

YORK ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB REPORT 2011

Published by the York Ornithological Club 2013



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- Inside Back Cover: Sparrowhawk (male) at Cliffe *Mike Williams*
Sparrowhawk (female) at Dunnington Common
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- Outside Back Cover: Wheatear, Heslington East *Chris Gomersall*
Great Grey Shrike, Skipwith Common *Clare Scott*

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York Ornithological Club

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

The Club has a membership of about 70 and normally meets on the first Tuesday of the month (except July and August) at St Olave's church hall, off Marygate, York for a full programme of talks and discussions and for the informal exchange of information. In addition, excursions are arranged to areas of ornithological interest, usually outside the recording area but with more local visits on selected summer evenings. See the club's website at www.yorkbirding.org.uk for full details of club activities.

Editorial

I feel compelled to start the editorial to this issue of the YOC's annual report by paying tribute to Andy Booth, the club's Recorder from 1985 till late 2012. Andy's death, in December 2012, came as a shock to all members of the YOC, to his many friends and colleagues and not least his family. I have included an obituary of Andy in this issue of the YOC Report. It is also a fitting tribute that the YWT has decided to rename the Tower Hide at Wheldrake Ings in Andy's memory.

Andy was not always the easiest person to get on with, but his birding knowledge was extensive and highly respected and I for one still very much miss his presence, as I am sure we all do, in the York birding scene.

Inevitably there have been changes to the club and Nigel Stewart and Andy Walker have been appointed joint Recorders to succeed Andy Booth. Nigel will retain his role in editing part of the annual report but this team will now be referred to as assistant editors, not assistant recorders as formerly. In addition Paul (Paz) Fletcher has been co-opted onto the YOC committee to bring this up to its former strength and Paz is actively involved assisting in the digitising of records.

This report has been produced from a database of just over 6,000 records including not only those sent in directly from members but from postings on YorkBirding (the YOC newsgroup), on BirdGuides and BirdTrack. The YOC website also provides a route through which non-members can submit casual records.

A site which has rapidly grown in birding significance is the new campus development at York University, referred to throughout this report as Heslington East (or Hes East in the parlance of local birders). The creation of a major new permanent body of water and the landscaping of surrounding areas for wildlife has pushed Heslington East to the forefront of birding locations in the York area. I am very pleased that John Lawton, YOC president, who has been associated with this development from its inception, has written a comprehensive account of the site's first three years, from 2009 when excavators first moved in to 2011 when breeding Little Ringed Plovers were a major highlight.

I have also made a number of changes to the way this report is presented incorporating some suggestions from Andy Walker. All records which could not be validated when this was required have been removed from the Classified List and placed, for the record, in an additional appendix as have interesting bird records from just outside the YOC area. In addition, the list of species for first and last dates has been revised as has the list of species for which descriptions are required.

Acknowledgements

As before the species accounts have been compiled by Nigel Stewart (Wildfowl to Shag), Peter Watson (Waders), Peter Reed (Bittern to Crane and Skuas to Puffin), Julia Lawson (Doves to Warblers), and Paul Doherty (Waxwing to Buntings) to whom thanks are due. The report would also not be of the high standard I believe it to be if were not for the efforts of our new joint recorders, Nigel and Andy, who pointed out all my shortcomings and checked the provenance of all the birding information. The Highlights for 2011 were edited by Andy Walker based on the monthly summaries prepared for the YOC website by Andy Booth. Thanks are also due to Jack Ashton-Booth, Richard Hampshire and Jonathan Pomroy for the drawings, and to Ian Brookes, Mark Coates, Chris Gomersall, Ian Newton, Haydn Pattison, Clare Scott, Andy Walker and Terry Weston for their photos which illustrate this report, and to Nigel once again for looking after production.

Mike Williams
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HIGHLIGHTS OF 2011

January

The **Whooper Swan** herd at North Duffield peaked at 114 birds on the 31st with up to 100 regularly here through the month. Around 100 **Pink-footed Geese** were at Thorganby Ings on the 8th and other notable counts included a similar number at Elvington on the 9th, a skein of 200+ tracked flying north over Bank Island, Walmgate Stray and Clifton Ings on the 24th and a total of 450 north-northwest over Cornborough Hall near Sheriff Hutton on the 28th. An **Egyptian Goose** was photographed by the River Ouse at Acaster Malbis on the 14th while a drake **Red-breasted Merganser** was observed flying upriver with two **Goosanders** at Fulford Ings on the 10th. An adult male **Goshawk** was at Fulford Ings on the 15th, and a male **Merlin** was at Pool Bridge Farm near Crockey Hill on the 24th. The only gull of note was a juvenile **Glaucous Gull** present at Wheldrake Ings on the 29th.

Approximately 90 **Waxwings** were attracted to a berry-laden tree on Broadway in Fulford early in the month with birds seen in several other areas in and around York thereafter. Records of wintering **Blackcaps** involved two birds at Upper Poppleton on the 1st, a male at Acomb the same day and a female at Pocklington on the 20th. A flock of 150 **Lesser Redpolls** at Redhouse Wood held at least 15 **Mealy Redpolls** during the month with at least two of this species at Wheldrake Wood on the 25th, and a single at Fulford Golf Course on the 24th.

February

The 27th produced a peak count of 119 **Whooper Swans** at North Duffield Carrs, with 31 **White-fronted Geese** and 59 **Barnacle Geese** also within the LDV. A small passage of **Pink-footed Geese** occurred between the 10th and 15th, with 45 northwest over York and 82 west at Thornton on the 10th, 56 north at Wharfe Ings on the 11th and approximately 150 over Wheldrake on the 15th. A female **Scaup** was at Castle Howard Lake on the 11th. A cream-crown **Marsh Harrier** was at North Duffield Carrs on the 18th, a male **Goshawk** was over Walmgate Stray, York on the 25th, while a female **Merlin** was at Allerthorpe on the 5th with another bird at Hollicarrs on the 21st. The gull roost at Wheldrake Ings produced an adult **Yellow-legged Gull** on the 2nd, with two there on the 5th. At least three different **Iceland Gulls** were

recorded at Wheldrake Ings between the 4th and 22nd with a first-winter **Mediterranean Gull** on the 19th. A **Short-eared Owl** was reported from Flaxton Road near West Lilling on the 17th. **Waxwings** were again well reported with a flock of at least 50 ranging round York. A **Firecrest** was trapped and ringed in a garden at Stockton-on-the-Forest mid-month and a **Great Grey Shrike** was seen at North Duffield Carrs on the 20th and 21st.

March

There was a noticeable movement of **Whooper Swans** during the month with at least 650 birds passing through the LDV. **Pink-footed Geese** were also on the move with sizeable counts in several places including up to 200 on the 4th at both SHL and Wheldrake Ings where the two **Egyptian Geese** remained. A drake **Green-winged Teal** was found at Newburgh Priory Lake on the 17th, remaining until the 29th, while a very elusive drake **Blue-winged Teal** was reported from the refuge at Wheldrake Ings on 18th March, and a summer-plumaged **Black-necked Grebe** was viewable distantly from the Geoff Smith Hide at North Duffield Carrs on the 13th and 14th.

A single **Red Kite** was seen moving east at Bishopthorpe on the 19th. Presumably it was the same female **Marsh Harrier** which passed through both Heslington East and Wheldrake Ings on the 10th with others seen at Skipwith Common on the 15th and moving north at Sherburn-in-Elmet on the 27th. An **Osprey** flew north on the 19th while a **Merlin** was seen chasing a **Skylark** at Bank Island on the 4th.

A major highlight of the month for many was the brief appearance of three **Common Cranes** in the LDV on the 21st seen near Bubwith bridge. A **Grey Plover** was discovered at Thorganby Ings on the 6th, while a single **Bar-tailed Godwit** was at the same site the next day. Gulls were well represented with two adult **Mediterranean Gulls** in the roost at Wheldrake Ings on the 5th and a juvenile **Iceland Gull** present on the same date. A juvenile **Glaucous Gull** was at North Duffield Carrs on the 29th. A **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** flew over Thorganby Ings on the 8th and **Waxwings** were still very much in evidence with the largest flock being 60+ at Selby on the 21st. A highly mobile **Great Grey Shrike**, maybe the same as seen at North Duffield Carrs in February, appeared at this site on the 18th and then moved to Skipwith Common before commuting between the two sites and finally settled down in a favoured area of the common where it lingered into April.



April

Most wintering wildfowl had already departed though five **Pink-footed Geese** winged their way over Wass on the 9th while the two **Egyptian Geese** were still at Wheldrake Ings on the 2nd with just one remaining there by the 23rd. A **Little Egret** was seen briefly at North Duffield Carrs on the 2nd. It was another good month for raptors with a **Red Kite** seen at Askham Bryan on the 1st; a female **Marsh Harrier** high south over Holgate, York on the 24th; single **Ospreys** passing over Wheldrake Ings on the 5th, Heslington East on the 20th and Allerthorpe GP on the 24th; a female **Merlin** flying over East Cottingwith on the 9th; and finally two **Hobbies** drifting north over Strensall Common on the 22nd with singles at Wheldrake Ings the same day, passing through Heslington East on the 24th and over Rawcliffe on the 29th.

Seven **Whimbrel** flew north over Melbourne on the 15th while 20 birds came in to roost at Wheldrake on the 23rd. Heslington East held two **Wood Sandpipers** on the 23rd and these remained on and off until the 28th. Two **Arctic Terns** were at Wheldrake Ings on the 23rd but a smart summer-plumaged **Black Tern** which lingered at Heslington East during the second part of the day on the 20th provided more interest. Heslington East also held single **Water Pipits** on the 10th, 15th

and 17th. The hugely popular **Great Grey Shrike** was last reported from Skipwith Common on the afternoon of the 3rd, then relocated to Thorganby on the 8th, while another (believed to be different) bird was also seen at Strensall Common on the 3rd.

May

A single **Egyptian Goose** paid a visit to Heslington East on the 9th while a drake **Garganey** was on the pool at Wheldrake Ings on the 23rd. Three **Quail** were calling at Lilling Bottom on the 27th but more unusual was a single **Spoonbill** discovered at Wheldrake Ings on the morning of the 21st which was joined by a second bird in the evening but with just one bird present next day. A **Red Kite** was seen over Bishopthorpe Road/Nunnery Lane, York on both the 5th and 6th and a female **Marsh Harrier** was observed hunting at Wheldrake Ings on the 10th. Single **Ospreys** passed over Wheldrake Ings on the 15th and Castle Howard on the 31st while **Hobbies** were noted at four sites. Up to five **Wood Sandpipers** were seen at Wheldrake Ings during the month with singles at both Bank Island and Heslington East. A **Little Stint** was seen at Wheldrake Ings with a **Grey Plover** at Heslington East both on the 8th and with a pair of **Avocets** at the latter site on the 19th.

A single **Turtle Dove** was singing at Slingsby on the 25th. Six **Waxwing** flew southwest over Fulford Road in York on the 3rd. Single **Wheatears** were seen on four dates at Heslington East. **Grasshopper Warblers** were heard reeling along the Pocklington Canal on the 2nd and at Fulford Ings on the 3rd with two there on the 9th and one still on the 14th. A **Wood Warbler** singing in the churchyard at Heslington on the 2nd was a good record as was a male **Pied Flycatcher** seen at Strensall Common on the 1st.

June

A juvenile **Goosander** on the River Rye at West Ness indicated local breeding which had previously been suspected here. Reports of **Quail** calling came from six different sites through the month. A **Red Kite** was seen at Ellerton on the 11th, with a female **Marsh Harrier** hunting at Wheldrake Ings on the 27th, and reports of **Hobby** at four separate locations. A **Greenshank** was at Wheldrake Ings on the 27th, while a **Green Sandpiper** was at Allerthorpe GP on the 19th with

one at Wheldrake Ings on the 27th and two dropping into Heslington East on the 28th. Reeling **Grasshopper Warblers** were at Yearsley Moor on the 12th, Lilling on the 24th and Wharfe Ings on the 30th. **Spotted Flycatchers** were noted at five sites and eight **Crossbills** flew west over Castle Howard on the 11th, with four over SHL on the 17th and an estimated total of 200 at Yearsley Moor on the 25th.

July

Several **Quail** were reported in the month, the main sites being East Cottingwith with birds calling on the 2nd, 13th and 19th, and West Lilling with birds calling on the 16th, 27th and 28th. Up to 40 birds were estimated to be in the Lower Derwent Valley as a whole. As many as four **Little Egrets** were reported at Wheldrake Ings early in the month and up to three birds were sighted around the Lower Derwent Valley thereafter. Additionally, one turned up on isolated ponds near Foggathorpe on the 24th. A female **Marsh Harrier** was seen at North Duffield Carrs on three dates from mid-month onwards while a female and juvenile which flew northwest over South Bank, York on the 30th may well have involved the two birds seen at Wheldrake Ings the previous day. Other raptor reports concerned single **Hobbies** seen at Dunnington Common on several dates and at Haxby on the 15th and Allerthorpe Lakeland Park on the 21st. At Heslington East 20 **Black-tailed Godwits** paid a brief visit on the 16th. Two **Turtle Doves** were recorded at Gribthorpe with another at nearby Foggathorpe on the 24th, while a **Grasshopper Warbler** was again heard reeling at Fulford Ings on the 28th with another at Bank Island on the 29th. **Spotted Flycatchers** were noted at Aughton church, Castle Howard, Fulford, Gilling and Thornton Lock on the Pocklington Canal.

August

At the start of the month up to four **Quail** were still calling at a number of sites. At least five **Little Egrets** were in the Lower Derwent Valley early on while two adults were at Heslington East on the 12th with a juvenile seen there the following day. A **Marsh Harrier** passed north over Hassacarr NR on the 31st. A juvenile **Little Stint** was at Heslington East on the 29th and 30th as well as a single **Greenshank** on the 27th and a single **Common Sandpiper** also on the 30th. A juvenile **Turnstone** was on the pool at Wheldrake Ings on the 26th. A

family party of five **Spotted Flycatchers** was observed at Strensall Common on the 3rd and 9th with a single bird at Clifton Park on the 17th and another family party, this time of six, at Skipwith Common on the 20th.

September

A female/immature **Garganey** was seen at Heslington East on the 1st and 3rd and a **Little Egret** was at Bank Island on the 11th. At least five **Marsh Harriers** moved through the Lower Derwent Valley during the month and single **Hobbies** were seen at Hovingham on the 14th, Poppleton on the 15th and at Earswick Moor (Strensall) and North Duffield Carrs on the 19th. There was a good passage of waders, particularly at Heslington East where a juvenile **Little Ringed Plover** was present up to the 7th and a juvenile **Little Stint** graced the site from the 1st–5th when two juvenile **Knot** were seen briefly. A **Whinchat** was at East Cottingwith on the 2nd with one at Heslington East on the 6th and another at Welburn on the 15th. A **Stonechat** was present at Heslington East on the 29th. As if Heslington East had not had enough of the action, two **Ravens** circled over the site on the 7th before drifting off in a southeasterly direction.

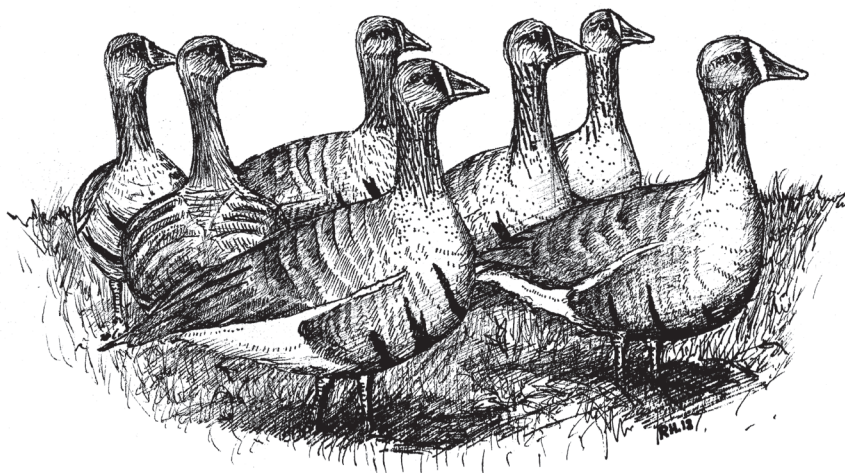
October

The first **Whooper Swans** (17 birds) returned to North Duffield Carrs on the 18th with 13 at Wheldrake Ings the following day when four also flew over Heslington East. Sixteen were at Wheldrake on the 23rd with 17 still at North Duffield on the 28th. On the 16th a drake **Ferruginous Duck** was found at Castle Howard Lake but was not present next day. A **Little Egret** was at Wheldrake Ings on the 8th. A single **White Stork**, which was first seen near Sherburn-in-Elmet on the 10th and then wandered eastwards, was apparently an escaped bird from Lotherton Hall Gardens. A **Red Kite** was seen near Strensall on the 3rd. Intriguingly, belated news concerned a satellite-tagged **Hen Harrier** which had been tracked passing through the Lower Derwent Valley on the 21st (but not seen by any birders!). On the 13th a **Little Stint** was present at Heslington East while this site also held at least one **Rock Pipit** on the 13th with a late **Wheatear** also present on that date. **Fieldfares** and **Redwings** were both first noted in the recording area on the 8th. An unexpected **Bearded Tit** was seen

and heard in a maize field by the Pocklington Canal at Bielby on the 15th while equally surprising was a flock of 13 **Twite** at Full Sutton airfield on the 31st.

November

Up to 30 **Whooper Swans** were at Wheldrake Ings with up to 25 at North Duffield Carrs; four flew over Heslington East on the 15th with an adult on the main lake there on the 23rd. The only records of **Bewick's Swan** concerned two dropping onto Castle Howard Lake on the 13th and three birds reported from North Duffield Carrs on the 29th. Flocks of 70 and 80 **Pink-footed Geese** flew over Rawcliffe Lake and Overton on the 4th and 5th respectively followed by around 40 north over Heslington East on the 16th. Two birds were present at Elvington on the 27th with 150 at North Duffield Carrs on the 29th. The most notable event of the month was a major influx of **Tundra Bean** and **White-fronted Geese** with higher counts of the former being 24 at Castle Howard on the 23rd and 30 at North Duffield Carrs on the 29th while counts of **White-fronted Geese** included 32 at Wheldrake on the 10th, 70 heading northeast over Bank Island on the 15th, 27 at Castle Howard on the 16th and 18 at Elvington on the 24th, all racially identified birds being from the Eurasian breeding population. A male **Marsh Harrier** was seen at North Duffield Carrs on the 19th while a ringtail **Hen Harrier** moved through Allerthorpe Common on the 5th. Another satellite-tagged **Hen Harrier**



was tracked passing through the Selby area and Lower Derwent Valley early in the month before ending up at Bransdale in the North York Moors (again not seen by any birders!). A **Jack Snipe** was at Heslington East on the 24th while an adult **Yellow-legged Gull** was recorded at this site on the 15th. Single **Short-eared Owls** were seen at Clifton Ings on the 9th and Wheldrake Ings on the 30th. A **Wood Lark** visited Cornfield NR on the 2nd. The only **Waxwing** reported this month was a single bird at Naburn Lock campsite on the 15th. A single **Brambling** was at East Cottingwith on the 7th with two at Allerthorpe GP on the 11th and seven at Castle Howard on the 19th.

December

The maximum count of **Whooper Swans** in the North Duffield area was 58 birds on the 6th while a flock of c.40 grey geese which flew southeast over Buttercrambe Moor Wood on the 2nd consisted mostly of **Pink-footed Geese** accompanied by a few **White-fronted Geese**. Two **Tundra Bean Geese** remained at Elvington until at least the 9th with up to 17 **Eurasian White-fronted Geese**. A **Red Kite** was seen at Elvington on the 6th and a female **Marsh Harrier** was at North Duffield Carrs on the 17th. Two **Short-eared Owls** were discovered at Poppleton on the 4th with up to three birds seen there regularly to the end of the month. A single **Waxwing** was discovered in Clementhorpe, York on the 24th, with two birds present on the 25th and 26th, while a single flew west over Fulford Ings on the 28th.

[Based on original monthly reports compiled by Andy Booth. Ed]

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Classified List

The sequence and scientific nomenclature follow that of the British List maintained by the British Ornithologists' Union. The British List was changed in 2002 and places Anseriformes and Galliformes at the start of the list. It was last revised by BOU in 2010 and it is this version, with some further revisions, which is currently used in YOC reports.

BBRC	British Birds Rarities Committee
BBS	Breeding Bird Survey (BTO)
CHL	Castle Howard Lake
GP	Gravel Pit(s)
JRTNR	Joseph Rowntree Trust Nature Reserve, New Earswick
LDV	Lower Derwent Valley
NDC	North Duffield Carrs
NE	Natural England (formerly English Nature)
NR	Nature Reserve
SHBR	Sand Hutton Bird Report (from SHL)
SHL	Sand Hutton Laboratory (formerly the Central Science Laboratory, Sand Hutton) now part of 'fera', the Food and Environment Research Agency.
WBBS	Waterways Breeding Bird Survey (BTO)
WeBS	Wetlands Bird Survey (BTO)
WWT	Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust
WTW	Water Treatment Works
YNU	Yorkshire Naturalists' Union
YOC	York Ornithological Club
YWT	Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

The following nature reserves appear as sites in the report (apart from those listed above):

- Calley Heath NR (Barmby Moor)
- Cornfield NR (Rawcliffe Ings)
- Fireman's Leap (part of the JRTNRs)
- Hassacarr NR (Dunnington)
- Huntington School NR (part of the JRTNRs)
- Sessions NR (part of the JRTNRs)

The new Heslington East campus of York University is referred to simply as 'Heslington East' throughout this report, while the original campus site retains its previous reference as 'York University'.

Where appropriate WeBS counts are included under individual species. WeBS counts in the Lower Derwent Valley are normally conducted in the winter months when seasonal flooding attracts wildfowl. Months when counts are made will vary from year to year depending on conditions. Note that WeBS counts reflect numbers on a specific date and do not necessarily indicate maximum numbers at any location.

Additionally, WeBS counts are normally conducted every month at Castle Howard Lake but for consistency only data for January–April and September–December are included in most tables in this report. Any other noteworthy counts are referred to in the text.

In 2011 LDV WeBS counts took place on 15th January, 7th February, 16th March, 17th October, 20th November and 17th December; those at Castle Howard Lake on 14th January, 14th February, 12th March, 17th April, 15th May, 17th June, 17th July, 19th August, 18th September, 16th October, 21st November and 18th December. In these tables a short dash (-) indicates no birds were present; a blank entry indicates that no count was made.

Records submitted to BirdGuides are also included in the report and marked as such where appropriate but we do not have details of the individual observer(s) and these records remain unverified. They are included for completeness as it is clear that many birders (local or from further afield) visit the Lower Derwent Valley in particular without otherwise submitting records.

This report is also based on records from within the YOC area submitted to BirdTrack and in this case we do know the observers' names. However, the very large majority of BirdTrack records relate to the commoner species and these normally just merit a summary anyway.

The systematic list also includes those species recorded in at least three of the previous ten years even if they were not recorded in 2011. The information given for these shows the year last recorded.

As in previous reports we have also included, for added interest, a few records which occurred just outside the YOC recording area. However, these are now placed in an appendix at the end of the Classified List as they do not qualify as records for the YOC area. In most cases there is no other local report to document these occurrences.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

Resident breeder, passage migrant and winter visitor

Numbers remained good at the major strongholds of the LDV and CHL, both sites still retaining healthy resident populations with breeding taking place. Numbers again increased during the winter months with 100+ in the LDV and more than 40 at CHL during the first winter period, but a change of fortunes in the second winter period with 100+ at CHL and a maximum of 82 in the LDV.

There were regular sightings of one to two birds on the River Ouse at Clifton Ings and Poppleton throughout the year and birds were also noted coming and going regularly at Heslington East all year with six present on 18th April. A single bird was on the pool at SHL on 13th April with four at Allerthorpe Lakeland Park on the 24th and birds were noted moving through Skipwith Common during April into early May with eight on Wash Dike on 18th April.

In the second winter period eight were on Orchard Fields near the River Derwent at Old Malton on 22nd December.

Monthly WeBS counts for Mute Swan

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
CHL	48	43	27	19	71	102	94	104
LDV	119	103	114			69	82	76

Bewick's Swan *Cygnus columbianus*

Declining winter visitor and passage migrant

Another poor showing this year with no sightings during the first winter period and just a couple of sightings during the second. Two birds were seen at CHL on 13th November (DW) and three were with Whooper Swans *Cygnus cygnus* at NDC on the 29th (CR per RS).

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

Winter visitor and passage migrant

During the first winter period the usual herd was at the southern end of the LDV feeding in fields by Derwent Cottage Farm during the day and then roosting at NDC and Bubwith Ings. Forty birds in early January had increased to 100+ by February with many other flocks noted flying over and it was estimated several hundred birds moved through the area during this period. Nine birds were by Redhouse Reservoir on 22nd February and other flocks on the move included a dozen or more over Poppleton on 3rd and 8th March, 50 over York University on the 7th, 102 headed northwest over Osbalwick, York on the 14th with 16 over Buttercrambe Woods on the 18th and flocks of 60 and 80 seen over Rawcliffe Lake on 4th and 5th April.

The first returning birds were 17 at NDC on 18th October while four circled Heslington East the next day, six flew over SHL on the 21st and four were again noted circling Heslington East on 15th November. Small numbers settled throughout the LDV increasing to 80+ by the end of November with the majority favouring the southern end as usual.

Monthly WeBS counts for Whooper Swan

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
CHL	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
LDV	97	115	151			17	37	91

Bean Goose *Anser fabalis*

Scarce winter visitor

All records relate to birds of the Tundra race *rossicus*, all in the second winter period. A single was at Wheldrake Ings on the 10th November (RS) while three flew over CHL late afternoon on the 13th (DW) with 12 on the south bank of the lake on the 19th and 24 in a mixed flock (including White-fronted Geese *Anser albifrons*) in a field by the car park on the 23rd and 24th (IA, BirdGuides). One or two were with other geese at Elvington WTW from 24th November to 9th December at least (AF, PeR, RS *et al.*) and 30 paused briefly at NDC on 29th November (CR per RS) with a further eight at Wheldrake Ings (RS) during the afternoon of the same day.

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*

Winter visitor and passage migrant

There were many reports of skeins flying over the region particularly during the first winter period; for example 200+ were tracked going north over Bank Island then Walmgate Stray and then Clifton Ings on 24th January with other notable counts of 150 or more being 450 in two flocks NNW over Cornborough on 28th January, 150 over Allerthorpe Common and 200 over SHL on 4th March while 200 dropped into Wheldrake Ings to preen and bathe the same day. Up to 15 had been at Wheldrake Ings during this period and one or two were reported from Westfield Farm, Thornton on 21st January, CHL on the 22nd, Anchor Plain (Strensall) from 17th to 25th February and Allerthorpe Lakeland Park on 24th April.

Smaller numbers were on the move during the second winter period including skeins of 30–40 over central York late September, 70 over Rawcliffe Lake on 4th November with 80 over Overton the next day plus 40 over Heslington on the 16th. Two were with other geese at Elvington WTW on 27th November and 150 dropped into NDC on the 29th.

White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons*

Scarce winter visitor

All reports refer to birds of the European race *albifrons*. Few records were received for the first winter period with just three at Ellerton on 9th January and two at Wheldrake Ings in early February, although WeBS counts of 30+ for the LDV were recorded, while two were also at CHL on 29th March.

Larger counts were recorded during the second winter period with 32 accompanying other geese at Wheldrake Ings on 10th November, 20 flying northeast there on the 15th with a further 70 over Bank Island later that day. Some 20–30 were with the large goose flock feeding in fields by the car park at CHL from the 16th to the month's end and up to 18 were at Elvington WTW from late November into early December. Two were seen heading southeast over Buttercrambe Moor with Pink Footed Geese *Anser brachyrhynchus* on 2nd December and an impressive total of 234 was counted in the LDV during the WeBS count on the 17th.

Monthly WeBS counts for White-fronted Goose

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
CHL	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
LDV	35	31	151			-	197	234

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

Resident feral breeder, passage migrant and winter visitor

Common and reported widely throughout the recording area. There were good numbers in the LDV although they were down slightly on the previous year, averaging around 1,200 with a maximum WeBS count of 1,400 in October. At CHL 400+ were present in early January with peak counts there of 600 in June and again in October. Other notable counts of 200 or more were 800 at Stamford Bridge on 28th January with 250 by the River Rye the next day, another 250 at Anchor Plain (Strensall) through February, 500 at the Elvington WTW on 23rd July and up to 250 at Heslington East late August. There were also flocks of 250 at Skipwith Common on 14th September and at Allerthorpe GP on 8th October with 370 at the Elvington WTW in late December.

Monthly WeBS counts for Greylag Goose

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
CHL	410	45	15	8	155	600	379	6
LDV	1,025	1,244	533			1,400	1,147	1,021

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

Resident feral breeder and winter visitor

As with the previous species a common goose that was recorded widely throughout the recording area. Largest flocks were reported from the LDV

with maximum WeBS counts of 795 on 7th February and 766 on 17th December while a peak count of 293 at CHL was recorded the following day. Other counts of 100 or more were 100 by the River Rye on 29th January and up to 200 at Heslington East late August.

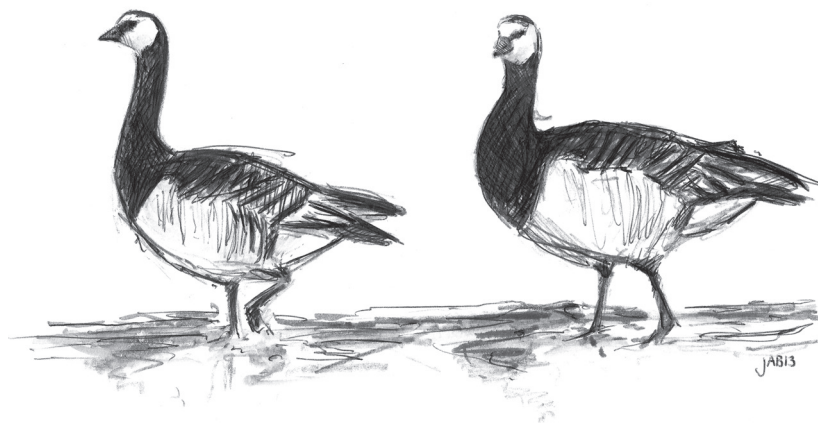
Monthly WeBS counts for Canada Goose

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
CHL	143	132	28	66	70	180	102	293
LDV	562	795	424			657	658	766

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*

Occasional winter visitor and feral wanderer

A flock of 26 was reported from Westfield Farm, Thornton on 21st January with 50 present southeast of Flamingoland for a week in February.



Brent Goose *Branta bernicla*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant

No reports this year; last recorded in 2009.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

Rare visitor and from feral population; has bred

A single bird was on the River Ouse at Acaster Malbis on 14th January and two, probably the birds seen last year, were at Wheldrake lngs from February through to the end of April. A single bird at Heslington East on 9th May was probably one of these birds which then reappeared at Elvington WTW mid-November, remaining in the area into December.

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna***Winter visitor, migrant breeder and scarce autumn passage migrant**

Small numbers recorded at various sites throughout the LDV early in the year slowly increased to a maximum of 169 on 16th March. Four were at Wharfe Ings, Cawood on 11th February with another four on the River Kyle at Tollerton on the 26th. At Anchor Plain, Strensall 15 on 13th February increased to 34 by the 27th, the largest flock outside of the LDV. Up to six were at Newburgh Priory lake through February and March, with a single at CHL during March and three to four reported from Heslington East throughout March and April.

Breeding was confirmed at Elvington WTW with three pairs accompanied by seven chicks seen in July.

The only reports in the second winter period were from the WeBS counts in the LDV as below.

Monthly WeBS counts for Common Shelduck

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
LDV	34	103	169			2	8	11

Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata***Scarce visitor mostly in the winter period**

There was just a single report of a pair at CHL on 30th October.

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope***Regular winter visitor, spring passage migrant and resident breeder in small numbers**

Good numbers again wintered in the LDV with a WeBS count of over 17,800 on 16th March, with 300–400 recorded at CHL during the first winter period. Elsewhere nine were on the River Ouse at Clifton Ings on 1st January with 60+ dropping onto the floods there on the 25th. Six were on the pool at Bishopthorpe Palace on 20th February while 250 were by the River Kyle at Tollerton on the 26th. With the LDV being so dry in the second winter period up to 500 took refuge on the ponds at Skipwith Common during October and November and counts in the valley were lower than normal with just 5,700 counted on 17th December although higher numbers than usual were reported from Elvington WTW with 140 there early December. Numbers remained constant at CHL with 310 there on 18th December and there were single figure counts from Heslington East, the River Rye by Ryton Bridge and the River Derwent at Stamford Bridge.

Monthly WeBS counts for Eurasian Wigeon

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
CHL	16	252	366	-	64	274	346	310
LDV	12,730	12,691	17,803			2,100	3,108	5,700

American Wigeon *Anas americana*
Vagrant

No reports in 2011; last recorded in 2010.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*
Winter visitor and migrant breeder

In the first winter period numbers peaked at 178 in the LDV on 16th March with up to 30 at CHL during this time. Additionally 14 were on the River Kyle at Tollerton on 26th February with nine at Low Water, Terrington the next day. A pair flew over Heslington East on 10th March with a drake on the main lake there from the 21st to the 22nd, while other pairs were seen at Newburgh Priory lake on 20th March and at Skipwith Common at the end of April into early May.

Small numbers were present throughout the summer at both CHL and in the LDV with numbers increasing at both sites during the second winter period although a low peak of just 34 in the LDV was probably due to the lack of water; 66 at CHL on 16th October was a better count.

Monthly WeBS counts for Gadwall

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
CHL	17	26	24	6	24	66	64	48
LDV	72	125	178			11	21	34

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*
Winter visitor and resident breeder

Several thousand frequented the LDV during the first winter period with in excess of 6,300 in early March while numbers peaked at 137 at CHL in early January. Good numbers were on the floods by the River Ouse early in the year with 40+ at Clifton Ings on 13th January and a further 30+ there from 22nd–25th February plus a peak of 22 at Fulford Ings mid-January. Counts of 100+ were made at Skipwith Common on the 25th February and on the River Kyle, Tollerton the next day with up to 70 on Newburgh Priory lake through February and March.

Small numbers were also noted at other sites through the year including Allertorpe GP, Cawood, Heslington East, the River Derwent near Stamford Bridge and on the River Rye near Ryton Bridge.

During the second winter period there were peak counts of 210 at the Elvington WTW on 9th December and 310 at CHL on the 18th with up to 2,800 throughout the LDV, up to 300 taking refuge at nearby Skipwith Common during shooting days.

Monthly WeBS counts for Eurasian Teal

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
CHL	137	32	8	1	5	54	79	310
LDV	3,297	4,988	6,361			1,950	1,980	2,780

Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*

Rare visitor

A drake was on Newburgh Priory lake from 17th to 29th March (JP *et al.*); this species has now been an annual visitor since 2006.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Winter visitor and resident breeder

Common and widespread throughout the recording area with up to 2,500 wintering in the LDV early in the year. At CHL a peak count of 450 was recorded in January with 100–300 present throughout much of the year.

Other counts of more than 100 were 150 along the River Ouse between York and Naburn on 25th January, 200 at Heslington East on 15th September and 150 at Elvington WTW on 16th November. Overall numbers took a while to build during the second winter period but 3,100 were back in the LDV by late December.

Monthly WeBS counts for Mallard

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
CHL	450	117	118	38	210	115	189	282
LDV	2,176	2,499	2,234			970	1,769	3,100

Pintail *Anas acuta*

Winter visitor and scarce breeder

Most records as usual came from the LDV with a peak count of 405 during March, c.100 of these at Wheldrake lngs. Elsewhere three were on the River Kyle at Tollerton on 26th February, a drake was at Redhouse Reservoir on 7th April and one was at CHL on 9th October. By the end of December c.200 had returned to the LDV.

Monthly WeBS counts for Pintail

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
CHL	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
LDV	377	326	405			4	19	201

Garganey *Anas querquedula*
Scarce migrant breeder

This was a very poor year indeed for this species: a drake on the pool at Wheldrake Ings on 23rd May (RD) and a juvenile was seen in flight, moving to the eastern end of Heslington East on both 1st and 3rd September (TJ, JA-B *et al.*), were the only reports received, but see also RBBP report on page 79.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*
Vagrant

An elusive drake was reported from the refuge at Wheldrake Ings late on 18th March (OM) and again on the 21st (BirdGuides). A description was submitted to BBRC but at the time of publication this is still 'in circulation'. If accepted it would be only the 2nd record of this species for the YOC area, the 1st being in 1967.

Shoveler *Anas clypeata*
Winter visitor and resident breeder in small numbers

Away from the LDV two were reported on floods at Clifton Ings on 13th January, with a female at CHL on 11th March and three at Heslington East on 10th April. Small numbers were also seen again at Skipwith Common for much of the year although it was not thought breeding took place. In the LDV WeBS counts peaked at 364 in the first winter period (but with an estimated total of 600 – see RBBP report on page 79) but at just 32 in December in the second. A drake was also at Rawcliffe Lake on 5th November.

Monthly WeBS counts for Shoveler

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
CHL	-	-	-	-	-	4	6	-
LDV	120	199	364			7	8	32

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*
Winter visitor and breeder in small numbers

Numbers at CHL in the first winter period peaked at 45 in February with 173 in the LDV in the same period. Elsewhere a female was in Rowntree Park on 29th January, seven were at Wharfe Ings near Stillington on 11th February and up to four were at Heslington East most of the year. A few remained at CHL during the summer with numbers building up again to 34 by December although the species remained scarce at this time throughout the LDV.

Monthly WeBS counts for Common Pochard

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
CHL	17	45	37	-	-	1	1	34
LDV	119	173	170			-	-	1

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*

Vagrant

A drake at CHL on 16th October (DR *et al.*) was the 5th for the YOC area and the first since 1985. A description of this find appears on page 81.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

Winter visitor and breeder in small numbers

Good numbers were recorded at the start of the year with peak counts of 256 in the LDV on 7th February and 93 at CHL on 12th March. A few birds were also noted on the River Ouse from Clifton down to Naburn and from the River Foss in the city during this period. Reported from Heslington East throughout the year with a maximum of 11 during October while small numbers were also present at the various water bodies around Allerthorpe with breeding noted at Allerthorpe Lakeland Park. Other records through the year came from Acaster Malbis, Everingham, Rawcliffe Lake, the River Kyle at Tollerton, Rowntree Park and SHL.

A few pairs were on the ponds at Skipwith Common in spring with numbers peaking at 32 in early July, and at least one pair bred. Breeding was also confirmed at Melbourne (Pocklington Canal) and Wheldrake Ings.

During the second winter period numbers remained low in the LDV probably due to the lack of water but an impressive 210 were at CHL in December while 95 were counted at Elvington WTW.

Monthly WeBS counts for Tufted Duck

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
CHL	47	70	93	40	26	43	137	210
LDV	180	256	237			11	14	15

Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*

Winter visitor and passage migrant in small numbers

A first winter female was present at CHL on 11th February (DR, JLe).

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

Very scarce winter visitor

There were no records in 2011; last recorded in 2008.

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Winter visitor and passage migrant

On the River Ouse in early January a drake was by the Millennium Bridge, York and two were at Poppleton, with one on floods at Rawcliffe Ings on the 24th. Another single was on the River Kyle, Tollerton on 26th February while an immature male at Heslington East in early March remained until 10th April.

At CHL up to 16 early in the year peaked at 21 in February while birds were seen widely throughout the LDV during the same period with 33 at Wheldrake Ings on 2nd March.

During the second winter period a female/immature type at Heslington East during October remained to 15th November. A drake was on Rawcliffe Lake on 5th November with another at Elvington WTW on 9th December while up to 13 were at CHL.

Monthly WeBS counts for Common Goldeneye

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
CHL	14	11	15	-	-	1	12	10
LDV	13	20	14			-	2	4

Smew *Mergellus albellus*

Scarce winter visitor

There were no records in 2011; last recorded in 2008.

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*

Very scarce winter visitor

A drake flew downriver at Fulford Ings with two Goosanders *Mergus merganser* on 9th January, seen again the following day (AB).

Goosander *Mergus merganser*

Regular winter visitor and passage migrant

Widely reported from the river systems and many water bodies in the recording area during the first winter period but counts were generally less than recorded historically. Maximum numbers, in excess of 20, were 27 at Wharfe Ings near Cawood on 11th February, 25 at Redhouse Reservoir from 22nd February to 3rd April and 37 at Wheldrake Ings on 6th March.

There was a single summer sighting of a juvenile on the River Rye at West Ness on 12th June suggesting probable breeding.

During the second winter period a female was at Heslington East from 19th–23rd October, two were on the River Derwent at Stamford Bridge on 12th December, and a drake flew over Naburn Marina on the 26th. By the end of the year a pair was on the River Ouse near Overton and 24 had returned to CHL.

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*

Formerly resident breeder in small numbers but now a scarce visitor following national cull

There were no sightings in 2011; last recorded in 2009.

Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa*

Resident breeder

Single-figure numbers were again reported widely from suitable areas throughout the region with double-figure counts of 13 at Heslington East on 3rd November with 30 there on the 11th, 25 at Woodhouse Grange Farm, Sutton upon Derwent on 13th December and 12 at Thorganby on the 18th.

Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*

Resident breeder

While not as common as the previous species, small numbers were reported from Dunnington Common, East Cottingwith, Heslington East, Poppleton, Scagglethorpe, Sheriff Hutton, Street Farm (Stamford Bridge), Storwood, Strensall Camp and Warthill, with coveys of 15 at Holtby on 18th July and Brecks Farm, Haxby on 20th August. Evidence of breeding came from Dunnington Common, East Cottingwith and Holtby.

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

Summer visitor which breeds in good years

The first of the year were three at the usual West Lilling site on 27th May and up to six were present there through July. Up to three were heard along Westfield Lane, Poppleton in June with a single bird heard calling from a wheat field near Whitwell Grange on the 28th, and one or two heard calling from fields adjacent to Allerthorpe Common from late June to early August. It was also a good year in the LDV with a minimum of 40 throughout the summer the last report being one calling at North Duffield (village) on 15th August.

Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

Resident breeder

Common and regularly encountered in farmland throughout the recording area. Counts in double figure were flocks of 11 at Moreby near Naburn on 29th April and at NDC on 29th May, and flocks of 15 at SHL on 27th October and Woodhouse Grange Farm, Sutton upon Derwent on 13th December.

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*

Scarce autumn visitor on passage

Not recorded in 2011 after sightings in 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2009.

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Passage and winter visitor; recently established resident breeder

Around 20 were at Cawood at the start of the year and birds were again present in every month at CHL with a peak of 43 in May (20 breeding

pairs). Maximum counts in the LDV were 19 in March and December but no information was received regarding how the breeding colony at Wheldrake Ings fared in 2011. Elsewhere single figure counts were reported from Allerthorpe GP, Clifton Ings, Fulford Ings, Hemingbrough, Heslington East, Poppleton, Selby, SHL, Stamford Bridge and Terrington.

Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

Very scarce, mostly winter visitor

No sightings in 2011 though recorded each year from 2006 to 2010.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Scarce visitor, has bred

A good increase in records this year, including evidence of possible breeding. One was seen on 2nd April at NDC but no further reports were received until up to three were seen together on various dates from 13th July until 8th October at a variety of sites in the LDV. In total, five were estimated to be present in the LDV in late July/early August and one adult with two juveniles on the 12th at Wheldrake Ings suggests breeding occurred somewhere in the area. In addition, some five different birds were seen over a period of two weeks at Heslington East mid-August.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Resident breeder

Frequently seen throughout the area during the year, with the highest count being six together at Turn Bridge near Moor Monkton on 18th January. Breeding was recorded at CHL where two active nests were present with two large young on 6th May. Opposite Clifton Ings, over the River Ouse, a small heronry on Acomb Ings had at least four occupied nests.

Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

Rare vagrant

The 7th and 8th records for the YOC area were two seen at Wheldrake Ings on 21st–22nd May (BB *et al.*).

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Resident breeder, more widespread in winter

Widespread throughout the area in suitable habitats, especially during the two winter periods when frequent at Frog Hall (Allerthorpe Common), CHL and on the River Ouse in the York area.

Breeding was confirmed at Frog Hall, Allerthorpe Common on 30th April when a nest with four eggs was found, and at Allerthorpe GP on

31st May when two family parties of four young were present. At Skipwith Common numbers were lower than usual though a few were present during the breeding season and one juvenile was seen on 9th August.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Resident breeder and passage visitor

Wintered in the LDV and at CHL, Naburn Marina and York University Lake. At the latter site a pair was first seen displaying and nest building on 9th February but no breeding was recorded here. Nesting was also attempted at Heslington East but there was again no evidence of success, probably because of the lack of vegetation cover at present. Breeding was proven at Naburn Marina where one adult and three juveniles were present on 11th June, at Rawcliffe Lake where two pairs eventually raised one young and at Elm Moor Lake (Heworth, York) where a pair raised seven young from two broods. Also present in the breeding season at Allerthorpe GP and Elvington WTW.

Monthly WeBS counts for Great Crested Grebe

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
CHL	1	2	8	2	4	7	7	4	3	7	4	4
LDV	-	-	6							-	-	-

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

Very scarce winter visitor

None recorded in 2011 after records in 2009 and 2010.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

Former summer visitor and scarce breeder, now predominantly a passage visitor

One adult at NDC from 13th to 14th March (AB, AW) was, unusually, the only report for the year.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

Irregular but increasing visitor from reintroduction schemes

A continued increase in sightings in the area throughout the year, with singles seen over Askham Bryan, Bishopthorpe, Ellerton, Elvington, Healaugh, Pocklington, Strensall and York city centre.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Passage migrant and rare breeder, now also scarce winter visitor

Regular throughout the year in the LDV, especially at Wheldrake Ings, usually seen in ones or twos, but three juveniles flew south over East

Cottingwith on 20th September. The first records for Heslington East and Hassacarr NR were on 10th March and 30th August respectively and other 'fly-overs' occurred at Sherburn in Elmet and central York. Occasionally seen at Skipwith Common during the early part of the year.

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

Mostly a very scarce winter visitor

There was just a single record submitted this year of one which flew low across Allerthorpe Common on 5th November being mobbed by two Carrion crows *Corvus corone* (IA).

An interesting development, however, is the notification of 'virtual' records based on satellite technology: on 21st October a satellite-tagged bird was in the LDV based on co-ordinates from its transmitter (per RS). Again, between 7th and 13th November, another satellite-tagged bird was in the Selby area and then in the LDV around Thorganby, before being detected moving on to Bransdale (per RS).

Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

Passage visitor and rare breeder

Another good scattering of sightings this year began with a male on Fulford Ings on 15th January (AB) followed by a female at Buttercrambe Weir on 3rd February (P&SB) with another on the 24th over Walmgate Stray, York attacking Magpies *Pica pica* (both AB), and a further bird sighted at Brayton Barff, Selby on the 28th (MW). Singles were also seen at Skipwith Common on 3rd and 6th of April and later in the spring but there was no evidence of breeding (DT).

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Resident breeder and passage migrant

Frequently recorded throughout the area during the year with breeding confirmed at Dunnington Common, Hassacarr NR, between York and Naburn, and at York University. Prey items noted were Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*, Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* and Bank Vole *Myodes glareolus*. One was caught on 12th November after sunset at Skipwith Common in a net set for catching Teal *Anas crecca*.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Passage migrant and scarce resident breeder

A large increase in records over the previous year shows the expanding range and increasing numbers of this species in the recording area. Counts of five or more together occurred at Hassacarr NR, Poppleton and Redhouse in September and at Escrick in December while smaller

numbers were reported over the whole recording area, including the centre of York. Another was found dead along the track at platform 1, York station in mid-November, presumably resulting from a train collision. One flying over Skipwith Common on 8th January dropped what appeared to be a snake.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Regular passage migrant

There were a few sightings this year as usual: an early migrant was at Wheldrake Ings on 19th March (RS) and another flew northwest along the Pocklington Canal on 5th April (BirdGuides) while one was high over Heslington East on the 20th (TJ). Allerthorpe GP held one for 10 minutes on 24th April (P&SB) and another hunted over the main lagoon at Wheldrake Ings for 15 minutes on 5th May (SH). Finally one was at CHL on 31st May (BirdGuides).

There were no sightings during the autumn.

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Resident breeder

Frequently encountered throughout the recording area during the year with the highest number together being four at the Pocklington Canal on 2nd August and four at Dunnington on the 26th. A healthy local breeding population was noted around Skipwith Common.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

Passage migrant and winter visitor

A few records this year with the first near Crockey Hill on 24th January (TJ). During February singles were seen at Allerthorpe Common on the 5th (IA) and at Hollicarrs on the 21st (CC) while one was at Bank Island on 4th March (TD) with another at East Cottingwith on 9th April (MaW).

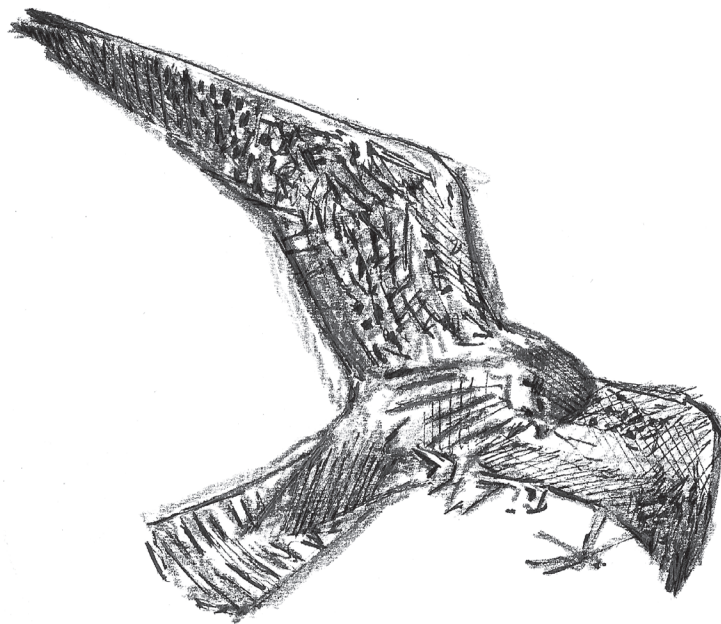
During the autumn singles were at Brecks Farm, Haxby on 8th October and at Woodhouse Grange on 13th December (both P&SB).

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Passage and scarce summer visitor

Another good set of records this year began with two drifting north over Strensall Common on 22nd April with another at Wheldrake Ings the same day. More regular and frequent sightings came from the Dunnington area and Wheldrake Ings but singles were also seen at Allerthorpe Lakeland Park, Copmanthorpe, Crockey Hill, Earswick Moor, Heslington East, Hovingham, NDC, Rawcliffe (York), Poppleton, Scagglethorpe, Skipwith Common and Sutton-on-the-Forest. Many were seen hunting with prey

including House Martins *Delichon urbicum*, Sand Martins *Riparia riparia*, Swallows *Hirundo rustica* and various dragonflies. The last of the autumn was seen at Skipwith Common on 5th October.



Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

Winter and passage visitor

A good year with three sightings at NDC during January and frequent records at Wheldrake Ings from 27th January until 7th April. Singles also occurred at Ellerton, Fulford (York), Heslington East, Hovingham, SHL and Selby during this period and one appeared to reside in York as three sightings were made in Acomb and Holgate during the early summer. Thereafter there were scattered records mainly over the southern part of the area while one frequented pylons over the River Ouse at Poppleton during late October.

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

Resident breeder and winter/passage visitor

Fewer records were submitted this year although a good sighting was an adult feeding two chicks on Strensall Common on 24th July. Low numbers were also noted at Skipwith Common where only a few were heard and none were seen and it was thought likely that the harsh winter had reduced the local population and that the dry spring and summer made the usual nesting

sites unsuitable. Singles were seen at Wheldrake Ings on 8th October and at Allerthorpe GP on the 30th and another was at Ruddins Ings, northwest of Poppleton, on 15th November. In the LDV as a whole WeBS counts recorded 12 in January, six in February, four in each of March, October and November and eight recorded there in December.

Spotted Crane *Porzana porzana*

Very scarce passage migrant and breeder

Three were reported calling in the LDV this year compared to five in 2010 (see RBBP report for LDV on page 79).

Corncrake *Crex crex*

Very scarce summer migrant and irregular breeder

A single bird heard calling in the LDV on two dates in June was the only one reported (see RBBP report for LDV on page 79).

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Common resident and winter visitor

Abundantly recorded over the area with a maximum count of 14 at Allerthorpe GP on 10th April and 73 during the WeBS count at CHL during October.

Breeding was confirmed at Allerthorpe GP, Allerthorpe Lakeland Park, Bolton Percy, Hassacarr NR, Nether Poppleton, Skipwith Common and SHL. At Skipwith Common none of the birds colour ringed during 2009/10 was sighted and were assumed to have died or moved away. However, one ringed in November 2010 in the LDV was recovered in Germany in the summer – shows where some of the late autumn build-up originates from.

Monthly WeBS counts for Moorhen

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
CHL	19	9	22	15	5	14	13	30	54	73	39	44
LDV	235	*	280							154	165	231

* No WeBS count was made in February.

Coot *Fulica atra*

Common resident and winter visitor

Frequently recorded throughout the area during the year with a typical late winter increase in numbers in the LDV. Highest numbers at CHL were in

Monthly WeBS counts for Coot

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
CHL	346	156	73	55	33	64	268	269	287	303	287	167
LDV	62	166	549							22	4	13

the autumn when numbers are comparatively low in the LDV. Breeding was confirmed at two sites and was suspected at a number of others.

Common Crane *Grus grus*

Scarce vagrant

A number of sightings were reported in March all in the LDV. On the 20th three birds, first seen earlier over Thicket Priory (RS, JB), were seen again over NDC before landing on Bubwith Ings where behaviour suggested a pair and another male. These birds were seen again the following morning (AW) before flying off to the southeast. However, two birds appeared to remain in the area moving between Wheldrake Ings and NDC while on the 28th one was seen flying over Skipwith Common. Two were seen again on 5th May at Skipwith Common flying over to the west.

According to Natural England up to four adults, present in the LDV and surrounding areas from 15th March until 16th April, were frequently mobile throughout the area and difficult to connect with. Two of these birds then remained in the southwest of the valley where they spent most of their time feeding on dispersed arable fields until 30th May.

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

Passage migrant and scarce breeder

A single was reported at Ellerton on 16th January. Numbers then started to build in February with reports from four sites around York and the LDV including 11 at Thorganby Ings on the 20th. Two were by the River Rye near Nunnington on the 20th and five were at Heslington East on the 25th.

March saw a widespread increase in reports with records from ten locations including 12 at Heslington East on the 28th with pairs there in several areas of suitable nesting habitat.

April and May saw reports from 14 different locations with eight birds at East Cottingwith and six at Allerthorpe Lakeland Park, but most records were of just one or two birds.

Sightings fell off during June and July with the last records being 16 at Thorganby Ings on 25th July and a single at Naburn Marina on the 30th.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Rare visitor

A pair on the eastern pools at Heslington East on 10th May (TJ *et al.*) was the only record received (but see RBBP report on page 79).

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubious*

Scarce summer breeder and passage migrant

The highlight was the successful breeding on the York University construction site at Heslington East.

The first record was a single on 10th March (TJ) followed by reports on five other March dates. By 6th April three birds were present with five or more on the 15th, ten on the 17th and 12 on the 23rd. There were seven birds still on 2nd May and a chick was seen on the 13th. On 14th June five pairs were present, three pairs each with a chick and two pairs sitting, and three chicks were seen on 26th. One bird was reported on 16th July followed by a juvenile on 1st, 3rd and 6th September.

Elsewhere birds were reported in March and April at Bootham Stray, Earswick (opposite Hartrigg Oaks) Pocklington Industrial Estate (a pair) and at Wheldrake Ings. A pair with a single chick was seen at Elvington WTW on 21st July confirming breeding at this site.

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Passage migrant

Most records were from Heslington East with two there on 11th March and sightings in single figures every month through to 7th September.

The highest count was six on 12th March with birds displaying in April often in regular conflict with Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*. Birds were thought to be on nests on 29th April and two chicks were seen on 27th May and two pairs with chicks on 14th June.

Through August and up to 7th September there were one or two birds present, with a juvenile seen on 30th August.

Elsewhere 11 were at Wheldrake Ings on 8th May and one was at Elvington WTW on 5th July.

European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*

Winter visitor and passage migrant

Records showed a build up of numbers mostly in the LDV through the first three months of the year. Post breeding, the first returning birds were noted in August with increasing numbers from October to the year's end.

Significant counts (100 or more) in the first winter period were:

- 120 at Selby on 9th January
- 600 at Thorganby on 10th February with 400 on the 12th
- 300 at Wheldrake Ings also on 12th February
- 800 at Thorganby on 15th February
- 100 at Ellerton on 20th February
- 3,000 at Thorganby on 6th March with 2,100 on the 8th
- 721 (WeBS count) in the LDV as a whole on 16th March
- 150 at Scrayingham on 1st April

In the second winter period high counts were:

- 200 at Osbaldwick on 27th August
- 130 at Ellerton on 11th September
- 400 at Kexby on 8th October

1,000 between Newton and Sutton upon Derwent on 9th October
 400 at High Catton also on 9th October
 2,070 (WeBS count) in the LDV as a whole on 17th October
 200 at Heslington East on 8th November
 1,500 at Elvington WTW on 16th November
 878 (WeBS count) in the LDV as a whole on 20th November
 350 at Heslington East on 24th November with 400 on the 28th
 100 at Elvington WTW on 7th December with 200 on the 9th
 560 (WeBS count) in the LDV as a whole on 17th December

The largest counts of the year appear to have been in the autumn, maybe when autumn-sown cereal crops offer good feeding/roosting habitat.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant

There were two records in 2011, both in spring. One was seen at Thorganby Ings from the viewing platform on 6th March (RS) and another was by the easternmost pools at Heslington East on 8th May (CG *et al.*)

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Winter visitor, passage migrant and breeder

Numbers built up in the LDV over the first three months of the year before dispersing to nesting areas and then increased again in the second winter period. The dry conditions of the spring seemed to reduce nesting numbers and in turn may have resulted in the lower numbers recorded towards the end of the year compared with counts in the first three months.

Significant counts (of 100 or more) in the first winter period from the LDV:

200 at Ellerton Ings (and a WeBS count of 543 in the LDV as a whole) on 15th January
 300 at Bubwith Ings on 17th January with 100 there on the 22nd
 120 at Ellerton Ings and 125 at NDC also on the 22nd
 516 in the LDV (total from Bank Island, Thorganby, NDC and Bubwith) on 28th January
 350 at NDC on 5th February
 4,826 (WeBS count) in the LDV as a whole on 7th February
 362 at Ellerton on 8th February
 1,000s reported from the Tower Hide at Wheldrake Ings on 10th February
 900 flying over Aughton Ings again on the 10th
 500 (minimum) at Thorganby on 12th February
 1,500 at Thorganby on 15th February
 1,200 at Wheldrake Ings also on the 15th with 500 on the 18th and 3,000 on the 22nd
 4,002 (WeBS count) in the LDV as a whole on 16th March

Elsewhere there were three significant counts:

250 at Anchor Plain, Strensall on 13th February with 120 on the 25th

250 at Colley Broach Road, Newburgh on 22nd February

250 by the flooded River Kyle near Linton on Ouse on 26th February

From April to July birds were reported from some 16 locations although numbers were down from recent years presumably due to the dry conditions. Birds did breed at Skipwith Common though for the first time since 1970. In July 18 were noted at Elvington WTW on the 5th, with 80 at Naburn Marina on the 30th and 86 at Heslington East on the 31st.

In the second half of the year significant counts were:

160 at Ellerton on 6th August with 138 on the 7th and 120 on the 11th

400 at Wheldrake Ings on 11th September

458 (WeBS count) in the LDV as a whole on 17th October

120 at Buttercrambe on 10th November

800 at Heslington East on 15th November

300 at Elvington WTW on 16th November

1,020 (WeBS count) in the LDV as a whole on 20th November

230 at the Heslington Tillmire on 24th November

1,098 (WeBS count) in the LDV as a whole on 17th December

200 at Gaterley near Castle Howard on 27th December

100 near Heslington East on 31st December

Knot *Calidris canutus*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant

The sighting of two juveniles at Heslington East on 5th September (CG) was the only report during 2011.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant

A single was reported at Bank Island on 21st May (BirdGuides).

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

Scarce passage migrant mostly autumn

One was seen at Wheldrake Ings from Swantail Hide on 8th May (RS) while a juvenile was at Heslington East from 29th August to 3rd September (AF *et al.*) with a probable second bird on the 4th and 5th (TJ, JL). Another, likely a third bird, was there on 13th October (TJ).

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

Rare passage migrant

Not recorded in 2011; last sighted in 2009.

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*

Rare vagrant

Not recorded in 2011; most recent sightings in 2007 and 2008.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

Infrequent passage visitor, usually in the autumn

Not recorded in 2011; last seen in 2010.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

Passage migrant and winter visitor

Reported from most damp locations in the Derwent Valley in the first half of the year. Significant counts (20 or more) were 30 at Bubwith bridge on 3rd January, 85 at NDC on the 5th, 20 at Ellerton Ings on the 9th and a total of 152 from several sites in the LDV on the 28th. In February there were records of 193 at Wheldrake Ings on the 1st, 283 in the LDV on the 7th with 100 at Thorganby Ings on the 10th. Thorganby still held 130 on 6th March with 230 in the LDV as a whole on the 16th after which numbers quickly fell.

At Heslington East a single was found on 16th March and numbers there then varied through the month and into April and May with a maximum of five on several occasions. A juvenile was there on 15th August.

In the second winter period one was back at Wheldrake Ings on 17th October with one again on 20th November and three there on 17th December.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Rare breeder, passage migrant and winter visitor

Most records in the first winter period were single-figure counts from sites in the LDV with a few late summer/autumn records.

In January high counts (ten or over) were ten at Bubwith Bridge on the 3rd, 20 at Ellerton on the 9th and 32 in the LDV on the 28th.

In February there were records of 61 in the LDV on the 7th, 60 at Thorganby Ings on the 10th followed, in March, by 18 at Ellerton Ings on the 5th, 20 at Thorganby Ings on the 7th and 69 in the LDV on the 16th. The last spring record was of four at Wheldrake Ings on 7th April.

A juvenile at Wash Dike, Skipwith Common on 24th August was the first record of Ruff at this site since it was reported as a breeding species in the 19th century.

At Heslington East single birds were recorded on 31st July as well as on 15th, 27th and 29th September and 1st October. In the LDV as a whole 16 were present on 20th November with 11 on 17th December (WeBS counts).

Jack Snipe *Lympocryptes minimus***Winter visitor and passage migrant**

There were fewer records than usual, probably due in part to the dry conditions through the year. At Skipwith Common none was seen early in the year during the freezing weather while dry conditions then lead to a complete absence of autumn passage birds.

A single was reported at North Duffield Carrs on 3rd January with two in the LDV on the 15th (WeBS) followed by a single at Allerthorpe Common on 4th March and two at Skipwith Common on the 11th.

In the autumn a single was recorded in the LDV on 17th October, with another at Heslington East on 1st November and two in the LDV again on 17th December.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago***Resident and migrant breeder, passage visitor**

The LDV held good numbers in the first and last three months of the year, but dry conditions generally affected records from elsewhere.

Records from five other sites included six at Sutton upon Derwent on 6th January and 16 at Skipwith Common on 11th March. From the Heslington Tillmire counts were well down from 2010 with just a possible five birds but only one displaying. No territories were found on Strensall Common during the MOD survey in May. Similarly no drumming was heard at Skipwith Common nor was there any other evidence of breeding.

Three birds were back at Wheldrake Ings on 26th August and through the last four months of the year one or two birds were reported from seven locations including Rawcliffe Meadows with 32 on 22nd November.

Monthly WeBS counts for Common Snipe

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
LDV	65	197	750			31	120	143

Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola***Resident breeder and winter visitor**

In the first three months of the year single birds were reported from nine different sites. Eleven were recorded in the LDV on 15th January (WeBS), with three at Skipwith Common on 28th January, four at Wheldrake Lane west of Wheldrake on 12th February, and eight at Allerthorpe Common on 4th March.

In the breeding season birds were seen at Allerthorpe Common, Crook Moor (Skipwith), East Cottingwith and Wheldrake Woods with roding birds at Gilling Park as well as at Skipwith and Strensall Commons.

In the second winter period singles were reported from 13 different sites including three from the road between Stamford Bridge and Sand Hutton on 23rd November.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

Passage migrant and rare breeder occasionally seen in winter

Records were down on 2010 possibly due to the dry weather.

Three birds at Thorganby Ings on 10th February were the first of the year followed by two at Wheldrake Ings on the 12th and one on the 15th increasing to 20 by the 25th. In March there were 15 on the 22nd, 16 on the 16th and 19 on the 23rd with 15 at NDC on the 20th. A peak of 38 was reached on 7th April at Wheldrake Ings.

The only returning birds reported were 20 at Heslington East mid-evening on 16th July before flying south.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

Scarce passage migrant

A single at Thorganby Ings on 7th March was the only record in 2011 (RS).

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Passage migrant

Fewer reports than usual were received probably due in part to the dry conditions which made feeding a problem when food was difficult to obtain.

The first was recorded over Melbourne on 15th April (IA) but most records come from various fields in the Storwood area between 20th and 30th April where birds usually left to roost some 20 minutes before sunset. Many counts were in single figures this year but counts of over ten were 12 on the 20th, 14 on the 22nd, 22 on the 24th, 19 on the 25th, 14 on the 27th, 12 on the 28th, 11 on the 29th and 14 on the 30th.

Singles were seen over the A64 near Heslington East on 1st May, and at Storwood on the 7th as well as over Strensall on the 8th. Several were reported at Wheldrake Ings on the 8th but no count was given.

Curlew *Numenius arquata*

Winter visitor, passage migrant and migrant breeder

Numbers quickly built up in the LDV during the first few months of the year before dispersing to breeding areas; a few returned by the year end.

Counts of note were 21 at North Duffield Carrs on 23rd January and WeBS counts in the LDV as a whole of 25 on 28th January, 45 on 7th February and 185 on 16th March. Elsewhere, flooded areas of the River Kyle also held two in January.

In late February and into March birds dispersed for breeding and were reported from some 18 different sites until June with displaying birds noted at some locations.

In August three were at Heslington East from the 12th to the 15th. In the LDV two were back on 29th November with 11 counted there on 17th December.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Passage migrant and scarce migrant breeder

The first record of 2011 was of two at Heslington East on 16th April where singles were seen regularly from then on until 15th May with a maximum of four on 9th May.

Three were located at Allerthorpe GP on 24th April with a single there on 26th June. At Wheldrake Ings there were reports of two on 5th May with singles on 6th, 27th June and 11th July and two at NDC on 24th July.

Into the autumn one was at Heslington East on 30th August with two there on 1st September and then regular sightings through the month with peaks of two on the 6th and three on the 7th and 15th. The last record there was on 1st October.

Elsewhere there were four at Elvington WTW on 21st July with singles at Rawcliffe Lake on 15th August and Ruddins Ings, Poppleton on 18th September.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Passage migrant and winter visitor

In the first winter period two were found in the LDV on 7th February, and two at Middlethorpe Ings on 20th February with one still there on 5th March.

Heslington East had a single on 12th March with sightings also on 29th March and 23rd and 25th April. Singles were also seen at Skipwith Common on 21st and 22nd March, and at Bank Island on 2nd May.

Autumn passage started early with singles at Allerthorpe GP on 19th June and Skipwith Common on the 20th, followed by one at Wheldrake Ings on the 27th and two at Heslington East on the 28th. Birds at Skipwith peaked with four on 5th August and the last there was seen on the 29th. Other passage birds were reported in July and August from Brighton, Elvington WTW, Foggathorpe, Poppleton, Scagglethorpe Moor and Wheldrake Ings with four at the latter site on 31st July. Birds, mostly ones and twos, were seen at Heslington East and Wheldrake Ings from early September through to mid-November with the last sighting of the year at Heslington East on 11th November.

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*

Passage migrant and occasional winter visitor

On 18th September a juvenile was present on mud at the west side of Wash Dike, Skipwith Common, a first known record for Skipwith Common. The bird was not seen again until 22nd when it was feeding in the same place. It is possible that between the two sightings the bird was present on pools hidden from view.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Passage migrant and occasional winter visitor

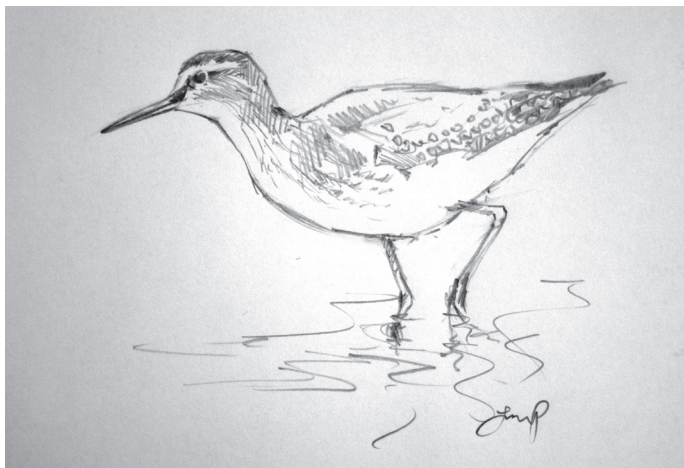
The first record was of two on 26th April at Heslington East where a single bird remained until 11th May. Other records for the spring were a single at Bank Island on 2nd and 12th May and two to three at Wheldrake Ings on 5th to 8th May.

The first returning bird was at Wheldrake Ings on 27th June with two there on 15th August, a single at NDC on 30th July and at Seller Dike Ponds, south of Foggathorpe on 3rd August. Singles were also at Heslington East on 30th August to 7th September, with two there on the 5th and 7th, and singles also present later in the month and on five occasions from October to early November.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Passage migrant

It was a good year for records of this species with Heslington East and Wheldrake Ings being the favoured locations. At Heslington East two birds were present from 23rd to 27th April with one still there on the 28th. A different bird was then located on 5th May staying until the 7th.



At Bank Island a single was present on 2nd May followed by two at Wheldrake Ings on the 5th and increasing to 5 on the 6th when one was seen again at Bank Island. Five were still present at Wheldrake Ings on the 7th decreasing to four on the 8th, after which just one was seen at Bank Island on the 10th, 17th and 18th.

Later in the year one was seen on the western edge of Wash Dike, Skipwith Common on 5th and 7th of August and then heard but not seen on the 16th. This was the first known sighting here since 2004.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Passage migrant, migrant breeder and winter visitor

Again the dry conditions appear to have reduced numbers. In the Bubwith bridge area there were 30 on 3rd January with 20 there on the 22nd while Ellerton Ings held ten on the 9th.

The figures for the LDV for the first winter period were 42 on 15th January, 70 on 7th February and 199 on 16th March. Heslington East had eight birds on 28th March, then singles through much of April and early May with two present on a couple of occasions, the last record being on 30th May. The only record from the Heslington Tillmire was one on 25th April. Singles were present on 5th May at Wheldrake Ings and at Bank Island on the 6th as well as two at NDC on the 29th.

In the second half of the year there was a single at Brighton on 4th July, two at Elvington WTW on 27th July and a single at Heslington East on 5th September. Subsequent WeBS counts found eight in the LDV on 20th November with 18 there on 17th December.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Passage migrant, usually in the spring

A single was at Wheldrake Ings on 27th May (RS) with a presumed juvenile there on 26th August (TD).

Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*

Scarce passage migrant

Not recorded in 2011; last sighted in 2010.

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Resident breeder, winter visitor and passage migrant

Widespread throughout the area especially on larger water bodies and along the River Ouse where pre-roost flights reached 600+ on 20th February. Breeding was strongly suspected on Strensall Common where dive-bombing of the observer occurred near likely nest-site pools where breeding had previously occurred but no young or nests could be confirmed amongst the vegetation.

At Skipwith Common where they had nested up to 2005, a pair started to make a nest platform but on 28th April a freshly predated adult, resulting from a fox kill, was found and no further nesting attempts were made.

There was a good build-up of numbers at CHL at the end of the year with 380 during the December WeBS count and up to 1,000 were also seen at Stamford Bridge in December.

Monthly WeBS counts for Black-headed Gull

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
CHL	70	-	3	-	-	65	204	380
LDV	14,000	*	17,000				980	

* No WeBS count was made in February.

Little Gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

Passage migrant and scarce winter visitor

Not seen in 2011 although recorded annually between 1976 and 2010.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

Passage migrant and winter visitor

A single was at Wheldrake Ings on 19th February (BirdGuides) with two adults there on 5th March (RS), one of which associated with a juvenile Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides*. An adult was at Heslington East on 20th July (TJ *et al.*).

Common Gull *Larus canus*

Winter visitor and passage migrant

An abundant species during the winter periods at areas of open water or feeding on farmland. Although early winter WeBS counts in the LDV were in their 1,000s counts at CHL only reached a maximum of 15 between January and April. Flocks over 100 were recorded at Buttercrambe Weir, Clifton Backies, Stamford Bridge and SHL during this period, with smaller numbers frequently seen elsewhere.

During the summer occasional sightings were at Heslington East, Holgate (York) and Stamford Bridge until numbers built up in the autumn period, the highest being 500 at Stamford Bridge on 22nd December.

Monthly WeBS counts for Common Gull

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
CHL	15	2	5	5	-	6	12	10
LDV	6,200	*	8,200				-	

* No WeBS count was made in February.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Passage migrant and scarce winter visitor

Low numbers were present around the recording area in the early part of the year with a maximum of ten at Harewood Whin on 11th March, while 16 flew west over Fulford Ings on 11th June. The lake at Heslington East attracted up to 40 in July while 70 were seen on farmland at Full Sutton on 8th August and up to 200 were by the A19 near Riccall on various dates in August and September. Sightings in the later winter period were 70 at Heslington East on 29th September and a minimum of 800 at Rufforth on 1st October with lower numbers recorded at Leppington, Stamford Bridge and along the River Ouse between York and Naburn. There was a good WeBS count of 120 along the LDV on 20th November.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

Winter visitor and passage migrant

During the year many records were received of birds frequenting the LDV or of movements across the area to roosting sites on the Humber or at Wheldrake. The maximum pre-roost flight over the River Ouse between York and Naburn was 250 on 3rd January and the highest LDV WeBS count was 17,340 on the 15th, down to 1,140 there on 16th March. The favourite local feeding area, at the Harewood Whin landfill site near York, held 300 on 11th March though this is probably a gross underestimate of the numbers using this site because of the continuous arrival and departure of birds.

A bird took up residence at York University Lake in early April giving display calls and collected nest material but no further evidence of subsequent breeding was seen.

There were only a few records of low numbers during the autumn although 50 flew west over the River Ouse between York and Naburn on 5th November and 30 gathered at Heslington East on the 28th.

Monthly WeBS counts for Herring Gull

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
LDV	17,340	*	1,140				-	

* No WeBS count was made in February.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant

One adult was reported in the roost at Wheldrake Ings on 2nd February (RS) with at least two there on the 5th (AW). One was on freshly-cut grass at Clifton Ings on 8th July (NS) while another was recorded at Heslington East on the 11th (TJ) with two seen there on the 31st (AW). Another two were between Naburn and Escrick on 11th September (RS) while between 24th September and 15th

November there were occasional sightings of up to two adults and a single first-winter bird at Heslington East (CG, JL, RCn, TJ).

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucooides*

Scarce winter visitor

A third-winter bird was reported at the Wheldrake Ings roost on 4th February (DR) with a second-winter there on the 5th (AW), reported again on the 11th and 22nd and also 5th March. A juvenile was also present on 19th February and on 5th March when it was associating with an adult Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* (RS). LDV WeBS counts also recorded a single bird on both 15th January and 16th March.

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*

Scarce winter visitor

One was recorded during the LDV WeBS count on 15th January and a juvenile was in the roost at Wheldrake Ings on the 29th and 30th (JLe, TJ, DR, RS) with another at NDC on 29th March (AW).

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*

Winter visitor and passage migrant

Most records occurred during the early and late parts of the year with birds flying to roosting areas including a maximum of 30 west over the River Ouse between York and Naburn on 3rd January. The highest LDV WeBS count was 1,860 on 15th January with 1,740 counted on 16th March.

On 29th September 70 gathered in a field the other side of the A64 from Heslington East and 20 were on the lake there on 28th November.

Monthly WeBS counts for Great Black-backed Gull

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
LDV	1,860	*	1,740				-	

* No WeBS count was made in February.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*

Rare passage migrant

Recorded annually since 2008, one at Heslington East on 20th April (TJ *et al.*) continued this run of records.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Passage migrant and rare migrant breeder

Single birds were present at York University Lake on 26th and 27th April with two there on 3rd May. Subsequently two were also seen at Heslington East on 30th May and 13th July, but there was no evidence of breeding

from either site. Elsewhere, two were at Wheldrake Ings on 18th July while a recently fledged juvenile accompanied by two adults at Naburn Sewage Works and on the adjacent River Ouse on 30th July suggests breeding took place somewhere in the York area, with an adult still present there on the 31st.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*

Passage migrant

The first record since 2006 was of two at Wheldrake Ings on the evening of 23rd April (RS).

'Feral Pigeon' *Columba livia*

Resident breeder

Present in large numbers in urban and outlying areas. A maximum count of 60 was recorded on 5th September at SHL where they are a recent colonist to the site. Again almost certainly under-recorded, with few records submitted.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas*

Resident breeder

Up to 12 birds were recorded at Brecks Farm, Haxby throughout the year including a bird sitting on a nest in March. At least three pairs were resident along the River Ouse (York to Naburn) and several pairs were present in all months in the Clifton Ings area. At Moreby, near Naburn 18 birds were recorded during a BBS count on 29th April. Eleven were seen on 5th May at Skipwith Common where they bred in six of the Tawny Owl nest boxes.

One to three birds were seen at Allerthorpe GP, Ampleforth, CHL, Dunnington, Flamingoland, Hagg Lane (Hemingbrough), by River Derwent at Malton, Pocklington Canal (Melbourne), Stamford Bridge, Strensall Common, Woodhouse Grange Farm (Sutton upon Derwent), Upper Poppleton and Wheldrake Wood.

Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*

Resident breeder and abundant winter visitor

There were several reports in the first winter period of large flocks across the area. At Selby 3,000 were reported on 10th January while on the 24th 1,000 were flushed from a brassica field east of the golf course at Heslington by a passing Buzzard *Buteo buteo*. Flocks of up to 100 were regularly seen across the recording area during the year.

In the second winter period 170 birds were recorded at Ryton Bridge and 151 at Wheldrake Wood, with 500 birds roosting on Strensall Common.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*
Resident breeder

This species was present in parks and gardens throughout the year. It was widely reported in single and low double figures across the recording area.

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*
Passage migrant and increasingly scarce migrant breeder

The first record of the year was a single bird in the wooded area by the castle in Slingsby on 25th May (KH). Another was seen at Foggathorpe on 24th July with two birds at nearby Gribthorpe on the same day (PW). Birds were seen again in the same locations on 3rd August (PW) with the Gribthorpe pair having visited a garden in the village for the last four years. No other sightings were reported.

Ring-necked Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*
Occasional but scarce visitor

No records in 2011 despite regular sightings each year during the past decade.

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*
Migrant breeder

The first of the year was seen calling from the top of a hawthorn bush before flying over the Pocklington Canal (Melbourne) on 10th April and up to three birds were heard calling later in the year at the same site. Further migrants were then recorded at Strensall Common on 14th April, at Sheriff Hutton on 18th April with another at Sandburn Hall Golf Course, Flaxton on the 19th. These were quickly followed by other birds heard at Allerthorpe GP and Common, Hagg Bridge, North Duffield, Poppleton, Redhouse Reservoir and Wheldrake Ings. Records at Skipwith Common were fewer than usual with the first flying over the site on 21st April.

May sightings included Black Wood (Easingwold), Fulford Ings, Gilling Castle, Hemingbrough, Skipwith village, SHL and Tang Hall Beck Fields (York) followed in June by Askham Bryan, Bank Island, Fryton Moor (Wood), Moreby (near Naburn), NDC, Sutton-on-the-Forest and Wheldrake.

The last records of the year were one seen for about ten minutes by the Pocklington Canal, Melbourne on 4th July and another recorded at Fryton Moor on the 29th.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*
Resident breeder

As usual the LDV and the Pocklington Canal produced many records of birds hunting, often in the early morning. Other reports were spread widely

across the recording area with a sighting in Poppleton on 1st June of a bird carrying prey to the nest. While most birds were seen over fields or along hedgerows two sightings were by the roundabout at the junction of Acomb with the outer ring road. Other records came from CHL, Foss Nabs (Poppleton), Haxby, Heslington, Osbaldwick, Riccall, Sheriff Hutton, Strensall Common, Wass and Westow.

At least four pairs bred within one kilometre of Skipwith Common and these birds and their young accounted for the apparent increase in sightings at this site in comparison with previous years.

Little Owl *Athene noctua*

Resident breeder but can be elusive

The first record of the year, on 3rd January, was at a well-known site by Thorganby Ings, followed by single birds beside the River Ouse at Poppleton on the 6th and Whitwell Grange on the 19th, with two birds at Hovingham on the 31st. Several birds, including a pair, were seen in the Common Lane area of Heslington (York) in February and March. Throughout the rest of the year single birds were seen at Brecks Farm (Haxby), CHL, Dunnington, Ellers Farm (Buttercrambe), Knapton, Loring Lane (Askham Bryan), Low Catton, Murton Grange, SHL and Common Lane (Stockton-on-Forest). Two birds were seen at Ruddins Ings, Scagglethorpe and West Lilling and two were calling in unison on Dunnington Common on 13th November.

On Skipwith Common a dead bird was found in mid-April while in late May a nest was found in a birch tree on the northern boundary of the common. Four eggs were laid and by mid-July two almost-fledged young were present. Sadly both chicks were found dead on 27th July probably having been taken by a stoat or weasel.

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*

Resident breeder throughout the area

There were many reports across the recording area during the year, mostly of single birds calling. Two birds were seen in Upper Poppleton on 28th March, with one bird later seen holding territory, and on 13th May a juvenile was also seen in the same area. At SHL a single bird was seen on 12th May but the usual nestbox in Nursery Wood was unoccupied. Three birds were recorded at Wheldrake on 2nd August and a pair was heard calling at Hassacarr NR on the 3rd. Five birds were noted on 17th August around Hagg Bridge (Pocklington Canal) with four calling upstream and one standing on a post at Dauby Lane, Elvington.

On Skipwith Common it was found that the decaying Silver Birch stump, which contained the only known natural site on the reserve, had fallen down. In early May four broods in artificial boxes were noted with a maximum of

six eggs between them, of which five young survived to be ringed. It is perhaps surprising that after such an extreme winter four pairs survived to breed in 2011. The number of young raised per pair was the highest since 2007, probably due to the mild spring.

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*

Resident breeder and winter visitor

One adult and one juvenile were both heard calling on the evening of 6th July at Strensall Common confirming breeding (PeR).

No records were noted from Skipwith Common where the birds used to breed (see also Appendix D).

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

Casual breeder, passage and winter visitor

The first sighting of the year was at West Lilling along the Flaxton Road on 17th February. In the second winter period single birds were seen at Skipwith Common on 1st November, at Clifton Ings being mobbed by Black-headed Gulls *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* on the 9th, and at Wheldrake Ings on the 30th.

A significant influx of migrant Short-eared Owls occurred along the east coast in the autumn of 2011, probably accounting for the records of this species in the York area in the autumn and into 2012. Up to three birds were regularly seen at Foss Nabs, Poppleton (to the west of York) during December, sometimes hunting at the same time as a Barn Owl *Tyto alba*, and in general showing very well on most days.

Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*

Scarce migrant breeder

Despite two evening visits no birds were seen or heard on Strensall Common again this year and none were reported from Skipwith Common where a bird was heard churring in 2010.

Common Swift *Apus apus*

Migrant breeder

The first record of the year was of two birds at Bubwith on 11th April, followed by a single bird returning to its nest site in Ampleforth on the 22nd and two birds in Holgate (York) on the 30th. They were quickly followed by sightings in Bishopthorpe, Fulford (York), Heslington East, North Duffield and Wheldrake Ings.

Numbers then increased rapidly with at least 40 seen over Wheldrake Ings on 8th May, 30 plus over the River Ouse (York to Naburn) on the 9th, 45 at Westow on the 15th, 20–30 at Heslington East on the 23rd

and 50 over Walmgate Stray (York) on the 30th. Other notable sightings over the summer were 20 hawking over farmland at Whitwell Grange on 20th June and 25 at Hassacarr NR on the 21st. In July 35 were seen at Full Sutton village on the 28th. In August at least 100 were feeding on a cloud of insects at Clifton (York) on the 4th and a minimum of 200 were over the roundabout near the Grimston Bar Park & Ride site on the 12th. However, at Skipwith Common summer numbers rarely reached double figures due to poor feeding conditions.

Birds continued to be seen into September with one at Heslington East and six over Rowntree Park on the 1st, and a single at SHL and three noted over Wilberfoss on the 2nd. On the 3rd one at Appleton Roebuck was among a group of Swallows *Hirundo rustica*. However, two pairs at Ampleforth were still raising broods in the village on the 4th. Singles continued to be seen at CHL, East Cottingwith, Heslington East, Holgate (York), Poppleton and Scagglethorpe up to the 15th. Five birds at Tedder Road (York) on 26th September was the last record of the year.



Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Resident breeder

Birds were seen throughout the year along the River Ouse, both north of York by Clifton Ings and southwards down to Naburn, with at least one vocal bird, probably with fledged young, at Fulford Ings on 28th July. More birds were seen along the River Derwent at Stamford Bridge, Wheldrake Ings and North Duffield Carrs and along The Foss at Scagglethorpe.

Other sightings during the year were from Allerthorpe GP, Buttercrambe Weir, CHL, Hassacarr NR, Howsham, Huntington Allotments (York), Nunnington, Osbaldwick (York), Pocklington Canal (Thornton Lock), Ruddins Ings, SHL, St. Nicholas' Fields (York), West Ness and York University Lake.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Scarce summer visitor

Despite several records in the past decade this species did not make an appearance in 2011.

Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*

Resident breeder but not widespread

Many of the records received came from Skipwith and Strensall Commons. At Skipwith Common birds were seen throughout the year, even during the coldest weather, and a pair successfully nested in a decaying Silver Birch near the southern entrance. An adult was heard excavating the nest cavity on 27th April and young were calling on 19th May. Another pair probably bred near the Blackwood entrance. Elsewhere birds were seen in suitable habitat within the recording area.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

Resident breeder

This relatively common species was reported widely throughout the recording area, and birds were heard drumming from January to April. At Skipwith Common birds were present throughout the year and breeding took place. From January to March and in December 13 birds were caught and ringed here. The wing length of two of the December birds was very long and it is possible that they were winter visitors of the race *D.m.major* from continental Europe.

Elsewhere, five birds were reported along the River Ouse (York to Naburn) on 19th March, six birds were seen at Askham Bog on 10th April and a male, female and three juveniles were feeding on peanuts in a garden at Dunnington on 30th June.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor*

Scarce resident breeder though localised

A single bird of this elusive species, heard drumming on 4th March at Gilling Castle, was then seen on 1st April and was still calling on 7th and 8th April (GS). The only other report was a bird was seen flying towards Thorganby village from the viewpoint on 8th March (PF).

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*

Very scarce mostly winter visitor

On 20th and 21st February one was seen from the Geoff Smith Hide, NDC (AW *et al.*) reappearing in the same place on 18th March. What was presumed to be the same bird was then seen at Skipwith Common (Sands Lane) on 18th and 19th March (DT) and again on the 20th flying from the Common in the direction of North Duffield (JB). On 3rd April the bird was caught on farmland near Skipwith Common, and then ringed and photographed. It was last seen at Thorganby on 8th April. The bird spent time at both Skipwith Common and NDC, commuting periodically between the two sites.

On 3rd April a different bird (seen at the same time as the Skipwith bird) was recorded on Strensall Common (Kidney Pond) at 14:00 (PeR). See historical account of Great Grey Shrike records in the YOC area on page 83.

Magpie *Pica pica*

Resident breeder

Widely reported and commonly seen throughout the year. On 9th January approximately 100 birds were present along the River Ouse (York to Naburn).

Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

Resident breeder, passage and winter visitor

Up to seven birds were seen regularly on Skipwith Common and up to two on Strensall Common, the two major habitats for this species, with up to three birds on Fulford Ings. Elsewhere, ones and twos were scattered across the recording area in suitable habitat.

Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*

Resident breeder

Regular counts in double figures (maximum size 53 birds) were seen along the River Ouse (York to Naburn) throughout the year. On 17th January there was a count of 92 birds in a field just north of Skipwith Common. At Bank House (Buttercrambe) a flock of 50 birds was reported pre-roost on 10th November, and up to 90 birds were in the Ryton/Howe Bridge area on the 25th.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

Resident breeder

Large flocks were seen in the recording area throughout the year with about 100 in fields south of Bishopthorpe on 3rd January and 200 at Stamford

Bridge on the 28th. Up to 300 were seen regularly during February at Stockton Common and there was a pre-roost gathering of 1,200 during November at Bank House, Buttercrambe. However, no records of rookeries were received.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

Resident breeder

At Skipwith Common a flock of 20 birds feeding with Jackdaws *Corvus monedula* was seen on 4th January and flocks of non-breeding birds were seen during the spring including 67 on 30th April and 84 on 4th May. These birds were probably responsible for most of the predation of Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* and duck eggs on the Common (DT).

Low double numbers were regularly seen along the River Ouse, both north and south of the city centre, with a maximum of 127 counted between York and Naburn on 18th April. On 22nd June five birds, including young being fed, were recorded at Stamford Bridge. A flock of 150 was sighted at Storwood on 3rd December.

Raven *Corvus corax*

Rare visitor

This rare visitor seems to be spreading slowly south and east with two separate records in the recording area this year. At Heslington East two birds were circling overhead before flying off southeast on 7th September (TJ & CG), and a single bird was seen flying north over Fulford lngs on 12th November (AB).

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

Resident breeder and winter visitor

Single-figure numbers were present in suitable habitat throughout the year including Hagg Wood (Dunnington); Wheldrake Wood and Yearsley Moor/Woods.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*

Scarce passage migrant

A single bird was reported as trapped and ringed in a garden at Stockton on the Forest mid-February (per RS).

Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Resident breeder

Widely seen in single and low double figures with 41 birds recorded along the River Ouse (York to Naburn) during a WBBS count on 18th April.

At Skipwith Common 141 birds were caught and ringed at the feeders during the year.

Great Tit *Parus major***Resident breeder**

Widely reported in low double figures across the region with 29 recorded along the River Ouse (York to Naburn) during a WBBS count on 18th April. A nest inside a signpost about one metre above the ground in Heslington Road, York was discovered on 6th June and at SHL on 16th June ten pairs were counted in nest boxes. Up to three young were being fed by an adult along the Pocklington Canal (Melbourne) at the end of June/ beginning of July.

At Skipwith Common 125 individuals were ringed during the year.

Coal Tit *Periparus ater***Resident breeder**

Reports of this species were widespread across the YOC area. Larger numbers included eight birds at Acaster Malbis on 1st January, at least eight along the River Ouse (York to Naburn) on 30th July, 30 in Hagg Wood (Dunnington) on 24th November and 28 in Wheldrake Wood on 21st December.

At Skipwith Common 34 were caught and ringed during the winter months and a family party of five birds was recorded on 20th September.

Willow Tit *Poecile montana***Resident breeder**

The highest count, of three together, was at Wheldrake Ings on 14th March. Elsewhere one or two birds were seen at the following sites: Allerthorpe Common and GP, Askham Bog, Brayton Barff, Fulford Golf Course, Hovingham, North Howden, Redhouse Wood, Stamford Bridge, Stockton Common and the Heslington Tillmire. The resident pair at SHL were located on 5th May and a juvenile was seen flying around the campus buildings at Heslington East on 26th June.

The only evidence of any birds remaining at Skipwith Common was a single caught at the Riccall corral (west side) on 24th February.

Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris***Resident breeder**

An adult and two juveniles were recorded in the wood at SHL on 8th June, but otherwise just one or two were seen at various locations: Acaster Malbis, Askham Bog, Allerthorpe GP and Common, Buttercrambe Moor Wood, CHL, Cum Hag Wood (Ganthorpe), Dunnington, Gilling village and woods, Gravel Pit Farm (Sand Hutton), Naburn Sewage Works, Redhouse Wood, River Derwent (Old Malton to Orchard Fields), Brickyard Farm (Skirpenbeck), Woodhouse Grange Farm (Sutton upon Derwent) and Wheldrake Ings.

Five birds were caught and ringed by the winter feeders at Skipwith Common.

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*

Rare visitor

A single bird was seen in a field of maize by the Pocklington Canal at Bielby on 15th October (IA). It was calling loudly and was seen flying across the crop which was being harvested at the time. For reference there have been some 25 records of this species now in the recording area.

Wood Lark *Lullula arborea*

Recent colonist in small numbers

Up to three birds were seen at Strensall Common between 8th March and 13th May (PeR *et al.*).

The first returning bird at Skipwith Common was on 24th February and five birds were singing by 19th March. Observations made during April and May suggested that six pairs bred. Egg predation was high and the largest post-breeding flock was nine birds on 7th August (DT *et al.*)

On 2nd November a single bird was seen flying round Cornfield NR at Rawcliffe before heading off towards Rawcliffe Ings (NS).

Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis*

Resident breeder and winter visitor

This species was widely reported throughout the year across the YOC area. A flock of around 15 was seen at Terrington on 5th March which included many singing males. Ten territories were estimated during the MOD survey at Strensall Common on 13th May. Eight birds were recorded during a BBS count at Moreby (near Naburn) on 11th June with 12 birds at Low Carr Farm (Sutton-on-the-Forest) on the 18th. At East Cottingwith a group of 20 birds was seen feeding amongst growing maize on 2nd July.

In the second winter period 26 birds were seen at North Hill (Youlthorpe) on 13th October, 30 at Seavy Carr (Thornton) on the 25th and 15 at Allerthorpe GP on the 30th. A flock of around 100 was recorded on the airfield at Full Sutton on 4th November with other buntings and finches.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

Migrant breeder and passage migrant

The first record of the year was of two birds hawking over the lake at Heslington East on 16th March, followed by two at Wheldrake Ings on the 17th, two at East Cottingwith again on the 21st and one over North Duffield on the 23rd. Three birds were seen at Rawcliffe Ings and two in the usual site

in the river bank near Lendal Bridge (York) on the 25th, while three birds were attending a nesting colony by Fulford Hall (Fulford Ings) on the 26th. A flock of 200 was at Heslington East on 13th April with 400 at Allerthorpe Lakeland Park on the 24th, where 280 nest holes were counted. A large colony of two hundred birds at a Yorkshire Mining extraction site at Burythorpe was noted on 11th June, while 20 pairs were nesting at Heslington East on the 14th in a trench no more than a foot deep dug by archaeologists. Good numbers also bred at Clifton Ings.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*
Migrant breeder and passage migrant

The first sighting of the year was a single on 22nd March at Elvington Water Treatment Works followed by others at Wheldrake on the 23rd and the old brickworks (southwest of Escrick), SHL and Newburgh Priory lake on the 29th. Reports then became widespread throughout the recording area.

On 27th July, 350 birds were sitting on the roofs of buildings at SHL with 135 in a mixed flock of hirundines at Dunnington on 13th August and 150 at Pocklington Airfield on the 22nd. The largest counts of the year were at least 2,000 roosting in a maize crop at East Cottingham on 5th September and 1,000 moving south-west, hawking as they flew, at Poppleton on the 15th. A flock of 250 birds, mainly Swallows with some House Martins *Delichon urbicum*, were hawking over a cultivated arable field at Ellerton late in the evening of 4th September.

Numbers then gradually reduced with five birds seen at Orchard Farm (Wheldrake) on 9th October, two birds at Dunnington on the 10th, two at Bubwith and two at Dunnington Common both on the 12th and one at Breck's Farm, Haxby on the 16th. The last sighting of the year was one at Heslington East on the 19th.

House Martin *Delichon urbicum*
Migrant breeder and passage migrant

The first bird was seen at North Duffield on 23rd March followed by one at Bishop Wood on the 27th. Into April one was at New Earswick on the 2nd, followed by one at Wheldrake Ings on the 3rd, four at Flamingoland on the 5th, plus three at Stamford Bridge and one at Newburgh Priory lake both on the 7th.

At Skipwith Common 12 birds were feeding over Wash Dike on 26th April. On 4th May a bird was back at its nest site at Fulford Road, York. Three or four nests were being rebuilt at Whitwell on 7th June. At Cliffe near Selby one site had six nests, one had three nests but a third regular site had no active nests visible.

Into late summer a flock of 90 was recorded at Sand Hutton on 7th August, with at least 50 over Heslington East on the 15th and 100 hawking around the reserve at Hassacarr NR on the 30th. On 19th September 45 birds were still present at Earswick Moor, Strensall. One bird remained at Tedder Road, York on 2nd October while five birds at SHL on 12th October were the last of the year to be recorded.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

Rare visitor

Not recorded in 2011; last seen or heard in 2009 and 2010.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

Resident breeder

Significant numbers (20 or more) were reported throughout the year with 20 birds at Hassacarr NR on 12th January and 21 birds at Rawcliffe Meadows on the 30th. Another 20 were recorded at Stamford Bridge on 16th February and at least 20 more along the River Ouse (York to Naburn) on the 27th. At Brecks Farm, Haxby 45 birds were seen on 26th August, with 30 or more seen in the Fulford area (York) on 10th September, 20 at Hassacarr NR on 16th October and 30 at Allerthorpe Common on 13th November.

Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

Scarce breeder and passage migrant

Single birds were recorded at Yearsley Moor, in full song, on 25th April, at Gilling Park House on 2nd May and singing in the church car park at



Heslington (York) also on 2nd May. A singing male in Yearsley Woods on the 15th May was possibly the same bird seen there on 25th April.

Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

Migrant breeder and passage migrant with some birds overwintering

The only wintering record was of a bird seen with a flock of tits at Clifton Moor on 9th February.

The first arrivals, all on 14th March, comprised at least two birds at Heslington East, one bird at Rider Lane Farm (Howsham) and one bird at Wheldrake Ings, followed by a single bird at SHL on 15th March. Numbers then increased with a minimum of 20 recorded at Allerthorpe Common on 6th April.

Proof of breeding occurred at Skipwith Common in April when a nest with young was discovered and at Fulford Ings when three or more birds seen on 28th July included fledged juveniles. Thirty were ringed at Allerthorpe Common on the 4th September while birds were still seen well into October with the final sightings at SHL on the 13th, Brecks Farm (Haxby) on the 16th and Allerthorpe GP on the 22nd.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Migrant breeder and passage migrant

Two singles were the first to be seen, on 4th April, at Wheldrake Ings and at Heslington, followed by six at Allerthorpe Common and one at SHL on the 6th. Birds were present at Holgate (York), Redhouse Wood, Wheldrake Ings and York University on the 7th. Numbers increased quickly in the YOC area as further migrants arrived. On 25th May nine birds were recorded in the Heslington area (York) which suggested a recovery in numbers (in the last few years Chiffchaffs *Phylloscopus collybita* and Blackcaps *Sylvia atricapilla* had been much commoner here). At Allerthorpe Common 21 birds were ringed on 24th August, a reflection of the numbers visiting this site during the summer. The last birds to be seen were at Brecks Farm, Haxby on 22nd September and at Hassacarr NR on the 24th.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Migrant breeder with some birds overwintering

Several overwintering birds were seen with a male at Acomb, York on 1st January, with two males present on the 2nd and again on 5th February, while a male and female at Poppleton on 1st January remained, on and off, until 10th March. A female was also ringed in a Pocklington garden on 20th January. A female seen at Fulford, York on 13th March was most likely an overwintering bird but one on the 25th at Gravel Pit Farm (Sand Hutton) may or may not have over-wintered in the area.

Obvious migrants started arriving on 3rd April with two birds singing in Park Wood, Melbourne. On 4th April birds were seen at Heslington (York), Rawcliffe Ings, Sheriff Hutton, Wheldrake Ings and York University. A total of 19 birds was recorded in a WBBS count along the River Ouse (York to Naburn) on 11th June.

In the autumn a male was in a garden at Dunnington Common on 27th September. Thereafter birds were seen at Allerthorpe GP (three) on 2nd October, followed by singles at Clifton Backies on the 5th, Wheldrake Ings on the 8th, Brecks Farm (Haxby) on the 16th, Huntington (York) on the 23rd, Dunnington Common on the 29th, Heslington East on 8th November, Heslington village (York) on the 21st and Clifton Backies again on the 28th. Some of the later records may have been overwintering birds.

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*

Migrant breeder

Single birds were seen at Scagglethorpe on 4th April and at Heslington, York on the 16th, followed by sightings across the YOC area during the late spring and summer months.

Three pairs were possibly holding territory on 3rd May at SHL and two were feeding young at Scagglethorpe on 17th June. Ten adults were caught and ringed between 4th May and 7th August at Skipwith Common and breeding was established when a nest of five eggs was discovered in late May, with two chicks present on 13th June. The last record of the year was of two at Yearsley Moor/Woods on 7th August.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*

Migrant breeder

Early migrants were at Marsh Lane (Bolton Percy) and Heslington East on 20th April, Fulford Golf Course and Rawcliffe Meadows on the 25th and Clifton Backies and Fulford Ings on the 27th. Birds continued to be seen until 7th May, but no further records were received.

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

Migrant breeder

A single singing briefly on 12th April in a hedgerow along Hagg Lane at East Cottingwith was the first record of the year. This was followed by five birds at Clifton Ings on 14th April, singles at Heslington East and Poppleton on the 17th and seven beside the River Ouse (York to Naburn) and a single at Wheldrake Ings on the 18th. Approximately 20 birds were recorded along the River Ouse (York to Naburn) in a WBBS count on 11th June.

At Skipwith Common two pairs were known to have bred with one pair raising five young.

The final records for the summer were three at Fulford Ings on 1st September, one at Clifton Backies on the 2nd and four at Allerthorpe Common on the 4th.

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*

Scarce migrant breeder

A good run of records this year. The first, heard 'reeling', was at Allerthorpe Common on 14th April followed by another at Fulford Ings on the 16th. More singing birds were heard at Askham Bog on the 20th, four individuals at Wheldrake Ings on the 23rd and another just east of Rabbit Warren Wood (Dunnington Common) on the 25th. On 26th May one bird was 'reeling' by the Pocklington Canal (Hagg Bridge to Melbourne), with one at Yearsley Moor on 12th June, one at West Lilling on the 24th and one at Wharfe Ings on the 30th. The last records were of birds at Bank Island on 29th July and another at Wheldrake Ings on 14th August.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Migrant breeder and passage migrant

The first of the year was seen at Wheldrake Ings on 5th April followed by a single bird by the Pocklington Canal at Melbourne on the 18th and another on the 21st at Allerthorpe GP where numbers rose to six birds of which four were singing on the 29th. Regular sightings at Fulford Ings, North Duffield Carrs and Strensall Common occurred during the summer. The last records were a pair carrying food near the angling pool at Brighton on 4th July and a single bird at the Pocklington Canal (Melbourne) on the 21st.

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Migrant breeder and passage migrant

The first record for the summer was of two at Wheldrake Ings on 18th April followed by a single bird at Allerthorpe GP on the 21st and the Pocklington Canal (Sandhill and Giles Lock areas) on the 24th. A singing male was at Castle Howard Lake on 6th May. Numbers had increased to 12 birds at Allerthorpe GP by 31st May. A bird was seen at North Duffield Carrs on 23rd June and three pairs were seen at probable nest sites in the reed bed by the angling pool at Brighton on 4th July. The last record was of a family party of five at Allerthorpe GP on 21st August.

Waxwing *Bombus garrulus*

Occasional winter visitor though more regular in recent years

In the first half of the year several groups were left after the influx in the autumn of 2010 and Fulford (York) remained a favoured location. One, which had been colour ringed in Aberdeen on 27th November 2010 (per PD) was

with the Fulford flock on 2nd January; the group there peaked at 90 on 2nd January. Other significant counts during January were 80 at Foss Island, York on the 11th, 62 at Imphal Barracks, York on the 25th, 28 at Heslington, York on the 26th, 35 at Bishopthorpe on the 31st and 40 at Blossom Street, York also on the 31st. There were still 55 at Fulford on 12th February and also 57 at Acomb, York on the 25th with 50 at Rawcliffe Lake, York on the 27th.

Away from York birds were recorded in single or low double figures from Askham Bog, Copmanthorpe, New Earswick, Poppleton and Stamford Bridge, and there were at least 60 by the northern part of the Selby bypass on 21st March. Reports of up to 12 birds were received from the Clifton, Fulford and Heslington areas of York during April and the last spring record involved six flying over Fulford Road, York on 3rd May.

In contrast the second winter period had far fewer birds. One was at Naburn Lock, Naburn on 15th November, but the next records weren't until 24th–28th December when two were at Fulford, York. A report of two flying around the centre of York on the 26th may have been the same birds.

Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*

Local resident breeder

Reports of up to three birds came from Acaster Malbis, Bishopthorpe, Bolton Percy, Brayton Barff, Castle Howard, Fulford Ings, Gaterley, Gilling (Park and village), Hovingham, Old Malton Priory, Skipwith Common and Yearsley. The two at Skipwith Common on the 11th February were the first records at that site. Two caught and ringed at Wheldrake Ings on 5th August were presumed to be dispersing juveniles as there are only a couple of previous records from this location.

Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*

Resident breeder

Up to six birds were noted at the following sites: Allerthorpe Common, Allerthorpe GP, Waplington Hall (Allerthorpe), Askham Bog, Askham Bryan, Brayton Barff, Flamingoland, Fox Covet Wood (Eddlethorpe), Fulford Ings, Gilling Park, Hassacarr NR, Haxby, Hollicarrs, Howsham, Park Wood (Melbourne), Poppleton, Rawcliffe Meadows (York), River Ouse (York to Naburn), Skipwith Common, Brickyard Farm (Skirpenbeck), SHL, Strensall Common, Wheldrake Wood and Woodhouse Grange Farm (Sutton upon Derwent).

Proof of breeding came from Fox Covet Wood (Eddlethorpe), Fulford Ings, Gilling Park, Skipwith Common and SHL. Singles in a Heslington garden on two dates in July fitted a pattern of such records, chiefly in July and August, and were presumably due to post-breeding dispersal.

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Resident breeder

Widespread and common across the region. Notable counts were 48 along the River Ouse (York to Naburn) on 18th April and 43 in this area on 11th June. A minimum of 32 was recorded in the Fulford area (York) on 18th May.

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Resident breeder and winter visitor

Although counts into double figures were widespread, there was a notable lack of higher counts. Records of 100 or more were 'thousands' near Bilbrough on 13th January, 500+ at Heslington, York on 25th February with about 200 there on 4th March, 140 at Ellerton on 13th July and 400 at Hassacarr NR on 14th November.

Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus*

Very scarce passage migrant

Not recorded in 2011; recent sightings in 2005, 2006 and 2009.

Blackbird *Turdus merula*

Resident breeder, winter visitor and passage migrant

Common throughout the region with a significant increase during the winter months. The only counts over 50 were up to 57 feeding on fallen apples in East Cottingwith during January, 52 in the Fulford area (York) on 12th May and 85 counted along the River Ouse (York to Naburn) during a WBBS survey on 11th June. About 30 wintered at Skipwith Common, a figure which was considered to be below average.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

Winter visitor and passage migrant

Widespread throughout the recording area. In spring none was noted after 15th April and the first of the autumn were several flying over Wheldrake on 8th October. Counts of 100 or more were 450 at Ellerton Ings and 150-300 at Heslington East on 1st January, about 300 over Fulford, York on the 3rd, 500 at Selby on the 4th, 150 along the River Ouse (York-Naburn) on the 9th, 300 at Heslington East on the 26th, 120 flying NE over Naburn sewage works on 26th March and 170 at Hassacarr NR on the 27th.

In the second winter period high counts were 120 at Allerthorpe GP on 17th October, 250 at Scagglethorpe Moor on the 20th, 100 at Thornton Ellers on the 25th, 200 at Stamford Bridge on 9th November, 200 at SHL on the 15th, 300 at Wheldrake Ings on the 15th, 250 at Scagglethorpe Moor on 3rd December and 100 there on the 13th.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

Resident breeder but declining in some areas; winter visitor and passage migrant

Seen regularly across most of the recording area. The only counts in double figures were 10 along the River Ouse between York and Naburn on 20th February and the same number there again on 11th June.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

Winter visitor and passage migrant

Widespread across the region in both winter periods. In the spring none were noted after 15 were recorded at Allerthorpe Common on 27th March while the first of the autumn were 85 at Allerthorpe GP on 8th October.

Flocks of over 50 birds were 400 at Selby on 4th January, 85 at Brecks Farm (Haxby) on the 23rd, 200 at Heslington East on the 26th, 75 at Strensall Camp on 12th March, 85 at Allerthorpe GP on 8th October, 75 at Brickyard Farm (Skirpenbeck) on 9th November, 50 at Stamford Bridge on the same date, 75 at Allerthorpe GP on the 10th, 70 at Elvington Water Treatment Works on the 16th and 70 at Stamford Bridge again on 12th December.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

Resident breeder, winter visitor and passage migrant

Recorded at a variety of locations throughout the recording area. The only count of more than five birds was 20 flying over the Pocklington Canal, Melbourne on 28th October.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

Migrant breeder and passage visitor

The first record was of two at Storwood on 4th May though there was then a gap until the next records at Ampleforth and Whitwell on 1st June. Subsequently records came from Aughton, Castle Howard, Fryton Moor, Kirkham Priory, Nunnington, Thornton Lock (Pocklington Canal) and West Ness. Additionally breeding was confirmed at East Cottingwith, Gilling (Park and village), Skipwith Common and Strensall Common. The last autumn bird recorded was one at Clifton Park, York from 15th September to the end of the month.

Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Resident breeder

Common and widespread, though at Skipwith Common it was noted that the total of about ten breeding pairs was about one third of the 1990 total,

the decline being attributed to the removal of undergrowth by browsing livestock. Fifteen were counted along the River Ouse between York and Naburn on 11th April and 14 along there again on 11th June.

Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*
Scarce summer migrant and occasional breeder

Not recorded in 2011; last recorded in 2010.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochrurus*
Very rare visitor

Not recorded in 2011, the last record being in 2008.

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*
Migrant breeder and passage migrant

The first of the year was a singing male at Ampleforth on 9th April (JP). Another male in song was located at Skipwith Common on 21st April (DT) and remained at the same site until early June, but a female was never seen and there was no evidence of breeding. A singing male was noted at Wass Woods on 14th May, with two further singing males located at Yearsley Moor/Woods on the same date (DR). Breeding was confirmed at Byland Abbey from photos of a juvenile following records of up to three singing males in the spring (per IT).

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*
Former migrant breeder and passage migrant

The only records involved autumn passage birds with two (adult and immature) at East Cottingwith on 2nd September (PR), one at Heslington East on the 6th (TJ) and one at Welburn on the 15th (KM).

Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus*
Casual breeder and passage visitor

In 2011, until November, there were no sightings of this species which has been recorded annually since 1999 including a small breeding colony at Strensall Common, no doubt due to the severe winter weather of December 2010. However, one was seen briefly at Heslington East early November (CG).

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*
Summer visitor and passage migrant

The first migrant was at East Cottingwith on 29th March. Other records soon followed in April including Copmanthorpe, Deighton, East Cottingwith

(several further records with a maximum of nine on the 18th), Heslington East (particularly favoured with a maximum of eight on the 22nd), Long Marston, Menthorpe, New Earswick, Poppleton, Scagglethorpe, Storwood, Strensall Common and Terrington followed by some additional records in May. The only record of a bird of the Greenland race *leucorhoa* was one at Heslington East on 10th April.

Autumn records were limited to singles at Hovingham on 14th September and at Heslington East on 13th October.

Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*

Very scarce passage migrant

One at Strensall Common on 1st May was the first in the recording area since 2003 (MR).

Dunnock *Prunella modularis*

Resident breeder

Common and widespread throughout the recording area. The highest count was 18 along the River Ouse between York and Naburn on 18th April.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Resident breeder

Although reports came from a variety of locations within the recording area there was a significant reduction in higher numbers compared with 2010. The only counts over 50 were 65 at Haxby on 12th March and 70 there on 20th August.

Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

Resident breeder

Counts of 50 or more were 65 at Allerthorpe GP on 16th January, 50 at Hassacarr NR on the 22nd (with 60 there on 16th February and 50+ on 16th March), 120 at Woodhouse Grange Farm (near Sutton upon Derwent) on 13th December, 83 at Cornfield NR on 14th December and 50+ at Hassacarr NR again on the 28th.

One at Skipwith Common on 14th February was the first there for at least ten years. However, during the second winter period, six were present on 23rd November increasing to 12 by mid-December. The higher numbers are probably largely due to increased provision of artificial food.

In a Heslington garden the smallest numbers were in July, August and September (1–5) and they were most abundant in January, February and March (7–20).

The only reports of breeding came from High Stittenham and SHL.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava flavissima*
Migrant breeder and passage migrant

The majority of spring records came from Heslington East with the first of the year for the YOC area there on 9th April and a maximum at this site of nine on 1st May. Other April records came from Ampleforth, Copmanthorpe, Dunnington Common, East Cottingwith, Moreby (near Naburn), Naburn Sewage Works and Strensall Common. The only spring record into double figures was 19 at Ampleforth on 22nd April with further records in May and June from many sites.

The sole confirmed breeding record came from Gilling with a pair accompanied by two young on 19th June, though this is almost certainly a significantly under-representative for the YOC area.

In the autumn highest counts (20 or more) were 38 in a cattle field adjacent to Redhouse Wood on 20th August, 20 at East Cottingwith on the 26th and 20 at Heslington East on 1st September with single figure counts from other sites. The final record was of four at Brecks Farm, Haxby on 15th September.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*
Resident breeder and winter visitor

Up to four were seen regularly throughout the year at Clifton Ings and breeding was confirmed there as well as at Redhouse Reservoir and Yearsley Moor.

Elsewhere, up to three birds were reported from Allerthorpe GP, Bank Island, Brickyard Farm (Skirpenbeck), Gilling, Hassacarr NR, Heslington East, Holgate (York), King's Staithe (York). Naburn sewage works, Osbaldwick (York), Pocklington Canal (Sandhill Lock Area), Pocklington Sewage Works, Redhouse Reservoir, SHL, St Nicholas' Fields (York), Stamford Bridge, Welburn Sewage Works and at York Science Park.

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba yarellii*
Resident breeder

In all 195 were counted in the centre of York on 12th January roosting in Parliament Square. Elsewhere records involving 20 or more birds were 20 at Naburn Sewage Works on 3rd January, 20 at North Duffield Carrs on the 16th and 35 there on the 23rd. At least 20 were at Heslington East on 12th March with 30 there on 15th August. In central York, 50 flew over the railway station on 22nd October.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba alba*
Scarce spring passage migrant

There was a series of records of this race from Heslington East between 6th and 21st April with a peak of 11 on the 16th.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*

Migrant breeder though numbers have recently declined

One was reported at Yearsley Moor on 23rd April, followed by a series of records at Strensall Common from 25th April onwards, with five territories estimated in this area during the MOD survey on 13th May. Six or possibly seven territories were noted at Skipwith Common. One was recorded at Gilling Park on 11th June and there were four at Yearsley Moor on the 12th. There were two records in the autumn, a single flying south over Wheldrake Ings on 14th August and one briefly on the ground at Allerthorpe Common on 23rd August.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

Resident and migrant breeder, and passage migrant

The only high counts (over 20 birds) were all during the second winter period with 41 at Skipwith Common on 25th September, 40 at Heslington East on 13th October, followed by 50 there on 8th November and 30–40 on 31st December. No evidence of breeding was received and no territories were located during the MOD survey of Strensall Common in May.

Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus*

Scarce, mainly winter visitor

A single was at Heslington East on 13th October (TJ & CG), while a bird of this species or Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta* was seen to fly over this site on 8th November (TJ).

Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta*

Rare winter visitor and passage migrant

One was at Heslington East on 10th April (OM) while another bird, maybe the same individual, remained at this location from the 15th to the 17th (JLe).

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Resident breeder, passage and winter visitor

A widespread and common species throughout the region but with most records in single or low double figures. Higher counts (25 or more) were 40 at Cawood on 1st January, 27 by the River Ouse (York to Naburn) on 18th April, 26 at Moreby (near Naburn) on the 29th and 35 near Ryton on 25th November.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*
Winter visitor and passage migrant

The only records involving more than ten birds were 15 at East Cottingwith on 15th March, 30 at Long Lane (Heslington) on 31st January and 2nd February, and 88 at Terrington on 5th March – a notable high count. Other records (mostly of one or two birds) came from Allerthorpe GP, Ampleforth, Castle Howard, Cawood, Clifton Park (York), Danesmead Copse (York), East Cottingwith, Fulford (York), Brecks Farm (Haxby), Heslington (York), Holgate (York), Newton-on-Ouse, North Duffield Carrs, Osbaldwick (York), Pocklington, Poppleton, Rawcliffe Meadows (York), Rawcliffe Country Park (York), Redhouse Wood, Sutton upon Derwent and Yearsley Moor/Woods.

Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*
Resident breeder, passage and winter visitor

The only high counts (50 or more) were 100 at Wheldrake Wood on 8th August, 120 at Allerthorpe GP on 30th October and 60 there on 11th November, 160 at Cornfield NR on 22nd November and 98 there on 14th December. Observers at Skipwith Common and Upper Poppleton commented on reduced numbers this year, quite possibly due to the 'Trichomonosis' viral disease which has affected this species nationally.

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*
Resident breeder, passage and winter visitor

Higher counts (30 or more) were 60 at Scagglethorpe on 27th August, 45 at Allerthorpe GP on 2nd October and 200 at Heslington East on 11th November.

Siskin *Carduelis spinus*
Resident breeder in small numbers, passage and winter visitor

High counts (30 or more) were 80 at Askham Bog on 2nd January, 80 at Selby on the 4th, 35 at Fulford (York) on the 6th, 40 at Askham Bog on the 23rd, 50 at Hassacarr NR on 2nd February, 100 at Allerthorpe Common on 17th March with 50 there on 15th July, 45 at Allerthorpe GP on 2nd October with 65 there on the 8th, 100 at Gilling Park on 23rd October and 40 at Stamford Bridge on 11th November. Records in single or low double figures also came from Bootham Stray (York), Castle Howard Lake, Fulford (York), Gilling, Brecks Farm (Haxby), Towthorpe Road (Haxby), Heslington (York), Heslington East, Knavesmire (York), Middlethorpe Ings, Naburn Bridge, Newton upon Derwent, Osbaldwick (York), Rawcliffe Lake (York), Redhouse, St Nicholas' Fields (York), SHL, Strensall, Upper Poppleton, Wass, Raker Lakes (Wheldrake), Wheldrake Wood and York University.

Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*

Resident breeder, passage and winter visitor

High counts (more than 30) were 60 at Cawood on 1st January, 200 at Allotment Lane (Huby) on 5th February, a roost at Allerthorpe Common normally holding 50 to 100 birds, but peaking at 300 on 31st March, 100 at Heslington East on 16th April, 60 at East Cottingwith on 5th July and 30 at East Cottingwith on 16th July.

In the second half of the year there were 50 at Skipwith Common on 21st August, 200 at SHL on 20th September and 30 at Allerthorpe Common on 13th November.

Twite *Carduelis flavirostris*

Very scarce winter visitor

Thirteen seen at Full Sutton on 31st October (DF) was an unexpected report and at least ten were still present on 4th November (CG).

Lesser Redpoll *Carduelis cabaret*

Resident breeder, passage and winter visitor

Higher counts (30 or more) were 250 at Selby on 10th January, 80 at Frog Hall, Allerthorpe Common on the 17th, 150 at Redhouse Wood on the 18th, at least 60 at Wheldrake Woods on the 25th and 30 at Allerthorpe Common on 22nd February. In the second winter period there were 30 at Allerthorpe Common on 13th November and 55 at Wheldrake Woods on the 15th December.

Records in single or low double figures also came from Allerthorpe GP, Brecks Farm (Haxby), Castle Howard Lake, Danesmead Copse (York), East Cottingwith, Fulford (York), Heslington (York), Heslington East, North Hill (Youlthorpe), Osbaldwick, Poppleton, Rawcliffe Lake, SHL, Skipwith Common, Stamford Bridge, Strensall Common, Towthorpe Road (Haxby), Upper Poppleton, Walmgate Stray (York) and York University.

Mealy (Common) Redpoll *Carduelis flammea*

Scarce winter visitor

In the first winter period many more were reported than usual with some quite large flocks. Two were at Allerthorpe GP on 17th January with five at Frog Hall, Allerthorpe Common on the same date (P&SB). At Redhouse Wood "many" were reported on the 18th (PaR), plus one at the Heslington Tillmire (York) on 24th January (TJ) and at least two at Wheldrake Wood on 25th January (RS). On 29th January there was one at Allerthorpe GP (P&SB), five at Rawcliffe Lake (NS) and 15 at Redhouse Wood (BirdGuides).

February opened with one in a garden at Heslington, York on the 2nd (JL), 70 at Allerthorpe Common on the 22nd (IA), 50 at Redhouse Wood on the 24th (PaR), one in a Heslington garden again on the 27th with two there on the 28th (JL).

Allerthorpe Common had eight on 3rd March (AB) and ten on the 4th (AB, MW), with two at Towthorpe Road, Haxby on 7th March (NM), two at Osbaldwick on the 9th (SG), two at Rawcliffe Country Park on the same date (NS), a minimum of six at Cemetery Road, York on the 12th (PaR), about 30 at Allerthorpe Common on the 17th (IA), two at Allerthorpe GP on the 19th with eight there on the 20th (P&SB) and one at Ampleforth on the 23rd (JP).

More typical numbers were recorded in the second winter period with three at Gilling Park on 23rd October (GS), two at Allerthorpe Common on the 28th (IA), five at Allerthorpe Common on 13th November (IA) and one at Osbaldwick on the 28th (BirdGuides).

Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*

Casual breeder and passage migrant

There were more records than usual but none until the 28th April when 30 were at Frog Hall, Allerthorpe Common. Twelve flew over Skipwith Common on 21st May, eight flew west over Castle Howard on 11th June, four flew over SHL on the 17th and an impressive 200 were at Yearsley Moor on the 25th. Three were at Redhouse Wood on 7th July and ten were at Allerthorpe Common on the 15th with 50 there on the 30th.

In the autumn a minimum of 50 was at Yearsley Moor/Woods on 7th August and on the 24th a few small groups were still present at Allerthorpe Common. One was at Castle Howard on 16th October, two were at SHL on 1st November, six were noted at Allerthorpe Common again on the 13th, and lastly four were at Wheldrake Woods on 15th December with three there on the 22nd.

Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Resident breeder, passage and winter visitor

Birds were noted in single figures at a variety of locations across the region. Counts of ten or more were as follows: 15 at Bishopthorpe on 3rd January with 15 along the River Ouse (York to Naburn) on the same date (with similar numbers there in late January and late December), 12 at Scagglethorpe on the 13th and 15 at Wheldrake Ings on 14th August.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Rare winter visitor

Not recorded in 2011; recent records in 2004, 2005 and 2008.

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Very scarce winter visitor

One was at Whitwell Grange on 8th and 9th November (GS), a record which only subsequently came to light through BirdTrack. This is the first record of this species in the YOC area since brief appearances in 2003 and 2004.



Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*

Resident breeder, passage and winter visitor

During the first half of the year high counts (over 20 birds) were 30 at East Park, Melbourne on 16th January, 35 at Dunnington on 22nd January, a minimum of 100 at Heslington East on both the 26th and 31st and 27 at Hassacarr NR on 16th February.

On 13th May five territories were estimated during the MOD survey at Strensall Common, a decrease since 2010.

High counts during the second half of the year were 100 at Full Sutton on 4th November and 28 in the Ryton area on the 25th.

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Resident breeder and passage visitor

The only high counts (20 or more birds) were 42 at Cornfield NR on 4th January and 50 at Allerthorpe Common on 13th November. Breeding was recorded at Skipwith Common while six breeding territories were noted at Strensall Common during the MOD survey on 13th May.

Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra*
Resident breeder

In the first winter period high counts (of 20 or more) were: 50 going to roost at Clifton Ings on 19th January (with up to 35 there during February), 60 at Dunnington on the 22nd January, 50 at Hassacarr NR on 23rd February, 20 at Poppleton Garden Centre (off A59 – formerly Wyevale) on the 24th, 50 at Allerthorpe Common on the 26th with 20 there on 3rd and 4th March, 47 at Dunnington Common on the 16th and 49 at Hassacarr NR on the same date.

In the second half of the year the only high counts were 30 at East Cottingwith on 27th August, 100 at Full Sutton on 4th November and 26 going to roost at Clifton Ings on 17th December.

Elsewhere records, all in single figures, came from Cawood, Deighton, Hagg Bridge, Poppleton, Ryton, Stamford Bridge, Storwood, Strensall Common, Sutton-on-the-Forest, Terrington, West Lilling, Wheldrake Ings and Yapham Grange.

Appendix A: Introductions/Escapes

Black Swan *Cygnus atratus*

The main sites for this introduced species continue to be Allerthorpe GP, North Duffield Carrs and York University Lake with breeding again confirmed at the latter site. One was apparently sitting on a nest on an island in a small lake near Everingham on 19th April but breeding was not otherwise confirmed here. The only other sightings were of one at Wheldrake Ings on 21st April and 13th November.

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*

Up to 75, the well-known feral university flock previously recorded at the old York University Lake, were reported regularly through the year from Heslington East.

Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*

One was seen at Anchor Plain, Strensall on 17th February while another, possibly the same, was at Elvington Water Treatment Works on 23rd July and again on 29th November and 6th and 7th December.

Ross's Goose *Anser rossii*

A presumed escape/feral bird was present at Elvington Water Treatment Works on 9th December.

Swan Goose (Chinese Goose) *Anser cygnoides*

One was seen among Greylag Geese *Anser anser* at Wheldrake Ings on 30th December.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

One frequenting the Sherburn in Elmet to Cawood area from 10th–13th October (DS per RS, JF) was a probable escape from Lotherton Bird Gardens (southwest of Tadcaster) and one, presumably the same bird, was at Bubwith Bridge on the 19th (RS).

Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*

A bird was reported flying from Skipwith Common towards the pines on the old Riccall mine site at 16:20 on the 23rd February. The origins of this bird remain a mystery but no evidence supports it as being a genuinely wild bird (per DT).

Appendix B: Hybrids

Canada x Greylag Goose

One was reported from Allerthorpe GP on 3rd November.

Snow x Barnacle Goose

One was reported at Heslington East throughout the year with feral Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis*.

Appendix C: Unproven records

The following records, all of which require descriptions to be submitted for validation by the appropriate authority (YOC Recorders, YNU Rarities Committee, British Birds Rarities Committee), were received for the 2011 report. In each case either no description was forthcoming or the description was insufficiently detailed to confirm identification. Some of these records may well have been of the species claimed but none is officially acceptable.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* Wheldrake Ings 26th August
Great White Egret *Ardea alba* Pocklington Canal 24th October
Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* Brighton 31st May
Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus* NDC 21st March

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* Heslington East 22nd October.
Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans* Wheldrake Ings on 30th and 31st January
and on 2nd February.
Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla* Clifton (York) 30th December.
Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica* Bank Island 12th May.
Blue-headed Wagtail *Motacilla flava flava* East Cottingwith 26th August.
Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni* Allerthorpe Common 22nd and 24th
February.

Appendix D: Records from outside the recording area

Included here are records of interesting species which occurred outside the recording area. Previously such records were included in the Classified List.

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

Mostly a very scarce winter visitor

One was reported on 1st January at Settrington (RCo), about 4km east of the YOC recording area on the edge of the Yorkshire Wolds.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

Passage migrant and winter visitor

One was seen on 1st January also near Settrington (RCo) but outside the recording area.

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*

Resident breeder and winter visitor

On 24th November a single bird was seen at Ryemouth, the confluence of the River Derwent/River Rye (RCo), and just outside (by 2.5km) the YOC recording area. The following day possibly the same bird was seen roosting four feet above ground in hawthorn at the Ryemouth site, when very good views were obtained and a description submitted with the record.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

Rare summer migrant

There was a brief but conclusive view of a bird at Burn Bridge (A19) on 14th June as it flew across the Selby Canal into a line of trees before disappearing; it was not seen again (MK per AB). This was just 400m beyond the strict boundary of the YOC recording area.

Earliest and latest dates for summer visitors/passage migrants

Species	Arrival date/ first reported	Last Reported
Garganey	23rd May	3rd September
Quail	27th May	15th August
Osprey	19th March	31st May
Hobby	22nd April	5th October
Oystercatcher	16th January	30th July
Little Ringed Plover	10th March	6th September
Ringed Plover	11th March	7th September
Little Stint	8th May	13th October
Whimbrel	15th April	8th May
Common Sandpiper	16th April	1st October
Greenshank	26th April	3rd November
Wood Sandpiper	23rd April	16th August
Common Tern	26th April	31st July
Turtle Dove	25th May	3rd August
Cuckoo	10th April	29th July
Swift	11th April	26th September
Sand Martin	16th March	25th September
Barn Swallow	22nd March	19th October
House Martin	23rd March	12th October
Wood Warbler	25th April	14th May
Chiffchaff †	14th March	22nd October
Willow Warbler	4th April	24th September
Blackcap *	25th March	29th October
Garden Warbler	4th April	7th August
Lesser Whitethroat	20th April	7th May
Common Whitethroat	12th April	4th September
Grasshopper Warbler	14th April	14th August
Sedge Warbler	5th April	21st July
Reed Warbler	18th April	21st August
Spotted Flycatcher	4th May	30th September
Common Redstart	9th April	early June
Whinchat	‡	15th September
Wheatear	29th March	13th October
Yellow Wagtail	9th April	15th September
Tree Pipit	23rd April	23rd August

Earliest and latest dates for winter visitors/passage migrants

Species	Last reported in Spring	First reported in Autumn
Whooper Swan	14th April	18th October
Pink-footed Goose	7th May	14th September
Goosander**	6th April	19th October
Golden Plover	10th April	13th July
Dunlin	31st May	15th August
Ruff	7th April	31st July
Jack Snipe	4th March	17th October
Green Sandpiper	2nd May	19th June
Fieldfare	15th April	8th October
Redwing	27th March	8th October
Brambling	9th April	22nd October

Notes (to both tables)

* Overwintering birds seen on 1st and 20th January, 5th February, 13th March, 8th, 21st and 28th November; some dates in October could be late migrants or overwintering birds.

† Overwintering bird seen on 9th February.

‡ Recorded only on autumn passage this year

** Note that a juvenile seen on 12th June may be indicative of breeding.

YOC Website

The YOC maintains a website at www.yorkbirding.org.uk which contains details of all the club's activities and monthly summaries of local sightings. Records of birds seen within the YOC area can also be submitted through the club's website.

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Rare Breeding Birds of the Lower Derwent Valley 2011

Compiled by Craig Ralston

Cat A – Rare Species

Species	Max no. adults	No. of young	No. of pairs			
			Poss	Prob	Proven	Total
Eurasian Wigeon	11	0	3	0	0	0–3
Pintail	No evidence of breeding during the year					
Garganey	6	4+	0	1	1	1–2
Shoveler*	165	34+	49	8	7	7–64
Little Egret**	2	0	1	0	0	0–1
Water Rail†	9	7	6	0	3	3–9
Spotted Crake†	3	?	2	1	0	0–3
Black-tailed Godwit	?	?	0	1	0	0–1

* A poor year due to drought conditions – over 600 adults present in late March and early April (c.350 drakes) declined due to drying conditions and may have involved some wintering/passage birds.

** Continues to increase but colonisation slow. Up to two birds were seen displaying on several occasions and were seen flying into the heronry, but there were no other evidence of breeding. Another species where numbers and length of stay during the year continues to increase.

† The figure for ‘max no. of adults’ is the number of calling males.

Common Crane

Up to four adults present in the Lower Derwent Valley NNR and surrounding area from 15th March until 16th April were mobile throughout the area and difficult to connect with. Two of these birds then remained in the southwest of the valley where they spent most of their time feeding on dispersed arable fields until 30th May.

In addition to the birds above, three further birds flew south down the valley on 20th March before settling at Bubwith lngs where many local birders managed to connect with them. Two remained until 23rd and following a brief flight over York were back at Wheldrake lngs briefly on the 25th.

Marsh Harrier

Continues to increase in number and frequency year on year with occasional immature males present.

Corncrake

A single calling bird present at one site on 11th and 27th June but no further records.

Avocet

Continues to turn up in spring and prospect but no signs of breeding with birds staying one or two days.

Ruff

Up to 19 males and 7 females present at leks during late March, April and into early May. Three or four males remained thereafter until early June, returning in early July briefly before moving off.

Cat B – Less Scarce species

Gadwall

Poss: 22 Probable: 21 Proven: 17 Total: 17–60 pairs
A poor year with poor breeding success due to the dry conditions.

Common Quail

Breeding of Common Quail

Breeding Definition	Singing males	On adjacent arable
Possible	7	6
Probable	3	5
Proven		1
Total	0–10	1–12

Hobby

Poss: 4 Probable: 0 Proven: 1 Total: 1–5 pairs

Woodlark

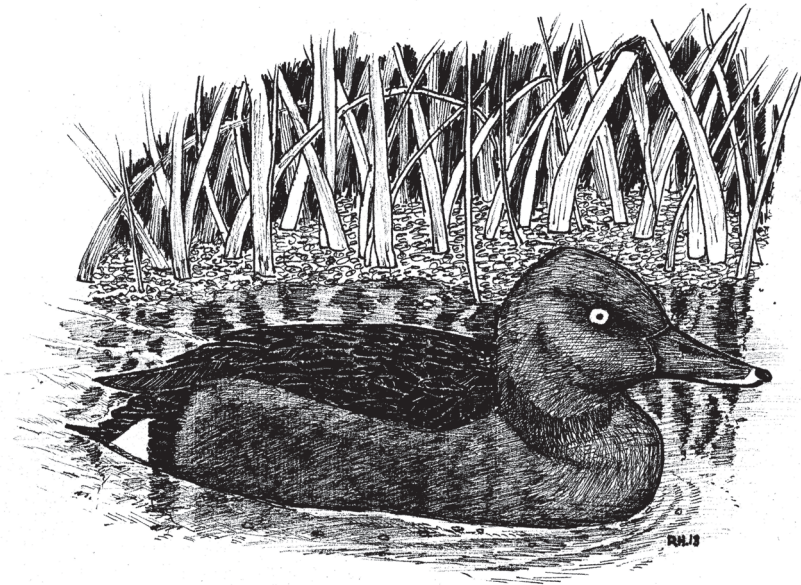
Poss: 0 Probable: 3 Proven: 3 Total: 3–6 pairs

Ferruginous Duck, Castle Howard

16th October 2011

Dave Richardson

Whilst scanning a group of Tufted Duck on the water, amongst them was an Aythya duck which when encountered was sat asleep with it's bill tucked backwards into it's mantle feathers. Despite being asleep the rich rufous head and breast colouration were immediately apparent as were the bright clean white undertail coverts. Thoughts immediately turned to Ferruginous Duck, but aware of the real possibility of a hybrid an anxious wait ensued until the bill pattern could be established together with the colour and extent of any wing bar.



Description

Size and shape: appeared similar to Tufted Duck except for the head, which varied with posture, but was always obviously peaked behind the eye and at times almost triangular. Additionally the front of the head had a long profile formed by the relatively long bill and steep forehead.

Plumage: head, breast and flanks chestnut, being richest on the head and breast but less intense on the flanks, the rear of which possessed a dark vertical border which offset the pure brilliant white undertail coverts. The upperparts were a uniform dark brown. In some light a dark brown neck collar was also just visible.

When the bird rose out of the water to flap it's wings it revealed a bright pure white wing bar, which extended across the whole wing, being broadest on the primaries and contrasting with the rest of the uniform dark brown upperwing. It also revealed that the breast was sharply demarcated from a white belly however this was interrupted by a dark patch extending from the rear of the belly and running between the legs.

Bareparts: the nail was black and demarcated from rest of bill, immediately behind the nail was a faint bluish/grey band which extended up along the sides of the upper mandible, along it's rear the band merged into the rest of the grey bill. The eye was obviously pale with a dark centre.

The possibility of hybridisation was ruled out by the bill pattern, clean white wing bar and the lack of any other plumage abnormalities such as vermiculations. The richness of the plumage together with the strongly demarcated belly patch and pale eye indicated that the bird was an adult drake.

A number of other observers saw the bird during it's one day stay and all were happy with the identification. What was presumably the same individual subsequently relocated to West Yorkshire.

Dave Richardson

[A description was submitted to YNU and duly accepted. This is only the 5th occurrence of this species for the YOC recording area, with the last being at Wheldrake Ings/Pocklington Canal in late 1984 staying until early 1985.]

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* in the York Area

A review of previous records of this species

Mike Williams

In 2011 a Great Grey Shrike was seen at intervals from late February to early April, initially at North Duffield Carrs (in February) and then at North Duffield Carrs and at Skipwith Common (in March and April). Observations supported the supposition that this bird appeared to commute between these two areas. It was last seen in the morning at Skipwith Common on 3rd April, when it was ringed, but the same day a Great Grey Shrike also appeared in the afternoon at Strensall Common, very probably a different bird and presumably on passage. The original, ringed bird was last seen on 8th April at Thorganby. Two separate birds were definitely present, one a long-stayer, but possibly three if the February bird is considered different to those of March and April.

Against the background of this long-staying bird I have researched the history of Great Grey Shrike sightings in the YOC recording area (primarily since 1980) and these are listed below.

1940–1980

1940: Skipwith Common (D.A. Goode 1964).

1948: 'A bird was picked up dead on a road near Escrick in fresh condition on 3rd November and sent to 'The Game keeper'. Another bird was present at Skipwith during the winter months.' (Source: 1948 Report *The Naturalist* 1949).

1956: One present near Howden 28th December (but may have been outside YOC area) (C. Ralston 2006).

1969: In letter written by Peter Pearson - re: objections to poultry farm - he reports that Great Grey Shrikes have been seen on the Common on three separate occasions during recent times (dates currently unknown).

1974: Aughton Ings 20th January and 19th February (C. Ralston 2006).

1975: Wheldrake Ings 11th October 1975 (C. Ralston 2006).

1976: Wheldrake Ings 30th and 31st October (C. Ralston 2006).

1979: Strensall Common 24th February (YOC Report).

1979: Riccall Common 24th March (YOC Report).

1979: York University 18th and 23rd October, 2nd and 15th November and 28th December (YOC Report).

Winter 1981/82

1981: Elvington 22nd December (C. Ralston 2006).

Winter 1982/83

1982: Sutton-on-Forest 7th November (YOC Report).

1982: Anchor Plain, Strensall Common 17th December (YOC Report).

1983: Fulford Ings 3rd January (YOC Report).

Winter 1983/84

1983: Anchor Plain, Strensall Common 27th November (YOC Report).

1984: Elvington 31st January, Sutton upon Derwent 4th and 7th February, Bank Island 12th February (all records considered the same bird); East Cottingwith 19th February (adult female considered to be a different bird); Elvington/Sutton upon Derwent 29th March to 8th April (adult male; may or may not have been different to first bird) (YOC Report).

Winter 1984/85

1985: Norton 1st to 3rd January (stated as present late December 1984) (YOC Report).

Winter 1985/86

1985: Skipwith Common 19th December (C. Ralston 2006, YOC Report).

1986: LDV 1st January to 20th March (male) (C. Ralston 2006).

1986: LDV 1st January to 9th February (male), Fulford Golf Course 11th/12th February, LDV also 12th February (presumably a different bird), Heslington 15th February, Fulford Golf Course 18th February, LDV 23rd and 26th February and 20th March. Considered as probably two birds but possibly just one (YOC Report).

Winter 1986/87

1987: Bank Island 28th January (C. Ralston 2006, YOC Report).

1987: Yearsley Moor 8th and 22nd March (YOC Report).

Winter 1987/88

1987: Acaster Selby/Appleton Roebuck 20th November to 8th December (YOC Report).

Winter 1990/91

1991: Castle Howard 20th April (YOC Report).

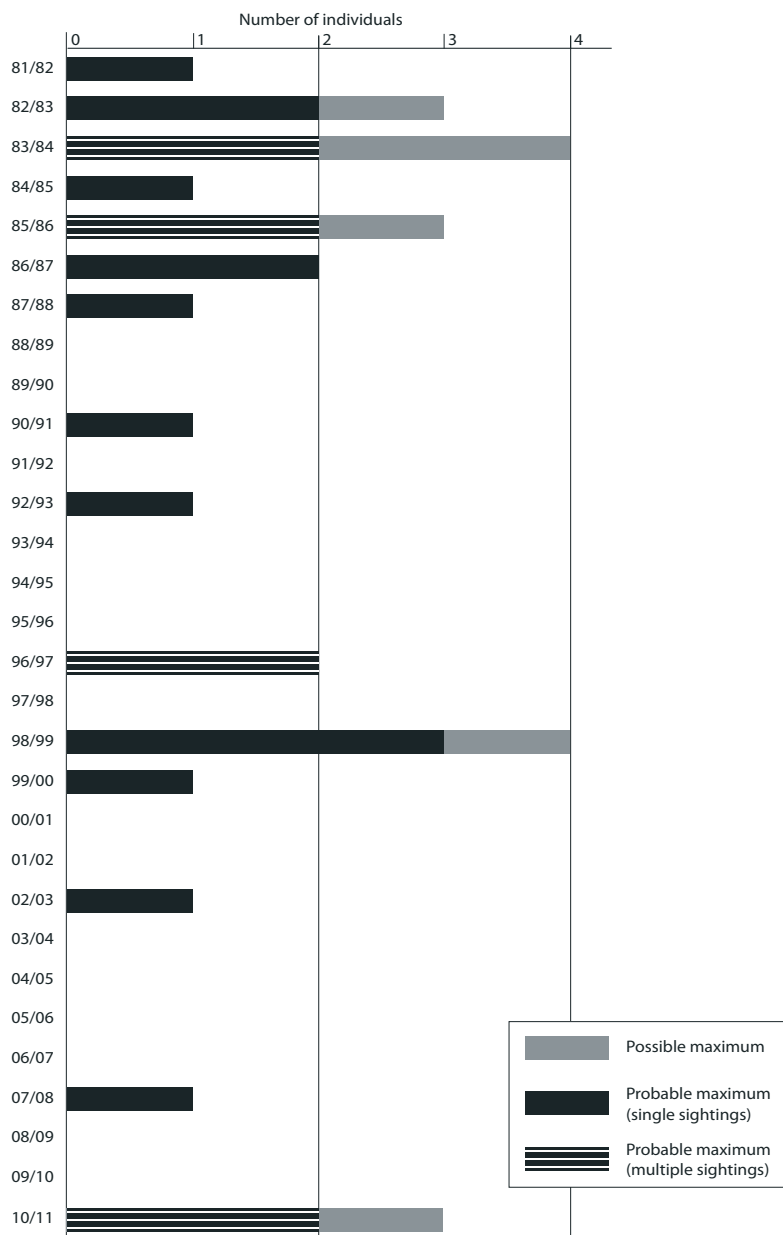


Fig. 1 Records of Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* in the YOC recording area winters 1981/82 to 2010/11

Winter 1990/91

1993: Heslington Tillmire March – a Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* was flushed off the remains of a bird (YOC Report).

Winter 1996/97

1996: River Ouse at Fulford mid-December to month end (YOC Report).

1997: Fulford Ings early January to 16th February – probably 1996 bird (YOC Report).

1997: Wheldrake Ings 2nd February (C. Ralston 2006).

Winter 1998/99

1998: Bank Island and Bubwith late December – considered two separate birds (C. Ralston 2006).

1999: Wheldrake Ings 2nd and 4th January – considered to be the Bank Island bird from 1998 (C. Ralston 2006, YOC Report).

1999: Hagg Bridge 7th January (1st-winter male caught and ringed) (C. Ralston 2006, YOC Report).

1999: Storwood 16th January (unringed so different bird to previous record) (C. Ralston 2006, YOC Report).

1999: NDC 21st January considered the same as at Bubwith late December 1998 – also seen in Bubwith gardens (C. Ralston 2006, YOC Report).

1999: Skipwith Common late January (C. Ralston 2006, YOC Report).

1999: NDC 1st March – considered same as January bird (C. Ralston 2006, YOC Report).

Winter 1999/2000

1999: Crook Moor, Thorganby 24th October (YOC Report).

Winter 2002/03

2002: Strensall Common 10th November (YOC Report).

Winter 2007/08

2008: NDC 28th February (YOC Report).

Winter 2010/11

2011: NDC 20th and 21st February.

2011: NDC and Skipwith Common 18th to 21st March.

2011: Skipwith Common 22nd March to 3rd April.

2011: Strensall Common 3rd April – from evidence a different bird.

2011: Thorganby 8th April – ringed so presumed bird from Skipwith.

Figure 1 shows the number of records of Great Grey Shrike in the YOC recording area for the winter periods 1981/82 to 2009/10 a period of 30 years. The graph shows an interpretation of the individual records in each season to suggest a probable minimum and possible maximum in each period. This is based on comments made in the original sources and a revised assessment based on all the records now available.

In some winter periods the pattern of records suggests presence on one or just a very few dates; in some periods records suggested multiple sightings over an extended period, as was the case for the 2011 bird. This is also indicated in the graph. Prior to the winter of 2010/11 there have been three other winters when there were multiple sightings of one or more birds: 1983/84, 1985/86 and 1998/99.

Figure 1 shows clearly that the frequency of occurrence (of Great Grey Shrike) in the region was higher in the eighties than subsequently, though there was a shorter peak in the winters 1996/97 to 1999/2000. In contrast, including 2010/11, there have been only four winters with a record of Great Grey Shrike in the past 12 winters.

Geographically nearly half of all sightings come from the LDV or nearby but this may reflect observer bias in watching this area; Strensall Common features more often than Skipwith Common but together these account for only around six sightings since 1974.

With YOC reports available to me only from 1979 to date it has not been possible to assess other possible records of this species in detail from when the YOC started in 1966 up to 1978.

Acknowledgements

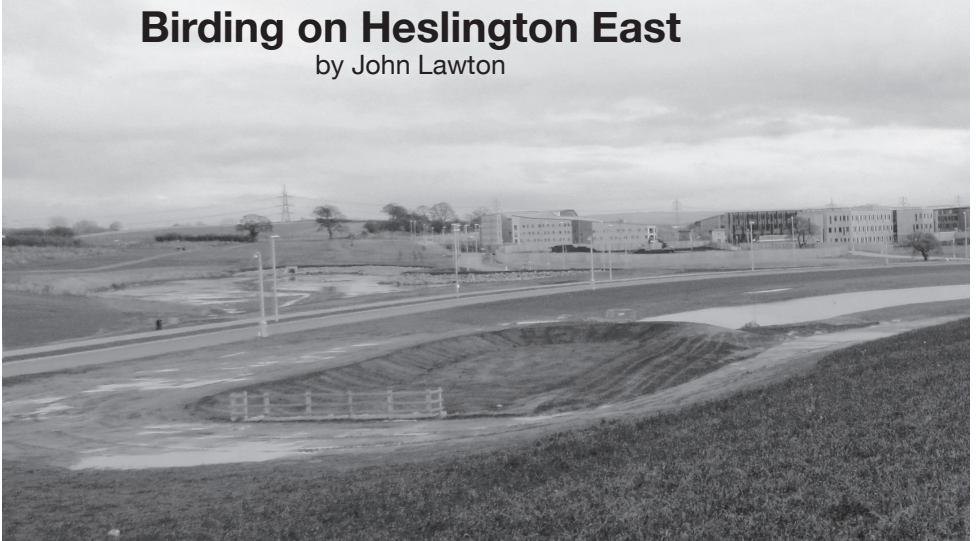
The inspiration for this review came from Dave Tate who included an historical review of Skipwith Common records of Great Grey Shrike in his report on this area for 2011. Some data from that report has been included here with Dave's agreement.

References

- Goode, D.A. (1964) *Skipwith, Allerthorpe and Strensall Commons; An ecological survey and comparison of three lowland heaths in the Vale of York*, Presented for the Diploma Course in Conservation at University College London.
- Ralston, C.S. (2006) *Birds of the Lower Derwent Valley*, English Nature YOC Reports (1980–2010)

Birding on Heslington East

by John Lawton



I wasn't expecting to find a Dunlin on my local patch. But there it was, pottering about a flooded area by the side of what we now call the Top Lagoon on the University of York's major new development known as Campus East in Heslington, just outside York. It was mid-September 2009. I had first started birding there in June that year, when most of the area was a construction site. Prior to the University taking it over it was relatively uninteresting bird-wise – a typical bit of Vale of York arable land. All that was to change quite dramatically in 2009.

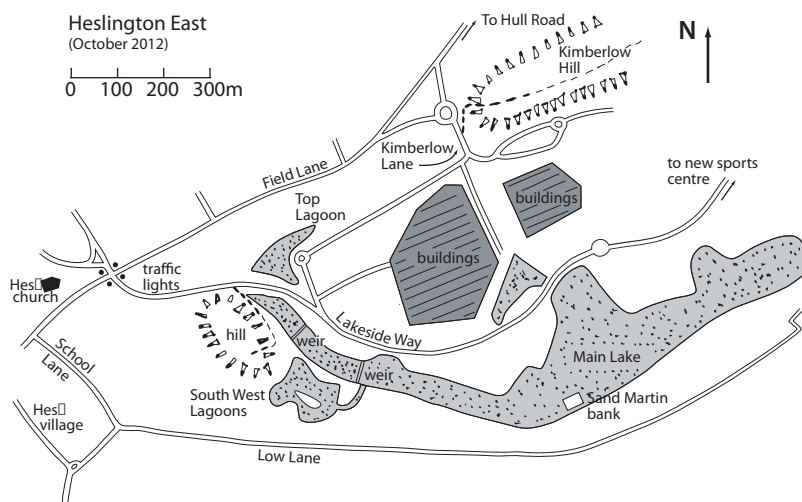
Beginnings 2009–2010

Heslington East (as YOC now calls it) lies immediately east of Heslington village (see map). The most exciting feature is a large new lake that stretches for about 1.2km from east to west – that's about the same size as Castle Howard Lake. Geologically the site is a complex series of glacial clays and sands, and the lake was constructed to manage the drainage. From the outset the University (to their great credit), led by Professor Chris Thomas, planned it with nature conservation in mind. The lake has extensive shallow margins, particularly round the South West Lagoons that are perfect for waders. Further east however the lake is seriously deep – 'eye-balling' it during construction I would estimate the area in the vicinity of "Main Lake" on the map to be up to 10m deep – and hence good for diving ducks. The Top Lagoon drains into the western end of the lake and is a shallow marshy area that attracts



waders in small numbers but of high quality. Some of the keen student birders turned up two Wood Sandpipers there in April 2011 and still refer to it as the 'Wood Sand Pool'.

My early forays in 2009 began to produce hints of the site's potential. Only the Top Lagoon and the western quarter of the Main Lake (to the second weir), plus the South West Lagoons existed that year, but



Oystercatchers, the occasional Common Sandpiper, that Dunlin and a Greenshank over the village (flying west from the new lake) were all nice birds to have on your own patch. And by the spring of 2010, although the eastern three-quarters of the Main Lake was still under construction, the South West Lagoons began to attract significant numbers of loafing gulls (where you do not necessarily expect, but secretly hope, to find something 'good'), and varying numbers of waders, including Lapwings (which bred that year), Oystercatchers (which may have bred) and Common Sandpipers. But with the greater part of the area one huge construction site it was (with hindsight) inevitable that the first Little Ringed Plovers would turn up, which they duly did in April 2010. From April to mid-June that year the Little Ringed Plovers gave several of us a merry dance. On any one day there would typically be up to three about, often displaying vigorously. Rob Chapman had a peak count of eight. But did they breed? I have no idea. No incubating birds were ever seen, and no young. In 2011 it was very different – see below.

Coverage of the site steadily improved throughout 2010, and with the arrival of some enthusiastic students towards the end of that year (led by Tim Jones) coverage became even better in 2011. The eastern three-quarters of the Main Lake began to fill with water in September 2010. It took a long time! But again its potential was hinted at by a single female Goosander that arrived in November. By the spring of 2011 (as a study of the records in this report shows) the site was turning up large numbers of quality birds.





The Top Lagoon in August 2012 with the central stony ridge running towards the inlet just visible at the back. *Photo: John Lawton*

Into 2011

It is interesting to compare what we thought were good numbers of waterfowl in 2010, with the records for 2011. In 2010 peak numbers of geese were of the order of 30 each of Greylags and Barnacle Geese and 20 Canada Geese. In 2011 these rose to c.250 Greylags, 200 Canadas and 75 Barnacles. The first Mute Swans arrived in 2011 with up to five, but with a lot of coming and going. About 30 Mallards was as good as it got for ducks in 2010; 2011 produced records of Common Shelduck (up to 4), Eurasian Wigeon and Gadwall, a Garganey recorded on two dates, and frequent records of Eurasian Teal. Diving ducks also arrived in force in 2011, no doubt encouraged by a population explosion of small fish (Stickleback and possibly Minnows – see below). While Common Pochards (1–5) disappeared between early May and early October, Tufted Ducks were more evenly spread through the year. A single Common Goldeneye was a regular feature from February to April, and Goosanders followed that pioneering female in 2010 with between one and three, rising to five in the first few months of 2011.

Other notable firsts or peak counts in 2011 were up to nine Cormorants, five Little Egrets (in August), and the arrival of Great Crested Grebes – typically one or two, but up to four, and with a breeding attempt that was bound to fail because the nest had no cover what-so-ever. Successful breeding will surely follow once the vegetation matures. The first Little Grebe was recorded in September that year. Birds of prey

seem attracted to the site (or are they just easier to see from the open ground?), with several records of Common Buzzards, a single Marsh Harrier and an Osprey, and Peregrines on four occasions. But it is the waders that stole the show for me in 2011. Regular 'common' waders included Oystercatchers (up to five, and possible breeding), Golden Plovers (mainly flying over), Lapwings (five pairs bred and a peak count of 150), while Common Sandpipers, Green Sandpipers, Greenshanks, and Common Redshanks all appeared regularly. Rarer waders gracing the pools in 2011 included Avocet (2), Knot (2), Little Stint (2 or 3), Dunlin (up to 5), Ruff (singles), Jack Snipe (1), Whimbrel (1), Black-tailed Godwit (2 and Wood Sandpiper (up to 3). Both Little Ringed (5 pairs) and Ringed Plovers (2 pairs) bred in 2011. And if you add a Mediterranean Gulls on one day in July, several Yellow-legged Gulls (adults and immatures) in the second half of the year, and an adult Black Tern, it's turning out to quite a site!

The whole of Heslington East has considerable potential from a general natural-history point of view, not just birds and not just the lake and lagoons. Most of the landscape has been sown with a wild-flower mixture, and a good population of Common Blue Butterflies is now established. The University manages the whole of the land to the south of the Main Lake and round the South West Lagoons as a nature reserve. Over the site as a whole, including Kimberlow Hill (of which more in a moment), over 50,000 trees (predominantly native species) and a rich variety of berry-bearing bushes have been planted. The lake and lagoon margins have also been planted with reeds and bulrushes,



and the lake itself with pondweeds of various species. Dragonflies and damselflies have moved in rapidly. The University's policy is not to allow any angling in the lake, and it has not been stocked with coarse fish. But it has been naturally colonised by Sticklebacks and (possibly) Minnows, although how is anybody's guess.

Problems and issues

It hasn't all been plain sailing (no pun intended). Despite the University's original intention to manage the site as a nature reserve, some of the student's had other ideas, thinking it a great location for one or all of canoeing, out-door swimming and sailing. At the time of writing (October 2012) all these threats have been quietly disposed of. Dog walkers remain a source of great irritation, and many of them obviously cannot read because they blithely ignore the 'No Entry' signs. But the planned management doesn't suite everybody. Although there will be no tree-planting along the whole of the southern shore there are areas round the western end of the lake where trees have been planted close to the lake, potentially reducing this part of the site's attractiveness for waders. Particularly unwelcome for some birders is the dense screen of trees and bushes planted on the very South West corner of the campus, making it increasingly difficult to view the South West Lagoons from Low Lane. And my personal view is that an attempt to plant wet-loving trees in the Top Lagoon (most of them have fortunately died) was a big mistake. But there is no question that overall the University is committed to the effective conservation management of Heslington East. The breeding Little Ringed Plovers in 2011 were scattered across the construction site, and after Tim Jones and colleagues pointed out to the University that this is a Schedule 1 species (i.e. it is illegal to disturb breeding birds) they, and the construction engineers, willingly diverted earth movers and other heavy equipment away from the nesting areas, at some significant expense and inconvenience.

Visiting the site

So what is the best way to 'work' the site? A telescope is essential to cover it effectively. There is no visitor parking. I walk in from Field Lane via the traffic lights just east of Heslington Church (where there is some on-road parking), along Lakeside Way. First check the Top Lagoon. You can see all of it from the western shore and (if you approach carefully) without disturbing anything. Then walk round the east side of the little hill (between the hill and the top of the Main Lake), and from the hill itself you can view the whole of the South West Lagoons (best in the morning or late-



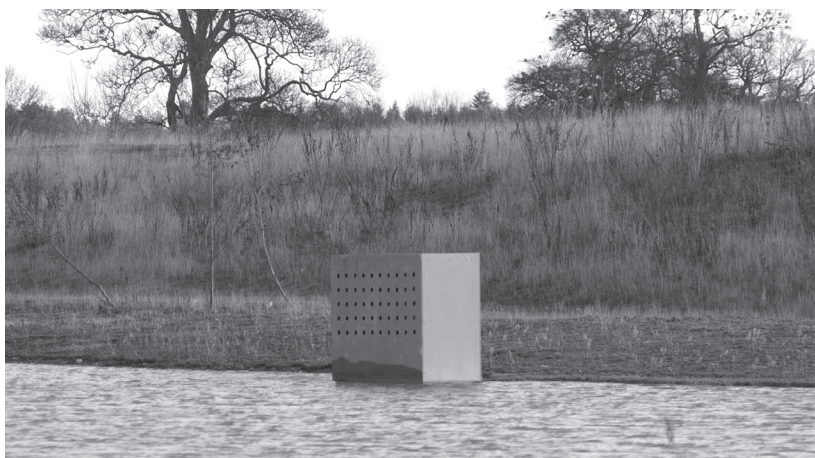
The South West Lagoons looking towards Low Lane from the hill at the western end. *Photo: Mike Williams*

afternoon/evening so you are not looking into the sun). Retrace your steps and proceed along Lakeside Way, from where you can see virtually the whole lake (although you need the odd excursion from the road towards the lake to see some 'dead ground'). Lakeside Way continues past the eastern end of the lake to the new sports centre, giving further views across the lake (if you walk along the lake-shore you will flush everything and see rather little). It's unclear what's going to happen to this part of the campus in the future. Others find it useful to view the lake from Low Lane but there is a lot of dead ground from there, and bushes, trees and hedges get in the way. Finally, having finished with the lake, I have recently started to go over Kimberlow Hill (on the newly constructed path from Kimberlow Lane). The hill was raised several meters by spoil dug out of the lake, and it gives commanding views across the Vale of York so its potential as a raptor watching site looks good. It's also where most of the trees have been planted and is already developing in to a fine young wood.

The site has continued to attract great birds in 2012, whilst also continuing to change. It's not unusual any more to have in excess of 300–400 geese on site (Greylags, Canada and Barnacle Geese). Duck numbers and the range of duck species are both increasing as the food-supply matures. Virtually every wader that isn't a vagrant has now been recorded, including two Temminck's Stints (in 2012). Two Little Gulls in 2012 were also new, and so on. Surely a Pectoral Sandpiper (or better!) is on the cards.

Looking to the future

So what does the future hold? As construction work finishes I don't think we will keep Little Ringed Plovers as breeding birds (although the provision of some gravel 'scrapes' may prove me wrong). To the east of the last block of new buildings, at the southern foot of Kimberlow Hill are extensive, but temporary flooded scrapes which have attracted waders both as breeders and as passage migrants. These scrapes will probably disappear towards the end of 2012, and my understanding is that they will be turned in to playing fields. That could be interesting bird-wise (as 'loafing areas' for gulls and waders), but who knows. The shore of the lake is definitely maturing and emergent vegetation (both planted and self-sown) is appearing. I predict that the new reed beds will hold breeding Reed Warblers once they are mature (Sedge Warbler was recorded in 2010, but not 2011). Reed beds will also be good for shore-line birds that like cover, and not so good for species that need bare mud. But the intention is always to have plenty of open ground running down to the lake, and if 2011 is anything to go by, this bare ground and short vegetation will continue to attract passage migrants. In 2011 they included Northern Wheatears (up to eight in April and May), Yellow Wagtails (with good numbers in April, May, August and September) and White Wagtails (in April). In 2012, with funding from YOC members the University installed two tern rafts and a Sand Martin bank. Unfortunately there were no takers for either that year, though two pairs of Common Terns prospected. But fingers crossed for 2013. In 2012 large numbers



The Sand Martin bank about midway along the main lake with trees along Low Lane behind

Photo: Mike Williams

of dragonflies also frequented the site (including some records of the rare Red-veined Darter). If numbers of dragonflies continue to increase, the area could be one of the best in Yorkshire to see Hobbies.

What else could be done to increase the potential of Heslington East? Some hides would help. So would the creation of fresh muddy 'scrapes' each year. There are already a small number of owl and Kestrel boxes, and currently a shortage of big trees for more but give it a few years! We have to remember that the University own the site and their primary function is not managing a bird-reserve. They are strapped for cash, as are all universities, and I for one am extremely grateful to them for what they have already done and hope to continue to do. As the site matures, and our own understanding of its natural history develops, it would be good to talk to the University about other ideas. I'm sure they will listen.

It's also interesting to speculate about why Heslington East turns out to be a better birding site than I ever imagined in 2009. In the main I think the answer is because all these birds have always passed over the Vale of York, but before the site was created there was nothing to draw them down here. Now the very large expanse of water seems to act like a magnet. For example, any bird following the Derwent or Ouse from even a modest height will be able to see the water and associated open ground, and may be tempted to drop in. One of the curious (not to say frustrating) things about Heslington East is that a bird can seemingly just disappear for an hour or a day or so, and then pop up again. I wonder whether they commute to the Derwent Valley? And finally, unlike Wheldrake and other sites in the LDV, there aren't many places on Heslington East for a bird to hide, and plenty of keen eyes looking for them. Long may it last.

John Lawton

Notes

Allerthorpe Gravel Pits 2011

Phil Bone

This spring saw a small milestone reached, ten years of population monitoring using the Common Bird Census (CBC). This year's survey showed that the Canada Goose population had doubled (compared to 2010) to ten territories, Woodpigeon was up from six in 2010 to ten territories, Blackbirds were up from last year's low to 13 territories and that both Blackcap and Chiffchaff had reached all time highs with nine and ten pairs respectively. A lot of the Common Reed around the lake fringes looked particularly unhealthy this spring. This made monitoring of Reed Warbler nests more difficult, with several pairs reduced to using very small inaccessible patches of reed. The CBC also showed that the number of territories present had declined to just 12 pairs, the lowest it's been for seven years. Nest boxes monitoring showed that in contrast to 2010 Blue Tits were having a bad time with clutch sizes down on normal, with even fewer eggs hatching and young fledging.

It was not all bad: Sparrowhawk was confirmed as breeding on the site for the first time, a pair of Tawny Owls managed to raise one young to fledging (from two eggs), the first instance of successful breeding since 2005, while Tree Sparrows had a fantastic breeding season with at least eight pairs present over the summer, with four boxes occupied.

First recorded in 2004 and with just two more records since, the Osprey is a bit of a sore point, having so far managed to successfully miss everyone and so it was to be again. Last recorded during the autumn of 2006, when a bird hung around for several days (and we were away on holiday) the owners of the site watched one for ten minutes on 24th April when it was seen to dive for a fish (and missed).

Allerthorpe Lakeland Park

A fantastic year for the Sand Martins this year which saw a large increase from 210 nests in 2010 to 280 active holes in 2011. Due to sand slides the number of active holes had declined to 150 by mid-summer though a female Hobby caught here in July may have had an impact.

Phil Bone

Note: Allerthorpe Gravel Pits is a site with no public access; please respect this. Allerthorpe Lakeland Park is open to the public.

Obituary

Andrew James Booth

1964–2012

We sadly report the sudden death, on 7th December 2012, of Andy Booth, one of Yorkshire's leading birders who will be greatly missed by his partner, his family and many birding friends.

Andy was born in Newcastle where he attended St Vincent Primary School before gaining a scholarship to St Cuthbert's Grammar School. He showed a keen interest in the natural world from an early age across many fields including butterflies, patiently recording what he saw. He studied sciences at A-level and went on to read for a degree in Zoology at the University of Durham. Over this period his interest in birds increased and he became a serious bird-watcher starting to travel to look for birds further afield.

On leaving university he moved back to Newcastle and worked as a Voluntary Warden for the RSPB from 1985 to 1987 and in the same period worked in a hospital testing blood samples using his methodical and meticulous approach to work.

From 1987–1988 he worked at the Hancock Museum in Newcastle as a Museum Assistant before moving to the Stringwell Conservation Centre as Senior Warden for Druridge Bay Nature Reserve where he compiled records and led guided walks. By this time he had joined Newcastle & Tyneside Bird Club and went with them birding all over the country. Then, in 1990, he took a job with Biosis in York as a Zoological Indexer, a job ideally suited to his skills, and lived in the city until his untimely death.

On moving to York he joined the York Ornithological Club where he made many new birding friends. It was soon realised by other members that he was an excellent birder with wide knowledge and a thorough and careful approach to bird identification, especially where rare birds were concerned. He became an Assistant Recorder for the YOC in 1996 and Recorder in 1998 including responsibility for producing the Club's Annual Report.

He was also a gifted artist and his records of all his outings and the YOC Report were enriched by his beautifully detailed drawings. In addition he was a patient photographer, particularly with the advent of digiscoping, continuing long after others had given up on this format.

After moving to York Andy was out most weekends, twitching rare birds in the UK far and wide, and made regular autumn visits to the Isles of Scilly as well as going twice to South America, and to the Sudan,

Ethiopia, Greece and Madagascar. Yet he always spent much time in his local patch, Fulford Ings and along the River Ouse from York to Naburn, compiling meticulous records of the birds of this area. While most records were of commoner species it was Andy who first picked out the song of a Marsh Warbler at Fulford Ings in the spring of 1999, enjoying the rewards of regular patch-watching.

Although he could at times seem to have a gruff exterior, and would seem to be intolerant of others whose activities impacted negatively on his love of birding (slow drivers, dog-walkers and the like), he was a very caring individual, always prepared to help others whether with natural history problems and birding questions or at a more personal level.

He was very methodical and meticulous, keeping extensive records of all that he saw, and was a highly respected birder, indeed a true master of his craft who will be sadly missed.

*Based on notes compiled by Nigel Stewart,
edited by Peter Watson and Mike Williams*



Andy birding at Tentsmuir Sands near Leuchars, Fife during a club weekend trip in November 2011 *Photo: Mike Williams*

Species in the York recording area since 1966

This is a list of species recorded in the YOC area since 1966. Uncommon birds are marked in **bold**. Species for which the YNU requires descriptions are marked *. Species considered by BBRC are marked **R** and all require descriptions. Regular breeding birds are marked **B** and occasional breeders (**B**). Regular winter visitors are marked **W** and regular passage migrants **P** while regular non-breeding summer visitors are marked **S**. Brackets indicate species of dubious origin or subspecies.

This report uses the revised version of the British List, revised and updated as a result of taxonomic changes, as at the end of 2010. These changes include revisions to the order of species, changes to the names (English and scientific) of species and includes the most recent splits (of races into full species). The list below reflects this order of species. Recent taxonomic changes mean that Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*, which includes the Scandinavian *argentatus* and British *argenteus* subspecies, and American Herring Gull *Larus smithsonianus* are treated as separate species, as are Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans* and Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*.

If anyone can think of any species which should have been included in this list then please contact the YOC Recorder.

Mute Swan B	American Wigeon *
Bewick's Swan W	Gadwall B
Whooper Swan W	Eurasian Teal B
Bean Goose W *	Green-winged Teal
Pink-footed Goose P	Mallard B
White-fronted Goose	Pintail (B)?
(Lesser White-fronted Goose) R	Garganey B
Greylag Goose B	Blue-winged Teal R
(Snow Goose)	Shoveler B
Canada Goose B	Red-crested Pochard
Barnacle Goose	Common Pochard (B)
Brent Goose	Ring-necked Duck
(Egyptian Goose)	Ferruginous Duck *
(Ruddy Shelduck)	Tufted Duck B
Common Shelduck B	Greater Scaup
(Mandarin Duck)	Common Eider
(Wood Duck) R	Long-tailed Duck
Eurasian Wigeon (B)	Common Scoter

Velvet Scoter
 (Barrow's Goldeneye) R
 Goldeneye W
 Smew
 Red-breasted Merganser
 Goosander (B)?
 Ruddy Duck B
 Red-legged Partridge B
 Grey Partridge B
 Common Quail (B)
 Common Pheasant B
 (Golden Pheasant)
 Red-throated Diver
 Black-throated Diver
 Great Northern Diver
 Fulmar
 Manx Shearwater
 European Storm-petrel
 Leach's Storm-petrel
 Northern Gannet
 Cormorant B
 Shag
 Bittern (B)?
 Night Heron *
 Cattle Egret R
 Little Egret
 Great White Egret *
 Grey Heron B
 Purple Heron *
 Black Stork *
 White Stork
 Spoonbill
 Little Grebe B
 Great Crested Grebe B
 Red-necked Grebe
 Slavonian Grebe
 Black-necked Grebe (B)
 Honey Buzzard *
 Black Kite *
 Red Kite
 Marsh Harrier

Hen Harrier
 Montagu's Harrier *
 Goshawk B
 Sparrowhawk B
 Common Buzzard B
 Rough-legged Buzzard *
 Osprey
 Kestrel B
 Red-footed Falcon *
 Merlin
 Hobby (B)?
 Peregrine
 Water Rail B
 Spotted Crake (B)
 Corncrake (B)
 Moorhen B
 Coot B
 Common Crane
 Oystercatcher B
 Black-winged Stilt R
 Avocet
 Stone Curlew
 Little Ringed Plover B
 Ringed Plover
 Kentish Plover *
 Dotterel
 American Golden Plover *
 European Golden Plover W
 Grey Plover
 Lapwing B
 Knot
 Sanderling
 Little Stint P
 Temminck's Stint
 White-rumped Sandpiper *
 Baird's Sandpiper? R
 Pectoral Sandpiper
 Curlew Sandpiper
 Dunlin W & P
 Buff-breasted Sandpiper *
 Ruff (B)

Jack Snipe W
 Common Snipe B
 Woodcock B
Black-tailed Godwit (B)
Bar-tailed Godwit
 Whimbrel P
 Curlew B
 Common Sandpiper B?
 Green Sandpiper P & W
Spotted Redshank P
 Greenshank P
Lesser Yellowlegs R
Wood Sandpiper P
 Common Redshank B
 Turnstone
Red-necked Phalarope *
 Grey Phalarope
 Pomarine Skua
 Arctic Skua
 Great Skua
 Sabine's Gull
 Kittiwake
 Black-headed Gull B
 Little Gull
 Mediterranean Gull
 Common Gull W & P
 Ring-billed Gull? *
 Lesser Black-backed Gull S & P
 Herring Gull W & P
 Yellow-legged Gull
 Iceland Gull
 (Kumlien's Gull)? R
 Glaucous Gull
 Great Black-backed Gull W
 Little Tern
 Caspian Tern R
 Whiskered Tern R
 Black Tern
 Sandwich Tern
 Common Tern (B)?
 Roseate Tern

Arctic Tern
 Common Guillemot
 Little Auk
 Puffin
 'Feral Pigeon' B
 Stock Dove B
 Woodpigeon B
 Collared Dove B
 Turtle Dove B
(Ring-necked Parakeet)
 Common Cuckoo B
 Barn Owl B
 Little Owl B
 Tawny Owl B
 Long-eared Owl B
Short-eared Owl
 Nightjar B
 Common Swift B
Alpine Swift *
 Common Kingfisher B
 European Bee-eater
 Hoopoe
 Wryneck
 Green Woodpecker B
 Great Spotted Woodpecker B
 Lesser Spotted Woodpecker B
 Golden Oriole
 Red-backed Shrike
 Lesser Grey Shrike R
 Great Grey Shrike
 Magpie B
 Jay B
 Jackdaw B
 Rook B
 Carrion Crow B
 Hooded Crow
 Common Raven
 Goldcrest B
 Firecrest
 Blue Tit B
 Great Tit B

Coal Tit B
 Willow Tit B
 Marsh Tit B
 Bearded Tit
 Wood Lark B
 Sky Lark B
 Sand Martin B
 Barn Swallow B
 House Martin B
 Red-rumped Swallow *
 Cetti's Warbler
 Long-tailed Tit B
 Yellow-browed Warbler
 Wood Warbler (B)?
 Common Chiffchaff B
 Siberian Chiffchaff
 Willow Warbler B
 Blackcap B
 Garden Warbler B
 Barred Warbler
 Lesser Whitethroat B
 Common Whitethroat B
 Grasshopper Warbler (B)?
 Sedge Warbler B
 Marsh Warbler *
 Reed Warbler B
 Waxwing
 Nuthatch B
 Treecreeper B
 Wren B
 Common Starling B
 Rose-coloured Starling
 Dipper B?
 Ring Ouzel
 Blackbird B
 Fieldfare W
 Song Thrush B
 Redwing W
 Mistle Thrush B
 Spotted Flycatcher B
 Robin B

Common Nightingale
 Black Redstart (B)?
 Common Redstart (B)?
 Whinchat (B)?
 Stonechat
 Northern Wheatear
 Red-breasted Flycatcher
 Pied Flycatcher (B)?
 Dunnock B
 House Sparrow B
 Tree Sparrow B
 Yellow Wagtail B
 (Blue-headed Wagtail)
 Grey Wagtail B
 Pied Wagtail B
 (White Wagtail)
 Richard's Pipit
 Tree Pipit B
 Meadow Pipit B
 Rock Pipit
 Water Pipit
 Chaffinch B
 Brambling W
 Greenfinch B
 Goldfinch B
 Siskin B?
 Linnet B
 Twite
 Lesser Redpoll B
 Mealy Redpoll
 Arctic Redpoll *
 Common Crossbill B?
 Bullfinch B
 Hawfinch (B)?
 Lapland Bunting
 Snow Bunting
 Yellowhammer B
 Cirl Bunting *
 Reed Bunting B
 Corn Bunting B

Guidelines for the submission of records

One of the most important functions of the York Ornithological Club is the publication of the Annual Report. The value of this publication depends on members submitting records of their sightings within the Club recording area. All members are encouraged to submit records, whatever their level of knowledge.

Records are received and split into sections which are distributed to the Assistant Recorders who compile reports for their particular section:

Swans, Geese & Ducks to Shag
Bittern to Common Crane & Skuas to Puffin
Waders to Grey Phalarope
Pigeons & Doves to Warblers
Waxwing to Buntings
Introductions/Escapes

These are then returned to the Report Editor for editing and the addition of illustrations before a final version of the Annual Report is produced.

In order to ease their task and speed up the production of the Report please follow the guidelines given below.

1. Records should be submitted at the end of the year and certainly by end of March following the relevant year to guarantee appearance in the Annual Report.
2. For each species, records should give the site and date with numbers of birds provided where possible. Counts are preferable to terms such as 'few', 'several' or 'many' as these terms are very subjective and actual numbers enables the comparison of populations between years. The counts do not have to be too accurate – approximate numbers will do. This particularly applies to flocks of birds such as wildfowl and waders.
3. Records of scarce or rare birds will need a description for consideration by the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union Reports Committee and, if necessary, the British Birds Rarities Committee. Descriptions should be submitted to the Recorder as soon as possible after the sighting, preferably by email at recorder@yorkbirding.org.uk. A list of species and subspecies needing written supporting evidence can be found elsewhere in this Report or contact the Recorder for guidelines or rarity forms. The importance of such descriptions for the validation of rare records cannot be overemphasized.

4. Please do not forget to include your contact details, particularly name and telephone number or email address, with your records.
5. Records should, preferably, be submitted in electronic format as attachments to an email. Ideally records should be compiled as an Excel spreadsheet using the customised spreadsheet, developed for YOC use, which can be downloaded from the YOC website www.yorkbirding.org.uk. Records for inclusion in the YOC Report should be submitted to the editor by email at editor@yorkbirding.org.uk.
6. Records submitted using the YOC spreadsheet may be in any order but if you submit records by any other means then we ask that your records follow the **new taxonomic order** issued by the British Ornithologists' Union – a revised list of species recorded in the YOC area since the Club's inception in 1966 can be found elsewhere in this Report (or contact the Recorder who can also supply a full list of British birds in the new order).

Submission of records using the YOC spreadsheet has the advantage that it allows records to be entered in any order, for example in date order, as they can subsequently be easily re-ordered into the correct taxonomic order required by the YOC Bird Report (and many other bird reports). Observers wishing to submit records other than as a spreadsheet should contact the editor to check for acceptability of other formats.

Note that news of recent sightings, descriptions of rarities etc. should continue to be submitted to the Recorder and/or circulated on the YOC newsgroup (see the YOC website) as previously though caution should always be exercised over publicising records of rare breeding birds in the breeding season.

The need for field descriptions

To enable us to present our reports with complete accuracy, contributors are reminded that records of certain species must be supported by descriptions taken in the field or as soon as possible after the sighting – preferably before reference to textbooks. The updated list given below is of species for which the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union Reports Committee (YNU) require descriptions before acceptance for publication in their annual report. **It would help both the YOC Recorder and the YNU if descriptions were submitted as soon as possible after the sighting.** Forms for species considered by the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) or the YNU can be obtained from the YOC Recorder or any YNU vice-county recorder.

In addition to species considered by the BBRC (which has now 'dropped' a number of more regular rarities from its remit), the following uncommon or difficult species/subspecies are those requiring descriptions for consideration by the YNU (as of 2013):

(Taiga) Bean Goose	Ring-billed Gull
(Tundra) Bean Goose (<i>in flight</i>)	Caspian Gull
Black Brant	White-winged Black Tern
American Wigeon	Alpine Swift
Ferruginous Duck	Woodchat Shrike
Surf Scoter	(Red-billed) Chough
White-billed Diver	(Greater) Short-toed Lark
Wilson's Storm-petrel	Red-rumped Swallow
Night Heron	Aquatic Warbler
Cattle Egret	Marsh Warbler
Great White Egret	Melodious Warbler
Purple Heron	Dartford Warbler
Honey Buzzard	Subalpine Warbler
Black Kite	Greenish Warbler
White-tailed Eagle	Radde's Warbler
Montagu's Harrier	Dusky Warbler
Rough-legged Buzzard	Tawny Pipit
Golden Eagle	Red-throated Pipit
Red-footed Falcon	Arctic Redpoll
Kentish Plover	Girl Bunting
American Golden Plover	Parrot Crossbill
White-rumped Sandpiper	Rustic Bunting
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Little Bunting
Red-necked Phalarope (<i>in flight</i>)	

Additionally, contributors **are** asked to provide details for the following species/subspecies:

Bewick's Swan	Curlew Sandpiper
(Greenland) White-fronted Goose	Purple Sandpiper
Brent Goose – all races	Bar-tailed Godwit
Green-winged Teal	Spotted Redshank
Garganey	Grey Phalarope
Red-crested Pochard	Great Skua
Ring-necked Duck	Pomarine Skua
(Greater) Scaup	Arctic Skua
(Common) Eider	Long-tailed Skua
Long-tailed Duck	Sabine's Gull
Velvet Scoter	Kittiwake
Red-breasted Merganser	Little Gull
Red-throated Diver	Mediterranean Gull
Black-throated Diver	Yellow-legged Gull
Great Northern Diver	Little Tern
Fulmar	Black Tern
Manx Shearwater	Sandwich Tern
European Storm-petrel	Roseate Tern
Leach's Storm-petrel	Arctic Tern
Gannet	Razorbill
Shag	Little Auk
(Great) Bittern	Puffin
White Stork	Ring-necked Parakeet
Spoonbill	Long-eared Owl
Red-necked Grebe	Short-eared Owl
Slavonian Grebe	Nightjar
Black-necked Grebe	European Bee-eater
(<i>away from LDV</i>)	Hoopoe
Hen Harrier	Wryneck
Goshawk	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker
Osprey	Golden Oriole
Spotted Crake	Red-backed Shrike
Corncrake	Great Grey Shrike
Common Crane	Common Raven
Stone Curlew	Firecrest
Dotterel	Bearded Tit
Knot	Wood Lark
Sanderling	(<i>away from breeding areas</i>)
Little Stint	Shore Lark
Temminck's Stint	Cetti's Warbler
Pectoral Sandpiper	Yellow-browed Warbler

Wood Warbler
Barred Warbler
Rose-coloured Starling
Ring Ouzel
Nightingale
Black Redstart
Red-breasted Flycatcher
Pied Flycatcher
Yellow Wagtail
*(‘Blue-headed’ race and
‘Channel’ hybrid)*

Richard’s Pipit
Rock Pipit
Water Pipit
Twite
Mealy (Common) Redpoll
Hawfinch
Snow Bunting
Lapland Bunting

In addition, the Recorder may ask contributors to provide some supporting evidence for some species not listed here, taking into account such factors as observer experience, out-of-season occurrences and unusual or difficult plumages, etc. This will be at the Recorders’ discretion and the list of species requiring descriptions is under constant review.

Note that if photographs showing key identification features are submitted of these species a field description may not be required (as long as details such as location, date, observer, etc. accompany the photographs).

Gazetteer of sites in the YOC recording area

All grid references within the YOC recording area refer to the 100km OS square SE so this is not included in the grid references given. Six figure grid references are provided for most sites but in many instances this simply identifies a larger area for which the grid reference is the approximate centre.

Most farms and woods are omitted (in the systematic list the nearest village is given for reference) unless particularly isolated, when they are included here, and street names are not listed except in rural areas where it might otherwise be difficult to locate the road referred to.

A

Acaster Aerodrome	575428
Acaster Malbis	590455
Acaster Selby	574415
Acklam	785618
Acomb, York	5751
Allerthorpe Common	7547
Allerthorpe Gravel Pits (also known as the Old Gravel Pits, Allerthorpe)	7947
Allerthorpe Lakeland Park	780465
Ampleforth	583787
Anchor Plain, Strensall	6363
Appleton Roebuck	555423
Askham Bog	5748
Aughton (Ings)	7038

B

Baldwins Bridge, Pocklington Canal	740450
Bank Island	695452
Barmby Moor	776490
Barthorpe	774598
Barton-le-Willows	715632
Beningbrough	529578
Beningbrough Hall	516586
Bielby	789437
Bilbrough	532468
Bishopthorpe	5947
Bishopthorpe Palace	596480
Bishop Wilton	797553
Bishop Wood	5533
Black Dike, Barmby Moor	764502
Black Wood, Easingwold	5467
Bolton Percy	532414
Bootham Stray, York	597548
Bossall	719607
Bowthorpe Hall	697331
Brandsby	589724

Brayton	601305
Brayton Barff	5830
Brawby	738781
Breck's Lane, Strensall	641612
Brecks (The), Strensall	648618
Brighton	709341
Brind	742310
Brindley's Plantation	742318
Broomhill Plantation	703449
Bubwith bridge	705364
Bubwith Ings	7037
Bugthorpe	773579
Buttercrambe	733582
Buttercrambe Weir	734585
Butterwick	732775
Byland Abbey	549790

C

Calley Heath NR	753498
Canal Head, Pocklington	798474
Castle Howard Lake	7170
Cawood	573377
Cawton	643767
Church Fenton	515370
Church Bridge, Melbourne	759445
Claxton	694602
Cliffe	662320
Cliffe Common	666339
Clifton	593532
Clifton Backies NR, York	596540
Clifton Ings	583531
Clifton Park	584533
Coates Bridge, Pocklington Canal	785453
Coneysthorpe	713713
Coneysthorpe Banks Wood	720725
Copmanthorpe	565469
Cornborough Manor	630671

Cornfield NR, Rawcliffe	579542	North Duffield Carrs	698368
Coulton	636742	Garrowby Hill	798567
Coulton Moor Plantation	625748	Gaterley	737696
Coxwold	536772	Geoff Smith Hide,	
Crambe	733649	North Duffield Carrs	696372
Crambeck	738674	Giles Lock,	
Crayke	562705	Pocklington Canal	795464
Crooke Hill	625466	Gilling (East/Park)	614770

Danesmead Copse, York	607497	Great Barugh	750790
Derwent Cottage Farm, North Duffield	700360	Great Wood, Strensall Common	668627
Designer Outlet, York	607477	Grimston	644514
Dringhouses, York	580495	Grimston Bar roundabout	649516
Dunnington	671525	Grimston Moor	613744
Dunnington Common	6750	Gunby	710354

Easingwold	529698	Hagg Bridge	717452
East Cottingham	703425	Harewood Whin	538518
East Moor,		Hartrigg Oaks, York	608559
Sutton-on-the-Forest	600644	Hassacarr NR	673518
Ellerton (Ings)	700400	Haxby	609582
Everingham (Park)	804426	Healaugh	500477
Elvington	700476	Heslington East,	
Elvington Airfield	670480	York University	6350-6450
Elvington WTW	7048	Heslington Tillmire, York	638475
Escrick	631427	Heslington, York	627504
Escrick Park	635418	Hessay	524534

Fangfoss	765533	High Lodge, SHL	675586
Fireman's Leap, New Earswick		Hob Moor, York	585506
609550		Hogg's Pond, Dringhouses	581493
Flamingoland	7780	Hollicarrs	626395
Flaxton	680624	Holtby	675542
Foggathorpe	755377	Hopgrove (roundabout)	642553
Foss Island, York	609520	Hovingham	667758
Foston	698651	Howardian Hills	5875-7568
Fulford, York	610496	Howe Bridge	809761
Fulford Ings	608493	Howe Hill, Norton	803702
Fulford Golf Course	624494	Huby	566655
Fulford Hall	606484	Hull Road Park, York	620515
Full Sutton	746555	Huntington, York	612550

Ganthorpe	689704	Jeffry Bog, Low Hutton	759667
Garganey Hide,		JRTNR, New Earswick	608548

K

Keldspring Crossing, Pocklington	786498
Kelfield	594384
Kexby	705511
Kilburn	504796
Kirby Misperton	780794
Kirkham Priory	736658
Knapton	562522
Knavesmire, York	594495

L

Langton	798671
Langwith Stray, Heslington	650480
Laytham	749395
Leppington	763613
Linton-on-Ouse	495607
Loftsome Bridge	705301
Long Marston	502512
Low Carr, Sutton-on-the-Forest	600623
Low Cattton	705538
Lower Derwent Valley	7036-7046

M

Malton	785717
Mausoleum, Castle Howard	727696
Melbourne	753441
Melbourne Slurry Pit	763427
Middlethorpe Ings	603486
Melbourne Scamland	766437
Meltonby	796525
Millennium Bridge, York	603497
Monks Cross, York	630550
Moor Lane, Bishopthorpe	585470
Moor Monkton	506569
Moreby Wood	606428
Moorlands	577588
Mount Ferrant, Birdsall	796639
Murton	650527

N

Naburn	599455
Naburn Bridge	598467
Naburn Marina	599462
Naburn Sewage Works	601467
Naburn Wood	609438
Newburgh Priory (lake)	542767

Newhay	661307
Newton-on-Ouse	512599
Newton Carr	740494
Newton upon Derwent	720495
New Earswick	609555
North Duffield Carrs	695375
North Howden	7530
Norton-on-Derwent	795710
Nunnington (Hall)	667794
Nursery Wood, SHL	678585

O

Osballdwick	633519
Osgodby	641338
Oswaldkirk, York	625790
Oulston Reservoir	570745
Oxton	505431

P

Petersfield Farm, Bielby	793422
Pocklington	802490
Pocklington Airfield	793485
Pocklington Canal	698426-800474
Poppleton	560546
Pretty Wood, Castle Howard	732690

R

Raker Lakes, Wheldrake	684463
Rawcliffe Bar Country Park	577547
Rawcliffe Ings	575544
Rawcliffe Lake	586546
Rawcliffe Meadows	577545
Redhouse Reservoir	529575
Redhouse Wood, Moor Monkton	520570
Refuge, Wheldrake	708435
Riccall	620380
Roscarrs	645316
Rossmoor Park	722436
Rowntree Park, York	604508
Ruddins Ings	5456
Ryther	550392
Ryton	795757
Ryton Bridge	796754

S

Sand Hutton	695586
Scackleton	650726
Scagglethorpe Moor	5355

Scamlands	766439	Tollerton	513643
Scoreby Lodge	684513	Towthorpe	625586
Seaton Ross	780415	Towthorpe Civic	
Seavy Carr, Thornton	753451	Amenity Site, York	648586
Selby	615324	Towthorpe Moor Lane,	
Sessions NR, New Earswick	610548	Strensall	625585-663579
Settrington House	839702	Triangle Meadow, York	604547
Sheriff Hutton	655664		
Silburn Lock,		U	
Pocklington Canal	797468	Ulleskelf	520400
Skewsby	625710		
Skipwith	657385	W	
Skipwith Common	6537	Walbut Lock,	
Skirpenbeck	747570	Pocklington Canal	773442
Sleights, Amotherby	737758	Walbutts Sewage Works,	
Slingsby	698750	Strensall	646618
Slingsby Banks Wood	698733	Walmgate Stray, York	617505
South Duffield	681335	Waplington Hall, Allerthorpe	776468
Stamford Bridge	715555	Warthill	675555
Steeton Whin	520435	Wash Dike, Skipwith Common	662372
Stillingfleet	594410	Wass Woods	550796
Stillington	585678	Welburn	720680
Stittenham	679677	Welburn Sewage Works	714685
Stockton on the Forest	655561	West Cottingwith Ings	695419
Stonegrave	657777	West Lilling	648652
Storwood	712442	West Ness	690790
Strensall	633608	Westow	7565
Strensall Common	6460-6661	Wheldrake	682450
St Nicholas Fields, York	615517	Wheldrake Ings	7043
Stubb Wood	585433	Wheldrake Wood	6546
Sutton-on-the-Forest	584647	Whitehill Mine	667359
Sutton upon Derwent	707468	White Carr, Flaxton	663603
Swantail Hide,		Whitwell Grange	715666
Wheldrake Ings	707438	Wiganthorpe	662724
Swinton	760731	Wigginton	595585
Swinton Ings	772748	Wilberfoss	734510
		Winchmore, Stamford Bridge	727547
T		Wistow	594357
Tang Hall Beck fields	6353	Woodhouse Grange	733470
Tang Hall, York	620520	World's End Plantation	
Terrington	670707	Strensall Common	6659
Terrington Moor	685716	Wressle	708313
The Retreat, York	617510		
Thorganby	691420	Y	
Thorganby Ings	6941	Yearsley	585744
Thormanby	495747	Yearsley Moor/Woods	5875-6076
Thornton	760453	York Minster	603523
Thornton Ellers	730460	York University campus	6250
Tockwith	465525	York University Lake	620505