

# **The Birds of Whitlingham & Thorpe 2015**



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 2016 report, by emailing: [whitlinghambirds@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:whitlinghambirds@yahoo.co.uk).

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## Introduction

This is the fourth annual report of the bird species reported from the Whitlingham area (including Thorpe Marsh NWT reserve) during 2015. It should be noted that this bird report is independent from any of the organisations that manages these sites, notably the Broads Authority, Whitlingham Charitable Trust, Norfolk Wildlife Trust and South Norfolk Council. A map of the recording area covered by this report can be found on the next page. Note the removal of the area around the sewage works from the Whitlingham recording area used in previous reports. Given that there is little public access to the area (and therefore few records from it in previous years), there seems little point in continuing to include it within the report.

In addition to my monthly counts and other sightings, a large number of records have been supplied by other local birders, to whom I am grateful. I have included the majority of sightings that have been sent to me directly or reported online, with only a few being left out of the final report. This does however mean that there are a number of species in the report that I haven't personally seen. As a result I feel that for recording purposes the sightings in this report should be treated as unverified records, i.e. sightings should not be used for any 'official' purposes.

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

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

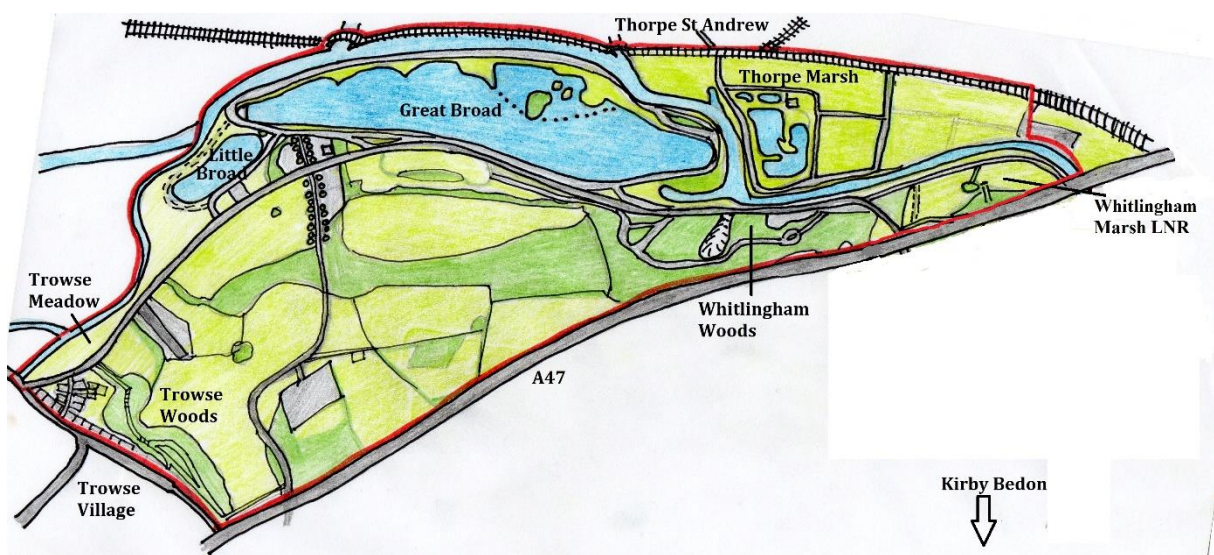
**Species recorded annually in low numbers at Whitlingham** – species that occur in most years are dealt with as above but with more detail regarding the sightings

**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 if the record was photographed, if it was seen by more than one individual, if there were any other sightings nearby etc. These records also have the initials of the person who reported the sighting. Note that this won't necessarily be the person who first found the species in the case of multi-observed records.

**County or national rarities** – included 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.

*[Several potentially interesting records where the observer felt that the ID was likely, but not quite certain, are included in the text, but written in italics and not included in the total species count at the end]*

There has been a change to recording arrangements for county bird sightings since the last report. Sightings entered into BirdTrack are no longer included in the Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report, so observers are asked to send details of any noteworthy sightings direct to the county recorders. Details on how to do this can be found here: <http://norfolkbirds.weebly.com/submitting-records.html>. Any observer lucky enough to find a species at Whitlingham that is a county rarity is asked to send a description to the [Norfolk Records Committee](#), who will publish their verdict in the Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report 2015, to be published in autumn 2016.



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

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

Areas of Thorpe St Andrew, including Thorpe Green, are not within the recording area, however as the boundary is rather arbitrary, details of wildfowl and gulls recorded there have been included where it is likely that the birds involved were also sometimes present at or visible from Whitlingham.



# Thorpe Marsh – what’s in a name?

## James Emerson

Norwich-based birders have long been aware of the possibility of confusion between birds reported from the marshes at Thorpe St Andrew and Thorpe-next-Haddiscoe, both colloquially referred to as Thorpe Marsh. To help clarify which location was being referred to, some birders called the Thorpe St Andrew site by the name Thorpe Station Marsh. This name was based on an information board near the entrance to the marsh and refers to the stretch of railway that hosted the long-gone Whitlingham railway station (confusingly the Norwich railway station was known as Thorpe railway station!) When the Norfolk Wildlife Trust took over the management of the marsh, the official signage made no mention of station marsh, simply naming the site NWT Thorpe Marsh(es).



Whilst looking through the recently published 2014 Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report, I noticed that sightings reported from Thorpe Marsh NWT reserve were being referred to by at least three different names. To see this, have a look at the entries for Jack Snipe and Common Snipe. Sightings are reported from “Norwich Thorpe Marsh”, “Station Marsh Thorpe St Andrew”, “Thorpe Whitlingham Marshes” and also just “Thorpe St Andrew” (whilst the latter may not actually refer to Thorpe Marsh, that is the most likely place in the area for a Jack Snipe to be reported from).

Whilst the site name used by individuals is mainly born of habit and attempts to clarify that it is the marsh near Norwich being referred to, the different descriptors mean that there can be confusion about which area is being referred to. The references to Whitlingham are understandable given that proximity to Whitlingham CP (and the main access to the marsh is via Whitlingham Lane – not to be confused with the longer road of the same name across the river), however with two Whitlingham Marshes (the local nature reserve north of the A47 and the area between the A47 and Kirby Marsh) this just adds to the confusion. In most cases local birders can work out where is being referred to, but birders not familiar with the area may struggle. A more important issue could be the duplication of records, for example in cases where flocks are reported from the site in both January and February. If different names are used for each then it gives the impression that double the number are wintering.

Something else to consider is that whilst bird information services regularly use reserve acronyms in their messages, the official Norfolk bird records spreadsheet specifically asks submitters to avoid this, recording locations rather than reserves. Furthermore the recording spreadsheet doesn't require a site grid reference, so there is a need to make specific reference to either Norwich or Thorpe St Andrews when sending records to the county recorders for publication in the Bird & Mammal Report.

Clearly it would be best if all reports from Thorpe Marsh NWT were referred to by the same name, allowing records to be unambiguously associated with the reserve. I would suggest that the most straightforward name to use when referring to Thorpe Marsh NWT reserve in a recording context would be Thorpe Marsh, Norwich. I would welcome feedback from other local observers with regards to standardising our nomenclature. Another issue is the naming of different bits of the marsh to enable easy directions to be used, but as habitat management is underway this winter, that can wait!

## References

Recording spreadsheet & guidelines available from here:

<http://norfolkbirds.weebly.com/submitting-records.html>

Stoddart, A. (ed) **Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report 2014**, *Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists Society, Transactions volume 48 part2*. 2015.

# An unseasonal Goosander

## James Emerson

Goosanders are regularly recorded at Whitlingham in the winter, but records later than April are unusual. In a Norfolk context a pair did breed at Thetford several years ago, but most of the county lacks the breeding habitat preferred by this species. It was therefore a surprise when a redhead, identified as a first-year male, was found at Thorpe Green on 3<sup>rd</sup> August. Even more unusual was the fact that it was coming to breed with a flock of Mallards. A photo on Twitter showed that the bird was also present the previous day (also coming to breed) and there was also a report on Twitter of a drake Goosander from Whitlingham on 25<sup>th</sup> July.

After spending a few days at Thorpe Green, the Goosander moved onto the River Yare, where it was seen sporadically until at least 15<sup>th</sup> September. Following a month with no sightings it was then seen on the Great Broad at Whitlingham on 22<sup>nd</sup> October, where it could often be seen showing well around the slipway. It was last reported on 22<sup>nd</sup> November.

Usually a bird occurring out of season and exhibiting tame behaviour would be written off as an escapee, but I am not aware of any wildfowl collections keeping Goosanders nearby. There is also a precedent for Goosanders occurring on the River Yare and as far as Norwich during the summer.

In 1995 there appears to have been several Goosanders recorded during the summer in Norfolk. According to the Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report for that year, a female remained at UEA until August and one was at Magdalen Bridge in July. Of specific interest here was a female bird present at Brundall in August. It is listed as being injured or escaped, however this lack of certainty suggests that it showed no visible injuries and these two options were assumed to be the only reason it would be present at that time. This bird moved down to Whitlingham at the start of October, and continued along the Wensum into Norwich, where it spent the winter. Rather than leaving at the end of winter, the female Goosander stayed in Norwich, visiting Whitlingham on occasions. It attracted a male at Whitlingham in May 1996, and both continued to be seen in Norwich until at least 11<sup>th</sup> September.

## References

Seago, M. (ed) **Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report 1995**, *Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists Society, Transactions volume 30 part 6*. 1997.

Seago, M. (ed) **Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report 1996**, *Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists Society, Transactions volume 31 part2*. 1997.



Many thanks to everyone who reported the Goosander during its stay, and also to Alex Berryman for allowing me to use his photos here.



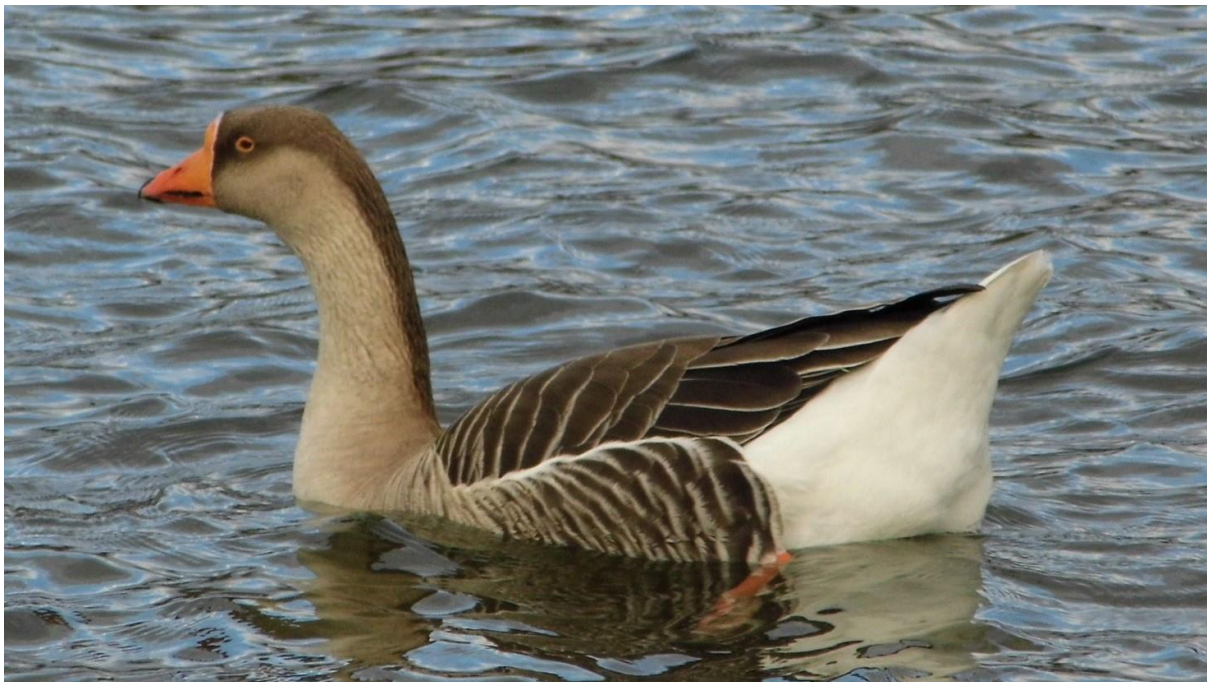
# Hybrid birds at Whitlingham

## James Emerson

Arguably one of the most interesting birds seen at Whitlingham this year was a drake Pintail x Mallard hybrid. Whitlingham has a good track record of attracting hybrid wildfowl, some of which originate from wild birds (e.g. Greylag x Canada Goose), whilst others are almost certainly of captive origin (e.g. the American x Eurasian Wigeon, which had a coloured plastic ring). The identification of hybrids can be difficult as they can sometimes have features that are not present on either of the parent species, and some are so subtle that they could fall within the range of variation of one of the parents. With this in mind, some of the identifications below are likely, but not certain.

I am grateful to everyone who has reported hybrids from Whitlingham, to Joern Lehmhus for his comments about some of the birds shown here, and to Dave Appleton for his help identifying some of the hybrids and also for commenting on a draft of this article. If you have seen any hybrids at Whitlingham or Thorpe that are not mentioned here (or you have photographs of the ones not illustrated) then I would love to hear from you.

### Domestic Swan Goose x Greylag Goose



These large and aggressive geese look like bulky domestic Greylags, however they show marked contrast between the pale front of the neck and dark back of the neck, an orange eye ring and a small but clearly visible bill knob. At one point there was at least three present, but in recent times we are down to one.

### **Possible Domestic Swan Goose x Snow Goose**



The dark back of the neck and black beak are Swan Goose features, but I wasn't sure what other species was involved. Snow Goose has been suggested as the other parent based on the pale edges to the greater coverts.

### **Greylag Goose x Canada Goose**



Probably the commonest goose hybrid, this is a fairly typical one, with the black parts of a Canada Goose being replaced with a dark brown. Interestingly the beak is pink on this individual, rather than the orange of Greylag Geese or the black of Canada Geese.



**Probable Lesser White-fronted Goose x Ross's Goose**



This small hybrid goose was present at Whitlingham for several years and caused much debate, but the end suggestion was that it is probably Lesser White-fronted Goose x Ross's Goose (rather than Snow Goose).

**Probable Barnacle Goose x Lesser White-fronted Goose**



This goose (or one very like it) was also seen in October 2007 at Swanton Morley GPs by Dave Appleton.

### **Barnacle Goose x Red-breasted Goose**



This small goose was seen at Whitlingham several times in June 2011. It was also noted further along the Yare Valley at Buckenham. There are a few feral Red-breasted Geese seen regularly with Barnacle Geese in north Suffolk – has anyone seen this hybrid with them?

### **Gadwall x Wigeon**



This rather drab hybrid duck could be overlooked at a glance as a Gadwall, but upon closer inspection had the head and front of a drake Wigeon. It was present on Whitlingham Little Broad during March 2011.



### **American Wigeon x Eurasian Wigeon**



This interesting hybrid was present for a few days at the end of December 2014, where it associated with Mallards along the south shore of the Great Broad. When it emerged from the water a plastic coloured ring was visible, indicating that it was an escape from captivity.

### **Domestic Mallard x Pintail**



An attractive and rather unusual drake hybrid, present in the same place as the American x Eurasian Wigeon hybrid, but a year later during December 2015. The soft edges to the rufous area at the front apparently suggest domestic genes in the Mallard parent.



### Tufted Duck x Pochard



The commonest *Aythya* hybrid. The top photo shows a typical drake type, whilst the lower photo shows a less common (or less often identified) female hybrid, shown on the left with a female Pochard.

## **Other hybrids reported from Whitlingham**

### **Mallard x Shoveler**

A drake of this hybrid is mentioned in the 1999 Bird & Mammal Report from 14<sup>th</sup> January 1999.

### **Garganey x Shoveler**

A drake of this hybrid was reported from Thorpe Marsh during May 2009 (via the Punkbirders website)

### **Tufted Duck x Ring-necked Duck**

Present on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2002 as reported in the 2002 Bird & Mammal Report.

### **Scaup x Tufted Duck**

A female was present on 15<sup>th</sup> December 1994, as reported in the 1994 Bird & Mammal Report. This bird had a Scaup-shaped head, with a wide white blaze near the beak and pale ear coverts, but was much smaller than a typical Scaup.

### **Ferruginous Duck x Pochard**

Two drakes of this hybrid were present during January 2007. One closely resembled a brown drake Pochard, whilst the other one was closer to a Ferruginous Duck but with extra black on the nail and off-white areas on the wing (via Punkbirders website)

### **Black headed Gull x Mediterranean Gull**

Present on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2004 as reported in the 2004 Bird & Mammal Report.

## **Useful websites:**

Dave Appleton's websites are a very useful resource for hybrids, in particular his photo gallery: <http://www.gobirding.eu/Photos/Gallery.php> and Bird Hybrids blog: <http://birdhybrids.blogspot.co.uk/>

## **Extra records have been taken from:**

The Punkbirders website (RIP) - <http://punkbirder.webs.com/>

Norfolk Bird & Mammal Reports (1994-2014), published by the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists Society.

# Yet more ringed Black-headed Gulls at Whitlingham

**James Emerson**

## **Introduction**

In the 2013 report I wrote an article about the origins of several colour-ringed Black-headed Gulls recorded at Whitlingham C.P. In 2014 several of these birds returned, but there was also a few new individuals. This article updates this data with records of the ringed Black-headed Gulls seen at Whitlingham during 2015, along with two birds recorded in 2014 where the details weren't available at the time of the 2014 report.

Many people will be familiar with the use of large coloured (or white) rings to mark waterbirds, however these birds will also have a smaller metal one. All birds that are ringed by approved schemes should carry this small metal ring on one leg, which carries a unique code and the name of the ringing scheme. This means that even when the code on the metal ring cannot be read it may be possible to determine the country the bird was ringed in. At Whitlingham around half of the ringed Black-headed Gulls seen only carry the small metal ring. These are not generally intended to be read in the field, and are more typically read if a bird is "controlled" (i.e. captured by another ringer) or found dead. If a bird is confiding then with patience and views or photographs from multiple angles, these rings can be read, and this is the case for some of the birds here.

The difficulty in reading complete metal rings explains why some of the codes here have only been partially recorded. Where the middle of a code has been read and matches that of a bird previously seen, it is likely (although not certain) that they are the same individual. If the part of the code read is at the start then this is not necessarily the case, as rings are provided in batches so birds ringed at the same site would be expected to have rings with similar numbers at the beginning.

The main inhibition to reading gull rings at Whitlingham is that gulls are typically seen on the water or in flight. When the broads freeze over there is a good opportunity to read gull rings, however normally the area around the slipway, particularly the solar boat docking platform, offer the best place to observe. In this report I have included birds seen just outside the recording area at Thorpe St Andrew river green. Many people come to feed the birds here, and there are numerous places for gulls to perch up, attracting good numbers of Black-headed Gulls. Despite the closeness of the sites, so far the gulls present in both early and late 2015 seem quite site faithful to either Thorpe or Whitlingham, which is interesting and something that we will be keeping an eye on.

## Ringed gull data and discussion

**Table 1 - 2014 ringed Black-headed Gulls where details not included in 2014 report**

| Ring number | Date first seen | Place ringed                     | Date ringed | Distance travelled / Km | Seen previously ? |
|-------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| White KCA   | 13/11/14        | Hellerup Havn, Gentofte, DENMARK | 27/03/01    | 785                     | No                |
| 6405918     | 15/11/14        | Pildammsparken, Malmö, SWEDEN    | 07/10/02    | 828                     | No                |

Responses to the two birds in Table 1 were received in January 2015. White KCA becomes the oldest ringed Black-headed Gull to be reported from Whitlingham, at 13 years 7 months between ringing and re-sighting. Furthermore, it was ringed as an adult (3y+) so it would have been at least 16. In context, according to the [BTO Birdfacts page](#) for this species the average lifespan is 11 years old (the oldest recorded bird was 32). Also a correction to the tables in the 2013 and 2014 articles, the bird referred to as White J5JR should be White **J5JE**.

**Table 2 – Ringed Black-headed Gulls seen in the first winter period (Jan-Feb) 2015**

| Ring number    | Date first seen | Place ringed               | Date ringed | Distance travelled / Km | Seen previously ? |
|----------------|-----------------|----------------------------|-------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| White J0AJ     | 11/01/15        | Akershus, NORWAY           | 06/05/12    | 976                     | No                |
| Metal 6206183  | 10/01/15        | Langøyskjæret, NORWAY      | 18/06/06    | 955                     | No                |
| Metal ST246128 | 13/01/15        | Hyvinkää, Uusimaa, FINLAND | 04/06/05    | 1682                    | No                |
| White A341     | 03/02/15        | Neumunster, GERMANY *      | 16/12/12    | 600                     | Yes (2014)        |
| Green JC16     | 07/02/15        | Vaterland, Oslo, NORWAY    | 04/04/14    | 997                     | No                |
| Metal 6--1253  | 14/02/15        | ?                          | ?           | ?                       | No                |

\* This bird was ringed in winter. Subsequent sightings of it from Denmark (in March) and Finland (July) suggest that this may be another Finnish bird that flies south-west to winter.

In the first winter period six ringed Black-headed Gulls were observed, four from Thorpe river green and two from Whitlingham. Of the two Whitlingham ones, White A341 was present near the slipway and Green JC16 was observed on the Little Broad when it froze over in early February. The Finnish bird ST246128 had been ringed 1682km away, the furthest distance of any of the ringed birds noted so far.

The bird with the metal ring 6—1253 could be from any of the Scandinavian countries, as birds from Norway, Sweden and Denmark have all had rings beginning with a 6.

**Table 3 – Ringed Black-headed Gulls seen in the second winter period (Oct-Dec) 2015**

| Ring number    | Date first seen | Place ringed            | Date ringed           | Distance travelled / Km | Seen previously? |
|----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Metal 6279560  | 02/10/15        | Sprogø, Korsør, DENMARK | 09/06/14              | 698                     | No               |
| Metal 6206183  | 02/12/15        | Langøyskjæret, NORWAY   | 18/06/06              | 955                     | Yes (Jan 15)     |
| White J0AJ     | 02/12/15        | Akershus, NORWAY        | 06/05/12              | 976                     | Yes (Jan 15)     |
| Metal 6209434  | 02/12/15        | SWEDEN                  | Data not yet received |                         | No               |
| Green JC16     | 18/12/15        | Vaterland, Oslo, NORWAY | 04/04/14              | 997                     | Yes (Feb 15)     |
| Metal -405--   | 18/12/15        | SWEDEN                  | ?                     | ?                       | Probably         |
| White J5JE     | 18/12/15        | Oslo, NORWAY            | 06/09/12              | 996                     | Yes (13/14)      |
| Metal ST109--5 | 24/12/15        | FINLAND                 | ?                     | ?                       | Probably         |
| Metal --246--  | 24/12/15        | FINLAND                 | ?                     | ?                       | Probably         |

An impressive nine ringed Black-headed Gulls were seen in the second winter period, four at Thorpe river green and five at Whitlingham. Of these only two were definitely new birds, a Danish metal ringed gull and a Swedish bird, the details of which have not been received at the current time. Three of the Norwegian birds had been seen in the first winter period, whilst the other Norwegian bird, White J5JE, was present here in the 2013/14 winter. The remaining three birds were all partial ring-reads. It is likely that:

Metal -405--- from Sweden = 6405108, seen at Whitlingham in 2014

Metal ST109—5 from Finland = ST109275, seen at Whitlingham in 2012/13 and 2013/14

Metal --246— from Finland = ST246128, seen at Thorpe river green in January 2015.



The Norwegian bird White J0AJ, photographed at Thorpe river green





Another Norwegian bird, Green JC16, photographed on the frozen Little Broad at Whitlingham.

## **Acknowledgements**

Many thanks to James Appleton for the 2014 data, to Justin Lansdell for supplying much of the 2015 information, and to the various ringers involved.

## **References**

BTO Black-headed Gull information page:

<http://blx1.bto.org/birdfacts/results/bob5820.htm>

## Whitlingham Wildfowl Survey

Complete wildfowl counts were made once per month by the author to contribute to the BTOs Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS). The data here is based on the combined counts for Whitlingham Little Broad, Great Broad and Thorpe Broad, however some counts differ from the figures submitted to WeBS in that they also include birds seen on nearby land. This mainly relates to the geese, which can sometimes be found on the meadow opposite the CP, and Cormorants, which sometimes roost on a pylon across the river. The counts are not necessarily high counts for the month – ad hoc and high counts are described in the individual species accounts.

| Species                  | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun  | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Mute Swan                | 35  | 32  | 18  | 24  | 17  | 35*  | 67* | 74  | 61  | 27  | 25  | 20  |
| Greylag Goose            | 37  | 19  | 31  | 49  | 31* | 181* | 49  | 6   | 163 | 39  | 92  | 35  |
| Canada Goose             | 11  | 23  | 14  | 12  | 20* | 44   | 51  | 3   | 3   | 3   | 3   | 3   |
| Egyptian Goose           | 4   | 5   | 2   | 3*  | 4*  | 17   | 35  | 23  | 4   | 2   | 1   | 1   |
| Gadwall                  | 209 | 93  | 11  | 3   | 1   | 0    | 0   | 0   | 1   | 43  | 29  | 106 |
| Wigeon                   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0    | 1   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   |
| Teal                     | 104 | 71  | 0   | 2   | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0   | 0   | 8   | 2   | 42  |
| Mallard                  | 73  | 58  | 48  | 53  | 37* | 42   | 101 | 120 | 63  | 83  | 67  | 87  |
| Shoveler                 | 8   | 6   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   |
| Pochard                  | 80  | 36  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0   | 0   | 6   | 18  | 48  |
| Tufted Duck              | 220 | 155 | 77  | 96  | 20  | 16   | 1   | 0   | 3   | 29  | 141 | 198 |
| Goldeneye                | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 1   | 0   |
| Goosander                | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 1   | 2   |
| Cormorant                | 30  | 16  | 17  | 6   | 4   | 4    | 6   | 15  | 15  | 41  | 65  | 37  |
| Grey Heron               | 4   | 4   | 1   | 0   | 0   | 1    | 1   | 1   | 0   | 2   | 3   | 8   |
| Little Grebe             | 0   | 1   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0   | 0   | 2   | 0   | 1   |
| Great-crested Grebe      | 10  | 10  | 6   | 6   | 4   | 3    | 3   | 4   | 4   | 4   | 4   | 8   |
| Water Rail               | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0   | 1   | 1   | 0   | 1   |
| Moorhen                  | 16  | 14  | 8   | 8   | 4   | 2    | 5   | 3   | 2   | 5   | 3   | 10  |
| Coot                     | 232 | 217 | 45  | 13  | 10  | 14   | 36  | 44  | 45  | 103 | 157 | 264 |
| Oystercatcher            | 0   | 0   | 1   | 2   | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   |
| Lapwing                  | 5   | 3   | 0   | 1   | 0   | 1    | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 2   |
| Snipe                    | 1   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0   | 0   | 1   | 0   | 0   |
| Common Sandpiper         | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 1   | 0    | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   |
| Common Tern              | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 4   | 3    | 0   | 1   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   |
| Black-headed Gull        | 485 | 410 | 159 | 105 | 1   | 1    | 56  | 6   | 7   | 99  | 300 | 192 |
| Common Gull              | 27  | 22  | 21  | 2   | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0   | 0   | 1   | 4   | 14  |
| Lesser Black-backed Gull | 1   | 0   | 7   | 24  | 41  | 22   | 36  | 58  | 7   | 17  | 6   | 2   |
| Herring Gull             | 11  | 1   | 11  | 21  | 16  | 3    | 8   | 7   | 0   | 2   | 15  | 13  |
| Kingfisher               | 0   | 0   | 0   | 1   | 0   | 1    | 0   | 1   | 0   | 1   | 0   | 2   |

\*Goslings/ducklings seen but not included in count figures as less than  $\frac{3}{4}$  grown.

## **Whitlingham and Thorpe Classified List**

This list follows the latest taxonomical order taken from the British Ornithologists Union (BOU). The main list is available here: <http://www.bou.org.uk/thebritishlist/British-List.pdf>, however as of December 2015 there have been some changes to the order of some species (the plovers are relevant here) in the BOURC TSC 11<sup>th</sup> report, which I have also incorporated <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/287959465> Taxonomic recommendations for Western Palearctic birds 11th report

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

### **Mute Swan** *Cygnus olor*

*Common resident*



Present all year round. Despite a minimum of five nests around Whitlingham, only one cygnet was present, suggesting the other nests failed or were predated. In addition a pair on the river near Whitlingham Marsh had five grown 1<sup>st</sup>-year young. Numbers reached 74 in July, 110 in August and then peaked at 113 on 15<sup>th</sup> September. A bird found dead at Thorpe Marsh had been metal-ringed at Trowse (presumably at

Whitlingham) in 2011.

### **\* Whooper Swan** *Cygnus cygnus*

*Scarce flyover species*

Eight were seen flying over (and were also photographed) by participants on a NWT guided walk at Thorpe Marsh on 4<sup>th</sup> November (CD). Unlike Pink-footed Geese, there doesn't seem to be much east-west movement of wild swans over the winter, so late autumn and early spring represent the most likely time to see Bewick's or Whooper Swans around Norwich.

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

*Occasional flyover*

Probably flew over Whitlingham on numerous occasions, but only report received from the recording area was a skein heard flying over on 22<sup>nd</sup> November.

### **Greylag Goose** *Anser anser*

*Common resident*



A flock of 32 were present on the meadows on 1<sup>st</sup> Jan, in addition to 34 on the Great Broad. Goslings first noted on 19<sup>th</sup> April (groups of 4 and 8). Broods as usual difficult to separate as the families creche goslings, but between 6-9 broods, raising a minimum of 32 goslings (possibly 50+ due to the difficulty in keeping track with

older goslings). On 15<sup>th</sup> May there were broods of 4, 8, 5, 2, 2 plus a group of 11 goslings. Several counts of more than 100: 107 present at dusk on 22<sup>nd</sup> Jan, 163 on 13<sup>th</sup> September, 212 on 15<sup>th</sup> September and 231 on 12<sup>th</sup> June. Numbers varied markedly between counts, probably due in part to geese being out of sight on the island, and also due to flocks moving back and forth along the valley.

**Canada Goose** *Branta canadensis*

*Common resident*



Three present at the start of the year. The first broods were noted at Whitlingham on 19<sup>th</sup> April and at Thorpe on 27<sup>th</sup> April. By 15<sup>th</sup> May there was one brood at Thorpe (4 goslings), four broods at Whitlingham (1, 3+, 8 and 5 goslings) and one additional pair still on a nest. The highest count of the year was 44 on 12<sup>th</sup> June. From November onwards numbers dropped back down to three, presumably the same individuals present at the

start of the year.

**[Brent Goose** *Bernicla bernicla*

*Rare visitor*

*A tight flock of small black geese were seen flying over the river in the afternoon of 20<sup>th</sup> October. The observer felt that they were likely to be Brent Geese based on their darkish appearance, stubby wings and flight behaviour. The previous two records of Brent Geese here have been singles, and there are several flocks of feral Barnacle Geese, which in poor light may somewhat resemble this species in flight, now resident within a 10km radius. With this in mind, along with the slight uncertainty in the initial report I have included them here for information only]*

**Egyptian Goose** *Alopochen aegyptiacus*

*Common resident.*



The first gosling was born on 4<sup>th</sup> April. There were no double-figure counts in the first three months of the year, with 16 on 8<sup>th</sup> April the highest count until 26 on 12<sup>th</sup> June. Over the summer the two highest counts were 51 on 7<sup>th</sup> August and 45 on 27<sup>th</sup> July. From September all counts were in single figures with the exception of 10 on 22<sup>nd</sup> November and 14 on 9<sup>th</sup> December.

**Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna*

*Scarce spring visitor*

One flew over Thorpe Marsh on 7<sup>th</sup> April and another was present on Thorpe Broad on 27<sup>th</sup> April, typical spring records here. The only other record was one present on Thorpe Broad on 22<sup>nd</sup> December.



**\* Mandarin**

*Irregular visitor*



Following a number of years without a record we came very close on 4<sup>th</sup> May, when a pair were seen from a boat on the River Wensum close to the Trowse swingbridge (AMa). This area is not easily viewable any public right of way, so I have not included it within the Whitlingham recording area. On 20<sup>th</sup> August a female-type bird was found at the far end of the Little Broad (JL), where it was seen swimming along the reedy margins catching flying insects. Subsequently I received a report of this bird being seen on the previous day too (MC). This bird was seen by several observers and also photographed, although it remained very distant.

**Wigeon *Anas penelope***

*Scarce winter visitor*



A pair was present at the west end of the Little Broad on 1<sup>st</sup> January and seen again on 7<sup>th</sup> January. There was only one more sighting during the winter, of one at Thorpe Broad on 20<sup>th</sup> March. There next record was on 21<sup>st</sup> July, when a rather scruffy bird was present briefly on the Great Broad. It was also noted again in the morning on 7<sup>th</sup> August and again on 20<sup>th</sup> August. These appear to be the first July and August records at Whitlingham. By mid-September the bird had assumed a grey mantle, showing it to be a 1<sup>st</sup> year male. Three were present on 28<sup>th</sup> October and a high of five reported on several dates throughout November. Three (2 drakes) were back at Thorpe Broad on 29<sup>th</sup> December.

**Gadwall *Anas strepera***

*Common winter visitor*



Present at Whitlingham throughout the winter until 15<sup>th</sup> May, with one lingering at Thorpe until 6<sup>th</sup> June. The highest count during the first winter period was the 211 present across Whitlingham and Thorpe on 11<sup>th</sup> January. Counts at Thorpe Broad alone exceeded three figures several times during mid-January, peaking at 121 on 22<sup>nd</sup> Jan. In the autumn the first birds were seen again from 13<sup>th</sup> September and the highest count was 157 at Whitlingham on 12<sup>th</sup> December.



**Teal** *Anas crecca*

*Common winter visitor.*



There was a large influx of Teal at the start of the year, with at least 124 present on 7<sup>th</sup> January and a minimum of 180 present mid-month, split roughly evenly between Whitlingham and Thorpe Broad. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> January a minimum of 257 Teal were counted at Thorpe, a new high count for the site. Numbers tailed off, but eleven were still present on 14<sup>th</sup> April and four on 23<sup>rd</sup> April. Between 30 and 40 were seen at Thorpe

Broad on 10<sup>th</sup> September, although some were probably present before then. Numbers reached three figures towards the end of December when 106 reported on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*

*Common resident.*



The first broods of the year were noted at Thorpe Broad on 14<sup>th</sup> April and Whitlingham Great Broad on 19<sup>th</sup> April. Pairs at Whitlingham raised 4, 5 and 6 ducklings.

Counts of Mallards can be variable as large numbers can sometimes be out of sight at Thorpe river green, but 240 birds counted on the broads and river on 20<sup>th</sup> August was a new high count. 87 on 13<sup>th</sup> December was a much higher December count than 2014 (48).

**Shoveler** *Anas clypeata*

*Scarce winter visitor*

At least three present on 1<sup>st</sup> January, with 11 on 7<sup>th</sup> January and nine still present on the Little Broad on 14<sup>th</sup> February. Two were seen at Thorpe Broad on several dates in March and three flew over the same site on 10<sup>th</sup> April. A female was present at Thorpe Broad on 4<sup>th</sup> November, and a drake returned to Whitlingham in November, when it was present on the Great Broad.

**Pochard** *Aythya ferina*

*Common winter visitor*



Around 50 present at the start of the year, with 69 counted on 7<sup>th</sup> January and a combined count of 80 across Whitlingham and Thorpe on 18<sup>th</sup> Jan. A female was still present on 28<sup>th</sup> March. There were unseasonal records of one present on 20<sup>th</sup> July and presumably the same individual on 1<sup>st</sup> August. First of the second winter period were two on 6<sup>th</sup> October, with high counts of 72 present on 9<sup>th</sup> December, 71 on 15<sup>th</sup> December and 65

still on 18<sup>th</sup> December.

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

*Fairly regular winter visitor*

Four (two males, two females) were present and photographed on Thorpe Broad on 28<sup>th</sup> February. This is the first mixed group for some time (in the past five years sightings have been of singles with the exception of two eclipse males). Recent records have also been in the autumn half of winter (i.e. Oct to Dec), making the timing slightly unusual.

**Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula*

*Common winter visitor*



203 were counted on 7<sup>th</sup> January, rising to 220 on 18<sup>th</sup> January and with 127 still present on 28<sup>th</sup> March. Double-figure counts continued to be made throughout June and July, although unlike the previous two years no ducklings were seen. Nine Tufted Ducks were on Thorpe Broad on 1<sup>st</sup> August. In October 78 were on the Great Broad on 22<sup>nd</sup>. Numbers broke 200 on 22<sup>nd</sup> November, and peaked at 279 on 2<sup>nd</sup> December.

**Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula*

*Scarce winter visitor*

Despite two being present in the area in December 2014 there were no records in what was a mild first winter period. The mild weather didn't prevent autumn records though, with sightings from 23<sup>rd</sup> October, including five present at Thorpe Broad on 20<sup>th</sup> November, commuting between Thorpe Broad and Whitlingham and seven (4 drakes) on 22<sup>nd</sup> November.

**Goosander** *Mergus merganser*

*Scarce winter visitor*



A drake Goosander seen on 13<sup>th</sup> March fishing on Thorpe Broad before flying off towards Postwick was the only record in the first winter period. A drake reported online on the 25<sup>th</sup> July seemed particularly unusual, however a 1<sup>st</sup>-winter drake, presumably the same bird, was found coming to breed at Thorpe Green on 3<sup>rd</sup> August (see article on pages 7 & 8).

In addition to the 1<sup>st</sup>-winter drake mentioned above, an adult drake flew over Thorpe Marsh on 28<sup>th</sup> November and up to three drakes were seen at Whitlingham during December, although more usually just the two. A fifth bird, a redhead, was also seen on the river on 22<sup>nd</sup> November. One of the adult drakes was still present on 29<sup>th</sup> December.

**Pheasant** *Phasianus colchicus*

*Fairly common resident*

Present all year round at Thorpe Marsh, Whitlingham Woods and the surrounding area.

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

*Occasional visitor*



Although resident on nearby farmland, Red-legged Partridges are only seen occasionally in the recording area. There were two sightings this year, both from Thorpe Marsh. Firstly one reported flying in from the direction of the sewage treatment works and landing on Thorpe Marsh on 7<sup>th</sup> March. The second record was of one seen and photographed on the 17<sup>th</sup> October walking along the edge of Thorpe Broad

**Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo*

*Common winter visitor*



A sizeable roost count of 55 was made on 13<sup>th</sup> January. During the day numbers more typically around 30. One on 18<sup>th</sup> Jan had a full set of white breeding filo-plumes on the head. Eight went to roost on 7<sup>th</sup> August. Roost counts include 44 on 15<sup>th</sup> September, 55 on 22<sup>nd</sup> November and 65 seen on 15<sup>th</sup> November. The latter count, which includes one bird from Thorpe, is possibly the highest count for five years.

Some interesting behaviour was observed in late October, when a group of 15-20 could be found fishing together in a fairly tight group on the Great Broad south-east of the island. Generally no attempts were made to identify birds to subspecies, although the bird pictured in the foreground here at Thorpe on 29<sup>th</sup> December was identifiable as *sinensis*.

**Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris*

*Rare winter visitor*

One was seen and photographed on the Great Broad on 20<sup>th</sup> Jan. There were also several reports of birds heard flying over after dark, which may relate to migrating birds.

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta*

*Occasional flyovers*

The first sighting of the year was one flying over at dusk on 13<sup>th</sup> January. One was seen on the marsh at Thorpe on 9<sup>th</sup> February. Two present at Thorpe on 7<sup>th</sup> June is possibly the first record of multiple individuals here. Most records were of birds flying west at dusk, although I'm not sure where the bird(s) in question are roosting.

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*

*Common resident*



Four present on 18<sup>th</sup> Jan, one on the Little Broad and three on the Great Broad. There was a record count on 13<sup>th</sup> December, with at least eight, possibly nine birds present - 7 on the Great Broad, 1 at Thorpe Marsh, with 1 on the Little Broad (the heron at the Little Broad could have moved onto the Great Broad whilst the count was being undertaken, hence the slight uncertainty).

**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

*Common winter visitor*



Little Grebes tend to favour different areas in different years, with the Little Broad, the part of the river Yare near the watersports centre and the conservation area bay all hosting gatherings over the years. This year at least three were present on the Great Broad during January, and a maximum count of five there on 3<sup>rd</sup> March. One or two were regularly seen on Thorpe Broad throughout the spring until 14<sup>th</sup> April. After being absent over the summer one was back on the river on 23<sup>rd</sup> September, the earliest return in recent years, and back at Whitlingham on 6<sup>th</sup> October. The highest count in the second winter period was four present on 18<sup>th</sup> December.

**Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus*

*Resident*



At least one pair fledged two young, which were present on the river between Whitlingham and Thorpe. The highest count was 11 on 10<sup>th</sup> April, with ten seen on several occasions in spring and winter. Typical number at Whitlingham were between six and eight.

**Red Kite** *Milvus milvus*

*Occasional flyovers*

One flew over Thorpe Marsh on 2<sup>nd</sup> April, but unfortunately there was no repeat of 2014 when one was resident over a large amount of the spring.



**Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus*

*Occasional flyovers*

A female was present at Thorpe Marsh on 16<sup>th</sup> February, during which time it was hunting over the marsh before being mobbed by Carrion Crows and spiralling up into the clouds. During the spring there were several more sightings, including of a male bird. These sightings probably all relate to birds from further down the Yare Valley at the edge of their range.

**Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus*

*Resident*



Probably several pairs within the recording area. A male showed well perched up on a dead tree at Thorpe Marsh on 16<sup>th</sup> February. One was seen chasing a Green Woodpecker at Whitlingham on 9<sup>th</sup> September, only giving up when it noticed the birder observing it!

**Buzzard** *Buteo buteo*

*Occasional flyovers*

Sightings regular throughout the year, possibly involving up to six individuals, with a mixture of pale, mid and dark phase birds seen, with perhaps two pairs on territory nearby.

**Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*

*Scarce migrant*

One flew east over the Little Broad on the evening of 9<sup>th</sup> September. It was immediately mobbed by gulls and presumably carried on over Thorpe and along the Yare valley.

**Water Rail** *Rallus aquaticus*

*Winter visitor/possibly secretive resident*

Two heard at Thorpe Marsh on 3<sup>rd</sup> Jan, with one seen on the flooded marshes on 13<sup>th</sup> January. After that between one and three heard calling from around Thorpe Marsh throughout March. Unusually there were some summer records, one heard at Whitlingham Marsh LNR on 10<sup>th</sup> May and two at the Great Broad on 10<sup>th</sup> August. In the autumn first birds first heard at Thorpe Marsh on 10<sup>th</sup> September, with up to five reported from October.

**Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*

*Common resident*



Common at Whitlingham and Thorpe, but probably undercounted on casual visits due to their unobtrusive nature. During March seven typically counted at Thorpe Marsh, whilst at Whitlingham the maximum reported was 25 on 14<sup>th</sup> April, although usually much less than that. A pair with one young was seen on 12<sup>th</sup> June.



**Coot** *Fulica atra*

*Resident/Common winter visitor*



Around 220 present on 7<sup>th</sup> January, and 101 still present in February. In the second winter period numbers had reached 100 by 6<sup>th</sup> October then there was a count of 202 on 2<sup>nd</sup> December. Numbers continued to increase during December, with 264 on 13<sup>th</sup> and a high of 279 on the 21<sup>st</sup>. One nest was seen on 21<sup>st</sup> April, and on 18<sup>th</sup> May four young were present.

**Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus*

*Scarce spring visitor*



Present at Thorpe throughout much of March. Typically 2-4, but five seen on one occasion. On 28<sup>th</sup> March a pair were flying around Whitlingham before landing on the jetty near the flint barn. This pair took up semi-residency at Whitlingham during the spring and could often be seen or heard nearby. When not at Whitlingham these birds were probably nearby at the sewage works.

**\* Golden Plover** *Pluvialis apricaria*

*Rare passage migrant*

Not reported for several years, but there were two flyover records in 2015, a flock over on 6<sup>th</sup> March (RC) and one heard calling in the dark on 17<sup>th</sup> March (MC)

**\* Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula*

*Rare passage migrant*

One seen and heard flying over Thorpe Marsh by two observers on 13<sup>th</sup> March was the first record for several years (RC). Views (and the call) were enough to rule out Little Ringed Plover, a commoner species here.

**Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius*

*Scarce spring visitor*



One was reported from Thorpe Marsh on 15<sup>th</sup> March. No regular sightings followed this initial report, although there were several evening reports during April. Two were seen at Thorpe Marsh on 4<sup>th</sup> May, followed by a number of other sightings of singles or two birds until 27<sup>th</sup> May. A pair may have bred successfully nearby, as a juvenile bird was seen on the slipway at Whitlingham on 12<sup>th</sup> July by a visitor to the

CP and shown to visitor centre staff. **Photo courtesy of Ricky Cleverley.**

**Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus*

*Common winter visitor*

Typically between 3-15 present at Thorpe Marsh during January and February, with a peak of 23 on 12<sup>th</sup> February. A pair were seen displaying on 23<sup>rd</sup> April. 12 were present on 16<sup>th</sup> July.

**Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*

*Scarce passage migrant*

Four records of birds heard flying over during the spring.

**Curlew** *Numenius arquata*

*Occasional passage migrant*

Three separate records, all flying over Thorpe Marsh. One seen by multiple observers flying over on the morning of 13<sup>th</sup> March, two reported flying over on 25<sup>th</sup> August and three reported flying over on 10<sup>th</sup> September.

**\* Dunlin** *Calidris alpina*

*Scarce passage migrant*

Five flew onto the shingle spit at Thorpe Marsh on 17<sup>th</sup> February (JH) and one present on the shingle spit at Thorpe Marsh on 4<sup>th</sup> March (MC).

**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos*

*Spring migrant*

The first of the year was on 7<sup>th</sup> April, with two on 14<sup>th</sup> April. One was still present up until 19<sup>th</sup> May. Five flew along the river on 14<sup>th</sup> May. In the autumn one was present on 19<sup>th</sup> August and possibly the same bird on 15<sup>th</sup> September.

**Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus*

*Spring migrant*

One on the Great Broad on 20<sup>th</sup> January was the first winter record for several years, although at one point they used to be annual in winter. Typical spring records included two on 10<sup>th</sup> April and records of singles until 23<sup>rd</sup> April. One at Thorpe Marsh on 25<sup>th</sup> November.

**Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia*

*Scarce spring migrant*

One reported heard over on 10<sup>th</sup> April.

**\* Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola*

*Scarce spring migrant*

An unusual record of one heard and then seen landing along the edge of the Great Broad at Whitlingham on 21<sup>st</sup> April (MC).

**Redshank** *Tringa totanus*

*Scarce passage migrant*

One report, a bird heard flying over Thorpe Marsh on 28<sup>th</sup> March.

**Jack Snipe** *Lymnocyrtus minimus*

*Scarce winter visitor*

One flushed from alongside a ditch on 16<sup>th</sup> February flew onto the marsh nearby. The weather wasn't particularly cold at the time, suggesting that this species is still a regular visitor to Thorpe but going generally unrecorded on the inaccessible areas of marsh. Two were flushed from the same general area on 19<sup>th</sup> Feb, and three were seen on 3<sup>rd</sup> March. In the second winter period reported again from Thorpe Marsh from 11<sup>th</sup> October onwards.

**Woodcock** *Scolopax rusticola*

*Scarce winter visitor*

One seen at Thorpe on 19<sup>th</sup> Feb and singles reported from the same location in December.

**Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago*

*Common winter visitor*

One present at Whitlingham on 3<sup>rd</sup> Jan was flushed from vegetation in front of the bird screen. At Thorpe Marsh at least 40 present on several dates throughout January. A series of counts of birds leaving at dusk at Thorpe Marsh in early March suggested the presence of up to 75 birds on the marsh. At least 40 were present at Thorpe on 4<sup>th</sup> November.

**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo*

*Common spring migrant*



First of the year seen on 9<sup>th</sup> April, which despite not seeming particularly early appears to be the earliest date for this species here. A maximum of six birds were seen (2<sup>nd</sup> May). An adult was observed courtship feeding another adult on 27<sup>th</sup> May. The last sighting was of one on the Great Broad on 15<sup>th</sup> August.

**Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea*

*Scarce spring migrant*

No large tern passage this year, but one reported over the Great Broad on 21<sup>st</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> April.

**Black-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

*Common resident*



At least 11 ringed birds were seen at Whitlingham or Thorpe river green, three colour-ringed and the rest just sporting metal rings (see article on page 16). The bird ringed at Hyvinkää, Finland, sets a new distance record for a bird seen at Whitlingham, having travelled at least 1680km. Numbers reached around 500 in January, although typically during the winter months numbers were around 200. 380 were counted at Thorpe on 18<sup>th</sup>

February and a gathering of around 550 birds was present on the Great Broad on 8<sup>th</sup> April.

**\* Little Gull** *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

*Scarce spring migrant*

A winter plumaged adult was reported feeding with Black-headed Gulls on the Great Broad on 8<sup>th</sup> April (MC). April is by far and away the best month for seeing this species here.

**\* Mediterranean Gull** *Larus melanocephalus*

*Scarce visitor*



A 1<sup>st</sup>-winter was seen just outside the recording area at Thorpe St Andrew green on 10<sup>th</sup> January was present until at least the 9<sup>th</sup> Feb (JL). On 11<sup>th</sup> Jan it was seen to fly across towards the Great Broad. It is thought that this is the same bird that was seen at Whitlingham in late December 2014 and it had possibly been commuting between Thorpe St Andrew and Whitlingham during the intervening period.

A 1<sup>st</sup>-winter (possibly the same bird as the one described above) was present on the Great Broad on 28<sup>th</sup> March (JL), and a 1<sup>st</sup>-summer, again possibly the same bird was reported on 28<sup>th</sup> April (MC).

**Common Gull** *Larus canus*

*Common winter visitor*



Present up until 1<sup>st</sup> April, and then again from 17<sup>th</sup> October. Numbers generally low, with 31 at Thorpe Broad on 23<sup>rd</sup> March the only time that more than 25 were recorded.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus*

*Common summer visitor*



A Lesser Black-backed Gull seen at Whitlingham on 8<sup>th</sup> September was ringed as a pullus at Beccles, but interestingly had been reported from Huelva, Spain in January, giving an insight into the wintering grounds of the some of the Lesser Black-backed Gulls that are seen here during the summer. A Lesser Black-backed Gull was seen eating a Moorhen chick on the river on 29<sup>th</sup> April. No particularly high counts made this year.

**Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus*

*Fairly common migrant*



A count of 80 on 5<sup>th</sup> March was the largest count of the year, although large numbers present for short periods of time during the pre-roost gatherings on the Great Broad in late summer and autumn. In that context 47 loafing on recently excavated areas at Thorpe Marsh on 22<sup>nd</sup> December were notable. Two colour-rings were read - a red-ringed bird with VKB in white letters seen in January and March was ringed as a pullus at Landguard

and has been recorded at Whitlingham in each of the past two winters. A bird with a dark-orange ring with S5GT in black lettering had been ringed at Pitsea Landfill site in Essex in March 2014 and later been seen in the Netherlands that May. A bird seen during the March WeBS count had a particularly long-looking beak, possibly due to an elongated upper mandible.

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

*Scarce migrant*

A 1<sup>st</sup>-winter dropped into the gull pre-roost on 11<sup>th</sup> September, but otherwise a poor year for this species.

**Great Black-backed Gull** *Larus marinus*

*Scarce migrant*



A 1<sup>st</sup>-winter was present on the Great Broad on 1<sup>st</sup> January. Other than that there were three reports of adults, on 7<sup>th</sup> August, 11<sup>th</sup> September and 3<sup>rd</sup> November.

**Feral Pigeon** *Columba livia*

*Common resident*

Flocks nearby at Trowse and Thorpe St Andrew visible in flight and occasionally seen flying over the area.

**Stock Dove** *Columba oenas*

*Scarce resident*

Present all year at Thorpe Marsh, with occasional sightings from around Whitlingham as well. The highest count was from Thorpe Marsh, where eight were present on 20<sup>th</sup> May.

**Woodpigeon** *Columba palumbus*

*Common resident*

Numerous throughout the recording area.



**Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto****Scarce resident*

Not recorded from Whitlingham CP itself, although possibly overlooked, particularly along Whitlingham Lane closest to Trowse. The only records were four flyover records from Thorpe Marsh during the spring.

**Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus****Scarce spring migrant*

The BTO-tagged bird Skinner, the subject of an article in the 2014 report, is unfortunately no longer transmitting a signal. This in itself doesn't necessarily mean that Skinner has died, it could be that the tag has stopped working or fallen off. A male Cuckoo was heard calling from 21<sup>st</sup> April, similar to the 2014 first date, favouring the area of marsh to the east of Bungalow Lane. Given the similarity in date and location to Skinner the bird was closely observed by at least two observers, both of whom agreed that it was not wearing a transmitter. In addition a female was heard giving the 'bubbling' call on 4<sup>th</sup> May.

**Barn Owl *Tyto alba****Scarce resident*

Two were seen hunting over the area of rough marsh east of Bungalow Lane on 3<sup>rd</sup> March, with one also seen later in the week. One seen perched in a tree at Whitlingham on 8<sup>th</sup> April could be one of the birds seen hunting at Thorpe, or could be a bird with a territory incorporating the Trowse area.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> December there was an unusual record as a Barn Owl was caught on discarded fishing wire on branches at Trowse Woods. Luckily Broads Authority staff were able to free it. The owl apparently had a dislocated leg, but was able to be released after treatment.

**Tawny Owl *Strix aluco****Scarce resident*

Birds heard calling from the trees north of the railway line and also from Whitlingham Woods on several occasions.

**Swift *Apus apus****Common summer visitor*

Ten seen over the Great Broad on 23<sup>rd</sup> April, much earlier than 2014 (first noted on 5<sup>th</sup> May) but about the same as 2013 (25<sup>th</sup> April). About 30 were present over the Great Broad on 2<sup>nd</sup> May, and around 400 reported on 6<sup>th</sup> May. A flock of 200 were reported on 1<sup>st</sup> June, but no records from July and none after four present on the evening of 7<sup>th</sup> August.

**Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis*

*Scarce resident*



Two at Thorpe Marsh on 3<sup>rd</sup> February. A pair were present on the Great Broad on 7<sup>th</sup> August, and sightings continued through into December. Kingfishers were regularly seen at Trowse Meadow, Little Broad, Great Broad and Thorpe Marsh, suggesting a good year for this species locally.

**Green Woodpecker** *Picus viridis*

*Scarce resident*



One was 'yaffling' from the scrub along Whitlingham Lane in 18<sup>th</sup> Jan. Birds were heard fairly regularly, and most commonly seen around the picnic meadow.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopus major*

*Scarce resident*

Present throughout the recording area and often heard calling from wooded areas. Drumming reported from the trees north of the railway line (but audible from Thorpe Marsh) on 7<sup>th</sup> April and from Trowse Woods on 23<sup>rd</sup> April.

**Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*

*Resident*

Seen intermittently, most commonly at Thorpe Marsh. Most records of singles, with the exception of two seen on 28<sup>th</sup> April.

**[Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus*

*County rarity*

*On 31<sup>st</sup> May a falcon initially seen hovering but then flying like a Hobby was seen at Carey's Meadow before it flew across the river to Whitlingham, and was seen briefly there. The underparts were a buffish colour, but full plumage features couldn't be seen. The observer considered that it was likely to be a female Red-footed Falcon, but didn't see it well enough to be sure. This report is included here for information however the sighting has not been sent to the Norfolk rarities committee]*

**\* Merlin** *Falco columbarius*

*Rare winter visitor*

One seen well over Thorpe Marsh on 19<sup>th</sup> February before flying off towards Whitlingham (RC). Merlins are rare in the Norwich area, but there were also sightings of what was presumably the same bird in the UEA area.

**Hobby** *Falco subbuteo*

*Scarce spring migrant*

One flew over Thorpe Marsh towards Whitlingham on 28<sup>th</sup> April, with another sighting on 4<sup>th</sup> May. The only other record was of an adult bird flew over the Great Broad on 19<sup>th</sup> August.

**Peregrine** *Falco peregrinus*

*Regular flyovers*

Fairly frequent reports of birds flying over or perched nearby. Two were seen perched on an electricity pylon near the Little Broad on 15<sup>th</sup> February. One was seen at Whitlingham on 28<sup>th</sup> March, and later in the morning one of the cathedral pair was seen to bring in a Teal. All other reports of singles except for two seen on 19<sup>th</sup> August.

**Magpie** *Pica pica*

*Common resident*

Common throughout the recording area, with birds coming in to the communal roost over the winter. 130 birds roosted on 13<sup>th</sup> January, four more than the record count of 126 made in February 2014. Numbers began to build up again in early autumn, with 46 roosting on 15<sup>th</sup> September. The site record count was smashed on 18<sup>th</sup> December, when 189 were counted coming in to roost. Interestingly 28 were seen to gather in a pre-roost at Thorpe Marsh on 14<sup>th</sup> December.

**Jay** *Garrulus glandarius*

*Common resident*

Fairly common, most often seen flying over the Great Broad towards Thorpe Island and the riverside scrub.

**Jackdaw** *Corvus monedula*

*Common resident*



Flocks present in the trees opposite the country park and in Whitlingham Woods, occasionally coming down to feed in the meadows along Whitlingham Lane.

**Rook** *Corvus frugilegus*

*Scarce flyover*

Only recorded as flyovers at Whitlingham Marsh from the nearby sewage works and farmland, with the exception of one flying over Trowse Meadow on 8<sup>th</sup> April. Visiting birders are asked to double-check corvid sightings, as birders on casual visits sometimes see Rooks more frequently than I would expect based on regular visits.

**Carrion Crow** *Corvus corone*

*Common resident*

Commonly encountered around the south shore of the Great Broad.

**Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus*

*Common resident*



One with the tit flock along the Lime tree avenue on 3<sup>rd</sup> January. Several present with Long-tailed Tit flock at Thorpe Marsh on 3<sup>rd</sup> Feb and also along Bungalow Lane on 6<sup>th</sup> March.

**\* Firecrest** *Regulus ignicapilla*

*Rare visitor*

A rare species in the Norwich area, although increasing in Norfolk as a whole. Two reported, both only present briefly. Firstly one in an ivy-clad tree at Thorpe Marsh on 13<sup>th</sup> March (MC) and one in brambles along the north shore of the Great Broad at Whitlingham on 22<sup>nd</sup> October (MC).

**Blue Tit** *Cyanistes caeruleus*

*Common resident*

Common throughout the recording area.

**Great Tit** *Parus major*

*Common resident*

Common throughout the recording area.

**Coal Tit** *Periparus ater*

*Scarce resident*

Present throughout the year in wooded areas but easily overlooked.

**Marsh Tit** *Poecile palustris*

*Scarce resident*

Calling birds seen near the pump-house and from the private wood at the top of the Lime tree avenue on 3<sup>rd</sup> January. Encountered throughout the year, present around the Great Broad, in Whitlingham Woods and at Whitlingham Marsh.

**Skylark** *Alauda arvensis*

*Scarce winter visitor*

Present on farmland south of the sewage works, but no territorial birds within the recording area. Recorded flying over Thorpe Marsh on 7<sup>th</sup> April and then on several occasions during the autumn, usually in small numbers with the exception of 18 over on 15<sup>th</sup> October.

**Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia*

*Common spring visitor*

At least six flew over the Great Broad on 28<sup>th</sup> March (four in the morning and two in the afternoon). This was over a week earlier than the first arrivals in 2013 and 2014. One was seen on 27<sup>th</sup> July, but there were no late summer gatherings.

**Swallow** *Hirundo rustica**Common summer visitor*

The first Swallows of the year were reported on 1<sup>st</sup> April, with six on 9<sup>th</sup> April and 10 on the 10<sup>th</sup>. Around 100 present at Whitlingham on 6<sup>th</sup> May. As usual absent or scarce over the summer before returning during August and early September. Two very late birds seen over Thorpe Marsh on 15<sup>th</sup> October.

**House Martin** *Delichon urbicum**Common spring visitor*

Three were reported flying over Thorpe Marsh on 7<sup>th</sup> April, a week earlier than 2013 & 2014 and one of the earliest dates here. No further reports until a mixed hirundine flock including many House Martins was present at Whitlingham during overcast conditions on 19<sup>th</sup> April. Last record of the year was a flock of around 30 over Whitlingham on 15<sup>th</sup> September.

**Cetti's Warbler** *Cettia cetti**Common resident*

Heard in sub-song throughout the winter, but more vocal during spring. Typically three or four audible at Thorpe Marsh, with up to five around the broads at Whitlingham.

**Long-tailed Tit** *Aegithalos caudatus**Common resident*

Common throughout the recording area.

**\* Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus**Rare migrant*

Rare inland. This year saw a record influx to Norfolk in early October, and there was one reported from Whitlingham Woods on 26<sup>th</sup> October (MC).

**Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita**Common summer visitor*

Two overwintering birds were seen in December 2014 and these birds continued to be seen at Whitlingham throughout January and February. Another bird was also present at Thorpe Marsh, seen in late February and early March. Overwintering birds can cloud the issue of spring arrivals, but the first singing bird was at Thorpe Marsh on 13<sup>th</sup> March, the same date as in 2014. By the end of March there was at least 12 singing birds at Whitlingham CP, along with birds at Trowse Woods and Trowse Meadow. The last singing birds of the year were heard on 22<sup>nd</sup> September, fairly typical of the past few years. A bird present at Whitlingham on 22<sup>nd</sup> October is probably overwintering.

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

Currently treated by the BOU as a subspecies of Common Chiffchaff. One was heard calling at dusk for 3 minutes from Bungalow Lane along the edge of Thorpe Marsh on 18<sup>th</sup> December (MC). It was identified retrospectively following the finding of one downriver at Strumpshaw Fen on 22<sup>nd</sup> December. Note that Siberian Chiffchaff is a county rarity and requires a description to be submitted to the county rarities committee in order to be accepted into the county records



**Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus**Common summer visitor*

One first singing bird at Whitlingham was heard on 2<sup>nd</sup> April, a few days earlier than in 2014. Following last year, which was very poor for this species, numbers were still depressed, with two singing birds at Whitlingham and four heard at Thorpe Marsh and the surrounding scrub.

**Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla**Common summer visitor*

A male at Thorpe Marsh on 6<sup>th</sup> March and a female there on 11<sup>th</sup> March were presumably both overwintering birds. The first singing bird was at Thorpe Marsh on 7<sup>th</sup> April, a date consistent with a migrant bird. The first report of one singing at Whitlingham was on 10<sup>th</sup> April, and a big influx meant that at least 13 were present there on 14<sup>th</sup> April. In addition at least six birds were singing in Trowse Woods during May. Records of a female at Whitlingham on several dates in October suggest another wintering bird.

**Garden Warbler** *Sylvia borin**Scarce summer visitor*

The first singing birds reported were two at Thorpe on 17<sup>th</sup> April, a week earlier than 2014. It seemed to be a good year for Garden Warblers at Whitlingham, with at least six singing birds at Whitlingham on 2<sup>nd</sup> May and eight reported on 6<sup>th</sup> May. A singing male was also heard at Trowse Woods on the 8<sup>th</sup> May, and breeding behaviour was observed at Thorpe Marsh on 1<sup>st</sup> June.

**Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia curruca**Scarce summer visitor*

Scarce as usual, although present nearby at Carey's Meadow. Singles recorded from Trowse Meadow on 28<sup>th</sup> April and at Whitlingham in scrub north of the Great Broad on 19<sup>th</sup> August.

**Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis**Common summer visitor*

For the third year in a row the first singing birds were heard on the 18<sup>th</sup> April (two singing at Thorpe Marsh). Two were also heard singing at Whitlingham on the next day. During May typical numbers of singing birds were four at Thorpe Marsh and nine at Whitlingham CP. One bird appeared to linger into September, being seen at Whitlingham on 11<sup>th</sup> and then just outside the recording area north of the railway line on 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella naevia**Scarce summer visitor*

One was present at Griffin Fen, the area east of Bungalow Lane, from 20<sup>th</sup> April and audible from the edge of Thorpe Marsh until at least 28<sup>th</sup> April. Later in the year one was heard reeling again from Griffin Fen on 6<sup>th</sup> July, and presumably the same bird was seen and heard calling from Thorpe Marsh itself on 10<sup>th</sup> July.

**Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

*Common summer visitor*

First heard at Thorpe Marsh on 10<sup>th</sup> April, a fairly typical first date after an early arrival in 2014. Thirteen were seen/heard at Thorpe on 28<sup>rd</sup> April. There were also several higher counts, however perhaps some of these were just passing through, as the overall number of territories will be constrained by the relatively small size of the site. In contrast to Thorpe there were very few Sedge Warblers at Whitlingham, with none recorded until 8<sup>th</sup> May, and then only two singing males.

**Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

*Common summer visitor*

Three singing birds at Whitlingham on 15<sup>th</sup> April, a week earlier than 2014 and the earliest arrival date in recent times. Two were also present at Thorpe a few days later on 18<sup>th</sup> April. Numbers built steadily and birds were recorded up until 25<sup>th</sup> August.

**Waxwing** *Bombycilla garrulus*

*Infrequent winter visitor*

Scarce in both winter periods. One flew over the Little Broad towards the city on 20<sup>th</sup> January, and three flew over Thorpe Marsh on 9<sup>th</sup> December. The latter birds also presumably account for a report of three Waxwings seen nearby at Pilling Park in Thorpe St Andrew on 11<sup>th</sup> December. Five also reported flying over Thorpe Marsh on 23<sup>rd</sup> December.

**Nuthatch** *Sitta europaea*

*Scarce resident*

Present throughout the year at Whitlingham Wood and Trowse Wood, although not recorded from the trees around the main car park this year.

**Treecreeper** *Certhia familiaris*

*Common resident*



This species appeared to have a good year at Whitlingham in 2015. One was seen accompanying a tit flock along the Lime tree avenue on 3<sup>rd</sup> January, and two were seen together in trees along the Little Broad in early spring. Also present in Whitlingham and Trowse Woods, and seen at Thorpe Marsh in autumn.

**Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes*

*Common resident*

Widespread and common throughout the recording area.

**Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris*

*Common resident*

Seen occasionally on the meadows south of Whitlingham Lane, opposite the car parks. Otherwise mainly seen in flight.

**\* Ring Ouzel** *Turdus torquatus*

*Rare migrant*

Rare in this area, although occurs fairly regularly in spring to the west of Norwich. One was recorded from Thorpe Marsh on 24<sup>th</sup> April (heard by one observer, seen by another) (MC) at a similar time to another one being present at UEA. Another one was reported from Thorpe Marsh on 11<sup>th</sup> October (MC).

**Blackbird** *Turdus merula*

*Common resident*

Common throughout the recording area.

**Fieldfare** *Turdus pilaris*

*Common winter visitor*

One flew over on 1<sup>st</sup> January, and small numbers occasionally encountered throughout the winter. First noted again on 15<sup>th</sup> October over Thorpe Marsh.

**Song Thrush** *Turdus philomelos*

*Common resident*

Several pairs present around the recording area, most commonly heard in Whitlingham Woods and the boundaries of Thorpe Marsh.

**Redwing** *Turdus iliacus*

*Common winter visitor*

Scarce in the first winter period, several over towards the end of January, although groups of up to 50 heard flying over during March, last noted at Whitlingham Wood on 10<sup>th</sup> April. There were no further records until 26<sup>th</sup> September. The highest count of the autumn was of 180 recorded flying over Thorpe on 15<sup>th</sup> October.

**Mistle Thrush** *Turdus viscivorus*

*Scarce resident*

Two present near the campsite on 3<sup>rd</sup> January. Sporadically reported throughout the rest of the year, but no large groups.

**Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata*

*Scarce migrant and former breeder*

Again no sign of breeding this year. One was reported near the Little Broad on 8<sup>th</sup> May, and one along the south shore of the Great Broad on 11<sup>th</sup> September.

**Robin** *Erithacus rubicula*

*Common resident*

Common throughout the recording area.

**Nightingale** *Luscinia megarhynchos*

*Scarce possible breeder*



A male Nightingale was found singing just outside the recording area boundaries on 16<sup>th</sup> April, and was later joined by a second male for several days from 29<sup>th</sup> April. After being absent in 2014, a male was heard singing at Whitlingham from 23<sup>rd</sup> April onwards into May.

**Photo courtesy of Ricky Cleveley**

**\* Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula hypoleuca*

*Rare migrant*

A very scarce bird inland in Norfolk, one was reported from the scrub along the river north of the Great Broad on 11<sup>th</sup> September (MC).

**\* Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

*Rare migrant*

Redstarts are rare inland away from breeding areas in the brecks. One was reported with a tit flock at Thorpe Marsh on 15<sup>th</sup> October (MC).

**\* Stonechat** *Saxicola rubicola*

*Scarce winter migrant*

One seen at Thorpe Marsh on 7<sup>th</sup> March, the first record for several years (AMa). In the winter of 2014/15 a pair overwintered west of the city at Earlham Marsh, so perhaps this was one of those birds moving along the river.

**\* Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe*

*Scarce passage migrant*

Wheatears are occasionally seen at Thorpe Marsh, more commonly in spring. This year there was one report, of a juvenile-type on 22<sup>nd</sup> September (MC).

**Dunnock** *Prunella modularis*

*Common resident*

Common throughout the recording area.

**Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*

*Former resident, now irregular*

This species appears to be recovering along this stretch of river. Although there were few records from Whitlingham itself, there were a number of reports from birds flying over Thorpe Marsh (presumably to the sewage works) and along the river. Birds were seen on the shingle spit at Thorpe on 18<sup>th</sup> March and 2<sup>nd</sup> April. Three were seen on 8<sup>th</sup> December along the exposed edges of the river between Whitlingham and Thorpe.



**Pied Wagtail** *Motacilla alba*

*Common resident*



Resident and often encountered around the visitors barn.

**Meadow Pipit** *Anthus pratensis*

*Passage migrant*

Present at Thorpe Marsh from January until the end of March, with six present on 6<sup>th</sup> March. Sightings in the autumn began from 22<sup>nd</sup> September, with a high of eight present on 2<sup>nd</sup> December.

**\* Water Pipit** *Anthus spinoletta*

*Rare visitor*

One reported flying over Thorpe Marsh on 15<sup>th</sup> October (MC), with several other records of singles flying over and one of a bird at the flood on 11<sup>th</sup> December (all MC). Water Pipits are rare here but annual in the Mid-Yare valley. Hopefully habitat creation work at Thorpe Marsh will result in more records of this species in the future.

**Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs*

*Common resident*

Common across the recording area and one of a handful of passerines that are likely to be encountered on most visits, although seemingly scarcest over the summer months.

**\* Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

*Rare visitor*

Two reported flying over Thorpe Marsh and landing in the trees north of the railway line (MC). At one point Hawfinches were fairly regular winter visitors to west Norwich, but they are very scarce this side of the city.

**Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

*Scarce resident*

Common although fairly elusive across the recording area. A selection of sightings of more than one bird include three seen at Thorpe on 19<sup>th</sup> February, three at Whitlingham on 15<sup>th</sup> April and two calling along the footpath at the top of Trowse Woods on 7<sup>th</sup> August.

**Greenfinch** *Chloris chloris*

*Fairly common resident*

Present in low numbers, most often reported in the spring. A flock of c35 at dusk on 22<sup>nd</sup> March was unusual. They were either roosting or gathering together in a pre-roost in the small trees between the Little and Great Broads.

**Linnet** *Linaria cannabina*

*Scarce visitor*



Recorded more frequently than in previous years, with numerous sightings of one or two from Thorpe Marsh, sometimes perched up and sometimes flying over. Most records were from January to April, with the exception being a flock of nine over on 22<sup>nd</sup> September.

**Lesser Redpoll** *Acanthis cannabina*

*Common winter visitor*

As with 2014 Redpoll numbers were much reduced on previous, colder, winters. In the first winter period six were seen with a flock of Goldfinches at Thorpe Marsh on 3<sup>rd</sup> Feb. During the autumn two Redpoll sp, probably Lesser Redpoll, were seen in 6<sup>th</sup> October and six were reported from Thorpe Marsh on 23<sup>rd</sup> October.

**Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis*

*Common resident*

Small flocks present all year, combining with one of the flocks of Siskins during December.

**Siskin** *Spinus spinus*

*Common winter visitor*



Siskins are usually common at Whitlingham during the winter, but presumably as a result of the relatively warm temperatures there was no flock present in the first winter period. The only records were of birds presumably passing through at Thorpe on 20<sup>th</sup> March and Whitlingham on the 22<sup>nd</sup> March. In the autumn a flock of around 25 were first seen on 11<sup>th</sup> September (a relatively early date) in the trees to the south-east of the Great Broad. Further small flocks arrived later on, with several counts up to 45, and a maximum of 72 reported on 21<sup>st</sup> December.

**\* Yellowhammer** *Emberiza citrinella*

*Scarce flyover*

Several present with a mixed finch flock in fields outside of the recording area, between the sewage works and Bramerton. There was one report of a bird flying over Thorpe Marsh on 15<sup>th</sup> October (MC).

**Reed Bunting** *Emberiza schoeniclus**Common summer visitor*

Reed Buntings are present for most of the year, but tend to disperse during the winter, when they can either be found on arable land or increasingly coming to garden feeders. Three were present at Thorpe on 19<sup>th</sup> February, including a singing bird. Singing birds first noted at Whitlingham on 10<sup>th</sup> April, although probably present before then. As with 2014 at least one was still present at Thorpe Marsh into November.

**Total: 135 species**

**Appendix A – Unrecorded but likely species**

These species are birds that are either seen in most years but not reported during 2015, or birds that were seen very close to Whitlingham and/or flying in the direction of the Whitlingham without being actually observed there.

**Bewick's Swan** – Likely flyover in winter.

Increased observer coverage/reporting meant that all other regular/likely species were recorded this year.

## **Appendix B – Escapes and birds of dubious origin**

### **Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata***

*No previous records*

This species has a criminally-overlooked-should-be-Category C, self-sustaining population at Ely, but birds in Norfolk are likely to be either birds escaped from smallholdings or their offspring. A Muscovy, presumably this one, was initially seen in Norwich city centre before relocating to Thorpe St Andrew where it was seen at the river green on 29<sup>th</sup> October. It was reported on the River Yare resting near the sailing club on 28<sup>th</sup> October and 17<sup>th</sup> November. Plumage in Muscovies varies – this one was largely dark, with a small amount of white on the head, neck and front.

### **[*Flamingo sp. Phoenicopterus sp.***

*No previous records*

Bizarrely a Flamingo was seen by RSPB staff from their office in Thorpe St Andrew on 21<sup>st</sup> May. Given the location it is likely that the bird did enter Whitlingham air space, possibly following the course of the river. Likewise given the size and colour it would have probably been visible from the area even if it didn't enter it. Sadly there were no further reports from the county, so where this bird came from and went to remains a mystery]

### **Eclectus Parrot *Eclectus roratus***

*No previous records*

A male of this species was seen flying over Thorpe Marsh by two observers on 23<sup>rd</sup> October. Males are green, whilst females are red and purple, and they appear to be common in captivity. When I mentioned this sighting online I was informed that the same bird had previously been seen in the Claxton/Rockland area earlier in the week.



## **Appendix C – Hybrids & domestic wildfowl**

### **Greylag x Swan Goose**

*Resident*



One of these resident and rather aggressive hybrids remains, usually around the slipway or south edge of the Great Broad.

### **Pintail x Mallard**

*No previous records*



A drake of this hybrid was found with a small group of Mallard on the Great Broad near the ruined hall. It was easy to locate but difficult to photograph as it swam quickly behind the broad-side vegetation. It has been suggested that the extent of the rufous colouring suggests that the Mallard parent had some domestic Mallard genes.

## Acknowledgements

I am grateful to everyone who has reported birds from the Whitlingham area this year, be it directly to myself, to the bird news services or by posted sightings on websites such as [BirdForum](#) or Twitter. In particular I would like to thank the following for providing records or information: D. Appleton, C. & R. Baldock, A. Barnett, M. Chipperfield (MC), R. Cleverley (RC), G. Dawson, C. Durdin (CD), M. Eldridge, J. Gearty, J. Halls (JH), J. Harkness, S. Harris, J. Lansdell (JL), D. Lyness, A. Manvell (AMa), R. McIntyre, R. Moores, A. Musgrove, J. Nicholls, K. Otta, C. Thornton and A. Ward. My thanks also go to the Broads Authority staff at Whitlingham, and the people that I have spoken to whilst in the field.

## Local information

The following websites regularly contain sightings from the Whitlingham area:

<http://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 Marsh NWT unofficial site)

<http://yarevalleywildlife.synthasite.com/bird-notes-2016.php> (Yare Valley Birding website)

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

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

## Bird information services

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

[Rare Bird Alert](#) (0207 0382820), [BirdGuides](#) (0333 5772473), [Bird Info hotline](#) (0115 8712888) or [BirdLine East Anglia](#) (07941 333970).