

YOC REPORT 1986

CLASSIFIED LIST

The sequence and scientific nomenclature used is that of VOOUS K.H.. List of Recent Holarctic Bird Species (1973 and 1977). B.O.U. 1977

RED-THROATED DIVER *Gavia stellata*

One picked up freshly dead at Castle Howard on 13th April (per RDG).
Fifth record for the area.

BLACK-THROATED DIVER *Gavia arctica*

Two birds, one of which was oiled, on the River Ouse at Poppleton from 18th February until 1st March (DA).

Third record for the area.

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER *Gavia immer*

A well watched and very obliging immature at Castle Howard from 26th November until 21st December (SM.TED,JP.DW et al.) First record for the area.

LITTLE GREBE *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Bred in Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal (at least two pairs), Strensall Common (two pairs), Brandsby (two pairs), Skipwith Common (two pairs), and Castle Howard (one pair).

Most records in the early months with four at Fulford Ings and Dringhouses Pond in January, four at Bolton Percy and three on the River Foss in York in February, four in Lower Derwent in March. Singles during this period at Stamford Bridge and Naburn. One at Sand Button on 19th April and up to seven at Strensall Common during May where only two pairs bred however.

The only autumn records were of one or two at Lower Derwent from late September, two at Strensall Common on 20th August and one at Elm Hagg on 18th November.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE *Podiceps cristatus*

Single pairs bred at Dringhouses Pond, Sturge's Pond (Selby), Foggathorpe Pond and North Howden Ponds. A displaying pair in Lower Derwent during May. The decline at Castle Howard continues and astonishingly no birds bred or even summered, in 1984 nine pairs reared 17 young.

The worst spring showing since 1981. After three early birds at Castle Howard and Dringhouses Pond in January, only two singles in February on the River Ouse at Poppleton and Lower Derwent. The maximum numbers were: four at Castle Howard on 17th March, three at Sand Button on 25th and 28th when there were six in Lower Derwent. Five on Dringhouses pond on 22nd April, and then three at Clifton Airfield on 11th May. Five at Castle Howard on 6th June and two pairs at Wigganthorpe on 25th.

A poor season was indicated by only two immatures at Castle Howard on 16th August, with one present from 17th until 5th December. Adults were there on 9th July, 1st and 16th August, 12th September (two), and one from 27th November until 3rd December. Other singles at Dringhouses Pond from 13th to 20th December and Lower Derwent on 19th.

FULMAR *Fulmarus glacialis*

A bird flew east at Wheldrake Ings on 12th September (ID).
Second record for the area.

MANX SHEARWATER *Puffinus puffinus*

A bird attempted to land on the A19 at Deighton on 11th February. It was blown aside by a lorry and was last seen flying weakly east. This coincided with the appearance of many sea birds inland countrywide (TB).

A second bird appeared briefly at Wheldrake Ings on 26th May (TB et al), this being the first spring inland county record.

Second and third records for the area.

GANNET *Sula bassana*

A first-year bird flew south down the River Derwent at North Duffield on 27th September (TED)

Sixth record for the area and the first since 1980.

WHITE STORK *Ciconia ciconia*

A bird between Harlthorpe and Foggathorpe on 11th June (DB) , feeding in a newly-cut silage field.

First record for the area.

CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*

In Lower Derwent, one east on 15th January. Then a remarkable series of spring records, commencing with a single on 12th March then up to four' almost daily during the rest of March (36 bird days), up to five regularly during April (23 bird days), up to three almost daily in May (35 bird days) and singles on 3rd, 4th, 5th and 10th June. Easily the best ever spring showing. Singles on 27th September and 28th December.

Elsewhere singles at York Water Works on 24th February and 3rd March and at Castle Howard on 1st May.

GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*

Ten pairs bred in the Lower Derwent heronry.

Although recorded in every month numbers remained low, mostly referring to one or two birds, with the exception of four at South Ings on 13th January and Newburgh on 14th April.

Post breeding dispersal gave eight at Wheldrake Ings on 4th July and seven on 6th August. Seven at Roscarrs on 26th September until 6th October, then six until 16th.

MUTE SWAN *Cygnus olor*

Bred in Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal (two pairs) and single pairs at Roscarrs and Castle Howard. All pairs failed.

Records mainly in the Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal area with maxima of ten in January, nine in February, 11 in March, nine in April and 15 in May. Five in September, four in October and six in November and December.

Elsewhere, four at Bolton Percy on 26th January, nine at Riccall from 2nd to 3th June, two at Roscarrs and one at Wistow Lordship on 20th September; two at Roscarrs from 20th November until year end.

BEWICK'S SWAN *Cygnus columbianus*

Numbers lower than in previous years with virtually all records from Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal area. Maximum numbers were: 67 in January, 126 in February and 125 in March, decreasing to seven by the 23rd. An unusually late bird was at Wheldrake Ings on 22nd and 25th May (ID, DW.TED).

The first returning birds were two adults and three juveniles at North Duffield Carrs on 6th November. Four adults there on 25th began an increase in numbers rising to 95 in the Lower Derwent on 30th December with a maximum of 26 immatures on the 25th.

Elsewhere: one at Bolton Percy Ings on 2nd December.

WHOOPEE SWAN *Cygnus cygnus*

Monthly maxima in Lower Derwent of 16 in January, 30 in February; 38 in March and nine in April with the last two on 26th.

The first returning birds were two at Wheldrake Ings on 18th,

24th and 25th October. One there from 9th to 21st November, five at North Duffield Carrs on 4th December with a maximum of 28 at year end.

Other records: one at Riccall on 1st January and at Elvington on 4th. Four adults and three juveniles at Roscarrs on 4th November and two at Ryther on 20th and 21st.

GREY GOOSE *ap Anser sp*

70 South-east over Copmanthorpe on 17th March and 20 in the same direction on 27th.

BEAN GOOSE *Anser fabalis*

A remarkable series of records from the Lower Derwent. A bird of the nominate race *A.f. fabalis* at Wheldrake Ings from 22nd February until 25th April, with four on 10th March at Aughton, two at Wheldrake Ings on 16th March, five on 30th and three on 2nd, 7th and 9th April. A bird at Castle Howard on 16th March was thought not the same as the one at Wheldrake Ings, but was likely to have originated from the four at Aughton.

Now seen in five of the six years since first recorded in 1981.

PINK FOOTED GOOSE *Anser brachyrhynchus*

In the Lower Derwent, up to eight in January and four in February with up to 14 in March (8th). Four from 1st to 19th April with three to 24th.

A maximum of 22 at Wheldrake Ings from 20th to 29th December.

Elsewhere, a bird with Greylags at Castle Howard throughout the year was joined by a second on 2nd November and 18th December. This bird may have been responsible for sightings at Wheldrake Ings on 7th June, 1st, 3rd, 5th and 19th October and 2nd November.

WHITE FRONTED GOOSE *Anser albifrons*

A bird showing characteristics of the Greenland race *A.a.flavirostris* in Lower Derwent from 23rd February to 16th March, and presumably the same bird at Castle Howard from 26th March to 9th April.

A nominate bird in Lower Derwent from 20th March to 19th April when there were two. An adult nominate bird at Castle Howard from 18th to 30th December.

GREYLAG GOOSE *Anser anser*

Bred in Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal (at least 25 pairs), Castle Howard, Skipwith Common (one pair), Melbourne Brickyard (five pairs) and North Howden Ponds (one pair). Monthly maxima at the two main sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Lower Derwent	337	458	124	N/C	103	90	102	222	160	240	250	183
Castle Howard	N/C	N/C	226	178	N/C	N/C	52	52	58	153	195	177

The seemingly inexorable increase continues.

Few reports from elsewhere, except five pairs and 22 juveniles at Melbourne Brickyard on 26th June, 19 south east at Poppleton on 13th August and 16 north at Barlby on 22nd September.

SNOW GOOSE *Anser caerulescens*

An adult white phase in Lower Derwent on 11th to 18th January, 25th February, 9th March and 8th to 30th May, with a first summer bird on 31st. One on 3rd June. Two flew west with Greylag Geese at Naburn Sewage Works on 24th December.

CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis*

Bred in Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal, Newburgh, Stearsby and Castle Howard.

Monthly maxima from the two main haunts were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Lower Derwent	340	435	300	29	16	6	N/C	11	15	N/C	150	375

Castle Howard	N/C	N/C	55	20	N/C	N/C	31	135	148	130	195	167
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Few reports from elsewhere although the species seems to have occupied most suitable habitats in the area. As with Greylag this species continues to increase; the February count being the highest ever.

BARNACLE GOOSE *Branta bernicla*

All birds recorded were presumably escapes.

Two present in the Lower Derwent from 3rd January to 15th February, with three on 18th and 20th January and one on the 25th February. A bird present at Castle Howard from 12th March to 25th May. A single at Wheldrake Ings from 2nd to 11th April, then nine on 25th and 8th May, decreasing to three on 3rd June.

A Barnacle x Greylag or Pinkfoot at Newburgh on 14th October.

SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadorna*

Around 20 pairs bred in Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal. Six pairs held territory on the Ouse between Selby and Hemingbrough and two pairs between Riccall and Barlby.

Up to six birds in the Lower Derwent in January, but only two in February due to the severe weather. Numbers gradually increased in March but remained lower than in previous years with a maximum of 34 on 8th. A creche of 40 juveniles at Wheldrake Ings on 18th June. Up to 15 juveniles there during July. Seven on 8th and 14th August with two juveniles present until 25th October, with an adult on 27th and 25th. One at Bubwith on 11th November and Wheldrake Ings on 16th December, two on the 29th and one at Bubwith on 30th, when one found dead at East Cottingwith.

Elsewhere: one on River Ouse at Poppleton on 22nd February. Three pairs in the Lower Wharfe on 24th April. Five at Strensall Common on 3rd May. A juvenile at Riccall from 22nd to 25th July.

MANDARIN *Aix galericulata*

A male on the Lower Wharfe on 24th April (DW)
Tenth record for the area.

WIGEON *Anas penelope*

In Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal one pair bred and a further six pairs probably bred.

Monthly maxima in Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal area were:
3650 in January; 5835 in February; 7048 in March; 2900 in April;
27 in September; 300 in October; 1200 in November and 4130 in December. A fine series of counts.

Elsewhere small numbers were reported from Fulford Ings, Castle Howard and Sand Hutton, with 41 at Bolton Percy Ings on 17th December and 50 at Ryther on 20th.

GADWALL *Anas strepera*

Nine pairs bred in Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal at least six of which were successful; a tenth pair probably bred. The best ever showing.

Recorded regularly in Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal from 3rd January to 7th September, mainly in low single figures but five on 28th January, ten on 23rd March, six on 14th and 16th April;

at least ten pairs located during May and June Two females with broods of eight and seven on 8th July, four females with broods of nine, nine, three and two on 12th, ten immatures on 23rd, a female with six juveniles on 14th August, nine on 19th with the last four on 7th September. Four on 28th December.

Elsewhere: two males and a pair at Castle Howard on 19th April with two males and a female on 23rd when a male at Bolton Percy Ings. A male at Castle Howard on 21st May and a female on 12th and 23rd November.

TEAL *Anas crecca*

Bred in Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal (ten pairs) and Skipwith Common (two pairs).

Monthly maxima in Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal area were rather low, with 800 in January, 2573 in February, 2410 in March and 800 in April. 380 in September, 680 in October; 46 in November and 1120 in December.

Up to 100 birds were also recorded from: Bolton Percy, Barlow Common, Barlow Grange, Castle Howard, East Ness, Kexby, Lower Wharfe, Naburn Marsh, Newton-on-Ouse, Newburgh Priory, Poppleton, Skipwith Common, Stearsby, Strensall Common, Roscarrs and Ryther.

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos*

Sample counts gave 30 breeding pairs at Aughton and the same number on the Pocklington Canal between Hagg Bridge and Church Bridge. A welcome return to form in the Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal area with maxima of 500 in January; 5240 in February and 4000 in March when a rapid dispersal left 400 on 30th. Few records from April to July. 200 in August; 800 in September; 1000 in October; 1150 in November and 2055 in December.

At Castle Howard 70 in March; 511 in August; 789 in September; 427 in October; 213 in November and 450 in December.

Up to 300 in winter months at Barlow Common, Bishopthorpe Ings, Bolton Percy, Brighton Marsh, Clifton Airfield, Fulford Ings, Lower Wharfe, Kexby, Newburgh Priory and Newton-on-Ouse.

PINTAIL *Anas acuta*

In the Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal area numbers were rather lower than usual with 30 in January; 32 in February; 26 in March and 10 in April, the last bird on 7th May. First returning birds were late with four on 3rd November, with up to ten in December.

GARGANEY *Anas querquedula*

A very good showing in the Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal area With at least five pairs attempting breeding. The first returning birds were a pair on 19th April (TB.TED). At least five pairs were located during the ensuing weeks with three or four pairs at one site, one or two pairs at a second and one pair at a third. Birds were seen almost daily until three drakes on 25th June. Three birds at Skipwith Common on 14th July were thought to be immatures and presumably emanated from the Lower Derwent (one and a half miles east), this was the only indication of breeding success. In September a male from 2nd to 17th and an immature female from 3rd to 23rd.

SHOVELER *Anas clypeata*

At least 43 breeding pairs were located in an incomplete survey of the Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal, first eggs laid 1st May, first young seen 1st July.

Outside the breeding season numbers very low with maxima of eight in February; 26 in March; 18 in August; ten in September and 10 in October.

Elsewhere: a male on Wharfe Ings on 8th March and Fulford Ings on 20th April; two males at Ryther on 24th. A female in distraction display at Skipwith Common on 21st May but no young seen. A female at Castle Howard on 9th July; 13 at Riccall on 7th August; two males at Castle Howard on 12th September; 21 on 22nd, 21 on 26th; nine on 2nd October and three on 15th. One at Bolton Percy Ings on 17th December.

RED-CRESTED POCHARD *Netta rufina*

A female at Wheldrake Ings on 8th July (GO).
Ninth record for the area.

POCHARD *Aythya ferina*

One pair bred and four pairs probably did so in Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal.

Winter numbers were very low. Larger counts were 97 in Lower Derwent on 12th January and 76 at Dringhouses Pond on 25th. 150 in Lower Derwent on 7th February; 390 there on 16th March. 32 at Castle Howard on 5th October; 26 on 14th and 125th November; 113 in Lower Derwent on 23rd December and 100 on 30th.

TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula*

Bred at Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal (at least 30 pairs), Riccall, Skipwith Common, Pond Head and Newburgh (single pairs at each).

As with other duck species numbers low with larger counts of 60 at Dringhouses Pond on 13th January; 67 on the River Ouse at Poppleton 24th February; 104 in Lower Derwent on 10th March. 19 at Sand Button on 13th September was considered exceptional. 22 in Lower Derwent on 27th November and 30 on 24th December.

Elsewhere up to 16 at Bishopthorpe, Clifton Airfield, Fulford Ings, Howden Common, Newburgh Priory, Middlethorpe Ings, Skipwith Common and Strensall Common.

SCAUP *Aythya marila*

An adult male and immature male in Lower Derwent from 12th March (TB,DW,TED) to 15th (PP,DW,TC).

A very early adult female at Castle Howard on 13th August (JP), with a very tame female/immature from 25th October to 15th November (RSS,DR,JG,DW,TB).

COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra*

A first spring male at Roscarrs from 22nd to 26th April. Tenth record for the area.

GOLDENEYE *Bucephala clangula*

The largest counts were again in the Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal area, with up to 14 in January; ten in February; 48 in March and 26 in April, with the last three on 2nd May. A female at Stamford Bridge on 4th and 6th May, with a different bird at Kexby on 22nd and in Lower Derwent at Elvington on 23rd.

The first returning bird was at Castle Howard on 19th October, rising to 11 on 28th November and 12 on 3rd December. One in Lower Derwent on 30th October rising to four by year end.

Elsewhere up to four birds at Dringhouses Pond, Fulford Ings, Naburn Sewage Works, University Lake and Wharfe Ings.

SMEW *Mergus albellus*

A 'red head' in Lower Derwent on 12th January (per TED). Two males and a female on River Ouse at Poppleton on 23rd February (DA).

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER *Mergus serrator*

Two drakes at Castle Howard on 3rd May (GAC).

There were only four records prior to 1981 but the species has occurred annually since.

GOOSANDER *Mergus merganser*

Largest counts were: 22 at Castle Howard on 11th January; 24 at Riccall on 4th and 15th February; 33 at Castle Howard on 12th March; 27 in Lower Derwent on 17th; 18 at Castle Howard on 21st

and 25th, and at Lower Derwent on 23rd. 16 at Newburgh Priory on 30th and 19 at Riccall on 5th April. The last spring birds at Lower Derwent and Riccall on 13th May.

First returning bird was a redhead at Castle Howard on 19th September (DR), one on 19th October with 19 on 25th and 34 on 26th. Numbers fluctuated in November and December with maxima of 26 and 14 respectively. 17 at Newburgh Priory on 30th November; up to four in Lower Derwent in late December.

Elsewhere: singles at Fulford Ings on 4th January, Barlow Grange on 7th, seven on Lower Wharfe on 8th March and a male at Butterwick on 20th April.

RUDDY DUCK *Oxyura jamaicensis*

Failed to breed this year.

A pair and a male in Lower Derwent on 26th April (TED); then two pairs regularly to 12th May., with a male displaying on the 16th. Last male on 28th (TED). Away from Lower Derwent a pair at Castle Howard on 21st May (DW) may presage future colonisation.

OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*

A bird at Castle Howard on 18th April (per TED), with probably the same on 21st (GAC).

HONEY BUZZARD *Pernis apivorus*

One flew north at: Allerthorpe Common on 6th June (DWI). One at Stillingfleet on 21st August (DB)

Fourth and fifth records for the area.

MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus*

In Lower Derwent an all dark female flew north on 17th April (TED) and another female on 7th (TED) and 8th May (TB.TED). A female over Heworth Green on 2nd June (GO).

HEN HARRIER *Circus cyaneus*

Most records from Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal with ringtails on 13th, 12th, 14th, 19th (two), 20th, 22nd and 30th March and 20th and 24th April. Males on 26th (two) and 27th January. A good showing. Elsewhere a female at Heslington, Tilmire on 10th March (TO) and at Wharfe Ings on 19th April (DW).

HARRIER sp *Circus* sp

A small 'ringtail' at Church Fenton on 15th June was probably a Montagu's Harrier (per TB).

GOSHAWK *Accipiter gentilis*

Birds in Lower Derwent on 11th January (PWR) and west on 2nd March (TED). A male seen at the 1985 site in late March and early April (names of observers and site withheld).

SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus*

Now happily established as a breeding bird throughout the area. Mainly singles recorded from a record 67 sites throughout the year, with most sightings in spring as the following table of monthly bird days indicates.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
18	18	25	23	22	11	10	10	14	9	12	14

The Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal produced 47% of all records. Birds continue to increase in York suburbs, the species is now wintering in the city centre as evidenced by a female chasing Feral Pigeons over Parliament Street on 13th and 15th December. Interesting prey items this year included Green Woodpecker at Brandsby on 26th January (PH) and Snipe in Lower Derwent on 4th April (DW).

BUZZARD sp *Buteo/Pernis*

An unidentified bird flew over Welburn on 1st May (GAC).

BUZZARD *Buteo buteo*

One at Brandsby on 9th February and subsequent days (PH). Lower Derwent on 8th March (per TED), Gilling on 4th April (JP) and Stearsby Hagg on 18th May (PH). One in Lower Derwent on 25th September.

KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*

The few records received by no means reflect the status of this species in the area as a widespread and common breeding bird. The only significant records were of at least ten birds in the Lower Derwent during early January and of a pair nesting on the winding tower of Wistow Mine.

MERLIN *Falco columbarius*

An excellent year. Recorded in the early months at Lower Derwent on 16th January (TED), a female at Barlow Orange on 6th February (DC), one chasing a Redwing on a housing estate at Strensall on 10th (JHL); one at Lower Derwent on 14th (GO), Lower Derwent on 23rd and a female regularly at Roscarrs from 4th February to 14th March (TB). A good spring passage began with two males at Strensall on 5th March (DW), with birds at Welburn on 28th; 16th and 18th April, and Whitwell-on-the-Hill on 2nd May' (GAC), with the last, a female, at Lower Derwent on 5th.

First returning bird found dead at Acomb on 1st August (per TED). A female/immature flew south-west at Heworth on 4th September (JHL) when a bird at Lower Derwent (TED), with one there on 13th and 19th November (TED) A female at Roscarrs on 25th November (DC), Bunnygate on 13th December (PH) and Fulford Golf Course on 18th (per JHL).

HOBBY *Falco subbuteo*

Birds at Huntington on 2nd June (GO), Naburn on 23rd (GO), Skipwith Common on 21st July (GAC) and Brandsby on 1st September (per PH).

PEREGRINE *Falco peregrinus*

A good year with all records from Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal with a male on 10th January (TED); one on 15th March (TED); a male on 30th March (PM) and a female on 15th November (TED) .

First recorded in 1980 and recorded annually since 1982 with 12 of the 15 records in Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal area.

RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE *Alectoris rufa*

This has now become the predominant species in the Northern squares 57, 67 & 77 (PH) and around the Castle Howard Estate.

Largest covies were: 20 north of Clifton Airfield on 22nd January; 17 at Skipwith Common on 19th March and nine at Wheldrake Ings on 26th and 30th April. 17 at Hagg Bridge on 14th October; 29 at Brighton on 24th December; 28 at East Cottingwith on 20th; 25 at Brighton Tip on 30th when 16 at Riccall, and 15 at Skipwith Village on 31st.

GREY PARTRIDGE *Perdix perdix*

Again the largest covies in the York area, with an apparent slight recovery in the Lower Derwent (TED); however fewer records received. The only large covies were mostly in the early months with 11 at Poppleton on 1st January, and 15 at Clifton Airfield on 13th. 13 in the Bishopthorpe area on 13th February. No records for July, August, September or October except for two at Strensall Common on 24th August. 30 at Outgang, Heslington and 25 at Tilmire on 8th November were the largest covies recorded there for many years (JHL); 12 at Oulston on 16th; 25 at East Cottingwith on 20th and 16 at Wistow Lordship on 6th December.

QUAIL *Coturnix coturnix*

Singing males at Brandsby on 20th July (per PH) and in Lower Derwent on 22nd (TED).

PHEASANT *Phasianus colchicus*

The only large numbers were 140 at Buttercrambe on 10th September and 46 at Sand Mutton on 18th December. Melanistic birds were common in the Stamford Bridge area this year (RSS) and also one at Kirk gates on 10th September, when five at Buttercrambe; one at Kexby in December and three at Sand Button on 18th December. Four all white birds at Castle Howard on 25th December.

WATER RAIL *Rallus aquaticus*

Bred at Fulford Ings.

Singles at Roscarrs on 7th February and Lower Derwent on 12th, 21st and 23rd; 1st and 2nd March, with one freshly dead on the 7th; one on 14th and one calling at Strensall Common on 19th. One at Lower Derwent on 14th September. One calling at Strensall Common on 9th November; three at Fulford Ings on 15th and one at Lower Derwent on 20th. One calling at Castle Howard on 12th December and one at Lower Derwent on 23rd.

CORNCRAKE *Crex crex*

A male seen and heard in Lower Derwent on 12th June (TED.TB.EBB).

MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*

Largest counts were 21 at Bishopthorpe to Acaster Malbis on 6th January, 12 at Newburgh on 11th February and 14 at Bishopthorpe to Acaster Malbis on 2nd March. 13 at Castle Howard on 1st August and 25 there on 18th; 22 on 5th and 12th September. 24 at Naburn Sewage Works on 14th December.

A nest on the River Ouse at Poppleton was built in a Willow Tree at a height of seven feet. The water level rose to within one foot of the nest with young then subsided. A nest was then built on the river bank for brooding the chicks (DA). An adult with two chicks on York Foss on 20th March produced an early breeding record (BGP).

COOT *Fulica atra*

Sample breeding counts in Lower Derwent area of 15 pairs at Aughton and ten pairs between Hagg Bridge and Melbourne.

Largest numbers were in the Lower Derwent with 150 in January; 158 in February; 230 in March; 50 in May and 70 in June.

Elsewhere: 17 at Sand Mutton on 17th and 21st March; 15 on 29th November with 20 on 14th December and 20 at Wheldrake Ings on 26th.

CRANE *Grus grus*

Two adults and a juvenile at Aughton from 3rd to 5th May (TED). after which the immature remained until 7th, returning on 14th and remaining to 5th June (TB).

Fifth record for area with three records in the last four years.

OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus*

Bred in apparently normal numbers in the Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal: probably 8-10 pairs with the first chicks on 10th May. However, for the first time in several years, no confirmed breeding took place elsewhere, and this despite an encouraging batch of April records. A total of 13 (some of which were displaying) were noted on 19th April in the Lower Wharfe (DW), but the only subsequent record from this district involved a single at Bolton Percy Ings on 3rd May. Two breeding season reports came from the Ouse above York: single individuals flying up-river at Poppleton on 13th April and at

Moor Monkton on 7th May. The Lower Ouse yielded four records, including a party of five at Roscarrs on 25th April, and two at Riccall during the first week of June.

The spring arrival was rather late, with a single in Lower Derwent on 8th March being the first of the year (TB). Only three were in the Lower Derwent by 16th, though eight present next day and 11 on 19th heralded the main influx of breeding birds.

As usual most local breeders had departed by late June, further dispersal being indicated by July reports of four at Melbourne on 12th - 13th; three at Riccall on 19th; two over Hob Moor (York) on 20th and a single over Poppleton on 21st. Two at Riccall on 4th August (TB) were the last of a fairly unremarkable year.

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius dubius*

Another disappointing year for a species which so vigorously colonized the York Recording Area in the late seventies and early eighties. Only two pairs bred successfully: one at Clifton Airfield and the other at British Sugar Works, York (a new site). Two other pairs were present at the former site at different periods, but did not breed. Similarly, a pair in Lower Derwent during the second week of May did not remain to nest. However, four juveniles accompanied by two adults at Riccall in the third week of July may possibly have been reared locally. Passage at both ends of the year was generally considered to be poor, especially as it is difficult to distinguish between records of breeding birds (and their young in autumn) and migrants.

The first of spring arrived on 13th April (slightly later than in most recent years) when two were at Clifton Airfield (SR) and four at Riccall (PP). Roscarrs held two on 24th. May's records came from Clifton Airfield, where birds were continuously present with a maximum of four on 3rd; the Lower Derwent, which yielded 19 bird/days, maximum three on 26th; and Fulford Ings, where a single was noted on 22nd.

Four adults at Melbourne on 9th July presaged the onset of a sparse autumn passage. Individuals from the presumed family at Riccall mentioned above remained at the site until 12th August, while the last at Clifton Airfield was observed on 3rd August. A single at Wistow Lordship on 9th August was undoubtedly one of the Riccall birds. Passage in the Lower Derwent was entirely confined to Wheldrake Ings in early August: nine bird/days, probably involving only two individuals. Evidently an early departure, with the last of the year being two at British Sugar Works, York on 13th August (DW).

RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula*

In the Lower Derwent an excellent spring passage culminated in an ultimately unsuccessful breeding attempt. A pair at Aughton performing a distraction display on 8th June obviously had eggs or chicks; unfortunately the field was ploughed the following day. Interestingly, a pair had attempted to breed at this site in 1981. A shame that this sequel to last year's successful breeding at Riccall ended in disaster, but if the trend of good spring passage numbers continues optimism is surely justified.

The only March record involved a single in Lower Derwent on 6th (TED). The April total of four singles, two in the Lower Derwent and one apiece at Riccall and Roscarrs, was very poor and gave no indication of things to come. May saw a great improvement however, with birds continuously present in Lower Derwent from 4th; 255 bird/days here in May, with maxima of 20 on 13th; 27 on 14th and 24 on 18th. The month's only other records comprised two from elsewhere in Lower Derwent on 2nd and 13th, and three on 26th.

Return passage was typically thin. Three were in Lower Derwent on 8th August, with a single there on 11th and 12th. A juvenile at Riccall on 6th September (TB) was almost certainly the same individual as was observed at Wistow Lordship the same day (RS).

KENTISH PLOVER *Charadrius alexandrinus*

A female in Lower Derwent on 6th May was also seen briefly the

following day (TED.TB.PP).

The second record for the area, the first being an individual on nearby North Duffield Carrs in May 1981. Spring Ringed Plover flocks are clearly worth checking carefully!

GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis apricaria*

Generally a poor year; late winter numbers were adversely affected by the cold weather, and both passages were sparse.

The species was present in fairly healthy numbers for the first five weeks of the year: January maxima included 550 in Lower Derwent on 9th, c1000 on 15th, 350 at Poppleton on 16th, and 280 at Bishopthorpe on 28th, while a total of 2500 were in the Lower Derwent on 21st. The onset of the big freeze in early February greatly affected this highly weather-sensitive species. In the first week 300 were at Naburn (on 4th), 370 were counted in Lower Derwent next day, and 12 braved the conditions there until 6th. Thereafter no records at all for the month, save a single 'very approachable' individual discovered 'running around a small building site' at Dringhouses on 11th February.

The coldest February since 1347 had a lasting effect, and March saw only a slight recovery in numbers. The first half of that month yielded only five records, maximum being 12 at Naburn on 10th: indeed, none at all were to be found during the Wildfowl Count in the Lower Derwent on 16th. However, at least 600 had returned to the valley three days later, with further flocks of 300 on 22nd and 30th, and 80 at Bolton Percy on 24th.

With the exception of a good count of c1100 at Wharfe Ings/Cawood on 19th April, spring passage was unspectacular. Flocks in the order of 50 to 200 were recorded at Riccall and Lower Derwent in mid-month. The species is typically very scarce in May, so that month's total of only five bird days came as no surprise; all records came from well-watched Lower Derwent, with the last being two on 24th (PP,DR,RS).

A patchy return movement was evident from 8th July, when two were at Riccall (TB), while the following day 90 were counted in Lower Derwent. Subsequently July records involved 60 in Lower Derwent on 14th, 260 at Wistow Lordship on 24th, and 38 in Lower Derwent on 31st. Wistow Lordship held a flock of 400 on 6th August, but thereafter passage was reduced to a trickle, with no records of double figures until mid-September (when 15 were in Lower Derwent on 14th). However, the final week of that month saw a welcome increase in numbers, with 120 at Roscarrs on 22nd; 850 at Wistow Lordship on 23rd; 100 in Lower Derwent on 25th, and 200 there on 29th.

Once again wintering flocks built up very slowly. Notably October/November records came from just five sites. In October, 163 in Lower Derwent on 8th; 100 at Bishopthorpe from 23rd, and a healthy 2000 at Wistow Lordship from 30th (these last two flocks remaining until the year-end). In November, 400+ were counted at Knapton on 9th and 128 over Woodthorpe on 11th.

December saw the expected increase in numbers and records: c200 were at Butterwick on 8th, and 1000 in Lower Derwent from 9th to 12th, with 1400 on 16th, rising to 3500 the following day. Notable flocks during the remaining fortnight of the year¹ included 600 in Lower Derwent on 24th; 800 there on 25th and 400 on 29th, with 2000 at Kistow Lordship on 30th and 400 at Bishopthorpe on 31st.

GREY PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola*

A remarkable series of January records from the Lower Derwent, involving a minimum of four birds. Two at Bubwith on 11th were followed by two at North Duffield Carrs and a single at Aughton the next day. At North Duffield Carrs there were four on 15th; three on 19th; four again on 20th, and a single on 27th. One was noted at Aughton on 31st.

On 7th March an individual was at North Duffield Carrs, while in the Lower Wharfe singles at Bolton Percy Ings and Wharfe Ings on 20th April were considered by their observer to be different birds.

The species has now appeared annually in these reports for ten years but continues to defy attempts to define its overall status. For example, prior to this year January had yielded only eight bird days, as compared with April's 14, May's 21 and

November's 12; now, out of the blue, January 1986 produces 18 bird days! However, recent trends indicate that birds are most likely to be encountered in the opening half of the year: over the last five years 88% of bird days have been in the period January to May (61 out of 68 bird days).

LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus*

Generally a poor showing, with the few four-figure counts submitted being largely confined to the last two months of the year.

January saw a large number of records of flocks in the order of 100-500 birds, most as usual in the Lower Derwent, but also several in the Ouse basin as far north as Poppleton. Larger aggregations in the Lower Derwent included 1100 on 15th; 1500 on 20th and 1600 on 21st.

In early February 300 were at Middlethorpe Ings on 7th and 100 in Lower Derwent on 9th, these being the last to quit the YOC Area at the onset of the severe weather. Only three birds could be found in the whole Lower Derwent on 2nd March although a flock of 20 returned to Bubwith on 5th and the first brave pairs were back on breeding territories at Grimston on 8th.

Ameliorating weather conditions during the remainder of March led to a gradual, if unspectacular, increase in numbers in Lower Derwent. On 8th flocks of 100 were noted at Aughton and 150 at Wheldrake Ings, while on 14th 300 were at Bubwith. A total of 1380 was present on 16th, most of which were in the Bubwith/Aughton/Ellerton district, where there were 1000 on 19th. Aughton alone yielded a count of 700 on 22nd.

April saw the anticipated diminution of flock sizes as breeding territories were re-occupied, the last notable gathering comprising 150 birds at Bubwith Ings on 6th.

Breeding numbers were apparently normal or near-normal (for example 40 pairs on Aughton Ings); a tribute to this species' ability to escape the earlier arctic weather conditions by migrating far to the south-west.

Post-breeding flocks were rather slow to gather, with the only-June record received being of 94 at Spellar Farm on 22nd. July yielded a number of medium-sized aggregations, for example 180 at Strensall Camp on 2nd; 350 in Lower Derwent on 9th, 500 there on 12th; 400 on 13th and 250 on 14th, with 140 at Fulford Ings on 27th.

As with most recent autumns, the period August to October was characterized by few notable counts. In September c800 were at Fulford on 19th, 400 at Roscarrs on 22nd, 300 at Escrick on 26th and 146 flew west in Lower Derwent on 28th where there were 117 on 8th October and c300 at Bishopthorpe from 23rd onwards.

However, healthier numbers were present from mid-November onwards. On the 14th of that month 478 were present at Roscarrs, while the following day a fine flock of c2100 graced Grimston Bar. In Lower Derwent, c800 on 19th had increased to c1800 by 26th. The Bishopthorpe flock had grown to 500+ by 27th. The Lower Derwent produced some good numbers in December. 1000 were at Bubwith on 9th and 10th, with 1000 at Bank Island on 14th, and c400 at Wheldrake Ings on 15th rising to 1000 on 26th and 1500 on 19th. Totals in the Lower Derwent were 3800 on 16th; 2500 on 17th and 1440 on 25th. Elsewhere, 1000+ were counted at Clifton Ings on 20th and c!200 at Bishopthorpe on 31st.

SANDERLING *Calidris alba*

An excellent series of records from the Lower Derwent in May, providing the first multiple occurrence of the species in the York Recording Area.

A summer-plumaged individual was at Aughton on 11th and 12th May (TB, TED, PP, DR). On 25th, two winter-plumaged birds flew south over Wheldrake Ings (DW) while three summer-plumaged birds were observed at Aughton (TED), one of which remained the next day.

The fifth, sixth and seventh records for the Area and, barring an individual in March 1983, the first since May 1979.

LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta*

Once again only a single record; a juvenile in Lower Derwent on 17th and 18th August (PP,DR,DW). The species has appeared annually in these reports since 1975.

KNOT *Calidris canuta*

Two records in Lower Derwent this year. A single at Wheldrake Ings on 9th February (per TED) and two at Aughton on 7th May (ML,TED) fit the emerging pattern of late-winter and spring occurrences well. The species has now been recorded in eight of the last nine years.

DUNLIN *Calidris alpina*

As is customary all significant flock counts came from the Lower Derwent, where good numbers were present in January: 50 at Bubwith on 2nd; 50 at Wheldrake Ings and 85 at North Duffield Carrs on 12th; 150 at Wheldrake Ings and 140 at North Duffield Carrs on 15th; 250 at North Duffield Carrs/Aughton/Bubwith on 20th, and 300 at Bubwith and 100 at Wheldrake Ings on 21st.

February's severe weather predictably resulted in a mass exodus, with the only double-figure counts submitted being of 15 at North Duffield Carrs on 6th and ten at the same site on 18th. March saw a sizeable and unexpectedly rapid re-occupation of the Lower Derwent by what were presumably wintering birds. By 6th 150 had returned to North Duffield Carrs with 120 there next day; 255 in the valley on 16th and 30 at Wheldrake Ings, with 120 at Aughton on 30th. 70 were counted at this last site on 1st April, with 200 there and 20 at North Duffield Carrs on 12th.

Spring passage was relatively sparse in the latter half of April and in May. Maxima were 18 at Wheldrake Ings on 17th April; 19 at N. Duffield Carrs on 19th; 18 at Aughton on 7th May and 25 there on 8th. Smaller numbers trickled through Aughton almost, daily during the remainder of the month, with the last of spring coming on 31st when three were present at Wheldrake Ings.

Incredibly, the Lower Derwent could muster a mere three bird days in the five and a half month period from July to mid-December! On 16th December the valley held 91 birds, and the rest of the month yielded no three-figure counts. Maxima were 40 at Ellerton on 17th and 25th, and 22 at Wheldrake Ings on 28th. Altogether an abysmal autumn passage, with wintering birds arriving late and in poor numbers.

Away from the Lower Derwent, one to four were recorded from Middlethorpe Ings (February); Naburn (March); Roscarrs and Wharfe Ings (April); Riccall (July/August) and Wistow Lordship (December).

RUFF *Philomachus pugnax*

Once again possibly bred in the Lower Derwent, where numbers were however well down on those of last spring. In May, lekking was observed at one site where up to eight males were involved; a single female was noted there on 18th. A second site held up to ten males during the first week of the month.

Good numbers were present in the Lower Derwent in January, with maxima of 12 at Bubwith (on 10th), ten at Wheldrake Ings (on 20th) and six at North Duffield Carrs (also on 20th) (73 bird days). Five lingered at Wheldrake Ings until 5th February (14 bird days), after which the severe weather ensured a four-week absence.

Six returned on 6th March, with single figures until the month end (50 bird days). A total of 100 April bird days in the Lower Derwent with 40 on 28th indicated an unexceptional spring passage.

Return movement commenced on 11th August when seven were at Wheldrake Ings; two were at this site on 30th, with one there from 31st to 29th September being joined by two others on 2nd. Thirteen were found along the Pocklington Canal on 1st September with 12 on 4th, while two were present at Ellerton on 29th.

Thereafter no records until 29th November when two were noted at Wheldrake Ings. A count of 12 at North Duffield Carrs on 11th December proved to be the month's maximum; in the last fortnight of the year up to six were regularly present at Wheldrake Ings. Ellerton held three on 30th. 58 bird days in December.

Away from the Lower Derwent all records came in August: three at Riccall on 7th with two there the next day, a single at Clifton Airfield on 10th, and a flock of seven at Ryther on 30th.

JACK SNIPE *Lymnocyptes minima*

Not for the first time a dearth of records of this secretive little wader.

Singles were recorded at Pocklington Canal on 12th January; Fulford Ings on 30th and York Waterworks on 6th February, while two were noted at Strensall Common on 30th March. One was at Fulford Ings on 9th April: this locality also played host to the first of autumn, on 30th November. A single was observed at Strensall Common on 26th December. Additionally, the species was recorded by shooters on two Malton estates, with "a few being bagged on most early shoots".

SNIPE *Gallinago gallinago*

Bred in good numbers, at least in the southern half of the recording area, where the Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal is of course of great importance for the species. Sample counts of drumming birds revealed c25 pairs in each of Aughton Ings and North Duffield Carrs, with other healthy populations at Wheldrake Ings, East Cottingwith, Ellerton, Bubwith and the Pocklington Canal. Elsewhere, confirmed or probable breeding occurred at Howden Common, the Lower Wharfe (nine pairs), Skipwith Common, Kexby, Newton-on-Derwent, Fulford/Middlethorpe Ings (eight pairs) and Strensall Common (seven pairs). A pair possibly bred on the A64 intersection at Dringhouses - a noisy if otherwise relatively undisturbed location! However, one observer commented that the species is now rarely recorded in the northernmost 10km squares, an assertion underlined by a total lack of reports of drumming birds in these areas, barring two individuals in March on the Castle Howard Estate,

The first few months of the year produced a large number of records from many sites. No counts of three figures were submitted, with birds being generally well-distributed. January maxima included 36 at North Duffield Carrs on 9th; 16 at Fulford Ings on 30th, and ten at Bishopthorpe on 31st.

Perhaps surprisingly February's arctic conditions produced some of the highest counts of the year. A proportion of the wintering population obviously elects to stay put and endure such severe weather, and in these circumstances is often fairly visible as birds take to feeding in exposed ice-free locations. Hence 80+ were at Bubwith Bridge on 7th; 64 at Wheldrake Ings on 9th; 25 at North Duffield Carrs on 18th; 86 at Wheldrake Ings on 20th, and 11 at Bishopthorpe on 26th. One observer witnessed what was possibly a cold-weather movement at Strensall Common on 5th, when 21 birds left an undisturbed marsh in blizzard conditions, departing high to the west and south-west (DW). Numbers were generally low in March, with maxima of 15 at Aughton on 2nd and 25 at Bubwith on 7th. However, by the month-end larger flocks were recorded, presumably indicating spring passage: on 30th, 26 at Middlethorpe and Fulford Ings, and 58 at Strensall Common, with 63 at Wheldrake Ings the following day. April gatherings included 25 at Aughton and 33 at Fulford Ings on 9th; 40+ at Bubwith/Aughton on 17th and 22 at Thorganby on 22nd.

Return passage was apparently unrecorded, and the main wintering population still had not arrived by the year-end. The only notable counts for the later months came from Fulford Ings, where 24 on 30th November had increased to 61 on 9th December.

WOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola*

Roding birds were observed at only three localities this year (Skipwith Common, Askham Bog and Strensall Common), but April reports from Allerthorpe Common, Low Catton and Castle Howard doubtless refer to breeding individuals. More records please!

In the early months one or two were noted at Grimston, Brandsby, Strensall Common, Askham Bog and Allerthorpe Common, while the Lower Derwent produced four singles. Mortality must have been high during this period, as evidenced by the discovery of a corpse alongside the Derwent at Aughton on 8th March.

The last five months of the year yielded but one record - a single at Castle Howard on 28th November.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa*

Birds were present in the Lower Derwent from early April to mid-May, but breeding was deterred by floods in late April. Following the arrival of the first - a pair on 6th April - three sites held single displaying pairs on 16th to 18th. Thereafter, a single bird displayed at a site on 15th May.

Increased numbers during the last week of April (29 bird days) and the first eight days of May (44 bird days) undoubtedly denoted passage of northbound birds. Daily maxima were seven on 29th and 30th April; ten on 5th May and 17 on 7th May.

An adult at Wheldrake Ings on 18th July was, curiously enough, the first autumn record in the present decade.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa lapponica*

Four records (involving at least three birds) of a species which has become an annual visitor to the Lower Derwent in recent years. One at Wheldrake Ings on 21st January (TED) and a single there on 1st April (TB,TED,DR) were followed by another at the same site on 3rd May (TB,TED,GO), and one at Aughton two days later (TED). These birds fit in well with the established pattern of spring occurrences, although January birds are rare.

WHIMBREL

An appalling April showing and an undistinguished autumn passage no doubt moved one observer to comment that 1986 was "poor in contrast to recent years" as regards this species. However, the May total of 49 bird days in the Lower Derwent surpasses the corresponding figure for 1985, making it the best May passage ever!

The first two birds of the year were noted at Wheldrake Ings on the early date of 4th April (DW): two (possibly the same individuals) were observed there on 6th. A single at the same site on 13th was followed by two on 19th. Thus a mere seven bird days in the Lower Derwent in April. Elsewhere, a single at Riccall on 18th, with one spending 23rd and 24th at Roscarrs. May saw a concentrated passage of 57 bird days through the Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal, maxima being 12 on 1st; 13 on 2nd; ten on 3rd; eight on 5th, and six on 9th. Two were present, at Wheldrake Ings on 10th, while on the Ouse, Riccall produced two on 2nd. A single at Wheldrake Ings on 4th and 5th June was a very late northbound bird.

The Lower Derwent could amass only 11 bird days in July (maximum seven at Bubwith on 31st), with a single at Wheldrake Ings the next day being the last of the year in the valley.

Elsewhere, single individuals were noted at Riccall on 7th August and at Castle Howard on 19th August. A bird at Riccall on 24th September was one of the latest ever recorded in the York Recording Area (TB).

CURLEW *Numenius arquata*

A good year for the species, with healthy wintering populations at both ends of the year, fair-sized spring and autumn passages, and apparently sound breeding numbers.

Some forty pairs bred in the Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal. Other confirmed breeding records came from Strensall Common (five pairs); Skipwith Common, and 10km square SE57 in the far north-west (six pairs). Probable or possible breeding took place at Kexby, Tilmire, Hopgrove and Castle Howard.

Most records for the first two months of the year came, as usual, from the Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal. January yielded a total of 75 bird days: an excellent flock of 36 was at Aughton on 21st, while 13 were on North Duffield Carrs on 27th. In view of the harsh weather February's total of 59 bird days was a good figure, even though it was largely due to two flocks on North Duffield Carrs (35 on 6th and 20 on 15th).

The species' resilience is graphically illustrated by a record of 22 birds "foraging through deep frost" at Wigginton on 9th.

Early March saw the first influx of birds moving back towards breeding territories, bang on schedule. Thus, on 8th, 52 were at Aughton, and seven on the Lower Wharfe. Poppleton's first of the year appeared two days later, on 10th, while an individual had penetrated as far north as Stearsby by 16th. That day only one could be found in the Lower Derwent, but the 17th saw a further influx there, with 104 at North Duffield Carrs; 64 at Wheldrake Ings and 11 at Aughton. The remainder of the month was notable for other large passage flocks there, with 92 on 19th at Wheldrake Ings and 72 at Bubwith/Ellerton, and 70 at Wheldrake Ings on 21st.

Good numbers continued to pass through the valley well into April, indicating a protracted northbound movement: 60 at Aughton on 1st, followed by 30 on 3rd and 25 on 9th; 30+ at Bubwith on 6th; 47 at Wheldrake Ings on 11th and 41 at North Duffield Carrs on 23rd.

Post-breeding gatherings in July were few and far between: maxima were 12 at Bubwith on 22nd; six at Riccall on 18th, and four at Fulford Ings on 14th.

August saw a steady trickle of birds through Wheldrake Ings, amounting to some 34 bird days, with a maximum of nine on 14th.

Some excellent counts were made at Wheldrake in the remaining four months of the year, but numbers fluctuated markedly until December, when the wintering population settled in. September produced the fine total of 281 bird days, with maxima of 37 on 10th; 69 on 23rd, and 39 on 30th. Altogether 175 bird days in October: maxima 48 on 3rd; 46 on 7th, and 50 on 12th. November mustered 192 bird days, largest counts being 71 on 8th and 63 on 11th. At least 30 birds were noted regularly in December, totalling 519 bird days; higher numbers included 44 on 4th; 68 on 20th and 24th; 70 on 26th, and 120+ on 29th. It appears that the species is now wintering in larger numbers than ever.

SPOTTED REDSHANK *Tringa erythropus*

Another below-average showing, with all records coming from the Lower Derwent apart from a single in breeding plumage at Ozendyke Ings on the Lower Wharfe on 24th April.

Two at Aughton on 6th and 7th May had declined to one on 8th and 9th. Also 9th, a single called overhead at Wheldrake Ings.

One remaining at Wheldrake Ings from 14th to 22nd August was the sole autumn record.

REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*

Bred in apparently normal numbers in the Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal, where sample counts revealed 15 pairs on North Duffield Carrs and 15 pairs on Aughton Ings. Also bred at Fulford/Middlethorpe Ings (5 pairs), while probable breeding took place at Kexby (two pairs); Bolton Percy Ings (two pairs); South Ings (Acaster Malbis), and Wharfe Ings.

A total of 331 bird days in the Lower Derwent was an exceptional figure for January. Maxima were 45 at North Duffield Carrs and 20 at Aughton on 12th; 35 at Aughton on 19th; 70 at North Duffield Carrs/Bubwith/Aughton on 20th; 60 at Aughton the next day, and 36 there on 31st. Despite severe weather there were 51 February bird days in the valley: maximum 20 at North Duffield Carrs on 6th. The first half of March yielded only one significant count, of 17 at North Duffield Carrs on 7th. By 16th there were 96 in the whole valley, and subsequent flocks increased the month's bird day total to 429: these included 40 at Aughton/Ellerton on 17th, 24 at Wheldrake Ings and 80+ at Bubwith/Ellerton on 19th, and 60 at Aughton on 30th. Elsewhere, Ryther held two on 13th January; Middlethorpe Ings a single on 4th February and Wharfe Ings two on 8th March.

The return to breeding territories began in earnest in the last week of March, with six at Fulford Ings on 27th increasing to 12 on 30th, and five at Newton-on-Derwent on 28th.

Passage of northbound birds continued through much of April, with 30-45 regularly present in the Aughton/Ellerton/Bubwith district up until 17th; a flock of 20 at East Cottingwith on 18th, and 16 by the Lower Wharfe on 19th.

Post-breeding aggregations were generally small; groups of up to four birds were noted at Wheldrake Ings and Riccall throughout July. All August's records came from Wheldrake Ings, and all single figures: maximum seven on 11th, with the

last four juveniles departing on 17th.

Apart from a single at Castle Howard on 14th September, no records at all were submitted for the subsequent three-month period up until late November when birds returned to the Lower Derwent. At Wheldrake Ings, two on 21st of that month were followed by four on 26th and three on 29th. In December a total of 109 bird days comprising single figures until 17th, when ten were present, increasing to 24 on 25th and 27 on 30th. Maxima were 14 at Wheldrake Ings on 20th; 15 at Bubwith on 24th and 27 at Ellerton on 30th. Elsewhere, singles were reported from Barlow Grange on 20th, and Clifton Airfield on 20th and 22nd.

From where does this regular and apparently discrete wintering population originate?

GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia*

Unusually, winter birds were observed in Lower Derwent at both ends of the year. On 11th January two were at Bubwith (TED). Wheldrake Ings held a couple on 8th December and a single on 26th, while what was probably the same individual was noted at East Cottingham on 27th (TED).

Spring numbers in the Lower Derwent no doubt suffered from comparison with the extraordinary influx of 1985, but still amounted to 39 bird days, two-thirds of them in May, an above-average showing. Singles at Aughton on 18th and North Duffield Carrs on 25th preceded four at Wheldrake Ings on 28th; five were present at this last site from May 2nd to 5th. Thereafter singles at Aughton on seven dates, the last being on 24th. Elsewhere, a single at Riccall on 18th.

Return passage in the Lower Derwent was rather below average: 30 bird days in August and a mere four in September. Maxima (all at Wheldrake Ings) were five on 11th August; three on 17th, and two on five other dates. At least three birds were noted at Riccall; from 13th to 19th July, on 12th August, and from 14th to 22nd September. Castle Howard achieved a healthy 14 bird days in August: maxima five on 16th and four on 18th. Singles were observed in August at Cliffe Bend (on 9th); Strensall Common (12th) and Poppleton (21st), and in September at Wistow Lordship (on 20th).

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus*

Scarce during both winter periods and a dismal spring showing. Autumn passage spanned a typically protracted five month period; numbers were well down on those of last year, being only average. Interestingly, birds were reported from many localities, of which few were in the Lower Derwent (where there were only 18 bird days in the entire autumn).

An individual at Strensall Common on 4th January was the only wintering bird reported in the early months. Spring passage was almost non-existent, with singles at Melbourne on 23rd March and 6th April constituting the only records.

Autumn passage began early with a single at Wheldrake Ings on 13th June followed by two there on 15th, one on 23rd and two again on 25th. Thereafter, the Lower Derwent (excluding Melbourne) could only muster five bird days in July (maximum two at Wheldrake Ings on 14th); five in August (all singles), none at all in September and two in October. However, Melbourne managed 102 bird days in July (maximum nine on 9th to 12th); 46 in August (maximum six on 17th) and four in September (maximum three on 6th). Riccall yielded 21 August bird days (maximum two on two dates) and 50 in September (maximum three on 8th and 9th). Elsewhere, one to two birds were reported from Castle Howard; Strensall Common; Poppleton; British Sugar Works (York); Naburn Sewage Works; Wistow Lordship and Sturge's Ponds. The last of autumn were four at Melbourne on 10th November.

December saw the return of an old friend; a bird near Stockton-on-the-Forest on 18th and again on 26th was apparently spending its sixth consecutive winter at the site! (RS,DR).

WOOD SANDPIPER *Tringa glareola*

Another undistinguished showing. Two were at Aughton on 6th May, with one remaining on 7th and 8th. An individual at North Duffield Carrs on 10th June was a late migrant. Wheldrake Ings held a single on the more typical date of 11th August, while

away from the Lower Derwent one passed south over Strensall Common on the 20th of that month.

COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleucos*

Possibly bred at Castle Howard where a pair was present from 19th May to 12th July. A single at Riccall from 10th May to 2nd June failed to attract a mate.

Spring passage was poor: the return movement was rather better, although again there were very few birds in the Lower Derwent, and a single site (Riccall) was responsible for the vast majority of autumn bird days.

The wintering bird noted in last year's report was present at Riccall up until 9th February (PP). What may well have been a different unseasonal individual was observed further down the Ouse at Roscarrs on 6th January (TB).

The first of spring arrived at Riccall on 18th April (TB). On 22nd Roscarrs and Aughton held singles, while on 26th two were at Cliffe and one at Buttons Ambo. In May one or two birds were noted at a number of sites: Roscarrs; Sturge's Ponds; Riccall; Poppleton; Clifton Airfield; North Duffield Carrs; Aughton; Wheldrake Ings; Hagg Bridge; Stamford Bridge and Castle Howard. Barring the Castle Howard and Riccall long-stayers mentioned above, however, May yielded a total of only 14 bird days (six in the Lower Derwent).

Autumn passage was heralded by a single at Poppleton on 7th July, with two arriving at Riccall the next day, and one by the Ouse at Acaster Malbis also on 8th. A total of 86 July bird days was recorded, 75 of them from Riccall and only one from the Lower Derwent. Maxima were six at Riccall on 26th to 28th, and five at Roscarrs on 23rd.

Altogether 264 bird days were tallied for August; a fine figure, surpassing the corresponding 1985 statistic. Riccall was responsible for 204 of these. Maxima there were 12 on 8th and 9th, and elsewhere, four at Fulford Ings on 28th and 29th and three at Wheldrake Ings on four dates. There were 32 bird days in the Lower Derwent during the month.

None at all in the Lower Derwent in September, and a similarly disappointing month elsewhere with only 47 bird days logged: 42 of these came from Riccall, which held four from 2nd to 11th. Singles on three dates at Fulford Ings and on 6th at Poppleton preceded the last of the autumn - two at Riccall on 14th (TB). A very early departure. However, December produced another winter record, this time from the Lower Derwent with a single at Bank Island on 14th December (TED, EBB).

TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres*

A single was observed at Ryther on 24th April (DW). In Lower Derwent, one was present in the famous flooded field at Aughton from 5th to 8th May, being joined by a second individual on 7th (TB, TED, ML, PP). The species has now appeared in every May of the present decade.

MEDITERRANEAN GULL *Larus melanocephalus*

A first-summer individual in Lower Derwent at North Duffield Carrs on 1st and 2nd May was also observed at Bubwith on 6th (TED). A bird moulting from 2nd summer to adult winter was seen on the Ouse between Riccall and Barlby on 8th August (TB).

Twelfth and thirteenth records for the area of a species which is now of virtually annual occurrence.

LITTLE GULL *Larus minutus*

An excellent spring showing, the best ever, with birds more or less continuously present in the Lower Derwent from 26th April to 3rd June. Altogether 24 bird days in this period: maximum four on 2nd May and three on 26th. Too many records to list individually, but it would appear that at least four adults and two first-year birds were involved.

At a Lower Derwent gullery on the evening of 10th May, an adult with striking pinkish underparts persistently attempted to settle in low vegetation between incubating Black-headed Gulls. Such observations must inevitably raise the possibility of breeding; surely it is only a matter of time?

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Larus ridibundus*

Breeding populations rose to new levels, thanks largely to the burgeoning Lower Derwent colonies: 500 pairs at Wheldrake Ings; 350 at Aughton; 60 at North Duffield Carrs and 50 at Ellerton. Elsewhere, Skipwith Common held 500 pairs and Strensall Common at least 47 pairs. Breeding was attempted on flooded arable land to the North of Wheldrake Ings, where three adults were sitting on 24th May: all subsequently failed as the field dried out.

Some good roost counts were submitted for the early months of the year. These included 2000 at Elvington on 3rd January; c!200 at Wharfe Ings on 12th January, and a spectacular 15,000 at Wheldrake Ings on 21st March with 6000 there on 23rd.

Few records of post-breeding flocks came to hand, though 133 were on the Knavesmire on 11th July; 84 at Castle Howard on 1st August increasing to 140 on 21st, and 400 at Bank Island on 28th August.

As usual, it was November before the big roosts built up. At Castle Howard 1800 on 15th November had increased to 9 - 10,000 by 27th; a pre-roost flight of c1000 circled British Sugar Works (York) on 15th; c550 were at Middlethorpe Ings on 21st, while 150 were at Clifton Airfield on 15th. December yielded only a single significant record of 2500 at Wheldrake Ings on 25th.

Two reports of colour-marked first-year birds were received; individuals at the Wheldrake Ings roost on 22nd and 23rd March, and at Newburgh Priory on 12th December, both had bright orange-yellow dyed under-tail coverts. Such features had also been noted on first-year birds at Bishopthorpe in January 1985, and at several roosts elsewhere in Yorkshire during 1986. So far investigations into the origins of the birds so marked have proved fruitless.

COMMON GULL *Larus canus*

The only three-figure count received for the early months of the year referred to 100 at Wharfe Ings on 12th January. February's severe weather obviously prompted an exodus, as birds were unable to forage for earthworms in frosty conditions.

Numbers increased through March as the weather improved; moreover, flocks were no doubt swollen by northbound birds. Hence 2200 roosted at Wheldrake Ings on 23rd March, and the highest counts of the year were obtained at Clifton Airfield (78 on 16th) and Knavesmire (260 on 19th and 325 on 28th). In April numbers declined: at Knavesmire 220 on 9th had decreased to 55 on 26th. There were 131 near Old Byland on 23rd. As usual, most of May's handful of records involved first-summer birds: maxima seven at Anchor Plain on 26th, and ten at Wheldrake Ings on 2nd. One flew north at the latter site on 5th June.

July saw the first signs of southbound passage, with single figures being noted at Low Catton, Wheldrake Ings and Knavesmire from mid-month; two at Hobmoor on 21st had increased to 62 by 28th.

Thereafter no significant records until 12th November, when 113 fed on Knavesmire, while c350 roosted at Castle Howard, numbers at this latter site had risen to 1000 by 15th. By December the main wintering population had arrived, with the Wheldrake Ings roost holding 1200 on 20th and 1500 on 25th.

Three aberrant 2nd winter birds were recorded: two at Wheldrake Ings on 22nd March and one at Roscarrs on 7th February showed prominent subterminal tail-bands, with one of the Wheldrake Ings individuals also exhibiting a lack of primary mirrors (RS). A cautionary tale, in view of the obvious risk of confusion with Ring-billed Gull!

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus*

Probably the best year since 1983, but still a relatively poor showing, especially as regards wintering numbers and spring passage.

None was recorded in January. Wheldrake Ings held one or two in February, while single adults were reported from Bolton Percy-Ings on 16th and Riccall from 9th (this last individual was considered to be of the North European race '*fuscus*'). March records came mainly from Wheldrake Ings, where adults were present throughout: maxima were 15 on 9th and six on 23rd. A single spent a week at Welburn from 4th, while on 28th three adults flew west over Strensall Common. In April the Wheldrake

roost held eight adults on 6th, and 15 adults and a second-year on 11th.

On 6th May, 49 second-summer types flew into Bubwith Ings at 20.00 hrs. Sub-adult non-breeders are regular in May, occasionally in numbers, but so large a flock early in the month is unprecedented. Seven at Middlethorpe Ings on 22nd May included an adult of one of the races '*intermedius/fuscus*' .

In June a first-summer was at Wheldrake Ings on 3rd, with four adults present there on 5th. July produced six at Aughton on 3rd and two at Wheldrake Ings on 12th, while singles were noted at Poppleton and Stamford Bridge.

Early autumn saw a welcome increase in numbers. In August a single at Clifton Lake on 16th was followed by a flock of 19 on Strensall Common on 20th. Then came three interesting records of birds flying south-east, involving seven over Stamford Bridge on 20th; ten above Castle Howard on 26th, and 50 over Wheldrake Ings on 31st. September was notable for the build-up of good numbers at Brighton Tip, where 130 on 6th rose to 200 on 20th and 300 on 27th. Elsewhere, 42 at Westow on 10th included ten sub-adults; three were at Castle Howard on 12th, and Wheldrake Ings held six on 28th.

The Brighton Tip flock peaked at 400 on 11th October. Two were observed at Bishopthorpe on 20th of that month, while three at Wheldrake Ings on 25th had decreased to one by December. The only other December record involved an adult at Ryther on 18th.

HERRING GULL *Larus argentatus*

As always, the limited number of records received makes assessment of this species' status difficult. However, it is clear that significant numbers are generally confined to the mid-winter period.

In January, the Wheldrake Ings roost held 120 on 15th; 100 on 16th and 140 on 21st. Elsewhere, 30 were counted at East Cottingwith on 5th and 34 scavenged at Askham Bog Tip on 16th. Two regularly roosted at Castle Howard. The only February report was of 25 attending Strensall Tip on 5th.

Then no records until late March, when 15 at the Wheldrake Ings roost on 23rd increased to 21 on 31st and 40 on 11th April. Is there a suggestion of spring passage here?

Following three over Bishopthorpe on 29th June, the autumn yielded only two records: five at Westow on 10th September, and a single at Wheldrake Ings on 28th of the same month.

Twelve sub-adults flying south over Castle Howard on 5th December heralded the arrival of wintering birds: by 20th the Wheldrake Ings roost contained 25 birds, rising to 60 on 25th, 90 on 27th and an excellent 265 on 30th. Also on 30th, 90 were at Brighton Tip, and at least six individuals at Ellerton Tip showed characteristics of the northern race '*argentatus*' (RS): it is quite likely that many of our wintering birds are of this subspecies.

GLAUCOUS GULL *Larus hyperboreus*

The early months of the year produced a complex series of records involving at least two, probably three or four and possibly five individuals. A second-winter regularly roosted at Wheldrake Ings from 11th January to 7th February (TED,DR,DW.TED). A first-year bird at the Wharfe Ings roost on 12th January (DW) may well have been that which visited Brighton Tip on 2nd February (TB). The pale second-spring individual at Wheldrake Ings on 6th April (PP,DW) and 13th (TED) and at North Duffield Carrs on 25th (TED) could possibly have been the Wheldrake bird of January, but was perhaps as likely to have been a different one; however, it was certainly not the 'long-dead first or second year' found at Barlby Sewage Works on 15th April (TB).

At the other end of the year a third-winter visited Wheldrake Ings on 25th, 26th and 27th December (DR,TBDI).

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus*

Present in fair numbers in the Lower Derwent in January, with the Wheldrake Ings roost holding 160 on 4th; 190 on 16th and 198 on 20th. Forty were counted at East Cottingwith on 5th. Elsewhere, single figures were noted at Wharfe Ings and Bishopthorpe.

Twenty-five foraged at Strensall Tip on 5th February. Thereafter no significant records until 11th April, when 60 went to roost at Wheldrake Ings.

Following five at Roscarrs on 2nd August, the autumn produced only a single at Wheldrake Ings in October. However, following flooding at this latter site, the roost built up satisfactorily during December: ten on 15th increased to 60 on 20th; 122 on 22nd and 25th; c!60 on 27th and 28th; 200 on 29th, and 400 on 30th. Many of these birds may well have been scavenging on Brighton Tip, which held 300 ON 30th.

KITTIWAKE *Rissa tridactyla*

The only record received involved an adult at Wheldrake Ings on 18th January. So a return to normality after two good years.

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*

A terribly poor spring for the species, the only records being of singles at Riccall on 15th April (TB), Bubwith on 5th May and Wheldrake Ings on 26th May.

Autumn was rather better, with 15 out of a total of 19 bird days coming in July. Two spent three days at Castle Howard from 12th of that month, an adult at Riccall on 16th was followed by four there on 26th, and four were present at North Duffield Carrs on 31st. In August a single at Riccall on 3rd preceded three at the same site on 5th (PP).

ARCTIC TERN *Sterna paradisea*

A substantially better spring showing than the previous species, but the total of only 16 bird days nonetheless indicates only a barely-average passage. All records in Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal. Two flying north at Wheldrake Ings on 20th April was the only record for that month (DW.TED). Three were noted at this site on 3rd and 4th May, while two headed north there on 7th. On 12th four individuals were observed in the Lower Derwent. Aughton held singles on 17th and 26th, with the latter bird also being seen at Wheldrake Ings. There were no autumn records.

BLACK TERN *Chlidonias niger*

A vigorous and concentrated passage through the Lower Derwent during the first week of May yielded 41 bird days; a good figure, just eclipsing the total for the entire Spring of 1983 (hitherto considered to be the best passage of the present decade). A total of 14 flying SE at Wheldrake Ings on 1st (RS) preceded 15 (presumed different) birds there the next day; then six on 3rd, two on 4th and three on 5th. A single was at Aughton on 6th.

Wheldrake Ings produced two autumn records, both in August: a juvenile on 13th and an un-aged individual on 30th (TED).

STOCK DOVE *Columba oenas*

Once again a paucity of records makes assessment of this species' relative status difficult, though it is clear that numbers are higher in the southern half of the recording area.

Significant numbers were as follows: ten at Wressle on 12th January; 24 at Copmanthorpe on 1st March; ten at Strensall Common and ten at Bolton Percy Ings on 8th March; 30 at Aughton on 15th July; 60 at Bolton Percy on 17th December and 53 at Roscarrs on 23rd December.

Breeding records came from Colton, Archbishop's Palace, Knavesmire Wood, Naburn, Fulford, Stearsby Hagg, Stillington, Brandsby, Castle Howard, Lower Derwent and Pocklington Canal.

On 6th December a bird repeatedly tried to land amongst a flock of Black-headed Gulls on Newburgh Priory Lake, each time only abandoning the attempt as its feet touched the water. "Clearly not very bright as Stock Doves go" comments the observer!

WOODPIGEON *Columba palumbus*

Maxima during the early months were 4200 roosting at Sutton Wood, Elvington on 3rd January (easily the largest count of the year); 1100 at North Duffield Carrs on 20th February; 2500 at

Poppleton on 23rd February; 250 at Hagg Bridge on 22nd March and c!80 at Coxwold on 30th March. One observer commented on the species' virtual absence from the north of the recording area during February's severe weather.

Counts during the later months of the year included 300 at Poppleton on 31st October increasing to 500 the next day. In December 500+ went to roost in 15 minutes at Ray Wood, Castle Howard on 3rd, 600 were at Cawood on 13th; 500 roosting at Newburgh Priory on 14th increased to 800+ on 17th, and 800 fed at Willitoft on 28th.

COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto*

A mere four flocks were reported this year: 40+ at BOCM Mills, Selby on 19th March; 146 at Poppleton on 9th October, and 23 going to roost on 9th December at Fulford Ings, with 25 there on 24th December.

Bred at Fulford, Naburn, Nunnington, East Ness, West Ness, Oswaldkirk, Ampleforth, Gilling, Stonegrave, Hovingham, Brandsby, Welburn, Bulmer and Coneysthorpe and presumably many other sites. As can be seen, most of these reports came from our northernmost 10km squares; the species is a relatively recent colonist in many of these villages. Certainly, it is still said to be 'increasing' in the Castle Howard district (GAC).

TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia turtur*

Another late arrival, with a bird in Lower Derwent at Ellerton on 30th April (TED) being followed in May by a single near Bishop Wilton on 2nd; two at Wheldrake Ings on 3rd and one at East Cottingwith on 4th. Further May records came from Archbishop's Palace, Strensall, and Allerthorpe Common.

Widely-distributed in the southern half of the recording area during the breeding season, but very few records from districts to the north of York. Birds were present during June and July in the Poppleton and Strensall areas and at Brandsby, while six-pairs bred on the Newburgh estate.

Most birds had left by the end of August, with September yielding only five records: singles at Brighton on 6th, North Duffield Carrs on 11th, Riccall on 16th, Wheldrake Ings on 17th and Roscarrs on 19th (DC).

CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*

Rather late in arriving, with only two April records coming to hand: singles on 26th at Appleton-le-Street (TED) (in the far north-east of the recording area) and Barlow Grange (TB). However, the opening five days of May saw a concerted influx, with singing males at Wheldrake Ings and Hopgrove on 1st, Welburn and Melbourne on 2nd, Appleton Roebuck and Strensall Common on 3rd, Skipwith Common and Copmanthorpe on 4th, and Auguston on 5th. Strensall Common held three males as early as 4th, and Copmanthorpe three on 8th.

As usual, most adults left during July. August produced rather more records than usual; all birds aged were, not surprisingly, juveniles. They comprised singles at Strensall Common on 2nd and 17th, at Poppleton on 9th, 10th and 14th (at least two individuals involved here), Wheldrake Ings on 24th, Osbaldwick on 18th, Escrick on 20th, Stamford Bridge on 27th, and the last at North Duffield Carrs on 29th (TED).

BARN OWL *Tyto alba*

Bred at Barlow Grange, Foggathorpe, Menthorpe, Bubwith, Aughton, Thorganby, Wheldrake and at Bugthorpe Present during the breeding season and possibly bred at Cliffe Common, Bank Island, Dunnington Common, Hopgrove, Farlington, Melbourne and Welburn. Outside the breeding season recorded at a further eleven sites.

The picture that emerges from these records is still undoubtedly incomplete (note the scarcity of reports from the west and north of the recording area) but does underline the continued significance of the Lower Derwent population.

One road casualty reported this year: a bird found by the A1079 at Wilberfoss on 31st August. Additionally, details of an appalling incident came from Bubwith, where one was found shot

on 15th January; the bird was subsequently taken into captivity and survived.

LITTLE OWL *Athene noctua*

Breeding records came from Aughton, Tilmire (1 young), Dunnington Common, Murton (1 young), Poppleton (1+ young) and Oswaldkirk. Possible/probable breeding took place at Gate Helmsley, Stamford Bridge, Laytham, Ellerton, Wheldrake, Crockey Hill, Bulmer and Castle Howard. Outside the breeding season birds were recorded at North Duffield, East Cottingwith, Clifton Airfield, Old Earswick, Strensall, Kirkham Abbey and Coneysthorpe. As the species is so highly sedentary, it is likely that breeding occurred at many if not most of these sites. Road casualties were reported from Sutton-on-Derwent and Clifton bypass in June and Leppington in September.

One observer noted the absence of three long-established breeding pairs in the far north of the recording area, possibly victims of February's severe weather.

TAWNY OWL *Strix aluco*

Reports of confirmed breeding came from Wheldrake Ings (unsuccessful), Fulford, Naburn Sewage Works, Dunnington Common, Strensall Common (probably 2 + pairs) and Coneysthorpe. Also probably or possibly bred at Skipwith Common, Crockey Hill (where a bird was found dead on a road in May), Woodthorpe/Dringhouses, Heslington Lane, York, Moorlands, Hopgrove, Welburn and Wass. Relatively few records were received this year.

LONG-EARED OWL *Asio otus*

A single pair bred successfully again at Strensall Common, rearing one young. An old-established pair bred at Friargate, while birds were present in the breeding season at Skipwith Common.

A single roosted at Wheldrake Ings on many dates from early January until 31st March, and another was discovered roosting at Hopgrove on 7th March. Two road-casualties were reported: one at Bishopthorpe on 19th February and one at Aughton on 7th May.

The only record for the later months involved two at Clifton Airfield on 29th December.

SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus*

Following the substantial influx of late 1985, a good showing in the early months, with an absolute minimum of six wintering individuals in the Lower Derwent alone, and birds reported from many other sites.

At Wheldrake Ings one was present regularly from January to 14th April, with two there on four dates and three on 15th and 16th January; one was at Hagg Bridge on 19th January. The North Duffield Carrs/Bubwith/Aughton/Ellerton area held three regularly up until 7th March, two until 9th March, and one until 6th April¹ one was found dead at North Duffield Carrs on 18th April. One at Brighton on 4th February may well have been one of the above birds, while three at East Cottingwith could have wandered from Wheldrake Ings or Aughton. Bird days in Lower Derwent in first four months were 35, 37, 51 and 21 respectively.

Away from the Lower Derwent, a single at Riccall on 29th March was possibly that which displayed at the same site on 22nd April, and was present on the late date of 13th May. Up to two were regular at Clifton Airfield up until 20th April; display was noted here from 20th February onwards. Up to two were also recorded at Poppleton during January.

Other reports involved singles at Ganthorpe on 3rd January, Bolton Percy Ings on 26th January, and Coneysthorpe on 15th March. By contrast, the autumn showing was atrocious, probably the worst ever. Only four records were received: singles at Wheldrake Ings on 20th November, and in December at Bubwith on 6th, Terrington on 17th and Brighton on 20th. Moreover, it seems that the species' scarcity was general throughout much of the country in late 1986.

NIGHTJAR *Caprimulgus europaeus*

The first churring male arrived on Skipwith Common on 15th May (TED); about on time. Subsequently four males held territory at this site, while two pairs possibly bred on Strensall Common. Though numbers remain low and breeding success is unknown, the species appears to be maintaining its population in the York recording area.

SWIFT *Apus apus*

Despite an absence of April records birds arrived in good numbers in the first few days of May. Following one at Wheldrake Ings on 2nd May (RS), and a single there the next day, the 4th saw individuals over Heworth, North Duffield Carrs and Welburn, with two at Strensall Common and six at Wheldrake Ings. By 7th birds had reached Poppleton and Green Hammerton. Ten at Wheldrake Ings on 8th had increased to 35 by 9th.

Large May flocks included 500 at Aughton on 19th; 500 at Wheldrake Ings on 22nd and 60 at Kirkham Abbey on 24th.

Notable early August gatherings involved 140 at Dalby on 1st; c!50 over Bishopthorpe on 4th and 40 at Poppleton on 10th. Few birds remained to the end of the month, and September yielded only three records; on 3rd two at Stamford Bridge and one at Roscars, the last of the year was at Welburn on 17th (GAC).

KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis*

Bred at several sites in the Lower Derwent and Pocklington Canal, the Fulford/Bishopthorpe/Naburn area (two pairs), York Water Works, Poppleton and Kirkham Abbey.

Present in the breeding season at Melbourne Brick Ponds and Strensall Common. During the rest of the year records came from Roscars, Sturge's Ponds, Cockey Hill, Riccall, Newburgh Priory, Dringhouses Pond, Beningborough and Kexby.

Fewer records than last year, although whether this is significant remains to be seen. Certainly an absence of records from the York University Campus was described by one observer as "most unusual".

GREEN WOODPECKER *Picus viridis*

Bred successfully at Strensall Common, where a nest contained 'many' young on 15th June, and at four sites in the Brandsby area. Probably bred at Castle Howard, Skipwith Common, Kirkham Abbey, Elm Hagg and Wass Wood. One on Lower Derwent at Elvington on 24th April was rather unexpected at that locality.

Singles were reported from two sites in the Selby area; Brayton Barff in February and Struge's Ponds in September.

The species remains scarce away from its northern strongholds.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos major*

Confirmed breeding records came from a minimum of 21 sites, with probable/possible breeding at a further seven localities. Remains widely-distributed and fairly common in the York Recording Area.

LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos minor*

No confirmed breeding records were received of this rather secretive little bird. However, the number of reports submitted referring to the period March to May suggests that the species continues to prosper.

As usual, the pocket of population in the Fulford/Bishopthorpe/Askham Bog district immediately south of York provided most records. One drummed regularly at Archbishop's Palace in late April and early May, while later in the month individuals were seen in Knavesmire Wood and Askham Bog. Singles were observed at Wheldrake Ings and Newburgh Priory in mid-April, while birds were "present in the breeding season" at Castle Howard.

In the period January - March, one fed regularly at a bird-table at Archbishop's Palace, while an individual frequented the vicinity of Huntington School. One at Wheldrake Ings on 31st January and singles in November at Dringhouses Pond on 11th and

Castle Howard on 30th.

SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis*

Some large flocks in the first winter period. In January, 80 at Poppleton on 1st; in Lower Derwent, 600 at Bubwith and 100 at Aughton on 7th and 500 at Ellerton on 9th; 150 at Poppleton on 19th with 300 there on 26th. At Cliffe 500 birds feeding with a further 90 west on 7th February was the last big count, as birds moved elsewhere during the ensuing hard weather, until 70 at Acaster Malbis on 26th. On 1st March, 80 at Appleton Roebuck and 200 at Copmanthorpe. The only breeding count was of c25 pairs at Clifton Airfield.

The only late winter counts were of 40 at Sand Hutton Common on 18th December; 50 at Stamford Bridge on 19th and 80 at Wistow Lordship on 30th.

SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*

First birds were three at Castle Howard on 21st and 23rd March (RSS, JHL), the earliest arrival ever, then no more until 30 there on 19th April and seven there on 24th, when four were on the Lower Wharfe. Birds became widespread from then on.

A heartening recovery in breeding numbers with 26 pairs between Poppleton and Red House, eight pairs at Fulford, 45 pairs at Westow, two pairs at East Ness and several pairs at Stamford Bridge two pairs of which nested in drains in the road bridge over the Derwent.

Last birds were singles at Poppleton (DA) and Castle Howard (GC) on 12th September.

HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbica*

The first arrivals were singles at Castle Howard and Bolton Percy Ings on the 24th April followed next day by seven at Roscarrs and three at Bishopthorpe - the latest arrival since 1975. Numbers gradually built up and on the 14th May 14 were mud-gathering for their nests at Poppleton while others were repairing old nests at Bishopthorpe on 19th May. seen flying north at Clifton but the last were at Dringhouses 176 were seen flying SE at Wheldrake on the 13th August; 400 at Castle Howard on 26th and 300 at Bank Island on 28th. 80 were at Stamford Bridge on the 3rd September, 40 at Poppleton on the 9th, with 200 at Wheldrake Ings on the same date and 250 at Bugthorpe and 200 at Bishop Wilton on the 11th. On the 17th September a third brood left, their nest in Bishopthorpe. 80 were at Clifton on 8th October and on the 9th the last birds left another nest in Bishopthorpe. On the 18th October one was seen flying north at Clifton but the last were at Dringhouses Pond, York on the 3rd November and at Hopgrove, York on the 6th November.

SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*

The first - the latest arrival since 1978 - was at Dunnington Common on the 17th April and from the 20th of that month small numbers were seen throughout the area, culminating in 50 at Newburgh on the 30th April, 50 at Wheldrake Ings on 5th May and 94 at Kexby on 22nd May.

Large September counts were 200 at Stillington on the 7th, 200 + at Roscarrs on the 12th, increasing to 230+ on the 16th. An exceptionally late brood was being fed at Newburgh on the 14th October and the last of the year was on 22nd October at Tadcaster Road, York.

An earlier departure than usual.

TREE PIPIT *Anthus trivialis*

The latest spring arrival for nine years. The first arrivals were at Yearsley Moor and Ampleforth on the 23rd April, two days later six were singing on Skipwith Common and on the 26th three were song flighting on Strensall Common which increased to five on the 3rd May.

Bred at Blackwood, Peel Park, Snargate and Oliver Wood (Brandsby), Yearsley (seven sites), Skewsby, Whenby, Fulford Golf Course (ten pairs) and Fulford Ings (two pairs). Probably

bred at Strensall Common, Skipwith Common and Allerthorpe Common. Other singing birds during May or June at North Duffield Carrs, Castle Howard, Brayton Barff and Buttercrambe Moor Wood.

Post-breeding records came from Knavesmire on 18th July, Cockey Hill on 29th and 27th August, East Ness on 2nd September and Wheldrake Ings on 15th and 17th.

MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis*

In the early months, 20 at Melbourne on 12th January, 25 at Brayton Barff on 6th February, 30 at Wheldrake Ings on 7th and 9th, 60 at Aughton on 12th, 60 at Naburn on 10th, 24 at North Duffield Ings on 18th and 33 at Newton Mask on 30th. Confirmed breeding of c25 pairs at Clifton Airfield, one or two pairs on Hob Moor (a new site), eight pairs on Fulford Ings, and at Lower Derwent, Pocklington Canal, Welburn and Strensall Common, with probable breeding at Poppleton.

Autumn flocks were 21 on 14th August at Clifton Airfield, 17 at Spellar Park on 14th September, 30 at Wheldrake Ings on the same day, 30 on Clifton Airfield on 27th and 13 flying S.E. at Low Catton on 29th. 90 at Wheldrake Ings on 10th October, 30 at Clifton Airfield on 11th, 30 at Acaster Malbis on 25th, 86 at Naburn Sewage Works on 22nd November with 99 on 9th December and 173 on 14th, 54 at Wheldrake Ings and 60 at Bank Island on 22nd and 37 at Wheldrake Ings next day.

YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava*

The first returning bird was at York Water Works on 21st April (TO - the latest arrival ever - with birds next day in Lower Derwent, Roscarrs and Clifton Airfield. Birds over the next four days at Wharfe Ings, Skipwith Common, York Knavesmire, Middlethorpe Ings, Bishopthorpe Ings and Strensall Common with 12 at Roscarrs on 25th.

Bred at York Water Works, Naburn Sewage Works, the Lower Derwent, Pocklington Canal, and possibly on Clifton Ings. Also present during the breeding season at Dunnington Sewage Works, Towthorpe Bridge, Willitoft and Sturge's Ponds. Breeding numbers still very low.

Post breeding flocks were 17 at North Duffield Carrs on 15th July and 45 at Roscarrs on 12th September, with 12 on 16th. The last were singles at Naburn Sewage Works on the 20th September and North Duffield Carrs on 25th September.

GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*

During the early months one or two in January at Dringhouses Pond, Castle Howard, Hobmoor and Strensall Pumping Station (seven bird days). In February, one or two at Naburn, Fulford, Hobmoor and York Foss with four at Bishopthorpe Ings on 19th (17 bird days). In March, singles at Clifton Airfield, Poppleton and Rawcliffe on 2nd, one north at Wheldrake Ings on 6th and a pair at Strensall Pumping Station on 8th. A pair again at Strensall Pumping Station on 5th April, singles at Stamford Bridge on 6th May and Kirkham Abbey on 24th.

Two juveniles on York Foss on 2nd July - did the Strensall pair breed? - two at Naburn Sewage Works on 15th and one at Riccall on 18th. One at Stamford Bridge on 13th August, seven at Clifton Lake next day (early for so large a count) and one at Fulford Ings on 28th. One to three at Cockey Hill, Naburn Sewage Works, Pocklington Canal, Lower Derwent, Castle Howard, Riccall and Stamford Bridge during September (27 bird days). Singles in October at Lower Derwent, Brandsby, British Sugar Corporation (York), Dringhouses Pond, Huntington, University. (33 bird days). Singles at British Sugar Corporation (York), Dringhouses Pond, York, Castle Howard, Selby Canal, Clifton Airfield, and in Lower Derwent in November with up to four at Fulford Ings and Naburn Sewage Works (78 bird days). In December one or two at Strensall, Dringhouses Pond, British Sugar Corporation (York), York City Centre, Bishopthorpe, Castle Howard, with up to six at Naburn Sewage Works (76 bird days).

PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba*

Double figure counts made during the early part of the year were 15 on Wheldrake Ings on 6th February, 15 in a Dunnington garden

on 1st March, 58 on Bank Island on 15th, 25 roosting in a reedbed on Strensall Common on 19th and 30 at Strensall Sewage Works on 30th.

Bred at Naburn Sewage Works, Lower Derwent, Pocklington Canal, Castle Howard (6 pairs), Welburn (two pairs), Kirkham (1 pair), possibly at Clifton Airfield and juveniles were seen at Poppleton and Bishopthorpe.

During the latter part of the year there were 11 at Bishopthorpe on 25th August, 75 at Church Fenton on 30th, 42 at Roscarrs on 10th October and 102 at Naburn Sewage Works on 22nd November with 75 there on 29th, 95 on 4th December and 145 on 14th.

Birds showing the characteristics of White Wagtail *M.a. Alba* were a male in full breeding plumage at Strensall Sewage Works on the 5th April, two at Roscarrs on the 22nd and 24th April, one pair at Button Ings on 26th April, one at Melbourne on 20th September and one at Naburn Sewage Works on the same date.

WAXWING *Bombycilla garrulus*

One at Castle Howard on 11th January (per TED), one at Clifton on 30th March (per TED), one at Huntington Road, York from 27th - 31st March (ESP) and one on the Canal Bank, Selby from 4th to 11th April (TB). A good showing.

DIPPER *Cinclus cinclus*

Pairs were seen at West Ness and Crambeck during the year but breeding was unproven.

WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes*

No significant records received.

DUNNOCK *Prunella modularis*

No significant records received.

ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*

No significant records received.

REDSTART *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

A female on passage feeding at the York Water Works on the 25th April was the first to arrive and no more records were received until almost a month later. Two males were in full song on the 22nd May on Strensall Common. On the 24th May a male was singing at Castle Howard and probably bred as did a pair present throughout the breeding season on Strensall Common. Singles seen at Acklam on 30th June, Highwood (Brandsby) on 6th July and Yearsley Forest on 7th August. A juvenile male appeared in a Hobmoor garden on the 29th July and must have found it congenial as it stayed until the 19th August, and another similar bird joined it on the 11th and 12th August. One at Wheldrake on 12th August. The last were both seen on 11th September, an immature male at Bishop Walton and a female or immature at Barlby Sewage Works .

WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra*

A male on Strensall Common on 11th May was the first arrival there, by 18th May two males were singing. Next day four birds were present but on 13th June only one singing male was recorded. However on the 7th and 8th July adults were feeding three young and there was still a pair and three juveniles present on the 21st July. A male was also seen on Pocklington Canal on 26th May. Post breeding birds were a female and two juveniles at Wistow Lordship on 16th July and one at Poppleton on 6th August; five on Wistow Lordship on 8th September, an immature at Howsham on the 10th and on the 12th a female was at Roscarrs, singles at Yearsley on 21st, and Clifton Airfield on 27th. Singles at Roscarrs on 6th October and finally at Wheldrake Ings on 12th (PP).

STONECHAT *Saxicola torquata*

Only one record this year - a male was at Ampleforth on 7th April (JP).

WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe*

A very early bird - a male - was in Lower Derwent at East Cottingwith on 16th March (TED,EBB), the next on Fulford Ings on 30th and then three on Clifton Airfield on 5th April. No more were seen until 19th April when, until 13th May, up to three were seen at Riccall, Clifton Airfield, East Cottingwith, Roscarrs, the University, Kilburn, Wheldrake Ings and York Water Works. One was recorded on Clifton Airfield on 7th June. A very poor total of 27 bird days for the spring passage.

The first returning birds were at Riccall on 6th August followed by birds at Roscarrs, Clifton Airfield (up to five), Wheldrake Ings (two), Strensall Common (two), East Ness (three) and Melbourne, with the last one on 24th September at Riccall. 24 bird days in August and a mere six bird days in September. A very poor year.

RING OUZEL *Turdus torquatus*

One at Brandsby on 26th April. Eighth record for the area.

BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula*

Very small winter flocks seen this year, one at Fulford Ings on 30th January being the largest with 60 birds. 45 there and 25 at Brandsby on 25th January, 35 at Dunnington Common on 24th February and 42 at Clifton Airfield on 27th being the only early flocks. One female got off to an early start and was sitting on eggs in the centre of York City on the 15th January (York Evening Press). A later bird at Poppleton was building a nest on 5th April, feeding young on 16th and had them fledged by the 27th. Very few autumn/winter counts, the maximum being that of 50 on Clifton Airfield on the 13th December.

FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris*

The larger counts of this species usually occur on the Ings and "Carrs" of the Ouse and Derwent. Counts were very low this year with maxima of 200 at East Cottingwith on 5th January, 120 at North Duffield Carrs on 9th, 150 there on 12th when 120 were also at Wheldrake Ings. 385 flew south-east at Roscarrs on 6th February, 120 at Wheldrake Ings on 9th was the last count of any significance until 50 at Aughton on 2nd March as birds moved out during the big freeze, 70 flew north at Wheldrake Ings on 24th and 600 flew north there on 26th. Thereafter very few were seen with 30 at Newton Mask on 27th April and the last a single at Wass on 7th May (JP).

The first returning birds were 12 at Hovingham on 10th October (GO followed by 120 at North Duffield Carrs on 15th. Thereafter the only large counts were in the Lower Derwent area with 400 at North Duffield Carrs on 12th November, 150 there on 16th, 200 there on 9th and 10th December, 150 at Kexby on 15th, 160 at Laytham on 28th and 260 in Aughton/Bubwith area on 30th.

SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelos*

No significant records received. On 31st March one was plucked from a Brandsby lawn by a Sparrowhawk.

REDWING *Turdus iliacus*

Again the "Ings" and "Carrs" held the larger flocks but comparatively small counts were made. 50 were at Bishopthorpe on 24th January and 79 on Fulford Ings on 25th. The highest count was 150 on Fulford Ings on 30th January. 50 were on North Duffield Carrs on 6th February, 30 on the Knavesmire on 26th February, 60 on 27th on Clifton Airfield, 50 at Aughton on 15th March, 38 on Fulford Ings on 9th April, the latest being three on Fulford Ings on 16th April (ML).

First returning birds were ten along Pocklington Canal on 28th September (TEDI with the next at Roscarrs on 6th October,

after which birds gradually became more widespread. Nocturnal passage noted over North Duffield on 7th and 11th October and 12th November, and over Osbaldwick from 12th October to month end and occasionally in November. The only large count was of 120 at Nun Ings on 12th December. A very poor year.

MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus*

On 13th January males were singing at Micklegate and Peasholm Green in York City. Double figure counts of 12 at Acklam on 30th June, ten at Melbourne on 6th and 19th July, 32 at Naburn on 23rd July, 40 at Fulford Golf Course on 4th September, 38 at Railway Institute Playing Fields on 6th, 27 at Brandsby on 9th and 12 at Melbourne on 10th and 13th. One was singing on 7th December at Brandsby.

GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella naevia*

The first returning bird was a male at Brighton on 28th April followed by two males on Skipwith Common from 2nd to 4th May. One was reeling in Bishop Wood on 2nd May and another heard on Wheldrake Ings from 3rd to 10th May. On 4th June a male was singing by Castle Howard lake with another on the 24th at Youlthorpe. The last was a singing male at Pocklington Canal on 12th July. A much better showing than of recent years.

SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Bred in Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal with sample counts of 27 singing males at Wheldrake Ings and 16 singing males along the Canal between Hagg Bridge and Church Bridge. Also bred at Castle Howard and York Waterworks, and probably at Strensall Common, Roscarrs, Bishopthorpe, Fulford Ings, Middlethorpe Ings, Sturge's Ponds (Selby), Selby Canal, Naburn Marsh, Low Catton and Kirkham Gorge.

The first' of the year were in Lower Derwent from 1st May (TED,CR,RSS) where present daily thereafter - the latest arrival for eight years. Birds at Castle Howard on 4th and 5th but none there or elsewhere (other than Lower Derwent) until a major arrival on 18th after which birds became widespread. Last birds were singles at Roscarrs on 13th September (TB) and at Castle Howard next day (GC).

MARSH WARBLER *Acrocephalus palustris*

One immature at Roscarrs between 25th September and 4th October (TB)

First record for the area.

REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

The earliest was a singing male at Pocklington Canal, on 6th May (TED) with the next nine at Roscarrs Pond on 19th May followed by one singing by Castle Howard Lake on 21st. Birds were relatively widespread by the 24th. Another very late arrival.

Bred in Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal (45 pairs), Roscarrs (ten pairs), Castle Howard, Strensall Common, Sturge's Ponds (Selby) (two pairs each) and Skipwith Common (uncounted). Probably bred at Selby Canal and Fulford Ings.

The final bird of the year was at Roscarrs on 3rd October (DC). Rather later than usual.

LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca*

Interestingly this species arrived only a few days later than normal. The first migrant was at Wheldrake Ings on 1st May (RSS). On 3rd May one was singing at Bolton Percy and a male singing on the 4th at Copmanthorpe was joined by a female the next day. Birds were heard singing from then on at Sturge's Ponds, the Lower Derwent Valley/Pocklington Canal (ten pairs), the Ouse Ings below York, Dringhouses Pond, and on Allerthorpe Common from the middle of a dense Scots Pine thicket. One was seen on 9th July at Strensall Camp, the only record north of York. The last was at Barlby Sewage Works on 18th September (TB).

WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis*

The first returning bird was singing in Copmanthorpe on 30th April (JD) and from then on small numbers were reported throughout the area. (Maximum eight at Copmanthorpe on 8th May). Breeding confirmed only at Naburn, Fulford Ings, Lower Derwent Valley, Pocklington Canal and Castle Howard although the species continues to be widespread. The last was at Roscarrs on 16th September (TB).

GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin*

An early bird was on Hobmoor on 20th April (IM) with no further sightings until 2nd May when there was one at Castle Howard, with only a few up to mid-May when the species began to spread through the area. Breeding confirmed at Brandsby, the Lower Derwent, Pocklington Canal, Skipwith Common and Castle Howard, and probable at Brayton Barff, Knavesmire Wood and Askham Bog. There were very few autumn records, the last bird being seen at Castle Howard on the 4th September (GC).

BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla*

Three or perhaps only two overwintering birds were recorded this year - at Castle Howard, a male on 19th January and on 9th February (GC), and one male was feeding regularly at a bird table in Upper Poppleton from 12th to 26th February (DA).

The first migrant was on Dunnington Common on 21st April (TK,VK), after which small numbers were spread over the area, the maxima being nine singing at Brayton Barff and seven at Moorlands.

The last of the year was a female/immature at Kilburn Thicket, on 20th September (JP). Unusually no records in the last three months of the year.

WOOD WARBLER *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

The first spring migrant arrived at Wass on 30th April (JP) and by the 5th May the number had increased to five with breeding subsequently confirmed here. Birds were noted at three sites near Brandsby and probably bred. On the 26th May a bird was singing at Brayton Barff and on the 29th to 12th June a pair were displaying. On the 21st June a nest with seven chicks was found and by the 27th the chicks had left the nest. The adults were still singing. On the 20th July four young were seen in the same woods. A welcome return to this former breeding area south of York (DC)

Last of the year was a single at Wass on 4th September (JP). Another relatively good year.

CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita*

An extraordinarily late arrival with the first at Wass on 14th April (JP) followed by two in Lower Derwent on 19th with a rapid arrival thereafter. Only in 1973 has this species arrived later (15th April). Bred as usual in coniferous and old established deciduous woodlands, mainly in the north of the area. Most had left by late August, with the last singles at Castle Howard and Crockey Hill on 25th September (JP.DW) until a single at Dunnington Common on 21st November (TW.VW). This latter presumably an incoming wintering bird.

WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus*

The latest arrival ever recorded with the first of the spring three at Struge's Ponds on 17th April (DC), with birds in Lower Derwent on 19th and 20th and at Hopgrove and York next day. Thereafter came a major arrival with birds at nine sites on 23rd and 20 singing males at Skipwith Common on 25th.

Autumn passage was well under way by mid August with 21 on Fulford Ings on 12th and 32 at Clifton Airfield on 14th. Last of the year were two at Strensall and one at Castle Howard on 27th September (NS,GC).

GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus*

Few records received this year. Present in early winter months at Castle Howard and Poppleton and in the breeding season at Moorlands and at three sites near Brandsby. Breeding proved at Fulford and Naburn.

The only autumn flock was of 15 at Ampleforth on 19th November (JP).

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata*

The first was in the Lower Derwent at Aughton on 6th May (TED.DW) and again on 9th with a more general arrival from 14th.

Breeding reports came from many sites with breeding proved at Lower Derwent/Pocklington Canal (at least seven pairs), Brandsby (four pairs), Castle Howard (three), Acaster Malbis, Crockey Hill (three broods seen). Present in breeding season and probably bred at Strensall, Bishopthorpe, Fulford Ings, Middlethorpe Ings, Brayton Barff, Gilling, Knavesmire Wood, Dringhouses, Skipwith, Bishop Wood, Buttercrambe and Upper Helmsley.

Last of the year were singles at Aughton on 17th September and Melbourne on 20th (ID).

BEARDED TIT *Panurus biarmicus*

The pair of 1985 remained until 18th February when the male disappeared with the female remaining until the 20th. Site and observers names withheld.

Two in a reedbed at Strensall Common on 2nd March (DW).

LONG-TAILED TIT *Aegithalos caudatus*

A spring count on 4th April in Bishops Wood found 20 present.

Few autumn flock counts received, with 25 at Kexby on 24th August and 37 there on 27th, 11 at Melbourne on 29th, 20 at Kexby on 6th September, 24 at Thornton Ings on 28th October, 12 at Strensall Common on 21st November with 18 there on 12th December.

MARSH TIT *Parus palustris*

Again few records received.

Confirmed breeding reports came from Naburn Sewage Works, Fulford, three sites near Brandsby, and Castle Howard. Birds were seen on Strensall Common, Bishopthorpe Wood, Tilmire, Clifton, Wheldrake Ings, Bishopthorpe Palace, Crockey Hill, Skipwith Common and Dunnington Common; they probably bred there also as the species is very sedentary.

WILLOW TIT *Parus montanus*

No large counts at all this year but birds were seen in Knavesmire Wood, Lower Derwent, Pocklington Canal, Allerthorpe Common, Strensall Common, Clifton, Bossall, Ampleforth, Askham Bog, Crockey Hill and Fulford Ings.

Breeding was confirmed at Naburn Sewage Works, Fulford, four sites near Brandsby, Lower Derwent and Skipwith Common.

COAL TIT *Parus ater*

No significant records again this year although the species was reported as 'abundant' on Yearsley Moor.

Bred at Fulford, Naburn Sewage Works, Castle Howard and Skipwith Common. 'A good breeding year' at Ampleforth.

BLUE TIT *Parus caeruleus*

A common breeding bird throughout the area. No significant records received.

GREAT TIT *Parus major*

No 'two figure' counts received this year although a common breeding bird in the area.

NUTHATCH *Sitta europaea*

Present at the Archbishop's bird table at Bishopthorpe Palace

January and February (per Mrs. Habgood). One was heard singing in the gardens on 30th March and by 1st May three were singing. On the 29th May a bird was at a nest hole with a faecal sack and on 12th June a pair were feeding young. On 19th June two fledglings were seen.

One pair was present at Castle Howard from February to June and courtship was observed. The species bred at Maidensworth (Brandsby). Seen during the breeding season at Brandsby and Wass. Outside the breeding season seen at Strensall Golf Course during August and September and at Bossall (a new site) on 10th September.

TREECREEPER *Certhia familiaris*

Few records received. Birds at Wheldrake Ings, Knavesmire Wood, Bishopthorpe Ings, Moorlands, Poppleton, Brandsby, Strensall Common and Castle Howard. Bred at Fulford and Kaburn Sewage Works.

BED-BACKED SHRIKE *Lanius collurio*

A male at East Ness on 2nd September (JP)

Third record for the area, the first two being on 2nd and 7th September 1981.

GREAT GREY SHRIKE *Lanius excubitor*

A male bird in Lower Derwent from 1st January regularly to 9th February (TED). On 11th and 12th February one was on Fulford Golf Course (VG) and a different bird, presumably, singing in Lower Derwent on 12th. Singles on 15th at Heslington (ML), Fulford Golf Course on 18th (VG) and Lower Derwent on 23rd and 26th (TED) and finally on 20th March. Probably only two birds involved and conceivably perhaps just one.

JAY *Garrulus glandarius*

Present in suitable habitat throughout the year in small numbers. Significant counts were 12 at Castle Howard on 29th August and 18 on Strensall Common on 27th October. At Moorlands two were seen harrying a Tawny Owl on 30th April (PC)

MAGPIE *Pica pica*

Continues to prosper. Double figure counts were 12 on Hobmoor on 22nd January, 15 at Strensall Tip on 2nd February, 21 on Clifton Airfield on 16th February, 16 on Clifton Airfield on 16th March and 15 at Low CattOn on 15th December.

JACKDAW *Corvus monedula*

Large gatherings counted were 400 roosting at Bubwith on 3rd January, 80 at Bishopthorpe on 2nd March, 100 at Newburgh Priory on 30th March and 130 at Kirkham Gorge on 10th September. On North Duffield Carrs on 6th November there was a roost flight of 800 which increased to 2000 the next day and the same number on 14th November.

ROOK *Corvus frugilegus*

Nest counts at rookeries were as follows: nine at Nunnery Lane, York, 16 at Nunnington, 85 at East Ness, 15 at Dalby, 41 at Newburgh and 55 at Stamford Bridge.

Flock counts were 400 at Bubwith on 3rd January, 600 at Whenby on 26th January, 280 at Stamford Bridge on 15th July, 300 at Wheldrake on 13th August, 300 at Roscarrs on 15th August, 274 at West Ness on 12th September 500 at Wheldrake on 25th October, 700 at Brandsby on 1st November, 2000 on North Duffield Carrs on 7th and 14th November and 1000+ at Dunnington Common on 4th December.

CARRION CROW *Corvus cox-one*

Few significant records received. There were 16 on Clifton Airfield on 16th August, 12 at Wheldrake on 25th October, 12 took part in a communal display at Heworth on 7th November and 31 at Wheldrake on 25th December.

STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris*

Maxima were 100 at Acaster Malbis on 15th January, 1400 moving to York City Centre on 22nd February, 1000 on Bootham Stray on 16th March, 1100 on Wheldrake on 12th July, 1000+ at Roscarrs on 15th August, 1000 at Poppleton on 19th November and 2000 at Poppleton on 15th December. Large flocks from Clifton Airfield (maximum count 4000) were using a roost on Bootham Stray early in the year but this was abandoned by mid-July and birds were noted flying east from Clifton until the end of the year. It is probable that the new roost which built up in Poppleton at this time came from the flocks formed on the airfield. A roost on the dome of Castle Howard held 1500 birds.

On the 1st August a leucistic bird all pale buff but with normal tertials was seen at Naburn Sewage Works (JG) and another similar to that recorded in 1985 in Stamford Bridge was again present there on several occasions (RSS).

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*

Few observers submit records of this familiar species.

There were 100 at Acaster Malbis on 6th January, 95 at Poppleton on 16th August, 120 at Stamford Bridge on 27th, 30 on Dunnington Common on 17th December and 200 at Poppleton on 23rd December.

TREE SPARROW *Passer montanus*

Twelve birds were feeding in a Heworth garden near the city centre from 9th February until 1st March. 40 at Aughton on 2nd March with 50 there on 12th April were the only significant early counts.

A late second brood was being fed at Poppleton on 5th August.

In autumn 50 at Poppleton and 45 at Thornton Ings on 28th October, 83 at Poppleton on 15th December, 30 at Dunnington Common on 17th, 175 at Poppleton on 25th and 25 at Barlow Grange on 29th.

CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs*

Early winter maxima were 80 at Poppleton on 14th January, 100 at Coxwold on 19th, 120 at Escrick on 23rd, 100 at Hazelbush (Stockton on the Forest) on 12th February, 70 at Wharfe Mouth on 8th March and 60 at Aughton on 22nd.

Later in the year 278 at Wheldrake Ings on 13th August, an early date for so large a flock, 140 at Pool Bridge, Crockey Hill on 19th, 300 at Barton Hill grain store from October to year end, and in December, 60 at Upper Helmsley on 18th and 50 at Pond Head on 27th.

BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla*

Many more and larger flocks than usual in the early part of the year. Up to 300 at Barton Hill from January until end of March. At Aughton, 50 on 1st and 9th January, 120 on 12th, 70 on 23rd, 80 on 31st; 120 on 7th March, 100 on 30th; 60 on 12th April, 63 on 23rd and 60 on 24th. Elsewhere, 70 at Poppleton on 19th, 80 at Escrick on 23rd and 150 at Stamford Bridge on 18th April. Last of the spring were a pair at Strensall Common on 26th April.

In autumn very few records, the first returning bird was very early in the Lower Derwent at Newton Mask on 19th September (TW.VW), followed by only five records of up to five birds to year end.

GREENFINCH *Carduelis chloris*

The early year maxima were: up to 400 regularly at Barton Hill grain store during the first three months, 270 at Roscarrs on 6th January, 70 at Brighton on 4th February and 100 at Roscarrs from 6th to 20th.

A late juvenile was still being fed at Bishopthorpe on 3rd September. The only late flock of note was of 90 at Roscarrs on 21st October.

GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis*

As usual only small charms noted during winter months but larger counts in autumn of post breeding and passage flocks. 48 at Poppleton on 29th August, 80 at Clifton Airfield on 6th September, 35 at Wistow on 20th, 90 on Clifton Airfield on 4th October and 75 there on 11th.

SISKIN *Carduelis spinus*

No large flocks at either end of this year, double figure counts being 20 at Scrayingham on 2nd January, 45 at Bishopthorpe Palace on 5th, 15 at Pocklington Canal on 12th, ten in Lower Derwent on 28th and at Acaster Malbis on 4th February. April records are more frequent nowadays, with a singing male at Stamford Bridge on 2nd, singles at Bishopthorpe on 13th, Stamford Bridge next day (an adult male dead on road) and Poppleton on 18th. Last of spring were seven at Sand Hutton Pond on 19th (RSS). A record of four at Stamford Bridge on 18th July (RSS) is interesting and parallels a record of 30 at Riccall on the same date in 1985. It is surely only a matter of time before these enterprising birds are proved to breed in the area. They may well be doing so already.

The first typical autumn record was of one in Lower Derwent on 24th September (PP). Only one October record, of two at Pocklington Canal on 28th. Significant counts thereafter were 20 at Pocklington Canal on 5th November, 15 at Dunnington Common on 21st, 50 at Sand Hutton and 16 at Malton on 16th December and 50 at Sand Hutton on 18th. 20 to 30 birds were present at University from 29th October to year end.

Several reports received of birds feeding on nut bags at Osbaldwick, Heworth and Welburn. This habit at last seems to be becoming widespread in the area.

LINNET *Carduelis cannabina*

Most high counts came in the early months of this year, the maxima being 40+ on 10th January at Overton, 120 at Roscarrs on 6th which had by the next day risen to 300 but by the 20th was reduced to 100. c!50 were at Crockey Hill on 8th February and 130 at Riccall on 18th April. 16th May was a late date for a flock of 40 at Aughton.

50 at Clifton Airfield on 10th August and on 6th September 110 present, increasing to 146 on 13th and a peak of 255 on 27th. On 4th October there were 208, with 98 on 24th October, after which there was a rapid decline over the whole airfield.

TWITE *Carduelis flavirostris*

Two were at Aughton on 5th May (JP) and five at Wheldrake on 20th November (TED). Two typical Lower Derwent records of a species which has occurred annually since 1981 and was probably overlooked previously.

REDPOLL *Acanthis flammea*

Maximum early winter flock counts were 80 at Roscarrs during January, 240 at Riccall on 5th and 45 at Bishopthorpe on 6th. 70 near Allerthorpe Common on 15th February, 40 at East Cottingwith on 9th March, 35 on Allerthorpe Common on 8th April and 20 on Strensall Reserve on 26th April. Song flighting was observed by Wheldrake Car Park on 30th May and the next day a female was gathering nesting material there. Further display was on 10th June at the car park, similarly on the 15th at Askham Bog and during May on Allerthorpe Common. Two used nests were found at Crockey Hill high in a Norway Spruce. The only significant end of year flock was 25 on Fulford Ings on 2nd November.

MEALY REDPOLLS *A.f.flammea* were seen as follows: four regularly at Roscarrs during January, increasing to nine during March with the last there three on 9th May. 41 at Riccall on 5th January was a fine count (PP). Two at Allerthorpe Common on 15th February, three at Acaster Malbis on 26th March and one at Stamford Bridge on 14th December.

CROSSBILL *Loxia curvirostra*

Another good year with most records coming from Yearsley Moor Woods as follows: 31 on 4th January, five on 26th, one on 16th February, 38 on 2nd March, five on 12th, 12 on 18th, 29 on 26th, 26 on 28th, 32 on 29th, 28 on 6th April and 24 on 11th; seven on 8th May and five on 27th December. It seems likely that breeding is taking place at this site but confirmation is still

needed.

Elsewhere, two at Castle Howard on 1st January, 12 between Coneythorpe and Terrington on 24th, 14 at Riccall on 9th February, one at Castle Howard on 12th, with 22 there on 4th May. One at Allerthorpe Common on 5th July with 15 at Hovingham next day, one at Allerthorpe Common on 13th and three at Riccall on 19th.

BULLFINCH *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Maximum counts were 18 on Skipwith Common on 29th January, 10 on Clifton Airfield on 16th February, 63 at Brayton Barff on 11th April.

A splendid total of at least 80 at Brayton Barff on 4th November (DC).

HAWFINCH *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Very few records this year. One was at Stamford Bridge on 6th February, six on Yearsley Moor on 2nd March, five on Roscarrs and four at Naburn on 10th March. One was heard near Brandsby on 6th July and one was at Castle Howard on 3rd December.

YELLOWHAMMER *Emberiza citrinella*

Maximum flocks were 20 on Clifton Ings on 25th January, 24 at Bishopthorpe on 28th January, 49 on Clifton Airfield on the 9th February, with 35 there on 25th and 26th and 35 on 22nd. Later flocks were 30 on Clifton Airfield on 24th October, 70 on Thornton Ings on 28th; 47 on Clifton Airfield on 18th November; 40 at Wistow on 30th December and 70 at Cawood on the same day.

REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus*

The largest early year flock was on Clifton Airfield with 20 on 5th January; 37 on 9th February, 40 on 15th, 29 on 16th and 20 on 22nd. A flock of 15 was on Brayton Barff on 6th February and a roost of 40 at Strensall Common on 2nd March. No significant autumn counts.

CORN BUNTING *Miliaria calandra*

Largest counts were 52 at Melbourne on 19th January, 65 at Riccall on 26th January, 20 at East Cottingwith on 28th January, 50 near Easingwold on 8th February and 50 roosting on Strensall Common on 2nd March.

Present in breeding season at Barton, Wheldrake, Naburn, Tilmire, Hagg Bridge, Acaster Ings, Poppleton, Strensall Common, Towthorpe and breeding confirmed in Lower Derwent.

Large December flocks were 120 on 6th near Cawood, 65 at Brighton Tip on 22nd and 172 at East Cottingwith on 25th.

ESCAPED BIRDS

GREATER FLAMINGO *Phoenicopterus ruber*

One on Wheldrake Ings on 23rd April (TED).

BAR-HEADED GOOSE *Anser indicus*

One in Lower Derwent from 1st May to 29th May and 25th September to 26th December (TED.RSS.TB et al.).

CHUKAR *Alectoris chukar*

Two at Brighton Airfield on 15th April (ML).
A not unexpected record given the number that are increasingly being put down by "sporting" interests.

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