

# **The Birds of Whitlingham & Thorpe 2018**



Compiled by James Emerson

## **Contents**

Page 2 – Contents & contact details

Page 3 & 4 – Introduction & site map

Page 5 & 6 – New to Whitlingham: Glaucous Gull

Page 7 – 9 – New to Whitlingham: Coues's Arctic Redpoll

Page 10 & 11 – Coues's Arctic Redpoll BBRC submission by Justin Lansdell

Page 12 & 13 – New to Whitlingham: Spoonbill

Page 14 – 18 – Effects of 'the beast from the east' on scarce birds around Norwich

Page 19 – 21 – An exceptional passage of Little Gulls

Page 22 & 23 – Ringed Black-headed Gulls at Whitlingham episode vi: Return of the Black-headed Gulls

Page 24 – Whitlingham Wildfowl Count

Page 25 -57 – Whitlingham & Thorpe classified species list

Page 58 & 59 – Appendix A – Regular species not recorded this year, or seen close by.

Page 59 – Appendix B – Escaped and released birds

Page 60 – Appendix C – Hybrids & domestic wildfowl

Page 61 – 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 2019 report, by emailing: [whitlinghambirds@yahoo.co.uk](mailto: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 Gary White 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 can be found in the acknowledgements).

## Introduction

This is the seventh annual report of the bird species reported from the Whitlingham area (including Thorpe Marshes NWT reserve), covering sightings from 2018. It should be noted that this bird report is independent from any of the organisations that manages these sites, notably the Broads Authority, Whitlingham Charitable Trust, Norfolk Wildlife Trust and South Norfolk Council. A map of the recording area covered by this report can be found on the next page. Within this area most of the sightings come from the area around Whitlingham Great Broad and Thorpe Marshes.

In addition to my monthly counts and other sightings, a large number of records have been supplied by other local birders, to whom I am grateful. I have included the majority of sightings that have been sent to me directly or reported online, with only a few being left out of the final report. This does however mean that many of the reported sightings in this report have not been seen by me personally, and some relate to birds 'heard only' flying over at night. 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 from the report to be used for any 'official' purposes.

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

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

Observers are asked to send details of any noteworthy sightings direct to the county recorder, Neil Lawton. Details on how to do this can be found here: <http://norfolkbirds.weebly.com/submitting-records.html>. Any observer lucky enough to find a species at Whitlingham that is a county rarity is asked to send a description to the Norfolk Records Committee, who will publish their verdict in the Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report, which is published in the following autumn.



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

Areas of Thorpe St Andrew, including Thorpe Green, are just outside the recording area, however as the boundary is rather arbitrary, details of wildfowl and gulls recorded there have been included where it is likely that the birds involved were also sometimes present at or visible from Whitlingham.

# **New to Whitlingham: Glaucous Gull**

**James Emerson**

During December 2017 a 1<sup>st</sup>-winter Glaucous Gull was seen at Eaton Park to the west of Norwich. The bird flew off north-eastwards and wasn't seen again until Christmas Day, when it was present on Anderson's Meadow, a small area of grassland along the Marriott's Way. Sporadic sightings followed until late February 2018 (see figure 1), however no real pattern emerged and with the exception of three visits to Earlham Marshes and two to Norwich Waterworks, sightings were largely restricted to flyovers.

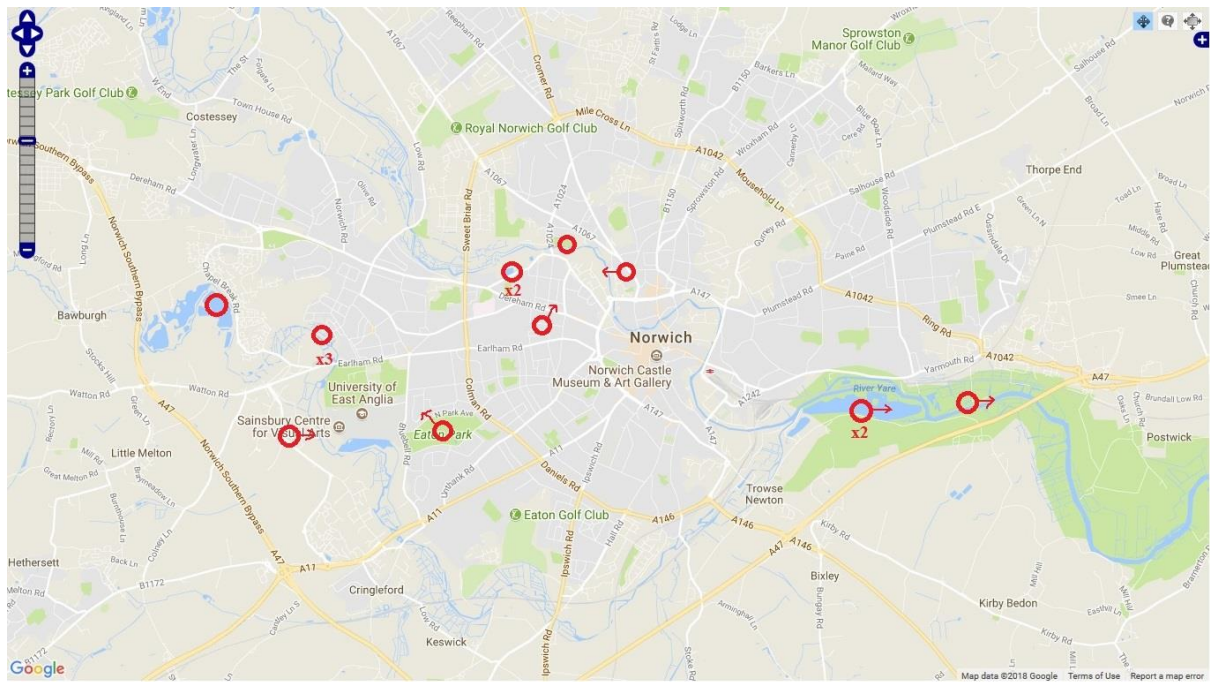
Most of the large gulls fly over Norwich before dusk, predominantly heading eastwards towards Breydon although if stationed at Whitlingham there is a clear secondary movement to the north-east, perhaps to Wroxham Broad. With this in mind, several local observers made visits to Whitlingham during the late afternoon in the hope of seeing the Glaucous Gull fly overhead. Justin Lansdell was successful on two of these occasions, the first of which constituted the first documented record of Glaucous Gull for the site. There was also a record of it flying over Thorpe Marshes, although interestingly the bird wasn't seen heading over Whitlingham by an observer present at the same time, perhaps suggesting a different trajectory.

## **Details of the Whitlingham area sightings:**

1. Whitlingham C.P. 30<sup>th</sup> January 2018 – 1<sup>st</sup>-winter flew east at 16:20 (JL)
2. Thorpe Marshes, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2018 – 1<sup>st</sup> winter flew east at 17:30 (MC)
3. Whitlingham C.P, 8<sup>th</sup> March 2018 – 1<sup>st</sup>-winter flew east at 17:32 (JL)

The addition of Glaucous Gull completes the set of 12 regularly-occurring Norfolk gulls for Whitlingham, with the fellow 'white-winger' Iceland Gull having occurred on one previous occasion. The gull list for the wider Norwich area is 13, with the first county record of Ring-billed Gull coming from UEA in 1991 (Glaucous Gull was already on the Norwich list prior to this bird, having previously been seen at Norwich Waterworks in 1994).





*Figure 1 – Glaucous Gull sightings around Norwich during winter 2017/18 based on social media, bird news services and reports from local birders. Where the bird was in flight any direction given is indicated by an arrow.*



*Figure 2 – Glaucous Gull (presumably the same individual seen over Whitlingham) photographed at Earlham Marshes © [James Lowen](https://www.jameslowen.com/)*

# New to Whitlingham: Coues's Arctic Redpoll

James Emerson

During February a flock of Redpolls including at least two Mealy Redpolls was seen regularly around Whitlingham C.P. Despite a report of a Redpoll showing some pro-Arctic features in mid-February, the flock was regularly checked by several observers with only Lesser and Mealy Redpolls seen in the weeks that followed. This changed on 27<sup>th</sup> Feb, when Justin Lansdell managed to find, ID and photograph an Arctic Redpoll in the favoured area of Alders west of the main car park. Justin has kindly allowed me to reproduce his submission to the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) here, which can be found on pages 10-11.

The finding of the Arctic Redpoll, identified as subspecies *exilipes* (Coues's Arctic Redpoll), came at the start of a spell of very harsh weather including heavy snowfall, and it was usually in a flock of between 10-20 Redpolls, mainly Lesser Redpoll but with several Mealy Redpoll mixed in as well. Views varied greatly depending on where the bird was seen – either high up in the Alders, lower down in the same trees or down amongst the snow at the edge of the ditch where the birds regularly landed to drink.

In the field most observers felt that there were two birds of interest within the flock, the Coues's Arctic Redpoll (figure 1) and a 'frosty' Mealy Redpoll (figure 2). A few observers suggested that there were two Arctic Redpolls in the flock, whilst a few who only saw the bird in a particular light were not convinced that they had seen any. As more people visited and extra pictures appeared online the debate continued, with James Lowen posting a series of Redpoll photos on his blog and inviting comments (<http://www.jameslowen.com/blog-5-mar-2018-a-confusion-of-redpolls.html>). The conclusion, reached independently by several people in response to James's posts (and also some others offline) was that the 'frosty' bird was actually the Coues's Arctic Redpoll displaying chameleonic properties depending on the location and lighting.

In order to provide evidence for the view that most of James's images depicted the same individual, different parts of the plumage of the birds were scrutinised and found to match. Two features in particular were noted, a pinkish tinge to the ear coverts below the left eye and a dark triangle on the outermost left uppertail covert, cutaway shots showing this analysis can be found on James's blog here: <http://www.jameslowen.com/blog-6-mar-2018-a-clarity-of-redpolls-.html>

After the first two weeks interest in the Redpolls at Whitlingham faded amongst the wider birding community, partly because once the weather began to warm the flock began to roam more widely, but also because there had been several other Arctic Redpolls in East Anglia already earlier in the year. Sean Locke managed to get some good photos on 6<sup>th</sup> March (figure 3), and the last confirmed sighting came from Mark Eldridge on 16<sup>th</sup> March.





Figure 1 – Coues's Arctic Redpoll. Photo: [James Lowen](#)



Figure 2 – The 'frosty' Redpoll. Photo: [James Lowen](#)





*Figure 3 – Coues's Arctic Redpoll. Photo: [Sean Locke](#)*

Coues's Arctic Redpolls are currently treated as a national rarity, assessed by the BBRC. This has not always been the case, having been regarded as a county rarity for much of the past 20 years. The reason for the change is that redpolls tend to be irruptive, so there are sometimes large numbers in a single winter, but this might be followed by only one or two records in subsequent years. The 2017/18 winter was a good one for Arctic Redpolls, with birds also reported from Eccles, Cromer, Holt, Bodham, Kelling, Choseley, Fakenham, Cockley Cley and Felthorpe.

### **Acknowledgements**

Many thanks to Justin Lansdell and Mark Eldridge for the sighting information, James Lowen for the use of photos and detective work carried out on his blog, and to Sean Locke for allowing the inclusion of his photo.

## Coues's Arctic Redpoll – Whitlingham CP, Trowse, Norwich – Tues 27<sup>th</sup> Feb 2018

Found amongst small flock of c10 Lesser Redpolls, 2+ Mealy Redpolls and c10 Siskins feeding for approx. 1hr on alders just west of main carpark where it was watched closely at all angles feeding actively and occasionally dropping to dyke to drink. This is a site I watch regularly and a flock I have enjoyed for several weeks but the Arctic Redpoll was not seen previously. I sent these photos to Andy Stoddart in the evening to confirm my impression of the bird being a Coues's Arctic Redpoll and he was very happy with it being a classic Coues's.

The bird was not looked for on 28<sup>th</sup> Feb-1<sup>st</sup> March due to bad weather and extensive snow cover but was well twitched over the period 2<sup>nd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> March at least when most got good views although the presence of at least 4 Mealy Redpolls (including one pale individual that could have been a less obvious Coues's Arctic Redpoll) were present and caused confusion for some observers.

Plain pale ear coverts

Big headed, bull-necked appearance

Short, dumpy bird lacking the longish looking tail that is often obvious on Mealy Redpolls

Flank streaking very limited, concentrated on mid/upper flanks and not organised, instead being a few fine pencil streaks (on both sides, see other photo). Note streaking is on white ground colour

Broad clear white wingbar



Overall frosty appearance obvious on both upperparts and underparts

Gave tiny 'pig eyed' impression that I have noted on other Arctic Redpolls

Short bill pushed into face, shorter than the often long-looking bill of typical Mealy Redpolls

Subtle sandy/straw wash to mantle and face

Very fluffy feathered tarsi visible as bird fed





Short bill pushed into face, shorter than the often long-looking bill of typical Mealy Redpolls

Plain pale ear coverts

Subtle sandy wash to face and chest

Flank streaking very limited, concentrated on mid/upper flanks and not organised, instead being a few fine pencil streaks (on both sides, see other photo) . Note streaking is on white ground colour

Undertail coverts white with single narrow streak on longest utc and even narrower (often invisible) fine line on longest lateral utc (one visible here). This is within the range of Coues's Arctic Redpoll (A.Stoddart pers.comm.)

Overall frosty appearance obvious on both upperparts and underparts

Rump difficult to photograph but was unmarked white (partially shown here) except 1-2 short pencil streaks on extreme lower edge



# New to Whitlingham – Spoonbill

**James Emerson**

In recent years Spoonbills have returned to Norfolk as a breeding species, and can be seen in the county all year round. Despite this, sightings are generally restricted to coastal areas, with Hickling and Potter Heigham Marshes, only 4 miles from the coast, the only truly inland sites\* hosting birds in 2017. It was therefore completely unexpected when Gary White saw a Spoonbill fly out of the roost trees on the main island at Whitlingham on the morning of 30<sup>th</sup> March. This bird flew west towards the city, and was not seen again in the area. This sighting coincided with four Spoonbills seen at Buckenham Marshes on 30<sup>th</sup> March and remaining for a few days afterwards. Observers noted that this group sometimes split into a group of three and a lone individual, which provides anecdotal support for the idea that the Whitlingham bird had overshot Buckenham but then returned after its brief visit.



*Figure 1 – Spoonbill flying past the main island. Photo: Gary White*





*Figure 2 – Spoonbill departing west. Photo: Gary White*

Further research into inland Norfolk Spoonbill sightings reinforced the initial impression that they are still rare away from the coast. With the exception of the Breydon/Berney area and previously mentioned Hickling/Potter Heigham sightings, the only inland records from the Norfolk Bird & Mammal Reports 2012-2017 were 1 at Fritton 26<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012 and 4 at West Walton 27<sup>th</sup> May 2014.

*\* Some birders may contend that Breydon Water, which regularly also hosts Spoonbills is an inland rather than coastal site – it is 1 mile from the sea as the bird flies.*

## **References**

Stoddart, A (ed) **Norfolk Bird & Mammal Reports 2012 – 2017 Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists Society**, Volumes 46-51.

## **Acknowledgements**

Thanks to Gary White for describing his sighting and providing the photos.

# The beast from the east – effects of the storm

James Emerson

During the last week of February strong easterly winds brought freezing temperatures and heavy snow to the east of England. The snow was deep enough to cause road closures, initially due to snowfall and latterly due to drifting. Temperatures across the country in February averaged 2.4°C, the lowest since 2010 \*<sup>1</sup>. The start of March saw more snowfall and sub-zero temperatures as the strong easterly winds continued. Later in the month temperatures increased, leading to an average monthly temperature of 3.8°C, 1.6°C lower than average but higher than the cold spell in March 2013 \*<sup>2</sup>.

The period from 27<sup>th</sup> February to 7<sup>th</sup> March brought about a number of interesting sightings, mostly influenced by the weather but inevitably the increased number of observers caused by the cold snap and presence of an Arctic Redpoll meant that some birds that would have otherwise gone un-noticed were found. A summary of likely weather-influenced birds is presented below, with comments on their historical status in the area.

## Shoveler

The count of 53 on 03/03/18 was the second highest area count (the highest count being 58 present on 21<sup>st</sup> Dec 2000). Figure 1 shows just how high this count is compared to typical numbers during March. Note that for ease of analysis the counts included here are from the monthly WeBS count and not necessarily monthly maxima.

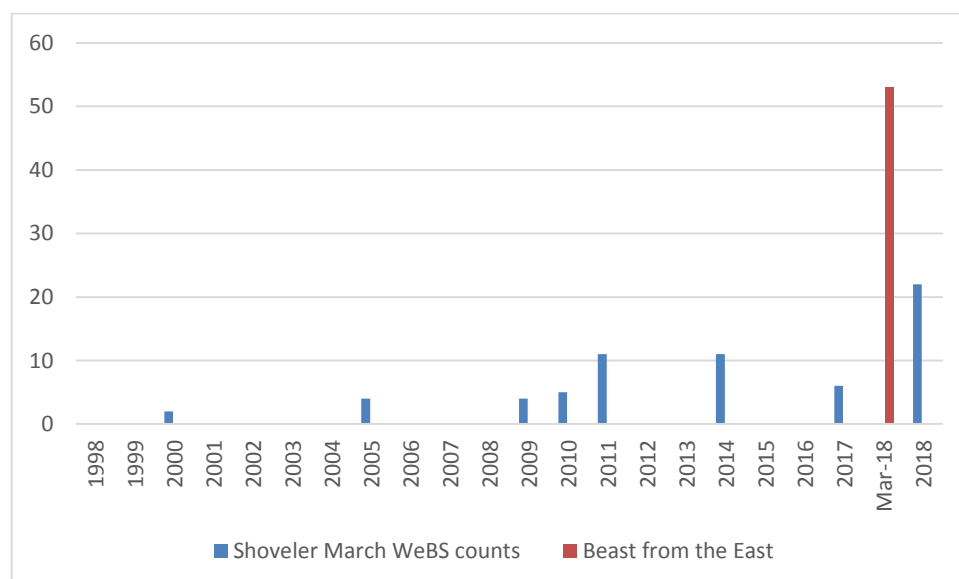


Figure 1 – Shoveler records from March WeBS counts 1998-2018

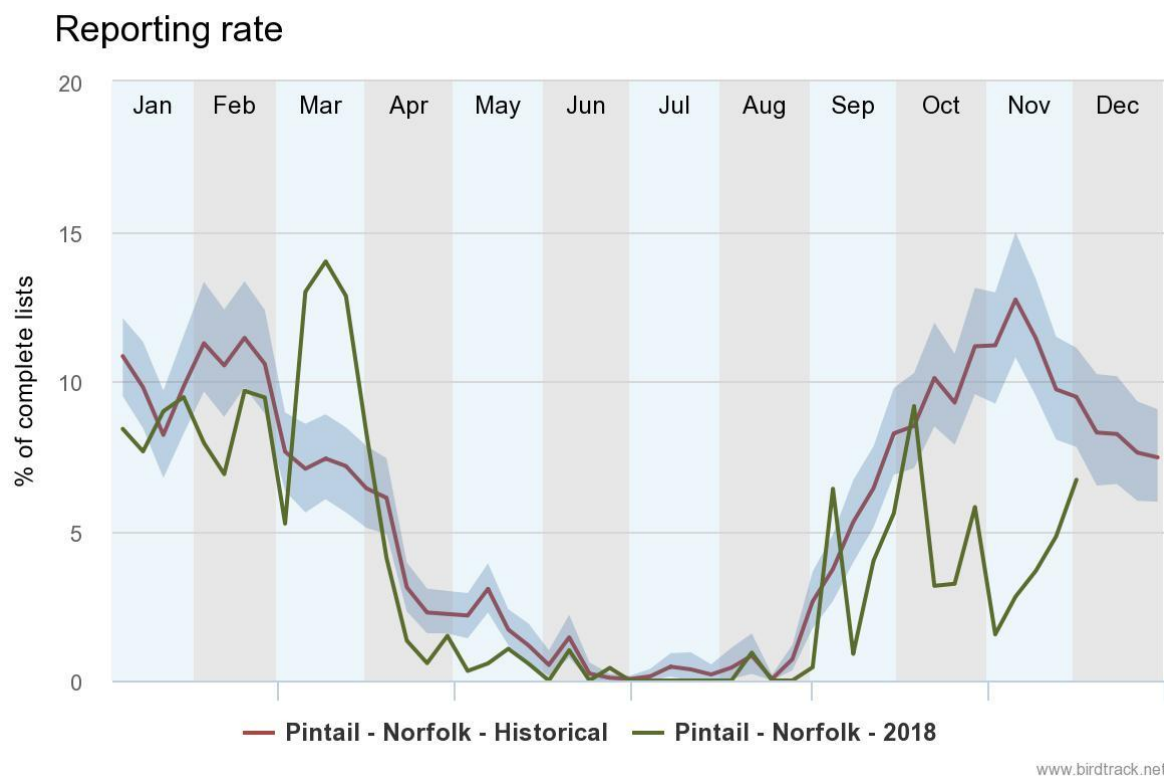
## Pintail

Pintail are rare at Whitlingham, with the only records in the period 2013-17 being single females at Whitlingham 10<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> Jan 2016 and St Andrews Broad on 1<sup>st</sup> Feb 2017. The appearance of four drakes between 27<sup>th</sup> February and 2<sup>nd</sup> March (two still present in the area until 18<sup>th</sup> March) was therefore unusual in terms of both numbers and sex. Inland Pintail were also noted at Earlham Marshes, plus at Binham, Cantley and Felbrigg.



*Figure 2 – drake Pintail on the Great Broad. Photo: Gary White*

In order to investigate if this apparent increase influx of Pintail into inland Norfolk was being observed more widely I used the beta version of BTO's BirdTrack to generate the % of complete lists that included Pintail during 2018 compared against the historical trend, which is shown below in Figure 3. You can see that near the end of February the reporting rate for 2018 was declining in line with the historical trend, but then there was a sharp increase of around 9 percentage points, peaking in mid-March.



*Figure 3 – Pintail reporting rate reproduced from [www.birdtrack.net](http://www.birdtrack.net) with permission of BTO*

Given that Met Office data showed that the March of 2013 was colder than the same month in 2018, I wondered if the Pintail reporting rate had showed a similar spike in that year. There is indeed a spike at the same time of year in 2013 and 2018 – see Figure 4 below.

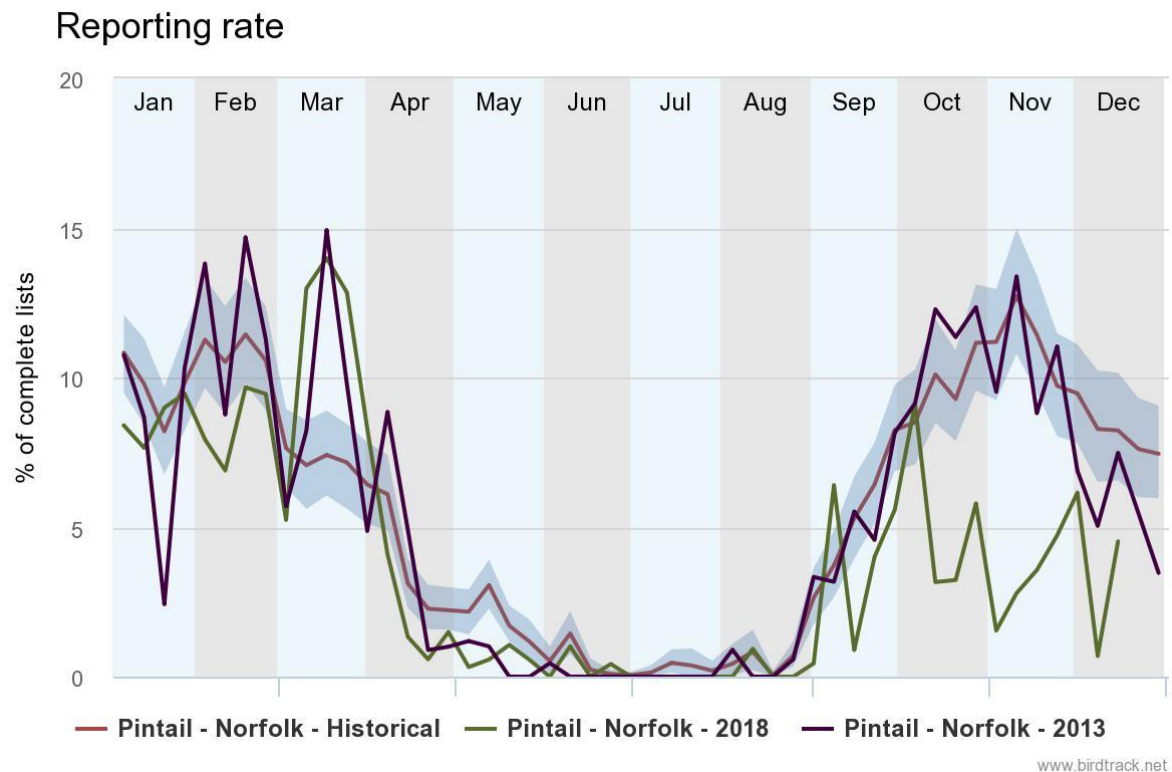


Figure 4 – Pintail reporting rate in 2013 and 2018 vs historical rate, reproduced from [www.birdtrack.net](http://www.birdtrack.net) with permission of BTO

## Smew

This species is strongly associated with periods of snow or cold weather at Whitlingham. A redhead between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> March was the first one here since February 2012.



Figure 5 – Smew on St Andrews Broad. Photo: James Emerson

## Goosander

Near annual, but no sightings earlier in the year until one present 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> March.

## Ringed Plover

A rare species in the area - one was reported at Thorpe Marshes on 1<sup>st</sup> March.



### **Curlew**

A scarce species locally - one over Thorpe Marshes on 1<sup>st</sup> March.

### **Knot**

A rare species in the area. One, initially looking in poor condition but latterly seemingly OK was seen by several observers at Whitlingham C.P. on 2<sup>nd</sup> March

### **Dunlin**

Does pass through in spring in varying numbers, but at least one present between 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> March was probably associated with the cold weather. Nearby one was found dead at Postwick, and anecdotally others were seen around the city outskirts during March.

### **Green Sandpiper**

Whilst predominantly seen on passage, some birds now overwinter at the sewage treatment works, and that might be the origin of three seen on 2<sup>nd</sup> March.

### **Redshank**

This species is sometimes seen on spring passage at Thorpe Marshes, typically in April, however there was a clear influx of birds during the cold spell. This included two at Thorpe Marshes, one over Sandy Lane on 2<sup>nd</sup> March and one near Dolphin Bridge in the city centre all on 2<sup>nd</sup> March (the latter still present on 3<sup>rd</sup> March). Later in the month birds were still being seen locally, including one over the picnic meadow on 18<sup>th</sup> March and one on the Great Broad on 25<sup>th</sup> March.



*Figure 5 – Redshank on the River Wensum in Norwich. Photo: [Jeremy Bartlett](#).*

### **Great Black-backed Gull**

Scarce locally and more usually recorded in the second half of the year, so one on 1<sup>st</sup> March might well have been weather-affected.

### **Caspian Gull**

Rare locally, although the true status is probably masked by the lack of enthusiasm local birders have for gulls. One on 4<sup>th</sup> March, probably only recorded because of a visiting gull expert!

### **Yellow-legged Gull**

Scarce locally, as above one on 4<sup>th</sup> March would have probably gone unnoticed had it not been for Dawn Balmer visiting.

### **Coues's Arctic Redpoll**

The individual found on 27<sup>th</sup> February was a first for the site and part of a small influx to the county in 2017/18 – see articles for fuller details.

## **References**

\*1 <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/summaries/2018/february>

\*2 <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/summaries/2018/march>

## **Acknowledgements**

Thanks to everyone who reported sightings during the 'Beast from the East', including some observers who don't usually visit Whitlingham. In addition thanks to Mike Toms for granting permission for the use of the BTO graphs, and Jeremy Bartlett for allowing use of his Redshank photo.

# An exceptional passage of Little Gulls

**James Emerson**

On 15<sup>th</sup> April I headed to Whitlingham to carry out the monthly Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) count. I arrived to find the broads covered in fog, which having initially begun to lift then changed and began to get thicker. I had managed to get some basic counts done during the brighter spell, but visibility was very challenging (figure 1).



*Figure 1 - Telescope view of a Common Tern about a third distance across the Great Broad once the fog had thickened.*

After finding out that fellow local birder Gary White was on site, I caught up with him to compare counts. He had got completely round before the fog had thickened and had seen a Little Gull, which we presumed was probably one of three adults that had been present the previous day. Keen to see it and ensure my counts were as accurate as possible we waited once again on the south shore for the fog to clear.

Eventually visibility was restored to normal, and shortly afterwards a Little Gull flew past. However, when we tracked it along the broad we noticed another three Little Gulls sitting on the water. We continued to scan, and every time we did, one of us would count more

birds. At one point we agreed there were at least 17, and texted the news out the information services. By the time Justin Lansdell arrived we were up to 24, and when we left there were 29! In addition we also saw 2 Arctic Terns, one of which had a damaged tail streamer. Birds continued to arrive after we left, the highest count reported was 35.

Previously the highest published count of Little Gulls at Whitlingham was nine, seen on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2005, although since then 11 were reported on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2012 as recorded in that years Whitlingham Bird Report. Figure 2 shows the distribution of Little Gull records for the area since 2010, showing that their occurrence during April is sporadic and usually in low numbers. Note that across the period in question all the sighting dates are unique, i.e. birds have occurred on different dates every year. The Whitlingham flock was also impressive in a county context (see Table 1). Typically Barton Broad attracts the largest numbers most springs, but looking at 2012-2017, only the Barton flock of 40 in 2017 exceeds this year's Whitlingham total

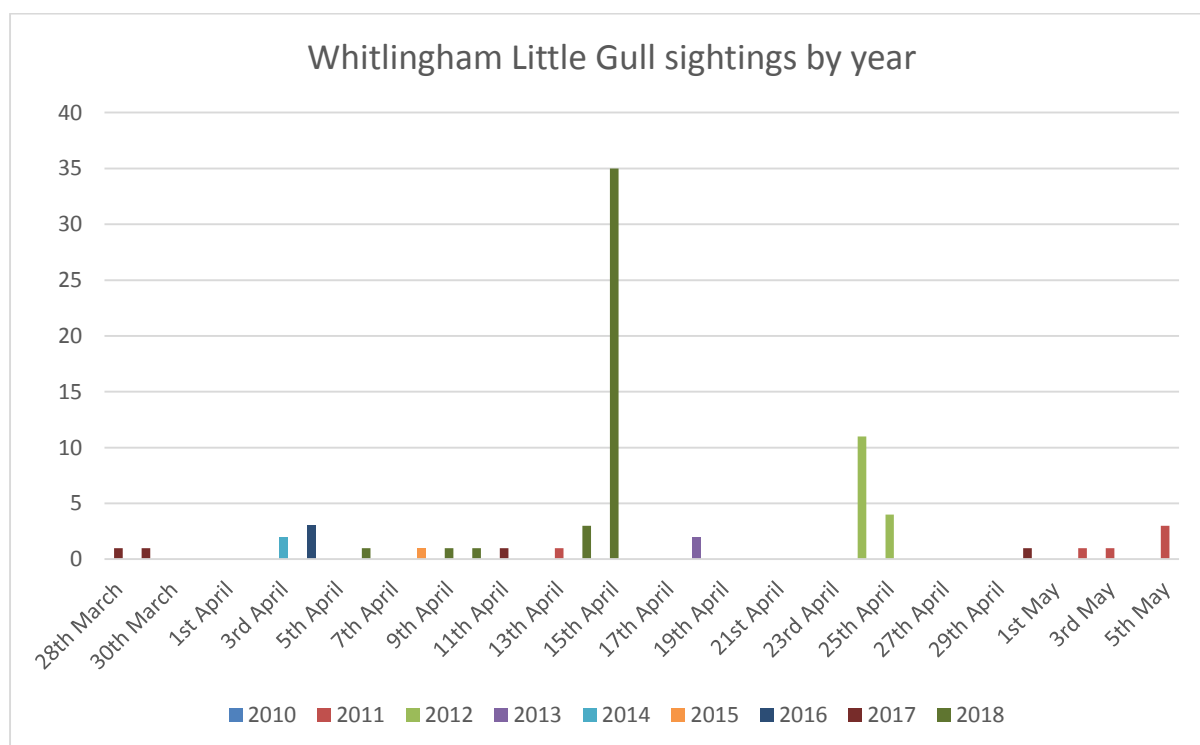


Figure 2 – Little Gull sightings 2010-2018 by day and colour coded to the year

Site	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Highest spring count	4	6	7	8	5	40
Location of the count	Barton & Whitlingham	Barton	Hickling	Barton	Pentney	Barton

Table 1 – Inland Little Gull sightings from the Norfolk Bird & Mammal Reports 2012-17





Figure 3 – Adult Little Gull over Whitlingham Great Broad. Photo: [James Lowen](#)



Figure 4 – Part of the Little Gull flock on Whitlingham Great Broad. Photo: [James Lowen](#)

## **References**

Stoddart, A (ed) **Norfolk Bird & Mammal Reports 2012 – 2017** Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists Society, Volumes 46-51.

## **Acknowledgements**

Thanks to [James Lowen](#) for allowing his photos to be used to illustrate this article.

# Ringed Black-headed Gulls at Whitlingham episode vi – Return of the Black-headed Gulls

James Emerson

This brief report is the sixth 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. For further information about the origins of these birds see the article ‘Colour-ringed Black-headed Gulls at Whitlingham’ from the 2013 Whitlingham Bird Report.

Ring number	Date first seen	Place ringed	Date ringed	Distance travelled /Km	Seen previously?
Green J6U2	03/01/18	Østfold, NORWAY	18/06/06	954	Yes (2015 onwards)
White J0AJ	14/01/18	Akershus, NORWAY	06/05/12	976	Yes (2014 on)
Yellow T2X8	18/01/18	Zachodniopomorskie, POLAND	May 2017	868	Yes (Nov 2017 on)
Metal 5431788	18/01/18	Ostfriesische Inseln, GERMANY	01/06/17	463	NEW
White A341	22/01/18	Neumunster, GERMANY	16/12/12	600	Yes (2014 onwards)
Metal ST246128	16/02/18	Hyvinkää, Uusimaa, FINLAND	04/06/05	1682	Yes (2015)

***Table 1 – Ringed Black-headed Gulls seen in the first winter period (Jan-Feb) 2018***



*Black-headed Gull white-ringed J0AJ and green-ringed J6U2. Photos: Nick Elsey*

Ring number	Date first seen	Place ringed	Date ringed	Distance travelled / Km	Seen previously?
Green J6U2	05/11/18	Østfold, NORWAY	18/06/06	954	Yes (2015 onwards)
White J0AJ	05/11/18	Akershus, NORWAY	06/05/12	976	Yes (2014 on)
Yellow T2X8	05/11/18	Zachodniopomorskie, POLAND	May 2017	868	Yes (Nov 2017 on)
Metal ringed ST305473	14/11/18	FINLAND	?	?	NEW
White A341	19/12/18	Neumunster, GERMANY	16/12/12	600	Yes (2014 onwards)
Metal-ringed ST272401	19/12/18	Eura, FINLAND	24/06/09	1560	Yes (2014 onwards)
Metal-ringed ST263009*	19/12/18	Porvoo, Uusimaa, FINLAND	21/04/07	1714	Yes (2017 onwards)
White 5NE	19/12/18	DENMARK	?	?	NEW

**Table 2 – Ringed Black-headed Gulls seen in the second winter period (Nov-Dec) 2018**

\* This bird was also seen in autumn 2017 but details were received too late to include in that report.



*Black-headed Gull white 5NE, a new colour-ringed bird to the area. Photo: James Emerson*

## **Acknowledgements**

Many thanks to Justin Lansdell for supplying much of the 2018 information, to the various ringers involved and to the other birds who reported sightings of some of the birds, including Ricky Cleverley, Mark Eldridge, Nick Elsey, @NorfolkPuffin and Steve Smith.

## Whitlingham Wildfowl Survey

Complete wildfowl counts were made once per month by the author to contribute to the BTOs Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS). The data here is based on the combined counts for Whitlingham Little Broad, Great Broad and St Andrews Broad, however some counts differ from the figures submitted to WeBS in that they also include birds seen on nearby land. The counts are not necessarily high counts for the month – ad hoc and high counts are described in the individual species accounts.

Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Mute Swan	32	34	21	25	27	127	114	53	22	22	20	12
Greylag Goose	3	21	6	21	23	87	72	4	0	23	41	8
Canada Goose	11	11	9	13	10	48	9	2	4	2	14	2
Egyptian Goose	7	4	0	2	0	3	8	30	10	6	5	7
Shoveler	39	14	22	8	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	5
Gadwall	262	54	18	3	3	3	0	1	1	48	160	219
Wigeon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Mallard	88	45	39	27	22	73	83	136	66	63	56	72
Pintail	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Teal	138	22	18	8	0	0	0	0	1	4	19	33
Red-crested Pochard	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Pochard	59	39	8	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	29	6
Tufted Duck	327	221	159	120	10	4	2	1	0	52	197	173
Goldeneye	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Cormorant	22	8	27	1	3	0	8	14	30	69	35	29
Bittern	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grey Heron	8	3	3	2	2	2	1	1	0	4	6	4
Little Egret	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Little Grebe	6	8	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	6	6
Great-crested Grebe	2	6	6	6	5	6	5	6	6	11	7	6
Moorhen	5	4	5	3	1	6	6	7	4	8	5	5
Coot	192	68	37	3	0	1	2	12	45	96	143	238
Lapwing	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	61	0	0	0
Oystercatcher	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Common Snipe	1	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Common Sandpiper	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Green Sandpiper	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	4	1	0	0	0
Little Gull	0	0	0	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Black-headed Gull	408	316	505	84	0	1	28	7	7	109	207	312
Common Gull	8	9	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	18
Lesser Black-backed Gull	1	1	47	27	39	15	8	74	50	9	0	1
Herring Gull	13	46	50	11	2	3	0	1	3	2	22	8
Great Black-backed Gull	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Common Tern	0	0	0	2	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	0
Arctic Tern	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kingfisher	2	0	0	2	1	0	0	3	0	2	1	0
Pochard x Ferruginous Duck	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0



## **Whitlingham and Thorpe Classified List**

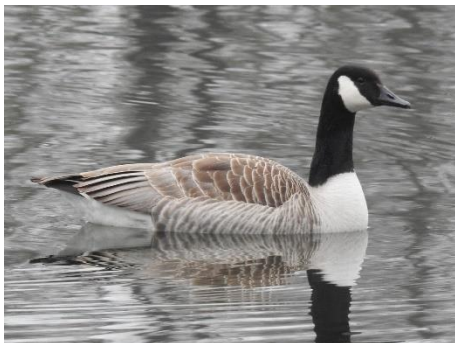
The systematic list in this bird report follows the latest taxonomical order taken from the British Ornithologists Union (BOU), available to view or download here: <https://www.bou.org.uk/british-list/>. The most recent update to the British list occurred on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2017. The order of the wildfowl has been adjusted, with the most notable change to the order this year being the elevation of the geese above the swans. Brent Goose is now the first species on the British List.

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

Sightings of birds that are locally scarce or rare, particularly early or late reports or unusually 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 resident*



A small number of truly resident birds (3 at the start of the year but only 2 from October) were joined by small numbers of other local birds in winter and more in the spring, with a peak count of 44 on 17<sup>th</sup> June. One pair bred, with 3 well-grown goslings seen on the Great Broad on 3<sup>rd</sup> June.

**Photo: Gary White**

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

*Common resident*



Low numbers present during most of the year, with three-figure counts restricted to 112 on 1<sup>st</sup> Apr and 162 on 2<sup>nd</sup> June. Two broods reported from Thorpe Marshes during early May (3 and 5 goslings). At Whitlingham a minimum of 5 broods fledged, although not all goslings appeared to make it to adulthood. The first brood of the year was noted on 6<sup>th</sup> May, with presumably the same pair with eight goslings seen on 8<sup>th</sup>. On 20<sup>th</sup> five broods were noted, possibly including the original one, of 3,3,3,2 and 1 goslings respectively.

**Photo: Gary White**

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

*Occasional flyover*



Flocks flying over Whitlingham C.P. in the first winter period were noted on 7<sup>th</sup> Jan and c100 flying north-west at dusk on 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb. There were also several reports from November, with 85 photographed flying over Thorpe Marshes on 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Mute Swan** *Cygnus olor*

*Common resident*

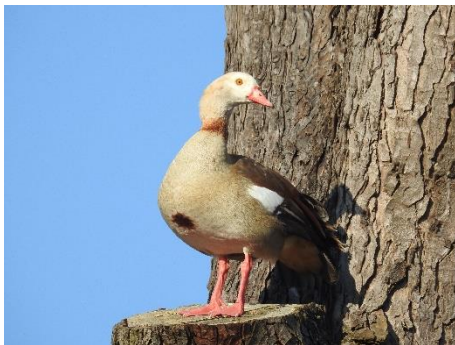


The highest count of the year was 121 on 2<sup>nd</sup> June, with 113 still present on 15<sup>th</sup> July. A brood of 4 cygnets at Thorpe Marshes once again contained a rare 'Polish' Swan with a pigment deficiency. By the 17<sup>th</sup> June this family was down to 2 cygnets, the 'Polish' bird being one of the 2 to have perished. At Whitlingham 3 small cygnets were seen on the Great Broad on 17<sup>th</sup> June. On the river 4 mature cygnets near Thorpe Green in autumn came from two families that must have bred nearby. A new metal-ringed bird seen in May had been ringed "near Trowse" in April by the RSPCA.

**Photo: James Emerson**

**Egyptian Goose** *Alopochen aegyptiacus*

*Common resident.*



Only modest counts this year, typically between 2 and 7, with a peak count of 35 recorded on 14<sup>th</sup> Aug. A brood of 10 small goslings were first seen on 3<sup>rd</sup> May, with the only other breeding record 3 goslings present on the Little Broad on 12<sup>th</sup> Aug.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna*

*Scarce spring visitor*



Sightings usually relate to 1-3 individuals, so a flock 9 on the Great Broad on 6<sup>th</sup> Apr was unusual (7 shown above). The only other reports were both on St Andrews Broad with 3 on 7<sup>th</sup> Mar and 2 on 9<sup>th</sup> Apr, the latter possibly lingering birds from the large flock.

**Photo: Justin Lansdell**

**\* Mandarin** *Aix galericulata*

*Scarce occasional visitor*



A drake was found on the River Yare, viewed from Whitlingham, on 25<sup>th</sup> Feb (GW). This bird continued to be seen, mainly at Thorpe River Green, until 4<sup>th</sup> Mar.

Three birds were present on 15<sup>th</sup> Apr, a drake that flew east from Whitlingham (GW/JL) and a pair on the river (JG). Further sightings of a drake came from 29<sup>th</sup> Apr and 5<sup>th</sup> May (the latter with shorter 'sails' than the original bird – both sightings GW)

In the second winter period a drake was present on the Great Broad on 7<sup>th</sup> December (JL).

**Photo: Gary White**

**Shoveler** *Spatula clypeata*

*Regular winter visitor*



A very good first winter period for this species, starting with 29 on St Andrews Broad on 1<sup>st</sup> Jan. Numbers increased slightly to 36 on 20<sup>th</sup> Jan, with 35 seen on 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb, both again on St Andrews Broad. During March more birds arrived and moved between Thorpe and the Great Broad. It was at the latter where a whopping 54+ were counted on 2<sup>nd</sup> Mar, narrowly falling short of the site record of 58 set in 2000. Numbers fluctuated during

April, peaking at 18 on the 9<sup>th</sup> and last being seen on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> winter period 3 flew over Whitlingham on 13<sup>th</sup> Sept, with small numbers of birds on St Andrews Broad from the 24<sup>th</sup> and moving between Whitlingham and Thorpe until the year end.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Gadwall** *Spatula strepera*

*Common winter visitor*



Lower numbers than the start of the previous year, with around 50 at Whitlingham, but climbing to a peak of 166 on 27<sup>th</sup> Jan. Numbers quickly dropped off, with only 12 by the end of March. Peak counts in April and May were both 10, and 1 was seen on 16<sup>th</sup> June. After a 2 month gap, 4 were seen on St Andrews Broad on 16<sup>th</sup> Aug. Numbers increased quickly during autumn, with 69 on 28<sup>th</sup> Oct, 86 on 10<sup>th</sup> Nov, 152 on 11<sup>th</sup> Nov and then

stabilised in late Nov, with 211 on 24<sup>th</sup> matched by 212 on 7<sup>th</sup> Dec and peaking at 259 on 16<sup>th</sup> Dec.

**Photo: Ricky Cleverley**



**Wigeon** *Spatula penelope*

*Scarce winter visitor*

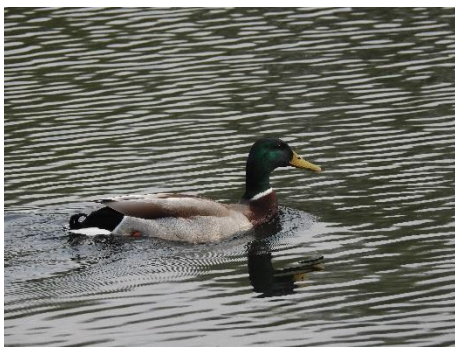


Sporadic sightings of 1 or 2 birds throughout January, February and March, with 6 briefly on 1st Mar the highest count and the last of spring being 2 on the Great Broad on 9<sup>th</sup> Apr (with the exception of 20 heard flying over Thorpe on 13<sup>th</sup> Apr). First returning bird was on St Andrews Broad on 17<sup>th</sup> Sept, with 4 on 29<sup>th</sup> Sept and 1-2 seen on several dates in October and November.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*

*Common resident.*



At least 2 pairs bred at Thorpe Marshes and another 2 at Whitlingham C.P, first noted on 15<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> April respectively. A metal-ringed drake seen at Thorpe St Andrew had been ringed at Whitlingham in January 2016. Numbers peaked in August with 173 on 26<sup>th</sup> Aug, around 80 higher than the next highest counts.

**Photo: Gary White**

**\* Pintail** *Anas acuta*

*Rare winter visitor*



Typically records here are of females in late winter, but this year up to 4 drakes were seen during the cold snap from 27<sup>th</sup> Feb to 6<sup>th</sup> Mar, alternating between St Andrews Broad and Whitlingham Great Broad (many observers). Two were again present on 18<sup>th</sup> Mar (GW), and finally one flew over Thorpe Marshes on 22<sup>nd</sup> Apr (RC).

**Photo: Gary White**

**Teal** *Anas crecca*

*Common winter visitor.*



Large number present at St Andrews Broad in early January, with 155 on 7<sup>th</sup> Jan and 176 on 18<sup>th</sup> Jan. Numbers tailed off quickly, with 8 on the Great Broad on 15<sup>th</sup> Apr the last of the first winter period. Birds reported from Thorpe Marshes from 13<sup>th</sup> Sept and Whitlingham on 29<sup>th</sup> Sept. Numbers initially lower in the second winter period, with around 35 being seen in early December, but a coordinated count revealed 153

on 15<sup>th</sup> Dec (128 at Whitlingham and 25 on St Andrews Broad).

**Photo: Gary White**

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

*Scarce winter visitor*



After an absence in 2017 there were 3 records this year. Firstly a pair was present on the Great Broad on 17<sup>th</sup> Mar (JL), followed by a female on the Great Broad on 30<sup>th</sup> Mar (GW) and another female on 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> Nov (GW).

**Photo: Gary White**

**Pochard** *Aythya ferina*

*Common winter visitor*



Around 70 present at the start of the year, of which 59 were at Thorpe. Forty remained at Whitlingham until 3<sup>rd</sup> Mar, but after that numbers declined to single figures, with a drake on 6<sup>th</sup> May the last bird of spring. Sightings resumed on 29<sup>th</sup> Sept, peaking at 31 on 11<sup>th</sup> Nov but only a handful seen during most of December - although numbers picked up right at the end with 30+ on St Andrews Broad on 30<sup>th</sup> Dec. **Photo: Gary White**

**Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula*

*Common winter visitor*



Counts early in the year revealed 326 birds present during the day on 2<sup>nd</sup> Jan, but c450 before dusk – perhaps suggesting birds arriving from elsewhere to roost on the Great Broad. Numbers fluctuated, but the combined count of 200 on 14<sup>th</sup> Apr (186 on St Andrews Broad, 14 on Great Broad) was a new high count for April. A pair were present all year round, but no signs of breeding were noted. In the second winter period numbers peaked at 267 on 24<sup>th</sup> Nov but dropped back down to around 190 in early December. A high count of 332 on 16<sup>th</sup> Dec was probably swelled by numbers arriving the previous night during a big storm, as numbers were back down to 234 shortly afterwards.

**Photo: Gary White**

**\* Scaup** *Aythya marila*

*Rare winter visitor*



An unusual record of a pair present on St Andrews Broad on 22<sup>nd</sup> July (SW). These birds were photographed and seen by several observers.

**Photo: Justin Lansdell**



**\* Common Scoter** *Melanitta nigra*

*Scarce passage migrant*



A drake present on Great Broad on 8<sup>th</sup> April was then joined by a second drake later in the day (GW, SS).

There were also two spring reports of birds heard flying over Thorpe Marshes after dark, on 28<sup>th</sup> Mar and 13<sup>th</sup> Apr (both MC).

**Photo: Gary White**

**Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula*

*Scarce winter visitor*



Seemingly absent in the first winter period, although 1 reported on 3<sup>rd</sup> Mar. In the autumn 2 were present on St Andrews Broad on 27<sup>th</sup> Oct, with 3 on 28<sup>th</sup> Oct. After a month gap 4 were present on 24<sup>th</sup> Nov with 6 in the area on 9<sup>th</sup> Dec (5 female types and a 1<sup>st</sup>-winter drake). Eight on 22<sup>nd</sup> Dec (4 at Thorpe, 4 on Great Broad) equalled the site high count, and 7 were present on the Great Broad on 30<sup>th</sup> Dec.

**Photo: Gary White**

**\* Smew** *Mergellus albellus*

*Rare winter visitor*



A redhead was found during the spell of freezing weather on the Great Broad (JL/RC/MS) on 2<sup>nd</sup> Mar, then moved across to St Andrews Broad from 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> Mar.

This was the first local sighting since 2012.

**Photo: Ricky Cleverley**

**Goosander** *Mergus merganser*

*Scarce winter visitor*



One noted by several observers on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Mar, flying between Whthingham, Thorpe and the river. A pair were seen in flight on 18<sup>th</sup> Mar then on the Great Broad on 25<sup>th</sup>. A redhead was then seen on the Great Broad on 10<sup>th</sup> Apr. In the second winter period 4 redheads were present on the Great Broad on 4<sup>th</sup> Nov, with 3 still present 5<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> Nov. Two drakes were also present on 22<sup>nd</sup> Dec.

**Photo: Gary White**

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

*Occasional visitor*



Four spring sightings, perhaps relating to the same bird, firstly at Thorpe Marshes on 15<sup>th</sup> Mar (RC) then at Whitlingham C.P. on 18<sup>th</sup> Mar, 24<sup>th</sup> Mar and 10<sup>th</sup> Apr (all GW).

**Photo: Ricky Cleverley**

**Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus***

*Fairly common resident*

Present but unobtrusive around Whitlingham – a maximum of 5 noted (30<sup>th</sup> March) but presumably more on the parts of the area with limited public access.

**\* Diver sp. *Gavia* sp.**

*Very rare visitor*

One, unfortunately not identified to species, was seen flying west over Whitlingham on 10<sup>th</sup> Feb (per bird news services). The only species of Diver on the Whitlingham list is Great Northern Diver following the wintering bird of 2009/10, although prior to that there had been a Black-throated Diver on the river east of Norwich.

**Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis***

*Common winter visitor*



At least 11 present in the area during January, with 4 on St Andrews Broad and 7 on the Great Broad simultaneously. Numbers at each site fluctuated with up to 5 at Thorpe and 9 at Whitlingham, with singles also seen on the river. The last sighting of spring was on 29<sup>th</sup> Mar, with the first returning bird at Whitlingham on 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept and 6 present during the winter.

**Photo: Ricky Cleverley**

**Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus***

*Resident*



Present all year round. Courtship display noted on 1<sup>st</sup> April, but no young recorded this year. Numbers occasionally reaching double-figures, with 12 on 16<sup>th</sup> Dec the highest count.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris*

*Scarce but annual winter visitor*



One present and occasionally seen basking in the sun during warm morning between 9<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> January, then no reports until the spell of cold weather on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Mar, although it seems likely the bird was present between these dates. In the second winter period one noted on 9<sup>th</sup> Nov and 22<sup>nd</sup> Dec – presumably present between these dates. **Photo: James Emerson**

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*

*Common resident*



Present throughout the year, usually in low numbers around the Great Broad. Seven on the Great Broad on 7<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> Jan was the highest count.

**Photo: Gary White**

**\*Great White Egret** *Casmerodius alba*

*Former county rarity*



One flew west over Whitlingham C.P. on 21<sup>st</sup> Jan (RM, DW), whilst another was photographed after flying in from the west and landing in trees on the main island (GW). The latter record is probably the first to be noted actually landed here, with previous records relating to flyovers.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta*

*Regular flyovers*



Regular sightings of birds flying over, mostly at dusk. Sightings mainly concentrated between Jan-Apr and August onwards, but this might reflect the months when birders are most likely to be present around sunset. The most interesting sighting was of five going to roost in trees on the main island on the Great Broad on 12<sup>th</sup> Aug. This is the first time multiple birds have been reported roosting here, but in November &

December birds noted in trees at the Little Broad early in the day, including 3 on 22<sup>nd</sup> Dec.

**Photo: Gary White**



**Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo*

*Common winter visitor*



Winter daytime counts typically no higher than 50, with the exception of 82 on 4<sup>th</sup> Nov and a remarkably stable 69 on 8<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> Oct. Highest roost counts were 109 on 21<sup>st</sup> Jan and 77 on 30<sup>th</sup> Jan.

**Photo: Gary White**

**[\* Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivora*

*County rarity*

*A large raptor seen over Thorpe Marshes on 3<sup>rd</sup> May was felt to be highly likely to be this species (RC). There are three previously documented area records: 7<sup>th</sup> June 1997, 4<sup>th</sup> July 2004 and 30<sup>th</sup> Sept 2009. This would therefore be an early date]*

**Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus*

*Resident*



A scattering of sightings throughout the year from both Whitlingham and Thorpe Marshes, all singles other than two at Whitlingham on 21<sup>st</sup> Apr.

**Photo: James Emerson**

**Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus*

*Fairly regular flyover*



Reported fairly frequently, always single birds and in three clear clusters, January, March/early April and then finally October. Where sexed, birds were female/1<sup>st</sup>-winter male with the exception of a male on 29<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**Photo: Gary White**

**[\* Ringtail Harrier** *sp* *Circus sp.*

*Very rare migrant*

*A ringtail harrier was seen flying along the river from Thorpe River Green on 22<sup>nd</sup> April (ME). Unfortunately views were not prolonged enough to conclusively identify it, but based on date and location Hen Harrier is the most likely species. See also Appendix A]*

**\* Red Kite** *Milvus milvus*

*Scarce flyovers*



A single record this year, one photographed over Whitlingham on 11<sup>th</sup> Feb (GW). Despite increasing around Norfolk this species has been surprisingly scarce here recently, so I have instated it as locally scarce and would welcome all sightings.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Buzzard** *Buteo buteo*

*Resident nearby*



Regular sightings of one or two birds throughout the year, with pairs resident both north and south of the recording area. A passage of 11 birds was observed over Thorpe Marshes on 9<sup>th</sup> March, including a particularly pale bird.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Water Rail** *Rallus aquaticus*

*Secretive resident/winter visitor*

Fewer records than received in recent years. Up to 4 seen around Whitlingham Great Broad during Jan to Mar, with sightings again in Nov and Dec. At Thorpe records additionally received during Apr, Sept and Oct, but no evidence of breeding noted this year.

**Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*

*Common resident*



Noted in small numbers throughout the year. The only evidence of breeding was a pair with two young chicks seen at Thorpe Marshes on 1<sup>st</sup> May.

**Photo: Gary White**



**Coot** *Fulica atra*

*Resident/Common winter visitor*



Up to 188 present during January, decreasing to 26 in mid-March. Numbers from Apr to July all single figures then slowly increased, with numbers reaching 100 by the end of Sept, and peaked at 238 on 9<sup>th</sup> Dec. No breeding noted this year.

**Photo: Gary White**

**\* Common Crane** *Grus grus*

*Rare flyover*

This species is now becoming almost seen annually now as a handful of birds fly around the county in spring. This year there was a sighting of two birds circling over Thorpe St Andrew on 7<sup>th</sup> May (SW), and an undated report of two seen from Whitlingham during spring probably relates to the same birds (per JE).

**\* Stone Curlew** *Burhinus oedicnemus*

*Very rare – nocturnal records only*

A report of two heard flying separately over Thorpe Marshes at night on 13<sup>th</sup> Apr (MC).

**Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus*

*Regular spring visitor*



Scarce this year. Two present at Thorpe Marshes on several dates in March, possibly accounting for one at Whitlingham on two dates in early April. Three flew east over Whitlingham on 20<sup>th</sup> May and two present at Thorpe on 15<sup>th</sup> June. Possibly under-reported due to perception of being common.

**Photo: Ricky Cleverley**

**\* Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta*

*Scarce spring migrant*

No grounded birds seen, but reported flying over at night on three occasions, 13<sup>th</sup> Mar, 5<sup>th</sup> Apr and 13<sup>th</sup> Apr (all MC).

**Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus*

*Common winter visitor*



A handful of sightings from the first winter period from Thorpe Marshes. Highest counts were 101, which flew over Whitlingham then landed at Thorpe Marshes on 27<sup>th</sup> Jan, followed by 72 over west on 25<sup>th</sup> Feb and 61 on 12<sup>th</sup> Sept.

**Photo: Gary White**

\* **Golden Plover** *Pluvialis apricaria* *Rare flyover, most reports nocturnal*

Four reports this year, all of birds heard after dark flying north or north-west over Thorpe Marshes. Dates were 20<sup>th</sup> Mar, 22<sup>nd</sup> Mar, 10<sup>th</sup> Apr and 19<sup>th</sup> Apr (all MC).

\* **Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola* *Rare flyover, most reports nocturnal*

One report of a bird heard flying west over Thorpe Marshes after dark on 12<sup>th</sup> Apr (MC).

\* **Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula* *Rare flyover*

Two reports this year, one at Thorpe Marshes on 1<sup>st</sup> Mar (per Twitter) and one reported flying west after dark over Thorpe Marshes on 22<sup>nd</sup> Mar (MC).

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

Nocturnal reports of birds at Thorpe Marshes on 13<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> Mar, with sightings there from 31<sup>st</sup> Mar but no sign of any breeding attempts. Elsewhere in the Yare Valley up to 5 birds were seen with at least one nesting pair, and these birds might account for most of the Thorpe sightings. No further sightings at Thorpe were noted after 15<sup>th</sup> Apr.

\* **Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus* *Occasional passage migrant*

Flyovers noted on 26<sup>th</sup> Mar (MC), 10<sup>th</sup> Apr (GW), 13<sup>th</sup> Apr (MC), 22<sup>nd</sup> Apr (per Yare Valley Birds) and overnight on 27<sup>th</sup> Apr (MC).

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

Flyovers reported on 1<sup>st</sup> Mar (DL), heard-only on 5<sup>th</sup> Apr (MC) and one on 19<sup>th</sup> Oct (per Honeyguides website), whilst one over Thunder Lane on 29<sup>th</sup> Aug (SW) was just outside the recording area.

\* **Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* *Rare passage migrant/flyover*

One reported flying over on 13<sup>th</sup> Mar (MC).

\* **Knot** *Calidris canutus* *Rare winter visitor*

A weak bird seen at Whitlingham, initially in the wooded area near the Little Broad and then on the Great Broad on 2<sup>nd</sup> Mar during harsh weather (PW, RC, MS).

\* **Sanderling** *Calidris alba* *Very rare visitor*

One reported flying over on 13<sup>th</sup> Mar (MC). [Editor's note: an exceptional day for wader passage, with Black-tailed Godwit, Dunlin, Little Ringed Plover and Avocet all reported]

**\* Dunlin** *Calidris alpina*

*Scarce passage migrant*

A cluster of sightings associated with the cold weather in March – birds noted on 1<sup>st</sup> (per Twitter), 2<sup>nd</sup> (RC/MS), 4<sup>th</sup> (PW), 13<sup>th</sup> (MC) and 25<sup>th</sup> (JL/ME). Birds noted passing through in April on 5<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> (all MC). In autumn two on the Great Broad (JL).

**Woodcock** *Scolopax rusticola*

*Scarce winter visitor*

Almost certainly overlooked in wooded areas due to crepuscular nature. During the cold spell 2 at Thorpe Marshes on 27<sup>th</sup> Feb and 3 there on 1<sup>st</sup> Mar, whilst also noted at Whitlingham on 1<sup>st</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> Mar. Several birds heard at Thorpe Marshes between mid-March and mid-April. Birds then reported from dusk/after dark at Thorpe Marshes from 5<sup>th</sup> Nov into Dec.

**Jack Snipe** *Lymnocyptes minimus*

*Scarce winter visitor*

Single birds flushed from Thorpe Marshes on 2<sup>nd</sup> Jan, 23<sup>rd</sup> Mar and 19<sup>th</sup> Apr. A scattering of records of birds then noted from Thorpe at dusk from 26<sup>th</sup> Sept onwards.

**Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago*

*Common winter visitor*

Most records from Thorpe Marshes, but 31 seen around the frozen edges of Whitlingham Great Broad during the cold spell on 1<sup>st</sup> March was of note. Sightings at Thorpe generally related to low numbers of birds seen (most birds spend the day out of sight on the marshes), although counts of birds flying out at dusk included 121 on 4<sup>th</sup> Dec heard flying out after dark on a foggy night.

**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos*

*Spring migrant*



Main spring migration occurred between mid-April and mid-May with several records starting with 2 on the Great Broad on 15<sup>th</sup> Apr, and including three on 23<sup>rd</sup> Apr. The last bird was noted on 2<sup>nd</sup> June. There were 2 records in autumn, 1 seen at Thorpe Marshes on 12<sup>th</sup> Sept and another heard there on 1<sup>st</sup> Oct.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus*

*Spring migrant*

One seen at Thorpe Marshes on 27<sup>th</sup> Feb was probably a wintering bird from the nearby sewage works, whilst three at Whitlingham on 2<sup>nd</sup> Mar may also have been wintering birds or part of a cold weather influx. One heard over on 27<sup>th</sup> Mar was on a more expected date.

Autumn passage was evident with 4 at Thorpe Marshes on 16<sup>th</sup> Aug, followed by singles at Thorpe Marshes on 29<sup>th</sup> Aug, at Whitlingham on 9<sup>th</sup> Sept and Thorpe Marshes on 26<sup>th</sup> Sept and 7<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**Redshank** *Tringa totanus*

*Scarce passage migrant*

Some sightings linked to the cold weather in early March, but it should be noted that the peak time for seeing this species at Whitlingham tends to be late March into April so this was not too far out of season. Two seen at Thorpe Marshes on 1<sup>st</sup> Mar then one at Whitlingham on 18<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> Mar (over the picnic meadow and in the conservation area bay respectively), with presumably the same bird at Thorpe Marshes on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> Mar.

**Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia*

*Scarce spring migrant*

Two records this year, singles at Thorpe Marshes on 19<sup>th</sup> Apr (MC) and 19<sup>th</sup> May (PW).

**\* Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla*

*Rare storm-driven visitor*

One in the conservation area bay on the Great Broad on 12<sup>th</sup> Feb (ME).

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

*Common resident*



A good range of ringed birds noted this year, see pages 23 & 24 for details. Some counts submitted include birds flying over to roost (e.g. 1220 Thorpe Marshes on 21<sup>st</sup> Oct) – of the grounded birds c1000 on the Great Broad on 2<sup>nd</sup> March and 225 1<sup>st</sup> winters on 6<sup>th</sup> Apr were both unusual. Other high counts include 433 on 18<sup>th</sup> Mar and 300 on 9<sup>th</sup> Dec. **Photo: James Emerson**

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

*Scarce spring migrant*



A winter-plumaged adult on 6<sup>th</sup> Apr (JL) was followed by a 1<sup>st</sup> summer 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> Apr (SH, GW) and three adults on 14<sup>th</sup> Apr (JL). There was then a record-breaking arrival on 15<sup>th</sup> Apr (JE, GW), peaking at 35 birds (SH), which is documented on pages 20 – 22.

**Photo: Gary White**

**\* Mediterranean Gull** *Ichthyaeetus melanocephalus*

*Scarce winter visitor*

A 1<sup>st</sup>-summer reported flying west on 1<sup>st</sup> Apr (MC). Two adults flew over the Great Broad on 4<sup>th</sup> April (ME). These birds might well have stayed in the Yare Valley, as 2 also seen flying over on 20<sup>th</sup> Apr and also noted at Strumpshaw later on the same day (and had been seen at Buckenham Marshes two days previously).



**Common Gull** *Larus canus*

*Common winter visitor*



Mostly confined to winter – the only records between 11<sup>th</sup> Apr and 8<sup>th</sup> Oct relate to a bird seen on St Andrews Broad on 8<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Aug. Whilst checking the gulls flying over at dusk several hundred were noticed flying over on 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb, heading north-east towards the broads rather than east towards Breydon. A flock of 83 on the Great Broad on 10<sup>th</sup> Nov was a high count.

**Photo: Gary White**

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

*Scarce occasional visitor*



Two (adult and 3<sup>rd</sup>-winter) on St Andrews Broad on 1<sup>st</sup> Jan (JL), with one there on 25<sup>th</sup> Jan (CD). At Whitlingham singles on 11<sup>th</sup> Feb (JE), 18<sup>th</sup> Feb (GW), 1<sup>st</sup> Mar (per Twitter) and 18<sup>th</sup> Mar (JE, GW). One flew over Thorpe Marshes on 11<sup>th</sup> Apr (MC). This is in contrast to 2017 when there were only two records.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Glaucous Gull** *Larus hyperboreus*

*New species for the area*

A 1<sup>st</sup>-winter seen intermittently around west Norwich was observed flying east over Whitlingham at dusk on 30<sup>th</sup> Jan and 8<sup>th</sup> Mar (JL), and also reported over Thorpe Marshes on 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb (MC). The 30<sup>th</sup> Jan sighting represented the first Whitlingham record of this species, documented in the article on pages 5 & 6.

**Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus*

*Common winter visitor*



Noted in every month except July. Daytime counts seldom above 30, but hundreds fly over at dusk on the way to roost and often drop on to bathe.

No colour-ringed birds noted this year.

**Photo: James Emerson**

**\* Caspian Gull** *Larus cachinnans*

*County rarity*



An adult seen and photographed at Whitlingham on 4<sup>th</sup> Mar (DBa) was the first sighting here since October 2012. A 3<sup>rd</sup>-winter photographed on St Andrews Broad on 9<sup>th</sup> Mar (RC) and seen on the Great Broad on 18<sup>th</sup> Mar (GW) were presumably the same bird.

**Photo: Ricky Cleverley** (bird on the right)

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

*Scarce visitor*

A 2cy bird present on the Great Broad on 4<sup>th</sup> Mar (DBa).

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

*Common summer visitor*



Present all year round, albeit only one individual in November and December. The highest daytime count was 71 on 16<sup>th</sup> Aug, although as with Herring Gulls large numbers are sometimes noted flying over and 124 noted in the evening of 14<sup>th</sup> Aug would have included birds dropping in to bathe.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo*

*Common spring migrant*



First of the year noted on 8<sup>th</sup> April, after which at least two present until 15<sup>th</sup> July. Ten on 30<sup>th</sup> Apr and a minimum of 10 on 1<sup>st</sup> May included late passage birds moving through, as prior to that 4 birds had been present (and afterwards 5 birds were still noted).

**Photo: Gary White**

**Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea*

*Scarce spring migrant*



Two on 15<sup>th</sup> Apr (the same day as the Little Gull passage), three on 21<sup>st</sup> Apr, six on 2<sup>nd</sup> May, two on 5<sup>th</sup> May and finally one on 13<sup>th</sup> May.

**Photo by Gary White**

**Feral Pigeon** *Columba livia*

*Common resident*

As usual sightings limited to flyovers from the areas that border Trowse, Norwich and Thorpe St Andrew.

**Stock Dove** *Columba oenas*

*Scarce resident*



Present throughout the year at both Whitlingham and Thorpe Marshes, where the highest count was 6 on 16<sup>th</sup> Aug. At Whitlingham 8 were seen on 24<sup>th</sup> March, whilst 15 noted at Whitlingham on 13<sup>th</sup> Sept presumably included birds flying over.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Woodpigeon** *Columba palumbus*

*Common resident*

Ubiquitous across the recording area. A cold weather movement was noted on 4<sup>th</sup> Feb when 1129 south and 41 north and 289 counted over on 24<sup>th</sup> Mar. Autumn vis-mig counts included 422 seemingly flying out of a nearby roost on 13<sup>th</sup> Sept and 236 over on 8<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*

*Scarce – resident nearby*



Between one and three birds noted occasionally throughout the year at Whitlingham.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus*

*Scarce spring migrant*



The first two of the year seen on 21<sup>st</sup> April, with one heard at Whitlingham several times until 29<sup>th</sup> April, before seemingly moving to Thorpe where noted between 3<sup>rd</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> May. Last heard at Whitlingham on 2<sup>nd</sup> June.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Barn Owl** *Tyto alba*

*Scarce resident*



Sightings from Thorpe Marshes on nine dates during March and early April, on 27<sup>th</sup> Sept and on several dates in December.

**Photo: Ricky Cleverley**

**Tawny Owl** *Strix aluco*

*Scarce resident*

A similar pattern of records to Barn Owl of records from March, September and October, perhaps suggesting that this is more related to presence of observers at those times rather than anything else. The suggestion from observers is that three pairs were present, one in Whitlingham Old Wood, one north of the railway at Thorpe Marshes and another at Whitlingham C.P.

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

*Rare – nocturnal records only*

Reports of one at or near Thorpe Marshes after dark on 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb, 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> Mar (all MC).

**Swift** *Apus apus*

*Common spring visitor*



Five noted back on 21<sup>st</sup> April, an early date. After the main spring passage present in low numbers until 16<sup>th</sup> Aug. The Swift tower continues to play Swift calls, but as of yet there is no sign of any birds inspecting the nest chambers.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis*

*Scarce resident*



Frequent sightings from Whitlingham, where pairs on the Little Broad and Great Broad. Several counts of more than four received, including 8 on 30<sup>th</sup> March, which presumably included some birds from territories along the river.

**Photo: Gary White.**



**Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopus major*

*Resident*



Sightings from Trowse Meadows, Whitlingham C.P. and Thorpe Marshes, with drumming birds heard on 27<sup>th</sup> Jan and 18<sup>th</sup> Feb.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Green Woodpecker** *Picus viridis*

*Resident*



Sightings throughout the year at Whitlingham C.P. with additional sightings from Trowse Woods. No young birds noted this year.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*

*Resident*



Only occasional sightings this year, mostly in spring but also in June and November.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Hobby** *Falco subbuteo*

*Scarce spring migrant*

First of the year was seen on 20<sup>th</sup> Apr, an early date, with further sightings coming on 1<sup>st</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> May. An interesting sighting on 15<sup>th</sup> June was a 1<sup>st</sup>-summer male catching Norfolk Hawker dragonflies at Thorpe Marshes. There was a cluster of sightings later in summer, on 12<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> Aug then 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and finally 13<sup>th</sup> Sept.

**Peregrine** *Falco peregrinus*

*Regular flyovers*

The cathedral pair again hatched chicks from 3<sup>rd</sup> May onwards, but as last year there were only a handful of sightings of birds hunting over the area.

**Jay** *Garrulus glandarius*

*Common resident*



Resident, but unless heard or specifically looked for then easy to miss. A high count of 7 was recorded on 8<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Magpie** *Pica pica*

*Common resident*



Present throughout the recording area. Roost counts from the first winter period included 51 on 21<sup>st</sup> Jan, 85+ on 30<sup>th</sup> Jan and 62 on 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb. In autumn 23 on 14<sup>th</sup> Aug and also on 20<sup>th</sup> Sept, followed by 48 on 28<sup>th</sup> Oct. The highest count of the year was 134 on 7<sup>th</sup> Dec.

**Photo: Ricky Cleverley**

**Jackdaw** *Coloeus monedula*

*Common resident*

The recently established roost in the large trees on the main island continues to grow in number. Counts increased from 483 on 21<sup>st</sup> Jan to 590 on 30<sup>th</sup> Jan and then 700 on 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb then a new high count but surpassed later in the year. Numbers held up, with 695 on 8<sup>th</sup> Mar and 610 on 9<sup>th</sup> Apr. In autumn the roost reassembled, with 660 on 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept, 575 on 20<sup>th</sup> Sept, 905 on 28<sup>th</sup> Oct (new high count – JL) and 850 on 7<sup>th</sup> Dec.

**\* Rook** *Corvus frugilegus*

*Resident nearby but rare flyover here*



After a year of no sightings in 2017 there were five reports of Rooks in 2018, all flyovers. Firstly 7 on 21<sup>st</sup> Jan (GW), then 4 on 24<sup>th</sup> Feb (GW), 2 on 5<sup>th</sup> Apr (MC), 1 on 13<sup>th</sup> Sept (GW) and 2 on 24<sup>th</sup> Nov (GW).

**Photo: Gary White**

**Carrion Crow** *Corvus corone*

*Common resident*



Common and likely to be seen on every visit. Two nests noted at Whitlingham C.P. on 13<sup>th</sup> April but undoubtedly more elsewhere.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Coal Tit** *Periparus ater*

*Scarce resident*



Noted from Whitlingham C.P in small numbers, mostly in spring and autumn, with a couple of sightings from Thorpe Marshes in January.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Marsh Tit** *Poecile palustris*

*Scarce resident*



Very few sightings this year, possibly evidence of a sharp decline in recent years. Two were noted just outside the area on Griffin Lane on 22<sup>nd</sup> Mar.

[Editor's note: not seen by me at all this year]

**Photo: Gary White**

**Blue Tit** *Cyanistes caeruleus*

*Common resident*



Common throughout the recording area.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Great Tit** *Parus major*

*Common resident*



Common throughout the recording area.

**Photo: Gary White**

\* **Bearded Tit** *Panurus biarmicus*

*Rare irruptive visitor*



The male bird present at Thorpe Marshes during December 2017 was seen again on 1<sup>st</sup> Jan (JL) and 4<sup>th</sup> Jan (CL). The only sighting after that was by a participant on a guided walk on 17<sup>th</sup> Jan (per CD).

**Photo: Chris Lansdell**

\* **Woodlark** *Lullula arborea*

*Rare flyover*

Report of one over south-west on 29<sup>th</sup> Oct (MC), a similar date to one in 2017.

**Skylark** *Alauda arvensis*

*Scarce winter visitor*

As 2017 sightings were largely of birds flying over in Feb/March or October. All related to 1 or 2 birds except for 3 on 18<sup>th</sup> Feb, 9 on 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Oct and 16 on 29<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia*

*Common spring visitor*



One flew west over Whitlingham C.P. on 24<sup>th</sup> March, an early date (GW). From then present in low numbers until 16 on 8<sup>th</sup> Apr and 140 on 29<sup>th</sup> Apr. Last of spring noted on 20<sup>th</sup> May. The only congregation noted in late summer was 32 on 12<sup>th</sup> Aug.

**Photo: Ricky Cleverley**



**Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*

*Common summer visitor*

First seen at Thorpe Marshes on 1<sup>st</sup> Apr and at Whitlingham on 4<sup>th</sup> April and then with a pattern mirroring Sand Martin an increase in numbers on 8<sup>th</sup> Apr with 42 over the Great Broad, followed by a big increase at the end of the month with between 300-400 noted across 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> Apr. In late summer 25 noted on 26<sup>th</sup> Aug and then 2 on 13<sup>th</sup> Sept at Whitlingham, with 2 at Thorpe Marshes on 17<sup>th</sup> Sept and 7 there on 24<sup>th</sup> Sept.

**House Martin** *Delichon urbicum*

*Common spring visitor*



One flew through Thorpe Marshes on 1<sup>st</sup> Apr and also noted on the following two days (ME) – early dates for this species and several weeks earlier than 2017. Later in the month 40 on 29<sup>th</sup> and c100 on 30<sup>th</sup> Apr mirrored the other hirundine occurrences. There was a very large aggregation of House Martins over waterbodies in late August – on 26<sup>th</sup> Aug only 20 were present over the Great Broad early morning, but this grew to 260 later in

the day. Sightings continued until 9<sup>th</sup> Sept at Whitlingham, although migrating birds noted flying over Thorpe Marshes on 13<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Sept.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Hirundine spp**

[Editor's note: Large flocks of hirundines swooping back and forth over the water can be difficult to count, and even more so when composed of two or three species. The counts from different observers on 29<sup>th</sup>/30<sup>th</sup> April all vary quite a bit, perhaps due to these difficulties but also as birds joined and left the flock. Estimate compositions were:

- Observer A: 29<sup>th</sup> April – c300 Swallows, 60 mixed Sand & House Martins (total = 360)
- Observer B: 29<sup>th</sup> April – 140 Sand Martins, 380 Swallows, 40 House Martins (total = 560)
- Observer C: 30<sup>th</sup> April – 30+ Sand Martins, 350-400 Swallows, 100+ House Martins (total = 480-530 birds)

**Cetti's Warbler** *Cettia cetti*

*Common resident*



Again seemingly a good year for this species, with up to 7 apparent territories around Whitlingham C.P. and several north of the river but occasionally audible. Good numbers also present around Thorpe Marshes and the surrounding area.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Long-tailed Tit** *Aegithalos caudatus*

*Common resident*



Common and mobile around the recording area.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus*

*Declining summer visitor*

A poor year for this species in the recording area. The first back at Whitlingham was on 11<sup>th</sup> Apr, but no more than one was reported on any visit. A bird was reported from Griffin Fen just outside the recording area on 8<sup>th</sup> Apr, whilst at Thorpe Marshes two were present with 3 or 4 reported on occasions.

**Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita*

*Common summer visitor*



Two overwintering birds present at Thorpe Marshes during January. First singing birds noted at Thorpe on 15<sup>th</sup> Mar and at Whitlingham on 24<sup>th</sup> Mar. During mid-April around 20 singing birds present across the C.P. and Thorpe Marshes. In the second period 2 wintering birds at Whitlingham on 22/12/18 plus 1 at Thorpe in October and November is probably also wintering.

**Photo: Gary White**

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

*County rarity*

One reported from Thorpe Marshes on 12<sup>th</sup> Mar (MC).

**Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

*Common summer visitor*



First of the year within the recording area was 1 at Thorpe Marshes on 5<sup>th</sup> April, followed by 1 at Whitlingham on 7<sup>th</sup> April, with numbers increasing into double figures at both sites by early May.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

*Common summer visitor*



Reported back at Thorpe Marshes on 10<sup>th</sup> Apr, an early date (MC), then 2 days later at Whitlingham C.P. Numbers peaked around mid-May. Newly fledged young were noted at Thorpe Marshes on 15<sup>th</sup> June.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella naevia*

*Scarce summer visitor*



Heard reeling at Thorpe Marshes from 18<sup>th</sup> Apr onwards into early May, with 1 heard on 10<sup>th</sup> June and 15<sup>th</sup> June. Exact numbers always subject to the possibility of error as birds move around territories, but a minimum of 5, possibly up to 7 reeling birds reported this year.

**Photo: Ricky Cleverley**

**Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla*

*Common summer visitor*



The only report in the first winter period was a male near the Rushcutters that flew across towards Whitlingham on 6<sup>th</sup> Jan. The first singing bird was one at Thorpe Marshes on 29<sup>th</sup> Mar, with 2 at Whitlingham the following day. Records from Thorpe Marshes on 27<sup>th</sup> Sept and 17<sup>th</sup> Oct might represent migrating birds or an overwintering one.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Garden Warbler** *Sylvia borin*

*Scarce summer visitor*



Three present at Whitlingham on 21<sup>st</sup> Apr, with 1 back at Thorpe Marshes on 29<sup>th</sup> Apr. Peak counts of singing birds at each site were 4 at Whitlingham on 6<sup>th</sup> May and 3 at Thorpe Marshes on 8<sup>th</sup> May. A pair were seen feeding young at Thorpe Marshes on 10<sup>th</sup> June.

**Photo: Gary White**



**Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia curruca*

*Scarce summer visitor*



A handful of records, with singing birds heard at Thorpe Marshes from 19<sup>th</sup> April and 2 at Whitlingham on 21<sup>st</sup> April. No records after 8<sup>th</sup> May.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis*

*Common summer visitor*



A very early record of one from Thorpe Marshes on 8<sup>th</sup> April (MC). One heard singing on 17<sup>th</sup> April at Thorpe Marshes was a more typical date. At Whitlingham birds present from 21<sup>st</sup> April onwards.

**Photo: Gary White**

**\* Firecrest** *Regulus ignicapilla*

*Rare visitor*

One reported from the south end of Bungalow Lane at Thorpe Marshes on 20<sup>th</sup> Mar (MC).

**Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus*

*Common resident*



Present in Whitlingham Woods and around Whitlingham C.P. There were also a couple of sightings from Thorpe Marshes in late autumn.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes*

*Common resident*



Widespread and common throughout the recording area.

**Photo: Gary White**



**Nuthatch** *Sitta europaea*

*Scarce resident*

As usual heard calling occasionally from Whitlingham Woods and Trowse Woods.

**Treecreeper** *Certhia familiaris*

*Common resident*



Present around Whitlingham C.P, more obvious in spring.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris*

*Common resident*

Occasionally noted around the recording area, but most often seen flying through at dawn or dusk. On 16<sup>th</sup> Oct there appeared to be a pre-roost gathering of c100 birds at Thorpe Marshes, whilst on 5<sup>th</sup> Nov 2800 were counted flying east, presumably to a roost in the mid-Yare valley.

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

*Rare migrant*

Three April reports from Thorpe Marshes, one over north-west on 3<sup>rd</sup>, one doing three loops of the site then flying off north on 8<sup>th</sup> and one heard west on 12<sup>th</sup> (all MC). Two also reported flying separately over Thorpe Marshes on 5<sup>th</sup> Nov (also MC)

**Blackbird** *Turdus merula*

*Common resident*



Common throughout the recording area.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Fieldfare** *Turdus pilaris*

*Common winter visitor*

One present in Lime trees near the large car park on 1<sup>st</sup> Jan and 5 on 5<sup>th</sup> Jan, but otherwise sighting restricted to spring and autumn migration. The highest counts were 28 west on 29<sup>th</sup> Oct and 24 over on 4<sup>th</sup> Nov.

**Redwing** *Turdus iliacus*

*Common winter visitor*



Low numbers present at Whitlingham between Jan-Mar, last seen on 8<sup>th</sup> April.

In October 81 over on 8<sup>th</sup>, 58 on 16<sup>th</sup>, 54 on 24<sup>th</sup>, 50 over on 28<sup>th</sup> and 11 on 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Song Thrush** *Turdus philomelos*

*Common resident*

Present throughout the recording area, and small numbers also noted flying over during early October.

**Mistle Thrush** *Turdus viscivorus*

*Scarce resident*

Resident, but no more than three seen on a single visit.

**Robin** *Erithacus rubicula*

*Common resident*

Common throughout the recording area.

**Nightingale** *Luscinia megarhynchos*

*Scarce possible breeder*

First heard back at Whitlingham on 21<sup>st</sup> Apr, four days later than 2017. A second singing male was heard on 29<sup>th</sup> Apr and again on 10<sup>th</sup> May. There were no more reports after 19<sup>th</sup> May.

**\* Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

*Rare migrant*

A female reported from Thorpe Marshes on 29<sup>th</sup> Apr (MC).

**Stonechat** *Saxicola rubicola*

*Scarce winter migrant*



The male wintering at Thorpe Marshes continued to be seen regularly through the winter until 25<sup>th</sup> Feb, with one observer last noting it on 25<sup>th</sup> Mar.

In the autumn what was presumably the same bird reappeared on 30<sup>th</sup> Sept, with a pair noted from 5<sup>th</sup> Oct until the year end.

**Photo: Ricky Cleverley**

**Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe*

*Rare spring migrant*



One seen and photographed at Thorpe Marshes on 21<sup>st</sup> Apr (GW), with perhaps the same bird present at Whitlingham C.P. on 28<sup>th</sup> Apr (CL). In autumn one also reported from Thorpe Marshes at dusk on 28<sup>th</sup> Sept (MC).

**Photo: Gary White**

**\* House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*

*Very rare wandering species*

Despite being present nearby in Thorpe St Andrew, this species had not been reported from within the recording area during the time that these annual reports have been produced (2012 onwards). Indeed at least one long-time patch birder here has never seen House Sparrow at Whitlingham. This year there was one record, of five birds drinking from puddles in Bungalow Lane just south of the railway line on 18<sup>th</sup> Mar (GW) [Editors note – this location seemed the most likely to turn up records, as I have seen House Sparrows at the town end of Bungalow Lane in recent years].

**Dunnock** *Prunella modularis*

*Common resident*

Common throughout the recording area.

**\* Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava*

*Scarce spring flyover*

One flew over Thorpe Marshes on 20<sup>th</sup> April (ME), a typical date for this species here. An autumn record of one reported flying WSW over Thorpe Marshes on 13<sup>th</sup> Sept was more unusual (MC).

**Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*

*Scarce resident*



At least two pairs present in the area, one of which was regularly seen on the Great Broad during April, and another noted at Thorpe Marshes and Thorpe River Green. No sign of a roost gathering at Thorpe Marshes this year, but a pair seemingly on territory near the railway bridge on 13<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**Photos: James Emerson**



**Pied Wagtail** *Motacilla alba*

*Common resident*

Resident and usually seen around the slipway and visitors barn. A count of 28 flying up from Thorpe Marshes and away south on 28<sup>th</sup> Sept was interesting and presumably a pre-roost gathering.

**Meadow Pipit** *Anthus pratensis*

*Passage migrant/winter visitor*

Seen throughout most of the year with the exception of mid-summer, usually at Thorpe Marshes but sometimes flying over Whitlingham. Some also noted flying over during autumn, including 26 on 8<sup>th</sup> Oct and 34 on 21<sup>st</sup> Oct. Once again there was a roost of birds at Thorpe Marshes during the winter, but it was much smaller than 2017, with numbers between 10-20 in the second winter period.

\* **Tree Pipit** *Anthus fluvialis*

*Rare flyover*

One report this year, of a bird flying over on 8<sup>th</sup> Apr (MC).

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

*Rare winter visitor*

A series of reports, albeit fewer than 2017, all from Thorpe Marshes and mostly at dusk. Dates are: 1 on 4<sup>th</sup> Jan, 2 on 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb, 2 on 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb, 1 on 6<sup>th</sup> Mar, 1 on 25<sup>th</sup> Mar, 1 on 26<sup>th</sup> Oct and 1 on morning of 29<sup>th</sup> Oct (all MC, although the one on 25<sup>th</sup> Mar also reported by another observer on Twitter).

**Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs*

*Common resident*

Widely seen throughout the recording area.

**Brambling** *Fringilla montifringilla*

*Scarce winter visitor*



Scarce this year. In terms of grounded birds 1 recorded on 11<sup>th</sup> Feb then 3 on 16<sup>th</sup> Apr and 4 on 17<sup>th</sup> April. In the second winter period 2 on 24<sup>th</sup> Nov and 4 on 9<sup>th</sup> Dec. With regards to flyovers, birds reported six times during March and April, the highest count being 6 on 26<sup>th</sup> Apr. There were also 2 records of flyovers from October.

**Photo: Gary White**

\* **Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

*Very rare visitor*

There was no repeat of 2017's large nationwide autumn influx, but one observer did record birds flying over on five dates: 1 east on 6<sup>th</sup> Mar, 2 south-east on 26<sup>th</sup> Apr, 1 south-west on 16<sup>th</sup> Oct, 1 west with Redwing on 29<sup>th</sup> Oct and 1 heard going south-west on 5<sup>th</sup> Nov (all MC).



**Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

*Scarce resident*



Two pairs present at Thorpe Marshes and birds also recorded at Whitlingham throughout the year, although more often in late summer and winter.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Greenfinch** *Chloris chloris*

*Fairly common resident*

As suspected, the roost that used to occur in the now-cut-down Evergreen Oaks has gone, the highest count of the year being 10 on 18<sup>th</sup> Mar, with 1-3 seen fairly frequently at other times.

**Linnet** *Linaria cannabina*

*Scarce resident*



A singing male noted at Thorpe Marshes on 8<sup>th</sup> May, whilst 2 or three family groups seen at Whitlingham on 12<sup>th</sup> Aug show that successful breeding occurred there. In the second winter period a roost gathering noted at Thorpe Marshes in a tree along the riverbank typically held up to 23 birds, but on 8<sup>th</sup> Dec a phenomenal 149 were counted (GW).

**Photo: Gary White**

**\* Common (=Mealy) Redpoll** *Acanthis flammea*

*Scarce winter visitor*



Between 1 and 3 reported from Whitlingham 23<sup>rd</sup> Jan to 24<sup>th</sup> Mar, with 4 on 18<sup>th</sup> Mar. Two reported from Thorpe Marshes in early March might refer to the same wider flock as the Whitlingham birds or could refer to additional individuals.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Lesser Redpoll** *Acanthis cannabina*

*Fairly scarce winter visitor*



A large flock including 32 Lesser Redpolls was noted on 24<sup>th</sup> Feb – this flock frequently split roughly in half, with one half around the Little Broad and the other roaming wider during February and March. Three on 15<sup>th</sup> Apr were the last of spring. Very scarce in the second winter period, 1 on 10<sup>th</sup> Nov

**Photo: Gary White**

**Redpoll sp.** (*Acanthis sp*)

*Scarce winter visitor*

Three Redpoll sightings this year were not assigned to species, all birds flying over Thorpe Marshes. Dates were: 1 on 25<sup>th</sup> Mar, 4 on 29<sup>th</sup> Oct and 1 on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov.

**Coues's Arctic Redpoll** *Acanthis hornemanni ssp exilipes*    *National rarity / Site first*



One was found amongst the Redpoll flock at Whitlingham C.P. on 27<sup>th</sup> Feb (JL), and remained until 16<sup>th</sup> Mar. See the article on pages 7-9 and the BBRC submission on pages 10 & 11 for full details.

**Photo: Justin Lansdell**

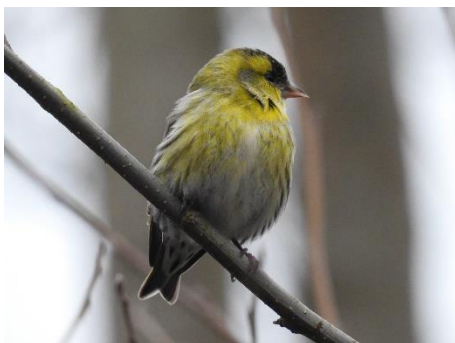
**Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis*

*Common resident*

Small flocks present all year. Larger flocks included 53 on 18<sup>th</sup> Jan, 66 on 11<sup>th</sup> Feb, 80 on 5<sup>th</sup> Oct and 45 on 10<sup>th</sup> Nov.

**Siskin** *Spinus spinus*

*Common winter visitor*



Present until 11<sup>th</sup> Apr with flock of 70 on 5<sup>th</sup> Jan, 100 on 4<sup>th</sup> Feb and 65 of 1<sup>st</sup> Mar.

In autumn seen again from 24<sup>th</sup> Sept, with the only large flock 74 on 22<sup>nd</sup> Dec.

**Photo: Gary White**

**\* Yellowhammer**

*Scarce flyover*

Three records this year, 1 over Thorpe Marshes on 5<sup>th</sup> Oct (MC), 2 over Whitlingham C.P. on 8<sup>th</sup> Oct (GW), and one flew in and appeared to land near the bird screen on 22<sup>nd</sup> Dec (GW).

**Reed Bunting** *Emberiza schoeniclus*

*Common summer visitor*



Recorded almost throughout the year at Thorpe Marshes, although the first record of singing males was actually from Whitlingham, where 3 in song from 18<sup>th</sup> Feb. Birds still present at Thorpe through the autumn, including 3 still present in December.

**Photo: Gary White**

**Total: 151 species (not including subspecies or birds where the identity was not certain)**

## **Appendix A – Unrecorded but likely species or species recorded nearby**

These species are birds that are either seen in most years but not reported during 2018, or birds that were seen very close to Whitlingham and/or flying in the direction of the Whitlingham without being actually observed there.

[\* **Bewick's Swan** *Cygnus columbianus* *Scarce flyover species*

Most years some are reported flying over Norwich during February, sometimes entering Whitlingham airspace, but no records this year]

\* **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* *Scarce migrant*

One flew over Broadland Business Park on 17<sup>th</sup> April.

\* **Hen Harrier** *Circus cyaneus* *Rare winter flyover*

One seen from the Trowse bypass flying in the direction of Whitlingham on 26<sup>th</sup> Jan (SB). A ringtail reported hunting over Griffin Fen (the area east of Thorpe Marshes) from a slowly moving train on 14<sup>th</sup> Dec (MC) was unusual as previous sightings in the area have presumably related to birds passing through rather than hunting birds.

\* **White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla* *County rarity*

A juvenile was reported flying north-east over Broadland Business Park on 29<sup>th</sup> Oct (per Bird News Services). A probable juvenile was also reported over Strumpshaw Fen on the same day.

\* **Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola* *Rare spring migrant*

One on the pool near Postwick park & ride car park on 29<sup>th</sup> May was about a mile east of suitable habitat at Thorpe Marshes.

\* **Sandwich Tern** *Thalasseus sandvicensis* *Rare spring flyover*

This year one was seen flying west along the River Yare past Brundall Marina on 11<sup>th</sup> April, about five miles from Whitlingham, but was not seen in the area despite observers present at the time, so probably turned back east or diverted around the city.

\* **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* *County rarity*

A female reported at Norwich Cathedral flying towards Whitlingham on 6<sup>th</sup> June (per bird news services). Note direction was mistakenly released as SW before being clarified online.



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

*Rare visitor*

First added to the Whitlingham area list last year as a result of some wandering birds in the Norwich area. This year a pair bred at Hellesdon, but this seems to have meant fewer sightings elsewhere. Nonetheless one seen just outside the recording area in Thorpe St Andrew, flying north-east over the Town House pub on 1<sup>st</sup> Apr (MC).

**\* Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros*

*Very rare visitor*

There have been no confirmed reports of this species from Whitlingham during the period that these bird reports have been compiled, however 2018 saw an unprecedented influx into Norwich City Centre. Once birds stopped singing it was near impossible to determine if breeding was taking place or the bird had moved to a different area, but an estimate of between 4 and 6 singing males seems reasonable, and confirmed breeding was observed for two pairs.

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

**Cape Shelduck** *Tadorna cana*

*New site record*



Having been present at Buckenham Marshes, what was almost certainly the same individual was reported on the river level with Whitlingham.

**Photo: David Bryant (taken at Buckenham)**

**Muscovy Duck** *Cairina moschata*

*Semi-resident at Thorpe Green*



The now resident Muscovy was again seen on a number of occasions, usually around Thorpe Green or on the river nearby.

**Photo: Gary White**

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

### **Greylag x Chinese Goose (aka domestic Swan Goose)**

*Resident*



This long-staying bird was again present throughout the year and appeared to have either parented (or stolen!) a gosling in the spring.

**Photo: James Emerson**

### **White-cheeked Pintail x Mallard**

*Previously unrecorded hybrid*



This bird, resembling a rather dowdy version of a White-cheeked Pintail, was seen at Whitlingham just before dusk on 7<sup>th</sup> Dec (JL) and again on 8<sup>th</sup> Dec (GW). After photos were posted online it was mentioned that this individual was previously present at Strumpshaw Fen, where it was seen photographed on 15<sup>th</sup> Nov, and it then returned to Strumpshaw in mid December.

**Photo: Gary White**

### **Pochard x Ferruginous Duck**

*Returning wintering bird*



The returning female Pochard x Ferruginous Duck was still present in January, being reported between 1<sup>st</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> Jan on St Andrews Broad. Interestingly a second Pochard x Ferruginous Duck was present on the 1<sup>st</sup> Jan, also a female-type but slightly greyer. There were no sightings in the second winter period.

**Photo taken by Chris Lansdell**

## 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 or by posted sightings on websites such as [BirdForum](#) or Twitter. In particular I would like to thank the following for providing records or information:

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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'.

Photographers of pictures used in the report are: [Jeremy Bartlett](#), [David Bryant](#), [Ricky Cleverley](#), Nick Elsey, [James Emerson](#), [Chris Lansdell](#), [Justin Lansdell](#), [Sean Locke](#), [James Lowen](#) and [Gary White](#).

## Local information

The following websites regularly contain sightings from the Whitlingham area:

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

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

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

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

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

## Bird information services

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

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