

The Birds of Whitlingham & Thorpe 2025



Compiled by James Emerson

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Get in touch: I would welcome any comments, corrections or constructive criticisms about this report. These can be sent to me, along with any sightings for inclusion in the 2026 report, by emailing: whitlinghambirds@yahoo.co.uk.

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

Introduction

This is the fourteenth annual bird report documenting the bird life of the Whitlingham area (including Thorpe Marshes NWT reserve), covering sightings from 2025. As always, I am very grateful to all those who support the report by supplying sightings, data and photographs.

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

There were a number of claims of species new to the Whitlingham area during 2025, which are dealt with in the articles early in the report. The overall site list was again affected by taxonomic decisions as the official British List moves to AviList taxonomy – again the results of this change are covered in a brief article. Provisional Met Office data suggests that 2025 was in the top three warmest years on record (i.e. dating back to 1850), <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/about-us/news-and-media/media-centre/weather-and-climate-news/2026/2025-continues-series-of-worlds-three-warmest-years> and was also drier than average. A cold spell between 10th-12th January with temperatures down to -5°C brought in additional wildfowl as described further in the species accounts. The first few months of the year saw three species that although not new to the area are rare locally so of particular interest to local birders: White-fronted Goose, Red-necked Grebe and Sandwich Tern. The Cormorant colony increased slightly in size, with 12 nests noted.

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

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

submit their records to the county recorder directly or log them on a system such as BirdTrack or eBird, to which the county recorder has access.

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

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

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

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

County or national rarities – included solely at the editor's discretion – typically records will be used if they have been photographed, sound recorded, submitted & accepted by the relevant records committee or if supported by a pattern of local records. Details of the record included as with local scarcities, but with an additional note as to whether the record has been submitted to and/or accepted by the relevant rarities committee, based on the latest WIP (work-in-progress) files.

Birds covered by the above process form the main systematic species list. The presence of a number of recently reintroduced species in Norfolk has necessitated a specific appendix to these reports, although in 2025 there were no records thought to relate to reintroduction projects. In keeping with recent reports I have included selected additional species seen elsewhere around Norwich out of general interest and to help provide supporting evidence for future Whitlingham sightings.

The appendices to the report are as follows:

- Appendix A – Recorded species possibly linked to reintroduction schemes
- Appendix B – Recorded birds thought to be escapes or of dubious origin (where not already mentioned in the systematic list)
- Appendix C – Birds reported from the area but not accepted onto the main list
- Appendix D – Hybrid birds
- Appendix E – Species notably not recorded in 2025
- Appendix F – Selected additional bird sightings from the Norwich area

The Whitlingham Recording Area covered by this report

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



The key sites that make up the recording area are:

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

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

Also welcome was the reopening of Trowse Meadow to the public, now with a single access point near to the start of Whitlingham Lane.

Taxonomic changes and impacts on the Whitlingham area bird list

In 2024 changes to the taxonomy used by the official British list included the decision to ‘lump’ three redpoll species together as a single species, known simply as Redpoll (*Acanthis flammea*). This led to the removal of Lesser Redpoll (*Acanthis cabaret*) and Coues's Arctic Redpoll (*Acanthis hornemanni exilipes*) from the Whitlingham area totals. Since then there has been a further development, with the adoption of AviList taxonomy as the basis for the British list. AviList is a unified global bird taxonomy, aiming to resolve differences in taxonomic treatment that previously existed between the various different world bird taxonomic checklists. This list will supercede the IOC world bird list as the authority that is used for the official British bird list. The result of this move to AviList taxonomy is the loss of two further species from the Whitlingham bird list, as Green-winged Teal (*Anas carolinensis*) has been lumped with Eurasian Teal (*Anas crecca*), and Hooded Crow (*Corvus cornix*) has been lumped with Carrion Crow (*Corvus corone*).

During a ten-year review of the birds of Whitlingham in the 2021 Whitlingham Bird Report, the key totals at the time were:

- Accepted bird species within the area since 2012: **195** (of which 151, 77%, had been photographed).
- Additional bird species recorded within the area prior to 2012: **19** (a mixture of local extinctions, vagrants and flyovers).
- Total birds on the Whitlingham area list: **214**.

Since then, three species new to the area list have been accepted onto the Whitlingham List, all from 2025. These are Cattle Egret (photographed), Quail and Raven (see the articles on pages 7 & 8 and 9 & 10 for further details on these sightings).

Four species previously only seen prior to 2012 have been seen since the 2021 review: Shag (2022), White Stork – a Dutch ringed bird (2023), Little Owl (2023), and Great Northern Diver (2024).

Species removed from the Whitlingham list as no longer considered full species: Green-winged Teal, Hooded Crow, Arctic Redpoll, Lesser Redpoll.

As a result, the updated totals are:

- Accepted birds seen in the Whitlingham area since 2012: **200** (of which 156 photographed – 78%)
- Additional bird species recorded from the area but not since 2012: **13**
- Total number of birds on the Whitlingham area list at the end of 2025: **213**

Cattle Egret – new to Whitlingham

The presence of Cattle Egrets in the Whitlingham area has been expected for a few years as numbers have increased in Norfolk. In 2025 there were two records received from Whitlingham. The first was listed on eBird at Whitlingham C.P. on 15th Feb, but with no photo or further details about the record, this would probably not have constituted enough detail to add the species to the site list. Fortunately two seen roosting on the Great Broad island on 3rd Sept (JL) were photographed (Fig. 1), providing confirmation that Cattle Egrets have definitely occurred here.

The Cattle Egret (*Ardea ibis*, formerly *Bubulcus ibis*) is a recent colonist to Norfolk. The first Norfolk record was of one shot at Breydon Water on October 1917, which was also only the second British record. At the time of publishing, the 1977 edition of *Birds of Norfolk* (Seago, 1977) only contained four records of Cattle Egrets within the county, and this had only increased modestly in the next edition (Taylor *et al*, 1999), which documented 15 records between 1934-1998. As recently as 2015 it was described in the *Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report* as a “very rare vagrant”, however in the following year it was noted that “this species is steadily becoming more regular in the county”, whilst in the 2019 NBMR it was being flagged up as a potential future breeding species. This proved to be correct, as breeding occurred in 2020 (Eaton & the RBBP, 2022). A thorough overview of the status of Cattle Egrets in Norfolk, including details of the first documented nesting, is provided by Bloomfield (2021).

The sharp increase in numbers and the new status as a breeding species has now made Cattle Egrets less ‘newsworthy’ and ultimately resulted in Cattle Egret being removed from the list of scarce species covered by most of the rare bird news services. This makes researching its status around Norwich, where it is still a rare species, slightly more difficult than it would be for many equivalent species. The following records are therefore those known to the author from Norwich or the surrounding villages, but might not be definitive.

- 4th December 2023 – One in paddocks near Colney Pits
- 12th January – 22nd February 2024 – regular sightings of one or two at Attlebridge, a few miles west of Norwich.
- 12th May 2024 – One flew east over Dereham Road
- 12th December 2024 – Two at Marlingford with Little Egrets
- 9th January 2025 – One roosted on the UEA Broad. It had apparently also been seen on nearby marshes for two days previously.
- 15th February 2025 – One reported on eBird from Whitlingham C.P.
- 3rd September 2025 – Two roosted on the Great Broad island at Whitlingham C.P. (photographed).
- 23rd September 2025 – Seven flew SSW over Trix Road



Figure 1 - Two Cattle Egrets roosting on the Great Broad main island. Photo: Justin Lansdell

References/further reading

Bloomfield, A. 2021. The Cattle Egret – its changing status and the first breeding in Norfolk. *Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report 2020*. Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society. Vol 54(2) 26-35.

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Thank you to Justin Lansdell for allowing his photos to be used for this article.

Additional species new to Whitlingham: Raven & Quail

During 2025 in addition to the photographed Cattle Egrets, a further five species of bird that would be new to the Whitlingham area were reported. Unfortunately none of these five were photographed or sound recorded, which makes assessment of the records difficult. Typically for county or national rarities, only those accepted by the relevant committee are included here. In order to try to ensure some level of consistency when deciding what 'non-rarity listed' species should be included in the main species listing and which should be listed in the appendices, the details of the individual record, the number of recent records within Norfolk or East Anglia and any pattern of sightings around the Norwich area are all considered. Raven is a good example of a species where sightings included in Appendix C (not accepted records) and Appendix F (birds seen elsewhere in Norwich) of previous annual reports can help provide anecdotal evidence for the presence of a colonising species.

As a result of these deliberations, I have decided to include two of the reported species on the main Whitlingham list, these being Raven and Quail. Details of the sightings and context are included below. The three species not added to the main list at this time are Black Kite, Penduline Tit (both county rarities) and Tree Sparrow (rare in East Norfolk + insufficient information). Details of these sightings can be found within the report in Appendix C.

Raven *Corvus corax*

One flew north over Whitlingham Hall towards the Great Broad on 29th Dec 2025, then shortly after was seen again flying back south (DS).

Historically Ravens were apparently common in the Norwich area (based on the writings of Thomas Browne in the 1600s), however they were persecuted and by the mid-1800s were becoming scarce in the county. For a long time Ravens were a county rarity (they were only removed from the county rarity list in Jan 2021), but recolonisation has occurred quickly in recent years. This started with birds being seen regularly in the Brecks from 2015 onwards, with breeding observed in 2018. Now there are multiple breeding pairs well scattered across Norfolk.

There have been several previous reports of Ravens in or near to the recording area, however this is the first time that a birder has been sure of the ID of one here, and given the now regular sightings around the outskirts of Norwich this species is therefore added to the Whitlingham list. Ravens have been occasionally reported around the Norwich area since 2020 – a summary of local sightings is listed below. The majority of these records have taken place from September to early March, initially suggesting that most of these sightings refer to birds straying into the area during winter, however evidence of breeding in 2024 and a juvenile seen in 2025 mean that at least one territorial pair is likely to be present fairly close by.

Norwich and surrounding district sightings from 2020 onwards

2020 – One flew over Charter Wood, Bowthorpe on 8th Dec 2020.

2021 – The first record of a probable Raven at Whitlingham came on 6th Jan 2021 – this record was assigned to Appendix C of the 2021 Whitlingham Bird Report

2022 – Another probable sighting – this time a pair of corvids heard and seen flying high south over Thorpe St Andrew towards Whitlingham on 1st Sept were thought by the observer to be Ravens but the observer was not completely certain. Later in the year there were sightings of Ravens in the mid-Yare Valley, providing anecdotal evidence that the species could well be occurring sporadically in the area. Again this record was documented in Appendix C of the Whitlingham Bird Report.

2023 – A confirmed sighting, but just outside the recording area, when one was seen over the Postwick junction on 1st Feb.

2024 – Multiple sightings around Norwich, most notably a breeding pair south of the city, with additional sightings from Marston Marshes on 3rd Mar, over Stafford Street on 2nd Nov and Sprowston 3rd Nov. South of the city one also seen over Poringland on 2nd Dec.

2025 – Again several records from south and west of the city, including Arminghall Lane on 12th Feb, Keswick on 17th Feb, north over a New Costessey garden on 1st Mar, a sighting from Ringland on 19th Mar, one over Harford park and ride on 8th Apr. and interesting a juvenile bird was photographed by a trail camera at Sweet Briar Marshes on 9th July.

Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

A vocal bird heard flying over Thorpe Marshes on 13th June (MC).

The number of Quails occurring in Norfolk each year is difficult to estimate given their secretive habits. The call is however distinctive, and can also be given in flight. The species also has an interesting migration strategy, often breeding in Africa before flying north to Europe to breed again, meaning that there can be migrants still arriving in early summer (see the Sound Approach Quail page: <https://soundapproach.co.uk/pages/common-quail-1>).

Although scarce in Norfolk, there have been several records of Quails around Norwich in recent years, including another record from summer 2025, providing anecdotal support that one could be heard over Thorpe Marshes. Known sightings are listed below:

2020 – One at Earlham Marshes on 18th May. Also one in a field at Thorpe Marriott from early July to early August

2023 – One present and calling for several days at Bawburgh in early July

2025 – One heard calling at around 01:30 over Chapelbreak on 4th July.

Additional Whitlingham area records from 2024

Two notable records from the previous year have come to light since the publication of the 2024 Whitlingham Bird Report and are therefore noted here.

* **Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula hypoleuca*

Rare passage visitor

A female was present in the private gardens of Whitlingham Hall on 2nd-4th Sept 2024 (DS). This is only the second area record since these reports began in 2012 – the other being a sighting of one in riverside scrub north of Whitlingham Great Broad on 11th Sept 2015. Interestingly a female-type bird was also reported this year, on 14th Aug 2025, so perhaps they are beginning to occur within the area with more regularity.

* **Caspian Tern** *Hydroprogne caspia*

County rarity

Caspian Tern was added to the Whitlingham list in 2021, when one initially found & photographed at UEA Broad on 16th May flew along the river and briefly passed through Whitlingham before turning round and flying back in the direction of UEA. The second area record took place in 2024, but does not appear to have been seen by anyone!

An article in the Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report 2024 details the wide-ranging travels of a Swedish-ringed Caspian Tern (red K9N) that had also been fitted with a transmitter. Details included in the article explain that on 24th June having roosted overnight at Stiffkey, the Caspian Tern flew south, heading over Cockthorpe, Melton Constable, Reepham, Costessey, Norwich Cathedral, Whitlingham and arriving at Strumpshaw at 06:08, before then heading to Hickling where it was found by James McCallum. A map showing the extensive travels that the tern made around Norfolk is shown as Fig. 6 in the original article.

Reference

McCallum, J. 2025. A GPS tracked Caspian Tern visits Norfolk. *Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report 2024*. Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society. Vol 58(2), pages 45-49.

With the addition of these two birds, the updated species total for 2024 was 128.

White-fronted Goose – a notable Whitlingham sighting

On 19th Jan a flock of four White-fronted Geese were seen flying over Whitlingham (JL), one of which presumably landed, as a single White-fronted Goose was found on the meadow south of Whitlingham Lane (GW) a few hours later – Fig. 1. The goose then moved onto the Great Broad, where it remained overnight and was still present on 20th Jan (Figs 2-4). This was only the second Whitlingham record since the Whitlingham Bird Report has been published and the first to involve a bird on the ground.



*Figure 1 - White-fronted Goose viewed distantly on the meadow south of Whitlingham Lane.
Photo: James Emerson.*

Although an annual wintering species in the Mid-Yare Valley at Buckenham and Cantley Marshes, White-fronted Geese are rarely seen within the Whitlingham area (although in March 2021 several were present elsewhere close to the city, including a small group on Postwick Marshes, one at Marston Marshes on 6th/7th and six at Caistor St Edmund). A list of White-fronted Goose records from the Whitlingham area is reproduced below.

2001 – An immature present with Greylags on the Great Broad on 25th Aug and again on 28th Sept.

2003 – Eight at Whitlingham C.P. on 21st Jan

2008 – One at Whitlingham C.P. on 21st Mar

2011 – One on Whitlingham Great Broad on 18th Mar

2016 – Seven flew over on 12th Dec

It is worth noting that over the years there have been several presumed escapee Lesser White-fronted Geese at Whitlingham, along with at least one hybrid goose thought to involve a White-fronted or Lesser White-fronted Goose parent, which might account for the 2008 and 2011 records. In addition, several more recent records were not included in the relevant annual Whitlingham Bird Report due to concerns that the sightings in fact were likely to relate to Greylag Geese with white at the base of the bill, which pose an identification pitfall for those not familiar with the range of wild geese that can be found in Norfolk.



Figure 2 – White-fronted Goose in flight © Robin Chittenden (www.robinchittenden.co.uk)



Figure 3 – White-fronted Goose on the meadow near to the visitor barn © Robin Chittenden (www.robinchittenden.co.uk)



Figure 4 – White-fronted Goose (front bird) with a Greylag Goose on the Great Broad © Robin Chittenden (www.robinchittenden.co.uk)

Acknowledgements

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

A multi-day Sandwich Tern at Whitlingham

A Sandwich Tern was found at Whitlingham Great Broad on 6th Apr (JS) and remained until 8th Apr. This is the first multi-day occurrence of this species at the site and was also the first time that many observers were able to see this species locally, as at least four of the six previous sightings were only seen by the finder.



Sandwich Tern over the Great Broad. Photo: Ed Mackrill

Previous site records of Sandwich Tern

2006 - Two on 17th Sept (adult and a juvenile)

2008 - One on the Great Broad on the evening of 22nd Apr (reported to bird news services the following day)

2009 - Two on 24th Apr (photographed. Seen on the same day as a Little Tern, also photographed).

2016 – One reported from St Andrews Broad, Thorpe, on 28th Aug.

2017 – Two reported on the floating platform on the morning of 27th Mar.

2020 - Two reported flying NW over Whitlingham C.P. (viewed from Thorpe Marshes) early morning on 27th Apr



Sandwich Tern over the Great Broad. Photo: David Ratcliffe



Sandwich Tern on the Great Broad. Photo: Ed Mackrill

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Ed Mackrill and David Ratcliffe for allowing their photos to be used for this article.

Local rarity - Red-necked Grebe

In mid-January a winter-plumage Red-necked Grebe was found on St Andrews Broad at Thorpe. It later moved across the river onto Whitlingham Great Broad, where it remained for about a month. This was the first 'twitchable' Red-necked Grebe in the area since early 2010, a halcyon period when five grebe species were present at Whitlingham within the space of a month (note: a report of one on 31st December 2013 to the bird news services was made after dark and was not present the following day, so presumably only seen by the finder).

The first and last dates for the Red-necked Grebe were 14th Jan to 17th Feb, however these dates require some slight qualification. It was first actually reported from St Andrews Broad on 15th Jan (RM), however it then emerged that it had been present and photographed there on the previous day (RCI). It spent one more day on St Andrews Broad, before moving to Whitlingham on 17th Jan. Here it was then seen daily, lastly on 14th Feb. It was searched for and not seen on 15th and 16th, however there was one final sighting, on 17th Feb (DS), suggesting that it had been elsewhere nearby on the previous two days. The time of arrival and duration of stay of this individual both closely match the 2010 bird, which was present at Whitlingham for just over a month, from 17th Jan to 20th Feb 2010.



Red-necked Grebe on Whitlingham Great Broad. Photo: © Robin Chittenden
(www.robinchittenden.co.uk)



Red-necked Grebe on Whitlingham Great Broad. Photo: © Robin Chittenden
(www.robinchittenden.co.uk)

Five species of grebe have been recorded at Whitlingham: Great Crested, Little, Slavonian, Black-necked and Red-necked. Of those, Great Crested Grebes are resident and often breed, whilst Little Grebes are winter visitors. The other three species could all be considered local rarities, however arguably Red-necked Grebe has been the scarcest of late, having not occurred at the site for over ten years prior to this sighting.

Previous Red-necked Grebe sightings in the area:

1995 – One on the River Yare, seen from Whitlingham on 25th Feb and Thorpe/Postwick 5th-22nd Mar.

2006 – One on Whitlingham Great Broad 14th & 15th Feb.

2010 – One on Whitlingham Great Broad 17th Jan to 20th Feb.

2013 – One reported from Whitlingham Great Broad on 31st Dec.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to everyone who reported the Red-necked Grebe during its stay in the area and to Robin Chittenden for allowing his photos to be used here.

Russian Common Gull *Larus canus ssp. heinei* at Whitlingham

During January and February, local gull enthusiast Ed Mackrill noticed that at least one of the first-winter Common Gulls present at Whitlingham showed characteristics consistent with Russian Common Gull, *Larus canus* subspecies *heinei*. This would be a new subspecies for the area. A brief description of this species in Britain is presented here, along with some of Ed's photos taken from Whitlingham Great Broad.

Common Gull *Larus canus* is usually considered to comprise of four subspecies (Adriaens & Gibbins 2016), of which the nominate subspecies *Larus canus canus* is present in Britain as both a breeding species and winter visitor. Its European range includes most of northern Europe as far east as the north-western edge of Russia (BBRC 2017) where it intergrades with *L. c. heinei* ("Russian Common Gull"). The two other subspecies, *L. c. kamtschatschensis* (the east of Russia) and *L. c. brachyrhynchus* (western North America) have not yet been proven to have reached Britain and are not considered further here.

Russian Common Gull is on the official British List and is considered to be a scarce migrant to Britain (BBRC 2017). The occurrence in Britain has been supported by biometrics of captured birds (predominantly wing length measurements) and by ringing recoveries from within the breeding range of *heinei*. As it may not be separable from the nominate species in all plumages, it is difficult to assess what percentage of wintering Common Gulls might relate to each subspecies. Assessments in northern Germany in the 2000/2001 winter suggested that up to 50% of Common Gulls were *heinei*, whilst in 2009/10 an assessment near Copenhagen in Denmark placed the figure there at over 10% based on catching and recording the biometrics of over 1000 Common Gulls (Gull Research website 2010).

The paper by Adriaens & Gibbins (2016) sets out detailed criteria that can be used to separate the subspecies in various age categories, which is not repeated here. In addition, Wilson (2020) provides both useful Norfolk context and comments on identifying potential Russian Common Gulls in his article in the 2019 Norfolk Bird & Mammal Report. When identifying first-cycle birds (i.e. those in their first winter) he suggests that the key features to look for are:

- An unmarked (or at least only lightly streaked) head contrasting with streaks or blotching on the lower hind neck
- Largely unmarked underside
- Unmarked tail with a single dark band
- Largely unmarked upper and undertail coverts
- Some second generation scapulars showing brown centres and/or white fringes
- A particular underwing type (pictures in the original article)
- A pink bill base



Figure 1 – Putative 'heinei' Common Gull. Photo: Ed Mackrill



Figure 2 – Putative 'heinei' Common Gull. Photo: Ed Mackrill



Figure 3 – Putative 'heinei' Common Gull. Photo: Ed Mackrill



Figure 4 – Putative 'heinei' Common Gull. Photo: Ed Mackrill



Figure 5 – Putative 'heinei' Common Gull. Photo: Ed Mackrill



Figure 6 – Putative 'heinei' Common Gull. Photo: Ed Mackrill

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Breeding Grey Herons & Cormorants in 2025

This year two Grey Heron nests were visible on the Great Broad island. The first was on the south-eastern edge, easily viewed but distant looking northwards from the path along the south side of the broad. The other nest was on the northern shore of the island and slightly obscured views could be had looking south from the path along the north shore of the Great Broad. The pair from nest 1 (Fig. 1-3) fledged three young, which were seen exploring the area around the nest in late May. An adult was also seen on the nest again in June, but no second brood was noted. It was not possible to see the number of young present in nest 2 (Fig. 4-6), however it appeared that at least two were present low in the nest in April. At least one of them fledged, seen standing on the nest in late May, with the nest deserted by June.



Figures 1-3: Photos of Grey Heron nest 1 (south side)

Top left: Incubating adult visible on nest, 16th March 2025

Top right: Adult visible guarding the nest, 13th April 2025

Left: Three fledged young present around the nest area, 25th May 2025



Top left: Figure 4 - Incubating adult on nest, 16th March 2025

Top right: Figure 5 -Young birds hunkering down in the nest, 13th April 2025



Figure 6 - One nearly-fledged youngster present on the nest, 25th May 2025

The Cormorant colony at Whitlingham was established in 2023, when five pairs nested in the large White Willow on the Great Broad island (see the 2023 Whitlingham Bird Report for further details and wider county context). In 2024 the number of nests increased to nine, and this year 12 nests were observed. The small branches on the tree make some of the nests difficult to pick out from photos of the tree (Fig. 7), so to aid monitoring and year-to-year comparison of the nest sites I have drawn a stylised version of the tree and numbered each nest from 1-12 (Fig. 8).

In addition, each nest was photographed and these photos are included here (Figs 9-17). Most of the nests were reasonably straightforward to see, however nests 3 & 4 (Fig. 11) were partly obscured by a mixture of trunks and branches.



Figure 7 – Whitlingham Cormorant colony tree, photographed in mid-April 2025.



Figure 8 – A stylised diagram of the Cormorant roost tree, showing only larger branches and the sites of the 12 Cormorant nests present in spring 2025.



Figure 9 – Cormorant nest 1



Figure 10 – Cormorant nest 2



Figure 11 – Cormorant nests 3 (left of centre) & 4 (right of centre), both in the background of the image, partly obscured by foliage.



Figure 12 – Cormorant nest 5



Figure 13 – Cormorant nest 6



Figure 14 – Cormorant nest 7



Figure 15 – Cormorant nest 8



Figure 16 – Three Cormorant nests on the right-hand side of the tree – on the left is nest 9, right (higher nest) is nest 11 and right (lower, slightly further back) is nest 10.



Figure 17 – Nest 12 up in the top right of the tree.

Bibliography

- Emerson, J. 2024. Establishment of a colony of breeding Cormorants at Whitlingham. *Birds of Whitlingham & Thorpe 2023*. Pages 28 – 34.
- Emerson, J. 2025. Breeding Grey Herons and Cormorants in 2024. *Birds of Whitlingham & Thorpe 2024*. Pages 19-23.

Colour-ringed Mute Swans seen in 2025

The Norwich Swan Project began colour-ringing Mute Swans in the Norwich area in June 2020, and by the end of 2023 had colour-ringed 242 individuals. The project is no longer active, so sightings should be reported via email to Mike Reed, the lead for the East Anglian Swan Study (see <https://cr-birding.org/node/1413> for contact details).

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

Feedback from the early years of the project showed that the large majority of swans ringed around Norwich have remained in the area between Bawburgh and Costessey in the west and the Mid-Yare valley in the East. There has been one long distance movement to East Sussex, with other East Anglian movements involving birds recorded at Cley, Great Yarmouth, Lowestoft, north-west Norfolk and Thetford. The graphic below shows the codes of birds recorded at Whitlingham this year. At the time of writing, feedback regarding the movements of these birds has not been received, nor were details of the birds submitted as part of the 2024 report.

Local colour-ringed Mute Swans seen within the recording area during 2025

4DZS	4DZT	4ENF	4ENM	4ENO	4ENP	4ENU
4ENY	4EOI	4FDE	4GGA	4GGE	4GGL	4GGN
4GGO	4GGT	4GGV	4GNN	4GTA	4GTK	

This year there was also one colour-ringed Mute Swan that was not ringed in Norwich. This was Yellow JD, seen at Whitlingham on 29th Jan, which had been ringed at Thetford in summer 2024, and was still present in Thetford on 6th Jan.



Figure 1 – Mute Swan with yellow leg ring 'JD'. Photo: Justin Lansdell

Ringed Black-headed Gulls at Whitlingham part xiii

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

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

- **Number of foreign-ringed individuals recorded (full codes only):** 41 (2 new in 2025).
- **Countries of origin of ringed birds seen at Whitlingham:** 11 - Denmark, England, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden and Wales.
- **Countries where Whitlingham/Thorpe ringed birds have been sighted:** 8 - Denmark, England, Finland, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Russia, & Sweden
- **Furthest distance travelled:** A metal-ringed bird ringed at Whitlingham on 16th Jan 2019 by the UEA Ringing Group was recorded at Veliky Novgorod, Novgorod O., Russian Federation on 21st Apr 2023 (1555 days, 1989km ENE). This was around 50km further than the previous furthest record, which was also of a UEA-ringed bird that was observed in Russia. Of the foreign-ringed birds, metal-ringed ST305.473 from Finland has so far travelled the furthest to reach Whitlingham (1841km).
- **Most years recorded:** 9 (Yellow T2X8) – 2017-2025 inclusive. [A gull with a metal ring from Denmark has been seen between 2013 – 2022, a range of 10 years, but was only noted in five of them].
- **Most winters recorded:** 9 (Yellow T2X8) – 2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26.

Black-headed Gulls ringed outside of Norfolk

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

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

Ring number	Date first seen	Place ringed	Date ringed	Distance travelled / Km	Seen previously?
T2X8	11/11/25	Zachodniopomorskie, POLAND	20/05/17	868	First seen in Nov 2017
Metal-ringed ST305.473	11/11/25	Keski-Suomi, Konnevesi, FINLAND	10/06/18	1841	First seen in Nov 2018
A341	12/11/25	Neumunster, GERMANY	16/12/12	600	First seen in 2014
Metal-ringed ST305.075	28/11/25	Keski-Suomi, Konnevesi, FINLAND	20/06/21	1687	NEW
Metal-ringed EY22680	28/11/25	Bangor, WALES	03/08/24	370	NEW

Table 1 – Foreign-ringed Black-headed Gulls seen in the second winter period (Oct-Dec) 2025

Locally-ringed Black-headed Gulls

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

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

It is not known if any further Black-headed Gulls were ringed in the area this year. The graphics below show the ringed gulls that were noted by contributors to the report. The final section details some notable European re-sightings of Norwich ringed birds.

Local colour-ringed Black-headed Gulls seen within the recording area Jan to Mar 2025

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



Local colour-ringed Black-headed Gulls seen within the recording area Aug to Dec 2025

The graphic below shows the codes of 15 colour-ringed Black-headed Gulls reported to the author within the recording area during the second half of the year. Thirteen of these ringed birds were only seen at Thorpe River Green, whilst 207N was seen at Whitlingham C.P.

2K61	2K62	2K64	2K68	2K81	2K90	2E01
2E02	2E03	2E06	2E15	2E29	2E33	207N
211N						

Full life histories for all of the above birds were kindly provided by Kane Brides. Most have only been recorded at Thorpe River Green or Whitlingham since they were colour-ringed, however three of them were reported abroad during 2025: **2K81** was reported multiple times in the Netherlands between 5th and 18th Feb 2025, whilst **2E02** was seen at Örebro, Sweden, in May and June 2025 (a site it has previously been seen at in 2022 and 2023). **211N** was originally metal-ringed in Denmark in Nov 2010, but had a colour-ring added when caught at Whitlingham C.P. in Dec 2022. It was recorded this year back in Denmark in March 2025.

In addition to those, three of the other gulls seen in 2025 have been reported from European countries in earlier years, with 2K90 reported from Finland in June 2023, 2E05 seen in Germany in Aug 2023 and 2E29 recorded from The Netherlands in Apr 2022.

European reports of local colour-ringed Black-headed Gulls made during 2025

In addition to the birds noted above, these two locally-ringed birds were recorded in Europe over the summer, as shown on the map on the Waterbird Colour Marking Group website here: <https://waterbirdcolourmarking.org/sightings-bh/>

2E18 (ringed at Whitlingham C.P. in Jan 2022) – seen in the Netherlands in Feb 2025 (this bird usually travels through the Netherlands on the way to summer in Finland).

215N (ringed at Thorpe River Green in Dec 2022) – seen in Norway in May 2025.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Justin Lansdell & Roger Parker for reporting many of the sightings included here, to Kane Brides for supplying life-history information about the sighted birds and to those associated with the Waterbird Colour-marking Group for their very useful interactive website.

Whitlingham Wildfowl Survey

The monthly wildfowl counts shown here are based on the combined counts for Whitlingham Little Broad and Great Broad using WeBS methodology, combined with counts of nearby areas of land (for example the visitor barn meadow) where appropriate. The counts are not necessarily high counts for the month – ad hoc and high counts are described in the individual species accounts. Note that as of this year, the species order has been changed to reflect Avilist taxonomy.

Species	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Mute Swan	16	13	28	23	64	83	55	14	17	16	17	14
Canada Goose	6	0	0	6	34	26	18	4	9	0	0	0
Greylag Goose	30	11	23	49	84	156	26	8	33	19	20	12
Egyptian Goose	2	2	12	27	29	59	42	29	26	11	1	2
Goldeneye	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Goosander	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pochard	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	27	25
Tufted Duck	194	192	122	33	0	0	0	0	1	5	198	224
Shoveler	23	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	4	11
Gadwall	429	106	14	4	0	0	0	0	7	14	19	90
Wigeon	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mallard	104	74	56	53	29	49	74	123	92	65	70	78
Teal	30	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	11
Little Grebe	17	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	14	17
Great Crested Grebe	7	4	8	12	8	15	16	15	15	6	15	8
Water Rail	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Moorhen	21	13	8	3	2	3	1	2	5	8	3	8
Coot	192	132	26	11	13	33	22	33	51	75	176	239
Common Tern	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0
Black-headed Gull	463	184	98	23	1	1	22	37	42	68	217	220
Mediterranean Gull	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Common Gull	24	20	7	0	0	0	1	0	1	3	7	6
Caspian Gull	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Herring Gull	32	65	51	55	17	14	12	11	9	11	24	35
Lesser Black-backed Gull	2	4	11	71	55	27	84	105	22	7	3	2
Cormorant	19	42	36	22	21	29	3*	19	37	19	40	26
Little Egret	1	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	2
Great White Egret	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Grey Heron	5	2	5	4	7	3	3	3	2	1	4	5
Kingfisher	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Canada x Greylag Goose	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0

* The July Cormorant count is an undercount as the colony of nesting birds was not viewed due to time constraints.

Whitlingham and Thorpe Classified List

The systematic list in this bird report follows the new unified AviList taxonomy and taxonomic order, as published in December 2025 on <https://bou.org.uk/british-list/> presented in the British Ornithologists Union Records Committee (BOURC) 58th report. The impacts of this change have been discussed in the article on page 6. Sightings of birds that are locally scarce or rare, some early or late reports and particularly high counts have initials after them – these relate to observers, a list of which can be found at the end of the classified list.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

Common resident



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

Counts varied between 10-30 in the first few months of the year, with a single high count of 46 on 7th Feb. The yearly peak was reached in June, with 81 on 2nd surpassed on 15th when 83 counted. Either side of that the highest May count was 68 on 23rd and in July the high count was 55 on 14th. Numbers dropped off in autumn, with no more than 18 seen from September to the year end. The pair on the Little Broad endured a similar breeding pattern to the previous year – four young cygnets were noted on 10th May, but only one survived to adulthood (five/one in 2024). On the Great Broad nests were noted on the main island and north shore, but no cygnets were observed from these pairs.

A number of resident or regular-visiting orange colour-ringed birds were noted throughout the year, but a yellow-ringed bird ringed in Thetford in August 2024 was an interesting new sighting. Fuller details can be found in the article on pages 31 & 32.



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

Counts during Jan-Mar all 15 or less, with the exception of 21st Mar when 33 present. Numbers fluctuated more during April, mostly single-figure counts but 18 on 7th, 27 on 21st and 17 on 29th of note. Numbers increased from late May for the usual summer peak, with 38 on 23rd May and the yearly high of 46 on 2nd June. A flock of 26 on the Great Broad on 15th June also contained a Canada Goose x Greylag Goose hybrid. Between Oct-Dec only 1 or 2 seen on any visit with the exception of 17 on 31st Oct.

No successful breeding was reported this year, and there was also no sign of the distinctive birds with extra white on the head that have been present during July in recent years.

* **Barnacle Goose** *Branta leucopsis*

Occasional visitor

A flock of 50 flew west over Whitlingham on 1st Feb (DS). Given the time of year and the directions, these birds were presumably heading back from the east coast of Suffolk to summering grounds at Pensthorpe or Holkham

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

Common resident



Numbers varying anywhere between 10-50 in the first winter period. Monthly high counts for spring were Apr 51 (25th), May 84 (25th), June 181 (20th), which was the highest count of the year. There was then a steep drop-off, with no further three-figure counts at Whitlingham. There was however a report of 319 at Thorpe Marshes, which were presumed to relate to a flock of the same size at Cantley 30 minutes earlier. Unusually no chicks or young were noted this year. Locally ringed bird ZA4 reported on several occasions – pictured with White-fronted Goose below. This was mistakenly listed as a German-ringed bird on an eBird submission – so far all ringed geese at Whitlingham have been British ringed.

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

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

Rare passage migrant



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

Early morning on 19th Jan four White-fronted Geese were seen flying low over Whitlingham (JL). The first bird was in front of the other three, and likely accounts for the bird seen later in the day by GW on the meadow south of Whitlingham Lane. Although initially on its own on the meadow, it later flew over to the Great Broad where it joined the Greylag Goose flock, roosting on the Great Broad and was still present on the following day. This is a notable record for the area – see the article on pages 12 – 14 for more details.

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*

Occasional flyover



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

As always this species is under-recorded at Whitlingham compared to the flocks that are seen flying over houses in Norwich, usually early morning. All records listed: 124 over Whitlingham C.P. on 30th Jan, 35 over on 21st Oct, 32 over on 4th Nov, 24 ESE over Thorpe Marshes on 17th Nov and a flock over Thorpe on 17th Dec.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*

Common resident



Low numbers in the first winter period, typically 2-6, but occasionally over 10, for example on 20th Jan when 17 present. Numbers increased in April, with numbers typically 15-20 and peaking at 27 on 13th. The highest May count was 29 on 25th, with the largest counts in June – 47 on 3rd, 59 on 15th and the year's peak of 73 on 20th before decreasing back to 59 on 3rd July. November and December counts all single figures.

Mating was observed on 16th Mar and three goslings were present on the Great Broad on 22nd May.
Photo: © Robin Chittenden (www.robinchittenden.co.uk)

* **Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna*

Scarce spring migrant

Two records (the same as in 2024). Firstly one flew east over Thorpe Marshes on 11th Feb (CD), and secondly one north-east over Whitlingham C.P. on 24th Apr (DR).

Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Scarce winter visitor



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

One or two present throughout January, with the last sighting on the 29th. Higher counts only made on 12th (3) and 13th (4), and no sightings in February or March.

In the second winter period not seen until 16th Dec, when a female was present on the Little Broad. It then moved to the Great Broad and was present until at least 24th.

* **Goosander** *Mergus merganser*

Scarce winter visitor



One or two redheads present most days between 10th Jan and 4th Feb. A third redhead was noted on 12th Jan, and four (the three redheads and an adult drake) were present on 13th. Later sightings included one on 23rd Feb and one on St Andrews Broad on 6th Mar. There was only a single autumn record, one on 15th Nov.

Photo: Ed Mackrill

Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Common winter visitor



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

Some fluctuation in numbers during January, sometimes even on the same day. When all present the peak was 30, noted on 10th and 20th. At St Andrews Broad a drake was often present, with 6 there on 16th. Fifteen still present on 1st Feb, then a maximum of 6 recorded into spring. Once again a pair present throughout May and June, and a fledged juvenile seen on the Great Broad on 19th July. This suggests that breeding occurred this year, although as it was only seen on that date there is the possibility it fledged elsewhere but fairly close by.

In autumn the female continued to be seen in September, with a drake also present on 28th Sept and 11th Oct. An influx from 19th Oct when 18 seen, up to 21 on 21st Oct. Numbers then lower until early November when 26 on 4th and 27 on the 8th (16 drakes, 11 females). Similar numbers seen regularly, peaking at 44 on 10th Dec (42 drakes, 2 females). On 29th Nov and 2nd Dec the flock was accompanied by a drake Ferruginous Duck x Pochard hybrid.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

Common winter visitor



Regular counts of 160+ on the Great Broad and additional birds on St Andrews Broad. The highest count of the month was 268 on 13th Jan, whilst a count of 180 on St Andrews Broad on 3rd Jan probably involved a large-scale displacement of birds from Whitlingham. Highest monthly counts for the start of the year were *Feb* 150 17th, *Mar* 182 12th and *Apr* 146 10th (combined Whitlingham/Thorpe count). Last of spring 10th May.

Seven on St Andrews Broad on 16th July, then one at Whitlingham on 13th Aug and 7th Sept. Numbers built during October, with 103 seen on 21st and 28th. The highest second winter period count was 226 on 24th Nov, with 205 on 7th Dec and 200 on St Andrews Broad on 4th Dec. The pink-billed bird first seen in Nov 2022 (pictured above) was present at the start of the year until at least the 3rd Apr, but not noted in the second winter period.

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

Shoveler *Spatula clypeata*

Regular winter visitor

No repeat of the large numbers of 2024, with the maximum count in the first winter period 23, on both 10th and 12th Jan. Sixteen present on 20th Jan but declining afterwards, with all other counts in single figures. During March typically 1-3 at both the Great Broad and St Andrews Broad, with the last record of spring one at Whitlingham on 24th Apr.

An eclipse drake was present on the Great Broad on 7th Sept. Returning autumn birds were first noted on St Andrews Broad on 13th Oct and at Whitlingham from 28th Oct. The peak of the second winter period was 20, recorded at St Andrews Broad on 13th Nov and on the Great Broad on 3rd Dec.

Gadwall *Mareca strepera*

Common winter visitor



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

Counts in the first week of January included 203 on 2nd and 223 on 3rd. A clear but brief arrival mid-month, evidenced by a count of 190 in the morning of 12th, but 429 in the afternoon! Numbers dropped to 314 on 13th (and 2 Pintail arrived on that date, highlighting the movement of dabbling ducks). Numbers dropped back to c170 near the end of the month. In February numbers mostly 100 or less, with the exception of 218 on 3rd. Highest counts for the rest of the first half of the year 58 Mar, 10 Apr, 5 May and one sighting in June of one on the Great Broad on 4th. Display flight noted on St Andrews Broad on 4th Mar, and a drake paired with a Mallard seen at Whitlingham on 25th Apr, but no breeding observed.

Returning birds seen at Whitlingham on 20th Aug and St Andrews Broad from 5th Sept. No counts above 50 made until 51 on 4th Dec and peaking at 90 on 7th.

Wigeon *Mareca penelope*

Scarce winter/passage visitor



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

Low numbers present throughout January, typically one or two, but four on 13th and 20th, plus a high of five on 22nd. These birds last seen on 2nd Feb, but a small arrival in late March when four on 24th, with two present the following day and recorded again on 1st Apr.

In autumn first seen on 14th Oct (a very close return date to 2024, when returning birds seen on 15th Oct), with six seen. One also noted on 19th/20th Oct, but then no further sightings until December when two seen on 3rd, 5th and 19th.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Common resident



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

An influx on 12th and 13th Jan (104 and 109 counted respectively) coincided with the large arrival of Gadwall. For the rest of the first winter period and spring, counts of 40-60 were more usual. During summer 74 noted on 14th July and the year high was 123 on 10th Aug. Counts of 100 also noted on 19th Sept and 8th Nov. No ducklings noted this year, which together with the lack of goslings suggests a poor year for breeding wildfowl within the recording area.

* **Pintail** *Anas acuta*

Scarce winter visitor

A pair present on the Great Broad on 13th Jan (EM, DR). The timing is very similar to 2024, when 1-4 were present 12th-19th Jan.

Teal *Anas crecca*

Common winter visitor.



In common with Gadwall and Mallard there appeared to be an increase in mid-January, but not to the extent there was in 2024. On 11th Jan 40 counted at Thorpe Marshes, with 70 there on 12th Jan whilst 30 were also present on the Great Broad. Lower numbers present throughout February and March, last noted on St Andrews Broad on 11th Apr and at Whitlingham on 25th Apr. Early autumn birds noted from Thorpe Marshes on

25th Sept and 16th Oct, but sightings from Whitlingham only regular from 7th Nov, with numbers peaking at 14 on 10th Dec.

Photo: James Emerson

Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

Fairly common resident

An under-recorded species here. Noted from Whitlingham C.P. and surrounding area in all months of the year except June and July (in part due to increased coverage of the area around Whitlingham Hall this year), whilst recorded from Thorpe Marshes in five months of the year.

* **Quail** *Coturnix coturnix*

Local rarity

A vocal bird reported flying north over Thorpe Marshes on 13th June (MC) is a new species for the area. For a brief discussion of this record see the article on pages 9 & 10.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Common winter visitor



Widely fluctuating numbers throughout January, likely in part due to the difficulty in accurately counting this species when small groups are split across the site. A count of 21 on 10th Jan was the highest site count since these reports began in 2012, surpassing 18 from 2022. Seventeen were noted on 12th Jan, but otherwise a typical count was six or seven.

Numbers in February typically in single figures, but potentially 22 present in the area on 14th when 17 counted on the Great Broad and five on St Andrews Broad – it is not known however if the counts were done at the same time and if there was any movement between the two sites. Thirteen were counted on the Great Broad on 16th. Noted at both the Great Broad and St Andrews Broad throughout March (up to five and four birds respectively), last of winter seen at Whitlingham on 24th Mar and at Thorpe on 9th Apr, although one noted in an apparent territorial flight over St Andrews Broad on 10th May.

No late spring or summer sightings this year, with six returning birds noted on 7th Oct. Numbers steady through October and November, with a peak of 13 noted on 24th Oct, 28th Oct and 4th Nov. Numbers increased towards the end of November, with 19 on 28th and a new

confirmed high count of 22 on 3rd Dec. On St Andrews Broad birds were seen on 26th Nov and 17th Dec.

Photo: James Emerson

* **Red-necked Grebe** *Podiceps grisigena*

Rare winter visitor



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

First seen on St Andrews Broad on 14th Jan (RCI), although only conclusively identified and reported on 15th (RM). It remained at Thorpe until 16th Jan, before transferring to Whitlingham Great Broad on 17th (JL), remaining there until 14th Feb (although it was also seen on 17th Feb – DS). This was the first confirmed local area sighting since 2010 – see article on pages 17 & 18 for more photos and details.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Resident



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

Highest monthly counts for the first half of the year were: *Jan* 15; *Feb* 9; *Mar* 14; *Apr* 17; *May* 14 and *June* 15. One on St Andrews Broad on 14th Jan was in summer plumage, and displaying was noted there on 9th Apr and 3rd May. At Whitlingham one on a nest was seen on 13th Apr and an unprecedented four nests were noted on 7th May (EM). On 25th an adult with two chicks were seen, with another adult still on a nest. It is not known what happened to the other two nests. Numbers over summer and autumn largely matched those of spring, with a peak count of 17 noted on multiple occasions. Lower numbers in winter, with counts in December not passing eight.

Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

Scarce spring migrant



First heard back calling from Whitlingham Woods on 9th Apr, with presumably the same bird seen at Whitlingham C.P. on 11th and Thorpe Marshes on 12th. Daily sightings for the rest of the month, with 2 reported on 17th Apr. Regular sightings throughout May too, including 2 on 6th. On 22nd May 4 were noted (2 pairs), one of which was a 'bubbling' female. Two calling birds were regularly heard into early June, usually one at Thorpe and one at

Whitlingham. Last heard on 20th June.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Scarce wanderer from nearby

Recorded on 16 dates, most frequently in the first winter period (11/16). There was a fairly even split between records from Whitlingham C.P. (9) and Thorpe Marshes (7). Most records related to singles or pairs, with the exception of four at Whitlingham 17th Feb and three there on 6th Mar.

Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*

Common resident

A common resident species with additional birds flying over early mornings. No vis-mig counts or large flocks noted this year.

Feral Pigeon *Columba livia*

Common resident close to the area

Records typically relate to small flocks either seen flying over or distantly over Trowse or Thorpe St Andrew. Noted on 32 dates this year.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas*

Scarce resident



Between 1-5 seen at both Whitlingham C.P. and Thorpe Marshes on a range of dates throughout the year. At Whitlingham there was a high count of nine on 7th Feb, noted coming to bird feeders in one of the cottage gardens along Whitlingham Lane.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

*** Common Crane** *Grus grus*

Scarce spring flyover

Only one record this year – a flock of seven initially spotted flying west over Brundall presumably tracked the river as they were later picked up as they flew over Trowse towards Lakenham.

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

Secretive resident/winter visitor

Records typically referring to one or two heard-only birds. The highest count at Whitlingham was from February, when five heard at Whitlingham (2 Little Broad, 3 Great Broad) on 7th, whilst a minimum of 8 were heard at Thorpe Marshes on 14th Feb (JG). Some individuals likely to have been present throughout the year, but no summer records were received, with the last spring sightings from Thorpe Marshes on 15th May and Whitlingham on 25th May.

In autumn birds heard again at Thorpe Marshes from 30th Sept (a day later than in 2024) and at Whitlingham C.P. from 7th Oct. The highest daytime count noted for the second winter period was 5 at Thorpe Marshes on 7th Oct, although early morning/dusk counts included 11 on 13th Oct and 18 on 13th Nov (both MC).

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Common resident



Present all year round at Whitlingham C.P. and Thorpe Marshes. Slightly higher than usual numbers noted in January, with 20 around the Great Broad on 12th, 16 on 13th and 19 on 23rd. Twenty were also noted on 12th Feb. Double-figure counts were also received from Thorpe Marshes for Jan, Feb, Mar, Oct, Nov and Dec, the highest of which were 22 on 17th Mar and 19 on 26th Apr.

At least two pairs bred, with a pair on the Great Broad with five young chicks on 23rd May and a pair with two young chicks on the Little Broad on 14th July.

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

Coot *Fulica atra*

Resident/Common winter visitor



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

Occurrence mirrored that of some of the dabbling ducks, with an increase in numbers mid-January, peaking at 235 on 13th with 225 still present on 16th and 20th. At the start of Feb numbers down to 140, with a March high count of 38. In April 60 on 4th was out of keeping with the rest of the month, with 12 being the next-highest count. Summer month high counts *May 13, June 33, July 22 and Aug 33*. One young bird noted on 14th July.

Numbers back past 100 on 21st Oct (112), up to 172 on 31st Oct, 254 on 25th Nov and 301 on 3rd Dec. Later in December counts were back down to c100.

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

Regular spring visitor

First seen at Thorpe Marshes on 20th Feb and at Whitlingham on 24th Feb, then not again until 12th Mar (when 5 were also present just outside the recording area at Whitlingham STW). A pair were seen flying around on 21st Mar. Further sightings of singles during April and early May, but after that only two Thorpe Marshes 21st May, one Thorpe Marshes 17th June and two Whitlingham C.P. on 26th June.

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

Scarce spring migrant

The two records this year - a vocal bird west over Thorpe Marshes on 5th Apr (MC) and one reported from Thorpe Marshes on 2nd Aug (per eBird).

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Scarce flyover

Records typically refer to low numbers flying over. All records listed: 15 flew north-west over Whitlingham on 12th Jan, 2 there 20th Jan, 6 on 14th Feb, 1 Thorpe Marshes 3rd Apr, 12 flew over Thorpe Marshes 24th June, 16 east over Whitlingham on 5th Dec and 3 there on 17th Dec.

* **Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*

Rare spring flyover

One heard calling as it flew over Whitlingham C.P. on 5th May (JS) and another vocal bird heard flying over Thorpe Marshes on 26th May (MC).

* **Jack Snipe** *Lymnocyptes minimus*

Scarce winter visitor

One flushed from the south shore of Whitlingham Great Broad on 10th Jan (DS) and a handful of recorded from Thorpe Marshes: one there on 17th Mar (MC), 3 flushed by a work party whilst cutting an area of reed near the railway line on 13th Nov (MW), one on 16th Nov (MC) and one on 12th Dec (MC).

Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*

Scarce winter visitor

In the first winter period reported from Whitlingham on 20th Jan, 4 south over the Little Broad towards the woods on 6th Mar and one on 23rd Mar. At Thorpe Marshes one flushed and flew over towards Whitlingham on 18th Dec.

Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

Common winter visitor

Generally under-recorded as present on the inaccessible parts of the marsh at Thorpe. Records of 1-2 there during January, February, March, April, October and November. Higher counts included seven on 12th Jan, 15 on 17th Mar, 17 on 13th Nov, 15 on 16th Nov, 16 on 26th Nov and 13 on 10th Dec. At Whitlingham one sighting, on 12th Jan.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Spring migrant



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

Two seen at Whitlingham C.P. on 15th Apr, a day earlier than in 2024. Multiple sightings of a single bird in the following two weeks, either on the Great Broad or the riverbank, with the last sighting of spring two on 1st May. Two return passage sightings, three at Thorpe Marshes on 14th Aug and one at Whitlingham on 20th Aug.

* **Redshank** *Tringa tetanus*

Scarce passage migrant

One heard calling as it flew ESE over Thorpe Marshes on 14th Aug (MC).

* **Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus*

Rare passage migrant

One heard calling as it flew N over Thorpe Marshes on 10th May (MC).

* **Sandwich Tern** *Thalasseus sandivicensis*

Rare spring migrant



One found on the Great Broad on 6th Apr (JS) remained until 8th Apr, the first multi-day sighting here. For further details, see the article on pages 15 & 16.

One eBird checklist noted two birds present on the 6th, but neither the finder nor any of the large number of other observers present that day noted a second bird, so this could be an error.

Photo: Ed Mackrill

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Common spring migrant

An early sighting from the Great Broad on 7th Apr, but then no more until one at St Andrews Broad on 22nd Apr. Between 1-3 seen regularly at Whitlingham throughout May and June, with later sightings of two on the Great Broad on 14th July and nearby at Thorpe Ferry Café on 25th July. One was also seen at Thorpe Marshes on 5th Aug. There was no sign of any breeding on the tern raft on the Great Broad, and unusually no large tern passage was observed this spring.

* **Little Gull** *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

Scarce spring migrant



Three present on the Great Broad on 6th Apr (JS, EM) were described as a summer plumaged adult, winter plumaged adult and a 2cy bird. One remained the following day. A large arrival on 12th Apr, with the highest count noted a minimum of 20 birds, all adults except one 2cy.

Photo: Ed Mackrill

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Common resident



Present all year round, although in low numbers May to August. Selected high counts: *Jan* 394 (3rd), 463 (12th), 241 (13th), 464 (27th), *Feb* 200 (21st), *Mar* 98 (16th), *Apr* 150 – almost all 2cy (1st), *Nov* 217 (8th), 243 (26th), *Dec* 220 (7th).

There were no new colour-ringed gulls seen this year, although there were two new metal-ringed birds, from Finland and Wales. Returnees from Finland, Germany and Poland were also seen. A fuller summary of ringed Black-headed Gulls reported from the area can be found in the article on pages 33 to 35.

Photo: Ed Mackrill

* **Mediterranean Gull** *Ichthyaeetus melanocephalus*

Scarce visitor, often in spring

Five records this year. One listed as present at Whitlingham on 23rd Feb (per eBird), then at Thorpe Marshes where one circled over before flying off NW on 3rd April (DR). At Whitlingham 2 were seen circling over the east end of the Great Broad on 17th Apr (DR) and a 2cy bird was seen at Whitlingham C.P. on 25th July (DL). Finally one seen flying west along the Great Broad on 10th Aug (JE) – large numbers were seen over the city later on the same date.



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

Up to 25 seen during January-March, with a large influx of additional birds on 11th March giving a total of 74 for that date. A maximum of five seen during April, with the last one at Whitlingham seen on 9th. One at Thorpe Marshes on 27th Apr was presumably passing through. There was again a summer record from Whitlingham, on 14th July. In autumn seen from 7th Sept, with a maximum of nine in October, 18 in November and 19 in December.

* [subspecies] **Russian Common Gull** *Larus canus heinei* *Vagrant/under-recorded*



This sub-species is thought to occur regularly in winter in Britain but is difficult to identify with certainty. A fuller description including photos can be found in the article on pages 19 – 22. First-winter birds matching the description of this sub-species were noted during January on the 8th, 16th and 18th (probably the same bird) and 2 were seen amongst a large influx of Common Gulls on 11th Mar (all records EM). **Photo: Ed Mackrill**

* **Caspian Gull** *Larus cachinnans*

Scarce visitor



A 1st-winter bird noted on 4th Jan (EM) remained until 20th Apr, often around the slipway so seen on most visits during this period. The only other individual reported was a second 1st-winter seen on 11th Jan (EM).

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

Common winter visitor

Numbers higher in winter, but also often dependent on the time of day (additional birds drop in to bathe late afternoon). Counts included: Jan 3rd (68), 12th (61), 28th (71), Feb 15th (65), Apr 6th (85) and Nov 17th (97). No colour-ringed birds seen this year.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*

Scarce visitor



Recorded on 15 dates, age/moult stage in brackets if known, as described by the observer:

17th Jan (2nd cycle), 19th Jan, 5th Feb (2CY), 19th Feb (3rd cycle/4CY), 21st Feb (adult), 27th Feb (3CY), 11th Mar (2nd cycle), 13th Mar (adult), 14th Mar at Thorpe Marshes (adult), 23rd Mar (2nd winter), 2nd Apr (adult), 22nd Apr (2nd cycle), 25th July, 4th Nov (adult) and 9th Nov.

Photo: Ed Mackrill

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*

Occasional visitor

Recorded on 11 dates, mostly early in the winter. All sightings listed, singles unless otherwise stated: Jan 20th, 23rd, 24th, 29th and 31st; Feb 12th and 23rd; Aug 17th; Nov 13th (2), 17th (10) and 26th (4). The count of 10 on 17th Nov (DS) is unusual here and presumably relates to birds flying over or that dropped in to bathe with other large gulls.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Common summer visitor



Up to 6 present in January, with a high of 17 in February and 60 in March (11th). A day of passage on 12th Apr saw a minimum of 100 pass through, with 71 noted on the Great Broad on the following day. Other notable counts for spring/summer included 60 on 10th May, 84 on 14th July and 105 on 10th Aug. Numbers during November and December all 5 or less with the exception of 60 reported from Whitlingham Marsh (presumably flying over).

Photo: Ed Mackrill

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Resident, small breeding population



Photos: Barry Madden

Numbers in the first winter period typically between 20-30, peaking at 46 on 7th Feb. A count of 76 on 1st Feb was presumably a roost count as only 23 had been counted that morning. The highest roost count this year was 83 on 20th Dec. One was photographed catching and eating an eel on 22nd May – see photos above.

Nesting occurred in trees on the Great Broad main island for the third consecutive spring. There was a modest increase to 12 nesting pairs this year (2023: 5 nests, 2024: 9 nests) – see the article on pages 24 to 30 for full details.

The ‘brown’ individual with a pigment deficiency described in the 2023 Whitlingham Bird Report was noted on the Great Broad on 12th Jan.

* **Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia*

Very rare visitor



Two flew over Whitlingham C.P. on 25th Mar (KC via PW). This is the second confirmed area record, the first being in 2018.

Photo: Kate Conway

Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

Scarce but annual winter visitor

One present during January, but only reported on 2nd, 22nd and 25th. Not recorded from Whitlingham in the second winter period, however a vocal bird was heard flying south over Thorpe Marshes after dusk on 16th Nov.

[Elsewhere in Norwich, a Bittern was present on UEA Broad from 27th Nov into December]

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Regular winter visitor



Typically between one and five at Whitlingham from January to March, with counts of seven on 10th Jan, 7th Feb and 23rd Mar. One seen regularly at Thorpe during this period, with three there on 19th Mar. A single bird seen during April and May, with two on 3rd June the last of spring. Further sightings on 15th Aug and 11th Sept preceded more regular sightings from 7th Oct onwards. Particularly high autumn counts included 11 on 18th Nov plus nine 30th Nov, eight 3rd Dec and nine 12th Dec. Monthly maximum counts shown below:

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	7	7	7	1	1	2	0	1	1	3	11	9

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

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

Winter visitor



Two present from the start of the year until 4th Mar. One remained in the area until 22nd Apr, often ranging to Thorpe Marshes and on one occasion to Whitlingham Marsh. Two seen back at Whitlingham from 28th September and remained until the end of the year, with a third individual also present on 17th Nov and 8th Dec.

Photo: © Robin Chittenden

(www.robinchittenden.co.uk)

*** Cattle Egret *Ardea ibis***

Local vagrant, scarce Norfolk breeder



This species has rapidly colonised England in recent years, and now breeds in Norfolk. There were no previous Whitlingham area records, however in recent years there have been several sightings from the western edge of Norwich. One was listed on eBird at Whitlingham C.P. on 15th Feb, but with no photo or details about the record, this would not constitute enough detail to add the species to the site list. Fortunately on 3rd Sept two were seen and photographed roosting on the Great

Broad island (JL), confirming that it has occurred here. For more discussion, see the article on pages 7 & 8. Photo: Justin Lansdell.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Common resident



Usually up to 6 present around the Little Broad and Great Broad, but several double-figure counts, including 14 on 5th Feb, 12 on 9th Feb (of which 11 were in a flock flying over), 12 on 10th Dec and 11 on 12th Dec. A count of 19 on 30th Jan (NR) included birds from the whole area from Trowse onwards rather than just the Great Broad, whilst having checked with the observer a count of 23 on 17th Feb on eBird was an error and should have read '3'.

Two nests were visible on the Great Broad island, the one facing the south shore fledged three young, whilst the one opposite the north shore fledged at least one (pictures and further details in the article on pages 24-30. The old nest used in 2024 by the Egyptian Geese was not occupied this year. **Photo:** © Robin Chittenden (www.robinchittenden.co.uk)

Swift *Apus*

Common spring visitor

No April sightings this year, with the first ones seen at Whitlingham C.P. on 3rd May. A few more arrived later in the week, with 20 on 8th May. Only noted on four other dates in May, but regular sightings from the first week of June, including 40 on 3rd. The largest count of the year was 60 at Whitlingham C.P. on 3rd July, and the last of the year was at Thorpe Marshes on 25th July. Again no sign of any breeding activity around the swift tower in the barn car park.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

Scarce resident

No sightings from Whitlingham this year. Records from Thorpe Marshes on 17th Mar, 26th Apr, 10th May and 16th Nov.

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*

Scarce resident

Under-recorded due to its nocturnal habits. Recorded from Whitlingham C.P. on 25th Jan and from Whitlingham Hall on 12th Oct and 23rd Nov, whilst at Thorpe Marshes there was a cluster of spring records of a pair heard on 25th Apr, 3rd May and 10th May, plus one on 13th Nov.

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Resident

Seen in all months of the year except July, and from all regularly recorded parts of the area (Thorpe Marshes, Whitlingham C.P., Whitlingham Hall and Whitlingham Woods). Most sightings of single birds, with the exception of 2 Thorpe Marshes on 9th Apr, 2 Whitlingham 8th May and 2 there 2nd Dec.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Fairly regular flyover



Recorded on 39 dates, with a similar split of sightings from Thorpe Marshes and Whitlingham C.P. Most frequently seen between Jan-May (28 dates), with only 3 sightings over the summer and the rest in Nov/Dec. All records of singles except 3 over west on 10th Jan, 2 at Thorpe Marshes 27th Mar and 2 also at Thorpe on 5th Dec.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

Scarce flyovers



This species is common around Norfolk, but remains scarce here. Seven records: From Whitlingham C.P. on 17th Jan, 30th Jan and 16th Feb, from Whitlingham Hall on 9th and 11th Mar, at least two over Thorpe Marshes on 26th May and one east over Thorpe Marshes on 3rd Dec.

Photo: Ed Mackrill

Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Resident nearby

Regular sightings of 1-4 around the recording area and in every month of the year. The sighting of 3 at Whitlingham C.P. on 17th Feb included a displaying pair.

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Scarce resident



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

Recorded throughout the year, most frequently at Whitlingham but also a few records from Thorpe Marshes, all referring to one or two birds with the exception of three at Thorpe Marshes on 19th Sept.

Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*

Resident

Regularly seen at Whitlingham C.P. & Hall, with a scattering of records from Thorpe Marshes. Most records of 1-2 birds but three were reported on 9th Mar.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopus major*

Resident

Recorded throughout the year around the recording area. Most records of one or two, with three at Whitlingham Hall 5th Jan, Whitlingham C.P. 19th Jan, Whitlingham C.P. 12th Mar and Whitlingham Hall 12th Oct, plus four Whitlingham C.P. 11th Mar. One seen excavating a nest hole in a tree at Thorpe Marshes on 23rd Mar, with drumming heard at Whitlingham C.P. on 13th and 17th Apr.

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Resident

Regularly seen throughout the year, most frequently at Thorpe Marshes but also at Whitlingham C.P. and Whitlingham Hall.

* **Hobby** *Falco subbuteo*

Scarce passage migrant

Seven sightings spread across spring to autumn. Firstly at Thorpe Marshes where one seen on 28th Apr (BM), then again on 26th May and one hunting odonata at dawn on 4th June. The remaining sightings were from Whitlingham C.P. 20th June (DR), Whitlingham Hall 8th Aug (DS) and late records from Whitlingham C.P. 19th Sept (per eBird) and Thorpe Marshes 2nd Oct (CD).

* **Peregrine** *Falco peregrinus*

Scarce flyovers

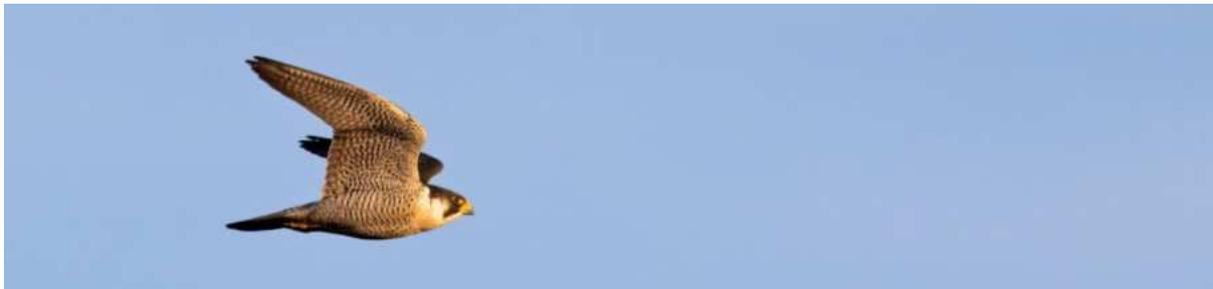


Photo: © Robin Chittenden (www.robinchittenden.co.uk)

Three records from the recording area this year, all over Whitlingham C.P. Firstly on 29th Jan (per eBird) and 30th Jan (EM), then also on 9th Nov (per eBird).

[At Norwich Cathedral four eggs were laid this year, of which three hatched and two fledged.]

Ring-necked Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*

Scarce visitor



At least one bird now almost resident, reported regularly throughout the year except July (after the 3rd) and all of August. From late March two present and seen regularly. Higher counts included four on 17th June and 7th Oct, whilst a new record of six were reported at Whitlingham C.P. on 30th Nov and 20th Dec (both per eBird). **Photo: David Ratcliffe**

Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

Common resident



Between 1-4 regularly seen throughout the year at Whitlingham C.P., Whitlingham Hall and Thorpe Marshes, plus higher counts of five on 28th Jan, six on 5th Feb and seven on 17th Feb.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Magpie *Pica pica*

Common resident

Present throughout the recording area. Roost or pre-roost gatherings noted from Thorpe Marshes in the first winter period including 19 on 14th Jan, c70 on 16th Jan, 151 on 17th Feb (JG), 46 on 28th Feb and 157 on 17th Mar (JL). At Whitlingham the only large count received were 46 on 6th Mar. The two 150+ counts are impressive but some way short of the record of 204 set in November 2016.

Jackdaw *Coloeus monedula*

Common resident



Present throughout the year. Highest roost or pre-roost count 710 on 20th Dec, with other three-figure counts of 160 at Thorpe Marshes on 14th Jan, 340 at Whitlingham C.P. 1st Feb and 145 at Whitlingham Hall on 11th Mar.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

Resident nearby but scarce flyover here

Sixteen records, mostly via eBird, of which eight from January or February. Unusually several of the records refer to reasonably sized flocks – 25 on 27th Jan and 30 on 6th Mar, both at Whitlingham C.P., and 30 in the Whitlingham Marsh area on 29th Nov.

* **Raven** *Corvus corax*

Rare visitor, increasing in Norfolk

One flew north over Whitlingham Hall towards the Great Broad, before then heading back south on 29th Dec (DS). This species has returned as a breeding bird in Norfolk in recent years – this is the first definite Whitlingham area record but follows several possible/probables and others just outside the area (see the article on pages 9 & 10).

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

Common resident



A common species that can usually be found around the southern edge of the Great Broad. The highest count was 17, seen on 16th Feb.

Photo: © Robin Chittenden

(www.robinchittenden.co.uk)

Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Common resident

Common throughout the recording area. Notable counts included 34 on both 5th Feb and 17th Feb, 22 on 9th Mar and 30 on 21st Oct.

Great Tit *Parus major*

Common resident

Common throughout the recording area. The highest count of the year was 15 at Whitlingham Hall on 27th July.

Coal Tit *Periparus ater*

Scarce resident

Recorded regularly this year, with sightings from over 50 dates (but note that this is not directly comparable with previous years as this included regular sightings from Whitlingham Hall, which had not been regularly covered in previous reports). As well as sightings from Whitlingham Hall and around Whitlingham C.P., Coal Tits were also noted from Thorpe Marshes, Whitlingham Wood and on bird feeders near the volunteer compound.

Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris*

Scarce resident

Pleasingly this species was recorded in every month of the year and at multiple locations within the area, so does not currently warrant listing each sighting individually. Thirteen sightings were made at Thorpe Marshes, all of single birds except 2 on 26th May, 5th Sept and 13th Oct. The remaining sightings were mostly from Whitlingham C.P., however also two Whitlingham Woods on 12th Mar and two Whitlingham Marshes 27th Mar, with a single at the latter site on 13th Dec.

* **Bearded Tit** *Panurus biarmicus*

Rare winter visitor

At least some of the birds noted at Thorpe Marshes in autumn/winter 2024 were still present in the early part of the year, with up to three noted on 11 dates from 3rd Jan to 24th Mar (multiple observers) and four reported on 17th Mar.

Sightings resumed for the third successive winter from 13th Oct (MC). At least one is likely to have been present from this date but only occasional records, including 16th Nov (RC), 26th Nov (CD) and 27th Dec (JL).

Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

Scarce flyovers

Recorded from Whitlingham C.P. on 14th Feb, 17th Feb and 6th Apr, at Whitlingham Hall on 27th Apr and flying over Thorpe Marshes on 13th Oct (13) and 30th Oct. A record on eBird of 6 at Whitlingham Marsh might refer to flyovers at that site, but could also relate to birds present on nearby farmland as some sightings on the checklist appear to relate to the wider area rather than just the marsh.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Common summer visitor



First heard at Thorpe Marshes on 7th Apr and at Whitlingham a day later. Numbers increased steeply in the following week, with a minimum of 15 singing birds at Thorpe Marshes on 12th Apr. The highest count from Thorpe Marshes eBird submissions was 30 on 27th Apr (DR), however only 17 of those were in song so it is not the number of territories present. Dawn counts of singing birds submitted by MC included 27 on 14th Apr, 52 on 26th Apr, 39 on 10th May and 31 on 20th June. The count of 52 exceeds any previous site count and would presumably result from an overnight arrival of passage birds that sung for a day before moving on. At Whitlingham a high count of four was noted on 23rd May. Last noted at Thorpe Marshes on 25th July. **Photo: Barry Madden**

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Common summer visitor



First heard singing at Whitlingham on 8th Apr and at Thorpe Marshes from 17th Apr. The highest count of singing males at Whitlingham C.P. was 15 on 23rd Apr. Numbers at Thorpe Marshes much lower, typically with a high of 6 singing birds (although this is in stark contrast to dawn counts from MC of 21 on 26th Apr, 43 on 10th May and 25 on 26th May). Last of the year noted on 21st Aug (Whitlingham C.P.) and 6th Sept (Thorpe Marshes).

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

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*

Scarce summer visitor



First heard reeling at Thorpe Marshes on 6th Apr, a similar date to 2024. Most sightings related to either one or two reeling birds, reported fairly regularly throughout April, May and June, although up to seven reeling birds reported on 26th Apr and 10th May by MC.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

Common spring visitor

Two seen over the Great Broad on 22nd Mar (coinciding with an arrival of about 50 at Strumpshaw Fen), but no further sightings until an arrival of up to 30 on 6th Apr. A group of up to 50 were seen on a range of dates throughout April and the first week of May, but after that the only records were of singles on 2nd June, 3rd June and 3rd July. Almost all sightings were from Whitlingham C.P. (only reported from Thorpe Marshes on 9th Apr), but that perhaps relates to the relative number of observers visiting each site in the spring.

Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Common summer visitor

One passed through Thorpe Marshes on 28th Mar, but the main arrival occurred on 6th Apr, the same day as the Sand Martin arrival. Numbers noticeably low this year, with 20+ at Whitlingham C.P. on 9th Apr the highest count of the year. Spring passage was over by 1st May, with the only other records from Thorpe Marshes on 15th July and 15th Aug.

House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

Common spring visitor

A very poor year for records of this species. Two at Thorpe Marshes on 9th Apr was the first record of the year, followed by 14 Whitlingham C.P. on 14th Apr, two there on 24th Apr and one at Thorpe Marshes on 10th May. In autumn one noted at Whitlingham C.P. on 11th & 12th Sept.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

Common resident



Common throughout the recording area. Largest numbers noted in autumn, with 40 at Whitlingham C.P. on 21st Oct and 35 there on 30th Oct.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

Common resident



Common at both Whitlingham and Thorpe Marshes. Maximum numbers of singing birds at Whitlingham C.P. was seven, with 11 noted at Thorpe Marshes on 13th Oct (MC).

Photo: © Robin Chittenden

(www.robinchittenden.co.uk)

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Declining summer visitor

Usually one of the earlier spring arrivals, it initially looked like this would be the first year that no singing birds were recorded within the area. A single singing male was then heard on three dates – 1st, 7th and 10th May from Whitlingham C.P. (on the latter date it was present on Thorpe Island but heard from Whitlingham). Two were also seen at Thorpe Marshes on 14th Aug, presumably dispersing through the area.

Please report all Willow Warbler sightings in 2026.

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

Common summer visitor



Single overwintering birds noted on multiple dates during January at both Thorpe Marshes and Whitlingham C.P. On 17th Feb four noted at Whitlingham (one at Whitlingham Marsh and three at Whitlingham C.P.), which might relate to birds that had overwintered here, or to ones moving through the area. Possible spring migrants noted from 4th Mar (singing from 5th Mar), with an arrival on 9th when five singing at Whitlingham C.P.

Highest counts of singing birds were 15 at Whitlingham, five at Thorpe Marshes.

Several large counts reported from Thorpe Marshes in summer/early autumn, with 21 on 14th Aug and 26 (7 in song) on 19th Sept.

Relatively large numbers present in the second winter period, with five at Thorpe Marshes on 16th Nov and 5th Dec, eight in the Whitlingham Marsh/STW area on 13th Dec and another at Whitlingham C.P. on 7th Dec.

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

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*

Scarce summer visitor



First of the year at Whitlingham on 17th Apr (about a week earlier than 2023 & 2024), then at Thorpe Marshes on 22nd Apr. Highest counts of singing birds eight at Whitlingham on 1st May and 23rd May, with three at Thorpe Marshes on 28th Apr. Last record at Whitlingham on 26th June when four still present.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Common summer visitor



A wintering bird reported on 2nd Feb. First singing birds heard at Whitlingham on 20th Mar and Thorpe Marshes from 27th Mar. Highest counts of singing birds at Whitlingham C.P. was eight (only half of the 2024 max count) plus three at Thorpe Marshes. A cluster of September sightings perhaps indicated passage – at Thorpe Marshes three on 5th Sept, with one still on 6th and four seen on 19th, whilst at Whitlingham singles on

9th and 12th Sept. One seen at Thorpe Marshes on 13th Nov might have been an overwintering bird.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

* **Lesser Whitethroat** *Curruca curruca*

Scarce summer visitor

Only three records this year, firstly one in song at Thorpe Marshes on 11th Apr (MC), then one (possibly the same individual?) singing from a riverside Hawthorn at Thorpe Marshes on 22nd Apr (CD) and lastly one at Whitlingham C.P. on 1st May (EM).

Whitethroat *Curruca communis*

Common summer visitor

A poor year for this species. First seen at Whitlingham C.P. on 13th Apr, with one or two noted until 17th July (the exception being four on 24th Apr). At Thorpe Marshes numbers were also low – first reported on 24th Apr with a peak count of two on 6th May. The last Thorpe Marshes sighting of the year was on 16th July and at Whitlingham a day later.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

Common resident

Reported from Whitlingham C.P. throughout the year. Also reported from Thorpe Marshes, where a count of 15 on 7th Oct was unusual (per eBird). There was also a count of six at Thorpe Marshes on 13th Nov.

Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*

Scarce resident



A resident species within the larger blocks of woodland. Records typically related to birds heard calling at Whitlingham C.P., but also several records of birds coming to feeders within the volunteers' compound and also from Whitlingham Hall.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*

Common resident

A scattering of records throughout the year, all one or two individuals with the exception of three seen on 12th Dec. Most records were from Whitlingham C.P., but sightings also received from Thorpe Marshes and Whitlingham Hall.

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Common resident

A common species recorded throughout the year from both Whitlingham C.P. and Thorpe Marshes. The highest count made was of 12 around Whitlingham on 8th May.

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Scarce wanderer from local populations

Seemingly a better year for this species, recorded on 22 dates (only five in 2024). Records largely over winter, with 10 records in the first winter period (Jan to Mar) and another 10 in the second winter period (Oct to Nov). The other two records were of three from the Thorpe Ferry café on 25th Aug and seven at Whitlingham C.P. on 28th Sept. Most records were of low numbers, but several flocks noted later in the year, most notably 150 heading high west on 19th Oct.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

Scarce resident

Recorded on 12 dates, 11 of which were in the first four months of the year (the exception being one at Whitlingham Hall on 14th Dec). Most sightings from Whitlingham C.P., although one flew west over Thorpe Marshes on 29th Jan and sightings on 2nd Mar and 14th Dec were from the area around Whitlingham Hall.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

Common resident



Present at both Whitlingham C.P. and Thorpe Marshes from January onwards. First noted singing on 30th Jan with high counts of five at Whitlingham and four at Thorpe Marshes. A record of 15 from Thorpe Marshes on 13th Oct presumably related to birds flying over as there were other high winter thrush counts for the same date.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

Common winter visitor



Seen in generally small numbers around Whitlingham C.P., Whitlingham Hall and Thorpe Marshes in the first winter period, with larger counts of 125 over Whitlingham on 1st Feb and 64 at Whitlingham Hall on 23rd Feb. On 6th Mar 120 were seen flying in to roost along the north shore of the Great Broad at dusk. In autumn 264 were counted over Thorpe Marshes on 13th Oct, whilst 72 roosted in the woods in the SE corner of

the Thorpe Marshes on 27th Dec. **Photo: © Robin Chittenden (www.robinchittenden.co.uk)**

Blackbird *Turdus merula*

Common resident

Common throughout the recording area. A record of 28 from Thorpe Marshes on 13th Oct (MC) presumably included birds flying over or passing through on migration.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

Scarce winter visitor

Recorded on just six dates: 30th Jan, 5th Feb (12), 28th Oct (2), 13th Oct (18), a flock of 30 over on 30th Oct and 12 on 29th Nov, all over Whitlingham except the 13th Oct flock (Thorpe Marshes).

All records of this species are welcomed for future reports.

Robin *Erithacus rubicula*

Common resident



Common throughout the recording area. The highest count noted as singing birds was 16 at Whitlingham C.P. on 3rd Mar, whilst other high counts not specified as relating solely to singing birds included 34 at Whitlingham C.P. on 17th Feb (NR) and 15 at Thorpe Marshes on 7th Oct. **Photo: © Robin Chittenden (www.robinchittenden.co.uk)**

* **Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula hypoleuca*

Rare passage migrant

A female/juvenile type reported from Thorpe Marshes on 14th Aug (MC). This is only the third sighting of this species during the period since these reports began, however it is the second consecutive year following one in September 2024 (documented in the short article on page 11 of this report).

* **Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Rare passage migrant

One reported from Thorpe Marshes on 15th Apr (MC). There are previous spring records for this species, but none since 2018 and individuals don't tend to linger so are typically only seen by single observers.

Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

One resident breeding pair



Photo: Barry Madden

A pair were noted from Thorpe Marshes in every month of the year, with successful breeding for the fifth consecutive year. Fledged young were first noted on 6th May and two were photographed still being fed by adults on 20th May (note that apparently three juveniles were seen on 26th May). Three adults were noted at Thorpe Marshes on 13th Oct (2 males and a female), although it is not known if the additional male was one of the fledged birds or a different individual passing through.

Duncock *Prunella modularis*

Common resident

Common throughout the recording area.

* **House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*

Rare wanderer from local populations

Two records this year, one at Whitlingham C.P. on 23rd Mar (NR) and three at Thorpe Marshes on 25th July (MH).

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Scarce resident

A scattering of records of 1-2 birds at both Whitlingham C.P. and Thorpe Marshes throughout most of the year.

Once again there was a roost gathering at Thorpe Marshes in the second winter period. As mentioned in the 2024 Whitlingham Bird Report any counts over ten are potentially important in a county context (with the general caveat that many winter roost gatherings in Norfolk are presumably going un-noticed).

Thorpe Marshes counts (all by MC unless otherwise stated): 6 on 13th Nov, 12 on 16th Nov (RC + MC), 18 on 17th Nov, 22 on 26th Nov and 6 on 27th Dec (JL).

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba yarrelli*

Common resident

Between 1-3 noted regularly throughout the year from Thorpe Marshes, Whitlingham C.P. and Whitlingham Hall. No recently fledged birds noted this year.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

Passage migrant

Most records from Thorpe Marshes, typically small numbers but 40 on 28th Feb, 69 to roost on 17th Mar, 14 over south on 19th Sept, 31 on 17th Nov and 23 on 10th Dec. Records from Whitlingham C.P. on 6th Mar, 19th Sept, 9th Nov and 29th Nov presumably relate to flyovers.

* **Water Pipit** *Anthus spinoletta*

Rare winter visitor

Reported on four dates, all from Thorpe Marshes: 12th Jan (MC), 14th Feb (JG), 17th Mar (MC) and 13th Oct (MC).

* **Brambling** *Fringilla montifringilla*

Scarce winter visitor

The sole grounded record this year was of several present in trees near to the ruined hall at Whitlingham on 7th Dec (per JE). There was an additional sighting of one flying SW over Thorpe Marshes on 13th Oct (MC).

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Common resident

Seen throughout the year in low numbers.

* **Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Scarce flyover

Five flew low east over Thorpe Marshes on 17th Mar (MC).

Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Scarce resident

A record of two at Whitlingham C.P. on 4th Feb was the sole sighting this year.

Please submit all records of this species in 2026.

Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*

Fairly common resident



Recorded regularly during the spring, with many records of singing birds. A juvenile bird was seen with adults at Whitlingham on 25th Apr.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Linnet *Linaria cannabina*

Scarce resident

There was a flock at Thorpe Marshes during January, with 30 on 11th Jan, 18 on 14th Jan and 37 on 24th Jan. During spring pairs noted at Thorpe Marshes and Whitlingham C.P., but no sightings in the second half of the year.

Redpoll *Acanthis flammea*

Redpolls were recorded on ten dates. Two of these were identified as Lesser Redpoll, whilst the others were just identified as Redpoll. Of the latter records, around 10 were present at Whitlingham C.P. with Siskins on 18th Jan, with one west over on 25th Mar. There were more sightings in the second winter period - at Thorpe Marshes there were seven on 13th Oct, some still present on 16th Oct and singles there on 13th and 17th Nov. At Whitlingham one was seen on 9th Nov and eight present across the recording area on 29th Nov.

[Subspecies] **Lesser Redpoll** *Acanthis flammea cabaret* *Fairly scarce winter visitor*

It is likely that all Redpoll records this year relate to this subspecies, however the only sightings definitively identified/reported as Lesser Redpoll were those at Whitlingham C.P. on 16th Jan and 12th Dec.

* **Crossbill** *Loxia curvirostra*

Scarce visitor to the area



Two flew low SW over Thorpe Marshes on 14th Aug (MC), whilst on 13th Dec one was found at the top of a tree at Whitlingham Marsh (JLo). The latter sightings was photographed.

Photo: James Lowen

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

Common resident

Present throughout the year, flocks mostly 25 or less, but 30 at Whitlingham Hall on 26th Jan, 39 at Whitlingham C.P. on 13th Feb, 36 at Whitlingham Hall on 23rd Feb and 30 at Whitlingham C.P. on 31st Oct.

Siskin *Spinus spinus*

Common winter visitor

Small numbers present at the start of the year but flocks of between 20-40 regularly seen at Whitlingham C.P. in the second half of January. The highest count of the first winter period was 50 on 15th Feb, with the last sighting on 9th Mar. In autumn seen again from 10th Sept, with numbers highest in November, with a peak of 60-70 on 23rd Nov. Sightings came from Thorpe Marshes, Whitlingham C.P., Whitlingham Hall and Whitlingham Wood.

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Common summer visitor



Noted at Thorpe Marshes from 12th Jan onwards. At Whitlingham one was present on 30th Jan, but then not seen again there until 9th Mar. The maximum count of singing birds was 12 at Thorpe Marshes (on 26th May) and four at Whitlingham C.P.

Photo: David Ratcliffe

Total: 131 species

Appendix A – Recorded species possibly linked to reintroduction schemes

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

None this year.

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

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

None this year, however one historical addition:

[**Snow Goose** *Anser caerulescens*

Presumed escape]



There was a period in the 2000s when various hybrid geese would turn up at Whitlingham. I couldn't identify this one, but posted about it on my blog in 2010. In October 2025 the post was seen by hybrid wildfowl expert [Joern Lehmhus](#), who recognised that it was in fact not a hybrid, but a juvenile blue-phase Snow Goose. Whilst undoubtedly from a collection rather than a wild bird, this is a new species for the 'escapes' site list.

Photo: James Emerson

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

The species listed here are primarily those where the observer was certain of the ID, however they have not been included on the main species list (typically 'probable' species are included within the main list in italics). This will usually be national or county rarities, or species not previously recorded in the area, that have not been photographed or seen by multiple observers (or that have been reported second-hand with insufficient detail to assess properly). If a sighting is listed as from Whitlingham/Thorpe but it is not clear if a sighting relates to the area (i.e. if an observer has recorded a single list for a walk that is partly within the area and partly out of it) then species not otherwise on the main list are also included here.

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

Scarce wanderer into the area

No records received from Whitlingham C.P. or Thorpe Marshes this year (typically one or two a year). An eBird report assigned to Whitlingham Marsh on 29th Nov suggests a flock of 20, which would be very unusual given the habitat. Evaluation of the whole checklist suggests that it relates to a long walk, beginning at the C.P., so I suspect that this record might relate to the farmland beyond the STW, which is outside the recording area.

* **Black Kite** *Milvus migrans*

Vagrant

This year a Black Kite was reported flying south over the east end of Whitlingham Great Broad on 14th Apr, viewed from Thorpe Marshes. As of January 2026 this record had not been submitted to the county rarities committee (per the Jan 2026 work-in-progress file). A further complication is a contemporary sighting of an escaped bird, as on the same day as this sighting one wearing jesses was reported from Winterton. There were also sightings earlier in the day from Minsmere and Westleton (although a sighting from Benacre on 15th Apr suggests that this Suffolk bird was still present along the east coast so wouldn't account for one in Norfolk). Black Kite is not currently on the Whitlingham area list, although a record of one photographed flying over Thorpe St Andrew just north of the area boundary on 7th May 2020 was accepted by the county rarities committee.

* **Penduline Tit** *Remiz pendulinus*

County rarity

One reported from Thorpe Marshes on 12th January as follows “1 first-winter bird seen feeding at reedmace, central 'The Flood' area at 12:35, whilst monitoring 'Reedling' numbers. Was observed for c.5 minutes before it flew off to the west into nearby scrub. Sadly not to be seen again.” This bird was not reported to the bird news services at the time and as of January 2026 this record had not been submitted to the county rarities committee (per the Jan 2026 work-in-progress file). There were no other reports of this species in Norfolk during 2025, and nationally during the first six months of 2025 there were only records from a single site in Britain (in Cheshire).

* **Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus*

Local rarity

One reported from Thorpe Marshes on 16th Jan (per eBird). This is a rare species in east Norfolk, with no accepted records from the Whitlingham area (although note that there has been one previous report of this species within the area during the period covered by these reports, of a flyover bird at Thorpe Marshes in autumn 2020 that was listed in Appendix C of that years report). Given the lack of a photo or further detail about the sighting this species is not included in the main systematic list.

Appendix D – Hybrid birds

Canada x Greylag Goose



The commonest naturally-occurring goose hybrid in the UK, and a regular visitor at Whitlingham, often in the summer when large numbers of geese gather on the Great Broad. One seen on the Great Broad on 13th Jan, then one there on 3rd and 15th June, with two present on 20th June and 3rd July.

Photo: James Emerson

*** Pintail x Pochard**



An interesting bird, which provided that the ID is correct would be a new hybrid for the site. It was seen on 20th Jan (RC) but not again.

Photo: © Robin Chittenden

(www.robinchittenden.co.uk)

*** Ferruginous Duck x Pochard**



A drake of this hybrid was seen and photographed on 29th Nov (RC) and also noted on 2nd Dec.

Photo: © Robin Chittenden

(www.robinchittenden.co.uk)

Appendix E – Species notably not recorded in 2025

These are a selection of birds that have been seen frequently in the recording area (here defined as having occurred in at least three of the previous five years, 2020-2024) but were not reported during 2025.

Mandarin *Aix galericulata*

Scarce visitor

Recorded in the area from 2020-2023, however the majority of sightings referred to a single drake that was near-resident in the area. This is the second consecutive year with no sightings.

* **Scaup** *Aythya marila*

Scarce winter visitor

Not an annual species here, but no confirmed sightings for a second consecutive year.

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

Scarce spring wanderer into the area

At least one seen most springs (3 out of 5 of the past five years). Note that there was one 2025 record submitted from “Whitlingham Marsh” that was only included in Appendix C because it concerned a large flock, so appeared to relate to somewhere more akin to farmland.

* **Golden Plover** *Pluvialis apricaria*

Scarce flyover

Only ever seen in flight, but typically one or two records most years, including 4 of the last 5.

* **Curlew** *Numenius aquaticus*

Scarce flyover

Seen in three of the past five years, all as flyovers.

* **Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus*

Scarce spring migrant

Probably the biggest missing species from 2025, Green Sandpipers had been reported in all 13 of the previous Whitlingham Bird Reports (from 2012 onwards). There was an anecdotal report of a sandpiper at Whitlingham Marsh in the second winter period that might have been this species (as they are more likely to overwinter here than Common Sandpiper), but it was not seen again to confirm the ID.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

Scarce spring visitor

Previously annual - recorded in eight years in a row up to and including 2022, however no records in 2025 for the third year in a row

* **Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger*

Scarce spring migrant

Always scarce, but recorded in three of the previous five years (2020, 2021 and 2023). Reasonable numbers reached several inland Norfolk sites, e.g. 10+ at Ranworth on 1st May and eight at Barton Broad on 13th May, but none reported from Whitlingham.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*

Scarce spring migrant

Another notable omission from the 2025 list, having been recorded from 12 of the 13 previous bird reports (2014 being the sole blank year in that period). The pattern of occurrence is usually similar, a flock arriving on a day of large passage across the country, with several remaining on the next day. In 2025 the largest passage took place on 21st Apr, with sightings from lots of sites and counts in the hundreds at Draycote Water (Warwickshire). However none were seen by observers at Whitlingham or Thorpe on that date, and indeed interestingly no Arctic Terns were reported on this day from any sites in Norfolk.

* **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava*

Scarce spring flyover

Recorded for seven years in a row 2016 to 2022, but not reported again for a third year in a row.

* **Yellowhammer** *Emberiza citrinella*

Scarce autumn flyovers

Recorded in three of the previous five years (2020, 2021 and 2023), usually as autumn flyover records.

Appendix F – Selected additional bird sightings from the Norwich area in 2025

These are species with no accepted records from within the Whitlingham recording area this year, but seen or heard elsewhere around Norwich. Details are included here both for general interest and because in some cases it might help to establish future patterns of occurrence within the area. The status indicators relate to their Whitlingham occurrences rather than attempting to describe them for the wider Norwich area.

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

* **Bewick's Swan** *Cygnus columbianus* *Rare flyovers in winter*

A flock heard late at night flying over Hellesdon towards the city centre on 24th Mar.

* **Whooper Swan** *Cygnus cygnus* *Rare flyovers in winter*

One heard over the Salhouse Road area on 12th Nov

* **Garganey** *Spatula querquedula* *Scarce spring passage migrant*

One at Earlham Marsh on 7th Apr.

* **Golden Plover** *Pluvialis apricaria* *Scarce flyover*

Five over Lakenfields on 13th Aug, One reported at UEA Broad briefly on 9th Sept and one over the waterworks on 20th Sept

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

One calling over a garden in New Costessey on 1st May

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

One over Greenborough Road on 14th June, another over Telegraph Lane East on 8th Sept

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

One over Dereham Road area on 14th July and another over North Norwich on 3rd Oct

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

Two over Hellsedon on 24th Mar

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* *Spring passage migrant*

One over Bawburgh Lakes on 24th Apr and another over Hellsedon on 5th May

* **Little Owl** *Athene noctua* *Rare occasional sightings*

One heard in Sprowston on 14th May. Presumably still present in the UEA/Earlham area too.

* **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* *Scarce spring migrant*

One photographed over Norwich Waterworks on 27th Apr, plus one over Sweet Briar industrial estate on 1st Sept.

* **Marsh Warbler** *Acrocephalus palustris* *County rarity*

This species occurs in Norfolk in late spring in varying numbers. The work-in-progress file from late January 2026 shows that six individuals were submitted for 2025 (four accepted, one held and one still being assessed). One of the records accepted by the county rarities committee was a singing bird present at Costessey 3rd-10th June. A second singing bird was also apparently seen on private land in the wider Norwich area, although it appears that details of that one has not been submitted to the county rarities committee for assessment.

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

One heard calling at Douro Place on 1st Oct.

* **Waxwing** *Garrulus garrulus* *Rare winter visitor*

One west over Trix Road on 24th Dec.

* **Firecrest** *Regulus ignicapilla* *Rare occasional visitor*

Sightings from the south, west and north of the city, including: Netherwood Green on 2nd Feb, Eaton on 31st Mar, Harrison's Wood multiple dates during May, Thorpe St Andrew on 20th May, Hellesdon on multiple dates during November and one in Earlham Cemetery on 20th Dec.

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

A wintering bird seen in the city centre on 3rd Jan, one amongst houses in west Norwich on 18th June and in Lakenham on 3rd Dec.

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

Flyovers on 26th Aug and 19th Oct.

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

Flyovers on 12th Aug and 16th Aug.

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

Flyovers on 7th Oct, 9th Oct and 14th Oct.

Acknowledgements & initials for scarce/rare species

I am grateful to everyone who has reported birds from the Whitlingham area this year, be it directly to myself, to the bird news services, via WhatsApp groups or by posted sightings on social media. Where someone has found a rare bird or a significant count etc this can be matched to the initials below. I would particularly like to thank the following for providing records, information or photos:

P. Allen, D. Andrews, S. Buck, B. Bufford, M. Chipperfield (MC), R. Chittenden (RC), R. Cleverley (RCI), K. Conway (KC), A. Crotty, L. Curson, C. Durdin (CD), J. Emerson (JE), J. Farooqi, D. Farrow, J. Gearty (JG), M. Hoit (MH), D. Holman, J. Lansdell (JL), A. Lawn, J. Lowen (JLo), D. Lyness, E. Mackrill (EM), B. Madden (BM), R. McIntyre (RM), R. Parker, D. Ratcliffe (DR), N. Robinson (NR), D. Russell, J. Sharpe (JS), D. Sivyver (DS), L. Smith, P. Walton (PW), W. Walmsley, G. White (GW), S. White and M. Wickens (MW).

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

Citations for the eBird dataset used is:

eBird Basic Dataset. Version: EBD_relNov-2025. Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, New York. Nov 2025.

Photographers of pictures used in the report are:

Robin Chittenden, Kate Conway, James Emerson, Justin Lansdell, James Lowen, Edmund Mackrill, Barry Madden and David Ratcliffe.

Local information

The following websites regularly contain sightings from the Whitlingham area:

- <https://jamesbirdsandbeer.blogspot.co.uk/> (The author's blog, no longer regularly updated but containing various information about Whitlingham & Thorpe including a site guide and links to all previous bird reports.
- <http://www.honeyguide.co.uk/thorpemarshes.htm> (Thorpe Marshes NWT unofficial site)
- <http://yarevalleywildlife.synthasite.com/> (Yare Valley Birding website)

Bird information services

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

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