

The Birds of Whitlingham & Thorpe 2021



Compiled by James Emerson

Contents

Page 2 – Contents & contact details

Pages 3-5 – Introduction & site map

Pages 6-7 – New to the Whitlingham area: Caspian Tern

Pages 8-11 – Great White Egrets at Whitlingham

Pages 12-16 – Kittiwakes article

Pages 17-21 – Not in a month of Little Gulls

Pages 22-30 – Ten years of the Whitlingham Bird Report

Pages 31-33 – Norwich Mute Swan colour-ringing project update

Pages 34-37 – Ringed Black-headed Gulls at Whitlingham episode ix

Page 38 – Whitlingham Wildfowl Count

Page 39-67 – Whitlingham & Thorpe classified species list

Page 68 - Appendix A – Recorded species linked to reintroduction schemes

Page 68 - Appendix B – Recorded birds thought to be escapes or of dubious origin

Page 69 - Appendix C – Birds reported from the area but not accepted onto the main list

Page 70 - Appendix D – Hybrid birds

Page 71 - Appendix E – Unrecorded but likely species

Page 72 - Appendix F – Selected additional bird sightings from the Norwich area

Page 73 – Acknowledgements & Further reading

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 2022 report, by emailing: whitlinghambirds@yahoo.co.uk.

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

Introduction

This is the tenth annual bird report documenting the bird life of the Whitlingham area (including Thorpe Marshes NWT reserve), covering sightings from 2021. I am immensely grateful to everyone who has supported these bird reports over the years. The ten year run of bird reports form part of a wide-ranging local project to document the wildlife of the Whitlingham area, along with many checklists and species guides that cover plants, fungi, mammals and invertebrates.

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

As with several periods during 2020, bird recording during 2021 was affected by government-imposed Coronavirus restrictions, most notably a national lockdown from January to March 2021, which restricted leisure activity during this time to local “exercise”. The effects of lockdowns on local bird recording was explored in detail in the 2020 report article “The Covid-19 pandemic and its effects on local wildlife and recording”, so is not explored further here.

There was one new bird added to the site list in 2021, a Caspian Tern that sadly flew straight through and was only seen by a single observer. Less rare but still notable were a Great White Egret and a Kittiwake, both of which stayed for several days. A cold spell in February led to sightings of Smew and Black-necked Grebe, whilst there was an unusually long run of Little Gull sightings throughout April.

A large number of records in this report have been supplied by other local birders, to whom I am grateful. I have included the majority of sightings that have been sent to me directly or reported online, however as always I reserve the right to decide what sightings make the final report. Many of the sightings included in this report have not been seen by me personally and some may relate to birds that were only seen flying over or were ‘heard only’ records. As a result for formal recording purposes the sightings in this report should be treated as unverified records, i.e. sightings should not be taken directly from the report to be used for any ‘official’ purposes unless accompanied by a photo – observers are encouraged to submit their records to the county recorder directly or log them on a system such as BirdTrack or eBird, to which the county recorder has access.

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

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

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

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

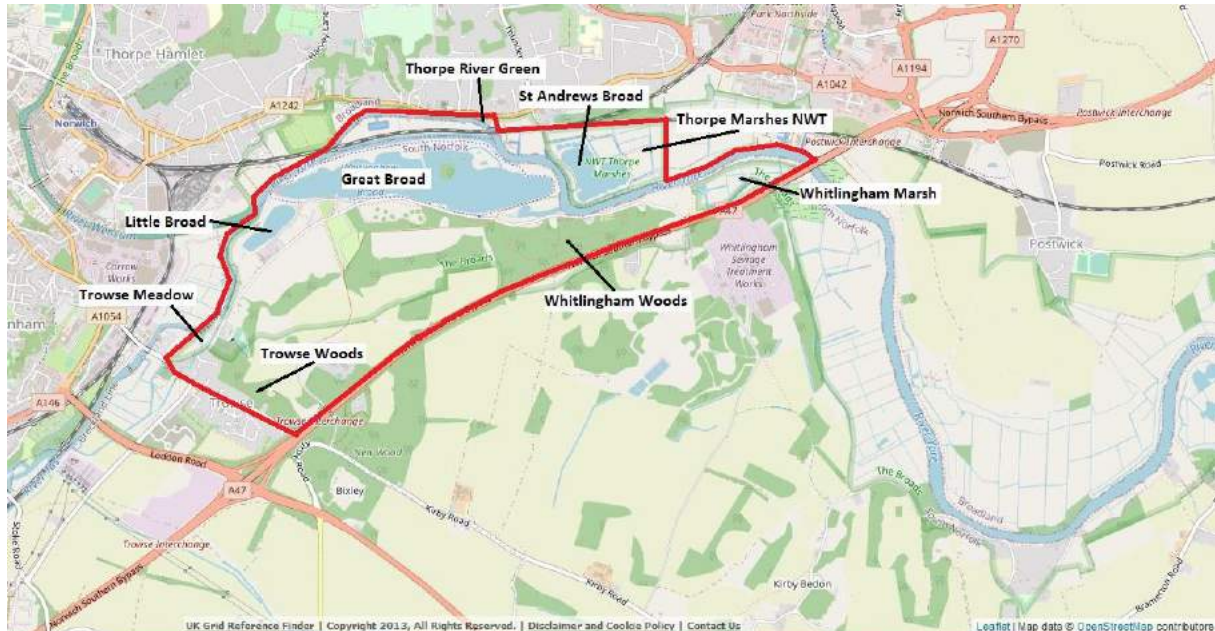
County or national rarities – included solely at the editor's discretion. Details of the record included as with local scarcities, but with an additional note as to whether the record has been submitted to and/or accepted by the relevant rarities committee, based on the latest WIP (work-in-progress)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

Birds covered by the above process form the main systematic species list. The presence of a number of recently reintroduced species in Norfolk has necessitated a specific appendix, whilst the more thorough than normal recording of birds around Norwich also meant increased records from nearby, a few of which I have chosen to mention. The appendices of the report for 2021 are as follows:

- Appendix A – Recorded species linked to reintroduction schemes
- Appendix B – Recorded birds thought to be escapes or of dubious origin
- Appendix C – Birds reported from the area but not accepted onto the main list
- Appendix D – Hybrid birds
- Appendix E – Species notably not recorded in 2021
- Appendix F – Selected additional bird sightings from the Norwich area

The Whitlingham Recording Area covered by this report

Where possible distinctive features make up the boundaries, for example the railway line along part of the north of the area and the A47 to the south.



The key sites that make up the recording area are:

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

Crown Point Estate land north of the A47 is currently included, although as most of it has no public access there are seldom any sightings from this area. Whilst Thorpe St Andrew sits just outside of the recording area, Thorpe River Green is included in the more recent reports. This area, which sits adjacent to the old course of the River Yare just north of the railway line is now the primary part of the area for reading colour rings on gulls, and was previously covered by this report despite nominally being just outside the area.

New to the Whitlingham area: Caspian Tern

Undoubtedly the rarest bird seen in the Norwich area during 2021 was a Caspian Tern found at UEA Broad by Dave Andrews on 16th May. It was present for around 40 minutes from discovery, at which point it headed off along the river. There was some initial confusion as to which direction it had headed, but it was then seen shortly afterwards at Whitlingham Great Broad by Justin Lansdell. Sadly for other local observers it didn't take a similar liking to Whitlingham, flying west along the Great Broad and back along the river. It briefly returned to UEA but then flew north and was not seen again that day. What was presumably the same bird then turned up at Potter Heigham on 18th May, where it lingered for several days.



*Figure 1 – Caspian Tern photographed at UEA Broad. Photo © James Lowen
(<http://www.jameslowen.com/>)*

Because the time the Caspian Tern departed and arrived at UEA and the time of the brief Whitlingham sighting were recorded, a calculation of flight speed between the two locations can be made. It was found at UEA at 10:30, and departed at 11:10, before being seen at Whitlingham at 11:38, a gap of 28 minutes. It was then seen back at UEA Broad at 11:55, a mere 17 minutes later. Assuming that the tern flew along the River Yare, which seems most likely (route shown in Figure 2), the distance covered was 6.5 miles, giving speeds of 14mph and 23mph respectively.

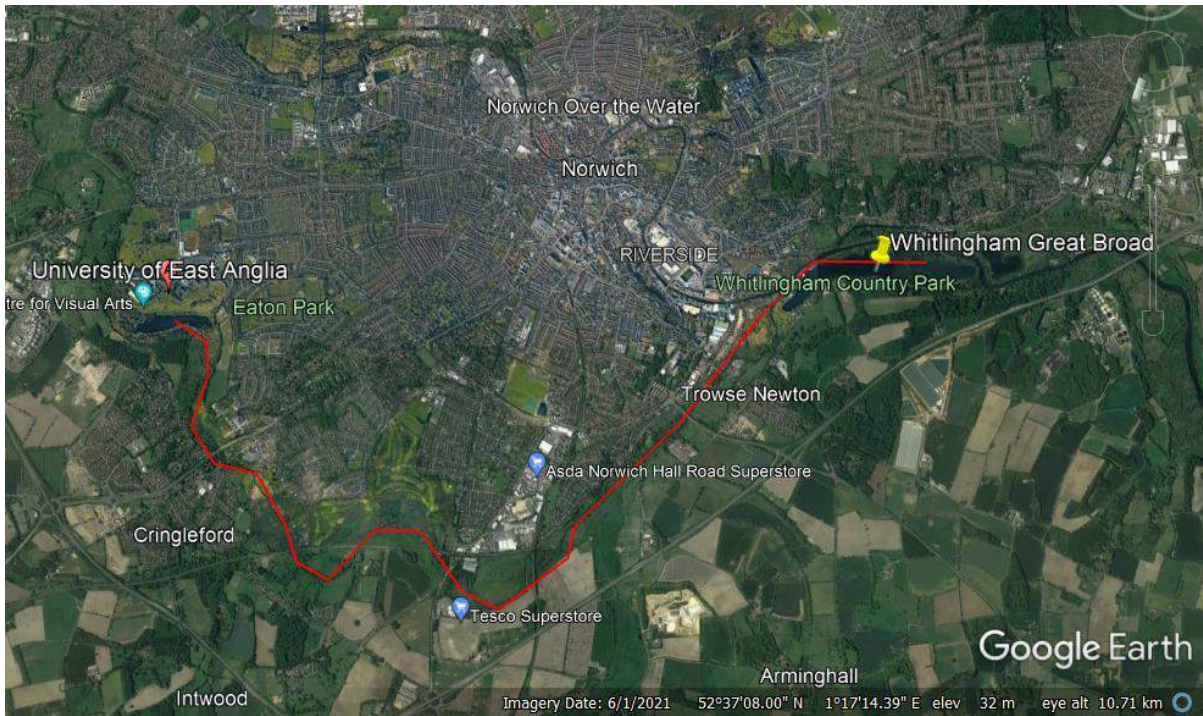


Figure 2 – proposed route taken by the Caspian Tern between UEA Broad and Whitlingham

Caspian Terns are fairly regular in Norfolk, with 73 accepted records of Caspian Tern up until the end of 2020. They are often wide ranging, making it hard to be sure of the number of birds involved when sightings are received from different areas within a few days of each other, but certainly appear to have favoured areas within the county, such as Hickling Broad, Potter Heigham and Breydon Water. A return to the Norwich area in 2022 for this bird would be most welcome!

Acknowledgements

Thanks of course to Dave Andrews for finding the Caspian Tern at UEA along with the other observers who provided updates on the presence of the bird, Justin Lansdell for details of the Whitlingham sighting and to James Lowen for use of the picture.

Great White Egrets at Whitlingham

The marshes to the west of Norwich at Bowthorpe and Earlham have attracted at least one wintering Great White Egret in most years since 2013, but despite this they have remained scarce at Whitlingham. Up until 2021 there had been a total of eight reported sightings, all on single dates and mostly of birds flying over (the exceptions being one reportedly flushed by a boat in 2017 and another perched in trees on the Great Broad island in 2018). The latter was the only sighting to have been photographed, although the 2012 record was submitted to and accepted by the County Rarities Committee. Dates of all sightings along with details (where known) are included in Table 1.

Given the paucity of sightings of Great White Egrets at Whitlingham, the discovery of one roosting on the edge of the Great Broad island on 26th January (see Figure 1) was welcomed by local birders, even more so as it was present throughout the day and remained for several days after. It spent some time along the Great Broad, particularly the north shore, but also flew back and forth to Thorpe Marshes (Figure 2). After an absence of around a week it returned following the onset of cold weather (Figure 3), spending most of its time at Thorpe Marshes. The area of suitable habitat at Thorpe Marshes is much less than at Earlham/Bowthorpe, but it will be interesting to see if sightings will now start to become more regular in the area following this occurrence.



Figure 1 – Great White Egret with a Little Egret at Whitlingham on 26th January 2021.

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

Date	Site	Details
04/11/07	Whitlingham C.P.	Seen by two observers from just past Whitlingham Sewage Works but flying west towards the C.P. It appears that this sighting wasn't reported to the Norfolk Rarities Committee as it is not mentioned in either the species account or the not-accepted records section of the Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report 2007.
10/02/12	Whitlingham C.P.	Flew east along the northern edge of the Great Broad being mobbed by Black-headed Gulls, before appearing to drop down unseen at Thorpe Marshes. Record accepted by Norfolk Rarities Committee
26/05/16	Thorpe Marshes	Flew south-east over at dusk. Not submitted to Norfolk Rarities Committee.
23/10/17	Whitlingham C.P.	Reported via Bird News Services as present on the Great Broad until flushed by a boat. No further details, but species no longer classed as a county rarity so included in the Whitlingham Bird Report for that year.
21/01/18	Whitlingham C.P.	Flew west over the Great Broad, seen by several observers.
13/09/18	Whitlingham C.P.	Seen perched in Great Broad island trees early am – may have roosted. The first Great White Egret to be photographed here (see <i>Birds of Whitlingham & Thorpe 2018</i> for picture)
18/01/20	Whitlingham C.P.	<i>One reported as present via Bird News Services. Several other birders were present during the morning it was reported and didn't see the bird in question, so without further details about the sighting it was mentioned in the 2020 Whitlingham Bird Report for completeness, but has not been included in statistics for the site</i>
30/12/20	Whitlingham C.P.	Two flew in from the east and headed off south. This is the first record of multiple birds here.
26/01/21- 29/01/21, then 08/02/21- 15/02/21 and 27/02/21	Whitlingham C.P./ Thorpe Marshes (moving regularly between the two)	Initially seen on the Great Broad island with a Little Egret, then spending time actively feeding along the broad edges at Whitlingham and St Andrews Broad. Photographed on various dates and seen by many observers during its stay.
28/04/21	Thorpe Marshes	One flew high west (assumed to probably be the same bird that spent time in the area earlier in the year)

Table 1 – Published Great White Egret sightings from the Whitlingham area (2021 sightings in green)



Figure 2 – Great White Egret flying up off Whitlingham Great Broad. Photo © David Ratcliffe



*Figure 3 - Great White Egret at Thorpe Marshes in wintry conditions on 8th February 2021.
Photo © Bill Bufford.*

The colonisation of England by the Great White Egret has occurred rapidly, and a summary of developments from 1979 (when it was first recorded in Norfolk) is set out below. Great White Egrets continued to be considered a national rarity with records assessed by the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) for quite some time, until an increase in the number of birds occurring and their length of stay led to them dropping down to the county rarity list. This change from being considered a national rarity to a regularly breeding Norfolk species took place within the past 15 years (the relevance of their whiteness has also seemingly decreased, with the official IOC name simply “Great Egret”, although the author’s preferred name is still used here.) A brief timeline listing selected events is shown below:

1979 – Norfolk’s first Great White Egret is seen at Hickling, becoming the 20th UK record

1993 – A Great White Egret wintered in Norfolk for the first time (in the Feltwell area)

2006 – Great White Egret is removed from the list of species considered by the BBRC

2007 – First report of a Great White Egret at Whitlingham (but not submitted to Norfolk Rarities Committee)

2009 – A flock of 11 Great White Egrets are seen flying east along the North Norfolk coast, flying past Cley, Sheringham and Mundesley – probably the first double figure Norfolk count.

2012 – First British breeding occurs, with two pairs at Shapwick Heath, Somerset Levels

– First accepted record of a Great White Egret at Whitlingham

2016 – Nesting is attempted in Norfolk – a pair lay an egg at Holkham but the nest fails.

2017 – From Jan 1st Great White Egret is removed from the list of birds requiring submission of a description to the Norfolk Rarities Committee

– First successful breeding in Norfolk, as young are fledged from a nest at Holkham.

References

For a more detailed description of the history of Great White Egrets in Norfolk, and in particular its establishment at Holkham then Andy Bloomfield’s paper referenced below is essential reading:

Bloomfield, Andrew (2017) The Great White Egret – its changing status and the first breeding in Norfolk. **Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report 2017** pages 24-32. *Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists Society*.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to all of the observers who reported the Great White Egret during its stay, and Bill Bufford, Robin Chittenden and David Ratcliffe for allowing use of their photographs.

Kittiwakes at Whitlingham



Figure 1 - Kittiwake on Whitlingham Great Broad. Photo © Max Hellicar

Whilst a common sight along the Norfolk coast (particularly in autumn), Kittiwakes remain a rare find inland, with no more than two inland sightings for the county in any of the past five years. Prior to 2021, there had only been five records from the Whitlingham area, so the presence of four individuals this spring was unprecedented. These sightings included the first photographed live bird, the first record of multiple birds and the first Kittiwake to be present for multiple days. Details of all of the Kittiwake sightings from the Whitlingham area are summarised in Table 1.

The 2021 run of Kittiwake sightings began on 25th January, when a winter-plumaged adult Kittiwake was seen over St Andrew's Broad at Thorpe, where it was photographed by Bill Bufford (Figure 2) before flying off eastwards. On 5th April two adults or near-adult birds were seen with a large flock of 1st-summer Black-headed Gulls. There was clearly a high turnover of birds as they had not been present earlier in the morning and departed shortly after news was broadcast, although were seen by several observers already onsite. The final individual on the 8th April however delighted local birders by staying for several days and regularly showing at close quarters as it flew around and worked its way along the edge of the Great Broad (Figures 3 & 4), whilst also spending some time loafing on the Great Broad close in to the shore as captured in Max's excellent picture (Figure 1).

Year	Date(s)	Age	Length of stay	Notes
1997	14 th March	Not noted	1 day	Whitlingham
1997	31 st March	Adult	1 day	Whitlingham
2013	13 th April	Adult	1 day	Whitlingham Great Broad with large flock of Black-headed Gulls
2017	3 rd Dec	1 st -winter	1 day (found recently dead)	Whitlingham (photographed)
2018	12 th Feb	Not noted	1 day	Whitlingham Great Broad
2021	25 th Jan	Adult (winter plumage)	1 day	St Andrews Broad (photographed)
2021	5 th April	2 adults /near adults	1 day	Whitlingham Great Broad with large flock of 1 st -summer Black-headed Gulls (multiple observers)
2021	8 th -11 th April	Adult	4 days	Whitlingham Great Broad (also seen at St Andrews Broad on 10 th April) (photographed)

Table 1 – Kittiwake records from the Whitlingham area since 1990. Records from 2021 are highlighted in green.



*Figure 2 - Winter-plumaged adult Kittiwake at St Andrews Broad on 25th January 2021.
Photo © Bill Bufford*



Figure 3 - Kittiwake at Whitlingham Great Broad. Photo © Will Walmsley



Figure 4 – Kittiwake flying along the edge of the Great Broad. Photo © James Emerson

Whilst inland Kittiwake sightings are often assumed to be related to birds driven inland by storms, various sources document a light overland spring passage of birds. Analysis of birds reaching reservoirs in the West Midlands showed a clear and regular spring peak, centred on March, with most of these birds being adults. This has been taken to relate to passage birds, which pass through annually but were only likely to be recorded if stalled by a weather front*¹. In contrast there was a smaller November peak, which could be attributed to storm driven birds, and these birds constitute a mixture of ages.

To get a Norfolk perspective I looked up all of the inland sightings of Kittiwakes reported from the Norfolk Bird & Mammal Reports 1991-2020*², then removed some sightings that were listed as inland but relate to sites particularly close to the coast, e.g. Holkham, Cley Arnolds Marsh, Kelling Water Meadows and perhaps controversially Breydon Water. The reasoning behind their removal is that at these locations birds flying past could simply drop in to rest (or float into an estuary) and they were not of the same sighting type as when a bird had flown strongly inland or turned up at a out-of-place location. These sightings were then grouped by month of occurrence. I used the number of days that Kittiwakes were first found, so this does not take into account flock size where more than one bird was seen, or the odd occasion when a bird lingered and was seen for more than one day. The graph nicely shows the same spring peak centred on March that was evident in the West Midlands data, although there is no equivalent secondary winter peak shown by the Norfolk records.

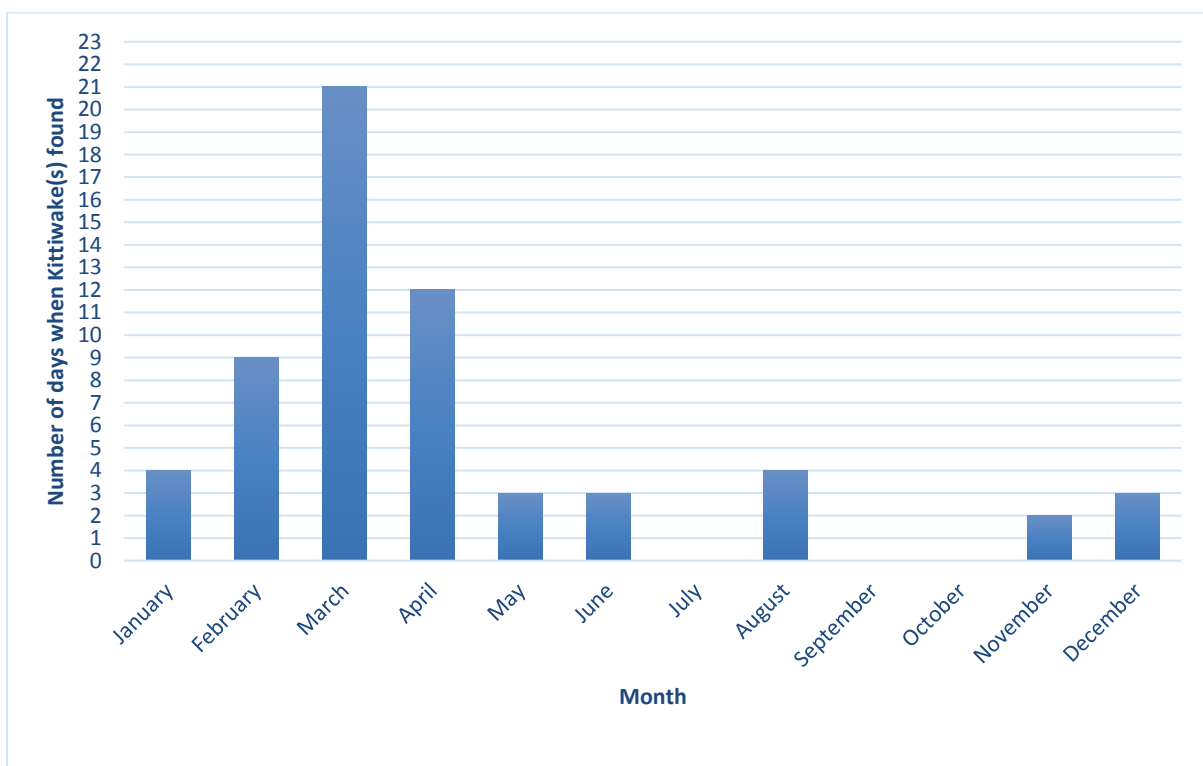


Figure 5 – A monthly breakdown of inland Norfolk Kittiwake sightings from 1991-2020 as further defined in the text

I then plotted the same records on a map (Figure 6). No attempt was made to illustrate the number of sightings from any particular location. There seems to be quite a clear cluster of west Norfolk sightings south of the Wash, either along the River Great Ouse or River Nar. It is noticeable that there were far more inland sightings between 1991 and 2005 (48) than 2006-2020 (13), and many of the records from that first 15 year period came from Welney (records in 13 out of 15 years but then none reported from there 2006-2020). The sheer regularity of spring sightings at Welney would certainly seem to provide support for the idea of regular passage rather than birds simply being storm-driven. The reason for the lack of sightings in recent times from Welney, which is a well-watched location thanks to the Wildfowl &

Wetlands Trust (WWT) reserve, can perhaps be put down to the overall decline in Kittiwake numbers in recent years, with JNCC figures suggesting that in 2019 abundance was down 52% on a baseline taken in 1986*³.

A third suggestion for the occurrence of some spring inland Kittiwake records other than overland passage or inclement weather is the possibility of birds being temporarily swept up in coastal locations with flocks of 2cy Black-headed Gulls that penetrate inland along the river valleys during the day but return to Breydon in the evenings, something that all three of the April records from Whitlingham appear to have in common.

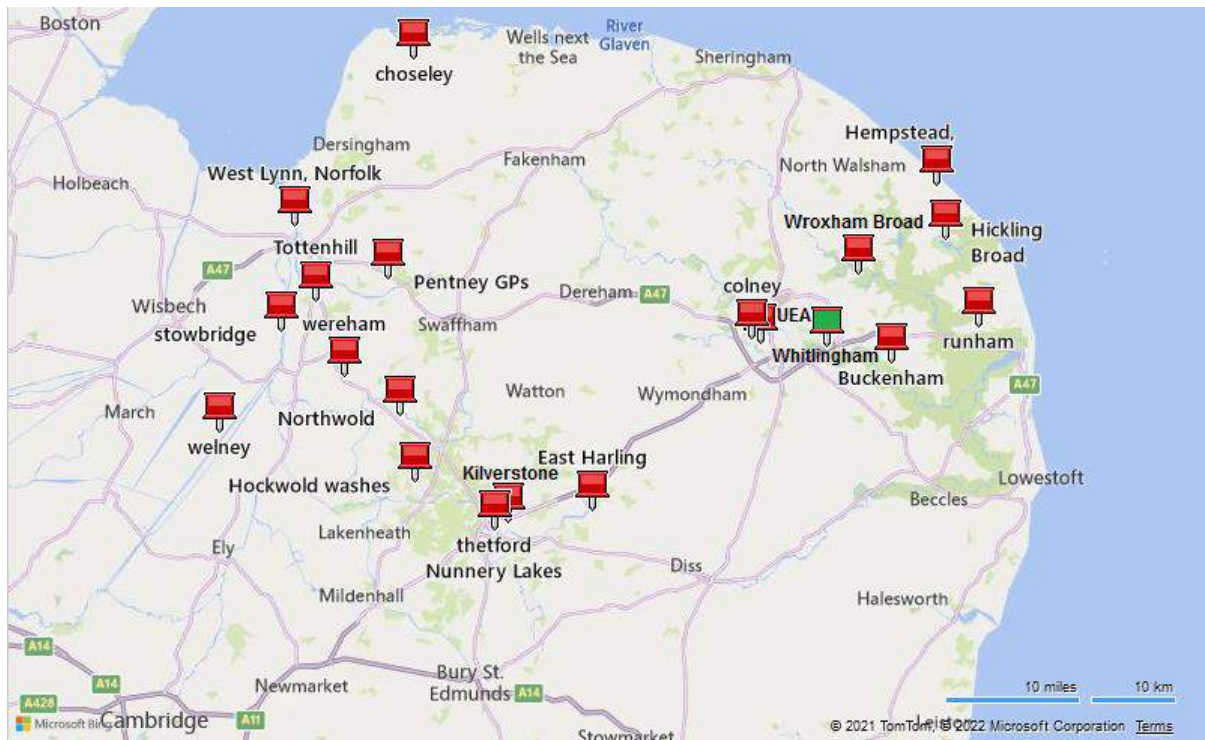


Figure 6 – locations of inland Kittiwake sightings from 1991-2020 as taken from the Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report and excluding wetland sites close (<2 miles) to the coast.

References

- *1 - Dean, A.R. (2000) West Midlands birds website, Kittiwake page - <http://deanar.org.uk/wmgulls/Kw/kwake.htm>
- *2 – Various (eds) (1992-2021) **Norfolk Bird & Mammal Reports 1991-2020** Published by Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society.
- *3 - SMP report (2019) <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/black-legged-kittiwake-rissa-tridactyla/>

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Bill Bufford, Max Hellicar and Will Walmsley for allowing use of their photographs.

Not in a month of Little Gulls...

Little Gulls are annual spring migrants to Whitlingham, typically in the last week of March or during April, however passage is usually limited to one or two days, often on dates when flocks are seen at a range of inland locations. Sometimes individuals may linger for one or two days following this main passage, or pioneering/straggling birds might turn up either side of the main event, but it is unusual for birds to be present for any longer than a week. The situation in spring 2021 with at least one Little Gull (not necessarily the same individual) present in the area for nearly a month, was therefore unprecedented. This article provides a bit more detail about the sightings and compares them to previous years at Whitlingham.

The first Little Gull of the spring was an adult seen at St Andrews Broad on 30th March, with three adults on the following day. There then proceeded to be near-continuous sightings of an adult through until 23rd April, with the one exception of 2nd April (it is however unclear if no Little Gull was present on that date or if no potential observers were present/reported it). There was some debate about if this was the same bird on each date as up to 5th April reports mostly referenced winter plumage (as displayed in Figure 1), whilst by 10th April the Little Gull present had a mostly dark head (see Figure 2). In addition, the original bird on 30th March was noted as looking like it had an injured leg on several dates. Unfortunately I have been unable to obtain any photos of the individual taken between 5th-9th April to check its stage of moult - it is quite possible that the lengthy sequence did indeed involve one long-staying individual that completed its moult by the end of its stay (Figure 3). On several dates additional birds were present – see Table 1 for a complete list of sightings. Ironically the main passage this year appeared to be on 24th Apr, the day after the Whitlingham bird departed!



Figure 1 – Little Gull at Whitlingham on 1st April. Photo ©David Ratcliffe



Figure 2 – Adult Little Gull at Whitlingham on 10th April. Photo © James Lowen
(<http://www.jameslowen.com/>)



Figure 3 – Adult Little Gull at Whitlingham on 19th April. Photo: © Robin Chittenden
(www.robinchittenden.co.uk)

Date	Number of Little Gulls present	Age/plumage	Location
30/03/21	1	Adult	Whitlingham/Thorpe
31/03/21	3+	Adults	Whitlingham/Thorpe
01/04/21	1	Adult (winter plumage)	Whitlingham/Thorpe
02/04/21	?	Thought to have been present but no named observer	
03/04/21	1	Adult (winter plumage)	Whitlingham
04/04/21	1	Adult (winter plumage)	Thorpe
05/04/21	1	Adult (winter plumage)	Whitlingham/Thorpe
06/04/21	1	Adult (winter plumage)	Thorpe
07/04/21	1	Adult	Thorpe
08/04/21	1	Adult	Whitlingham
09/04/21	1	Adult	Whitlingham
10/04/21	1	Adult (nearly all dark head)	Thorpe
11/04/21	1	Adult	Thorpe
12/04/21	1	Adult	Thorpe
13/04/21	1	Adult (nearly all dark head)	Thorpe
14/04/21	1	Adult	Thorpe
15/04/21	1	Adult	Thorpe
16/04/21	1	Adult	Thorpe
17/04/21	1	Adult	Thorpe
18/04/21	3	One adult, two 1 st -summers	Whitlingham/Thorpe
19/04/21	1	Adult (completely black head)	Thorpe
20/04/21	2	Adult (completely black head) & 2cy (also black head)	Thorpe
21/04/21	3	2 adults and a 1 st -winter	Thorpe
22/04/21	1	Adult	Thorpe
23/04/21	1	Adult	Thorpe
24/04/21			
25/04/21			
26/04/21			
27/04/21			
28/04/21			
29/04/21			
30/04/21	2	One 1 st -summer and one 2 nd summer	Whitlingham/Thorpe

Table 1 – Details of all Whitlingham/Thorpe Little Gull sightings for spring 2021

To compare the run of Little Gull sightings during 2021 I revisited records from the previous nine years covered by Whitlingham bird reports, looking at the total number of dates with a Little Gull present, the longest continuous spell with a Little Gull present, and also for interest the minimum number of Little Gulls seen during the spring (based on a combination of the largest flock and notes on different plumages). This data is displayed in Table 2. Whilst we realised at the time that the presence of a Little Gull for this length of time was unusual, this data shows just how unusual it was. The previous longest spell that a Little Gull was present for during this period was three days, and the most non-consecutive days overall during spring was five. In 2021 these numbers were 21 consecutive and 26 overall (or 25 and 27 respectively if you make the assumption that a Little Gull was also present on 2nd April).

Year	Total number of days when a Little Gull was present	Longest number of continuous days when a Little Gull was present	Minimum number of Little Gulls present during spring
2012	1	1	11
2013	1	1	2
2014	2	1	3
2015	1	1	1
2016	1	1	3
2017	4	2	4
2018	5	2	37
2019	4	3	10
2020	3	1	13
2021	26 (27*)	21 (25*)	8

Table 2 – Comparison of spring Little Gull sightings for the 10 year period covered by Whitlingham Bird Reports

Somewhat unusually none of the Whitlingham occurrences seemed to coincide with the largest passage of Little Gulls, which happened on 24th/25th April when a flock of 38 were present at Hickling along with 14 at Breydon (both 24th) and 16 at Buckenham Marshes (25th). Whilst possibly coincidental it is worth noting that the long-staying Whitlingham bird was last seen on 23rd April, so it appeared to depart at the same time as the main passage of Little Gulls through the country. There was one further day of local sightings, 30th April, when two different Little Gulls were present, including the one shown in Figure 4.



Figure 4 – Little Gull at Whitlingham on 30th April. Photo © Drew Lyness

References

Emerson, James (2013-2021) Birds of Whitlingham & Thorpe 2012-2020

Acknowledgements

Thanks to all of the observers who reported Little Gull sightings throughout the spring, plus Robin Chittenden, James Lowen, Drew Lyness and David Ratcliffe for allowing their photos to be used.

Ten years of the Whitlingham Bird Report

This edition of the Birds of Whitlingham and Thorpe, colloquially the Whitlingham Bird Report, completes ten years of publishing a record of the birdlife of the area. Whilst the early reports were built around personal observations supplemented with records from a small core of other local observers, more recent reports have taken into account records from many local birders and sources, helped in no small part by the rise in sightings being shared via social media platforms such as Twitter and WhatsApp. I have revisited all of the bird reports and compiled a complete list of species recorded over the 10-year period along with the years they have been recorded (Table 1). In some cases this has resulted in minor changes to the annual species totals as a result of species that had been accidentally omitted, or county rarities that were included at the time but on review would perhaps not now make the main list.

The annual species count over the period covered has varied from 111 to 156 (shown in Figure 1), with a mean of 136 species. Whilst undoubtedly some of the variation is related to weather conditions or simply the unpredictable nature of bird migration, it is likely that the main factor is the difference in observer numbers and behaviour year-to-year. For example, the three years that saw over 150 species recorded were all years during which large numbers of nocturnal visits were made to the Thorpe Marshes, thus providing records of a range of calling flyover species that were not recorded during other years when visits were almost all diurnal.

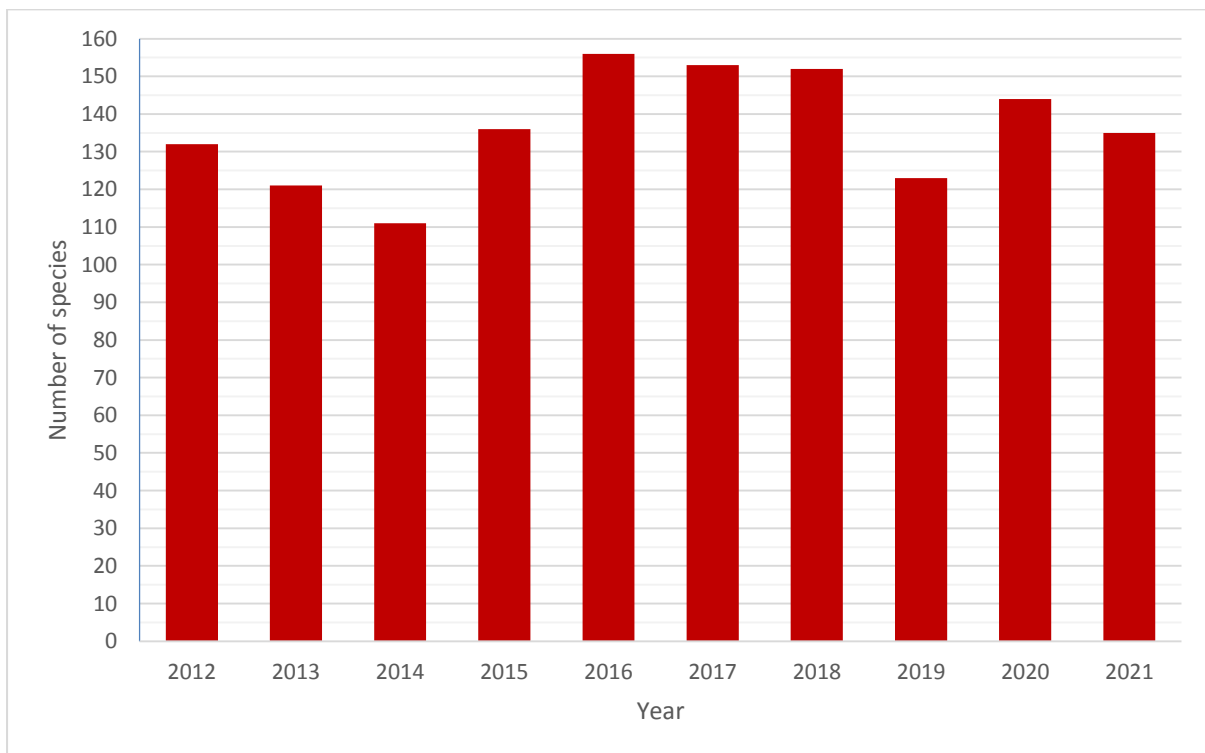


Figure 1 – Species totals year-on-year (note totals might not match exactly with those in the corresponding bird reports as several rare birds not submitted to the relevant rarities committee have been omitted and a few omissions have been added in)

Species name	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Brent Goose	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	3
Canada Goose	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Barnacle Goose	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	4
Greylag Goose	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Pink-footed Goose	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
White-fronted Goose	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Mute Swan	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Bewick's Swan	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	5
Whooper Swan	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
Egyptian Goose	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Shelduck	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Mandarin Duck	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	6
Garganey	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
Shoveler	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Gadwall	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Wigeon	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Mallard	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Pintail	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	6
Teal	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Red-crested Pochard	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	4
Pochard	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Ferruginous Duck	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Ring-necked Duck	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Tufted Duck	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Scaup	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	6
Velvet Scoter	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Common Scoter	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	5
Long-tailed Duck	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Goldeneye	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Smew	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	3
Goosander	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
Red-breasted Merganser	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Pheasant	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Red-legged Partridge	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
Swift	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Cuckoo	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Feral Pigeon	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Stock Dove	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Woodpigeon	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Turtle Dove	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Collared Dove	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Water Rail	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Corncrake	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	x

Species name	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Moorhen	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Coot	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Crane	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	6
Little Grebe	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Red-necked Grebe	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Great Crested Grebe	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Slavonian Grebe	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
Black-necked Grebe	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
Stone-curlew	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
Oystercatcher	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Avocet	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	5
Lapwing	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Golden Plover	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	6
Grey Plover	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	3
Ringed Plover	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	4
Little Ringed Plover	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	9
Whimbrel	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	7
Curlew	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8
Bar-tailed Godwit	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
Black-tailed Godwit	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	4
Knot	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
Ruff	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Curlew Sandpiper	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Sanderling	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Dunlin	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8
Woodcock	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
Jack Snipe	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	7
Snipe	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Common Sandpiper	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Green Sandpiper	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Redshank	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	8
Wood Sandpiper	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	6
Spotted Redshank	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
Greenshank	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	6
Kittiwake	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	4
Black-headed Gull	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Little Gull	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Mediterranean Gull	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	8
Common Gull	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Great Black-backed Gull	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	9
Glaucous Gull	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Iceland Gull	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Herring Gull	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10

Species name	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Caspian Gull	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	3
Yellow-legged Gull	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	6
Lesser Black-backed Gull	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Caspian Tern	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Sandwich Tern	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Little Tern	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Common Tern	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Arctic Tern	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
Black Tern	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	5
Cormorant	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Spoonbill	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Bittern	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Grey Heron	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Great White Egret	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	6
Little Egret	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Osprey	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	4
Honey-buzzard	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Sparrowhawk	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Marsh Harrier	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Hen Harrier	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Red Kite	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
White-tailed Eagle	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Buzzard	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Barn Owl	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
Long-eared Owl	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
Short-eared Owl	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Tawny Owl	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8
Kingfisher	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Great Spotted Woodpecker	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Green Woodpecker	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Kestrel	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Merlin	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Hobby	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Peregrine	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Ring-necked Parakeet	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
Jay	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Magpie	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Jackdaw	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Rook	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	9
Carrion Crow	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Waxwing	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	5
Coal Tit	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10

Species name	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Marsh Tit	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Blue Tit	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Great Tit	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Bearded Tit	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	5
Woodlark	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Skylark	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Sand Martin	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Swallow	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
House Martin	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Red-rumped Swallow	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Cetti's Warbler	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Long-tailed Tit	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Yellow-browed Warbler	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	3
Willow Warbler	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Chiffchaff	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Sedge Warbler	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Reed Warbler	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Marsh Warbler	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Savi's Warbler	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Grasshopper Warbler	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Blackcap	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Garden Warbler	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Lesser Whitethroat	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Whitethroat	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Firecrest	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	7
Goldcrest	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Wren	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Nuthatch	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Treecreeper	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Starling	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Song Thrush	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Mistle Thrush	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Redwing	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Blackbird	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Fieldfare	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Ring Ouzel	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	5
Spotted Flycatcher	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	4
Robin	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Nightingale	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	8
Pied Flycatcher	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Redstart	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	4
Whinchat	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
Stonechat	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7

Species name	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Wheatear	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	5
House Sparrow	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
Dunnock	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Yellow Wagtail	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	8
Grey Wagtail	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Pied Wagtail	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Meadow Pipit	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Tree Pipit	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	3
Water Pipit	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	6
Rock Pipit	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Chaffinch	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Brambling	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
Hawfinch	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	4
Bullfinch	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Greenfinch	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Linnet	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Mealy Redpoll	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	7
Lesser Redpoll	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Arctic Redpoll	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Crossbill	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	3
Goldfinch	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Siskin	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Lapland Bunting	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Yellowhammer	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
Reed Bunting	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Year Total	132	121	111	136	156	152	152	123	144	135	-
Notes	*1	*2	✓	*3	*4	*5	*6	✓	✓	✓	

Table 1 – Year by year breakdown of species included within the Whitlingham Bird Report 2012-2021.

- Species named in **bold** have been photographed or filmed within the Whitlingham area during the period in question.
- Orange background - Species not counted in total (recent reintroduction scheme)

Notes regarding specific year totals in Table 1

- *1 (2012) – Total is one species higher than in the original report – Slavonian Grebe was mentioned in the year summary but accidentally omitted from the systematic list
- *2 (2013) – Total is one species higher than in the original report – Meadow Pipit was recorded but accidentally omitted from the systematic list
- *3 (2015) – Total is one species higher than original report – Short-eared Owl was reported but accidentally omitted from the systematic list.

- *4 (2016) – Total is one lower than original report – Night Heron mentioned in systematic list but omitted from this review
- *5 (2017) – Total is two lower than original report – Yellow-legged Gull (was included in the original report but re-identified as Herring Gull from photos) and Lesser Spotted Woodpecker mentioned in systematic list but omitted from this review
- *6 (2018) – Total is one species higher than original report – Spoonbill was written up in an article as new to the site, but accidentally omitted from the systematic list.

Excluding reintroductions, likely escapes and a handful of single-observer reports of county/national rarities, I have accepted a total of 195 species as having been recorded in a wild state from the area since the start of 2012, an impressive 91% of the total site list since 1990, which is provisionally estimated to be 214*¹. Of the 195 species that are included in the bird reports, 151 (77%) have been either photographed or filmed, whilst three more have had descriptions accepted by the county rarities committee (White-tailed Eagle, Honey Buzzard and Red-rumped Swallow). A further 20 have been reported by more than one named observer during the ten years, leaving 21 species (11% of the total) that have only been reported by one observer (including some that have been reported multiple times, but by the same person).

Details of the 18 species on the overall site list that have not been seen since before 2012 are included in Table 2 and broadly fall into three categories; species no longer present/regular through change of habitat (e.g. the waders attracted by the working gravel pits), species that have undergone national declines (Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and Willow Tit) or vagrants (e.g. Alpine Swift, Black-and-white Warbler).

Just under half of the species recorded (96/195) have been seen in each of the ten years, whilst a further 15 have been seen in eight or nine years (of which some, such as Tawny Owl and Pink-footed Goose, would have almost certainly been present in the 'missing' year(s) but just not submitted to the author by observers). At the opposite end of the spectrum 26 species have only been seen in one of the ten years, with 12 seen twice and a further 11 seen three times. It is also possible to look at the sightings in five year blocks, 2012-2016 and 2017-2021. A total of 101 species were seen in each of the first five years, whilst 109 were recorded in all of the more recent five. Some of the greatest declines by this measure is Yellow-legged Gull (5/1), Nightingale (5/3) and Waxwing (4/1), whilst Brambling, Stonechat and Yellowhammer are all now recorded more regularly (all 2/5).

Species	Year recorded/status	Details
Grey Partridge	Last seen 1999	Locally extinct
Green-winged Teal	Two records: 1999 and 2005	Vagrant
Ruddy Duck	Last seen 2010	Nationally extinct
Alpine Swift	One, 2 nd April 2006	Vagrant
Turnstone	Last seen 2002	Rare inland
Little Stint	Last seen 1998	When the site was still gravel pits
Red-necked Phalarope	13 th Sept 1995	When the site was still gravel pits
Great Northern Diver	Winter 2009/10	A well-watched long-staying bird
Shag	Several records, last in Sept 2011 [2022]	Mostly coastal species, storm-driven inland. <i>[At the time of writing (at the start of Jan 2022), a Shag has just been photographed at Whitlingham!]</i>
White Stork	Records from 1998 accepted by rarities committee	Due to recent releases and free-flying birds all recent records are impossible to assign as genuine migrants
Goshawk	One sighting from 2010	Rare, possible confusion with Sparrowhawk
Little Owl	Status unclear – a record from near the sewage works in the early 2000s.	Breeds a few miles south of Whitlingham but seemingly not present here.
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	Resident in early 2000s	Locally extinct. Birds still present in 2002 but probably not resident after that, although possibly occasional birds still seen.
Golden Oriole	6 th June 1999	Local vagrant - one mentioned in the Bird & Mammal Report
Hooded Crow	17 th Oct 1999	Local vagrant
Willow Tit	Present up until 2003 but one possibly ringed at the STW years after that.	Locally extinct
Black Redstart	Unclear	Anecdotally at least one has been recorded near the old Barn between the A47 flyover and the STW but date not known.
Black-and-white Warbler	A well-twitched individual on Whitlingham Lane in Nov 1996	National vagrant
Snow Bunting	A flyover on 30 th Oct 2010	Local vagrant

Table 2 – Additional species on the Whitlingham area list but not seen during 2012-2021.

One of the harder parts about compiling a local bird report is deciding which records to omit. In the first reports I adopted a policy of including almost all records, but having discussed this with various other birders it became apparent that some level of assessment for unusual records would be appropriate. I have continued to include most records of species that would be expected to occur locally based on historical records and contemporary sightings from the surrounding area. This approach does rather preclude acceptance of rare species new to the area that have not been photographed or corroborated elsewhere, but then most birders familiar with the system of rarities committees would accept that claims of rarities are usually subject to increased scrutiny. The circumstances around the sighting are also considered, for instance with most species there is more chance of an error being made with heard-only birds or those flying over at night than something seen perched up and showing well.

In keeping with the approach used in other bird reports the sightings that are not included should be viewed as not proven rather than as incorrect – ultimately it is impossible to know what someone else has actually seen or heard. Whilst this assessment of records is mostly relevant to rare species, it can also be needed for records of locally scarce species reported via social media or citizen science schemes. Whilst most of these would typically be accepted when reported by experienced observers, they might present pitfalls to the less-experienced (or over eager!) A trivial example is the tendency of some visitors to report Rooks, a fairly infrequent flyover species, on each visit. Sightings such as these are typically not mentioned in the report, with only the occasional sighting that gains extra traction by making it onto the Bird News Services addressed within the report. For completeness a list of the species that have been reported either directly or via the bird news services since 2012 but not accepted onto the main species list of any of the reports is included in Table 3.

Species	Year	Details
Goshawk	2015	Reported from Whitlingham Marsh
Purple Heron	2015	Whitlingham Great Broad (via bird news services)
Night-heron*	2016	Nocturnal calls over Thorpe Marshes
Serin	2016	One reported flight calling over Thorpe Marshes
Wood Warbler	2016	One reported at Thorpe Marshes in late summer
Spotted Crake	2019	Nocturnal calls over Thorpe Marshes
Black-winged Stilt	2019	Nocturnal calls over Thorpe Marshes
Little Bittern	2020	Nocturnal calls over Thorpe Marshes
Tree Sparrow	2020	Flew over Thorpe Marshes

Table 3 – Rarities not included in main reports

(Note that the Night-heron was included in the systematic list in the 2016 report, but in terms of consistency with other species it would no longer be included)

References

*1 – Emerson, James (2021) Birds of the Whitlingham area: Interim checklist

- Emerson, James (2013-2022) Birds of Whitlingham and Thorpe 2012-2021

Norwich Mute Swan colour-ringing project update

This article provides a Whitlingham-centric update on the progress of the Norwich Swan Project, an initiative from the UEA Ringing Group, and is based on a post on their blog here: <https://uearg.blogspot.com/2021/06/norwich-swan-project-our-first-year.html?m=1> alongside some additional information provided by Stephen Vickers.

The group began colour-ringing Mute Swans in late spring 2020 using orange leg rings with four-letter black alpha-numeric codes, with 123 swans ringed by the end of 2020. Ninety-four of these were ringed within the Whitlingham recording area, either at Whitlingham C.P. or Thorpe River Green. The other main ringing location near Carrow Bridge is only a short stretch of river away from the recording area, and there is already evidence of exchange between these three sites. This year a further 43 swans were colour-ringed around Norwich, with 25 ringed at Whitlingham C.P. or Thorpe River Green.

Over 500 sightings were submitted of colour-ringed swans in the area during 2021, relating to 89 different birds. This annual number is likely to increase in future, partly because of the additional swans being ringed, but also because of the dedicated webpage for reporting Norwich Swan Project ringed Mute Swans, <https://stephenvickers.shinyapps.io/swansubapp/>

Norwich Swan Project sighting submissions



We fit orange leg rings with a unique 4-digit code to swans across Norwich as part of a larger national project to help us understand their movements and estimate survival. Sightings from members of the public play a vital role in our study, helping us to build up a rich picture of where our birds go. Repeat sightings of individuals at the same site (yes, even that bird you see on every visit to Whitlingham) are just as valuable to us as the bird that crosses the country on its travels. If you spot a bird with a metal leg ring, but without a colour ring we'd also like to hear about those too.

Colour rings used so far for this project are orange with black writing with a four digit code: **4DU*, 4DZ*, 4ES*, 4EN*, 4EO*, 4EX*, 4FD*** where "*" can be any letter of the alphabet.

Other four digit codes on an orange ring are not in this project and should be reported through the following: [link](#).

Projects using colour rings that are not orange can be found by searching at the following: [link](#)

You can find out more and contact us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#).

Multiple individuals present at the same place, date & time can be submitted in a single submission by separating legging codes with a comma.

Mandatory fields are marked with a red asterisk (*), this includes a map-click sighting location.

Legging Code *

The legging was orange with black writing (tick if true) *

Date *

By submitting sightings via this online app you receive an instant history for the swan you have reported. Observers are asked to submit all sightings, even of seemingly resident birds, as this information helps to build up a detailed picture of the movements of individual swans. You can also contact the project via the Norwich Swan Ringing social media accounts https://www.facebook.com/NorwichSwanProject/?view_public_for=100635121759111 and https://twitter.com/swan_norwich.

As expected most re-sightings of the locally-ringed Mute Swans are made from the area around Norwich, either along the River Wensum or River Yare (see Figure 1). Over time this should give a nice illustration of the catchment area for the birds that spend the summer at Whitlingham C.P. A few birds have already been noted away from the local river valleys, such as one at Great Plumstead, and others have been noted along other rivers including the Bure and the Waveney. Another has been sighted at Thetford, which is in keeping with previous movements of a neck-ringed Greylag Goose. So far only one ringed swan has been reported outside of Norfolk, but the movement was a significant one with a 1st-year bird ringed at Whitlingham turning up near Eastbourne (East Sussex), 218km SSW of its ringing location. These larger movements are mapped on Figure 2.

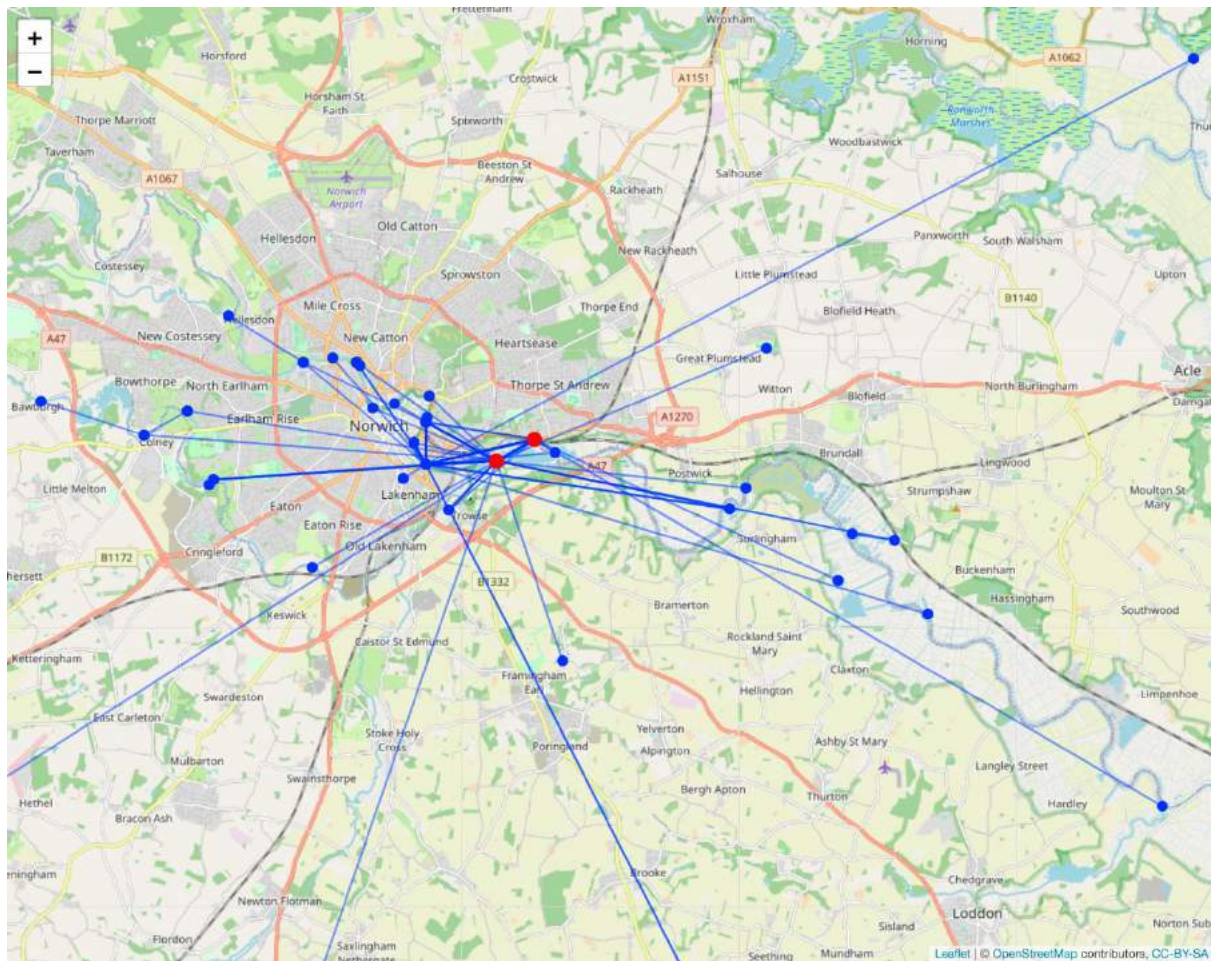


Figure 1 – local movements of Norwich Swan Project colour-ringed Mute Swans (Whitlingham and Thorpe River Green marked with red dots)

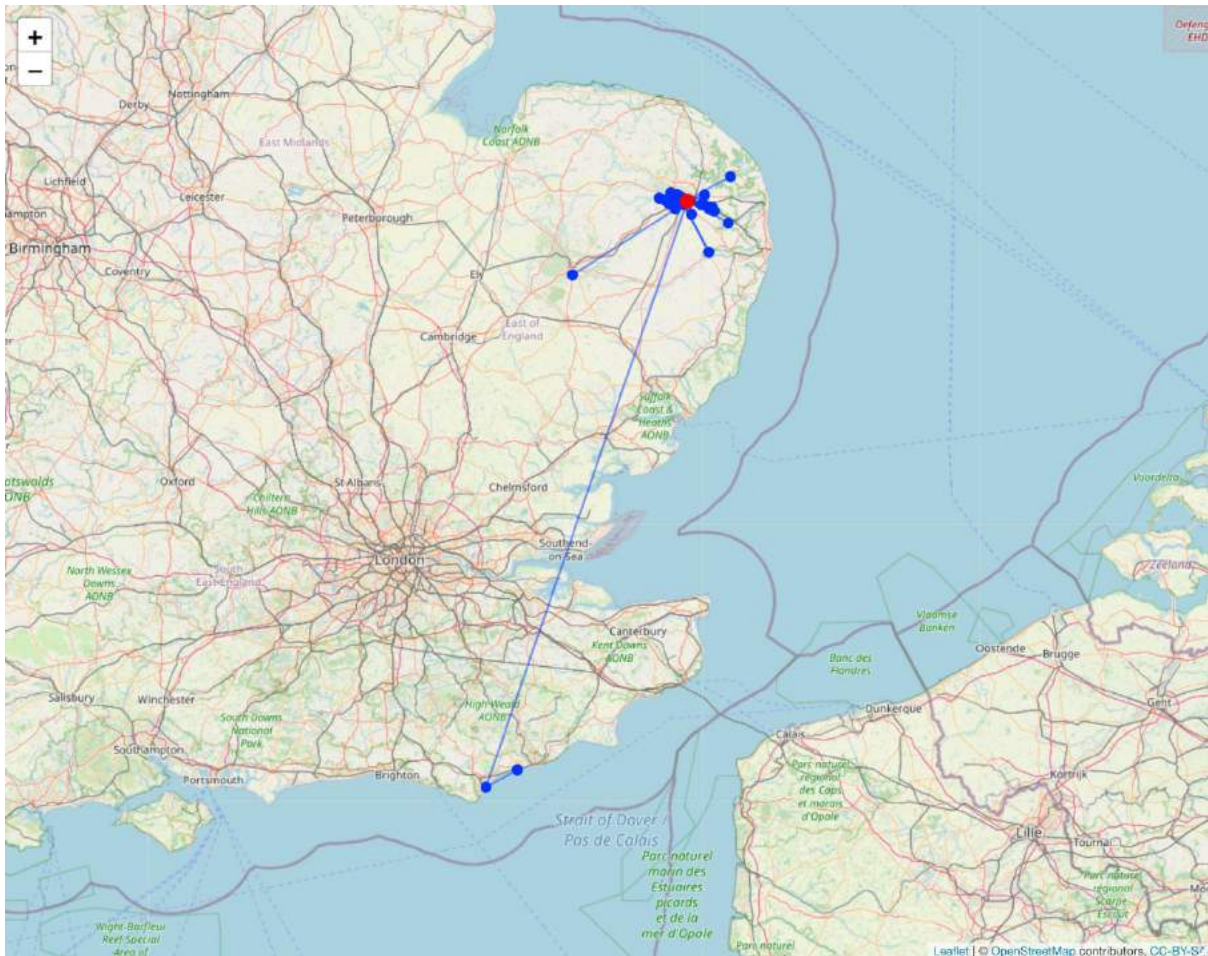


Figure 2 – map of larger movements of Norwich Swan Project colour-ringed Mute Swans

Acknowledgements

The Norwich Swan Project is run by the UEA Ringing Group and the author is particularly grateful to Stephen Vickers from the group, who provided an update in June 2021 here: <https://uearg.blogspot.com/2021/06/norwich-swan-project-our-first-year.html?m=1> and also provided more specific local data at the end of the year via email.

Ringed Black-headed Gulls at Whitlingham part ix

This brief report is the ninth in a series of annual articles documenting the ringed Black-headed Gulls that have been reported from Whitlingham or across the river at Thorpe River Green. During the time covered by these bird reports (2012 onwards) foreign-ringed Black-headed Gulls have been observed within the area from nine different countries (Denmark, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland and Sweden). During 2021 Black-headed Gulls from six of those countries were reported - Denmark, Finland, Germany, Lithuania, Netherlands and Poland.

In addition to the foreign ringed Black-headed Gulls, 24 were colour-ringed within the recording area during 2021. There were also some returning birds from the 13 that had been ringed within the area during autumn/winter 2020. Details of these locally ringed birds are only included here if they have been seen by or reported to the author (i.e. details of those ringed in situ but not reported since are not included). The easiest way to report sightings of these UK ringed birds (blue with four characters of white text beginning 2K__) is via the website <https://waterbirdcolourmarking.org/report-a-bird/>, which can then give you an instant sighting history of the bird. For other colour ringed birds, check out www.cr-birding.org to find contact details for the relevant scheme.



*Figure 1 - Blue-ringed 2K94 at Thorpe River Green, ringed in situ this winter.
Photo © James Emerson.*

Black-headed Gull sightings from January to March 2021

Eight ringed gulls were reported in the first winter period, including three of the blue ringed birds that had been ringed at Thorpe River Green in the autumn of 2020 by members of the UEA Ringing Group and two regular yellow-ringed Polish gulls. Of the other three, one was a returning metal-ringed Finnish bird and the other two were reported here for the first time - a metal ringed bird from Denmark and a white colour-ringed bird from the Netherlands. Full details can be found in Table 1.

Ring number	Date first seen	Place ringed	Date ringed	Distance travelled / Km	Seen previously?
2K64	01/02/21	Thorpe River Green	Nov 2020	0	Reported Dec 2020
2K68	01/02/21	Thorpe River Green	Nov 2020	0	1 st report but ringed here
Metal ringed ST305.473	02/02/21	Keski-Suomi, Konnevesi, FINLAND	10/06/18	1841	First seen in Nov 2018
2K63	05/02/21	Thorpe River Green	Nov 2020	0	1 st report but ringed here
Metal ringed 6241523	09/02/21	Odense, DENMARK	26/10/10	670	NEW
TEX7	13/02/21	Mietkowski, POLAND	24/06/19	1063	First seen in Nov 2019
T2X8	13/02/21	Zachodniopomorskie, POLAND	20/05/17	868	First seen in Nov 2017
EJ3X	20/02/21	Griend, THE NETHERLANDS	03/07/18	272	NEW

Table 1 – Ringed Black-headed Gulls seen in the first winter period (Jan-Mar) 2021

Black-headed Gull sightings from April to September 2021

The large majority of Black-headed Gulls are winter visitors to the area. This year for the first time since these reports began there was a sighting of a ringed bird in July.

Ring number	Date first seen	Place ringed	Date ringed	Distance travelled / Km	Seen previously?
2K61	11/07/21	Thorpe River Green	24/11/20	0	Ringed here in 2020

Table 3 – Ringed Black-headed Gulls seen over the summer period (Apr-Sept) 2021

Black-headed Gull sightings from October to December 2021

Eleven ringed gulls were reported in the autumn. Three of them were returning having been ringed within the area the previous autumn, whilst a further two were sighted having had colour rings added in situ this autumn. Of the others, the two yellow ringed Polish birds were returning for their 3rd and 5th winters respectively, and the Finnish and Lithuanian gulls were also returnees. This left a white-ringed Danish bird and a metal ringed 1st-winter ringed on the Germany/Poland border in June 2021 as 'new' birds. Full details are presented below in Table 3.

Ring number	Date first seen	Place ringed	Date ringed	Distance travelled / Km	Seen previously?
Metal-ringed HA50-955	19/10/21	Kretuona, LITHUANIA	15/06/19	1636	First seen in Nov 2019
Metal ringed IA210786 (Now 2K82)	19/10/21	Riether Werder, GERMANY [Colour ring added at Whitlingham C.P.]	08/06/21 28/11/21	872	NEW
TEX7	27/10/21	Mietkowski, POLAND	24/06/19	1063	First seen in Nov 2019
T2X8	11/11/21	Zachodniopomorskie, POLAND	20/05/17	868	First seen in Nov 2017
2K63	04/12/21	Thorpe River Green	Nov 2020	0	Ringed here in 2020
2K65	04/12/21	Thorpe River Green	Nov 2020	0	Ringed here in 2020
2K68	04/12/21	Thorpe River Green	Nov 2020	0	Ringed here in 2020
2K94	04/12/21	Thorpe River Green	Dec 2021	0	1 st report but ringed here
Metal ringed ST305.473	17/12/21	Keski-Suomi, Konnevesi, FINLAND	10/06/18	1841	First seen in Nov 2018
S76	17/12/21	Copenhagen, DENMARK	16/03/11	807	NEW
2K74	19/12/21	Whitlingham C.P.	Nov 2021	0	1 st report but ringed here

Table 3 – Ringed Black-headed Gulls seen in the second winter period (Oct-Dec) 2021

Movements of Black-headed Gulls ringed in the Whitlingham area

So far there have been 38 re-sightings of Black-headed Gulls ringed at Whitlingham or Thorpe River Green, and as expected given the recent nature of the project the majority of them have been around the sites that they have been ringed, with a few smaller excursions nearby (see Figure 2). There have however been two sightings further afield, one was re-sighted in Sweden, whilst earlier in the winter another bird was noted in Lincolnshire.

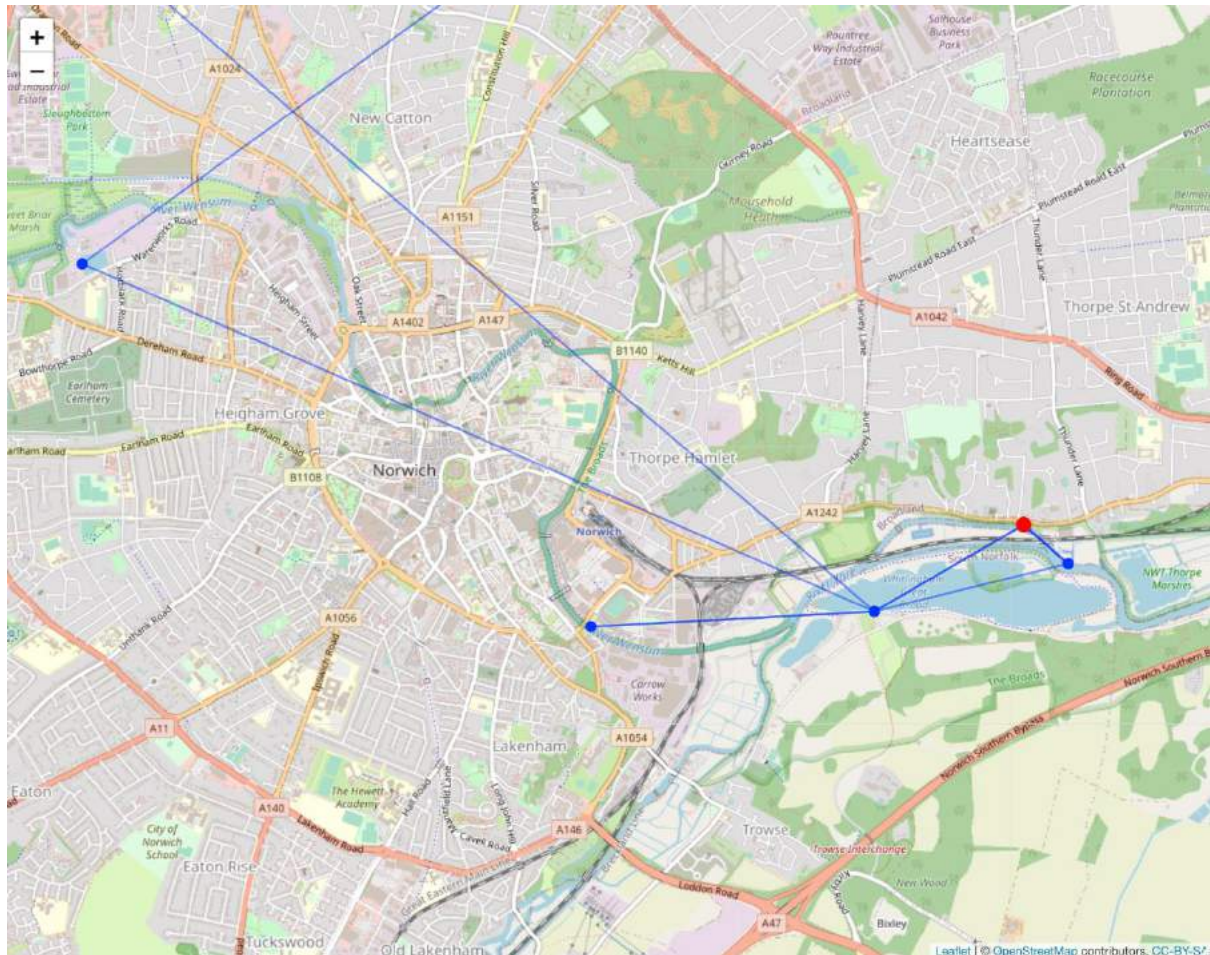


Figure 2 – map of Whitlingham area local Black-headed Gull movements. Map supplied by Stephen Vickers of UEA Ringing Group.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Max Hellicar, Justin Lansdell, Adam Manvell and Stephen Vickers for supplying additional 2021 information. Particular thanks to Stephen for providing details about the activities of the UEA ringing group this year and Max for details of other ringed birds encountered in the area.

Whitlingham Wildfowl Survey

The monthly wildfowl counts here are based on the combined counts for Whitlingham Little Broad and Great Broad using WeBS methodology, with St Andrews Broad also counted where possible (this is more important in winter, when large amounts of ducks commute between the two sites). The counts are not necessarily high counts for the month – ad hoc and high counts are described in the individual species accounts. The species order does not change to allow better comparison with previous bird reports.

Species	Jan *	Feb	Mar *	Apr \$	May \$	Jun \$	Jul \$	Aug \$	Sep \$	Oct \$	Nov	Dec \$
Mute Swan	22	15	29	25	34	78	44	18	19	11	14	26
Greylag Goose	2	1	15	29	36	164	34	14	1	31	1	22
Barnacle Goose	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1
Canada Goose	15	2	10	14	4	59	31	0	0	131	0	4
Egyptian Goose	5	8	4	4	16	50	46	13	7	4	4	3
Mandarin	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Shoveler	0	26	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Gadwall	33	142	16	5	0	0	0	0	0	11	82	152
Wigeon	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Mallard	45	78	48	48	40	49	80	130	68	85	52	110
Teal	41	74	14	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	13
Pochard	3	14	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tufted Duck	263	240	134	100	4	0	4	0	0	0	72	253
Goldeneye	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Scaup	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cormorant	32	24	31	14	2	1	9	13	20	7	38	22
Grey Heron	6	8	1	5	0	0	0	3	2	2	1	4
Little Egret	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Little Grebe	15	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	3
Great Crested Grebe	4	6	6	8	3	4	4	6	6	2	8	2
Water Rail	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Moorhen	7	7	1	1	1	2	1	0	1	1	11	10
Coot	96	89	19	5	1	1	1	1	2	4	26	77
Lapwing	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Common Snipe	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kittiwake	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Little Gull	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Black-headed Gull	300	524	130	114	0	2	13	7	19	12	201	251
Common Gull	4	77	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
Lesser Black-backed Gull	0	4	11	5	11	19	28	42	4	1	3	3
Herring Gull	10	25	14	17	5	13	2	1	0	2	13	17
Common Tern	0	0	0	2	6	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kingfisher	2	0	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hybrid duck	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

* Counts at Whitlingham and Thorpe conducted on different days

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

Whitlingham and Thorpe Classified List

The systematic list in this bird report follows the latest taxonomical order used by the British Ornithologists Union (BOU) and based on decisions made by the International Ornithologists Congress (IOC) world list. The most recent list adjustment (IOC 11.2) has switched the wildfowl to the start of the list ahead of the gamebirds, and also re-ordered the thrushes.

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, rarity or a species that usually just flies over.

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

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

Common summer visitor



Typically low numbers in January with the exception of 24 on 18th Jan. A possible explanation for this increase is additional birds from elsewhere in the catchment area flying in to roost on the Great Broad, as witnessed on 12th Feb when 26 flew in from the west before dusk.

The highest count of the year was rather unusually in October, when 121 were present on 10th. The summer peak was slightly lower at 110 on 13th July, with the only other count of note 91 on 25th June.

A family with six young goslings seen on 16th May. Later a Greylag Goose attached itself to the family, perhaps after losing its own goslings to predation. There was no further sign of the goslings by mid-June, suggesting that they too might have been predated.



Also of note were two birds with extra areas of white on the face, present on the Great Broad in late June and early July. This distinctive pair had been present in Breckland earlier in the spring, with Harry Ewing photographing them on 17th May.

Photo (top): James Emerson, (bottom): Justin Lansdell

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*

One resident bird, otherwise occasional visitor



The tame bird that arrived at Whitlingham in August 2019 was still present for much of the year, however there was some signs of it finally moving around a bit, as it was absent on several dates in spring – a sighting of a Barnacle Goose at Cow Tower on 28th Apr sporting a metal ring partially readable with the same last four digits as the Whitlingham bird was almost certainly this bird, as was a sighting near Carrow Bridge on 13th Nov.

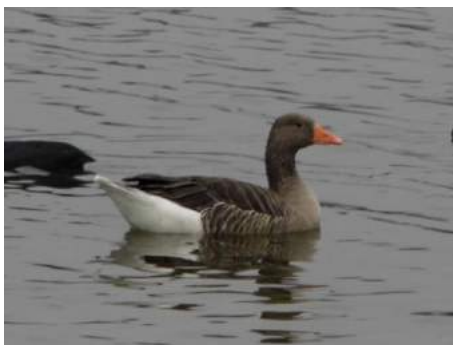
The bird mentioned above had a blue ring with white letters on fitted by the UEA ringing group in November 2021 as part of a large-scale colour-ringing project of Barnacle Geese. This project also ringed large numbers of post-breeding Barnacle Geese flocks at Pensthorpe and Holkham, offering some hope that in future visiting birds at Whitlingham could be tracked back to their natal sites. Ringed birds from these locations can be told at a glance thanks to a second site-specific colour ring, white for Holkham and yellow for Pensthorpe. There is already evidence that some of these birds are wintering along the Suffolk coast and it is quite possible their flightpath would take them over Whitlingham. You can report any colour-ringed Barnacle Geese you see, including the Whitlingham individual, here: <https://waterbirdcolourmarking.org/barnacle-geese/>

Other than this individual there was a record of two Barnacle Geese flying west over Thorpe Marshes (i.e. then over Whitlingham) on 27th Apr (DR).

Photo: James Emerson

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

Common resident



A brood of three young goslings was noted on 16th May, however it was a poor breeding year, possibly in part due to predation by Carrion Crows, which were observed by two separate observers to be targeting and killing young goslings this year. On 23rd May the author watched as a Carrion Crow flew off carrying a young gosling away from its parents onto the barn meadow where it killed and ate it.

Birds elsewhere in the area seemed to fare better, a pair had one gosling at Thorpe Marshes on 3rd June and a group of five adults were looking after 14 goslings on the river between Thorpe and Whitlingham on the same date.

The only three figure counts were 362 on 25th June, 230 on 13th July and 164 on 13th June.

Photo: James Emerson

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*

Occasional flyover

As usual skeins probably flew over the area daily during migration periods but went mostly overlooked. The only flock noted in the first winter period was 35 north over Thorpe Marshes on 19th Feb, whilst there were several flocks noted flying over in October, November and December.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

Common resident



No three figure counts this year, with a high of 78 on 13th June. Four nests noted at Whitlingham during April, one on the Little Broad and three around the Great Broad. A brood of six cygnets first seen on 12th May with a further two broods (one and two cygnets respectively) noted during June, along with another two cygnets at Thorpe Marshes and a further three on the river nearby.

The local colour-ringing scheme continued this year with an additional 25 swans ringed at Whitlingham or Thorpe River Green (see article on pages 31-33 for a brief update). The project is proving successful with over 500 sightings of locally ringed birds in 2021, mostly around Norwich but there was a long-distance re-sighting of one of the birds ringed at Whitlingham in 2020, which was seen near Eastbourne on the south coast, a movement of about 218km.

Photo: James Emerson

* **Bewick's Swan** *Cygnus columbianus*

Rare flyover

No records from the first winter period, but a flock of ten flew NW over Whitlingham C.P. on 31st Dec (JL) and were then later picked up on the same line flying over Rosary Cemetery.

* **Bewick's/Whooper Swan** *Cygnus columbianus/cygnus*

Rare flyover

Two wild swan species flew over Thorpe Marshes on 30th Apr (RC) but couldn't be identified to species with certainty.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*

Common resident.



Once again present in fairly low numbers throughout the year, with the early summer peak of 50 on 13th and 26th June and 57 on 13th July.

A brood of six very young goslings reported on 19th May, whilst in mid-June five of this year's young (broods of 2 and 3) were present.

Photo: James Emerson

* **Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna*

Scarce spring visitor

Four records in the first winter period, all relating to birds in flight: one south-east over Thorpe Marshes on 24th Jan (JL), two over Thorpe Marshes 1st Feb (CD), one flew from Whitlingham, looped over Thorpe and then back to Whitlingham on 26th Jan (JL) and one seen flying north over Thunder Lane would have passed over Thorpe Marshes on 11th Mar (SW). There was also a record from the second winter period, when two were present on Whitlingham Great Broad on 8th Nov (DF).

Mandarin *Aix galericulata*

Scarce visitor (one bird regularly roosts)



A very similar pattern to the previous year – a single drake was often present around the slipway before dusk and early morning through winter and until 24th Apr. It was seen again from 21st Aug and into autumn. There was one sighting outside this period, when a moulting drake was seen at the slipway at Whitlingham on 19th June, which when coupled with a few sightings from the Thorpe Island/Carey's Meadow area in June suggests

that this bird possibly only moves onto a more secluded part of the river nearby over the summer rather than going further along the valley.

There was one sighting not relating to this bird, a pair seen flying east along the river past Thorpe Marshes on 22nd Apr (SW). A record from 2020 (received too late to be included in that report) of a female on the river level with the west end of Thorpe Island means that both male and female Mandarin have been present in the area, albeit perhaps briefly, for the last two years. **Photo: David Ratcliffe**

Shoveler *Spatula clypeata*

Regular winter visitor



Three present at the start of the year, with an influx in mid-February peaking with 26 on 13th Feb, 23 of which were present on St Andrew's Broad on the following day. Numbers dropped to five by 23rd Feb and they were last noted on 5th Apr.

Six returned on 11th Nov and were present until the year end (joined by a 7th bird on 18th Nov).

Photo: James Emerson

Gadwall *Mareca strepera*

Common winter visitor



On 1st Jan 172 present across Whitlingham and St Andrews Broad, which was only surpassed by counts of 210 on 12th Dec. and 193 on 31st Dec. On 12th Feb 165 were counted on the Great Broad in the evening, around 45 more than a count made earlier in the day (and one on the previous day), suggesting that additional birds were flying in from nearby to roost.

No birds appeared to over-summer this year, with no records from May-Sept. Birds were first noted back on 10th Oct, with numbers breaking 100 on 11th Nov and typically around 150 with the exception of the two high counts mentioned above. **Photo: David Ratcliffe**

Wigeon *Mareca penelope*

Scarce winter visitor

Eleven present on 1st Jan, with a high count of 26 on 9th Feb and 10 still on 12th Feb (any double-figure counts here are notable). There was a scattering of early spring records including a drake on 8th Mar, 2 drakes on 5th Apr and a pair on 24th Apr. Returning birds were noted in October, with 4 on Great Broad on 20th and 5 on St Andrews Broad 25th. The highest count of the second winter period was seven on 21st Dec.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Common resident.



Typically between 40-60 present, with a June/July peak count of only 80 this year on 25th July. The highest count of the year was 185 on 21st Aug, presumably incorporating a large number from elsewhere in the catchment area. At least one brood seen, but no further details noted regarding number of ducklings or survival.

Photo: James Emerson

***Pintail** *Anas acuta*

Local scarcity



A single record this year, a drake on Whitlingham Great Broad on 10th Feb (MHe).

Photo: Drew Lyness

Teal *Anas crecca*

Common winter visitor.

Around 30 present at the start of the year, mostly on St Andrews Broad. This had risen to over 50 by the end of January, with 55 on 25th Jan and 53 still present on 14th Feb. A scattering of spring sightings from St Andrews Broad, lastly on 5th Apr, then a large gap until 3 back at St Andrews Broad on 4th Sept and 2 on the Great Broad on 6th Sept. The largest count in the second winter period was 18 on 30th Dec, but this species is typically tricky to count as it sticks to the margins and it is likely numbers were higher than this.

Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Common winter visitor



Five drakes present at the start of the year, but an increase in mid-February starting with 14 on 10th, jumping to 38 on 19th, with 34 still present on 23rd. Between 8-12 present throughout March, with 2 still present on 11th Apr. Interestingly there were a couple of mid-summer sightings, 4 on 25th June and a single drake on 13th July. Scarce in the second winter period, with 2 on 25th Nov and no more than 4 counted after that.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

Common winter visitor



A combined Thorpe/Whitlingham count of 328 on 1st Jan was only surpassed in number by 335 on 21st Jan. Numbers fluctuated between 120-200 during February and March with the exception of a brief uplift in mid-February with 245 on 10th and 273 on 17th. Numbers still in three figures during April, with 109 on 18th. After that 4 on 23rd May and 25th July then a blank spell until October, when around 30 present, mostly on St Andrews

Broad. Numbers peaked at the year-end with 325 on 31st Dec. **Photo: David Ratcliffe**

* **Scaup** *Aythya marilis*

Scarce winter visitor



A 1st-winter female was found on the Great Broad on 3rd Feb (JL) and was last seen on 12th Mar. Whilst usually relatively distinctive in the field, photographs of the bird varied quite a bit depending on the light, quality and angle, leading to suggestions that the bird in question was a hybrid, or that there were two different birds present. Taking personal observations and the range of photos available, the editor is satisfied that one

individual Scaup was present.

Photo: Drew Lyness

* **Common Scoter** *Melanitta nigra*

Scarce spring passage



Three (2 drakes, 1 female) on the Great Broad on 4th Apr (JG).

Photo: Justin Lansdell

Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Scarce winter visitor



Despite record-breaking numbers present in the second winter period of 2020, only 4 were present on 1st Jan. Numbers varied between 1-4 until 10th Feb, with a pair still present until 8th Mar. In the second winter period 2 drakes on 7th Nov were followed by several sightings of between 2-4 birds, peaking at 6 on 3rd Dec (4 drakes, 2 females).

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

* **Smew** *Mergus albellus*

Scarce winter visitor



A redhead present on Whitlingham Great Broad on 13th Feb (JL), then presumably the same one seen on St Andrews Broad on 15th and 16th Feb. (SW).

Photo: Stuart White

* **Goosander** *Mergus merganser*

Scarce winter visitor

Four (2 drakes, 2 females) flew over the Great Broad on 9th Feb (PW) and what were presumably the same birds flew NW over Newmarket Street in central Norwich on the following day. At that point the group appeared to split up, with 2 drakes seen again on the Great Broad on 11th Feb (CR), whilst on the same day 2 females were seen at Bowthorpe Southern Park on the western edge of Norwich.

Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

Fairly common resident

Present throughout the area in low numbers – no exceptional counts or sightings reported this year.

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

Scarce spring visitor

A single record this year, one photographed in fields south of Whitlingham old hospital on 30th Apr (per iNaturalist).

Swift *Apus apus*

Common spring visitor

First sighting of spring on 25th Apr (five days later than in 2020) at both Thorpe Marshes and Whitlingham C.P. Few large counts reported this year, with “lots” on 3rd May, 100 over Thorpe Marshes on 8th May and 160 at dusk on 13th July. The last sightings of summer was of a flock of c100 over Thorpe Marshes on 10th Aug. Sadly there is still no sign of any making use of the Swift tower in the Whitlingham barn car park.

Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

Scarce spring migrant

The first record of the year was at Whitlingham on 18th Apr, the same date as in 2020. Further sightings all from Thorpe Marshes on 5th and 16th May and also on 6th, 7th (two seen fighting, the only report of multiple birds) and 14th June.

Feral Pigeon *Columba livia*

Common resident

The usual scattering of records of distant flocks and birds just outside the recording area between Bracondale and Trowse.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas*

Scarce resident

An unobtrusive resident species here. No large counts received from Thorpe Marshes, with a maximum count of 5 from Whitlingham on 27th Jan.

Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*

Common resident

No vis-mig counts reported this year, but one observer undertook a careful count around Whitlingham on 27th Jan and counted 138 on his route.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Scarce – resident nearby

The only record received was of one at Whitlingham on 11th Jan, although this species probably suffers from being considered unremarkable due to being common elsewhere in the city.

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

Secretive resident/winter visitor



Two reported at Whitlingham and up to 3 at Thorpe Marshes in the first winter period, both presumably considerable undercounts given the secretive nature of this species. The last report of spring was on 17th Apr, although the evidence of previous years is that some birds over-summer (and breed here) annually. In the second winter period birds heard calling at Thorpe Marshes from 24th Sept. **Photo: David Ratcliffe**

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

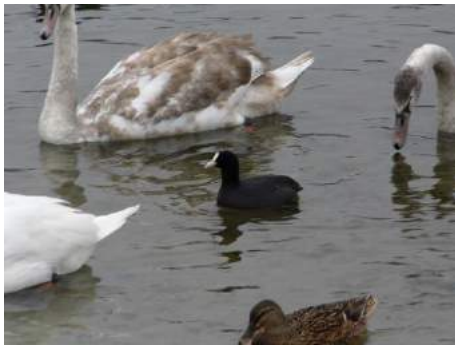
Common resident



Present all year round both sides of the river with a high count of 10 noted on dates in Jan, Nov and Dec. At least three broods noted around the Great Broad. An adult with three chicks was noted on 19th May, although it is thought that at least two of them were later predated by Carrion Crows. Another brood of at least two chicks was seen on 13th June and a third brood present on 18th Aug. **Photo: David Ratcliffe**

Coot *Fulica atra*

Resident/Common winter visitor



Fewer birds present than in recent years, with fairly constant counts of 90-120 present during January and early February, with a peak of 126 on 18th Feb. A single bird was present May to July, although not noted during August or September. In the second winter period the highest count was 77 on 19th Dec.

Photo: James Emerson

*** Crane** *Grus grus*

Scarce spring flyover



Five sightings this year. Firstly 2 east over Thorpe Marshes on 16th Feb (JP) having earlier been seen flying past County Hall, then 1 west over Thunder Lane on 22nd Feb (MB), 1 east over Whitlingham on 4th Apr (SW), 2 west over Thorpe Marshes on 15th Feb (RC) and 12 west over Whitlingham on 11th Nov (JL).

Photo: © Robin Chittenden

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Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Common winter visitor

Sixteen present on the Great Broad on 1st Jan (the same number as had been seen in late December 2020). Numbers decreased slightly to 11 throughout February and March, with seven on 17th Mar. The last report of spring was on 3rd Apr. First noted again on 6th Sept, when four present on the Great Broad, with numbers peaking at 14 on 25th Nov.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Resident



No nest observed this year, but two large (but still dependent) juveniles were seen on the Great Broad on 21st Aug showing that breeding occurred fairly nearby. Numbers generally low throughout the year - a high count of 14 present on the Great Broad on 6th Sept was the only time numbers exceeded 8.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

* **Black-necked Grebe** *Podiceps nigricollis*

Rare winter visitor



An excellent find on Whitlingham Great Broad on 15th Feb (DR) but unfortunately not present the following day.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

Regular spring visitor



First seen at both Whitlingham and Thorpe on 19th Feb, then up to 4 birds seen multiple times in the next week, including in display flight over Thorpe Marshes on 26th Feb. A single pair was then seen on multiple dates throughout March and April until 25th Apr, mostly at Thorpe Marshes but seemingly sometimes roosting on Whitlingham Great Broad.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Scarce winter/spring visitor

A relatively poor year, with most sightings of small numbers flying over in February or April. Double-figure counts, all flying over Thorpe Marshes: 11 on 16th Feb, 20 on 23rd Feb and 30 on 21st Dec. Five were also present there on 9th Aug.

* **Golden Plover** *Pluvialis apricaria* *Rare occasional migrant*

One heard flying over Whitlingham Lane just after dusk on 15th Nov (DL).

* **Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus* *Occasional flyover*

One flew over Thorpe Marshes calling around midnight on 12th June (SW).

* **Curlew** *Numenius arquata* *Occasional flyover*

Two flew east over Thorpe Marshes early morning 1st Apr (DR).

* **Dunlin** *Calidris alpina* *Scarce passage migrant*

One flew up off the riverbank and towards Thorpe Marshes on 8th Feb (JP).

* **Woodcock** *Scolopax rusticola* *Scarce winter visitor*

Six sightings this year (five at Whitlingham, one at Thorpe Marshes), all during a cold spell between 1st-12th Feb. Dates were 1st Feb (JL), 7th Feb (JL), 10th Feb at Thorpe Marshes (JP) and Whitlingham (MHe), 11th Feb (JL) and 12th Feb (JE). It should be pointed out that this might well be a case of birds already present becoming more visible than a suggestion of any influx.

* **Jack Snipe** *Lymnocyrtus minimus* *Scarce winter visitor*

One seen flying down the Great Broad on 5th Jan (JL) and another at Trowse Meadow on 14th Feb (MH), then records from Thorpe Marshes on 5th, 19th and 26th Mar (all MC).

Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* *Common winter visitor*

One present at Whitlingham Great Broad on 2nd Jan. The cold spell in mid-February led to a flurry of sightings, although it is unclear if these relate to birds already present but made more visible or cold-weather arrivals. Several double-figure counts made at Thorpe Marshes during March, with a maximum of 40 on 19th. Last record of spring was on 25th Apr, with only a handful of records from November and December.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* *Spring migrant*

First seen at Whitlingham C.P. on 9th Apr, then a large gap until another there on 24th Apr followed by several sightings in the next 2 weeks from the river edge and Thorpe Marshes. Two were present at Thorpe Marshes on 28th May.

Return passage begun on 30th July when one was on the river edge between Whitlingham and Thorpe Marshes, followed by four at Whitlingham on 1st Aug and one at Thorpe Marshes on 12th Aug.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* *Regular spring migrant*

Only a single record this year, at Thorpe Marshes on 27th Apr.

* **Redshank** *Tringa totanus*

Scarce spring migrant

No spring records, however one flew over Whitlingham C.P. on 8th Sept (TH).

* **Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla*

Rare visitor



A winter plumaged adult at St Andrews Broad on 25th Jan (BB), 2 adults or near adults present on Great Broad with c90 1st-winter Black-headed Gulls on 5th Apr (JL) and finally an adult on Great Broad 8th-11th Apr, (also visiting St Andrews Broad on 10th) (SBu et al). It was an unprecedented year for this species - see article on pages 12-16 for a more detailed examination of these and previous area records. **Photo: David Ratcliffe**

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Common resident



Up to 450 present during the first winter period, with additional three-figure counts in April including around 250 mostly first-summer birds on 6th Apr. Numbers up to c200 in November and 250 in December.

For details of a new Norwich area colour-ringing project and sightings of foreign ringed birds see the article on pages 34-37. **Photo: James Emerson**

* **Little Gull** *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

Scarce spring migrant



The first of spring was a 1st-winter at St Andrews Broad on 30th Mar (CD), followed by 3 on the Great Broad on 31st Mar (JL). This was the start of a long period of near-constant Little Gull presence in the area (see article on pages 17-21 for full details). It is not certain if this involved one long-staying individual as the gulls fly off to roost elsewhere each evening. There was then a blank week before 2 individuals were present on 30th Apr, one at Whitlingham (DL) and one at St Andrews Broad (SW).

Photo: © Robin Chittenden

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Common Gull *Larus canus*

Common winter visitor



Daytime counts were mostly in single figures with the exception of 28 on 27th Jan and 30 on 12th Feb. Large numbers were observed flying over in the evenings, e.g. 400 east over Thorpe Marshes at dusk on 6th Jan, with some of these briefly resting on the Great Broad as a pre-roost gathering on some days. Last noted in spring on 10th Apr then not again until 27th Oct.

Photo: James Emerson

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

Occasional visitor



Clusters of records (too many to list full details this year), mostly relating to 1-2 adults seen flying east at dusk on numerous dates in January and also 28th Feb. One on the Great Broad on 4th Apr (JG) then single 1st-year and adult birds seen on various dates in late November and during December.

Photo: Drew Lyness

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

Common winter visitor

Noted in every month although more numerous in winter, with no particularly high counts or ringed birds noted this year.

*** Caspian Gull** *Larus cachinnans*

Rare winter visitor



A 1st-winter was found and photographed on the Great Broad near the slipway on the evening of 10th Nov (RP) and what was presumably the same 1st-winter was present briefly in the conservation area bay before dusk on 18th Nov (DL).

Photo: Roger Parker.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Common summer visitor



One or two present all year round, with numbers increasing in late March and with up to 28 recorded over late spring and summer, with several similar counts in October as well. One notable count, of 62 on 18th Aug. An orange-ringed bird was noted on 23rd May but was too distant to read the characters

Photo: David Ratcliffe

*** CASPIAN TERN** *Hydroprogne caspia*

National rarity

A strong candidate for Norwich bird of the year was a Caspian Tern found at UEA Broad on 16th May. It departed from UEA and flew along the river, after which it was briefly seen flying along Whitlingham Great Broad (JL) before returning to UEA and then flying off. This represents a new bird for the Whitlingham area. The UEA sighting has been accepted by the Norfolk Rarities Committee, with a submission for the Whitlingham sighting being prepared.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Common spring migrant



First of the year seen at both Thorpe Marshes and Whitlingham C.P. on 9th Apr, the same date as the previous year. After that between 1-5 present throughout April, May and June with the exception of up to 12 at St Andrews Broad on 28th Apr. Last noted on 25th July, with no repeat of the autumn records of 2020.

Photo: Stuart White

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*

Scarce spring migrant



First of the spring were three on the Great Broad on 19th Apr (also seen over Thorpe Marshes). Six flew east over Thorpe Marshes on 21st Apr, with the only other record one at St Andrews Broad on 28th Apr.

Photo: Drew Lyness

* **Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger*

Scarce passage migrant



Six present and photographed at Whitlingham Great Broad on 28th Apr (WW). An adult was also reported from Whitlingham Great Broad on 3rd July (per bird news services). The latter is an unusual date as passage is usually April/May and late August/September, so any further details about this sighting would be welcome.

Photo: Steve Smith

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Common winter visitor

A similar pattern to previous years, with around 20-50 present during the day with additional birds flying in to roost in trees on the main Great Broad island. Single-figure counts were made throughout the spring and summer. The highest roost count of the year, 165 on 31st January, is probably the highest ever count here, surpassing 161 from 6th Feb 2016. Other large roost counts included 103 on 21st Jan, 80 on 29th Jan and 93 on 19th Feb.

Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

Scarce but annual winter visitor



One seen along the northern edge of Whitlingham Great Broad 11th-13th Feb, whilst in the autumn one seen regularly just before dusk in reeds along the Great Broad north shore from 25th Oct until 4th Nov. It seems likely that the birds involved in these sightings were also present either side of the dates reported.

Photo: Drew Lyness

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Common resident



Typically up to 6 present around the Great Broad during the first winter period, with a maximum of 11 on 10th Feb. Not noted on the WeBS counts of May-July, when perhaps absent and breeding elsewhere nearby. Smaller numbers in the second winter period, with no counts higher than 4.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

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

Rare flyover



After various flyover or short-staying records, 2021 was the year that local birders got to catch up with this species with one present on-and-off for several weeks. More complete details are included in the article on pages 8-11, however it was first present 26th-29th Jan (DR et al) then again 8th-15th Feb (BB et al), spending time on the Great Broad and St Andrews Broad. Additional sightings of one flying west over Thorpe Marshes on 27th

Feb and probables flying high west over Whitlingham on 27th and 28th Apr might refer to the same individual.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Regular winter visitor



The increasing number of roosting Little Egrets noted in the 2020 report seemingly did not spill over into 2021, with monthly high counts from the Little Broad roost being: 4 Jan, 3 Feb and 5 Mar. Birds began to be noted again during September, with a maximum roost count of 5 on several dates in November.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

* **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*

Rare spring migrant



A good spring for this species, with three records, two of which were also noted elsewhere on the flight path. One flew north from Thorpe Marshes over Thunder Lane on 28th Mar (SW), one on 9th Apr was initially seen flying over Hotblack Road in the city before being photographed over Whitlingham (RC) and one flew north-west over Trowse Meadow (CS) and was later seen flying over City Road in Norwich. Whilst seen fairly

regularly over the past ten years, the 9th Apr sighting appears to be the first time that one has actually been photographed in the recording area during that period – thanks to Robin for allowing his picture to be reproduced here. **Photo:** © Robin Chittenden

(www.robinchittenden.co.uk)

* **Honey-buzzard** *Pernis apivoris*

Very rare passage migrant



Two seen over Thorpe Marshes on 4th June including a male in wing-clapping display (SW). This record has been accepted by the

Norfolk Records Committee (see screenshot).

Another sighting of a bird on 5th July, again at Thorpe Marshes (SW), was preceded by a sighting from Strumpshaw. It later turned out that this bird had also been seen over Whitlingham a few minutes before the Thorpe sighting.

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Resident

Only a handful of sightings received during January and March then again in August, perhaps reflecting the fact that Sparrowhawks are resident nearby and not perceived as noteworthy rather than any decline in abundance.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Fairly regular flyover

A large number of sightings this year, mostly in the first six months of the year and where specified all referring to male birds with the exception of an immature over Thorpe Marshes on 28th Mar and a female high over Whitlingham on 6th May.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

Scarce flyovers

Sightings in each of the first five months plus July. Mostly from Thorpe Marshes, suggesting perhaps a bird on territory to the east of Norwich occasionally venturing into the area. The exception to this was on 12th Mar when 3 were seen over Thorpe Marshes, presumably passage birds following the river valley.

Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Resident nearby



Between 1-4 seen on various occasions throughout the year, often soaring in the distance on sunny days. This is consistent with the assumption that there are several pairs resident nearby. There was one report relating to passage birds when 16 reported from Thorpe Marshes on 19th Mar (MC), of which 10 flew north and 6 appeared to be local birds.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

Scarce resident

Pairs seen along Whitlingham Lane and on one occasion at Thorpe Marshes. Otherwise singles seen near dusk, particularly during the cold spell in February.

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*

Scarce resident

Under-recorded this year, but records of calling birds at Whitlingham C.P. in March and November.

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Scarce resident



No proven breeding this year, but pairs again present on both the Little and Great Broads, with sightings from Thorpe presumably relating to another pair on territory along the nearby stretch of river (where they were observed mating on 26th Apr).

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

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopus major*

Resident

Sightings from Whitlingham C.P. and Thorpe Marshes, with a bird heard drumming on 12th Feb and a pair seen together near the Little Broad on the same date.

Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*

Resident



Fewer sightings than in recent years, with a maximum of three seen on 27th Jan.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Resident



As in 2020 records mainly concentrated on the first few months of the year.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Scarce spring migrant

First seen at Thorpe Marshes on 23rd Apr, then on four dates during May. No further sightings over the summer until one seen from Whitlingham with 'anting' gulls on 6th Sept and again there on 17th Sept.

* **Peregrine** *Falco peregrinus*

Scarce flyovers

It was another successful year nearby at Norwich cathedral, with the resident pair fledging three young. Sadly the female of the pair died in November having collided with a parked car, but a new female is currently in residence. The cathedral spire can be 'scoped' distantly from Whitlingham! Actual sightings from the area were limited to 5 flypasts between Jan-Apr.

* **Ring-necked Parakeet** *Psittacula krameri*

Scarce visitor



Despite being added to the Whitlingham list in 2017 and breeding to the west of the city, Ring-necked Parakeet has remained a scarce species around the east of Norwich. One was first seen and heard moving between Thorpe Island and Whitlingham Great Broad island on 4th July (AM). It was then seen periodically on several dates in early summer, possibly spending most of its time in gardens in Thorpe St Andrew, where it was also

photographed.

What was presumably the same bird was then seen again at Whitlingham on 26th Oct (DL), and from then onwards was seen fairly regularly in the area, typically flying in to roost in the tall trees on the main Great Broad island before dusk. On 12th Nov two parakeets were seen on the island, the first local record of multiple birds. There were several further sightings of both birds during November, and at least one continued to be present periodically in December.

Photo: Adam Manvell

Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

Common resident



Resident in small numbers. The maximum count this year was 7 on 27th Jan.

Photo: James Emerson

Magpie *Pica pica*

Common resident

Present throughout the recording area. The roost count on 1st Jan of 125 remained the highest count of the year, with 65 on 12th Feb being the only other count of note received.

Jackdaw *Coloeus monedula*

Common resident

No four-figure roost counts this year, but one count got close on 21st Jan when 970 roosted. The highest counts from February and March were both 450, on 12th Feb and 8th Mar respectively. In the autumn numbers increased from 250 on 21st Aug to 585 on 17th Sept and 790 on 20th Oct. No roost counts received from November or December except 250 on 31st Dec.

* **Rook** *Corvus frugilegus*

Resident nearby but scarce flyover here

A handful of reliable records this year, including 5 over Whitlingham C.P. on 27th Jan (MHo), 5 over Whitlingham Marsh on 28th Feb (MHe) and 2 over Thorpe Marshes on 27th Mar (SW). Some visitors continue to note Rooks on nearly every visit, which seems unlikely.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

Common resident



Common and easily seen all around Whitlingham C.P. A high count of 18 on 27th Jan. This species was seen actively catching and killing young Greylag goslings and Moorhen chicks this year, and the author would be interested to hear of any similar occurrences in 2022.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Coal Tit *Periparus ater*

Scarce resident

A handful of records, all from Whitlingham C.P. between Jan-Mar. All were of single birds with the exception of 2 on 18th Jan.

* **Marsh Tit** *Poecile palustris*

Scarce but declining resident

Now a scarce and seemingly declining species here, possibly no longer resident, so all sightings are encouraged. Five records this year - at Thorpe Marshes on 4th Jan (BB) and 1st Dec (SW), along Whitlingham Lane on 11th Apr (JE) and 18th Aug (MHo) and finally in Whitlingham Woods on 13th Mar (JE).

Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Common resident



Common throughout the recording area.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Great Tit *Parus major*

Common resident

Common throughout the recording area.

Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

Scarce flyovers

A very poor year for this species which has featured in every Whitlingham Bird Report but was in danger of missing out on this one. In the end there were two records, two at Whitlingham on 15th Feb and one flying over Thorpe Marshes on 23rd Dec.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

Common spring visitor

First of the year at Thorpe Marshes on 26th Mar, a similar date to 2020. Seen on the next few days too, with 80 present at Thorpe Marshes on 1st Apr and 40 at Whitlingham on the same date. Last noted on 16th May, with no autumn records.

Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Common summer visitor

First seen on 26th Mar at Thorpe Marshes, the same date as the first Sand Martin. None on the next day, but 2 present at Whitlingham on 28th. No particularly high counts (20 on 30th Mar and 25 on 1st Apr the highest). Last noted on 3rd May although probably present on other dates during May.

House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

Common spring visitor

Another species with far fewer records than normal. First seen on 2nd Apr at Thorpe Marshes and Whitlingham, but after that only 1 or 2 seen in the next week with other hirundines. Numbers did pick up a bit by the end of the month, with a flock of c50 over the Great Broad on 28th Apr.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

Common resident



Common at both Whitlingham and Thorpe Marshes. One at the latter site on 18th Apr was seen to have a metal ring – no chance of reading the code, but possibly from further along the river as the UEA ringing group have ringed many Cetti's Warblers at Cantley BF.

Photo: Stuart White

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

Common resident



Common throughout the recording area. The only count of note was of 24 at Whitlingham C.P. on 27th Jan.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Declining summer visitor

First singing bird at Whitlingham on 31st Mar, several days earlier than in 2020. Up to 5 birds noted singing in the area this year.

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

Common summer visitor



One present at Whitlingham on 24th and 27th Feb, in full song on the latter date. It was a sunny day and singing Chiffchaffs were reported across the county, but it is impossible to be sure if this was a local overwintering bird, one moving through having overwintered elsewhere or a very early migrant. Other singing birds were noted on 6th and 8th Mar, with 2 on 9th and 5 on 15th, by which time the migrants must have arrived.

In autumn a bird seen at Thorpe Marshes on 1st Oct and 6th Nov is presumably overwintering.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Common summer visitor



First of the year at Thorpe Marshes on 31st Mar when heard by two observers. Numbers increased throughout April, with 18 heard on 23rd. Over the river at Whitlingham numbers typically low, with 2 singing males.

Photo: Stuart White

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Common summer visitor

Another early arrival this year, with one singing at Whitlingham from 9th Apr and Thorpe Marshes from 12th Apr. A count of singing warblers around both broads at Whitlingham on 18th May recorded 31 singing males (JL).

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*

Scarce summer visitor



First reeling bird at Thorpe Marshes on 13th Apr, a week later than in 2020. A maximum of 5 reeling birds heard at any one time during spring, with 2 also heard reeling again on 2nd Aug.

Photo: Stuart White

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Common summer visitor



No overwintering birds during January or February. First singing birds at Thorpe Marshes on 23rd Mar and Whitlingham on 27th Mar. The only count of singing birds at Whitlingham was of 13 on 18th Apr.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*

Scarce summer visitor

Not recorded until one at Thorpe Marshes on 27th Apr, much later than the previous year. Despite that it proved to be another good year for singing birds, with an impressive 12 singing males counted around Whitlingham Great and Little Broads on 18th May (JL).

*** Lesser Whitethroat** *Curruca curruca*

Scarce summer visitor

Another species slightly late in arriving this year. One was first noted at Thorpe Marshes on 26th Apr (PA) and also noted by other observers until 4th May, whilst at Whitlingham 2 were present on 6th May (DL).

Whitethroat *Curruca communis*

Common summer visitor



First heard at Thorpe Marshes on 15th Apr and Whitlingham on 18th Apr. No counts made, and the last sighting received was at Whitlingham on 21st Aug.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

*** Firecrest** *Regulus ignicapilla*

Rare spring migrant

One reported from the Bungalow Lane area on 19th Mar (MC). This road forms the boundary of Thorpe Marshes, so the sighting might technically be just outside the recording area.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

Common resident

Resident in Whitlingham Woods, a few sightings from around Whitlingham C.P. might be the result of roaming with mixed tit flocks. No records received from Thorpe Marshes this year.

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Common resident



Widespread and common throughout the recording area.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*

Scarce resident

Records received for Trowse Woods, Whitlingham Woods and the wooded area near the picnic meadow at Whitlingham C.P. One was also recorded from Thorpe Marshes on 11th Jan, but it is unclear if this relates to one heard calling from across the river rather than present at Thorpe itself.

Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*

Common resident



A handful of records, all from the first four months, although it was undoubtedly present throughout the year.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Common resident

A record of 40 from Thorpe Marshes on 26th Feb presumably related to a flock flying over, but no autumn vis-mig counts received this year – other records were mostly of 1s and 2s.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

Common resident



Present throughout the recording area in low numbers, with 5 noted on 27th Jan.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

Scarce resident(?)

One noted at Thorpe Marshes on 18th Jan and another at Whitlingham on 1st Apr turned out to be the only records of the year. I assume this is due to under-recording, so all 2022 records welcome.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

Common winter visitor



Small flocks present at Whitlingham and Thorpe Marshes in the first winter period, including the one pictured here eating Ivy berries along Whitlingham Lane. Last noted on 18th Apr, a few days later than in 2020. No sightings of note in autumn, with a few flocks heard flying over but none seen perched up.

Photo: James Emerson

Blackbird *Turdus merula*

Common resident

Common throughout the recording area.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

Common winter visitor

A handful of records during February and March. In the second winter period several flocks were seen flying over, including 100 west on 12th Dec and 50 west on 23rd Dec.

Robin *Erithacus rubicula*

Common resident



Common throughout the recording area.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

Scarce winter migrant



Three present at Thorpe Marshes at the start of the year (a pair and an additional female), with all 3 birds still being reported on 31st Mar.

Usually the Stonechats depart in early spring, but as their stay extended it eventually emerged that the pair had stayed to breed! Two recently fledged young were seen on 28th May, with three young seen on 6th June. Juveniles were still being seen on 25th June, after which only the pair were reported (and continued to be until the year end).

Photo: Stuart White

Duncock *Prunella modularis*

Common resident

Common throughout the recording area.

* **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava*

Scarce spring flyover



One showed well briefly at Whitlingham near the visitor barn on 12th Apr (RC). This is the first time a photo of this species has appeared in the Whitlingham Bird Report as most sightings are only flyovers. It was a good spring for Yellow Wagtails around Norwich, with a string of sightings at Earlham Marshes.

Photo: © Robin Chittenden

(www.robinchittenden.co.uk)

© Robin Chittenden www.robinchittenden.co.uk

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Scarce resident

Only three records received this year, at Whitlingham in February and March, but presumably this is an under-representation of a species seemingly doing well along the River Wensum nearby.

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Common resident



Resident and seen regularly throughout the year.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

Passage migrant/winter visitor



Several relatively small groups reported from Thorpe in the first winter period including 22 on 8th Feb, 24 on 26th Feb and 15 on 13th Apr.

A huge roost count of 266 was reported from Thorpe Marshes on 24th Nov (MC).

Photo: David Ratcliffe

* **Water Pipit** *Anthus spinoletta*

Scarce winter visitor

One reported from Thorpe Marshes on 5th Mar (MC).

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Common resident

Widely seen throughout the recording area.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

Scarce winter visitor

The only record from Whitlingham this year was of 2 in trees at the east end of the Great Broad on 1st Mar. There were several records from Thorpe Marshes, also during March.

Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Scarce resident



Pairs noted at both Whitlingham and Thorpe Marshes. Most records in the first half of the year, but also in September and November.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*

Fairly common resident



Reported from Thorpe Marshes, Whitlingham C.P. and Trowse Meadow. A flock of 50 at Whitlingham on 11th Mar was of note (JL).

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Linnet *Linaria cannabina*

Scarce resident

Present at both Thorpe Marshes and Whitlingham, with a pair seen on top of the visitor barn at the latter site on 25th July and a high count of 35 on 3rd Feb.

Lesser Redpoll *Acanthis cabaret*

Fairly scarce winter visitor



Present in low numbers during the first winter period with the exception of 40 seen on 6th Jan and 20 on 14th Apr, the latter also being the latest date of spring.

In the second winter period the only records received were of 2 on 6th and 7th Nov.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

* **Common Crossbill** *Loxia curvirostra*

Rare occasional flyovers

Only one record from within the area, but it was an interesting one. A singing male with a female were found apparently on territory within the area on 9th Mar (WW). No further information was supplied regarding later sightings of these birds (the author did visit a week later but didn't hear any Crossbills nearby). Elsewhere 3 Crossbills were also seen south of Whitlingham Sewage Works (towards Bramerton) on 29th Jan (DR).

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

Common resident

Present throughout the year. The only count of note received this year was of 37 on 27th Jan.

Siskin *Spinus spinus*

Common winter visitor



Typically up to 60 present at Whitlingham during January and February, but an estimated 300 in the area on 16th Mar.

Few present in the first part of autumn, but 50 present at Whitlingham on 11th Nov and number built to a flock of c100, noted on 24th Nov, 6th Dec and 12th Dec.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

*** Yellowhammer**

Scarce flyover

Three records this year, one seen flying over the Great Broad on 1st Jan (JL) and 16th Dec (DL), and one over Thorpe Marshes on 24th Nov (MC). Just outside the recording area one was present near horse paddocks in Trowse on 27th Feb.

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Common summer visitor



Once again noted from both Whitlingham and Thorpe Marshes from January onwards, with singing birds first noted at the latter on 22nd Mar.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Total: 135 species

Appendix A – Recorded species linked to reintroduction schemes

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

None. Elsewhere in Norwich, a Corncrake sang at Hellesdon marshes 12th-16th June.

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

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

*** Hawaiian (Nene) Goose *Branta sandvicensis***

New species for the site

One of the more unusual sightings of the year was a Hawaiian Goose, present on the Great Broad for a short spell on 6th Jan (DR). The bird was photographed using a camera phone, but although the picture is of sufficient definition to corroborate the sighting, it is too grainy to include here. The bird seemed to be paired or at least keeping close to a Canada Goose. This bird is presumably the same one seen further up the mid-Yare valley during 2020.

*** Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus***



This bird was originally seen downriver on Postwick Marshes, where it appeared to be loosely associated with a small group of Greylags and Russian White-fronted Geese. The latter eventually departed, but this bird remained with the Greylags, and visited Whitlingham on several occasions, firstly photographed on the Great Broad on 3rd Mar (CS), then seen flying over Thorpe Marshes with 4 Greylags on 28th Mar (SW), again

with Greylags on the Great Broad on 31st Mar (WW) and finally seen and photographed on the Great Broad on 18th Apr (GW). Details of the initial sighting were passed to the BBRC, however it is anticipated that whilst the ID will be upheld, it will be placed in Appendix E (known or suspected escapes).

Photo: Caroline Spinks

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

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

* **White-fronted Goose** *Anser albifrons* *Local rarity*

Two were reported at Whitlingham via the Bird News Services on 7th Oct. This would be very unusual for the site and did not match up with any known movements of flocks elsewhere in the county, so without further details this record has not been included in the main systematic list.

* **Shag** *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* *Local rarity*

One listed on 21st Sept via eBird but no further details or photograph, and no mention of it in local birding circles at the time.

* **Raven** *Corvus corax* *Local rarity, slowly recolonising Norfolk*

Details of a possible Raven flying over Whitlingham C.P. on 6th Jan were emailed to me in the hope that someone else might have seen it nearby to corroborate the report, but no other sightings were made around this time.

There appear to be several pairs of Ravens now present in Norfolk, but they remain rare around the Norwich area and ideally a claim of a first for the area would be accompanied with a photo or sound recording.

Appendix D – Hybrid birds

Canada x Greylag Goose

Occasional visitor



Four sightings this year. The first three on 12th Feb, 13th Mar and 25th Mar presumably refer to the same individual, which might have also been responsible for the other sighting on 25th June.

Photo: James Emerson

Greylag x Chinese Goose (aka domestic Swan Goose)

Resident



Long-staying bird (which has been here at least ten years now), once again present all year, mostly around the slipway.

Photo: James Emerson

White-cheeked Pintail x Mallard

Regular hybrid first seen in 2018

Only seen on three occasions this year, 31st Jan, 12th Feb and 19th Feb.

Appendix E – Species notably not recorded in 2021

These are a selection of birds that have been seen frequently in the recording area (defined as at least three of the previous five years) but were not reported during 2021.

* **Red-crested Pochard** *Netta rufina* *Scarce winter visitor*

This species has been seen fairly regularly in recent years, with sightings in 2018, 2019 and 2020.

* **Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius* *Scarce spring visitor*

This is the first year since the Whitlingham area bird report began that no Little Ringed Plovers were reported within the recording area. Elsewhere around the city birds were present at Earham Marshes in spring.

* **Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia* *Scarce spring flyover*

This species has been reported each year 2015-2020, but no reports were received in 2021.

* **Mediterranean Gull** *Ichthyaetus melanocephalus* *Scarce spring visitor*

Mediterranean Gulls are still fairly scarce around the city, but were reported every year from 2013 to 2020.

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

Previously a fairly regular visitor to Whitlingham but with few records in recent years. Elsewhere a confiding 2nd winter first found at Wensum Park in December 2020 continued to be present there at the start of the year.

* **Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe* *Scarce spring passage migrant*

Wheatears have become slightly commoner locally in recent years, with birds reported within the area in 2017, 2018 and 2020.

* **Common (=Mealy) Redpoll** *Acanthis flammea* *Scarce winter visitor*

Numbers of Mealy Redpolls vary quite a lot year on year, but at least one had been reported in the five years leading up to 2021.

Appendix F – Selected additional bird sightings from the Norwich area

These are species with no accepted records from within the recording area this year, but seen elsewhere around Norwich. Details are included here for general interest and in some cases as it might help to establish future patterns of occurrence within the area.

* **Raven** *Corvus corax*

As noted in Appendix C this species is still rare locally, but does appear to be turning up occasionally west of the city. This year 2 were reported flying over Bowthorpe on 5th Feb and 1 over Costessey on 3rd Mar.

* **White-fronted Goose** *Anser albifrons*

A flock of up to 7 were present on Postwick Marshes during February, only a few miles downriver of Whitlingham. A small movement of birds also brought one to Marston Marshes on the south side of the city on 6th Mar whilst another 6 were at Caistor St Edmund.

* **Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa*

Flew over Costessey on 19th Mar.

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

Nocmig record of one flying over Costessey on 31st Mar and one present at Earlham Marshes on 17th & 18th Apr.

* **Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*

Nocmig record of one flying over Drayton on 21st Mar

* **Hen Harrier** *Circus cyaneus*

One seen at Postwick Marshes on 20th Feb was only a few miles away from Whitlingham.

* **Siberian Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita tristis*

One caught and ringed at UEA on 6th Dec and another at Train Wood on 28th Dec

* **Rock Pipit** *Anthus petrosus*

One at Earlham Marshes on 18th Mar.

* **Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Flyovers over Norwich Waterworks on 29th Oct and Earlham Cemetery on 5th Nov.

* **Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Several sightings from the city centre and north city, although no evidence of breeding.

Acknowledgements & initials for scarce/rare species

I am grateful to everyone who has reported birds from the Whitlingham area this year, be it directly to myself, to the bird news services, via WhatsApp groups or by posted sightings on Twitter. I am also grateful to members of the UEA Ringing Group who have provided additional information and answered queries about their work. I would particularly like to thank the following for providing records, information or photos:

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Where a name was not given for a sighting (for example posted as a Twitter handle) or a sighting was passed on second or third hand, I have listed it as per the source, e.g. 'per Twitter' or 'per JL'. For completeness I have also tried to review any additional sightings from blogs, forums and recording sites such as eBird, however I have only included sightings from these sources if they fit an established pattern of occurrence.

Photographers of pictures used in the report are: Bill Bufford, Robin Chittenden, James Emerson, Max Hellicar, Justin Lansdell, James Lowen, Drew Lyness, Adam Manvell, Roger Parker, David Ratcliffe, Steve Smith, Caroline Spinks, Stephen Vickers, Will Walmsley and Stuart White.

Local information

Increasingly local birding information is discussed on Twitter or private WhatsApp groups, but the following websites regularly contain sightings from the Whitlingham area:

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

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

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

Bird information services

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

Rare Bird Alert (0207 0382820), BirdGuides (0333 5772473) or BirdLine East Anglia (07941 333970).