

Thorpe Marshes Wildlife Report 2015

Norfolk Wildlife Trust's Thorpe St Andrew Marshes nature reserve – NWT Thorpe Marshes for short in this report and elsewhere – was established in 2011. It's NWT's first nature reserve in Norwich, recognising the wildlife value of the marshes and protecting the area as an asset for people in Thorpe St Andrew and beyond.

This is the fourth annual wildlife report, summarising some of the observations of wildlife during 2015. It includes records from the monthly wildlife walks, plus records made by me or provided by other naturalists (see acknowledgements). For birds, regular, detailed observations and counts by Mark Chipperfield were especially notable, adding several species and many counts, especially of snipe and jack snipe departing at dusk. The expertise of staff in the adjacent Broadland Environmental Services Limited (BESL) office was a bonus.

The report is not a full wildlife survey. Plants are excluded, partly for reasons of space, and partly as they vary less from year to year. Mammals are under-recorded: these are again some casual records. The invertebrates list has a bias towards more showy, terrestrial species, though some others are included in more difficult groups, thanks to several recorders, especially James Emerson and Derek Longe. (Aquatic invertebrates were surveyed in 2012 by Norfolk Wildlife Services Ltd, commissioned by NWT.)

It's possible that other visitors to Thorpe Marshes have seen additional species, or what are noted as 'new' here have been seen by others before. We'll be glad to have additional records, to chris@honeyguide.co.uk. We hope this report may encourage more recording, especially of under-recorded groups.

Chris Durdin, January 2016



Azure Damselflies egg-laying, 6th July; Snow from the railway bridge, 20th November; orange balsam, 16th August.

Acknowledgements

Records from Mike Burrows, Mark Chipperfield, Ricky Cleverley, Chris Durdin, James Emerson, Jeremy Halls, Barrie Harding, Ian Holmes, Derek Longe, Susan Weeks and Yare Valley Wildlife website. Photos by Chris Durdin unless otherwise attributed.

Initials used in this report:

NWT: Norfolk Wildlife Trust. CP: Country Park (Whitlingham).

Websites for NWT Thorpe Marshes

NWT: <u>www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/Wildlife-in-Norfolk/Reserves/Thorpe-Marshes.aspx</u> www.honeyquide.co.uk/thorpemarshes.htm

References

Steve Cham, Brian Nelson, Adrian Parr, Steve Prentice, Dave Smallshire and Pam Taylor (2014). *Atlas of Dragonflies in Britain and Ireland.*

Durdin, Chris (January 2013/2014/2015). *Thorpe Marshes Wildlife Reports 2012/2013/2014*. Emerson, James (January 2016). *Whitlingham Bird Report 2015*.

Key habitats and management

Key habitats at NWT Thorpe Marshes are the **gravel pit**, known as St Andrew's Broad, **grazed marshes** (including the 'flood') grading into grazed fen, **ungrazed marsh** of ranker vegetation and scrub around the broad, and **ditches**. These are described in more detail in previous reports.

Management saw major development in 2015. NWT has a 10 year Higher Level Stewardship agreement which started on 1st March 2013, providing funding to support grazing and wetland management. In addition, the Trust secured major finding for conservation management from Lafarge-Tarmac and Norse Landfill Communities Funds, which kick-started nearly continuous management work on site from the end of September to the year's end and beyond. By the end of December, this had included cutting all the grazing marshes except the rankest one around the flood; ditching, including new culverts connecting ditches; scrub removal; the restoration or excavation on three ponds (pond-dipping facilities will be added later); deepening and extending the flood; restoration of shingle areas on St Andrews Broad and other enhancements to the Broad's edges; path-raising, mostly on the main circuit around the broad.

Railway bridge and access: the railway bridge at the end of Whitlingham Lane was closed on 5th December for the start of repair, to works programme to take until the end of March 2015. Pedestrian access was then only from Bungalow Lane at the eastern end of the reserve.

Guided walks and publicity

There were monthly NWT guided walks led by Chris Durdin, promoted though NWT events leaflets, the two websites and newspaper 'what's ons'. In additional there was a walk for Rackheath WI. The 13 walks attracted 145 people through the year (177 in 2014, 104 in 2013, 90 in 2012) giving a running total of 515 people on walks over four years.

Those attending walks were asked, throughout 2015, how far they had come, and the results are summarised in the table below.

less than 1 mile	1-5 miles	5-10 miles	10+ miles	total
21	73	19	32	145
15%	50%	13%	22%	100%

Media: two young people drowned in St Andrews Broad on 12th August. Inevitably there was extensive media coverage, including on BBC Look East on three successive evenings.

More routine media work about the reserve's wildlife were the regular article in the Broads Society's *Harnser*, appearing in January, April, July and October and five contributions to the NWT's Blog (plus one on bee orchids in Norwich).

Review of the year

The marshes flooded when tides were high around 11th/12th **January**, and a high count of 257 teal came later in the month when in a cold snap the majority of the broad was frozen. There were plenty of bright days in **February** and duck numbers declined with the better weather. A digger was on site dredging several short stretches of ditches. A chiffchaff was seen on several days and bird of prey records included barn owl, marsh harrier and merlin.





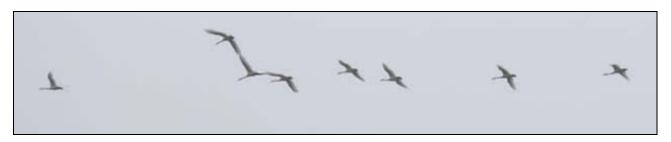
A tame Large Red Damselfly; nightingale (Ricky Cleverley), near the reserve.

Oystercatchers were displaying on 1st **March** and up to five came and went all month. A highlight was a bittern at dusk on 17th and other evening sightings included a barn owl and both snipe and jack snipe leaving the marsh near nightfall. Much of mid-**April** was warm, bringing out orange-tip and other butterflies, though it turned colder later. Nonetheless warblers came in, with up to eight species in song, including an influx of willow warblers. A nightingale – sometimes two – was heard several times just off the reserve by Bungalow Lane. Cattle returned on 2nd **May** to a month of mostly unsettled weather. The

nightingales stayed, cuckoos were heard and lapwings were often present, probably from pairs nesting on arable farther east.

On 19th **June**, James Emerson found and photographed an unusual sawfly later confirmed as *Arge melanchroa*, just the second record for the vice-county (a standard recording area) of East Norfolk. Norfolk Hawker surveys started, with a high count of 46 on 30th June and they continued into **July**. The heatwave at the start of the month didn't last, but there were good numbers of small skippers and ringlets for a period in what was otherwise an unremarkable year for butterflies. Skullcap (plus larvae of skullcap sawfly), common-hemp-nettle and a single almost white greater willowherb were flowers of note on the walk in early **August** among the usual colours of high summer. Other recording was rather overshadowed by two teenagers drowned in St Andrew's Broad on 17th August, though late in the month our first Roesell's bush-cricket was recorded and a Willow Emerald damselfly seen, confirming their presence for a second year.

The peak Willow Emerald count was 10 on 20th **September**, and we found several more sets of egg laying scars. A big programme of management work started with the marshes being cut at the month's end, and work continued through the autumn. Interesting birds in **October** included ring ouzel, short-eared owl and early goldeneyes, and it was good to hear redpolls on several days. **November** varied from surprisingly warm days early in the month to snow on 22nd. Eight whooper swans on 4th November and a male goosander were highlights, and regular counts at dusk underlined the value of the flood area for snipe. The railway bridge closed for repairs on 5 **December**, and with access only from the eastern end there were fewer people around this exceptionally mild month. A weasel pursuing a harvest mouse was highlight on a quided walk.



Eight whooper swans, 4th November 2015 (Derek Longe)

Birds

[Records in square brackets are off but near to the reserve.]

Mute swan Cygnus olor	Resident. One pair nested by the Broad, but no young noted this year. 1-6 birds throughout the year on the Broad, in ditches or the River Yare. A dead adult on the marshes (fox casualty?) in Dec 2014 and Jan 2015 had a BTO ring. The report said ringed at Trowse, which probably means Whitlingham CP.	
Whooper swan Cygnus cygnus	8 whooper swans flying over on guided walk on 4 th Nov in foggy conditions; 8 also reported seen on the Broad by a dog walker in early November, presumably the same birds.	
[Pink-footed goose Anser brachyrhynchus]	[Flocks seen or heard over Thunder Lane on 3 dates in late January, so likely to have been visible or audible from the reserve. A high flock of c.100 geese flying over NW on 9 th Feb (JH) may well have been pinkfeet.]	
Greylag goose Anser anser	Breeds at Whitlingham CP. At Thorpe fairly regularly in small numbers, especially on the Broad, occasionally on the flood, but no brood this year. Noisily flying around Thorpe St Andrew in summer and autumn in groups of up to 20, sometimes more e.g. 77, 9 th Dec.	
Canada goose Branta canadensis	Birds at Thorpe off and on throughout the year, and a pair with 4 goslings in late April to mid-May.	
Brent goose <i>Branta bernicla</i>	1 on about 24 th Dec (MB), presumably dark-bellied.	
Egyptian goose Alopochen aegyptiaca	Breeds at Whitlingham CP and regularly present at Thorpe or on the river.	
Shelduck Tadorna tadorna	Occasional, formerly bred (while gravel was being dug). 2, 2 nd Feb; 1, 24 th Mar, 7 th & 27 Apl; 1, 22 nd Dec.	
Wigeon Anas penelope	Occasional winter visitor on the Broad, surprisingly scarce considering the big numbers elsewhere in the Yare Valley. 1-5 on five occasions in Jan, Mar, November and December; also 5 over, 23 rd Nov.	
Gadwall Anas strepera	Winter visitor, formerly bred. Peak counts in early 2015 of 99, 15 th Jan; 120, 18 th Jan; 121, 22 nd Jan and 87, 30 th Jan. Also a pair in May. The high count was in freezing conditions. Low numbers in the mild autumn and December.	

Teal Anas crecca	Autumn and winter visitor, especially in cold weather. Often in the vegetation on the edge of St Andrew's Broad or on the flood, and likely to be overlooked. Notable count of 257 on 22 nd Feb (JH) on unfrozen parts of the Broad. 10-30 typically present in the autumn.	
Mallard Anas platyrhynchos	Typically spring and summer visitor, to the dykes and broad, with breeding pairs present. 2 females with broods in May/June, but one appeared to be semi-domestic type. Previously absent from the Broad during the winter, but not so this year, some here or on ditches were again semi-domestic types. Dusk flights into the flood in autumn (max 58, 20 th Nov) hint at wild birds.	
Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i>	Winter visitor, with occasional birds in spring. On or over St Andrew's Broad: 1-3 on various dates in Jan, Mar, Apl, Oct and Nov.	
Pochard <i>Aythya farina</i>	Winter visitor, with occasional birds in spring. Often absent or in single figures, with only double figure count on 22, 30 th Jan. All but absent in the second winter period: singles on 2 dates only.	
Red-crested pochard Netta rufina	Four birds – two males and two females – on the Broad on 28 th February, photographed and posted on the Yare Valley Wildlife website.	
Tufted duck Aythya fuligula	Winter visitor, especially Dec-ApI, and may have bred. Counts usually 15-50, but high counts of 125 on 28 th Mar and 86 on 7 th ApI may coincide with disturbance at Whitlingham CP. 2 pairs on 1 st June and 1 on 6 th June, but no brood seen this year.	
Goldeneye <i>Bucephala clangula</i>	Winter visitor, but absent in first part of the year. Unusually regular in the autumn, with 1 on 15 th October and last seen when 2 on 18 th December. 5 on 29 th Oct (MC) & 20 th Nov (CD).	
Goosander <i>Mergus merganser</i>	Male fishing on the broad on 13 th Mar (RC); a male flew west on 28 th November (CD). [Remarkably there was also an immature male at River Green on 3 rd Aug enjoyed by those on the guided walk; that bird was almost certainly the goosander seen on the river on 30 th Aug and at Whitlingham CP in the autumn.]	
Red-legged partridge Alectoris rufa	Singles on 7 th Mar and 17 th Oct, the latter photographed from Whitlingham CP!	
Pheasant <i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	Seen or heard throughout the year, up to 5 males (though usually 1-2), and young seen in June.	
Slavonian grebe <i>Podiceps auritus</i>	7 th Mar: "1 adult (summer-plumaged) observed S area of broad close to central reed fringe" (MC).	
Little grebe Tachybaptus ruficollis	Occasionally on the river (e.g. 7 th Jan) and 1-4 on the Broad to 14 th April, and 5 on 13 th Mar. In the autumn, regularly if erratically seen or heard (especially at dusk) on the Broad from 15 th October.	
Great crested grebe Podiceps cristatus	Resident, seen or heard displaying on both St Andrew's Broad and the river. Nested on the river, breeding success unknown, suggesting unsuccessful. 1-3 on the Broad in the autumn.	
Cormorant Phalacrocorax carbo	Present in low numbers: it's usual to see 1-3 birds on the broad or flying over, but rarely more. Studies at Whitlingham CP and concluded that there is a mix of <i>P c carbo</i> and <i>P c sinensis</i> present with a majority of <i>carbo</i> , and the same is presumably true at Thorpe.	
Bittern <i>Botauris stellaris</i>	17 th March: "1 probable male heard flight calling to the W over Whitlingham Broad at 18:43 flying E was observed to circle Thorpe Broad once then continued E over the marshes departing to the SE over Whitlingham Marshes at 18:45 flight calling throughout" (MC). Also 1 over on 27 th Nov (MC). Occasional. Single birds on 9 th Feb, 7 th Mar, 18 th Apl, 23 rd May; 2 on 7 th June; 1	
Little egret Egretta garzetta Grey heron Ardea cinerea	Occasional. Single birds on 9 th Feb, 7 th Mar, 18 th ApI, 23 rd May; 2 on 7 th June; 1 on guided walk on 23 th Oct. 1-2 regularly during spring and summer, occasionally 3, 4 seen on 14 th April and 14 th May.	
Red kite Milvus milvus	2 nd April (MB).	
Marsh harrier Circus aeruginosus	Male on 14 th May and 2 seen on 10 th Sept (IH).	
Sparrowhawk Accipiter nisus	Resident in the area. 1, occasionally 2, seen throughout the year.	
Buzzard Buteo buteo	1-3 seen on various dates in spring, summer and September, mostly over the woods across the river.	
Kestrel Falco tinnunculus	Resident, 1-2 fairly often seen hovering over the grazing marshes.	
Hobby Falco subbuteo	28 th Apl and 4 May (both RC).	
[Peregrine Falco peregrinus]	[18 th Dec, east of Bungalow Lane (MC)]	
Merlin <i>Falco columbarius</i>	19 th Feb, a bird calling loudly (RC).	

Water rail Rallus aquaticus	Winter visitor, October to March, nearly always heard only, first autumn record on 10 th Sept (CD). Maximum count on the reserve of 8 at dusk on 3 rd Nov (MC). One seen caught by a sparrowhawk (BH).
Moorhen Gallinula chloropus	Resident, presumably breeds, though often quite secretive. Always single figures except 10, 14 th Mar.
Coot Fulica atra	Winter visitor on St Andrew's Broad, usually in small numbers. Only count more than 20 was 25, 20 th Feb. Also nested on the broad.
Oystercatcher Haematopus ostralegus	Springtime visitor, up to 5 erratically present in March and April, displayed but did not breed. 2 over on 23 rd July.
Little ringed plover Charadrius dubius	Sporadic spring visitor, formerly bred. 1-2 on several dates in April and May.
Ringed plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	One on 13 th March was seen and heard well enough to rule out the more usual little ringed plover (RC).
Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	Non-breeding birds through much of the year; formerly bred. Winter numbers variable, but usually less than 10, with more coming in during hard weather, e.g. 28, 27 th Feb, though quite often absent. Display seen on 10 th , 20 th and 21 st April. Also flocks moving through, e.g. 120, 17 th Dec.
Woodcock Scolopax rusticola	Several records of single birds, mostly at or approaching dusk in autumn and winter: 19 th Feb, 11 th & 28 th Mar, 29 th Oct, 3 rd & 8 th Dec.
Snipe <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Winter visitor, with numbers increasing in hard weather; formerly bred. Mark Chipperfield has regularly counted birds flying away to NE, E, SE or S at dusk from their preferred boggy area. Peak count in the early part of the year 77 on 6 th Mar. Highest autumn count: 107 on 3 rd Nov. In the half-light these are minimum counts; no big counts after raptor disturbance this year.
Jack snipe Lymnocryptes minimus	Regularly present in winter in generally inaccessible areas and, like snipe, also counted flying away at dusk by Mark Chipperfield. Most were single birds, including 1 flushed by a barn owl on 20 th Feb and 1 flushed by a Chinese water deer on 26 th March, but also 3 on 3 rd March and 2, 28 th March. Autumn records from 11 th Oct, including 5 on 3 rd Nov.
Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i>	Five flew onto the shingle spit on 17th Feb (JH) and one present on the shingle spit on 4th March (Whitlingham Bird Report).
Common sandpiper Actitis hypoleucos	Passage migrant, all in April and May. 1, 13 th April; 2, 14 th April; 2, 17 th Apl; 1, 2 nd Apl; 1, 10 th May; 5, 14 th May.
Green sandpiper Tringa ochropus	Passage migrant and occasional winter visitor. 2 on 10 th Oct, other records all singles: 1 on 13 th & 14 th & 20 th ApI, 22 nd Sept, 15 th Oct and 25 th Nov.
Redshank Tringa totanus	Uncommon migrant. 1 heard at flood, 28 th March (MC).
Greenshank <i>Tringa nebularia</i> Curlew	Uncommon migrant. 1, 10 th April (MC).
Numenius arquata Whimbrel	Uncommon migrant. 1, 13 th Mar; 2, 25 th Aug; 3 on 10 th Sept (IH).
Numenius phaeopus	Uncommon migrant. One over on 17 th Mar and 14 th May. Winter visitor, with birds loafing around or washing on the Broad, and high
Black-headed gull Chroicocephalus ridibundus	numbers attracted to the newly shaped Broad edges towards the end of the year, though these not counted. Counts in 3 figures: 180, 3 rd Mar; 226, 4 th Mar; 140, 7 th Mar; 144, 14 th Mar and 108, 23 rd Mar. Whitlingham Bird Report has a further report on ringed birds, including new records of birds from Denmark and Sweden. Large numbers fly over at dusk going to roost.
Common gull Larus canus	Winter visitor, in smaller numbers mixed in with black-headed gulls. High counts of 31 on 23 rd Mar and 9 th Dec.
[Mediterranean gull Larus melanocephalus]	[A first-winter bird was at River Green, Thorpe, from 10 th January and the guided walk group took a little detour to see it on 13 th Jan. It remained until at least 10 th February.]
Lesser black-backed gull Larus fuscus	Usually in single figures with other gulls. 21 on 7 th April a high count. Largely absent in the second winter period. Large numbers fly over at dusk going to night roosts.
Herring gull Larus argentatus	Usually in single figures with other gulls or flying around, with 80 on 5 th March an unusually high count. Numbers increased after more Broad edge was exposed by management in the autumn, e.g. 47 on 22 nd Dec.
Common tern Sterna hirundo	1-2 on several dates in late April, May and July, including 3, 10 th July on guided walk. A tern raft could be a valuable draw for this species.
Feral pigeon <i>Columba livia</i>	Not usually on the reserve, though the feral pigeons/white doves on River Green can sometimes be seen flying over, especially from the railway bridge.
Stock dove Columba oenas	Resident, though more obvious in spring and summer, when 2-6 would be typical, sometimes singing. Higher counts of 7, 9 th March; 7, 14 th ApI; 8, 20 th & 23 rd May.

Woodpigeon Columba palumbus	Resident, often outnumbering stock doves. No doubt breeding in trees adjacent
Collared dove	to the reserve. Resident, in Whitlingham Lane, rather than on the reserve, sometimes flying
Streptopelia decaocto	over.
Cuckoo	A bubbling female on 2 nd May and single calling males on several dates from 14 th
Cuculus canorus	April to 17 th May.
Barn owl <i>Tyto alba</i>	A barn owl flushed a jack snipe on 20 th Feb. Other singles on 6 th March, 3 rd and 10 th April, and 2 just east of the reserve on 3 rd March.
Short-eared owl Asio flameus	11 th October, 1 observed hunting low over marshes working the ditch edges, first spotted about the NE corner at 18:30. Again at dusk on 26 th Oct (MC).
[Tawny owl	[Heard on several occasions from woods around the reserve, to the north, south
Strix aluco]	and east.]
Swift Apus apus	Summer visitor, nesting locally, often over the reserve. The Yare Valley often has early flocks of migrants in late April, and 7 on 23 rd April, some also seen on 22 nd April, follow this pattern. 40, 19 th May; 30 feeding over the Broad, 15 th May; 200 feeding in general area, 1 st June. Last record 4 th August.
Kingfisher	Resident in the area and one, sometimes 2, seen fairly often, usually on the
Alcedo atthis	river, sometimes over the Broad or dashing through elsewhere, all year.
Green woodpecker Picus viridis	Resident, in the trees adjacent to the reserve and across the river in Whitlingham Wood. Excellent view of one by the Broad on guided walk, 23 rd Oct.
Great spotted woodpecker	Resident, 1-2 often flying over the reserve and in the trees adjacent to the reserve, especially those adjacent to the railway bridge.
Dendrocopos major Skylark	None singing this year. Groups flying over on several dates in October; also 1,
Alauda arvensis Swallow	7 th April and 20 th Nov. A scattering of records 1 st April to 15 th October, with few notable groups, though
Hirundo rustica	lots (uncounted) on 26 th April mostly over river and Whitlingham CP.
	First on 17 th April, last on 22 nd September. 20+ over the Broad on 14 th & 19 th
House martin Delichon urbicum	May; groups of house martins and swallows feeding over the Broad on 4 th
	September. Again a thin group of records.
Water pipit	15 th Oct, 1 at broad flew W towards Whitlingham Great Broad; 11 th Dec, 1 at
Anthus spinoletta	flood (both MC). Winter visitor, formerly bred. 1-6 in the early part of the winter, then 2 on 24 th
Meadow pipit Anthus pratensis	April. From 22 nd September, with variable numbers e.g. 10 on 15 th Oct, 8, 2 nd December but more usually 1-4, though may be under-recorded from wet meadows.
Pied wagtail <i>Motacilla alba</i>	1-3 erratically present throughout the year, with higher numbers e.g. 12, 23 rd Dec, but usually <10, flying over the reserve in autumn/winter, perhaps moving towards pre-roosts or roosts.
Grey wagtail Motacilla cinerea	1-2 on edge of Broad or flying over on several autumn/winter dates. More interesting records were 3 (1 in song) by River Yare at low tide on 18 th Dec and 1, 22 nd Nov on a pool round a newly coppiced willow.
Waxwing Bombycila garrulus	23 rd December, 5 flew over east at 15:25 (MC).
Dunnock Prunella modularis	Ever-present and often singing in both spring and autumn from scrub alongside the River Yare.
Wren	Resident. Several territories, with a maximum of 21 in song, 11 th March (MC).
Troglodytes troglodytes Robin	Ever-present and often singing in spring, autumn and winter, especially from
Erithracus rubecula	scrub alongside the River Yare.
Common redstart	15 th October: "1 fem/first winter landed briefly on river path SW corner of broad
Phoenicurus phoenicurus Stonechat	moving through E with tit flock @ 08:35" (MC). One seen at Thorpe Marsh on 7th March, the first record for several years
Stonechat Saxicola torquatus	(Whitlingham Bird Report).
Wheatear Oenanthe oenanthe	22 nd Sept, 1 juvenile perched just W of flood (MC).
Song thrush Turdus philomelos	Often seen on the reserve this year, in and around the riverside scrub, and in song.
Redwing Turdus iliacus	Flying over especially at dusk in March and October; 173 at least on 15 th Oct, part of the usual passage of thrushes W through the Yare Valley in October. Smaller groups departing at dusk in late Oct and Nov e.g. 87, 26 th October.
Mistle thrush Turdus viscivorus	Several sight records of 1-2 overflying the reserve. Also regularly heard in song in March, April and early May both from Whitlingham Wood and N of the railway line, then again regularly singing in Whitlingham Wood in the mild November and December.
Fieldfare Turdus pilaris	45, 26 th October; other autumn observations all <10 birds.

Blackbird Turdus merula	Resident, often in song, up to 3 and presumably breeding. Some higher autumn counts e.g. 24 present/departed S at dusk on 23 rd November.
Ring ouzel	1 on 14 th April (MB, MC); 1, 24 th April (MC); 1, 11 th Oct (MC).
Turdus torquatus Garden warbler	Two males regularly singing in scrub along the riverbank SW of the broad, and
Sylvia borin	another recorded by Bungalow Lane.
Blackcap Sylvia atricapilla	Summer visitor, also winter visitor in nearby gardens. Heard regularly in April and May, often 4 in song, peak of 7 on 6 th June, with others singing in adjacent scrub or across the river.
Whitethroat Sylvia communis	Noisy and fairly numerous in late April and early May, especially in the unmanaged marsh between the river and the broad, with up to 8 in song. First recorded on 18 th April. On 1 st June, 1 young predated from nest by a jay which was hotly pursued by the nesting pair. Also in the bramble field by Whitlingham Lane.
Sedge warbler Acrocephalus schoenobaenus	Summer visitor, the first on 10 th April. Up to 21 in song (dawn, 14 th April, MC).
Grasshopper warbler Locustella naevia	Not regularly at NWT Thorpe Marshes, but 1 in song E of Bungalow Lane (Griffin Fen), from 20 th – 28 th April (RC, MC) and again 6th July, and presumably the same bird was seen and heard calling from Thorpe Marsh itself on 10 th July (Whitlingham Bird Report).
Reed warbler Acrocephalus scirpaceus	Summer visitor, the first on 18 th April. Up to 14 in song (dawn, 14 th April, MC).
Cetti's warbler Cettia cetti	Resident, and singing through most of the autumn and winter especially, but not only, on bright days. Up to 7 (20 th Nov) in song, 3-4 in spring.
Willow warbler Phylloscopus trochilus	Summer visitor/passage migrant. First reported on 28 th March. First thought was that a high count of 9 in song (1 just off reserve) on 18 th April included some migrants but then 8 again in song on 14 th May plus 2 just off reserve suggests a good year (or thorough recording).
Chiffchaff Phylloscopus collybita Siberian chiffchaff Phylloscopus collybita	Migrant and a few overwinter: records on 20 th Feb, on guided walk on 3 rd March, and also fairly regularly from 3 rd November. Singing from 13 th March and regularly thereafter; difficult to know if mid-March birds were wintering or migrants, though 7 singing on 28 th March (one just off reserve) likely to be migrants. More moving through and singing in September. Siberian chiffchaff
tristis	heard 18 th December in Bungalow Lane (MC), thought likely to be the same bird heard at RSPB Strumpshaw Fen on 22 nd December.
Goldcrest Regulus regulus Firecrest	Resident/winter visitor. This year quite regularly recorded in autumn and winter in scrub or brambles, sometimes with tits. 20 on 15 th Oct suggests migrants.
Regulus ignicapilla	13 th March, 1 in song within ivy-clad tree just S of kissing gate (MC).
Great tit <i>Parus major</i>	Resident, often in mixed tit flocks out of the breeding season.
Coal tit <i>Periparus ater</i>	Not on the reserve this year, heard in Whitlingham Lane and across the river in Whitlingham Wood.
Blue tit Cyanistes caeruleus	Resident, often in mixed tit flocks out of the breeding season.
Marsh tit Poecile palustris	2, 3 rd April. [Also heard during March from Whitlingham CP, Whitlingham Wood and E of Bungalow Lane.]
Long-tailed tit Aegithalos caudatus	Resident. Groups are seen year-round, often in mixed flocks with blue tits and great tits. The riverside trees are a favoured location, but also in the sallows by the permissive path.
[Nuthatch Sitta europaea]	Heard on several occasions from Whitlingham Wood, across the river.
Treecreeper <i>Certhia familiaris</i>	Fairly regular in the trees in Bungalow Lane.
Magpie <i>Pica pica</i>	Resident, up to 8 often on the marshes, with higher number pre-roost in autumn, notably 28, 14 th Dec.
Jay <i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	Resident in adjacent wooded areas, but regularly over or on the marshes especially during the autumn.
Jackdaw C <i>orvus monedula</i>	Resident. Often groups moving over the reserve. On the reserve, notable counts of 43 on 23 rd March about broad & flood and 28, 5 th November.
Carrion crow Corvus corone	Resident.
Starling Sturnus vulgaris	Infrequent. Some groups moving west over the reserve in autumn, and flocks moving before dusk.
Chaffinch Fringilla coelebs	Often in wooded areas adjacent to the reserve or flying over.

Brambling Fringilla montifringilla	1 flew over on 15 th October (MC).	
Linnet	1-2 often flying over, >10 on a few occasions. Regularly around the brambles in	
Carduelis cannabina	the field by Whitlingham Lane.	
Redpoll	Redpolls seen well were lesser redpolls, though many records are calling birds	
Carduelis flammea	flying over and not seen closely. 8, 29 th Jan; 6, 2 nd Feb; 12, 15 th Oct; 2-6	
(caberet)	regularly in October and November.	
Goldfinch	Regularly present, often in tree tops, usually <10, sometimes 10-15.	
Carduelis carduelis		
Siskin	12, 22 nd Sept and 15 th Oct; 1-2 fairly often during the autumn, usually in flight.	
Spinus spinus	No big flocks this year.	
Greenfinch	Often 1.2 comptimes up to 6 flying ever; also singing in Whitlingham Land	
Chloris chloris	Often 1-2, sometimes up to 6, flying over; also singing in Whitlingham Lane.	
Bullfinch	1-3 in August, October and December, with Bungalow Lane area favoured.	
Pyrrhula pyrrhula		
Hawfinch	20th Nevember #2 lew ever N seen to turn W and descend havend plantation N	
Coccothraustes	20 th November, "2 low over N seen to turn W and descend beyond plantation N	
coccothraustes	of rail line at 15:41" (MC).	
Reed bunting	Occasional in winter, breeds. Singing males: 7, 11 th & 17 th March; 11, 1 st June,	
Emberiza schoeniclus	10, 6 th June. 10 pairs mapped on 7 th April.	
Yellowhammer	1 flying over heading SW on the morning of 15 th October, coinciding with a	
Emberiza citrinella	morning movement of finches, larks, pipits and thrushes (MC).	

Appendix 1 – Escapes: green parrot, thought to be one of the Eclectus roratus types, 23rd Oct (MB, MC).

Appendix 2 - List of birds recorded in 2012-2014, but not in 2015

Pintail, ferruginous duck, smew, hen harrier, grey plover, ruff, black-tailed godwit, wood sandpiper, little gull, great black-backed gull, sand martin, yellow wagtail, whinchat, lesser whitethroat.

Appendix 3 – List of birds recorded prior to 2012 (including flying over, no doubt incomplete).

Scaup, mandarin, crane, black tern, turtle dove, rook, golden oriole.







Male goldeneye and green woodpecker (Derek Longe) and goosander at River Green.

Amphibians and reptiles

Staff from BESL put out black mats to assist monitoring of reptiles.

Common frog. One on 3rd October. Why are they so scarce here? **Common (smooth) newt.** 1, 22nd April (JH).

Grass snake. Juvenile reported by BESL under a reptile mat near the railway bridge on 10th & 15th June. **Common lizard**. Four records from BESL team: 3 on path edge, 8th August, and singles on or under reptile mat on 30th September, 1st & 5th October. Also photographed by Susan Weeks on logs near the tidal flap on 21st July (*below*) and seen on permissive path, 16th August (CD).



Common lizard (Susan Weeks)

Mammals

Casual records only, with very limited bat detector work and no small mammal trapping. No records confirmed in 2015 for bank vole or muntjac and possible noctule only.



Weasel and harvest mouse (Derek Longe)

Weasel	Remarkable views on the guided walk on 11 th December of a weasel high in dead	
	willowherb, chasing a harvest mouse (see photo).	
Fox	1 at dusk on Bungalow Lane 20 th February; dog fox, 17 th March, 7 th April & 6 th	
	June; 3 rd July, with prey in mouth.	
Otter	1 swimming along a ditch on the evening of 3 rd May (CD).	
Water vole	20 th April feeding on a ditch edge (MC).	
Mole	Molehills in rough grass in several areas.	
Harvest mouse	Identified from photos, 11 th Dec, but presumed to have been caught by the weasel	
	when they dropped out of sight.	
Wood mouse	One dead on bank, 7 th April.	
Soprano pipistrelle	Bat detector readings of 55kHz reconfirmed this species by Whitlingham Lane	
	bridge.	
Noctule?	A "possible" on 3 rd November.	
[Deer sp.	A dog walker reported seeing by the railway line very early on 18 th Sept big deer	
-	with antlers, very vocal.]	
Chinese water deer	Seen on so many occasions that dates are no longer noted, usually 1-2, though 3	
	on 28 th March, 10 th April and 11 th & 14 th Dec. [Also 5 on 14 th April on marsh just	
	east of Bungalow Lane.] They seem to be on or adjacent to Thorpe Marshes all the	
	time, if often hidden from view. A dog walker reported seeing 2 young deer.	

Fish

Three-spined stickleback: a nest was found in a dyke by Jeremy Halls, and appreciated by those on the guided walk on 29th April.

Eel: a few surfaced while management work was underway during the autumn, according to digger driver Paul, and were carefully returned to water.

Butterflies

Orange-tip surveys: a new initiative this year was transect-style counts of orange-tips, with five surveys in May. This is a later start than ideal on account of a combination of getting organised, time away and suitable weather for surveys, and we may have missed potentially good counts on bright days in April. Highest count was 27 (16 males and 11 females) on 11th May.

Otherwise a fairly good year for butterflies, continuing into the mild autumn.

Large skipper – June-July Small skipper - July-August Large white - May-October Small white – April, June-August

Green-veined white - April-September. Often the commonest

white, except in peak orange-tip season.

Orange-tip - April-May-early June. See survey notes above. Eggs found on lady's smock flowers again.

Brimstone - April-May

Small tortoiseshell – March-August. Many caterpillars on nettles.

Comma – April-Nov

Painted lady - June, August

Red admiral - March, May-September

Peacock – March-August. Caterpillars on nettles.

Meadow brown - July-August

Gatekeeper – July-August

Ringlet - July

Speckled wood June, August-September

Holly blue May, August-September

Small copper June

Not seen in 2015: common blue (though present on common to the east).



Orange-tip egg on lady's smock, photographed on 24th April; comma on ivy (1 November).

Moths

No moth trapping has been done: these are daytime records from Mark Chipperfield, James Emerson and Derek Longe. Dates are when species were first noted.

Common Nettle-tap 1st June

Common Carpet 1st June

Green Carpet 1st June

Silver-ground Carpet 1st June. This and the above three moths all found on nettles.

Drinker Moth 6th June, 1 larva

Common Marble 15th June, 1 on nettles

Orange-spot Piercer 15th June, on hogweed.

Small China-mark 30th May

Silver Y 15th June

Yellow-tail 19th June, caterpillar

Brown China Mark 22nd June. This species has an aquatic larval stage.

Snout 10th July. Larval foodplant is nettle.

White Plume Moth 10th July Larval foodplant of this micromoth is bindweed leaves and flowers.

Dwarf Cream Wave 10th July

Small Magpie 10th July

Rush Veneer 23rd July

Chequered Straw 23rd July

Six-spot Burnet 30th July

Cinnabar caterpillars, 30th July. On ragwort near the bench on the shingle spit.

Mother-of-Pearl 30th July

Crescent 3rd August. Larval food plant is yellow flag iris

Rush Veneer 27th August, a migrant moth *Celypha lacunana* 4th September

Vapourer 22nd September & 12th November









Moths, left to right: Yellow-tail caterpillar (JE), Crescent, Snout, White Plume (all DL).

Damselflies and Dragonflies

Norfolk Hawker surveys: as for orange-tip butterflies, transect-style counts of Norfolk Hawkers were initiated this year with 12 surveys in June, July and on 2nd August. Highest count was 46 by Susan Weeks on 30th June.

No new species were recorded in 2015, though all of the regular 18 species were present. There was no record of Broad-bodied Chaser; however a chance encounter with an experienced observer unearthed that Small Red-eyed Damselflies were seen in a ditch 2-3 years ago. These are both species that we can keep an eye out for on or around ponds restored in the autumn of 2015.

The overall impression was a rather mixed year, rather like the weather, with some species less obvious or for shorter periods find than last year, such as Southern Hawker and Black-tailed Skimmer. Considering the mild autumn there was a lack of late dragonflies with just Migrant Hawker in very early November and an obvious lack of late Common Darters.

Red-eyed Damselfly was previously adjacent to the reserve on lily pads and other floating vegetation on the River Yare, but in 2015 they were recorded within the reserve.

The **Willow Emerald Damselfly** (Western Willow Spreadwing in Europe) discovered, we thought, in 2014 was, it turns out, seen by an experienced observer in 2013, the same year at it was found on the River Yare at Cringleford. This year they showed fairly well for much of September, with a maximum of 10 seen by Derek Longe on 20th September. Eight waterside trees (seven willows, one alder) with the grooves that reveal egg-laying scars were located in various parts of the reserve, though some of these were certainly from 2014 and some looked older, probably 2013. These were mapped by NWT and ditch management work in the autumn took the needs of this species into account by saving the trees most clearly used in 2015, opening out some overgrown ditches and cutting back or coppicing trees to allow fresh new growth that will overhang open water. This enables any hatching larvae to drop into the water when emerging from twigs in spring.





Willow Emerald, male, 26th September 2015; ovipositing scars on a small willow

In the table below, the third column is proof of breeding: **Y** = **yes**, **P** = **probable**. This is little changed from 2014. The fourth column is this year's main flight period, with a few start or end dates. **Confirmed breeding (Y, 12 species)**: species where larvae or excuviae identified (Azure Damselfly, Brown Hawker, Norfolk Hawker, Hairy Dragonfly), egg-laying seen (Willow Emerald Damselfly, Large Red Damselfly, Migrant Hawker, Emperor, Common Darter), pairs seen in tandem (Common Blue Damselfly, Red-eyed Damselfly, Ruddy Darter) or immature form seen (Blue-tailed Damselfly). **Probably breeding (P, 6 species)**: what look like freshly emerged insects, or males apparently holding territory (Emerald Damselfly, Banded Demoiselle, Southern Hawker, Emperor Dragonfly, Four-spotted Chaser, Black-tailed Skimmer).

Willow Emerald Damselfly	Chalcolestes sponsa	Y	Late August, September, mostly single males or pairs in tandem. Egg-laying pair photographed on 26 th September. Surprisingly, couldn't be found in October.
Emerald Damselfly	Lestes sponsa	Р	August.
Banded Demoiselle	Calopteryx splendens	Р	June-July. 26 on 6 st June (18 males).
Common Blue Damselfly	Enallagma cyathigerum	Υ	May-September, often abundant. 485 counted on 6 th June, also 1 on 1 st October.
Azure Damselfly	Coenagrion puella	Υ	May-July. 19 counted on 6 th June. See photo on pg 1 of ovipositing, 6 th July.
Red-eyed Damselfly	Erythromma najas	Υ	30 th May, June-August. 20+ on 10 th June.
Blue-tailed Damselfly	Ischnura elegans	Р	June-July
Large Red Damselfly	Pyrrhosoma nymphula	Υ	First of year on 27 th April, May and June. 8 counted on 20 th May.
Southern Hawker	Aeshna cyanea	Р	July-September
Brown Hawker	Aeshna grandis	Υ	July-September
Migrant Hawker	Aeshna mixta	Υ	August-October
Norfolk Hawker	Aeshna isosceles	Υ	31 st May, June-July, 4 th August.
Emperor Dragonfly	Anax imperator	Υ	July; female seen ovipositing, 27 th July.

Hairy Dragonfly	Brachytron pratense	Υ	2 on 21 st April, May
Four-spotted Chaser	Libellula quadrimaculata	Р	July-August
Black-tailed skimmer	Orthetrum cancellatum	Р	June-August
Ruddy darter	Sympetrum sanguineum	Υ	July-September
Common darter	Sympetrum striolatum	Υ	July-1 st October



Darters, 23rd August. Left: Ruddy Darter; note the narrow waist and the black legs can be seen well against the pale stone. Right: Common Darter on a reed.

Spiders

Apart the furrow spider, photos and details below, it was a much poorer year for spiders than 2014; and there were no other additions to the list and photos in the report for 2014.



Furrow spider *Larinioides cornutus*. These spider photographs are from 8th May 2015, from the riverside path. The white deadnettle flowers on the right give an idea of the relatively small size of this species. Thanks to Pip Collyer for the ID.

Other notable invertebrates

Ad hoc records from 2015, and no doubt many noted in previous years were also present. Initials denote those who found and identified the species listed. In same cases English names are descriptive rather than precise. Concentrated effort by specialists would add many more species.

The sawflies are of particular note. James Emerson found *Arge melanchroa* on 19th June and says: "There is a commoner species that has a complete black band across the wing, but this one only has small blotches. Tony Irwin who is county recorder for these has agreed. This is only the second vice county record, and it seems I'm only the third person in Norfolk to record it (Ken Durrant found it in several West Norfolk sites apparently, and it has been recorded at Eaton)." Skullcap sawfly was another good record of a marshland species.

Bees & hornet	
Buff-tailed bumblebee <i>Bombus terrestris</i>	
Red-tailed bumblebee Bombus lapidarus	
Tree bumblebee Bombus hypnorum	
Common carder bee <i>Bombus pascuorum</i>	Including one on record on 02/12/15
Hornet Vespa crabro	August – September, with ivy favoured
Beetles	
Anthocomis rufus, tiny red Malachite beetles	30/07/15
7-spot ladybird Coccinella septempunctata	
Harlequin ladybird Harmonia axyridis	
Orange Ladybird Halyzia sedecimguttata	27/08/15 (JE)

	T	
Coccidula rufa a small red beetle	25/08/15 (MC) 2 in copulation among ditch side vegetation	
Wasp Beetle Clytus arietis	06/06/15, on nettles (MC)	
Reed Beetle <i>Donacia simplex</i>	Many dates in summer	
Reed Beetle <i>Donacia semicuprea</i>	19/06/15 (JE)	
Nettle Weevil <i>Phyllobius</i> sp. probably Green Nettle	30 at least on nettles; 65 at least on nettles (4prs in	
Weevil	copulation) 01/06/15 & 06/06/15 (MC)	
Green Dock Beetle Gastrophysa viridula	07/15 (MC), on dock!	
Skullcap Leaf Beetle <i>Phyllobrotica quadrimaculata</i>	30/07/15 (JE)	
Black-and-yellow Longhorn Beetle Rutpelia	30/07/15 (JE) & 04/08/15 (MC)	
maculata		
Common Red Soldier Beetle Rhagonycha fulva	Many dates in summer	
Swollen-thighed Beetle <i>Oedemera nobilis</i>	10/06/15 (JE)	
Bugs		
Common green shield bug Palomena prasina	30/07/15 (JE), nymphs	
Dock Bug <i>Palomena prasina</i>	30/07/15 (JE)	
Parent Bug	27/08/15 (JE)	
Cinnamon bug Corizus hyoscyami	01/06/15 (MC), on nettles	
Alder Spittlebug Aphrophora alni	04/08/15 (MC)	
Flies, caddis-flies		
Alder fly Sialis sp probably lutaria	20/04/15 (DL)	
Mayfly Ephemeroptera	Species unknown.	
St Mark's fly <i>Bibio marci</i>		
Tachina fera a large tachinid fly	27/08/15 (JE)	
Black Snipe Fly Chrysopilus cristatus	19/06/15 (JE)	
Liriomyza eupatorii Leaf-mine in hemp agrimony	30/07/15 (JE)	
Phytomyza anglicae Leaf-mine in ground rlder	30/07/15 (JE)	
Caddis-fly Limnephilus flavicornis	Probably this species, a cinnamon sedge	
Arge melanochra a caddis-fly	19/06/15 (JE)	
Grasshoppers and crickets		
Common green grasshopper Omocestus viridulus	24/06/15 (DL)	
Lesser marsh grasshopper Chorthippus	20/07/15 (JE) & 25/08/15 (DL)	
albomarginatus		
Meadow grasshopper Chorthippus parallelus	27/08/15 (DL)	
Long-winged conehead Conocephalus discolor	27/7/15 - 29/9/15 (DL & JE)	
Short-winged conehead Conocephalus discolor	03/08/15 (DL) ID on sound	
Dark bush cricket Pholidoptera griseoaptera	29/9/15 (DL) and 01/10/15 (JH)	
Speckled bush cricket Pholidoptera griseoaptera	27/08/15 (JE), a pair.	
Roesel's bush-cricket	25/08/15 (DL)	









Left to right: alder fly (DL); skullcap sawfly larva Athalia scutellariae (DL); sawfly Arge melanchroa (JE); Roesel's bush-cricket (DL).

Hoverflies (all JE)	
Eristalis intricarius a bee-mimic hoverfly	27/08/15
Cheilosia impressa	27/08/15
Marmalade Hoverfly Episyrphus balteatus	30/07/15
Helophilus pendulus	27/08/15
Melangyna sp.	27/08/15
Volucella inanis a smaller species related to the Hornet-mimic hoverfly	27/08/15
Sawflies	
Sawfly Arge melanchroa	19/06/15 (JE)
Turnip Sawfly	30/07/15 (JE)
Skullcap sawfly Athalia scutellariae	Larvae, 03/08/15, on guided walk, see photo.

Fungi

Marshes have relatively few fungi, so many species are on timber.

19th Jan 2015, fungi on guided walk fungi in wet woodland by path to Bungalow Lane:

Velvet Shank, Hairy Curtain Crust, Oyster Mushroom, Blushing Bracket, Southern Bracket, Yellow Brain and Smoky Bracket.

A similar range was seen on the walk on 11th December.

Dryad's Saddle *Polyporus squamosus* on a fallen poplar, 10th July



Additional fungi identified by James Emerson, various dates:

•	3		
Silverleaf Fungus	Chrondrostereum purpureum		16/02/15
Willow Barkspot	Diatrype bullata		16/02/15
-	Ganoderma sp. Prob G. australe		16/02/15
-	Illiosporopsis christiansenii	a fungus that parasitises lichens	15/03/15
Violet Bramble Rust	Phragmidium violaceum		16/02/15
Scarlet Elf Cup	Sarcoscypha austriaca/coccinea	One of this species pair	16/02/15
Turkeytail	Trametes versicolor		16/02/15
Meadowsweet Rust	Triphragmium ulmariae		19/06/15
Candlesnuff Fungus Mildew sp. on crab	Xylaria hypoxylon		15/03/15
apple Mildew sp. on	Podosphaera clandestina	Confirmed by University of Reading	19/06/15
meadowsweet	Podosphaera spiraeae	Confirmed by University of Reading	19/06/15

Lichens

Lichens identified 15/03/15 by James Emerson:

Xanthoria parietina (the common yellow one)

Physcia tenella (common greeny-grey rounded branches)

Lecanora chlarotera

Melanelixia subaurifera (a leafy brown lichen)

Parmelia sulcata (a leafy greeny-grey with white lines on the thallus)

Parmelia saxatalis (similar to above but thallus powdery)

Parmotrema perlatum (big green and leafy)

Punctelia subreducta (white 'spot' effect on thallus)

Evernia prunastri (greeny grey pointy branches)

Galls

Galls identified 19/06/15 by James Emerson:

Galls	Caused by	
Ash gall (middle of leaf)	Dasineura fraxini	Caused by a gall midge
Ash gall (curled leaf edge)	Psyllopsis fraxini	Caused by a psyllid nymph
Sycamore nail gall	Aceria cephaloneus	Caused by gall mites
Sycamore pale spot gall	Aceria pseudoplantani	Caused by gall mites
Meadowsweet pimple gall	Dasineura ulmaria	Caused by gall midge
Meadowsweet blister gall	Dasineura pustulans	Caused by gall midge Caused by Willow Red Gall Sawfly (not
Willow Red Galls	Pontania proxima	Willow bean galls)