby Warren. The first bird of the year was at Gibraltar Point Feb 25th with a singing male in Laughton Forest 26th but subsequently birds were only recorded from five areas in the forest. Two singing males on Risby Warren from Mar with a family party in Jul confirmed breeding at that location and two males were holding territories at Black Bank and with a minimum of two at Manton-Greetwell in Mar. Also in Mar, singles were at Gibraltar Point on the 11th and 17th with later birds on the 27th and Apr 6th, 11th and two on the 15th with additional singles 25th and 26th. One also flew south at Chapel Six Marshes on Apr 7th and one at Anderby Creek 30th. By Apr breeding birds should be on territories so these were presumably non-breeders. In May additional breeding birds included five males at Kirkby Moor–Ostler's Plantation and one on Woodall Golf Course. Singles at Gibraltar Point and over Laughton Forest on Oct 28th proved to be the last of the year.

# Skylark Alauda arvensis Very common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. Red list

Skylark is our commonest and most widespread UK red listed farmland bird of conservation concern. Its song and the long period through which it sings makes it instantly detectable and identifiable. In a year when COVID-19 restrictions heavily impacted BBS recording, Skylark maintained its prevalence and was recorded on 86% of BBS one km squares (2019, 88%). The average number of birds per square stayed high too at 10.1 (2019, 11.4). Records were received from over 300 sites and the highest count was 897 at Gibraltar Point on Oct



Skylark Alauda arvensis Gibraltar Point Mar 26th 2020 © PAUL NEALE

7th, the peak of autumn migration. It was preceded by a count of 726 on Oct 5th and followed by 840 on Oct 9th, the vast majority of which were heading south. The migration persisted into Nov with 268 on 6th and 262 on 12th. Migration watches at Anderby Creek revealed a similar pattern with 154 on Oct 6th, the largest count away from Gibraltar Point. The highest wintering count of 139 came from a WeBS count at Wainfleet Marsh on Jan 26th and the largest inland count of 89 came from Lakes Farm, Burgh le Marsh on Nov 28th. During the breeding season the peak count was 88 from Heath Farm, Wellingore on Jun 24th.

#### Shore Lark Eremophila alpestris

Scarce, formerly fairly common winter visitor. Currently low numbers compared to the 1960s and 1970s. Exceptional inland. Amber List.

The dearth of records of this species continues with just one record in 2020: seven were at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe on Nov 10th. This is the worst ever showing. The new *Birds of Lincolnshire* found that in the decade to 2018 three sites held 90% of the birds: Brickyard Lane (Theddlethorpe), Donna Nook and Gibraltar Point. These three sites also recorded the only flocks of more than 20 in that decade, on five occasions between them. The majority of the breeding population of Fennoscandia winter on the North Sea coasts of the near continent; it is unclear why numbers have taken such a nosedive in the UK.

#### Sand Martin Riparia riparia

Common but declining summer visitor and passage migrant. Green List.

Site	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov
Freiston Shore	-	-	-	-	25	2800	-	-	-
Alkborough Flats	1	150	2	1	1000	1	-	-	-
Gibraltar Point	2	53	25	18	370	943	175	10	8
Kirkby GP/Tattershall	-	90	600	60	-	45	15	-	-
Thorpe Pits									
Barton Pits	-	500	200	60	-	-	-	-	-
Frampton Marsh	-	6	20	15	70	300	100	-	-
Messingham Sand Quarry	-	-	60	-	50	150	300	-	-
Baston - Langtoft Pits	-	250	150	150	15	9	18	-	-
Boultham Mere/Swanpool	-	3	3	6	200	20	-	-	-
Kettleby	5	113	160	-	-	-	-	-	-
Covenham Reservoir	-	100	50	2	15	2	1	2	-
Toft Newton Reservoir	2	50	60	10	20	100	40	-	

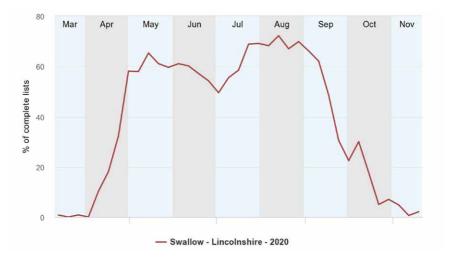
Records were received from 106 sites across the county; those sites recording 100 or more birds in any one month are tabulated. First bird of the year was at Deeping Lakes NR on Mar 12th and nine other sites also had them in Mar with 20 at Bagmoor Floods Mar 21st. Three-figure counts were recorded from mid-Apr at Alkborough Flats, Deeping Lakes NR, Baston & Langtoft GP, Covenham Reservoir and Kettleby with 500 at Barton Pits Apr 28th. By May, most had arrived with peaks of 600 at Kirkby GP on 12th and a mixed flock of c.2,000 House and Sand Martins at Bourne STW on 13th. Despite the number of known nesting colonies, the only mention of confirmed breeding was at the long-term site at Hagworthingham on May 30th. Post-breeding numbers quickly built up in Jul with counts in the low 100s from several sites peaking at 1,000 on 20th at Alkborough Flats. More than 100 birds went south at Gibraltar Point on six dates in Jul peaking at 370 on 27th soon quickly followed by 943 south there on Aug 1st, but the highest count of the year was at Freiston Shore with 2,800 on Aug 10th. Birds moved through swiftly during Sep. with 300 at Messingham SQ on 7th, 175 Gibraltar Point 9th and 100 Frampton Marsh 11th. Practically all birds had left the county by the end of Sep with just three Oct records – two, Covenham Reservoir 8th, 10 Gibraltar Point 12th, and one, Cleethorpes 23rd. The last of the autumn was eight, Gibraltar Point Nov 21st. A notable recovery was S377509 originally ringed at Marston STW as 1CY bird on Jul 7th and retrapped at Torreta Ampla, Spain on Sep 9th, a movement of 1,514 km south.

#### Swallow Hirundo rustica

Very common summer visitor and passage migrant. Exceptional in winter but recorded in most months. Green List.

Site	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	-	122	385	40	220	1127	2206	132	13	-
Covenham Reservoir	1	250	150	25	15	300	300	5	-	-
Toft Newton Reservoir	-	75	420	15	10	40	200	4	-	-
Frampton Marsh	-	9	20	10	50	48	500	12	1	-
Tetney Marsh	1	22	55	20	45	250	55	-	-	-
Chapel Six Marshes	-	3	305	2	3	4	25	3	-	-
Middlemarsh Farm	-	100	100	20	14	50	50	-	-	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	-	15	46	14	50	50	110	19	1	1
Boultham Mere	-	25	20	20	15	30	150	5	-	-
Sturton by Stow	-	4	9	8	13	15	212	1	-	-

The highest count of the year was 2,206 at Gibraltar Point on Sep 4th. Records were received from over 300 sites and the top 10 are listed above based on the sum of monthly peak counts over 250 per annum. The first bird was reported on Mar 2nd at Wolla Bank Pit, followed by one at Frampton Marsh on Mar 9th. The pattern of occurrence through the year is depicted by the Birdtrack reporting rate graph shown below. Birds were reported from 74% of BBS squares the same as in 2019 with an average number of birds per occupied square of 4.2 (2019, 5.5). Peak migration counts aside of the highest count at Gibraltar Point were 1,127 on Aug 23rd and 1,661 on Sep 9th. The largest counts outside the table were also around this time with 200 at Marton on Aug 24th and 200 at Scopwick Heath on Aug 19th. The last birds were seen at Theddlethorpe on Dec 1st and 2nd and Immingham on Dec 4th and 9th.



**Erratum:** The first date of arrival published in the 2019 report was Feb 24th at Alkborough; this was incorrect and should have been Mar 24th.

#### House Martin Delichon urbicum

Common summer visitor and passage migrant. Red List.

Site	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov
Gibraltar Point	80	257	45	41	888	1699	132	4
Covenham Reservoir	50	250	140	10	140	260	8	-
Whisby NP	50	10	100	250	50	10	-	-
Middlemarsh Farm	10	20	250	40	20	50	-	-
Frampton Marsh	2	15	30	6	40	200	12	-
Boultham Mere	30	30	20	50	70	60	-	-
Marton	4	35	25	12	200	125	2	-
Barton Pits	30	100	100	-	1	13	-	-
Cleethorpes	4	30	40	45	20	50	-	-
Tetney Marsh	1	12	40	11	70	-	-	-



ABOVE: **House Martin** *Delichon urbicum* Frithville
May 31st 2020
© NEIL SMITH

BELOW: **Cetti's Warbler**Cettia cetti Barton Pits
Dec 9th 2020

© GRAHAM CATLEY

The highest count of the year was 1,699 at Gibraltar Point on Sep 9th; there was also a mixed flock of c.2,000 House and Sand Martins at Bourne STW on May 13th. Records were received from over 200 sites. The top 10 sites, with counts submitted for at least five months, based on the sum of monthly peak counts are listed from highest to lowest. The first birds reported were two at Deeping Lakes on Apr 2nd, followed by one at Fulbeck on Apr 4th. Birds were reported from 33% of BBS squares (2019, 37%) with an average of 4.9 birds per one km square (2019, 6.8). The last record was a single at Lincoln West Common on Nov 18th.

# Red-rumped Swallow Cecropis daurica Rare migrant, almost annual since 2003. Southern Europe. LBRC

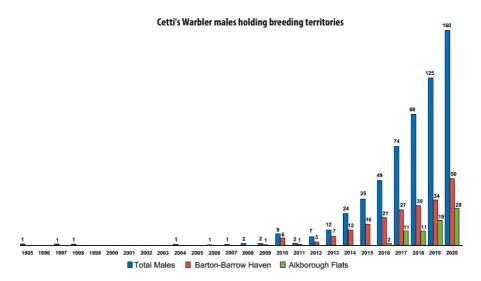
One flew south at Gibraltar Point on Apr 11th (RKW), and another was found there over Croft Marsh on Apr 27th (GBI). This species has now occurred in every year 2010-2020 inclusive.

#### Cetti's Warbler Cettia cetti

Scarce and increasing breeding resident and passage migrant/ winter visitor; first proven breeding in 2008. Green List. **RBBP.** 

In the analyses that follow a wintering bird has been recorded as any bird staying in a locality for seven days or more between Oct-Feb with breeding territories being assumed for singing males remaining for seven days or more between Apr-Jul.





Cetti's Warbler shows no signs of slowing its rate of increase in the county with a new all-time record total of 160 occupied breeding territories being recorded in 2020 up from the 125 in 2019. It is sobering to recall that the first territory holding male was only recorded in 1995 and it was 2013 before more than 10 singing males were recorded in one season. The species is still restricted to some extent by habitat requirements but there are signs of spread into small areas away from the key wetlands in the county particularly long river valleys. The key area in the county remains the Humber bank pits with 92 of the 160 territories being located between North Killingholme Haven and Alkborough Flats with 50 territories alone along the Barton-Barrow Haven pits. The meteoric rise in numbers at Alkborough Flats from two males in 2016 to 28 males in 2020 shows the dynamics of the species' ability to occupy developing habitats. The breeding season appeared to be a good one and wandering birds occurred at several sites away from breeding areas in the following autumn and winter.

**Territory-holding males** are tabulated below from 2010 onwards as numbers increased rapidly from that date and by 2020 they had been recorded on territory at 47 sites (Data summary per G P Catley).

Site	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Alkborough Flats	_	-	-	-	-		2	1	11	19	28
Anderby Creek	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	3	3	6
Bagmoor floods	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Bardney Pits	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	3	-	-
Barton-Barrow Haven	6	1	3	7	12	16	21	27	30	34	50
Baston Fen	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Baston Pits	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	-	4
Boultham Mere	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Burton Brick Pits	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	2	-	2
Chapel Pits Marshes	1	-	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	2	5
Cleethorpes CP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Crowle Moors	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	-	5
Deeping Lakes	-	-	1	1	2	1	2	3	1	-	2
East Halton Pits	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
Fiskerton Fen	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2

Site	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Fiskerton - Branston Delph	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Frampton Marsh	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	2	2	-	4
Gib Point	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	3
Goxhill Marsh	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	3	1	1	-
Huttoft Pit	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	2	2
Kirkby Pits	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	-
Louth Keddington	-	-	-	-	-	3	2	2	-	-	-
Marston STW	1	-	1	2	2	1	1	-	1	6	3
Messingham	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	4
New Holland	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	6	-	-
North Thoresby	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Saltfleetby - Theddlethorpe	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Sandilands GC	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Seacroft	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
South Ferriby	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	1
Tetney Blow Wells	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Thurlby Fen	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	2	-	1
Towns Holt Freshney Grimsby	-	-	-	-	2	3	8	6	8	-	10
Trent Port Marton	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Washingborough	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	2	-	1
Whisby NP Apex pit	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	2	2	-	1
Willow Tree Fen	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	2	-	1
Wilsford	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
Winteringham Haven - Whitton	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	4	5	6	4
Wolla Bank	-	1	1	-	2	3	2	2	1	1	3
Worlaby Carrs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1

### Long-tailed Tit

**Total males** 

Aegithalos caudatus

British form 'rosaceous' a common resident and partial migrant.
Nominate Scandinavian form ('Northern Long-tailed Tit') vagrant.
Green List.

9

2

7 12

24

35

49

74

98 125

160

The highest count for the year was 50 reported at Epworth Turbary Dec 7th and Crook Bank, Theddlethorpe Oct 18th. Although data was received from over 250 sites only five sites reported a count in every month of the year. It is difficult to get accurate counts of this small highly vocal bird, but any count is better than none. An easier way to look at the annual pattern of this species is through Birdtrack reporting rates (courtesy of the BTO) in terms of the percentage of lists in which the species occurs each week:



**Long-tailed Tit** Aegithalos caudatus Nocton Jan 29th 2020 © RUSS HAYES



Although Long-tailed Tit is primarily a resident species, it does show migratory movements, and these are clearly detectable on the coast in autumn. The high count at Crook Bank was of family parties moving south. The overall highest monthly count across all sites was 954 in Nov. The pattern suggested from inland and coastal sites in late autumn early winter is of birds moving south on a broad front. The spring peak indicates high detectability in Mar-Apr. Interestingly BBS data shows Long-tailed Tit was reported in 18% of Lincolnshire BBS squares (2019, 28%) with an average of 2.3 birds per occupied square (2019, 2.5). The apparent drop is a result of COVID-19 restrictions reducing the number of Apr early BBS visits. More visits were carried out in late May-Jun but at that time the species becomes more difficult to detect as it concentrates on rearing young.

#### Wood Warbler Phylloscopus sibilatrix

#### Very scarce and declining passage migrant. Formerly bred up until 1951. Red List. LBRC.

A bird was seen in the west dunes at Gibraltar Point on Apr 25th (KMW), the only bird of the spring. The first of the autumn was found in the east dunes at the same site on Jul 29th (KMW) with another on Aug 4th (BWd) in Sykes' plantation and another in the west dunes Aug 9th-10th and 12th (JS, et al). The last of the autumn was at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe on Sep 17th (NCC, et al).

#### Hume's Leaf Warbler Phylloscopus humei

#### Vagrant. Central Asia mainly winters Indian Subcontinent.

One was at Anderby Creek, Nov 8th (DCk, MW). Accepted by BBRC (*British Birds* 114 (10): 570-628). This was only the 4th county record. The first two were both in 2003, one also at Anderby Creek, the other at Gibraltar Point. The third was not for another 10 years in 2013, again at Gibraltar Point.

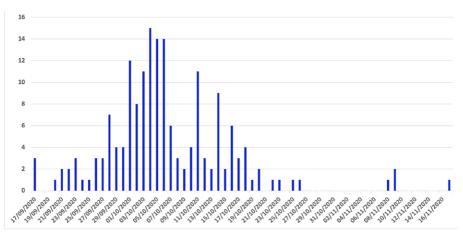
#### Yellow-browed Warbler Phylloscopus inornatus

#### Scarce but increasing passage migrant Sep-Nov, rare inland.

In a year which provided exceptional numbers of Dusky Warblers (p XX) it was perhaps no surprise that Yellow-browed Warblers appeared in very good numbers too, although not on a par with the influxes seen in 2016 and 2018. The chart shows the total numbers of birds recorded each day from the first arrival (Sep17th) to the last (Nov 16th); most arrived Oct 1st-7th with a second peak (12) on 11th. Gibraltar Point once again recorded the most with single day totals in Oct of 11 (1st and 3rd), 10 (4th), nine (5th) and eight (11th). Elsewhere, Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe had four and Freiston Shore three on Oct 6th. Records

came from inland sites not just the coast with singles at Normanby Sep 26th; Covenham Reservoir Oct 6th; R. Freshney valley, Grimsby on Oct 11th and 22nd; Covenham St Mary Churchyard Oct 20th (2); South Ferriby Oct 23rd; and Belton Park, Nov 17th.

#### Total number of Yellow-browed Warblers per day



#### Pallas's Warbler Phylloscopus proregulus

#### Very scarce but increasing passage migrant Sep-Nov, rare inland. Siberia. **LBRC.**

In contrast to Yellow-browed and Dusky Warblers, there was just a single record of this delightful vagrant at Seaview Farm, Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe, Oct 16th-17th (JRow, PRo, et al). Peak arrival period is Oct 11th-31st with a significant majority going into Nov; extreme dates in the autumn are Oct 7th, 2016 - Nov 24th, 2019. There were blank years in 2017 and 2018, but seven in 2019. Early signs from the 2020 **British Bird** Scarce Migrants report are that 118 were recorded nationally with nine in Yorkshire, 47 in Norfolk, 14 in Suffolk and 12 in Kent.

#### Radde's Warbler Phylloscopus schwarzi

#### Rare, Siberia, LBRC

One was at Donna Nook on Oct 4th (CA, GPC, ND, MJN, HB). First recorded in 1898, there were no more records until 1988 when one was trapped at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe. Since then, it has been recorded in 1990 (2), 2000 (2), 2003, 2006, 2007, 2014 (3) and 2016 (2). It remains a much-prized county rarity.

#### **Dusky Warbler** Phylloscopus fuscatus

#### Rare. Siberia. LBRC.

This Siberian rarity has become much more familiar in the county since 2015 when there were three, followed by two in 2016 and two in 2019: an over-wintering bird at Huttoft Bank in Jan-Feb and one at nearby Anderby in Nov. However, no-one was prepared for the deluge of birds in 2020 when there was a minimum of nine accepted records, seven of them arriving between Oct 14th-20th with two later ones in Nov and Dec: Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Oct 14th-17th (OBt, GPC, MJT, BMC, et al); Saltfleet Oct 15th (ND); Gibraltar Point Oct 16th-19th (PAH, PHyd, et al); Seaview Farm, Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Oct 16th-18th (CA, et al); Donna Nook Oct 17th-18th (CA, ND, et al); North Cotes Oct 17th (HB); Wolla Bank Pit, Anderby Oct 20th (RDn); Goxhill Haven Nov 8th (SR, GPC, et al); Donna Nook Dec 5th (RDn).

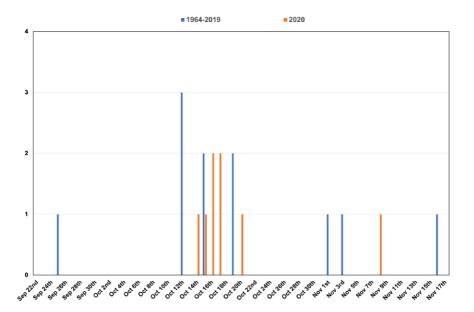
Prior to 2020, 1964-2019, there had been just 12 records with seven of those since 2000, so with the nine in 2020 the total now stands at 21. The arrival dates (all years combined) are plotted below. The earliest



Dusky Warbler Phylloscopus fuscatus Sea View Farm Oct 18th 2020 © GRAHAM CATLEY

autumn arrival date was Sep 25th, 2001. Most arrived Oct 12th-20th (14) with four in Nov (1st, 3rd, 8th, and 16th) and an even later one on Dec 5th in 2020; it is a moot point as to whether the latter bird was a very late autumn arrival or had arrived earlier and was wintering (though it wasn't seen after Dec 5th). The sole Jan record was of a well-watched over-winterer found on Jan 1st, 2019, and present until Feb 3rd, 2019, at least.

## Arrival dates of Dusky Warblers in Lincolnshire 1964-2020 by date; there were no arrivals Feb-Aug and the outliers in Dec-Jan (see above) are omitted from this chart.



#### Willow Warbler Phylloscopus trochilus

Nominate form a very common summer visitor and passage migrant. Northern form acredula scarce passage migrant to the UK. Amber List.

Site	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct
Gibraltar Point	9	5	-	21	525	51	3
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	6	7	4	-	24	7	1
Freiston Shore	4	-	1	-	8	32	-
Crowle Moors	24	20	-	-	-	-	-
Twyford Woods	-	40	-	-	-	-	-
Baston - Langtoft Pits	10	5	4	-	4	7	-
Linwood Warren	13	13	-	-	-	-	-
Willingham Woods	-	12	12	-	-	-	-
Sturton by Stow	2	2	3	6	9	1	-
East Halton	-	-	-	1	11	9	-

The highest count for the year was 525 at Gibraltar Point on Aug 23rd. Records were submitted from over 150 sites. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks of more than 20 over the year. Two early birds were reported, one at Barton Pits on Mar 19th and another at Town's Holt, Grimsby on Mar 26th. More arrivals came in from Apr 4th at Tattershall and Tetney Marsh. An exceptional spring count of 40 singing males came from Twyford Woods on May 17th. Counts of over 10 singing males came from eight sites in May, all in the western half of the county. BBS reported the species from 10% of squares (2019, 28%) with an average of 3.2 birds per occupied one km square (2019, 2.1). Spring singing acredula race males were reported from Gibraltar Point on Apr 28th and Anderby Creek on May 6th, with one in autumn at Gibraltar Point on Aug 13th. The autumn migration at Gibraltar Point was more pronounced this year with an incredible 525 on Aug 23rd (of which 84 were trapped) up from a peak of 309 in Aug 2019. Interesting to note that this is the highest Gibraltar Point count in the LBC database in more than 20 years; the highest we have on record was 1,000 on Aug 26th 1985. The latest birds were singles at Freiston Shore Oct 9th and Gibraltar Point Oct 14th and 16th.

Willow Warbler Phylloscopus trochilus Freiston Shore Aug 30th 2020 © NEIL SMITH





#### Chiffchaff Phylloscopus collybita

Common summer visitor and passage migrant. Rare/scarce in winter. Green List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	4	2	21	32	19	15	25	34	67	75	5	2
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	-	-	5	9	14	4	40	8	20	12	2	-
Baston - Langtoft Pits	1	-	9	18	9	5	3	29	26	1	3	3
Louth	1	-	11	22	5	12	5	2	5	2	-	-
Marton	1	-	5	7	9	4	9	16	7	2	1	1
Long Bennington	-	-	9	13	12	12	8	2	2	-	-	-
Heath's Meadows	-	-	8	16	11	12	9	-	-	-	-	-
Boultham Mere	-	-	6	10	7	5	4	12	5	2	1	-
Temple Wood	-	-		22	-	12	-	7	-	-	-	-
Legbourne	-	-	4	14	13	-	-	1	4	4	-	-

Recorded in all months of the year with records reported from nearly 300 sites. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks of 40 or more over the year. Forty-one birds were reported wintering at 20 sites in Jan with migrants appearing in more numbers from around Mar 8th onwards. BBS reports came from 39% of squares surveyed (2019, 51%) with an average of 3.1 birds per occupied square (2019 2.4). It was the fourth most widespread summer visitor reported (after Whitethroat, Swallow and Blackcap). All counts over 60 came from Gibraltar Point Sep 17th-Oct 10th with the highest count of the year of 75 there on Oct 5th. In Dec 45 were reported from 20 sites with four at Stamford STW on 17th and 20th and three at Deeping Lakes on 20th.

#### Siberian Chiffchaff P.c. tristis

Very scarce migrant and winter visitor though has been recorded in spring with a singing male in Mar 1989. **LBRC.** 

A decent showing of this often-distinctive race of Common Chiffchaff. There was just a single, mobile bird in the first half of the year at Anderby Creek (RDn), then Wolla Bank (GMu) on Mar 13th and on 17th at Chapel Six Marshes (RDn). Oct was a better month with one on 3rd in the West Dunes, Gibraltar Point





ABOVE LEFT: **Iberian Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus ibericus* Croft May 15th 2020 © JOHN CLARKSON ABOVE RIGHT: **Siberian Chiffchaff** *P.c. tristis* Goxhill Nov 12th 2020 © GRAHAM CATLEY

(BWd) and another in the Plantation on 16th and 20th (KMW); also, on 16th another was at Seaview Farm, Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe (GPC). Then one was at Donna Nook 17th-18th (CA, GPC, ND) and another at Gibraltar Point at the north end on 23rd (ABe). There followed an unusual record of a singing male at Goxhill Marsh Nov 12th-16th (GPC, SRo, et al); this was especially interesting as it was the second record there of a singing bird after one Mar 11th-23rd, 1989. At the end of the year one was at Baston Fen Nov 29th-Dec 1st and later on the 1st slightly down river at Thurlby Fen Slipe NR. In Dec one was found inland at Stamford STW (JJ) on 17th and the last of the year was in the Plantation, Gibraltar Point Dec 30th (BWd).

#### **Iberian Chiffchaff** Phylloscopus ibericus

#### Vagrant. South-western Europe. BBRC.

Hot on the heels of the first county record at Gibraltar Point in May 2019 came the second record, also a singing male, found on the fringes of a large mature garden plot at Croft, Skegness May 3rd-15th (NAL). Accepted by BBRC (*British Birds* 114 (10): 570-628).

#### **Arctic Warbler** Phylloscopus borealis

Rare. Scandinavia, North-eastern Europe. LBRC.

No records of this species were received in 2020.

#### Sedge Warbler Acrocephalus schoenobaenus

Common summer visitor and passage migrant. Amber List.

Site name	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct
Gibraltar Point	26	34	30	53	23	2	1
Frampton Marsh	18	34	15	19	5	2	-
Anderby	17	10	4	30	2	-	-
Chapel Six marshes	25	17	3	2	4	-	-
Wolla Bank	11	24	12	6	6	-	-
Alkborough Flats	20	6	5	15	-	4	-
Pinchbeck	-	20	-	-	-	-	-
Middlemarsh Farm	8	16	12	7	-	1	-



Sedge Warbler Acrocephalus schoenobaenus Alkborough Flats Aug 27th 2020 © GRAHAM CATLEY



Sedge warblers were recorded from 130 sites with 1,670 observer sightings. The species was recorded in eight (19%) of 42 BBS squares surveyed (18% in 2019) with an average of 3.8 birds per occupied square (5.2 in 2019).

The first bird of the year was at Croft on Mar 24th; subsequently one to three birds were recorded at seven sites on Apr 7th with numbers increasing thereafter. Double figures were recorded at 17 sites with the highest spring peak counts of 34 birds at Frampton Marsh (May 3rd) and Gibraltar Point (May 16th and 20th). All sites holding over 15 birds are tabulated. Post-breeding numbers built up through Jul-Aug with the peak count for the year of 53 at Gibraltar Point on Jul 10th. Only 11 sites recorded the species in Sep as numbers rapidly diminished. The final birds of the year were a single at Gibraltar Point on Sep 22nd and a late bird trapped there on Oct 18th.

Three birds ringed at Marston STW showed prodigious movement and were retrapped or recovered in SW Britain: AVK6584 ringed on Aug 4th, retrapped in Cornwall Aug 17th; AVK6166 ringed on Sep 4th, retrapped in Dorset on Sep 8th; AVK6624 ringed on Aug 4th, retrapped on Aug 8th at Uskmouth, Newport. Another 1CY bird ringed on Sep 1st, 2019, was retrapped at Gibraltar Point, May 14th, 2020.

#### Blyth's Reed Warbler Acrocephalus dumetorum

#### Vagrant. North-east Europe.

A long-staying and much appreciated singing male was at Far Ings NNR Jun 7th-15th (GPC), frequenting a reed-filled ditch and hedgerow opposite Target Pit giving good views to all during its stay. There have been three previous records, all in Sep: Sep 3rd-4th, 1991 (Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe, trapped); Sep 16th, 2006 (Gibraltar Point, trapped) and Gibraltar Point Sep 5th-6th, 2014.



Blyth's Reed Warbler Acrocephalus dumetorum Barton Jun 10th 20200 © GRAHAM CATLEY

#### Reed Warbler Acrocephalus scirpaceus

#### Common summer visitor and passage migrant. Green List.

Recorded in seven months of the year with over 1,570 observer sightings from 128 sites. Reed warblers were found in seven (16%) of the 43 BBS squares surveyed in 2020 (18% in 2019) with an average 1.4 individuals per occupied square (2.2 in 2019); data from England to 2019 show long-term (24 years) increases in abundance of 20% and of 4% in the short-term (five years).

The first birds of spring were recorded on Apr 9th with singles at Baston-Langtoft GP and Barton Pits, each followed by two birds the following day. There were no records from other sites until Apr 15th with singles at Frampton and three at Alkborough Flats. Thereafter, numbers gradually increased with peak spring counts of a notable 47 birds at Messingham Ings (May 26th), 26 at Frampton (May 3rd) and Baston-Langtoft Pits (May 9th), 23 at Kirkby GP (May 8th), and 20 at Alkborough Flats (Apr 24th) and Greetwell Hollow Quarry (May 27th). Late summer and autumn counts were lower with double figures recorded at only three sites: Alkborough, Frampton Marsh and Gibraltar Point. The final birds of the year were a single at Huttoft on Oct 1st and two at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe on Oct 5th.

Three ringing recoveries gave some insight into the origins and movements of 'our' birds. Firstly, D370641 caught as a 1CY female at Marston STW on Aug 22nd, 2013, has subsequently been caught three times at its presumed breeding site, Rutland Water, in 2015, 2019 and lastly Aug 27th, 2020, and now 7yr. old. Two other birds caught at Marston STW were of interest: AKF1562 ringed as a 1CY in Aug 2019 was trapped on Jan 24th, 2020, at Kartong BO, Gambia; another originally ringed in Spain as a 1CY on Sep 8th, 2019, was retrapped on Aug 6th 2020.

#### Marsh Warbler Acrocephalus palustris

# Very scarce migrant and potential breeder first recorded in Lincolnshire in 1961. Red List. **RBBP, LBRC.**

Three singing males were found in 2020: Anderby Marsh Jun 4th-11th (JS, RDn, et al); a different male at nearby Chapel Six Marshes Jun 9th-10th (RHay, GPC, KSho); Barton Pits Jun 4th (GPC). There was no evidence that any of these birds were paired nor of any nest-building activity.



Marsh Warbler Acrocephalus palustris Chapel Six Marshes Jun 9th 2020 © GRAHAM CATLEY



Icterine Warbler Hippolais icterina Donna Nook Sep 1st 2020 © GRAHAM CATLEY

#### **Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina*

Very scarce passage and declining coastal passage migrant mainly Aug-Oct, exceptional inland. **LBR, RBBP.** 

One was trapped at Gibraltar Point on Jun 2nd (GGr) and another was at Donna Nook Aug 31st-Sep1st (per County Recorder, finder unknown but seen by GPC, et al Sep 1st). This species is becoming rarer in the county with one to two per year 2009-2019, except for 2017 when there were none.

#### Grasshopper Warbler Locustella naevia

Scarce summer visitor and passage migrant. Decline in late 20th century. Red List.

Site	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct
Barton - Barrow Haven	8	8	8	-	-	-	-
Alkborough Flats	3	7	3	1	-	-	-
Gibraltar Point	6	3	2	4	1	1	1
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe-Rimac	6	2	2	-	1	-	-
Chapel Six Marshes	2	2	-	3	-	-	-
Cleethorpes Country Park	3	2	1	-	-	-	-
Donna Nook	-	3	-	-	-	-	-
Huttoft Marsh	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wolla Bank - Chapel Six Marshes	-	-	3	-	-	-	-
Barton Pits	2	-	2	-	-	-	-
Baston - Langtoft Pits	2	1	1	-	-	-	-
Huttoft Bank	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wolla Bank	1	1	2	1	-	-	-

Thirty-six sites recorded this species, though 23 of them had just a single male in one to four months of the spring and summer. Those sites recording at least two reeling males are tabulated and the first of the year were at Gibraltar Point and Anderby Creek on Apr 6th. Three followed at Alkborough Flats on Apr 8th, which were the earliest ever, and seven males eventually established territory. Singing continued there into Jul when several second broods were being reared. Nearby on the Humber bank between Barton and Barrow Haven first arrivals were on Apr 15th and eight territories became established. A pair were

seen feeding young at Barton Pits on Jun 2nd. Six reeling males were at Gibraltar Point Apr 15th, a pair were feeding young Jun 2nd, and four reeling males still present Jul 15th. Up to six reeling males were at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe from Apr 24th but just two remained into May-Jun. A male was reeling near a nest site at Wolla Bank on Jul 24th. As expected with this secretive warbler, once singing ceased records were few and far between with single birds heard at Gibraltar Point and Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe on a few dates in Aug, one at Gibraltar Point Sep 16th and 19th, one at Crook Bank also Sep 19th and the last of the year at Gibraltar Point Oct 4th

#### Blackcap Sylvia atricapilla

Very common summer visitor and passage migrant. Scarce winter visitor Dec-Mar. Green List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	3	1	1	30	24	17	20	40	33	106	6	2
Baston - Langtoft Pits	-	-	4	22	16	4	2	11	17	-	-	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	-	-	-	10	8	2	7	4	15	12	5	1
Louth	-	-	1	23	9	11	4	3	3	1	-	-
Barton Pits	-	-	-	36	-	10	-	3	-	-	-	-
Legbourne	-	-	2	16	26	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Boultham Mere	-	-	1	12	10	5	6	5	5	-	-	-
Marton	-	-	-	9	12	5	5	4	4	-	-	-
Normanby by Spital	-	-	-	11	8		9	9		-	-	-
Laughton Forest	-	-	-	-	21	12	-	-	-	-	-	-

Recorded in all months of the year with records from around 250 sites. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks of 33 over the year. Only five birds were reported wintering at three sites in Jan, Gibraltar Point had one to three all month and there was a male at Langtoft on Jan 4th and a bird at Cleethorpes on Jan 8th. Migrants appeared in increasing numbers from around Mar 20th onwards. BBS reports came from 65% of squares surveyed (2019, 72%) with an average of 2.6 birds per occupied square (2019 3.1). It was the third most widespread summer visitor reported. All counts over 45 came from Gibraltar Point between Oct 3rd-17th with the highest count of the year of 106 there on Oct 11th. In Dec 15 were reported from 12 sites with two at Gibraltar Point throughout the month, a pair on garden feeders at North Thoresby on Dec 8th and 10th and another pair also on feeders at Stickford, on Dec 31st.



Blackcap Sylvia atricapilla Ashby Ville LNR, Scunthorpe Apr 189th 2020 © SIMON SPAVIN



# Garden Warbler Sylvia borin

Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant. Green List.

Site	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Whisby Nature Park	3	22	-	-	-
Baston - Langtoft Pits	8	19	6	-	1
Chambers Farm Wood	-	16	-	-	-
Crowle Moors	6	8	-	-	-
Messingham Sand Quarry	-	8	-	-	-
Willingham Woods	-	8	2	-	-
Laughton Forest	-	6	6	-	-
Snipe Dales	-	6	-	1	-
Swanholme Lakes	1	6	-	-	-

The most important sites for this species are tabulated; in all, records were received from around 73 sites though 35 of these recorded just one bird in one to two months only. The first of the year was at Anderby Creek on Apr 7th, the same date as in 2019. Most arrived though from Apr 18th onwards and eight at Baston and Langtoft on Apr 29th had increased to 19 singing males by May 3rd, an exceptional year for that site. A similar picture was seen at Whisby NP where 22 were recorded on May 4th, and at Chambers Farm Wood with 16 on May 9th. Despite the high numbers of singing males, there was no other evidence of breeding activity, and few were recorded after mid-Jun and Jul-Aug were even quieter.

Coastal sites were hardly involved during Apr-May, but signs of autumn migration were seen at Gibraltar Point from mid-Aug and four were at Donna Nook Aug 12th; inland woodland sites recorded very few. Records all but dried up thereafter with singles on the coast at the usual sites from Sep 1st, inland at Marston STW Sep 7th and 17th, and the last few at Gibraltar Point in Oct where there were singles on 4th, 12th-13th and one photographed there on 28th, the last of the year.

### Barred Warbler Curruca nisoria

## Very scarce/scarce coastal passage migrant mainly Aug-Oct, exceptionally to Dec. LBRC.

A decent year for this species with eight records, six of these at Gibraltar Point. The first were at Seaview Farm, Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Aug 11th-12th (OBt, PAH, et al) and also on Aug 11th in the Plantation, Gibraltar Point (M. Capper). Others followed there in Aug with different birds in the East Dunes 12th (BWd), 17th-18th (JS, BWd, et al,), and one trapped 20th (GGr). Another was also at Wolla Bank Aug 17th. Another three in Sep-Oct were all at Gibraltar Point: West Dunes, Sep 17th (BWd), East Dunes, Oct 3rd (JS) and the last of the year trapped on Oct 14th (GGr).

## Lesser Whitethroat Curruca curruca

Common summer visitor and passage migrant. Green list (nominate form)

Site	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct
Gibraltar Point	12	10	12	17	29	19	1
Heath's Meadows, Burgh le Marsh	8	13	3	1	-	-	-
Crook Bank	-	-	-	10	1	5	1
Louth	8	4	2	-	-	-	-
Long Bennington	7	4	1	1	-	-	-
Withcall	-	7	1	-	1	-	-
Barton Pits	6	-	4	-	1	-	-
Gunby	-	6	-	-	-	-	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	2	4	1	-	4	6	1
Legbourne	5	5	-	-	-	-	-

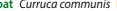
Around 120 sites reported more than 800 records; the top 10 sites are tabulated with a monthly maximum of five birds or more in at least one month The first birds of the year were at Long Bennington, Apr 8th and Barton Pits, Apr 10th followed by a trickle of others in the first half of Apr. Highest spring counts were at Gibraltar Point Apr 27th and 29th (12) and Heath's Meadow, Burgh le Marsh May 3rd (13). Summer highs were at Gibraltar Point, 17 on Jul 10th, and Crook Bank, 10 Jul 31st. Post-breeding counts were highest at Gibraltar Point again with 15 or more on nine dates in Aug, peaking with 29 on 3rd; double-figure counts there continued into Sep with 19 still on 17th and 15 on 21st. Thereafter birds rapidly left, and only single birds were present in Oct at five coastal sites between Donna Nook and Gibraltar Point and the final bird of the year on Oct 14th at Saltfleet Haven. Interestingly, a 1CY bird ringed at Gibraltar Point on Oct 6th was retrapped on Oct 9th in coastal woodland in The Netherlands 291km ESE.

# Siberian Lesser Whitethroat Curruca curruca blythi

Vagrant, Asia, LBRC

No records of this sub-species were received in 2020.

#### Whitethroat Curruca communis



Nominate form a very common summer visitor and passage migrant. Amber List (nominate form).

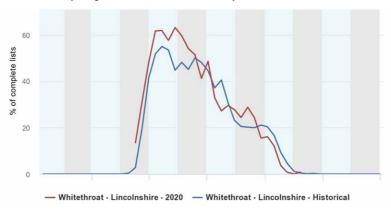
Site	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct
Gibraltar Point	58	107	83	94	93	25	2
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	32	40	30	40	13	3	-
Tetney Marsh	11	20	20	15	5	-	-
Marton	5	21	9	8	10	4	-
Boultham Mere	15	15	8	10	5	2	-
Dyke	12	14	15	1	9	3	-
Long Bennington	10	15	16	10	-	-	-
Seacroft	12	19	14	5	-	-	-
Sturton by Stow	9	17	14	7	1	-	-
Gunby	-	45	-	-	-	-	-



Records were received from around 250 sites with the highest count of 107 reported at Gibraltar Point on May 16th. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks of more than 45 over the year. Good sites for this bush loving species are found all over the county but coastal buckthorn is especially favoured. It is our most widespread summer visitor and traditionally arrives mid-Ap. In 2020 the first came in at West Common, Lincoln on Mar 23rd and another was at Deeping Lakes Apr 1st with a more widespread arrival from Apr 7th, BBS records showed it was the seventh most widespread species in the county being reported from 84% of one km squares, the same as in 2019. The average number of birds recorded per occupied square was 4.4 (2019, 4.8). There is no pronounced autumn migration of this species at coastal watch points, birds often seem to fade away, as reflected in the Birdtrack reporting rate graph below, with the last of the year at Gibraltar Point a single on Oct 4th and two on Oct 5th.

Whitethroat Curruca communis (juvenile) Marston STW Jun 98th 2020 © STEVE NESBITT

#### Reporting rates (% lists with Whitethroats), Apr-Oct 2020 and historical.



# Firecrest Regulus ignicapilla

## Scarce and increasing passage migrant and rare winter visitor. Green List. RBBP.

No birds over-wintered from 2019 and the first of the year was an early spring migrant at Freiston Shore on Mar 12th. Later in Mar there was a wider arrival with single birds at Gibraltar Point on 17th, Anderby Creek on 19th then on 25th at Donna Nook, Freiston Shore and Gibraltar Point, Two birds were present at Gibraltar Point on 26th with singles at Huttoft and Marsh Yard, Anderby and different singles were at Gibraltar Point on 27th and 28th with the first singing bird there on 29th. There were three birds at Gibraltar Point on Apr 2nd of which two were singing; song was reported on four further days up to Apr 11th, with possibly different birds singing on Apr 26th and May 7th-8th. Whether these are just migrants in song or overshooting, potential breeding birds from East Anglia (colonisers?) is a moot point. One bird sang in the same spot for at least nine days. When and where will the first breeding in the county occur? Gibraltar Point seems to be the most likely candidate site. Elsewhere in spring, birds were reported at Wolla Bank on Apr 5th, 6th and 8th and Middlemarsh Farm on May 9th, the last of spring. Autumn migration began on Sep 16th with one at Gibraltar Point and there were singles there on four further dates to the end of Sep, with one at Anderby Creek on 22nd. Oct saw peak migration with two at Gibraltar Point on 5th and 17th and singles on 6th, 10th, and 14th. There were also singles at Sea View, Saltfleetby on 6th, Saltfleet on 16th, Crook Bank, Theddlethorpe 17th-19th and Donna Nook on 23rd. The last bird of the year was one at North Somercotes on Dec 3rd.

# Goldcrest Regulus regulus

Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. Green List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	7	4	14	4	1	3	2	2	61	314	20	4
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	2	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	50	120	13	2
Huttoft	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	60	4	1
Louth	5	3	4	10	4	5	5	10	5	2	5	3
Baston - Langtoft Pits	3	-	2	5	2	1	-	2	3	2	7	1
Donna Nook	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	25	-	-
Middlemarsh Farm	-	1	-	-	2	-	-	1	6	4	5	3
Snipe Dales	-	5	12	-	3	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
Marton	-	1	1	1	1	2	1	-	1	3	3	2
Whisby NP	3	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	7	1	2



Goldcrest Regulus regulus Gibraltar Point Nov 17th 2020 © PAUL NEALE

For such a common resident with numbers reported from over 150 sites, counts were low throughout the first eight months of the year. This is evident in the table, which lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks of more than 15 over the year. BBS reported the species from 10% of squares (2019, 15%) with an average of 1.4 birds per occupied one km square (2019, 1.5). Autumn migration sees the highest numbers and the high count this year was 314 at Gibraltar Point on Oct 16th. Of eight counts over 100 all fell between Oct 3rd-17th, seven were from Gibraltar Point and the eighth was of 120 at Crook Bank, Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe on Oct 14th. All counts from 50-100 fell between the period Sep 28th - Oct 23rd with a high count 60 at Huttoft on Oct 18th.

# Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*Abundant resident and partial migrant. Amber List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	34	21	51	49	30	18	29	59	75	74	64	37
Aubourn	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	90	64	42
Long Bennington	9	12	19	21	23	24	15	8	6	16	13	10
Marston STW	16	3	23	2	21	25	-	8	12	23	12	3
Normanby by Spital	5	2	18	21	19	-	22	16	7	7	13	9
Louth	5	3	6	34	18	39	2	3	5	4	4	3
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	3	1	9	21	13	6	-	11	16	10	22	6
Middlemarsh Farm	3	2	7	10	10	10	5	10	11	8	10	6
Laughton Forest	-	-	-	-	44	41	-	-	-	-	-	-
Linwood Warren	-	-	15	21	24	-	-	-	-	-	14	-

The highest count of the year was at Aubourn on Oct 18th. Records were received from over 300 sites. BBS reported the species from 88% of squares (2019, 87%) with an average of 6.5 birds per occupied one km square (2019, 6.4). It is quite likely that this species is still on the rebound from the disastrous impact of the Beast from the East in Mar 2018. It is now the 5th most widespread bird in the county.



## Nuthatch Sitta europaea

Fairly common and increasing woodland resident. Green List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Belton Park	2	2	-	8	2	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Legbourne Wood	1	1	6	3	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	6
Linwood Warren	1	1	4	6	2	4	-	-	-	-	3	-
Louth	3	1	2	3	1	1	1	-	6	3	2	3
Laughton Forest	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	5	-
Chambers Farm Wood	-	-	2	-	2	-	4	6	-	-	-	-
Keelby	2	-	2	4	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Mausoleum Woods	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Temple Wood	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	4	2
Willingham Woods	-	-	-	-	4	2	-	-	-	-	-	1

The top 10 sites all had counts of four or more birds in at least one month and the highest count of the year was of eight at Belton Park on Apr 16th. Records were received from 73 sites, though 34 of these reported just a single bird in one to five months of the year. Most records were of course from woodland habitats, but a few were seen in less usual places. At Alkborough Flats one was chased out from a reed-bed by a Sedge Warbler on Jun 2nd, and another was seen on the outer Flats on Jul 12th, both unusually distant from the adjacent escarpment. Another on Sep 13th was discovered at Frampton Marsh, a reserve first. Despite



Nuthatch Sitta europaea Nocton Jan 15th 2020 © STEVE NESBITT

the large number of sites recording the species none recorded evidence of breeding activity. BBS recorded birds in two, one km squares this year, a rate of 4% up from 1% (only one square) in 2019. The average number of birds per occupied square was 3.5 (2019, 8).

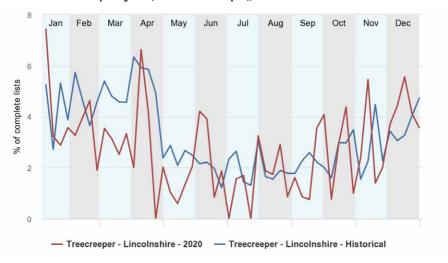
# Treecreeper Certhia familiaris

British form *britannica* a common resident and partial migrant. Nominate Scandinavian and eastern European form, vagrant. Green List (nominate).

## 'British Treecreeper' C.f. britannica

Recorded from around 115 sites across the county, more than 700 records were received of this familiar yet sometimes elusive woodland dweller. Only 41 sites recorded two or more on any one date, and 14 recorded three to six birds in various months, mainly in the first quarter or post-breeding in Jul-Oct (See'Reporting rate' chart below, courtesy of the BTO). BBS recorded birds in only 2% of one km squares surveyed, down from 7% in 2019. The Birdtrack reporting rate shows Treecreeper peak song is in early Apr, coinciding with COVID-19 restrictions, reducing the number of early visits. Later visits in May were likely to have missed birds. The average number of birds per occupied square was 1 (2019, 1.2). Singing birds were noted in the Plantation, Gibraltar Point in Mar-Jun with one bird seen with nesting material May 7th. Elsewhere singing birds were heard at Trent Port (Marton) Jun 6th and one to two at Whisby NP Mar-Apr. This race does not move significant distances according to ringing data but can be relatively long-lived for a small bird. One such example was HVN379, first ringed as a 1CY bird in Aug 2016 in Willingham Forest and retrapped in 2017, 2019 and again in Oct 2020, then aged 4 yr. 2 mth.

#### Reporting rates (% lists with Treecreepers), Jan-Dec 2020 and historical.



## 'Northern Treecreeper' C.f. familiaris

This subspecies is now considered by BBRC, and two records of trapped birds submitted retrospectively were accepted by BBRC (*British Birds* 114 (10): 570-628).

**2013:** A 1CY+ trapped Oct 15th, Crook Bank, Theddlethorpe, present until Oct 18th (A.D. Lowe, *et al*). **2015**: A 1CY+ trapped Oct 17th, Crook Bank, Theddlethorpe, present until Oct 21st (A.D. Lowe, *et al*).

## Rose-coloured Starling Pastor roseus

## Rare. Eastern and south-eastern Europe, Asia. LBRC.

Adults were recorded on Jun 1st at Winteringham Haven (M. Stow, per RDn); Jun 9th in a private garden in Skegness (per RDn) and on Jul 10th in a private garden in Mablethorpe (C. Seabrook, et al). None of these was found by a birdwatcher but came to light through photographs shown to a birdwatching friend (Winteringham) or from local Facebook pages (the other two). All were adults, but only the Mablethorpe bird was seen by local birdwatchers and could be confidently sexed as a male.



Rose-coloured Starling Pastor roseus Mablethorpe Jul 11th 2020 © MARK JOHNSON



Starling Sturnus vulgaris

Very common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. BBS data shows that the breeding population has significantly fallen by 79% during the period 1994-2018. Red List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Chapel Six Marshes	-	30	200	2	2	-	-	-	31	5000	120000	30000
Gibraltar Point	380	926	7495	39	47	288	5000	7200	12000	60000	6000	700
Huttoft	-	120	30000	-	2	-	-	-	1000	800	15000	6000
Frampton Marsh	120	150	100	-	28	8000	3000	90	500	5000	35000	-
Anderby	220	4000	5000	-	20	229	16	-	500	10000	13200	200
Kirkby on Bain GP	7000	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	15000	6000
Wolla Bank	-	-	-	2	-	50	10	11	-	10000	25000	-
Woodhall Spa	100	47	22	-	5	1	35	30	25	64	15000	22
Alkborough Flats	2	-	20	-	-	20	100	60	2	500	14000	60
East Halton	-	-	300	-	-	-	24	-	-	150	250	6000

With counts reported from nearly 300 sites, the highest count of the year was 120,000 at Chapel Six Marshes on Nov 13th. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks of more than 6,500 over the year. BBS reported the species from 51% of squares (2019, 64%) with an average of 28 birds per occupied one km square (2019, 18). Some large roosts appear to be quite transient. The massive winter roost of 200,000 at Messingham in Nov 2019 fell to 4,000 birds on Oct 26th this year. The largest roost this year at

Chapel Six Marshes held a maximum of 22,000 birds in 2019. The fact that there are five new sites in the table this year supports this observation. It is also possible that four large roosts along the coast from Anderby down to Gibraltar Point involve some of the same birds as the peaks occur on different dates

#### **Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris*

TOP: Alkborough Flats Nov 11th 2020

© GRAHAM CATLEY

RIGHT: Lincoln Apr 6th 2020 © STEVE LOVELL





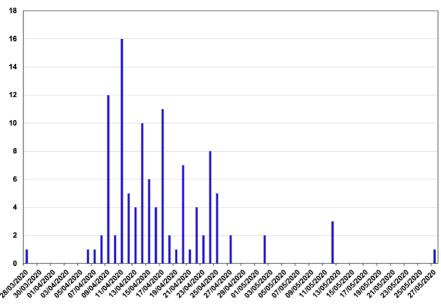
Ring Ouzel Turdus torquatus Barton Pits Apr 27th 2020 © GRAHAM CATLEY

# Ring Ouzel Turdus torquatus

## Scarce to fairly common passage migrant Mar-May and Sep-Nov; rare in winter. Red List.

More than 180 records were received from 34 sites, just under half of which were inland sites. The overwintering bird first seen Dec 3rd, 2019, in the Seaview Farm-Rimac area remained until Jan 15th. The first of the spring was at Gibraltar Point on Mar 28th followed by a significant and widespread arrival in Apr involving more than 20 sites (allowing for some duplication between adjacent sites) with a few birds still around in May (Chart below). Clearly these totals will include newly arrived birds plus those remaining from previous days although males in particular do not remain at migration arrival points for very long in spring and most had gone by the end of Apr. There were no records Jun-Aug.

#### Ring Ouzel totals per day, Lincolnshire, 2020



The autumn was far less spectacular with the first record recorded flying over Scopwick Sep 15th followed by a series of records at Gibraltar Point Sep 17th-29th, mostly single birds but with three on 17th, two on 27th and seven on 28th. More arrived in Oct, all coastal, in variable numbers but with a 'purple patch' at Gibraltar Point 3rd-4th with maxima of 13 on 3rd and eight on 4th. Elsewhere there were one to two birds at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe, Crook Bank and the Huttoft coast. Most birds had departed by midmonth and the last of the year were at Huttoft on Oct 26th (1) and Gibraltar Point Nov 8th (1) and 9th (2).



Black-throated Thrush Turdus atrogularis Grimsby Institute Jan 31st 2020 © GRAHAM CATLEY

## Black-throated Thrush Turdus atroqularis

## Vagrant. Eastern European Russia to north-central Siberia, north-west Mongolia.

A 2CY male was found on the green outside the Grimsby Institute on Jan 30th, remaining until Apr 2nd, the first record for the county (JFF, et al). Accepted by BBRC (*British Birds* 114 (10): 570-628). See 'Finder's report, p191, for a full account together with the BBRC comments on this record.

#### Blackbird Turdus merula

Very common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. BBS data shows no significant change in the breeding population of this species from 1994-2018. Green List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	366	36	44	39	30	23	16	32	32	520	635	462
Aubourn	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	-	-	158	98	99
Louth	18	15	12	60	38	71	6	4	6	25	30	50
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	10	6	8	15	4	2	-	2	9	40	200	50
Sturton by Stow	33	26	37	24	11	23	15	17	13	15	28	41
Woodhall Spa		19	32	41	69	37	2	-	-	-	37	26
Long Bennington	23	31	29	32	32	24	13	5	1	15	20	28
Normanby by Spital	21	13	18	26	17	-	27	8	7	10	25	33
Legbourne	4	4	8	17	37	-	-	2	3	2	33	92
Middlemarsh Farm	13	9	13	19	9	11	8	5	8	25	34	47

Records were received from nearly 400 sites with the highest count of 635 at Gibraltar Point on Nov 28th. COVID-19 restrictions seem to have encouraged more observers to count their local patches regularly, and this is reflected by the spread of sites in the table which lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks of more than 200 over the year. BBS reported the species from 100% of squares (2019, 100%) with an average of 9.8 birds per occupied one km square (2019, 11.5). Of 22 counts received over 200, 20 came from Gibraltar Point between Oct 17th-Dec 22nd. The others were from Gibraltar Point on Jan 30th and Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe on Nov 8th.

Blackbird Turdus merula Grantham Jan 4th 2020 © STEVE NESBITT

# Fieldfare Turdus pilaris

# Very common passage migrant and winter visitor, mainly Sep-Apr; rare in summer. Red List. RBBP

The year was very much a tale of two halves similar to the historical data (BTO chart below shows reporting rates) with a dwindling wintering population in the first quarter and a typically large arrival in the last quarter. In Jan-Mar the highest counts were modest with 100-300 at 19 mainly inland sites. Birds began to leave during Apr with the last three-figure count (110) at Market Rasen Apr 9th and most had gone by the end of the month. Gibraltar Point harboured the last few in May, with 12 still there on 13th and the last of the spring a single on 22nd.

The first autumn birds appeared in late Sep at Gibraltar Point with one on 27th and two on 29th followed by the main 'rush' there in mid-Oct with a peak of 385 on Oct 17th. This continued into Nov with many more sites recording 100-300 birds and 355 at Marton Nov 17th. In Dec a large movement occurred on the Humber bank involving 1,000s of birds arriving Dec 20th-28th with 2,000 Goxhill Marsh and 3,600 East Halton Skitter 20th; 1,500 East Halton Skitter 24th; 1,000 Barton Pits 27th; 640 Killingholme Marshes 28th. Only smaller numbers in the low 100s were reported in the southern half of the county apart from 450 at Frampton Marsh 30th.

#### Reporting rates (% lists with Fieldfares), Jan-Dec 2020 and historical.



# Redwing Turdus iliacus (nominate) (coburni)

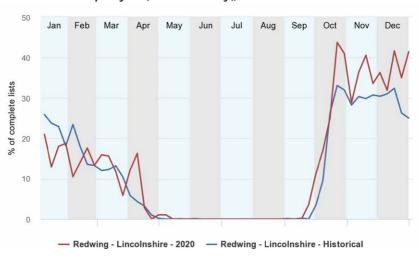
Nominate Scandinavian and Russian form a very common passage migrant and winter visitor, mainly Sep-Apr, rare in summer. Icelandic form *coburni* rare but probably under-recorded and claims must be accompanied by good photographs. Amber List. **RBBP.** 

The BTO Bird Track chart shows a reporting rate very similar to that of Fieldfare with diminishing numbers through Jan-Mar, with a peak count of 594 at Gibraltar Point Apr 2nd, with a few remaining there into May and the last bird there May 28th. Autumn arrivals were from Sep 9th mainly at coastal sites but with 106 at Bardney Pits and 156 at Gibraltar Point on 27th. Arrivals and peak numbers in Oct were earlier than Fieldfare with 2,764 Gibraltar Point 10th and 4,150 Nettleton Moor 11th. Thereafter Nov-Dec counts were much smaller, presumably as birds distributed further inland but with maxima of 956 at Gibraltar Point Nov 9th and 370 at Killingholme Marshes Dec 28th.



Redwing Turdus iliacus Eagle Oct 26th 2020 © STEVE LOVELL

# Reporting rates (% lists with Redwings), Jan-Dec 2020 and historical.



# Song Thrush Turdus philomelos (clarkei) (nominate)

British form *clarkei* a very common resident. Nominate continental form a common passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	17	11	15	24	13	9	10	10	48	521	64	16
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	3		1	2	1	2	1	1	4	44	23	25
Louth	2	5	6	10	9	11	6	3	1	6	4	3
Boultham Mere	4	4	4	7	5	3	3	1	2	4	4	2
Marton	4	2	3	4	3	2	2	1	2	12	6	2
Donna Nook	-	-	-	7	5	-	-	-	-	30	1	-
RAF Digby	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	34	-	-
Stamford	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	15	16	-
Scopwick	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	5	21	3
Middlemarsh Farm	1	2	3	5	3	3	1	1	1	6	2	2

Records were received from nearly 270 sites with the highest count of 521 at Gibraltar Point on Oct 3rd. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks of more than 30 over the year. BBS reported the species from 43% of squares (2019, 60%) with an average of 2.4 birds per occupied one km square (2019, 2.2). COVID-19 restrictions on early visits impacted the recording of this species when it was in its main song period. Of 20 counts received over 40, 19 came from Gibraltar Point between Sep 28th-Nov 8th including 223 on Oct 4th, 127 Oct 5th and 133 Oct 16th. The other was 44 from Crook Bank, Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe on Oct 4th. The high counts of 34 at RAF Digby were on 6th and 30 at Donna Nook Oct 4th, indicating the first week of Oct was peak arrival date for Song Thrush this autumn.



**Song Thrush** *Turdus philomelos* Grantham Jun 1st 2020 © STEVE NESBITT

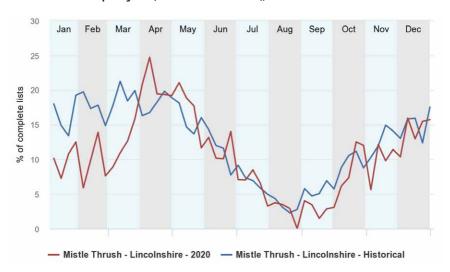
#### Mistle Thrush Turdus viscivorus

Common resident and partial migrant. Red List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	5	6	51	6	7	5	6	5	3	4	4	4
Harrington	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50	-	-	-	-
Welbourn	2	4		2	2	4	9	-	4	10	-	5
Boultham Mere	4	5	4	5	2	1	2	3	-	1	3	11
Louth	3	3	5	7	2	1	1	-	1	3	2	4
Saltfleetby -	2	-	3	6	2	5	-	-	1	3	4	3
Theddlethorpe												
Aubourn	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	22	4	1
Linwood Warren	-	-	2	2	5	16	-	-	-	-	2	-
Middlemarsh Farm	5	1	2	1	3	3	3	-	1	2	3	3
Normanby by Spital	1	3	5	1	3		1	7	-	-	1	4
Counted at all sites	70	67	149	130	134	100	55	84	44	124	109	102
Number of sites	35	36	53	64	70	32	22	11	17	37	49	49
Average per site	2.0	1.9	2.8	2.0	1.9	3.1	2.5	7.6	2.6	3.4	2.2	2.1

Records were received from 173 sites with the highest count of 51 at Gibraltar Point on Mar 20th. COVID-19 restrictions seem to have encouraged more observers to count their local patches regularly, and this is reflected by the spread of sites in the table which lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks of more than 20 over the year. For each month it also summarises the total birds counted at all sites, the total of sites from which counts were received and the average number of birds per site. BBS reported the species from 100% of squares (2019, 100%) with an average of 9.8 birds per occupied one km square (2019, 11.5). The Birdtrack reporting rate for Lincolnshire (see chart below) shows that there is a dearth of reports in Aug, also reflected in the historical reporting rate for the species. Perhaps because birds appear to flock up for a brief period before returning to territories making them less widespread. What are they up to?

#### Reporting rates (% lists with Mistle Thrushes), Jan-Dec 2020 and historical.



# Spotted Flycatcher Muscicapa striata

Fairly common but much decreased and now very local summer visitor and passage migrant. Red List.

Site	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct
Gibraltar Point	1	1	-	11	11	-
Boultham Mere/Swanpool	-	-	-	6	3	-
Little Scrub's Meadow	-	-	-	6	-	-
Donington on Bain	-	-	-	5	-	-
Rippingale	-	-	4	-	-	-
Dunsby	2	1	-	3	-	-

Around 110 records were received from 51 sites (145 from 47 in 2019) in May-Oct; the Oct record was from Donna Nook (not tabulated). Those in the table were the only sites to record more than two in any one month. The first of the spring was at Sudbrooke on May 2nd, a typical date. More arrived at 12 other sites during the month, all singles apart from two at Dunsby on 7th, two at Alkborough Flats 19th and two at Linwood Warren 30th. In Jun-Jul 15 sites reported the species, mostly singles, with most at Rippingale where a pair were feeding two fledglings Jul 7th. The only other confirmed breeding records came from



Spotted Flycatcher Muscicapa striata Rimac Sep 6th 2020 © OWEN BEAUMONT

Panton Park Woods, East Barkwith (three juveniles, Jul 29th) and Little Scrubs Meadow, Chambers Farm Wood (Pair with four juveniles, Aug 7th). Some light autumn passage began from mid-Aug with 11 at Gibraltar Point on 23rd and six at Boultham Mere 24th. Sep passage was similar with one to three birds at several sites, five at Gibraltar Point 4th and 11 there on 9th. After this date just one to two were seen, mainly on the coast and the last bird was at Donna Nook Oct 4th-5th.

## **Robin** *Erithacus rubecula*

British form *melophilus* a very common resident. Nominate continental form a common passage migrant and winter visitor. Green List (both forms).

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	42	34	40	46	30	22	21	47	119	291	162	53
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	6	6	6	6	3	1	-	5	62	25	80	8
Normanby by Spital	9	26	18	15	11	-	5	23	18	15	15	8
Long Bennington	18	18	6	5	5	5	2	3	11	16	22	17
Woodhall Spa	-	32	23	18	15	3	2	-	-	-	15	18
Louth	6	5	8	30	13	24	2	5	10	4	6	10
Humberston Fitties	8	5	10	24	15	8	2	4	17	-	13	1
Seacroft	2	3	7	4	2	2	1	1	19	27	27	12
Lincoln	7	35	4	12	4	3	4	5	5	4	3	3
Middlemarsh Farm	3	7	10	8	6	7	1	5	12	12	7	8

The highest count of the year was an autumn arrival of 291 at Gibraltar Point on Oct 16th. Records were received from around 350 sites. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks of more



than 85 over the year. BBS reported the species from 80% of squares (2019, 92%) with an average of 3.4 birds per occupied one km square (2019, 3.4). Thirty out of 31 counts over 80 came from Gibraltar Point involving waves of arrivals from Sep 21st-Nov 10th. The highest Sep count was 119 on 28th and the highest Nov count 162 on 8th. The highest count from another site came from Rimac, Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe also on Nov 8th.

## Bluethroat Luscinia svecica

Nominate Scandinavian form (Red-spotted Bluethroat) rare migrant. Central and southern European subspecies *cyanecula* (White-spotted Bluethroat) vagrant. **LBRC RBBP.** 

An early spring bird at Gibraltar Point on Apr 9th was the only record of the year. It was accepted as of the subspecies *cyanecula*, having a small white throat spot (NAL, RKW).

Identifying spring males in not as easy as once thought with IOC 11.2 listing 11 subspecies, some of which lack either white or red spotting on the throat; seven of these may be relevant

to Britain. BBRC advice for prospective records of *cyanecula* is as follows: In respect of birds considered to be *cyanecula*, from 1st Jan 2021, claims are welcomed of both breeding plumage males and females/non-breeding males where there is reasonable evidence to suggest that subspecies. Field notes may be sufficient for such claims.

## Nightingale Luscinia megarhynchos

Very scarce and declining local summer visitor and very scarce passage migrant. Red List.

Twenty-eight reports were received from just five sites, one of which was a migrant found on Apr 24th at Tetney Marsh. The first of the spring was at Whisby NP on Apr 20th, and from May 1st there were two singing males there on six dates in May, lastly on 30th. The last record from Whisby was on Jun 3rd. Elsewhere a male was singing at Baston GP from May 7th-21st, the first record there since 2008. Another was at Lawn Wood and Meadows NR, Castle Bytham May 17th and 23rd, and finally another was at Auster Wood, Bourne, May 29th. As far as is known, there was no confirmed breeding at any of these sites in 2020.

# **Red-flanked Bluetail** *Tarsiger cyanurus* Rare. North-eastern Europe **LBRC.**

No records of this species were received in 2020, the last one being in Oct 2016 at Chapel St Leonard's.

# Red-breasted Flycatcher Ficedula parva Very scarce coastal passage migrant mainly Aug-Oct. Eastern Europe to the Urals. LBRC.

There were five records in 2020: Gibraltar Point Oct 3rd (KMW), Donna Nook Oct 3rd-4th with two on 4th (CA, GPC, ND, et al), Anderby Creek Oct 4th (MHa), and Shoveler's Pool, Gibraltar Point Oct 11th (OBt, LAn). The new *Birds of Lincolnshire* states that most records are autumnal, absolute dates Sep 6th-Nov 7th. There have been just three spring records, all in May, in 1999, 2008, and 2013.

TOP: **Robin** juvenile *Erithacus rubecula* Louth Jul 21st 2020 © JOHN CLARKSON RIGHT: **Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva* Donna Nook Oct 4th 2020 © GRAHAM CATLEY



# Pied Flycatcher Ficedula hypoleuca

Scarce passage migrant, mainly coastal; very scarce in spring and scarce in autumn. Amber List.

Site	May	Aug	Sep	0ct
Gibraltar Point	1	36	10	7
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	-	15	2	-
Anderby Creek	-	6	-	-
Gedney Drove End	-	4	-	-
Theddlethorpe St Helen	-	-	3	-
Wolla Bank	-	3	-	-
Donna Nook	-	2	-	-
Freiston Shore	-	2	2	1
Welton Low Wood	-	2	-	-
Cleethorpes	-	-	1	-
Crook Bank	-	1	1	-
Frampton Marsh	-	1	1	-
Huttoft Bank Pit	-	1	-	-
Marsh Yard	-	1	-	-
Pye's Hall	-	-	1	-
Sandilands Golf Course	-	-	1	-
Scottlethorpe	-	1	-	-
Tetney Marsh	-	1	-	-
Toft Newton Reservoir	-	1	-	-

Seventy-four records were received from 19 sites, but the sole spring record was a female at Gibraltar Point on May 6th. Spring records are usually in single figures and blank years are not unknown; 2018 on the other hand was a very good year with 12 at Gibraltar Point May 1st.

Good numbers were recorded in the autumn with the first ones at Anderby Creek and Gibraltar Point Aug 7th. Some decent arrivals occurred throughout the month with Gibraltar Point recording 36 on 10th, 25 on 17th, and 15 on 23rd. Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe also had good numbers in Aug with 15 on 11th



Pied Flycatcher Ficedula hypoleuca Gibraltar Point Aug 10th 2020 © GARY FENWICK



and up to seven mid-month. All records in Aug were from coastal sites apart from one on Aug 31st at Scottlethorpe. Few were seen in Sep with one to three at nine coastal sites with a peak of 10 at Gibraltar Point on 17th. Singles were at Freiston Shore and Gibraltar Point on Oct 3rd, seven at Gibraltar Point on 4th and the last of the autumn there, a single, Oct 5th.

#### Black Redstart Phoenicurus ochruros



European subspecies ('Western Black Redstart') gibraltariensis a scarce passage migrant, rare and irregular breeder, last in 2012, and very scarce winter visitor. One record of one of the Central Asian forms P.o. phoenicuroides/rufiventris/xerophilus. Red List. RBBP

Site	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	0ct	Nov	Dec
Anderby Creek	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Elsea Park, Bourne	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Cleethorpes	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Cress Marsh	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Deeping St James	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dunsby	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
East Halton Skitter	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Frithville	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Gedney Drove End	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
Gibraltar Point	2	1	1	1	2	1	1
Humberston (village)	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
North Somercotes	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Sandilands GC	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Spalding, March Line Borrow Pits		1	-	-	-	-	-

Taking the approach that a table is worth a thousand words, 2020 was a poor year for this species. Most records were coastal with the first of the year at East Halton Skitter Mar 16th followed by six to seven others and two at Gibraltar Point on Mar 27th. Singles were found in Apr at six sites including inland birds at Spalding 4th and Frithville 15th. Gibraltar Point recorded singles on and off from Apr 11th-May 6th and a summer record on Jun 30th, an adult male: there was another summer record at Elsea Park. Bourne Jun 29th. There were no further records until the first of the autumn on Oct 14th-16th at Gibraltar Point, the sole Oct record. There was a late 'flurry' in Nov with further singles at Gibraltar Point 8th-9th, Sandilands GC 17th-18th, Dunsby 22nd and Gibraltar Point again 29th where the last of the year was seen Dec 10th. Apart from the adult male at Gibraltar Point, all birds were in immature/female 'brown' plumage and there was no evidence of any breeding activity.

# **Redstart** Phoenicurus phoenicurus

Very scarce summer visitor and scarce passage migrant in spring, fairly common in autumn. Last confirmed breeding 2013. Amber List.

Site	Apr	May	Jun	Aug	Sep	0ct
Donna Nook	-	-	-	-	1	12
Gibraltar Point	1	1	-	4	11	9
Crook Bank	-	-	-	-	-	6
Boultham Mere/Swanpool	1	-	-	4	-	-
Brickyard Lane	-	-	-	-	-	2
Freiston Shore	-	-	-	2	1	2
Gedney Drove End	-	-	-	-	2	-
Huttoft	-	-	-	-	1	2
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	-	-	-	1	2	1

Records were received from 23 sites, eight of which were inland; thirteen sites reported just a single bird in one to two months with an even split between spring and autumn records. Those sites reporting at least two in any month are tabulated.

Redstart remains a very scarce spring migrant, the first being at Melton Ross Apr 11th and singles at four other sites 14th-30th. Just three records were received in May with singles at Frampton Marsh and Gibraltar Point on 8th and the last inland at Deeping Lakes on 17th. Finally, there was an intriguing summer record of an adult male at Belton Park Jun 23rd but not seen thereafter.

The first birds of the autumn arrived in Aug with records mainly from Gibraltar Point on 13 dates from 9th, maxima four on 11th and 31st. Seven other sites had one to two birds but with four inland at Boultham Mere/ Swanpool 23rd. Records were more widespread in Sep-Oct and exclusively coastal. Eight were at Gibraltar Point Sep 1st where birds were present on at least 18 days in the month peaking at 11 on 17th. One or two birds was the norm elsewhere on the coast. Passage continued into Oct with peaks of 10-12 birds at Donna Nook and nine at Gibraltar Point on 4th, eight on 5th and seven on 6th. Lingering birds were at Gibraltar Point and Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe on 15th, two were at Brickyard Lane 16th and the final bird of the year was at Anderby Creek Oct 18th.

## Whinchat Saxicola rubetra

Scarce/fairly common passage migrant. Formerly a common breeder, last bred in the 1980s. Red List.

Site	Apr	May	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct
East Halton Skitter	-	-	-	14	1	-
Goxhill Marsh	-	-	-	14	-	-
Gibraltar Point	1	-	1	13	8	2
Freiston Shore	-	-	-	10	6	-
Alkborough Flats	-	-	-	-	7	-
Frampton Marsh	-	-	-	2	4	-
Halton Marshes	-	-	-	-	4	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	-	-	-	4	1	3
Deeping High Bank	-	-	-	1	3	-
Seacroft	-	-	-	3	1	1

Just over 160 records were received from around 37 sites, mostly coastal but with 12 inland sites, the majority being of autumn birds. The top 10 sites are tabulated.

A very poor spring for Whinchats with singles reported from eight sites Mar-May, an adult male at Manby Wetlands Apr 23rd being the first and on a typical date. The remaining records were all single birds seen from then to May 9th.

Autumn birds began to appear from mid-Jul at Alkborough Flats 16th, Saltfleet Haven 25th and Gibraltar Point 30th. Aug is generally the peak month and many more were seen with one to three birds on the coast to mid-month. The highest numbers seen were 14 at East Halton Skitter and 13 at Gibraltar Point on 23rd and 10 at Freiston Shore on 24th. Thereafter numbers rapidly dwindled into Sep with one to three at several coastal sites, six at Freiston Shore 6th and eight Gibraltar Point 17th. A few lingered into Oct with three at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe 5th and the last singles of the year at Gibraltar Point 26th and Seacroft 31st.

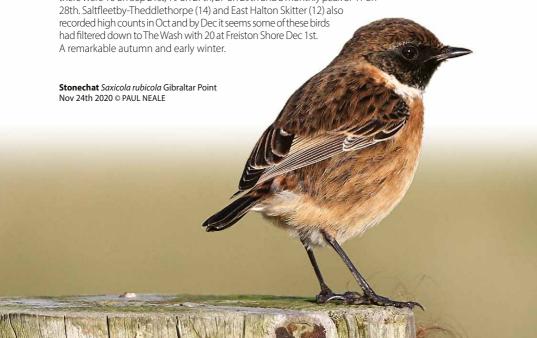
### Stonechat Saxicola rubicola

Scarce/fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor, mainly Sep-Apr. Very scarce and sporadic breeder. Bred in six out of the last 20 years to 2018, last in 2016. Green List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Alkborough Flats	8	6	7	-	-	-	-	-	23	48	15	10
Gibraltar Point	6	3	3	4	1	2	1	1	41	45	15	11
Freiston Shore	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	7	3	20
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	2	2	4	1	-	-	-	1	2	14	4	4
Seacroft	-	2	3	1	-	1	-	-	13	9	4	3
East Halton Skitter	4	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	6	3
Trent Port (Marton)	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	9	2	-
Huttoft Car Terrace	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	6	6	2
Middlemarsh Farm	3	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	5	8	4	3
Anderby	2	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	5	7	2	1

More than 1,000 records were received from more than 100 sites across the county; the top 10 sites are tabulated. In the first quarter of the year small numbers wintered with most having departed by the end of Mar, few in Apr and just a single at Gibraltar Point May 8th and 16th. No reports of breeding activity were received. Jul-Aug was very quiet, the lull before the storm, as record numbers arrived on the Humber and Gibraltar Point in Sep-Oct. Events from Alkborough Flats (per GPC) as follows:

The first signs that high numbers of Stonechats were arriving on the Flats came in mid-Sep with 10 on the 19th followed by a then, new record of 23 on the 27th. In early Oct at least three groups of birds seemed to be feeding in different areas but proving they were all different individuals was difficult, so a coordinated count was organised on the 7th, and this revealed a staggering total of 48 birds, three times the previous highest single day count. A lot of these birds moved on and the Nov peak was 15 on 3rd and 10 on the 14th, after which around 10 birds were regular through Dec. This picture was reflected in Sep at Gibraltar Point where there were 10 on Sep 21st. 19 on 27th. 27 on 29th and a monthly peak of 41 on





Wheatear Oenanthe oenanthe Gibraltar Point Aug 10th 2020 © JOHN CLARKSON

#### Wheatear Oenanthe oenanthe



Fairly common passage migrant and former local breeder until the end of the 19th century but no recent certainty, although pairs are regular in late spring. 'Greenland Wheatear' leucorhoa is a scarce migrant in spring/autumn. Amber List (both subspecies).

Site	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct
Gibraltar Point	-	10	10	-	3	20	44	3
Skegness (North Shore)	-	-	-	-	-	-	31	-
Seacroft Marsh	-	4	6	-	-	1	8	-
Baston - Langtoft Pits	-	7	2	-	-	1	-	-
Tetney Marsh	-	7	4	1	1	1	-	-
Toft Newton Reservoir	-	7	2	-	-	1	1	1
Huttoft Marsh	-	6	4	-	-	1	2	1
Middlemarsh Farm (Skegness)	-	5	6	-	1	1	1	-
Horkstow Wolds	-	2	5	-	-	-	-	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	1	5	5	-	-	3	2	1

There were just over 500 records from 72 sites. First of the year was at Goxhill Marsh on Mar 15th, followed by others at Cleethorpes and Woodhall Spa Airfield on 17th and Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe on 18th. Widespread arrivals occurred during Apr with highs of eight at Gibraltar Point on 11th, seven each at Tetney Marsh (11th), Baston & Langtoft GP (18th), and Toft Newton Reservoir (21st) and the months high of 10 at Gibraltar Point on 25th. Similar numbers arrived in May with most on the coast and another 10 at Gibraltar Point on 4th the most recorded. These migrants quickly moved through leaving just two records of single birds in Jun. Autumn arrivals began in Jul where a few arrived on the coast with two at Goxhill Marsh 19th and three at Gibraltar Point 26th. Passage picked up through Aug with records of one to four birds from 27 sites peaking at 20 on 23rd at Gibraltar Point. Sep painted a similar picture with 24 sites reporting one to four birds, but highest counts were on the Skegness coast with 31 at North Shore and



House Sparrow Passer domesticus North Somercotes Mar 24th 2020 © MARK JOHNSON

44 at Gibraltar Point on 4th with 37 still present Gibraltar Point next day, 5th. Thereafter one to five were reported daily mainly on the coast. Small numbers remained into Oct with just singles present after 11th, the last few singles hanging on at Gibraltar Point 14th-18th being the last of the year.

# House Sparrow Passer domesticus

## Abundant resident and partial migrant. Red List.

The highest count of the year was 212 at Louth on Apr 22nd. Records were received from around 250 sites. BBS reported the species from 65% of squares (2019, 68%) with an average of 27 birds per occupied one km square (2019, 25). P. Espin conducted a study using BBS methodology of a grid of 16 one km squares in Louth during Apr-Jun, from which the highest count came. Two one km squares per day were surveyed on 16 different dates. House Sparrows were found in 15 out of 16 squares with an average of 43 birds per square, with a range from 3 – 118 birds per occupied square. House Sparrow was the second commonest bird in this study (after Wood Pigeon) with a total of 648 birds counted on breeding territories. The largest winter count came from Humberston Fitties, 150 on Feb 2nd. The other largest count was also 150, at Messingham on Sep 7th.

# Tree Sparrow Passer montanus

Common resident though localised resident and partial migrant. Population prone to fluctuations up and down over last 30 years. Red List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Toft Newton Reservoir	4	4	8	6	4	4	20	80	70	35	6	3
Withcall	10	40	-	-	6	1	2	120	20	-	-	38
Freiston Shore	-	-	6	-	-	3	10	10	2	40	29	30
Boultham Mere	10	35	15	4	5	15	8	8	-	4	5	7
Gibraltar Point	-	-	1	1	20	-	1	-	19	60	1	-
Normanby by Spital	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	27	51	5	2	11
Tetney	6	-	10	12	10	20	20	15	-	-	1	-
Horkstow Wolds	-	-	-	8	-	-	80	-	-	-	-	-
Eastoft	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	80
Walcot	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	30		40

The highest count of the year was a post breeding flock of 120 at Withcall on Aug 18th. This flock was found on one of the largest organic farms with some of the best field margins and hedges in the Wolds. In total, records were received from around 100 sites. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks of more than 70 over the year. BBS reported the species from 22% of squares (2019, 22%) with an average of 3.7 birds per occupied one km square (2019, 5.3). In the survey mentioned for House Sparrow, above, P. Espin found Tree Sparrows in four out of 16 squares with an average of 2.5 birds per square, (range 2–4 birds per occupied square). The comparative breeding numbers of the two *Passer* species could not be starker. An annual and relatively large southerly autumn passage of Tree Sparrows observed just across the Humber at Spurn Narrows is not reflected in records on the Lincolnshire coast (the birds may head west at Spurn Point or turn back) but Gibraltar Point recorded a passage of 48 on Oct 5th with 12 birds not moving through. In addition, 18 went south on Sep 9th and 16 south on Oct 15th.

**Dunnock** *Prunella modularis* (occidentalis) (nominate)

British form occidentalis a very common resident and partial migrant. Nominate continental form a scarce passage migrant, mostly in autumn. Amber List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	18	30	52	52	32	26	28	45	66	96	47	31
Seacroft	4	10	18	14	9	11	3	3	10	13	19	8
Aubourn	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	45	37	32
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	2	1	4	7	7	2	5	8	14	20	32	12
Tetney	6	-	10	14	10	12	15	10	-	-	2	1
Woodhall Spa	2	7	16	20	11	9	-	-	-	-	5	3
Louth	3	2	3	21	4	20	2	2	2	4	4	5
Long Bennington	5	14	10	6	6	4	4	2	4	6	2	2
Huttoft	-	1	3	4	1	1	1	2	15	20	10	5
Lincoln	2	4	5	9	8	8	7	6	6	4	2	1



The highest count of the year was 96 at Gibraltar Point on Oct 12th. Records were received from around 350 sites. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks of more than 62 over the year. BBS data showed that the species was found in 92% of squares (2019, 85%) with an average of 2.4 birds per occupied one km square (2019, 3.8), our 10th most widespread bird. All 10 counts over 50 came from Gibraltar Point involving spring movements of 52 on Mar 25th and 52 on Apr 15th and eight counts from Sep 21st-Oct 16th. The highest Sep count was 66 on 29th and the highest Oct count 96 on 12th mentioned above. The highest count from another site of 45 came from Aubourn on Oct 18th and the highest count elsewhere on the coast was 32 at Rimac, Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe on Nov 8th.

LEFT: **Dunnock** *Prunella modularis* Nocton Nov 7th 2020 © RUSS HAYES

RIGHT: **Tree Sparrow** Passer montanus North Somercotes Mar 31st 2020 © MARK JOHNSON





Yellow Wagtail Motacilla flava flavissima Barton Pits Apr 10th 2020 © GRAHAM CATLEY

# Yellow Wagtail Motacilla flava flavissima

Summer visitor and passage migrant. British form 'flavissima' common. Lincolnshire holds around 20% of the world population, perhaps our most important bird of conservation concern. Several other subspecies are scarce/rare. Red List.

Site	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct
Gibraltar Point	27	56	2	10	254	86	8
Toft Newton Reservoir	35	5	5	5	50	85	-
Freiston Shore	1	-	3	-	139	5	-
Frampton Marsh	10	3	2	20	50	55	-
Covenham Reservoir	25	4	3	7	44	50	3
Alkborough	53	1	-	30	20	20	-
Thorpe Tilney Fen	-	-	-	-	100	1	-
Tetney Marsh	6	8	4	7	36	1	-
Donna Nook	3	2	-	1	50	-	-
Middlemarsh Farm	20	15	2	5	4	3	-

The highest count of the year was 254 at Gibraltar Point on Aug 22nd. Records were received from around 140 sites from Apr-Oct. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks of more than 45 over the year. The first birds reported were three at Toft Newton Reservoir on Apr 4th, with a single at Gibraltar Point on Apr 5th. Birds quickly became widespread within a couple of days. The Apr peak was 52 at Alkborough on 13th and the May peak was 54 at Gibraltar Point on 1st, of which 51 were moving south. BBS reported Yellow Wagtail from 33% of squares (2019, 42%) with an average of 3.4 birds per

occupied one km square (2019, 3.5). The Birdtrack reporting rate was similar to the historic range in much of May, although it was probably impacted by the lack of early visits in April. The autumn (and annual) high count was at Gibraltar Point on Aug 22nd with the second highest count, 139 at Freiston Shore on Aug 23rd. There was also a count of c100 at Thorpe Tilney Fen on Aug 18th. The highest Sep count was 86 at Gibraltar Point on 8th and there were 85 at Toft Newton Reservoir on 2nd. The last birds were two at Gibraltar Point on Oct 18th and one at Covenham Reservoir on Oct 25th.

#### Reporting rates (% lists with Yellow Wagtails), Apr-Oct 2020 and historical.



# Blue-headed Wagtail M.f. flava

## Very scarce passage migrant, mainly spring. Has bred sporadically. Amber List. LBRC RBBP

A 2CY+ female was identified at Gibraltar Point on Apr 27th (KMW, et al) and an adult male was there on May 7th (BWd). An adult male was at Toft Newton Reservoir on Apr 25th (GJF).

A so-called 'Channel' wagtail (M.f. flava x M.f. flavissima) was present at Toft Newton reservoir on Apr 11th (GJF), and it or another on May 1st (GJF). The LBRC are aware of several other potential records, but no submissions were received.

These hybrids are the main reason that Blue-headed Wagtail is an LBRC description species and can be confusing. Observers should concentrate on the head pattern (in males). In Blue-headed, the head and ear covert colour is a rather dark hue of almost ashy-grey (rather than bright blue) with a narrow white supercilium, white chin and yellow throat. 'Channel' wagtail males show a head colour which is much paler, powder-blue, almost lavender, and show a more extensive white supercilium, flared behind the eye, and more extensive white extending into the ear coverts and an entirely white throat. Females are often impossible to identify with certainty.

# Ashy-headed Wagtail M.f. cinereocapilla

Vagrant. Italy (including Sardinia and Sicily) and Slovenia.

**Additional record, 2006:** A male was found at Covenham Reservoir Apr 12th-13th (GPL). Accepted BBRC (*British Birds* 114 (10): 570-628). A photograph of this bird was published in *Lincolnshire Rare & Scarce Bird Report 2003-2007* but submissions of the rare subspecies of Yellow Wagtail were not routine at that time. Nowadays, any of the rare subspecies should be submitted to BBRC, preferably with good photographs, and with sound recordings of vocalisations if possible.

# Grey Wagtail Motacilla cinerea

Scarce passage migrant (mainly coastal) and winter visitor (mostly inland). Scarce and local breeder increased in recent years. Amber List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Louth	5	2	4	4	7	3	2	2	4	7	5	2
Gibraltar Point	-	1	1	2	1	1	3	1	11	21	2	-
Marston STW	4	1	1	-	-	3	1	2	1	2	4	3
Covenham Reservoir	3	2	3	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	3	2
Sleaford	1	-	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	3	-	-
Alkborough	1	2	-	1	-	-	4	-	2	-	1	-
Anton's Gowt	-	-	-	-	3	1	-	-	-	1	6	-
Lincoln	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	4	2	2
Frampton Marsh	-	-	1	-	-	1	1	1	4	1	1	-
Pyewipe (Grimsby)	2	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	2	1	1	2
Total birds all sites	33	23	28	20	33	21	19	13	65	92	70	34
Total sites	24	21	21	15	21	16	12	11	40	49	42	27

The highest count of the year was 21 at Gibraltar Point on Oct 5th. Records were received from around 110 sites, well up on 70 in 2019. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks of more than nine over the year. It also summarises the total of peak counts (numbers of birds) reported each month and the total number of sites from which records were received. BBS reported the species from 6% of squares (2019, 0%) with an average of 2.7 birds per occupied one km square (2019, 0). Jumping from zero to three squares in the BBS may be indicative that Grey Wagtails were more widespread this year. Overall, records indicate not many more than 15 probable breeding locations. Only one record of confirmed breeding was received, a pair with two juveniles at Lincoln Jun 13th. At the prime location for the species in the county, Louth, it is thought there may be at least five pairs along the five mile stretch of the Lud from Raithby to Louth STW. All three counts over 10 came from Gibraltar Point. In addition to the Oct high count already mentioned there were 11 on Sep 21st and 10 on Sep 4th. Although migration is most obvious at Gibraltar Point, Oct saw the highest overall total of 92 birds across 49 sites.

# Pied Wagtail Motacilla alba yarrellii

Common resident and passage migrant. Green List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Toft Newton Reservoir	9	8	12	22	32	35	40	50	110	35	35	8
Gibraltar Point	1	2	5	6	4	4	6	20	112	60	5	3
Marston STW	49	7	23	-	2	-	-	12	10	53	44	3
Covenham Reservoir	5	10	5	15	8	16	12	12	20	26	14	5
Middlemarsh Farm	4	5	8	14	8	6	16	16	15	7	6	29
Chapel St Leonards	-	100	1	2	2	2	-	3	16	-	1	-
Seacroft	1	-	1	2	2	1	2	44	50	16	2	3
Tetney Marsh	21	12	4	20	5	16	21	5	-	1	2	1
Cress Marsh	15	15	20	1	6	10	6	6	3	7	12	5
Frampton Marsh	1	1	2	-	10	5	14	29	30	3	4	-

The highest count of the year was 112 at Gibraltar Point on Sep 5th. On the same date at this site there was also a count of 123 "alba" wagtails which are likely to have been Pied. Records were received from around 250 sites. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks of more than 95 over the year. BBS reported the species from 31% of squares (2019, 45%) with an average of 1.6 birds per occupied one



Pied Wagtail Motacilla alba yarrellii Toft Newton Res Oct 1st 2020 © SIMON SPAVIN

km square (2019, 1.9). Hard to know if this fall was a result of COVID-19 restrictions hampering surveys or a real one. There were only two other counts over 100 this year. A winter roost count of 100 at Chapel Nature Area, Chapel St Leonards on Feb 2nd and 110 at Toft Newton Reservoir on Sept 1st-2nd. The largest counts outside the table were a winter roost count of 60 at Huttoft Bank on Dec 30th and 55 at Alkborough on Aug 21st.

# White Wagtail M.a. alba

Nominate continental form scarce passage migrant Mar-Jun. Autumn status unclear as most juveniles are inseparable from *yarrellii*. Green List. **RBBP.** 

Forty-seven records were received from 15 sites. Spring passage began with one at Cress Marsh on Feb 21st. Anderby Marsh had two on Mar 15th, rising to nine on Mar 16th (the highest count of the year) with five there on Mar 22nd and four on Mar 23rd. There were three at Gibraltar Point, Mar 18th and four at Covenham Reservoir on Apr 27th with the last bird of spring passage also at Covenham Reservoir on May 5th. There were seven reports of two birds and a further 30 single birds. Only four birds were claimed in autumn.



White Wagtail M.a. alba Covenham Res Apr 28th 2020 © JOHN CLARKSON

## Richard's Pipit Anthus richardi

## Very scarce passage migrant, mainly Sep-Nov, rarely Dec-Jan and Apr-May. LBRC.

A good year for the species with at least four accepted records: an early, presumed over-wintering, bird was seen at Gibraltar Point on Feb 7th (BWd) followed later by a spring bird at Sandilands GC, Apr 12th-24th (JS, et al). Two regulation autumn records were reported in Oct – one at Mogg's Eye, Oct 13th (RL) and one at Donna Nook on Oct 23rd (CA, et al).

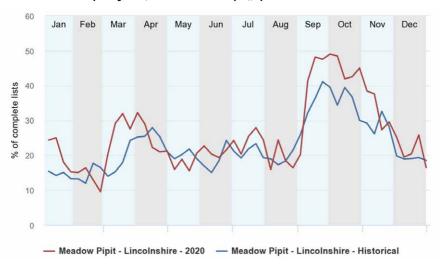
Over-wintering birds are not a new phenomenon, the first being at Skidbrooke 1992-93 with further records in 2008-09, 2016 and 2019. There have also been five other spring records (not including spring departures of the over-wintering birds) with three in Apr (1995, 1998 and 2015) and two in May (1985 and 2004).

## Meadow Pipit Anthus pratensis

Common/very common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber List

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	18	8	134	92	59	58	78	227	6732	1517	31	9
Huttoft	80	4	100	-	-	-	-	1	1215	46	23	12
Anderby Creek	-	-	28	-	-	-	-	-	295	943	8	-
Toft Newton Reservoir	8	35	50	60	2	-	1	5	220	40	30	9
Frampton Marsh	6	20	10	70	8	35	18	18	130	14	26	4
Chapel St Leonards	-	5	10	1	-	-	-	-	308	2	1	-
Seacroft	1	2	24	19	17	26	11	40	120	40	5	-
Donna Nook	7	22	12	16	10	5	9	100	34	25	29	10
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	4	1	12	19	10	6	14	6	98	41	34	2
Sandilands	80	4	100	1	-	-	-	-	5	50	-	-

#### Reporting rates (% lists with Meadow Pipits), Apr-Oct 2020 and historical.



The highest count of the year was 6,732 at Gibraltar Point on Sep 9th. Records were received from around 200 sites. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks of more than 220 over the year.

BBS reported the species from 12% of squares (2019, 20%) with an average of 2.8 birds per occupied one km square (2019, 2.3). The apparent fall in breeding numbers is explained by the Birdtrack reporting rate graph opposite. Birds become more difficult to detect after mid-Apr and the dearth of early season visits because of COVID-19 restrictions caused under-recording. Meadow Pipit is one species for which peak autumn migration is readily observed along the whole coast but as ever our well-placed bird observatory with dedicated migration watchers gets the best numbers. There were 20 counts reported of over 500 birds of which 18 came from Gibraltar Point from Sep 4th-Oct 28th. In addition to the Sep high count already mentioned there were 2,015 on Sep 11th and 2,011 on Sep 5th. The Oct high count at Gibraltar Point of 1,517 was on Oct 6th. Outside the table largest count was 217 at Wolla Bank on Aug 31st.

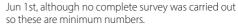
**Tree Pipit** Anthus trivialis



Scarce summer visitor and passage migrant. Breeds locally, mainly in the western half of the county. Red List.

Site	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct
Laughton Forest	_	14	25	1	-	-	_
Gibraltar Point	7	2	-	2	9	10	5
Anderby Creek	1	-	-	-	-	1	-
Cleethorpes	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Crook Bank	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Linwood Warren	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Middlemarsh Farm (Skegness)	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Moulton Chapel	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Scopwick	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
Seacroft Golf Course	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Stamford	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Tetney Marsh	-	-	-	-	1	-	-

As in previous years the table tells the story at a glance – away from the main breeding area and passage birds at Gibraltar Point this remains a scarce migrant and summer visitor. Just 91 records were received, all but 16 of them from Laughton Forest and Gibraltar Point; all sites reporting the species are tabulated. The first arrival was at Gibraltar Point on Apr 11th with two there 25th and seven on 26th, two of which were in song, and their highest total of the spring. Only single birds were seen there in May with the last on 15th. One was at Linwood Warren 28th, thought to be the first there for four years. Fourteen singing birds were recorded on the wet heath in Laughton Forest on May 8th and 25 across the whole forest on



Autumn passage began in early Aug with one to two birds at Gibraltar Point to 22nd, four on 23rd, nine on 24th and eight on 27th. Inland nocturnal migration monitoring at Scopwick revealed birds passing overhead on Aug 26th, 31st and Sep 6th. Birds continued through Gibraltar Point in Sep with highs of 10 on 4th (two trapped), seven on 5th, five on 9th and four on 21st. Oct continued to produce a few with five at Gibraltar Point on 4th and 5th and four on 6th. The last of the year were singles inland over Moulton Chapel, calling, on 8th and another at Gibraltar Point on the same date.



Tree Pipit Anthus trivialis Laughton Forest May 8th 2020 © GRAHAM CATLEY

# Olive-backed Pipit Anthus hodgsoni

## Vagrant. Siberia. LBRC.

Two records in 2020, the first at Crook Bank, Theddlethorpe Oct 15th-17th (NCC, OBt, GPC, et al) and the second at Goxhill Haven Nov 8th-15th (SRo, GPC, JS, et al).

## Water Pipit Anthus spinoletta

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor Oct-Apr. Mainly coastal, possibly increasing but can be elusive, making counting difficult. Amber List. **LBRC.** 

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	2	47	97	36	2	6	6	4
Alkborough Flats	10	12	4	-	-	-	10	3
East Halton Skitter	6	1	4	-	-	3	5	3
Baston Fen	4	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
Anderby Marsh	-	-	2	-	-	1	-	-
Frampton Marsh	1	-	1	-	-	1	2	1
Freiston Shore	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1
Huttoft	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
Middlemarsh Farm (Skegness)	-	2	-	-	-	1	1	-
North Killingholme Haven	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2

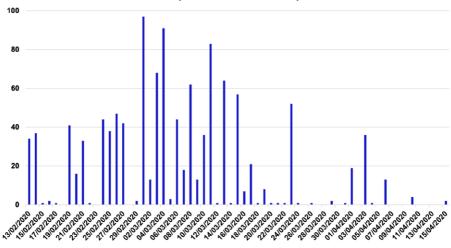
Some 220 records were received from around 18 sites all coastal excepting Baston Fen and Middlemarsh Farm, and the majority from Gibraltar Point where there was an exceptional influx of birds arriving to roost on the Old Saltmarsh late Feb-late Mar. The first hint of an unusual influx came perhaps on Feb 13th when an exceptional 34 were noted rising to 47 by 26th, all birds coming to roost. With the recognition of an unusual event occurring KMW organised a small team of observers thereafter to count birds coming into roost, many birds settling in Hawthorns in the west dunes and going down to areas of standing water to bathe before disappearing to roost. The counts are unprecedented, and the summary table doesn't tell the whole story, so the roost counts are summarised in the chart on the following page.





ABOVE LEFT: **Olive-backed Pipit** Anthus hodgsoni Goxhill Nov 9th 2020 © GRAHAM CATLEY ABOVE RIGHT: **Water Pipit** Anthus spinoletta Alkborough Flats Jan 1st 2020 © GRAHAM CATLEY





In other times, the counts at Alkborough would have been enough to invite comment and double-figure highs were recorded in Jan-Feb and again in Nov. Smaller highs were seen at East Halton Skitter (6) and Baston Fen (4) but the remaining sites just had one to two birds, mainly in the autumn.

# **Rock Pipit** Anthus petrosus (littoralis) (nominate)

Scandinavian Rock subspecies *littoralis* a fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor Sep-Apr; scarce inland. Nominate British and Irish subspecies essentially resident so probably a very scarce winter visitor. Green List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	22	16	9	1	21	144	93	93
Donna Nook	12	4	2	-	-	5	20	40
Freiston Shore	3	-	3	-	-	22	30	21
Howden's Pullover	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	-
Anderby Creek	-	-	1	-	-	18	-	-
Frampton Marsh	3	16	1	-	-	12	18	2
Seacroft	3	3	2	-	1	3	18	10
Saltfleet	8	10		-	1	11	4	15
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	14	15	2	-	1	12	9	11
Donna Nook Realignment Area	-	3	9	-	-	4	_	5

British and Irish Rock Pipits are essentially resident and with none breeding between the south Yorkshire coast and the Thames the autumn and winter arrivals are largely of the Scandinavian race *A. p. littoralis*. Birds are absent Jun-Aug in most years (excepting the late Jun bird in 2019) and the first few in the autumn arrive in Sep. Early and late in the year, most Rock Pipits are found along the shore and in saltmarsh between Gibraltar Point and Tetney/Grainthorpe but there is also a pronounced visible passage at Gibraltar Point in autumn.

Counts in the first quarter were somewhat down on previous years with a meagre 22 at Gibraltar Point on Jan 13th being the most reported. The bulk of the wintering birds departed during Mar with a few birds lingering into Apr, an inland record came from Toft Newton Reservoir on Apr 3rd and the last bird reported was one at Gibraltar Point Apr 10th. There were no records Jun-Aug.

In the autumn Gibraltar Point hosted the first bird on Sep 16th with several double-figure counts towards the end of the month and into Oct. Visual migration counts at Gibraltar Point recorded 1,319 south during the month with a peak of 144 south on Oct 29th and just three other day counts of 108-126 in the month, significantly fewer than in 2019. Interestingly very few were reported on The Wash in Oct with 22 at Freiston Shore Oct 15th the next largest count. Inland records in Sep-Nov of one to two birds came from Covenham and Toft Newton Reservoirs. Birds continued to move south in Nov with a total of 673 south over Gibraltar Point during the month, and a monthly high of 93 on 12th (67 south). Thirty at Howden's Pullover and Freiston Shore on Nov 4th and 17th were the next highest counts. Coincidentally, the 93 at Gibraltar Point on Dec 15th was the same as the Nov peak and small numbers moving south continued to be logged. Forty were recorded at Donna Nook Dec 20th but most counts elsewhere were in single figures.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Anderby Creek	-	-	1023	1	-	4	2	2	-	77	4	-
Anderby Marsh	-	-	996	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gibraltar Point	48	84	816	198	47	28	18	26	82	343	249	75
Chapel Six Marshes	-	-	350	1	1	2	-	4	7	3	1	-
Messingham Sand Quarry	2	-	350	-	-	-	-	-	2	3	33	5
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	6	4	230	23	35	28	-	6	21	100	175	15
Crook Bank	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	4	150	70	-	-
Sturton by Stow	140	60	65	27	27	23	12	5	8	15	23	70
Aubourn	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	123	57	21
Foston	1	120	-	-	-	2	-	-	2	4	-	4
Nocton Fen	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100



Chaffinch Fringilla coelebs Whaplode Feb 1st 2020 © NEIL SMITH



With more than 6,000 records from nearly 450 sites across the county, this finch remains our commonest and most widespread. Twenty-five sites recorded monthly peaks of 50 or more in at least one month and coastal sites many more during migration periods. BBS reported the species from 94% of squares (2019, 99%) with an average of 8.3 birds per occupied one km square (2019, 9.5).

In the first quarter, Sturton by Stow was the only site recording more than 100 with 140 on Jan 20th. Spring migration began in earnest in the second week of Mar with visual migration monitoring on the coast producing some high daily peaks, a monthly total of more than 3,000 south at Gibraltar Point, and more than 1,000 south at Anderby Creek early morning on 24th. Apr-Jul were quiet months and despite the species presence nearly everywhere in the county few confirmed breeding records were submitted. Autumn passage began in Sep although not in such numbers as in Mar, and highs were mostly recorded in Oct-Nov. A ringing recovery of note was of an adult ringed in Oct 2019 found freshly dead on Mar 29th in Gainsborough.

# Brambling Fringilla montifringilla

# Winter visitor and passage migrant. Exceptional in summer. Numbers fluctuate considerably between winters. Green List. **RBBP**.

This winter visitor appears in variable numbers each year and while numbers recorded at coastal sites in Oct were impressive, very few appeared to have stayed on to winter at both ends of the year with the highest count being five on Feb 5th at Culverthorpe, very few in Mar-Apr and the last of the spring at Gibraltar Point Apr 30th; there were no records May-Aug. A few migrants appeared during Sep from 17th with eight at Crook

Bank and Gibraltar Point on 28th the most. Oct movements began on 3rd with 52 at Gibraltar Point and 84 on 4th, when 12 were also at Pye's Hall. Gibraltar Point continued to record good numbers almost daily with 13 counts of 20 or more up to the end of the month and highs of 745 on 11th and 16th, 42 on 17th, 44 on 22nd and 29 on 27th. Crook Bank continued to see good numbers in Oct too with 41 on 14th, 25 on 17th, and 30 on 18th. Inland, 21 were at Barton Pits on 15th and late on in the month 18 were at Freiston Shore on 26th. Smaller numbers were seen in Nov with highs of 39 at Gibraltar Point Nov 16th and one to eight at 17 other coastal and inland sites. Few were seen in Dec with eight at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe on 2nd the high and only one to four birds at four other sites. Details of a bird ringed on 16/10/18 was trapped alive in FlensjoenVestre, Hedmark, Norway on 05/05/19



**Brambling** *Fringilla montifringilla* Grantham Jan 5th 2020 © STEVE NESBITT

## **Hawfinch** Coccothraustes coccothraustes



Rare local resident and rare passage migrant. Occasionally irruptive, large and exceptional influx in autumn 2017 with around 100 birds staying into 2018. Last confirmed breeding 1999. Red List. RBBP.

Site	Jan	Sep	0ct	Nov
Gibraltar Point	-	2	3	2
Doddington	1	-	-	-
Freiston Shore	-	-	1	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	-	-	1	-
Woodhall Spa	-	-	-	1

After the luxury of seeing double-figure Hawfinch flocks in the invasion of 2017/18, 2020 was back to a normal showing. There were 14 records from five sites with just a single in the first half of the year at Doddington on Jan 19th. Gibraltar Point had the lion's share of records with two on Sep 18th the first of the autumn. Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe and Freiston Shore each had singles on Oct 5th and 6th respectively and three calling loudly and going south over the reserve on Oct 7th was the highest number of the year. An adult male at Seaview Farm on Oct 5th was colour-ringed at Llanbedr-Y-Cennin, Conwy in Feb. 2018. Two were seen at Gibraltar Point Nov 5th and a lucky observer had one at his garden bird-feeder in Woodhall Spa Nov 28th, the last of the year.



Hawfinch Coccothraustes coccothraustes colour-ringed adult male at Seaview Farm Oct 5th 2020 © JOHN CLARKSON



# Bullfinch Pyrrhula pyrrhula

British subspecies *pileata* a fairly common resident, but largely absent from the fens. Nominate Scandinavian subspecies ('Northern Bullfinch') a very rare irruptive visitor in autumn and winter (see below). Amber List (*pileata*).

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Snipe Dales	-	24	2	-	4	-	-	-	5	-	-	8
Walesby Moor	16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Barton Pits	11	-	3	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	5
Crook Bank	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	1	2	4	-	-
Trent Port (Marton)	7	9	10	4	2	3	3	3	2	3	8	3
Scrivelsby	-	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Whisby Nature Park	7	9	2	3	-	-	2	1	-	5	5	4
Epworth Turbary	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	8
Legbourne	5	-	2	4	4	-	-	-	2	2	2	8
Messingham Sand Quarry	6	-	2	-	1	-	-	-	2	-	8	7



More than 1,500 records were received from around 170 sites with the highest numbers reported in the first quarter. BBS reported the species from 8% of squares (2019, 1%) with an average of 1.8 birds per occupied one km square (2019, 2.4).

Eleven at Barton Pits Jan 15th, 16 at Walesby Moor on Jan 30th and 24 Snipe Dales Feb 19th were notable with 10 of the 24 at Snipe Dales feeding in one Holly tree. Numbers fell markedly Mar-May as birds dispersed to breed, although no confirmed breeding was reported other than a juvenile at Whisby NP in late Aug. British Bullfinches do not move very far and two birds ringed in Willingham Forest provided good evidence of site fidelity. Z523965 ringed as a 1CY male in Sep 2015 was retrapped there on Jan 28th; S293417 also ringed as a 1CY male in Oct 2016 was retrapped on Jan 28th and again Jul 2nd. No records of 'Northern Bullfinch' were received in 2020

# Common Rosefinch Carpodacus erythrinus

## Rare. North-eastern Europe. LBRC, RBBP.

One at Gibraltar Point on May 24th (KMW) was the only record of the year. First heard singing in the scrub at the south end of the East Dunes, it was eventually seen to fly up and away and could not be relocated. One or two records per year is the average though doubtless this skulking species gets overlooked.

# **Greenfinch** Chloris chloris (harrisoni) (nominate)

British form *harrisoni* a common but declining resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. Nominate continental subspecies a winter visitor in unknown numbers. Red List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Marton	7	8	3	3	1	8	1	2	2	5	85	45
Whisby Nature Park	80	30	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	16	20	-
Gibraltar Point	61	20	29	9	15	1	3	10	17	64	48	34
Goxhill Marsh	72	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	5
Toft Newton Reservoir	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	50	-
Middlemarsh Farm	-	-	3	3	3	1	5	20	7	46	25	18
Crook Bank	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	30	37	-	-
Alkborough Flats	36	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	11	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	10	-	-	1	4	-	-	5	25	15	7	2
Wilsthorpe	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	25	

Just under 200 sites reported more than 3,000 records. The highest counts of the year came from Marton, 85 on Nov 28th, and Whisby NP, 80 Jan 1st. BBS reported the species from 29% of squares (2019, 34%) with an average of 3.2 birds per occupied one km square (2019, 2.9). Comparison with the summary table in the 2019 report shows a huge reduction in birds recorded, in particular birds seen on visual migration counting at Gibraltar Point where in 2019 the Oct peak was 438 on 12th with three other counts of more than 100 and around 1,500 logged moving south during the month. In 2020 the Oct high was 64 on 7th, including 60 south. Although COVID-19 restrictions affected BBS activities, recording at Gibraltar Point continued on most days, so the decrease is a significant one.



Greenfinch Chloris chloris Gibraltar Point Feb 3rd 2020 © PAUL NEALE



#### Twite Linaria flavirostris



Fairly common, declining to scarce coastal winter visitor in recent years and passage migrant, mainly Sep-Apr. Rare inland. Red List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	0ct	Nov	Dec
Donna Nook	4	140	-	-	-	25	60
Grainthorpe	-	12	-	-	-	-	60
Tetney Marsh	46	4	-	-	9	-	3
Freiston Shore	-	-	-	-	-	40	1
Horseshoe Point	22	35	-	-	-	-	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	26	-	-	-	-	20	-
Humberston Fitties	-	25	-	-	-	-	-
Friskney	-	16	-	-	-	-	-
Brickyard Lane	-	-	-	-	12	-	-
Gedney Drove End	12	-	-	-	-	-	-
Frampton Marsh	2	5	-	-	1	1	-
Sutton-on-Sea	-	-	-	-	7	-	-
Anderby Creek	-	-	-	-	6	-	-
Leverton	-	-	4	-	-	-	-
Gibraltar Point	-	-	-	-	2	3	-
Huttoft Car Terrace	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
Algarkirk	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Howden's Pullover	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Saltfleet Haven	1	-	-	-	-	-	-

The monthly maxima for all the sites reporting Twite are tabulated; 73 records were received in all. Note there were no records May-Sep. Comparing the counts with those of Dec 2019 shows that similar numbers remained at Tetney Marsh and Horseshoe Point into Jan-Feb 2020 but that there were many fewer on The Wash saltmarshes. Northwards movements presumably begin early with Donna Nook numbers building up in Feb peaking at 140 on 17th, broadly similar to the peak of 100 reported in Feb 2019. The final records in early spring were of four at Leverton Mar 14th and one Algarkirk Apr 7th.

The first bird of the autumn was a single at Frampton Marsh Oct 2nd with two at Gibraltar Point 15th. Monthly highs were of 12 at Brickyard Lane 22nd, seven at Sutton on Sea 23rd and nine Tetney Marsh 30th. More arrived in Nov with 40 Freiston Shore 1st, 25 Donna Nook 22nd and 20 Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe 26th. Many fewer were reported in Dec with a flock of 60 at Grainthorpe-Donna Nook on 20th representing the majority of birds in the county, and the last record of the year.

## **Linnet** *Linaria cannabina* (nominate)

Very common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. Red List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	37	8	71	514	178	36	87	168	349	1265	388	49
Garthorpe	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	320	622	350
Cress Marsh	-	-	10	-	27	8	8	60	170	500	60	80
Goxhill Marsh	450	-	-	-	4	-	10	30	100	57	70	95
Frampton Marsh	25	12	15	-	10	6	75	400	400	100	200	32
Freiston Shore	-	70	60		3	2	5	3	2	364	193	340
Anderby Creek	-	-	126	14	15	20	52	-	-	358	-	-
Eastoft	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	300
Pyewipe Marsh	7	4	2	5	4	6	10	6	12	40	40	300
Wainfleet Marsh	296	34	64	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Around 4,000 records were received from more than 270 sites. The top 10 sites are tabulated according to summed monthly peaks. The highest count of the year was 1,265 at Gibraltar Point Oct 5th where there also counts of 672 on 26th, and 549 on 6th. BBS reported the species from 69% of squares (2019, 78%) with an average of 5.7 birds per occupied one km square (2019, 6.0).

Early in the year 450 were recorded feeding on a sunflower crop at Goxhill Marsh Jan 15th and 296 were at Wainfleet Marsh Jan 26th. Spring passage was noted beginning in Mar with 126 south at Anderby Creek Mar 24th and 450 south (out of a site total of 514) on Apr 11th at Gibraltar Point, where a minimum total of 2,261 went south during the month. In the autumn, more high totals were logged, mainly on the coast with highs occurring mainly during Oct when a total of 4,809 went south at Gibraltar Point. Inland, 320 were counted in fields around Island Farm, Garthorpe Oct 30th with a high of 622 on Nov 30th and 350 Dec 25th. Freiston Shore, Eastoft and Pyewipe Marsh also held 300 or more in Dec.

#### Redpoll reminder

Some observers continue to confuse Lesser and Common Redpolls. This may be a problem as much with terminology as with identification. All Redpolls can be variable and confident identification in the field can be difficult. Observers are reminded that **all** field records of **Common** (formerly **Mealy**) **Redpolls** in Lincolnshire should be supplemented by supporting details such as a written description, ringing report and/or photographic evidence. Only the following records below met these criteria and were deemed acceptable.

#### Common Redpoll Acanthis flammea

Nominate Scandinavian and Russian form scarce or very scarce, occasionally fairly common, irruptive winter visitor. Greenland form *rostrata* a very rare vagrant. Red List (nominate). **LBRC.** 

Few reports of this species in 2020 with the first south at Gibraltar Point with two Redpoll sp. on Sep 17th, another south Sep 25th and a third on Sep 29th with a Goldfinch flock. In Oct, two over Lincoln West Common 17th, Freiston Shore 25th and finally another at Gibraltar Point 30th.

# Lesser Redpoll Acanthis cabaret

Fairly common but declining passage migrant and winter visitor. Very scarce breeder. Red List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Crowle Moors	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	800	100	29
Gibraltar Point	-	1	2	-	1	1	1	742	60	4	2
Whisby Nature Park	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	70	100	250
Moor Farm	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	250	-
Laughton Forest	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	220	120	-
Anderby Creek	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	188	-	-
Boultham Mere/Swanpool	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	140	121	180
Bottesford	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100
Marston Sewage Treatment Works	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	100	5	-
Messingham Sand Quarry	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	45	100

In what turned out to be a very good autumn for Lesser Redpolls more than 80 sites reported around 430 records. The blank Nov-Dec of 2019 continued into 2020 with hardly any birds in the county in the first quarter. A few birds remained into Apr (not tabulated) with one to three at four sites, the last a single at Chapel Six Marshes on 22nd. There were no records in May and just a few singles on the coast Jul-Aug. A trickle arrived in the first half of Sep with 13 on 10th at Gibraltar Point and 10 at Whisby NP on 16th but the picture changed dramatically in late Sep which saw a very large arrival. Firstly, on the coast 718 went south at Gibraltar Point on 28th when 80 were also at Crook Bank. More arrived in Oct with 50 Boultham Mere on 3rd; 60 at Gibraltar Point on 5th; 140 at Boultham Mere on 9th and 188 south at Anderby Creek on 12th. An enormous flock of c.800 were recorded at Crowle Moors on 17th, 100 were inland at Marston STW and 220 Laughton Forest 28th. Birds were clearly very mobile and redistributed to some extent in Nov but with100 at Crowle Moors and 120 Laughton Forest on 4th, 250 Moor Farm on 13th and still 121



Lesser Redpoll Acanthis cabaret Frithville Nov 9th 2020 © NEIL SMITH

Boultham Mere on 26th increasing to 180 on Dec 10th. Elsewhere there were highs of 100 at Bottesford (Scunthorpe) on Dec 17th, 100 Messingham SQ Dec 25th and 250 at Whisby NP on 24th and 26th. Always good to see these delightful finches in such good numbers!

#### Parrot Crossbill Loxia pytyopsittacus

#### Irruptive vagrant. Two records since 2000. Scandinavia.

A probable male of unknown age flew low south down the East Dunes at Gibraltar Point Oct 20th (KMW) and another probable over Frampton Marsh RSPB offices Oct 28th (ABe). Both gave a distinctive 'tyupp, tyupp, tyupp, tyupp' call, deeper than and distinct from the 'glip, glip, glip' of Common Crossbill. These are the first county records since a female at Gibraltar Point, 14th-15th Nov 2018 and an immature male at Chambers Farm Wood 15th-20th Dec 2013.

#### Red Crossbill Loxia curvirostra

Scarce/fairly common irruptive passage migrant and visitor, mainly Jun-Apr, occasionally all year. Proved to breed on a few occasions, last between 2008-2011. Green List.

Site	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	1	2	8	19	23	14	25	118	8	5
Laughton Forest	-	-	-	40	20	-	-	50	50	-
Seacroft	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	79	2	-
Market Rasen	-	-	-	-	4	-	7	25	-	14
Stapleford Woods	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	26	16
Twyford Woods	-	-	-	-	-	13		18	4	-
Messingham SQ	-	-	-	-	-	-	14	4	9	4
Huttoft	-	2	-	-	1	-	-	12	10	-
Wroot	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	24	-	-
Kirkby Moor	-	-	-	18	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total peak counts	1	4	10	101	89	28	66	405	113	39
Total sites	1	2	3	9	12	3	8	21	10	4



There were no reports in Jan-Feb and only a handful in Mar-Apr. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peak counts of 18 or more, together with the total of peak counts across all sites and the total sites reported each month. Sadly, there was no repeat of 2019's successful breeding at Laughton Forest, the first in Lincolnshire since 2012. There was a significant influx in Jun with 40 in flight at Laughton Forest on 17th, 19 at Gibraltar Point on 19th and 18 at Kirkby Moor on 22nd. The total peak count for Jun was 101. Not quite as impressive as the last big invasion of 293 in 2012, but what followed in Oct was the largest in well over a decade, with a peak count of 405 (probably a serious underestimate of the true numbers involved) across 21 sites. The numbers at Gibraltar Point alone totalled over 600, generally moving south. Big movements at Gibraltar Point started with 28 south on Oct 4th, 84 on 5th, 118 on 12th, 40 on 18th and 68 on 22nd. There were 11 on 23rd after which low single figures continued to pass through. The invasion was obvious inland too with 24 at Alderfen, Wroot on Oct 10th, 25 on Market Rasen Golf Course on Oct 12th and 50 at Laughton Forest on Oct 28th. Most birds passed straight through but there were still 50 at Laughton Forest on Nov 4th and 20 on Nov 21st with some lingering into Dec. The latest counts were 14 at Market Rasen Dec 28th, 30 at Stapleford Woods Dec 30th (raising the prospect of breeding in 2021?) and with the last word, five at Gibraltar Point Dec 31st.

## Goldfinch Carduelis carduelis

British subspecies *britannica* a very common resident and passage migrant. Nominate continental subspecies may also occur. Green List (*britannica*).

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	45	34	94	360	114	38	73	186	174	2051	877	50
North Kelsey Carrs	-	-	-	-	-	10	12	1212	40	10	11	-
Freiston Shore	-	-	5	-	-	33	10	25	80	647	182	180
Marton	12	18	8	9	14	16	15	25	250	200	65	45
Middlemarsh Farm	18	12	7	22	30	22	60	150	150	120	45	22
Frampton Marsh	30	14	12	-	40	30	45	200	120	45	100	-
Anderby	-	-	38	160	4	-	1	-	-	321	16	-
Lincoln	30	24	24	20	27	27	31	41	39	40	52	88
Donna Nook	40	10	3	20	30	-	1	300	10	10	-	-
Cress Marsh	2	10	8	-	2	10	6	50	100	150	50	30

The highest count of the year came during autumn passage at Gibraltar Point on Oct 5th when 2,051 were counted of which 1,978 were moving south. Records were received from nearly 400 sites. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks in excess of 410 over the year. The only count over 150 outside the table was of 160 at Aubourn on Oct 18th. BBS reported the species from 70% of squares (2019, 90%) with an average of 6.2 birds per occupied one km square (2019, 6.7). The fall in BBS reporting may be a result of reduced early BBS visits owing to COVID-19 restrictions but reporting rates are reasonably consistent from Apr-Jun so there may be a suggestion of a real fall in breeding pairs. Of 13 counts over 500, 11 came from Gibraltar Point from Oct 5th-Nov 2nd, the peak autumn passage period. This included a count of 1,092 on Oct 6th of which 1,047 were moving south. The remaining two large counts were a flock of 1,212 at N. Kelsey Carrs on Aug 12th and 647 at Freiston Shore on Oct 18th.

# **European Serin** Serinus serinus

Very scarce migrant, mainly Apr-Jun and Oct-Nov. Continental Europe.  ${\bf LBRC.}$ 

Gibraltar Point cemented its place as *the* place to see this annually scarce finch with all four county records this year: Apr 11th, 13th and 29th, all immature or female birds and a probable male on May 16th. These were seen mainly in and around the West Dunes.

**Goldfinch** Carduelis carduelis Grantham Mar 22nd 2020 © STEVE NESBITT

# Siskin Spinus spinus

Common passage migrant and winter visitor. Scarce in summer but may breed in some years. Green List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	3	5	83	22	7	46	245	76	1071	875	109	12
Freiston Shore	-	-	-	-	-	-		1	140	238	5	1
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	-	-	9	-	-	4	8	2	150	100	9	2
Anderby	-	-	94	1	1	14	14	16	26	111		
Messingham SQ	30	12	6	-	-	-	-	10	5	100	80	30
Seacroft	-	-	6	1	2	7	-	2	41	84	61	-
Laughton Forest	-	-	-	-	-	4	60	-	50	-	-	-
Kirkby GP	-	11	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	1	35	40
Whisby NP	2	7	-	-	-	-	-	8	30	9	20	12
Snipe Dales	-	46	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	16	-	-



**Siskin** Spinus spinus Messingham Nov 16th 2020 © SIMON SPAVIN

A better year than 2019 with the highest count of 1,071 passage birds at Gibraltar Point on Sep 24th. Records were received from around 80 sites. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peak counts of 63 or more. The start of the year was poor, the largest wintering flocks reported were 46 at Snipe Dales on Feb 19th, 30 at Messingham SQ on Jan 15th and 30 at Scunthorpe on Jan 20th. Largest spring passage was at Anderby with 94 south on Mar 23rd. There were no reports of confirmed breeding this year and the origin of 62 juveniles at Crowle Moors on Jun 26th is unknown. Visible autumn passage began in Jul with an early monthly peak of 225 birds at Gibraltar Point on 6th. Peak passage came later and of 21 counts over 200, 19 came from Gibraltar Point between Sep 4th-Oct 29th. Apart from the high count above, the next highest was 618 on Sep 21st. The peak elsewhere was 230 at Freiston Shore on Oct 25th. By Dec wintering birds had settled down and the numbers were once more looking poor with a peak of 40 at Kirkby GP on Dec 2nd and 30 at Messingham SQ Dec 1st.

#### **Lapland Bunting** Calcarius lapponicus

Nominate continental subspecies a scarce local passage migrant and winter visitor Sep-Apr. Rare inland. The Greenland and Canadian form *subcalcaratus* may also occur. Amber List (both subspecies).

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	4	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	5	3	2
Donna Nook	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	5	1
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	2
Saltfleet	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	3
Tetney	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
Frampton Marsh	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Freiston Shore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Anderby	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
East Halton	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Huttoft		-	-	_	-	-	-	-	-	1		

Ten sites reported Lapland Buntings this year down from 12 in 2019. The table lists all 10 sites based on summed monthly peak counts. Jan had a total of 14 birds up from seven in Dec 2019 suggestive of a small influx. The only bird on Jan 1st was one at Donna Nook. The four at Gibraltar Point were only seen on one date, Jan 14th. The three at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe, on the outer saltmarsh from Rimac were seen on three dates between Jan 19th-24th. Feb saw just one flyover bird reported at Gibraltar Point on 2nd and 11th. Obviously, these birds move on very early. There were no spring migrant reports and the first autumn bird was not seen until Sep 4th at Gibraltar Point when a single bird flew south. Subsequently one to three birds were seen there on 11 dates in Sep. Peak migration came with five birds seen on Oct 1st and 4th, with four on 6th and 7th and one to three on 10 dates from Oct 8th onwards. In Nov one to two birds were seen on 14 dates with three on 17th. In Dec there were two birds on 5th and singles on three dates up to 10th with none reported in mid-winter. At Donna Nook, which is traditionally a good site for this species but massively under-watched, there was one on Oct 14th, five on Nov 6th, three Nov 28th and one on Dec 20th. Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes had singles on Sep 8th, Oct 9th and 13th and Nov 22nd, with two on Dec 7th. Saltfleet had one Oct 18th and three Dec 20th and Tetney had two on Oct 30th. The five singles at other sites were all one-day birds.

#### **Snow Bunting** *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Icelandic form *insulae* a regular winter visitor and passage migrant on coast, mainly Sep-Apr, exceptional in summer. Scarce but fairly regular inland. Nominate Scandinavian subspecies a scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. Amber List (both forms).

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Donna Nook	55	18	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	16	-
Chapel St Leonards	70	12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cleethorpes	10	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-		21	35
Seathorne	45	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	18	19
Gibraltar Point	14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	17	5
Goxhill	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	33
Mablethorpe	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	12
Trusthorpe	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Huttoft	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	1

A better year than 2019 with the highest count a flock of 70 at Chapel St Leonards feeding on the beach just south of North Sea Observatory on Jan 18th. Records were received from 21 sites up from 12 in 2019. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peak counts of five or more. The most reliable birds were a flock of 30-55 at Donna Nook seen from Jan 1st-21st, peaking at 55 on Jan 15th. A flock of 45 was at Seathorne, north of Skegness, Jan 9th-16th. Another regularly seen flock of eight to 10 were at Cleethorpes from Jan 2nd-30th. Numbers dwindled rapidly in Feb with the last at Donna Nook on Feb 12th and Chapel St Leonards on Feb 23rd. The last of the 2019/20 winter were singles at Cleethorpes Mar 7th and inland at Covenham Reservoir Mar 31st. The first birds of autumn were both calling flyover singles heading south at Sutton on Sea on Sep 19th and Wolla Bank on Sep 22nd. There were three single flyovers in Oct and more birds began to arrive from Nov 4th with eight at Gibraltar Point, 18 at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe from Nov 10th and 21 at Cleethorpes from Nov 22nd. On the Humber there was a flock of 35 feeding on the shore and stubble fields between Goxhill and New Holland on Dec 5th and perhaps the same roving flock of 35 at Cleethorpes on Dec 20th. Inland or up estuary? - there were two at Alkborough on Dec 6th there having been a single there the previous day.

# Corn Bunting Emberiza calandra

Fairly common but somewhat localised and declining resident. Red List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Withcall	50	2	-	-	58	10	11	4	5	-	-	1
Bardney - Kirkstead	65	70	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bridge												
Gibraltar Point	15	35	38	2	5	-	-	-	1	1	12	5
Algarkirk	-	-	-	69	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Searby	-	-	-	61	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Donington on Bain	-	40	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	-	-	-
Bonby Carrs	26	-	-	14	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Crowland	-	-	40	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sutton Bridge	-	-	6	10	20	-	-	-	-	-	5	-
Bigby Top	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	24	-
Total across all sites	216	148	94	191	166	51	27	16	22	19	100	58
Total sites	11	4	9	21	31	19	7	7	4	5	9	5

The highest count of the year was a winter flock of 70 between Bardney and Kirkstead Bridge along the River Witham on Feb 7th. The flock included one leucistic bird. Records were received from around 75 sites, up from 49 in 2019. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks of more than 30 over the year. It also summarises the total of peak counts each month and the total number of sites from which records were received. The Gibraltar Point roost which held a peak of 82 birds in Jan 2019 was well down with a peak of 38 in Mar 2020. Larger counts over 20 outside the table were 30 at Tunnel Pits Wroot, Dec 2nd, 25 at LWT Red Hill Jan 5th, and 23 at Deeping High Bank Nov 19th. BBS reported the species from 16% of squares (2019, 15%) with an average of 3.1 birds per occupied one km square (2019, 2.5). Very little breeding data was received apart from the count of 58 at Withcall on May 17th which included 24 territorial singing males and a flock of 34 birds. The table and data received shows that Corn Bunting is still found widely across the county but localised to favourable breeding areas. What makes these areas attractive to Corn Buntings can be difficult to discern. This is one red data species that should through patient farmland management be saved and encouraged to spread.

# Yellowhammer Emberiza citrinella

Very common resident. Red List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Withcall	150	50	-	-	20	31	14	21	-	-	-	51
Louth	7	15	23	23	6	19	5	17	21	7	44	38
Welbourn	100	-	2	12	2	-	4	-	-	-	50	50
Sturton by Stow	19	29	27	25	16	25	20	5	11	23	10	7
Covenham Reservoir	6	8	37	6	5	3	3	1	1	5	31	40
Normanby by Spital	27	5	10	15	10	-	11	6	3	15	14	15
Burgh le Marsh	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	119	-
Manby Wetlands	63	15	5	5	12	2	3	1	2	-	1	5
Algarkirk	-	-	-	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Keelby	35	20	-	8	3	6	5	6	-	-	5	-

The highest count of the year was a winter flock of 150 at Withcall on Jan 19th. Records were received from nearly 300 sites. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks of more than 85 over the year. Larger counts over 50 outside the table were 60 at Farforth, Feb 13th, 50 at Thurlby Fen Slipe, Dec 5th and 60 at Raithby, nr. Spilsby, Dec 20th. Large winter flocks can be hard to find in the vast



arable expanses of Lincolnshire and must be out there but none have been reported for several years. The Birdtrack reporting rate shows Yellowhammers are more difficult to find when they are flocked up from Sep-Feb, with detection best when they are on territory and singing. BBS reported the species from 71% of squares (2019, 77%) with an average of 4.9 birds per occupied one km square (2019, 5.4).

#### Ortolan Bunting Emberiza hortulana

Vagrant. Continental Europe.

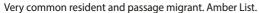
After last year's record, the first for 27 years, 2020 was back to normal with no records received.

#### Little Bunting Emberiza pusilla

Rare. Scandinavia. LBRC.

No records of this species were received for 2020.

#### Reed Bunting Emberiza schoeniclus



Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	0ct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	37	22	18	25	21	16	14	17	155	515	50	34
Sturton by Stow	27	36	37	49	33	38	29	14	16	21	12	10
Middlemarsh Farm	30	12	7	13	10	12	14	7	18	26	14	4
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	4	6	12	15	20	11	3	3	30	25	16	8
Frampton Marsh	5	6	3	-	5	10	14	3	20	46	26	6
Alkborough Flats	80	-	15	-	15	8	5	4	2	4	9	1
Huttoft	19	1	5	1	4	2	4	1	17	30	16	35
Anderby	6	8	25	3	6	4	2	-	1	52	1	-
Cleethorpes	15	50	4	2	3	1	-	-	3	1	3	26
Freiston Shore	1	1	12	-	5	6	7	5	-	24	31	14

The highest count of the year was 515 at Gibraltar Point on Oct 5th of which 447 were moving south. Records were received from around 250 sites. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks of more than 105 over the year. The largest count outside the table was 40 at Chapel Six Marshes on Sep 21st. The largest inland count and the largest wintering count was 80 at Alkborough on Jan 1st. BBS reported the species from 67% of squares (2019, 62%) with an average of 3.1 birds per occupied one km square (2019, 4.2). Coastal autumn passage was most obvious at Gibraltar Point where all nine counts over 100 were recorded Sep 9th-Oct 12th. The Sep high count was 155 on the 28th of which 85 were moving south and three came in from the east. Elsewhere on the coast the high count was 52 birds moving south at Anderby on Oct 5th.

# Appendix 1: Records considered not proven

#### Hume's Warbler Phylloscopus humei

Anderby Creek, Nov 10th, 2019.

#### American Bittern Botaurus lentiginosus

Fiskerton Fen, Nov 29th-Dec 1st, 2020.

#### **Goshawk** Accipiter gentilis

Gibraltar Point, Oct 2nd, 2020; Woodhall Spa Airfield, Apr 11th, 2020.

# Appendix 2: Records where identification accepted, but origin is uncertain or known not to be wild, and including hybrids

This list includes those species that may not have self-sustaining wild populations and any individuals from species that are on the British list that are known, or are strongly believed, to have been of captive origin. We are aware that the species on this list and other escapes are under-recorded.

The Lincolnshire Bird Club asks that all records of category E'species recorded in Lincolnshire are submitted. The RBBP report occasionally on non-native species breeding in the UK. The last report was for 2012-14 published in *British Birds* in 2017 (Holling, M and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel. Non-native breeding birds in the UK, 2012-14. *British Birds* 110 (2): 92-108). A summary paper on naturalised geese in Europe was published in 2010 (Kampe-Persson, K. Naturalised Geese in Europe. *Ornis Svecica* 20: 155-173).

#### Black Swan Cygnus atratus

Scarce. Birds are recorded in most years. Most, if not, all are assumed to come from feral stock in the Netherlands. Kept in collections and has bred.

A single was at Broughton on Feb 19th, at Kettleby on Mar 26th, North Somerton Warren on Apr 28th, two at Donna Nook on Apr 25th, Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe on Apr 29th and Woodhall Spa Golf Course on Sep 14th. Records of presumably the same individual from the Gibraltar Point area were received from Apr 30th, May 27th, Jul 22nd–24th, Aug 24th and Dec 23rd-24th. Finally, a bird was at Alkborough Jun 13th–20th and on Nov 3rd.

#### **Eurasian Eagle-owl** Bubo bubo

#### Central and southern Europe to north and central Asia.

An escaped bird was photographed on Corporation Bridge in Grimsby on Nov 28th, reported in the local press https://grimsbynews.blogspot.com/2020/11/spectacular-owl-admires-view-from.html.

# Appendix 3: Errata, LBR 2019

**Purple Heron.** The first occasion on which two birds occurred together was in fact Jul 31st, 1952, on the Brocklesby Estate, not Manby Wetlands as stated.

Carrion Crow, 1200 at Boultham Mere, Jan 1st was an erroneous entry, deleted from the database.

**Swallow**, 2, Alkborough Flats, Feb 24th; date should have been Mar 24th, confirmed by the observer.

# Lincolnshire Rare Breeding Birds Panel Report Summary 2020

Each year I prepare LBC's annual report to RBBP during Oct/Nov of the following year to meet the RBBP target submission date of Nov 30th. The report is prepared from the LBC database and direct contacts with a host of people who can provide the detailed information required for the report. The full UK report is published in *British Birds*. The 2020 report will be in the Dec 2022 issue. I usually do this as part of writing the species account for the bird report.

Species	Sites	Confirmed Pairs	Probable Pairs	Possible	Total Pairs	Best breeding evidence
Garganey	5	1	4	-	5	Fledged Young
Shoveler	9	5	13	-	18	Fledged Young
Pintail	0	-	-	-	0	, ,
Pochard	8	19	15	-	34	Fledged Young
Red-crested Pochard	2	-	7	-	7	Pair
Quail	20	-	8	21	29	Territory
Black-necked Grebe	2	2	-	1	3	Fledged Young
Red-necked Grebe	1	-	-	1	0	Summering in br.pl.
Bittern	7	7	4	1	12	Fledged Young
Little Egret	13	146			146	Fledged Yoing
Great White Egret	1		1		1	Pair
Spotted Crake	1			1	0	Singing male
Goshawk	1	1		2	3	Fledged Young
Marsh Harrier	35	16	24		40	Fledged Young
Montagu's Harrier	0				0	, ,
Avocet	9	33	155		188	Fledged Young
Little Ringed Plover	12	9	21		30	Fledged Young
Ruff	1		1		1	Lekking 1m 1 f
Mediterranean Gull	3	4	1		5	Fledged Young
Little Tern	1	11			11	Fledged Young
Turtle Dove	30		22	17	39	Pair
Short-eared Owl	3			3	0	Habitat
Long-eared Owl	1	3			3	Fledged Young
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	3			3	0	Singing male
Hobby	96	2	51	43	53	Fledged Young
Peregrine	24	21	23		24	Fledged Young
Willow Tit	7	1	5	2	8	Fledged Young
Marsh Warbler	3		1	2	3	Territory
Bearded Tit	6		68		68	Fledged Young
Woodlark	7				10	Fledged Young

Species considered but no evidence of breeding reported in 2020: Wigeon, Spoonbill, Osprey, Black Redstart, Hawfinch Records for 2021 breeding season: Please send your 2021 breeding season records to me as soon as you are able. If you wish to discuss any record please call me on 07966 325380 or email pmjespin@gmail.com

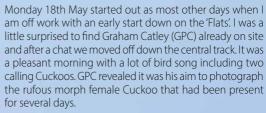
Please study the summary above and be prepared if you have relevant information about any of the above species at any Lincs site. If you don't hear from me in January, please submit your data to LBC through your usual channel. If you have any questions about anything in this report, please contact me on chairman@lincsbirdclub.co.uk.

PHIL ESPIN CHAIR LBC. Follow me on Twitter @philespin.

# Finder's Report: Terek Sandpiper

18th May 2020, Alkborough Flats

#### **Neil Drinkall**



As we reached the top of the site a male Cuckoo appeared on the trackside fence about 300 yards behind us. The urge to photograph was too much for GPC to resist and this was where we split up.

I continued on my usual circuit and was soon 'scoping a

distant flock of fresh-in migrant waders on one of the wet fields. These included Dunlin, Ringed Plover and.... boom! – Terek Sandpiper! I couldn't operate my mobile phone, so it was fingers in the mouth and a couple of shrill whistles to alert GPC followed by some frantic arm waving to ensure he knew that I'd found something worth dashing over for.

On his arrival I offered him my'scope without telling him what it was that I had seen and just told him to scan the waders. He soon located the Terek, followed by a string of expletives! The flock was nervous, and they twice took to flight moving away towards the river but fortunately they returned which allowed me to take a few 'phone-scoped' pictures as well as some flight shots.

The bird was on view for about 30 minutes in all before flying off towards the Humber and was not seen again. Only one other observer made it in time to see the bird. This was the fifth county record; the previous records having been at Gibraltar Point in Jul 2005 and Jun 2009; Covenham Reservoir May 2014; and Barton upon Humber Pits in Aug 2014. The first British record was not until May 1951 (in Sussex) and since then there have been around two per year. The Alkborough bird was the 93rd British record, turning up a week before the second of the year in Lothian (same individual?) which took the grand total to 94.





Terek Sandpiper Xenus cinereus (lower), with Ringed Plover Charadrius hiaticula & Dunlin Calidris alpina Alkborough Flats May 18th 2020 © GRAHAM CATLEY



# Finder's Report: Black Throated Thrush

Grimsby, 30th January-2nd April 2020

#### Josh Forrester

I work at the Grimsby Institute and as I live close to work, I often walk home for lunch at midday. There is some open ground with a stand of trees on the south-eastern boundary of the college. In the winter I usually walk on the pavement around this area, but it had been dry, so at lunchtime on Jan 30th I decided to cut across the grass.

About halfway across the grass, a thrush on the ground caught my eye. In the winter, this area plays host to the occasional ground feeding Mistle Thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*) and Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*), but it wasn't either of these. Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*) briefly crossed my mind due to the colour and shape but something about this bird was different.

When I first saw the thrush, it had its back to me and was feeding on worms amongst a group of Black-headed Gulls (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*). It was strikingly pale underneath.

I moved towards a tree to obscure myself somewhat and tried to move closer. The bird flew in to a tree but returned to the ground shortly thereafter and now it was facing me. The clear contrast between its black throat markings and its creamy, grey breast made me say aloud: Black-throated Thrush!

This species was never on my radar and certainly not something I would've expected in such a mundane place. There were two things that helped me make this identification:

My local patch is about a mile south-east (as the thrush flies...\*) of my work. Each year I spend time in the spring and autumn on the search for Ring Ouzel (*Turdus torquatus*) as well as counting passage Fieldfare, Redwing (*Turdus iliacus*) wintering Blackbirds (*Turdus merula*) and continental Song Thrushes. I'm quite familiar with the *Turdidae* of Grimsby.

A long-staying, adult male Black-throated Thrush had been present at Whipsnade Zoo in Bedfordshire since 11th December 2019. Photos of this bird had done the rounds on Twitter so that was in my mind.

Although I was shaking with excitement, I managed to obtain some record shots and videos with my iPhone and then got in touch with some local birders. I received reassurance that it "looked good for Black-throated Thrush" and that it would be a first for Lincolnshire. Once I knew other birders were inbound, I went home to grab my binoculars and returned to meet with Chris Atkin and Howard Bunn.

The bird spent a significant amount of time in the upper tree canopy and gave only brief views. Eventually it flew some distance away across Laceby Road and was observed to have a distinctive undulating flight-pattern associated with larger thrushes.

Unfortunately, due to work obligations, I was unable to spend much more time that afternoon observing the thrush. I understand that it did return – providing reasonable views and photographic opportunities to those who had attended that afternoon. Graham Catley – the don of Lincolnshire birding – proffered that the bird was a 1st-winter male.

The ensuing twitch over the weekend of 1st / 2nd of February (and the weeks following) provided ample opportunities for birders from near and far to connect with this obliging Siberian delight. It remained in the area until it was last sighted on April 2nd.

\*Sadly, I do not believe the thrush visited my patch during its regular perambulations of the area.

# Black-throated Thrush - some plumage features and analysis

During its stay, some observers commented on the warm brown colouration visible at the base of the tail in this bird. Graham Catley provided the analysis below highlighting the salient plumage features.

#### Figure 1

In Figure 1 note the following:

- Crown, nape, mantle, and rump all mid-grey
- Tertials, secondaries and primaries all blackish-grey with pale creamy fringes and edges to secondaries and tertials forming a pale wing panel.
- 3 Alula black with narrow pale fringe; primary coverts blackish with paler grey fringes; greater coverts of two ages, some are pale grey with creamy edges and other, newer ones are darker grey.
- 4 Tail feathers blackish-grey with a very faint and restricted hint of rufous at the base of the outermost feather on the right side of the bird, as here; on the left side this colouration was even less obvious





#### Figure 2.

In Figure 2 note the following:

- Chin, throat, and upper breast all black-centred feathers with pale cream fringes.
- Breast and belly creamy with diffuse pale grey streaks and markings along the flanks. Undertail coverts also creamy.

#### Figure 3.

In Figure 3, note the rusty-orange underwing coverts, with the colour deeper on the median than lesser and greater coverts. The underside of the flight feathers are a very pale creamy colour.





Figure 3

During the consideration of this record, the presence of the warm brown colouration at the tail base was a point of contention. There was no other red colouration in the face or breast feathers and it can be surmised that this bird may have inherited some Red-throated Thrush *T. ruficollis* genes from a generation or two back, but this is speculation. Whatever the true picture is, in the light of current knowledge, the record was unanimously accepted as being of an immature (2CY) male, and BBRC added the following comment:

"The Lincolnshire bird posed an interesting dilemma for the Committee. It showed a hint of warm brown to the basal edges of the outer tail feathers. Ordinarily, shades of red in the tail would point to hybrid influence by Red-throated *T. ruficollis* or even, more rarely, Naumann's Thrush *T. naumanni* (see *Brit. Birds* 110: 116–121). However, the Committee felt that in this case – on a bird that was otherwise perfect for Black-throated Thrush and where the warm coloration at the base of the tail was neither particularly red nor particularly extensive – there was insufficient evidence for acceptance as a hybrid and the record therefore appears here as Black-throated Thrush."

This constitutes the 403 species to be added to the Lincolnshire list, a welcome addition given the county's dearth of rare thrushes.



# Lincolnshire's Black-tailed Godwits

# Graham F. Appleton<sup>1</sup> & Jennifer A. Gill<sup>2</sup>

With counts of 10,500 at Freiston (16 Nov 2019) and 7,500 at Killingholme (27 Sep 2019), Lincolnshire has become an extremely important county for Icelandic Black-tailed Godwits. These are impressive numbers, especially given that the whole Icelandic population is probably still under 80,000 birds, including juveniles and non-breeding first-years. Putting this into a historical context, the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) maximum count for the Humber was only 29 in 1990/91, rising to over 1,000 by 1998/99. There has been a Wash flock since the 1970s, but it took until 1990/91 to reach 1,000 and the peak WeBS count has only recently reached 10,000 (Lincs and Norfolk sections of the Wash).

Counts are important but they don't tell the whole story of a mobile population that winters as far south as the Mediterranean. To learn more, you must be able to follow individuals, and that's where colour-rings and godwiteers (colour-ring readers) become a vital part of the story. There are several colour-ring schemes for *islandica* Black-tailed Godwits, run by coordinators in Iceland, Ireland, the UK, Netherlands, France, Portugal, and Spain. Older schemes use four colour-rings, one of which sometimes has a letter on it, but there are also six-ring schemes and new variants with flags, spots, and stripes. On average, between around 1% and 2% of Icelandic Black-tailed Godwits are individually marked.

The most commonly encountered colour-ring schemes, in a Lincolnshire context, are the ones run as a collaboration between the University of East Anglia and the Wash Wader Ringing Group and the more recent studies by the Humber Ringing Group. We've been tracking Black-tailed Godwits on the Wash since 1995. Each bird in this scheme wears four rings and the lowest ring on the right leg is always a white – or it starts off as a white but can get stained orange, especially if it spends time at Cley, north Norfolk. Some birds have worn rings for more than twenty years, providing unique long-term insights into their movements. Well over 2,000 people have been submitting sightings during the last quarter of a century and every report of a colour-ringed bird is important.

The Wash and Humber are both important moulting and wintering sites. The first adults return from Iceland as early as late June, likely having failed to breed, and numbers build throughout July, August, and September, as more adults and then juveniles join them. Having moulted out of their summer plumage, many birds move on, to south and east coast estuaries in England, further south to France, Spain, and Portugal, or west to west England, Wales, and Ireland. An increasing number of birds spend the whole winter in eastern England, with flocks using freshwater wetlands as well as estuaries. As the winter continues, and food supplies diminish on the east coast, sites such as the Ouse and Nene Washes become very important, with birds moving to these flooded grasslands from the Humber, the Wash and the estuaries of Suffolk and Essex. These patterns are confirmed by sightings of colour-ringed birds.

#### Range expansion

The rising number of wintering Black-tailed Godwits is attributed to a growth in the Icelandic breeding population. A century ago, Black-tailed Godwits only occurred in the Southern Lowlands of Iceland, the warmest and most fertile part of the country. Since then, the breeding range has expanded into the north and east of Iceland (Figure 1), a process that has continued since these data were collated. The Wetland Bird Survey shows that there are now three times as many Black-tailed Godwits wintering in the LIK as there were 25 years ago. As the number of Black-tailed Godwits has increased they have

in the UK as there were 25 years ago. As the number of Black-tailed Godwits has increased, they have also expanded into new wintering sites, with most of the newer sites in colder areas, in the north and east of the wintering range (Figure 1).

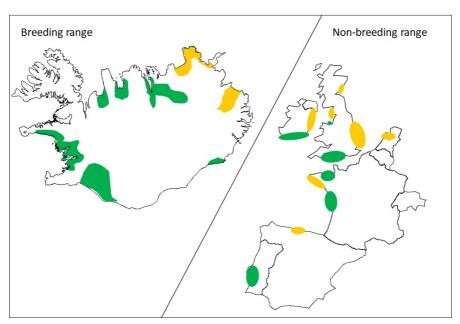


Figure 1: Major areas of the breeding (Iceland) and non-breeding (northwest Europe) range of islandica Black-tailed Godwits occupied before (green) and after (yellow) the 1960-70s (redrawn from Gill et al. 2001 and Gunnarsson et al. 2005b).

Black-tailed Godwit chicks have been ringed in Iceland for nearly twenty years, providing a pool of known-age adults for which natal sites are known. Winter observations of colour-ringed individuals have shown an interesting pattern; birds breeding in newly colonised areas, particularly in north and east Iceland, are the ones that are more likely to be found in the more recently colonised winter sites (Gunnarsson et al. 2005a). Birds from these newer sites tend to be on different spring migration schedules too, returning to Iceland over a week later than birds from traditional wintering sites such as one in Southern England, Portugal, and France (Alves et al. 2012).

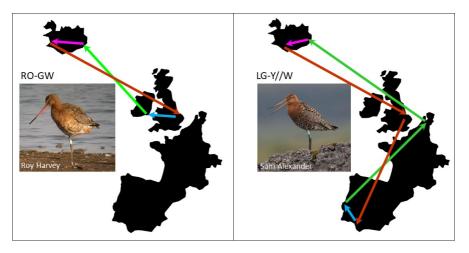
#### The annual cycle

Colour-ringed Black-tailed Godwits have been tracked for over 25 years, with a small number of individuals contributing data for the whole of this period. This tracking information can be used to ask how much individuals move around and experience different sites and to assess whether individuals from different generations are using different parts of the range.

Using colour-ring sightings, the Black-tailed Godwit team has discovered that, although individuals can live for over 20 years, in that time they generally use a total of only about four or five sites between leaving Iceland in late summer and returning in the spring (Gill et al. 2019). Individual birds therefore have very limited experience of sites and there is no evidence that they have moved to occupy different sites as, for instance, winter conditions have changed.

One of the most fascinating things to come out of colour-ringing Icelandic Black-tailed Godwits is the detailed information about marked birds. The annual cycle for an individual may not change but there are huge differences between individuals. The two maps in Figure 2 illustrate the movements of RO-GW (Red Orange – Green White) that was ringed while moulting on the Wash in 2002, and

spends the winter in Ireland, while LG-YW was ringed on the Wash in 1998 and migrates to Spain and Portugal during the winter months and the Netherlands in spring. Compare this with many other Wash-ringed birds that may only travel as far as the Humber and the Ouse and Nene Washes during the nine-month non-breeding season, between July and April. Each individual has developed a strategy that works and to which it sticks.



**Figure 2:** Contrasting migratory journeys of two *islandica* Black-tailed Godwits that spend the autumn in Lincolnshire (photo credits: Roy Harvey and Sam Alexander)

#### Returning to Iceland

Colour-ring observations have shown that individual birds rarely change their breeding or wintering locations and that migrating individuals often appear in the same stop-over sites year after year. The timing of movements is also pretty consistent, especially in the spring. Each year, until COVID-19 struck, we spend the second half of April in Iceland, waiting for the return of Black-tailed Godwits and logging the arrival dates of colour-ringed birds. These sightings revealed that individual birds are remarkably consistent, appearing in the same sites on virtually the same dates every year (Gill et al. 2014). This seemed to be at odds with findings from annual surveys of first spring sightings in south Iceland which showed that timing of arrival of Black-tailed Godwits, and several other species of wader, has been advancing over the last 20 years (Gunnarsson & Tómasson 2011). This apparent contradiction was explained by sightings of birds ringed as chicks, mostly by Pete Potts and members of Farlington Ringing Group, over the last two decades. These sightings of known-age birds showed that early spring migration schedules are more common in birds hatched in recent years than in older individuals. The advancing timing of spring migration of Icelandic Black-tailed Godwits is therefore happening because there are increasing numbers of 'early-returning' birds in the population. We are still exploring why some birds become 'early-arrivers', and there's more about this in the WaderTales blog (wadertales.wordpress.com) Why is spring migration getting earlier?

### Warmer springs in Iceland

The increase and spread of Black-tailed Godwits in Iceland has taken place during a period of warming spring and summer temperatures and we were keen to work out how this might be influencing godwit numbers. PhD and post-doctoral studies by Tómas Gunnarsson and José Alves

at the University of East Anglia, in collaboration with the Universities of Iceland and Aveiro (Portugal), have provided some answers.

Monitoring of Black-tailed Godwit nests by Tómas and José over an eleven-year period revealed that nests are laid earlier in warmer springs (Alves et al. 2019). Colour-ring sightings from across the whole range of the species show that early-hatched chicks are twice as likely to survive into adulthood as late-fledged chicks. Summer surveys in Iceland, to count the number of successful broods, also show that there are more successful broods in warmer years. But why do birds nest earlier in warmer springs?

Black-tailed Godwits conceal their nests in tall grass, and nests that are not well concealed are more likely to be predated (Laidlaw et al. 2020). On average, around 60% of well-hidden nests are successful but only around 20% of nests that are easily visible go on to hatch. Faster grass growth in warmer springs means that early nests can more easily be concealed from predators. Climate change has given opportunities for Icelandic Black-tailed Godwits to nest earlier and across more of Iceland's lowland basins. However, faster grass growth also means that farmers can cut silage earlier, which can destroy nests and kill chicks, and so these benefits of climate change may be short-lived.

#### Generational change

The Icelandic breeding season is becoming more protracted. In the south, nesting attempts are earlier than ever but there are now birds nesting successfully, but later, in colder areas in the north. Early chicks, which will mostly be from the south and west, can be ready to leave Iceland during the migration window when there are still lots of adults heading south. Following these experienced birds may be how juveniles can end up in places such as France and Portugal.

Birds raised in new breeding areas in eastern and northern Iceland, where spring comes later, are likely to fledge later in the season, perhaps after most adults have left. With not many experienced birds to follow, these young birds may well stop off at the first suitable site they encounter. This might explain why more of the recently ringed godwits are wintering in the north of the range (Gill et al. 2019). Perhaps this is also happening in other species for which ranges are expanding northwards?



Black-tailed Godwit Limosa limosa Gibraltar Point Jul 20th 2020 © PAUL NEALE



#### Change happens to birds

Birds are being affected by change – individuals do not have the knowledge or flexibility to effect change. Even in long-lived birds, like Black-tailed Godwits, we see little evidence of individuals altering what they do as the world changes around them. Changes in timing of migration and migratory ranges can, however, involve generational changes in the numbers of individuals on differing routes and schedules.

#### Godwits of the *limosa* subspecies

Almost every Black-tailed Godwit seen in Lincolnshire will be from the *islandica* race but occasional colour-ringed *limosa* from the Ouse and Nene Washes occur around the Wash during autumn passage, and it is not impossible that a *limosa* bird from the Netherlands breeding population could spend time in Lincolnshire, before heading south for the winter, perhaps as far as Senegal and the Gambia. Thanks to the head-starting and habitat improvement work by the RSPB/WWT *Project Godwit* team (projectgodwit.org.uk), there are far more young *limosa* Black-tailed Godwits fledging in the Washes each summer, as you can read in the WaderTales blog *England's Black-tailed Godwits*. So far, two of these have turned up at RSPB Frampton; a wild-reared chick from 2018 was seen on 24 April 2019 and one of the 2021 head-started birds was seen at Frampton on 2 July 2021. *Limosa* Black-tailed Godwits are in serious trouble with poor breeding success in the Dutch heartlands of the subspecies. Interestingly, there has been an expansion of the *limosa* breeding range in Russia, as conditions at the northern edge of the breeding range have become warmer.

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woodland in North Lincolnshire. Subsequent watches in 1986 failed to produce any further sightings of this bird but in retrospect insufficient time was given to follow up searches although the possibility that the bird was simply a drifted migrant during the extant period of easterly winds

could have been an alternative solution.

On May 26th 2014 the same male Honey-buzzard was again seen in the same locality but on this occasion, it travelled a distance of 5.8 kms from the initial location in a high soaring display flight. Wing clapping display flights were observed again on June 1st and June 8th with the male seen accompanying a female in a low-level pursuit on the latter date. On subsequent visits in late June and July sightings were limited and infrequent coinciding with the expected period of incubation. By early August both birds were observed carrying food back to a presumed nest site and breeding was proven in mid-August when a nest was located containing at least one youngster. The nest was typical of that described in the literature, a metre across and was sited 10-12m up in the crown of mature Larch tree 40m from the edge of an adjacent ride. In spite of this the nest was only visible from one location and was hidden from view from the ride by adjacent trees. During the latter half of August, it was confirmed that there were two juveniles in the nest both pale/intermediate birds and they started branching on the 22nd and were seen in flight for the first time on the 27th. On August 30th a new male appeared over the nesting wood and drifted off south-east. Both the male and female were seen on the 30th with the male undertaking some display flights but they were not seen to got to the nesting wood and this was the last date that either adult was seen. Both of

the juveniles were flying strongly but still in the vicinity of the nest site on September 3rd but there was no sign of either bird on the 7th.

This formed the first proven instance of breeding by this species in Lincolnshire as far as is known and the fledging of two juveniles was seen as a very positive sign suggesting that sufficient food and habitat was available for the birds to return in subsequent years.

In 2015 it was June 9th before a Honey-buzzard was seen at the previous year's locality and this proved to be the female that had bred in 2014. From mid-June to August 16th the female was seen frequently performing high soaring displays and

Above: Juvenile Honey-buzzard fledged September 3rd 2014 Right: Female August 14th 2014 ALL PHOTOS © GRAHAM CATLEY







Left: Male Honey-buzzard with wasp comb August 24th 2014 Right: Female carrying wasp comb to nest August 14th

2014



bouts of butterfly displays peaking on August 7th when she did three bouts of 7-10 wing-clapping displays followed by a marathon 16 consecutive bouts of wing-clapping display flights with lowered feet suggesting a second bird was in the area but none could be located. The male of 2014 failed to return in 2015 and with no replacement male there was disappointingly no breeding attempt and the female was last seen on August 16th. Searches in the early season of 2016 failed to detect the presence of any Honey-buzzards in the area but surprisingly on July 23rd the same female was seen flying low over an open field before landing in a low thorn hedgerow where she appeared to pick up a food item. Following an interaction with a Common Buzzard the female then soared up high and set off in a powerful flight to the east. There were no

further sightings in 2016 and subsequent surveys in 2017 – 2020 failed to produce any sightings of Honey-buzzard in the area.

#### **Discussion:**

The actual arrival date of the male in 2014 was not proven but late April to May is given as the arrival period for British birds in Hardey et al; According to timings given in the Raptor survey guide courtship takes place from mid-May with egg laying peaking in late May to early June and incubation taking 30 – 35 days with hatching thus taking place in late-June to early July. Young are in the nest late June to early August with fledging from late July to late September.

Taking these data and those given in Roberts et al into account the 2014 Lincolnshire birds started branching on August 22nd a behaviour noted as occurring at c35 days of age and thus subtracting this plus 35 days for incubation, two eggs, gives a laying date of around June 13th a late date according to Robert's data suggesting that the arrival of the male was probably around the time when it was first located and the that the female possibly arrived later into early June.

During the period when the male was provisioning the female and when the pair were collecting food for the young they regularly travelled up to 6kms from the nest site moving at varying heights but up to an estimated 2000 feet on sunny days when birds occasionally disappeared into the base of high clouds. Movements from the feeding area to the nest site were typically undertaken in a series of high soaring flights followed by long downward glides towards the nest wood where travel was often undertaken under the tree canopy but was assumed to be along rides. In a German study using satellite tracking data four birds occupied home ranges that varied between 13.5 and 25.8 square kms. Only taking into account the most distant points at which the Lincolnshire birds were observed gives a home range of c20 square kms suggesting that abundant food was available in a restricted home range.



Neither of the birds was observed foraging and the bulk of the food items noted as being carried back to the nest comprised wasp comb but due to distances involved the identity of the food items was typically impossible to identify with certainty. On August 19th the male was seen and photographed flying back towards the nest carrying a pigeon squab the only other prey item identified.

Up to 20 Common Buzzards were often in the air during surveys of the Honey-buzzards and interactions with that species were fairly frequent with Common Buzzards often mobbing soaring Honey-buzzards but the latter species being much more manoeuvrable and agile was typically able to evade such attacks.

Whether this was a one-off occurrence with a male Honey-buzzard finding a suitable area of habitat and attracting a female is unclear. The species is particularly easy to overlook in the breeding season and the possibility that birds had nested in this area in previous years cannot be discounted but the failure of the birds to continue breeding in subsequent years in spite of the return of the female may tend to suggest that this was a one-off event.

There are areas of woodland in Lincolnshire which could conceivably hold breeding Honey-buzzards but locating birds is time consuming and relies heavily on extensive observation periods, during May – August, and a bit of luck particularly if nesting is not attempted or if an attempt fails early in the season

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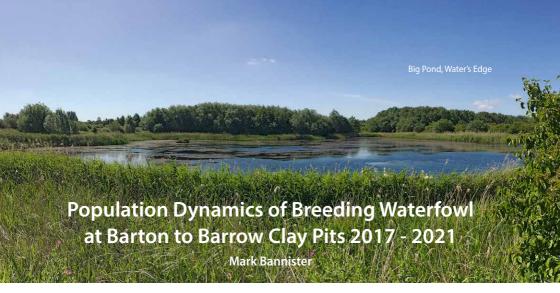
Home range, habitat use and diet of Honey-buzzards during the breeding season

Fridtjof Ziesemer and Bernd-Ulrich Meyburg: British Birds 108 • August 2015 • 467–481

Right: Male Honey-buzzard with pigeon squab August 19th 2014 Below: Juvenile Honey-buzzard branching August 22nd 2014 ALL PHOTOS © GRAHAM CATLEY







#### **Background**

The south humber bank clay pits primarily comprise of abandoned workings from the brick, tile and cement industries with closure of the majority of yards in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century <sup>[1]</sup>. Today, they have developed into a species-rich habitat of reedbed, open water and scrub with many pits designated as SSSI's. The highest density of pits can be found from Barton upon Humber to Barrow Haven in the east (Fig.1, 2). They are in mixed ownership, with the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust (LWT), North Lincolnshire Council (Water's Edge Country Park), private fishing clubs, sailing club, ski club and shooting syndicates all represented. The majority of the pits to the west of the humber bridge form Far Ings NNR under ownership of LWT.

While the Barton to Barrow clay pits are nominally similar and experience the same weather and diversity of predators, they vary to a degree in age, size, depth, open water extent, water source, water quality, public access and human activities. Although not unique, this provides a rare opportunity to examine what influences breeding success and what does not. While informally birding the area since 1990, I had noticed that breeding birds favoured some pits far more than others and wondered what influenced the breeding success of the bird populations. I had also noted a new trend amongst some who claimed that human disturbance was a problem in the pits. This was not my own impression at all, but often impressions are wrong - data is king and the key to understanding. In 2017, thanks to Brexit, I had found myself "between jobs". Inspired by Ian Newton's New Naturalist 'Bird Populations' [2], and Graham Catley's many projects such as his long-term study of local Marsh Harriers [3], I decided to start a project myself studying the fortunes of the local waterfowl population. This also happened to neatly dove-tail into a desire to replace car journeys by bicycle wherever possible in order to minimise my carbon emissions – and so my twitching days were over before they ever really got started. This article gives some results from the first 5 years of this study.

Many thanks go to A Sharp for sightings of broods passed on to me, to GP Catley for brood sightings and use of his photographs in the article and to P Short for his observations from Blacktoft for comparison. Any mistakes and viewpoints are, of course, all my own.

#### Method

Each year, records are made of breeding pairs and visible broods of all duck species, mute swan, both grebe species, coot and moorhen (henceforth termed 'waterfowl') from March to the end of Sept, from Target Pit in the west to Barrow Haven in the east. No data was collected for feral species (greylag, canada geese) before 2019. In hindsight, this was a mistake as it has become increasingly

clear they have a major influence on the other waterfowl populations. Water rail are also ignored as, although I record calling birds and bump into fledged young every year, to find a statistically significant proportion of their broods is all but impossible due to their hyper-secretive behaviour. Although I could have covered different species, these were chosen because the numbers of fledged young are far easier to reliably record and felt I could find the vast majority of broods each year. Recording fledged young enables calculations of productivity and so some basic, if rough, estimates for local population increase/decrease trends for each of the species. I judged that having data for productivity would be far better than simply tracking numbers of breeding pairs as these are influenced by both immigration and emigration which could mask any population declines as pointed out by Newton [2].

Every pit surveyed is visited, normally by bicycle, twice a week, spending around 20 hours each week. Visits are purposefully maintained at each pit to be of a similar time period and frequency so the results can be considered to be of 'constant effort'. It is inevitable that some broods are completely missed, particularly more secretive and terrestrial species such as moorhen, but it is also highly likely that this will be to a similar extent across all pits, so should not impact on the relative distribution of data, or for comparison across years. An additional merit of the additional sightings passed to me by AS and GPC proved to be confirmation that I was, in fact, spending enough time in the field to find the vast majority of broods – it was very rare for me not to have already found or consequently find sightings of broods passed on to me.

Nests were not searched for systematically, but for coot, both grebes, mute swan, the majority could be observed from a distance. I made no effort to collect data for survival at the egg stage. The numbers of breeding adult pairs are estimated primarily by repeated observation of females or

obvious pairs at each pit primarily over March-May. Particularly for the duck species, some judgement has to be applied as to whether the females are in fact breeding on the particular pit observed, or perhaps feeding but breeding elsewhere. This is where repeated visits and good notes help to build up a picture of what is likely to be going on, but there is of course a large slice of judgement involved. Pairs with broods of most species are relatively easy to observe, as they usually feed in open water, but those of moorhen are particularly difficult, with early stage young keeping within cover. It is likely that I missed many moorhen broods that were subsequently predated. Luckily, once moorhen young near fledging, they become far more prominent and happily feed out in the open. Hatching time is back-calculated based on the estimated age of the young when first found. For species that do not normally breed in their 2nd calendar year (coot, great crested grebe, mute swan, both geese), judgement also has to be applied as to whether the birds present are actually making a breeding attempt, or are non-breeders. The number of non-breeders is also required for the ultimate calculation of local population trends. As would be expected, it is the larger pits with limited breeding habitat that tend to host most of the apparent non-breeders, such as Sailing Pit and Pit25. The smaller pits with good breeding habitat are assumed to contain only breeding pairs (apart from mute swan), as competition for these prime spots is intense. For the 'observed nonbreeding birds' found on the bigger pits a relevant question is: are these from the local population or are they from a far wider area? To help answer this, the 'expected number of non-breeding birds' for a stable population size is also calculated using the BTO BirdFacts survival data [6]. Disagreement in the 'expected' and 'observed' number of non-breeders is particularly pronounced in mute swan where non-breeders from beyond the local breeding population appear to be drawn in to summer on the larger pits. Coot appear to be the opposite: the observed number of non-breeders on the pits is lower than that which would be expected for the local population size. The non-breeding coot must be summering elsewhere, perhaps on reservoirs without nesting habitat.

Due to differences in survival rates between the sexes, there is an excess of males for at least the duck species as the sitting female is far more likely to be killed by a ground predator than the male

as he takes no part in incubation. Overall ratios of three males to each female has been found in some species by Lack<sup>[4]</sup> and this roughly agrees with my counts for mallard. Pochard appear to have an even higher ratio locally. These 'excess' males are also ignored when calculating the number of breeding pairs and population trends.

A total of 23 pits are surveyed (Fig.1, 2), but many pits are missed from the study, mainly to the east of the Humber bridge due to difficultly of access (mainly private fishing and shooting pits). These include pits that are likely to have numbers of breeding waterfowl such as Hoe Hill, New Diggings and to a lesser extent Barton Broads. The pit naming system used here is mainly inherited from local naturalists. They have evolved somewhat through time and may not match other publications. Hopefully the maps prevent total confusion.

#### **Survey Regions**

Pits surveyed: green / Pits not surveyed: red

#### West of Humber Bridge:

Target Pit in the west to the Old Tileyard Pit in the east. SSSI unit numbers given in brackets.



Figure 1 - Pits West of Bridge 1:Target Pit (146); 2:Scrapes(145); 3: West/Ness/East Pits(145); 4:Hotel Pit(143); 5:Bridge Pit(143); 6: New Pits 1-5 (numbered east to west); 7:Pursuit Pit(142); 8:Western Approach Pit(141); 9:Barton Reedbed(141); 10:Old Tile Yard Pit. Map data ©2019 Google

#### East of Humber Bridge:

Water's Edge in the west to Barrow Haven in the east. SSSI unit numbers given in brackets.



Figure 2 - Pits East of Bridge 11:Humber Bridge View Point Pits 12:VC Pond; 13:Big Pond; 14:North East Pond; 15:Folly Pond; 16:West Pond(140); 17:East Pond(137); 18: Barton Broads 19:Pioneer Pit(131); 20:Hoe Hill(132); 21:Pasture Wharf(130); 22:Sailing Pit(129); 23:Pit25(126); 24: New Diggings; 25:Ski Pit(124); 26:Barrow Haven(121); 27:West Marsh Lane Pit(122). Map data ©2019 Google

#### **Accuracy**

No detailed analysis of accuracy has been attempted, but some rough values are suggested here. The hatching dates are backdated with an estimated accuracy of less than 1 week. Young are assumed to fledge if they are seen at 5weeks (except for mute swan and both geese). This is less than the 7-8 weeks that is typical for fledging of most of the waterfowl [5], although swans and the geese take far longer. This was done for several reasons: old young become increasingly difficult to find as they spend far less time feeding and more time sleeping tucked in cover; they become more difficult to separate from adults at distance; they tend to move pit yet again and may separate from the rest of the brood and the female. Once fledged, the young often leave the pits, presumably as the food supplies become depleted or to reduce predation risk by moving to a bigger water body and safety in numbers, possibly well beyond the study area. There is therefore a risk that if they are not observed for a few weeks (easily done), or if I have my aging a bit wrong, they will be gone before I record them as fledged. At 5 weeks they are far less likely to be predated due to their size. An estimate can be made of the losses in the remaining c2.5weeks until they actually fledge based on the recorded survival rates for the first c5 weeks of observation and the assumption that survival rates vary linearly to that that for juvenile birds from BTO BirdFacts [6] at 7.5 weeks. I estimate this to be less than 5% further losses to the actual fledging date. On the other hand, it is inevitable that I will miss broods completely, all the way up to fledging. An accuracy of +/-10% on numbers of fledged young therefore seems a healthy error band.

Numbers of pairs at chick stage could easily be 10% higher, similarly for numbers of breeding birds (including those that fail at egg stage), although a sanity check on the latter is made by estimating the number of failed pairs at egg stage using the BTO nest survival data <sup>[6]</sup>, assuming that the failed breeders re-lay again and adding the resulting completely failed breeders to the observed pairs at chick stage.

It is likely that there is some recording bias towards pits that are smaller and/or are more easily viewed. This will affect the recorded number of pairs and very young broods, but far less so for numbers of older and fledged young as these are much more visible and the chances of missing them on repeated visits is far lower. The number of moorhen pairs/groups in particular will be higher than recorded on the larger pits.

# **Breeding Pairs Summary 2017 to 2021**

Fig.3 gives a summary of the estimated total number of breeding pairs in the study area for each year over the period 2017-2021. These figures do not include non-breeders, unpaired (excess) males, those judged as breeding elsewhere or the feral geese.

There appears to be a recovery ongoing with an overall upward trend in numbers. Minimum numbers may well have occurred before 2017. From this figure, one could easily think that in general, the waterfowl must be breeding successfully, resulting in an increasing population, but an alternative explanation could be that breeding conditions in the clay pits are improving compared to elsewhere and immigration into the clay pits is increasing irrespective of local productivity.

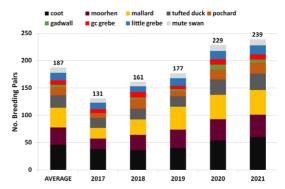


Figure 3 - Total number of breeding pairs 2017 - 2021

There is a popular view locally that human and/or dog disturbance is a major issue, with closed paths and much dead hedging deployed to limit this perceived problem. Could this be a reason why numbers are recovering?

Which of these explanations is it? Is it all of them or something completely different? In part, this study is an attempt to find out which are the most likely explanations and which are not.

#### Fledged Young and Productivity Summary 2017 to 2021

Fig.4 gives a summary of fledged young produced each year over the period 2017 to 2021 which increased from 149 in 2017, to 395 in 2021. In addition to these, another approx 50 greylag and canada goose fledged young combined were produced each year (2020/21 data only). There appears again to be an overall upward trend, one that is stronger than purely the increase in breeding pairs

due to improved productivity (No. fledged young / breeding pair), as indicated.

One possibility is that the numbers of breeding birds and fledged young are following a cyclic fashion, suggested by Newton [2] as being related to predator-prey cycles. Each cycle is likely to be far longer than the 5 year study here and we may well be at the start of an upward trend after a recent low point. Currently, small mammal and rabbit populations are in decline nationally and mink

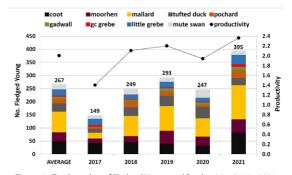


Figure 4 - Total number of Fledged Young and Productivity 2017 - 2021

are reducing in number [8]. Locally, rabbit numbers certainly do appear low. As rabbits sustain some predatory mammals over the autumn and winter months, it could be that this is translating into lower predator numbers and thereby reduced predation of breeding waterfowl in the following spring/summer.

Another possibility is that productivity has improved via increased food availability in the pits. Water quality was likely at its worst after the 2013 floods dumped large volumes of saline river water and mud into many of the pits and they are likely to have taken much time to recover. Many have certainly recently improved including Sailing Pit and Ski Pit (both recovering from dye application), West Pond (recovering from saline intrusion and water fern invasion) and both Far Ings and Pasture

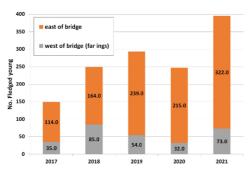


Figure 5 - Number of Fledged Young East and West of the Bridge

Wharf have benefited from recent largescale reedbed management with many new channels dug.

The 2020 breeding season appears to be the biggest anomaly to the otherwise smooth upward trend. It could be easy to jump to the conclusion that this must be related to the covid lockdown, as a popular view is that the increased use of nature reserves, footpaths and open spaces by people and their dogs during lockdown resulted in significant disturbance to breeding birds. There certainly was more use of the pits

by people over this period, particularly in 2020 with barbeques and wild swimming popular, particularly in the pits to the east of the bridge. If this increased 'disturbance' did have an effect at the population level, we would expect it to have a far bigger impact in the eastern pits and far less in the more restricted access of Far Ings. This, however, is not the case - Fig.5 shows that from 2019 to 2020, numbers of fledged

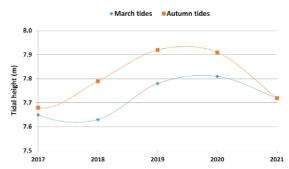


Figure 6 – Height of Maximum Equinox Spring Tides (Immingham)

young reduced by 12% in the east but by 41% in the west. The Water's Edge pits received the most 'extra' visitors during lockdown, yet numbers of fledged young were the least affected. Due to covid restrictions, additional visitors continued into spring 2021, yet the highest breeding success of the five years was recorded. Impressions are often wrong. The answer must lie elsewhere.

Significant amounts of saline intrusion were observed to occur mainly in the pits to the west of the bridge during both the March and Autumn equinox periods as they reached a peak in 2019 and 2020 (Fig.6). During their working life, most of the pits had sluices to drain off water into the humber at low tide via tunnels through the old flood defence bank. Although back-filled in a fashion, many of the tunnels appear to still exist and are permeable enough to allow river water to enter the pits to varying degrees, particularly when under pressure from the large head of water on the very highest spring tides. Pits affected during 2019/20 included Target pit, Hotel pit and West Pond, Water's Edge. The larger inundations can change the water quality dramatically, typically resulting in mass fish die-off and reduction in fresh water weed.

Large amounts of river water entered Target Pit at each high tide over a long period in 2019, depositing mud and the non-native Chinese mitten crabs into the pit. It appears likely the leakage had been ongoing to a lesser extent for some years (now repaired). At the same time, river water entered Hotel Pit by leakage through the river bank, with a mass die-off of fish resulting. Hotel Pit has a long history of saline intrusion leading to fish die-off via the brackish water algae prymnesium (Dawson <sup>[22]</sup>). A common sign of this type of event is congregations of gulls feeding on the dying fish. In West Pond, large amounts of river water entered through a partly blocked flap valve into the haven in November 2019. The river water exited at low tide and the flap valve was washed-out within a day or two. Nonetheless, the number of fledged young on West Pond reduced by 30 in 2020 compared to 2019 in all likelihood as a direct result, before recovering again in 2021.

Given that Fig.5 indicates breeding success was reduced in both 2019 and 2020 in the western pits despite much positive reedbed management and that this correlates perfectly with the highest equinox tides in Fig.6 along with visible saline intrusion events, it seems highly likely it is this that negatively affected breeding success in the western pits in 2019/20 and in large part is responsible for the dip in breeding success in 2020.

Also overlaid on the general recovery of fledged young numbers in both western and eastern pits is likely to be the effects of weather events: 2020 had a very dry spring (May rainfall 83% below the 20 year local average) [15] favouring easier predator access to waterfowl nests and fewer alternative food sources available for predators due to the baked ground, such as worms. 2021 was a very wet spring in May at least (64% above the 20 year local average) [15] with more difficult access to nests by predators.



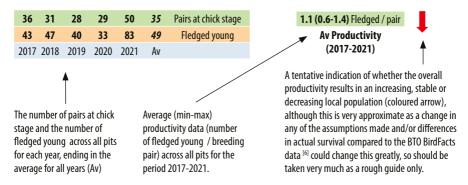
In contrast, it seems that breeding waterfowl can recover well from very cold periods in early spring, even when they kill off all the early broods as happened in 2021 and again back in 2018 with the two 'beast from the east' storms, as high numbers of fledged young were ultimately produced in both years. It could be that the predators are more affected than the waterfowl, which simply re-lay a new clutch of eggs in response, whereas, in general, mammalian predators have just the one litter. Other threats, risks and positive associations with breeding success are discussed in more detail later.

#### **Species Accounts**

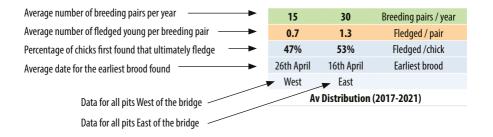
On each page, the following data is given for each species:



Pairs recorded at chick stage for each year are given as they are judged to be a more accurate trend than the number of breeding pairs across the years, particularly for the duck species.



An indication of the distribution of numbers and productivity of each species across the clay pits is given at the bottom of each account by simply splitting the data into pits to the West of the bridge (Far Ings to The Old Tile Yard) and those to the East of the bridge (Humber Bridge Viewpoint Pits to Barrow Haven). Note that the ratio of (fledged young / chicks first found) will be higher than reality. The number of chicks hatched will be higher than those I note as broods are generally found several days after hatching when losses will already have occurred. It is presented here purely as a useful comparison between the western and eastern pits.





Coot 46 (36-60) Breeding pairs

35 36 31 28 29 50 Pairs at chick stage 47 33 83 49 43 40 Fledged voung 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021

1.1 (0.6-1.4) Fledged / pair Av Productivity (2017-2021)





Coot Fulica atra Barton Pits @ GRAHAM CATLEY

Coot numbers were in decline up to 2019 with only 36 breeding pairs across the study area, but increased to around 60 breeding pairs in 2021. It is not clear if this is the start of an upward trend, indicating better food availability in improving water conditions, or if the 2021 breeding year was a 'one-off'. Average productivity of 1.1/pair (improved considerably by the 2021 season which reached the highest recorded at 1.4/pair), suggests the local population is unlikely to be producing enough young to sustain their numbers without immigration, which is in agreement with the population decrease shown in BTO BirdTrends data for the East Midlands [7].

As with moorhen, the increasing numbers of breeding birds in contrast to relatively low local productivity suggests immigration from outside the area. This indicates the local birds should be regarded as part of a much larger population that simply breeds where conditions are best. This may, at times be nearby, perhaps at Bagmoor where movements of coot to/from the Barton pits are suspected (the long-staying 2019 red-necked grebe commuted regularly between these sites), or equally well beyond the local area.

Moult assemblies build up in June and early July, mainly on Pit25 along with large groups of juvenile birds from first broods, visible with their smaller frontal shields. The adult birds are flightless during moult (BWP <sup>[9]</sup>), which means that they may be vulnerable if the weed within their chosen pit dies. This, in fact, is just what happened in 2019 when there was a sudden mass die-off of weed in Pit25 and a switch to an algal state occurred. A large group of the moulting coot fled to the adjacent Sailing Pit where they were observed kleptoparasitising tufted duck. This appeared to be a strategy to reduce energy spent diving in this far deeper pit by instead feeding on the weed brought up to the surface by the tufted duck group. It was perhaps fortuitous that the weed levels in Sailing Pit had recovered that year.

There has been a long term reduction in the number of wing-moulting and overwintering coot on Pit25, reaching a minimum with the 2019 event. They now appear to be slowly recovering in line

with macrophyte levels in this important overwintering pit. We could expect the weed die-off event to have had a negative effect on survival and breeding condition, although the overwintering birds on Pit25 could equally be from elsewhere, as suggested by the lack of impact of the 2019 event on the subsequent breeding numbers locally in 2020.

Coot productivity is far lower in the western pits (Far Ings) compared to the eastern pits. It is tempting to attribute this simply to the presence of otter and marsh harrier there, as many do, but both these species are also present at Barrow Haven where average productivity is amongst the highest recorded in the clay pits (1.4 / breeding pair), even when there is a successful nesting attempt by marsh harrier close by. The fact that the percentage of chicks that go on to fledge is roughly similar to both east and west of the bridge hints that it is either predation at the nest and egg stages that is higher at Far Ings, or simply lower clutch sizes/numbers hatching. Also notable is that the average date for the appearance of the first coot brood is on average, 10 days later in the west compared to the east. This is a strong indicator that food availability is lower in the western pits. The situation has improved, however: in 2017 the first coot brood in the western pits was 11th May and by 2021

it was 9th April, indicating water quality and food availability has improved at Far Ings.

It is therefore likely that the pits to the west have not been the best breeding sites for them and in this case, territories may have been taken by subordinate birds, possibly even some second calendar year birds that attempt to breed <sup>[9]</sup>. This in itself would lead to lower productivity.

15	30	Breeding pairs / year
0.7	1.3	Fledged / pair
47%	53%	Fledged /chick
26th April	16th April	Earliest brood
West	East	
Av	Distribution	(2017-2021)

ΝЛ	_	_	-	<b>L</b>	_	-

32 (19-41)

Breeding pairs

19	19	34	26	34	26	Groups at chick stage
17	22	49	34	50	34	Fledged young
2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Av	

1.1 (0.8-1.5) Fledged / pair Av Productivity (2017-2021)



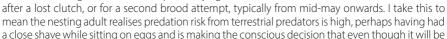
In moorhen, it has been found that a significant number of birds engage in co-operative nesting with multiple females, males or adult helpers, so instead of 'pairs', 'groups' is used here instead. Moorhen numbers and productivity appear to be recovering from a low point at or before 2017 and have now reached around 41 breeding groups recorded across the study area (2021), when 34 groups were estimated as reaching chick stage. Productivity is low and the implied population trend is in agreement with the population decrease shown in BTO BirdTrends data for the East Midlands [7]. Average productivity of 1.1/group containing an average of 2.25 birds suggests the local population is not producing enough young to sustain their numbers without immigration. 2019 productivity was the highest recorded at 1.5 fledged/group.

Surveying moorhen is problematical. Firstly, assessing the number of breeding birds is complicated by the fact that in c20% of nests, birds engage in co-operative nesting between 3 or more birds and/ or with adult helpers and/or with brood parasitism [10,11], so a sighting of 3 or 4 birds on a pit does not signify 2 pairs are necessarily present. Secondly, missing some broods while surveying is quite likely, as adults with a brood are very wary and generally keep within vegetation. My impression is that they are more difficult to see now than compared to the mid 1990's, perhaps as a result of a higher diversity of predators. By comparing against the expected losses at chick stage, the data suggests that on average, an additional c10% of broods are missed, which I can well believe. The data presented here attempts to take this into account. It has also been assumed that 20% of nests are co-operative with an average of 2.25 birds/nest overall. Note that none of this affects the numbers of

fledged young, or the productivity data presented here, but does affect the ratio of losses at egg and chick stages and its effect on the productivity per group that is required for a stable population.

At first sight, the strategy of co-operative nesting does not appear to make much sense in terms of productivity, as although there will be more adults to feed the young, there will surely be less broods. It makes more sense if you consider that only one of the birds will be sitting on the eggs at any one time, at risk of being predated. In this manner, overall adult survival rates may be increased for a given productivity. This strategy is likely to make more sense when risk of predation of the sitting adult is high, as it appears to be for moorhen: the BTO BirdFacts data <sup>[6]</sup>, gives adult female survival as 57.1% per year only, the lowest for all the species studied here, even with some co-operative nesting occurring.

Moorhen is one of the species most commonly observed building a nest out in the open re-laying



more exposed to aerial predation, the reduction in terrestrial and mink predation risk for the sitting adult more than compensates. This is no more than my own hypothesis however.

As with coot, moorhen productivity is far lower in the western pits. The ratio of fledged young / chick and earliest brood dates are not reliable as the majority of broods are not found at an early enough stage.



**Moorhen** Gallinula chloropus Barton Pits
© GRAHAM CATLEY

10	22	Breeding pairs / year
0.6	1.3	Fledged / pair
-	-	Fledged /chick
-	16th April	Earliest brood
West	East	
	Av Distribution (	2017-2021)

Mallard 39 (23-48) Breeding pairs

17	22	32	33	30	27	Pairs at chick stage
22	77	94	70	130	79	Fledged young
2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Av	

1.9 (1.0-2.7) Fledged / pair Av Productivity (2017-2021)



Breeding numbers of mallard appear to have recovered from a low point around 2017 and have stabilised at around 48 breeding pairs. Current productivity of 1.9 fledged/pair suggests the local population is producing enough young to increase their numbers. 2021 productivity was the highest recorded at 2.7 fledged/pair.

There is also a population of mallard that breed within the town, which could be around 10 pairs. Many of these birds feed at Water's Edge, likely in the large congregation that are fed grain at the Visitor Centre Pond, but nest within the town gardens and nearby ditches and ponds. Breeding attempts have been made in my own garden twice (chicks predated by fox), but I also know of a



Mallard Anas platyrhynchos Barton Pits © GRAHAM CATLEY

pair that bred in an enclosed walled garden. At first sight, this appears completely reckless, but the strategy paid off, as ground predators were excluded, the female was fed by the owner and finally all were let out by the owner and walked off to the blow well pond at St. Mary's. A similar strategy has been noted by Pete Short at Island Farm near RSPB Blacktoft Sands [12] where in 2021, 8 pairs of mallard hatched 90 young - all within an electrified hen enclosure, benefitting from both ground predator exclusion and hen feed. They were ultimately let out to the river by the land owner. A small number of mallard broods from some of the Barton town gardens, the haven and possibly adjacent fishing pits are likely to make it into Water's Edge and the rest of the study area. There is also a large number of excess males – perhaps as much as a male: female ratio of 3.

In May 2020 I came across a female on West Pond with a large brood comprising of at least two groups of very differently sized ducklings which I had never noted before. Their young appeared to be separated by several weeks and all other female mallard appeared to have vacated the pond. As she circuited West Pond with her brood she terrorized all other adult waterfowl, ejecting them off their nests and actively attempting to kill them, including several coot. Although mallard are often aggressive, this was on another level. I felt that if a lesser black-backed gull had attempted to take one of the young it would have regretted it badly. Initially, I wondered if, given her hyper-aggressiveness, she had 'kidnapped' the broods from other females, or at least drove off the females without killing their young. BWP [9] however, states that no brood amalgamations or crèching occurs in mallard, although nest parasitism can occur. An alternative explanation is that all the young were actually from the same brood, but some were experiencing developmental problems due to a lack of food. As covered elsewhere, West Pond suffered saline intrusion in the preceding autumn and the breeding success of coot and mallard in particular dropped greatly in 2020. It could be that competition for dwindling food resources drove the female into this state of hyper-aggression. Pete Short has noted similar developmental problems in mute swan broods at Blacktoft [12].

Similarly to coot and moorhen, the first mallard broods are, on average, found 18 days later in the western pits than those to the east. Again, this improved to parity in 2021 indicating better food availability in the western pits that year. Interestingly, in contrast to all other species covered, productivity is similar both west and east, along with the number fledged / chick found.

14	25	Breeding pairs / year
1.6	2.1	Fledged / pair
52%	51%	Fledged / chick
7th May	19th April	Earliest brood
West	East	
۸۰	, Distribution	(2017-2021)



Tufted duck	23 (18-30)	Breeding pairs

9	12	13	14	13	12	Pairs at chick stage
15	33	40	43	27	32	Fledged young
2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Av	

1.4 (0.8-2.1) Fledged / pair Av Productivity (2017-2021)



Tufted duck numbers and productivity appear to have recovered from a low point around 2017 and have stabilised at around 13 pairs reaching chick stage and around 30 breeding pairs are now recorded across the pits. Current average productivity of 1.4/pair suggests the local population is producing enough young to increase their numbers. 2019 productivity was the highest recorded at 2.1 fledged / breeding pair.

Tufted duck numbers appear to be recovering from a low point around 2018. The Pasture Wharf—Sailing pit – Ski Pit grouping has been an important breeding area in the past and is now recovering from dye application in the latter two pits. Two broods which fledged a total of 15 young on Ski Pit in 2020 were notable and were the first for many years, possibly taking advantage of the low number of predators there which may have been absent due to a lack of prey for so long. It is also a lesson in keeping the effects of 'disturbance' in proportion such that it is perfectly possible to have high numbers of fledged young on a pit with water boat / ski activity. The 15 young fledged there in that year alone represents more than have fledged at Far Ings for the last 3 years combined.

Tufted, pochard and other duck have been found to be more successful nesters within gull colonies, e.g. Newton & Campbell [13] and Väänänen [14]. A female tufted duck appeared to be attempting to nest on a well-vegetated tern raft on Hotel Pit one year amongst both black headed gull and common tern. I was not able to determine if the attempt was successful, but it is a behaviour well worth looking out for.

Tufted duck productivity is far lower in the western pits, as is the ratio of fledged young / chicks found. Also notable is that the average date for the appearance of the first tufted duck brood is on average, 17 days later in the west than to the east. It is likely these are all indicators of lower food production for this invertebrate-feeding duck as well as for the previous herbivorous species.

9	14	Breeding pairs / year
0.5	2.1	Fledged / pair
40%	54%	Fledged /chick
9th July	22nd June	Earliest brood
West	East	

Av Distribution (2017-2021)



Tufted Duck Avthva fuliqula Barton Pits @ GRAHAM CATLEY

Pocl	nard						15 (9-20) Breeding pairs	
6	11	6	5	13	8	Pairs at chick stage	<b>1.2 (0.5-1.9)</b> Fledged / pair	Pairs at chick stage
8	24	17	9	30	18	Fledged young	Av Productivity	Fledged young
2017	2010	2010	2020	2021	Δız		(2017-2021)	



Pochard Aythya ferina Barton Pits © GRAHAM CATLEY

The Barton-Barrow pits remain an important breeding site for pochard in the county. It is estimated that between 9 and 20 pairs attempt to nest each year in the study period, perhaps more as some historically favoured pits are not surveyed. 2021 was a particularly good year for the species with 13 pairs getting to chick stage and an estimated 30 young fledged, although breeding success is highly variable, as it is estimated that only 8 fledged from 6 broods in 2017. In general, they appear to be just producing enough young to sustain their numbers, although this was not the case before the 2021 breeding season.

The pits to the east of the bridge are favoured, with Water's Edge and Barrow Haven producing the majority of broods and fledged young during the study period. One of the Barton-Barrow pits that is not surveyed is historically a good breeding site for pochard, so it is likely the numbers of pairs and fledged young are an underestimate. Numbers appear to fluctuate greatly which makes any trends difficult to make out. The poor years (2017, 2020) coincide with low rainfall in the March-April period recorded in Barton (Bryant [15]). Late April / early May will be just when the females start incubating and this species typically breeds in reedbeds with a waterlogged base [5], so low water levels at this time may lead to higher predation rates, including the sitting females.

This species appears to be highly dependent on those pits with high macrophyte densities, with almost all broods either hatching or being led to such pits within days of hatching. Reedbed and water level management can have a dramatic effect in offering new nesting sites – the extensive work at Hotel/Bridge Pit produced much wet reedbed which attracted 32 males and 4 females on 15/04/18, producing at least 4 broods all of which moved to Western Approach Pit and 9 ultimately fledged. Unfortunately, this, their most favoured pit for brood rearing, experienced a mass die-off of weed and fish in July 2019, switching to an algal state and has still not fully recovered, although it appears to be slowly getting there. No pochard broods have been recorded there since. This indicates that just offering suitable nest sites is not enough. The macrophyte-rich feeding sites are also required and the females will nest elsewhere if they are not on offer.

The New Pits now appear to be their remaining favoured breeding site at Far Ings, but productivity there is low. It was here that a female was seen on 04/06/19 taking her remaining young brood



**Pochard** Aythya ferina Barton Pits © GRAHAM CATLEY

to the tern raft in a desperate and ultimately fruitless attempt to gain the protection of the common terns against predators.

On 19th July 2018, a female with bill saddle '1K' was found with a brood of 2 young on one of the pits. Both young ultimately fledged. This was a bird first found by GP Catley in 2016. Graham discovered she was ringed and saddled at St Philbert de Grand Lieu near Nantes on November 25th 2015. Before finding the brood I had noted her repeatedly feeding on the grain cast by visitors into the Water's Edge Visitor Centre Pond, so it appears she was gaining a breeding advantage

by minimising the time off the nest during incubation. It may be that many incubating females of multiple species do this without us being aware – it was simply the fact we could identify her that allowed us to note this behaviour. She was not seen (by myself at least) in the following years, so this individual appears to have had at least 3 breeding years on the pits before either reaching the end of her life or moving elsewhere to breed.

Similarly to mallard, the first pochard broods are, on average, found 8 days later in the western pits than those to the east, which remained the case in 2021. Productivity is far lower in the pits to the west of the bridge, but the ratio of (fledged young / chicks found) is similar, indicating higher predation at nest and egg stage or a smaller clutch size / numbers hatching.

6	9	Breeding pairs / year				
0.8	1.5	Fledged / pair				
61%	64%	Fledged /chick				
7th June	30th May	Earliest brood				
West	East					
Av Distribution (2017-2021)						

Gadwall

4 (0-9)

**Breeding pairs** 

0	2	4	3	3	2	Pairs at chick stage
0	4	11	8	13	7	Fledged young
2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Δv	

1.8 (0.9-2.8) Fledged / pair Av Productivity (2017-2021)





Gadwall Mareca strepera Barton Pits © GRAHAM CATLEY

Gadwall are currently a relatively rare breeder on the pits which is perhaps surprising given the very large numbers that winter here. Current productivity suggests the local population is producing enough young to increase their numbers.

Occasionally, broods are found in the surrounding ditches, such as the one found by GP Catley in 2019, so as with mallard, not all adults present during the breeding season are necessarily breeding in the pits. The numbers of breeding pairs appear to be increasing slowly and productivity is relatively high. Productivity also appears lower in the western pits, although all these figures are based on very small sample sizes.

Gadwall appear to favour the pits within Water's Edge for breeding with females returning to the same pits each year. There may be more attempted breeders than indicated here, as they are quite unobtrusive and easily missed which, if this is the case, would result in a lower productivity than indicated

1	3	Breeding pairs / year				
1.0	2.2	Fledged / pair				
-	-	Fledged /chick				
-	-	Earliest brood				
West	East					
Av Distribution (2017-2021)						

#### **Great Crested Grebe**

8 (6-10)

Breeding pairs

4	5	2	3	5	4	Pairs at chick stage
6	3	4	4	11	6	Fledged young
2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Av	

0.7 (0.3-1.2) Fledged / pair Av Productivity (2017-2021)



The number of great crested grebe successfully nesting across the Barton to Barrow pits was at an historic low in 2019 with 6 breeding pairs of which only 2 pairs reached chick stage, but increased to 5 pairs reaching chick stage in 2021. It is not clear if this is the start of an upward trend, indicating better food availability in improving water conditions, or if the 2021 breeding year was a 'one-off'. A further group of c5 non-breeding birds generally keep to the bigger pits away from the territorial breeders. These are probably second to third calendar year or unpaired male birds. Average productivity of 0.7/pair is very low due to the relatively large number of failing attempted breeders at nest or egg stage. Note that no survival data is available for this species in BTO BirdFacts <sup>[6]</sup>, so an estimate as to whether the productivity is enough to maintain the local population is not possible, but is so low as to be unlikely.

During the period 2017 to 2020, around 4-5 pairs were recorded as displaying on several pits but continually failed to breed successfully, failing at the nest or egg stages giving an overall failure rate of c50% at this stage. One reason may be a lack of suitable nesting habitat. Many areas of wet reedbed have gone due to grazing by greylags, particularly the 'fingers' of wet reedbed that they appeared to favour to enable the adults to view incoming predators and quickly slip off the nest. Loss of favoured reedbed nest sites have occurred in several other pits along the Humber due to grazing by greylag such as on Winter's Pond (East Halton) which coincided with the loss of this species there as a breeding bird (S. Routledge). Competition for breeding sites with coot is also apparent, with coot taking over a grebe nest site on Sailing Pit noted in 2020. Predation pressure may also be magnified if only sub-optimal breeding sites are available.

Reduction in water quality and associated reduction in food availability is also possibly implicated for at least some pits. It is notable that the species has not successfully bred at Far Ings since 2017 when the last pair nested at Target Pit. The last youngster at Target Pit appeared to die of starvation before fledging after weeks of incessant begging to the adults. Saline intrusion could well have been implicated in why great crested grebe deserted this pit as a breeding site. Water quality there is now improving after repairs to the river bank, so it will be interesting to see if a pair ultimately returns.



Great Crested Grebe Podiceps cristatus Barton Pits © GRAHAM CATLEY

In the 2021 breeding season, three young were produced by the pair on Ski Pit and as they got older, the brood was split as always happens in this species, but in this case between three adults: two young tended by two adults and one young with a single adult. It was not clear which adult was not a parent, but I assume it was one of the birds tending the two young. BWP [9] notes "Young of 1st brood reported helping to feed siblings in 2nd (J Fjeldså), even carrying them on back (P P A

M Kop)" but in this case, the helper was an adult, so maybe it was a 2nd to 3rd calendar year non-breeder from a brood produced by the same pair in the past?

Productivity is far lower in the western pits compared to the eastern pits due to most breeding attempts failing at nest or egg stage, although this is based on a very small sample size.

2	6	Breeding pairs / year					
0.2	0.9	Fledged / pair					
-	81%	Fledged /chick					
-	28th May	Earliest brood					
West	East						
Av Distribution (2017-2021)							

#### Little Grebe

 13
 12
 11
 9
 15
 12
 Pairs at chick stage

 24
 18
 21
 15
 35
 23
 Fledged young

 2017
 2018
 2019
 2020
 2021
 Av

**14 (11-17)** Breeding pairs

1.6 (1.0-2.1) Fledged / pair
Av Productivity
(2017-2021)



Little grebe numbers and productivity appear to have recovered from a low point around 2018 and have increased to 17 breeding pairs in 2021. Note that no survival data is available for this species in BTO BirdFacts <sup>[6]</sup>, so an estimate for local population trends is not possible, but the relatively high productivity suggests the local population is producing enough young to increase numbers.

This is another species that is often observed nest building in the middle of a pit for a second brood or clutch from mid-may onwards, perhaps indicating high predation pressure from mink and terrestrial predators. It was notable that this did not occur in 2021 and almost every breeding pair produced broods, suggesting losses at nest and egg stage were very low.

In the same year, the highly productive pair at Folly Pond produced 3 broods with a total of 7 young fledged. The pair here have at least 2 broods each year with an average productivity of 4.2 /

breeding pair, the highest across the pits, despite having the most visitors with and without dogs and so potential 'disturbance'.

This is another species that strongly favours the macrophyte-rich eastern pits. In July 2019, coincident with the re-connection with Pursuit Pit via a pipe under the access track, there was a mass die-off of weed and fish in Western Approach as the pit switched from a macrophyte-rich state to an algal state. Little grebe was consequently lost as a breeding species at Far Ings, returning in 2021 after reedbed management and many new channels dug in Barton Reedbed. Suitable nesting habitat in Western



**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis* Barton Pits © GRAHAM CATLEY

Approach Pit appears to be disappearing as the wet reedbed is lost to greylag grazing. Productivity is similar in both the western and eastern pits.

3	11	Breeding pairs / year				
1.5	1.7	Fledged / pair				
-	65%	Fledged /chick				
-	8th May	Earliest brood				
West	East					
Av Distribution (2017-2021)						

		_
$\mathbf{n}$	11140	Swan

4	6	6	7	7	6	Pairs at chick stage
14	21	17	31	20	20	Fledged young
2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Av	

9 (8-11) Breeding pairs

2.1 (1.5-2.8) Fledged / pair Av Productivity (2017-2021)



The number of mute swan successfully nesting across the Barton to Barrow pits has increased to around 7 pairs fledging young from approximately 11 breeding pairs. A further group of 40-50 non-breeding birds are dotted around the pits in early summer with the main numbers on the bigger pits. Average productivity of 2.1/pair is high and suggests the local population is producing enough young to increase their numbers, in agreement with the population increase shown in BTO BirdTrends data for the East Midlands [7].

The non-breeders on the pits are probably second to fourth calendar year, or unpaired birds. They are joined later by what I assume are failed breeding birds for their wing moult on the larger pits, for example 78 birds on Pit25 on 14/08/2019.

In contrast to most of the other waterfowl, mute swan had their lowest productivity in 2021, seemingly not benefitting at all by the rains in May and with fewer cygnets hatching.

Territorial mute swan can be very aggressive towards both nearby swans and other nesting waterfowl and young and are known to drive them from their nesting areas, reportedly even killing some young, eg Allin et al [16]. The same reference claims this is worse in older birds. This aggressive behaviour is commonly observed during the study period including attempts at drowning pochard young on several occasions. My heart sinks a little when I realise a mute swan will be nesting on one of the best pits. Admittedly, I have not seen them succeed, but I can imagine they do so based on the determination of some individuals. I once watched a cob swan attempt to drown the last remaining greylag gosling from a previously large brood for over 15mins. The youngster survived by repeatedly diving until the cob swan lost interest as his own brood finally drifted away.



#### Mute Swan Cygnus olor Barton Pits © GRAHAM CATLEY

In common with many of the other species, the first mute swan broods are, on average, found 11 days later in the western pits than those to the east, which remained the case in 2021. Productivity is far lower in the pits to the west of the bridge (Far Ings) and the ratio of fledged young / chicks found is also a little lower

4	6	Breeding pairs / year				
1.1	3.0	Fledged / pair				
<b>72</b> %	87%	Fledged /chick				
7th June	26th May	Earliest brood				
West	East					
Av Distribution (2017-2021)						

#### **Greylag Goose**

21 (16-26)

**Breeding** pairs

-	-	-	19	11	16	Pairs at chick stage
-	-	-	55	30	41	Fledged young
2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Αv	

2.8 (2.7-2.9) Fledged / pair Av Productivity (2017-2021)



Greylag goose number around 21 breeding pairs with around 16 pairs reaching chick stage across the pits. There is, however, a significant population of breeding greylags on the eastern pits used for fishing that are not surveyed, perhaps numbering another 5 pairs. Current productivity suggests the local population is producing enough young to strongly increase their numbers, in agreement with the population increase shown in BTO BirdTrends data for the East Midlands [7].

Greylag goose numbers appear to be continuing their upward trend. Productivity is relatively high at 2.8/pair, thought to be related to their reduced susceptibility to predation due to both their size and their habit of feeding nearby human habitation. Diving to escape is also something that greylags excel at and may well explain, at least to some extent, the difference in productivity at chick stage between young greylag and canada geese found across the pits.

In contrast to most of the other waterfowl, greylags, along with mute swan had their lowest productivity in 2021, seemingly not benefitting at all by the May rains.

The increase in the local population of greylag will continue to have a detrimental effect on the other reedbed breeders via loss of wet reedbed from overgrazing, competition for nest sites and reduced water quality via nutrient input load, particularly in the pits favoured for their wing moult. There appears to be no sign of reaching any limit in their population size yet. Even wildfowlers who were once responsible for releasing them now appear to ignore them and shoot pink-footed geese instead. One possibility would be to limit their access to lawned areas adjacent to the currently favoured pits, but this will simply move the problem elsewhere.

Flocks of wing-moulting birds favour the pits with easiest access to adjacent lawned areas which they can graze before quickly fleeing onto the water if danger is perceived. The Pursuit Pit flock starts to build from June, often reaching several hundred. A count of 540 on Pursuit Pit and adjacent fields on 11/08/2020 was notable.

In contrast to all the other previous species, but in agreement with Canada geese, the western pits are more favoured for breeding than the eastern pits surveyed. In addition and again in contrast with previous species, the first greylag broods are, on average, found 14 days earlier in the western pits than those to the east, which remained the case in 2021. The most obvious possible explanation for this is that the geese primarily feed by grazing on grasses which are plentiful on the causeways and lawns around the western pits and are not influenced by differences in water quality and food

availability within the water column as are the other species. Despite this, productivity is far lower in the western pits, indicating predation is higher, perhaps indicating a higher fox population in the west. It seems likely that those nesting in the eastern pits benefit from protection from fox predation as most broods are found on private lawned areas close to housing and are protected to some degree by fencing and the human presence.

14	7	Breeding pairs / year			
1.5	5.6	Fledged / pair			
-	-	Fledged /chick			
10th April	24th April	Earliest brood			
West	East				
Av Distribution (2017-2021)					

#### Canada Goose

17 (16-18)

Breeding pairs

-	-	-	10	10	10	Pairs at chick stage
-	-	-	16	19	18	Fledged young
2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Av	

1.9 (1.3-2.5) Fledged / pair Av Productivity (2017-2021)



Canada goose number around 17 breeding pairs with around 10 pairs reaching chick stage across the pits. Current productivity suggests the local population is producing enough young to weakly increase their numbers.

The pits do not appear to be a site for wing moulting birds anymore, the birds travelling elsewhere locally, with some non breeders, failed breeders and immature birds perhaps joining the moult migration of Canada geese from Yorkshire and the West Midlands to Beauly Firth, Moray [17].

Average productivity is 1.9/pair and as for the greylags, likely benefit to some degree by both their size and habit of feeding nearby human habitation, thereby benefitting from reduced predation.

Canada geese can be aggressive towards other wildfowl and it is interesting to note that none of the top six pits for productivity have either Canada or Greylag breeding on them.

In contrast to the previous species, but in agreement with Greylag geese, the western pits are more favoured for breeding than the eastern pits surveyed. In addition and again in agreement with just the greylags, the first Canada goose broods are, on average, found 18 days earlier in the western pits

than those to the east. The most obvious possible explanation for this is that, as for the greylags, the Canada geese primarily feed by grazing on land and only occasionally feed in water. Productivity is far lower in the western pits, again indicating that predation is higher there compared to the eastern pits, with reasons again likely to be similar to those for greylags.

12	5	Breeding pairs / year	
1.3	4.5	Fledged / pair	
-	-	Fledged /chick	
19th April	7th May	Earliest brood	
West	East		
Av Distribution (2017-2021)			



#### Distribution of Breeding Waterfowl across the Pits

It is quite obvious to anyone bird watching the clay pits for any length of time that breeding waterfowl favour some pits far more than others.

With the knowledge that many duck broods move from a nesting site to a brood rearing site, pits have been grouped such that the main movements of young stay within each Area (Area1-4).

More on this later. It can be seen in Fig.7 that both the Water's Edge and Barrow Haven groupings of pits produce the majority of fledged young (all species combined), on average 63% of the total. They are the powerhouses of waterfowl production. In 2021, the relatively small Water's Edge group of pits (c15ha, or 9% of the total based on open water + reedbed), produced 45% of all fledged young alone.

Looking at the numbers of fledged young per hectare (Fig.8), the difference is even more visible: both the Far Ings and Pioneer to Ski Pit groupings produce at least 80% less per hectare than either the Water's Edge or Barrow Haven groupings of pits. Both the Far Ings and Pioneer to Ski Pit groupings have some large water bodies with smaller amounts of nesting habitat, which no doubt adds bias to this analysis, but even accounting for this, the difference is stark. Some pits are obviously more important than others for breeding waterfowl, but why?

Simplifying into pits to the west and east of the bridge, there are 54% fewer breeding pairs per hectare



Figure 7 - Distribution of Fledged young

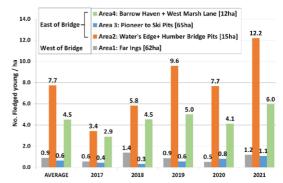


Figure 8 - Distribution of Fledged young / ha

in the west than in the east. Secondly, productivity (No. fledged / pair) for the West is, on average, 21% lower than those East (Fig.9) which was not clear in the first years of the study.

Fewer birds therefore choose to breed in the western pits in the first place and secondly, productivity of each pair that do breed is lower. In the species accounts, it is shown that the first broods are on average between 8 to 18 days later in the west than in the east for all species that feed in the water (i.e. excluding the geese). This is a strong indicator that lower food availability in the water column is implicated in the low productivity for waterfowl to the West (Far Ings). Cabot [18] states that hatching midge larvae, pupae, stoneflies and mayflies are eaten by ducklings. If the supplies of these insects are inadequate, the ducklings have to search and spread out over a larger area and suffer higher rates of mortality as they become more vulnerable to predators such as pike, mink, fox, heron and carrion crow e.g. Hunter et al 1984 [19]. In addition, the presence of high densities of coarse fish such as bream, tench and roach can significantly reduce the number of aquatic insects. In one study, in the years following fish removal, mallard brood density increased from 0.22 to 0.81 / ha.

It is therefore likely that lower food availability in the western pits is a key reason for lower number of fledged young there, probably related to some degree with saline intrusion events, with predation rates worsened as the young are in poorer condition and less able to evade predation. Predator numbers may also be higher in the western pits as there is more habitat for rabbits, which in turn, sustain higher predator numbers over the winter period. It must also be remembered that Far Ings was among the worst affected

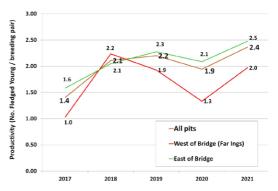


Figure 9 - Productivity to both East and West of the Bridge

by river water input in the 2013 storm surge and many pits are perhaps still recovering from the nutrient load that was added.

A clue is also given in the productivity data (Fig.9): productivity in the west roughly equalled that to the east in 2018 only. The main reason for this appears to be the large scale habitat management on Hotel and Bridge Pits which created extensive wet reedbed for breeding in 2018. At this stage Western Approach Pit was also macrophyte-rich and many broods made their way there for brood rearing. Since then, Western Approach Pit suffered a mass weed die-off with few other western pits of similar quality to take its place.

#### The Effect of Macrophyte - Rich Pits on Waterfowl Distribution

The young of all duck species leave the nest and feed themselves once hatched. It is therefore easy to see that macrophyte-rich pits with weed extending into large areas on the surface will be particularly attractive, where young can feed with minimum effort. Even for coot, moorhen and the grebes which are fed by their parents, the young can often be observed feeding themselves between parental visits by picking at food items in the emergent weed which will give them a survival advantage.



Figure 10 – Typical overland routes used by duck broods to travel with their brood from nesting pit to brood rearing pit.

Map data ©2019 Google

By tracking pairs early in the season and noting where broods are subsequently found feeding, it is clear that it is common for all duck species to nest in one pit with large amounts of reedbed and soon after hatching move the young to another, macrophyte-rich pit (but with perhaps limited nesting habitat), for brood rearing. It appears the majority of duck broods do this at the chick stage. Some of the typical 'overland routes' used by duck broods are shown in Fig.10 above. The destinations indicated are all pits with high weed densities during their 'good years'. Other routes are highly likely to occur. This brings the added complication of which pit the brood 'belongs to'. Clearly, both the favoured nesting and brood rearing pits are equally important and should be thought of as a whole, not individually.

As an example, it was notable that very few broods were recorded on Sailing Pit while dye was added to the water to suppress weed growth and this corresponded with very few birds recorded as breeding in the adjacent Pasture Wharf pit. This changed dramatically when dye application ceased c2020 and breeding within Pasture Wharf re-established in 2021 with several tufted duck broods moving onto Sailing Pit, then onto Pit25 to feed. This indicates that the birds are assessing the condition of both the nesting pit and the adjacent brood rearing pits before making the decision to breed in any particular location.

Given that we know a significant number of duck broods travel overland from nesting pit to brood rearing pit, an obvious risk is that of obstacles which prevent them or obstruct them from doing so. The appearance of what I assume to be otter-exclusion fencing has recently started to appear

around some of pits used for fishing (Fig.11). Although not part of those that I survey, I have not noted an increase in pairs or productivity of waterfowl in them due to otter exclusion. Both coot and moorhen enjoy grazing adjacent lawned areas which may be denied them with such fencing. It would also be wise to make sure all dead hedging that is becoming more common across the pits is open enough to allow movement of these broads.

Fig.12 shows that all of the top 6 pits with the highest densities of fledged young are also macrophyte-rich, including emergent weed (based on visual judgement only): North East Pond, Folly Pond, Big Pond (all Water's Edge); Western Approach Pit up until 2018 (Far Ings NNR) and Barrow Haven. Note that this data does not include those broods that are moved there for brood rearing, only those assessed as nesting there. Again, this data excludes the geese, although it is notable that no geese breed in any of the top 6 pits.

Of the remaining 17 pits, 3 of them are at levels below 4 fledged young / ha and the remaining 14 pits are below 2 fledged young / ha. With these top 6



Figure 11 – Potential Obstacles to Brood Movements

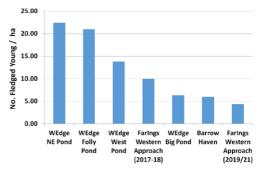


Figure 12 – Top 6 Pits for Number of Fledged Young / hectare (All species)

pits containing over 50% of fledged young across all of the pits, the fact that only one of them are in the western pits is the main reason for the uneven distribution of waterfowl between east and west.

There are outliers to this correlation. Pioneer Pit is an obviously macrophyte-rich pit, but it puzzlingly performs very poorly with only 1.6 fledged / ha and a productivity of 0.2 fledged/breeding pair. It also has much reedbed suitable for breeding. This pit is, or at least was until recently, home to several very large turtles, that I believe are yellow-bellied slider turtles, releases from the mutant ninja turtle craze of the 1990's. These turtles are omnivorous, so may possibly enjoy waterfowl eggs or newly hatched young. On the other hand, it may be something else. Some things just defy explanation.

#### The Loss of Macrophyte - Rich Pits

It can be seen in Fig.12 that there was a step change reduction in fledged young for Western Approach Pit between 2018 and 2019. In 2019, coincident with re-connection of this pit with Pursuit Pit via a pipe under the access road, there was a mass die-off of weed and fish and the pit switched to a turbid/algal state. Little grebe was lost as a successful breeding species at Far Ings as a whole in 2020. Returning as a breeder here in 2021, the pit appears to be recovering, but still suffers smaller die-offs. Pochard have yet to return to this pit for brood rearing and have had little fledging success at Far Ings since the 2019 weed die-off.

It is known that fresh water bodies can switch between stable states [20]. These states are termed clear with submerged vegetation' (state I) and 'turbid with phytoplankton' (state II). Moving from state I to state II can happen very quickly, but going the other way can be a long process. Events such as an increase in water level can trigger the state change. There are several of the Barton to Barrow pits that appear to have undergone this process: Pursuit pit was once a macrophyte-rich pit with high numbers of breeding waterfowl. It appears to have undergone a switch in state in the years leading up to the 2013 flood which dumped huge quantities of saline water and mud into many pits, notably excluding the Water's Edge pits. Pursuit Pit has never really recovered since and appears to be an example of a pit that is 'locked-in' to the 'turbid with phytoplankton' state.

From the Natural England Water Quality Briefing 2013-14 <sup>[21]</sup>: "Vegetation surveys were undertaken in 2007 and 2008 on lakes of the Clay Pits and compared with the baseline in 1987, significant declines in macrophyte diversity and abundance occurred. Little is known as to the likely causes of this, which is contributing to failure to meet appropriate target condition, although poor water quality has been suggested as a contributing factor. Nutrient enrichment is occurring in some pits and the resulting competition from algal blooms and filamentous algae is likely to be limiting macrophyte abundance and diversity."

A further negative effect of grazing geese on Pursuit pit in particular is that the loss of reedbed

allows stronger winds to form over the water surface. This creates circulation cells within the water column, mixing the nutrients from the bottom of the pit into the water column, contributing to the locked-in state. This can often be seen by the aeolian lines on the surface that trace the circulation zones (Fig.13).

We can safely say that high macrophyte levels are extremely important to waterfowl breeding performance in the clay pits. They are the prime breeding sites and are the main drivers of waterfowl distribution across the pits.



Figure 13 – Aeolian lines tracing circulation zones Pursuit Pit 2019.

#### 2021 – The Anatomy of a 'Good Year'

It was a big relief to see a year like 2021 as most species were not doing well at all from at least 2017 to 2020. The obvious question is: why was it such a good year? April had a long period of very cold conditions. By the end of the third week in April, all young from every early brood I had noted were dead and I was pretty gloomy about the prospects for the remainder of the year. Then, something magical happened. More rain fell in May 2021 than occurred in any of the last 14 years (81.5mm compared to a 20 year average of 49.7mm) [15] and it appeared to trigger the birds to get back down to breeding. Many second clutches were incubated and an explosion of broods appeared (Fig.14). Note that the 29 birds fledged from April 2021 were all from broods hatched in the last days of April which just managed to survive the back-end of the cold spell and so almost made it into the column for May. For the following months, the broads just kept coming at a level equal or above the average. The wet May appears to have favoured the breeding success of the species that nest in the 'blue zone' of wet reedbed and emergent vegetation: coot, pochard and both grebes. This can be seen in the increased number of pairs recorded at chick stage for these species in 2021 (Fig. 15). Nesting opportunities in the expanded 'blue zone' must have increased and access to these nests by ground predators and mink reduced. It was notable that no second brood nests were built out in the open in 2021 which often happens in drier years and perhaps indicates lower mink predation due to more difficult access to nests.

Given that local productivity for coot has been historically poor, I assume that the notable increase in pairs seen in Fig.15 is either due to better survival rates than assumed or (more likely) immigration of birds from outside the area.

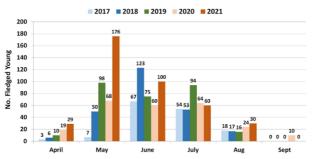


Figure 14 - Total Fledged Young from Month Hatched

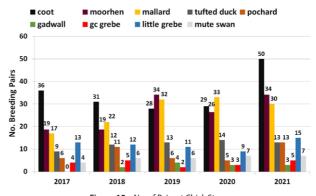


Figure 15 – No. of Pairs at Chick Stage

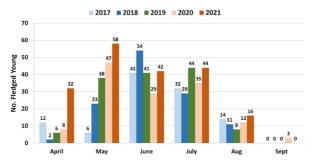


Figure 16 - No. of Broods from Month Hatched

It is tempting to put the success of 2021 simply down to the unusual May rains, but that is not the whole story. Looking at the data for numbers of broods (Fig.16), several species had already made the 'decision' to breed in high numbers in April, before the rains in May had even appeared.

Studies quoted by Newton <sup>[2]</sup> have shown that good breeding years can correlate to favourable conditions in the previous autumn or even the previous spring. Recent habitat management across the pits has certainly provided improved nesting opportunities and perhaps there has been an improvement in water quality, but this is also not the main reason, as breeding improved in many pits that had no management or obvious change. In fact, it appears conditions for a good breeding year were found across a wide area including Blacktoft Sands which had the best breeding year for mallard since the 1970's (P Short <sup>[12]</sup>).

Finally, my impression was that predation rates were lower with no observed predation events, again in agreement with the impression at Blacktoft Sands (P Short <sup>[12]</sup>). Marsh harrier predation appeared increased in the pits to the west of the bridge as a new male took over from the old bird that had previously favoured hunting over the wold.

Productivity rates in 2021 were the highest recorded across the pits (Fig.9). A study of productivity in coot <sup>[23]</sup> concluded that the convex shape of productivity rates through the breeding months is primarily related to food availability, building and peaking in mid summer, before dropping away again. By using supplementary feeding, it was shown that productivity rates could be both elevated and flattened across the months. It could therefore be that food availability in general across the pits had improved in 2021.

#### **Threats and Pressures**

The threats affecting breeding waterfowl on the pits are numerous but of varying importance. It is of course, hard to pick out correlations from the data when multiple factors are different in each pit, but some things are clear from the data and are outlined below.

#### **Predation Pressure**

A possible explanation for the varying productivity across the species is differences in predation pressure. Larger species such as mute swan and greylag appear to have far fewer predators to contend with due to their ability to defend themselves to at least some extent from the smaller predators. There has been an increase in both the number and diversity of predators, both native and nonnative, with an increase in observed predation events compared to even as recently as the 1990s. It is notable that of what I would assess to be the top four predators of waterfowl broods based on observation (lesser black backed gull, marsh harrier, mink, otter), all but mink were not present in any numbers before 1998 (Table 1). If we assume that predator numbers are limited mainly by winter food availability, then because many of the newly arrived predators winter elsewhere (marsh harrier,



gulls) they are likely to represent additional predation pressure during the breeding season. During the 2,000+ hours spent recording, predation has been observed on many occasions, with lesser black-backed gulls sometimes observed removing whole broods over the course of a day or two.

	Predator	Period, increasing or decreasing?	Observed predation? level
mammal	fox badger otter mink stoat weasel brown rat	whole period, constant? whole period, increasing? since c2008 Since c1985, increased after 2008 whole period, constant? whole period, constant? whole period, constant?	yes, high
bird	marsh harrier lesser black-backed gull herring gull black-headed gull bittern grey heron corvid sp.	since c1998 since c2015 since c2015 since c2015 since c2000 whole period, constant? whole period, constant?	yes, high yes, very high yes yes
fish	pike	whole period, constant?	
reptile	turtle sp. (yellow-bellied slider?)	since c1990s ? Pioneer Pit only?	

Table 1 – List of Predators of waterfowl eggs/young/sitting adults across Barton to Barrow Clay Pits

From observation, predation pressure of waterfowl broods from both marsh harrier and lesser blackbacked gull appears to be directly related to prey availability, not the other way around: when the first marsh harriers nested at Far Ings in 1998, they were observed to spend a lot of time hunting across the pits to supply food to the nest (e.g. GP Catley [3]). During most of the study period, with fewer waterfowl young being produced at Far Ings, the old male harrier at Far Ings spent most of his time bringing food items in from the wolds. In 2021, with a better breeding season and more chicks available, observed hunting pressure from the new male and old female at Far Ings have increased again. Marsh harriers nesting to the east of the bridge have been repeatedly observed hunting over Barrow Haven Pit which currently contains some of the highest numbers of waterfowl young (Fig.7). It is true that there is certainly less marsh harrier hunting pressure at Water's Edge compared to Far lngs, likely related to the fact it is essentially enclosed by residential areas on at least two sides, but on the other hand, lesser black-backed gull predation appears to be the highest at Water's Edge due perhaps to the shorter distance to local gull breeding sites. In general, from observation, it appears that the predator species listed (Table 1) are present throughout the clay pits and most pressure is applied where the most food is available which may vary from year to year. Exceptions to this are the exotic turtles known only from Pioneer Pit and possibly pike which may not be present in some of the younger pits. There are certainly records of monster sized pike, including the famous record by K Gray in the 90's of a dead pike with (also dead) adult tufted duck stuck in its jaws.

#### Mink and Otter Predation

American mink have been reported as being present in the Barton-Barrow clay pits from at least 1985 by Dawson [22], but only appeared to have a major effect (e.g. on the water vole population) soon after 2008. Within a few years, the water vole population was completely lost from the local drains and to date has never recovered, but interestingly, they still exist in the reedbeds. This indicates that the vole population in the (almost) 1-dimensional drains were particularly vulnerable. It was

observed that mink systematically checked every vole burrow as the traversed the edge of the drains. The voles within the reedbeds exist in a far more 2-dimensional landscape which appears to allow the population there to evade mink predation enough to persist. Perhaps an easily observed sign of successful mink trapping/eradication would be the return of water vole to the drains as they appear to be a more favourable habitat for them. Despite trapping, mink presence continues across the pits as predation or attempted predation is typically observed multiple times per year, usually involving either moorhen (typically rising in alarm to the tops of the reeds) or coot (adults noisily fleeing the nest onto the water). Occasionally, birds are observed appearing injured or stressed from suspected mink attack.

Otter is also now present throughout the pits and it was once thought that they would significantly suppress mink numbers enough to allow vole and bird populations to recover. This appears not to be the case across the clay pits at least and this idea appears to persist from the initial Thames studies by Macdonald [24]. In a follow-on Thames study in 2009 [25], this has been shown to be a temporary effect only such that after a period of interaction and otter dispersal, little evidence was found that mink now exist at a substantially lower abundance than prior to the recovery of the otter. It appears that mink now co-exist with



Mating Water Voles in Far Ings Drain, May 2007. ©M. Bannister

otter by changing their behaviour: in essence mink take the daylight shift and otter the night shift. This finding certainly fits with observation across the clay pits. It was also found that, in the presence of otter, mink reduce the amount of fish prey and increase the amount of bird prey they take, so it may actually be that an increase in bird predation by mink now occurs due to the presence of otter. This may well explain the observation that although mink arrived at the clay pits on or before 1985, they were only perceived to be a major problem after c2008, when otter had returned.

The species accounts show that coot and moorhen have a significantly lower productivity than the duck species at both chick stage and nest/egg stage. They also show that mute swan and greylag goose have the highest productivity. This fits with the hypothesis of mink predation having a major effect on productivity. Nordström et al, <sup>26</sup> found no increase in productivity of both greylag and mute swan when american mink were eradicated from Baltic islands in contrast to the smaller nesting species. Although the authors note that mink have been known to kill even adult mute swan, it appears that their size gives them at least some protection.

These observations also fit with the findings of Ferreras et al  $^{[27]}$  and Brzeziński et al  $^{[28]}$ . The former studied a 33km stretch of the upper Thames. It was found that the impact of predation by American mink during the bird breeding season was moderate to high for moorhens (16% of adults and 46% of broods) and high for coots (30% of adults and 50% of broods). They noted that nesting behaviour of coots made them very vulnerable to mink predation. They hypothesized that the persistence of coot populations in areas with high mink density requires immigration from surrounding populations with lower mink impact.

Brzeziński et al [28] studied the effect of American mink predation on great crested grebe populations on a lake in north-eastern Poland. The survival rate of grebe nests was positively affected by increased distance between the nest and lake shoreline. It was found that the probability of mink occurrence in reedbeds decreases with distance from the bank because mink try to optimise the trade-off between hunting costs and food intake and although are aquatic, prefer to remain terrestrial when possible. Thus, grebe nests closer to the lake shoreline can be reached more easily by mink than those that



are more distant and even if mink are aware of nests most distant from the shoreline, they do not forage there while they can find nests that are easier to access.

#### Effect of Greylag Goose on the Breeding Success of other Waterfowl

The number of fledged young produced by each pit is negatively correlated with the presence of breeding geese. None of the top 6 pits (Fig.12) have nesting geese or are visited by moulting geese. This, of course, may be just chance, but a possible mechanism can be observed which tends to support the correlation: greylags graze heavily on the wet reedbed region, sometimes permanently reducing the amount of suitable nesting habitat. Coot and both grebes in common have nests that are often visible to the observer as they can be found in the wet outer region of the reedbed/vegetation, in contrast to most of the duck species. Grazing of the wet reedbed may therefore



Figure 17 – Reedbed Edge at Early Stages of Grazing by Greylag Geese (Western Approach Pit) 2019.

increase the risk of predation by terrestrial predators such as mink by moving nest sites closer to dry land in a similar fashion to the findings of Brzeziński et  $al^{[28]}$ . This can also be seen as a similar process to the higher predation experienced by the water voles in the 1-dimensional drains compared to the 2-dimensional reedbeds.

Those pits that have breeding geese also tend to have them in late summer during their annual moult which is when most grazing of the reed edge occurs. Pits that have adjacent areas of grass for grazing that are easily accessed from the pit are particularly favoured for both breeding and post-breeding moult such as Pursuit Pit and more recently, Western Approach Pit (part of Barton Reedbed) and East Pond at Water's Edge.

A reedbed that is in the process of being reduced in this fashion is Western Approach Pit (Fig.17). Reedbed loss by feral goose grazing may result in a serious loss of nesting habitat for several species, but would be expected to impact pochard, coot and particularly both grebes that like to nest

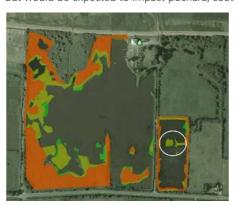


Figure 18 – Pursuit Pit Reedbed Extent: 2003 (green); 2007 (yellow); 2017 (orange). MAP DATA ©2019 GOOGLE

very close to the open water. Although I was vaguely aware that this was occurring, I had fallen victim of 'shifting baseline syndrome'. It was only after a chance encounter with Keith Parker when he commented that the reedbed area was much reduced in Pursuit. Pit that the thought was re-established in my mind. By studying images from Google Earth over the time period 2003, 2007 and 2017, the effect of feral goose grazing on the reedbed extent within Pursuit pit and Western Approach pit can be seen (Fig.18). Colour coding the reedbed extent shows that losses started between 2003 and 2007, or possibly earlier, but the main losses occurred between 2007 and 2017.

The loss of reedbed area within Pursuit pit amounts to c30%, but note that this is the most important part of the reedbed for breeding as it was the wettest part. As can be seen, the geese eat the reedbed from the water outwards as they can remain in safety during wing moult. Much of the remaining reedbed will be unfavourable for breeding apart from geese, mallard and possibly tufted duck. The loss of suitable breeding habitat to birds is therefore likely to be far more than c30% indicated. For the grebe species, it may be close to 100% loss of favourable breeding habitat. Certainly, both grebe species have been long lost as breeding species on this pit. Losses in Western Approach reedbed amount to c28%, but once again it is the most important part, particularly the peninsula and island (circled), which was the breeding site for little grebes on this pit.

A large flock of moulting geese inevitably increases nutrient levels within the water body by the birds repeatedly defacating in the pit. They are effectively moving nutrients from the surrounding fields and lawns and adding it into the pit. Over time, this can have a significant effect as confirmed by the Natural England study of 2014 [21]. In particular phosphate is at an elevated level.

The moulting feral goose flock appears to be still increasing and the effect is not limited to Pursuit Pit – it appears that East Pond at Water's Edge may be the next victim to this effect as the adjacent property has large, accessible lawns favoured by the geese. The evidence appears strong, therefore, that the feral goose flock is negatively effecting other waterfowl breeding success by both reducing suitable nesting habitat, increasing mink predation risk by removing the wet reed edge and increasingly taking the available nest sites for themselves with attendant territorial aggression towards other breeders.

It is known that as well as the human release of the non-native mink and the feral greylag geese by wildfowling interests, the gull populations have been displaced to some degree from coastal areas to inland areas by human action (Ross-Smith [29]). All this additional predation pressure, increased competition and loss of wet reedbed is therefore very much a man-made problem.

#### Competition between Birds and Fish

There have been several studies that have shown removal of fish increases submerged plant density, e.g. a 17ha lake in southern England where submerged plant cover increased from less than 1% to 95%, Giles  $^{[30]}$ . Mute swan, coot and gadwall increased in association with greater weed growth and shoveler, tufted duck and pochard in association with greater invertebrate numbers. Such changes were not found in adjacent lakes with intact fish populations. A study in Bavaria by Haas et  $al^{[31]}$  established that the presence of carp in particular correlates with reduced invertebrate densities and plant biomass available for birds, except the fish eaters, such as the grebes.

Cabot <sup>[18]</sup> states that the presence of high densities of coarse fish can significantly reduce the number of aquatic insects. In one study, in the years following fish removal, mallard brood density increased from 0.22 to 0.81 per hectare. Loughs Neagh and Beg are the Irish breeding headquarters of tufted duck, and held 1,000 pairs in the 1960s, declining to 300 pairs in 1987. That decrease was attributed to increased competition for invertebrate food by an expanding roach population.

Many of the pits in the study area are stocked with fish, or were previously before becoming nature reserves. Large carp can be observed spawning on the surface of many pits in late summer and many of these are relatively poor for breeding waterfowl. I would include in these East Pond at Water's Edge and Pursuit Pit at Far Ings in particular. I am not aware of any removal of large fish from any of the pits specifically to benefit waterfowl, although there has been and maybe continues to be 'poaching' of carp from many of the pits. This is often frowned upon as 'disturbance', but I do wonder if, ironically, it is actually beneficial particularly to pits locked into the turbid/algal state and almost bereft of breeding waterfowl such as Pursuit Pit. Fish removal has occurred by chance on a few occasions however and there is evidence that waterfowl populations have subsequently increased, perhaps the clearest example of this being the amazing recovery of West Pond at Water's Edge:

Up until 2019, numbers of breeding waterfowl on West Pond were unremarkable. Large numbers

of big carp could be seen at the surface spawning each summer. In 2018, the non-native water fern (Azolla filiculoides) suddenly took hold, subsequently covering at least 80% of the open water surface (Fig. 19). Over a period of weeks, many fish were removed by several grey heron, little egret and even a great white egret as oxygen levels dropped in late summer and the fish came to the surface. Then, as quickly as it appeared, the water fern disappeared over the winter of 2018/2019. It was amazing to witness how such a mass of vegetation could seemingly just vanish. The landowner (NLC) confirmed that the known weevil control method was considered but not actually used, with collapse of its own accord considered most likely.

The subsequent explosion in breeding wildfowl numbers on this pond in 2019 was a sight to behold and is outlined in Fig.20. It was as if the 'reset button' had been pressed that took the pond back to an earlier time in its development, when it was far more attractive to nesting waterfowl. It can be seen that the herbivores (mallard, gadwall) benefitted first, followed by the invertebrate-feeding tufted duck and fish-eating little grebe three years



Figure 19 – Invasive Water Fern (Azolla filiculoides) covering West Pond in 2018.

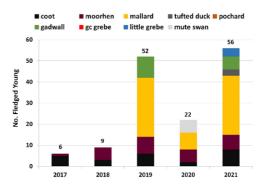


Figure 20 – Fledged Young on West Pond pre and post Azolla
Invasion

after the event. Reedbed management in this pit will have also had a positive effect on breeding numbers. Note that the reduction in the number of fledged young on this pond in 2020 is highly likely to be due to the saline intrusion event of Nov 2019 previously referred to.

#### Visitor and Dog Disturbance

A subject that receives much attention locally as several paths have been closed at the clay pits stating 'disturbance' as the reason, including one used historically by local people with and without dogs continuously since at least the 1950's.

A simple comparison can of course be made between Far Ings NNR which has one of the lowest number of human visitors, with that of Water's Edge, which receives the highest number of visitors, joggers, cyclists, dog walkers etc than any of the other clay pits, likely by at least an order of magnitude, yet it has the highest number of fledged young / ha of the whole pits system, on average 700% higher than that of Far Ings NNR. Productivity is also 25% higher. As we have seen however, we now believe that saline intrusion / poor water quality and lower food availability are the likely reasons for lower breeding numbers at Far Ings. It is therefore not a 'fair' comparison, although we can conclude that any 'disturbance' effect, if it exists, is certainly far less than the advantage given by the macrophyte-rich pits to the east. An alternative analysis is therefore required to see if there is any evidence of visitor disturbance.

#### Disturbance within Macrophyte-rich Pits Only

By looking at only the top 6 macrophyte-rich pits, this removes the main variable that controls breeding performance and also removes any effects of feral geese as none breed or moult on them. The majority of these pits are within Water's Edge, so for this subset at the very least, predation levels will be essentially the same. A theoretical 'Disturbance Area' is defined as the 'Marea of each pit (reedbed and open water) that is within 20m of a footpath or access point. The 20m distance is chosen somewhat artibrarily as that which will give a measureable difference between each pit. We would get a similar result if we chose something smaller or larger with the results just shifted up or down – the aim is really to see if we can find any correlation/relationship with the presence of visitors with and without dogs. Examples are given below in Fig.21, showing Big Pond, NE Pond and Folly Pond, all at Water's Edge (left) and Barrow Haven (right). Note that no consideration is given to the numbers of visitors, which are by far the highest at the Water's Edge Ponds. As we will see, this does not really matter to the results.

This data can be combined with the number of fledged young / ha for each pit to give the relationship shown in Fig.22. If disturbance was a problem to the breeding waterfowl, we would see a negative correlation, i.e. less fledged young/ha with increasing Disturbance Area, yet we do not see this at all. The trend line is actually in the other direction, which may, of course, just be chance, or possibly does indicate a real positive association. If we wanted to put any weighting onto the data for numbers of visitors, then the plot would look essentially the same, but stretched on the x-axis.

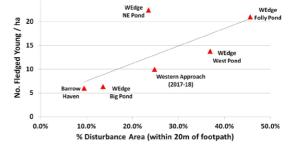
What we can definitely say, is that the data shows no detectable negative correlation with visitor presence (with or without dogs) in all pits that are similar, including all the factors that are known or suspected of influencing breeding success: macrophyte density; predator levels; absence of feral geese. If there is a negative correlation with visitor pressure it is so small as to be completely lost within the advantages gained by the small differences in macrophyte levels between these top 6 pits.





Figure 21 (above) – Definition of Theoretical 'Disturbance Areas' Based on the Region within 20m of Footpath or Access Point. Disturbance Areas (red); Remaining areas of reedbed and open water (white). MAP DATA ©2019 GOOGLE

Figure 22 (right) – Correlation between Fledged Young / ha and the % Disturbance Area (within 20m of a footpath)





#### **Nesting Associations for Predator Protection**

Given that the 'Disturbance Area' data appear to indicate that there might be a positive association with the human presence, it is worth considering just how such a mechanism could occur. It is known that birds look to gain protection by nesting close to more aggressive species such as fieldfares, lapwings, terns and gulls. It is not, then, a large stretch of the imagination to see that birds may also use humans as a predator deterrent in a similar manner. A study of nesting blackbirds in Spain by Ibáñez-Alámo [32] found that breeding success increased for those nests visited by the researchers which was attributed to the human presence deterring their main predator – in this case beech marten. The increased breeding success of arctic terns nesting closer to footpaths on Inner Farne by way of reduced gull predation also springs to mind.

There is some anecdotal evidence gathered while surveying the pits that supports this hypothesis: while lesser black-backed gulls can be noted over most of the pits, I have never observed one at Folly pond, which is the most visited and has the highest 'disturbance area'. I have witnessed corvids obviously seeking waterfowl eggs there, but only at a distance from the footpaths. Cabot<sup>[18]</sup> states: "Tufted duck's two main predators, carrion crows and magpies, can destroy over 50 per cent of all tufted clutches." No doubt predation occurs, but if the human presence deters these predators for even a part of the day only, then a significant improvement in survival at egg and chick stages may be gained. It may well be that that the nesting birds at Folly Pond have traded-off the risks of human and dog presence for the predator protection they give. Of course some could argue that this interferes with natural predation processes, but equally where the main predators are non-native american mink introduced by man and gulls that have been displaced by man from their natural habitats, I would see it as but a small rebalancing of the scales.

If there is no negative correlation with visitor 'disturbance' with and without dogs in the data analysed here, surely that is in conflict with published studies on disturbance and what is commonly claimed?

#### **Disturbance Studies for Wetlands**

An increasingly frequent quoted statement is that "dogs disturb wildlife" without qualification e.g. by LWT<sup>[33]</sup>. If the main published papers listed there are actually studied however, it becomes apparent that they are almost completely valid for ground nesting/foraging birds only within grassland/heathland/shore habitats only. In summary, disturbance by domestic dogs was found to be significant in the following cases:

- For ground nesting birds in grassland/heathland/shore habitats [34].
- In woodland habitat in eastern Australia where "ground dwelling birds appeared most affected" and where the birds were predated by dingo/domestic dog hybrids [25].
- For shore nesting white fronted plovers [36].
- For ground foraging birds in estuary / shore habitats (the Humber) [37].

The wetland habitat and related bird species within the Barton-Barrow Clay Pits system are nothing like those studied in these published disturbance papers. We should therefore not be surprised when the data in this study does not agree to the findings in the disturbance studies referenced – it is surely obvious that a ground nesting ringed plover on a beach and a coot nesting within a reedbed surrounded by water will react totally differently to the presence of a human and/or a dog? Despite much searching, I can only find one study that covers human and/or dog disturbance in a wetland habitat. This is the paper by Randler [38], which found that coot vigilance (head up, alert state) is increased by 3.4 sec after playing a recording of dog barking for 30sec. I fully expect the same results would be found if the experiment was repeated at Folly Pond, yet coot and all other species nesting there enjoy the highest productivity of all the clay pits. This demonstrates perfectly the dangers of extrapolating a change in bird behaviour to an effect at the population level.

The 2005 English Nature study [34] states that "The research shows that disturbance is greater where:

...distance to a refuge is greater". The inverse must therefore also be true and it appears that to a large extent, waterfowl on the pits act like they are in a refuge from human and/or dog threats. My own observation is that waterfowl simply swim away to a distance at which they feel comfortable if the visitor approaches the bank sides to a distance closer than their usual experience. This reaction reduces if the human/dog presence is predictable as the birds learn the actions are essentially benign. Thus, it is perfectly possible (and I experience it every year) to see broods of all the species covered here down to 5-10m at Water's Edge with little behaviour change to the birds. The reaction of the birds also appears to reduce as the shooting season is left behind and the association of humans with shooting is reduced, which often makes me wonder how much of the behaviour change termed 'human disturbance' should actually be termed 'indirect shooting disturbance'?

Humans and dogs can and undoubtedly do disturb the breeding bird species within the habitats in the relevant disturbance studies. Extrapolating this conclusion to all bird species in all habitats is simply poor science.

#### Disturbance to other Species

It is only recently that the view of 'disturbance' as a major problem in the Barton to Barrow clay pits appears to have become so prevalent amongst naturalists. I have heard people openly exclaim that Far Ings should be 'rewilded' and all humans removed (presumably excluding themselves). When I ask the question "where's your data?", the answer usually revolves around "something bad happened somewhere else". It appears to me that all perspective has been lost and that the rise of the misanthropic naturalist is mainly based upon a somewhat selfish desire to enjoy what remains of the natural world without many other people around. I have to admit to feeling this myself to some extent - all my birding is done solo - it's just that I don't expect others to be removed just for my own pleasure, particularly on the doorstep of a town with c20,000 people, in a climate crisis, when people need to spend more time locally and less time travelling.

I can hear the 'whataboutery' of some readers from here, so a brief summary of other species is perhaps necessary. A survey of territorial warblers around the clay pits I undertook in 2018 is indicated in Fig.23. The conclusion was that the density of breeding warblers in Water's Edge is c20% higher than those at Far Ings (3.5 and 2.9 singing males per ha respectively). Interestingly, Barrow Haven also had similarly high densities of breeding warblers which mirrors the results in this study of breeding waterfowl. It is interesting to postulate if this is ultimately related simply to better water quality driving higher food levels for all species (i.e. insect populations for warblers and aquatic weed/invertebrate populations for waterfowl). Incidentally, 2018 was a poor year nationally for numbers of breeding warblers. Correcting for the areas missed from the survey and combining with national BTO BBS population trends indicates that estimated total numbers over the 4 year period 2015-2018 is 620 to 780 warbler territories.

Several species have become locally extinct recently around Barton and the clay pits in recent decades including corn bunting, turtle dove and very recently willow tit. It seems likely cuckoo and others will join them soon. Their loss is beyond sad and particularly haunting when you experience the last male singing for a mate that no longer exists, but not one of them were or are about to be lost due to 'disturbance'.

Of the non-breeding birds at the clay pits, I would say grey heron stands out as one which suffers a level of behavioural disturbance. It will often fly to a different fishing spot if surprised by sudden human appearance at a flight initiation distance far higher than most other species. This in itself is worrying as it indicates an association of the human form with continued persecution. From the local breeding birds, I struggle to think of a single species that is negatively affected at the population level due to people walking with or without a dog, apart from, perhaps, marsh harrier which is another bird that still associates the human form with persecution by shooting. It is likely that if all human activity was removed from the region of Water's Edge to Sailing Pit that a pair could successfully nest there,

as they have, on occasion, tried and failed. That would, however, also entail evicting people from many houses and closing businesses – hardly a realistic plan. Even the satellite female harrier that would, on occasion, nest in Hotel/Bridge pit at Far Ings was unaffected by people with or without dogs walking down the adjacent Hotel Pit track (now closed to dog walkers) as she successfully brought off several young in multiple years when it was open to all. Nesting there (in the years the birds decided to) was and still is completely dependent upon whether the Hotel owner chooses to mow and use the track he owns between the two pits.



Figure 23 – Territorial Warblers (2018). Red areas unsurveyed (except for the loud species!). MAP DATA ©2019 GOOGLE

People seem particularly protective of bittern, but my own experience is that if they perceive they are being watched, they simply step into the reedbed. It is of note that there are now just as many bittern booming from the eastern pits, with their far greater human presence and activities, as there are in the western pits and with just as much (or little) evidence of breeding.

### Weather and Climate Change

The latest UKCP18 Predictions for 2070 [39] are that for a high emissions scenario, in central England, summer rainfall may decline by 57% and winter rainfall may increase by 33%, giving less rain overall with summer temperatures locally rising by up to 5.8deg. Although winter rainfall is projected to increase, projections for our own local 12km square indicate the reduced rainfall period starting from the end of March, with an average 40% reduction in rainfall in April and by up to 57% for the whole summer by 2070. Increases in spring storms, summer droughts and storm surges are predicted on top of this. We have seen that the success of the 2021 breeding season correlated with the higher water levels from May rains. We have also seen that in very dry spring conditions (March/April 2017, 2020) breeding can be poor. If dryer springs do become the norm, productivity may not reach the levels high enough to sustain the local breeding populations and the adult breeders are likely to go to better breeding sites elsewhere – if there is anywhere else to go that is.

As the 2013 storm surge showed and continuing saline intrusion at the spring tides show, all the pits are vulnerable to sea level rise and ultimately overtopping and abandonment with sea defences moved back. Currently, the Environment Agency Humber Flood Risk Management Strategy, 2008, that covers the pits to the west of the bridge states that no commitment has been made to continue to maintain the sea defences there beyond 2028 [40]. Climate change is therefore by far the greatest threat to the breeding waterfowl of the Barton to Barrow clay pits.

#### Conclusions

- The 5 year trend is that numbers of most breeding waterfowl are steadily increasing along with improving productivity. This indicates that water quality and food availability in the pits are improving and/or predation pressure is reducing.
- Productivity of both coot and moorhen appear to be too low to increase the local population.
   Increasing breeding numbers of these species are therefore likely to be due to immigration from other areas.
- Breeding waterfowl success is strongly linked to the presence of the macrophyte-rich pits where
  productivity is higher than for other pits. It is only in these pits that productivity appears to reach
  a level that is high enough to increase the population of all species including coot and moorhen.
- Currently, Water's Edge and Barrow Haven contain the main populations of breeding waterfowl, due simply to them containing the highest number of macrophyte-rich pits and highest productivity via improved food availability.
- The relatively poor breeding success of waterfowl at Far Ings is likely to be due to lower food availability compared to the pits to the east, in some part due to ongoing saline intrusion events, along with a reduction in water quality via nutrient enrichment from the increasingly large feral goose population.
- The greatest threat to breeding waterfowl across the pits is likely to be climate change via drier spring periods, increased saline intrusion from higher spring tides and possible over-topping or abandonment of sea defences. Other major threats include loss of macrophyte-rich pits to nutrient enrichment via agricultural/industrial run-off and nutrient input from the increasing feral goose flock; loss of wet reedbed to greylag overgrazing; increased predation by both nonnative and displaced native predators (e.g. gulls); loss of food availability via competition with an increasing fish population.
- There is no detectable negative correlation between numbers of visitors with or without dogs and breeding success. The data given here shows that if visitors and their dogs are kept to a generous and well laid out path system resulting in a minimal desire to stray and with limited access to the bank sides, similar to the current layout at Water's Edge, then disturbance to breeding waterfowl is essentially non-existent at the population level, even for a wetland on the doorstep of Barton with a population of c20,000 people. It is proposed that this is due to breeding waterfowl considering the wetland habitat within the pits a relative safe haven, in contrast to other habitats where the vast majority of disturbance studies apply.

Piecing together the evidence for what does and does not affect the breeding success of the waterfowl on the clay pits is not easy, but is interesting (to me at least). My viewpoints are often updated as more data is accumulated, so this study is most definitely not the end of the story, but hopefully gives a few insights that the reader was perhaps unaware of. It is mysteries like these that make birdwatching so enjoyable and all I hope for is that occasionally a curtain is drawn back a little and another small piece of their lives is revealed.



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Mallard Anas platyrhynchos Alkborough Flats Feb 6th 2020 © PAUL COOMBES





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#### Tim Mackrill, Roy Dennis Foundation.

A White-tailed Eagle passing overhead with slow, laboured strokes of its vast wings is always a memorable sight. In the UK our largest bird of prey is synonymous with northwest Scotland, but with the onset of the Isle of Wight reintroduction project it is a species that birders in Lincolnshire are likely to become increasingly familiar with in the coming years.

Historical research indicates that White-tailed Eagles were once common across the whole of England with the population estimated to be as high as 1,000-1,400 pairs in 500 CE. But like many birds of prey, and particularly those with a penchant for fish, they were relentlessly persecuted from the Middle Ages onwards and the population went into terminal decline. The last pair in southern England bred on Culver Cliff on the Isle of Wight in 1780, and they were slowly eradicated from the rest of the UK during the next century. Following the successful reintroduction of White-tailed Eagles to Scotland - where there are now approximately 150 breeding pairs - the Roy Dennis Wildlife Foundation and Forestry England embarked on a five-year project to restore the species to the estuaries of southern England. The first six birds were translocated from nests in the northwest Scotland stronghold and released on the Isle of Wight in August 2019, with each individual fitted with a satellite transmitter to enable post-release movements to be monitored in detail. A further seven birds followed in 2020. White-tailed Eagles tend to breed for the first time at four-five years, usually close to their natal site. However, wing-tagging and satellite tracking studies have shown that young birds can be extremely nomadic in their early years, sometimes dispersing over considerable distances and spending one-three years away before eventually returning to their natal area. As such there is a chance of individuals from the Isle of Wight turning up just about anywhere in England during their early

explorations, and this proved to be the case in spring 2020.

The satellite tracking data revealed that the Isle of Wight birds were extremely sedentary during their first winter, usually living in an area of just a few square kilometres and spending upwards of 90% of diurnal time perched inconspicuously on the edge of a wood or perhaps a post in an estuary. But then, as the days began to lengthen, their behaviour changed. In March 2020, just as our own movements were severely restricted by the first Covid-19 lockdown, the young eagles became extremely mobile. Longer sunny days encouraged them to begin dispersing away from areas they had favoured during winter. On 4th April two second calendar year birds, male G393 - who had wintered in Oxfordshire - and female G318 - who had been extremely sedentary on the Isle of Wight since release – passed through Lincolnshire as they headed north. That morning G393 left Rutland Water and flew north-east into Lincolnshire, passing just to the west of Mablethorpe at 13:40. It then followed the coast north and was photographed by Owen Beaumont from his garden near Louth at around 14:25. Eventually G393 stopped 10 km (6 miles) south of Grimsby in an area of scattered trees and woods, having flown 80 km (50 miles) since leaving Rutland Water. G318, meanwhile, left its overnight roost site in Berkshire and by 14:00 had flown 104 km (65 mils) and was approaching Daventry in Northamptonshire. It then passed to the west of Rutland Water before continuing north on a similar track through Lincolnshire. G318 eventually settled to roost just 10 km (6 miles) north-west of G393, in a wood between Grimsby and Caistor having flown a remarkable 263 km (163 miles) during the course of the day, aided by a strong southerly wind. The next day both eagles resumed their travels and, after crossing the Humber independently, they met up and flew north together for 17 kilometres (11 miles) en route to the North York Moors.

Both G393 and G318 spent the summer in the North York Moors, where they favoured quiet treelined valleys where Rabbits were abundant. G393 was the first to move south again and it travelled through South Lincolnshire on 1st August, passing over Tallington Lakes and Baston and Langtoft Pits en route to The Wash at Guy's Head. The bird subsequently spent the rest of the year in West

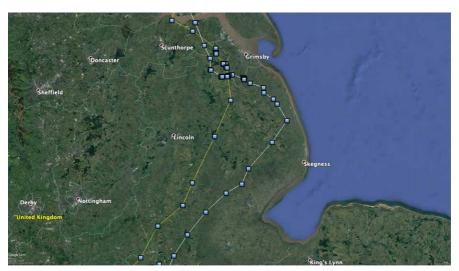


Figure 1 (above): Shows the movements of both G393 and G318 through Lincolnshire on April 4th, 2020 Figure 2 (below): Shows the movement of G393 through Lincolnshire on Aug 1st, 2020.



Norfolk. During this period, it spent prolonged periods around the Wash, and made brief forays across the border into Lincolnshire on 7th and 23rd November and 22nd December.

G318, meanwhile, remained in North Yorkshire for much longer, but returned to Lincolnshire on 26th September. It passed over the Humber at 09:45 and then alighted soon afterwards at Alkborough Flats, before continuing south. That night G318 roosted in woodland near Woodhall Spa, and she remained in the vicinity for the next three weeks. During this period its behaviour was very reminiscent of its time in the North York Moors, spending most of each day perched inconspicuously on the edge of woodlands and remaining sedentary for long periods.

On 16th and 17th October G318 visited Kirkby Gravel Pits and then, on 18th, moved 35 km (22 miles) north-east into the Lincolnshire Wolds. Here its core range centred on an area of mixed arable and pastoral land with deeply undulating topography. It spent most of the winter in this area, favouring an area of 8.5km². It seemed that, like in the North York Moors, the main attraction was high lagomorph abundance, combined with quiet woodlands for perching and roosting. The bird was observed catching Rabbits and Brown Hares on a regular basis and was also seen feeding on carrion.

On 4h November G318 flew south into the Lincolnshire Fens and next day visited the coast near Friskney, between Gibraltar Point and Freiston Shore, before heading back inland. It remained in the Fens until 22nd November and during this period roosted each night in a 14-hectare mixed woodland before making a daily 9 km (5.5 miles) commute to a small water storage reservoir where Black-headed Gulls were thought to be the key prey item. G318 became more mobile at the end of November, flying 30 km (19 miles) north to Middlemarsh Farm where it was photographed by Nige Lound on 23rd, and then making another visit to Kirkby Gravel Pits on 28th. G318 subsequently returned to its favoured area in the Wolds and remained there until the end of the year and was again seen predating both Rabbits and Brown Hares.



Figure 3: Movements of G318 in the late autumn and winter in Lincolnshire

As expected, both G393 and G318 have now returned to the South Coast, but the fact that G318 spent such a prolonged period in Lincolnshire demonstrates that immature White-tailed Eagles are likely to become regular visitors in future years. The fact that this bird spent much of her time in inland areas away from water is testament to high Rabbit and Brown Hare abundance. This bird has become a particular lagomorph specialist since release, and this perhaps explains its extended stay in the county. Nevertheless, the coastline around the Wash is very likely to attract more White-tailed Eagles in the coming years.

Very many thanks to the Lincolnshire birders who assisted with monitoring of G318 during her stay in the county. For the latest news on the White-tailed Eagle project please visit www.roydennis.org.

## **Breeding Cranes in Lincolnshire in 2020**

### Matthew Capper, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust

Common Crane *Grus grus* was once a common sight in the UK but hunting and the loss of wetland habitat led to their disappearance as a breeding species around 400 years ago. Birds returned to the UK in 1979 and the first nesting attempt was in 1981 at Horsey in the Norfolk Broads. They bred successfully the following year, when one chick was fledged. They are long-lived and breeding attempts are often unsuccessful, meaning that this embryonic population took 20 years to reach double figures. It wasn't until 2007 that they began to spread out from their Norfolk stronghold, when 10-12 pairs bred in two further counties.

In recent years, however, numbers have increased markedly, further boosted by a reintroduction project, centred on the Somerset Levels. In the east of England, Cranes colonised the Nene and Ouse Washes to the south of Lincolnshire and the Humberhead levels to the north-west. The Humberhead birds winter in East Anglia leading to an increase in sightings in the county as birds commute between the two areas and other birds spill over from the south, looking for available territories.

Today, the Lincolnshire Fens are a shadow of the once extensive mires, swamps and shallow lakes that extended across much of the south-east of the county. Over 99% of the original fenland has been lost in favour of large open fields, crisscrossed by deep drains. In 2009, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust acquired Willow Tree Fen, an area of farmland that was converted from growing cereals and beans to a new wetland, recreating some of the lost fenland habitat and making a significant addition to the Trust's suite of reserves. Fen habitat has been quickly recolonised and species such as Marsh Harrier Circus aeruginosus, Redshank Tringa totanus and Lapwing Vanellus vanellus all breed in significant numbers; Bittern Botaurus stellaris is now also noted with some regularity.

At 112 hectares, Willow Tree Fen is large but has a track bisecting the reserve and other paths and hides, so it was assumed that it would be unsuitable to host both a pair of breeding cranes and visitors. Cranes are notoriously sensitive to disturbance and the arrival of a pair at RSPB Lakenheath in 2007, for example, led to a complete redesign of the reserve, removing planned access to nearly half of the site.

Plans changed in 2020 with the arrival of COVID-19 and the resultant UK lockdown from 23rd March. Conditions at Willow Tree Fen, now devoid of visitors, were immediately suitable for Cranes and exactly one month later, on 22nd April, a pair arrived, most likely from the nearby Nene Washes. They stayed put and were joined the next day by a second pair, which they vigorously evicted over the course of the next few days.

Display was first noted on 23rd April and the decision was taken to formally close the reserve. South East Lincolnshire Warden John Oliver swung into action to establish a nest protection scheme, which was up and running just two days after the birds arrived. By the end of the breeding season, 25 volunteers had contributed over 1,500 hours of their time – an incredible effort.

On 5th May, the behaviour of the pair changed. Only one bird was seen at a time, indicating that the other was on the nest, incubating eggs. Five days later, the Prime Minister announced a conditional plan for the easing of lockdown, but the decision was taken to keep Willow Tree Fen closed and a watch point was established by the bridge at the entrance to the reserve.

The behaviour of the adults changed again on 2nd June and on 15th June it was confirmed by a remote camera that there was a single chick being cared for by the parents. At this point, the Trust shared the news more widely and it attracted a good deal of publicity, including items on BBC Look North and Radio 4's Farming Today.

The parents were most likely first-time breeders but proved to be both attentive and protective, keeping the young bird close to the nest site and within the nearby wetland until 25th June when



Common Crane Grus grus with juvenile at Willow Tree Fen LWT - Camera Trap LWT 29th June 2022

they moved to the adjacent Railway Field. This matches the pattern of behaviour seen at other sites in the UK such as the Humberhead Levels where young chicks are generally kept close to the nest at first and then graduate to nearby farmland as they get older. The layout of Willow Tree Fen is such that fences and ditches form barriers to this movement and so gates were opened and later that winter, new land bridges were created over ditches, to aid connectivity in future years.

The first flight was noted on 12th August and the parents and chick began to feed on neighbouring farmland, returning to the site to roost in the evenings. They remained at Willow Tree Fen until 11th October when the family party left to spend the winter with the wider crane population, most likely on the Ouse and Nene Washes. It represented the first breeding Common Cranes in Lincolnshire for over 400 years and the chick was one of 23 fledged nationally – a record breaking year involving 64 breeding pairs. Chick mortality can be high during the first year and so it was especially pleasing to see all three birds return to Willow Tree Fen on 22nd January 2021.

With birds being site faithful, it is likely that breeding attempts will occur at Willow Tree Fen for the foreseeable future. As with Lakenheath in 2007, this has prompted a discussion about how the Trust can host both visitors and Cranes going forward. In the short term, the needs of the birds will come first but in time, it is hoped that we can redesign the site to allow some access and public viewing whilst maintaining the privacy that the Cranes require.

The Trust would like to thank the volunteers who gave their time to Cranewatch in 2020 and the birders and members of the public for their understanding and patience when the site was closed to accommodate the birds.

## **Artificial Sand Martin nest site at Biscathorpe**

#### Stuart Britton - Mid-Lincs Ringing Group

#### **Background**

Since the late 1970's the Mid-Lincs Ringing Group (MLRG) has been ringing Sand Martins at a Sand Quarry owned by the Wallis family at Biscathorpe. In the early 1980's an exploratory oil drilling rig was set up beside the working face and had no detrimental effect on the birds. When the Quarry was worked out, the face was unsuitable for nesting as it had weeded over so ringers Andy Chappell and Ian Kingswood tried to scrape the banks to make them attractive to Sand Martins, but this was unsuccessful. Kevin Wallis was eager to get Sand Martins breeding again so he asked Andy if the Group could build an artificial site.

#### Construction of the nest site

Andy did some research and found plans on the BTO Website. Kevin agreed to assist in providing building materials with Andy and MLRG members being responsible for the construction. It was decided to construct two tiers of nest holes totalling 36 which were in a breeze block building constructed beside the quarry. The nest holes were made from drainage pipes and lead to a small nest chamber that can be accessed from a narrow corridor in the building. Each chamber has a numbered wooden, hinged hatch which gives Andy the ability to check and record the contents of each nest. The building was finished in 2014 and each hole was partially filled with sand.

#### Occupancy and breeding success

In July 2015 one of the nest chambers was occupied and six nestlings were ringed. The following year, 2016, five were occupied and 25 nestlings ringed. There was a much bigger uptake the following year when 129 nestlings and 11 adults were ringed – this was done by setting up a mist net in front of the holes at first light. Andy went to check for second broods and found that all the nests had been predated, probably by a Stoat or Weasel. This had a devastating effect on the colony, and it was immediately deserted. Despite some modifications to prevent a reoccurrence no Sand Martins returned in 2018.

However, in 2019 Andy was delighted to find a lot of occupied nests and by the end of the season 168 nestlings and 16 adults had been ringed. In 2020, we saw the most productive year so far, and 268 nestlings were ringed – the first on May 31st and the last on August 26th. To date only one of the ringed nestlings has been found elsewhere - at an artificial site at Rutland Water. All the data has been submitted to the BTO Nest Record Scheme.

As far as we are aware this is the only artificial site in the county which has provided easy access to the nest chambers. It provides valuable information on clutch and brood size and the exact age of the birds. The MLRG would like to acknowledge the continued support of the Wallis family and particularly Kevin on this project. Please note the site is private and there is no public access without the owner's permission. Finally, Andy Chappell's skill and dedication has made this long-term project possible.

**Update, 2021:** Last 8 pulli ringed on Aug 30th. It has been the best year for the Sand Martin bank - 163 were ringed in 2019, 267 in 2020 and 358 in 2021; six more fledged in 2021 before they could be ringed. So, in 2021 there were 79 nests in total with 36 first broods (188 nestlings ringed), 32 second broods and 11 third broods. These averaged 4.53 pulli per nest. MLRG also ringed 43 adults in 2021 and retrapped 14, all but 1 of them from 2019. One bird was controlled from Rutland water. One of the 2021 young was retrapped at Lands' End less than 30 days after it was ringed as a pullus.

**Footnote:** Fast forward a year to August 2021 and the MLRG had their first foreign recovery of a nestling ringed at the Biscathorpe colony. This was ringed on Aug 1st, 2021, and trapped alive on Aug 26th, 2021, at Saint-Vigor-d'Ymonville on the north side of the Seine estuary, France, 437km to the south.



#### Sand Martin colonies elsewhere in the county

The data which we have on record is summarised in the following table and is incomplete for several reasons. These include a lack of systematic checks on colonies; ephemeral colonies nesting opportunistically for one or two seasons only at temporary sites; no complete annual reports, 1997-2008. The *Lincolnshire Bird Atlas 1980-199:* an historical perspective stated that confirmed breeding occurred in 65 x 1km squares; probable breeding in 22 x 1km squares; possible breeding in 19 x 1km squares.

In the 1960s there were many very large colonies in active sand and gravel workings in the Wolds and all the main river valleys where the nest holes are usually excavated in vertical sandy cliffs - a countywide census in 1968 identified 4077 occupied nest holes). Unusual and opportunistic nest sites may also be utilised, such as that at Hall Weir, Kirton in 1990 when a small colony of 14 nests was discovered by Garry Steele in the exposed root plate of a huge Crack Willow felled by autumn gales (Figure 1); this short-lived site also supported an active Kingfisher nest. Another colony monitored by Garry is at Hagworthingham in a sandy cliff next to what is now a small commercial area. It has been in existence for at least 45 years to his knowledge and he periodically clears away overhanging vegetation allowing access to the nest holes.

Droughts in the Sahel region in 1968-69 and 1983-4 caused significant population crashes and the species became much less widespread thereafter. The 1984 county report noted that there had been a huge countywide decline, although few colony counts were reported that year. By 1989, some larger colonies of 100-400 holes began to appear again and *The Atlas* estimated that in occupied 1km squares that 50-100 pairs were likely to be present and further estimated that this could translate to a county total of 3,000-6,000 pairs.

Since the 1968 census, the sites that LBC has on record as having confirmed or probable breeding are listed in the table appended to this article, with estimated numbers of occupied nest holes given when recorded.

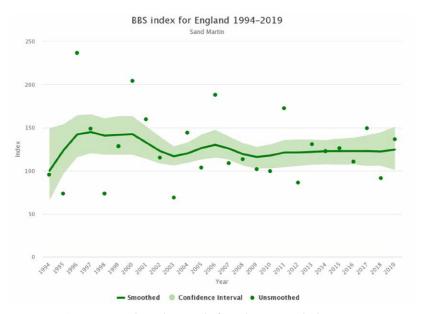


Figure 1: BTO Breeding Bird Survey index for Sand Martins in England, 1994-2019

#### Sand Martin migration and wintering areas

One of the first species of the spring to arrive, birds are regularly recorded from early to mid-March with most back by mid-late April. Return migration is apparent by late June with most leaving the UK late July through September; late stragglers are regularly recorded in October, with November records being exceptional. Birds then migrate S-SW through Europe to their wintering grounds in West Africa.

BTO ringing data cites 278 recoveries or controls of Sand Martins ringed in Lincolnshire, the oldest bird being just over 7 years (UK longevity record is currently 9 years). Birds ringed in Highland region, Scotland are the most distant birds retrapped in the county and birds retrapped or found dead in Europe have come from Belgium (3), Channel Islands (4), Hungary (1), and Netherlands (2); in Africa, Algeria (2), Cape Verde Islands (1), Morocco (2) and Senegal (8). The latter country has the most recoveries (376) of UK-ringed Sand Martins of any African country, followed by Morocco (42) and Algeria (21).

Since the crash of the 1983-4 the BTO BBS graph for England (Figure 1), 1994-2019, shows that the Sand Martin population has remained steady although at lower levels since the 1980s.

**Table 1:** Sand Martin colonies in Lincolnshire 1968-2020. In years when there were no colony counts, that year has been omitted although it does not mean that the species didn't breed in that year; NC = confirmed or probable breeding reported but no colony count.

Year	Site	No pairs	Comments
1968	County census	4077	
1980	Biscathorpe	400	
1982	Pinchbeck	100	
1983	West Ashby	2-3	
	Castle Bytham	12	
	Barrow/Barton	2-3	
	Ancaster	4-5	200+ in previous years
	Pinchbeck	5	
1986	Whisby pits	20	
	Sausthorpe	20-30	
	Kirkby on Bain	50	
1988	Hagworthingham	80	
	Kirkby GP	80	
	S Thoresby landfill	25	
	Ancaster GP	46	
	Spalding	400	
1989	Barton on Humber	15	
	Santon Warren	20	
	South Ferriby	10	
	Baston GP	97	
	Hagworthingham	150	
	Kirkby GP	100	
	Spalding	400	
	Messingham	15	
	Near Messingham	30	

Year	Site	No pairs	Comments
Late 1980s	LBC Atlas	3000-6000	Estimate from Lincolnshire Bird Atlas 1980-199.
1990	Barton on Humber	10	
	South Ferriby	17	
	Nettleton	70	
	Spalding	100	
	Kirkby GP	150	
	Little Bytham quarry	248	
	Langtoft GP	100	In 3 colonies
1991	Langtoft GP	146	
	Fonaby Top	30	
	Deeping St James	2	
	South Ferriby	9	
1992	Langtoft Common	268	
	Tallington GP	279	
	Deeping St James	15	
1993	Deeping St James	132	
	Tallington GP	170	
	Baston/Langtoft GP	500	
	Little Bytham quarry	NC	
1994	Pinchbeck marsh	NC	
	Kirkby GP	200	
	Whisby NP	20	
	Ancaster	20	
	Little Bytham quarry	6	
1995	Whisby quarries	300	
	West Ashby	200	
	Kirkby GP	850	
	Deeping St James	45	
1996	Bardney pits	No count	
	Deeping St James	600	In 3 colonies - "Deeping St James area"
	Kirkby GP	1140	In 4 colonies
	West Ashby	105	
	Witham on the Hill	12	
2009	Frampton Marsh	67	First report in artificial sand bank
2010	Messingham SQ	90	
	Whisby NP	14	Thorpe Pit: 17 broods reared.
	Westwoodside	95	Birds Wood quarry 60; Cove Farm pit 35
	Kirkby GP	25	
	Frampton Marsh	50	
2011	Pinchbeck	50	Vernatt's drain
	Kirkby GP	15	
	Westwoodside	15	Cove Farm pit.
	Frampton Marsh	35	
	Whisby NP	39	Artificial site; 58 broods, at least 21 prs double-brooded.

Year	Site	No pairs	Comments
2012	Castle Bytham	137	
	Hagworthingham	15	30 adults and young
	Deeping Lakes	22	
	Whisby NP	30	Min 29 broods with 4 double-brooded at least.
	Tydd St Mary's marsh	4	
2013	Deeping Lakes	NC	
	Castle Bytham	104	
	Whisby NP	23	Min 17 broods raised in artificial nest holes
2014	Holme Hall, Scunthorpe	NC	
	Spalding	NC	
	Trent Port, Marton	16	
	Dalderby	20	
	Whisby NP	1	
2015	Biscathorpe	NC	
2016	Hagworthingham	NC	
	Messingham SQ	NC	Probable breeding
2017	Hagworthingham	NC	
	South Ferriby Cliff	4+	colony
2018	Hagworthingham	0	Colony not used due to overhanging vegetation
	Asterby	NC	
	South Ferriby Cliff	30	Estimate
2019	Sutton Bridge	120	S Holland Main Drain
	Kirkby GP	65	
	Baston GP	50	
	Hagworthingham	5	
	Asterby	NC	
	Deeping Lakes	NC	
2020	Greetwell Bottom	15	Sand bank near to public footpath, minimum of 15 prs
			100420; colony deserted 250420 but birds present 300420.
	South Ferriby Cliff	0	Colony deserted
2021*	Hagworthingham	16	
	South Ferriby Cliff	0	Colony deserted

<sup>\* 2021</sup> data incomplete to date



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## **BBS Trends 2020**

# Lincolnshire Red Data Breeding Birds of Conservation Concern: BBS Trends 1995-2020 Distribution and Population change in Lincolnshire and other parts of UK

Ranked in order of frequency of occurrence in Lincolnshire

Species	Rank 2020	%Squares Lincs 2020	%Squares Lincs 2010	%Squares UK 2020	% UK birds in Lincs 2020	% Change Lincs
Skylark	1	85.7	93.8	58.8	5.2	-18
Yellowhammer	2	71.4	85.9	36.1	6.0	-35
Linnet	3	69.4	74.3	35.1	5.5	*
House Sparrow	4	65.3	67.2	58.3	4.7	-5
Starling	5	51.0	59.4	48.9	4.6	-60
Song Thrush	6	42.9	56.3	71.6	1.1	*
Yellow Wagtail	7	32.7	28.1	4.6	23.6	*
Swift	8	28.6	37.5	24.0	2.2	*
Mistle Thrush	9	22.4	40.6	22.7	1.6	*
Tree Sparrow	10	22.4	26.6	5.2	8.8	*
Grey Partridge	11	18.4	18.8	3.2	9.2	*
Lapwing	12	18.4	46.9	10.3	2.0	*
Corn Bunting	13	16.3	15.6	5.5	5.7	-23
Cuckoo	14	12.2	20.3	12.4	1.8	*
Spotted Flycatcher	15	0.0	1.6	4.4	0.0	*
Marsh Tit	16	0.0	1.6	3.5	0.0	-45
Tree Pipit	17	0.0	1.6	3.3	0.0	-62
Grasshopper Warbler	18	0.0	1.6	1.3	0.0	*
Turtle Dove	19	0.0	9.4	0.4	0.0	-96
Willow Tit	20	0.0	1.6	0.2	0.0	*
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	21	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	*

#### Notes

- %Squares UK is extracted from the BTO website and refers to the proportion of BBS squares in which each species was recorded in 2020 (Lincolnshire; 49 and UK; 2,025)
- 2. Figures in bold indicate statistically significant change at the 95% level
- \* indicates insufficient BBS squares covered to provide data to compute changes, no Lincolnshire or E. Midlands trends were computed this year due to insufficient data owing to COVID restrictions
- 4 Trend is not computable due to reduced data owing to COVID restrictions
- 5 Swift and Mistle Thrush are included for the first time following Birds of Conservation Concern 5
- 6 A comparison between % squares in Lincolnshire between 2020 and 2010 is shown for the first time.
- 7 Over the 10 year period the position of Yellow Wagtail and Corn Bunting has improved while that of Cuckoo, Lapwing, Mistle Thrush and Turtle Dove have particularly deteriorated.
- 8 The data suggests Yellow Wagtail, Tree Sparrow and Grey Partridge continue to be significantly more widespread in Lincolnshire than the rest of UK.
- 9 % UK birds in Lincs indicates the % of number of birds recorded in Lincolnshire in BBS compared to total birds recorded in UK, provided for information interest
- 10 Lincolnshire comprises 3.3% of the land area of UK

## Main Lincolnshire bird sites



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Front cover: Watercolour of **Black-throated Thrush** *Turdus atrogularis* by Darren Woodhead