

# **YORK ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB REPORT 2017**

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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 YOC was formally established in 1965, though the founder members originally met at an evening class run by Michael Clegg in the late '50s, with the aim of observing and recording birds and other wildlife, and supporting their conservation, in the club's recording area; this comprises 15 10-km squares around York. The area covers a range of habitats: wetlands (the Lower Derwent Valley), deciduous woodland (Hambleton and Howardian Hills), coniferous woodland (Yearsley and Ampleforth), lakes (Castle Howard and Heslington East), residual heathland (Allerthorpe, Skipwith and Strensall Commons), peat bog (Askham Bog) and the large agricultural areas of the Vales of York and Pickering.

The Club has a membership of about 90 and normally meets on the first Tuesday of the month (except June, 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, as well as local walks 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. Full details of the Club's activities can be found on the website – [www.yorkbirding.org.uk](http://www.yorkbirding.org.uk). This also includes a general Twitter feed (@yorkbirding) as well as one devoted to the York Minster Peregrines (@yorkperegrines). In addition we have an active email group which shares information about local sightings.

## Editorial

Welcome to York Ornithological Club's 2017 Report, compiled and produced by the Editorial Committee. A bumper issue, thanks in part to three very exciting finds in the area during the year; two firsts, a male Pine Bunting and a Glossy Ibis and a second record, Coue's Arctic Redpoll (subject to acceptance by the relevant authorities). Full reports of how each was found are on pages 119 - 123. The Club's annual survey looked at wintering Goosander this year; the findings along with historical occurrence of this species in Yorkshire and the area are revealed in an article by Paul Doherty and David Tate. We also have short articles on 'Bob' the one-eyed Kestrel by Terry Weston and the Nuthatches of Heslington by John Lawton, while another dip into the archives by David Tate has thrown up more interesting changes in species' prevalence and distribution. The summary of the BTO's House Martin Nest Study 2016-2017 in the York Region was prepared by Rob Chapman.

As with any publication that mainly relies on the submission of casual records, there are inevitably patches within the area that are covered more thoroughly and

more regularly – in particular currently the Lower Derwent Valley NNR and SE53. There is therefore an inevitable bias towards coverage of these sites in the Report. It does not necessarily follow that some species are absent elsewhere; we may just not have anyone visiting that particular area often – the hectads (10 km x 10 km squares) SE73 and SE77 in the northeast and southeast of the recording area are generally under-recorded. Changes in habitat and land use can also affect sightings. This year sadly saw the end of Harewood Whin landfill site at Rufforth (commonly known as Rufforth Tip) as a working site, and with operations there winding down numbers of gulls visiting that area to feed already appear to be declining. We are also still trying to encourage more submission of breeding records relating to common resident species, as these remain under-reported, as well as migrant breeders. As with any breeding bird, please exercise discretion; sensitive records should be sent to the recorder.

The list of birds seen in the York recording area since 1966 has been updated and some changes have been made to the species list for which we publish first and last dates, for both summer migrants and winter visitors. In some cases there are not enough sightings these days for the dates to be meaningful e.g. Wood Sandpiper or some remain in the area to breed e.g. Wigeon, making departure and arrival dates of birds on passage difficult to determine. Where birds are known to overwinter occasionally, e.g. Blackcap and Chiffchaff, the first migrant date is taken as the date a singing individual is first heard.

### **How the report is produced**

Records are received and collated, then split into sections which are distributed to the section writers 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.

### **Acknowledgements**

As ever, thank you to everyone who contributed records, without which the annual report would not be possible. Many thanks once again to the Natural England team in the Lower Derwent Valley (one of the most significant sites for birds in the York area) for allowing us to use records posted on the LDV Blog and for providing WeBS counts. Also thanks to Craig Ralston for allowing us to reprint the annual Rare Breeding Bird Panel report for the Lower Derwent. Thank you to Elaine Gathercole and Sean Garvey who carry out the counts and provide WeBS data to the club from Castle Howard Lake and the University of York (Heslington East and West) respectively. Thanks to Stephen McAvoy at the BTO for providing BirdTrack records. Thank you to FERA (now National Agri-Food Innovation Campus, Sand Hutton) and to Jim Pewtress of the Ryedale Natural History Society for allowing us to extract records from their 2017 Reports. In particular, the former is an important source of breeding records of more common species (recorded as SHL in the main species accounts). Thank you too to Friends of

Rawcliffe Meadows for giving permission to extract some records from their 2017 Report. Thanks to everyone who shared their sightings via YorkBirding email group. The Editorial Committee would also like to express its gratitude to Paul Doherty, David Tate, Terry Weston and John Lawton for their articles and to Chris Gomersall and Duncan Bye for their descriptions of finding the Pine Bunting, Coue's Arctic Redpoll and Glossy Ibis.

Many thanks to Jack Ashton-Booth, Ian Brookes, Duncan Bye, Jane Chapman, Alistair Charlton, Mark Coates, Doug Crawford, Chris Gomersall, Paul Greenwood, Adam Hutt, Lee Johnson, Josh Jones, Jono Leadley, Ellis Lucas, Jan Nobel, Dave Mansell, Lucy Murgatroyd, Mike Pilsworth, Masha Sitnikova, Martin Standley, David Tate, Jean Thorpe, Mike Walton and Terry Weston for their photos which illustrate this report.

Thanks to Rob Chapman for running the website and keeping it updated, and to Duncan Bye and Jono Leadley for running the Twitter feed. Thank you to Doug Crawford for keeping everyone up to date about the Minster Peregrines via their dedicated Twitter feed.

Thank you to everyone who was involved with the preparation of the report for publication. Records from YorkBirding emails were collated by Paz Fletcher; Fiona Walton extracted records from the LDV Blog; Rob Chapman formatted all records and collated them onto the master spreadsheet; Paul Doherty compiled the Highlights of 2017 and the weather report was prepared by David Tate.

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

Jane Chapman	swans and geese
Jonathan Begbie	ducks
Fiona Walton	game birds, divers, herons, egrets, storks and grebes
David Tate	raptors (including owls)
Jane Chapman	crakes, rails, Moorhen, Coot and Crane
Jono Leadley	waders
Chris Gomersall	skuas, terns and gulls
Jane Chapman	doves, pigeons, woodpeckers and shrikes
Julia Lawson	crows, tits and larks
Paul Doherty	martins, swallows and warblers
Jane Chapman	Waxwing to Dipper (excluding owls and raptors)
Barry Thomas	thrushes
Duncan Bye	flycatchers, chats and wheatears
Duncan Bye	sparrows, wagtails, pipits, finches and buntings

Verification of records of scarcer species was undertaken by Jono Leadley, YOC Recorder. Records still awaiting confirmation by the BBRC or YNU are marked with an asterisk (\*) in the Highlights section. These are detailed in the relevant species reports and updates on their acceptance will be given in future reports. Records from previous years that have been accepted/rejected are included at the end of the classified list.

Jane Chapman 2018

# Highlights of 2017

## Weather in 2017

Data from the University of York's automatic weather station has been used to prepare recent weather reports. During 2017 this occasionally malfunctioned and therefore this report has used national Met Office data where appropriate.

The start of the year was relatively warm and dry with only seven night time frosts during January and day temperatures remaining above freezing, with 12°C recorded on the 11th. The monthly rainfall total was 75% below the ten year mean; as a result the Derwent and Wharfe valleys held little flood water. February was also mild, with only one frost and 11 days exceeded 10°C. Although rainfall was near the monthly norm Storm Doris brought nearly 10mm of rain on the 23rd and by the end of the month flooding restriction notices were employed in the LDV. Above average temperatures continued in March, with seven days above 14°C.

The first nine days of April were warm with spells of heavy rain including 23mm on the 5th. This was followed by anticyclonic conditions which led to dry weather and although it became cooler towards the end of the month frosts were not recorded. Easterly airflow continued into early May, followed by changeable, though generally warmer than average, conditions. Rainfall was well below average, despite 28mm on the 27th causing localised flooding. Summer came early with six days above 22°C during June, while 29°C recorded on the 19th proved to be the hottest day of the year. The monthly rainfall total, which included 16mm on the both the 6th and the 28th, was close to the long term mean.

Mainly westerly airflow in July led to slightly cooler temperatures and only five days exceeded 22°C. Thundery conditions at the end of the month led to rainfalls of 16mm on the 22nd and 13mm on the 27th. August was cool. Though four days were over 22°C, 18 were below 20°C, including a low of 15°C on the 8th. Continuing westerly airflow brought a total of 63mm of rain including 26mm on the 23rd. Weather data from the York University station was unavailable for most of September. The local effects of Storm Aileen mid-month were seen in the form of several Manx Shearwaters blown into the area after this Atlantic storm brought 75mph winds to the west coast at a time when they had just started to migrate. Nationally September proved to be wetter and colder than the long term mean.

During October ex-tropical hurricane Ophelia (16/17th) and Storm Brian (21st) brought severe conditions to western parts of the UK, however the effects in the York area were far less pronounced. Ophelia brought warm air and temperatures in York reached 22°C, whilst rainfall from Brian amounted to a modest 12mm. Overall October was warmer and drier than average. The November rainfall total was about half the local 10-year mean for the month with a maximum daily total of 4mm reported on the 29th. Daytime temperatures exceeded 14°C on the 21st and 22nd whilst night time frosts were restricted to the 6th. Persistent rainfall in early December meant the LDV began to flood in the first week. The month was generally unsettled with some spells of high pressure which led to five frosts though four daytime temperatures rose to between 10-11°C.



## January

The year got off to a colourful start with a flock of 45 **Waxwings** at Castle Mills on the 1st, whilst groups seen elsewhere included 20 in Selby on the 17th. A **Great White Egret** was at Wheldrake Ings on the 2nd, and then flew over Bank Island at dusk on the 7th. The LDV was the place to be if you fancied a wild goose chase, with up to 200 **Pink-footed Geese**, 15 **Tundra Bean Geese** and 53 **European White-fronted Geese** early in the month. Other wildfowl there included over 100 **Whooper Swans**, two returning **Bewick's Swans** from the 16th, a **Scaup**, plus a drake **Red-breasted Merganser** at Bank Island on the 18th. Elsewhere two **Scaup** were at CHL from the 5th, 84 **Goosander** at Redhouse Reservoir on the 15th would be the year's highest count and a **Smew** was at Heslington East on the 17th. Waders in the LDV included 14 **Black-tailed Godwits** and 48 **Ruff** on the 3rd, the 14th saw a minimum of 480 **Snipe**, whilst Milford Common had a good count of 11 **Jack Snipe** on the 8th. Over 20,000 large gulls were feeding in the club area (mainly at the Rufforth landfill site) and then roosting at Wheldrake Ings. Careful checking revealed the presence of up to five **Glaucous Gulls** (including a single rehabilitated bird ringed and released at Rufforth on the 6th); up to four **Iceland Gulls** and three **Caspian Gulls**, whilst **Mediterranean Gulls** were seen at the Wheldrake Ings roost on the 21st and the 23rd. Another traditional roost saw 600 **Pied Wagtails** at Parliament Street on the 14th, but the bird of the month (and indeed the year) was at Dunnington on the 20th when a fine male **Pine Bunting** was found amongst the large numbers of finches and buntings there – a 'first' for the recording area.

## February

The interest in wildfowl continued in February with 103 **White-fronted Geese** heading towards Wheldrake Ings on the 1st. Counts of the commoner ducks in the LDV included 12,000 **Wigeon**, 10,000+ **Teal**, 368 **Pintail**, 262 **Gadwall**, 251 **Tufted Duck**, 257 **Pochard** and 238 **Shoveler**. In addition there were 4150 **Golden Plover** and a minimum of 8000 **Lapwings**, with some variety added by two **Avocets** at Wheldrake Ings on the 25th. The abundance of wildfowl and waders doubtless explained why there were up to five **Peregrines** present in the LDV, and the pair on York Minster was seen in courtship display on the 1st. Four **Tundra Bean Geese** were at CHL on the 4th, one remaining to the 25th, and 19 were at Bank Island on the 24th. Two **Bewick's Swans** were seen in the LDV on the 4th and then reappeared at Aughton on the 26th, and the 19th and 20th saw two redhead **Smew** at Aughton. Gulls provided plenty of interest, with **Glaucous**, **Iceland** and **Caspian Gulls** continuing to be seen at Rufforth, but pride of place went to the **Kumlien's Gulls**\* seen on the 22nd and the 25th. The Dunnington **Pine Bunting** remained throughout February, a **Hawfinch** was at Yearsley Wood on the 17th and a **Great Grey Shrike** was found at Acaster Malbis on the same date. Dunnington provided another prize passerine on the 26th when a group of nine **Common (Mealy) Redpolls** in Hagg Wood were seen to be accompanied by a **Coue's Arctic Redpoll**\*.

## March

A **Chiffchaff** at Heslington East on the 3rd and a **Wheatear** at Sutton upon Derwent on the 9th were a hint of spring, but the 9th also saw 40 **Waxwings** at Bishopthorpe and the Parliament Street **Pied Wagtail** roost reached 1100 on the 10th, whilst the **Pine Bunting** put in its last appearance on the 10th. Four **Scaup** were at Wheldrake Ings on the 12th and the following day there were two **Red-crested Pochard** at Aughton Ings, plus the first **Sand Martins** appeared, with two over Bubwith Bridge. The 13th also saw a large movement of **Whooper Swans** - a total of 648 used the LDV in March. A female **Common Scoter** was at Wheldrake Ings on the 17th and 18th. A **Yellow-browed Warbler** was an excellent find at Rawcliffe Lake on the 22nd, whilst the same date saw a **Garganey** at Bank Island. A **Grey Plover** was at NDC from the 20th to the 28th. **Hen Harriers** at Thorganby on the 22nd (a ringtail) and an adult male at Wheldrake Ings on the 25th were doubtless on return passage. The end of the month saw more summer visitors arriving - **Willow Warbler** on the 27th and **Swallow** and **Blackcap** on the 28th. A **Great White Egret** was at NDC on the 29th, with two in the southern end of the valley the following day.

## April

The **Great White Egrets** were still at Bubwith at the start of the month. Two **Avocets** were at Wheldrake Ings on the 3rd, a **Little Ringed Plover** appeared at Heslington East on the 7th and three **Cranes** circled over Wheldrake Ings on the 8th (with six near East Cottingwith on the 22nd). **Cetti's Warblers** were at Pocklington on the 9th and East Cottingwith on the 13th. A **Little Gull** was at Wheldrake Ings on the 9th and the same date saw first records for **House Martin** and **Sedge Warbler**. A **Whimbrel** was at Wheldrake Ings on the 10th, whilst the following day saw first records for **Lesser Whitethroat**, **Whitethroat**, **Redstart** and **Yellow Wagtail**. The next few days saw appearances by **Pied Flycatcher**, **Hobby** and **Osprey**, while a **Black Redstart** was singing at Heslington West on the 14th and a **Water Pipit** was at Bank Island on the 15th. The Acaster Malbis **Great Grey Shrike** put in a final appearance on the 17th, which was the first date for both **Cuckoo** and **Reed Warbler**. The now usual spring passage of **Black-tailed Godwits** peaked with 120 at Bank Island on the 19th. An early **Swift** was at a Riccall nest box on the 19th, a **Tree Pipit** was singing at Strensall Common on the 22nd and a **Common Sandpiper** was at Allerthorpe Water Park on the same date. Two **Kittiwakes** flew over York on the 23rd. Wheldrake Ings enjoyed visits from **Osprey**, **Wood Sandpiper**, **Arctic** and **Black Terns** at the month's end, and the 29th saw an arrival of **Grasshopper Warblers**, with birds singing at Bank Island, Heslington East and Ryther Ings. A sub-adult **Gannet** flying over the A19 near Riccall on the 30th was unexpected.

## May

A **Spoonbill** was at Wheldrake Ings on the 1st and the spring passage of **Whimbrel** peaked at 88 on the 2nd. A **Ring Ouzel** was found near the Yorkshire Museum on the 2nd, with another near Easingwold on the 12th and the first

**Spotted Flycatcher** was near Melbourne on the 3rd. A pleasing run of waders began with four **Avocets** at Bank Island on the 5th and a **Sanderling** at Thornton Ellers on the same day. A summer plumaged **Spotted Redshank** was a fine sight at Thornton Ellers on the 8th and the same spot had a **Wood Sandpiper** from the 8th to the 11th. The former **Turtle Dove** stronghold around Foggathorpe still held one on the 14th and the same date saw 18 **Ringed Plovers** at Thornton Ellers. The 14th also had singing **Quail** at Thornton Ings and Pocklington Canal (The Grange), and a **Corncrake** at NDC, with two from the 17th to the month end. Two **Cranes** were at Thorganby Ings on the 17th and then three were at NDC on the 21st. A **Kittiwake** was at Knapton on the 21st and in contrast to that inland seabird, a party of 14 **Crossbills** at Yearsley Moor on the 21st included some juveniles. The next day saw a **White Stork** flying north between Wheldrake and Elvington, two **Great White Egrets** were at Wheldrake Ings from the 25th to the 28th and a **Wood Sandpiper** was at Bank Island on the 27th. At the end of the month a **Nightjar** was churring at Sand Hutton on the 30th.

### June

Attention shifted from spring passage to breeding birds with a **Quail** singing at Acaster Airfield on the 2nd, two at Wheldrake Ings on the 6th with three there the next morning; the start of a notable influx with 16 recorded across the LDV by the month end. **Corncrakes** were singing at several sites in the LDV; at least eight singing males were present. A **Nightjar** was churring at Skipwith Common on the 3rd and birds were heard at Strensall Common from the 9th to the month end. Up to seven pairs of **Little Egret** were breeding in the LDV where there were sightings of **Great White Egrets** on the 9th and the 13th. A **Crane** was at Wheldrake Ings on the 11th, and away from the LDV singles were seen at Malton on the 6th and Strensall on 28th. For the first time, the Minster **Peregrines** successfully hatched young (two males) around the 14th. A **Cetti's Warbler** was at CHL on the 26th, whilst the reappearance of **Green Sandpipers** in the LDV towards the end of the month signalled the start of the return wader passage.

### July

Records of **Quail** and **Corncrake** in the LDV continued from June and a **Crane** flew over Aughton Ings on the 3rd, there was a **Spoonbill** at Wheldrake Ings on the 8th with a **Great White Egret** at Bank Island the next day. A party of three **Ravens** were over Wheldrake Ings on the 11th. A **Cetti's Warbler** was at Stamford Bridge on the 15th and a **Wood Warbler** at Hagg Wood on the 18th. One of the newly fledged Minster **Peregrine** juveniles ended up on the ground on the 24th, but was rescued and returned to the northwest tower of York Minster unscathed.

### August

The start of the month saw **Lapwing** numbers building up, with over 1000 in the LDV on the 3rd. Small numbers of **Green Sandpiper**, **Common Sandpiper**, **Dunlin**, **Curlew** and **Little Ringed Plovers** moved through the LDV, with a lone

**Whimbrel** at Wheldrake Ings on the 6th and **six Black-tailed Godwits** there on the 30th. Birds of prey showed well, with up to three **Hobbies** at Wheldrake Ings and daily **Marsh Harriers**. An **Osprey** was at Bank Island on the 25th, and one was at CHL on the 27th and the 29th. **Swallows** moved through the LDV in numbers with 500 south on the 20th, followed by 1000+ on the 21st, when there were 80+ **Yellow Wagtails** at Wheldrake Ings, and **Redstarts** and **Spotted Flycatchers** appeared at several sites. A **Pied Flycatcher** was at Bank Island on the 27th, with another at Pocklington Canal, Melbourne on the 28th. A **Garganey** was seen at Heslington East on the 30th, but a **Nightjar** flushed at Ellerton Ings on the same day was rather more unexpected.

### September

**Osprey** records continued with one over Canal Head, Pocklington on the 1st and the **Garganey** remained at Heslington East to the 8th. Four **Bearded Tits** were on the Pocklington Canal near Melbourne on the 10th and 11th. **Teal** and **Wigeon** numbers started to build up and 20 **Pink-footed Geese** flew high southeast over Elvington on the 12th. Storm Aileen passed through in the early hours of the 13th and was doubtless responsible for single **Manx Shearwaters** picked up at Barmby Moor, Howden and Fulford on the 14th, with one in a York garden the following day. An adult **Yellow-legged Gull** was at Wheldrake on the 15th, then four were with **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** on the 25th. The last **Willow Warbler** was at Askham Bog on the 20th, with the final two **Swifts** at Skipwith Common on the same day. Waders included a **Spotted Redshank** at Wheldrake Ings on the 24th and 25th, along with up to 27 **Ruff**. Another **Spotted Redshank** called as it flew over Bishopthorpe on the 25th. Two **Ospreys** flew over Bank Island on the 25th, while the year's second **Yellow-browed Warbler** turned up in trees by York railway station the same day and a **Cetti's Warbler** was at Wheldrake Ings on the 26th. The first **Brambling** of autumn flew over Ozendyke on the 27th and a drake **Common Scoter** was at Heslington East on the 27th and 28th.

### October

The last **Hobby** passed through Bank Island on the 2nd and an adult male **Hen Harrier** was at Foggathorpe on the 4th. The first **Whooper Swans** of the autumn arrived at Bank Island on the 5th and a **Great White Egret** at Wheldrake Ings on the same day was presumably the bird seen later in the month at Newburgh Priory and Bolton Percy Ings. The expected arrival of winter thrushes began with the first **Redwings** over Sand Hutton on the 6th, followed by four **Fieldfares** over Bank Island on the 8th. **Redwings** started coming through in earnest on the 8th when 2105 flew south at Ozendyke. A **Yellow-browed Warbler** at Grosvenor Terrace, York on the 8th was an excellent find with another at Gilling on the 14th. Two **Bearded Tits** were at Wheldrake Ings, on the 8th increasing to 15 on the 12th and then down to four on the 14th. **Yellow-legged Gulls** were at Riccall on the 10th and Barby on the 14th, whilst two **Hawfinches** at Thorganby on the 13th were a hint of what was to follow. The first **Jack Snipe**

was at Bank Island on the 13th, and an impressive ten were counted there on the 24th. Staying with waders two **Spotted Redshanks** were at Wheldrake Ings from the 15th to the 17th. The last **Swallow** of the year passed through Wheldrake Ings on the 22nd and the final **Tree Pipit** was at Hemingbrough on the 27th. The end of the month saw outstanding numbers of **Pink-footed Geese** in the area, including 3884 at Spaldington on the 25th; doubtless some of the record wintering population on the Humber spreading north to feed.

### November

The month opened brightly with three **Great White Egrets** over Skipwith Common on the 1st and these were followed by singles at Newburgh Priory, NDC and Dunnington. A flock of 25 **Waxwings** at Gilling East on the 2nd was a welcome dash of colour, but by now the scale of the national influx of **Hawfinches** was becoming apparent, and 50 at the Yorkshire Arboretum on the 3rd attracted lots of admirers. **Pink-footed Geese** numbers remained high with 1250 at Pocklington on the 5th and 1500 at Easthorpe on the 7th. **Whooper Swans** were back on their usual wintering fields at NDC with 94 on the 14th, including 41 juveniles. A **Snow Bunting** was at NDC on the 26th and the fifth and sixth **Yellow-browed Warblers** of the year were found at Clifton Ings on the 25th and Tang Hall Beck on the 29th. A **Grey Phalarope** at Malton on the 30th would have been widely appreciated, but it had hit wires and had to be put to sleep.

### December

**Great White Egrets** may have lost their rarity status, but one at Wistow on the 1st was noteworthy, followed by a single at Newburgh Priory on the 3rd and the 9th. A drake **American Wigeon**\* was found at Bank Island on the 2nd, with a final sighting at Ellerton on the 11th. This was trumped by a **Glossy Ibis**\* at Wheldrake Ings on the 3rd, which was also seen coming in to roost at Bank Island on the 6th – the second 'first' for the recording area in the year. The returning **Bewick's Swan** was with the Whoopers from the 8th to the 14th, with 188 **Whooper Swans** in the LDV on the 13th. Other wildfowl counts in the LDV included a massive 11,500 **Wigeon** and 8000 **Teal**, with a drake **Green-winged Teal** discovered at Ellerton on the 16th. All these wildfowl attracted birds of prey with up to nine **Marsh Harriers**, four **Peregrines**, three **Merlins** and also **Short-eared Owls** on two dates. The centre of York had 500 **Pied Wagtails** in the Parliament Street roost on the 15th while, back in the LDV, the only **Bittern** of the year was at Church Bridge, Melbourne on the 21st. A colour-ringed **Glaucous Gull** at Bank Island on the 21st proved to be the bird ringed and released at Rufforth Tip in January, and a **Mediterranean Gull** was at Rufforth on the 22nd. There was a good count of 51 **Mandarin Ducks** at Castle Howard on the 26th and a drake **Red-crested Pochard** on the 28th. There were 80 **Ruff** at Aughton Ings on the 29th. Gull watchers closed the year with a 1st-winter **Mediterranean Gull** at the Wheldrake Ings roost on the 30th and an adult there the next day.

## YOC CLASSIFIED LIST

The sequence and scientific nomenclature follow that of the British List maintained by the British Ornithologists' Union. It was last revised by BOU in 2013, and most recently updated December 2016; as in previous reports, the classified list uses the British (English) vernacular names. Note: although the BOU has published a revised taxonomic list for use in 2018 onwards, as this report refers to 2017, the list order does not reflect these new changes. The Red/Amber status of birds is as per BOCC – 4 (*British Birds* 108 • December 2015 • 708 - 746). National and local description species designations (BBRC/YNU/YOC) are included for easy reference – the YNU/YOC lists are on pages 138 -139.

New for this year is an indication of presence in Breeding Bird Survey squares during the 2017 season. This is shown in the classified list as BBS x/43 where x is the number of squares where the species was noted, while 43 is the total of BBS 1km squares/WBBS transects covered – there were 39 BBS and 4 WBBS.

<b>SE57</b> BBS 4	<b>SE67</b> BBS 3	<b>SE77</b> BBS 2
<b>SE56</b> BBS 0	<b>SE66</b> BBS 2	<b>SE76</b> BBS 8 WBBS 1
<b>SE55</b> BBS 2	<b>SE65</b> BBS 4	<b>SE75</b> BBS 2
<b>SE54</b> BBS 3 WBBS 2	<b>SE64</b> BBS 3	<b>SE74</b> BBS 1 WBBS 1
<b>SE53</b> BBS 0	<b>SE63</b> BBS 1	<b>SE73</b> BBS 4

Number of BBS 1 km squares/WBBS transects in each hectad (10 km x 10 km) - the distribution is randomised hence the uneven coverage in our region.

Where seasons are mentioned in species accounts the following applies: spring (March, April, May); summer (June, July, August); autumn (September, October, November) and winter (December, January, February).

The following abbreviations are used throughout:

BBRC	British Birds Rarities Committee
BBS	Breeding Bird Survey (BTO)
BTO	British Trust for Ornithology
CHL	Castle Howard Lake
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
RNHS	Ryedale Natural History Society
SHBR	Sand Hutton Bird Report (from SHL)
SHL	National Agri-Food Innovation Campus, Sand Hutton, part of 'FERA', the Food and Environment Research Agency (formerly the Central Science Laboratory, Sand Hutton then Sand Hutton Laboratory - to avoid further confusion 'SHL' is still used to denote this site)
VMW	Visible migration watch

WBBS	Waterways Breeding Bird Survey (BTO)
WeBS	Wetlands Bird Survey (BTO)
WWT	Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust
WTW	Water Treatment Works
YNU	Yorkshire Naturalists' Union
YOC	York Ornithological Club
YWT	Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

The following nature reserves also appear as sites in the report:

Cali 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 Heslington East campus of York University is referred to as 'Heslington East' throughout this report, while the original campus site is 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 October-December are normally included in the tables in this report unless the species is present throughout the year. WeBS counts for the University – comprising the combined totals for Heslington East and Heslington West (HES) – for several species are included again. 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.

Dates for WeBS counts in 2017

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	15th	13th	12th	9th	7th	11th	24th	13th	10th	8th	19th	11th
<b>LDV</b>	<b>15th</b>	<b>12th</b>	<b>12th</b>	<b>9th</b>	-	-	-	-	-	<b>8th</b>	<b>19th</b>	<b>13th</b>
<b>HES</b>	17th	17th	12th	12th	14th	11th	25th	17th	12th	11th	19th	11th

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 113.

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 as it is clear that many birders (local or from further afield) visit the LDV in particular without otherwise submitting records. This report also uses records from within the YOC area

submitted to BirdTrack. Observers' initials are however only included for less common species. The systematic list also includes those species recorded in at least three of the previous ten years even if they were not recorded in 2017. 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. The birds listed in Appendix C are included for completeness, but either a description has not been forthcoming or is insufficient to exclude possible confusion species. If a description is submitted, we will include any additional accepted records in a future report. Updates on records accepted/not proven by the BBRC or YNU rarities committee are at the end of the classified list

<b>Status Definitions</b>	
<b>Abundance</b>	
<b>Vagrant/Very rare</b>	1-10 (records since 1966)
<b>Rare</b>	1-10 in the past ten years
<b>Scarce</b>	11-100 in the past ten years
<b>Common</b>	Widespread and frequently occurring species within the preferred habitat. E.g. Moorhen
<b>Abundant</b>	Large numbers of this species occur across the area. E.g. Woodpigeon or at certain times of year E.g. Wigeon
<b>Breeding status</b>	
<b>Resident breeder</b>	All or part of the local population is present throughout the year and breeds within the area. E.g. Blackbird
<b>Migrant breeder</b>	Breeds within the area but all or most of the breeding population departs in autumn and winter. E.g. Willow Warbler
<b>Casual breeder</b>	Has bred irregularly in the area since 1966 and may do so again. E.g. Pied Flycatcher
<b>Winter visitor</b>	All or part of the population breeds outside the area but either spends the winter here or has visited on at least 30 occasions in the winter months. E.g. Whooper Swan
<b>Passage visitor</b>	Occurs regularly in the spring and/or autumn. E.g. Black Tern

Please note: Abundance does not refer to the number of breeding birds; it is intended to give an idea of the prevalence of the species in the area.

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

*Amber listed*

*Resident breeder, passage migrant and winter visitor*

*BBS 5/43*

CHL and the LDV (notably NDC and Wheldrake lngs) continue to hold the largest number of birds, but counts of one to five birds were frequently recorded from suitable habitat, predominantly in the southern half of the recording area.

In the first winter period, at CHL there were 97 on 4th January and 106 there on the 15th (WeBS), the maximum count for the first half of the year. The monthly maxima for February to May were all WeBS counts (see table). In the LDV the monthly maximum for January was 91 on the 4th decreasing slightly during February to 85, with a similar number present during March. Numbers increased



during April; 51 were at NDC on the 6th and by the 28th there were 128 throughout the site, with 34 at Wheldrake Ings and 29 at NDC. On 15th May 47 of the 60 non-breeding birds in the valley were at Wheldrake Ings. Elsewhere, the highest count was eight on Dort's Dike at Kirkby Wharfe on 6th March.

Nest building was noted at Wistow in mid-March and occupied nests were reported from early April at several sites, with confirmed breeding taking place at Acaster, Aughton, CHL, Heslington East, Pocklington Canal (Melbourne and Thornton Lock), NDC, Newburgh Priory, Old Gravel Pits Allerthorpe and Wheldrake Ings. The first broods hatched were a brood of six at Old Gravel Pits, Allerthorpe on 11th May and a brood of eight at NDC on the 14th, almost two weeks earlier than in 2016. A successful breeding season in the LDV saw ten pairs (out of 12) raising 61 cygnets. At CHL a count of 81 included three broods of five, five and three on 25th June. The resident pair at Heslington East raised a brood of five.

Post breeding at CHL, numbers were broadly similar to 2016, numbers increasing to 98 in July (WeBS). There were 111 adults and 10 juveniles there on 17th September. The peak annual count was 119 on 22nd October, with the same number present during the WeBS count in November. In the LDV, in July there were 99 on the site; 23 summering non-breeders, ten pairs and their remaining 56 cygnets. The first birds returning from moult elsewhere were two flying in from the north to Bank Island on 30th August, when the ten family parties were still present in the valley. By 16th December there were 97 on the reserve, increasing to 112 on the 26th, of which 62 were at Wheldrake Ings. Elsewhere the only counts above ten were 11 on 11th December (WeBS) at Heslington East and 13 adults there (in addition to the resident pair and three surviving cygnets) on the 19th, when the incomers were being frequently attacked by the resident male.

#### Monthly WeBS counts for Mute Swan

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	106	59	49	43	37	57	98	96	98	107	119	105
<b>LDV</b>	90	83	82	128	-	-	-	-	-	67	86	97
<b>HES</b>	5	8	4	4	4	2	3	7	6	7	7	11

*N.B. Only on Heslington East in Aug Sep Oct Nov*

**Bewick's Swan** *Cygnus columbianus*  
*Scarce visitor and passage migrant*

YOC Amber listed

Two adults flew into NDC mid-afternoon on 16th January (TD) and were seen there again on 4th February (LDV Blog), then on the 26th at Derwent Bridge, Bubwith (MS) and Aughton Ings; they were presumed to have remained in the area but mobile and elusive during this time.

In December a single returning adult was seen at Bubwith Ings on the 8th (CA), and then at NDC on the 13th and 14th with the Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* herd (LDV Blog).

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

*Amber listed*

During January there were 104 wintering in the LDV, split between NDC and Wheldrake Ings; 48 were on the Refuge on the 8th. On the 17th eight were seen flying north over Sand Hutton. Up to 70 birds remained in the valley during February and into March, mostly around NDC, Derwent Farm and Aughton Ings. On 12th March 80 were feeding near Aughton Church; 67 were still present on the 18th and 72 on the 19th (at Bubwith Ings) but numbers fell to just 22 by the month's end.

Passage during March began with a flock of 22 flying north over Bank Island on the 1st. There was a large movement on the 13th with 156 at Aughton, 123 at NDC and at least 50 north over East Cottingwith – a minimum of 329 birds moving through. On the 16th 110 flew north over Wheldrake Ings and Bank Island. 649 passage birds flew through the valley during the month. Two birds lingered on into April at NDC, last reported on the 3rd. Elsewhere, 63 were seen at Brumber Hill on 16th March. On the 17th, 19th and 20th March 19 were seen at Byland Flash (SE57); and on the 22nd two were seen flying west over Hemingbrough, the same day as 20 were heard and seen flying northeast over Tang Hall Beck in York.

The first returning birds of the autumn were two at Bank Island on 5th October and one at Bolton Percy Ings on the 6th, with four at Wheldrake Ings the same day. On the 7th seven flew north over Stamford Bridge. By the 8th 14 were around Thorganby. On the 23rd there were seven, including four juveniles at Bank Island. Twenty were on the floods on Bolton Percy Ings on the 27th but flew east, the same day as 26 of the 'resident wintering herd' were at NDC. These were joined by a further 17 coming in from the northeast the following day. Also on the 28th eight were seen flying south during a VMW at Bolton Percy Ings. On the 30th 16 passed through Bank Island. By 11th November 72 were at NDC (out of 79 in the whole valley), 94 on the 14th, including 41 juveniles, and 98 on the 18th. In December 84 were scattered through the site on the 3rd, with 67 at Bubwith Ings on the 4th and 134 at NDC on the 13th increasing to 163 on the 14th. The herd remained in the NDC/Bubwith Ings/Ellerton Ings area with 112 at Ellerton Ings on the 29th.

Away from the LDV in November 12 flew north over Sand Hutton on the 1st; two flew northwest over Bolton Percy Ings on the 7th and seven dropped in briefly to Riccall irrigation pond on the 11th. Two adults plus a juvenile were at Bolton Percy Ings on the last day of the year.

Monthly WeBS counts for Whooper Swan

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>LDV</b>	104	70	72	2	11	96	163

**Bean Goose** *Anser fabalis* *YNU (taiga)/YOC* *Amber listed*  
*Scarce winter visitor (Tundra, 'rossicus'); very rare winter visitor (Taiga, 'fabalis')*

All records this year were of the Tundra 'rossicus' race, and, apart from one

record in November, from the first winter period. On 1st January a singleton was at Thorganby (AF). Nine flew over at Bank Island heading east on the 2nd (CSR) and four were at Wheldrake Ings late morning the same day (FW). Four were seen on 4th January at CHL (DMB), and again on the 5th (DR). There were 15 present at Bank Island on the 6th with a flock of Pink-footed Geese *Anser brachyrhynchus*, followed by one at Wheldrake Ings on the 7th (DMB), up to eight at Thornton the same day and five at Field Lane, Thornton on the 8th, seen during the bird race (DMB, JcN, RCn, PEW). Singletons were at Bank Island on the 12th (LDV Blog) and 22nd (CSR, FM). Two flocks of seven and 11 were at Wheldrake Ings on the 25th, though some of these may have been the same birds (CSR, FM). In February, four were at CHL on the 4th (DR), one on the 11th and four again on the 13th (PC). Four were seen at the southern end of the lake, then five on a nearby field (possibly the four seen earlier joining another bird) on the 14th (DT). On the 24th, 19 were at Bank Island, with nine there on the 27th and 11 on the 28th (CSR). Twenty were at Ozendyke Ings on the 26th (PD). Up to 11 were at Bank Island on 1st March, remaining to the 4th (LDV Blog).

The only report from the second half of the year was of two on the Low Grounds at Wheldrake Ings on 27th November (LDV Blog).

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

*Amber listed*

#### *Passage migrant and winter visitor*

The first of the year were three at CHL on 4th January, with seven there the following day, when 15 were also at Wheldrake Ings. Movement started early in January with 275 over Cawood on the 6th and 190 were feeding at Bank Island on the 7th. The largest movements took place mid-month when 530 flew northwest over the LDV on the 15th and over 700 passed through during the evening and night of the 17th. The only notable movement in February was 210 flying northwest over the LDV on the 13th though small numbers were also seen on the ground, including six long-staying individuals at Aughton Ings. In March, 115 over Bank Island, and 110 over Ozendyke Ings on the 3rd were closely followed by the last notable flock of the spring passage - 200 over the Knavesmire on the 5th - with very small numbers lingering thereafter. During April, apart from a small flock of 34 at NDC on the 2nd, six lingered on at Wheldrake Ings/Bank Island to the 27th. One at NDC on 10th May was the last reported until the autumn.

The first returning birds were 20 flying southeast high over Elvington on 12th September, 70 over Acaster Airfield on the 14th and 22 over the LDV on the 15th. Smaller skeins of up to 90 birds continued to pass through during September and early October, the first notable flock being 150 over Stockbridge on 13th October. During a two hour long VMW at Bolton Percy Ings on the 18th, 208 were seen flying northwest, perhaps to Lancashire wintering grounds. A record flock numbering between 3000 and 4000 individuals flew north through the LDV on the 28th and 29th October, representing almost 1% of the UK wintering population. As passage continued during November and December, many other large skeins were seen flying west and northwest.

Large flocks on the ground included 3884 on fields near Spaldington on 25th October (presumed to be from the Humber's wintering population), 250 on stubble at Pocklington on 5th November, 1500 at Easthorpe on the 7th and 300 came in to roost at Brumber Hill on the 14th.

Other notable counts (150 and more) were:

18th January, LDV - 390 northwest over at dawn

18th January, Knavesmire - 200 over northwest

23rd January, York (Central Library) - 150 over

16th October, Sand Hutton - 200 flying south

1st November, Bank Island and Skipwith Common - 430 in several skeins

4th November, Wheldrake Ings - 359 (119 flying southeast and 240 northwest)

6th November, Knavesmire - 500 flying north

7th November, St Nicholas Fields, York - 150 flying northwest

8th November, Bolton Percy Ings - 154 flying south and 145 on the 9th

12th November, Bank Island - 300 flying northwest

17th November, Acaster Airfield - 300 over

21st November, Melbourne - 300 flying south

1st December, Bolton Percy - 219 flying west in two skeins

6th December, Milford Common - 150 over northwest

22nd December, Ellerton - 300 flying northwest

**White-fronted Goose** *Anser albifrons* YOC Red listed  
*Scarce winter visitor*

All sightings came in the first winter period with the majority of records coming from the LDV. The flock seen at the end of December 2016 remained in the area and the year began with 38 seen on 1st January in the Wheldrake/Thorganby area, increasing to 44 on the 2nd, with 53 at Elvington on the 4th. Thirty one flew NNE over Bank Island on the 7th, while 33 were at Wheldrake Ings on the 8th and 16 there on the 13th. Fifty three flew north over Wheldrake Ings on the 16th. Singles were seen at Wheldrake Ings on the 19th and at Bank Island on the 20th, with 21 present at Ellerton the same day. On the 23rd, three were at NDC. Away from the LDV, 11 were at CHL on 4th January, 20 there on the 5th and 16 on the 15th. In February, two flocks totalling 103 birds arrived low and fast from the northeast heading towards Wheldrake Ings. More than 20 were seen at Thorganby Ings on the 3rd, and 14 at Aughton Ings on the 4th. Ten were seen flying over Ellerton with 100 Greylag Geese *Anser anser* and six Pink-footed Geese *Anser brachyrhynchus* on the 8th. Two flocks comprising 23 and 32 birds were in the Aughton/Ellerton/Thorganby area on the 9th, with six still present on the 12th. The last report of the year was of 38 seen at Ellerton on the 15th.

**Greylag Goose** *Anser anser* Amber listed  
*Naturalised breeder, winter visitor and passage migrant* BBS 20/43

As in previous years, well reported from suitable habitat across the area during the year, with the LDV continuing to hold the largest numbers in late autumn and winter. Over 1000 were in the valley, mainly in the Wheldrake/Bank Island area,

throughout January, with the monthly maxima 1200 seen near Elvington on the 4th. In February over 1000 were at Thorganby on the 3rd, and 500 at Ellerton Ings on the 8th, with 900 still in the valley into March. From 800 on the 3rd, numbers began to fall thereafter, decreasing to 370 by the month's end. The only significant count from CHL was 600 on 4th January.

Occupied nests were observed from the beginning of April with the first goslings reported from the Knavesmire and Ouse bank on 10th April, and two broods of five and six at Wheldrake Ings on the 13th. These were followed by many other records of goslings at: Acaster, Aughton, Bank Island, Bolton Percy Ings, Foss Islands Road (York), Melbourne Park Farm, Pocklington Canal (The Grange), SHL and St George's Field/New Walk (York) – where, somewhat surprisingly given the city centre location, five young broods, as well as a crèche of 18 half-grown goslings being watched over by three adults, were seen on 27th May. On 31st May, 28 young were ringed during the goose roundup in the LDV.

Post breeding, numbers increased at Heslington East with the year's peak count being 580 on 15th September. At CHL the peak count was 570 on 25th June. Numbers fluctuated thereafter with 500 on 17th August and 422 on 28th December the highest counts in the second half of the year. In the LDV 500 were at Bank Island by 23rd September. In early October 1000 were in the Low Grounds/Bank Island/Wheldrake Ings area, increasing to over 1500 at Bank Island on the 28th. The peak count for the year was 1700 there on 1st November. In December counts of over 1000 were recorded on several dates in the LDV.

Other individual site counts of 200 or more (in addition to WeBS counts) were:  
 4th August, Heslington East - 480 and 304 on the 15th  
 24th September, Poppleton - 270  
 27th October, Bolton Percy Ings - 350 and on the 28th  
 7th November, Nunnington - 275 and 420 on the lake on the 24th  
 26th November, Byland - 300

#### Monthly WeBS counts for Greylag Goose

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	138	1	16	22	1	437	3	8	224	6	16	225
<b>LDV</b>	1200	1000	800	-	-	-	-	-	-	1500	1700	1150
<b>HES</b>	114	84	120	80	142	226	153	230	349	169	193	18

#### **Canada Goose** *Branta canadensis*

*Naturalised breeder and winter visitor*

*BBS 5/43*

As in recent years, CHL, the LDV and Heslington East saw the greatest numbers, but there were also many double figure counts from other bodies of water around the area.

In the first winter period, in the LDV up to 350 were about during January; a flock of 100 were on fields between Wheldrake and Thorganby on the 1st. In February 200 were at Ellerton Ings on the 8th, and 300 there on several dates later

in the month. By March numbers in the LDV were beginning to drop, from 200 early in the month to 112 on the 28th. The peak count at CHL was 210 on 7th January, much lower than in 2016, with WeBS counts (see table) the monthly maxima through to May. Elsewhere, a notable flock of 120 was on Hessay Pond on 15th January.

Breeding was confirmed at Acaster, Bolton Percy Ings, Milford Common, the River Foss (Foss Islands Road, York) and Wheldrake Ings (six pairs produced 13 goslings). At least 15 pairs bred on ponds and waterbodies in the LDV. The first broods were reported on 1st May from Acaster and from Milford Common (one brood of five small young).

Post breeding, at CHL there were 340 on 25th June, but only double digit counts there in July and August. However 700 were present on 17th September and this number was matched again at the WeBS count in December – the annual peak counts and much higher than 2016. Heslington East also saw the now annual build-up post breeding in August with the peak count for the year 239 on the 13th (WeBS). On 24th September a sizeable flock of 290 was seen on stubble at Poppleton. In the LDV 500 were at Bank Island on 8th October and 250 at NDC on the 27th. The monthly maximum during November was 290 around Thorganby on the 20th and the highest count in December was on the 17th when 200 were on the Refuge, Wheldrake Ings out of 300 in the whole valley.

Other individual site counts of 100 or more (excluding WeBS counts) were:

4th January, CHL - 200; 210 on the 7th, 100 on nearby fields on the 17th and 205 on the 29th

4th August, Heslington East - 118 and 130 on the 15th

28th October, Bank Island - 100

3rd December, CHL - 170 and 609 on the 27th

27th December, Bank Island - 100 and 126 there on the 31st

#### Monthly WeBS counts for Canada Goose

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	191	114	58	154	68	190	56	5	497	24	2	700
<b>LDV</b>	350	300	200	-	-	-	-	-	-	211	290	367
<b>HES</b>	90	28	30	43	42	30	65	239	87	57	81	106

NB: Only on Heslington East in Oct, Nov, Dec

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

*Amber listed*

*Scarce winter visitor, with a small naturalised breeding population*

It is always difficult to ascertain whether sightings away from the University are of wild birds, rather than members of the University's free-flying flock ranging in the area. This year, up to three birds were seen in the Storwood/East Cottingwith area on 21st January, followed by sightings of three at Wheldrake Ings on several dates to the end of the month. One flew east over Bubwith on the 29th. In February three were still present, increasing to four from the 12th to the 18th. A flock of 20 arrived

at Bank Island on the 24th, increasing to 22 on the 26th, which stayed on into March to the 4th. Otherwise, one was at Wheldrake Ings on 5th May. It should be noted that as none of these dates overlap with sightings of the full flock at the university, they may not refer to wild birds.

**Brent Goose** *Branta bernicla*

YOC Amber listed

*Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant*

None seen in 2017, after records in three of the past ten years, most recently 2016.

**Egyptian Goose** *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

*Scarce visitor and naturalised breeder in small numbers*

As usual, most sightings were from the LDV. The resident pair at East Cottingwith farm pond was regularly reported from there during the first half of the year. In February they were joined by another two birds on the 4th. In the second half of the year, an immature was seen with an adult there on 8th October and five were present on the pond on 5th November.

Other sightings in the LDV were of three at Wheldrake Ings on the 13th and 20th to 22nd January. In March a pair was at NDC from the 13th to the month's end. Two were on the Refuge, Wheldrake Ings on 2nd April and two on Pocklington Canal near East Cottingwith on the 9th, with occasional sightings of singles at Wheldrake Ings during the month also. In May one was at Wheldrake Ings/Bank Island on the 8th and 13th and a pair thereafter to the month's end. Five breeding pairs were present on scattered ponds around East Cottingwith towards the end of May and into June (including the usual pair on the farm pond). One was also with the Wheldrake Greylag Goose flock *Anser anser* between the 1st and 10th June. Later in the year, in September two were at Wheldrake Ings on the 16th, and in October two were on the pool there on the 5th. On 4th November, ten circled and flew east over the Refuge, then on the 12th 11 flew north over Bank Island, the maximum number seen together during the year. During December, up to 13 lingered in the LDV, though some wandered to Heslington East.

Elsewhere, two were on Hessay Pond on 6th January, one flew over Dort's Dike at Kirkby Wharfe heading northeast on 6th March, and one was at Bolton Percy Ings on the 11th. In December, seven were at Heslington East on the 12th and two at Foggathorpe on the 30th.

**Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna*

Amber listed

*Common winter visitor, migrant breeder and scarce autumn passage migrant*

BBS 6/43

In the first winter period in the LDV there were 32 at NDC and 62 at the Refuge, Wheldrake Ings on 2nd January, 56 there on the 3rd (including the hybrid Australian x Shelduck mentioned in the 2016 report) and 65 at Wheldrake Ings on the 4th. On the 10th 69 roosted at Thorganby Ings. Throughout February there were up to 60 in the LDV with a maximum of 80+ by the 28th. In March up to 70 birds remained in the Valley, fewer than in previous years. Away from the LDV

there was one at Hessay on 8th January, two on the 15th, and five there on 27th and 28th February. Two were at Acaster on 4th February, five at Newburgh Priory on the 10th, and a single there on 19th March. Three were in a flooded field at Sutton-on-the-Forest on the 12th and 23rd February and again on 18th March. One was at Rufforth Tip on 26th February and a pair at Eastmoor on the 29th. Two were at Byland on 17th March. The peak count along the Lower Wharfe was 12 at Wharfe Ings on 26th March, with only single digit counts there otherwise.

In April, 44 were at Bank Island on the 11th and 43 at Wheldrake Ings on the 13th when there were 89 in the LDV in total, the maximum recorded during the month. On 1st May, 32 were at NDC, 31 at Thornton Ellers and 11 at Wheldrake Ings. After 8th May, there were only single digit counts from the LDV.

During the breeding season, although a pair was seen at CHL on 7th May, and birds were reported from The Grange, Pocklington Canal in May and June, it was not until 26th July that two juveniles were seen on the pool at Wheldrake Ings where they remained to the end of the month – the only evidence of breeding received.

The first returning bird was at Bank Island on 27th October with five there by the 30th. During November, numbers increased with 24 at Wheldrake Ings on the 5th, 25 at Bank Island on the 15th and 51 between Wheldrake Ings and Bank Island on the 19th. In December most were to be found at Wheldrake Ings where there were 61 on the 28th when the LDV held a total of 78. On the 31st 42 were on Ellerton Priory Fields. There were no sightings reported away from the LDV in the autumn and second winter period.

#### Monthly WeBS counts for Shelduck

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Oct	Nov	Dec
LDV	69	80	70	89	0	51	63

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

##### *Scarce resident breeder (Introduced/Category C)*

Once again, the species' stronghold was principally Castle Howard. In January seven males and six females were on New River Pond there on the 4th and 15 birds on the 6th. Numbers reported fluctuated thereafter with seven on the 7th (with courtship and display noted) and a pair on the 22nd. Into February there were eight on the 4th, a minimum of 18 birds flew north on the 13th, and the peak count was 19 by the 25th. Elsewhere two pairs were on the River Ouse at Beningborough on 17th January. There was an unusual record of two birds at Rowntree Park in York on 12th March and Bank Island, even more unusually, held four drakes on 27th March and five drakes and two females there (a record count) on the 31st.

There was a pair on Red House Lagoon on 14th April, with a count of 12 there (including three juveniles) on 9th July; the only indication of successful breeding received.



## Rare and Scarcer Birds recorded during 2017



Left to right and top to bottom

**Tundra Bean Geese** © Mike Walton

**White-fronted Goose** © Jane Chapman

**Green-winged Teal** © Lee Johnson

**Garganey** © Jane Chapman

**Scaup** © Duncan Bye

**Smew** © Duncan Bye

**Mandarin** © Mike Walton

At CHL the next sighting was of one on 21st May, with seven there on 25th June and a pair on 27th August. Continuing into autumn there were 16 on 15th September, 11 on the 17th, a female on 22nd October, and, six (five displaying males meant that the lone female was apparently spoiled for choice) on 6th December. The year's maximum was an impressive 51 on 26th December on New River Pond, and a pair on the 28th.

**Wigeon** *Anas penelope*

*Amber listed*

*Abundant winter visitor, spring passage migrant and rare breeder in small numbers*

Numbers for this species were again healthily high in the LDV in the first winter period; from 500 at Wheldrake Ings on 21st January, numbers soared to 9800 in the valley on the 25th and 11,150 on the 30th. In February there were 9800 on the 8th, with 4000 at Aughton Ings on the 26th, when more than 12,000 were present throughout the site. Into March there were up to 12,500 present early in the month, with 9000 present until the 31st. Monthly peak counts at CHL were 436 on 15th January, 313 on 13th February and 138 on 12th March (all WeBS). Elsewhere, along the Lower Wharfe there were several counts in excess of 100 between January and March with the peak count 250 at West Ings on 3rd March. Smaller numbers were also seen at Acaster Ings, Angram Ponds Riccall, Heslington East, Newburgh Priory, Oulston Reservoir and Wistow Clough.

In April, numbers in the LDV fell to 411 by the 10th and to 280 by the 13th. On 1st May 56 were still present at Wheldrake when four pairs were at NDC and three at Bank Island. By the 6th there were 40, including approximately 10 pairs, at Wheldrake, reducing to five on the 13th, with a total of 11 pairs throughout the LDV. Seven drakes were at Wheldrake Ings on the 30th. Up to seven pairs remained throughout the reserve during June. A female with a large, almost fledged juvenile was on the scrape at Swantail Hide, Wheldrake on 21st July, again on the 23rd and daily on the pool thereafter.

The first returning passage bird in the LDV was at Wheldrake Ings on 28th August. Numbers began to build in September with 86 at Bank Island on the 23rd and 300 by the 30th. By 8th October there were 1170 birds in the Valley, with more than 3000 by the 31st and, in November, 3700 by the 13th increasing to 4500 between Bank Island and the Low Grounds by the 27th. In December numbers increased rapidly with 8000 on the River Derwent at Ellerton on the 12th, of a valley total of 10,500. By the 19th there were in excess of 11,600 at Ellerton.

At CHL monthly maxima were 338 on 22nd October, 456 on 19th November and 450 on 11th December. Elsewhere, the only count above 100 was 110 at Skipwith on 4th November, with small numbers also reported from Angram Ponds Riccall, Newburgh Priory, Ozendyke Ings and Wistow.

Monthly WeBS counts for Wigeon

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	436	313	138	2	167	456	450
<b>LDV</b>	11150	12000	12500	411	2700	3000	11500

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

*Very rare winter visitor*

Following last year's record, a drake was at Bank Island on 2nd December (AF, DMB, JLe) where it remained for a second day. A male, probably the same bird, was then seen at Bubwith Ings on the 8th (CA), with further sightings among the vast flock of Wigeon *Anas penelope* on the River Derwent at Ellerton on the 11th and 12th (LM, FM).

*If accepted by the YNU this will be the fifth record for the area.*

## **Gadwall** *Anas strepera*

*Winter visitor and migrant breeder*

*Amber listed*

*BBS 1/43*

The year showed an increase in numbers from 2016. In the first winter period, in the LDV, monthly maxima were 123 on 25th January, 262 on 27th February, and 366 on 26th March while maximum counts from CHL were 132 on 7th January, 36 on 13th February and 15 on 12th March. Elsewhere, between January and the end of March there were also single digit counts from Acaster, Bolton Percy Ings, Heslington East, Kirkby Wharfe, Milford Common, Old Gravel Pits Allerthorpe, Ozendyke Ings, Rawcliffe Lake, Wharfe Ings and Wistow Clough.

Into the breeding season, a total of 83 pairs were located around the LDV on 10th April and the first brood, of 11, was at NDC on 20th May. Eight young were at Sutton upon Derwent on the 22nd, 13 at Ellerton Ings on the 23rd and three broods, totalling some 25 ducklings, were observed at Wheldrake on the 30th. Many broods fledged during June and July; upwards of 100 young were seen, of which 18 were caught and ringed. Post-breeding gatherings included 25 drakes loafing at Wheldrake on 30th May and 80 by 9th June. Away from the LDV, between one and five birds were also seen at CHL (with 18 there on 27th August), Heslington East, Old Gravel Pits Allerthorpe and Skipwith Common.

In the autumn and second winter period, in the LDV, there were 114 on 2nd October; 24 at Bank Island and 90 on the pool at Wheldrake. Over 70 were on the pool daily thereafter with 98 there at dawn on the 13th. In November up to 90 remained early in the month before dispersing further around the site. In December there were up to 130 scattered around the valley. At CHL, monthly maxima were 91 on 22nd October, 73 on 19th November and 75 on 11th December. Along the Lower Wharfe there were single digit counts, with the maximum being five at Bolton Percy Ings on 27th October. Seven were at West Ings on 27th November. Elsewhere, one was at Newburgh Priory on 2nd November, a single at the Yorkshire Arboretum on the 4th, and three at Wistow Clough on the 8th.

### Monthly WeBS counts for Gadwall

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Oct	Nov	Dec
CHL	80	36	15	12	69	73	75
LDV	120	260	366	166	114	100	121

**Teal** *Anas crecca**Amber listed**Abundant winter visitor and resident breeder in small numbers**BBS 1/43*

As ever the largest counts came from the LDV. In the first winter period there was a monthly maximum count of 4650 on 25th January and approximately 10,000 (significantly higher than 2016's maximum) on 8th February. This number remained undiminished by 1st March but thereafter fell to 2500 by the 31st. Slightly out of the ordinary was a bird with a white head seen at Wheldrake Ings on 25th February. At CHL monthly maxima were 252 on 15th January, 203 on 13th February and 47 on 12th March (all WeBS). While there were several counts over 100, the peak count along the Lower Wharfe in the first winter period was 250 at Bolton Percy Ings on 2nd February. Elsewhere, 40 were at Angram Lakes, Riccall on 5th January and 100 at Skipwith Common on the 10th while the peak count at Heslington East was 62 on 17th January. Bishopthorpe Ings held 45 on 1st March. There were also single and low double figure counts during the period at: Acaster, Acaster Airfield, Allerthorpe (Common, Frog Hall and Old Gravel Pits), Byland, Oulston Reservoir, Newburgh Priory, Rawcliffe Lake, River Ouse, Skipwith Common, Strensall Common and Wistow Clough.

In April numbers in the LDV reduced further to 1641 by the 10th and to 690 by the 15th. Away from the wintering flocks there were about 30 breeding pairs with the first evidence of successful breeding coming on the 28th when a female was at Bank Island with seven ducklings. By 31st May, overall numbers were down to a maximum of 80, in pairs and scattered groups. In June there were up to 45 pairs in the valley with several broods recorded during the month and thereafter in July, small numbers lingered until a slight build-up began again in early August, reaching 90 at Wheldrake Ings by the 31st. By 24th September numbers were up to 530 at Bank Island/Wheldrake.

Returning birds continued to swell the numbers in the LDV during October and there were over 1500 throughout the site by the 21st. 1600 were at Wheldrake Ings on 12th November and 2000 in the LDV by the 20th. In December, numbers soared to 4300 by the 15th, 5950 the following day and 7250 on the 19th. By the 29th the LDV held approximately 10,000, up considerably on 2016. Peak counts at CHL were 164 (including 33 birds on a field between Ray Wood and Bog Hall) on 22nd October, 225 on 19th November and 400 on 11th December. On 16th November 96 were at Newburgh Priory, but no other counts above 30 elsewhere.

## Monthly WeBS counts for Teal

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	252	203	47	0	102	225	400
<b>LDV</b>	4100	10000	10000	1640	1490	2018	8023

**Green-winged Teal** *Anas carolinensis*

YOC

*Rare winter visitor and passage migrant*

The third record in three years, a drake was found on 16th December in a flock of some 3000 Teal *Anas crecca* (an impressive piece of birding!) on the River Derwent at Ellerton (JLe).

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*  
*Common resident breeder and winter visitor*

*Amber listed*  
*BBS 20/43*

As has been the case in previous years, more records were submitted for this widespread duck species than for any other. In the LDV, maximum counts during the first winter period were of up to 1100 in the Valley in January and 1450 present throughout February, with up to 1,000 (considered to be a poor number) by 1st March. At CHL and Heslington East and West monthly maxima were all WeBS counts (see table). A notable count elsewhere was of 860 at Oulston Reservoir on 15th January.

The first confirmation of successful breeding came from the Old Gravel Pits, Allerthorpe where a brood of eight was seen on 29th March followed by a brood of 12 at Heslington Tillmire on 3rd April. Many reports of broods were then received from: Askham Bryan, Bank Island, Bolton Percy Ings, CHL, Heslington East and West, Milford Common (Bishopdyke), NDC, Pocklington Canal (Melbourne), SHL and Strensall (River Foss), Wheldrake Ings and York City stadium, Monk's Cross.

Post breeding, in the LDV, up to 500 birds were present throughout the site in late August. In late autumn and the second winter period numbers increased to 980 at the October WeBS count with broadly similar counts in November and December. At CHL and Heslington East and West, peak monthly counts were all WeBS counts also (see table). Elsewhere 74 were at Bolton Percy Ings on 15th October and 71 there on 31st December, 60 at West Ings on 16th October and 146 at Newburgh Priory on the 30th.

Monthly WeBS counts for Mallard

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	57	44	54	34	41	57	184	122	59	147	55	237
<b>LDV</b>	1100	1450	1000	-	-	-	-	-	-	980	890	988
<b>HES</b>	206	130	91	78	62	68	240	168	119	206	146	149

**Pintail** *Anas acuta*  
*Winter visitor and rare breeder*

*Amber listed*

In the first winter period this species was almost completely restricted in distribution to the LDV where some of the biggest counts were at Wheldrake Ings including 51 on 2nd January and 113 on the 3rd (when there were estimated to be 131 birds throughout the site). Total numbers for the LDV were estimated at 164 on the 15th, 176 on the 22nd and 203 on the 25th, climbing to 250 on the 30th. There was a successful ringing operation throughout the month with 30 birds involved, doubling the total number of birds ringed over the previous 20 years. In February higher counts included 300 on the 12th and 19th and a peak of 368 on the 26th, 245 of which were at Aughton Ings. In March, counts included 70 at Wheldrake Ings on the 12th and 113 at Aughton Ings on the 13th, when there were also more than 80 at Ellerton Ings and 30 at North Duffield Ings. Numbers at Aughton Ings climbed to 227 by the 18th, with 37 at Bubwith Ings that day, when the full count for the Valley was 473; declining to around 250 by the 31st. 111 were

at Wheldrake Ings on the 25th and 96 at NDC on the 31st. Elsewhere, CHL held a lone drake on 25th February while Lower Wharfe sightings included 38 at West Ings (peak count) on 3rd March and 22 at Bolton Percy Ings on the 5th.

Into April, there were still large numbers in the LDV, including 139 at Wheldrake Ings on the 2nd, with 195 in the valley on the 6th. By the 15th their presence at Wheldrake Ings had been whittled down to 25 with seven pairs remaining by the 30th. In May only a single pair remained, seen on the 1st and again on the 21st. There was also a pair at CHL on 7th May. There was no evidence of successful breeding.

The first returning birds of the autumn were singletons at Bank Island and CHL (a female), both on 17th September. Numbers at Bank Island grew to six on the 23rd and 14 on the 24th. In October, 11 were at Bank Island on the 7th, increasing to 21 in the valley on the 8th. During November numbers increased from 35 at Bank Island on the 8th to 134 on the 29th. Widespread flooding during December pushed LDV totals up to 147 by the 3rd and at least 200 by the 16th, of which 73 were at Wheldrake Ings, with 44 there on the 31st. Away from the LDV, a pair was at CHL on 8th October and three there on the 22nd, while three birds were at Ozendyke Ings on the 18th. There was a female at CHL on 4th November and a male and female there on 28th December.

#### Monthly WeBS counts for Pintail

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>LDV</b>	248	368	473	195	23	59	172

**Garganey** *Anas querquedula*

YOC Amber listed

*Scarce migrant breeder*

2017 was a poor year for this species, with sightings of a single fledged bird being the only indication of possible breeding.

The first returning bird was at Bank Island on 22nd March. There was a drake at Wheldrake Ings on 6th April and a pair at Bank Island and then Aughton on the 28th and 29th respectively. During May a drake was at Wheldrake Ings on the 2nd, a female at Thornton Ellers on the 15th and a pair at Bank Island on the 29th. In June NDC held a female on the 14th, while a juvenile was at Wheldrake Ings on the 21st. In July, there was an eclipse drake at Bank Island on the 18th and a juvenile there on the 29th. The focus then switched to Heslington East where a juvenile was present from the 3rd to 5th August and again on the 7th, 12th and 13th. The final sighting of the year in the LDV was of one on the pool at Wheldrake Ings on 12th August. However the juvenile was seen again at Heslington East on the 30th, staying on into September when it was last seen on the 9th. See also the RBBP report on page 113.

**Shoveler** *Anas clypeata*

Amber listed

*Winter visitor and resident breeder in small numbers*

BBS 1/43

First winter monthly maxima in the LDV were 159 on 30th January, increasing to 180 on 12th February and 238 on the 26th (with courtship and display

witnessed among a group of 16 birds at NDC on the 24th). Wintering birds' numbers were boosted by spring passage and incoming breeders, to more than 340 by 31st March. At CHL the highest count was eight on 25th February. Along the Lower River Wharfe one was at Wistow on 6th January, two at Ozendyke Ings on 28th February, two at Wharfe Ings the same day, eight at West Ings on 3rd March, five and four at Bolton Percy Ings on the 5th and 6th respectively and two again there on the 25th. Elsewhere, one was on Rawcliffe Lake on 8th January and a pair at Skipwith Common on 25th February.

In the breeding season, there was a full count of 157 pairs in the LDV on 10th April and, in July, evidence of successful breeding in the shape of two broods totalling ten unfledged ducklings on the pool at Wheldrake on the 10th and 20 fledged ducklings there on the 17th. Several also fledged and lingered at Bank Island. It was thought that there was a minimum of 40 young throughout the valley.

Two females were at Heslington East on 4th August, a rarity at the site, (with three further sightings there in September and October), while five were on Wash Dike at Skipwith Common on the 14th.

In the autumn, numbers were back up to 51 at Bank Island by 1st October with a maximum count for the month of 91 there on the 21st, and up to 90 birds remaining into early November; 80 were there on the 12th. In December there were 93 at Bank Island on the 29th, with a total of 110 birds throughout the LDV during the month. The highest count at CHL was six on 11th December, while the highest counts along the Lower Wharfe were three at West Ings on 27th November and three at Bolton Percy Ings on 31st December.

#### Monthly WeBS counts for Shoveler

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Oct	Nov	Dec
CHL	1	1	2	0	2	0	6
LDV	159	238	340	340	89	103	107

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

YOC

*Rare vagrant although escapes from wildfowl collections are more likely*

There were two sightings this year, after last year's female. A pair was seen on floodwater at Aughton on 13th March (DT, CSR) and a male at CHL on 28th December.

#### Pochard *Aythya farina*

*Red listed*

*Winter visitor and breeder in small numbers*

In the first winter period maximum counts in the LDV were 54 at Wheldrake and 16 at NDC on 25th January, then 188 at Aughton Ings on 9th February from a total of 257 in the valley. In March there were 112 at Aughton Ings on the 4th, 145 on the 5th, 110 on the 6th and 103 on the 13th. The first sightings of the year at CHL were of nine (seven males and two females) on 4th January, a single on the 6th, seven again on the 7th, a single on the 8th and five on the 15th. In February there was one on the 13th and 15 on the 4th. At Heslington East, 40 birds were an impressive sight on 10th January, with a single there on the 11th and 10 on the

17th, eight on the 22nd, six on the 24th and 11 on the 29th. On 12th February there were five birds and into March, nine on the 9th, seven on the 12th and two on the 18th. Heslington West held two males on the 11th and 12th March and 11 on the 31st.

Two males and three females were reported to be displaying vigorously at Heslington West on 17th April and thereafter there was evidence of breeding when two females were seen on 15th June, one with five, and the other with two, newly hatched ducklings. As there are no pinioned/captive Pochard at the university the observers were satisfied that, although relatively confiding, the parents were genuine wild birds. By mid-July, it appeared that a total of three females had produced eight (five, two and one) ducklings between them, however four of the brood of five did not survive. On 20th August one fully grown juvenile was seen on Heslington West. The only other sign of successful breeding was in June in the LDV where a female with three ducklings seen on the 21st on the ditch network at Bank Island was an unexpected find.

Into the autumn, three were at Heslington East on 30th August and 11th September and a single female there with a flock of Tufted ducks *Aythya fuligula* on 8th October, while three males were at CHL on 17th September. As winter approached the first returning bird in the LDV was at Bank Island on 1st November but sightings thereafter were relatively few with three on the Refuge at Wheldrake on the 3rd, three at Wheldrake Ings on the same day, rising to six on the 27th with a final count of two there on the 31st. CHL held three on 3rd December and Heslington East six (four males) on the 10th and seven on the 19th.

#### Monthly WeBS counts for Pochard

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
CHL	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
LDV	70	257	140	17	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	3
HES	10	3	9	7	11	2	6	0	2	4	5	0

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

*Winter visitor and breeder in small numbers*

*BBS 1/43*

During the first winter period and in the LDV there were 65 at Wheldrake Ings on 25th January and, by February, 103 birds throughout the Valley on the 4th with 65 at Bank Island on the 6th, building to 139 at Aughton on the 8th. On the 9th the Valley held a total of 251 birds with 192 in the Aughton/Ellerton area and 65 at Bank Island. In March there were 238 at Wheldrake Ings on the 12th and by the 13th there was an estimated 400 in the LDV with 250 remaining to the end of the month. Of 300 in the LDV early in April, 56 were at Bank Island on the 1st, 169 at Wheldrake Ings on the 2nd and 61 at NDC on the 3rd, with 100 still remaining at the end of the month. At CHL monthly maxima were 169 on 15th January, 121 on 13th February, 50 on 12th March and 79 on 9th April (all WeBS). On 10th January 82 was a notable count at Heslington East. Monthly maxima for February to April were all WeBS counts (see table). Elsewhere single digit counts came from



Acaster Ings Bolton Percy Ings, Milford Common, Old Gravel Pits Allerthorpe, Rawcliffe Lake, Skipwith Common, West Ings, Wharfe Ings and Wistow Clough.

During the breeding season, the first brood of three was seen on 17th June at Bank Island, alongside ten adults. Several pairs with broods were then reported at Wheldrake Ings during the month and into July. By 10th July, with receding water levels, there were four broods (21 ducklings) on the pool there. There was a female with three ducklings at NDC on the 22nd. At Heslington East on 3rd August a nest with young was detected, with four small ducklings there the same day, thought to be the first known breeding record for the site. There were two surviving ducklings by the 15th. At CHL recently fledged young were reported on 22nd July. Although up to six birds remained at Milford Common during May there was no proof of breeding.

Post breeding, numbers in the LDV totalled 15 on 8th October but thereafter into November, the highest count was of a mere five birds at Bank Island on the 13th and, throughout December, only a handful of birds returned to the Valley with just 21 on the 15th and 11 on the 29th. On 8th October 52 were at CHL increasing to 84 on the 22nd with the same number there on 4th November, while 120 on 11th December was the highest count for the latter part of the year. At Heslington East there were 18 on 11th October, building to 44 on 9th November and peaking at 57 on 11th December.

#### Monthly WeBS counts for Tufted Duck

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	169	121	50	79	35	31	11	30	8	52	54	120
<b>LDV</b>	63	251	358	300	-	-	-	-	-	11	3	21
<b>HES</b>	45	26	61	31	17	3	14	16	43	18	31	57

*Note: all HES were on Heslington East apart from three on Heslington West in May*

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

YOC Red listed

*Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant*

Unfortunately 2017 proved to be something of a letdown after the previous year's excellent showing. The year started promisingly enough with a drake at Wheldrake Ings on 3rd January and two, a 1st-winter male and a female, on the 5th at CHL, where they were seen again on the 7th. The 21st found two birds (adult male and 1st-winter male) on the Refuge at Wheldrake Ings, where they were seen again on the 25th, the 27th (one bird only) and the 28th. A male was still there on 4th February and again from the 18th to the 27th, a female on the 24th at Bank Island, one at Wheldrake Ings on the 25th and two females at Aughton Ings on the 27th. Back at CHL there was a female on 4th February with two birds there on the 11th and two females on the 25th. In March, a male was on the Refuge, Wheldrake Ings until the 11th, with an influx there on the 12th when there were four drakes in the area. These remained until the 19th. Seen there again on the 25th, they were then joined by a 1st-winter drake until the 31st. In April the four drakes stayed on the Refuge until the 7th with a single bird lingering on the 8th, and a male seen on the 9th being the last of the year's sightings there.

Sightings in the second winter period were at a premium with just one female at CHL on 8th October and a single there on 5th November.

**Common Scoter** *Melanitta nigra*  
*Scarce passage migrant*

*Red listed*

After this species' improved showing in 2016 it was a disappointment that only two birds were seen all year, namely a female on Wheldrake Ings on 17th and 18th March (DMB) and a male at Heslington East, feeding actively on 27th and 28th September (JL).

**Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula*  
*Winter visitor and passage migrant*

*Amber listed*

After some larger concentrations of this species in 2016, numbers were much reduced in 2017 and birds were only seen at three sites.

In the LDV one was at NDC on 2nd January, with three, a male and two females, at Wheldrake Ings the same day. A male was there on the 4th and three birds on the 7th and 8th. By the 15th there were two males at Wheldrake Ings, with numbers climbing to seven on the Refuge by the 21st and to ten (seven drakes) by the 25th. A party of eight birds (five females and three drakes) was then noted on the River Derwent at Thorganby on the 30th. It was estimated that there was a minimum of 12 and a maximum of 18 birds in the Valley throughout the month. Birds continued to be present throughout February with 13 at the Refuge, Wheldrake Ings on the 12th, increasing to 16 on the 18th and 21 on the 21st, the peak count for the month, with numbers dipping to 13 on the 26th. Into March, there were 22 at Wheldrake Ings on the 11th and 12th and 20 on the 18th, of which up to 16 lingered until the 31st; there was evidence of some spring passage. Singletons were also seen at East Cottingwith and Bank Island. In April, five including two drakes were still present on the 6th, with the last of the spring three on the 11th.

Away from the LDV, the peak monthly counts at CHL were 26 on 4th January, 31 on 13th February, 24 on 12th March and three on 9th April. Heslington East hosted a female on 10th January with presumably the same bird seen there on the 15th, 22nd and 29th, then again on 15th February.

The first returning birds were seen on 22nd October when two were at CHL. Sixteen were present by 4th November, this being the maximum count there to the end of the year, with 16 also recorded on the 19th and again on 11th December. Two were seen at Heslington East on 9th November, while the first back to the LDV were two at Bank Island on the 15th. Into December, Wheldrake Ings held six on the 16th increasing to seven on the 26th, nine on the 27th and ten on the 30th and 31st. There were also two on the River Derwent at NDC on the 19th.

Monthly WeBS counts for Goldeneye

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	17	31	24	3	0	16	16
<b>LDV</b>	18	16	20	5	0	2	6

**Smew** *Mergellus albellus*  
*Scarce winter visitor*

*Amber listed*

After an excellent 2016 for this species, sightings were disappointingly sparse. There was a 'redhead' on Heslington East on 17th January and then a month's gap before a few sightings in the LDV when two 'redheads' were in the Aughton area on 19th February (DT, DMB), with at least one remaining until the 21st and then reappearing on the 26th.

There were no records in the second winter period.

**Red-breasted Merganser** *Mergus serrator* YOC  
*Very scarce winter visitor*

The first record in the area since 2011 was of a drake seen briefly at Bank Island on 18th January (LDV Blog).

**Goosander** *Mergus merganser*  
*Winter visitor, passage migrant and casual breeder*

*BBS 1/43*

Early in the year peak counts at CHL were 17 on 7th January, 19 there on 13th February and only five on 12th March. Heslington West numbers were well down on 2016 with a mere five on 17th January, five on 4th February and four on 12th March (compared with 27 on 26th February and 42 on 3rd March 2016). In the LDV the maximum count was at Bank Island on 19th January when 15 birds flew in to roost but thereafter sightings were scarce and counts low. On the River Ouse maximum counts were six at Acaster on 29th January and four at Naburn Lock on 17th February, with ten there on 20th March. The Lower River Wharfe held fairly modest numbers throughout the first winter period with a maximum count of 16 at Bolton Percy Ings on 28th March. Elsewhere, at Red House Lagoon there were 84 on 15th January (the year's peak count) and a still impressive 39 birds on 11th February; and again on 11th March. At Rawcliffe Lake numbers were well down on 2016 with monthly maxima of two in January and nine on February 23rd, the same day that nine were at Gilling East on the lakes there. There were five at Scagglethorpe Lane on 1st January and five again on the River Derwent at Stamford Bridge late in February. Low single digit numbers were also seen at Acaster Ings, Bishopthorpe (flying over towards the River Ouse), Cawood, Dringhouses Pond, Elvington, Malton, River Foss (Heworth and Huntington Road), River Ouse (York) and Wistow.

Once again some birds lingered on the Lower River Wharfe and throughout May up to four individuals were noted at Bolton Percy Ings, Kirkby Wharfe and Nun Appleton, with a further single bird at Bolton Percy Ings on 10th June and an adult female and five ducklings there on 23rd July.

The first returning birds were three at Ryther Ings on 13th October. Thereafter in the Lower Wharfe area birds were only seen on seven other dates with the peak count being four at Bolton Percy Ings on 5th November. CHL's first returnee appeared on 22nd October and there were single birds there on the 25th and 4th November, plus three on the 5th. Numbers remained low with the maximum count only five to the end of the year. Heslington West hosted some of the most

impressive numbers with 29 on 19th November and 14 on 26th December. At Acaster there were three on 19th November and 13 on 26th December while at nearby Naburn Lock there were four on 27th December. Two were on the River Ouse by Knavesmire and Ouse Bank on 21st December. There were also single digit counts at Bank Island, Dringhouses Lake, Gilling East, NDC, Rawcliffe Lake and World's End (Stockton Parish). Paul Doherty and David Tate's article about the Club's wintering Goosander survey can be found on page 125.

#### Monthly WeBS counts for Goosander

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	15	15	5	0	0	0
<b>LDV</b>	15	5	2	0	0	0
<b>HES</b>	5	1	4	0	29	0

Note: HES birds all at Heslington West site

#### **Quail** *Coturnix coturnix* Scarce migrant breeder

*Amber listed*

A better year in the LDV with up to 16 singing males there, but few reports from elsewhere. The first calling bird was one on Thornton Ings on 14th May (and again on the 15th). Then came singles at Hessay on 22nd May, East Cottingwith Ings on 23rd May, Milford Common on 24th May and Acaster Airfield on 2nd June. A notable influx into the LDV occurred at the end of the first week of June with two singing at NDC on the 6th and three there the following morning, one at Wheldrake Ings on the 7th, two at Bubwith and two at North Duffield Ings on the 8th and further birds at Aughton and Ellerton Ings. At East Cottingwith a male was singing from arable near the village on the 9th with another singing from the Ings on the 14th. In the Pocklington Canal area one was near Church Bridge at Melbourne on 10th June and another was at Seavy Carr near Thomton on 18th June. Birds were regularly heard at NDC throughout June. While July was generally much quieter, males continued to be vocal at Bubwith Ings and adjacent NDC with one heard at Bubwith Ings on the 16th, up to four audible from the path from Bubwith Bridge on the 17th and singles at NDC on 18th and 19th July with one, possibly two, singing on the 21st. See also the RBBP report on page 113.

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

*Resident breeder and released to shoot*

*BBS 17/43*

Seen throughout the region in suitable habitat. Single and low double figures were regularly encountered in SE53 with many thought to be releases for shooting. By far the highest count was 52 at Skipwith on 1st January. Other counts of greater than ten in the first part of the year were 14 at Bank Island on 21st January and again on the 28th and 18 at Wheldrake Ings on 25th February with 15 on Low Grounds. In the second half of the year sizeable counts were 18 at Ryther Ings on 23rd July, 12 at Bolton Percy Ings on 20th August, 12 on Low Grounds, Wheldrake Ings on 8th October and 12 at Brumber Hill on 1st November. The last few days of December saw 20 at Allerthorpe Common on the

28th and 20 by the footpath between Melbourne and Field Lane, Thornton on the 30th, while 23 were at Low Grounds, Wheldrake Ings on the same date.

**Grey Partridge** *Perdix perdix*  
*Resident breeder*

*Red listed*  
*BBS 7/43*

More widespread this year with reports from approximately 50 sites across the region, usually of small coveys of less than five individuals. Releases from captivity may account for many of the birds seen in SE53; the keeper at Milford Common estimated that about 60 birds were there.

Calling birds were heard at Bank Island, Bishopthorpe (calling regularly at dawn throughout spring), East Cottingwith, North Howden and Scagglethorpe Lane. Breeding was confirmed at Aughton (pair with 12 newly hatched chicks on 4th July), Naburn (two adults with 12 young on 4th July), Pocklington Canal, Melbourne (two adults with 17 juveniles on 10th September), Middlethorpe (family party of six on stubble on 2nd September) and Poppleton (a covey of ten that included juveniles on 11th August).

Other sites holding more than five birds were:

Bolton Percy Ings - seven on 31st August and 12 on 27th October

Brandsby - eight near Snargate on 27th April

Bumber Hill - eight on 12th November

Bubwith Ings - eight on 16th September

Full Sutton - six by Moor Lane on 24th January

Hagg Wood - six on 9th May and again on 31st May, nine on 31st October

Haxby Moor Road, York - 12 on 29th October

Heslington East - seven on 10th January and nine on 19th December, flushed from area of rough grass

Knavesmire - six on grass just south of racecourse buildings on 24th November

Melbourne Ings - 19 on 10th September

Milford Common - a minimum of ten on 8th and 19th January, six on 7th March, 18 on 16th August (probably all released birds), 13 on 19th September

Naburn - 14 on 4th July

Rufforth - 13 by Wetherby Road on 31st December

Scagglethorpe Lane - ten on 15th September and six on the 25th, 15 on 21st December

Sherburn in Elmet - eight on 1st January

Thornton Ellers - a covey of 12 throughout November

Wistow - eight during October and 18 on 8th November with the observer noting an increase in sightings this year in the Cawood Marshes area

**Pheasant** *Phasianus colchicus*

*Resident breeder and released to shoot*

*BBS 33/43*

Widespread and common throughout the region. In the early part of the year counts of at least 20 were made at Bank Island, Milford Common and Wheldrake Ings. Milford Common held a minimum of 20 birds on 8th January, Bank Island

had 31 on 4th February with 29 on Low Grounds at Wheldrake Ings on the same date and 22 were at Low Grounds on 18th February. Birds were present at Sand Hutton all year with a maximum count of 22.

Notable counts in the autumn were 25 at Milford Common on 8th October (in a small area, almost certainly releases), 21 at Bank Island on 14th October with 37 there on 11th November and 60 at Castle Howard on 22nd October.

**Red-throated Diver** *Gavia stellata* YOC  
*Rare winter visitor and passage migrant*

Not recorded in 2017 after three records in the last ten years, most recently in 2016.

**Manx Shearwater** *Puffinus puffinus* YOC *Amber listed*  
*Very rare passage migrant*

A startling influx occurred in September when three young birds were found in the York area in two days, presumably driven inland by gale force winds from Storm Aileen. On 14th September individuals were found in gardens at Bamby Moor and Fulford (with another found the same day in Howden just outside the recording area). The birds were rehabilitated, ringed and returned to the coast (LDV Blog, JT). Another bird was found on 15th September in a York garden but unfortunately did not survive.

**Gannet** *Morus bassanus* YOC *Amber listed*  
*Rare visitor*

A sub-adult flew over the A19 near Riccall heading east towards NDC on 30th April (LDV Blog). There have been five records of this species in the past ten years with most records being of juveniles in autumn.

**Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo* BBS 3/43  
*Passage and winter visitor; localised resident breeder*

Numbers reported away from the strongholds of CHL and the LDV were much reduced with no double-figure counts received. In SE53 there was a significant decrease in sightings compared to the previous year (113 bird-days, compared with 167 in 2016). The peak count from CHL in the first winter period was 31 on 7th January. Numbers held up well at Wheldrake Ings with 24 in the roost on 2nd January, 32 on 18th February, up to 26 in the roost during March, 20 on 2nd April and up to 19 in early May, reducing to just a handful towards the month's end. Elsewhere, five were on the river at NDC on 17th March and five were at Wharfe Ings on 9th April. A bird of the Continental race *sinensis* was at Kirkby Wharfe on 24th February.

There was no information about breeding success from CHL this year. An adult and recently fledged juvenile both of the Continental race *sinensis* were at Pocklington Canal, Melbourne on 29th June. Two juveniles were on the Ings at Naburn on 12th October.

Notable counts in the second half of the year included 11 at Wheldrake Ings on

6th August, eight at Stamford Bridge on 24th September, eight at Bolton Percy Ings on 20th October, 30 at CHL on 12th November and six at Melbourne, Pocklington Canal on 27th November. At NDC in December there were daily sightings of birds flying north up the River Derwent shortly after dawn, presumably arriving to feed in the area from roosts elsewhere (LDV Blog). At CHL 34 were seen leaving on the morning of 17th December and at Wheldrake 22 were in the roost on the 26th.

#### Monthly WeBS counts for Cormorant

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	24	9	6	3	0	1	4	7	2	15	10	0
<b>LDV</b>	23	32	26	12	-	-	-	-	-	7	11	13

#### **Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris*

YOC Amber listed

#### *Scarce winter visitor*

One was on the Pocklington Canal at Church Bridge near Melbourne on 21st December (LDV Blog); the third year in a row with a single record.

#### **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta*

*Resident, with small numbers breeding in the LDV*

BBS 1/43

Reported from at least 30 sites, most records came from the LDV where breeding again took place. Maximum numbers (in brackets) at LDV sites occurred in spring and early summer as follows: Bank Island (five on 28th April), Bubwith Ings (four on 28th March and 1st April), East Cottingwith (two on 7th to 9th March and four in the area on the 10th), Pocklington Canal (five at Melbourne on 17th April), NDC (four on 23rd April and 1st May), Thornton Ellers (up to three on 18th May) and Wheldrake Ings (21 at dusk on 18th May).

Pairs were seen at the heronry from 13th April. By the end of the breeding season eight pairs had raised at least 15 young. Up to 12 birds were roosting by the pool at Wheldrake by the end of June, increasing to 14 on 7th July. Two adults and one immature were there on 22nd July then one adult with an immature on 29th July. Two were at Melbourne including one juvenile on 14th August. Eight were seen at Wheldrake Ings in late August to 1st September with up to five daily in September. A colour-ringed bird (J9), ringed as a nestling in 2015 by Mid-Lincolnshire ringing group and recorded at NDC on one occasion in 2016, was present at Thornton Ellers during June.

Away from the LDV, sites where more than one bird was seen (peak count in brackets) were: Bolton Percy Ings (two on 2nd February), CHL (three on 25th June), Heslington village (two on 17th August), Heslington East (three on 22nd January), Heslington West (two on 17th March), Milford Common (three roosting on a nearby field on 6th October), Riccall (five on River Ouse on 1st February), Sheriff Hutton (two on 12th June), Sherburn in Elmet (two on 29th January and 17th February), Wistow (three perched in trees by the lake at Wistow Clough on 5th March). Elsewhere singles were seen at Bolton Percy, Brumber Hill, Church Fenton, Foggathorpe ponds, Hassacarr NR (on 30th January, first record for the

reserve), Heslington Tillmire, Knavesmire (flying east low over on 30th December), Naburn (in field near village), Sand Hutton (on 12th July, first record for the site) and Foss Bridge, Towthorpe. See also the RBBP report on page 113.

**Great White Egret** *Ardea alba*

YOC

*Scarce vagrant*

With records coming with ever increasing frequency, sightings no longer require a description submitting to the YNU rarities committee (though sightings should still be submitted to the YOC recorder). Whilst all records have occurred since 2002, with more than 13 records in the past ten years, Great White Egret can now be considered scarce, rather than rare in the YOC recording area.

A dramatic increase in sightings with birds present in most months, particularly in the LDV where one or two were seen regularly in spring and early summer, and scattered records from elsewhere during the autumn and on into winter. The first appearance was one that flew along the Pocklington Canal and across Swantail Ings towards Thorganby on 2nd January (JLe, TD); it was seen again flying over Bank Island at dusk on 7th January (FM, CSR). There were no further sightings until late March when one turned up at NDC on the 29th with two at the southern end of the valley on the 30th and two in the Bubwith/NDC area on 1st and 2nd April (LDV Blog). A single was at Wheldrake Ings on 3rd April (TD) and again on 8th April (DMB, DT *et al*). The next reports came in late May when two were at Wheldrake Ings on the 25th (LDV Blog) with a single present on the 27th (DMB, DR) and 28th (LDV Blog). In June one flew north up the LDV and over Ellerton church on the 9th (NC, CSR *et al*) and was seen again on East Cottingwith Ings on the 13th and Bubwith Ings on the 14th (LDV Blog) with it or another at Bank Island on 9th July (AF). After a blank month in August, two appeared at the Storwood end of Low Grounds on 11th September followed by one at Wheldrake Ings on 5th and 6th October (LDV Blog). A single appeared briefly on the flood at Bolton Percy Ings on 28th October but soon left to the south (PD). A surprise sighting was of three that flew together over Skipwith Common on 1st November (NCa, FM, JC).

For the third year in a row autumn brought a bird to the northwest of the region with one found at Newburgh Priory Lake on 15th October (IB) and seen regularly there until 9th December (JR *et al*). Other records from November through to early December may relate to the same wandering individual. One was found in a field near Heslington on 13th November (JN), relocating to the east of Heslington Tillmire later the same day. A single that roosted that evening at NDC was possibly the same bird (LDV Blog). It or another spent 23rd November in the Dunnington area (TW) and was present at NDC the next day (LDV Blog). In December the only sighting, apart from the one at Newburgh Priory Lake, was at Wistow on the 1st (PL). See also the RBBP report on page 113.

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*

*Resident breeder*

BBS 10/43

Well reported from suitable habitat, most records were of one or two with



higher numbers in the LDV notably around Wheldrake Ings and Bank Island. In the early part of the year there were no counts of more than ten birds with the highest numbers at or near breeding sites as birds returned during February.

Breeding was reported from four sites. At the largest of these, Thicket Priory near Wheldrake Ings, there were 31 occupied nests. Several broods were close to fledging by 28th April and seven were colour-ringed (LDV Blog). The first fledged young at Wheldrake were two on 8th May, rising to 33 there on the 28th. The other breeding sites were Acomb Ings where 18 nests were counted, Bishop Wood which had 11 occupied nests on 15th April and CHL which had four nests with three adults and seven fledged young present on 21st May.

Post breeding records of more than ten birds were confined to the LDV with a peak count of 34 during June including 11 at Wheldrake Ings on the 21st, up to 30 during July with 17 at Bank Island on the 5th, 27 throughout the site on 28th August and 20 on the pool at Wheldrake on 30th August. There were 14 between Bank Island and Wheldrake on 2nd September, a maximum of 14 in the LDV during October then small numbers in November and December, with 13 throughout the site on 29th December the highest count.

**White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia*

YOC

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

One flew north between Elvington and Wheldrake on 22nd May (CSR), the first since 2015.

**Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus*

YNU

*Very rare vagrant*

The first record for the York recording area, one was present at Wheldrake Ings on 3rd December (DMB, AF, JLe). Initially picked up flying low along the main ditch, it circled and headed off towards the Refuge but soon returned and landed near Tower Hide from where it was admired for about 20 minutes until flushed (by planes passing overhead). It was found again at roost at Bank Island on 6th December (FM, CSR). A full report can be found on page 121.

*This record is subject to acceptance by the YNU.*

**Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia*

YOC Amber listed

*Very rare spring and summer migrant*

A welcome return after five blank years. One flew south over Wheldrake Ings on 1st May (CSR). It or another was at Wheldrake Ings on 8th July (LDV Blog).

**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

*Resident breeder*

In the first winter period the Pocklington Canal and River Derwent were favoured sites, with up to five on the canal at Melbourne. Elsewhere there were two at Milford Common ponds and two at the Old Gravel Pits, Allerthorpe with

singles at Nunnington and Heslington East. A regular winter presence along the Lower Wharfe included a single at Kirkby Wharfe and up to two at Bolton Percy Ings.

Pairs started to return to breeding sites from February. In March there were two pairs at Milford Common, at least one pair at Old Gravel Pits, Allerthorpe and at least two pairs at both Wheldrake and Bank Island along with a single pair at NDC. Up to two birds were at Skipwith Common in April and early May and a pair was at Breezy Knees, Warthill in June. Two birds were at Heslington East on 6th June but no breeding activity was observed. Breeding was confirmed at Milford Common and at Wheldrake Ings, where a single pair had hatched one chick by 6th June. A single fledged immature lingered on the pool at Wheldrake Ings early in August whilst a single immature was at Bank Island from 3rd to 12th August. Up to four young birds were at CHL on 22nd July and a single immature remained at the Duck Decoy at Escrick during August. At Old Gravel Pits, Allerthorpe the peak count was eight on 3rd August. Also noted during the breeding season were singles at Aughton Ings, Bolton Percy Ings, Brumber Hill, Gilling Redcar, Sand Hutton and Yearsley fishponds

Post-breeding records included site maximum counts of four at Heslington East on 11th September and seven at CHL on 15th September. At the end of the year, in December, up to seven were on the River Derwent between Bubwith Bridge and East Cottingwith. Five were along the Pocklington Canal with up to three at Melbourne. Low single figures remained at Bank Island, Wheldrake Ings and Old Gravel Pits, Allerthorpe. Other wintering birds were five at Bolton Percy Ings on 3rd December, a single at Acaster on the 26th and up to two at Heslington East.

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

*Resident breeder and passage visitor*

*BBS 1/43*

In the first winter period up to two birds were at Heslington East and West and singles were at Rawcliffe Lake and Dringhouses Pond. Three were at CHL on 4th February. Winter records from the LDV were of two birds at Wheldrake Ings on 21st January, two at Bubwith Ings on 6th February and four at Wheldrake Ings on 17th February, with three there on the 19th. In March singles were found more widely including at Acaster, Bolton Percy Ings, Ozendyke Ings, Rawcliffe Lake, Redhouse Lagoon and Wistow. One was at NDC on 12th March with three there by the 17th. Two were at Eastrington Amenity Ponds, also on the 12th. Four were at Bank Island on the 14th and four at Wheldrake Ings on the 27th. Two pairs remained at Wheldrake Ings during April and one pair was on the ponds at Foggathorpe on 29th April. A single was at Naburn on 1st May and at Knavesmire and Ousebank on 4th May. A pair was seen nest building at CHL on 17th May. Another pair was at Old Gravel Pits, Allerthorpe from 1st March and was seen attending a nest from 11th May to 16th June but the outcome was not recorded. At Heslington East three birds (a pair plus a single) were present during May and early June with two remaining into July but there was no sign of a breeding attempt. Two pairs bred at Crockey Hill and Aughton. A late brood of two chicks

was at Heslington West on 19th September. Thereafter the only sightings to the end of year were of one at CHL on 8th October and one or two at Heslington East and West.

#### Monthly WeBS counts for Great Crested Grebe

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
HES	1	0	3	0	0	3	0	1	2	2	2	1

**Black-necked Grebe** *Podiceps nigricollis* YOC Amber listed

*Scarce passage visitor; formerly rare breeder*

Not recorded in 2017 though recorded in six of the past ten years, most recently in 2014.

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

*Scarce passage migrant*

The first records since 2010 (if accepted); one was in the north of the area on 7th July (JR) and a migrant bird was seen in Gilling on 27th August (BirdGuides).

*Both records are subject to acceptance by the YNU.*

**Red Kite** *Milvus milvus*

*Resident in the southern part of the recording area; scarce elsewhere BBS 2/43*

With over 350 records, Red Kite was the second most reported raptor; however sightings of birds beyond the Derwent and Wharfe Valleys are still scarce. During the first three months of the year most sightings came from the Lower Wharfe Valley, where at least one pair appears to be resident. These included two at Bolton Percy on 15th January; three at Kirkby Wharfe on 3rd February and four at Bolton Percy on 20th March. The first returning bird to the LDV appeared at Bank Island on 3rd February and by the 19th four were present at Wheldrake Ings. Elsewhere two were reported from CHL on 7th January, Allerthorpe on the 19th and Dunnington on 11th March, whilst singles appeared at Acaster Airfield, Church Fenton, Escrick, Seaton Ross and Harewood Whin landfill site (Rufforth Tip).

By the end of April three or four pairs were estimated to be present in the wider LDV. Three birds were present at Seaton Ross on 18th May and presumably the same were at Aughton on the 22nd. By early July adults were regularly seen carrying food. The conclusion at the end of the breeding season was that two pairs had bred in the area whilst another two pairs were present, though details about nest sites and brood sizes are not available. Haymaking on the meadows during July attracted hunting birds and a pair with two juveniles was present at the Low Grounds on the 9th, with up to six birds present when Wheldrake Ings and Bank Island were harvested, whilst two birds were at NDC on the 19th and Aughton from the 21st to the 23rd. Many other breeding season records were received from the Lower Wharfe area where breeding may have taken place. The single seen in the Castle Howard area on several dates was probably a summering individual.

Other records came from Acomb, Bilbrough, Brind, Pocklington, Poppleton, Redhouse Lagoon, Sand Hutton, Strensall Common and above York Minster, where one was soaring on a thermal along with Buzzards *Buteo buteo* on 10th May.

After the breeding season the number of reports from the LDV steadily declined. It seems likely that most of the breeding population dispersed from the area and this may account for the three juveniles seen at Rufforth on 13th August. One was seen at Bank Island on 7th October. However, there were regular reports from the Thorganby area in early December, with a single over Melbourne Ings on the 4th and Wheldrake on the 16th and 21st. By comparison the number of autumn and early winter reports from the Lower Wharfe Valley remained high (double that of 2016). An adult and juvenile were present at Kirkby Wharfe on 11th November and there were four sightings of three birds at Nun Appleton on the 3rd and 28th October and Bolton Percy Ings on 14th October and 7th November. Elsewhere, birds were present throughout December at Escrick Park Estate, and singles were seen at Heslington on the 26th and Naburn on the 28th. See also the RBBP report on page 113.

**Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* *Amber listed*  
*Scarce visitor and passage migrant; now resident in the LDV in small numbers*

Over 90% of the 100 or so records came from LDV where birds are now present throughout the year. Two cream-crowns wintered in the Valley and one or both were regularly reported from Aughton, Bubwith, Ellerton, NDC and Wheldrake Ings. The birds reported at Skipwith Common on 24th January and 13th April may well have been from the LDV; however the male seen there on 27th January was not reported locally at the time. The only other pre-breeding record came from Flaxton where one was seen on 7th January.

LDV sightings significantly increased in May when there were reports of an immature male on the 14th and an adult male on the 16th. By the end of the month at least four birds were present, including a pair at Wheldrake Ings. Two pairs were present in the Valley throughout June and a 1st-summer male made regular appearances in the Melbourne and Thornton Ings area. After 9th June one of the pairs was thought to be feeding young. The presence of a newly fledged immature at Bank Island on 17th July and three there on the 21st supports the claim of successful breeding in the LDV.

After the breeding season birds were regularly reported from the LDV until the year end and on 19th December an exceptional total of six was seen at NDC with a further three present on the same date at Wheldrake Ings. The wing-tagged bird present at NDC on 20th October showed that birds from elsewhere pass through the recording area. This was further confirmed by sightings made during VMW at Bolton Percy Ings. An immature female flew south on 10th September followed by another bird on the 23rd and another cream-crown on 3rd October whilst on the 18th two cream-crowns flew over to the north-west. A cream-crown was also present at Skipwith Common on the 11th and 14th August.

## Rare and Scarcer Birds recorded during 2017



Left to right and top to bottom

- Manx Shearwater** © Jean Thorpe
- Great White Egret** © Ian Brookes
- Crane** © Duncan Bye
- Glossy Ibis** © Jono Leadley
- Avocet** © David Tate
- Grey Plover** © Duncan Bye

**Hen Harrier** *Circus cyaneus* YOC Red listed  
*Scarce winter visitor*

The number of Hen Harrier records has declined in recent years. Wintering birds were not reported in 2017 and there were just three sightings. A female flew north over Thorganby on 22nd March (CSR), and on the 25th a male was present over Wheldrake Ings and the Low Grounds (DMB). In autumn, a male was hunting over fields at Foggathorpe on 4th October (CSR).

**Montagu's Harrier** *Circus pygargus* YNU Amber listed  
*Very rare summer migrant*

Not seen in 2017, after records in three of the past ten years, most recently 2015.

**Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis* YOC  
*Rare passage visitor and very rare resident breeder*

Most of the 16 reports relate to a resident pair in SE53. These birds were seen displaying on 30th March (PD) though neither proven breeding nor fledged young was reported. A pair was also present in the LDV during the first three months of the year. Other sightings came from Skipwith Common on 19th January (DT) and CHL on 5th November (PWh). The last proven breeding records date from the 1990s. See also the RBBP report on page 113.

**Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus* BBS 5/43  
*Common resident breeder and passage migrant*

Recorded throughout the year with most reports occurring in January and April and fewest in June. A well reported pair established a breeding territory opposite Pool hide on Wheldrake Ings. Significant numbers of sightings were received from SE53, 54, 64, and 65, but none from SE57 and none from SE66, 67 and 73 during the breeding season. Prior to the breeding season most of the records were of single birds, though two were seen at Milford Common on 8th January, Dunnington on the 25th, Acaster Malbis on the 28th and three at Ozendyke on the 29th. The well-watched Wharfe and Derwent valleys produced the majority of the regular sightings. Additional occasional records came from Acaster Airfield, Allerthorpe, Barmby Moor, Castle Howard, Strensall Common, Skipwith Common and York (Bolton Lane, the City centre, Rawcliffe Lake and York Cemetery).

Breeding was proven at Bank Island, Bolton Percy Ings, Castle Howard (2 sites), Naburn, Nun Appleton, Skipwith Common and Wheldrake Ings. Most of the evidence to support proof of breeding came from sightings of adults carrying prey to nest sites. In addition birds were reported on suitable nesting habitat at Allerthorpe, Melbourne and Nether Poppleton and may have bred there. The number of breeding records for 2017 was higher than any of the annual totals for the period 2012-16.

The most notable feature during the post-breeding period was the counts of birds recorded during VMW at Ozendyke in the Lower Wharfe Valley. Twenty one southbound birds, the largest total in recent years, were seen from 12th

September to 5th November, with the maximum of five occurring on the first date. Four were at Bank Island on 21st October and five at Wheldrake Ings on 3rd September and 10th October. Further sightings came from Acaster Airfield, Cali Heath, East Gilling, Eden Camp (Malton), Haxby, Norton and York.

**Buzzard** *Buteo buteo*

*Passage migrant and resident breeder*

*BBS 28/43*

The highly visible and audible Buzzard is now the commonest reported raptor in the recording area. Birds were seen in all months, especially during March-May, when there was much pre-breeding activity.

The highest counts during the first half of the year were eight at Milford Common on 28th February, eight at Bank Island on 8th April, and 12 at Wheldrake Ings on 20th May. Displaying birds were seen at Illingworth's Wood, Strensall on 13th February, Fulford Ings on 19th March, Askham Bog on 6th April and Scotland Wood, Bolton Percy Ings on 1st May.

During the breeding season birds were reported from all hectads except for SE73. However, evidence of confirmed breeding was limited. Adults were giving agitated calls at Hagg Wood, Kexby on 16th May; carrying food at Acaster on 25th June and visiting probable nest sites at two places near the Pocklington Canal in June. Breeding was also suspected near Naburn.

After the breeding period a party of six birds was reported in the Pocklington Canal area on 11th August when it was thought that four were juveniles. It is more than likely that some of the 17 birds reported at NDC on 25th August, which was the highest count of the year, included recently fledged young. Four possible recently fledged young were noted at Melbourne on 28th August and two were at Whitwell on 5th September. Though still widespread, the number of records declined after September. The maximum counts were five at Rawcliffe Meadows on 8th October and five at Nun Appleton on the 28th, whilst six were present at Acaster on 5th November and six at Wheldrake Ings on 30th December.

**Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*

*YOC Amber listed*

*Scarce passage migrant*

Seven Ospreys were reported in 2017 which is similar to the 2014-16 totals and about half those of 2012-13. The first spring passage sighting occurred during the late evening of 13th April at Raker Lakes (CSR) and this was followed by north bound birds over Bank Island on the 15th (CSR) and 28th (DMB). A returning bird flew south over Bank Island on 25th August (DMB) whilst another was present at CHL from the 27th to 30th August. One went south over Canal Head, Pocklington on 1st September and the last record of the year was of two southbound birds over Bank Island on the 25th (LDV Blog).

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

*YNU*

*Rare visitor and passage migrant*

There was a report of one flying along the railway line at Copmanthorpe on 29th December (BirdGuides). This record is being considered by the YNU.

**Water Rail** *Rallus aquaticus*

*Winter and passage visitor; resident breeder*

Up to 15 birds overwintered in the LDV, with maximum counts during January being four at Bank Island, four at Wheldrake Ings, five in the Melbourne area along Pocklington Canal and three at Thornton Ellers. These wintering birds remained through February. One overwintered at St Nicholas Fields, and sporadic reports of singletons came from Bolton Percy Ings, Castle Howard and Milford Common.

During March, singletons were at Milford Common on the 1st, and Bolton Percy Ings on the 5th and one was singing at Old Gravel Pits, Allerthorpe on the 6th. Up to four singing birds were at Wheldrake Ings during the month and three at Bank Island. Singles were at Aughton Ings and NDC on the 18th. Singles were also reported from Skipwith Common on the 24th and 25th.

During the breeding season, most reports came from Wheldrake Ings - up to four were calling from the reed bed by Swantail Hide on 11th April - and four were heard calling at Wheldrake Ings through May and June. The first juveniles were seen on 7th June. Up to four pairs were present there throughout July. Other males were also calling at Aughton, Melbourne and NDC in July. In contrast to last year, there were no sightings at Milford Common during the breeding season.

There were no further sightings until 15th October when one was at Wheldrake Ings. On the 30th, two were at Thornton Lock, Pocklington Canal. In November singles were seen on the riverbank between Bank Island and Wheldrake on the 4th and 17th, at Bank Island on the 19th and Wheldrake Ings on the 28th. Along Pocklington Canal one was at Melbourne on the 8th and 17th and one at Thornton Lock on the 15th. Elsewhere, one was squealing at Heslington East on the 9th and one at Bolton Percy Ings on the 27th. In December, there were at least twelve wintering birds in the valley (including two at Melbourne, Pocklington Canal); three were at NDC on the 20th. One was at Heslington East on the 3rd, two there on the 10th and three on the 12th. Two were squealing at Milford Common on the 18th and one was at St Nicholas Fields on the 20th.

**Spotted Crake** *Porzana porzana*

YOC Amber listed

*Scarce passage migrant and casual breeder*

After a good showing in 2016, disappointingly there were no records in 2017, the third blank year in the last four.

**Corncrake** *Crex crex*

YOC Red listed

*Scarce summer migrant and casual breeder*

Another very good year for this species, with up to eight males thought to have been holding territory in the LDV, of which up to five were thought to have bred or attempted to breed. Conservation measures taken included delaying hay cuts all around the singing locations, with 'Corncrake friendly' mowing introduced in those areas.

The first singing male was heard and recorded at NDC on 14th May (MFJ, JcN, RCn, DMB) in front of Geoff Smith Hide, and again on the 15th and 16th followed by two in the area on the 17th through to the end of the month (MFJ *et*



a). One was heard at East Cottingwith on 23rd May (CSR *et al*) and one at Wheldrake Ings on the 31st. In June two birds were present at Wheldrake Ings on the 20th and 21st with one bird singing daily in front of Tower Hide at Wheldrake Ings from the 22nd to the end of the month. The two calling males at NDC and one at Bubwith Ings were present all month and presumed to be breeding owing to their behaviour. The Tower Hide male at Wheldrake Ings was singing daily from 1st July (NH, GW, AW, JC, MS); there were two other sightings on the meadows on the 1st too (LDV Blog). On the 3rd a female was seen on the path close to Tower Hide. Two males were singing at Wheldrake Ings on the 11th and one to the 25th at least (LDV Blog). Singing males continued to call daily at NDC and Bubwith Ings during July to at least the 19th. Successful breeding was confirmed with the sighting of two recently fledged juveniles at the northern end of NDC on the 18th and one on the 19th (LDV Blog). During August, a single was still singing at Wheldrake Ings on the 1st, with the last report from there of one on the track by Tower Hide on the 13th. Two were heard at NDC on the 11th and the last of the year was one seen at NDC on 25th August (LDV Blog). See also the RBBP report on page 113.

### **Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*

*Common resident breeder and winter visitor*

*BBS 9/43*

Well recorded throughout the year, mostly in small numbers, with the highest counts coming, as expected, from CHL, Heslington (East and West) and the LDV. In the early part of the year the peak count from Heslington (East and West) was 77 on 17th January (WeBS); a similar number was present in February before dropping to 47 in March, much higher than counts received from CHL where monthly maxima were the low double figures recorded at each WeBS count up to May (see table). The maximum count from the LDV was nine at Wheldrake Ings on 19th February. Elsewhere, the only double figure counts were 12 at Old Gravel Pits, Allerthorpe on 11th January, 11 there on the 13th and 14 on the 19th.

Breeding was confirmed at Acaster, Askham Bryan, Bank Island, Brumber Hill, Frog Hall (Allerthorpe), Foss Island (York), Hagg Wood, Heslington East and West, Hull Road Park, Old Gravel Pits Allerthorpe, Pocklington Canal (at several sites along the canal), Rawcliffe Lake, Scagglethorpe Lane, SHL and Wheldrake Ings. The first broods were seen at Pocklington Canal and SHL, both on 8th May.

#### Monthly WeBS counts for Moorhen

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	13	10	15	12	12	5	8	28	10	16	13	4
<b>LDV</b>										110	108	87
<b>HES</b>	77	70	47	41	37	27	48	44	57	53	66	87

*N.B: No LDV WeBS counts for Jan – Apr*

Post breeding, numbers increased slightly at CHL; the annual peak count was 33 on 27th August, before dropping back to low teens to the end of the year. At Heslington (East and West), monthly maxima were between 48 and 66 from July

to November, with an influx in December when 87 were present on the 11th (WeBS). In the LDV, the highest counts were all WeBS counts, the annual peak count being 110 on 8th October. Elsewhere, in November, 11 on the small lake by Wistow was a high count for the site.

**Coot** *Fulica atra*

*Common resident breeder and winter visitor*

*BBS 1/43*

Many more records were received in the first half of the year than the second half. The only significant counts were received from CHL, Heslington (East and West) and the LDV. However, counts were markedly lower at CHL in the latter part of the year than in 2016. Single digit counts were also received from other areas of suitable habitat. Numbers in the LDV in January were much lower than usual, with only 37 present on the 25th; however, by 19th February there were 129 at Wheldrake Ings, building to 320 in the valley by the 26th. During March, numbers increased again to 511 (annual peak count) on the 24th, with 480 still present on 10th April by which time several pairs were incubating clutches and others nest building. On 30th April there were 290, with 64 present at Bank Island and 21 nests there. At CHL, the monthly maxima, except in December, were all WeBS counts (see table) – numbers dropping rapidly after February. At Heslington East and West, as the WeBS counts show, numbers hardly fluctuated at all throughout the year, the annual peak count being 66 on 17th February.

Breeding was confirmed at Bank Island, Heslington East and West, Old Gravel Pits Allerthorpe (three pairs - five young), Pottery Lake (Strensall) and Wheldrake Ings. The first brood hatched at Heslington East on 19th April.

Post breeding, at CHL numbers increased in July to 47 on the 24th before dropping back to between 25 and 30 to the end of the year, with 24 there on 28th December; a huge change to last year when there were 3-digit counts in July, August and September. Only low single digit counts were received from the LDV to the end of the year.

Monthly WeBS counts for Coot

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	107	81	26	26	36	29	47	25	23	28	4	9
<b>LDV</b>	-	300	511	480	-	-	-	-	-	2	0	2
<b>HES</b>	61	66	55	52	49	47	64	58	51	41	54	48

**Crane** *Grus grus*

*YOC Amber listed*

*Scarce passage migrant*

There were fewer sightings than in 2016, and none in the autumn, but an increase in the number of birds involved. All except two records were from the LDV.

The first report of the year was of three seen circling over the Refuge at Wheldrake Ings, and then landing, on the afternoon of 8th April (CA). These were followed by four seen on the 10th at East Cottingwith and a single on arable there on the 13th (TH). On the 19th four flew in to roost at Wheldrake Ings, seen again

at dawn on the 20th (AS, DMB, CSR). Six, the maximum count together for the year, were reported near East Cottingwith on the 22nd (LDV Blog). In May, two were at Thorganby Ings on the 17th (CSR), then three at NDC on the 21st (LDV Blog). In June one was seen at dawn at Wheldrake Ings on the 11th (LDV Blog). The only sightings away from the LDV were of one at Malton on 12th June (BirdGuides) and one at Strensall on the 28th (BirdGuides). The last reported was one seen flying south down the LDV over Aughton Ings on 7th July (LDV Blog).

**Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta*  
*Rare passage migrant*

*Amber listed*

A pair on the Low Grounds near Wheldrake Ings on 25th February (AF) was the first of a fairly typical showing. A pair was on a bund at NDC on 3rd April (DT) with another pair at Skipwith Common ten days later on the 13th (HMT). The last of the spring and of 2017 were four at Bank Island on 3rd May (LDV Blog).

**Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus*  
*Passage migrant and scarce breeder*

*Amber listed*

*BBS 8/43*

One at Heslington East on 17th January was unusual but not exceptional. More typically, single birds began to arrive in the LDV from early February, with the first returning individual at East Cottingwith on the 4th, the same or another at Wheldrake Ings on the 6th, and three there on the 18th. Thereafter small numbers were reported from 17 sites during February and March, with 33 in the LDV on 18th March, including 21 at NDC, with other notable counts being nine at Bolton Percy Ings on the 27th, and six at Heslington East mid-month.

Recorded from approximately 30 sites during May and June, away from the LDV where several pairs bred. A pair raised two young on a roof at Heslington East, an unusual breeding site, though not unprecedented, with adult Oystercatchers, unlike most wading birds, being happy to carry food to their young. Pairs were suspected of breeding in a number of other locations, such as Melbourne and Milford Common, but no conclusive evidence was received. In July, post-breeding dispersal began, hinting at successful nearby breeding with eight at Heslington East on the 12th, the best count. A single at Wheldrake Ings on 9th August was the last of the year.

**Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*  
*Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant*

*Amber listed*

In parallel with 2016, another poor year for this species with only a single bird reported from NDC on 20th March, being seen again from the 25th to the 28th.

**Golden Plover** *Pluvialis apricaria*  
*Winter visitor and passage migrant*

Good numbers were present in the area during both winter periods. On 8th January 3850 were present in the LDV, with 3150 present at Wheldrake Ings alone. Numbers remained high throughout the month and into February, rising slightly to 4150 on the 26th. The largest gatherings continued to be roosting birds

at Wheldrake Ings, where 3000 were counted on the 25th. The large numbers remained into the early part of March, before dispersal for breeding occurred, with only 500 remaining by the end of the month, which may have been passage birds rather than lingering winterers. Twenty one flying northwest at Bolton Percy Ings on 4th April were the last of the spring.

An early bird put in an appearance at Bank Island on 18th July, with the next being a month later on the 18th August, when 11 arrived at Raker Lakes, near Wheldrake. This flock increased to 60 by the 27th. Few were noted elsewhere until September, when flocks started to appear in traditional areas. 150 were in fields near Bishopthorpe-Copmanthorpe in early September, with 260 at Kirkby Wharfe on the 6th, 160 at Nun Appleton the same day, 230 at Bolton Percy Ings on the 12th, rising to 500 by the 15th and 530 at Raker Lakes on the 24th. Similar numbers remained in October, with 200 at Raker Lakes on the 1st, 500 at Stamford Bridge-Low Catton on the 6th and 500 at Elvington Waterworks on the 7th the best counts.

Numbers began to build up with the onset of winter. A flock of 300 was at Acaster Airfield on 3rd November and over 1000 were present on the Low Grounds, Wheldrake on the 9th and 10th. In December, 670 was a good count at Sutton-on-the-Forest on the 22nd, with 2000 at Wheldrake Ings on the 20th ending the year as it began.

#### Monthly WeBS counts for Golden Plover

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
LDV	3800	4150	4000							1800	1000	1025

#### **Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula*

*Red listed*

*Passage migrant and casual breeder*

In contrast to 2016, a good spring for this species but a complete absence of autumn records. An early record was of a single at Wheldrake Ings on 19th February. The next record was of two at Bank Island on 14th April, which flew off northeast. Two weeks later, a single was at NDC on the 28th, followed by two at Thornton Ellers on 8th May, with two there again on the 11th and a single at Bank Island on the 13th. Most impressive was a flock of 18 birds at Thornton Ellers on 14th May, while the last of the spring was a flock of seven at Wheldrake Ings on the 30th and 31st May. The May birds were considered to be of the *tundrae* subspecies.

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

*Passage migrant and scarce breeder*

*BBS 1/43*

A good year. As is typical with this species which breeds in early successional habitats, birds were quick to locate new breeding habitat in the area. The first of the year, a pair, were noted at Monks Cross, York on 12th April, on the site where the new football ground is being developed. Numbers increased to six at this site, and at least one pair nested. Three were found at Eden Camp, Malton, on 13th April with one the next day, although no further reports were received from this

site. A pair was present at Skipwith Common also on the 13th, but again there were no subsequent reports. A pair and a fledged juvenile were found at Heslington East, the former breeding site, on 21st June, although it would appear they did not breed on site this year due to the disappearance and/or maturation of the habitat. A pair was seen at The Grange, Pocklington Canal on 14th May, and up to three on Clifton Backies from the end of April to 9th May. Other passage birds were one seen at Bank Island on 19th April, one at NDC on 28th April and two at Sand Hutton on 13th June.

In the autumn, two adults were at Thornton Ellers on 3rd July, with two at Bank Island on the 16th and 17th. In August, two were at Bank Island on the 5th and 6th, with a single there the next day. The last of the year was a solitary juvenile on the pool at Wheldrake Ings on 9th August.

**Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus*

*Red Listed*

*Winter visitor, passage migrant and resident breeder*

*BBS 20/43*

Impressive numbers were present in the LDV in the first winter period, with 4870 counted on 8th January. Many of these roosted together with Golden Plovers *Pluvialis apricaria* creating a magical spectacle, especially when flushed by a hunting Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* or Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*.

At least 3000 were present at Wheldrake Ings on 21st January, with the large numbers increasing yet further in February, when a staggering 9000 were thought to have been present in the LDV as a whole. Numbers reduced to 5100 by the end of the month. Elsewhere, on 3rd February 600 were at Kirkby Wharfe.

The first signs of breeding came from 1st March, when a bird was seen displaying at Whitwell Grange. Thereafter, display was noted widely across the region, though comparatively few confirmed breeding records were received, with many nests lost to the plough or mower. Birds were present in the breeding season across the area at least 26 sites. Signs or proof of breeding came from Brumber Hill, Copmanthorpe, East Cottingwith, Eastmoor, Heslington East, Kirkby Wharfe, Stillingfleet and Whitwell Grange. In the LDV, there were approximately 100 pairs in what was considered to be a successful breeding season, including 21 pairs at NDC, ten pairs at Wheldrake Ings and five each at Bank Island and Thornton Ellers, and a number of young were caught and ringed.

Post-breeding flocks were noted from the end of May, with 45 at Ellerton on the 30th. By mid-July, large flocks were gathering in the LDV, mainly in the recently-cut meadows. 600 were present at Bank Island on the 21st, with 1000 across the LDV by 3rd August, numbers that remained reasonably constant until the end of October. On 3rd September 530 were at Kirkby Wharfe, with 550 at Bolton Percy Ings on the 22nd. Numbers increased in the LDV in November with 1700 by the month end and 2000 at Wheldrake Ings in early December, with 3500 there on the 24th.

Monthly WeBS counts for Lapwing

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
LDV	4850	8500	5100	94					-	1100	1300	1198

**Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus**Red listed**Passage migrant*

The first record of this charismatic, Iceland-bound wader was a singleton at Wheldrake Ings on 10th April, six days earlier than the last two years, which was present again the next day. Four arrived at Wheldrake Ings on 16th April, the typical arrival date for this species in the area. Numbers reached double figures soon after with 11 on the 19th and 19 the next day, seen arriving to roost at Wheldrake Ings. Small numbers were seen feeding during daytime in the valley, with the largest numbers being counted dropping into roost at Wheldrake Ings. The roost had risen to 47 by 28th April, with the highest count of 88 being recorded on 2nd May, dropping to 31 by the 8th and 15 by the 10th. Two late singles were noted on 23rd May at Wheldrake Ings and on 27th May at Bank Island; the latter was seen flying north. Subsequently, the only record of the return passage was a single flying northwest at Wheldrake Ings on 6th August.

The year's peak Whimbrel count of 88 was similar to last year's peak of 86, and is slightly down on the five year average of 91 and lower than the average over the last 30 years which is 116 (lowest 13 in 1986 and highest 227 in 1996), suggesting the last couple of years have been below par. It is worth noting that in some years coverage of the roost at Wheldrake Ings during the peak passage period has not been comprehensive and hence the figures may not be a true reflection of peak numbers.

**Curlew** *Numenius arquata**Red listed**Winter visitor, passage migrant and migrant breeder**BBS 11/43*

Good numbers wintered in the LDV, with 71 at Wheldrake Ings on 27th January the highest single site count in the first winter period. Towards the end of February, 130 were present in the LDV by which time the first displaying birds were noted. Elsewhere, 45 were at Hessay Moor Pond on 28th February, with 35 at Byland on the 25th and 21 at Bolton Percy Ings on the 28th. By March, the picture was more complicated, as many birds settled back into their breeding territories while other birds were passing through. The highest counts during March were from NDC, with 71 on the 1st, and Wheldrake Ings, with 34 at on the 18th.

In the breeding season, birds were present at 24 sites at least, with breeding occurring at many of them. In the LDV at least 50 pairs were thought to have bred. Sample counts revealed seven pairs at NDC and three pairs at both Bank Island and Wheldrake Ings.

The first post-breeding flock was 13 at Thornton Ellers on 26th June. Most birds dispersed following breeding with only 16 birds residing across the LDV on 20th July. Passage birds moved through from August, with six at Wheldrake Ings on the 6th. There was then a gap, until the second half of November, when the first wintering birds began to appear in the LDV. Eight at Bank Island on the 19th were part of a LDV site count of 18. Small numbers were then recorded for the rest of the year, increasing slightly to 25 by the end of December.

**Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa**Red listed**Passage migrant, also occasionally seen in winter, and casual breeder*

A good year for this species, with most records, as usual, from the LDV. The year started with 11 at Wheldrake Ings, a flock which increased to 12 by the month end, spending time there and at Bank Island. Numbers began to increase in February as passage birds started to arrive, with 16 on the 19th and 23 by the 25th. Away from Wheldrake Ings, two birds were seen at Ellerton. In March, up to 31 were present at Wheldrake Ings throughout, apart from one count of 32 on the 18th, with a single at Wharfe Ings on the 27th, being notable as the only record away from the LDV this year.

As spring approached, numbers built, increasing to 56 by the 14th and then 63 on 15th and 16th. Numbers tailed off after mid-month, although a flock of 120 arriving at Bank Island high from the south on the 19th must have been a spectacular sight. Sixty were present at NDC a few days later on the 21st, part of a strong spring passage through the LDV. The last few spring birds lingered into early May, with four at Wheldrake Ings on the 6th and singles at Bank Island on the 8th and Thornton Ellers on the 15th.

A pair remained in the LDV throughout June and was thought to have bred.

The first returning birds were a party of six at Bank Island on 10th July, with seven there on the 21st, one of which remained until the 30th. Six were on the pool at Wheldrake Ings from the end of August into September, remaining until the 6th. Three were there on the 9th, with ten the next day and the last of the autumn passage, one on the 16th. A single bird appeared at Wheldrake Ings on 28th December.

**Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica*YOC *Amber listed**Scarce passage migrant*

None recorded in 2017; the first blank year since 2010.

**Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres*

None seen in 2017, though recorded in four of the past ten years, most recently 2014.

**Knot** *Calidris canutus*YOC *Amber listed**Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant*

None seen in 2017; the first blank year since 2010.

**Ruff** *Calidris pugnax**Red listed**Winter visitor and passage migrant*

In the first winter period 48 were in the northern part of the LDV on 3rd January. Later in the month, peak site counts included 59 at Wheldrake Ings on the 27th and 16 at NDC on the 30th. The following month, numbers seemed lower as birds were spread throughout the LDV, though site counts revealed up to 56 on several dates. Twenty nine were still at Wheldrake Ings on 12th March, with smaller numbers elsewhere, although 53 were present in the LDV mid-month.

Small numbers persisted through April, with up to three at NDC and, more unusually, four at Skipwith Common on the 13th. The last of the spring was a single at Bank Island on 25th May.

Two arrived at Bank Island on 15th July, the first of the autumn. The bulk of the autumn passage took place in September and October. Up to 27 were present in the Low Grounds/Bank Island area in late September, rising to 37 by the beginning of October and 40 at Wheldrake Ings on the 8th. Two sightings away from the LDV were five at Acaster Airfield on 27th October and six at Ozendyke Ings the next day. In November, 34 at Wheldrake Ings on the 28th was the highest count. Numbers then increased to 60 by 7th December. Later in the month 56 were at Wheldrake Ings on the 26th and 80 at Aughton Ings on the 29th.

Monthly WeBS counts for Ruff

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>LDV</b>	72	56	53	-					-	23	23	71

**Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea* YOC Amber listed  
*Scarce passage visitor, usually in the autumn*

None seen in 2017, though recorded in five of the past ten years, most recently 2016.

**Sanderling** *Calidris alba* YOC Amber listed  
*Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant*

A single summer-plumaged bird was present at Thornton Ellers on 5th May (LDV Blog).

**Dunlin** *Calidris alpina* Amber listed  
*Winter visitor and passage migrant*

The year started with 169 at Wheldrake Ings on 3rd January, increasing to 210 by the 7th, with 69 at Bank Island and 46 at NDC the same day. Numbers increased in February, with the LDV holding 300 on the 8th, falling to 215 by the 26th. Good numbers remained into March, with 147 at Wheldrake Ings on the 12th, and 100 still in the LDV on the 24th. Forty eight were still present in the LDV at the month end and thereafter numbers dropped rapidly.

A very small spring passage was noted, with singles at Monks Cross, York, on 27th April, Thornton Ellers on 8th May (which was joined by a second individual on the 10th) remaining until the 14th, Heslington East on the 12th and Haxby on the 13th (which was recorded flying over at 23:58).

The first returning birds were seen on 17th July, when two arrived at Bank Island, staying until the 22nd, followed by a single on the 30th. Another individual arrived on 1st August, remaining until the 6th. There were no further reports until mid-September, when a single bird flew from Wheldrake Ings towards the Low Grounds on the 15th, with presumably the same bird at Bank Island the next day. One was at Heslington East on 27th September, with one still on the Low Grounds and Wheldrake Ings in early October.



Wintering birds began to arrive towards the end of October, with up to 50 present at Wheldrake Ings. Numbers remained fairly static and then rose in December, with 80 at Wheldrake Ings on the 7th, rising to 100 by the 27th, with 230 at Aughton Ings on the 15th being the highest count for the second winter period.

Monthly WeBS counts for wintering Dunlin in the LDV

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
LDV	205	300	147	3					-	2	21	234

**Little Stint** *Calidris minuta* YOC

*Scarce passage migrant, mostly autumn*

None recorded in 2017; though there have been three records in the past ten years, most recently in 2011.

**Grey Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius* YOC

*Very rare vagrant*

A single bird was picked up having hit wires in Malton on 30th November and later died. The fifth record for the area and first since a juvenile was observed at Aughton and Ellerton on 11th November 2007.

**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos* Amber listed

*Passage migrant*

A poor spring passage was followed by a reasonable autumn. The first arrived at Allertorpe Water Park on 22nd April, followed on 1st May by one or two at Heslington East and one on Pocklington Canal at Melbourne. One was sound-recorded flying over Towthorpe Road, Haxby at 22:40 on 13th May, showing what may be passing over the area normally undetected. The last of a poor spring for this species was a late bird at Bank Island on 25th May.

One on the River Derwent at Elvington on 2nd July was an early herald of the return passage, followed by singles at Heslington East from the 11th to the 22nd and Sand Hutton on the 14th. Five at Wheldrake Ings on 9th August was the highest count of the year, followed by a single at Bolton Percy Ings from 13th to the 19th. The last of the year was a party of four at Bank Island on the 26th September.

**Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* Amber listed

*Passage migrant and winter visitor*

BBS 1/43

Only one record was received in the first winter period, of two at Bank Island on 30th January, one of which was present the next day. Spring passage was noted at Ulleskelf on 14th March, with a single there, and another at Wheldrake Ings and two flushed from a ditch by Pocklington Canal the same day. One was at Brumber Hill between 25th April and 7th May. Singles were reported from Bank Island, on the unusual dates of 27th and 28th May, and Clifton Moor (York), on 2nd June, either lingering non-breeding birds, or very early returning migrants.

As is typical, return passage began in June with adult females departing their breeding grounds soon after laying. A single was seen at Wheldrake Ings on the 24th, followed by two at Bank Island from the 26th until the month end. Two had returned to Brumber Hill by 30th June too, one of which remained until at least 18th July. Birds were present throughout July at Bank Island, with three on the 21st and two until the month end. Numbers increased during August as the first juvenile birds started to appear, with a maximum of ten on the pool at Wheldrake Ings on the 30th. Up to five were nearby at Bank Island on 22nd August, with a single at Church Bridge, Melbourne on the 28th, one at Doe Park, Clifton Moor on the 20th and one at Skipwith Common on the 30th.

Ten were still present at Wheldrake Ings on 1st September, with up to eight daily until the 4th, and two still there on the 17th. Singles were present at Brumber Hill throughout the month, at Pocklington Canal (Melbourne) on the 7th and at Acaster Airfield on the 25th. Numbers fell rapidly thereafter, with singles reported from Bolton Percy Ings, Brumber Hill, East Cottingwith and Wheldrake Ings during October, with two at Wheldrake Ings on the 14th

In the second winter period, single birds were present at Bolton Percy Ings, Brumber Hill (two there on 27th November) and Wistow.

**Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus* YOC Amber listed  
*Scarce passage migrant*

A slightly better showing than recent years. A splendid 'black' adult was at Thornton Ellers from the 8th to 10th May, providing a real treat for those who saw it. In the autumn, one was present on the Low Grounds just north of Wheldrake Ings on 24th September, with the same bird and possibly a second the following day. That evening, a bird was heard calling several times as it flew west over Keble Park, Bishopthorpe mid evening and this may have been the same departing bird. Two in winter plumage at the pool at Wheldrake Ings on 15th October were the last of the year.

**Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia* Amber listed  
*Passage migrant and rare winter visitor*

A reasonably good spring and autumn passage. A single on 13th April was the first of the year and presumably accounted for the reports from both NDC and Wheldrake Ings. Four arrived at NDC on 30th April, part of a large wader movement across the country. This was eclipsed by five at Thornton Ellers on 5th May, with four there on the 8th. A single arrived at Bank Island on 11 May and remained until the 29th, with two individuals at Thornton Ellers on the 13th. A single appeared at Bank Island on 17th July, followed by another single there from 28th July to 2nd August. At Wheldrake Ings, singles were noted on the 9th and 12th August, and 1st and 6th September.

**Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola* Amber listed  
*Scarce passage migrant*

Another quiet year for this species. One was in front of the Andy Booth (Tower)

Hide at Wheldrake Ings during the evening of 29th April before flying towards the Low Grounds. Another single was present at Thornton Ellers on 8th May in the company of a Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus* and eight other wader species! A single at Bank Island on 27th May was the third and final record of the year.

**Redshank** *Tringa totanus*

*Amber listed*

*Passage migrant, migrant breeder and winter visitor*

Up to 30 were present in the LDV during January, although no single counts greater than three were received from any one site. Two at Heslington East were the only ones reported away from the LDV during the month. Numbers doubled during February, with a peak of 61 counted in the LDV on the 14th, with seven the peak site count from Bank Island on the 25th. Numbers in the LDV remained fairly constant during March, rising slightly to 70, with counts of up to eight at Bank Island and NDC. Birds began to be seen elsewhere, indicating spring passage, with singles at Bolton Percy Ings on the 25th and 27th, two at Heslington East on the 9th and four at Ozendyke Ings on the 26th. By April, birds were back on territory, although 13 at Wheldrake Ings on 2nd April presumably included passage birds.

Redshanks were present at ten sites in the breeding season, which is an increase on 2016, although breeding was only confirmed in the LDV. It was a successful season in the LDV where 28 breeding pairs included three at Aughton Ings, three at Bank Island, five at Wheldrake Ings and four at NDC (where several young were ringed). By the last week of June most adults had departed, a few fledged juveniles lingering thereafter, although two pairs remained at Bank Island with small broods into July.

Post-breeding, birds dispersed, with the first migrant noted at Heslington East on 12th July, with three at Bank Island on the 15th. Up to four were present in the Bank Island/Wheldrake Ings area throughout the second half of the month, with one remaining on 1st August. This was the last until wintering birds began to arrive in mid-October. Small numbers were noted until 20th November, when 18 were at Thorganby Ings, increasing to 40 by 29th December.

**Jack Snipe** *Lymnocyptes minimus*

*Winter visitor and passage migrant*

Good numbers were recorded in the first winter period, with birds located at 13 sites, up from ten in 2016. The highest count was an impressive 11 from Milford Common on 8th January, with other site maximum counts six at Ryther Ings on 17th March, four at Kirkby Wharfe on 19th March, three at Wharfe Ings on 3rd March and two at Heslington East on 1st January. The last of the spring was a single at Milford Common on 15th April.

Autumn passage commenced on 13th October, with two at Bank Island, with numbers increasing to ten there by the 24th, four of which were caught and ringed. Singles were seen at Bolton Percy Ings, Kirkby Wharfe and Milford Common towards the end of the month. In the second winter period, one or two birds were

recorded from Bank Island (one), Bolton Percy Ings (two), Elvington (two), Heslington Tillmire (one), Heslington East (two) and NDC (one).

**Woodcock** *Scolopax rusticola*

*Red listed*

*Winter visitor and resident breeder*

In the first winter period, recorded from nine sites. Singles were reported from Askham Bog, Byland, Deighton, Milford Common and NDC with up to five at Ulleskelf Mires (20th January), four at Wheldrake Ings (7th January), three at Bank Island (25th January) and two at Skipwith Common (18th January).

During the breeding season birds were recorded from six sites, as follows; Allerthorpe Common (five birds roding), Bishop Wood (seven sightings of roding birds during a 75 minute survey), Black Dike Plantation, Sand Hutton (one roding), Gilling Castle (one/two roding), Skipwith Common (one roding) and Yearsley Moor (two roding).

There were no further reports after the middle of June, until 8th November, when two were on Skipwith Common, followed by three flushed during a conservation task on the 14th. Up to four were seen at a further eight sites during November and December as numbers of local birds were boosted by arrivals from further north and east.

**Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago*

*Amber listed*

*Resident and migrant breeder and passage visitor*

In the first winter period, an estimated 480 were present in the LDV in January, with 100 at Wheldrake Ings on the 11th, 57 at The Grange, Pocklington the same day and 210 at Thornton Ings on the 14th. Snipe were recorded from six sites away from the LDV in January, with notable counts being 22 at Bolton Percy Ings on the 22nd and 25 at Milford Common on the 27th, with 24 at Ozendyke Ings the same day. Over 300 were still in the Melbourne/Thornton area of the LDV on 21st February, with counts elsewhere much lower, only reaching single figures. Numbers fluctuated through March as spring passage birds mixed with lingering winter visitors. At least 100 were still within the LDV during the month, many of which were concentrated at Seavy Carr. Good numbers were in the southwest of the area, with 63 at Ryther Ings on the 19th, 57 at Kirkby Wharfe the same day, and 36 at Milford Common on the 30th. The last notable counts of the spring away from the LDV were 36 at Milford Common on 8th April, with 25 at Ryther Ings and 21 at Ozendyke Ings the next day.

As the breeding season arrived, 69 drumming birds were counted in the LDV, an increase on the previous couple of years. An adult was seen with a brood of chicks at Melbourne on 14th May. A single bird was noted drumming at Heslington Tillmire during the period too.

Following breeding, local birds began to congregate to feed and numbers were swelled by birds arriving from outside the area. The most significant July counts were 25 at Seavy Carr on the 11th, with over 50 at Bank Island on the 17th. By August, numbers were higher, with over 100 at Bank Island on the 1st the best count, with 40 on the pool at Wheldrake Ings on the 30th being notable. On 1st

September, 289 were present throughout the LDV, with 200 flushed from Bank Island by a hunting male Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* on the 15th. Good numbers continued to be recorded through October, with counts of 100 at Melbourne on the 10th and at Bank Island on the 25th the best. Numbers remained fairly constant through November and December, as most birds had arrived for the winter, with an estimated 200-300 present in the LDV.

Monthly WeBS counts for wintering Snipe in the LDV

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
LDV	480	300	100	35						266	280	187

**Arctic Skua** *Stercorarius parasiticus* YOC Red listed  
Rare passage migrant

Not seen in 2017 after records in three of the past ten years, most recently 2014.

**Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger* YOC  
Scarce passage migrant

On 30th April three were at Thornton Ings, Melbourne whilst singles were also at Bank Island and Heslington East; the latter bird remaining until the following day.

**Sandwich Tern** *Sterna sandvicensis* YOC Amber listed  
Scarce passage migrant

Not recorded in 2017, though seen in three of the past ten years, most recently 2016.

**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo* Amber listed  
Passage migrant and rare migrant breeder BBS 1/43

First seen on 29th April with four at Foggathorpe ponds, with an impressive 16 present at Heslington East the following day and also two at NDC. On 16th May there were ten in the LDV. Throughout May and June there were several reports of pairs attempting to breed. A pair took up residence almost straightaway on the newly installed tern raft on the pool at Wheldrake Ings; incubating by 22nd May, they were joined by a second pair on the 23rd through to the end of the month. By this time a pair was also incubating on the upturned tern raft at Heslington East though this attempt was washed out by heavy rain on 8th June. They re-laid by 15th June, when another bird was also present there. The pair at Wheldrake Ings hatched and reared two chicks, which fledged by 10th July. This was the first successful record of breeding on the reserve. Another pair laid one egg before deserting. Successful breeding also took place at Heslington East with two chicks raised to fledging from the second clutch. During July and early August, there were also records of other pairs and wandering parties, with up to seven seen in the LDV and at Heslington East. One or two were also seen fishing along the River Derwent and up to three visited SHL on several dates. A single on 13th August at

Wheldrake Ings was the last record of the year.

**Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea* YOC Amber listed  
*Scarce passage migrant*

A very poor year for this species with just two records of single birds passing over in April. One flew northwest over Wheldrake Ings on the 28th (LDV Blog), whilst another headed east over Bank Island on the 30th (JLe).

**Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla* YOC Red listed  
*Scarce passage migrant*

Two records this year involving a pair reported flying over York on 23rd April (BirdGuides) whilst on 20th May, surprisingly, one was seen and photographed in a loafing gull flock at Knapton (AH).

**Black-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* Amber listed  
*Resident breeder, abundant winter visitor and passage migrant* BBS 8/43

Recorded throughout the year though not enough observers submitted counts to get the full picture. However, it should be noted that the closure of the tip had little effect on this species or Common Gull *Larus canus* as birds using the Wheldrake roost tend to come in down the River Derwent from the Vale of Pickering or off the Wolds and numbers according to NE were 'average'. The only representative count from the LDV in the early part of the year was of 19,500 over Bank Island heading for the roost at Wheldrake Ings on 19th January. Elsewhere, 750 were at CHL on 15th January, 1000 at Oxtan on 16th February and up to 1400 present on floodwater near Kirby Wharfe on the 24th.

Birds were prospecting nesting areas during April, with 30 pairs seen on a visit to Strensall Common on the 7th. However, after the long dry spring, many birds failed to breed with only one or two pairs successfully fledging chicks. Six juveniles were seen at Melbourne on 5th July alongside 26 adults.

Numbers were very slow to build up towards the winter, on 18th October, 600+ were on Ozendyke Ings, whilst the highest count later in the year was typically at the Wheldrake Ings roost, with over 2000 on 26th November.

**Little Gull** *Hydrocoloeus minutus* YOC  
*Passage migrant and scarce winter visitor*

The only record was of an adult that was present for the day at Wheldrake Ings on 9th April (DMB).

**Mediterranean Gull** *Larus melanocephalus* YOC Amber listed  
*Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant*

A better year for this species starting with an adult at Wheldrake Ings on 21st January (DMB) and a 1st-winter bird at Bank Island two days later (CSR). 1st-winter birds were also seen on 22nd December at Rufforth landfill (CSR) and at Wheldrake Ings on the 30th (JLe) with an adult also there the following day (AF).

**Common Gull** *Larus canus*

*Amber listed*

*Abundant winter visitor and passage migrant*

*BBS 2/43*

Grossly under-recorded this year, with few observers submitting counts, so not reflecting its true status. For the same reason as Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* this species has been less affected by the closure of Rufforth Tip than the larger gull species. Numbers according to NE were 'average' in the LDV but the only significant count received from there was of 15,000 seen heading over Bank Island on the way to the Wheldrake Ings roost on 19th January. Elsewhere, the 65 that were reported at Pocklington on 18th January was the single highest count of the year until 12th November when 200+ were seen at the CHL roost. There were no records received at all between 24th April and 2nd July.

On 2nd July, ten, including eight juveniles, were seen at Pocklington Canal, Melbourne and two immatures at Monks Cross on the 15th.

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

*Amber listed*

*Mainly summer visitor and passage migrant*

*BBS 5/43*

One or two birds were seen regularly at Rufforth and Wheldrake Ings during January and February, with only single figure counts until a modest spring passage commenced with 25 seen near NDC on 25th March and 21 at Pocklington Canal, Melbourne on 18th April. Low numbers were recorded from various locations over the summer months; however late summer and early autumn saw flocks begin to accumulate particularly towards the south and west of the recording area, culminating with 230 feeding on Bolton Percy Ings on 31st August. A VMW there the previous day saw 109 pass over northwest. Elsewhere, 150+ were in arable fields near to Skipwith on September 6th and 170 there on the 25th. On 14th October 100 were on fields on Barlby Common. After that numbers fell away sharply as birds headed off to wintering grounds around the Mediterranean and North Africa.

**Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus*

*Red listed*

*Winter visitor, passage migrant and recently colonised breeder in small numbers*

*BBS 20/43*

With the winding down Rufforth Tip as a working landfill site, the number of birds visiting that area has massively declined; more evident in this species than perhaps any other. The Wheldrake Ings roost held about 15,000 birds during January, 14,000 on 12th February (WeBS) and up to 10,000 remaining at the roost to the month's end, whilst at Rufforth the 4000 birds present on 18th February was the maximum day count there for the whole year.

On a more positive note, the York breeding population continues to increase with at least three pairs around Walmgate successfully raising five young. Across the city fresh juveniles were seen on rooftops on Blossom Street and with other displaying pairs seen on Fishergate and in Acomb, this trend looks set to continue.

As the year end approached, numbers began to increase slowly throughout

the region, including 763 heading northwest over Bolton Percy Ings during a three-hour-long VMW on 1st November. The regular roost at Wheldrake Ings held up to 8000 birds by 31st December.

**Yellow-legged Gull** *Larus michahellis* YOC Amber listed  
*Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant*

A very poor year with only four records received; all of adult birds on typical dates. The first was at Wheldrake Ings on 15th September, followed by four there on the 25th (LDV Blog). Two were present together on 10th October in fields east of Riccall (CG) with the last of the year at nearby Barlby on 14th October (DMB).

**Caspian Gull** *Larus cachinnans* YOC Amber listed  
*Scarce winter visitor*

As with other species of gull affected by reduced operations at Rufforth Tip, records fell away sharply compared to recent years. In January one was at Wheldrake Ings on the 5th (LDV Blog) with another seen at Rufforth the next day (BirdGuides) whilst three birds were also present at this site on the 19th (MN), with another bird seen on the 25th near Knapton (BirdGuides). A second calendar-year bird seen at Rufforth on the 8th February (TL) was different to another bird seen there on the 10th (CG). The maximum day count of the year saw five at the same site on the 24th (BirdGuides). The single bird which was present there on the 25th (BirdGuides) was the last record of the year.

**Iceland Gull** *Larus glaucooides* Amber listed  
*Scarce winter visitor*

A fairly good year for this species, with several birds of all ages seen throughout January and February, with a bias towards the Rufforth area. The peak count came on 16th February with five (two adults, a fourth-, a third- and a second-calendar-year bird) seen near Rufforth airfield. Away from there an adult was seen at NDC on the 24th. With a long return spring journey to breeding grounds on the horizon, numbers fell quickly in March with two at Rufforth on the 10th and one seen migrating north over Sherburn in Elmet on the morning of the 25th. Remarkably, one was seen on Rufforth Tip on 31st May, easily the latest spring record for the YOC area.

**Kumlien's Gull** *Larus glaucooides kumlieni* YNU

An adult bird which was found near Rufforth Tip on February 16th (CG) was also reported there on 22nd and 25th (BirdGuides). Interestingly, this could possibly be the same bird that has returned for the past three years.

*These records are subject to acceptance by the YNU.*



## Rare and Scarcer Birds recorded during 2017



Left to right and top to bottom

**Little Ringed Plover** © Lucy Murgatroyd

**Spotted Redshank** © Duncan Bye

**Black Tern** © Jan Nobel

Juvenile **Common Tern** (Heslington East)

© Jane Chapman

**Glaucous Gull** © Jono Leadley

**Kittiwake** © Adam Hutt

**'Kumlien's' Gull** © Chris Gomersall

**Glaucous Gull** *Larus hyperboreus*  
*Scarce winter visitor*

*Amber listed*

Bucking the trend of other gulls, this year was actually a very good one for this species. Five 1st-winters and a 2nd-winter bird were seen on 6th January in the Rufforth area. These included a bird picked up injured a week earlier from Flamborough and taken into the very safe hands of Jean Thorpe for rehabilitation, and duly ringed and released on Rufforth Tip. An adult was at Poppleton on the 10th though not seen subsequently, with records of 1st-winter birds culminating in six seen on February 22nd. Up to three birds remained during March with the last of the spring at Wheldrake Ings on 4th April. At the back end of the year a 2nd-winter bird was seen over Bank Island on 21st December and a 2nd-winter at Rufforth Tip on the 22nd, possibly the same bird.

**Great Black-backed Gull** *Larus marinus*  
*Winter visitor and passage migrant*

*Amber listed*

*BBS 2/43*

Another species which has been affected by the closure of the landfill site. The peak winter count was 5000 in the roost at Wheldrake Ings on 30th January. There were 2500 on 12th February (WeBS). Without a working tip to feed on most of these birds left quickly and by March 28th only 30 were recorded loafing at NDC. A few non-breeders accounted for the single figure counts over the summer months and autumn passage was also barely visible with 12 southeast over Wheldrake on 2nd August and 20 over Barlby on 14th October. Not until November did numbers start to build with over 150 at Wheldrake Ings and the roost there grew slowly until an estimated 2000 were present on 31st December.

**'Feral' Pigeon** *Columba livia*  
*Common resident breeder*

*BBS 20/43*

Reported throughout the year; with most records being of up to 20 birds. The only count over 100 was 250 at Malton on 14th August.

**Stock Dove** *Columba oenas*  
*Resident breeder*

*Amber listed*

*BBS 22/43*

Widespread in areas of suitable habitat, with most reports of between one and five birds. In SE53, it was noted that whilst widespread on farmland, birds were far less numerous where the farming was more intensive.

Flocks of 20 or more (all reported from the southwest of the recording area) were: 41 at Sherburn in Elmet on 1st January; 28 at Bolton Percy Ings on 19th August and 46 there on the 31st, then 20 there on 6th September, 26 on the 15th and 47 on the 23rd; and 25 at Milford Common on 19th September. During VMW at Ozendyke in the autumn, 178 flew south between 31st August and 1st November, with peaks of 46 on 31st August and 45 on 23rd September.

Singing males were heard or pairs seen during the breeding season at Allerthorpe Common and Woods, Bank Island, Bolton Percy Ings, CHL, Clifton Park, Crayke, Gilling East, Kirkby Wharfe, Pocklington Canal (Hagg Bridge, Melbourne and Thornton Lock), Seaton Ross, Skipwith Common, Strensall

Common, Westfield House, Wheldrake Ings and Yearsley Moor. During May, adults were noted visiting probable nest sites in Wigginton on the 2nd, Clifton Park on the 13th, and Scagglethorpe Lane on the 27th. A fresh juvenile was at Milford Common on the 30th and a fledged juvenile was with two adults at Melbourne on 23rd August.

**Woodpigeon** *Columba palumbus*

*Abundant resident breeder*

*BBS 43/43*

Well reported throughout the year, as in previous years, it remains one of the most abundant, visible and widespread species in the recording area.

Flocks of 500 or more in the first half of the year were:

4th January, CHL - 500

23rd January, Dunnington - 500+ and 600+ on the 25th

2nd February, Scagglethorpe Lane - 500+ and on the 28th

5th February, Milford Common - 920

27th March, Wharfe Ings - 600

28th March, Scagglethorpe Lane - 500

14th April, Church Fenton - 700 (flock in a field)

9th May, Nun Appleton - 510

Breeding birds were heard singing or seen displaying in many areas. Forty seven were near Naburn Wood during a BBS on 24th June. Again, breeding success was under-reported with confirmation coming only from Pocklington Canal, Melbourne (where recently fledged young were seen on 23rd August and 4th September), Seaton Ross (fledged young seen on 1st June), SHL, and Strensall Common (where a nest site was being visited on 12th May).

VMW at Milford Common, Ozendyke and Whit Hill recorded 17,959 flying south and 970 flying north between 24th September and 10th November (a large reduction from 154,705 in 2015), with a peak of 10,020 flying south at Bolton Percy Ings on 27th October during a 90 minute VMW. In the LDV 1900 were seen from Bank Island on 5th November (970 flying north and 530 southwest), then 1200 on the 6th, 900 on the 8th, 580 south on the 11th and 553 south on the 12th.

Apart from migrants, counts over 500 in the second half of the year were 1000 at Brumber Hill on 9th October, 600 at Bank Island on 19th November and 2000 between West Lilling and Strensall Common on the 28th.

**Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*

*Common resident breeder*

*BBS 18/43*

Widely reported from areas of human habitation, predominantly in ones or twos, throughout the year.

Whilst many pairs were observed to be holding territory, the only confirmation of breeding was from Easingwold (a nest being visited on 23rd March), Hemingbrough (a nest with eggs on 30th May) and Heslington, (hatched eggshells on ground below the nest site).

Flocks of 20 or more were: 20 at Kirkby Wharfe on 8th January, 40 at Sherburn in Elmet on 26th August, 21 at Pocklington Canal (Melbourne) on the 3rd and 8th November, and 68 at Kirkby Wharfe on 11th November, the largest flock of the year.

**Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur*

*Red listed*

*Passage migrant and declining scarce migrant breeder*

The first of the year was one singing at Foggathorpe on 14th May (DMB), then one 'purring' at Lodge Hagg Wood, south of Hovingham on the 20th (PW). At least two were present in Ampleforth Village in May (JP), with one heard there on 9th June (RB). On 24th June one was sitting on a TV aerial in Gilling village and singing for about ten minutes before flying off (GS). Two were recorded again in Ampleforth village during a survey for the Turtle Dove Howardian Hills project on 5th July (JB). The same day, one was seen on the road at Scackleton Mill which flew off towards Hovingham, the last of the year (GS).

**Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus*

*Red listed*

*Migrant breeder*

*BBS 4/43*

The first of the year was one on 17th April at Towthorpe Road (Haxby), followed by one at Easingwold on the 20th, the same day as the first returning bird to the LDV, at Ellerton Ings. Singles were calling at East Cottingwith on the 21st and 22nd, Skipwith Common on the 22nd, Kexby on the 23rd, Pocklington Canal (Melbourne) on the 26th and Thornton the same day. One was at Bank Island on the 28th, the same day as one at Milford Common and the first report from Strensall Common came on the 29th.

Most records were of singing males from April to June in ones or twos. Though widespread in the LDV with reports from 30 locations, including Bank Island, various locations along Pocklington Canal and Wheldrake Ings, numbers were considered to be down on previous years. Other records came from Allerthorpe Common and Woods, Askham Bog, Bank Island, Bolton Percy Ings, Castle Howard, Elvington, Heslington Tillmire, Knavesmire Wood, Milford Common, Moorlands YWT Reserve, Old Gravel Pits Allerthorpe, SHL, Stamford Bridge, The Stank, Stockton on the Forest and York (Northgate Lane). Six territories were estimated on 12th May at Strensall Common during the MOD survey, an increase of two on 2016.

During June adults were present in the LDV throughout the month, late individuals including ones at Bubwith on the 21st, Thorganby on the 26th and Elvington on the 29th. The only report of young birds was from the LDV in late June. In July an adult was seen at Elvington on the 1st, one was at Melbourne on the 2nd, 5th and 8th and one at Bolton Percy Ings on the 9th. The last report of the year was one at Elvington on 18th August.

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

*Resident breeder*

*BBS 3/43*

Just over 250 Barn Owl records were received making this the most frequently reported owl species in the recording area, though not necessarily the most numerous or widespread. There were reports for all months with 30% occurring in June and July when highly visible adults were seen collecting food for young. Sightings from SE53 and SE74 accounted for 50% of the total whilst there were three or fewer from SE56, 66, 67, 73, 77 and none from SE57.

During the early months of the year most of the records were of single birds hunting in the Lower Wharfe Valley and surrounding areas, notably at Bolton Percy, Brumber Hill, Church Fenton and Ulleskelf. Birds were also reported from the Skipwith/North Duffield /Cliffe area and a scattering of other places including Acaster, Full Sutton, Leppington, Naburn, Moor Monkton, Sutton-on-the-Forest, Terrington, York (Tang Hall Beck) and Yapham.

Sightings increased during April and by the end of the month males were reported to be carrying prey back to incubating females, most of these records coming from the well-watched LDV and SE53/54.

Proven breeding was established at Allerthorpe (four young), Bank Island, Bolton Percy Ings, Deighton, Escrick (two pairs with broods of one and three), Heslington (three young), Melbourne/Pocklington Canal (three pairs), Naburn, Riccall (three pairs with broods of three, two and one), Strensall and Scagglethorpe lane, and probably at Castle Howard and Wheldrake Ings. The pair at Deighton raised two young which were ringed on 13th July. The female then began to lay at another site in the same building and by 7th August there were nine eggs. Soon afterwards the male was killed by traffic on the A19 and the young only survived due to supplementary feeding offered by the owner. Eventually three almost fledged young were ringed on the late date of 19th October.

The number of sightings rapidly declined after July. Almost all of these records came from sites already listed with the addition of Cawood on 6th November, Whitwell on the 15th and Appleton Roebuck on 8th December.

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

*Resident breeder but can be elusive*

*BBS 2/43*

Little Owls were reported in every month of the year though most of the records came from places within 3km of the Rivers Ouse (ten sites) and Derwent (eight sites). Very few birds were reported from the six northern hectads with only one record each from SE56, 66, 67, and 77 and none from SE57 and 76. Pre-breeding records came from Acaster Selby, Aughton (a pair), Kexby (a pair), Hagg Wood, Moor Monkton, Naburn (a pair), Poppleton, Scagglethorpe Lane, Stillingfleet, Wheldrake Ings and Yapham.

Although specific nest locations went unreported recently fledged young appeared at four sites. A family party of four was seen close to the cycle track near Naburn on 23rd June and other records of young came from Allerthorpe Common on 13th June, Seaton Ross on 13th July and Storwood on 1st August, when Club

members reported a juvenile on a gate near Hagg Bridge during an evening walk. Little Owls were also present during the breeding season at Acaster Malbis, Bolton, Bolton Percy, Clifton Moor, Gowthorpe, Haxby, Hovingham, NDC, Scagglethorpe Lane, Seaton Ross, Skipwith, Storwood, Thorganby, Whenby and Wressle. Successful breeding probably took place at some of these sites. The four 2017 breeding records are one below the total for 2013 but well above the 2012-16 mean of 1.8.

After August the number of records declined and mostly came from the previously noted sites, many of which appear to be permanent territories. Additional records came from Sherburn in Elmet, where one was a roadside casualty on 12th September, Huby on 29th September, Bank Island on 19th November and SHL on 6th December.

**Tawny Owl** *Strix aluco*  
*Resident breeder*

*Amber listed*  
*BBS 5/43*

Reports of Tawny Owls were received every month with 60% of the 120+ records coming from SE54 and 74, whilst there were fewer than four reports from SE53, 56, 57, 67, 73, 75, 76 and 77. This variation probably reflects observer coverage rather than a lack of suitable habitat on the latter eight hectads.

During the first three months of the year birds were reported from Acaster Malbis, Bank Island, Bolton Percy and Ings, Dunnington, Kexby (Hagg Wood), Pocklington, Redhouse Wood (at least four on 8th January), Sand Hutton, Stamford Bridge, Strensall, Skipwith Common, Wheldrake Ings (five calling on 7th January), York (Water Lane) and Gilling East. Although the species breeds early in the year an attempted copulation reported from Bubwith on 1st February is thought to be unusual.

The number of proven breeding records has steadily increased in recent years (two in 2013; four in 2014; six in 2015 and nine in 2016) and the 2017 total of 12 continues this trend. It is likely that the rise is due to the additional details supplied by contributors rather than a rapid increase in the population. In 2017 five pairs bred in the monitored nest boxes on Skipwith Common. A total of 14 eggs were laid and eight young were ringed making this the most productive year there since the project started in 2007. The data collected suggests that laying commenced during the last week of March. Successful breeding was also reported from Old Gravel Pits Allerthorpe, Hemingbrough (a brood of three), Naburn (a noisy family party of four on 25th July), Scagglethorpe Lane, Seaton Ross, Strensall Common and Wheldrake Ings. Although breeding was not proven in the City of York area birds were present at several sites notably Museum Gardens on 2nd May, Knavesmire on the 17th, Fulford on the 26th and Hull Road on 19th June. Other breeding season records came from Bishop Wood, Brandsby, Hovingham, King's Moor (Stockton on the Forest), Kirkby Wharfe, Low Hutton, Milford Common, Oulston Reservoir and Thornton, as well as two other sites in Allerthorpe.

After the breeding season the number of records declined until November when adults began to encourage their young to leave the natal territory. New post breeding sites records came from Huby, Newburgh Priory, Norton, Poppleton and

Wigginton Road (York).

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

YOC

*Scarce localised breeder and winter visitor*

There were six reports from five sites. As in 2016 all the records came from the first half of the year. One flew over the road by Melbourne Hall after dark on 29th March and another was present in riverside willows near the Andy Booth hide at Wheldrake Ings on 21st May (both LDV Blog). There then followed an exceptional run of breeding records with success noted at three sites for the first time since 2005. Two hunger-calling young were heard at Strensall Common on 4th June, when there were also prolonged views of an adult, and again on the 9th (DR, PR). Hunger-calling young were also present at Brandsby and Whenby on 18th June (DR). However, there were negative reports from Skipwith Common and Bishop Wood, though it is likely that some breeding pairs go undetected each year in other areas.

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

YOC Amber listed

*Winter and passage visitor; casual breeder*

The seven records from 2017 were fewer than half the totals for both 2015 and 2016. In the first half of the year singletons were present at Castle Howard on 7th January (CH) and at Knapton on the 21st and 23rd May (AH).

There was no evidence to suggest a breeding attempt and the first reported returning bird of the autumn was present at Thornton Ellers on 6th September (RR). In November one was seen flying over the York outer ring road towards Rufforth (DC) on the 11th, whilst another was present at East Ings, Ulleskelf on the 27th (PD). The final sightings of the year were from the LDV where a bird was seen flying high over East Cottingwith on 3rd December (DW) and another was present at NDC on the 29th (LDV Blog).

Correction: The sighting given as 6th June in the 2016 YOC Report was a transcription error – the description of the bird in flight referred to the bird seen on 6th May near Naburn i.e. one record, not two.

**Nightjar** *Caprimulgus europaeus*

YOC Amber listed

*Scarce passage migrant and scarce migrant breeder*

No reports from Skipwith Common again this year, but on 30th May one was churring between 22:05 and 22:30 at Black Dike Plantation, Sand Hutton (during a Woodcock survey – but not heard on the subsequent survey visit)(PeR). Two were also churring from 22:05 on 30th May at White Carr, Strensall Common (FW). One was churring at Strensall Common on 9th June and two there on the 21st in a similar area to where they were heard last year (PeR). An unusual sighting was of one seen on the pavement outside the refectory at SHL at 09:45 on 19th July, which then flew off into undergrowth (SS). The final report of the year was of one seen during the day at Bubwith Ings on 30th August, following an unconfirmed report of a single in a Bubwith garden earlier in the month.

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

*Amber listed*  
*BBS 16/43*

The first returning bird was one to a nest box in Riccall on 19th April, with the only other April return being four into Bank Island on the 28th (in contrast to 2016 when many returned in the last week of April). Three returned to Wheldrake Ings on 1st May, with singletons reported from Strensall on the 2nd, and Ampleforth and Woodthorpe on the 4th. There was a flurry of reports between the 5th and the 11th with mostly small numbers being reported from more than 20 sites around the recording area – as the month progressed reports from other sites were also received. Larger numbers included 100+ over Wheldrake Ings on the 5th and 300 there on the 8th, 75 over Melbourne on the 9th and 50 over Naburn the same day. On the 14th 300 were over Wharfe Ings and 150 at CHL on the 21st. During June 50 were feeding over Bolton Percy Ings and 60 over Nun Appleton, both on the 11th and 100 were over Wheldrake Ings on the 24th.

Birds were reported at many suitable nesting sites and breeding was confirmed at Easthorpe, Frances Street (York), Naburn, Osbaldwick, Pocklington Canal (Melbourne), Poppleton, Riccall, Stamford Bridge and Strensall. At Riccall there was an excellent breeding season at a small nest box colony. Of the 12 boxes, ten were occupied - the highest since monitoring started in 2009 - and one nest was abandoned. A mean of 2.1 young were raised in nine nests. Three adults were re-trapped from previous years - two from 2013, including the first nesting of those which were raised at the site. Ten pairs fledged young at the colony at Ampleforth; however the weather appeared to deter prospecting non-breeders, which regularly left the area.

The first significant return movement south came on 11th July with 1000+ over Wheldrake Ings (the largest count of the year), then 300 there on the 13th and up to 100 on several dates thereafter. Away from the LDV, 61 were at Acaster on the 29th while 150 at Sherburn in Elmet on 10th August was the only other count over 100. Twenty two over Norton on 22nd August was the last flock of over 20 seen. Single digit numbers were then reported from several sites up to 12th September when one was at New Earswick, with the last of the year two seen at Skipwith Common on the 20th.

**Hoopoe** *Upupa epops*  
*Rare passage migrant*

YOC

Not seen in 2017, after records in three of the past ten years, most recently 2016.

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

*Amber listed*  
*BBS 1/43*

Reported throughout the year, mostly in ones and twos, from suitable habitat. Three were at Bolton Percy Ings on 17th April, three at Stamford Bridge viaduct on 5th May and four at Fulford Ings on the 27th. During the year birds were also recorded at the following sites: Acaster, Bank Island, Brumber Hill, Castle Howard Arboretum pond, Clifton, Elvington, Escrick Duck Decoy (a first for the site),



Hassacarr NR, Heslington East, Milford Common, Naburn Lock, Newburgh Priory, Old Gravel Pits Allerthorpe, Ozendyke Ings, River Ouse in York (Foss Island and Mill Bridge), Pocklington Canal (East Cottingwith, The Grange, Hagg Bridge, Melbourne), Rawcliffe Ings and Lake, Redhouse Lagoon, Ryther Ings, The Stank, SHL, Wharfe Ings, Wheldrake Ings, White Carr (Strensall Common), Wistow Clough and a small drainage ditch between Crockey Hill and Naburn. A stunned individual was rescued from the roadside by Howden Dyke, Naburn on 10th December; luckily it recovered quickly and flew off.

During the breeding season, pairs were seen at Bolton Percy Ings, SHL, Sutton Lock (Sutton upon Derwent) and Wistow Clough, while confirmation of breeding came from several sites including Bank Island and Wheldrake Ings. Food carrying was seen at Acaster on 21st May with fledged young seen there on 14th June and three juveniles were feeding on the reserve at Hassacarr NR on the 17th. At Wheldrake Ings an adult and fledged juvenile were ringed on 4th July and up to three birds were seen daily through to the end of August. Up to five pairs were thought to have bred along Pocklington Canal.

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

YOC

Not seen in 2017 after records in three of the past ten years, most recently 2015.

**Green Woodpecker** *Picus viridis*  
*Resident breeder*

BBS 4/43

Though records came from more than 30 locations with suitable habitat, the majority were from Milford Common, Skipwith Common and Strensall Common and along the Lower Wharfe between Ozendyke and Cawood - all sites where birds were present all year. There were substantially more reports in the first half of the year. Most were of one or two birds, the only reports of more than two being three at Hagg Wood on 14th March and three at Cross Paths, Strensall Common on 12th May. Other locations where birds were seen or heard were: Acaster Airfield, Acaster Malbis, Allerthorpe Common, Bank Island, Castle Howard, Dunnington, Easingwold golf course, East Cottingwith, Elvington, Fulford Ings, Hassacarr NR, Heslington, Kirkby Wharfe, Knavesmire, Middlethorpe Ings (York), Moorlands YWT Reserve, Naburn, Nun Appleton, Old Gravel Pits Allerthorpe, Pocklington Canal (Melbourne and The Grange), Redhouse, Ryther Ings, Sand Hutton, Scagglethorpe Lane, Sutton upon Derwent, The Stank, Wharfe Ings and Wheldrake Ings. The female present at Hassacarr NR from May 2016 remained at the reserve through to the end of March 2017.

There was limited evidence of confirmed breeding though birds were heard calling at several sites during the breeding season. At SHL two pairs were present all year and both probably bred; a juvenile was seen on the 14th, 20th and 21st July - on the latter date a female was also present. Sadly, at Naburn a dead juvenile was found below a window on 28th July. An adult and juvenile were at

Milford Common on 15th August; they were thought to have bred there.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major*

*Resident breeder*

BBS 18/43

Commonly seen and heard throughout the year, with records coming from at least 70 locations (similar to last year), mostly of one or two birds. Three were at Bolton Percy Ings on 22nd January and on the 26th five were at Clifton Park, with another two along the River Ouse at Clifton Ings. On 18th February three were at Bank Island and four, two drumming, were at Wheldrake Ings on the 19th. Three were at Bolton Percy Ings on 5th March, three at Wheldrake Ings on the 11th, four at Allerthorpe Common on the 12th, and the same number at Strensall Common on the 24th, and at Wistow Clough during the month. In April, four were at Skipwith Common on the 25th and three were at Yearsley Moor on 14th May. Later in the year three were at Bolton Percy Ings on 10th September and at Skipwith Common on the 20th. Single birds and pairs regularly visited feeders at Askham Bryan, Heslington, Naburn, Poppleton and Strensall.

Numerous drumming males were heard during the breeding season, with breeding confirmed at several sites. A pair was visiting a nest hole with food at Fulford Ings on 1st May; a noisy brood was heard at Clifton Ings on the 23rd and an adult was photographed flying to its nest hole at Redhouse Wood, carrying what appeared to be a dead chick (species unknown) in its beak, on the 28th. Recently fledged young were seen at Pocklington Canal (West Melbourne) on 2nd June, at Coneysthorpe on the 3rd and Allerthorpe Woods on the 4th. At Askham Bryan a pair with one juvenile regularly visited feeders, while an adult female and two juveniles were seen at Seaton Ross on the 7th (and again on the 27th) and young were seen at Acaster Malbis on the 11th. At Strensall a juvenile was visiting a peanut feeder from 5th July, and a juvenile was at Easthorpe on the 14th. A juvenile bird visited a Heslington garden on several dates. Breeding was also thought to have taken place at Milford Common.

Interestingly, eight birds were noted flying south during VMW at Ozendyke Ings between 3rd September and 9th November, as well as one flying north and one west. On 8th October, one flew south with a flock of Redwings *Turdus iliacus*.

**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos minor* YOC *Red listed*

*Scarce resident breeder*

Five reports this year was a marked improvement on the single sighting in 2016. One was heard drumming at Elvington on 15th March (MW), followed by one at Strensall Common on the 23rd (FW). In April, one was seen again at Strensall Common at World's End (PRf). The other two sightings both came in November; one was on roadside trees between Wheldrake Ings and Thorganby Village on the 1st (CSR) and the last, one reported from riverside alders at Buttercrambe on the 19th (LDV Blog).

**Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*  
Resident breeder

Amber listed  
BBS 17/43

Over 300 sightings of this highly visible falcon were reported. Birds were seen throughout the year and there are records from every hectad. However, five or fewer reports came from SE56, 57, 67, 73, 75, 76 and none from SE67 and 73 during the breeding season. This could be due to a genuine scarcity of Kestrels in these areas or a lower level of observer coverage.

Three were present at Milford Common on the 8th and 21st January and 24th February; Ozendyke on the 14th and 24th February; Wheldrake Ings on the 19th and Bolton Percy on the 28th, whilst four were reported from Strensall Common on 24th March. One or two were seen at a further 25 locations including Mill Lane, York.

Eleven pairs bred in the LDV raising 33 chicks, 16 of which were ringed. Broods of four were also ringed on arable land in Escrick, Kelfield, Riccall and Skipwith. Other pairs bred at Dunnington (four young), Hemingbrough, Riccall, and Sherburn in Elmet (two young) and probably at Acaster Airfield (two resident pairs), Bolton Percy, Milford Common, where a juvenile caught in wire was released on 15th August, and Ozendyke. The one-eyed male of the Dunnington pair successfully raised another brood. The number of breeding records is larger than any of the totals reported during the last five years.

After the breeding season birds were regularly reported from many locations mostly in the central and southern parts of the recording area. In July a bird was seen attacking young House Martins *Delichon urbicum* at a colony in Sand Hutton and Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* were hunted at Norton church on 16th October. The maximum count was four at Wistow on 8th November.

**Merlin** *Falco columbarius*  
Passage migrant and winter visitor

Red listed

The 26 records for 2017 are well above the 2012-16 mean of 16. In the first four months almost all of them came from the well-watched areas close to the Rivers Derwent and Wharfe. At the former, singles were at Bank Island on 16th January and Wheldrake Ings on the 20th, the water treatment works, Elvington on 19th February, Ellerton on 24th March and NDC on 4th April. The River Wharfe sightings were at Oxton on 9th January, Brumber Hill on 7th February and Bolton Percy Ings on 17th February and 9th April. Elsewhere, one made three unsuccessful strikes at passerines feeding on stubble at Riccall on 2nd January and one flew over the lake at Heslington East on 16th February.

The first returning bird was seen soaring over Bootham, along with a Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*, on 13th August. Nothing further was seen until 18th October when one was reported from Bank Island. This was followed by an exceptional run of 14 sightings. Another was seen at Bank Island on the 22nd and one at Bishopthorpe on the 28th. In November one was at Walbut Mill Farm, Pocklington Canal on the 4th, one at Brumber Hill on the 15th, one hunting Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis* at a roost at Skipwith Common on the 20th and one at SHL on the 28th while two were sparring at Wheldrake Ings on the 30th.

December saw singles at Bank Island on the 4th, East Cottingwith on the 7th, Aughton and Scagglethorpe Moor on the 19th, Barton Hill on the 24th and the last of the year was one at Skipwith Common on the 30th.

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

*Passage migrant; scarce and localised breeder*

The first returning bird was reported from Wheldrake Ings on 13th April which is, along with 2009, the joint earliest record for the recording area. Almost 90 records followed mostly from the well-watched areas close to the Rivers Derwent and Wharfe (SE53, 64 and 74) during May. Apart from Strensall Common there was only one other report from the six northern tetrads.

In the LDV three, possibly four birds, were present at Bank Island on 2nd May and on the 14th two were seen at both Wheldrake Ings and NDC. A hatch of mayflies on 22nd May was enjoyed by hunting birds, including a first summer individual at East Cottingwith. There were regular sightings throughout June, including a bird chasing House Martins *Delichon urbicum* over North Duffield village on the 10th. Observations of adults carrying food at Bank Island, Thorganby and NDC on 21st July, along with other evidence, led NE to report five probable breeding pairs and a further possible breeding attempt in the LDV and Pocklington Canal area. Elsewhere, possible breeding may have taken place in the Lower Wharfe Valley, Bishop Wood and Sherburn in Elmet area from where 14 reports, including one of two birds at Ozendyke on 14th May, were received for the period 6th May to 29th September. Other breeding attempts may have taken place in the Escrick area, where birds were present throughout the summer, and there were five sightings at Strensall during May, including two on the 28th. Although nest sites were not identified in 2017 the number of possible and probable breeding pairs in the recording area appears to be at an all-time high. However, Hobbies will hunt up to 6.5km from the nest which makes it difficult to estimate the number of pairs present in the area.

Other records came from Hassacarr NR on 29th April, Skipwith Common on 5th May, SHL (two birds) on the 21st, Heslington on the 27th and Sherburn in Elmet the same day. Singles were at Henderskelfe on 3rd June, Seaton Ross on the 16th, Bishop Wood on the 21st, Stamford Bridge on 19th July, Monks Cross on 21st August and Acaster Airfield on 8th September. Large gatherings did not form in 2017 and a juvenile seen at Bank Island on 2nd October was the last record of the year. See also the RBBP report on page 113.

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

*Winter and passage visitor; scarce breeder*

Peregrines were present in the recording area throughout the year though the number of sightings varied with the season. Winter sightings accounted for 40% of the total, whilst only 10% came from June and July. Records for the first three months of the year were dominated by sightings from the LDV where four wintering birds were present in January and five in February. Other multiple sightings came from Bolton Percy Ings, Brumber Hill, the Heslington/Dunnington

area (where two predated Black-headed Gulls *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* were seen on 21st January), Milford Common and York Minster, where a pair gave courtship displays on 1st February. Single records came from Acaster Airfield on 26th January, Sand Hutton on 10th February and CHL on the 25th, while two were at Slingsby on 28th March and another at Wistow the same day.

Proven breeding took place for the first time at York Minster where two males eventually fledged, but before this happened they both fell from the nest to the ground below. One of the juveniles managed to return to the nest site whilst the other was collected, ringed and returned by hand. Breeding also took place at a quarry in the northern part of the recording area and an adult was seen bringing prey to two juvenile females at a pylon nest site east of York. Three pairs were present in the 'wider' LDV area though outcomes were not monitored. Elsewhere, a recently fledged bird was seen at Sand Hutton on 3rd August and a female was seen carrying a feral pigeon at Bolton Percy Ings on 13th August though breeding in SE53/54 was not suspected.

The number of sightings increased after the breeding season. Most of the August and September records appear to be of the Minster birds which were reported in and around York, including Poppleton on 18th August, two at Knavesmire on 25th August, Clifton Moor on 20th September and two at Scagglethorpe Lane on the 28th. The birds were last reported at the Minster on 30th November. In the LDV two juveniles were seen at Bank Island on 2nd October which corresponded with a major influx of wintering ducks. Sightings then became regular and by 18th December it was estimated that four wintering birds were present. Other early winter records came from Hovingham on 7th October, Bolton Percy Ings on the 8th, 14th and 28th October, Sand Hutton on 9th November and 7th December, when two birds were seen mobbing a Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, and Milford Common on 18th December.

**Ring-necked Parakeet** *Psittacula krameri* YOC  
*Scarce visitor but escapes cannot be ruled out*

A small number seem to have settled in York, with up to three seen together in the autumn in the Rawcliffe Meadows/Clifton Park area. Most reports in the first part of the year were of single birds. In January sightings were at Danesmead Wood on the 21st and Wigginton Road (York) on the 30th. During February birds were seen at Clifton Park on the 4th, York on the 5th, Danesmead Wood again on the 16th and St Nicholas Fields on the 20th while two were at Clifton Park on the 25th. On 19th March one was at Clifton again. Singletons were also seen in York on 8th April, at Clifton Ings on 23rd May, near York railway station on 27th May and Shipton Road, York on 13th June.

One pair bred; this pair regularly visited feeders in a York garden during the spring. A juvenile was first seen on 6th June, and the pair plus the juvenile continued to visit throughout the summer and into autumn/winter.

In October three were at Clifton Moor on the 15th, then in November, one at Hagg Wood, Dunnington on the 19th, three at Rawcliffe Meadows on the 22nd and three at Clifton Park on the 26th, the last report of the year.

**Great Grey Shrike** *Lanius excubitor*  
*Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant*

YOC

The area was graced by yet another Great Grey Shrike at the beginning of the year (third year in a row). Following an unconfirmed report on the 14th at Acaster Malbis, the first confirmed sighting was at nearby Acaster Airfield on 17th February (DT, ASw, JRe, ASc). That day it was also observed catching and eating a couple of field voles, which it carried in its feet to a larder in thick blackthorn bushes (JLe). Very well-watched during its extended stay in that area, it favoured perches on willow scrub by Ebor Trucks lorry park and could often be seen flying across to trees behind and back again. It finally departed on 12th April.

**Magpie** *Pica pica*  
*Common resident breeder*

BBS 28/43

With single numbers seen throughout the year across the recording area, records of more than ten included up to 17 seen regularly at Danesmead Wood in the first half of the year. At Rufforth Tip 14 were seen on 20th January and 11 on 18th February. On 29th January 18 were recorded at York Cemetery, 12 at Milford Common on 5th February, 12 at Bolton Percy Ings on 15th March and 12 at Strensall Common on 24th March.

During the breeding season records of pairs observed in suitable nesting habitat came from Askham Bog, Brecks Farm (Haxby), Easingwold (Oaklands Way), Heslington East, Knavesmire and Ouse Bank (York), Old Gravel Pits Allerthorpe, Pocklington Canal and Strensall Common. At SHL two nesting pairs were on site, with one pair seen rebuilding a nest from the previous year in February. A bird was seen carrying nesting material at Naburn on 17th March. In Heslington a pair successfully nested in a large hawthorn, recently fledged young were seen at Rawcliffe Lake on 3rd June and three juveniles were regularly seen at Upper Poppleton in June and July. Two recently fledged young were in a Fulford garden on 17th July.

**Jay** *Garrulus glandarius*  
*Resident breeder, passage and winter visitor*

BBS 7/43

Throughout the year and across the recording area up to four birds were seen in suitable habitats. Five or more birds were regularly seen at Bolton Percy Ings, with 14 seen there during a VMW on 23rd September, mostly flying south. In the LDV up to eight birds were observed roosting in poolside willows on 12th October.

During the breeding season, birds were noted as being in suitable nesting habitat at Askham Bog, Old Gravel Pits Allerthorpe, Pocklington Canal (Melbourne), Skipwith Common and Strensall Common and birds possibly bred at Naburn. However no evidence of confirmed breeding was received.

**Jackdaw** *Corvus monedula*  
*Common resident breeder*

BBS 32/43

Large numbers of roosting birds and flocks were seen throughout the recording area. Significant numbers of 100 or more were:

15th February, Hassacarr NR - 200  
16th July, Nun Appleton - 120  
31st August, Bolton Percy Ings - 162  
1st September, Bolton Percy Ings - 229  
10th September, Ryther Ings - 190  
22nd October, CHL - 150  
17th November, Pocklington Canal (Thornton Lock) - c170  
2nd December, Pocklington Canal (Thornton Lock) - 160  
18th December, SHL - c200 and on the 29th

During the breeding season birds were seen at many sites with suitable nesting habitat including Allertorpe Common, Askham Bog, Easingwold (Oaklands Way), Heslington East, Sandy Lane (Stockton on the Forest), Scagglethorpe Lane and Strensall Common. On 8th April a bird was nest building at Acaster. On 9th May a bird was seen carrying nesting material at Clifton Backies, on the 13th at Clifton Park a bird was seen visiting a probable nest site and at Poppleton breeding was confirmed on 12th June. Confirmed breeding occurred in May and June at Melbourne (Pocklington Canal) with adults entering and leaving a nest site and in July at least 20 recently fledged young were also observed. On 19th July ten recently fledged young were seen at Thornton Lock (Pocklington Canal).

**Rook** *Corvus frugilegus*

*Common resident breeder*

*BBS 34/43*

This species was again widely recorded with notable counts in excess of 100 including:

19th January, Burtonfields - c150  
2nd, 3rd and 12th July, Pocklington Canal - 100 to 200  
12th August, Raker Lakes (Wheldrake) - 200  
13th August, Wheldrake Ings - 100  
24th September, Bolton Percy Ings - 103 (flew north at dawn)  
13th October, Norton - 170+ (leaving roost)  
18th October, SHL - c300  
28th October, Bank Island - 100  
16th November, Newburgh Priory - c600 (roosting)  
17th November, Pocklington Canal (Thornton Lock) - c350  
27th November, Pocklington Canal (Melbourne) - 241  
15th December, Pocklington Canal (Melbourne) - c250  
30th December, Thornton - 100

In the breeding season 27 nests were counted at Kirkby Wharfe on 17th March and at Stamford Bridge viaduct 30 adult birds were seen entering and leaving nest sites, indicating occupancy. A probable nest site was recorded at Allertorpe Village on 9th April. On the Pocklington Canal at Melbourne at least 20 recently fledged young were recorded on 22nd June and at least 30 on 2nd July. At

Melbourne West five recently fledged young were seen on 29th June and 20 at Thornton Lock on 19th July.

**Carrion Crow** *Corvus corone*

*Common resident breeder*

*BBS 41/43*

Again many records from across the area were submitted of low numbers, mostly less than 20 birds. Counts of more than 50 were 90 on 22nd January at Intake Lane, Dunnington, 56 on 26th March at Wharfe Ings and 85 there on the 27th.

At Acaster on 25th March birds were seen nest building and on Strensall Common permanent territory was established in several areas. At Pocklington Industrial Estate, four juveniles were seen on 9th May and at Hagg Wood young were seen and heard at a nest on the 31st. During June three breeding pairs raised at least three broods of at least two young each at SHL and on the 15th a pair with newly fledged young was recorded at Sherburn in Elmet. In July recently fledged young were regularly seen on the Pocklington Canal with a maximum of nine on the 2nd at Melbourne and two at The Grange on the 4th.

**Raven** *Corvus corax*

YOC

*Scarce visitor*

*BBS 1/43*

A pleasing increase in records yet again this year, although some sightings could be of the same bird. On 2nd February two were seen between Bolton Percy and Nun Appleton being mobbed by a Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* and then by three Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* (ASw, PD). One was at Castle Howard on 27th March (NB), with the next being one seen flying north at Kirkby Wharfe on 17th April (PD). In May, one was at Acklam on the 16th (DT), one at Castle Howard on the 17th (CR) and two there 'cronking' during the month (DR). On 3rd June, one was at Castle Howard in the same area as 2016's family party (DR).

Later in the year, in September, three were seen at Wheldrake Ings flying west on the 11th (CSR), and two near Bolton Percy on the 27th (PD, ASw). Then, on 18th October, two were at Bolton Percy Ings (PD) and again on the 20th, the same day as one at Acaster Airfield (TD). Sightings in SE53 continued with two at Nun Appleton on 28th October, then one there on the 9th and 10th November (PD).

**Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus*

*Resident breeder and winter visitor*

*BBS 11/43*

Single digit records were widespread across the recording area. Notable counts of ten or more were ten at Dunnington on 4th February, ten at Allertorpe Common on 12th March (holding territory with eight singing), 20 on 14th May (18 singing and holding territory) at Yearsley Moor and 15 there on 11th June (ten singing).

During the breeding season, birds in suitable nesting habitat, territory holding, displaying or singing were recorded at many more sites including Acaster Airfield, Askham Bog, Castle Howard, Coneysthorpe, Easingwold, Eastington, Fryton, Gilling, Heslington, LDV, Low Hutton, Oulston Reservoir, Rawcliffe Lane (York),



Scagglethorpe Lane, Skipwith Common, Stamford Bridge, Strensall Common and Wass. However, the only confirmed breeding evidence came from Acaster where recently fledged young were seen on 25th June.

No autumn influx was evident. The highest count in the second half of the year was nine at Moorlands Wood, York on 29th October.

**Firecrest** *Regulus ignicapilla* YOC  
*Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor*

Not recorded in 2017, though there have been records in four of the past ten years, most recently 2016.

**Blue Tit** *Cyanistes caeruleus* BBS 42/43  
*Common resident breeder*

Another rise in records submitted throughout the year across the whole of the recording area, mainly single digit counts. Significant numbers of over 15 birds (outside the breeding season) were: 19 on 27th August at Acaster, with 21 there on 9th September and 16 on 17th December. On 15th October 15 birds were recorded at Bank Island and 87 at Melbourne (Pocklington Canal) on the 30th.

During the breeding season there were numerous reports of singing birds and adults visiting nest sites from many locations. Confirmed breeding, with fledged young seen, came from: Acaster, Allerthorpe Common, Askham Bryan, Clifton Park (adult carrying faecal sac or food for young), Crayke, Fishergate (York), Heslington, Pocklington Canal, Poppleton, Scagglethorpe Lane, SHL, Strensall Common, Wass and Wheldrake Ings. At SHL five pairs successfully raised broods in security camera poles again. Higher numbers seen were 29 at Bolton Percy on 10th June, 29 - comprising several family parties - seen along Pocklington Canal between Gardham Lock and Melbourne on the 17th and 19 (three families) at West Melbourne on the 29th. At Acaster there were 46 on 12th July.

**Great Tit** *Parus major* BBS 39/43  
*Common resident breeder*

Widespread reports throughout the year, mainly in single figures. Records of ten or more were: 15 at Old Gravel Pits Allerthorpe on 8th January and 12 on the 11th, 20 at Strensall Common on 24th March, ten at Danesmead Wood on 5th April and 12 at Melbourne (Pocklington Canal) on 22nd June (including two groups of a single parent and three juveniles).

Breeding evidence of birds singing or visiting probable nest sites came from Allerthorpe Common and Old Gravel Pits, Appleton Roebuck, Askham Bog, Beningborough Hall, Castle Howard Arboretum, Easingwold, Eastington Amenity Ponds, Knavesmire and Ouse Bank, Melbourne Park Farm, Norton, Scagglethorpe Lane, Seaton Ross, Skipwith Common and the University of York. Reports of confirmed breeding with fledged young seen came from Acaster, Askham Bryan, Clifton Park, Hemingbrough, Heslington, Melbourne and Thornton Lock (Pocklington Canal), Naburn, Poppleton, Rawcliffe Lane (York), SHL, Strensall Common, Thorganby, Huby and Wheldrake Ings.

**Coal Tit** *Parus ater*  
*Common resident breeder*

BBS 10/43

There were more records this year of this common species, mostly of one to five birds. Sightings of ten or more were: ten at Redhouse Reservoir on 17th February, 13 at Yearsley Moor (11 singing) on 14th May, ten at Castle Howard Arboretum on 4th November and 13 at Allerthorpe Common on 28th December.

During the breeding season singing birds were noted at Askham Bog, Bank Island, Castle Howard Arboretum, Easingwold (Oaklands Way), Foggathorpe, Frog Hall (Allerthorpe Common), Hagg Wood (Dunnington), King's Moor (Stockton Parish), Oulston Reservoir, Melbourne (Pocklington Canal), Norton, Skipwith Common and Strensall Common. Confirmed breeding with fledged young seen came from Fishergate (York), Heslington, Pocklington, SHL and Wheldrake Ings.

**Willow Tit** *Poecile montana*  
*Scarce resident breeder*

YOC *Red listed*

BBS 1/43

The LDV continues to be a stronghold, particularly around Wheldrake Ings and the Bank Island area where birds were present all year. Twelve were ringed during the breeding season and post breeding period, including two family parties each of four juveniles caught and ringed by the pool at Wheldrake Ings on 23rd July and 6th August respectively. A family party was at East Cottingwith on 9th June. At Thornton Ellers two pairs were present in August (LDV Blog). Regular sightings and probable breeding took place at Kirkby Wharfe, Milford Common, Ulleskelf Mires and Allerthorpe.

Records of one or two birds also came from Acaster Airfield, Askham Bog (2), Bolton Percy Ings, Castle Howard Arboretum, Fenton (2), Hagg Wood (Dunnington), NDC, Oulston Reservoir (2), Pocklington Canal, Melbourne (2), SHL (2), Stamford Bridge and West Ings. See also the RBBP report on page 113.

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

*Red listed*

BBS 4/43

Counts of mostly one or two birds were received, with four at CHL on 7th January and 3rd June, and four at Frog Hall, Allerthorpe on 2nd February the highest.

During the breeding season, males were heard singing at Old Gravel Pits Allerthorpe on 6th March and Strensall Common on the 31st, at Frog Hall Allerthorpe on 5th April and at Townend Plantation on 1st June. Pairs were also reported from Fangfoss Park, Melbourne (Pocklington Canal), SHL and three at Yearsley Moor. Confirmed breeding was recorded on 21st May at Howsham Bridge, when one was seen carrying food, and on 3rd June at Shaw Wood (Castle Howard), when four in a family party included recently fledged young.

Other sites and peak numbers per site were at Acaster Airfield (1), Allerthorpe Common (2), Askham Bog (1), Bank Island (1), Bubwith (1), Dunnington (1), Gilling East (1), King's Moor, Stockton Parish (1), Melbourne (3) and Walbut Mill Farm (Pocklington Canal) (3), Moreby Wood (1), Newburgh Priory (1), Riccall (1), Scrayingham (1), Skipwith Common (1), The Stank (1), Thurtle Wood (Terrington)

(1), Townend Plantation (1), Waplington (1) and Wheldrake Ings (1).

**Bearded Tit** *Panurus biarmicus* YOC  
*Scarce visitor usually in autumn and winter*

Visiting for the fourth consecutive year, this scarce species was seen at two sites in 2017. On 10th and 11th September four were recorded near Melbourne, Pocklington Canal (LDV Blog). A month later, on 8th October, two roosted at Wheldrake Ings (CSR) followed four days later on the 12th by 15 in the same area, which then reduced to four birds on the 14th (LDV Blog).

**Wood Lark** *Lullula arborea* YOC  
*Localised migrant breeder*

As usual most sightings were at Skipwith Common and Strensall Common, although the first two returning birds were recorded on 24th February at Allerthorpe Common, one of which was singing (VG). Two were at Skipwith Common on 25th February (NC) and one at Wheldrake Ings the same day.

At Skipwith Common regular sightings of up to five birds were recorded from late February to late June whilst eight singing males holding territory were established by 22nd March (LDV Blog). On 9th April courtship display was observed (ASt) and on the 25th three singing birds were holding territory (DMB). Breeding calls were heard on 2nd May (CD) and on the 12th (GSR) and on the 26th two males were singing (DR). On 19th June a singing male was still present (CD).

At Strensall Common the first record was of four birds on 5th March (FW) rising to six on 15th April (GWa). Singing males were recorded up to early June, with records on 13th March (PR), 10th April (PR), 17th April (FW), 4th and 12th May (PR) and 31st May (PRf), 3rd June (DMB) and one on the 4th (DMB,DR).

At Allerthorpe Common singing males were heard on 3rd April (AG) and the 29th (PB), on 4th June (GSR) and the 20th (DHW). One was seen on 17th April at Thornton near Allerthorpe Common (DMB).

There were only two records after June; one was at White Carr, Strensall Common on 14th August, with the last report of the year of two at Skipwith Common on 20th September. See also the RBBP report on page 113.

**Sky Lark** *Alauda arvensis* Red listed  
*Resident breeder and winter visitor* BBS 37/43

Widespread and well reported during the year, apart from August when there was only one record. During the first winter period the largest numbers reported were c20 at Acaster Malbis on 22nd February, at least 30 at Brumber Hill on 13th March, c20 at Eastmoor on 28th March and c30 at Wistow during March, where they were often heard displaying.

The first singing birds were heard at NDC on 22nd January. At Brumber Hill three were singing and hovering on the 25th and birds were seen at Aughton Ings on the 30th. In the LDV and Pocklington Canal numbers increased during the first winter period with several pairs holding territories and displaying from mid-

February. Eight territories were found during the MOD survey at Strensall Common on 12th May. Other locations included Acaster Airfield, Allerthorpe Common and Old Gravel Pits, Barmby Moor, Breck's Farm (Haxby), Castle Howard, Clifton Backies, Germany Beck (Fulford), Heslington East, Heslington Tillmire, Knapton, Milford Common, Mill Lane and Foss, Overton, Rufforth Tip, Scagglethorpe Lane, Skipwith Common, Strensall Common, The Stank, Whitwell Grange West and Wistow. Recently fledged young were seen at Strensall Common, but surprisingly this was the only confirmation of breeding success.

In the autumn and second winter period a minimum of 200 was seen at Brumber Hill on 16th September then 50 on the 25th and 27th, 200 on 4th October and 70 on the 9th. At Bank Island 27 were present on 15th October (of which 19 flew west), while 40 were at Acaster Airfield on the 20th and 30 at Acaster on 5th November. During VMW at Milford Common and Ozendyke 183 flew south and 16 flew north between 23rd September and 8th October, with a peak of 55 on 27th September. At Bolton Percy Ings a minimum of 250 was counted on 30th September, while 29 were still present at Milford Common on 30th October.

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

*Migrant breeder and passage migrant*

*BBS 6/43*

The first returning birds were two at Bubwith Bridge on 13th March, followed by four at North Duffield on the 16th and with 25 at Bank Island and 22 at Heslington East on the 29th and 30th March respectively. The only three figure counts were 100+ at Wheldrake Ings on 10th April and a similar number at Bank Island on the 24th.

Birds were seen prospecting nesting holes at Heslington East on 3rd April and an end of season check revealed 77 occupied burrows; an identical figure to 2016. At SHL there were 17 occupied holes; an increase on the 12-13 of recent years. Elsewhere nesting behaviour was seen at Acaster Malbis, Kirkby Wharfe, Naburn Lock and Waplington.

The largest post-breeding gathering was 40+ at Heslington East on 4th August and the final record was a single at Wheldrake Ings on 23rd September.

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

*Migrant breeder and passage migrant*

*BBS 39/43*

One at Ellerton on 28th March was the first, closely followed by 13 between Bank Island and Wheldrake on the 29th. Disappointingly there were no spring counts in triple figures, with 50 at Wheldrake on 16th April the maximum recorded.

Breeding was recorded at Haxby, Heslington East, Naburn, Pocklington Canal (Melbourne), SHL, Scagglethorpe Lane, Stamford Bridge and Wheldrake Ings.

The LDV had 500 flying south on 20th August, followed by 1000+ on the 21st and 300+ on the 22nd. VMW at Ozendyke between 19th August and 3rd October recorded 2991 flying south and 1098 north in 40 hours of observations, with a peak of 151 south and 728 north on 15th September. On 4th October there were 200+ at Brighton Meadows and the final record was one at Wheldrake Ings on 22nd October.

**House Martin** *Delichon urbicum*  
*Migrant breeder and passage migrant*

*Amber listed*  
*BBS 19/43*

A single was with Swallows *Hirundo rustica* at Strensall Common on 9th April and the following day saw 30 at Wheldrake lngs. Spring counts of 50 or more were 60 at Stamford Bridge on 10th May, 250 at Pocklington Sewage Works on the 15th and 60 at Bank Island on the 29th.

Reports of breeding came from Castle Howard, Copmanthorpe, Heslington East, Melbourne, Monks Cross, North Howden, SHL (12 nesting pairs, up from nine in 2016) and Stockton on the Forest. There were 23 successful nests at Monks Cross Park & Ride, with two still occupied on 14th September, on which date there were 100 at Bank Island. The final record was of three flying south at Sherburn in Elmet on 15th October.

### **BTO House Martin Nest Study 2016-2017 in the York Region**

Following on from the House Martin Census that was done in 2015, the BTO ran a survey looking at nesting activity. Volunteers made regular observations at individual nests to collect information across the breeding seasons of 2016 and 2017. The BTO has yet to carry out the full analyses of the data but these will look at the timing and outcome of nesting attempts across different geographical areas and how they may be affected by other environmental factors. However there are data available on coverage and the highest level of breeding evidence. The table shows the contribution of the York Region to the survey. Although a relatively low proportion of nests are recorded as having fledged young, a large proportion of the nests in which young were present are likely to have fledged. This is because visits were often weekly and so fledging may not have been observed.

	No. of Observers	No. of sites	Highest level of breeding evidence recorded for each nest						Total number of nests
			No activity	HMs in vicinity	Nest building	Occupied Nest	Young present in nest	Fledged young	
2016	15	22	25	2	3	6	27	17	80
2017	12	16	9	7	4	13	16	3	52

**Cetti's Warbler** *Cettia cetti*  
*Rare visitor*

YOC

Now recorded annually since 2013, it is to be hoped that this species is becoming established in the area. One was calling at Canal Head, Pocklington on 9th April (CT) and it or another at East Cottingwith on the 13th (CSR). Singles

at Castle Howard on 26th June (TS) and Stamford Bridge on 15th July (IH) were interesting records away from the LDV. In the autumn one was calling at Wheldrake Ings on 26th September (LDV Blog); the last report of the year.

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

*Common resident breeder*

*BBS 17/43*

Widespread throughout the year in single or low double figures, with 20 at Wheldrake Ings on 3rd January the highest count in the first half of the year.

Probable or confirmed breeding was recorded at Acaster Malbis, Allerthorpe Common, Askham Bryan, Bank Island, Frog Hall Allerthorpe, Fulford, Kirkby Wharfe, Naburn, Pocklington Canal (Melbourne), SHL, Strensall Common and Wheldrake Ings.

Twenty were at St Nicholas Fields on 12th July. However, the only counts of over twenty birds were all from Wheldrake Ings, peaking at 30 on 2nd September, 15th October and 4th November. A Heslington garden reported their presence in 88% of weeks (100% in 2016, 96% in 2015), with a maximum of seven in August and September.

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

*Very rare vagrant*

With an amazing six records in 2017 (comprising the 8th to 13th records for the area), this species has now been recorded annually since 2013. In spring one was at Rawcliffe Lake on 22nd March (FW). Autumn records started with one calling in trees by York Railway station on 25th September (BirdGuides), followed in October by singles at Grosvenor Terrace, York on the 8th (AH) and Gilling on the 14th (BirdGuides). One at Clifton Ings on 25th November (BirdGuides) was then followed by one at Tang Hall Beck on the 29th November (JD).

**Wood Warbler** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* YOC *Red listed*

*Rare passage migrant*

After a blank year in 2016, there was just a single record of one at Hagg Wood on 18th July (IH).

**Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita*

*Migrant breeder and passage migrant; some birds overwinter* *BBS 40/43*

Wintering birds were at Church Bridge, Melbourne on 8th January and Acaster Selby on the 13th. The first migrant was at Heslington West on 3rd March, another was at NDC on the 5th and there was a scattering on 12th March including four at Wheldrake Ings. On 13th April 20 were singing at Wheldrake Ings. Birds were widely reported in single figures, and counts of 10 or more were reported on 15 dates, the highest counts being 26 at Yearsley Moor on 14th May (and 25 there on 11th June) and 18 at Wheldrake Ings on 15th June.

Breeding was confirmed at Clifton Park, Pocklington Canal (Melbourne and Thornton Lock), Riccall, SHL (two successful broods), Skipwith Common (two

broods of five and two ringed) and Wheldrake Ings.

The last migrant was probably one at Norton on 9th November, as singles in December at NDC on the 9th, Hull Road Park on the 10th and East Cottingwith on the 16th were probably wintering.

**Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus*

*Amber listed*

*Migrant breeder and passage migrant*

*BBS 27/43*

The first was singing at Acaster South Ings on 27th March, and singles were at Bank Island and Wheldrake on the 29th, followed by four there on 30th March. Eleven were at Wheldrake Ings on 9th April with a large arrival on the 15th when 20+ were between Bank Island and Wheldrake Ings.

Away from Wheldrake Ings counts in double figures were 12 at Strensall Common on 15th April, 14 at Allerthorpe Common on the 17th, 30 at Skipwith Common on 25th and 20 at Yearsley Moor on 14th May.

Birds were widespread during the breeding season and confirmed breeding records came from Pocklington Canal (Melbourne and Thornton Lock), Thorganby and Wheldrake Ings.

Autumn passage peaked with 15 at Wheldrake Ings on 27th August. Strong passage through the LDV in August, was followed by small numbers early in September, including several large, long-winged birds presumed to be of the northern race '*acredula*' on the 2nd and 18th. The final record was a single at Askham Bog on 20th September.

**Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla*

*Migrant breeder with some birds overwintering*

*BBS 35/43*

No wintering birds were reported. The first record was one singing at Bank Island on 28th March, with three there by the 30th. There was an influx in the first week of April with between one and five birds reported from many sites thereafter. Double figure counts were 10 at Wheldrake Ings on 13th April and 11 at Strensall Common on the 15th.

Breeding was confirmed at Acaster Malbis, Pocklington Canal (West Melbourne), Riccall, SHL (where the first juveniles were seen on 13th June), Scagglethorpe Lane and Strensall Common. At Skipwith Common 12 nests were found; three were predated but the mean brood size of the other nine was 4.3 - a good year.

After 26th September there were only four records. An immature female ringed at Bank Island on 21st November was followed by the final record, at Poppleton, on the 25th.

**Garden Warbler** *Sylvia borin*

*Migrant breeder*

*BBS 6/43*

The first were two singing at Wheldrake Ings on 27th April, with four at Skipwith Common on 2nd May and three at Bank Island on the 4th. Away from the LDV reports of one or two birds (mostly singing males) came from: Allerthorpe Common (including seven on 20th June), Askham Bog, Black

Plantation, Bolton Percy, CHL, Crambeck, Easingwold Golf Course, Foggathorpe, Frog Hall Allerthorpe, Melbourne, Moorlands YWT Reserve, Old Gravel Pits Allerthorpe, Old Malton, Pocklington Canal, Ryther Ings, Scagglethorpe Lane, SHL, Skipwith Common, Strensall Common, Wass, Whitwell Grange West and Yearsley Moor.

Breeding was confirmed at Allerthorpe Common and Skipwith Common. At the latter, five nests were found; one was predated while the mean brood size of the other four was 4.25.

The final records were one caught and ringed at Bank Island on 6th September and one at Skipwith Common on the 20th.

**Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia curruca*

*Migrant breeder*

*BBS 8/43*

The first was singing at Brighton on 11th April, but then there was a gap until the next at Monks Cross on the 21st, the same day as two at NDC. In the LDV there were good numbers with three pairs at Bank Island and five at Wheldrake Ings by 4th May. Away from the LDV reports of one or two birds (mostly singing males) came from: Acaster South Ings, Baxton Howe, Bolton Percy Ings, Brumber Hill, Clifton Backies, Crayke, Flaxton, Heslington West, Kirkby Wharfe, North Howden, Old Gravel Pits Allerthorpe, Pocklington Canal (Church Bridge and Melbourne), Scagglethorpe Lane, Tang Hall Beck, Towthorpe Foss Bridge, West Ings and Westfield House.

No actual proof of breeding was received this year, but doubtless it occurred. The last record was a single at Clifton Backies on 18th September.

**Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis*

*Amber listed*

*Migrant breeder*

*BBS 37/43*

The first was at Heslington East on 11th April, followed by one at East Cottingwith on the 14th, then a more general arrival on the 23rd, with five at Bank Island on the 24th and six there on 25th April.

Counts of ten or more were:

10th June, Brumber Hill - 12

17th June, Bank Island - 11

1st July, Brumber Hill - 15

5th August, Brumber Hill - 20

4th September, Fangfoss - 12

Breeding was confirmed at Bank Island, Brumber Hill, Crayke, Hassacarr NR, Pocklington Canal, (Melbourne, The Grange and Thornton Lock), Westfield House and Wheldrake Ings. At farmland around Riccall and Skipwith eight nests were found; all the young survived to ringing and the mean brood size was 3.6.

The final record was a single at Bank Island on 24th September.



## Rare and Scarcer Birds recorded during 2017



Left to right and top to bottom

**'Minster' Peregrine adult with two chicks and fledged juvenile** © Doug Crawford

**Waxwing** © Paul Greenwood

Male **'Channel' Wagtail** © Jack Ashton-Booth

**Hawfinch** © Masha Sitnikova

**Mealy (Common) Redpoll** © Duncan Bye

**Crossbill** © Alistair Charlton

**Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella naevia*

*Red listed*

*Scarce migrant breeder*

*BBS 1/43*

The first of the year, singles at Bank Island and Heslington East, plus two at Ryther Ings on 29th April, were part of an influx into the county (the Heslington East bird was a first for the site). Singles were heard at Milford Common and Fulford Ings on 1st and 2nd May respectively, one was still reeling at Ryther Ings on 11th June and the Milford Common bird was reeling on 7th July. One at Melbourne Ings on 10th July was the first in a series of records involving four between Melbourne and Thornton Ings from the 10th to 15th July. The final record was of one at Bank Island on 24th August.

**Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

*Migrant breeder and passage migrant*

*BBS 4/43*

The first birds were at Wheldrake Ings and along the Pocklington Canal at Canal Head on 9th April. Ten were at Ryther Ings on 29th April and 15 at Wheldrake Ings on 6th May. Away from the LDV and the Lower Wharfe, single digit figures were noted at Acaster Malbis, Askham Bog, CHL, Foggathorpe, Heslington East and Monks Cross.

Adults carrying food were seen at East Cottingwith on 28th May and at Wheldrake Ings on 30th June and breeding was also confirmed at Melbourne (Pocklington Canal) where fledged young were being fed on 3rd July, with juveniles seen on several dates there.

One caught and ringed at Wheldrake Ings on 17th September was the final record.

**Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

*Migrant breeder and passage migrant*

*BBS 1/43*

One singing at Canal Head, Pocklington on 17th April was the first, followed by one at Wheldrake Ings and one at Heslington East, both on the 20th. Fourteen were at Old Gravel Pits, Allerthorpe on 22nd May (and again on 13th July). Away from there and the LDV, single figures were seen at Askham Bog, CHL, Heslington East (seven singing on 31st May was a record count until topped by nine singing there on 15th June), Milford Common and Wharfe Ings.

There was limited confirmation of breeding. An adult carrying food or a faecal sac was seen at Askham Bog on 18th May and food carrying was also seen at Wheldrake Ings in late July, while juveniles were being fed at West Melbourne (Pocklington Canal) on 4th August. Though no song was heard in the Hollow Swang reed bed at Skipwith Common which is now heavily grazed, a juvenile was ringed there on 14th August.

The last record was a single at Wheldrake Ings on 26th September.

**Waxwing** *Bombycilla garrulus*

*Scarce winter visitor*

With many reports of sightings in and around York, it is difficult to establish how many flocks were actually involved, as at least one flock was known to be highly

mobile. This flock, seen on several dates in late December 2016, was back feeding at Castle Mills, York on 1st January, having increased by one to 45. What was presumed to be the same mobile flock was seen the same day at Heworth Green and the following day close by at Bishopgate, York. On the 3rd a flock of 24 was at Woodthorpe and 28 at Haxby on the 4th. Twenty were seen in Selby on the 17th and 30 again in York on the 25th. Sightings continued during February with 31 at Heslington East on the 18th the largest count for the month; 29 were seen in York on the 21st and 17 also turned up at Cockey Hill on the 23rd. During March larger counts included a flock of 50 seen at Spurriergate, York on the 3rd (the highest count for the year) and 40 at Bishopthorpe on the 9th, with 30 there the following day; the same day as 17 at Escrick. On the 22nd 20 were at Strensall, with 19 still there on the 30th. Thirteen at Ampleforth on the 13th increased to 25 there on the 17th. From January to March, single digit numbers were also seen at Acomb, Appletree Village, Askham Bar, Bishopthorpe, Canal Head (Pocklington Canal), Dunnington, Fulford, Heslington East, Ozendyke Ings, Rufforth, Ryther, Sand Hutton, Strensall, Thorganby and Wheldrake. Some birds were still around in April with sightings of eight at Hopgrove, York on the 3rd, one at New Earswick on the 8th, three at Easingwold on the 17th and two there on the 19th. However these were not the last; three very late birds were seen in a lime tree on Knavesmire Road on 3rd May and finally reported on the 8th.

In contrast to last year, the only sightings later in the year were a flock of 25 at Gilling East on 2nd November, one in York on the 4th and four at New Earswick the same day.

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

*Resident breeder*

*BBS 7/43*

Widespread in areas of suitable wooded habitat. Most reports, as in previous years, were of one or two birds, from at least 37 locations in 2017. At least six were at Brayton Barff on 23rd January and three were at The Stank on 18th March and 4th April. Seven (the highest count received) were at Escrick Duck Decoy on 22nd August and four there on 9th September, with several reported as being present throughout November as well. Three were at Castle Howard on 4th November, and again on 3rd December. Birds were reported visiting garden feeders in Naburn and Poppleton – all through the year at the former.

More breeding evidence was received this year with several reports of singing males and pairs holding territory during the breeding season. Breeding confirmation came from four sites. Adults were seen carrying food along the lane to the car park at Wheldrake Ings on 9th May. Later in the month two adults were seen feeding young at a nest hole at Clifton Park on the 20th and one was feeding young in a beech tree at Howsham Bridge on the 31st. A pair with two or three fledged young was in a Naburn garden on 16th June.

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

*Common resident breeder*

*BBS 7/43*

Common and widespread, with records (mostly of one or two birds) coming

from 58 different locations. Four were in Hagg Wood, Dunnington on 26th February, four (two pairs) at Beck Lane, Acaster on 17th March, five at Skipwith Common on 24th March and the same number at Strensall Common on 2nd April, Yearsley Moor on 14th May, and Allertorpe Common on 18th June.

Very little evidence of breeding was submitted and there were no reports of juveniles seen, though singing males and pairs were noted at several sites. A pair was seen nest building in a silver birch at Strensall Common on 15th April. An adult was seen carrying a faecal sac/food for young at Skipwith Common on 18th May. One was also seen visiting a probable nest site at Melbourne, Pocklington Canal on 9th June

**Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes*

*Common resident breeder*

*BBS 42/43*

Very common and widespread; mostly reported in low single figures. Double figure counts were received from Bank Island where there were 20 on 16th January, 11 of them roosting together in a nest box; Skipwith Common with 10 on 24th March, and the same number at Snargate, Brandsby on 27th April. A BBS near Naburn Wood recorded 11 on 29th April. During May, 15 were at Clifton Backies on the 9th, 11 at Skipwith Common on the 10th and 18th, ten at Clifton Park on the 13th and 11 around Danesmead Wood on the 21st. There were 12 at Fulford Ings on the 27th and ten along Scagglethorpe Lane the same day. On 26th June there were 11 at Crayke and ten at Thorganby on the 30th. In the second half of the year up to 15 roosted in nest boxes at Bank Island during December.

Though singing males were widely heard between late February and the end of September, yet again there was little evidence of confirmed breeding. An adult was seen carrying food at Wheldrake Ings on 1st June. At SHL, where there were three confirmed breeding attempts, two nests were seen being attended on 12th June. Two recently fledged young were seen on 19th and 25th July at Melbourne, Pocklington Canal and one juvenile there on 7th August. At Acaster Malbis young were seen on 29th July.

**Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris*

*Red listed*

*Common resident breeder and winter visitor*

*BBS 23/43*

Common and widespread across the area. In the first winter period, flocks of 100 or more were:

8th January, Thornton - 200

11th January, Pocklington Canal (Melbourne) - 133

25th January, Scagglethorpe Lane - 1250

2nd February, Scagglethorpe Lane - 300

15th February, Easthorpe - 3000; 2000 on the 22nd and 300 on the 27th

18th February, Upper Poppleton - several hundred roosting

3rd March, Bolton Percy Ings - 180

7th March, Sand Hutton - 1500, and 5000 roosting on the 12th

12th March, Scagglethorpe Lane - 200

13th March, Brumber Hill - 300

Nesting was noted from late March onwards with breeding confirmation coming from Acaster Malbis, Bank Island, Clifton Park, Easthorpe, Fishergate (York), Fulford, Hemingbrough, Pocklington Canal (Melbourne), Stamford Bridge, Stockton Lane, Stockton on the Forest and Woodthorpe (York).

On 4th June 179 came in to roost at Wheldrake Ings, with flocks of 100 or more later in the summer being 100 at Naburn on 25th July, 100 at Wheldrake Ings on the 9th, 20th and 27th August and similar numbers at Raker Lakes, Wheldrake in late August.

Larger flocks were seen in the autumn and winter. Numbers began to build at Wheldrake Ings in September with 344 on the 6th and up to 250 were roosting there from early in the month. 200 were at Naburn on 13th October with similar numbers there on the 14th and 16th. On 29th October 150 were feeding on fields near St John's Well Plantation. A movement on 1st November saw flocks totalling 1000+ over Ellerton Ings, while 800 were present at dusk on the 2nd; there were also many smaller flocks moving through the site at the time. On the 5th 500 flew northwest over Bank Island, with 229 northwest on the 11th and 399 on the 12th. On 13th 150 came in to roost at Monks Cross (building to 400 by the 23rd), and 200 were on fields by SHL the following day. On the 15th 1000 were at Brumber Hill and 1200 at Church Fenton on the 20th while 1500 were at West Lilling on the 28th. VMW at Ozendyke between 20th October and 9th November recorded 3377 moving in a broadly southwesterly direction with a peak of 1232 on 1st November. During December 500 were at Wheldrake Ings on the 3rd, 200 at Thorganby Ings on the 16th and 1000 roosting at Aughton between the 19th and 22nd. A murmuration of about 230 individuals was present at Strensall for several weeks during December.

**Ring Ouzel** *Turdus torquatus*  
*Scarce passage migrant*

YOC Red listed

Two records were received, both of singletons, with one in central York on 5th May (BirdGuides) and the second in Easingwold on 12th May (BirdGuides). This is the fifth year in succession that birds have been seen as they pass through the area to breeding grounds further north.

**Blackbird** *Turdus merula*

*Common resident breeder, winter visitor and passage migrant* BBS 43/43

Common and widespread throughout the area. In the first winter period higher counts included 28 at Danesmead Wood on 14th January, 20+ at Dunnington on the 25th and 30 at Wheldrake Ings on 12th February. Reports of 15 to 20 were received from Easthorpe, Fulford, Hassacarr NR, Mount Pleasant Park and York Cemetery.

Confirmed breeding was noted at Allerthorpe (on the Common and at the Old Gravel Pits), Bolton Percy, Brumber Hill, Easingwold, East Cottingwith, Easthorpe,

Haxby, Hemingbrough, Kirkby Wharfe, Melbourne, Pocklington, Poppleton, Rawcliffe, Stamford Bridge, SHL, Thornton, Wheldrake Ings and York city centre.

In the latter part of the year the first count of more than 15 birds was of 16 on 20th September at Melbourne, Pocklington Canal. Twenty were at Heslington on 8th October. A lull followed before 8th November produced 28, again on the canal at Melbourne. Later in the month 20 were at Bank Island on the 19th and up to 50 on the 20th, with the highest count of the year 68 at Church Fenton on the same date. These numbers may be symptomatic of the arrival of continental migrants. On 24th November 15 were at Melbourne and 18 at Easthorpe on the 29th. In December, 20 were at Melbourne on the 6th, 26 at Pocklington on the 10th and 18 at Easthorpe on the 28th.

**Fieldfare** *Turdus pilaris*

*Red listed*

*Winter visitor and passage migrant*

*BBS 1/43*

During the first winter period flocks of 150 or more were:

17th January, Moor Monkton - 200

19th January, Acaster Airfield - 150

2nd February, Scagglethorpe Moor - 200 and 300 on the 27th

3rd February, Acaster Airfield - 400

14th February, Terrington Bank - 200

17th March, Acaster Airfield - 200

The last seen in spring were three at Melbourne on 7th May.

The first returnees of autumn were four west over Bank Island, two over Wheldrake Ings and one at Bolton Percy Ings, all on 8th October. The first notable flock was 150 over Bank Island on the 23rd while 600 at Brumber Hill on the 27th was the largest flock of the month. The largest movements took place in the first half of November. VMW at Bolton Percy Ings included 258 flying north on the 5th followed by 551 going northwest on the 8th, 1007 west on the 9th and 162 northwest on the 10th. In the LDV larger flocks included 500 moving through on the 10th, 227 west on the 11th and 600 over Bank Island on the 15th. In December, Bank Island held over 1000 following heavy snow on the Wolds, the largest flock of the month.

Other flocks of 150 or more were:

23rd October, Acaster Airfield - 150+

28th October, Bolton Percy Ings - 208

30th October, Milford Common - 404

1st November, Bank Island - 157

1st November, Bolton Percy Ings - 282

2nd November, NDC - 200

15th November, NDC - 150, also 150 at Wheldrake Ings

19th November, Bank Island - 177

30th December, Acaster Malbis - 225+

**Song Thrush** *Turdus philomelos**Red listed**Resident breeder, winter visitor and passage migrant**BBS 35/43*

Seen in small numbers (typically one to four) throughout the year, especially in the Vale of York.

During the breeding season there were many reports of singing males and of 'territory holding' with hot-spots being the area around the Pocklington Canal at Melbourne and on Yearsley Moor where there were at least ten singing males on 14th May. The first definitive evidence of breeding was an adult carrying food at Church Bridge on the Pocklington Canal on 17th April. Confirmed breeding was also reported from Castle Howard, Clifton Backies, Hemingbrough, Huby, Melbourne, Mount Pleasant, Naburn, Seaton Ross, SHL, Wheldrake and Wheldrake Ings. Five nests were located on Skipwith Common (one pair using the same nest for two successive broods) and three more between Riccall and Skipwith.

Six to 11 birds were seen at Bank Island and Wheldrake Ings between the 1st and 15th October whilst 20 were reported flying over Grosvenor Terrace in York on the 8th suggesting a possible arrival of migrants at that time. Later in the year, a notable count was 12 at Melbourne, Pocklington Canal on 13th November.

**Redwing** *Turdus iliacus**Red listed**Winter visitor and passage migrant**BBS 1/43*

The highest count in the first winter period was 300+ at Dunnington on 25th January. Other counts of more than 100 were 200 on Scagglethorpe Moor on 28th February, 120+ at Dunnington on 4th March, and 200 heading northeast over Upper Poppleton on the 10th. The last of the spring were two at Danesmead Wood on 5th April and six seen flying north over Bolton Percy Ings the same day.

The first returning migrants were four noted over Sand Hutton on 6th October. Large numbers followed on 8th October with 720 over Grosvenor Terrace in York during a two hour VMW in the early morning, 615 flying west over Bank Island and 2105 flying south over Bolton Percy Ings during a four hour VMW, with 181 on the Ings themselves. At Bank Island 100 also flew west on the 9th. A further 2596 were recorded flying in a broadly southwesterly direction during VMW at Ozendyke and Milford Common between 9th October and 10th November, with 1039 on 20th October the peak count.

Other counts over 100 were:

18th October, Bank Island - 200+; 300+ on the 19th and 100 on the 20th

19th October, Wistow - 150+ and on the 20th

21st October, Bank Island - 203, flying southwest followed by 400+ on the 24th

27th October, Scagglethorpe Moor - 100+

27th October, Brumber Hill - 600 minimum

28th October, Bank Island - 268 over

3rd November, Scagglethorpe Moor - 100

12th November, Bank Island - 100 and 119 on the 19th

12th November, Brumber Hill - 250 minimum

**Mistle Thrush** *Turdus viscivorus**Red listed**Resident breeder, winter visitor and passage migrant**BBS 10/43*

Widely distributed across the recording area, though usually seen in ones and twos. Five were present at Scagglethorpe Lane on 2nd February and six at Bolton Percy Ings on the 14th.

There were many reports of singing males and of pairs defending breeding territory but only two confirmed breeding records; at Pocklington Industrial Estate where four juveniles were seen on 9th May and at Skipwith Common where two chicks were ringed on 14th June.

In late summer notably large parties were nine at Brumber Hill on 12th July and ten there on 5th August, 14 at Melbourne (Pocklington Canal) on 14th August and 20 at Gardham Lock (Pocklington Canal) on the 28th. The autumn period produced groups of ten flying south at Bolton Percy Ings on 8th October (when large numbers of Redwings *Turdus iliacus* were also moving south) and 19 at Thornton Lock on 2nd October.

**Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata**Red listed**Migrant breeder and passage visitor**BBS 1/43*

Reports, usually of one or two birds, were received from 20 locations. The first records of the year came in May, with the first at Melbourne on the Pocklington Canal on the 3rd (compared with 29th April in 2016). It was over a week before the next reports with a singing male at Strensall Common on the 12th, followed by two at Acaster Selby on the 17th and two at Hardy's Wood, Acaster on the 19th. On the 21st one was at Kirkby Wharfe with two at Yearsley Moor the same day and one was at Pocklington on the 24th.

Breeding was confirmed at several sites. One pair nested at Appleton Roebuck in May, while food carrying was seen at Strensall Common in early June and a family party of seven was at Bolton Percy in late June. A pair bred at the Melbourne arm of Pocklington Canal. Two pairs bred near Crockey Hill, a pair bred in a Melbourne Village garden and two pairs bred at both SHL and in Skipwith Village.

Post breeding, five were at Brumber Hill on 2nd August, with the first passage bird caught and ringed at Wheldrake Ings on the 6th. Also in August, on the 20th, three were at Bolton Percy Ings with two at Kirby Wharfe. Five were at Strensall Common on the 23rd, with three at both Bolton Percy and CHL on the 27th. The final reports of the year came in September with two at Skipwith Common on the 5th, three at Thornton Lock on the 7th (including a juvenile), a single at Church Bridge on the 15th and the last one at Scagglethorpe the next day.

**Robin** *Erithacus rubecula**Common resident breeder**BBS 42/43*

This species continues to be common and widespread. Although maximum counts early in the year were lower than in 2016 they included ten at Old Gravel Pits, Allerthorpe in January, ten at Allerthorpe Common in February, ten at Dunnington on 7th March, 18 at Skipwith Common on 24th March and ten at The



Stank on 3rd April. Double figure counts later in the year included ten on 20th September at Melbourne, Pocklington Canal, ten on the Knavesmire on 9th October and 23 at Sand Hutton on the 18th.

Breeding evidence was received from Allerthorpe Common, Bank Island, Bolton Percy Ings, Burythorpe, Castle Howard, Clifton Park, Heslington, Huby, Melbourne, Naburn, Pocklington, Poppleton, Sand Hutton, Thorganby and Wheldrake Ings. Breeding densities included seven singing males at Askham Bog, three pairs at the old paper mill site in Selby, 19 at SHL and 20 at Strensall Common.

**Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula hypoleuca* YOC Red listed  
*Scarce passage migrant and casual breeder*

There was a single record in spring with a singing male at Hemingbrough on 3rd May (SC). Then in late August there was a run of records with singles at Bank Island on the 27th and the 31st when an immature male was caught and ringed (LDV Blog). On the 28th a female was at Church Bridge, Melbourne (NC).

**Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros* YOC Red listed  
*Rare visitor*

On 14th April a male was found singing from the roofs of James College and the Environment Building at Heslington West, the first since 2015 (JN).

**Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* Amber listed  
*Migrant breeder and passage migrant* BBS 2/43

The first record of the year was of a single at Strensall Common on 11th April. The only reports during the breeding season were of a pair feeding young at Castle Howard and of three singing at Yearsley Moor on 14th May.

Return passage birds were reported during August, with a female at Bank Island, three at Bolton Percy Ings and a single at Kirkby Wharfe all on the 20th. On the 22nd two females were still at Bolton Percy Ings while a female visited a garden in Fulford. A male was at Clifton Backies on the 24th and two were at Brumber Hill on the 28th. In September singles were at Wheldrake Ings on the 11th, Scagglethorpe on the 15th and finally at Brumber Hill on the 16th.

**Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra* Red listed  
*Passage migrant and casual breeder*

There were no spring records. The first records came during July, all from Wheldrake Ings with a single adult male in front of Tower Hide on the 16th followed by four there on the 20th and 21st with two remaining on the 22nd and a single still present on the 28th. Into August up to three were present at Wheldrake Ings all month with a single at Bank Island on the 18th and at Scagglethorpe on the 23rd. The final records of the year came in September, all from Wheldrake Ings, with two there on the 2nd and finally a male on the 16th.

**Stonechat** *Saxicola rubicola*

*Casual breeder and passage visitor; sometimes over-winters*

*BBS 1/43*

Overwintering birds included one to two present at NDC from January to early March. Also in January, two were at Wheldrake Ings on the 7th with two at Towthorpe on the 20th and a female at Heslington East on the 24th. At Heslington Tillmire two were present from 19th February to 1st March. In February, singles were at East Cottingwith on the 8th and at Heslington East on the 16th, with a pair at Strensall Common on the 20th.

At Strensall Common the MOD bird survey on 12th May identified three pairs with five young, a welcome increase from just a single pair in 2016.

Post breeding, in July, singles were seen at Askham Bog on the 15th and at Pocklington Canal, Melbourne on the 31st. Autumn passage started in September with a male at Wheldrake Ings on the 16th and a single at Acaster Airfield the next day. During October, up to five were present at Wheldrake Ings with three at both Wistow and Strensall Common and singles at Bolton Percy Ings, Heslington Tillmire and Bank Island. In November, two were present at Pocklington Canal, Melbourne, singles at Hagg Bridge and Heslington Tillmire and two at Wheldrake Ings and Brumber Hill. During December, a minimum of ten wintering birds were present in the LDV including up to four at Wheldrake Ings and two at East Cottingwith, Aughton Ings and Thornton Ellers.

**Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe*

*Amber listed*

*Summer visitor and passage migrant*

*BBS 1/43*

The first of the year came on the early date of 9th March, nearly a month earlier than 2016 (3rd April). There were further reports during March; a single at Wistow on the 20th and 21st, a single at Bubwith on 22nd and three at Aughton Ings on the 23rd, with two on nearby arable land there the next day. After a single at Towthorpe on 1st April the main arrival began from the 9th and included four at Brighton on the 11th, eight at East Cottingwith on the 22nd, the same day three were at Malton and three at Hessay on the 30th. The last of the spring were singles at NDC and Wheldrake Ings on 11th May.

The next record came on 2nd July when an immature was at Heslington East. This was then followed by autumn passage birds during August with two at Rufforth on the 13th and singles at Thornton on the 25th and at Ellerton Ings on the 30th. In September, singles were at Bolton Percy Ings and Westfield, Poppleton on the 3rd, Acaster Airfield on the 6th, Sand Hutton on the 7th and Brumber Hill on the 27th, with two at Terrington on the 9th. The final records of the year came in October from Sand Hutton, with an immature possibly of the *leucorhoea* (Greenland) race there on the 16th and 22nd.

**Duncock** *Prunella modularis*

*Amber listed*

*Common resident breeder*

*BBS 39/43*

This species continues to be common and widespread in the recording area, most reports being of one to three birds. Nine were at Fulford Ings on 3rd February and eight at Brumber Hill on the 21st, while the highest count of the year was 12 at

Kerver Lane, Dunnington on the 27th.

Birds were reported singing from several locations, including five singing at both Allerthorpe Common and Wheldrake Ings during March. A survey of the farmland around Riccall/Skipwith located eight nests, one of which was deserted and two predated. At nearby Skipwith Common three nests were found. Confirmation of breeding was also received from Acaster, Heslington, Poppleton, Sand Hutton and Stamford Bridge.

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*  
*Common resident breeder*

*Red listed*  
*BBS 28/43*

Peak counts at the beginning of the year were lower than those seen during 2016 with 30 at Dunnington on 28th January, 45 at Brecks Farm, Haxby on 2nd April and 25 at East Cottingwith on the 25th the only counts over 20.

Confirmation of breeding was under-recorded, with fledged young noted at Burythorpe, Fishergate (York), Melbourne (Pocklington Canal), Langton Road Poppleton, Westfield House and Wigginton. At a garden in Woodthorpe three nests were present, while two nest boxes were occupied in a garden in Strensall with many young seen.

Post breeding, a flock of 150 at Thornton Lane on 25th August was the highest count of the year. Towards the end of the year, flocks included 75 at Brecks Farm, Haxby on 29th October and 70 at Thornton on 30th December.

**Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus*  
*Resident breeder*

*Red listed*  
*BBS 25/43*

At the beginning of the year the highest counts came from three locations; sixty were at Wistow on 30th January, 30 at Bank Island during February and March and numbers at Dunnington peaked at 100 on 4th February.

Breeding was confirmed at Acaster, Bank Island, Bolton Percy, Castle Howard, Scagglethorpe Lane, Seaton Ross and Wheldrake Ings. At SHL, four broods were produced from six breeding attempts.

Post breeding there were some impressive flocks with 100 at Sutton upon Derwent on 20th August, 150 at Thornton on 25th August and 50 at Sutton-on-the-Forest on 17th September. During November, 50 were at the Yorkshire Arboretum on the 12th, with 70 at the Pocklington Canal, Melbourne on the 17th and 50 at Bank Island. Peak counts in December were up to 70 at Bank Island and 80 at Field Lane, Thornton on the 30th.

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

*Red listed*  
*BBS 8/43*

The first records of the year came on 11th April with singles at Heslington East and Wheldrake Ings. These were followed by two at the site of the new York City stadium at Monks Cross on the 13th. Records increased during the rest of April with peak counts of eight at Allerthorpe Common on the 17th and 15 at Hagg Lane, East Cottingwith on the 22nd. Passage continued during May with six at Wistow on the 3rd and 20 at Thornton Ellers on the 5th.

During the summer birds were reported from suitable breeding habitat at a number of locations. Breeding was confirmed at Cliffe (one pair), Kelfield (one pair), along the Lower Wharfe between Cawood and Ulleskelf, Melbourne (four pairs) and Towthorpe (one pair).

Post breeding counts in July included 12 at Field Lane, Thornton, with a further seven at Thornton Ings on the 10th, eight at Mount Pleasant Farm, Kelfield on the 12th, 17 at Wheldrake Ings on the 21st and 12 at Bank Island the next day. Passage increased during August with 20 at Thornton Ellers on the 11th and an impressive 80 at Wheldrake Ings on the 21st with 40 still present the next day. VMW at Ozendyke recorded eight flying south and one north between 19th August and 12th September. The final records of the year came in September with four at Wheldrake Ings and five south over Bank Island on the 14th and a single south over Wheldrake Ings on the 16th was the last.

**Blue-headed Wagtail** *Motacilla flava flava* YOC

No records of this race in 2017, though reported in three of the past ten years. However a male 'Channel' Wagtail (*M. f. flava x flavissima*) was photographed at Hemingbrough on 7th May, which then flew off west up the river (JAB).

**Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*

*Red listed*

*Resident breeder and winter visitor*

*BBS 1/43*

During the year there were widespread reports generally of one to two birds, including birds visiting gardens and from York city centre. In January and February four roosted at Bank Island on the 20th, with five there on 9th March.

Breeding was confirmed at Acaster (one pair), Bank Island (one pair - two broods), Naburn Lock (one pair) and Pocklington Canal (three pairs).

VMW at Ozendyke recorded 14 flying south between 6th September and 1st November with a peak of four on 6th September. On 15th October, six at Bank Island included three flying south. On 26th November three were at Sand Hutton.

**Pied Wagtail** *Motacilla alba*

*Common resident breeder*

*BBS 27/43*

The large numbers present in the traditional roost in Parliament Street during December 2016 decreased during January with 600 on the 14th, but had increased to 900 on 26th February and to a peak of 1100 on 10th March. Elsewhere during February, 33 were at Clifton Ings on the 4th, with the same number at Brumber Hill on the 28th.

Spring passage during March included 13 at Heslington East on the 5th, with 15 at Brumber Hill on the 13th and ten at East Cottingwith on the 18th. On 5th May, 35 were at Thornton Ellers. Small numbers were widely reported during the breeding season with evidence of breeding received from Acaster, Bank Island, Brumber Hill, Heslington East, Kelfield, Melbourne, Monks Cross, Naburn and SHL (where five pairs bred).

On 21st July, 30 seen flying over Bishopthorpe Road, may have been heading for Parliament Street in York city centre, with 100 present on 26th August.

Autumn passage included 19 (14 south) at Bank Island on 24th September and 15 over Bolton Percy Ings on the 27th. In October, 18 were at Barlby on the 14th, with ten through Bank Island on the 15th and nine through Naburn on the 21st. During November, counts included 18 at Old Gravel Pits, Allerthorpe on the 12th, 32 at Acaster Airfield on the 24th and 54 at Bubwith Ings on the 25th. In December, up to 50 were still at Bubwith Ings on the 7th, with 21 at Bank Island and 29 at Wheldrake Ings on the 16th. At NDC, 50 were present on the 27th and 20 were at both Aughton Ings and Ellerton on the 28th. The roost in Parliament Street peaked at 500 on 15th December.

**White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba alba*

*Scarce spring passage migrant*

The first record of the year was of a single at Acaster Airfield on 30th March and 1st April. Also in April, a male was at Heslington East on the 7th and a single at Bank Island on the 25th. In May, two were at Thornton Ellers on the 5th with a single present there on the 8th.

**Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis*

*Red listed*

*Migrant breeder though numbers have recently declined*

The first records of the year came in April, from Strensall Common on the 22nd, following by two singing at Skipwith Common on the 25th. At these two sites during May, up to eleven singing males were at Skipwith Common and five territories were identified at Strensall Common during the MOD survey on the 12th; a decrease from eight during 2016. At Yearsley Moor, five were present on the 14th, three of which were singing, and seven on 11th June, when two were singing. The only other site with singing birds was Allerthorpe Common where six were present on 4th June and a single there on the 20th. After that, a single flying south over Sherburn in Elmet on 6th July was the only record until three were seen at Skipwith Common on 20th September; the last of the year.

**Meadow Pipit** *Anthus pratensis*

*Amber listed*

*Resident and migrant breeder and passage migrant*

*BBS 5/43*

At the beginning of the year, flocks in January included 18 at Selby on the 7th, 13 at Escrick on the 14th, 35 at Heslington East on the 24th and 50 at Aughton Ings on the 30th. On 28th February, 16 were at Brumber Hill. Passage birds were reported during April, including 91 flying north at Bolton Percy Ings on the 5th.

The first singing birds were reported from Milford Common on 7th March with reports from widespread locations after this. Breeding was confirmed at NDC, Thornton Ellers and Wheldrake Ings. A single territory was identified during the MOD survey on Strensall Common.

VMW at Ozendyke recorded 1440 flying south between 30th August and 27th September with a peak of 325 on 12th September. At Wheldrake Ings, 50 were present on 6th September. Also in September, 130 were disturbed from a field by a Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* at Wharfe Ings on the 12th, while numbers at Brumber Hill peaked at an impressive 1000 on the 16th. In October, 200 were at

Brumber Hill on the 9th. During December flocks included 30 at Heslington East on the 19th and 30 at NDC on the 27th.

**Rock Pipit** *Anthus petrosus* YOC  
*Scarce, mainly winter visitor*

Not recorded in 2017, having been recorded in four of the past ten years, most recently 2015.

**Water Pipit** *Anthus spinoletta* YOC *Amber listed*  
*Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant*

The first confirmed records since 2013 were of a single briefly at Bank Island on 15th April (LDV Blog) and later in the year one seen at Rufforth on 17th November and again on the 21st (AH).

**Brambling** *Fringilla montifringilla*  
*Winter visitor and passage migrant*

An excellent start to the year, with birds reported at several locations. In January, 30 were in a cover crop at Deighton on the 8th with three at Old Gravel Pits, Allerthorpe the same day. On the 15th, 13 were at Naburn, along with a single at Pocklington Canal, Melbourne. A single was at Bank Island on the 18th and 80 were at Escrick on the 19th. At Dunnington on Intake Lane, the large bunting and finch flock attracted the first birds from the 20th, with five there on the 29th. A single was at Acaster Airfield on 26th January with twelve there on 3rd February. During February up to five continued to be reported from Dunnington along with a single at West Lilling on the 19th and 20 at Thorganby. In March, three were at Old Gravel Pits, Allerthorpe on the 6th with 60 at Canal Head the same day and four were still at Dunnington on the 7th. Also in March, 15 were at Allerthorpe Common on the 12th, while numbers at Eastmoor peaked at 25. The last reports of the spring came in April with a single at Acaster Airfield on the 1st, 20 at Allerthorpe Common on the 3rd, with a single there on the 5th and finally a single flew north over Kirkby Wharfe on the 17th.

The first returning bird was a single south over Bolton Percy Ings on 27th September. In October, singles were at Bank Island on the 4th, south over Bolton Percy Ings on the 18th, Clifton Backies on the 23rd, Yorkshire Arboretum on the 29th and three flew south over Bolton Percy Ings on the 28th. Small numbers continued to be reported during November with singles heading south over Bolton Percy Ings on the 1st and 8th, with singles at Acaster Airfield on the 3rd, Castle Howard on the 6th, west over Bishopthorpe on the 7th and 10th, Yorkshire Arboretum on the 11th and Bank Island on the 12th. On 6th November, two flew south over Whit Hill, with four at Kirkby Wharfe on the 11th and three at Hagg Wood on the 14th. In December, two were at Milford Common on the 6th and three visited the feeders at Bank Island on the 29th.

**Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs*

*Common resident breeder, passage and winter visitor*

*BBS 43/43*

Widespread and well reported throughout the year. At the beginning of the year, peak counts were 50 at Milford Common on 12th January, 100 at Acaster Airfield on 3rd February and 100 at Dunnington on the 4th.

Whilst there were lots of reports of singing males, there were fewer reports of confirmed breeding. A BBS square near Naburn Wood produced totals of 15 on 29th April and 11 on 24th June (a decrease from 25 recorded during 2016), and at Crayke there were 15 on 26th June. At SHL, 12 singing males were present on 19th May, with juveniles seen there in September. Of six nests found on Riccall/Skipwith farmland, one was predated while on nearby Skipwith Common of 14 nests found, 36% were predated; the average number of chicks for the successful broods was 2.0 and 4.4 at ringing respectively. Recently fledged juveniles were also seen at Acaster Malbis, Easthorpe, Melbourne (Pocklington Canal) and Westfield House

The only visible migration was noted on 8th October when 30 passed over Grosvenor Terrace in York city centre. On 12 November 37 were at Brumber Hill, while a flock of 50 at Allerthorpe Common on 28th December was the highest count in the latter half of the year.

**Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* YOC

*Red listed*

*Rare winter visitor*

A single at Yearsley Moor on 17th February was the only report at the beginning of the year.

The latter half of the year then saw an unexpected but welcome influx nationally. October saw the first birds appear with two visiting a feeder in a garden in Thorganby on the 13th and two flying over Church Bridge, Melbourne on the 29th. November saw a massive increase in sightings. At Gilling East, six were present on the 1st, with 25 the next day and 11 on the 16th. On 2nd November a single was Thornton Ellers. Also on the 2nd, eight were discovered at the Yorkshire Arboretum at Castle Howard, with 50 present the next day increasing to 60 on the 4th. The peak count was 68 on 23rd November. Birds were then present daily into December and proved popular with large numbers of visiting birders. The Arboretum was closed in December reducing the number of sightings although eight were still present on the 3rd. Elsewhere in November singles were at Yearsley Moor on the 2nd and Bolton Percy Ings on the 5th, with six northeast over Whit Hill the next day, two at Poppleton on the 8th and eight near Coxwold on the 10th. Three flew south over Rawcliffe Ings on the 3rd. On the 12th two were found in with a Redwing *Turdus iliacus* flock at Bank Island, with a single there on the 14th and three on the 15th, while a single was seen nearby at Wheldrake Ings on the 19th. Two were reported at Church Bridge, Melbourne on the 17th and three at Coneysthorpe the same day. Late in the month two flew north at Norton on the 28th and eight were behind St Peter's School, York on the 30th. Reports during December included a single at Elvington on the 2nd, three at Newburgh Priory and one at Grovesnor Terrace, York on the 3rd, singles at Fulford Ings on

the 9th, Acaster Airfield, Byland and North Duffield on the 17th and two at Acaster Airfield on the 30th. The flock at Gilling East was still present during December and peaked at 29 on the 27th.

**Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

*Amber listed*

*Resident breeder, passage and winter visitor*

*BBS 16/43*

Reported throughout the year, mostly in low single digit numbers. In January, up to nine visited the feeders at Bank Island, while 11 were at Milford Common on the 29th. Ten were at Acaster Malbis on 22nd February.

During the breeding season evidence of confirmed breeding was received from Askham Bryan (where a pair produced five young), Breezy Knees at Warthill, Heslington, the Pocklington Canal at Melbourne, SHL (where a pair produced two broods) and Wheldrake Ings. At Skipwith Common three nests were found, one of which was predated, with five chicks ringed at the other two sites.

Post breeding, eleven at Wheldrake Ings on 6th August increased to an impressive 28 on the 28th with 15 still present on 2nd September. Ten were at Castle Howard on 15th September. In late autumn and early winter, counts of eight or nine came from several sites: Bank Island, Brumber Hill, Clifton Backies, Pocklington Canal (Melbourne) and Scagglethorpe Lane.

**Greenfinch** *Chloris chloris*

*Resident breeder, passage and winter visitor*

*BBS 23/43*

At the beginning of the year, only low numbers were reported with the peak count just 12 at Wistow during January.

The only confirmed reports of breeding were received from Poppleton, SHL, where one pair bred, and from Seaton Ross. There were reports from a handful of other sites of birds displaying and holding territory.

Towards the end of year there was more encouraging news with 120 at Hagg Wood, Dunnington on 31st October, increasing to 250 on 14th November. On 12th November, 60 roosted in laurel at Old Gravel Pits Allerthorpe, however these numbers were dwarfed by an impressive count of 450 at Kexby on 11th November.

**Linnet** *Linaria cannabina*

*Red listed*

*Resident breeder, passage and winter visitor*

*BBS 25/43*

The year started with the largest count of the year, an impressive 380 at Sherburn in Elmet on 1st January; 120 were still present there on 5th February, 80 on 26th March and 40 on 5th April. Also in January, 60 were at Castle Howard on the 4th, with 40 at Barlby on the 5th, up to 40 at Wistow and 100 at Acaster Airfield on the 26th. At Skipwith Common, 34 came into roost on the 19th. In February, 150 were at Milford Common on the 12th, 45 at Barmby Moor on the 14th and 60 at West Lilling on the 19th. Flocks continued to be reported into March including 60 at Heslington Tillmire on the 1st, 80 at Stillingfleet on the 6th, 100 still at Milford Common on the 7th and 80 at Eastmoor on the 29th. In April 59 were at NDC on the 7th, with 110 at Hagg Lane on the 16th. On 14th May, 49 were at Ryther Ings.



Breeding data included 29 nests found in farmland at Skipwith/Riccall, 24% of which were predated, while the mean number of chicks at ringing was 3.5. At Skipwith Common, two nests were found, with broods of three and four ringed. The MOD survey at Strensall Common found nine territories, an encouraging increase, up from just one in 2016. Breeding was also confirmed at Brumber Hill, Melbourne Park farm, SHL and Thornton Ellers.

Post breeding, 40 were at Wheldrake Ings on 29th July, while in September flocks included 30 at Monks Cross on the 8th, 33 at Bolton Percy Ings on the 10th, 200 at Brumber Hill on the 14th and 70 at Scagglethorpe Lane on the 22nd. VMW at Ozendyke recorded 187 flying south between 27th September and 5th November with a peak of 97 south on 27th September. In October, 50 were at Ozendyke Ings on the 8th, with 35 at Hagg Wood on the 9th and 35 at Acaster Airfield on the 11th. On 9th November, 30 were at Cawood. During December, 100 were at Cornfield NR on 12th with 85 at Milford Common on the 24th and 50 at Castle Howard on the 26th.

**Twite** *Linaria flavirostris*  
*Rare winter visitor*

YOC *Red listed*

Not recorded in 2017, having been recorded in five of the past ten years, most recently 2014.

**Lesser Redpoll** *Acanthis cabaret*

*Red listed*

*Passage and winter visitor, formerly resident breeder*

*BBS 2/43*

In January 45 were at Skipwith Common on the 1st, with 40 at Redhouse on the 29th. On 25th February, 70 were at Hagg Wood and 60 at Skipwith Common. During March, the flock at Skipwith Common increased to 100 by the 4th and 30 were at Allerthorpe Common on the 12th. Numbers decreased during April, with 20 at Pocklington Canal, Melbourne on the 19th the largest flock. In May, two were at Milford Common on the 1st, a single at Skipwith Common on the 2nd, a flock of 44 at the Pocklington Canal, Melbourne on the 5th and three at Milford Common on the 6th. These were the last records until September: it seems the species may have been lost as a breeding species in the area.

In September, three at Wheldrake Ings on the 2nd were the first, followed by singles at Bolton Percy Ings on the 27th and 30th. Reports increased during October, including 15 at Thornton Lock on the 6th, eleven at Wheldrake Ings on the 15th and 30 at Pocklington Canal, Melbourne on the 19th. At Skipwith Common 98 were caught and ringed between 12th October and 8th December. November saw flocks increase in size with 60 at Pocklington Canal, Melbourne on the 3rd. In December, 50 were at Allerthorpe Common on the 9th and 40 still at Pocklington Canal, Melbourne on the 13th.

**Common (Mealy) Redpoll** *Acanthis flammea*  
*Scarce winter visitor*

YOC *Amber listed*

At the beginning of the year, birds were reported at Hagg Wood, Dunnington with nine on 17th January (DW) and nine again on 26th February (DMB). A single

was at Skipwith Common on 4th March (DMB).

The next records came in November, with one caught and ringed at Skipwith Common on the 14th (DT), with two at Hagg Wood on the 21st (DW). A single was then found at Allerthorpe Common on 9th December (MS).

**Arctic Redpoll** *Acanthis hornemanni* YNU

A single considered to be a Coue's was found at Hagg Wood, Dunnington on 25th February (MP), only a few hundred metres away from the Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos*! It was still present the next day with a large flock of Lesser Redpoll *Acanthis cabaret* and five Common Redpoll *Acanthis flammea* (DMB, EL). If accepted this will be the second record for the area; the first being a single at Heslington in January 1985. A full account can be found on page 123.

*This record is subject to acceptance by the YNU/BBRC (BBRC for Coue's).*

**Crossbill** *Loxia curvirostra*

*Casual breeder and passage migrant*

Another poor year with just five records received. The first was at Yearsley Wood on 17th February and a month later a female was at Allerthorpe Common on 14th March, followed by more positive news of 14, including juveniles, at Yearsley Moor on 21st May. There was an interesting report of a juvenile photographed when it visited a garden feeding station in Melbourne on 29th July. The only other record was of a single at Yearsley Moor on 2nd November.

**Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis*

*Resident breeder, passage and winter visitor* BBS 38/43

Widely reported throughout the year, both in small numbers and larger flocks. At the beginning of the year 50 were at Wistow on 6th January, while in February, 120 were at Milford Common on the 12th and 50 at Heslington Tillmire on the 19th.

Breeding was confirmed at Easthorpe, Fishergate, Heslington, Melbourne, Poppleton, SHL, Strensall, Riccall/Skipwith farmland (two nests), Thornton and Thorganby.

Post breeding flocks started to build up during August with 120 at Brumber Hill on the 22nd and 60 at Riccall on the 27th. Into September, numbers at Brumber Hill increased to 300, while 100 were at Rufforth Tip and 120 were at Naburn with 150 at Wheldrake Ings. The flock at Wheldrake Ings increased to 300 on 7th October. Also during October, 130 were at NDC on the 2nd with 70 at Bolton Percy Ings on the 8th. On 3rd November, 50 were at Askham Bog and 60 at Pocklington Canal, Melbourne. On 2nd December, 60 were at Bank Island.

**Siskin** *Spinus spinus*

*Resident breeder in small numbers, passage and winter visitor* BBS 2/43

In January, 100 were at Castle Howard on the 4th with 52 at the Pocklington Canal, Melbourne on the 6th and 30 at St Nicholas Fields on the 10th. Thirty five

were at Sand Hutton on 1st February, while a flock at Milford Common peaked at 90 on the 12th. In March, the highest count was 18 at Wistow on the 7th. A male and female were on feeders at Bolton Percy on 4th and 5th April.

During May and June the only reports received were of 17 at Yearsley Moor on 14th May, with two there and two at Wass on 11th June. This lack of records during the breeding season is surely not a true reflection of status of this species in the area. There were no reports during July and August.

VMW at Ozendyke recorded 14 flying south between 12th September and 6th October.

The first significant flocks towards the end of the year were reported in November with 55 at the Pocklington Canal, Melbourne on the 9th increasing to 100 during December. Also during December, 50 were at St Nicholas Fields on 20th with 60 at Milford Common on 30th.

**Snow Bunting** *Plectrophenax nivalis* YOC Amber listed  
*Rare winter visitor*

The first record since 2004 was of a single on the river bank at Bubwith Ings on 26th November (VP).

**Corn Bunting** *Emberiza calandra* Red listed  
*Resident breeder* BBS 5/43

The York area continues to hold a significant population of this nationally decreasing bunting. At the beginning of the year the large bunting flock at Intake Lane, Dunnington included counts of 38 on 25th January and 100 on 4th February. The traditional roost at Thornton Lock, Melbourne peaked at 50 on 16th January.

During the breeding season singing birds were reported from several locations. In the LDV up to 56 pairs were on the Ings grasslands during the month with good numbers also present in the Thornton area and around East Cottingwith. Away from the LDV reports included two singing males at Full Sutton, a single at Naburn, three singing males at Strensall Common and up to six at West Lilling.

Later in the year, in November, 26 were at Thornton Lock on the 17th, with 42 at Field Lane, Thornton nearby on 30th December.

**Yellowhammer** *Emberiza citrinella* Red listed  
*Resident breeder, passage and winter visitor* BBS 32/43

In January, the flock on Intake Lane, Dunnington which attracted the Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* peaked at an estimated 300, with 200 still present into February before decreasing in March with 70 on the 3rd and 40 on the 9th. Also in January up to 50 were at Wistow, with 43 at Naburn on the 15th. In February, 28 were at Thornton on the 22nd and 26 were at Brumber Hill on the 28th. On 8th March, 31 were at Acaster Airfield.

Singing birds were widely reported during the breeding season, including at Allerthorpe Common (five singing males), Lilling (five singing males), Naburn (seven singing males), Scagglethorpe Lane (six singing males) and West Moor

(five singing males). Evidence of breeding came from farmland around Riccall/Skipwith where 21 nests were located, with 28% predated and an average of 2.7 chicks ringed in what was considered an excellent season. During the MOD survey at Strensall Common only a single territory was located.

In September, 40 were at Fangfoss on the 4th with 50 at Brumber Hill on the 14th. On 13th November, 46 were at Acaster Airfield, while 30 at Allertorpe Common on 28th December was the last significant flock of the year.

**Pine Bunting** *Emberiza leucocephalos* BBRC

*Very rare vagrant*

One of the rarest finds in the recording area and a great reward for the local birder who found a male in a large flock of Yellowhammers *Emberiza citronella* in fields off Intake Lane, Dunnington on 20th January (CG). It remained in the area until 10th March in a large mixed flock of Yellowhammer, Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*, Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*, Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*, Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra* and Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* and was much enjoyed by hundreds of visiting birders. A first for the YOC recording area, the full account can be found on page 119.

*This record has been accepted by the BBRC.*

**Reed Bunting** *Emberiza schoeniclus* Amber listed

*Resident breeder and passage visitor*

*BBS 17/43*

At the beginning of the year, up to 45 were at Wistow during January and February. Also in January, 21 were at the Pocklington Canal, Melbourne on the 11th and 30 were at Dunnington on the 22nd. On 22nd February, 25 were at Milford Common, with 21 at Wheldrake Ings on 12th March and 20 were at Bolton Percy Ings on 8th April.

Breeding data included four singing males at Bank Island, two pairs which attempted to breed at SHL and ten singing males at Wheldrake Ings. A survey of the Pocklington Canal from Thornton Ellers to Canal Head produced 16 singing males on 18th June. At Strensall Common 17 territories were found during the MOD survey. Confirmation of breeding was also received from Hagg Wood, Heslington East, Milford Common, Mount Pleasant farm and Thornton Ellers.

On 15th October, 32 came into roost at Wheldrake Ings. At Thornton Lock, Pocklington Canal 32 were present on 2nd December with 50 nearby at Field Lane, Thornton on the 30th.

## Appendix A: Category E

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

The Black Swan at Heslington East remained with the resident breeding pair of Mute Swans *Cygnus olor* during the year; they tolerate its presence, even when they have cygnets, but will drive off other Mute Swans quite aggressively. One was seen on the Refuge, Wheldrake on several dates during January. In March, one was at Bubwith on the 1st, one at NDC on the 19th, two there on the 23rd and two again on the 25th. Two were seen at NDC on several dates in April, then one at Wheldrake Ings on the 26th. One was on the Refuge on 8th May. On 13th December one was at NDC.

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

Members of the free-flying flock at the University of York were reported in at least eight months of the year. Up to 18 were recorded there from January to March. Nest building was noted on 31st March. In the last three months of the year, 26 or 27 were present at each WeBS count. Single digit numbers were also seen there in April and August. The only record pertaining to the flock at Flamingoland (Kirby Misperton) this year was of one there on 25th March.

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

Apart from counts done during WeBS, there were fewer reports of the University of York's resident flock this year, which remains stable at around 28 individuals. On 5th March 12 'blue' morphs were noted in the flock; while the annual peak count was 29 on the 12th (WeBS). The only months the whole flock was not seen there were January and November. Three pairs bred, with juveniles seen in the autumn. The only other report was of a small number among a large flock of Greylag Geese *Anser anser* on 8th September on fields between York and Elvington. The Greylags were presumed to be dispersing after the now annual post breeding build up on Heslington East.

### **Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea*

A single female, a probable escape, was seen at Bolton Percy Ings on 27th March and again on the 29th, with a final sighting there on 2nd May.

## Appendix B: Hybrids

**Gadwall x Mallard** One at Wheldrake Ings on 24th September.

## Appendix C: Unproven records

**Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia* A report of one on the pool at Wheldrake Ings on 28th April was not substantiated.

### Update on records submitted to the BBRC/YNU rarities committees

**American Wigeon** *Anas americana* The drake found by Jono Leadley at CHL on 12th February 2016 has been accepted by the YNU; the fourth accepted record.

**Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* The individual seen by David Tate on 15th January 2016 has been accepted by the YNU; the second accepted record

**Great White Egret** *Ardea alba* Records pertaining to the individual seen at Yearsley between 6th and 12th December 2015 have been accepted by the YNU.

Correction to 2016 Report – the YNU did not require sightings of this species to be submitted to them from 1st January 2016, so 2016 sightings were assessed by the Club's recorder and all have been accepted.

**Rough-legged Buzzard** *Buteo lagopus* The one reported at Thorpe Willoughby on 23rd March 2015 was classed as not proven by the YNU, so not accepted.

**Kumlien's Gull** *Larus glaucooides kumlieni* The records of birds seen in 2015, at Wheldrake Ings on 3rd January, Knapton on the 7th, Rufforth on the 11th, 12th, 15th and 20th and Rufforth again on 3rd and 4th March (as detailed in the 2015 report) have all been accepted by the YNU.

## Earliest and latest dates for summer visitors/passage migrants 2017

Species	Arrival Date/First Reported	Last Reported
Garganey	18th February	8th September
Quail	14th May	31st July
Osprey	13th April	25th September
Hobby	13th April	2nd October
Oystercatcher	17th January	9th August
Little Ringed Plover	7th April	9th August
Ringed Plover	19th February	30th May
Whimbrel ^	10th April	27th May (6th August)
Common Sandpiper	22nd April	26th September
Greenshank	13th April	6th September
Common Tern	29th April	13th August
Turtle Dove	14th May	5th July
Cuckoo	17th April	18th August
Nightjar	30th May	30th August
Swift	19th April	20th September
Sand Martin	13th March	23rd September
Swallow	28th March	22nd October
House Martin	9th April	15th October
Wood Warbler	18th July (only record)	-
Chiffchaff †	3rd March	9th November
Willow Warbler	27th March	20th September
Blackcap *	28 th March	23rd October
Garden Warbler	14th April	20th September
Lesser Whitethroat	11th April	18th September
Whitethroat	11th April	24th September
Grasshopper Warbler	1st May	24th July
Sedge Warbler	9th April	17th August
Reed Warbler	20th April	26th September
Spotted Flycatcher	3rd May	16th September
Redstart	11th April	16th September
Whinchat	16th July	16th September
Wheatear	9th March	22nd October
Yellow Wagtail	11th April	16th September
Tree Pipit	22nd April	20th September

† Overwintering birds seen on 8th and 13th January, 9th, 10th and 16th December

\* Possible overwintering birds seen on 9th, 21st and 25th November

^ One was seen on return passage on 6th August

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

Species	Last reported in Spring	First reported in Autumn
Bewick's Swan	16th January	8th December
Whooper Swan	3rd April	5th October
Pink-footed Goose	10th May	12th September
Pintail	7th May	17th September
Goldeneye	11th April	22nd October
Goosander ^	23rd July	13th October
Golden Plover	4th April	18th July
Ruff	25th May	15th July
Dunlin	14th May	17th July
Green Sandpiper*	7th May (2nd June)	24th June
Jack Snipe	15th April	13th October
Fieldfare	7th May (late bird)	8th October
Redwing	5th April	6th October
Brambling	17th April	27th September

^ One over-summered and bred at Bolton Percy Ings

\* 2nd June bird either very late lingering non-breeder or very early migrant



**Sedge Warbler – a migrant breeder**

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# Rare Breeding Birds of the Lower Derwent Valley and Skipwith Common 2017

Compiled by Craig Ralston

## Terminology (Summary)

**Possible** – birds (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.

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

## 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	14	1 (to fledging)	2	3	1	1 - 6
Garganey	1 (from June)	1 (see comments)	1	0	0	0 - 1
Shoveler	340 (157 prs)	40+ (2 caught and ringed)	56	31	18	18 - 105
Pochard	2	3	0	0	1	1 - 1
Quail	Singing males		10	6	0	0 - 16
Little Egret	21+	15+	0	0	8	8
Marsh Harrier	6	4	0	1	1	1 - 2
Water Rail	16 (calling males)	6+	8	4	2	2 - 16
Corncrake			3	4	1	1 - 8
Black-tailed Godwit			1	0	0	0 - 1
Hobby			1	5	0	0 - 6
Woodlark			2	2	4	4 - 8
Willow Tit			3	4	4	4 - 11

### Wigeon:

56 were still present at Wheldrake on the 1st May when four pairs were at NDC along with three at Bank Island. 40 were at Wheldrake on the 6th including c10

pairs. On the 13th five were still at Wheldrake when a total of 11 pairs was present throughout the valley. Birds became increasingly difficult to see thereafter with seven drakes seen at Wheldrake Ings on the 30th.

Up to 7 pairs were present throughout the reserve during June.

A single female with a large, almost fledged juvenile was found on the scrape at Swantail Hide, Wheldrake on the 21st July (CSR, FM), presumably the same two were seen on the 23rd (DB) and daily on the pool thereafter.

### **Garganey:**

A rather poor year for the species in the valley.

A single drake was present on the pool at Wheldrake Ings on the 6th April, followed by a pair at Bank Island on the 28th and Aughton on the 29th.

During May a single drake present at Wheldrake on the 2nd was followed by a female at Thornton Ellers on the 15th and a pair at Bank Island on the 29th.

A female was present at NDC on the 14th June with a juvenile at Wheldrake Ings on the 21st.

A single eclipse drake at Bank Island on the 18th July was followed by a juvenile there on the 29th.

Maximum number of adults (from June onwards) - 1

Number of young - 1 (already fledged so could have been dispersing from elsewhere although relatively early).

### **Shoveler:**

Numbers increased during March with spring passage/incoming breeders – a total of 340+ were recorded by month end.

Another excellent April with 78 at Bank Island on the 1st, 187 at Wheldrake on the 2nd, 58 at NDC on the 3rd and 340+ throughout the site on the 6th. A full count throughout the valley revealed a total of 157 pairs on the 10th.

In July two unfledged broods of 10 ducklings were present on the pool at Wheldrake on the 10th with 20 fledged ducklings there on the 17th. Several ducklings also fledged and lingered at Bank Island.

### **Pochard:**

A single male at Wheldrake Ings on the 24th June was the only sighting during the month.

A single drake was again present on the pool at Wheldrake Ings on the 1st, 4th and 9th July, while a female found on the ditch network at Bank Island with three ducklings on the 21st was unexpected (CSR, FM).

### **Quail:**

The first singing bird was present on Melbourne and Thornton Ings on the 14th May (NC) and again on the 15th (CSR), followed by one at East Cottingwith Ings on the 23rd.

A notable influx then occurred at the end of the first week of June. Two singing males were located at NDC on the evening of the 6th with three there the next

morning (and regularly thereafter), and singles at Wheldrake Ings and East Cottingwith on the 7th, and two at Bubwith and North Duffield Ings on the 8th. 12 singing males included further birds at Aughton and Ellerton Ings on the 9th with another singing on nearby arable land by East Cottingwith village. A further bird was present at Church Bridge Melbourne on the 10th with another at East Cottingwith Ings on the 14th. By month end a total of 16 singing males had been located throughout the site.

### **Little Egret:**

Up to nine were present throughout the valley during the first week of April with 16 throughout the site (including nine at Wheldrake Ings) on the 10th. Large numbers remained thereafter including pairs reported from the heronry on the 13th. A total of 19 were recorded throughout the valley on the 23rd. Four pairs were present in the heronry by the end of the month.

Four were still present at NDC on the 1st May with one at Thornton Ellers on the 5th. 17 were recorded across the valley on the 8th. Eight were then recorded at Wheldrake on the 11th with 21 at dusk there on the 18th and eight there on the 21st. Elsewhere, up to three were present at Thornton Ellers on the 18th.

Regularly recorded throughout the valley during June with up to seven breeding pairs present. A single (returning from 2016) colour-ringed bird 'J9' was present at Thornton Ellers during the month. Up to 12 were roosting on the pool at Wheldrake towards month end.

### **Great White Egret:**

*Continues to increase and recorded here (breeding season records) for completeness*

A single was present at NDC on the 29th March with two at the southern end of the valley on the 30th.

Two remained in the Bubwith Ings/NDC area on the 1st and 2nd April, followed by a single at Wheldrake on the 3rd and again on the 8th.

Two were again present at Wheldrake on the 25th May with a single present again on the 27th and 28th.

A single flew north up the valley and over Ellerton church on the 9th June (NC, CSR *et al*) and was again present at East Cottingwith Ings on the 13th and Bubwith Ings on the 14th.

Another or the same wandering single was present at Bank Island on the 9th July. Recorded regularly thereafter till month end.

### **Marsh Harrier:**

Two at Wheldrake on the 6th May were followed by singles at North Duffield Ings on the 9th and NDC on the 9th and 10th. An immature male was present on the 14th with an adult male on the 16th, whilst a pair was noted at Wheldrake Ings from the 20th to month end. At least four or five individuals were thought to be involved during the month.

Two pairs were present throughout the valley in June with at least one pair thought to be feeding young by the 9th, whilst an additional first summer male made regular appearances in the Melbourne and Thornton Ings area.

By July two pairs were thought to have bred in the valley with the first fledged juvenile at Bank Island on the 17th. Three were together there on the 21st.

### **Goshawk:**

One pair was present in the area – probable breeding record

### **Water Rail:**

Up to four calling birds were present in the reedbed by Swantail Hide, Wheldrake on the 11th April.

A single was calling on the riverbank by Tower Hide on the 1st May whilst another was seen at Church Bridge, Melbourne on the same date. On the 18th three were recorded from the reedbed at Swantail Hide, followed by two along the old course of the River Derwent on the 20th. Up to three birds were heard calling from around Pool Hide on the 30th.

Up to four singing males were present at Wheldrake in June with the first juveniles of the year noted there on the 7th.

Up to four pairs remained at Wheldrake throughout July with other calling birds noted at Melbourne, Aughton and NDC.

### **Corncrake:**

*Another great year suggesting/reinforcing successful breeding in recent years.*

A singing male was found calling in front of the Geoff Smith Hide at NDC at 1100hrs on the 14th May and continued throughout the day (MFJ *et al*). It was then present and heard calling throughout the 15th and again on the 16th. Two were calling in the area on the 17th and thereafter until month end. Another was heard at East Cottingwith on the 23rd (CSR *et al*) followed by one at Wheldrake briefly on the 31st.

At least two calling males remained at NDC throughout June with another on Bubwith Ings throughout the month, and were thought to be breeding judged on behaviour. Two singing males were present on Wheldrake Ings on the 20th and 21st with a single daily thereafter until month end.

In July it was thought that another successful breeding season had occurred, with at least eight singing males involved from which four or five are thought to have bred or at least attempting breeding, and possible attempted second broods. A single singing male continued to call from in front of Tower Hide at Wheldrake Ings daily from the 1st when two sightings were also reported, whilst a single female was seen on the path by the Hide there on the 3rd. Two were singing again on the site on the 11th with a single there until at least the 25th. Singing males also continued to call daily at NDC and Bubwith Ings early in the month until at least the 19th. Two recently fledged juveniles were seen at the northern end of NDC on the 18th with another there on the 19th.

**Common Crane:**

During April three arrived at Wheldrake Ings on the 8th and were the first of the year, followed by four at East Cottingwith on the 10th (TH) and a single on arable there on the 13th. Presumably it was the same group of four that re-appeared back at Wheldrake on the 19th and 20th (AS, DB, CSR). Six were reported near East Cottingwith on the 22nd.

During May two at Thorganby Ings on the 17th (CSR) were followed by three at NDC on the 21st.

A single was present at dawn on the 11th June at Wheldrake Ings

In July a single flew south down the valley over Aughton Ings on the 3rd.

**Black-tailed Godwit:**

Present through April a single pair lingered at Wheldrake Ings between the 1st-5th May, with four there on the 6th and a pair still there on the 10th – with breeding thought to have been attempted. A single individual was present at Thornton Ellers on the 15th.

**Hobby:**

The first returning bird was present at Wheldrake Ings and The Low Grounds on the 13th April with another over Bubwith village on the 20th, Wheldrake on the 23rd and NDC on the 27th. Two were seen hawking insects all afternoon at Bank Island on the 28th and a single was again present at Wheldrake Ings on the 29th and 30th.

A single was present at Wheldrake during the afternoon of the 1st May with two showing well there at dusk with three, possibly four at Bank Island on the 2nd, followed by two there on the 3rd, 4th and 5th. A single was also reported at Skipwith Common on the 5th and Wheldrake on the 6th. Singles at Bank Island and Melbourne on the 14th were followed by two at Wheldrake and two at NDC. Regular sightings were received at Wheldrake, Bank Island and elsewhere thereafter. A hatch of mayflies from the 22nd was enjoyed by hunting birds including a first summer individual at East Cottingwith Ings on the 23rd. Present daily throughout thereafter.

Good numbers of birds continued to be seen throughout the reserve during June, with a single hunting House Martins in North Duffield village on the 10th (AW).

Birds were present at Bank Island on the 1st and 4th July, with sightings also coming from Wheldrake on the 2nd and East Cottingwith/Thorganby on the 4th. A single was again present at NDC on the 19th. Adults were seen carrying food at Bank Island, Thorganby and NDC on the 21st - suggesting at least three were feeding young around the site.

**Peregrine:**

Three pairs were present in the wider LDV area and used the reserve and wider area for hunting – but outcomes weren't monitored. Up to four individuals were still present during April. Five sightings were reported from the reserve during May and presumably related to nearby breeding pairs.

Three breeding pairs were present in the wider Lower Derwent Valley area during June. A single was present at Bank Island on the 10th.

**Willow Tit:**

Wheldrake Ings and the Bank Island area continue to be a stronghold with 12 ringed there during the breeding season and post breeding period with a family party of four juveniles caught and ringed by the pool at Wheldrake on the 23rd July. Also present at the other stronghold of Thornton Ellers

**Category B – Less Scarce Species**

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

**Breeding success of Category B species in the LDV**

Species	Max. no. adults	No. of young	No. of Pairs			
			Poss.	Prob.	Confirmed	Total
Gadwall		100+ min (18 caught and ringed)	40	29	31	31 - 90
Red Kite			2	0	2	2 - 4

**Gadwall:**

A total of 83 pairs were located throughout the site on the 10th April. Large numbers (c 90 pairs) were present throughout the site with eight pairs at Thornton Ellers on the 5th May. The first brood, of 11, was recorded at NDC on the 20th with another of 8 at Sutton upon Derwent on the 22nd. 13 were at Ellerton Ings on the 23rd. Up to 25 drakes were 'loafing' at Wheldrake on the 30th when three broods (c25 ducklings) were seen.

Good numbers were present throughout the June with up to 80 loafing drakes remaining at Wheldrake on the 9th, followed by 30+ ducklings there on the 14th.

Five broods totalling 36 ducklings were present on the pool at Wheldrake on the 10th July, with 60+ ducklings there on the 11th - several unfledged broods remained at month end. 21 ducklings fledged from Bank Island while a single unfledged brood of nine remained at NDC to month end.

**Red Kite:**

Four pairs remained in the area in July with two of the pairs having thought to have bred, and at least one brood was seen, confirming successful breeding. Two were observed following hay making operations at the Low Grounds on 1st July with four birds (two adults and two juveniles) there from the 9th onwards. Two birds were regularly seen carrying food early in the month at Melbourne. Up to six were hunting over the cut meadows at Wheldrake Ings/Bank Island on the 18th/19th, whilst two were seen over newly-mown hay at NDC on the 19th/20th, followed by Aughton on the 21st/23rd.

# **Pine Bunting – a mega in our recording area**

## **By Chris Gomersall**

The morning of Friday 20th January began like most others when not working at this time of year, heading out to my local gull patch at Rufforth Tip. The weather was cold and very foggy, and after a few hours I'd only managed a couple of Glaucous gulls and a single Iceland, so I decided to drive round to the east of York, to the village of Dunnington. The previous evening, Terry Weston, warden of the nearby Hassacarr local nature reserve, had put an email out on the local grapevine informing of a large flock of over 200 Yellowhammers frequenting hedgerows and fields on the eastern edge of the village. This had stirred a bit of interest with other local birders as to what could be lurking in amongst them. I recalled seeing my first Little Bunting near Huddersfield c20 years ago, in very similar habitat, so thought this could be a possibility, so I just had to check them out.

Upon arrival, it was evident there was a massive flock of passerines present, with probably over 500 birds feeding in the area, certainly there were many Yellowhammers, but also Goldfinches, Chaffinches, Linnets, Tree Sparrows, Reed and Corn Buntings. These birds were dispersed across a couple of fields, and as there were around 40 Yellowhammers sat up on top of the nearest hedgerow, I started to scope them. With the low sun behind me, the visibility was pretty good. As I worked my way through the flock, I noticed how cold brown some of the females looked in comparison to some very bright males, suddenly there was one individual, perched facing away, that seemed different, it had no yellow tones, the underside looked white and the rump looked very rufous. I was in complete disbelief as the bird turned round to reveal a striking facial pattern, a black bordered white crown stripe, pinkish chest with another white border at the base of the throat, but most strikingly of all, brilliant white cheeks, unmistakably a male Pine Bunting! There it sat for all of 5 seconds before it dropped down into stubble with the other birds around it. I was completely shell shocked; I'd had no time to get a picture, but got my camera ready for when the birds returned to the hedgerow. After 2 hours of waiting and with other birds moving around so much, it seemed likely it was elsewhere. I decided I needed to contact other birders and tried to no avail to contact Terry Weston as he knew the area better than me, but after discussion with Andy Walker, the local bird recorder, we decided I should put the news out, given that I hadn't been on private land and had actually seen the Bunting whilst stood on a public footpath. By 3pm the mist was closing in and the light was deteriorating rapidly and I realised it was unlikely I was going to re-find the bird. A little dejected, I headed home to lots of messages and questions. Single observer records of rarities with no photographs can sometimes receive scepticism but I knew that I'd been honest, despite only seeing the bird for a few seconds, I had not seen anything to suggest a hybrid, but I also know this can be a problem for all Pine Buntings. I was definitely keen to return at first light.

The next morning I arrived at 07:30 only to find several other birders including fellow locals Tim Jones and Jack Ashton-Booth already there and watching the same hedgerow. More and more buntings were appearing as time passed and at c8am many expletives were heard coming from Tim, he'd picked it out near the base of the hedge and all the 20 or so observers managed to watch this stunning bird as it sat and preened for a few minutes before it disappeared yet again into the stubble field. Confirmation went out on the news services and as it was early on a Saturday morning, many other birders started to arrive. With people spread out over a greater area, the bird was seen several more times that day. On Sunday, I arrived mid-morning to a very different scene; almost 300 people were stood in an adjoining paddock, an area I had not been in yet. Very kindly, the owner had allowed access to the paddock to view an overgrown wild grassy field, which, it soon became evident, was the reason why so many passerines were wintering in this area, as most of the birds were feeding here at some point during the day. The Pine Bunting stayed in the general area of the paddock until at least early March, and although it could be extremely elusive for long periods, most of the several hundred people who came to see it during its stay eventually managed to do so. It was rarely seen back in the original field, which further adds to the complete flukiness of this unexpected find.

I was fortunate enough to see it many times and the whole saga was a fantastic and lucky experience. I last saw the bird on 9th March.



Photos: © **Chris Gomersall** top left,  
© **Josh Jones** below left,  
© **Terry Weston** above



## **Glossy Ibis – a first for the YOC recording area!**

**By Duncan Bye**

Having had family commitments on Saturday 2nd December I headed to my regular patch of Bank Island / Wheldrake Ings early on Sunday 3rd December, hoping to catch up with an American Wigeon which had been found at Bank Island on the Saturday. I arrived at dawn and was soon joined by the Wigeon's finder Adam Firth on the viewing platform here. However with low light levels and with mist hanging over the floods we were unable to re-find the Wigeon. Jono Leadley then turned up for the same reason.

After more time searching we decided to go and check Wheldrake Ings which was also in a state of flood, the first significant flooding in the valley of the winter. The car park was flooded and we had to wade through the water to bridge. We headed to the Tower Hide negotiating the flooding riverside path with river having burst its banks in places. We reached the Tower Hide and the light began to improve. The floods were full of thousands of wildfowl and waders which were getting spooked by a couple of hunting Marsh Harriers. Wheldrake is at its best when it's first starting to flood; an awesome spectacle. Scanning the ducks we still had no luck in finding the American Wigeon.

At around 10am, I then noticed a large dark bird taking off from the main central ditch and flying towards the 'Cormorant trees'. Expecting this to be one of the Marsh Harriers I had a look through my telescope and my immediate thought was why was this Harrier carrying two large sticks? It quickly dawned on me that these were long legs and feet and that the bird had a long curved beak. This was clearly a Glossy Ibis and I shouted to Jono and Adam (I am told an expletive may have been involved in the message) and they both managed to get on it as flew over the 'Cormorant trees' flushing Teal and Lapwing before looping round and heading over Swantail Ings and off towards the refuge and was lost from view behind the pool side willows after around a minute.

We were all elated, a British tick for me and also a first record for York. There was no doubt about the identity of this distinctive bird, with its dark plumage and long curved bill. I was happy to have shared this bird with Jono and Adam, especially with it being a first for York and the LDV.

Luckily it was then picked up by Adam as it flew right past the tower hide at 10:15 and landed on the edge of the meadow to the right of Tower Hide and close to the boundary with Low Grounds. It then settled to feed allowing great views from the hide. In flight it looked to be quite a large bird, but on the ground it was quite small and was not much bigger than nearby Jackdaw and Lapwing. We released the news but at about 10:35 it was flushed by three low flying planes, without any other birders seeing it, and it was lost from view in the flocks of flushed birds. It was not relocated for the rest of the day. With rising water levels we headed back and made it through the flooded car park, happily without wet feet. Back at Bank Island, Adam managed to relocate the previous day's American Wigeon too.



**Glossy Ibis** © Duncan Bye (above) and Jono Leadley (below)



Over the next few days, with Wheldrake Ings inaccessible due to flooding, there were no further reports until Craig Ralston and Fallon Mahon saw it come into roost at Bank Island on 6th December. It was not seen again.

# Arctic (Coue's) Redpoll – second record for the York Recording Area

By Duncan Bye

Having seen a tweet and photo of a Coue's Arctic Redpoll in Hagg Wood at Dunnington near York from Mike Pilsworth on the YorkBirding twitter feed late on Saturday 25th February 2017 in Hagg Wood at Dunnington, I decided to try for the bird on Sunday morning.

I arrived at Dunnington and ignoring the Pine Bunting twitch I entered Hagg Wood at around 9 am. After walking some of the wood over next hour and failing to find a single Redpoll I decided to have another lap of the wood. I had been on my own but was joined by a visiting birder from Colchester, David Bradnum.

Approaching the southeast corner of the wood a flock of Redpoll appeared in an area of dense birches here. Moving round we were able to view the birds coming down to the ground to feed & drink. The flock contained several very pale looking Common (Mealy) Redpoll along with Lessers. The flock then moved further down the path and continued to feed. We were then both able to pick out a very white Redpoll which was clearly an Arctic Redpoll candidate. They then moved a bit further down where they seemed to settle under some alders and continued to feed on the ground.



I was able to get some pictures of the bird at this point (left, © Duncan Bye). The flock contained around 40 Lesser Redpoll and at least nine Common (Mealy) Redpoll.

The Coue's Arctic Redpoll stood out from the other birds in the

flock. It did appear bigger than the other Redpolls. A dog walker who looked through David's telescope also commented on its larger size compared with the other Redpolls present.

The flanks and underside were white with only a couple of fine streaks on the flank. The tail and rump were white and unstreaked. The thighs were covered with feathers. The white wing bar was very noticeable compared to the surrounding Redpolls as was the white nape and an obvious white eye stripe. The bird also had a prominent black bib.

The news was put out and the flock moved off. With other birders arriving, I located the bird again in a tree just above head height and the underside and tail were unstreaked and white appearance of the bird was evident. After about 30 seconds the birds moved off and I didn't see the bird again and left the area at about 1pm.

## **'Bob' the Kestrel does it again**

**By Terry Weston**

In June 2014 a local farmer informed me that he had a pair of Kestrels feeding young quite low down in an old tree along a woodland edge and would like me to photograph them. No sooner had I erected my hide than two well-grown young at the fledging state slowly shuffled out of the nest hole and on to a protruding branch. I only had one more chance to photograph them and that was on the day they fledged and disappeared into the leaf-covered canopy, at this site I only ever saw the female feeding young and wondered what had happened to the male.

The following year 2015 they raised three young in a tree at the corner of the wood overlooking a meadow. This gave me a better chance to study them more closely in the early stage of their lives, also when the male was hovering above me I noticed he only had one eye, as can clearly be seen in the photo below – presumably having somehow damaged it whilst fighting off a predator or perhaps a territorial male. Maybe this is why I never saw the male at the nest in 2014; he could have been recovering from his injury.

In 2016 the pattern was very much the same with the male fiercely defending his territory; even seeing off two advancing Common Buzzards by dive bombing them incessantly until they retreated. When all was quiet he continued feeding, taking his prey to the female in the nest; this time he was the sole provider. Once again three healthy young fledged successfully and one evening alighted on an old tree stump in front of my hide and allowed me to capture the gorgeous young as you can see in the photograph before the light faded.

This year 2017 is the fourth year that I have been watching this male (nicknamed 'Bob'), and was delighted to find him nesting high in an old gnarled oak tree; I was also surprised to find a female Mallard sitting on a nest in a crevice halfway up the tree. He has been successful again despite his injury he managed to pair up with an interested female perhaps the same one as last year and once again raised to fledging a brood of four young, making a total of twelve young raised over the last four years. It's fantastic to know that not only is the male managing to survive and hunt, but also that he's raised another brood successfully - albeit with a helping hand from the kind landowner.



**'Bob' the one-eyed Kestrel and one of his broods**

© Terry Weston

# Goosander (*Mergus merganser*) in the York recording area

By Paul Doherty and David Tate

Goosanders have bred in the York area but are more familiar as winter visitors. This article summarises the historical records and reports on a late winter roost survey carried out by club members in 2017.

## Background – Goosanders in the UK

As a breeding bird they are primarily associated with fast flowing rivers in upland areas. During the autumn the females and young move to lakes, reservoirs and some low-lying rivers and estuaries where they are later joined by the returning males and other birds from Scandinavian breeding grounds. The first generally accepted UK breeding record relates to a pair which bred in Perthshire during 1871. Since then there has been a rapid expansion of the range and population. Birds first bred in England at a Northumberland site in 1941. An estimated 3500 pairs (Musgrove *et al*), which accounts for 10% of the European total, now breed throughout Scotland, Wales and in England as far south as Hampshire. The species is on the UK's Green List of birds of least conservation concern. The winter range expanded by almost 90% between 1981/84 and 2007/11 (Balmer *et al*) whilst WeBS counts show that the number of wintering birds rose rapidly from the late 1960s to a 5-year mean of 16,100 birds in 1994/99. Since then numbers fell by almost 75% to lows in 2004/06 before increasing by 11% between 2004/05 to 2014/15 (Hayhow *et al*). As a result the winter totals today are closer to 12,000.

## The historical status of Goosander in the York recording area

The following account refers to some outwith county records where appropriate.

### **Breeding birds**

Goosanders first bred in Yorkshire by the River Tees in 1969. Colonisation was rapid and by 1986 14 pairs bred successfully, including sites near the rivers Wharfe and Rye. Females with young sometimes move down these rivers into the York recording area. The first accepted breeding record for the York area occurred in 1987 when a pair bred at the confluence of the rivers Rye and Dove (SE7178). A pair bred there again in 1988 and 1989, when eight young were seen. At the time breeding was also reported from Butterwick though the 1989 YOC Report notes that, '*It is possible that the same pair is involved in these records as the sites are only 2.5km apart*'. Proven breeding took place at the Butterwick site from 1990-93 and probably did so 6km upstream at Nunnington in 1993. There is also a report of breeding '*along the River Rye*' in 1994. After an interval of 14 years a female with two young was observed on the River Rye at Ryton Bridge, north of Malton, on 25th June 2007. More recently four large juveniles (or females) were

present on the Rye near Nunnington on 29th July 2010 and in 2011 a juvenile was at West Ness on 12th June. As was reported at the time none of these records amount to proven breeding. However, Balmer *et al* (2013) reports proven breeding in SE67. Elsewhere, a pair may have bred close to the LDVNNR in 1996 though the YNU noted that '*no proof was forthcoming*', whilst in 1997 prospecting birds were seen near Sutton upon Derwent. Other breeding season records include four birds on the River Ouse at Clifton on 7th June 2005; a juvenile at Newton-on-Ouse on 4th July 2006 and 10 large juveniles at Bolton Percy on 25th July 2016. Again, none of these recent records amounts to proof of breeding in the York area.

### **Wintering birds**

Records of wintering Goosanders in the York area pre-date those of breeding birds by well over a century, for example, Nelson (1907) quoted Thomas Allis (1844) who reported that '*The female and immature young are frequently met with in winter near York.*' The birds were hunted for the table and taxidermists throughout the 19th century and Sidney Smith (1912) provides details of 40 Goosanders shot in the LDV during the winters of 1864-85. Chislett (1950) reported that numbers in the county had increased and mentions the occasional presence of birds at CHL. He also noted that evening roosts had begun to form at some of the larger reservoirs e.g. 50 at Eccup reservoir in 1947.

YOC recording began in 1966 though there is little mention of Goosanders until 23 were reported on the floods at Aughton during March 1970 followed by 73 at CHL in December 1974. For the next 25 years roost counts from CHL and Wheldrake Ings dominated the YOC's winter records. The first three figure count in the York area, which was the highest English total for the 1985/86 winter, involved 154 birds at CHL in December 1985. Numbers rapidly increased and by early 1996 there were about 500 wintering birds with 272 at Wheldrake Ings (10th February); 250 at CHL (9th January) and 50+ at Redhouse reservoir (20th January). This was followed by a count of 354 at the Wheldrake roost on 13th January 1997 which remains a Yorkshire site record. Since then numbers in the area have declined and the mean winter count for 2005-14 was 31.

### **The 2017 YOC winter Goosander survey**

YOC members carried out surveys at known and potential Goosander roost sites to determine the current size of the late wintering population in the recording area. Surveys took place on 15th January, 12th February and 12th March, which were also WeBS count dates. The weather conditions on the three dates were mild for the time of year with minimum temperatures above freezing and rainfall was negligible.

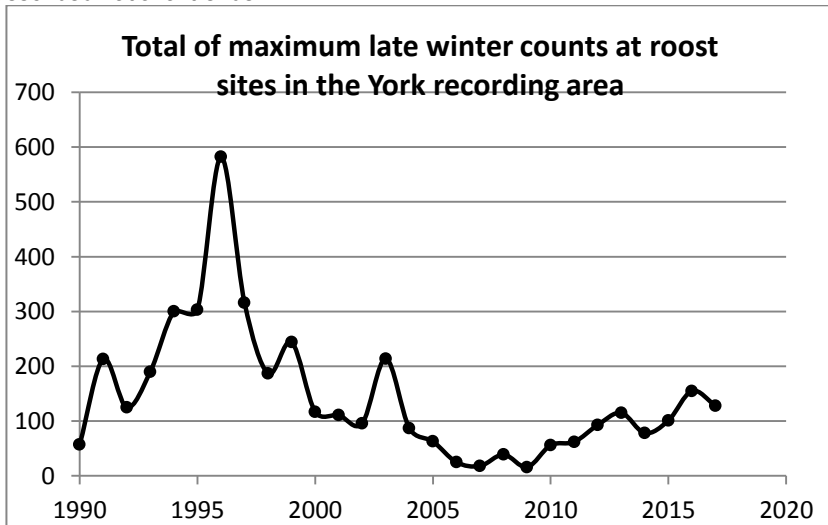
### **Results**

The results from the three survey dates, plus two counts made on 13th February, are set out in the table. Nil returns were received from Bank Island, Heslington East, Middlethorpe Ings, NDC, Rawcliffe Lake, Wheldrake Ings and Yearsley Moor Ponds.

Date	Location	Count
15th January	Redhouse Reservoir	84
	CHL	15
	LDV	15
12th February	Redhouse Reservoir	35
	CHL	15
	LDV	5
	Heslington West	3
13th February	CHL	19
	Dringhouses pond	10
12th March	CHL	5
	LDV	2

### Discussion

The total number of Goosanders present on the three survey dates was 114 (15th January); 58 (12th February) and 7 (12th March). The sharp drop off in numbers during February and March is typical for a mild winter. The total of the maximum counts amounts to 131 birds and this figure, along with data from previous YOC reports, is shown below. The pattern is similar to the previously described national trends.



It was thought that the local decline after the mid 1990's could have been due to human disturbance and persecution. During the late 1990s CHL was run as a commercial fishery and thunder flashes were used to discourage fish-eating birds. As a result the counts of roosting Goosanders rapidly declined and, although this type of disturbance has long ceased, numbers at the site have never recovered. At

the time some of the birds may have re-located to Wheldrake Ings where there was greater protection. Licences to shoot Goosanders can be sought if there is evidence to show that they are causing serious damage to fisheries. The results from a Freedom of Information request for this article show that 216 Goosanders were legally shot in England during 2017 and that 13 of these were taken in Yorkshire. Although the amount of illegal killing is unknown it seems most unlikely that either human disturbance or persecution have caused the decline in the number of wintering Goosanders in the York area and beyond.

The most likely causes of the winter population changes are a combination of a changing climate and the rise in the UK breeding population. The peak counts in the 1990s are now known to have resulted from a series of cold winters on the continent which led to an influx of Goosanders into the UK. Since then milder conditions have prevailed and an analysis of European winter Goosander count data (Lehikoinen, 2013) has shown that the European wintering range has noticeably shifted to the north and west and as a result fewer continental birds are now wintering in the UK. So even though the UK breeding population was rising between the late 1990's and the 2000's the number of wintering birds in the UK and the York area declined. It is likely that since 2010 the number of winter immigrants stabilised at a much lower level and that the latest increase in national and local winter counts results from the growing UK breeding population.

There has also been a shift in the location of key winter roost sites in the York area and the survey confirmed that Redhouse Reservoir is now the premier location in the York area and that both the LDV and CHL no longer support significant numbers. Indeed, the count of 84 at Redhouse on 15th January was the highest total reported from Yorkshire during 2017. The reasons for the rise in numbers at Redhouse Reservoir and the declines in the LDV are unknown.

### **Acknowledgements**

Many thanks are due to the club members who carried out the counts on which this paper is based and to Steve Denny, Steve Root, Paul Singleton, Graham Speight and Jeff Wragg who helped with information on Goosander records elsewhere in Yorkshire.

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# Attempts by Nuthatches to colonise part of Heslington; a brief history

By John Lawton

Although Nuthatches have spread steadily north in England over the last several decades (compare the breeding distributions in the first 1976 *Atlas of Breeding Birds* with that in *Bird Atlas 2007-11*), they remain quite scarce and patchy on the Vale of York, one of the most poorly wooded areas of lowland England. Nuthatches need big trees, in large blocks of well-connected woodland to thrive, and isolated patches of woodland frequently remain unoccupied. Nuthatches are remarkably sedentary; once a pair has established a territory adults move hardly at all for the rest of their lives. It is the young birds that disperse in two phases (see *The Migration Atlas*, BTO 2002), the first immediately after fledging followed by a second peak in August and September. Typically they don't move far; 95% of 304 ringed Nuthatches found dead moved a maximum distance of 15km from where they hatched and most were found within 1km of the ringing site.

Starting in 2015 Nuthatches have made several attempts to colonise an area that includes my garden in Heslington and the adjacent part of Campus West (behind and in front of Heslington Hall), and Heslington Parish Church yard. It's a small area, but Nuthatch territories are small (usually just 1 - 4.5 ha in mixed deciduous woodland - *BWP*) i.e. at most an area measuring about 210m by 210m. Prior to 2015 I had just two 'one-day wonder' records of Nuthatches here, in 2006 and 2010. Then in 2015 one appeared in my garden on 14th August (bang on when a dispersing youngster 'should' turn up), and it was then a regular visitor to the feeders until 10th September when it was joined by a second bird. The intriguing question is how did they find one-another? Be that as it may, they stayed in the garden until the 3rd November when they suddenly upped-sticks and moved to Spring Lane about 100-200 meters to the north on Campus West (behind Heslington Hall). I continued to hear them regularly, and see them occasionally there until 29th November, and then they simply disappeared (or possibly just stopped calling – see below).

The 2016 YOC Report's species account does not pick out every record in the Heslington area, only mentioning a possible dispersing bird on 12th October 2016 as the first there since the November records. The next contact I had in Spring Lane was actually on 3rd February 2016, just a single, silent bird. After that I didn't see or hear any Nuthatches again either in my garden or in Spring Lane until August when a single bird was calling in the Spring Lane area between the 12th and 30th (the dates again strongly suggestive of a dispersing juvenile). I assume this was the bird that then moved into my garden on 6th September, where it was joined by a second bird on 17th October. They remained until almost the end of 2016, when they (again) apparently disappeared.

Meanwhile since 2015, several club members have encountered Nuthatches from time-to-time around Spring Lane, behind and in front of Heslington Hall, and

round the Parish Church. I don't have a detailed summary of all their records, but piecing the story together (and including records from 2017 and early 2018) I think that there are now three established Nuthatch territories in Heslington: the Spring Lane area behind Heslington Hall; in front of Heslington Hall and across University Road in to the wood on the edge of the Science Park; and round Heslington Church. These three areas have the largest number of big trees in Heslington, and each is (roughly) 4-5ha in area. But the Nuthatches are elusive, and after bouts of calling in the autumn (presumably when they are establishing or advertising their territory) and in spring, they are, in my experience, unusually quiet and hard to find, giving the impression that they have 'disappeared'. Perhaps with few territorial rivals, they stay silent and unobtrusive most of the time.

And my garden? I think the trees are too small and too scattered for it to make a viable territory, and copious supplies of peanuts and sunflower seeds that initially attract dispersing juveniles are insufficient to compensate; eventually the well-fed youngsters move over to Heslington West. But they are fun to have in the garden whilst it lasts!



**Nuthatch**

© Mark Coates

# Records from the archives

## By David Tate

The following selections have been taken from previous YOC and YNU reports. The records of rare birds were accepted by the appropriate authorities.

**25 years ago** – The details are all from the 1992 YOC Report which also contains articles about the local status of rare seabirds (Russell Slack) and Mute Swan research (Craig Ralston).

### Rare Birds:

**Cattle Egret** - 5 at Nunnington on 6th May. 1st area record.

**Honey Buzzard** - 1 at Thornton Ellers on 28/29th May

**Turnstone** - singles at CHL on 21st July and 4th August.

**Sandwich Tern** - 4 records of 7 birds during (April-September), at East Cottingwith (2); York University (1); Wheldrake Ings (2) and Redhouse Reservoir (2).

**Red-footed Falcon** - A female at Fulford Golf Course on 25th June.

### Breeding:

**Quail** - An influx year with 27 singing males in the LDV.

**Black-necked Grebe** - Two fledged in the LDV. 1st area breeding record.

**Black-headed Gull** - 650 pairs bred on Wheldrake Ings.

**Nightjar** - A nest with 2 young seen at Gilling during August.

**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** - Bred at Newburgh.

### High counts:

**Bewick's Swan** - 30 in the LDV during March.

**Golden Plover** - 6800 in the LDV on 11th December.

**Kittiwake** - 15 bathing in floodwater at Wheldrake Ings on 17th April.

**Goosander** - 96 at CHL in January.

**Fieldfare** - 2000 at Thorganby on 9th January.

**50 years ago** – The records are from the 1967 YOC and Yorkshire (*in italics*) reports. At this time preparations were underway for the first national breeding bird survey and the YOC decided that the recording area should correspond with fifteen of the 10km<sup>2</sup> survey squares. The 1967 YOC Report includes results from a Common Bird Census carried out by Pete Piring on 50 acres (20ha.) at Skipwith Common and acknowledges staff at the Naburn sewage works who had provided bird watching facilities.

### Rare Birds:

**Blue-winged Teal** - A drake at Wheldrake Ings on 26th April. 1st record for Yorkshire.

**Red-breasted Merganser** - A male at CHL on 12th February.  
**Bittern** - One at Naburn sewage farm on 29th November.  
**Little Auk** – 1 alive and 1 dead at Kirby Misperton on 2nd November.

**Breeding:**

**Turtle Doves** - Bred at Wheldrake Woods (7 pairs) Buttercrambe (6 pairs) and Skipwith Common (5 pairs on CBC plot).  
**Long-eared Owl** – 3 pairs bred on Skipwith Common  
**Willow Warbler** – 34 pairs bred on the CBS plot at Skipwith Common.  
**Redstart** – At least 3 pairs bred near Brandsby  
**Whinchat** – Bred at Overton Wood and near Acaster Malbis.

**High counts:** These include some of the earliest wildfowl counts from the LDV.

**Bewick's Swan** - 174 in LDV on 15th January  
**Wigeon** - 3000 on LDV floods on 19th February  
**Pintail** - 100 on LDV floods on 26th February  
**Long-eared Owl** - 16 at the Skipwith Common roost on 11th November  
**Brambling** - 600 at Melbourne on 27th March

**100 years ago** – The information has been taken from the 1917 and 1918 editions of the YNU's 'The Naturalist'.

Prolonged periods of low temperatures and snowfall over Western Europe during the winter of 1916/17 added to the misery of those confined to the First World War trenches. A detailed account of the winter conditions in the YOC area, by J.F.Musham of Selby, was published in the 1917 edition. The first fall of snow took place on 18th November 1916 and continued on and off until 16th April 1917. Night time temperatures fell to -10°C on several nights during February and on 8th March. These extreme conditions led to widespread losses of Lapwings, Blackbirds, Thrushes, Redwings throughout Yorkshire, whilst it was estimated that half the pairs of Rooks lost either eggs or young.

During 1917 William Hewitt volunteered to cover for Sydney Smith, the York area bird recorder, who was serving in West Africa. Hewitt had little time to forward records for the YNU's 1917 bird report though he did report a '*great mortality*' among Song Thrushes. The only other record concerned the capture of two Cormorants at Buttercrambe Woods on January 9th. This unusual event took place at a time when inland sightings of Cormorants in Yorkshire were very rare. Presumably the birds had been in poor condition and they died two days later. Hewitt provided more records from 1917 at an YNU meeting in early 1918. He reported that resident species, except Rook and Heron, had delayed nesting and spring migrants were unusually late e.g. Swallow 24th April; Cuckoo and Willow Warbler 30th April and Corncrake 10th May. It was also noted that 10 pairs of Woodcock bred in an un-named wood; a pair of 'wild swans' frequented Wheldrake Ings and that a female Smew and an Egyptian Goose had been shot in the LDV.

The Egyptian Goose appears to have been added to wildfowl collections in England during the seventeenth century. Since then birds have escaped into the wild though there are few early records. Although Thomas Nelson (*Birds of Yorkshire*, 1907) noted that Egyptian Geese had occurred in Yorkshire he provides no further details and therefore the 1917 record is possibly the first published County record.

Finally, the 1916 UK harvest was poor and this, combined with the commencement of submarine warfare, led to a scarcity of food supplies by the following spring. A minor solution was proposed by HB Booth of the YNU's 'Birds and Eggs Protection Acts Committee'. Booth remarked that the society had helped to protect nesting gulls for many years therefore they could help us in our time of need. One result of the removal of protection was that 900 Black-headed Gull eggs were taken from the gullery on Skipwith Common and sold for 1/- (5p) a dozen as far afield as Bradford.

## 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/former 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 138 and 139.

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

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

Goldeneye W	** Rough-legged Buzzard
Smew	* Osprey P
Red-breasted Merganser	Water Rail B
Goosander (B)	* Spotted Crane (B)
Ruddy Duck (now absent from area following national cull)	* Corncrake (B)
Quail (B)	Moorhen B
Red-legged Partridge B	Coot B
Grey Partridge B	* Crane
Pheasant B	* Stone Curlew
(Golden Pheasant)	*** Black-winged Stilt
* Red-throated Diver	Avocet
* Black-throated Diver	Oystercatcher B
* Great Northern Diver	** American Golden Plover
* Fulmar	Golden Plover W
* Manx Shearwater	Grey Plover
* Storm-petrel	Lapwing B
* Leach's Petrel	Little Ringed Plover B
* Gannet	Ringed Plover B
Cormorant B	** Kentish Plover
* Shag	* Dotterel
* Bittern	Whimbrel P
** Cattle Egret	Curlew B
Little Egret B	Black-tailed Godwit (B)
* Great White Egret	* Bar-tailed Godwit
Grey Heron B	Turnstone
** Purple Heron	* Knot
*** Black Stork	Ruff (B)
** Glossy Ibis	* Curlew Sandpiper
* White Stork	* Temminck's Stint
* Spoonbill	* Sanderling
Little Grebe B	Dunlin W & P
Great Crested Grebe B	* Little Stint P
* Red-necked Grebe	** White-rumped Sandpiper
* Slavonian Grebe	** Buff-breasted Sandpiper
* Black-necked Grebe (B)	* Pectoral Sandpiper
** Honey Buzzard	* Red-necked Phalarope
** Black Kite	* Grey Phalarope
Red Kite (B)	Common Sandpiper
Marsh Harrier (B)	Green Sandpiper P & W
* Hen Harrier	* Spotted Redshank P
** Montagu's Harrier	Greenshank P
* Goshawk B	*** Lesser Yellowlegs
Sparrowhawk B	Wood Sandpiper P
Buzzard B	

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  
 \*\* (*Kumlien's Gull*)  
 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)(B)  
 \* 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



Chiffchaff B	Wheatear P
** ( <i>Siberian Chiffchaff</i> )	Duncock 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
** Rose-coloured Starling	Bullfinch B
Dipper (B)	Greenfinch B
* Ring Ouzel	Linnet B
Blackbird B	* Twite
Fieldfare W & P	Lesser Redpoll
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)	* Cirl Bunting
* Black Redstart (B)	Yellowhammer B
Redstart B	*** Pine Bunting
Whinchat P	Corn Bunting B
Stonechat B	Reed Bunting 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 for 2017

(Taiga) Bean Goose	Alpine Swift
Black Brant	Woodchat Shrike
American Wigeon	Penduline Tit
Ring-necked Duck	Red-billed Chough
Lesser Scaup	Short-toed Lark
Surf Scoter	Red-rumped Swallow
White-billed Diver	Greenish Warbler
Wilson's Storm-petrel	Radde's Warbler
Cattle Egret	Dusky Warbler
Purple Heron	Siberian Chiffchaff
Glossy Ibis	Dartford Warbler
Black-crowned Night Heron	Subalpine Warbler
Honey Buzzard	Melodious Warbler
Black Kite	Blyth's Reed Warbler
White-tailed Eagle	Marsh Warbler
Montagu's Harrier	Rose-coloured Starling
Rough-legged Buzzard	Red-flanked Bluetail (ex BBRC 2017)
Golden Eagle	Citrine Wagtail
Red-footed Falcon check!	Olive-backed Pipit
Black-winged Stilt (ex BBRC 2017)	Arctic Redpoll
American Golden Plover	Parrot Crossbill
Kentish Plover	Girl Bunting
White-rumped Sandpiper	Little Bunting
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	
White-winged Black Tern	
Ring-billed Gull	<i>Note: The following species has</i>
Kumlien's Gull	<i>returned to the BBRC since 01/17</i>
	Ferruginous Duck

## YOC description species (additional to YNU)

Bewick's Swan	Red-throated Diver
Tundra Bean Goose (ex YNU 2016)	Black-throated Diver
(Greenland) White-fronted Goose	Great Northern Diver
Brent Goose – all races	Fulmar
Green-winged Teal	Manx Shearwater
Garganey	Storm-petrel
Red-crested Pochard	Leach's Petrel
Scaup	Gannet
Eider	Shag
Long-tailed Duck	Great White Egret (ex YNU 2016)
Velvet Scoter	Bittern
Red-breasted Merganser	White Stork

Spoonbill  
Red-necked Grebe  
Slavonian Grebe  
Black-necked Grebe  
Hen Harrier  
Goshawk  
Osprey  
Spotted Crake  
Corncrake  
Crane  
Stone Curlew  
Dotterel  
Bar-tailed Godwit  
Knot  
Curlew Sandpiper  
Temminck's Stint  
Sanderling  
Purple Sandpiper  
Little Stint  
Pectoral Sandpiper  
Red-necked Phalarope (ex YNU)  
Grey Phalarope  
Spotted Redshank  
Pomarine Skua  
Arctic Skua  
Great Skua  
Long-tailed Skua  
Puffin  
Razorbill  
Guillemot  
Little Auk  
Little Tern  
Black Tern  
Sandwich Tern  
Roseate Tern  
Arctic Tern  
Caspian Gull (ex YNU 2016)  
Sabine's Gull  
Kittiwake  
Little Gull  
Mediterranean Gull  
Yellow-legged Gull

Turtle Dove  
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  
Willow Tit  
Bearded Tit  
Woodlark  
*(away from breeding areas)*  
Shore Lark  
Cetti's Warbler  
Yellow-browed Warbler  
Wood Warbler  
Barred Warbler  
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 be considered for 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/photographs 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.

In line with the YNU, the YOC reserves the right not to publish records of scarce birds which cannot be attributed to a named observer and are unsupported by photographic evidence.

## Contributors to the 2017 Report

(with apologies for any accidental omissions)

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A Porter	J Sutton	Report
N R Porter	Alan Swain (ASw)	YOC Website reports
C Proffitt	S Sweeney	
T Quantrill	R W Swift	<b>The LDV team comprises:</b>
D Raine	H M Tanner (HT)	Craig Ralston
Christy Ralph (CR)	David Tate (DT)	Mike Jackson (MFJ)
Craig Ralston (CSR)	R E Taylor	Steve Huddleston
John Rawcliffe	Barry Thomas	David Tate
P Rawnsley	G Thomas	Lucy Murgatroyd
Paul Reed	J Tipping	Fallon Mahon
Peter Reed (PR)	Ian Traynor (IT)	Jean Thorpe
G S Reid	C Toop	Beki Johnson
Jim Reid (JRe)	M Twinn	

## 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.

<b>A</b>		Brind	742310
Acaster Airfield	575428	Brindley's Plantation	742318
Acaster Malbis	590455	Broomhill Plantation	703449
Acaster Selby	574415	Brumber Hill	535430
Acomb, York	5751	Bubwith Bridge	705364
Allerthorpe Common	7547	Bubwith Ings	7037
Allerthorpe, Old Gravel Pits	7947	Bugthorpe	773579
Allerthorpe Lakeland Park	780465	Buttercrambe	733582
Ampleforth	583787	Buttercrambe Weir	734585
Anchor Plain, Strensall	6363	Butterwick	732775
Appleton Roebuck	555423	Byland Abbey	549790
Askham Bog(s)	5748	<b>C</b>	
Aughton (Ings)	7038	Cali Heath NR	753498
<b>B</b>		Callis Wood	6971
Baldwins Bridge, Pock.Canal	740450	Canal Head, Pocklington	798474
Bank Island	695452	Castle Howard Lake	7170
Barmby Moor	776490	Cawood	573377
Barthorpe	774598	Cawton	643767
Barton-le-Willows	715632	Church Fenton	515370
Beningbrough	529578	Church Bridge, Melbourne	759445
Beningbrough Hall	516586	Claxton	694602
Bielby	789437	Cliffe	662320
Bilbrough	532468	Cliffe Common	666339
Bishopthorpe	5947	Clifton	593532
Bishop Wilton	797553	Clifton Backies NR, York	596540
Bishop Wood	5533	Clifton Ings	583531
Black Wood, Easingwold	5467	Clifton Park	584533
Bolton Percy Ings	537397	Coates Bridge, Pock. Canal	785453
Bolton Percy	532414	Coneysthorpe	713713
Bootham Stray, York	597548	Coneysthorpe Banks Wood	720725
Bossall	719607	Copmanthorpe	565469
Brandsby	589724	Cornfield NR, Rawcliffe	579542
Brayton	601305	Coxwold	536772
Brayton Barff	5830	Crambe	733649
Breck's Lane, Strensall	641612	Crambeck	738674
Brecks (The), Strensall	648618	Crayke	562705
Brighton	709341		

<b>D</b>		Hemingbrough	6730
Designer Outlet, York	607477	Heslington	627504
Dringhouses, York	580495	Heslington East, York Uni.	6350 –
Dunnington	671525		6450
Dunnington Common	6750	Heslington Tillmire	638475
<b>E</b>		Heslington West, York Uni.	6250
Easingwold	529698	Hessay	524534
East Cottingwith	703425	Heworth	618529
East Moor, Sutton-on-the-Forest	600644	High Catton	718538
Ellers Farm, Buttercrambe	7257	High Hutton	755685
Ellerton (Ings)	700398	High Lodge, SHL	675586
Elvington	700476	High Plumps Wood, SHL	671584
Elvington Airfield	670480	Hob Moor, York	585506
Elvington WTW	7048	Hogg's Pond, Dringhouses	581493
Escrick	631427	Hollicarrs	626395
Escrick Park	635418	Holtby	675542
<b>F</b>		Hopgrove (roundabout)	642553
Fangfoss	765533	Hovingham	667758
Fireman's Leap, New Earswick	609550	Howardian Hills	5875 –
Flamingoland	7780		7568
Flaxton	680624	Huby	566655
Foggathorpe	755377	Hull Road Park, York	620515
Foss Island, York	609520	Huntington, York	612550
Fulford, York	610496	Huttons Ambo	763677
Fulford Ings	608493	<b>J</b>	
Fulford Golf Course	624494	Jeffry Bog, Low Hutton	759667
Fulford Hall	606484	JRTNR, New Earswick	608548
Full Sutton	746555	<b>K</b>	
<b>G</b>		Keldspring Crossing, Pock.	786498
Ganthorpe	689704	Kelfield	594384
Garrowby Hill	798567	Kexby	705514
Gaterley	737696	Kilburn	504796
Giles Lock, Pocklington Canal	795464	Kirby Misperton	780794
Gilling (East/Park)	614770	Kirkham Priory	736658
Goosewood Caravan Park, Sutton-on-the-Forest	591631	Knapton	562522
Great Barugh	750790	Knavesmire, York	594495
Grimston	644514	Knavesmire Wood, York	593488
Grimston Bar (roundabout)	649516	<b>L</b>	
Grimston Moor	613744	Langwith Stray, Heslington	650480
<b>H</b>		Laytham	749395
Hagg Bridge	717452	Linton-on-Ouse	495607
Harewood Whin (Rufforth Tip)	538518	Londesborough Lodge Farm	
Hassacarr NR	673518		Dunnington 6952
Haxby	609582	Long Marston	502512
Healaugh	500477	Low Carr, Sutton-on-the-Forest	600623
		Low Catton	705538



Lower Derwent Valley	7036 –	Patefield Wood	500381
	7046	Petersfield Farm, Bielby	793422
Low Grounds, Wheldrake Ings	703444	Pocklington	802490
<b>M</b>		Pocklington Airfield	793485
Malton	785717	Pocklington Canal	698426
Mausoleum, Castle Howard	727696		-800474
Melbourne	753441	Poppleton	560546
Melbourne Scamland	766437	Pretty Wood, Castle Howard	732690
Meltonby	796525	<b>R</b>	
Middlethorpe Ings	603486	Raker Lakes, Wheldrake	684463
Milford Common	5332	Rawcliffe Bar Country Park	577547
Millennium Bridge, York	603497	Rawcliffe Ings	575544
Monks Cross, York	630550	Rawcliffe Lake	586546
Moor Lane, Bishopthorpe	585470	Rawcliffe Meadows	577545
Moor Monkton	506569	Redhouse Reservoir	529575
Moreby Wood	606428	Redhouse Wood, Moor	
Moorlands	577588	Monkton	520570
Mount Ferrant, Birdsall	796639	Refuge, Wheldrake	708435
Murton	650527	Riccall	620380
<b>N</b>		Rossmoor Park	722436
Nabum	599455	Rowntree Park, York	604508
Nabum Bridge	598467	Ruddins Ings	5456
Nabum Marina	599462	Rufforth	5251
Nabum Sewage Works	601467	Ryther	550392
Nabum Wood	609438	Ryther Ings	551389
Newburgh Priory (lake)	542767	Ryton	795757
Newhay	661307	Ryton Bridge (Riggs Rd Bridge)	796754
Newton-on-Ouse	512599	<b>S</b>	
Newton Carr	740494	Sand Hutton	695586
Newton Mask SSSI	705501	Scackleton	650726
Newton upon Derwent	720495	Scagglethorpe Moor	5355
New Earswick	609555	Scamlands	766439
North Duffield Carrs	695375	Scoreby Lodge	684513
North Howden	7530	Seaton Ross	780415
Norton-on-Derwent	795710	Seavy Carr, Thornton	753451
Nunnington (Hall)	667794	Selby	615324
Nursery Wood, SHL	678585	Sessions NR, New Earswick	610548
<b>O</b>		Sheriff Hutton	655664
Osballdwick	633519	Sherburn in Elmet	500330
Osgodby	641338	Silburn Lock, Pock. Canal	797468
Oswaldkirk	625790	Skewsby	625710
Oulston Reservoir	570745	Skipwith	657385
Oxton	505431	Skipwith Common	6537
Ozendyke Ings	539398	Skirpenbeck	747570
<b>P</b>		Slingsby	698750
Parliament Street, York	603518	Slingsby Banks Wood	698733

South Duffield	681335	Warren Wood, Dunnington	677503
Stamford Bridge	715555	Warthill	675555
Stearsby Hagg	620720	Wash Dike, Skipwith Common	662372
Steeton Whin	520435	Wass Woods	550796
Stillingfleet	594410	Welburn	720680
Stillington	585678	Welburn Sewage Works	714685
Stittenham	679677	West Bank Park, York	584512
Stockton on the Forest	655561	West Cottingwith Ings	695419
Stonegrave	657777	West Ings	550394
Storwood	712442	West Lilling	648652
Strensall	633608	West Ness	690790
Strensall Common	6460 –	Westow	7565
	6661	Wharfe Ings	568387
St Nicholas Fields, York	615517	Wheldrake	682450
Stubb Wood	585433	Wheldrake Ings	7043
Sutton-on-the-Forest	584647	Wheldrake Wood	6546
Sutton upon Derwent	707468	Whitehill Mine	667359
Swinton	760731	White Carr, Flaxton	663603
Swinton Ings	772748	Whitwell Grange	715666
<b>T</b>		Wiganthorpe	662724
Tang Hall Beck fields	6353	Wigginton	595585
Tang Hall, York	620520	Wilberfoss	734510
Terrington	670707	Winchmore, Stamford Bridge	727547
Terrington Moor	685716	Wistow	594357
The Retreat, York	617510	Woodhouse Grange	733470
Thorganby	691420	World's End Plantation,	
Thorganby Ings	6941	Strensall Common	6659
Thormanby	495747	Wressle	708313
Thornton	760453	<b>Y</b>	
Thornton Eilers	730460	Yearsley	585744
Tockwith	465525	Yearsley Moor	5875 –
Tollerton	513643		6076
Towthorpe	625586	York (city centre)	599519
Towthorpe Civic Amenity Site	648586	York Minster	603523
Towthorpe Moor Lane,	625585		
Strensall	-663579		
Triangle Meadow, York	604547		
<b>U</b>			
Ulleskelf	520400		
<b>W</b>			
Walbut Lock, Pock. Canal	773442		
Walbutts Sewage Works			
Strensall	646618		
Walmgate Stray, York	617505		
Waplinton Hall, Allertorpe	776468		