

# **YORK ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB**

## **REPORT 1999**

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**Compiled by**

**C. Jakeman, J. Pewtress, N. Stewart  
R. Traynor, P. Watson**

**Edited by A. Booth**

**Produced by M. Pirozek**



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**Keywords:**

## YORK ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB

This report has been compiled by members of the York Ornithological Club with nearly all the records submitted by members who are active in watching an area of 550 square miles around York which the Club is responsible for recording. The area covers wetlands (Lower Derwent Valley), deciduous woodland (Hambleton/Howardian Hills), coniferous woodland (Yearsley and Ampleforth), lakes (Castle Howard) and large agricultural areas of the vales of York and Pickering.

The Club has a membership of about 70 and meets on the first Tuesday of the month (except July and August) in the Friends' Meeting House, Castlegate, York for a full programme of talks and discussions and for the informal exchange of information which birdwatchers find invaluable. In addition, excursions are arranged to areas of ornithological interest, usually outside the recording area.

### EDITORIAL

Welcome to this 'bumper' issue of the YOC Report! We are pleased to be able to again include the 'official' records from the Lower Derwent Valley NNR which have been missing from the previous two reports. We have also included the results of two surveys carried out on this important reserve in 1999.

Many thanks to all members who have submitted their records for this report.

The species accounts have been compiled by Nigel Stewart (Divers to Ducks), Jim Pewtress (Raptors to Crane), Peter Watson (Waders to Auks), Ruth Traynor (Doves to Flycatchers) and Christine Jakeman (Tits to Buntings) and edited by Andy Booth. Muriel Pirozek has been responsible for the final production of this report. Andy Booth and Nigel Stewart have kindly provided the illustrations which enhance the text. The processing of the Report involves a great deal of unseen work which has been carried out voluntarily by the above persons to whom we are deeply grateful.

Thanks are also due to other members of the Committee who have worked hard throughout the year to ensure the successful running of the Club. Likewise, some of our best talks have been given by members of this club and we also thank members who have offered lifts to those without transport for our various outings.

We welcome all new members and wish to encourage others, particularly younger people, to join the Club. We aim to produce a report of interest which is as comprehensive and accurate as possible and encourage all members to submit their sightings, however insignificant they may seem. Guidelines for submitting records can be found in the 1998 Report and on the YOC website.

Records of scarce or rare birds need to be supported by a description - see the 1998 Report or ask the Recorder for details or advice. An account of the Marsh Warbler occurrence at Fulford Ings in June is included in this report as a guideline. Most descriptions do not have to be this comprehensive, but more difficult-to-prove species will require more detailed descriptions.

This was my first full year as Editor and I have to apologise for the delay in publishing this report, which was due to a variety of reasons. However, our aim is to strive to have the Report available as soon as possible so that it is more relevant to the year in question. Please help us by submitting your records as soon as possible at the end of the year.

Andy Booth

## **HIGHLIGHTS OF 1999**

### **January**

There was an exceptionally mild start to the year but a ridge of high pressure brought colder conditions with a belt of short-lived snow on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Wet, windy and mild conditions then returned but it was the sunniest January for eight years.

As usual, the main interest at the start of the year was in the Lower Derwent Valley. More unusual records of wildfowl consisted of Slavonian Grebe, Scaup and Red-breasted Merganser. Wintering raptors included Hen Harrier, Goshawk, Common Buzzard and Peregrine while wader numbers were generally high.

The Wheldrake Ings gull roost included both Iceland and Glaucous gulls with a Water Pipit at this site on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>. Wintering Blackcap and Chiffchaff were noted elsewhere. Other interesting wintering passerines included Bearded Tit, Great Grey Shrike and Twite.

### **February**

The month was dominated by a mild, south-westerly airstream bringing very unsettled conditions which were interspersed with brief cold spells caused by strong northerly winds.

Wildfowl were still prominent in the Lower Derwent Valley topped by an impressive flock of 175 Bean Geese on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, while a drake Smew was seen briefly at Wheldrake Ings on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

Merlin and Peregrine were the raptor highlights with a good selection of waders including Sanderling, Little Stint and Knot.

The Wheldrake roost again held various white-winged gulls with a Mediterranean Gull there on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Roosts of Reed and Corn Bunting increased with maximum counts of 200 and 110 respectively.

### **March**

Generally another mild month dominated by south-westerly winds resulting in the early appearance of several summer migrants.

A Bittern was heard 'booming' near Melbourne late in the month.

Bewick's and Whooper swans departed as the first summer migrants returned including Garganey, Little Ringed Plover, Sand Martin, Swallow, House Martin, Wheatear and Chiffchaff.

Rarer species included a Common Crane near Hagg Bridge on the 28<sup>th</sup> and a Pomarine Skua over Wheldrake Ings on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

The Wheldrake gull roost built up with a Kumlien's Gull claimed on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

Notable flocks of Fieldfare and Brambling were still present.



## **April**

April was mostly mild and wet, but a cold spell with frosts occurred in the second week with drier conditions by the end of the month.

As usual, the influx of summer migrants continued apace with the appearance of Black-necked Grebe, Osprey, Hobby, Common Sandpiper, Sandwich Tern, Common Tern, Arctic Tern, Cuckoo, Swift, Tree Pipit, Yellow Wagtail, Ring Ouzel, Grasshopper Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Reed Warbler, Whitethroat, Garden Warbler, Blackcap and Willow Warbler.

Records of scarce species included a Common Scoter at Wheldrake Ings on the 11<sup>th</sup>, Dotterel at Ellerton on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the only report of Hawfinch - at Wheldrake on the latter date. There were also good counts of Ruff and Black-tailed Godwit.

## **May**

Another month of mainly south-westerlies was punctuated by cooler spells due to south-easterly then north-easterly winds.

Breeding activity was now well underway with the arrival of later summer migrants including Quail, Turtle Dove, Nightjar, Redstart, Lesser Whitethroat and Spotted Flycatcher.

A Bittern was still 'booming' in the Lower Derwent Valley and the first of up to three summering Marsh Harriers was noted, while an intriguing series of Osprey sightings came from the city of York. Calling Spotted Crakes and Corncrakes were reported with up to 15 and three birds respectively.

More unusual species included Red Kite, Avocet, Turnstone, Yellow-legged Gull and Nightingale.

## **June**

June was very unsettled with heavy rain although a few short-lived high pressure systems did provide some respite.

The breeding season continued to gather momentum with up to 32 pairs of Cormorant at Wheldrake Ings and, in the Lower Derwent Valley as a whole, birds advertising their presence included 49 Quail, 39 Water Rails, a further two Corncrakes and a record 69 Turtle Doves. However, no Black-necked Grebes were noted - no doubt due to the deliberate drainage of Wheldrake Ings.

On a brighter note, Hobby sightings increased in the valley and rarer species included singing Savi's and Marsh warblers and a Golden Oriole.

## **July**

The first three weeks were mostly warm or hot and reasonably dry but unsettled weather returned later in the month.

The return passage of waders began to pick up with more unusual species such as Pectoral and Curlew sandpipers noted.

Other interesting birds included a Red-crested Pochard at Wheldrake Ings on the 17<sup>th</sup>, a Honey Buzzard over Elvington on the 11<sup>th</sup> and a lingering pair of Common Buzzards in the Lower Derwent Valley.

An unseasonal Short-eared Owl was seen at Bank Island on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and a few Whinchats were also reported.

## **August**

A hot start to the month soon gave way to a succession of Atlantic fronts making it the wettest August on record for many areas.

This was a rather quiet month - for unusual species at least.

The first summer breeders began to depart and more interesting birds included Red Kite at Wheldrake Ings on the 1<sup>st</sup>, Osprey near Melbourne on the 21<sup>st</sup>, up to four Curlew Sandpipers in the Lower Derwent Valley, Wood Sandpiper at Bank Island on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> and up to four Crossbills at Sutton Farm.

## **September**

The month started as one of the warmest on record, but unsettled weather again followed although it remained very mild.

Numbers of wildfowl in the Lower Derwent Valley started to increase and a good month for raptors included several sightings of Osprey, a lingering Common Buzzard and a totally unexpected report of a possible Golden Eagle which flew south down the valley on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

An early Jack Snipe at Bank Island on the 19<sup>th</sup> was a forerunner of an incredible series of records in the Lower Derwent Valley while the first Fieldfares appeared over Elvington on the 25<sup>th</sup> and return passage of Redwing began on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

## **October**

October was generally unsettled, but mild. However, anticyclonic conditions during the third week brought a period of strong easterly winds.

The first Bewick's and Whooper swans returned to the Lower Derwent Valley on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> respectively. Likewise, a return passage of geese was noted with a Scaup seen at Wheldrake Ings on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

Raptors included Red Kite, Hen Harrier and at least five Merlins.

Wader numbers began to rise and an impressive flock of 180 Stock Doves was seen near North Duffield Carrs on the 6<sup>th</sup> with a Richard's Pipit seen on the floodbank on the 5<sup>th</sup>.

Meanwhile, good numbers of Fieldfare and Redwing were recorded and a Great Grey Shrike was seen near Thorganby. However, few Brambling were noted but large flocks of other finches and buntings were evident.

## **November**

Mild, wet and windy weather persisted but northerly winds brought cooler conditions later in the month.

Few 'wild' geese were noted in the Lower Derwent Valley this month, but generally there was a steady increase in numbers of wildfowl. Wader counts also rose and the gull roost at Wheldrake Ings built up again.

A dead Guillemot migrated passively down the River Derwent on the 29<sup>th</sup> while a more active movement of 400 Skylarks was observed over North Duffield Carrs on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

A Rock Pipit was at Wheldrake on the 19<sup>th</sup> while a national influx of Waxwings was reflected in up to 28 birds being found throughout the Lower Derwent Valley.  
A northern Chiffchaff was present at Rawcliffe Lake from the 8<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> but a Firecrest at Clifton Ings on the 26<sup>th</sup> was an even better find.

Flocks of winter finches increased and included two Twite at North Duffield on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

## **December**

The weather was again unsettled with mainly west or south-westerly winds but a wintry spell in the third week brought some snow.

Amongst the good numbers of wildfowl present in the Lower Derwent Valley towards the year end were up to five Smew. Raptors were also prominent and a count of 50 Grey Partridge at Thornton on the 17<sup>th</sup> was encouraging.

Further increases in wader counts included an amazing total of 46 Jack Snipe in the Lower Derwent as well as a Spotted Redshank.

A Water Pipit was at Wheldrake Ings on the 19<sup>th</sup> and more Waxwings were noted including up to three in York.

Meanwhile, a Stonechat was seen at Wheldrake on the 16<sup>th</sup> and at least two wintering Blackcaps were found. 100 Tree Sparrows were at Thornton on the 27<sup>th</sup> and notable finches included Brambling and Twite while Clifton Ings was good for bunting flocks.

Andy Booth

# Earliest and latest dates for migrants

Species	Arrival date	Last reported
Black-necked Grebe	4 <sup>th</sup> April	15 <sup>th</sup> April
Garganey	28 <sup>th</sup> March	1 <sup>st</sup> September
Marsh Harrier	10 <sup>th</sup> May	1 <sup>st</sup> October
Osprey	2 <sup>nd</sup> April	24 <sup>th</sup> September
Hobby	27 <sup>th</sup> April	17 <sup>th</sup> September
Quail	4 <sup>th</sup> May	16 <sup>th</sup> August
Spotted Crake	22 <sup>nd</sup> April	24 <sup>th</sup> July
Corncrake	10 <sup>th</sup> May	14 <sup>th</sup> August
Little Ringed Plover	27 <sup>th</sup> March	24 <sup>th</sup> August
Black-tailed Godwit	15 <sup>th</sup> March	14 <sup>th</sup> August
Common Sandpiper	22 <sup>nd</sup> April	20 <sup>th</sup> September
Turtle Dove	1 <sup>st</sup> May	4 <sup>th</sup> September
Cuckoo	12 <sup>th</sup> April	13 <sup>th</sup> July
Nightjar	30 <sup>th</sup> May	10 <sup>th</sup> June
Swift	26 <sup>th</sup> April	11 <sup>th</sup> September
Sand Martin	20 <sup>th</sup> March	30 <sup>th</sup> September
Swallow	26 <sup>th</sup> March	16 <sup>th</sup> October
House Martin	30 <sup>th</sup> March	16 <sup>th</sup> October
Tree Pipit	30 <sup>th</sup> April	4 <sup>th</sup> September
Yellow Wagtail	4 <sup>th</sup> April	23 <sup>rd</sup> September
Redstart	9 <sup>th</sup> May	28 <sup>th</sup> August
Whinchat	5 <sup>th</sup> July	23 <sup>rd</sup> September
Wheatear	14 <sup>th</sup> March	29 <sup>th</sup> September
Grasshopper Warbler	14 <sup>th</sup> April	19 <sup>th</sup> September
Sedge Warbler	3 <sup>rd</sup> April	3 <sup>rd</sup> September
Reed Warbler	24 <sup>th</sup> April	3 <sup>rd</sup> October
Lesser Whitethroat	1 <sup>st</sup> May	15 <sup>th</sup> September
Whitethroat	23 <sup>rd</sup> April	16 <sup>th</sup> September
Garden Warbler	9 <sup>th</sup> April	11 <sup>th</sup> September
Blackcap	2 <sup>nd</sup> April	24 <sup>th</sup> November
Chiffchaff	15 <sup>th</sup> March	3 <sup>rd</sup> November
Willow Warbler	1 <sup>st</sup> April	11 <sup>th</sup> September
Spotted Flycatcher	11 <sup>th</sup> May	14 <sup>th</sup> September

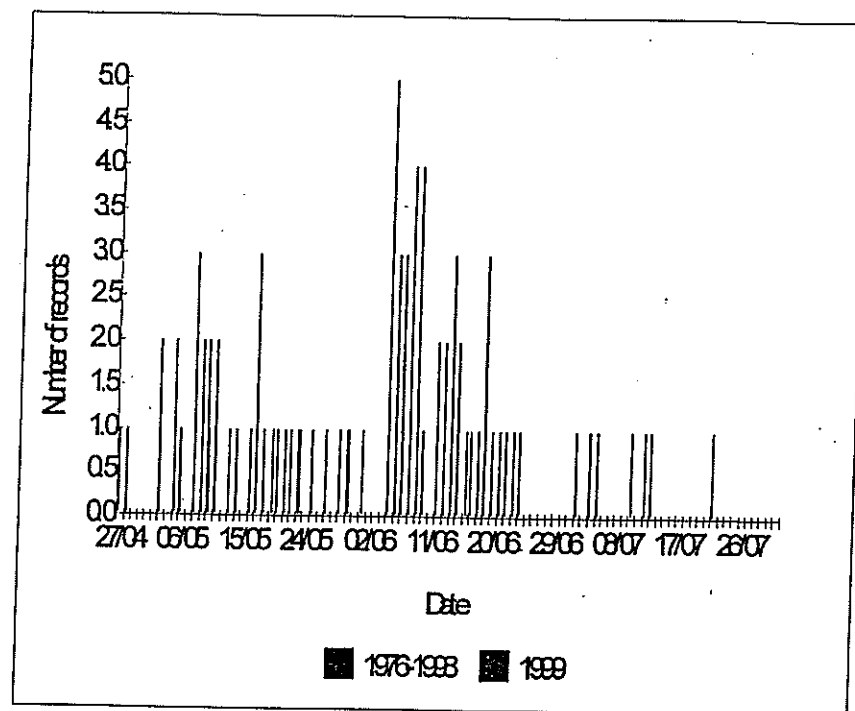
LOWER DERWENT VALLEY  
NOCTURNAL SURVEY REPORT

1999



CORNCRAKES  
(AND OTHER THINGS WHICH GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT)

C.S.RALSTON  
AUGUST 1999



Daily Corncrake records in the Lower Derwent Valley 1976-1999

## Introduction

This report is a summary of the results arising from two month's nocturnal survey work in the Lower Derwent Valley Ramsar/SPA/cSAC site and surrounding area between 26<sup>th</sup> April and 27<sup>th</sup> June 1999 and also from further work carried out outside this period as part of normal wardening duties. Records received from other sources are also included, e.g. daytime records, records from visiting birders and records from English Nature's (EN) Farmland Bird Survey in and around the Lower Derwent Valley.

Although primarily concerned with Corncrakes, which form a major part of this report, once again other largely nocturnal species were well monitored during the survey work including Spotted Crake as part of the first ever UK survey, Bitterns, Water Rail and Quail. Once again other interesting species were recorded on the Reserve during the year (Nightjar), while several species were more widely recorded as a result of the nocturnal survey work (Garganey, Snipe and Grasshopper Warbler).

The results of the survey are presented in a species by species format to allow clear and easy assessments for each species, with the data for both Corncrake and Spotted Crake provided in a daily diary of activity.

## Method

This is the second year of intensive nocturnal surveys in the valley following the first in 1998 and the methods used in both years are identical to allow direct comparisons between years to be made. Two alternative methods were adopted for this survey.

First an attempt was made to cover as much of the valley as possible in a given night (up to one hour per site), varying the time of arrival each night or, alternatively, spending the whole night at only one or two sites. Each method again (as in 1998) had limitations in terms of locating calling birds and a combination of the two methods was employed during the season. During late April and early May for example, many more sites than usual were checked during the first three hours after darkness (often only spending 15-30 minutes on each site) in order to monitor the appearance and behaviour of Spotted Crake.

Publicity was again maintained for the project but was focused more on visiting birders rather than a general press release. Articles appeared in the Yorkshire Post through their weekly bird column, in 'Birdwatching' magazine and, in addition, posters were placed in all the EN managed hides in the valley. This publicity (see appendices) included a Corncrake hotline number operated from my home telephone during the day (0900hrs – 1700hrs) and a mobile during the hours of the surveyed work (1700hrs – 0900hrs). This was a new addition to the survey in 1999 and resulted in two extra records of singing males during the year.

In addition, 10 EN volunteer fieldworkers undertook nocturnal survey work co-ordinated with EN staff. This produced a number of Spotted Crake records but no singing Corncrakes.

It was hoped to make sound recordings of all Corncrakes, Spotted Crakes and any Bitterns during the year, however this proved more difficult than expected. Birds were very quiet in 1999 often only calling for short periods, sometimes just one or two calls. This was noted in many species including Water Rail and Quail which normally sing for long periods on several nights at least at some point during the year. It was also rather disappointing not to tape-record Spotted Crake during the year given the number that were singing well for several nights in 1998 – possible reasons for such behaviour are discussed.

Two main methods were used with the sound recording equipment in order to try to obtain recordings. First, to listen, locate and then try to get a recording. As the birds were calling so infrequently and often only briefly even by the time the PLAY button had been pressed the bird had stopped calling. The second method was to listen with the tape set on record. As I was often on the move, stopping from time-to-time to wait and listen, the result was often large amounts of blank tape with rustling sounds and only very faint bird calls in the background. On hearing a bird and stopping and redirectioning the equipment the calling had usually stopped.

As a number if 'good recordings' was required for each bird in order to identify individuals, the poor quality of these one or two records became irrelevant.

#### Corncrake – *Crex crex*

##### (Daily Diary)

May	10 <sup>th</sup>	A single singing male at Pickering Bank, Aughton, with two short calls at 01.30hrs.
	19 <sup>th</sup>	A single singing male at Wheldrake Ings briefly at 03.10hrs.
	23 <sup>rd</sup>	A single male responded immediately to a Tape Lure at Bubwith Ings at 23.10hrs but not thereafter.
	30 <sup>th</sup>	A single male reported via the 'Crake Hotline' singing briefly at Bank Island at 2100hrs.
June	1 <sup>st</sup>	The Bank Island bird heard again at 03.30hrs with four calls.
	16 <sup>th</sup>	A single reported via the 'Crake Hotline' at North Duffield Carrs at 0000hrs singing well. Two brief calls at 0300hrs.
July	10 <sup>th</sup>	A report via the 'Crake Hotline' of a single singing at Bank Island at 21.45hrs.
Aug.	14 <sup>th</sup> uncut	A single newly fledged bird seen well but briefly as it walked across a track in an strip of hay meadow at Allerton at 12.30hrs

All these birds were well distributed around the site and each singing male is likely to reflect a different bird.

Although the number of records is considerably lower than last year (24 in 1998), the minimum number of singing males is similar, with six in 1998 and five in 1999. Once again there was possible evidence of a second brood at Bank Island with calling five weeks apart.



## **Early Season Cover/Habitat at 1999 Corncrake Calling Sites**

### **Aughton Ings**

Calling from Pickering Bank between Aughton and Ellerton Ings. This bank itself is dominated by Meadowsweet, Nettles, Docks and in places, especially along the ditch sides, Glyceria. There are several other ditches and associated bunds converging at this point all with similar vegetation. The meadows themselves in this area have suffered from Docks in the last few years with small areas left uncut in previous nearby. This area is also at the top of the floodplain, slightly raised and therefore drier than the surrounding area at this time.

### **Wheldrake Ings**

The bird at this site was calling from the main meadow c100m from any 'edge' feature. This bird was present towards the setter communities occurring in an area with Meadowsweet and Docks providing cover. On the morning of the Corncrake singing at this site, five singing Quail were also noted calling from the same vegetation zone on the site.

### **Bubwith Ings**

This bird was calling from ditch side vegetation, again where several ditches and their associated bunds converge. This may well be an important factor on this site where there is little early season cover. The ditch side vegetation may well act as corridors allowing movement along these linear features. Again dominated by Meadowsweet with locally dominant areas of Nettles, Thistles and Docks with Glyceria along the ditch edges.

### **Bank Island**

This area along the riverbank is ungrazed and is dominated by Nettles, which are normally 15 – 20cm tall, by early May. As it is ungrazed there is usually dead vegetation from previous years present.

### **Bank Island**

This is on the opposite side of the river to point D and is an area of rough, cattle grazed pasture bordered by tall grasses, Cow Parsley and Nettles. The eastern boundary is a steep slope well above the floor line.

### **Bank Island**

This bird was calling on the bund running from the left of Bank Island Hide. This is a rather substantial bund dominated by Nettles and Thistles. The surrounding field is improved pasture which, as a result of cattle grazing, contains a rather tussocky sward. There are also several areas of dense Nettles and Thistles with scattered stands of Docks.

### **North Duffield Carrs**

This bird was calling from the centre of North Duffield Carrs from an area dominated by rather short Glyceria and Sedges. This bird was again calling from a point where several ditches meet, all edged by Glyceria and all with small raised bunds as a result of previous dredging programmes.

## Ellerton Ings

A single fledged juvenile seen amongst an uncut hay strip by the riverbank side. The riverbank here, as in most sites in summer, is grazed by cattle, while the strip where the bird was seen was MG4 hay meadow.

## Corncrake Management – 1999

In addition to the 1999 nocturnal survey, several practical steps were started in order to safeguard Corncrakes on the site. First, all the calling sites were identified and mapped, with a 250m radius drawn round this location. The ownership and tenancy of each strip falling within this 250m radius from the calling site was established and the farmers approached. They were asked (on a voluntary basis) to:

1. Delay the cutting on these strips to last,
2. Use Corncrake friendly methods (cut from the centre of the field out or from one side to the other).

This was well received and presented no problem. In one case, a farmer cut all of his strips (including those with no records of calling Corncrake during the year) in this manner.

Several areas of fencing were also erected during the area in order to create or extend the amount of early season cover around the Reserve. This including over 1km along the Old Course on the Low Grounds and c700m around the top pond field at North Duffield Carrs. Both areas are already a good source of early season cover with Cow Parsley and Nettles/Thistles present respectively and both sites have held calling males in recent years.

Opportunities were also taken elsewhere, such as at Bank Island, where existing fencing was replaced as it was slipping into the ditch. The fence (approx. 150m) was replaced c1m from the ditch side in order to rectify the situation but also to maximise the early cover available.

## Spotted Crane - *Porzana porzana*

April	22 <sup>nd</sup>	A single giving occasional whips at Wheldrake from 2100hrs to 022.30hrs.
	24 <sup>th</sup>	A single gave four whips at Bubwith from the borrow pits by the lay-by near the bridge from 22.15hrs – 23.10hrs.
	27 <sup>th</sup>	A single whip at Wheldrake at 21.25hrs.
	30 <sup>th</sup>	Three birds calling at Wheldrake with occasional whips from 2100hrs – 22,10hrs. Two from Tower hide and a single in the Swantail area.
May	2 <sup>nd</sup>	A single whip from in front of Riverside hide, Wheldrake at 22.20hrs.
	5 <sup>th</sup>	A single calling occasionally from Tower hide, Wheldrake at 22.30hrs.
	6 <sup>th</sup>	A single heard at North Duffield Carrs, with three whips in succession at 07.30hrs.

- 10<sup>th</sup> Three, possibly four males, singing well at Bubwith Ings at 2200hrs – 22.30hrs, with another from the borrow pit by Bubwith bridge.
- 11<sup>th</sup> Two giving only occasional whips from Bubwith Ings from 2200hrs with a single whip at Bubwith bridge pits at 22.25hrs.
- 17<sup>th</sup> A single whip at Brighton Meadows at 2200hrs.
- 19<sup>th</sup> A single calling three times at Wheldrake at 03.10hrs.
- 21<sup>st</sup> A single whip at Aughton at 22.45hrs.
- 22<sup>nd</sup> A single whip at Aughton at 22.45hrs.
- 22<sup>nd</sup> A single singing at Bubwith Ings, three whips at 23.30hrs.
- June 21<sup>st</sup> Two birds calling occasionally, sometimes against each other, at 23.20hrs – 0000hrs at North Duffield Carrs.
- July 24<sup>th</sup> A single gave two whips at Bank Island at 00.30hrs.
- Aug 10<sup>th</sup> A single juvenile flushed from the central bund at Bank Island.

In total, at least 16 singing males were thought to be present around the site during 1999. This is the second highest total on the Reserve since the Species apparently colonised the site in 1995 (see Table).

#### Annual total of singing male Spotted Crakes in the Lower Derwent Valley 1995 – 1999

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Singing males	6	3	5	31	16

That the second highest total of singing males should occur following the record influx in 1998 is interesting and may well in part reflect birds returning to the site in successive years. Several other interesting points also came to light.

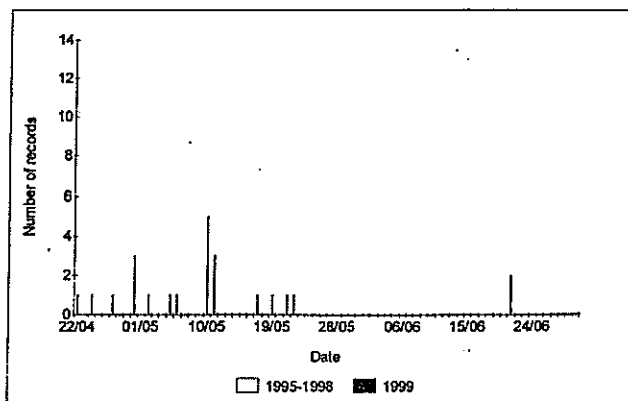
Alan Bamford (an EN volunteer) undertaking survey work at Bubwith bridge at dusk on 10<sup>th</sup> May phoned the office to inform us that he had heard what he thought was three or four Spotted Crakes on Bubwith Ings. We returned the following evening where after a long wait two birds were heard occasionally calling. The location of these birds was, almost to the metre, identical to those where birds had called in 1998 and those birds were first heard calling from 9<sup>th</sup> May.

In 1998, whilst undertaking BBS survey work at North Duffield Ings on 21<sup>st</sup> June, I flushed a single Spotted Crane from the transect line. At the same time, although unknown at the time, Chris Wright (an EN volunteer) also undertaking a BBS transect at East Cottingwith recorded a single singing male.

In 1999, two singing males were recorded on North Duffield Carrs on 21<sup>st</sup> June while the latest singing male on record for the site was heard at Bank Island on 24<sup>th</sup> July.

The figure below shows the daily distribution of records from 1995 – 1999 (excluding extremes).

#### Daily Distribution of Singing Male Spotted Crakes in the Lower Derwent Valley 1995 – 1999



#### Other Species

##### Bittern

A single was heard to boom once at Headrace (probably from the Old Course area to the north east of Swantail hide) at 21.00hrs on 23<sup>rd</sup> April. An EN volunteer fieldworker, J Turner, reported a single, faint, distant boom to the south of Wheldrake at dusk on 27<sup>th</sup> April and finally, a visiting birder from Tyneside reported booming at Wheldrake at 07.40 hrs on 8<sup>th</sup> May, again from the Old Course to the north east side of Swantail Ings.

He had just returned from birding on the continent a week earlier where he had heard numerous Bitterns. Whilst talking to the owner of Rossmoor Grande, Melbourne, about project Barn Owl, he mentioned several other interesting records. He seemed quite knowledgeable and knew of several other Barn Owl sites and had heard Quail and a Bittern which had been booming every night at dusk during the last week of April and first week in May from the Pocklington Canal/Scotland Bottoms area. This may have been a second individual.

The recent changes in water level and habitat management at Wheldrake Ings are unlikely to benefit the valley Bitterns, whilst the two large fish kills in consecutive years will undoubtedly have an adverse effect of the chances of re-colonisation.

##### Garganey

Although considered to be well monitored by standard monitoring techniques, as in 1998 birds were found to be particularly active during the three hours after darkness with both males and females being rather vocal. Although on well-watched sites such as Wheldrake this made little difference to monitoring, on sites with just one or two pairs, which were otherwise elusive, it was a good indicator of activity. A total of 21 pairs was located – see breeding season summary for full details.

## **Teal**

As always a difficult species to census due to its elusive nature during the breeding season. Once again nocturnal records were usual in the monitoring of this species, especially, as with Garganey, at sites with low numbers. The nocturnal survey work for example was responsible for almost all the records of the three pairs which remained at Wheldrake Ings.

## **Quail**

Another excellent year which now almost appears to be the norm. A total of 63 singing males was located during the year between the first at Thornton Ellers on 4<sup>th</sup> May and the last, also there, on 16<sup>th</sup> August. Small but notable influxes occurred on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> May and around 10<sup>th</sup>, 14-15<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>–25<sup>th</sup> June and again in late July. Birds arriving during May and June only sang on one or two nights whilst those arriving later in July and August tended to sing over several successive nights.

## **Water Rail**

Birds were largely quiet during April but 12 singing males were located throughout the site during the month. This total increased to 21 by late May but again birds were rather quiet throughout the month.

A large upsurge in activity was noted from 18<sup>th</sup> June with most calls heard being those given by a female during courtship. This period of activity lasted until 25<sup>th</sup> June with birds calling throughout the night and occasionally during the day. In total 39 calling males were located during June, many but not all sites were where birds had been recorded calling earlier in the season, suggesting this activity was associated with second broods.

A total of 53 calling birds (males and females) was located during the year with 39 singing males. This figure is lower than in 1998 but may well reflect changes in water level management at Wheldrake Ings, traditionally the stronghold in the valley for this species. Up to six calling birds were present there during early April but only two were recorded during May and none after 26<sup>th</sup> June. This site held 22 singing males from the total of 51 during 1998 and it is likely that the loss of water from the site forced many of these birds to move onto other sites.

## **Barn Owl**

This species was subject to a specific EN survey in and around the Lower Derwent Valley NNR during the year. However, numerous sightings were logged during the nocturnal survey work, especially at dawn and dusk. Several birds were also heard screeching during the hours of darkness and although this also occurred in flight this behaviour was only noted within 200m of an active nest site.

This survey has been written up as a separate report but, in summary, 274 sightings were recorded and mapped between 1<sup>st</sup> April and 31<sup>st</sup> August 1999 over an area of approximately 200 square kilometres. 52 pairs bred or attempted breeding, of which 49 active nest sites were located. In addition, 11 pairs were located to area but the nest sites were not found. A further six nest sites used in 1998 were located but not checked due to time constraints.

### Nightjar

For the fourth year in succession Nightjars were recorded on the site. During the nocturnal survey in 1998 a single was heard churring briefly in the car park lane at Wheldrake on 22<sup>nd</sup> May with two birds feeding over East Cottingwith Ings on 10<sup>th</sup> June. During the survey in 1999 a total of four churring males was located on 10<sup>th</sup> May with singles at Thornton Ellers, North Duffield Carrs and two at Melbourne Arm by the Pocklington Canal. Birds were only churring briefly and rather quietly and it is thought that these birds may have been on passage. Another singing male was at North Duffield Carrs on 17<sup>th</sup> May with a single at Breighton the same evening. These birds were also calling in a similar manner just after dusk and that six birds should appear on just two dates once again suggests passage. As only a maximum of three churring males were present on nearby Skipwith Common during the season, it is possible that these birds were moving on to the North Yorkshire Moors forests which hold a healthy population.

### Nightingale

Once again made an appearance during the year with a singing male between Wheldrake and Elvington on 23<sup>rd</sup> May, but this was the only record. In addition to last year's single at East Cottingwith (see 1998 Report) it is now known that a single singing male remained for several weeks at Crook Moor between Thorganby and Skipwith. This continues the excellent run of records during the 1990s, especially in the latter half of the decade.

### Grasshopper Warbler

Despite the full nocturnal survey during 1998 disappointing numbers of this species were located during the year with only five singing males compared to the 44 recorded in 1997. However, the 1999 survey revealed increased numbers, suggesting 1998 to have been a poor Grasshopper Warbler year in the area.

The first returning bird was reeling at Wheldrake on 14<sup>th</sup> April, a rather early arrival. Three reeling males arrived at Bank Island on 1<sup>st</sup> May with 10 scattered throughout the site by the month end. Numbers continued to increase during June with 19 reeling males located by the month end. Birds were very vocal throughout the season often reeling throughout the night from dusk to dawn. Several birds were still reeling in early July with activity suddenly dropping off from the 10<sup>th</sup> and the last singing bird heard on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

1999 BARN OWL SURVEY

OF

THE LOWER DERWENT VALLEY

(AND SURROUNDING AREA)



AUGUST 1999

prepared by C.S.Ralston (English Nature)

## Introduction

The British Barn Owl *Tyto alba* population has declined by up to 70% over the last 50 years with the British breeding population now estimated to be fewer than 4000 pairs. The sight of their ghostly white forms flitting over hedgerows in the headlights of a car is all too rare a sight in many parts of the UK. However, the Vale of York and particularly the Lower Derwent Valley apparently holds a healthy population and may represent one of the most densely populated areas in the UK.

## Aims

The aims of this survey were several fold.

- To assess accurately the true population of the Lower Derwent Valley, not only those breeding on or adjacent to the site but also those nesting further afield which may be dependant upon the site for feeding. (Whilst population estimates have been made previously by English Nature for the annual breeding season reports these have comprised mainly casual sightings and this is the first full scale survey to be undertaken.)
- To locate as many nest sites as possible and, through licensed ringing, to monitor productivity, survival and movements as part of an ongoing study.
- To feed our local results into the national surveys and monitoring schemes – the Rare Breeding Birds Panel now monitors The Barn Owl.
- To allow English Nature and others to give scientifically based, accurate information on the status, conservation and management of Barn Owls in the area.
- To monitor and when possible act against persecution – we are aware of a nest containing five, half-grown young being stolen from a nest near Melbourne in 1998,
- and finally, to bring together and co-ordinate all the groups and individuals working on Barn Owls in the area. This involves several individuals and groups erecting boxes, monitoring pairs, and ringing young throughout the area with, up to now, little interaction or flow of information. With all the information now collated centrally and passed amongst us we are all in a much better position to fulfil all of our aims.

## Methods

Initially, fieldwork was undertaken by 15 English Nature volunteer field workers and staff, recording any sightings and plotting them onto maps. Additional information was also recorded such as flight paths, if birds were carrying food, territorial encounters, or any known nest sites (past or present) and any unused boxes. Sightings were requested by late June so that we could compile the data and follow up the records. This was undertaken by English Nature staff and the help of two volunteers, Bryan Wainwright and Nick Askew. By looking at all the sightings plotted on a single map it was possible in some areas to estimate the approximate location of the nest site and with several hours of observations over following nights we were able to locate many of these pairs. Several areas appeared where we had large gaps in our knowledge so local farmers and landowners were approached with questionnaires in these areas in order to try to fill the gaps. The questionnaires were generally well received with a 98% completion success. At the same time, discussions with several people running



projects in the area based on Barn Owls also proved invaluable, with many further pairs added to the total. A list of those people and their studies appears in the Acknowledgements.

## Results

A total of 274 sightings were received and mapped, spanning 1<sup>st</sup> April 1999 to 30<sup>th</sup> August 1999.

From these sightings and from other sources as a result of this survey, 49 pairs were located to nest site and a further three are known to have bred (i.e. seen carrying food during June and July) despite the nest site remaining unlocated. A further 11 pairs were located to territory but the nest sites were not located.

An additional six sites which held breeding birds in 1998 were not checked due to lack of time or because details were received too late in the season to prove breeding.

## Summary

Pairs known to have bred (Nest site located)	52 (49)
Pairs probably breeding	11
Other known sites not checked	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>

Birds were often found nesting at high densities, with five pairs lying within two 1km squares surrounding Hagg Bridge and a total of nine pairs along the Pocklington Canal corridor. Of the 49 nest sites located, 17 were less than 700m apart, with two nests near Wheldrake only separated by 300m. Five active nest sites were also found within a 2km radius of Brighton.

Below is a breakdown of the 49 known nest sites.

Tree cavity	14	(11 Ash, 2 Oak, 1 Willow)
Building	17	
Boxes	17	(9 internal, 8 external)
Straw stack	1	
	<b>49</b>	

Several broods were monitored during the year and it is hoped to increase this effort over the coming years. Many sites are, of course, inaccessible and permission was refused to visit several others. Many sites were discovered too late into the season to allow access to be arranged but now the fieldwork has largely been undertaken we hope to monitor more nests next year.

A total of 10 pairs were monitored during 1999 with a minimum of 31 eggs laid which produced a total of 22 young to fledging from eight pairs. Two pairs failed to hatch any eggs but it is known that one of these pairs was newly formed and attempting to breed for the first time.

It is always dangerous to draw any conclusions or look for patterns from such a small sample of nest sites or from a single season, but several interesting points arose during this work which may merit further investigation.

Of those eight successful pairs, birds nesting within 1-2km of the reserve produced larger broods (4.0, n=4) than those nesting 3+km from the reserve (1.5, n=4). Of these nests monitored, broods from nests 1-2km from the reserve also fledged 2-3 weeks earlier than those nesting further afield.

Nick Askew, an English Nature volunteer involved in this survey work hopes to study this aspect of the project in more depth as part of his B.Sc., comparing the differences in clutch size, survival, laying date and territory size with food availability in different areas through pellet analysis and small mammal trapping.

At least two pairs are known to have raised second broods during the year, a single pair at Laytham and another at Storwood, although others may well have done so.

The area surveyed was estimated to be 196 square kilometres, from which 52 pairs are known to have bred and a further 11 thought to have done so. This gives a density of 25-32 pairs per 10km square, which represents an extremely high density of nesting Barn Owls. Although there are few surveys as in-depth and as localised as this one undertaken around the Derwent Valley with which to compare, project Barn Owl published means of c5.7 pairs per 10km square in East Anglia in 1996 and c1 pair per 10km square in northern England in 1997 (BTO News, No. 223). This national project (running from 1995-97) also estimated the British population of Barn Owls to be around 4000 pairs, of which 63 pairs in and around the Lower Derwent would represent c1.5%.

A total of 14 juveniles and a single adult female were ringed during the season.

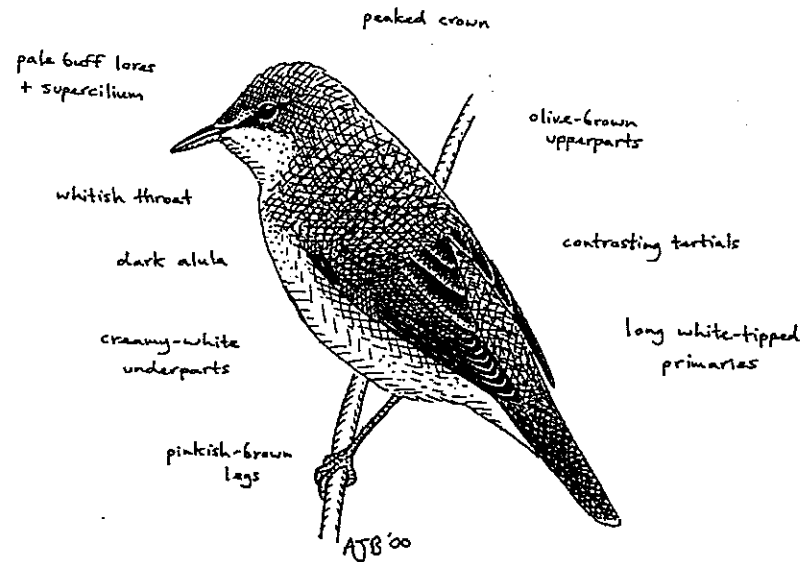
### Acknowledgements

The success of this survey is entirely the result of all the hard work undertaken by everyone involved. We would like to thank all of those involved in sending sightings during the year and supplying other records. Each and every record was useful and often pairs were located from just a single record sent in from an area. We would particularly like to thank those already working with Barn Owls in the area who kindly supplied information. They include:

Steve Elliot	A ringing study in the Pocklington and Pocklington Canal area, with several boxes erected.
Don Milner	Making and erecting boxes in and around the Wressle area.
Keith Pleavy	Undertook a Barn Owl survey throughout the Selby area, covering the Lower Derwent Valley, for the World Owl Trust from 1993-1995, also erecting some boxes in the area.
Terry Weston	Erecting boxes and giving advice, particularly in the Dunnington/Elvington area.

We would also like to thank Steve Huddleston and Mike Jackson for their assistance with monitoring and ringing of broods in the north Yorkshire and southern parts of the Lower Derwent, Bryan Wainwright and Nick Askew for undertaking questionnaires and gaining permission to visit nest sites and finally, to all the landowners who supplied information and allowed us access onto their land.

## MARSH WARBLERS NEAR YORK



As Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> June 1999 dawned fine and sunny and I had woken up early I decided to go for a morning walk down the River Ouse to Fulford Ings near York.

On reaching the north end of the Ings I heard a song which I had recently heard on tape and immediately recognized as Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*, despite never having come across a singing bird 'in the flesh'. On lifting my binoculars I picked up a greenish-brown bird perched in some dead willowherb near an area of dock. The bird was obviously an *Acrocephalus* warbler, but the greenish cast reminded me of Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*.

I then proceeded to check the rest of the Ings, returning to the initial site at about 9am. The bird was still singing from low vegetation but its performance became more intermittent before it flew into a nearby hedge.

I went home to alert other local birdwatchers and returned to the site at about 2pm, when other observers were present. However, the bird was not singing and was not seen again until about 7pm when it sang very briefly before becoming very active although elusive.

I returned early the following morning armed with a telescope and fortunately the bird was still singing and showing very well.

The following description was taken:

**Upperparts** - Olive-brown with yellower rump. Greenish cast recalling Chiffchaff in certain lights. Buff lores and supercilium to just behind eye. Pale eye-ring whitish below eye. Dark brown centres to tertials. Blackish-brown primaries narrowly tipped whitish – more obvious when bird facing away. Primary projection about equal to tertial length. Dark brown alula contrasting with paler greater coverts and primary coverts. Tail tipped paler.

**Underparts** - Creamy-white with whiter throat. Flanks washed yellow-buff.

**Bare parts** - Upper mandible of bill dark brown, lower mandible pale orange. Rich orange gape when singing. Iris dark brown. Legs pale brown, appearing pinkish in certain lights.

**Appearance** - Peaked crown when singing, but flatter with sleek overall shape when foraging.

**Song** - Varied with trills and sweeter notes incorporating mimicry including Quail *Coturnix coturnix*, Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*, Blackbird *Turdus merula*, Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*, Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*, Great Tit *Parus major*, House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*, Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*, Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* and Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*.

**Call** - Harsh 'tchik'.

**Behaviour** - Often sang from exposed perches in low marshy vegetation and occasionally from hedge. Seen chasing other small birds from territory.

**Habitat** - Dense mixed vegetation including willowherb, meadowsweet, nettles and dock.

A second bird had been suspected and this was confirmed when another bird (presumably a female) was seen on 13<sup>th</sup> June at close range while the male was still singing at the back of the marsh. The second bird was similarly olive-brown above and clean whitish below, but was perhaps a little browner than the singing bird.

However, the male was last seen and heard singing on 16<sup>th</sup> June and despite subsequent brief sightings of unstreaked *Acrocephalus* warblers, no evidence of breeding was obtained.

Good views of a juvenile Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* or Marsh Warbler were obtained on 22<sup>nd</sup> August, but not all features were visible so it was not possible to confirm its identity, especially as there had been a singing Reed Warbler in the area on 26th June. Compared to the Marsh Warblers the latter bird was more rufous-brown above with a rich rufous rump and warm buff underparts. The supercilium was less distinct and the eye-ring hardly visible. Legs were dark brown or grey-brown.

Most local birdwatchers managed to see the Marsh Warbler(s) but, owing to their occurrence in suitable breeding habitat, their presence was withheld from the bird information services. Obviously, the disturbance caused by many visitors would have been highly undesirable under the circumstances.

Andy Booth

### York Ringing Report 1999

1999 proved a good year for ringing and most ringers in the area submitted their ringing totals. Certain species have been targeted this year and this has resulted in five species being added to the list.

Cormorants have recently colonised the Lower Derwent and so it is with interest that by ringing the young it may give us an opportunity of finding out where the parent birds came from. There are now several well established inland colonies at Abberton Reservoir and in future years it will be interesting to see what dispersal patterns emerge from the Lower Derwent birds and if any of the colour-ringed birds from elsewhere arrive in the area. English Nature have made attempts to increase efforts in catching wildfowl pulli to try to increase the understanding of British bred ducklings. Consequently there has been an increase in ringed wildfowl, with 212 Mallard, 16 Gadwall, 12 Shoveler and nine Teal ringed in 1998, as well as two Tufted Duck – new to the list.

A concerted effort was made to catch Snipe in the Lower Derwent Valley NNR which has resulted in an amazing total for the list. Ringing started at Aughton on 10<sup>th</sup> July and again on the 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup>, when a total of 17 were caught. Operations then moved to Bank Island in late July and continued until 31<sup>st</sup> October and six visits yielded 61 captures. A further 14 were caught at Bubwith on 14<sup>th</sup> November and the last at Wheldrake Ings on 11<sup>th</sup> December.

The added advantage of ringing at this time of the year is that there is a possibility of catching Jack Snipe and this was the case at Bank Island, with six on 17<sup>th</sup> October when an estimated 30+ were present, three on 31<sup>st</sup> October and the last at Bubwith on 14<sup>th</sup> November. Whilst catching Snipe two more species were added to the list with Dunlin and Ruff.

Few Black-headed Gulls were ringed in 1998 so the 65 this year was a welcome increase although lower than previous years. This was probably due to large numbers of adults and immatures being affected by botulism, so this figure represents approximately 25% of surviving pulli.

Catching Swallows at the Pocklington Canal roost at Melbourne was welcome as few roosts seemed to have formed in the past few years. However, having caught 86 on 12<sup>th</sup> September and 113 on 3<sup>rd</sup> October, the roost dispersed by the 6<sup>th</sup>.

The number of warblers ringed was slightly down on 1998. Numbers of Coal, Blue and Great Tits were markedly down in both adults and pulli. As those of Chaffinch and Greenfinch were also down it would suggest that numbers at winter feeders were below normal. Pulli decreases were probably due to another poor breeding season.

Several species nationally are causes for concern and it was depressing to see that Tree Sparrow totals were below par. However, on the bright side, Bullfinch totals were up as were those of Reed Bunting which were caught at four ringing sessions on the Pocklington Canal at Melbourne. Nine were caught on 3<sup>rd</sup> October and 22 on 18<sup>th</sup> December. Overall numbers ringed in 1999 were slightly more than in 1998.

Our thanks must go to all landowners who have given permission to local ringers, particularly English Nature and Forest Enterprise. The following ringers submitted totals and recoveries: Mark Fletcher, Huddelston & Jackson partnership, Peter Reid, Dave Turner, Richard Ward-Smith, Chris Wright and English Nature.

### Recoveries and Controls

- DE46772 Sparrowhawk 3 Male Ringed 22/08/99 Kirby Wharfe, Tadcaster.  
Found freshly dead Cawood 22/10/99 (58 days, 8km)
- FA87928 Shoveler Pulli Ringed 01.07/98 Derwent Ings.  
Shot 07/08/98, Pas-de-Calais, France (37 days, 438 km)
- ST200060 Black-headed Gull Pulli Ringed 10/06/98 Hyvinkaa, Finland.  
Found dead Wheldrake Ings 20/03/99 (283 days, 1724km)
- ST202602 Black-headed Gull Pulli Ringed 30/06/98 Pori, Turku-Pori, Finland.  
Identified by colour marks, 09/02/2000, River Ouse, York (1yr 7m 9 days, 1577km)
- Another Black-headed Gull found dead at Castle Howard in January 1998 was also ringed in south west Finland, near Turku, in June 1996.
- P176769 Swallow Pulli Ringed 05.09.99 Saltholme, Teesmouth.  
Controlled Pocklington Canal, Melbourne, 03/10/99 (28 days, 83km)
- N282519 Swallow Pulli Ringed 24/08/97 Milbourne, Northumberland.  
Controlled Pocklington Canal, Melbourne, 12/09/99 (749 days, 146km)
- N415140 Siskin 5 Male Ringed 14/03/97 Selby.  
Recovered 16/05/99, Otterburn, Northumberland (63 days, 190 km)

Shoveler recoveries are most numerous from France and Black-headed Gulls from Finland are second only to the Baltic States.

Species	Pre 1999	Adults Ringed	Pullii Ringed	Total Ringed	Grand Total
Little Grebe	1	1	0	1	2
Black-necked Grebe	6	0	0	0	6
Cormorant*	0	0	20	20	20
Grey Heron	2	0	0	0	2
Mute Swan	199	5	21	26	225
Whooper Swan	2	0	0	0	2
Bewick Swan	1	0	0	0	1
Greylag Goose	49	31	32	63	112
Canada Goose	51	3	0	3	54
Shelduck	10	0	0	0	10
Wigeon	3	2	0	2	5
Gadwall	21	1	15	16	37
Teal	137	7	2	9	146
Garganey	5	1	0	1	6
Mallard	373	190	24	214	587
Shoveler	16	2	10	12	28
Pochard	5	0	0	0	5
Tufted Duck*	0	0	2	2	2
Sparrowhawk	108	1	3	4	112
Kestrel	56	0	0	0	56
Grey Partridge	4	0	0	0	4
Pheasant	3	0	0	0	3
Water Rail	4	0	0	0	4
Moorhen	370	4	0	4	374
Coot	54	4	0	4	58
Oystercatcher	6	1	0	1	7
Lapwing	241	0	14	14	255
Dunlin*	0	2	0	2	2
Ruff*	0	1	0	1	1
Jack Snipe*	0	10	0	10	10
Snipe	8	92	0	92	100
Woodcock	9	0	0	0	9
Whimbrel	1	0	0	0	1
Curlew	25	1	2	3	28
Redshank	10	29	1	30	40
Green Sandpiper	3	1	0	1	4
Common Sandpiper	1	0	0	0	1
Black-headed Gull	867	2	62	64	931
Common Gull	4	0	0	0	4
Herring Gull	1	0	0	0	1
Stock Dove	12	1	2	3	15
Wood Pigeon	101	3	5	8	109
Collared Dove	136	11	0	11	147
Turtle Dove	18	0	0	0	18
Cuckoo	12	0	0	0	12
Barn Owl	2	2	2	4	6
Tawny Owl	31	0	0	0	31

Species	Pre 1999	Adults Ringed	Pulli Ringed	Total Ringed	Grand Total
Long-eared Owl	1	0	0	0	1
Short-eared Owl	1	0	0	0	1
Nightjar	2	0	0	0	2
Swift	829	5	0	5	834
Kingfisher	94	0	0	0	94
Green Woodpecker	3	0	0	0	3
Gt.Sp.Woodpecker	81	4	0	4	85
Lr.Sp.Woodpecker	2	0	0	0	2
Skylark	24	0	0	0	27
Sand Martin	1567	81	0	81	1648
Swallow	4704	211	0	211	4915
House Martin	3341	7	0	7	3348
Tree Pipit	13	0	0	0	13
Meadow Pipit	92	1	0	0	93
Yellow Wagtail	149	0	0	0	149
Grey Wagtail	104	0	0	0	104
Pied Wagtail	1022	4	3	7	1029
Wren	2300	111	0	111	2411
Dunnock	4059	138	0	138	4197
Robin	3184	152	4	156	3340
Redstart	58	0	0	0	58
Whinchat	6	0	0	0	6
Stonechat	1	0	0	0	1
Blackbird	10373	289	24	313	10686
Fieldfare	331	3	0	3	334
Song Thrush	1870	31	8	39	1909
Redwing	1802	0	0	0	1802
Mistle Thrush	139	2	0	2	141
Grasshopper Warbler	3	0	0	0	3
Sedge Warbler	731	1	0	1	732
Reed Warbler	498	14	0	14	512
Barred Warbler	1	0	0	0	1
Lesser Whitethroat	334	9	0	9	343
Whitethroat	1430	43	0	43	1473
Garden Warbler	231	11	0	11	242
Blackcap	1778	107	0	107	1885
Wood Warbler	2	0	0	0	2
Chiffchaff	292	20	0	20	321
Willow Warbler	4300	131	0	131	4431
Goldcrest	657	12	0	12	669
Firecrest	1	0	0	0	1
Spotted Flycatcher	301	6	0	6	307
Pied Flycatcher	18	0	0	0	18
Long-tailed Tit	1879	104	0	104	1983
Marsh Tit	105	3	0	3	108
Willow Tit	517	23	0	23	540
Coal Tit	787	36	0	36	823



Species	Pre 1999	Adults Ringed	Pulli Ringed	Total Ringed	Grand Total
Great Tit	5206	250	185	435	5641
Nuthatch	10	1	0	1	11
Treecreeper	409	14	0	14	423
Jay	67	2	0	2	69
Magpie	85	6	0	6	91
Jackdaw	40	4	0	4	44
Rook	29	1	0	1	30
Carrion Crow	17	0	0	0	17
Starling	8522	53	25	78	8600
House Sparrow	1947	71	0	71	2018
Tree Sparrow	1754	26	0	26	1780
Chaffinch	7567	193	0	193	7760
Brambling	701	0	0	0	701
Greenfinch	14818	522	0	522	15340
Goldfinch	1243	37	0	37	1280
Siskin	299	52	0	52	351
Linnet	775	1	0	1	776
Redpoll	643	0	0	0	643
Bullfinch	1314	62	0	62	1376
Yellowhammer	1201	7	0	7	1208
Reed Bunting	078	36	0	36	1014
Corn Bunting	27	0	0	0	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>112376</b>	<b>3723</b>	<b>521</b>	<b>4244</b>	<b>116620</b>
<b>Species Total = 118</b>					

#### Top 10 Ringed Birds

Greenfinch	522	Greenfinch	15340
Blue Tit	461	Blue Tit	12182
Great Tit	435	Blackbird	10686
Blackbird	313	Starling	8600
Mallard	214	Chaffinch	7760
Swallow	211	Great Tit	5641
Chaffinch	193	Swallow	4915
Robin	156	Willow Warbler	4431
Duncock	138	Duncock	4197

### CLASSIFIED LIST

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

#### **Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Status: Resident breeder

Wintering birds in the Lower Derwent Valley peaked at 31 on 9<sup>th</sup> January with 23 there on 27<sup>th</sup> February and 19 birds had returned to breeding sites by 28<sup>th</sup> March. Wheldrake Ings has traditionally been the stronghold for breeding birds but there were only six pairs by mid-April falling to three pairs by the end of the month, all birds deserting the site due to rapidly falling water levels during May.

Two pairs were noted at Bank Island throughout June and July, one pair raising two young - this being the only confirmed breeding record in the valley this year. Singles were then noted from August to November when winter numbers slowly built up to 16 by 26<sup>th</sup> December.

Three birds were on ponds on Strensall Common on 12<sup>th</sup> May, one bird on a nest, though breeding was not confirmed at this site. Also, a pair was on Brandsby pond from 29<sup>th</sup> March but breeding here failed.

Singles were noted at Osbaldwick Beck, St Nicholas Fields (York) on 28<sup>th</sup> February, Yearsley Moor Ponds on 6<sup>th</sup> June, Castle Howard Lake on 28<sup>th</sup> March, 11<sup>th</sup> April and 7<sup>th</sup> November, York Waterworks ponds near Beningborough on 18<sup>th</sup> November and Newburgh Priory on 24<sup>th</sup> December with two on the River Foss at Strensall on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and two on the River Ouse at Fulford on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Occasionally seen on the lakes in Gilling Woods.

#### **Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus*

Status: Migrant breeder and passage visitor

In the Lower Derwent Valley, the first pair had returned to Wheldrake Ings by 19<sup>th</sup> March with nine pairs throughout the valley by the end of the month, though early breeding attempts were thwarted by fluctuating water levels. A record 11 pairs were noted during May but many of these moved on leaving just six pairs by the month end. Birds at Bank Island were again affected by unseasonal flooding in June and all clutches were lost although a pair at Wheldrake Ings managed to hatch two chicks on the 25<sup>th</sup> but then found it difficult to find food and both chicks were lost by 11<sup>th</sup> July. All birds had departed by the end of the month.

A single bird at Rawcliffe Lake from 18<sup>th</sup> January was joined by a mate on 5<sup>th</sup> March, with a third bird present on the 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>. The first breeding attempt failed but four chicks were hatched on 7<sup>th</sup> July and two fledged with one adult remaining until 14<sup>th</sup> October. One was present from 22<sup>nd</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> November.

Good numbers were reported from Castle Howard Lake throughout the year with peak counts of 16 on 5<sup>th</sup> February, 12 on 8<sup>th</sup> April and ten on 6<sup>th</sup> October, but no breeding records were received although a pair was noted displaying on the unusual date of 5<sup>th</sup> December.

Elsewhere, a pair on the bottom lake in Gilling Woods from 16<sup>th</sup> March raised one young. Pairs were also noted at Pond Head, Oulston on 22<sup>nd</sup> March and Yearsley Moor Ponds on 6<sup>th</sup> June. A single was on the River Ouse near Beningborough on 24<sup>th</sup> March and a moulting adult on the Ouse at Fulford

from 12<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> July. An immature was also seen here on several dates between 4<sup>th</sup> September and 29<sup>th</sup> December.

**Slavonian Grebe** *Podiceps auritus*

Status: Scarce winter visitor

A winter-plumaged bird was on the River Derwent at East Cottingwith on 31<sup>st</sup> January (EN).

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

Status: Summer visitor

A pair appeared at Wheldrake Ings on 4<sup>th</sup> April with another two pairs arriving on the 7<sup>th</sup>. Two pairs at North Duffield Carrs on the same day had moved on next day. Three to four birds were seen regularly at Wheldrake Ings until the 15<sup>th</sup> but there were no sightings thereafter. Extensive searching in June and July failed to reveal any evidence of breeding and it would appear that the birds have deserted this site (EN).

**Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Status: Passage and winter visitor and recently established resident

16 birds were roosting at Wheldrake Ings throughout January increasing to 69 by the end of April, the first brood being noted at this time. By early June, 32 nests had been located with 89 birds seen on the 12<sup>th</sup> - some of these being colour-ringed birds from Denmark - and 101 young had been fledged by the end of the month. Numbers then fell through July and August with small numbers thereafter slowly increasing in December to 27 by the year end.

Present at Castle Howard Lake all year with a maximum count of 16 on 19<sup>th</sup> May. A single was on the River Ouse at Poppleton on 17<sup>th</sup> February with four between here and Beningborough on 24<sup>th</sup> March and 12 on the York Waterworks ponds near there on 18<sup>th</sup> November plus 16 in a tree half a mile down river.

Elsewhere, singles were noted from Pond Head, Oulston and flying over Fulford Ings on 3<sup>rd</sup> October.

**Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris*

Status: Scarce winter and spring visitor

One was heard 'booming' at Wheldrake Ings on 23<sup>rd</sup> April and again on 8<sup>th</sup> May with another heard south of Wheldrake on 27<sup>th</sup> April. A 'booming' bird was also reported from the Pocklington Canal near Melbourne in late March and early April (EN).

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*

Status: Resident breeder

Low winter numbers in the Lower Derwent Valley increased from early May with falling water levels to 30+ at Wheldrake Ings in late June and early July.

The Wheldrake heronry held only 14 pairs this year while seven pairs were at the Thornton heronry and several pairs nested along the Pocklington Canal.

The concentration of birds moved to Bank Island in July with 20 present by the end of the month and 27 on 6<sup>th</sup> August. Numbers then fell again in September remaining low until the end of the year.

Small numbers were present throughout the year at Castle Howard Lake where two nests were noted during the breeding season.

Birds were also reported from Aldby Park, Askham Bog, Cass Wood (Huby), Stonegrave, Yearsley Moor, Gilling Woods, Hovingham Park, New Earswick Nature Reserve, Warthill and the River Ouse between Poppleton and Bishopthorpe.

**Mute Swan** *Cygnus olor*

Status: Resident breeder, passage migrant and winter visitor

Large numbers wintered in the Lower Derwent Valley with a record count of 171 on 31<sup>st</sup> January. Many non-breeding birds departed during February but 100+ remained well into the breeding season and a record 28 pairs bred - Wheldrake Ings and the Pocklington Canal being the main sites. However, heavy losses were suffered for a variety of reasons - not least the fluctuating water levels - and only 23 cygnets were fledged. Numbers increased through October with 78 present by late November, the highest concentration being 23 at Hagg Bridge with 31 there at the year end.

At Rawcliffe Lake, the resident pair plus two immatures remained from last year - the latter being driven off by April when the adults started to breed again. Four cygnets were raised this year but none survived. A third adult bird was present from 14<sup>th</sup> October to the end of the year.

Up to five birds were present throughout the year at Castle Howard Lake with a report of four pairs breeding, although only one immature was noted on 5<sup>th</sup> December.

Other breeding pairs were noted at Stearsby Pond, Wiganthorpe, the River Ouse at Poppleton, Newburgh Priory and the River Rye near West Ness. Pairs also noted at Pond Head, Oulston and Yearsley Moor ponds.

Elsewhere, two were on the River Ouse near Lendal Bridge, York on 2<sup>nd</sup> January, a single over Fulford Ings on 28<sup>th</sup> August, four over Butterwick on 17<sup>th</sup> November, three immatures on Gilling Woods ponds on 10<sup>th</sup> December and two over Strensall Common on the 12<sup>th</sup>.

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

Status: Winter visitor

16 at Bank Island on 3<sup>rd</sup> January had moved on next day while 34 wintering at North Duffield Carrs early in the month increased to 61 by the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Numbers then fell to 21 by the end of February and all birds had departed by 5<sup>th</sup> March except for an immature which remained until the 21<sup>st</sup>.

The first returning birds were four flying south at Bank Island on 19<sup>th</sup> October with a single present at North Duffield Carrs on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Another there on 5<sup>th</sup> November was the last sighting until three arrived on 19<sup>th</sup> December, increasing to ten by the year end.

**Whooper Swan** *Cygnus cygnus*

Status: Winter visitor

Winter numbers in the Lower Derwent Valley peaked at 88 on 22<sup>nd</sup> January with 66 still present in early February. Numbers then fluctuated as northward migrating birds passed through with a maximum count of 91 on 28<sup>th</sup> March.

The first returning birds were 11 at Bubwith Bridge on 28<sup>th</sup> October increasing to 31 by the end of November and 83 by the year end - the birds favouring the large arable field south of the North Duffield Carrs car park then roosting on either the Carrs or Bubwith Ings. The only sighting away from the Lower Derwent was of 16 flying north-west over St Nicholas Fields, York on 28<sup>th</sup> March.

**Bean Goose** *Anser fabalis*

Status: Winter visitor and late winter passage migrant

One or two lingered with the Greylag Geese *Anser anser* and Pink-footed Geese *Anser brachyrhynchus* at Wheldrake Ings throughout February. An amazing 175 dropped in at North Duffield Carrs at dusk on the 13<sup>th</sup> but moved on early next day. 20 were at Ellerton on the 20<sup>th</sup> with 11 at North Duffield Carrs on the 25<sup>th</sup> - five remaining to 2<sup>nd</sup> March - and a single was present at Wheldrake from 5<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> April.

Later in the year, nine were seen flying south-east from Wheldrake Ings on 29<sup>th</sup> November and a single flying east from there on 27<sup>th</sup> December.

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

Status: Winter visitor and passage migrant

Three birds were with the Greylag Goose *Anser anser* flock at Wheldrake Ings throughout January but large numbers passing through peaked at 280 flying north over Bubwith on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. In February, eight birds accompanied the Greylags and northward moving birds peaked at 227 on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 440 on the 20<sup>th</sup>. 11 birds remained until 20<sup>th</sup> March with two present thereafter. 250 moved north over North Duffield Carrs on the 7<sup>th</sup> while the two birds increased to 13 on 8<sup>th</sup> April with 11 from the 13<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>, eight remaining until the 26<sup>th</sup>. One or two birds lingered in the North Duffield Carrs area throughout May.

A flock of 30 flying south over Elvington on 2<sup>nd</sup> October were the first returning birds, with three at Wheldrake Ings on the 10<sup>th</sup> and two birds present at this site throughout November and December, while the only flock noted during this period was 14 at Bank Island in December.

Elsewhere, one was at Castle Howard Lake on 10<sup>th</sup> January, two there on 16<sup>th</sup> March, three on the 28<sup>th</sup> and four on 11<sup>th</sup> April. Also, a single bird commuting around York with Greylag Geese early in the year was noted at Skeldergate Bridge on 23<sup>rd</sup> January and Rawcliffe Lake on 1<sup>st</sup> February. The same bird was probably then seen with Canada Geese *Branta canadensis* at the York Waterworks ponds near Beningborough on 24<sup>th</sup> March.

Addition to 1998 Report: 670 flew west over Upper Poppleton on 10<sup>th</sup> February.

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

Status: Winter visitor

A single was at Wheldrake Ings from 1<sup>st</sup> January with another 33 arriving on the 14<sup>th</sup> increasing to 103 by the end of the month; but all moved on in early February. Seven were at Bank Island on the 13<sup>th</sup> with 14 there from the 26<sup>th</sup>, back to seven by 3<sup>rd</sup> March with one remaining from the 8<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>. One of the European race *albifrons* was at Wheldrake Ings throughout April until the 26<sup>th</sup> (EN).

Later in the year, a single was present at Wheldrake from 5<sup>th</sup> November to the year end with eight at Thornton Ellers on 21<sup>st</sup> November and 18 roosted at Bank Island on 11<sup>th</sup> December.

**Greylag Goose** *Anser anser*

Status: Resident breeder, passage migrant and winter visitor

1000+ wintering in the Lower Derwent Valley in January decreased to 520 in February then to 312 by the end of March. During April, 40 pairs were noted throughout the valley and the first brood appeared at North Duffield Cams on 3<sup>rd</sup> May with 53 goslings by June, but generally a poor breeding year due to fluctuating water levels.

Numbers remained low through July steadily increasing in August to 470, but there were no further influxes until late October with 650 by the 26<sup>th</sup>, 500+ remaining to the year end.

300+ were at Castle Howard Lake early in the year with 600 from 27<sup>th</sup> February to 14<sup>th</sup> March. 95 were still present on 31<sup>st</sup> May, 50+ remaining in June. Later in the year, 106 on 16<sup>th</sup> October increased to 550+ by the end of the year.

Present throughout the year in the Skeldergate Bridge/Rowntree Park area of York with 135 there on 28<sup>th</sup> November; also 40-50 on the River Foss around Monk Bridge, goslings noted at both sites in June. Up to 40 were commuting in and out of Rawcliffe Lake throughout the year and records were also received from Sand Hutton, Towthorpe, Dringhouses, Cass Wood (Huby), Terrington, Strensall Common, Newburgh Priory, Pond Head (Oulston), Beningborough, New Earswick Nature Reserve and Gilling Woods ponds.

**Canada Goose** *Branta canadensis*

Status: Resident breeder and winter visitor

In the Lower Derwent Valley, numbers peaked at 450 in January decreasing to 280 through February and March with 38 pairs remaining in April. Breeding losses were high due to the fluctuating water levels and just 12 adults with a creche of 35 goslings at Wheldrake Ings were noted during May. 70 birds remained through the summer then 106 in late September steadily increased to 812 by the end of the year. A single at Wheldrake on 18<sup>th</sup> September showed characteristics of one of the smaller vagrant races, probably *minima* (EN). No description received.

At Castle Howard Lake there were 300+ present early in the year with 50+ remaining through the summer, numbers then increasing to 250 by late December.

Present all year in the Skeldergate Bridge/Rowntree Park area of York with a maximum count of 39 in early August and 23 goslings noted in June. Up to 30 birds were commuting in and out of Rawcliffe Lake throughout the year.

14 were present at York University Lake on 14<sup>th</sup> January with 20 on the River Foss at Monk Bridge on the 16<sup>th</sup>. A flock of 19 was at Newburgh Priory lake on 1<sup>st</sup> April with 57 there on 16<sup>th</sup> September and 39 at Harem Hill, Towthorpe from 1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> October. In November, 31 were at Wiganthorpe Lake on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 120 at the York Waterworks ponds near Beningborough on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

Also reported during the year from Yearsley Common, Pond Head (Oulston), Terrington, Sutton-on-the-Forest and Gilling Woods ponds.

**Barnacle Goose** *Branta leucopsis*

Status: Winter visitor and feral wanderer

A single was seen at Wheldrake Ings throughout January and one at Castle Howard Lake on 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> February. Another bird arriving at Wheldrake Ings with a flock of Pink-footed Geese *Anser*

*brachyrhynchus* on 18<sup>th</sup> April had moved on next day and one there on 15<sup>th</sup> May had moved to North Duffield Carrs the following day where it remained until the 19<sup>th</sup>.

A bird seen earlier in the year was reported from the rivers Ouse and Foss in York on 18<sup>th</sup> July and in the Skeldergate Bridge area on 6<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> August and again on 3<sup>rd</sup> October. Another was at Wheldrake Ings from 28<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> October while one was with a large flock of Canada Geese *Branta canadensis* at the York Waterworks ponds near Beningborough on 18<sup>th</sup> November and another seen regularly at Wheldrake Ings through December.

**Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna*

Status: Winter visitor, migrant breeder and scarce passage migrant

Wintering numbers in the Lower Derwent Valley increased from 40 in January to 66 by late February with 142 present through March and April. In May, 82 pairs were located and as most tended to breed off-site they were unaffected by the fluctuating water levels. Although the majority of broods were taken straight down river to the Humber, the last two females plus young were still at North Duffield Carrs and Bank Island in early July. The first returning birds were four at Wheldrake Ings on 19<sup>th</sup> October slowly increasing to 18 by the end of December.

Two at York University Lake on 11<sup>th</sup> February was the only record away from the Lower Derwent this year.

**Wigeon** *Anas penelope*

Status: Winter visitor, spring passage migrant and resident breeder

The usual high numbers wintered in the Lower Derwent Valley with counts of 5000+ in January, 9300 on 6<sup>th</sup> February and 7100 on 2<sup>nd</sup> March. 3600 remaining at the beginning of April quickly declined to 670 by the 18<sup>th</sup> and 27 pairs in early May dropped with the falling water levels to just seven by the month end - a brood of 13 at Aughton on the 13<sup>th</sup> was the only breeding record this year. Seven birds remained through June with sightings of singles thereafter until 28 were counted on 29<sup>th</sup> August. Numbers rose to 360 by the end of September then quickly increased to 2200 in October, 3400 in November and 8500 by late December.

Elsewhere there were four males on York University Lake from 10<sup>th</sup> January to 16<sup>th</sup> February, five at Castle Howard Lake on 2<sup>nd</sup> January with two pairs there on 28<sup>th</sup> October and 6<sup>th</sup> November and two pairs at the York Waterworks ponds near Beningborough on 24<sup>th</sup> March with 60 birds there on 18<sup>th</sup> November.

**Gadwall** *Anas strepera*

Status: Winter visitor and migrant breeder

In the Lower Derwent Valley, wintering numbers increased from 142 in early January to 250 in March peaking at 344 on 28<sup>th</sup> February. 70 pairs were located in the valley during May with broods noted at North Duffield Carrs, Bank Island and Wheldrake Ings. More broods were seen in June and 42 moulting drakes were at Wheldrake Ings on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Numbers then fell and remained low until the end of November, slowly increasing to 71 by the end of the year.

The only other record this year was of five at Castle Howard Lake on 2<sup>nd</sup> January.

**Teal** *Anas crecca*

Status: Winter visitor and resident breeder

The wintering population in the Lower Derwent Valley peaked at 6100 in January with 4300 remaining until March. Numbers then fell rapidly throughout April, 24 pairs remaining in early May. Breeding success was poor with two ducklings at Wheldrake Ings in July being the only record. Numbers stayed low until late September then steadily increased to 4200 by the year end. Elsewhere, two pairs were at Castle Howard Lake on 13<sup>th</sup> March with three on 16<sup>th</sup> October increasing to 45 by the 24<sup>th</sup> and 62 on 6<sup>th</sup> December dropping to 15 on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Also, three were at Newburgh Priory on 22<sup>nd</sup> March, a pair on Strensall Common on 2<sup>nd</sup> April and a male calling at Skipwith Common on 9<sup>th</sup> June.

A drake of the American race *carolinensis* ('Green-winged Teal') was at Bank Island on 18<sup>th</sup> November (EN).

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*

Status: Winter visitor and resident breeder

Up to 2500 birds wintered in the Lower Derwent Valley with an estimated 600 pairs remaining to breed, the first brood appearing on 25<sup>th</sup> April, but as with most other waterbirds in the valley it was a poor breeding year. Up to 800 were present until the end of October when returning birds swelled numbers to 2100 in November peaking at 3600 on 26<sup>th</sup> December.

Resident populations noted elsewhere: on the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe with a maximum of 120 in October, c. 40 at Rowntree Park, c. 80 at Rawcliffe Lake, c. 50 on the River Foss in York and 80 at Castle Howard Lake with 200+ there in the winter months. Also recorded from numerous locations in the north of the recording area with the main concentrations at Newburgh Priory - 150+ on 2<sup>nd</sup> January - and Pond Head, Oulston - 200+ on 31<sup>st</sup> October. Other records were received from Dringhouses, Welburn, St Nicholas Fields (York), Osbaldwick, New Earswick Nature Reserve, Strensall Common and Skipwith Common.

**Pintail** *Anas acuta*

Status: Winter visitor and scarce migrant breeder





The Lower Derwent Valley held 200+ birds throughout January with 240 in February, the largest concentration being 167 at North Duffield Carrs on the 27<sup>th</sup>. 302 in the valley in March decreased to 100 by the month end with just three pairs remaining by the end of April, two of which departed in early May and the third failed.

A female was at Wheldrake Ings on 29<sup>th</sup> July, a male there on 22<sup>nd</sup> August and two females at North Duffield Carrs on 10<sup>th</sup> September with a single there on the 16<sup>th</sup>. 11 at Bank Island on 4<sup>th</sup> December increased to 41 by the 12<sup>th</sup> with 140 throughout the valley by the end of the month.

Elsewhere, single males were at Castle Howard Lake on 10<sup>th</sup> January and York University Lake on 16<sup>th</sup> February.

**Garganey** *Anas querquedula*

Status: Summer breeder

A pair arrived at Wheldrake Ings on 28<sup>th</sup> March with a male next day at Bank Island and five pairs were present by 4<sup>th</sup> April. Numbers increased through April and 21 pairs were located in May, a male showing well on the pool at Wheldrake Ings from the 8<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> and the first brood of eight ducklings appearing at Bank Island on the 30<sup>th</sup>. A poor showing during June with just single sightings up to the 18<sup>th</sup> May have indicated a mass exodus from the site and there were no further sightings until the 30<sup>th</sup> when a duck appeared at Bank Island, this bird was accompanied by eight ducklings on 3<sup>rd</sup> July. A single male was at Wheldrake Ings on 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> July with three at Bank Island from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the month end. An immature was at Wheldrake Ings on 17<sup>th</sup> August while two immatures at Bank Island on 1<sup>st</sup> September were the last.

**Shoveler** *Anas clypeata*

Status: Resident breeder and winter visitor

Up to 350 wintered in the Lower Derwent Valley with a peak of 411 on 5<sup>th</sup> March, numbers then falling throughout April. 80 pairs were located in May and broods were noted at Ellerton, Bank Island, Wheldrake Ings and North Duffield Carrs. Birds became scarce by the end of June with just four drakes remaining at Wheldrake on the 28<sup>th</sup> and four females plus young there next day, numbers staying low until September. There was a steady rise in numbers to 92 by the end of November, falling again to 42 by late December.

Elsewhere there was a female at Castle Howard Lake on 2<sup>nd</sup> January with a pair there on 3<sup>rd</sup> April and a female at Rawcliffe Lake on 21<sup>st</sup> July.

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

Status: Rare visitor with the possibility of escapes from captivity

A male in eclipse plumage was at Wheldrake Ings on 17<sup>th</sup> July (EN).

**Pochard** *Aythya ferina*

Status: Winter visitor and migrant breeder

In the Lower Derwent Valley, 110 on 1<sup>st</sup> January increased dramatically to 1011 by the 31<sup>st</sup> then fell again to 300 by the end of February, nine pairs remaining at the end of April. A brood of two was on the pool at Wheldrake Ings on 29<sup>th</sup> May but neither survived and all other breeding attempts failed.

There were single bird sightings thereafter until small numbers began returning throughout October, building up to 100+ from late November to the year end.

50 were at Castle Howard Lake early in the year with 62 there on 10<sup>th</sup> January and 16 remaining on 13<sup>th</sup> March. Three males put in an appearance on 27<sup>th</sup> June and ten birds returning on 16<sup>th</sup> October increased to 45 by the end of the year.

Elsewhere there were three on the River Ouse at Bishopthorpe all year, up to five wintering at Rawcliffe Lake, eight at Holiday Chalet Lake, Moor Lane on 1<sup>st</sup> January with a male at Rowntree Park, York on the 10<sup>th</sup> and up to 12 at Newburgh Priory early in the year.

**Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula*

Status: Winter visitor and migrant breeder

Up to 300 were in the Lower Derwent Valley early in the year, the extensive flooding during March attracting large numbers including a record count of 714 on the 15<sup>th</sup> with 600 remaining until the month end then declining through April. 61 pairs were located in May with 12 broods appearing in June and 50 males at Bank Island late in the month. Two females with 33 ducklings were there on 3<sup>rd</sup> July then numbers remained low until 49 arrived at North Duffield Carrs on 9<sup>th</sup> October steadily increasing to 71 by the end of the year.

Small numbers were present throughout the year at Castle Howard Lake with peak counts of 55 on 10<sup>th</sup> January and 68 on 9<sup>th</sup> May and up to seven were at Rawcliffe Lake during the winter months. Eight were at Rowntree Park, York on 9<sup>th</sup> January with five there next day and up to six present on the River Foss in York during January while four were at the latter site on 17<sup>th</sup> February. Meanwhile, eight juveniles were on Stearsby Pond on 17<sup>th</sup> August with 11 juveniles at Brandsby Pond the same day.

Also recorded at Newburgh Priory, Pond Head (Oulston), Yearsley Common ponds, Terrington and on the River Ouse.

**Scaup** *Aythya marina*

Status: Winter visitor and passage migrant in small numbers

Singles females were at Wheldrake Ings on 31<sup>st</sup> January and North Duffield Carrs on 27<sup>th</sup> March with a first-winter male on the pool at Wheldrake on 30<sup>th</sup> October (EN).

**Common Scoter** *Melanitta nigra*

Status: Rare visitor

A male was seen from the Swantail hide at Wheldrake Ings on 11<sup>th</sup> April (EN).

**Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula*

Status: Winter visitor and passage migrant

Small numbers early in the year at Wheldrake Ings peaked at 41 on 5<sup>th</sup> March decreasing to seven by the end of April, an immature male remaining until 8<sup>th</sup> May. Four birds returned on 14<sup>th</sup> November and stayed to the end of the year.

Single males were at Yearsley Moor ponds on 1<sup>st</sup> January and Newburgh Priory in mid-February with up to five at Castle Howard Lake throughout February and March. Later in the year, a female was at Rawcliffe Lake on 15<sup>th</sup> October with a male seen flying along the River Ouse at Fulford Ings on the

30<sup>th</sup> and again on 20<sup>th</sup> November. Another male was at Castle Howard Lake on 6<sup>th</sup> November with six birds there on 27<sup>th</sup> December and a female on floodwater near Bishopthorpe Bridge the same day.

**Smew** *Mergus albellus*

Status: Almost annual winter visitor

A male appeared briefly at Wheldrake Ings on 26<sup>th</sup> February. Later in the year, a male flew over this site on 19<sup>th</sup> December while a pair was on the River Derwent at Bank Island on the 20<sup>th</sup> and two males at Sutton Ings on the 26<sup>th</sup> (EN).

**Red-breasted Merganser** *Mergus serrator*

Status: Passage and winter visitor

A male with the Goosander *Mergus merganser* flock at Wheldrake Ings on 2<sup>nd</sup> January was the only record (EN).

**Goosander** *Mergus merganser*

Status: Winter visitor and passage migrant

Good numbers were recorded early in the year at Wheldrake Ings with peak counts of 137 on 2<sup>nd</sup> January and 171 on 13<sup>th</sup> February. 30 remained in late March, all departing during April with a late male on 11<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> May. The first returning bird, a female, flew along the canal at Storwood on 29<sup>th</sup> October with singles appearing at Wheldrake Ings in early November increasing to 17 by the 21<sup>st</sup> and 32 by 24<sup>th</sup> December.

Another good wintering site, Castle Howard Lake, held 64 birds on 2<sup>nd</sup> January but an early departure left just ten there on 7<sup>th</sup> February. 16 had returned by 6<sup>th</sup> November increasing to 54 by 11<sup>th</sup> December with 69 there on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

Elsewhere there was a male and three females at Pond Head, Oulston on 2<sup>nd</sup> January, eight there on 4<sup>th</sup> February and a single male on 22<sup>nd</sup> March. Also, five were at Newton Mask on 8<sup>th</sup> January, a male on Rawcliffe Lake on the 18<sup>th</sup> and two pairs on the River Ouse at Poppleton on 9<sup>th</sup> February.

Later in the year, ten were at Wiganthorpe Lake on 6<sup>th</sup> November, a female on the River Rye near Little Habton on the 17<sup>th</sup> and a pair on the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe on 29<sup>th</sup> December.

**Ruddy Duck** *Oxyura jamaicensis*

Status: Migrant breeder

A male was at Wheldrake Ings throughout January with five present in February. Three pairs at the end of March increased to six pairs in April with nine birds elsewhere in the Lower Derwent Valley. A female with five ducklings appeared on 26<sup>th</sup> June with five males and two females on the 30<sup>th</sup> - one pair with ducklings remaining by the end of July. A male was then present from 15<sup>th</sup> August until the year end.

Small numbers were present throughout the year at Castle Howard Lake with a female and 11 ducklings seen on 1<sup>st</sup> June and 15 birds on 6<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> December while two pairs were displaying at Rawcliffe Lake on 17<sup>th</sup> July, one pair still present next day.

**[Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*]**

Status: Irregular summer migrant

One flew north at Elvington on the unusual date of 11<sup>th</sup> July (EN). Usually observed in May, June and September. Only the fourth record since 1990, but no description received.

**Red Kite *Milvus milvus***

Status: Irregular visitor

With the recent release of birds in West Yorkshire it is expected that sightings will become more common in the area although the last sightings were of two well-observed birds and two single birds in 1996.

A single was reported adjacent to the Lower Derwent Valley NNR on 22<sup>nd</sup> April (EN) while one at Sutton-on-the-Forest on 7<sup>th</sup> May was seen later at Whenby and Farlington (PH). Others were observed flying north over the pool at Wheldrake Ings on 1<sup>st</sup> August (EN) and drifting slowly along the edge of the Wolds from Melbourne on 3<sup>rd</sup> October while an untagged bird flew east at Escrick on the 18<sup>th</sup> (EN).

**Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus***

Status: Passage migrant and rare breeder

As expected all records came from the Lower Derwent Valley.

It was a rather disappointing start to the year with the first bird, characterized by a rather dark cream-crown, not appearing at Bank Island until 10<sup>th</sup> May. Two females arrived at Wheldrake Ings on the 22<sup>nd</sup> with one or two daily there until the end of the month. Up to two females lingered throughout June while another took up residence in the Ellerton/Aughton area towards the month end.

Almost daily sightings continued of 'cream-crowns' in the valley in July, appearing at Aughton, Bank Island, Ellerton, North Duffield Carrs and Wheldrake. In August, up to three individuals remained with two immatures seen regularly at Aughton, Bank Island and Wheldrake whilst a female roosted daily at North Duffield Carrs. At least two, possibly three, 'cream-crowns' lingered throughout September with almost daily sightings coming from the south of the reserve at Aughton, Bubwith and North Duffield Carrs where the last was seen on 1<sup>st</sup> October.

It was one of the best years on record for long-staying females with one or two daily from late May to early September, but no males were seen. Unlike previous years there was no suggestion of breeding in the locality and it is probable that the immatures present in late August/September were from the population in the Humber.

**Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus***

Status: Winter visitor and passage migrant

The long-staying bird from 1998 was at North Duffield Carrs on 1<sup>st</sup> January and at Seavy Carr next day. A male present on Skipwith Common from late January until early March was probably responsible for the sightings of males at North Duffield Carrs on 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 6<sup>th</sup> February and 10<sup>th</sup> March and at Wheldrake Ings on 13<sup>th</sup> February.

The only autumn record was a ringtail drifting slowly south at North Duffield Carrs on 28<sup>th</sup> October.

Two winter and one autumn bird represent the worst year since a similar pattern in 1992.

**Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis*

Status: Passage visitor and rare breeder

Very scarce in the Lower Derwent Valley throughout the year. A male showed well at North Duffield Carrs on 3<sup>rd</sup> January, with singles at East Cottingwith on 3<sup>rd</sup> February, North Duffield Carrs on the 14<sup>th</sup> and the last of the spring at Wheldrake Ings on 4<sup>th</sup> April.

A juvenile on 17<sup>th</sup> July was unlikely to have travelled far given the rather early date, but there was no suggestion of breeding. This is a rather worrying down-turn in the fortunes of this species and may reflect concerns over persecution.

An adult female was at Bubwith Ings on 22<sup>nd</sup> August with a male at nearby North Duffield Ings on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Winter records were of an immature male at Wheldrake Ings on 19<sup>th</sup> October, a female at Bubwith Ings on the 28<sup>th</sup>, an immature at Bank Island on 12<sup>th</sup> December and an adult male at Thornton Ellers on the 27<sup>th</sup> (EN).

Present throughout the year in the northern 10k squares, but no details (PH).

**Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus*

Status: Resident breeder and passage migrant

Widespread reports throughout the area in all months although few details of breeding.

Bred as usual throughout the Lower Derwent Valley NNR in good numbers with most being successful as large numbers of juveniles were seen from early August. The first fledged young were noted at Ellerton on 29<sup>th</sup> June.

A male visited a garden in Dringhouses throughout the year and likewise in Strensall where its noted victims were Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* and House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* - the latter appearing to form the staple diet and possibly a contributing factor to the House Sparrow's demise. There were occasional sightings from York city centre and a female was seen carrying prey over the River Ouse at Fulford Ings on 22<sup>nd</sup> June where a juvenile male was seen on 28<sup>th</sup> August. The only record of a pair was at Yearsley on 30<sup>th</sup> March.

**Common Buzzard** *Buteo buteo*

Status: Passage migrant and rare breeder

One south at Storwood on 1<sup>st</sup> January was the only record early in the year (EN).

A pair lingered in the Lower Derwent Valley (to the east of the River Derwent) throughout July, one of which was probably a bird seen at Melbourne on the 31<sup>st</sup>. A single remained in the North Duffield/Skipwith area from 9<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> September and one at Thorganby on 1<sup>st</sup> November stayed until the month end (EN).

Also in November, one noted near Welburn on the 7<sup>th</sup> (MD) was probably the bird seen at Moor Hill/Cum Crag, Castle Howard on the 19<sup>th</sup> (C & DJ).

[Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*]

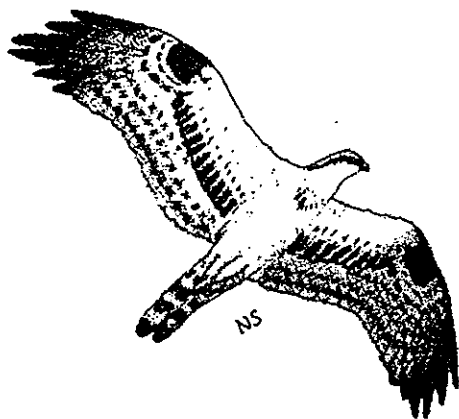
Status: Rare visitor

An eagle seen at Wheldrake Ings on 26<sup>th</sup> September was considered to be a sub-adult of this species and was seen by two lucky observers (per EN). No description received.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Status: Regular passage migrant

Three birds headed north in April with one at Bank Island on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, Wheldrake Ings on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and North Duffield Carrs on the 23<sup>rd</sup> while one was also seen at Bank Island on 17<sup>th</sup> May (EN).



An interesting series of records came from the suburbs of York with singles over Rowntree sports field, Haxby Road on 14<sup>th</sup> May, New Earswick on 15<sup>th</sup> May and 11<sup>th</sup> June and at least six other unrecorded dates (PRI) and on two occasions over Burtonstone Lane (per PRI). Presumably the same bird was involved and had found a suitable food supply!

Returning birds involved one flying along the Pocklington Canal at Melbourne on 21<sup>st</sup> August and three south in September: at North Duffield Carrs on the 6<sup>th</sup> and Wheldrake Ings on the 7<sup>th</sup> with the last at North Duffield on the 24<sup>th</sup> (EN).

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Status: Resident breeder

In the Lower Derwent Valley NNR, good numbers were present throughout the site and were thought to have bred with moderate success in similar numbers to previous years.

The hovering nature of this species makes it one of the most recognizable birds of prey and, whether in town or country, it was reported throughout the YOC recording area. Ten were regularly seen along the York ring road and A1079 between York and Pocklington and four were at the Castle Howard estate in December. One was observed preying on Sand Martins *Riparia riparia* at Castle Howard on 11<sup>th</sup> April, catching them in the manner of a Hobby *Falco subbuteo*.

**Merlin** *Falco columbarius*

Status: Passage migrant and winter visitor

Early birds were at Bubwith on 7<sup>th</sup> February and across the A64 near Sand Hutton on the 8<sup>th</sup> while a female and an immature were at Hagg Bridge on the 9<sup>th</sup>, coinciding with a large arrival of thrushes, pipits and larks. A female was at Wheldrake Ings on the 18<sup>th</sup> and a bird attacked a flock of Redwing *Turdus pilaris* at Crayke on 7<sup>th</sup> March. Spring passage was poor with males at Bank Island on 2<sup>nd</sup> May and Wheldrake Ings on the 6<sup>th</sup>.

As usual, the first returning birds were seen in early August with an immature at Aughton on the 8<sup>th</sup> and an adult male at Thornton on the 19<sup>th</sup>. An adult male at North Duffield Carrs on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> September coincided with a large movement of pipits and larks. A single on 3<sup>rd</sup> October was the first of at least five birds which appeared in the Lower Derwent Valley around the 11<sup>th</sup> with records from Ellerton, Elvington, North Duffield Carrs and Wheldrake. One was at Selby on the 19<sup>th</sup> and at Thorganby on the 29<sup>th</sup> while one or two were present throughout November with regular sightings from North Duffield Carrs and an immature flew down the main street of Wheldrake village in pursuit of Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Regularly seen again at North Duffield Carrs in December with possibly three males hunting pipits near Wheldrake.

**Hobby** *Falco subbuteo*

Status: Increasing summer visitor

An excellent year once again in the Lower Derwent Valley, the first birds returning in late April with one chasing Swallows *Hirundo rustica* over North Duffield village on the 27<sup>th</sup> and the next at Bank Island on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Singles were seen at Wheldrake Ings on 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> May with another there on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Sightings increased during June with singles at Elvington on the 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> and another bird near Skipwith on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Adults were also present at Thornton Ellers on 1<sup>st</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> July and Wheldrake on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

Sightings increased dramatically during August when birds appeared at the usual hirundine roosts with up to five (two adults and three immatures) at Bank Island throughout the month. Two were also noted at Ellerton on the 14<sup>th</sup> with singles at Wheldrake on the 26<sup>th</sup> and Bubwith on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Up to three remained at Bank Island into early September with singles seen at a Swallow roost near Melbourne on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>.

A pair was seen regularly on nearby Skipwith Common with display noted during May. One pair was reported to have subsequently bred here following suggestions of breeding in this report for several years. It is also likely that pairs were present in the Elvington area throughout the summer months and along the Pocklington Canal area at Melbourne where it would appear that one pair raised two young. Birds were also noted during the summer at Escrick, Crockey Hill and Heslington suggesting that this delightful falcon is on the increase in the area.

Elsewhere, singles were seen at Fulford on 25<sup>th</sup> May, Dringhouses on 19<sup>th</sup> June, Scoreby Grange on 27<sup>th</sup> July and Dunnington Common on 17<sup>th</sup> September.

**Peregrine** *Falco peregrinus*

Status: Winter and passage visitor

Up to five were present in the Lower Derwent Valley in January and three remained during February with regular sightings from Bubwith, North Duffield Carrs and Wheldrake Ings. Four birds, an adult male and female with an immature male and female were present on the 27<sup>th</sup> with two immature males at Wheldrake on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Four remained into early March, then an adult female was present on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and an adult male on the 28<sup>th</sup>. An adult pair and immature female were at Wheldrake Ings on 7<sup>th</sup> April, a single at Laytham on the 8<sup>th</sup>, an adult female at North Duffield Carrs on the 14<sup>th</sup>, a male at Wheldrake Ings on the 17<sup>th</sup> and an immature female there on the 27<sup>th</sup>. An immature female stayed at Wheldrake Ings from 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> May bringing to an end an excellent winter and spring.

An early returning adult male was at Wheldrake Ings on 14<sup>th</sup> August and an adult female drifted over Bank Island on 26<sup>th</sup> September. Two adult males and an immature female returned to the valley by 11<sup>th</sup> October and were possibly joined by another bird throughout November. Up to five had arrived by 1<sup>st</sup> December and were frequently seen at Bank Island, the Bubwith/North Duffield Carrs area and Wheldrake Ings. An adult flew west at Full Sutton on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

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

Status: Resident breeder

Bred throughout the Lower Derwent Valley NNR although it was not censused. Despite releases in the autumn it was thought to be present in lower numbers than previous years.

As one would expect they were reported from many areas but not in any numbers except for seven at Forest Farm, Warthill on 28<sup>th</sup> April with six there on 31<sup>st</sup> May and eight at Lilling Green Farm between Sheriff Hutton and Strensall on 31<sup>st</sup> October when 12 at West Lilling.

**Grey Partridge** *Perdix perdix*

Status: Resident breeder

As with the previous species it was thought to have become less numerous in the Lower Derwent Valley. However, a covey of 20, considered to be wild birds, was present at Hagg Lane, East Cottingham on 6<sup>th</sup> October and a noteworthy 50 at Thornton on 17<sup>th</sup> December. Coveys of 15 were noted at Selby on 3<sup>rd</sup> January, eight at Huby on the 15<sup>th</sup>, six at Grimston on 6<sup>th</sup> February, eight at Poppleton on the 18<sup>th</sup> and Huby on 27<sup>th</sup> December.

Encouragingly, pairs were seen throughout the northern recording area in March, April and early May indicating that the population had hopefully stabilized.

**Quail** *Coturnix coturnix*

Status: Summer visitor which breeds in good years

63 'singing' males were located in the Lower Derwent Valley between 4<sup>th</sup> May and 16<sup>th</sup> August. For the first time in several years there was no proof that breeding occurred but it is almost certain to have done so. For more details see the included Nocturnal Survey Report.

Remarkably there was only one record from elsewhere with a bird calling at Dunnington Common on 16<sup>th</sup> June (T & VW).



**Pheasant** *Phasianus colchicus*

Status: Resident breeder

Bred as usual throughout the Lower Derwent Valley with numbers as usual supplemented by releases, though not censused.

Counts of 100 are not uncommon throughout the YOC recording area, especially after release from pens.

**Water Rail** *Rallus aquaticus*

Status: Resident breeder and winter/passage visitor

53 calling birds (males and females) were located throughout the Lower Derwent Valley NNR during the year. This included 39 'singing' males. For more details see the included Nocturnal Survey Report.

The only other records came from Fulford Ings with birds heard calling on 26<sup>th</sup> January and 20<sup>th</sup> November (AB).

**Spotted Crane** *Porzana porzana*

Status: Rare passage migrant and rare summer breeder

At least 16 'singing' males were located in the Lower Derwent Valley between 22<sup>nd</sup> April and 24<sup>th</sup> July - the latest calling on record. An apparently newly-fledged juvenile at Bank Island on 10<sup>th</sup> August was unlikely to have travelled far and was considered to confirm local breeding once again. Prior to colonization of the site in 1995, there were no records of autumn passage birds from the reserve despite several seen annually at other wetland sites in Yorkshire such as Blacktoft Sands and Tophill Low.

Once again birds tended to call from 30 minutes before to one or two hours after dusk, but only for one or two nights before falling largely quiet (EN). For more details see the included Nocturnal Survey Report.

The number of birds is likely to represent a major proportion of the British breeding population. 1999 saw the first ever national Spotted Crane survey undertaken as part of the Statutory Conservation Agencies/RSPB scheme to monitor scarce breeding birds. The result from this site will be fed into the national figures so it would be unwise to estimate the importance of the 16 singing males here at present.

During the assessment of the habitat characteristics of the calling sites it became clear that males had often selected distinct areas consisting of small wet depressions with vegetation comprising one or more of *Alopecurus geniculatus*, *Carex acuta*, *Glyceria maxima* and *Phalaris arundinacea*. These areas were invariably very wet and set amongst areas of less wet vegetation.

**Corncrake** *Crex crex*

Status: Passage migrant and rare summer breeder

1999 was the second year of the intensive programme to safeguard the presence of this species in the Lower Derwent Valley. This included a repeat nocturnal survey between May and July and full details can be found in the included Nocturnal Survey Report.

To summarize the data here, five 'singing' males were located with singles at Aughton on 10<sup>th</sup> May, Wheldrake Ings on the 19<sup>th</sup>, Bubwith Ings on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and Bank Island on the 30<sup>th</sup>. The latter bird also

called the following day and then again on 10<sup>th</sup> July. Another calling male was heard on North Duffield Carrs on 16<sup>th</sup> June while breeding was proved with a newly-fledged juvenile at Ellerton on 14<sup>th</sup> August seen in an uncut strip of hay meadow. This was approximately 0.5km from the calling site at Aughton.

**Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*

Status: Resident breeder and winter visitor

In the Lower Derwent Valley NNR, 300+ in early March increased to 800+ by the month end with an estimated 400 pairs present (as in 1998). 817 were counted on 4<sup>th</sup> April with 50% (413) at Wheldrake Ings. A large drop in numbers coincided with the release of water from the reserve with only 229 remaining at Wheldrake on the 11<sup>th</sup> down to 100+ by the 16<sup>th</sup>. Further birds departed Wheldrake during May and June with a large exodus from 26<sup>th</sup> June coinciding with almost complete drainage of the site. This, combined with unseasonal flooding elsewhere in the valley, produced one of the poorest years on record although breeding continued throughout August along the River Derwent with a newly-hatched brood of four noted at Thorganby on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

Elsewhere, ten were resident at Rawcliffe Lake with at least two pairs breeding. 15 were at York University on 10<sup>th</sup> January and ten at Castle Howard on 5<sup>th</sup> February with 20 there on 13<sup>th</sup> March and 16<sup>th</sup> October. 17 along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe on 17<sup>th</sup> November included six juveniles with birds present throughout the year. Up to six birds were reported at other sites with eight at Towthorpe on 9<sup>th</sup> November.

**Coot** *Fulica atra*

Status: Resident breeder and winter visitor

Numbers continue to increase in the Lower Derwent Valley NNR with a nationally important 1342 on 5<sup>th</sup> March being a new record count. A large departure of birds coincided with fluctuating water levels and rapid water loss from the site, with 981 remaining on 4<sup>th</sup> April and 516 on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Numbers remained low thereafter, especially at Wheldrake Ings which usually holds the majority of breeding birds. 350+ at North Duffield Carrs on 5<sup>th</sup> May and 180+ at Bank Island on the 18<sup>th</sup> were the monthly maxima with an estimated 230 pairs scattered throughout the reserve at the month end (c. 500+ pairs in 1998). The largest loss was at Wheldrake with only 60 pairs attempting to breed here (c. 350+ pairs in 1998). Breeding success at this site was also very poor with only 20 young reared to fledging.

Elsewhere in the valley, good numbers of young appeared after the first brood on 5<sup>th</sup> May. Up to 100+ remained at Bank Island during June increasing rapidly to 200+ by the end of the month. Numbers at Wheldrake dropped from 100+ on the 23<sup>rd</sup> to only about ten on the 29<sup>th</sup> due to rapid water loss and many of these birds probably moved to Bank Island. Up to 30 remained at the latter site in early August with only 20+ birds noted along the canal and river by the month end.

It was a poor year in terms of breeding numbers and success - the worst since the early 1990s. This represents a loss of over 1% of the British total of 46 000 birds.

Elsewhere, 22 birds were resident at Rawcliffe Lake with at least eight pairs breeding. Up to seven were present in Rowntree Park, York with one or two visiting the adjacent River Ouse. Other than ten at Newburgh Priory on 22<sup>nd</sup> March all other counts came from Castle Howard Lake (although up to five were seen in suitable habitat in other areas): 160 on 5<sup>th</sup> February, 100 on 13<sup>th</sup> March, 60 on 13<sup>th</sup> October, 40 on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> November with 100 on 5<sup>th</sup> December. By the 19<sup>th</sup> much of the lake was frozen and only 40 remained.

**[Common Crane *Grus grus*]**

Status: Rare summer visitor

One flew east along the Pocklington Canal at Hagg Bridge on 28<sup>th</sup> March (EN). No description received.

**Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus***

Status: Passage migrant and migrant breeder

In the Lower Derwent Valley, the first returning birds were a single at North Duffield Carrs on 2<sup>nd</sup> February followed by two at Wheldrake Ings on the 4<sup>th</sup> with three there from the 5<sup>th</sup> increasing to eight by the 20<sup>th</sup>. In March, 12 on the 2<sup>nd</sup> rose to 24 by the 20<sup>th</sup> and quickly thereafter to a record 56 on the 28<sup>th</sup> (28 pairs). The largest concentrations occurred at Wheldrake with 13 on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 16 on the 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>. By May, 24 pairs were scattered throughout the valley breeding in fields adjacent to the reserve and returning there to feed during darkness.

Four flying south at Elvington on 28<sup>th</sup> June and six at Ellerton on the 29<sup>th</sup> were the first signs of return passage. 12 roosted at Aughton on 1<sup>st</sup> July with six at Bank Island from the 2<sup>nd</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> while ten roosted at Wheldrake Ings on the 13<sup>th</sup> with 15 on the 14<sup>th</sup>, 16 on the 15<sup>th</sup> and four daily until the 21<sup>st</sup>. Singles were still present on 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> August with two on the 5<sup>th</sup> while one at Ellerton on the 22<sup>nd</sup> was the last in the valley.

Elsewhere, two were at Castle Howard on 16<sup>th</sup> March and 8<sup>th</sup> April, two at Sand Hutton on 17<sup>th</sup> April and one at Strensall on several dates between 28<sup>th</sup> April and 3<sup>rd</sup> July. Singles flew over Fulford Ings on 19<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> June and between York and Bishopthorpe on 21<sup>st</sup> July. Two were at Forest Farm, Warthill on 15<sup>th</sup> May and birds seen regularly in the River Kyle area and Osballdwick during the spring and summer. Singles were noted in the Linton/Beningborough/Poppleton area with other sightings including three in the Gilling/Coxwood valley in mid-July.

**Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta***

Status: Vagrant

Two adults arrived at Wheldrake Ings from the south at 0740 hours on 8<sup>th</sup> May before circling and returning south down the Derwent Valley. They were relocated at Aughton at 1100 hours before flying off high to the north (EN). Presumably the same birds then arrived on Teesside later that afternoon.

**Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius***

Status: Passage migrant and summer breeder

A pair displaying at St Nicholas Fields, York on 27<sup>th</sup> March was the first record while in the Lower Derwent Valley four were at North Duffield Carrs on 9<sup>th</sup> April with a pair remaining there into early May, moving to Bank Island on the 6<sup>th</sup> where the female was thought to be incubating by the 15<sup>th</sup>. A single was at Wheldrake Ings on the 22<sup>nd</sup> while the Bank Island pair lingered until 10<sup>th</sup> June and another pair was thought to have bred at Elvington sewage works.

In July, an adult was at Wheldrake Ings on the 17<sup>th</sup> and then two adults and two juveniles were at Bank Island from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the month end. The juveniles remained at the latter site until 3<sup>rd</sup> August with six birds there on the 4<sup>th</sup> and three on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. One to two were at Wheldrake Ings from the 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> with the last at Bank Island on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

One was seen by a pool off the Hallfield Lane cycleway from 13<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> May.

**Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula*

Status: Passage migrant

Reports from the Lower Derwent Valley confirmed a dreadful spring. Two were at North Duffield Carrs on 10<sup>th</sup> February with four at Wheldrake Ings on 7<sup>th</sup> May and one there on the 15<sup>th</sup> being the only records until two appeared at Aughton on the 29<sup>th</sup>. A female was thought to be incubating by the 31<sup>st</sup> while a single bird was at Bank Island on 2<sup>nd</sup> June with a pair there on the 4<sup>th</sup>. Another bird flew over Elvington on the 20<sup>th</sup> while two lingered at Aughton from the 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>. Two returned to this site on 7<sup>th</sup> July with a single calling at Bank Island after dark on the 30<sup>th</sup>. August produced only one record of a single at Bank Island on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Dotterel** *Charadrius morinellus*

Status: Rare visitor

Two summer-plumaged birds were with a small flock of Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* at Ellerton on 3<sup>rd</sup> April (EN).

**Golden Plover** *Pluvialis apricaria*

Status: Winter visitor and passage migrant

In the Lower Derwent Valley the year started with 5600+ increasing to 7100 by the end of January. This trend continued with 7300 on 1<sup>st</sup> February followed by a gradual decline to 6800 on the 7<sup>th</sup>, 6200 on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 5700 on the 27<sup>th</sup>. 5000+ on 5<sup>th</sup> March dropped to 1500 by the 12<sup>th</sup> with only 140 remaining at the month end after heavy flooding. In April, 37 were at Thorganby on the 3<sup>rd</sup> with six at North Duffield Carrs on the 11<sup>th</sup> and a single in summer plumage at Ellerton on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

Five were at Bubwith on 5<sup>th</sup> July with three at Wheldrake Ings and four at North Duffield Carrs on the 11<sup>th</sup>. Three remained at Wheldrake until the 13<sup>th</sup> with five pausing at North Duffield on the 24<sup>th</sup> and a single at Bank Island on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Three flew over Thornton Ellers on 28<sup>th</sup> August and one was at East Cottingwith on the 29<sup>th</sup> while seven were at North Duffield Carrs on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

Three were at Ellerton on 1<sup>st</sup> September with a single over North Duffield on the 16<sup>th</sup> while three were present again on the 24<sup>th</sup> with seven on the 26<sup>th</sup> and singles flying over on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>. Numbers increased slowly during October with 120 near Wheldrake on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 2100 by the end of November including a partial albino. 2400 were present throughout December with 2650 on the 26<sup>th</sup> although birds were scattered due to flooding.

Records from elsewhere included 640 near the A64 in the Osbaldwick/Murton area on 27<sup>th</sup> January, 300 at Rawcliffe on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 100 there on 13<sup>th</sup> February. 280 were around Haxby and 700 off Sim Balk Lane, Bishopthorpe on 20<sup>th</sup> February, 42 at Slights Farm, Barton Moor on 17<sup>th</sup> March, two at Forest Farm, Warthill on 19<sup>th</sup> April, 60 at Poppleton on 7<sup>th</sup> November and 130 at Shipton on 8<sup>th</sup> December.

**Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*

Status: Passage migrant and winter visitor

In the Lower Derwent Valley, two remained with Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* during January. One was at North Duffield Carrs on 2<sup>nd</sup> February, six with Golden Plover at Ellerton on the 6<sup>th</sup> and three there next day with two remaining in the valley throughout the month. A single was at North

Duffield from 1<sup>st</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> March when extensive floods dispersed the Golden Plover while a summer-plumaged bird was present at this site from 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> May with another appearing on the 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus*

Status: Migrant breeder, passage migrant and winter visitor

Counts in the Lower Derwent Valley consisted of 5130 on 1<sup>st</sup> January, 6030 on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 7200 on the 19<sup>th</sup>. These then declined gradually from 6500 on the 7<sup>th</sup> to 5430 on the 20<sup>th</sup> with 4600 by the month end. 4000+ remained in early March but numbers decreased as birds dispersed onto arable land adjacent to the reserve where numerous pairs were displaying towards the end of the month.

350+ pairs were recorded throughout the reserve in early April but birds incubating on the Ings were washed out by flooding mid-month. However, birds on adjacent arable land fared well.

In May, the first brood of four was escorted over the road at Bank Island and down onto the Ings on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. A further seven broods were taken on the same trip and a newly-hatched chick appeared at Breighton Meadows on the 3<sup>rd</sup> with many broods appearing thereafter. The protracted breeding season continued with large numbers of unfledged young still present at the end of June including eight broods at Bank Island on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

Post-breeding flocks built up during the month with 65 at Thorganby on the 10<sup>th</sup> being the first. 31 were at Ellerton on the 15<sup>th</sup>, 41 at Bank Island on the 21<sup>st</sup>, 110 at Aughton on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 180 at Wheldrake on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Several unfledged broods remained in early July while post-breeding flocks included 670 on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 900+ on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 2100 on the 10<sup>th</sup> with 1060 at Wheldrake Ings. Numbers dropped thereafter to 400+ by the month end and these soon dispersed with 70 at North Duffield Carrs on 28<sup>th</sup> August and 21 at Thornton Ellers on the 29<sup>th</sup> being the only double figure counts.

In September, 120 were at Ellerton on the 1<sup>st</sup> but the species remained scarce until 350 arrived there on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 300+ were present at North Duffield Carrs by the 26<sup>th</sup> increasing to 430 by the 30<sup>th</sup>. October showed a steady increase from 700+ scattered throughout the valley on the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 1750 by the 30<sup>th</sup>. Numbers built up again following flooding in November with 100+ at Bubwith on the 13<sup>th</sup>, 1400 at North Duffield Carrs on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 2000+ at Wheldrake Ings on the 26<sup>th</sup>. 3700 were present at the end of the year.

Elsewhere the highest counts were 620 by the A64 near Osbaldwick on 27<sup>th</sup> June, 320 at Bolton Percy on 25<sup>th</sup> September and 280 at Strensall/Haxby on 22<sup>nd</sup> December. Other counts included 230 at Sim Balk Lane, Bishopthorpe on 8<sup>th</sup> February, 150 at Rawcliffe on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 400 at Poppleton Moor on 7<sup>th</sup> November while smaller numbers were reported from many other areas.

**Knot** *Calidris canutus*

Status: Winter visitor and passage migrant

Singles were seen at Aughton on 16<sup>th</sup> January, North Duffield Carrs on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and again there on 20<sup>th</sup> February (EN).

**Sanderling** *Calidris alba*

Status: Winter visitor and passage migrant

Two were with Dunlin *Calidris alpina* at North Duffield Carrs on 27<sup>th</sup> February while a summer-plumaged bird was at Wheldrake Ings on 1<sup>st</sup> May (EN).

**Little Stint** *Calidris minuta*

Status: Passage migrant and rare winter visitor

Six were reported at North Duffield Carrs on 20<sup>th</sup> February with two amongst Dunlin *Calidris alpina* on the 27<sup>th</sup>. One was at Wheldrake Ings on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> May with a juvenile there on 22<sup>nd</sup> August (EN).

**Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos*

Status: Vagrant

A juvenile at Aughton on 7<sup>th</sup> July was relocated next day at North Duffield Carrs (EN). Description forwarded to YNU.

**Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea*

Status: Infrequent passage visitor

A moulting adult was on the pool at Wheldrake Ings on 31<sup>st</sup> July and 1<sup>st</sup> August. Another bird was seen there on the 10<sup>th</sup> with two at Bank Island on the 13<sup>th</sup> while one remained at Wheldrake from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the month end (EN).

**Dunlin** *Calidris alpina*

Status: Passage migrant and winter visitor

In the Lower Derwent Valley, 736 on 1<sup>st</sup> January increased to 800+ on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 1030 on the 16<sup>th</sup> with 800+ still present at the month end. February started with 430 on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 455 on the 20<sup>th</sup> increasing to 670 on the 27<sup>th</sup> presumably with the appearance of passage birds. March numbers peaked at 1000+ on the 5<sup>th</sup> dropping to 600+ on the 20<sup>th</sup> but only a handful of birds remained at the end of the month. One or two lingered throughout April with a small trickle of passage birds including a flock of 130+ on the 27<sup>th</sup> flying high and north up the valley.

Present daily in early May with five at Wheldrake Ings on the 1<sup>st</sup> and six at North Duffield Carrs on the 7<sup>th</sup> the maxima. Three were at North Duffield on the 8<sup>th</sup> with two displaying at Wheldrake on the same date. 12 were present on the 9<sup>th</sup> with eight at Bank Island on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> and two at Wheldrake on the 13<sup>th</sup>. Four were at Bank Island from the 26<sup>th</sup> to the month end and at Aughton on the 31<sup>st</sup> while two were at Bank Island and Aughton in early June until the 9<sup>th</sup> when it was thought that they departed. However, a pair with two 'fluffy' newly-fledged young appeared on the floodbank at North Duffield Carrs on the 21<sup>st</sup> and it is thought that they bred nearby, probably at Aughton. They remained until the 24<sup>th</sup> while what was presumably a passage bird flew south at Bank Island on the 25<sup>th</sup> with a single at Wheldrake on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

In July, two at Aughton from the 1<sup>st</sup> increased to three by the 9<sup>th</sup> and remained until the 11<sup>th</sup>. Two were at Bank Island from the 23<sup>rd</sup> July to 6<sup>th</sup> August with six arriving at Wheldrake Ings on the 10<sup>th</sup>. However, these quickly moved on and were the last for the month.

One was at Bank Island on 26<sup>th</sup> September with three at Wheldrake on 16<sup>th</sup> October and two remaining on the 17<sup>th</sup>. In November, five on the 11<sup>th</sup> increased with flooding to 51 on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 41 on the 22<sup>nd</sup> up to 73 on the 25<sup>th</sup>. 70+ on 1<sup>st</sup> December rose to 120 on the 4<sup>th</sup> with 300+ from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the end of the year.

**Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax*

Status: Rare breeder, passage migrant and winter visitor

148 on 6<sup>th</sup> January was the maximum count in the Lower Derwent Valley with 100+ remaining throughout the month declining during February to 79 from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the month end. 84 were present

from 1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> March but none were seen during the rest of the month while April proved to be an excellent month with at least 51 lekking males and 21 females. Lekking could be observed from the hides at North Duffield Carrs and numbers of females attending the leks decreased towards the end of the month suggesting several were already incubating. 32 lekking males and six females remained on 1<sup>st</sup> May decreasing to 16 males and two females on the 7<sup>th</sup> with a male and a single female on the 9<sup>th</sup>.

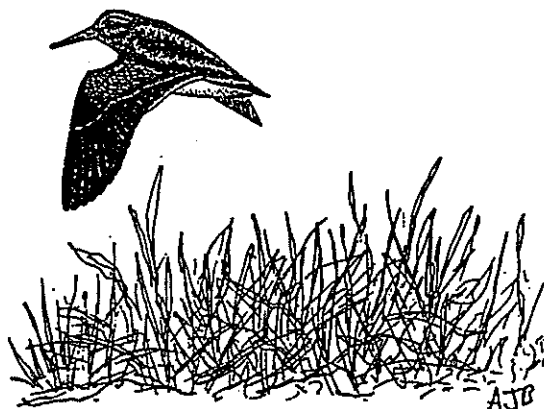
A male at Wheldrake Ings on 27<sup>th</sup> June was the first returning passage bird while two males at Bank Island on 4<sup>th</sup> July increased to ten birds by the 9<sup>th</sup>, 16 (including two females) by the 24<sup>th</sup> and 22 (four females) by the 30<sup>th</sup>.

Elsewhere in the Lower Derwent, ten were at Aughton on the 9<sup>th</sup> with three at Wheldrake from the 21<sup>st</sup> and five there on the 30<sup>th</sup>. 22 remained at Bank Island from 1<sup>st</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> August with 12 on the 10<sup>th</sup>, eight on the 14<sup>th</sup> and four on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

September produced only a single female at Bank Island on the 19<sup>th</sup> while one bird there on 2<sup>nd</sup> October was the only record for that month until 14 arrived at Bubwith Ings on the 28<sup>th</sup> with 20 there on the 30<sup>th</sup>. These remained until 13<sup>th</sup> November when numbers increased to 23 with 31 on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 39 on the 24<sup>th</sup>. In December, counts quickly rose to 70 on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 110 on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Jack Snipe** *Lymnocryptes minimus*

Status: Winter visitor and passage migrant



Singles at Wheldrake Ings on 31<sup>st</sup> January and North Duffield Carrs on 10<sup>th</sup> February were the only records at the start of the year.

A rather early returning individual was at Bank Island on 19<sup>th</sup> September and again on the 26<sup>th</sup> with three there on the 28<sup>th</sup> increasing to five by 11<sup>th</sup> October. A minimum of ten was present on the 15<sup>th</sup> while a full survey of this site on the 17<sup>th</sup> revealed at least 25 to be present, six of which (two adults and four first-winters) were caught and ringed. Several were present daily until the month end with ten plus on the 31<sup>st</sup> and a further three (two adults) caught and ringed. Another bird was flushed on the floodbank at East Cottingwith on the 30<sup>th</sup> - an excellent month.

At least four remained at Bank Island in early November prior to flooding. One was at Bubwith on the 13<sup>th</sup> with at least five there on the 14<sup>th</sup> when a first-winter was caught and ringed. Another was at Seavy Carr on the 21<sup>st</sup> while three were at Bank Island on 2<sup>nd</sup> December with two there on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. A full survey of the Lower Derwent Valley produced a staggering 46 on the 4<sup>th</sup> - a new reserve record. The extensive flooding and freezing conditions lead to fewer records thereafter with a single at Wheldrake Ings on the 11<sup>th</sup> and another at North Duffield Carrs on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

The only record received from elsewhere concerned single birds flushed from two different locations on the River Rye near Lower Butterwick on 17<sup>th</sup> November (MDo).

**Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago*

Status: Resident and migrant breeder and passage visitor

Counts in the Lower Derwent Valley were low as usual during the mid-winter period due to flooding but 100+ were recorded most days. 110 at Wheldrake Ings on 31<sup>st</sup> January suggested a small arrival. Up to 200+ remained at Wheldrake throughout February with smaller numbers scattered throughout the valley. Small numbers returned at the end of March to the higher ground with several 'drumming' males noted from adjacent arable land from the 26<sup>th</sup>. The first main 'drumming' activity was recorded on 4<sup>th</sup> April but there was little action thereafter until the 21<sup>st</sup> when, like many waterfowl, breeding activity started en-masse. An estimated 250+ displaying males were scattered throughout the reserve in May and large numbers of birds began 'drumming' again from 14<sup>th</sup> June with up to 100+ displaying throughout the valley from the 21<sup>st</sup> to the month end. There was a protracted breeding season with many birds still 'drumming' in early July. Several clutches were still being incubated with the last clutch at Ellerton on the 14<sup>th</sup> and the last unfledged young seen at Thorganby on the 17<sup>th</sup>. Post-breeding counts suggested a successful year with 100+ at Aughton on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 150+ there on the 11<sup>th</sup>, 50+ at Wheldrake Ings on the 15<sup>th</sup>, 50+ at Bank Island on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 120+ there on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

295 on 1<sup>st</sup> August included an impressive 250+ at Bank Island, numbers falling quickly thereafter with 100+ at the latter site on the 6<sup>th</sup>, 57 there on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 21 on the 16<sup>th</sup>. Numbers elsewhere in the valley also declined at this time with 21 on the pool at Wheldrake Ings on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 25 there on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 21 on the 7<sup>th</sup> falling to ten by the 10<sup>th</sup>. Small numbers were scattered throughout the reserve until 110 were counted at Bank Island on 19<sup>th</sup> September with 200+ there on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. An estimated 60 birds remained on the 26<sup>th</sup>. In October, Bank Island proved to be the most popular site with 120+ on the 11<sup>th</sup>, 130+ on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 350+ on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. c. 100 were still present at the month end and elsewhere, 50+ at North Duffield Carrs on the 16<sup>th</sup> was notable. 100+ remained at Bank Island on 4<sup>th</sup> November prior to flooding with 50+ still present at this site on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>. An estimated 500+ were present at Bubwith on the 14<sup>th</sup> with 150+ at Seavy Carr on the 21<sup>st</sup>. Small numbers were scattered elsewhere throughout the valley. In December, a full survey of the valley on the 4<sup>th</sup> produced a staggering 1240 - a new reserve record. However, extensive flooding thereafter followed by freezing conditions led to a large scale departure with 100+ remaining on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

Elsewhere, two were at Castle Howard on 3<sup>rd</sup> April and one at Hovingham on 23<sup>rd</sup> March. At Strensall Common, birds were evident on 3<sup>rd</sup> April with 'drumming' noted on 12<sup>th</sup> May. 'Drumming' was also heard near Gilling in mid-May and nine birds were flushed along the River Rye near Lower Butterwick on 17<sup>th</sup> November.

**Woodcock** *Scolopax rusticola*

Status: Resident breeder and winter visitor

Up to four were present at Thornton throughout January with 11 nearby on the 10<sup>th</sup>.

A single at Thornton Ellers on 27<sup>th</sup> December was surprisingly the first winter record for this site.



Two were at Askham Bog on January 1<sup>st</sup> and birds were present during the winter months at Brandsby High Wood.

'Roding' birds included two at Skipwith Common on 6<sup>th</sup> June and 5<sup>th</sup> July, four at Yearsley Moor on 10<sup>th</sup> June and one around Gilling bottom lake on 31<sup>st</sup> March with another along the avenue at Gilling.

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

Status: Passage migrant and rare breeder

The first returning bird was a single at East Cottingwith on 15<sup>th</sup> March with a group of nine arriving on the 28<sup>th</sup> and staying to the end of the month. One bird in the flock was colour-ringed above the knees. April was an excellent month with 11 nominate race birds from the 1<sup>st</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>, 18 from the 8<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> and 32 on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Seven remained thereafter to the month end. The colour-ringed female first seen on 28<sup>th</sup> March lingered throughout the month with a colour-ringed male appearing on the 25<sup>th</sup>. In addition, 149 birds of the race *islandica* arrived at North Duffield Carrs on the 24<sup>th</sup> but moved on next day. Three pairs and an additional female remained in early May increasing to five pairs and two additional males on the 7<sup>th</sup> by which time three females were thought to be incubating, appearing at dawn and dusk to feed with the males. As usual, however, breeding appeared to be unsuccessful and three males at dawn on the 11<sup>th</sup> were the last, although a single pair reappeared at Wheldrake Ings on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>.

One flew south at Wheldrake on 29<sup>th</sup> June with four at Bank Island at the start of July followed by 14 there on the 14<sup>th</sup>, one at Wheldrake on the 19<sup>th</sup>, two at the latter site on the 29<sup>th</sup> and an adult there on 14<sup>th</sup> August.

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

Status: Passage migrant and winter visitor

One was at East Cottingwith on 5<sup>th</sup> January while a bird still in winter plumage was at Aughton on 3<sup>rd</sup> May and North Duffield Carrs on the 6<sup>th</sup> (EN).

**Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*

Status: Passage migrant

The roost at Wheldrake Ings began earlier than normal with 22 birds there on 12<sup>th</sup> April and seven next day. No more were recorded over the following four evenings until 17 appeared on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Numbers remained low with 12 on the 19<sup>th</sup>, 17 on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 20 on the 24<sup>th</sup> being the maxima. Numbers then increased quickly with 49 on the 25<sup>th</sup>, 109 on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 155 on the 27<sup>th</sup>. A change of behaviour of roosting birds and a drop in numbers to 67 on the 28<sup>th</sup> suggested turnover during the previous day and night, possibly the result of fine weather and clear, moonlit skies. 60 were counted on the 29<sup>th</sup>, peaking at 155 on the 27<sup>th</sup>. A dark-rumped individual, possibly of the North American race *hudsonicus*, was seen at the roost on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> (EN).

84 birds remained on 1<sup>st</sup> May with 91 on the 2<sup>nd</sup> falling to 37 on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Numbers increased again as bad weather held up migration with 61 on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 76 on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 59 on the 7<sup>th</sup>. 31 on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 22 on the 9<sup>th</sup> had decreased to single figures by the 14<sup>th</sup> with two on the 24<sup>th</sup> the last.

Three were heard on nocturnal passage on 1<sup>st</sup> June with four on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and a late or early returning bird seen during the day at Wheldrake Ings on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Two were at Bank Island on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> July while three arrived at Wheldrake prior to dusk on 1<sup>st</sup> August.

**Curlew** *Numenius arquata*

Status: Passage migrant, migrant breeder and winter visitor

In the Lower Derwent Valley, up to 33 were present throughout January, often roosting at Wheldrake Ings towards dusk. These stayed on until 19<sup>th</sup> February increasing to 47 on the 21<sup>st</sup>, 67 on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 111 from the 28<sup>th</sup> when several pairs were actively displaying. By 5<sup>th</sup> March, numbers were up to 230 with 300+ by the month end, but were forced onto adjacent fields by flooding. 320 was the maximum count for April while 150+ pairs were estimated throughout the valley with several broods appearing from 15<sup>th</sup> May. During June, large numbers were noted throughout the reserve as well as a secondary area with newly-hatched broods noted until the end of the month and many birds displaying again from the 19<sup>th</sup> as with other species of wader.

The first post-breeding flock appeared at Wheldrake Ings at this time when 70+ birds roosted. The usual westerly passage was noted late in the month with 30+ on the 20<sup>th</sup>, 47 on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 21 on the 27<sup>th</sup>. A total of 21 late broods (44 chicks) remained during July. 20 birds roosted at Aughton after dark on the 2<sup>nd</sup> with 40+ at Wheldrake on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 14 on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Ten were at Ellerton on the 16<sup>th</sup> with a few thereafter. In August, 29 flew west at Thornton Ellers on the 28<sup>th</sup> while 12 roosted near Aughton on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

Elsewhere, birds were seen in several areas in mid-March including Huby, Poppleton, Gilling and Strensall. Five were heard 'singing' on Strensall Common on 12<sup>th</sup> May and birds seen in mid-June at Fulford Ings and Stilling Head. Evidence of breeding was noted at Marton and Stearsby.

**Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus*

Status: Passage migrant and occasional winter visitor

A winter-plumaged bird was at North Duffield Carrs on 20<sup>th</sup> February.

Three were at the above site on 21<sup>st</sup> April with two there on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and another winter-plumaged bird appearing at the same site on the 28<sup>th</sup> with another at Wheldrake Ings on the 29<sup>th</sup> - a good showing. May produced one at Wheldrake on the 1<sup>st</sup> and again at Bank Island on the 3<sup>rd</sup> while another flew south at Wheldrake on 14<sup>th</sup> July with three there on 1<sup>st</sup> August and a single at Ellerton on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. One was at Bank Island on 6<sup>th</sup> December (EN).

**Redshank** *Tringa totanus*

Status: Passage migrant, migrant breeder and winter visitor

In the Lower Derwent Valley, 300+ on 1<sup>st</sup> January declined during freezing weather when birds were thought to have moved to the Humber. Numbers increased thereafter with 337 towards the month end. February counts included 330 on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 340 on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 362 from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the end of the month. 400+ in early March rose to a record 621 on the 28<sup>th</sup> while there were excellent numbers in early April with another new reserve record of 717 on the 4<sup>th</sup>. Good numbers then remained throughout the month.

An estimated 200+ pairs were present throughout the reserve during May with the first brood of four at Aughton on the 6<sup>th</sup> where there was a total of 70+ adults on the 31<sup>st</sup>, most with broods. 40+ at this site on 1<sup>st</sup> July included at least seven unfledged broods with 60+ birds there on the 7<sup>th</sup>. As usual, adults quickly departed thereafter with small numbers of juveniles remaining: ten at Wheldrake Ings on the 15<sup>th</sup>, four at Aughton on the 16<sup>th</sup>, five at Bank Island on the 29<sup>th</sup> and two at Wheldrake on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Three were still present on the reserve on 1<sup>st</sup> August with two daily thereafter until the last on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

In the autumn, two were at Bank Island on 22<sup>nd</sup> October with three at North Duffield Carrs and two at Wheldrake Ings on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Up to five were present daily during the first week of November increasing quickly to 52 at Bubwith Ings on the 13<sup>th</sup> with flooding, then climbing to 143 on 4<sup>th</sup> December and remaining rather stable thereafter with 171 on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Despite record numbers in the valley, Wheldrake Ings held just 47 birds on 4<sup>th</sup> April with only four pairs subsequently proven to have bred. This was a significant drop from the 30+ pairs usually present, possibly due to nests being washed out or left high and dry as foxes were noted to have taken advantage of the conditions.

The only record from elsewhere was of one at Rawcliffe Lake on 11<sup>th</sup> October (NS).

#### **Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia*

Status: Passage migrant and occasional winter visitor

The first returning bird arrived at North Duffield Carrs on 22<sup>nd</sup> February and was still present next day. Five were at Aughton on 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> April but passage became more obvious at the end of the month with two at Wheldrake Ings on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and singles at North Duffield and Ellerton on the 25<sup>th</sup> and Aughton on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

A good passage was noted in early May with three at North Duffield Carrs from the 1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> and two at Wheldrake Ings on the 5<sup>th</sup>, one of which was 'singing'. Two at North Duffield on the 6<sup>th</sup> included a yellow-legged individual. Singles were then seen at Wheldrake and Bank Island on a number of dates while the yellow-legged bird was noted at the latter site from 1<sup>st</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> June.

One was at Bank Island on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> July with another there on the 18<sup>th</sup> and two on the 30<sup>th</sup> while a single was at North Duffield Carrs on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Three stayed at Bank Island from 1<sup>st</sup> to at least 23<sup>rd</sup> August with occasional sightings of the same birds at Wheldrake Ings. Singles were noted thereafter from the riverbank in the Ellerton/Aughton area with three at North Duffield on 31<sup>st</sup> August and 1<sup>st</sup> September and one at Ellerton on the 11<sup>th</sup>. Three flew south at North Duffield Carrs on the 17<sup>th</sup> with two there next day being the last.

#### **Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus*

Status: Passage migrant and winter visitor

Up to four lingered in the Melbourne area throughout January and February with singles at Bank Island on 20<sup>th</sup> February and North Duffield Carrs on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Only three remained at Melbourne during March with one flying over North Duffield Carrs on the 29<sup>th</sup> presumably a returning migrant. Others flew north at North Duffield on 4<sup>th</sup> April with a single there on the 14<sup>th</sup> while three flew north at Wheldrake Ings on the 27<sup>th</sup>. One was at Wheldrake on 8<sup>th</sup> May with another calling there after dark on the 21<sup>st</sup>. Another flew west along the canal at Hagg Bridge on the 26<sup>th</sup> while a male was 'singing' after dark at Melbourne on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>. Presumed late spring migrants were present at Wheldrake on 1<sup>st</sup> June and Bank Island on the 4<sup>th</sup> while one or two remained throughout the month at Melbourne.

Return passage started with two near North Duffield and Skipwith on 18<sup>th</sup> June with three there on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Two were at Wheldrake Ings on the 21<sup>st</sup> and daily thereafter with three from the 28<sup>th</sup> to the month end. Singles also flew north over North Duffield Carrs on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> with two at Breighton Meadows on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Birds were present throughout July with three at North Duffield Carrs, six at Bank Island, seven at Wheldrake, four at Melbourne and singles elsewhere throughout the Lower Derwent Valley NNR with a full count of 22 on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

12 were present from 1<sup>st</sup> until at least 7<sup>th</sup> August with up to seven on the pool at Wheldrake being the largest gathering. Counts then decreased with a maximum of only five recorded on one day thereafter.

Numbers in the Pocklington Canal/Melbourne area were very low due to high water levels at the nearby Stermland pools.

Singles were scattered at several sites in early September including Wheldrake Ings, Bank Island and Melbourne. Four at Wheldrake on the 15<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> was the maximum count with one or two until the month end while a single was on the scrape at North Duffield Carrs on the 27<sup>th</sup>. In October, a bird was again on the scrape at North Duffield on the 16<sup>th</sup> with the last birds at Melbourne on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola*

Status: Passage migrant

Singles were at Wheldrake Ings on 29<sup>th</sup> April, Thornton Ellers on 8<sup>th</sup> May and Bank Island on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> with another at the latter site on 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> August (EN).

**Common Sandpiper** *Tringa hypoleucos*

Status: Passage migrant and rare summer breeder

The first bird of the spring was on the riverbank at Wheldrake Ings on 22<sup>nd</sup> April with the next being a single at Bubwith on the 28<sup>th</sup> while others were at Bank Island on 8<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> May and Wheldrake on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>.

The first autumn passage bird appeared at Wheldrake on 29<sup>th</sup> June with an impressive eight at Bank Island on the 30<sup>th</sup> and a single at North Duffield Carrs on the same and following day. Nine were at Bank Island on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> July with one at Wheldrake Ings on the 10<sup>th</sup>, two at Aughton on the 11<sup>th</sup> and singles at Thorganby on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>. Two at Wheldrake Ings on the 28<sup>th</sup> increased to four on the 29<sup>th</sup> with seven there next day remaining until 2<sup>nd</sup> August then down to two by the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Three were at North Duffield on the 8<sup>th</sup> with singles at Ellerton on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and North Duffield again on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>.

In September, the only record from the Lower Derwent was of one on the pool at Wheldrake Ings on the 20<sup>th</sup> with another at Dunnington Common on the 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Singles were also seen at Sand Hutton balancing pond on 29<sup>th</sup> April, Gilling Woods on the 26<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> and Bishopthorpe Bridge on 6<sup>th</sup> August.

**Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres*

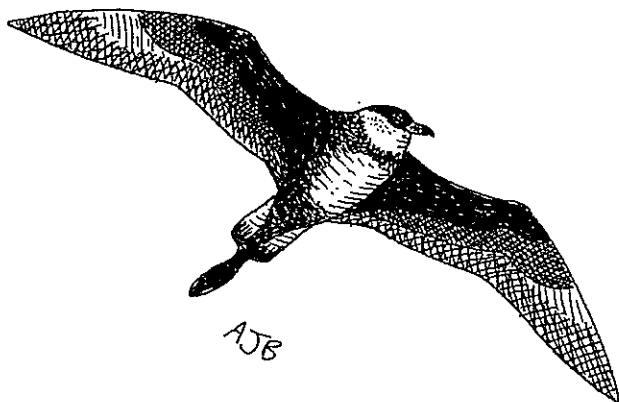
Status: Rare visitor

One on the pool at Wheldrake Ings on 27<sup>th</sup> May was the only record (EN).

**Pomarine Skua** *Stercorarius pomarinus*

Status: Vagrant

A pale phase adult with full tail 'spoons' flew north at Wheldrake Ings on 11<sup>th</sup> March - first record for the reserve (EN). This appears to be the second record for the YOC recording area following a bird



found dead on Skipwith Common in the 1800s. No description has been received, but there seems no reason to doubt this record.

#### **Mediterranean Gull** *Larus melanocephalus*

Status: Passage migrant and winter visitor

A summer-plumaged individual was at the Wheldrake Ings roost on 28<sup>th</sup> February while an adult was on floods at Sutton Bridge on 20<sup>th</sup> March.

A pair was located in the gull colony at Wheldrake on 4<sup>th</sup> April and seen regularly thereafter (with time and effort). Three adults were present at this site on the 13<sup>th</sup> when the first pair was seen displaying and copulating and they were thought to have a nest nearby. Unfortunately, however, they appeared to desert the site on the 19<sup>th</sup> with falling water levels, with a single adult returning briefly on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

Meanwhile, a second-winter bird flew south down the River Derwent at Ellerton on 22<sup>nd</sup> August with another adult at Bank Island on 17<sup>th</sup> December and a first-winter at Wheldrake on the 24<sup>th</sup> (EN).

#### **Little Gull** *Larus minutus*

Status: Passage migrant

Two first-winter birds on the pool at Wheldrake Ings on 9<sup>th</sup> April were the first with two adults in the gull colony there on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>. Three adults were on the pool at Wheldrake on the 29<sup>th</sup>. A series of records in early May started with an adult at North Duffield Carrs on the 1<sup>st</sup> followed by four adults on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and a single on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. A second-summer was at North Duffield and a first-summer at Wheldrake on the 4<sup>th</sup> with both birds at North Duffield Carrs on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. Two adults were again at Wheldrake on the 14<sup>th</sup> while a first-summer flew south down the River Derwent at Thorganby on 15<sup>th</sup> June (EN).

**Black-headed Gull** *Larus ridibundus*

Status: Resident breeder, winter visitor and passage migrant

6000 at the Wheldrake Ings roost on 9<sup>th</sup> January increased to 11,000 by the month end. The February maximum there was 17,000 on the 20<sup>th</sup> while 200+ pairs had returned to the breeding colony by this date with 300+ on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Numbers at the roost increased to an estimated 20,000+ by 20<sup>th</sup> March with 7000 remaining at the end of the month. Large numbers also roosted elsewhere in the Lower Derwent Valley with an estimated total of 35,000+ on the 20<sup>th</sup>. 1000+ pairs also returned to the Wheldrake breeding colony towards the month end while a dead first-winter bearing a Finnish ring was picked up at Wheldrake Ings on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Up to 1000 pairs remained at Wheldrake in May declining to c. 500 pairs but breeding success was poor. However, a small number of broods appeared towards the end of the month. Predation and disturbance were heavy at this site with the first two fledged juveniles finally appearing on 14<sup>th</sup> June. 20 had fledged by the 20<sup>th</sup> with 50 on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and c. 100 by the month end. Unfortunately, large numbers were affected by botulism at this time.

Small numbers flew south down the River Derwent on a daily basis towards dusk in November presumably to roost on the Humber. 300 roosted at Bubwith on the 13<sup>th</sup> with 450 at Wheldrake Ings on the 21<sup>st</sup> and c. 1000 there on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Roost counts built up during December to 1500 by the 14<sup>th</sup> with a further 5500 roosting at Bank Island.

3000+ were at Castle Howard on 5<sup>th</sup> February with 1000+ there on 27<sup>th</sup> December. Present along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe throughout the year where smaller numbers during the summer built up from July to a maximum of 200 in December. 170 were with Common Gulls *Larus canus* on the Knavesmire, York on 17<sup>th</sup> December. 35 were at Wiganthorpe Lake on 6<sup>th</sup> November with 50 noted during the winter months at Rawcliffe Lake and a small breeding colony at Skipwith Common. Regularly seen with Common Gulls at a ratio of 3:1 in Osballdwick with 150 there on 4<sup>th</sup> March. 85 were at Monk Stray on 8<sup>th</sup> January building up to 140 later.

**Common Gull** *Larus canus*

Status: Winter visitor and passage migrant

2000+ at the Wheldrake Ings roost on 5<sup>th</sup> March increased to 4000+ at the month end with the onset of spring passage. 500 were feeding in wet pasture near Foggathorpe on 2<sup>nd</sup> June with 300+ near Bubwith on the 21<sup>st</sup> followed by one or two daily mingling with Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus*. In December, numbers in the Lower Derwent Valley increased to 1000+ by the 8<sup>th</sup> and 2000+ by the 19<sup>th</sup>. 300+ were at Castle Howard on 5<sup>th</sup> February with 3000+ there on 27<sup>th</sup> December. A peak of 50 was at Osballdwick on 6<sup>th</sup> March. Regularly seen along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe outside the breeding season with the first returning bird on 12<sup>th</sup> July increasing to ten by December, while up to 16 birds were at Rawcliffe Lake during the winter months. Elsewhere, 200+ were west of Casswood on 31<sup>st</sup> January, 16 at the Yorkshire Waterworks site at Beningborough on 24<sup>th</sup> March and 70+ on flooded fields at Sheriff Hutton Carr on 2<sup>nd</sup> April.

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

Status: Passage migrant and scarce winter visitor

Two birds of the British race *graellsii* were at the Wheldrake Ings roost on 17<sup>th</sup> January with singles there on 1<sup>st</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> February, two on the 27<sup>th</sup> and three on the 28<sup>th</sup>. As usual, numbers increased with the onset of spring passage. The Wheldrake roost held two birds on 5<sup>th</sup> March, seven on the 20<sup>th</sup>, 11 on the 27<sup>th</sup> and nine on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Singles of the race *intermedius* were present on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> with three on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Small numbers moved south over Wheldrake Ings on most evenings in June, the

majority being sub-adults. Numbers increased towards the month end with 250+ on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Small flocks were also found scattered throughout the Lower Derwent Valley on pastures adjacent to the reserve with 140 near Foggathorpe on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 100 near Bubwith on the 21<sup>st</sup>. Birds were recorded daily in August flying south at dusk to roost on the Humber while one or two often lingered around the reserve during the day. 80 at Brighton on the 30<sup>th</sup> was the highest count.

Singles or groups of up to six were seen flying over the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe during June and July. 100+ were in a mixed flock with Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* south of Kilburn on 28<sup>th</sup> October and a single was in the winter gull roost at Castle Howard on 27<sup>th</sup> December. A juvenile was on Osbaldwick playing field on 7<sup>th</sup> September with an adult there on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus*

Status: Winter visitor and passage migrant

Numbers at the Wheldrake Ings roost increased from 220 on 1<sup>st</sup> January to 500+ on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 680 on the 16<sup>th</sup>. A monthly maximum of 411 was counted on 20<sup>th</sup> February with a single colour-ringed adult seen on the 27<sup>th</sup>. In November, as with Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*, numbers increased at the Wheldrake roost with 410 on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 200+ on the 29<sup>th</sup>, 500+ on 8<sup>th</sup> December and 800 on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

Also seen flying over the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe, usually heading west, with a maximum count of 40 on 27<sup>th</sup> April. Ten immatures were on the Yorkshire Waterworks lake opposite Beningborough on 24<sup>th</sup> March while a flock of 50+ birds was feeding on newly-ploughed fields in the Gilling area during October and November. Singles were noted at Rawcliffe Lake during the winter months.

#### **[Yellow-legged Gull** *Larus cachinnans*]

Status: Very rare visitor

A second-summer appeared briefly at Wheldrake Ings before dusk on 18<sup>th</sup> May (EN). No description received.

#### **Iceland Gull** *Larus glaucoides*

Status: Winter visitor

An adult was at the Wheldrake Ings roost on 30<sup>th</sup> January where a second-winter was seen on 7<sup>th</sup> February and a first-winter on the 13<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> with a second rather dark first-winter bird on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>. A single first-winter roosted there on several dates in March with an adult appearing on the 27<sup>th</sup>. A third-winter at the Wheldrake roost on 3<sup>rd</sup> April was the last.

Later in the year, an adult roosted at Bank Island on 6<sup>th</sup> December with a second-winter there on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

An adult of the race *kumlieni* (Kumlien's Gull) was reported from the Wheldrake roost on 28<sup>th</sup> March (EN). No description received.

#### **Glaucous Gull** *Larus hyperboreus*

Status: Winter visitor

A first-winter was at the Wheldrake Ings roost on 16<sup>th</sup> January with an adult there on the 30<sup>th</sup>. A third-winter roosted at Wheldrake on 12<sup>th</sup> February with single birds there on 19<sup>th</sup> March and from the 26<sup>th</sup> to the month end. An adult and first-winter roosted at this site from 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> April with a first-winter

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* hybrid present on the latter date. A first-winter reappeared at the roost on the 19<sup>th</sup> with two there on the 22<sup>nd</sup> (EN).

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

Status: Winter visitor and passage migrant

Numbers increased at the Wheldrake Ings roost in January from 420 on the 1<sup>st</sup> to 600+ on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 720 on the 16<sup>th</sup>. February maxima were 425 on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 398 on the 20<sup>th</sup> down to 200+ on the 28<sup>th</sup> with 140 remaining on 27<sup>th</sup> March, the majority being first-winter birds.

Following flooding at Wheldrake from 20<sup>th</sup> November, numbers increased from single figures to 220 at the roost there on the 21<sup>st</sup> with 300+ on the 29<sup>th</sup>. December saw 400+ on the 6<sup>th</sup> increasing to 650+ by the 11<sup>th</sup> and 750+ by the 28<sup>th</sup>.

Noted throughout the winter months flying over the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe, usually heading west, with a maximum count of 62 on 25<sup>th</sup> December. Two were near Forest Farm, Warthill on 15<sup>th</sup> May.

**Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla*

Status: Winter visitor and passage migrant

An adult was at Wheldrake Ings on 2<sup>nd</sup> January with two there on the 17<sup>th</sup> (EN).

**Sandwich Tern** *Sterna sandvicensis*

Status: Rare visitor

Two flew north up the River Derwent at North Duffield Ings on 4<sup>th</sup> April and a family party of five flew east at Wheldrake Ings shortly before dusk on 11<sup>th</sup> July (EN).

**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo*

Status: Passage migrant and rare summer breeder

The first returning bird appeared at Wheldrake Ings on 18<sup>th</sup> April with another at North Duffield Carrs on the 26<sup>th</sup> (EN).

A party of four flew south down the River Ouse past Rowntree Park, York during the early morning of 18<sup>th</sup> June (AB).

**Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea*

Status: Passage migrant

One flew south at Wheldrake Ings in strong winds on 26<sup>th</sup> April with 24 moving north-east over the Lower Derwent Valley on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Another single was at Wheldrake on 12<sup>th</sup> July (EN).

**Guillemot** *Uria aalge*

Status: Very rare visitor

A dead bird floated down the River Derwent at North Duffield Carrs on 29<sup>th</sup> November (EN).



**Stock Dove** *Columba oenas*

Status: Resident breeder

A pair was on electricity wires in Huby on 15<sup>th</sup> March with further pairs on Strensall Common on 2<sup>nd</sup> April and 12<sup>th</sup> May and at Sutton-on-the-Forest on the 31<sup>st</sup>. Seven birds were between Naburn and Stillingfleet on 19<sup>th</sup> June.

Bred as usual throughout the Lower Derwent Valley NNR with 100+ pairs counted. Numerous family parties and small flocks were noted there in August, the largest being 21 at Bank Island on the 6<sup>th</sup>. A staggering flock of 180+ was adjacent to North Duffield Carrs, feeding on linseed, on 6<sup>th</sup> October with 120+ there on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 85 on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Small parties were scattered throughout the rest of the Lower Derwent Valley.

Up to ten were noted in the Fulford Ings area throughout the year and two were seen regularly in a Dringhouses garden. Also occasionally seen and heard in Gilling Woods.

**Wood Pigeon** *Columba palumbus*

Status: Resident breeder

Winter flocks included a maximum of 400 at Stearsby on 4<sup>th</sup> January, 500 in stubble fields at Rye Hill Farm, Castle Howard on 27<sup>th</sup> February and 100+ in fields north of Strensall Common on 7<sup>th</sup> March. 11 were at Forest Farm, Warthill on 17<sup>th</sup> March while 42 were in the kilometre square between Naburn and Stillingfleet on 15<sup>th</sup> May with 58 there on 19<sup>th</sup> June.

A widespread species throughout the Lower Derwent Valley NNR but not censused.

Around 500 were near Flaxton on 31<sup>st</sup> October with 100+ in fields by Brecks Lane, Strensall. Three or four were regularly seen at Rawcliffe Lake, with large flocks from time to time in the area. 50+ were in a field north of Wiganthorpe Hall, Terrington on 21<sup>st</sup> November and 200+ in fields near Strensall Water Treatment Works on 4<sup>th</sup> December while 1000 were feeding on linseed on Dunnington Common on the 5<sup>th</sup> and over 200 on a grass verge outside Bulmer the same day.

One to three fed regularly in a Strensall garden and birds were also regular visitors to a Dringhouses garden. Resident along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe and regularly seen in York right into the city centre. Noted to be very common throughout the north of the recording area.

**Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*

Status: Resident breeder

Bred as usual throughout the Lower Derwent Valley in farms and villages but as always a rather scarce visitor on the reserve. One was displaying in Dunnington on 31<sup>st</sup> January while up to ten were along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe throughout the year with seven or eight seen regularly at Rawcliffe Lake. Seen daily in Huby and common throughout the northern recording area.

A pair was seen copulating in a Huby garden on 24<sup>th</sup> May and one appeared to have been killed in an Osballdwick garden - presumably by a Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*. Around 20 were on farm buildings in Strensall on 17<sup>th</sup> October.

Winter roosts noted were 25 at Oldstead Grange on 9<sup>th</sup> November, 33 in a tree at Wilberfoss on the 26<sup>th</sup>, 14 in trees off Nunnery Lane, York on 25<sup>th</sup> December and at least 12 regularly in a cherry tree in Osballdwick Lane, York throughout December. Also reported from Muncastergate, Woodlands Grove (York) and regularly seen in a Dringhouses garden while one to four regularly fed in a Strensall garden. Also regular at garden bird feeders in the north of the recording area in the winter months.

**Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur*

Status: Summer breeder and passage visitor

In the Lower Derwent Valley, it was a truly amazing year for this most delightful dove. The first returning bird was 'purring' at Bank Island on 1<sup>st</sup> May with two 'purring' there on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, singles at Wheldrake Ings on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and North Duffield Carrs on the 5<sup>th</sup>. A total of 29 'purring' males had been located in the Lower Derwent Valley NNR by the end of the month. Numbers soared in June with several influxes noted, the first around the 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> and again on the 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> resulting in 60 'purring' males in and around the site by the end of the month. Birds were distributed throughout the area with a stronghold once again in the Latham/Seaton Ross/Foggathorpe area, 15 pairs along the Pocklington Canal and nine pairs along the River Derwent from Kexby to Bank Island.



'Purring' was also noted throughout June, but there was a large decrease in activity after the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Another small increase in activity occurred early in July with a second burst of 'purring' noted from many sites, increasing the total to 78 'purring' males. However, most pairs fell silent by the 17<sup>th</sup> but several pairs and family parties seen regularly in August suggested success had been high. Singles at Elvington on 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> September were the last.

Outside the Lower Derwent Valley, the only reports were of a single on the York bypass near Millfield Lane on 27<sup>th</sup> April and one heard 'purring' in Gilling Woods in mid-June.

**Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus*

Status: Summer breeder

The first returning bird was at Wheldrake on 12<sup>th</sup> April, with further singles there on the 16<sup>th</sup>, Riccall and Deighton on the 24<sup>th</sup>, Thornton and Kexby on the 25<sup>th</sup>, Dunnington and Huby on the 26<sup>th</sup> and Selby on the 27<sup>th</sup> while several birds arrived in the recording area on the 28<sup>th</sup> including Strensall Common and Heslington. Further records were received from Osbaldwick on the 29<sup>th</sup>, Dringhouses on 1<sup>st</sup> May, Strensall on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, Gilling on the 6<sup>th</sup> and Naburn on the 7<sup>th</sup>. Heard at Forest Farm, Warthill on the 15<sup>th</sup> when two were between Naburn and Stillingfleet. Also heard on Skipwith Common, Sutton-on-the-Forest and from three separate locations around Huby on 3<sup>rd</sup> June.

Numbers in the Lower Derwent Valley were a little lower than previous years with an estimated 85 calling males until early June with adults departing quickly from the 10<sup>th</sup>. One was at Welburn on the 18<sup>th</sup> with the last calling bird in the Lower Derwent Valley on the 19<sup>th</sup>. One or two juveniles remained thereafter with one at Thornton Ellers on 4<sup>th</sup> July. One at Wheldrake Ings on the 13<sup>th</sup> was the last - a

rather early departure. Fewer juveniles were seen than in recent years which may in part reflect the poor breeding season also experienced by many warblers.

**Barn Owl** *Tyto alba*  
Status: Resident breeder

Birds showed regularly from the bridge at Wheldrake Ings in January, with two noted on several dates. Also seen at Bank Island and Hagg Bridge where two were present on the 7<sup>th</sup> with scattered sightings at dusk throughout the Lower Derwent Valley. One was seen in Huby at dusk on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, at first light on the 11<sup>th</sup> and for much of the afternoon on the 13<sup>th</sup> quartering a rough grass field behind the observer's garden. A pair was feeding at dusk in Slingsby on 26<sup>th</sup> February, with one seen the same day in Appleton-le-Street being possibly one of the same pair.

Regular sightings were reported from several sites throughout the Lower Derwent Valley throughout February, most frequent in the Wheldrake/Bank Island area with two to three birds regularly seen at Hagg Bridge. Birds continued to show well during March.

Bred at Maidensworth Farm, Brandsby and in a nest box on Dunnington Common. One was seen hunting near Skipwith village on 9<sup>th</sup> June and a pair was known to have bred at Sutton Farm, with occasional sightings of hunting adults throughout the summer. A single at Wheldrake Ings was seen to catch a water vole *Arvicola terrestris*.

Regular sightings were also reported throughout the Lower Derwent Valley during November and December - towards dusk at Bank Island and daily over the reedbed area at Wheldrake Ings. One was at Grimston Bar roundabout on 9<sup>th</sup> December while another roosted in a barn at Warthill in the winter.

**Little Owl** *Athene noctua*  
Status: Resident breeder

Found to be numerous throughout the Lower Derwent Valley as a result of the nocturnal survey and the Barn Owl *Tyto alba* survey. 47 pairs were located around the site with birds found nesting in many areas with suitable habitat at around one pair per 1km square, so the true total is likely to be higher. Three pairs were known to breed in the Dunnington area, with one pair seen regularly in an old apple tree. At least one pair was present in Slingsby all summer.

Noted at Foulrice Marsh, Stearsby and Mill Farm on 5<sup>th</sup> June while two were seen in Upper Poppleton on the 9<sup>th</sup> in the same tree as last year and one was perched on a telegraph pole near Skipwith village on the same day. A single was half a mile north of Coxwold at midday on 25<sup>th</sup> July while one was on the road just outside Overton village on 20<sup>th</sup> December.

**Tawny Owl** *Strix aluco*  
Status: Resident breeder throughout the area

Widespread and numerous throughout the Lower Derwent Valley with an estimated 100 pairs discovered.

Two pairs bred on Dunnington Common and two birds were seen or heard along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe on 28<sup>th</sup> June and 3<sup>rd</sup> October. There was a breeding pair in Overton throughout the year.

Also reported from Sutton-on-the-Forest, Huby, Yearsley Moor (three pairs) and other woods in the northern recording area, Strensall Nature Reserve, Welburn, Skipwith Common, Sand Hutton, Bishopthorpe and in York at Straylands, Moss Street, Tang Hall and Osbaldwick where a juvenile was heard on 28<sup>th</sup> September. A pair was calling in Cass Wood, Huby on 22<sup>nd</sup> October.

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

Status: Resident breeder and winter visitor

An adult was picked up and taken into care near Aughton on 4<sup>th</sup> April. Nocturnal survey work produced calling birds at Thornton on the 28<sup>th</sup> and Brighton on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Seen hunting at dusk on Skipwith Common on 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> June. Another was at Thornton on 6<sup>th</sup> December.

**Short-eared Owl** *Asio flammeus*

Status: Casual breeder and passage and winter visitor

One was hunting on the Low Grounds on 9<sup>th</sup> January and again on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Two were hunting at dusk at North Duffield Carrs on 7<sup>th</sup> February while singles were seen flying low southeast over Wheldrake Ings at dusk on 27<sup>th</sup> April and at Bank Island towards dusk on 23<sup>rd</sup> July.

**Nightjar** *Caprimulgus europaeus*

Status: Summer breeder

Two males were 'churring' on Skipwith Common on 30<sup>th</sup> May and 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> June, with one female seen. A male was seen - and presumably the same bird heard - at different locations in a cleared area next to Foresters cottage, Yearsley Moor on 10<sup>th</sup> June. A visit to Skipwith Common on 5<sup>th</sup> July was met with silence.

**Swift** *Apus apus*

Status: Summer breeder throughout the area

The first bird returned to Wheldrake Ings on 26<sup>th</sup> April. One was seen there on 3<sup>rd</sup> May with 20+ on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 150+ at North Duffield Carrs on the 5<sup>th</sup>. Around ten were at Gilling on the 6<sup>th</sup> with one the same day in Osbaldwick where more arrived on the 8<sup>th</sup> when further singles were at Dringhouses and Slingsby. One was over Rowntree Park, York and six at Strensall on the 9<sup>th</sup> with 40+ at North Duffield Carrs on the 10<sup>th</sup> when seven were over the River Ouse in York and the first pair was at Brandsby Rectory. Seven were at Stockton-on-the-Forest on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 400+ at Wheldrake on the 22<sup>nd</sup> when 250+ were over Bank Island - this site having 1000 feeding over it on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Two were seen entering the eaves of a house in Strensall on the same date while 50+ were feeding over Castle Howard Lake on the evening of 10<sup>th</sup> June.

Not censused in the Lower Derwent Valley NNR as birds breed in villages and farms off the reserve, but considered to be present in lower numbers than previous years with few large feeding concentrations noted. However, in Strensall, around 25 were seen in June and July - apparently more than normal - and good numbers were also noted in Osbaldwick.

Seen along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe between 5<sup>th</sup> June and 6<sup>th</sup> August while one was visiting a nest site on a three-storey house in St Saviourgate, York on 6<sup>th</sup> July. Noted as fairly common in the northern recording area in suitable habitat, eg. church towers.

Around 56 were over the Longridge Lane breeding site at Poppleton on 17<sup>th</sup> July, where the last two were seen on 18<sup>th</sup> August. Up to 20 were seen very high over Strensall all day on 31<sup>st</sup> July and four birds were seen regularly at Rawcliffe Lake until mid-August. c. 300 were seen over south York on 5<sup>th</sup> August with the last in Strensall on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Most had left Osbaldwick by the 18<sup>th</sup>, with the last there on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. A rather late single at Melbourne on 11<sup>th</sup> September was the last for the recording area.

**Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis*

Status: Resident breeder

Another rather disappointing year in the Lower Derwent Valley NNR. One of the largest floods on record during March forced almost all birds off the site with small numbers returning during the second week in April. Breeding then recommenced during early May with three pairs along the river between Wheldrake and Bank Island, five pairs along the Pocklington Canal and scattered pairs elsewhere, making a total of 12 pairs. Birds nesting on the riverbank spent little time on the Ings and those that fished there had little success. Birds appeared to be successful at other sites, however, with a total of five broods seen along the canal during the year including what was presumably a second fledged brood of seven at Thornton on 10<sup>th</sup> September.

Seen or heard regularly along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe throughout the year with two or three pairs breeding. One was in Rowntree Park, York on 26<sup>th</sup> December. Also seen at Howsham, Clifton Ings, Overton, Gilling Lake, Slingsby, Castle Howard Lake, York Waterworks ponds near Benningborough, Birkdale Fishery, north of Bulmer and regularly at Hassacarr Nature Reserve.

**Green Woodpecker** *Picus viridis*

Status: Resident breeder but not widespread

A single was in the car park lane at Wheldrake Ings on 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> January while another was calling on Strensall Common on 1<sup>st</sup> February and again in March. Throughout February, birds were again reported from the car park lane at Wheldrake, making it possible to see all three woodpecker species within 100 metres - with luck! A bird flew across the pool towards Storwood on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

One was at Stockton-on-the-Forest on 14<sup>th</sup> March with others on Skipwith Common on the 17<sup>th</sup>, heard calling at Wood Knoll near Hovingham on the 25<sup>th</sup> and at Wheldrake on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Present in Gilling Woods where seen or heard calling from March to June. Singles were also at Strensall Common on 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 31<sup>st</sup> May and 15<sup>th</sup> August and at Wass Wood on 1<sup>st</sup> April. Further singles were at Wheldrake on 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> May, Thorganby on the 11<sup>th</sup> and Elvington on the 30<sup>th</sup> with two between Naburn and Stillingfleet on 19<sup>th</sup> June.

A pair was thought to have bred adjacent to the Lower Derwent Valley NNR at Thornton while singles in the Wheldrake Ings area were thought to have wandered from Wheldrake Woods. One was at Ellerton on 14<sup>th</sup> August and another at Wheldrake on 5<sup>th</sup> October. Also resident on Dunnington Common.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major*

Status: Resident breeder throughout the area

Six were 'drumming' at Wheldrake Ings on 3<sup>rd</sup> January while a female was in a Hubby garden on the 11<sup>th</sup>. A pair was at Clifton Bridge on 23<sup>rd</sup> February with 'drumming' heard at Gilling the same day. One was at Yearsley Moor on 19<sup>th</sup> March with 'drumming' heard there on the 30<sup>th</sup> and at New Earswick Nature Reserve on 4<sup>th</sup> April while one was at Dringhouses on 1<sup>st</sup> May.

Seen or heard regularly along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe throughout the year. One was seen carrying food into gardens adjacent to Fulford Ings on 5<sup>th</sup> June where a family party was observed on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and one was between Naburn and Stillingfleet on the 19<sup>th</sup>. A female was regularly noted feeding on nuts in a garden in Sim Balk Lane, Bishopthorpe until the end of June.

Bred as usual throughout the Lower Derwent Valley NNR with four pairs in the Bank Island/Wheldrake Ings area, two pairs at Thornton Ellers and single pairs scattered elsewhere. Two pairs bred in the Dunnington area with one pair visiting a garden feeding station. Two adults and one juvenile were on Strensall Common on 15<sup>th</sup> August while one was seen in a Strensall garden on 19<sup>th</sup> September.

Resident at Moorlands YWT Reserve, Askham Bog and Upper Poppleton. Also reported from Castle Howard, Easthorpe Hall, Brandrith Wood, Yearsley Moor Woods and Skipwith Common. Fairly common in Gilling Woods and other woods in the northern area where a regular visitor to garden feeders.

#### **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos minor*

Status: Resident breeder

Singles were seen in the car park lane area at Wheldrake Ings on 1<sup>st</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> January and again on 1<sup>st</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> February, with a bird 'drumming' at Thornton Ellers on the 27<sup>th</sup>. A female was seen at Askham Bog on 4<sup>th</sup> March while a male was heard 'drumming' in Strensall Common golf course area on 2<sup>nd</sup> April and seen on an old birch tree there on the 4<sup>th</sup>.

One or two pairs were present once again in the Wheldrake/Thorganby area with single pairs at North Duffield Carts and Thornton. Typically elusive in the Lower Derwent Valley during the breeding season but thought to have been present in lower numbers than in recent years.

Singles were noted along the riverbank path at Wheldrake Ings on 19<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> June. Others were seen flying over Wheldrake from Storwood and into the priory on 19<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> October and at Elvington on the 30<sup>th</sup>. One flew over the River Ouse from Rowntree Park, York towards Fulford on 27<sup>th</sup> November.

#### **Skylark** *Alauda arvensis*

Status: Resident breeder and winter visitor

Around 500 were near West Lilling on 10<sup>th</sup> January, feeding in a stubble field - invisible until a dog put them up! The same day 250 were counted, also on stubble, near Dunnington village. Harsh weather during the month saw numbers increase briefly in the Lower Derwent Valley, possibly the result of birds being pushed off the Wolds. 90 were at Ellerton and 230 at East Cottingham on the 12<sup>th</sup>, with 210 near Wheldrake on the 13<sup>th</sup>. 100+ were at Sutton from the 21<sup>st</sup> with occasional singing birds on fine days towards the month end and 30 were at Overton on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

In February, a large influx was noted in the Lower Derwent Valley on the 9<sup>th</sup> with the appearance of snow on the Wolds, when small flocks were scattered throughout the reserve. Birds dispersed with mild conditions thereafter, with numerous singing males from the 11<sup>th</sup>. There was another influx on the 20<sup>th</sup>, with 100+ singing males noted throughout the site and small, scattered flocks totalling over 300 birds. Singing was heard at Yearsley on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and on Strensall Common from the 24<sup>th</sup> with many males singing there in the breeding season.

Regularly seen singing at several locations on the outskirts of Huby from 6<sup>th</sup> March. Four were singing along a three mile stretch of the cycleway between York and Selby on the 13<sup>th</sup> while up to six were along Caulkleys Bank between West Ness and Stonegrave on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and noted in several locations in fields adjacent to Yearsley Moor on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

Bred as usual throughout the Lower Derwent Valley NNR and on adjacent arable land. However, numbers at Wheldrake Ings slumped from the usual 20-30+ singing males to only three singing males, coincident with a marked increase in the level of disturbance from visitors and dogs walking off the path and with fluctuating water levels. Good numbers were still counted in the survey square near Riccall (mostly winter cereal, but crop rotation practised here). Eight pairs were present at Forest Farm, Warthill throughout the breeding season and 21 flew west at North Duffield Carrs on 9<sup>th</sup> September with 48 there on the 10<sup>th</sup>.

Two flew over Moss Street, York on 3<sup>rd</sup> October while 30+ were in a stubble field one mile west of Nether Poppleton and another 25 half a mile further on 18<sup>th</sup> November, with 30 at Woodhouse Farm, west of Nether Poppleton. Three flying east near Bishopthorpe Bridge on 29<sup>th</sup> November were the most seen at this site.

50 were in a stubble field north of Wiganthorpe Hall, Terrington on the 21<sup>st</sup> while small numbers moved west or south from the 22<sup>nd</sup> with 400 over North Duffield Carrs on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24 there on the 30<sup>th</sup>. In December, a single stubble field along Hagg Lane, East Cottingham held 120 on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> and 45+ were in stubble at Sutton on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

#### **Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia*

Status: Summer breeder and passage migrant

Two at Melbourne Ings on 20<sup>th</sup> March were the first returning birds, with seven at Wheldrake Ings on the 27<sup>th</sup> and 30+ arriving next day. Eight were at Castle Howard Lake on the same day, with hundreds feeding there with Swallows *Hirundo rustica* on the evening of 8<sup>th</sup> April, departing when drizzle started. Six were over the River Ouse in central York on the 9<sup>th</sup> with one at nest holes on the Ouse at Poppleton the same day where around 20 were inspecting the holes by 1<sup>st</sup> May.

The largest counts in the Lower Derwent Valley came late in May with a large arrival on the 22<sup>nd</sup> bringing over 500 to Bank Island and over 800 to Wheldrake. However, numbers of breeding birds in the valley appear to be on the decline, possibly due to flooding events which have washed out colonies along the River Derwent. One or two pairs bred at North Duffield Ings and Sutton with 15+ pairs along the Derwent from Elvington to Kexby.

Small numbers were seen along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe from 27<sup>th</sup> April to 6<sup>th</sup> August while there was a poor showing at Rawcliffe Lake, with only one or two birds seen occasionally. Seen on 9<sup>th</sup> June at artificial holes at Sand Hutton CSL, but believed not to have nested there this year. 30+ were feeding over Castle Howard Lake on the evening of 10<sup>th</sup> June.

Rather scarce during return passage at Wheldrake Ings, with 500+ at Bank Island on 2<sup>nd</sup> September being the maximum count. However, birds lingered throughout the month with around 30 moving south at North Duffield Carrs on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24 there on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*

Status: Summer breeder and passage migrant

One at Wheldrake Ings on 26<sup>th</sup> March was the first, with one at Castle Howard on the 28<sup>th</sup>. A single was in Sutton on 3<sup>rd</sup> April with one or two daily thereafter. Hundreds were feeding with Sand Martins *Riparia riparia* over Castle Howard Lake on the 8<sup>th</sup>, but had left by dusk when drizzle started. 30 moved west at North Duffield Carrs on the 10<sup>th</sup> with 40+ at Wheldrake next day. Seen at Naburn on the 7<sup>th</sup>, Fulford on the 9<sup>th</sup>, Gilling and Swinton on the 21<sup>st</sup>, Linton-on-Ouse and Tollerton on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, Riccall on the 24<sup>th</sup>, New Earswick on the 25<sup>th</sup>, Huby on the 26<sup>th</sup> and Osbaldwick by the month end when birds were widespread in the Lower Derwent Valley and had returned to breeding sites, but were

nowhere numerous. Present in low numbers there for most of May, with 250 at Wheldrake and 200 at Bank Island on the 22<sup>nd</sup> coinciding with other arrivals.

In Huby, birds nested under the roof of a garden shed. Seven were between Naburn and Stillingfleet on 15<sup>th</sup> May, with 13 there on 19<sup>th</sup> June. 20+ were feeding over Castle Howard Lake on the evening of 10<sup>th</sup> June while around 20 were at Swinton on 10<sup>th</sup> July, two nests having fledged young. 100+ roosted at Wheldrake Ings on the 6<sup>th</sup> with 150+ on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 200 on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Several were over Strensall Common on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

Noted feeding over Osbaldwick cricket field on 28<sup>th</sup> August, birds normally being further out of the village. Ten were around Strensall all day on the 31<sup>st</sup> while 100+ were on wires near Fulford Ings on 4<sup>th</sup> September, with 50+ on wires at Thornton-le-Cley on the 5<sup>th</sup>. Feeding again over Osbaldwick cricket field on the 7<sup>th</sup>, with many juveniles present. 200+ flew south over Dunnington Common at 1820 hours on the 17<sup>th</sup>, followed by a Hobby *Falco subbuteo*, this being an early departure for the bulk of Swallows.

The main roost at Bank Island held over 3000 birds early in September, declining to 1000 by the 26<sup>th</sup>. A roost near Melbourne held 800 on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 100+ on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 2000+ by the 29<sup>th</sup>. 300+ roosted there on 3<sup>rd</sup> October, but very few remained thereafter with 50 on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 11 on the 5<sup>th</sup> and singles after that until two at North Duffield Carrs on the 9<sup>th</sup>. The last was at Gilling on 16<sup>th</sup> October.

#### **House Martin** *Delichon urbica*

Status: Summer breeder and passage migrant

The first was at Naburn on 30<sup>th</sup> March, with one at Wheldrake Ings on 7<sup>th</sup> April and ten there on the 11<sup>th</sup>. 40+ were at North Duffield Carrs on the 19<sup>th</sup>, with small numbers thereafter. Two passed over Osbaldwick on the 24<sup>th</sup>, two over Micklegate, York on the 27<sup>th</sup> and one at the Beeswing pub on Hull Road, York on the 29<sup>th</sup> when one was at Gilling while 12 at Strensall on the 30<sup>th</sup> were the first seen there.

Noted to be present in worryingly low numbers in early May in the Lower Derwent Valley NNR and surrounding villages. Three were at Forest Farm, Warthill on 5<sup>th</sup> May with nine there by the 31<sup>st</sup>. Birds had arrived at their nest sites on a house in Sim Balk Lane, Bishopthorpe on 6<sup>th</sup> May and were present until the end of September with nine nests occupied.

Back in force in York from the 13<sup>th</sup>, with a large group collecting sand from a builders' yard on Hallfield Lane on the 20<sup>th</sup> and mud-gathering in a nearby puddle. Abundant in Huby by the 21<sup>st</sup>, nesting under the eaves of several houses. There was a large arrival in the Lower Derwent Valley on the 22<sup>nd</sup> with 500+ at Wheldrake and 1000+ at Bank Island. 25+ were feeding over Castle Howard Lake on the evening of 10<sup>th</sup> June.

16-18 pairs nested on houses surrounding Rawcliffe Lake and birds also nested in Fourth Avenue, Heworth while colonies monitored in the Lower Derwent Valley appeared to have nested in similar numbers to 1998 and with good success.

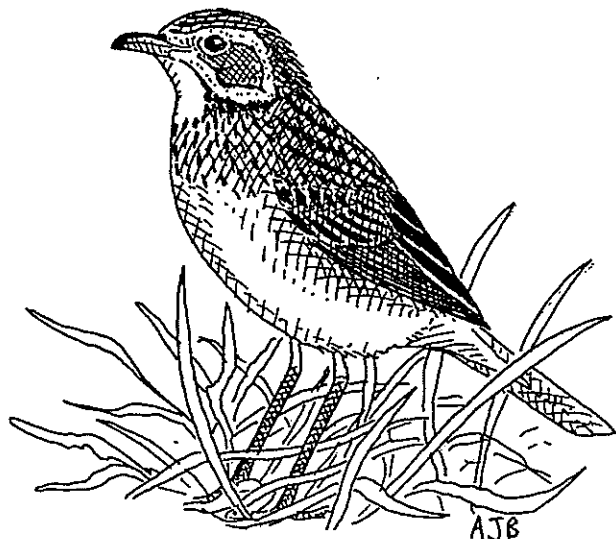
Seen regularly along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe from 5<sup>th</sup> June to 4<sup>th</sup> September when around 50 were on wires near Fulford Ings. Birds were still feeding young in Osbaldwick in late August, but numbers decreased by 3<sup>rd</sup> September. Departed from Sim Balk Lane, Bishopthorpe earlier than usual having only raised one or two broods instead of the more usual three, possibly due to the cold, wet spring. 25 were at Strensall on 9<sup>th</sup> October, with the last at Rawcliffe on the 11<sup>th</sup> and the last for the recording area at Gilling on the 16<sup>th</sup>.



**Richard's Pipit** *Anthus novaeseelandiae*

Status: Very rare visitor

A first-winter bird showed well down to 20 metres on the floodbank at North Duffield Carrs on the afternoon



of 5<sup>th</sup> October before flying into nearby meadows. It reappeared on the floodbank that evening before finally disappearing. Second record for the Lower Derwent Valley NNR (EN). Description forwarded to YNU.

**Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis*

Status: Summer breeder though numbers have declined recently

The first was at Skipwith Common on 30<sup>th</sup> April (NS), with one at Gilling on 6<sup>th</sup> May (RNHS) and three singing on Strensall Common on the 12<sup>th</sup> (PReed). One was seen and heard at Fulford Ings on 22<sup>nd</sup> August with another heard overhead near there on 4<sup>th</sup> September being the last (AB).

**Meadow Pipit** *Anthus pratensis*

Status: Resident and migrant breeder and passage migrant

Several small flocks were scattered throughout the Lower Derwent Valley in January with 52 at Wheldrake Ings on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 93 on the 17<sup>th</sup> when 25 were at Rawcliffe. Two were noted on Strensall Common on 24<sup>th</sup> February, seen there on most spring visits. Four or five were beside the River Ouse west of Nether Poppleton on 24<sup>th</sup> March.

Considered to have bred in the Lower Derwent Valley in the usual numbers, with around 300 singing males throughout the site. However, numbers at Wheldrake Ings were well below average apparently due to disturbance by walkers and dogs. 40+ were at Ellerton on 14<sup>th</sup> August, including four pairs still feeding unfledged young in a small strip of uncut meadow. Small numbers started to move through the Lower Derwent Valley from the 21<sup>st</sup> with 200 moving west at Thornton Ellers during the last two hours of daylight on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Over 200 roosted at this site and two flew over Nunnery Lane, York on 28<sup>th</sup> August.

Singles flew over Fulford Ings on 4<sup>th</sup> September and several movements were noted in the Lower Derwent Valley during the month with the first starting on the 9<sup>th</sup> when over 100 were present at North Duffield Carrs. 150+ were present next day, with 17 remaining on the 11<sup>th</sup>. Birds continually passed overhead from the 18<sup>th</sup> with 500+ west in two hours at North Duffield Carrs on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Ten were at West Mill House, Sittenham on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

One flew over Nunthorpe Road, York on 3<sup>rd</sup> October while two were feeding with Pied Wagtails *Motacilla alba* on the icy edges of floodwater near Bishophorpe Bridge on 27<sup>th</sup> December with two near there on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Also reported from Rufforth airfield and very common in arable farmland and moorland areas in the north.

**Rock Pipit** *Anthus petrosus*

Status: Irregular visitor

A single at Wheldrake Ings on 19<sup>th</sup> November was the only record (EN).

**Water Pipit** *Anthus spinoletta*

Status: Irregular visitor

One fed with Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis* and Pied Wagtails *Motacilla alba* in front of the Tower hide at Wheldrake Ings on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> January. Another was feeding in a small flooded area by the bridge at Wheldrake on 19<sup>th</sup> December (EN).

**Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava*

Status: Summer breeder and passage migrant

A very poor year in the Lower Derwent Valley NNR. A single at Wheldrake Ings on 4<sup>th</sup> April was the first, with two at North Duffield Carrs on the 10<sup>th</sup> and daily thereafter in small numbers throughout the month. The only double figure count was of 17 at Bubwith on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Numbers failed to improve with an estimated 30 pairs scattered throughout the site (compared with 200 in 1996). Numbers have fluctuated markedly in the past, but this dramatic decline over the last four years is a matter for concern. One or two were moving daily by the end of August, with 16 at North Duffield Carrs on 9<sup>th</sup> September and four there on the 10<sup>th</sup>. A single was there on the 17<sup>th</sup> with a large fall of 62 on the 19<sup>th</sup> during heavy rain. One at Bank Island on the 23<sup>rd</sup> was the last.

Also noted breeding at Riccall and Forest Farm, Warthill. Very scarce in the northern recording area.

**Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*

Status: Resident breeder

One was on the River Ouse at Poppleton on 18<sup>th</sup> January with another feeding near the Osbaldwick Beck inflow culvert, St Nicholas Fields on the 27<sup>th</sup>. A single was seen on Strensall Common on 24<sup>th</sup>

February while a pair was by Newburgh Priory Lake on 14<sup>th</sup> March. A pair once again bred on the top section of the Pocklington Canal, with one or two pairs located during the breeding season along the River Derwent at Elvington and near Stamford Bridge. Also bred in tributaries of the River Foss near Brandsby and a pair was regularly seen along the stream through Gilling village while a male was singing near Skeldergate Bridge, York during June.

One to three were seen or heard along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe throughout the year, with five on 3<sup>rd</sup> October. Present in the Micklegate area of York from mid-September to the year end with three together in gardens there on 30<sup>th</sup> September. Singles were at Rawcliffe Lake on 6<sup>th</sup> September and 8<sup>th</sup> November while up to three were seen throughout October at Church Bridge near Melbourne with singles at Bank Island and North Duffield Carrs and two at Elvington during the month. One was on the River Foss at Strensall on the 17<sup>th</sup> while another wintered at Hassacarr Nature Reserve. Also seen at Sheriff Hutton.

**Pied Wagtail** *Motacilla alba*

Status: Resident breeder

The roost at Bank Island held over 80 throughout January with a single flock of 96 sighted at Wheldrake reedbed on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. 12 were in ploughed fields next to Knavesmire Wood on 15<sup>th</sup> February while a pre-roost assembly of 52 was at the Bank Island sewage farm on 5<sup>th</sup> April. Regularly seen in Huby with ten there on 27<sup>th</sup> September. Two were on the ridge north of Coneysthorpe on 8<sup>th</sup> October and three or four in a large flock of thrushes, finches and buntings near Lilling Green Farm on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

Up to eight were present along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe throughout the year with a loose flock of around 12 flying south near Bishopthorpe Bridge on 19<sup>th</sup> December and 30 feeding on the icy edges of floodwater there on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Around 50 were with a finch flock near a manure heap in a stubble field on Brecks Lane, Strensall on 4<sup>th</sup> December, with 50 at Clifton Ings on the 10<sup>th</sup>. Common in suitable habitats in the northern area, feeding regularly in a Gilling garden during the cold spell in December.

**Waxwing** *Bombycilla garrulus*

Status: Occasional winter visitor

The area surrounding the Lower Derwent Valley NNR had its share of the national influx in November. A flock of seven near Elvington on the 10<sup>th</sup> was the first, followed by three in the Bank Island car park on the 18<sup>th</sup>. A single lingered in the churchyard at Wheldrake on the 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> with a flock of 17 at Thorganby on the 26<sup>th</sup> (EN). In December, one was seen along the City Walls, near Bishopthorpe Road, York on the 4<sup>th</sup>. Three (two adults and a first-winter) were in the same area on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>, feeding on rowan berries when not chased off by the resident Mistle Thrushes *Turdus viscivorus* (AB). Six were at Elvington on the 29<sup>th</sup> (EN).

**Dipper** *Cinclus cinclus*

Status: Resident casual breeder

One on Holbeck stream in Gilling on 27<sup>th</sup> February was the only record (RNHS).

**Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Status: Resident breeder throughout the area

Bred as usual in the Lower Derwent Valley. A party of ten adults and juveniles was in a small copse north of Tollerton Road half a mile west of Huby on 29<sup>th</sup> May and a juvenile was on Yearsley Moor on 6<sup>th</sup> June. A pair nested in an old Swallow's *Hirundo rustica* nest in a Huby garden, with five young noted from the 8<sup>th</sup>.

Present and singing in gardens in Strensall and Dringhouses for most of the year. Resident along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe with up to six resident at Rawcliffe Lake. Six were by a gate leading to Castle Howard Lake on 5<sup>th</sup> December. Abundant at Askham Bog and common in many places, including the northern recording area.

**Dunnock** *Prunella modularis*

Status: Resident breeder throughout the area

Bred as usual in the Lower Derwent Valley. Males were competing along the Osbaldwick to York cycleway on 27<sup>th</sup> January and singing on 8<sup>th</sup> February, with seven counted there on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Singing in Bishopthorpe from the 11<sup>th</sup> and Strensall from the 18<sup>th</sup>. A party of five including three juveniles was in a Huby garden on 30<sup>th</sup> May. An adult with one juvenile was in a Strensall garden on 7<sup>th</sup> June, with a juvenile feeding around garden chairs on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

Resident along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe, with singing birds still noted in Rowntree Park, York on 28<sup>th</sup> November and 26<sup>th</sup> December. Five or six were in a stubble field in Terrington on 21<sup>st</sup> November with up to eight resident at Rawcliffe Lake. Common throughout the northern recording area and all other areas.

**Robin** *Erithacus rubecula*

Status: Resident breeder throughout the area

Bred as usual in the Lower Derwent Valley. Present and singing in gardens in Strensall and Dringhouses for most of the year. Two adults were seen feeding each other in a Strensall garden on 17<sup>th</sup> May while single juveniles were in a Huby garden on 3<sup>rd</sup> June, on Yearsley Moor on the 6<sup>th</sup> and in a Strensall garden on 5<sup>th</sup> August.

Resident along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe with a maximum count of 12+ on 19<sup>th</sup> December. Seven were counted in Yearsley Moor Woods on 10<sup>th</sup> December and over 12 counted on a walk between Bulmer and Castle Howard on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Up to four were resident at Rawcliffe Lake and three by Moor Lane lake. Common in all areas.

**Nightingale** *Luscinia megarhynchos*

Status: Infrequent summer visitor

A bird was heard singing between Elvington and Wheldrake on 23<sup>rd</sup> May (EN).

**Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Status: Summer breeder and passage visitor

One was in the hedge at Bank Island on 9<sup>th</sup> May.

There was a good return passage in the Lower Derwent Valley from the last week of July: a male was at Canal Head on the 25<sup>th</sup>, an immature/female at North Duffield Carrs on the 26<sup>th</sup> with two on the 27<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> and two males there on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

August was another good month with singles at North Duffield Carrs on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>. Three were at Thornton Ellers on the 6<sup>th</sup>, with singles there on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> while two on the 28<sup>th</sup> were the last (EN).

**Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra*

Status: Casual summer breeder and passage visitor

An immature was at Wheldrake Ings on 5<sup>th</sup> July and two at North Duffield Carrs on the 11<sup>th</sup>. Nine arrived at the latter site during heavy rain on 6<sup>th</sup> August, with two remaining until at least the 27<sup>th</sup>. One was caught and ringed at Sutton on 23<sup>rd</sup> September (EN).

**Stonechat** *Saxicola torquata*

Status: Casual breeder and passage visitor

A male present near the windpump at Wheldrake Ings on 16<sup>th</sup> December was the only record (EN).

**Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Status: Summer visitor

An early individual at Hagg Lane, East Cottingham on 14<sup>th</sup> March was followed by another at Wheldrake Ings on the 31<sup>st</sup>. Singles were on Strensall Common on 2<sup>nd</sup> April, in front of the Tower hide at Wheldrake on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and again at Hagg Lane on the 14<sup>th</sup> when five were on Strensall Common while further singles were at Hagg Lane on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>.

Two were on the range greens at Strensall Common on 28<sup>th</sup> April with one there on 12<sup>th</sup> May. A male was at North Duffield Carrs on 6<sup>th</sup> August and a female there on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Single immatures were on the riverbank at North Duffield Carrs on 29<sup>th</sup> September and near Kexby on the same date.

**Ring Ouzel** *Turdus torquatus*

Status: Rare visitor

A female was at Thornton Ellers on 25<sup>th</sup> April with a male near Thorganby next day (EN).

**Blackbird** *Turdus merula*

Status: Resident breeder, winter visitor and migrant

Song was noted early in the year at Osbaldwick on 3<sup>rd</sup> February and Strensall on the 25<sup>th</sup> while males were disputing territory at the former site on 1<sup>st</sup> March with the first brief dawn chorus there on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and full song by the 19<sup>th</sup>. A female was making a nest in a *Leylandii* hedge in a Strensall garden from 12<sup>th</sup> March but this nest was lost, probably due to Magpies *Pica pica*. The first juvenile seen in Osbaldwick was unfortunately a road casualty on 12<sup>th</sup> April. An adult was carrying food on the Osbaldwick to York cycleway on the 19<sup>th</sup>, with another juvenile in central York the same day.

The female in the Strensall garden built another nest in a beech hedge on 17<sup>th</sup> May while another female was feeding a recently-fledged juvenile in a Huby garden on the 22<sup>nd</sup> with one feeding two juveniles there on 7<sup>th</sup> June. Nesting activity continued throughout the summer in Osbaldwick, but song died out after 21<sup>st</sup> June. A female and a juvenile were in a Strensall garden on 31<sup>st</sup> July with the last juvenile in Osbaldwick observed on 25<sup>th</sup> August feeding on ants. Breeding success appeared to be high in the Lower Derwent Valley, this species benefiting from wet springs when worms appear to be easier to find. 18 were counted in a kilometre square between Naburn and Stillingfleet.

A large influx was noted with other winter thrushes in the Lower Derwent Valley on 16<sup>th</sup> October when over 1000 moved through the valley. Smaller numbers moved through the area over the following days.

Large numbers were in gardens in Dringhouses and eight in Woodlands Grove with up to 12 resident at Rawcliffe Lake. Resident along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe with numbers boosted by migrant birds in winter, reaching a maximum count of 185 on 27<sup>th</sup> December (60 at Fulford Ings). A male was in full song near Fenwick's in York on 27<sup>th</sup> November while good numbers were noted in the winter at Strensall Common, Yearsley Moor Woods, Rowntrees Park (York) and New Earswick Nature Reserve.

#### **Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris***

Status: Winter visitor

Two were on Monk Stray on 8<sup>th</sup> January with 12 near West Lilling on the 10<sup>th</sup>. 25+ were at Huby on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 120 there on the 26<sup>th</sup> with 26 just outside the village. 40 were near Murton on 6<sup>th</sup> February with eight at Strensall on the 10<sup>th</sup>. 40 were at Hagg Bridge from 25<sup>th</sup> January to 24<sup>th</sup> February. Several movements were noted in the Lower Derwent Valley NNR during March with the largest of over 1000 passing Storwood on the 8<sup>th</sup>. 75+ were near Sutton-on-the-Forest cemetery on the 14<sup>th</sup>, 300 at Wheldrake Ings on the 20<sup>th</sup>, 150 over North Duffield Carrs on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 100+ in the grounds of Beningborough Hall on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 150+ near Hushwaite on the 26<sup>th</sup> while 250+ were at Angram Hall, 150+ at Elphin Bridge and 80 at Elvington on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Most birds had departed by the end of the month.

40 were flying east over Strensall on 1<sup>st</sup> April when c.100 were near Oldstead Grange. c.100 were at West Mill House, Sittenham on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 21 in the car park lane at Wheldrake on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 30+ at Laytham on the 8<sup>th</sup>. 75 flew west over Thornton Ellers on the 15<sup>th</sup> and there were 17 at Wheldrake Ings on the 21<sup>st</sup>, with two birds in the car park lane on the 25<sup>th</sup> being the last.

The first of the autumn were four flying west over Elvington on 25<sup>th</sup> September. 70 were at North Duffield Carrs, 50 at Elvington and 170 at Bank Island on 15<sup>th</sup> October - all arrived late afternoon. Large numbers were present at dawn on the 16<sup>th</sup> with over 6000+ moving through the valley during the day. 1000+ lingered on the 17<sup>th</sup> with smaller numbers over the following week.

The first at Strensall were four on the 17<sup>th</sup> when there were small parties of ten to 25 birds around Huby and Sutton-on-the-Forest. 20 were at Selby on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 100 near Poppleton on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. 1000+ flew over Osbaldwick on the 23<sup>rd</sup> after easterly winds. A further influx at the month end saw flocks of 2300 at Aughton and 1000 at North Duffield Carrs on the 28<sup>th</sup> with 1300 at Bank Island on the 29<sup>th</sup>. These later flocks spent large amounts of time amongst grazing sheep. 2000+ were counted throughout the Lower Derwent Valley on the 30<sup>th</sup>. On the same day, 60+ flew over Fulford Ings with up to 30 noted there during November and December. 20-30 were in fields by the River Foss in Strensall on 31<sup>st</sup> October.

100+ were in a mixed flock with Redwings *Turdus iliacus* in trees near River Derwent Paradise Farm on 8<sup>th</sup> November and small parties (of two to ten) near Byland Abbey. Ten were west of Nether

Poppleton on the 18<sup>th</sup> and a small flock at Gilling from the 17<sup>th</sup> - less than in previous years. Six were at Moor Monkton and six or seven in a stubble field at Terrington on the 21<sup>st</sup>. At least 12 were in a field on Brecks Lane, Strensall on 4<sup>th</sup> December and five flew south over Rowntree Park, York on the 5<sup>th</sup>. 12 flew over the Sheriff Hutton road on 10<sup>th</sup> December with 50 at Brecks Lane on the 12<sup>th</sup>. 50 were present on Clifton Ings throughout December and 18 were on the Castle Howard estate on the 19<sup>th</sup> with 50 at Linton-on-Ouse and 100+ near Sutton-on-the-Forest on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Ten were in Huby late in the month.

#### **Song Thrush** *Turdus philomelos*

Status: Resident breeder but in decline in some areas

Singing was heard from late January in St Nicholas Fields (York), Slingsby on the 30<sup>th</sup>, Gilling on 1<sup>st</sup> February and also in Strensall from then until 18<sup>th</sup> June. Singing was also heard in a garden in Sim Balk Lane, Bishopthorpe from the second week in February and Osbaldwick from the 24<sup>th</sup>. Four were counted on the Osbaldwick to York cycleway on the 26<sup>th</sup> while two were seen chasing one another in an Osbaldwick garden on 3<sup>rd</sup> March and a pair was seen in Bishopthorpe on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

It was an amazing year in the Lower Derwent Valley - perhaps the best of the decade: as usual three pairs were present in the car park lane at Wheldrake Ings with three pairs at Bank Island. At least four pairs were present at Thornton Ellers but the largest increases came from the rest of the valley with many pairs located and breeding success appeared to be high.

An apparent comeback was noted in the Rawcliffe area and it was the best year for numbers in Dunnington for a long time. At least six were recorded on a three mile stretch of the York to Selby cycleway on 19<sup>th</sup> May and a pair was on Strensall Common on 28<sup>th</sup> April with a juvenile seen by the end of July. A juvenile flew into a house in Huby on 1<sup>st</sup> June.

A noticeable influx brought c. 200 into the Lower Derwent Valley on 16<sup>th</sup> October with 100 present on the 17<sup>th</sup>. Birds were widely scattered thereafter. Seen regularly in a Dringhouses garden, but less often in winter. Up to ten were noted along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe throughout the year, most birds being at Fulford Ings. Regular in Huby and Strensall Common where birds were often calling in late evening. Also recorded from Coneysthorpe and Low Hutton. However, no longer a common species in the northern recording area.

#### **Redwing** *Turdus iliacus*

Status: Winter visitor

Four were in holly trees on Moss Street, York on 9<sup>th</sup> January with one on Strensall Common on the 17<sup>th</sup>. 20 were with Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* on a field near New Earswick Nature Reserve on 16<sup>th</sup> January. Small numbers were in flock of Fieldfare between East Cottingham and Ellerton on 7<sup>th</sup> February, with 16 on Strensall Common on the same date and three there on 15<sup>th</sup> March.

Nocturnal passage of returning birds commenced on 28<sup>th</sup> September with individuals heard calling over York University. Two flew west over North Duffield Carrs on the 29<sup>th</sup> and one was in Priory Street, York on 1<sup>st</sup> October when four were in nearby Nunnery Lane with 12 at Gilling on the 2<sup>nd</sup> where flocks were smaller than previous years. There were up to 15 in the Fulford Ings area from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the year end and three were at Dringhouses, also on 3<sup>rd</sup> October, with two there on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

Small numbers were noted in the Lower Derwent Valley most days from the 4<sup>th</sup> with 100+ arriving on the 15<sup>th</sup>. 2000+ arrived on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 1000+ on the 17<sup>th</sup> with smaller numbers thereafter. One was in a garden in Sim Balk Lane, Bishopthorpe on the 23<sup>rd</sup> with ten at Castle Howard on 6<sup>th</sup> November

while three were at Hutton Hill, 18 at High Gatterly and 25 near Easthorpe Hall on the 7<sup>th</sup>. 100+ were in a mixed flock with Fieldfare near River Derwent Paradise Farm on the 8<sup>th</sup>, with small parties near Byland Abbey. Around ten were near Woodhouse Farm (near Nether Poppleton) on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 20-30 were present at Clifton Ings throughout December, with Fieldfare. Two were in Rowntrees Park, York feeding on holly berries on 5<sup>th</sup> December with eight in a mixed thrush flock at Castle Howard the same day. c. 30 were at Gilling on the 10<sup>th</sup> and c. 40 in Gracious Street, Huby on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Mistle Thrush** *Turdus viscivorus*

Status: Resident breeder and winter visitor

Heard singing outside the cinema at Clifton Moor at dusk on 7<sup>th</sup> January and in Osbaldwick on the 31<sup>st</sup>. The breeding status in the Lower Derwent Valley appeared unchanged, with scattered pairs adjacent to the reserve.

As usual, numbers peaked in July when large parties appear amongst the newly-cut hay: 11 were at Wheldrake Ings on the 6<sup>th</sup> with 53 at Sutton on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, 13 at Wheldrake on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 62 at Ellerton on the 14<sup>th</sup>, providing a full reserve count of 114 on the latter date. There were 17 at Wheldrake on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 24 on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Breeding also noted at Strensall Common and occasionally seen in a Dringhouses garden.

One was reported from Welburn on 11<sup>th</sup> May and 18<sup>th</sup> June with two seen in Elmpark estate (near Malton Road, York).

Up to four were seen along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe throughout the year, with a flock of nine flying over Fulford Ings on 22<sup>nd</sup> August. Flocks of up to nine were in the Selby area in September while up to five were defending berry-laden rowan trees along the City Walls, York (near Bishopthorpe Road) during November and December. All other species were chased off vigorously, including Waxwings *Bombus garrulus* and even Blue tits *Parus caeruleus*! Regularly seen in Huby and the northern recording area. Also reported from Low Hutton, York University, Terrington, Gilling Castle, Castle Howard and Slingsby.

**Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella naevia*

Status: Rare summer breeder

There was a significant increase in numbers in the Lower Derwent Valley NNR. The first returning bird was 'reeling' by the windpump at Wheldrake Ings on 14<sup>th</sup> April - a rather early date. Three males were 'reeling' at Bank Island on 1<sup>st</sup> May, with ten located by the month end. Numbers increased to 19 by the end of June and several were still 'reeling' in July. Activity then dropped off suddenly, with the last heard at Bank Island on the 19<sup>th</sup> until a very late bird was seen at Wheldrake on 19<sup>th</sup> September.

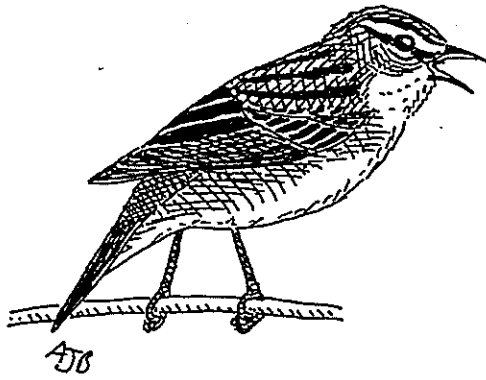
**Savi's Warbler** *Locustella luscinioides*

Status: Very rare visitor

A male singing from the island and hedge around the top pond at North Duffield Carrs at dawn from 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> June was the first record for the Lower Derwent Valley NNR (EN). It appears that this species may also be new to the YOC recording area. Description forwarded to YNU.



**Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*  
Status: Summer breeder and passage migrant



Two had returned to Wheldrake Ings by 3<sup>rd</sup> April, with a small arrival bringing eight to this site on the 8<sup>th</sup>. Numbers were slow to build up with one or two on most dates until the 21<sup>st</sup> when 15+ were present. There was then an increase with birds widespread by the month end.

One was singing near the River Ouse near Riccall on the 24<sup>th</sup> and singing was first noted at Fulford Ings on 1<sup>st</sup> May where up to seven pairs remained to breed. Two singing males were at Castle Howard on 9<sup>th</sup> May.

In the Lower Derwent Valley, breeding success appeared to be poor with very few young seen during the year. Most birds departed early, by mid-July, with small numbers still lingering in the reedbed at Wheldrake and elsewhere in August. Eight were at North Duffield Carrs on the 27<sup>th</sup>, presumably on passage. Three at Wheldrake Ings on 3<sup>rd</sup> September were the last.

**Marsh Warbler** *Acrocephalus palustris*  
Status: Very rare visitor

A male was singing in suitable breeding habitat at Fulford Ings from at least 5<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> June. A second bird was suspected to be present and one (presumably a female) was positively seen on 13<sup>th</sup> June. There were possible sightings after the 16<sup>th</sup>, but breeding could not be proved (AB). A full account of this occurrence can be found elsewhere in this Report. Another singing male by the pond at the west end of Thornton Ellers from the 23<sup>rd</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> was the first record for the Lower Derwent Valley (EN). Second and third records for the YOC recording area. Descriptions forwarded to YNU.

These records were part of a national influx at this time which resulted in several inland records and the first confirmed breeding record for Yorkshire.

**Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*  
Status: Summer breeder and passage migrant

The first bird was heard by the River Ouse near Riccall on 24<sup>th</sup> April, with a single at Wheldrake Ings on the 26<sup>th</sup> being the first at this site where three were present next day and six on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Bred in the Lower Derwent Valley in similar numbers to the previous year (100+ singing males), with the largest

concentrations recorded from the Pocklington Canal and Wheldrake Ings. A male was singing at Castle Howard on 19<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> May with a pair seen there on 10<sup>th</sup> June and two recently-fledged juveniles on 14<sup>th</sup> July. A single was at White Hill, Full Sutton on 1<sup>st</sup> June.

One was singing in a bed of reedmace at Fulford Ings from at least 25<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> June. Two other birds were singing there on the 26<sup>th</sup>, one in a stand of willowherb and the other in riverside willows. A juvenile bird seen at close range at this site on 22<sup>nd</sup> August was either a Reed or Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*, but was not identifiable to species.

A total of nine along the Pocklington Canal on 5<sup>th</sup> September included two adults feeding four fledged young. An adult and a juvenile were caught and ringed at Melbourne on the 11<sup>th</sup> while a late individual remained there on 3<sup>rd</sup> October.

#### **Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia curruca*

Status: Summer breeder

The first was a male singing near Fulford Ings on 1<sup>st</sup> May and again on 15<sup>th</sup> June, with a juvenile seen there on 6<sup>th</sup> August.

A pair apparently bred on the Osbaldwick to York cycleway, last seen on 12<sup>th</sup> July. Bred as usual in the Lower Derwent Valley where movement occurred late in August with five at North Duffield Carrs on the 26<sup>th</sup> and four on the 27<sup>th</sup> and three at Thornton Ellers on the 28<sup>th</sup>. A small party or family group was in Brandsby Orchard from 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> September, with one at Rawcliffe Lake on the 15<sup>th</sup> being the last. Also reported from Warthill and Rufforth.

#### **Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis*

Status: Summer breeder

The first returning bird at Storwood on 23<sup>rd</sup> April was followed by three at Thornton Ellers on the 25<sup>th</sup>, three at Wheldrake Ings on the 26<sup>th</sup>, one at Middlethorpe Ings on the 27<sup>th</sup>, one on the Outgang, Heslington on the 28<sup>th</sup> and one in Osbaldwick on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Several were singing in a hedge at Gilling on 4<sup>th</sup> May with one at Sand Hutton on the 5<sup>th</sup> when four were at Forest Farm, Warthill and three on the Osbaldwick to York cycleway on the 7<sup>th</sup>. 14 were recorded at Fulford Ings on 2<sup>nd</sup> May where at least eight pairs bred, with birds feeding young on 14<sup>th</sup> June when the first fledgeling was seen. Six were singing along a three mile stretch of the York to Selby cycleway on 19<sup>th</sup> May.

Numbers breeding in Dunnington had dropped while those in the Lower Derwent Valley were also very low and breeding success apparently poor. Most departed early in July.

Young were still at Fulford Ings on 24<sup>th</sup> July and at Osbaldwick on the 29<sup>th</sup>. The last at Fulford Ings were three on 4<sup>th</sup> September, with a single at Melbourne on the 11<sup>th</sup> and two at Storwood on the 16<sup>th</sup> being the last for the recording area. Also reported from Welburn, Haxby, Rufforth, Huby and Sutton-on-the-Forest.

#### **Garden Warbler** *Sylvia borin*

Status: Summer breeder

One was singing at Wheldrake Ings on 9<sup>th</sup> April, but it was a long wait until the next at Thornton on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Other singles were at Skipwith Common on the 20<sup>th</sup> and St Nicholas Fields, York on the 26<sup>th</sup>

with two there on the 28<sup>th</sup>. One was singing in Gilling Wood on 5<sup>th</sup> May with two or three at Gilling on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Two males were singing at Fulford Ings on 5<sup>th</sup> June with three there on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Single birds were seen at two locations on Yearsley Moor on the 6<sup>th</sup>. The last bird at Fulford Ings was on 22<sup>nd</sup> August with a single at Melbourne on 11<sup>th</sup> September being the last for the recording area.

**Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla*

Status: Summer breeder and winter visitor

A male was seen in a garden at Upper Poppleton on 14<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> January and also 8<sup>th</sup> March. The first song of the year was heard on 2<sup>nd</sup> April with singles at Bank Island and Skipwith Common. Two were at St Nicholas Fields, York on the 4<sup>th</sup> while a male was singing along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe on the 10<sup>th</sup>. Another was singing at Gilling on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and one was in the trees by the scout hut in Osbaldwick on the 28<sup>th</sup> with several more down the Outgang, Heslington the same day. Good numbers were at Wheldrake Ings by the end of the month while one was at Slingsby on the 14<sup>th</sup> and two between Naburn and Stillingfleet on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Two were singing on Skipwith Common on 9<sup>th</sup> June.

Up to eight pairs were present in the Fulford Ings area throughout the summer, with a male seen carrying food on 14<sup>th</sup> June. One was still singing near Tang Hall, York on 23<sup>rd</sup> July. Also recorded in the summer from Allerthorpe Woods, Moorlands YWT Reserve and Strensall. Two males were singing along the Pocklington Canal on 6<sup>th</sup> September with three recently-fledged juveniles and a male at Storwood on the same date. Three were at Melbourne on the 11<sup>th</sup> with a single at Thornton on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

The last bird seen at Fulford Ings was a female on 3<sup>rd</sup> October with another in a mixed tit flock in the car park lane at Wheldrake Ings on 9<sup>th</sup> November with one in a garden at Dunnington Common on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>. An aggressive male took up residence in a Naburn garden from 30<sup>th</sup> November to the year end, feeding on food put out and chasing off other small birds including Robins *Erithacus rubecula*! A female was in Micklegate, York during snowy weather on 21<sup>st</sup> December and one overwintered in Gilling, seen on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Addition to 1998 Report: Two males challenged each other in a Dringhouses garden on 12<sup>th</sup> January.

**Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita*

Status: Summer breeder and passage migrant

A wintering bird was seen at Strensall Common on 17<sup>th</sup> January with one at Rawcliffe Lake on the 21<sup>st</sup>. One was at Gilling on 15<sup>th</sup> March, with the first singing bird at Wheldrake Ings on the 19<sup>th</sup> and two there on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Seen and heard at several locations in woods near Pond Head, Oulston on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. A large wide-scale arrival occurred from the 23<sup>rd</sup>. One was singing at Castle Howard on the 27<sup>th</sup> while on the 28<sup>th</sup> one was in trees by the railway bridge over the River Ouse in York, two contact-calling at Overton, one calling in Cass Wood, Huby and a male singing at New Earswick Nature Reserve. Seen or heard in at least 14 locations on Yearsley Moor on the 30<sup>th</sup> and singing noted on Strensall Common on 31<sup>st</sup> March. Several birds were in Wass Wood on 1<sup>st</sup> April while one was singing by the River Foss in New Earswick on the 4<sup>th</sup> with three there on the 8<sup>th</sup>. Four were in Huttons Bank Wood on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

Up to two males were singing at Fulford Ings from 10<sup>th</sup> April to 3<sup>rd</sup> October, with a family party seen on 25<sup>th</sup> June. Also reported in the spring from Giants Hill Woods, Elvington, Woodlands Grove and

Burnholme Beck (both York) and between Naburn and Stillingfleet with several birds on Skipwith Common.

Autumn passage was average in the Lower Derwent Valley with eight along the Pocklington Canal on 6<sup>th</sup> September (four in song) and scattered birds throughout the reserve during the month. Still singing in Strensall on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>. A remarkable passage was noted at Rawcliffe Lake throughout the month, with five there on the 15<sup>th</sup>. A passage bird was calling in Osbaldwick on the 28<sup>th</sup> while a single lingered in the car park at Wheldrake Ings until the month end, the last there being on 3<sup>rd</sup> November. A single bird present at Rawcliffe Lake from 8<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> November showed characteristics of the northern race *abietinus* (NS).

**Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Status: Summer breeder and passage migrant

A single in Wass Wood on 1<sup>st</sup> April was the first. Two were singing on Skipwith Common on the 2<sup>nd</sup> with one at Bank Island and three at Wheldrake Ings on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 11 singing males there next day. One was singing by the top lake at Gilling on 7<sup>th</sup> April when other singles were in Slingsby and near the Hallfield Lane site in York where two were present next day when also heard on Strensall Common. There was a noticeable influx at Wheldrake Ings the same day. One was at Forest Farm, Warthill on the 12<sup>th</sup> with two there by the 28<sup>th</sup> and two were at Monks Cross on the 24<sup>th</sup>. On the 27<sup>th</sup> there were two along the Osbaldwick to York cycleway where several pairs bred. Six singing males were at St Nicholas Fields, York on the 28<sup>th</sup> and four in Huttons Bank Wood. Noted at Fulford Ings from the 10<sup>th</sup> with 20 singing males on 2<sup>nd</sup> May. Two were between Naburn and Stillingfleet on 15<sup>th</sup> May and seven singing along a three mile stretch on the York to Selby cycleway on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

At least ten pairs bred in the Fulford Ings area with the first juveniles seen on 26<sup>th</sup> June. There were four to five breeding pairs at Rawcliffe Lake. In Huby, a juvenile flew into a house on 14<sup>th</sup> July. Widespread throughout the northern recording area, but numbers were below average in the Lower Derwent Valley and other locations - including Dunnington - and breeding success was apparently poor with very few remaining after early June. One was still singing in Osbaldwick on 6<sup>th</sup> August where present until the 23<sup>rd</sup> and another was on Strensall Common on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

There was little sign of autumn passage through the Lower Derwent site in August and September, but a juvenile was in Priory Street, York on 2<sup>nd</sup> September while five were still at Fulford Ings on the 4<sup>th</sup>. A single singing male was at Melbourne on the 5<sup>th</sup> and one at Elvington on the 11<sup>th</sup> was the last. Also reported from Yearsley Moor (low numbers) and Hushwaite Common.

**Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus*

Status: Resident breeder and winter visitor

Present at Rowntree Park, York during the winter months and at Strensall Common and Fulford Ings throughout the year with up to three noted at the latter site where one or two were singing throughout the summer. One was moving through a Strensall garden on 4<sup>th</sup> April and a pair was at Forest Farm, Warthill on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Small flocks were on Yearsley Moor on 30<sup>th</sup> March where birds were found throughout the year.

Two at Hagg Bridge on 5<sup>th</sup> September were the first of the autumn in the Lower Derwent Valley, with the next being three at Wheldrake Ings on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Two were at North Duffield Carrs on the 16<sup>th</sup> with seven there by the 21<sup>st</sup>. Five or six were beside the River Rye in Nunnington on 29<sup>th</sup> October while one was in a Dringhouses garden on the 31<sup>st</sup>. Two or three were seen at several locations in woods beside ponds at Pond Head, Oulston with three to five at Castle Howard estate and the same number near

Howsham on 8<sup>th</sup> November. Two to three were with tit flocks in Fryton East Wood and Thurtle Wood, between Terrington and Slingsby, on the 21<sup>st</sup>. Also reported from Askham Bog, Welburn, Coneysthorpe Bank Wood and Gilling Woods.

**Firecrest** *Regulus ignicapillus*

Status: Rare visitor

A male which showed well at Clifton Ings on 26<sup>th</sup> November was the only record (NS).

**Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata*

Status: Summer breeder and passage visitor

The first returning bird arrived at Thorganby on 11<sup>th</sup> May with six at Storwood on the 17<sup>th</sup> and three in the car park lane at Wheldrake Ings by the month end. Numbers appeared higher than in previous years. Two were at Forest Farm, Warthill on the 15<sup>th</sup> and one was at Gilling on the 18<sup>th</sup> while another paid a brief visit to a *Wisteria* in a Strensall garden, possibly prospecting a nest site, but was not seen again. A pair was first observed inspecting a nest box in a Huby garden on 21<sup>st</sup> May and observed copulating next day. Two juveniles fledged from this site on 25<sup>th</sup> June, with adults copulating again on 10<sup>th</sup> July.

A male was singing by the River Ouse near Fulford on 6<sup>th</sup> June, with a family party including three juveniles at nearby Fulford Ings on 31<sup>st</sup> July. The last bird from this latter site was a juvenile on 28<sup>th</sup> August. Present throughout the summer at Strensall Common and Moorlands YWT Reserve. Also seen at Yearsley Moor, Skipwith village, Castle Howard Lake and Linton-on-Ouse.

A rather late showing was noted in the Lower Derwent Valley with two at Canal Head and a single at Melbourne on 5<sup>th</sup> September. A family of four lingered at the latter site on the 11<sup>th</sup> with a single at Wheldrake Ings on the 14<sup>th</sup> being the last.

**Bearded Tit** *Panurus biarmicus*

Status: Winter visitor

A pair present since mid-November 1998 represents the first wintering record for the Lower Derwent Valley NNR. They remained into January, but proved very elusive in the Wheldrake Ings reedbed with sightings on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. The female, possibly the pair, remained throughout February with sightings on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> (EN).

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

Status: Resident breeder

Small parties were noted throughout the year at numerous sites including the River Ouse between Bishopthorpe and York, Skipwith Common, Strensall Common, Yearsley Moor Woods, Pond Head (Oulston), and Askham Bog with six at the latter site on 1<sup>st</sup> January and 12 on Strensall Common on 1<sup>st</sup> February. At least ten were in a Huby garden on 9<sup>th</sup> January with a flock of 20 near West Lilling on the 20<sup>th</sup> and four at Rawcliffe Lake on the 21<sup>st</sup>. Four were near Bog Hall, Castle Howard on 27<sup>th</sup> February while two to three visited a Dringhouses garden from January to April and two were at Melrosegate, York on 17<sup>th</sup> April.

A family party of ten plus was at Yearsley Moor on 6<sup>th</sup> June with a similar party at Skipwith Common on the 9<sup>th</sup>. A party of mainly juveniles was on Strensall Common on 15<sup>th</sup> August. Breeding was recorded throughout the Lower Derwent Valley with several large post-breeding flocks suggesting a moderately successful season.

The largest, of 32, was along riverside willows at Wheldrake Ings on 24<sup>th</sup> November.  
During October, November and December groups of between six and 20 were at various locations including Nunnington, Easthorpe Hall, Slingsby, Gilling, Swinsey Carr (Wiganthorpe), Wath Wood, Thurtle Wood (Terrington) and Clifton Moor (by the York ring road).

**Marsh Tit** *Parus palustris*

Status: Resident breeder

Present all year at Askham Bog. Single birds were at Horse Close Rush near Castle Howard and in Concysthorpe Woods on 27<sup>th</sup> February. Small parties were in the Yearsley Moor area on 30<sup>th</sup> March with a single there on 6<sup>th</sup> June. One to two were by the River Ouse near Bishopthorpe on 2<sup>nd</sup> May and at Welburn near Castle Howard on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

Breeding was recorded in the Lower Derwent Valley NNR with small numbers scattered throughout the site and a juvenile was in Cass Wood, Huby on 9<sup>th</sup> June.

From September to December, one to two were seen at Yearsley Moor, Easthorpe Hall, Fryton Wood (Castle Howard) and in a Gilling garden.

**Willow Tit** *Parus montanus*

Status: Resident breeder

Present all year at Askham Bog. Bred as usual in the Lower Derwent Valley NNR, with small numbers scattered throughout the site.

One was at a nut-feeder near Low Water and three or four were with a mixed tit flock at Swinsey Carr, Wiganthorpe - both sites north of Terrington - on 21<sup>st</sup> November. During December, six were in Yearsley Moor Woods with singles on The Stray, Castle Howard and at Slingsby Banks Wood while two were in Brandrith Woods - all on the Castle Howard estate.

**Coal Tit** *Parus ater*

Status: Resident breeder

Seen throughout the year at Strensall Common, Moorlands YWT Reserve and along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe. A regular visitor to gardens in Dringhouses, Strensall, Gilling and Slingsby. Reported as 'common' at Yearsley Moor and Wass Wood in March and April, with one at New Earswick Nature Reserve on 8<sup>th</sup> April. One or two were at Forest Farm, Warthill in April and May.

Small numbers were reported breeding in the Lower Derwent Valley and a party of adults and juveniles was at Yearsley Moor on 6<sup>th</sup> June. Small groups of two to five were at various locations during October, November and December. These included Beacon Banks Wood (Husthwaite), Pond Head (Oulston), Castle Howard estate, Wass Wood, Swinsey Carr (Wiganthorpe), Thurtle Wood, Wath Wood, East Wood and Yearsley Moor.

**Blue Tit** *Parus caeruleus*

Status: Resident breeder and winter visitor

A common bird throughout the recording area found in all suitable habitat, with good numbers throughout the area during the winter.

Resident on Strensall Common with at least ten there on 14<sup>th</sup> January, c. 50 on the 17<sup>th</sup> and at least 15 feeding on the ground on 1<sup>st</sup> February. Pairs were seen there in March and April while two were at St Nicholas Fields, York on 3<sup>rd</sup> February and at least 30 at Dunnington Common on the 5<sup>th</sup>. Four or five were around New Earswick Nature Reserve on 8<sup>th</sup> April and ten were at Forest Farm, Warhill on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Nine were between Naburn and Stillingfleet on 15<sup>th</sup> May with seven there on 19<sup>th</sup> June. One or two were recorded regularly in a Dringhouses garden from late January to May, with three to four from June to October. Also regular in a Strensall garden with a juvenile seen on 15<sup>th</sup> August.

Bred as usual throughout the Lower Derwent Valley NNR, but not censused. Success appeared to be limited with few post-breeding flocks seen. An adult was feeding a juvenile in a small copse just north of Tollerton Road near Huby on 20<sup>th</sup> May and young were seen in an Osballdwick Lane, York garden on 18<sup>th</sup> June.

Resident along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe with juveniles seen during the summer months, especially at Fulford Ings. Six pairs were resident at Rawcliffe Lake.

Up to 15 were feeding in a garden at Dunnington Common on 3<sup>rd</sup> November. During November and December parties of four to ten were seen at various locations, often in mixed flocks of tits and finches. These included Swinsey Carr (Wiganthorpe), Thurtle Wood, Wath Wood, Fryton East Wood, Castle Howard and Yearsley Moor Woods.

#### **Great Tit** *Parus major*

Status: Resident breeder and winter visitor

A common bird throughout the recording area found in all suitable habitat.

Regularly seen on Strensall Common throughout the year, including ten on 17<sup>th</sup> January, six on 1<sup>st</sup> February and ten again on 7<sup>th</sup> March. Up to three were seen regularly throughout the year in a Dringhouses garden with three pairs resident at Rawcliffe Lake. Ten were at Askham Bog on 1<sup>st</sup> January with up to four at St Nicholas Fields, York in January and February. At least 35 were at Dunnington Common on 5<sup>th</sup> February.

Resident along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe with juveniles seen during the summer months, especially at Fulford Ings. Six were between Naburn and Stillingfleet on 15<sup>th</sup> May. Bred as usual throughout the Lower Derwent Valley NNR, but not censused. Young appeared in a garden in Osballdwick Lane, York on 7<sup>th</sup> June.

Four were with a mixed tit, finch and thrush flock in a field north of Castle Howard Lake on 5<sup>th</sup> December.

#### **Nuthatch** *Sitta europaea*

Status: Resident breeder

An occasional visitor to a Gilling garden during the autumn and winter period and reported to have bred in nearby Gilling Woods (RNHS).

#### **Treecreeper** *Certhia familiaris*

Status: Resident breeder

Singles were seen or heard along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe throughout the year. Also present all year at Askham Bog, Moorlands YWT Reserve and Gilling Woods.

Singles or pairs were seen at Pond Head (Oulston) on 2<sup>nd</sup> January, Slingsby on the 26<sup>th</sup>, Strensall Common on 1<sup>st</sup> February, Bog Hall Farm (Castle Howard) on the 27<sup>th</sup>, Yearsley Moor on 19<sup>th</sup> March and 6<sup>th</sup> June, Welburn on 11<sup>th</sup> May and between Naburn and Stillingfleet on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

In the Lower Derwent Valley, several pairs bred at Thornton Ellers with a single pair in the car park lane at Wheldrake Ings and scattered pairs elsewhere.

Between October and December, singles and pairs were at various locations including the ridge north of Coneysthorpe, Lodge Field (Lilling Hall), Cass Wood (Huby), Swinsey Carr (Wiganthorpe), Strensall Common, Yearsley Moor Woods and The Stray (Castle Howard) while one was seen in a Micklegate, York garden during snowy weather on 21<sup>st</sup> December.

**Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus*

Status: Rare passage migrant

A regular visitor to the Lower Derwent Valley was lucky enough to observe a female which flew strongly west over Wheldrake Ings towards the priory on 6<sup>th</sup> June (per EN). This was the third record for the reserve, the last being in 1993. Several other individuals were seen inland at this time. A verbal description was given to English Nature wardens and there seems no reason to doubt this record.

**Great Grey Shrike** *Lanius excubitor*

Status: Rare visitor



Following singles in the Bank Island and Bubwith areas in late December 1998, one reappeared at Wheldrake Ings on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> January, flying off towards Thicket Priory on both occasions. A first-winter male was caught and ringed at Hagg Bridge on the 7<sup>th</sup>, having been seen to catch and kill a Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*, while an unringed bird was seen at Storwood on the 16<sup>th</sup>. A single at North Duffield Carrs on the 21<sup>st</sup> was presumably the same bird seen in Bubwith gardens during the month, appearing on Skipwith Common towards the month end. One reappeared briefly at North Duffield on 1<sup>st</sup> March (EN).

In the autumn, a single was at Crook Moor near Thorganby on 24<sup>th</sup> October (EN).

**Jay** *Garrulus glandarius*

Status: Resident breeder and passage and winter visitor

Present all year at Askham Bog, Moorlands YWT Reserve and Gilling Woods.



Scattered singles were noted throughout the Lower Derwent Valley NNR in January with two at Wheldrake Ings on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>. Five were near Thornton on the 10<sup>th</sup> with three at Thornton Ellers on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Pairs were recorded from Wheldrake, Thorganby and Thornton during April. Between January and April, one to three were seen at various other locations including Cass wood (Huby), Osbaldwick, Strensall Common and Yearsley Moor.

Three were around Strensall Common on 12<sup>th</sup> May where one was heard calling on 11<sup>th</sup> June. At least one was in the Welburn area on 11<sup>th</sup> May and 18<sup>th</sup> June and birds heard in gardens adjacent to Fulford Ings on 26<sup>th</sup> June. Up to three pairs were present during the breeding season in the Wheldrake Ings/Bank Island area and are thought to have bred nearby. A single was at Thornton Ellers on 19<sup>th</sup> August with three there on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

Birds became more obvious during September in the Lower Derwent Valley. Singles were at Wheldrake Ings on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, Bank Island on the 4<sup>th</sup> and North Duffield Carrs on the 9<sup>th</sup> with three at Thornton Ellers on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Small numbers were at various locations from September until the year end including Forest Farm (Warthill), Wass Wood, Yearsley Moor, Wath Beck (west of Butterwick), Huby and the Storwood/Rossmoor area with a maximum of four at Strensall Common on 14<sup>th</sup> November.

#### **Magpie *Pica pica***

Status: Resident breeder

Seen daily throughout the year at Huby, Dringhouses, Rawcliffe Lake, around the York ring road, at Strensall village and common and at New Earswick Nature Reserve. Reports also from York University and St Nicholas Fields, York.

Nest building was observed in Tang Hall, York on 2<sup>nd</sup> February and two were seen by the nest, mutually preening, on the 8<sup>th</sup>. One learned to remove fat balls from the bird table and was seen flying away with one. Though scarce on the Lower Derwent Ings, there was a flock of up to 17 on arable land adjacent to North Duffield Carrs throughout January and up to 20 in February. A record 37 roosted in willows on the riverbank at Bubwith on 10<sup>th</sup> February.

A flock of ten was in rough pasture near Ampleforth on 1<sup>st</sup> March and two were harassing a Blackbird *Turdus merula* trying to build a nest in Strensall during April and May. Resident along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe with family parties noted from June.

In the Lower Derwent Valley, breeding occurred in small but increasing numbers in farms, villages and hedgerows adjacent to the reserve. Nest-building activity was noted in Tang Hall as late as 26<sup>th</sup> October.

#### **Jackdaw *Corvus monedula***

Status: Resident breeder

Several were at Strensall Common, Strensall village, Castle Howard, Nunnington Hall, Gilling, just south of Sutton-on-the-Forest and on the outskirts of Easingwold throughout the year.

Three were with gulls following a tractor in fields north of Strensall Common on 2<sup>nd</sup> April and two were in a Dringhouses garden on the 18<sup>th</sup>. They were also present in the Welburn area on 11<sup>th</sup> May and 18<sup>th</sup> June.

12+ were with a Rook *Corvus frugilegus* roost at Waite Wood, north of Terrington on 21<sup>st</sup> November and c.100 were with a corvid flock over woods west of Castle Howard Lake on 19<sup>th</sup> December.

Also noted in loose flocks of Rooks seen daily over York during the winter months (heading SW in the morning and NE in the evening). Seen regularly along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe throughout the year with flocks of up to 30 in the Skeldergate Bridge area, York during December.

**Rook** *Corvus frugilegus*

Status: Resident breeder

Good numbers were in flocks around Dunnington, Kexby, Barmby Moor, Clifton Ings and near Buttercrambe. Also seen regularly around Huby, Gilling and along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe throughout the year.

About 500 were with Wood Pigeons *Columba palumbus*, thrushes and finches in arable fields at Rye Hills Farm, Castle Howard on 27<sup>th</sup> February. A large 'parliament' was on a pylon by the Derwent Arms, Osbaldwick on 10<sup>th</sup> March and 83 were in a ploughed field next to Sim Balk Lane, Bishopthorpe on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

The rookery at the Old Rectory, Strensall had four nests and 22 birds on 7<sup>th</sup> March and 12 nests were occupied by 3<sup>rd</sup> April. 73 active nests were present in Welburn near Castle Howard on 6<sup>th</sup> April. Large rookeries were also present at North Duffield Carrs, Elvington, Sutton-on-Derwent and Thornton Ellers. In the Lower Derwent Valley NNR as a whole, at least 1000 were counted on several dates during July, feeding on the aftermath (what's left after the hay is cut).

Loose flocks including Jackdaws *Corvus monedula* were seen daily flying over York during the winter months (heading SW in the morning and NE in the evening). At least 2000 were seen leaving a roost in Black Wood, Easingwold early in the morning of 22<sup>nd</sup> October while at least 200 were in a stubble field north of Wiganthorpe Hall, Terrington in the morning of 21<sup>st</sup> November with similar numbers roosting in Waite Wood north of the village in the late afternoon and flying over woods west of Castle Howard Lake on 19<sup>th</sup> December.

**Carrion Crow** *Corvus corone*

Status: Resident breeder

Seen regularly throughout the year at Huby, Gilling, Strensall Common, Yearsley Moor, Dringhouses, Castle Howard and along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe. Up to six were present all year at Rawcliffe Lake.

A pair was at Monk Stray on 2<sup>nd</sup> January and 18<sup>th</sup> April and six to seven were between Naburn and Stillingfleet on 15<sup>th</sup> May and 18<sup>th</sup> June.

In the Lower Derwent Valley, numbers increased during the year with several pairs breeding adjacent to North Duffield Carrs where predation upon breeding wildfowl and waders appeared to be high as a result. Several pairs also bred adjacent to or on Wheldrake Ings where waterbird predation was also high, especially after falling water levels left many nests exposed.

Two juveniles were seen with two adults at Strensall on 27<sup>th</sup> July while a roost of 40-50 birds was on Skipwith Common in the late evening of 9<sup>th</sup> June - according to the warden, this is a regular occurrence at this site.

**Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris*

Status: Resident breeder and winter visitor

Large numbers were feeding with Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus* at Wheldrake Ings during the winter period. Resident in the Huby and Gilling areas and along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe. Also seen all year at Rawcliffe Lake, with numbers peaking at 45 on 21<sup>st</sup> January and 50 on 6<sup>th</sup> September.

400-500 were at the regular roost under Lendal Bridge, York on 8<sup>th</sup> January and 35 were at Monk Stray on the 31<sup>st</sup>. Up to seven visited a Dringhouses garden from January to April where numbers increased to 11 by early May and into June then declined. Seen regularly around Strensall and fed on scraps and fat in one garden with a maximum of 30 on 9<sup>th</sup> February during snow. A flock of 300-400 was over fields north of Strensall Common on 7<sup>th</sup> March.

Breeding was reported from the Lower Derwent Valley, but no census was taken. A fledgeling was with two adults in Low Hutton on 28<sup>th</sup> April and a recently fledged juvenile was begging from an adult in the New Earswick Folk Hall car park on 23<sup>rd</sup> May. Juveniles were also in the Huby area on 25<sup>th</sup> May and 3<sup>rd</sup> June. 119 were foraging and bathing in a partially-flooded field next to Sim Balk Lane, Bishopthorpe on 8<sup>th</sup> June and a flock of at least 500 was at North Duffield Carrs on 18<sup>th</sup> July. In the Osbaldwick area, flocks of 50+ were seen hawking insects on 3<sup>rd</sup> September - a hot day. Later the same day they visited a garden where they stripped elderberries. Numbers in a Strensall garden increased to 20 by 9<sup>th</sup> October and were up to 30 by the year end. 30-40 were in large trees near The Hall, Strensall on 12<sup>th</sup> December and about 100 were at Ganthorpe village during the late afternoon of the 19<sup>th</sup>.

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*  
Status: Resident breeder

Resident along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe and in the Huby and Gilling areas. Up to 25 were at Rawcliffe Lake all year. Present all year at Strensall with up to 25 seen most days in winter in one garden and a maximum of 50 during January in another. Mature hedges along Brecks Lane in the village also held ten or more in the early part of the year with numbers increasing to at least 20 in December. Up to 15 fed regularly in a garden at Dunnington Common and up to four were in a Dringhouses garden from February to April where numbers rose to eight during May then fell back after June. Other reports were of five at Forest Farm, Warthill on 12<sup>th</sup> April and from the Welburn area on 11<sup>th</sup> May and 18<sup>th</sup> June.

Three juveniles were being fed by a female in a Strensall garden on 19<sup>th</sup> May. Up to 20, including juveniles, were present there during June and July with numbers of up to 40 for the rest of the year. A female was feeding a juvenile in a Huby garden on 6<sup>th</sup> June.

As always, a scarce visitor to the Lower Derwent Ings, but considered to have bred in local farms and villages in similar numbers to 1998. A single female collecting seeds and caterpillars on Bubwith Ings in July flew about one and a half kilometres back towards the village, indicating how far birds travel in order to find food.

About 30 were in a mixed flock with Tree Sparrows *Passer montanus* on the outskirts of Bulmer village on 19<sup>th</sup> December.

**Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus*  
Status: Resident breeder and passage visitor

40 were feeding on winter stubble at Dunnington Common on 10<sup>th</sup> January and 70 were in linseed stubble near West Lilling on the same day. On 7<sup>th</sup> March a flock of c. 50 was to the north of Huby and two were in the hedge along Brecks Lane, Strensall. Three were to the west of Nether Poppleton on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Other reports were of eight on Dunnington Common on 24<sup>th</sup> March with five there on 2<sup>nd</sup> April, at least ten at Airyholme Farm north of Hovingham on 25<sup>th</sup> March and at Wilder Grange on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Singles were reported at Forest Farm, Warthill on 17<sup>th</sup> March and 19<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> April while two were between Naburn and Stillingfleet on 15<sup>th</sup> May with four there on 19<sup>th</sup> June. They were also an occasional visitor to a garden in Gilling.

Scattered pairs bred throughout the Lower Derwent Valley with strongholds in the Melbourne/Thornton areas and smaller numbers around East Cottingwith and North Duffield Carrs. A pair nested in a box in a Huby garden with young fledging on 8<sup>th</sup> June. Successful breeding also occurred in nest boxes at Dunnington Common and in an Overton garden where two pairs bred and up to eight were present throughout the year.

At least one was on Brecks Lane, Strensall on 31<sup>st</sup> October and three were in Flaxton on 18<sup>th</sup> November. Three were also near the Gate House to Wiganthorpe Hall and another two or three were at Moor House Farm, north of Terrington on the 21<sup>st</sup>. November was a poor month in the Lower Derwent Valley with the only flock being 40 at Thornton, also on the 21<sup>st</sup>. Small numbers were scattered throughout the valley during December with several seen at the feeding station at North Duffield Carrs. At least 100 were at Thornton on the 27<sup>th</sup> feeding with mixed finches on mugwort seed heads. Six were at Clifton Ings from the end of November to the year end and ten were in field hedges by Brecks Lane, Strensall on 12<sup>th</sup> December. c. 30 were in a mixed flock with House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* on the outskirts of Bulmer village on 19<sup>th</sup> December.

**Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs*

Status: Resident breeder and passage and winter visitor

About ten were noted along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe throughout the year, with four at Rawcliffe Lake. Also seen daily around Huby and Gilling. Up to seven were present all year in a Dringhouses garden.

Heard singing along the Osballdwick cycleway on 26<sup>th</sup> February while up to 20 were in fields by Brecks Lane, Strensall on 7<sup>th</sup> March and three males were at Monk Stray on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Four or five were around New Earswick Nature Reserve on 8<sup>th</sup> April and two males were at New Lane, Huntingdon on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Also present in the Welburn area on 11<sup>th</sup> May and 18<sup>th</sup> June and 22 were between Naburn and Stillingfleet on 15<sup>th</sup> May with 32 there on 19<sup>th</sup> June. Bred throughout the Lower Derwent Valley, but not censused.

They were numerous in a flock of c. 30 finches on the ridge north of Coneysthorpe on 8<sup>th</sup> October. A male with a creamy-white head and nape was observed at East Cottingwith on 19<sup>th</sup> November and 12 were with Yellowhammers *Emberiza citrinella* near the Gate House to Wiganthorpe Hall, Terrington on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

Up to 40 were present at the winter feeding station in front of the Geoff Smith hide at North Duffield Carrs throughout November and December and at least 35 were feeding in linseed stubble nearby on the 25<sup>th</sup> in a mixed finch flock. 25 were at Hagg Bridge on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

About 50 were with Pied Wagtails *Motacilla alba* near a manure heap in a stubble field by Brecks Lane, Strensall on 4<sup>th</sup> December and c. 70 were in a similar area on the 12<sup>th</sup>. 30 were with a mixed finch flock on The Avenue, Gilling Castle on the 10<sup>th</sup> and c. 20 were in and around farm buildings in Ganthorpe village on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Brambling** *Fringilla montifringilla*

Status: Winter and passage visitor

In the Lower Derwent Valley, up to 33 remained in the Hagg Bridge area in early January with 25 on the 20<sup>th</sup>, while up to 16 were present near East Cottingwith. Up to ten were also reported with mixed finches from Sutton with three seen there on 1<sup>st</sup> February and a single was at Bank Island on the 8<sup>th</sup>. 15 remained early in February at Hagg Bridge with seven still there in early March. Three there on the 21<sup>st</sup> were the last seen in the area until the autumn.

A female was on the old railway line by New Earswick Nature Reserve on 7<sup>th</sup> March and a flock of at least 100 was north of Coxwold on the 26<sup>th</sup>. A male was in a Dringhouses garden on 15<sup>th</sup> April.

Later in the year, a male appeared in a mixed finch flock at Hagg Bridge on 23<sup>rd</sup> October and remained to the month end. A single was also at St Nicholas Fields, York on 31<sup>st</sup> October while eight were with

Chaffinches *Fringilla coelebs* at the feeding station at North Duffield Carrs on 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> December, with a single there on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. 25 were at Full Sutton Industrial Estate on 13<sup>th</sup> December.

Addition to 1998 Report: A male was present in Dringhouses from 6<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> January.

**Greenfinch** *Carduelis chloris*

Status: Resident breeder and passage and winter visitor

Resident along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe with up to six being seen. Up to eight were seen all year at Rawcliffe Lake and also resident around Huby and Gilling. Present all year in a garden in Sim Balk Lane, Bishopthorpe and regular visitors to a Strensall garden from January to April with a maximum of 11 in March. Also regular in a Dringhouses garden with a maximum of 13 on 21<sup>st</sup> March.

Two were at St Nicholas Fields, York on 3<sup>rd</sup> February and singing was heard in central York on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Five or six were around New Earswick Nature Reserve on 7<sup>th</sup> March and two were at Straylands Grove near Malton Road, York on 27<sup>th</sup> April. Two were at Forest Farm, Warthill on 5<sup>th</sup> April and 31<sup>st</sup> May with others in the Welburn area on 11<sup>th</sup> May and 18<sup>th</sup> June.

As always a rather scarce visitor to the Lower Derwent Ings, but considered to have bred in the usual numbers in local farms and villages. A juvenile was begging for food in a Huby garden on 6<sup>th</sup> June and another was with one to three adults in a Strensall garden during June.

A flock of 50 was in Slingsby on 6<sup>th</sup> September while several flocks began to build up in the Lower Derwent Valley during September, with the largest being 300 near Aughton from the 24<sup>th</sup>. A number were in a finch flock of c. 30 on the ridge north of Coneysthorpe on 8<sup>th</sup> October and 50+ were at Hagg Bridge on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, with 35+ there on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

Present in good numbers throughout the Lower Derwent Valley in November with 30+ at the feeding station at North Duffield Carrs during December. A further flock of 30 was nearby on the 22<sup>nd</sup> while at least 60 were at Thornton on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 30 at Seavy Carr on the 21<sup>st</sup>. Good numbers were also present throughout the valley during December, with regular birds at the feeding station building up to 60+ and peaking at 160+ on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

20 were near Strensall Water Treatment Works on 4<sup>th</sup> December, 50 in a mixed finch flock on The Avenue, Gilling Castle on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 30 eating seeds in an ash tree at Yearsley Moor Woods the same day.

**Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis*

Status: Resident breeder and passage and winter visitor

Up to five were regularly seen along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe and birds were present all year in Huby. Eight were at Strensall Common YWT Reserve on 1<sup>st</sup> January.

In the Lower Derwent Valley, a flock at Hagg Bridge remained throughout January with 400+ on the 2<sup>nd</sup> decreasing to 200 by the month end. Numbers returned to 300 in early February, declining to 100 by the end of that month. Another flock of at least 300 at Thornton on 10<sup>th</sup> February dropped to 150 by the month end. The Hagg Bridge flock numbered 150 on 5<sup>th</sup> March and 60 on the 21<sup>st</sup>, but all had departed by the 28<sup>th</sup>.

Up to eight fed in a Strensall garden from January to April and nut-feeding was also reported in a Gilling garden on 25<sup>th</sup> January. Ten were feeding around the Lime Tree path at St Nicholas Fields, York on the 27<sup>th</sup> and two were feeding on teasels there on 12<sup>th</sup> February. Seven were near Bog Hall, Castle Howard on the 27<sup>th</sup> and 40-50 were feeding in a field (as well as silver birch) north of Strensall Common on 7<sup>th</sup> March. Up to four were in a Dringhouses garden from February to June, six to ten present at Forest Farm, Warthill during April and May and others in the Welburn area on 11<sup>th</sup> May and 18<sup>th</sup> June.

Bred in average numbers throughout the Lower Derwent Valley with moderate success. Numerous small post-breeding flocks were scattered throughout the area in July. 20+ were at Ellerton on the 16<sup>th</sup> feeding with Linnets *Carduelis cannabina*, increasing to 50 in August. Several similar-sized 'charms' were located throughout the valley on the 30<sup>th</sup>. About ten were at Gilling in mid-July and they were a frequent garden visitor in Slingsby where young were being fed in August.

Four were at Straylands Grove near Malton Road, York on 18<sup>th</sup> September and at least 150 were at Mowthorpe Lane, Terrington on the 28<sup>th</sup>. 80 were by the Pocklington Canal at Melbourne on 4<sup>th</sup> October and a large 'charm' of 350 fed in linseed at Hagg Bridge on the 23<sup>rd</sup> remaining until the month end. A large mixed finch flock frequented this site over much of last winter (1998/99). About 20 were in the Coneysthorpe area on the 8<sup>th</sup> and ten were at Tally Ho, Huby on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

In November, 500 were feeding on linseed at Dunnington Common on the 5<sup>th</sup> and three or four were near Hovingham on the 21<sup>st</sup>. Although seen all year at Rawcliffe Lake, numbers peaked at 12 on 11<sup>th</sup> November and the largest 'charm' in the Lower Derwent Valley this month was 80+ at North Duffield Carts on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

Small flocks were scattered throughout the valley in December, with 100+ near Thornton from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the month end. A flock of c.1000 was near Wilberfoss during the month while three were in a Dringhouses garden on the 12<sup>th</sup> and about c. 20 were around straw bales in a stubble field by Brecks Lane, Strensall the same day. Six were feeding on thistle seeds at Moor Hill, Castle Howard estate on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Siskin *Carduelis spinus***

Status: Resident breeder and passage and winter visitor

The only notable flock in the Lower Derwent Valley in January was of 100+ at Thornton Ellers on the 30<sup>th</sup> while c. 30 were in alders at Thornton on 13<sup>th</sup> February. Two were in a garden in Appletree Village, York in January with three there in February. Single birds were on garden feeders in Gilling and Slingsby in February and a male and female at Horse Close Rush, Castle Howard on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

Bird tables in Brandsby attracted regular visitors from the beginning of the year until March, with five in the Rectory garden on the 15<sup>th</sup>. A pair was similarly seen feeding on nuts in a garden in Sim Balk Lane, Bishopthorpe for three weeks from the 16<sup>th</sup> while a single male was at Robin Lane, Huby on the 17<sup>th</sup>. Two separate flocks of c. 30 were at Yearsley Moor on the 19<sup>th</sup> and beside the River Rye just west of West Ness on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. On the latter date, a pair was feeding on nuts in a Nether Poppleton garden and about five were at New Earswick Nature Reserve on the 28<sup>th</sup> with some birds in song. A pair at Yearsley Moor on the 30<sup>th</sup> was the last report until the autumn.

16 at Melbourne on 11<sup>th</sup> September were the first birds to return to the Lower Derwent Valley and four were in a garden in Appletree Village, York during the month. Up to five fed in alders along the River Ouse Between York and Fulford from the end of October. A flock of 31 flew east at Wheldrake Ings

on 13<sup>th</sup> November while c. 50 were west of Cass Wood, Huby on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 40 were at Seavy Carr on the 21<sup>st</sup>. At least two were with a tit flock in alders between Lodge Hagg and Wath Wood, south of Hovingham, also on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

Five at Rawcliffe Lake on 20<sup>th</sup> December was the only record there this year. At least 12 were with a mixed finch flock on The Avenue, Gilling Castle on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 15 were at Hassacarr Nature Reserve on the 28<sup>th</sup>. 60 had appeared at Thornton Ellers by the 27<sup>th</sup>, with 30 at Low Catton Ings the same day. Two flocks totalling 60 birds flew west over Wheldrake Ings on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

**Linnet** *Carduelis cannabina*

Status: Resident breeder and passage and winter visitor

Winter stubble attracted 50 to Dunnington Common on 10<sup>th</sup> January and three were near Monk Stray on 20<sup>th</sup> February. A single male was at the Elmpark estate, York and a pair on Metcalfe Lane, Osbaldwick on 16<sup>th</sup> March. A pair was also at Fox Folly Farm near Coxwold on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

20 were in the Strensall area on 1<sup>st</sup> April and seven - some singing in gorse - on Strensall Common on the 14<sup>th</sup>. A male was singing in Osbaldwick on the 9<sup>th</sup> with a pair at Monks Cross on the 14<sup>th</sup> and four at Forest Farm, Warthill on the 28<sup>th</sup>. 25+ were feeding in a grassy field near Bishopthorpe Bridge on 2<sup>nd</sup> May and two were at the end of Broadway West, Fulford the same day. Other reports of up to three were from Welburn on the 11<sup>th</sup>, Metcalfe Lane, Osbaldwick on the 18<sup>th</sup>, Huby on the 25<sup>th</sup> and near Cass Wood (also Huby) on the 29<sup>th</sup>. One to three were noted along the River Ouse between York and Bishopthorpe from 19<sup>th</sup> June to the year end and up to ten were at Rawcliffe Lake throughout the summer.

Bred throughout the Lower Derwent Valley in the usual numbers with a stronghold in the Melbourne/Thornton area. Appeared to have bred with good success with several large post-breeding flocks noted in July and August. 53 at Ellerton on 14<sup>th</sup> July increased to 230+ on the 23<sup>rd</sup> with at least 170 remaining on the 30<sup>th</sup>. These were feeding on meadowsweet and great burnet seeds in an uncut strip of meadow. Numbers declined to 60 by 14<sup>th</sup> August while a large flock of 300+ appeared at Canal Head from the 22<sup>nd</sup> to the month end.

One was at St Nicholas Fields on 6<sup>th</sup> August, 20 at Hagg Bridge in the Lower Derwent Valley on 23<sup>rd</sup> October and six west of Nether Poppleton on 18<sup>th</sup> November. The only flock of note in the Lower Derwent during November was of 49, feeding in linseed stubble adjacent to North Duffield Carrs on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Three were with Siskin *Carduelis spinus* and other finches on The Avenue, Gilling Castle on 10<sup>th</sup> December while 30 were at Thornton on the 27<sup>th</sup> and at least 100 at Sutton on the 31<sup>st</sup>. Small flocks were also on arable land at Slingsby and Gilling during the month.

**Twite** *Carduelis flavirostris*

Status: Scarce winter visitor

In the Lower Derwent Valley, one was with mixed finches near Hagg Bridge on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> January and another or the same with Linnets *Carduelis cannabina* at Sutton on the 26<sup>th</sup>. One was also at the latter locality on 3<sup>rd</sup> February and three were amongst mixed finches at Thornton on the 10<sup>th</sup>.



A single was on the Low Grounds on 5<sup>th</sup> October while three appeared with mixed finches at Hagg Bridge on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Another flew east over North Duffield Carrs on the 30<sup>th</sup> and two were with mixed finches nearby on 25<sup>th</sup> November. Other singles were located in a large mixed finch flock at Thornton on 27<sup>th</sup> December and amongst 100 Linnets at Sutton on the 31<sup>st</sup> (EN).

#### Redpoll *Carduelis flammea*

Status: Resident breeder and passage and winter visitor

Up to 50 remained in the Wheldrake Ings/Bank Island area throughout January. Two birds showing characteristics of Mealy Redpoll *C. f. flammea* were in the car park at Bank Island on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> (EN).

Elsewhere, a flock of 25 was at Stearsby Pond on 4<sup>th</sup> January, small numbers seen occasionally in Gillling Woods and up to six at Rawcliffe Lake until mid-March. One was at Dringhouses on 15<sup>th</sup> June. 25 were at Wheldrake Ings on 8<sup>th</sup> October and two were at Rawcliffe Lake from early November to the year end. Three were in trees in the Fulford area on 20<sup>th</sup> November and were heard calling there on 29<sup>th</sup> December. 20 were with Siskin *Carduelis spinus* at Seavy Carr on 21<sup>st</sup> November. 80 fed with mixed finches at Thornton on 27<sup>th</sup> December while 40 at Thornton Ellers on the same date were present in alders with Siskin.

#### Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*

Status: Casual breeder and passage visitor

One was calling at Sutton Farm on 4<sup>th</sup> August and at least four were there on the 16<sup>th</sup> while a single flew west over North Duffield Carrs on 2<sup>nd</sup> September. Four were at Sand Hutton on 5<sup>th</sup> October and several sightings of one to two were recorded between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>. Several were still present on the 27<sup>th</sup>.



**Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Status: Resident breeder and passage and winter visitor

Small flocks were scattered throughout the Lower Derwent Valley with up to 30 in the Wheldrake Ings/Bank Island area during January. Six to eight were regular at Wheldrake Ings during the winter period. Up to seven were seen in the Fulford Ings area throughout the year and two or three pairs were regularly seen along the Osbaldwick to York cycleway. A pair occasionally visited a Slingsby garden. Singles and pairs were reported at various locations from January to April including New Earswick Nature Reserve, York Cemetery, St Nicholas Fields (York), Dunnington Common, Sim Balk Lane (Bishopthorpe), Bog Hall (Castle Howard), Huby, Dringhouses, Strensall Common, Cass Wood (Huby), Yearsley Moor, Wass Wood and Love Lane, Fulford.

Another excellent breeding year was noted in the Lower Derwent Valley NNR, with good numbers scattered throughout the site. Once again the stronghold was in the Wheldrake Ings/Bank Island area. A male was in a Dringhouses garden in May and a pair was present in June. Three pairs bred in the Fulford Ings area with juveniles noted from 25<sup>th</sup> June to 4<sup>th</sup> September.

A pair was in an Osbaldwick garden on 22<sup>nd</sup> August and pairs were on York Golf Course and along Brecks Lane, Strensall on 31<sup>st</sup> October. In November, three males were by the River Derwent south of Howsham Bridge on the 8<sup>th</sup>, two males at Cam Head west of Byland Abbey and a pair and a single female at Oldstead Grange on the 9<sup>th</sup> and eight in the Yearsley Moor area on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Two males were in an Osbaldwick garden on 3<sup>rd</sup> December and a group of at least six was on The Avenue, Gilling Castle on the 10<sup>th</sup>. A male was on a hedge only two metres from heavy traffic on the York ring road near Clifton Moor on the 18<sup>th</sup>, a pair in Brandrith Wood, Castle Howard on the 19<sup>th</sup> and a female near Pond Head Farm, Oulston on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

**Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Status: Rare visitor

The only report this year was of a single in the car park lane at Wheldrake Ings on 3<sup>rd</sup> April (EN).

**Yellowhammer** *Emberiza citrinella*

Resident breeder and winter passage visitor

One to two were noted in the Fulford Ings area throughout the year. Also seen near York racecourse. A flock of at least 30 were around the Gracious Street footpath, Huby on 9<sup>th</sup> January and at least ten were there on 5<sup>th</sup> February. 40 fed in winter stubble at Dunnington Common on 10<sup>th</sup> January. In the Lower Derwent Valley, more than 50 at South Duffield on 9<sup>th</sup> January was a notable flock with several smaller flocks scattered elsewhere. Although most flocks were in single figures during February, 12 were near East Cottingwith on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 15 were at Thornton on the 10<sup>th</sup>. Numbers from one to ten were reported during January, February and March from the Brecks Lane area at Strensall, Holbeck (Gilling), Huby, Forest Farm (Warthill), Nunnington Hall and Tick Penny Farm, Moor Monkton.

In April, two males were at Forest Farm on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> and a flock of 25-30 were feeding in a field near Gilling on the 13<sup>th</sup>. Seven were between Naburn and Stillingfleet on 15<sup>th</sup> May with ten there on 19<sup>th</sup> June. Three were singing along the York to Selby cycleway on 19<sup>th</sup> May and reports also came from the Welburn area on 11<sup>th</sup> May and 18<sup>th</sup> June.

Considered to have bred in the Lower Derwent Valley in similar numbers to 1998. The largest concentrations were found in the Melbourne/Thornton and Allerthorpe areas with smaller numbers in the Thorganby and South Duffield areas.

Three were in the Coneysthorpe area on 8<sup>th</sup> October and in the Lower Derwent Valley, a flock of 40 at Storwood on the 23<sup>rd</sup> was a notable count as was 15 at North Duffield on the 30<sup>th</sup>. 30+ were flushed from a stubble field on Sleights Lane, Barton Moor on 17<sup>th</sup> November and at least 25 were at the north end of Long Lane, Slingsby the same day. Ten were at Woodhouse Farm west of Nether Poppleton on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 12 were with Chaffinches *Fringilla coelebs* in a stubble field near Wiganthorpe Hall, Terrington on the 21<sup>st</sup>. A small flock of ten was at North Duffield Carrs on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 36 were at Clifton Ings on the 25<sup>th</sup> and throughout December.

At least two were with a finch flock near manure heaps in a stubble field by Brecks Lane, Strensall on 4<sup>th</sup> December and 12 were in a similar area on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Two were on a manure heap north of Bulmer on the 19<sup>th</sup> and at least 30 beside Sutton-on-the-Forest cemetery on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Reed Bunting** *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Status: Resident breeder and passage visitor

Numbers in the Lower Derwent Valley NNR increased during February with roost counts of more than 60 at North Duffield Carrs on the 7<sup>th</sup>, 200 at Wheldrake Ings on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 80 at Melbourne on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. At least 120 were feeding in game cover on arable land at Sutton on the 26<sup>th</sup>. A male was at Rawcliffe Meadows on 23<sup>rd</sup> February and a male and two females were on Strensall Common on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Another male was at Gale Garth, Moor Monkton on 24<sup>th</sup> March. Up to four were at Rawcliffe Lake during the winter period but a male singing there on 30<sup>th</sup> March did stay on to breed.

A pair was on Strensall Common 3<sup>rd</sup> April, two males on the 14<sup>th</sup> and three males on 12<sup>th</sup> May as well as 5<sup>th</sup> June when they were singing. A male was in the Triangular Meadow at New Earswick Nature Reserve on 4<sup>th</sup> April and another was at Castle Howard on the 11<sup>th</sup>. Up to four singing males were at Fulford Ings from April to June and single birds were along the banks of Holbeck, Gilling during May and June.

Bred in apparently normal numbers in the Lower Derwent Valley with pairs scattered throughout the site. The largest concentrations were found along the Pocklington Canal and in the reedbed at Wheldrake Ings. However, breeding ceased at the latter site as the reedbed dried out and reed began to die back coincident with the sudden release of water in June.

Several roosts built up during October with 60 at Melbourne on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 90 there on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 70 at Wheldrake Ings on the 30<sup>th</sup> - these remaining throughout November - while up to 50 were at a roost near Melbourne. Rather scarce away from these roosts with single figure counts from only a handful of mixed finch flocks.

Two were in the Nether Poppleton area on 22<sup>nd</sup> October and one was heard at Fulford Ings on 20<sup>th</sup> November. Up to 20 were at Clifton Ings on the 25<sup>th</sup> and throughout December.

Addition to 1998 Report: A male and female were present in Dringhouses throughout the winter and early spring with two males and two females there from 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> March.

**Corn Bunting** *Miliaria calandra*  
Status: Resident breeder

In the Lower Derwent Valley NNR, 50+ were at East Cottingwith on 4<sup>th</sup> January and similar numbers roosted in the reedbed near Church Lane Bridge, Thornton on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Several birds had returned to local breeding territories towards the end of the month.

120 were feeding in winter stubble at Dunnington Common on 10<sup>th</sup> January and a single was at Gracious Street, Huby on the 26<sup>th</sup>. c. 20 were in bushes near Poppleton Community Centre on 2<sup>nd</sup> February while an evening roost near Melbourne held 50 on the 10<sup>th</sup>, 80 on the 11<sup>th</sup>, 110 on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> with 30 on the 17<sup>th</sup>. 20 remained at the month end.

Up to three were reported from various locations during March, April and May including Sutton-on-the-Forest cemetery and nearby Eastmoor, the Huby area, Forest Farm (Warthill), Strensall to West Lilling, Nether Poppleton and along the York to Selby cycleway.

Continues to maintain a stable breeding population in the Lower Derwent Valley, possibly extending its present range. The largest concentrations were again in the East Cottingwith, Melbourne and Thornton areas with a small population adjacent to North Duffield Carrs. An estimate of at least 120 singing males was made throughout the reserve. Up to ten singing males were reported along the minor road from Allerthorpe Woods to Sutton-on-Derwent on 6<sup>th</sup> May.

Two were at Landing Lane, Riccall on 12<sup>th</sup> June with singles singing at Sutton Farm on the 14<sup>th</sup> and between Haxby and Strensall on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Two were singing at Harem Hill, Towthorpe Common on 2<sup>nd</sup> July and one was at Millfield Lane, Poppleton on the 14<sup>th</sup>. A singing male was also at Grimston Bar on the 24<sup>th</sup> while 22 perched on electricity wires to the east of Huby on 19<sup>th</sup> October, with 12 in the same area on the 25<sup>th</sup>. A flock of 39 remained near Sutton throughout November and seven were at Clifton Ings on the 25<sup>th</sup> while one was on Stillington Road, Huby on 28<sup>th</sup> December.

### ESCAPES/INTRODUCTIONS

**White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia*

An individual at Castle Howard Lake from 30<sup>th</sup> May to 11<sup>th</sup> June was probably one of the free-flying birds from Harewood House.

**Sacred Ibis** *Threskiornis aethiopicus*

A single flew down the Lower Derwent Valley on 11<sup>th</sup> May before circling at Ellerton and returning northwards. What may have been the same bird was reported in distress on a farm in Wheldrake on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Black Swan** *Cygnus atratus*

Singles were resident at Castle Howard Lake throughout the year and at Wheldrake Ings throughout April with another on the floods at Buttercrambe on 8<sup>th</sup> March.

**Snow Goose** *Anser caerulescens*

A white-phase bird appeared at Wheldrake Ings for the day on 14<sup>th</sup> August.

**Bar-headed Goose** *Anser indicus*

A single at Wheldrake Ings from 25<sup>th</sup> June until the month end remained throughout August with the Greylag Goose *Anser anser* flock. It was seen on several dates during October.

**Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea*  
One was at York University Lake on 16<sup>th</sup> February.

**Mandarin** *Aix galericulata*  
A male was at Castle Howard Lake on 8<sup>th</sup> November.

**Red-tailed Hawk** *Buteo jamaicensis*  
An individual wearing jesses flew over north-west Selby on 18<sup>th</sup> April.

**Eagle Owl** *Bubo bubo*  
One was heard calling near Thornton throughout June.

#### CONTRIBUTORS -with apologies for any omissions

Denise Anderson  
Philip Bone  
Andy Booth  
Rob Chapman (RCh)  
Roy Crossley (RCr)  
Mike Dixon (MDi)  
Malcolm Douglas (MDo)  
Peter Gannon  
Louis Gibb  
John Henderson  
Anne Hoad  
Peter Hutchinson  
Christine & Derek Jakeman  
Brian Pepper  
Jim Pewtress  
Peter Reed (PReed)  
Peter Reid (PReid)  
Heather Reynolds  
Dave Richardson  
Pete Richman (PRi)  
Gill Smith  
Nigel Stewart  
Ian & Ruth Traynor  
Richard Ward  
Terry & Val Weston  
English Nature  
Ryedale Natural History Society  
St Nicholas Fields Urban Nature Park