

Norfolk Wildlife Trust



St Andrew's Broad at Thorpe Marshes, from Whitlingham Country Park.

Nature notes from NWT Thorpe Marshes

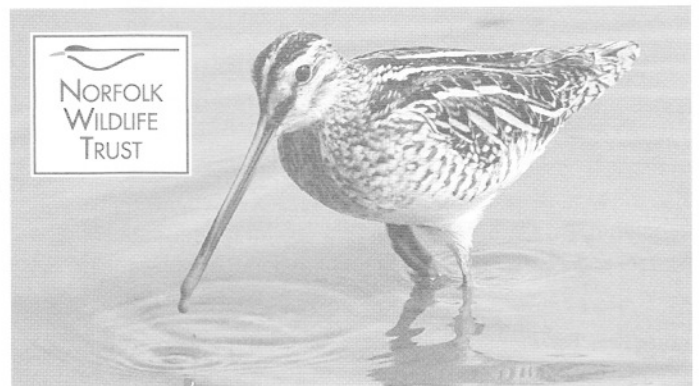
Norfolk Wildlife Trust's Thorpe Marshes reserve is in the Norfolk Broads, yet on the edge of Norwich in Thorpe St Andrew. Local resident Chris Durdin introduces us to the reserve:

I'm lucky to have Thorpe St Andrew Marshes – NWT Thorpe Marshes for short – a short walk from home. The nature reserve, established in 2011, is a charming mix of grazing marshes, ditches and ungrazed fen. There's year-round interest, though spring and summer are my favourite times, with flowers on the marshes and dragonflies over the ditches, including good numbers of that speciality of the Broads, the Norfolk hawk.

There's also a gravel pit, now known as St Andrews Broad. In winter, the Broad comes into its own, with good numbers of gadwalls, tufted ducks, pochards and teals. These ducks move along the Yare Valley and especially between Thorpe and Whitlingham Country Park.

The wet marshes attract wintering snipe, a long-billed wading bird, and I often wonder how many are hidden there. A few may fly around when you visit, but generally they stay put unless flushed.

In January 2013, walking around the reserve, I'd seen nine. Suddenly there were tight flocks of birds over the marshes, at first



Snipe can be seen on the wet marshes (Source: Wikipedia).

glance looking like starlings. They were snipe and I estimated 200, including one in the claws of a peregrine.

The peregrine, clapping its prey, the snipe's long beak clearly visible, headed west along the river, presumably towards central Norwich and the cathedral, where peregrines nest and remain during winter. A second peregrine also showed, perhaps the other one of the cathedral's pair. The falcons explained the disturbance that made the snipe take to the air.

Chris leads monthly wildlife walks at NWT Thorpe Marshes. If you'd like to join him, you can see details of these and keep up to date with recent sightings on the reserve on the website:

www.honeyguide.co.uk/thorpemarshes.htm

Chris Durdin

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