

# **YORK ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB REPORT 2014**

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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 580 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 80 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, both within and outside the recording area and with more local visits on selected summer evenings. The annual Michael Clegg Memorial Bird Race takes place in January, when teams from across Yorkshire, including the YOC, focus on seeing as many species as possible in one day within their clubs' recording areas. See the Club's website at [www.yorkbirding.org.uk](http://www.yorkbirding.org.uk) for full details of club activities.

## **Editorial**

Following the sudden and untimely death of our editor, Mike Williams in November 2014, the Committee decided that every effort should be made to continue the work that Mike did as editor and aim to publish the annual report the year following the reporting year. The compilation and publication of the 2014 Report has been undertaken by an Editorial Committee as no-one else had the necessary publishing experience to take on the role of editor alone. This report is dedicated to the memory of Mike Williams, who worked tirelessly as editor to ensure the success of the annual report. We would also like to thank Margaret Williams very much for allowing us access to all Mike's documents pertaining to previous reports.

## **How the report is produced**

Records are received and collated, then split into sections which are distributed to the Assistant Editors who compile reports for their particular section. These are then returned to the Editorial Committee for checking of species report accuracy, editing, proofreading and the addition of articles, regular features and illustrations, before a final version of the report is produced.

Articles this year are by David Tate who has compiled the 2014 Ringing Report; Phil Bone on a census of rookeries in the recording area and his annual report on the Old Gravel Pits, Allerthorpe; Terry Weston on the development of Hassacarr Nature Reserve in Dunnington; Jack Ashton-Booth and David Tate on Peregrines in the recording area; Paul Doherty on Visible Migration in the Vale of York and Rob Chapman on the Breeding Birds Survey (BBS) – 20 years on.

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to everyone who contributed records, without which the annual report would not be possible and Ian Traynor for running the website and YorkBirding email group through which local sightings are often publicised. Many thanks to Elaine Gathercole who carries out the counts and provides WeBS data to the club for CHL. New for this year are WeBS counts for the University, covering Heslington West and Heslington East; thanks to Sean Garvey for providing these data. The Lower Derwent Valley is highly regarded in respect of its significance for the bird life of the York area and this report benefits again from the ongoing efforts of Natural England staff in the provision of WeBS counts, the annual Rare Breeding Bird Panel report for the Lower Derwent and records posted on the LDV blog. Thanks to Nick Moran at the BTO for providing BirdTrack records. The Editorial Committee would also like to express its appreciation to Jack Ashton-Booth, Phil Bone, Rob Chapman, Paul Doherty, David Tate and Terry Weston for their articles.

Thanks to everyone who was involved with the preparation of the report for publication. Records were collated by Paz Fletcher (from YorkBirding emails), Jono Leadley (LDV blog) and Rob Chapman (all records formatted and collated onto the master spreadsheet).

The species reports in the Classified List were written by the following individuals:

Jane Chapman	swans and geese
Ollie Metcalf	ducks
Peter Watson	game birds, divers, herons, egrets, storks and grebes
Jack Ashton-Booth	raptors (excluding owls)
Jane Chapman	crakes, rails, Moorhen, Coot and Crane
Jono Leadley	waders
Chris Gomersall	skuas, terns and gulls
Peter Reed	doves, pigeons, owls, woodpeckers and shrikes
Julia Lawson	crows, tits and larks
Paul Doherty	martins, swallows and warblers
Nigel Stewart	waxwings to thrushes, flycatchers, chats and wheatears
Duncan Bye	sparrows, wagtails, pipits, finches and buntings

Verification of records of scarcer species was undertaken by Andy Walker, Recorder. Andy also edited the Highlights for 2014 based on the monthly summaries he prepared for the YOC website. The weather report was prepared by David Tate using data from the electronics department at the University of York <http://weather.elec.york.ac.uk>. Many thanks to Jonathan Pomroy and Katy Chapman for their artwork, and to Jack Ashton-Booth, Keith Brockie, Duncan Bye, Mark Coates, Paul Doherty, Michael Flowers, Chris Gomersall, Mike Jackson, Peter Reed, Nigel Stewart, David Tate, Andy Walker, Terry Weston and the late Mike Williams for their photos, which illustrate this report.

# Highlights of 2014

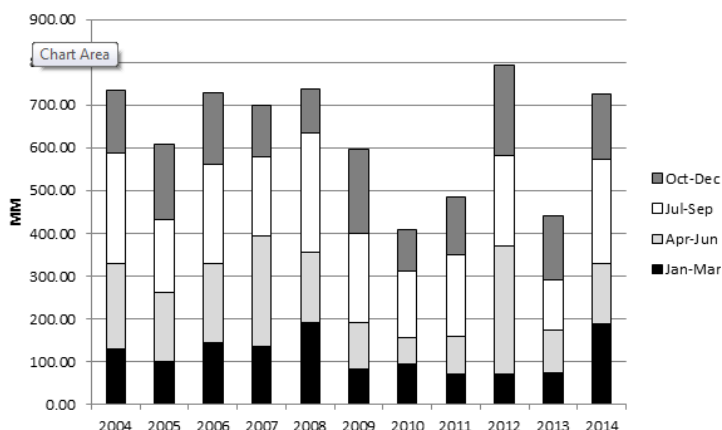
## Weather in 2014

Mild and wet conditions were prevalent in January and February. There were only four air frosts and the mean temperatures for both months exceeded 5°C. The combined rainfall total of 163mm was well above average (see graph) and kept the floodwaters in the LDV topped up which resulted in good numbers of wildfowl. By comparison the rainfall total for March and April (40mm) was the lowest since 2008.

May had ten rain free days, however the total for the month was double the ten year mean due to heavy outbursts during 10th/12th (33mm) and 22nd/24th (27mm). Rainfall in June (36mm) was well below average whilst the July total was just below the norm. Although the maximum temperature for the year of 28°C on 26th July was unspectacular, the spring and summer were warm and July had 23 days exceeding 20°C. The conditions favoured open nesting species and most had a bumper breeding season. Small mammals thrived and there was a population explosion of field voles which led to large broods of Barn Owls and Kestrels. The dry March and April allowed the LDV to dry out and an above average wader breeding season was anticipated. Unfortunately, the two downpours in May resulted in renewed flooding and many breeding territories were inundated.

August would have been a dry month without the downpour of 51mm on the 8th which resulted from the passage of ex-hurricane Bertha. The September total (80mm) was double the 10 year mean though amounts in October and November were more typical and the year ended with the driest December (30mm) since 2004. Temperatures throughout the autumn and early winter were above average and air frosts were not recorded until early December.

**Rainfall in the York area - 2004-14**



## January

The Michael Clegg Memorial Bird Race was held on the 5th, and true to recent form a wide-range of good local birds were recorded, including **Pink-footed Goose**, **Scaup**, **Red Kite**, **Jack Snipe**, two 1st-winter **Iceland Gulls** and a 1st-winter **Caspian Gull**, **Lesser Black-backed Gull**, **Chiffchaff**, **Hawfinch**, **Common Crossbill** and **Brambling**. Although not recorded by 'bird-racers' other sightings on the 5th included **Merlin** and **Marsh Harrier**. In excess of 100 species were recorded in the local area on this date. Other interesting birds seen in the month included: '**Greenland**' **White-fronted Geese**, **Smew**, **Grey Plover**, **Yellow-legged Gull**, **Kumlien's Gull**, **Glaucous Gull**, and **Long-eared Owl**.

## February

Gulls again featured heavily in February with a number of notable records such as **Kumlien's**, **Iceland**, **Glaucous**, **Caspian** and **Yellow-legged Gulls**, most of which were recorded around the Rufforth Tip area. Away from the gulls, other interesting records included: red-head **Smew**, a dead **Long-eared Owl** picked up on the road near Bubwith, several **Jack Snipe** at Skipwith Common, several **Red Kites** scattered across the area, **Little Egret**, and single **Waxwings** in both York (Woodthorpe) and Strensall.

## March

Waterfowl were a feature of the month with the following interesting records: '**Tundra**' **Bean Goose**, '**Taiga**' **Bean Goose**, **Pink-footed Goose**, **Egyptian Goose**, **Whooper Swan**, and **Smew** all centred on the Lower Derwent Valley and Castle Howard Lake. A **Great White Egret** was along the Pocklington Canal and three **Cranes** flew over Elvington, with two also flying into North Duffield Carrs where a **Bittern** was also noted. Gulls continued to be prominent during the month, the **Kumlien's Gull** being popular.

Interesting passerines included a mix of winter and spring migrants with low numbers of **Waxwing** around York, increasing numbers of **Fieldfare** and **Redwing** heading back north and a **Common (Mealy) Redpoll** in Copmanthorpe. The first returning **Sand Martin**, **Swallow**, singing **Chiffchaff** and an exceptionally early **Sedge Warbler** were all recorded from the Lower Derwent Valley.

## April

April saw the return of most of the summer migrants. Highlights of the month included an **Osprey** at North Duffield Carrs, **Sandwich Tern** over Copmanthorpe, **Garganey** and **Cranes** at several sites within the Lower Derwent Valley, **Grey Plover** at Redhouse Reservoir, **Arctic** and **Black Terns** were recorded in Heslington/Lower Derwent Valley and three **Arctic Skuas** flew over York city centre. A **Hoopoe** was seen all too briefly up in Ampleforth, where the first returning **Turtle Dove** was also observed. A few returning winter visitors were also recorded into April such as **Whooper Swan**, **Smew**, **Fieldfare** and **Waxwing**.



## May

May saw the continued passage of spring migrants with plenty of breeding birds, though it was generally quiet from a rarity point of view until right at the end of the month when one lucky observer picked up on the **Black Stork** that had flown through South Yorkshire and Lincolnshire to the south of our area (and was later also observed to the north of our area). Other quality birds recorded included: **Long-eared Owl, Nightjar, Quail, Crane, Osprey, Hobby, Red Kite, Marsh Harrier, Garganey, Mandarin, Turtle Dove, Wood Sandpiper, Spotted Flycatcher** and **Whinchat**.

## June

As we moved into summer, migration slowed, though **Osprey** and **Purple Heron** (unconfirmed) were reported from the Lower Derwent Valley. It was more about the breeding birds in the area, with some very high quality birds recorded in the shape of: **Garganey, Quail, Little Ringed Plover, Little Egret, Hobby, Peregrine, Long-eared Owl, Nightjar, Woodlark, Turtle Dove, Spotted Flycatcher** and **Grasshopper Warbler**. Other birds recorded included **Crane** and **Red Kite**.

## July

As usual a steady month, but after a break of a few weeks during June of no migration, autumn migration started up in early July with **Osprey, Green Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, Greenshank, Black-tailed Godwit, Snipe, Dunlin**, and **Sandwich Tern** all reported from sites within and adjacent to the Lower Derwent Valley. There was also a continuation of the breeding species mentioned in the June summary.

## August

Autumn migration started to increase in pace after a sluggish start, with numerous waders on the move by the month end (e.g. **Snipe, Common Sandpiper, Greenshank, Green Sandpiper, Ruff, Dunlin, Black-tailed Godwit** and **Whimbrel**). However, the bird of the month appeared in the bird ringers' nets at Wheldrake Ings on 23rd – a **Barred Warbler**. Only the second York area record – the last record was another bird trapped and ringed in the early 1980s. Unfortunately there was no further sign of it after release. Similarly frustrating was a **Wryneck** that was just outside the northern boundary of the recording area in a private garden, and, as with the 2013 bird, this one was not available for local birders, vanishing almost immediately.

## September

Not many reports returned during September, where again the focus of the month was on wader passage with a similar range of species to those of July and August recorded, with the addition of **Grey Plover**. The first **Pink-footed Geese** of the autumn were recorded in the third week of the month. Both **Marsh** and **Hen**

**Harriers** were recorded in the Lower Derwent Valley and nearby areas, but the highlight of the month was of a post-breeding flock of 14 **Bearded Tits** at Wheldrake Ings. Other passerines recorded included several **Whinchat** and **Spotted Flycatcher**.

### October

Further migrants flooded into and through the recording area during October. More **Bearded Tits** were recorded in the Lower Derwent Valley; it's uncertain whether these pertain to the same birds as recorded in September, or if they were 'new' birds. The first **Fieldfare** of the autumn was recorded in the first week of the month, followed by the first **Redwing** and **Brambling** in the second week of the month. Interestingly another autumn passage movement of **Jays** was noted through the Lower Derwent Valley. Further passerine highlights included a **Cetti's Warbler** trapped and ringed at Wheldrake Ings, with top spot going to a **Yellow-browed Warbler** trapped and ringed on Skipwith Common.

Interesting non-passerines included a juvenile **Rough-legged Buzzard** at Milford Common, with an adult male **Hen Harrier** also there, along with several **Short-eared Owls**.

### November

November was a busy month and was all about the noticeable increase in wildfowl moving into the area for the winter. Although nothing out of the ordinary was reported, several **Whooper Swans** and **Pink-footed Geese** were noted. Other interest came in the form of two **Ravens** through Milford Common, a ring-tail **Hen Harrier** present at Skipwith Common, along with a couple of **Jack Snipe** there. Passerine interest came in the shape of **Waxwing** in York, a couple of **Brambling** and 20 **Common (Mealy) Redpoll**. Over-wintering 'summer' migrants included **Chiffchaff** and **Blackcap**.

### December

There wasn't a great deal reported in December but there was still a good range of interesting local birds for those braving the winter weather. Several **Jack Snipe** were present within the Lower Derwent Valley and at Heslington East. Other species recorded in the Lower Derwent Valley included unseasonal **Oystercatcher** and **Black-tailed Godwit**, along with: **Bewick's Swan**, 'Tundra' **Bean Goose**, **Bittern**, **Marsh Harrier**, **Merlin**, and more records of **Bearded Tits**, in what turned out to be a bumper year for this species within the local area. Rufforth Tip produced another 1st-winter **Caspian Gull**, with **Glaucous** and **Iceland Gulls** all present at the close of the year.

Please note: We are still awaiting ratification of some records for which descriptions and photographs have been submitted to the relevant recording body. Updates on their acceptance will be given in future reports.

## Classified List

The sequence and scientific nomenclature follow that of the British List maintained by the British Ornithologists' Union (BOU). This report uses the version of the British List, revised and updated as a result of taxonomic changes, as at February 2015. 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 classified list reflects this order of species. For example, recent taxonomic changes mean that falcons now follow woodpeckers. In addition, the Editorial Committee has decided to use the BOU's British (English) vernacular names throughout for consistency (with the exception of Greater Canada Goose, which will continue to be referred to as Canada Goose); this means that a number of species' names are no longer preceded by 'Common' or 'Eurasian', e.g. Common Eider is now referred to simply as Eider. The following abbreviations are used throughout:

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
RBBP	Rare Breeding Bird Panel (national committee)
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	Wetland Bird Survey (BTO)
WWT	Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust
WTW	Water Treatment Works
YNU	Yorkshire Naturalists' Union
YOC	York Ornithological Club
YWT	Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

In addition, the following nature reserves appear as sites in the report:

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 is now referred to as 'Heslington West'.

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 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. WeBS counts at CHL are conducted every month but only data for January–April and September–December are normally included in the tables in this report unless the species is present throughout the year. In these tables a '-' indicates that no count was made; zero counts are shown as '0'. Any other noteworthy counts are referred to in the text. WeBS counts for the University - comprising Heslington East and Heslington West (HES) – for several species are included for the first time this year. Dates for WeBS counts in 2014 are shown below (for the LDV, there were only counts made in four months and not all species were counted).

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	19th	13th	14th	20th	14th	16th	13th	11th	7th	12th	9th	9th
<b>LDV</b>	8th	27th	13th	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3rd
<b>HES</b>	-	16th	16th	20th	-	15th	13th	13th	7th	13th	9th	7th

For more detailed information on the breeding of scarce and rare birds in the LDV refer to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP) Report on page 83.

Also new for this report is the conservation status of species listed as Red or Amber, as defined in Birds of Conservation Concern 3 [Eaton et al.(2009) British Birds 102:296 – 341].

Records submitted to BirdGuides are 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 also uses records from within the YOC area submitted to BirdTrack and in this case we do know the observers' names. Observers' initials are included for less common species, however, the majority of BirdTrack records relate to commoner species which normally just merit a summary.

The systematic list also includes those species recorded in at least three of the previous ten years even if they were not recorded in 2014. The information given for these shows the year last recorded.

Category E records, including the University's free-flying geese and escapes are listed in Appendix A, while hybrids are listed in Appendix B. Appendix C includes reports of scarce or rare species whose identity could not be confirmed (description not received or insufficient to confirm identity).

## **Mute Swan** *Cygnus olor*

*Resident breeder, passage migrant and winter visitor*

CHL and LDV continued to see the largest congregations of Mute Swans outside the breeding season, though numbers using the LDV were down compared with 2013 in the early part of the year. Most breeding records also came from these sites, though elsewhere Heslington East recorded its first successful confirmed breeding.

In the first winter period, 84 birds were recorded across the LDV on January 8th. In February, 33 were present at Thorganby on the 9th, with 29 still there on 13th plus 31 at Derwent Farm the same day. On 26th February and 1st March, 107 birds were in the LDV, with 94 there on the 13th March. Up to 100 non-breeders were counted in the LDV in late April, with 62 at Wheldrake Ings on 29th, along with seven breeding pairs. The peak count for CHL in the early part of the year was 49 on 19th January, with slightly lower numbers recorded through the spring.

Nesting was confirmed at Bank Island, Brighton Meadows, CHL, Heslington East, NDC and Wheldrake Ings. A brood of nine cygnets, seen on 19th May at NDC were the first to hatch in the LDV, with five further broods (23 cygnets) hatching later in the month. Twelve cygnets from four family parties were seen at CHL on 12th June. On 13th July, 16 young were present there (four families). At Heslington East, the three young hatched in early May and raised to fledging represent the first successful breeding on the site. The juveniles remained there with the adults through to the 24th December. In September they were joined by another pair on 22nd and a juvenile on 23rd, through to the end of October. A pair with six young was reported on the river between Foss Bank and Foss Island in York from 18th – 26th September.

Post breeding, the peak count at CHL was 87 in July, with between 70 and 85 birds recorded in each of the following months to the year's end. In the LDV, 80 were counted around the site on 3rd December, with a peak count of 101 on the 19th.

### Monthly WeBS counts for Mute Swan

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
CHL	49	39	39	39	41	57	87	77	70	74	83	85
LDV	84	107	94	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	80
HES	-	2	3	1	-	2	3	5	4	7	5	5

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

*Amber listed*

*Declining winter visitor and passage migrant*

The only records of the year occurred in December, with two at Bank Island on the 6th (DB) and two at Ellerton Ings on the 9th which then flew to NDC where a total of four adults and two immature birds were present (LM,CSR).

**Whooper Swan** *Cygnus cygnus*  
*Winter visitor and passage migrant*

*Amber listed*

Outside of the LDV, most reports were of birds flying over on passage. In the first winter period, the wintering herd of up to 80, which included at least six colour-ringed birds still present from the November 2013 cannon net catch, remained in the valley from January to mid-March, but were mobile, ranging between Aughton/Ellerton Ings, Derwent Farm, NDC and Wheldrake Ings mostly. Some early passage birds boosted numbers at Derwent Farm to 95 on 19th February. In addition to the resident herd, a total of 357 passage birds moved through the LDV during March, starting with 34 seen at Thornton Ellers on the 5th and herds of 39 and 22 seen heading north on the 6th. Most members of the resident herd departed by mid-March. Towards the end of March, another large movement saw 68 fly over Wheldrake Ings on the 24th and 52 over NDC on the 25th. In April, a single bird was present at Wheldrake Ings from the 4th to the 6th, with four there on the 7th and a lone bird lingering there to the beginning of May, last seen on the 3rd.

Seven birds seen flying south over Bank Island on 6th October were the first of the autumn and seven were seen at Heslington East on the 13th. Fourteen were reported flying over Stamford Bridge on the 23rd and the first four 'resident herd' birds arrived at NDC (two adults and two juveniles) the same day, increasing to 14 there by the 25th (six juveniles). In addition to the above, a family party of eight birds (two adults and six juveniles) paused at Wheldrake Ings on the 25th, including two colour-ringed birds marked last autumn at the same site. During November, numbers increased from 18 at Wheldrake Ings on the 1st to 27 on the 3rd and 66 on the 7th. Though mobile, the herd then spent most time on the floods at Ellerton and Aughton. In December, numbers increased again with 95 present at NDC on the 17th, and 90+ remained there to the end of the month.

Monthly WeBS counts for Whooper Swan

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
CHL	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
LDV	56	83	31	-	-	-	-	72

**Bean Goose** *Anser fabalis*  
*Scarce winter visitor*

*Amber listed*

Records this year came from both the first and second winter periods, in contrast to 2013 when there were no records towards the end of the year. In January, five 'Tundra' Bean Geese *Anser fabalis rossicus* were at Wheldrake Ings on the 8th (RW) with the same number reported flying east over Bank Island on the 28th (CSR). A single 'Tundra' was seen with four Pink-footed Geese *Anser brachyrhynchus* at Castle Howard on 1st March, while two birds showing features of the Taiga race *fabalis* were seen at Bubwith Bridge on the 2nd (JAB, OM, AW).

The second winter period birds were all of the Tundra race *rossicus*, with a single seen at Wheldrake Ings on 7th November (CSR, MJF et al) and one again

on the 29th (BirdGuides). On 2nd December, one was reported at Askham Richard (BirdGuides), with the final sighting of the year on the 3rd when one was seen at Ellerton Ings with a flock of Greylag Goose *Anser anser* (LM, CSR, JR).

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

*Amber listed*

*Winter visitor and passage migrant*

As in previous years, most reports were of birds migrating over the area, predominantly January to early March and September to November, alongside small numbers stopping off in the LDV, and a few lingering individuals. From April to the start of the autumn passage, the only reports were of two birds at the Old Gravel Pits, Allerthorpe on 13th April and one at Wheldrake Ings from 2nd – 10th May, then seen at NDC on the 15th.

Apart from one skein seen on 12th September, just outside the recording area, the first reports of returning birds were three skeins totalling 130 birds flying over Ampleforth on 21st September, with a skein of 120 seen flying south over Bank Island the same day. During October, 1426 birds moved through the valley, with 120 stopping off on the 23rd and spending a few hours on the flood waters with the Greylag Goose flock *Anser anser* before flying east at dusk. Ten birds were at Bank Island on 20th November, and 60 there on 7th December.

Notable counts (150 and more) were:

12th January, Allerthorpe Common – 300 flying northwest

20th January, Skipwith village – 200+ over

18th February, Bank Island – skeins of 180 and 200 passing north, 200 seen flying north over Tadcaster Road area, York, the same day

4th October, Wheldrake Ings – 220 over, with 150 on the 20th and 190 on the 22nd, all flying south

23rd October, Bank Island – 630 flying east

4th November, Bank Island – 200+ flying east

7th November, LDV – 300 over, flying south

16th November, Bolton Ings – 270 flying WNW

24th November, Milford Common – single skein of 170 flying east

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

*Red listed (race)*

*Scarce winter visitor*

The only sightings occurred at the beginning and end of the year. In January, two juveniles of the Greenland race *flavirostris* were present at Thorganby Ings on the 8th (presumed to be the same birds as seen in December 2013, (LM, CSR et al)). On 6th December, an individual of the European race *albifrons* was reported flying south over the Old Gravel Pits, Allerthorpe, then turning east. The following day, an adult *albifrons* was seen at NDC (GW).

**Greylag Goose** *Anser anser**Amber listed**Resident feral breeder, passage migrant and winter visitor*

As last year, large numbers were reported from the LDV in the early months of the year, with 1450 birds present in the valley on 8th January. In the autumn and second winter period, numbers in the LDV built up to more than 2500 in December. Numbers at CHL were generally lower than in 2013, the peak count of 450 occurring post breeding on 16th June. While numbers at Heslington East and West did not reach the record figures of 2013, more than 200 birds were recorded there in five different months.

Individual site counts of 200 or more away from the LDV (and in addition to WeBS counts) were:

11th January, Wharfe Ings - 270

23rd January, Pocklington Canal/West Melbourne - c.400

1st & 2nd February, Wharfe Ings - 280

14th June, CHL - 350 plus 5 juveniles, 262 on the 29th

21st July, Heslington East - 213

15th August, Heslington East - c.200

1st September, Sutton-upon-Derwent - 600+ flew over, with 300 present at Melbourne on the same date

7th September, Heslington East - 215, with 241 on the 9th and 234 on the 25th

28th September, Old Gravel Pits, Allerthorpe - 225

October - Melbourne and Thornton Ings/Pocklington area - 300 through the month

2nd November, Old Gravel Pits, Allerthorpe - 260

7th November, Heslington East - 215

17th November, Bolton Ings - 290

14th December, Bolton Ings - 234, with 360 there on 16th

21st December, Wharfe Ings - 318, with c.420 seen there on 24th

**Monthly WeBS counts for Greylag Goose**

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	8	37	88	23	2	450	49	0	36	94	265	0
<b>LDV</b>	1450	939	215	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1670
<b>HES</b>	-	110	92	55	-	217	90	189	277	96	179	155

**Canada Goose** *Branta canadensis**Resident feral breeder and winter visitor*

Canada Geese were well reported throughout the year. Peak count in the LDV was 511 on 8th January, up on 2013, with most birds remaining in the valley into early February. Similar numbers were recorded there during November and December. At CHL, numbers fluctuated less than the previous year; the peak count of 355 occurred in December. A marked increase in birds using Heslington East and West was seen in August and September.

Individual site counts of 150 or more (excluding WeBS counts below) were:

8th January, Thornton Ings - 234

21st February, CHL - 154



27th September, Milford Common - 150 roosted on a pond there

21st November, Wheldrake Ings - 500

1st December, NDC - 500

17th December, Melbourne and Thornton Ings - 310

27th December, CHL - 353

#### Monthly WeBS counts for Canada Goose

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
CHL	210	85	104	55	53	170	180	150	25	104	107	355
LDV	296	278	112	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	208
HES	-	21	24	37	-	66	24	163	135	30	46	34

#### **Barnacle Goose** *Branta leucopsis*

*Amber listed*

*Occasional winter visitor and feral wanderer*

The only record away from York University was of one flying south with three Greylag Geese *Anser anser* over Milford Common on 5th May, then returning north, presumed to be a feral bird.

#### **Brent Goose** *Branta bernicla*

*Amber listed*

*Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant*

Again, there were no records this year, though individuals have been recorded in the area in five of the past ten years, most recently in 2012.

#### **Egyptian Goose** *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

*Feral breeder and occasional visitor*

Following last year's successful breeding attempts and increasing numbers over recent years a single pair returned to Derwent Farm on the 26th, remaining in the Derwent Farm/NDC area from 1st March, then present at Wheldrake Ings on the 9th and NDC on the 13th. Three birds were at NDC to the month's end, being joined by a fourth bird on the 24th. Four birds were at Wheldrake Ings from 1st to 5th May, with one pair present for the whole month. A pair was present on and off at a pond at East Cottingwith during April and May; a successful breeding attempt raised six young there. A second successful breeding attempt took place, also at East Cottingwith, with eight newly hatched goslings seen on 21st July – this pair remained there during August with seven goslings. Singles were also reported at Wheldrake Ings on the 21st, 24th and 30th. Apart from a pair at East Cottingwith that remained there with six fledged juveniles to the year's end, the only autumn and second winter reports were of a single adult flying east over Bank Island on 23rd September and one at Wheldrake Ings on 10th and 11th October.

#### **Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna*

*Amber listed*

*Migrant breeder and early passage migrant, particularly in spring*

Shelduck were present in the York area almost throughout the year, only going unrecorded in July and September. Compared to 2013, the main arrival of birds

from the continent was delayed, with numbers peaking at 147 during the March LDV WeBS count; by contrast the numbers had already reduced to only 35 birds by the same time in 2013. High counts from individual sites include 44 at Ellerton on 17th January and 86 at NDC on 17th December. 74 territorial males were present throughout the LDV area in the breeding season, but no evidence of successful breeding was reported. Further pairs in suitable habitat during the season were at Eastfield Airfield, Newburgh Priory, near Strensall, West Lilling and Wilberfoss.

Monthly WeBS counts for Shelduck

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
LDV	25	95	147	-	-	-	-	63

### **Mandarin Duck** *Aix galericulata*

*Scarce resident breeder (Introduced/ Category C)*

Present at several locations in the York area, but possibly overlooked elsewhere. A pair was observed copulating at CHL on 25th April; then a single immature was present there on 29th June. Other reports included four birds on the River Derwent and again at the Yorkshire Arboretum (Castle Howard) on the 14th and 29th March respectively, two at Benningborough Park on 18th April, a drake at Huttons Ambo on 15th May and, in a repeat of 2013, a drake on Wheldrake Ings from 24th May to 14th June.

### **Wigeon** *Anas penelope*

*Amber listed*

*Regular winter visitor, spring passage migrant and resident breeder in small numbers*

As would be expected, the largest numbers were recorded in the LDV, as well as lower but still noteworthy numbers at CHL. The February WeBS count from the LDV represents 2.5% of the British wintering population of this species (using the BTO counts 2004/2005 - 2008/2009 of 440,000 wintering individuals). [Musgrove, A. et al, (2011) British Birds 104:364-397]. The peak count in the LDV came a month later than last year, and numbers overall were higher in each of the months counted, with the exception of January.

Monthly WeBS counts for Wigeon

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
CHL	518	130	6	0	268	361	361	804
LDV	8385	11204	10610	-	-	-	-	7867
HES	-	0	0	0	2	5	0	0

A few counts involving over 100 birds were away from the LDV or CHL. The Ings along the River Wharfe benefitted from much increased coverage this year and showed what a magnet it can be for dabbling ducks. Bolton Ings held the highest counts, with 700 on 11th January and 500 still present on 6th February. In the second winter period numbers built up there to 360 on 26th December.

Ozendyke Ings held 250 on 26th January and West Ings held a maximum of 300 on 16th January. Away from the River Wharfe, 200 arrived at dusk at Skipwith Common on 19th September and the same number was there on 26th October.

There were eight probable breeding pairs within the LDV during the summer, with none confirmed to have bred. No reports of breeding birds were received away from the LDV.

### **American Wigeon** *Anas americana*

#### *Vagrant*

Not recorded in 2014, last recorded in 2010 (the fourth record for the area).

### **Gadwall** *Anas strepera*

*Amber listed*

#### *Winter visitor and migrant breeder*

One of the commonest breeding ducks in the York area. The peak count was of 410, present within the LDV on 5th April. Other, relatively low, counts came from Acaster Malbis, Heslington East and Wharfe Ings regularly from both winter periods.

In the LDV there was a confirmed total of 36 breeding pairs with as many as 92 pairs possible, and upwards of 200 ducklings seen. Other breeding records came from CHL, with eight ducklings seen on 29th June, and Gunby Ings.

#### Monthly WeBS counts for Gadwall

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	81	90	35	18	7	6	4	1	28	53	84	211
<b>LDV</b>	18	89	227	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	111

### **Teal** *Anas crecca*

*Amber listed*

#### *Winter visitor and resident breeder*

The second most common wintering wildfowl after Wigeon, but more widespread due to its more catholic habitat preferences. Again occurring in the largest numbers within the LDV, the maximum count was of 7875 birds throughout the LDV during the December WeBS count. The December WeBS count from the LDV represents 3.75% of the British wintering population of this species (using the BTO counts 2004/2005 - 2008/2009 of 210,000 wintering individuals) [Musgrove, A. et al, (2011) British Birds 104:364-397]. Counts of 100 birds or more from outside of CHL or the LDV came from Naburn Ings with 200 present on 11th January, 120 at Bolton Ings on 12th January, with 200 there on 2nd February, 100 at Newburgh Priory on 22nd October and 110 at Bolton Ings on 16th November, with an excellent count of 700 there on 28th December.

Despite almost certainly breeding in several locations within the area, again there were no confirmed breeding records received, although there were an estimated 35 pairs present throughout the LDV at the start of the breeding season, with one pair seen copulating at Wheldrake Ings, and a further pair at Brighton Meadows.

### Monthly WeBS counts for Teal

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	54	27	17	0	13	133	228	443
<b>LDV</b>	6172	5952	5350	-	-	-	-	7875

### Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*

*Rare visitor*

Not recorded in 2014 - the most recent confirmed report was in 2011.

### Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

*Amber listed*

*Winter visitor and resident breeder*

Widespread and reported throughout the year; this is also the commonest breeding duck in the area. Highest numbers were recorded early in the year with up to 2500 during January and 2300 on 13th March in the LDV. In the autumn and second winter period, the highest counts received were: 300 at Oulston on October 6th, 350 at Newburgh Priory on October 22nd and 381 at CHL on 9th December.

Breeding was confirmed at Allertorpe GP, Bank Island, Brighton Meadows, CHL, Gunby Ings, Hassacarr NR, Heslington East, Melbourne and Thornton Ings, Milford Common, NDC, SHL, Seavy Carr, South Duffield Ings and Wheldrake Ings. The first ducklings were reported on 1st April - a female with a brood of 13 at Bank Island and another female with 15 seen on the River Ouse in York, (near Skeldergate) the same day. 217 pairs were estimated to have bred in the LDV (Survey for Natural England Breeding Bird Report).

### Monthly WeBS counts for Mallard

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	122	45	33	21	21	103	253	173	62	56	88	381
<b>LDV</b>	1772	1425	2251	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	132
<b>HES</b>	-	20	27	40	82	122	71	96	50	50	28	53

### Pintail *Anas acuta*

*Amber listed*

*Winter visitor and scarce breeder*

A common wintering duck in the LDV, but scarce elsewhere, although this year there was an increase in counts away from the LDV.

### Monthly WeBS counts for Pintail

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
<b>LDV</b>	89	625	489	-	-	-	-	81

Two were present at Acaster Malbis on 3rd January rising to 13 by 27th January. The River Wharfe held a sizeable wintering population during the first winter period with a maximum count of 100 birds present on Bolton Ings on 2nd February, and

in the second winter period there were 32 there on 26th December. Other records came from Dingle Dell on 2nd March and a single at Newburgh Priory on 22nd October.

**Garganey** *Anas querquedula*  
*Scarce migrant breeder*

*Amber listed*

The first returning birds were recorded a week earlier than last year with five birds across the LDV on 5th April. Birds were regularly seen at Bank Island, NDC and Wheldrake Ings throughout the summer, with the only record away from the LDV being a drake at Newburgh Priory on 21st April.

There was one confirmed breeding pair within the LDV with a second probable breeding pair present (see RBBP report on page 83).

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

*Amber listed*

A better year for this species than in 2013, but like most dabbling ducks in the York area, the vast majority of records came from the LDV. The highest count outside the LDV was of 22 birds at Bolton Ings on 1st February.

Again, breeding numbers in the LDV were much improved from 2013, with 22 proven breeding pairs, and up to another 62 possible and probable pairs present in the valley. Despite this increase in breeding numbers, fewer young were seen than in 2013 with 43 birds seen, in contrast to 47 from only ten pairs the year before, perhaps indicative of less successful breeding. The 22 confirmed breeding pairs represents 3% of the UK breeding populations [Musgrove, A. et al, (2011) British Birds 104:364-397].

Monthly WeBS counts for Shoveler

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	1
<b>LDV</b>	13	60	211	-	-	-	-	51

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

*Vagrant although escapes from wildfowl collections are more likely*

No records in 2014, last recorded in 2012.

**Pochard** *Aythya ferina*

*Amber listed*

*Winter visitor and breeder in small numbers*

A very poor year for this species at CHL where they can normally be found in good-sized flocks, but were almost entirely absent throughout 2014. Elsewhere, numbers were closer to the norm, with birds present around York University throughout the year, and two drakes over-summering at Wheldrake Ings providing hope of breeding. The only other significant records were of a flock at Acaster Malbis in the first winter period, reaching a peak of 24 on 16th January.

### Monthly WeBS counts for Pochard

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>LDV</b>	9	235	42	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	72
<b>HES</b>	-	5	0	1	-	2	3	0	0	4	22	7

### **Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula*

*Amber listed*

*Winter visitor and breeder in small numbers*

Widespread through the area in suitable habitats in both winter periods, the only three figure count away from the WeBS sites was at Acaster Malbis, with a peak of 100 on 18th January.

Five pairs bred at CHL, one pair at Allerthorpe Gravel Pits, and there were an estimated 46 breeding pairs in the LDV.

### Monthly WeBS counts for Tufted Duck

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	62	66	90	43	23	52	38	37	35	49	57	112
<b>LDV</b>	21	375	245	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	54
<b>HES</b>	-	0	18	25	-	36	12	11	55	21	24	10

### **Scaup** *Aythya marila*

*Red listed*

*Winter visitor and passage migrant in small numbers*

A much quieter year than 2013 with only two records. The female present at the end of December 2013 continued its stay at CHL until 2nd February, and another (possibly the same) female was present at NDC on 20th March.

### **Common Scoter** *Melanitta nigra*

*Scarce winter and passage visitor*

As usual for this unpredictable species, some intriguing records. The largest count was of a flock of 60 seen flying high northwest over Bishopthorpe Road, York on 2nd August (CG). A large flock of duck which best matched this species was migrating extremely high up over the centre of York during a visible migration watch on 1st April (JA-B), again showing the potential this species has to be recorded from anywhere. The only grounded record was of a single female on the pool at Wheldrake on 13th April.

### **Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula*

*Amber listed*

*Winter visitor and passage migrant*

Another quiet year for this species, which typically favours deeper water. The maximum count was of 25 birds on 22nd February at CHL. Outside of the LDV and CHL, reports were received from Acaster Malbis of two birds there on 3rd January which remained until the end of the month, a single at West Ings on 11th January, rising to six birds by 1st February, a single on Bolton Ings on 16th November and three on Heslington East on 20th November.

### Monthly WeBS counts for Goldeneye

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	20	13	11	0	0	0	7	20
<b>LDV</b>	3	16	5	-	-	-	-	2

### **Smew** *Mergellus albellus*

*Amber listed*

*Scarce winter visitor*

A single redhead arrived at North Duffield Carrs on 28th January (MW) with a possible second present at dawn on the 29th (CG, OM). A single bird then toured the valley, visiting Thorganby in February and March and was last seen on the Refuge at Wheldrake Ings on 6th April (JLe).

### **Goosander** *Mergus merganser*

*Regular winter visitor and passage migrant*

A widespread wintering visitor usually occurring in low numbers, 2014 was a poor year for this species, with birds being particularly dispersed and unsettled in the first winter period. The maximum count of 32 individuals was at Heslington West on 10th March. Double figure counts were present at Acaster Malbis from 1st January to 26th January with a maximum of 30 on 17th and 23rd, 13 at Wharfe Ings on 11th January, ten at CHL on 17th January, 18 at Rawcliffe Lake on 28th January, 15 at private fishing lakes in the LDV on 29th January, ten at West Ings on 1st February, 16 at Wharfe Ings on 8th February, 12 at CHL on 22nd February, 23 at Heslington West on 2nd March with double figures present at the site until 1st April and 12 at Rawcliffe Lake on 6th March.

The first returning birds of the second winter period were two birds present at Acaster Malbis on 14th July. Counts over ten in the latter part of the year were 13 birds at Bolton Ings on 13th November and 12 at West Ings on 22nd December.

### Monthly WeBS counts for Goosander

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
<b>LDV</b>	0	0	1	-	-	-	-	0
<b>HES</b>	-	1	15	0	0	0	0	0

### **Ruddy Duck** *Oxyura jamaicensis*

*Formerly resident breeder in small numbers but now scarce visitor following national cull (Introduced/Category C)*

Not recorded in 2014, last reported in 2013

### **Quail** *Coturnix coturnix*

*Amber listed*

*Summer visitor which breeds in good years*

All records were in June with singles at Poppleton on the 6th (RD), Tang Hall Beck Fields on the 13th (BJB), a singing bird at Town Ings on Pocklington Canal on the 15th (DB) and Wheldrake Ings on the 19th. After a small arrival in the LDV

on 1st June, there were nine calling birds including birds at Melbourne, Skipwith Common and Wheldrake Ings (see RBBP Report on page 83).

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

*Resident breeder and released to shoot*

Single figure numbers were reported widely from suitable areas throughout the recording area. Larger counts in the first part of the year were 22 at Bank Island on 2nd January and 13 at Wheldrake Ings on the 3rd.

In the autumn there were 11 at Milford Common on 18th September and the same number at Cawood on 1st October; 21 at Milford Common on 23rd October and 15 there on 16th November; then 17 at Skipwith on 17th November. Many birds at Milford Common were believed to have been released for shooting at this kept location (PD).

**Grey Partridge** *Perdix perdix*

*Red listed*

*Resident breeder*

Scarcer than the Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa*, with records of small numbers of usually four or fewer received from widespread suitable locations through the year.

Higher counts were ten at Sheriff Hutton on 24th January, ten at Brough Plantation, Bossall on 2nd April, 11 at Eastmoor on 15th October and Hagg Wood on 4th November, and 19 at Londesborough Lodge Farm on 25th October. A pair with five young was seen at Allerthorpe on 28th August.

Through October and November there were several counts of between 30 and 52 birds at Milford Common, believed, in the main, to have been released for shooting at this kept location.

**Pheasant** *Phasianus colchicus*

*Resident breeder and released to shoot*

Common and regularly encountered in suitable habitat throughout the year with higher counts in autumn after birds released for shooting. Double figure counts included 12 at Bank Island on 8th March.

Proof of breeding came with records of young from Allerthorpe, Gibthorpe and Heslington Tillmire.

Higher autumn counts were 25 at Londesborough Lodge Farm on 14th September, 18 at Bank Island on 17th October and 35 at Milford Common on the 29th. Twenty four in one acre at Kirkby Wharfe was evidence of density when birds are released for shooting.

**Gannet** *Morus bassanus*

*Amber listed*

*Scarce autumn visitor on passage*

Not recorded in 2014 after records in 2005-2007, 2009, 2012 and 2013.



## Rare and Scarcer Birds recorded during 2014



Left to right and top to bottom:  
**Bewick's Swans** © Duncan Bye  
**Tundra Bean Goose** © C Gomersall  
**Smew** © Mike Williams  
**Garganey** © Duncan Bye  
**Rough-legged Buzzard** © Paul Doherty  
**Hen Harrier** © Andy Walker  
**Montagu's Harrier** © Michael Flowers

**Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo*

*Passage and winter visitor. Recently established resident breeder.*

CHL was again the main site for this species with birds present through the year, although numbers were slightly down from 2013.

Monthly maximum counts in the first half of the year at CHL were 35 on 2nd January, 31 on 25th February, 21 on 14th March, 35 on 30th April, 40 on 14th May, and 38 in June. Numbers fell slightly from July with 13 in September before increasing to 21 on 25th October and 36 on 9th November. Eleven nests were counted on 23rd March and 14 on 30th April.

In the LDV, maximum counts were 23 in January, 26 in February, 27 in March, then nine in November and 21 in December. At Milford Common on 20th August, 22 birds were reported flying over, probably from Fairburn. Elsewhere there were counts of generally single figures from 12 sites, usually near water.

**Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris*

*Red listed*

*Very scarce, mostly winter visitor*

There were singles at North Duffield on 22nd March, at Wheldrake Ings on 3rd December and at Bank Island on 4th and then on 20th on the canal at Bielby (LDV Blog).

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta*

*Amber listed*

*Scarce visitor, has bred*

Sightings of Little Egret in the recording area continue to increase in frequency and duration. Smaller numbers were recorded at the beginning and end of the year, the peak occurring between May and July. Singles were seen at Riccall on 11th February and then in the LDV on the 1st, 6th, 9th, 16th and 18th March, as well as at NDC in April.

In May, there were three at Wheldrake Ings on the 9th, four on the 13th and six from the 15th -19th; four at East Cottingham on the 15th were possibly the same birds. On 23rd June, three, including a juvenile, were in the south of the LDV with the same configuration seen at Bank Island on 1st July. Four were at Wheldrake Ings on 26th July, five there on 27th July and four on 1st August. Three juveniles were at Heslington East on 31st July, with a single there on 5th August.

Elsewhere, a bird roosted at Forest of Galtres Golf Course on 9th May; the first record for Rawcliffe Lake was a single on 24th July and one was recorded at Fulford Ings on 30th August. On flooded fields at Milford Common there were up to three between 17th August and 7th September. A single was there on 5th November. Singles were at Wheldrake Ings on 9th November and 6th December, as well as NDC on the 7th.

**Great White Egret** *Ardea alba*

*Rare vagrant*

One was seen briefly at Pool Hide, Wheldrake Ings on 2nd March (GW). A single was then seen around the Pocklington Canal area near Melbourne from the 4th to the 8th before moving to the Thornton area from the 9th to the 12th. From

the 13th it was around Wheldrake Ings until 17th and there again on the 20th to the 23rd (LDV Blog). The bird was last reported at Thornton on 26th March (PF).

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*

*Resident breeder*

Birds were recorded in suitable habitats throughout the year, mostly in low single figures. Breeding was recorded again at three sites.

There were nine in the LDV on 23rd January, then 16 at the heronry on 26th February which increased to 30 by 31st March, when young were heard. 56 were counted on 23rd April with 28 nests when 30 birds were ringed. There were 46 birds there on 23rd June. At Bishop Wood, five nests were occupied on 20th April, when nine birds were seen. There were four nests at Castle Howard on 14th June, with one immature bird.

At Milford Common between 12th August and 16th September birds were present on flooded areas, with a maximum of 16 on 17th August and ten on the 18th and the 30th. At the year-end there were 20 in the LDV on 3rd December.

**Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra*

*Very rare vagrant*

One of the highlights of the year, though not seen by many birders, was a single on 26th May over East Cottingham flying north towards Wheldrake Ings at 2-00 pm having been tracked up through Lincolnshire and South Yorkshire and then seen later flying over Malton (LDV Blog). This is only the second record for the recording area, the first one turning up in August 2008, which more obligingly remained in the Cawood area for several days.

*Awaiting record to be submitted and approved by the BBRC/YNURC; however the records north and south of York have been accepted.*

**White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia*

*Scarce vagrant, but free flying birds from Harewood Estate near Leeds have been likely in recent years*

Not recorded in 2014 after records in 2005-2008, 2010 and 2011.

**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

*Amber listed*

*Resident breeder, more widespread in winter*

Widespread and numerous with records throughout the year and breeding confirmed at Allerthorpe GP, CHL, Heslington East, the LDV and Milford Common.

Maximum site numbers recorded were six at Allerthorpe, four at CHL, 16 (which included two pairs each with two well grown chicks) at Heslington East, ten in the LDV and four at Milford Common.

**Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus*

*Resident breeder and passage visitor*

Frequent in small numbers at suitable bodies of water throughout the area.

Successful breeding was confirmed from Allerthorpe GP (two pairs and three young), CHL (five pairs and five juveniles), Heslington East (three juveniles) and Heslington West (three juveniles).

Although present at Rawcliffe Lake all year no breeding was confirmed.

In winter months, records came from Allerthorpe GP, CHL, Dringhouses Pond, Heslington East and West, NDC, Rawcliffe Lake and Wheldrake Ings.

#### Monthly WeBS counts for Great Crested Grebe

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
HES	-	1	0	4	-	6	5	5	6	4	1	0

**Red-necked Grebe** *Podiceps grisegena* Amber listed

*Very scarce winter visitor*

Not recorded in 2014 after records in 2004, 2009 and 2010.

**Black-necked grebe** *Podiceps nigricollis* Amber listed

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

A single returning passage bird was reported at Bank Island on 19th April (LDV Blog). See also the RBBP Report on page 83.

**Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* Amber listed

*Irregular passage migrant*

Not recorded in 2014 after records in 2013.

**Red Kite** *Milvus milvus* Amber listed

*Irregular but increasing visitor from nearby reintroduction schemes, passage migrant and breeder.*

This species is really beginning taking a foothold in the area with birds observed throughout every month of the year. The number of sightings and areas in which these observations were made neatly mirrors 2013 and strongly suggests more birds are not only prospecting, but are establishing their own home ranges with the foresight to breed. Wintering birds seemed to show a strong affinity with riparian habitats with the majority of sightings from the ings alongside the Rivers Wharfe, Ouse and Derwent. These sightings most likely refer to males trying to secure tenure and safeguard optimal breeding habitat from the insurgence threat that ensues in the spring, from rival adult birds and floating immature birds, wishing to stake out a viable place to summer and moult. Just such an episode was witnessed on 6th of April at Kirkby Wharfe where an adult was seen to drive off a 2nd-calendar-year bird.

Unsuccessful breeding was recorded at one site in the club area and it is now known that an unsuccessful breeding attempt occurred at the same site in 2013.

The bulk of observations throughout autumn and the second winter period were again orientated around the aforementioned areas or from the southwest of the area. Sightings usually involved one or two birds, but three birds were observed together at Bolton Ings on 28th February and on 10th June and from

Grimston Park on 15th December respectively. Other multiple sightings were made at Ulleskelf on 10th January, concerning four birds, and an incredible nine above Canal Head on 24th December, most likely involving birds from the nearby Wolds population.

Another interesting sighting was made in December when a juvenile sporting wing-tags was seen on the 13th at Milford Common. Unfortunately the tags couldn't be read, but given the last Yorkshire Red Kites were tagged in 2006 it seems likely this bird would have ranged from the East Midlands or the Northern Kites project

**Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus*

*Amber listed*

*Passage migrant and rare breeder, now also scarce winter visitor*

The area in and around the LDV, in the south east of the recording area, is highly favoured by Marsh Harriers; however the species remains scarce away from there. The LDV was utilised throughout the late winter and early spring period by this species and was dominated by single observations of cream-crowns. Whether these sightings relate to a single bird or more than one is hard to ascertain but observations ranged between Bubwith, NDC, Wheldrake, Melbourne and the Pocklington Canal. Single sightings of cream-crowns continued until the last week of April when three different cream crowns were observed. A pair frequented the southern end of the LDV throughout May and was observed nest building towards the end of the month. With this pair in residence it was easier to establish different individuals and a new female was observed in the same area towards the end of June.

A juvenile bird was observed in the company of two adults in the LDV from the 14th to 17th July, denoting breeding had been successful. Further juveniles were observed dispersing with one over Heslington East on 19th August followed shortly by one migrating over Milford Common on 22nd August. Just under a month later on 21st September two cream-crowns were together at Wheldrake Ings, including a wing-tagged (green tag) bird, ringed in Cantley, Norfolk. This bird was in the company of three other birds (a male and two other cream-crowns) at Wheldrake Ings on 28th September. Numbers continued to build and at least six different individuals were known to be exploiting the wealth of food & roost sites in the valley throughout October, with birds remaining until the end of the year but in lower densities.

**Hen Harrier** *Circus cyaneus*

*Red listed*

*Mostly a scarce winter visitor*

A year of stark contrast to 2013, when all the observations for this species came in spring, with none in the autumn/winter period. 2014 however witnessed just a single bird in the spring, reported on 15th April from Escrick (Birdguides). The rest of the sightings were made during the latter part of the year with an adult male flying south east through Wheldrake Ings on 21st September (CSR), quickly followed by another or the same adult male the following day at Milford Common which was seen irregularly in that area up until 3rd November(JH & PD). Another

long staying individual concerned a juvenile female hunting and roosting on Skipwith Common between 11th and 29th November (JC & DT) that was later seen on 26th December at NDC. One explanation for these lingering individuals may correlate with the 2014 populations of Field Voles *Microtus agrestis*. In their study, the Cumbria Bird Club (2014) found that in many areas of the UK populations of Field Voles *Microtus agrestis* show multi-annual cycles with a three to four/five year periodicity. Very occasionally, however, populations may expand to reach plague proportions, having a marked effect on both their food supply and the wide range of species that predate them. Such a phenomenon was witnessed in 2014 on the RSPB Geltsdale reserve, and also more widely across the Pennines and southern uplands of Scotland. They also showed that weather data for northern England and southern Scotland during the winter of 2013/14 was one of the mildest since 1910. These temperatures not only increased the quality of grasses (the main food source for voles) but improved the overall winter rodent survival.

Cumbria Bird Club (2014) Some observations on the vole plague 2014 [Online]: <http://www.cumbriabirdclub.org.uk/sites/default/files/Autumn%202014.pdf> .

### **Montagu's Harrier** *Circus pygargus*

*Amber listed*

#### *Rare vagrant*

Last recorded in 2008, and only the eighth record for the area, an adult male was briefly observed flying northwest over Eastrington ponds just inside the southeast corner of the recording area on the morning of 5th June (MF). This was most likely the male of the pair that bred successfully in the Humber region last year.

### **Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis*

#### *Passage visitor and rare breeder*

A species that remains hard to detect in the YOC recording area even in the north where the habitat type is seemingly perfect. Displaying birds were witnessed over three territories with a further territory currently being explored. The only bird in transit was an adult female that flew southwest over Sherburn in Elmet on 28th September (PD).

### **Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus*

#### *Resident breeder and passage migrant*

Very prevalent in the York area due to their ability to utilise open country, woodland and the urban environment. The abundance of this species can be truly appreciated on a sunny spring's day from any given vantage point around the city with displaying pairs peppering the York skyline. Urban birds have been seen to perch up on the York Minster from time to time following an altercation with the Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* pair after which they sit to preen or scan for prey. Not one to miss out on an opportunity, a pair was observed on two occasions hunting Reed Buntings *Emberiza schoeniclus* over Hollow Swang Roost, on Skipwith Common before taking one there on 21st September (DT). A nest was also

monitored on Skipwith Common that contained three young females (two of which were ringed) and nest visits revealed a tendency for the adult birds to predate and cache Blackcaps *Sylvia atricapilla* (DT).

In a Heslington garden, single birds (of both sexes) were seen attacking bird feeders in 75% of recording weeks, with a male and female together there in September. Non-resident birds were observed during autumnal visible migration watches at Milford Common during which 14 were recorded moving in a broadly southerly direction, with a maximum of four on passage on 19th October (PD).

### **Buzzard** *Buteo buteo*

*Passage migrant and common resident breeder*

Now common in the area, this species was recorded throughout all months of the year. Due to the broad front nature of this species' migration and sub-adult dispersal it is hard to differentiate between movements of local birds and individuals on passage but lone 1st-summer birds (2nd-calendar-year) and 2nd-summer (3rd-calendar-year) birds seem to be quite evident in spring, not only drifting through the area but amidst the kettles of adult birds as they get forced out of their air space. Birds are increasingly more common around the city centre as are kettles of soaring birds nearing double figures.

High counts included nine at Skipwith Common on 4th February and at Bishop Wood and Milford Common on 21st March, ten at Wheldrake Ings on 27th September and eight birds that flew south over Naburn on 11th October that were deemed to be migrating birds. Other notable sightings concerned four mewing loudly whilst thermalling up with a Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* over Heslington on 27th July. Castle Howard Estate remains a very good stronghold for this species.

### **Rough-legged Buzzard** *Buteo lagopus*

*Rare passage migrant*

With a broad front invasion of juvenile Rough-legged Buzzards sweeping across the nation it wasn't long before one was located in the area. Milford Common played host to this beautiful species and this vegetated slag heap clearly looked enough like the arctic tundra, and accommodated enough voles for its stay of just under two weeks between the 18th and 29th October (PD).

### **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*

*Amber listed*

*Regular passage migrant*

Unsurprisingly, the LDV lay claim to the first sighting of an Osprey with one found on the morning of 5th April at NDC (JL) followed closely by a bird drifting north over Bank Island on the 12th.

The YOC area then hosted a record breaker on 20th May that took the fine form of Blue YD, a two year old Osprey ringed and satellite tagged on 17th July 2012, on one of Scottish Wildlife Trust's Angus reserves by Roy Dennis and Keith Brockie. Blue YD was only the second two year old Osprey to have been recorded on a return migration (three years old is the norm). Before entering the YOC area the last batch of satellite data showed at 3pm BST (2pm GMT) on Monday 19th,

Blue YD had crossed the Flamborough headland on the East Yorkshire coast and was flying across the southern outer edge of Filey Bay (having been seen by Keith Clarkson earlier in the day at Bempton Cliffs) on his northward return from Senegal where he had spent the winter. On 20th May, Blue YD satellite data showed that at 1pm he was cruising at 15km/h at an altitude of 180m just southwest of Malton and Norton Golf Club. The very last transmission ever received from him was at 7pm when he returned to the River Derwent around High Hutton at which point he had done a remarkable 20,517km!!! Scottish Wildlife Trust ranger Emma Rawlings said Blue YD had shown nothing to suggest he was in trouble. "The bird was doing well up until the last transmission and there was no information in the data to indicate he was struggling or slowing down. This leaves us with two possibilities: that something sudden and catastrophic has happened to our bird and his tag at the same time — e.g. being shot down or caught and the tag destroyed by a person — or that the tag has simply reached its maximum life and ceased working"

On reflection it would therefore appear only a matter of time for a floating sub-adult bird to show some interest in one of the several Osprey nest platforms erected in the valley by Natural England in 2013. A potential candidate was observed at Wheldrake Ings on 31st May and lingered in the area until 4th June, unlike the bird observed flying purposefully north on 6th June along the river toward the Minster (AH). Another northbound bird was a nice addition to a North Duffield garden list for a lucky observer on 1st July (AW).

### **Water Rail** *Rallus aquaticus*

*Resident breeder and winter/passage visitor*

Recorded throughout the year, many birds showed well. Similar to last year, the majority of reports were from the LDV, predominantly Wheldrake Ings (where the car park and reed bed were the most favoured sites) and the only reports of successful breeding were from there (see also the RBBP Report on page 83).

During February, five birds were present along Pocklington Canal with singles at Wheldrake on the 17th and NDC on the 21st. In early April there were two singing at Wheldrake Ings on the 4th, three on the 5th and two on the 8th, increasing to four calling birds by the end of the month. Five singing birds were at Wheldrake Ings throughout May and June, and at least three pairs bred there, one pair raising a brood in front of Swantail Hide during June. A juvenile was caught and ringed during July and juveniles were also reported there in August on the 1st (one), 4th (one), 7th (one), 9th (one), 10th (two), 12th (one) and 31st (two). One predated adult was picked up dead on the 24th.

During the autumn, regular sightings in the LDV continued, notably six birds at Wheldrake Ings on 28th September, and four present there on 19th October. Eight individuals were present in the LDV during November, with the peak occurring in December when 14 were present on the site; 13 were recorded during the WeBS count on 3rd December. Away from the LDV, there were records from Bolton Ings, CHL, Heslington East, Skipwith Common, Strensall Common, St. Nicholas Fields — the first record for that site — and Tang Hall, York.



**Corncrake** *Crex crex**Red listed**Very scarce summer migrant and irregular breeder*

No records were received this year; though there have been records in five of the past ten years (2007, 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2013).

**Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus**Common resident and winter visitor*

Well reported across the recording area and throughout the year, though there were fewer WeBS counts from the LDV (see also Coot *Fulica atra* below). Counts were down at CHL in late spring and early summer but numbers increased in the latter part of the year to well above 2013 totals during September, October and November. WeBS counts from the University (which includes both Heslington East and West), show that more than 20 birds were present in seven months, the majority of these being in the latter half of the year.

The first chicks were reported on 23rd April when a family with nine young was seen on floods on the River Derwent near Buttercrambe. Breeding was confirmed at CHL (at least 5 pairs seen with young), Foss Island in York, Heslington Tillmire, Londesborough Lodge Farm at Gate Helmsley (one pair raised three broods), Old Gravel Pits, Allerthorpe (a good breeding season with lots of young about) and Wheldrake lngs.

Other counts above 20 were as follows:

2nd January, Pocklington Canal, Melbourne - 22

9th March, CHL - 23 and 22 there on the 23rd

28th April, Old Gravel Pits, Allerthorpe - 25

2nd September, CHL - 44, with 45+ there on the 7th

11th October, Old Gravel Pits, Allerthorpe - 21

2nd November, Old Gravel Pits, Allerthorpe - 22

9th November, CHL - 61, the peak count received for the year.

27th December, CHL - 29, increasing to 30 on the 28th.

## Monthly WeBS counts for Moorhen

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	20	29	22	7	9	12	10	36	43	54	52	38
<b>LDV</b>	-	53	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
<b>HES</b>	-	24	13	15	-	10	22	20	33	33	32	21

The WeBS counts in the LDV for January and March did not record any numbers for Moorhen and it is assumed this species was not counted in these months.

**Coot** *Fulica atra**Common resident and winter visitor*

Like Moorhen, well reported throughout the year. Most records came from CHL, Heslington East and West, the LDV and the Old Gravel Pits, Allerthorpe. Sporadic records also came from many other areas with suitable open water habitat. Fewer Coot were recorded in the LDV than in previous years, possibly due

to there being fewer WeBS counts of this species. The peak count was on 13th March, when 291 birds were at Wheldrake Ings, with a further 147 at NDC making up the bulk of the total of 502 birds in the valley that day. Counts were down at CHL in most months, particularly in the early part of the year, compared with 2013, though the peak count of 212 there in August was up on the previous year.

Breeding was confirmed at Bank Island (11 pairs, 40+ young), CHL, Heslington East and Wheldrake Ings (ten pairs, 30+ young), with another pair thought to have bred at Brighton Meadows.

There were only three counts in excess of 100 (apart from the WeBS counts shown in the table below), compared with six in 2013, as follows:

22nd March, Wheldrake Ings - 117

5th April, LDV - 300+

2nd September, CHL - 132

#### Monthly WeBS counts for Coot

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	50	31	42	30	28	49	110	212	141	111	23	51
<b>LDV</b>	-	97	502	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	16
<b>HES</b>	-	32	20	23	-	32	54	52	51	49	44	52

The WeBS count in the LDV for January does not record any numbers for Coot and it is assumed this species was not counted this month.

#### **Crane** *Grus grus*

*Amber listed*

#### *Scarce vagrant*

All sightings were from the first half of the year, the first reports being three flying over Elvington on the 18th March (CSR) and two coming in to NDC on the evening of the 25th (DT, AW), seen earlier that day over Swillington. One was seen circling over Poppleton on 9th April (CG), then a single flying north at Wheldrake Ings on the 10th (LDV blog) and one flying over Rufforth on the 12th (AH), while a pair seen in the Kexby/Newton-on-Derwent area (CH) - also on 12th April - then visited Wheldrake Ings (RI) and North Duffield Carrs later in the day. These birds were presumed to have roosted at Blacktoft Sands reserve before returning north to the LDV on 13th (LDV blog). A pair was present at Bank Island and Wheldrake Ings during May (RBBP report). The only other records were of two calling in the southern end of the LDV on 31st May (LDV Blog), a single on 1st June near Skipwith Common and two in fields near there on the 5th (AH). See also the RBBP Report on page 83 for further details.

#### **Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta*

*Amber listed*

#### *Rare but increasing visitor*

Not recorded in 2014, having been recorded in seven of the past ten years, most recently 2013.

**Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus*

*Amber listed*

*Passage migrant and scarce breeder*

Recorded from 31 sites outside of the LDV this year, which was a considerable increase on last year. The first bird of the year was at Wheldrake Ings on 20th January, followed by another single at Heslington East on 13th February and a pair near Wilberfoss the same day. The second half of February saw a wide arrival with three at Church Ings, Acaster Malbis on the 19th, six at Thorganby Ings on the 22nd and a good count of 22 in the LDV on the 26th, with a pair at Kirkby Wharfe on the 28th.

In March, pairs were recorded from many sites, with the highest counts being 26 in the LDV on the 1st, and ten at Heslington East on the 21st. During the breeding season, birds were present at Beningbrough, CHL, Pike Hills Golf Club Copmanthorpe, Dunnington Common, Eastfield Airfield, Haxby, Hemingbrough, Heslington East, Kelfield, Naburn, Sand Hutton, Sherriff Hutton, Strensall Common, Towthorpe, Upper Poppleton, Warthill and West Ness. In the LDV seven pairs were present, which was half that of the previous year.

Birds dispersed after the breeding season and the number of records diminished. Up to six birds were still present at Heslington East in early August and three were at Milford Common in the middle of the month. No further reports were received until what was assumed to be a very early returning bird at Wheldrake Ings on 3rd December.

**Golden Plover** *Pluvialis apricaria*

*Amber listed*

*Winter visitor and passage migrant*

Good numbers were recorded in both winter periods and a moderate autumn passage was noted, though spring passage was virtually non-existent.

The year started with 200 at Ganthorpe on 1st January, and 250 at Aughton on the 4th. Later in January, 500 were at NDC on the 23rd, with 600 at East Cottingham on the 30th and 2050 at Thorganby Ings the next day. 3100 was the highest count for the LDV in February, with notable counts away from this site being 105 at CHL on the 21st and 250 at Skipwith Common on the 22nd. By April, numbers had diminished and 13 at NDC on the 5th and 12 over York on the 11th were the only counts of note. A single bird appeared at Heslington East on the 20th and remained until 11th May.

The first returning birds were 35 at Ellerton on 20th August, followed by small numbers elsewhere. 300 were present at Bank Island on 3rd September. More flocks were recorded from the beginning of October, with 79 at Wheldrake Ings on the 6th, 100 at Skirpenbeck on the 10th, 50 at Bishopthorpe on the 11th, 220 at Sherburn in Elmet on the 12th, 140 at Acaster Malbis on the 15th, 55 at Sand Hutton the next day, 305 at Milford Common on the 20th, 60 at Hagg Wood on the 22nd, 100 at Stockton Common on the 24th, 95 near Stamford Bridge on the 25th and 220 at Wharfe Ings on the 31st. Larger counts during November were 310 at Wharfe Ings on the 5th and 2100 in the LDV on the 22nd. As the year drew to a close, 200 were present at NDC on 28th December, with 100 at Wheldrake Ings the same day.

**Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*

*Amber listed*

*Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant*

Six records scattered across the year was a typical showing. A single flew north at NDC on 4th January, followed by another single at Rufforth Airfield on the 25th. In spring, singles were seen north over Redhouse Reservoir on 9th April and at Wheldrake Ings on 5th May.

The first of the autumn was a calling bird flying east over Bishopthorpe on 16th October, with a party of five in the LDV on 19th November.

**Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus*

*Red listed*

*Winter visitor, passage migrant and breeder*

Good numbers were present in both winter periods, with reasonable numbers of pairs remaining to breed. Up to 1100 were in the LDV in January, with peak site counts of 500 at Wheldrake Ings on the 4th, 500 at Aughton Ings on the 19th, 500 at West Melbourne on the 23rd and 200 at East Cottingham on the 30th. Numbers increased during February with a maximum of 4000 in the LDV on the 9th, including peak site counts of 1000 at Thorganby Ings that day, with 1500 at NDC on the 15th. Birds began to disperse from early March, with many birds back on their breeding territories by the middle of the month.

In the breeding season, 31 pairs bred in the LDV, though productivity was reduced due to flooding in May. Away from the LDV, three to six pairs were noted from Dunnington, Heslington East, Heslington Tillmire, Kelfield Manor Farm, Poppleton and Scagglethorpe. One or two breeding pairs were reported from a further 14 sites, with about a dozen scattered pairs counted to the north of Strensall in late May.

The first post-breeding flocks were noted in the first half of June. Twenty six were at Wheldrake Ings on the 9th, with 32 near Hagg Wood the next day. Bank Island held 45 on the 28th, eclipsed by 500 nearby at Wheldrake Ings the same day. In July, notable counts were 200 at Wheldrake Ings on the 12th and 115 at Bolton Ings on the 28th, this latter flock increasing to 450 by the middle of August. 140 were also present at Milford Common on 15th August.

In the second winter period, good numbers were present in the LDV; with 3942 the highest count on 3rd December. Peak site counts during the period included 1200 at Ellerton on 22nd November, 690 at Wheldrake Ings on 15th December and 600 at Bolton Ings on 21st November.

**Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius*

*Scarce summer breeder and passage migrant*

The first migrant was noted at Elvington waterworks on 7th April. Four had arrived back at Heslington East by 11th April, with the count increasing to a maximum of five by the 20th. A pair was present at Wheldrake Ings during the month, with one of the birds being present until the 29th. Another pair was noted at Bootham Stray on the 16th.

The only breeding record relates to Heslington East where the population has dwindled as the site has become more developed and vegetated. A pair held

territory but it is unknown whether they were successful, with birds last reported in late June.

The first autumn migrant was noted from Wheldrake Ings on 28th June, with two juveniles noted on the 26th and 27th July, the last of the year.

**Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula*

*Amber listed*

*Passage migrant and occasional breeder*

Very poor numbers were reported this year. A pair returned to Heslington East by 13th March and subsequently raised two young. Another pair was present during mid-May but did not linger. Single migrants were noted from NDC on 25th March, with one or two seen at Wheldrake Ings from the 17th to 22nd April.

In the autumn, two were present on flooded fields near Milford Common in mid-August, with eight noted flying south with Snipe at Wheldrake Ings on 25th August.

**Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*

*Red listed*

*Passage migrant*

Arriving two days later than in 2013, the first birds were a flock of 11 in fields at Storwood on 19th April, one of which was a bird colour-ringed in 2008. Numbers began to increase, with the largest flock of 109 roosting at Wheldrake Ings on 29th April. During this period, reports from other areas included six at Thornton on 28th April, a single at Full Sutton Airfield on 30th and three feeding at NDC on 9th May, which was noteworthy.

The first returning migrants were seven at Wheldrake Ings on 2nd July, with a single later in the month at Fog Lane near Melbourne on the 22nd. Four were at Wheldrake Ings on 5th August, with nine seen flying south over Bank Island on the 23rd and 11 southwest over Bishopthorpe on the 28th. One at Bank Island on 19th September would have been expected to be the last record, but was eclipsed by an exceptionally late individual at the same site on 25th November.

**Curlew** *Numenius arquata*

*Amber listed*

*Winter visitor, passage migrant and migrant breeder*

A good year, with a productive breeding season. The first notable count of the year was ten at Wheldrake Ings on 21st January, followed by 37 in the LDV on the 31st. A number of good counts were noted during February, with 39 at North Duffield Carrs on the 25th being the peak, with the overall count in the LDV at 62 by the 26th February.

Singing birds were first noted displaying in the LDV on 14th March, by which time the overall count had risen to 110, a much higher count than in 2013. The bulk of breeding pairs were noted from the LDV, where 28 pairs were estimated to have bred on the Derwent Ings SSSI with a further six pairs at Melbourne and Thornton Ings SSSI. The breeding season in the LDV was noted as being productive, although one unfortunate chick was seen being taken by a Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* at Thorganby Ings. Elsewhere, birds were displaying or

at least present in the breeding season at Acaster Church Ings and Acaster South Ings, Benningbrough, Brighton Meadows, Castle Howard, Fulford and Middlethorpe Ings (where adult birds were noted flying on to Bustardthorpe rugby pitch to feed early in the morning), Heslington Tillmire (two pairs), Hovingham Mill Wood, Kirkby Wharfe, Milford Common, Strensall Common, Sutton-on-the-Forest, Stockton-on-the-Forest, West Ings, Westow Grange, Wharfe Ings and Whenby.

Post-breeding dispersal began in July, with 103 birds heading west during the month in the LDV including a flock of 28 on the 18th. Elsewhere, a small flock was heard moving over Blossom Street, York on the 7th. Very few birds were counted later in the year as most birds departed for their winter quarters. Numbers in the LDV had reached 18 by the end of December.

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

*Red listed*

*Passage migrant and rare breeder, occasionally seen in winter*

A reasonable showing with good counts in the LDV as Icelandic birds paused on their northbound migration.

An early bird was noted at North Duffield Carrs on 26th January. A pair was present on 1st March at Wheldrake Ings, with numbers increasing to 14 birds by the middle of the month. One of these birds was a colour-ringed Icelandic bird that had been caught on the Wash Estuary in 2010. The count rose to a peak of 26 on 3rd April, with 20 staying until the 20th dwindling to six by the 23rd. Further south at North Duffield Carrs, a flock of 45 birds arrived on 17th April, six of which remained until the month end. Two pairs attempted to breed in the LDV.

A single bird recorded at Bank Island on 28th June may well have been an early migrant, with 11 at Wheldrake Ings on 12th July clearly so. In August, a single bird was noted at Heslington East on the 19th, with four feeding in flooded fields at Milford Common on the 22nd rising to five the next day. A late single bird was at Ellerton on 22nd November, with another bird at North Duffield Carrs on 14th December the last of the year.

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

*Amber listed*

*Scarce passage migrant*

Another poor showing, after a single record last year, with one at Wheldrake Ings on 20th April followed by another single at the same site on the 26th.

**Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres*

*Amber listed*

*Passage migrant, usually in spring*

Three at Wheldrake Ings on 11th May were the only record.

**Knot** *Calidris canutus*

*Amber listed*

*Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant*

Last recorded in 2013.

**Ruff** *Calidris pugnax**Red listed**Mainly passage migrant and winter visitor; rare breeder*

A good showing with good counts in both winter periods. Up to 100 were present in the LDV in early January with the largest counts being from Aughton Ings. Numbers rose slightly to 110 in early February, with NDC hosting up to 42 birds, with Aughton Ings again being popular. Numbers began to decline as spring approached, and display was noted with 35 birds at one site including 22 males lekking. Up to 65 remained in the LDV until early April, falling to 40 by 23rd April. A male at Wheldrake Ings on 2nd May was the last report of the spring.

Flooded fields at Milford Common attracted two migrants on 16th August, which remained until the 18th. A single was at Wheldrake Ings on 31st August, with three there on 10th September. Wintering birds began arriving in the LDV in November, with the flock building rapidly to 140 at Ellerton by the 22nd. The flock at NDC peaked at 40 on 13th December and included two white headed males.

Monthly WeBS counts for Ruff

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
LDV	5	90	61	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	131

**Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea**Infrequent passage visitor, usually in the autumn*

A very early adult was reported at Bank Island on 3rd July (LDV Blog).

**Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii**Red listed**Rare passage migrant*

Last recorded in the area in 2012.

**Sanderling** *Calidris alba**Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant*

One was reported at Aughton Ings on 11th May (LDV Blog).

**Dunlin** *Calidris alpina**Red listed**Passage migrant and winter visitor*

A reasonable winter showing, though spring and autumn passage was poor. Up to 198 were in the LDV during January, with 60 at NDC on the 4th, and 30 at Aughton Ings on the 19th. Rufforth Airfield hosted two birds on 25th January. Numbers in the LDV increased in February with 228 counted on the 27th, most of which were using NDC and nearby Bubwith Ings. Numbers declined thereafter, with 90 at NDC on 13th March notable. Spring passage was poor, with ten at Wheldrake Ings on 17th April and 20 at NDC on the 23rd, followed by a late single at Wheldrake Ings from the 23rd to 29th May.

A flock of 15 at Bank Island on 25th June were presumably failed breeders returning south and no further birds were seen until a single at Heslington East on 29th July. Singles were noted at Wheldrake Ings from 18th August until 2nd September, with two there on 31st August. No more were reported until wintering

birds began to arrive in November. Two birds at Wheldrake Ings on the 9th were followed by 11 at Ellerton on the 15th, rising to 33 by the 18th and 50 on the 22nd. The LDV count had grown to 102 by 3rd December, before 120 were counted at NDC on the 7th, most of which remained until the year-end.

Monthly WeBS counts for wintering Dunlin in the LDV

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
LDV	60	228	90	-	-	-	-	102

**Little Stint** *Calidris minuta*

*Scarce passage migrant, mostly autumn*

Last recorded in the area in 2011.

**Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos*

*Rare vagrant but becoming more frequent*

Last recorded in the area in 2012.

**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos*

*Amber listed*

*Passage migrant*

Despite the first birds arriving earlier than usual, it was a pretty disappointing year. Arriving ten days earlier than in 2013, the first was noted at Elvington on 7th April, followed by another single at Heslington East on the 11th. A single was noted at Wheldrake Ings on 1st May, with another at Heslington East on the 3rd, with a count of five there on the 8th being the best and last of a rather poor spring showing.

Autumn passage began on 4th July with a single at Wheldrake Ings, with another there on 1st August. Two were at Heslington East on 5th August and a single was on flooded fields at Milford Common on the 16th. Further singles were noted from Heslington East on 19th August and Wheldrake Ings on the 4th and 10th September.

**Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus*

*Amber listed*

*Passage migrant and winter visitor*

There was a reasonable showing for this species in 2014. A single bird was flushed from Bishopthorpe Ings on 1st January and was presumably wintering in the area. Another single was seen at Hagg Bridge on 8th March, with another a month later at Allerthorpe Common on 6th April. Spring passage is usually very modest, so the two birds at Wheldrake Ings on 15th April were noteworthy.

The first returning bird turned up at Bank Island on 15th June, the same date and the same site as last year, and given the site fidelity of many birds, could even have been the same individual. Hereafter, birds were seen in the LDV throughout the month, with two at Bank Island on the 28th the only multiple count. Numbers began to rise in July with a peak of five at Bank Island on the 3rd, with four nearby at Wheldrake Ings on the 12th. Heslington Tillmire attracted a single on 21st July. In August, birds were more widespread with a single at Deighton on the 5th, two at



Melbourne Ings on the 11th, four at Milford Common on the 16th, three at Thornton Ellers on the 20th, and up to seven at Wheldrake Ings during the month. In September, Milford Common, Heslington East and Thorganby Ings each had two birds still present, with up to five at Wheldrake Ings early in the month, dwindling to one by the month end, which remained in the area until 11th December at least. Milford Common held one or two birds until 4th November. Another single was at Melbourne on 5th December, which indicates a wintering individual.

**Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus*

*Amber listed*

*Passage migrant and occasional winter visitor*

Not recorded in 2014 or 2013, but annual between 2000 and 2012, apart from 2008.

**Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia*

*Passage migrant and occasional winter visitor*

A reasonable spring was followed by a better than average autumn. A single at Wheldrake Ings on 17th April was the first of the year, and remained until the end of the month, being joined by a second from the 22nd to the 23rd, then from the 27th to the month end. One of these birds remained until 9th May, with another south over the reserve on the 18th and another single at Thornton Ellers on the 28th the last of the spring.

Autumn passage commenced with a single flying south at Wheldrake Ings on 6th August followed by another single the next day at Milford Common. Two birds paused at Wheldrake Ings on the 17th and 18th August, with singles at Thornton Ellers on the 20th and Skipwith Common on the 27th. Two birds were at Thornton Ellers on the 21st, three at Milford Common on the 31st and three at Wheldrake Ings the same day. The three at Wheldrake Ings remained until 2nd September, and two until the 4th, followed by singles on the 21st and from the 27th to the 28th. One was present at Skipwith Common on 19th September. In October, one or two were noted at Wheldrake Ings and Thorganby Ings during the month with a late single on 21st November at Bank Island being the last of the year.

**Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola*

*Amber listed*

*Passage migrant*

Following a good year in 2013, 2014 was poor, with only one reported from Wheldrake Ings on 5th August.

**Redshank** *Tringa totanus*

*Amber listed*

*Passage migrant, migrant breeder and winter visitor*

Good numbers in the first winter period were followed by a poor breeding season. In the first winter period, the Bubwith Ings – North Duffield section of the LDV took the lion's share, with 33 at Bubwith Ings recorded on 19th January and

50 at North Duffield Ings on 15th February. The only winter record away from the LDV was a single at Heslington East on 8th January.

With the arrival of spring, birds began to disperse to their breeding territories, with up to 60 present in the LDV on 31st March. A single at Castle Howard on 9th March was notable. Three birds had returned to Heslington East by 9th March, increasing to seven by 11th April. In the LDV, 26 pairs were estimated to have bred, with Bank Island, NDC, and Wheldrake Ings being the key sites. Spring flooding caused problems with only three pairs remaining at Wheldrake Ings at the end of the breeding season. Up to six were on Heslington Tillmire, and it is thought that two pairs bred.

Single birds were at Bank Island on 3rd July and then at Wheldrake Ings from 19th August until 4th September. In the second winter period, a single at Bolton Ings from 14th – 22nd December was a noteworthy record. There were up to 21 in the LDV by the end of the year.

Monthly WeBS counts for wintering Redshank in the LDV

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
LDV	5	25	55	-	-	-	-	13

### **Jack Snipe** *Lymnocyptes minimus*

*Amber listed*

*Winter visitor and passage migrant*

There were a handful of records in the first winter period, with at least one in the Heslington area on 5th January, a single at NDC on 30th January and 1st February and up to two at Skipwith Common in the first half of February, one of which was caught and ringed. Spring passage revealed a scattering of singles in March and April from Heslington Tillmire, Melbourne Ings and Wheldrake Ings, with the last at the latter site on 2nd May.

The first returning birds were recorded at Skipwith Common where two were present on 15th October. Five were trapped for ringing at this site later in the month, with two still present in November. A minimum of seven were at Milford Common on 10th November. A single was at Heslington East on 12th December, with four counted there on the 30th.

### **Woodcock** *Scolopax rusticola*

*Amber listed*

*Resident breeder and winter visitor*

Good numbers of Woodcock were reported in the first winter period. The highest count came from Buttercrambe where seven were recorded on 5th January. Four were recorded at Thornton Ellers on 23rd January, with up to four around Wheldrake Ings car park during the same month. Two birds in a Spaldington garden was a good record on 27th January, and singles were reported from Askham Bog, Bishop Wilton, Coneysthorpe and Redhouse during January and February. Migrants were still much in evidence in March, with singles noted at Aughton Ings, Castle Howard, Clifton Backies, Heslington East, King's Moor (Stockton-on-the-Forest) and Rawcliffe Ings.

Three birds were roding over Allerthorpe Common on 8th March, signalling that some birds had returned to their territories. Further roding birds were noted at Bishop Wood, Naburn, Skipwith Common and Yearsley Moor (four males), whilst an adult with four young was seen in Escrick parish in early May. A bird feeding by the roadside at Milford Common on 31st August may have hinted at local breeding.

Migrants were reported from Milford Common on 17th September, 29th October and 5th November, with further singles seen at Skipwith Common on 17th November, three at Thornton Ellers on 1st December and one at Escrick Duck Decoy on 17th December. Three birds were reported from Wheldrake Ings car park on 28th December.

### **Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago*

*Amber listed*

*Resident and migrant breeder; passage visitor*

The biggest counts in the first winter period were from the LDV as might be expected, with 100 at NDC on 30th January and 102 at Seavy Carr on 26th February, followed by 110 in the LDV on 1st March, with 150 at Wheldrake Ings a couple of weeks later on the 17th. Away from the LDV, 34 were counted on Skipwith Common on 22nd January, six at Skirpenbeck on 5th March, at least 25 on Heslington Tillmire on 10th March and a handful of ones and twos elsewhere.

By early April birds were displaying at traditional sites. Good counts were still made during the month, with 55 at Wheldrake Ings on 2nd April and 42 at Heslington Tillmire on the 4th. 32 pairs were estimated to have bred on the Derwent Ings SSSI, including four at Ellerton Ings, three at North Duffield Ings, nine at NDC, and eight at Wheldrake Ings. In addition, five pairs bred at Melbourne and Thornton Ings SSSI. The only other breeding record was from Heslington Tillmire where one pair was recorded.

Migrants began arriving back in the area from late June, when 61 were counted at Wheldrake Ings. Over 40 were flushed by a Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* at Wheldrake Ings on 2nd July, when the site held at least 84 birds. Forty nine were counted at Bank Island on 27th August, and 12 arrived from the northeast at Milford Common on 20th August. Good numbers were recorded through September, with 150 at Melbourne Ings on the 1st, 50 at Wheldrake Ings and 25 at Skipwith Common both on the 3rd, the highest counts. Numbers hereafter declined, with 200 in the Melbourne-Thornton area on 25th November and 50 at Wheldrake Ings on 2nd November the only notable counts before the year-end.

### Monthly WeBS counts for wintering Snipe in the LDV

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
LDV	121	102	32	-	-	-	-	224

**Arctic Skua** *Stercorarius parasiticus*

*Red listed*

*Very scarce passage migrant*

The only record received this year concerned a party of three birds drifting southeast over the city centre on the afternoon of 13th April. (AH). This is the seventh record for the area, bringing the total to ten birds.

**Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger*

*Amber listed*

*Rare passage migrant*

Just about managing to hang on to its recent annual status courtesy of a single adult bird that spent the day on the main lake at Heslington East on 22nd April (GW).

**Sandwich Tern** *Sterna sandvicensis*

*Amber listed*

*Scarce passage migrant*

This year saw two records, involving five birds. Early on the morning of 3rd April, three birds were seen heading east over Copmanthorpe (PO), with the only other report concerning two individuals flying south over Bank Island on 8th July (LDV Blog).

**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo*

*Amber listed*

*Passage migrant and rare migrant breeder*

The first record of the year was of a pair prospecting the tern rafts at Wheldrake Ings on 9th May, whilst there were up to five birds present at Allerthorpe GP on the 15th. The breeding attempt of another pair, making the most of the tern rafts at Heslington East, ultimately ended in failure, as they appeared to have been predated shortly after incubation. Over the summer months, single birds were seen at North Duffield, Rawcliffe Lake and throughout the LDV, where up to four pairs were thought to have bred. Two pairs at Allerthorpe GP successfully raised three young.

**Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea*

*Amber listed*

*Passage migrant*

Traditional rain showers on 22nd April encouraged 11 of these beautiful world-wide wanderers to drop out of the sky and spend the day feeding on the main lake at Heslington East (CG and MC). Also urged northwards by spring migration, 12 birds passed through the LDV the following day with a further seven through there on the 26th (LDV Blog).

**Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla*

*Amber listed*

*Scarce passage migrant*

No reports in 2014, but records received in five of the past ten years, most recently 2013.

## Rare and Scarcer Birds recorded during 2014



**Bearded Tits**  
all © Duncan Bye



**1st-winter Caspian Gull (l), 3rd-winter Kumlien's Gull (r) © Chris Gomersall**

Below: **Tree Pipit** © Peter Reed - a small number of pairs of this migrant breed in the recording area – and **Osprey 'Blue YD'** © Keith Brockie that passed through the area in May; a migrant whose travels were well-documented thanks to satellite tagging.



**Black-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* Amber listed  
*Resident breeder, winter visitor and passage migrant*

Present throughout the year, with the largest flocks occurring during winter. The regular roost at Castle Howard contained over 8000 birds on 2nd January, with 500 at Heslington East the next day. An incredible 20,000 were counted coming in to roost on Wheldrake Ings on the 23rd, with an estimated 17,500 still there by the end of February. Numbers fell away sharply over the spring and summer months. On 16th August there were 500, mostly juvenile birds, feeding on earthworms on Milford Common. Figures remained relatively low for the remainder of the year, the highest count being 1000 on Wharfe Ings on 26th December.

**Little Gull** *Hydrocoloeus minutus* Amber listed  
*Passage migrant and scarce winter visitor*

A very poor year for this species, the only record was of a 1st-summer bird present at Bank Island on 14th May (LDV Blog).

**Mediterranean Gull** *Larus melanocephalus* Amber listed  
*Winter visitor and passage migrant*

A species which is probably far commoner in the area than the handful of records received would suggest. There was a 1st-winter bird present on Wheldrake Ings on 10th-11th January (JLe), with an adult there from 28th January to 2nd February (CSR). Two adult birds on 16th April at Bank Island somewhat surprisingly represented the last record of the year (DB).

**Common Gull** *Larus canus* Amber listed  
*Winter visitor and passage migrant*

Recorded in large numbers in the early part of the year, starting with 1000 at Castle Howard on 2nd January. Wheldrake Ings had 3500 roosting on 23rd January, but by 8th March this had increased to an impressive 17,000, with a further 5000 present simultaneously at Elvington waterworks. After that, numbers diminished significantly and 140 feeding behind a plough at Full Sutton on 24th August was the highest count for the remainder of the year.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus* Amber listed  
*Predominantly summer visitor and passage migrant*

Spring migration started with four adult birds at Rufforth on 28th January, slowly increasing to 25 there by 7th March. Unlike the other gulls, summer sees the largest counts of this species in the YOC area, reaching a peak of 300 at Elvington waterworks on 26th May. Milford Common saw the last significant record with 150 present there on 15th August.

**Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus* Red listed  
*Winter visitor, passage migrant and recent breeder in very small numbers*

Certainly the most numerous gull in the winter months, with the lure of Rufforth landfill attracting birds from all over north western Europe to come to the York

area. On 26th February a staggering count of 14,300 was seen coming in to the main gull roost at Wheldrake Ings. As spring arrives many of these birds head back north and by 14th March the roost was down to 4000.

At least two pairs bred within the city walls, and two newly fledged chicks were seen at Walmgate on 15th July.

Winter flocks start to increase again by November and 7000 at Wheldrake Ings on 30th increased to 10,000 by the last day of the year.

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

*Amber listed*

*Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant*

At least one adult was reported from the Rufforth area between 28th January and 17th February (CG and AH). An adult was seen at Wheldrake Ings on 4th July (TD). As with previous years, the late summer/ early autumn period saw the peak count, with a minimum of four birds, comprising two adults and two juveniles, present on Rufforth airfield on 16th August (CG, OM). An adult bird on 4th September over Heslington East was the last report of the year (CG).

**Caspian Gull** *Larus cachinnans*

*Very scarce winter visitor*

Continuing its rise to prominence in recent years, at least a further seven individuals were reported during the year. Different 1st-winter birds were seen at Rufforth in January on the 2nd (JAB/CG), 5th (AH) and 28th (CG). A 2nd-winter bird was identified there on 9th January (JAB/OM) with a further 1st-winter present from 7th-10th February (TJ). That was it until at the end of the year when on 30th December another 1st-winter bird was found on Rufforth Tip (JLe).

*These records are currently being reviewed by the YNU; should any not be accepted, an update will follow in future reports.*

**Iceland Gull** *Larus glaucooides*

*Amber listed*

*Scarce winter visitor*

Another good year for this species, with probably no fewer than 12 individuals involved. Starting with a 1st-winter bird at Rufforth on the 2nd January, birds of various ages were seen around the area predominantly from the usual haunts of Rufforth airfield, Wheldrake Ings and the fields around Poppleton, but also seen over the city centre, and rather bizarrely the services on the A64 at Bilbrough. The peak count was on 28th January with two adults and two 1st-winters together on Rufforth Airfield. The last record of the year, on 5th April, involved yet another 1st-winter bird, flying south over North Duffield.

A well-watched 3rd-winter Kumlien's Gull *Larus glaucooides kumlieni* was present and seen many times in the Rufforth area from 28th January to 1st March (CG). This was the second/third bird recorded in the York area, previous records occurring in 2005 and a possible in 2012.

**Glaucous Gull** *Larus hyperboreus*

*Amber listed*

*Scarce winter visitor*

Another reasonable year for this species with probably eight individuals accounting for many reports between 1st January and 23rd March, mostly from the Rufforth area, with some reports from the roost at Wheldrake Ings. The maximum day count was on the 10th February with four birds (one adult, one 4th-winter and two 1st-winters) seen on Rufforth airfield (CG).

The only records in the second winter period were of one at Rufforth on 28th October (TD) and one again on the 30th (Birdguides).

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

*Amber listed*

*Winter visitor and passage migrant*

As with the other large gulls, numbers are at their peak during the cold winter months early in the year and they wander between feeding on Rufforth landfill and roosting on Wheldrake Ings. It was at Wheldrake Ings that the peak count for the year took place, with 4700 seen arriving to roost on 26th February.

Throughout the summer the only records referred to a regularly-sighted leucistic bird which seems to have taken the YOC area to its liking.

In the second half of the year numbers began to increase again; 40 were present at Bank Island on 20th October and by 30th November up to 3000 birds were seen at Wheldrake Ings. At Heslington East, 400 were present on 12th December.

**Feral Pigeon** *Columba livia*

*Resident breeder*

Widespread and frequent throughout the recording area, especially in urban and suburban areas. The highest number reported was 100 at North Duffield on 20th September.

**Stock Dove** *Columba oenas*

*Amber listed*

*Resident breeder*

Frequently recorded throughout the year, with higher numbers in flocks during the winter periods. In the southwest of the area, in SE53, widespread in single and low double figures with the highest counts being 35 at Patefield Wood on 14th January, 37 at Milford Common on 9th October and 26 at Wharfe Ings (Cawood) on 1st November. Visible migration watches at Milford Common recorded a total of 29 flying south during the autumn. A flock of 30 was observed at East Moor, Sutton-on-the-Forest on 6th November.

During the breeding season, singing was heard in a number of locations and a nest was found on a pylon at Allerthorpe Common on 2nd May.

**Wood Pigeon** *Columba palumbus*

*Resident breeder*

Widespread throughout the area with numbers increasing during the winter due to continental migrants. Flocks over 500 during the first winter period were 600



at Milford Common on 11th January, c1300 between Ryther and Ulleskelf on the 27th and 500 at Bank Island on 9th February.

During the breeding season nesting was frequently recorded with four pairs estimated to have bred at Newton Mask SSSI, seven pairs at Allerthorpe GP and ten pairs at Heslington Tillmire. Also, 72 were counted during a BBS survey near Naburn Wood on 15th June and more than 30 in Hagg Wood on 15th July.

During the autumn, visible migration watches at Milford Common recorded a total of 15,593 between 9th October and 13th December. Most were moving south including 3490 on 5th November, but with a return movement of 5695 flying northeast on 24th November. About 1600 were at Milford Common on 16th December and 1200 at Sherburn in Elmet on the 20th. Other records over 500 birds were: 934 south east over Bank Island on 25th October and 1276 over York on the 27th, 1000 at Heslington Outgang in an Oilseed Rape field on 27th December and 500 at CHL on the 28th.

**Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*

*Resident breeder*

A regular inhabitant of gardens, parks and other areas of human habitation and a common breeder in the area. Gatherings of 25 or above were; 25 at Kirkby Wharfe on 2nd February, 31 there on 8th November and 25 at Milford Common on 16th November.

**Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur*

*Red listed*

*Passage migrant and increasingly scarce migrant breeder*

There was a slight increase in records over 2013. One was at Ampleforth on 26th April, followed by another at Wigginton on 11th May. Two pairs were between Bubwith and Foggathorpe on 2nd June and a single was just north of Terrington on the 6th. During July one was at Acaster Selby on the 17th and one flew through a garden at North Duffield on the same day. Another was purring in Gilling East on the 27th, while another probable bird was seen flying at Scackleton Bank the following day. The last record of the year was of one seen flying south in the LDV on 31st August.

**Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus*

*Red listed*

*Migrant breeder*

Still reasonable numbers in the area and seen or heard frequently, though declining nationally. The first arrival was one at Melbourne on 12th April, followed by singles at SHL on the 17th, Stockton-on-the-Forest on the 19th, Easingwold and Strensall on the 22nd and Strensall Common on the 24th. Thereafter singles were frequently reported throughout the area, with one also at Tang Hall Beck Fields in York on the 28th of note. Two were at Allerthorpe GP on 5th May and Heslington Tillmire on 21st and three territories were estimated on Strensall Common during the annual survey on the 23rd. One pair was estimated to have bred at Brighton Meadows and another at Gunby Ings and birds were also present at Brayton Barff during the season. At Thornton Ings a rufous-phase

female was mobbed by a Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* and Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*.

By the end of June, five singing birds had been recorded at Melbourne with fledged young seen there by the 27th and a juvenile was raised by a foster pair of Robins *Erithacus rubecula* in a garden at East Cottingwith in early July. By this time, most birds had finished singing but a late bird was still calling at Wheldrake Ings on 16th July. A juvenile was also seen at Milford Common on 23rd July and the last record was on 27th August at Heworth, York, where a juvenile was seen feeding on worms.

### **Barn Owl** *Tyto alba*

*Amber listed*

*Resident breeder*

A very good year for this species, with many sightings throughout the area, especially later in the year after the excellent breeding season. The LDV, Milford Common and the southwestern part of the recording area (SE53) provided most sightings, but birds were recorded in many other areas and sites too. Most observations were of singles or two birds; early in the year there were a number of sightings during the middle of the day, sometimes in bright sunshine. In late May a very dark-breasted bird was in the area of Newton-on-Derwent. One bird frequented Tang Hall Beck fields, York from 26th June to 5th July.

In the SE53 area, two, possibly three, pairs bred at Milford Common, with two pairs at Ozendyke and regular sightings at Church Fenton and Wistow. In the LDV, it was a very good season with 200 chicks fledged in the valley and 136 young ringed. At Scoreby Lodge a pair reared nine young to fledging. Other sites outside of the LDV with proven breeding were Hagg Wood and Strensall Common.

The autumn and second winter period provided a large number of observations of one or two birds as young birds dispersed throughout the area.

### **Little Owl** *Athene noctua*

*Resident breeder but can be elusive*

A better year than 2013 with a reasonable number of records and breeding recorded in a number of areas. In York, singles were seen at Grosvenor Terrace and in Copmanthorpe, where one sat on a garden fence for half an hour. One was also seen during the day hunting at Towthorpe Bridge over the River Foss on two occasions. Singles were seen at a number of other sites throughout the recording area during the year.

Breeding was suspected in the Heslington Tillmire and Langwith Stray area and at Milford Common (where two pairs were reported by the farmer), and confirmed at Riccall Grange, Riccall where a pair reared three young in an old split Ash.

### **Tawny Owl** *Strix aluco*

*Resident breeder throughout the area*

Frequently heard calling at night in the beginning and end of the year with breeding confirmed at a number of sites. During January five were heard calling before dawn at Castle Howard and three were heard at Grosvenor Terrace, York, while four were heard at Bishop Wood on 28th February. At Thornton Ellers one was caught in January and found to bear a ring that was over 15 years old!

During the breeding season birds were recorded at a wide range of locations. At Bishopthorpe a pair raised three young in the Palace Grounds, with another pair at Naburn Bridge on territory. At Skipwith Common, although birds did not breed in 2013, two of seven boxes were occupied: one pair laid a single egg which was later abandoned and another laid three eggs and raised two young. At the end of June, at Bishop Wood an adult was hooting with a juvenile calling nearby and at Acaster a fledged bird, still with some fluffy feathers, was seen well and two others were in flight through trees. Two young were calling in birches on Strensall Common in early July.

Later in the year birds started calling in the hours of darkness, with three heard at Milford Common on 27th September. On 20th October one was caught before dawn at Skipwith Common in the bottom shelf of a net set for Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*.

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

*Resident breeder and winter visitor*

After no records the previous year, there were a number of sightings this year, with breeding confirmed at one location. At the beginning of the year, one with two displaced primaries flew around Tower Hide, Wheldrake Ings on 13th January, possibly after being disturbed by a shooting party in nearby Thicket Priory (DR). On 30th January one was recorded at NDC (LDV blog) and on 6th February a juvenile was picked up dead at the roadside at nearby Bubwith (DW per JAB).

On 28th March at Callis Wood one was giving an alarm call (PB) and on 24th May another was at Escrick (OM, AW). One gave reasonable views as it flew around an RSPB group on an evening visit to Strensall Common on the 21st and another bird, possibly of this species, was seen nearby two days later (PeR). Subsequently, on 1st June, a family party of two adults showed well and three young were heard calling, with one of these partially downy young also seen (DR). These birds were also heard on 8th June (PeR), and on 5th July either these (as none were present at the original site) or possibly different birds were heard 2 km away at Fox Covert, Stockton-on-the-Forest (PeR).

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

*Amber listed*

*Winter and passage visitor; casual breeder*

Like 2013, there were only a few records, following abundant sightings in 2012. One was at NDC on 13th March (DT) and up to three were seen intermittently at Milford Common between 30th September and the year end (RD, PD).

There were some late records for previous years submitted (included here for completeness), all at Milford Common: singles on 25th October and 27th December 2011, 13th March and 21st August 2012, up to four between 27th November and 21st December 2012 and one or two birds on eight dates between 2nd January and 9th April 2013 (all VP).

**Nightjar** *Caprimulgus europaeus*  
*Scarce passage migrant and breeder*

*Red listed*

A few records again this year, with birds still hanging on at two sites in the area. Two were at Yearsley Moor on 6th June including a churring male, which was later seen in display flight with a second bird in a large clear-felled area (DR). At the traditional site of Skipwith Common, although there were none in 2013, up to four males were churring over a six week period between mid-May and the end of June (MC).

**Swift** *Apus apus*  
*Migrant breeder*

*Amber listed*

The first of the year was one on 27th April at Wheldrake Ings followed by two the following day over Bootham in York, then none until 4th May when five were at Haxby and North Duffield, 30 in the LDV and one at Heslington East. Thereafter birds became widespread over the recording area with higher numbers of 30 at Heslington East and York Minster on 8th May and 150 at Wheldrake Ings on the 10th. Later in May, heavy rain forced birds into feeding low over the Ings on the 28th with 50+ at Thornton Ellers and Bank Island, 150+ over Wheldrake Ings and 30+ over North Duffield Ings, while 400 were at Wheldrake Ings the following day.

Breeding was confirmed at Westow, where birds regularly breed under pantiles and Frances Street, York where four juveniles were seen. In Ampleforth it was estimated to have been a very productive year with two, possibly three, pairs still feeding young on 12th August. In a camera box there an adult was also still roosting every night up to 12th August and a pair of non-breeders was roosting at another new nest site. Similar success was noted in Riccall where 11 nest boxes under eaves at a house have been monitored since 2009, and 2014 was the most productive year to date: nine boxes were occupied and 22 young ringed. One adult was also re-trapped from 2011.

Sixty were at Slingsby on 30th July. Return passage began to be noticed in mid-August when up to ten were noticed flying south at a number of locations. Over 100 were in passage in groups of 10-14 flying west at Poppleton from 6.00pm to 8.30pm on 13th August. A few singles were recorded at various sites at the end of the month and the last was seen on 7th September when one was flying with House Martins *Delichon urbicum* over Rawcliffe Lake York.

**Hoopoe** *Upupa epops*  
*Scarce summer visitor*

The first since 2008 was one seen all too briefly at Ampleforth on 27th April (JP). This was the seventh record for the YOC area.

**Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis*  
*Resident breeder*

*Amber listed*

Frequently recorded in ones and twos throughout the year, especially along the River Ouse, at Milford Common, at SHL and at various sites in the LDV. One was also at St. Nicholas Fields, York on 25th January.

Singles or pairs were seen during the breeding season at a number of suitable sites while pairs with broods were seen at Melbourne, Canal Head and Wheldrake Ings as well as on the River Derwent at Bank Island and NDC.

During the autumn, apart from the usual sites, on 1st October one was at Hassacarr NR and on 30th December another was on the River Foss at New Earswick NR.

**Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla*  
*Rare passage migrant*

*Red listed*

None were seen in the region in 2014, the nearest occurring tantalisingly close but sadly 300m outside the northern boundary at Oldstead on 29th August! The last one recorded in the region was in 2013.

**Green Woodpecker** *Picus viridis*  
*Resident breeder but not widespread*

*Amber listed*

Frequently seen and heard throughout the recording area, especially as single birds in areas of short grassland. Regular sightings were at Allerthorpe Common, the Heslington area, Milford, SHL and at Skipwith and Strensall Commons.

Breeding was confirmed at Naburn where four were seen on 12th July (including at least two juveniles) and at Milford Common where two juveniles were observed on the 23rd. At Skipwith Common two pairs were seen regularly in March and April and birds were also frequent at Strensall Common with four recorded during the annual MOD survey on 23rd May. Three birds were seen during September and October at Brayton Barff.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major*  
*Resident breeder*

Widespread throughout the area; frequently seen at feeders during the winter periods and heard drumming during the spring. Three were at Allerthorpe Common on 14th March and three pairs were also there in early May. Pairs were also noted at Bank Island, East Cottingwith, NDC, Skipwith Common and Thornton Ellers.

In the autumn, four were at Skipwith Common on 3rd September and four at Wheldrake Ings the following day. Later in September three were in Fulford on the 10th and the same number at Bank Island on 19th October. At Heslington a single bird was noted on feeders in 41% of recording weeks, with the main periods of absence March to mid-May, and September to December.

**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos minor*

*Red listed*

*Scarce resident and localised breeder*

The only records of this declining species were one in York on 31st March (SR per NM) and a male seen in Bishop Wood on 10th July perched on top of a tall conifer, which then disappeared into adjacent deciduous woodland; sadly not relocated despite an extensive search of the area (VP).

**Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*

*Amber listed*

*Resident breeder*

Fortunately, despite an alarming national decline in numbers, this species is still commonly encountered throughout the recording area but to a lesser extent around farms adopting more intensive agricultural practices. This is yet another species that cashed in on the 2014 vole boom with plentiful observations of family parties, including up to eight birds counted at Milford Common on 5th August alluding to decent breeding productivity. With food the least of their worries juvenile birds could concentrate on other pressing issues and on 26th September a 1st-calendar-year female Kestrel was observed mobbing an adult female Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* perched on the north face of the North West Tower several times.

**Merlin** *Falco columbarius*

*Amber listed*

*Passage migrant and winter visitor*

As to be expected, the 2014 sightings of this species were made throughout the colder months of the year, relating to wintering individuals. Sightings appear strongly associated with areas abundant in passerine prey and given the species flying speeds, sightings undoubtedly refer to the same handful of birds witnessed repeatedly on roving hunting sorties.

A bird seen on 2nd January at Church Bridge on the Pocklington Canal (DB) was most likely the bird seen at Bank Island on the 13<sup>th</sup> (CSR). One drifted over Askham Bog on 5th January and a bird was at Milford Common on the 11th. Two observations in February, on the 6th at Seavy Carr and at Ellerton on the 18th in all probability concern an adult male that was again seen in the LDV on 4th March, with an appearance at East Cottingham. A bird seen at Grimston Bar on 7th March reinforces this species affiliation with Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis*, and was no doubt in the area to take advantage of an over-wintering population of this species, alongside the healthy Linnet *Linaria cannabina* population at nearby Heslington East. The last birds of the first quarter were at Allerthorpe Golf course on 18th March and SHL on the 28th.

The LDV enticed the first of the wintering birds back with an individual seen along the Skipwith to Thorganby road on 26th November, followed by a sighting at Huby on the 29th (Birdguides). Birds continued to be seen into December with a bird back at Milford Common on the 2nd and a bird at NDC on the last day of the year.

### **Hobby** *Falco subbuteo*

#### *Passage migrant; scarce and localised breeder*

A species that is synonymous with the area's water bodies, with the greater part of sightings originating from the LDV. The River Derwent gives rise to a wealth of winged invertebrates that hatch en masse, in turn attracting Hirundines and swifts, all component parts in the diet and breeding cycle of this practised aerial acrobat. Strangely the first Hobby at Skipwith Common on 30th April was sighted almost two weeks later than the first in 2013, despite 2013 being a remarkably late spring. Another or the same bird around Skipwith on 3rd May was part of wave of newly arrived migrants that included a bird at NDC on the 14th and at Elvington airfield on the 17th lingering until 5th June. Two sightings were made on 8th June, one from Beningbrough and the other from Wheldrake Ings while the last of the June sightings was a bird at Breighton on the 10th.

A bout of mid-summer sightings seems interconnected with breeding birds with newly hatched young. With active nests, adults are known to forage up to 3-6.5 km away (Chapman, 1999; Sergio et al., 2001) which may go to explain sightings at Sherburn in Elmet on 21st July, Escrick on the 27th and Grimston on the 28th; a bird at Milford Common on 15th August and multiple sightings throughout the LDV during the same month.

Sightings increased during September as southbound passage commenced and juveniles became somewhat more independent. The LDV boasted the majority of birds with Wheldrake as the epicentre of observations, but birds also passed through Milford Common on the 12th, Askham Bog on the 21st and east over Sand Hutton on the 24th.

### **Peregrine** *Falco peregrinus*

#### *Winter and passage visitor; local breeder*

York is another area feeling the influence of the national population expansion of this species, with sightings vastly increasing as a result of higher breeding densities in the YOC area, including a newly prospecting pair on York Minster that were frequently seen in transit or hunting forays across the city skyline (see article on page 102). Although recorded throughout every month of the year, Peregrine sightings are more prolific in the area during the winter resulting from the species' increased nomadic nature that leads to an influx of immigrants. The species' penchant for wildfowl usually dictates its movements and naturally the bulk of records stem from the LDV where multiple birds regularly winter and at times can be seen hunting in unison. This species really is a one of the most adept winged assassins and it would seem that no species can rest easy given the catholic tastes of this spellbinding bird. On 5th January a 2nd-calendar-year bird made an unsuccessful pass at a Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*, a Coot *Fulica atra* and then disappeared into a flock of Woodpigeons *Columba palumbus*. An adult was seen in hot pursuit of a Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* at West Cottingwith Ings on 4th March. The most notable sighting however concerned a large juvenile female that was haunting Milford Common, Sherburn in Elmet and Ryther from August until December and had clearly had bigger fish to fry. Between harassing large gulls

this bird was observed homing in on a Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* and a Goosander *Mergus merganser*!

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

*Occasional but scarce visitor*

Only the second record since 2009, two were at St. Bedes in York on 9th January (GJ). However, the possibility that these could have been escapes from a collection cannot be discounted.

**Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus*

*Red listed*

*Rare summer migrant*

No records of this scarce migrant for 2014, the last was in 2011.

**Magpie** *Pica pica*

*Resident breeder*

Commonly seen throughout the recording area, though mostly in single figures. A notable count in the first winter period was 14 at Tang Hall, York on 19th February. Breeding was confirmed at SHL in June with three fledged young seen in August.

In the second winter period there were counts of ten at Oak Villa, Poppleton on 15th September; 11 at Heslington East on 12th December and ten at Fulford Ings on the 29th. Autumn restlessness was noted at Milford Common with birds flying at height, three northeast on 1st October and five east on the 27th.

**Jay** *Garrulus glandarius*

*Resident breeder, passage and winter visitor*

Low numbers of up to five birds were reported from suitable habitats throughout the year. Many records were from Castle Howard, the LDV and Milford Common. In the autumn and second winter period numbers increased significantly following an influx of birds from the continent. Some of these were seen closer to human habitation than usual, probably in search of food. These larger counts included six at Terrington on 21st September, six over the City of York on the 23rd and eight on Milford Common on the 27th. In the LDV, 20 were seen at Wheldrake Ings on 5th October and ten at Bank Island on the 6th. At East Moor, Sutton-on-the-Forest, 11 birds were seen on 6th November and at least nine at Kirkby Wharfe on the 8th.

**Jackdaw** *Corvus monedula*

*Resident breeder*

Many counts were of at least ten birds, with very large numbers of roosting birds reported in the first and second winter periods. Significant numbers of 100 or more were: 100 at CHL and 350 at Patefield Wood on 2nd January; 350 again at the latter and 800 at Scarthingwell on 14th January and 100 at CHL on the 18th.



In the second winter period 160 birds were seen flying south between 20th and 31st October during visible migration watches at Milford Common, including 129 birds on 29th October, and 1830 roosted at Patefield Wood on 12th December.

An almost pure white bird, with some coffee coloured patches in its wings, and pink legs was feeding at Pocklington Sewage Works on 7th September (P&SB).

### **Rook** *Corvus frugilegus*

#### *Resident breeder*

There were counts in double figures across the recording area. Significant numbers of 100 or more were: 100 at Patefield Wood on the 2nd and 14th January; 760 at SHL on the 14th and 100 at Pocklington Canal, Melbourne on the 12th and 29th. At NDC 300 were counted on 28th February; at least 100 were at Kirkby Wharfe on 6th April; 150 on 7th June and 120 on the 16th at Milford Common and 100 at Castle Howard on 14th June; 300 on the Pocklington Canal (NE from Hagg Bridge) on 12th August; 100 at Bank Island on 3rd September; over 100 at Hagg Wood on 1st October, 250 at Seaton Ross airfield on the 18th and 320 flew north over SHL on the 23rd; 200 at Wheldrake Ings on the 9th and 15th and 150 at Bank Island on 15th November. Around 540 were roosting at dusk at Patefield Wood (part of which lies inside the western boundary of the recording area) on 12th December and 100 at Forest of Galtres Golf Club, Stockton-on-Forest on the 31st.

A paper on a comprehensive census of rookeries in the YOC area in 2014 appears later in this report on page 95.

### **Carrion Crow** *Corvus corone*

#### *Resident breeder*

Many more counts were submitted in 2014 than in previous years, most of which were of fewer than 20 birds. Significant numbers were as follows: at Milford Common, 27 on 11th January, 28 on 31st March, 110 on 2nd May and 25 on 10th June. At Wheldrake Ings; 46 on 5th January, 22 on 5th October, 89 on 18th October and 65 on 15th December. Other counts were 24 near Naburn Wood (BBS count) on 26th April, 170 at Rufforth Tip (north side) on 8th September and 30 at East Moor, Sutton-on-the-Forest, on 18th November.

Evidence of breeding was recorded at Heslington Tillmire, Newton Mask and Wheldrake Ings.

### **Raven** *Corvus corax*

#### *Rare visitor*

Following regular sightings of a total of ten individual birds over the last ten years, two records were submitted in 2014. A single bird was seen at Sutton-on-the-Forest on 9th March (NAC) and two birds at Milford Common on 4th November (PD).

**Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus*

*Resident breeder and winter visitor*

A number of records throughout the recording area were submitted this year, with up to six birds at around 40 different locations. Birds were heard singing from mid-March to mid-June. Significant numbers of ten or more were as follows: 40 at Hagg Wood on 21st January and ten at Bishop Wood on the 25th; 12 (three singing) at Frog Hall, Allerthorpe Common on 15th March; 12 (11 singing) on 17th May and 17 (12 singing) on 14th June at Yearsley Moor and 14 on 30th October at Milford Common.

**Firecrest** *Regulus ignicapilla*

*Amber listed*

*Scarce passage migrant*

Not recorded in 2014 after sightings in 2010, 2011 and 2013.

**Blue Tit** *Cyanistes caeruleus*

*Resident breeder*

A large number of records of this species, many in double figures, were submitted across the whole of the recording area and throughout the year. Sightings of over 20 were: 35 on 11th January and 67 on 1st March at Brecks Farm, Haxby and 22 on 22nd October at Hassacarr NR.

Evidence of breeding was recorded at Heslington Tillmire, the LDV, SHL and Yearsley Moor, but the species bred widely throughout the area.

**Great Tit** *Parus major*

*Resident breeder*

This common species was widely reported throughout the year across the whole of the recording area, mainly in single figures. Numbers of 15 or more were as follows: 18 on 11th January and 25 on 1st March at Brecks Farm, Haxby; 15 on 20th January at Rabbit Warren Wood, Dunnington and 36 on 11th June at Heslington Tillmire.

Birds were heard singing in April and May and confirmed breeding took place at CHL, Heslington Tillmire, SHL and Yearsley Moor.

**Coal Tit** *Periparus ater*

*Resident breeder*

A common species, widely reported, mainly in single figures. However there were high numbers of ten at Skipwith Common on 4th January; 12 at Hagg Wood on 21st January; ten (seven singing) on 17th May and 15 (13 singing) on 14th June at Yearsley Moor; 23 (three singing) at Allerthorpe Common on 15th June; 11 at Skipwith Common on 3rd September and 22 at Hagg Wood on 4th November.

Five pairs nesting in boxes at SHL (which produced 37 chicks between them) and two immature birds seen at Yearsley Moor in June were the only records of breeding reported.

Birds were also heard singing at Bank Island, Castle Howard, CHL, Coneysthorpe Banks Wood, Gaterley, Heslington East, Hull Road Park, York and Strensall Common.

**Willow Tit** *Poecile montana*

*Red listed*

*Resident breeder*

Reports of ones and twos were again concentrated in the LDV where they bred with good success. Eight pairs were confirmed, with a further three pairs probable and five pairs possible. Up to five were regularly seen at Wheldrake Ings, up to four at Bank Island and up to three along Pocklington Canal, East Cottingham (a pair calling on 23rd March). In December, a total of 15 birds were trapped and ringed at Wheldrake car park, Thornton Ellers (where two pairs were estimated to have bred) and Church Bridge.

Other locations where birds were seen included Acaster, Allerthorpe GP, Ampleforth, Appleton Roebuck, Askham Bog, Bolton Ings, Castle Howard, Caulkey's Bank (Stonegrave), Coneysthorpe, Fulford Ings, Hagg Wood (Dunnington), Heslington, Milford Common and Oulston Reservoir.

**Marsh Tit** *Poecile palustris*

*Red listed*

*Resident breeder*

Recorded in ones and twos throughout the year in many locations including Bank Island, Buttercrambe, CHL, Coneysthorpe, Gilling Castle, the LDV, Rabbit Warren Wood (Dunnington), SHL and Stamford Bridge. A minimum of four birds were seen on 10th January at Askham Bog; three on 31st January at Hagg Wood; three on 13th February at Skipwith Common; three on 15th March at Allerthorpe GP; three on 2nd September at Pretty Wood, Castle Howard; three on 2nd October at Oulston Reservoir and three on 2nd November at Frog Hall, Allerthorpe Common. It was estimated that three pairs bred at Thornton Ellers.

**Bearded Tit** *Panurus biarmicus*

*Amber listed*

*Rare visitor*

This rare visitor was last recorded in 2009 and 2011 so several sightings in the autumn and second winter period represented something of a bumper year in 2014. The population on the Humber Estuary had a very successful breeding season and birds dispersing (irrupting) from this population are likely to account for these records. On 27th September at Wheldrake Ings birds were heard calling from the Pool Hide, and 14 were counted from the Swantail Hide shortly afterwards (DB). On 2nd October three birds were still present and two remained (which were a pair) from the 12th to 16th October (DB). Two birds were seen again at Wheldrake Ings on 4th December and a single bird was present at Melbourne on the 5th (LDV Blog).

**Woodlark** *Lullula arborea**Amber listed**Recent re-colonist in small numbers*

Yet again both Skipwith and Strensall Commons were the two main locations, both providing multiple sightings. The first record of the year was at Thornton Ellers (LDV Blog) on 18th February followed by sightings of up to five birds at Skipwith Common, two on the 22nd (LDV Blog), one on the 27th (DT) and five on 5th March - three birds singing and one pair on the ground (DT). Also at Skipwith Common a pair was seen on 20th March (PF); four birds, two singing, on 29th April (DB); two birds on 13th May (CD); two on 3rd June (SC) and one on the 13th (SH); three juveniles on 7th August (LDV Blog) and one bird on 2nd September (LDV Blog). Altogether, eight birds were present with four singing at Skipwith and four at another site (LDV Blog).

At Strensall Common three birds were singing on 7th March (NS); three at World's End on the 9th (PeR) and two on the 30th (M&FW). Two pairs were recorded on 10th April (PF); three birds on 17th May (PeR) and one on both the 23rd and 31st (PeR & BB). On 1st June up to four birds were present (PeR), with one bird there on 2nd September (DB).

At Allerthorpe Common two birds were seen on 14th March (JMD). A single bird was heard singing on 30th March (JLe) and 6th April (GR), with two still present on 8th June (S&PL) and 12th June (JAS).

**Skylark** *Alauda arvensis**Red listed**Resident breeder and winter visitor*

In the first winter period small numbers of up to 18 birds were present mainly in the LDV and on Milford Common where ten were seen on territory and song-flighting. There was a single bird in full song on Kimberlow Hill, Heslington East on 6th February, followed by more singing birds in the LDV on the 22nd. Records of singing birds continued during the breeding season and through summer, mainly in the LDV but also on farmland at 21 other locations within the recording area.

In the autumn, towards the end of September, birds started to form flocks again with 44 seen at Wheldrake Ings on 27th September, of which 34 were moving southeast. The highest counts came from visible migration watches at Milford Common with 671 birds flying south between 20th August and 24th November, with a peak of 157 in 3.5 hours on 27th September.

Eleven pairs were estimated to have bred at Melbourne, Seavy Carr and Thornton Ings and five to ten pairs at Heslington Tillmire. During a MOD survey at Strensall Common on 23rd May, eight territories were estimated, an increase of three from 2013.

**Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia**Amber listed**Migrant breeder and passage migrant*

The first was at Heslington East on 12th March, followed by three at Wheldrake Ings on the 17th, increasing to 17 on the 22nd. The highest count of the spring and indeed the year was 50 around three colonies in the banks of the River Ouse at Beningbrough. Birds were inspecting the artificial bank at Heslington

East on 4th May, but it was not used; however nearby soil piles contained two apparently occupied burrows on 19th May. These seemed abandoned on 5th June, but five birds were attending two fresh burrows on the 26th, though the colony appeared to be deserted at the next visit on 21st July. Breeding was recorded at SHL with perhaps seven or eight pairs.

Autumn migration was light with a maximum of ten at Wheldrake Ings on 12th and 27th July. Visible migration watches at Milford Common recorded a modest 14 moving south between 20th August and 7th September.

**Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*

*Amber listed*

*Migrant breeder and passage migrant*

A single at Wheldrake Ings on 24th March was the first, followed by two at Bank Island and one at Strensall on 3rd April. There were 50 at Wheldrake Ings on 13th April and a similar number there on 1st May.

Little information was received on breeding numbers or success; at least three pairs bred at SHL with two of the pairs having second broods noted; also a pair at Wheldrake Ings under the Andy Booth hide

Autumn records involving 100 or more were 200 moving through Ozendyke Ings on 11th August, 200 roosting at Pocklington Canal, Hagg Bridge on the 12th, 100 at Badger Bank, Westow on the 18th, 300 at Milford Common on the 26th and 100 there on the 29th when 100 were also at Knavesmire Wood, York, and 200 flew southwest at Brayton Barff in one hour on the 30th. September opened with 100 at Bank Island and 150 at Wheldrake Ings on the 1st, while the 2nd had 135 at Brecks Farm, Haxby and 120 at Milford Common. 210 passed through Bank Island on the afternoon of the 6th and 120 were at Ozendyke Ings on the 7th, when 106 flew south at Milford Common and 167 flew southeast at Wheldrake Ings on the 21st. In October, 120 passed through Wheldrake Ings after heavy rain on the 8th; the last record was of five birds there on the 23rd.

**House Martin** *Delichon urbicum*

*Amber listed*

*Migrant breeder and passage migrant*

Three were at Wheldrake Ings and one at North Duffield on 8th April and there were 25 at Wheldrake Ings on the 13th. Forty were collecting mud at North Duffield on 26th May and there were 100 at Wheldrake Ings on the 29th.

Little information was received on breeding numbers or success; two pairs on a cottage at CHL and three pairs at SHL were the only confirmed nests.

Autumn records included 60 at Wheldrake Ings on 12th July, 85 at Ellers Farm, Buttercrambe on the 30th, 160 at Gilling East on 16th August, 120 at Londesborough Lodge Farm, Dunnington on the 23rd, 75 at SHL on the 28th and 80 at Wheldrake Ings on the 31st. SHL had 140 from 1st to 5th September while North Duffield had 90 on the 5th, 44 flew west at Milford Common on the 7th, 40 were at Fulford, York on the 20th and the final record was a single flying southeast at Wheldrake Ings on the 27th.

## Rare and Scarcer Birds recorded during 2014



### Ringers' delights!

Only the second **Barred Warbler** for the area and **Cetti's Warbler** both

© Mike Jackson

Two views of the fourth **Yellow-browed Warbler** and a diagram showing diagnostic features of its wing

© David Tate

**Wing 53mm** – small for species – so probably female (Goldcrest 50-57)

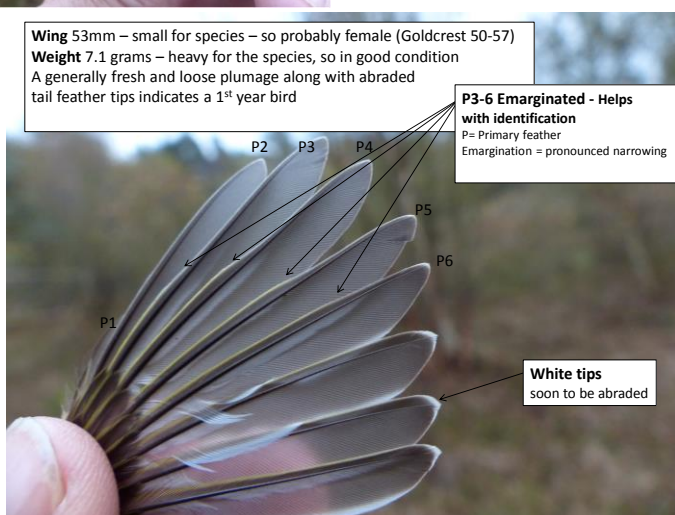
**Weight 7.1 grams** – heavy for the species, so in good condition

A generally fresh and loose plumage along with abraded tail feather tips indicates a 1<sup>st</sup> year bird

**P3-6 Emarginated - Helps with identification**

P= Primary feather

Emargination = pronounced narrowing



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

*Rare visitor*

This species has now been recorded in the area in four of the past six years. Similar to last year, there was just one record in 2014, also in October. A 1st-summer male was caught and ringed amongst poolside willows at Wheldrake Ings on the 22nd (MFJ).

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

*Resident breeder*

Widespread in single or low double figures. Records of over twenty birds were: 36 at Warren Wood, Dunnington on 20th January, 21 at Wheldrake Ings on 29th May and 25 there on 3rd September, on which date there were also 25 at Skipwith Common. Warren Wood, Dunnington had 28 on 27th December. A Heslington garden recorded their presence in 93% of recording weeks, either in flocks moving through or on feeders, with one to six birds at a time (usually two to four).

**Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus*

*Vagrant*

Another of the year's highlights, one was caught and ringed at Skipwith Common on 30th October (DT). This is only the fourth record for the club area. Further details are in the 2014 Ringing Report on page 86.

**Wood Warbler** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

*Red listed*

*Scare breeder and passage migrant*

Not recorded in 2014, the first blank year since 2003.

**Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita*

*Migrant breeder and passage migrant with some birds overwintering*

The first winter period featured singles at Rufforth on the 5th, St Nicholas Fields on 25th January and Church Bridge, Pocklington Canal on 23rd February. One at Melbourne on 5th March may also have wintered.

The first probable migrants were singles at Allerthorpe and Elvington on 9th March, records then became daily in March with eight singing at Wheldrake Ings on the 20th and nine at Coneysthorpe Bank Woods on the 23rd. Birds were widely reported in single figures and counts of ten or more were: ten at Skipwith Common on 29th April, 12 at Allerthorpe Common on the 2nd, ten at Askham Bog on the 5th and 20 at Yearsley Moor on 17th May.

Autumn records were mostly in single figures, but with 15 at Allerthorpe Gravel Pits on 24th August and 11 at Wheldrake Ings on 28th September. The final autumn record was of two at Wheldrake Ings on 20th October. Records during the second winter period involved singles at James Street, York on 28th November, the LDV on 15th and Heslington East on 31st December.

**Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus*

*Amber listed*

*Migrant breeder and passage migrant*

The first birds were two at Strensall Common on 30th March, then one at Wheldrake Ings on 1st April, three each at Skipwith Common and Wheldrake Ings on the 5th and then becoming more widespread from the 8th. Later in April ten were singing along a 3.5 km stretch of the Pocklington Canal between Hagg Bridge and Melbourne on the 18th, 12 were singing at Wheldrake Ings on the 28th and 20 were in song at Skipwith Common on the 29th. May records in double figures were; 16 at Wheldrake Ings on the 1st (and again on the 18th); 11 along the Pocklington Canal between Church Bridge and Gardham Lock on the 17th and 13 at Yearsley Moor the same day; 18 at Strensall Common on the 23rd.

Surveys for Natural England estimated that five to eight pairs bred at Heslington Tillmire, four pairs at Newton Mask SSSI and seven pairs at Melbourne and Thornton Ings SSSI.

The only autumn count in double figures was ten at Castle Howard Lake on 2nd September. The final record was of one singing at Brayton Barff on 18th September.

**Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla*

*Migrant breeder with some birds overwintering*

Overwintering birds were seen in January at Sherburn in Elmet on the 4th, Heslington from the 16th to the 22nd, and Copmanthorpe on the 21st and at Rawcliffe on 9th February. One at Bank Island on 22nd March may have been a migrant and was followed by singles at Bishopthorpe and the Yorkshire Arboretum on the 29th and Heslington on 31st March. The only records in double figures were ten at Askham Bog on 5th May, ten at Milford Common on the 16th June and 11 at Wheldrake Ings on the 28th.

Surveys for Natural England estimated that two pairs bred at Brighton Meadows, three pairs at Newton Mask SSSI and one to two pairs at Heslington Tillmire.

Autumn records included nine at Allerthorpe Gravel Pits on 24th August and eight at Hassacarr NR on the 27th, with four at Bank Island on 21st September. The last migrant was one at Bank Island on 15th November and the year ended with one at Acaster Malbis on 31st December.

**Garden Warbler** *Sylvia borin*

*Migrant breeder*

In contrast to 2013 when there were no April records, this year saw one singing at Skipwith Common on 6th April, the second earliest record there. Most records were of one or two birds, but there were five singing at Wheldrake Ings on 5th May, three at Skipwith Common on 13th May and four at Strensall Common on 1st June.

A survey for Natural England estimated that one to two pairs bred at Heslington Tillmire. The final record was a single at Acaster Selby on 24th August.



**Barred Warbler** *Sylvia nisoria*

*Rare passage migrant*

One of the birding highlights of the year for the recording area was undoubtedly the discovery of an adult female Barred Warbler (MFJ), caught, ringed and photographed early on 23rd August. A surprise find in one of Mike's mist nets by the poolside willows whilst he carried out his weekly ringing on Wheldrake Ings, it was the first reserve record for the species. As this is one of fewer than ten ever recorded inland in the county it was a great find and just reward for local patch effort (LDV blog). Sadly, on release, it was not relocated to be enjoyed by a wider audience. What may have been the same bird was seen in a mixed warbler flock at Melbourne the day before (NC).

This is only the second record for our area, the first of which also occurred in early autumn. The previous record was of a juvenile, again caught unexpectedly when it flew up into a mist net, ringed on 4th September 1983 at Anchor Plain, Strensall.

**Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia curruca*

*Migrant breeder*

Singles were at North Duffield and Bank Island on 15th April, with one at Bugthorpe on the 21st and singles at Ozendyke Ings and Milford Common on the 23rd. Two pairs were recorded at Appleton Roebuck, but records elsewhere were limited to one or two birds at Allerthorpe, Clifton Backies, East Cottingwith, Haxby, Heslington, Heslington Tillmire, Melbourne, Thornton and Wheldrake Ings. The final record was one at Melbourne on 30th August.

**Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis*

*Amber listed*

*Migrant breeder*

Singles were at Clifton Backies and Wheldrake Ings on 13th April, with three at the latter on the 19th. There were five at both Bank Island and Wheldrake Ings on 28th April, four at Skipwith Common on the 29th, and four at Kelfield Manor Farm on the 30th. Ten were at Allerthorpe Common on 2nd May, five at Haxby on the 4th, seven at Wheldrake Ings on the 24th and six north of Strensall on the 26th.

Surveys for Natural England estimated that four pairs bred at Brighton Meadows, two pairs at Newton Mask SSSI and one or two pairs at Heslington Tillmire. The last record was one at Melbourne on 16th September.

**Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella naevia*

*Red listed*

*Scarce migrant breeder*

The first was reeling at Wheldrake Ings on 26th April and singles were reeling at Melbourne, North Duffield and Storwood from 28th April. The Melbourne and Storwood birds were heard until mid-June and the last record was the North Duffield bird reeling on 19th July.

**Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

*Migrant breeder and passage migrant*

The LDV had its earliest ever record when one was seen at Bank Island on 26th March. Most records were from the LDV with ten at Wheldrake Ings on 15th April and 13 there on 4th May. Records away from the LDV were all in single figures and came from Askham Bog, CHL, Hagg Wood, Heslington East, Kelfield Manor Farm, Milford Common and Station Farm (Bolton Percy).

Surveys for Natural England of Melbourne and Thornton Ings SSSI estimated that one pair bred at Seavy Carr, 13 pairs on Thornton Ings and 11 on Melbourne Ings.

**Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

*Migrant breeder and passage migrant*

The first was singing at Wheldrake Ings on 17th April, with two at CHL on the 25th and 12 at Wheldrake Ings on the 27th. Surveys for Natural England estimated that three pairs bred at Brighton Meadows and five pairs along the Melbourne Ings stretch of the Pocklington Canal.

As with Sedge Warbler most records were from the LDV, but birds were also recorded at Allerthorpe GP, CHL, Heslington East, Milford Common and SHL. The singing male at Heslington East on 11th June was the first record for that site and was still present on the 26th. Fourteen were at Allerthorpe GP on 24th August and the final record was a single at Wheldrake Ings on 28th September.

**Waxwing** *Bombycilla garrulus*

*Occasional winter visitor though more regular in recent years*

A rather quiet year with just a handful of single bird sightings from February through to early April, from Strensall and Woodthorpe plus Huntingdon Road and Grosvenor Terrace in York. In the latter half of the year one was reported from a garden in Beckfield Lane on 5th November and there was also a report of some at Gilling in early December (RNH)

**Nuthatch** *Sitta europaea*

*Local resident breeder*

Widely reported all year, with single figure counts coming from suitable habitats throughout the region, Brayton Barff and the Castle Howard Estate being the main strongholds. Also regularly reported from Bishop Wood, Kirkby Wharfe and the YWT Moorlands reserve. A notable sighting was from Bank Island on 31st January.

**Treecreeper** *Certhia familiaris*

*Resident breeder*

Very common and widespread with single figure counts coming from a wide range of sites throughout the recording area. The only double figure counts were ten at Bishop Wood on 28th February and 18 at Hagg Wood on 1st October.



**Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes*

*Resident breeder*

A common and widespread breeder, high counts were of eight at Allerthorpe GP on 9th March and 11 at Naburn Wood BBS square on 26th April and again on 15th June.

**Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris*

*Red listed*

*Resident breeder and winter visitor*

Common and widespread with flocks of several hundred birds regularly reported, the most notable sighting was of 1210 flying west during a visible migration watch at South Milford Common on 28th October. In 2013 there were three counts of over 1000 birds; it will be interesting to see whether smaller flock sizes will be a continuing trend or whether larger flocks were just under-reported during 2014.

**Ring Ouzel** *Turdus torquatus*

*Red listed*

*Very scarce passage migrant*

A single female was seen at Bank Island on 9th October when its arrival coincided with a small movement of Blackbirds *Turdus merula* through the site (CSR).

**Blackbird** *Turdus merula*

*Resident breeder, passage migrant and winter visitor*

Very common resident, with many continental birds seen during the winter months. The only notable count this year was of 100+ at Wheldrake lngs on 30th October, no doubt relating to an autumn arrival of continental birds.

**Fieldfare** *Turdus pilaris**Red listed**Winter visitor and passage migrant*

Common and widely reported throughout the recording area during both winter periods with the last bird of the first winter period at Sherburn in Elmet on 4th May and the first returning bird at Wheldrake Ings on 6th October.

Quite often encountered in large flocks, counts of 150 or more included:

2nd January, Terrington - 170

10th January, Melbourne - 155

24th January, by the A19 at Riccall - 150

31st January, Kirkby Wharfe - 150

7th February, Langwith Lane, Heslington - up to 300

26th February, Cotril Farm, Terrington - 200

5th March, North Duffield Carrs - 230

8th March, Colton - 300

20th March, Red House Reservoir - 475

30th October, LDV - 1000+

30th October - Wharfe Ings - 556 flying southwest, then 329 southwest on 1st November and 360 southwest on the 8th

31st October, Milford Common - 658 flying southwest

6th November, Easingwold Golf Course - 350

6th November, Sherburn in Elmet - 250

21st November, Bolton Ings - 250, and again on 7th December

**Song Thrush** *Turdus philomelos**Red listed**Resident breeder, passage migrant and winter visitor*

Reported widely throughout the area, all year, though only in small numbers. Highest counts were ten at Yearsley Moor on 17th May and, later in the year, 13 at Milford Common on 30th September that were probably autumn arrivals, as were 20 over Ampleforth on 16th October.



**Redwing** *Turdus iliacus**Red listed**Winter visitor and passage migrant*

Common and widely reported throughout the recording area during both winter periods, with the last birds of the first winter period being six at Londesborough Lodge Farm on 6th April and the first returning birds reported from several locations on 11th October. Notable counts in excess of 120 included:

2nd January, around the Grosvenor Terrace area - 250

25th February, Heslington West playing fields - 190

22nd March, Ellerton - 200+

16th October, Ampleforth - 750

29th October, Milford Common (during visible migration watch) –120 over with

1774 on the 31st

30th October, LDV - 2000

1st November, Wharfe Ings - 244, with 140 on the 8th

19th November, Milford Common - 200

7th December, Bolton Ings - 150

12th December, Heslington East - 250

**Mistle Thrush** *Turdus viscivorus**Amber listed**Resident breeder, passage migrant and winter visitor*

Reported widely throughout the recording area in small numbers, generally one to three birds; six were seen together at Coneysthorpe on 9th January, while the highest count was 15 feeding on elderberries at Hassacarr NR on 27th August.

**Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata**Red listed**Migrant breeder and passage visitor*

A good number of records again this year with the first bird of the spring noted at Brayton Barff on 1st May but it was towards the end of the month before birds were more widely reported.

Breeding was confirmed at Acaster, Brayton Barff (5 pairs), Coxwold, Selby and Skipwith Common. A nest with five well grown young was seen at Nunnington Hall on 23rd June. Birds were also reported from Allerthorpe Woods, Appleton Roebuck, Byland Abbey, Calley Heath, Escrick, Gilling Park, Melbourne, Naburn, SHL, Stockton-on-the-Forest, Strensall Common, Welburn, West Ness, Wheldrake Ings and Yearsley Moor. The last bird of the year was a single at Brayton Barff on 17th September.

**Robin** *Erithacus rubecula**Resident breeder*

Common and widespread, some notable counts included:

9th March, Dringhouses - 10

9th March, Allerthorpe GP - 12

2nd September, SHL - 10, with 15 there on the 16th

5th September, Stamford Bridge - 10 and again on 15th October

15th October, SHL - 12

**Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*  
*Migrant breeder and passage migrant*

*Amber listed*

A bird singing by Castle Howard Lake on 25th April was the first of the year with another near Byland on the 27th and a male back on territory at Skipwith Common for the third year on the 29th. Singles were also reported late April/May from the Castle Howard Estate and Yearsley Moor. Passage birds were noted at Wheldrake Ings on 13th August and Melbourne on the 22nd.

**Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra*  
*Former migrant breeder and passage migrant*

*Amber listed*

Just one spring record of a bird at Whitwell Grange near Whitwell-on-the-hill on 15th May. Late summer sightings in the LDV included up to two birds at Wheldrake Ings from 23rd August into early September, with other records from Bank Island, Hagg Bridge and NDC during the same period. Singles were also seen at Milford Common on 31st August, near Sutton-on-the-Forest on 9th September and West Lilling on the 17th, with three at NDC on the 20th being the last.

**Stonechat** *Saxicola rubicola*  
*Casual breeder and passage visitor, sometimes over-winters*

Early in the year a female at Skipwith Common on 4th and 5th March was the only record. Later in the year a single was reported from Allerthorpe Common on 12th June, with another seen at Strensall Common on 18th July. During October, one was seen at Strensall Common on the 8th, with another at Poppleton on the 11th and two or three reported from Milford Common from the 17th to the 20th, while a couple of birds at NDC on the 23rd remained to the end of the year.

**Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe*  
*Summer visitor and passage migrant*

*Amber listed*

Rather late back this year with the first bird being reported from NDC on 9th April. Two were at Bubwith Ings the next day, with a scattering of ones and twos throughout the LDV thereafter; up to three were at Heslington East from 11th April, with at least 14 there on 8th May. Individuals were also reported from CHL, Heslington Tillmire and Strensall Common during this period.

Return passage involved just a handful of singletons from 14th August, with records coming from Londesborough Lodge Farm, NDC, Thorganby Ings and Scagglethorpe Moor, with the last from Poppleton on 2nd October.

**Dunnoch** *Prunella modularis*  
*Resident breeder throughout the area*

*Amber listed*

This species continues to be common and widespread, if under-recorded in the YOC area. At the beginning of the year the largest count was of eight at Brecks Farm, Haxby on 11th January. The only breeding data received was of two pairs at Heslington Tillmire, although singing birds were reported from several locations.

Finally, a count of 11 at Wheldrake Ings on 27th September was the highest of the year.

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*

*Red listed*

*Resident breeder*

Like Dunnock, another under-recorded species. Associated with built-up areas and farms, peak counts were significantly higher than in 2013 which was encouraging after the recent pattern of reduced counts. Peak counts at the beginning of the year came in January with 45 on the 11th at Brecks Farm, Haxby and 50 at East Cottingwith on the 19th.

The only report of breeding came from a garden in Strensall where nest boxes were used. A flock at Brecks Farm, Haxby increased from 120 on 6th August to a peak of 200 on 2nd September, but had reduced to 65 by 9th November.

**Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus*

*Red listed*

*Resident breeder*

During the course of the year the largest gatherings were once again in the LDV where feeding stations at Bank Island and North Duffield Carrs show how important this supplementary feeding is along with the provision of nest boxes. Peaks counts during January included, 100 at Bank Island and 60 at NDC. Away from the LDV, 40 were at Hagg Wood on 8th January, with 25 at Allertorpe Gravel Pits on 9th March.

Breeding activity was noted at Bank Island where nine pairs used the nest boxes there, with three pairs at Heslington Tillmire, while a pair at Upper Poppleton produced three broods. Breeding was also confirmed at Bishopthorpe (two small colonies), Castle Howard and up to four pairs at SHL.

Post breeding counts included 50 at South Duffield on 15th August and 45 at Londesborough Lodge Farm on 25th October. At Bank Island numbers peaked at 60 during October and November. Visible migration watches at Milford Common recorded 16 flying south and seven north between 9th and 31st October. In November, 200 present at Thornton Ellers was the largest flock of the year.

**Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava*

*Red listed*

*Migrant breeder and passage migrant*

The first record of the year came on 5th April (compared with the 13th in 2013) when a single flew north over a garden at North Duffield. However the next report wasn't until the 17th when a flock of 12 were at Thornton, with two at Wheldrake Ings the same day. Compared to 2013 when over 200 roosted at North Duffield during April, there was no repeat of such large numbers during 2014. During the rest of April only one to three were reported from several sites, with a peak of 20 at Seavy Carr, Thornton on the 28th.

Single figures were typically recorded from May onwards, including two pairs displaying at Eastmoor on 18th May and eight in fields to the north of Strensall on 26th May. Birds continued to be recorded in suitable breeding habitat during the summer, with confirmation of breeding received from near Naburn Wood, where a

pair was seen with at least one young, while a juvenile at Milford Common in July was thought to have been bred locally and an adult was feeding two fledged young at SHL on 1st August. Three pairs were also present on Melbourne & Thornton Ings and breeding was also confirmed at Scoreby Lodge.

Return passage was noted from the second half of August with the largest counts coming from Wheldrake Ings where southerly passage included 12 on the 24th, 20 the next day and five on the 28th. Visible migration counts at Milford Common recorded 22 flying south between 22nd August and 23rd September with a peak of five on 7th September. In September, 11 were present at Scoreby Lodge on the 1st, while eight were at Heslington East on the 4th and ten were at Thornton on the 10th. The final record of the year was of two at Ellerton on 28th September.

### **Blue-headed Wagtail** *Motacilla flava flava*

No reports during 2014, following a good spring passage in April 2013

### **Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*

*Amber listed*

*Resident breeder and winter visitor*

At the beginning of the year ones and twos were reported from widespread locations, typically from water courses and the area's sewage works, including birds in York City Centre. Breeding was again under-recorded with the only confirmation received from Hassacarr NR where a pair produced two young.

Visible Migration Watches at Milford Common recorded ten flying south and one north between 7th September and 5th November with a peak of three on 21st September. Post breeding counts included, in September, three at Bank Island on 21st, where one spent much of October attacking its reflection in car wing mirrors. Also in September, three were at Heslington on the 22nd and the same number at Wheldrake Ings on the 28th, while two were regularly seen to the year end at Rawcliffe Lake. On 11th October, three were at Allerthorpe GP. A single visited a garden in Dringhouses on 28th October, a first for the observer.

### **Pied Wagtail** *Motacilla alba*

*Resident breeder*

The winter roost in the St Sampson's/Parliament Street area of central York peaked at 375 in January, with 250 still present in early March. Also at the beginning of the year, 13 were at Wheldrake Ings on 4th January, while in February, 12 were at Bank Island on the 9th with 22 at Pocklington Canal at Melbourne the next day.

Breeding was under-recorded but evidence was received from Appleton Roebuck, Heslington Tillmire, SHL, Thornton, and Wheldrake Ings. During June and July, 11 roosted in set-aside at Hagg Wood.

On 15th August, 12 were at Milford Common, where visible migration watches recorded 318 flying south between 20th August and 24th November with a peak of 52 on 27th September. Also in September, 25 were in fields in Castle Howard on the 2nd, with 50 at Heslington East on the 4th. September also saw the start of the



York City Centre roost with a pre-roost flock of 150 present on the 26th, with 300 at roost here during December. In November, 18 were at Church Bridge on the 9th, with 58 at Milford Common on the 16th and 131 flew north at dusk over Milford Common on the 30th which were thought to be roosting at Sherburn WTW.

All reports of the subspecies, White Wagtail *Motacilla alba alba*, came during the spring. The first record of the year was of three at NDC on 23rd March (LDV Blog). In April a single was at Bubwith on the 10th (LDV Blog), with three at Seavy Carr on the 17th (LDV Blog) and again on the 28th (CG).

**Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis*

*Red listed*

*Migrant breeder though numbers have recently declined*

This species continues to be recorded as a breeding bird in suitable habitat in the area. The first records of the year came in April with a single singing at Terrington on the 19th, followed by three singing males at Skipwith Common on the 22nd, rising to five here by the 29th.

Reports during the summer were localised with breeding confirmed at Skipwith Common, Strensall Common - with an estimated four territories (compared with three in 2013) - and at Milford Common where a single pair bred. At Yearsley Moor a singing male was present on 17th May with two there on 6th June.

Visible migration watches at Milford Common produced single birds flying south on 29th August and on the 2nd and 14th September, with two south there on 7th September. Also in September a single was still at Skipwith Common on the 11th, while a single at Wheldrake Ings on the 21st was the last report of the year.

**Meadow Pipit** *Anthus pratensis*

*Amber listed*

*Resident and migrant breeder and passage migrant*

At the beginning of the year, peak counts in January included 12 at Heslington East on the 3rd and 14 at Milford Common on the 11th. On 9th March, 30 were at Heslington East.

Display was first noted on 9th April with a single at Brighton. Breeding was better reported than in 2013 when none were confirmed. At Gunby Ings, two pairs bred, with an estimated ten to 14 pairs at Heslington Tillmire and 11 pairs on Melbourne and Thornton Ings. Breeding was also confirmed at Milford Common.

Visible migration watches at Milford Common recorded a total of 1685 flying south between 20th August and 24th November with a peak of 358 on 27th September. Counts at Milford Common also included 304 on the 7th, 201 on the 9th and 124 on 14th September, while in October, 104 were counted on the 8th after which only smaller numbers were recorded.

Also in September, 50 flew south at Wheldrake Ings on the 5th, with 85 in stubble at Londesborough Lodge Farm on the 8th and 60 at North Duffield CARRS on the 9th. In October, 21 were present at Heslington East on the 23rd, with 17 at Sherburn in Elmet on 22nd November and 26 were at Heslington East on 12th December.

**Rock Pipit** *Anthus petrosus*

*Scarce, mainly winter visitor*

No reports during 2014: last record 2012

**Water Pipit** *Anthus spinoletta*

*Amber listed*

*Rare winter visitor and passage migrant*

No reports during 2014. Annual since 2010, last recorded in 2013.

**Brambling** *Fringilla montifringilla*

*Winter visitor and passage migrant*

A seemingly poor year with only one count above single figures during the course of the year. In January, a single was in NDC car park on the 4th, while the next day, Bird Race day, records included singles at Poppleton, Castle Howard and Welburn Sewage Works, with two in Buttercrambe Wood. Also in January, four were in Brayton Barff on the 10th, with two at Appleton Roebuck on the 27th and eight along the Pocklington Canal at Melbourne on the 30th. The only reports in February were of a single at Upper Poppleton on the 11th and 13 at Canal Head, Pocklington on the 25th, the highest count of the year. March saw the last reports of the first winter period with four at Melbourne on the 5th and a single by Menethorpe suspension bridge on the 14th.

The first of the autumn was one flying south at Brayton Barff on 11th October and three were present there on 18th October. Also in October, singles were at Bank Island on the 14th, Ampleforth on the 16th, Milford Common on the 20th and 23rd and south over North Duffield on the 23rd. On 31st October, two flew southwest over Milford Common. The only other reports both came in November with singles at Allerthorpe GP on the 2nd and at a Poppleton garden bird table on the 17th.

**Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs*

*Resident breeder, passage and winter visitor*

This species continues to be common and widespread throughout the region. In the first winter period counts of 25 or more were: 80 at Hagg Wood on 21st January, 100 at Seavy Carr on 29th January, 30 at the Yorkshire Arboretum, Castle Howard on 16th March and 100 at Brough Plantation, Bossall on 2nd April.

Few breeding reports were received although an estimated seven to eight pairs bred at Heslington Tillmire, with an estimated eight pairs at Newton Mask SSSI, while a BBS survey near Naburn Wood on 15th June produced a count of 20.

Post breeding, visible migration watches at Milford Common recorded 110 flying south between 20th August and 13th December with a peak of 16 on 23rd September. On 27th September, 20 were at Wheldrake Ings. In October, 26 flew south at Brayton Barff on the 11th, with 19 southwest at Wharfe Ings (Cawood) on the 31st. On 16th November, 40 were present at Aughton Ings and finally 25 were at Wheldrake Ings on 21st December.

**Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula**Amber listed**Resident breeder, passage and winter visitor*

At the beginning of the year the only counts of ten or more of this still widespread species were of an impressive 25 near Moor Monkton on 14th January and 15 at Milford Common on 2nd February.

The only breeding information came from Heslington Tillmire where a pair was suspected and SHL where a pair held territory and were seen feeding young at the end of August. Although breeding was not confirmed, post breeding counts of ten or more included 16 at Wheldrake Ings on 3rd August, with 14 there on 4th September and 15 there on 12th October. On 30th October, 16 were at Milford Common. Visible migration watches recorded nine flying south at Milford Common between the 19th and 28th October and five south at Wharfe Ings on 8th November.

**Haфинch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes**Red listed**Rare winter visitor*

The first record of the year came on Bird Race day when a single was at Castle Howard on 5th January (PD). The only other report was of a single which flew south over Milford Common on 20th October (PD).

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

At the beginning of the year the only counts of 20 or more were: 100 at Seavy Carr on 29th January (the highest count of the year) and 50 at Beningbrough Hall on 19th February. On 14th March, 18 were present along the Pocklington Canal from Coates Bridge to Thornton. At York University, 17 were present on 12th April.

Few breeding reports were received, although displaying and singing birds were widespread, while confirmation was only received from Heslington Tillmire, where a single bird held territory. The return of a bird to a garden in Strensall after a two year absence demonstrates recent declines due to Trichomonosis disease.

Post breeding flocks included 50 at Sheriff Hutton on 17th September, while in October, 20 were at Hagg Wood on the 1st and 85 at Londesborough Lodge Farm on the 25th. Finally, 16 at Hagg Wood on 4th November was the last report in double figures to the year end.

**Linnet** *Linaria cannabina**Red listed**Resident breeder, passage and winter visitor*

During the first winter period this is a species which can be difficult to find, however localised flocks are often present. Counts of 30 or more in January were 40 at Castle Howard on the 5th, 60 at Heslington East on the 16th and impressive counts of 200 at Barby sewage works on the 22nd and 180 at Riccall also on the 22nd. Reports increased during March as birds returned to the area to breed. On 1st March, 60 were still at Barby sewage works, with 20 at Castle Howard on 23rd March. In April some flocks were still in evidence with 50 at Brighton on the 9th,

20 at Hagg Wood on the 10th and 40 at Heslington East on the 12th. On 5th May there was a count of 19 on Milford Common.

Breeding was confirmed at Appleton Roebuck, Gunby Ings and Newton Mask SSSI where single pairs were present, while six pairs were located on Melbourne and Thornton Ings. At Heslington Tillmire, up to 11 pairs held territory. The MOD survey at Strensall Common located five territories (compared with four in 2013, and seven in 2012).

Post breeding, flocks in August included 100 at Milford Common on the 18th and 95 at Londesborough Lodge Farm on the 23rd. In September further flocks developed with 60 at Hagg Wood on the 2nd, 40 at Wheldrake Ings on the 4th, 200 at Lilling Bottom on the 17th, and the largest count of the year of 300 at Derwent Cottage Farm on the 20th. Visible Migration Watches at Milford Common recorded 233 flying south and 30 north between 12th August and 5th November, with peaks of 41 south on 27th September, 46 south and 11 northwest on 1st October and 57 south on 19th October. On 1st October 50 were still at Hagg Wood. The only other counts over 20 came from Milford Common with 35 on 23rd October and 85 there on 9th December.

**Twite** *Linaria flavirostris*

*Red listed*

*Very scarce winter visitor*

The only record of the year was of a single flying west over Bank Island on 25th October (CSR), the first record since 2012.

**Lesser Redpoll** *Acanthis cabaret*

*Red listed*

*Resident breeder, passage and winter visitor*

In a poor year for the species, flocks at the beginning of the year were substantially smaller than seen in 2013, when one flock numbered 200. In January, 15 were at Brayton Barff on the 10th, with two at Milford Common the next day and a single at SHL on the 14th. A mixed flock with Siskin reported from Askham Bog during January contained 15 Redpoll sp. on the 22nd. Small numbers continued to be reported during February, including three in a Heslington garden on the 7th, six in a Strensall garden on the 17th and four at Milford Common on the 28th. March saw up to three continue to visit a garden in Strensall, while 16 were at Angram ponds, Riccall on the 1st, with one or two reported at Allerthorpe Common, Brecks Farm, Haxby, Copmanthorpe, Church Bridge, Melbourne and Coneysthorpe Banks Wood. Four also visited a garden in Upper Poppleton during February and March. Also in March, 10 Redpoll sp. were at Skipwith Common. On 1st April, ten were present at Skipwith Common.

This species hasn't been confirmed as a breeding species in the area for the last couple of years, with only a handful of sightings during the summer. After a male at Milford Common on 9th April the only record until September was of a single at Allerthorpe Common on 25th May.

The first reports of returning birds were of Redpoll sp. passing over Milford Common during September with a single on the 27th and two on the 28th. A flock of 40 were at Skipwith Common in October, when 11 were at Church Bridge,

Melbourne on 22nd and three flew southwest over Milford Common on 31st October. In November, reports included four at Thornton Ellers and a single southeast over Wharfe Ings, both on the 5th, with seven south over Wheldrake Ings on the 15th. On 6th December a small flock was at Heslington Tillmire and three were at Allerthorpe GP. Also in December, ten were at Sand Hutton on the 13th, with 20 at Melbourne on the 19th, and two at Bishop Wood on the 24th. On 15th December, 17 Redpoll sp. were at Allerthorpe Common.

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

*Scarce winter visitor*

This species has been an annual visitor to the area since 2008. The only report during the first half of the year was of a single at Skipwith Common on 1st April (DT). The next records came in November, with a single at SHL on the 6th (PB) and an impressive 20 in a mixed finch flock at Allerthorpe Common on the 22nd (IA). The final record of the year was of a single at Melbourne on 19th December (NC).

**Crossbill** *Loxia curvirostra*

*Casual breeder and passage migrant*

A poor year for this species after good numbers recorded over the previous couple of years. At the beginning of the year, January saw birds at Castle Howard with singles on the 1st and 5th, 25 on the 2nd and six on the 5th. Also in January, nine were at Yearsley Moor on the 5th and a single there on the 8th. On 21st February ten were at Gilling Woods. In March up to 32 were present at Allerthorpe Common including nine heard singing on the 30th and a single was at Yorkshire Arboretum, Castle Howard on the 16th. On 20th April, a small flock was at Hagg Wood. The next record was of four at Sherburn in Elmet on 11th June.

The final records of the year came in August from Milford Common with five flying northeast on the 23rd and four southwest on the 24th.

**Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis*

*Resident breeder, passage and winter visitor*

Flock sizes were below expected at the beginning of the year, with, in January, 15 at Castle Howard on the 2nd and 14 at St Nicholas Fields on the 25th. In March, 19 were at Allerthorpe Common on the 14th and 20 were at the Yorkshire Arboretum, Castle Howard on the 16th.

The only breeding data received were of two pairs at Heslington Tillmire and at Newton Mask SSSI.

Post breeding flocks were reported from July with 50 at Heslington East on the 21st, peaking at 140 by 25th September. In August, 70 were at Milford Common, peaking at an impressive 170 on 9th October. Visible migration watches at Milford Common recorded 182 flying south between 31st August and 5th November with a peak of 29 on 29th September. Also in September, 32 were at Rufforth Tip on the 8th and 100 at Brayton Barff on the 18th. On 12th October 32 were at Wheldrake Ings. In December, 50 were still at Heslington East, while 90 were

present at Milford Common. Also in December, smaller flocks included 30 at Gilling on the 7th, 28 at Hassacarr NR on the 10th and 31 at Castle Howard on the 28th.

### **Siskin** *Spinus spinus*

*Resident breeder in small numbers, passage and winter visitor*

During the first winter period flocks of over 30 included in January, 50 along the Pocklington Canal at Melbourne on the 6th, 40 at Milford Common on the 11th, 100 at Askham Bog on the 25th and 50 at Thornton Ellers on the 30th. The peak count during February was of 20 at Milford Common on the 28th, with small numbers recorded at several sites from March onwards.

Few reports were received during the breeding season with two at Skipwith Common, three at SHL and a single along the Pocklington Canal at Melbourne all coming in April. Also in April birds were visiting a Strensall Garden up to the 20th. Yearsley Moor then provided the only other sightings with six on 17th May and a single on 14th June, the last report until September.

Post breeding, six flying south and two north at Milford Common on 23rd September were the first of the autumn. October saw reports increase with seven south over Brayton Barff on the 11th and a westerly passage was noted at Ampleforth on the 16th including one flock of 75. Single figures were recorded during the rest of October. On 5th November, 25 were at Thornton Ellers, with 60 there during December.

### **Yellowhammer** *Emberiza citrinella*

*Red listed*

*Resident breeder, passage and winter visitor*

The peak counts were similar to those seen during 2013. In January flocks included 20 at Welburn on the 2nd, 37 at Dunnington Common on the 10th and 31 at Cornfield NR, Rawcliffe on the 29th. February saw 20 at Milford Common on the 2nd, with 42 at Heslington Tillmire on the 18th and 20 at Seaton Ross on the 28th. March saw numbers drop as singing birds were reported at numerous sites, suggesting it remains a widespread breeder in low densities. In April, 25 were at Londesborough Lodge Farm on the 6th and 30 were at Bubwith on the 10th. At Allerthorpe Common on 15th June, a count of 20 included 14 singing males.

During the breeding season the annual MOD survey at Strensall Common located two territories compared with five in 2013 and two in 2012. Elsewhere, single pairs were present at Newton Mask SSSI and Heslington Tillmire.

Post breeding, generally single figures were reported from widespread sites, with peak counts during September being 25 at Hovingham on the 8th and 35 at Londesborough Lodge Farm on the 14th. Visible migration watches at Milford Common recorded 24 flying south and two north between 7th September and 5th November, with a peak of four south on 31st October. Thirty were in stubble fields at SHL on 12th December. The largest count of the year finished the year off with 50 at Ampleforth on 26th December.

**Reed Bunting** *Emberiza schoeniclus**Amber listed**Resident breeder and passage visitor*

Recorded throughout the year in suitable habitat. Counts of 20 or more during the first winter period included 25 at the Pocklington Canal, Melbourne and 20 at Milford Common, both on 11th January. On 23rd February, 20 were at Storwood. A count of 20 along the Pocklington Canal from East Cottingwith to Church Bridge included four singing males on 8th March. On 24th March, 60 were at Cornfield NR, Rawcliffe, with 50 at Bubwith rail trail on 10th April.

During the breeding season, survey work by Natural England identified 16 pairs at Wheldrake Ings, 12 pairs at East Cottingwith Ings, ten pairs at Ellerton Ings and a total of 22 pairs on Melbourne and Thornton Ings. Elsewhere five pairs bred at Heslington Tillmire, with three pairs at both Newton Mask SSSI and Gunby Ings and a single pair at Breighton Meadows. At Strensall Common, seven singing males were present, a decrease on the 14 territories identified during 2013.

Post breeding, 100 were at Wheldrake Ings on 20th September, the largest count of the year, with 50 at North Duffield Carrs the same day. Visible migration watches at Milford Common recorded 73 flying south and seven north between 7th September and 5th November, with a peak of 16 south on 9th October. In November, 78 came into roost at Church Bridge on the 9th, the same day as a roost of 14 was reported at CHL. On 20th November, 48 were at Melbourne.

**Corn Bunting** *Emberiza calandra**Red listed**Resident breeder*

The York area continues to hold one of the best populations of this UK Red listed species in Yorkshire. It is now scarce or absent from large areas in the county. January saw flock and roost sizes significantly down compared with 2013, when several sites held over 100 birds. In January peak counts included 45 coming into roost at Church Bridge on the 5th, 40 at Dunnington Common on the 10th, and 46 at Thornton Lock, Pocklington Canal on the 21st. The roost at Church Bridge held 50 during February. On 28th February, 15 were at Seaton Ross. On 10th March 26 were at Cornfield NR, Rawcliffe, while in April 30 were at Bubwith rail trail on the 10th and 35 were still at Dunnington Common on the 17th.

Singing males were reported from February onwards, with reports during the breeding season including six at Allerthorpe Common, five at Thornton, four at West Lilling, three at Eastmoor, two at Ouse Moor, Poppleton, two at Towthorpe and single pairs at Heslington Tillmire and Sherburn in Elmet. There was also a surprise minor colonisation of the LDV SSSI with a total of eight singing birds at Wheldrake Ings, East Cottingwith, Bubwith Ings and Aughton Ings. A nest was located with five eggs at Kelfield but unfortunately was predated by Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*.

Post breeding, numbers were lower than at the beginning of the year with 12 at Dunnington Common on 2nd September. On 9th November, nine were at East Moor, Sutton-on-the-Forest. Ten flew over SHL on 8th December. The roost at Church Bridge increased from eight on 9th November to 30 on 29th December.

## Appendix A: Category E

### **Black Swan** *Cygnus atratus*

Most records this year were from Heslington East, NDC and Wheldrake, apart from a pair reported at Everingham in June. All the Wheldrake and NDC sightings were of single birds. The pair at Heslington West bred and the female was seen with two cygnets on 18th July. Confusingly, the male from this pair died in April and a different adult male was reported at Heslington East in early August, presumably a wandering bird. One Black Swan was constantly associated with a pair of Mute Swans and their cygnets from early September to the year-end at Heslington East. A juvenile was also present on 7th November.

### **Barnacle Goose** *Branta leucopsis*

Members of the flock at York University were recorded in most months at Heslington East or Heslington West, apart from January (no reports), with a maximum of 30 birds recorded across both sites in August, indicating that the population has remained stable since the cull last year

### **Snow Goose** *Anser caerulescens*

The only reports were one on 3rd January at Heslington East, then five at Heslington West on 7th October and 28 there on 27th December; all these sightings being of members of the free-flying flock resident at the university.

## Appendix B: Hybrids

### **Canada x Greylag Goose**

One was reported at the Old Gravel Pits, Allerthorpe on 1st June and one there on 2nd November.

### **Aythya hybrid**

One reported at Newburgh Priory on 2nd November.

## Appendix C: Unproven records

The following records, all of which require descriptions to be submitted for validation by the appropriate authority (BBRC, YNURC, YOC recorder) were received for the 2014 report. In each case either no description was forthcoming or the description was insufficiently detailed to confirm identification.

**Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* Bank Island 13th June

**Spotted Crane** *Porzana porzana* Wheldrake Ings 6th August

**Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros* Railway Museum, York 1st June



## Earliest and latest dates for summer visitors/passage migrants

Species	Arrival Date/First Reported	Last Reported
Garganey	5th April	14th August
Quail	1st June	15th June
Osprey	5th April	14th September
Hobby	30th April	28th September
Oystercatcher	6th February	3rd December
Little Ringed Plover	7th April	27th July
Ringed Plover	13th March	25th August
Whimbrel	19th April	25th November (very late bird!)
Common Sandpiper	7th April	10th September
Greenshank	17th April	21st November
Wood Sandpiper	5th August (only record of year)	-
Common Tern	9th April	14th September
Turtle Dove	26th April	31st August
Cuckoo	12th April	27th August
Nightjar	6th June	30th June
Swift	27th April	7th September
Sand Martin	17th March	21st September
Swallow	24th April	23rd October
House Martin	8th April	27th September
Wood Warbler	- (not seen in 2014)	-
Chiffchaff †	14th March	20th October
Willow Warbler	30th March	18th September
Blackcap *	22nd March	29th October
Garden Warbler	6th April	9th September
Lesser Whitethroat	15th April	15th September
Whitethroat	13th April	16th September
Grasshopper Warbler	26th April	16th July
Sedge Warbler	26th March	28th September
Reed Warbler	25th April	29th September
Spotted Flycatcher	1st May	17th September
Redstart	25th April	28th August
Whinchat	15th May	20th September
Wheatear	9th April	2nd October
Yellow Wagtail	5th April	28th September
Tree Pipit	19th April	21st September

† Overwintering birds seen on 28th November and 15th & 31st December

\* Overwintering birds seen on 4th & 16th - 22nd January, 9th February, 15th November & 31st December

## Earliest and latest dates for winter visitors/passage migrants

Species	Last reported in Spring	First reported in Autumn
Bewick's Swan	(none reported)	6th December
Whooper Swan	3rd May	6th October
Pink-footed Goose	15th May (long staying individual)	21st September
Wigeon‡	29th April	19th September
Teal *	29th April	19th August
Pintail	14th June	17th October
Goldeneye	5th April	25th October
Goosander	14th July	14th October
Golden Plover	11th May	20th August
Ruff	2nd May	16th August
Dunlin	29th May	25th June
Green Sandpiper	15th April	15th June
Jack Snipe	2nd May	15th November
Fieldfare	4th May	6th October
Redwing	6th April	11th October
Brambling	14th March	11th October

‡ Excluding small number of potential breeders (see RBBP Report on page 83).

\* Small numbers (<25) remained in the LDV throughout the summer.



**Goosander** - a regular winter visitor © Nigel Stewart

# Rare Breeding Birds of the Lower Derwent Valley and Skipwith Common 2014

Compiled by Craig Ralston

## Category A – Rare Species

Breeding data for each species (where available) is shown in the accompanying table. Comments on some species are also given.

### Breeding success of Category A species in the LDV

Species	Max. no. adults	No. of young	No. of Pairs			
			Poss.	Prob.	Confirmed	Total
Wigeon	16	0	0	8	0	0 - 8
Garganey	4	1+	0	1	1	1 - 2
Shoveler	180	43+ 8 ringed	18	44	22	66 - 84
Pochard			2	0	0	0 - 2
Black-necked Grebe	1	0	0	0	0	0
Little Egret	5+	1+	1	0	1	1 - 2
Marsh Harrier			1	0	0	0 - 1
Water Rail	11 calling males	4+	2	6	3	3 - 11

**Wigeon:** A maximum of 17 pairs were present in late April and appeared to be holding territory. However, using the criteria of drakes/pairs on territory throughout May and June, six pairs were present in the LDV and two at Skipwith Common. No broods seen.

**Pochard:** On the sole basis of two drakes at Wheldrake Ings on 9th June the species makes it into the report – as two possible pairs.

**Black-necked Grebe:** Just a single returning passage bird seen during the spring.

**Little Egret:** Still continues to increase in frequency and duration during the year and also in numbers. Two or three were reported from various sites around the valley early in June. Three, two adults and a very recently fledged juvenile, were present at Brighton Meadows on the 23rd (CSR, FM, LM) – once again raising the possibility of local breeding.

Three (two adults and a juvenile) were present in the Wheldrake Ings/Bank Island area from the 1st July. Things became harder to sort out thereafter with what was believed to be a different family party of two adults and two young from the 10th also appearing at Wheldrake Ings, a monthly maxima of five being recorded on several dates. It is however possible that these birds may have arrived from elsewhere.

**Common Crane:** A single flew north at Wheldrake Ings on 10th March with a pair in the Kexby/Newton-on-Derwent area on the 12th (CH) before visiting both Wheldrake Ings and North Duffield Carrs later in the day. Presumably the same birds roosted over night at Blacktoft Sands RSPB reserve before returning northwards to the valley on the 13th.

Two birds were calling at the southern end of the valley on 30th April.

Pairs were present at Bank Island and Wheldrake Ings during May.

A single was seen near Skipwith Common on the 1st with a pair reported again in fields near there on 5th June.

Reported via the UK Crane Working Group as a non-breeding pair.

**Peregrine:** Three pairs were present in the wider LDV area and used the reserve and wider area for hunting – see article on page 102.

**Marsh Harrier:** Present throughout the year and now almost 'resident'. Several cream crowns lingered and several males were also present this year – mainly sub-adults.

A single pair was present at the southern end of the valley throughout July with at least another female present. Evidence of local breeding could be suggested by an adult pair and a single fledged juvenile at Bank Island on the 14th-17th.

**Black-tailed Godwit:** Up to seven birds lingered in April and early May but unlike in previous recent years there was no behaviour or other evidence to suggest that breeding was attempted.

**Ruff:** A total of 61 birds were present throughout the valley during March, on the 13th which included a group of 35 (22 males) lekking at one site – the first lekking behaviour of the year. 40+ were present at Wheldrake Ings on the 17th. 40+ were still present at North Duffield Carrs on the 22nd with 40+ at Wheldrake Ings on the 24th when 17 were present at North Duffield Carrs – a total of 57+ still present in the valley. 63 were at North Duffield Carrs on the 30th. Up to 65 remained into early May with 17 (15 males) lekking on the 3rd with the last, 3 males and a female on the 11th.

No further evidence of breeding.

### **Category B – Less Scarce Species**

(NB – some of these are now not considered by RBBP but are included here for completeness and comparison with previous years submissions)

**Quail:** The small arrival on 1st June brought four calling males to the valley (CSR) and a single bird to Skipwith Common (RM), with a further three on the 2nd and nine by the 4th. A single was still present at Church Bridge Melbourne on the 15th (DB) with a single at Wheldrake Ings on the 19th. Another poor year!

## Breeding success of Category B species in the LDV

Species	Max. no. adults	No. of young	No. of Pairs			
			Poss.	Prob.	Confirmed	Total
Gadwall		200+ 40+ ringed	31	25	36	92
Common Quail	9 singing males	-	9			0 - 9
Hobby		-	3	0	0	0 - 3
Woodlark		-	0	6	0	0 - 6
Willow Tit		-	5	3	8	8 - 16

**Willow Tit:** Bred with good success.

### Non-Native Species

(These are not now considered by RBBP but are included here for local interest to monitor the changing situation locally)

**Egyptian Goose:** Following a steady increase in recent records and breeding attempts by a single pair in 2012, two pairs bred in 2013 and produced two broods totalling 4 young. During 2014, two breeding attempts took place off site at East Cottingwith with two pairs both rearing broods to fledging – of seven and three. All 14 birds remained into 2015.

**Mandarin:** Following a summering bird in 2013, a bird was present during June and July 2014.

### Terminology (summary)

Possible – bird(s) present in breeding season in suitable habitat or singing male(s) present or heard in breeding season.

Probable – pair(s) in suitable habitat, birds holding territory, courtship display, nest building, agitated behaviour, visiting probable nest site.

Proven (confirmed) – nest with eggs, nest with young seen or heard, recently fledged young, recently used nest or eggshells, distraction display, adults carrying food or faecal sac.

For full details see: <http://www.rbbp.org.uk/downloads/rbbp-recording-standards.pdf>

# Bird Ringing Report for 2014

Compiled by David Tate

## Introduction

Collecting data for this report continues to be a challenge because the BTO publish data at county level whilst the YOC recording area covers parts of North Yorkshire and Humberside. Previously, the BTO provided contact details for ringers living in, or adjacent to, the York recording area. Almost all of the ringers have responded to a request for data and so although this report does not offer a definitive account it does provide a flavour of local ringing activities and results.

Sadly, Mark Fletcher died in early 2015. Mark held a licence for cannon-netting and in recent years was responsible for the capture of many swans, ducks and waders in the Lower Derwent Valley. A full obituary appears in the autumn edition of the BTO's Lifecycle. Mark's Stockton-on-the-Forest ringing data for 2014 are not available for inclusion in this report.

## Bird ringing in 2014 – Numbers, species, locations and personnel

Details about the 8,762 birds (87 species) known to have been ringed in the York area during 2014 are shown in Table 1. About 15% of the birds were ringed before fledging (pulli). As in 2013, Great and Blue Tits account for about 20% of the total.

Table 1.

	Adult	Pulli	Total		Adult	Pulli	Total
Mute Swan	17		17	Swallow	195	113	308
Whooper Swan	1		1	House Martin	1		1
Greylag Goose	10	3	13	Cetti's Warbler	1		1
Canada Goose	4	1	5	Long Tailed Tit	189		189
Shelduck	3		3	Yellow-browed Warbler	1		1
Wigeon	17		17	Chiffchaff	504		504
Gadwall	3	50	53	Willow Warbler	493		493
Teal	78		78	Blackcap	482	20	502
Mallard	158	64	222	Garden Warbler	80	4	84
Shoveler		11	11	Barred Warbler	1		1
Tufted Duck	2		2	Lesser Whitethroat	70		70
Grey Heron	1	30	31	Whitethroat	176	17	193
Little Grebe	2		2	Sedge Warbler	210		210
Sparrowhawk	4	2	6	Reed Warbler	181		181
Water Rail	1		1	Nuthatch	6		6
Moorhen	13	12	25	Treecreeper	25		25

	Adult Pulli		Total		Adult Pulli		Total
Coot	3	2	5	Wren	163		163
Lapwing	1	8	9	Starling	15		15
Whimbrel	7		7	Blackbird	199	29	228
Curlew		6	6	Fieldfare	5		5
Jack Snipe	6		6	Song Thrush	21	3	24
Snipe	13		13	Redwing	21		21
Stock Dove		3	3	Mistle Thrush	1		1
Wood Pigeon	12	1	13	Spotted Flycatcher	1		1
Collared Dove	2		4	Robin	208	4	212
Barn Owl	3	182	185	Redstart	2		2
Tawny Owl	4	14	18	Stonechat	1		1
Nightjar	1		1	Duncock	152	5	157
Swift	8	24	32	House Sparrow	204	3	207
Kingfisher	5		5	Tree Sparrow	220	13	233
Green Woodpecker	3		3	Grey Wagtail	1		1
Great Spotted Woodpecker	17		17	Pied Wagtail		2	2
Kestrel	2	61	63	Meadow Pipit	24		24
Magpie	1		1	Brambling	1		1
Jay	1		1	Chaffinch	180	14	194
Jackdaw		13	13	Bullfinch	131	6	137
Carrion Crow	1		1	Greenfinch	154		154
Goldcrest	92		92	Linnet	6	22	28
Blue Tit	926	281	1207	Lesser Redpoll	174		174
Great Tit	532	319	851	Goldfinch	178	4	182
Coal Tit	139		139	Siskin	11		11
Willow Tit	13		13	Yellowhammer	52	12	64
Marsh Tit	16		16	Reed Bunting	541		541
Sand Martin	1		1				
				<b>87 Species</b>	<b>7404</b>	<b>1358</b>	<b>8762</b>

75% of the ringing was carried out by members\* of the Huddleston & Jackson partnership which receives financial support from Natural England. The main ringing sites and focus of activities include:

- **Lower Derwent Valley NNR** – Trapping, mainly at Wheldrake Ings and North Duffield Carrs, accounts for all the adult Shelduck, Wigeon, Tufted Duck and Gadwall. The ringing of pulli ducks is a speciality and totals included 50 Gadwall and 11 Shoveler. Large numbers of warblers – Sedge (203); Willow (185) and Reed (128) – were caught at Wheldrake Ings and lurking amongst

them were single examples of Barred (23 August) and Cetti's (22 October). The Cetti's Warbler is the 5th ringed on the reserve whilst the Barred is the second for the York recording area. The first was caught on 4th September 1983 at the former field station at Anchor Plain north of Strensall.

Mist netting at roost sites produced over 350 Reed Buntings and 46 Swallows. Other highlights were 22 Meadow Pipit, 13 Willow Tit, seven Whimbrel, two Kingfishers and one Whooper Swan. Other pulli ringing included 30 Grey Heron (also colour ringed) at the Thicket Priory colony and 77 Barn Owl and 24 Kestrel.

Further details about ringing activities on the reserve may be accessed at <http://ldvnnr.blogspot.co.uk>.

- **Skipwith Common NNR** – 998 birds were ringed including 203 Willow Warbler, 148 Lesser Redpoll, 133 Reed Bunting, 35 Coal Tit, 29 Goldcrest and 24 Teal. Twelve Snipe and six Jack Snipe were colour ringed. Rarer birds comprised singles of Nightjar (adult male), Yellow-browed Warbler (probably the first ringed in the York recording area), Spotted Flycatcher (juvenile) and Redstart (adult male). Eighteen Blackcap pulli and two each of Sparrowhawk and Tawny Owl were also ringed.
  - **Rural areas south of York** – Both Barn Owl and Kestrel had an excellent breeding season and totals of 116 and 58 pulli respectively were ringed. The productivity at the Swift colony in Riccall was the highest since monitoring began in 2009. Nine pairs bred and 22 pulli were ringed - a 120% increase on the 2013 total. During the study period 17 adults have been captured and 30% have been re-trapped in subsequent years. The number of Linnet pulli (22) ringed at eight monitored hedges east of Riccall was the same as in 2013. However, Whitethroat (17) was down by 53% and Yellowhammer (12) by 37%. The level of predation was high in the spring but then declined, which favoured the second broods of Linnet.
  - **York suburbs and other sites** – Long standing studies, including colour ringing of Starlings, Goldfinch and House Sparrow, continued as well as the monitoring of Blue and Great Tit nest boxes at Stub Wood, Acaster Malbis. Ian Nicholson and Paul Thorpe ringed about 2500 passerines at a variety of sites including New Earswick, Dunnington, Sand Hutton and Stillingfleet. Their totals included 293 Blackcap, 261 Chiffchaff, 129 Goldfinch, 83 Whitethroat and 69 Bullfinch. Single examples of Sparrowhawk, Kingfisher, Redstart and Brambling were also caught.
- \* Robin Arundale, Steve Huddleston, Mike Jackson, Fallon Mahon, Lucy Murgatroyd, Ian Nicholson, Craig Ralston, David Tate, Jean Thorpe and Paul Thorpe.



Elsewhere, Phil and Sarah Bone, who operate in areas around Haxby, Pocklington and Allerthorpe, processed over 800 birds including 93 Swallow pulli; 47 House Sparrow; 22 Reed Warbler; 19 Barn Owl pulli and 11 Yellowhammer. Chris Wright, who trains Leeds University MSc students and others at private sites near Thorganby, supervised the ringing of 668 birds notably 128 Swallows; 79 Tree Sparrows; 69 Greenfinch; 19 Redwing; 11 Barn Owl pulli and one Green Woodpecker.

Smaller numbers were ringed by Jim Pewtress's group (315) including 135 at Flamingoland (five Jackdaw pulli, two Marsh Tit and a Kingfisher) and 125 at Nunnington (15 Tree Sparrow and 5 Marsh Tit); David Turner (230) notably 43 House Sparrow, 20 Yellowhammer, 16 Barn Owl pulli and two Marsh Tit in the Hovingham area; FERA staff at Sand Hutton (51), including 17 Tree Sparrow; Hugh Brazier (37) at Strensall; Dan Sidley of Yorkshire Swan Rescue Hospital and Sorby Breck ringing group (15 Mute Swans - two adults and 13 first year birds) and finally, Lucas Mander, new to the area, has begun ringing at Fangfoss and his total of 44 includes 15 House Sparrows.

A Buzzard retrieved from the Escrick to Skipwith road was taken into care by Jean Thorpe. The bird recovered, was ringed and released in the same area on 8th August.

#### **Ringling recoveries results for 2014**

Highlights of recent ringing results for the York area are shown in Table 2 - further details are available at [www.bto.org](http://www.bto.org) (click 'ringing' then 'online ringing reports').

Table 2. Ringling recoveries in 2014

<b>SPECIES</b>	<b>Place ringed</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Recovered</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Dist./Age</b>
Mute Swan	Derwent Ings	12.10.96	Wiseton, Notts	30.09.14	17yr 11m
Mute Swan	Wakefield	18.08.07	York (s)	22.10.14	7yr 2m
Greylag Goose c	South Bank, York	26.01.03	York	06.07.14	11yr 5m
Wigeon	Wheldrake Ings	09.12.13	Khanty-M. Russia (s)	15.05.14	4,480km
Teal*	Skipwith Common	26.09.12	Lancashire	18.02.14	107km
Shoveler (p)	Wheldrake Ings	15.08.12	Saratov, Russia (s)	28.08.14	3202km
Tufted Duck (p)	North Duffield	08.08.13	Londonderry (s)	01.12.14	376km
G. Heron (p) c	Wheldrake	23.04.14	Skegness	01.10.14	118km
Woodcock	Kyni, Finland	02.09.12	Thorganby (s)	29.11.14	1840km
Black-headed Gull	Pitsea, Essex	10.03.12	Skipwith Common	07.01.14	274km
LBB Gull (p) c	Amble, Northumberland	27.07.13	Wheldrake Ings	05.01.14	166km
Tawny Owl	Thornton Ellers	11.03.00	Storwood	10.01.94	13yr 9m

Magpie (p)	Allerthorpe	19.05.13	Helmsley	09.04.14	42km
Blue Tit (p)	Allerthorpe	30.05.06	Allerthorpe	11.10.14	8yr 4m
Long-t Tit	Kintbury, Berks.	14.06.14	Wheldrake Ings	25.10.14	280km
Sedge Warbler	Wheldrake Ings	04.08.14	Finistere, France	19.08.14	709km
Blackbird	Sutton o' Forest	13.01.14	Ribe, Denmark	15.04.14	629km
Goldfinch	Boston, Lincs	03.04.13	Hovingham	11.03.14	146km
Lesser Redpoll	Belgium	TBA	Skipwith Common	02.11.14	TBA

(p) = pulli; c = colour-ringed; (s) = shot; \* Predated by a mink

In addition to the above, two more Wigeon ringed in the LDV were reported from Russia. Also, there were many other re-sightings of Mute Swans ringed by Dan Sidley, including a second year bird caught at Welham Park, Norton in January 2009. The bird was later seen on Homsea Mere in August before re-appearing at Castle Howard Lake during June 2014. Finally, a male Marsh Harrier wing-tagged at the nest in Norfolk during July 2014 was at Fairburn Ings in August, East Cottingwith in September and Wexford, Ireland during November.

### Migrant warblers in 2014

The 2199 fledged migrant warblers ringed in 2014 are almost certainly an area record.

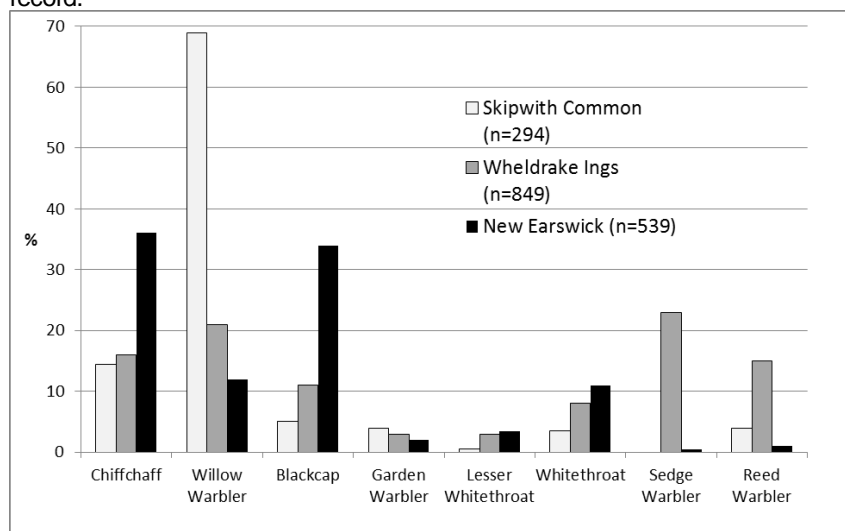


Figure 1. Relative proportions of the 8 commonest species caught at 3 sites, which account for 75% of the total.

The differences between the proportions caught at each site (Figure 1) are almost certainly due to variations in habitat. At Skipwith Common efforts were focused on areas of re-generating silver birch scrub and a small reed bed. Most of

the birds were caught in the scrub, where Willow Warbler dominated. The habitat at Wheldrake Ings includes regenerating willow scrub and a reed bed both of which are surrounded by lush ditch sides where Sedge Warblers breed. The mixture of regenerating silver birch and ash at New Earswick held Chiffchaff, Blackcap and Willow Warbler, whilst Whitethroats breed at the margins of the adjacent semi-natural grassland.

The number of warblers caught in 2014 appeared to be greater than that expected from the local breeding populations and very few of the birds ringed at the three sites were subsequently re-trapped. An indication that some of the Willow Warblers may have been on passage from northern breeding grounds came on 28th July when an adult Willow Warbler, originally ringed on 19th June 2013 - as a juvenile - at Rainton Meadows, 10km inland from the Durham coast, was caught on Skipwith Common. On 14th August, a juvenile re-captured on the Common, provided almost certain proof that an autumn passage was taking place. This bird was ringed at Ugthorpe, 10km inland from Whitby, on 11th July.

More work is required to determine the significance of the Willow Warbler autumn passage in the York area. Maybe some of the birds which breed in eastern Scotland and north-east England move south through the North Sea coastal corridor until they encounter rivers such as the Wear, Swale and Derwent which lead them into the Vale of York. Such a movement could also account for the presence of the Barred Warbler in 2014 and the Wryneck caught at York in 2013, both of which were caught along with Willow Warblers.

The capture of the Yellow-browed Warbler (photos on page 62) at Skipwith Common on 30th October was not totally unexpected because at this time significant numbers were arriving on the east coast and six were reported at Filey on the same date. Also, two of the three previously confirmed sightings in the York recording area were reported on November 1st and 4th. The Skipwith Common bird was part of a small catch which included three Lesser Redpolls. Two days later a Belgian ringed Lesser Redpoll was trapped at the site, so it is possible that the Yellow-browed Warbler moved inland along with migrating Redpolls. Yellow-browed Warblers breed east of the Urals and winter in India, China and Malaya. However, in recent years the breeding range has expanded into areas west of the Urals and since then the number of sightings in the UK has steadily increased (1):

	Annual average
1970-79	76
1990-99	328
2010-12	1032

About 30 birds wintered in the UK during 2011/12, mostly in southwest England. So do scrutinise autumn passerine flocks because it looks like Yellow-browed Warblers will become increasingly common.

1. White, S. and Kehoe, C. (2015) Report on scarce migrant birds in Britain in 20011-12. *British Birds* 108: 199-200.

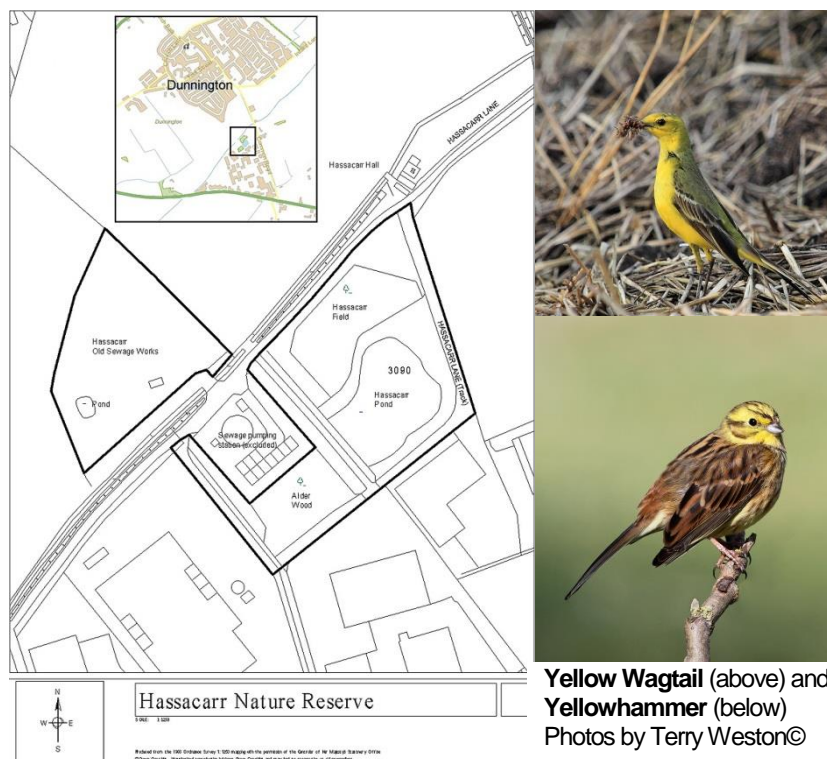
# A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE HASSACARR NATURE RESERVE 1993-2015

Compiled by Terry Weston

Voluntary warden of the Hassacarr Nature Reserve, and chairman of the Dunnington Conservation Group

The Hassacarr Nature Reserve is owned by Dunnington Parish Council and managed by the Dunnington Conservation Group. They work within the guidance of a management plan, for the benefit of wildlife, the next generation, and a place to reflect on the wonders of nature.

Hassacarr Nature Reserve - Grid reference SE 668 523 - is classified as a Local Nature Reserve by Natural England.



## Highlights of a typical year are:

Winter - good numbers of Yellowhammer and Tree Sparrows at the feeding station

Spring - frogs and toads spawning, Great-crested and Smooth Newts laying eggs

Summer - breeding Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Whitethroat and Sparrowhawk

Autumn - Redstart and Chiffchaff leaving, Redwing, Fieldfare and Waxwing arriving

### **HASSACARR POND**

Like other geographical features in the area, Hassacarr pond is thought to date from the last Ice Age and was used for centuries to water livestock. The site includes part of the Derwent Valley Railway as well as areas of meadow and woodland, creating an area of rich and diverse flora and fauna. The conservation group has worked for the last twenty two years to restore the pond, which had become badly silted, and to improve the surrounding environment. Initial work involved the dredging of the pond, the planting of trees and creation of a path around the site and a boardwalk across one side of the pond to enable visitors to study the water life more closely.

One hundred and one species of birds have been recorded; this includes nesting Whitethroat, Blackcap and Tree Sparrow. The occasional Hobby visits in the late summer, while Siskin, Fieldfare and Brambling are among the winter visitors. 23 species of butterfly, 20 species of dragonfly, 120 species of two-winged insects (diptera) and 71 species of water beetle (seven nationally scarce) have also been recorded, while the pond also houses frogs, toads, Smooth, and Great-crested Newts. A new find in 2007 was two water stick insects. Water Voles frequent the main drainage ditch together with brown rat. Other notable mammals are Stoat, Weasel, Harvest Mouse, Bank and Short-tailed Vole, Water, Common and Pygmy Shrews, Otter, Fox and Roe Deer.

Over 200 species of plants have been recorded from the site. Woodland species of interest include Bluebell and Snowdrop, Wood Avens, Crosswort and Purging Buckthorn, while the margins of the pond support a wide range of plants, including less common species such as Marsh Stitchwort, a fine stand of Tubular Water Dropwort (both Red Listed), Marsh Pennywort, Floating Marshwort, (rarely recorded in the York area) Tufted Forget-me-not, Water Pepper and Narrow-leaved Water Plantain.

### **THE OLD DERWENT VALLEY RAILWAY**

The ten metre strip of land running north to south through on the western edge of the pond belongs to Simpson's York Limited who bought the land together with their new premises in 2007. They created a new pond and left an area to be developed as a wildflower meadow, it was also agreed to leave an area of nettles along the end of the main pond as a barrier and butterfly sanctuary. The Dunnington Conservation Group has formed a close working relationship with the owners and is managing the strip of land for wildlife. The pond has quickly established itself and holds important numbers of Great-crested and Smooth Newts, Water Scorpion and dragonfly larvae.

### **THE OLD SEWAGE WORKS**

In 1995 Dunnington Parish Council negotiated with Yorkshire Water to acquire the old sewage works, which had become redundant as a result of improvements in other local facilities. The site covers about 0.5 hectares (1.4 acres) and is

surrounded by a chain link fence, separating it from surrounding farmland. Many of the sewage work structures have been removed, leaving two old covered filter beds, and a capped off mound with the rest of the land fairly level. Initial work involved the planting of a hedge near the perimeter fence; the hedge in 2015 is quite mature and puts on a spring spectacular when the Buckthorn and roses flower. In summer, Yellow Rattle is abundant and in the autumn it provides a mass of berries for birds. The creation of a new pond in 1995 has become a magnet for dragonflies (and now holds one of the most northerly colonies of the rare Broad-bodied Chaser). Other wildlife benefiting are Smooth and Great-crested Newts together with toads, backswimmers, snails, horse leeches, a good selection of water beetles and nesting Moorhen. Migrant birds in the autumn find this part of the reserve most attractive with Redstart, Chiffchaff, Whitethroat, Hobby, Woodcock, Long-eared Owl and Barn Owl being recorded. The small pumping house has been extended and now serves as an excellent field centre as well as home to Stock Doves, Tree Sparrows and Pipistrelle Bats. With the wildflower meadow and the hedgerow maturing, together with the pond this area is now proving invaluable for children's activities. Future work will concentrate on improving the wildflower meadow and the provision of access to all parts of the site for use by visitors at open days, special events and by appointment.

### **NEW WOOD AND MEADOW**

The new wood was planted in February 1994 and grew rapidly becoming a magnet for birds and butterflies; the adjacent meadow was left to mature naturally and soon attracted meadow brown and ringlet butterflies in good numbers. Birds known to have bred in the wood are Sparrowhawk, Magpie, Carrion Crow, Woodpigeon, Blackbird, Robin, Long-tailed Tit, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler and Goldcrest. Waxwing, Bullfinch, Siskin, Redpoll, Fieldfare and Redwing can be found in the winter months.



**Hassacarr Pond** ©Terry Weston

# **A Census of Rookeries in the York Ornithological Club Recording Area in 2014**

By Phil Bone

## **Background**

Out of personal interest I first started counting Rookeries near my home in 2013. This motivated me to start counting rook nests elsewhere and from this it expanded into attempting to survey the Club's recording area.

## **History**

There have been three national surveys of rookeries, the first was organised in response to information based primarily on local bird club reports suggesting that while the Rook population had increased through the 1950s (and in some areas into the 1960s), by the 1970s the population was declining. This prompted the BTO to organise the first national census of rookeries in 1975. This survey, based upon 10km squares, aimed for complete coverage of the British Isles. Further worrying declines and the loss of suitable nesting trees through Dutch Elm disease prompted a second survey in 1980, though this was based on a sample survey of 10km squares. A third survey based upon tetrads selected at random was carried out in 1996

The results of some of these surveys for the YOC recording area have previously been reported by B. G. Pepper and were published in the Club's 1980 Annual Report. There are no data available for our area for the 1996 census as none of the randomly selected tetrads fell into the Club's recording area. BTO analysis of the results between the 1975 and 1980 surveys showed that the number of rookeries had declined by 8%, but the number of nests had increased by 7%. So while the number of rookeries had declined, the size of the rookeries had increased. The results of the third and last national survey in 1996 showed that the population had increased in England by 39% since 1975 and that the size of rookeries had also continued to increase. It was thought that this increase (in some areas of the UK), may have been due in part to outdoor piggeries and rubbish tips.

Since then there have been no surveys aimed specifically at surveying rookeries; up to 1999, population estimates for the Rook were based upon data from the Common Bird Census (CBC) and more recently on data from the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), which suggests that the population in eastern Scotland and Northern Ireland has declined. The most up to date information on rookeries we have for the Club's recording area comes from the BTO 2007 - 2011 Bird Atlas, but not all tetrad squares were surveyed then.

## **Survey methodology**

The aim of this study was to provide more up to date information on the location of rookeries and the number of nests in each. The survey was based

upon tetrads (2km x 2km squares) and we aimed for complete coverage surveying all 375 tetrads in the Club's recording area. We followed the same methodology as used in the national surveys; a rookery was defined as a group of nests 100 metres or more from the next nearest. As part of the survey a six figure grid reference for each rookery was also recorded. As with the national surveys no attempt was made to confirm whether a nest was occupied, as this would have been too time consuming. Problems surveying rookeries have been well documented, the main ones being count accuracy when rookeries can only be viewed from a distance and when nests are located in conifers and accuracy of counts in large rookeries. The problem of not being able to count nests when trees are in leaf was largely avoided, as counts took place before leaf burst.

## Results

All tetrads within the Club's recording area were surveyed, though in most instances observations could only be made from public roads and rights of way. When available, high vantage points were used to locate rookeries and these were then followed up by a closer inspection. It is possible that some rookeries may have been missed, either because they were small and unobtrusive or because of issues with access. For completeness, rookeries just outside the Club's recording area were also counted (n=53) and their positions plotted onto the map included in this report (Fig.1), though the actual nest counts from these rookeries have been excluded from the figures (but would have added a further 1452 nests to the totals).

## Distribution of Rookeries

A total of 188 rookeries were located within the Club's recording area and a total of 7864 nests counted. Breeding was confirmed in all fifteen 10km squares, though the survey revealed a clear bias in number and distribution of rookeries, with more being present the further north and east you go. When compared to the BTO 1975 survey (the only national survey where complete coverage was attempted), a decline in the number of rookeries present was noted for all but four of the 10km squares surveyed (see Table 1). Of those four squares SE65 showed no change, while the number of rookeries in squares SE63, SE74 and SE75 had increased between surveys

10km Squares			1975			2014		
SE57	SE67	SE77	9	22	28	5	16	26
SE56	SE66	SE76	14	14	42	8	11	23
SE55	SE65	SE75	?	<b>16</b>	<b>7</b>	8	<b>16</b>	<b>20</b>
SE54	SE64	SE74	19	16	<b>9</b>	8	9	<b>21</b>
SE53	SE63	SE73	5	<b>1</b>	19	1	<b>5</b>	11

Table 1. Number of rookeries recorded in the 1975 survey, compared to 2014 by 10km square



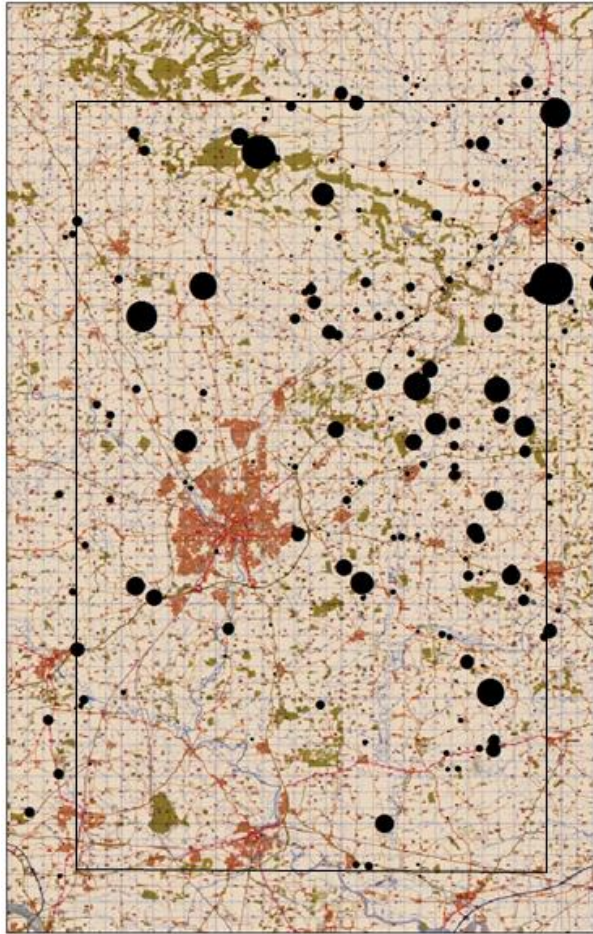


Figure 1. Map showing distribution of rookeries in the YOC recording area and the areas just beyond the boundaries; the larger the dot the larger the rookery.

The number of rookeries in our area appears to have declined by 15% since the 1975 survey; this decline mirrors the national picture that was first noticed in the 1980 national survey and appears to have continued through to the present day. While the number of rookeries may have declined, the number of nests in each rookery has increased, with an average increase of 10.8% nests in each rookery compared to 1975. While the data for the 1980 survey is more limited, if we just compare nest counts for the four 10km squares surveyed in 1980 with nests counted in those same four squares in 2014, there has been a 4.2% increase in the intervening 35 years.

## Rookeries

The most recent data available come from the BTO Bird Atlas (2007-2011). While coverage was excellent, not all tetrads within the Club's recording area received a timed survey visit and while some casual observations may have been recorded for those squares, there is no guarantee that the presence of adults, let alone rookeries, were noted. In total 936 records for Rook were submitted to the BTO atlas from the Club's area, with breeding confirmed (records reporting actual nests) recorded in 97 tetrads or 25.8% of the recording area and probable breeding (e.g. behaviour such as birds recorded carrying nest material) noted in a further 16 tetrads. However, it is possible that birds carrying out this behaviour may have been nesting in other nearby tetrads.

Because the Rook Census was more species focused and an effort was made to cover all available tetrads, we were able to confirm that in 2014 nesting took place in 152 (40.5% ) of 375 tetrads available. Because the timing of the atlas survey took place slightly later in the spring, when leaf cover may have been denser, with less visibility, nest counts may be less reliable and so for the purpose of this report we have not compared nest count data from the atlas with this survey. Rookeries were found in 2014 in tetrads with no reports in 2008-11, and vice versa, so between 2008 and 2014 nesting has been confirmed in 179 tetrads or 47.7% of the Club's recording area.

Table 2. The total number of rookeries and nests counted in each 10km square for the last two BTO surveys compared to 2014 in the Club's recording area.

Year	1975		1980		2014	
10 km square	Rookeries	Nests	Rookeries	Nests	Rookeries	Nests
SE 53	5	49			1	16
SE 54	19	286	10	424	8	439
SE 55	?	107			8	252
SE 56	14	721			8	619
SE 57	9	492	11	536	5	240
SE 63	1	5			5	239
SE 64	16	428			9	354
SE 65	16	471			16	433
SE 66	14	688			11	509
SE 67	22	736			16	811
SE 73	19	570	13	378	11	347
SE 74	9	168			21	776
SE 75	7	109			20	1149
SE 76	42	1228	45	1641	23	1010
SE 77	28	818			26	670
Totals	221	6876	79	2979	187	7864

Since the last Atlas, the number of tetrads where nesting has been confirmed would appear to have increased by 79 tetrads, though nesting would appear to have been lost from a further 24. Because of the difference in survey methodologies, perhaps the increase in the number of tetrads with nesting birds should not come as a surprise. The loss of 24 is perhaps more interesting, as these were tetrads where we know breeding had taken place. Knowing that nesting had been reported in these tetrads and fearing that rookeries may have been missed, special attention was given to these tetrads. While it is possible that birds were still nesting here, we were unable to confirm nesting for these squares in 2014. It may well be that birds were still nesting here in either small numbers or perhaps in a location that could not be easily observed.

## Nest Counts

Table 3. The location of the largest rookery in each 10 km square within the Club's recording area.

10 km square	Tetrad	Place	Grid ref.	Total nests
SE53	D	Church Fenton	SE 510368	16
SE54	J	Askham Richard (prison)	SE 539481	80
SE55	E	Newton-on-Ouse	SE 514597	39
SE56	M	Huby Burn, Tollerton	SE 543653	135
SE57	I	Coxwold	SE 538770	53
SE63	W	Bowthorpe Hall	SE698330	80
SE64	Z	Elvington Industrial Estate*	SE685483	79
SE64	Z	Elvington Industrial Estate*	SE683483	100
SE65	U	Hazelbush	SE667581	75
SE66	V	Harton Lodge	SE692612	83
SE67	C	Low Warren Farm, Gilling	SE617758	150
SE73	T	nr Foggathorpe	SE767377	65
SE74	Q	Breckstreet Farm, Seaton Ross	SE765414	118
SE75	J	Buttercrambe	SE730585	94
SE76	Y	Langton	SE801672	147
SE77	T	Great Habton	SE760763	60

*The Elvington Industrial Estate rookery\* is well spread out along the B1228 road with the largest number of nests concentrated in two different locations. For ease they have been treated as two separate rookeries, but as both are so close, that they are almost one and the same, both appear in the table.*

As shown in table 3, the largest single rookery located in the Club's recording area is at Gilling in the Howardian Hills (at SE 6175) where there were at least 150 nests. However a very large rookery is located just on the boundary, at the village of Langton (at SE7967). The rookery there is well spread out, with birds nesting in seven separate locations in and around the village. Clearly defining the rookery there is difficult, as spacing between nesting trees is, at times, no more than 100 meters apart; for mapping purposes they have been treated as one very large rookery. In total there were at least 283 nests counted within the Club's recording area, although the largest number of nests at a single location within the Langton rookery complex was 147. Nesting birds followed the road east out of the village and over the recording boundary, where a further 198 nests were counted (giving a total of 481). Elsewhere, there are also large rookeries located at Huby Burn (Tollerton) 135 nests, while rookeries at both Bossall and Stillington each had 119 nests.

In 2013 a more limited survey of rookeries within the Club's recording area took place. Comparing this data with the 2014 survey has revealed just how mobile some rookeries are. For example there were two small rookeries located within 1km of each other near Garrowby Hill; when a visit was made to count these known rookeries in 2014, it was discovered that both had disappeared and instead a new rookery appears to have formed 2km away. While the mobility of some rookeries has been noted in other studies and the reason for the dispersal of these two rookeries and the formation of a new one can never be known for sure, one possible cause is human interference. During the survey, a rookery near Malton was known to be suffering from unwanted attention from a nearby home owner and as a result during the course of the spring, nests were slowly moved further and further away from the original location. Another example was of a large rookery near Foston; in 2013 there were 113 nests, however in 2014 the number of nests was found to have declined to just 12 and as the rookery was located on the edge of someone's garden, persecution is again suspected. Human persecution was a known cause for at the loss of rookeries in at least one of the tetrads in the time between the BTO Atlas and this survey in the Skipwith area.

## **Conclusion**

The southwest of the Club's recording area never appears to have been a good area for the Rook; the number of rookeries present here since the 1975 survey has declined further and the Rook now appears to be hovering on virtual extinction as a breeding bird in 10km square SE53. While we cannot be sure of the causes behind this decline, it may be due to agricultural practice as declines also appear to have occurred in nearly all of the other 10km squares especially those in the west and south, while in contrast there has been an increase in the east and the north.

While the number of rookeries may have declined, the number of pairs nesting in each rookery has increased. Problems such as the transitional nature of some rookeries are well known and this was one of the problems that made the

interpretation of trends difficult for the national surveys in 1980 and 1996 (see the 1996 report for details). Likewise some caution needs to be exercised in interpreting both short term trends and surveys with such large gaps between them. While Rooks do appear to have been able to, or have been forced to, adapt to changes in agricultural practices, for example there are a large number of rookeries present outside the Club's recording area along the A64 at East Heslerton where there is a large outdoor pig unit, their main threat remains human persecution.

## Thanks

Thanks must go to Paul Doherty, Rodger Jackson, Peter Reed, Dave Tate and the late Mike Williams for help with the survey and to Rob Chapman for help with BTO atlas data and apologies for any accidental omissions.

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## **Peregrine in the York Recording Area**

By David Tate (Historical Peregrine Records and the 2014 National Breeding Peregrine Survey) and Jack Ashton-Booth with Doug Crawford ('A Peregrine for a Nave' - An account of the Minster Peregrines)

With the recent completion of the 2014 national Peregrine survey and the arrival of the well-watched pair at York Minster it seems appropriate to describe the two events and at the same time set them within an historical context.

### **Historical Peregrine Records**

#### **The Yorkshire setting**

Thomas Nelson (1907) commented that:

*'As an autumn and winter visitant the Peregrine is most frequent on the coast, but it also occurs inland, visiting all parts of the county, so that an enumeration of the occurrences would be unnecessary and tedious' and that, 'These immigrants are mostly in immature plumage...'*

However, breeding birds in Yorkshire had suffered at the hands of gamekeepers and egg collectors so that by 1850 there was an almost county wide extinction. A pair or two managed to survive in coastal areas, such as Bempton, where Rock Doves were plentiful, and there were occasional records from the uplands.

The level of persecution intensified in the first half of the twentieth century and Ralph Chislett (1953) was aware of just one breeding pair in 1949. He considered winter sightings a rarity. John Mather (1986) added the harmful effect of pesticides during the 1960s to the list of threats encountered by Yorkshire Peregrines. But after 1970 the situation began to improve and during 1981-83 29 Peregrines were reported to have fledged from Yorkshire eyries. Mather concluded that:

*'Now that the species is breeding more successfully, it is likely that sightings away from the nesting areas will become more regular during the autumn and winter months ...'*

Subsequently, the number of proven and probable breeding attempts in Yorkshire rose to 56 in 2010.

#### **The York recording area - winter (October-February) sightings.**

Nelson's unpublished data may include sightings of Peregrines wintering in the York area. The Yorkshire Museum has an immature female specimen taken from the 'York' area. Although undated this bird may possibly have been wintering during the late nineteenth century. At present the first known record dates from

11th November 1947 when a dead bird was found at Escrick. This Peregrine had been ringed on the nest at Hallefors, Sweden on 10th June 1946, which supports Nelson's views about the origin and age of birds wintering in Yorkshire.

The 1974 YOC Report contains details of a Peregrine at Healaugh though the date is not given and the site was later ruled to be outside the recording area. As a result the first record of a live bird was credited to Frank Oates who saw a Peregrine fly over the River Derwent near Wressle Castle on 21st December 1980. A further 20 winter sightings were reported during the 1980s with 85% coming from the LDV. All of the records were of single birds; half of the sexed birds were male and the three aged birds were all 'immature'. Only one record from the York area (SE65) was published in the national 'Atlas of Wintering Birds' (1986).

A substantial increase in the number of sightings occurred throughout the 1990s, as John Mather had predicted it would. Again, most of the records were from the LDV though birds appeared over ten other locations ranging from Newburgh Priory to Selby. At the start of the decade a remarkable event took place at Wheldrake Ings on 6th October 1991 when a male Peregrine, to the amazement of the reporter, caught and 'dined' on a Manx Shearwater. Later, multiple sightings of individual birds became frequent and a small male seen in the LDV during the autumn of 1992 returned during the winters of 1994/95 and 1995/96. The maximum annual number of 17 sightings was published in the 2006 Report. Since then records have become commonplace with the result that full listings have given way to comments such as '*many late winter sightings*' (2008).

The number of records from outside the LDV has also continued to increase and the Peregrine winter distribution map in the 2007-11 Bird Atlas shows that birds were present in all the York area grid squares except SE53 and SE66. These widespread records may be due to increased observer coverage and expertise though an apparent shift in the diet of some Peregrines from ducks and waders towards the plentiful supply of farmland Woodpigeons and overflying racing pigeons may be a more likely explanation.

### **The York recording area – breeding season (March-September) sightings**

Peregrines have not traditionally bred in the York area due to the lack of natural nest sites. Until recently there were very few spring and early autumn records and most of them concerned late wintering individuals or early autumn arrivals.

The first known sighting for this period occurred on 4th May 1973 when a bird was reported over the York/Tadcaster road though this record was not accepted by the YNU. Only three breeding season records were published during the 1980s. Two of the sightings concerned an adult male observed at an undisclosed site, thought to be Brandsby, in June 1983. Another male was present at Kirkham Abbey on 22nd June 1992. There is no known evidence to suggest that these males belonged to a breeding pair.

The number of sightings began to increase after 2000 and in 2006 Peregrines were observed at North Duffield Carrs, Castle Howard and Clifton Ings during

June and early July. On 15th June 2007 a juvenile was seen perched on York Minster. This sighting may correspond with verbal accounts from Minster staff who claim that a pair bred at about this time and that the remains of a desiccated chick were seen on a high ledge. It now seems possible that Peregrines first bred in the York area during 2007 though further evidence is required to confirm the record.

The 2008 Report contains details about a juvenile Peregrine seen over Dunnington Common (13th June) and an adult at Clifton Ings (8th July). In 2010 Peregrines carrying prey were reported from Clifton Park (23rd June) and Sherburn in Elmet (19th July) and there were three early summer sightings from the Acomb/Holgate area in 2011. It is likely that these birds came from sites close to the York recording area though there was speculation that a pair may have bred on a high voltage pylon near to York.

The national '2007-11 Bird Atlas' shows proof of breeding in two survey squares within the recording area. The record for SE 64, southeast of York, has been confirmed as a mistake, whilst the adult seen carrying food in SE 77 south of Malton almost certainly relates to a pair which successfully bred just outside the recording area.

A preening Peregrine was at York Minster on 11th May 2012 and the YOC Report for that year notes that, '*...three pairs are thought to have bred*'. A recent investigation failed to find any data to support the statement, which was added after the species account was submitted, and therefore it is likely to be an error.

The Peregrine account in the 2013 Report makes no mention of breeding birds whilst the 'Rare Breeding' section lists three proven breeding pairs, two of which raised broods of two and three young. A recent review has shown that, although three pairs were present in 2013, there is only one undated record of successful breeding. Another pair probably bred whilst a third pair did not breed. All the pairs were present at high voltage electricity pylons to the east of York. Although it went unreported at the time there is evidence to suggest that another pair was present in the north of the recording area.

## **Conclusion**

Wintering Peregrines are likely to have had a long association with the York area though the first known accepted sighting of a live bird did not occur until 1980. Since then the frequency of sightings has greatly increased and after 2006 the YOC ceased to publish full listings. Breeding season sightings were very rare before 2000. Since then the number of records has increased and there is tantalising evidence to suggest that breeding may have taken place in 2007 and 2013 and that Peregrines were on the cusp of colonising the recording area. As a result expectations for the 2014 survey were high.

## **The 2014 National Breeding Peregrine Survey**

The first national survey of breeding Peregrine took place in 1961 with repeat surveys occurring in 1971, 1981, 1991 and 2002. The 2007-11 national breeding



bird survey precluded the need for a Peregrine survey in 2011. An analysis of the 2007-11 Peregrine data showed that the breeding population was at an all-time high. However, it confirmed the view that fewer pairs were breeding in highland areas, especially northwest Scotland. The concern over upland birds led the BTO to organise the 6th Peregrine survey which took place in 2014. The aims of the survey were to gain a more detailed knowledge about the number and distribution of pairs and, for the first time, record the level of breeding productivity. Three survey methods were employed. Most of the known breeding sites were surveyed by raptor specialists. Elsewhere, volunteers covered over 2000 priority and 'second' priority randomly generated 5x5 km squares. In addition other mid-March to mid-July sightings of Peregrines were accepted.

Eleven of the squares, six of which were priority, occurred within the York recording area. When the squares were scrutinised it was apparent that they did not cover some places where there had been recent reports of Peregrines during the breeding season. This led to one group surveying the random squares whilst another concentrated on other potential nest sites, especially high voltage electricity pylons.

### **Results for the York Recording Area**

Unfortunately, there continues to be a need to withhold details about Peregrine nest sites since various forms of persecution remain commonplace. As a result only the location of the York Minster pair, which is well known and in a secure place, has been released. A total of seven pairs, five of which bred, were discovered during the York survey:

Random Squares - The non-breeding pair on York Minster occurred on a 'second' priority square and a full account follows later. A pair was seen in mid-June in a priority square though evidence of breeding was lacking.

Other evidence - Four pairs successfully bred on pylons and one pair raised young on a rock face. At four nest sites young were first reported from 17th-19th June. The secretive pair at the 5th site appeared not to have raised young until a large eyas was discovered on 1st July.

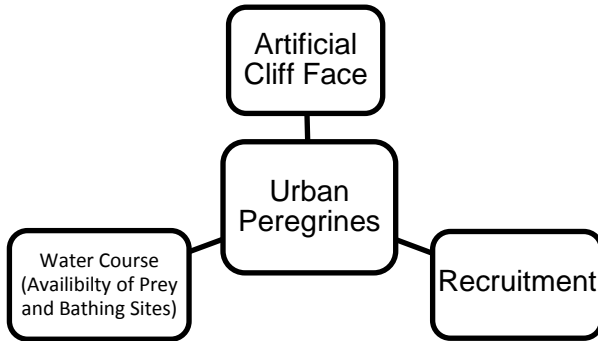
A minimum of 11 young birds were raised by five pairs giving an average brood size of 2.2. This is just below average though it is possible that young at two sites may have gone undetected. An indication that pylon sites can have drawbacks came when the remains of a young bird was found beneath one of the nest towers. Earlier, the security of the same tower was compromised by National Grid workers, however Schedule 1 legal protection prevailed and the pair was eventually left undisturbed.

The report of the national survey is due to be published in 2016.

Thanks to Rob Chapman for providing information about the BTO survey.

### **'A Peregrine for a Nave'**

I started watching urban Peregrines at the age of 16, on and around Worcester Cathedral and was just as amazed then as I am now at how such a simple model (see diagram below) enables the world's fastest bird, that once went days and months without seeing man out in the wild uplands, to take to an environment that wouldn't exist without our presence.



To this day, 12 years on, this simple formula can be applied and hasn't changed. The only change is that the British population of Peregrines has increased to such an extent that the catchment for recruitment has widened, leading to yet more Peregrines occupying urban man-made structures.

On moving to York it was immediately evident to me that York ticked all of these boxes for these birds and I knew that if I was thinking about the suitability of a 56m high slab of magnesian limestone looming over the River Ouse then Peregrines would most certainly have beaten me to it.

Sure enough this was the case; Peregrines had indeed been observed intermittently on the Minster and reports would suggest that they have even bred on it in the last decade, raising a single chick, found by a Minster policeman, which died at or nearing fledging stage (2007).

However, 2014 allowed for documentation of our very own urban Peregrine pair. A 3rd-calendar-year female was first observed residing on the north face on the northwest (NW) tower on 16 February 2014, with a pair observed on the same face on the 17th following the return of a 3rd-calendar-year male after having just caught a Pigeon over the Heworth area. After personal communication with Minster Staff, it is more than likely the pair had been in and out of residence for over a year. This most certainly makes sense and ties in nicely with a story I was told by one of the very amicable Minster policemen. He told me how he had been speaking to one of the stone masons who had thought he had cut himself, after noticing fresh blood dripping from his person. After a period of bewilderment, given he wasn't in any pain and couldn't see any obvious wounds, he looked up to see

blood dripping from the above scaffolding, from prey being consumed by none other than a Minster Peregrine.

I would suspect that this scaffolding was the same as that situated at the top of the NW tower throughout the start of last year, making up a proportion of the 16 miles of scaffolding erected for renovation work on the ever-eroding building.

During early observations the pair would regularly reside on the crown of scaffolding on the NW tower and the female would readily roost behind its framework in one of the small ornate arches set back into the north face of the tower. The male however had a greater affinity for the central tower especially on the east face where he could get himself out of the wind and scan over the east of the city. He had a tendency to head towards the River Foss and, given the information we know now, he would most likely have been coming and going between hunts and stints perched up on the Coal Chimney at Morrison's at Foss Bank.

Despite being discreet at times and disappearing against the incredibly lavish masonry work it was always relatively straightforward to determine whether the pair was still in occupancy by the clues they left behind. Although the height of the Minster is sometimes a hindrance for seeing the birds, this height is a blessing when establishing the diet of an urban York Peregrine. The building essentially acts as a giant sail and deflects the wind every which way around it, ensuring numerous feathers and skeletal remains of the birds that have fallen victim to the Peregrine pair are blown off or are within reach on the floor below.

Despite being in the heart of our city, the following prey remains were collected and identified. Not only does this raise some questions about where this pair hunts but how much we are missing in fields and in the skies in and around the city:

**Woodcock** - one of the most frequent prey items taken especially during migration periods, most likely taken at twilight or under artificial light at night.

**Snipe** - remains from this species and personal communication with Minster Police would suggest this is a regular prey item.

**Lapwing** - very readily taken and feathers from 1st-winter birds would suggest the Peregrines take advantage of the young birds migrating through the area in autumn.

**Golden Plover** - very frequently taken and one of the most common prey items throughout autumn and the winter period.

**Teal** - the Peregrines most definitely live up to their name as the duck hawk with this species, with feathers littering the Dean's Garden at times.

**Woodpigeon** - a common prey item, both adults would readily chase migrating Woodpigeons during days of mass movement over the city.

**Stock Dove** - tail feathers would suggest this species is taken intermittently, (possibly taking a chance at the birds breeding in the Treasurer's House garden from time to time)

**Feral/Racing pigeons** - a staple prey item.

**Mallard** - remains found but most likely eaten *in situ*, in contrast to the lighter Teal that can be brought back.



Various prey remains recovered from the Minster Peregrines  
©Jack Ashton-Booth

Other prey items recorded in 2014 were: Great Spotted Woodpecker, Blackbird, Starling, House Sparrow, Swift, Grey Wagtail, Pied Wagtail, Song Thrush, Redwing, Jackdaw, and Mistle Thrush

The Minster Peregrines were last observed in the spring on 22nd March towards which time sightings of the male became much more intermittent. No display was observed from the male and their departure corresponds with the increased, non-deliberate disturbance brought about by the Minster beginning to remove the scaffolding from around the aforementioned tower.

Despite being absent throughout summer their return tied in nicely with the end of the breeding season and they were sighted again on 19th August and judging from prey remains may have returned around the second week of August.

Therefore the question remains where did these birds summer, given that as I write this in 2015 the same pair are known to have had eggs and hatched chicks? More about the 'Mr & Mrs' Minster Peregrines can be found @yorkperegrines. Since November 2014 observations have been made more or less daily so there should be plenty more surprises to come from this truly fascinating pair.



The Minster Peregrines (tiercel left and falcon right) ©Jack Ashton-Booth

# Visible Migration across the Vale of York

By Paul Doherty

The YOC recording area largely coincides with the Vale of York - a mainly flat agricultural landscape which may not seem likely to offer much in terms of bird migration compared to famous coastal sites like Spurn and Flamborough. Hopefully I can show that even though we are marooned inland there is still plenty to look out for.

Many birds (e.g. warblers) migrate at night, but others such as hirundines, pipits and thrushes migrate during the day. There have been autumn days when I've noticed Swallows passing over my house and realised that a movement was underway. If you are willing to simply stand and stare, then the number and variety of birds which fly past can be surprising. And I cannot deny the lazy attraction of taking it easy and letting the birds come to you.

The study of visible migration - the practice of standing at one spot and seeing what flies past - dates back to the late 1950s, but has taken off in recent years (pardon the pun) thanks to the "vismig" website Trektellen (<http://www.trektellen.org>) which enables you to enter your sightings each day and immediately compare them to hundreds of others across Britain and Europe.

Very little seemed to have been published for the York area, so in the autumn of 2013 I started doing some visible migration watches (VMW) at Milford Common (SE5332), which is just a mile or so to the east of where I live at Sherburn in Elmet. On a clear day I can see across the Vale of York towards the Wolds and the North York Moors. To be honest it is not a classic visible migration spot and when I mentioned it to some of the "old hands" they gave me gentle warnings about not expecting too much in the Vale of York - a flat landscape with few features to concentrate the birds. My observations in the autumn of 2013 were limited, but definitely encouraging. Rather surprisingly I had a Richard's Pipit in October and a young Gannet in November; two rare birds in the York area. Visible migration isn't about rare birds, but they were a very welcome bonus.

So in 2014 I was determined to put a bit more time in. I was away for three weeks in the spring, so most of my attention was on the autumn - the best time for visible migration. I started on 12th August and between then and my final watch of the autumn on 24th November I did a total of 62 hours on VMW. A typical VMW would involve two hours. I would start around sunrise and record the species flying past, the numbers involved and the flight direction. The largest movements tend to occur on days with light winds from the south or southwest, though Woodpigeons prefer light northerlies.

I recorded 64 different species including Little Egret, Marsh Harrier, Greenshank, Raven and Hawfinch; all scarce birds in the York area. But as I have already said, 'vis migging' is not about rare birds - so how did I do for common

birds? I logged a total of over 26,000 birds which worked out at a rate of 421 per hour; though of course the flow of birds was very variable and some mornings were much busier than others. It is interesting to look at the figures for the commonest species. Eight species make up 91% of the birds seen at Milford Common. To put the site into context, I have made some comparisons below with other visible migration watch points which post their results on Trektellen. You can see the full "totals" table for 2014 here:

<http://www.trektellen.org/site/totals/1427/2014>.

### **Woodpigeon**

This was the most numerous species. A total of 15,593 were recorded between 9th October and 13th December. Most were moving south including 3,490 on 5th November, but with a return movement of 5,695 flying northeast on 24th November. Despite being one of our commonest birds, the autumn movements of Woodpigeons aren't fully understood. Larger movements are noted to the west of us, but my counts are clear evidence that Woodpigeons do migrate across the Vale of York. If you get a fine morning in early November with light northerly winds then it is highly likely that there will be a large movement of Woodpigeons in the first hour or two after sunrise. Though be warned that some flocks can be so high they are difficult to see; the term "pigeon smoke" is sometimes used to describe them.

### **Skylark**

I recorded 671 flying south between 20th August and 24th November with a peak of 157 in 3.5 hours on 27th September. That's an overall average of about 11 birds per hour which is significantly higher than sites to the west around Bradford, Huddersfield and Sheffield which averaged less than two per hour. The most likely explanation is that Skylarks prefer to migrate over the sort of agricultural landscape they use as nesting sites.

### **Swallow**

I recorded 743 moving south or west between 12th August and 19th October with a distinct peak in late August/early September. That's an average of just over 12 per hour. Amongst inland Yorkshire sites Anglers Country Park (Wakefield) did slightly better with an average of 13 per hour (the presence of a lake may have helped to concentrate Swallows there). Further west in Yorkshire the average varied between two and nine per hour. Again it seems likely that Swallows find the landscape of the Vale of York more attractive than areas towards the Pennine foothills, doubtless because it offers more in the way of feeding and resting sites.

### **Meadow Pipit**

I recorded 1,685 flying south between 20th August and 24th November with a peak of 358 in 3.5 hours on 27th September. That's an overall average of 27 per hour. It's not surprising that these upland breeders occur in larger numbers to the

west; Oxenhope (Bradford) had an average of 62 per hour and Harden (Huddersfield) averaged 70 per hour.

### **Pied/White Wagtail**

I recorded 318 flying south between 20th August and 24th November with a peak of 52 in 3.5 hours on 27th September. That's an overall average of five per hour. This is another species where Milford Common averaged ahead of Yorkshire sites to the west which averaged between 1.6 and 3.6 per hour. That's slightly surprising, but it was noticeable that passage began earlier in the autumn at Milford Common. This does suggest that Milford Common may have more White Wagtails than sites to the west (White Wagtails migrate earlier in the autumn than Pied Wagtails). Perhaps, like the Skylarks, Pied Wagtails prefer to migrate over the lowlands of Yorkshire.

### **Fieldfare**

I recorded 735 moving southwest between 31st October and 5th November, including 658 in 135 minutes on 31st October. That's an overall average of 12 per hour. Sites to the west averaged between 66 per hour at Chapel Hill (Harewood) and 82 per hour at Caldene Fields (Bradford).

### **Redwing**

I recorded 1,996 moving southwest between 14th October and 5th November, including an impressive 1,774 in 135 minutes on 31st October. That's an overall average of 35 per hour. Milford Common clearly struggles with thrushes because sites to the west averaged between 46 per hour at Harden (Huddersfield) and 210 per hour at Chapel Hill (Harewood).

The relatively low numbers of thrushes are a bit difficult to understand. I can't believe they take a detour round the Vale of York, nor do I think they are too high to be seen because the ones I counted aren't at much more than treetop height and I've seen the same thing at Anglers Country Park. The relatively low numbers at Milford Common are probably due to the lack of any concentrating features; sites towards the Pennines tend to be at places such as the heads of valleys where movement is concentrated. Certainly thrush migration across the Vale of York is on a broad front because I recorded similar thrush numbers to Milford Common at Brayton Barff (5.5 km to the southeast) and at Wharfe Ings (7 km to the northeast).

### **Starling**

I recorded 2,131 moving south or west between 29th August and 5th November, including 1,210 flying west in 2 hours on 28th October. That's an overall average of 34.5 per hour. Sites to the west generally had higher numbers with 51 per hour at Oxenhope (Bradford) and 54 per hour at Harden (Huddersfield), though Caldene Fields (Bradford) only averaged 26 per hour.

So those are the main species. But one of the things I like about 'vis migging' is that you also get some birds that we tend not to think of as migrants - Dunnock, Mistle Thrush, Coal Tit, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Jay and Reed Bunting are just some of the species involved. It was especially interesting because while Dave Tate was ringing at Skipwith Common in autumn 2014, I had a total of 80 Reed Buntings flying south and Dave ringed over 250 at Skipwith with very few re-traps clearly suggesting that these were birds moving through the York area.

All I have done is scratch the surface. There are birds passing over and I observed them at an average rate of over four hundred per hour which is enough to keep most people occupied. Spring migration has barely had a mention because I was away for a large part of the spring in 2014. In spring 2015 I tried some observations at Whit Hill (7.5 km to the northwest of Milford Common). On the 7th April I had 1109 Meadow Pipits flying north. The previous day Anglers Country Park near Wakefield (a relatively well watched site with records going back several years) had 461 Meadow Pipits - a spring record for them. So 'vis migging' in spring clearly has potential.

There must be lots of other places in the York area which will be good for vis migging. Well I know there are because I've tried a couple of them. Brayton Barff is an isolated hill just outside Selby and you get a similar migration pattern to Milford Common there. Wharfe Ings is about 5 miles northeast of Selby; the Ouse and the Wharfe meet here and river valleys often concentrate migrants, so it was no surprise that I saw thrushes and starlings moving over there in autumn.

But there must be plenty of other suitable spots in our area. How about the Howardian Hills in the north of the club area? Or you could go to the eastern edge of the Club's area - does the western edge of the Yorkshire Wolds concentrate migrants? Garrowby Bank is in our area and anyone who has driven a car down it will know what a stunning view you get. Kimberlow Hill overlooks the lake at Heslington East and enjoys a fine view across the Derwent valley towards the Yorkshire Wolds. In autumn it would be interesting to begin with an hour or two's vis migging from the hill before having a look round the lake. The small reservoir at Redhouse, right next to the River Ouse, looks to have potential too.

Hopefully I have shown that it is worth staring at the sky over the Vale of York. There are surely lots of interesting sites in the York area and I hope this article will encourage people to seek some of them out. I personally think that 'vis migging' is the best autumn birding in our area, but don't take my word for it, try it for yourselves.



# **The Breeding Bird Survey in the Yorkshire (York) Region: a review 1994-2014.**

By Rob Chapman, BBS Regional Organiser

## **Introduction and history**

The BTO's Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) saw its 20th Anniversary in 2014. The survey was started in 1994 as a wide-participation successor to the Common Birds Census (CBC), which had been running since 1962, to monitor population trends. The CBC methods were very intensive, being based on territory mapping, so demanded a high commitment from participants, hence there were few sites covered. Furthermore, as sites were chosen by the participants, there was a bias towards good bird habitat and also, geographically, to the south of England. The BBS was designed to take snapshot data from a broader range of habitats and geographical regions. The simpler methods, shorter and less frequent visit times allowed more people to get involved, more sites to be covered and more species to be monitored. The BBS detects trends more efficiently and gives a picture more indicative of the population trends across the whole UK for over 100 commoner species.

The BBS does not aim to have all birds in a site counted, neither does it aim to record evidence of breeding, rather to take repeatable snapshots in order to determine population trends of birds during the breeding season. The strengths of the method are that sites are spread wider across the country, both geographically and across habitats, and that the methods are repeatable from year to year. The same people visit the same sites (albeit with some turnover and growth) and walk the same routes for the same length of time at the same time of year and day; this means that the data can be compared year-on-year. It does have limitations; nocturnal, scarcer and habitat-restricted species are not monitored so well, other surveys are more appropriate for these.

The two schemes were run in parallel until 2000, when it was clear that the BBS was fulfilling its aims and the CBC was then stopped as a national scheme. The CBC methods are still valid where richer data are needed for specific, localised studies. Nationally, participation in the BBS has increased from 1536 squares (the survey is based on the 1km squares in the Ordnance Survey grid) in 1994 to the current level of 3639 squares in 2014. The increase in participation has allowed population trends to be published for many species for each country of the UK and also to report by English region. Long term trends from the 1960s to the present can be seen by combining the data from the CBC and BBS, visit <http://www.bto.org/about-birds/birdtrends/2014> for examples.

The Breeding Bird Survey is run by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and is jointly funded by BTO, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) (on behalf of the statutory nature conservation agencies), and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB).

## BBS methods

The BBS requires the observer to visit a 1km square twice in the breeding season, with a month between the two visits: the first when resident birds are actively breeding (April to mid-May), the second once later migrants have arrived (mid-May to end June). The observer walks two transect routes of 1km in length and counts all birds that are identified by sight or sound. The two transects should ideally be parallel lines but, in practice, will follow paths, roads, field edges or other features and depend on access rights and permissions, resulting in a variety of route shapes.

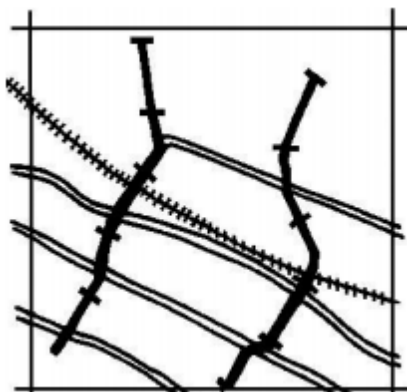


Figure 1. Example of a square with transect routes

The important thing is that transects are not too close to each other, in order to maximise the area of the square that can be seen from the routes. There is no directional preference for transects; they can run broadly north-south, east-west or even diagonally. Counts are recorded in distance bands and in 200m sections to assist recording and provide further data for future analysis; for example, comparing to habitat data or factoring in detectability. The habitat is also recorded using standard BTO codes and, optionally, the observer can count sightings and signs of mammals for monitoring purposes. Recently some observers have revisited BBS squares to monitor butterflies for the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS).

Initially, the survey was run using paper instructions and forms but, with the development of the internet and increased access to technology, the BTO has developed online systems to support the BBS. Instructions and forms can be viewed and downloaded from the website and BBS-Online allows data to be entered directly to the database by the surveyor. The majority of data are now captured through the website: for example, 91% of squares in 2013. The website also provides a wealth of data on population trends and one can download the annual reports from the last decade. Information on the analytical methods used to produce the trends and on other research using BBS data can also be found on the website. The site was upgraded for the 2014 season, which also enabled online recording for the similar Waterways Breeding Bird Survey (WBBS).

## Coverage in the York Region

Locally, in the Yorkshire (York) Region, 11 squares were covered in 1994, increasing to 18 in 2000. The Foot and Mouth outbreak of 2001 meant that large areas of the countryside were inaccessible, which resulted in only one square

being covered. Since then, with allocations of more squares, the numbers surveyed has gradually risen to almost 40. The graph below illustrates this; although note that the 2014 count includes the four WBBS sites surveyed in the region.

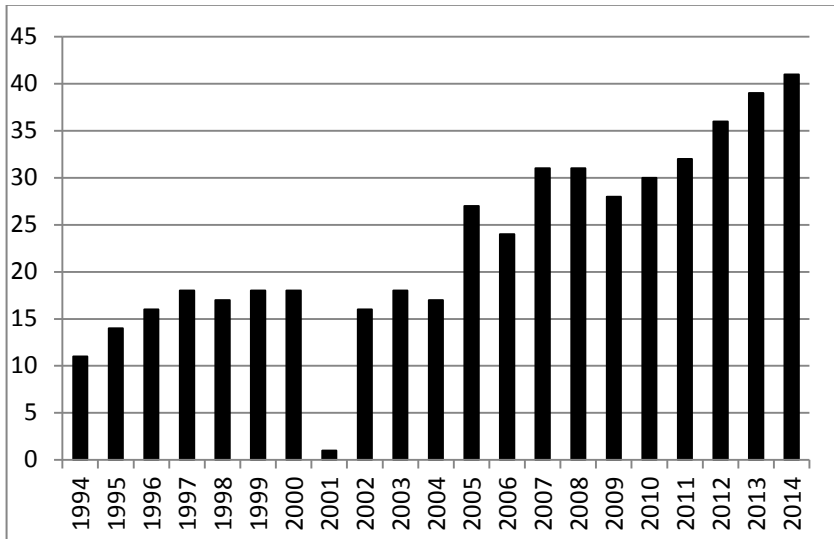


Figure 2. Number of BBS squares surveyed in the York Region by year.

Of the original list of 11 squares, nine are still actively being covered. There were still two observers surveying squares in 2014 who had taken part in 1994; one of whom counted the same square throughout the whole period. To illustrate the continuity of coverage, 2014 saw 14 observers surveying the same square as they did in 2006, five of whom had been counting there since at least 2000. In 2014, 11 of the 35 different observers were members of the YOC.

BBS sites are randomly chosen to ensure that the majority of habitat types in the UK are surveyed. Locally, this results in the majority of sites being located in farmland habitat and, as can be seen in the map in figure 3, there are clusters in some parts of the region whilst other areas do not hold squares.

## Counts of birds in the York Region

The current BBS model takes the maximum of the two counts (early and late) as the annual measure of relative abundance for each species in a square. Using these max counts, in the York Region, there have been 113,488 individual birds counted from 1994 to 2014. Including some feral birds, 123 bird and 10 mammal species have been recorded. The most commonly encountered birds have been

Woodpigeon with 16,300 individuals, Rook with 9,750, Blackbird 6,301, Chaffinch 6,072 and Starling with 5,722 recorded.

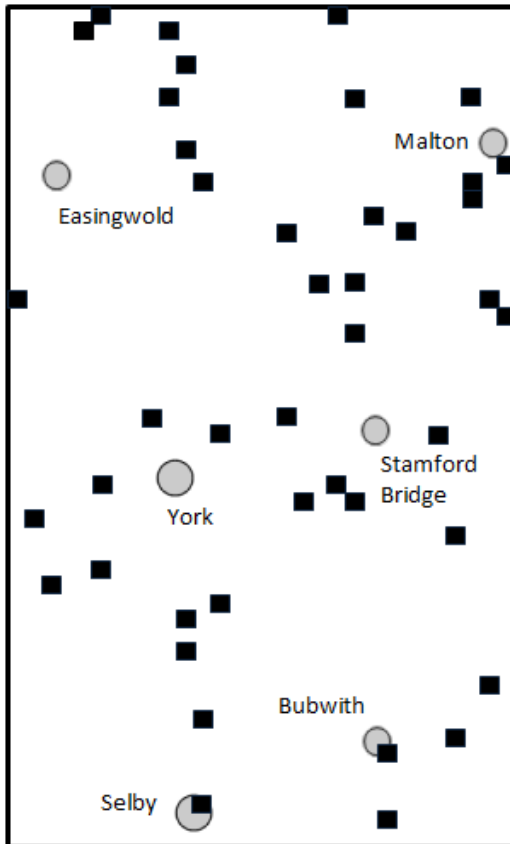


Figure 3. Distribution of BBS squares within the BTO York Region

Seven species have only been recorded once in the region during BBS visits and these illustrate different points of note about the survey or the species' distribution. Water Rail, Great Crested Grebe and Garganey show that the BBS does not cover water bodies as well as it does other habitats. To fill this gap, the BTO has been running a supplementary scheme, the Waterways Breeding Bird Survey or WBBS, since 1998; the data are not available to me for this review prior to 2014. The record of one Redwing illustrates that late wintering birds can be picked up and the BTO factors this into the analyses, for example in the way flocks of Golden Plover or other waders are treated. Hobby and Red Kite records are perhaps early signs of their moving into the region while the sighting of Marsh Harrier could have been a passage bird.

## Regional population trends of selected species

Next, we will take a look at population trends in the region for a selection of species. To control for the differing numbers of squares surveyed each year, I have calculated the mean maximum count per square covered for each year as an index. The data from 2001, the year of Foot and Mouth, were removed as there was only a single square covered which would have distorted the analysis without a more sophisticated statistical model. There does need to be some caution applied to these trends as some are based on small sample sizes and cover a limited geographical area.

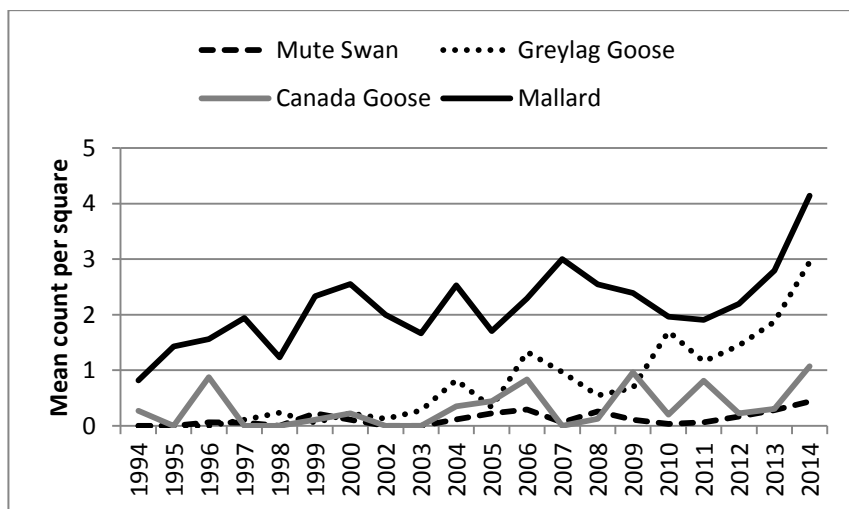


Figure 4. Population index trends for selected waterfowl.

In figure 4, note the increasing counts of Mallard and Greylag Goose. The numbers for 2014 are likely to be extra high as a result of WBBS data being included in the data extract. The local data for all four species in the graph reflect the increases seen nationally in BBS data.

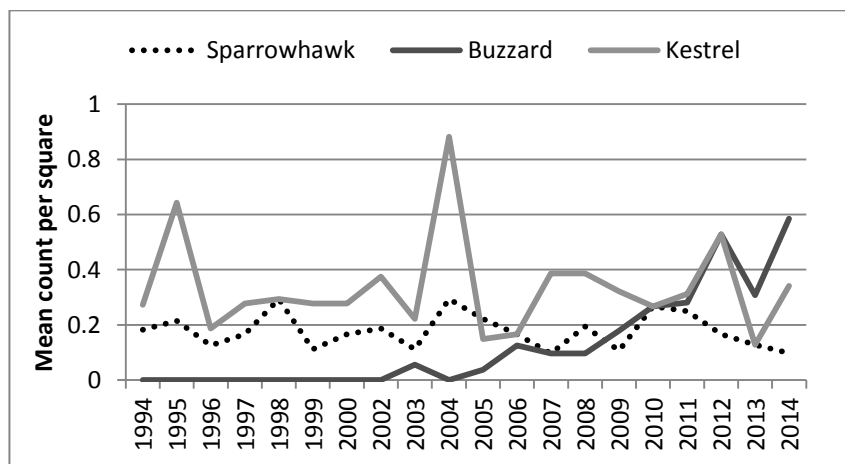


Figure 5. Population trends for selected raptors.

The raptor trends in figure 5 reflect the increase in Buzzards that has been seen in the York Region over the last decade or so. However, the Kestrel decline seen nationally does not show up locally in BBS data, although there appear to be large fluctuations annually.

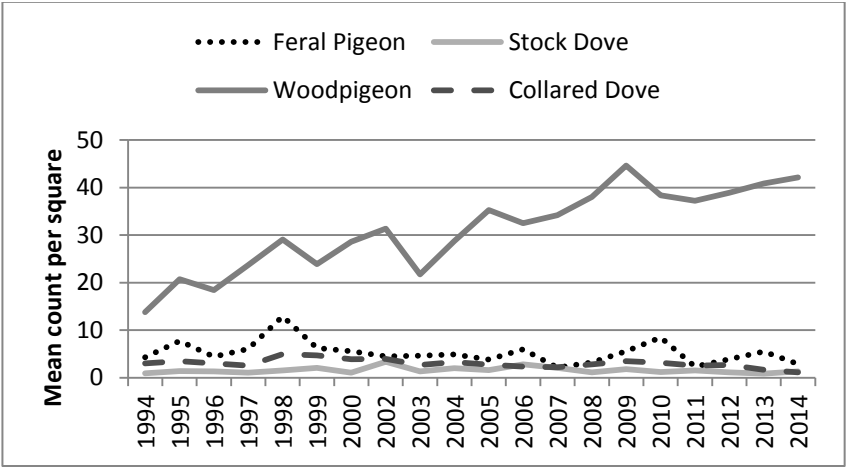


Figure 6. Population index trends for pigeons and doves.

The graph in figure 6 shows local trends for pigeons and doves, highlighting that Woodpigeon is very common and increasing in numbers too. The other species look broadly stable though, nationally, Stock Dove and Collared Dove show increases in population in low double figures and Feral Pigeon shows a significant decrease. Turtle Dove barely registers in the BBS counts so is not shown here.

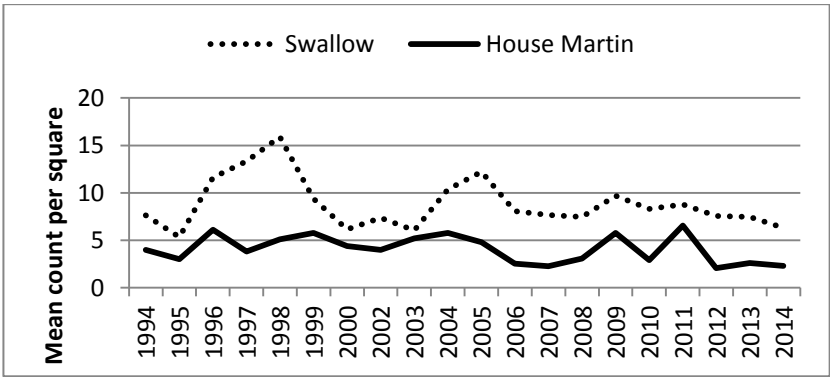


Figure 7. Population index trends in two hirundines.

Both Swallow and House Martin show a decreasing trend, although the former is increasing nationally.

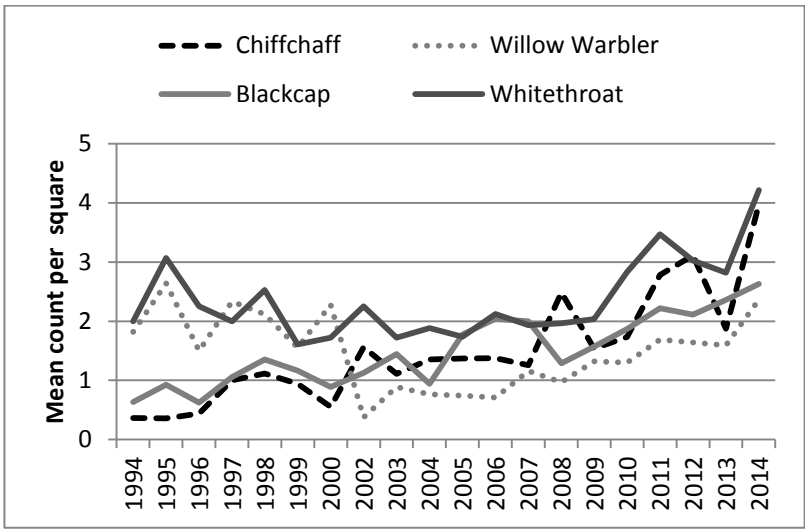
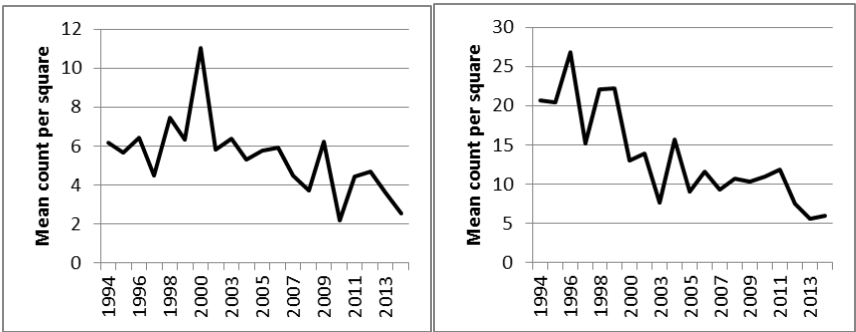


Figure 8. Population trends of selected warblers.

The national population trends for Chiffchaff, Blackcap and Whitethroat, which are all increasing as measured by long-term BSB data, can be seen reflected in the graph in figure 8. Willow Warbler shows a return to levels seen at the start of the BBS, following a steep drop at the start of the century; this bounce-back is not evident in the national data. Is there something different happening locally or is it an artefact of sample size?



Figures 9. and10. Population trends for Swift (L) and Starling (R).

Figures 9 and 10 illustrate that the trends for two declining species, Swift and Starling respectively, are picked up in the local York Region BBS data.

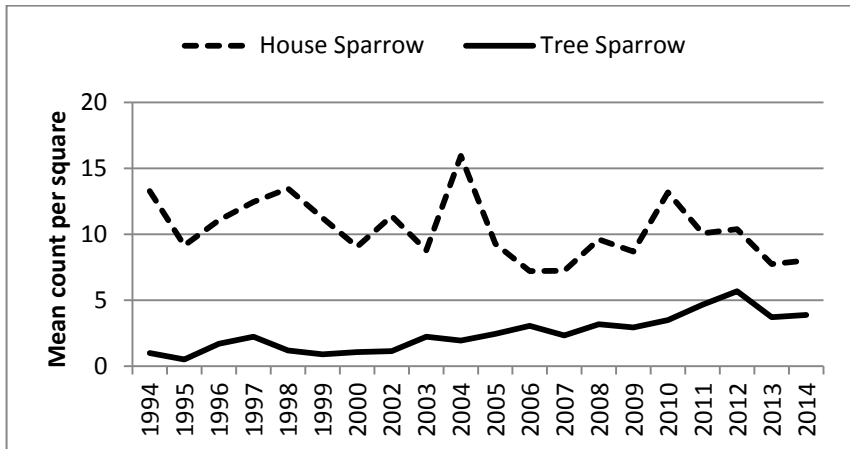


Figure11. Population trends for the sparrows.

Comparison of House and Tree Sparrow trends in the York region is shown in the graph in figure 11. The national decline of House Sparrow shows up locally while the Tree Sparrow appears to be increasing, although at lower densities than the former species. This is consistent with the national picture of long-term BBS data, although House Sparrow declines are more marked here. The national decline is far more dramatic when tracking back to the 1980s using CBC data.

## Concluding remarks

The BBS in the York Region has proven to be a popular survey with volunteers and all selected squares are allocated in most years. The increase in coverage has been a result of the expansion of the survey with selection of new squares for the region at various times during the period. The York Region has contributed significant quantities of data over first two decades of the survey to help understand the national picture. Some of the trends seen nationally can also be picked up in the local data.

This overview would not have been possible without the support of the local volunteer surveyors, I would like to record my thanks to them all and also to the late Peter Hutchinson who was the BBS Regional Organiser in its early days, from 1994-1999. If you are interested in finding out more about the BBS, please contact me or visit the BTO's website.



# Old Gravel Pits, Allerthorpe 2014

By Phil Bone

It was a mild start to the year and with so much natural food around from the previous autumn, bird activity around the feeders was generally quiet, though they were attracting good numbers of Tree Sparrow and there were occasional sightings of both Marsh (up to two birds ) and Willow Tit. There was however a distinct lack of finches around. The only sighting of note during this period was of two Pink-footed Geese that flew over on 13th April.

It was a good year for many resident species; survey work showed that the 2013 breeding season had clearly been productive with Wren, Dunnock, Robin, Blue and Great Tit and Chaffinch populations nearly back to the pre-2012 levels. Continuing from last year there were regular sightings of Grey Partridge, including sightings of a family party of a pair and five young.

Of the summer migrants, after a long slow decline the Willow Warbler population appears to have stabilised at five pairs, meanwhile Chiffchaff in 2014 reached an all-time high at 11 pairs. While these declines and increases perhaps reflect what is happening nationally, since last autumn there has been extensive habitat management on site with the removal of a lot of bramble that was taking over and it is unclear as to how much this has had an impact on bird populations. A surprise and worrying development this year was (for first time in 16 years) that no Sedge Warblers returned, though data from the BTO indicated that survival rates for some species that over winter south of the Sahel (such as Sedge Warbler) was low and may have been due to poor rainfall.

Breeding highlights this year included Sparrowhawk; while the nest location was known (high in a Scots Pine) we had no idea as to how successful they were, until three young were noted food begging on several dates in August. A new triangular nest box erected the previous autumn for Barn Owls initially attracted the wrong species with a pair of Tawny Owls raising two young in it during the spring (having ignored the box they usually use), for it then to be occupied by Barn Owls later in the summer. This is the first time Barn Owls have bred on site, the pair managed to hatch and raise one chick to fledging. There were mixed fortunes for water birds; both Coot (six pairs) and Moorhen had a productive breeding season with many broods present. While there were up to seven pairs of Tufted Duck present during the spring, only one brood of four young was noted in August. There were two pairs of Great Crested Grebes, though only one successfully raised young.

The year ended as it began, quietly, with just occasional sightings of Siskin or Redpoll. There was little finch activity around the bird feeders, with Greenfinch very thin on the ground. However, there appeared to be more Tree Sparrows about. The highlight of the year was a White-fronted Goose that flew southeast over the site on 6th December, a new species for the site.

*[Note: Allerthorpe GP is a site with no public access; please respect this. Allerthorpe Lakeland Park is open to the public.]*

## **Obituary for MIKE WILLIAMS 1942 – 2014**

It was with much sadness that we reported the sudden death of Mike Williams in 2014. Mike is greatly missed by his wife Margaret, his family, many friends and the YOC. He was a friendly, enthusiastic and knowledgeable member of the Club and it is entirely thanks to his tireless work and publishing expertise that the YOC Report is now up-to-date and published in the year following the recording year.

His interest in birding started as a boy and he recalled being taken out by his father who was a ringer, to sites such as Dungeness Bird Observatory. He also grew to love natural history, stamp collecting, cricket and model railways, later becoming interested in walking and foreign travel.

Mike went to school at Kent College before going to Bristol University to read Physics, but changed partway through the course to Mathematics. After gaining his degree, he worked as a maths teacher at Barnsley Holgate Grammar School. He married Margaret in 1965 and in 1967 began to teach at Norwich City College as a maths lecturer. Their daughter, Sarah was born in 1969. In 1971, he moved to Crewe and Alsager College, again teaching maths; whilst there gaining an MSc in Computing. In 1974 they moved to Bedfordshire where Mike ran the Computer Centre at Luton F E College, also liaising with local schools to help introduce computing into the curriculum. At this time he became a member of Bedfordshire Natural History Society an involvement that lasted 27 years. He became their meteorological recorder and was involved with the production of scientific journals.

Leaving teaching, Mike worked for BeeBug, which published magazines for Acorn Computer users, considerably extending his knowledge. On being made redundant in 1994 he set up Akalat Publishing (named after an East African bird – a forest dweller formerly in the Thrush family, but now considered an Old World Flycatcher). He produced a computing magazine for Acorn users; this work also involved travelling to various road shows around the country. With his editing, design and publishing skills he produced other publications linked to his interests including both the Surrey and Bedfordshire Bird Club Reports, which he was still doing in 2014.

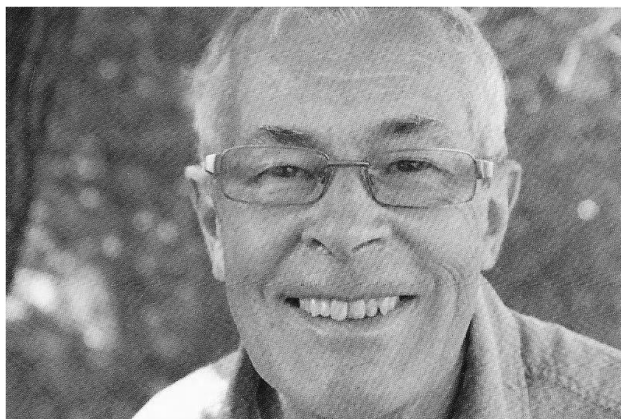
Sarah, his daughter, settled in Sheffield in 2002 and in 2004 he and Margaret moved to Cliffe, near Selby at which time he joined the YOC. His skills were quickly discovered and he soon became editor of the York Ornithological Club's annual report. He was a keen walker with Selby Walkers and Fell Walkers as well as being involved with walking Hearing Dogs for the Deaf. Mike also worked for Great Rail Journeys as a part-time tour manager abroad from 2002 – 2012 and

had several continental holidays. He had a very full and rich life, further enriched in later years by his grandchildren Jake and Katie who recollect him as a chatterbox, traveller and an adventurer.

Mike was a respected and careful birder. A keen photographer too, his patience was rewarded by some great shots. Always an active member of the Club, he attended talks, was a dedicated Committee member, and often led field trips which were always meticulously planned and researched beforehand to try to ensure that the most was got out of the day. He was instrumental in preparing the YOC's responses to local plans for building near sensitive birding sites, ensuring that the Club's objections were cogently argued. He also enjoyed playing his part helping out with local and national bird surveys. Shortly before he died last year, Mike gave a talk to the club with Peter Reed about birding in Morocco and it is fitting that his final club outing, that he also led, was a hugely successful trip to the East Coast where the undoubted highlights were Citrine Wagtail, Rough-Legged Buzzard and Water Pipit.

He will be remembered by the Club for all his work, much unseen, in producing an excellent annual report in a precise and methodical manner, alongside his willingness to take a full part in the activities of the club.

By Peter Watson



# Species in the York recording area since 1966

This is a list of species recorded in the YOC area since 1966.

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.

## Rarer species requiring descriptions

Rare and scarce species at national, county and local levels are marked in the list with three, two or one asterisks. Records of rarer birds require descriptions to be submitted for ratification as follows: \*\*\* British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC), \*\* Yorkshire Naturalists' Union Rarities Committee (YNURC), \* YOC Recorder. Records for these species must be supported by descriptions taken in the field or as soon as possible after the sighting – preferably before reference to textbooks. Forms for species considered by the BBRC or the YNU can be obtained from any YNU vice-county recorder or the YNU website. Note: If photographs showing key identification features are submitted a field description may not be required (as long as details such as location, date, observer, etc. accompany the photographs). Full lists of YNU and YOC description species are on pages 128 - 129.

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

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

- Goldeneye W
- Smew
- Red-breasted Merganser
- Goosander (B)
- Ruddy Duck B
- Quail (B)
- Red-legged Partridge B
- Grey Partridge B
- Pheasant B
- (Golden Pheasant)
- \* Red-throated Diver
- \* Black-throated Diver
- \* Great Northern Diver
- \* Fulmar
- \* Manx Shearwater
- \* Storm-petrel
- \* Leach's Petrel
- \* Gannet
- Cormorant B
- \* Shag
- \* Bittern (B)?
- \*\* Night Heron
- \*\* Cattle Egret
- Little Egret (B)
- \*\* 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 (B)
- Marsh Harrier (B)
- \* Hen Harrier
- \*\* Montagu's Harrier
- \* Goshawk B
- Sparrowhawk B
- Buzzard B
- \*\* Rough-legged Buzzard
- \* Osprey P
- Water Rail B
- \* Spotted Crake (B)
- \* Corncrake (B)
- Moorhen B
- \* Coot B
- \* Crane (B)
- \* Stone Curlew
- \*\*\* Black-winged Stilt
- Avocet (B)
- Oystercatcher B
- \*\* American Golden Plover
- Golden Plover W
- Grey Plover
- Lapwing B
- Little Ringed Plover B
- Ringed Plover B
- \*\* Kentish Plover
- \* Dotterel
- Whimbrel P
- Curlew B
- Black-tailed Godwit (B)
- \* Bar-tailed Godwit
- Turnstone
- \* Knot
- Ruff (B)
- \* Curlew Sandpiper
- \* Temminck's Stint
- \* Sanderling
- Dunlin W & P
- \*\*\* Baird's Sandpiper?
- \* Little Stint P
- \*\* White-rumped Sandpiper
- \*\* Buff-breasted Sandpiper
- \* Pectoral Sandpiper
- \*\* Red-necked Phalarope
- \* Grey Phalarope
- Common Sandpiper (B)
- Green Sandpiper P & W
- \* Spotted Redshank P
- Greenshank P
- \*\*\* Lesser Yellowlegs
- Wood Sandpiper P

- Redshank B
- Jack Snipe W
- Woodcock B
- Snipe B
- \* Pomarine Skua
- \* Arctic Skua
- \* Great Skua
- \* Puffin
- \* Little Auk
- \* Guillemot
- \* Little Tern
- \*\*\* Caspian Tern
- \*\*\* Whiskered Tern
- \* Black Tern
- \* Sandwich Tern
- Common Tern B
- \* Roseate Tern
- \* Arctic Tern P
- \* 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 & B
- \* Yellow-legged Gull
- \*\* Caspian Gull
- Iceland Gull (W)
- Glaucous Gull
- Great Black-backed Gull W
- 'Feral Pigeon' B
- Stock Dove B
- Woodpigeon B
- Collared Dove B
- Turtle Dove B
- Cuckoo B
- Barn Owl B
- Little Owl B
- Tawny Owl B
- \* Long-eared Owl B
- \* Short-eared Owl (B)
- \* Nightjar B
- Swift B
- \*\* Alpine Swift
- \* Hoopoe
- \* Bee-eater
- Kingfisher B
- \* Wryneck
- Green Woodpecker B
- Great Spotted Woodpecker B
- \* Lesser Spotted Woodpecker B
- Kestrel B
- \*\* Red-footed Falcon
- Merlin
- Hobby (B)
- Peregrine B
- \* (Ring-necked Parakeet)
- \* Golden Oriole
- \* Red-backed Shrike
- \*\*\* Lesser Grey Shrike
- \* Great Grey Shrike
- Magpie B
- Jay B
- Jackdaw B
- Rook B
- Carrion Crow B
- Hooded Crow
- \* Raven
- Goldcrest B
- \* Firecrest
- Blue Tit B
- Great Tit B
- Coal Tit B
- Willow Tit B
- Marsh Tit B
- \* Bearded Tit
- \* Woodlark B
- Skylark B
- Sand Martin B
- Swallow B
- House Martin B
- \*\* Red-rumped Swallow
- \* Cetti's Warbler
- Long-tailed Tit B
- \* Yellow-browed Warbler
- \* Wood Warbler (B)?

Chiffchaff B	Wheatear P
( <i>Siberian Chiffchaff</i> )	Dunnock B
Willow Warbler B	House Sparrow B
Blackcap B	Tree Sparrow B
Garden Warbler B	Yellow Wagtail B
* Barred Warbler	* ( <i>Blue-headed Wagtail</i> )
Lesser Whitethroat B	Grey Wagtail B
Whitethroat B	Pied Wagtail B
Grasshopper Warbler B	( <i>White Wagtail</i> )
Sedge Warbler B	* Richard's Pipit
** Marsh Warbler	Tree Pipit B
Reed Warbler B	Meadow Pipit B
Waxwing W	* Rock Pipit P
Nuthatch B	* Water Pipit
Treecreeper B	Brambling W
Wren B	Chaffinch B
Starling B	* Hawfinch (B)?
* Rose-coloured Starling	Bullfinch B
Dipper (B)	Greenfinch B
* Ring Ouzel	Linnet B
Blackbird B	* Twite
Fieldfare W & P	Lesser Redpoll B
Song Thrush B, W & P	* Common (Mealy) Redpoll
Redwing W & P	** Arctic Redpoll
Mistle Thrush B	Crossbill B
Spotted Flycatcher B	Goldfinch B
Robin B	Siskin B
* Nightingale (B)	* Snow Bunting
* Red-breasted Flycatcher	* Lapland Bunting
* Pied Flycatcher (B)?	Yellowhammer B
* Black Redstart (B)	** Cirl Bunting
Redstart B	Reed Bunting B
Whinchat (B)?	Corn Bunting B
Stonechat B	

The YOC Recorder may ask contributors to provide extra supporting evidence for some species not on the description species lists taking into account factors such as observer experience, out-of-season occurrences and unusual or difficult plumages. This is at the recorder's discretion and the list of species requiring descriptions is reviewed regularly.

## YNU Description Species

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

## YOC description species (additional to YNU)

Bewick's Swan	Fulmar
(Greenland) White-fronted Goose	Manx Shearwater
Brent Goose – all races	Storm-petrel
Green-winged Teal	Leach's Petrel
Garganey	Gannet
Red-crested Pochard	Shag
Ring-necked Duck	Bittern
Scaup	White Stork
Eider	Spoonbill
Long-tailed Duck	Red-necked Grebe
Velvet Scoter	Slavonian Grebe
Red-throated Diver	Black-necked Grebe
Red-breasted Merganser	( <i>away from LDV</i> )
Black-throated Diver	Hen Harrier
Great Northern Diver	Goshawk



Osprey  
Spotted Crake  
Corncrake  
Common Crane  
Stone Curlew  
Dotterel  
Bar-tailed Godwit  
Knot  
Curlew Sandpiper  
Temminck's Stint  
Sanderling  
Purple Sandpiper  
Little Stint  
Pectoral Sandpiper  
Grey Phalarope  
Spotted Redshank  
Great Skua  
Pomarine Skua  
Arctic Skua  
Long-tailed Skua  
Puffin  
Razorbill  
Little Auk  
Little Tern  
Black Tern  
Sandwich Tern  
Roseate Tern  
Arctic Tern  
Sabine's Gull  
Kittiwake  
Little Gull  
Mediterranean Gull  
Yellow-legged Gull  
Long-eared Owl  
Short-eared Owl  
Nightjar  
Hoopoe

Bee-eater  
Wryneck  
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker  
Ring-necked Parakeet  
Golden Oriole  
Red-backed Shrike  
Great Grey Shrike  
Raven  
Firecrest  
Bearded Tit  
Woodlark  
(*away from breeding areas*)  
Shore Lark  
Cetti's Warbler  
Yellow-browed Warbler  
Wood Warbler  
Barred Warbler  
Rose-coloured Starling  
Ring Ouzel  
Nightingale  
Red-breasted Flycatcher  
Pied Flycatcher  
Black Redstart  
Yellow Wagtail  
(*'Blue-headed' race and  
'Channel' hybrid*)  
Richard's Pipit  
Rock Pipit  
Water Pipit  
Hawfinch  
Twite  
Common (Mealy) Redpoll  
Snow Bunting  
Lapland Bunting

## **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's recording area. All members are encouraged to submit records, whatever their level of knowledge.

1. Records must be submitted by the 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 noted where possible. Counts are preferable to terms such as 'few', 'several' or 'many' as these terms are very subjective and actual numbers enable the comparison of populations between years. For large flocks of birds, approximate numbers are acceptable.
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. These descriptions should be submitted to the Recorder as soon as possible after the sighting, preferably by email to [recorder@yorkbirding.org.uk](mailto:recorder@yorkbirding.org.uk). The importance of such descriptions for the validation of rare records cannot be overemphasized.
4. Please remember to include your contact details, particularly name and telephone number and email address, with your records.
5. Records should, preferably, be submitted in electronic format as attachments to an email. Ideally records will be submitted on the club spreadsheet, which can be downloaded from the website [www.yorkbirding.org.uk](http://www.yorkbirding.org.uk). Records for inclusion in the YOC Report should be submitted directly to the editorial committee by email to [editor@yorkbirding.org.uk](mailto:editor@yorkbirding.org.uk). Casual records can also be submitted via the casual records form on the website.

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. Sensitive records can be submitted confidentially to the Recorder.

# Contributors to the YOC Bird Report for 2014

(with apologies for any accidental omissions)

Ian Andrews (IA)	Robert (Bob) Coursey (RCo)	J E Harrison
Jack Ashton-Booth (JAB)	Arnold Cowen (AC)	M Hayes
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L Bailey	D Craven	Brian Hedley (BH)
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Tim Birkinshaw	K Delap	Lynn Holden
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Elaine Blake	K Dickenson	Dave Howlett (DH)
Barbara Boize (BBo)	Jenny Dixon	Steve Huddleston
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Richard Bradford	Trevor Douglas (TD)	Richard Iggulden
Phil Bradley	J M Dowson (JMD)	P Izzard
C G Bradshaw	C Doyle	D Jackson
P Brady	Mary Duffy	L Johnson
Hugh Brazier	Richard Drew	Steve Joyce
M T Breaks	S M Edwards	Graham Jones (GJ)
Ian Brookes (IB)	S C Elliott	Tim Jones (TJ)
M Brotherton	A Farrar	Mark Killeen
G Burgon	Christine M Fearnley	M S Kirby
Duncan Bye (DB)	Adam Firth (AF)	Andrew Kisby
N A Calbrade (NAC)	Mark R Fletcher	Wendy Knowles
D K Campbell	Paul (Paz) Fletcher (PF)	A Laverick
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A C I Carter	Rachel Gartner	Tom & Julia Lawson
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Christine Cliff (CC)	J Gregory & G Tubb	Anne & Chris Lloyd
Mark Coates (MC)	Steve Griffiths	David Lumsdaine (DL)
S Collins	D Hall	I Lyall
Derek Cooper	Martin Hammond	Fallon Mahon (FM)
Neil Cooper	Richard Hampshire (RH)	Pamela Manners
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 Moran  
 Lucy Murgatroyd (LM)  
 Michael Naylor (MN)  
 D Neville  
 S Newsome  
 Ian Nicholson (IN)  
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 Rebecca Norville  
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 Matthew O'Sullivan  
 Pete O'Toole (PO)  
 S Ogilvy  
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 C Ralph  
 Craig Ralston (CSR)  
 John Rawcliffe  
 K Rawnsley  
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 J Rudd  
 G Sanderson  
 A Schofield  
 S Scrivener  
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 N Whitehead  
 P Winship  
 A D Winship  
 M Windmill (MW)  
 D Wilson  
 A D Winship  
 Alan Worsley  
 BirdGuides  
 LDV Blog  
 Natural England (NE)  
 Ryedale Natural History  
 Bird Report 2014 (RNH)  
 Sand Hutton Bird  
 Report (SHBR)  
 YOC Website reports

#### **The LDV team**

##### **comprises:**

Craig Ralston  
 Mike Jackson (MFJ)  
 Steve Huddleston  
 Lucy Murgatroyd  
 Fallon Mahon  
 Jean Thorpe  
 James Roberts



## Gazetteer of sites in the York 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
Bishop Wilton	797553
Bishop Wood	5533
Black Wood, Easingwold	5467
Bolton Ings	537397
Bolton Percy	532414
Bootham Stray, York	597548
Bossall	719607
Bowthorpe Hall	697331
Brandsby	589724

Brayton	601305
Brayton Barff	5830
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
Callis Wood	
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
Coneythorpe	713713
Coneythorpe Banks Wood	
	720725
Copmanthorpe	565469

Cornborough Manor 630671  
 Cornfield NR, Rawcliffe 579542  
 Coxwold 536772  
 Crambe 733649  
 Crambeck 738674  
 Crayke 562705  
 Crockey Hill 625466

# **D**

Danesmead Copse, York 607497  
 Designer Outlet, York 607477  
 Dringhouses, York 580495  
 Dunnington 671525  
 Dunnington Common 6750

# **E**

Easingwold 529698  
 East Cottingwith 703425  
 East Moor,  
 Sutton-on-the-Forest 600644  
 Ellers Farm, Buttercrambe 7257  
 Ellerton (Ings) 700400  
 Elvington 700476  
 Elvington Airfield 670480  
 Elvington WTW 7048  
 Escrick 631427  
 Escrick Park 635418

# **F**

Fangfoss 765533  
 Fireman's Leap, New Earswick 609550

Flamingoland 7780  
 Flaxton 680624  
 Foggathorpe 755377  
 Foss Island, York 609520  
 Fulford, York 610496  
 Fulford Ings 608493  
 Fulford Golf Course 624494  
 Fulford Hall 606484  
 Full Sutton 746555

# **G**

Ganthorpe 689704  
 Garganey Hide,  
 North Duffield Carrs 698368  
 Garrowby Hill 798567  
 Gaterley 737696  
 Geoff Smith Hide,  
 North Duffield Carrs 696372  
 Giles Lock,  
 Pocklington Canal 795464

Gilling (East/Park) 614770  
 Goosewood Caravan Park,  
 Sutton-on-the-Forest 591631  
 Great Barugh 750790  
 Grimston 644514  
 Grimston Bar (roundabout) 649516  
 Grimston Moor 613744

# **H**

Hagg Bridge 717452  
 Harewood Whin 538518  
 Hartrigg Oaks, York 608559  
 Hassacarr NR 673518  
 Haxby 609582  
 Healaugh 500477  
 Hemingbrough 6730  
 Heslington East,  
 York University 6350-6450  
 Heslington Tillmire 638475  
 Heslington West,  
 York University 6250  
 Heslington, York 627504  
 Hessay 524534  
 High Catton 718538  
 High Hutton 755685  
 High Lodge, SHL 675586  
 Hob Moor, York 585506  
 Hogg's Pond, Dringhouses 581493  
 Hollicarrs 626395  
 Holtby 675542  
 Hopgrove (roundabout) 642553  
 Hovingham 667758  
 Howardian Hills 5875-7568  
 Huby 566655  
 Hull Road Park, York 620515  
 Huntington, York 612550  
 Huttons Ambo 763677

# **J**

Jeffry Bog, Low Hutton 759667  
 JRTNR, New Earswick 608548

# **K**

Keldspring Crossing,  
 Pocklington 786498  
 Kelfield 594384  
 Kannythorpe 790660  
 Kexby 705514  
 Kilburn 504796  
 Kirby Misperton 780794  
 Kirkham Priory 736658

Knapton	562522
Knivesmire, York	594495
Knivesmire Wood, York	593488
<b>L</b>	
Langton	798671
Langwith Stray, Heslington	650480
Laytham	749395
Leppington	763613
Linton-on-Ouse	495607
Loftsome Bridge	705301
Londesborough Lodge Farm,	
Dunnington	6952
Long Marston	502512
Low Carr,	
Sutton-on-the-Forest	600623
Low Catton	705538
Lower Derwent Valley	7036–7046
<b>M</b>	
Malton	785717
Mausoleum, Castle Howard	
	727696
Melbourne	753441
Middlethorpe Ings	603486
Melbourne Scamland	766437
Meltonby	796525
Milford Common	5332
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
<b>N</b>	
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 Mask SSSI	705501
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
<b>O</b>	
Osballdwick	633519
Osgodby	641338
Oswaldkirk, York	625790
Oulston Reservoir	570745
Oxton	505431
Ozendyke Ings	539398
<b>P</b>	
Patefield Wood	500381
Petersfield Farm, Bielby	793422
Pocklington	802490
Pocklington Airfield	793485
Pocklington Canal	698426–800474
Poppleton	560546
Pretty Wood, Castle Howard	732690
<b>R</b>	
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 (Riggs Road Bridge)	
	796754
<b>S</b>	
Sand Hutton	695586
Scackleton	650726
Scagglethorpe Moor	5355
Scamlands	766439
Scoreby Lodge	684513
Seaton Ross	780415
Seavy Carr, Thornton	753451
Selby	615324
Sessions NR, New Earswick	610548

Sheriff Hutton 655664  
 Silburn Lock,  
 Pocklington Canal 797468  
 Skewsby 625710  
 Skipwith 657385  
 Skipwith Common 6537  
 Skirpenbeck 747570  
 Sleights, Amotherby 737758  
 Slingsby 698750  
 Slingsby Banks Wood 698733  
 South Duffield 681335  
 Stamford Bridge 715555  
 Stearsby Hagg 620720  
 Steeton Whin 520435  
 Stillingfleet 594410  
 Stillington 585678  
 Stittenham 679677  
 Stockton on the Forest 655561  
 Stonegrave 657777  
 Storwood 712442  
 Strensall 633608  
 Strensall Common 6460-6661  
 St Nicholas Fields, York 615517  
 Stubb Wood 585433  
 Sutton-on-the-Forest 584647  
 Sutton upon Derwent 707468  
 Swantail Hide,  
 Wheldrake Ings 707438  
 Swinton 760731  
 Swinton Ings 772748  
**T**  
 Tang Hall Beck fields 6353  
 Tang Hall, York 620520  
 Terrington 670707  
 Terrington Moor 685716  
 The Retreat, York 617510  
 Thorganby 691420  
 Thorganby Ings 6941  
 Thormanby 495747  
 Thornton 760453  
 Thornton Ellers 730460  
 Tockwith 465525  
 Tollerton 513643  
 Towthorpe 625586  
 Towthorpe Civic  
 Amenity Site, York 648586  
 Towthorpe Moor Lane,

Strensall 625585-663579  
 Triangle Meadow, York 604547  
**U**  
 Ulleskelf 520400  
**W**  
 Walbut Lock, Pocklington Canal 773442  
 Walbutts Sewage Works, Strensall 646618  
 Walmgate Stray, York 617505  
 Waplington Hall, Allerthorpe 776468  
 Warren Wood, Dunnington 677503  
 Warthill 675555  
 Wash Dike, Skipwith Common 662372  
 Wass Woods 550796  
 Welburn 720680  
 Welburn Sewage Works 714685  
 West Bank Park, York 584512  
 West Cottingwith Ings 695419  
 West Ings 550394  
 West Lilling 648652  
 West Ness 690790  
 Westow 7565  
 Wharfe Ings 568387  
 Wheldrake 682450  
 Wheldrake Ings 7043  
 Wheldrake Wood 6546  
 Whitehill Mine 667359  
 White Carr, Flaxton 663603  
 Whitwell Grange 715666  
 Wiganthorpe 662724  
 Wigginton 595585  
 Wilberfoss 734510  
 Winchmore, Stamford Bridge 727547  
 Wistow 594357  
 Woodhouse Grange 733470  
 World's End Plantation,  
 Strensall Common 6659  
 Wressle 708313  
**Y**  
 Yearsley 585744  
 Yearsley Moor 5875-6076  
 York Minster 603523