

The Birds of Whitlingham & Thorpe 2019



Compiled by James Emerson

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Get in touch

I would welcome any comments, corrections or constructive criticisms about this report. These can be sent to me, along with any sightings for inclusion in the 2020 report, by emailing: whitlinghambirds@yahoo.co.uk.

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All photos are attributed to the photographer and copyrighted to him/her. I am particularly grateful to Gary White for providing a large amount of photos from Whitlingham for use in this report, and also to the other photographers who have allowed their pictures to be used (a full list can be found in the acknowledgements).

Introduction

This is the eighth annual report of the bird species reported from the Whitlingham area (including Thorpe Marshes NWT reserve), covering sightings from 2019. It should be noted that this bird report is independent from any of the organisations that manages these sites, notably the Broads Authority, Whitlingham Charitable Trust, Norfolk Wildlife Trust and South Norfolk Council. A map of the recording area covered by this report can be found on the next page. Within this area most of the sightings come from the area around Whitlingham Great Broad and Thorpe Marshes.

In addition to my monthly counts and other sightings, a large number of records have been supplied by other local birders, to whom I am grateful. I have included the majority of sightings that have been sent to me directly or reported online, however I reserve the right to decide what sightings make the final report. This does mean that many of the sightings included in this report have not been seen by me personally, and some may relate to birds that are 'heard only'. As a result for formal recording purposes the sightings in this report should be treated as unverified records, i.e. sightings should not be taken from the report to be used for any 'official' purposes – observers are encouraged to submit their records to the county recorder and/or BTO directly.

In general when considering what records and details to include I have adopted the following categorisation:

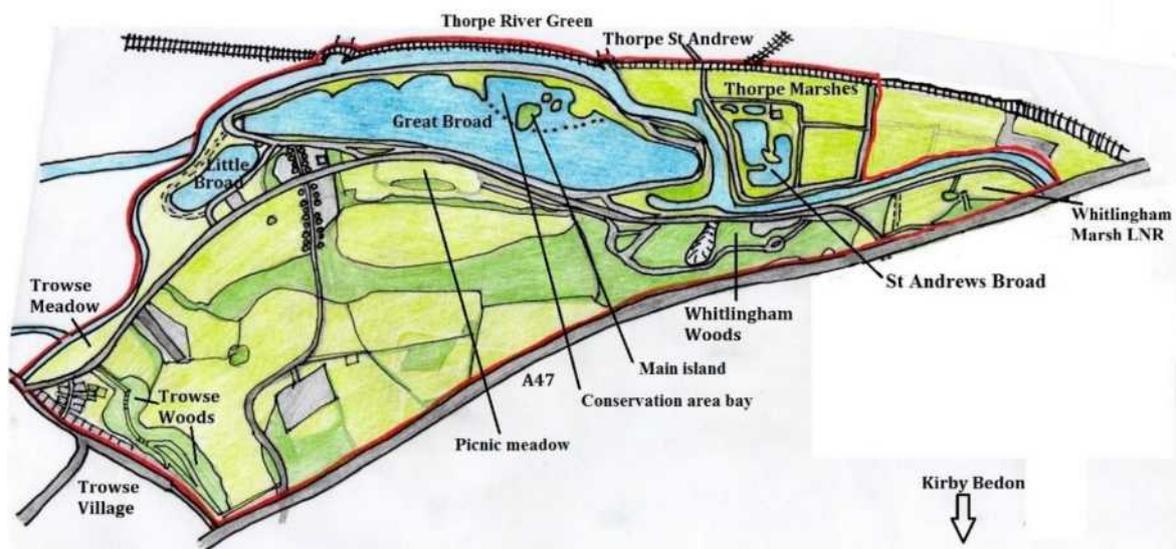
Resident species and regular migrants – reports have been used to write a general summary for the species, with records only omitted if they were particularly unusual, for example very early or late records. High counts or unusual records may be attributed to the observer.

Species recorded annually in low numbers at Whitlingham – species that occur in most years are dealt with as above but with more detail regarding the sightings

Species seldom recorded at Whitlingham or particularly scarce locally – records included in the report with * before the species name. As much detail as possible is included with each of these records, in particular it is mentioned if the species recorded was photographed, if it was seen by more than one individual, if there were any other sightings nearby etc. These records also have the initials of the person who reported the sighting. Note that this won't necessarily be the person who first found the species in the case of multi-observed records.

County or national rarities – included solely at the editor's discretion. Details of the record included as with local scarcities, but with an additional note as to whether the record has been submitted to and/or accepted by the relevant rarities committee, based on the latest WIP (work-in-progress) files.

Observers are asked to send details of any noteworthy sightings direct to the county recorder, Neil Lawton. Details on how to do this can be found here: <http://norfolkbirds.weebly.com/submitting-records.html>. Any observer lucky enough to find a species at Whitlingham that is a county rarity is asked to send a description to the Norfolk Records Committee, who will publish their verdict in the Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report, which is released in the following autumn. Usually decisions will also be announced via the Norfolk Bird Records Twitter account (@NorfolkBirds) and via ad-hoc 'work-in-progress' spreadsheets on the website.



The Whitlingham Recording area covered by this report. Where possible distinctive features make up the boundaries, for example the railway line along part of the north of the area and the A47 to the south.

The key parts of the recording area are: Whitlingham Country Park, Trowse Meadow, Trowse Woods, Whitlingham Marsh LNR and Thorpe Marshes NWT. Crown Point Estate land north of the A47 is currently included, although as most of it has no public access there are seldom any sightings from this area.

Areas of Thorpe St Andrew, including Thorpe River Green, are just outside the recording area, however as the boundary is rather arbitrary, details of wildfowl and gulls recorded there have been included where it is likely that the birds involved were also sometimes present at or visible from Whitlingham.

Paul Woolnough: a brief tribute to a popular local birder

James Emerson

Local naturalists were saddened to hear of the death of Paul Woolnough this September. Paul was well known in Norfolk & Suffolk, in particular for his appearances at twitches, where he would often demonstrate a near-encyclopaedic knowledge of past occurrences of the species in question, usually accompanied by an anecdote relating to when he saw it (or why he couldn't get there!) When Paul wasn't seen at several rare bird twitches in the autumn, Justin Lansdell asked around to see if anyone had seen him recently. Finding that no-one had seen Paul and he wasn't responding to messages, Justin went round to Paul's address where a neighbour informed him of the sad news.

Whilst most people knew of Paul as a birder and naturalist, he was also well known in some circles for his conservation volunteering, being one of the founder members of the Buxton Heath Wildlife Group and also doing work with the Norwich Environmental Weekenders (NEWS). In fact, the last correspondence I had with Paul over the summer related to the monthly NWT conservation group working at Thorpe Marshes.

Whilst a fuller tribute to Paul has been written by Peter Ransome and published on his Lowestoft Birding blog here <http://lowestoftbirding.blogspot.com/2019/11/paul-woolnough-birder-twitcher-lister.html>, I regularly saw him whilst birding around Norwich and he contributed to the Whitlingham Bird Report from its first edition in 2012 through to this one, so I think it is fitting that he be commemorated here.

My first encounter with Paul came in 2010, when I was walking towards the footbridge at Thorpe Marshes. He was just leaving in his car (at that time parking was allowed at the end of the road) and wound down his window, said "Hi James" (I could only surmise later that he had recognised me from my tiny profile picture on BirdForum) and proceeded to advise me that there was no sign of two Water Pipits that had been reported recently but there were various other common birds about. He then drove off without telling me his name! I later blogged about the day, and ended the blog post by noting that there were no sign of any Alpine Swifts as the country was experiencing a mini influx at the time. He replied in typical fashion, allowing me to put a name to the face – *"Sorry I do not need alpine swift for Whitlingham!! 2006 Norfolk Bird Report, page 248, finder "J Gilroy". I was waiting at the lights on Unthank Road at the ring road when the pager went off with the bird, 2 April 2006"*.

Paul kept his year, patch and life lists on BUBO listing (<https://bubo.org>), and I think he would have appreciated mention of some of the scarcer species that he recorded at Whitlingham amongst his total list of 145 species. In addition to the Alpine Swift mentioned previously, Paul was one of the group of birders fortunate enough to encounter the 1996 Black-and-white Warbler, seeing it on Whitlingham Lane on 11th November of that year. A drake Green-winged Teal on 16th January 1999 was another good bird from before the country park came into existence and was noted on BUBO as the first bird Paul twitched in his new car. A Hen Harrier on 27th April 2013, Knot on 5th May 2004 and Ringed Plover before the broad was completed were also rare birds for the site.

R.I.P. Paul Woolnough (1959 – 2019)

New to Whitlingham: Nordic Jackdaw

James Emerson

Western Jackdaws (*Corvus monedula*) are resident at Whitlingham, where a small flock presumably breed in the belt of trees that runs between the southern end of the lime tree avenue and the ski slope. In recent years a winter roost has developed, centred mainly on the trees on the Great Broad island, with numbers peaking at 1340 in January 2019. Whilst this gathering will probably include locally based birds that have relocated from previously-used roost sites, it would also seem reasonable that some of the birds are migrants from continental Europe.

There are four recognised subspecies of Jackdaw, three of which are present in Europe. The subspecies resident in the UK and western Europe is *Coloeus* (formerly *Corvus*) *monedula spermologus*, whilst the nominate subspecies ‘Nordic Jackdaw’ *Coloeus monedula monedula* is common in central and northern Europe. Further east the predominant subspecies is ‘Russian Jackdaw’ *Coloeus monedula soemmerringii**.

The most accessible reference for identifying the different subspecies of Jackdaws is a paper from Dutch Birding by Rudy Offereins¹. It contains a good discussion of the features of each of the European subspecies, which I have summarised in Table 1. *C. m. monedula* is on the official British List, however the BOURC have adopted a policy of only accepting an example of *soemmerringii* if it has been ringed as a pullus at a known breeding colony, due to the issue of separating ‘pure’ birds from intergrades². A series of pictures of a candidate for *soemmerringii* in Sussex can be seen on the Birding Frontiers blog³.

| Feature | <i>C.m. spermologus</i> | <i>C.m. monedula</i> | <i>C.m. soemmerringii</i> |
|---|---|--|--|
| Pale neck collar? | No | Yes, wide and silvery | Yes, white and sharply defined |
| Colour of nape | Dark grey | Paler grey | Paler grey, often a purple tinge and contrasts with black crown. |
| Colour of underparts | Dark grey/black | Mid grey (often darker than nape, but paler than in <i>spermologus</i>) | Dark grey (usually between the other two subspecies) |
| Contrast between throat and underparts? | No | Yes (throat darker) | No (throat and underparts both dark) |
| Pale fringes on mantle feathers | Only in eastern populations or down to wear | Often | Not noted. |

Table 1 – comparative ID features of Jackdaw subspecies summarised from “Identification of eastern subspecies of Western Jackdaw and occurrence in the Netherlands” (Offereins, 2003)

On 4th November 2019 Dave Farrow noticed that three of the Jackdaws (2 adults and a 1st-winter) in the meadow alongside Whitlingham Lane had pale but indistinctly edged 'collars', the most obvious plumage trait of Nordic Jackdaw. This was clearly visible in the field and also shows up on Dave's photos (see Figure 1 & Figure 2). The black capped appearance and black throat is also clearly visible and contrasts with the slate grey underparts - in *C. m. spermologus* the throat and underparts are usually concolorous. This appears to be the first record of Nordic Jackdaw at Whitlingham.



Figure 1 – Nordic Jackdaw at Whitlingham C.P. (04/11/19). Photo: Dave Farrow



Figure 2 – Nordic Jackdaw at Whitlingham C.P. (04/11/19). Photo: Dave Farrow

The presence of *C.m. monedula* in Norfolk was first confirmed in 1951 when a ringed Jackdaw seen at Kilverstone (near Thetford) was traced back to a breeding population of that subspecies in Humulu in Denmark⁴. As mentioned earlier there are currently no accepted records of *C.m. soemmerringii* in Britain, but that subspecies is known to be migratory in winter with birds reported in the Netherlands¹, Denmark¹ and France³, and birds showing characteristics of it have been noted in Norfolk since 1995. Whilst I have not found any references to previous records of Jackdaws of either of the eastern subspecies in the Whitlingham area, the Norfolk sightings of 'Eastern-type' Jackdaws have not been restricted to coastal sites, with the most recent edition of Birds of Norfolk mentioning sightings from Easton, Attleborough, Bawburgh, Colney, Keswick, Lenwade and Thetford⁵, suggesting that both Nordic and Russian Jackdaws should be looked for anywhere in the county during winter.

References

1 – Offereins, Rudy (2003) Identification of eastern subspecies of Western Jackdaw and occurrence in the Netherlands. *Dutch Birding* 25 pages 209-220.

This is available to download for free here: <https://www.dutchbirding.nl › journal › pdf>

2 – Tilmouth, Alan (2011) Eastern Jackdaws. *Birding Frontiers blog*:
<https://birdingfrontiers.wordpress.com/2011/04/10/eastern-jackdaws/>

3 – Garner, Martin & Silk, Matthew (2011) Russian Jackdaws in Britain. *Birding Frontiers Blog*: <https://birdingfrontiers.wordpress.com/2011/02/03/russian-jackdaws-in-britain/>

4 – Dye, Keith; Fiszer, Mick and Allard, Peter (2009) Birds New to Norfolk. Wren Publishing. Page 352.

5 – Henderson, Ian (1999) Jackdaw species account in **Taylor, Moss; Seago, Michael; Allard, Peter & Dorling, Don** (1999, reprinted 2007). The Birds of Norfolk. Christopher Helm publishing. Pages 478 & 479.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Dave Farrow for reporting these birds and allowing me to use his photos.

* Note – both the use of *Coloeus* for the genus and the spelling of *soemmerringii* are taken from the IOC world bird names checklist v9.2, which is used for the British list and is available at www.worldbirdnames.org. Older sources will still refer to Jackdaws as *Corvus*, and understandably there seem to be a few miss-spellings of *soemmerringii* out there!

Establishment of a Little Egret roost at Whitlingham

James Emerson

Little Egrets have been a successful colonist of the UK in recent years, and this has been reflected in Norfolk with birds becoming regular at locations across the county. The first Norfolk record was as recent as 1952¹, and the first wintering bird was not until 1993/94². Up until recently local Little Egret sightings were largely limited to individuals flying over the Great Broad around dusk. This changed in 2013 when Little Egrets began to be seen feeding at Thorpe Marshes and along the exposed river margins nearby³.

The first record of roosting Little Egrets at Whitlingham was on 23rd July 2016, when two were seen in tall trees on the Great Broad main island³. There were no further sightings of roosting birds until 23rd Aug 2018, when five were seen roosting again on the Great Broad island. In the winter of 2018/19 there began to be regular sightings of at least one Little Egret roosting in the Alders surrounding the Little Broad, typically in the north-west corner (Figure 1), but sometimes along the south shore (Figure 2). This was followed by more birds, with numbers typically between two and four, but peaked at seven birds (six of which shown in Figure 3). All records of multiple birds from the 2018/19 winter are shown in Table 1. Multiple birds have also been reported from Thorpe Marshes, but the lack of suitable roost trees mean that they are perhaps more likely to have roosted at Whitlingham and flown across together than roosted at Thorpe.



Figure 1 – A roosting Little Egret in the Little Broad Alders. Photo: Gary White.



Figure 2 – Little Egret roost (with Grey Heron) along southern edge of Whitlingham Little Broad (25/11/19). Photo: Nick Eley.



Figure 3 – Six of seven Little Egrets that roosted on 10/03/19. Photo: Gary White.

| Date | Location of birds | Number of Egrets |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|
| 24 th Nov 2018 | Whitlingham Little Broad Alders | 2 |
| 7 th Dec 2018 | Whitlingham Little Broad Alders | 2 |
| 9 th Dec 2018 | Whitlingham Little Broad Alders | 2 |
| 22 nd Dec 2018 | Whitlingham Little Broad Alders | 3 |
| 30 th Dec 2018 | Whitlingham Little Broad Alders | 3 |
| 24 th Nov 2018 | Whitlingham Little Broad Alders | 2 |
| 19 th Jan 2019 | Whitlingham Little Broad Alders | 3 |
| 20 th Jan 2019 | Whitlingham Little Broad Alders | 3 |
| 27 th Jan 2019 | Whitlingham Little Broad Alders | 3 |
| 3 rd Feb 2019 | Whitlingham Little Broad Alders | 3 |
| 9 th Feb 2019 | Thorpe St Andrews Broad | 4 |
| 18 th Feb 2019 | Thorpe St Andrews Broad | 3 |
| 21 st Feb 2019 | Whitlingham Little Broad Alders | 4 |
| 24 th Feb 2019 | Whitlingham Little Broad Alders | 4 |
| 10 th Mar 2019 | Whitlingham Little Broad Alders | 7 |
| 16 th Mar 2019 | Whitlingham Little Broad Alders | 3 |
| 17 th Mar 2019 | Whitlingham Little Broad Alders | 2 |
| 22 nd Mar 2019 | Whitlingham Little Broad Alders | 2 |
| 24 th Mar 2019 | Whitlingham Little Broad Alders | 3 |
| 31 st Mar 2019 | Whitlingham Little Broad Alders | 2 |

Table 1 – Records of multiple Little Egrets at Whitlingham/Thorpe in winter 2018/19

After a one-off record of four Little Egrets at St Andrews Broad on 21st June, numbers of roosting Egrets were seen again from October onwards and as with the previous winter peaked at seven birds (see Table 2). Interestingly whilst the previous records of Little Egrets at Thorpe did not have enough information to be sure whether they had roosted or were just feeding there, the five Little Egrets on 4th Dec were perched up together on a fallen tree along the edge of St Andrews Broad (Figure 4). However, the observer felt that the location was rather exposed and he had not been seen them there again, suggesting that it was unlikely that the Egrets had roosted there.

| Date | Location of birds | Number of Egrets |
|----------------------------|---|------------------|
| 21 st June 2019 | Thorpe St Andrews Broad | 4 |
| 19 th Oct 2019 | Whitlingham Little Broad Alders | 2 |
| 3 rd Nov 2019 | Whitlingham Little Broad Alders | 4 |
| 11 th Nov 2019 | Whitlingham Little Broad Alders | 4 |
| 12 th Nov 2019 | Whitlingham Little Broad Alders | 7 |
| 17 th Nov 2019 | Whitlingham Little Broad Alders | 3 |
| 25 th Nov 2019 | Whitlingham Little Broad Alders (SE corner) | 7 |
| 4 th Dec 2019 | Thorpe St Andrews Broad (together on broad-side trees along northern edge, east part. | 5 |
| 14 th Dec 2019 | Whitlingham Little Broad Alders | 4 |
| 16 th Dec 2019 | Whitlingham Little Broad Alders | 5 |

Table 2 – Records of multiple Little Egrets at Whitlingham/Thorpe from summer 2019 onwards



*Figure 4 – Five Little Egrets perched up on a fallen tree at St Andrews Broad (04/12/19).
Photo: Chris Durdin*

References

1 – Dye, Keith; Fiszer, Mick and Allard, Peter (2009) *Birds New to Norfolk*. Wren Publishing. Pages 89 & 90.

2 – Seago, Michael (1999) Little Egret species account in **Taylor, Moss; Seago, Michael; Allard, Peter & Dorling, Don** (1999, reprinted 2007). *The Birds of Norfolk*. Christopher Helm publishing. Pages 124 & 125.

3 – Emerson, James (2014-2019) *Whitlingham Birds Reports 2013-2018*. Available online at <https://jamesbirdsandbeer.blogspot.com/p/whitlinghm.html>

Acknowledgements

The Little Egret counts included here have been made by Mike Burrows, Chris Durdin, Nick Eley, James Emerson, Ann Greenizan, Justin Lansdell and Gary White. In particular thanks to Chris, Nick and Gary for allowing their photos to be used in this article.

An exceptional local passage of Black Terns

James Emerson

Black Terns are scarce passage migrants at Whitlingham, being recorded less than annually and usually in late April or early May, although sometimes returning birds are seen in late August or early September. Numbers are typically low, with the highest count prior to 2019 being five that passed through Thorpe Marshes on 30th April 2017.

Black Terns overwinter along the western coast of Africa, and often pass through the UK en-masse, meaning that once sites in southern England start reporting them then it is always worth checking other inland sites, particularly those along river valleys. In 2019 the Black Tern migration began on 7th May, but no birds were seen at Whitlingham on that date. There were similarly none present the following morning during inclement weather, but the weather system appeared to be conducive to their arrival, with strong south-westerly winds funnelling birds into the English channel and easterly winds in the North Sea to push birds into the Norfolk river system (Figure 1). As hoped for, two Black Terns were present at Whitlingham by mid-afternoon. As the day went on more Black Terns arrived, reaching a spectacular peak of 24 birds. At times most of these birds could be seen flying across the Great Broad in a large flock (Figures 2, 3 & 4).



Figure 1 – Wind conditions at 09:00 on 8th May 2019 as taken from www.theweatheroutlook.com



Figure 2 – A flock of 20 Black Terns fly over the Great Broad. Photo: James Lowen



Figure 3 – Black Terns fly over the Great Broad. Photo: James Lowen



Figure 4 – 21 Black Terns gain height over the Great Broad. Photo: Gary White

I was keen to look at the influx in a countrywide context. To do this I generated a graph of 2019 Black Tern occurrences against the yearly trend based on all of the historical data held by BTO's BirdTrack. This uses the number of complete lists that feature a species as a proxy for its abundance. This graph is reproduced here with kind permission of the BTO (Figure 5). The historical peak occurs in the 18th week of the year (late April/early May), at which point typically 1.14% of complete BirdTrack lists contain Black Tern. In 2019 the peak came in the following week (early-mid May) with 3.58% of complete lists containing Black Terns.

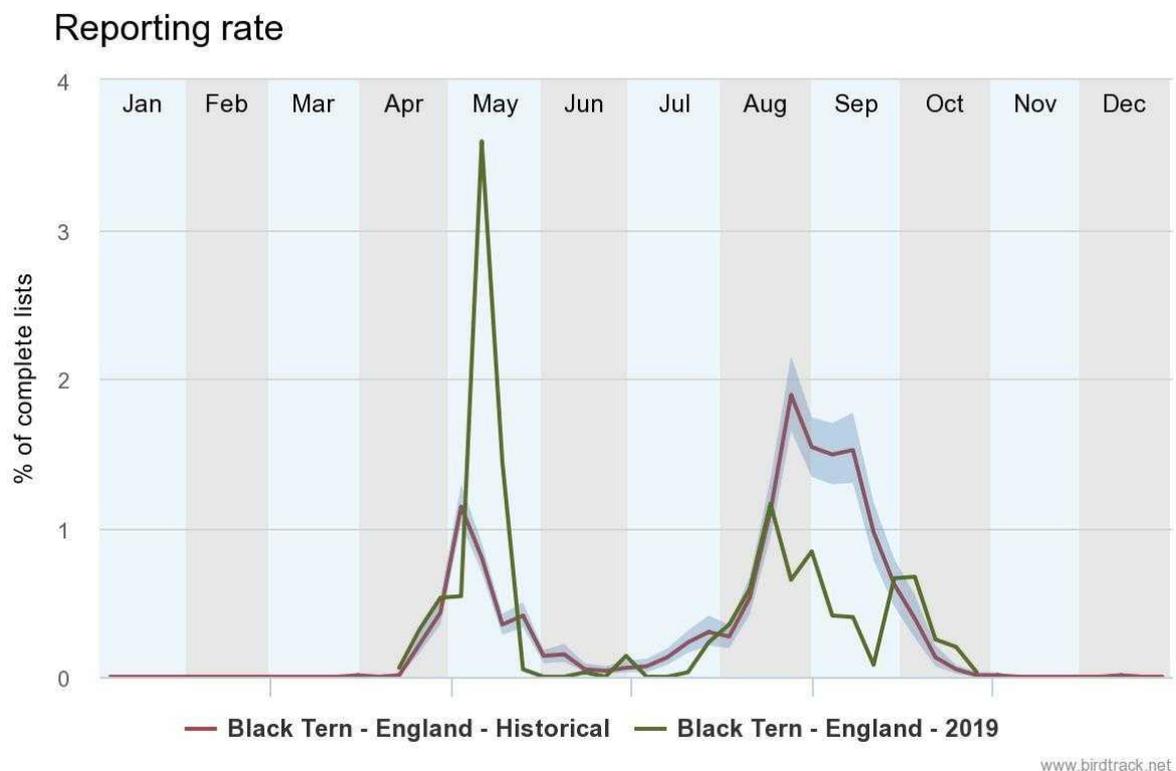


Figure 5 – Reporting rate of Black Terns in 2019 against the historical trend. Data from BirdTrack (www.birdtrack.net) reproduced with permission from BTO.

Figure 5 shows that the 2019 national influx was very large compared to an average year, and also that it was a bit later than the average peak arrival. I therefore decided to plot the last twenty years-worth of Black Tern sightings from the Whitlingham area by day of observation to see if this occurrence of larger numbers in May was a trend backed up by local data (Figure 6). Black Terns were seen on spring passage in nine of the 20 years (years in black bold type on the key). Arrivals have been well-spread from mid-April to late May, with peak times being the last week of April and second week of May. This year's influx dwarfs all previous years, with even the combined data not giving more than five for any one date.

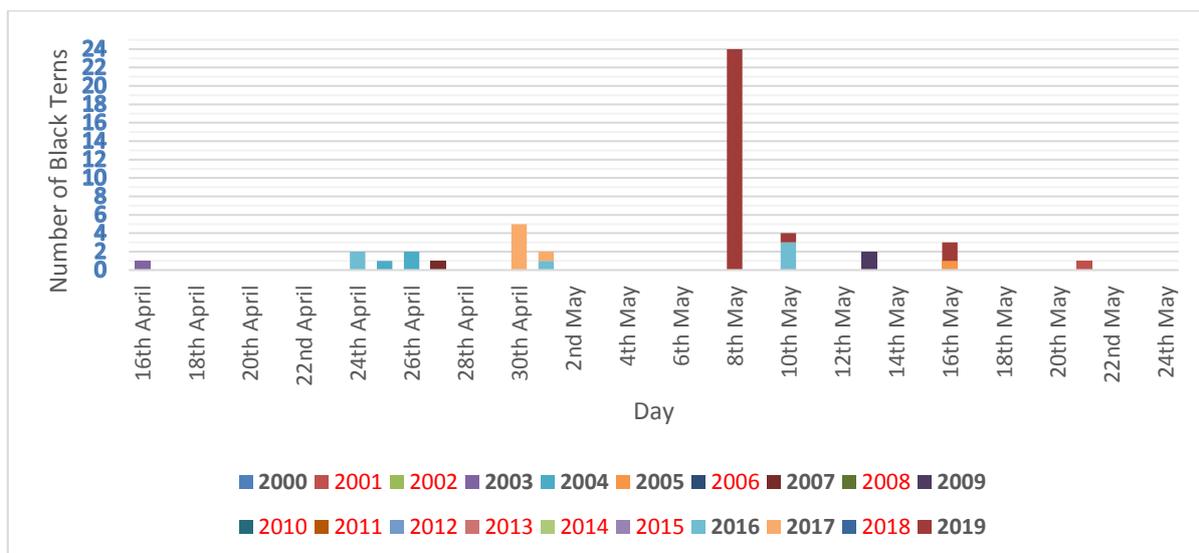


Figure 6 – Spring records of Black Terns at Whitlingham from 2000-2019 presented by date of sighting and colour-coded by year.

The next thing I looked at was occurrences at county level. Black Terns bred in Norfolk back in the 19th century, but since then the only successful breeding occurred as a one-off at Welney in 1975¹. Birds on spring passage typically pass through during mid-April to mid-May. There have been some large passage movements in the past, including counts of 200 and 250 through Hickling in mid-May (1960 and 1980 respectively). These very large influxes do seem to be rare, with one in early May 1990 standing out as the biggest in the past 30 years. There was a huge movement through Norfolk, including 1000 east over Holkham, 160 Horsey mere, 100 Hickling Broad, 95 Pentney, 60 Lyng etc. A large movement also happened in May 2000, with at least 550 birds reported including 83 Welney, 40 Ouse Washes, 30 Hardley Flood and 25 Barton Broad. A slightly more modest influx occurred in May 2009, with large numbers mostly coastal but 40 at Rollesby/Ormesby Broads. More recently on 30th April 2017. There was another influx, with lower numbers than the May ones mentioned earlier but noted in the Bird & Mammal Report as “the largest April one-day passage recorded in the county since before 1953, if not ever”

Using the Norfolk Bird & Mammal Reports I compiled the largest yearly inland spring count of Black Terns for 2010-2018 (plus the Whitlingham count in 2019 – see note), which are presented in Table 1. The table shows that for seven of the last ten years the maximum Norfolk count was in single figures, with 2016 only just above this with 11. However the large movement in 2017 with 51 through Breydon on the 30th April means that the Whitlingham count is not the highest inland spring count of the decade. Note that Breydon is usually classed as an inland site, as despite being an estuary, it is actually over a mile inland (even further by water as Yarmouth is on a south pointing spit) and birds tracking the coast would be recorded as seen from Great Yarmouth. In addition there was one other count that surpassed the Whitlingham count of 24 (not shown in the table as it was also in 2017), a flock of 32 Black Terns passed through Colney GPs on 26th April 2017.

| | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 |
|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Highest spring count | 2 | 7 | 5 | 9 | 5 | 3 | 11 | 51 | 9 | 24* |
| Date of count | 28 th April | 23 rd April | 2 nd May | 25 th April | 27 th April | 6 th May | 9 th May | 30 th April | 21 st May | 8 th May |
| Location of the count | Barton Broad | Barton Broad | Welney | Ranworth | Breydon | Pentney GPs | Horsey | Breydon | Hickling | Whitlingham |

Table 1 – Maximum inland spring Black Tern numbers taken from the Norfolk Bird & Mammal Reports 2010-18.

**Note - the 2019 Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report is not due to be published until October 2020, however the Whitlingham 2019 count was the highest inland count reported to the bird news services for 2019 and it would seem reasonable to assume at this point that it was the highest count of the year.*

Given that the Norfolk data showed that the largest recent count occurred in 2017 I was interested to see if the BirdTrack would reflect that. I therefore used the BirdTrack data to compare 2019 to 2017, displayed here as Figure 7. As expected based on the Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report counts, in 2017 the national Black Tern peak occurred in week 18 (late April) and was even higher than the 2019 peak, with 4.36% of complete lists featuring Black Terns. The main day of passage in 2017 was 30th April, the day when the previous local record of five Black Terns was set. Why 2019 saw much larger numbers reach Whitlingham despite lower national numbers than the 2017 influx is unknown, but if the weather pattern begins to resemble that shown at the start of this article in late April or early May then you would do well to check your local lake for Black Terns!

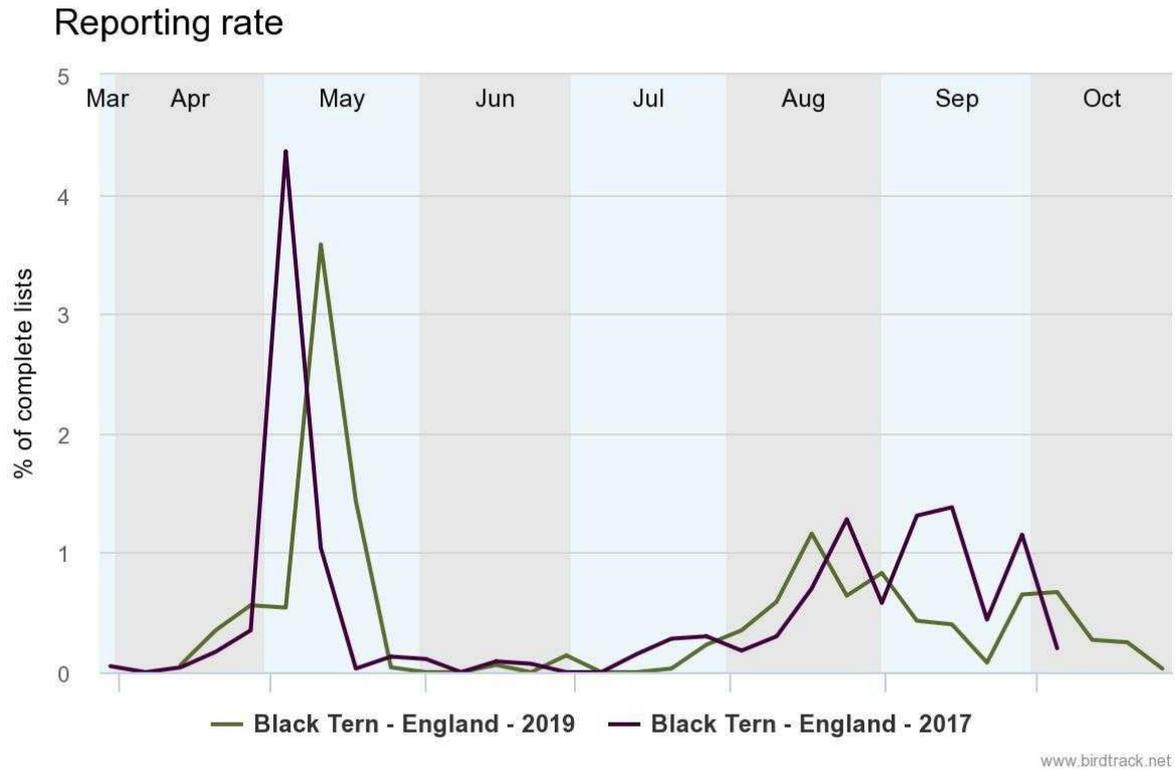


Figure 7 – Reporting rate of Black Terns in 2019 against that in 2017. Data from BirdTrack (www.birdtrack.net) reproduced with permission from BTO.

References

- 1 – Taylor, Moss (1999) Black Tern species account in Taylor, Moss; Seago, Michael; Allard, Peter & Dorling, Don (1999, reprinted 2007). **The Birds of Norfolk**. Christopher Helm publishing. Pages 335-337.
- 2 - **Norfolk Bird & Mammal Reports 2000 – 2018** Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists Society, Volumes 34-52. (currently edited by Andy Stoddart).

Acknowledgements

Thanks to James Lowen (www.JamesLowen.com) and Gary White for allowing their photos to be used to illustrate this article. Thanks also to Mike Toms at the BTO for allowing the graphs generated via BirdTrack to be used here.

Ringed Black-headed Gulls at Whitlingham part vii

James Emerson

This brief report is the seventh in a series of annual articles documenting the ringed Black-headed Gulls that have been reported from Whitlingham or across the river at Thorpe River Green. Prior to 2019, Black-headed Gulls ringed in eight different countries had been recorded at Whitlingham or Thorpe St Andrew (Denmark, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Netherlands, Norway, Poland and Sweden). In addition to those countries, during this year a Lithuanian-ringed bird was seen, as were two British-ringed gulls. However, it emerged that the latter had been ringed at Whitlingham by Stephen Vickers of the UEA Ringing Group. Stephen caught and ringed four birds at Whitlingham in the first winter period, and one more in November. He has since received permission for a colour-ringing project, which should increase the likelihood of the gulls being re-sighted elsewhere, which will hopefully all add to the information about the Black-headed Gulls that winter in the Whitlingham area.



Figure 1 – A Black-headed Gull caught by UEA ringing group. Photo: Stephen Vickers.

During the first winter period only five ringed gulls were reported. At Thorpe River Green were two returning colour ringed gulls, White JOAJ and Yellow T2X8, plus a metal-ringed Finnish bird first seen earlier in the winter but for which details are not yet available. At Whitlingham the only colour-ringed bird was another returnee, White A341, plus one of the birds metal-ringed at Whitlingham a few days earlier!

| Ring number | Date first seen | Place ringed | Date ringed | Distance travelled /Km | Seen previously? |
|------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|-------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| White JOAJ | 09/01/19 | Akershus, NORWAY | 06/05/12 | 976 | Yes (2014 on) |
| Yellow T2X8 | 09/01/19 | Zachodniopomorskie, POLAND | 20/05/17 | 868 | Yes (Nov 2017 on) |
| Metal-ringed EAXXXX6 * | 25/01/19 | Whitlingham C.P. | 23/01/19 | 0 | NEW |
| Metal-ringed ST305473 | 29/01/19 | FINLAND | ? | ? | Yes (Nov 2018) |
| White A341 | 01/02/19 | Neumunster, GERMANY | 16/12/12 | 600 | Yes (2014 onwards) |

Table 1 – Ringed Black-headed Gulls seen in the first winter period (Jan-Feb) 2019



Figure 2 (left) – White A341 and Figure 3 (right) – Metal-ringed EAXXXX6 Black-headed Gulls from Whitlingham. Photos both by Justin Lansdell.*

** as this bird is from a local project I have redacted part of the ring number.*

The second winter period was much better for ring-reading, with ten different rings fully read, of which five were read for the first time. At Thorpe River Green Yellow T2X8 returned for a third winter, whilst Yellow TEX7 was a new Polish bird (and was also seen on one date at Whitlingham). The metal ringed birds ST305473 (Finland) and 6209434 (Sweden) had both been recorded here previously, but no details have been received about them yet.

At Whitlingham Great Broad six metal rings were read in November or December. Two of these were birds ringed at Whitlingham in January, whilst 212874 is a mystery bird because the country reference at the start of the ring wasn't read (hopefully the BTO will be able to trace the scheme). A new country of origin was recorded on 14th Dec with the Lithuanian bird HA50-955, which will be submitted on due course and the results included in a future report. One of the remaining birds was ringed at the German island of Heligoland, where it was presumably a migrant passing through from one of the Scandinavian or Eastern European countries. The other individual, 6405918, was a Swedish bird that had been recorded back in 2014 and is interesting because it had been ringed in 2002, making it at least 17 years old.

| Ring number | Date first seen | Place ringed | Date ringed | Distance travelled / Km | Seen previously? |
|------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Metal ringed ST305473 | 22/10/19 | FINLAND | ? | ? | Yes (2018 onwards) |
| Yellow T2X8 | 30/11/19 | Zachodniopomorskie, POLAND | 20/05/17 | 868 | Yes (Nov 2017 on) |
| Yellow TEX7 | 13/11/19 | Mietkowski, POLAND | 24/06/19 | 1063 | NEW |
| Metal-ringed 6209434 | 13/11/19 | SWEDEN | ? | ? | Yes (in 2015) |
| Metal-ringed 212874 | 18/11/19 | ? | ? | ? | NEW |
| Metal-ringed EAXXXX4 * | 18/11/19 | Whitlingham C.P. | 16/01/19 | 0 | NEW |
| Metal-ringed HA50-955 | 14/12/19 | LITHUANIA (new recovery country) | ? | ? | NEW |
| Metal-ringed 5431788 | 15/12/19 | Heligoland, GERMANY | ? | ? | NEW |
| Metal-ringed EAXXXX6 * | 20/12/19 | Whitlingham C.P. | 23/01/19 | 0 | Earlier in 2019 |
| Metal-ringed 6405918 | 20/12/19 | Skane, Malmo, SWEDEN | 07/10/02 | 828 | Previously in 2014 |

Table 2 – Ringed Black-headed Gulls seen in the second winter period (Nov-Dec) 2019

** as this bird is from a local project I have redacted part of the ring number.*



*Figure 4 (left) – Yellow TEX7 and Figure 5 (right) – Yellow T2X8
Polish colour ringed Black-headed Gulls from Thorpe River Green. Photos both by Nick Elsey.*



*Figure 6 (left) – Metal-ringed 6209434 and Figure 7 (right) – Metal-ringed ST305473
Black-headed Gulls from Thorpe River Green. Photos both by Nick Elsey.*

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Justin Lansdell & Nick Elsey for supplying much of the 2019 information, to Stephen Vickers who provided a photo and details of his work with UEA ringing group, to the BTO ringing department and the various other ringers involved and to the anyone else who reported sightings of these birds.

Whitlingham Wildfowl Survey

Wildfowl counts at Whitlingham Great Broad and Whitlingham Little Broad were made once per month by the author to contribute to the BTOs Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS). The data here is based on the combined counts for Whitlingham Little Broad, Great Broad and St Andrews Broad, which was counted by Justin Lansdell. Counts were carried out on the same day unless otherwise indicated. Some of these counts may differ from the figures submitted to WeBS in order to include birds seen on nearby land (for instance geese on the meadow south of Whitlingham Lane). The counts are not necessarily high counts for the month – ad hoc and high counts are described in the individual species accounts. Unlike the systematic list the species order has not been updated to that included in the latest IOC checklist. This is to better allow comparison between this year and the data included in the previous bird reports.

| Species | Jan * | Feb * | Mar | Apr * | May | Jun | Jul | Aug \$ | Sep \$ | Oct | Nov | Dec * |
|--------------------------|----------|----------|-----|----------|-----|-----|-----|-----------|-----------|-----|-----|----------|
| Mute Swan | 24 | 17 | 17 | 21 | 79 | 86 | 108 | 77 | 20 | 25 | 24 | 26 |
| Greylag Goose | 3 | 19 | 41 | 47 | 23 | 14 | 91 | 1 | 3 | 13 | 1 | 1 |
| Barnacle Goose | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Canada Goose | 5 | 43 | 11 | 19 | 14 | 90 | 71 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Egyptian Goose | 2 | 5 | 6 | 2 | 16 | 21 | 31 | 26 | 12 | 8 | 6 | 3 |
| Shoveler | 7 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| Gadwall | 430 | 48 | 11 | 7 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 63 | 99 |
| Wigeon | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mallard | 70 | 71 | 17 | 28 | 31 | 36 | 91 | 101 | 37 | 59 | 65 | 68 |
| Teal | 89 | 18 | 6 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 14 | 6 | 39 |
| Pochard | 30 | 17 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 14 | 6 |
| Tufted Duck | 307 | 219 | 207 | 62 | 22 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 45 | 202 | 266 |
| Goldeneye | 8 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 3 |
| Cormorant | 23 | 45 | 13 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 8 | 11 | 25 | 52 | 46 | 27 |
| Grey Heron | 8 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 6 |
| Little Egret | 3 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 5 |
| Little Grebe | 8 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 9 |
| Great-crested Grebe | 5 | 7 | 9 | 8 | 8 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 1 |
| Water Rail | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Moorhen | 15 | 7 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 9 | 8 |
| Coot | 227 | 99 | 13 | 9 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 7 | 11 | 40 | 144 | 142 |
| Lapwing | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Oystercatcher | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Black-headed Gull | 456 | 96 | 249 | 7 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 13 | 15 | 38 | 290 | 358 |
| Common Gull | 27 | 18 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 4 |
| Lesser Black-backed Gull | 0 | 2 | 21 | 8 | 15 | 10 | 13 | 204 | 15 | 9 | 2 | 1 |
| Herring Gull | 72 | 56 | 88 | 7 | 17 | 2 | 0 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 11 | 47 |
| Common Tern | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Kingfisher | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Aythya</i> hybrid | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |

* counts at Whitlingham and Thorpe conducted on different days

\$ No WeBS count carried out at Thorpe this month.

Whitlingham and Thorpe Classified List

The systematic list in this bird report follows the latest taxonomical order used by the British Ornithologists Union (BOU) and based on decisions made by the International Ornithologists Congress (IOC) world list. The latest version, 9.2, was released in June 2019 and featured a large scale re-ordering of the first half of the list. I have included a rough guide to these changes below to help readers locate species that have been moved since the previous list.

| Previous order | | IOC v9.2 |
|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| Geese | → | Gamebirds |
| Swans | → | Geese |
| Ducks | → | Swans |
| Gamebirds | → | Ducks |
| Divers | → | Nightjar |
| Petrels & Shearwaters | → | Swifts |
| Grebes | → | Cuckoo |
| Hérons & allies | → | Pigeons |
| Gannet & allies | → | Bustards, Rails & Crakes |
| Cormorants | → | Grebes |
| Raptors | → | Waders |
| Bustards, Rails & Crakes | → | Gulls |
| Waders | → | Terns |
| Gulls | → | Skuas |
| Terns | → | Auks |
| Skuas | → | Divers |
| Auks | → | Petrels & Shearwaters |
| Pigeons | → | Gannet & allies |
| Cuckoos | → | Cormorants |
| Owls | → | Hérons & allies |
| Nightjar | → | Raptors |
| Swifts | → | Owls |
| Kingfisher & allies | → | Kingfisher & allies |
| Woodpeckers | → | Woodpeckers |
| Falcons | → | Falcons |
| Shrikes & allies | → | Shrikes & allies |
| Corvids | → | Corvids |
| Waxwings | → | Waxwings |
| Tits | → | Tits |
| Larks | → | Larks |
| Swallows | → | Swallows |
| Warblers | → | Warblers |
| Treecreeper etc | → | Treecreeper etc |
| Thrushes | → | Thrushes |
| Chats | → | Chats |
| Sparrows | → | Sparrows |
| Wagtails | → | Wagtails |
| Pipits | → | Pipits |
| Finches & Buntings | → | Finches & Buntings |
| American vagrants | → | American vagrants |

The description on the right refers to the chances of encountering a species if visiting at the appropriate time of year (common/scarce/rare) along with whether it is resident, a migrant, usually seen as a flyover or if it is only an occasional visitor.

Sightings of birds that are locally scarce or rare, particularly early or late reports or unusually high counts have initials after them – these relate to observers, a list of which can be found at the end of the classified list.

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

Occasional visitor



One record, from Whitlingham C.P. on 22nd March (GW). This is a typical date for this species, which seems to wander into the recording area in early spring.

Photo: Gary White

Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

Fairly common resident



Present in low numbers, most commonly noted at Trowse Meadow and in the meadows south of Whitlingham Lane, but also noted from Whitlingham Woods and thought to be resident at Thorpe Marshes. The highest count of the year was seven on 14th Apr.

Photo: Gary White

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

Common summer visitor



Now only one individual resident on the Great Broad, with more birds arriving in early spring. The high count of 90 on 15th June was more than double the 2018 high count – the only other count of note was 59 on 9th June. At least one pair bred, with four young goslings seen on 28th Apr. A pair noted with two goslings on 19th May could also refer to the same birds or could have been a second pair. **Photo: Gary White**

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*

Occasional visitor



A single bird was found on the slipway on the Great Broad on 19th Aug (JE) and continued to be seen until the year end. It was un-ringed when it arrived but was latterly ringed by UEA ringing group in November, who aged it as a 1st-year bird. It was fairly tame – perhaps from one of the category C flocks within East Anglia (e.g. the free-flying breeding population at Pensthorpe).

Photo: James Emerson

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

Common resident



A very similar high count to 2018, with 163 on 9th June (the previous year's high count was 162 on 2nd June). The only other count of note was 88 on 13th Sept. Only two breeding pairs noted this year, one gosling on the Great Broad on 18th Apr and a second pair with three goslings at Thorpe Marshes in late April.

Photo: James Emerson

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*

Occasional flyover



An unusual record of a single bird on the Great Broad on 8th March, which flew in with a flock of Greylag Geese and roosted on the broad (JL).

Otherwise, flocks noted flying over in late October when several skeins noted on 28th and 29th, plus another on 30th Nov.

Photo: Justin Lansdell

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

Common resident



The highest count of the year was 131 on 9th June, 10 higher than the 2018 maximum. A pair with six cygnets were seen on dykes at Thorpe Marshes on 3rd June, another pair raised one cygnet on the Little Broad and a third pair hatched two cygnets from a nest on the Great Broad. Five metal rings were read, all birds that had been ringed at Whitlingham.

Photo: Gary White

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*

Common resident.



A pair with six goslings were seen on 24th Feb, the earliest date since the bird reports began in 2012 (breeding in February has occurred at least once prior to that, in 2002). The lack of further sightings of the young suggested that they didn't survive long. A later brood did get two birds through to adulthood. The highest count of the year was 41 on 8th Sept.

Photo: Gary White

*** Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna*

Scarce spring visitor



Two sightings this year, firstly of two birds on St Andrew's Broad on 3rd Feb (SW), followed by two flying over Thorpe Marshes on 3rd June (SYWG).

Photo: Stuart White

*** Mandarin** *Aix galericulata*

Scarce occasional visitor



A drake first found on 6th Jan (GW) was then seen periodically into the spring until 10th May. What was presumably the same bird, now in eclipse plumage, returned on 7th Aug (JL) and was seen on several dates during Aug and Sept, and also in full adult plumage on 25th Nov (NE) and 17th Dec (JL).

Photo: Justin Lansdell

*** Garganey** *Anas querquedula*

Rare spring visitor



A pair were found on the Little Broad on 28th Mar (JL) and were present though elusive on the 29th and 30th. After a 2-week gap what was presumably the same birds were seen again on the Great Broad on 14th Apr (GW).

Photo: Gary White

Shoveler *Spatula clypeata*

Regular winter visitor



There was no repeat of the exceptional numbers seen in early 2018, with a maximum of six seen on 14th Jan. Numbers otherwise varied between 1-4, with birds last seen on 5th Apr. In the 2nd winter period six seen on 28th Sept were the first returning birds, although latterly only 1-3 were present until six again on 20th Dec.

Photo: James Emerson

Gadwall *Spatula strepera*

Common winter visitor



The year began with a combined Whitlingham/Thorpe count of 315 on 4th Jan, which was surpassed by a combined Whitlingham/Thorpe count of 456 on 20th Jan (397 Great Broad/59 St Andrews Broad). Other high counts included 254 on 6th Jan, 165 on 19th Jan and 164 on 3rd Feb. A pair bred at Thorpe Marshes, with 3 ducklings seen on 16th June. There were no summer records, although presumably the aforementioned family were still present. Returning birds were recorded from 8th Sept but numbers were slow to accumulate, reaching 53 on 3rd Nov, 84 on 14th Dec and finally 120 on 30th Dec.

Photo: Gary White

Wigeon *Spatula penelope*

Scarce winter visitor



Three birds were present on 5th Jan, followed by a confiding drake present 1st Feb until 8th May (GW), that latter date being the latest spring record for the site. A further eight birds were present on 28th Mar (4 pairs), the same day that the Garganey arrived. Eight were also present on 6th Oct and one on 3rd Nov.

Photo: Gary White

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Common resident.



Two clear peaks in numbers, at their highest in mid-summer when 175 on 31st July was surpassed by 225 on 7th Aug. Earlier in the year 122 seen on 6th Jan and 100+ on two other dates that month. Broods noted at Whitlingham (3, 5 and 13 ducklings) and Thorpe Marshes during April, whilst another brood was noted at Whitlingham on 19th Aug. **Photo: Gary White**

Teal *Anas crecca*

Common winter visitor.



Smaller numbers present than in 2018, with a peak combined count of 95 on 20th Jan consisting of 49 on St Andrews Broad and 46 on the Great Broad. Numbers tailed off sharply after January, with small numbers seen until 21st Apr. In the autumn birds noted from 8th Sept. The highest count of this period was 24 on 12th Oct, although “good numbers” noted on St Andrews Broad by CD on 19th Dec. **Photo: Gary White**

*** Red-crested Pochard** *Netta rufina*

Scarce winter visitor



A single record this year, of a drake on St Andrew’s Broad on 8th Mar (JL). This date is in keeping with the 2018 records, when 2 of the 3 records were also in March.

Photo: Justin Lansdell

Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Common winter visitor



Around 35 present at the start of the year, with the highest count 44 (36 drakes) on St Andrews Broad on 13th Jan. The last wintering bird was noted on 5th Apr, but a drake was also seen on St Andrews Broad on 16th May. In the second winter period 10 seen flying over on 29th Oct followed by four on the Great Broad on 3rd Nov. Numbers peaked at 27 on 23rd Nov. **Photo: Gary White**

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

Common winter visitor



A very high count of 542 was made at Whitlingham on 30th Dec (GW) and presumably involved a brief influx of c250 birds as before and after that date numbers were between 250-300. Other than that, a count of exactly 300 across Whitlingham and Thorpe on 4th Jan was almost matched on 20th Jan when 297 present (270 Whitlingham and 27 Thorpe). Around 200 were still present during February and c150 during March and April. In May 17 seen on 19th, with 4 still present at

Thorpe on 5th & 6th June. One back on the Great Broad on 15th Sept, with numbers increasing in November and a winter peak (with the exception of the high count mentioned at the start) of 277 on 15th Dec.

Photo: Gary White

*** Long-tailed Duck** *Clangula hyemalis*

Very rare winter visitor

One reported briefly on St Andrew's Broad on 10th Feb (MB) was the first area record since 2005, but sadly not relocated after the initial sighting. Interestingly there was also a report on the previous day from Ormesby Little Broad. A long-staying (although sometimes elusive) Long-tailed Duck overwintered on Barton Broad during 2018/19 and could perhaps account for both of these sightings, although it appeared to be relatively settled, being regularly reported at Barton until at least 21st Mar. Interestingly it appears that a Long-tailed Duck is also settled in the Trinity Broads area in the 2019/20 winter, so perhaps we won't have to wait another 14 years for the next Whitlingham area sighting.

Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Scarce winter visitor



A minimum of 7 present during January, often split between St Andrews Broad and the Great Broad. Five of these (2 imm. males and 3 females) remained until 18th Apr, with 2 on 24th Apr the last of the spring. A 1st-winter drake on the Great Broad on 7th Sept (JL) became the earliest ever returning patch bird (and indeed the first September record). It remained throughout the month and was joined by a second in October, with up to 5

present in November and December.

Photo: Gary White

Goosander *Mergus merganser*

Scarce winter visitor



A redhead on St Andrews Broad on 9th Apr (DL) was asleep when seen and the observer noted that he couldn't conclusively rule out Red-breasted Merganser, but the date and location would strongly point to this species. The only other two records, quite possibly relating to the same individual, were on 12th Oct and 3rd Nov (both GW).

Photo: Gary White

Swift *Apus apus*

Common spring visitor



The first sighting of spring was on 27th Apr, a fairly typical date but six days later than 2018. Further records followed from 6th May onwards. There were anecdotal reports that some Swifts appeared interested by the swift tower, but as far as I'm aware still no breeding attempts. The last record of the year was of two over the Great Broad on 7th Sept.

Photo: Gary White

Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

Scarce spring migrant

A handful of reports this year, probably all relating to a single roaming male. Firstly seen at Whitlingham C.P. on 3rd May, then at Whitlingham or Thorpe on another five dates during the month. There were also two sightings during June, on 16th and 23rd.

Feral Pigeon *Columba livia*

Common resident

A few casual records, usually only when the observer was making an effort to record as many species as possible. This species is very common in Norwich city centre but typically only seen in the area as distant flocks.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas*

Scarce resident

Resident at both Whitlingham and Thorpe Marshes. The highest count of local birds was of 5 on 23rd June, but 14 were noted during a vis-mig session on 10th Sept (10 south, 2 north).

Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*

Common resident

A very common species across the recording area. Large early-morning movements were noted on several occasions during September, including 1310 south on 10th, 417 on 28th and 760 on 30th Sept.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Scarce – resident nearby



Occasionally noted on Whitlingham Lane, all records relating to 1 or 2 individuals with the exception of 3 on 31st Mar.

Photo: Gary White

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

Secretive resident/winter visitor



A maximum of 4 recorded around Whitlingham during January, the same number as the previous year. The last bird of the first winter period was recorded at Whitlingham on 28th Mar.

In the second winter period recorded at Whitlingham from 5th Sept and Thorpe Marshes from 14th Sept.

Photo: Gary White

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Common resident



Resident, with numbers of up to 17 recorded on the Great Broad but likely to be an underestimate of the overall numbers. One was found building a nest about 6 feet up a tree on 14th Apr and an adult with a large chick was visible on the main island on 19th May.

Photo: Gary White

Coot *Fulica atra*

Resident/Common winter visitor



A joint Whitlingham & Thorpe count on 4th Jan revealed 238 birds, impressively the same number as counted a month earlier.

As usual numbers decreased quickly, with 10 on 14th Apr and 12 on 19th Aug the only double-figure counts between April and August. Numbers increased during autumn, peaking at 162 on 23rd Nov. **Photo: Gary White**

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Common winter visitor



Similar numbers to 2018, with up to nine present at Whitlingham in January and a combined Whitlingham/Thorpe count of 10 on 20th Jan. Seven still present on 10th Mar and 3 on 6th Apr, last reported on 14th Apr when 2 seen. In autumn a single bird noted on 13th Sept and 1-2 during October, before a combined total of 12 (10 Great Broad/2 St Andrews Broad) on 17th Nov and 30th Dec. **Photo: Gary White**

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Resident



Present all year round in low numbers, peaking at 15 on 28th Mar (13 Great Broad/2 St Andrews Broad) and again on 6th Apr. On 21st Apr one was visible on a nest on the northern shore of the main island on the Great Broad. A pair including at least one small juvenile riding on an adult's back was noted on 19th May.

Photo: Gary White

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

Regular spring visitor



A series of spring records from February to April. Firstly two at Thorpe Marshes on 15th Feb then 1 or 2 on numerous dates until 24th Mar. After that three on 29th Mar, four on 6th Apr and three on 9th Apr, with further sightings on 14th and 21st Apr.

Photo: Gary White

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Common winter visitor



Fewer records than normal this year, possibly in part due to fewer visits to Thorpe Marshes, flooding of the marshes and not being seen as noteworthy. Records received from January to August, with highest counts 12 on 29th Mar, 11 on 15th June and 25 on 1st Aug. Interestingly A pair were observed nesting at Thorpe on 3rd June, but unfortunately the nest flooded shortly afterwards. **Photo: Gary White**

* **Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius*

Scarce spring visitor



Only two records this year, an adult with three large juveniles on 1st Aug (JL) and a juvenile photographed on 4th Aug (GW). Given the lack of sightings prior to this it is reasonable to assume that they fledged nearby but not within the recording area.

Photo: Gary White

* **Curlew** *Numenius arquata*

Occasional flyover

A single record this year, of a bird that flew up off Thorpe Marshes and carried on flying west early morning on 28th Apr (GW).

* **Dunlin** *Calidris alpina*

Scarce passage migrant

Following several good years for this species locally there was only one sighting this year, of a single bird at Thorpe Marshes on 6th May (SW).

* **Woodcock** *Scolopax rusticola*

Scarce winter visitor

Almost certainly overlooked in wooded areas due to crepuscular nature – two were seen flying out of woodland at dusk on 30th Dec (GW).

Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

Common winter visitor

Low numbers noted from Thorpe Marshes during casual visits (maximum of six on 28th March), with one at Whitlingham C.P. on 14th April the last spring sighting. In the autumn 1-3 noted on several occasions from 8th Oct onwards.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Spring migrant



First noted on 24th Apr when three present at Thorpe Marshes. On 6th May a flock of five seen at Whitlingham with three at Thorpe – possibly the same birds from April or evidence of passage on that day. The last bird of spring was noted on 9th June, with reverse passage starting on 1st Aug. Nine birds at Whitlingham on 8th Aug included a flock of seven and is a sizeable count for the area.

Photo: Gary White

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Spring migrant



An over-wintering bird was seen at Thorpe Marshes on 4th Jan and presumably the same bird was at Whitlingham on 19th Jan. Spring passage confined to sightings of a single bird between 5th and 17th Apr. Autumn passage began with on 14th July, with singles on 1st and 4th Aug then 2 on 18th Aug.

Photo: Gary White

* **Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola*

Rare spring migrant

One flew in from the direction of Whitlingham, circled over Thorpe Marshes whilst calling, then flew off eastwards on 28th July (SW). This was part of a national influx of Wood Sandpipers around this time.

* **Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia*

Scarce spring migrant

One flew over Thorpe Marshes on 6th May, a typical date for this species (GW).

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Common resident



Several new ringed birds were noted this year (see article on pages 19-22), including the first Lithuanian-ringed individual. Black-headed Gulls were also ringed at Whitlingham for the first time. Recorded in every month, although low numbers over the summer. There were two counts over 500 - 686 on 30th Dec and c580 on 20th Jan.

Photo: Nick Eley

* **Little Gull** *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

Scarce spring migrant



No repeat of the huge influx of 2018, but sightings on several days during mid-April. Firstly four on 9th Apr (DL), with two on 10th Apr (DL) and one on 11th Apr (JL). There was then a gap until six (5 adults and a 1st-winter) over the Great Broad on 18th Apr (GS, PWo, JL).

Photo: Chris Lansdell

*** Mediterranean Gull** *Ichthyaetus melanocephalus*

Scarce spring visitor

A 2nd calendar-year bird was bathing on St Andrew's Broad on 29th March (ME), a similar date to several of the 2018 records and the only sighting of the year.

Common Gull *Larus canus*

Common winter visitor



Generally low numbers with the exception of 32 on 5th Jan and a very high count of 120 on 1st Feb. Last of spring was on 12th May. One on 18th Aug and 2 on 13th Sept were the only sightings until November, when up to 13 present on the Great Broad.

Photo: Gary White

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

Common winter visitor



As with the previous year, herring Gulls were noted in every month except July. With the exception of evenings when birds drop in to bathe on the way to roost the only counts of 20+ birds were 56 on 5th Jan, 46 on 6th Jan and 41 on 20th Jan. One colour-ringed bird noted this year, orange Z3FT, a Thames Valley ringed bird.

Photo: Gary White

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Common summer visitor



Recorded throughout the year with numbers highest from late March until October. Only one 100+ count, with 204 present on the Great Broad on 4th Aug.

Photo: Gary White

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Common spring migrant



First of the year reported on 30th Mar (per Bird News Services). This would be a new earliest site record so I would welcome further details about this sighting. One on 2nd Apr was presumably the same bird. Evidence of passage on 18th Apr when 8 seen, and also on 8th-12th May when 10 present. Birds then seen on most visits until 23rd June. One, possibly two of the May birds were metal-ringed, but the rings could not be read at range.

Photo: Gary White

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*

Scarce spring migrant



One reported from the Great Broad on 12th Apr (per Bird Information Services) was a very early record (15th Apr 2018 is currently the earliest attributed site record) so further information on this sighting would be welcome. Main passage came on 17th Apr when 7-8 seen, at least two of which were still present the following day. Also two seen on 28th Apr, one on 3rd May and two on 8th May.

Photo by Drew Lyness

*** Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger*

Scarce passage migrant



An unprecedented arrival of up to 24 birds seen and photographed on 8th May (various) smashed the site record and is discussed in more detail in the article on pages 13-18.

Apart from this influx, sightings were received of one on 10th May (JL) and two flew through on 16th May (BF).

Photo: Stephen Vickers

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Common winter visitor



Present all year, although numbers down to single figures in June and July. One of the large roost trees on the island collapsed, meaning the roost is now more spread out than it was previously. The highest roost count of the year was 87 on 20th Dec, with other notable counts of 69 on 12th Oct and 76 on 3rd Nov.

Photo: Gary White

Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

Scarce but annual winter visitor



Only one record received this year, of a bird seen and photographed along the north shore of the Great Broad on 4th Jan (JL).

Photo: Justin Lansdell

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Common resident



A high count of eight was made on 20th Jan, and these birds evidently stayed close by for a few weeks as the same number was also recorded on 27th Jan and 3rd Feb. On 10th Mar several Grey Herons were noted roosting with Little Egrets on the Little Broad. In the autumn the maximum count was seven on 23rd Nov.

Photo: Gary White

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Regular flyovers



The 2018 Whitlingham Bird Report documented a new site high count of five birds and occasional roosting by multiple birds. During 2019 it became apparent that a small roost was establishing, which is discussed in the article on pages 9-12. The site record was broken again on 10th March when seven were present on the Little Broad (GW) and this number was equalled twice in the autumn, on 12th Nov (AG) and 25th Nov (NE).

Photo: Gary White

*** Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*

Scarce migrant

Despite regular and sometimes quite lengthy stays in the mid-Yare valley, Osprey sightings remain rare in the Whitlingham area. One was reported flying over at 13:41 on 24th Apr (per Bird News Services, observer unknown) – for context this was 1 hour 20 mins after one had been seen at Hotblack Road in west Norwich and the day before one was seen at Rockland Broad. The second sighting of the year was one seen over the Whitlingham area from a car travelling east along the A47 on 1st Sept (DB).

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Resident



Occasional sightings throughout the year, mostly at or from Thorpe Marshes. All records refer to one or two birds with the exception of three on 29th Mar.

Photo: Gary White

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Fairly regular flyover

Probably under-reported. Outlying records received for February and September but the bulk of records in spring (late April to mid-June), perhaps indicating that a bird breeding further along the valley was hunting in the area. All sightings were of single birds except two over Thorpe Marshes on 11th May.

* **Red Kite** *Milvus milvus*

Scarce flyovers

Six records received, spread out throughout the year and over Thorpe Marshes unless stated. Firstly 22nd Feb (MB), 18th Apr (PWo) and 2nd June (SW), followed by one flying over Whitlingham seen from the A47 on 1st Sept (DB). During the winter two over on 13th Dec (JL) then finally one over Whitlingham C.P. on 14th Dec (NENBC walk participants, per JL).

Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Resident nearby



Fairly regular sightings throughout the year relating to one or two birds, with six on 29th Mar and six on 13th Sept. These counts could include migrant birds, but are perhaps more likely to relate to birds from local woodlands.

Photo: Gary White

* **Barn Owl** *Tyto alba*

Scarce resident

Only two sightings this year, one at Thorpe Marshes on 24th June (JP) and another hunting over the meadows south of Whitlingham Lane on 31st July (JL).

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*

Scarce resident

Only four records this year, from Whitlingham in January and April, then from both Thorpe Marshes and Whitlingham in November, but this undoubtedly reflects the occasions that observers were present at or after dusk and cannot be used to infer any downturn in fortunes of this species.

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Scarce resident



Numerous sightings from Whitlingham and occasional reports from Thorpe, referring to between one and four individuals. The most seen on a single visit was six on 19th Jan.

Photo: Gary White.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopus major*

Resident



Sightings from Whitlingham C.P. and Thorpe Marshes, throughout the year, with a drumming bird heard on 28th Mar.

Photo: Gary White

Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*

Resident



Up to four birds seen and/or heard at Whitlingham C.P. and Thorpe Marshes throughout the year.

Photo: Gary White

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Resident



Apparently still resident at Thorpe Marshes, and seen frequently, but few specific records submitted this year. In addition one at Whitlingham on 13th Sept.

Photo: Gary White

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Scarce spring migrant

First reported on 5th May at Thorpe Marshes, with presumably the same bird also noted on 9th, 10th, 11th and 16th May. There were no sightings over the summer, with autumn sightings from Thorpe Marshes on 5th and 7th Sept.

* **Peregrine** *Falco peregrinus*

Scarce flyovers

Despite the Norwich Cathedral pair again fledging young (three this year), sightings over the Whitlingham area are surprisingly rare. It would appear that the Peregrines are currently more inclined to fly along the wooded ridge towards Thorpe St Andrew and seldom hunt over Whitlingham or Thorpe Marshes. Following an appeal for sightings only one emerged, of a female Peregrine that circled the Great Broad several times on 27th June whilst being mobbed by Lesser Black-backed Gulls (BF). Otherwise birds were noted nearby over Thunder Lane, Thorpe St Andrew in February and elsewhere in Thorpe St Andrew on multiple occasions during the spring.

Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

Common resident



Resident in small numbers. The most recorded on a single visit was seven (the same number as 2018) on 13th Sept.

Photo: Gary White

Magpie *Pica pica*

Common resident



Present throughout the recording area. No roost counts made during the first winter period. Signs that the autumn roost was beginning to establish when 27 present at dusk on 5th Sept, with the highest roost count of the year being 95 on 15th Dec.

Photo: Gary White

Western Jackdaw *Coloeus monedula spermologus*

Common resident



Present throughout the year, but the main focus was the winter roost increasing in number again, with a new site record of c1340 on 4th January. Other high roost counts included 760 on 8th Mar, 550 on 28th Mar, 300+ on 7th Sept, 1110 on 15th Dec and 885 on 30th Dec.

Photo: Gary White

*** Nordic Jackdaw** *Coloeus monedula monedula*

Rare winter visitor



Three (2 adults and a 1st-year bird) were seen and photographed at Whitlingham C.P. on 3rd Nov (DF). For further details about Nordic Jackdaws see the article on pages 6-8. As far as I'm aware this represents a new subspecies for the site.

Photo: Dave Farrow

*** Rook** *Corvus frugilegus*

Resident nearby but rare flyover here

Two records this year, three flew over Whitlingham C.P. on 6th Apr (GW) and one over Thorpe Marshes on 18th Oct (CD).

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

Common resident



Common and easily seen all around Whitlingham C.P.

Photo: Gary White

Coal Tit *Periparus ater*

Scarce resident



In contrast to the previous species, Coal Tits can go unnoticed for periods, but there was a good number of records received this year. Numbers were highest in September when eight noted on the 8th and 14 on 13th. At Thorpe Marshes one was present with a large Long-tailed Tit flock on 13th Dec.

Photo: Gary White

Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris*

Scarce resident

A slight increase in records on recent years, with 1-2 recorded on quite a few dates between January and April then again from September. Three were seen on 13th Sept during a walk around the whole of the area.

Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Common resident



Common throughout the recording area.

Photo: Gary White

Great Tit *Parus major*

Common resident

Common throughout the recording area.

* **Skylark** *Alauda arvensis*

Scarce winter visitor

No sightings reported during early spring this year, so all records listed: One over Thorpe Marshes on 8th Oct (CD), one over Whitlingham C.P. on 25th Oct (JE) and six over during an early morning Whitlingham vis-mig session on 29th Oct (JL).

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

Common spring visitor



First seen back on 30th Mar, with 18 the following day and 150 on 3rd Apr. Flocks of around 50 common throughout April, with a flock of 96 on 4th May suggesting a further influx of birds. Numbers declined suddenly, with no further spring sightings after 60 at Thorpe Marshes on 11th May. Autumn passage consisted of one bird on 14th Aug and 34 on 8th Sept.

Photo: Gary White

Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Common summer visitor



First seen on 31st Mar, a day earlier than in 2018. Low numbers present throughout April, with a high count of 324 at Thorpe Marshes on the evening of 4th May. Most birds had gone by 12th May although two were also present on 23rd June. The only autumn sightings were one on 19th Aug and two on 13th Sept.

Photo: Gary White

House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

Common spring visitor

First noted on 2nd Apr, in keeping with the early arrival in 2018. Fairly low numbers present during April, but 120 on 4th May suggested a recent arrival along with Sand Martins and Swallows, with birds lingering until 11th May. Two were also seen on 16th June. In the autumn birds were noted on 1st Aug then again on 14th, 18th and 19th Aug, with a large gathering of 262 on 8th Sept. Unusually there were two sightings in October this year, three birds on 8th Oct (CD) and a single on 12th Oct (JP).

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

Common resident



No sign of any ill-effects from the recent harsh winter, with varying numbers of singing birds up to 10 at south of the river between Whitlingham C.P. and Whitlingham Marsh, with up to nine heard in and around Thorpe Marshes.

Photo: Chris Lansdell

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

Common resident



Common throughout the recording area, with a flock of 35 at Thorpe Marshes on 15th Dec of note.

Photo: Gary White

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Declining summer visitor



First of the year was heard on 7th Apr, and there was a slight increase on the 2018 numbers, with up to six heard at Whitlingham and a further one at Thorpe Marshes. One of the Whitlingham birds noted on 6th May was a 'mixed singer', slipping in bits of Chiffchaff song between Willow Warbler song. The last report was from 23rd June.

Photo: Gary White

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

Common summer visitor



Three overwintering birds noted in January, two at Whitlingham on 6th Jan and one at Thorpe Marshes on 13th Jan. The first singing bird of the year was on 15th Mar and based on previous years was probably a migrant. Very common over the summer, with large numbers in September possibly down to fledged young or migrants passing through. Six on 12th Oct also probably migrants, but three at Whitlingham on 3rd Nov and one at Thorpe Marshes on 17th Nov will presumably overwinter.

Photo: Gary White

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Common summer visitor



First of the year at Whitlingham was on 7th Apr, the same date as 2018. At Thorpe first reported on 9th Apr, although possibly present before this. Numbers increased later in the month, with 10 at Thorpe Marshes on 21st Apr. Most evident in spring, but eight singing on 14th July and three on 18th Aug. Final sighting of one on 13th Sept.

Photo: Gary White

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Common summer visitor



First noted back at Whitlingham on 21st Apr, a slightly later date than recently. Numbers increased shortly afterwards, with 11 present on 28th Apr. Birds heard throughout late spring and into the summer, with two at Thorpe Marshes on 14th Sept the latest of the year.

Photo: Gary White

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*

Scarce summer visitor

First heard reeling at Thorpe Marshes on 15th Apr, several days earlier than in 2018. As usual difficult to be sure exactly how many birds were present – the minimum number of birds present was three, heard reeling at once on 24th June. The position of reeling birds suggests that as in previous years there were probably several more than that. Other than the spring birds, one reeling on 14th July and unusually an autumn bird noted, on 14th Sept.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Common summer visitor



No overwintering birds reported from the first winter period, with a bird in song at Thorpe Marshes on 28th March. There was a clear influx in the following week, with 20+ at Whitlingham from 6th Apr. Singing birds still common in May and June, with a handful of sightings over the summer. Nine on 8th Sept suggests a passage movement, with four still present on 13th Sept.

Photo: Gary White

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*

Scarce summer visitor



First noted at Whitlingham on 3rd May, a later arrival than recent years. Numbers high, with an impressive eight recorded at Whitlingham on 6th May and 9th June, and up to three at Thorpe Marshes. Last of the year seen on 13th Sept.

Photo: Gary White

*** Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia curruca*

Scarce summer visitor

Only two records this year, at Whitlingham C.P. on 18th Apr (JE) and 4th May (GW).

Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

Common summer visitor



First recorded on 21st Apr when one at Thorpe Marshes and four at Whitlingham C.P. Numbers peaked in early May, with up to 18 heard around the Whitlingham area. Last noted on 13th Sept.

Photo: Gary White

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

Common resident

Present in Whitlingham Woods and around Whitlingham C.P. all year round. Two were also noted with a Long-tailed Tit flock at Thorpe Marshes on 13th Dec.

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Common resident

Widespread and common throughout the recording area.

Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*

Scarce resident

As usual single birds occasionally heard calling from wooded areas around Whitlingham, with one apparently accompanying a mixed tit flock along the trees south of the river level with Whitlingham Woods on 16th Dec.

Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*

Common resident



Up to four noted around Whitlingham C.P, with a further bird noted at Thorpe Marshes in the autumn and winter. One nest was found this year, and adults were noted carrying in food on 19th May.

Photo: Gary White

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Common resident

Scarce this year. Two noted on 10th Mar and several small flocks noted in autumn. A count of 1040 was made during an hour vis-mig session on 19th Oct, with 300 over in 2 hours on 29th Oct.

Blackbird *Turdus merula*

Common resident



Common throughout the recording area. A record of 23 flying over during 2 hours of vis-mig on 29th Oct was the only count of note.

Photo: Gary White

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

Common winter visitor



A poor year. Two present on 19th Jan and another two on 7th Apr. Nine flew over in 2 hours on 29th Oct and finally one was present at Thorpe Marshes on 4th Nov.

Photo: Ricky Cleverley

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

Common winter visitor

Single figure counts on several dates in January and until 31st Mar. Two over on 30th Sept were the first reported back in autumn, with 81 on 6th Oct and 261 recorded flying over in 2 hours on 29th Oct.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

Common resident



Present throughout the recording area in low numbers.

Photo: Gary White

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

Scarce resident

Presumably still resident, but fewer records than normal and never more than one bird seen on a visit.

Robin *Erithacus rubicula*

Common resident

Common throughout the recording area.

Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

Scarce winter migrant



The pair overwintering from October 2018 continued to be seen at Thorpe Marshes until 18th Feb.

In the autumn the pair were again seen from 30th Sept until the year end, although not seen on every visit over that period. Interestingly a third bird was also seen on 18th Oct (CD).
Photo: Ricky Cleverley

* **House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*

Very rare wandering species



A female was seen and photographed in a garden along Whitlingham Lane between Trowse and the Little Broad on 17th Mar, and a pair at the same location on 22nd Mar (both GW). Sadly they were not seen after those dates.

Photo: Gary White

Dunnock *Prunella modularis*

Common resident

Common throughout the recording area.

* **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava*

Scarce spring flyover

One flew over Thorpe Marshes on 17th April (DL), a typical date for this species here.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Scarce resident



Fairly commonly seen around Whitlingham and occasionally at Thorpe Marshes and along the river edge. A recently fledged young bird on the fence around the Little Broad on 8th May suggested that breeding occurred within the recording area this year, having previously only been recorded just outside the area.

Photo: Gary White

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Common resident



Resident and usually seen around the slipway and visitors barn. No reports of recently fledged birds or pre-roost gatherings this year.

Photo: Gary White

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

Passage migrant/winter visitor

Recorded at Thorpe Marshes in the first winter period until 18th Mar, and then again from 18th Aug onwards. Numbers typically confined to single figures with the exception of 11 on 14th Sept. Between 1-5 noted flying over Whitlingham early in the morning during vis-mig sessions on several occasions during September and October.

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Common resident



Widely seen throughout the recording area but no double-figure counts noted.

Photo: Gary White

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

Scarce winter visitor

Only a handful of sightings this year, including single birds on 3rd and 16th Feb, four presumably moving through the area on 14th Apr and three on 3rd Nov.

Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Scarce resident



Regular sightings of up to 4 birds at Whitlingham and a further 2 at Thorpe Marshes throughout the year.

Photo: Gary White

Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*

Fairly common resident



No sign of a regular roost, but two double-figure counts in the first winter period – 11 on 27th Jan and 18 on 16th Feb. Otherwise small numbers seen occasionally, although 13 seen early morning on 3rd Nov might have come out of a roost nearby.

Photo: Gary White

Linnet *Linaria cannabina*

Scarce resident



Resident in low numbers but unobtrusive. Most sightings came from the winter periods and early spring, with a flock of 15 at Thorpe Marshes at dusk on 9th Feb and 14 at Whitlingham on 16th Feb.

Photo: Gary White

*** Common (=Mealy) Redpoll** *Acanthis flammea*

Scarce winter visitor

Only a single sighting this year, from Whitlingham C.P. on 16th Feb with 8 Lesser Redpolls (GW).

Lesser Redpoll *Acanthis cannabina*

Fairly scarce winter visitor

Low numbers of Redpolls this year (following a bumper year in 2018), with 1-2 seen on several dates between January and 14th Apr, plus 8 on 16th Feb. In the second winter period eight on 3rd Nov and up to five on several dates afterwards.

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

Common resident



Resident in fairly small numbers, although a flock of 73 on 28th Sept must have involved an influx and is comparable to the flock of 80 seen on 5th Oct the previous year.

Photo: Gary White

Siskin *Spinus spinus*

Common winter visitor



Present until 31st Mar during the first winter period. Numbers varied (which is consistent with the usual behaviour here of several different small flocks sometimes feeding together). The highest count was of 74 on 3rd Feb.

In autumn not noted until 12th Oct, several weeks later than in 2018.

Photo: Gary White

*** Yellowhammer**

Scarce flyover

Two records this year, one at Thorpe Marshes on 6th May and another at Whitlingham on 28th Sept (both GW).

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Common summer visitor



As with the previous year birds were recorded throughout the year, with singing males first noted at Thorpe Marshes on 15th Feb and at Whitlingham on the following day. Double-figure counts noted at Thorpe Marshes during March and June.

Photo: Gary White

Total: 123 species (not including subspecies)

Appendix A – Unrecorded but likely species or species recorded nearby

These species are birds that are either seen in most years but not reported during 2019, or birds that were seen very close to Whitlingham and/or flying in the direction of the Whitlingham without being actually observed there.

* **Common Scoter** *Melanitta nigra* *Scarce passage migrant*

In recent years this species has been near annual in spring (with other records in August and December), but there were no records received this year.

Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus* *Scarce winter visitor*

Probably present at Thorpe Marshes during the winter.

* **Great Black-backed Gull** *Larus marinus* *Scarce occasional visitor*

No records from within the recording area, but three (2 adults and a 1st-winter) flew east over Thunder Lane, Thorpe St Andrew with gulls flying to roost in the evening on 19th Jan.

* **Yellow-legged Gull** *Larus michahellis* *Scarce visitor*

Typically there are one or two sightings of this species each year, but large gull ID is not a popular area for many birders so it is not a great surprise to not receive any records of Yellow-legged Gull or Caspian Gull.

Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* *Scarce spring migrant/breeder*

For the first time since these reports began there were no Nightingale sightings for the area. Sadly this absence seemed to be reflected in the wider county as well, with many former territories unoccupied during 2019.

* **Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros* *Very rare visitor*

Once again several birds were singing in the city centre though, so it should be a possible species to encounter on passage, although none have so far been reported during the period that these bird reports have been compiled.

Appendix B – Escapes and birds of dubious origin

Note that un-ringed species on Category C of the British List (for example Barnacle Goose and Mandarin) are typically given the benefit of the doubt and included in the main systematic list.

Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata* *Semi-resident at Thorpe Green*

Recorded on a number of dates during January and March.

Appendix C – Hybrids & domestic wildfowl

Greylag x Chinese Goose (aka domestic Swan Goose) *Resident*



Present all year, mostly around the slipway.

Photo: James Emerson

Ruddy Shelduck x Egyptian Goose

Previously unrecorded hybrid



This hybrid was found loosely associating with Egyptian Geese near the slipway on 25th Oct (JE) but not seen again. It is likely that these two species are the parents, but with several Ruddy Shelduck x Egyptian Geese hybrids at large in Norfolk there is a possibility that it could be a second generation hybrid. What was probably the same bird had earlier been seen at Strumpshaw on 24th Sept. **Photo: James Emerson**

Tufted Duck x Pochard

New individual of a common hybrid pairing



This smallish female-type *Aythya* hybrid is thought to be Tufted Duck x Pochard, a hybrid pairing found fairly frequently at Whitlingham, although this individual is probably a new one at the site. It was found on 11th Nov (GW) and seen on several dates afterwards.

Photo: Gary White

White-cheeked Pintail x Mallard

Regular hybrid first seen in 2018



Having been first found in November 2018 and been commuting along the river between Whitlingham and Strumpshaw, it was seen in January then regularly throughout April. It returned in eclipse plumage on 31st July and spent August at Whitlingham, before being noted at Thorpe Green on 6th Oct.

Photo: James Emerson

Acknowledgements & initials for scarce/rare species

I am grateful to everyone who has reported birds from the Whitlingham area this year, be it directly to myself, to the bird news services or by posted sightings on Twitter. In particular I would like to thank the following for providing records or information:

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Where a name was not given for a sighting (for example posted as a Twitter handle) or a sighting was passed on second or third hand, I have listed it as per the source, e.g. 'per Twitter' or 'per JL'. Several sightings also came about from guided walks for South Yare Wildlife Group (SYWG) and the North East Norfolk Bird Club (NENBC).

Photographers of pictures used in the report are: Ricky Cleverley, Nick Eley, Dave Farrow, James Emerson, Chris Lansdell, Justin Lansdell, James Lowen, Drew Lyness, Stephen Vickers, Gary White and Stuart White.

Local information

The following websites regularly contain sightings from the Whitlingham area:

<https://jamesbirdsandbeer.blogspot.co.uk/> (The author's blog, containing updates from Whitlingham & Thorpe, and a site guide and a site bird list)

<http://www.honeyguide.co.uk/thorpemarshes.htm> (Thorpe Marshes NWT unofficial site)

<http://yarevalleywildlife.synthasite.com/> (Yare Valley Birding website)

<https://shakysbirdingblog.blogspot.co.uk/> (Ricky Cleverley's Blog containing updates from Thorpe Marsh)

<http://www.birdforum.net/showthread.php?t=249220> (The Norwich thread of BirdForum)

Bird information services

Several sightings and dates relate to sightings reported to the bird information services. If you are fortunate enough to find a rare or locally scarce bird, please report it to one of them. Contact websites and phone numbers of the main providers can be found below.

[Rare Bird Alert](http://www.rarebirdalert.co.uk/) (0207 0382820), [BirdGuides](http://www.birdguides.co.uk/) (0333 5772473) or [BirdLine East Anglia](http://www.birdlineeastanglia.co.uk/) (07941 333970).