

The Birds of Whitlingham & Thorpe 2024



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 2025 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 Robin Chittenden, Ed Mackrill and David Ratcliffe for providing a large number 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 of contributors can be found in the acknowledgements).

Introduction

This is the thirteenth annual bird report documenting the bird life of the Whitlingham area (including Thorpe Marshes NWT reserve), covering sightings from 2024. As always, I am very grateful to all those who support the report by supplying sightings, data and photographs.

It should be noted that this bird report is independent from any of the organisations that owns or manages the sites covered by it, notably Whitlingham Charitable Trust, Norfolk Wildlife Trust and South Norfolk Council. A map showing the recording area covered by this report can be found on page 5. Within this area most of the sightings come from Whitlingham C.P. (particularly Whitlingham Great Broad) and Thorpe Marshes.

There were no confirmed records of species new to the Whitlingham area during 2024, and in fact the site list went down by two as a result of the decision by the IOC to 'lump' Lesser Redpoll, Mealy Redpoll and Arctic Redpoll into a single species, now known simply as 'Redpoll'. Further details of this change are detailed in a short article on page 6. Sightings of particular interest this year included a Great Northern Diver on two dates and the first Turtle Dove records since 2013. A Red-throated Diver over-summered further east along the River Yare at Buckenham and came tantalisingly close to the recording area on at least two occasions, when it was seen on the river at Postwick. Also of note was the continuation and expansion of the Cormorant colony established in 2023, with nine nests noted this year.

I am grateful to everyone who has reported records from the area this year. Many of the records in this report have been supplied by other local birders, either directly or via local Whatsapp groups. The report also features records taken from eBird, which provides added detail to the commoner species and can also help providing fuller coverage of scarcer ones. I have included the majority of records in my sightings analysis, however as always, I reserve the right to decide what sightings make the final report. Where sightings are plausible but unusual (for example very high counts), I have sometimes tried to include comparative data from recent Bird & Mammal Reports to put them in context.

The sightings in this report are therefore a mixture of personal observations, directly reported records and 'citizen science'-type records from observers of different knowledge levels. Some may relate to birds that were only seen flying over or were heard only. As a result, I consider that for formal recording purposes the sightings in this report should be treated as unverified records, i.e., sightings should probably not be taken directly from the report to be used for any 'official' purposes unless they are supported by a photo – observers are encouraged to submit their records to the county recorder directly or log them on a system such as BirdTrack or eBird, to which the county recorder has access.

In general, when considering what records and details to include in the main systematic list 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 where this is known. Note that this won't necessarily be the person who first found the species in the case of multi-observed records.

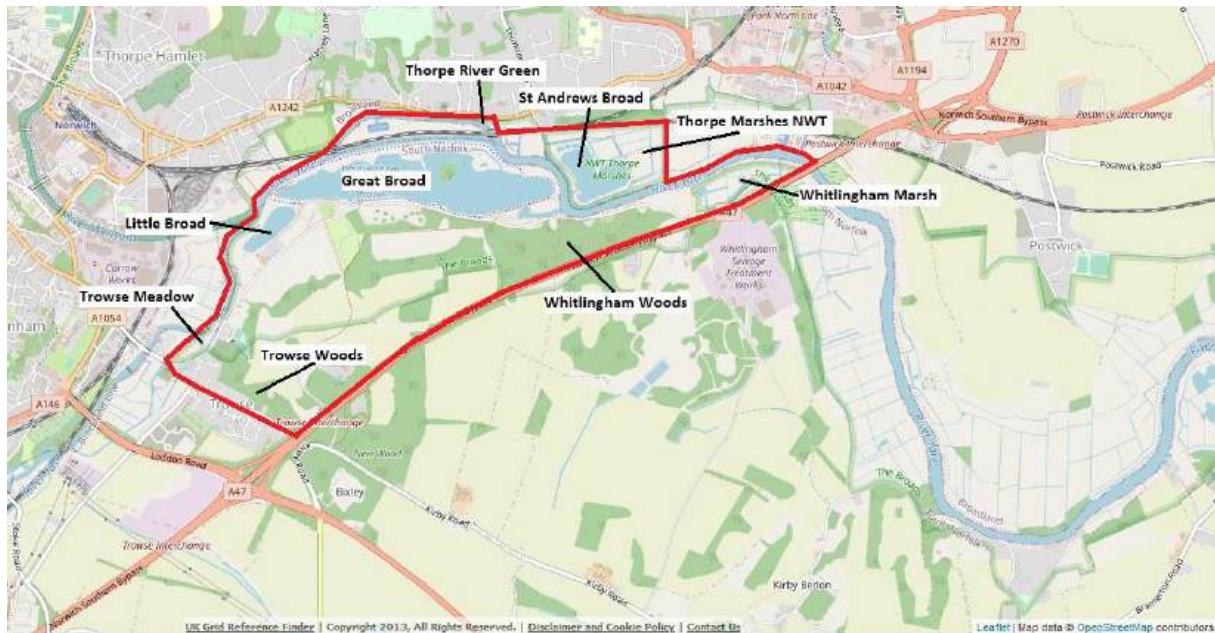
County or national rarities – included solely at the editor's discretion. Details of the record included as with local scarcities, but with an additional note as to whether the record has been submitted to and/or accepted by the relevant rarities committee, based on the latest WIP (work-in-progress)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

Birds covered by the above process form the main systematic species list. The presence of a number of recently reintroduced species in Norfolk has necessitated a specific appendix to these reports. This year White Stork is listed in this appendix. As with the past few years I have included selected additional species seen elsewhere around Norwich out of general interest. The appendices to the report are as follows:

- Appendix A – Recorded species possibly linked to reintroduction schemes
- Appendix B – Recorded birds thought to be escapes or of dubious origin (where not already mentioned in the systematic list)
- Appendix C – Birds reported from the area but not accepted onto the main list
- Appendix D – Hybrid birds
- Appendix E – Species notably not recorded in 2024
- Appendix F – Selected additional bird sightings from the Norwich area

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 sites that make up the recording area are:

- Whitlingham Country Park (including Whitlingham Little Broad and Great Broad) *
- Trowse Meadow**
- Trowse Woods
- Thorpe Marshes NWT (including St Andrew's Broad)
- Thorpe River Green
- Whitlingham Woods
- Whitlingham Marsh LNR

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. Whilst Thorpe St Andrew sits just outside of the recording area, Thorpe River Green is included in the more recent reports. This area, which sits adjacent to the old course of the River Yare just north of the railway line is now the primary part of the area for reading colour rings on gulls, and was previously covered by this report despite nominally being considered outside the area.

* There was unprecedented flooding of parts of the Great Broad path during January, although it was passable if wearing wellies. The C.P. was also closed on nine dates this year when yellow weather warnings for strong winds had been issued.

** Again no public access was allowed to Trowse Meadow during 2024 following its closure by the Whitlingham Charitable Trust in summer 2022, so the only sightings from the meadow were those made viewing onto the meadow from Whitlingham Lane.

Taxonomic changes - redpolls

As a result of recent research looking at redpolls, the International Ornithological Congress (IOC) have taken the decision to 'lump' the existing Redpoll species Lesser Redpoll *Acanthis cabaret*, Arctic Redpoll *Acanthis hornemanni* and Mealy Redpoll *Acanthis flammea* into one species, Redpoll *Acanthis flammea*, effective from IOC World List version 14.2 (July 2024).

The taxonomy of Redpolls has always been contentious, with different authors and authorities advocating up to seven species (Coues 1862). A review by Knox (1988) explained the reasoning for the system of the time, which separated redpolls into Mealy Redpoll (with four sub-species) and Arctic Redpoll (with two sub-species). In 2001 a paper by Knox *et al.* set out the decision to elevate the status of Lesser Redpoll to that of full species. This treatment of the redpolls as three separate species was adopted in Britain, but another paper from the following year involving DNA analysis (Ottvall *et al.* 2002) supported retention of the existing system, i.e. with Lesser Redpoll remaining as a subspecies.

DNA studies on redpolls have consistently shown genetic homogeneity, however most of the early DNA work on redpolls only covered mitochondrial DNA (Seutin *et al.* 1995) or parts of the genome (Mason & Taylor 2015). More recently however Funk *et al.* (2021) carried out whole genome analysis of 73 redpolls and the results were conclusive – there was very little difference genetically between Lesser, Mealy and Arctic Redpolls. A key finding was that the differences in phenotype (appearance) were the result of an inversion on a single chromosome. The characteristics used currently to separate redpolls, such as plumage colouration and bill size were explained as being the result of gene expression rather than significant differences in genotype. Combined with evidence of continuous phenotypic variation and a lack of evidence of prolonged isolation, redpolls were lumped by the American Ornithological Society (Chesser *et al.* 2024) and the IOC has decided to follow suit. As the British Ornithologists Union (BOU) follows the IOC taxonomic decisions, the British List has been updated accordingly.

Whitlingham redpoll records

Prior to the latest taxonomic update by the IOC, all three species of redpoll had been recorded within the Whitlingham recording area. Lesser Redpoll *Acanthis cabaret* is an annual winter visitor in varying numbers, whilst Mealy Redpoll, *Acanthis flammea* is a scarcer (but still near-annual) species, typically occurring in ones or twos mixed in with the Lesser Redpolls. Coues's Arctic Redpoll, *Acanthis hornemanni exilipes* has occurred once, during a cold spell in 2018, the finding and description of which is covered by that year's Whitlingham Bird Report (Emerson 2019). The British List has listed *cabaret*, *exilipes*, *flammea*, *hornemanni* and *rostrata* as subspecies, so I would encourage local observers to continue to record their redpoll sightings to this level when possible.

References and further reading

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Great Northern Diver – second Whitlingham record

A Great Northern Diver found on the Great Broad on 19th Jan was the first confirmed record of this species at Whitlingham since 2010, and only the second ever. Unlike the previous bird, which remained on the Great Broad for several months, this bird was only present a few hours before flying off. What was presumably the same individual returned to the Great Broad on 12th Feb, but again did not stick around, spending about 3 hours at Whitlingham before flying off northwards. It seems likely that this was one of two birds seen on a range of dates between 26th Jan and 17th Feb at Barton Broad. There were also several sightings of an individual at Ormesby Broad that could likewise have been one of the Barton individuals.



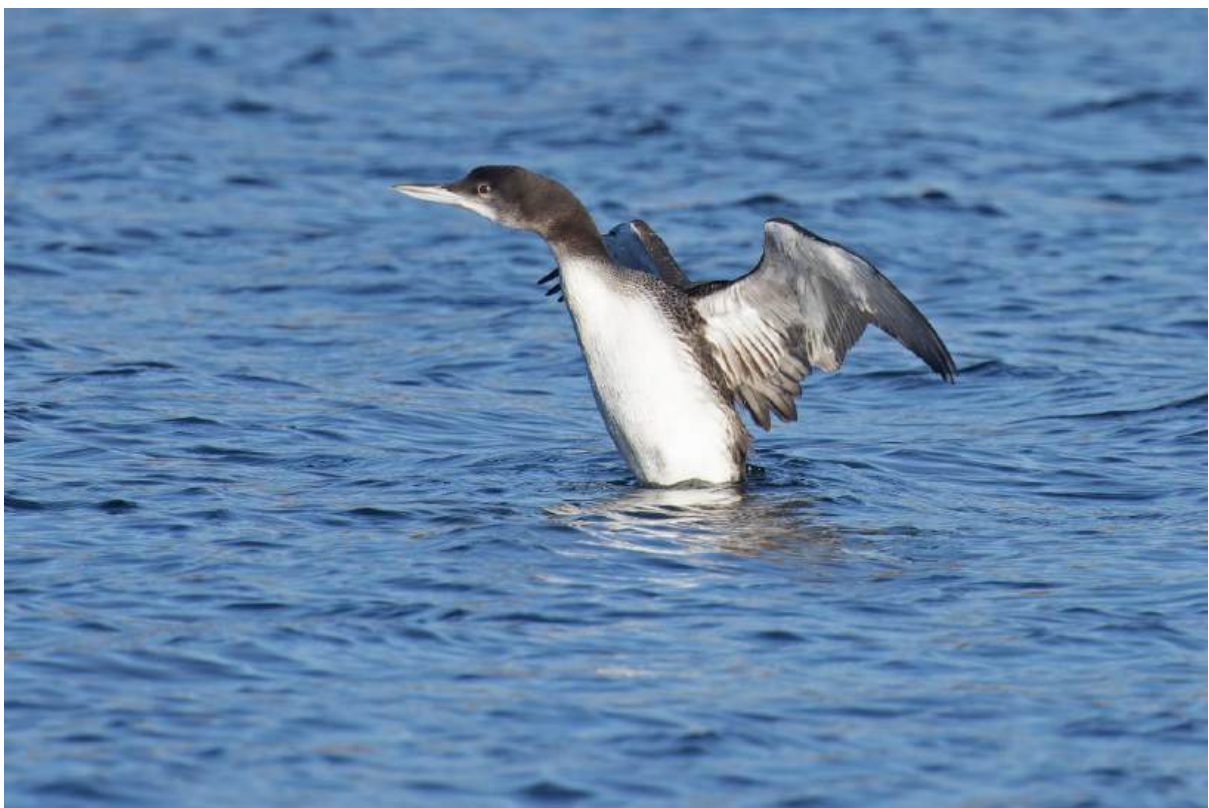
Great Northern Diver on the Great Broad © Robin Chittenden

www.robinchittenden.co.uk

Whilst Great Northern Diver is the only diver species that has been seen on the Great Broad, both Black-throated Diver and Red-throated Diver have been seen on the river close by. A Black-throated Diver was seen on the River Wensum in Norwich city centre during the 1996/97 winter, and would have passed through the Whitlingham Recording Area if it entered the river system at Breydon and followed the river inland. During 2024 a Red-throated Diver was present for much of the year in the mid-Yare valley, with two records from Postwick discussed in Appendix F.



Great Northern Diver feeding © Robin Chittenden (www.robinchittenden.co.uk)



Great Northern Diver stretching wings © Robin Chittenden (www.robinchittenden.co.uk)



Great Northern Diver departing from Whitlingham Great Broad © Robin Chittenden
(www.robinchittenden.co.uk)

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Robin Chittenden for allowing his photos to be used for this article.

An update on aberrant Cormorants at Whitlingham

In the 2023 Whitlingham Bird Report (Emerson 2024) an article was published discussing the presence of two Cormorants with aberrant plumage in Norwich, one of which was regularly seen at Whitlingham. This individual was still present in January 2024 and again in March, with what was presumed to be the same individual seen again in the autumn. The plumage aberration that is suspected of being the cause of the pale plumage (a mutation known as “brown”) means that new feathers after moult are initially brown-coloured but fade with exposure to sunlight, eventually becoming almost white. This means that the plumage appearance will vary throughout the year. As a result I have included pictures from throughout 2024 here to further document this interesting individual.



Figure 1 - 'Brown' Cormorant on 13th January 2024. Photo: James Emerson

The first group of sightings came during January, up until the 18th. At this stage the Cormorant was mostly brown-coloured with creamy-white colouring limited to the outer feathers on the wings (Figure 1). Interestingly a “buffy brown” Cormorant was present in the Cormorant roost at Holkham in the first week of February, whilst a “leucistic Cormorant” was tracked flying east past Weybourne then Cromer on 16th Feb. Given the apparent lack of aberrant Cormorant sightings recorded prior to last year, it would seem a reasonable suggestion that these sightings could have been this individual (or a relative) having temporarily relocated to North Norfolk.

After being absent for around two months, it was seen again from 16th to 25th March, by which time it had assumed a more uniform ‘milky tea’ colouration over much of the body (Figures 2 & 3). Figure 3 is taken in strong sunlight, nicely showing that the area of the underparts close to the legs that is typically covered by the wings (i.e. shielded from sunlight) has remained darker than the rest of the body.



Figure 2 - 'Brown' Cormorant on 23rd March 2024. Photo: Ed Mackrill.



Figure 3 - 'Brown' Cormorant on 29th March 2024. Photo: Ed Mackrill.

There were no sightings of brown Cormorants at Whitlingham or in Norwich city centre over the summer, however it was once again back on the Great Broad on 9th Sept. Figures 4 & 5 show the bird on that date. Figure 5 shows a view from behind, showing that the wing feathers have bleached more than those on the back, as would be expected based on the relative exposure to sunlight. The white feathers look quite scruffy – this could be partly due to preening or general damage, however melanised keratin in feathers has been shown to be harder (and therefore more wear-resistant) than non-melanised keratin (Bonser 1994) so it is likely that the paler feathers of this bird will be more susceptible to damage than those of a Cormorant with typical darker plumage.



Figure 4 - Brown Cormorant 9th September 2024. Robin Chittenden



Figure 5 - 'Brown' Cormorant on 9th September 2024. Photo: Ed Mackrill.

The bird seen at Whitlingham in November (Figure 6) has a completely dark back, brown wings and only a few creamy-white feathers. Seen in isolation it could easily be considered to be a different aberrant individual, however I suspect that it is the same individual from September but it has just undergone a moult of the feathers on the head, neck and body, and that these replacement feathers will in time fade to the same colour as those in the earlier photos.



Figure 6 - 'Brown' Cormorant November 2024. Photo: Robin Chittenden.

References

- Bonser, R.H.C .1994. Melanin and the abrasion resistance of feathers. *The Condor* 97 pages 590 & 591.
- Emerson, J. 2024. Aberrant Cormorants in the Norwich area. *The Birds of Whitlingham & Thorpe 2023*. Pages 17-27.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Robin Chittenden and Ed Mackrill for allowing their photos to be used for this article, Andy Bloomfield for letting me know about the Holkham sighting and Trevor Williams for mentioning the Cromer sighting on his blog <https://cromernaturenotes.wordpress.com/>

A record influx of Shoveler

Introduction

During winter cold spells there are often influxes of wildfowl to Whitlingham, where parts of the Great Broad tend to remain free of ice. Typically these involve diving ducks, however during January 2024 there was a large influx of dabbling ducks. The number of Shoveler was particularly significant, but there were also large numbers of Gadwall and Teal, plus several Pintail (less than annual visitors here). This article focuses on the counts of Shoveler, compared to the mean of the highest January count from each of the past 10 years, and also against the all-time highest site count. Summaries are also provided for the other species that showed increases over the same period.

Mid-January weather

The movement of ducks to Whitlingham was presumably in response to their previous habitat freezing over. Maximum, minimum and mean temperatures for the period in question taken from the Norwich Weather Centre are displayed below. It should be noted that the temperatures in the area that the ducks were previously occupying is also relevant, but assuming that the movement was not a large one, these temperatures can be used as a proxy.

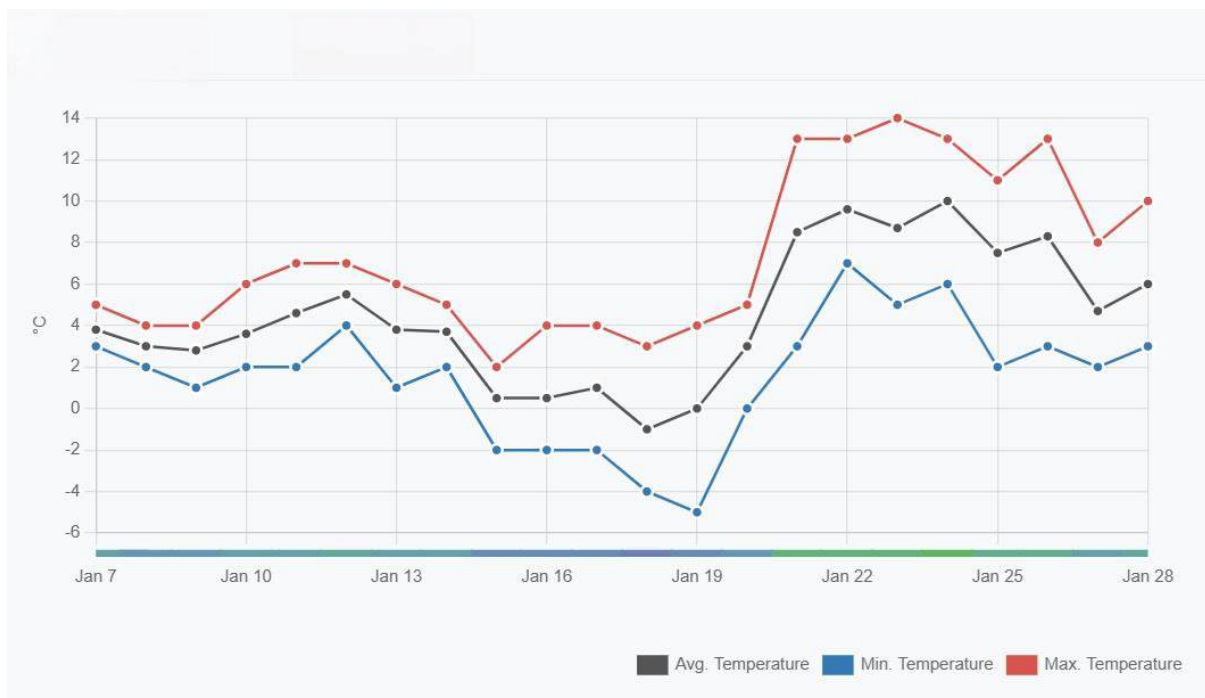


Figure 1 – Temperatures recorded at the Norwich Weather Station between 7th-28th January 2024, taken from Meteostat (<https://meteostat.net/en/station/03492?t=2024-01-07/2024-01-28>) and reproduced under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial 4.0 International Public License (CC BY-NC 4.0).

Shoveler

Shoveler winter annually at Whitlingham, typically in small numbers. Over the past ten years (2014 to 2023) the mean maximum count of Shovelers during January has been 13, with the mean maximum count from any month being 22. Both of these figures are inflated due to the counts from 2018, when there were 39 recorded in January and 54 in March. Based on the other nine years the equivalent mean figures are 10 for January and 20 for any month.

The all-time site record for Shoveler at Whitlingham was 58, set on 31st Dec 2000. This year that record count was surpassed on at least six days, with the new record ending up a minimum of 200. The most recent waterbird population estimates from the BTO (Frost *et al.*, 2019) give a January population estimate for Shoveler of 19,000, so on this particular day it is possible that Whitlingham Great Broad held 1% of the Great British population of Shoveler!

Figure 2 shows the highest daily count of Shoveler received from Whitlingham C.P. during January 2024. This data has been collated from multiple sources, including counts by the author, counts reported to the author by other local birders plus counts logged on eBird. Visits were made on 22 of the 31 days, and Shoveler counts are displayed for 20 of these. Of the other two, no Shoveler were seen on 5th Jan, whilst Shoveler were present on 10th Jan but were not counted.

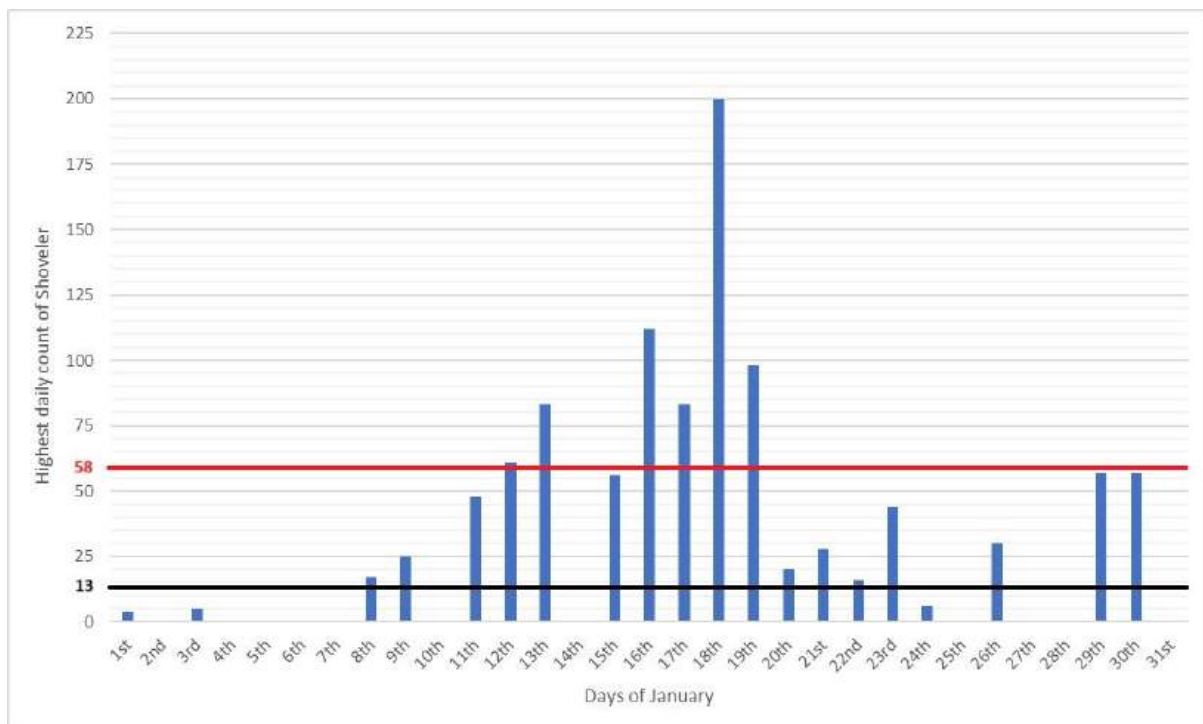


Figure 2 – Counts of Shoveler at Whitlingham C.P. during January 2024, collated from assorted sources

The graph can be neatly split into five sections. During the first week of the month Shoveler numbers were low. During the next ten days there was a steady increase in numbers (the relatively lower counts on 15th and 17th are probably because some birds were out of sight, tucked in along the northern edge of the Great Broad). There was then a further large arrival on 18th Jan, giving the very high count of 200+ for a single day. That arrival coincided with the average temperature dropping below zero as shown on Figure 1. In the next few days there was a clear movement of birds away from Whitlingham, numbers halving to 98 on 19th Jan and then reducing further to 20 on 20th Jan. Finally there was another arrival of birds in the last few days of the month, with 57 present on 29th and 20th Jan, 37 of which were still present on 1st Feb. These birds then departed, with no further double-figure counts until November.

Other dabbling duck numbers

Whilst the Shoveler counts are particularly notable because of the low numbers usually present, the dabbling duck present in the largest numbers was actually Gadwall. Counts during January are shown on Figure 3, with the peak being 409 seen on 19th Jan, an increase of 100 from the previous day when c300 were present. Whilst impressive, the count of 409 was not a new site record. Over the past ten years the highest count was 456 in 2019, whilst the highest site counts were made in the 2009/10 winter, when there was 547 recorded in Dec 2009 and 513 in Jan 2010.

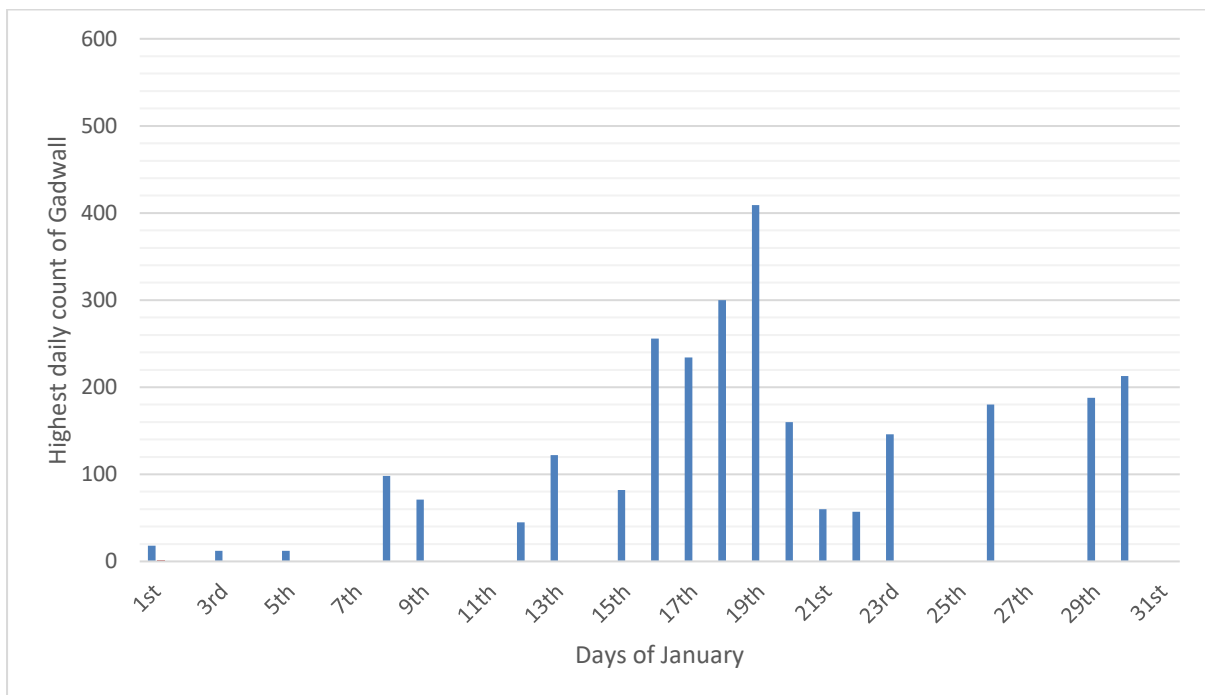


Figure 3 – Counts of Gadwall at Whitlingham C.P. during January 2024, collated from assorted sources

Another duck present in large numbers during the January cold spell was Teal. Numbers were a bit harder to analyse because there were large numbers on Whitlingham Great Broad and St Andrews Broad. Whilst it is possible there was some overlap, Thorpe has often attracted Teal and their habitat of sticking to the edge of the broads makes them less likely to be flushed between the two by boating disturbance, which sometimes moves Tufted Ducks across to St Andrews Broad.

Numbers on the ten days encompassing the wildfowl influx were:

- 13th Jan – 28 on Whitlingham Great Broad
- 14th Jan – 131 on St Andrews Broad
- 15th Jan – 240 Whitlingham Great Broad
- 16th Jan - 311 on the Great Broad plus 53 on St Andrews Broad (assuming separate birds) is a total of 364
- 17th Jan – only 53 noted on the Great Broad, no count from St Andrews Broad
- 18th Jan - 200 minimum on the Great Broad plus 77 on St Andrews Broad (assuming separate birds) is a total of 277+
- 19th Jan – 211 on the Great Broad plus 178 on St Andrews Broad (assuming separate birds) is a total of 389.
- 20th Jan – 178 St Andrews Broad
- 21st Jan – 50 Whitlingham Great Broad
- 22nd Jan – 17 Whitlingham Great Broad

The combined counts from 16th (364), 18th (277+) and 19th Jan (389) were all notable. The only similar counts in the past 25 years were 360 on 11th Dec 2002, 294 in Jan 2003, 350 on 22nd Jan 2012.

Of the other dabbling species, 11 Wigeon were present on 19th Jan, representing a rather modest arrival (a maximum of two had been seen earlier in the month), whilst some Pintail also arrived (1 from 12th Jan, 3 from 16th Jan and 4 on 18th and 19th Jan). This is actually a good count of Pintail for the site – four equals the most seen on the Great Broad at one time, and three of the past ten years saw no Pintail records at all. Mallard, also a dabbling species, showed no significant increase over the period in question.

Reference

Frost, T., Austin, G., Hearn, R., McAvoy, S., Robinson, A., Stroud, D., Woodward, I., Wotton, S. & Allen, R. 2019. Population estimates of wintering waterbirds in Great Britain. *British Birds*. 112, pages 130-145.

Breeding Grey Herons and Cormorants in 2024

Introduction

In both 2022 and 2023 a pair of Grey Herons nested on the north shore of Whitlingham Great Broad, however in 2024 the nest was occupied by Egyptian Geese (Fig. 1). Both Grey Herons and Egyptian Geese are early nesters, and the geese were first noticed on the nest on 11th February. It is not known if they had actively displaced the Grey Herons, or simply found the empty nest to their liking.



Figure 1 – An Egyptian Goose on an old Grey Heron nest. Photo: James Emerson.

The other location with Grey Heron nests in 2023 was the area of willow trees on the Great Broad island, and on 11th February at least two Grey Heron nests were again noted on the island (Fig. 2). A third occupied nest was seen along the north shore of the Great Broad on 13th Mar and a fourth nest, on the island in the same region as the initial two, was noted on 13th Apr. At least two of these nests successfully fledged young, with three recently fledged birds seen at the edge of the Great Broad on 11th May (Fig. 3) and three late-fledging birds still standing on a nest on 18th Aug (Fig. 4).



Figure 2 – Nesting Grey Herons on the Great Broad island. Photo: James Emerson.



Figure 3 – Recently fledged Grey Herons along the north shore of the Great Broad on 11th May. Photo: James Emerson



*Figure 4 – Three young Grey Herons still on a nest on the Great Broad island on 18th August
Photo: James Emerson.*

Last year, a small colony of Cormorants established themselves in the willows on the Great Broad island. Five nests were observed, and young were thought to have fledged, although a combination of tree foliage, the presence of non-breeding birds and reduced number of birding visits meant that this was not confirmed. In 2024 birds in vocal display were noted on 28th Feb and nest building/re-building was noted from 1st Mar onwards. On 2nd Apr at least eight nests were counted in the large willows on the island, and on 7th Apr a ninth nest was spotted.

On 11th May all nine nests appeared to still be occupied. Three on the edge of the colony all had well-advanced young birds visible, two of them containing two young and the other at least one. More young birds were seen on 9th June, including one nest that had at least three, possibly four young in (Fig. 7). Figs 8 & 9 show additional nests.



Figure 5 - Three occupied Cormorant nests on 7th April 2024. Photo: James Emerson



Figure 6 - The same nests seen in Figure 3, but taken on 11th May 2024 showing nearly-fledged young. Photo: James Emerson



Figure 7 – Two additional Cormorant nests viewed on 9th June. There are at least three fledged birds in the upper nest (possibly a fourth behind foliage to the left of the trunk). It is unclear if the bird in the lower nest is an adult or a first-year bird. Photo: James Emerson.



Figures 8 & 9 – additional occupied Cormorant nests on 9th June. Photo: James Emerson.

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Colour-ringed Mute Swans seen in 2024

The Norwich Swan Project began colour-ringing Mute Swans in the Norwich area in June 2020, and by the end of 2023 had colour-ringed 242 individuals. During this time a reporting app was established that allowed members of the public to submit ring details and get an instant life history for the reported bird. This app has since been deactivated, so reporting of these swans is now via email to Mike Reed (see <https://cr-birding.org/node/1413> for contact details).

Colour rings used so far for this project are orange with black lettering making up a four-digit code: **4DU***, **4DZ***, **4ES***, **4EN***, **4EO***, **4EX***, **4FD***, **4FN***. **4GG***, **4GN*** where '*' can be any letter of the alphabet. Colour-ringing using orange leg-rings has also taken place at a range of other East Anglian locations, particularly at Wroxham but also at several locations in North Norfolk, so it should not be assumed that all swans with these combinations have been ringed in Norwich. If you find one with a code that does not begin with the three-digit combinations listed above then you can find alternate scheme details by searching the website cr-birding here: https://cr-birding.org/colourprojects?tid_3=Mute+Swan&tid_2=&tid_1=All&tid_4=All&tid_5=All&field_firstletter tid=&field_last letter tid=&field countr tid=All

Feedback from sightings in previous years has showed that the large majority of local birds have remained in the area between Bawburgh and Costessey in the west and the Mid-Yare valley in the East. There has been one long distance movement to East Sussex, with other East Anglian movements involving birds recorded at Cley, Great Yarmouth, Lowestoft, north-west Norfolk and Thetford. The graphic below shows the codes of birds recorded at Whitlingham this year. At the time of writing, feedback regarding the movements of these birds has not been received, so details of any notable movements will be included in the 2025 report.

Local colour-ringed Mute Swans seen within the recording area during 2024

4DZS	4DZT	4ENO	4ENT	4ENY	4EOB	4EOT
4EOX	4EXD	4FDX	4FNW	4GGA	4GGD	4GGE
4GGF	4GGL	4GGN	4GGO	4GGQ	4GGR	4GGS
4GGT	4GGW	4GGX	4GGZ	4GNN	4GNQ	4GNR
4GNU						

Ringed Black-headed Gulls at Whitlingham part xii

This report is the twelfth 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. Most colour-ringed gulls seen in the area are now locally-ringed birds, so for clarity the article is split up into sections covering foreign ringed birds and then locally ringed ones.

A brief summary of gulls ringed or sighted abroad since 2012:

- **Number of foreign-ringed individuals recorded (full codes only):** 39 (0 new in 2024).
- **Countries of origin of ringed birds seen at Whitlingham:** 10 - Denmark, Finland, Germany, Great Britain, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland and Sweden.
- **Countries where Whitlingham/Thorpe ringed birds have been sighted:** 8 - Denmark, Finland, Germany, Great Britain, Netherlands, Norway, Russia, & Sweden
- **Furthest distance travelled:** A metal-ringed bird ringed at Whitlingham on 16th Jan 2019 by the UEA Ringing Group was recorded at Veliky Novgorod, Novgorod O., Russian Federation on 21st Apr 2023 (1555 days, 1989km ENE). This was around 50km further than the previous furthest record, which was also of a UEA-ringed bird that was observed in Russia. Of the foreign-ringed birds, metal-ringed ST305.473 from Finland has so far travelled the furthest to reach Whitlingham (1841km).
- **Most years recorded:** 8 (Yellow T2X8) – 2017-2024 inclusive. [A gull with a metal ring from Denmark has been seen between 2013 – 2022, a range of 10 years, but has only noted in five of them].
- **Most winters recorded:** 8 (Yellow T2X8) – 2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25.

Black-headed Gulls ringed outside of Norfolk

Only three foreign-ringed gulls were reported this year, all of which were returning birds, from Finland, Germany and Poland respectively. All of these were first seen in autumn - there were no reports at all relating the first winter period, although this relates to a lack of observers at Thorpe River Green rather than the absence of ringed gulls.

If you see a colour-ringed gull (other than one of the locally ringed gulls with white codes on blue – see further down for more detail) then the best place to locate contact details for the scheme is to visit cr-birding.org and add as much detail about the ring and code as you can.

Ring number	Date first seen	Place ringed	Date ringed	Distance travelled / Km	Seen previously?
A341	31/10/24	Neumunster, GERMANY	16/12/12	600	First seen in 2014
T2X8	14/11/24	Zachodniopomorskie, POLAND	20/05/17	868	First seen in Nov 2017
Metal-ringed ST305.473	14/11/24	Keski-Suomi, Konnevesi, FINLAND	10/06/18	1841	First seen in Nov 2018

Table 1 – Foreign-ringed Black-headed Gulls seen in the second winter period (Oct-Dec) 2024



Figure 1 – Returning German-ringed bird A341. Photo: Roger Parker

Locally-ringed Black-headed Gulls

The local Black-headed Gull ringing effort is part of a national waterbird colour-marking project using dark blue rings with white text. All codes have four digits and begin with a 2, either followed by a letter and two numbers or two numbers then a letter. Codes that have been used so far include 2K**, 2E** and 2**N where * = a number.

Sightings can be reported at <https://waterbirdcolourmarking.org/>

No information was available this year regarding the number of Black-headed Gulls ringed within the recording area in 2024 or the number of re-sightings of gulls previously ringed here. The graphics below show the ringed gulls noted this year by contributors to the report. The final section details some notable European re-sightings of Norwich ringed birds.

Local colour-ringed Black-headed Gulls seen within the recording area Jan to Mar 2024

The graphic below shows the codes of 4 colour-ringed Black-headed Gulls seen by or reported to the author within the recording area during the first three months of the year. All of these sightings were made at Whitlingham C.P.

2E22	207N	225N	237N
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Local colour-ringed Black-headed Gulls seen within the recording area Aug to Dec 2024

The graphic below shows the codes of 22 colour-ringed Black-headed Gulls seen by or reported to the author within the recording area during the second half of the year. Fifteen of these ringed birds were only seen at Thorpe River Green, six were seen at Whitlingham C.P. and 2K61 was reported from both, at Whitlingham C.P. on 16th Aug and at Thorpe River Green 14th Nov.

2K61	2K62	2K64	2K68	2K81	2K90	2E00
2E01	2E05	2E06	2E12	2E14	2E15	2E18
2E29	2E36	2E37	2E40	2E45	218N	224N
225N						

European reports of local colour-ringed Black-headed Gulls made during 2024

These four locally-ringed birds were recorded in Europe over the summer, as shown on the map on the Waterbird Colour Marking Group website here:

<https://waterbirdcolourmarking.org/sightings-bh/>

2E18 (ringed at Whitlingham in Feb 2022) – seen in the Netherlands in February 2024 and then Finland in July 2024. Seen back at Whitlingham on 19th Oct.

205N (ringed at Thorpe River Green in Dec 2022) – seen in Germany in October 2024

221N (ringed at Whitlingham in Dec 2022) – seen in the Netherlands in February 2024.

222N (ringed at Whitlingham in Dec 2022) – seen in the Netherlands in January 2024.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Justin Lansdell, Roger Parker and David Ratcliffe for reporting many of the sightings included here, and to those associated with the Waterbird Colour-marking Group for their very useful interactive website.

Whitlingham Wildfowl Survey

The monthly wildfowl counts shown here are based on the combined counts for Whitlingham Little Broad and Great Broad using WeBS methodology. The counts are not necessarily high counts for the month – ad hoc and high counts are described in the individual species accounts. The species order here is that used since the first bird report (i.e. not updated each time the IOC list is changed) to allow better comparison with previous bird reports.

Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Mute Swan	29	21	16	28	31	46	53	24	27	14	17	14
Greylag Goose	30	31	23	34	29	309	61	14	80	6	18	48
Canada Goose	0	0	6	10	4	80	19	0	6	5	0	0
Egyptian Goose	6	2	4	7	10	22	63	53	29	6	14	1
Shoveler	83	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	10
Gadwall	122	38	7	0	0	1	0	0	9	20	76	124
Mallard	44	46	43	37	39	23	82	74	127	57	94	58
Teal	25	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Pochard	11	17	2	0	1	2	0	1	1	0	8	18
Tufted Duck	249	188	93	64	0	0	1	0	1	65	211	338
Goldeneye	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Cormorant	24	34	24	35	22	25	26	25	35	24	40	19
Grey Heron	3	3	6	5	4	2	4	5	1	3	5	5
Great White Egret	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	2
Little Egret	5	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	2
Little Grebe	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	2	7
Great Crested Grebe	2	6	6	11	9	3	14	12	12	18	10	12
Water Rail	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Moorhen	3	3	5	2	0	3	1	2	6	7	11	12
Coot	126	83	14	8	2	6	5	25	45	85	183	227
Black-headed Gull	243	111	272	39	0	0	7	30	50	153	252	313
Common Gull	12	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	7	12	14
Lesser Black-backed Gull	2	1	8	0	70	39	66	69	29	27	2	2
Herring Gull	9	11	97	75	194	18	34	59	19	31	56	26
Great Black-backed Gull	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Common Tern	0	0	0	0	23	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Kingfisher	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Canada x Greylag Goose	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pochard x Tufted Duck	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0

Whitlingham and Thorpe Classified List

The systematic list in this bird report follows the checklist in the British Ornithologists Union Records Committee (BOURC) 57th report and is based on taxonomical decisions made by the International Ornithological Congress (IOC) in the IOC 14.2 list (summer 2024). The main changes are the lumping of the redpolls plus some reordering. Sightings of birds that are locally scarce or rare, some early or late reports and particularly high counts have initials after them – these relate to observers, a list of which can be found at the end of the classified list.

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

Near-resident in fluctuating numbers



© Robin Chittenden (www.robinchittenden.co.uk)

Varying numbers during January, with a peak of 40 on 19th. After that numbers below 16 (mostly in single figures) until June, when 33 on 2nd and 80 on 9th. The latter count was the highest of the year. A pair with three goslings was seen on the Great Broad on 9th June. In 2022 and 2023 two birds with extra white on the head were seen on several dates in the summer – this year only one of them was seen, on 4th July as part of a flock of 50 Canada Geese.

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

Common resident



Numbers fluctuated throughout the year with spring monthly highs *Mar* 59 (27th) *Apr* 56 (15th), *May* 83 (25th), *June* 309 (9th), which was the highest count of the year, and *July* 308 (4th). Apart from the summer post-breeding peak the only three-figure counts received were 100 on 31st Oct and 140 on 11th Nov. Two breeding pairs noted, one with three goslings and the other with two goslings, both on the Great Broad on 9th June. A further family

group was also noted later in June, but could perhaps have come from nearby along with the other post-breeding flock. Locally ringed birds ZA4, ZC4 and ZV4 were all recorded, and a white ‘farmyard’ type was present on 9th June. **Photo: James Emerson**

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*

Occasional flyover



Photo: © Robin Chittenden (www.robinchittenden.co.uk)

Under-recorded this year, although many of the flocks seen elsewhere flying over Norwich are likely to have passed over the recording area. A flock of 45 flew eastwards over Whitlingham on 1st Nov whilst flocks over Thorpe Marshes included 40+ on 17th Sept, 411+ (spread over three skeins) on 11th Nov, 100 on 12th Nov and an unseen flock on 27th Dec. Of particular interest was one present on the Great Broad on 18th Mar (RC) – see photo.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

Common resident



Photo: Ed Mackrill

After low counts between Jan and March 2023, numbers increased this year, with typical counts of 20-30 per month. Unusually the yearly peak was in May, when 75 were seen on 27th. During June numbers reached 65 on 12th, whilst the highest July count was 55 on 14th. During autumn numbers only passed 25 once, when 35 were counted on 8th Nov. Nests were seen on

the Great Broad and St Andrews Broad during May, whilst on the Little Broad a pair with five cygnets were seen on 11th May, reduced to one by 9th June.

The Norwich Swan Project website is no longer in operation – for details of where to send details of ring-reads, see the article on page 24.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*

Common resident.



Photo: © Robin Chittenden (www.robinchittenden.co.uk)

Very stable numbers during the first winter period, with typically four or six present. An additional pair was seen on a range of dates from late February, but the maximum count remained at eight until 23rd Apr when 12 seen. The summer peak count was 63 on 21st July (for comparison the 2023 high count was 66, 2022: 69). Other counts of note were 61 on 4th July and 53 on 18th Aug.

An Egyptian Goose was noted occupying an old Grey Heron nest on 11th Feb and still sitting on 11th Mar. On 29th Mar four goslings were seen on the Great Broad (a similar date to 2023 when five goslings were noted on 24th Mar). Another brood, this time of three goslings, was first noted on 24th May and still alive on 12th June at least. At Thorpe a pair were seen using an old Carrion Crow nest in a tree near the river, still incubating on 11th Mar.

* **Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna*

Scarce spring migrant

Two records this year, one from Thorpe Marshes on 30th Jan (per eBird) and a more typical record of one flying over Thorpe Marshes on 1st May (DR).

* **Garganey** *Spatula querquedula*

Scarce spring migrant

A drake dropped onto the Great Broad briefly, before flying off east on 25th June (per Norwich Birders Whatsapp Group).

Shoveler *Spatula clypeata*

Regular winter visitor



A handful of birds present at the start of the year, but number rose sharply in the second week with 48 on 11th, 61 on 12th and 83 on 13th. On 16th 112 were present, and on 18th a minimum of 200 were recorded (EM). Prior to this, the record site count was 58, set in 2000. For fuller details see the article on pages 15 to 18. The last sighting of spring was of two drakes on the Great Broad on 2nd May.

Unusually there was also a mid-summer record, with an eclipse drake present on 15th Aug. In autumn first noted back on 19th Oct when two present at Whitlingham C.P., with 22 on St Andrews Broad on 21st Nov the highest count of the second winter period.

Photo: Ed Mackrill

Gadwall *Mareca strepera*

Common winter visitor

Eighteen present at the start of the year, but as with Shoveler numbers increased strongly mid-month, with 171 on St Andrews Broad on 9th, then on Whitlingham Great Broad counts of 122 on 13th, 256 on 16th, 300 on 18th and 409 on 19th. Numbers dropped off sharply after that, with 213 present on 30th Jan. Highest monthly counts for the rest of the first half of the year were 64 Feb, 23 Mar, 5 Apr, 6 May (including two pairs present at Thorpe Marshes on 12th) and 25 June. The latter count of 25 on 26th June (eBird) is particularly unusual for the time of year – on the previous day only two were reported. Two were also seen on the Great Broad on 14th July, but there was no sign of breeding this year.

Returning birds seen on 22nd Sept and numbers increased during November and December, with high counts including 123 on 15th Nov, 152 on 4th Dec, 124 on 14th Dec and 159 16th Dec.

Wigeon *Mareca penelope*

Scarce winter/passage visitor



Two noted on 12th Jan and on several dates until 31st Jan, with more on 19th Jan (initially six, but later 11 seen). Last seen in the first winter period on 31st Jan when two were on St Andrews Broad.

In autumn first seen on 15th Oct, with up to three recorded on several dates until five seen on 14th Dec and 13 on 17th Dec.

Photo: James Emerson

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Common resident



During January numbers varied between 24 and 65. The highest count of the year was 87 on 14th July, with 82 on 21st July, 74 on 18th Aug and 78 on 22nd Sept.

A pair with one duckling seen on 9th June.

Two all-green 'Cayuga' type ducks were present on the river at Frostbite Sailing Club on 22nd June (see bottom photo)



Both photos: © Robin Chittenden
(www.robinchittenden.co.uk)

* **Pintail** *Anas acuta*

Scarce winter visitor

One on the Great Broad on 12th Jan (EM, JL), remaining until 19th Jan. Several additional individuals were present during that period, with three noted on 16th Jan (ME), two on 18th Jan (RC) and four on 19th Jan (EM). The latter sighting represents the joint highest Pintail count present on the Great Broad, alongside the four drakes seen in late February/early March 2018 (part of a large cold-weather influx documented in that years Whitlingham Bird Report), although a flock of six seen flying over Thorpe Marshes in 2020 is the largest number seen within the area.

Teal *Anas crecca*

Common winter visitor.

Around 30 present at both Whitlingham Great Broad and Thorpe Marshes in the first week of January, but as with Gadwall and Shoveler the numbers increased steeply mid-month, with 131 on St Andrews Broad on 14th and 240 on the Great Broad on 15th Jan, with 311 three on 16th Jan. At Thorpe Marshes on 16th 53 Teal were counted, suggesting a minimum of 364 Teal present in the area on that date. On the 18th counts of 200 (Great Broad) and 77 (Thorpe) were made, whilst on the 19th 211 (Great Broad) and 178 (Thorpe) gave a year-high total of 389. A count of 107 on 30th Jan was the only other three-figure count of the year, whilst the last record of spring was on 24th Apr.

As with 2023 there was a single record from August, this time three on the Great Broad on 15th. First birds of autumn were late this year, noted from Thorpe Marshes on 12th Nov and from the Great Broad on 20th Nov. Numbers were generally low, with a maximum of 23 on 23rd Dec.

Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Common winter visitor



Present in low numbers throughout January, with 14 on 5th and 22 on 23rd Jan the highest figures recorded. Counts of 20+ more frequent during February, including 27 on the Great Broad on 23rd and 23 on St Andrews Broad on 28th. The highest count of the year was 34 on the Great Broad on 1st Mar. Sightings continued throughout spring, with a pair still present on 9th June and a female seen again on 12th June.

A female was seen on the Great Broad on 15th Aug, suggesting that for a second year in a row one might have over-summered (noted in all months except July this year). A drake was also present on 9th Sept. Regular sightings from 6th Oct, including five on 15th. In November there were 15 on 15th Nov and 22 on 25th Nov, whilst in December highest counts were 27 on 3rd, 26 on 4th, 26 on 16th, 29 on 27th, 27 on 20th and 33 on 23rd. **Photo: Ed Mackrill**

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

Common winter visitor



Photo: © Robin Chittenden (www.robinchittenden.co.uk)

Numbers typically around 250 during January. On 3rd Jan 240 reported on the Great Broad and 227 on St Andrews Broad likely involve mostly the same birds moving between the sites rather than a huge influx of additional birds. High counts on the Great Broad during January included 321 on 8th, 313 on 19th and 346 on 23rd. Additional high counts for St Andrews Broad during January were 146 on 24th, 250 on 26th 117 on 27th and 150 on 31st. Highest counts for later months were 188 on 11th Feb, 118 on 4th Mar, 114 on 12th Apr. Low numbers seen throughout spring/summer.

A lone bird was seen in June, July and Aug, but four seen on 9th Sept and 23 on 6th Oct marked the start of number building up. Numbers reached 100 on 31st Oct and there was a high count of 275 on 15th Nov, surpassed in early December when 340 on 4th and still 338 on 14th.

The pink-billed bird first seen in Nov 2022 (left-hand bird in the above photo) was present at the start of the year until 26th Apr and returned from 31st Oct for its third winter in the area.

Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Scarce winter visitor



Two seen on the Great Broad from 3rd Jan onwards, with three on several dates and a monthly high of six on 19th. During February the sole sighting was of a female at St Andrews Broad, whilst in March a drake was present on the Great Broad between 1st-11th.

In autumn none until a drake on 6th Nov, with a female present on 15th. Two regularly seen after that, with three

on 20th Nov and 31st Dec, plus four on 4th Dec.

Photo: Ed Mackrill

* **Smew** *Mergus albellus*

Scarce winter visitor



A redhead was present on St Andrew's Broad on 18th and 19th Feb (CD, RC), last seen early morning on 20th Feb (per eBird).

Photo: Stuart White

* **Goosander** *Mergus merganser*

Scarce winter visitor



Photo: © Robin Chittenden (www.robinchittenden.co.uk)

Present throughout January, with numbers fluctuating between two and three (a redhead was observed on the river in the city centre on multiple dates and probably accounts for the extra bird). In addition four (2 drakes, 2 redheads) present on 8th Jan and six (2 adult drakes, 4 redheads) on 18th Jan. Four also noted on 19th, 21st and 23rd Jan. Recorded at Whitlingham on four dates during February, including two on 27th, whilst four (3 redheads and a drake) flew past Thorpe Marshes on 1st Feb. In spring an adult drake flew west over the Great Broad on 25th Mar. In the autumn a drake was present on 28th Nov and again on 24th and 30th Dec.

Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

Fairly common resident

An under-recorded species here. Noted from Whitlingham C.P. in all months of the year except July and September, whilst recorded from Thorpe Marshes in January and November.

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

Scarce wanderer into the area

One record this year, of a bird seen near the Great Broad slipway on 15th Mar (RP).

Swift *Apus*

Common spring visitor

First of the year over Thorpe Marshes on 26th Apr, then over Whitlingham C.P. on 28th Apr. The largest gathering of the year was 150-200 over St Andrews Broad on the evening of 9th June. Last noted 14th July, when a flock of 10 present at Whitlingham C.P. No sign of any breeding activity around the swift tower in the barn car park.

Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

Scarce spring migrant



One heard calling on 6th Apr (JG, EM) is the earliest site record and a particularly early record in general. It was also seen on 7th Apr by JE, who was unaware of the previous days sightings, and heard on the same date that morning at Thorpe Marshes (MC). There were sightings regularly throughout April and more scattered reports throughout May, including three males on 12th May, two on 19th May (one a 'bubbling' female) and two on 24th May. In June three were seen together at Thorpe Marshes on 9th June, whilst the latest reports were 29th June (Whitlingham C.P.) and 21st July (Thorpe Marshes). **Photo: David Ratcliffe**

Feral Pigeon *Columba livia*

Common resident close to the area

Records relate to small flocks either seen flying over or distantly over Trowse or Thorpe St Andrew. Noted on 28 dates this year.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas*

Scarce resident



Between 1-5 seen at both Whitlingham C.P. and Thorpe Marshes on a range of dates throughout the year.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*

Common resident



A common resident species with additional birds flying over early mornings. The only flock of note was 250 flying north on 27th Feb.

Photo: Ed Mackrill

*** Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur*

Rare flyover

Vying with the Great Northern Diver for the most notable sighting of the year, there were two sightings, probably relating to the same individual. Firstly seen flying across the Great Broad and landing in scrub near to the bird hide on 24th Apr (EM) then one seen on 30th Apr at Thorpe Marshes (DR). These are the first site records since 2013, when there was a very similar record to the first one noted here – the 2013 Whitlingham Bird Report records “one flew over the Great Broad on 25th April”.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Scarce – resident nearby

Only eight records this year, seven from Whitlingham C.P. and one from Thorpe Marshes where two noted flying over heading north on 5th Mar.

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

Secretive resident/winter visitor

During the cold spell in mid-January up to eight heard calling at Thorpe Marshes and three around Whitlingham C.P. Three were also noted at Whitlingham C.P. on 28th Feb, two near the bird hide and one on the river bank at the east end. The last bird of spring reported from Whitlingham C.P. was on 24th Apr, however birds were heard calling at Thorpe Marshes on in May, June and July. Two pairs, both with young, were reported on 21st July (MC).

In the autumn birds were heard again at Thorpe Marshes from 29th Sept and at Whitlingham C.P. from 15th Oct.

[A number of double-figure counts were received from Thorpe Marshes – 18 on 17th Feb, 17 on 19th Oct, 27 on 26th Nov and 16 on 3rd Dec. Numbers of Water Rails are higher in winter with the arrival of birds from the continent, however these are particularly high counts both in terms of the size of the site and in a county context. For comparison the highest winter counts for any site in Norfolk in recent Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report were 2019: 10, 2020: 9, 2021: 15, 2022: 9 and 2023: 6].

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Common resident



Photo: Ed Mackrill

Present all year round at Whitlingham C.P. and Thorpe Marshes. The highest count received from Whitlingham C.P. was of 13 on 12th June, although as with Water Rail the true numbers present are likely to be higher than those reported due to its skulking habits. Double-figure counts were also received from Thorpe Marshes for Jan, Feb, Mar, Oct, Nov and Dec.

A brood of five chicks was present on the Great Broad on 10th May, whilst broods of three and four chicks were seen on 12th June and an adult with two small chicks was on the Little Broad on 18th Aug.

Coot *Fulica atra*

Resident/Common winter visitor



Numbers around 100 at the start of the year, peaking at 144 on 23rd Jan. Eighty-three were still present on 11th Feb, but there was then a drop-off in numbers to 37 on 28th Feb and a maximum of 21 during March. There were single-figure counts only from 5th May through to 14th July (when 17 present). One on a nest near to the main Great Broad island was seen on 9th June, but no young were seen on further visits.

Numbers increased from August onwards, reaching 91 on 19th Oct, 183 on 16th Nov and 276 on 10th Dec before dropping slightly to 227 on 14th Dec. The count from 10th Dec was the highest count of the year.

Photo: Ed Mackrill

* **Common Crane** *Grus grus*

Scarce spring flyover



Photos: Left: Ed Mackrill, right © Robin Chittenden (www.robinchittenden.co.uk).

Two flew over Whitlingham C.P. on 16th Jan (EM, ME) – photographed above left by Ed Mackrill and three flew over heading west on 23rd Jan (RC), photographed above right by Robin Chittenden.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Common winter visitor

Numbers lower than in recent years – typically during Jan only two seen per visit, with a high count of six on 23rd. On St Andrews Broad a maximum of five seen, on 11th Jan. Other than four on the Great Broad on 1st Feb, the remaining sightings in February and March were all of 1s and 2s. The last of early spring were on the Great Broad on 25th Mar and St Andrews Broad on 26th Mar (the latter sighting of two quite vocal birds). Interestingly after no April sightings, four were on the Great Broad on 3rd May, with one there again on 20th May. One was also there on 12th and 15th Aug, before returning birds in autumn from 11th Oct. The highest count in the second winter period was 15 on the Great Broad on 4th Dec, although numbers were more typically around ten.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Resident



Photo: © Robin Chittenden (www.robinchittenden.co.uk)

Low numbers throughout January, with all counts five or less with the exception of 12 on 20th Jan. Highest monthly counts for the first half of the year were: *Jan 12; Feb 7; Mar 11; Apr 17; May 11 and June 10*. A pair successfully bred, with two young chicks seen on 12th June and

presumably the same noted on 4th July. Numbers peaked in late summer, with 20 seen on 15th Aug and 16th Sept, and a yearly high of 22 on 20th Sept. This is the highest count here since Feb 2010.

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

Regular spring visitor

First noted at Whitlingham on 16th Feb, with a pair seen feeding at Whitlingham on 27th and 28th Feb. There were four sightings in March, including pairs flying along the river past Thorpe Marshes on 17th and 26th, but the next cluster of records was in April/early May. Further sightings included four flying over Whitlingham on 27th May, one over Thorpe Marshes on 21st June and two at Whitlingham on 29th June. The last sighting of the year was from Thorpe Marshes on 21st July.

* **Golden Plover** *Pluvialis apricaria*

Rare flyover/passage migrant



A flock of 40 were photographed flying over Whitlingham Great Broad on 12th Feb (RC), whilst a vocal bird flew over Thorpe Marshes on 7th Feb (MC).

Photo: © Robin Chittenden

(www.robinchittenden.co.uk)

* **Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula*

Rare spring flyover

One heard flying over Thorpe Marshes during the night of 11th May (MC).

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

Scarce spring migrant

Heard at St Andrews Broad in the evenings of 11th and 19th Mar (both MC).

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Scarce winter/spring visitor

Few records this year. A flock of 19 flew over Whitlingham on 8th Jan, a flock of 25 flew over on 19th Jan and one was recorded from Whitlingham C.P. on 25th Mar.

* **Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica*

Rare spring flyover

A vocal bird reported flying west over Thorpe Marshes at 04:30 on 10th Apr (MC).

* **Jack Snipe** *Lymnocyptes minimus*

Scarce winter visitor

Recorded at Thorpe Marshes on 14 dates (all MC). In the first winter period last seen on 14th Apr, then noted again from 19th Oct. Sightings mostly of one or two individuals, although three on 1st Feb and four on 11th Feb.

Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*

Scarce winter visitor

Recorded from Thorpe Marshes on four dates: two on 7th Feb, one on 1st Nov, three on 25th Nov and one on 3rd Dec.

Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

Common winter visitor

Generally under-recorded as present on the inaccessible parts of the marsh at Thorpe. The highest daytime count received from January was nine on 12th. The first of autumn was seen on 19th Oct. Counts were made at dusk on a number of dates, aiming to count the Snipe as they fly off to feed overnight. Particularly large counts were made during February, with 109 on 1st, 133 on 7th and 96 on 11th (all MC). During a dawn visit on 14th Apr, 20 were counted including a 'drumming' bird. There were no sightings from Whitlingham C.P. this year.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Spring migrant



First of the year seen on the Great Broad on 16th Apr, with one also seen on 23rd, 28th, 29th & 30th Apr (flying down river). There were also sightings at St Andrews Broad on 12th May and from the Great Broad on 21st May, but none seen passing through on return passage this year.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

*** Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus*

Scarce spring migrant

An overwintering bird noted from Thorpe Marshes on 12th Jan (BB) and there were later winter records from Thorpe Marshes on 18th and 23rd Dec (per Honeyguide blog). In terms of passage birds, one flew over Thorpe Marshes in the evening of 16th Apr (MC), whilst in autumn one at St Andrews Broad on 19th Oct (MC) and over Thorpe Marshes on 7th Nov (MC).

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*

Scarce spring migrant



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First sighting of the year was on the Great Broad on 15th Apr. There was then a day of large tern passage on 23rd Apr, with a mixed flock of 30 Arctic and Common Terns flying through Whitlingham early morning. Later in the day a flock of 42 Arctic Terns were present over the Great Broad (SW), a new site record (surpassing the 18 seen on 18th Apr 2013 and 28th Apr 2023). The only other record received was of five on 27th Apr.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Common spring migrant



First of the year on 15th Apr, but no more seen until 27th Apr when ten present. During May between 1-3 present (and sometimes flying over to St Andrews Broad). A flock of 21 present in the afternoon of 11th May combined with two local birds made a new site record of 23 (although on days of strong spring passage mixed flocks of Common and Arctic Terns pass through and it is sometimes tricky to determine how many of each

species is present). Sightings continued of the local summering birds until 21st July.

A tern raft, complete with decoy, was installed in the conservation area bay of the Great Broad in late March. This was made possible via funding from the charity [Birds on the brink](https://www.birdsonthebrink.co.uk) following an application from Whitlingham Charitable Trust. For photos of the raft and its installation go to : <https://www.birdsonthebrink.co.uk/blog/whitlingham-tern-raft-update>. Adult Common Terns were seen perching on it on several dates during May. Whilst there was no signs of breeding at Whitlingham this year, there was a sighting of an adult and one of this years fledged young on the Great Broad on 15th Aug, suggesting that breeding did occur somewhere fairly close by.

Photo: Ed Mackrill

* **Little Gull** *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

Scarce spring migrant

One at Whitlingham C.P. on 2nd Apr (DR) was the only record this year.

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Common resident



Numbers constantly high during January, including 256 on 9th, 243 on 13th, 272 on 17th and 250 on 20th. There was a second peak in March, when 262 on 9th, 150 on 16th and 102 on 27th. Lower numbers present May to Aug, and no further three-figure counts until 153 on 19th Oct. In November 252 on 16th, whilst the highest count of the year was 313 on 14th Dec.

There were no sightings of 'new' colour-ringed gulls this year, although returning birds ringed in Finland, Germany and Poland were seen. A fuller summary of colour-ringed Black-headed Gulls reported from the area can be found in the article on pages 25 to 28. **Photo: Ed Mackrill**

Common Gull *Larus canus*

Common winter visitor



Low numbers present throughout the first winter period, highest counts of 30 on 15th Jan, 36 on 18th Jan and 25 on 20th Jan sometimes included birds dropping in to bathe before departing rather than birds present all day. Last of spring on 23rd Apr, although there was an unusual summer record of one on 25th June. In autumn seen again from 9th Sept, with numbers peaking at 25 on 28th Oct.

Photo: Ed Mackrill

*** Caspian Gull** *Larus cachinnans*

Scarce visitor



Reported on 12 dates, all by EM unless stated. Comments in brackets indicate age or stage of moult, e.g. 1w = 1st winter, 2cy = 2nd calendar year). Records from: 15th Jan (1w), 30th Apr (2cy), 9th Sept (1w), 6th Oct (age not noted - per eBird), 19th Oct (1w), 28th Oct (1w), 31st Oct (2w – this bird had a yellow colour ring on the left leg but the code couldn't be read), 1st Nov (1st-winter on St Andrews Broad – MC), 17th Dec (age not noted), 20th Dec (age not noted – per bird news services), 23rd Dec (1w) and 30th Dec (1w).

Photo: Ed Mackrill

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

Common winter visitor



Both *argentatus* and *argenteus* race birds occur. Present in varying numbers throughout the year, with numbers often higher in the evenings when birds drop in to bathe before continuing eastwards. Highest counts were 80 on 9th Jan, 150 on 21st Jan, 100 on 1st Mar, 300 on 16th Mar (of which c95% were 1st winter birds), 370 on 5th Apr, 200 on 18th and 19th Apr, 150 on 26th Apr, 194 on 11th May, No colour-ringed birds seen this year.

Photo: James Emerson

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*

Scarce visitor



Recorded on nine dates, age/moult stage in brackets if known:

20th Mar (3cy), 29th Mar (3cy), 19th Apr (adult), 24th May (2cy), 6th Oct (adult), 15th Oct (adult), 19th Oct (2w), 10th Dec (not known) and 20th Dec (not known).

With regards to the record from 24th May, EM notes "2CY dark P1&2 only present in subsp. *lusitanicus*" A photo of the bird in question is shown below left.



Both photos: Ed Mackrill

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*

Occasional visitor



This species is scarce inland and I think is sometimes over-reported here. Records received for 11 dates, nine of which relate to single birds: 1st Jan (adult, photographed), 15th Jan, 9th Feb, 24th Apr (4CY, photographed), 10th May (at Thorpe Marshes), 22nd Sept (adult, photographed), 7th Oct, 14th Oct (adult, photographed) and 1st Nov (adult, photographed).

Photo: Ed Mackrill

[Of the other records, seven were reported on 15th Apr (per eBird). This is an unusually high count for the location. That date did see a large number of birds passing through (it was the main day of Arctic Tern passage), but as a result there were lots of observers present during the day who did not report these birds. The other multi-bird record was six on 10th June (per eBird), which I think is unlikely. It would be useful for verification purposes if observers who do find multiple Great Black-backed Gulls could take photos to support the eBird submissions.]

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Common summer visitor



Up to five present during January, with 40-50 mainly adults dropping in to bathe on multiple dates during March. Higher numbers were also present at the start of April, with 76 on 5th and 69 on 7th, with 70 also present on 11th May. Towards the end of May it was noted that more 2cy and 3cy birds were passing though. Numbers fluctuated over the summer with a high of 69 on 18th Aug, dropping back down to single figures during

November and December.

Photo: Ed Mackrill

* **Great Northern Diver** *Gavia immer*

Local vagrant



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One was seen and photographed on the Great Broad on 19th Jan (RC) and again on 12th Feb (RC & ME). On both occasions it was only present for part of the day before departing, possibly to Barton Broad where two were present during the first winter period. This is the first confirmed site record since the long-staying bird from the 2009/10 winter, and additional pictures can be found in the article on pages 8-10.

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Common winter visitor



Numbers in the first winter period typically between 10-35, peaking at 45 on 21st Jan. The highest roost count this year was a modest 50+ on 31st Dec. Having bred for the first time on site in 2023, there were nine nests this year. Most of them appear to have successfully fledged young – see the article on pages 19 to 23 for more details. During 2023 a distinctive individual with a pigment deficiency giving brown and white feathers was noticed

(see the article in the Whitlingham Bird Report 2023, pages 17 to 27 for full details). This bird was still seen regularly until 18th Jan, again briefly in late March and returning from 9th Sept until the year end. Pictures of it can be found on pages 11-14. **Photo: Ed Mackrill**

Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

Scarce but annual winter visitor



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Fewer sightings than in 2023. First seen when one was flushed from reeds near to the bird hide on 8th Jan, then seen in reeds along the edge of the Great Broad on 19th Jan. One was heard flying over Thorpe Marshes on 17th Feb. The only record from the second winter period was of one at Thorpe Marshes on 6th Dec.

[There is a record on eBird of a Bittern booming at Whitlingham on 10th June – based on the other species on the checklist this does not appear to be a location error (i.e. a checklist meant to be from a different reserve), but nonetheless is very unlikely.]

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Regular winter visitor



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Between one and five at Whitlingham from January to April. One still present in May but wandering more widely, including visits to Thorpe Marshes on 1st and 10th May. Last seen in spring on the 25th May. First noted back in autumn on 11th Oct, with numbers peaking at 9 on 11th Nov. Monthly maximum counts shown below:

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	5	5	6	2	1	0	0	0	0	3	9	5

* **Great White Egret** *Ardea alba*

Winter visitor



© Robin Chittenden (www.robinchittenden.co.uk)

The two individuals first seen in November 2023 remained until 11th Jan, with a third bird reported on that date (via Norwich WhatsApp group), which would be a new site record. A single bird continued to be seen throughout the spring (with two on 2nd Apr), settled birds last noted on 4th May, but singles seen in flight from Thorpe Marshes on 10th May (flying towards Whitlingham) and 26th June (flying east along the river in the evening).

In the autumn back at Whitlingham on 6th Oct, with two present intermittently from 19th Oct until the year end. On several dates two were seen at Thorpe Marshes on the same date as two were seen at Whitlingham, however the timings were never simultaneous and it seems likely that these sightings represent two mobile individuals rather than four. Three were however seen at Whitlingham on 31st Dec (EM), equaling the highest site count from January.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Common resident



© Robin Chittenden (www.robinchittenden.co.uk),

The highest count of adults noted at any one time was seven, however four nests were noted, implying that over spring a minimum of eight adults were present (i.e. four pairs). One of the nests used in 2022 and 2023 was taken over by Egyptian Geese – however four occupied nests

were noted on 25th Mar, three of which were on the Great Broad island. Three recently fledged young from one of the nests were seen on 11th May. Two young birds were still stood on a nest on 21st July, a late date for this early nesting species so perhaps a second brood. For pictures see the article on pages 19 to 23.

*** Honey-buzzard** *Pernis apivorus*

Local vagrant

One flew east over Whitlingham Hall in the evening of 20th May (per Norwich WhatsApp group). This species is a county rarity and it is not known if details of this record have been passed to the county rarities committee. In the past few years there have been increasing sightings from the Mid-Yare, and the location is in keeping with a bird that might have tracked up the river. Last seen here in 2021.

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Resident

A similar pattern of sightings to 2023, seen in most months of the year (except for June, August and September). One on 16th Mar was seen in display flight, and six sightings relate to two individuals rather than one.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Fairly regular flyover

Reported on 25 dates, most frequently in January (9 of 25). The majority of the sightings were in the first six months of the year, the only sighting from Whitlingham C.P. in the second half of the year was on 19th Oct, whilst at Thorpe there were sightings on 22nd Sept, 25th Oct, 1st Nov, 26th Nov (2 watched hunting over the marsh then flew west – the only record of multiple birds this year), 23rd Dec and 29th Dec. Where a sex was specified it was usually female, although there were also several sightings of an immature or 2cy male.

*** Red Kite** *Milvus milvus*

Scarce flyovers

This species is now common around Norfolk, but remains scarce within the Whitlingham area. There were five sightings this year, four of which came in a two-week window in late March/early April. The first two sightings were from Whitlingham C.P. on 20th Mar (EM) and 25th Mar (RC), whilst the next two were from Thorpe Marshes on 28th Mar (CD) and 5th Apr (SW). The only other record was one over Thorpe Marshes on 9th June (MC).

Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Resident nearby

Between 1-5 seen regularly throughout the year, with sightings from every month of the year. No sign of any passage noted, with all sightings likely to relate to resident birds nearby. The sighting of four at Whitlingham on 28th Feb included a bird in display flight.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

Scarce resident



Photo: Ed Mackrill

During January one was seen regularly in the evenings hunting over the meadow south of Whitlingham Lane (photographed here by Ed Mackrill), with a scattering of sightings there during March and April. At Thorpe Marshes one seen on 24th Jan and on multiple dates during February, then further sightings from Thorpe Marshes on 21st June, 8th July, 31st Oct and 19th Nov.

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*

Scarce resident

Under-recorded due to its nocturnal habits. At Whitlingham C.P. one heard calling during the day close to the pump house on 23rd Apr, with a record of one heard in the evening of 4th July. More records were received from Thorpe Marshes as a result of nocturnal visits, with a maximum of three calling birds heard, typically one of which was calling from north of the railway line.

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Scarce resident

Recorded throughout the year, most frequently at Whitlingham but also a few records from Thorpe Marshes and one from the river adjacent to Whitlingham Marsh. All records refer to either one or two birds this year, with the exception of three at Thorpe Marshes on 7th Apr.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopus major*

Resident

Recorded during each month with the exception of September (although undoubtedly present all year round). Drumming recorded on 18th Jan, 28th Feb and 18th Apr. All records of one or two birds except three at Thorpe Marshes on 16th May.

Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*

Resident



Regularly seen at Whitlingham, with a scattering of records from Thorpe Marshes. Most records of 1-2 birds but three were reported on 21st Jan and 28th Feb.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Resident



A large number of sightings received from Whitlingham C.P. from January to April, with a male regularly hunting along Whitlingham Lane level with the Great Broad. A few sightings received from Thorpe Marshes and Whitlingham during May, but only single sightings from July, Aug and Sept before more regular records at both sites from October until the year end.

Photo: Hayley Strivens

* **Hobby** *Falco subbuteo*

Scarce passage migrant

Spring records from Whitlingham C.P. on 11th May (WW) and Thorpe Marshes on 16th May (per eBird), with one at Thorpe Marshes on 18th Aug (MC) and a single autumn record over Whitlingham C.P. on 16th Sept (JL).

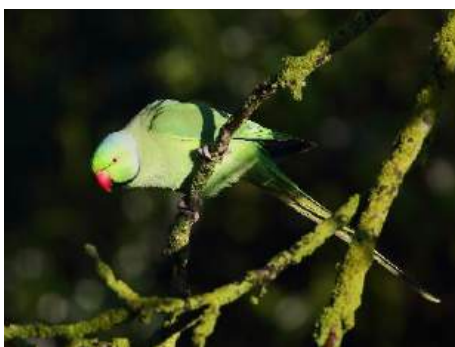
* **Peregrine** *Falco peregrinus*

Scarce flyovers

Just two records from within the recording area this year, over Whitlingham C.P. on 21st Jan (per eBird) and at Thorpe Marshes on 5th Apr (SW). Nearby at Norwich Cathedral four eggs were laid, from which three hatched and one fledged (on 17th June).

Ring-necked Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*

Scarce visitor



Recorded on 17 dates from January to May, all of single birds with the exception of two on 28th Feb that were viewed from Whitlingham but perched in trees north of the river level with Carey's Meadow. Most sightings from Whitlingham, but one at Trowse Woods and two sightings from Thorpe Marshes. Following the same pattern as 2023 there were no sightings over the summer, but one was seen again on 16th Sept and two sightings in December. **Photo: Paul Hartman**

Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

Common resident



Between 1-4 seen throughout the year at Whitlingham C.P., Thorpe Marshes and Trowse Woods.

Photo: Ed Mackrill

Magpie *Pica pica*

Common resident

Present throughout the recording area. No roost counts reported from Whitlingham, but a pre-roost gathering of 60 seen at Thorpe Marshes on 31st Dec.

Jackdaw *Coloeus monedula*

Common resident

Present throughout the year. Highest roost or pre-roost count c500 on 21st Jan and 16th Sept, whilst c140 were also noted gathering in the afternoon on 9th Nov.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

Resident nearby but scarce flyover here

One or two birds recorded on nine dates between January and July, which is probably an accurate reflection of this species here.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

Common resident



Photo: © Robin Chittenden (www.robinchittenden.co.uk)

A common species that can usually be found around the southern edge of the Great Broad. The highest count was 11, seen on multiple dates throughout the year. Recently fledged birds were seen on 9th June, whilst the bird photographed here by Robin Chittenden was seen eating a rodent (Brown Rat?).

Coal Tit *Periparus ater*

Scarce resident

Recorded on 16 dates throughout the year, five of which were in the first half of April when two were heard in song. The records from 28th Feb and 15th Aug were associated with mixed tit flocks, whilst two also came to feeders put up near the volunteers compound at Whitlingham C.P. Fourteen of the records were from Whitlingham C.P., with just one on 6th Nov seen at Thorpe Marshes.

*** Marsh Tit** *Poecile palustris*

Scarce resident

Recorded on eight dates – at Whitlingham C.P. on 9th Jan (DR) and 16th Nov (JE), in Whitlingham Woods on 29th Jan (WW) and 9th Nov (JE) and at Thorpe Marshes on 14th Jan (MC), 22nd Sept (MC), 25th Oct (CD) and 16th Dec (MC).

Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Common resident



Common throughout the recording area. There was a count of 33 on 28th Feb, composing of a mixture of pairs and flocks. Another count was made on 15th Aug, with 35 mostly from three mobile tit flocks but also counting a few additional scattered birds.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Great Tit *Parus major*

Common resident



Common throughout the recording area. An estimated count of 20 from 15th Aug as part of three mixed tit flocks.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

*** Bearded Tit** *Panurus biarmicus*

Rare winter visitor

In the first winter period one recorded at Thorpe Marshes at dusk on 11th Feb (MC).

In autumn recorded for the second successive winter (and the fifth in the last ten years). Exact numbers difficult to confirm, as when Bearded Tits are present within the area they are seldom seen with records dependent on calls. Records from most observers related to a small flock heard calling from reeds between the permissive path and the railway line at Thorpe Marshes, where at least two were first heard on 25th Oct (CD), with a pair seen and another bird heard calling on 5th Nov (CD). At least five present on 7th Nov (2 males and 2 females seen, with at

least one more calling from nearby – MH). Some of these birds were still present until 29th Nov at least. Additional birds were reported on a number of dates from either close to St Andrews Broad, the flood or areas of sedges east of the flood. These sightings were from 19th Oct to 16th Dec, during which point high counts were made as follows: 10 at dusk on 1st Nov (2 at the reedbed & 8 at the flood), 8 at dusk on 13th Nov (3 at the flood & 5 in sedge just east of the flood) and nine at dusk on 19th Nov (2 south-east broad, 5 in sedge just east of the flood & 2 at the reedbed) (all MC).

Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

Scarce flyovers

One over Whitlingham C.P. on 6th Oct, two heard flying over Thorpe Marshes on 25th Oct and another over Thorpe Marshes on 29th Dec.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

Common spring visitor



Photo: Ed Mackrill

A slightly late arrival this year, first seen at Whitlingham C.P. on 2nd Apr and at Thorpe Marshes on 5th Apr. There was then a large passage of birds on 10th Apr, when c200 present over the Great Broad. Other than the April sightings small numbers were also present on 22nd May, 29th May and lastly 9th June, when 20 at Thorpe Marshes and 15 at Whitlingham C.P.

Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Common summer visitor



Photo: David Ratcliffe

A Swallow at Thorpe Marshes on 23rd March (SW) is the earliest date since these bird reports began (2012), although a week later than the site record, 16th March 2010. Two also passed through Thorpe Marshes on 25th March, but the main arrival was not until 5th Apr when four at Thorpe Marshes and up to 20 at Whitlingham C.P. There were several large aggregations in the second half of April, with 200 on 15th, 100 on 19th, 100 on 23rd and 200 on 24th. The last sightings of spring were on 27th May and 10th June. There was one autumn sighting this year, of two at Thorpe Marshes on 9th Sept.

House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

Common spring visitor

First seen on 6th Apr, the same date as in 2023. There were a few sightings of small numbers in the following week, then a flock of c170 on 15th Apr along with large numbers of Swallows. Otherwise single figure counts received during the rest of April and throughout May, with the last of spring seen at Thorpe Marshes and Whitlingham C.P. on 9th June. In autumn five seen on the Great Broad on 6th Oct (per eBird).

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

Common resident



Common at both Whitlingham and Thorpe Marshes. Numbers of singing birds at Whitlingham C.P. typically up to six, with eight recorded on 10th May. At Thorpe Marshes typical daytime counts received of up to four singing birds, but up to nine reported from evening visits (MC).

Photo: Ed Mackrill

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

Common resident



Common throughout the recording area. During a survey of tit flocks on 15th Aug an estimated 85 present, 45 of which were around the picnic meadow.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Declining summer visitor

First heard singing at Whitlingham C.P. on 6th Apr, with a second singing bird from 12th Apr onwards. At Thorpe Marshes first heard on 7th Apr and two singing from 22nd Apr. A juvenile was noted with a mixed tit flock at Whitlingham C.P. on 15th Aug.

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

Common summer visitor



Three overwintering birds seen at Thorpe Marshes on 9th Jan, with one of them seen again in trees near the railway line at on 10th Jan. There were several other sightings from Thorpe Marshes during February, presumably relating to these birds. The first singing bird of the year was at Whitlingham on 9th Mar, with further birds arriving in the next week (six singing on 16th Mar). The first singing bird at Thorpe Marshes was reported on 11th

Mar. Highest counts of singing birds were 12 at Whitlingham and 13 heard from Thorpe Marshes. An adult was seen feeding two chicks at Whitlingham C.P. on 25th May.

In late autumn two present at Thorpe Marshes on 7th, 19th and 22nd Nov, with one seen there on 26th Nov, 16th, 27th and 29th Dec. Elsewhere one was also seen at Whitlingham Marsh on 31st Dec.

Photo: Ed Mackrill

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Common summer visitor



One heard giving brief bits of song at Thorpe Marshes on 26th Mar, an early date. There was no further sign in the next few days, with the next sighting two singing on 31st Mar. At Whitlingham not noted until 11th Apr. The highest count from Thorpe Marshes was 37 on 1st May (DR), however only 17 of those were in song so it is not the number of territories present. The highest number reported in song was 33 on 14th Apr (MC) Three held

territories around the Great Broad. **Photo: Ed Mackrill**

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Common summer visitor



First heard singing at Whitlingham on 10th Apr and at Thorpe Marshes from 14th Apr. The highest count of singing males at Whitlingham C.P. was 16 on 10th May. At Thorpe Marshes there was a count of 24 singing birds on 12th May (MC), but no other double-figure counts.

Photo: Ed Mackrill

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*

Scarce summer visitor

First heard reeling at Thorpe Marshes on 7th Apr, with three on 10th and five on 14th Apr (all MC), however otherwise not reported until 30th Apr and all other reports of a single reeling bird except for two on 7th May. Last heard on 21st July.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Common summer visitor



First singing bird heard at Whitlingham on 16th Mar, then no further sightings until 25th Mar when six in song. First heard at Thorpe Marshes a few days later on 28th. Highest counts of singing birds at Whitlingham was 16, plus four at (or heard from) Thorpe Marshes. Last noted on 20th Sept, with no overwintering birds reported.

Photo: Ed Mackrill

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*

Scarce summer visitor

First seen at Whitlingham on 23rd Apr (the same date as in 2023, albeit that one was at Thorpe Marshes) and at Thorpe Marshes on the 26th Apr. A high count of nine singing birds reported at Whitlingham on 10th May, with two noted at Thorpe Marshes on multiple dates. Last reported on 14th July.

* **Lesser Whitethroat** *Curruca curruca*

Scarce summer visitor



First of the year heard singing at Thorpe Marshes on 23rd Apr (CD), where it was also seen on 1st and 4th May (DR) and again on 12th May (MC). One was also heard at Whitlingham C.P. on 1st May (EM) and again on 6th May (WW).

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Whitethroat *Curruca communis*

Common summer visitor

A female seemingly carrying nesting material was seen at Whitlingham C.P. on 18th Apr, however the first singing males were not noted until 22nd Apr (the same date as in 2023) when they were present at both Thorpe Marshes and Whitlingham C.P. First seen on 22nd Apr at both Thorpe Marshes and Whitlingham C.P. The highest count for Whitlingham was five, whilst up to three were heard at Thorpe Marshes. Again there were no sightings after June.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

Common resident

Reported from Whitlingham C.P. throughout the year, with single records also received from Whitlingham Marsh and Whitlingham Woods. Goldcrests are probably resident at the latter site but not many records are submitted from there. At Thorpe Marshes there were records on 16th May, 17th June and 6th Nov.

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Common resident



A common species recorded throughout the year from both Whitlingham C.P. and Thorpe Marshes. A tally of singing birds around Whitlingham C.P. on 28th Feb counted 17 Wrens, whilst on 10th May 31 were counted in song around the C.P. Newly fledged young were seen on 9th June.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*

Scarce resident



Once again under-recorded this year. Two visited feeders near the Whitlingham volunteers compound on 28th Feb and one was noted nearby on 13th Mar. There was one report from Trowse Woods (where they are presumably still resident), on 29th May.

Photo: Keith Sowter

Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*

Common resident



A scattering of records throughout the year, all one or two individuals with the exception of three seen on 15th Aug mixed in with tit flocks around the picnic meadow. All records were from Whitlingham C.P. except one at Thorpe Marshes on 6th Nov.

Photo: Ed Mackill

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Scarce wanderer from local populations

Recorded on just five dates this year. Six at Whitlingham C.P. on 19th Jan, a flock of c200 over Whitlingham on 26th Jan, four at Thorpe Marshes on 10th May, 12 at Whitlingham on 8th Nov and 80 flew in to roost in the reeds at Thorpe Marshes on 9th Nov.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

Common resident



Heard singing from both Whitlingham C.P. and Thorpe Marshes in the first week of the year and regularly throughout the spring. The highest count of singing birds was six, from Whitlingham C.P. on 10th May.

Photo: Ed Mackrill

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

Scarce resident

At Whitlingham C.P. records were received for six dates: 3rd Jan, 9th Jan (2), 10th Jan, 15th Mar (2), 15th Apr and 23rd Apr. At Thorpe Marshes there was a single record, of two perched in trees along the railway line on 5th Nov.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

Common winter visitor

Small numbers seen regularly during January and February, plus 57 at Whitlingham C.P. on 8th Jan and 60 there on 13th Feb. Last of spring one on 27th Mar.

In the autumn first seen back on 6th Oct, with no counts above 10.

Blackbird *Turdus merula*

Common resident

Common throughout the recording area.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

Scarce winter visitor

Another sparse year for this species. A flock of 22 was seen flying across Yarmouth Road (Thorpe St Andrew) towards Whitlingham on 31st Oct, whilst several were heard calling in Whitlingham Woods on 9th Nov.

All records of this species are welcomed for future reports.

[* Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

Rare spring migrant and former breeder]

[There were no confirmed sightings of this species in 2024, however one observer noted that the Merlin sound recording app apparently picked one up calling near the Great Broad slipway on 6th and 7th July, and another one just east of the picnic meadow on 6th July. He noted that the app had correctly identified Spotted Flycatcher at Strumpshaw Fen when one was in view. At the moment I am of the opinion that due to the risk of false positives, birds detected by apps (and Merlin is one of the better ones) but not seen to confirm the ID will not be included in the report. However, given that there were Spotted Flycatchers present in May 2023, this report is included for information but not in the final species count]

Robin *Erithacus rubicula*

Common resident



Common throughout the recording area. Counts of singing birds at Whitlingham included 16 on 29th Jan, 33 on 28th Feb and 12 on 10th May.

Photo: © Robin Chittenden
(www.robinchittenden.co.uk)

Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

One resident breeding pair



No sightings at Thorpe Marshes during January, although the marshes were flooded so less access was possible than normal. A pair were seen from 2nd Feb and every month until July, then again from November. An immature bird seen on 4th July suggests that successful breeding occurred for the fourth year in a row.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

* **House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*

Rare wanderer from local populations

Intriguingly there were two records close together, one from Whitlingham C.P. on 25th May and one from "Trowse Marshes" on 29th May (both per eBird) Observers are reminded that this is a rare species within the recording area, so all records are welcomed, ideally photographed.

Dunnock *Prunella modularis*

Common resident

Common throughout the recording area.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Scarce resident



Recorded at Whitlingham throughout the year, most frequently in January. Most records were of single birds, but 2 seen on 10th Jan and 30th Apr, with 3 reported from Whitlingham on 28th Apr.

A number of counts of roosting birds were received from Thorpe Marshes, including six on 27th Jan, 10 on 24th Feb, 11 on 31st Oct and eight on 21st Nov. This probably represents the majority of the birds along the stretch of river either side of Whitlingham C.P. There was also one exceptional count of 27 roosting on 7th Nov (MC). This one-off large gathering was not repeated and it is not known how far away some of these birds must have flown in from. For context the largest gathering reported from Norfolk in the past five years

(2019 to 2023) from the Norfolk Bird & Mammal Reports was 10 at Holt STW (plus a vis-mig count of 15 past Hunstanton, although presumably throughout the day rather than in one flock).

Photo: Ed Mackrill

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba yarrelli*

Common resident

Between 1-4 noted regularly throughout the year. Recently fledged young seen at Whitlingham C.P. on 9th June.

* [Subspecies] **White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba alba*

Rare spring migrant

A 2cy male reported at Whitlingham C.P. on 21st May (EM).

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

Passage migrant

A handful of daytime records, all from Thorpe Marshes: 1 on 27th Jan, 35 on 5th Mar, 15 on 17th Mar and also present on 13th Nov. There was also a roost at Thorpe Marshes with varying numbers present overwinter. The most notable counts were: 50 on 27th Jan, 76 on 1st Feb, 123 on 7th Feb, 48 on 13th Nov and 152 on 19th Nov (all MC).

* **Water Pipit** *Anthus spinoletta*

Rare winter visitor

Reported on seven dates, all birds coming in to Thorpe Marshes in the evening to roost alongside Meadow Pipits (singles unless otherwise stated): 7th Feb (3), 11th Feb, 11th Mar, 13th Nov, 19th Nov (2), 25th Nov and 16th Dec (all MC).

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Common resident

Seen throughout the year in low numbers.

* **Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Scarce flyover



Two sightings within the recording area this year – one flew into scrub along the railway line at Thorpe Marshes on 19th Oct (MC), with another near Bungalow Lane on 13th Nov (MC). Just outside the boundaries of the recording area one was seen in a garden twice near the start of the year, being photographed on 7th Feb (see left). **Photo: Paul Hartman**

Editor's note: There was a big surge in sightings of Hawfinch in the wider Norwich area during the second winter period this year, notably on 3rd Nov when 10+ flew over various sites around Norwich early morning. Others flew over city gardens on 13th Oct, 30th Oct, 5th Nov, 11th Nov, 15th Nov and 20th Nov.

Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Scarce resident



Only two records this year, both from Whitlingham C.P., on 13th and 26th Jan (the latter photographed here).

Please submit all records of this species in 2025.

Photo: Ed Mackrill

Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*

Fairly common resident

Recorded regularly during the spring, with many records of singing birds. There was also a record of a juvenile bird at Thorpe Marshes on 17th June.

Linnet *Linaria cannabina*

Scarce resident

Pairs noted at both Thorpe Marshes and Whitlingham C.P., where a male was singing from the hedge that separates Whitlingham campsite from the road on 8th June. One flock noted, with 18 seen at Thorpe Marshes on 15th Feb.

Redpoll *Acanthis flammea*

As detailed in the article on pages 6 & 7, the IOC have 'lumped' all Redpoll taxa, which will now simply be considered one species, Redpoll, *Acanthis flammea* (formerly the scientific name used for Common/Mealy Redpoll). There is a bibliography on page 7 if you wish to read more about the reasoning behind this decision. Given that there is fairly well established criteria for separating Arctic, Mealy and Lesser Redpolls it would seem to make sense to continue to record them at this level where possible, although be aware that some recording platforms might now only allow sightings to be submitted as Redpoll, so use of the comments field will be needed to record the subspecies.

With regards to the impact on 2024 records, this decision was made part way through the year and implemented retrospectively. As a result, the downloaded eBird data was all listed as Redpoll, however given that the small number of Mealy Redpolls present between January to March were mixed in with the Lesser Redpolls, it was possible to work out which taxa were being referred to in most cases.

[Subspecies] **Mealy Redpoll** *Acanthis flammea flammea*

Scarce winter visitor



In the first winter period between two and four were reported in with a flock of Lesser Redpolls along the southern shore of Whitlingham Great Broad: three on 13th Jan, four on 15th Jan, 2+ on 18th Jan, two on 19th Jan, one on 11th Feb, two on 28th Feb, three on 8th Mar, 2+ on 17th Mar and one on 20th Mar.

Photo: Ed Mackrill

[Subspecies] **Lesser Redpoll** *Acanthis flammea cabaret*

Fairly scarce winter visitor



A flock of up to 25 (with a small number of additional Mealy Redpolls as detailed above) were present at Whitlingham in the first winter period, mostly along the south shore of the Great Broad. They were last seen on 27th Mar. There were no sightings in the second winter period, and also no records from Thorpe Marshes this year.

Photo: © Robin Chittenden (www.robinchittenden.co.uk)

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

Common resident

Present throughout the year, flocks mostly 15 or less, with the exception of 18 on 15th Apr and 25 on 8th Nov.

Siskin *Spinus spinus*

Common winter visitor



A large flock present in January that sometimes mixed in with the Redpoll flock. The largest counts were 60 on 5th Jan, 70 on 6th Feb and 50 on 28th Feb. The last sighting of spring was on 29th Mar.

There was an unusual record of a vocal bird calling as it flew over on 15th Aug. The first birds of autumn were present on 15th Oct, but there were no double-figure counts in the second winter period. **Photo: Ed Mackrill**

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Common summer visitor



Noted at Thorpe Marshes from 14th Jan onwards and at Whitlingham on 28th Feb. The maximum count of singing birds was 13 at Thorpe Marshes (on 12th May) and seven at Whitlingham C.P.

Photo: Ed Mackrill

Total: 126 species

Appendix A – Recorded species possibly linked to reintroduction schemes

Species listed here are those that would otherwise have appeared in the main species list but are either known or suspected to have originated from reintroduction schemes rather than self-sustaining natural populations. Species most likely to count under this appendix are Corncrake, White Stork and White-tailed Eagles, but schemes for several other species are at various stages of development.

*** White Stork *Ciconia Ciconia* Wanderer from captivity & reintroduced populations**

One seen flying over Thorpe St Andrew and then carrying on south over Thorpe Marshes on 28th Mar (ME). Without close views to check for rings or corroborating evidence of an arrival from the continent it is impossible to assess if this sighting relates to a bird of long-term wild origin, one from a recently established reintroduced population or a wanderer from captivity. It should however be noted that the date is similar to the bird seen flying over in 2023 (23rd March), which was established to have been ringed in the Netherlands. That bird was however seen at numerous other locations in Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire (established thanks to the distinctive leg ring). There were other sightings in Norfolk during March, including one at Hickling Broad on 16th, which was seen to be unringed. What might have been the same bird was noted over Ormesby St Margaret on 18th, Buckenham Marshes on 24th and over Little Plumstead on 27th.

[During early May two White Storks toured Norfolk. One was a ringed bird from the Knepp reintroduction, whilst the other one was unringed. They flew over west Norwich on 7th May when seen by multiple observers, with one seen over UEA later the same day. There was also an intriguing report of two White Storks flying east along the River Yare at Carrow Road on 8th May (i.e. flying towards Whitlingham). These were reported via the Bird News Services as the same Knepp and unringed pair, however those birds had been seen 15 minutes earlier at Blakeney and three hours later at Choseley, suggesting that they were at the North Norfolk coast at the time].

Appendix B – Recorded birds thought to be escapes or of dubious origin

Note that species on Category C of the British List (for example Barnacle Goose and Mandarin) without captive-type rings are typically given the benefit of the doubt and included in the main systematic list, so this category typically covers things like Black Swan, Muscovy Duck, Ruddy Shelduck etc.

Fulvous Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna bicolor*

One reported from St Andrews Broad on 18th Sept, possibly a new species for the area (albeit definitely an escape from captivity).

Appendix C – Birds reported from the area but not accepted onto the main list

Species listed here are those where the observer was certain of the ID but have not been included on the main species list (typically ‘probable’ species are included within the main list in italics). This will typically be national or county rarities, species not previously recorded in the area (or species that have been reported second-hand with insufficient detail) that have not been photographed or seen by multiple observers.

* [Subspecies] **Baltic Gull** *Larus fuscus fuscus* *National rarity*



For a fuller discussion of the occurrence of Baltic Gulls and why the species is currently considered a national rarity, see the article in the Whitlingham Bird Report 2023, pages 13-16. Two sightings this year:

An individual “*showing full characteristics of 3CY Baltic Gull*” on 4th Apr (EM)

“*Adult showing all the characteristics - P10 longest, long primary extension beyond tail, small Common Gull type head shape, intense black upperparts, outer primaries very worn, no moult. Small individual*” on 6th Oct (EM). See photo above by Ed Mackrill.

Neither of these records have been submitted for assessment by the BBRC.

* **Black-crowned Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* *County rarity*

There were two reports of Black-crowned Night Heron from Thorpe Marshes as follows:

- “An adult flew from ditch beside cattle corral, Station Marsh at first light on 14th Apr”.
- “A vocal bird over at 23:00, approached from the south and departed on a north-east line on 21st June”.

As far as I am aware these sightings have not been submitted to the county rarities committee.

* [Subspecies] **Siberian Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita tristis* *County rarity*

One reportedly heard calling from trees near the gas compound on 20th Dec (per Bird News Services) but no further details.

As far as I am aware this sighting has not been submitted to the county rarities committee.

Appendix D – Hybrid birds

Canada x Greylag Goose



Three of these hybrid geese were present on Whitlingham Great Broad on 9th & 12th June along within a large flock of Canada Geese. One was also seen on 4th July and on 25th Nov.

Photo: James Emerson

Pochard x Tufted Duck



Both photos: © Robin Chittenden (www.robinchittenden.co.uk)

A drake of this hybrid resembling a drake Tufted Duck in size but with a grey back and flanks, orange eye and lacking the 'tuft' was found on the Great Broad on 15th Nov and present until the end of the year.

Caspian Gull x Herring Gull

A 1st-winter gull seen on 23rd Dec appeared to have a mixture of Caspian and Herring Gull features.

Appendix E – Species notably not recorded in 2023

These are a selection of birds that have been seen frequently in the recording area (here defined as having occurred in at least three of the previous five years, 2019-2023) but were not reported during 2024.

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis* *Occasional visitor*

Recorded in each of the five years, but sightings in 2019-2022 mostly related to a single bird and there were only three sightings in 2023.

Mandarin *Aix galericulata* *Scarce visitor*

In recent years a drake Mandarin had been near-resident in the area, often roosting on the slipway with the Mallard. There were fewer sightings in 2023, and none at all in 2024.

Scaup *Aythya marila* *Scarce winter visitor*

Seen in the past three years, but this species has never been annual over a large period of time.

Curlew *Numenius aquaticus* *Scarce flyover*

Seen in four of the past five years, but never common (often a single sighting per year).

Dunlin *Calidris alpina* *Scarce spring visitor*

Recorded in eight years in a row until 2023 when no records, and none again this year.

Redshank *Tringa totanus* *Scarce spring migrant*

Recorded in three of the previous five years, absent in 2019 and 2023.

Mediterranean Gull *Ichthyaetus melanocephalus* *Scarce spring migrant*

Recorded in four of the five previous years, including on six dates during 2023, but no sightings this year.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* *Scarce spring migrant*

Recorded in four of the five previous years, although often only on single dates.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* *Scarce spring flyover*

Recorded for seven years in a row 2016 to 2022, but not seen in 2023 or this year.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* *Scarce winter visitor*

Recorded in each of the past five years but never common here – in 2023 there was only a single sighting.

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*

Scarce autumn flyovers

Recorded in four of the previous five years, but only ever as occasional flyover records so the absence of sightings might be down to a reduction in observer coverage.

Appendix F – Selected additional bird sightings from the Norwich area

These are species with no accepted records from within the Whitlingham recording area this year, but seen elsewhere around Norwich. It should be noted that many of these birds were only seen or heard flying over, and it is possible that some ‘heard only’ birds were detected with apps rather than by experienced observers. Nonetheless, details are included here both for general interest and because in some cases it might help to establish future patterns of occurrence within the area. The status indicators relate to their Whitlingham occurrences rather than attempting to describe them for the wider Norwich area.

* **Bewick’s Swan** *Cygnus columbianus*

Scarce flyovers in winter

One flew south-east over The Close on 8th Mar.

* **Whooper Swan** *Cygnus cygnus*

Rare flyovers in winter

Two flew west on 6th Jan.

* **Mandarin** *Aix galericulata*

Occasional visitor

One in paddock by Chapelbreak Road on 22nd Apr.

* **Common Scoter** *Melanitta nigra*

Nocturnal migrant, near annual at WCP

A drake seen on Bawburgh Fishing Lakes on 24th June.

[* **Red-breasted Merganser** *Mergus serrator*

Rare winter visitor]

One was reported from UEA Broad on 24th, 25th and 26th Dec. When the broad was checked by local birders, the report on 26th Dec evidently referred to a drake Goosander, so it appears likely that on all three days the same Goosander (a regular winter visitor to the Norwich area) was mis-identified as a Red-breasted Merganser (a mostly coastal species with only a handful of Norwich records)

[* **Demoiselle Crane** *Grus virgo*

No accepted UK records]

A “probable” was seen flying past Norwich Cathedral with a Common Crane on 22nd Nov. This species is not currently on the British List (there have been previous UK records but they have been judged to relate to birds escaped from captivity) so even if the ID was proven it is likely that this record would not be accepted as a first for Britain without some evidence that it was likely to be from a wild population.

* **Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola* *Rare flyover*

Singles flew over Norwich gardens on 13th Aug and 27th Oct.

* **Curlew** *Numenius arquata* *Scarce spring flyovers*

One over UEA on 23rd Feb and one east over Fifer's Lane on 29th June.

* **Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus* *Scarce spring flyovers*

Singles over on 29th Apr and 20th Aug.

* **Dunlin** *Calidris alpina* *Scarce spring migrant*

One at Bowthorpe Southern Park on 10th Mar then flyovers elsewhere in Norwich on 23rd Mar, 23rd July and 2nd Nov.

* **Redshank** *Tringa totanus* *Rare flyover*

One over Hellesdon 20th Apr.

* **Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia* *Spring migrant/flyovers*

One over Greenborough Road calling on 13th Aug.

* **Sandwich Tern** *Sterna sandvicensis* *Rare spring migrant*

One reported flying over Spencer Road on 12th May.

* **Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger* *Scarce spring migrant*

None at Whitlingham this year, but a flock of nine reported from Bawburgh Fishing Lakes on 11th May, of which two were still present later in the day.

* **Red-throated Diver** *Gavia stellata* *Local vagrant*

Although this species is common offshore, it is the scarcest of the three regularly-occurring divers inland. One was first seen flying along the River Yare at Brundall on 24th Oct 2023 and over the next three weeks was seen at several mid-Yare locations. After a gap of two months it was seen on the river at Buckenham Marshes on 14th Jan 2024. It proceeded to spend most of the year on that stretch, typically between Buckenham and Cantley. In November however it moved closer to Norwich on at least two occasions, being reported "on the river below the A47 bridge" at Postwick on 15th Oct. It was reported as "still on River Yare below A47 bridge" on 5th Nov, however on both occasions it was not present on the day after the sighting, and indeed was back at Buckenham on 22nd and 27th Oct so was not present at Postwick continuously. The A47 bridge forms the recording area boundary, so it is possible that this individual did become a new area species, however further information would be needed to confirm this.

* **Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia*

Local vagrant

There was a report of two in the flooded meadow adjacent to Trowse church (just outside the Whitlingham recording area) on 11th Feb, however there was no sign of them the following day.

* **Cattle Egret** *Ardea ibis*

Local rarity, increasing in Norfolk

A few miles to the north-west of Norwich, two were present in flooded fields near Attlebridge in January, with one remaining and seen periodically until at least 22nd Feb (photographed). One flew over Dereham Road on 12th May. In winter two were with Cattle Egrets a few miles west of Norwich near Marlingford on 12th Dec.

* **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea*

County rarity

A juvenile was found and photographed at Bawburgh Fishing Lakes (Colney GPs) on 14th Sept. Access to the site is members-only, there was a further sighting looking in from the nearby road on 14th and again on the 20th, but no further sightings.

* **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*

Scarce spring migrant

One over UEA on 29th Apr and one at Sweet Briar Marshes on 8th May, the latter bird tracked by several other Norwich birders as it flew over.

* **Long-eared Owl** *Asio otus*

Rare winter visitor

One heard calling from a site around Norwich on 28th Dec (sound recorded), but was not heard again in the area.

* **Raven** *Corvus corax*

No confirmed records

A pair successfully bred within five miles of the recording area this year. A reminder that there are not yet any confirmed records of Ravens at Whitlingham, so please keep an eye out for this species within the recording area and to document any sightings (photo/video/sound recording) if possible. Also seen flying over Marston Marshes on 3rd Mar and over Stafford Street on 2nd Nov.

* **Waxwing** *Garrulus garrulus*

Irregular winter visitor

Various sightings in the first winter period, mostly from the west of the city around the Norwich Research Park.

* **Woodlark** *Lullula arborea*

Rare flyovers

One flew over Greenborough Road on 8th Apr.

* **Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus* *Local rarity*

Various reports over a two-week spell in mid-October:

UEA two on 9th with one still present with a tit flock on 10th, Mousehold Heath 10th, Anderson's Meadow 17th (video'd), Chapelfield Park 18th (heard only), City College grounds 18th (heard).

* **Ring Ouzel** *Turdus torquatus* *Scarce migrant*

One seen at Bawburgh Fishing Lakes on 10th Apr.

* **Black Redstart** *Phoenirurus ochruros* *Migrant, periodic breeder in the city centre*

One in Lakenham on 22nd Sept.

* **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* *Scarce flyover*

One with Pied Wagtails at the Norfolk showground on 20th Aug. Elsewhere one flew over a city centre garden on 11th Aug and two flew over a north Norwich garden on 29th Aug.

* **Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis* *Rare flyover*

A bumper year for this species, with flyovers noted from a range of observers on 12th Aug, 28th Aug (2 separate locations), 2nd Sept, 13th Sept, 17th Sept, 10th Oct and 2nd Nov.

* **Rock Pipit** *Anthus petrosus* *Local rarity*

One seen briefly at Bowthorpe Southern Park before flying off towards Earlham Marsh on 10th Mar.

* **Lapland Bunting** *Calcarius lapponicus* *Inland vagrant*

One flew over Stafford Street on 27th Oct.

* **Yellowhammer** *Emberiza citronella* *Scarce flyover*

A singing bird in Eaton Park on 8th June was unusual. Elsewhere several autumn flyovers - over Earlham 22nd Oct, over a Lakenham garden 27th Oct and finally one over a city centre garden on 3rd Nov.

Acknowledgements

Most of these sightings were originally posted in the Norwich Birders Whatsapp Group – thank you to the many local birders who have shared their sightings throughout the year. A few others were reported via the bird news services and are included for completeness.

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, via WhatsApp groups or by posted sightings on social media. I would particularly like to thank the following for providing records, information or photos:

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I have included sightings taken from eBird to enhance the report. These were provided as a download and records were anonymised. Records of common species were used to create the summaries in the species accounts. Records of scarcer species from this dataset were assessed using the same criteria as records from named observers and if included are listed as 'per eBird'.

Citations for the eBird dataset used is:

eBird Basic Dataset. Version: EBD_relOct-2024. Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, New York. Oct 2024.

Photographers of pictures used in the report are: Robin Chittenden, James Emerson, Paul Hartman, Edmund Mackrill, Roger Parker, David Ratcliffe, Keith Sowter, Hayley Strivens 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)

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 (0207 0382820), BirdGuides (0333 5772473) or www.birdlineeastanglia.co.uk.