

# **THE Lincolnshire BIRD REPORT 2021**









# Welcome to the 2021 Report



White-tailed Lapwing  
*Vanellus leucurus* East Halton Pits  
December 31st 2021  
© GRAHAM CATLEY









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# The Lincolnshire Bird Club 2021 Report

## Welcome to the 2021 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

Our database is now under the stewardship of Charlie Barnes at GLNP. We are still trying to replicate the high-quality species data packages the late Colin Casey produced for report writers. This has meant much more work for report writers and the team has been further reduced to try and ensure consistency for comparisons to 2020 and earlier years. Andrew Chick is working on this issue with Jon Cooper and Charlie Barnes, and we hope to see improvements for 2022. We are also grateful to John and Nicky Clarkson for proof-reading this report.

## Ringling Report 2021

We are happy to include a full ringing report this year and thank you to Dr Carl Soulsbury for stepping up to the plate.

## 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 2021 report; Graham Catley (6), Phil Espin (97) and Phil Hyde (185)

## Photographers

LBC is very grateful to the following photographers for supplying images for the 2021 report. All images included in the report have been obtained in Lincolnshire during 2021 and many are referred to in the text. All images are labelled with the photographer's name:

Mark Johnson	Ian Shepherd	Roy Harvey	L.&D. Everatt
Graham Catley	Phil Palmer	Ian Shepherd	R Caney
John Clarkson	Chris Grimshaw	Geoff Beasley	Nick Crouch
Neil Drinkall	Steve Nesbitt	W Scott	Andrew Chick
James Porter	Neil Smith	Gervase Orton	Mike Harrington
Simon Spavin	J Hanlon	A Allport	Wayne Gillatt
Russel Hayes	Gary Fenwick	Cliff Morrison	

## 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](mailto: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](http://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](mailto:info@lincsbirdclub.co.uk). Download the template from [www.lincsbirdclub.co.uk/site/media/LBC\\_Template\\_import.zip](http://www.lincsbirdclub.co.uk/site/media/LBC_Template_import.zip).

**BirdTrack:** Many birders are now using BirdTrack ([www.bto.org/birdtrack](http://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.

**eBird:** Many birders are also using eBird ([ebird.org/home](http://ebird.org/home)) to maintain their personal records online. LBC supports both BirdTrack/eBird and a single submission to BirdTrack/eBird will suffice; there is no need for you to send duplicate records direct to LBC. Please ensure your 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](http://www.bbrc.org.uk) and a copy sent to the county recorder at [recorder\\_south@lincsbirdclub.co.uk](mailto: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](mailto: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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:charlie.barnes@glnp.org.uk). Searches can be made online at [www.glnp.org.uk](http://www.glnp.org.uk)

## Data Sources used in the 2021 Bird Report

LBC offers its thanks to the following individuals and organizations for supplying and letting us use their data in the 2021 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. .

**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](http://www.birdtrack.net). For the first time we have used annual BirdTrack reporting rate data for Lincolnshire. This data has been downloaded 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](mailto: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/](http://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 Jennings with data input.

**LBC website:** A major revision of the LBC website ([www.lincsbirdclub.co.uk](http://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](mailto:gpcatley@gmail.com) or via his website at [grahamcatley.com](http://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.

Andrew Chick, Phil Espin and Phil Hyde May 2023





## Anne Goodall

### 21/09/1946 - 14/03/2022

Anne was a well-known ringer, ecologist and longest serving Chair of LBC from 1992 to 2007. Her lifelong friend, colleague and fellow LBC committee member, Janet Eastmead who was Hon. Secretary when Anne was Chair, writes:

"Anne was born in Wakefield on 21 September 1946, to 'Charlie' and 'Sally' Staples. Her father was in the RAF and her mother was a Nurse. She has a younger sister, Gill. The family was posted to RAF stations in Wales and Germany amongst others and finally to RAF Waddington. By this time her mother was a Sister at Lincoln County Hospital and, after retiring from the RAF her father became an Administrator there. When Anne left school she too obtained a post there in the Pathology Department and this is where I first met her. A shared interest in birds led to us to begin training to obtain bird-ringing licences from the BTO where, in due course, she served on the Ringing Committee for a while. She was, of course, a founder member of the Lincolnshire Bird Club and worked tirelessly on the club's publications.

After leaving the Pathology department she met and married Robin and they had a son, Iain. During this time she also took several medical research posts for NHS Consultants in Lincoln and London.

Having developed by this time a deep interest in the natural world in general she went on to obtain an MSc in Zoology at Hull University.

She then began to undertake bird surveys for an ecological consultancy in Lincolnshire. After a while, together with two or three other surveyors, she started a new consultancy, ESL (Ecological) Ltd., in Horncastle, which they later moved to Lincoln and which became very successful.

By this time she was living in Chambers Wood Cottages where she continued bird ringing. She also helped to set up the introduction and monitoring of Hazel Dormouse into the wood and a bat monitoring group.

Despite several attempts to retire she continued work until very recently.

My best friend for 60 years, we spent many weekends and holidays all over the UK from the Scilly Isles to Shetland, from Alderney to the Western Isles - birding, botanising and exploring the geology and archaeology of the British Isles. I will miss her terribly."



**Janet Eastmead, March 2022**



# Review of the Year: 2021

James Siddle

## Highlights

- First British record of **Egyptian Vulture** to be reviewed by BOURC
- First record of **Baillon's Crake** at Alkborough Flats for three days
- First record of **White-tailed Lapwing** on New Year's Eve at Halton Marshes
- Third record of **Bonaparte's Gull** at Gibraltar Point
- 5th record of **White-billed Diver** at Gibraltar Point
- 6th record of **Lesser Scaup** initially at Chapel Pit
- 6th-8th records of **Pacific Golden Plover** at Frampton (two) and Deeping Lakes
- 8th record of **Gull-billed Tern** at Cress Marsh
- First record of **Great Shearwater** since 1977 tracked between three locations

## January

The year began with a good count of five **Great Northern Divers** going south past Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe NNR on New Year's Day. The **Iceland Gull** at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe on the 2nd remained in the area for over two months and was one of five in the first winter period. A **Dipper** was at Belton House on the 8th. The 162 **Corn Buntings** at Stowgate on the 10th was the highest count of the year by a considerable margin. The **Glaucous Gull** that passed Mogg's Eye on the 15th was one of only two in the first half of the year – the other being at Stallingborough and surrounding areas from February 13th into April. The 10,656 **Wigeon** at Frampton on the 16th was by far the highest count of the year, and this was followed by a female **American Wigeon** at the same site on the 21st. On the 17th a **Lesser-spotted Woodpecker** was at Dunsby Fen – one of only three records during the year.

## February

A drake **Green-winged Teal** was at Alkborough Flats on the 2nd when ten **Water Pipits** were at Gibraltar Point. A notable influx of **Woodcock** occurred during the month; although records were widely dispersed, it was at Gibraltar Point where by far the largest numbers were noted, peaking at 169 birds on the 18th. The 223 **Snow Buntings** at Crook Bank on the 11th was high by recent standards. A female **Ring-necked Duck** was at Tallington Lakes from the 13th (and subsequently seen at Langtoft in April).

## March

An early **Northern Wheatear** was at Moulton Seas End on the 5th. A **Cattle Egret** at Frognall on the 7th was the first of numerous records of this species, and its change in status is reflected in its removal



**Snow Bunting** *Plectrophenax nivalis* Covenham Reservoir  
December 12th 2021 © JOHN CLARKSON





from being a county rarity. An **Osprey** at Huttoft Bank on the 19th was the first of a light spring passage. The first returning **Garganey** was at Willow Tree Fen on the 27th. The first returning **Hobby** was noted at Frampton Marsh on the 30th but breeding numbers were somewhat down this year compared to 2020.

## April

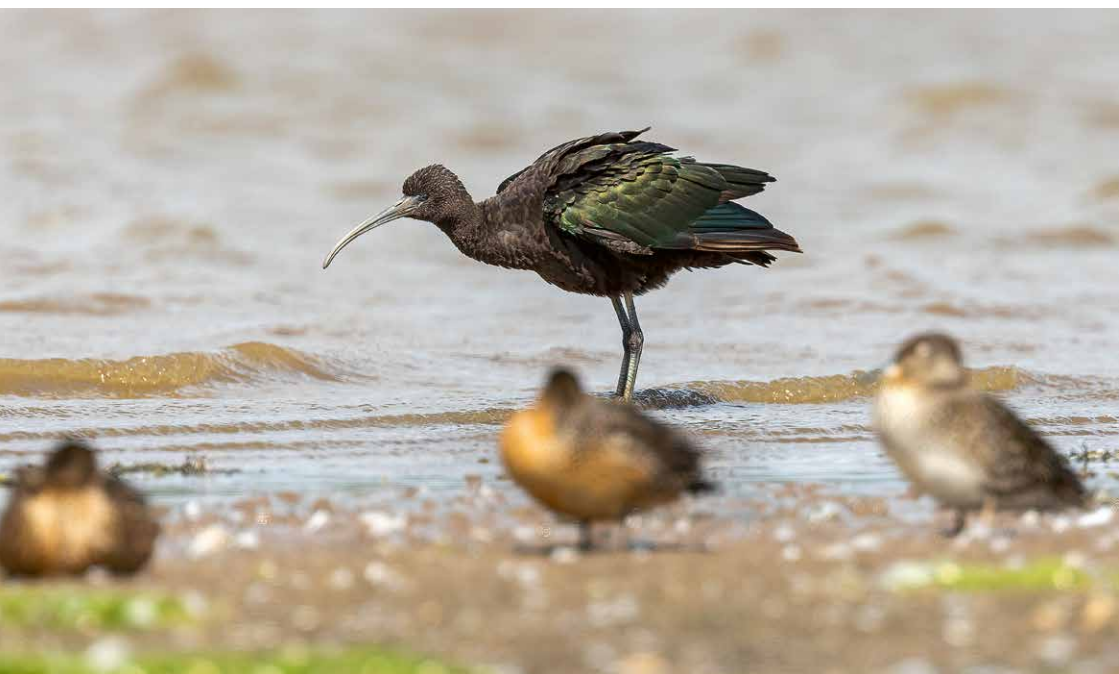
A drake **Ring-necked Duck** was at Barton Ski Pit from the 2nd. A **Wryneck** was in a garden in Welbourne on the 18th and was followed by singles at Gibraltar Point on the 22nd and Welton on the 30th.

A **Temminck's Stint** at Covenham Reservoir from the 24th was, surprisingly, the only record for the year. It was another poor year for **Dotterel** in the county, with the first of only three spring birds noted at Frampton Marsh from the 27th. A surge of **Arctic Terns** passed through late in the month, with good counts at several sites. A **Pied Flycatcher** at Huttoft Bank on the 28th was one of only two spring records this year. The month ended with the county's sixth record of **Lesser Scaup** at Chapel Pit on the 29th.

## May

Two **Common Crane** chicks appeared with the breeding pair at Willow Tree Fen on the 1st, unfortunately, it is suspected both were predated. A **Purple Heron** was at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe NNR from the 3rd. A second calendar year **Pallid Harrier** – the fifth county record – was noted at Bonby Carr on the 7th. One of only two spring **Wood Warblers** was at Theddlethorpe from the 8th with the other at Gibraltar Point on the 16th. A **Glossy Ibis** was at Manby Wetlands on the 10th before relocating to Alkborough Flats for an extended stay into September. The same day a **Red-rumped Swallow** lingered for half an hour at Gibraltar Point. The only **Great-Grey Shrike** of the year was at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe NNR on the unusual dates of the 11th-12th. Sensationally, an **Egyptian Vulture** was photographed flying over Willingham by Stow on May 13th – the first for Britain for one fortunate observer.

**Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* Alkborough Flats August 13th 2021 © GRAHAM CATLEY







**Baillon's Crake** *Zapornia pusilla* Alkborough Flats June 5th 2021 © NEIL DRINKALL

Six **Bitterns** at Baston GP on the 15th was the highest count in another good year for this species in the county. Also, on the 15th a **Honey Buzzard** was seen flying north over the East Dunes at Gibraltar Point, and was followed by one over Freiston Shore on the 18th. The raptor theme continued with a **Black Kite** at Gibraltar Point on the 19th whilst nearby a **Hoopoe** was in a Skegness garden the same day. April's **Lesser Scaup** was relocated at Manby Wetlands on the 21st. A **Red-rumped Swallow** was at Marston STW on the 25th. A **Stone Curlew** was at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe NNR on the 29th. Next day, two **Bee-eaters** were at Chapel St Leonard's, ending an eventful month.

## June

June started as May had ended with a **Bee-eater**, this one noted at Gibraltar Point on the 2nd. One of the highlights of early-June was the arrival of four **Rosy Starlings**, beginning with one at Holbeach Clough on the 1st and closely followed by birds at Huttoft Bank and Gibraltar Point two days later, and one at Blyton from the 6th. On the 2nd a **Marsh Warbler** was in song at Gibraltar Point. On the 5th a **Baillon's Crake** was noted at Alkborough Flats, the first county record, and remained until the 7th. The second **Bee-eater** of the month was vocal at Wolla Bank on the 9th. A **Honey Buzzard** was at Gibraltar Point on the 10th. The second **Marsh Warbler** of the year was at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe NNR on the 17th.

One of the highlights of the month was the appearance of at least two **Caspian Terns**, starting with one at Barton Sailing Pit from the 19th which was presumably the bird at Baston GP on the 20th; this bird was followed by another individual, bearing a Finish ring, at Barton Sailing Pit from the 25th. An adult male **Red-footed Falcon** flew in-off the sea at Huttoft on the 23rd and carried on inland. It was proving a good year for **Bee-eaters** with further records coming from Tetney – two on the 27th - and Normanby, where four were noted on the 30th. Also from the 19th was a **Glossy Ibis** at Bardney.





**Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* Freiston August 15th 2021 © JAMES PORTER

## July

On the 6th some 2,542 **Common Swifts** moved through Gibraltar Point. A superb long-staying **Pacific Golden Plover** was located at Frampton Marsh on the 19th. A series of **Roseate Tern** records peaked with three at Freiston Shore on the 12th. The **Gull-billed Tern** at Cress Marsh on the 22nd was only the eighth county record, but the second consecutive year it has been recorded in the county. This bird coincided with some high counts of **Sandwich Tern** in the county with 7,000 noted at Gibraltar Point on the 25th. A **Red-necked Phalarope** passing Huttoft on the 30th was seen at Gibraltar Point twenty minutes later.

## August

Remarkably, the **Pacific Golden Plover** at Frampton was joined by a second individual from the 5th. On the 9th a **Black Stork** was seen at Tetney Marsh, before relocating to Frampton on the 12th and visiting a number of sites in the area. It was seen through to September, proving one of the highlights of the year. A **Pectoral Sandpiper** at Frampton Marsh on the 7th was the first of a good series of autumn records in the county, with up to three together at the above site, with records also coming from Alkborough Flats and Middlemarsh Farm. The first of a reasonable passage of **Long-tailed Skuas** was noted at Theddlethorpe on the 17th.

The only autumn **Dotterel** – and only the fourth of the year – was at Frampton Marsh on the 21st. The first **Wryneck** of the autumn was at Freiston Shore from the 23rd with another at nearby Frampton Marsh from the 26th when the second, and final, **Red-necked Phalarope** of the year was noted at Freiston Shore. Also, on the 6th the first **Sabine's Gull**, of what was a reasonable autumn for this species, with around seven birds, was noted off Wolla Bank. A **Barred Warbler** was at Sandilands on the 24th. Another **Wryneck**, this one at Gibraltar Point, was noted on the 30th. The month ended with a **Common Rosefinch** trapped and ringed at Gibraltar Point.





Little Stint *Calidris minuta* Frampton Marsh September 12th 2021 © SIMON SPAVIN

## September

The second and final **Barred Warbler** of the autumn was at Huttoft Bank on the 1st. There was a reasonable passage of **Pied Flycatchers** early in the month, peaking at 19 at Gibraltar Point on the 4th. During the same period, **Common Redstarts** peaked at a very lowly nine at Gibraltar Point on the 3rd. Two **Common Rosefinches** – including August's bird – were at Gibraltar Point on the 3rd. The 26 **Little Stints** at Frampton Marsh on the 7th was the peak count of a good year for the species in the county. In contrast, the only **Wood Warbler** of the autumn was at Wolla Bank the same day. A **Wryneck** was in Skegness on the 10th. The only **Honey Buzzard** of the autumn flew south at Freiston Shore on the 11th when 3000 **Meadow Pipits** were noted at Gibraltar Point.

A **Red-breasted Goose** was found at Wrangle on the 21st and eventually relocated to Butterwick, staying until the 25th; this was the first county record since the two that wintered in 2007-8. A **Glossy Ibis** was at Gibraltar Point on the 23rd with one at East Halton Skitter next day. A drake **American Wigeon** was located at Freiston Shore on the 27th. An exceptional 8-12 **Long-tailed Skuas** were noted past Huttoft and Chapel Point on the 4th. A **Leach's Storm Petrel** off East Halton Skitter was one of only three records during the year.





**Jack Snipe** *Lymnocyptes minimus* Alkborough Flats November 22nd 2021 © GRAHAM CATLEY

## October

Strong north-westerlies were a feature early in the month when 1395 **Northern Gannets** passed Gibraltar Point and 1300 passed Huttoft on the 6th. The **Grey Phalarope** at Frampton Marsh on the 8th was the first of eight scattered birds during the month. The first **Yellow-browed Warbler** of a dismal autumn showing was at Gibraltar Point on the 6th. **The Red-backed Shrike** at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe NNR on the 9th was the only record of the year. A **Red-breasted Flycatcher** at Gibraltar Point from the 6th was followed by another at Theddlethorpe on the 13th. Single **Richard's Pipits** were noted at Gibraltar Point on the 10th and in-off the sea at Anderby Creek two weeks later. Two **Taiga Bean Geese** at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe NNR on the 12th and at Covenham on the 21st were the only confirmed Taiga records during the year. An arrival of **Redwing** from the 12th included 1345 at Gibraltar Point. The 14 **Jack Snipe** at Alkborough Flats on the 16th was the peak count for the year. The 37 **Goldcrests** at Gibraltar Point on the 19th was a dismally low highest count for the autumn.

The drake **American Wigeon** at Frampton Marsh from the 25th was probably the September Freiston Shore bird relocating. Also, from the 25th was an arrival of **Fieldfares** with the highest counts being inland.





## November

Some 9,000 **Wood Pigeons** moved over Gibraltar Point on the 2nd. An adult **Bonaparte's Gull** at Gibraltar Point was only the 3rd county record. An adult **Ring-necked Duck** at Tallington Lakes from the 5th was followed by an immature male at Baston GP from the 15th; both birds stayed to the end of the year.

On the 6th a **Pacific Golden Plover** at Deeping Fen was an excellent third record of the year, and 2000 **Fieldfare** were at West Pinchbeck the same day. A **Dusky Warbler** was at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe NNR on the 8th and a **Richard's Pipit** was at Alkborough Flats next day. Four **Shore Larks** at Theddlethorpe on the 11th were the only birds of the year. A **Pallas's Warbler** was at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe NNR on the 14th.

The **Grey Phalarope** that lingered at Covenham Reservoir from the 27th into December was the final and much-admired bird of this species during the year. Also, on the 27th the year's only **European Storm Petrel** was off East Halton.

## December

The only **Iceland Gull** in the second half of the year was at Cress Marsh on the 1st. Next day, a tide-edge hugging **Great Shearwater** was tracked past Mablethorpe, Huttoft and down to Gibraltar Point – incredibly the first in the county since 1977! A **White-billed Diver**, only the fifth county record, was noted off Gibraltar Point on the 9th.

A **Lesser Yellowlegs** was found at Goxhill Haven/East Halton Skitter on Dec 16th – perhaps the returning bird seen at Alkborough in 2020. The **Waxwing** at Stamford on the 21st was, remarkably, the only record of the year. The year ended on a significant high, with the discovery of the county's first **White-tailed Lapwing** at Halton Marshes on New Year's Eve.



Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* Covenham Reservoir December 12th 2021 © RUSSEL HAYES





## Systematic List 2021

**Collated and edited by** Phil Hyde, Phil Espin, John and Nicky Clarkson

**Contributing Authors:** Graham Catley, 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:** Stanbury, A., Eaton, M.A., Aebischer, Balmer, D., Brown, A., Douse, A., Lindley, P., McCulloch, N., Noble, D., and Win, I. (2021). The status of our bird populations: 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. *British Birds* 114(12): 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

<b>BB</b>	British Birds
<b>BBRC</b>	British Birds Rarities Committee
<b>BBS</b>	Breeding Birds Survey
<b>BO</b>	Bird Observatory
<b>BoCC</b>	Birds of Conservation Concern
<b>BOU</b>	British Ornithologists' Union
<b>BOURC</b>	British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee
<b>BTO</b>	British Trust for Ornithology
<b>CP</b>	Country Park
<b>GC</b>	Golf Course
<b>GP</b>	Gravel Pit(s)
<b>GWCT</b>	Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust
<b>JNCC</b>	Joint Nature Conservation Council
<b>LBC</b>	Lincolnshire Bird Club
<b>LBRC</b>	Lincolnshire Birds Records Committee
<b>LWT</b>	Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust
<b>NNR</b>	National Nature Reserve
<b>NP</b>	Nature Park
<b>NR</b>	Nature Reserve
<b>RBBP</b>	Rare Breeding Birds Panel
<b>RSPB</b>	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
<b>SQ</b>	Sand Quarry
<b>STW</b>	Sewage Treatment Works
<b>WeBS</b>	Wetland Bird Survey
<b>WWT</b>	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust





## Bird names used in this report

From Jan 1st 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. 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. A '-' in the table indicates that no counts were available for that month ( = a zero count).

## 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](mailto: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](http://www.birdtrack.net) (accessed January 2022). These are **reporting rate** charts which display the percentage that birds are recorded on complete lists submitted to BirdTrack in





2021; 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 nature conservation 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 because of the relatively small sample size (usually about 80 out of over 3500 UK squares) following COVID-19 restrictions in 2020 only 66 BBS squares were surveyed by volunteers in 2021, still down from 74 in 2019. Because of the continuing effects of 2020 on sample reliability, 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 Green 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.





## 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Freiston Shore	3500	155	2000	2271	1000	-	-	-	-	701	1600	-
Witham Mouth	-	-	2800	240	285	-	-	-	-	-	2700	48
Frampton Marsh	2000	1300	2568	1500	685	11	1	1	19	140	600	1100
Butterwick	-	-	175	250	185	2	-	-	-	1400	517	675
Croft Marsh	1200	850	700	230	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Holbeach Marsh	-	-	-	-	180	5	-	-	-	246	270	1200
Wainfleet Marshes	1200	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	500
Gibraltar Point	891	1150	719	205	155	1	-	21	191	218	562	180
Leverton	516	931	73	261	89	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Friskney Flats	800	600	55	84	74	-	-	-	-	-	-	40

The top 10 sites for Dark-bellied Brent Geese are tabulated with the highest count being 3500 at Freiston Shore Jan 5th. The west side of The Wash between Frampton Marsh and Gibraltar Point is clearly of international importance. On the Humber notable counts not in the table were 750 Jan 1st North Cotes Pt-Horseshoe Pt; 400 Jan 18th Humberston; 505 Feb 12th and 655 Nov 12th, Grainthorpe Haven area; 500 Dec 6th, Donna Nook. Wintering birds stayed well into May with large flocks in The Wash 15th-17th with a few remaining until the end of the month. Summering birds were noted Jun-Jul mainly on The Wash and with 1-2 on the Humber in the Cleethorpes area. Returning birds were noted from Aug 27th when 21 were at Gibraltar Point with more in September including 250 at Wrangle Marsh Sep 25th. The Wash numbers in Nov-Dec were significantly less than those seen in 2020 when 4000 were at Frampton Marsh and 2700 at Freiston Shore.

Inland records came from the Deeping Lakes area (1, Mar 18th-21st), presumably the same bird at Baston GP (1, Mar 27th), and Culverthorpe Lakes (Apr 15th-17th). One bird which was colour-ringed R-N4 at Kinnun, Terschelling (Netherlands) in Apr 2012 and first seen at Gibraltar Point in Mar 2014 was again present there Jan-Mar. It has been seen every winter 2014-2021 (and again in 2022).



Dark-bellied Brent Goose *B.b. bernicla* Tetney April 26th 2021 © IAN SHEPHERD





### 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.

At Frampton Marsh, one Mar 25th, two March 30th on and off to May 1st, and one lingering until May 23rd; it was also seen at Freiston Shore May 7th. A few more arrived in the autumn: one, Witham Mouth Nov 22nd with two there Nov 29th; two Covenham Reservoir Nov 27th, increasing to four Nov 28th.

### Red-breasted Goose

*Branta ruficollis*

Vagrant. Arctic Siberia. **BBRC.**

A 2CY+ bird was found on The Wash at Wrangle on Sep 21st and later relocated to fields at nearby Butterwick Marsh where it remained until Sep 25th (PPa). This was the first record since two at Covenham Reservoir and Saltfleet in 2006-2007. It is noteworthy that the numbers of these geese wintering in Romania in winter 2020/21 reached record proportions with 14,000 counted in Dec 2020. Accepted by BBRC (*British Birds* 115:551-612).



Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* Butterwick Marsh  
September 21st 2021 © PHIL PALMER

### Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

Common resident introduced from North America in the eighteenth and nineteenth 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	93	114	450	20	28	42	61	238	447	100	180	204
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	60	5	8	6	8	14	-	430	564	250	80	340
Frampton Marsh	20	31	20	26	24	28	26	43	50	258	293	354
Coastal Country Park	29	49	35	20	20	30	4	80	150	300	40	250
Manby Wetland	150	90	4	3	4	-	34	90	-	598	-	-
Middlemarsh Farm	97	197	75	14	6	10	-	40	8	140	60	220
Huttoft Bank	40	49	35	20	20	30	6	-	150	30	75	250
Covenham Reservoir	20	19	30	4	4	5	26	20	310	170	3	1
North End, Mablethorpe	230	60	18	51	36	16	6	-	-	-	165	-
Hartsholme Country Park	2	38	45	29	45	82	10	4	9	135	150	25



The highest count of the year was 564 moving south at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes on Sep 18th. The table lists the top 10 sites reporting a cumulative annual monthly total of more than 570 birds. There were no other large counts outside these sites. The highest monthly count across all sites was 2956 in October.

The species was found in 20% of BBS squares (2020 16%) with an average of five birds per occupied square (2020 3.9).

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis* Frampton Marsh May 5th 2021  
© CHRIS GRIMSHAW





**Barnacle Goose** *Branta leucopsis* Alkborough Flats January 10th 2021 © GRAHAM CATLEY

### **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.

Recorded in every month of the year at more than 50 sites, most numerous on the Humber Bank where a large feral colony continues to successfully breed. Alkborough Flats continues to host the largest flocks with peaks in the first part of the year of 2040 (Jan), 2100 (Feb), 2080 (Mar) and 1170 (Apr). Autumn numbers built up from September (800) to a peak in Dec (1440). Meanwhile down the Humber with three-figure counts at Cleethorpes (150, Oct) and Humberstone (110, Oct). Elsewhere there were 99 at Frampton Marsh and 80 at Huttoft Marsh in Oct, with 1-5 birds seen at 39 other widely scattered sites, both coastal and inland. There were no discernible influxes of possible Scottish or continental birds

### **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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Messingham SQ	300	200	80	80	44	38	96	92	1000	800	800	800
Baston	500	200	250	75	53	100	300	600	100	600	500	700
East Halton	244	35	35	21	35	250	220	600	900	400	200	200
Kirkby GPs	14	-	32	50	115	245	210	270	750	280	700	140
Covenham Res.	101	95	13	24	6	18	51	105	671	400	376	500
Alkborough Flats	132	74	163	80	23	400	-	730	-	600	-	-
Tallington Lakes	600	300	200	35	30	-	77	70	30	35	300	501
Frampton Marsh	400	58	53	48	86	30	149	326	60	181	79	531
Marston STW	300	70	55	35	26	-	-	-	20	580	550	350
Manby Wetland	225	210	6	3	9	2	4	250	40	584	2	1



The highest count of the year was 1000 at Messingham SQ on Sep 29th. The table lists the top 10 sites reporting a cumulative annual monthly total of more than 1350 birds. The largest count outside these sites was 700 at Nebraska Farm on Oct 3rd. The highest monthly count across all sites was 8669 in October. The species was found in 40% of BBS squares (2020 12%) with an average of six birds per occupied square (2019 10).

### Taiga Bean Goose *Anser fabalis* ■

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

Two were on the foreshore at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes on Oct 12th (JW) and a flock of five dropped into Covenham Reservoir Oct 21st (GPL), which was likely to have been the elusive 'flyovers' seen elsewhere on the NE coast (see below).

### Bean Goose spp. *Anser serrirostris/fabalis*

A flock of five flew over Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes on Oct 10th (JRW) and six, perhaps including this flock, flew over Cleethorpes on Oct 11th (CMo). They were thought most likely to be Taiga Bean Geese, but flight views were inconclusive.

### Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus* ■

A very common winter visitors 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: 5400; for national importance: 5100.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Read's Island	800	6000	-	-	1	-	-	-	10000	27500	25	-
Gibraltar Point	5000	1640	550	8	2	1	2	2	1597	15260	20040	1110
East Halton Skitter	2400	-	2	1	1	-	-	-	2206	4500	2000	3000
Sutton Bridge	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3600	450	500
Anderby-Huttoft	442	407	222	-	-	-	-	-	2059	4175	1214	1650
Keelby	109	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3050	239	300
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	3500	116	55	2	-	1	-	-	1300	3300	1600	2600
Manby Wetland	86	600	120	-	-	-	-	-	-	2500	3	2000
Middlemarsh Farm	1800	42	8	-	-	-	-	-	80	2300	250	47



Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus* Marston STW January 2nd 2021 © STEVE NESBITT





The table lists those sites reporting at least one monthly peak count of more than 2000 birds. Numbers in the county increased dramatically from September onwards. As in 2020, the highest count of the year was at Read’s Island where 27,500 were logged on Oct 9th, well above the threshold for international importance as was Gibraltar Point’s highest of 20,040 Nov 11th. These two sites between them logged 18 counts above the international threshold, 17 of them in the autumn between Sep 25th and Nov 19th. The other eight sites in the table also contributed counts in the low 1000s although none quite surpassed the thresholds for either international or national importance. A substantial population increase over the last 40 years, and a doubling of the wintering range within Britain, means that skeins of migrating Pink-footed Geese are a common sight across the county as they move between feeding and roosting areas. December counts fell away after the November peaks presumably as birds redistribute to other areas to the north and south of the county.

**Tundra Bean Goose** *Anser fabalis* ■

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

The only records in the first quarter were singles in the Huttoft Bank area Jan 1st and presumably the same Feb 27th, and another at Gibraltar Point Feb 4th.

In October one at Gibraltar Point 15th, another flew east at Frampton Marsh on 23rd, and two were at Freiston Shore 24th increasing to five 25th and six Nov 7th. The last records of the year were both on Nov 17th: one at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes flying south with 30 Pink-footed Geese, and two at Frampton Marsh.

**Russian White-fronted Goose** *A.a albifrons* (European/Russian subspecies) ■

Scarce winter visitor Sep-Apr. Northern Eurasia. Threshold for international importance: 12000; for national importance: 21. Red List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Croft Marsh LNR	-	4	31	-	-	-	-	-
Huttoft Bank	-	31	-	-	-	-	-	6
Gibraltar Point	-	2	30	-	-	-	5	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	29	-	3	-	-	-	-	-
Branston Island	-	-	20	-	-	-	-	-
Frampton Marsh	-	-	17	-	-	-	-	-
Freiston Shore	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	14
Chapel Point	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Around 70 records were received from 24 sites, some close together so some flock counts will be duplicated.

The table lists the top eight sites reporting monthly maxima of 10 or more birds. Eleven were logged at Chapel Point Jan 25th and on Jan 29th 29 flew in off the sea from the SE at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes with at least six juveniles among them. The flock of 30 at Huttoft Bank Feb 1st presumably included the same birds. Continuing the theme, a flock of 24-31 were seen on several dates Mar 2nd-17th at various



sites in and around Gibraltar Point, arguably the same mobile flock. A flock of 20 were at Branston Island Mar 7th and another 17 at Frampton Marsh Mar 9th on and off to Mar 19th. The only April record was of four at Boatmere Creek, Gedney, Apr 27th.

In the autumn, singles were at Covenham Reservoir Sep 26th and





29th, five were at Gibraltar Point Nov 5th and the year concluded with six on the Huttoft-Anderby Marshes Dec 24th-31st and 14 at Freiston Shore, also Dec 31st.

### 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Deeping Lakes	100	87	110	33	109	152	201	125	150	150	45	33
Crowland	40	7	-	16	32	101	-	-	49	83	26	60
Baston Fen	48	69	73	57	61	4	9	7	7	5	6	10
Bardney	60	40	200	20	2	30	-	-	2	-	-	1
Baston GPs	17	6	29	52	12	32	29	46	40	25	25	37
Alkborough Flats	9	55	48	30	70	50	9	35	18	8	12	-
Messingham SQ	4	7	7	8	10	16	47	43	36	30	10	30
Gibraltar Point	4	40	10	21	41	16	6	3	19	39	2	10
Cress Marsh	17	14	9	9	45	14	10	8	18	20	14	26
Woodhall Spa Airfield	9	7	8	9	11	24	17	20	24	35	-	35

The table lists the top 10 sites all of which have a cumulative reported annual monthly total of more than 200 birds. The highest count of 201 at Deeping Lakes in July was down on the high at the same site of 248 in June 2020. The only count of 100 not in the table was 100 at Branston Fen on Feb 25th. The species was found in 26% of BBS squares (2020 16%) with an average of four birds per occupied square (2020 3).

### 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.

This species continues to be a scarce passage migrant and very scarce winter visitor. Most of the records were in Jan-Apr: one, Frampton Marsh Jan 3rd and Mar 30th; three, Deeping Fen Jan 31st; two, Sandilands Feb 5th; two, Manby Wetlands Feb 17th; four, Branston Island Feb 21st and two Mar 7th; one, Bagmoor Floods Apr 11th. The only autumn/winter records were two south at Chapel Point Nov 5th and two past Wolla Bank Nov 24th.

### 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	Jun	Jul	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Alkborough Flats	3	-	41	1	-	-	550*	181	22	3
Deeping Fen	35	550	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gibraltar Point	4	4	1	-	-	-	2	438	110	20
Frampton Marsh	117	24	358	20	-	-	3	200	15	185
Huttoft-Anderby	75	75	37	10	-	-	-	347	94	108
Baston GPs	2	6	317	31	-	-	1	10	25	14
Deeping St Nicholas	8	315	-	-	-	-	-	8	-	-
Northgate, W. Pinchbeck	-	-	300	-	-	-	-	7	-	-
Swinderby	-	-	300	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nocton Fen	109	280	-	1	-	-	-	-	100	-

\*550 is the sum total for Sep 25th-Oct 25th.





**Whooper Swan** *Cygnus cygnus* Deeping High Bank April 11th 2021 © JAMES PORTER

The rise and rise of Whooper Swans in the county continues with more than 150 sites contributing over 900 records. The mix of data received includes both wintering flocks in situ and flocks flying over arriving in the autumn and departing in the spring, although activity was not always given by observers. The wintering flocks in the fens continued their presence from winter 2020 with 109 Nocton Fen Jan 2nd, 117 Frampton Marsh Jan 3rd, 151 Stowgate Jan 10th, 120 Deeping High Bank Feb 1st and many double-figure counts up and down the county. By Feb 11th 315 were noted at Deeping St Nicholas, an unprecedented number, with 550 Deeping Fen Feb 24th and 280 Nocton Fen Feb 28th. Departures began in March and flocks moving N/NW were seen at 12 sites at least Feb 19th-20th including Baston Fen 222 north, Dunsby Fen 150 north, Howdales 150 north, Northgate (W. Pinchbeck) 300 N in nine groups and 300 Swinderby (assumed different group). There are many other records from inland sites on these dates but without notes indicating movement. Flocks of 10-31 lingered into mid-April, the last seven Roxholm Apr 23rd. There were no records in May and lingering birds in the Branstion-Bardney area Jun 22nd-26th and Freiston Shore Jul 25th are assumed to have been sick or injured. Autumn arrivals began in late September and from Sep 25th-Oct 25th 550 were logged going south over Alkborough Flats. Good numbers were seen in many areas incoming during October with 438 at Gibraltar Point Oct 22nd the highest; 390 of these flew south and the same birds were presumably in the total of 347 south over Huttoft-Anderby the same day. As many of these birds moved south to the Cambridgeshire and Norfolk fens and wetlands, wintering flocks settled in with decent flocks on The Wash at Frampton Marsh and Gibraltar Point, and in the Huttoft-Anderby area. At Dunsby Fen there were 200 Nov 5th, Nocton Fen 100 Nov 11th, and 51 Stickford Fen Nov 14th-Dec 21st, a new phenomenon for that area. The Deepings-Crowland area hosted up to 176 birds from late November and the Frampton Marsh flock numbered between 100-185 up to the years end.

### **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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Kirkby GP	6	16	22	24	17	23	29	9	10	4	6	13
Thorpe Tilney Fen	27	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tattershall Bridge	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	25	-	-	-
Woodhall Spa	7	9	8	3	10	6	12	9	8	11	-	16
Airfield												
Middlemarsh Farm	1	2	1	13	11	8	7	-	-	5	-	5
Tattershall Thorpe	-	-	-	13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Quarry												
Frampton Marsh	-	11	6	1	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-
Baston GPs	-	10	8	2	2	1		2	2	1	5	2
Deeping Lakes	3	2	4	3	4	5	5	10	6	2	6	4
Messingham SQ	4	2	3	10	9	2	2	8	5	-	-	2



Around 59 sites reported this species, slightly more than in 2020 with Kirkby GP holding the dubious privilege of hosting most birds throughout the year, doubtless with some interchange between there and Woodhall Spa Airfield and the river Witham at Tattershall bridge. Confirmed breeding came from Kirkby GP (min three broods of 7,4,4 Apr 1st); Welland Bank Pits (4 goslings Apr 3rd); Deeping Lakes (2 goslings from Apr 8th); Boatmere Creek, Gedney (5 juveniles Apr 21st); Woodhall Spa Airfield (8 juveniles Apr 23rd); Middlemarsh Farm (12 goslings Apr 29th); Whisby NP (4 goslings Jun 24th, first site record). Their rise and rise continues.

### 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: 2500; for national importance: 470.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Pyewipe	200	100	200	145	150	200	9200	1860	1300	500	1284	848
Read's Island	50	7	161	109	163	635	1037	1130	1000	2000	448	248
Grainthorpe	-	429	313	146	-	520	440	540	538	490	620	-
Tetney	30	2	-	50	62	38	4	63	62	136	50	412
Gibraltar Point	105	54	39	40	26	32	60	75	147	185	122	22
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	40	33	25	16	10	15	-	8	-	83	500	86
Saltfleet	-	178	23	32	10	6	4	44	-	79	279	132
Alkborough Flats	51	146	113	110	187	19	1	8	-	11	48	36
Donna Nook	-	182	67	10	16	12	4	10	40	15	115	106
Frampton Marsh	54	54	121	111	99	36	24	5	27	12	9	18

The highest count of the year was 9200 seen at Pyewipe Marsh, Grimsby on Jul 28th. Pyewipe had July counts of 6650 in 2020 and 1360 in 2019. The meteoric rise in numbers at Pyewipe in July is an internationally important phenomenon, and these birds appear to be a moulting population\*. Numbers fell away much quicker than in the previous year. Pyewipe 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 8% of BBS squares (2020 4%) with an average of four birds per occupied square (2020 12).

\*A research project at University of Liverpool is GPS-tagging shelduck some of which have been found on the Humber. Full details at <https://shelducks.co.uk/gps-tracking/>.

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* Kirkby Gravel Pits June 1st 2021 © JAMES PORTER







**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**.

Birds were seen at Read’s Island Jun 19th and then a lone female appeared at Frampton Marsh Jun 26th-Aug 16th which was joined by another on Aug 16th. At Deeping Lakes LNR three were seen on Aug 22nd and 25th-26th, and a single lingered to Nov 14th. On the Humber, one was at Halton Marshes Aug 20th and presumably the same bird at Alkborough Flats Aug 26th-27th.

Note: To repeat the message of the 2020 report, this 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 review of records of Ruddy Shelduck continues to ascertain whether the species be recategorised 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.



**Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea* Deeping Lakes LNR November 12th 2021 © STEVE NESBITT

**Mandarin Duck** *Aix galericulata*

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

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Kirkby GP	-	-	-	3	1	1	3	-	-	-	1
North Cockerington	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tallington Lakes	-	-	-	1	-	3	-	-	-	-	-
Tathwell	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Boultham Mere	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
Math and Elsea Wood	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
Bourne	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	-
Frampton Marsh	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Gibraltar Point	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-
North Hykeham Pits	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
North Somercotes Warren	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Sleaford	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Sturton Park (Baumber)	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Whisby Nature Park	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-

Fourteen sites reported Mandarin in at least one month of the year, around 50 records in all. A long-staying male was at Millennium Green, N Hykeham from Jan 7th on and off until May 7th; what was thought to be





the same bird returned Sep 28th. Up to three birds were at Kirkby GP May 1st-Aug 25th, including a moulting male in mid-June and females or immatures on other dates, last seen there Dec 29th. North Cockerington, Tathwell and Tallington all saw three birds in February, March and July respectively. The irregular nature of the sightings makes it difficult to know if they are largely present most of the time but unreported or wandering birds from neighbouring counties. There were no reports of confirmed breeding.



**Mandarin Duck** *Aix galericulata* River Witham Woodhall  
February 12th 2021 © RUSSEL HAYES

### **Garganey** *Spatula querquedula* ■

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

Site	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Alkborough Flats	-	2	4	8	1	2	-	-	-
Frampton Marsh	-	4	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Bardney Pits	-	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Coastal Country Park	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Huttoft Bank	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gibraltar Point	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
Middlemarsh Farm	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	1
Bardney	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Covenham Reservoir	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Croft Marsh	-	-	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 highest count for the year was eight at Alkborough on Jun 9th, comprising seven drakes and one female. Recorded in nine months of the year, there were sightings recorded from 22 sites up from 17 in 2020. The first spring record was a single male at Willow Tree Fen on Mar 27th followed by another single male at Baston Fen on Mar 31st. The first pair was at Alkborough Flats on Apr 1st. In addition to those tabulated were pairs at Far Ings and Skidbrooke in Apr. Although a total of nine pairs were reported from nine sites



**Garganey** *Spatula querquedula* Marston STW September 19th 2021 © STEVE NESBITT





in April and May most of these were short staying migrants. One pair was confirmed breeding at Alkborough where a juvenile was seen on Jul 31st following the presence of a pair from Apr 16th to Jun 14th. A pair at Covenham Reservoir present from Apr 16th-22nd met the criteria for probable breeding as they were present for at least seven days and there is suitable breeding habitat in the immediate vicinity. In all a total of one confirmed and one probable pair bred. A further decrease in reported breeding from 2019 and 2020. The latest birds reported were singles at Whisby NP on Oct 3rd-4th and Middlemarsh Farm on Nov 27th. A note for the future: it would be helpful if all reports of this species could record the sex of birds seen.

### Northern 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Alkborough Flats	95	240	196	126	12	25	50	150	120	54	36	14
Frampton Marsh	118	69	68	68	17	30	9	13	8	22	33	58
Whisby Nature Park	11	32	49	17	2	2	3	5	73	106	66	11
Messingham SQ	15	18	20	26	2	4	6	8	53	55	56	20
Barton Pits	81	60	28	35	1	-	-	-	12	26	-	35
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	61	53	30	25	4	-	-	1	-	22	30	48
Baston GPs	12	37	29	15	4	8	-	5	6	39	36	65
Gibraltar Point	65	82	45	27	12	5	9	-	4	-	-	-
Middlemarsh Farm	6	22	22	25	10	7	7	8	18	29	34	38
Boultham Mere	25	33	12	4	2	-	2	16	42	42	34	9



Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata* Alkborough Flats August 13th 2021 © GRAHAM CATLEY



The table shows the top 10 sites holding maximum accumulated counts of more than 220 birds across the year ranked from highest to lowest. The highest count of the year was of 240 birds at Alkborough Flats on Feb 23rd. The only other non-tabulated count of more than 75 this year was 76 at Garthorpe on Feb 4th. The maximum monthly total across all sites in 2021 was 992 in February compared with 1286 the same month the previous year. For the second year running 13 sites held two or more birds through May and June and 12 sites reported evidence of breeding. Three sites had confirmed breeding with total of eight confirmed pairs as follows: Alkborough Flats where five separate broods of nine, eight, seven, seven and five ducklings were noted on July 11th; Middlemarsh Farm where two females with broods of five and six were seen on Jun 22nd and Jul 19th; a female at Baston GP had a brood of seven Jun 2nd. Frampton Marsh reported 23 pairs and Freiston Shore five pairs, but no productivity details were supplied from either site. A further seven sites held a total of nine probable breeding pairs as follows: Gibraltar Point (3), with single pairs at Baston Fen, Croft Marsh, Cress Marsh, Kirkby on Bain GP, Manby Wetland and Messingham SQ. In total 45 pairs were reported compared to 18 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.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Alkborough Flats	124	216	142	90	110	248	60	60	45	4	22	38
Woodhall Spa Airfield	208	65	38	6	14	6	10	-	16	25	150	1
Whisby NP	184	81	69	39	8	41	30	73	140	65	194	4
Frampton Marsh	50	93	159	101	33	95	20	23	34	76	78	28
Kirkby GP	80	130	45	21	24	38	30	30	70	90	130	120
Cress Marsh	53	28	9	7	1	4	2	5	3	15	47	110
Messingham SQ	97	82	90	38	20	12	10	30	90	64	44	30
East Halton Skitter/marshes	73	-	15	9	3	6	1	8	52	46	93	62
Covenham Reservoir	89	26	20	15	3	-	-	1	4	4	84	40
Swanholme Lakes	60	87	5	-	-	-	-	-	9	26	34	76



Gadwall *Mareca strepera* Frampton Marsh 2nd May 2021 © NEIL SMITH





The table lists the top 10 sites in the county, adjudged by the sum of the monthly peak counts which gives a rough guide. Records were received from more than 160 sites and in every month of the year. The highest count of the year of 248 was at Alkborough Flats Jun 14th and no sites exceeded the national importance threshold of 310. There were other notable peaks at Woodhall Spa Airfield Jan 1st (208) and Nov 21st (150), mirrored by Whisby NP (184 Jan 21st and 194 Nov 17th); Kirkby GP had 130 Feb 10th, Frampton Marsh 159 Mar 23rd and Cress Marsh 110 Dec 9th.

Eurasian 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: 4500. **RBBP.**

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Frampton Marsh	10656	1715	3000	110	20	3	1	1	1000	4449	4271	6770
Alkborough Flats	2500	2000	1700	280	10	9	12	95	136	232	438	660
Garthorpe	1800	1900	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	300	400	560
Freiston Shore	3000	64	300	36	2	-	7	-	40	300	1200	-
Middlemarsh Farm	600	1000	800	20	1	-	-	3	120	400	400	450
Baston	400	1017	450	29	2	-	6	21	26	411	500	400
Huttoft Bank	496	384	232	-	-	-	4	-	100	280	304	687
Coastal Country Park	496	384	232	-	-	-	-	14	92	239	304	687
Gibraltar Point	400	580	430	16	7	3	25	-	-	235	620	125
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	400	500	70	13	-	-	-	5	61	333	400	270

The table shows the top 10 sites holding maximum accumulated counts of more than 2050 birds across the year ranked from highest to lowest. The largest count of 10,656 was from Frampton Marsh on Jan 16th. Other counts of more than 750 birds not listed in the table came from Butterwick, 1450 Nov 7th, Woodhall Spa Airfield, 1000 Feb 26th, Welland 850 Oct 9th and Willow Tree Fen, 800 Feb 6th. As in most years there were several summering birds with single pairs reported at Alkborough and Gibraltar Point during May, but no evidence of breeding was noted in the form of displaying birds or fledged young. The largest movement at sea was 280 (direction not noted) reported from Huttoft Car Terrace on Oct 6th.

American Wigeon *Mareca americana*

Rare. N. America. **LBRC.**

After a blank in 2020 there were two records in 2021. The first, a female and probably adult, was well found and described at Frampton Marsh on Mar 21st (JB, J. Hanlon). This is only the second time a female has been found in the county (as far as we are aware), and it's always a very difficult task to find amidst the throng of Eurasian Wigeon and easily overlooked. An adult male at Freiston Shore on Sep 27th-28th (PS) was probably the same bird found later at Frampton Marsh on Oct 25th-Nov 3rd (JSt, et al). These are the 21st and 22nd county records.



American Wigeon *Mareca americana* Frampton Marsh March 19th 2021 © J HANLON



### 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Alkborough Flats	196	152	182	51	70	190	39	170	80	70	58	82
Covenham Res.	268	195	46	106	91	36	30	13	140	51	90	125
Baston	120	40	30	43	20	64	120	120	300	35	120	100
East Halton	61	-	13	22	21	46	51	123	271	198	59	139
Manby Wetland	132	150	30	15	40	85	64	90	-	162	95	49
Donna Nook	-	92	69	12	12	49	6	174	60	72	210	54
Boultham Mere	60	46	57	26	51	50	20	128	118	113	90	50
Hartsholme Hall	15	72	49	41	47	42	20	122	105	109	102	81
Frampton Marsh	44	65	31	29	53	67	100	98	76	70	12	117
Barton Pits	51	35	75	61	59	22	116	29	69	80	8	109

BBS results show that Mallard continues to be our commonest breeding waterfowl species found in 70% of BBS squares (2020 47%, 2019 70%) with an average of 6.5 birds per occupied square (2020 7.2, 2019 6.7). The table shows monthly maximum counts for the top 10 sites holding a monthly cumulative annual maximum count of more than 700 birds. The highest count for the year at one site was 300 at Baston GP in September. Mallard is widespread at low density, and this is reflected by reports received from over 400 sites during the year. Frampton Marsh topped the table in 2020 but numbers in 2021 appear to have halved.

### Northern 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**.



Northern Pintail *Anas acuta* Barton Pits October 28th 2021 © GRAHAM CATLEY





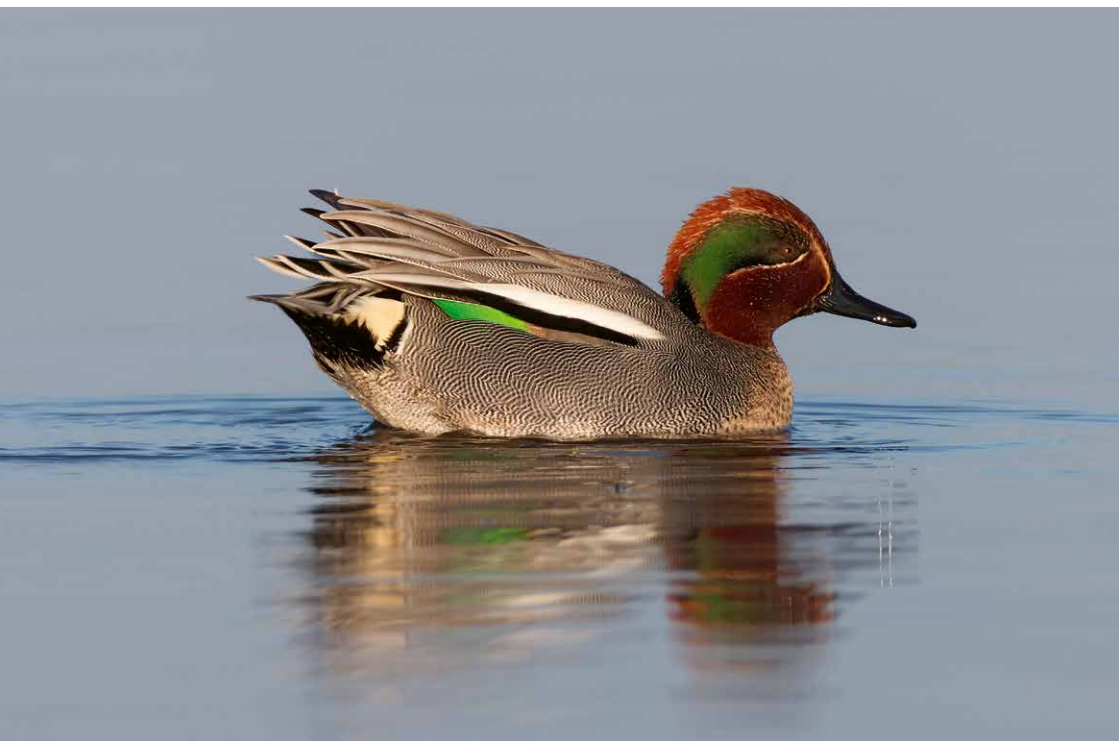
Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Frampton Marsh	43	34	40	10	2	-	1	-	61	39	37	36
Freiston Shore	200	-	-	2	-	-	-	6	-	22	4	-
Alkborough Flats	6	35	46	12	-	1	-	13	24	35	10	6
Coastal Country Park	2	3	3	2	-	-	-	34	6	13	14	2
Gibraltar Point	11	4	6	2	-	1	-	-	-	8	15	3
Middlemarsh Farm	-	1	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	41	2	-
Huttoft Bank	2	3	3	2	-	-	-	4	12	-	14	2
Branston Island	-	36	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Baston GPs	-	2	3	-	-	-	-	4	7	7	7	2
Trent Port (Marton)	10	19	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

The table shows the top 10 sites holding maximum accumulated counts of more than 25 birds across the year ranked from highest to lowest. The highest count of the year was 200 at Freiston Shore on Jan 1st. The highest peak monthly total (all sites) was 289 in January, low compared to 690 in November 2020 and 482 in February 2019, but comparable to 277 in February 2018. This indicates that 2021 was a poorer year for Pintail in Lincolnshire and again like 2020, there was no evidence of breeding activity. A few birds summered and a pair were reported at Frampton Marsh for one day on May 28th. Autumn sea watching was also poor with maximum counts of 12 south at Huttoft Bank on Sep 15th, 13 south at Anderby Creek on Oct 18th and 14 at Huttoft Bank on Nov 4th.

### 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: 5000; for national importance 4300.

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca* Frampton Marsh April 17th 2021 © NEIL SMITH







Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Read's Island	2000	380	226	4	-	-	-	70	3000	6500	416	2500
Frampton Marsh	585	601	160	63	37	10	17	97	500	509	893	3196
Alkborough Flats	450	1088	870	620	56	74	140	800	600	2000	1584	34
Killingholme Marshes	1450	90	130	5	-	-	-	23	80	270	432	360
Garthorpe	500	500	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	747	1050
Gibraltar Point	445	257	150	27	22	42	83	441	764	417	240	80
East Halton Skitter	674	163	72	53	5	1		89	50	75	240	267
Tennyson's Sands	218	257	100	26	9	42	83	112	236	450	550	608
Huttoft-Anderby	164	136	92	40	2	10	68	364	537	205	84	304
Donna Nook	-	13	8	-	-	-	-	-	500	500	140	300

The table lists the top 10 sites assessed by the monthly peak counts. The highest counts of the year were both at Read's Island, where there were 6,500 Oct 9th and 5,000 Oct 11th-12th, both surpassing the threshold for international importance. As usual pairs summered at several sites and no confirmed breeding evidence was reported. At Middlemarsh Farm, birds were seen displaying from the end of January but were never easy to see. Two males were seen together on Jun 18th and 10 birds flew from West pool Jun 22nd with nine there Jul 13th. There was no proof of breeding though they were suspected of having done so. As ever the key difficulty is deciding whether female/juvenile types appearing in July have bred on site or migrated in from elsewhere.

### Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*

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

An adult male was noted at Alkborough Flats on Feb 2nd, presumed to be a returning bird coming back to the most popular site in the county for this species (ND, GPC). This was the only record.

### 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Baston	58	60	47	32	22	12	31	55	57	7	80	46
Tallington Lakes	35	22	13	3	4	-	-	-	-	5	19	18
Messingham SQ	-	4	6	1	1	3	-	1	1	-	-	-
Barton Pits	-	-	-	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kate's Bridge	-	-	-	2	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Langtoft	-	-	-	2	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-



Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina* Messingham SQ 21st February 2021 © SIMON SPAVIN





The table shows the top six sites holding maximum monthly accumulated counts of more than five birds across the year ranked from highest to lowest. Five other sites held 1-2 birds in various months. The highest total monthly count across all sites in Lincs was 101 in November, up from 82 in Jul 2020. The highest day count was 80 at Baston GP on Nov 11th. Confirmed breeding reports came from Baston GP in May and June with single broods of one on May 14th, one on Jun 8th, two on Jun 22nd and broods of two and one on Jun 28th, suggesting at least three confirmed breeding pairs. There was a single probable breeding pair at Messingham SQ. The majority of records were in the south and west of the county. The Barton Pits report was of two males and a female on Apr 9th with a single male there on May 9th.

### Common 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: 2000; for national importance: 230. **RBBP.**

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Baston GPs	5	51	46	20	2	7	2	86	71	25	94	114
Messingham SQ	29	43	60	12	6	-	4	-	25	38	30	34
Tallington Lakes	77	101	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	39
Frampton Marsh	18	31	25	22	17	29	8	2	23	-	5	23
Barton Pits	79	6	26	10	4	8	4	3	4	21	-	13
Barrow Haven	154	-	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Deeping Lakes	4	3	7	8	1	1	28	46	25	2	7	-
Covenham Reservoir	9	10	-	2	2	-	-	4	11	10	35	27
Toft Newton Reservoir	32	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	3	21	26
Whisby Nature Park	8	1	5	1	-	2	-	1	7	11	23	19

The table shows the top 10 sites holding maximum accumulated counts of more than 78 birds across the year ranked from highest to lowest. The highest count of 154 came from Barrow Haven on Jan 30th. The only other non-table count over 50 was of 67 at N. Hykeham Pits on Jan 29th. The county total across all sites was 541 in January compared to 641 in Feb 2020 reflecting a further decrease in wintering birds this year. There were reports of 27 breeding pair this year down from 34 pairs in 2020. There were 14 reports of confirmed breeding with three broods at Barton Pits of seven on Jun 2nd, three on Jun 14th and two on Jul 2nd and 10 further confirmed pairs between Far lngs and Barrow Pits. At Frampton Marsh a brood of nine was reported on Jun 5th. There were eight probable pairs here too. Elsewhere there were two probable pairs at Kirkby on Bain Pits and one in the Baston area.

### 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**

In the first half of the year an immature female was at Tallington Lakes, Feb 13th-19th (JJ), and the same bird was present at Langtoft GP Apr 3rd-21st (JJ). An adult male was at Barrow Haven Ski Pit Apr 2nd-5th (GPC, WG, et al). In the autumn an adult male was found at Tallington GP, Nov 5th-Dec 31st, (JJ, P. Bolton) and an immature male was at Baston GP Nov 15th-Dec 31st (JJ).



Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* Barrow Haven Ski Pit  
April 3rd 2021 © SIMON SPAVIN





### Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* ■

Fairly common breeding species on GPs and similar water bodies, and fairly common or common winter visitor. Green List. Threshold for international importance: 8900; for national importance: 1300

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Baston GPs	166	180	321	137	102	69	35	60	4	90	281	343
Tallington Lakes	461	398	64	2	11	-	-	1	-	37	295	409
Whisby NP	112	150	159	100	38	15	82	101	180	179	165	8
Covenham Reservoir	100	88	85	90	62	42	43	20	103	135	250	250
Messingham SQ	40	250	130	48	26	48	40	40	16	30	40	165
Barton Pits	38	140	86	114	28	35	25	16	51	155	3	80
Deeping Lakes	70	63	86	120	12	12	59	100	24	20	25	40
Swanholme Lakes	20	115	60	39	18	6	-	11	11	60	73	78
Langtoft	74	-	54	81	31	-	2	11	-	21	26	112
East Halton	64	34	43	19	2	1	14	25	34	30	49	53

The table lists the top 10 sites all of which have a cumulative reported annual monthly total of more than 360 birds. The pits in the south west of the county put on a strong wintering show with the highest count of 461 at Tallington in January similar to the peak of 450 at Deeping Lakes in Aug 2020. The species was found in 11% of BBS squares (2020 18%, 2019 11%) with an average of 4.9 birds per occupied square (2020 5.9, 2019 9.4).

### Greater 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: 3100; for national importance: 39.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Barton Pits	2	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Freiston Shore	-	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Barrow Haven	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Covenham Reservoir	-	-	3	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-
Goxhill Haven	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Huttoft-Chapel Pt	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	3	-	1
Alkborough Flats	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bagmoor Floods	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gibraltar Point	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-
Sutton-on-Sea	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-

Scaup remained few and far between in 2021 with 112 records from 18 sites, albeit a significant number of these referred to long-staying birds at Covenham Reservoir, Deeping Lakes, and Tallington Lakes. The top 10 sites are tabulated, all having two or more birds in any one month. In the first quarter there were just 1-2 birds at six sites, with an immature male inland at Tallington Lakes Jan 3rd-Feb 16th and another immature male at Deeping Lakes Jan 3rd-Apr 26th. In February there was what might accurately be described as a mini-influx three Goxhill Haven Feb 4th, these or another three Barton Pits Feb 8th-9th, increasing to nine there Feb 22nd (four males) when there were also eight Freiston Shore. In March four were at Barrow Haven Mar 6th, three Covenham Reservoir Mar 20th, two Bagmoor Floods Mar 13th and probably the same two Alkborough Flats Mar 14th-Apr 4th. Aside from the long stayer at Deeping Lakes one flew past Chapel Point Apr 29th and an adult male at Covenham Reservoir May 19th-24th was the last of the spring.





**Greater Scaup** *Aythya marila* Alkborough Flats March 17th 2021 © GRAHAM CATLEY

An adult male off Tetney Marsh Jul 15th was the first of the autumn, an immature/female was at Frampton Marsh Aug10th-19th and two went past Sutton on Sea Sep 27th, a sparse scattering with which to begin the autumn. October saw 1-3 birds logged offshore between Chapel Point and Gibraltar Point. In November a long staying adult female was at Tallington Lakes Nov 4th-Dec 30th; otherwise, a few singles were noted on the coast Nov-Dec at Gibraltar Point and Huttoft, at Frampton Marsh Nov 27th, and inland at Whisby NP Nov 16th, Covenham Reservoir Nov 27th and Toft Newton Reservoir Dec 30th.

**Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis*

Vagrant. North America. **BBRC.**

An adult male was found on Chapel Pit LWT Reserve on Apr 29th (RDn, GWr, et al); almost a month later what is assumed to be the same bird was found at Manby Wetlands on May 21st (KSho, et al). Accepted by BBRC (*British Birds* 115:551-612).

Note: this species was off the BBRC list for the period 2015-2019 but is now back on it due to a recent fall-off in UK records. This was the 6th county record.

**Common 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: 9800; for national importance (except Shetland): 770.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Friskney	1445	212	23	51	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wainfleet All Saints	765	56	71	41	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gibraltar Point	21	49	163	3	6	7	2	3	17	127	95	376
Saltfleet Haven	-	350	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Freiston Shore	132	38	50	-	-	-	-	-	12	1	-	-
Huttoft Bank	17	9	5	3	-	7	7	-	8	6	45	7

Records were received from around 25 sites, allowing for some duplication, all coastal. The principal sites are tabulated and apart from a large flock at Saltfleet Haven in February, all the significant numbers were in and around The Wash. Friskney and Wainfleet All Saints are adjacent sites and the January peak counts there may include some overlap. The absence of autumn counts at these two sites is unfortunate. Counts in the autumn were much lower than in the first quarter but with the highest ones being in The Wash off Gibraltar Point. Several of the coastal seawatching sites also recorded 10-20 birds at this time and there were no inland records in 2021.



### Velvet Scoter *Melanitta fusca* ■

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor. Rare inland and in summer. Red List. Threshold for international importance: 4000; for national importance: 34.

Site	Jan	Feb	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Saltfleetby-Mablethorpe	3	1	-	2	4	2	3
Huttoft-Chapel Point	5	1	1	4	5	1	1
Gibraltar Point	3	-	-	1	5	2	-
Freiston Shore	2	-	-	-	-	-	-

A very poor year for this species with small numbers off the Saltfleetby-Chapel Point coastline, with a maximum of five Jan 4th, two in The Wash at Freiston Shore and three at Gibraltar Point Jan 21st the most. A dismal first quarter saw the last singles off Anderby Creek Feb 19th, Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes Feb 20th, 25th, and 28th.

In the autumn the first bird was seen off Huttoft Aug 31st with four there Sep 15th and 1-2 elsewhere on the coast. In Oct-Nov 1-2 were seen at Gibraltar Point with five Oct 24th, with similar numbers, possibly some of the same birds north along the coast to Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe. The Saltfleetby-Gibraltar Point coastline held 1-3 birds during December, the last record being a single Dec 24th.

### 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: 7500; for national importance: 1300.



Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra* Mablethorpe December 10th 2021 © GRAHAM CATLEY

Common Scoter were present in every month of the year, and more than 40 sites recorded them. Most of the counts were made along the coastline from Saltfleet south to Gibraltar Point. Due to birds being recorded at multiple seawatching sites along that section of coast, the maximum count at any one site (only) during 2021 was plotted in the chart. Visible offshore movements during the winter months at both ends of the year are likely to be local ones, dependent on tide and time of day, with some migratory movement evident Jul-Aug. Departures from UK waters have recently been documented as often being to the west overland. Some nocturnal recordings of these movements were documented

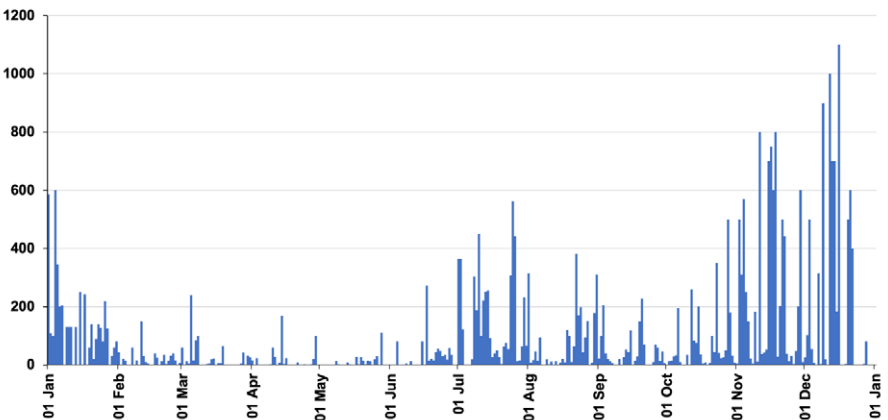




by observers in Grantham and Scopwick, mostly in Mar-Apr, and coastal counts are also at their lowest and continuing into May-Jun.

Counts on the Humber were much lower than on the coast with most recorded Aug-Sep: 40 Killingholme Aug 8th, Alkborough Flats 32 west Sep 16th and 32 (same flock?) East Halton Sep 19th. Later, 20 were off Immingham Nov 4th and 38 East Halton Skitter Nov 9th. The only significant inland records which were not nocturnally recorded were at Covenham Reservoir with 1-2 birds Jan-Jun increasing to 15 Jun 30th with singles recorded Jul 15th and Aug 18th.

Common Scoter, Saltfleet-Gibraltar Point: maximum day count, Jan-Dec 2021



Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis* ■

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor, rare in summer and inland. Red List. Threshold for international importance: 16000; for national importance: 130.

Site	Jan	Feb	Oct	Nov	Dec
Brickyard Lane, Theddlethorpe	-	-	1	3	2
Chapel Point	-	-	-	1	-
East Halton Brick Pits	-	-	-	1	-
Frampton Marsh	-	-	-	-	1
Freiston Shore	1	-	-	-	-
Gibraltar Point	-	-	2	1	1
Grainthorpe Haven to Horseshoe Point	-	-	-	1	-
Humberston Fitties	-	-	-	1	-
Huttoft Bank	1	-	-	1	1
Kirkby GP	-	-	-	-	1
Mablethorpe	-	-	-	3	4
Saltfleet Haven	-	1	-	-	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	1	-	1	4	3
Sutton-on-Sea	-	-	-	2	-
Witham Mouth	-	-	-	4	1

Long-tailed Ducks continue to be a scarce passage migrant and winter visitor in very small numbers. All sites recording them are tabulated showing the monthly peak count at each one. Singles were seen at four sites only, Jan-Feb and autumn bird appeared at three sites in October with more in Nov. The records



from Saltfleet-Chapel Point may have involved the same birds and a variable but small number were seen with the Common Scoters off Mablethorpe at different times. Four were noted at the Witham Mouth Nov 27th during a particularly good seawatch Nov 27th and on the Humber and a drake flew west at East Halton Nov 28th. Most seemed to remain into December with four off Mablethorpe on most days Dec 3rd-24th. Inland one was at Kirkby GP Dec 14th and another Frampton Marsh Dec 29th.

### Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* ■

Fairly common but somewhat localised winter visitor, rare in summer. Red List. Threshold for international importance: 11400; for national importance: 190.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Goxhill Marsh	200	30	40	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	32	369
Barton Pits	70	170	70	5	-	1	2	-	-	8	-	98
Covenham Reservoir	44	48	56	13	-	-	-	-	-	2	100	57
Baston GP	19	33	18	1	-	-	-	1	-	3	7	12
Langtoft West End Pits	32	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	14	30
Freiston/Witham Mouth	22	21	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	32	-
Toft Newton Reservoir	21	19	30	3	-	-	-	-	-	3	31	30
Deeping Lakes	28	23	16	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	14
Frampton Marsh	11	23	16	12	2	-	-	-	-	1	5	4
Whisby Nature Park	20	22	14	6	-	-	-	-	-	2	19	2



Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* Barton Pits April 20th 2021 © GRAHAM CATLEY

Seen in every month of the year (September record not in the table), records were received from more than 50 sites across the county. The Dec 2020 peak of 338 at Goxhill had fallen by January 2021 to 200, still above the threshold for national importance. The only other three-figure count of the first quarter was the 170 Barton Pits Feb 20th. Most birds had departed by the end of March with just a few lingering into April and two birds remained at Frampton Marsh until May 9th, one to May 10th. One or two summering birds were around Jun-Aug at Barton Pits (Jun 28th, Jul 25th), Bagmoor Floods (Jul 16th-17th), and Baston GP (Aug 5th). One was noted East Halton Skitter Sep 25th and small numbers (1-8) arrived at 13 sites on the coast and on inland waters during October. The main arrival occurred from mainly mid-November with 100 back at Covenham Reservoir Nov 28th, although there were few on the Humber then but the Goxhill total peaked at 369 Dec 13th, a very similar figure to that of Dec 2020.





## 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.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Dec
Bagmoor Floods	-	-	1	-
Barton Pits	1	2	1	-
Baston GPs	2	1	-	-
Deeping High Bank	-	-	-	1
Whisby Quarry (Job's Lane)	-	1	1	-

Smew *Mergellus albellus* Barton Pits  
February 13th 2021  
© GRAHAM CATLEY



The summary table tells its own story of this very scarce winter visitor. The two males present at Baston GP Dec 28th-29th 2020 were still there Jan 1st and 3rd, 2021. Birds were at Barton Pits Jan 30th, Feb 7th and 20th (2), and Mar 6th (all redheads). A much-admired male was found at Whisby Quarry (Job's Lane) Feb 16th and stayed until at least Mar 21st, and a day earlier, Mar 20th, a redhead was found at Bagmoor Floods. After this mini flurry of records in the first quarter, the only record in the rest of the year was a 1CY male at Gull Farm Bend on Deeping High Bank Dec 19th.

## Goosander *Mergus merganser* ■

Fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor, mainly inland. Rare in summer. Green List. Threshold for international importance: 2100; for national importance: 150.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Willow Tree Fen	63	111	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Deeping High Bank	7	30	8	-	-	-	2	2	1
Swanholme Lakes, Lincoln	13	16	3	-	-	-	-	10	25
Butterwick Hale	-	2	21	-	-	-	-	-	5
Cowbit Wash	16	21	12	-	-	-	-	-	1
West Ashby	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20
Crowland area	12	18	12	2	-	-	-	-	7
Deeping Lakes	18	16	12	2	3	-	2	2	9
Fiskerton Fen	18	14	7	-	-	-	-	-	2



The Deepings area and in particular Willow Tree Fen LWT reserve has become quite a centre for roosting Goosander wintering in the south of the county. There were counts on just seven dates in Jan-Feb in 2021, showing that numbers built up from 23 on Jan 17th to 111 Feb 21st. Counts from other sites in the area will all be part of this roost total. Across the county more than 85 sites recorded the species which was present in all months apart from July (not reflected in the table). Most had gone by the end of March with 1-6 birds seen at seven sites until Apr 30th. Singles in May-Jun were

Goosander *Mergus merganser* Boultham Park January 12th 2021  
© CHRIS GRIMSHAW



at Gibraltar Point May 29th and Kate's Bridge (Bourne) Jun 1st. After this the first autumn birds were one at Freiston Shore Aug 23rd and three Deeping Lakes Aug 29th-30th. September records were also scant with one Barton Pits 5th and three Huttoft Bank 20th. A few more were seen in Oct-Nov with 15 past Gibraltar Point Nov 20th and 10 Swanholme Lakes (Lincoln) Nov 23rd the only double figure counts. More widespread records were received in December involving around 35 sites, mainly inland most being small groups of less than 10 birds, 20 West Ashby Dec 30th and 25 Swanholme Lakes Dec 29th the highest numbers. It is only possible to surmise how many were being seen at roost at Willow Tree Fen in Nov-Dec.

### 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	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	13	7	111	6	3	1	-	4	10	38	15
Freiston Shore	21	15	9	12	-	1	-	-	8	-	-
Witham Mouth	-	-	9	1	-	-	-	-	-	20	1
Friskney	-	-	1	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sailor's Home, Wrangle	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-
Sutton-on-Sea	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	1	-
Wainfleet All Saints	-	-	4	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wrangle Marsh	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-
Huttoft	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	2	3	-

This largely marine sawbill was recorded in 11 months of the year with reports from around 26 sites. The table lists the top nine sites reporting cumulative monthly maxima of three or more birds. The highest count of the year was an astonishing 111 at Gibraltar Point on Mar 11th when 24 were offshore and another 87 went south; another 36 went south Mar 12th and 42 were still around Mar 13th. The vast majority of birds were in and around The Wash and most had departed by the end of April with 12 at Freiston Shore Apr 13th the last substantial count. None were reported in June with just a few Jul-Sep. Wintering birds were again most numerous around The Wash with 38 at Gibraltar Point Nov 20th. Between 1-4 birds were seen along the coast Saltfleet-Chapel Point Jan-Mar, Jul, and Sep-Nov. Very few records came from the Humber, singles at Barton Feb 13th, East Halton Jul 25th-26th and again October 2nd and 23rd, Cleethorpes Nov 3rd, Goxhill Marsh Dec 13th. Inland records were even scarcer with one at Covenham Reservoir May 19th and another at Toft Newton Reservoir Dec 21st.



Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator* Toft Newton Reservoir December 21st 2021 © GARY FENWICK





Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa*

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

Recorded in 44% of BBS squares (2020 33%, 2019, 46%) with an average of 2.2 birds per occupied square (2020 2.3/sq., 2019, 2.8/sq.). It is the 32nd most widespread species found on BBS in Lincs and 40th in terms of numbers. The Red-legged Partridge shooting season runs from Sep 1st-Feb 1st and poults are released from late June through to early August. The highest count from outside this period was 40 at Stubton on Feb 13th and 20th.



Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa* Dunsby Fen April 11th 2021 © STEVE NESBITT

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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Sturton by Stow	41	31	18	24	12	-	10	5	42	-	-	46
Boultham Mere	10	28	2	4	2	2	2	8	14	12	11	19
RAF Digby	-	8	16	8	12	9	-	9	18	19	12	-
Toft Newton Reservoir	-	-	-	2	2	2	3	4	27	9	14	7
Marton	4	5	2	2	-	2	1	-	6	27	1	18
Normanby by Spital	12	5	2	6	4	-	-	-	-	-	13	8
Covenham Reservoir	5	-	2	2	-	-	2	11	9	-	-	12
Hibaldstow Bridge	3	2	2	2	1	2	-	4	6	9	10	-
Baumber	9	8	6	2	2	-	4	-	-	-	-	6
Butterwick Hale	12	4	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	8
Total max count	257	198	99	161		75	44	87	225	125	175	180
N sites	34	43	30	54		31	14	15	14	18	20	18
Mean	7.6	4.6	3.3	3.0	2.4	2.4	3.1	5.8	16.1	6.9	8.8	10.0





Grey Partridge was recorded in 23% of BBS squares (2020 18%, 2019, 25%) with an average of 2.7 birds per occupied square (2020 2.3/sq. 2019, 1.7/sq.) and was the 46th most widespread species in the county and the 48th in terms of numbers. The table shows the top 10 sites holding maximum accumulated peak monthly counts of more than 35 birds. The highest count of the year of 46 birds again came from Sturton by Stow as in the previous year. The table also shows the total maximum count received from all sites each month, the number of sites reporting each month and the mean count, or covey size each month. The extent of releases by farmers to re-establish Grey Partridge in the county is unknown. Reports were received from around 160 sites in total.

### Quail *Coturnix coturnix* ■

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

Recorded in six months of the year with the first heard briefly at Baston Fen on Apr 30th and the last flushed from the side of a farm track at Flixborough on Sep 10th. On the face of it, it was a good year for Quail with 138 reports from 31 sites compared to 53 reports from 20 sites in 2020. The improvement in Quail numbers wasn't reflected in an increase in overall singing birds holding territory, with 22 in 2021 compared to 29 in 2020. However, people clearly monitored individual singers more closely than previous years. The first record on Apr 30th mentioned above was 2.5 weeks earlier than in 2021 but there were few birds around until a wider arrival on May 25th, with the first noc-mig night calling bird reported over Scopwick on May 26th. The focus this year seemed to shift too. Last year the Wolds and Fens did well but this year 14 singers were reported from the South Limestone Cliff, six from the Wolds and two from the Fens. The highest number recorded at one site was three, with three singing at Temple Bruer from June 8th-23rd and three between Donington on Bain and Withcall on Jul 3rd. Birds were singing widely through to Aug 5th but after that date the only birds singing were at Temple Bruer where they were last heard on Aug 24th. The spread of records received was Apr (1), May (18), Jun (69), Jul (37), Aug (12), Sep (1). Will a birder ever find a nest or see recently fledged chicks? The writer (PEs) spoke with a farmer near Withcall who says he flushed coveys of Quail while combining in 2020, so birders who drive combine harvesters watch out!

### Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

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

Recorded in 86% of BBS squares (2020 73%, 2019 93%) with an average of 7.1 birds per occupied square (2020 2.3/sq. 2019, 4.9/sq.). It was the 7th most widespread species in the county, up from 11th in 2020. After under-recording due to the negative impact of Covid restrictions in 2020 which meant very few early BBS visits took place, the numbers of Pheasants reported on BBS leapt in 2021.

### European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* ■

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

The first of the year was a bird churring from cover in the freshwater marsh at Rimac, Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes in the middle of the afternoon on May 11th, the only migrant reported. There were only 21 other reports this year all from four breeding sites. At Laughton Forest two, possibly three, birds were on their breeding grounds on May 15th. There was thought to be a pair here and one additional bird, and birds were reported on five dates up to Jun 26th. At Stapleford Woods up to three birds were reported on two dates between June 1st to 8th. At Tunman Woods up to three birds were reported on six dates between Jun 11th and Jul 2nd while at Walesby Woods two birds behaving like a pair were reported on Jun 7th.





## Common Swift *Apus apus* ■

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

Site	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Gibraltar Point	2	184	388	2542	528	6
Barton Pits	7	1000	120	-	-	-
Covenham Reservoir	14	1000	150	35	-	1
Anderby Creek/ Marsh	-	32	100	1000	522	-
Middlemarsh Farm	40	60	120	30	308	-
Frampton Marsh	4	300	20	3	-	-
Toft Newton Reservoir	10	250	18	15	18	3
Alkborough Flats	1	200	-	-	-	-
Huttoft Bank	-	22	59	200	156	-
Rosper Road Pools	-	-	200	-	-	-
Whisby Nature Park	-	200	6	-	-	-



**Common Swift**  
*Apus apus*  
Frampton Marsh  
May 23rd 2021  
© NEIL SMITH



More than 1200 records were received from around 180 sites and the first of the spring were singles at Covenham Reservoir and Fillingham Lake, both Apr 25th and eight days later than in 2020. Forty were over Middlemarsh Farm by Apr 29th and numbers built steadily from then and into May as birds arrived at many sites across the county. There were many counts into three figures and as expected at least 1000 Covenham Reservoir May 11th and Barton Pits May 23rd. Six sites recorded 100-388 in June with widespread smaller numbers gathering occasionally at regular feeding sites such as Covenham Reservoir, Toft Newton Reservoir and Barton Pits. Significant coastal movements were noted in the south of the county in July, especially at Gibraltar Point where there were 2,542 south Jul 6th, and more than 100 south on five other dates (but not as massive as the 46,026 on Jun 29th, 2020). Anderby Creek also logged 1000 on Jul 6th, part of the same movement. Later in July and August birds were more settled and smaller numbers were recorded very widely although both Gibraltar Point and Anderby Creek/Marsh logged more than 500 on Aug 6th and 10th respectively, and the former site had 438 present on Aug 23rd. Birds rapidly departed the county by the end of the month and there were just six records in September, all from Gibraltar Point, with six on Sep 11th and the last bird Sep 29th, followed by the last of the year over Swineshead Oct 1st.

## Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* ■

Fairly common but declining summer visitor. Red List.

Site	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Gibraltar Point	5	7	6	2	1	2
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	2	7	4	2	-	-
Huttoft Bank	-	5	4	2	1	-
Anderby Marsh	-	6	3	-	-	-
Baston GP	2	3	4	-	-	-
Boultham Mere	2	4	2	-	-	-
Marton	1	2	2	1	1	-
Anderby Creek	1	3	2	-	-	-
Baston Fen	1	2	2	-	1	-
Kirkby GP	1	2	3	-	-	-





**Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus* Laughton Forest July 9th 2021 © SIMON SPAVIN

The first was at Eagle Hall Wood on Apr 10th (10 days earlier than 2020) followed by birds on Apr 17th at East Halton Brick Pits and two at Gibraltar Point on Apr 19th. The highest count was seven at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes on May 8th and seven at Gibraltar Point on May 12th. The table shows the maximum peak monthly count for all sites with a cumulative annual monthly peak total of more than six birds. Records came from 123 sites with 73 of those reporting single birds in one month. The peak count across all sites in May was 133 at 77 sites down from 184 at 99 sites in 2020. Recorded in 14% of BBS squares (2020, 12%) with an average of 1.0 birds per occupied square (2020, 1.2/sq.). It was the 65th most widespread species down from 61st in 2020. The last birds were singles reported at Frampton Marsh Sep 9th and Gibraltar Point Sep 13th.

### **Rock Dove (feral) *Columba livia* 'feral'** ■

**Common and widespread resident. Green List.**

The highest count of the year of 205 came from Long Benington on Nov 18th, well down on the 2020 peak of 500 at Pyewipe Marsh, Grimsby in Dec 2020 (where 200 were recorded during Mar 2021). Thirty-eight counts of 100 or more were received this year, well up on 19 in 2020. There were also 200 at Brayford Pool, Lincoln on Jun 4th. Recorded in 24% of BBS squares (2020 20%, 2019, 27%) with an average of 12 birds per occupied square (2020 9.8, 2019, 10.2/sq.). It was the 45th most widespread species in the county up from 43rd in 2020. A map of the current distribution of "pure" Rock Doves in a paper by WJ Smith: The Undomesticated Rock Dove in Britain and the Isle of Man (*British Birds* 2023 p72) indicates that the nearest pure birds to Lincolnshire are on the Isle of Arran in the Clyde Estuary of Scotland some 350 km to our north-west. The nearest on the east coast are now in Caithness Scotland, 550 km to our north.





## Stock Dove *Columba oenas* ■

Common and increasing resident and winter visitor. Amber List.

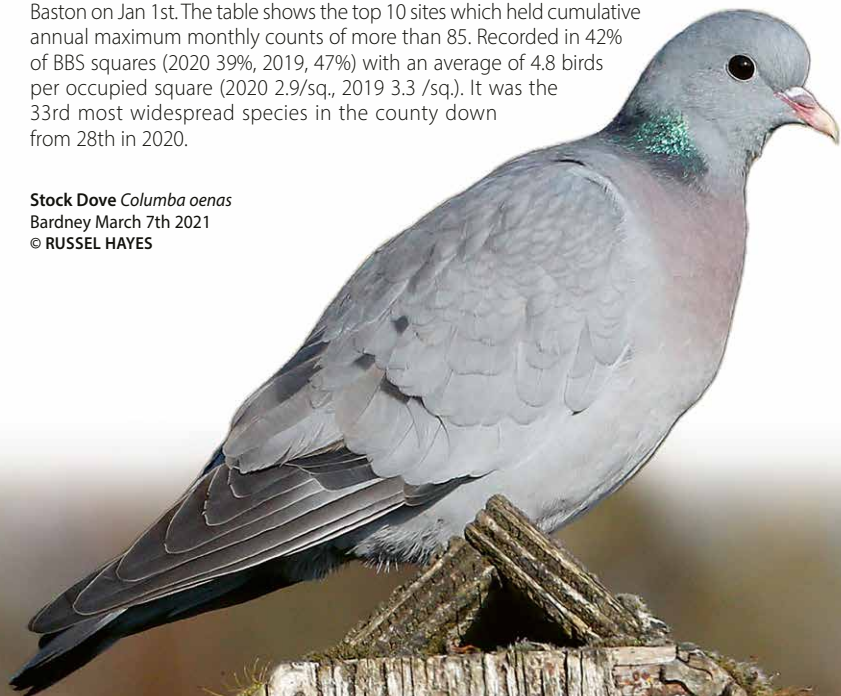
Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Baston	200	10	115	20	5	2	1	11	2	2	75	40
Garthorpe	3	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	70	155	201
Gibraltar Point	42	31	23	9	12	8	6	11	24	26	30	63
East Halton	4	-	35	2	6	-	1	32	15	8	45	41
Louth	11	6	40	18	10	6	29	6	11	40	5	3
Middlemarsh Farm	28	14	9	4	5	4	4	3	2	4	25	22
Boultham Mere	35	5	9	6	9	9	3	3	4	4	4	6
Covenham Reservoir	10	2	11	14	5	7	-	4	6	13	4	18
Hibaldstow Bridge	2	17	11	8	8	7	9	15	8	3	5	1
Marton	4	12	10	6	5	6	6	5	12	5	8	8

The highest count of the year was 201 at Garthorpe on Dec 2nd with 200 at Baston on Jan 1st. The table shows the top 10 sites which held cumulative annual maximum monthly counts of more than 85. Recorded in 42% of BBS squares (2020 39%, 2019, 47%) with an average of 4.8 birds per occupied square (2020 2.9/sq., 2019 3.3 /sq.). It was the 33rd most widespread species in the county down from 28th in 2020.

### Stock Dove *Columba oenas*

Bardney March 7th 2021

© RUSSEL HAYES







Common Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus* Timberland Fen January 10th 2021 © JAMES PORTER

### Common 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.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	211	300	300	437	200	108	100	100	200	6310	9000	600
Middlemarsh Farm	250	500	400	300	400	500	400	300	1000	500	400	600
Keelby	500	171	613	176	69	30	52	72	25	200	2024	420
Louth	200	100	1000	79	77	-	42	100	500	800	-	500
South Ormsby	-	-	-	-	40	-	-	-	-	-	-	3000
Huttoft Bank	500	500	500	300	250	100	200	4	70	20	1	300
Marton	85	25	45	129	17	58	13	14	19	152	2000	53
Manby Wetland	60	1000	400	110	60	30	15	13	31	10	75	600
Baston Fen	150	150	50	150	75	50	30	25	30	100	1450	120
Marton	244	65	154	72	24	17	25	14	31	166	570	350

The highest count of the year was 9000 at Gibraltar Point on Nov 2nd which was much higher than the Oct 2020 high count of 4490 at the same place. The table shows the top 10 sites which held cumulative annual maximum monthly counts over 1800. There were no other counts of more than 2000. Recorded in 98.5% of BBS squares (2020 100%, 2019, 100%) with an average of 35 birds per occupied square (2020 36/sq., 2019, 39/sq.). It was the joint number one most widespread species in the county with Blackbird and also our most numerous bird counted on BBS.





## European 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	Poss.	Prob.	Conf.
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	-	7	7	7	-	4	-	6	1
Tallington Lakes	-	2	1	3	4	-	-	1	1
Eagle	-	2	3	2	1	-	-	5	-
Blankney Quarry	-	2	2	1	-	-	-	1	-
Frampton Marsh	-	1	1	1	2	-	-	1	-
Claypole Fen	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Dunsby	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	1
Gibraltar Point	-	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kirkby GPs	-	1	2	1	-	-	-	2	-
Burgh le Marsh	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	1	-
Whisby	-	1	2	-	-	-	1	1	-
Baston GPs	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	1	-
Dunston Fen	-	2	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Dyke	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	-
East Keal	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	1	-
Heath's Meadows	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	-
Morton	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	1	-
North Scarle	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	-
Old Bolingbroke	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	-
Susworth	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Swinderby	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	1	-
Walesby Moor	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	1	-
West Keal	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	-
Blyton	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-
Deeping St James	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-
Donna Nook	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-
Hobhole	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-
Holbeach St Matthew	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Kirkby Moor	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Market Rasen	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-
Rippingale Fen	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-
River Idle	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-
Sibsey	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-
Sow Dale	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Sutterby	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-
Westwoodside	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-
Birds	2	35	36	23	12	4	14	31	3
Sites	1	20	21	12	7	1	14	21	1

The table above includes all sites from which birds were reported in 2021. The first birds of the year were two at Claypole Fen on Apr 24th and there were two singing males at Kirkby GPs on May 1st with one at Frampton Marsh the same day. With much more effort going into recording breeding this year there were three reports of confirmed breeding this year with Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes leading the way with one confirmed pair with two juveniles on Jun 13th and a further six territories there of



Full details of the 2021 survey can be found at <https://operationturtledove.org/>.

Very common resident. Green List.

The highest count of the year was 91 in February at the same cattle feeding facility outside Burgh le Marsh which had 206 in Nov 2020. Only one other site reported 50 or more which was 50 at Keelby on Dec 23rd. The table shows the top 10 sites which held cumulative annual maximum monthly counts of more than 50. Recorded in 50% of BBS squares (2020 45%, 2019 53%) with an average of 4.3 birds per occupied square (2020 5.6/sq., 2019 4.5/sq.). It was the 28th most widespread species in the county down from 25th in 2020.

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: 6400; for national importance: no data.

[illegible]





The highest count was made during a census of territories from GPC who found 70 pairs on territory at Alkborough Apr-Jun; no census was possible at Barton Pits in 2021. 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 69 sites/subsites up from 36 in 2019 and 54 in 2020. Calling birds were logged at several sites but confirmed breeding reports came from Far Ings NR, Jun 23rd (adult with two juveniles); Huttoft Pit Jul 31st (mature juveniles, presumed first brood); Baston Fen Aug 19th (juvenile); Baston & Langtoft GP (adult with young); East Halton Skitter Aug 20th (three juveniles).



**Water Rail** *Rallus aquaticus* Louth November 29th 2021  
© JOHN CLARKSON

### **Baillon's Crake** *Zapornia pusilla*

**Vagrant, Europe. BBRC.**

A superb calling adult male was found on Jun 5th during a late evening search for Spotted Crakes at Alkborough Flats, the first record for the county and hopefully not the last given the increasing acreage of wetlands across Lincolnshire; it was photographed and sound-recorded (ND, W&C Gillatt) and last reported on Jun 7th. Accepted by BBRC (*British Birds* 115:551-612). See Finder's report on p196.



**Baillon's Crake** *Zapornia pusilla* Alkborough Flats June 5th 2021 © NEIL DRINKALL





### Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* ■

Very common resident and partial migrant. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 20000; for national importance: 3000.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Whisby	24	31	23	19	10	6	27	39	49	21	29	1
Frampton Marsh	41	18	21	18	20	18	6	7	18	11	12	35
Middlemarsh Farm	16	28	16	23	11	7	8	7	12	11	8	13
Tattershall	10	7	16	7	2	6	9	17	12	11	29	18
Cleethorpes	10	7	20	15	7	4	-	6	8	10	14	18
Gibraltar Point	6	6	6	13	7	9	12	13	19	18	112	8
Boultham, Lincoln	50	14	10	5	4	5	4	12	16	10	10	20
Kirkby on Bain	6	8	9	5	4	4	9	12	6	11	9	9
Messingham SQ	6	7	4	3	4	3	7	8	12	12	9	14
Baston Fen	10	12	8	5	1	3	2	9	10	6	16	6

The highest count of the year was 112 at Gibraltar Point on Nov 2nd, lower than the peak 2020 count of 143 at Frampton Marsh on Dec 20th. The table shows the top 10 sites which held cumulative annual maximum monthly counts of more than 85 birds. There were no other counts of more than 50 that are not shown in the table. Recorded in 33% of BBS squares (2020 27%, 2019 34%) with an average of 2.1 birds per occupied square (2020 2.1/sq., 2019, 1.5 /sq.). It was 39th most widespread species in the county, as it was in 2020.

### Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra* ■

Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. Green List. Threshold for international importance: 15000; for national importance: 2000.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Deeping Lakes	25	49	15	12	11	33	81	196	345	286	353	84
Whisby	221	181	70	61	41	46	150	113	400	75	121	1
Covenham Reservoir	120	100	55	20	2	3	6	80	226	188	163	200
Baston	60	25	25	14	21	50	163	215	107	30	175	190
Kirkby on Bain	95	70	21	19	9	19	66	60	60	105	150	150
Boultham Mere	90	85	25	12	20	81	90	68	20	96	120	80
Messingham SQ	14	78	28	20	25	46	68	104	120	130	100	51
Barton Pits	99	88	36	11	9	19	45	24	131	56	23	142
Bagmoor Floods	200	200	120	10	10	-	-	-	-	-	130	-
Tallington Lakes	211	120	20	10	-	-	10	-	5	26	91	127

The highest count of the year was 400 at Job's Lane, Whisby on Sep 19th down from the peak count of 500 at Deeping Lakes in Aug 2020. The table shows the top 10 sites which held cumulative annual maximum monthly counts of more than 600 birds. Outside the table there were counts of 100 at Toft Newton Reservoir on Nov 13th and 133 on Dec 30th. Recorded in 18% of BBS squares (2020 16%, 2019 14%) with an average of 2.9 birds per occupied square (2020 4.1/sq., 2019, 3 /sq.). It was 55th most widespread species in the county, down from 54th in 2020.

### Common 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: 3500; for national importance: 2. **RBBP, LBRC.**

Willow Tree Fen is where the Crane action in Lincolnshire is centred these days and the year started with eight flying over on Jan 22nd. What was almost certainly the same flock of eight birds was seen flying





**Common Crane *Grus grus* Alkborough Flats August 9th 2021 © GRAHAM CATLEY**

west over Laughton Forest the same day. Two birds were also present at Tongue End on Jan 22nd. What was thought to be the previous year's pair and their single juvenile offspring were at Willow Tree Fen on Feb 17th and 28th having earlier been seen feeding in fields at Deeping High Bank on Jan 28th. Ones and twos were seen in March and April at Willow Tree Fen and nearby Baston Fen, almost certainly the same pair, but the birds at Willow Tree Fen were remarkably secretive until they appeared with two chicks by May 1st. Sadly the chicks were thought to have been predated and were not seen from May 28th. The pair were seen on Jun 4th and again on Jun 16th at nearby Baston Fen but then disappeared. What might have been the same pair were present in the Bardney/Branston Island area from Jun 19th to Jul 10th. It is likely that this pair of birds alone accounted for over 70% of the 82 Crane records received this year. A Crane was seen at Alkborough Flats on Apr 1st and a pair were present on Apr 26th-27th displaying and mating. Things went quiet and it was hoped they might be nesting but it was not to be! The same pair was seen on and off in June, July and August and at adjacent Blacktoft Sands. Other reports were of two at Crowland Feb 11th, two at Skidbrooke Apr 20th, four at Deeping St James Apr 24th, three at Frampton Marsh May 17th and Jul 4th, two at Spalding Jul 3rd, one at Deeping St Nicholas on Jul 27th, one at Gibraltar Point Aug 2nd and two at Deeping Low Bank on Sep 11th.

### **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: 4700; for national importance: 150.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Alkborough Flats	-	3	8	-	3	3	19	54	30	17	11	1
Bagmoor Floods	48	30	10	-	1	-	1	15	-	-	4	-
Toft Newton Reservoir	23	16	4	2	-	-	-	3	13	18	23	28
Frampton Marsh	2	-	13	8	14	8	11	7	25	19	4	3
Whisby Nature Park	4	5	4	1	1	2	4	2	25	12	10	3
Tennyson's Sands	5	6	6	6	6	7	9	13	12	21	24	12
East Halton Skitter	8	3	5	4	1	3	4	12	21	9	9	10
Baston GPs	5	5	4	6	2	1	20	15	8	10	20	12
Freiston Shore	18	-	-	-	2	-	1	1	9	12	15	-
Whisby Quarry (Job's Lane)	-	17	18	6	1	-	16	-	16	-	-	-





**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis* Gibraltar Point April 21st 2021  
© JOHN CLARKSON

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 2000 records were received from more than 150 sites across the county; the top 10 most regularly counted sites are tabulated. Two significant 'one-off' counts were 22 at Holywell Lake (Jan 2nd) and the Tetney Haven-Horseshoe Pt coast with 23 Sep 10th.

Confirmed breeding records came from Alkborough Flats, Anderby Creek, Baston & Langtoft GP, Branston Island, Chapel Pit, Cress Marsh, Deeping Lakes NR,

Doddington Lake East Halton Skitter, Gibraltar Point, Marston STW, Twigmoor Woods, and Whisby NP. 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 slightly better than in 2020 but held fewer pairs due to the shrinking area of open water and 19 adults counted Jul 7th may have included birds from elsewhere. The record count there of 54 birds Aug 18th almost certainly included birds from nearby sites such as Blacktoft Sands, although this count included a brood of small young.

### **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 of the year was seen offshore at Freiston Shore Jan 5th and 9th. One went south at Gibraltar Point Feb 25th and one in summer plumage was at Barton Pits Apr 2nd and the last of the spring flew north past Gibraltar Point Apr 29th. Another bird in summer plumage was discovered at Bagmoor Floods Jul 16th-17th. Autumn birds appeared on the coast at Wolla Bank Oct 21st and 23rd, the latter bird probably the one seen at Gibraltar Point the same day. Singles were reported along the coast between Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes to Chapel Point on five dates Nov-Dec, the last at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes Dec 20th. One was at Witham Mouth Nov 22nd and singles were recorded at Gibraltar Point Nov 22nd, Dec 9th, 14th and 15th.



**Red-necked Grebe**  
*Podiceps grisegena* Barton Pits  
April 2nd 2021 © GRAHAM CATLEY





**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: 6300; for national importance: 170.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Covenham Reservoir	59	54	11	8	10	11	21	41	59	65	37	37
Gibraltar Point	23	7	9	2	2	3	3	4	5	7	8	42
Toft Newton Reservoir	10	3	5	2	2	3	3	12	15	24	42	38
Frampton Marsh	-	-	4	6	11	38	26	4	-	-	-	-
Freiston Shore	35	31	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	6	-	-
Job's Lane, Whisby	2	18	28	24	28	20	24	-	20	-	-	-
Crowland Fodder Lots	-	-	22	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
Messingham SQ	-	5	20	3	3	2	1	3	3	1	1	1
Witham Mouth	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	20	-
Tallington Lakes	17	18	16	18	11	3	6	1	8	6	17	17

The top 10 sites are tabulated. More than 1650 records were received from around 100 sites, both coastal and inland. The highest counts of the year all came from Covenham Reservoir with 65 Oct 7th and 23 other counts of 42-59 in the winter (Jan-Feb) and autumn (Sep-Oct) months, with significant numbers on other freshwater bodies. The Wash also held a good wintering population.

Confirmed breeding records came from Baston & Langtoft GP, Deeping Lakes, Frampton Marsh (6 pairs), Gibraltar Point, Kirkby GP (5 pairs), and Job's Lane and Whisby NP lakes. Displaying pairs were seen at several other sites.

**Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus* Barton Pits May 31st 2021 © GRAHAM CATLEY







**Slavonian Grebe** *Podiceps auratus* Chapel St Leonards March 4th 2021 © RUSSEL HAYES

### Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auratus* ■

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

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Chapel St Leonards	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
Covenham Reservoir	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Freiston Shore	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gibraltar Point	-	1	-	-	1	1	1
Huttoft Bank	-	1	-	-	1	-	-
Witham Mouth	-	-	-	-	-	2	1

One at Freiston Shore Jan 1st and 3rd was the first of the year. The next was one south at Gibraltar Point Feb 15th and it or another there Feb 17th. An extraordinarily confiding individual was located on a small drainage ditch in Chapel St Leonards Feb 20th and present on and off until Mar 4th. In the autumn the first was at Covenham Reservoir Sep 21st followed by another Huttoft Oct 9th and Gibraltar Point Oct 29th. In Nov-Dec singles were seen off Gibraltar Point Nov 9th, 15th, 20th and Dec 5th and 12th. Elsewhere the only other records were from Witham Mouth where there were two, Nov 27th and singles Nov 28th and Dec 9th.

### Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* ■

Rare breeder, scarce passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber List. Threshold for national importance: 1800; for national importance: 1. **RBBP**.

The first of the year was a bird in partial summer plumage on Mar 14th on the sea at Witham Mouth and probably the same bird off Freiston Shore Mar 18th. An adult appeared at Bardney Pits Apr 17th seen on and off until May 1st only. At the same time a pair appeared at Frampton Marsh, also Apr 17th and were





present until Jun 4th, with a third there briefly May 10th and 27th. Brief courtship was observed but there was no sustained breeding effort and a single bird remained until Jun 14th.

A juvenile appeared at Baston GP Jul 18th-Aug 21st, but not locally bred. One (unaged) was at Bardney Pits Aug 18th and 21st, Bagmoor Floods Aug 22nd and both Frampton Marsh and Freiston Shore Aug 23rd.

**Stone Curlew** *Burhinus oedichenus* ■

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

One was flushed from the outer dunes at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes on May 29th (PRo & J Ro). With this record, there have been just 14 records since 2000, 10 of them Apr-May, singles in June and July and two in Sep.

**Eurasian 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	3980	4980	3100	1500	800	205	1403	5380	10000	7500	4200	2645
Friskney	3470	1834	837	1716	463	-	667	-	-	-	-	-
Freiston Shore	750	150	700	450	110	-	1000	2100	-	2300	800	-
Leverton	1954	1140	481	665	235	-	413	-	-	-	-	-
Wainfleet marsh	1805	1037	838	3	318	-	1233	-	-	-	-	-
Horseshoe Pt-Tetney Haven	-	-	-	60	11	-	1362	980	1340	1410	-	1440
Theddlethorpe	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1340	-
Saltfleet Haven	-	70	48	58	42	38	175	1030	1000	1230	970	249
Grainthorpe-Horseshoe Point	-	1150	1040	660	-	420	220	790	960	1180	730	-
Cleethorpes	200	100	100	40	82	100	300	680	700	700	900	210

Gibraltar Point remains the most important site in the county and on The Wash for this species and counts exceeded the threshold for international importance on two dates in September (compared to five in 2020). In February three Norwegian colour-ringed birds were noted Feb 1st among a roost of 1750 birds. Friskney marsh had a nationally important count in Nov. 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); Boatmere Creek, Gedney (1); Cress Marsh (1); Deeping Lakes (1); Frampton Marsh (14); Freiston Shore (11); Gibraltar Point (2); Kirkby GP (4-6); Middlemarsh Farm (3); West Ashby GP (2); Whisby Quarry (1).

Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* Frampton Marsh April 20th 2021 © NEIL SMITH





**Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta* Alkborough Flats August 13th 2021 © GRAHAM CATLEY**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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Read's Island	-	-	104	6	15	50	860	1300	1600	1300	55	15
Alkborough Flats	-	1	84	35	6	6	109	220	330	188	16	-
Frampton Marsh	-	49	179	130	178	136	180	28	4	4	5	3
Killingholme Haven	-	8	248	60	32	31	10	150	170	166	-	-
Gibraltar Point	1	10	33	57	27	45	90	110	70	44	9	-
Middlemarsh Farm	-	-	12	17	46	73	78	5	-	-	-	-
East Halton	1	15	43	2	2	-	1	13	8	22	32	50
Garthorpe	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	127	-	-
Manby Wetland	-	-	37	43	16	7	8	4	-	-	-	-
Covenham Reservoir	-	-	43	35	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

The table shows the top 10 sites with cumulative max counts of 80 or more in the year. Birds were present all year round. Reads Island no longer supports a breeding population, but continues to be the only internationally important site for Avocet in Lincolnshire and is clearly a vital feeding and staging area for birds breeding further north. The breeding fortunes of Avocet in the county were mixed this year. The total breeding pairs reported of 179 was down from 188 in 2020 and fledging success remains difficult to determine. The Wash is now the main focus of the Lincs breeding population with 85% of the breeding pairs this year. There were 117 pairs at RSPB Frampton Marsh but no reports on breeding success. With two breeding seasons since the installation of a highly successful predator proof fence it is disappointing to be unable to report news of improved breeding success there. Two nests at Freiston Shore failed to raise any young. At Gibraltar Point 11 pairs raised seven young. Nearby at Middlemarsh Farm 22 pairs (a big jump from six in 2020) raised 12 young. Inland at Kirkby on Bain GP four pairs hatched 11 chicks of which three fledged. Moving up the east coast a pair nested on Anderby Marsh for the first time, but the clutch was taken by a fox. A similar circumstance occurred at Manby Wetland where eight sitting birds had their clutches taken in one night. At Joe House Grasslands at Mablethorpe N End six pairs nested and raised four young. On the Donna Nook Realignment four pairs probably nested but no details were submitted. Moving up the Humber at Cress Marsh, Stallingborough four pairs raised two young. At Killingholme Pits though there were up to 32 birds present in May the only report of breeding was of one pair with two young on Jul 8th. Alkborough Flats and Barton Pits again had no breeding birds. The birds at Covenham Reservoir during March to May were usually seen resting on the water. The reservoir is unsuitable breeding habitat for Avocet and these birds may well have been nesting locally on Wragholme lngs, but no details were received from this site. If the wider population in the county is to flourish it is likely more predator barriers will need to be installed at breeding sites to improve breeding success.

**Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta* Frampton Marsh May 19th 2021 © NEIL SMITH





Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* Frampton Marsh April 17th 2021 © NEIL SMITH

### 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Frampton Marsh	8160	1155	140	64	82	50	250	62	300	628	331	5000
Garthorpe	3000	500	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	1000	1800	3600
Gibraltar Point	450	3500	26	11	7	19	47	12	75	425	559	850
Goxhill Marsh	3500	-	53	7	24	46	53	-	11	35	750	420
Alkborough Flats	1300	1390	191	30	4	180	500	450	350	440	2000	2500
Croftmarsh LNR	800	2500	100	5	4	4	12	45	-	280	450	450
Tetney Lock	-	108	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	2500
Killingholme Marshes	210	450	18	-	-	16	18	32	37	15	230	2350
Bardney Pits	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2000	-	-
Billingborough	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2000	-
Deeping Common	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2000	-
Freiston Shore	2000	400	-	4	5	-	6	-	-	36	28	-
Read's Island	500	-	2	-	-	-	5	-	100	800	900	2000

A familiar but declining species but still recorded widely across the county with records from some 220 sites. The most significant sites are tabulated, 8160 at Frampton Marsh Jan 16th being the highest of the year. Frampton Marsh was the only site of national importance. Peak counts were recorded Jan-Feb and Oct-Dec. Low counts Apr-Jun as wintering birds move out leaving a small residual breeding population. Breeding activity was reported from various sites. At Middlemarsh Farm, 10 pairs were displaying on Mar 29th, first brood pair with four chicks Apr 29th, seasonal total 20+ pairs producing 40 chicks; Baston GP, three broods May 12th, six fledglings Jun 4th, a 4th brood Jun 27th; Halton marshes five pairs with chicks Jun 19th; West Ashby, pair with three chicks May 1st; Gibraltar Point, pair with chicks May 18th-Jun 7th; East Halton Skitter, pair with chicks Jun 19th; Hemingby Manor, agitated pair probably chicks nearby, Jun 12th; Thurlby Fen three adults, two chicks, Jun 9th.





## White-tailed Lapwing

### *Vanellus leucurus*

Vagrant. Turkey and Middle East to Asia. **BBRC.**

At the last gasp the first county record of this species was discovered on Dec 31st at Halton Marshes (M. Pickwell, G.P. Catley *et al*), assumed to be the same long-staying bird which was at Blacktoft Sands, Yorkshire, Aug 26th-Dec 16th. It stayed in the county well into 2022. Accepted by BBRC (*British Birds* 115:551-612).

See Finder's Report, p198.

## European 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.



White-tailed Lapwing *Vanellus leucurus* East Halton Pits  
December 31st 2021 © GRAHAM CATLEY

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Frampton Marsh	12000	1010	1200	20	8	6	98	300	2140	-	8000
Killingholme Marshes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	25	-	10500
Friskney Flats	800	500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10000
Read's Island	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9000	7000	10000
Garthorpe	900	200	-	-	-	-	-	-	2000	9000	4400
Alkborough Flats	2500	550	16	1	-	1	37	-	170	2500	4000
Freiston Shore	4000	4000	-	-	50	-	4	-	-	1	-
Tetney Lock	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3500
Deeping Common	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2500	-
Holbeach Marsh	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2300	150



European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* Frampton Marsh November 9th 2021 © NEIL SMITH





Recorded in 11 months of the year (absent June) from around 135 sites, numbers peak Oct-Feb. There are many blanks from key areas on the Humber and The Wash, Read's Island in particular, which may be related to continued caution with regard to Covid. Counts at Frampton Marsh are broadly similar to those of 2020 and seven of the sites tabulated equalled or exceeded the threshold for national importance; four of these – Frampton Marsh, Killingholme Marshes, Friskney Flays and Read's Island – surpassed the threshold for international importance. Birds departed during Mar-Apr leaving a few summering birds after mid-May with no records from June this year. Returning birds were noted from mid-July onwards into Aug, with 1200 at Gibraltar Point Aug 15th and more widespread arrivals during Sep, peaking in Oct-Dec.

**Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva*  
**Vagrant. Arctic Siberia and west Alaska. BBRC.**

An adult/ 2CY+ bird in summer plumage was found at Frampton Marsh Jul 19th (RBe, JRC, ACS) and remained until Aug 26th. On Aug 5th-16th it was joined by a second bird (JB). Remarkably there was a third record, a 1CY bird, Nov 6th-10th at Deeping Fen (JJ). All three accepted by BBRC (*British Birds* 115:551-612).

With just five previous records involving six birds, this species is decidedly the rarer of the two 'Lesser' Golden Plovers and Lincolnshire is now the third-best county for this species with eight records.



**Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* Frampton Marsh  
July 23rd 2021 © GARY FENWICK

**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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	919	3830	4630	5300	1500	200	250	4000	3900	3890	3500	2900
Horseshoe Pt	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	490	133	2555	-	-
Wainfleet All Saints	-	429	995	1112	379	-	37	-	-	-	-	-
Cleethorpes	154	15	59	9	-	-	-	950	600	6	500	22
Friskney	694	811	776	711	431	-	46	-	-	-	-	-
Welland mouth	-	-	-	70	-	-	-	-	800	120	-	-
Frampton Marsh	36	-	27	5	171	32	23	717	15	106	7	4
Leverton marsh	170	487	354	617	638	-	81	-	-	-	-	-
Pyewipe	30	50	100	300	500	50	1	20	6	6	76	172

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 2000 exceeded in eight months of the year). Counts of 100 or more were recorded at Freiston Shore (300 January and 250 August) and Butterwick Marsh (220, May). Total numbers are comparable to those of 2020 although peak counts differ slightly in the month in which they have occurred and the sites recording them, e.g., an earlier peak at Gibraltar Point in August. Th overall importance of The Wash cannot be overstated.

Inland/non-estuarine sites recording the species were Scopwick (Mar 2nd, nocturnal flight call recorded), Deeping Lakes (Apr 2nd-3rd and Apr 24th), Toft Newton Reservoir (Aug 28th) and North Cockerington (Dec 29th).





### 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Somercotes-Tetney Haven coast	-	15	20	27	160	9	7	254	-	673	-	-
Gibraltar Point	35	56	58	236	497	20	100	248	188	145	33	31
Frampton Marsh	2	12	18	400	4	10	107	170	-	140	30	
Theddlethorpe-Mablethorpe coast	-	9	14	14	-	-	390	127	-	18	-	
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe coast	-	34	29	37	-	2	22	340	11	-	9	4
Killingholme Marshes	-	2	3	-	94	-	-	235	3	2	-	-
Cleethorpes	68	32	-	-	23	-	-	192	208	100	16	93
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	26	1	30	35	200	47	20	25	60	130	10	-
Alkborough Flats	-	-	2	4	6	-	1	160	82	16	-	-
Read's Island Flats - Sector D	-	-	-	1	3	-	-	76	150	3	-	-
Freiston Shore	100	-	-	-	125	-	1	16	-	140	-	-
East Halton Skitter	-	-	-	-	14	-	-	132	-	-	20	-

Sites recording 100 or more in at least one month are tabulated. The three WeBS sectors along the coast between Somercotes north to Tetney Haven are summarised together to provide a more comprehensive series of counts across the year. There was an internationally important count there along the Horseshoe Point-Tetney Haven section in October. No other counts reached this threshold or that for national importance. The highest count in Jan-Feb was 100 Freiston Shore Jan 22nd. The first showing of spring migration was at Gibraltar Point with 150 Apr 23rd, 123 Apr 27th and 236 Apr 28th. There were also distinct peaks in the first and last 10 days of May at Frampton Marsh, Gibraltar Point, Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes and Somercotes-Tetney Haven coast, presumably mainly the smaller northern (*tundrae*) race.

Return passage began in July along with other shorebirds, peaking in Aug-Sep. Significant numbers remained on the coast between Somercotes-Tetney Haven with 673 Oct 11th and more than 100 birds on at least one day in October at four other coastal sites. Frampton recorded 140 on Nov 6th and smaller numbers wintered around the county during December with most at Cleethorpes (3) Dec 15th.

Inland records came from 11 sites, mostly 1-4 birds but with 14 Baston GP Aug 17th and 10 Middlemarsh Farm Sep 2nd notable exceptions.

### 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	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Frampton Marsh	6	9	20	6	15	10	1
Middlemarsh Farm	5	7	6	6	11	7	4
Gibraltar Point	1	4	6	1	5	11	4
Cress Marsh	2	7	6	6	1	1	-
East Halton	-	6	5	2	6	1	-
Alkborough Flats	3	6	-	2	2	5	1
Stallingborough	-	5	5	3	2	-	-
Woodhall Spa Airfield	2	4	4	4	1	-	-
Immingham Dock	-	3	-	2	6	-	3
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	3	3	3	-	3	-	-





Another good spring for this species with peak site counts of 85 across the county in May up from 76 in 2020. Autumn peak counts in July were down to 71 from 81 in 2020. The first report was of one at Frampton Marsh on Mar 15th, two weeks later than 2020 and there was another there on Mar 18th. Whisby had one Mar 20th and Market Deeping one on Mar 25th. Middlemarsh Farm and Whisby both had three on Mar 26th, with birds widespread by Mar 30th. Breeding reports came from 18 sites this year compared to 12 in 2020 and the number of pairs increased to 37 from 30 in 2020. Confirmed breeding reports came from nine sites of 12 pairs: Baston (one pair with chick), Branstons Marsh (one pair one chick) Cress Marsh, Stallingborough (one pair one chick), Deeping Lakes (one pair two chicks), East Halton (one pair three chicks) Frampton Marsh (one pair with chick), Mablethorpe North End (nest with eggs predated), Middlemarsh Farm (three pairs raised six chicks), Woodhall Spa Airfield (two pairs raised one chick). Twenty-five probable pairs reported without breeding success were at Frampton Marsh (13), Freiston Shore (3) and singles at Covenham Reservoir, Croft Marsh, Gibraltar Point, Kirkby on Bain GP, Manby Wetland, Market Deeping, Messingham SQ, Pyewipe Grimsby and Whisby Pits. The latest birds were singles at Whisby Sep 18th and Alkborough Sep 21st.

**Eurasian Dotterel** *Charadrius morinellus* ■

Rare/scarse passage migrant, mainly spring. Red List. LBRC.

A spring bird turned up at Frampton Marsh Apr 27th and remained in the area until May 2nd. A second bird was found at Tetney Lock May 12th, and an adult female was at Rowston Top (Scopwick) May 14th-15th. In the autumn, a 1CY bird was a good find at Frampton Marsh Aug 21st-22nd, consorting with a small flock of Golden Plovers (MHe). It was on site for just less than an hour before flying off south with the flock. This continues the poor run of this species in the county with two in 2018, three in 2019 and a single in 2020. The last 'big' year was 2014 when 80 were recorded, all but one of these being in the spring.

**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	Oct	Nov
Gibraltar Point	-	32	23	1	65	46	6	1	-
Anderby-Huttoft	1	15	17	1	47	19	2	-	-
Skidbrooke	-	32	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Benington	-	-	1	-	24	30	5	-	-
Halham	-	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Freiston Shore	-	14	26	-	2	5	-	-	-
Witham Mouth	-	3	25	-	-	-	1	-	-
Caistor	-	24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Saltfleetby-Mablethorpe	-	13	23	-	3	6	3	-	-
Sandilands Golf Course	-	8	-	-	-	20	-	-	-

More than 70 sites filed some 550 records. The first of the year was on Mar 31st at Anderby Marsh (Mar 10th, 2020, at the same site). More birds trickled through in Apr with 32 at Skidbrooke on Apr 3rd, and 24 Caistor Apr 24th, 30 Halham Apr 15th but most arrived in the last week with 13 at Gibraltar Point 25th, and then 12 Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes Apr 27th, 24 Gibraltar Point Apr 27th and 32 Apr 29th. More arrived in May, mainly on the coast, with nine sites having flocks of 10-26 and many other sites having 1-9 birds. Passage ceased by the end of the month as expected but with six sites recording singles up to mid-month. Return passage began late June-early July with small numbers south from Jul 1st but with most from late July including 20 Jul 28th, 65 29th (the highest count of the year), when 47 went past Huttoft in the same movement and another 26 Jul 30th. On The Wash 24 were at Benington Jul 26th. The Gibraltar Point tally in August totalled 153, all south, peaking at 46 Aug 6th, while 30 were present Benington Aug 9th, 20 went south over Sandilands GC Aug 12th, 12 East Halton Skitter Aug 22nd, and 15 Huttoft Aug 24th. Single figure counts were the order of the day (month?) in September with nine



at Huttoft Pit 4th and six Gibraltar Point 11th the most. Virtually none were left going into Oct-Nov with singles at East Halton Skitter Oct 2nd-3rd, East Halton Oct 8th, Gibraltar Point Oct 16th and the last of the year at Terrington Marsh Nov 6th. There were no reports this year of any overwintering.

### **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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Friskney Flats	180	617	94	218	54	-	293	-	-	-	-	487
Gibraltar Point	206	570	250	84	63	46	311	390	340	303	245	170
Alkborough Flats	540	456	172	100	30	-	25	80	50	135	85	124
Goxhill Marsh	500	-	190	151	90	70	163	171	232	283	111	157
Wainfleet All Saints	139	154	61	152	36	-	484	-	-	-	-	-
Holbeach Marsh	-	-	-	-	20	2	20	25	480	62	7	80
Theddlethorpe-Mablethorpe	127	430	45	18	-	-	-	49	30	-	32	348
Garthorpe	137	390	82	-	-	-	16	14	-	30	129	51
Pyewipe	130	90	150	150	30	50	303	265	100	50	142	84
Read's Island	25	200	51	14	6	150	454	131	200	300	114	1

The most important sites for Curlew are tabulated and all of these are in either The Wash or on the Humber, apart from the coastline between Theddlethorpe and Mablethorpe. The peak monthly count was 617 at Friskney Flats Feb 3rd. No individual sites surpassed the thresholds for national or international importance; The Wash and Humber sites collectively hold nationally important numbers, and The Wash comes close to being internationally important for Curlews. It is well known that the species is long-lived and FA97797 which was ringed as an adult on The Wash in August 1999 was found freshly dead there in November 2021 aged 22 yr. 3 mth. Another bird, colour-ringed on Seal Sands (Teessmouth) in August 2019 was seen twice at Island Farm, Garthorpe in December 2021.

Breeding activity was recorded at RAF Digby where the first bird returned Mar 8th, courtship and display was noted Mar 16th and three pairs were present by the end of the month. Birds were noticed visiting a probable nest site in Jun, but no other evidence of successful breeding was recorded. No other records of possible breeding activity at other sites were received.

**Curlew** *Numenius arquata* Marston STW October 10th 2021 © STEVE NESBITT







**Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica* Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe November 4th 2021 © JOHN CLARKSON

**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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	1330	2680	3000	4800	850	1	1600	3000	7650	6700	3500	664
Friskney	4850	1640	475	590	313	-	625	-	-	-	-	500
Wainfleet All Saints	1225	3254	3100	371	212	-	966	-	-	-	-	-
Leverton	427	1787	880	311	286	-	535	-	-	-	-	-
Cleethorpes	200	58	10	20	10	-	6	350	750	1700	800	160
Pyewipe	200	500	1000	300	100	100	-	50	40	8	53	1212
Frampton Marsh	2	-	85	110	400	1000	1000	2	10	1	4	-
Holbeach Marsh	-	-	-	-	20	6	600	250	36	-	-	-
Somercotes-Donna Nook	-	389	-	-	-	-	-	-	17	-	-	-

Those sites recording 200 or more in any month are tabulated. The Wash overall remains an internationally important site for this species and several sub-sites therein also surpassed that threshold in different months: Gibraltar Point, Friskney, Wainfleet, Leverton, and Cleethorpes. In addition, Pyewipe, Frampton Marsh and Holbeach Marsh recorded nationally important numbers. Regrettably, Wrangle Marsh was still not regularly counted in 2021.

Sites on The Wash held the largest winter flocks in Jan-Feb and birds at Gibraltar Point peaked in Mar-Apr prior to departing north. By the end of May most had departed with the exception of Frampton Marsh which held 715-1000 May-Jun, mostly summering 2CY birds which will undergo a first moult here. In the autumn numbers increased in August and peaked in September. Both adults and immatures moult on the Wash, second-year birds starting in the first week in June and adults in the third week of July. The population takes 100-120 days to complete primary moult. Numbers then fall and by late November many have moved away to winter in southwest Europe and west Africa. Smaller wintering flocks remain in December in both The Wash and on the Humber.



### 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. l. limosa* from the Icelandic race *L. l. 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.

Three birds of the nominate race were seen at Frampton Marsh. The first was a 'head-started' juvenile ringed Jun 5th and released on the Nene Washes, later seen at Frampton on Jul 2nd carrying orange/lime (left) and yellow/lime (right) colour rings (B. Buffery).

A juvenile was present at Freiston Shore Aug 4th (G. Knight) and 16th (PS); at Frampton Marsh Aug 19th with an adult (M. Golley); at Freiston Shore Aug 20th (M. Smiles). The juvenile bird carried a white flag and was ringed at Geesteren in the eastern Netherlands.

### 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Killingholme	230	-	60	570	9	-	2200	3630	3545	6250	6	5
Pyewipe	400	300	300	250	1	-	40	5	20	500	5490	5060
Frampton Marsh	30	12	201	281	80	400	2000	3950	3000	3000	153	16
East Halton Skitter	356	-	189	8	19	-	180	2576	2372	120	8	36
Gibraltar Point	4	-	1	35	6	12	178	2040	320	281	48	15
Goxhill Marsh	80	-	89	-	1	-	180	1894	9	120	2	2
Freiston Shore	750	-	1	-	2	-	-	112	1	22	950	-
Witham Mouth	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	-	850	3
East Halton Brick Pits	-	-	-	-	19	-	21	-	650	-	-	64
Immingham Dock	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	610	-

Black-tailed Godwits were reported in every month of the year and from more than 80 sites. Six of the sites in the table (above) exceeded the threshold for international importance (>1100) and all of the sites



Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* North Killingholme July 30th 2021 © GRAHAM CATLEY





exceeded the threshold for national importance (>390). All of these sites are on either The Wash or the Humber. The peak counts in the autumn were significantly higher than in 2019.

Smaller numbers were seen on passage at inland sites with Alkborough Flats recording 174 Mar 28th and 170 Jul 22nd. Other notable inland flocks were at Branston Island (54, Jul 6th), Baston GP (40, Jul 7th), and Manby Wetlands (22, Aug 6th). The catalogue of colour-ringed birds continues to grow and in 2021 four of these birds demonstrated the interchange which occurs between sites in Lincolnshire and in Kent: <https://app.bto.org/ring/countyrec/results2021/recGBLI2021.htm>

**Ruddy 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Freiston Shore	65	10	-	60	150	-	450	30	-	70	14	--
Goxhill	-	-	140	80	-	-	47	21	3	154	170	3
Cleethorpes	68	10	52	42	10	-	10	13	43	35	138	66
Wainfleet marsh	76	-	5	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-
Anderby-Huttoft	1	2	2	-	1	-	21	65	1	1	1	1
Gibraltar Point	41	40	57	35	44	1	25	65	47	24	43	28
Welland marsh	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	60	2	-	-
Witham Mouth	-	-	40	-	1	-	-	-	17	-	50	1
Grainthorpe Haven-Tetney Haven	-	38	10	30	-	8	6	19	29	50	9	-
East Halton Skitter	1	-	-	3	5	-	-	2	37	25	25	3

More than 500 records were received from around 55 sites. The top 10 sites are tabulated. Only Freiston Shore and Goxhill had a count in any month of more than 100. Goxhill had three counts of more than 100 in March, October and November with most (170) Nov 8th. Freiston Shore had 140 Mar 15th, 150 May 15th and 450 Jul 25th.

Looking back at site maxima, 2015-2020, shows that the figures are quite variable year-to-year, but the 5yr. moving averages for The Wash and Humber have not changed very much. For example, in 2019 Freiston had an October peak of 600. 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?

**Red 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	5000	18000	33000	18260	6000	40	40000	80000	90000	73000	30000	15000
Friskney	7547	3574	1550	1240	635	-	14370	-	-	-	-	15000
Wainfleet	9820	7472	14300	2650	430	-	10300	-	-	-	-	-
Holbeach Marsh	-	-	-	-	400	-	200	1500	800	20	1500	14000
Donna Nook-Horseshoe Pt	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10000	4000
Leverton	1432	1917	3780	3215	467	-	8635	-	-	-	-	-
Grainthorpe- Horseshoe Pt	-	3320	3750	2540	-	-	480	-	530	6700	7320	-
Cleethorpes	500	200	25	-	-	-	-	2000	6000	5000	5000	550
Frampton Marsh	1	-	31	100	750	4250	4000	1700	200	-	1	1
R. Welland	-	-	-	3000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-





**Red Knot** *Calidris canutus* North Killingholme July 30th 2021 © GRAHAM CATLEY

The most important sites for Knot are tabulated above, eight of them having internationally important counts (>5,300) in at least one month. Gibraltar Point recorded such counts in 10 months as well as the highest count of the year (90,000) on Sep 24th. 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 Knot count in The Wash in the autumn is 4-5 times higher than the next most important British estuary, the Ribble. 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, 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Frampton Marsh	50	46	18	50	15	4	23	41	12	18	20	25
Alkborough Flats	11	14	11	19	14	-	19	60	70	54	31	1
Garthorpe	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	53	24	-
Middlemarsh Farm	-	-	-	2	2	-	-	33	21	7	-	-
Island Farm	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	29	-
Tetney	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	17	-	-	-
Epworth	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	-	-	-
Freiston Shore	14	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
East Halton	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	1	-	3	3	4
Gibraltar Point	-	-	-	1	2	1	1	2	1	3	-	-

The table lists the top 10 sites reporting annual cumulative monthly maxima of 11 or more birds in descending order. Ruff were present in all months of the year and more widespread in 2021 with records





from 50 sites compared to 30 in 2020. The highest count of 70 at Alkborough Flats on Sep 10th was far lower than that of 152 at Frampton Marsh on Oct 1st, 2020. Frampton Marsh and Alkborough between them accounted for only 40% of Ruff records in 2021 compared to over 80% in 2020. The only sites outside the table reporting wintering birds were Deeping Bank with three in Jan, and in December Sutton Bridge had two and Humberston Fitties (formerly a reliable wintering site) one. No evidence of breeding activity was reported this year with lekking behaviour apparently completely absent at all sites. Frampton Marsh was the only site with more than one summering bird.

### **Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea* ■

Passage migrant, scarce in spring and scarce/fairly common in autumn. Rare in winter. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 4000; for national importance: no data.

Site	Apr	May	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Alkborough Flats	2	-	-	10	6	3	-	-
Chapel Point	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Cleethorpes	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Donna Nook Realignment	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
East Halton Skitter	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Frampton Marsh	-	4	3	3	15	4	2	1
Freiston Shore	-	1	-	4	-	-	-	-
Gibraltar Point	-	1	-	3	2	-	-	-
Huttoft Bank	-	3	-	-	1	-	-	-
Huttoft Bank Pit	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Middlemarsh Farm	-	-	-	2	4	-	-	-
Read's Island Flats	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-

Around 13 sites recorded this species in 2021 and the first record of the year was of two at Alkborough Flats on Apr 25th, three days earlier than in 2020. Overall, it was one of the species poorer years numerically speaking with just a few more in May at five sites, a peak of four at Frampton Marsh May 18th. That was it until July with one back at Frampton Marsh 3rd, it or another 18th, increasing to two 23rd and a peak of three 24th. Two were seen at Donna Nook Jul 23rd, the only other site to see them in July. Aug-Sep



**Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea* Frampton Marsh July 25th 2021 © SIMON SPAVIN



was a more productive autumn period with 6-8 sites recording them and peaks of 10 at Alkborough Flats Aug 28th and 15 Frampton Marsh Sep 10th. Few remained into October with 3-4 at Frampton Marsh and 1-3 at Alkborough Flats. One at East Halton Skitter Oct 31st was the last of the year on the Humber. Thereafter two were at Frampton Marsh Nov 2nd with one until Nov 9th, and unusually it or another was present there until Dec 14th, the last of the year.

### Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

Very scarce/scarce passage migrant. **LBRC.**

An early Temminck's Stint was at Covenham Reservoir Apr 24th-25th, the first there since 2007. More turned up in May with one at Alkborough Flats May 6th and two at Frampton Marsh May 11th-12th, increasing to three May 13th-14th with at least two still present 15th-16th and a single to May 23rd. There were no reports of any records in the autumn.



Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii* Frampton Marsh May 13th 2021 © ROY HARVEY

### 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	420	512	850	1300	2300	11	4600	6550	5000	3590	2200	703
Wainfleet marsh	541	478	191	-	-	-	285	-	-	-	-	-
Leverton	219	66	-	-	33	-	491	-	-	-	-	-
Friskney	411	276	36	-	-	-	121	-	-	-	-	-
Theddlethorpe-Mablethorpe	-	255	50	68	-	-	-	92	55	-	11	55
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	250	250	80	46	30	-	12	12	55	60	250	80
Ingoldmells	100	150	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	-	5	12
Horseshoe Point-Tetney	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	149	-	-	-
Cleethorpes	20	-	20	-	20	-	-	6	100	142	115	60
Donna Nook	-	-	118	-	-	-	-	-	24	6	-	-



Sanderling *Calidris alba* North Cotes  
August 23rd 2021 © IAN SHEPHERD





The top 10 sites for Sanderling as assessed by monthly peak counts are tabulated. Gibraltar Point is far and away the most important county site, 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 five sites in the table all had at least one count categorising them as of national importance (count >200). Nearly all records received were coastal/estuarine with just two inland records: one Baston GP May 9th and two Deeping Lakes May 19th.

The main story here is of passage at Gibraltar Point. In the spring there were two obvious periods when northward-bound birds passed through in late April (peak 1300 Apr 8th) and again late May (peak 2300 May 27th-28th). Autumn passage started in late July with 1460 Jul 23rd, 2300 Jul 24th, 4600 Jul 25th and 2840 Jul 26th. Birds appeared in waves in Aug-Sep beginning Aug 22nd-27th (peak 6550 Aug 26th); Sep 19th-26th (peak 5000 Sep 25th) and later in October with four counts of 2500 or more, with smaller totals in November (1500 Nov 3rd, 2200 Nov 4th, 1670 Nov 7th). Most passed through going further south leaving totals of 180-703 from late Nov until mid-Dec.

### **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 July 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	2000	6600	6640	5220	2900	8	7600	11000	16590	15000	6390	3600
Pyewipe	500	1000	1000	2000	2000	1	5	70	1800	300	6400	3700
Alkborough Flats	900	954	330	23	10	-	43	550	1520	1080	5000	160
Read's Island	2000	333	-	-	200	-	-	300	600	4020	5290	5584
Cleethorpes	3800	342	34	47	3	-	7	60	600	4000	3000	1000
Wainfleet All Saints	1455	1270	2700	1320	387	-	411	-	-	-	-	-
East Halton Skitter	2650	-	150	12	50	-	-	21	9	6	476	837
Leverton	1800	1179	475	1270	347	-	2275	-	-	-	-	-
Friskney	2170	129	790	1187	414	-	414	-	-	-	-	1500
Somercotes-Donna Nook	-	1320	2130	8	74	-	-	-	500	100	-	-



**Dunlin** *Calidris alpina* Toft Newton April 27th 2021 © SIMON SPAVIN





More than 110 sites provided records, mainly coastal and estuarine but 23 were inland lakes and reservoirs. The 10 sites providing the highest counts as measured by their highest monthly peak are tabulated and all are part of our two major estuaries, the Humber and The Wash and both remain of international importance. In May, the Gibraltar Point peak of 2900 was on the 5th while at Pyewipe the peak there (2000) was 14th-19th. Some 100s remained to late May with very few left by 27th. Inland, 23 were at Middlemarsh Farm Feb 8th and 76 Branstons Island Mar 14th and 50 Mar 20th. On May 4th 23 were at Toft Newton Reservoir and 16 Baston GP.

In the autumn, returning birds were back by early July, increasing through the month with peaks of 2275 at Leverton Marsh Jul 24th and 7600 Gibraltar Point Jul 25th. Huge numbers congregated at Gibraltar Point Aug-Oct as birds arrived from different parts of the Arctic, the peak counts somewhat eclipsing those of the previous five years (table, below). Many of these Dunlin had moved on further south by the end of Oct. The Nov-Dec peaks at the top five sites were also substantially higher than in 2020 but overall WeBS data show that numbers on The Wash have been fairly constant year on year.

Gibraltar Point	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
2021	11000	16590	15000	6390
2020	9008	14470	9060	4730
2019	8400	8470	6000	4340
2018	16300	5700	8000	3100
2017	7690	5500	5000	4800
2016	9200	9980	7000	2000

**Purple Sandpiper** *Calidris maritima* ■

Very scarce/scarse passage migrant and winter visitor, mainly coastal. Red List. Threshold for international importance: 110; for national importance: 97.

In the first quarter one was on the seafront at Cleethorpes Jan 6th and 21st, Feb 7th, Mar 2nd, and 11th. The only other record then was at Freiston Shore Feb 7th. In the early autumn a juvenile flew south with Dunlin at Anderby Creek Jul 29th, and another went south at Gibraltar Point Aug 10th. Singles were noted



Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima* Mablethorpe December 10th 2021 © GRAHAM CATLEY



on several dates Aug 22nd-31st between Chapel Point and Saltfleetby, possibly the same bird moving up and down the coast. In September a confiding individual was at Covenham Reservoir 19th-20th. Another was at Chapel Point Oct 29th and may have been the bird seen Nov 4th on and off until Dec 14th up and down the coast between there and Mablethorpe. In The Wash, two were found at Witham Mouth Nov 14th while on the Humber, one was at Cleethorpes Nov 7th, another at Far Ings NR Nov 21st and North Killingholme Haven Nov 24th. One wintered at Cleethorpes Nov 28th-Dec 5th, visiting Pyewipe Marsh Dec 11th and then Cleethorpes Dec 14th, 16th and 29th.

### 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	Jan	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Frampton Marsh	-	-	4	1	1	21	26	5	2	2
Alkborough Flats	2	1	-	-	1	19	22	9	3	-
Freiston Shore	-	-	-	-	-	12	-	-	-	-
Gibraltar Point	-	-	-	-	-	4	7	1	-	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-
Brickyard Lane End	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-
Middlemarsh Farm	-	-	-	-	-	3	4	-	-	-
Read's Island	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	3	-	-
Baston GP	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	1	-	1
Covenham Reservoir	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	-
Deeping Lakes	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-
Whisby NP	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Donna Nook	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-
Huttoft Bank	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	-
Tetney Marshes	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-
Toft Newton Reservoir	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-



Little Stint *Calidris minuta* Toft Newton September 1st 2021 © SIMON SPAVIN





The best year for some time, certainly compared to the last five with more than 230 records from 16 sites, six of them from inland sites. Two wintering birds were at Alkborough Flats Jan 2nd-3rd with a single Jan 9th-10th. Another was there Apr 24th-26th before a light spring passage which appeared to be solely at Frampton Marsh where singles appeared from May 5th, two May 9th, 11th and 16th and a peak of four May 18th-19th; one there Jun 8th was the last of the spring/summer. Early autumn records came from Huttoft Bank Jul 10th, an adult Alkborough Flats Jul 22nd-24th, and another single Frampton Marsh Jul 23rd-29th. Numbers built up into August peaking in the last week. Alkborough Flats had 12 Aug 27th, 19 Aug 28th, 15 Aug 29th, and 13 Aug 30th. At Frampton Marsh the highest count was 21 Aug 30th with 12 there the following day. Frampton had 10-16 on five dates in September peaking at 26 on 7th. At Alkborough Flats there were 21 Sep 18th, 22 Sep 21st and 20 Sep 23rd. Inland during Aug-Sep there were 1-4 birds present at Baston GP (2), Covenham Reservoir (2), Deeping Lakes (2), Middlemarsh Farm (4), Toft Newton Reservoir (1) and Whisby NP (2).

Birds rapidly moved out during September leaving 1-3 birds at four sites. One was at Baston GP Oct 6th, three Read's Island Oct 11th with one lingering until 14th, two Covenham Reservoir Oct 17th-20th and one Gibraltar Point Oct 21st. A very late bird was found at Baston GP Dec 18th.

**Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos*

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

The first of the year was one at Frampton Marsh on Aug 7th (PDa) followed by one at Alkborough Flats on Sep 7th later joined by a second bird on Sep 8th (ND, GPC); a late bird was there on Oct 8th (GPC). One was at Middlemarsh Farm (Skegness) on Sep 11th (NAL) and another two Saltfleet Haven Sep 12th (CMO). At Frampton Marsh after the August record, 1-3 birds were present Sep-Nov: three on Sep 18th (SRb, DTa) with 1-2 of these present until Sep 27th. After a gap of nearly a month a juvenile was found on the reservoir there on Oct 22nd (AJB, et al) which had an extended stay and was last seen Nov 2nd.

**Eurasian Woodcock** *Scolopax rusticola* ■

Fairly common resident in woodland, passage migrant and common winter visitor. Red List.  
Threshold for international importance: 20,000; for national importance: 14,000.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	7	169	7	1	-	-	-	1	13	2
Croft Marsh	4	25	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Stallingborough	-	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chapel Pit	2	13	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Legbourne	3	13	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hoplands Wood	-	12	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Huttoft	2	11	1	-	-	-	-	-	3	-
Baston GP	9	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
Swinn Wood	3	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tathwell	1	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

More than 90 sites logged over 265 records, the vast majority being in Jan-Mar and Oct-Dec. There were no records Aug-Sep. The main story of the year though was of the huge influx of birds in February. Birds began arriving in off the sea on the coast early in the month, most at Gibraltar Point but with significant numbers logged elsewhere (table). A brief summary of the Gibraltar Point numbers, including birds found dead, is included below.

Feb 2021	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	13th	14th	15th	16th	17th	18th	19th	20th
Total seen	11	30	30	136	105	72	34	1	118	5	32	169	20	18
Total dead	-	-	-	22	3	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-



Counts at other sites reflected this February influx with 15 Stallingborough Feb 9th, 12 Hoplands Wood Feb 11th, 13 Chapel Pit Feb 12th, Legbourne Feb 14th 11 Huttoft Feb 15th and 25 Croft Marsh Feb 23rd. Most had dispersed by early March with 1-6 birds at many sites and a peak of 11 Croft Marsh Mar 8th. The records from Apr-Jul (not tabulated) related to roding or displaying birds in Laughton Forest (up to four roding males), Walesby Moor (displaying male), Nocton Wood, Tunman Wood and Crowle Moors. A few singles arrived in October but most came in Nov, albeit in more 'normal' numbers compared with those in February. Most were 1-4 birds with peaks of eight Gibraltar Point Nov 3rd, 10 Nov 13th and 13 Nov 14th. Many fewer were recorded in Dec, just 1-3 birds at 11 sites to the end of the month.

### Jack Snipe *Lymanocryptes minimus* ■

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor. Probably much under-recorded. Green List. Threshold for international importance: 20000; for national importance: 1000.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Alkborough Flats	-	-	-	1	-	1	14	2	1
Baston Fen	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	7	8
Far Ings	-	-	5	-	-	-	1	-	-
Gibraltar Point	1	1	2	4	2	-	1	1	-
Barton Pits	1	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Frampton Marsh	1	-	-	3	2	-	1	1	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	2	1	-	1	-	-	3	2	-
Sturton by Stow	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-

Some 31 sites recorded this secretive species Jan-May and Sep-Dec. Those recording at least three in one month are tabulated; of the remainder, six recorded at least two in one month, 17 just one. Present from Jan 1st through April and in small numbers, the last of the spring were seen at Gibraltar Point May 8th (2) and at Frampton Marsh May 12th. Singles were found in September at Marston STW 17th, and Alkborough Flats and Huttoft Pit 28th. Most arrived in October at both coastal and inland locations, mainly 1-4 birds but a concerted effort at Alkborough Flats saw a minimum of 14 located Oct 16th and 12 Oct 22nd. Seven were at Baston Fen Nov 1st, the highest of the month just 1-2 elsewhere. Baston Fen continued to provide the biggest numbers into December with seven Dec 6th, eight Dec 11th and 6 Dec 20th. The only other December records received were singles from Alkborough Flats, Whisby NP and Huttoft Bank Pits.



**Jack Snipe** *Lymanocryptes minimus*  
Marston STW September 17th 2021  
© CHRIS GRIMSHAW





## 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Alkborough Flats	7	35	62	59	1	1	30	100	60	95	43	17
Gibraltar Point	17	14	17	43	6	-	10	35	30	10	35	1
Baston Fen	4	15	26	12	2	-	1	8	10	35	20	26
Frampton Marsh	8	6	8	8	9	1	13	15	12	6	42	20
Killingholme Marshes	1	85	25	-	-	-	-	1	15	-	1	15
Middlemarsh Farm	7	48	11	16	4	1	3	21	12	4	8	4
East Halton	22	-	1	13	1	-	6	11	4	15	40	5
Kirkby GPs	31	13	12	12	-	-	-	5	5	2	7	18
Manby Wetland	-	18	1	10	-	1	2	10	1	1	-	20
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	6	3	18	6	1	-	1	5	4	4	10	1

Common Snipe were reported from around 150 sites with the highest count of the year of 100 at Alkborough Flats on Aug 23rd. The table shows the top 10 sites with annual cumulative monthly max counts of more than 58. Marston STW fell out of the table having a max count of 15 in February way down from 77 in January 2020. Baston Fen was the best inland site this year with a high of 35 in October. The highest count outside the table was 32 at Killingholme Haven Pits on Mar 8th. The highest sum of max counts across all sites was 463 in February. Common Snipe was recorded on 1.5% of BBS one km squares (2020, 0%). The average number of birds per square was 4 (2020, 0). It is likely these birds were migrants rather than breeders. Breeding evidence was reported from three sites as follows: drumming birds were at Bardney Pits on Apr 26th, Gibraltar Point Apr 29th, and Alkborough Flats Jun 6th where subsequently a bird was seen on Jul 2nd behaving as if it had young. In addition, birds present in June at Frampton Marsh, Middlemarsh Farm and Manby Wetland are indicative of possible breeding.



Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* Killingholme August 27th 2021  
© ROY HARVEY

## Red-necked Phalarope

*Phalaropus lobatus* ■

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

One flew south past Huttoft Jul 30th (RL) and then south past Gibraltar Point 20 minutes later with 30 Dunlin (KMW). The only other record of the year was of a juvenile north past Freiston Shore on Aug 26th, with presumably the same bird again on 28th (AJB).





### **Grey Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius*

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

A decent showing this year with one at Frampton Marsh Oct 8th and a second in advanced 1CY plumage at Alkborough Flats Oct 17th-20th followed by two on the sea at Gibraltar Point Oct 24th, eventually disappearing off to the south, and another was at Witham Mouth the next day, Oct 25th. One was offshore at Huttoft Nov 4th, another was at Saltfleet Haven Nov 8th and the last coastal bird was at Huttoft on Dec 2nd. The only inland record was of one at Covenham Reservoir Nov 27th-Dec 13th, admired and photographed by many.



Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* Covenham Reservoir November 29th 2021 © MARK JOHNSON

### **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: 12000; for national importance: 1.

Site	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	1	3	-	3	20	3	-	-	-
Witham Mouth	-	-	-	19	-	-	-	-	-
Paradise Pool, Saltfleet	-	-	-	12	1	-	-	-	-
Barton-upon-Humber	1	3	-	1	10	2	-	-	-
East Halton Skitter	2	2	-	10	10	3	1	-	-
Frampton Marsh	1	1	-	10	4	5	-	-	1
Covenham Reservoir	5	7	-	4	3	9	-	-	-
Goxhill Marsh	-	-	-	5	6	2	-	-	-
Killingholme	-	-	-	3	6	1	-	-	-
Saltfleet Haven	-	-	-	-	6	-	1	-	-





Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* Toft Newton September 26th 2021 © SIMON SPAVIN

The top 10 sites with the largest monthly peaks counts are tabulated. Records came from around 70 sites and the first of the year was at Frampton Marsh Apr 4th. More followed Apr-May with seven at Covenham Reservoir May 6th-7th. There were no records in Jun, but early autumn birds were seen from Jul 2nd onwards. Numbers built up from after mid-July with 12-19 at various sites (table) and more into August with notable peaks on 10th, 11th-12th (Gibraltar Point) and 22nd (Barton). Numbers tailed off dramatically in September with nine at Covenham Reservoir 7th and singles only 19th onwards. In October singles remained at five sites (Cress Marsh, East Halton Skitter, Immingham, Saltfleet Haven, Trent Port). The bird at Trent Port remained until Nov 21st, the only record for that month. In December the Cress Marsh bird was seen 14th, 23rd and 28th and another was at Frampton Marsh 14th.

**Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* ■

Fairly common autumn passage migrant, scarce in spring and a regular winter visitor. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 20000; for national importance: 3.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Branston Island	-	-	-	-	-	4	5	16	-	-	-	-
Manby Wetland	-	-	3	1	-	4	15	11	7	-	-	-
Frampton Marsh	-	-	-	1	-	4	12	4	2	-	1	-
Boatmere Creek, Gedney	-	-	1	-	-	-	9	11	-	-	-	-
Alkborough Flats	-	-	-	1	-	2	5	8	1	1	-	-
Kirkby GP	-	-	1	-	-	1	2	7	2	-	-	-
Paradise Pool, Saltfleet	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	3	-	-	-	-
Middlemarsh Farm	-	1	1	1	-	6	6	5	1	1	-	-
Scrane End, Fishtoft	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-
Tallington Lakes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	2
Baston Fen	-	-	1	-	-	-	2	5	4	-	1	-
Cleethorpes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	1	1	-	-	-





More than 600 records were received in every month of the year and from nearly 100 freshwater and estuarine locations. Those sites having a monthly peak of five or more in at least one month are tabulated. As ever, a small number wintered in the county Jan-Feb, 21 sites hosting 1-2 birds, with Cress Marsh having three Feb 28th. It's partly guesswork separating over-wintering birds from early spring arrivals, but of those sites with no Jan-Feb records, the early records were of three on the river at the Havenside CP Mar 2nd, one Baston Fen Mar 8th, two Deeping Lakes Mar 15th and Marston STW Mar 17th. Spring passage in Apr-May was light, with only Fiskerton Fen (3, Apr 15th) and Baston Fen (2, Apr 24th) recording more than a single bird. Only singles lingered during May, the last May 23rd East Halton Skitter.

A few birds leave their breeding grounds as early as late May/early June so it seems probable that the June records refer to very early season autumn migration, with the main southwards movement in Jul-Aug. Eleven were back at Frampton Marsh Jul 10th, increasing to 12 23rd -24th, with most (15) at Manby Wetlands Jul 18th and 21st. Similar counts were seen in Aug: 16 Branston Island Aug 1st, 11 Boatmere (Gedney) Aug 10th and 18th, 11 Manby Wetlands Aug 20th. Most departed in August and September counts were down to 1-4 birds with a peak of seven at Manby Wetlands Sep 4th. Only singles remained Oct-Nov at around 20 sites and by December there were single over-wintering birds at Black Bank/ Messingham SQ, Cress Marsh, Flixborough, Horkstow bridge, Marston STW, Tallington Lakes and Tathwell.



**Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* Cress Marsh  
August 19th 2021 © GEOFF BEASLEY

### **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes*

**Rare. North America. LBRC.**

A winter plumage adult was found at Goxhill Haven/East Halton Skitter on Dec 16th (CGo, WS), which may have been the 2CY bird seen at Alkborough Flats in 2020. This is the third year in a row the species has been found in the county and the 18th record in all. (Note: ex-BBRC 2019).



**Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* and **Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus* East Halton Skitter December 16th 2021  
© W SCOTT





Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* Waters' Edge Barton February 15th 2021 © GRAHAM CATLEY

### Common 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Freiston Shore	250	34	36	12	35	-	633	800	3	1109	103	-
Welland marsh	-	-	-	12	-	-	-	40	1050	750	-	-
Gibraltar Point	258	318	240	432	35	24	582	851	600	150	193	150
Pyewipe marsh	100	100	200	150	10	-	300	200	804	100	425	264
Saltfleet Haven	89	51	50	82	8	10	-	18	45	34	106	298
Read's Island	10	7	11	16	-	-	168	250	293	251	7	4
Somercotes-Donna Nook	-	284	5	17	3	-	-	-	26	40	-	-
Killingholme marshes	75	140	220	92	-	-	2	75	60	125	9	250
Donna Nook	-	87	165	28	11	-	26	206	200	66	96	147
Humberston Fitties	-	10	-	-	-	-	-	11	-	-	30	200

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 late August-early October and the highest counts of the year were at Welland Marsh, 1050 Sep 11th and Freiston Shore with 1109 Oct 10th. These two sites were the only ones of national importance; none reached the threshold for international importance. The Wash remains an internationally important estuary for this species, although the Dee estuary, Morecambe Bay and Severn on the west coasts hold higher numbers.

### Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* ■

Scarce passage migrant, in spring and autumn. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 18000; for national importance: no data.

Site	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Alkborough Flats	1	1	1	1	6	1	-
Middlemarsh Farm	1	1	-	1	5	-	-
Frampton Marsh	1	2	1	3	3	-	1
Manby Wetland	-	3	1	-	1	-	-



Another thin year for Wood Sandpipers with around 150 records from 29 sites/subsites, with 25 of these reporting just 1-2 birds. The first were two at Woodhall Spa Airfield Apr 19th with singles at three other sites Apr 26th, 27th and 29th. A sprinkling of records came during May from seven sites, all 1-2 birds excepting the three at Manby Wetlands May 9th. A few lingered through June with singles at Manby Wetlands 11th and 14th, Frampton Marsh 15th and Alkborough Flats 16th, and small numbers passed through in Jul, three at Frampton Marsh Jul 23rd the best. Most were seen in August when 20-24 sites had mainly 1-3 birds but with five Middelmarsh Farm Aug 10th and six Alkborough Flats Aug 15th. These birds soon moved on leaving just 1-2 birds at 10 sites Sep-Oct with the last bird at Frampton Marsh Oct 10th.



**Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola*  
Frampton Marsh July 25th 2021  
© SIMON SPAVIN

### 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: 1000; for national importance: 1.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Alkborough Flats	1	1	5	6	4	8	20	28	20	20	3	-
Frampton Marsh	2	-	1	2	2	4	8	15	22	7	1	1
Gibraltar Point	-	-	-	1	1	2	3	7	7	5	1	-

More than 400 records were received from around 23 sites and in every month of the year; monthly peak counts at the three main sites are tabulated. Wintering birds were on the Humber from Jan 1st with one Alkborough Flats Jan 1st-18th, and 1-2 Read's Island Jan 2nd and 4th, presumed the same birds. Two were at Frampton Marsh Jan 29th. One at Alkborough Flats Feb 5th was the only record of that month. A few more appeared in March from 9th, most at Alkborough Flats Mar 24th with five. April saw up to six birds across the county at 10 sites with inland records coming from Woodhall Spa Airfield Apr 23rd, and

Baston Fen and Middelmarsh Farm, both Apr 24th.

May-Jun saw modest totals at just five sites, with Middelmarsh Farm (two Jun 21st) and Bardney (two, Jun 22nd) being the two not tabulated. July saw numbers building up at Alkborough Flats, 20 Jul 17th and continuing into August with the first juveniles noted there Aug 20th and a peak of 28 Aug 30th. Frampton Marsh logged a peak of 15 Aug 10th and 22 Sep 8th with 17 still there Sep 24th. Into October Alkborough held 14-20 birds Oct 1st-13th. Elsewhere most birds had gone by mid-month with 1-3 lingering into November and singles in December on the Humber Dec 5th and Dec 25th, and at Frampton Marsh Dec 7th-9th.



**Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus*  
Frampton Marsh February 9th 2021  
© GERVAASE ORTON





**Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia* Donna Nook September 5th 2021 © MARK JOHNSON

**Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia* ■

Passage migrant, scarce in spring, fairly common in autumn. Very scarce in winter. Amber List.  
 Threshold for international importance: 3300; for national importance: 8.

Site	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Frampton Marsh	-	5	3	3	4	63	30	5	2	6	6
Boatmere, Gedney	-	-	1	1	-	51	54	42	7	-	-
Freiston Shore	-	-	2	1	-	8	33	1	3	-	-
R. Welland	-	-	-	-	-	-	28	8	1	-	-
Donna Nook	-	-	-	1	-	11	10	16	2	-	-
Gibraltar Point	-	1	3	4	1	15	11	11	4	1	-
Alkborough Flats	-	-	3	1	4	13	11	7	2	-	-
Horseshoe Point-Tetney Haven	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	10	-	-	-
Deeping Lakes	-	-	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

More than 600 records were received from more than 60 sites both freshwater and estuarine. The first of the year was found at Trent Port, Marton Feb 20th, whether an over-wintering bird or an early spring migrant is debatable. Five were at Frampton Marsh Mar 23rd and a single at Gibraltar Point Mar 31st. Small numbers came through Apr-Jun at 29 sites across the county, both coastal and inland. The real numbers didn't arrive until the autumn with some high counts on The Wash during Jul-Sep. Birds departed rapidly from mid-Sep, seven at Boatmere (Gedney) Oct 13th the most. Few remained into Nov, with 5-6 at Frampton Marsh on several dates the most, and birds on Dec 1st (2), 12th (1) and six Dec 31st. A colour-ringed Greenshank seen at Gibraltar Point on Sep 8th, 23rd-24th and 28th-29th had been ringed earlier on The Wash on Aug 25th.





### Black-legged 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Huttoft Bank	125	28	-	326	5	-	1	2	9	1	986	14
Gibraltar Point	38	25	16	347	16	2	4	19	27	878	895	27
Chapel Point	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	-	-	497	-
Sutton-on-Sea	18	-	-	22	5	-	-	-	-	7	261	-
Mablethorpe	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	86	-
Moggs Eye	46	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	18	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	1	-	6	-	-	-	-	1	2	4	32	-
Freiston Shore	14	11	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

A better year for this red-listed species compared to 2020, with records in every month of the year and the highest totals coming during coastal passage Oct-Nov. Those sites recording at least one double figure count during the year are tabulated.

The first significant counts of the year occurred in a period of strong north-easterlies on Jan 4th with good numbers past the Sutton-Gibraltar Point coastline, peaking at 125 past Huttoft; 38 went past Huttoft the next day, Jan 5th and 38 also past Gibraltar Point. Smaller movements occurred Feb-Mar until a strong NW produced a big passage on Apr 6th when 326 were counted past Huttoft and 347 past Gibraltar Point. Small numbers were offshore on many days May-Sep, maxima as per the table. Increasing SW winds Oct 3rd brought the biggest southerly passage of the autumn with 878 past Gibraltar Point (apparently the only site seawatching on that date!) along with a good variety of other seabirds. This total was more in line with previous Oct-Nov highs (949, Nov 2019, 884 Nov 2018, and 1150 Oct 2017). More northerly/northwesterly winds and poor weather in Nov continued to produce good offshore passage. Gibraltar Point logged 204 Nov 4th, and 895 Nov 21st on which date 986 were logged past Huttoft, with 497 past Chapel Point and 261 past Sutton all part of the same movement. Several flocks of 109-218 were seen to Nov 27th along the same coast. Numbers dried to a trickle into December with 27 Gibraltar Point Dec 2nd and 10 there Dec 10th.

A few singles only were seen on the Humber, but with three at the Humber Bridge Nov 27th and inland records came from Bardney Pits (one, Mar 14th), Langtoft GP (one, Apr 3rd), Covenham Reservoir (1-2, Apr 12th-15th), Long Bennington (one, Nov 17th)

### Sabine's Gull *Xema sabini*

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

Juveniles went past Wolla Bank Aug 26th and 31st (RL) and another juvenile the next day, Sep 1st, past Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes (CMo). One was off Gibraltar Point on Sep 2nd being mobbed by an Arctic Skua before heading off NE (APC, KMW) and again there Sep 3rd offshore from Wainfleet Haven. An adult in SP was seen close at Gibraltar Point NNR in on Sep 8th and again on Sep 14th (KMW).

### Bonaparte's Gull *Chroicocephalus philadelphia*

Vagrant, North America. **BBRC.**

An adult/2CY+ bird was found at Gibraltar Point on Nov 3rd, only the third county record (DWr). Is this species being overlooked amongst the thousands of Black-headed Gulls present across the county for much of the year? Accepted by BBRC (*British Birds* 115:551-612). See Finder's report on p200.





## 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	3000	5060	2050	1500	264	250	3000	4600	8420	25000	1000	500
Covenham Reservoir	120	200	400	200	70	2	400	450	3000	580	10000	500
North Hykeham Pits	-	-	10000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Friskney	874	3629	365	83	19	-	1126	-	-	-	-	-
Toft Newton Reservoir	3500	1000	140	6	13	5	23	100	130	800	2200	1700
Tallington Lakes	25	2200	3000	11	4	5	12	150	28	25	120	70
Theddlethorpe/Mablethorpe	-	1200	25	3	8	-	-	2800	2200	-	65	9
Read's Island Flats	-	-	-	-	-	-	2500	-	-	-	-	-
Baston GPs	120	250	500	750	800	250	2000	200	35	400	370	150
Chapel Point	-	50	40	-	-	-	168	30	100	2000	300	40
Gedney Drove End	36	2000	-	130	20	-	-	-	500	-	-	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	80	1000	12	40	20	4	750	200	2000	1200	100	12
Whisby Nature Park	-	1000	-	225	800	200	12	200	110	300	2000	1

All of the sites recording 2000 or more birds in at least one month of the year are tabulated above. The highest counts of the year were at North Hykeham Mar 4th (10000), Covenham Reservoir Oct 16th and Nov 11th (10000) and at Gibraltar Point Oct 21st (25000). Significant counts of 1000-5060 were recorded in the first quarter at seven other sites. Numbers fell for a brief period May-Jun but rose again from July with several counts up to 800 to mid-month, but peaking late July with 3000 Gibraltar Point 23rd, 2500 Read's Island and 1126 Friskney, both 25th. Numbers increased during the autumn on the coast and inland at Covenham and Toft Newton Reservoirs, and Whisby NP. The three latter sites returned the three highest counts in November with many fewer on the coast in that month, and very many less in Dec.

Confirmed breeding was reported at Boultham Mere (five nests, May); Deeping Lakes (c.40 nests May); Gibraltar Point, pairs on several of the water bodies and on the old saltmarsh but most were on Tennyson's Sands where c.50 pairs reared 40 young; Kirkby GP c.105 pairs, many failed, minimum of 20 chicks fledged; Woodhall Spa Airfield 210 nests in May; at Whisby Quarry/Job's Lane c.800 pairs.

As ever, a number of colour-ringed birds were noted, including ER86483 first seen at the now defunct Slippery Gowt Lane landfill site (Boston) in Feb 1999, seen twice in May at a colony in Poland, and again at Middlemarsh Farm Jul 28th, 2021. Another bird, ringed as a nestling in Poland in June 2020 was at North Killingholme Haven pits Jul 30th.



**Black-headed Gull**  
*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*  
 Hartsholme Park  
 January 22nd 2021  
 © CHRIS GRIMSHAW



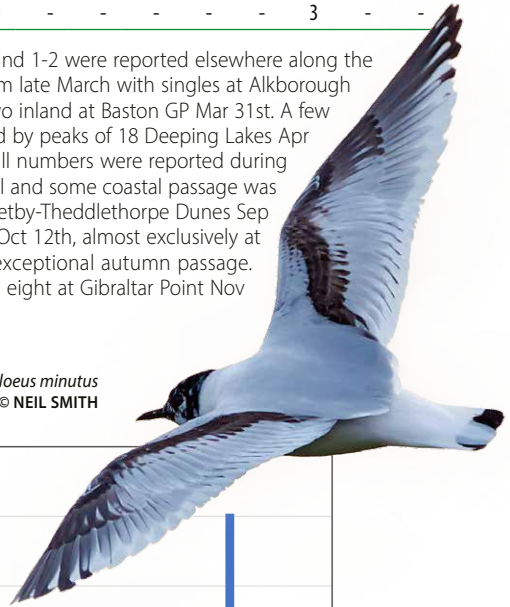
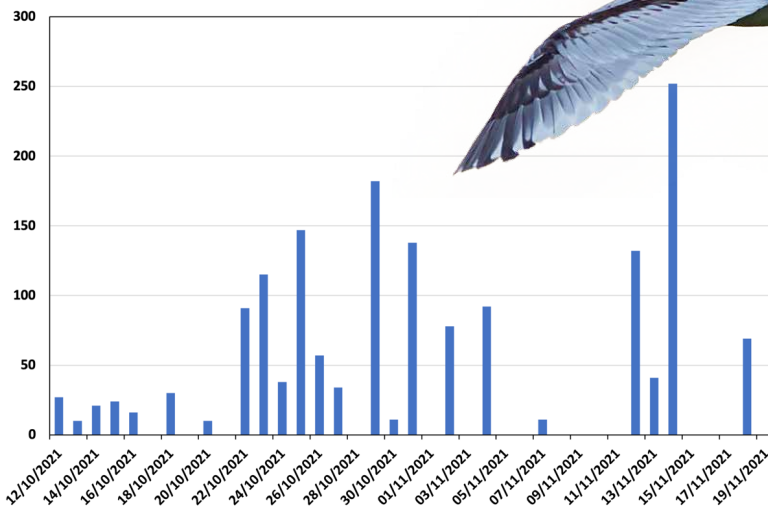
### Little Gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

Fairly common passage migrant in spring and autumn, scarce/very scarce in summer and winter. Green List. Threshold for international importance: 1000; for national importance: no data. **RBBP**.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	-	-	1	2	1	1	3	1	1	182	252	5
Frampton Marsh	-	-	-	23	4	2	1	-	-	-	-	-
Deeping Lakes	-	-	-	18	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	8	5	-	-
Chapel Point	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	1	3	-
Croftmarsh LNR	-	-	-	2	5	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Baston GPs	-	-	2	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Huttoft Bank	-	2	-	-	-	-	4	1	3	-	2	-
Alkborough Flats	-	-	1	-	3	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Humber Bridge Viewing Area	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-

The first of the year was at Freiston Shore Jan 4th and 1-2 were reported elsewhere along the coast Jan-Mar. Some spring passage was noted from late March with singles at Alkborough Flats Mar 20th and Gibraltar Point Mar 24th, and two inland at Baston GP Mar 31st. A few more went through in the first half of April followed by peaks of 18 Deeping Lakes Apr 23rd and 23 at Frampton Marsh the same day. Small numbers were reported during May and there were w few summering birds Jun-Jul and some coastal passage was noted from late Aug-Sep, maximum of eight Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes Sep 1st. October saw some exceptional numbers from Oct 12th, almost exclusively at Gibraltar Point. The chart below summarises this exceptional autumn passage. Numbers dropped dramatically after Nov 18th with eight at Gibraltar Point Nov 21st and two there Dec 13th the last of the year.

Little Gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus*  
Frampton Marsh May 19th 2021 © NEIL SMITH







**Mediterranean Gull** *Ichthyæetus melanocephalus* ■

Scarce, but increasing visitor throughout the year, most frequent in late summer/early autumn.  
Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 2400; for national importance: 40. **RBBP**.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	-	1	2	4	3	3	3	2	2	7	2	-
Whisby	-	1	2	8	6	8	-	-	-	-	-	-
Frampton Marsh	-	-	3	3	4	2	2	-	-	-	-	-
Huttoft Bank	1	1	-	-	1	-	2	1	2	-	-	1
Barton Pits	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	3	-	2	-	-
Baston GPs	-	-	-	-	2	2	-	2	-	-	-	-
East Halton	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	3	-	-
Far Ings	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Anderby Creek	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	1	-	1	-	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	2	-	-	-	-

The table shows all sites with cumulative annual monthly totals of more than five birds in 2021. The highest counts of the year were of eight at Whisby on Apr 25th and Jun 20th, all adult birds in full breeding plumage. The maximum winter count across the county was 10 in February. Although four pairs were present at Whisby only three pairs nested. Of these three pairs, one successfully raised two chicks and the other two failed at the incubation stage. At Frampton Marsh up to four birds were present in May but no breeding attempts were reported. At Gibraltar Point a pair was present in April and May but no nesting attempt was observed. Having peaked at a maximum number of 21 across the county in April and July, there were 18 birds in the county in October. The last reports of the year were singles at Huttoft Bank on Dec 11th and a Polish colour ringed adult in winter plumage at Ingoldmells on Dec 14th.

**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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Toft Newton Reservoir	2500	400	80	15	-	-	11	50	7	120	100	5400
Covenham Reservoir	300	1000	500	15	20	2	100	40	350	120	4000	500
Gibraltar Point	1000	2410	540	820	190	20	20	36	300	2500	300	300
Stickney	2500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Huttoft Bank	800	2000	600	300	206	120	50	40	60	140	300	600
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	350	1500	50	12	80	12	-	53	1000	800	200	-
Mablethorpe-Theddlethorpe	-	920	38	6	210	-	-	800	800	-	30	6
Garthorpe	770	50	40	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	500	-
Gedney Drove End	-	700	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Theddlethorpe to Saltfleetby	-	183	-	14	33	11	40	56	700	191	32	-

The top 10 sites according to the sum of the monthly peaks are tabulated. None of these surpassed the thresholds for national or international importance, although given the sometimes vast flocks feeding in the Wolds and elsewhere on ploughed land and winter wheat during the winter (see Stickney January peak) the county would arguably easily surpass the 17,400 for international importance. The winter numbers dissipate Mar-Apr and significant numbers can usually be seen going north on the coast at this time, e.g., 760 out of the 820 recorded on Apr 3rd at Gibraltar Point went through north. Post-breeding numbers build Sep-Oct with most present Nov-Dec and into January of the following year.  
A number of colour-ringed birds of long-standing were reported in the county during 2021 (NAL *et al*), mostly German-ringed birds some of which were also seen further south in Europe at various times. Many of these were more than 10 years old, the oldest being at least 15 yrs.





### 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: 3600; for national importance: 760.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	200	243	23	104	45	40	25	160	630	500	180	200
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	75	80	60	25	85	8	10	9	98	400	90	60
Pyewipe	35	25	15	20	20	20	30	110	90	25	182	70
Middlemarsh Farm	14	3	-	2	2	3	12	80	180	70	100	64
Donna Nook	-	28	23	56	9	-	-	-	10	-	16	40
Saltfleet Haven	-	16	35	51	14	4	4	18	4	38	1	17
Bagmoor Floods	50	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Humberston Fitties	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50
Tathwell	50	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1

As ever, Gibraltar Point remains the best place to regularly see this monster of a gull in numbers, with the years highest count of 630 on Sep 3rd and 500 Oct 22nd. Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes recorded the next highest at 400 Oct 23rd. The top four sites in the table were the only ones recording 100 or more in at least one month, all of the others had 50 or more in at least one month.

Birds are present all year with lowest numbers recorded May-Jul as breeding birds depart. Autumn passage begins in August 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. Two colour-ringed birds were noted in 2021, both having been seen in previous years: Black JK265, ringed as a chick on the islet of Teistholmene, SE Norway in 2017 was seen on Skegness beach Aug 1st and at Skegness boating lake Oct 8th and 10th; Black JJ286 ringed as a chick at Tranesvegen, west of Bergen in 2019 was at Gibraltar Point May 2nd.

### Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus* ■

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor, rare in summer. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 3100; for national importance: 2. **LBRC.**

Two individuals were seen in the first half of the year - an adult went south with Herring Gulls on Jan 15th at Mogg's Eye was the first of the year. A 2CY bird was then found at Stallingborough Feb 13th and was seen on and off there and also nearby Pyewipe and Cress Marsh until Apr 6th.

In the autumn a juvenile/1CY bird was seen at Wolla Bank Oct 23rd followed by a number of other sightings of a 1CY bird Nov 8th-27th on the coast between Chapel Point-Mablethorpe and one at Gibraltar Point Nov 28th, which may all relate to the same individual.

### Iceland Gull *Larus glaucooides* ■

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor Aug-May. Kumlien's Gull *L. g. kumlieni* is a vagrant. Amber List (nominate). Threshold for international importance: 3100; for national importance: 3. **LBRC.**

An adult first seen at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes on Jan 2nd (OBT, JRC) remained in the area until Mar 7th; a 1CY was also seen there at the river mouth on Feb 11th (JRC). It is believed

**Iceland Gull** *Larus glaucooides* Cress Marsh  
December 9th 2021 © GEOFF BEASLEY







that the latter was the individual seen at Manby Wetlands Feb 13th (PAH, PAHy) and Mablethorpe Feb 17th (OBT). Another 2CY bird Cress Marsh Feb 12th (ADv, CA) and a very white individual, probably a 2CY, flew south Mar 22nd at Wolla Bank (RDn) and a 1CY flew north at Huttoft Bank Apr 4th (RDn, RL). The last record of the first half of the year was of two 2CY+ birds north at Gibraltar Point on Apr 28th (NAL, KMW). There was just a single record in the second half of the year, at Cress Marsh on Dec 1st (CA, GBe).

### European 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 *argenteus*.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	5000	8100	2282	3500	1190	300	645	1490	3000	5290	3000	3000
Holbeach Marsh	-	-	-	-	50	250	20	20	12	1100	8	6
Ingoldmells	400	1000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	40
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	500	1000	300	60	400	130	40	20	65	150	200	35
Middlemarsh Farm	300	150	150	150	120	250	300	350	500	400	400	800
Kirkby GP	60	600	200	180	60	68	-	-	1	-	-	4
Pyewipe	100	100	100	145	104	276	560	210	150	100	270	140
Saltfleet Haven	-	430	30	-	550	63	10	180	6	60	10	20
Huttoft Bank	136	500	150	100	82	110	19	30	30	30	190	50

More than 200 sites recorded this common gull with the large roosts at Gibraltar Point surpassing the threshold for national importance in February. The counts in Jan-Feb reflect in part birds attracted to a large washout of starfish and razor shells. The large mobile flocks along the Mablethorpe-Saltfleet coast were difficult to assess and a count of 1100 along the Mablethorpe-Theddlethorpe section Feb 15th (not tabulated) may have been many of the same number frequenting Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes flock which was not counted on that date. Middlemarsh Farm and Kirkby GP were the only inland sites to record more than 250 birds. The high numbers at Gibraltar Point roosts dropped May-Jun as birds went north during the spring but a pair were seen at a nest May 22nd and 25th but they did not breed successfully. A pair probably bred on a roof top in Skegness when two juveniles were seen begging an adult for food Jul 10th.

The continued presence of birds in Jun-Jul at several of the sites reflects the immature summering birds. Returning birds in the autumn were noted from early August onwards.

Among the throngs of Herring Gulls at Gibraltar Point were at least 14 colour-ringed birds, most of them ringed at Yorkshire landfill sites, some seen regularly there in previous years as well as inland at Kirkby GP and indeed elsewhere in the UK. One of these colour-ringed birds was also re-sighted for the first time, having been ringed in King's Lynn in 2011: Yellow 1G2B, ringed at Blackborough Tip as an adult Oct 29th 2011 seen at Gibraltar Point Jan 5th 2021.

### Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans* ■

Very scarce all-year visitor, first county record in 2001. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 3200; for national importance: 1. **LBRC**.

In January a 2CY was at Barton Pits Jan 1st (GPC); a near-adult/4CY male at Festival Pool, Skegness Jan 4th (NAL); an adult on Ingoldmells beach Jan 10th (RDn); and at Gibraltar Point: 2CY Feb 4th (KMW), adult Mar 3rd (KMW), 2CY Mar 4th (NAL, KMW), 3CY Apr 8th (KMW). There were none May-Jun. The first of



the early autumn were two adults on several dates Jul 24th-31st between Freiston Shore and Witham Mouth (AJB, JB). A juvenile was at Gibraltar Point Jul 30th (KMW). More followed in the second half of the year with a minimum of eight accepted records, all between Aug-Dec: at Middlemarsh Farm separate juveniles Aug 2nd and then a long-stayer Sep 13th-Nov 18th (NAL); juvenile East Halton Aug 22nd; juvenile, Aug 30th Skegness boating lake (NAL); juvenile, Sep 4th Winterton landfill site (ND); juvenile Marton Sep 5th (DN); a 3/4CY at Willingham by Stow Sep 26th (DN); a 1CY Nov 9th and 21st Gibraltar Point (NAL); Ad, Nov 16th Huttoft Pit (RLb); 2CY+ Nov 27th and Dec 5th Donna Nook (AAI, OBT); 1CY Mablethorpe Dec 6th (DN); 2CY+, Dec 11th, Covenham Reservoir (OBT).



**Caspian Gull** *Larus cachinnans* Donna Nook November 11th 2021  
© A ALLPORT

As ever it is impossible to know how many are duplicates as birds wander between sites. This is the last year in which this species will be considered by LBRC, but good photographs are always welcome.

**Yellow-legged Gull** *Larus michahellis* 

Scarce visitor, mainly in late summer/autumn. RBBP. Amber List (nominate). Threshold for international importance: 13900; for national importance: 8. **LBRC**.

Note that Azorean Yellow-legged Gull *L. m. atlantis* is a vagrant on the BBRC list.

[illegible]





According to the new Birds of Lincolnshire during the recent years 2017-2019, records 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. Although birds were seen in all months of the year most were just 1-2 birds with August 'peaks' of three at Gibraltar Point Aug 9th (two 2CY and one juvenile) and 12th (three juveniles) and another three at Long Benington Aug 24th. Juveniles were seen at Gibraltar Point through Sep-Oct, the last there Oct 3rd. One or two long-standing adults frequented Covenham Reservoir and Louth, being seen in 10 months of the year with two present in March and June. There was no pattern to records throughout the year and only singles were reported Aug-Dec.

### 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
West Common, Lincoln	-	-	-	15	121	5	-	-	-	-	-	-
Deeping Lakes	1	51	70	95	115	109	100	54	12	1	-	1
Kirkby GPs	1	-	15	95	2	20	-	-	-	-	-	1
Gibraltar Point	1	3	25	15	91	9	25	39	30	17	3	1
Crowland	-	2	85	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Trent Port (Marton)	1	1	2	2	6	5	6	82	85	84	3	-
Pyewipe	2	2	19	43	20	47	80	60	5	-	2	1
Cress Marsh	-	2	27	30	70	50	15	18	2	5	-	-
Long Benington	4	3	2	-	3	2	22	70	4	12	3	8
Terrington Marsh	-	-	-	-	-	55	70	-	-	-	-	-

The top 10 sites are tabulated, and this species was widely recorded across the county at around 200 sites, involving nearly 2500 records, and in all months of the year. It is a scarce presence in Nov-Jan, with just 1-8 individuals seen mainly at inland sites. Returning birds were first noted from Feb 19th at Deeping Lakes Feb 19th when 14 were present increasing to 26 Feb 23rd and 51 Feb 26th. Peak spring counts were seen in Apr-May with both coastal and inland movements recorded. Inland, 121 went SE over West Common, Lincoln May 29th for example, and smaller numbers, mainly south, at Gibraltar Point in both periods. Birds gradually departed in the autumn with 84 Trent Port Oct 1st, 67 Frampton Marsh Oct 11th and 40 Toft Newton Reservoir Oct 17th the last sizeable flocks. Very few remained Nov-Dec.

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 48 occupied nests on May 23rd, 39 large chicks among 70 adults Jun 20th, 40 fledged young Jul 11th and 48+ fledged young Jul 24th. There were no records of potential breeding pairs on roof tops in any of the conurbations.

One ringing recovery of note was GC79502 ringed as a nestling Jun 21st, 2009, at Inner Westmark Knock off Terrington Marsh found freshly dead May 10th, 2021, in Holbeach aged 11 yr. 10 mth.

### Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*

Vagrant. Western Europe.

A presumed 2CY bird was found at Cress Marsh on Jul 22nd (CA), accepted by BBRC (*British Birds* 115(10): 551-612). This constitutes the 8th county record and the second consecutive year one has been recorded in the county after the bird at Gibraltar Point Aug 18th-19th, 2020.





**Caspian Tern** *Hydroprogne caspia* Barton Pits June 19th 2021 © GRAHAM CATLEY

### **Caspian Tern** *Hydroprogne caspia*

Vagrant. Western Europe. **BBRC**.

Late June provided three records of at least two birds: a ringed 3CY+ bird was at Barton Sailing Pit Jun19th-20th (GPC *et al*) and presumed the same bird at Baston GP on Jun 20th-21st (JJ). A different 3CY bird at Barton Sailing Pit Jun 25th-28th also ringed but on a different leg (GPC, *et al*); the two Barton birds were identified as being different thanks to some nifty photographic work by Graham Catley. The ringed bird wore a yellow darvic ring and was ringed as a chick in Finland in 2019. Both accepted by BBRC (*British Birds* 115:551-612)

### **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	Feb	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Gibraltar Point	1	346	257	89	7000	4136	1910	189	4
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	-	-	3	-	100	700	60	40	-
Sutton-on-Sea	-	-	1	-	358	600	240	150	-
Anderby Creek	-	-	-	2	586	300	100	1	-
Huttoft Bank	-	-	1	12	432	450	412	29	1
Chapel Point	-	-	-	-	120	400	140	4	-
Theddlethorpe-Mablethorpe	-	-	-	-	-	400	250	-	-
Freiston Shore	-	-	-	-	65	300	-	-	-
Donna Nook	-	-	-	-	-	145	2	-	-
Huttoft Bank Pit	-	-	-	-	18	60	140	-	-
Saltfleet Haven	-	-	-	-	81	140	3	-	-

Over 550 records were received from 29 sites, all coastal/estuarine with the exception of Baston GP. The first of the year was a very early bird Feb 25th, seen offshore at Gibraltar Point, which flew off south into The Wash. This is not exceptional and birds have been recorded wintering in The Wash, for example Dec 2018-Jan 2019 (LBR 2019). More records came in Apr, exclusively at Gibraltar Point, where 61 north Apr 5th was the next record. A good northerly passage was recorded all month with a peak of 346 (343 north) Apr 21st.

This continued throughout May with peaks of 80 May 1st, 257 May 3rd, 187 May 4th and 93 May 14th. Only eight other coastal/estuarine stations recorded any with 19 at Friskney and 16 at Wainfleet Marsh May 2nd.





As expected, autumn passage produced some very high roost counts at Gibraltar Point with 10 counts of more than 1,000 in Jul, 7,000 on 25th the highest, but eclipsed by the build-up during Aug: 19 counts of more than 1,000 during the month, peaking at 4136 Aug 1st (compare the Aug 2020 peak of 13,762 on 16th). Nine other coastal sites recorded peaks in August of 140-700, and the lone 2021 inland record was of one at Baston GP on Aug 24th. Smaller totals were noted into September, but Gibraltar Point still recorded four counts of more than 1,000 peaking at 1,910 Sep 3rd and there were 18 other counts of 135-881 during the month. The last big counts of the year were of 150 Sutton on Sea Oct 1st and 189 Gibraltar Point Oct 3rd. Numbers quickly dwindled after mid-month with just 1-7 birds seen at coastal sites. The last of the year were two birds south at Gibraltar Point Nov 4th.

### 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	Oct
Gibraltar Point	125	249	18	34	13	2	-
Huttoft Bank	-	5	4	12	2	-	1
Wainfleet All Saints	-	9	-	-	-	-	-
Freiston Shore	-	-	-	-	5	-	-
Grainthorpe	-	-	5	-	-	-	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	-	3	-	-	2	-	-
Somercotes Haven	-	-	-	5	-	-	-

The table list all sites reporting a cumulative monthly maximum annual total of more than five birds. The first four birds were reported at Gibraltar Point on Apr 20th and there were 15 there on Apr 23rd, with a big passage of 125 north on Apr 28th. Another big spring passage day occurred on May 17th with 236 north. The only inland bird reported in spring was one flying over Biscathorpe Lake in the Wolds on Jun 2nd. Gibraltar Point is the main site in the county which records the most passage, roosting and breeding action. The breeding colony on Millennium Ridge was wardened and at least 8 pairs attempted to nest and were successful in fledging 3 juveniles. One of these pairs attempted to breed on the new ridge at Greenshank Creek. Early autumn passage was a damp squib, with 12 moving off Huttoft Bank on Jul 2nd and a max. of only eight south at Gibraltar Point on Aug 10th; the usual roost here did not develop. In recent years numbers of birds have been reported from the SW corner of The Wash in late summer but not this year. The last two birds of the year at Gibraltar Point were single adult and juvenile south on Sep 12th and the very last bird of the year was of a single juvenile feeding close inshore off Huttoft Bank on Oct 16th.

### Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii* ■

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

All records were of post-breeding adults: Freiston Shore lagoon on Jul 9th-13th, with one on 9th, three on 12th, and one on 13th (JB, et al); Gibraltar Point Jul 13th and Aug 31st (KMW); Chapel Point Aug 17th (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.





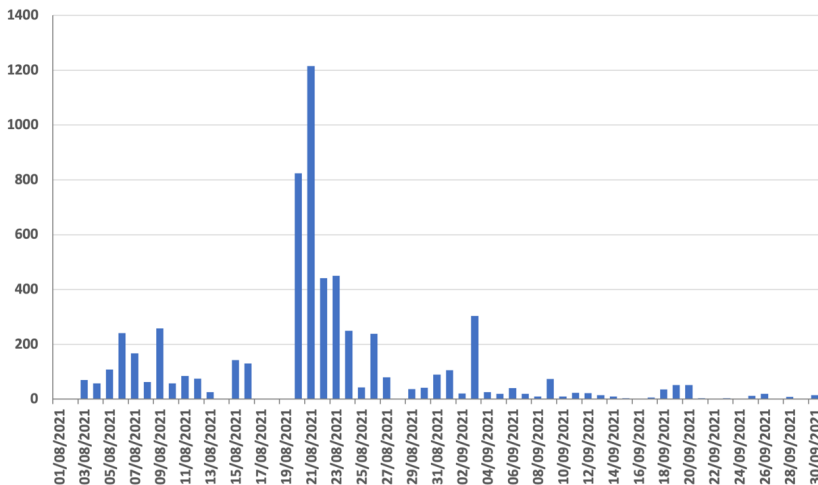


Site	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Gibraltar Point	3	24	8	30	1215	304	4	-
Anderby Creek	-	-	-	7	500	5	1	-
Goxhill Marsh	-	-	-	-	342	-	-	-
Cleethorpes	-	-	-	-	280	3	-	-
Chapel Point	-	-	-	-	250	-	1	-
Freiston Shore	5	25	-	100	200	5	-	-
East Halton Brick Pits	-	-	-	2	-	100	-	-
Frampton Marsh	-	21	43	26	8	-	-	-
Sutton-on-Sea	-	-	-	11	42	4	7	-
Kirkby GP	4	36	14	2	1	-	-	-
Baston GP	20	16	31	16	6	-	-	-
Huttoft Bank	3	6	12	22	30	8	8	2
Woodhall Spa Airfield	10	30	2	9	1	-	-	-

More than 100 coastal and inland sites recorded this species Apr-Nov. The first bird was at Tallington Lakes Apr 19th with more arriving, mainly across the southern third of the county, to the end of the month. Highest counts were 24 Deeping Lakes Apr 26th and 20 Baston GP Apr 28th. More followed during May as passage continued and breeding colonies re-established. The following confirmed breeding records were received: Gibraltar Point one nest; Kirkby GP c20 pairs all failed, no young seen; Whisby NP 10 pairs, 11 chicks Jul 12th. Failed breeders and returning birds began to appear from late-July with 100 at Freiston Shore 24th, and 200 there on Aug 8th. At this time large numbers began to appear on the coast (see table, above).

The peak counts were made in the third week of August and reflected elsewhere at Anderby Creek (500, Aug 19th, and Chapel Point (130 Aug 23rd, 250 Aug 24th). Numbers rapidly tailed away during September after a smaller peak of 304 at Gibraltar Point Sep 3rd and 100 East Halton Brick Pits Sep 4th, graphically illustrated by the Gibraltar Point data. Most had departed the county going into October with single figure counts only on the coast. In November there were two late birds at Huttoft Bank 3rd-4th (2), the last birds of the year.

**Common Tern counts, Gibraltar Point NNR, Aug-Sep 2021**







## Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* ■

Fairly common passage migrant, mainly coastal but there is a regular inland passage in spring. Has bred. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 20,000; for national importance: no data.

Site	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Frampton Marsh	120	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Saltfleetby - Theddlethorpe Dunes	84	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Barton-upon-Humber	82	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
Covenham Reservoir	64	12	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gibraltar Point	19	23	1	12	25	12	10	1
Toft Newton Reservoir	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Freiston Shore	13	-	-	1	2	1	-	-
Bagmoor Floods	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Theddlethorpe	-	-	-	-	10	-	-	-

Recorded from 28 sites both coastal and inland, Arctic Terns tend to move through mainly in the spring and in pulses often involving large flocks. In 2021 the first bird was at Tallington Lakes Apr 19th followed by 16 at Gibraltar Point and 13 at Covenham Reservoir on 21st. A large movement followed on 28th, probably involving several hundred birds: 84 Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes; 82 at Barton upon Humber; 64 Covenham Reservoir; 19 Gibraltar Point; 15 Toft Newton Reservoir; 10 Bagmoor Floods. The next day, Apr 29th, the peak count for the spring was recorded when 120 passed through in the evening. May saw 23 at Gibraltar Point and 12 Covenham Reservoir on 1st. Numbers dwindled rapidly thereafter with just singles on the coast on Jun 11th and 18th. Small numbers started to reappear on the coast during July culminating in a flock of 12 on 30th at Gibraltar Point. This continued through Aug-Sep with double figures on seven dates, with a peak count of 25 on Aug 21st at Gibraltar Point. After a flock of 10 at Gibraltar Point Oct 1st birds rapidly moved through with 1-6 birds, mainly juveniles, on several dates and the last two at Gibraltar Point Nov 4th and 14th.

## 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: 7500; for national importance: no data.

There was a very light spring passage with the first at Baston GP Apr 27th increasing to four Apr 28th. The only other spring record was of one at Holbeach Marsh May 1st. A summer record came from Frampton Marsh Jul 2nd-3rd.

Autumn passage was also unremarkable with records of 1-5 birds from 20 sites from Aug 3rd throughout the month, with most on the coast. Inland birds were at Toft Newton Reservoir Aug 27th-28th and Whisby NP Aug 31st. This pattern continued into Sep-Oct with maxima of three Covenham Reservoir Sep 6th-7th and four past Gibraltar Point Sep 20th. The final singles were in October off Wolla Bank 4th, Gibraltar Point 5th and Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes 6th.



**Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger* Frampton Marsh  
September 5th 2021 © NEIL SMITH





### 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	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Gibraltar Point	-	-	4	13	25	4
Huttoft	1	2	7	5	22	6
Sutton-on-Sea	-	-	-	1	14	2
Chapel Point	-	1	1	5	9	12
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	-	-	-	-	3	-
Wolla Bank	-	-	-	-	3	-
Anderby Creek	-	1	1	-	2	-
Freiston Shore	-	-	2	-	-	-
Ingoldmells	-	-	-	2	-	-
Mablethorpe	-	-	-	2	-	1
Donna Nook	-	-	1	-	-	-
East Halton Skitter	-	-	-	-	1	-
Frampton Marsh	-	-	1	-	-	-
Skegness	-	-	-	1	-	-
Wrangle Marsh	-	-	-	1	-	-

An early 'Bonxie' was offshore at Huttoft Jan 4th, possibly one of the two seen there Dec 24th, 2020. Autumn birds appeared from mid-July with 1-2 seen at Huttoft-Chapel Point coastline from Jul 16th and into Aug. Seven at Huttoft Aug 30th was the highest of the month, with one inland at Frampton Marsh Aug 18th and two Freiston Shore Aug 28th. Small numbers continued down the coast in Sep, mainly 1-5 birds but with 13 past Gibraltar Point Sep 14th. As expected, more were logged in October with a significant passage occurring on Oct 6th when in a strong NW wind, 22 past Huttoft and 25 past Gibraltar Point. Numbers fell back after that with seven past Huttoft Oct 16th and 1-3 birds elsewhere along the coast. Small numbers continued south along the coast in Nov, again mainly 1-5 birds with 12 on Nov 27th the highest count and the last of the year.

### Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus* ■

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

Site	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Anderby Creek	-	1	1	-	-
Chapel Point	-	-	-	2	1
East Halton Skitter	-	-	-	-	2
Freiston Shore	-	2	-	-	-
Gibraltar Point	-	3	2	2	7
Huttoft	-	2	3	2	11
Killingholme Marshes	-	-	-	-	2
Moggs Eye	-	-	1	-	-
Sailor's Home, Wrangle	-	-	1	-	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	1	-	-	-	1
Sutton-on-Sea	-	-	1	-	5
Theddlethorpe	-	-	-	-	4

Sixty records from 12 seawatching sites were received in 2021 and peak counts per month are tabulated for all sites. An early bird went south off Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes Jul 22nd and two were seen





at Huttoft Aug 8th. Singles were seen between Huttoft and Gibraltar Point Aug 19th-20th, 22nd-23rd and 25th, followed by three at Gibraltar Point Aug 26th (one juvenile and two light phase adults) and two in The Wash at Freiston Aug 28th. In September a full-tailed adult went south Sep 1st and probably the same bird at Gibraltar Point the same day. Two were seen at Huttoft Sep 20th and 24th with 1-2 birds logged on six days in October up to 29th. More followed in November with six Huttoft and four Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes Nov 4th, followed by a strong passage Nov 21st with most past Huttoft (11) and Gibraltar Point (7 – two juveniles, five pale phase adults). A few more were noted Nov 27th with two Killingholme marshes, five Sutton on Sea and two East Halton Skitter. The last of the year were single juveniles past Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes and Gibraltar Point Nov 28th.

### 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	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Gibraltar Point	1	-	7	90	61	32	6
Freiston Shore	-	-	5	37	-	-	-
Huttoft Bank	-	-	3	30	35	15	1
Chapel Point	-	-	-	28	5	5	3
Huttoft	-	-	-	15	15	17	-
Marsh Yard	-	-	-	-	13	-	-
Moggs Eye	-	-	-	-	13	-	-
Sutton-on-Sea	-	-	-	11	13	12	1
Skegness	-	-	-	2	10	-	-

Records were received from around 25 coastal sites including three on the Humber. Those recording 10 or more in any month are tabulated above. The section of coast from Sutton on Sea to Gibraltar Point is well-watched from multiple places and duplications are frequent.

An adult light phase bird went south at Gibraltar Point on May 22nd, a less than annual spring record. A few singles were noted on several dates in the first half of July between Huttoft and Gibraltar Point (the same individual?) before more were noted in the second half with up to seven at Gibraltar Point; four were noted to go to roost on an offshore sandbar on 30th. Numbers built up during mid-late August with good passage noted at Gibraltar Point with four counts of 40 or more and a peak of 90 Aug 31st. This passage was also recorded at other coastal watchpoints (see table) and also in The Wash with Freiston Shore recording 31 on Aug 26th, 37 on Aug 28th and 29 on Aug 30th. This period of peak passage continued into September with 61 Gibraltar Point 1st, and 48 on 2nd. Some of these were also recorded on these dates along the coast N of Gibraltar Point. Double figure counts continued through the month along the coast with a second peak Sep 19th-20th with 47 Gibraltar Point 19th and 51 on 20th. In the Humber, three were off East Halton and one off Barton Sep 4th. In Oct, passage continued with small pulses of birds on 3rd and 6th at the usual coastal sites with 24 at Gibraltar Point Oct 3rd, 32 on 6th and 17 at Huttoft on 6th. That signalled the end of large numbers. Seven went past Gibraltar Point Oct 15th and nine Oct 29th. In the Humber one was off East Halton Oct 31st. Stragglers continued into November with up to six at Gibraltar Point (4th) with the last bird there Nov 14th.



### Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* ■

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

Site	Aug	Sep	Oct
Anderby Creek	-	1	-
Chapel Point	1	8	1
East Halton Skitter	-	-	1
Freiston Shore	2	-	-
Gibraltar Point	5	2	1
Huttoft Bank	1	12	3
Sandilands	1	-	-
Sutton-on-Sea	2	1	1
Theddlethorpe	1	2	-



Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* Rimac September 2nd 2021 © GRAHAM CATLEY

Records were received from the coast Gibraltar Point-Saltfleetby, The Wash and the Humber. The first was an intermediate phase juvenile Aug 17th at Theddlethorpe. More records followed of 1-2 birds but with five past Gibraltar Point Aug 31st the highest count. In September, 1-3 birds continued to be seen on 11 dates during the month but with an exceptional count of 12 past Huttoft and eight past Chapel Point on the Sep 4th. Predictably few were seen in October with one past East Halton Skitter Oct 2nd, singles past Gibraltar Point 2nd and 6th, and three past Huttoft 6th the last multiple occurrence with singles past other coastal watchpoints close by marking the last records of the year.

### Little Auk *Alle alle* ■

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

The only record in the first half of the year was one found dead on the tideline at Gibraltar Point Feb 10th. The first was one north at Gibraltar Point Sep 30th. Then in October eight flew south and one went north at Crook Bank, Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes on 10th followed by a single Sutton on Sea Oct 21st with two there Oct 23rd and two north past Gibraltar Point Oct 29th. In November singles were recorded





on seven days between 3rd and 28th on the coast between Saltfleetby-Gibraltar Point. Two went north Gibraltar Point 4th and Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes 15th, three south Gibraltar Point 15th and three north 22nd. The last of the year was a single at Huttoft Bank Dec 2nd.

### Common Guillemot *Uria aalge* ■

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

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Huttoft Bank	4	2	2	-	18	1	1	1	26	30	11	3
Gibraltar Point	2	7	1	2	2	-	2	27	12	15	3	2
Sutton-on-Sea	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	16	13	2	-
Witham Mouth	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	11	10	5

Around 20 sites on the coast, in The Wash and Humber recorded this species in small numbers but with more in Sep-Oct as is usual. A raft of 27 off Gibraltar Point on Aug 3rd was unusual and coastal counts increased after Sep 12th with 26 off Huttoft, and with more in October peaking at 30 off the same site Oct 6th. Small numbers were seen off the Witham mouth with 11 Oct 15th and 5-10 remaining into Nov. Very few remained into December with 1-3 seen at several coastal sites.

### Razorbill *Alca torda* ■

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

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Anderby Creek	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	3	-	-
Chapel Point	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Chapel Six Marshes	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Freiston Shore	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gibraltar Point	1	2	1	13	1	-	1	8	26	3	1
Huttoft	-	1	-	2	5	1	-	1	-	2	1
Mablethorpe	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
Sutton-on-Sea	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-
Witham Mouth	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Wolla Bank	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

A reasonable year for this auk with a scattering of records in 11 months of the year (oddly none in April) mainly from the well-watched coastal sites and some good autumn totals at Gibraltar Point. Seawatching effort there is usually high and provides most of the records with most on Oct 14th (20) and Oct 28th (26). Many more passed by offshore too distant for certain identification in late Sep-early Oct (see next account). Most had departed by the end of October leaving 1-3 birds off the coast in December and the last record a single off Huttoft Dec 22nd.

### 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.

A particularly heavy passage of Auk sp. was noted past Gibraltar Point from late September and into October. On Sep 29th 122 were recorded, increasing to 492 on Oct 4th and with three figure counts on seven dates thereafter: Oct 5th (157), 15th (143), 16th (239), 17th (193), 18th (154), 28th (151) and Nov 4th (111).





### Atlantic Puffin *Fratercula arctica* ■

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

One flew north past Gibraltar Point Aug 30th and Sep 2nd and other singles there Oct 3rd, on the sea with Razorbills and Guillemots, Oct 4th, 6th and 12th (all north). Huttoft (Oct 10th) and Sutton on Sea (Oct 21st) also logged singles. In November singles were seen at Huttoft (3rd, 13th, 21st and 27th), Sutton on Sea (4th), and Chapel Point (21st, 27th). The last of the year was off Mablethorpe Dec 21st.

### 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	356	398	89	7	4	1	-	2	52	82	79	149
Huttoft	177	375	32	2	1	1	2	1	45	38	19	39
Mablethorpe	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	5	210
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	159	170	3	-	-	-	-	-	3	27	10	12
Anderby Creek	8	118	5	-	-	-	-	-	32	10	1	-
Freiston Shore	71	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chapel Point	97	12	1	-	-	-	-	-	21	10	33	8
Sutton-on-Sea	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	25	29	3	-

More than 500 records were received from 26 sites, 24 of them coastal, in every month of the year. Highest counts were logged in Jan-Feb topped by 356 at Gibraltar Point Jan 26th, including 242 south and a raft of 114 on the sea, with 177 of these logged south past Huttoft. At Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes 159 Jan 31st (158 north) and 118 north the same day past Huttoft. Gibraltar Point and the Saltfleetby-Chapel Point coast continued to provide most records, all part of the same movements of birds which are tidal as well as seasonal. By the end of the month the pattern remained the same with 192 Gibraltar Point and



Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata* Deeping High Bank February 13th 2021 © GERVAISE ORTON





353 Huttoft Feb 25th, and 375 Huttoft Feb 26th as birds began moving north towards breeding grounds. Numbers dwindled rapidly after the first week of March, 89 at Gibraltar Point Mar 6th the highest, and 16 there Mar 28th the last double figure count of the month. The spring and summer, Apr-Aug were very quiet before birds began reappearing in the autumn with decent counts in Sep: 45 Huttoft Sep 12th and 52 Sep 20th Gibraltar Point; counts of 20 or more were recorded there on seven other dates in the month. This picture continued through Oct-Nov as more arrived and wintering numbers peaked in December with 149 Dec 12th Gibraltar Point and 210 Mablethorpe Dec 20th. Inland records came from Crowland Feb 12th on and off to Mar 1st and Barton Pits Apr 15th and 17th.

### **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: 3500; for national importance: 6.

In January one or two birds were reported 1st-26th along the coast between Gibraltar Point and Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes. The only other bird in the first half of the year was one at Covenham Reservoir April 8th.

The first of the autumn was off Gibraltar Point Sep 11th-13th, and later on 23rd, 25th and 28th; singles were off Huttoft 12th-13th, 19th and 21st; Sutton on Sea 27th and Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes 29th. In October birds were off Sutton on Sea 1st, 6th and 15th; and Huttoft/Wolla Bank 6th, 10th and 27th. Huttoft/Wolla Bank accounted for most of the November records with singles on 2nd, 10th, 21st-22nd and 26th, as well as the last of the year on Dec 20th. Clearly the majority of these records may refer to 1-2 individuals moving up and down the coast. In The Wash there was an exceptional count of up to four at Witham Mouth Nov 28th.

### **Green 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.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	3	1	1	1	1	2	-	4	5
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	5	2	1	-	-	-	1	-	-
Covenham Reservoir	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Freiston Shore	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Huttoft	-	1	2	-	-	2	-	2	1
Chapel Point	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
Deeping Lakes LWT	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kirkby GP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Moggs Eye	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sutton-on-Sea	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-
Wainfleet All Saints	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Witham Mouth	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-

All sites recording Great Northern Divers are tabulated, nine are coastal and three freshwater bodies. Records were received in nine months of the year with none Jun-Aug. On the coast five going south at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes Jan 1st with a good movement of Red-throated Divers was the highest of the month with three south at Gibraltar Point Jan 11th. One turned up at Deeping Lakes Jan 5th-9th. Singles were noted at several other coastal sites and 1-2 birds were also on the coast Feb-Mar and the last two were both off Gibraltar Point Apr 12th, going into The Wash, and a very late bird on May 24th.

The first of the autumn was an adult in summer plumage Sep 10th-11th at Gibraltar Point, two were there Sep 13th, and also two off Huttoft Sep 10th, 13th, and 15th, perhaps the same birds. Singles on Oct 14th at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes and Chapel Point Oct 24th were the only records of that month. More arrived from Nov 2nd, with four seen off Gibraltar Point Nov 6th and 1-3 there Nov 10th-30th. December saw a good scattering of records from 1st, both on the coast and inland. One was





**Great Northern Diver** *Gavia immer* Covenham Reservoir December 12th 2021 © ROY HARVEY

offshore at Gibraltar Point Dec 9th with a White-billed Diver (see next account) and a minimum of five were seen there 10th. One arrived at Covenham Reservoir 11th, staying well into 2022, and another was at Kirkby GP Dec 11th-31st.

### **White-billed Diver** *Gavia adamsii*

Vagrant. Arctic region. **LBRC.**

One was well seen offshore at Gibraltar Point Dec 9th, only the 5th county record.

### **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.**

One seen and videoed in the Humber off East Halton Nov 27th was a patch first for the observer (SRo).

### **Leach's Storm Petrel** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* ■

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

Another poor year with just three records. One at East Halton Skitter Sep 30th flew SE down the Humber (Mht); one S past Gibraltar Point Nov 22nd during a decent spell of seabird movement; one at Witham Mouth Nov 27th. The last good year was 2013 when there were 16 records involving 27 birds.

### **Northern Fulmar** *Fulmarus glacialis* ■

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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	8	2	1	4	47	1	1	4	5	1	1	4
Huttoft Bank-Anderby	26	2	-	19	15	3	-	1	4	1	-	1
Freiston Shore	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
Chapel Point	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	3	1
Sutton-on-Sea	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	2	1	-	1	-
Normanby	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-
Skegness	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-





Fulmar remains a scarce bird offshore with double figure counts increasingly rare. More than 100 records were received in every month of the year from coastal sites Saltfleetby-Gibraltar Point, from Freiston Shore in The Wash, and from one inland site, Normanby.

There was a northward coastal movement in early January with 26 at Moggs Eye Jan 4th and 15 Huttoft Bank Jan 5th and 1-9 were recorded on five other dates to Jan 30th. Few were seen in Feb-Mar but 19 went north Huttoft Bank Apr 28th and the highest count of the year was of 47 south at Gibraltar Point in a strong westerly along with other seabirds on May 22nd; 15 were also recorded at Huttoft, part of the same movement. Another 28 (25 N, 3 S) were seen at Gibraltar Point May 30th. Jun-Jul was predictably quiet apart from the extraordinary record of one flying low south over a Normanby garden during a period of low cloud and a NE wind. The autumn was rather a non-event for the species with four at Gibraltar Point Aug 30th and five there soon after on Sep 2nd. Just two singles were reported in October and a few in late November with three past Chapel Point Nov 27th the last of the year.

### **Sooty Shearwater** *Ardenna grisea* ■

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

Another sparse showing for this species with 13 records received from four coastal sites Aug 26th-Nov 27th.

The first were five north at Gibraltar Point Aug 26th with one at Huttoft the same day, presumed part of the same movement. One north at Gibraltar Point Aug 30th was the last of the month. In September there were two records, three Huttoft Sep 4th and one Gibraltar Point Sep 30th. In October singles were seen at Huttoft Oct 7th and Gibraltar Point Oct 29th. The last of the year were singles at Huttoft Nov 3rd, Saltfleetby and Gibraltar Point Nov 4th, two Mablethorpe Nov 21st and one Huttoft Nov 27th.

### **Great Shearwater** *Ardenna gravis*

**Vagrant. South Atlantic. LBRC.**

One flew south along the tide edge at Huttoft Car Terrace Dec 2nd (RL), then past Mablethorpe (THo, TSh) and finally going south past Gibraltar Point (NAL) before seeming to disappear into The Wash.

This was one of the highlights of the year, especially for the observers concerned. There have been just eight previous county records involving nine birds prior to this year, the last in 1977. Whether this was the bird later picked up moribund at Wisbech (Cambs.) in Apr 2022, and which later died, is a moot point.

### **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	Apr	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Chapel Point	-	-	-	-	1	1
Gibraltar Point	2	-	1	1	3	1
Huttoft	3	3	1	1	5	-
Moggs Eye	-	-	-	-	-	1
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	-	-	-	-	2	1
Sutton-on-Sea	-	-	-	2	2	-

A very poor year for this species with fewer than 50 records from the usual coastal sites. Just four spring records of 1-2 birds Apr 6th, 21st, 27th and 28th. Three went past Huttoft Jul 13th, and singles there Aug 26th-27th were the first of the autumn. The same picture in September saw records on seven days of 1-2 birds between 13th-30th. A few more were logged in October from 3rd onwards, with four past Huttoft Oct 6th and five there Oct 21st. Thereafter just singles were seen from Oct 22nd and on four further dates, the last Nov 22nd.





## Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*

Vagrant. Europe. **BBRC**.

A 1CY bird appeared over Tetney Marsh on Aug 9th (observer unknown, but photograph seen by Frampton Marsh RSPB staff) and then turned up at Frampton Marsh on Aug 12th remaining in the area until Sep 15th (AJB, et al.). During its stay it was also seen at Freiston Shore, Butterwick, Leverton, Kirtton Marsh, Holbeach Marsh on various dates up until late Aug. It reappeared at Frampton Marsh on Sep 3rd, remaining there until Sep 15th. Accepted by BBRC (*British Birds* 115:551-612).



Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* Freiston Shore  
August 15th 2021 © JAMES PORTER

## Northern 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	2	2	5	40	80	21	50	141	254	1395	81	5
Huttoft Bank-Chapel Pt	6	-	1	44	13	102	59	48	35	1300	29	2
Sutton-on-Sea	1	-	-	-	-	3	19	26	57	686	24	-
Saltfleetby- Theddlethorpe	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	60	13	165	13	-
Barton-upon-Humber	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	35	3	-
Wrangle Marsh	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	35	-	-	-
East Halton Skitter	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	31	-	-
Humber Bridge	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	28	-	-

More than 600 records were received from around 26 sites, 21 coastal or estuarine, four inland. A few were seen from coastal sites Jan-Mar but there was a decent passage of 44 past Huttoft Apr 28th and on the same day at Gibraltar Point 40 were seen, doubtless some of the same birds. Another pulse of birds came through in mid-late May at Gibraltar Point with 20 May 14th, 80 May 22nd and 39 May 26th. The following month 102 went past Huttoft Jun 22nd with smaller numbers elsewhere along the coast. Regular double figure counts were logged in July with 59 Huttoft Jul 30th and 50 Gibraltar Point the same day. August totals increased steadily with 139 Gibraltar Point Aug 5th, 127 Aug 6th and 141 Aug





20th, and 60 Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes Aug 16th. September totals were similar with 20-50 on 10 dates and peaks of 57 Sutton on Sea Sep 24th and more than 100 past Gibraltar Point on four dates, peaking at 254 on Sep 30th. In Oct, 454 went S past Gibraltar Point Oct 2nd, 628 on Oct 3rd, 472 Oct 5th and then more strong NW winds on Oct 6th resulted in the best passage of the autumn with 1395 S past Gibraltar Point and also 1300 at Huttoft, and 686 at Sutton on Sea. Things quietened down thereafter with 126 Gibraltar Point Oct 17th, 248 Huttoft Oct 21st and 106 Gibraltar Point Oct 29th the best of the rest. Much smaller numbers continued into November with 81 past Gibraltar Point Nov 4th the highest, then 79 Nov 21st. Birds lingered into Dec, with five Gibraltar Point Dec 2nd, three Dec 10th and singles offshore at Huttoft and Mablethorpe to Dec 25th.

Inland, an adult flew SE over Normanby Enterprise Park Mar 13th, the only spring record at an inland site. In the autumn, a juvenile flew west over East Kirkby airfield Sep 29th, another juvenile went SE at Middlemarsh Farm Oct 2nd, and a third juvenile went S over Boultham Mere Oct 7th.

### Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* ■

Fairly common winter visitor, mainly coastal but increasing numbers inland and in summer.

Inland breeding colony established 1992. Subspecies *carbo* and *sinensis* Green List. Threshold for international importance: 1,200; for national importance: 620.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Coastal</b>												
Gibraltar Point	274	323	195	56	30	7	14	60	51	183	449	318
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	112	143	350	80	10	1	2	75	26	22	100	45
Friskney Flats	4	200	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Saltfleet Haven	-	200	56	7	6	-	-	6	21	22	14	26
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	-	27	173	27	-	-	2	1	32	18	63	37
Theddlethorpe-Mablethorpe	-	142	128	1	-	-	-	10	6	-	10	20
Friskney	-	117	4	36	3	-	59	-	-	-	-	-
Wrangle Marsh	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	116	-	-	-
Sutton-on-Sea	30	-	-	4	2	1	4	93	9	10	10	3
Somercotes-Donna Nook	-	6	72	-	1	1	-	-	3	11	-	-
<b>Inland</b>												
Covenham Reservoir	87	226	1	4	6	5	5	7	124	34	105	241
Deeping Lakes	65	20	31	70	57	52	25	60	9	30	38	21
Tallington Lakes	66	23	10	3	4	-	-	2	-	12	24	22
Woodhall Spa Airfield	57	61	47	29	25	31	20	20	21	25	-	-
Whisby Nature Park	22	13	11	16	2	5	6	15	50	40	53	11
Toft Newton Reservoir	52	11	6	7	1	-	2	2	8	12	32	28

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe December 9th 2021 © GRAHAM CATLEY







More than 230 sites reported Cormorant and in every month of the year. Those sites recording 50 or more in at least one month are tabulated, split by coastal and inland status. Gibraltar Point, the Saltfleet-Mablethorpe coast, and The Wash consistently recorded the highest counts. Covenham Reservoir had by far the highest counts of the inland sites.

At the Deeping Lakes, the breeding colony amounted to a maximum of 28 occupied nests Apr 19th, with two still occupied Sep 12th; a good number of young (unquantified) were present in the colony May 23rd. The colony at the Woodhall Spa Airfield held a maximum of 14 occupied nests Mar 24th with young visible in the nests May-Jun (unquantified).

A bird colour-ringed as a nestling on Anglesey Jun 2019 was seen at Middlemarsh Farm Mar 20th and again Dec 11th. Another nestling colour-ringed on the River Mersey Jul 2019 was recorded Sep 3rd Rutland Water and then Nov 11th at Whisby NP.

### European Shag *Gulosus aristotelis* ■

Usually rare/scarse winter visitor Aug-May to the coast and inland, with occasional larger influxes. Exceptional in summer. Threshold for national importance: 2000; for national importance: 1110. Red List.



European Shag *Gulosus aristotelis* Covenham Reservoir December 14th 2021 © GRAHAM CATLEY

Site	Jan	Feb	Oct	Nov	Dec
Chapel Six Marshes	1	-	-	-	-
Covenham Reservoir	-	-	-	-	2
Deeping High Bank	-	1	-	-	-
Deeping Lakes	-	1	-	-	-
Freiston Shore	1	-	-	-	-
Gibraltar Point	-	-	1	2	2
Huttoft Bank	-	1	2	2	1
Mablethorpe	-	-	-	-	1
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	-	-	-	1	-
Sutton-on-Sea	-	-	1	-	-
Tallington Lakes	-	-	-	-	1





A fairly typical showing with around 80 records from 10 or 11 sites Jan-Feb and Oct-Dec, and taking local movements into account. January records were of singles at Freiston Shore Jan 5th and Chapel Six Marshes Jan 15th. In February one Huttoft 13th, another at Deeping High bank 12th-14th and probably the same bird at Deeping Lakes Feb 24th. These were the only winter records, with none Mar-Sep. One feeding on the sea at Sutton on Sea Oct 6th was the first of the autumn followed by one Huttoft Oct 10th and two Oct 13th-14th and another at Gibraltar Point Oct 16th. Two were at Gibraltar Point Nov 4th and 6th, with two also Huttoft Nov 6th, perhaps the same birds. A single was at Huttoft Nov 10th, another Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes Nov 17th and Gibraltar Point Nov 28th. The theme continued into December with 1-2 off Gibraltar Point on several dates Dec 4th-10th, Huttoft Dec 10th and Mablethorpe Dec 16th. Inland records came from Covenham Reservoir, 1-2 birds Dec 10th-31st and Tallington Lakes Dec 29th.

**Taxonomic note:** Resurrection of the monotypic genus *Gulosus* was proposed for the genetically highly divergent European Shag (IOC 12.1).

### Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

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

The first of the year was an immature (2CY) at Manby Wetlands on May 10th (GW, et al) and later at Alkborough Flats, May 20th-Sep 11th (GPC, ND, et al), and presumably the same bird at Winterton Jun 1st, East Halton Sep 24th, and Far Ings NR Oct 14th. What was thought to be a different bird was at Bardney Jun 19th on and off until Jul 3rd (DCk, MWh, et al), visiting Kirkby GP briefly on Jun 24th (KDR). There were two autumn records on Sep 23rd at Gibraltar Point (KMW) and on 24th at East Halton Skitter (DWt). Overall, it seems no more than three birds at most were involved in these records.

This is another species whose numbers have increased dramatically in the UK since the mid-2000s. It hasn't yet bred anywhere in the UK at the time of writing this report, as far as is known, but breeding attempts (nest building) were recorded in 2014 at Frampton Marsh and at RSPB Ham Wall (Somerset) in 2016.



Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* Alkborough Flats August 13th 2021 © GRAHAM CATLEY





**Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia* juvenile begging for food at Alkborough Flats August 13th 2021 © GRAHAM CATLEY

### **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	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Frampton Marsh	-	-	1	8	12	30	29	39	3	-	1
Gibraltar Point	-	1	1	4	15	23	34	30	10	2	-
Alkborough Flats	1	4	5	15	8	30	32	29	5	-	-

More than 500 records were received from around 35 sites in 11 months of the year, the first bird being seen at Alkborough Flats Feb 20th. Counts at the three main wetland sites are tabulated. A few more arrived Mar-Apr, 1-5 birds at seven sites including Barton Pits, Huttoft Pit, and Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes as well as those in the table. There was a wider scatter of records in May-Jun with presence at 16 sites, with just 1-3 birds at 12 of these. A juvenile was noted at Alkborough Flats Jul 2nd and post-breeding numbers increased totals during Jul-Aug. In July when counts were available on the same dates at the three tabulated sites totals varied between 24 and 52 with five totals of more than 40. There were only two such dates in August, when the totals across the three sites were 46 Aug 15th and 50 Aug 26th, and another two in September when the totals were 59 on 11th and 53 on 12th. Most had departed by late September with 9-12 birds lingering Gibraltar Point to Oct 8th. Two immatures were seen along the coast Gibraltar Point-Anderby Creek Nov 9th and a late bird was at Frampton Marsh Dec 17th. There was no evidence of breeding as yet, but birds at Gibraltar Point regularly flew in off The Wash with juveniles in tow begging for food, presumably from the breeding colony in the Holkham area, and of the 22 birds there on Aug 25th, most were juveniles. When will the first breeding attempt be discovered?!





## 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of sites	6	3	8	8	6	6	4	5	8	5	3	4
Minimum total	7	6	11	12	16	8	5	6	9	6	5	5



**Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*** Far Ings Barton December 6th 2021  
© GRAHAM CATLEY

Bitterns continue to go from strength to strength. The highest count of the year was six reported at Baston GP on May 15th and records came from 21 sites through the year. The most astounding news was that confirmed breeding pairs doubled from seven to 14 with eight pairs along the Humber bank and another six in the far south of the county Fens. Even better than that, the total fledged young was 17 in the Fens and nine on the Humber, indicating the Bittern 'boom' seems set to continue.

The earliest booming male reported this year was on Mar 16th at Ness Pit, Barton-upon-Humber, which presaged another great breeding season along the Humber. In summary there were three pairs at Alkborough, three at Far Ings (raising seven young), one at

Pasture Wharf (raising two young) and a pair at Barrow Haven. In the Fens at Baston GPs three confirmed pairs raised two young while at nearby Deeping Lakes three pairs raised an incredible 15 young. In addition to all this confirmed breeding activity there were additional possibly unpaired booming males at Baston Fen (two), Alkborough, Far Ings and Messingham SQ. There was no breeding behaviour reported along the coast although single birds were present at Huttoft Pit and Chapel Pit in January with the former site holding a bird in Jul-Sep. In all eight sites reported a bird in one month, usually on a single date. With all this breeding activity it is surprising that the winter population remains fairly static raising the question where do all these Bitterns go in winter? The total across all sites of seven in January was one up on 2020 while the December count of five was six down compared with 2020.

## Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* ■

Rare vagrant. Amber List. Threshold for international importance: 2300; for national importance: 1. **LBRC**.

There were many records of between 1-3 birds during the year across the county, but as this is another well-known wanderer some duplication cannot be excluded, and exact totals are difficult to estimate even with the small numbers involved.

In the first half of the year, the first was one at Frognall Mar 7th. This bird seemingly took up residence and was reported there and in the immediate vicinity at Deeping Lakes NR, Deeping High Bank and Stowgate on several dates until the end of the month (M. Porter, et al). Two turned up at Deeping Lakes NR from Apr 4th (JJ) on and off until 26th and three flew over there on May 8th (JWI). Elsewhere, one was on a small NR near Branstow on Mar 21st (API), a single was at Gibraltar Point on May 13th (GPBO), it or another was at Frampton Marsh May 29th (RSPB) and a summer bird flew north at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes Jul 6th (CMo).



The first of the autumn was a long stayer at Baston GP Aug 5th-Sep 1st (MBr). Another long stayer was at Frampton Marsh Aug 11th-Sep 4th, joined by a second bird Aug 23rd-28th with 1-2 birds there until Nov 15th (RSPB staff). In Oct, two were at Fillingham Lake 17th (Dro), and an adult was at Middlemarsh Farm 28th (NAL). In November singles were seen at Thorpe Fen 2nd (JJa); Frampton Marsh 2nd (1), 8th (3) and 15th (1) with probably one of the same birds at Butterwick 7th (RSPB staff); one at Marton 14th (BHe); one 23rd at Crowland and adjacent Deeping Lakes LNR and Deeping High Bank until Dec 31st (JJ et al). In December one was at Pinchbeck 5th (MFi). Further north one was at East Halton 31st (WPa, et al). The spread of these birds as a breeding species in the UK is well documented, including in the neighbouring counties of Norfolk and Cambridgeshire, and it will surprise no-one when the first Lincolnshire breeders are reported in the near future. This species will not be considered by LBRC after this year.

### **Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*

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

Counts of apparently occupied nests from the BTO Heronry survey organised in Lincolnshire by Barrie Wilkinson are tabulated below. In total there were 186, up from 134 in 2020 when the count was impacted by Covid restrictions and up also from the last unrestricted count of 168 in 2019.



Site	No. nests
Abbey Wood	23
Apple Tree Ness (Haverholme Park)	10
Baston Sand & GPs	5
Belton Park (Villa Pond)	4
Bishopsbridge	5
Fitties Nature Reserve, Humberston	3
Hartsholme Country Park	16
Hospital Cottages Spinney	9
Kirkby Pits (West)	11
Lea Marsh	nil
Long Wood, Fiskerton	9
Moses Farm Wood, Stenigot	6
Nocton Wood	8
North Cotes Spinney	7
Patterson's Pit	20
The Deeps	4
The Mere (Deeping St James)	14
Troy Wood	nil
Warren Plantation, North	4
Somercotes	
Welland Farm	6
Willoughby Wood	19

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea* Frampton Marsh  
September 15th 2021 © NEIL SMITH

Away from heronries records were received from nearly 300 sites and the largest counts reported were of 126 at Winter's Pond East Halton on Dec 11th, 50 at Swanholme Lakes, Lincoln Mar 17th and 35 at Withern on Sep13th and 28 at the latter site on Oct 7th.





## Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Rare. Western Europe. **LBRC.**

One was at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes on May 3rd (T.&T. Foster), it was seen for a second time on May 23rd (PAH, CMO, et al) but was very elusive and not seen in the interim period. This was the 28th county record.

## 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.



Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* Rimac May 23rd 2021  
© CLIFF MORRISON

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Alkborough Flats	-	1	1	3	3	4	6	3	1	1	-	-
Middlemarsh Farm	1	1	2	2	3	3	2	4	1	2	1	1
Frampton Marsh	-	-	-	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	-
Gibraltar Point	-	1	-	1	1	1	1	4	1	2	1	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	-	-	1	2	2	1	1	1	-	1	-	-
Deeping High Bank	3	4	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Baston Fen	1	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Coastal Country Park	-	1	1	1	-	-	1	1	1	1	-	-
Fiskerton Fen	1	4	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Messingham SQ	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	2	1

The table shows the top 10 sites with cumulative monthly maxima of seven or more birds. Six hundred records were received from just over 100 sites, and it is clear from photos of colour ringed birds that the



Great White Egret *Ardea alba* Cress Marsh  
July 15th 2021 © GEOFF BEASLEY

booming Great White Egret population in Somerset where 15 pairs fledged 34 young in 2020, is helping drive the increase of birds in Lincolnshire (*British Birds* Nov 2022, Rare breeding birds in the UK 2020). More reports come from the period Jan-Apr, but all months of the year are now represented well with December being the quietest in 2021. At Alkborough Flats two adults in breeding plumage were present during May but no further breeding behaviour was reported; the highest count of the year of six birds was here on Jul 11th. A colour ringed nestling "Red left AAU" ringed at Ham Wall in June was present from Aug 8th on a number of dates. At Middlemarsh Farm a breeding plumage bird was present in association with one to two non-breeding birds in Apr-May. What may have been the same birds were also seen at nearby Gibraltar Point, only two miles away as the Egret flies. Frampton Marsh and Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes also had two birds in the breeding season, but plumage details were not submitted. One of these five sites must be front runner for first Lincolnshire breeding but given their widespread occurrence there are plenty of others that might be first.





### Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* ■

Formerly a rare/scarcely 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: 1110; for national importance: 110. **RBBP**.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gedney Drive End	2	3	-	1	2	-	25	272	209	84	30	-
Alkborough Flats	1	8	10	14	19	73	80	72	40	13	5	5
Gibraltar Point	10	12	9	15	14	15	16	29	27	33	39	14
Butterwick	-	-	1	2	2	11	17	26	18	19	54	11
Frampton Marsh	8	4	6	21	8	18	28	4	24	9	12	10
Donna Nook	-	5	8	7	10	7	27	23	45	18	27	17
Grainthorpe	-	12	18	16	-	15	19	15	12	19	17	
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	22	15	24	7	5	4	6	31	14	37	28	8
Holbeach Marsh	-	-	-	-	5	2	4	2	9	36	35	14
Baston	9	6	7	9	4	7	5	23	27	3	12	9

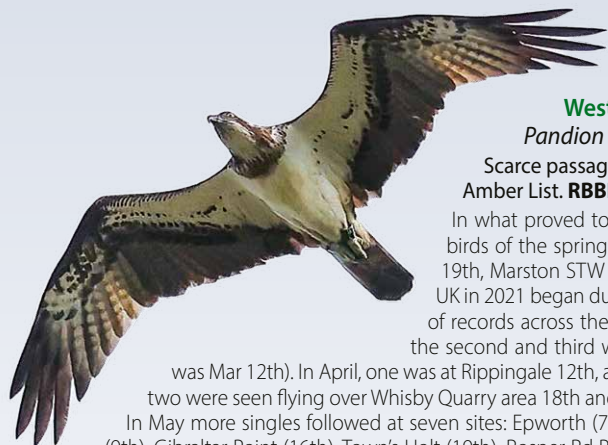
The table above shows the top 10 sites with cumulative annual monthly peak counts of over 120 birds. Little Egrets were reported from over 250 sites in 2021 and continue their increase. The largest count of the year was 272 on Aug 24th at Boatmere Creek, Gedney Drive End. The table below summarises the number of occupied nests reported from the known egrettries in the county (sites anonymised). Sites marked NS were not surveyed. The number of breeding pairs increased to 153 from 148 in 2020. One new site Q was found but two of the new ones from the previous year were unoccupied. It is possible the meteoric rise of the Little Egret is stalling, time will tell.



Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* Frampton Marsh  
September 15th 2021 © NEIL SMITH

Site	Number of nests	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
A	Wash	6	7	6	25	5	150	60	65	90	85
B	Humber	12	-	8	14	13	22	6	13	20	18
C	Inland	6	8	10	12	6	4	2	4	3	NS
D	Humber	3	4	20	15	22	18	13	14	NS	12
E	Humber	32	20	32	21	11	-	-	-	1	1
F	Inland	4	5	8	8	10	14	11	4	10	12
H	Inland	-	-	-	2	3	5	6	7	6	6
I	Humber	-	-	-	4	4	5	5	5	5	5
J	Inland	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	1	NS	3
L	Inland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	8
M	Inland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
N	Wash	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
O	Inland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0
P	Inland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	NS	0
Q	Inland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
<b>Totals</b>		63	44	84	101	74	218	106	118	146	153





Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*  
 Frampton Marsh June 11th 2021  
 © JOHN CLARKSON

## Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* ■

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

In what proved to be a very light spring passage, the first birds of the spring were seen in March at Huttoft Bank on 19th, Marston STW 26th and Baston GP 27th. Arrivals in the UK in 2021 began during the first week of March with a clutch of records across the southern counties and the midlands in the second and third weeks of March (the first Scottish record was Mar 12th). In April, one was at Rippingale 12th, another at Tallington Lakes 14th and 27th, two were seen flying over Whisby Quarry area 18th and another was seen at Humberston 30th.

In May more singles followed at seven sites: Epworth (7th), Stamford (8th), Covenham Reservoir (9th), Gibraltar Point (16th), Town's Holt (19th), Rosper Rd Pools (27th), and Donna Nook (29th). The spring records were concluded with one at Far Ings Jun 8th.

What was arguably a summering bird was seen at Hougham on Jun 27th - given the numbers of immature birds summering in England and the proximity of these and breeding birds at Rutland Water to S Lincs, separating these from passage birds is increasingly problematic.

The first of the autumn were reported in Aug: Leadenham (11th), Baston GP (17th), Freiston Shore (one 26th, two 27th, one 28th), and Donna Nook (28th). September birds were at Toft Newton Reservoir (2nd, 5th, 6th), Grainthorpe (12th), and Frampton Marsh (15th and 25th). The bird at Frampton on Sep 25th was the last of the year.

## Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*

Vagrant. Europe. **BBRC.**

One was seen flying over Willingham by Stow on May 13th (DN). Accepted by BBRC, April 2023.

This species is not currently on Category A of the British List and the status of this species is under consideration by BOURC.

## European Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus* ■

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

One went N over the east dunes at Gibraltar Point May 15th, and presumably the same bird was seen there again early on the 16th (GGr, KMW). A dark morph flew NNW at Freiston Shore on May 18th (AJB). Another was at Gibraltar Point Jun 10th (KMW). A pale morph flew south over Freiston Shore on Sep 11th (PS).

## Eurasian 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.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	3	2	5	4	3	1	2	4	4	7	5	2
Boultham Mere	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	2	2	3	2	2
Huttoft Bank	2	2	3	3	2	1	1	-	2	1	1	1
Middlemarsh Farm	2	1	1	1	1	1	-	1	2	2	2	3
Baston GP	1	1	1	1	1	2	5	2	1	-	1	-
Marton	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	2
East Halton	1	-	2	1	-	1	1	2	2	2	2	2
Stamford	1	1	2	1	-	1	1	1	2	2	1	1
Whisby NP	2	1	1	2	1	-	1	-	1	1	2	2
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	1	2	1	2	1	1	-	1	1	2	1	1





**Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus* Pinchbeck March 22nd 2021 © GERVAISE ORTON

Sparrowhawks were reported from around 240 sites with the highest count of the year of seven at Gibraltar Point on Oct 10th well down on the high of 19 there in Apr 2020, reflecting both a poor spring and autumn migration for this species. The table shows the top 10 sites with annual cumulative monthly max counts of more than 13. The highest sum of max counts across all sites was 101 in Jan. Sparrowhawk was recorded on 14% of BBS one km squares (2020, 10%). The average number of birds per square was 1.1 (2020, 1.2). Confirmed breeding reports came from Boultham Mere, a bird carrying food to an occupied nest on Apr 29th, Baston GP where a male with four well grown young was seen on Jul 6th and Tathwell where three recently fledged young were noted on Jul 19th.

Two birds ringed as 1CY females at North Somercotes (Oct 2019) and at Gibraltar Point (Sep 2020) were both found dead in October and January respectively, having hit glass windows, an indication of the danger unmarked glass poses for these suburban hunters.

### **Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis* ■

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

At the breeding site occupied since 2019, two adult birds (presumably the same pair) were present from early January and again bred rearing a single juvenile that fledged in the last week of June and was still in the area on Jul 15th. In addition to the breeding pair a female probably 3CY and another 2CY female were seen in the spring but only one nest was located.

The only other record was of one seen carrying large prey and being mobbed by corvids, Lapwings and Oystercatchers in the west of the county on Apr 18th (MVI).



**Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis* North Lincolnshire April 6th 2021  
© GRAHAM CATLEY

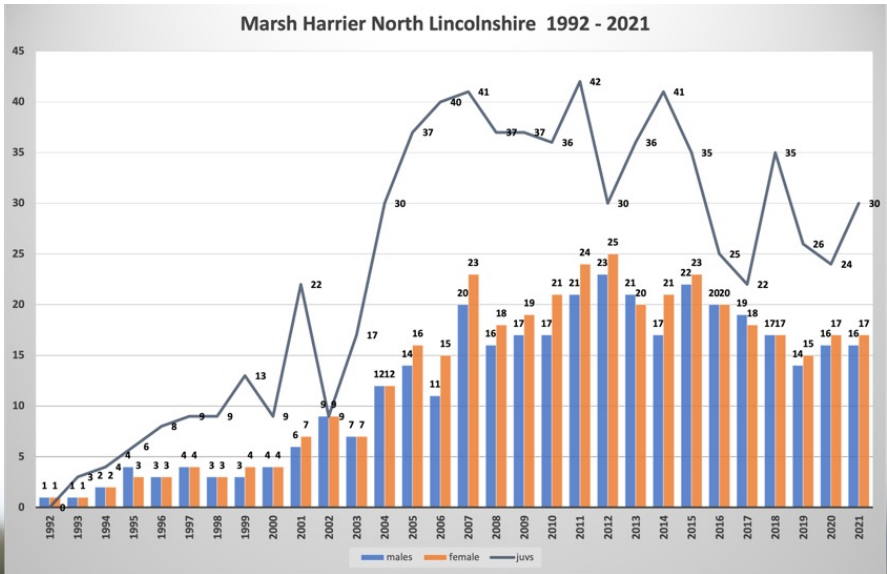




**Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* ■

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

In the two winter periods c40-50 birds were present in Humber roosts spreading out during daytime to cover a large part of North Lincolnshire with birds known to travel at least 15 miles from roosts. Elsewhere up to six birds wintered along the northeast coast with 1-2 at Gibraltar Point, 1-3 along the Wash to Frampton Marsh and 1-6 between there and the Nene Mouth but the only roost counts submitted being 10 at Sutton bridge Dec 9th. With no comprehensive roost counting in The Wash, it is impossible to ascertain how many birds were actually in that area. Inland 1-2 were at Willow Tree Fen, Thurlby Fen, Dunston Fen, Baston Fen; up to five were at Baston Pits and in the Woodall Spa area plus Crowle Moors in the northwest.



Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*  
(Female) Alkborough Flats October 1st 2021  
© GRAHAM CATLEY



With a large wintering and summering population it has become impossible to gauge any sensible idea of passage through the county. In the long running study of breeding birds in North Lincolnshire the number of breeding males (16) and females (17) was the same as 2020 but a total of 30 juveniles fledged compared to 24 in 2020 (chart). A comprehensive survey of the remainder of the county is needed to gain an insight into the total breeding population, as records submitted from the remainder of the county in 2021 were limited. These included five pairs fledging nine young along the coast; southern inland fens three males and four females but no reports of young fledged; just three pairs reported in the Wash hinterland and no reports of young (surely a gross underestimate); one pair in central inland fens fledging four young, plus one pair Boultham Mere and male and two females at Marston where no young fledged.

### 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	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	5	2	2	1	1	-	1	-	1	2	2
Friskney Flats	4	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Frampton Marsh	3	-	1	2	1	-	-	1	2	2	2
Holbeach Range	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Saltfleet-Mablethorpe coast	2	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	2
Witham Mouth	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
Freiston Shore	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wainfleet All Saints	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-



Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* Thorpe Tilney Fen February 5th 2021 © JAMES PORTER





Records were received from around 50 sites with the majority involving one or two birds, and a few (tabulated) having 3-4 on one or more occasions.

Ten sites noted immature or adult males, the remainder involved ringtail/female birds. Over-wintering birds from 2020 remained into 2021 with a minimum of 4-6 on The Wash, although difficult to avoid between-site duplication. At least three were on the Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe coastline Feb 17th and four were at RAF Wainfleet/Friskney Flats on Feb 3rd. Lingered birds into April included two at Frampton Marsh 2nd-3rd, and singles at Goxhill 4th, Anton's Gowt and Crowland 11th, RAF Digby 13th and the final bird of the spring at Anton's Gowt on 28th.

The first autumn birds appeared during August with a 1CY male at Alkborough Flats 17th, presumed the same at Garthorpe 19th and a ringtail at Middlemarsh Farm (Skegness) on 28th. A few more singles appeared in September at Frampton Marsh on 6th and 29th and RAF Digby on 21st. Numbers continued to be low into October with 1-2 at Frampton Marsh all month and singles at Kettleby (23rd, see footnote below), Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes (27th) and East Halton Skitter (31st). More birds arrived in November and apart from those tabulated around seven other sites recorded single birds, evenly split between the coast and inland. The picture remained much the same through to the end of Dec. with a maximum of only two birds at Frampton Marsh and along the Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes coastline. Illegal killing remains the most likely cause of these low numbers.

A footnote to the above account involves a BTO-tracked bird named 'Apollo' which fledged in Bowland (Lancs) in 2019. By 2021 it becomes a 3CY bird and it was first found roosting near Kettleby Oct 23rd. This bird was then seen at Gibraltar Point Oct 31st, Nov 1st, 2nd and 6th coming in to roost. Oddly, this bird had flown to Portugal in 2020 and over-wintered in Spain. He made it back to Bowland May 2020 and bred with a young female a couple of miles from where he hatched, and then over-wintered in Spain 2020/21. Full details at <https://community.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/skydancer/b/skydancer/posts/hen-harrier-apollo-bomber-migrate-1000-miles-to-spain>.

### **Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus*

**Vagrant. Eastern Europe. BBRC.**

A 2CY female was seen and photographed on May 7th at Bonby Carr (L.&D. Everatt), also seen on Fair Isle May 12th-14th. Unfortunately, the bird passed straight through and wasn't seen by any other observers! Accepted by BBRC (*British Birds* 115:551-612).

Only recorded for the first time in 2012, there were records in 2015 and 2016 (2). This constitutes the 5th county record.

### **Montagu's Harrier** *Circus pygargus* ■

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

Sadly, no records of this species were received in 2021. This species has become an extremely rare migrant in recent times (see LBR 2020) and last bred in the county in 2012. The most recent RBBP report covering 2020 confirmed that 2020 was the first year in which no Montagu's bred since 1975, grim news indeed. Any claims of Montagu's Harrier in the future need to be submitted to the LBC records committee with full details.

### **Red Kite** *Milvus milvus* ■

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

Records were again received from more than 200 sites (allowing for some duplication) reflecting the species continued spread across the county and with a predominance of high totals from the south and south-west of the county. Maximum monthly counts in the first quarter saw nine at Couthorpe Jan 1st, 10 at both Folkingham Airfield Jan 25th and at Braceborough Mar 20th, and eight at Toft, also Mar 20th. Eight other sites recorded 3-5 birds during this period, the remainder recording 1-2 birds. There was little evidence of any coastal passage with 1-2 birds being seen Feb-Apr but with three at both Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes Mar 23rd and at Chapel Six Marshes Apr 4th. Fewer were seen during the spring and summer, mainly 1-3 birds but with 4-5 at sites in the south and southwest.





Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* 2CY female Bonby Carr May 7th 2021 © L.&D. EVERATT







Autumn counts were notable from August onwards, with seven at RAF Digby Aug 4th, eight Blankney Sep 4th, and four Stamford Oct 9th. Thereafter small numbers, 1-3 were seen at many sites but a winter roost in the Rippingale area built up to 21 birds by late November with 12 still there Dec 14th.

Possible breeding behaviour was noted at several sites in the south and southwest but there was no definitive evidence of proven breeding in our records.

### Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

Rare. Mainly W. Europe. **LBRC.**

One was found at Gibraltar Point on May 19th and circled overhead for some 20 minutes before departing to the south (videoed) (KMW). Another bird seen at Friskney on The Wash on August 12th was seen to be carrying jesses and assumed to be of captive origin.

### White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* ■

Very scarce visitor. **Amber List.**

One seen over Woolthorpe on Mar 21st was not known (tracked) to the Roy Dennis Foundation (RDF) and is assumed to have been of 'wild' origin (GF). Two birds tagged in the RDF scheme (G318 and G471) were seen in various parts of the county between Jan 22nd and May 21st.



**White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla* Tealby February 19th 2021  
© GRAHAM CATLEY



### Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* ■

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

Records came from around 450 sites, a huge increase on 250 sites in 2020. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks of over 40. BBS reports came from 49% of squares surveyed (2020, 39%) with an average of 1.6 birds per occupied square (2020 1.6). It is now easily our commonest breeding raptor. In spring the largest count was of 25 at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes coming in off the sea in groups of 4-7. The largest count of the year was an autumn migration movement of 38 at Gibraltar Point on Sep 6th. Other counts of 12 or more not in the table were of 14 in the air at the same time at Laughton Forest Mar 9th, 12 at Ruckland Jan 30th and 12 at Grimsby Sep 9th.

**Common Buzzard** *Buteo buteo* Branston Fen  
7th January 2021 © ROY HARVEY

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	3	6	8	10	9	3	2	5	38	7	6	3
Louth	9	3	13	9	2	5	2	8	5	5	4	1
Legbourne	8	16	4	3	-	7	-	-	-	7	8	1
Covenham Reservoir	3	9	13	5	3	3	3	1	5	4	2	2
Middlemarsh Farm	4	5	8	4	6	2	2	4	6	5	3	-
Messingham SQ	3	1	10	3	4	3	6	2	5	3	4	4
Marton	2	2	3	7	5	2	4	3	2	4	6	5
Huttoft Bank	3	9	6	3	6	3	3	1	4	1	1	4
Dunston	4	1	3	5	5	1	2	-	14	3	2	1
Sutton Bridge	12	7	6	6	4	-	-	-	2	-	2	1





**Western Barn Owl** *Tyto alba* Donna Nook  
June 24th 2021 © MARK JOHNSON

### Western 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.**

Around 130 sites reported Barn Owls somewhat down on the 220+ sites reporting the species in 2020. Most records were of 1-2 birds with a very small number being of 3-6 birds. Alan Ball and his ringing team supplied their data as usual and reported 230 nests having been visited, well up on the very poor season in 2020. The average number of chicks ringed per brood was in line with that of previous years (excluding 2020) with fewer failures. In addition to the continued huge effort put in by AB and his team, confirmed breeding was reported from four other areas involving five occupied nest boxes.

There was little ringing data to report with the exception of a female ringed as GC96165 as a nestling in 2010 and caught in every year since on the nest at the same site, and now nearly 11 years old.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total Number of nests**	272	280	185	296	49	230
Failures	41	62	31	29	12	18
Broods ringed	198	191	131	240	23	173
Chicks ringed	522	455	313	722	48	459
Average number of chicks/brood ringed	2.6	2.4	2.4	3.0	1.8	2.7

\*\* Total nests = "missed" and "outcome unknown" as well as ringed + failures

### Tawny Owl *Strix aluco* ■

Common resident, widespread but predominantly in wooded areas. Amber List.

This widely distributed but probably under-recorded Owl was seen or heard at nearly 90 sites across the county in all months of the year. Most records were of single birds but 3-6 were noted at 18 sites. Confirmed breeding records not included in the summary table below only came from Gibraltar Point, Midville, Withcall, and Wragby but in areas recording calling birds on territory these will also represent 'probable' breeding. Thanks once again to Alan Ball and Bob Sheppard and their ringing group for the 2021 data from their nest boxes, with something nearer to their annual totals achieved in 2021 post-COVID.

**Tawny Owl** *Strix aluco* Toft Newton July 15th 2021 © GARY FENWICK







Twenty-one broods totalling 36 chicks were ringed out of 28 nests.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total Number of nests**	23	42	8	36	1	28
Failures	2	1	2	4	1	0
Broods ringed	20	32	3	22	0	21
Chicks ringed	40	68	5	39	0	36
Average number of chicks/brood ringed	2.0	2.1	1.7	1.8	0	1.7

\*\* Total nests = “missed” and “outcome unknown” as well as ringed + failures

**Little Owl *Athene noctua***

Common resident, very sedentary.

Around 125 records were received from 51 sites in 2021. The ringing summary from Alan Ball and Bob Sheppard (below) indicates that an average number of broods were ringed involving an astonishing 150 chicks.

During the process of nestbox-checking, inevitably some adults were caught, the oldest one being just over 11 yrs. of age. Calling birds were reported at five other sites in the county but breeding activity is undoubtedly under-recorded.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total Number of nests**	78	90	91	66	65	75
Failures	23	26	27	16	10	10
Broods ringed	51	50	55	39	46	56
Chicks ringed	138	141	152	112	120	150
Average number of chicks/brood ringed	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.6	2.7

\*\* Total nests = “missed” and “outcome unknown” as well as ringed + failures



Little Owl *Athene noctua* Brandon April 19th 2021 © STEVE NESBITT





### Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* ■

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

Seventy reports of Long-eared Owls were received this year from 10 sites and remarkably six of these reported confirmed breeding, a record for Lincolnshire since this species became reportable to RBBP from 2010 onwards. Whether the increase is simply due to better reporting or a genuine resurgence in the county is difficult to say. The winter roost at Deeping Lakes held up to four birds on Jan 3rd and 5th. This site remains the only reliable well known winter roost. The only other winter bird was a single at Digby on Jan 5th. Spring migration was very light with singles at Gibraltar Point on Mar 17th, Apr 23rd and May 19th, with one at Huttoft Bank on May 11th. Given the attraction of Long-eared Owls for "toggers", breeding sites are not being detailed but in the south-west of the county three sites reported five confirmed pairs raising 14 juveniles. Another site had possible breeding with a lone bird seen hunting on Jun 4th. In the west, two sites had two confirmed pairs raising four juveniles. In the north-west there was one confirmed pair raising three juveniles. A total of eight confirmed pairs and one possible raising 21 juveniles. After the breeding season Gibraltar Point had one on Sep 4th, two on Nov 4th, one of which was seen to come "in off" the sea, and another one on Dec 1st. At Deeping Lakes two were seen on Dec 29th.

### Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* ■

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

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Frampton Marsh	1	-	-	4	3	3	2	5	5	5	5	1
Gibraltar Point	2	1	3	2	2	2	1	1	4	4	3	1
Deeping High Bank	4	7	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Sandilands Golf Course	2	1	4	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	2
RAF Digby	2	1	5	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Huttoft Bank	-	3	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	3	-	-
Saltfleetby- Theddlethorpe	-	1	-	-	1	1	1	1	-	2	1	-
Wainfleet All Saints	-	3	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Short-eared Owls were recorded in all months of the year and records came from 52 sites, the same number as in 2020, although 23 of the sites reported only one bird in one month of the year. The highest count in 2021 was seven at Deeping High Bank on Feb 3rd.

The table shows the top eight sites holding accumulated peak counts of seven or more birds across the year ranked from highest to lowest. The year started with a total of 24 birds at 13 sites. The best month of the year was November with 30 birds at 17 sites. There was better evidence of breeding this year with three sites reporting summering May-July. At Frampton Marsh a pair was thought to have bred but this was not confirmed. Five birds were reported on Aug 10th but the evidence that three additional birds were fledged young was circumstantial. At Gibraltar Point two birds summered but no evidence of display or carrying food to a nest site was seen and at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes one bird summered. In the autumn, birds "in off" the sea were reported from Anderby Creek on Oct 18th and Nov 9th, Chapel St Leonards on Nov 4th and 5th, Gibraltar Point on Oct 6th, 10th, 25th and Nov 4th (3), Huttoft Bank Oct 6th (3) and Sutton on Sea Nov 4th.

### Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

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

Just one record in 2021 in a private garden in Skegness on May 19th, videoed (per LAN). This is about average with 1-2 records per year 2000-2020.





Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* Louth December 25th 2021 © JOHN CLARKSON

### Common 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 850 records from around 140 sites/ sub-sites. The majority of these were of 1-2 birds, but four were at Louth canal Jan 1st and Saltfleet Aug 1st; the latter was a family party of an adult with three juveniles at a large pond in a private garden. Records of three birds came from Boultham Mere Mar 15th and 17th, Huttoft Bank pit Sep 23rd and Whisby NP Nov 25th. Breeding attempts were undoubtedly under-reported with confirmed breeding from just three sites: at Westgate Fields (Louth) three recently fledged young were noted Jun 21st; at Boultham Mere a pair raised two broods with a second brood being fed Jun 26th; Saltfleet Aug 1st (above).

### European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

Very scarce migrant. Mediterranean Europe. **LBRC.**

Two flew over a garden in Chapel St Leonard's on May 30th (W&M Tilley), one was seen and photographed at Gibraltar Point Jun 2nd (C. Elmer); another heard but not seen over Wolla Bank Jun 9th (RL); two were at Tetney Lock Jun 27th (HB); and four were seen on Jun 30th flying over Normanby before drifting off to the southwest (WG, CGI). Initially one of the latter group of four had been heard calling and was then seen circling overhead. As the observers watched this bird another three drifted into view and eventually all four drifted off south-west while circling together.

### Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* ■

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

An unusually good spring with three records: one photographed Apr 18th in a private garden in Welbourne (T. Watts), another at Gibraltar Point Apr 22nd (GBe) and another in a private garden in Welton Apr 30th (M. Hunt).



The first autumn birds were on The Wash at Freiston Shore Aug 23rd-28th (AJB, PS, et al) and a second was found across the river at Frampton Marsh Aug 26th-27th (J&C Oldham, et al). Another was at Gibraltar Point Aug 29th (KMW) and another photographed at Skegness boating lake Sep 10th (J. Turton)

### Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dryobates minor* ■

Very scarce and declining resident. Red List. RBBP.

For the third year in a row only three records were received. One in the west of the county but more interestingly two in the southern Lincolnshire Wolds. The first was heard calling and seen at Dunsby Fen on Jan 17th. The second was heard calling and seen at Tetford on Feb 27th and the final bird was heard calling but not seen at Revesby Park on Mar 25th. Clearly there are birds still out there hanging on, though the last recorded confirmed breeding 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 11 at Gibraltar Point on Sep 6th and Oct 7th during autumn migration. The maximum count of birds reported simultaneously drumming was five at Math and Elsea Wood on Mar 21st. There were eight at Owlet Plantation in Laughton Forest on Feb 28th. Reports came from nearly 250 sites this year. Found in 35% of Lincolnshire BBS squares (2020 16%, 2019, 28%) with an average of 1.7 birds per occupied square (2020 1.6, 2019, 1.6). The dip in 2020 was almost certainly due to Covid restrictions preventing early BBS visits when "Great Spot" is easily detected because of drumming and "chic" calls.



Eurasian  
Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*  
Frampton Marsh August  
27th 2021 © NEIL SMITH



### European Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis* ■

Fairly common resident and partial migrant. Green List.

The highest count of the year was seven at Uffington on Apr 11th. Records came from nearly 180 sites. Other sites reporting six, were Sleaford on Jan 1st and Wilsford on Mar 23rd. Green Woodpecker was reported in 21% of Lincolnshire BBS squares (2020 28%, 2019, 24%) with an average of 1.6 birds per occupied square (2020 1.5, 2019, 1.4). The most regularly counted site this year, on the basis of cumulative annual total of peak monthly counts was Uffington with a total of 28, the same as Boultham Mere, Swanpool in 2020. Deeping Lakes was runner-up with 20. Fifty-three sites had a total of four or more which were distributed W 15, SW 17, SE 9, NW 3, NE 0, E 9. Green Woodpecker remains uncommon in the north of the county.

European Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*  
Bardney August 15th 2021 © RUSSEL HAYES



## Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Common resident and passage migrant. Amber List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	3	3	3	4	5	6	5	18	19	11	5	2
Frampton Marsh	2	-	1	1	2	-	1	8	1	4	3	1
Sutton Bridge	8	5	3	2	2	-	-	-	5	-	5	3
Saltfleetby - Theddlethorpe	2	2	2	2	6	2	-	7	3	2	3	-
East Halton Skitter	1	-	1	1	1	-	1	5	6	3	3	2
Goxhill Haven	-	-	-	1	-	-	2	6	1	1	4	1
Huttoft Bank	5	5	4	3	2	3	4	3	6	2	1	5
RAF Digby	5	3	4	2	2	5	-	3	5	6	3	1

This widespread and familiar falcon was reported from more than 360 sites across the county; those having at least one monthly count of six or more are tabulated. Most other records were of 1-3 birds but with some impressive post-breeding totals and passage on the coast in autumn. At Gibraltar Point, several double figure counts were made of 10-16 peaking at 18 Aug 14th and 19 Sep 6th, probably including some of the same birds. October saw 11 there on 6th and 10 22nd, the last double figure counts of the year.

Kestrel was reported in 40% of Lincolnshire BBS squares (2020, 18%) with an average of 1.4 birds per occupied square (2020, 1.0). The increase was partly caused by the absence of Covid restrictions for early BBS visits.

The ringing data from AB's group is tabulated below and after their 2020 raptor monitoring was greatly curtailed, 2021 saw almost normal service resumed with 58 broods ringed out of 99 nests surveilled.



	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total nests**	98	110	98	131	49	99
Failures	4	4	15	11	7	12
Broods ringed	58	61	56	81	30	58
Chicks ringed	203	195	154	294	94	210
Average chicks/brood ringed	3.5	3.2	2.8	3.6	3.1	3.6

**Common Kestrel**  
*Falco tinnunculus* Bardney Lock  
 January 17th 2021  
 © RUSSEL HAYES

\*\* Total nests = "missed" and "outcome unknown" as well as ringed + failures

## Red-footed Falcon

Rare. Eastern Europe. LBRC.

An adult male flew in off the sea at Huttoft on Jun 23rd and disappeared inland to the west (RL), the only record of the year.



### 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.

More than 300 records were received from 55 sites/sub-sites across the county and in 11 months of the year. Most birds were recorded during Jan-Feb and Oct-Dec.

The majority of birds had departed by late Apr, but late birds were at Cress Marsh May 2nd, Bonby Carrs May 8th, Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes May 10th, Gibraltar Point May 11th-12th and Midville May 25th. There were no June records and the first of the early autumn was at Midville Jul 14th. More followed in August, recorded on 15 dates at six sites, four coastal/estuarine, two inland. There was a small influx to coastal sites in the autumn with a minimum of 15 birds recorded across the county Oct-Nov. All records were of 1-2 birds with four at Gibraltar Point Oct 4th and three there Oct 15th, 17th, 24th, 26th and Nov 18th. The majority of those aged/sexed were immatures /females with a very few being identified as 2CY or adult males, unsurprisingly.



Merlin *Falco columbarius* Rimac December 16th 2021  
 © GRAHAM CATLEY

### Eurasian 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	Oct
Frampton Marsh	1	1	2	1	1	3	1	1
Gibraltar Point	-	1	3	1	2	1	2	1
Alkborough Flats	-	2	2	-	-	1	2	2
Baston GPs	-	1	3	1	1	1	1	-
Covenham Reservoir	-	-	2	1	1	3	1	-
Barton-upon-Humber	-	1	2	2	1	1	1	-
Messingham SQ	-	2	1	1	-	1	1	1
Huttoft Bank	-	1	2	-	1	1	1	-
Keelby	-	-	2	-	1	2	1	-
Kirkby GPs	-	-	2	1	2	-	1	-

There were no high counts this year reflecting low spring concentrations of newly arrived birds. The highest May count in 2021 was three on May 12th at Baston well down on nine there on May 17th, 2020. Records were submitted from 90 sites, down from the 110 sites in 2020. There were records from 55 sites in May compared to 59 sites in May 2020. The table shows the top 10 sites holding maximum





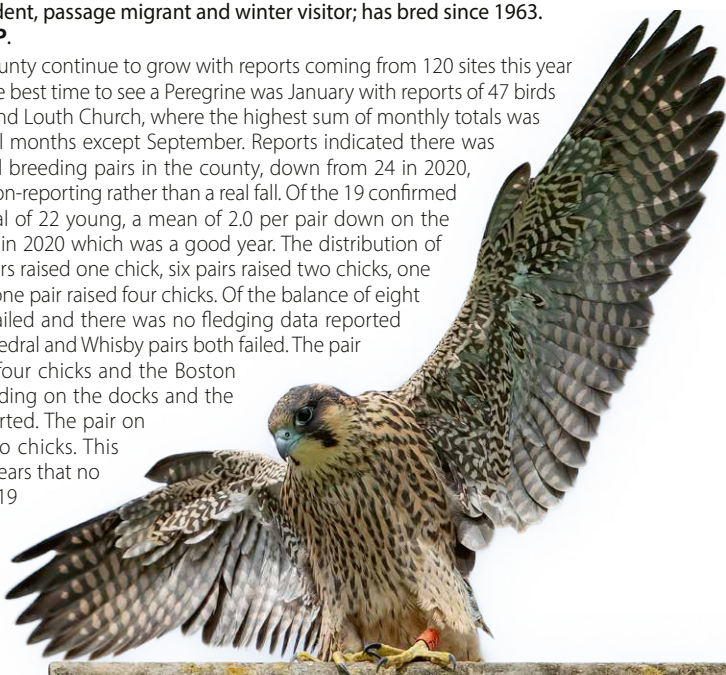
**Eurasian Hobby** *Falco Subbuteo* Alkborough Flats  
September 21st 2021 © GRAHAM CATLEY

accumulated peak counts of six or more birds across the year ranked from highest to lowest. All records occurred between Mar-Oct. The first arrival was a single at Frampton Marsh on Mar 30th, followed by singles at Far Ings, Barton-upon-Humber on Apr 14th and N. Scarle on Apr 15th. The first two birds together were at Messingham SQ on Apr 23rd. There were no reports of confirmed breeding this year. From the data received using consistent criteria applied in previous years it was judged there were a further 40 (51) probable breeding pairs and a further 41 (43) possibles (figures in brackets 2020 estimate). A total of 81 pairs compared to 96 on the same basis in 2020. As usual there was plenty of evidence of fledged juveniles, but these could not be tied to breeding at any particular site. The earliest report was of an adult and juvenile at Alkborough Flats on Sep 5th where birds were thought not to have bred. The last records of the year were singles at Gibraltar Point on Oct 13th and Frampton Marsh on Oct 23rd.

## **Peregrine Falcon** *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 120 sites this year compared to 107 in 2020. The best time to see a Peregrine was January with reports of 47 birds and the best place was around Louth Church, where the highest sum of monthly totals was 22 and birds were seen in all months except September. Reports indicated there was a minimum of 19 confirmed breeding pairs in the county, down from 24 in 2020, which is likely to be due to non-reporting rather than a real fall. Of the 19 confirmed pairs, 13 pairs fledged a total of 22 young, a mean of 2.0 per pair down on the productivity of 2.46 per pair in 2020 which was a good year. The distribution of fledged young was three pairs raised one chick, six pairs raised two chicks, one pair raised three chicks and one pair raised four chicks. Of the balance of eight confirmed pairs, two pairs failed and there was no fledging data reported for six pairs. The Lincoln Cathedral and Whisby pairs both failed. The pair on St James's Louth raised four chicks and the Boston Stump pair moved to a building on the docks and the nest outcome was not reported. The pair on Stamford Church raised two chicks. This was the first time for some years that no new sites were reported. The 19 confirmed and probable pairs were spread across the county as follows: NW 5, NE 2, W 2, E 4, SW 5, SE 1.



**Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus*  
Louth June 19th 2021  
© MARK JOHNSON





### Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*

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

A pair bred in the Bratoft area using a nest-hole in an Ash tree *Fraxinus excelsior*. This is new information, and it transpires that they have been around in that area for about seven years and have regularly nested in the same area. They are increasing in population each season, with up to 16 reported in winter. They do come to garden feeders and have also been feeding on fruit and various seeds and berries.

These may have contributed to the extensive spread of records at Gibraltar Point with singles in every month Apr-Dec apart from Aug, with two on May 16th. Elsewhere, singles were in Scunthorpe Apr 2nd and in the autumn Garthorpe Nov 5th, Trent Port Nov 14th and Yaddletorpe Nov 16th, presumably the same wandering individual.



Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*  
Scunthorpe February 12th 2021 © SIMON SPAVIN

### Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* ■

Very scarce passage migrant. Former rare breeder last confirmed in 1978. Red List. **LBRC, RBBP**. Just one record, a 1CY bird at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes Oct 9th (JRow, PRow, CMO)

### Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*

Very scarce to scarce passage migrant and rare winter visitor Oct-Apr. Exceptional in summer. **LBRC**.

The only confirmed record was one on private land near Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes May 11th-12th (JRW, OBT).

### Eurasian Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* ■

Very scarce migrant, mainly spring/early summer, but recorded Apr-Aug. Red List. **LBRC, RBBP**.

A below par year with just two records of an immature or female bird on May 26th at Gibraltar Point (NAL) and a singing male in woods above the reedbed at Alkborough Flats May 30th (ND).



Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes October 9th 2021 © CLIFF MORRISON





## Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius* ■

British form '*rufitergum*' is a common resident, otherwise an irregular migrant and winter visitor. Amber List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Alkborough Flats	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	88	1	-
Carrington	-	-	-	-	-	-	25	-	-	-	-	-
Barton-upon-Humber	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	12	-	-
Gibraltar Point	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	10	12	-
Messingham SQ	1	-	6	2	-	1	2	-	4	7	2	11
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	11	1	-
Barton Pits	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	10	-	-
Laughton Forest	-	10	-	-	4	2	-	-	10	-	1	-

Around 190 sites reported more than 900 records in every month of the year. The first half of the year was uneventful with 1-6 birds seen across the county, maximum 10 Laughton Forest Feb 3rd. Signs of early autumn flocks were seen in July with eight at Kirkby GP Jul 14th and 25 Carrington Jul 25th. Ten were in Laughton Forest Sep 22nd, seven of which went high north. October saw some birds moving along the Humber and the coast with nine Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes Oct 4th, 12 Gibraltar Point Oct 10th and 12 Barton upon Humber Oct 11th. Then on Oct 12th an astonishing total of 88 were counted moving west along the escarpment at Alkborough Flats. Twenty-one were seen there the next day, 13th, 10 Barton Pits 14th, 11 Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes 15th, 10 Alkborough Flats 16th, 11 Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes 20th and 10 Gibraltar Point 25th. Thereafter Nov-Dec things quietened down with just 1-5 at many sites, highest numbers were 12 at Gibraltar Point Nov 2nd and 11 Messingham SQ Dec 10th. Irregular coastal movements of Jays is not a new phenomenon with large numbers recorded in 1983, 2012 and 2013. These events are thought to be related to acorn crop failure.

## Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica* ■

Common resident. Green List.

Reports came from around 400 sites this year. The highest count of the year was 44 at Sturton by Stow on Sep 16th. Other high counts came from Huttoft Bank 40 Feb 22nd, Gibraltar Point 40 Nov 3rd and Burgh le Marsh 35 Feb 4th. It was recorded in 70% of Lincolnshire BBS squares (2020 65%) with an average of four birds per occupied square (2020, 3). Magpie received no relief from persecution in the changes to General Licenses introduced in Jan 2021. It has to be said that apart from a few local gaps where persecution is intense, the Magpie population in Lincolnshire is doing well.

## Western 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).

Reports came from around 400 sites this year with the highest count of the year being 750 at Tallington Lakes on Mar 5th. Other high counts came from Baumber Park 500 Feb 8th, Manby Wetland 400 Dec 28th and Gibraltar Point 350 Nov 5th. It was recorded in 74% of Lincolnshire BBS squares (2020 67%) with an average of 15 birds per occupied square (2020, 20). No reports of Nordic Jackdaws were received. DEFRA introduced new general licence restrictions from Jan 1st 2021 which slightly tightened the conditions under which Jackdaws can be "killed or taken". They can no longer be persecuted for Conservation purposes, except to protect nesting birds in woodlands. Killing to protect livestock and crops is still permitted. What impact, if any, this will have on Jackdaw populations remains to be seen.



Western Jackdaw *Coloeus monedula* Barton April 15th 2021  
© GRAHAM CATLEY



### Rook *Corvus frugilegus* ■

Very common resident also passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber List.

It was recorded in 65% of Lincolnshire BBS squares (2020 55%) with an average of 23 birds per occupied square (2020, 26). Reports came from around 330 sites this year and it was the 24th most widespread species reported on BBS in Lincolnshire. The highest count of the year was 500 at Baumber Park on Feb 8th. Other high counts were 400 Hagnaby Lock Feb 4th, 400 Folkingham Airfield Feb 19th and 400 at Toft Newton Reservoir on Oct 26th. Rook received similarly marginal improved protection from persecution to Jackdaw under the new General licence arrangements introduced by DEFRA from Jan 1st, 2021.

### Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* ■

Very common resident also passage migrant and winter visitor. Green List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	70	75	42	43	19	10	6	25	26	106	100	85
Long Bennington	27	25	48	46	45	52	9	16	34	76	102	33
Gibraltar Point	39	30	61	58	29	25	11	10	34	51	80	54
North End, Mablethorpe	2	49	2	16	8	6	2	-	20	-	80	250
Sturton by Stow	30	40	40	50	60	30	60	-	60	-	-	30
Huttoft Bank	40	30	20	45	40	20	20	25	25	50	50	30
Marston STW	30	-	128	48	53	-	-	-	30	32	56	-
Pyewipe, Grimsby	25	50	50	60	40	30	30	30	10	3	-	30
Cleethorpes	40	13	10	5	8	14	4	8	2	30	18	120
East Halton	18	-	20	36	36	9	7	48	34	18	24	14



Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* Mablethorpe December 10th 2021 © GRAHAM CATLEY





The table shows the top 10 sites which held cumulative annual maximum monthly counts of more than 250 birds. The highest count of the year was 250 at Mablethorpe North End on Dec 3rd. Other high counts were 128 Marston STW Mar 17th, 120 Cleethorpes Promenade Dec 11th and 106 Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes Oct 14th. It was recorded in 92% of Lincolnshire BBS squares (2020 89%) with an average of 10 birds per occupied square (2020, 9). Reports came from around 500 sites this year and it was the 5th most widespread species reported on BBS in Lincolnshire.

### Northern Raven *Corvus corax* ■

Resident to 18th century but was extirpated, but now a very scarce but increasing breeding resident. Green List.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Total sites	19	17	21	21	24	9	11	12	12	13	9	10

More than 200 records were received in every month of the year from around 98 sites/sub-sites, with the majority coming in the first five months of the year. Most came from the SW of the county and up through the Wolds. Confirmed breeding records came from Benniworth (three fledged); Bardney (minimum of two young); Stenigot (three fledged); Donington on Bain (three fledged). Pairs were seen behaving territorially and visiting probable nests at a significant number of other sites and the total numbers breeding is certainly higher than this. Away from these actual/potential breeding areas wandering birds were recorded at Alkborough Flats Jan 1st and 11th, Apr 11th and 18th, May 1st, Sep 19th, Oct 12th, and Dec 21st; at Gibraltar Point Jul 26th (departed across the Wash towards Norfolk) and Oct 16th; Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes Aug 25th-26th; Sutton Bridge Mar 8th.



Northern Raven *Corvus corax* Bardney March 6th 2021 © RUSSEL HAYES

### Bohemian Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus* ■

Passage migrant and winter visitor, most in Oct-Apr. Scarce most winters but fairly common in irruption years. Green List.

A dismal year for this nomadic and occasional winter visitor with just one bird, seen in Stamford Dec 21st.





### 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.

Records came from nearly 150 sites, well up from 100 last year. The highest counts of the year were 18 at Laughton Forest May 3rd with 12 at Forest Pines Golf Club, Broughton, Dec 12th and seven at Laughton Forest on Jun 5th and 20th and 10 at Willingham Woods Dec 16th. Records of 5-6 birds came from eight other sites, Boultham Park, Callan's Lane Wood, Kirkby Moor, Legbourne, Messingham SQ, Owlet Plantation, Tuetoos Wood and Tunman Wood. 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 8% of Lincolnshire BBS squares (2020, 2%) with an average of 2.2 birds per occupied square (2020, 1). The increase is due to early BBS visits taking place without Covid restrictions in 2021. A Continental Coal Tit was trapped and ringed at Gibraltar Point on May 5th.

### Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris* ■

Local resident, apparently decreasing, mainly occurs in the southwest. Red List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Oct	Dec
Belton, Grantham	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bourne Woods	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Branston	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Callan's Lane Wood	5	2	-	4	-	-	-	-	-
Casthorpe	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Denton Reservoir	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Dunston	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
Haverholme Park	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-
Lawn Wood & Meadows NR	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Math Wood, Bourne	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Morton	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Neville Wood	1	1	2	-	1	-	-	-	2
Nocton Fen	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Nocton Wood	2	1	3	1	-	1	-	1	2
Stapleford	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Temple Wood	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tortoiseshell Wood	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Twyford Woods	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
Uffington Meadows	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Wilsford Warren	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-

The table shows all sites which recorded this species and in alphabetical order and shows the peak count per month for each site. All the records came from the Kesteven part of the county with the bulk in the south.

Forty-six records were received from 21 sites/sub-sites in 2021, almost exactly the same as in 2020; there were no records for Aug-Sep or Nov. Of these 21 sites, only eight reported two or more birds in any one month and 12 sites reported only one bird in a single month of the year. The largest count reported was of five birds at Callan's Lane Wood Jan 5th and at Temple Wood Feb 15th.

No specific breeding information was reported, and it certainly looks now as if Marsh Tit has become scarcer in recent years and can no longer be described as fairly common. Its scarcity is emphasised by its non-appearance in the 2020 and 2021 BBS.





## Willow Tit *Poecile montanus* ■

Once common and widespread, now seriously declining, and scarce. Red List. **RBBP**.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Messingham SQ	2	3	2	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Snipe Dales	1	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Barton Pits	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Walesby Moor	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Anwick Fen	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Callan's Lane Wood	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
East Halton Brick Pits	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Epworth Turbary	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Far Ings	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Haverholme Park	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Laughton Forest	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Market Rasen	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

The highest count for the year was three at Messingham SQ on Feb 26th. Recorded in only eight months of the year (compared to 11 in 2020) there were 35 observer sightings from 12 sites, down from 42 and 14 respectively in 2020. The 2020 RSPB Willow Tit Survey may well have boosted coverage that year which then eased off in 2021, an observation which may be supported by the fact that no reports were received from nine sites reporting birds in 2020. The table shows all sites reporting birds by maximum accumulated peak counts across the year ranked from highest to lowest. Worryingly no sites reported confirmed breeding this year and there were no reports from Crowle Moors, the only site reporting confirmed breeding in 2020. The information from Snipe Dales and Messingham SQ suggests there was at least one pair at each site. There were two probable territories at Barton Pits/Far Ings and Walesby Moor. With a further six single birds at six sites during Jan-Apr, the maximum reported population could still be around 10 pairs. On a positive note, reports from Anwick Fen and Callan's Lane Wood show that Willow Tit is still hanging on in the south-west of the county. The broad results from the 2020 RSPB Willow Tit Survey were published in Nov 2022 and showed an estimated population in Britain of 5,700 breeding pairs, with North Yorkshire, Durham and Derbyshire the counties with the largest populations. As a result, Willow Tit has been removed from consideration by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel. Let's hope these thriving areas can be a source of more immigration into Lincolnshire to boost our flagging population.

## Eurasian Blue Tit

*Cyanistes caeruleus* ■

British form '*obscurus*' a very common resident. Green List.

Records were received from over 400 sites. The highest count of the year was 68 at Gibraltar Point on Jan 18th. Observed in 82% of BBS squares up from 80% in 2020, with a mean of 5.4 birds per occupied square (2019, 4.8) making it the 12th most widespread bird in the county and our commonest tit. Counts over 40 came from the following sites: Gibraltar Point (14 counts) and Kirkby Moor (one).



Eurasian Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus* Waters' Edge Barton  
December 6th 2021 © GRAHAM CATLEY





## Great Tit *Parus major* ■

British form '*newtoni*' a very common resident. Green List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	79	77	66	46	40	38	34	112	48	46	30	40
Marton	5	6	13	12	9	4	5	6	8	11	10	15
Huttoft Bank	10	8	8	8	8	6	10	10	10	8	8	4
Long Bennington	17	8	11	8	10	3	3	10	8	6	3	5
Middlemarsh Farm	12	9	12	6	9	4	5	3	5	5	6	5
Hartsholme CP	1	14	5	8	2	2	1	1	15	7	5	6
Messingham SQ	5	8	7	6	5	1	2	1	5	2	4	9
East Halton	2	2	1	2	4	2	4	2	2	2	3	4
Tattershall	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	4	2	2	3	2
Swanholme Lakes	2	6	7	2	2	1	1	1	2	1	2	1

Recorded from over 350 sites compared to 300 in 2020. Interestingly only 10 sites returned a count in every month and only 14 more sites delivered a count in 10/11 months indicating the hard core of 30 or less birders who contribute most of Lincolnshire's bird records. To reflect this all sites which submitted a full set of records are shown in the table. It should be noted that many diligent contributors failed to add a count in one or two months. The most counts came in April (155) beating last year's highest count total in May (120). The highest count of the year was 112 at Gibraltar Point on Aug 11th. The species was found in 74% of BBS squares (2020 61%, 2019 82%) with an average of 3.3 birds per occupied square compared to 3 in 220. It was the 27th most widespread bird in Lincolnshire this year. Of the top 100 counts received, which were of 20 or more, 87% came from Gibraltar Point!

## Bearded Reedling *Panurus biarmicus* ■

Scarce and localised, but increasing, resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. Green List. **RBBP.**

From submitted records it appears that virtually all of the breeding population is now found along the Humber with Alkborough Flats holding the bulk of them. In the early winter Jan–Mar there were at least 25 at Alkborough Flats, six Whitton Jan 3rd, four East Halton Pits 1st, 1–2 Frampton Marsh, 1–4 Gibraltar Point, one Marston STW and singles Huttoft Bank and Wolla Bank. Up to four were at Gibraltar Point in April with records from breeding sites including single pairs at East Halton Pits, Goxhill Haven, Frampton Marsh, at least three pairs Winteringham Haven and 10 pairs Barton–







Barrow Haven but the largest concentration was of 45 pairs at Alkborough Flats. Flocks of fledged juveniles and post breeding concentrations of more than 10 birds included 12 East Halton Skitter Jul; 150 Alkborough Flats Sep, 100+ Oct–Nov 1st; 49 Garthorpe Sep 28th; 15 Goxhill Marsh Oct 2nd–3rd to Dec; 10 Far Ings Dec. Autumn coastal records included one at Gibraltar Point Aug 29th and up to seven there in October. Also in October four Wolla Bank, four Frampton Marsh and up to 13 Lincs Coastal Country Park, plus 10 there in November and 16 in December; finally, one was inland at Whisby NP Nov 14th.

### **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**.

The first record of the year was a singing male back on a territory Feb 16th in Laughton Forest with the only other February record at Black Bank on 25th. No full surveys in the breeding season so limited data of three pairs five males Laughton Forest, minimum three pairs Greetwell, one pair Risby Warren, one pair Kirkby Moor, singing male Woodall GC and male Linwood Warren. Clearly a very low estimate of the total breeding population. Away from breeding sites singles Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes Mar 4th and 8th, Gibraltar Point Mar 23rd, Sutton Bridge Apr 10th, Gibraltar Point May 6th and 10th, a rather poor showing on passage.



**Woodlark** *Lullula arborea*  
Scotton Common NR May  
12th 2021 © SIMON SPAVIN

### **Eurasian 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. Records were received from nearly 350 sites including eighteen counts of over 100 birds. Eleven of these came from Gibraltar Point which also had the highest count of the year of 400 on Oct 7th. This was the same date and location as the 2020 high count of 897. Skylark maintained its prevalence and was recorded on 86% of BBS one km squares (2020, 88%). The average number of birds per square was slightly down at 9.6 (2020, 10.1). The peak autumn migration at Gibraltar Point was between Oct 7th–Nov 5th during which period there were 10 dates with over 100 birds, with the second highest count of 269 on Nov 2nd. The highest wintering count of 160 came from Huttoft Bank on Feb 12th and the largest inland count of 120 came from Withcall on Nov 30th. During the breeding season the peak count was 93 from Gibraltar Point on Apr 24th and 62 from Sturton by Stow on Apr 14th.

### **Shore Lark**

#### *Eremophila alpestris* ■

Scarce, formerly fairly common winter visitor. Currently low numbers compared to the 1960s and 1970s. Exceptional inland. Amber List.

Four were at Brickyard Lane, Theddlethorpe Nov 14th, where seven were seen Nov 11th in 2020, the only record of the year. In the 10 years to 2018, the numbers of birds varied from five in 2015 to 51 in 2016, averaging about 27 per year. In 2019, 15–17 were in the Brickyard Lane area Jan–Mar but only singles were seen Oct–Dec at four coastal sites. The decline since has been sudden and dramatic.



**Shore Lark** *Eremophila alpestris* Brickyard Lane Theddlethorpe  
November 14th 2021 © GRAHAM CATLEY





### Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* ■

Common but declining summer visitor and passage migrant. Green List.

Site	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Alkborough Flats	200	500	200	70	2000	500	-	3
Gibraltar Point	3	24	44	53	237	681	350	1
Bagmoor Floods	25	500	250	-	-	-	-	-
Baston GP	50	500	100	-	-	500	-	-
Winteringham Haven	-	-	-	-	500	-	-	-
Whisby NP	-	232	400	12	2	1	-	-
Biscathorpe	-	-	358	-	-	-	-	-
Barton Pits	7	300	-	-	-	-	-	-
Killingholme Marshes	4	-	-	-	-	280	-	-
Covenham Reservoir	-	60	200	-	2	6	8	-

Records were received from around 100 sites across the county and the top 10 sites recording the highest monthly peak counts are tabulated. First bird of the year was at Baston Fen on Mar 4th, eight days earlier than in 2020, and 25 other sites also had them in March with 30 at Deeping Lakes and 25 at Bagmoor Floods Mar 27th. Three-figure counts were recorded from Mar 30th at Alkborough Flats, Barton Pits, Baston & Langtoft GP, Messingham SQ and Whisby NP with 500 at Baston GP Apr 2nd, Alkborough Flats Apr 4th, and Bagmoor Floods Apr 13th. By May, most had arrived with peaks of 400 at Whisby NP and 250 Bagmoor Floods May 5th.



**Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia* Saltfleetby  
May 29th 2021 © MARK JOHNSON and Colony  
at South Holland Main Drain Sutton Bridge  
June 2021 © R CANEY







Post-breeding numbers quickly built up in July with counts in the low 100s from several sites peaking at 500 Winteringham Haven Jul 11th and 2000 Alkborough Flats Jul 19th. Visual migration at Gibraltar Point during Aug recorded 1541 heading south and just 472 in Sep, although the day peak at Gibraltar Point was 350 south Sep 10th. Few remained into October with three Alkborough Flats and one East Halton Oct 3rd, another Alkborough Flats Oct 4th; three Huttoft Oct 6th when there were also singles at Chapel Point (same bird?) and Gibraltar Point, where the last of the autumn was seen Oct 7th.

### Barn 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	1	49	902	56	750	919	2130	132	3	-
Covenham Reservoir	-	700	1200	17	37	40	80	2	-	-
Anderby Creek	1	4	28	7	1079	606	42	1	1	-
Huttoft Bank	1	11	429	20	220	206	101	26	3	-
Skegness	-	-	-	-	-	-	1000	-	-	-
RAF Digby	-	1	-	8	-	150	400	3	2	-
Whisby NP	-	20	320	5	-	-	10	1	-	-
Toft Newton Reservoir	-	80	120	2	30	30	60	1	-	-
Middlemarsh Farm	-	50	100	20	11	68	50	1	-	-
Total no. of sites	14	134	168	108	86	93	97	30	7	1

The first of the year were two reported over the Trent at Gainsborough on Mar 25th and there were singles at Epworth, Gibraltar Point and Huttoft Bank on Mar 29th. Reports came from 10 other sites in March. The highest count of the year was of 2130 at Gibraltar Point on Sep 6th with 1478 there on Sep 11th. In spring Covenham Reservoir had the peak count of 1200 on May 11th and May was the month in which Swallow was reported from the most sites: 168. Early summer passage was reflected by the 1079 recorded headed south at Anderby Creek on Jul 26th. The table shows the top 10 sites which held cumulative annual maximum monthly counts of more than 300 birds. Recorded in 71% of BBS squares (2020 73%) with an average of seven birds per occupied square (2020 4). It was 18th most widespread species in the county. Records came from seven sites in November and the last report of the year was one at Honington near Grantham on Dec 12th.

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* and Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum* Toft Newton April 5th 2021 © SIMON SPAVIN





## Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant. Red List.

Site	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Gibraltar Point	15	155	30	30	200	2446	51
Skegness	-	-	-	-	1	1000	-
Covenham Reservoir	100	600	15	7	2	100	5
Barton Pits	10	180	-	-	-	-	2
Messingham SQ	9	135	-	-	-	4	50
Hemswell Cliff	-	-	-	-	120	-	-
Middlemarsh Farm (Skegness)	12	40	30	14	7	100	-
Whisby NP	20	100	-	2	2	-	55
Woodhall Spa Airfield	1	100	-	1	-	30	-



**Common House Martin**  
*Delichon urbicum*  
Frithville July 18th  
2021 © NEIL SMITH

More than 1100 records were received from around 180 sites across the county. The first was an exceptionally early bird over Long Sutton Feb 27th followed by the more usual early records (not tabulated) in March: Boultham Mere Mar 26th, Deeping Lakes Mar 28th, Friskney Mar 29th and Thorney Mar 29th. Many more arrived in the county during April with 100 at Covenham Reservoir Apr 29th the highest count of the month. The major arrival in spring occurred during May with six sites (table) noting 100 or more on at least one date peaking at 600 Covenham Reservoir May 11th. Passage slackened off thereafter and Jun-Jul was predictably quiet. No detailed breeding records were received, but there were many notes recording mud collection for nest building and similar activities. It was recorded in 29% of Lincolnshire BBS squares (2020 33%) with an average of nine birds per occupied square (2020, 5). Autumn passage began mid-August onwards with 200 at Gibraltar Point Aug 21st and 120 Hemswell Cliff Aug 29th. September saw the main between 6th-11th with Gibraltar Point recording 2446 Sep 6th, 690 Sep 7th, 600 Sep 10th and 1665 Sep 11th. Small flocks of 10-25 were noted at several locations and 72 Gibraltar Point Sep 29th was the last of any note. Birds continued south through October in smaller numbers and surprisingly the last was one at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes Oct 28th. November dates are not unusual, but none were received this year.

## Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*

Rare migrant, almost annual since 2003. Southern Europe. LBRC.

One was over the freshwater lagoons at Gibraltar Point on May 10th, 09.30-10.00 only (KMW) and another was feeding over the reed-bed at Marston STW on May 25th (D. Wade, AB, et al).

## Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

Scarce and increasing breeding resident and passage migrant/winter visitor; first proven breeding in 2008. Green List. RBBP.

Allowing for duplication of site names the overall county total of territory holding males rose slightly to 172 at 41 locations compared to 2020 (chart). The key sites were Barton-Barrow Haven pits (47) and Alkborough Flats (26) but other concentrations occur along the Lincs coastal pits. Some sites with birds in 2020 failed to record any birds in 2021 but this could have been due to lack of reporting rather than lack of birds. However, as numbers were slightly down at the two key sites then maybe the species suffered a slight set back in the previous winter. The majority of winter records come from breeding localities where habitat is clearly the key factor but wintering birds are often quieter or only utter the less obvious single call note and are thus more likely to be overlooked in marginal habitats.

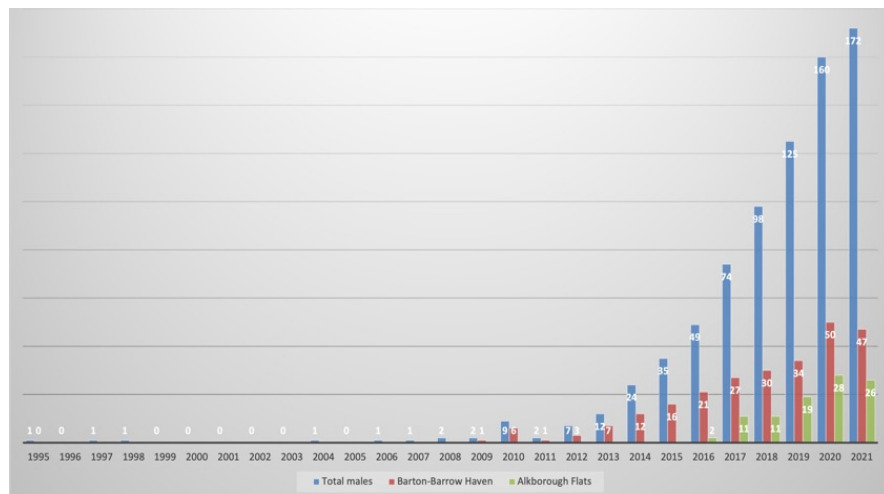


**Cetti's Warbler** *Cettia cetti* Waters' Edge Baron  
April 20th 2021 © SIMON SPAVIN





### Cetti's Warbler males holding breeding territories, 2021



### Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus* ■

British form 'rosaceous' a common resident and partial migrant. Nominate Scandinavian form ('Northern Long-tailed Tit') vagrant. Green List.

The highest count for the year was 71 reported at Whisby NP on Oct 8th and 40 at Epworth Turbary on Jan 4th. Although data was received from over 250 sites, only seven of these reported a count in every month of the year. Not surprising given the difficulty of getting accurate counts of this highly mobile and vocal bird, but any count is better than none. BBS data shows Long-tailed Tit was reported in 32% of Lincolnshire BBS squares (2020 18%, 2019 28%) with an average of 2.9 birds per occupied square (2020, 2.3). The apparent bounce is a result of Covid restrictions reducing the number of April early BBS visits in 2020 when this species is most detectable as mentioned in LBR 2020.

### Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* ■

Very scarce and declining passage migrant. Formerly bred up until 1951. Red List. **LBRC**.

Only three records of this declining summer visitor were received in 2021, two in the spring and one in the autumn. The first spring bird was a singing male at Brickyard Lane, Theddlethorpe St Helen's May 8th-9th (OBt, CMO, et al) followed by another on May 16th at Gibraltar Point (D&L Primrose, D&C Whitehead). The sole autumn record was on Sep 7th at Wolla Bank (RL).

### Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*

Scarce but increasing passage migrant Sep-Nov, rare inland.

One at Gibraltar Point on Oct 6th was the first of the year. Another was there on Oct 8th and 10th, and one was trapped and ringed at Anderby Creek, also Oct 8th. Late birds were at Gibraltar Point Oct 22nd, Wolla Bank Oct 25th and the last of the year again at Gibraltar Point Nov 5th.

### Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*

Very scarce but increasing passage migrant Sep-Nov, rare inland. Siberia. **LBRC**.

One in the willow hedge at Churchill Lane, Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes on Nov 14th was the only record (GPC, ND, et al).





## Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*

Rare. Siberia. **LBRC**.

One was at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes on Nov 8th, the 22nd county record, and on the same date as last year's final record (OBT, CMO). Last year's record influx of at least nine birds is but a distant memory!

## Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* ■

Familiar summer visitor and passage migrant but declining as a breeding bird. Northern form *acredula* scarce passage migrant to the UK. Amber List.

Site	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Gibraltar Point	1	8	6	3	6	61	40	1	1
Twyford Woods	-	8	33	-	10	-	-	-	-
Laughton Forest	-	7	30	9	-	-	-	-	-
Whisby NP	-	12	18	7	4	4	1	-	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	-	5	7	3	1	30	2	-	-
Baston GP	1	13	7	8	-	6	-	-	-
Barton Pits	3	1	-	-	-	24	-	-	-
Messingham SQ	-	10	8	4	1	3	2	-	-
Tunman Wood	-	16	4	4	-	-	-	-	-
Crowle Moors	-	-	20	-	-	-	-	-	-

The highest count for the year was 61 at Gibraltar Point on Aug 13th. Records were submitted from 160 sites. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks in excess of 20 over the year. The first bird was reported singing at Sturton by Stow on Mar 9th and the second (possibly the same bird?) was also there Mar 22nd-23rd. The spring rush came from around Apr 10th onwards. For the second year in succession, Twyford Woods had the highest spring count with 33 on May 16th. Counts of over 10 singing males came from six sites in May, all in the western half of the county with Linwood Warren the furthest east. BBS reported the species from 30% of squares (2020, 10%) with an average of 1.9 birds per occupied one km square (2020, 3.2) back to normal after the Covid restrictions impacted visits in 2020. There were no reports of *acredula* race males this year. The autumn migration at Gibraltar Point with a peak of 61 on Aug 13th was well down on the 20 year high of 525 on Aug 23rd the previous year. The latest birds were singles at Gibraltar Point on Oct 8th and Nov 5th.



Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* Messingham SQ April 9th 2021 © SIMON SPAVIN





## Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* ■

Common summer visitor and passage migrant. Rare/scarse in winter. Green List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	1	2	28	28	21	20	29	25	32	62	4	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	1	1	16	13	8	8	4	21	16	11	2	2
Whisby NP	1	-	19	26	19	6	6	1	5	7	2	1
Snipe Dales	-	-	-	63	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Baston GP	1	-	19	20	8	5	-	4	-	-	-	1
Uffington	-	-	5	13	14	9	8	-	3	-	-	-
Keelby	-	-	6	14	10	9	6	1	-	1	-	-
Messingham SQ	-	1	17	7	7	4	6	3	1	-	-	1
Louth	-	-	5	12	7	8	3	3	3	3	1	1
Marston	1	1	4	9	5	5	3	5	7	5	-	1
No of sites	15	22	124	179	146	108	73	44	59	31	15	13

Recorded in all months of the year with records reported from nearly 450 sites. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks of 45 or more over the year and the total number of sites from which birds were reported each month. Fifteen birds were reported wintering at 15 sites in January which was down from 41 birds at 20 sites the previous Jan. Migrants arrived in more numbers from around Mar 14th onwards. BBS reports came from 58% of squares surveyed (2020, 39%) with an average of 2.8 birds per occupied square (2020 3.1). The only site reporting birds in all 12 months of the year was Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes. The largest count of the year, 74, came on Mar 31st along the Humber Bank from Barton to Barrow Haven, all singing males as were the 63 at Snipe Dales on Apr 8th. Spring migration was barely observable elsewhere and autumn migration was also well down with the October peak of 62 at Gibraltar Point much reduced from the peak of 343 there the previous October.

## 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.

The first of the year was at Marston STW on Jan 24th (per DR) and this was followed by a less typical record of one in song at Saltfleetby St Peter Apr 9th (BMC, MJT). In the autumn and winter more typical records were at Gibraltar Point Nov 5th (KMW) ; two birds ringed in the dunes at Theddlethorpe St Helen Nov 5th (OBt, NCC, CMO, et al.); Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes singles Nov 11th and Nov 26th-Dec 3rd with two there Nov 29th (CMO); Barton Pits Nov 10th (GPC); Huttoft Pit Dec 13th (RDn, RL); Deeping St James STW Dec 16th (JJ); Marston STW Dec 27th and 29th-30th (AB, DR, et al).



Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* Grantham  
March 23rd 2021 © STEVE NESBITT



Siberian Chiffchaff *P.c. tristis* Crook Bank November 8th 2021  
© NICK CROUCH





### Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

Rare. The Baltic eastwards to western Siberia, central-eastern Himalayas, and central Asia. **LBRC.**

There were no records in 2021 but an historic record came to light from the ongoing review of the Gibraltar Point archives:

2008 Adult male, intermittently in song, Aug 17th (RJ & P Cosgrove, KMW).

This thus becomes the 13th county record with six others since, the most recent one being in Aug 2016, also at Gibraltar Point. Greenish Warbler was considered by BBRC up to 2006.

### Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* ■

Common summer visitor and passage migrant. Amber List.

Site	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Gibraltar Point	-	42	52	59	80	29	3
Huttoft Bank	-	22	35	30	12	1	-
Frampton Marsh	-	46	23	4	3	-	-
Middlemarsh Farm	-	9	24	23	4	1	-
East Halton	-	6	18	18	13	2	2
Goxhill Marsh	-	-	18	18	11	-	2
Midville	-	-	18	-	25	-	1
Anderby Marsh	-	20	17	3	2	1	-
Chapel Six Marshes	-	14	21	-	-	-	-
Wolla Bank	-	20	13	-	2	-	-

Sedge Warblers were reported from 140 sites with the first bird, an early one, at Barton Pits on Mar 31st with the next at Baston GP the following day, Apr 1st. Birds were becoming widespread by Apr 10th. The table shows the top 10 sites with annual cumulative monthly max counts of more than 35 and clearly



Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* Frampton Marsh April 24th 2021 © NEIL SMITH





reflects the density of the distribution of this species along the coastal marshes, with the highest count of the year of 80 at Gibraltar Point on Jul 17th. Sedge Warbler was recorded on 20% of BBS one km squares (2020, 22%). The average number of birds per square was down at 2.8 (2020, 3.9). Although most birds depart by August and the high count that month at Gibraltar Point was on Aug 3rd, there were 10 at Alkborough on Sep 16th and the last was a single at Gibraltar Point on Sep 25th.

### Eurasian Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* ■

Common summer visitor and passage migrant. Green List.

Site	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Alkborough Flats	2	-	-	-	-	40	4
Pyewipe	1	5	4	38	3	-	-
Midville	-	12	-	30	-	2	-
Goxhill Haven	2	27	13	3	-	-	-
Kirkby GP	5	25	26	-	-	-	-
Frampton Marsh	3	23	12	6	1	-	-
Gibraltar Point	5	12	20	23	22	6	1
Messingham SQ	9	22	6	4	-	-	-
Croft Marsh	5	10	20	8	-	-	-
East Halton Brick Pits	4	8	13	4	7	2	-

Recorded in seven months of the year with over 1100 observer sightings from around 130 sites. Reed warblers were found in 15 (23%) of the 66 BBS squares surveyed in 2021 (18% in 2020) with an average 2.1 individuals per occupied square (1.3 in 2020).

The first bird of spring was recorded at Bracebridge Apr 14th with singles the next day, Apr 15th, at Deeping Lakes, Messingham SQ and Barton Pits, where there were 10 by Apr 18th. Thereafter, numbers gradually increased with peak spring counts of 27 Goxhill Haven May 28th, 25 Kirkby GP May 19th, 23 at Frampton Marsh May 23rd, and 22 Messingham SQ May 20th. Summer counts of 38 Pyewipe Jul 28th and 30 Midville Jul 14th were notable as were post-breeding counts of 22 Tennyson's Sands (Gibraltar Point) Aug 1st and 40+ Alkborough Flats Sep 8th-16th. Numbers dwindled rapidly after Sep 16th with just 1-4 birds at a number of inland and coastal sites. The final birds of the year were singles at Alkborough Flats Oct 4th and 9th, Huttoft Oct 3rd and 5th and the last at Gibraltar Point Oct 10th.

### Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris* ■

Very scarce migrant and potential breeder first recorded in Lincolnshire in 1961. Red List.

**RBBC, LBRC.**

One singing in the Plantation at Gibraltar Point and seen only briefly June 2nd (KMW) and a second was found and videoed at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes Jun 17th (DWH).

### Common Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia* ■

Scarce summer visitor and passage migrant. Decline in late 20th century. Red List.

Site	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Alkborough Flats	3	1	7	-	1	1
Gibraltar Point	7	7	2	3	1	-
Anderby-Huttoft	2	3	3	2	-	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	4	4	2	1	-	-
Marston STW	3	2	-	-	-	-
Barton Pits	2	-	-	-	-	-
Frampton Marsh	1	2	1	-	-	-
Wolla Bank	4	2	2	2	1	-





**Common Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella naevia* Donna Nook April 18th 2021 © MARK JOHNSON

Records were received from around 20 sites allowing for some overlap, all of them coastal or estuarine. First of the spring was at Gibraltar Point Apr 14th, and by the end of the month they had been recorded at 15 other sites. Seven were heard at Gibraltar Point Apr 22nd and 30th; up to five on the Anderby coast Apr 24th, four at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes Apr 27th, three at Marston STW Apr 23rd and three at Alkborough Flats 29th. By May, reeling birds had been located in 11 localities with four Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes May 8th and seven Gibraltar Point May 9th and 1-3 birds at eight other sites. Seven established territories were located at Alkborough Flats by Jun 1st and with 1-3 birds present elsewhere. Birds were still active in July but in smaller numbers and by August just five sites reported single birds – Stamford Aug 3rd, Huttoft Aug 4th, Gibraltar Point Aug 11th and 31st, Alkborough Flats Aug 27th. These did not linger long, and the final and only bird of September was at Alkborough Flats Sep 6th.

A very interesting ringing recovery was of a bird ringed at Gibraltar Point Jun 1st, 2019, and recovered from a Barn Owl pellet (the leg with BTO ring!) at Carlton Marshes in Suffolk on Oct 29th 2021.

### **Eurasian 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	2	13	2	28	35	14	25	21	21	17	7	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	-	-	3	20	15	8	8	4	16	6	1	-
Whisby NP	-	-	3	15	25	6	4	-	2	1	1	-
Baston GP	-	-	7	24	13	2	-	5	-	-	-	-
Uffington	-	-	-	15	18	10	8	-	-	-	-	-
Louth	1	1	1	18	9	5	2	2	2	-	-	-
Messingham SQ	-	-	5	8	8	11	5	-	2	-	-	-
Great Limber	-	-	-	11	27	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marton	-	-	-	7	6	4	3	5	1	-	1	-
Kirkby GP	-	-	-	3	10	12	-	1	-	-	-	-
No. of sites	17	14	36	144	153	98	61	30	25	7	6	3





Recorded in all months of the year with records from around 290 sites. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks of 25 or more over the year and the total number of sites reporting this species each month. Seventeen sites reported January Blackcaps this year, up from five in 2020. Migrants supplemented the over-wintering birds from around Mar 29th onwards. BBS reports came from 68% of squares surveyed (2020, 65%) with an average of three birds per occupied square (2020 2.6). There were no counts over 45 this year, the highest being 35 in May at Gibraltar Point, well down on the autumn peak count there of 106 on Oct 11th, 2020. The autumn migration was poor compared to previous years. In Dec, birds were reported from only three sites, the quietest month of the year. These were Langtoft Dec 3rd, Fotherby Dec 4th and 27th and Castle Bytham Dec 28th.

### Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* ■

Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant. Green List.

Site	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Baston GP	4	12	9	-	3	-
Crowle Moors	-	11	-	-	-	-
Whisby Nature Park	4	11	5	-	-	-
Langtoft West End Pits	4	10	3	1	2	-
Laughton Forest	-	10	1	-	-	-
Chambers Farm Wood	-	6	-	-	-	-
Messingham SQ	1	6	-	-	-	-
Tallington Lakes	-	6	3	2	3	-
Uffington	-	4	6	1	-	-

More than 250 records of this warbler were received from around 60 sites. The first was at Eagle Hall Wood Apr 13th, compared to Apr 7th in the two previous years. Many more arrived across the county from Apr 23rd-30th, and numbers increased into May with the top five sites all recording 10 or more by the end of the month. Confirmed breeding came from Whisby NP Jun 14th, and Bourne Woods Jun 19th. Birds became less conspicuous as the summer progressed and most August records were of single birds other than three Baston GP Aug 8th and 10th and two Langtoft West End GP Aug 23rd. Most had departed by the end of the month with singles on the coast at several sites during September (not tabulated) and the last of the year was at Gibraltar Point Sep 28th.



Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* Londonthorpe Woods May 2nd 2021 © STEVE NESBITT





Eurasian Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*  
Waters' Edge April 8th 2021  
© SIMON SPAVIN





### Barred Warbler *Curruca nisoria*

Very scarce/scarse coastal passage migrant mainly Aug-Oct, exceptionally to Dec. **LBRC**.

One was found at the south end of the old Sandilands GC Aug 24th (RLo) and another or possibly the same bird along Huttoft Bank Sep 1st (GWr).

### Lesser Whitethroat *Curruca curruca* ■

Common summer visitor and passage migrant. Green list (nominate form)

Site	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Gibraltar Point	9	14	9	13	25	30
Barton Pits	3	8	-	-	-	-
Burgh le Marsh	-	6	3	-	-	-
Crook Bank	6	-	-	-	-	-
East Halton Brick Pits	-	2	1	2	6	2
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	1	6	6	6	4	3
Spilsby	-	5	1	-	-	-
Theddlethorpe	-	5	-	-	1	5
Pyewipe Saltmarsh	-	4	3	1	2	-
Uffington	-	4	1	-	-	-

Around 95 sites reported more than 530 records, well down on the 2020 total (800); the top 10 sites are tabulated. The first bird of the year was at Goxhill, Apr 12th, four days later than 2020. Most arrived across the county in the last week of April from 23rd onwards with nine at Gibraltar Point Apr 30th rising to 14 there by May 12th.



Lesser Whitethroat *Curruca curruca* Waters' Edge Barton May 16th 2021 © SIMON SPAVIN





Summer highs were at Gibraltar Point, 13 on Jul 17th, but only 1-6 recorded elsewhere. Post-breeding counts were highest again at Gibraltar Point with 10 or more on 18 dates in Aug-Sep, peaking with 23 Aug 20th, 25 Aug 27th and 30 Sep 6th. Thereafter birds rapidly left, and single birds were present towards the end of the month with the last at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes Sep 28th and Gibraltar Point Sep 29th. There were no reports of the Siberian subspecies *C.c. bythi*.

### Common Whitethroat *Curruca communis* ■

Nominate form a very common summer visitor and passage migrant. Amber List (nominate form).

Site	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Gibraltar Point	78	131	180	221	66	45	1
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	9	41	16	18	25	7	1
Huttoft Bank	9	35	25	15	-	6	-
Withern Washland	-	15	16	10	-	1	-
Long Bennington	7	14	11	9	-	-	-
Marton	5	14	7	6	9	-	-
Sturton by Stow	-	11	3	22	2	-	-
Spilsby	-	19	18	-	-	-	-
Anderby	6	10	10	4	4	-	-
Morton	1	10	5	16	-	-	-

Records were received from around 240 sites with the highest count of 221 reported at Gibraltar Point on Jul 17th which included many juveniles in family groups. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks in excess of 31 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 though it traditionally arrives in mid- April, the first came in at Baston Fen on Apr 7th, followed by one at Aunby on Apr 9th. By Apr 20th birds were widespread, 14 days later than in 2020. BBS records showed it was the tenth most widespread species in the county being reported from 85% of one km squares, (2020, 84%). The average number of birds recorded per occupied square was 3.6 (2020, 4.4). There is no pronounced autumn migration of this species at coastal watch points, with the last of the year at Gibraltar Point a single on Oct 7th and the last overall a bird trapped and ringed at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes on Oct 9th.



Common Whitethroat *Curruca communis*  
Cress Marsh July 1st 2021 © GEOFF BEASLEY

### Common Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla* ■

Scarce and increasing passage migrant and rare winter visitor. Green List. RBBP.

A quiet year for Firecrest with yet again no birds over wintering from the previous year. The first was an early spring migrant at Gibraltar Point on Mar 9th followed by others there on 18th, 20th and 31st. The only other March record was one in a private garden at Theddlethorpe on Mar 20th. There was only one record in April, at Freiston Shore on 8th. May was also quiet with single singing birds at Baston GP on 2nd and Gibraltar Point on May 16-17th. A different bird was at Gibraltar Point on Jun 2nd. There were no further reports until autumn migration was underway with singles at Gibraltar Point on Oct 3rd-4th and Nov 3rd, in the Coastal Country Park on Oct 8th and a bird trapped and ringed at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes on Oct 13th, retrapped there on Oct 20th. The last of the year was a possible wintering bird at Sturton by Stow on Dec 10th.





## Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* ■

Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. Green List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	3	3	36	8	3	3	1	1	8	37	18	6
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	2	-	2	-	1	-	-	2	-	30	6	-
Whisby NP	2	-	2	1	1	-	-	-	2	16	8	8
Louth	5	2	3	3	4	3	1	3	3	4	3	1
Willingham Forest	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	25	-
Baston	7	1	1	2	2	-	-	4	-	2	3	3
Messingham SQ	2	3	1	2	1	1	-	-	3	1	3	6
Hartsholme CP	5	2	-	1	2	1	-	-	3	2	2	-
Laughton Forest	-	-	-	-	10	3	-	-	-	-	3	-
Chapel Six Marshes	1	-	4	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	4

Counts came from over 170 sites and the table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks in excess of 15 over the year. There was a one-day spring peak at Gibraltar Point of 36 on Mar 23rd with no other counts over 10 on the coast in this period. BBS reported the species from 15% of squares (2020, 10%) with an average of 1.2 birds per occupied one km square (2020, 1.4). The increase is back to the position in 2019, Covid restrictions having probably caused the 2020 "reduction". Autumn migration usually sees the highest numbers but the high count this year was just 37 at Gibraltar Point on Oct 19th, nearly 90% down on the peak count there of 314 in October 2020. The only other significant October count was 30 at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes on the 16th of which eight were trapped. An exceptionally poor autumn for Goldcrest migration.

## Eurasian Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* ■

Abundant resident and partial migrant. Amber List.



Eurasian Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* Louth April 4th 2021 © JOHN CLARKSON





Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	31	39	61	51	46	65	73	58	46	75	63	52
Long Bennington	7	14	27	23	25	22	19	11	11	13	17	15
Marston STW	4	5	26	34	29	-	-	-	14	15	12	-
Uffington	6	9	13	22	23	27	11	-	8	-	9	10
Marton	6	3	11	10	9	10	4	3	12	13	22	20
Normanby by Spital	11	10	16	20	14	15	-	-	3	12	13	-
Burgh le Marsh	-	21	-	24	26	28	-	-	-	-	-	-
Louth	5	8	3	23	24	2	2	10	6	5	-	3
Huttoft Bank	6	8	10	10	10	12	10	3	8	2	3	6
Middlemarsh Farm	6	4	6	5	10	16	6	2	2	11	7	3

Records were received from over 350 sites, and the highest count of the year was 75 at Gibraltar Point on Oct 8th. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks in excess of 75 over the year. BBS reported the species from 89% of squares (2020, 88%) with an average of 6.5 birds per occupied one km square (2020, 6.5). It is the 7th most widespread bird in the county.

### Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* ■

Fairly common and increasing woodland resident. Green List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Belton Park	-	3	6	-	2	-	-	-	7	4	-	-
Louth	3	2	1	2	-	1	-	1	4	3	2	1
Hartsholme CP	-	1	2	2	-	-	-	-	4	3	1	-
Linwood Warren	-	1	6	2	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Woodhall Spa	-	4	2	3	-	-	-	1	-	2	-	-
Swinn Wood	1	1	2	-	-	2	1	-	-	2	1	-
Boultham Park	3	3	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Hoplands Wood	-	6	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nocton Wood	2	1	1	-	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Normanby Hall CP	4	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3



Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* Boultham Park February 4th 2021  
© CHRIS GRIMSHAW

The top 10 sites all had annual cumulative monthly counts of nine or more birds and the highest count of the year was of seven at Belton Park on Sep 12th. Records were received from 81 sites, though 38 of these reported just a single bird in 1-5 months of the year. The distribution of these sites was as follows NW 18, W 15, SW 22, NE 8, E 18, SE 0. No records were reported from less usual places this year. An active nest hole was noted at Hoplands Wood on Mar 24th. BBS recorded birds in three, one km squares this year, a rate of 4.5% up from 4% in 2020. The average number of birds per occupied square was 1.3 (2020, 3.5).





### Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris* ■

British form *britannica* a common resident and partial migrant. Nominate Scandinavian and eastern European form, vagrant. Green List (nominate).

Recorded from around 102 sites across the county, more than 480 records were received of this familiar yet sometimes elusive woodland dweller, a drop in the number of sites and reports since 2020. Fifty-seven sites recorded two or more on any one date up from 41 in 2020, of which 40 recorded 3-5 birds in various months, mainly in the first quarter or post-breeding in Jul-Oct. BBS recorded birds in only 1.5% of one km squares surveyed, down from 2% in 2020. The average number of birds per occupied square was 2 (2020, 1). The only confirmed breeding report was a family party of four birds observed at Trent Port, Marton Jun 20th. No reports of northern nominate race Treecreepers were received this year.

### Rosy Starling *Pastor roseus*

Rare. Eastern and south-eastern Europe, Asia. LBRC.

Four adults were recorded in early June at Holbeach Clough, 1st (P. Gray); Huttoft (RLo) and Gibraltar Point (SCI, PAH), both Jun 3rd; Blyton Jun 6th-7th (S. Todd). This reflects (in a small way) what was a record influx into Western Europe in 2021 where flocks of up to 400 were reported on the French-Italian border in late May, with the biggest flock in France being 320 Jun 1st; there was a minimum of 182 reported in NE Spain, also in late May.

### Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* ■

Very common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. BS data shows that the breeding population has significantly fallen by 79% during the period 1994-2018. Red List.



Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*  
Messingham SQ March 14th 2021  
© SIMON SPAVIN



Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* Winteringham Haven February 27th 2021 © SIMON SPAVIN





Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Chapel St Leonards	10000	12	-	2	-	-	-	-	2	2	18000	100000
Gibraltar Point	2100	1000	9870	40	53	3100	8000	17300	4850	3015	6800	191
Wolla Bank	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5000	50000	-
Alkborough Flats	30000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	200	100	20000	50	10	120	40	200	42	5000	2500	200
Woodhall Spa	20000	-	1	12	1	14	42	5	24	4000	-	-
East Halton	20000	-	800	6	10	296	100	250	650	125	180	450
Baston Fen	100	-	300	1	-	-	2	30	200	-	20000	100
Whisby NP	1	8	-	-	8	-	-	-	2	104	1500	18000
Wainfleet Marshes	-	-	-	-	-	-	15000	-	-	-	-	-

Counts came from nearly 350 sites; the highest count of the year was 100,000 at Chapel Pit on Dec 18th down from the 2020 peak of 120,000 at Chapel Six Marshes on Nov 13th. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks in excess of 15,000 over the year. BBS reported the species from 56% of squares (2020, 51%) with an average of 16 birds per occupied one km square (2020, 28). The table shows that big roosts in Lincolnshire are transient. The largest roost this year at Chapel Pit on Dec 17th was almost certainly based on 50,000 birds that had been at Wolla Bank on Nov 30th. It is therefore difficult to predict on what dates and exactly where the finest murmuration spectacles will occur.

### Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus* ■

Scarce to fairly common passage migrant Mar-May and Sep-Nov; rare in winter. Red List.

Site	Apr	May	Oct	Nov
Gibraltar Point	5	3	1	3
Humberston	1	5	-	-
Alkborough Flats	4	-	-	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	2	4	1	1
Barton Pits	3	-	-	-
Raithby, Louth	2	3	-	-
Tathwell	2	-	-	-

Records came from around 26 sites during Apr-May and Oct-Nov, mainly coastal but with a few inland. Those sites recording two or more are tabulated but compared to the spring of 2020 birds were scarcer on the ground.

The first birds arrived Apr 9th at Anderby Creek and Barton Pits. Peak counts in April were three Barton Pits 9th, five Gibraltar Point 20th with four there 27th, and four (three males, one female) Alkborough Flats 24th to May 2nd.

In May, five were at Humberston Fitties and four Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes 3rd, three Gibraltar Point 7th. Inland records in spring came from Scopwick Apr 11th (nocturnal sound recording); Deeping High Bank Apr 11th; Tallington Apr 15th-16th; Tathwell Apr 27th; Trent Port Apr 28th; Raithby Lake (Louth) two Apr 27th and three May 1st; a male in a private garden in Brigsley May 1st; and Covenham Reservoir May 6th.



Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus* Brigsley May 2nd 2021  
© MIKE HARRINGTON





Autumn records were few and far between, with singles Gibraltar Point Oct 6th, 19th-20th, and 26th and one Grimsby Oct 31st being the only records of the month. In November three were at Gibraltar Point 2nd and 4th, inland at Baston Fen 6th, Gibraltar Point 8th, and Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes 11th with the two latter sites seeing the last birds of the year on Nov 14th.

### Common 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	122	88	57	27	22	22	24	12	18	89	520	76
Barton-upon-Humber	300	50	50	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Long Bennington	53	30	57	20	27	22	12	6	6	6	28	35
Legbourne	104	47	35	4	11	39	6	-	-	12	9	25
Louth	50	60	12	33	42	4	2	10	5	5	10	40
Stamford	25	19	10	8	9	6	4	3	2	4	153	8
Marton	40	13	21	16	18	12	5	4	8	9	45	52
Sturton by Stow	39	27	22	28	28	27	26	4	6	-	-	32
Whisby NP	1	2	1	6	13	6	2	1	3	5	65	115
Middlemarsh Farm	27	16	21	12	21	21	8	3	2	16	18	33



Common Blackbird *Turdus merula* Louth February 14th 2021 © JOHN CLARKSON

Records were received from over 450 sites with the highest count of 520 at Gibraltar Point on Nov 4th. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks in excess of 200 over the year. BBS reported the species from 98.5% of squares (2020, 98.5%) with an average of 10.4 birds per occupied one km square (2020 9.8) making it the joint most widespread species in the county alongside Woodpigeon. Only five counts were received over 200, reflecting a relatively poor autumn migration, four came from Gibraltar Point between Nov 3rd and 14th, the other was at Barton-upon-Humber on Jan 1st.



### Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* ■

Very common passage migrant and winter visitor, mainly Sep-Apr; rare in summer. Red List. RBBP.

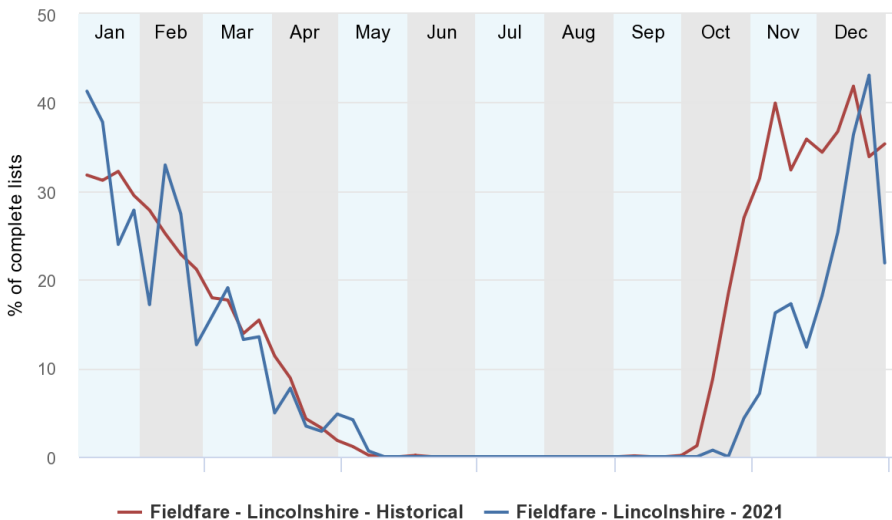
The year 2021 (blue line) was a fairly typical one and similar to the historical data from the BTO BirdTrack records (brown line). Note that the BTO chart shows reporting rates with the percentage of lists which include Fieldfare counts. The chart shows a rapidly dwindling wintering population in the first quarter and a typically large arrival in the last quarter; the species was widely reported across the county and from more than 250 sites.



Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* Fiskerton Fen January 12th 2021  
© RUSSEL HAYES

In Jan-Apr sites reporting flocks of 100 or more at mainly inland sites numbered 23 in January (range: 100-500); 19 in February (range: 100-500); 17 in March (range: 100-310); 11 in April (range: 100-400). Birds began to leave in April, but substantial flocks were noted at Northgate, West Pinchbeck (400, Apr 16th and 200 Apr 20th), Winceby (350, Apr 6th), Tetford (160, Apr 11th) and eight other sites had more than 100. The last three-figure counts were of 157 at North Willingham (Apr 28th) and Stickford 140 (May 1st). Fifty were at Ranby and 35 Baston Fen, both May 2nd. The last of the spring was a single Gibraltar Point May 19th. There were no records Jun-Sep and the first of the autumn were 45 Oct 6th at Northgate, West Pinchbeck with just a few (1-12) at six other sites. Two hundred at Stamford Oct 25th signalled a significant arrival going into November with peaks at Northgate, West Pinchbeck (2000, Nov 6th) and 270 Marston STW (Nov 9th). Oddly, counts on the coast were much lower with just 81 at Gibraltar Point Nov 14th and very few elsewhere. Many more arrived across the county in December though with significant arrivals throughout the month and 16 sites had peak counts of 100-500.

#### Reporting rates (% lists with Fieldfares), Jan-Dec 2021 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**.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	44	43	234	6	7	1	1345	554	67
Northgate, Pinchbeck	22	-	-	-	-	-	-	1000	-
Spendliffe Meadows, Huttoft	36	-	-	-	-	-	1000	-	-
Atkinson's Warren, Scunthorpe	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	600	-
Barton	500	130	150	-	-	-	60	30	55
Frampton Marsh	6	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	400
Normanby	10	-	45	-	-	-	333	36	-
Falldingworth	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	300
Scopwick	5	8	18	1	-	-	67	289	-
Trent Port (Marton)	40	38	82	-	-	-	25	119	268

More than 1500 records were received from all parts of the county. The table shows the top 10 sites assessed by monthly peaks during the year and makes for odd reading with discontinuous records from several of these sites, (and also at many of the other sites which are not tabulated). This perhaps reflects the highly nomadic nature of this thrush as they roam the county going from one food source to another or in response to adverse weather. Apart from the 500 recorded at Barton Jan 1st, there were just 12 counts of more than 100 birds at 10 sites, mainly in the northern half of the county. Flocks dissipated in March with 140 Boultham Mere and 120 Legsby Mar 4th, 234 Gibraltar Point 16th and 150 Boultham Mere 18th the biggest counts of the month. Records in April referred mainly to 1-3 birds at many sites with eight Croft Marsh Apr 20th (not tabulated) and seven Gibraltar Point May 1st, where singles lingered until May 25th and Jun 5th.



Redwing *Turdus iliacus* Grasby February 14th 2021 © ROY HARVEY





No records were received Jul-Sep and the first birds in the autumn arrived on the coast at Wolla Bank Oct 1st (1) and in The Wash Frampton Marsh Oct 4th (6) with 88 Gibraltar Point Oct 6th. A large arrival occurred on Oct 12th with 1345 Gibraltar Point and 1000 Spendluffe Meadows (Huttoft/Mumby). Gibraltar Point experienced daily arrivals throughout October as flocks came in off the sea and many heading off west and inland, with 556 Oct 13th, 936 Oct 19th and 110 Oct 22nd. Inland sites in turn saw significant arrivals with several counts of more than 100, highest being 333 Normanby and 180 Alkborough Flats Oct 13th and 189 Stamford Oct 14th. Birds continued to redistribute inland during Nov-Dec with an impressive 600 Atkinson's Warren Nov 4th and 1000+ inland in the fens at Northgate, west of Pinchbeck Nov 6th. In December Trent Port 240 5th and 268 6th, Faldingworth 300 Dec 8th Frampton Marsh 400 11th, Horkstow 200 11th were the highest. There were no counts of more than 100 after Dec 12th.

### 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	9	8	7	18	8	4	2	2	5	51	53	25
Louth	8	5	5	8	3	4	3	4	1	2	3	10
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	2	3	2	3	2	2	1	-	7	17	7	9
Marton	4	3	5	6	6	3	3	2	1	2	3	8
Whisby NP	1	5	1	1	4	3	3	-	3	2	11	12
East Halton	19	2	1	3	2	1	1	-	3	1	4	2
Legbourne	5	17	5	1	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	1
Woodhall Spa	-	3	8	8	11	4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Scopwick	1	5	2	1	1	-	-	-	-	8	14	-
Spilsby	-	9	-	11	3	7	-	-	-	-	-	-

Records were received from around 300 sites with the highest count of 53 at Gibraltar Point on Nov 3rd well down on the 2020 peak of 521 there on Oct 3rd. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks in excess of 30 over the year. BBS reported the species from 58% of squares (2020, 43%) with an average of 2.6 birds per occupied one km square (2020, 2.24). Covid restrictions on early visits in 2020 impacted the recording of this

species when it was in its main song period, and these visits during that period in 2021 accounted for the increase in prevalence. Only six counts were received over 40 this year reflecting a poor autumn migration and these all came from Gibraltar Point between Oct 10th and Nov 4th, suggesting a later migration "peak" than 2020.



Song Thrush  
*Turdus philomelos*  
Louth February 1st 2021  
© JOHN CLARKSON





## Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus* ■

Common resident and partial migrant. Red List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Louth	8	6	3	5	2	2	-	21	3	9	-	3
Gibraltar Point	2	3	2	3	3	7	2	-	4	4	2	2
Pyewipe, Grimsby	-	4	-	2	2	2	-	9	9	-	-	-
Huttoft Bank	6	4	3	2	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
Middlemarsh Farm	9	2	2	2	2	1	2	-	-	-	1	1
Sutton Bridge	6	3	3	1	4	-	-	-	1	-	3	-
Great Limber	-	-	-	6	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
RAF Digby	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	11	-	2	-
Baston GP	3	2	3	2	4	1	-	-	-	-	1	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	4	2	2	2	2	-	-	-	1	2	-	-



Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus* Messingham SQ April 24th 2021 © SIMON SPAVIN

Records were received from 200 sites with the highest count of 21 at Louth on Aug 30th, well down on the 2020 high of 51 at Gibraltar Point on Mar 20th. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks in excess of 15 over the year. BBS reported the species from 27% of squares (2020, 22%) with an average of 1.6 birds per occupied one km square (2020, 1.2). The apparent jump in Mistle Thrush prevalence is explained by the dearth of early BBS visits in April 2020 because of Covid restrictions, the period when Mistle Thrush is more detectable as one of our earliest breeding resident passerines.

Erratum: the BBS figures reported for Mistle Thrush in LBR 2020 were erroneous and were in fact those for Blackbird.





### 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
Gibraltar Point	3	1	-	3	3
Normanby	1	2	2	-	2
Alkborough	5	-	-	1	-
Baston Fen	-	-	-	4	2
Laughton Forest	-	3	2	-	-
Dunston	-	-	-	4	-
Stapleford	-	-	-	4	-
Huttoft Bank	1	1	-	1	-
Woodhall Spa	3	-	-	-	-
Total birds	21	14	7	25	7
Total sites	12	10	5	13	3
Total records	26	14	8	19	10

The Spotted Flycatcher decline in Lincolnshire continues apace. Just 77 records were received from 30 sites down from 110 records from 51 sites in 2020 and 147 from 47 in 2019. The highest count of the year of five was from the escarpment woods above Alkborough Flats on May 30th. The table shows the top 10 sites with summed monthly peaks of more than 2, together with max total of birds across all sites, the number of sites from which reports came and the number of records by month. The first birds of the year reported were on May 9th, a "nocmig" recording of night flight calls over Scopwick and on the same day an actual bird photographed at Culverthorpe Lake. May and August were the best months, and these were undoubtedly primarily migrant birds. Spotted Flycatcher was last recorded in one Lincs BBS square in 2019. There were two confirmed breeding reports from Dunsby on Jun 26th, a nest with five chicks in a nest in garden trellis ready to fledge, and at Laughton Forest an adult feeding a juvenile on Jul 29th. Hopefully reports from a further 20 sites in Jun-Jul may relate to other breeding birds. The last report of the year was of one at Gibraltar Point on Sep 7th.

### European 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	41	43	52	44	22	25	24	25	117	183	109	43
Whisby NP	4	5	-	11	26	8	2	2	6	69	27	-
Long Bennington	26	10	10	4	4	4	3	12	21	17	18	17
Normanby by Spital	10	25	18	20	14	5	-	-	11	14	13	-
Legbourne	35	14	18	6	-	5	-	-	-	25	12	12
Uffington	12	11	13	10	13	12	4	-	13	-	6	12
Marton	7	8	12	10	8	3	2	5	12	12	11	14
Middlemarsh Farm	6	5	15	6	11	8	1	3	12	16	7	5
Louth	10	15	6	12	11	-	2	10	10	10	-	1
Hartsholme CP	1	22	16	6	1	1	1	2	10	10	6	8

The highest count of the year was an autumn arrival of 183 at Gibraltar Point on Oct 8th down on the 2020 peak of 291 there on Oct 16th. Records were received from over 400 sites. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks in excess of 85 over the year. BBS reported the species from 92% of squares (2020, 80%) with an average of 4.6 birds per occupied one km square (2020, 3.4). All 15 counts





over 80 came from Gibraltar Point involving arrivals from Sep 15th-Nov 15th. The highest September count was 117 on 28th and the highest November count 109 on 8th. Unusually there were no high counts from locations further up the coast. The highest count from any other site was 69 at Whisby NP on Oct 8th.

### Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* ■

**Very scarce and declining local summer visitor and very scarce passage migrant. Red List.**

During 2021 there were 2 singing Nightingales at Whisby Nature Park. The first (at Teal Lake) was present 24th April to 1st May but was in an area that is now closed off to the public, so was only recorded by LWT staff. The second (at Coot Lake) was present from 26th April and being in an area with public access was recorded daily until last heard singing on 13th June. Unfortunately, there was no evidence that either of these males found a mate. Elsewhere singing males were found in Bourne Woods May 1st, Robert's Field May 9th and 13th and Tallington Lakes May 9th and 23rd, Jun 2nd and Jul 17th.

### Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*

**Very scarce coastal passage migrant mainly Aug-Oct. Eastern Europe to the Urals. LBRC.**

A poor year with just two records, at Gibraltar Point Oct 7th-8th (J&M. Tester, KMW) and at Theddlethorpe Oct 13th (CMo).

### European Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* ■

**Scarce passage migrant, mainly coastal; very scarce in spring and scarce in autumn. Amber List.**

Site	Apr	May	Aug	Sep	Oct
Frampton Marsh	-	-	1	-	-
Freiston Shore	-	-	1	-	-
Gibraltar Point	-	1	8	19	1
Humberston Fitties	-	-	-	3	-
Huttoft Bank	1	-	1	1	-
Mablethorpe	-	-	-	1	-
Saltfleet Haven	-	-	1	-	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	-	-	1	4	-
Risby Top, Tealby	-	-	-	3	-
Tetney Haven	-	-	-	1	-

All sites recording Pied Flycatchers are tabulated. There were just 42 records from 12 sites in 2021, all of them coastal apart from one record in the Wolds at Risby. Typically, a rare bird in spring, there were just two records – Apr 28th at Huttoft Bank and a male in the West Dunes, Gibraltar Point May 5th. The first autumn bird was at Saltfleet Haven Aug 1st followed by singles at five other coastal sites. Eight at Gibraltar Point was the highest count of the month, birds were recorded every day Aug 27th-Sep 8th. There were significant numbers at Gibraltar Point Sep 1st (18), Sep 2nd (10), Sep 3rd (18), and Sep 4th (19), with small numbers elsewhere on the coast and three inland at Risby Top Sep 7th. Numbers rapidly decreased thereafter with singles at Gibraltar Point only from Sep 11th and the last of the year there at Shovelers Pool Oct 8th, briefly in the company of a Red-breasted Flycatcher.

### 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.**

The first of the year was an over-wintering bird photographed in a private garden in Bitchfield on Jan 8th. In the spring birds arrived from late March at Theddlethorpe (23rd), Gibraltar Point (25th), Deeping St James (26th), Huttoft Bank (28th), Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes and Far Ings NR (29th) and Whisby (31st). In early April birds were seen in Grimsby and Cleethorpes Apr 4th. There was an almost continual presence at Gibraltar Point throughout April with two on 3rd and an immature male in song there Apr





**Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochrurus* Gibraltar Point April 21st 2021 © JOHN CLARKSON

24th. Another bird was photographed in a private garden at Northorpe May 1st and the last of the spring was at Gibraltar Point May 11th.

Autumn birds were few and far between, with yet another noted in a private garden in Grimsby for at least 10 days up to Oct 31st. Singles in November were at Gibraltar Point 20th and RAF Digby 23rd and the last of the year was one at St. Wulfram's Church, Grantham Dec 16th.

### **Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* ■

Very scarce summer visitor and scarce passage migrant in spring, fairly common in autumn.

Last confirmed breeding 2013. Amber List.

Another poor year for this declining species with just eight sites recording Redstart in the spring. The first was at Trent Port Apr 4th followed by other singles at Gibraltar Point Apr 9th, and 15th-16th, Crowle Moors Apr 10th, Freiston Shore Apr 13th, Chapel Six Marshes Apr 23rd, Linwood Warren Apr 27th, Huttoft Bank Apr 30th and Thurlby Fen Slupe May 23rd.

The first autumn birds arrived in late August: Huttoft Pit 22nd, Gibraltar Point 24th, inland Tealby 27th with most (4) Gibraltar Point also 27th. Gibraltar Point held most in September with records from Sep 1st onwards with six Sep 2nd and nine Sep 3rd. A few other coastal records came from Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes Sep 4th (2) with singles Huttoft Pit 5th, Pyewipe Marsh 7th and Huttoft Bank 8th. Inland records came from Horkstow Wolds Sep 5th and Baston Fen Sep 6th. The last of the year were singles at Gibraltar Point Oct 6th and Oct 9th.





Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* Deeping High Bank  
Spalding May 6th 2021 © GERVASE ORTON

## Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* ■

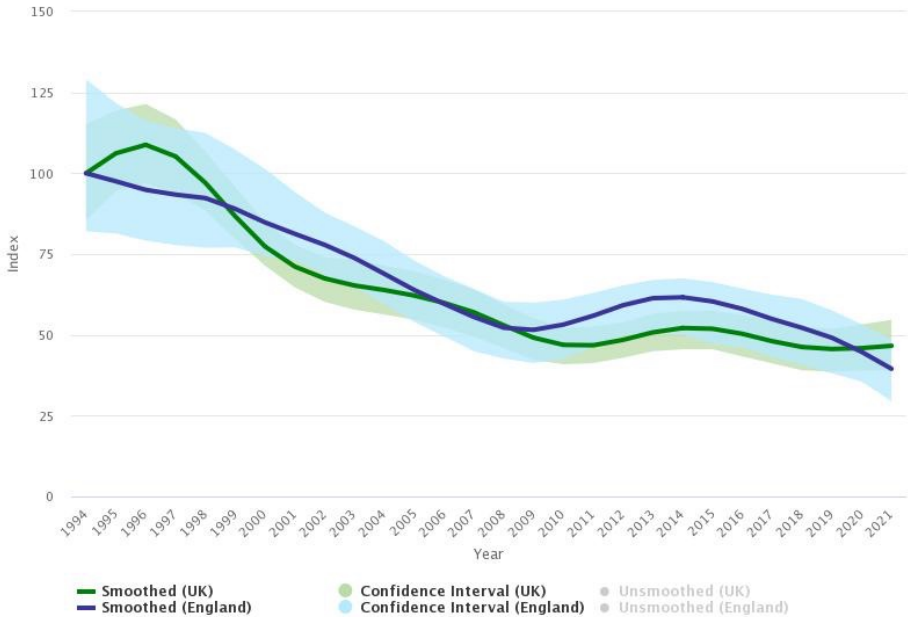
Scarce/fairly common passage migrant. Formerly a common breeder, last bred in the 1980s.  
Red List.

Site	Apr	May	Aug	Sep	Oct
Alkborough Flats	-	-	1	1	-
Anderby Marsh	-	1	-	-	-
Baston Fen	-	-	3	1	-
Cleethorpes	-	1	-	-	-
Covenham Reservoir	-	-	-	1	-
Croftmarsh LNR	-	-	-	2	-
Crowland Falls	-	-	1	-	-
Donna Nook	-	-	-	1	-
East Halton Skitter	-	-	3	2	-
Flixborough	-	-	-	1	-
Frampton Marsh	1	1	2	2	-
Garthorpe	-	-	2	-	-
Gibraltar Point	-	3	3	4	-
Huttoft Bank	-	2	-	2	-
Huttoft Pit LWT	-	-	-	1	1
Kirton in Lindsey	-	-	-	1	-
Kirton Marsh	-	-	3	-	-
Messingham SQ	-	1	-	-	-
Middlemarsh Farm (Skegness)	-	-	1	2	-
RAF Digby	-	1	-	-	-
Saltfleet	-	1	-	-	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	-	2	4	2	-
Sandilands Golf Course	-	-	-	-	1
Seacroft	-	1	-	-	-
Tetney Marsh	-	-	-	1	-
Thurlby Fen	-	-	-	1	-
Welland Farm	-	-	1	-	-





### BBS index for UK and England 1994-2021 – Whinchat



The UK outlook for this species remains dismal and because of the continuing decline of county records all sites reporting them are tabulated. Less than 90 records were received from 27 sites/subsites, the first on Apr 30th at Frampton Marsh and the last October 4th, 5th, 9th and 10th at Huttoft-Sandilands. Otherwise, the table speaks for itself.

The BTO BBS chart for England and the UK is shown here as we have no breeders in the county which emphasises the sad decline in this species (thanks to BTO for permission to reproduce this image).

### European 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	9	6	5	2	-	-	-	4	5	8	11	7
Alkborough Flats	6	4	2	-	-	-	-	-	3	9	6	3
Garthorpe	8	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	1	-
Barton-upon-Humber	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pyewipe Saltmarsh	2	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Boultham Mere	2	6	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	5	5	-
East Halton Skitter	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	5	2
Frampton Marsh	5	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	5	4
Huttoft Bank	4	5	2	-	1	-	1	-	-	5	2	3
Middlemarsh Farm (Skegness)	5	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	5	2	4	1	-	1	-	-	-	5	3	-





**European Stonechat** *Saxicola rubicola* Frampton Marsh  
January 2nd 2021 © NEIL SMITH

More than 600 records were received from around 105 sites/subsites in every month of the year, with most being logged during the winter period Jan-Feb and Oct-Dec mainly in coastal areas, but also in a wide variety of habitats near freshwater bodies, in the fens and areas of scrub and rough grassland. Peak counts were at Gibraltar Point and Alkborough Flats in the first and last quarters of the year, fewest during May-Jul.

Breeding pairs were noted at Holbeach Marsh, a pair with 1+ fledged young Jun 27th and at Crowle Moor, male with two fledged juveniles Jul 2nd.

### Northern 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	Oct
Gibraltar Point	3	4	41	-	1	2	6	1
Cleethorpes	5	-	30	-	-	-	1	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	1	4	26	2	-	-	1	-
Tetney Lock	-	1	24	-	-	-	-	-
Fosdyke Wash	-	-	13	-	-	-	-	-
Cress Marsh	10	1	3	-	-	-	-	1
North Hykeham	-	2	9	-	-	-	-	-
Northgate, W. Pinchbeck	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	-
Middlemarsh Farm (Skegness)	-	2	7	-	-	-	1	-
Sutton Bridge	1	5	7	-	-	-	-	-

Around 380 records were received from more than 70 sites across the county. The first bird of the spring was seen at Moulton Seas End Mar 5th and by the end of the month another 17 sites had recorded 1-6 birds with 10 at Cress Marsh Mar 30th. Small numbers, 1-5, continued to trickle in across the county in April but the big arrivals didn't occur until the second week of May. Gibraltar Point recorded 41 May 9th, Cleethorpes 30, and Tetney Lock 24. There was a further influx two days later when there were 26 at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes and 25 at Gibraltar Point on May 11th. There were three records of birds thought to be the Greenland race *leucorhoa*, at Halton Marshes (two, Apr 24th), Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes (one, Apr 25th) and RAF Digby (two, May 10th).



**Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe* Alkborough Flats  
April 25th 2021 © SIMON SPAVIN



Thereafter and until the end of the month records dried to a trickle with just 1-3 birds at several mainly coastal sites. June saw just a single record when two birds were at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes on Jun 1st. No instances of attempted breeding were reported. The autumn can be summed up as disappointing with very low numbers recorded Jul-Sep mainly 1-3 birds with six Gibraltar Point Sep 11th and nine in the Fens at Northgate (West Pinchbeck) Sep 27th. Six records of 1-2 birds in October saw the last bird at Gibraltar Point Oct 15th.

### Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*

Vagrant. Britain (*C.c. gularis*) and Europe (nominate). **LBRC.**

One was found on Jan 8th on the R. Witham at Belton House (JWr). It was not seen with optical aids, but the observer's description left no doubt that it was *C. cinclus*. Insufficient details of the plumage were seen to confirm if it was one of the Black-bellied races (presumably *C.c. cinclus*).

### House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* ■

Abundant resident and partial migrant. **Red List.**

Records were received from around 300 sites and the highest count of the year was 150 at Huttoft Bank on Aug 19th. BBS reported the species from 67% of squares (2020, 68%) with an average of 21 birds per occupied one km square (2020, 27). While being the 22nd most widespread bird counted on Lincolnshire BBS, it was the third most abundant in terms of numbers of birds counted. This reflects its colonial breeding habit in built up areas of human habitation. Despite its red listing, BBS data shows the population has been reasonably stable over the last 25 years. Other large counts from other sites were 118 at Long Benington on Mar 4th and 90 at Louth on Jan 15th.



House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* Cleethorpes  
June 26th 2021 © IAN SHEPHARD

### Eurasian 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Withcall	-	76	-	2	8	5	20	2	-	-	127	-
Short Ferry	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	200	-
Garthorpe	50	20	35	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	25	30
South Ormsby	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	150
Gibraltar Point	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	6	67	43	20	-
Toft Newton Reservoir	6	10	4	4	4	6	4	6	20	25	10	2
Huttoft Bank	22	7	30	2	1	1	3	-	12	4	-	-
Wrangle Marsh	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	70	-	-	-
Freiston Shore	24	28	12	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Eastoft	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	60	-	-	-	-





The highest count of the year was a flock of 200 feeding on a conservation cover crop at Short Ferry pumping station on Nov 13th. Records were received from around 100 sites. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks over 60 across the year. BBS reported the species from 18% of squares (2020, 22%) with an average of 3.8 birds per occupied one km square (2020, 3.7). There was evidence of autumn passage this year, Gibraltar Point recorded a southward passage of 67 on Sep 12th with a further 43 moving south on Oct 10th. The largest three counts shown in the table were all from mixed species flocks feeding on conservation cover crops illustrating the importance of these for the winter survival of Tree Sparrow.

**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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	24	45	64	64	35	53	42	32	81	89	66	45
North Thoresby	6	24	15	8	10	4	8	-	-	1	-	10
Huttoft Bank	10	8	10	12	10	6	6	-	10	2	3	5
Long Bennington	10	8	15	9	6	6	3	3	2	2	3	8
Marton	5	5	9	9	3	3	3	3	6	4	6	8
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	4	4	5	12	4	8	-	17	14	13	5	-
Legbourne	8	8	20	5	1	6	2	-	-	5	3	2
Sturton by Stow	4	4	5	8	9	4	9	1	10	-	-	4
Louth	6	5	5	13	8	2	5	4	5	2	-	2
Normanby by Spital	7	10	8	9	5	3	-	-	-	6	4	-
Keelby	4	8	5	9	3	4	1	3	3		2	8



Dunnock *Prunella modularis* Cleethorpes April 2nd 2021 © IAN SHEPHARD





The highest count of the year was 89 at Gibraltar Point on Oct 10th similar to the 2020 peak at the same site of 96 on Oct 12th. Records were received from over 350 sites. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks in excess of 50 over the year. BBS reported the species from 83% of squares (2020, 92%) with an average of 2.4 birds per occupied one km square (2020, 3.3) and also showed Dunnock is our 11th most widespread bird. All 17 counts over 50 came from Gibraltar Point with spring highs of 64 on Mar 7th and Apr 24th and autumn highs from Sep 15th to Nov 14th. The highest count from another site of 33 came from Aubourn on Mar 3rd and the highest count elsewhere on the coast was 17 Anderby Creek on Apr 11th.

### Western 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.



Western Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava flavissima* Alkborough Flats April 27th 2021 © GRAHAM CATLEY

Site	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Gibraltar Point	-	34	90	2	12	66	58	6
Alkborough Flats	-	120	-	1	6	80	20	-
Toft Newton Reservoir	-	40	25	2	4	70	50	1
Covenham Reservoir	-	66	18	1	2	43	14	-
Frampton Marsh	-	40	14	3	13	8	50	5
Middlemarsh Farm	-	19	30	3	2	26	4	-
Cowbit Wash	-	75	-	6	-	-	-	-
Baston GP	1	14	3	1	1	50	9	-
Huttoft Bank	-	4	46	1	2	1	2	-
Cress Marsh	-	6	6	2	1	20	5	-

The highest count of the year was 120 at Alkborough Flats on Apr 24th, well down on the 2020 peak of 291 at Gibraltar Point on Aug 22nd. Records were received from around 180 sites and reports came from eight months of the year. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks in excess of 40





over the year. The first birds reported were singles at Baston GP on Mar 27th, Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes on Mar 31st and Garthorpe and Covenham Reservoir on Apr 1st. There were eight at Deeping Lakes on Apr 2nd and then birds became widespread within a couple of days as usual. The April peak was 120 at Alkborough on 24th and the May peak was 90 at Gibraltar Point on 9th. BBS reported Yellow Wagtail from 38% of squares (2020, 33%) with an average of 3.9 birds per occupied one km square (2020, 3.4). The autumn high count of 80 was at Alkborough Flats on Aug 16th with the second highest count, 70 at Toft Newton Reservoir on Aug 30th. The last birds were one at Toft Newton Reservoir on Oct 7th and two at Gibraltar Point on Oct 18th.

### **Blue-headed Wagtail** *M.f. flava* ■

**Very scarce passage migrant, mainly spring. Has bred sporadically. Amber List. LBRC, RBBP.**

A male was at Covenham Reservoir Apr 26th (GL) and another photographed at Frampton Marsh on Apr 29th (TC). Females were at Frampton Marsh Apr 14th and it or another Apr 24th (AJB). In the autumn there were females at Middlemarsh Farm Aug 19th (NAL) and photographed at Freiston Shore Aug 26th and again 28th (AJB)

There were several other claims, but inspection of photographs showed that they were most probably 'Channel' Wagtails (Yellow x Blue-headed Wagtail hybrids).

### **Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea* ■

**Scarce passage migrant (mainly coastal) and winter visitor (mostly inland). Scarce and local breeder increased in recent years. Amber List.**

Grey wagtails were seen in every month of the year with records from more than 125 sites across the county; confirmed breeding came from four sites, though it is very probably under-recorded as a breeding bird in Lincolnshire. Migrants were much in evidence on the coast, mainly Gibraltar Point with peaks of eight Sep 6th and 17th, and 13 south Sep 11th; counts of 1-6 were made until late Nov. Confirmed breeding records were as follows: Alkborough Flats, May 3rd and 5th, fledged young from first brood, male feeding young in a second nest; Baston GP, eggs laid Apr 9th, six well-grown chicks in nest, May 3rd, adults feeding 2+ fledged young May 10th; Louth, adult male with food for young, R. Lud, Jun 21st; Sleaford, pair feeding young, Cogglesford Mill, May 25th.

A male was singing and song-fighting Apr 10th Manby STW, but no further sign of breeding. BBS reported the species from 1.5% of squares (2020, 5%) with an average of 1 bird per occupied one km square (2020, 2.7)



**Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea* Alkborough Flats May 14th 2021 © GRAHAM CATLEY





Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba yarrellii* Grasby June 11th 2021 © ROY HARVEY

### Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba yarrellii* ■

Common resident and passage migrant. Green List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
RAF Digby	60	70	-	-	-	-	-	200	100	-	-	-
Toft Newton Reservoir	6	7	40	60	15	11	22	50	55	35	35	8
Gibraltar Point	2	3	11	14	6	4	24	50	30	64	12	5
Middlemarsh Farm	7	15	10	19	14	14	15	12	15	22	12	5
Covenham Reservoir	5	10	12	39	9	3	14	16	28	5	8	8
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	2	4	65	12	5	-	2	3	5	25	17	4
Marton	8	68	3	4	3	3	1	4	1	22	12	5
Kirkby GP	1	25	1	1	-	1	-	-	90	-	-	-
Alkborough Flats	-	-	-	28	-	-	-	30	60	-	-	-
Louth	40	2	3	5	1	2	10	25	2	4	3	2

The highest count of the year was 200 at RAF Digby on Aug 24th. Records were received from around 300 sites. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks in excess of 100 over the year. BBS reported the species from 49% of squares (2020, 31%) with an average of 2.1 birds per occupied one km square (2020, 1.6). The increase was probably a result of Covid restrictions hampering surveys in 2020. There were no big winter roost counts of over 100 reported this year. The largest count outside the table was 40 at Manby Wetland on Oct 7th.

### 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.

Nearly 100 records came from around 20 sites this year, the first being two at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes Feb 25th, four days later than in 2020. More arrived in early March with records from eight sites with four Huttoft Bank Mar 6th, 7th, and 27th and 1-3 at other sites. Further passage continued to be light with just 1-2 birds reported during May on the coast and a maximum of five at Manby Wetlands May 20th. As ever, definite sightings in the autumn were few and far between with one or two at coastal sites from late Aug, two Sep 18th at Gibraltar Point and the last birds there two Oct 6th.





### Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi*

Very scarce passage migrant, mainly Sep-Nov, rarely Dec-Jan and Apr-May. **LBRC**.

Three records in 2021, the first on Tennyson's Sands, Gibraltar Point Oct 10th (GPBO); a second came in-off the sea at Anderby Creek Oct 24th and disappeared inland (RDn); and lastly one was at Alkborough Flats Nov 9th (GPC).

### 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	60	53	121	84	85	76	95	46	3000	874	60	10
Huttoft Bank	16	68	45	6	2	2	2	-	445	6	10	3
Anderby Marsh	-	231	2	3	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
Anderby Creek	-	3	4	1	1	-	3	-	168	50	1	-
Frampton Marsh	5	3	27	31	21	15	12	7	150	14	23	13
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	-	3	12	8	2	2	1	2	150	40	25	-
Toft Newton Reservoir	9	30	70	150	2	2	4	1	50	35	40	5
Long Bennington	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	120	3	-
Wrangle Marsh	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	120	-	-	-
Woodhall Spa Airfield	3	-	10	2	1	1	-	-	100	3	-	-

Records were received from around 200 sites and the highest count of the year was 3000 at Gibraltar Point on Sep 11th, less than half of that of Sep 2020. The table lists the top 10 sites based on the monthly peak counts.

The dedicated migration watchers on the coast inevitably record the best numbers. There were 13 counts of more than 500 birds at Gibraltar Point from Sep 11th to Oct 4th, including the second highest of the year of 1292 on Sep 17th. In October the high count at Gibraltar Point of 874 was on Oct 4th. Elsewhere on the coast 445 were logged at Huttoft Bank Sep 17th and nine other sites recorded counts of 100 or more in at least one month.



Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis* Clixby Market Rasen March 17th 2021 © ROY HARVEY





### Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* ■

Scarce summer visitor and passage migrant.  
Breeds locally, mainly in the western half of the county. Red List.

Two birds on the coast at Theddlethorpe on Mar 30th were the first of the year followed by one in Laughton Forest on April 6th; a limited survey there located 11 territories in one part of the forest. Elsewhere the only breeding records submitted were one Crowle and a pair Greetwell, a very poor representation of the county status of this breeding species. Spring coastal passage produced singles Gibraltar Point Apr 27th, May 2nd, 3rd, 9th, 12th, 20th, 27th and Jun 8th with singles Huttoft Bank May 5th and 9th, Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes May 8th and 10th, Chapel Six Marshes May 2nd, 5th and 9th plus one Barton Pits May 9th then in autumn Baston Fen Aug 19th, Gibraltar Point Aug 11th–Sept 15th 21 birds on 12 dates with four Sep 12th, Skegness Sep 6th, Donna Nook Sep 22nd and the last Huttoft Bank Sep 24th. A lack of October records was unusual.



**Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*** Scotton Common NR  
April 23rd 2021 © SIMON SPAVIN

### 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	May	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	4	10	3	2	-	2	5	1
Alkborough Flats	6	5	1	-	-	2	7	8
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	-	-	7	2	-	-	-	-
Dawsmere Marsh	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Huttoft Bank	-	3	4	-	-	1	-	1
Saltfleet	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Seacroft Golf Course	3	4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Anderby Creek	-	3	2	-	-	1	-	-
Baston Fen	3	-	1	-	-	1	1	1
Croft Marsh LNR	1	3	1	1	-	-	-	-
East Halton	3	-	3	2	-	1	2	2
Goxhill Marsh	-	-	3	1	-	-	2	1

More than 225 records were received from 27 sites/subsites with birds present Jan-May and Oct-Dec. Plenty were present at coastal sites Jan-Feb with 5-6 Alkborough Flats and 10 Gibraltar Point Feb 2nd. Baston Fen held 1-3 birds Jan-Mar, the last record of the first quarter a single Mar 29th. Elsewhere, most birds continued to be found on the coast in Mar, seven at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes Mar 15th, and 1-3 birds at 13 other sites. Numbers thinned out Apr-May as birds departed and one at Covenham Reservoir Apr 1st was a notable inland record. A few hung on until late April with singles at three sites 11th, Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes and Covenham Reservoir 15th and the last two records at Frampton Marsh Apr 23rd and May 8th. The first of the autumn was at Anderby Creek Oct 11th with singles at eight other sites through the month and two at Alkborough Flats Oct 30th and Gibraltar Point Oct 31st. More arrived during Nov, seven Alkborough Flats Nov 2nd and five Gibraltar Point Nov 14th. December counts were around average with eight Alkborough Flats Dec 4th, four Saltfleet Dec 12th Dawsmere Dec 18th and a single Baston GP to the end of the month. Clearly these secretive Pipits maintain a presence throughout the winter months and gaps in the table more likely reflect an absence of observers in those months rather than an absence of the birds.





### European 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	83	56	33	2	18	174	91	44
Freiston Shore	8	3	2	-	-	15	37	-
Saltfleet	-	8	7	-	-	35	35	8
Frampton Marsh	28	2	2	-	-	8	14	-
Cleethorpes	4	-	-	-	1	10	14	25
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	20	15	5	-	-	15	10	-
Theddlethorpe-Saltfleetby coast	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	16
Donna Nook	-	-	1	-	-	-	15	2
East Halton Brick Pits	3	-	-	-	-	5	10	1

More than 375 records were received from around 40 sites/sub-sites, Jan-Apr and Sep-Dec, with the exception of a single record Aug 30th at Huttoft which was the first of the autumn. The vast majority came from the saltmarshes of The Wash and the N/NE coastline, the highest totals coming from Gibraltar Point. Most had left the county by late March with just two at Gibraltar Point Apr 4th and one Pyewipe saltmarsh Apr 10th. In the autumn a trickle of birds arrived during Sep, peak of 18 at Gibraltar Point Sep 28th, but the big numbers arrived in October with many double figure counts at Gibraltar Point as well as a peak of 174 Oct 25th and counts on four other dates in the month of 101, 134, 164 and 173. November counts were lower in number but more widespread with seven other coastal sites recording 10-37 birds and a similar picture in Dec. Small numbers, 1-4, were recorded inland at Covenham and Toft Newton Reservoirs in March and Sep-Dec, and also at Baston GP with 1-2 in Oct.

European Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus* Goxhill Haven December 17th 2021 © GRAHAM CATLEY





### Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* ■ (gengleri) ■ (nominate)

British subspecies *gengleri* an abundant resident. Nominate continental subspecies a passage migrant and winter visitor. Green List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	146	60	215	95	33	35	20	15	70	395	318	37
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	30	20	40	19	12	16	-	5	30	150	40	12
Sturton by Stow	90	38	39	27	33	14	12	8	18	-	-	26
Louth	90	40	40	20	22	4	2	10	10	5	15	10
Legbourne	46	20	36	15	8	46	-	-	-	50	6	8
Huttoft Bank	12	10	120	10	10	5	8	1	22	2	4	6
Burgh le Marsh	-	72	-	79	30	23	-	-	-	-	-	-
Anderby Creek	-	-	95	-	5	-	-	-	2	72	18	-
Middlemarsh Farm	13	5	16	19	26	17	4	2	3	21	16	30
Normanby by Spital	21	35	24	21	25	10	-	-	12	16	3	-
Withcall		18	3	12	24	10	9	2	-	12	64	-

Recorded in all months of the year with records reported from over 400 sites Chaffinch remains our commonest finch despite increasing fears over the impact on the population of Trichomonosis passed on at bird feeders which has badly hit Greenfinches in England over the last 20 years. It has to be said the Lincolnshire breeding population appears to have held up better than the wider East Midlands and English population based on BBS data. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks of 160 or more over the year. BBS reports came from 97% of squares surveyed (2020, 94%) with an average of nine birds per occupied square (2020, 8). BBS showed it was the third most widespread breeding bird in the county in 2021. Very large inland winter flocks over 500 seem to be a thing of the past these days and the largest reported were of 90 at both Sturton by Stow on Jan 22nd and Louth on Jan 24th. There were no large counts not reported in the table, the largest reflecting spring passage and autumn passage principally at Gibraltar Point which was well down compared to 2020 in both seasons.

### Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* ■

Winter visitor and passage migrant.  
Exceptional in summer. Numbers  
fluctuate considerably between winters.  
Green List. **RBBP**.

Small numbers were recorded in the first half of the year from around 37 sites, mainly 1-7 birds but up to 12 were seen around Tathwell Mar 12th-14th. One or two birds lingered through Apr-May and the last was at Gibraltar Point May 18th.

More were seen on the coast in the autumn with significant influxes at Gibraltar Point Oct 6th, Oct 26th and Nov 2nd-3rd (chart). The Birklands Ringing Group were active at Crook Bank, Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes in October and saw peaks of 23 south on 11th, 50 south on 12th and 40 south on 13th; 16 birds were trapped and ringed. Significant flocks were also recorded inland at Normanby 132 Oct 12th and Withcall 100 Nov 30th. Counts at Gibraltar Point in November were more than 20 on seven dates peaking at 62 on 3rd. By December most had passed through the county or dispersed with 10 seen at South Ormsby and 25 Horkstow Bridge, both Dec 11th.

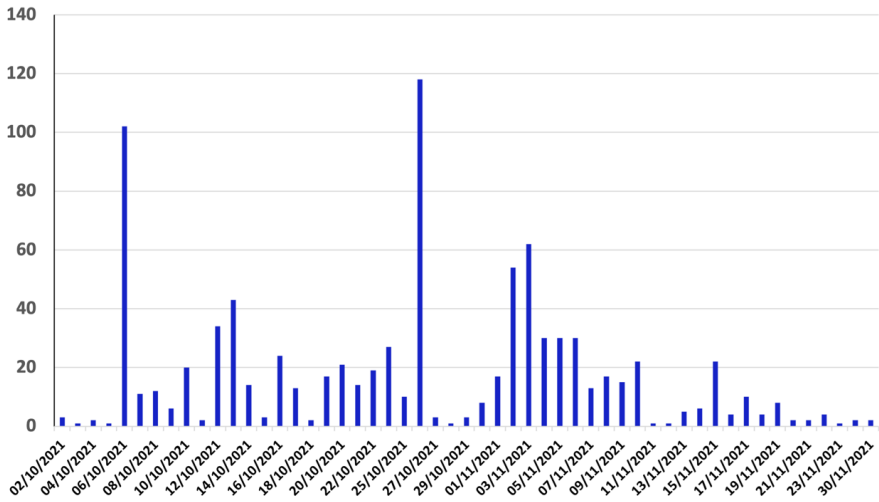


**Brambling** *Fringilla montifringilla* Grantham October 30th 2021  
© STEVE NESBITT





Brambling passage through Gibraltar Point, October-November 2021



**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.**

One flew along the coast at Huttoft May 9th. In the autumn at Gibraltar Point, one flew in high from the north and dropped into the plantation Oct 16th, it or another to the south Oct 23rd, and a third Nov 2nd. The last of the year flew over a Normanby garden on Nov 14th before landing in top of birches in the village for 2 mins and then flying off NW. Elusive as ever.

**Eurasian 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Whisby NP	6	8	4	4	4	2	2	2	3	15	14	17
Marton	3	6	5	4	4	3	2	2	3	3	8	5
Legbourne	8	8	10	-	-	3	-	-	-	3	3	1
Snipe Dales	6	-	-	26	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Gibraltar Point	3	1	2	1	2	2	2	3	1	5	8	2
Louth	4	2	2	2	-	2	-	3	4	5	4	3
Rigsby Wood	10	2	6	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	4
Messingham SQ	6	4	-	4	2	1	-	1	-	-	5	5
Uffington	2	2	1	3	2	1	3	-	4	2	2	2
Kirkby GPs	4	6	-	3	1	3	2	-	1	-	1	1

Recorded in all months of the year with records from around 180 sites. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks of more than 20. As in 2020 the highest count of 26 came from Snipe Dales





in April (24 in Feb 2020). One of our best and most under reported woodland sites, Snipe Dales would undoubtedly top the table if someone were to watch and count it more regularly. BBS reports came from 14% of squares surveyed (2020, 8%) with an average of 1.6 birds per occupied square (2020 1.8). The only sites reporting counts of over 10 not in the table were Spilsby with 15 on Feb 5th and Barton Pits 14 Feb 25th.

### Common Rosefinch

#### *Carpodacus erythrinus*

Rare. North-eastern Europe. **LBRC, RBBP.**

One was ringed at Gibraltar Point on Aug 31st and re-trapped there on Sep 3rd. A second bird was also trapped and ringed on Sep 3rd (GGr) and then re-trapped on 11th when it had increased in weight from 21.1 to 25.6g (GGr). This is an average showing for a species which occurs most frequently at this site.

Observers are reminded that this is an LBRC submission species.

### European 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.



**Eurasian Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* Ashby Vile NR Scunthorpe  
February 2nd 2021 © SIMON SPAVIN

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	21	9	7	4	5	3	5	2	11	88	28	16
Whisby NP	106	-	-	3	3	1	1	1	2	-	-	20
Louth	30	7	8	9	7	2	10	6	5	5	15	5
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	6	2	2	2	6	1	2	2	14	50	7	-
Alkborough Flats	40	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	26	-
Morton	8	21	10	3	5	4	3	1	2	2	2	11
Goxhill Haven	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	45	-	16
Dunston	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	3	50
Baston GP	10	3	10	3	6	8	-	3	-	5	1	9
Legbourne	14	15	11	-	1	-	-	-	-	3	-	14



**European Greenfinch** *Chloris chloris* Grantham January 3rd 2021

© STEVE NESBITT

Recorded in all months of the year with records reported from around 250 sites Greenfinch continues to suffer from the impact of Trichomonosis passed on at bird feeders which has badly hit Greenfinches in England since 2005. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks of 58 or more over the year. BBS reports came from 52% of squares surveyed (2020, 29%) with an average of 2.6 birds per





occupied square (2020, 3.2). BBS showed it was the 28th most widespread breeding bird in the county in 2021 and our fourth commonest breeding finch. The largest winter flock reported was 106 at Whisby NP Jan 19th. The only count over 50 not reported in the table was at Epworth Jan 6th. Autumn passage principally at Gibraltar Point was again muted with a max day count of 88 at Gibraltar Point Oct 6th, well down on 438 in October 2019, but slightly better than 64 in 2020.

### 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Donna Nook	-	60	-	-	-	60	70
Wainfleet All Saints	61	-	-	-	-	-	-
Frampton Marsh	-	-	-	29	4	-	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	-	-	-	-	-	25	-
Tetney Marshes	-	-	-	-	-	23	-
Cleethorpes	-	20	-	-	-	-	-
Granthorpe	-	5	-	-	-	12	-
Killingholme Marshes	-	-	-	-	14	-	-
Saltfleet Haven	-	-	10	-	-	-	-
East Halton	-	-	-	-	2	6	-
Gibraltar Point	-	-	-	-	1	2	-
Kirton Marsh	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Moggs Eye	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
Toft Newton Reservoir	-	-	-	-	2	-	-

Twite continues in the doldrums with just 46 records this year (2020 73) received from 14 sites. The table lists all sites reporting records. The early winter period saw a flock at Donna Nook of 60 birds present the previous December. Another flock of similar size, 61 on The Wash at Wainfleet was reported just once and was the largest count of the first half of the year. The only birds in March were at Saltfleet Haven on Mar 8th and a passage flock at Frampton Marsh was reported Apr 10th-12th. In the autumn the first birds were singles at Frampton Marsh on Oct 12th and Gibraltar Point on Oct 15th. There were two inland at Toft Newton reservoir on Oct 29th. The flock at Donna Nook built from three on Nov 11th to 60 on Nov 13th and was 70 strong on Dec 28th, the largest count of the year. A number of colour ringing projects to track the movements of individual birds are being undertaken and birders are asked to note and report any ringed birds they see.

### Common Linnet *Linaria cannabina* ■ (nominate)

Very common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. Red List.

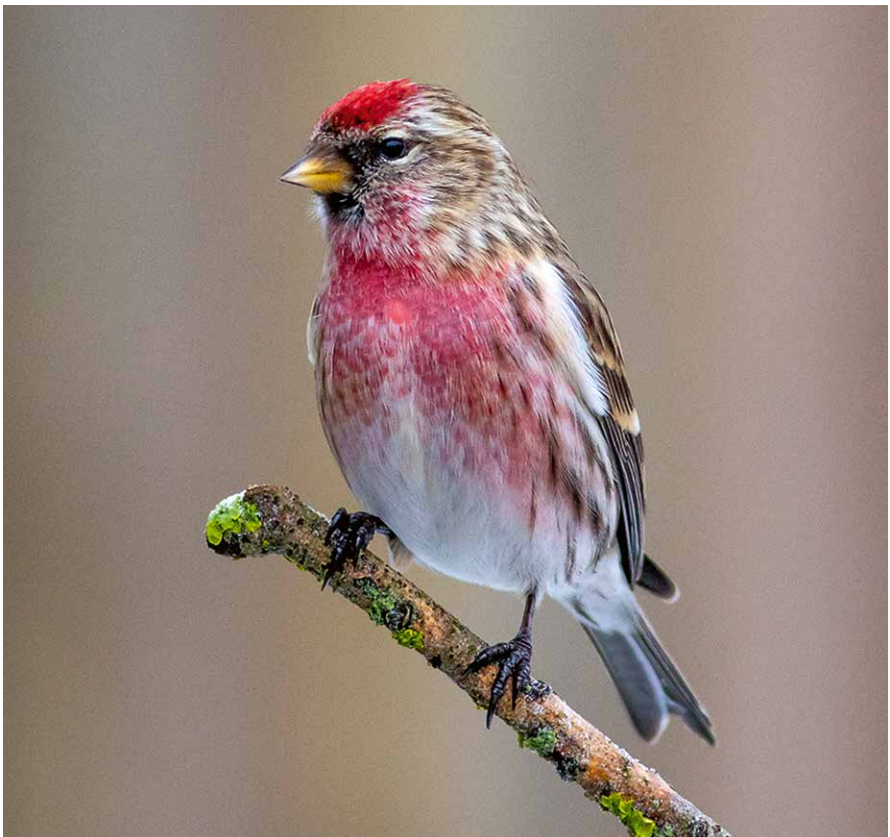
Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	120	37	185	173	138	90	102	134	1707	3112	260	187
Folkingham Airfield	1700	375	245	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Eastoft	1250	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	-	-	-	-
South Ormsby	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	1200
Freiston Shore	1050	170	610	10	24	-	19	2	1	39	46	-
Cleethorpes	1000	-	1	2	2	4	26	45	12	35	38	40
Crowle Moors	900	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Timberland Fen	500	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Garthorpe	105	150	80	-	-	-	-	-	-	350	250	400
Huttoft Bank	98	60	320	50	40	25	40	40	206	175	42	4



More than 2500 records were received from more than 300 sites/sub-sites. The top 10 sites are tabulated according to summed monthly peaks. The highest count of the year was 3112 (1265 in 2020) at Gibraltar Point Oct 4th (one day earlier than 2020). Early in the year up to 1700 were feeding in a cover crop at Folkingham airfield and another large flock was recorded further north at Eastoft. Other notable flocks in January were at Cleethorpes, Crowle Moors, Freiston Shore and Timberland Fen. Spring passage was noted beginning in March with 140 south at Huttoft Bank 2nd, another 320 south there 3rd and 610 at Freiston Shore Mar 14th. In the autumn higher totals were seen on the coast with peaks in Sep-Oct of 1707 at Gibraltar Point Sep 28th, 1188 Sep 30th, and 3112 Oct 4th; there were also three other counts there of more than 1000. Inland a notable flock of 1200 was found at South Ormsby Dec 11th. BBS reported the species from 77% of squares (2020, 69%) with an average of 5.6 birds per occupied one km square (2020, 5.7).

### 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.



Lesser Redpoll *Acanthis cabaret* Grantham January 24th 2021 © STEVE NESBITT





### 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.**

An exceptionally poor showing this year, with two Loughton Forest wet heath Jan 22nd and another two at Stubton Feb 20th. One was present with Lesser Redpolls at Doddington Feb 22nd-Mar 21st and another at Baston GP Mar 21st. The sole autumn record was of one in the Plantation, Gibraltar Point Nov 14th.

### Lesser Redpoll *Acanthis cabaret* ■

Fairly common but declining passage migrant and winter visitor. Very scarce breeder. Red List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Oct	Nov	Dec
Doddington Pk, Lincoln	3	200	160	39	3	-	-	-
Whisby Nature Park	150	100	16	-	-	3	34	120
Manton Warren	-	-	-	100	-	-	-	-
Epworth Turbary	80	15	15	-	-	-	-	-
Scotton Common	-	-	80	-	-	-	-	-
Boultham Mere	80	60	30	10	-	-	40	45
Messingham SQ	70	30	10	1	-	-	-	5
Loughton Forest	50	60	-	-	1	-	1	-
Baston GP	12	-	50	12	1	1	20	25

Autumn of 2020 was a very good one for this species (LBR 2020) and this is reflected on the high counts in (mainly) the north of the county as tabulated above. To what extent the peak counts at the various sites in and around Lincoln reflect different flocks, or one fairly mobile population is unknown although there were no dates when more than one large flock was seen at more than one site suggesting the latter is more likely.



Lesser Redpoll *Acanthis cabaret* Doddington Park Mark 10th 2021 © CHRIS GRIMSHAW





### 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	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Laughton Forest	24	23	53	22	5	-	-	-	-	-
Linwood Warren	-	7	21	2	6	-	-	-	-	-
Market Rasen & District GC	-	-	10	21	14	-	-	-	-	-
Willingham Forest	-	-	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Callan's Lane Wood	4	12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Scotton Common	-	-	-	8	-	-	-	-	-	-
Coleby	6	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Messingham SQ	6	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Normanby Hall Country Park	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Normanby (Old Estate Yd)	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Brumby Common	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Scunthorpe	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wolla Bank	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Gibraltar Point	-	1	2	1	2	1	1	-	-	1
Alkborough Flats	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Anderby Creek	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Woodhall Spa GC	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

The table lists all sites recording Red Crossbills. Birds were noted from Jan 5th, maximum of 24 on the wet heath in Laughton Forest Jan 7th. This site consistently held the most birds with 3+ nests seen on Mar 9th when several males were also in song. Breeding activity continued and many males were in song Mar 22nd in a flock of 43; at least one male in song until May 18th. Despite the species being recorded in other inland areas of the county with suitable habitat where breeding might have occurred, none was reported. Very small numbers of coastal migrants (1-3) were recorded on the coast at Gibraltar Point and Anderby Creek, and at Alkborough Flats, Feb-Jun and Jul-Oct, the last bird at Gibraltar Point Oct 6th. The blanks in the table Jun-Oct emphasise the rarity of the species in summer to autumn. Note that there were no records Nov-Dec.



Red Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra* Linwood Warren February 26th 2021  
© RUSSEL HAYES



European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*  
Horkstow Carrs December 22nd 2021  
© GRAHAM CATLEY







### European 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	60	36	82	153	100	56	83	141	680	4473	351	43
Lincoln	83	120	18	23	18	20	20	18	41	50	2	73
East Halton	30	-	33	2	4	4	30	70	65	87	100	46
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe	4	25	12	30	14	4	8	110	90	120	30	15
Middlemarsh Farm	20	21	21	11	12	14	13	150	80	70	20	16
Toft Newton Reservoir	3	2	8	5	4	4	2	40	300	50	15	2
Marton	40	40	16	35	7	6	12	42	29	67	49	52
Alkborough Flats	5	10	-	-	-	-	-	80	-	200	40	50
Withern	6	8	-	-	1	-	3	59	32	181	21	10
Long Bennington	23	9	19	16	13	17	15	17	45	37	55	45

Records were received from around 380 sites. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks in excess of 310 over the year. The highest count of the year came during autumn passage at Gibraltar Point on Oct 7th when 4,473 were counted and the highest count not tabulated was of 130 at Pyewipe Marsh, Grimsby on Aug 24th. BBS reported the species from 82% of squares (2020, 70%) with an average of six birds per occupied one km square (2020, 6.2). Of 11 counts over 500, 10 came from Gibraltar Point between Sep 28th-Oct 20th which was the peak autumn passage period. This included a count of 1,290 on Oct 9th. The other large count was of 555 moving south at Wolla Bank on Oct 4th.

### European Serin *Serinus serinus*

Very scarce migrant, mainly Apr-Jun and Oct-Nov. Continental Europe. **LBRC**.

No records of Serin were received in 2021, only the 4th year since 2011 in which they have not been recorded.

### Eurasian Siskin *Spinus spinus* ■

Common passage migrant and winter visitor. Scarce in summer but may breed in some years. Green List.



Eurasian Siskin *Spinus spinus* Waters' Edge Barton November 7th 2021 © GRAHAM CATLEY





Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	5	15	29	21	4	2	1	-	54	447	760	66
Anderby-Chapel Six Marshes	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	12	127	330	28
Whisby NP	10	20	40	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	120	42
North Hykeham Pits	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Messingham SQ	80	35	4	5	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	30
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	11	60	80	-
Baston GP	65	12	50	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	15	40
Alkborough Flats	1	-	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	62	22	-
Louth	60	10	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	20
Hartsholme Country Park	-	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50

Records were received from more than 100 sites, a substantial increase on 2020. The table lists the top 10 sites based on monthly peak counts. In Jan-Mar there were flocks of 30 or more at 12 sites with 60 Louth Jan 1st, 65 Baston GP Jan 16th, 80 Messingham SQ Jan 18th and 100 North Hykeham Pits Jan 24th the highest. Flock counts decreased Feb-Mar as birds moved out and Gibraltar Point logged small southward movements almost daily in March with 20+ on several dates. Fifty remained at Baston GP Mar 1st with 20 still there Mar 25th, and 40 were at Whisby NP Mar 17th. The last sizeable flock at Gibraltar Point was of 21 (16 south) Apr 4th and after mid-month just 1-5 birds were noted at several sites both coastal and inland. Small numbers remained May-Jun but there were no reports of breeding activity.

There were two reports of singles in August (not tabulated) at Normanby Aug 2nd and Trent Port Aug 22nd before birds began trickling through in September: 18 Gibraltar Point Sep 17th, peaking at 54 Sep 28th, all south. More substantial coastal movements were logged in October with 447 south at Gibraltar Point Oct 26th, when 127 were counted over Huttoft-Anderby. Gibraltar Point logged a total of 3,047 birds south during the month, eclipsed by a further 4,650 south there in Nov. Elsewhere flocks of 20-45 were reported across the county at inland sites

with 62 Alkborough Flats Oct 27th, 30 Candlesby Nov 5th, 120 Whisby NP Nov 11th and 45 Normanby Nov 14th. December was a quieter month altogether although small numbers were logged moving south at Gibraltar Point on 15 dates to Dec 24th, with 47 on Dec 4th the most, and 30-50 at several inland sites.

### 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	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Anderby Creek	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
Cleethorpes	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Donna Nook	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Frampton Marsh	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Gibraltar Point	-	2	1	1	2	3	1
Holbeach Marsh	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Moggs Eye	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	1	-	1	-	1	3	-
Tetney Marshes	6	-	-	-	-	1	-

Nine sites reported Lapland Buntings this year, one down from 2020. The table lists all nine sites. Reports from most of the sites were sporadic at best, with the exceptions of Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes and Gibraltar Point providing records in four and six months respectively. Birds were reported Jan-Mar and Sep-Dec.





There were just three records in January, the first Jan 18th at Cleethorpes, and with six at Tetney Marshes Jan 30th the best, and indeed the highest of the year. The last of the first quarter was one at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes Mar 29th. In the autumn the first was one at Gibraltar Point Sep 15th, the only one of the month. Very small numbers were reported Oct-Dec, per the table, with the last Dec 13th at Gibraltar Point.

### 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	Oct	Nov	Dec
Saltfleet-Mablethorpe	80	223	4	-	-	52	41
Cleethorpes	80	10	3	-	1	24	32
Gibraltar Point	2	1	16	1	3	30	32
Sutton-Ingoldmells	-	-	-	-	3	30	12
Winthorpe	-	-	-	-	-	-	12
Donna Nook	-	-	-	-	1	4	-
Alkborough Flats	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Covenham Reservoir	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Pyewipe Saltmarsh	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Toft Newton Reservoir	-	-	-	-	-	1	-







The table summarises records both by individual site and by coastline given the mobility of flocks. It is possible that the counts tabulated may have underestimated the totals along the Saltfleet-Mablethorpe and Sutton-Ingoldmells coastal sections as only the peak counts in each month have been taken for sites within these stretches.

Birds were present Jan-Mar with 80 along the Saltfleet-Mablethorpe coastline Jan 7th when there were also 80 at Cleethorpes. The highest count of the year was a huge flock of 223 at Crook Bank Feb 11th. As usual, most had departed by mid-March and 16 at Gibraltar Point Mar 21st was the last substantial flock of the early spring. Singles lingered into April with one at Wolla Bank Apr 7th and at Gibraltar Point Apr 12th.

Far fewer returned in the autumn, the first being three at Chapel Point Oct 6th and 1-3 birds elsewhere along the coast and the Humber. The main arrival occurred during November from 4th onwards with most at four coastal locations (table) and these stayed on into December until the years end. Inland records of single birds came from Toft Newton Reservoir Nov 9th and 11th, and Covenham Reservoir Dec 5th-14th.

### Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra* ■

Fairly common but somewhat localised and declining resident. Red List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Stowgate	162	6	4	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Withcall	-	17	1	2	30	10	20	-	-	-	83	-
Bonby Carrs	-	-	-	36	70	-	-	-	-	-	-	22
Baston Fen	11	12	4	16	2	1	-	-	-	-	1	19
Wroot	-	20	42	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tathwell	-	-	-	7	27	-	20	-	-	-	-	-
Deeping Common	50	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Deeping Fen	50	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sutton Bridge	4	12	6	6	5	-	-	-	2	-	10	5
Gibraltar Point	12	8	15	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	7
Total across all sites	414	103	82	115	195	60	66	25	24	6	115	59
Total sites	17	11	11	21	36	23	16	5	5	4	11	8



Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra* North Somercotes May 7th 2021 © MARK JOHNSON





The highest count of the year was a winter flock of 160 at Stowgate to the east of Deeping St James on Jan 10th, there having been 120 there three days earlier. The birds were perched up in trees and wires making them easy to count. Records were received from around 90 sites, up from 75 in 2020. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks in excess of 40 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 declined once more to a peak of 15 in March having held 82 birds in January 2019 and 38 in March 2020. Larger counts over 20 outside the table were 40 at Bigby Top on Jan 24th and 20 at both Frickley Farm and Marston on Jan 17th and 23rd. BBS reported the species from 17% of squares (2020, 16%) with an average of 3.1 birds per occupied one km square (2020, 4.5). The earliest singing males were reported from Kirton Meeres on Feb 21st and Baston Fen on Feb 25th, though experience shows a small number of Corn Bunting males can be found singing throughout the winter months. The dearth of reports Aug-Oct is interesting. What is causing it, moult, flocking up? More work needs to be done!

### Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* ■

Very common resident. Red List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Withcall	-	41	3	8	32	15	24	5	-	26	88	-
Sturton by Stow	28	30	33	53	33	3	34	-	7	-	-	7
Toft Newton Reservoir	8	3	5	5	5	3	6	4	4	5	50	60
Burgh le Marsh	-	48	-	44	38	19	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fenton	100	35	6	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Louth	33	10	12	15	4	10	7	7	7	6	20	5
Covenham Reservoir	11	11	2	2	3	2	3	3	1	20	2	70
Southrey	-	100	-	-	20	2	-	3	-	-	-	-
Welsdale Bottom	-	120	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Stowgate	100	4	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

The highest count of the year was a winter flock of 120 at Welsdale between Donington on Bain and Louth on Feb 16th. Records were received from 280 sites. The table lists the top 10 sites based on summed monthly peaks in excess of 120 over the year. Larger counts over 70 outside the table were 91 at Anderby Aug 19th, 80 at South Ormsby, Dec 11th and 77 at Bigby Top, Jan 24th. Large winter flocks of over 250 may 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 77% of squares (2020, 71%) with an average of 5.4 birds per occupied one km square (2020, 4.9).

### Common Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* ■

Very common resident and passage migrant. Amber List.

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gibraltar Point	42	20	22	19	19	17	14	7	89	659	99	54
Freiston Shore	54	93	27	2	28	-	6	-	-	18	7	-
Middlemarsh Farm (Skegness)	11	9	11	12	13	13	7	3	6	60	70	70
Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes	3	1	10	6	8	8	-	-	60	20	16	-
Sturton by Stow	28	48	52	42	31	17	30	-	9	-	-	23
Black Bank	-	2	2	1	-	-	1	-	43	-	-	-
Burgh le Marsh	-	40	-	21	4	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Huttoft Bank	40	20	35	10	12	14	8	2	10	5	2	3
Frampton Marsh	7	6	18	14	18	4	4	2	4	1	23	38
Baston GP	35	3	10	6	4	4	2	3	-	2	7	10





The highest count of the year was 659 at Gibraltar Point on Oct 7th of which 629 were moving south, very close to last year's peak of 515 on Oct 5th. Records were received from around 270 sites. The largest counts outside of the table were 50 at Barton upon Humber Jan 1st, in a stubble field, and 50 at Epworth Turbary Feb 10th. The largest inland count was 52 at Sturton by Stow Mar 22nd. BBS reported the species from 65% of squares (2020, 67%) with an average of 3.3 birds per occupied one km square (2020, 3.3). Coastal autumn passage was again most obvious at Gibraltar Point where eight counts over 100 were recorded Oct 3rd-23rd. The September high count was 89 on the 24th of which 77 were moving south. Elsewhere on the coast the high count was 60 Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes Sep 29th and 43 Black Bank Sep 18th. The November peak was 99 at Gibraltar Point Nov 2nd with 89 there Nov 3rd, and 70 Middlesmarsh Farm Nov 23rd and 70 Dec 11th. Most of these remained into December with 60 still present Dec 22nd. Fifty-four were seen at Gibraltar Point Dec 14th and up to 20 were logged at a number of other sites.



**Common Reed Bunting** *Emberiza schoeniclus* nest in winter wheat, Nocton Fen June 16th 2021 © ANDREW CHICK





## Appendix 1: Records considered not proven

These submissions were considered not proven based on the details received by the Lincolnshire Bird Club Records Committee:

**Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis*: Woodhall Spa Airfield, Feb 1st.

**Hoopoe** *Upupa epops*: Lincoln, Mar 30th.

**Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus*: Willow Tree Fen LWT Reserve, Aug 23rd.

**Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina*: Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes Jun 27th.

**Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla*: Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes, Oct 20th.

**Rough-legged Buzzard** *Buteo lagopus*: Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes Nov 2nd.

**Spotted Crane** *Porzana porzana*: a small crane at Frampton Marsh Sep 23rd was thought to be this species but views were inconclusive.

The following record was considered not proven by BBRC:

2020 **Lesser White-fronted Goose** Alkborough Flats November 28th to December 15th.

## 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).

### 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**

One of unknown origin was at Frampton Marsh Aug 31st.

### Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens*

South and west USA, northern Mexico. Most originate from captive or free-flying semi-naturalised European stock.

Forty-two flew south over Alkborough Flats at 11.15h May 2nd. They were also seen at Abram, Manchester 08:06, Fairburn Ings 09:55, and Wheldrake Ings 10:25.

### Greylag (domestic) *Anser anser* (domestic type)

Originate from farmyard stock and usually associate with feral Greylags, often interbreed.

Various Greylag 'variants' were reported throughout the year at various wetlands in the county associating with the feral Greylag flocks. These are usually leucistic with varying amounts of white, sometimes completely white, sometimes with black head markings.

### Greylag x Canada Goose hybrid *Anser anser* x *Branta canadensis*

A number of these quite familiar hybrids were reported from around the county at Baston Fen (1); Covenham Reservoir (4); East Halton marshes (up to 4); Crowle Pits (3); Fulbeck (5); Hartsholme CP (up to 3); Huttoft Pit (2); Keisby (1); Manby Wetlands (1); Marston STW (1); Tallington Lakes (up to 5).





### **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.

Individuals were reported at Thorpe Tilney Fen (Jan 5th), Gosberton Pits (Apr 4th), Tetney Marsh (Mar-Apr) and Alkborough Flats (Apr 16th). These records may all relate to a single wandering individual.

### **South African Shelduck** *Tadorna cana*

Namibia, Botswana and South Africa. UK records originate from captive stock.

Two at Gibraltar Point Aug 11th.

### **Muscovy Duck** *Cairina moschata*

Occurs widely across England and breeding is reported in most years although the only regular site remains the River Ouse at Ely, Cambs. Native to S America.

Three birds were reported in the vicinity of Hartsholme Country Park on Dec 9th and 17th.

### **White-cheeked Pintail** *Anas bahamensis*

Widespread in South America and the Caribbean. Known to hybridise with Mallards. UK records derived from captive stock.

One at Gibraltar Point Jul 11th.

### **Chiloe Wigeon** *Mareca sibilatrix*

South America. UK records derived from captive stock.

A male was at Alkborough Flats Aug 28th.

### **Hooded Merganser** *Lophodytes cucullatus*

North America. BOU Category A/E.

One at Frampton Marsh on Dec 31st was thought to originate from captive stock.

### **Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca*

Rare. Eastern Europe. Reintroduction scheme exists in Germany. Regularly kept in captivity.

A female carrying a green plastic ring was at Water's Edge CP May 4th, presumed escape.

There has been a project running at Zoo Berlin, Germany to re-introduce captive-bred birds to Lake Steinhude, near Hanover. Initially these birds were metal-ringed on the left leg but since mid-2013 they have also been colour-ringed on the right leg (yellow ring with a two-letter code in black). Around 260 have been released on this lake since the project began.

### **Common Pochard** *Aythya ferina* x **Red-crested Pochard** *Netta rufina* hybrid

A male hybrid between these two species was seen at Baston GP on Feb 22nd and Apr 21st.

### **Ring-necked** *Aythya collaris* x **Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula* hybrid

A male was at Tallington Lakes Jan 3rd and it or another at Frampton Marsh May 3rd-7th.

### **Indian Peafowl** *Pavo cristatus*

Escape from captivity, local breeder sustained by winter feeding.

Undoubtedly under-reported and commonly kept as domestic pets, especially on farms. Four records were received: seven at Neville Wood (Nocton) on Apr 22nd; one in the churchyard in Frampton village May 19th; one at Holbeach June 22nd; three at Fleet Hargate Oct 10th.

### **Reeves's Pheasant** *Symaticus reevesii*

North and central China. UK records derived from captive stock.

One was seen in the Bourne area Aug 14th. This species seems to feature regularly on Twitter with photographs from northern England down to Gloucestershire and Dorset, how many locations are releasing or losing them?



**Golden Pheasant** *Chrysolophus pictus*

Central and southern China. UK records derived from captive stock.

One at Stallingborough May 3rd.

**Grey Crowned Crane** *Balearica regulorum*

East and southeast Africa. UK records originate from captive stock.

One was reported on Nov 8th in fields in the Boston area and on several subsequent dates in the area, including Kirton End and Frampton Marsh. It was last reported alive on Dec 25th and later found dead in 'early January' 2022.

**White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia*

**Very scarce migrant. Status complicated by the existence of reintroduction schemes on the near continent. LBRC.**

Given the large number of White Storks wandering the country and originating from release schemes, all records of this species will be regarded with suspicion and considered as 'escapes' unless there is very good evidence to the contrary which suggests they may be of wild origin. The storks from the Knepp Estate have been recorded as far north as Aberdeenshire.

In 2021, one was seen in the South Ferriby area from Feb 24th, then presumably the same bird at Middlemarsh Farm, Sudbrook, and Normanby by Spittal on Mar 27th, and finally at Healing on Apr 22nd. This bird was seen to be carrying a blue-grey ring confirming its origin as the Knepp Estate, West Sussex (Details of this scheme can be found at <https://www.whitestorkproject.org/>). There were no reports of potentially wild vagrants. Later in the year a single was over Spalding Jul 17th and then Sutton Bridge 22nd, most likely the same bird or another from Knepp.



# Bird Ringing Report 2021

Dr Carl Soulsbury

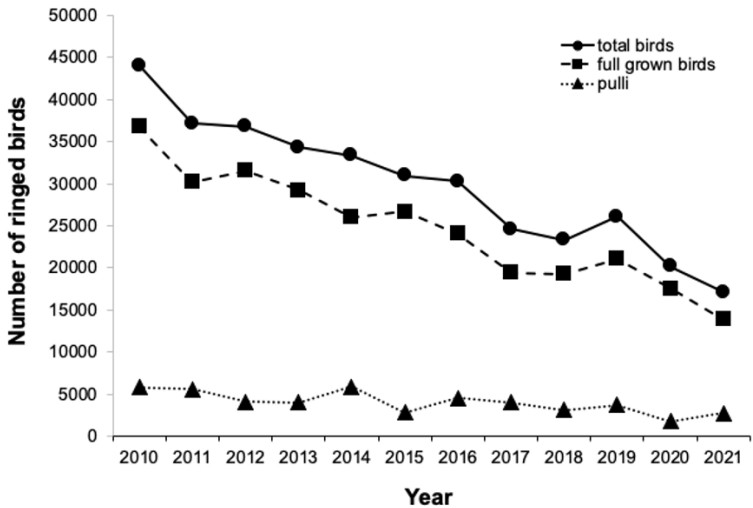
## Overview

Bird ringing was first devised around 100 years ago and is still an invaluable scientific tool to study bird populations. Since the advent of ringing, over 100 million birds have been ringed in Europe alone. Data from recoveries, both alive and dead, have allowed us to understand bird movements across the globe and to track population trends. Each year, between 900,000 to 1 million birds are ringed in Britain and Ireland.

Lincolnshire is the second largest English county by area (6959 km<sup>2</sup>) and is mainly comprised of agricultural land (arable farmland: 74%; grassland: 12%; Casey *et al* 2021). Though small in total area (3.8%), the coastal habitats that include The Wash and the Humber are internationally important sites for waterbirds. Of the 113 counties where ringing data is collected from, Lincolnshire has the 17th highest ringing total in 2021 with 17,134 birds. The commonest species ringed in 2021, as in most years, were Blue Tit, Great Tit and Goldfinch.

The 2021 total of 17,134 birds, is the lowest number ringed since 2015. This might be partly due to national lockdowns in spring 2021, but annual totals have been declining long-term and are around 39% of the 2010 total of 43,596 (Figure 1). So, what has driven this decline? The reasons for this are complex and will include changes in the number of ringers and their efforts across Lincolnshire. Access to ringing sites has changed over this time, with ringers reporting access to some sites being restricted or revoked. In other cases, they reflect changes to the environment with major declines also seen elsewhere, e.g., Willow Tits. Worryingly, there have also been notable declines in many “common” species with diseases such as *Trichomonas gallinae* leading to significant declines in Greenfinch and Chaffinch population over this period (Table 1). Similarly, there are long-term

**Figure 1: The total number of birds ringed each year (circle, solid line), full grown birds (adults + juveniles, square, dashed line) and pulli (triangle, dotted line). Total number of birds includes a small number of unaged birds.**







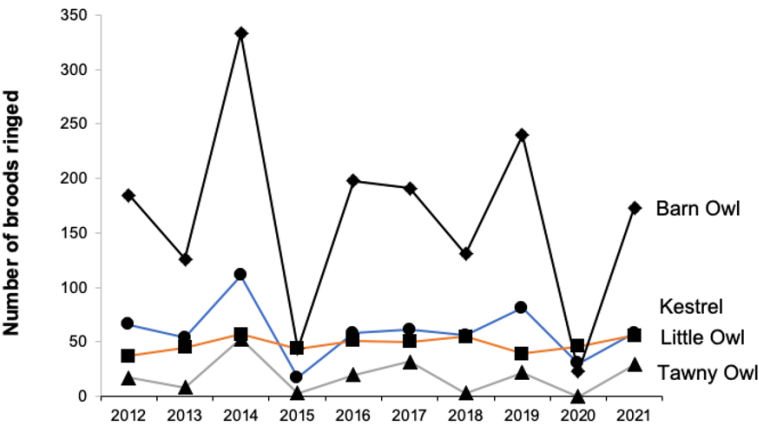
**Table 1: Ringing totals of selected bird species in Lincolnshire (all bird ages) for 2021, 2020 and comparative data from 2010**

Species	2021 total	2020 total	2010 total
Willow Tit	1	1	25
Swallow	153	259	2636
Yellowhammer	61	93	866
Redstart	3	7	38
Swift	27	12	295
House Martin	110	224	1141
Song Thrush	114	205	1612
Greenfinch	534	442	2915
Chaffinch	440	488	1748

declines in House Martins, Swallows and Swifts at the national level, which can also be seen in other European countries (Møller 2019; Petras & Vrezec 2022). These declines reflect key ongoing changes to food abundance i.e., insect declines, access to breeding sites, and changes for some species along their migratory routes.

Lincolnshire remains an important ringing area for many species. In agricultural landscapes the provision of boxes has helped support the numbers of owls, primarily Little and Barn Owls, and also Kestrels. Around 40% of British Little Owls ringed annually, together with 10% of Britain's and Ireland's Kestrels and Barns Owls, are ringed in Lincolnshire. The numbers change annually depending on underlying small mammal populations. Through the efforts of ringers, we have good long-term data on the productivity of these species in Lincolnshire that adds important information to the health of our bird populations. Interestingly, it is clear that owls and bird of prey dependent on rodent populations show greater variation in the number of broods produced, whilst Little Owls which include a greater proportion of invertebrates in their diet show less fluctuation in broods produced (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Annual number of broods ringed each year for barn owls (diamond), kestrels (circles), little owls (squares) and tawny owls (triangles). Data provided by Alan Ball and Bob Sheppard.**







Reflecting on 2021, there are two striking patterns that emerge. Firstly, the long-term decline in birds ringed is of concern. It remains to be seen if the COVID-hit years of 2020 and 2021 are aberrant or a pattern that continues. Secondly, ringing data is showing a clear decline in some of our previously common birds that for various reasons reflect wider changes in the environment. We clearly need to improve and increase efforts to monitor populations of both migrant and farmland birds – without monitoring, we sleepwalk into greater population declines. Ringing remains a valuable research tool without which our understanding of bird populations, bird migration and bird ecology would be much poorer. Lincolnshire, as an eastern county, remains a valuable ringing location. We therefore hope that in coming years, we can address a worrying decline in ringing numbers.

## Ringing projects

There are a number of long-term active ringing projects in Lincolnshire. Each year, we will highlight some of the work of these projects. This year, we start with the **Lincoln Swan Project**:

The Lincoln Swan project is a colour-ringing project based in and around the city of Lincoln. It relies on members of the public reporting sightings of colour-ringed Mute Swans in order to monitor their health, welfare, and behaviour. In 2021, we ringed 52 new birds, and recaptured 26 individuals, taking us to a grand total of 250 colour ringed since the project began in 2017. In 2021 we had reports of 133 individual birds, including 5 reported dead, and 10 reported from locations outside the immediate Lincoln area. These comprised three birds from Woodhall Spa and one each from North Cave wetlands, Ulrome (E Yorks.), Frithville, Langford Lowfields, Kilnsea Wetlands, Sleaford, and Middlewich (Cheshire). If you see swans (ringed or not) in and around Lincoln, please report these to us – either by e-mail, or (preferably) by downloading the EpiCollect5 App and registering for the Lincoln Swan project here: [lincn.ac/swanproject](http://lincn.ac/swanproject) (UoL2020\_2236). The App streamlines the data import process and provides an accurate GPS location when the bird is sighted. For more information, please e-mail [swanrings@lincoln.ac.uk](mailto:swanrings@lincoln.ac.uk).

## Bird Recoveries

There is increasing use of colour ringing as a tool to record bird movements. This increased use, alongside some interesting recaptures and recoveries of dead birds, has seen several notable long-distance recoveries in 2021.

Notable foreign recoveries include a **Eurasian Teal** ringed in Pohjois-Savo, Finland (2018) which was shot in Tetney Marshes (1915km). A nestling **Spoonbill** from Ouwerkerk, Netherland (2020) was sighted at Frampton Marsh (306km). Recoveries of **Oystercatchers** to and from abroad show important links between populations including one ringed at Holbeach (2001) then recovered dead after being hit by a car in Grødelandsvegen, Norway (735km), and another ringed at Wainfleet (2010) recovered dead in the Faroe Islands (1094km). **Bar-tailed Godwits** also had several reports during 2021, including one bird ringed on The Wash at Leverton being seen in The Netherlands (312km), and birds from Poland (1225km) and two from Norway (889km, 732km) being reported at Frampton Marsh. Similarly, a **Knot** ringed on The Wash at Wrangle was retrapped in The Netherlands (339km). Such reports of birds recovered dead or retrapped, and those reported from colour rings, really emphasise the connectedness of waterbird populations around the North Sea and across Europe. These data are invaluable in understanding how birds move during their lives.

No less important are movements within the UK, as they can also reflect important migration routes between key feeding, over wintering or breeding sites. For example, an adult female **Whooper Swan** first ringed at Martin Mere in 2005 was reported dead hitting overhead wires in Alford (206km). Colour rings demonstrated important movements around the UK for a number of species. Colour-ringed **Cormorant** nestlings from Anglesey and Hale (Cheshire) were resighted near Skegness (288km) and Whisby NP (145km). Nestling **Marsh Harriers** with wing tags from Norfolk, have also been sighted multiple times. A number of colour-ringed **Avocets** from Cumbria and Lancashire were resighted at Alkborough Flats (208km & 145 km) and Frampton Marsh (301km). A **Ringed Plover**

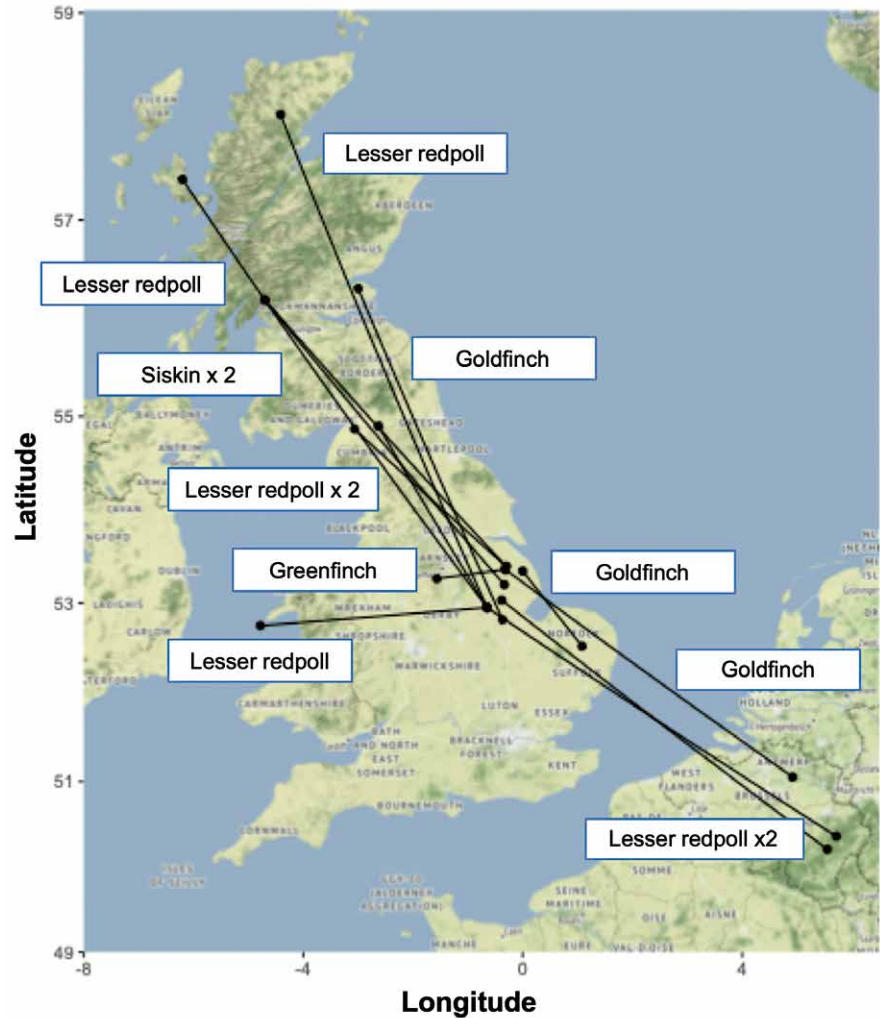




from Llanfairfechan (Conwy) was resighted at Alkborough (224km) and a **Curlew** from Teesmouth was resighted at Garthorpe (111km)

Many recoveries of passerines or near passerines are relatively short distance (a few tens of km). Notable exceptions include a **Great Spotted Woodpecker** ringed in Staffordshire and recaptured one month later at Nocton Fen (109 km), the longest distance for this species in 2021. Another bird which moved the longest distance for that species in 2021 was a **Kestrel** ringed as a nestling in Skegness found freshly dead in Staffordshire, a distance of 151km. Two **Blackbirds** from Lincolnshire were recaptured in Swindon (219km) and another found dead in Pembrokeshire (401km) and a **Robin** was retrapped in Kent (260km).

Figure 3: Recoveries in 2021 of ringed finches to and from Lincolnshire.







A number of birds were recovered on migration. A **Sand Martin** ringed as a nestling at Donington on Bain, was retrapped at Nanjizal, Land's End, just one month later, a distance of 528km. **Meadow Pipits** from Marston STW and Theddlethorpe were retrapped at Darlington and in Suffolk respectively. Many finches such as Lesser Redpoll and Siskin show a northwest to south easterly migration (Figure 3). A number of **Lesser Redpolls** were caught in Cumbria (2), Highlands (2) and Wales, with two more retrapped in Belgium. Two **Siskins** ringed in Lincolnshire were retrapped in Argyll and Bute demonstrating the southwards movement of Scottish birds. **Goldfinches** in contrast show a mix of migratory and resident populations, with longer distance movements uncommon but usually northwesterly/southeasterly. In 2021, a bird from Cupar in Scotland and one from Belgium were caught in Lincolnshire, alongside more local movements to Suffolk (Figure 3).

There were a number of notable recoveries amongst warblers. A **Willow Warbler** caught at Gibraltar Point in 2019 was caught in April 2021 at Portland Bill Bird Observatory presumably returning from winter grounds. A **Chiffchaff** caught at Nocton Fen in Sep 2020 was recovered the following spring in the Scottish Borders (312km) the longest recorded in Britain in 2021. A **Sedge Warbler** ringed in North Somercotes in Aug 2021 was retrapped in France just 11 days later, a distance of 555km; conversely, one ringed in France in Aug 2019 was retrapped at Gibraltar Point in Jul 2021. A **Grasshopper Warbler** ringed at Gibraltar Point in Jun 2019 was found long-dead in Suffolk in Oct 2021, victim of a bird of prey, and a **Reed Warbler** caught in East Sussex in Aug 2017 was retrapped in Lincolnshire in both May 2020 and Jun and Jul 2021 (237 km). **Blackcaps** have an unusual migration direction, that includes movement of birds from Western Europe into the UK as shown by a bird caught in Belgium in Sep 2021 and retrapped a month later at Gibraltar Point (432 km). Finally, a **Goldcrest** ringed at Gibraltar Point in Apr 2021 was retrapped 3 weeks later in Orkney (716km), a remarkable distance for such a tiny bird.

## Citations

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# Nest recording in Lincolnshire in 2021

Phil Hyde

As most Lincolnshire birders will know, the BTO nest monitoring scheme began in 1939. Since that date, thousands of volunteers countrywide have participated, generating some 35,000 records each year. This data provides invaluable information and helps to track changes in breeding success and correlate these with changes in the wider environment. In 2014, the scheme celebrated its 75th-anniversary.

Thanks to the scheme organisers, annual data for the county is now available earlier allowing us to publish a summary of the Lincolnshire totals for 2021. If you wish to participate in this scheme full details of how to join and what nest recording entails can be found at <https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/nest-record-scheme/taking-part>.

Many thanks to the Lincolnshire participants whose efforts are summarised in the table below. As can be seen, the longstanding efforts of Alan Ball and Bob Sheppard in owl and raptor ringing is well represented as usual and the higher totals are those for nestbox and tree hole users. Sand Martin nests are monitored in good numbers at the artificial nest site at Biscathorpe (see LBR 2020, p244).

Species	Total nests	Species	Total nests
Bittern	2	Blue Tit	50
Marsh Harrier	1	Great Tit	24
Kestrel	67	Skylark	1
Peregrine	3	Sand Martin	87
Moorhen	1	Swallow	6
Little Tern	14	House Martin	1
Rock Dove	13	Wren	2
Stock Dove	15	Blackbird	16
Woodpigeon	2	Song Thrush	3
Collared Dove	1	Spotted Flycatcher	4
Barn Owl	213	Robin	7
Little Owl	62	Tree Sparrow	2
Tawny Owl	51	Chaffinch	1
Kingfisher	1	Goldfinch	1
Jackdaw	1	Linnet	1
Raven	3		

## Acknowledgements

Daniel Bardsley, Blackburn & Lennon, Bowden, Ball and Sheppard, Phil Cannings, Simon Dudhill, Craig Emms, Paul Fenwick, Gibraltar Point Bird Observatory, Adam Homer, Isabel & D Hildred, Mark Joy, Mid-Lincolnshire Ringing Group, Lloyd Park, Michael Polling, Rockingham Forest Ringing Group, South Nottinghamshire Ringing Group, Stephen Wain, Elizabeth White





## Finder's Report: Baillon's Crake

### Alkborough Flats 5th-7th June, 2021

Wayne Gillatt

#### Circumstances in finding the Baillon's Crake

I had been waiting for a mild still night for some time so I could put out a sound recording device overnight with the hope of possibly capturing a recording of a Spotted Crake or any other good nocturnal species. A Spotted Crake had been recorded the previous spring and the news that several were calling at Wheldrake Ings this spring spurred me on somewhat. I arrived on site at 21.00 hrs and made my way down to an area of wet grazing fields bordered by ditches overgrown with *Phragmites* reed, the area where the Spotted Crake was recorded last year. I positioned the recorder at around 22.00hrs and then decided as it was such a still night to walk a loop on the footpath that runs around the site. Shortly later I heard a call close by that I was unfamiliar with which can be best described as a little rattle repeated. I slowly walked back towards the call when a small duck took flight and, in the twilight, I could make out it was a drake Garganey. Walking a little further round, I could hear the same or a different male Garganey calling. I pressed on further round the site not covering that much ground as there were such a lot of birds calling and singing. Then at approximately 23.15 I could hear another rattle call at about 100 meters range that I initially thought was another Garganey calling. I moved in closer and luckily the footpath took me straight to where the call was coming from which was a clump of reeds which was when I realised that this was not another Garganey. The call was loud and continued non-stop with just 2-3 second intervals between rattles and the bird was clearly stationary. Not instantly recognising what was making the call I moved away so I could listen to recordings on <https://xeno-canto.org/> out of earshot of the bird. I quickly ruled out Little Crake after hearing a recording of that species, then played Baillon's Crake and instantly realised that this was what was calling. I had to double check a few times that the recording I was listening to was not the actual bird calling as the recording was an exact match. I could hardly believe that I had got a Baillon's Crake calling on my local patch and as the significance hit me then panic started to set in. I made a short recording from my iPhone before rushing back to pick up my recorder in order to make a better quality recording. On the way I sent a message to a friend at 23.50 to say "Baillon's Crake calling on flats now" who called me back shortly later half asleep. He only lived in Alkborough village itself at the top of the hill, but it still took some time convincing him that I was not fooling around and that he should really come down and have a listen. I made my way back to the bird and obtained some more recordings before my friend turned up. It had turned 01.00 hrs by this time and the bird just carried on calling without a break with just a Reed Warbler singing in the background.

Getting back to the carpark at gone 02.00 hrs we decided it was too late to go home to bed and be back for dawn, so we had a little doze in the car until 03.30 before making our way back to the spot where the crake was calling from with the hope of capturing a glimpse of the bird. Arriving at a little after 04.00 hrs the bird was still calling non-stop but was now joined by other species as the dawn chorus began to break. As daylight broke, we could see that the bird was calling from a small isolated circular clump of *Phragmites* surrounded by rank wet grass and some clumps of *Juncus* rush. The bird began to call a bit more intermittently as it became lighter and was clearly beginning to move around a little within the clump of reeds. Shortly after we realised the bird had left the clump of reeds, crossed the flooded footpath, and moved into an overgrown ditch where we managed to get some glimpses of the bird as it moved through the vegetation. My wife joined us and the three of us managed a few more views of the bird with the odd very infrequent call heard through to just before 09.00 hrs when we left.

We revisited in the evening of the June 6th from 18.30 through to 21.30 with no sight or sound of the bird. There was a bit more of a breeze and it was cooler than the previous evening and with fatigue setting in we decided to leave before dark. A further visit from 04.00 - 08.00 on June 7th proved fruitful with further glimpses





of the bird crossing the footpath from the small reedbed to the ditch and some intermittent calls. This was the last time the bird was seen or heard despite several more visits over the next two weeks.

### Alkborough Flats History

Alkborough Flats is a managed realignment scheme that is part of the Environment Agency's flood prevention scheme on the Humber Estuary covering 400ha. It is situated at the confluence of the River Trent and the River Ouse. The scheme was completed in 2006 when a breach was made in the sea wall allowing high tide waters to flood the site. A partnership was created with the North Lincolnshire Council taking over the management of the site as a nature reserve.



**Baillon's Crake** *Zapornia pusilla* (Video Grab) Alkborough Flats June 5th 2021 © WAYNE GILLATT

### Habitat Description

Prior to 2006 before the realignment scheme Alkborough Flats was prime arable farmland overlooked by the Lincolnshire Edge escarpment. After the sea wall had been breached half the site was regularly inundated on the highest tides quickly depositing thick layers of silt that allowed *Phragmites* reed to colonise while tenant farmers continued to farm the remaining site with arable crops as well as sowing grass for grazing by cattle and sheep. As time progressed the area still farmed became wetter and wetter making it unsuitable to sow crops. Today much of the site is a solid reedbed with the remaining area comprising of grazing fields of which some has become very wet.

The area where the bird was holding territory comprised of a mixture of habitats from wet grassland, open water, reedbed and an overgrown ditch. The bird spent the whole night of June 5-6th June singing from a small circular clump of reed of about 7 metres diameter. This reedbed was surrounded by wet grassland. During the early morning of June 6th the bird moved from this reedbed into the overgrown ditch to feed. The ditch was very deep and was over the top in parts flooding across the footpath to a depth of about 10-20cm. The ditch was lined with a mixture of reed, flowering rush and *Juncus* species.

### Weather report

The evening of June 5th 2021 was very mild with temperatures only dropping to 15°C overnight with light to almost no wind.





## Finder's report: White-tailed Lapwing *Vanellus leucurus*, new to Lincolnshire

31st December 2021

Graham Catley

It's Friday December 31st 2021, and with my daughter at home for a couple of weeks and the weather having been rather dire, Friday's forecast was a lot better, so I suggested a drive to Spurn and a walk to the Point and back, not birding just for some exercise and atmosphere.

06:30: Sophie goes out for her usual 5km run but returns having lost the set of house keys she took with her. We walk the 5km route twice but to no avail, so phone a colleague who fortunately has two door locks available, and he offers to come round and do them in an hour. By this time of course it's getting late for a Spurn trip, and we are likely to miss the walk back due to high spring tides and thus we opt for a walk down the Ancholme seeing some Pink-footed Geese and Goosanders and a nice male Stonechat. When I get back and I am getting changed for the day at 14:17 I get a WhatsApp from Steve Routledge: '*Afternoon, wader at Winters with Yellow legs apparently, I'm at Scarborough so can't check unfortunately*'. Its only 12 miles from me and if this is the missing Lesser Yellowlegs, seen there two weeks previously, I have about 90 minutes to get there and look for it. In the event I get there in 20 minutes and no-one else is present apart from an elderly lady walking her dogs. I look out of the car window across the small grass field next to the pond and there, stood on the edge, is the White-tailed Lapwing that we have been looking for at Alkborough for weeks, hoping it would hop across from Blacktoft Sands. I grab the camera and take a few shots before it flies but it doesn't, it just walks up and down there until dark; four others get there in time to see it before darkness descends.

We all say it's a matter of effort but luck, chance, fate whatever still plays such a big part; if we had been at Spurn I would not have got there, and no-one would have seen it in the obvious location it was in apart from the two photographers who had seen it but had no idea what it was. The following morning all the Lincs listers were there at first light and gave up two hours later not even having looked nearby. Steve Routledge and his mate did look at the nearby mitigation pools but then went off to look at some flooded pig fields. I decided to check the mitigation pools again as anyone can miss something that skulks in clumps of rush and first scan with the bins, I saw a grey and beige shape hidden in the rushes. Basically, a Lapwing-sized *Vanellus* plover with extraordinarily long bright yellow legs; bill fine and black, head beige/buff/brownish-grey with slightly paler supercilia; eye dark with coral orbital ring; chin and throat creamy-white, breast and neck pale vinous-grey, lower breast and belly tinged salmon pink paler and creamier along the flanks. Upperparts mid-earth brown with white tips to tertials forming pale fringe to closed wing with black tips of flight feathers beyond this fringe on closed wing. Tail seen to be white and underwing coverts bright white when wings raised with primaries seen to be black but not seen in flight at this location so rest of flight pattern not seen. Legs bright yellow.

The bird stayed in the same area along the edge of the grazed grass field by the pit until dark just walking occasionally and pecking at the ground. The following day it moved even less in its chosen floodwater pool but seemed to be in good condition and plumage.





**White-tailed Lapwing** *Vanellus leucurus* East Halton Pits December 31st 2021 © GRAHAM CATLEY

**Post-script:** A first for the county and well done to all involved in the find (Mike Pickwell) and the follow-up and identification (Steve Routledge and Graham Catley). As we all know, the bird stayed in the county well into 2022 and eventually moved to Frampton Marsh and (presumed same bird) lastly turned up at Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe NNR. It was seen last there on May 28th, 2022.





## Finder's report: Bonaparte's Gull *Chroicocephalus philadelphia*

3rd November 2021, at Gibraltar Point

David Wright

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> November I was on my second day of a brief volunteering stay at Gibraltar Point NNR. It is a site I know well having worked there previously in 2008 and to which I have subsequently returned many times for other stints as a volunteer or for birding trips. In the late afternoon I was asked to go and count the roosting waders around Greenshanks Creek from Mill Hill, in the centre of the reserve. I was looking directly east from this high point, using my telescope and binoculars to count flocks of waders as they flew in on the rising tide. A large mixed flock of small waders was flying around the outer dune ridges of Greenshanks Creek. At 16.20, as I was scanning the area I noticed a small group of roosting Black-headed Gulls (BHG) and Common Gulls (c.40) in a large channel between the two outer dunes. I scanned through them briefly, and immediately noticed one slightly smaller bird in the group. I could make this out at 25x magnification; the bird was about  $\frac{3}{4}$  the size of the nearby Black-headed Gulls (directly alongside for comparison). It was at quite long range c.600m, so I zoomed the telescope in on the flock and I could immediately see that the bird had a grey wash to the nape and a short black bill and knew straight away that the bird was an adult Bonaparte's Gull! This was a species I have previously found in the UK and had seen two this year, so I was familiar with the field characteristics. I could also see a large dark spot behind the eye, again appearing larger than the nearby BHGs in comparison. The grey upperparts did appear slightly darker than the surrounding birds, but it was hard to be certain as the bird was in direct setting sunlight. The wing-tips seemed short, all black and stubby compared to the BHGs nearby. As the bird was floating on the water, I couldn't make out any underparts or leg features. After watching the bird for a minute, I thought I'd better spread the news and rang Kev Wilson the Site Manager. Strangely, we had been talking about Bonaparte's Gull a couple of hours previously in the office! He said he would come down immediately.

I watched the bird for a couple more minutes and was happy with my identification. The bird began to spin around a bit on the water, feeding briefly, when its smaller size was even more noticeable. The light was dropping quickly however, and the sun was no longer lighting the birds. At that point the bird took off with a group of about 15 BHGs and headed south along the shoreline towards the Wash. As I tried to switch between my 'scope and binoculars to follow the bird in flight, I panicked slightly and lost the bird in the flock. Unfortunately, I was not able to pick it up again in the 'scope as the birds headed even further away from me. Some of the other BHGs and Common Gulls in the roosting group also left the area very shortly afterwards. It was obvious the gulls were using this channel as a washing and resting stopover before heading into The Wash to roost. Kev arrived about 5 minutes after the bird had flown unfortunately, so I was the sole observer. The bird was looked for at the same time the next day, but not seen and looked for again on a few subsequent evenings but there was no further sign.

### Description

**Time of Sighting:** 16.20 to 16.25 only

**Upperparts:** Light grey upperparts, which appeared a shade darker than the BHGs alongside. Wingtips were black, appearing comparatively shorter and stubbier than BHGs and lacking any white tips to the primaries, which could just be seen on some BHGs.





**Underparts:** Not seen, bird was on the water.

**Head:** Head shape was small and delicate, a bit pigeon-like. A dark spot was visible behind the eye, which did seem noticeably larger in comparison to the BHGs nearby. There was a very noticeable grey wash to the back of the head and neck, which made the bird overall grey-necked rather than white, noticeable even at long range.

**Bill:** Short and black. Thinner and shorter than nearby BHGs.

**Legs:** Not seen.

**Flight:** Unfortunately, it was not possible to track the bird in flight.

**Overall Jizz:** Floating on the water quietly amongst the other gulls, very close to them at times. It was seen to spin briefly and take food off the water amongst the BHGs. It's overall small size and more dainty appearance was noticeable at long range and was estimated at  $\frac{3}{4}$  the body size of the BHGs next to it, but the neck and head looked particularly small and more delicate.

**Call:** No call was heard.





## Rough-legged Buzzards *Buteo lagopus* in Lincolnshire

Graham Catley

A cool afternoon of December 15th 1974 saw the late Derek Robinson and myself sat in his car at the foot of the Wolds escarpment at Bonby anticipating the predicted afternoon arrival of what would be my first county Rough-legged Buzzard. Resident for most of the year in Norwich at the University of East Anglia I had been privileged to encounter Rough-legged Buzzards from the notable late 1973 influx seeing a total of five birds in Norfolk - Suffolk that winter. The following winter was even more productive with a larger arrival and East Anglia held the bulk of the subsequent wintering population during which I bumped into a minimum of 24 different individuals with a notable 11 in the air at one time, at the then raptor mecca that was Walberswick, on November 10th 1974. The Bonby bird did appear en cue that afternoon and later in the month Mick Mellor found two birds in the adjacent Ancholme Valley that has since proven to be a notable site for wintering birds in the county. Personally, having seen a minimum of 71 birds in Britain with 31 in Lincolnshire between 1973 and 2020 it would appear that Rough-legged Buzzard is not that scarce a bird in the county but occurrences have always been rather sporadic and tied to the cyclical variation in vole and lemming numbers in their Arctic and sub-Arctic breeding areas. In recent years records have become less frequent in spite of the increasing number of active observers in addition to which the now regular appearance of pale Common Buzzards has served to increase the potential for mistaken identification. This short paper attempts to present the history of Lincolnshire records, to suggest preferred wintering habitats and to offer tips on the identification of this species and its separation from Common Buzzard.

Three races of Rough-legged Buzzard have been identified in Eurasia, nominate *lagopus* breeding from Scandinavia, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia to the centre of Siberia, the River Yenisey, where it overlaps with *menzbieri* breeding across North East and eastern Siberia while further east *kamtschatkensis* breeds across most of Eastern Asia, Kamchatka and the Kuril Islands. Currently also regarded as a race of the same species *B l sanctijohannis* the Rough-legged Hawk, a suggested taxonomic split, breeds across Arctic America from Alaska to north-east Canada. In Britain the

**Plate 1** 1cy Rough-legged Buzzard, October 2011, Bonby – Worlabby Carrs. Shows some features noted for *menzbieri*. Note diffuse dark terminal tail band seen from below, pale - but streaked - head, mainly pale underwings with narrow, dark trailing edge and dark carpal patches and belly patch. In characteristic hovering profile.





nominate race is the usual visitor but there have been a few confirmed and other suspected records of Rough-legged Hawk in Ireland, the Scilly Isles and Cornwall and this form has occurred on a number of occasions in Iceland and on ships in the North Atlantic. The race *menzbieri* has apparently been identified in winter in Eastern Europe.

Breeding birds are found in the tundra and taiga regions between 61° and 76° N where their breeding success is highly dependent upon the variation in the number of voles and lemmings that formerly occurred in four-year cycles but in recent years the effects of climate change have disrupted these cycles and warmer winters have had a detrimental effect upon rodent populations in the Arctic as winter snow melt has led to high mortality of hibernating rodents. In the past, years of high breeding productivity led to higher than normal numbers of juvenile birds migrating in the ensuing autumn and subsequently wintering in areas out with their typical range. Most Scandinavian and western Russian birds winter in central and Eastern Europe with Britain always being on the western fringe of their range. The majority of birds that reach Britain are juveniles with full adults being extremely unusual but there are records of birds returning to winter territories in subsequent years including in Lincolnshire a bird first recorded as a juvenile in the Tumby Woodside area from November 9th 2004 to March 23rd 2005 that was relocated in the same area as a 3cy bird from January 12th to March 21st 2006.

Although a real mammal / rodent specialist Rough-legged Buzzards also feed on birds and other invertebrate prey when their favoured food is unavailable or in short supply. A recent development described by Pokrovsky et al documented how a small population of Rough-legged Buzzards has colonised a rodent free island, Kolguev Island, in Arctic Russia where they bred successfully during 2006 – 2013 feeding on goslings and Willow Ptarmigan.

Various authors have attempted to connect large influxes into Britain with breeding success in the Scandinavian breeding range and that of 1966 occurred following a notable southerly shift of the Norwegian breeding population that was linked to a poor year for voles and lemmings further north and east. The bulk of the palearctic population though, is found in Russia an estimated 100,000 pairs compared to the 5000-10,000 in Norway, 3000 – 5000 in Sweden and 50 – 4000 in Finland (Gensbol 2004). In the large influx of 1974 – 1975 a large proportion of the population moved west with few birds wintering in Denmark but there was a big passage through the Baltic and Finland. This suggests that large arrivals in Britain rely upon a good breeding season to produce large numbers of young over a large part of the species' range but are perhaps also in part tied to weather systems producing suitable conditions for North Sea crossings during the key migration period.

### Status in Lincolnshire

The first county avifauna, Smith and Cornwallis 1955, described the Rough-legged Buzzard as *"A rare and irregular autumn and winter visitor. Until the 1920's it occurred fairly regularly on the coast in autumn, (mainly during October) in variable but usually very small numbers, and less frequently inland then and later in the winter. During the last thirty years, however, there have been very few records."* Writing in the early 1980's Atkin and Lorand noted its status as *"A rare or very scarce coastal passage migrant and winter visitor, chiefly in October and November and occasionally between December and early May. Inland occurrences are not infrequent and mainly in winter, but these birds appear to wander quite at random and seldom remain in one area for any considerable period. In some years it may be absent but influxes are noted at irregular and sometimes long intervals. It was rather more numerous than usual in the autumns of 1839, 1875, 1880, 1891, 1903, 1915, 1962, 1966, 1973, 1974, 1982 and 1985."* *"The biggest arrivals were in 1915 and 1974 when there were about 20 records each year"*.

All Lincolnshire records fall in the period October 4th 1998, Gibraltar Point to May 17th 1996, Laughton Forest a second calendar year bird with the exception of a bird reported as found dead at Ulceby near Alford within 15 days of September 17th 1977 having been ringed as a nestling in





**Plate 2** 1cy Rough-legged Buzzard, South Ferriby, November 2010. Note pale - but streaked - head, though no malar streak and variegated upperparts

Northern Sweden in July 1973. The date of this occurrence is clearly unusual and significant in that the bird would have been four years old when recovered. There was no more information with regard to the recovery other than reported as dead by a non-birder with identification unknown so there must be some question over the history of this record.

The species was clearly more numerous in the past with reports from neighbouring counties noting 50 birds killed at one Rabbit Warren in Yorkshire in 1839 (Mather 1986) and in Norfolk in the same winter 47 were killed within eight miles of Thetford, at that time a major Rabbit Warren zone (Allard *et al*).

The more recent status of the species in the county accords well with that described above but wintering birds have been recorded with greater frequency probably due to the larger number of observers and the increased interest in rare birds that have also attracted photographers in the last decade. Influxes are still erratic and seemingly less regular but two of the best winters of all time for accumulated records have occurred in the last 30 years with 26 birds in 1994 – 1995 and 23 in 2010 – 2011 only eclipsed by the 30 birds in the 1974-1975 winter. There has been a tendency for spring passage records to form a larger part of the winter influx in the last 30 years probably as a result of more observers covering coastal sites in the March – early May period when passage birds are most likely to occur. In the chart below records of individual birds in the period October – May have been included in that winter's total; there are of course possibilities that birds wandering between different sites in winter and moving between different locations in autumn and spring may have been double counted but an attempt has been made to ascertain which birds were different and which may have been recorded from different locations. Vole abundance is usually

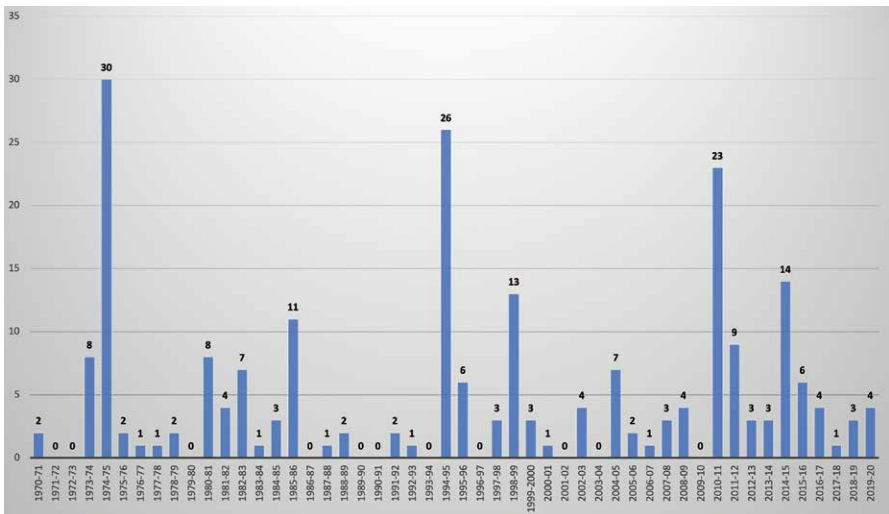




the key factor in holding birds in a wintering area for long periods and in winters with low vole abundance birds may wander widely in search of food.

The winter of 1974-1975 was probably the best winter ever recorded with a total of 250 birds recorded in Britain in October and c100 birds remaining to winter. Five were at Gibraltar Point on October 22nd 1974 and this remains the highest number recorded at one time in the county but on the same day a total of 45 came in off the sea in Suffolk in four and half hours with one flock being of eleven birds and on the 24th 14 flew south-west at Walberswick, Suffolk, with 13 in the air together. At the end of this winter period during March to early April 1975 three birds were found in Nettleton Valley, near Caistor, Lincolnshire, where they were seen carrying sticks and displaying. Birds are known to indulge in pre-breeding display prior to their northbound migration and pair formation can also occur in the winter quarters with paired birds migrating together in order to quickly settle into suitable breeding territories upon arrival in the far north where the limited duration of the summer requires a rapid start to breeding. In first-winter birds display is though, more likely to be ritualised as birds in their 2cy seldom breed.

**Figure 1: Rough-legged Buzzard records Lincolnshire by winter period, October - May, 1970 - 71 to 2019 - 2020**



Outside the normal pattern of occurrence for this wintering nomad a Rough-legged Buzzard appeared at Saltfleetby NNR in July 1986 but close observations revealed that it wore jesses and colour rings and was clearly an escaped falconry / collection bird. It remained in the area until at least late January 1987. The species is particularly rare in falconry and is possibly more common in bird of prey collections but remarkably a second bird reported to have been carrying jesses was seen at Gibraltar Point on March 22nd 1995 when it was one of two birds present.

Autumnal arrivals peak in October – November with coastal sightings accounting for most of the short-stayers that typically move on either south or inland in search of suitable winter territories. Over-wintering birds can settle into territories from October onwards with a very well watched bird in Worlaby Carrs first appearing from the south-east on October 26th 2002 and clearly finding a rich hunting area with a large population of Short-tailed Voles, that also attracted up to 13 Short-eared Owls, it stayed in a relatively small area through to March 8th 2003.





## Lincolnshire habitats

Coastal birds rarely linger for long periods but the rougher grass, formerly found on the Humber embankments and in the coastal dunes has sometimes held hunting birds for a few days while the expanse of Grainthorpe Marsh and the area around Gibraltar Point have also provided enough food for birds to remain for a up to two weeks in some autumns. Longer staying wintering birds have almost always been found in areas with high densities of short-tailed voles that have also often attracted wintering Short-eared Owls. Such areas have varied from abandoned fields to areas of set-aside, during its period of operation, to woodland clear-fells in years following clearance and replanting to rougher areas of permanent pasture on the Wolds and estates used for game shooting. If a high population of voles persists through the winter period then Rough-legged Buzzards are able to remain in a relatively small area of suitable habitat for several months. As examples: a bird that wintered at Fulstow during January 18th – April 3rd 1985 was feeding in an area of abandoned fields that covered only c2 square kms: one that spent the period October 26th 2002 to March 8th 2003 in Worlaby Carrs covered an area of only c3.5 square kms where there were also a minimum of 13 Short-eared Owls *Asio flammeus* during the same winter demonstrating the size of the field vole population: a third bird that wintered at South Ferriby – Read's Island from November 13th 2010 – April 6th 2011 covered an area of c3.5 square kms but obtained most of its food from a strip of rough grassland that measured only 760m x 70m in area. Little seems to have been published regarding the winter territory size of Rough-legged Buzzards but studies on the Rough-legged Hawk in the USA found winter territories to be between 6 - 10 and 10 – 15 square kilometres.

## Food and feeding

It has been estimated that a wintering Rough-legged Buzzard requires 80-120g of food per day equivalent to 4-6 small mammals. Rodents / mammals typically form 85% of their diet with birds and carrion forming a variable percentage. Carrion feeding in winter opens birds up to potential poisoning and a number of birds have been found dead in the county. One unhealthy juvenile male was found near Blankney on November 22nd 2010 and taken into care where it consumed

5 - 6 day-old chicks a day. Following rehabilitation, it was released in the same area on January 7th 2011 (Nigel Lound, *Lincolnshire Bird Report 2010*).

Observations of wintering birds in the county have produced limited information of food consumed but most identified prey items have been voles, assumed to be short-tailed field voles *Microtus agrestis*, with birds also having been seen feeding on Rabbits. The wintering bird at South Ferriby in 2010 – 2011 was mainly seen hunting short-tailed voles but during a period of deep snow cover on December 8th



**Plate 3** 1cy Rough-legged Buzzard, October 2011, Bonby – Worlaby Carrs. Shows some features noted for *menzbieri*. Note pale underwings with dark subterminal trailing edge, blackish primary tips, dark carpals, pale upper breast but with clear streaking and solid dark belly patch, pale head but with fine darker streaking on crown





**Plate 4** 1cy Rough-legged Buzzard with Water Rail prey, South Ferriby, December 2010

2010 it was seen to take off from a perch in a snow-covered field and fly in a direct line for 400m before crashing into an ice-covered ditch by the side of the main A1077 road and emerging with a Water Rail in its talons (GPC pers Obs).

The three birds in Nettleton Valley in early 1975 and the three birds present on the edge of Laughton Forest in early 1986 were all in small areas with high densities of Rabbits around former Rabbit Warrens. Large numbers of Rough-legged Buzzards were reportedly killed at Rabbit Warrens in Yorkshire in the 1800's but as this prey species has declined markedly in Lincolnshire in the last 30 years there are no longer many areas that support enough prey to hold a wintering Rough-leg.

### Identification

At least 95% of all the Rough-legged Buzzards located in Lincolnshire have been birds in their first winter, essentially birds in juvenile plumage as they do not commence moult until the late spring of their second calendar year. This is the easiest plumage to identify with adults having slightly less distinctive plumage features and being easier to mistake for Common Buzzards. In Lincolnshire the Common Buzzard nested to 1888 and not again until c1996. In the 1960's and 1970's it was a distinctly rare bird in the county with most records coming in the autumn and winter periods but as breeding birds became more established from 2000 onwards numbers have increased enormously with breeding now occurring on the edge of larger towns and in virtually every habitat in the county including the largely treeless Fenland. Thus, habitat is no use in identifying a lone *buteo* in the county.





The increased number of Common Buzzards has clearly produced the potential for confusion between the two species particularly so since the occurrence of pale Common Buzzards within the Lincolnshire population has increased markedly in the last 15 years. As noted by Gensbol plumage varies from very dark to very pale with some authors differentiating three main colour morphs pale, intermediate and dark but as noted there appears to be considerable variation within each of the three morphs.



**Plate 5 (TOP LEFT)** Extreme pale juvenile Common Buzzard, Pywipe, September 2014. Extreme pale Common Buzzards are whiter than any Rough-legged Buzzard

**Plate 6 (TOP RIGHT)** Juvenile Common Buzzard, Pywipe, September 2014. Note restricted dark belly patch and small dark carpal bars but very white/cream underparts with dark malar streak

**Plate 7 (ABOVE)** Juvenile Common Buzzard, Pywipe, September 2014. White tail base and white fringes to all upperwing coverts form a very striking pattern





In most large raptor species juveniles are longer winged and tailed than adults and the differences in profile can be striking. Juveniles of both Common and Rough-legged Buzzards are different in profile to adults and overall Rough-legged Buzzards appear longer winged and tailed than Common Buzzard and this produces a more fluid flight and when soaring or gliding the wings are held in a higher dihedral.

The key feature for identifying Rough-legged Buzzards noted by field guides is a white tail with a dark terminal band that in juveniles is much clearer on the uppertail than the undertail where it looks much more diffuse with less contrast. The underparts are generally very pale, whitish-cream with an obvious and well defined blackish-brown belly patch and dark carpal patches with blackish tips to the primaries. The upperparts are also subtly to obviously different to most Common Buzzards in juvenile plumage with contrasting pale bases to the primaries and broad pale tips to the greater coverts forming a pale wing panel combined with the narrower pale fringes to the median and lesser coverts. The head is very pale and whitish with fine darker streaks over the crown while the pale iris is bordered above by a darker eye-brow the fine streaking also extends to the chin and throat. Pale Common Buzzards can show a whitish base to the tail but the terminal band is usually more diffuse and less well defined on the upperside than that of Rough-legged Buzzard.

**Plate 8 (ABOVE)** Pale / Intermediate Common Buzzard with Peregrine, June 2011. Tail base can be very white but note finely barred remainder of tail feathers

**Plate 9 (BELOW)** 1cy Rough-legged Buzzard, October 2011, (Bonby – Worlaby Carrs. Shows some features noted for *menzbieri* and note feathered legs







**Plate 10** Pale 2cy Common Buzzard, February 2018, Alkborough Flats. Early spring pale juveniles can be very worn and look striking – note lack of belly patch and small dark carpal crescents



**Plate 11** Pale 2cy Common Buzzard, March 2015, Susworth. Variation with pale to intermediate birds is considerable and different individuals can look totally different

The underparts of pale Common Buzzards are variable but with generally smaller dark carpal patches and the head may actually be whiter than Rough-legged Buzzard due to the lack of streaking on the crown but they typically retain a dark malar streak and patch of streaking on the upper breast. The upperparts of the palest birds can have striking whiteish coverts, rump and base to the tail.

Rough-legged Buzzards habitually hover when hunting with deep languid wing strokes and hang motionless in stronger winds, adaptations to hunting over the treeless tundra and the preferred open country where they winter. Birds also hunt from a perch where available and in both respects overlap with the hunting behaviour of Common Buzzards. Hovering is used less by Common Buzzards as a hunting strategy but the behaviour is not species diagnostic and Common Buzzards will adopt this strategy for extended periods particularly in strong winds. It is thus important to confirm a range of features before jumping to conclusions on a brief view of a white-tailed hovering buteo. When seen well a juvenile Rough-legged Buzzard is a striking and very attractive bird and birds fresh from a life in human free tundra can be quite approachable.

Wintering Rough-legged Buzzards and Common Buzzards use the same food resources and hence compete for the best territories with studies in Sweden showing that Rough-legged Buzzards usually out compete Common Buzzards and maintain good territories through the winter. The wintering bird at South Ferriby in 2010 – 2011 was seen fighting with a Common Buzzard during the winter. Interactions with other raptors vary from mobbing and mock fighting to predation by larger species including eagles and Eagle Owls. Wintering birds in Lincolnshire have been observed in disputes with Common Buzzards and Marsh Harriers and have attracted the attention of mobbing Kestrels and Peregrines.

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**Plate 12** 1cy Rough-legged Buzzard, October 2011, Bonby – Worlaby Carrs. Shows some features noted for *menzbieri* with juvenile Marsh Harrier. Note size comparison



**Plate 13** 1cy Rough-legged Buzzard, South Ferriby, November 2010. Classic hovering pose with legs down and feathering visible





# Pigeons and Doves in Lincolnshire

Andrew Henderson

Photographs © Graham Catley

## Introduction

Pigeons and doves (Columbidae) are often ignored by birdwatchers. There are exceptions: attention was focused on Collared Dove in the 1950s and 1960s when they first arrived in Britain, and it's now focused on Turtle Dove as they seem destined to disappear. They are, though, an interesting group with diverse behaviours and habitat preferences. In this article, I am looking at the status up to 2021 of the five species in Lincolnshire: Feral Pigeon, Stock Dove, Woodpigeon, Turtle Dove and Collared Dove.

## Sources of information

I've used, as my main sources, the Lincolnshire Bird Reports (LBRs) from 1979 onwards and digital data held by the Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership for the years with no published LBRs (i.e. 1997-2007 and, at the time of writing, 2021). I am aware that this hybrid approach is somewhat unsatisfactory but doubt that more complex approaches would be sensible. My analyses have been fairly simple, and trends should be illustrated reasonably accurately. Some obvious gaps in data sets exist; for example, the digitised data for 1997 relate only to Gibraltar Point with nothing for the rest of the county, while the 2007 LBR does not contain any dove information for Gibraltar Point. Given the generally patchy nature of count reporting for these species, I doubt that those omissions affect conclusions. I have included a handful of additional Feral Pigeon counts supplied by Graham Catley.

The seasonal charts presented here are derived from the years for which I obtained full digitised data



**Plate 1** Feral Pigeons, from Scunthorpe steelworks, feeding on arable land at Brumby, February 2023





**Plate 2** In autumn and winter, Woodpigeons often feed on hawthorn berries, Barton, December 2010

(i.e. 1998-2007 and 2021). Ideally, I would have analysed a more recent and continuous set of, say, ten years. However, having already obtained the data for the years with no LBRs, I concluded that the work required to check and manipulate additional years' data was not justified, as the pattern for each species in 2021 was similar to those in the earlier years.

The charts of long-term trends, covering 1979-2021, show the highest single count anywhere in the county each year, plus in a paler shade the sum of the next two highest counts. Gaps in sequences exist for years when LBRs do not contain enough information for three high counts (or sometimes even one, in the case of Feral Pigeon). I applied a convention that I excluded from the analysis successive high counts made at the same site in the same month (for LBR data) or made at the same site less than about a month apart (for digitised data). This was to avoid bias from the inclusion of repeat reports of a single large flock. It is not entirely satisfactory, as large flocks present for over one month may have been counted twice and, conversely, only one of a succession of high counts of migrants on different days (and thus different birds) in the same month will have been included. However, I suggest it's as good a way as possible with the available data to illustrate trends.

I have included tables of the highest counts of each species. Except for Feral Pigeon, these tables show information colour-coded by season. Autumn (brown) has been defined as September-November, winter (blue) as December-February and spring (green) as March-May. The only tabulated count during June-August was one for Turtle Dove on 1st June which has been treated as spring. Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data for Lincolnshire were kindly supplied by the British Trust for Ornithology. Graphs of Lincolnshire population index trends included here are shown as smoothed lines together with a shaded area extending to the 85% confidence limits. The BBS is run by the BTO and is jointly funded by the BTO, the JNCC (on behalf of the statutory nature conservation bodies: Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs - Northern Ireland, Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, and Scottish Natural Heritage), and the RSPB. Additional information, including downloaded data from the BBS and its predecessor the Common Birds Census (CBC), has been obtained from the BTO/JNCC BirdTrends 2021 report (Massimino *et al.* 2022).





I have not attempted to estimate the current size of breeding populations. For commoner and most scarcer bird species, these are seldom more than informed guesswork and for pigeons and doves this is surely the case. There are no adequate studies of nesting densities of Feral Pigeons and Collared Doves in urban and rural settlements where they are mainly found. Woodpigeons have a breeding season later in the year than the period covered by most breeding bird surveys. Estimates based on Breeding Bird Survey data will be unreliable not least because they will include counts of birds away from breeding areas and, for Feral Pigeon, perhaps some flocks of racing pigeons.

### **Feral Pigeon *Columba livia***

Feral Pigeons originated from the Rock Doves of coastal cliffs and, on the continent, mountains. They have for centuries been domesticated, for food, ornament and racing, and no doubt birds escaping from captivity have existed in the wild for almost as long. Homes *et al.* (1957) noted that feral domestic pigeons had been a feature of London's birdlife since at least the fourteenth century. Cordeaux (1872) reported that it bred in considerable numbers on the cliffs at Flamborough, Yorkshire, with flocks sometimes travelling far inland and across the Humber into Lincolnshire in search of food; interchange with domestic birds was known to occur. Blathwayt (1915) said much the same, while commenting that records could be open to doubt since domestic birds sometimes revert to wild type. Because of doubts that wild birds occurred, Smith & Cornwallis (1955) placed the species in square brackets.

Lorand & Atkin (1989) took a more realistic attitude, describing it as a common and widespread resident, with the main breeding concentrations in larger towns but also found in more rural areas. Despite that, Feral Pigeon remains one of the most disregarded bird species. There was no mention of Feral Pigeon in the first eight LBRs and it is still severely under-reported. For example, counts of up to 400 were made in Lincoln during 2018-2020 but no more than 23 in 2021.



**Plate 3** Feral Pigeons drinking from the Haven at New Holland, November 2007



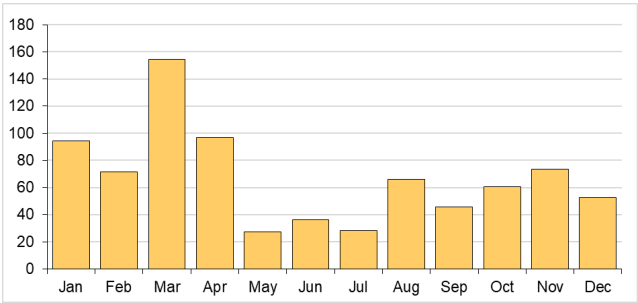


Birds breeding on the east Yorkshire coast may still reach Lincolnshire occasionally, but it is unrealistic to try to separate them from locally breeding birds. Gene flow between feral-type birds and ‘wild’ colonies has occurred throughout Britain, with minimal introgression (i.e. the least degree of hybridisation with Feral Pigeons) only in the Outer Hebrides (Smith *et al.* 2022, Smith 2023). There are no ringing recoveries affecting Lincolnshire and perhaps none has been ringed in the county (certainly none in recent years).

In the most recent atlas coverage (Balmer *et al.* 2013), Feral Pigeons were found in the breeding season in all except one (SK94, north-east of Grantham) of the 10 km squares in Lincolnshire and confirmed as breeding in most. Winter distribution also was almost throughout the county, again missing just one 10 km square (SE91, north-east of Scunthorpe, and since that includes part of the steelworks and Risby Warren a misleading result).

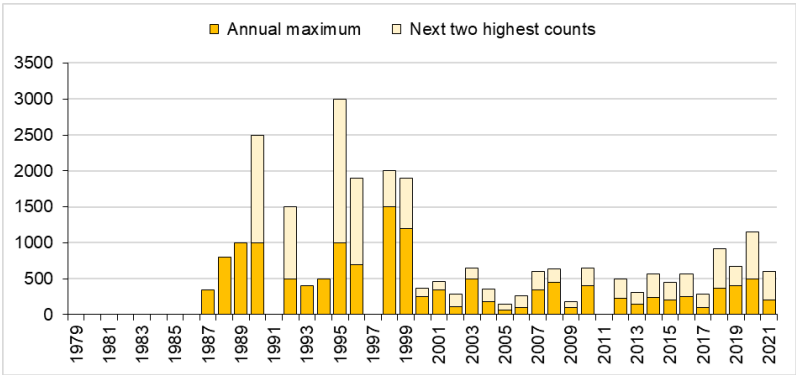
The seasonal pattern of occurrence (Figure 1) is derived from the average of the highest count anywhere in the county for each month, across the eleven years covered by the analysis. It shows no clear pattern. The relatively high totals in March and to a lesser extent throughout January-April are due to chance high counts.

Figure 1. Feral Pigeon: mean monthly maxima



The long term pattern of reported counts is shown in Figure 2. For each year, the highest single count anywhere in the county is shown, plus in a paler shade the sum of the next two highest counts. Note that there were no entries for Feral Pigeon in LBRs before 1987 and that reporting has generally been sparse.

Figure 2. Feral Pigeon: annual maxima







Until 1999, numbers appear to have been higher than subsequently. There may be some basis for believing that is true but it's more likely that it reflects large concentrations that formed at jetties on the Humber where grain and other animal feed was enshipped. These were a notable feature especially at New Holland until the grain handling procedures were improved, with far less spillage. The process also affected the size of flocks of wildfowl such as Mute Swan and Scaup.

Table 1 lists all counts during 1979-2023 of 500 or more Feral Pigeons. These are all along the Humber or within feeding range of Scunthorpe steelworks. The largest three counts of 1,400-1,500, at Burringham in 1998, Loughton Forest in 2022 and Brumby in 2023, were all probably steelworks birds.

**Table 1. Feral Pigeon: counts of 500 or more**

1988	Barton Wold	800 on 23rd December
1989	New Holland	1,000 on 31st December
1990	New Holland	1,000 in January
1990	Scunthorpe-Manton-Messingham	500-1,000 all year
1992	Barton-New Holland	500 during October-December
1994	New Holland	500 in August
1995	New Holland	1,000 all year
1996	New Holland	500 during January-March; 700 during November-December
1998	Burringham	1,500 on 31st December
1999	Immingham Docks	1,200 on 4th March
1999	New Holland	500 in April
2003	New Holland	500 throughout January-February
2004	Scunthorpe	Large numbers (not counted) east of steelworks
2020	Pyewipe	500 on 20th December
2022	Loughton Forest	1,500 flying N towards Scunthorpe on 23rd February & smaller numbers S on subsequent days
2023	Brumby	1,400 in a newly sown field on 12th February

This article mostly covers the period only up to 2021; the later records in Table 1 have been included because they demonstrate that the decreased frequency of high counts otherwise shown by the table is probably misleading. The 1998 and 2022 counts were provided by Graham Catley (also responsible for many of the earlier New Holland counts) when I consulted him over a draft – and, with interest consequently stimulated, he then followed up a report of a flock at Brumby, not far from the steelworks, resulting in the 2023 count.

I've not come across any records for the steelworks themselves, though access restrictions of course add to the disinclination to make counts there. I understand that large numbers of Feral Pigeons occupy the buildings, sitting high above the ladles of molten metal and no doubt benefiting from the warmth. Many, perhaps hundreds, are shot there each year but I have been unable to obtain details.

The predominance of Humber and Scunthorpe counts in Table 1 may well reflect reality, but it is probably influenced by the reluctance of many observers to report Feral Pigeon counts. There must also be substantial populations in other urban centres such as Grimsby, Lincoln and Boston – but counting Feral Pigeons there is perhaps not such an attractive prospect as visiting Far Ings or Frampton Marsh.





**Plate 4** Part of a flock of about 1,400 Feral Pigeons near Brumby, February 2023

So, have numbers genuinely declined since the early 2000s, or is the recent less frequent occurrence of high counts the result of the birds no longer forming such large concentrations, or because no-one records them? Fewer counts are made at New Holland nowadays but the Feral Pigeon totals there are typically 200-400 rather than the large numbers of earlier years (G P Catley pers.comm.). It is possible that Feral Pigeons have declined because of less food being available at grain-shipping locations and in farmland, or because of the redevelopment of buildings meaning that fewer nest sites are available. There has also been speculation that the increase of Peregrines, which habitually



**Plate 5** Feral Pigeons at Barton sewage works: a favoured loafing and feeding area, September 2006





prey on Feral Pigeons, may have had an effect though, of course, the two often nest in proximity (and Peregrines may concentrate on less wary domesticated birds). However, large numbers can still be found (such as the big counts of February 2022 and February 2023 mentioned above), and the fact that flocks at one site have declined doesn't necessarily mean the whole county population has done so.

For Lincolnshire on its own, there are too few BBS squares to describe the population trend reliably. The BBS does indicate an overall decline since 1995 for the East Midlands region (non-significant) and Yorkshire & the Humber regions (43% decline), and for England as a whole (20% decline), but with fluctuating trend lines. This does suggest that decline has occurred, and that wouldn't be surprising, but the scale of decline is not certain, something not helped by the difficulty of distinguishing between pure native Rock Doves, wild-nesting Feral Pigeons, semi-captive dove-cote breeders, and passing racing pigeons.

### Stock Dove *Columba oenas*

Lorand & Atkin (1989) said that the Stock Dove was "a typical bird of farmland as well as old woods and parklands and uses a wide range of breeding sites. It particularly favours hollow trees, old buildings, haystacks and the old nests of other species, and on the coast and sandy warrens in the north-west it regularly nests in rabbit burrows". That remains a good summary, though one could add large nest boxes, such as those of Barn Owls, to the list of nest sites. Blathwayt (1915) mentioned that a few pairs bred "among the towers of Lincoln cathedral"; I don't think that happens now, does it? As for their feeding habitat, Stock Doves are very much farmland birds, taking spilt grain and weed seeds, and the leaves and flowering parts of crops and other plants.

In the nineteenth century, the Stock Dove seems to have been scarcer than now. Lorand & Atkin (1989) suggest that it was "largely confined to old woodlands in the north-west", repeated at the time of writing on the Lincolnshire Bird Club website, but that was probably a misinterpretation of earlier authors such as Cordeaux (1872) who said it was found "only in old woodlands and parks, and nowhere very plentiful" but "not uncommon" in north-west Lincolnshire. But anyway, by the time of Cordeaux (1899) and Blathwayt (1915) a marked increase was underway.

That increase continued until after the middle of the twentieth century, at which point the introduction of organochlorine insecticides as seed dressings caused huge mortality to many bird species including Stock Doves, and a downturn of populations. With the



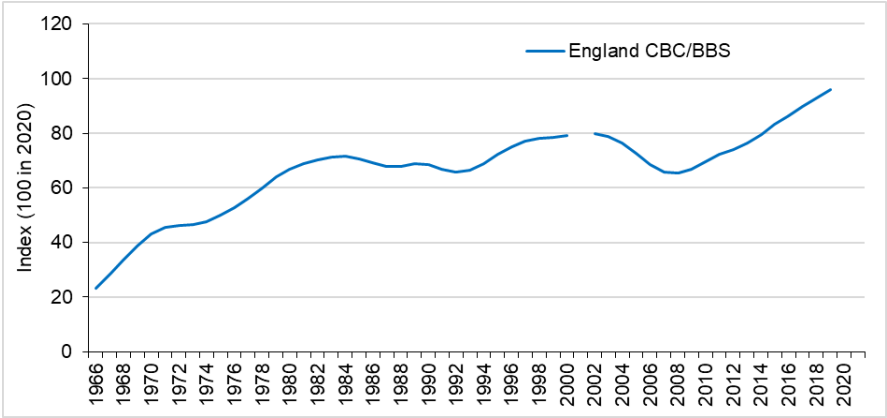
**Plate 6** Male Stock Dove displaying on owl nestbox at Waters' Edge, Barton, March 2008



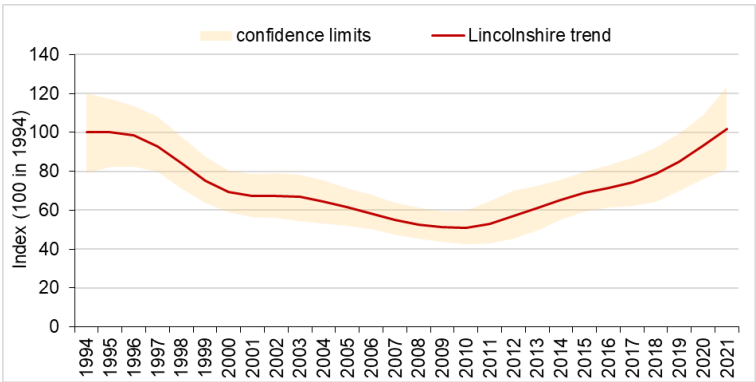


restriction and eventual banning of those chemicals, numbers increased once more (Figure 3, using data downloaded from the BTO/JNCC BirdTrends 2021 report; no confidence limits provided for this dataset). There was a short-lived decline from the late 1990s to about 2010 (more marked in Lincolnshire than nationally) but subsequently the population has recovered to where it was in the mid 1990s (Figure 4).

**Figure 3. Stock Dove: England CBC/BBS trend, 1966-2021**



**Figure 4. Stock Dove: Lincolnshire BBS trend, 1994-2021**

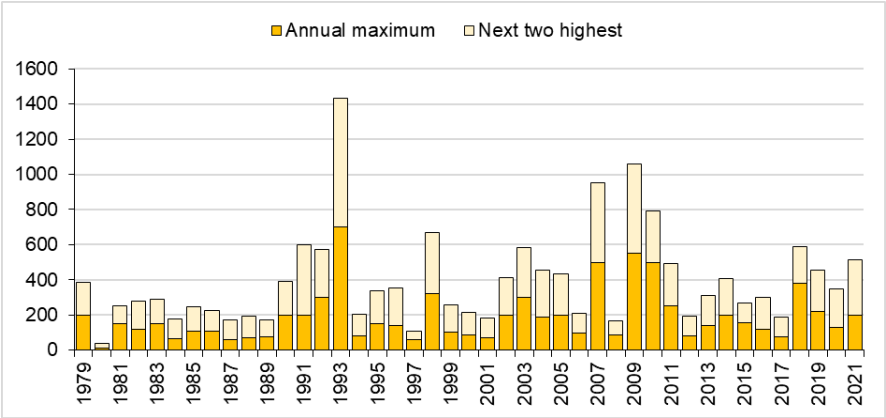


The BBS chart can be misleading if it is viewed in isolation from the earlier rise in population. Even at the time of the 2007-2011 BTO Atlas (Balmer *et al.* 2013), Stock Doves were found in all 10 km squares in winter and were confirmed or probably breeding in all but one (TF03, Aisby-Folkingham, where it must have been overlooked). That was a small but noticeable expansion from the 1988-91 Atlas. With the upturn since 2010, it is now probably as numerous as it has ever been.

Figure 5 shows the size of the highest count reported each year, with the sum of the next two highest in a paler shade.



Figure 5. Stock Dove: annual maxima



The maxima vary quite a lot from year to year. That may be due partly to large flocks forming only when suitable concentrated food sources are available but seems more likely to result from a low level of reporting, not helped by Stock Doves inhabiting many areas seldom visited by birders. Table 2 lists all counts that I've traced of 250 or more. These have occurred only from 1992 onwards; flocks of no more than 200 were reported during 1979-1991. The frequency of high counts has fallen since 2011, which seems surprising since populations have continued to rise since then. The largest counts of all, in 1993, were of birds roosting near Deeping St James, at either end of that year.



Plate 7 Part of a flock of 400 Stock Doves at Pye's Hall, November 2009





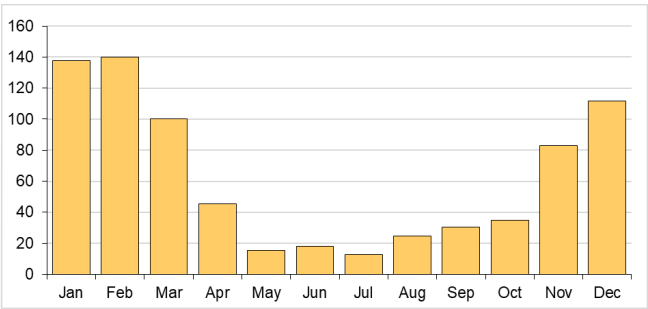
**Table 2. Stock Dove: counts of 250 or more**

Colours indicate seasons: **brown** = autumn, **blue** = winter, **green** = spring

1992	Deeping St James	300 on 28th December
1993	Deeping St James	600 in January-February, up to 700 in late winter period
1998	Blankney Heath	320 on 6th February
2003	Blankney	300 on 23rd January
2007	Swallow	400 in January, 500 on 23rd February, 500 in March
2009	Donna Nook/Pye's Hall	550 on 19th November, 400 on 4th December
2009	Gibraltar Point	286 on 4th November
2010	Grainthorpe Marsh	500 on 26th January
2011	Donna Nook	250 in November
2018	Gibraltar Point	378 (364 S) on 13th November

The seasonal pattern of maximum counts (Figure 6) is a rise and fall around the largest totals in January-February. This reflects the formation of flocks through the winter, with birds found largely as pairs or small groups in spring and summer.

**Figure 6. Stock Dove: mean monthly maxima**



**Plate 8** Displaying Stock Doves at Waters' Edge, Barton, April 2006





There is no suggestion in Figure 6 of autumn passage (as will be seen later for Woodpigeon). British Stock Doves are largely sedentary, in contrast to those in northern continental Europe which migrate to Iberia for the winter (Wernham *et al.* 2002). Of the 36 ringing recoveries affecting Lincolnshire listed in the BTO Online Ringing Report, 33 were in Lincolnshire and the remaining three in neighbouring counties.

Birds are, however, occasionally seen moving in numbers, as though on passage. A notable example of that is shown in Table 2, involving 364 seen flying S on 13th November 2018. Significantly, that was the date of the highest recorded passage of Woodpigeons in Lincolnshire (see below). It is possible that the Stock Doves were simply caught up with the Woodpigeon passage. Alternatively, it may be that birds engaged in migration from northern to south-western Europe, which normally stick to the continent, are occasionally drifted over to Britain by weather conditions. Such occurrences are thought to have been more frequent historically (Wernham *et al.* 2002) and would be expected to affect areas in south-east England more than Lincolnshire.

### Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*

The Woodpigeon, widespread and abundant today, has probably always been one of the more numerous birds in Lincolnshire. However, it must have been not quite so common at one time. There was a perception that it had become commoner in the nineteenth century with Cordeaux (1872), writing about the Humber district, saying that it had “greatly increased during the last ten years”; and there has been a huge increase during the past 50 years.

Woodpigeons nest and roost in woodland and scrub, plus of course parks and gardens, and feed there on tree leaves, seeds and so on, but they are primarily farmland birds. They are well able to exploit the concentrations of resources that agriculture provides. The recent large acreages of oil seed rape (a feature of the farmed landscape mainly since the 1970s) have been especially beneficial to them, with freshly growing seedlings particularly favoured. They can also feed in large numbers on other newly sown seeds and germinating plants, of cereals and peas for example. Large numbers



Plate 9 Woodpigeon in a garden at Barton-upon-Humber, May 2020

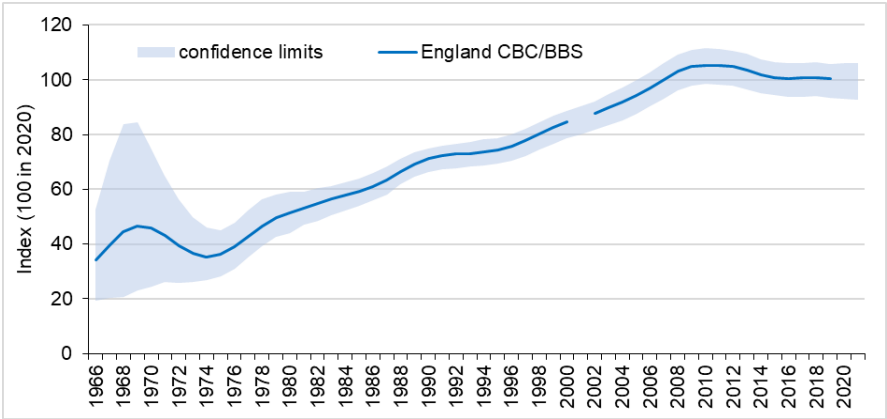




are shot sometimes in such situations. Crops are cleaner and more efficiently harvested than they used to be, but pigeons still find plenty of weed seeds and spilt seeds after harvest. Historically, forage crops such as clover also were important, and thought to be responsible for some of the nineteenth century increases (Lorand & Atkin 1989).

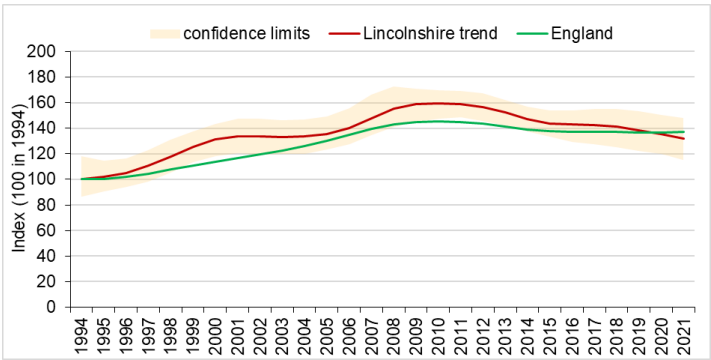
Figure 7 illustrates the rise in England since the 1960s (source BTO/JNCC BirdTrends 2021 report). Confidence limits were wide to begin with, but the trend has been one of steep increase, with the population some 260% higher in 2010 than in the early 1970s.

Figure 7. Woodpigeon: England CBC/BBS trend, 1966-2021



In Lincolnshire, Woodpigeons are pretty well ubiquitous, finding nest sites wherever there is a tree or bush, and occasionally using buildings such as derelict farm buildings. The population trend here is likely to have been similar to that nationally, something that has continued during the period when the better structured BBS has operated (Figure 8). Note, though, that the increase has not been sustained since 2010. In England as a whole, there was a statistically significant 5.7% decline between 2010 and 2020. The data for Lincolnshire suggests a larger decline of 15.2%, but that is not (quite) statistically significant.

Figure 8. Woodpigeon: Lincolnshire BBS trend, 1994-2021





There is not much sign of recent decline in the peak counts reported in Lincolnshire annually. Figure 9 shows the highest count plus, in paler shade, the sum of the next two highest for each year from 1979 to 2021. As obvious from the y-axis, as from actually going out birdwatching, Woodpigeons are much more numerous than the other species covered in this article.

Figure 9. Woodpigeon: annual maxima

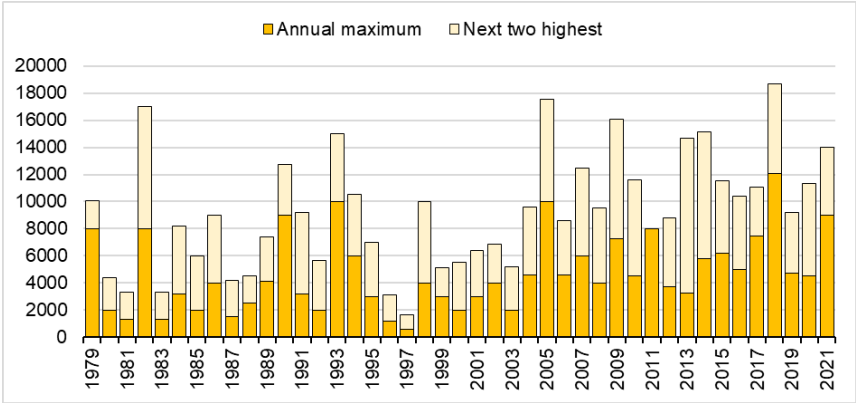


Plate 10 Part of a large flock of Woodpigeons in the Goxhill-East Halton area, February 2009







Table 3 lists counts of 5,000 or more during 1979–2021, colour-coded by season. There are four reports of 10,000 or more (in 1993, 2005, 2016 and 2018) with 12,062 in the last of those years the highest. However, I am aware of an estimate of 22,000 flying S at Gibraltar Point on 2nd November 2022, after the period covered by this review. Some of these counts may have been of birds feeding in fields but the majority, even if not stated, will have been those on passage or heading to or from winter roost sites. Daily feeding movements can be quite long. In autumn, flocks totalling several hundred can be seen daily crossing the Humber from Yorkshire to feed in Lincolnshire, returning later in the day.

**Table 3. Woodpigeon: counts of 5,000 or more**

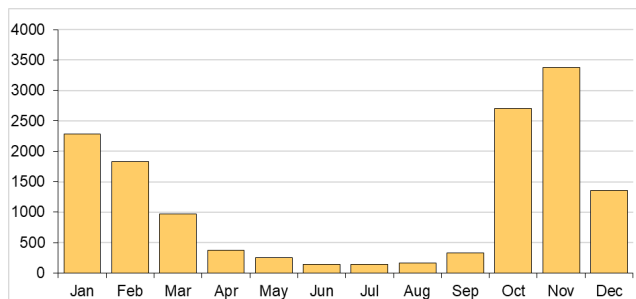
Colours indicate seasons: **brown** = autumn, **blue** = winter, **green** = spring

1979	North Thoresby	8,000 at roost on 26th December
1982	Stallingborough	5,000 on 3rd February
1982	Gibraltar Point	8,000 S on 13th November
1990	Alma Wood, Grantham	9,000 on 24th January
1993	Appleby Carrs	10,000 on 14th December
1994	Harmston	6,000 at roost on 24th November
2005	Castle Bytham	5,500 on 3rd January
2005	Ruckland	10,000 on 27th February
2005	Gibraltar Point	7,550 on 4th November, 6,200 on 5th November
2007	Wellingore Heath	6,000 on 16th November
2009	Gibraltar Point	7,250 on 2nd November
2011	Waddington	8,000 on 24th February
2014	Humberston	5,000 on 30th September
2014	Gibraltar Point	5,800 on 20th October, 5,350 on 25th October
2015	Gibraltar Point	6,160 S on 8th November
2016	Old Bolingbroke	10,390 on 23rd January
2017	Gibraltar Point	7,480 in October
2018	Gibraltar Point	5,100 (incl 4,850 S) on 24th October, 12,062 on 13th November
2021	Gibraltar Point	6,310 on 22nd October, 7,710 on 1st November, 9,000 on 2nd November

A couple of points can be made about Table 3. First, more high counts have been reported from 2005 onwards than in the first half of the period since 1979. That could reflect the higher Woodpigeon population now present but I suspect that it is partly connected with observer numbers and reporting rates. Second, it's noticeable that earlier high counts were mainly in winter while later ones have been mainly in autumn. That could have some basis in reality, if migrant numbers have remained high or increased while resident populations have stabilised, but again I suspect it's the result of changing observer behaviour, with greater emphasis on recording visual migration.

The seasonal pattern of Woodpigeon reports shows great variation between low numbers in spring and summer and larger numbers in winter, with the pronounced peak in October–November. That latter feature is associated with the autumn movements of the species, which I'll come to shortly, but at other times of year the variation is the result of birds flocking – and being therefore more likely to be counted – in winter but being more dispersed in summer.



**Figure 10. Woodpigeon: mean monthly maxima**

The majority of Woodpigeons seen in Lincolnshire are fairly sedentary. Of 199 ringing recoveries affecting the county, only 17 came from outside Lincolnshire or neighbouring counties (BTO Online Ringing Report). However, some locally-bred birds do move away; a Gibraltar Point nestling of 1996 was shot in Kent in January 1997 (the most distant recovery in Britain) while one ringed at Friskney in 1959 was shot in north-western France in January 1960.

There has often been debate about the origin of Woodpigeons involved in the large autumn movements (e.g. Wernham *et al.* 2002). These have sometimes been assumed to be British birds dispersing in search of food, a view supported by there being few overseas ringing recoveries and few observations of birds arriving or departing over the sea. But neither are movements of the scale being seen reflected in recoveries of British-ringed birds.

Continental Woodpigeons are far more migratory than ours, with birds from Scandinavia and Finland travelling to France, Spain and Portugal for the winter. As with Stock Doves, it seems that a proportion of these migrants travel via southern Britain, at least in the right weather conditions. The passage is usually very condensed, lasting just a few days; the most common period for movements seems to be the first week of November, though it can occur any time from mid October to early December. Numbers seen elsewhere, especially to the south of Lincolnshire, can be far higher than seen here so far. The highest total that I am aware of is 264,600 moving SW near the Severn Bridges in Gwent on 4th November 2022 (a couple of days after the Lincolnshire record).

One possibility, put forward in Wernham *et al.* (2002), is that the migrants are in Britain for too short a time for many to be ringed, or ringed birds to be recovered. It's still a bit of a mystery, though, as relatively few are seen arriving or departing. Do they perhaps make crossings at high altitude? Apparently, that happens crossing the Severn (see Portskewett entry for 02/11/2021 on Trektellen.org). And ringing recoveries fitting with the theory that these are continental migrants do exist, even if sparsely, including one involving Lincolnshire: an adult ringed at Crowland Common on 25th October 1971 was shot in northern France on 27th November 1971.

Autumn Woodpigeon movements occurred in the past as now and perhaps were larger at one time. Cordeaux (1899) reported that "immense numbers come into the east coast districts from the Continent in November and December, and spread over the country, these enormous flights preceding gales of wind and snowstorms". Blathwayt (1915) was in no doubt that they were immigrants: "very large flocks from the continent also visit the county in the Winter, and some years the numbers in these flocks are enormous".





**Plate 11** Adult Turtle Dove feeding on farm track, north Lincolnshire, June 2014

### **Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur***

The speed of the recent decline of Turtle Dove numbers has been shocking. While never abundant in Lincolnshire, even twenty years ago it could be found without much difficulty throughout the county. Now, there are only a few handfuls of pairs and the vanishing point seems close.

The species has always been commoner in the south of England than further north, but it had spread northwards and westwards in the second half of the nineteenth century, perhaps in response to the increased area under arable cultivation (Brown & Grice 2005). Cordeaux (1872) thought it “only a rare and occasional wanderer into north Lincolnshire”, though by 1899 he noted that it had become “quite common” in that area.

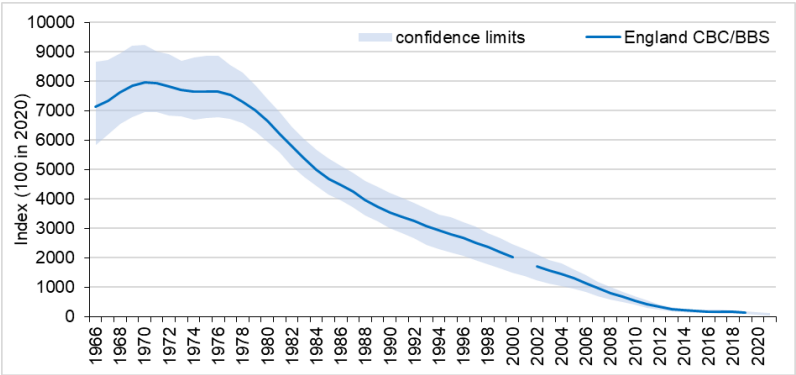
By the time of the first BTO atlas (1968-72), Turtle Dove had reached its maximum extent of distribution in Britain. Its retraction from that point in successive atlases can be seen on the BTO website (go to <https://app.bto.org/mapstore/StoreServlet?id=272>). By 2008-11, there had been major losses in the west and north but only a few in Lincolnshire.

The atlas maps show distribution by 10 km square, and it should be remembered that populations can decrease a lot while distribution at that fairly coarse scale is maintained. The decline was well under way nationally and in Lincolnshire by 2010. We do not have enough BBS squares to produce a county BBS index through to the present, but the long-term combined CBC/BBS index for the whole of England – including the south-east with its denser Turtle Dove population – illustrates only too well the scale of the decline (Figure 11).





Figure 11. Turtle Dove: England CBC/BBS trend, 1966-2021



To illustrate the trend in Lincolnshire, I have – as for other species – extracted from the data sources the three highest reported counts for each year during 1979-2021 (only a single high count is mentioned in the annual reports for 1987, 1989 and 1991). These are shown in Figure 12, with the maximum in orange and the sum of the other two in a paler shade. These counts are frequently of birds on passage, and thus do not necessarily relate to Lincolnshire breeding birds, but still form a reasonable measure of the trend.

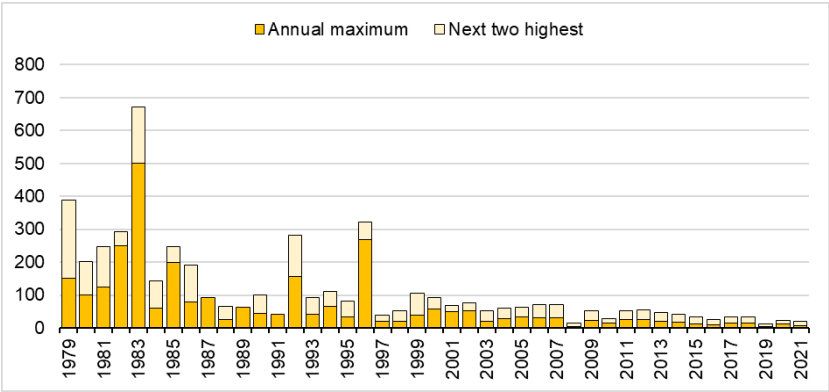


Plate 12 Juvenile Turtle Dove feeding on road verge, Winteringham Haven, August 2011





Figure 12. Turtle Dove: annual maxima



The last count of 20 or more was in 2013, and we have to go back to 2002 for one above 40. Yet, not long before that, three-figure counts were commonplace. Table 4 includes all counts of 100 or more reported in Lincolnshire Bird Reports or the database. As can be seen, the majority are spring passage counts between 8th May and 1st June, with the period of 22nd-28th May featuring prominently.

Table 4. Turtle Dove: counts of 100 or more

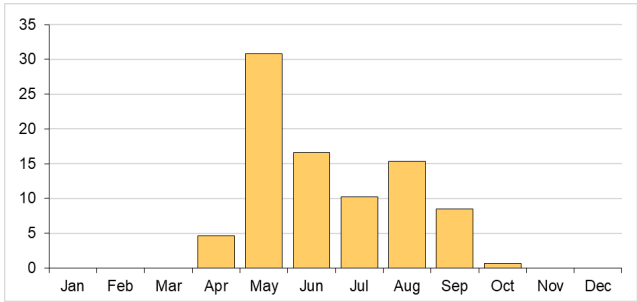
Colours indicate seasons: **green = spring**, **brown = autumn**

1979	Barrow Haven	101 on 8th May
1979	Gibraltar Point	150 S on 23rd May
1979	Donna Nook	138 N on 1st June
1980	Gibraltar Point	100 on 27th May
1981	Barrow Haven	100 W on 22nd May
1981	Gibraltar Point	123 on 23rd May
1982	Gibraltar Point	250 S on 22nd May, 159 S on 23rd May
1983	Gibraltar Point	500 S on 8th May, 300 on 14th May
1983	Theddlethorpe	100 N on 8th May
1985	Theddlethorpe	115 on 25th May
1985	Gibraltar Point	200 S on 25th May, 134 including 100 S on 26th May
1992	Gibraltar Point	100 on 22 May
1992	South Ferriby	156 on 26th August
1996	Gibraltar Point	268 S on 20th May, 99 S on 31st May

The seasonal pattern (Figure 13) shows the May peak well. This chart is based on the years 1998-2007 and 2021 only, and thus the mean peak counts are quite small. We don't have fully computerised data for earlier years, but the pattern then would probably be similar.



Figure 13. Turtle Dove: mean monthly maxima



First dates for Turtle Dove in spring average about 19th April (Figure 14a), and there has not been much of a shift towards earlier arrival as there has been for many summer migrants. The earliest ones were two on 10th April 1993 at Donna Nook, and singles on 11th April 1979 at Saltfleetby and 11th April 2018 at Spalding. There was also one at Goxhill on 17th March 2016, but that was thought to be an escape. I have excluded, as unreliable or input errors, the following database records, that in 2012 published in the LBR: singles on 3rd April 1998 and 23rd March 2012 at Gibraltar Point (after consultation with Kevin Wilson) and one at Caythorpe on 2nd April 2004 (a record via BirdGuides, observer unknown).

Last dates (Figure 14b) show a pronounced shift towards earlier departure in the years from 1979 to 1990 but after that have remained fairly stable, averaging about 28th September though with a fair amount of year-to-year fluctuation. The three November records were all singles at Donna Nook, on 7th November 1979, 26th November 1979 and 8th November 1983, in each case separated from the next latest by quite a few days. Lorand & Atkin (1989) mention another one, location not mentioned, on 11th November 1974.



Plate 13 Adult Turtle Dove in flight, Barton, May 2009





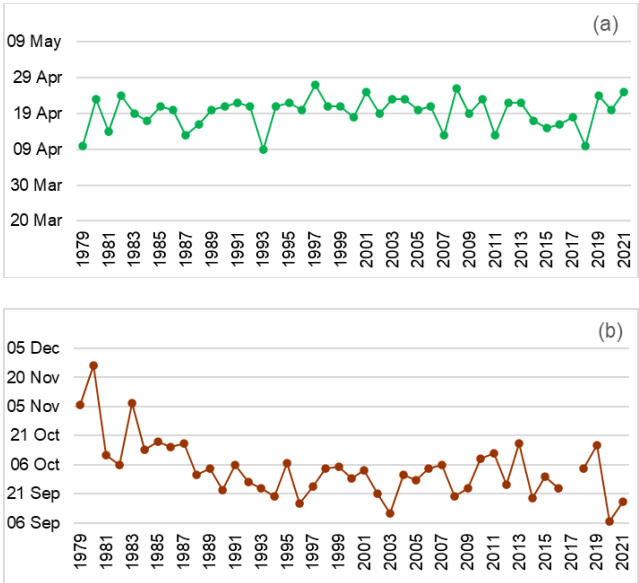
Plate 14 Breeding pair of Turtle Doves in hawthorn, East Halton, July 2010







Figure 14. Turtle Dove: (a) first and (b) last dates



As well as those single-date November records, there have been two winter records in Lincolnshire. The first was one that associated with Collared Doves at Cleethorpes Zoo from November 1966 to February 1967. The second was one photographed in a garden in Lincoln on 17th December 2014. Turtle Doves breeding in western Europe travel to winter in sub-Saharan Africa via Iberia and Morocco, while those from central and eastern Europe cross the central Mediterranean or fly around its eastern end. There are 17 ringing recoveries affecting Lincolnshire, three within the county, one on the Isle of Wight and the remainder further overseas. Eleven involved movements to, or in one case from, western France, Spain and Portugal. One was in Mali: a first-year bird ringed at Deeping St Nicholas on 3rd September 1985 was shot at Yelimane in western Mali on or before 29th March 1986. The final recovery involved another Deeping St Nicholas bird, ringed there as a nestling in August 1969 and found dead in cold weather in Switzerland on 13th May 1972; that individual possibly had used the central Mediterranean route.

There is plenty of debate about the causes of the Turtle Dove decline, which has been severe throughout Europe especially in the west and also thought to be occurring further east in the species' range, in western and central Asia (BirdLife International 2023). I am not going to discuss possible drivers of decline in detail here. They may include food shortage in breeding areas, disease, hunting pressures on migration, and habitat change in migration stopover and wintering areas. Turtle Doves nest in scrub, hedgerows, coppice woodland and young plantations and feed mainly on weed seeds with some grain. We know that habitat loss and the deterioration of its quality together with reductions in food availability have adversely affected other farmland birds, but none quite so severely as Turtle Dove. It may be the combination of factors that has led to such a steep decline in numbers. For further information on Turtle Dove research and conservation efforts, the website [www.operationturtledove.org](http://www.operationturtledove.org) is a good place to start.





### Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

The story of the spread of the Collared Dove across Europe in the twentieth century is well known; it now occupies most of the continent and has reached Iceland and the Azores. Introductions to the Bahamas spread to Florida, and this non-native population has spread across North America. It's a tale seemingly of unbroken success – but perhaps there are now hints that all is no longer well.



**Plate 15** Collared Doves seem well able to cope with hard weather, Barton, December 2005

The first Collared Dove to be recorded in Lincolnshire was at Manton in the first or second week of May 1952, remaining there until September and present again during April–October 1953 and subsequent years (May & Fisher 1953, Smith & Cornwallis 1955, Hudson 1965). The species was not officially added to the British list until 1955, when more birds appeared in Norfolk, but many recent publications have implied that the possibility of the Manton bird being an escape, which was the reason for it not being accepted as the first, was overplayed; at least one (Wernham et al. 2002) treats it as the first for Britain.

The expansion of the British Collared Dove population, in distribution and numbers, was rapid. By the time of the first BTO atlas (1968–72), it was present in the majority of 10 km squares in Lincolnshire, and it was found in all of them in the two subsequent atlases. However, it has never broken away from an association with humans. Built-up areas (especially towns and villages) remain the breeding areas for almost all Collared Doves, and they feed predominantly in such areas. From the early days, favoured feeding areas have been grain storage and milling sites. Sometimes, flocks may be found in open countryside but usually only where there is abundant spilt grain.

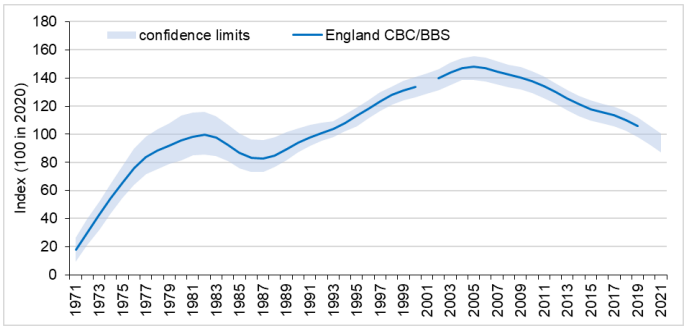




**Plate 16** Collared Dove has become a typical garden bird, Barton, February 2018

For this species, the combined CBC/BBS index is not available until 1971 (Figure 15). Over the next 35 years, there was a huge increase (despite a short-lived dip in the 1980s), with numbers by 2005 some seven times higher than in 1971. But then a reversal started, with a decline of a third or more by 2021.

**Figure 15. Collared Dove: England CBC/BBS trend, 1971-2021**

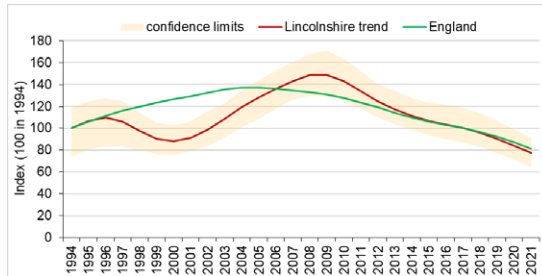


In the BBS era, from 1994 onwards, the Lincolnshire trend is reasonably close to that for England as a whole. In Figure 16, it can be seen that the Lincolnshire trend line follows a somewhat sinuous course, compared to that for England, but it does have rather wide confidence limits, and it has been declining since 2009. The county population change between 2010 and 2020 is estimated to be a statistically significant decline of 41%.



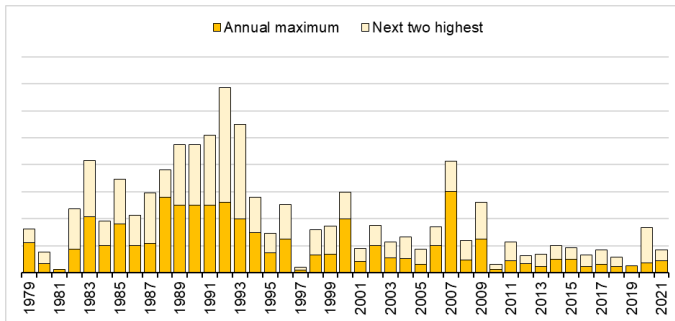


**Figure 16: Collared Dove: Lincolnshire BBS trend, 1994-2021**



The recent decline is evident in annual maximum counts reported to Lincolnshire Bird Club (Figure 17). However, as so often with bird club data, the picture is distorted to an extent by limited coverage and attention being focused on exceptional concentrations. In this case, numbers are seen to be low from 2010 onwards, but the very high counts in the period prior to 1995 are mainly from the grain shipping pier at New Holland. The scale of the change from high to low counts may be exaggerated, but the overall trend of decline is real.

**Figure 17. Collared Dove: annual maxima**



The decline from 2005 is likely to be linked to the parasitic disease trichomonosis (BTO BirdFacts), although there have also been suggestions that Grey Squirrels may have had an effect on numbers. The size of the decrease since 2005 has been large; at 37% in England, it's the same as the decrease in Turtle Dove numbers between 1969 and 1984 – and in this case we can't blame foreigners and their guns.

Table 5 lists all reported counts of 300 or more from 1979 onwards (I am not aware of any such counts prior to 1979). The high counts were all in autumn or winter, and the predominance of New Holland is obvious.

The highest count of all came in 2007, around the time when breeding numbers reached their peak (Figure 16). That total of 600 has been confirmed by Gervase Orton, who counted them on a regular cycle circuit around Pinchbeck. He also mentioned counting 84 flying up from the ground in his garden on 17th November 2008 – the area clearly was a Collared Dove hotspot. The trend in the garden has mirrored that of the BBS: there were typically only one-two in the garden in 1990, and by 2022 10-15 was the usual total (though numbers may have been affected also by changes in feeding practice and removal of some trees).





Table 5. Collared Dove: counts of 300 or more

Colours indicate seasons: **brown** = autumn, **blue** = winter, **green** = spring

1983	Gunness	415 on 28th December
1985	Cleethorpes	361 at roost on 23rd December
1988	New Holland	560 on 17th January
1989	New Holland	500 on 31st December
1990	New Holland	500 in January (150 shot in May)
1991	New Holland	300 in February (many shot April-May), 500 in December
1992	New Holland	Peak counts 520 in January, 360 in October, 450 in November, 400 in December
1993	New Holland	300 on 8th January, 400 in mid February, 400 on 1st December
1994	New Holland	300 on 27th November
2000	Boston	400 during January-June (exact date/s not recorded)
2007	Pinchbeck	600 on 9th September

It is worth noting the large numbers being shot at New Holland in the period when numbers there were at their peak. The shooting seemed to make little difference to the numbers arriving; it was only when handling procedures were improved that numbers decreased.

The seasonal pattern of reported Collared Dove counts (Figure 18) is much as one would expect, with higher numbers during autumn and winter, when they are found in flocks, than in spring and summer, when they are more dispersed. The spike in monthly maxima in September is due to the one exceptional count of 600 at Pinchbeck (see above).

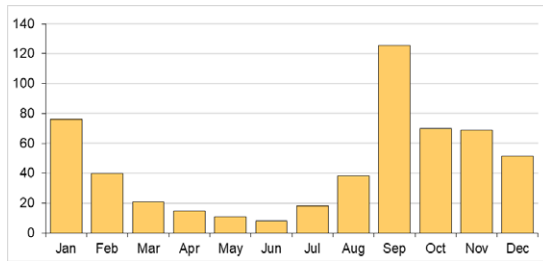


Plate 17. Collared Doves feeding at smallholding, Goxhill Marsh, November 2022





**Figure 18. Collared Dove: mean monthly maxima**



There are two ringing recoveries from abroad, both from many years ago now, at the time when immigration was at its height. Both were ringed as adults in Belgium, the first in November 1969 and shot at Heckington in May 1970, the other in December 1976 and shot at Eastoft on the Yorkshire boundary in March 1978. The longest distance recoveries from Lincolnshire have been one to Dublin between 1971 and 1975, plus two to Northumberland and one to north Wales, all in the period 1966-1976. The subsequent diminution of long-distance dispersal is noted nationally by Wernham *et al.* (2002).

## Conclusions

Descriptions of the status of pigeons and doves in Lincolnshire are constrained by the sparseness of data (and it's a problem not limited to this county). This is not to say that there are not many records (at least for some species) but rather that they can be limited in quality in various ways. There is a tendency, of course, to note only what is unusual but that tendency is most marked for species perceived as being uninteresting. The advent of bird recording facilities such as BirdTrack and eBird have, to an extent, encouraged more even recording between species, but groups such as doves and gulls (except the scarcer ones) still receive less attention than, say, thrushes and waders. The emphasis of BirdTrack analyses on 'complete lists' which take into account simply presence or absence, doesn't help.

Among the shortcomings of the data are the following:

- Some species are often simply disregarded, almost as non-birds: Feral Pigeon is such a species.
- There are geographical biases to recording, as observers concentrate on hotspots such as wetlands and ignore less favoured urban areas and farmland.
- The fact that some observers do record these species more assiduously introduces further geographical bias, with records seeming to suggest those observers' areas hold more of the species than elsewhere.

As an example of this, for Woodpigeon in 2021, the LBC database holds 7,404 records, of which no fewer than 2,008 (27%) were submitted simply as presence, with no count at all. Only 78 counts were of 500 or more, yet flocks of that size must be everywhere for much of the year.

For Feral Pigeon in 2021, 149 observers submitted a total of 1,619 records. About 70% of them (1,130) came from ten individual observers, and 37% (601) from just three observers. I suppose that at least it was an improvement over 2001, when only eleven Feral Pigeon records were received for the whole year, seven from one observer and site.

Despite such limitations, the records do allow some interesting facets of pigeon and dove occurrence in the county to be described.





**Feral Pigeon:** once almost completely ignored, there has been improvement in recording but it is still limited. Numbers at the New Holland grain terminal have declined but that may not reflect county-wide trends. The Scunthorpe steelworks may now hold the largest population, but the size of many urban populations remains unknown.

**Stock Dove:** has never been nearly as numerous as Woodpigeon but there has been an increasing trend for many years, bar some short-lived dips. Flocks of up to 500-700 have been recorded in autumn and winter but many large flocks are probably not counted or reported. The species is believed to be highly sedentary; occasional movements are seen but they could be simply caught up with Woodpigeon passage.

**Woodpigeon:** there have been huge increases during the past 150 years but these may possibly have ended. Flocks seen feeding, moving to or from roosts or migrating can be vast, with counts of 5,000 or more fairly frequent. Migration of continental through south-east Britain birds can affect Lincolnshire; the record county total of 22,000 in November 2022 was assumed to involve migrants.

**Turtle Dove:** the decline that began in the 1970s has reached the point where loss from Lincolnshire as a breeding species seems likely. Younger birders may be surprised that only 30 years ago counts of 100-200 were still being made. Reasons for the decline may include food shortage in breeding areas, disease, hunting pressures on migration, and habitat change in migration stopover and wintering areas, or combinations of those.

**Collared Dove:** there was an amazing increase after Lincolnshire and then the rest of Britain was colonised in the 1950s. It remains, though, closely associated with humans, largely restricted to built-up areas, with breeding still unusual in the wider countryside. It is not much realised that the increase has ceased, and populations appear to have been in quite steep decline for fifteen years. Fewer large flocks, of 300 or more, have been seen since the 1990s than earlier, but the largest count of all, of 600, was made at Pinchbeck in 2007.

## Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to Graham Catley for helpful comments on a draft article, greatly improving especially the part dealing with Feral Pigeon, and for providing some additional data and all of the photographs. Gervase Orton and Kevin Wilson kindly responded to my queries about some Pinchbeck and Gibraltar Point records. Charlie Barnes, Phil Hyde and Phil Espin provided me with records from the LBC database. Summaries like this are possible only thanks to the many observers who have submitted records over the years. Please keep them coming and, if using BirdTrack or similar, it is helpful to provide counts rather than simply indicating presence. To test your skill in estimating numbers of pigeons, how many are there in Plate 19? Answer at the end of References.



**Plate 18** Woodpigeon pair in courtship display, Waters' Edge, Barton, February 2017





**Plate 19** Woodpigeons, Goxhill, March 2010. How many are there?

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Woodpigeon answer: 1,280





# The Peregrines of Louth in 2021

Geoff Mullett

## Introduction

For the seventh consecutive year, the resident pair of Peregrines Falcons overwintered around St. James Church, Louth and by the middle of Jan 2021 they were observed flying together and 'pair-bonding'. The gravel-filled nest tray was installed on the north walkway on Jan 21st, together with the camera that for some years has relayed images to the TV screen in the church coffee shop. For the first time however, we had the bonus of two webcams, purchased by the LBC and linked by a wireless bridge from an antenna located on the south walkway, to a similar one attached to the wall of our house across the church driveway. This was wired to a 3TB capacity HIK hard drive with a 21" monitor attached and linked via our router, to enable live images to be streamed on the LBC and Louth Peregrines websites.

Images were recorded 24 hours a day from the end of Jan to the end of Jun, with the salient clips extracted for the websites and YouTube. We had hoped for some cracking images throughout the season – and we weren't disappointed.

## Courtship

The first visits to the nest tray were recorded on Feb 11th. The pair spent 13 minutes there creating a depression in the gravel, achieved by lying belly-down and pushing forward scraping with their talons pushing the gravel back. All the while, the pair emitted a series of 'cheeps' and 'clucks'. Both birds were involved in creating the depression although not always in the same place, so at this stage, it appeared to be more of a bonding ritual than a practical attempt to create a place to hold the eggs.

There were regular visits by the pair, touching beaks and performing a 'head-bowing' display, until on Mar 8th the pair were seen copulating on one of the spire crockets. Four visits were made on Mar 9th and on Mar 11th the pair briefly copulated again on one of the gargoyles. From mid-Mar there were 3-4 visits daily starting before dawn. Courtship display continued with an extended sequence on the 24th when over an hour was spent on the nest, and the female slept there for several hours during the night. On Mar 26th, the male brought in a gift of prey for the female, and this was later followed by the pair copulating on one of the gargoyles – again caught briefly on camera. The female spent much of that day on the nest and was there again at first light on Mar 27th.

## The eggs

The first egg appeared at 16.15 on Mar 27th. Its arrival brought a display of bonding from the pair. The male arrived through one of the trefoil openings in the castellations and inspected the egg with much heads-down 'clucking' and 'chukking', before the female settled down to keep it covered and the male left. The female covered the egg for three hours before leaving. On Mar 28th, the egg was unattended for four hours with both birds returning at 18.40. This was normal behaviour – an egg can remain viable for days providing it doesn't get warm from incubation as it won't have started to develop. We have seen in previous years that the female won't usually incubate until the penultimate egg has appeared, thereby ensuring the eggs hatch within a day or two of each other. Until then she just sits over the eggs to protect them, and her brood patch doesn't make contact with the eggs.

The second egg arrived at 01.22 on Mar 28th, the infra-red light of the camera recording the female sitting upright and the glistening egg emerging pointed end first. She hesitated for a moment, turned to inspect it, then used her beak to move it close to the other one. (The egg appears, I've read, having arrived at the uterus just before the shell is created and some six hours after it was





released from the ovary and fertilised.) The calcium needed to form the shell is acquired from the peregrine's diet, no doubt supplemented by her tendency to eat small bits of gravel from the nest tray.

The third egg arrived at 10.49 on Apr 1st, with the male starting to spend more time on the eggs, to give the female a break. On Apr 2nd, the female arrived and with a succession of face to face 'clucks' and 'squeaks' tried to persuade the male to move away. This was only achieved however, when she towered over him, forcing him to retreat. Being far larger, the female can cover the eggs more efficiently. The male returned later with a pigeon carcass that he presented to the female. She took it and clutching it in one talon hopped away and out of sight. (This hopping and dragging behaviour was soon to be witnessed from the juveniles.)

The fourth egg was laid at 23.25 on Apr 3rd. Incubation had started two to three days previously, so it was (correctly) thought that four eggs would be the limit.

### Incubation

With incubation well under way the pair swapped places 3-4 times in a 24-hour period increasing to around 8 times later on although the female spent far longer on the eggs – on Apr 15th she sat overnight for 12 hours without a break. With her brood patches and larger size, she was more capable of incubating the eggs on the chilly spring nights. Invariably, changeovers were accompanied by contact calls, the male 'whining' and the female responding with 'clucks' and 'cheeps', and the eggs were often rolled during changeover.

On Apr 19th, with the eggs keeping warm in the afternoon sun, the pair spent several minutes airborne, chasing each other, coming together, tumbling and diving – a great display of bonding.

### Emergencies

At various times throughout the breeding season the adults, ever alert, reacted to any threat to their eggs and young. Passing raptors were the main perceived threat and this year there were 3 observations of overflying Common Buzzards being harried. On May 1st, 3 hours into his stint on the eggs, the male was alerted to the female's 'cack-cack-cack' alarm call. He hurled himself



Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* Louth June 19th 2021 © MARK JOHNSON





out of the nearest opening in the castellations to support the female in chasing off a visiting Peregrine. The female returned to the eggs 5 minutes later. A more real threat to unattended eggs or small chicks are the Herring Gulls which now breed in the town and have nests just across the road from St. James. On 12th May, our camera caught the moment an adult gull appeared in the castellation opening opposite the nest. Both adults were feeding the young at the time and the male immediately broke off to chase the gull, while the female issued her 'yapping' call, before resuming the feed. Later in June the female was seen going after a very high-flying Red Kite.

### Hatching

The first three chicks arrived as expected, on May 7th, 41 days after the first egg was laid, 36 days after the third. The first one hatched at 05.25, the others at 6-hour intervals. The female was seen to eat the shell of the third egg (presumably she ate the other two), replacing the calcium lost in the production of the shells before laying. The fourth chick arrived the following day, May 8th, at 22.00.

### Feeding & brooding

Management of the four chicks now began in earnest. On May 10th the adults were seen swapping brooding duties on 13 occasions, accompanied by whining calls. The female spent more time covering the chicks, sometimes with her wings splayed out for greater protection, particularly when Louth suffered some unseasonal weather and hail clattered down on the walkway and the nest roof. The chicks themselves were starting to huddle together for warmth, something they continued to do even after fledging. Six feeds were recorded on May 10th – mostly prey brought in by the male who usually left it for the female to dissect, then offering delicate morsels to the chicks while all the time issuing 'chucking' sounds. It did appear that the chick which pushed itself forward received the greater portion, but close observation revealed that as one chick was satiated, it withdrew, and another took its place. They had insatiable appetites and by May 22nd, their swollen crops were clear to see.

### Ringing

Ringing took place on 26th May. I accompanied Alan Ball and his wife to the tower walkway. Within seconds of our arrival the Peregrines spotted us, and the adults took to the air, emitting their alarm call. As in previous years, the smaller male flew higher above the church, while the female flew low, circling the spire. The ringing took around 15 minutes and the juveniles were found to be three females and one male. All were judged to be healthy and well-fed. Each bird had a metal BTO ring attached to its right leg and an orange East Midland ring on the left leg. Those on the three females read PXL, PZL, PAN, and the male, PBN. We have been able to record these using our telescope from the garden as the birds perched on various crockets and gargoyles around the church.

### Towards fledging

At the beginning of June, the juveniles were seen to regularly exercise their wings, shedding the white, downy feathers. Earlier than expected, two of the juveniles left the nest tray, though they stayed close by, unable to return to the nest due to their inability to climb over the side of the tray. Feeding continued apace, with the arrival of an adult, with or without food, greeted by prolonged screeching. The size of prey varied – often a Starling, occasionally a Feral Pigeon. It didn't take long for the remaining juveniles to forsake the nest tray if the feed was taking place away from it. By Jun 3rd, the sight of the four young birds being fed was increasingly rare, as many feeds took place on the unmonitored west walkway. When visible though, the female was seen to be picking morsels of meat off the prey item to feed the juveniles individually, though often only one or two were hungry enough to bother. On one occasion, a live Pigeon was brought in, and it flapped away out of sight, pursued by four excited juveniles. The cameras didn't record its grisly demise!

On Jun 19th, the first of the juveniles fledged. Female PXL made her first flight around 08.30, landing on the nave roof where she sat for several hours. Later, male PBN flew, landing clumsily on the





parapet beneath the bell chamber, where he was fed by an adult at 17.40. By Jun 20th, three had fledged and were perched at various points around the tower, while the fourth was seen peering through the castellations. At 04.30 the following morning, all the juveniles were seen on the tower walkway, having returned during the night to roost. On Jun 24th, the remaining juvenile was seen flying well and all were able to return to the tower to sleep, which they did lying on the walkway, heads together and any time of the day.

The juveniles still received feeds from the adults and were often seen playing with the carcass of long-dead prey, dragging it along the walkway or pouncing on it. They didn't seem to be fussy what they ate if they were hungry, the camera recorded a pigeon leg being swallowed in one go, along with its accompanying metal ring!

What goes in, must come out, and it took a while for the juveniles to defecate as proficiently as the adults, who perched on the trefoil windows facing inwards, and powerfully expelled the excrement away from the walkway. The young birds, while instinctively knowing what should be done, lacked power and direction, and with a poor aim, their siblings were often on the receiving end of a liquid stream of droppings. It was clear that all the mess requiring swilling down at the end of the season (buckets of water and brooms carried up to the walkway) was a result of the juveniles' lack of 'toilet training'.

What the camera didn't record was the regurgitation of pellets. I hadn't found any in previous years when cleaning the walkway at the end of the season, but this year I saw several. Soft and grey, they were about 5cm long. There were few identifiable items in those I examined – generic bits of feather and bone, but the plastic ring from a feral Pigeon turned up in one.

### Finally

By the end of June, the four juveniles had become proficient in flying and rarely returned to the walkway. It was a relief to realise the thick gloves and cardboard box, on hand to retrieve grounded birds, could be stood down. Apart from 2019 when none fledged, there has always been a need to catch juveniles that land on the ground in the road or private garden. Peregrines are far happier at launching themselves from high places and the fledglings we've seen landing on the nave roof needed space to run while flapping their wings to get airborne. This behaviour was frequently observed while they were on the walkway prior to fledging, and one wonders how the birds born in nests manage with no space to run before leaving directly on the wing.

The end of July saw all four birds active around the church, hunting their own prey, but willing to accept any handouts from the adults. Frequently, two juveniles would fly in together with a kill, giving the impression there had been a joint effort in catching it. As August progressed, the juveniles stayed away for longer periods, though often roosting on the spire, and leaving at first light. Writing this on the last day of August, we haven't caught sight or sound of a juvenile for over a week, though both adults are regular visitors – a successful season.

### Summary of prey brought to nest May 7th – June 20th\*

Chaffinch	1	Unidentified large	1
Feral Pigeon	42	Unidentified medium	2
Feral Pigeon squab	2 (delivered at night)	Unidentified small	4
House Sparrow	2	Unidentified pigeon	1
Knot	1	Woodpigeon	2
Starling	103	Woodpigeon squab	1

\* Research by Ed Drewitt who studied the hours of recordings from our webcams





## Contributors List

The contributor's list is taken from BTO BirdTrack (BT), eBird (eB) and Lincs Bird Club records. The LBC editorial panel attempts to include ALL contributors but recognises that as the number of records increases it becomes increasingly difficult to ensure every record is acknowledged.

Jonathan Cole (BT)	Anthony Scriven (ASc)	Chris Jarvis (CJ)
A Bartholomew (ABar)	Ashley Banwell (eB)	Chris Ketola (eB)
A Pike (Api)	B Bishell	Chris Waring (BT)
Aaron Mace (BT)	Barrie Galpin (BG)	Christopher Lamb (eB)
Aaron Tietjen (BT)	Barry Clarkson (BMC)	Christopher Park (CPa)
Abbie Smith (BT)	Barry Hancock (BT)	Christopher Robinson (BT)
Adam Jones (BT)	Barry Jones (BT)	Claire Barker-Wyatt (BT)
Adrian Tysoe (BT)	Beecher Betts (BT)	Clare Gillatt (CGi)
Africa Gomez (AGo)	Ben Lucking (eB)	Cliff Morrison (CMo)
Alan Ball (AB)	Ben Turner (BT)	Clive Prescott (eB)
Alan Fern (BT)	Ben Ward (BT)	Clive Temple (eB)
Alan Hudson (AHu)	Benjamin Ward (BWd)	Colin Greenfield (BT)
Alan Kydd (BT)	Bethan Clyne (eB)	Colin Penny (CPe)
Alan Tomlinson (ATo)	BirdGuides (BT)	Colin Scott (CSc)
Alan Younger (eB)	Birklands Ringing Group (BRG)	D Lingard
Alex Masterman	Bob Kelly (BT)	Dan Watson (DWt)
Alexander Lees (ACL)	Bob Smith (BT)	Daniel Wade (DWa)
Alison Baldwin (Aba)	Bob Spencer (eB)	Danny Walsh (DWs)
Alison Bliston (BT)	Brian Barrett (BT)	Darren Oakley-Martin (BT)
Allan Greensmith (BT)	Brian Hedley (BHe)	Dave Coker (DCk)
Andrew Allport (AAI)	Brian Lawrence (BLa)	Dave Hitchin (DH)
Andrew Arbon (AAr)	Brian Piercey (BT)	Dave Jenkins (DMJ)
Andrew Bevan (BT)	Brian Smith (eB)	Dave Miller (BT)
Andrew Chick (APC)	Brian Stone (eB)	Dave Read (eB)
Andrew Dove (BT)	Byron Webb (BW)	Dave Roberts (DR)
Andrew Hannaford (BT)	C Seabrook	Dave Satterthwaite
Andrew Henderson (BT)	Carole Davis (BT)	David Agombar (BT)
Andrew Leggett (BT)	Catherine Hartwell (BT)	David Booth (BT)
Andrew Sims (ACS)	Charles Gunn (eB)	David Bradford (BT)
Andrew Smith (BT)	Charles Overton (BT)	David Chambers (DCh)
Andrew Steele (BT)	Charlotte Preece (BT)	David Cohen (DCo)
AV Andrew Vaughan	Chelsea Edwards (eB)	David Digby (eB)
Andy Dann (eB)	Chris Atkin (CA)	David Everatt (DEv)
Andy Dove (ADv)	Chris Bond (BT)	David Hepworth (DHe)
Andy Kerry (BT)	Chris Chapleo (eB)	David Lake (BT)
Andy Marshall (eB)	Chris Gomersall (CGo)	David Miller (DMi)
Anne Wheatcroft (BT)	Chris Grimshaw (CG)	David Nunn (eB)
Anthony Bentley (ABe)	Chris Heaton (CHe)	David Parker (BT)
Anthony Jackson (BT)	Chris Hilder (BT)	David Primrose (DPr)
Anthony McDonald (AMcD)	Chris James (BT)	David Ratcliffe (eB)





- David Taylor (DTa)  
 David Viles (BT)  
 David Winnard (BT)  
 Dave Whitworth (DWh)  
 David Wright (DWr)  
 Dean Cornwell (BT)  
 Dean Eades  
 Dean Nicholson (DN)  
 Dean Roizer (eB)  
 Derek Gruar (eB)  
 Derick Evans (Dev)  
 Dominic Mitchell (eB)  
 Don Cambridge (BT)  
 Don Gardener (BT)  
 Dr Christy Ralph (BT)  
 Dr Ian Tooley (BT)  
 Dr Lesley Swift (BT)  
 Dr Patrick Ryan (BT)  
 Dr Steven Dempster (BT)  
 Dr Stuart Ball (BT)  
 Duncan McNiven (BT)  
 Dylan Parry-Davies (BT)  
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 J P (BT)  
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 James Eaton-Brown (BT)  
 James Siddle (JS)  
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 James Wild (BT)  
 Jamie Johnson (eB)  
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 Janet Roworth (JRow)  
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 Jeanette Franklin (BT)  
 Jens Haugaard (JHau)  
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 John Oliver  
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 Richard Bashford (BT)  
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 Richard Heath (RHe)  
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 Richard Wilson (BT)  
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 Rob Gant (BT)  
 Rob K Watson (RKW)  
 Rob Martin (eB)  
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 Rob Watson (BT)  
 Robert Clark (eB)  
 Robert Hutchinson (eB)  
 Robert Hutton (eB)  
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 Robert Rackliffe (eB)  
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 Sean Pyman (BT)  
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